President’s Report

By Robert Weissler

With the widespread availability of vaccines for COVID-19, our volunteers have been anxious to resume bookstore operations, interpretive walks, and school field trips. We submitted operational plans with COVID-19 contingencies to the BLM several months ago. While we had hoped to receive approval shortly thereafter, we are still awaiting approval.

In the meantime, FSPR volunteers have been available outside of San Pedro House to greet visitors. In addition, the trails in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) remain open to the public. During the pandemic, there has been an increase in visitors hiking the trails in SPRNCA, as it is easy to maintain social distance out there.

In June 2021, FSPR awarded the first Dutch Nagle memorial scholarship to Katie Puckett, a Cochise College biology student involved with a research project on the San Pedro River (see article, p. 3). As part of the scholarship award, the student will engage with the Friends to perform volunteer service in SPRNCA.

During the past year, the BLM convened several working groups for the implementation process associated with the SPRNCA Resource Management Plan. Several FSPR Board members participated in the BLM-sponsored Uplands and Grazing Working Group and the Recreation and Cultural/Heritage Working Group. On September 29, BLM conducted a SPRNCA Recreation and Cultural/Heritage Field Trip with the assistance of Colleen Whitaker and Tahnee Robertson of Southwest Decision Resources, Inc. The itinerary included an overview at San Pedro House, a hike to Kingfisher Pond and back along the river, followed by a visit to the Lehner Mammoth Kill Site in Hereford. Participants shared ideas on how BLM could improve the sites and the visitor experience.

FSPR raised concerns about the issue of trespass cattle that continue to enter and occupy portions of SPRNCA outside the established grazing allotments. The Board still is determining how best to move forward with BLM to deal effectively with this persistent problem. Our partners in the conservation community also are engaged with BLM in this regard. It will take a team effort to get results.

On September 22, the BLM’s Gila District, US Army Garrison Fort Huachuca, Cochise County, and the City of Sierra Vista signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperative monitoring and management of SPRNCA and surrounding areas within Cochise County, in order to assure water resources for both the river and local communities.

(continued on p. 2)
Earlier this year, extensive renovation of San Pedro House was completed. Substantial anonymous donations funded these improvements to the interior of the house, including asbestos remediation, restoring the original hardwood floor (which was sanded and refinished), repainting the interior, rescreening porches, and installing a new toilet, sink, ceiling fans, and track lighting.

On June 13, FSPR volunteers participated with 60 Army volunteers in a trash cleanup near San Pedro House and the Charleston Road Bridge (see article, p. 5). Subsequently on September 4, a pre-NPLD workday was held with Army volunteers helping to initiate site improvement at Murray Springs Clovis Site. That was followed by National Public Lands Day at Murray Springs on November 6, during which a new ramada was erected and installed, a picnic bench was moved underneath, and volunteers cleared trails around the site (see article, p. 3).

The Annual Meeting was held at San Pedro House on October 23. This event was part volunteer clean-up and part rendezvous with Friends volunteers. Volunteers cleaned windows, porches, paths, and planting beds. This was followed by the dedication of the Milkweed Garden in honor of Dutch and Pat Nagle. Finally, during a pizza lunch, members and volunteers heard about recent news, activities, and Board election results. Ron Stewart, Jim Herrewig, and Steve Ogle were re-elected. Not surprisingly, volunteer hours for a second consecutive year were far lower than normal, due to the COVID pandemic. Nevertheless, volunteers with over 100 hours of service received gift certificates for our bookstores.

At a subsequent Board meeting, President Robert Weissler, Vice-President Ron Stewart, Treasurer Renell Stewart, and Secretary Sally Rosén were re-elected in their current positions to serve as Board officers for another year.

As we wrap up another pandemic year, we hope to receive approval from BLM to resume our regular interpretive walks, school field trips, and bookstore operations at San Pedro House and Fairbank.

