

Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 11 Issue 7

March, 2010

At our next meeting.... Wednesday, March 10, 2010 at 7 p.m.

Amanda Moors: Mexican Spotted Owl

Ever wonder how biologists study nighttime animals such as owls? Come learn some of the techniques used to locate, capture, and monitor Mexican Spotted Owls, as biologist Amanda Moors shares her experience researching the owls in the Catalina Mountains and the San Carlos Apache Reservation. In addition to discussing the Mexican Spotted Owl research, Amanda will cover some of the basics of birding on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. This will include information on obtaining permits, great places to find birds as well as an overall description of habitat types and bird species that are found on the Reservation.

Amanda Moors, wildlife biologist and resident of Globe, AZ, has studied everything from black bears in New Hampshire to spotted owls, elk, mountain lions, bighorn sheep and western box turtles all around the Grand Canyon State.



Amanda Moors

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

The board met on February 3, 2010, and the committees gave their reports.

The Membership Committee took a close look at the membership roster and it was noted that almost 200 people had not renewed their membership in either the National Audubon Society nor as a "Friend." E-mails or letters went to these individuals and unless they pay by mid-March, they will be dropped from our roles.

The Education Committee met on January 30, 2010. Plans were set to participate in the Tres Rios Earth and Nature Festival and the South Mountain Festival. Also, Tim Cullison has taken the bull by the horns and has really stepped forward on working with the Girl Scouts. Dates are being set for us to help them earn badges on birds and nature. This will be a big undertaking but worthwhile.

Questionnaires concerning our programs and other information will start being used at future meetings. The idea is to ensure that we are giving the programs that you want.

Chuck Richards of the Nominating Committee gave a rundown of the candidates for the coming election. See page 4.

The General Membership meeting held on February 10, 2010, had another great turnout—63 people. Dominic Sherony presented a fascinating and informative program on the Color of Birds. His photographs of many birds around the world were a treat to all.

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2010 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-Sunday, March 6-7, 2010 Tres Rios Nature and Earth Festival—See page 6

Thursday, March 18, 2010 B&M/P.I.R.

Leader: Rich Schooler 623-930-8904

rashooler@cox.net

This is a trip designed to look for rails, bitterns and soras. We'll be getting there just about daylight in order to call these reed dwellers out into the open.

Difficulty: 1 Morning trip only.

Meet at the Burger King just off of 101 on Thunderbird to leave at 5:30 a.m. or meet at the site at 6 a.m.

Tuesday, March 30, 2010 Washington Park/East Verde River Leader: Dan Bohlmann 602 938-8244

dansbohlmann@prodigy.net

This trip will include driving the Houston Mesa Road out of Payson which turns off of Highway 87 just a little ways north of town. It is paved for a short ways and then is a gravel and dirt road from then on. It runs for about ten miles heading north toward the Mogollon Rim. About half way to the Rim it runs alongside the East Verde river and then crosses it twice as well as another creek. There are lots of Sycamore and Cottonwood trees that line the river, lots of water and thus lots of birds. This is a great birding area that has the potential for variety of warblers, vireos, woodpeckers, flycatchers, phoebes, swallows and kingbirds. Also seen in this area are Western Tanagers, Summer Tanagers, Western Bluebirds, Bullock's Orioles, and a lot of birds that I haven't listed. We will stop at all the creek and river crossings as well as other places that look like they will be promising bird spots. I chose to do this trip during the week because on weekends the crossings are filled with fisherman, swimmers, picnickers and people also – too much noise for the birds to endure. After we stop at the crossings, we will go on to the little cabin community of Washington Park and take small sections of trails that follow creeks under the Rim in a small loop of under a mile which is heavily shaded by pines, oaks and maples. We should pick up a number of typical forest birds such as nuthatches, chickadees, titmouse and creepers and who knows what else.

Difficulty: 3 Bring a Lunch.

Meet at Fry's Electronics Store, 31st Ave and Thunderbird in the parking lot on the north side of the building (N.E. corner) at 7 a.m.

Hassayampa River Preserve Thursday, April 8, 2010

Leader: Eleanor Campbell 623-977-7639

ercamp@juno.com

This is the Nature Conservancy Preserve near Wickenburg. You never know what you might find here in the way of birds that hide in the palm trees, mesquite, cottonwoods and willows.

Difficulty: 1 Morning trip only.

Meet at the SW corner of the Bell Recreation Center in Sun City at 7:00 a.m. Take Boswell off Bell, go one block south. Arrange another meeting place with the leader.

