



Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 11 Issue 1

September, 2009

At our next meeting.... Wednesday, September 9, 2009 at 7 p.m.

Mike Foley: Birding in and around Anchorage, Alaska

Mike Foley has been birding over 10 years now and one of his favorite areas to bird is South central and Southeast Alaska. His presentation will include some birding hot spots in and around the Anchorage area and his experiences at the Copper River Shorebird festival. Mike is also head of the Volunteer Management Team and Manager of Trail Experiences at the Phoenix Zoo and is affectionately known as the resident "bird nerd".

Mike Foley in Alaska enjoying the scenery



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**What's Happening in our Chapter?
 By Your Editor, George Wall**

September is here and another summer is almost over – summer officially ends the 22nd of this month. However, in Arizona the hot weather will continue for awhile longer. September also means it is the start of a new year of programs, events and other interesting things for the Sonoran Audubon Society.

During the summer, the SAS board still met to iron out some policies and take action on various things. The following are just some of the things we accomplished or looked at.

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What's Happening in our Chapter?

1. We have scheduled a range of field trips up through the end of the year.
2. Outstanding programs have been locked in for September through May.
3. We worked on various items dealing with the "Focus Birds". A new brochure will be available sometime in September, new Focus Bird bookmarks will be periodically updated on the internet and a new Focus Bird fact sheet is in the works. All three of these items will feature our Focus Bird photo contest winning pictures.
4. We worked on and are finalizing a budget for the coming year.
5. A Together Green Proposal grant was submitted by Vice-President Karen LaFrance and we were just notified that the grant was approved for \$5,000. The money won't be available for our use, but lots of publicity for our chapter will be garnered.
6. Bird walks at Estrella Mountain Park have continued through the summer.
7. Plans for the Retreat on Saturday, September 5, 2009, and for our annual picnic on November 15, 2009, have been finalized or are being worked on.
8. Calendars will again be available this year with bird photos by Jim Burns. Hold off on buying a new calendar and purchase one from us.

2009 Field Trips

REQUIREMENT: On all trips, **YOU MUST** make reservations by calling the leader. The leader can then give updated information as to the meeting place, times, etc. Also, some trips are limited in size.

Saturday, September 5, 2009

Hassayampa Retreat

Contact: George Wall 623-875-7057 gwall5@cox.net

This is not your typical bird trip like others in this column, but it is bird watching. Come out for a morning bird walk at Hassayampa from 7 a.m. until 8:30 a.m. After the walk, enjoy a breakfast and stay for our annual retreat from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.

This retreat is a get-together of people in the organization who want to plan for the coming year events, goals and anything else that might benefit us and the community. So, if you are so inclined to put forth ideas and perhaps help our organization grow, this is the time to join us. Call the contact point above and come out.

Thursday, September 10, 2009

Lockett Meadow

Leader: Dan Bohlmann 602-938-8244 dans-bohlmann@prodigy.net

Lockett Meadow is a beautiful meadow in the area between the five peaks that make up the San Francisco Peaks. There is a small pond that attracts some high altitude birds along with the fir, spruce and aspen forest that surrounds the meadow. The elevation is 8600 ft. and it is reached by a gravel road that can be driven by any passenger car. The road enters the meadow from the east side of the peaks off of route 89 near Sunset Crater. We will walk around the meadow and a little way up the trail that leads to the heart of the Inner Basin of the peaks. We will be walking around the level meadow and campgrounds for about a mile and up the trail for 1/4th mile, taking it very easy because of the altitude. There will be the normal forest birds such as nuthatches, chickadees, warblers, woodpeckers, Steller's Jay and Broad-Tailed Hummingbirds. Because of the high altitude I have seen Sapsuckers, Gray Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers, Mountain Bluebirds, Hermit Thrushes and Red Crossbills there. I have also seen Western Kingbirds, Red-Shafted Flickers and Robins, but nobody cares because they are so common.

Difficulty: 2 Bring a Lunch.

Meet at Fry's Electronics parking lot at the SE corner of 31st Ave and Thunderbird. We will leave at 7:00 a.m.