---

**Help Wanted for Landscape Maintenance at San Pedro House**

*By Ted Mouras*

The maintenance day held October 23 at San Pedro House was a great success, resulting in a much-improved appearance of the landscape around the building. But it also demonstrated that only through regular weekly maintenance can we stay on top of the seasonal activities that have to be performed to keep the landscaped areas in shape for our visitors and for the wildlife that calls the area home.

FSPR is a bit short-handed on its landscaping crew and would like to invite additional volunteers to help with this activity. When done on a regular basis, the work is not that taxing (e.g., raking, pruning, watering), involving maybe an hour and a half of work. We meet at SPH every Tuesday morning at 8 am in warmer weather (May-October) and at 9 am when things start to cool down (November-April). There is no requirement for volunteers to be there every week; even a periodic commitment would help immensely. John Rose is present almost every week and can help point out what needs to be done, as will the other regular landscape maintainers. Please bring gloves and water and dress appropriately for the weather. Tools are kept on the breezeway. If you wish, we will be happy to provide you with a tour of the extensive landscaped area and help orient you about the work to be done. If you have not already signed a current BLM volunteer service agreement, plan to do so at the earliest opportunity.

Contact Ted at tedmouras@mindspring.com with any questions or if you wish to participate.

---

**Help Tally Birds on December 20**

The Ramsey Canyon Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is scheduled for Monday, December 20. The count circle is centered southeast of Sierra Vista. It includes some canyons of the Huachuca Mountains and portions of the San Pedro River. If you are interested in participating, please contact Ken Blankenship via email to kenblankenshipbirding@gmail.com or by calling 770-317-8486.

---
Dutch Nagle Scholarship Winner: Katie Puckett

By Ron Stewart

FSPR is happy to announce that the Dutch Nagle Scholarship will be awarded for the coming school year to Katie Puckett. It will cover tuition and costs for next year at Cochise College.

Katie is in her second year at Cochise College, studying General Science. She has lived in Sierra Vista for two years and is originally from Northern California. Katie is very interested in nature, as reflected by the large number of pets she has: two snakes, tarantulas, and a fish tank. She likes to roller skate.

In addition to the scholarship, Katie will be working on a few projects for the Friends during the coming year. One of these will be to develop articles related to her interests, school work, and the river.

Congratulations, Katie, on your scholarship. We are happy to help fund her schoolwork next year and know that Dutch would have been thrilled. We look forward to interacting with her more.

National Public Lands Day Event at Murray Springs

By Renell Stewart

FSPR collaborated with the BLM to stage a National Public Lands Day (NPLD) event at the Murray Springs Clovis Culture site on November 6. In attendance were SPRNCA Park Ranger Jody Barker; San Pedro House site host Pat Jacobsen; FSPR Board members Robert Weissler, Renell Stewart, and Jim Herrewig; FSPR docents Dwight and Chris Long; FSPR members Pam and Charlie Corrado, Paul Edwardson, and Vicki Hamblin; Las Cienegas site hosts Dennis and Carol Bierman; SPRNCA Adopt-a-Trail members Jay Hand, Janice Beam, and Susan Bortman; and perhaps most significantly, a contingent of 13 soldiers from the 111th MI Brigade at Fort Huachuca, led by Second Lieutenant Margaret Tutaj.

Park Ranger Jody initiated and spearheaded the project. He and Pat put in a lot of work ahead of time to ensure that the actual NPLD event went smoothly. Trails were groomed and trash was collected. The main effort focused on erecting a pergola at the end of the trail, where a rustic ramada used to stand. The former structure had rotted and fallen apart a few years ago. Everyone worked hard, but it was the muscle power of the soldiers and their can-do attitude that carried the day, especially moving heavy pergola parts down the trail, then erecting the structure.

An extra added attraction were Murray Springs docents Dwight and Chris. Dwight displayed his cultural docent table with Murray Springs information and artifact replicas. (One of the main uses of the new pergola area will be as a resting place and display table during Murray Springs history walks). The soldiers were very interested, but that interest grew to something more when Dwight brought out the atlatl (Native American spear thrower) and gave the soldiers a chance to propel darts around the parking lot. A great time was had by all attendees and Murray Springs received some much-needed attention.

