

Sonoran Audubon Society
The Planning AGENDA and MEETING NOTES
Thursday, July 11, 2024 (on ZOOM)

Attending: Jerry, Kathy D., Tim F., Tice., Jackie A., Kathleen M., Andre' T. Karen L. (facilitating & notes).

Consulted with or providing input/insights in weeks prior to meeting: Donna S., Tina B., Kaylee D., Ross L., Bob M., Kathe A., Jim C., Steven P., Joe F., Kay H., Irene P., several Auduboners from other AZ chapters and various staff at National Audubon.

A. How is SAS doing—Positives of most recent two years:

Western Yellow Billed Cuckoo Internships: Purposes: a) to support recent college graduates and senior students in conservation sciences to get certification from US Fish & Wildlife for work on Endangered Species thus augmenting their degrees in support of job opportunities; b) to add interns to the SAS roster; and 3) to encourage their actual participation with SAS & other Audubon Chapters. SAS is in year 4 in summer 2024 with the support from a 4th National Audubon grant of \$5,000. Participating with chapters is very important to SAS; the best example is Kaylee D. on the SAS Board, an SAS internship graduate who is on the Board and does key tasks for the Chapter in communication, membership and fund-raising. Several other former interns are volunteers at other chapters and three interns are employed in Bird Conservation fields.

Joe F./Tom L. Maricopa Mountain County Parks' "almost weekly" Bird Walks and Programs....)—Participation, photos, reports, and E Bird submissions are on the SAS Website. The chapter has highlighted these walks on Constant Contact because they are regular bird-oriented walks that attract all ages to birding, which SAS' board is keenly interested in. Besides advertising on the SAS website, Maricopa County Parks advertises these walks and talks 3 times/month; they attract approx. 12-15 persons for each walk.

Year End Contributions: Contributions are holding steady each year. The board is keenly aware of the generosity of SAS' contributors and makes

sure that all givers are thanked in writing for the extremely important core operating support.

Diversification of revenue: SAS aimed for \$200 revenue in 2023-2024. By Fiscal Year End, new sources totaled 4X the planned amount. Funds came in from bird classes, walks, education, presentations and net book sales. Examples—Kathy D. (with Karen) made a presentation on photographing birds in Sun City which attracted over 50 persons and resulted in a \$50.00 contribution from the Photography Club. Books for sale included selling off remaining inventory from the “gift shop” that SAS operated several years ago at the Tres Rios Festival, as well sales of the newest 2022 version of Birds of Arizona by Taylor that SAS provides (at the BEST price we have found, we might add....).

ArizonaGIVES, SAS approved in 2024—**OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD UPON THIS ENTITY’S STATE-WIDE FUND-RAISING INFRASTRUCTURE on behalf of the Cuckoo Survey Internships.** 2024-2025—SAS highlighted in ArizonaGIVES the giving opportunity to support the Cuckoo internships, receiving one donor so far. SAS’ page may be found at: <https://www.azgives.org/sonoranaudubon>. Other sources: SAS will be seeking a grant from AZ Community Foundation in 2024-2025 and may share in Audubon SW’s corporate funding for this purpose.

Partnerships and Collaborations: SAS has 20+ partnerships and collaborations in West Valley communities—recently reported in detail to National Audubon in SAS’ yearly required report card.

Communications: Jackie A has done a great job in setting up FACEBOOK and Instagram for SAS with input from Kathy D., Karen and the Board. See below.

B. How is SAS doing—longer term

Tres Rios Nature Festival—SAS is a founding financial supporter and continues, after 10+ years, to contribute \$500 each year to the Festival. The Festival has gained substantially in attendance (several thousand) and presentations/events, etc. It is now run by City of Avondale. SAS also does a booth and the early morning bird walks with SAS volunteers. Bob

M., who was the SAS Founding Member to the Festival years ago, still manages SAS' participation along with long time volunteer Andre' T. and many SAS volunteers.

Important Bird Areas (“IBAs”)—Former SAS President Bob M. & Tice S., with other SAS volunteers, identified these critical habitats 15+ years ago using scientific protocols from National Audubon and the Audubon AZ (now AZ SW) Science Committee. Under “McBob’s” guidance and data management, SAS has monitored the IBAs all these yrs. with Tice S. (NAS SW) and Jennie M. (Tucson Audubon). Volunteers count birds four times/year in SAS' two IBAs—Upper Agua Fria River IBA and the Tres Rios IBA.

All the birds seen and heard on specific routes are logged into the IBA Database. Like data from the year to year Christmas Bird Counts, IBA data informs scientists at National Audubon Society who use monitoring data in reports about birds. The most recent studies are in two important reports on the loss of billions of birds and the effects of Climate Change on specific bird populations. Go to the National Audubon website for these “must read” reports— <https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees> and <https://www.audubon.org/news/more-half-us-birds-are-decline-warns-new-report>.