Friday-Monday, October 2-5, 2009

San Diego Pelagic & Land Birding

Leader: Rich Schooler 623-930-8904

raschooler@cox.net

Join us for a combination pelagic and land birding trip to San Diego in October. We will be doing a one day pelagic trip out of San Diego. The cost of the pelagic trip is \$55 and the trip lasts approximately 10 to 11 hours. The boat, the Grande, is an 85 footer with several restroom facilities and food service. The trip is sponsored by the Buena Vista Audubon Society and will have five experienced guides on board. Some of the birds expected are: Pink-footed, Sooty, and Black-vented Shearwaters; Leach's and Black Storm-Petrels; Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers; Arctic Tern; Rhinoceros and Cassin's Auklets and Red-necked Phalaropes. Possible species include: Flesh-footed Shearwater; Blue-footed and Masked Boobies; Northern Fulmar; Xantus' and Craveri's Murrelets; Least, Ashy and Wilson's Storm-Petrels; and Sabine's Gull. Additionally, several sea mammals are likely.

The land birding portion of the trip will be on Sunday

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2009 Field Trips

October 4th to areas around San Diego to look for Southern California specialties and shorebirds. We will develop the exact land birding itinerary as we get closer to the trip date. We may also possibly make a side trip either going or coming to look for White-headed Woodpecker and other montane species, if the interest is there. Several of the people that have expressed interest in this trip have birded the San Diego area in the past, so we do not plan to hire a local guide for the land birding portion.

We will be staying at an older motel adjacent to the Point Loma Sport Fishing Marina where the pelagic trip originates from. We have blocked eight rooms for the group; however, you will be responsible for making your own room reservations and pelagic trip reservations. The trip will be limited to 16 people. If you are interested, please contact the leader.

Sunday, November 1, 2009

Robbins Butte Birding & Annual Picnic

Contact: George Wall 623-875-7057 gwall5@cox.net

This will be our Annual SAS Picnic and at the same time for those who want to, a birding trip. The birding trip will start at 7 a.m. at Robbins Butte. The picnic will start at 11 a.m. and go until 1 p.m.

Robbins Butte is a Wildlife Area administered by the Arizona Game & Fish Department. We've had trips here twice before and the last time we saw a Bald Eagle soaring above us. We should see about 35-45 species.

Difficulty: 1

Sign up at the meetings or let contact know.

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Tres Rios Wetlands

Leader: Eleanor Campbell 623-977-7639

ercamp@juno.com

The Tres Rios Wetlands Project located at the 91st Ave. Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Salt River is a haven for many bird species. Habitats there include open water, running stream, marsh, desert and woodland which provide a good environment for ducks, shorebirds, and passerines. Highlights on previous trips were sightings of Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Least Bittern, Sora, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon and White-faced Ibis.

Difficulty: 1 Morning only.

Call the leader to arrange the meeting place and time.

PHOTO CONTEST RESULTS

By George Wall

The Photo Contest which ran from March through April was a success. We asked that you submit photos of our "Focus" birds—Burrowing Owl, Cactus Wren, Costa's Hummingbird, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, Phainopepla, Gilded Flicker, Elf Owl, Yuma Clapper Rail and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. We had 121 photographs submitted by 13 photographers. The only birds that had no submissions were the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and the Yuma Clapper Rail.

The photographers who submitted pictures were Gene Almendinger, Dave Bixler Photography, Becky Jackson, Tresa Lematta, Vera Markham, Shirley Ramaley, Barb Sakshaug, Alvin & Arlene Scheuer, Robert Shantz Photography, Julie Stromberg/Matt Chew, Mary Sund, George Wall and George Zoske.

We sincerely thank all the photographers who submitted photos.

Some of the winning photos along with a nice write-up were in the Southwest Living section of the Daily News-Sun on Saturday, May 23, 2009.

The winning pictures are shown below and on the next page of this newsletter. They will be used in our brochures, bookmarks and handouts.



Elf Owl—Julie Stromberg & Matt Chew

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FOCUS BIRD CONTEST WINNERS



Burrowing Owl—Shirley Ramaley



Phainopepla—Dave Bixler Photography



Gilded Flicker—George Wall



Cactus Wren—Shirley Ramaley



Black Throated Sparrow—George Wall



Costa's Hummingbird—Tresa Lematta



Verdin—Vera Markham

Jeweled Daredevils of the Desert

By Bettina Bickel

Hummingbirds are surely some of nature's most enchanting creatures, and Costa's hummingbirds are a perfect example, with their amazing aerobatics and the range of color as light plays on their iridescent green backs and jeweled purple gorgets.