(see photos on p. 4)
Outreach & Communication: A Vital Function

By Robert Weissler

Have you ever wondered how FSPR achieve its mission to bring awareness of the San Pedro River and its natural and cultural resources to the local community and public at large? It does not happen by magic, but rather through volunteer initiative, persistence, and commitment. We have many volunteers who help us in this regard, but there is one who I would like to recognize here, namely our Vice-President Ron Stewart. Ron has taken the initiative on several fronts to communicate through social media, news outlets, and interactive software applications.

Ron administers the FSPR Facebook page and manages the day-to-day presence of the Friends by posting timely stories and photographs of recent events and activities. He also responds quickly to comments on posts, questions about upcoming events, and concerns about conservation and advocacy issues.

Ron spends many hours taking photographs, researching and writing posts about river-related subjects, sharing related posts and events that might be of interest to our readers and prospective members, and responding to questions received through Facebook Private Messenger. It is easy to take these efforts for granted, as though they were achieved by some form of automation, but behind it all is a committed volunteer dedicated to the FSPR mission. And Facebook readers certainly enjoy the posts and photographs! Social media provides a powerful outreach vehicle, but only if it is attentively managed.

Ron also spends considerable time and effort on the monthly articles submitted to the Sierra Vista Herald. Besides identifying topics and engaging with potential authors, Ron researches and writes many of the articles himself. He also reviews articles and provides suggestions, corrections, and other comments prior to approval for publication and coordination with our office manager Carolyn Santucci, who submits them to the Herald.

In the realm of educational, interactive media, Ron has devoted numerous hours to further develop site-specific material for the Agents of Discovery app dealing with San Pedro House, Fairbank, and Murray Springs. Ron has written engaging question/answer dialogues highlighting the unique wildlife, habitats, and other resources and history within SPRNCA. He also iterated with the BLM and app developers to solve technical problems, not to mention contributed images for the app. The Agents of Discovery is viewed by BLM as an effective method to engage visitors to the river, with a focus on youth education.

So, thank you, Ron, for your contributions to this vital aspect of the Friends’ mission!
A Special Hooah Kind of Day at San Pedro House

By Ron Stewart

The soldiers stationed at Fort Huachuca are valued members of the local community. Their vitality and can-do attitude enliven anything they get involved with. There is a long history of military folks volunteering to help with projects in SPRNCA. Not only do we appreciate their help, but we also cherish the opportunity to interact with these great young men and women who do so much for all of us at the cost of great personal sacrifice.

On June 13, members of the Student Hold Company from the 111th MI Brigade took on the task of cleaning up the San Pedro River near San Pedro House and also the Charleston Road Bridge.

A group of 60 soldiers—on their day off, mind you—arrived at SPH at 8:30 am. There, they ate breakfast and received a safety briefing. FSPR Treasurer Renell Stewart gave a short talk on the history, natural resources, and recreational opportunities of the area. Captain Joshua Ruth and First Sergeant Kevin Johnson explained the mission and gave the soldiers their assignments.

Then, the soldiers got to work. Half headed to the river near San Pedro House, while the remainder loaded transport and went to the Charleston Road Bridge. The area by the bridge receives heavy use. The mission: police the area. By mid-day, they had filled the dumpster at San Pedro House with trash. This was on a hot, sunny day. As soldiers, they assured us it was no big deal, but color us impressed. The river is looking good thanks to their efforts.

We want to thank the soldiers who came out, their leadership, and all involved. Special thanks go to the unit’s commander, Captain Ruth. This was his idea, inspired by time that he has spent along the river enjoying its beauty. First Sergeant Johnson and maybe most of all his wife Melissa were the movers and shakers. Melissa and FSPR Operations Committee chief Renell Stewart coordinated all details and last-minute snags.