C. Building the Board and the Chapter: MIXED RESULTS

Activities in past two years: With help from National Audubon, SAS added several **zip codes** to its “official” Sonoran Audubon area. NAS added approx. 70 households in the West side of Phoenix who already buy the NAS Magazine. These names are now on the SAS membership database and several households provided contributions in 2023-2024.

The Board: In the past two years since the SAS Treasurer finished her two year term, SAS has tried to recruit two CPAs/bookkeepers to the Board. After interviews, these attempts were unsuccessful as candidates made decisions about their interests. Karen became Interim Bookkeeper in 2022. In addition, three long time Board members resigned from the Board, basically retiring from SAS, and two persons came onto the Board, leaving SAS with 7 Board members (15 allowed).

The Chapter: Constant Contact goes out to approximately 450 e mail addresses. The list includes households that have given contributions in the past two years PLUS persons who provide e mail addresses at tabling events, education events, bird walks etc.

Contributions and Financial Info: SAS raises several thousand dollars per year in November, December, January and February. Contributors Valley-wide respond to the Year End Request for Contributions with the majority of gifts from the Sun Cities, Glendale & City of Phoenix.

The base funding is steady year to year. However, SAS has not completely replaced a \$1,000+ gap in yearly revenue that came from the now closed nonprofit Environmental Fund for Arizona. While some costs of running the chapter rise slowly year to year—ex. Insurance, Constant Contact—the increases are manageable. Note: SAS provides insurance for a local Christmas Bird Count where the Maricopa County Flood Control District folks require it. SAS' contribution saves the CBC the cost of indemnifying the public agency that allows volunteers onto its properties.

Volunteers: Volunteers are fewer as the primary demographic of the Chapter is “aging out” and retiring from volunteering. Reliance on long term, older leaders and volunteers is problematic where physical activity and/or repeated, longer term commitments are involved. SAS has hosted fewer bird trips and is experiencing fewer volunteers for tabling events, for examples. This is a critical issue. There are **OPPORTUNITIES for SAS in the West Valley for an active, assertive group of volunteers and leaders at Sonoran Audubon to educate folks, excite people and participate in conservation work with other groups.** SAS needs to get younger cohorts involved potentially using focused recruitment strategies for different age groups—like the Cuckoo internships and the STEM-CON tabling plan at Agua Fria High School.... see below.

D. Programs

Lights Out—Bird Safe Windows—organizing for safe windows AT HOME; SAS is looking for additional volunteers for a campaign. Recruits would join Andre' T. and Kathleen M. who participate with other

chapters, attend these joint Bird Safe Meetings and provide expertise at tabling events.

Tabling: Tres Rios Nature Festival—see above
 Agua Fria High School “STEM CON” Feb 2025; date TBD;
 committed: Karen L., Irene P., Jackie A.
 Bats & Buzzards: **October 3**, 2024 (Thursday, 4-6 PM);
NEED two volunteers; Karen L. has tabling
 materials if SAS wants to commit to this event.
City of Phoenix—Urban Wildlife Conservation Day—SAS
 will have a booth with other Audubon groups (as of
 this writing, DRA & Audubon SW)—this event is
OPEN FOR VOLUNTEERS w/ Kaylee D & Grey
 G as leads & McBob penciled in to lead a bird walk.
 Date/time: **October 19**, 8 AM- 12 Noon 7th
 Ave, trailhead at the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration
 Area. Flyer will be on Constant Contact. SAS is a
 signatory to the Urban Bird Treaty of City of PHX
 with the Federal Government.

Education Events: **EXISTING**: Hosted Education Programs about
 birds, birding and bird habitat are: “Birding 101” classes—currently
 Karen and Andre’ in Peoria—now three sessions in April each year;
 Glendale, “Birding 101” at Heroes Library—, Becoming an Outdoor
 Woman (“BOW”) once or twice/year with AZ Wildlife Federation—
 Karen— and Bird Friendly plants Glendale—Jim C. Kaylee D. with
 other volunteers; Kathy A. has offered to teach...what are SAS’
 education and teacher recruitment goals—replace Karen in these
 roles after 2025!

BIRDING TRIPS AND PICNICS—See below

E. Communications

Does SAS need to be on other sites besides FB and Instagram?
 Getting info to Jackie must be increased and timely.... Jackie has set
 up FM and Instagram (esp. for photos) which is great! However,

providing content is not yet a regular Chapter leadership & members' priority activity—bird pictures “corner”, perhaps....??

Constant Contact—SAS is trying to do these “newsy” e mail communications twice per month.— the effort needs a Volunteer Writer/Editor to shadow or participate with Karen and Kaylee—to take over writing duties in spring 2025.