Costa's hummingbirds are most abundant in Arizona's Sonoran desert during the breeding season in March and April. Males perform a daring "dive and whistle" courtship display, careening toward the ground from as high as 40 meters with a dramatic whistling sound effect. Hard-working females are solely responsible for nesting and chick rearing duties. A clutch of two eggs is laid from February to May and incubated for 15-18 days, with fledging occurring about 21 days later. Like other hummingbirds, their diet consists of nectar and small insects and spiders. Chuparosa, ocotillo, and fairy duster are among favored nectar sources.

The migratory patterns of Costa's are not well understood, but after spending the breeding season in the Sonoran and Mojave deserts, most individuals are thought to retreat to the cooler climes of coastal California and Baja California. In winter, the species concentrates in the warmer southern part of its range in Mexico.

Costa's hummingbird has landed on the National Audubon Society's watch list (yellow status) due to their limited range and widespread habitat destruction within that range. Both the Sonoran desert and California's coastal scrub have been lost to development at astonishing rates. Buffelgrass is planted in Mexico for cattle grazing, and huge swaths of native desert scrub habitat are being replaced by a monoculture of this alien species. Buffelgrass has become invasive in Southern Arizona, where it chokes out native species and promotes an unnatural and destructive fire regime.

These jeweled daredevils are one more reason to protect our Sonoran desert from sprawl, invasive species, and climate change.



Photo by Mary Sund

The above photo was entered into our photo contest and was the 2nd choice for the Costa's Hummingbird.

Pitch-in for Pollinators!

John Arnett, Secretary, Sonoran Audubon Society, and Wildlife Biologist, Luke Air Force Base/BMGR-East

The Department of Defense (DoD) Legacy program has teamed with National Public Lands Day to sponsor habitat enhancement projects on DoD lands around the country. This year's project theme is Pollinators, and I'm inviting you to pitch-in for pollinators at the Gila Bend Air Force Auxiliary Field (AFAF) on Saturday, November 7, 2009.

What will we be doing? The Gila Bend AFAF has a small nature trail and we want to make it a valuable resource for resident and migratory birds, bats, and insects. We'll install irrigation and electrical lines, plant shrubs and trees, pull a few invasive weeds, improve our interpretive trail signs, and learn about the importance of providing habitat for resident and migratory pollinators in the Sonoran desert.

Because our project is on a military installation, everyone must follow a few rules of conduct and you'll need to sign a Hold Harmless form the morning of the event. We encourage carpooling to and from the site in Gila Bend. For more details and to sign up, e-mail me at john.arnett@luke.af.mil or call 623-856-8491. You can learn more about National Public Lands Day, of which Audubon



is a partner organization, at <http://www.publiclandsday.org/> and more about the NPLD – DoD Legacy partnership at <http://www.publiclandsday.org/legacy.htm>.



At the end of the day you might have a few sore muscles, but you'll feel great knowing that you helped provide future habitat for pollinators in the Sonoran desert! And, when the work is done, you can enjoy the Gila Bend Desert Shrimp Festival just minutes from our project site.

Why are birds important?

John Arnett, Secretary, Sonoran Audubon Society

I need your input for the monthly program at our Sonoran Audubon meeting in December. I'll give a talk called "Why are birds important?" and I want you to tell me why you think birds are important. Your input will help me build the program, but your response will remain completely anonymous. Please keep your answer to 60 words or less, and e-mail it to me at treerunner@yahoo.com by **October 15, 2009** (sooner is better). **IMPORTANT** – write "Why are birds important" in the Subject line so I do not discard your e-mail as spam. All of our monthly programs are 'for the birds', but this one is also for (and by) you! Thank you, and see you in December.



THE THIRD ANNUAL PICNIC

FOR THE



Will be held Sunday, November 15, 2009, from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Robbins Butte which is located approximately 7 miles SW of Buckeye just off of Highway 85.

