

Friends of the San Pedro River

River Roundup Winter 2023/Spring 2024

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The San Pedro River near Fairbank, June 3rd, 2023, photo by Ron Stewart

This Newsletter is produced by the Board of Directors of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area for its members. All questions should be directed to fspr@sanpedroriver.org.
Like to write something for the next newsletter? Let us know.

President's Report

Robert Weissler, President, FSPR

A milestone was reached in June when Laura Mackin, the San Pedro House bookstore manager, retired after 21 years of service. A farewell ceremony was held in early July to honor Laura's dedication to the Friends. During her tenure, Laura took responsibility for virtually all operations there, not just retail sales, including volunteer coordination, event preparation, and serving as a point of contact for the Bureau of Land Management, Tucson Field Office and San Pedro Project Office, among her many roles. Fortunately for the Friends, we hired Sierra Delgado to replace Laura and carry on the tradition down at San Pedro House. Sierra was thrown straight into our migration from QuickBooks Point of Sale, retail software/hardware that has reached its end of life, to Shopify POS, a modern tablet-based solution that connects with merchant services in the cloud. That migration has gone smoothly indeed!

In April, the Bureau of Land Management reported that local ranchers removed 57 cows and bulls along with 22 calves from the vicinity of the river during a "cattle gather." FSPR continues to monitor trespass cattle in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.

The results of the recent board election: Renell Stewart, Sally Rosen, and I were reelected to the board. Also, the FSPR bylaws revisions passed. At the recent FSPR Board of Directors meeting held at San Pedro House, the new slate of officers for FY 2024 was elected: Ron Stewart will serve as the new Board President, Joanne Roberts was elected as Vice-President, while Renell Stewart was re-elected as Treasurer and Sally Rosén was re-elected as Secretary. The board also appointed Louise Wilkinson to fill the vacant board seat (Mary Ann Ambrose stepped down from the board for personal reasons).

Time Marches On

Ron Stewart, President, FSPR

Coming in as his successor, I have come to appreciate the legacy former President Robert Weissler and his predecessors left us to build on. Let's talk about that and then I want to share some of my ideas.

Robert has supported the Friends while serving in several capacities: board member, Executive Director, President, and now board member again. After multiple terms as President, he stepped down in October. Everywhere you look in the world of the Friends, you will see Robert's work. He set up our web page and social media. He established the Google-based automation environment that we use to track members, keep records, and meet regulatory requirements. He carried on and enhanced our basic operations.



Former FSPR President Robert Weissler

Robert built on the work of many other fine leaders. Len Roberts was our first President in 1988. Len led us through a difficult time of establishment of the organization and then restoration of the San Pedro House. Dot Rhodes was the next President. Important tasks for Dot

were to get a store going in the San Pedro House and to establish a docent program. She grew the organization and set it down the path we are still following.

Jim Varga became the third President in 1990. A focus during his tenure was trail improvement at Murray Springs and elsewhere. Dot Rhodes returned as president in 1992 and continued in that role until 1995. She was eventually replaced by Todd Doser. And so it went, as outstanding individuals stepped forward to take on leadership roles. Recent Presidents have included Dutch Nagle, Chris Long, Ron Serviss, and Tom Wood. Each brought renewed energy and priorities.

Having served multiple terms as Vice President, it's now my turn. My main goal is to help the Friends of the San Pedro River continue its success as a non-profit, working to garner public support for the SPRNCA, and work with the BLM to ensure its precious resources are conserved and enhanced. An area of emphasis for me is to reestablish some of the activities that withered during the pandemic. This started with our annual meeting, held at Gray Hawk Ranch, which attracted many of you. We will follow up with at least three members-only events during the year to build more of a feeling of community within the Friends and to grow our membership. We are working to renew and document our relationship with our partners in the BLM. We will hold a Celebrate the San Pedro public event this spring on April 27th, you will hear more about that soon. Finally, a goal for me is to move some of our docent-led walks to additional sites within the SPRNCA.

Have ideas? Things you would like FSPR to do? Send me a note at Quiburi@icloud.com. I am anxious to hear from you.

