

Sonoran Joint Venture

binationa**l** bird conservation



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Sonoran Joint Venture in the news

The Sonoran Joint Venture has been making headlines in the past month with a front page article in **Winging It**, the newsletter of the American Birding Association. The article looks at the use of ecotourism as a conservation tool and highlights the work of three SJV partners conducting projects in Sonora: the Sonoran Institute (Santa Cruz River), Pronatura Noroeste (Colorado River delta), and Proyecto Corredor Colibri (San Pedro River). If you would like to receive a copy of the article, contact [Jennie Duberstein](#), SJV Education and Outreach Coordinator.



Bird deaths cost PD over \$1M, Bad water blamed; copper producer admits violating law

Excerpted from article by Mitch Tobin, Arizona Daily Star

Dozens of migratory birds died after drinking acidic water at Phelps Dodge's Morenci copper mine from 2000 to 2003, leading the company to plead guilty to violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Besides paying more than \$100,000 in fines and other fees, the Phoenix-based copper giant is spending more than \$1 million to scare away birds with noisemakers and fake peregrine falcons.

The dead birds apparently drank from storm water that collected in the tailings area, or from a copper-bearing solution leached from crushed ore, said Ken Vaughn, a Phelps Dodge spokesman.

To develop preventive measures, Phelps Dodge consulted with the St. Louis-based World Bird Sanctuary. At the mine, crews monitor the water sources by day and scare off the birds with "bangers and screamers" that are similar to fireworks. Nearby, an automated propane cannon fires off rounds. The company has also provided alternate, clean water sources for the birds.

Under terms of the plea agreement, Phelps Dodge agreed to pay the maximum fine of \$15,000 for one count of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. They will also donate \$10,000 to one or more federally licensed bird rehabilitators for care of sick and injured birds and will spend at least \$80,000 to fund studies of creating or improving migratory bird habitat in the region.

In June, Phelps Dodge agreed to pay a \$1.4 million fine for a raft of air-quality violations at its Sierrita mine west of Green Valley. Between 1994 and 1999, the company illegally discharged more than 1,000 tons of the pollutant sulfur dioxide, the Environmental Protection Agency found.



SJV Education and Outreach Committee forming

The Sonoran Joint Venture continues to move forward with the development of its Communications, Education, and Outreach program with the formation of an Education and Outreach Committee. This small group will work with the Education and Outreach Coordinator to provide expertise, direction, and feedback. Committee members bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the table to help the SJV meet the needs of developing appropriate materials and programs for its diverse audience. If you are interested in participating on this committee, contact [Jennie Duberstein](#), SJV Education and Outreach Coordinator.

CRP Wetlands Restoration Initiative

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Wetlands Restoration Initiative aims to restore up to 250,000 acres of wetlands and playa lakes that are located outside of the 100-year floodplain. This initiative will further the large-scale accomplishments of CRP, which, as of July 2004, had restored 1.8 million wetland and wetland buffer acres nationwide.

The allotted acreage for SJV region states is as follows:

- ◆ Arizona: 100 acres
- ◆ California: 1,000 acres
- ◆ Nevada: 100 acres

FSA estimates the program will provide \$200 million in payments to participants through 2007. To determine eligibility for the initiative, landowners should check with their local FSA office. Program sign-up will begin 1 October 2004 and will run on a continuous basis until

250,000 acres have been enrolled or 31 December 2007, whichever comes first. For more details, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Funding available through Livestock and Crop Conservation Grant Program (LCCGP)

A total of \$2 million/year is appropriated to the Arizona Department of Agriculture (AZDAG) for the exclusive purpose of granting money to individual landowners and grazing and agricultural lessees of state or federal land who contract with the AZDAG to implement conservation based management alternatives using livestock or crop production practices, or reduce livestock or crop production, to provide wildlife habitat or other public benefits that preserve open space.

For more information, contact Kathleen Ryan at 602-542-4494.

Black-tailed prairie dog not Endangered or Threatened

On 12 August 2004 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released an announcement that a reexamination of the data showed that the black-tailed prairie dog is not likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future and no longer meets the Endangered Species Act definition of Threatened. This decision removes the black-tailed prairie dog as a candidate for listing under the Act.

New scientific evidence shows that the sylvatic plague, chemical control, and other factors do not impact prairie dog populations as dramatically as was previously thought. More thorough monitoring and research has also provided more accurate population estimates: in 2000, prairie dogs were estimated to occupy 676,000 acres in the United States.

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More recent surveys put this number at 1,842,000 occupied acres, with an estimated 18,420,000 individuals.

New information also shows that the black-tailed prairie dog is more able to persist over time in light of ongoing impacts. The increase in the Service's knowledge of additional occupied habitat played a supporting role in the decision to remove the species from the candidate list.

During the past few years some States and Tribes have made substantial progress in initiating management efforts for the black-tailed prairie dog, including completing surveys to provide more accurate estimates of occupied habitat. Additional activities included drafting management plans, enacting laws that change the status of the species from pest to a designation that recognizes the need for special management, establishing regulations that allow for better management of recreational shooting, and setting future goals for occupied habitat that will address population management needs for disease and other threats.

The black-tailed prairie dog is a keystone species for the shortgrass prairie and dog towns provide habitat for birds including Burrowing Owl, Mountain Plover, and Ferruginous Hawk, among many others.

To learn more about the black-tailed prairie dog, visit mountain-prairie.fws.gov/btprairiedog/.

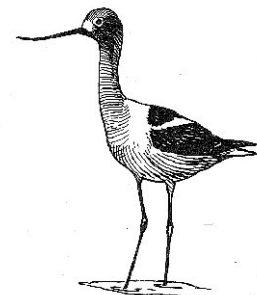
Sonoran Institute, Los Halcones publish "Nuestras Aves del Río Santa Cruz"

Los Halcones is a group of young people from the community of San Lázaro, located on the Santa Cruz River in Sonora, Mexico. This group of young people, formed by Alfonso González and Eduardo Gómez, has been conducting point counts along the Santa Cruz River in Sonora. Together, they have documented 183 species of birds to date. With the guidance of Gómez, Los Halcones have become experts on the birds of the Santa Cruz.

With funding from the Sonoran Joint Venture, the Sonoran Institute and Los Halcones have put together a pocket guide to the birds of the Santa Cruz, "Nuestras Aves del Río Santa Cruz." The full-color, Spanish language guide gives background information about Los Halcones, the Santa Cruz River, and the community of San Lázaro. It also provides fotos and natural history information for twelve of Los Halcones favorite bird species that one might observe at different times of year on the Santa Cruz.

Spanish language field guides are in short supply and this new resource will provide a much needed tool for those wishing to learn more about birds in the region. For more information or to request a copy of the field guide, contact Joaquin Murrieta at joaquin@sonoran.org.

To make a contribution to the SJV E-Newsletter, contact Jennie Duberstein, SJV Education and Outreach Coordinator. Next deadline is 15 October 2004.



American Avocet by Robert W. Hines/USFWS

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Arizona hosts Important Bird Areas meeting, discussion

The National Audubon society hosted the Fourth Important Bird Areas meeting in Sierra Vista, Arizona from 11-15 August 2004. The SJV was represented by Science Coordinator Carol Beardmore.



Double-crested Cormorant by Robert W. Hines/USFWS

The Important Bird Area program is a world-wide program to identify and designate areas that provide critical habitat to birds during some period of their life cycle. The SJV uses IBAs as part of our effort to locate "focus areas", or priority spots for supporting bird conservation work. California has just published a book on the state's designated IBAs and Arizona is in the process of doing the same. Mexico also has an IBA program (Áreas de Importancia para la Conservación de las Aves en México, or AICAs). Carol gave a presentation on the SJV to the assembled group of approximately 175 participants from all over the U. S. and Latin America. She also helped facilitate two sessions, one focusing on coordination between JVs and IBA programs and the other on coordination in the western region.

To learn more about the IBA program, visit www.audubon.org/bird/iba/.



SJV Website resource for partners

The Sonoran Joint Venture website is a valuable resource for partners to use in disseminating information about programs and projects. Each month the website is updated with details about grant opportunities, upcoming meetings, and important news and information for those working in bird conservation in the SJV region and elsewhere. Be sure to check back often to stay current!

In addition to sharing updates about project accomplishments, SJV partners can post announcements for both volunteer and paid positions on the site (www.sonoranjv.org/outreach06.html). To post job openings, send information to Jennie Duberstein.



Swainson's Hawk by Paul Kerris/USFWS

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