

## The new name and logo for our newsletter thanks to Sue Ahearn

**Monthly Meetings:** First Tuesday of the month, October through April, 7:30 p.m. at the Phoenix Zoo Auditorium, at Galvin Parkway between East McDowell and East Van Buren.

**Membership Information:** Your membership fee entitles you to membership in the National Audubon Society and the Maricopa Audubon Society. All members receive bi-monthly issues of *Audubon Magazine* and the *Cactus Wren-dition*. Make checks payable to National Audubon Society. For all new subscriptions, send check or money order to: Patricia Beall, 11020 S. Shoshoni Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85044.

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The opinions expressed by the authors in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policy of the National Audubon Society or the Maricopa Audubon Society.

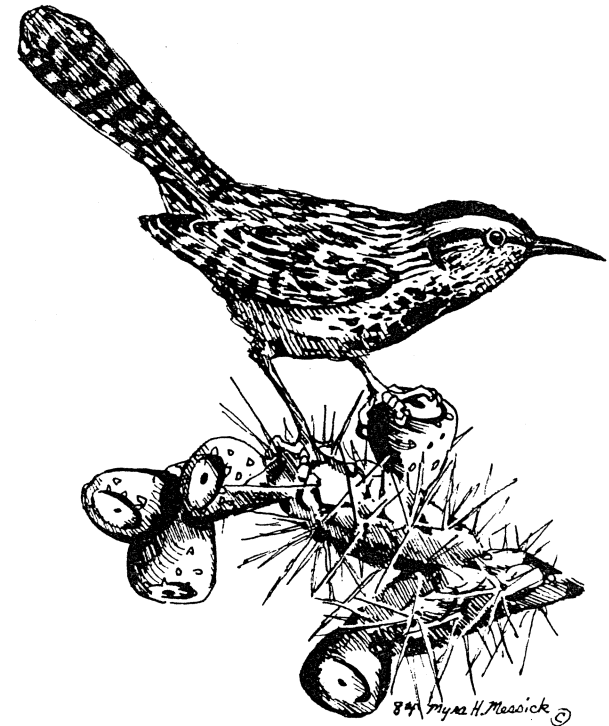
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# the cactus wren-dition



Vol. XXXII, No. 1

January-February 1984

Time-dated material; do not delay

# Birds of prey flock to Chandler

By Sunny Weathers Chandler Arizonan 1-16-84  
of The Arizonan staff

The men working at the sewer pond chuckled a little when a caravan of cars stopped and three dozen people began crowding the fence around the pond.

When a dozen spotting scopes and twice as many binoculars zeroed in on a small group of ducks floating on the pond, the chuckles turned into amused shrugs and the workers went about their business.

That was fine with the members of the Maricopa Audubon Society. They had met at the entrance to Sun Lakes early on a Wednesday morning for a purpose — to see the birds that live in the fields south of Chandler.

In the part of Chandler known now as the Ocotillo Development area, the ground is mostly still in alfalfa and there are open irrigation ditches running with water. Lines of towering tamarisk and eucalyptus trees line dirt roads.

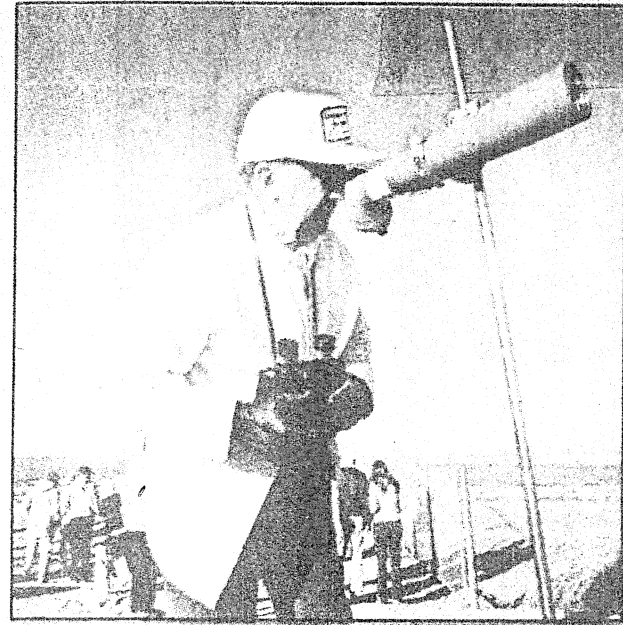
Every year, large concentrations of raptors — birds of prey — make these fields their winter

homes. The birds can easily be seen perched on telephone poles and tree tops by sharp-eyed motorists, but the Auduboners wanted something better. They wanted a close look at the birds and concrete information on how to tell one type from another.