FSPR Annual Membership Meeting

By Ron Stewart, FSPR President

On Saturday, October 28, 2023, the Friends membership gathered to hear a report on how the organization had done this past year and to enjoy each other's company. We chose the Gray Hawk Nature Center as the location. It is run by our dear friend Sandy Anderson former head of the FSPR docent program. We shared information, lunch, and a great experience.

The day started at 8:30 with a birdwatching walk led by our FSPR Board President Robert Weissler. At 9:30, Sandy led a nature walk around her Ranch and adjacent SPRNCA lands. Sandy's incredible depth of knowledge makes these walks a great experience. Following the walks, we held our annual membership meeting. Robert announced the election results, gave an overview of the year's events, and passed out volunteer gift certificates. We were thrilled to meet so many new members. New President Ron Stewart spoke briefly to acknowledge people present at the meeting who have been important to the Friends and to offer the organization's thanks to Robert Weissler, who is ending his time as President.



Nature Walk, part of our Annual Meeting at the Gray Hawk Ranch

Then came Sandy and her critters. An Australian skink. A Gila monster. And snakes, so many snakes: diamondback, Mojave, speckled, and tiger rattlesnakes; corn snakes; gopher snakes; boas, and others. Some people got up close. Others hung back. Many held the non-venomous snakes.



Monster of the Gila



Blacktailed Rattlesnake

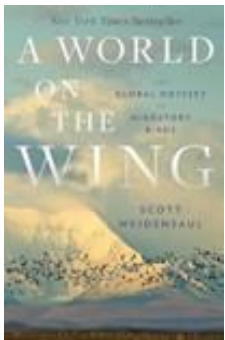


Jane Chambers, an original FSPR board member and natural history docent, enjoying corn snakes with her grandchildren

Many thanks to Sandy for hosting this event, as well as to Board members and staff for their support in planning it. Thinking ahead to our next Annual Meeting, to be held in October, 2024, we'd like to have your suggestions for possible locations and activities. Please email your ideas to fspr@sanpedroriver.org.

Check Out the Good Reads at the Nature Store

By Linda Stitt, FSPR Board Member



If you haven't visited the Nature Store at San Pedro House, you're going to be surprised by the quality and variety of books available for sale. One book in particular is appropriate to peruse before this year's bird migration event on the SPRNCA. That book is *A World on the Wing* by Scott Weidensaul. This book was a New York Times Bestseller, a finalist in the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and a Library Journal Best Science and Technology Book of the Year.

An exhaustive study of everything we have learned about migration, this book starts on the mudflats of the Yellow Sea in China and ends in the tundra in Alaska. It examines every aspect of how birds can endure the hardship of migration, including flying over the highest mountains, flying over huge oceans for months at a time without resting and flying long distances without stopping for food or water.

There is a considerable amount of research in this book, much of it recent. Some of the writing is highly technical which makes the reading a bit slower, but ultimately worth the effort. And, of course, there is information on the challenges of migration outside of the trip itself, like cultural practices, climate change and other environmental problems.

The writing in this book is exceptional. As an example, be sure to read the Epilogue. If anyone has ever asked you why you enjoy watching birds, send them to the last line of the epilogue, written after the author finally located a few birds banded previously and was asked what he felt. His response

was, “Reverence that this tiny bird and billions like him follow some ancient instinct and knit together the scattered and beleaguered wild places left on earth all through the simple act of flight.”

San Pedro House Xeriscape Garden Education Outreach

Joanne M. Roberts, FSPR Vice President

The Friends of the San Pedro River hosted its second low water gardening class for beginner adult gardeners in the xeriscape gardens at the San Pedro House on October 14, 2023. The first class, held in May of 2023, focused on using drought tolerant native plants and water conservation techniques and stressed the importance of these xeriscape landscaping techniques to the conservation of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA).

Our October class introduced the students to the Global Migratory Day theme of “Water Sustains Life” while highlighting winterizing plants and their watering needs, how to prepare their backyards to sustain birds through the coldest months in southeast Arizona, and the importance of water conservation in the watershed for the protection of the SPRNCA. Both classes were well received. Based on the student evaluations 95% of the students were very satisfied with the quality of topics, speakers, and demonstrations. The same number of students stated they would attend the same or similar classes in future.



Lori Kovash, Master Gardener and SPH garden volunteer, demonstrates where a tree's drip line would be using an umbrella as the tree's crown. Photo credit Joanne Roberts

A huge shout out goes to The Fort Huachuca Community Thrift Shop for providing the Friends with a generous grant that allowed each of the October class participants to receive a live native plant to take home to nurture through the winter then hopefully transplant in their home gardens next spring. Thank you to Rodney, Dianna and all the members of the Thrift Shop Grant Committee.

A second shout out goes to our local Ace Hardware Garden and Plant Nursery for their generous gift card donation for each student in our May class. Thank you, Kathy, for supporting

the Friends Board on our first adult educational outreach class post-pandemic.



Pruning demonstration at xeriscape garden. Photo credit Joanne Roberts

Finally, we want to thank the Friends staff, docents, and volunteer team. Without their energy and dedication events like these cannot take place. Thank you!

Members of both classes received native plant seeds to begin or add to their home gardens. Some of the seeds were harvested from the milkweed and pollinator garden at the San Pedro House, giving the students a chance to hone their plant-by-seed skills. Seeds are harvested by the Friends xeriscape garden volunteers for re-use in the San Pedro House gardens.

The Friends are looking forward to future events that remain unique and continue to reinforce the Friends' mission while welcoming new members and volunteers and educating our community on the uniqueness of the SPRNCA.

San Pedro House Gardens Workday, November 8th, 2023

By Ron Stewart, FSPR President



*Havoc Company Volunteers.
Photo credit Carolyn Santucci*

Many hands made light work of a successful workday in the gardens around the San Pedro House. Our intrepid volunteer gardeners and BLM site host Pat Jacobs were supported by a group from Havoc Company of the 111th MI Brigade from the Intel School on Fort Huachuca. Work centered on raking leaves, clearing weeds, moving rocks, trimming trees, and laying weed fabric and gravel.

Thirty-eight soldiers volunteered their time and sweat to help us. We are so grateful to Company Commander, CPT Jack Lee, and all the great men and women of Havoc Company. This is the latest chapter in the long story of partnership between the Friends, the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, and Fort Huachuca. We consistently hear that the soldiers enjoy their time helping us and not only do we appreciate their help, but we also enjoy their company.

We also want to thank Friends volunteers Joanne Roberts, who planned this event, Ted Mouras, Lori Kovash, John Rose, Louise Wilkinson, and Bill Walker for their work. Renell Stewart, Linda Stitt, Kirk Stitt, Carolyn Santucci, and Sierra Delgado also helped. Why not come out to the San Pedro House to see the results? You can stop in the house to learn about the SPRNCA, shop for gifts, and then take a walk, short or long, along the San Pedro River. See you there!

Tucson Mission Gardens Volunteers Visit the SPRNCA

by Carolyn Santucci, FSPR Office Manager

A request by a docent from Tucson Mission Gardens for a guided tour of Murray Springs turned into an all-day visit to not only Murray Springs, but also the gardens at the San Pedro House and a walk to the river, with lunch at a local restaurant after the Murray Springs tour to give the participants energy for the San Pedro House visit.

The group met Murray Springs docents Dwight and Chris Long at 10 a.m. on December 19. Dwight handed out maps, diagrams, and other information about the Clovis site and demonstrated the use of an atlatl (a spear thrower used by early native Americans to increase the range and velocity of a weapon). Following the trail to the site of the 1970s excavation where Dr. Vance Haynes found the remains of mammoth and a campsite of the Clovis people, the participants learned what life was like along the San Pedro 13,000 years ago.

After lunch FSPR Board members Joanne Roberts and Louise Wilkinson showed off the xeriscape gardens around the San Pedro House, handed out information packets, and then led the group to the river. Along the way Joanne and Louise discussed the purpose of the Friends, which is to educate the public about the importance of the river as well as on-going efforts to conserve not only the river, but the many cultural and historical sites within the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. And for the grand finale, the group paid a visit to the San Pedro House and indulged in some retail therapy!



