

HIKING WITH LLAMAS

RELAXING IN A NORTH RIM CABIN

arizonahighways.com JULY 2004

# ARIZONA HIGHWAYS



**taste**  
**the colorado's**  
**many moods**

Explore the Erratic Turns of the  
**VERDE RIVER**

Visit Our Western Waterworld  
**PARKER STRIP**

See What Happened  
When They Tried to  
**HERD DEER**  
**LIKE CATTLE**



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### Classic Wooden Boats Ride the Big River

A group of eccentric and fanatic admirers of old-style wooden boat designs prove again that the vessels can handle the Colorado River's thundering white water.

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## PORTFOLIO

### The Verde River — Abundant and Glorious

Central Arizona's perennial waterway possesses multiple personalities — from calm to sometimes raging — and traverses historic lands where the state was born.

[THIS PAGE] Backlit by the rising December sun, mist drifts through silhouetted bare-branched cottonwood trees and cattails along the Verde River near Camp Verde in central Arizona. For our Verde River portfolio, see page 18. ROBERT G. McDONALD [FRONT COVER] Whether gliding through the placid waters of Marble Canyon or plunging through roiling rapids (inset) veteran Colorado River guide and historian Brad Dimock revels in the thrill of navigating the watercourse in accurate re-creations of historic wooden boats. Read his account of a 21-day river adventure beginning on page 6.

KATE THOMPSON [BACK COVER] A profusion of indigo blue lupines and deep pink owl clover graces the desert among paloverde trees and ocotillos near Bartlett Reservoir along the course of the Verde River northeast of Phoenix. JERRY SIEVE

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### GENE PERRET'S WIT STOP

In defense of the "poor old editor," our author wants to keep an open mind regarding "new traditions."

### ONLINE EXTRA

#### Camp Reno

In the 1860s, the Army chose an ill-fated site for its remote outpost near Mount Ord.

### WEEKEND GETAWAY

#### Titan Missile Museum Historic Site

The museum in Sahuarita, south of Tucson, gives visitors a chilling idea of what Cold War readiness was all about.

### EXPERIENCE ARIZONA

Prescott gears up for its renowned rodeo events as part of statewide events during July, while Hopi Indian art demonstrations and cultural activities are scheduled in Flagstaff.

## {arizona highways on television}

Watch for this independently produced television show that emulates *Arizona Highways* magazine. The weekly half-hour show airs in Phoenix, Tucson and Flagstaff in both English and Spanish.

Robin Sewell, a veteran television news anchor and reporter, hosts the show.

English show times: 6:30 P.M. Saturdays on Channel 12 in Phoenix and on Channel 2 in Flagstaff, and at 4:30 P.M. Sundays on Channel 9 in Tucson.

The show airs in Spanish on Channel 33 in Phoenix, Channel 52 in Tucson and Channel 13 in Flagstaff. Check the stations' listings for times.

**Must Have the Words**

I have been getting your magazine for eons, it seems, and not always as a subscriber. When surviving as a grad student and trying to save a few dollars, I mooched *Arizona Highways* off all kinds of people, clubs and even doctors' offices. Now I am a legal subscriber and have been for a while.

I really enjoy your articles, especially the nature ones. John Alcock is one of my favorite authors, as is Craig Childs. Your photographs are excellent, but without the good written word they would be just pictures. They go together wonderfully.

Christine Baer, Belmont, MI

*The poor old editor applauds Christine's insight. She is absolutely correct. Without the right words, the photographs are just pictures.*

**Perfect Vacation Spot**

Isabella Weiss, a 9-year-old fourth grader from Minocqua-Hazelhurst & Lake Tomahawk Elementary School in Minocqua, Wisconsin, was asked by her teacher, Marge Stein, to write about her favorite place to vacation. Here is what Isabella wrote:

"Arizona smells like rosebuds with cinnamon blowing in the air. The fresh green grass and the ripples in the swimming pool make me so relaxed I could fall right asleep in the blazing sun. The birds and crickets will lullaby me to sleep, and the stars will be my night-light. The mountains will shadow me so I don't get sunburned and the purple wind will cool off my face. The soft orange sand squashes between my toes as I ran through the best place — Arizona."

*This description by Isabella again demonstrates the power of words.*

**Deer Ghosts**

Leo Banks is such a good storyteller and writer ("On the Trail of the White Ghost of Kendrick Peak," February '04). His mood-setting descriptions in his "spooky" story made me feel right there.

About four years ago, we were traveling through the back roads of Flagstaff and stopped to smell the wildflowers on a quiet country road. There was a wire-fenced green field with a wooded area. At the edge of the wooded area, about 100 feet away, a group of seven deer stood munching on fresh grass. Two of them were white. Were they perhaps grandchildren of Leo's great white ghost buck?

M. Angelica Rivadeneira-Whelan, Tucson

My family has loved the mountains of Arizona from the moment we first saw them, and we look forward to each issue of *Arizona Highways*. Every issue is outstanding and is read and reread by our family, but I especially loved the use of sepia photographs in the article, "On the Trail of the White Ghost of Kendrick Peak." The sense of otherworldliness given

by each photograph complemented the story so well, drawing my mind to a time of legends and mountain mystery. The article fired my imagination. I am glad Leo Banks found no solid explanation for the strange occurrences in the area. His last line, "The forest remembers," was a perfect ending to a story that has no clear-cut answers or ending.

Rebecca Swearingen, Clarendon, TX

**Gold Fever**

Your article and pictures of gold ("Golden Anniversary: Tucson Gem and Mineral Society Celebrates its 50th Show," February '04) were outstanding, and I ordered extra copies to send to relatives and friends who do a lot of gold mining as their fathers did before them.

From 1930 on, the Depression sent many families out to the desert in search of making a living from prospecting . . . until jobs became plentiful.

Marion Behrens, Seden, AK

**Repeated Joke**

I hope you paid Roger Rabalais \$100 for his "Clowning Around" joke since you used it in both the January and February issues.

Ed Rowley, Elbert CO

*We thought we'd keep running the joke until someone laughed. Actually it ran a second time due to a production error.*

**Sunken Boat**

Some years back, on a visit to Lake Powell, I had the opportunity to take a raft trip from the dam to Lee's Ferry, a pleasant afternoon's jaunt. As we approached the landing, the raft guide pointed out an object underwater near the west bank, which he described as the remains of ol' John D's ferry boat. All one could see at that time was some kind of iron tank, perhaps a boiler, underwater.

A few years later, on another tour of Glen Canyon Dam, there were only three of the turbines in operation at the time and, consequently, the river level was lower than usual. So on the way home I took a little side trip to Lee's Ferry to show a friend around. We walked the short distance upstream from the raft-launching site because I wanted to see if more of this boat might be visible. It was.

However, I was puzzled by the pointed prow, and thought that it was a peculiar design for a ferryboat. They usually have squared-off ends to facilitate the loading and unloading of vehicles.

Now Tom Dollar ("Historic Lee's Ferry," January '04) solves the mystery for me with the story of the coal barge, *Charles H. Spencer*, the remains of which this surely must be. I assume that much of the aft portion must have been washed away over the ensuing years.

Lee Johnson, Clarkdale

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PRODUCED IN THE USA



**Psychoanalysis by Horse?**

Do you believe that horses were created only for riding? "Not so," says Wyatt Webb, who created the Equine Experience, a self-discovery program available at Miraval Resort and Spa, one of the world's top resorts, located north of Tucson. Miraval specializes in facilitating experiences that lead to

a healthy "life in balance," and Webb believes that interaction with a horse can contribute to that goal. "A horse can become a mirror for what is going on in your life."

Webb, an author and psychotherapist, offers an unconventional therapy. In the Equine Experience, he instructs resort guests in grooming the

horse they are paired with—cleaning dirt and rocks from the hoofs, brushing the mane and the tail and observing the horse's response. He interprets the interaction as a metaphor for what the individual has learned over a lifetime about relationships to all living things.

For example, the guest receives instructions on how to coax the horse to lift its foot for grooming. If the horse refuses, it may be evident to Webb that the horse senses fear in the companion, which may extend from a need for control that has complicated the person's life.

In his book *It's Not About the Horse*, written with Cindy Pearlman, Webb shares how he struggled as a singer for 15 years, touring the country 30 weeks a year, living a self-defeating lifestyle that included addictions to drugs and alcohol. When he wanted to change, he sought help and, as his life transformed, he felt prompted to help others heal. He left the entertainment industry, and for 20 years has helped others on their personal journeys through his unique therapy.

Information: (800) 232-3696; www.miravalresort.com.

**Cold Wave in Tucson**

Southerners have to have their grits. Midwesterners need Jell-O. Some people crave macaroni and cheese. But in Tucson, the favorite comfort food comes icy cold in a cup. The frozen fruit drink, called an eegee's, is a 30-year-old native of Tucson, where the restaurants by the same name have grown to 19 locations. And yes, the drink and the company name are spelled with a lowercase "e."

Besides everyday flavors of strawberry, lemon and piña colada, eegee's co-owner Ed Irving constantly whips up new flavors-of-the-month like Frosty Lime, Wild Berry or Cranberry



Splash. His brainstorm doesn't always work.

Take his biggest disappointment, Blue Hawaii. The mint-and-coconut-flavored drink included chocolate chips that turned the whole

drink an uninviting khaki color.

Although many Tucsonans assume eegee's is an international chain, Irving and co-owner Bob Greenberg refuse to franchise their business because they want eegee's to stay as sweet as it is.

Although they started with the desire to re-create an Italian ice that they ate in their native Rhode Island, the two created a novel fine-grained frozen fruit concoction that starts with fruit rather than ice. Tucsonans love slurping the vitamin-C enriched treat, and don't even mind when big hunks of strawberry, blueberry or lemon get caught in the straw.

Information: www.eegees.com.

**THIS MONTH IN ARIZONA**

**1858**  
 A new wagon road is completed between Fort Yuma and El Paso.

**1862**  
 Apache leader Mangas Colorado is shot in the chest during a battle at Apache Pass. His men carry him to Mexico where a doctor successfully removes the bullet.

**1887**  
 The first railway line to Phoenix begins operation.

**1889**  
 Prescott merchants boycott Prescott and Arizona Railway in protest of high freight rates.

**1890**  
 A fire breaks out in a miner's shack on Whiskey Row in Prescott, and burns down banks, hotels, stores and many homes.

**1891**  
 The Colorado River bursts its banks near Pilot Knob and floods surrounding areas.

**1892**  
 A police officer armed with a pistol and a Mexican armed with a knife duel to the death on Meyer Street in Tucson.



### Hell or High Water

Many years ago Senator Henry Fountain Ashurst (1874-1962) of Arizona said during his maiden speech to the U.S. Senate: "Mr. President, the baby state I represent has the greatest potential. **This state could become a paradise.** We need only two things — water and lots of good people."

According to historical records, a senior senator from Pennsylvania, Boies Penrose (1860-1921), arose from his seat to interject: "If the senator will pardon me for saying so, that's all they need in hell."



### Out With You, Bad Flower

An invader lurks along roadsides and trails in northern Arizona. The small yellow snapdragons bring color to the traveler's eye. They grow on green, spiky stalks with distinctive triangular leaves. But this wild snapdragon, dalmation toadflax (*linaria dalmatica*), threatens native flowering plants like the state's colorful variety of penstemon.

Botanist Laura Moser, the Coconino National Forest representative working with Flagstaff's San Francisco Peaks Weed Management Area organization, estimates toadflax

has affected 150,000 acres in the forest. Since carrying the plants away from their growing site can spread the seeds, Moser recommends that people pull up the weeds and place them on a nearby rock so their roots dry up and die. As people learn that the weeds endanger the purple lupine, apricot mallow and red-orange Indian paintbrush, they are more willing to pluck out toadflax when they see it. With vigilance and some volunteer weeding, native Arizona plants won't be nudged out.

Information: [www.weedcenter.org](http://www.weedcenter.org); Coconino National Forest, (928) 527-3600.

### Drink Up, Mesquite Fans

Mesquite trees, a common sight in Arizona's deserts, produce bean pods in the summer — a food source for humans and wildlife. Indians have long relied on these beans as a dietary staple, which they made into syrup, beverages and a ground meal called pinole.

The desert tribes of



the Pima and Tohono O'odham created a nutritious beverage from the ripe, yellow beans of the mesquite each July. They would rinse and boil the beans and then pound them into a pulpy mash. The drained resulting juice made a refreshing drink.

### Blue Light Special

Frances M. Stone of Spanish Fork, Utah, read "Over, Under and Through the Mogollon Rim" in the October 2000 issue of *Arizona Highways* with fascination. It mentioned a 1975 incident in which a man claimed that a bright light knocked him to the ground; then aliens abducted him.

Could his tale be true?

In May 1957, Stone and her now-deceased husband visited Mesa. She writes:

"I do not know what route we took as we traveled north into the desert.



"Suddenly, I spotted a brilliant silver-blue beam of light coming from the sky. My husband stopped the car and snapped only one picture. He then quickly drove away. I watched the ray of light as we departed. It did not move, change or disappear as long as I could see it.

"To this day it is a mystery to me. But I still have the slide picture of this light, and when you put it in the projector and flash it on the screen, it is awesome."

### Pass the Kettle Chips

As the story goes, 15 years ago two schoolteachers from the Midwest arrived in Tucson with a massive kettle



potato chips under the brand name of Saguaro.

The freshly cleaned and sliced potatoes never ride a conveyor

for making a special kind of potato chip. Today that oil bubbler still turns out the kettle-cooked

belt. They drop directly into hot canola oil. A technician uses a raking device to separate and turn them. Owner Mike Wattis talks about the unique flavor and texture of the chips. Customers seem to agree.

Wattis recalls the reaction when he considered dropping the Chili & Lime from his seven-variety lineup. "I was almost tarred and feathered," he says. The chips stayed.

Although the process and the equipment came from the Midwest, the American Southwest plays a major role. Most of the potatoes used by this small Tucson company are grown by the Navajo Indians.