Well, at the risk of gushing, this was a special day for us. The soldiers in this group are at Fort Huachuca for training. They are far from home, often without transportation to leave post very often. We hope they enjoyed their day at the river, even if we put them to work.
Verde Valley School Visit

By Ron Stewart

Students and teachers from the Verde Valley School in Sedona came to visit Southeast Arizona in October. With permission from BLM, the group camped at Fairbank for a few days.

I led a tour of the old town and talked about Fairbank in its heyday, when it was the railroad hub for silver ore mined in Tombstone. Chris Schrager, BLM’s archaeologist, arranged for the students to perform some small preservation projects in and around Fairbank.

After visiting SPRNCA, the group moved on to the Wonderland of Rocks in the Chiricahua Mountains for a few more days of camping and learning about the geology and environment of the Chiricahuas. Students also worked on historic preservation projects at Camp Rucker.

We enjoyed meeting the students and their teacher, Beth Suby, a Cochise County native. It was a good experience for everyone.

Fairbank Reunion Held

By Ron Stewart

The Lindley and Darnell families held a reunion picnic at Fairbank on November 6. FSPR docent Merle Kilpatrick gave them a talk on the history of the area.

Robert Darnell, who grew up in Fairbank in the 1930s and 40s, was there to share some of the Fairbank historical items he owns. It was entertaining to watch Robert looking through a collection of photos that the Friends have of Fairbank and finding one of him with his brother and sister! His sister Frances Goodman, now deceased, was a long-term resident and teacher at Saint David. She was a fixture at Fairbank reunions and was missed at this event.

Robert Darnell reviewing old photos of Fairbank. Photo by Merle Kilpatrick.
175-Year Maintenance

By Ron Stewart

The Mormon Battalion marched through Cochise County in 1846 on its way from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to San Diego, California. While it fought no military battles, the troops did have to fend off an attack by wild cattle in our area along the San Pedro River, known forever as “The Battle of the Bulls.” You may have seen the white cement markers along the river that commemorate this march.

A private group sponsored a 9-mile hike from Charleston Road Bridge to Fairbank attended by about 40 people on December 11, to mark 175 years since the bulls attacked the Mormon Battalion somewhere near Fairbank. In preparation for the event, a group of volunteers and BLM employees met at the Charleston Bridge parking area to restore the commemorative marker there. They picked up trash, cut down brush around the marker, repainted it, and got the place ready for company. We want to recognize those who we know helped out. The list starts with SPRNCA Park Ranger Jody Barker, Jim Herrewig, Dennis and Carol Bierman, Allan Nyiri, Pat Jacobsen, Jay Hand, Lee Henney, Dave Barnhill, Ann (unknown last name), and four-footed helpers Max and Lucy.

(Left) From left: John Hancock (in enlisted uniform), Randy Madsen (in officers’ uniform), and event organizer Dave Barnhill. (Right) Restored marker. Photos by Carolyn Santucci.

Not familiar with the Mormon Battalion? Here is an overview.

» It started 175 years ago in 1846, with the commencement of the Mexican-American War. At that time, the US military was small and new units were recruited rapidly to prosecute the war, most by the states. A number were formed in the western edge of US territory.

» An Army unit was recruited among the Mormon settlements near Council Bluffs, Iowa. Mormons had arrived there recently, fleeing persecution in Illinois. At first, the Mormons were skeptical. How could they trust a government that had failed to protect them?

» Army representatives were able to gain the support of Latter Day Saints President Brigham Young. Young’s plans for the migration to Utah were indirectly supported by the Army’s proposal.

(continued on p. 8)
Around 540 Mormon men enlisted for a 1-year term. They were formed into the "Mormon Battalion," the only religious unit ever recruited into the US Army. They served from July 1846 until July 1847. A number of Mormon women and children accompanied the troops.

They were assigned to Brigadier General Kearny's Army of the West, which had the responsibility of traveling overland to California to subdue the northern part of Mexico, including California. The Mormon Battalion marched 2,080 miles from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego.