Scott Burge, leader of the field trip, said he had spotted 17 hawks in the trees over Bogle Farms on the previous day. There were the standard red-tailed hawks along with other types, he said. Reports have been made of a peregrine falcon in the area, Burge said, but he hadn't seen it.

Driving north on Price Road from Riggs Road, the caravan of cars stopped at the small sewer pond to check out a few ducks Burge had seen the day before. As the bird watchers lined up to look at the birds, Burge identified five floating birds as redhead ducks. Another group, silhouetted against the early morning sun, were spotted as eared grebes. One ruddy duck, its pointy tail sticking nearly straight up, swam by an aerator.

Turn to Birds, page A4



Continued from page A1

After the ducks had been identified and seen to everyone's satisfaction, the group climbed into cars, vans and trucks and headed north over the bumpy, unpaved road.

The group was nearly as varied as the birds they were out to see.

Burge is a law student at Arizona State University and holds a doctorate degree in chemistry. He spends much of his time in Audubon Society activities.

Jo Ondersma had driven from north of Bell Road to see the concentrations of hawks near Chandler. It's the only place in the county where the big birds winter in large numbers. She said she's been watching birds seriously for about 12 years, since she retired from teaching.

Many of the people in the group were retired, but others make conservation activities and bird watching a big part of their lives.

Bob Witzeman, an anesthesiologist, handed out name tags and kept the list of members present. Witzeman is editor of the Maricopa Audubon Society

newsletter, the *Roadrunner*.

"Have you ever heard of Orme Dam? That man over there stopped it," Burge said, pointing at Witzeman.

Witzeman has been honored at the state and national levels for his conservation activities. On this day, Witzeman was one of the group, zeroing in on the big birds through his spotting scope and arguing politely about the color of tail bands.

As the group scanned the horizon, a large, dark hawk sitting in a tree flew away. It had been the subject of much discussion. In landing on a telephone pole, the bird spread its tail and the tell-tale tail gave away its name. It was a dark phase ferruginous hawk, the largest of North American buteos.

A buteo is a hawk with wide wings, stout bodies and short, broad tails. From far away the bird looked much like a harlan's hawk or a rough-legged hawk. All three types winter near Chandler, as do northern harriers, formerly called the marsh hawks.

The dark-phase ferruginous elicited

excitement among the group. It is considered rare, Burge said.

"They're never common," Burge said. "That's why we come to these fields. It's the only place to get them. We hate to lose it."

As Burge talked, a group of horned larks were spotted, a flock of killdeer skimmed overhead and a red-tail hawk was sighted.

But the red-tail hawk was not allowed much time for viewing. A small american kestrel — also known as a sparrow hawk — flew at the bigger bird, driving it across the field. As the big bird flapped and tried to twist away from its tormentor, the smaller bird, a type of falcon, darted above and below and on all sides.

"If you see hawks by day, you know what's here by night," Burge said. "There will definitely be short-ear and screech owls here and you know barn owls and great-horned owls. These poor mice get no peace. And, you have log-head shrikes acting as raptors here."

The birds come for the mice, which live in the alfalfa fields.

The spot where Burge whistled up a male yellow-throat warbler was within an area planned for development by Motorola. The spot where a male Anna's hummingbird flew a spectacular mating display is on top of what will one day be the fifth or sixth lane of Price Road.

And Burge wondered where the five Red-tail hawks perched in a tree would winter once their range south of Chandler is paved under.

For now, the birds are there and the Audubon group will continue to look at them and record their presence.

While the group gathered, scopes and binoculars in hand, in the middle of a plowed field, some watched meadow larks or hawks while others watched vultures sitting on a dead sheep in the next field. The call of a cactus wren, the state bird, was heard and doves fluttered overhead now and then.

It was a good morning to see ph birds.

**Birdwatching is the heart and soul of our chapter**

Thursday, April 5, 1984

## Dam's foes consider delay cop-out, sham; ready for court fight

By Mary A.M. Perry  
Republic Staff

Representatives of two groups opposed to construction of Cliff Dam on the Verde River said Wednesday that Interior Secretary William Clark's decision to delay engineering work on the structure is a sham.

Spokesmen for the Maricopa Audubon Society and Concerned Citizens on the Rio Salado Project said construction of Cliff Dam will wipe out established ethnic neighborhoods in south Phoenix in addition to destroying nests of endangered bald eagles.

"We are prepared to go to federal court to stop it," Scott Burge, chairman of the Audubon Society's conservation committee, said at a news conference.

Herbert S. Fibel, the society's president, said, "I think Clark's decision is a cop-out. I think he simply is waiting for the heat to blow over and go on with the dam's construction anyway."

Clark decided Tuesday that the \$1 billion Plan 6, which includes Cliff Dam, is the best water-storage alternative for the Central Arizona Project but delayed work on the dam until after more environmental study.

