

10 WILDFLOWER HIKES & SCENIC DRIVES

ARIZONA

HIGHWAYS

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MARCH 2012

OUR ANNUAL
Wildflower
PORTFOLIO

LAKE POWELL
THEN & NOW

CASA GRANDE'S
HISTORIC HOTEL

WINSLOW
OUR HOMETOWN
OF THE MONTH

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Second Water Trail: Hyacinths, anemones, Mexican gold-poppies, desert lupines ... this time of year, wildflowers take center stage along this spectacular hike.

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▶ The rising sun backlights a summer storm in the Grand Canyon, as seen from Navajo Point on the South Rim. | GEORGE STOCKING

FRONT COVER Yellow brittlebushes crowd the hillsides of Black Mesa in the Mazatzal Mountains. | PAUL GILL

BACK COVER Dewdrops form a delicate coating on bluedick blossoms. | DEAN HUEBER



WILDFLOWERS 2012

A PORTFOLIO

Of the many portfolios we do every year, this one is among the most popular. Part of that is the photography, which is spectacular, but the allure is magnified by the fact that wildflowers are so unlikely in a harsh desert environment. There's wonderment in the following pages, but if you really want to see the lupines and larkspurs, flip to page 30 and check out some of our favorite wildflower hikes and scenic drives.



EDITOR'S NOTE: *Because Mother Nature has a mind of her own, Arizona's wildflower season varies from year to year. Without winter rain, spring color can be hit or miss. At press time, we had no idea how much rain we'd get — if any — but by the time you read this, we'll have a much better idea. That's where our website comes in. For the latest information on where to find wildflowers, visit www.arizonahighways.com.*

MEXICAN GOLDDPOPIES AND COULTER'S LUPINES BLOOM ALONG SILVER KING MINE ROAD NEAR SUPERIOR. | MARK LARSON



LEFT: BULL THISTLES TYPICALLY GROW IN "DISTURBED" EARTHEN AREAS AND ARE ATTRACTIVE TO BEES, BUTTERFLIES AND INSECTS. | MOREY MILBRADT ABOVE: BRIGHT-PINK SAND VERBENAS AND A FEW LIGHTER EVENING PRIMROSES SCATTER RANDOMLY ACROSS THE DUNES IN CABEZA PRIETA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. | JACK DYKINGA



WHEN CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT, THE SUPERSTITION WILDERNESS AREA EAST OF PHOENIX FINDS ITSELF COVERED IN MEXICAN GOLDDPOPIES, COULTER'S LUPINES AND BRITTLEBUSHES, AMONG OTHER WILDFLOWERS. | LAURENCE PARENT





ABOVE: THE VIOLET-BLUE TIP OF A COULTER'S LUPINE BLOSSOM CONTRASTS WITH THE VIBRANT COLOR OF A MEXICAN GOLDPOPPY. | MOREY MILBRADT **RIGHT:** SAGUAROS AND OCOTILLOS SHARE A HILLSIDE WITH BLUE LUPINES NEAR SUPERIOR. | PAUL GILL





LEFT: OWL CLOVER CARPETS THE DESERT FLOOR IN THE EAGLETAIL MOUNTAINS WEST OF PHOENIX. | **GEORGE STOCKING** ABOVE: SCORPION-WEED DOESN'T STING AS THE INSECT DOES, BUT CONTACT WITH THE PLANT CAN RESULT IN A RASH. | **DEAN HUEBER**



WILDFLOWER HIKES & SCENIC DRIVES

BELL TRAIL | *Coconino National Forest, Sedona*

This easy trail parallels Wet Beaver Creek for 3.3 miles to Bell's Crossing. Like most trails in the Sedona area, this one can be hiked year-round. In the spring, a handful of wildflowers — including desert hyacinths and blackfoot daisies — can be seen blossoming along the water, amid the sycamore, cottonwood and ash trees.

Length: 6.6 miles round-trip

Rating: Easy

Directions: From Phoenix, drive north on Interstate 17 to the Sedona exit (Exit 298) and turn right onto Forest Road 618. Continue on FR 618 for 2 miles to Forest Road 618A, turn left, and continue a quarter-mile to the trailhead parking lot.

Special Considerations: A Red Rock parking pass is required.

Information: Red Rock Ranger District, 928-282-4119 or www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

THE BIRDING TRAIL | *Catalina State Park, Oro Valley*

The Birding Trail is an easy 1-mile loop located in Catalina State Park. In the spring, the trail is a great place to see poppies, lupines and fiddlenecks. Occasionally, park rangers offer guided hikes, which are an ideal way to learn about the area's flora and fauna, including the 170-plus bird species that call this area home.

Length: 1-mile loop

Rating: Easy

Directions: From Tucson, drive

north on Oracle Road for approximately 12 miles to the entrance for Catalina State Park.

Special Considerations: State park entrance fees apply.

Information: Catalina State Park, 520-628-5798 or www.azstateparks.com/parks/catalina

CALLOWAY TRAIL | *Picacho Peak State Park, Picacho*

During a good wildflower season, Picacho Peak is home to one of the most stunning poppy fields in Southern Arizona. According to park rangers, the north face of the mountain is an ideal place for the poppies to bloom after a wet winter. The Calloway Trail (0.7 miles) winds right through the poppy belt, and the scenic overlook offers sweeping views that are often dotted with lupines.

Length: 1.4 miles round-trip

Rating: Easy

Directions: From Phoenix, drive south on Interstate 10 to Picacho Peak Road (Exit 219), turn right, and follow the signs to the park entrance.

Special Considerations: State



park entrance fees apply.

Information: Picacho Peak State Park, 520-466-3183 or www.azstateparks.com/parks/pipe

CACTUS FOREST SCENIC LOOP DRIVE | *Saguaro National Park East, Tucson*

This paved road winds for 8 miles past pockets of desert zinnias, brittlebushes, desert marigolds, desert mallows, fleabanes and trixises. Spring is the only time of year when Saguaro National Park's namesake takes a backseat.

Distance: 8-mile loop

Directions: From Tucson, drive east on Speedway Boulevard to Freeman Road and turn right. Continue south on Freeman Road for approximately 3.5 miles to Old Spanish Trail, turn left, and continue for a quarter-mile to the park entrance.

Special Considerations:

National park fees apply. **Information:** Saguaro National Park East, 520-733-5153 or www.nps.gov/sagu

CAVE CREEK TRAIL NO. 4 | *Tonto National Forest, Cave Creek*

Cave Creek Trail No. 4 winds east through the Cave Creek corridor and up into the Sonoran Desert. The creek bed and scattered pools of water make ideal environments for blooming lupines, bluedicks, desert globemallows and Indian paintbrushes.

Length: 10.4 miles one-way

Rating: Moderate

Directions: From Phoenix, drive north on Cave Creek Road. Pass through Cave Creek and Carefree, where the route becomes Forest Road 24. From Carefree, continue north on FR 24 (dirt road) for approximately 18 miles to the trailhead, located a short distance beyond Seven Springs Campground.

Special Considerations: None **Information:** Cave Creek Ranger District, 480-595-3300 or www.fs.usda.gov/tonto

FRYE CANYON TRAIL | *Coronado National Forest, Safford*

This moderately difficult hike follows a stream that feeds sycamores, cottonwoods and willow trees. In the springtime, the trail also features classic Arizona wildflowers, such as Indian paintbrush and red salvia, along with mulleins and mountain thistles.

Length: 2 miles round-trip

Rating: Moderate

Directions: From Safford, drive northwest on U.S. Route 70 toward Thatcher. Turn left (south) onto North Reay Lane and continue for 13 miles to Forest Road 103, or Frye Mesa Road. Turn right (west) onto FR 103 and continue approximately 10 miles to the trailhead.

Special Considerations: None **Information:** Safford Ranger District, 520-388-8300 or www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado

KING CANYON TRAIL | *Tucson Mountains, Tucson*

Located across the road from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Mu-



seum, this challenging trail leads to Wasson Peak, the highest point in the Tucson Mountains. It's a workout, but it's worth the effort. In the springtime, hikers can expect to see lupines, bahias, desert marigolds and fiddlenecks.

Length: 7 miles round-trip

Rating: Strenuous

Directions: From Tucson, drive west on Speedway Boulevard for approximately 13 miles to Gates Pass Boulevard and turn left. Continue for approximately 4.8 miles to Kinney Road and turn right. Continue on Kinney Road for 2.5 miles to the trailhead.

Special Considerations: Bikes and dogs are not permitted on the trail.

Information: Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department, 520-877-6000 or www.pima.gov/nrpr/trails

LOST DOG WASH TRAIL | *McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale*

This urban trail is popular with Scottsdale residents because of its easy access. But it's the prevalence of wildflowers that makes it a draw this time of year. Shortly into the hike, fields of wildflowers, including chuparosas, gillias and Indian wheat flowers, blanket the hillsides.

Length: 5.2 miles round-trip

Rating: Moderate

Directions: From Scottsdale, drive east on Shea Boulevard for 4.5 miles to 124th Street, turn left, and continue north past Via Linda to the trailhead.

Special Considerations: None **Information:** McDowell Sonoran

Preserve, 480-312-7013 or www.scottsdaleaz.gov/preserve

PINAL PIONEER PARKWAY | *Florence Junction*

In 2011, Arizona's Pinal Pioneer Parkway was featured in *USA Today* as one of the five fastest highways in the United States. Nevertheless, you'll want to go the speed limit this time of year to enjoy the poppies and lupines along the route from Florence to Oracle Junction.

Distance: 43 miles one-way

Special Considerations: None **Directions:** From Florence, drive south on State Route 79 for about 43 miles to Oracle Junction.

Information: Tucson Visitors Center, 520-624-1817 or www.visittucson.org

SILVER KING MINE ROAD | *Superior*

This scenic drive, which is located west of Superior, winds along Peachville Mountain on a rocky single-lane road. Mexican goldpoppies and desert lupines bloom just past Silver King wash, near the end of the drive.

Distance: Approximately 5 miles one-way

Directions: From Phoenix, drive east on U.S. Route 60 for approximately 50 miles to Silver King Mine Road and turn left.

Special Considerations: A high-clearance vehicle is recommended. Do not attempt to cross Silver King Wash in inclement weather.

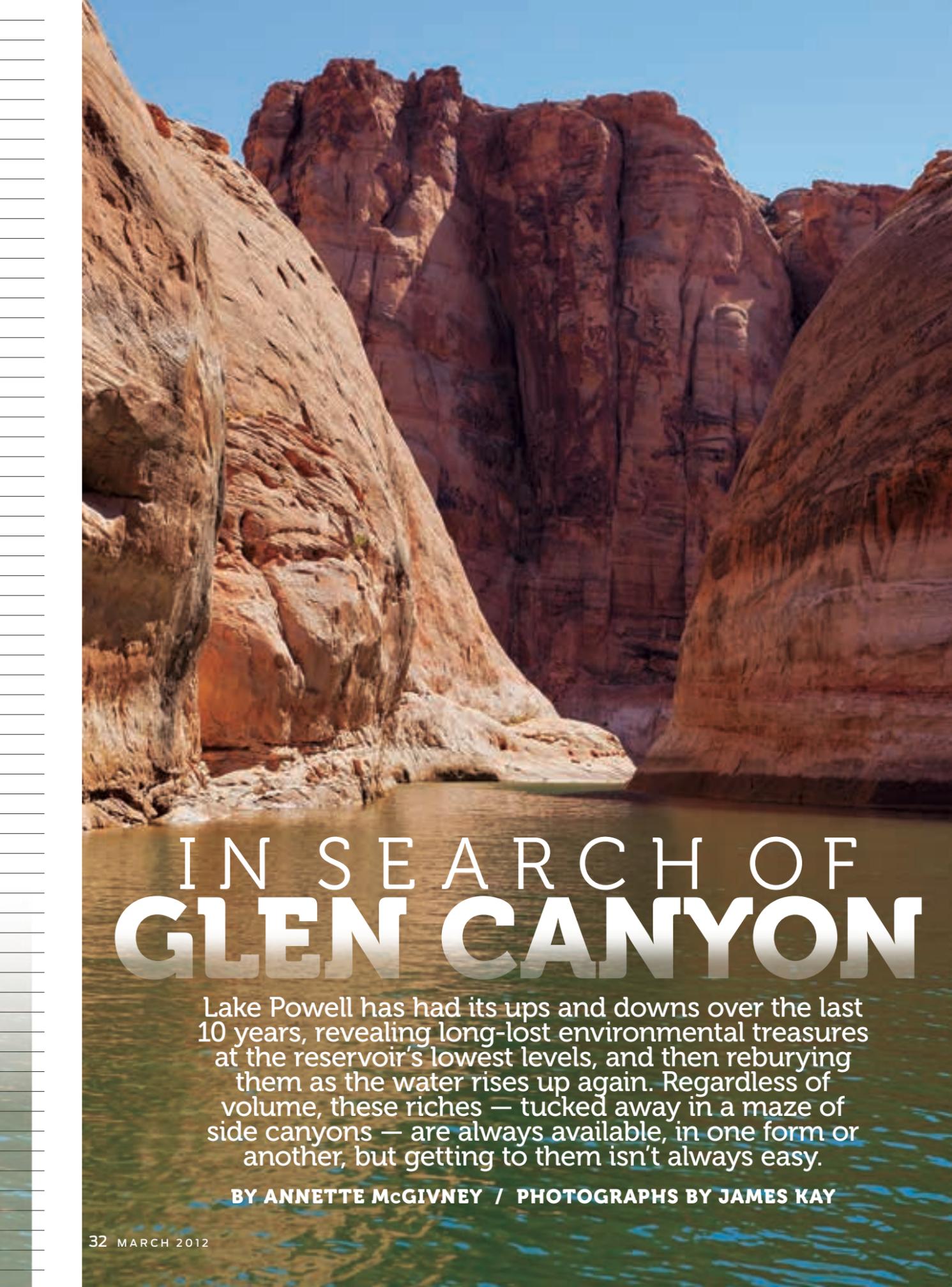
Information: Town of Superior, 520-689-5752 or www.superior_arizona.com

— MAGGIE PINGOLT

OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE: COULTER'S LUPINES AND MEXICAN GOLDDOPPIES. | **PAUL GILL**
OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW: MEXICAN GOLDDOPPY. | **PAUL GILL**
ABOVE: BEE ON A BLANKETFLOWER. | **PAUL GILL**



For updated wildflower locations, scan this QR code with your smart phone or visit www.arizonahighways.com/outdoors/floraandfauna.asp.



IN SEARCH OF GLEN CANYON

Lake Powell has had its ups and downs over the last 10 years, revealing long-lost environmental treasures at the reservoir's lowest levels, and then reburying them as the water rises up again. Regardless of volume, these riches — tucked away in a maze of side canyons — are always available, in one form or another, but getting to them isn't always easy.

BY ANNETTE MCGIVNEY / PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES KAY



By September 27, 2011, the rising waters of Lake Powell had submerged this section of West Canyon (opposite page) to a depth of approximately 50 feet. The drastically lower water level on May 24, 2005 (this page), allowed for a hiker's wet stroll.



Lake Powell's water level was 63 feet lower in April 2006 (opposite page), exposing sculpted narrow walls in Face Canyon, than it was on September 29, 2011 (this page). These narrows are now submerged beneath approximately 50 feet of water.

THE 150-HORSEPOWER MOTOR on our rented 19-foot-long boat sounds like a coughing chain smoker who's had one too many cigarettes. Designed for water-skiing and general Lake Powell pleasure-seeking, the boat isn't meant for what we're doing. As we putter farther up Willow Gulch, the water surface thickens into a black soup of decaying debris. Logs from drowned trees drift toward the engine intake, and the propeller is starting to choke as it's strangled with coils of dead willow branches (the canyon's namesake plant). The sensible thing to do would be to turn around, which most boaters on Lake Powell surely would have already done. But we keep going deeper into the gulch.

Photographer James Kay and I are on a mission to explore as many canyons as possible, as far as possible, in four days — boat

rental is not cheap. By the time we venture into Willow, it's the afternoon of day two, just halfway into an expedition to the outermost reaches of Lake Powell. It's the last week of September 2011, following the wettest Rocky Mountain winter in 10 years. Abundant snowmelt brought the level of Lake Powell up last July to 76 percent of capacity. It was a dramatic difference from April 2005, when record-low precipitation took the reservoir down to 38 percent of capacity and 140 feet below full pool.

Until the last few years, which experienced average or above-average precipitation, a decade of drought had reduced the massive Lake Powell by 120 square miles. And, as the reservoir stayed at half-empty or less, long-buried parts of Glen Canyon emerged. Between 2003 and 2007, James and I chronicled this changing landscape, venturing into dozens of canyons year after year to

document what nature was doing.

Now we are here for the opposite reason: to chronicle what is being undone, or, simply, to document what happens in the side canyons when the reservoir goes up. It's been at least four years since I've visited these hard-to-get-to places, and knowing there might be significant change has made me long to see them. The fact the boat might break down as we try to get there only strengthens my resolve.

IN 1869, WHEN JOHN WESLEY POWELL first explored the Colorado River basin, he wrote in his journal about an exceptionally peaceful and scenic stretch of country: "Past these towering monuments, past these mounded billows of orange sandstone, past these oak-set glens, past these fern-decked

alcoves, past these mural curves, we glide hour after hour, stopping now and then, as our attention is arrested by some new wonder ... A curious ensemble of wonderful features — carved walls, royal arches, glens, alcove gulches, mounds and monuments. We decide to call it Glen Canyon."

Glen Canyon was unique on the Colorado Plateau for its ecological diversity. The drainage encompassed not only 180 miles of the Colorado River, but also some 200 side canyons that nurtured riparian havens with perennial streams, seeps, springs, ferns, mosses, orchids, cottonwoods, willows and an array of wildlife. It was the side canyons — the hanging gardens or "glens" nestled between towering, twisting sandstone walls — that made Glen Canyon unlike any other place in the world. When environmental groups took up the fight to save Glen Canyon in the early 1960s from a dam that was already under construction, it was too little, too late. In 1963, the floodgates on the 710-foot-tall dam closed and the river began backing up to create what would become the second-largest reservoir in the United States.

When Lake Powell is full, it encompasses some 20 million acre-feet of stored water (1 acre-foot is 326,000 gallons) and 2,000 miles of shoreline, swallowing the main channel of the Colorado River and also pushing up for miles into the many side canyons. Federal water managers say Lake Powell is an integral link in a chain of reservoirs that is the lifeblood of the West, providing water to 30 million people and sustaining a massive agricultural industry that helps put food on the table of nearly every American.

Lake Powell, a spectacularly scenic place in its own right, has been in existence my entire life, and I'd never really thought about what was underneath its waters when the reservoir was more full. The fabled Glen Canyon was simply before my time. Then, in April 2003, I hiked into the Escalante drainage and walked along a river where I'd boated on a lake a few years earlier. I became obsessed with seeing every stretch of canyon that was emerging and spent the next five years exploring dozens of side canyons with alluring names like Willow, Twilight, Secret, Forbidding, Cathedral, Labyrinth and Reflection.

Below the lake's high-water mark (last reached in 1999), I witnessed miles of streams, waterfalls and springs surfacing, cottonwood saplings growing to 15 feet tall, and thick corridors of cattails and willows flourishing. In these places, the glens of Glen Canyon had returned. Although "Glen Canyon died in 1963," according to the late Sierra Club Director David Brower, that no longer seemed to be entirely true.

ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2011, James Kay and I, along with Frank Colver and Yffy (pronounced "iffy") Yossifor, set out in a rented boat from Lake Powell's Wahweap Marina. Frank, a retired engineer, tries to spend as much time as possible on river trips. He also

Llewellyn Gulch (right) was photographed on May 23, 2005, with heavy green growth. By September 27, 2011, the water level of Lake Powell had risen by 78 feet, flooding this section of Llewellyn Gulch to a depth of approximately 10 feet (below).



likes playing wooden flutes that he carves from cottonwood. Yffy just completed her degree at Northern Arizona University in photojournalism and is drawn to making documentary films about complicated topics. We are, perhaps, an unlikely crew, but we're united in our desire to seek out the authentic landscape of Glen Canyon. And even though our mission is somewhat morbid, we're not planning to suffer. Boat-camping has its luxuries. In addition to plenty of fresh drinking water, we're packing a fake, portable fire that's fueled by a propane tank (courtesy of Frank) and coolers stocked with beer, yogurt and cheese. I also have a fat air mattress and a full-size pillow.

After zipping through the Castle Rock Cut and across the wide blue waters of Padre Bay, we hang a right into West Canyon. It's our first stop in methodically retracing the path taken by James and me in 2005, when we explored dozens of side canyons emerging from a shrinking reservoir. West Canyon is big, extending for some 25 miles, and the walls are streaked brown with desert varnish, rising hundreds of feet. I have not been in this canyon in six years, and as we cruise up the winding corridor past other speeding motorboats and docked houseboats, it all comes back to me: a quiet ramble along a shallow, silty stream under a blazing midday sun.

"Isn't this where we were hiking?" I shout to James over the drone of the motor.

The lake has reclaimed about 1 mile of canyon with perhaps 40 feet of water where we'd walked on terra firma in 2005. A waterfall that was 10 feet tall is now 1 foot in height as the lake pools below it. We tie our boat to another parked boat and scramble up onto orange slickrock where the stream meets the reservoir. A group of barefoot teenagers in bathing suits greets us; they obviously weren't planning to go on a hike, but once they saw how the deep canyon winds tantalizingly out of view, they couldn't resist.

From West Canyon, we venture into the maze of Secret Canyon, and after making several wrong turns, we finally find the slot canyon we were looking for. It's an ever-narrowing, twisting hallway of slickrock that gets progressively darker, deeper and tighter. In 2005 we walked at the very bottom of this canyon, some 200 feet below the rim. Now the slot is filled with maybe 98 feet of lake water, but it's thrilling just the same. The canyon squeezes in to 10 feet wide, then 8. We cut the engine and drift in silence until the boat can go no farther. We back-paddle our way out and make camp that night in a quiet cove across from Hole in the Rock, where Mormon pioneers lowered their wagons 130 years ago into what must have seemed like an impossibly unforgiving landscape.

The next day, we spend the morning in Davis Gulch photographing the changes and relaxing on the pink sand in a large alcove. Then we continue up Lake Powell's long Escalante Arm to Fifty-mile Creek. Here, evidence of the fluctuating lake level



Fifty-mile Creek of Lake Powell's Escalante Arm shows its "bathtub ring" and an exposed canyon floor (top) in a photo dated October 10, 2007. On September 28, 2011 (bottom), the creek's floor was flooded to a depth of approximately 30 feet due to the rising waters.



The water level in Secret Canyon was 98 feet higher on September 27, 2011 (opposite page), than it was on April 26, 2005 (left), when boaters in a narrow passageway could look up to the high-water mark on steep, exposed walls.

and its environmental impact is obvious. When the lake was at its lowest level six years ago, a stream cut a channel through a wall of lake sediment, and then flash floods pushed the sediment out and the stream flowed over scoured slickrock. Cottonwood trees took root in this new riparian area and grew to 20 feet tall. When the reservoir reached its annual high mark in July 2011, it covered the area nearly to the tops of the trees. The lake began to drop last fall, leaving the drowned trees in its wake.

While Lake Powell may rise during the summer with Rocky Mountain snowmelt, the reservoir usually goes down in the fall and winter as the upper Colorado River basin meets lower-basin water-delivery requirements. The city of Page and the Navajo Generating Station get their water directly from Lake Powell, but all the big water users — Southern California, Las Vegas, Phoenix — get their water from Lake Mead and the reservoirs below. An “equalization” policy passed in 2007 requires that Lake Mead and Lake Powell be kept at relatively the same level. According to Rick Clayton, a Bureau of Reclamation hydraulic engineer, releases from Glen Canyon Dam would take Lake Powell down from a peak of 76 percent capacity in July 2011 to 63 percent capacity in December 2011. The releases would bring Lake Mead, which became dangerously low in 2010, up to 58 percent capacity.

Near the mouth of Fiftymile Creek, we float under a large alcove and watch the reflected light — water music — dance across the ceiling. Some 100 feet below where we’re sitting, James and I hiked along a stream six years ago. A flotilla of 10 kayakers on a tour with Hidden Canyon Kayak goes by after exploring Fiftymile’s narrows.

“I prefer the bottoms of these canyons,” James says. “All the vegetation and waterfalls made them more interesting.”

Frustrated by the change, James yells at one trailing kayaker drifting nearby and waves a photo in the air he took of Fiftymile in 2005. “See what this place used to look like!”

“Yeah,” the woman in the kayak yells back as she raises her paddle out of the water, “well, now we can get back here!”

THERE ARE NO KAYAKERS in Willow Gulch. It’s a man-versus-nature war zone. The powerful stench of rotting vegetation in the water is something like a full restaurant Dumpster on a hot summer afternoon. Willow Gulch is one of my favorite hiking places in the Southwest, with a giant natural arch, flowing stream, narrows and amphitheater-like alcove up-canyon, all above the reservoir’s high-water mark. But we won’t get there today. We turn around, as the motor is becoming impossibly clogged. Then it simply dies, and we drift to a beach with yet another perfect campsite.

The next morning, we limp down the Escalante Arm (where there’s no radio or cellphone reception) with our sick engine at about 15 miles per hour, drawing curious stares from houseboat-



In Reflection Canyon (above) on September 29, 2011, the water level was 47 feet below full pool, as shown by the white “ring.” A kayaker in the canyon (opposite page) found the water 93 feet lower on April 30, 2005.

ers who are going slightly faster than we are. Then James floors it, and the muck blows out as the engine thankfully repairs itself. We press on to magical slot canyons — Hidden Passage, Twilight, Face, Labyrinth — that are now half-full with water, making them navigable but impossible to hike. In Twilight, at a spot filled with reflected light and so narrow that I can spread my arms and touch both walls, a canyon wren perched on a tiny ledge silently watches us, shaken by our noisy intrusion.

When I return home, I’ll give Richard Ingebretsen a call to see what he thinks about the changes over the last year at Lake Powell. Ingebretsen is president of Glen Canyon Institute, a nonprofit organization he founded in 1996 to advocate for the protection of Glen Canyon. “Lake Powell will never be full again, because Lake Mead will never be full again,” he says, noting the equalization policy and the fact that lower-basin demand for water is impos-

sibly high. “Instead of having two giant reservoirs that are always half-full or less, why not just send all the [annual precipitation inflow] down to Mead and let Glen Canyon recover? It can all come back.”

The last night of our trip, we dock on a broad beach in Face Canyon and pitch our tents on a smooth slickrock bench. We sit in the warm, purple light of dusk and marvel at how the lake’s perfectly still waters form a mirror reflection of the canyon and sky. After dinner, we circle around the fake campfire and listen to Frank play his flute. I want to look at the stars and step away briefly from the firelight. Fish flop in the darkness. On this moonless night, the Milky Way is a sparkling white ribbon, and Jupiter is a luminous gold stud against a backdrop of diamonds. The vastness of the cosmos is comforting. It moves to a rhythm that is bigger than anything I can imagine.

IF YOU GO

“Lake Powell is beautiful at any level and always changing,” says Dave Panu, who, as owner of Hidden Canyon Kayak outfitters, has been exploring Powell for 30 years and spends an average of 150 days a year on the lake. “Some side canyons become accessible and others close off, depending on the reservoir level.” Panu says the best time to visit Powell is in the spring when the lake level is down and vegetation — mostly logjams — at the reservoir edge is stabilized and can be scrambled over to hike into canyons.

BY KAYAK: Hidden Canyon Kayak in Page provides day trips and multi-day kayak tours into Lake Powell side canyons that are often too narrow to be reached by motorboat. Information: 928-660-1836 or www.hiddencanyonkayak.com

BY BOAT: All-purpose, 19-foot-long powerboats with 150-horsepower outboard motors can be rented by the day from Lake Powell Resorts and Marinas. These easily accommodate four to five people with gear on a multiday camping trip.

Information: 888-896-3829, 928-645-2433 or www.lakepowell.com

BY CAR AND FOOT: Numerous scenic canyons on Lake Powell’s Escalante Arm can be reached by driving the 62-mile-long Hole in the Rock Road (four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended) from Escalante, Utah, and then hiking down from the tops of the drainages. Among the best canyons for day or overnight hikes are Willow Gulch, Forty Mile and Fiftymile Creek. Information: 928-608-6200 or www.nps.gov/glca. **AH**

LAVENDER FIELDS FOREVER

Mike Teeple didn't set out to become the Emeril Lagasse of lavender plants. He just wanted a few ornamental shrubs for his fruit orchard. So much for that. With 35,000 plants in the ground, the man

behind Red Rock Farms is now a resident expert on the aromatic evergreen, and his business has gone into mass production.



IN JULY, THE LAVENDER FIELDS at Red Rock Ranch and Farms in Concho are in midharvest. Recently harvested bundles of lavender lie stacked on top of freshly shorn bushes. More bundles cover every inch of the floor in a small adjacent building, making the central room smell like a high-end spa.

A week ago, this room was filled with shoppers who came for cooking demonstrations and to buy lavender oils, lotions and herb blends. Now, only a few scattered boxes of products remain.

Mike Teeple apologizes for the depleted inventory following his lavender festival. About 1,800 people attended the annual event over the course of eight days. He still seems surprised by the festival's success. For that matter, he still seems surprised he's in the lavender business at all.

Teeple never set out to become a lavender farmer. At age 45, he intended to retire from a successful construction firm he founded in California, where he built high-end homes for clients like Kevin Costner. A self-described "outdoors guy," Teeple likes growing things. He had organic vegetables and fruit orchards in mind when he bought these 130 acres with stunning red-rock formations, meadows and natural springs located between Snowflake and St. Johns.

The lavender was supposed to be purely ornamental. Recalling a trip to Provence, he imagined lavender fields flanking the drive, their sage-green leaves and pastel flowers contrasting with the surrounding red rock. But he couldn't find a local nursery to supply it.

He eventually bought 300 plants from a supplier in Santa Fe. Concho's 6,100-foot altitude, near-constant sunshine, sandy soil and water quality proved ideal for the plants. When the supplier, a lavender expert, came out to test the lavender the following year, it proved to be of extremely high quality.

Today, Red Rock Farms grows a dozen varieties of lavender, with 35,000 plants in the ground. But turning the discovery into a commercial enterprise wasn't easy.

BY KATHY MONTGOMERY • PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD MAACK



Teeple and his wife, Christine, learned mostly through trial and error.

"It's such a tight-lipped industry," Mike Teeple recalls. "It's the strangest business I've ever seen."

Getting workers to help with the harvest was hard at first, too. Outside in the fields, it's easy to see why. Bees swarm every bush. But they are so anesthetized by the lavender that Teeple is able to wave his hand back and forth through them.

That ability to attract bees is part of lavender's beauty. It draws bees while deterring harmful insects. It also repels deer and javelinas. That's been a boon to the fruit orchards the Teeples planted, which bear fruit at the same time the lavender is in bloom.

"It's a miracle plant," Teeple says.

In fact, lavender has been around since the ancient Greeks and has been used in everything from embalming agents to sleep aids. Widely prized for its calming effects, it's been thought to relieve headaches, "nervousness" and indigestion. And thanks to its antiseptic properties, lavender oil has been used to treat minor cuts and insect bites, and was even used to disinfect hospital floors during World War II.

The Teeples distill their own lavender oil and produce their products on-site, selling much of it wholesale to stores and spas. But retail products are available on the farm's website.

LEFT AND OPPOSITE PAGE: Lavender, a plant that's been around since the days of ancient Greece, attracts a profusion of bees during harvest time.

Once a year, during the last weekend in June and the first weekend in July, the farm is open to the public for the lavender festival, which features tours, demonstrations and discounted prices on plants and lavender products. Cooking demonstrations allow visitors to try lavender-infused foods like lavender lemonade, honey-lavender ice

cream and lavender-chocolate brownies. Box lunches for sale include lavender pound cake or cupcakes.

Two years ago, the Teeples added a Labor Day plant sale.

Teeple never completely abandoned his dream of growing vegetables and fruits. His pesticide-free orchards contain about 60 trees: nectarines, plums, cherries, Asian pears, apricots, pomegranates, and Fuji and golden delicious apples. A greenhouse contains banana, fig and kumquat trees.

There's also a small garden where Teeple is growing Concho chiles: hot, green chiles brought to the area by the Spaniards in the 1600s. The chiles had nearly disappeared. A handful of old-timers preserved their seeds and shared them with the Teeples, who use the chiles in a culinary product they call "herbes de Concho." It's their take on *herbes de Provence*, which contains lavender, with the added kick of dried chiles.

Next, Teeple has dreams of planting a vineyard for wine stock. But lavender will remain central.

"I'm amazed by how many people love lavender," he says. "I just thought it had a nice flower."

● Red Rock Farms is located off U.S. Route 180A in Concho. For more information, call 928-337-2289 or visit www.redrockfarms.com. **ARIZONA**



Our Wildest Streams

AN ESSAY BY
LAWRENCE CHEEK
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
RANDY PRENTICE

In Arizona, most creeks run dry most of the year. It's an arid state. In the springtime, however, many of those streams come to life, and some of the wildest even create waterfalls. Seven Falls and Tanque Verde Falls are two of the most impressive.

A desert waterfall is a paradox, a haywire brainstorm of nature so audacious that it's difficult to believe, even as it's slamming your face with fierce, cold spray. Similarly contradictory is the trek to one of the most spectacular Sonoran Desert cascades, Tucson's Seven Falls: The more you have to suffer to get there, the better the experience will be.

Up to a point.

I doubt any human has ever viewed Seven Falls at full roar, because it feeds a creek that must be waded across, seven times, to reach the falls. There are no bridges. On one occasion, I

A winter or spring hike to Seven Falls in the Santa Catalina Mountains near Tucson usually requires cold creek-crossings.



LEFT: Fog shrouds the creek flowing through Bear Canyon in the Santa Catalina Mountains. ABOVE: Sabino Creek, in upper Sabino Canyon of the Catalinas, gushes wildly after a heavy snowmelt or rain.

hiked it a couple of days after a flash flood had smashed through the canyon below the cascade. At the crossings, flood flotsam was lodged in the mesquite and willow branches 3 feet overhead. Over my head.

The spring of 2010 was one of the wettest in decades, so Seven Falls enjoyed a good, long seasonal run of several weeks. At the deepest crossing, the water was mid-thigh, fast and frigid. The cascade's source, snowfields up to 9,000 feet high in the Santa Catalina Mountains, was melting rapidly, and the thought occurred that as the day warmed, the water could rise. Hikers have been known to get stranded, the U.S. Forest Service confirms. Of course, there are worse fates than a moonlit bivouac by a desert waterfall.

When I lived in Tucson, I reveled in these rare watery seasons precisely because of the ephemeral waterfalls and creeks in the foothills surrounding the city. The arrival of any water in the desert feels like a gift, but *moving* water is especially intriguing because of its architectural presence. A new shape is imposed on the land, a kinetic ribbon that takes form from the cues of the topography, yet exists distinct from it. (Human-crafted architecture should do so well.)

A desert waterfall is as radical a surprise as a slapstick scene in a Wagner opera, yet it's not out of place. A desert is a land of contrasts and extremes, and a seasonal waterfall is just one of them. Searing days followed by frigid nights. A barrel cactus' exquisite flower flanked by an army of vicious, curling claws. The sight of water crashing past ranks of bewildered saguaros is a visual oxymoron, but the cactuses are plenty strange themselves. A desert encourages radicalism.

Some of the waterfalls show up in the same places year after year, at least in those years when enough precipitation arrives to feed them. Seven Falls and Tanque Verde Falls are the best-known



falls in the Tucson vicinity, because they're both relatively accessible. Tanque Verde asks a 1.6-mile (round-trip) hike; Seven Falls is nearly 8 miles of walking and wading, but the trail is easy and mostly flat. But there are hazards: On July 26, 1981, eight people drowned in a flash flood at Tanque Verde. Any waterfall is potentially dangerous; the same topography that makes water fall invites spectators to do likewise.

Tucson's lesser-known waterfalls tend to take more effort, but are worth it. During one exceptionally rainy week, I contemplated my topo maps of the Catalinas, looking for the converging squiggles that would indicate a steep draw, then an escarpment. The Catalinas, a craggy 9,157-foot-high loaf of gneiss and granite, bristle with steep neighborhoods. Ventana Canyon, a plunging V-shaped draw on the mountains' south flank, is full of them. I hiked up an established trail toward a chain of water-sculpted basins called Maiden Pools, which feature cascading trickles between them if there's been enough recent rain. But that season, the Pacific's storm track was off course, and Tucson was hosting Seattle's winter. Trickles, hell. Water was tumbling into the canyon from every side, over every indent in the walls. The hissing and crashing formed a baroque fugue in surround-sound, the creek a silver express corkscrewing crazily down the canyon.

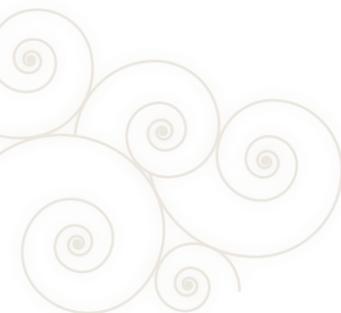
I spent a quarter-century in Tucson, and I now live in a place where waterfalls are practically

OPPOSITE PAGE: Tanque Verde Falls, a scenic and popular destination west of Tucson, is known for potential flash floods during heavy rains. ABOVE: Downstream from the falls, Tanque Verde Creek is normally serene.

throwaway scenery. Spring hiking in Washington's North Cascades yields a waterfall around every second twist in a trail. But desert waterfalls are more precious because of their rarity, and some other quality that's less obvious, harder to explain. A permanent waterfall, the sort we enjoy in the soggy Northwest, is predictable, established. It seems as self-assured as the rocky sluice that cradles it. A desert waterfall is a pioneer, an explorer, introducing itself to the land like a new chapter in Creation every time it appears. And yet it moves with

uncanny confidence and conviction. As naturalist Craig Childs described a desert flash flood in *Secret Knowledge of Water*: "It immediately knew how to turn behind a boulder, how to run straight down a chute ... It read the world as quickly as it could move."

So why do we seem to ascribe sentient qualities to moving water in the desert? Because it has many of the qualities of a living thing — an intelligent thing, actually. It creates, it menaces, it nourishes or destroys — all capriciously. It's an active participant in the web of life. As living creatures, we're naturally attracted to the other things in that web. Even when they threaten us, we watch in helpless fascination.



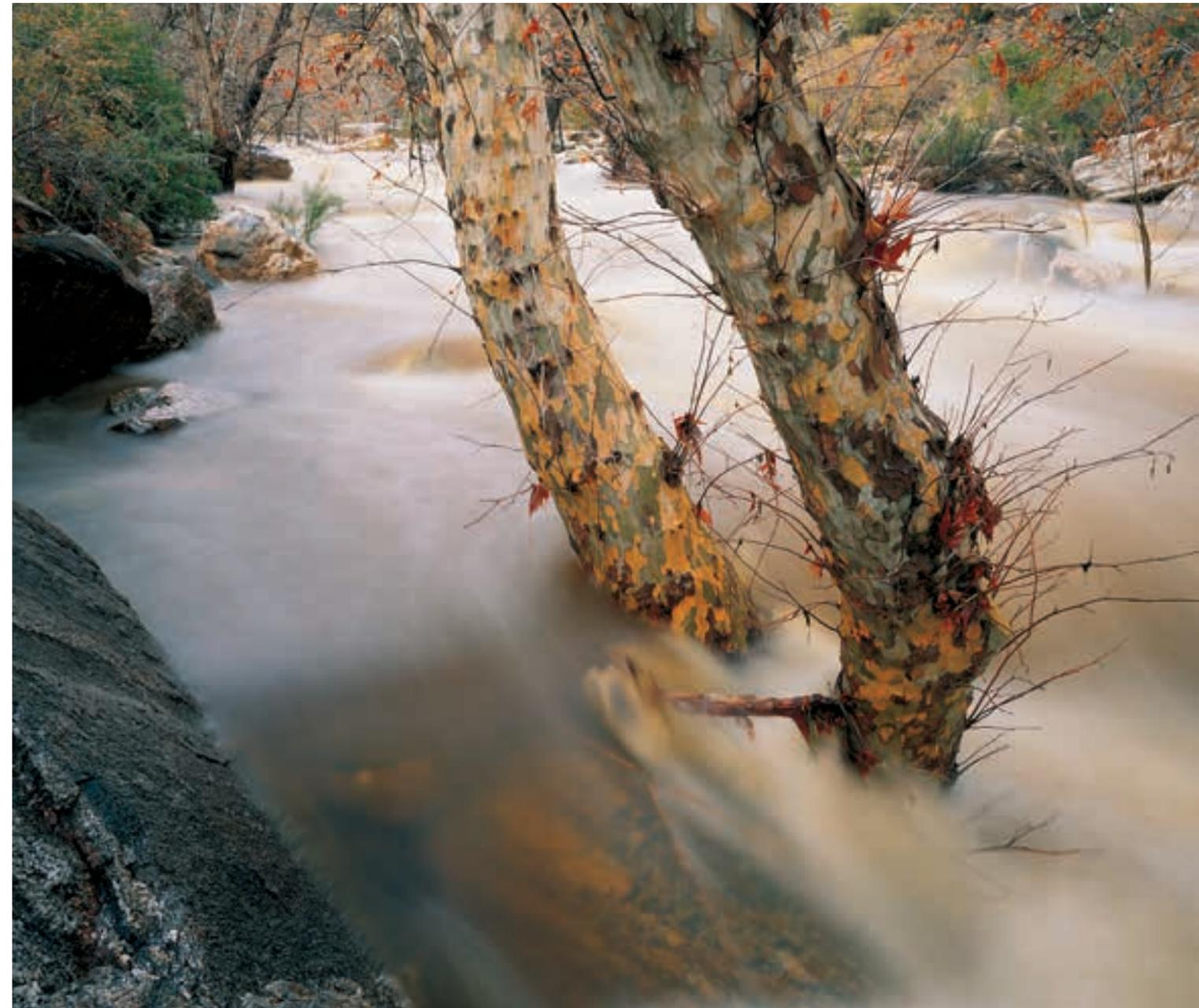


*LEFT: A tranquil pool collects in Ventana Canyon, high above Tucson's Catalina foothills.
BELOW: Sycamore trees resist the push from a vigorous Sabino Creek.*

The relationship between water and people in the desert is deep and complex, and frequently we threaten each other. In 2010, Seven Falls was as imposing as I'd ever seen it. Conversation anywhere in its neighborhood was impossible. The cascade was even creating its own wind, a biting norther that gathered itself out of a cerulean sky and careened down the mountainside. If the creek rose another 6 inches, we wouldn't be able to cross it on the return.

But through the afternoon it hardly rose at all — the desert canyon seemed to know just what to do with the intrusion — and we made it back to civilization with daylight to spare.

The water that spills off these waterfalls literally gives life, as somewhere downstream it filters through the sandy arroyo beds into the aquifer that supplies Tucson's water. But it also supplies another essential of life: the knowledge of wild things, forces that can't be predicted or controlled, a power that can easily smother conversation or tumble a body downstream, right at the edge of an overconfident huddle of a million people. [AH](#)



Florence-Kelvin Highway

The Sonoran Desert comprises 22.3 million acres. It's big, and there are a lot of ways to see it. One of the best is along this scenic route. **BY KATHY RITCHIE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE STOCKING**

When some people think about Arizona's landscape, they typically think desert — a dusty, barren wasteland that's inhospitable at its worst, and devoid of beauty at its best. It's a tough reputation to shake. After all, