

East Valley

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Web site offers state biology lore

AskABiologist serves students from all grades

By **TK SAWYER**
TRIBUNE

For years, Pierre Deviche spent weekends in the deserts and forests of Arizona recording bird calls, but after awhile he wondered why all the effort.

"It became like a stamp collection, and I started to question what I was doing with all these recordings," he said.

Arizona State University's Charles Kazilek had the answer — compile a database on birds of Arizona.

Kazilek runs the

AskABiologist Web site at ASU. The site is designed to answer the biology questions of students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The section on Southwestern birds is the site's latest edition and is a collaborative effort with the National Audubon Society, ASU and countless birders throughout the state contributing.

Inside the virtual-aviary is a collection of about 180 birds. With a mouse-click, anyone interested in learning more on Southwestern birds can see a picture of the bird, a map of its migration patterns and a sonogram of its song. Another mouse-click accesses an MP3 recording of the bird's song.

The bird section is still a

MORE ONLINE

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade can submit biology questions at <http://askabiologist.asu.edu>. To find the Arizona birds database, visit <http://askabiologist.asu.edu/expstuff/experiments/birdsongs/index.html>.

work in progress, and Deviche said he hopes it will encourage more people to go out and explore the birds in the wild.

Besides articles, experiments and coloring pages on topics from bugs to people, the Web site also allows students to submit questions to about 90 ASU life scientists known collectively as Dr.

Biology.

The site has a dual purpose: Help students who have a budding interest in biology and bring the ivory tower to the people, Kazilek said. One thing the site isn't is a homework site, and questions that are phrased like school assignments are left unanswered.

Kazilek said the site gets a variety of questions. "Students are especially perceptive and I've learned a lot just in answering their questions," Kazilek, said.

Still, there is one question that seems to be particularly popular: "What's it like to be a marine biologist?"

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