The selection of Plan 6 was the result of eight years of federal study to find an alternative to Orme Dam, which had been scheduled for construction at the confluence of the Salt and Verde rivers. Orme was eliminated from the CAP in 1977 because of environmental concerns and its impact on the Fort McDowell Indian Reservation.

Clark said he wants the National Academy of Sciences to complete studies in six months on

the dam's impact on the endangered Southwest bald eagle and sycamore and willow forests south of the proposed dam site.

"What is six months going to do after eight years?" Burge asked. "Nothing."

Clark said that if proposed plans to mitigate the threat to the eagles and the wetlands are inadequate, "we ... could very well modify, defer, maybe even end the plan for Cliff."

Cliff Dam would help reduce flood flows along the Salt River through the Valley. The reduced flows would allow for development of the Rio Salado project — parks, businesses, hotels and factories in and along the riverbed.

Cliff Dam always has been opposed by the Audubon Society because it would flood two of the eagles' 12 nesting areas.

As the Rio Salado Project is currently proposed, at least 300 families in south Phoenix would have to be relocated.

"We work and sweat to get something and they, the rich folks, come in and take it away from us," said Ola Williams, a south Phoenix resident. "It's pitiful."

Byron Ward, Chairman of Concerned Citizens, said, "Until the Rio Salado Development District is deauthorized, and until those Rio Salado Plan 6 flood-control dams are put on the bureaucratic garbage heap, there will be no peace for those of us here in south Phoenix."

Alma Williams, Sierra Club spokesperson, said the Rio Salado project would waste water. It would use as much water in growing Bermuda grass and creating ornamental lakes as Cliff Dam would generate, she said.

TEMPE DAILY NEWS, Tuesday, February 14, 1984 -- Editorial -- Page 15

## the readers write

### Beware of earthen dams

Editor:

As a participant in the Town Hall at Arizona State University on Jan. 28, I think your headline: "Rio Salado plans praised by group" is misleading and misrepresents what occurred that day.

A more appropriate headline in my opinion would have been: "Group expresses many concerns about Rio Salado plans."

As was indicated in the lead article, the morning panel discussion centered on problems with the master plan, such as water availability, flood control, financing and legal issues.

In the small group sessions in the afternoon, 45 minutes was allocated to concerns, and 15 minutes each was allocated to questions that haven't been answered, what we would like to see added, what we don't like about the plan and what we do like about the plan.

No consensus was reached and none was intended. To single out one suggestions — that a start be made now to transform the Salt River bed into more than just a

pipedream, in derogation to the hundreds of comments and concerns pro and con, is in my opinion misleading and leads to casual reader to a conclusion that a favorable consensus toward the plan was reached by the participants.

The plan as proposed calls for the construction of an earthen Cliff Dam on the Verde River designed to create a much reduced floodplain, followed by the planned movement into the land thusly salvaged of some 37,000 people.

Strangely, on the next page of the same edition is an article bearing the headline: "River breaks dikes, floods Idaho town." In that article it says that officials warned 250 families to prepare to flee.

Yet we seem to disregard such warnings and persist in building dikes and dams to stay the flow of the river in order to create more saleable land into which we then move unsuspecting people.

**Herbert S. Fibel**  
President

Maricopa Audubon Society

# Audubon Society blasts Plan 6

By KEITH BAGWELL  
Progress Staff Writer

The proposed Cliff Dam on the Verde River is not part of the Central Arizona Project or for dam safety but is part of the Rio Salado Project, the Maricopa Audubon Society and other groups said at a news conference in Phoenix Wednesday.

The society vowed to take the issue to court if U.S. Interior Secretary William Clark approves the dam after a further six-month study of its environmental impact.

The basis of the suit, said Scott Burge, society conservation chairman, will be that the dam threatens the existence of rare desert-nesting bald eagles, a violation of the 1975 Endangered Species Act.

The main concern of the society, however, is the human impact of the \$1 billion Rio Salado Project, a proposed greenbelt of golf courses, resort hotels, parks, office buildings, businesses and luxury condominiums to house nearly 40,000 in the Salt River bed through the Valley, Burge said.

At least 300 South Phoenix families would be relocated and many more adversely affected by the Rio Salado Project, and the proposed Rio Salado riverbed residents face a flooding threat, he added.

The threatened federal suit, he said, would be

over the endangered species issue because "people are not protected by federal law but these crazy birds are." There are an estimated 20 pairs of the rare bald eagles nesting along the Verde in the Cliff Dam area, he added.

Claro Gonzales of Concerned Citizens on the Rio Salado Project, said the project proposes to relocate South Phoenix residents "to build golf courses and parks — I don't know anybody in South Phoenix who plays golf."

Building on top of abandoned dumps in the riverbed that contain large amounts of hazardous wastes, Gonzales added, "could create another Love Canal."