The early birds will be birding the area which has lots of birds. The picnic will start at 11 a.m. for those who don't want to bird.

This is a free event and open to all Sonoran Audubon Society members/ friends and their guests.

The Sonoran Audubon Society will furnish the main items - hot dogs, hamburgers, buns, condiments, drinks, plates, etc.

It would be nice if families brought a side dish like baked beans, salad or a desert.

To facilitate how much food is needed, you need to register for this event by using the sign-up sheet at the front table at the General Membership meeting. You can also call George Wall at 623-875-7057 or e-mail him at gwall5@cox.net and let him know how many will be attending.

Dusky-tailed Canestero

By Dr. Jerry Theis

As an enthusiastic bird watcher around the world, I've learned to always be on the lookout for birds. A case in point was a guided bird trip in Chile.

On Nov 14, 2004, I arrived at the airport in Santiago, Chile, to meet my guide and fellow birders on a short birding expedition. After hailing a "blue" taxi, I finally set foot at our hotel meeting place at 2 a.m. Since I was too excited to attempt sleep and the temperature was mild, I wandered the streets, listening to the Austral Thrush, an around-the-clock songster.

As dawn slowly approached, I was waiting for the other participants to awaken when I saw a small bird fly to and from the light pole near the hotel entrance. The bird was obviously nesting. When my guide introduced himself, I mentioned the sighting. He had not noticed the bird on this or any previous visits to this hotel. As we waited for the bird to reappear, I described it as small and dark, with an obvious long tail. Soon we were all waiting, and doubts were beginning to form, when, alas, the mystery bird again visited the light pole, now in daylight. It was a Dusky-tailed Canestero, a Chilean endemic, usually found only in the scrubby hills, not in the city! This was a life bird for me and I wouldn't have seen it on the trip except by being observant.

There are no photos of this bird on the internet which indicates to me that it is often overlooked even in its home country.

Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO)

AZFO will hold their third annual statewide meeting in Tucson, AZ, Friday-Sunday, October 23-25, 2009. There will be lectures by noted ornithologists. A Saturday evening's dinner at El Parador features guest speaker, Rick Taylor, Director of Borderland Tours and author of "A Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona".

Saturday's meeting will be held at the Du Val Auditorium (room 206), University of Arizona Health Sciences Center, 1501 N. Campbell Ave. in Tucson.

There will be field trips on Friday afternoon and Sunday morning.

There is a \$10 fee for non-AZFO members. The dinner is \$25. To register, go to:
http://azfo.org/annual_meetings/2009/meeting_2009.html.

EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE VALLEY

Birders' Anonymous

Birders' Anonymous, a group of bird-watchers, has their next meeting on Friday, September 18, 2009, starting at 10 a.m. at the Church of the Palms on the corner of Boswell and 103rd Ave. in Sun City.

For further information on Birders' Anonymous contact Marshall Esty at 623-977-1637 or at mne@juno.com.

Desert Botanical Garden

Every Monday and the second Saturday of each month, there is a bird walk starting at 8:00 a.m.

Desert Botanical Garden entrance fees of \$15.00 (\$13.50 seniors) apply unless you're a DBG member. Membership is \$55 a year. When special events are held, this could be higher.

See their website at www.dbg.org for further information.

Hassayampa River Preserve

Bird Walk with a class on eggs, feathers and nests: Saturday, September 26, 2009, 7-9 a.m.

Bird Banding: Saturdays, September 12 and 26th starting at 6:30 a.m. **However**, you must contact Anne Leight at ALeigh@syntellect.com at least two days beforehand.

Entry Fees: \$5, TNC members \$3, kids 12 and under are admitted free.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum

This arboretum always has some nice walks. Check out the website listed below. Starting this month, the hours are 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Admission is \$7.50 for adults, \$3 ages 5-12. For driving directions or other details, call 520-689-2811 or visit their internet website at <http://arboretum.ag.arizona.edu/>.

Maricopa Audubon Field Trips

Saturday, September 5, 2009, Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Scott Burge, 480-968-5141 or burge@burgenv.com for reservations.

Friday, September 25, Verde River/Needle Rock, Kathe Anderson, 480-951-4890 or kathe.coot@cox.net for reservations.