Here are some additional facts about the Battalion:

- The unit was led by US Army Lieutenant Colonel Philip St George Cook and five Mormon company commanders.
- It was guided by Jean Baptiste Charbenneau, who had traveled as an infant with his mother Sacajawea on the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
- The Battalion peacefully captured Tucson on December 16, 1846, narrowly avoiding conflict with the Mexican garrison.
- The O’odham they encountered in Southern Arizona were helpful to the Battalion. Irrigation techniques the Mormon soldiers encountered there were later used in Utah.
- A detachment escorted General Kearny back East and along the way encountered the aftermath of the Donner Party.
- One hundred of the discharged veterans were working at Sutter’s Mill near Sacramento when gold was discovered in 1848. They brought $17,000 in gold back to the LDS Church.
- Once they reached California, they garrisoned the newly conquered area and helped establish a permanent military presence. A number of the Battalion's members reenlisted for an additional 6 months.
- In 1877, several veterans of the march returned to help found St. David, Arizona.

The Mormon Battalion set the stage for the Mormon migration to Utah that started in 1847. Its recruits gained valuable knowledge. Some of its veterans scouted routes across the mountains. They were already in the area when the Mormon migration began later that year. Perhaps most significantly, the money earned by the soldiers, donated to the Church, helped finance the migration to Utah. There are monuments scattered along the 2,000-mile route of the Battalion's march. Events to mark the 175th anniversary are scheduled locally, in Tucson, and elsewhere.

The Passing of Erick Campbell

By Jim Herrewig

I am saddened to report the passing of Erick G. Campbell, the first BLM Project Manager on the San Pedro River. Prior to becoming the project manager in 1986, Erick had been a wildlife biologist in the BLM Safford District Office. Before that, he had worked for BLM in Redding (CA), Winnemucca and Elko (NV), and Spokane (WA). Erick held Bachelor and Master’s degrees in wildlife management from Humboldt State University in Arcata, CA.

From his very first days as San Pedro River project manager, Erick was an enthusiastic advocate for and supporter of all efforts to preserve and protect the numerous natural and historic resources along the river. Erick always made an effort to include local communities in the initial BLM planning for the river.

When he was approached with the idea of a local Friends group being created to support BLM efforts on the river, he quickly became a supporter. Erick knew of a Friends group that had been organized on BLM lands in Nevada, so he connected the organizer here with the Nevada group. The lessons they learned helped make the beginnings of the Friends of the San Pedro River a smooth process.

(continued on p. 9)

- 8 -
When FSPR began the first restoration of San Pedro House in 1987-8, it was with Erick’s full support. If someone said “I don’t think they can...or...that may not work,” Erick was always the first to say “Yes, they can...or...we’ll figure out how to make it work.” He would not let bureaucracy stand in the way of the Friends’ efforts to restore SPH. And any time work was being done on the house, you could count on Erick being there, providing encouragement to the volunteers and joining in to do many of the tasks...painting walls...sanding floors...himself.

Erick was very proud that his work on the San Pedro River led to the creation of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area in 1988. Long after Erick's BLM career took him from Arizona, he continued to care about the San Pedro River. He would often be in contact to see if the bulrushes had returned to the river’s edges...if the big trees were still standing by San Pedro House...and how the BLM plans were being implemented.

Erick is survived by his sisters Jan and Karin, his sons Colin and Lars, former partner Amy, granddaughter Emily, other family members, and many friends. He will be missed.

---

Christmas Along the San Pedro

By Betty Foster Escapule & Chris Long

At this time of year, we all like to look back at the times of our childhood. We reminisce about all those “Christmas past” times that we remember from our youth. Somehow, the winters always seem to have been colder, the snow deeper, the Christmas trees larger, the stack of presents bigger (or in many cases smaller because of family circumstances), and the glow of Christmas brighter and more spiritual.

Betty Foster Escapule spent much of her childhood at what is now the San Pedro House. Located in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area near the junction of Highway 90 and the San Pedro River, it is now an information center, museum, gift shop, and bookstore operated by the Friends of the San Pedro River. But, when Betty was growing up, it was part of a large cattle ranch owned by the Boquillas Land and Cattle Co.
This Christmas story took place in 1947. The Second World War was over, but the country was still recovering. People across the country were transitioning from the wartime economy to one where consumer goods were just coming back on the market. In Cochise County, the winter was cold and snowy. Betty’s family and families across the country made do and enjoyed the simple things. Here, in Betty’s own words, is a story for all of us.

“My twin brother Bailey and I were nine when we moved back to the San Pedro House and the youngest in the family. With Christmas approaching, Dad called us kids together and told us we were getting too old for a Christmas tree. Then he asked for our opinion. Of course, we all agreed with him so he didn’t buy a tree when he went to Fry.

That night while the four of us kids were sitting around the table in the living room and Dad and Mom were in their room, we discussed the matter of the Christmas tree. None of us were ready for Christmas without a tree.

The boys said they knew where a lone cedar tree was growing about a quarter of a mile from the house up on the black brush hills. This was the only cedar tree in the area. So it was decided that my brothers Sammy and Bailey would chop it down and carry it home. My sister Mary and I would slip out of the house and bring in the big box of decorations from the garage. It was moonlight, so none of us needed a lantern.

When the boys returned with the cedar tree, Mary and I had the decorations ready. The boys made a stand for the tree and we all decorated it. Then we went to bed pleased that we hadn’t been discovered.

When Dad got up the next morning and saw the tree, he was truly surprised. He felt so bad for not getting us a tree. We didn’t want him to feel bad but we were proud of our accomplishment. After that Dad always brought home a Christmas tree.”

You can read more about this era of ranching, Cochise County, and Betty’s life in her book *The Five Fosters*. To get the real feeling of Christmas along the San Pedro, stop by San Pedro House. You will understand how difficult it must have been for Betty and her siblings to keep the tree a secret. The house is small. It has just four rooms. So, Dad and Mom were sleeping only a plaster wall away. Imagine the children sneaking out the back porch, silently hauling in the tree and boxes of ornaments, tiptoeing about trying to keep each other quiet and giggling while they decorated the tree, and sneaking off to bed when they were done.

[A note from FSPR: Due to the current COVID pandemic situation, the present-day San Pedro House is closed to the public. But when we open again (that will depend on public health guidelines), it is a great place to shop. Buy a copy of Betty’s book or browse the other nature-related books, children’s books, toys, and other gifts. In anticipation of reopening, we have lots of new merchandise. We have used the closure as a chance to renew and refurbish SPH itself. We have refinished the floors, brightened up the woodwork, and painted all the walls. It looks as if you could move in tomorrow! Even though SPH is closed, stop by for a stroll by the river, take a photo of the majestic cottonwood tree, check off a bird or two on your life list, or just sit on a bench and enjoy the view. The grounds are open from sunup to sundown. Happy holidays and we hope to see you soon!]

San Pedro House in winter. Photo by Bob Hermann.
New & Renewing Members, November 2020-November 2021


* = New member

Contact List

- President—Robert Weissler
- Vice-President—Ron Stewart
- Treasurer—Renell Stewart
- Secretary—Sally Rosén
- Directors—Jim Herrewig, Robert Luce, Steve Ogle, Sally Rosén, Renell Stewart, Ron Stewart, Linda Stitt, Robert Weissler
- Docent Activities—Ron Stewart
- Education—John Rose
- Membership—Carolyn Santucci
- Newsletter Editor—Sue Leskiw
- Office Manager—Carolyn Santucci
- Bookstore Manager—Laura Mackin

To contact any of the above individuals, please call the office at 520-459-2555 or send us e-mail at fspr@sanpedroriver.org or sanpedrohouse@sanpedroriver.org.

Mailing address: 9800 East Highway 90, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635; Website: www.sanpedroriver.org

Friends of the San Pedro River (FSPR) is a nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to the conservation of the River and the health of its ecosystems through advocacy, educational programs, and interpretive events.
Friends of the San Pedro River
9800 East Highway 90
Sierra Vista AZ 85635