Byron Ward of Concerned Citizens said, "Wealthy people hatched this Rio Salado thing and can make lots of money off it if they can push it through.

"They'll make their money at the expense of property owners here; the project will be good for them but not very fair."

Ola Williams of Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now said she lives three houses away from the river and "worked and sweated for years for that little house and now they want the Rio Salado Project."

"If they bring it in, we will pay. We always

have and will again . . . They just want to move us out for expensive development.

"I'm not interested in all those nice things; they are no benefit to us. They might benefit rich people, but not us."

Herb Fibel of the Audubon Society said a \$1 billion plan that calls for building include Cliff Dam and improvements to Roosevelt and Stewart Mountain dams on the Salt River and a new Waddell Dam on the Agua Fria River are billed for flood control, water storage and dam safety.

The added stored water, he said, all would be for agriculture and that added by Cliff (22,000 acre feet a year) is roughly the amount the Rio Salado Project's greenery and lakes would consume.

Flood control, Fibel said, no longer is needed as 14 high-flow-capacity bridges and a number of key dikes have been built since the last river flows.

The dam safety portion is an exaggerated issue used to make the economics of the rest of the plan look better, he said. "Cost-benefit ratios are what federal planners look at," he added.

Clark approved all the plan but Cliff, on which he deferred a decision to allow for the new study.

# Cliff Dam study delayed by find of eagle's nest

## Area to become reservoir under Plan 6 provision

An eagle's nest has been located in the area that would become a reservoir with the construction of Cliff Dam on the Verde River, delaying an environmental study, the U.S. Department of the Interior disclosed Friday.

The discovery will delay a review by the National Academy of Sciences of the impact Cliff Dam would have on the breeding habitat of about 20 endangered bald eagles that nest in the area.

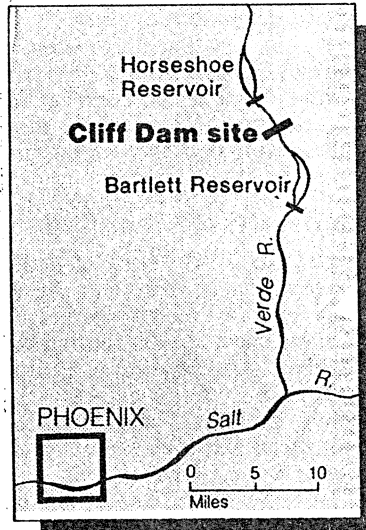
Interior Secretary William Clark said the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation last week confirmed the existence of an eagle's nest in the proposed dam's reservoir area. The dam is a feature of Plan 6, a plan related to the Central Arizona Project.

Clark approved Plan 6 on April 3 but delayed work on Cliff Dam for six months to allow further environmental studies by the academy.

He said the dam might never be built if it would damage the eagles' habitat.

"What we find in that period, yes, could very well modify, defer, maybe even end the plan for Cliff," Clark said April 3.

The National Academy of Sciences also will complete by Sept.



Gus Walker/Republic

a study of how 7½ miles of sycamore and willow groves south of the proposed dam would be affected by construction, Clark said.

An environmental-impact statement for Plan 6 said studying the eagles' prey and prohibiting blasting during the breeding season could lessen negative effects on the eagles and local wetlands.

A Bureau of Reclamation "nest watch" observer located the eagle's nest April 12, Bill Plummer, regional director of the bureau, said Friday.

Until then, eagles had been seen in the area, but a nest had not been found.

# Eagles ground study of dam

By Anthony Sommer  
The Phoenix Gazette

The discovery of a bald eagle nest in an area that would be underwater if Cliff Dam were built has delayed a National Academy of Sciences study of the project.

The nest, containing two eagle chicks, was discovered last week, Bill Plummer, regional director of the Bureau of Reclamation, said Friday.

When Interior Secretary William Clark approved the Plan 6 alternative to Orme Dam on April 3, he asked for a six-month National Academy of Sciences study of the environmental impact of Cliff Dam on the Verde River.

"The plan to move ahead with the study has been put on hold because of the eagles," Plummer said. "Obviously, we want to take a look at the situation."

The Bureau of Reclamation will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the effect the dam would have on the nest.

"We are now trying," Plummer said, "to gather data about the nest's occupants — what they eat, where they forage, the nesting chronology.

"We'll use this information to fully assess what impact construction of Cliff Dam would have on this nest and what alternatives are available to avoid any impacts."

Plummer said the bureau will ask the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a formal consultation.

He said the Bureau of Reclamation will identify the impact of construction on the nest. The wildlife service will determine whether construction will jeopardize the eagle population and formulate ways to avoid damaging the area.

Opponents of Cliff Dam — including the Maricopa Audubon Society — have claimed the structure would destroy breeding areas used by the rare bald eagles.