A beautiful day for a walk along the river. Photo credit Bonnie Bray, Tucson Mission Gardens volunteer

Thanks to everyone who helped make this visit a memorable one for the volunteers from the Tucson Mission Gardens!

National Public Lands Day Project in the SPRNCA

by Renell Stewart, FSPR Board Member

The 2023 SPRNCA National Public Lands Day was held October 21 at the Little Boquillas corrals. The goal was to clear vegetation around the historic structure and then apply paint to preserve the wooden rails.



*Southwest Gas Volunteers
Photo credit Renell Stewart*

Prior to the event, Tom Sayers of the Southwest Gas company reached out to the Friends of San Pedro River inquiring about volunteer opportunities, part of the company's community outreach. Renell Stewart (FSPR) and Jody Barker (BLM) came up with the idea of working to preserve the Little Boquillas corrals and coordinated with Tom to work out the details.

There were two phases to the project. Vegetation around the corral had to be cleared before it could be painted. This was accomplished in the weeks before the event by Fairbank site hosts Dennis and Carol Bierman, Lynn Mattingly and the Adopt-A-Trail team, and BLM staff. On the actual workday, a crew of Southwest Gas employees came to Fairbank with sprayers to paint the front part of the corrals. The paint will help seal and protect the wood.

At the end of the day efforts from all these people enabled this effort to help preserve a cultural treasure of the SPRNCA. Southwest Gas employees volunteered their time and the company provided equipment and funds for the paint and supplies.



*Looking good!!
Photo credit Renell Stewart*

Shout-outs go out to:

Southwest Gas Company (BIG thanks!)

Tom Sayers and other volunteers - Southwest Gas

Renell Stewart - FSPR
Jody Barker - BLM
Robert Walter- BLM
Dennis and Carol Bierman - BLM Fairbank site hosts
Mark Witzens - BLM
Carolyn Santucci - FSPR
Lynn Mattingly - BLM Adopt-A-Trail program
BLM Tucson Field Office Management

FSPR Photo Contest, 2023: A Year on the River

By Carolyn Santucci, FSPR Office Manager

Through the FSPR Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/fspraz>), photographers were asked to submit photos taken within the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area in the categories of “Flora and Fauna” and “Scenery”. A panel of judges picked the first-place photos submitted in each category and the winners received a \$100 gift certificate at the San Pedro House Nature Store. Seventy-two photos were received, making the final selection of the winner in each category a challenge. We are adding the winning photos here for you to enjoy.

Also on our Facebook page, we asked for donations to fund prizes for the 2024 photo contest. For this year, we are adding a new category, “Historic Sites”, so there will be three cash prizes of \$100 each. We exceeded our goal of \$300! We want to thank everyone who contributed to this fundraiser. Any extra funds raised will go to support our docent program of free history, nature, and birding walks in the SPRNCA.