LIFE IN ARIZONA 1 8 8 0 s

### JOHN L. SULLIVAN'S KNOCKOUT VISIT TO TOMBSTONE

The great boxer John L. Sullivan visited Tombstone in 1884 for a boxing match.

According to pioneer Anton Mazzanovich, writing in *The Tombstone Epitaph* in 1931, Sheriff J.L. Ward brought the champ to the jail for a visit with John Heith, one of six men involved in a Bisbee holdup that left four dead, including a

pregnant woman. Heith, the gang's lookout, got a life sentence, but a vigilante mob would soon lynch him. His five cohorts were condemned to die.

In the meeting, Sullivan said, "It's a pity that a fine looking chap like you should be in such a predicament."

"I would like to have your mug and your liberty," Heith responded. "I understand that you can knock a man out in four rounds."

Sullivan said yes.

"Well, you're no good. We have one man here who will knock five men out in one round," said Heith, referring to the hangman.

Sullivan did his work, putting on a good show at Schieffelin Hall, and the hangman did his.

At the Cochise County Courthouse in Tombstone on March 5, 1884, the five Bisbee murderers swung from ropes until they died.



### Astronomically Improbable!

"Astronomically improbable!" decreed the lawmakers of the 1917 Arizona State Legislature. Was the cause of this contention the appearance of some new star in the heavens over Phoenix? No, the debate was raging about the prototype for the new state flag.

First designed in 1911 by Charles W. Harris as a banner for the Arizona Rifle Team, the flag then — as it does today — consisted of two fields bisected by a five-pointed star. The lower field mirrored the blue of the Union flag, while the upper section, segmented into 13 red-and-gold sunrays, reflected the colors carried by the Spanish Conquistadores on their trek through Arizona in 1540. In the center, the bronze-colored star identified the state as the largest copper-producing region of the nation.

And it was precisely these astronomically improbable sunrays shooting out from behind the star that so vexed the legislators.

In 1915 the Legislature considered, but did not ratify, Harris' design. Two years later, despite the loud objections to its astronomical credibility and even over then-Governor Thomas Campbell's veto, the distinctive flag was adopted.



### Question of the Month

How was the last stagecoach robbery in Arizona also a first?

A Pearl Hart, one of the robbers of the Globe and Florence stage in 1899, created a sensation as the first female bandit in state history. Bereft of her pistol in the courtroom, Hart wielded her feminine charms. While her displays of weeping, hand-wringing and eyelash-batting won her an acquittal by the all-male jury, the judge remained unaffected. He sentenced her to five years in Yuma's Territorial prison on a related charge.

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A man in a white shirt, blue vest, and cap is rowing a wooden boat through a narrow channel between towering, layered rock walls. The water is a muddy brown color. The rock walls are composed of vertical, jagged rock formations with varying shades of brown and grey. The scene is captured from a low angle, emphasizing the scale of the rock walls.

# WOODEN BOATS PLUNGE AHEAD

TEXT BY BRAD DIMOCK PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE THOMPSON

Classic White-water Vessels Hold Their Own in Colorado Rapids



Falls, with its chaos of exploding waves, always brought a unique dread.

Today, as usual, my stomach knots. What is unusual is that I am rowing a plank-built skiff of a type not seen here in more than 65 years. It is of the Galloway style, a design long superseded by newer forms.

Devised in the 1890s by Utah trapper Nathaniel Galloway, the Galloway boat revolutionized white-water navigation. Earlier boaters, such as explorer John Wesley Powell, had struggled with heavy, round-sided, keeled boats, designed for flat-water work but poorly adapted to shallow, rocky or turbulent rivers.

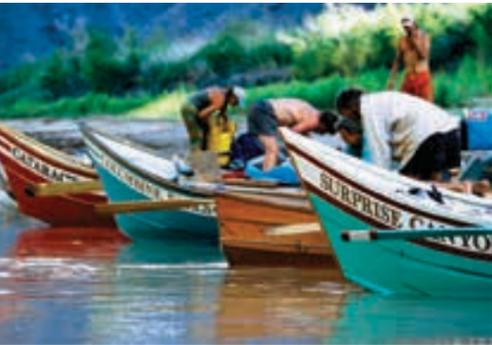
Galloway innovated a light, flat-bottomed boat, raised slightly at either end to ease pivoting. Then, unlike Powell and his ilk who rowed hard downstream, their backs to the oncoming waves and rocks, Galloway turned around, faced the obstacles and rowed upstream while moving downstream, which slowed his momentum and ferried him away from danger. Galloway's boats and techniques dominated Grand Canyon travel for four decades.

In 1937 the last Galloway boat was built by an Oregon gas station attendant named Buzz Holmstrom. A self-taught boatbuilder, he studied Galloway's design and modified it to his needs. By shortening it to 15 feet, widening it to 5 feet and raising the ends, Holmstrom



[ABOVE] At Lee's Ferry, the point of departure, the boats remain empty, waiting out a flash flood.

[BELOW] In a Galloway boat fashioned after one modified by Buzz Holmstrom in 1937, author Dimock thrusts the oars into Grand Rapids' turbulence.



**F**OR TEN THOUSAND MILLENNIA, Grand Canyon cloudbursts have ripped loose soil, sand, gravel and rocks, hurtling them down side canyons into the mother Colorado, spurring her into a frothing mudflow and choking her with boulders. These coarse blockages constrict the water's flow into dancing riffles, bounding rapids and great thundering cataracts.

The river's surface boils and sings, hinting at what lies beyond the approaching brink. The riffles hiss in a benign

white noise; the rapids caution with a throaty roar; the great falls shake the earth in the deepest of bass rumbles. Within this chorus spin tales of the countless boats and boaters that have floated through this chasm.

I nervously perch in a small wooden rowboat, drifting across a deceptively calm pool, being drawn inexorably toward a sharp horizon. On the right shore, a thousand feet of jagged black schist jut skyward. Pastel slopes and convoluted cliffs climb another five thousand feet to the pine-clad rim of the Canyon.

My world reverberates with a deep baritone roar. I am entering Granite Falls, one of the largest rapids on the Colorado River — one that most early river runners portaged around or lowered their boat by ropes down the boulder-studded shore. Boat designs and techniques have evolved, however, and navigating this maelstrom is now standard procedure. But the tiny cedar boat I am rowing is not standard.

For a quarter-century, I made my living chauffeuring tourists through rapids in wooden and rubber craft. Yet I never found the bigger rapids commonplace, and Granite

[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 6 AND 7] Veteran Colorado River guide and historian Brad Dimock leads a 21-day excursion through the Grand Canyon using re-created wooden boats representing historically significant boat designs, each built to survive the river's infamous rapids.

[ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP] The boats slip silently through Marble Canyon below Lee's Ferry; Andy Hutchinson handles the boat designed by Norman Nevills in 1938; a passenger hunkers down for an explosion of white water; the light, graceful, modern boats called dories are successors to those that have run the river since the early 1970s.



made the most maneuverable Galloway ever built. He then launched the craft, named the *Julius F.*, in Wyoming's Green River and became the first to solo the Green and the Colorado, for more than a thousand rapid-studded miles, to the Boulder Dam. Sadly, Holmstrom died just nine years later and his boat disappeared somewhere along the rainy coast of Oregon.

In the mid-1990s, I helped research and write Holmstrom's biography, *The Doing of the Thing*, and swore I would re-create his brilliant boat. To do that, I teamed with Oregon boat historian Roger Fletcher, Oregon boat designer and builder Jerry Briggs, Colorado boatbuilder and veteran river guide Andy Hutchinson, Flagstaff boatman and carpenter Dan Dierker, and more than a dozen others.

Working with old photographs, films, notes and memories, we redesigned Holmstrom's brainchild. Using aromatic Port Orford cedar, cut from the same forest Holmstrom cut his, we milled, planed and riveted together a beautiful lapstrake hull and decked it over with thin cedar strips. Finally, we rubbed it with oil to a luminescent sheen and christened it the *Julius*.

The *Julius* now moves lightly on the water, aglow in the afternoon sun. Behind me float Hutchinson and Dierker in their boats.

AS THE CREST OF GRANITE FALLS approaches, my twitching anxiety evaporates, replaced by a

## ANTICIPATE ACT. REACT.

resolute calm: Anticipate. Act. React. I drop in, spin the blunt stern left, then right, pushing into the exploding billows of muddy water. The *Julius*, buoyant and corky, climbs each crest and bobs through one wave after another. In less than half a minute, I am through, stroking into the left eddy below, jubilant. As archaic as the craft may be by today's standards, the *Julius* is astonishingly seaworthy and has taken on but a few gallons of water.

Looking back into the fray, I see a pith helmet, then a flash of white and green. Moments later Hutchinson appears in the tailwaves rowing a low, white, flatiron-shaped boat with "NEVILLS EXPEDITION" painted boldly on each side.

The Nevills boat, a radical departure from the classic Galloway style, was designed by Norman Nevills of Mexican Hat, Utah. He had been running square-ended, open plywood punts on the San Juan River for several seasons before he designed the Nevills Cataract

boat in 1938. Built from the new miracle material, plywood, the Cataract boat was substantially shorter, wider and more upturned than a Galloway. It had a low, flat deck, a large, open cockpit, and could accommodate one—or more awkwardly two—passengers.

In the summer of 1938, Nevills used three such boats to carry Elzada Clover and Lois Jotter through Grand Canyon—the first two women to complete the full voyage. The publicity from this trip helped Nevills establish the first commercial river company in Grand Canyon.

Hutchinson is rowing the *Sandra*, which was built by Nevills in 1947 and named for the younger of his two daughters. Tragically, Nevills and his wife, Doris, died in a plane crash two years later. The company carried on, however, operated as Mexican Hat Expeditions by three Nevills boatmen, brothers Jim and Bob Rigg, and Frank Wright, who adopted the *Sandra* as his personal boat until he left the company. The *Sandra's* last trip was in 1969, when she was smashed in Cataract Canyon. She was crudely patched and trucked home from the next road access. By then inflatable rafts had taken over commercial river running and the Nevills fleet was left to molder.

Hutchinson beams at me as he pulls into the eddy, having forgiven me for ensnaring him in this adventure. Four years ago,

Sandy Nevills Reiff and her son Greg had asked me if the *Sandra*



could be salvaged. During 30 years of neglect, her bottom and sides all but rotted to dust, her decks cracked and loosened, her paint peeled away to naked, graying wood. Being a sentimental optimist, I told them it looked plenty doable to me—but not by me. "Call Andy Hutchinson," I said.

Hutchinson's initial enthusiasm over the phone sagged to dubious dismay when he arrived to pick up the boat. I cringed on the sidelines. But after more than 500 hours and a bit of new plywood, the *Sandra* was again the premier example of the once-famous Nevills Cataract boat design. Now Hutchinson is savoring the honor of taking her on her first Grand Canyon voyage in more than 30 years.

Another boat bounds into view with a sharp red prow jabbing skyward, disappearing, then bounding high again. It's Dierker in a 1972 dory, with his wife, Alida, riding high and dry in the front. This boat was designed and built by Jerry Briggs of Oregon, the same man who helped re-create the *Julius*.

Back in 1962, conservationist Martin Litton was looking for boats to take a group down the Colorado to rally support against



[OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP] Hermit Rapids threatens Dimock as he pitches the boat into the roiling water with trepidation and strains to traverse it safely.

[THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP] Dimock reflects on the history of the names inscribed on a rock deep in the canyon. Hutchinson notes the design of an old Galloway boat, chained and bolted in place along the river by the National Park Service. Adventure continues into the night with a fire poi demonstration, in which a ball attached to a cord is set aflame and swung in circular motion.





[ABOVE] With the Grand Wash Cliffs on the horizon, members of the expedition share a calm moment by a campfire.

[RIGHT] Holmstrom designed and built his plywood boat, like this one, for his solitary trip through the Grand Canyon.

[BELOW] Hutchinson enjoys a quiet-water respite in Upper Granite Gorge.



## 'PURE BLISS ... ALTERNATING WITH SHEER TERROR.'

the proposed Grand Canyon dams. He focused on a style he discovered in Oregon: the "drift boat" or dory. These beautiful high-prowed, flare-sided plywood boats evolved on Oregon's McKenzie River in the 1920s and '30s for the purpose of carrying fishermen down rapid rivers.

Litton decked over the Oregon dories in Grand Canyon fashion and found them to be the best hull yet. In 1971, when Litton began running commercial trips, he went to Rogue River boatbuilder Jerry Briggs and asked him to design the flagship for a new fleet. Stable, able to carry four passengers and a heavy payload, the Briggs dory soon became the new standard for wooden boats on heavy white water.

But wooden boats are still in the minority, rowed by the eccentric and the devoted. Most oarsmen train in inflatable rafts, and the majority of them never find a reason to press their luck with a fragile boat.

Now, at the head of the falls, comes another of our fleet—Pam Hyde in a 16-foot raft, rowing through the Canyon for her first time. "Pure bliss," she says, describing her debut, "alternating with sheer terror." This is the latter.

She makes a fine entry, but midway a great wave explodes beneath her, rocking her raft on edge. Moments later a second violent wave finishes her off, dumping Hyde, her two passengers and the raft upside-down in the torrent.

By luck—bad luck—all three of them and the raft wash into the right-hand eddy—an easy place to get into, but a fierce place to escape. Dierker is below, so Hutchinson and I stroke hard across the waves into the



[ABOVE] Early morning sun urges the mist above the river as Dimock glides on flat water. [RIGHT] The restored Nevills boat, the *Sandra*, bounds through churning white water as it had first done 30 years before.

swirling vortex and chase down the swimmers and raft. Matt Dunn, rowing another Briggs-style dory, pulls in to assist, as does Jessica Pope, another new oarsman rowing a large 18-foot raft.

The rescue over, we struggle back out of "Forever Eddy" to rejoin Dierker and the last two boats of our fleet: my wife, Jeri Ledbetter, rowing her father and his new bride, and R.J. Johnson with his wife, Terri, in their stock 1975 Briggs dory. We regroup, jabber a dozen renditions of the flip and rescue, then head downriver to the next rapid, leaving the river another great story to tell.