The nest is located upstream from the dam site, which is between Horseshoe and Bartlett dams. It was found by Bureau of Reclamation workers April 12 after a report from U.S. Forest Service employees that bald eagles had been seen in the area in late March.

The Forest Service has been conducting a "nest watch" as part of the environmental study of the dam, Plummer said.

Cliff Dam is considered essential for flood control to allow construction of the Rio Salado Project. The city of Phoenix also wants the dam to provide additional water storage for areas not served by the Salt River Project.

Gov. Bruce Babbitt is scheduled to tour the area with SRP and federal officials Wednesday morning.

The remaining parts of Plan 6 approved by Clark include New Waddell Dam on the Agua Fria River and modifications to Roosevelt Dam and Stewart Mountain Dam, both on the Salt River.

"This will delay any action on a National Academy of Sciences review of the mitigation plan that Secretary Clark announced on April 3," Plummer said.

Plan 6 was among nine alternatives to the construction of Orme Dam at the confluence of the Salt and Verde rivers.

Plan 6 would benefit the Rio Salado Development District, which needs upstream flood control for its plan to turn the Salt River bed and nearby areas into a recreational, residential and business area.

It also would provide regulatory storage for Central Arizona Project water and dam safety for existing structures on the Salt and Verde rivers.

Construction on the plan, which will cost an estimated \$1.053 billion, is to begin in 1987.

## Mailbag

Scottsdale Daily Progress, May 17, 1984

# If we save state eagles, then eagles can save us

Editor:

With the discovery of a second eagle nest at a damsite that would create a floodplain nightmare, Arizona's highly endangered population of desert-adapted Bald Eagles could become the protectors of a great many endangered Arizonans.

Endangered would be 36,000 Valley newcomers who would unwittingly purchase homes in the Rio Salado development, deep in the unpredictable and dangerous Salt River floodplain.

Earth dams like Cliff Dam can be designed or operated incorrectly, become unsafe, silt-in or burst. Even with Cliff in place, major portions of that real estate extravaganza would be devastated by a 200-year-flood such as the one that occurred here in 1891.

The eagles would also prevent destruction of close-knit, established communities of Hispanics and Blacks living in south Phoenix. The adjacent luxury condos, hotels and golf courses of that posh real estate development would force them from their homes either by increased property

taxes or eminent domain.

Saved would be the endangered Maricopa County taxpayer from \$1 billion for funding a "downtown" real estate venture. The endangered federal taxpayer would be spared a \$350 million porkbarrel dam.

These eagles would prevent countless Valley residents from being endangered by the collapse of one of the highest earthen (dirt) dams in the U.S. The 338-foot earthen Cliff Dam, just 40 miles upstream of the metropolitan area, would be built by the same federal agency, the Bureau of Reclamation, that has had such a bad record with the few earth dams it has built of this height. In 1976, that agency's 305-foot dirt Teton Dam disastrously collapsed the first year it was filled.

Floodplains are great for recreation, open space and as natural greenbelts, but clearly communities should not be endangering thousands of their citizens with intense residential and commercial floodplain development.

**HERB FIBEL, President  
Maricopa Audubon Society**

## Dam's foes consider delay cop-out, sham; ready for court fight

By Mary A.M. Perry  
Republic Staff

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Alma Williams, Sierra Club spokesperson, said the Rio Salado project would waste water. It would use as much water in growing Bermuda grass and creating ornamental lakes as Cliff Dam would generate, she said.

Wednesday, June 6, 1984

## LETTERS

### Perverted Social Values Endanger Eagles

Editor:

Ben Avery would trade a proven, established bald eagle habitat at the Cliff Dam site because 40 miles of proposed wild and scenic Verde River would "hopefully restore riparian habitat along that section of the river."

First, Avery ignores the habitat dynamics of an endangered species. There is nowhere else for these unique desert-adapted birds to go.

The Verde wild and scenic reaches are already occupied by eagles. Are the Cliff Dam eagles to displace existing eagles from their territories?

Eagles have been producing young for years in Arizona, and if suitable riparian habitat existed elsewhere those areas would be occupied.

Second, Avery's 40-mile number is past history. Water establishment lobbyists last month obtained removal of 10 miles of that 40 miles of wild and scenic Verde because it was in the high-water level of Cliff Dam.

Last, as the Rio Salado area gradually silts in, or when that real estate project is devastated by a large flood (Rio Salado would only

be protected from the 100-year flood), there would be a great clamor for another dam.

It would be needed to protect the billions of dollars of homes and businesses which would have been foolishly built deep within the floodplain.

(MAS  
Past President) CLEMENS TITZEK  
Phoenix

Editor:

Ben Avery gave his opinion that Cliff Dam on the Verde River will not seriously hurt our endangered population of Southern bald eagles.