Saturday, April 24, 2010

Page Springs

Leader: Rich Schooler 623-930-8904 ra-

schooler@cox.net

Page Springs is a fish hatchery where water also attracts many birds. There are also Arizona Sycamore and cotton-woods surrounding the water. Bridled Titmouse is a resident and Common Black Hawks nest regularly. There is a birding trail that is a part of the Page Springs Important Bird Area.

Difficulty: 1 Bring a lunch.

Meet at McDonald's just off Carefree Highway taking Exit 223 off Rte. 17 to leave at 6:00 a.m.

FAMILY BIRD WALKS AT ESTRELLA

Sponsored by the Sonoran Audubon Society

Estrella Mountain Park is located on the south side of the Gila River in Goodyear at Bullard Avenue and Vineyard Road. There is a variety of habitat like mesquite, desert shrub and the Gila River.

SATURDAYS: These walks are held the second Saturday of each month. The next walk will be on Saturday, March 13, 2010. Meet at the visitor's center parking lot at 8:00 a.m. The walk will last approximately 2 hours. For further information, contact Rich Schooler at 623-930-8904, <u>raschooler@cox.net</u>.

SUNDAYS: These walks are held the fourth Sunday of each month. The next walk will be on Sunday, March 28, 2010, at 8:00 a.m. Follow the signs to the dirt parking lot on the east side of the park. For further information contact Bob McCormick at 602-373-2952 mcbobaz@aol.com or Andrée Tarby at 480-948-1074 atarby@cox.net.

There is a \$6.00 per vehicle charge for entering the park; however, the bird walks are free of charge.

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Hamerkop By Dr. Jerry Theis

The time was around 10 a.m. The date was October 21, 1997. Our bus was not moving an inch due to a disabled vehicle causing a traffic jam on the heavily congested, poorly maintained road near the community of Keratina, on the way from the Mt. Kenya Safari Club to Nairobi. I was on a medical mission to Kenya, Africa. I always carry binoculars in my briefcase, even when not on a birding trip. I noticed movement in the marsh not far off the road on my side of the bus. I quickly retrieved my binoculars and was excited to see a Hamerkop, a life bird.

The Hamerkop, also called Hammerkop, Hammerkopf, Hammerhead, Umbretta, Umber Bird or Anvilhead, is a medium-sized wading bird, occurring in sub-Saharan Africa, Madagascar and SW Arabia in all wetland habitats. The shape of its head with a curved bill and crest at the back is reminiscent of a hammer. Its plumage is a drab brown with purple iridescence on the back. The bill is long, flat, and slightly hooked. The neck and legs are short for a wader. The Hamerkop has partially webbed feet, a short tail, and big, wide, round-tipped wings. It soars well, stretching its neck forward like a stork, but when it flaps, it coils its neck like a heron. They feed during the day on fish, shrimp, insects and rodents. They may also feed on tadpoles while in flight.

The Hamerkop's behavior is unlike other birds. One unusual feature is that up to ten birds join in "ceremonies," running in circles, calling loudly. Another is "false mounting." The strangest aspect of their behavior is their huge nest, comprising as many as 10,000 sticks and strong enough to support a man's weight. The nest has a dome and a long tunnel and is decorated with brightly-colored objects. Hamerkop's construct 3-5 nests per year, whether breeding or not. Snakes, mammals and various birds may share the nest site.

According to an old Malagasy belief, anyone who destroys a Hamerkop nest will get leprosy. That would not be a blessing, but a disabled vehicle can be!



Hamerkop Photo from Wikipedia

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Biographies of the Nominees for Officers and Directors at Large for the Sonoran Audubon Society