It is day nine of our 21-day trip and, although there will be more excitement, this will be our only flip. The wooden boats, Galloway-, Nevills- and Briggs-style, each prove fun, stable and seaworthy, each unique in its handling characteristics. The *Julius* is buoyant, quick and dry; the *Sandra* is stable but wet—"like a wooden raft," says Hutchinson; the dories ride high and dry, carry the load and row easier and faster than the older boat styles. Each boat type shows its own genius in design, and each has run every rapid without incident.

But we're not always that fortunate. If we have had better luck than some of the pioneers did, perhaps it is because on this trip we have almost 500 transits of Grand Canyon beneath our belts. Galloway, Nevills and Holmstrom had fewer than a dozen trips between them. But their hard-won knowledge, passed



down and amplified through generations, is what we inherit. As Isaac Newton observed, "If I have seen farther, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." **AH**

ADDITIONAL READING: *Grand Canyon Stories: Then & Now* is a collection of stories about the Canyon's past characters, including river runners and the "West's biggest liar," and present-day individualists such as a pathfinder, rescuer and a female mule wrangler. To order the softcover book from Arizona Highways Books (\$7 plus shipping and handling), call toll-free (800) 543-5432 or order online at [arizonahighways.com](http://arizonahighways.com).

*Brad Dimock has spent 30 years as a boatman in Grand Canyon and rivers around the world. He now lives in Flagstaff. In 2002, Dimock received the Arizona Highways Adult Nonfiction award, presented by the Arizona Library Association, for Sunk Without a Sound: The Tragic Colorado River Honeymoon of Glen and Bessie Hyde.*

*Kate Thompson, who lives in Dolores, Colorado, has been piloting dories in the Grand Canyon since 1996, and has become enraptured by the magic that old wooden boats cast upon boatmen and their crews.*

# GRAND CANYON Deer Drive

Early Day Entrepreneurs Discover  
Deer Are More Temperamental  
Than Trainable

**T**HE GREAT GRAND CANYON DEER DRIVE was born out of romance, desperation and charm. George McCormick, the idea's creator, possessed the latter in abundance, and it might've been his only noteworthy quality.

Some describe the Ohio-born farmer and logger as a man of limited intelligence, few assets and, possibly, a shady past.

But he must've been an extraordinary talker to convince the state of Arizona and the Forest Service that it was possible to drive up to 10,000 mule deer, like a herd of cattle, off the edge of Kaibab Plateau into the Grand Canyon, across the Colorado River, and up the other side to the South Rim.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt had established protection for the vast plateau north of the Canyon by declaring it the Grand Canyon National Game Preserve. Over the years, government-sponsored predator kills and unusually wet weather, which increased the forage supply, caused the deer population to explode from its original 4,000.

Although there was no reliable method for counting the deer, 1924 estimates ranged from 26,000 to 100,000, and the number grew by as many as 6,000 a year. But

BY LEO W. BANKS ILLUSTRATION BY JOSEPH DANIEL FIEDLER



when the wet spell ended in 1920, the forage began diminishing rapidly, leaving thousands of starving animals on nearly ruined rangeland.

Moving quickly to address potential disaster, federal managers tried trapping and shipping the Kaibab deer elsewhere. But of the 18 caught in box traps, eight died of fright or were killed trying to escape, and most of the remainder had to be released. Only one reached the railroad alive.

Another plan, a massive, federally authorized hunt left Arizona sportsmen and conservationists outraged at the prospect of large-scale slaughter.

Into the breach rode McCormick, whose wild idea had exactly no chance of succeeding. But in a climate of immense frustration, it seemed worth a try. The story it produced was one of the grandest failures of its kind ever to come out of Arizona.

McCormick left Flagstaff on December

used it to move stolen horses across the Canyon from Utah.

Fuss noted that McCormick kept a galvanized boat stashed in a cave at the river, and surmised that this also might've been part of his horse-running operation. But no one else involved in the drive made a similar charge, making the truth of the matter difficult to determine.

McCormick's party required six days to reach the Kaibab Plateau. There he met others who'd streamed out of Flagstaff in a colorful caravan of trucks and touring cars bearing actors, cameramen and celebrities.

The motion picture company Famous Players-Lasky Corp. paid McCormick \$2,000 for rights to film the drive, his main source of money. If their cameras could capture thousands of deer swimming across the Colorado River, the company believed it would make millions.

them was on deposit in a Flagstaff bank.

Several prominent Flagstaff residents hurried to put up money, as did one of the story's strangest characters, Martiana Wentworth-Berteling, wife of McCormick's right-hand man, Neil Berteling.

She became a regular player in the *Sun's* coverage, the paper referring to her as the Countess Martiana, without explaining how she earned the distinction. Martiana evidently had money, however, and tossed \$1,250 of her own collateral into the pot.

With \$2,250 finally on deposit, the Indians began gathering for transport to deer country.

"The Navajos will get \$2 a day and grub," reported the *Sun*. But by the time the drive started on December 14, only 12 of the 72 hired Navajos had shown up.

Even in the final hours, uncluttered minds were saying the drive was impossible. One of them, Fuss, met with several officials at the Kaibab ranger station to deliver a report on prospects.

"I said, 'Gentlemen, what I got to say isn't gonna please ya . . . but it's the truth,'" Fuss remembered in the recorded interview. "I think the man's crazy. I don't see how in the world he can ever drive a herd of deer over the trail, and not lose two-thirds of 'em. Even if he got 'em down to the river, it's 300 feet across the rapids, practically. . . . And the trail that he expects them to go over is ridiculous."

But it was too late. The romance and excitement of it all had overwhelmed common sense.

McCormick's plan was to comb a section of forest, roughly 10 by 20 miles, leading to the head of Saddle Canyon, then plunge the animals into it, near what is now Nankoweap Trail.

The Indians, who eventually numbered around 100, including some Paiutes, were on foot, strung out in a huge ellipse. With them were another 50 mounted men. An estimated 5,000 deer filled the immense tract between this human throng and the Canyon's edge.

The Indians carried cowbells and rang them to get the deer moving out of the woods. They also beat metal pans with sticks, while the men on horseback waved hats, shouted and fired guns.

"But as they drew near the deer, instead of retreating, the animals almost invariably dashed through the cordon of men," reported the *Sun*. "Not only did they refuse to run away forward, but in charging the line, the animals seemed not to care a particle how close they came to the men. In



many instances the latter had to give ground. "One immense buck charged four mounted men, of whom Mr. Grey was one, and the latter reached for his gun, expecting to be run down. The deer just missed the quartet."

Another writer has the same incident ending with Grey sitting ignominiously on his rear end, "watching his horse disappear at high speed into the Arizona buckbrush before the determined charge" of deer.

The effort continued through that day and the next. But it never approached anything but total chaos, with deer stampeding in every direction. The hoped-for movie footage was an utter bust. None of the cameramen captured a single shot. The deer wouldn't stand still long enough, and the sky was overcast.

It turned out that McCormick's mounted army consisted mainly of starry-eyed boys, most from Fredonia and Flagstaff, out for a frontier adventure. They were utterly ineffectual against thousands of rampaging deer.

"So far as known there were no casualties to any of the men," reported the *Sun*. But

many deer died amid the commotion. They were promptly set upon by Indians with knives, eager to bring home meat and a hide.

Fuss reported seeing Indians laughing hysterically as they shimmied up trees to escape the deer. Mark Musgrave, predator control agent for the Arizona division of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey, later asked a Navajo named Grey Hat Charlie if the Indians drove the deer. "Yes, drive deer. Drive lots of deer," was the response.

Asked where they were driven, Grey Hat Charlie swung his hand around, accompanying the motion with a whistling sound to indicate the deer were driven in all directions.

On December 16, heavy snow and sleet began falling, and within hours the call to quit was sounded. Fuss recalled what it was like: "When I got back to camp, Lasky had packed up, tore down all their tents, snowin' like booger."

Grey and Griffith fled the scene in a Cadillac. They left in such a rush that a Lasky photographer and four cameramen had no ride back to Flagstaff. Fuss drove them, but

even that went sour. When their car got stuck in the road past Lee's Ferry, they spent the night at a ranch, the six men sleeping on the floor by the fireplace.

"The spectacular drive, featured in every daily paper and many magazines throughout the world, was over," said the *Sun*, leaving the much-fretted Kaibab deer on their own. The herd did go on to experience dramatic death rates, but eventually rebounded, proving dire predictions wrong.

The tortured explanations and fancy footwork began almost immediately. Grey published a front-page apology in the *Sun*, stating emphatically, if belatedly, that deer could not be driven, and calling for a return of mountain lions to the Kaibab. His account of the episode was serialized in *The Country Gentleman* magazine in 1925, and published as a novel, called *The Deer Stalker*, in the same year.

The mysterious Countess Martiana also weighed in, somewhat daffily, declaring that "all sportsmen should be as one in appreciating" McCormick's and Berteling's "glorious undertaking."

For his part, McCormick was unrepentant, departing the Kaibab only when Lasky's people did and it was clear his Indians were leaving, too, ending his movie dream.

Musgrave wrote that even "after three days of absolute failure," McCormick refused to acknowledge he could not drive deer.

"I would not term him a man of ordinary intelligence. He was irresponsible," wrote Musgrave. "I cannot understand . . . how the people who were interested in the drive could go ahead without investigating McCormick."

McCormick died in Flagstaff in 1945 at age 79, without again coming to public notice. But one deer did make it to the South Rim, according to chief Grand Canyon Ranger E.T. Scoyen. In *Grand Canyon Nature Notes*, published in 1926, Scoyen told of a young fawn abandoned by its mother and taken in for the summer by a North Rim ranger, Fred Johnson, who named the animal Chummie.

Knowing the friendly baby couldn't survive winter on the north side, Johnson coaxed it into his car and drove 282 miles around the great gorge, making Chummie the only Kaibab deer to get to the South Rim, valet-style. ■■

*Tucson-based Leo W. Banks wishes he could've covered the great Grand Canyon deer drive in person. Joseph Daniel Fiedler, a Pittsburgh native living in Detroit, says the first time he saw the Grand Canyon, he sat on the edge with a cold drink and watched the sunset while curious dragonflies circled about. "It was not overrated," he says.*

**Even in the final hours, uncluttered minds were saying the drive was impossible. . . .**

**But it was too late. The romance and excitement of it all had overwhelmed common sense.**

7, 1924. His party of 25 men, including saddle and packhorses, followed the old Grand Canyon Road to the head of Tanner Trail, about 30 miles east of El Tovar Hotel.

McCormick was to follow the trail from the South Rim down to the Colorado, swim his men and horses across, then ride up Lava Canyon to the east side of Kaibab preserve, site of the drive.

Within six days, he boasted, the deer would be on the south side of the Canyon, where there was plentiful food for them.

But trouble came early. Two horses in McCormick's party were killed when they jumped Canyon trails. Expedition member Jack Fuss described how one horse, walking behind its rider, suddenly bounded over the edge and hurtled hundreds of feet to the bottom.

"Went off . . . brand new saddle and all . . . and we never even heard it hit or seen where it went—just disappeared entirely," said Fuss, then a state deputy game warden.

In the same oral history interview, recorded in 1975 through a project by the Coconino County Public Library, Fuss described McCormick as "an old prospector and a horse thief" who knew the Tanner Trail better than anyone because he'd

Zane Grey, the famous writer and a member of Lasky's board of directors, was there, too, along with his attentive staff, including a Japanese cook. He planned to write a book and make a motion picture.

"Mr. Grey has his story, for a book and the films, pretty well sketched out, the drive to be its main episode. . . . whether or not it succeeds," reported the *Coconino Sun*.

Accompanying Grey was famed movie director D.W. Griffith, whose 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* is still considered one of the industry's most important. Deciding who'd win the film rights became a production in itself.

Regional forest supervisor R.H. Rutledge first granted the rights to the Hearst International News Service, but he scrapped that plan and switched to Lasky.

At the last minute, Grey added to the frenzy by insisting that no writers or reporters except him be allowed on the scene. Rutledge refused the demand, saying he had no legal right to exclude other newspapers and magazines.

Another obstacle arose when the Indian superintendent at Tuba City announced that the Navajo Indians hired by McCormick to help drive the deer would not be allowed to leave the reservation until money to pay



A PORTFOLIO

# verde river

A TREASURED EMERALD OF THE DESERT

BY ROSE HOUK



## The scent of fresh crushed mint

infused the air as my horse stepped on a patch of the herb. Daydreaming, I let the reins hang loose on Bud, a well-broken Oklahoma mustang. He led as we dawdled along the first 10 miles of the Verde River on a fine day. We splashed across the silken strands of the shallow river countless times, and each time Bud would drop his head and take a long drink. I was hypnotized by the sweet warmth of the spring sunshine and the yellow warblers that flashed through green-leaved cottonwoods.

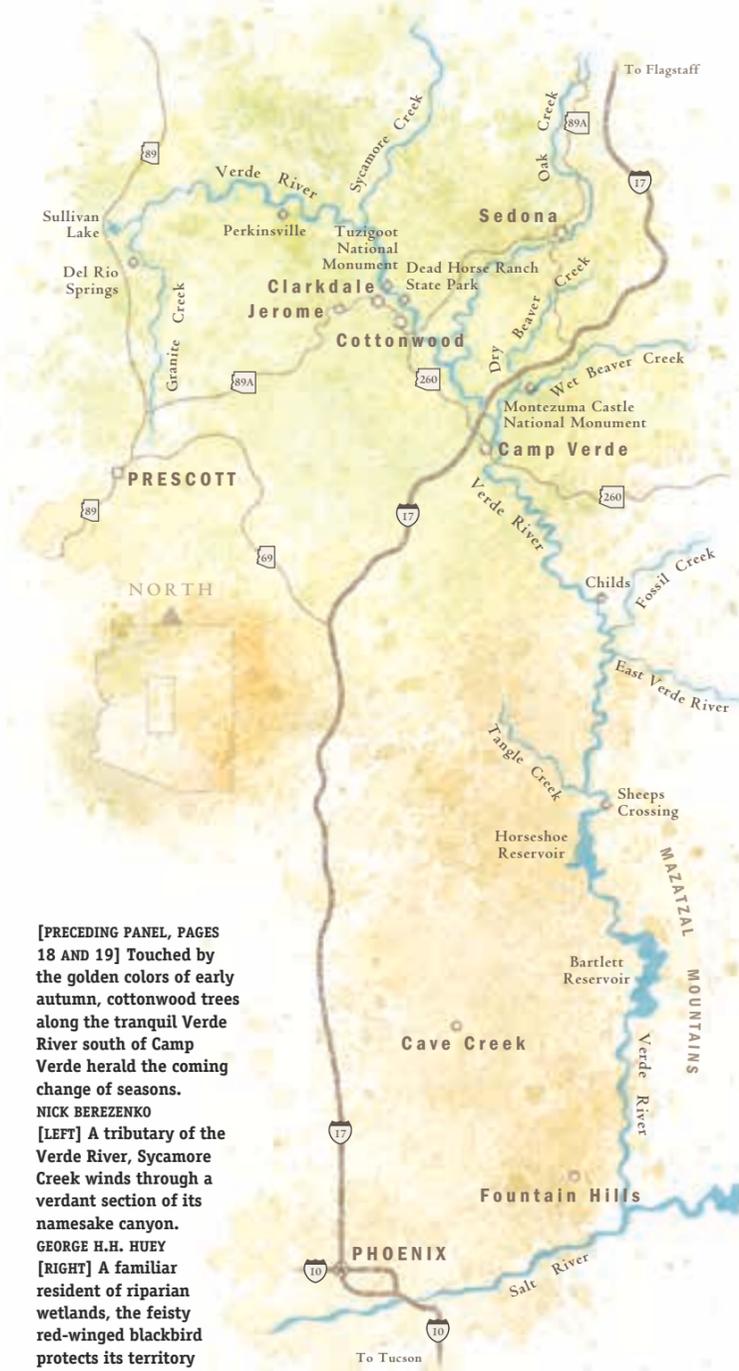
Ann Harrington, accomplished horsewoman and owner of the Little Thumb Butte Bed and Breakfast, supplied the trusty steeds. She was eager to show off her home country, but knowing she had a novice rider on her hands she solicitously watched my every move. Mindy Schlingen-Wilson from Prescott joined us for the day. Laurie Wirt, a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, had masterminded the trip.

Wirt scampered down to sample a spring bubbling up from the streambed. Farther along, she and Schlingen-Wilson marveled over the industriousness of beavers whose work left limpid pools and lush plant life more like a Louisiana bayou than a desert river.

For more than a decade, Wirt has studied the Verde, concentrating on the headwaters north of Prescott. The day before our horseback ride, she arrived at Harrington's home and unrolled large colorful maps and aerial photos on the table. With her hands, she traced the outlines of the Martin Formation and the Redwall limestone, rocks that enclose the upper Verde. But mostly she talked about the river.

"The thing that makes the Verde different," explained Wirt, "is that most rivers start up in the mountains. But the Verde begins at the confluence of two large valleys, Big Chino and Little Chino." It is, after all, a true desert river.

She went on to describe that beneath each of those valleys sits an aquifer, a big water-holding "sponge." That water seeps aboveground in several places near the outlets of the two valleys, most conspicuously at nearby Del Rio Springs. There, not only a river but also a state were born. In 1853, government surveyor Amiel Weeks Whipple happened upon the springs in a basin "so abundant in curled



[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 18 AND 19] Touched by the golden colors of early autumn, cottonwood trees along the tranquil Verde River south of Camp Verde herald the coming change of seasons.

NICK BEREZENKO

[LEFT] A tributary of the Verde River, Sycamore Creek winds through a verdant section of its namesake canyon.

GEORGE H.H. HUEY

[RIGHT] A familiar resident of riparian wetlands, the feisty red-winged blackbird protects its territory with a zeal that belies its modest size, often driving much larger hawks or crows away from its nesting sites.

TOM VEZO





[LEFT] Although trouble seems to be brewing between this pair of great blue herons, the dustup is actually an example of avian courtship. C.K. LORENZ  
 [BELOW] The broad valley and usually gentle flow of the Verde River between Cottonwood and Camp Verde fosters a marshy habitat that supports a wide variety of plant and animal life. Here, a predawn mist rises above the river and lemon-colored Hooker's evening primroses await the sunrise. NICK BEREZENKO

grama [grass] that we called it 'Chino Valley.' Ten years later, another group of surveyors followed Whipple's route and stayed at the springs. They decided this was a prime site for a military post to protect new gold mines in the area.

By December 1863, Fort Whipple, Arizona Territory, was in existence. The following month, mistaking Little Thumb Butte for look-alike Big Thumb Butte, the new Territory's first officials stopped beside "a small stream of water supposed to be, and for the present, called the head waters of the San Francisco river" (soon known by the Spanish name Verde). Though the water was of excellent quality, the flow was insufficient to sustain a permanent Territorial capital. Within six weeks, the fort was moved 20 miles south to what would become Prescott, placing it closer to the mines.

Pumped and diverted, Del Rio Springs still supports a heron rookery, but no longer reaches the Verde. By state law, mile zero on the river is now Sullivan Lake dam, a few miles north of the springs. The dam was built in the mid-1930s to create a recreation playground, complete with duck blinds where President Theodore Roosevelt hunted waterfowl. In wet years, a small lake gathers behind the dam, but in dry times it's more *(Text continued on page 26)*





(Continued from page 23) a meadow. Two miles below the dam, Granite Creek, the first perennial tributary, enters the Verde.

Groundwater, springs and a small tributary — subtle and hard to pinpoint. Still this headwaters region marks the beginning of a real flowing river — an emerald jewel amid tawny grasslands and sparse piñon and juniper trees. From here, the Verde River travels 198 miles to meet the Salt River in the Sonoran Desert.

Several perennial tributaries enter along the way. Granite Creek is the first; Fossil Creek is the largest; Sycamore, Oak, Beaver and Tangle creeks also belong to the family. In all, the Verde gathers strands from more than 6,600 square miles of rugged, beautiful central Arizona, an area larger than the state of Connecticut. Along the way, the river feeds otters and eagles, cottonwood and willow trees, ranchers and farmers, boaters and bird-watchers.

The Verde possesses at least three distinct personalities. The upper portion passes through steep-walled, colorful rimrock and canyon country, narrow and choked with stranded logs and debris. Near Clarkdale, a more civilized river loops through a wide, velvet-green valley, watering pecan orchards and farmfields and the towns of Cottonwood and Camp Verde.

The lower Verde charges past the Mazatzal Wilderness,

punctuated by rowdy rapids, the only way in or out along a handful of arduous backcountry roads or trails. The river's current is stilled for a time in Horseshoe and Bartlett reservoirs before making a last-gasp run into the Salt about 35 miles east of Phoenix.

Other than the two main downstream dams and a few diversions upstream, the Verde remains a mercurial stream ruled by the whims of the weather. Bob Williams, who has boated the entire length of the river, advises: "One must know and remember that unpredictability is one of the Verde's . . . more endearing qualities."

Fed by heavy rains on top of snows in the upper tributaries, the Verde can be transformed into a big brown bear of a river. Two unforgettable floods in two centuries — in 1891 and 1993 — made the record books. Both years, a torrent ripped down the Verde at close to 150,000 cubic feet per second. In average years, the river sidles along at a fraction of that volume, and in dry summers it dwindles to a trickle.

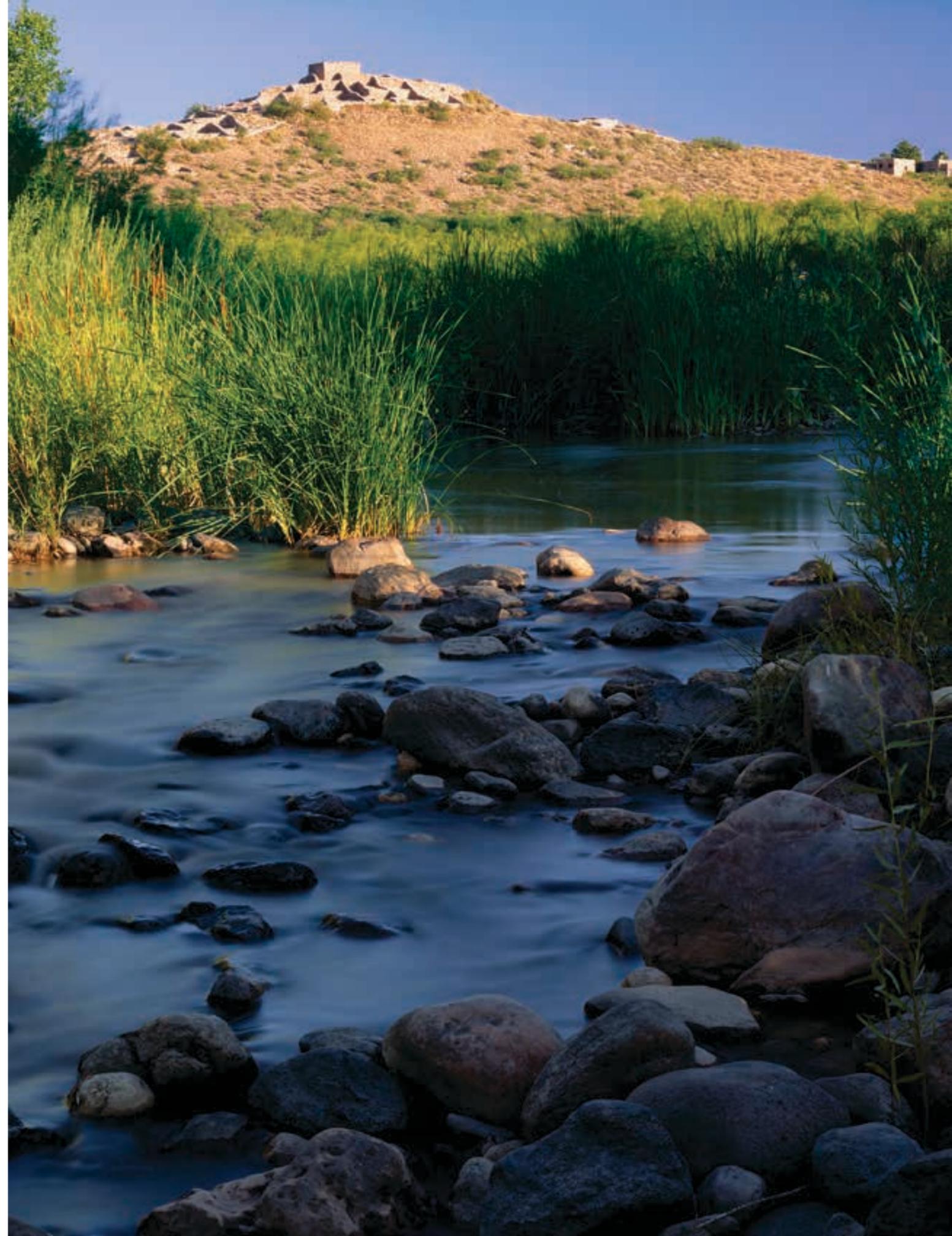
The Hohokam and Sinagua Indians, who lived along the Verde a thousand years ago, certainly knew of the river's recklessness. So did later ranchers like the Morgans, Perkins, Alvarezes and Packards.

About 25 miles downriver from Sullivan Lake, George

**They have seen both the male and female eagles dive into the river for trout, carp and suckers, and have even witnessed the pair snatching prey from a red-tailed hawk and an osprey.**



[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 24 AND 25] Another tributary of the Verde River, Oak Creek helped carve the famous canyon that bears its name. Deep in the canyon's recesses, the creek splashes past boulders and streamside sedges as nearby sycamore trees flaunt the first gold of early fall. BOB AND SUZANNE CLEMENZ [LEFT] A bald eagle watches from its nest on a cliff above the Verde River. LARRY LINDAHL [RIGHT] Occupied until A.D. 1425, after other dwellings in the area were abandoned, Tuzigoot, above the banks of the Verde River, might have drawn the ancient Sinagua Indians who had fled years of drought. RANDY PRENTICE





[ABOVE] Dead Horse Ranch State Park along the Verde River offers camping, hiking trails and year-round fishing opportunities. [OPPOSITE PAGE] Beaver Creek joins the Verde River near Camp Verde. The Sinagua Indians settled throughout its valley in the 12th and 13th centuries and built the misnamed but well-known Montezuma Castle along its banks. BOTH BY GEORGE H.H. HUEY

and Sharon Yard have their Y Bar D ranch at Perkinsville. What is surely one of the biggest cottonwood trees in the state casts an immense umbrella of shade on their riverside land. Cattle ranchers, the Yards decided not to graze their stock along the banks, and the riparian edge has responded with a spectacular recovery. They have also been trying to save a small threatened fish called the spikedace that is native to the Verde.

The Verde Canyon Railroad makes its turn-around at Perkinsville. Senator William Clark built the line in 1912 to haul copper ore from his United Verde Co. mines at Jerome. Today, passengers ride the 40-mile round-trip for the scenery. The cars sway and the brakes screech as the train snakes around tight curves through the Verde Canyon. Below Perkinsville, passengers rush to the right side of the train as the guide points out a loose mass of sticks set on a dark basalt cliff high above the river. It's called the Tower site, one of a number of bald eagle nests up and down the Verde.

The Verde River is a hotspot for bald eagles. Official observers with the Arizona Bald Eagle Nest Watch Program keep tabs on nesting pairs from December through mid-June, while the birds give birth and raise young.

I accompanied Brenda Wilson and Glenn Johnson on one of their daily observations of the eagle family at the Tower site. We got comfortable on a rocky, cactus-studded hillside, swatting juniper gnats and peering through a spotting scope as mom fed two youngsters that had just hatched. Wilson and Johnson talked like proud parents, protective of any intrusions that might cause the birds to crush the eggs or abandon the newborns.

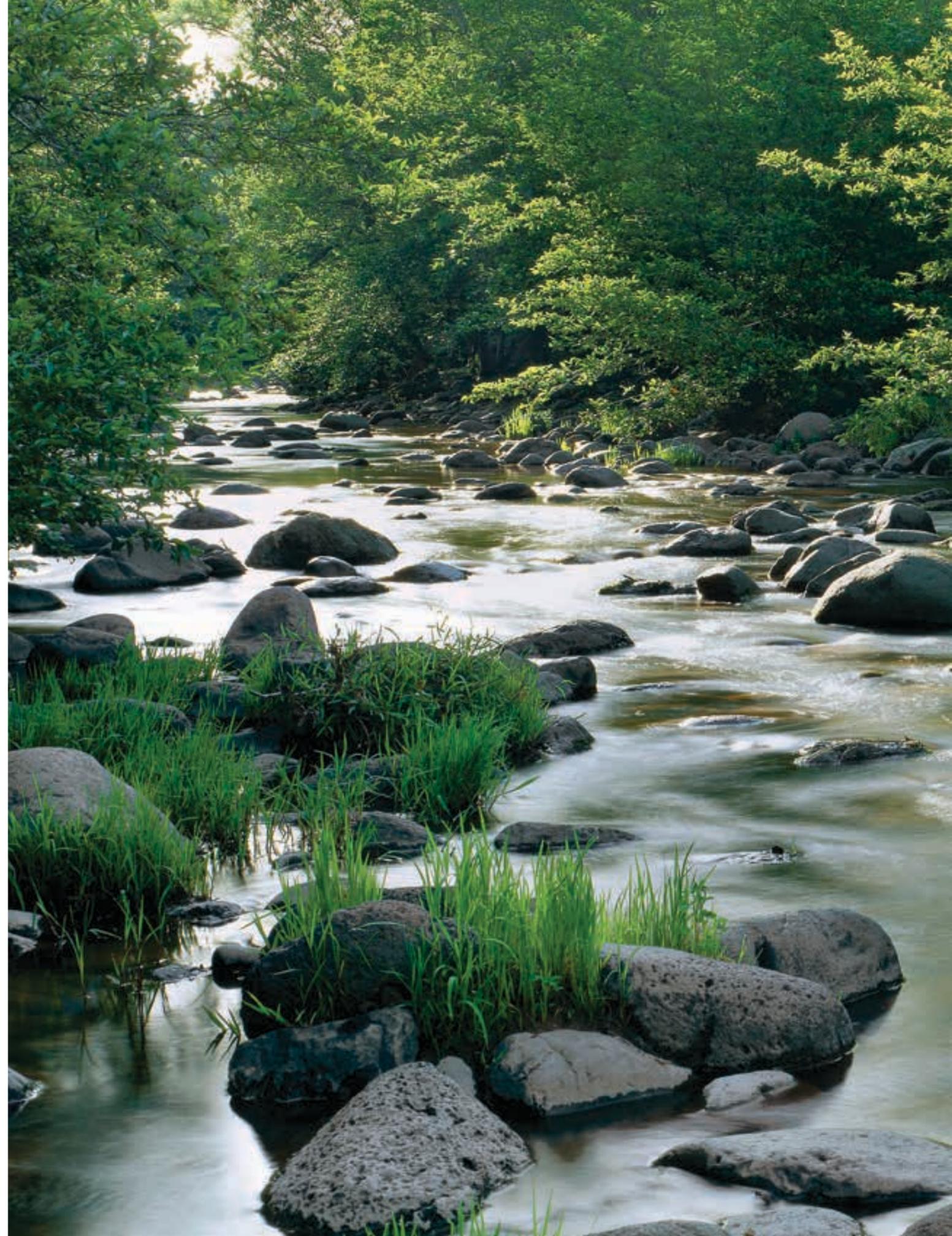
They have seen both the male and female eagles dive into the river for trout, carp and suckers, and have even witnessed the pair snatching prey from a red-tailed hawk and an osprey. The day before, Wilson and Johnson watched all four members of the family feeding on one big fish. This same eagle pair, they said, has inhabited the area for at least 10 years.

In my quest to learn more about the Verde, it was time to get in a boat. Friend Jene Vredevoogd graciously offered two blue inflatables, better known as "rubber duckies," for a float through the Verde Valley. We launched at Dead Horse Ranch State Park at Cottonwood where a rare riparian forest of Fremont cottonwoods and Goodding willows drapes the shore.

We nestled down in the duckies, eye level with waving cattails and stiff scouring rush. Goose-down cottonwood fluff whitened the air. Redwing blackbirds trilled their cascading, watery song, and two graceful hawks circled overhead. Beavers had gnawed young willows to pointed tips. High cutbanks of buff and orange sandstone kept houses and roads out of sight and out of mind.

Four young boys, poles in hand, were doing some earnest bass fishing. "We don't eat them," one assured us, "we throw them back in." Near Bridgeport, signs of civilization began to appear — laundry hanging on lines and barbecue grills ready for cookouts.

We could have paddled on down to the mouth of Oak Creek, but instead decided to call it a day and pulled over to Vredevoogd's back yard. A few years ago he found a piece of land on the river, cleaned it up and built a house. He





brags about his neighbors — the otters, raccoons and great horned owls.

For the next 30 miles or so to Beasley Flat, the river is negotiable by inexperienced boaters. But at Beasley, the Verde awakens as it departs the gentle valley and veers due south into the grips of the desert. The next 40 miles are designated part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. And the Verde Falls and other wily rapids await those river runners who commit to the multiday trip.

One of the takeouts is Sheeps Crossing, where a rough Forest Service road bumps down to the river and an old bridge. It was a challenge for sheepmen to get their herds across rivers like the Verde, as they drove them from winter to summer pasture. In the 1940s, Dr. Ralph Raymond of the Flagstaff Sheep Co. decided to build a bridge at this crossing to ease the way for his 10,000 sheep. His foreman, Frank Auza, and carpenter George Smith constructed the bridge with used mining cables and lumber. For the next four decades, herds of bawling woolies jostled across the bridge, swinging 45 feet above the river.

A few miles below Sheeps Crossing, the Verde's wild streak is tamed by Horseshoe and then Bartlett dams. Horseshoe was built in 1946, Bartlett in 1939, both in complicated arrangements to assure Verde water to the Phoenix Basin. Below Bartlett, the Verde tumbles quietly toward its rendezvous with the Salt River. On hot summer days, people swirl by in inner tubes, paying little heed to the landmark confluence where the Verde becomes another river.

Always, it's good to go back to the source. Up near the headwaters, Laurie Wirt and I bushwhacked down Granite Creek one afternoon. For a distance the streambed was dry. Suddenly, Wirt knelt by a small pool of water and uttered one word: "Current." Granite Creek had started to flow.

We sat on a huge downed cottonwood, munching peppery wild watercress and musing about the value of the Verde River's unique headwater valleys, the hidden aquifers underneath and the pressure to provide water to one of the fastest-growing parts of the state. Letting down her scientific guard for a moment, Wirt's love of this river surfaced like the pool in the creek. "If people knew what was here," she said as her voice trailed off, "if they knew what they could lose . . ." ■

*Rose Houk looks south to the Verde River from her home in Flagstaff.*



[OPPOSITE PAGE] Beginning high on the Mogollon Rim, West Clear Creek tumbles through its rock- and water-scoured canyon on the way to its confluence with the Verde River. NICK BEREZENKO [TOP LEFT] A powerful predator with a wingspan that can surpass 5 feet, the great horned owl is common throughout the Verde River watershed. [TOP RIGHT] Although sightings are extremely rare, the river otter's historical territory includes sections of the Verde River. BOTH BY TOM VEZO [ABOVE] Bartlett Reservoir stores the Verde River's flow in the last impoundment before the Verde joins the Salt River at Fort McDowell. LES DAVID MANEVITZ



# Llama Hikes

## Get a Llama Laughs

Just Learn to Love the Sweet-but-Stubborn Critters

text by Jackie Dishner  
photographs by David H. Smith

When I decided last year to visit Fossil Creek Llama Ranch in Strawberry, I thought the trip would provide a great diversion from a difficult year. Guests at the ranch relax by a campfire under a starlit sky, share sweet dreams with loved ones in a teepee (or a yurt, if you go in the winter), play farmhand by helping to milk a goat and then make cheese or fudge from the proceeds. And, oh yes, hike with the llamas.

After meeting a brown-eyed llama named Walter, however, the latter part of the deal didn't sound so great, and my 20-year-old son, Rob, didn't think the llamas liked him at all.

In fact, the first llama we came in contact with, Llakota, nestled right up to my face for a kiss. I didn't exactly respond favorably because that's a mighty big tongue to have lashing that close to my lips. Rob, on the other hand, couldn't even get close enough for a hug. Rob, a 6-foot 2-inch male, who in the human world is considered a handsome guy, had to forcibly coax the 300-pound, long-eyelashed, long-necked female to stand by him for the

souvenir picture. And when Llakota's ears dropped—a sign the animal wasn't pleased—Rob, of course, took it personally.

Still, that didn't stop him from brushing burrs off the animals' backs, walking them into the trailer, harnessing the packsaddles and generally helping our guide, Joyce Bittner, who owns the ranch with her husband, John. Rob seemed to enjoy guiding the big woolly companions along the trail when it was his turn. At a spot where a large log invaded the path, my son was thrilled that the llamas simply jumped right over, one after the other, as if performing a circus act.

The big bulky animals were much more agile than I, who would have been intimidated by their size if not for the short

lecture we received on llama behavior. Before we hit the trail, Bittner described how the animals have a sweet disposition, as long as you don't touch them in the face or on the rump. They might spit at you then, because that would irritate them. But since spitting's a behavior they prefer to inflict on other llamas, we learned we were probably safe—as long as we moved away from the line of fire. We were warned to watch the ears because you never know when a spitting match might ensue.

As our group of 14 hikers and three llamas moved out toward a meadow in near single-file formation on the three-hour trek through the Mogollon Rim's West Clear Creek Wilderness area, I breathed in the cool, fresh air. I heard loose ponderosa pine needles and oak leaves crackle under my boots. Periodically, I caught glimpses of tiny lavender blooms peeking out between damp grass and ferns. Walter, my hiking partner, also a 300-pounder, trailed behind the lead I held loosely in my left hand.

Though it was early fall, the weather felt unusually warm, and some of the hikers wore shorts (not me, however, because I feared poison ivy) as we headed toward an unnamed path surrounded by limestone cliffs and towering aspens.

Just as we advanced 20 feet past the remnants of an old concrete bridge near the trailhead, Walter, who decided it was time to exert his dominance, abruptly stopped. The look on his face said, "I'm done, and you can't make me go any farther." But, I thought, *he can't stop yet; we're just getting started, and he's carrying what we really came out here for—our gourmet lunch!*

I was told to tug on the lead and Walter would follow, but Walter stayed put. I tugged some more; he resisted. Save for his banana-shaped ears and woolly body, I couldn't help but compare this "llama with an attitude" to my cute-but-strong-willed 20-year-old son, who was standing next to me.

A somewhat hesitant but harsher tug forced Walter to press on, but he stopped again a few hundred feet farther when a second llama, Michael Jordan, paused. Michael made his way over to the right-hand side of the trail and dropped a dung heap. Not to be outdone, Walter followed suit and was joined by Bolivar, the third llama with us on the trek.

Walter continued this stop-and-go pattern throughout the course of our leisurely hike, usually so he could grab mouthful after mouthful of grass, leaves or tree branches along the way. The other two copied him (apparently, llamas don't mind carrying



your stuff when the job benefits include a buffet meal along the way).

As natural guard animals, llamas observe their surroundings carefully. And as social butterflies, they play copycat as a means of showing off what they've learned by observation—a curious characteristic that I enjoyed watching on this journey . . . until the humming began on the return trip.

At first it sounded like a soft cry. *Hum . . . hum . . . hum*. Barely audible, but with each step. *Hummmmm*. Each crackle of fallen leaves. *Hummmmm*. The sound grew louder and lasted longer. *Hummmmm . . . hummmmm*. As monkey see, monkey do, the sound set off a chorus of whining among the three animals that worried us all, except Bittner.

"They're just tired," she assured us. "Humming is their way of letting you know they're worried or agitated or just plain tired."

It made us want to embrace the poor souls, give them kisses on their sweet, furry faces, let them know everything's all right, just as you would do with a child. But llamas, remember, don't like to be touched.

So, we just listened to the birds chirping in the trees, water flowing through the creek and the llamas humming their anxious cries like children asking the familiar

[OPPOSITE PAGE] During a break for lunch on a llama trek in the West Clear Creek Wilderness, Bolivar nibbles on grass proffered by Victoria Fiore. [ABOVE] Bolivar takes a rest in a shady glen of ponderosa pine trees along the route.

travel question, "Are we there yet?"

Being around these big babies brought out the kid in us, too. Before long, we were behaving similarly, poking fun, mimicking the humming sounds. Then we abruptly stopped when someone asked, "What if we're irritating them?"

Oops. None of us intended to end this day of leisure by dodging llamas spit while boulder-hopping over a wet creek. Luckily, the animals ignored our childish antics, and we all went home with dry faces. We also left with something else—a desire to return. **AH**

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** For more information, call (928) 476-5178 or see the ranch's Web site at [www.fossilcreekllamas.com](http://www.fossilcreekllamas.com).

*Jackie Dishner of Phoenix says she's now enamored with the big woolly llamas and hopes to visit her new friend Walter again.*

*David H. Smith found hiking with the slightly stubborn llamas to be a lot more pleasant than riding the smelly mules of the Grand Canyon.*



# PARKER'S PLAYGROUND

text by Janet Webb Farnsworth photographs by Don B. Stevenson

Visitors Enjoy Lower Colorado River Adventures and Desert Explorations

I feel like a kite bobbing and weaving with wind whipping my face. But a kite doesn't clutch at its rope with white knuckles, so I'm just a blob dangling from a multicolored parachute 180 feet above the Colorado River at Parker.

My teen-age daughter, Jessica, takes the first turn at parasailing behind Rich Ferber's River Parasail boat. I watch her wave at boaters below and squeal in delight as Ferber brings the parasail down. She dips her toes in the cool Colorado River, then Ferber jerks her back up high above the water, and I can't wait to try it.

As I perch on the seat, securely shrouded in life jacket and safety harness, Ferber reassures me he's never had an accident. Then he guns the boat's engine, and I go airborne, screaming mightily. When I pry my eyes open, I'm awestruck at the contrasts below me — blue rippling river, bordered by dark-green alfalfa fields, followed by sand-colored desert and stark mountains the hue of burned toast. With that view, I forget I'm at the end of my rope, literally, and get brave enough to wave twice before Ferber reels me in like a giant catfish.

Parker, a friendly town of about 3,500 citizens, rolls like a green carpet along the east bank of the Colorado River in southwestern Arizona. At 450 feet elevation, mild weather makes it popular with winter visitors, while water activities draw a

younger crowd during hot summer months.

The Colorado River attracts water-skiers, speedboat and personal watercraft racing enthusiasts, plus those enjoying more leisurely tubing and swimming. The region offers year-round activities, and I've brought my husband, Richard, and daughter, Jessica, along to enjoy the fun.

Talk about Parker and you're really discussing Parker Strip, the 17 miles between Headgate Rock Dam and Parker Dam. Before tourists discovered the region, native people roamed the area, and then came miners searching for gold. The town of Parker roared into existence in 1871, named after Ely S. Parker, a Union Civil War general and Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1865.

Riverboats plied the Colorado from the mid-1800s to early 1900s, but when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway laid a spur line to the Colorado River in 1905, Parker picked up and moved 4 miles north to its present location where railroad construction crews were building a railroad stop and planning a town to go with it.

During World War II, Japanese-Americans were interned at nearby Poston. Gen. George S. Patton also trained troops for desert combat at Camp Bouse. Today, more than 85,000 acres of verdant crops flourish, including melons, lettuce, alfalfa and cotton. Agriculture, along with tourism from the 1 million annual visitors, helps drive Parker's economy.

Surprisingly, Parker Dam is the deepest dam in the world, but only one-quarter of the dam's 320 feet is above ground. Builders drilled 235 feet into the river bottom to bedrock, ensuring the dam's stability. Built between 1934 and 1938, Parker Dam backs up 27-mile-long Lake Havasu. From there, a billion gallons of water a day is sent 250

miles across the desert to Southern California.

Crossing the gravity-arch Parker Dam on State Route 95, we see that the spillway actually consists of five 50-by-50-foot gates. Rising 63 feet above the top of the dam, the five gate-hoist structures hold equipment resembling giant bicycle chains that pull open the floodgates when needed.

California and Arizona were feuding over water when the dam was built, so Governor Ben Moeur sent the Arizona National Guard to protect Arizona's rights. A few members of the guard tried crossing over to California to check things out, but their two boats became entangled and they needed rescuing by the Californians. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually ordered the guardsmen home.

After our parasailing adventure, Ferber takes us on a boat tour to see all the other water activities the river provides. Fishing, whether from boat or shore, remains popular. To us, just the novelty of a large river flowing peacefully through the arid desert is wonderfully relaxing.

We're staying at Branson's Resort, a combination motel and recreational-vehicle park built along the river, where you can tie up a boat or fish from its docks. Nearby, the scenic 18-hole Emerald Canyon Golf Course follows natural land contours around the rocky outcroppings and is a very challenging course. Don Rolapp, Parker

area tourism director, has arranged for us to meet Branson's Resort owner Jeanne Branson. At 84 years old, Branson has an abundance of energy, and since she knows Parker inside and out, she promptly takes us in tow. Always ambitious, she was, at age 13, a wild-animal trainer. Also a pilot, she operated a fly-in lodge in Canada's Northwest Territory. Branson still holds several world fishing records and is heading to the Arctic to hunt musk ox this summer.

Under her direction, we stop at Havasu Springs Resort. Along with a golf course, motel, RV park and restaurant, she points out a free boat launch and fishing area with a handicap ramp. Branson believes everyone should enjoy the river, so she put in the first free launch ramp 60 years ago. As we look around, she asks, "How can you beat this weather, this air? Just look at it." I have to agree the shimmering blue water, cinnamon cliffs and dazzling clear sky make a pretty scene.

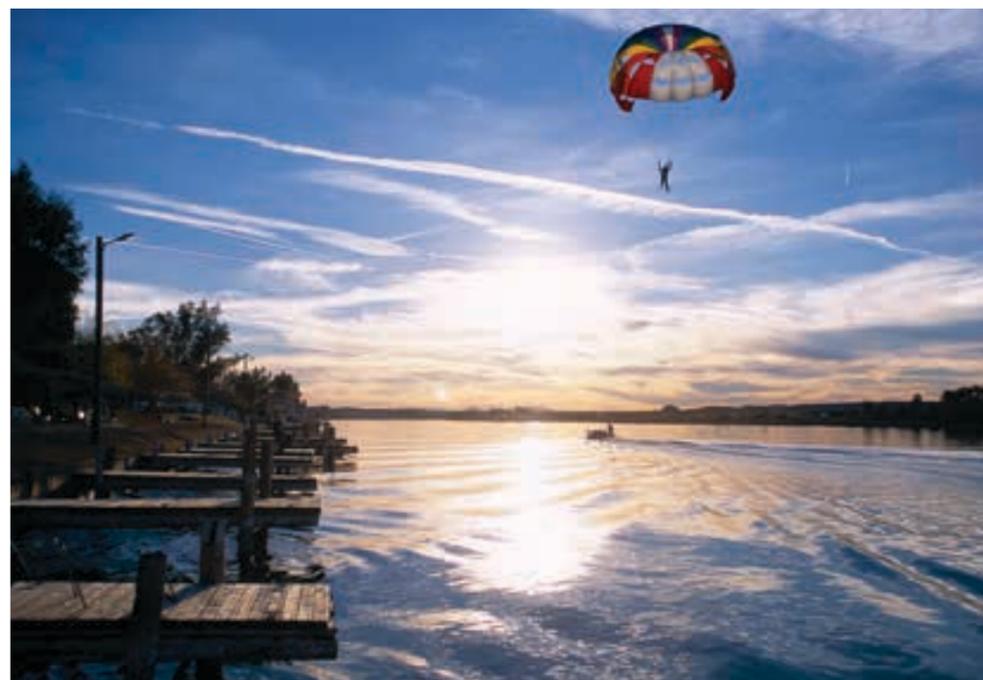
West of Parker Dam at the Mark Wilmer Pumping Plant, a Central Arizona Project facility on the shore of Lake Havasu, water from the lake is lifted



[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 34 AND 35] Sunset and the gently rolling Colorado River provide a shimmering backdrop for two fishermen trying their luck near Parker.

[ABOVE] A great view and a thrilling ride combine to fire the photographic enthusiasm of this parasailer, tethered to a boat cruising the Colorado River. RYAN STEVENSON

[RIGHT] The river's broad expanse north of Parker serves as the launching point for parasailing adventures.



[TOP] The darkening dusk and a slow shutter speed cause taillights to trail across the top of Parker Dam. With a foundation placed 235 feet below the riverbed, the deepest of the Colorado River containment structures backs up 27-mile long Lake Havasu. [ABOVE] Local doyenne and world-record angler 84-year-old Jeanne Branson runs a resort and RV park on her much-loved Colorado River.



[ABOVE] A popular attraction on the outskirts of Parker, the Nellie E. Saloon draws crowds on the weekends with all-American fare and country music.

[OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE] The Colorado River's water is a welcome commodity in the state's interior. Here, a Central Arizona Project pumping station taps the precious resource.

[OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW] Buckskin Mountain State Park, one of two state parks in the Parker area, includes a campground, boat ramps, beaches and hiking trails.

up 824 feet and sent through the 7-mile long Buckskin Mountains Tunnel. Rising 2,900 feet, 488 billion gallons of water yearly flow through the system bringing Colorado River water to cities as far away as Phoenix and Tucson.

When we comment on the number of birds, Branson takes us straight to the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge, stretching along the river as it flows into Lake Havasu. The refuge's thick trees, brush and cattail marshes provide a wintering water habitat for migrating birds. The Bill Williams River floodplain, more than a mile wide, is home to an abundance of wildlife, including desert bighorn sheep, along with a large variety of birds. We'd heard the coyotes yipping the night before, and Branson says wild burros often "serenade."

She tells us that Ken Coughlin's Nellie E. Saloon, located 5 miles east of Parker on a rough dirt road, is a must-see. Only open on weekends from "High Noon to Sundown," according to the sign, we arrive for lunch and find several hundred people already eating hamburgers, hot dogs and chili and listening to a country band. The diverse crowd includes children, a four-wheel-drive club, winter visitors and plenty of locals.

Coughlin opened for business in 1983 under the shade of a three-sided structure and hauled water in an old fire truck. He's been busy since then constructing everything on the place himself. In 1997, he added a few luxuries like a well,

solar electricity and an evaporative cooler. Even with coolers, the heat closes the Nellie E. Saloon from June through September.

A large yellow and white tomcat is stretched out across the top of the piano like a ruler surveying his kingdom. Coughlin says, "That's Mr. Nell. He just wandered in here out of the desert one day, and now he rules the roost." Obviously accustomed to adoring subjects, Mr. Nell yawns as I give him a friendly chin scratching.

On our drive back to Parker, we pass a steady line of cars heading to the Nellie E. Saloon. Coughlin will be frying hamburgers until dark, and Mr. Nell will get plenty of attention today.

We want to see more of the desert's spectacular geological formations, so the next morning Rich Lane of Colorado River Buggy Expeditions picks us up in his eight-passenger yellow dune buggy. Lane offers customized tours, and we opt for a two-hour trip to Gray Eagle Mine, an old gold mine. This gives us a chance to explore the area and view 30 million years of geology.

With the Mojave Desert mainly on the western side of the Colorado River and the Sonoran Desert on the eastern side, this is a transitional zone with plants from both areas. Joshua trees, an indicator plant for the Mojave Desert, mingles with saguaro cacti from the Sonoran Desert. Paloverde, mesquite and ironwood trees grow alongside cholla, prickly pear cacti and ocotillo. There are hundreds of miles of off-road trails,



River Indian Tribes, or CRIT. The CRIT Museum and Library includes items and history from all four tribes. All the farmland from Parker downriver to Blythe, California, is owned by the tribes and leased out. The tribes operate the BlueWater Resort and Casino, also in Parker.

The CRIT Education Department is developing the 'Ahakhav Tribal Preserve to help restore the river's native habitat. We walk a multipurpose trail that wanders through the preserve's thick vegetation to Deer Lake, a hunting and fishing area. Birds and wildlife abound in this brushy region.

Canoes can be rented to explore the preserve's Colorado River backwater areas. Jessica wants to try the canoes, but it's too late in the afternoon. As if to prove my point, turkey vultures soar down to roost for the night in a dead tree. With the sun setting, we reluctantly

end our walk. but riding with Lane is definitely more comfortable and, besides, he also changes flat tires.

To reach the Gray Eagle mine area, we travel northeast of Parker through the Buckskin Mountains where numerous mine shafts dot the wildly eroded volcanic terrain. Looking at the jagged barrier mountains, I realize what a hardy breed those early prospectors must have been. Lane doesn't allow us to inspect any of the dangerous "glory holes," a wise practice for anyone.

Javelinas, coyotes, bobcats and bighorn sheep roam the region, but we don't spot any since most desert animals are nocturnal and avoid the daytime heat. Lane has his own method of missing the heat. "I only offer rides from Labor Day to Memorial Day. Summer temperatures on the desert floor can reach more than 120 degrees, and that heat can be dangerous to travel in if you don't have air conditioning," he tells us.

Parker has three great parks, Buckskin Mountain State Park, La Paz County Park and Patria Flats Day Use Park, all great places to enjoy the river, camp, picnic or hike. Buckskin Mountain offers a full campground in its River Island Unit, with a boat ramp and a beach. Several hiking trails lead to great views of the river. An ever-changing activity calendar advertises interesting programs, hikes and adventures.

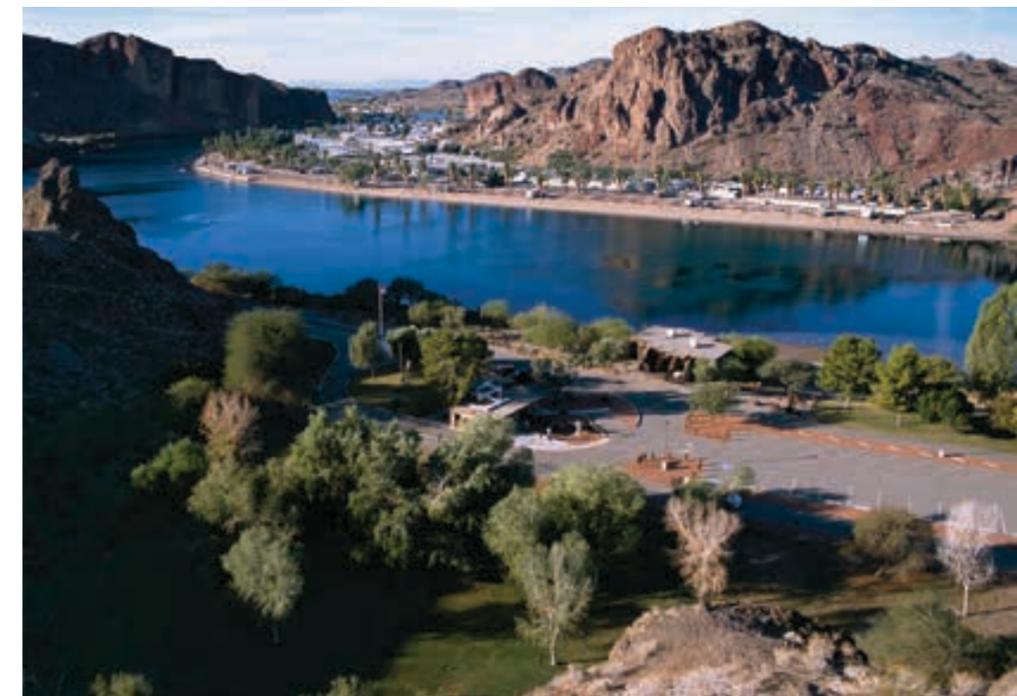
Bordering the Colorado River is the Colorado River Indian Reservation, unique because four tribes — the Mojave, Chemehuevi, Navajo and Hopi — occupy the land while maintaining their own separate lifestyles and traditions. Together they form a community known as the Colorado

end our walk.

From high-flying parasailing to roosting turkey vultures, Parker offers an array of things to do — river fun to cool you off, craggy mountain hiking to warm you up, history, wildlife and bird-watching to please the nature lover, and jet-boat racing to get the fun-lover's blood pumping. **AH**

*Janet Farnsworth, a resident of Snowflake and a native Arizonan, is always impressed with running water. Her daughter, Jessica, wants to go back for more parasailing — obviously the brave one of the family.*

*Don B. Stevenson of Tempe says he was impressed with the friendliness of the people around the Parker area and the Colorado River Indian Tribes.*



**LOCATION:** Parker is beside the Colorado River at Arizona's western border.

**LODGING:** Branson's Resort, (928) 667-3346; Havasu Springs Resort, (928) 667-3361.

**ATTRACTIONS:** 'Ahakhav Tribal Preserve, (928) 669-2664, [www.ahakhav.com](http://www.ahakhav.com); CRIT Museum and Library, (928) 669-1332; Colorado River Buggy Expeditions, (928) 669-6171, [www.buggytours.com](http://www.buggytours.com); Emerald Canyon Golf Course, (928) 667-3366; Nellie E. Saloon, [www.geocities.com/desert\\_bar](http://www.geocities.com/desert_bar); River Parasail, (928) 667-4837, [www.riverparasail.com](http://www.riverparasail.com).

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Parker Tourism Committee, (888) 733-7275, [www.parkertourism.com](http://www.parkertourism.com).

**CAMPING JOKES**

Recently, we asked our readers for camping jokes. Here's a sample of what we got:

Years ago our family was on the way to a camping trip in the White Mountains. It was a bright, sunny day as we left Tucson, prompting Mom to stop at a service station and ask the attendant if they had any dark glasses. "No ma'am," he replied, "but we do have paper cups."

ANNA DEAN SHIELDS, Payson

{early day arizona}

"John, that man next door came over here today and offered to tune little Lucy's piano."  
"Great! Did you let him do it?"  
"No, dear. He wanted to tune it with an ax."  
Jerome News, JUNE 3, 1911

When you go camping, you're not "roughing it" just because you leave your lighted makeup mirror at home.

TOM PADOVANO, Jackson Heights, NY

The Health Department is getting into camping. At a fork in a woodland trail, the department posted signs. As we approached the mountains, we hit the fork in the road. One said

"Smokey," pointing one way, and the other said "Non-Smokey," pointing the other way.

I went camping, and surrounding the campgrounds was a bike trail and a sign that said, "Watch out for cycle-paths."

BOTH BY JOHN KRUIEL, Oak Lawn, IL

The worst camping trip is the one where the fish don't bite and the flies and mosquitoes do.

GUY BELLERANTI, Oro Valley

We were backpacking in the mountains with our three children, who were elementary school-age at the time. We took a day hike to some beautiful lakes, where we stopped to eat lunch.

As we ate, about 60 yards away two women with no sense of modesty disrobed in broad daylight and bathed in the lake. In no hurry to cover up again, they then sat on a rock in the sun to dry off, all in full view of our family.

A couple of hours later, we saw the two (now fully clothed) approaching us on a narrow trail. One of my daughters whispered to me, "Dad, what

**UNUSUAL PERSPECTIVE**

**UNUSUAL** A snail can sleep for three years ... although periodically a telemarketer awakens it. —Linda Perret

are we going to say to them?"

"That's easy," I replied. "I'll just say, 'Hi, we've sure seen a lot of you today.'"

STEVEN J. COLE, Flagstaff

While camping one weekend, my friend Jim and I decided to have a "fishing" contest, standing at the edge of the Black River and trapping fish with our hands. My friend would boast with each fish he caught, stringing them onto a makeshift line.

The only luck I had was spotting a black bear splashing toward us in search of lunch. Backing away slowly in hopes that we wouldn't be spotted, my friend whispered, "I ain't worried about it." I couldn't figure out why, as I knew I could outrun Jim. Just then I noticed his fish tied to my belt loop.

DAVID MEMBRILA, Tucson

**IMPERFECT CUSTOMER**

I was eavesdropping when one irate waitress was describing a customer, who had just left. "She complained about the food, demanded more servings for the same price, told me I was too slow, and worst of all — tipped me a penny." She hesitated and then went on, "She's what I'd call a real counter-terrorist."

RUTH BURKE, Bowie

**ROAD HOG**

Several years back while traveling in the mountains northeast of Phoenix, we often had to reduce speed when following trailers and other slow-moving vehicles. Our frustration turned into laughter when we came upon a small economy car working its way up a steep hill. A handwritten

sign on the back read: "Please don't rush me — I'm busy making 25.8 miles to the gallon."

THOMAS LAMANCE, Prewitt, NM

**FLYING PRESIDENT**

After the devastating Aspen Fire in 2003 on Mount Lemmon northeast of Tucson, President George W. Bush visited the site to deliver a speech on forest policy. He traveled by helicopter from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base to the mountaintop. I was driving my niece JoAnnah, age 6, to her piano lesson as the convoy passed overhead.

"Look, JoAnnah," I said. "The president of the United States is in one of those helicopters."

She did not reply.

"There are three of them. Which one do you think it is?" Still no response.

"Is it the first one?"

"No," she retorted with a sigh.

"The first president is dead."

KAY LEHMAN, Tucson

**FOREBODING PREDICTION**

During a recent telephone visit with my brother-in-law, who lives in Minnesota, I was lamenting the devastating effects to Arizona's landscape of the recent drought, summer wildfires and the bark beetle infestation. He replied, "Wow, before long your state is going to turn into a desert!"

WENDY KREMANAK, Glendale

{reader's corner}

There is one thing that keeps me from pursuing mountain climbing... the law of gravity.

Mountain climbing is this month's topic. Send us your jokes and we'll pay \$50 for each one we use.

**TO SUBMIT HUMOR:** Send your jokes and humorous Arizona anecdotes to Humor, *Arizona Highways*, 2039 W. Lewis Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85009 or e-mail us at editor@arizonahighways.com. Please include your name, address and telephone number with each submission.

Like a Fallen Comrade, the Old Green Tent Was Hard to Leave Behind

IN THE MIDST OF A RECENT photo-organizing quest, I uncovered a stack of old camping pictures. As I flipped through snapshots covering 30 years of family camping trips, I smiled at pictures of my sister and me fishing for crawfish in Knoll Lake northeast of Payson, my mom cooling her feet in Fossil Creek west of Strawberry.

Then I came upon a photo of my family posed in front of a green tent. I caught my breath — we looked so happy — dusty, grinning.

The green tent met its demise last summer, after countless storms, many raucous games of Go Fish, plus surviving the Great Garage Acid Spill of 1983. The tent's castlelike assemblage of

peaks and turrets seemed to provide ample room for a square dance or an exuberant family of four.

Every summer we wedged the tent between fishing poles and sleeping bags into the back of the old Chevy Blazer. As soon as we turned onto forest roads, the tent would bonk me on the head in its excitement to reach Whitehorse Lake or the Grand Canyon.

Sure, you can put up those newfangled tents in 30 seconds. Big deal. In my family, learning how to pitch the green tent was a rite of passage.

When I turned 10, my dad taught me the green tent's intricate system of color-coded metal knobs and pulleys, further complicated after the Great Acid Spill by twine rope repairs.

But the green tent maintained a brave face — no matter the weather, it provided a safe haven — and we lovingly cared for it, carefully sweeping out pine needles and other forest debris.

By the time I reached high school-age, the green tent looked rather shabby — it stood lopsided, half-drunk with unknobbed knobs — but still fulfilled its duty every summer. Then I went to college and we quit camping.

Last summer, after an 11-year hiatus, my family planned another camping trip to Knoll Lake. When we got to the campsite and tried to erect it, the tent clearly resented its lengthy neglect. Knobs wouldn't knob, zippers wouldn't zip and some poles simply refused to stand upright. After careful cajoling and a few safety

pins, the green tent finally forgave us and stood proud again.

That afternoon during our hike, the sky broke open and pelted us with hail. We turned tail and dashed back to the campsite. Through the rain-whipped trees, we saw the green tent beckoning and quickly scurried to its shelter. Dodging marble-sized hail, we stumbled into the tent and huddled together, listening to the ominous sound of pounding hail.

"Good ol' green tent," my dad said.

Just then, the roof sagged. Canvas grazed the top of my dad's head. We looked at each other. A strange creaking sound rose all around.

"Aw, shucks," my dad said, and the tent collapsed on top of us. Blinded by green, we fumbled for an opening, but the tent didn't want to let us go. Even in its defeat, it strove to protect us from the storm, clinging to us like memories of the past.

Finally my sister found a way out, and we struggled after her. We stood in the rain, soaked to the bone, and gazed sadly at the canvas heap. My dad sighed and wiped the rain out of his eyes.

"It was a good tent," he pronounced.

We nodded somberly, paused briefly, then dashed for the car.

We had just made it to the safety of the Blazer when we remembered our duffel bags entombed inside the tent. My dad and I braved the storm once more and wrestled with the crumpled green mess, but could not find a way inside. My dad looked at me.

"We're going to have to rip it open," he said.

"Dad, we'll ruin it!" I protested.

"We'll have to leave it behind anyway, honey."

My dad pulled out his knife and I turned away, unable to watch.

We drove home that day leaving our faded green comrade behind in a trash Dumpster.

Last week, my parents bought a new tent — yup, one of those newfangled jobs — and invited me to go camping. I hesitated, but later, as I sat looking at the old picture of the green tent, I remembered the sound of the broom swooshing out pine needles and how I felt the first day my dad let me pound in the tent stakes. I called my dad and told him I'd join the camping trip.

"You might want to bring some twine and safety pins for the tent," he suggested.

"Why? It's brand new!" I said.

"Well, you never know . . ."

I laughed and glanced at the old photo before tucking it away for good. After all, there's always room for more memories — even inside a smaller new tent. ■



heat strokes

BY GARY BENNETT



"It's not chicken-fried snake. It's steak, Stupid!"

## Travel Old West Ranch Country from Munds Park to Mormon Lake

**S**TROLLING ALONG the wooden sidewalk that connects Mormon Lake Lodge and Steakhouse, the post office and general store, I could almost hear the jingle of a cowboy's spurs.

In the 1800s, Mormon settlers introduced sheep and cattle ranching to northern Arizona. Lot Smith, one of the early settlers, built the first sawmill for the fledgling logging industry. The abundance of timber to be cut eventually brought many loggers and their families. When the A & P Rail lines came through in 1887, Mormon Lake Village prospered as a hub for shipping logs, railroad ties and fuel.

The quick-and-easy way to reach Mormon

Lake, 30 miles southeast of Flagstaff, is paved Lake Mary Road (Forest Service Road 3) off Interstate 17. This route offers plenty of scenery as it passes through a forest of ponderosa pine, oak and aspen trees, but I wanted to nurture my adventurous spirit and chose the less-traveled roads to the lake, hoping for a glimpse of elk, deer or wild turkey.

The morning dawned bright and clear as my husband, Lloyd, and I traveled north from Phoenix on Interstate 17 to begin our drive from Munds Park through Coconino National Forest to Mormon Lake. We took Exit 322—where we began our mileage count—at Munds Park and turned right at the end of the off ramp to drive east on Pinewood Boulevard.

The paved road runs through Munds Park, a mountain community comprised mostly of summer homes. Upon leaving Munds Park, we crossed a cattle guard at 1.8 miles where Pinewood Boulevard gives way to Forest Service Road 240. We remained on the well-marked FR 240 the entire 14.6-mile drive to our destination. The first 5 miles of the road were well maintained, graveled and smoothly graded. Traveling in an easterly direction, we passed through a rich wildlife habitat and ideal spots for camping, hiking and picnicking.

As we gradually gained altitude, towering ponderosa pines, oaks and aspens became a backdrop to meadows green from the



[ABOVE] The eighth green at Pinewood Country Club in Munds Park south of Flagstaff tempts golfers on their way to Forest Service Road 240.

[RIGHT] Offering an open-pit steakhouse, RV park and campground, and cowboy dinner theater, the Mormon Lake Lodge is a popular attraction at Mormon Lake.

[OPPOSITE PAGE] Ponderosa pine boughs and autumn-tinted Gambel oak tree branches form a canopy over Mormon Lake Road.



[BELOW] Jennifer Gold's smile and a steak-and-bean dinner brighten the entrance to the Mormon Lake Lodge Steakhouse. [BELOW RIGHT] Reminiscent of the community's pioneer beginnings, a horse-drawn wagon welcomes visitors to the village of Mormon Lake's southern entrance. [BOTTOM] Speckled with yellow foliage, a stand of Gambel oaks interrupts a meadow near the junction of FR 240 and Mormon Lake Road.



summer rains. We continued to follow 240, and at 3.9 miles, crossed a narrow bridge over a spring-fed stream running into the meadow where elk and deer come out from their sanctuary of trees to feed and drink at early dawn and dusk.

In spite of the drier than usual conditions, the stock tanks were almost full of water for the cattle. Elk, wild turkey and deer are abundant in this region, although on this particular day we saw only squirrels scampering about, playing tag from tree to tree.

Ranch houses at the edge of the forest are a reminder that we're in historic ranching country, where cattle graze in the meadows

as they have for more than a century.

After 6.6 miles from our turnoff onto Pinewood Boulevard, 240 yields a sharp bend to the left and we begin a climb to above 7,000 feet in elevation. White billowing clouds forming against the clear blue skies appeared to be close enough to reach up and touch. Less than a mile from the start of the climb, a junction with Forest Service Road 700 heading north offered another adventure, but on this trip, we decided to maintain our course eastward on 240.

As we drove past Forest Service Road 91, our route climbed steeply and soon narrowed and became washboarded. Using caution, this road is suitable for a passenger car. Unlike many Arizona back roads, the route doesn't involve switchbacks, which allows an opportunity to relax and savor the solitude and beauty of the forest. Through an opening in the trees, we eventually could see Mormon Lake Valley below. An intersection with Forest Service Road 90 terminates 240, and we turned right, driving southeast on the two-lane paved road for the remaining 3 miles to Mormon Lake Village.

The village affords a trip back to the days of sheep and cattle ranching, far away from traffic lights, fast-food outlets and city noise. A welcome sign at the edge of town announces a population of 50 to 5,000, depending on the season. Surrounded by Coconino National Forest, the Western village stands at the edge of what once was the state's largest natural lake.

Scott Gold, general manager of the Mormon Lake Lodge, explained that the lake exists because a natural dam created by volcanic eruptions holds rainfall and seasonal runoff in a depression formed by cattle and sheep trampling the ground. On rare occasions, when full, the lake measures 5 miles long and 3 miles wide. Years of drought have taken a toll—the lake now is nearly dry.

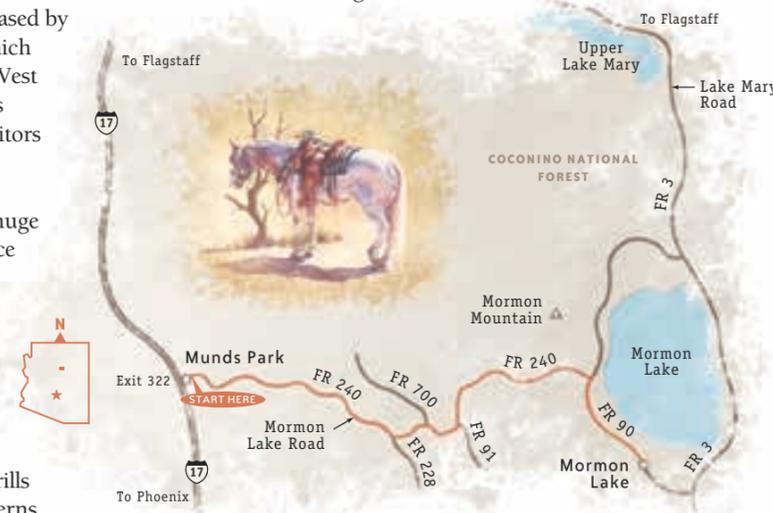
Mormon Lake Lodge was built in 1924 at the peak of the ranching and logging days. Virtually destroyed by fire in 1974, it was rebuilt with the



same rustic decor. The local ranchers, many of whom helped rebuild the lodge, seared their own brands into the rough wooden walls during what is claimed to have been the wildest branding party ever held. In 1994, the property was purchased by Forever Resorts, which maintains the Old West atmosphere that has welcomed lodge visitors for 80 years.

Inside the rustic lodge, a fire in the huge native-stone fireplace emitted warmth into the far corners of the dining area of the steakhouse, which has one of the few authentic open-pit mesquite grills in Arizona. Oil lanterns

hang from the walls and red-checked tablecloths adorn the picnic tables. Hanging overhead on a piece of driftwood, an optimistic sign reads, "Save your oars, boys, the lake will rise again." **AH**



[ABOVE] Lichen covers roughly textured boulders near the north end of Mormon Lake, beyond this Back Road Adventure route. A prescribed burn to thin brush in the Coconino National Forest creates background haze.

**travel tips** **WARNING:** Back road travel can be hazardous if you are not prepared for the unexpected. Whether traveling in the desert or in the high country, be aware of weather and road conditions, and make sure you and your vehicle are in top shape. Carry plenty of water, and let someone know where you're going and when you plan to return. Odometer readings in the story may vary by vehicle. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Coconino National Forest, Mormon Lake Ranger District, (928) 774-1147; Mormon Lake Lodge and Steakhouse, (928) 354-2227, www.mormonlakelodge.com.

## Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Rim Exudes Quiet Coziness

**B**UILDERS OF THE transcontinental railroad drove home the Golden Spike in 1869 just weeks before John Wesley Powell launched his boats on the Green River, heading for the first Colorado River exploration through the Grand Canyon. Though the two events seemed unrelated at the time, it was the Santa Fe Railway that developed the Grand Canyon's South Rim and opened the luxurious El Tovar Hotel in 1909, and the Union Pacific Railroad that opened the Grand Canyon Lodge on the more remote North Rim in 1928.

Now, visitors from around the world come to the Canyon, but one thing remains unchanged: the North Rim and the Grand Canyon Lodge are still remote and somehow . . . cozier than the more frequented South Rim.

The U-shaped lodge rests at the end of State Route 67 on the southern edge of the Kaibab Plateau in Grand Canyon National Park, 1,000 feet higher than the South Rim. Dense stands of ponderosa pine trees flank the highway, allowing only glimpses of the Canyon, and at the road's end, the lodge — a complex of cabins and a main lodge building — blocks the view entirely.

A walk from the parking lot passes the cafe, gift shop and saloon on the way to the main lobby and registration desk. Around a corner

and down a few steps, light bursts through the floor-to-ceiling plate-glass windows of the immense sunroom, which perches breathtakingly on the very edge of the Rim. Some first-time visitors might even experience a sense of vertigo and hesitate to inch forward all the way to the glass to take in the breath-stopping view.

Architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood ingeniously created this remarkable effect of unveiling the Canyon. Working under a mandate from the National Park Service that the building should harmonize with its setting, Underwood used Kaibab limestone quarried on the plateau and ponderosa pine logs milled from the surrounding forest. Hovering at the edge of Bright Angel Point, the lodge seems to rise as an extension of the canyon walls, and the stairs cascading onto walkways from the outdoor terraces appear as natural as ancient canyon paths. The pitched roofline, tiled green and gabled with log beams, blends with the pine forest.

The 23 Western cabins, made of half-log siding over wood frames, stand scattered on a rise northeast of the main lodge, and offer luxury without detracting from the rustic flavor. Rocking chairs on the porches suggest



that it would be a good idea to relax and enjoy the views. Meandering sidewalks connect the 70 log cabins, duplexes called Frontier and Pioneer cabins, to the southwest. Clustered along a forested slope, these smaller cabins have a woodsy village atmosphere. Visitors find themselves walking to dinner with neighbors and making arrangements with new hiking companions.

Meals at the lodge can be simple and quick by stopping at the cafeteria-style cafe, but a visit to the North Rim should include a meal in the grand dining room in the main building. Because of its popularity and reputation, dinner reservations are required, although anyone can drop in for breakfast and lunch. With Canyon views on two sides, the dining room can't be beat for location or for gourmet food with a Southwestern flair.

After dinner the place to be is on the terraces stretching out on either side of the sunroom. At this hour, a quiet camaraderie grows, and strangers regard each other like friends as this tiny part of the world community shares the close of a day at the edge of the Grand Canyon.

If a place can retain the love by which it was built, then this one does. Early settlers on the Kaibab were few and far between, but they were closely connected with each other. These pioneers built the roads across the plateau, brought the first "tourists" to the North Rim and set up camps to accommodate them. They carved a new trail into the Canyon, established a camp near Bright Angel Creek and built a cable system that was the first means of crossing the Colorado in the Canyon.

These men who had loved the North Rim for decades rallied to the call when the Union Pacific Railroad announced plans for the lodge in 1927. They set up construction camps on Bright Angel Point so they could build through the winter. Some of the men brought their families with them.

Joseph Gurnsy Brown had the contract to cut and peel all the logs for the lodge and

cabins. His wife, Anna, was the cheerful cook for the 30 loggers, baking eight to 10 pies and a dozen loaves of bread in a wood stove each day.

A stonemason's wife, Hortence Excell, taught the children of the families that stayed on with the construction crew. Joan Brown, the daughter of Joseph and Anna, completed third grade in the impromptu school of five grades with 17 children. Anna remembered this time on the Rim with fondness and recorded in her memoirs, "Along with our work we had a slab of cement where we could dance. . . . We had some real good parties out to the timber camp." In June 1928, the lodge opened one year after construction began.

The builders took pride in their work, desiring to fuse the natural beauty of the area into the buildings — both times. Fire consumed the main building and a few cabins during the night of September 1, 1932. Only the stonework remained, some walls, the foundation, terraces, stairways and fireplaces. Two years later, many of the original crew returned to begin reconstruction on the remaining foundation. The second design did not re-create the first, but remained true to its rustic style and to the harmony with its surroundings.

Grand Canyon Lodge reopened on June 1, 1937, asking \$8.50 a night for the Western cabins and \$2.25 for the smaller cabins. The prices today reflect the times, and the number of visitors each year has increased to 500,000, but, remarkably, little else has changed. The whole complex retains the sense of place designed by Underwood, nature's material precariously set on a tiny promontory through which to share the wonder of the Grand Canyon. ■



[BELOW] Perched on the lip of Bright Angel Point, the Grand Canyon Lodge offers rustic ambience and spectacular North Rim views of the Grand Canyon. [OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT] With its large windows overlooking The Transept canyon and massive log-encased steel beams supporting the ceiling, the lodge's dining room provides a unique culinary experience. [OPPOSITE PAGE, RIGHT] Named for landscape painter Gunnar M. Widfors, the Widfors Trail may be reached via a 2-mile hike from the lodge and affords impressive panoramas of The Transept, such as the one enjoyed here by photographer Richard L. Danley.



**LOCATION:** North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park, approximately 200 miles north of Flagstaff. **GETTING THERE:** From Flagstaff, travel north on U.S. Route 89 to U.S. Route 89A. Remaining on Route 89A, continue north across the Colorado River at Navajo Bridge, then drive west to Jacob Lake. Turn south onto State Route 67 and travel approximately 45 miles to Grand Canyon Lodge. **DATES:** Grand Canyon Lodge is open from mid-May through mid-October. **INFORMATION:** Xanterra Parks & Resorts, (303) 29PARKS or (888) 29PARKS, www.grandcanyonnorthrim.com; dinner reservations, (928) 638-2611; www.nps.gov/grca.

## Five Trails Reveal a Diversity of Trees at Hualapai Mountain Park

**H**UALAPAI MOUNTAIN PARK southeast of Kingman offers hikers five inter-connecting trails within a 10-mile trail system. Mohave County established the park in 1937, and the Civilian Conservation Corps built the first cabins and trails. The trail system has been improved and expanded ever since.

The Hualapai Mountains are as ancient as the rock formations found in the Inner Gorge of the Grand Canyon — 1.7 billion years old. The summit is Hualapai Peak, elevation 8,417 feet.

The Hualapai Indians (their name translates as “pine tree folk”) considered the nuts of the single-leaf piñon pine common to the mountains to be an important food source. Eventually, the name of the people became the name of the mountains.

The trailhead for Hayden Peak South Trail, like all

trails in the park, lies at the main trail junction, elevation 6,750 feet. On the trail system map available at the ranger station, this location is marked number 4, which corresponds to the trail information that comes with the map. The markers along the trail coincide with the map and information, so it’s a good idea to have one with you. This is a strenuous hike, so you’ll find a hiking stick a valuable companion. There are benches and storm shelters along the trail.

At location number 6 on the map, the Potato Patch Loop Trail junction, elevation 7,000 feet, take the right fork. This way leads south and up for a mile to the north end of the Potato Patch where Boy Scouts from the area hold a summer camp. The trail then leads down into the Potato Patch, which was a potato farm around 1910. This is a refreshing interlude before the challenging climb still ahead.

There is a choice to be made when the Hayden Peak South Trail meets the Hayden Peak West Trail. Mount Tipton Overlook, only .3 of a mile farther on the west trail, offers a view of Kingman and of Mount Tipton

at the north end of the Cerbat Mountains, 40 miles away.

The Hayden Peak South Trail route yields the true reward less than a mile farther south. Soon you’ll ascend through a narrow and shallow canyon that botanists call an interior riparian deciduous forest. A forest fire scorched this part of the mountains more than 50 years ago. Today, that scar has been replaced with pristine aspen trees, their thick, unmarred trunks as white as parchment. The ground is covered with ungrazed grasses and soft foliage called deer’s ears.

The trail climbs out of that narrow glade to a wooden bench at Dinosaur Rock Overlook, elevation 8,050 feet, some 200 feet below the summit of Hayden Peak. On this southern exposure, chaparral, cliff rose and pincushion cacti have replaced the forest. In the distance, to the west, the Sacramento Valley lies next to the Black Mountains, and beyond them, sunlight reflects on the surface of the Colorado River, 60 miles away.

When you take this hike, think of Miss Selma Braem. A graduate of Stanford University, Miss Braem arrived in Kingman in the early 1920s to teach bookkeeping and shorthand at the high school. In her spare time, Miss Braem assembled one of the first and most extensive collections of the flora found in the Hualapai Mountains.

The hike is 5.5 miles round-trip, and takes three hours or so, depending on whether you attempt to locate and identify along the way the 23 species of trees found in the Hualapais. After all, Miss Selma Braem did. **AH**

 Before you go on this hike, visit our Web site at [arizonahighways.com](http://arizonahighways.com) for other things to do and places to see in the area.



[ABOVE] Patches of snow linger in the shadows as day dawns at Hualapai Mountain Park southeast of Kingman. [OPPOSITE PAGE] The Hayden Peak South Trail culminates at Dinosaur Rock Overlook from which the distant Black Mountains may be seen on the western horizon.



**LOCATION:** About 14 miles southeast of Kingman.

**GETTING THERE:** Take Exit 53 off Interstate 40 in Kingman and proceed south on Andy Devine Avenue for 2 miles. Turn left (east) onto Hualapai Mountain Road, and drive 11.2 miles to the Hualapai Mountain Park ranger station to pick up a trail map. For an alternate route from east of Kingman, take Exit 59 to Hualapai Mountain Road, and then drive east to the ranger station. Continue 2 miles south into the park, bearing right at every junction. There is ample parking below the trailhead.

**TRAVEL ADVISORY:** Early spring through late fall offers the best hiking conditions.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Hualapai Mountain Park, (928) 757-3859.