As a graduate of Arizona State University and trained in wildlife biology, I know that the existing population of 12 to 15 pairs of desert-nesting eagles is already dangerously low.

I, for one, have seen enough luxury condominiums, hotels, golf courses and industrial parks to keep me satisfied for the rest of my life. But only once have I been privileged to observe a rare Arizona bald eagle.

Cliff Dam is a sad testimony to our perverted societal values.

NENA C. WILLIAMS  
Phoenix

Biltmore Bulletin

PAGE 12

BULLETIN.

JULY, 1984

### LETTERS

## Readers Forum

(Special to the Bulletin: in response to the "Protect the Bald Eagles" article in the May issue. Ed.)

Many well-intentioned, long time Valley residents have been led to believe the proposed Cliff Dam would provide flood control and water storage for Phoenix. It would do precisely the opposite.

The purpose of that dam is to provide a floodplain real estate project called Rio Salado which would deliberately place the homes of 40,000 innocent Valley newcomers deep within the

present vacant Salt River floodplain.

Yes, some of the last fragments of habitat of the world's only desert-nesting bald eagles would be inundated so that a downstream panorama of luxury condominiums, hotels, golf courses, and industrial parks could be placed in a metropolitan riverbottom. But the economic and social drawbacks of that project far outweigh its environmental impacts.

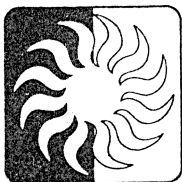
The cost of Rio Salado to Valley taxpayers will be a billion dollars and includes buying up all of the private land in the riverbottom and the gravel industry and constructing extensive earthworks and channels. Two artificial islands foolishly placed in the middle of the

riverbottom near downtown Phoenix would accommodate resort hotels, shopping centers and commercial structures.

Rio Salado defies the rational coexistence of a community with its desert environment. Their master plan discloses it would use more water than Cliff Dam would add!

Floodplains are great for recreation, open space and as natural greenbelts, but communities should not be endangering tens of thousands of their citizens with intense residential and commercial floodplain development.

Susan Ahearn,  
Vice-President  
Maricopa Audubon Society  
Phoenix



# THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

EUGENE S. PULLIAM

## Wildlife Federation Targets Waste, Fraud

*Editor:*

Your June 4 editorial, "West's Water Under Attack," accuses the National Wildlife Federation and unnamed "extremists" as advocating the abrogation of contract obligations in criticizing federal policies on water-user repayments for Western water projects such as the Central Arizona Project.

You indicated we were careless about the truth.

But our report only catalogued study conclusions and recommendations by the inspector general of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The department is responsible for managing the CAP.

The inspector general found, after studying the CAP repayment policies and those of five other water projects, that the mismanagement in administering project repayments will cost American taxpayers dearly — more than \$10 billion over the next 50 years, by our estimate.

For the CAP, the inspector general said excess cost to taxpayers will be more than \$200 million.

The Reagan administration said it wanted an inspector general who would be "meaner than a junkyard

dog" in ferreting out waste, fraud and mismanagement.

We agree — this kind of waste should stop. That's what our report said.

The president's appointees at Interior are in a position to see that responsible, businesslike policies are adopted.

By the way, you should know that the National Wildlife Federation's membership voted 2-1 for President Reagan over Jimmy Carter.

However, some 65 percent of the same membership has since rated the administration's conservation policies as "poor."

As for Eastern water projects which *The Republic* derides for receiving "nearly total taxpayer subsidy," we share these concerns.

The NWF is continuing to push for new cost-sharing and user-fee policies applicable to all types of projects, including navigation and flood control, and would welcome your support in this effort.

JAY D. HAIR

Executive Vice President  
National Wildlife Federation  
Washington, D.C.

## No Deal Was Made

*Editor:*

Nobody has "gone back on any deal" as your pro-Plan 6 editorial would lament. No deal was ever made.

No members of Gov. Babbitt's heavily pro-development Orme Alternatives task force ever signed any papers with the Bureau of Reclamation on behalf of the hapless Arizona taxpayers and water ratepayers.

Does the applause and cigar smoke of the governor's stacked deck of good ol' boys give them a right to reach into the pockets of Valley taxpayers and water users?

Does *The Arizona Republic* believe the taxpaying public should not be allowed to scrutinize a massive expenditure they would pay dearly for in decades to come?

New information is constantly being revealed, developed and refined on Plan 6 — one of the most complex and costly water projects ever proposed by the federal government. The Bureau has still refused to publish the benefit-cost ratios on the Waddell Dam or Cliff Dam or Roosevelt Dam.

The Arizona Municipal Water User's Association determined the ratio for Waddell Dam and found it flunked the economic test with a benefit-cost ratio of 0.84 to 1.