The selections below were nominated by the Nominating Committee

- Richard Fogle (for Vice-President): Richard is currently serving on the board as a Director at Large and agreed to step up when he was asked. He is a relative old-timer with Audubon: 17 years total about half of that with Maricopa Audubon Society before transferring to Sonoran Audubon. Since being a member of our chapter, he has led birding trips, done IBA work, and volunteered for numerous things like the Tres Rios Nature Festival. He says he seriously got into birding after retirement. He was a District Manager for the Ford Motor Company, and as such traveled all over the world, but extensively in Latin America. Richard went the extra mile on his international travels taking the time to learn of the people and places where Ford sent him. With all the places he has been, the one thing he regrets is that he wasn't a bird-watcher at the time.
- Carol Schooler (for Treasurer): This will be Carol's second term as Treasurer. She has been a member of Sonoran Audubon Society since its inception. She was introduced to birding by her husband, Rich Schooler, when they married 18 years ago. A life-long Arizona resident, she retired recently after 44 years of service within the banking industry. She was treasurer of an employee association while with the bank and was financial secretary of her church for over 25 years. Carol also enjoys travel, reading, fly fishing and quilting.
- John Arnett (for Secretary): This will be John's second full term as he volunteered to be our Secretary back in November, 2007. With his credentials, he was accepted by the board. John Arnett was born in Orlando, Florida, and spent many child-hood summers in the southern Appalachians of western North Carolina. It was in these mountains that he became interested in birding around the age of 9. John has B.S. and M.S. degrees in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Florida and he does, in fact, bleed orange and blue. He has worked on bird and many other wildlife-related research projects in Florida, Georgia, Arizona, Brazil, and Chile. He is currently working as a wildlife biologist for Luke Air Force Base where his primary task is to inventory and monitor the natural resources of the Barry M. Goldwater Range.
- Karen LaFrance (for Director at Large): She is currently our Vice-President and is completing her final term. In accordance with the Bylaws, she can serve one term as a board member after being an officer. She has been an Audubon member for seven years. She has helped in setting up all of the past retreats and facilitates some of the Board's planning sessions. Karen writes grants for SAS and has brought in a lot of money for our organization. She also is the liaison to Environmental Fund for Arizona, providing the paperwork and other submissions that keep Sonoran Audubon in the family of environmental organizations which receive matching funds from Federal, State and corporate fund-raising campaigns. She was just nominated to be a Southwest Board Member for the National Audubon Society.
- Joe Ford (for Director at Large): He moved to the "valley" in October of 2008 after 42 years in the classroom. Joe has an M.S. from the University of Oklahoma. Joe coached high school sports, soccer in New Mexico, and taught the life and earth sciences in high school and college. He also coached the Science Olympiad team in Hobbs, NM, for 22 years. His last classroom assignment included Astronomy, Meteorology, and Geology; Plants of the Southwest; Advanced Placement Environmental Science. He and his wife moved to Sun City to be closer to their family. Since moving to Sun City Joe has interests involving singing with the Choraliers, playing softball, bowling, volunteering at the West Side Food Bank, helping with the signing project at the Glendale Library Xeriscape Garden, a member of the Sundancers of Surprise that work spring training and spending time with his grandchildren. He has memberships with the Nature Conservancy, Audubon, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. Joe joined the Sonoran Audubon Society soon after moving to the valley. His favorite bird is the common loon and he enjoys trying to identify warblers.
- Haylie Hewitt (for Director at Large): She is a relatively new Sonoran Audubon Society member but she has really jumped into birding. She took the Beginning Birding class given by the Desert Botanical Garden TWICE. Having attended SAS meetings for about a year she has contributed to the Ad Hoc Membership Committee, has energetically planted trees for National Public Lands Day, joined several field trips and is currently handling the hospitality table at meetings. She is a volunteer for Citizens for North Phoenix Strays and has helped "adopt out" feral cats into homes where they will be indoor cats. She also has a M.A in Elementary Education.

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Sonoran Audubon Society Ballot
The Chapter bylaws require that an election ballot is to be included in the March newsletter. If the member is unable to attend the April meeting send this completed ballot to: Sonoran Audubon Society P. O. Box 8068 Glendale AZ, 85312-8068
The following members are nominated to fill a two year term for the respective officer position: Richard Fogle for Vice-President John Arnett for Secretary Carol Schooler for Treasurer The following members are nominated to fill a two year term as a board member for Director at Large: Karen LaFrance Joe Ford Haylie Hewitt
Put a check mark in front of each officer and board member to indicate your approval. There are three openings for an officer and three openings for Director at Large.
Non Sonoran Audubon members who receive this newsletter, please ignore this ballot.
Your name and address

This ballot is in accordance with the Bylaws of the Sonoran Audubon Society and should be made available to as many members

Member Spotlight: Les and Sharon Sell Submitted by Eleanor Campbell

Open the gate to the courtyard of Sharon and Les Sell's Peoria suburb home and you walk into a habitat designed just for the birds. Open the door to the living area and you're greeted by a lovely Umbrella Cockatoo and a brilliant green Lilac-crowned Amazon parrot.