See all of their trips at www.maricopaaudubon.org

Join the Sonoran Audubon Society

This can be done in two ways: become a friend of the Sonoran Audubon Society or join the National Audubon Society. The difference is as a "friend" all the money goes to our chapter. As a National member, you still become a member of our chapter, but only a percentage of the money goes to our chapter; however, you get the National Audubon Society Magazine. Some people choose to do both. See our website for the applicable forms.

New adult or family membership: \$20.00

Seniors and students: \$15.00

Renewal fee for seniors and students: \$15.00

All monthly issues of *Gambel's Tales* may be obtained free from the chapter website

<www.sonoranaudubon.org> or by mail for \$10.00 per year. If you wish to get the newsletter by mail or to be notified when a new issue is placed on the website, please contact chuckkan@mindspring.com or by mail to: Sonoran Audubon Society, P O Box 8068, Glendale, AZ 85312-8068.

SAS Web Site: www.sonoranaudubon.org
Arizona Audubon Web Site: www.az.audubon.org
Desert Rivers Audubon Web Site:
www.desertriversaudubon.org
Maricopa Audubon Web Site:
www.maricopaaudubon.org
Arizona Field Ornithologists: www.azfo.org
National Audubon: <http://audubon.org/>



Sonoran Audubon Society Officers, Board Members and Committee Contacts:

Officers

President: George Wall 623-875-7057 gwall5@cox.net

Vice President: Karen LaFrance 602-788-9646

klaf@cox.net

Treasurer: Carol Schooler 623-930-8904

raschooler@cox.net

Secretary: John Arnett 623-695-0953

treerunner@yahoo.com

Board Members— Directors at Large

Tim Cullison, 602-863-9744 timcullisonaz@aol.com

Dick Fogle: 623-584-3922 rpfogle@yahoo.com

Eleanor Campbell 623-977-7639 ercamp@juno.com

Darnell Kirksey, 602-938-6174 dkirk38338@aol.com

Chuck Richards 623-594-6554 crichards15@cox.net

Rich Schooler 623-930-8904 raschooler@cox.net

Andrée Tarby 480-948-1074 atarby@cox.net

Jerry Theis, 623-878-6528 jerry.theis@bannerhealth.com

Committees

Programs: Eleanor Campbell and George Wall—See phone numbers and e-mail addresses above.

Education: Rich Schooler 623-930-8904

raschooler@cox.net

Field Trips: Donna Smith 623-556-9535

rms15247@cox.net

Hospitality: Diana Barnum 623-215-3400 didibar@cox.net

Publicity: Tim Cullison: 602-863-9744

timcullisonaz@aol.com

Membership: Charles Kangas 623-931-6677

chuckkan@mindspring.com

Newsletter: George Wall 623-875-7057 gwall5@cox.net

Calendar of Monthly Meetings...

**Location: Auditorium, Glendale Public Library, 5959 West Brown Street
(one block south of Peoria Ave. & 59th Ave. intersection). Time: 6:30 p.m. for socializing and
7 p.m. for the start of the meeting and program.**

All meetings are on Wednesday night except the November 9th meeting.

September 9, 2009: Mike Foley—Birding in and around Anchorage, Alaska

October 14, 2009: Dr. Gerald Rosenthal—Sonoran Desert Life

MONDAY—November 9, 2009: Kenneth "Tuk" Jacobson—Bald Eagles

December 9, 2009: John Arnett—Why are Birds Important?

January 13, 2010: Doug Alexander—Birding in New Zealand

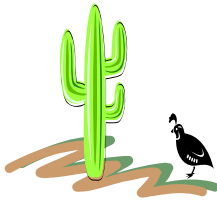
February 10, 2010: Dominic Sherony—Color in Birds

March 10, 2010: Amanda Moors—Spotted Owl

April 14, 2010: Tice Supplee—Adventures in Africa

May 12, 2010: George Wall—Birding in Galapagos Islands/Ecuador

Other Dates of Interest: September 2, 2009 7 p.m. Board Meeting at Glendale Library in small meeting room – all SAS members welcome.



Sonoran Audubon Society

P.O. Box 8068

Glendale, AZ 85312-8068