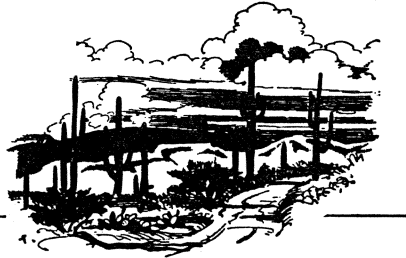
ELDON EVANS  
Phoenix

***The unrelenting support of the Arizona Wildlife Federation and the NWF was instrumental in stopping the CAP dams***



## An Arizona for Future Generations

by Gilbert Venable



For the last nine years I have been the attorney for the Maricopa Audubon Society, and prior to that I taught Environmental Law at Arizona State University, College of Law, where I was the Assistant Dean. While these are my personal comments, I think that they reflect the attitudes of most members of the Audubon Society as well.

Why do Audubon Society members oppose funding for the presently proposed Rio Salado plan as set forth in Senate Bill 1247? Why have we been fighting the proposed Cliff Dam?

I will not address all of the things that are wrong with public funding of this development project, but just a few that go to the heart of Audubon members' feelings. I do this not so much to convince you that we are right as to let you know what kind of vision we have for this "Rio Salado" — or what in our minds this great Salt River is and ought to be. I know that some members of our community disagree and I respect that there are different perspectives. I think that if we understand our differences, we can better work to meld our needs together with those of our neighbors who have a different vision for this river, into a plan that truly can be supported by all.

What unites Audubon members? We cherish the *natural* beauty of God's earth. Since we live in the desert, we love the Creosote Bush and Magenta Hedgehog Cactus more than we love the manicured lawn and the rose bush. But there are some very special natural places that have become extremely precious to us — those rare places where water is found in its *natural* condition in the desert.

Our society's letterhead sums it up. "Dedicated to the Preservation of Wetlands in an Arid Environment." We have nothing against "The Lakes" and "Fountain Hills" — but we

love Quitobaquito spring and the natural portions of the Salt and Verde Rivers and one of the primary purposes of our organization is to protect them.

We love them because this is where you find birds and animals in profusion. In the desert, water is a magnet for living things. If you want to see a desert bighorn sheep or a coatimundi — find a spot near an isolated spring. The place where the greatest density and variety of birds that can be seen anywhere in North America — probably anywhere in the world — is right here on the low desert portions of our Salt and Verde Rivers. You can see more than 100 different kinds of wild birds and animals in one day in this so-called "riparian habitat". This is where Audubon members go to see beavers and to hear the beautiful song of the Yellow Warbler. Those of us who have heard that song want our children to be able to hear it.

When we think of what our desert rivers used to be, we weep inside for our loss. The Salt once was a river with water in it year round through those hundreds of miles that are now dry riverbed and stagnant reservoirs. Arizona was once rich with rivers and streams that now have been stored behind dams, diverted into canals and dried up. We have but a few precious remnants of this riparian ecosystem left. The loss of riparian habitat continues today. As we consume more and more water, we have less and less of the precious, magical places where desert and stream meet, and nature's marvelous variety of creatures come for the water of life.

We all know that the Rio Salado is a *mighty* river. We have seen but a glimpse of its force and power in recent years. If the maximum probable flood comes, many existing buildings near the river will be washed away or caked

with mud — regardless of whether Plan 6 is built.

Our Arizona Legislature has wisely prohibited anyone from building homes in the 100 year flood plain of this or any other river. However, current laws still allow our neighbors, who are foolish enough to do so, to build their homes at the very edge of the so-called 100 year flood plain. This is deep within the natural flood plain of this mighty river. I doubt that any of us would encourage our children to buy such a house or want our grandchildren to live in it. The closer our neighbors build to the inner flood plain, the more frequently they will be washed away and the more their children's children will cry for new dams to stop the river from flowing where it has always flowed. If their children's children get the dams, our children's children will lose the song of the Yellow Warbler.

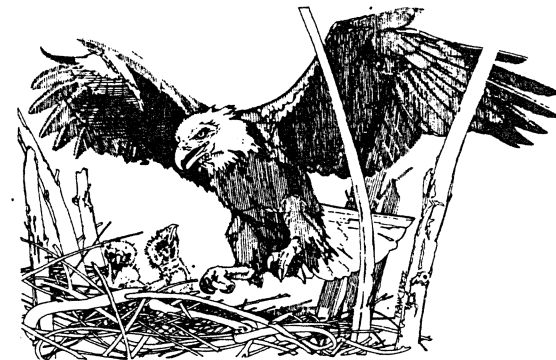
We believe our government should encourage our neighbors to build their houses on the rock and discourage them from building on the shifting sands of the riverbed, so that when the rains fall and the floods come, their houses will stand. To do the reverse, to subsidize the construction of homes in the riverbed, is folly.

Our dream for a Rio Salado Project is to see the river flow naturally again from the Granite Reef Diversion Dam to the metropolitan area. This would have the benefit of natural recharge of ground water. The most logical place to store water in the desert is underground where it cannot evaporate. We see no hope for restoration of a *natural* river through the heart of

Phoenix. This land is heavily impacted by jet noise, the earth is polluted with toxic wastes — and we cannot simply let water flow into the old landfill dumps without recognizing that the water will become polluted and the dumps will become generators of methane swamp gas. Although we do not hope for restoration of natural riparian habitat through the heart of Phoenix, we can envision benefits from the construction of appropriate parks and recreational facilities in the river bed. It would not really hurt for such things as golf courses and drive-in theaters to be flooded every so often.

Like all human beings, we care about the damage caused by floods and the loss of life that can be expected when people build in the flood plains. We are also not necessarily opposed to some upstream flood control measures. We have supported several Corps of Engineers flood control projects in Maricopa County. But these projects are very difficult in concept and design from what is being proposed for Rio Salado.

In the end, it comes down to this. We are the voice that cries for the right of our children's children to see the eagles soar and to hear the songs of the river birds. We hope that our concerns will be received in the same spirit of openness that is given to the desires of some of our citizens who want the legislature to subsidize their dreams of building and selling beautiful homes, businesses, gardens and parks in the heart of our city, and unfortunately, in the flood plain of a mighty river.



the Cactus Wren-dition

**Gilbert Venable is the gifted, inspired lawyer who has worked pro bono representing MAS in a number of Arizona endangered species lawsuits**

# Cliff Dam foes vow court fight

## Eagle habitat in peril, Audubon Society says

By MARY A.M. GINDHART  
Arizona Republic Staff

The Maricopa Audubon Society promised Tuesday to sue to stop the construction of the proposed Cliff Dam on the Verde River east of Phoenix, which would flood the habitat of desert-nesting bald eagles, an endangered species.

In response, Gov. Bruce Babbitt appointed a committee to negotiate with the society in hopes of keeping the issue out of court, where it could endanger Arizona's efforts to make a deal with Congress on funding for parts of the Central Arizona Project.

Herb Fibel, president of the society, said the National Audubon Society also has vowed to fight construction of the dam because of the eagles and because that part of the Verde River has been designated a federal wild and scenic river.

"We're not going to roll over and play dead on this one," Fibel told members of a larger Babbitt committee studying local funding for parts of the CAP. "We'll use every legal method possible to fight the building of Cliff."

Cliff Dam, one of the CAP's Plan 6 projects, would work together with a modified Roosevelt Dam on the Salt River to provide flood control on the river though the Phoenix area.

Cliff Dam is needed to narrow the river channel for the planned \$1 billion Rio Salado Project, which would reclaim riverbed land for building homes, hotels, recreational areas, businesses and industrial plants.

Assistant Interior Secretary Robert Broadbent warned the Babbitt funding committee that unless Arizona is in complete agreement when approaching Congress with a Plan 6 funding offer, the chances of approval would be slim.

"Your only chance is to go as one voice," Broadbent said.

Members of the funding panel are looking for ways to use local money to help speed up completion of Plan 6. They plan to make a recommendation to Arizona's congressional delegation by September.

Babbitt selected Jack Pfister, Salt River Project general manager; Bill Chase, Phoenix water-management adviser; and Jay Rhodes, member of the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, to meet with the local Audubon Society and try and resolve the matter.

Cliff Dam is important to the SRP and the city because it would resolve safety concerns about the existing Horseshoe Dam, and Phoe-

— Dam, B7

nix is interested in buying the CAP water that would be stored the lake Cliff would form.

The proposed dam's original primary purpose was flood control, but since floods in 1978 and 1980, major work has reduced chances of flood damages. Bridges to withstand larger water releases from existing dams have been built, a runway at Sky Harbor Airport has been protected, and the town of Allenville has been relocated.

"Cliff's sole and single purpose now is to narrow the flood plain in order to develop flood plain real estate deep within the presently vacant Salt River of metro Phoenix," said Dr. Robert Witzeman, past president of the Maricopa Audubon Society.

Witzeman questioned whether any of the funding-panel members would buy property in the riverbed that will have as high as a one-in-five chance of being flooded, depending how close the land is to the river.

He said the Rio Salado Project would create 1,400 acres of new lakes in the Salt River Valley, which now has 1,600 acres of lakes.

"The Rio Salado and its Plan 6 real-estate dams send a profligate image of Arizona to the world," Witzeman said. "We squander the nation's income-tax dollars to build water-wasting, flood-prone real-estate scams in the desert for the express benefit of one of the nation's richest, fastest-growing cities."