Both captive birds were being cared for as a favor to friends, but they wound up staying. Outside the glass surrounded room are the trees and shrubs that attract and feed dozens of birds. The veritable sanctuary has had Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Northern Harrier and Merlin zoom through. There are five hummingbird feeders and a Black-chinned hummer has nested there.

Les and Sharon have eased into birding and have made bird watching the focus of their trips even before they joined a formal group. Three years ago they met Rich Schooler (on our



Board) birding in the Chiricahua Mountains who invited them to attend Sonoran Audubon and for two years they have been coming regularly to our meetings.

Les grew up in eastern Colorado where thousands of Whooping and Sandhill Cranes and Red-winged Blackbirds wintered and has been interested in birding ever since. He was a pipefitter in oil refineries and power plants and for several years worked in the Atomic Energy Commission. Sharon spent many years in management of a department store.

They have taken the beginning bird class at Hassayampa River Preserve, have joined SABO's guided bird walks, and attended the summer birding festival in Sierra Vista. They enjoyed doing a count of LeConte's Thrasher at Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge.

The birds are fortunate to share such a lush habitat in the Sells' yard.

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Flightless Birds of New Zealand Submitted by George Wall

New Zealand consists of North and South Islands and is a long ways from any other land mass. Because there were no wild animals nor snakes in New Zealand, this made the perfect country for flightless birds to exist and there were several. Then came man and the flightless birds were an easy mark. Some of them were:

The Moa—believed to be the largest bird in the world according to fossil evidence. It weighed in at 500 pounds. The egg would have made a lot of omelets.

The Laughing Owl—sounded like someone laughing. Last reported seen in 1914.

The Hooky— an eagle with a 3 1/2 foot wingspan and huge claws.

The Huia—a crow-like bird last seen in 1920.

The Stephens Island Wren—a tiny flightless wren. Killed off by the Polynesian Rat probably in the 16th century on the mainland and supposedly by feral cats on the small island in 1894.

At one time there were 18 species of flightless birds. Today, there are only seven species left with the Kiwi and the Kakapo the most noted.

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Lammergeier – An Unusual Bird Researched by George Wall

I am always reading books on birds, especially unusual ones. When I came across the Lammergeier in the book "Remarkable Birds" by Stephen Moss, I immediately took notice for I had never heard of this bird. After reading the write-up, I decided to do a lot more research and I found out some interesting things.

This is actually a very large vulture, but unlike other vultures, it doesn't have a bald head. It has also been called the Bearded Vulture, Bearded Eagle, Bonebreaker and the Ossifrage. The name Lammergeier comes from the German language and means lamb-vulture. This is from the belief that it killed lambs.

I can see why it could be called the Bearded Vulture and Bearded Eagle, but what about the other two names. I found that Bonebreaker comes from the fact that it will drop large bones from a great height to crack them into smaller pieces.

The Ossifrage is a different sort. This name was mentioned in the Bible. In the King James Version of the Bible, the word can be found in two scriptures: Leviticus 11:13 "And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey". Deuteronomy 14:12 "But these are they of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey". Upon further research, I found that ossi means bone and frage means break in Hebrew (I hope I am right on this).

When full-grown, it has a wing span of 9-10 feet, weighs up to 17 lbs. and almost four feet in length. It has a white head, black beard on the chin, the back is grayish black, with the under parts and neck rusty yellow. Juvenile birds are dark all over, and take five years to reach full maturity.

It breeds on crags up to 13,000 feet high in the mountains of southern Europe, Africa, India and Tibet, laying just one or two eggs.

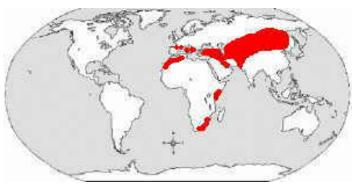
It's a scavenger, but normally doesn't eat rotting meat. Instead, it lives on a diet that is 90% bone marrow. This bird will also drop tortoises from high heights to break them open.

The Greek playwright Aeschylus was said to have been killed in 456 or 455 B.C. by a tortoise that was dropped by an eagle who mistook his bald head for a stone – if this incident did occur, the Lammergeier must be a likely candidate for the "eagle."

Picture at right shows the range of these great birds that can live up to 40 years.



Lammergeier Photo from Wikipedia



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Wild Birds Unlimited

At the last General Membership meeting, I talked with Victor Reece the proprietor of the new store for Wild Birds Unlimited that will be opening up 7480 W. Bell Rd, Suite #104 (near corner of 75th and Bell) by the end of this month. He seemed real enthusiastic about the store in this area. Ever since the Wild Birds Unlimited store closed in Sun City several years ago, we have had to go a long way to shop at one of their stores.



EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE VALLEY

Birders' Anonymous

Birders' Anonymous has their monthly meeting on Friday, March 19, 2010, starting at 10:00 a.m. at the Church of the Palms on the corner of Boswell and 103rd Ave. in Sun City. The program for this month will be completely different. From the church, the group will carpool to the Wildlife World Zoo. Look out for coupons.

The field trip for the month will be on Wednesday, March 24, 2010, to the P.I.R. area led by Marshall Esty.

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

Hassayampa River Preserve

February 27, 2010, there will be an Interpretive Nature Walk from 8:30—10 a.m.

Bird Banding: Saturdays, March 6th starting at 7 a.m. and 27th starting at 6:30 a.m. Newcomers welcome. However, if you want to help band, you must contact Anne Leight at **ALeight@syntellect.com** at least two days beforehand.

The preserve is open from Wednesday through Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Entrance fees are \$5.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children. Members fee is \$3.00.

Rio Salado Habitat

There are bird walks starting from the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center every other Saturday. The March bird walks are on the 13th and 27th. Loaner binoculars and bird guides will be available.

The Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center is located at 3131 S. Central Avenue in Phoenix. Call 602-468-6470 or e-mail riosalado@audubon.org. for more information.

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 \$75 a year. When special events are held, the entry fee could be higher.

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

Boyce Thompson Arboretum

Bird walks for March are on alternate Saturdays and Sundays. They are the 6th, 14th, 20th and 28th. They start at 8:30 a.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, March 13 Flagstaff Lakes. On this field trip we will visit the lakes around Flagstaff looking for waterfowl and Bald Eagles. We also hope to find Red Crossbills, Cassin's Finches and Pinyon Jays. Meet at Denny's Restaurant at the intersection of I-40 and I-17 at 8 a.m.. Bring a lunch, water, snacks and a scope will be very helpful. Difficulty: 1.

Leader: Charles Babbitt, 602-840-1772 or cjbabbitt@cox.net for reservations.

Wednesday, March 31 Glendale Recharge Ponds.

View wintering waterfowl, shorebirds and passerines. Take East Camelback Rd. to 107th Ave. Turn north about one mile to where the road dead ends at the ponds. Scope optional. Meet 7:00 a.m. Done by 11 a.m. Difficulty: 1.

Leader: Bob Witzeman 602-840-0052 or <u>witzeman@cox.net</u> for reservations.

Festivals

Tres Rios Earth and Nature Festival, March 6-7, 2010. See www.tresriosnaturefestival.com.

Yuma Birding and Nature Festival, April 15-18, 2010. See www.yumabirding.com.

Verde Valley Birding and Nature Festival, April 22-25, 2010. See www.birdyverde.org.

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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

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klaf@cox.net

Treasurer: Carol Schooler 623-930-8904

raschooler@cox.net

Secretary: John Arnett 623-695-0953

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Board Members— Directors at Large

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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.

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Field Trips: Donna Smith 623-556-9535

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Hospitality: Haylie Hewitt 623-581-1180

haylie.hewitt@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

SAS' VP Officially Nominated to the National Audubon Board!

The SAS Board of Directors thanks all of you who signed the petition nominating our Vice President Karen LaFrance to run for the Southwest Regional Representative position on the National Audubon Society Board! The nomination was accepted as complete and the campaign is on (February 22nd to April 1, 2010). Our chapter's two votes will be decided officially at the March 3rd SAS Board Meeting (to which all are always invited). We hear there may be other candidates so watch this space for updates. For Karen's published Statement, look for it soon on the National Audubon Society Website at: http://www.audubon.org/local/elections/index.html or e mail Karen at klaf@cox.net for a copy.

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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.

**March 10, 2010: Amanda Moors—Mexican Spotted Owl April 14, 2010: Tice Supplee—Adventures in Africa May 12, 2010: Andrée Tarby—Australian Adventures

**Note: A special 10-15 minute presentation on Monarch butterflies by Gail Morris will be given prior to the regular program

Other Dates of Interest: March 3, 2010, 7 p.m. Board Meeting at Glendale Library in small meeting room – all SAS members, friends and guests welcome.



Sonoran Audubon Society P.O. Box 8068 Glendale, AZ 85312-8068

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