Kestrel, by Gary Smith. Winner in the Flora and Fauna category



Reflections on the San Pedro, David Day, winner of Scenery



Splish, Becky Kelher - Honorable Mention



Cactus Wren - Our State Bird, Renee Goodhue - Honorable Mention



*Abandoned RR Bridge Near Fairbank,
Clyde Raines – Honorable Mention*



Open Wide! Sheila Foraker - Honorable Mention



*From the Old Charleston Bridge, Mark Siarto
– Honorable Mention*

New and Renewing Members of the Friends of the San Pedro River

Joe Altimus & Molly Molloy, Kathe Anderson*, Nicholas Athanas, Sharon Baron, Richard Bauer, Virginia Bealer, Ann Blatte*, Carmen Brady*, Isabella Burkhart, June Campbell, Shirley Campbell, Wendy Campbell*, Laura Cardinal*, Jered Cargman*, Richard Carlsen, Patricia Carlson, Ken & Christi Charters, Cinda Combs*, Barbara Cottrell*, Jeffry & Tina Cox*, Douglas & Natalie Danforth, Jan & Christy Davids, Barbara Davidson, Tom Deecken, Kathy & John DeKeizer, Pat & Bruce Dillingham, Catherine Dunn & Thaddeus Paprocki, Tina Eden, Elaine & Mel Emeigh, George & Sandi Fizell, Allen Fowler*, Tim & Linda Gallacher*, Linda Gantly*, Paula & Charles Gordon, Pam Griffin & Donald Lukes, Patsy Hansel, Mark Hansen, Myrna Harris*, Gwen Harvey*, Dave Heck, Robyn Heffelfinger, Peter Herstein, Ken & Sandy Heusman, Francie Hills, Barbara Huft*, Hank & Peter Huisking, Susan Husband, Ronald Hyde*, Thomas & Dale Ireson, Steve Johnson, Peter Kadrach, Laurie Kagann, Merle Kilpatrick, Rosemary King, Kevin & Irene Komandina*, Beth Krueger*, LaFargue, Gabrielle, Melanie Lawrence*, Kenneth & Linda Lawson, Theresa & John Lawson, Tom & Sue Leskiw, DeForest Lewis, Robert Luce, Helen Lyons*, John Maier, Bonnie Main*, Rick Marsi, Karin Mayes, Bob Mayor, Joyce & Jim McBee*, Susan McBee*, Gary & Gretchen Michaels, Alice Moffitt, Kyle Molloy*, Deborah Moyer, Charles Mullany, Amy Naron*, Jay Nenninger, Gary Noonan, Alan Nyiri & Angela Brill, Stephen Ogle, Jeroen Oomen, George & Jill Paul, Joe Payne, Roger Peet*, Judy Phillips, Douglas & Sue Polenz, Karen Ratte, Matt Reed, Diane Reisinger, Doug & Elaine Ripley, Joanne Roberts, Scott Ribonsin, Mary Rogers & Jim Havlena, Regina Rutledge, Susana Sanders*, Emily Schroeder, Tom & Judy Shepherd, Pete Siminski, David Singleton, Doug Snow, Anke & Herbert Staffenski, David Steed & Anne Morris, Robin Steinberg, Stephanie Stephenson, Iacob Stoita*, Tom & Carol Sykes, Barbara Szoke, Rick Tello, Mary & Scott Tillman, Judith Visty, Susan Vrtis & Raymond Younger*, David Waller*, Dianne & Thomas Wartman*, Russell & Julitta Watson, Robert & Liza Weissler, Laura White*, Robert

White, Stephen & Lauvon White, William Walker, Erika Wilson, Linda Wilson*, Arthur Wohlers, Connie Wolcott, Jerome Wolfe & Vicki Hamblin, Steve Yost*, Brenda Zaun, Virginia Zuelow **new members*

Lifetime Members

Chris and Gretchen Bachman, Anne Isbister & Christopher Ballog, Ron Beck, Verna Berry, Dean Bibles, Laura Cardinal, David Carlstrom, Jane Chambers, Debbie Collazo, Jan & Christy Davids, Stephen Deatrick, Nancy Docherty, David Dross, Bette Ford, Tricia Gerrodette, Myrna Harris, Ann Hartfiel, Joan Haufflin, C. Vance Haynes, Steve Hazen, Jim Herrewig, Tug Kellough, John Largay, Brandon Lloyd, Dwight Long, Judah MacCabee, Mary Roger, Ronald Mauk, Arthur Norcross, Mary Olinger, Helen Patterson, Nancy Mocroft & David Paulson, Dot Rhodes, Leonard Roberts, Carol Roche, Sally Rosén, Renell and Ron Stewart, Natalie Sudman, Doris Turner, Susie Walker, John Wallin, Jann Weiss, Claire Weissler, Mike Doyen and Louise Wilkinson

FSPR Board of Directors and Staff List

President—Ron Stewart • Vice-President—Joanne Roberts • Treasurer—Renell Stewart • Secretary—Sally Rosén • Directors—Linda Stitt, Bob Luce, Louise Wilkinson, Jim Herrewig • Office Manager—Carolyn Santucci • Bookstore Manager—Sierra Delgado

To contact any of the above individuals, please call the office at 520-459-2555 or email fspr@sanpedroriver.org