Constant Contact is an e mail platform to inform folks on the SAS e mail database (about 450 households) of timely information. SAS uses CC for notices, birding trips & picnic announcements, advocacy, short items of interest, Jerry T's newsletters on birds from around the world and Chapter news from the Board. Kaylee sends out the Constant Contact e mails after writing & editorial review w/ Karen. SAS is ALWAYS interested in receiving articles of interest related to birds, conservation, advocacy, etc. which members may want to share....or references and URLs of items of interest (send to Karen).

Constant Contact is used ALONG WITH THE WEBSITE.

The Website: The website, which was completely re-imagined and modernized a few years ago at considerable cost, carries longer items like the newsletter articles AND THE CALENDAR. These items are introduced on Constant Contact and then a HOT LINK may follow for clicking to the appropriate page on the website. SAS buys security and all permissions for the website each year. NOTE: Despite precautions, there is never a guarantee that information does not get from a website to the wrong people.

The Website is SAS' “billboard” to the public providing three opportunities: 1) longer articles are published and do not therefore take up space on Constant Contact, 2) articles, bird trip information, photos and organizational archives are published on it and 3) educational materials and information about the Chapter are on it. Kaylee manages and keeps the website and especially the Calendar up to date. For example, **Joe Ford's Walks and Talks**

are on the website at <https://sonoranaudubon.org/getting-involved/field-trips/trip-reports/> even if not advertised on Constant Contact.

Facebook and Instagram: Must develop protocols so that announcements are made timely with Jackie.

F. Administration: Succession Planning 2024-2025—Karen’s retirement date—May 31, 2025. Karen is preparing for the Board a summary of the tasks that she does—and Kaylee does—to provide Admin services to the organization. From there, a plan for the transition will be put in place, including recruitment, “shadowing” and other tasks.

G. BIRDING TRIPS, BIRD WALKS, PICNICS/ WITH BIRDING for 2024-2025: Purposes: respond to and engage SASers who have consistently asked for birding trips; encourage younger folks/families to enjoy birds; attract new members; promote conservation; promote other SAS activities; consider offering stipends for leaders....

PRIORITIES for 2024-2025:

First Priority: **RECONSTITUTE BIRD TRIP COMMITTEE—** Volunteer Chairperson(s)?? Members: Jackie, Karen, others? Background—long time chairperson and guides have retired in 2022-2023. Donna S., long time trip leader, is available to assist in planning.

EXISTING: Kathy A. has offered again to guide 3 trips (fall winter spring/ one per month?) in 2024-2025: Discussion: potential West Valley destinations—Mount Ord with Andre’ and another leader?? Other ideas—focus on Important Bird Areas like Upper Agua Fria IBA and Tres Rios IBA? Recruiting guides/leaders; training leaders; stipends. Waivers; publicity & communications.

Second Priority: **EXISTING: picnics/Bird Walks—Twice a year**—Fall and Spring—in town, for example, Glendale Conservation Park AND/OR Horseshoe Ranch if available; other sites in West Valley?? Jackie's ideas for picnics/birding AND/OR bird trips:

- * Rio Vista at Thunderbird bird and the 101- Ramadas near Skunk creek and Ponds, very busy parking with lots of families.
- * Saguaro Ranch also, Ramadas, also a busy park on Saturdays
- * Papago near zoo with Ponds
- * Cave Creek County park, Ramadas for reservation, stream and feeders near visitor centers (coordinate with Joe Ford Walk & Talk?)
- * Hassayampa River Preserve is a longer drive but great birding area.
- * Thinking outside the valley the picnic area at Montezumas Well. It is a drive but wonderful location for picnic and birds.

Immediate first step: Karen is polling for a ZOOM meeting with Donna, Jackie, Kathy A, Andre', McBob, Tice, Tina B and Kaylee D. Agenda: Review destinations/ideas for birding trips (for the year) AND Fall Picnic (October).

Opportunity: Joe F.'s Family Bird Walks & Talks already EXISTING—advertising currently with Maricopa County Parks and on SAS website; can SAS build upon this activity??

Opportunity: Weekly or bi-weekly meet ups—**SATURDAYS**—informal but advertised on Social media—Glendale Recharge Ponds—Other places?

Advertisements: Social Media—Jackie; senior SASers interested—Jim C., Tina B., and "McBob". Not a priority but perhaps can be accommodated per Tina's information and leadership.

Special Opportunity: Trip to the **Appleton Whittell Research Ranch of National Audubon**, Elgin, AZ: Summer for specific bird species; Fall, winter, Spring and Christmas Bird Counts. SAS has the open invitation—overnight accommodations are at the Ranch with on site full kitchens for meals. **PURPOSE:** offer conservation education with birding in an experiential setting could be a positive for chapter members. The research ranch is UNUSUAL in the Audubon world.... right here in AZ.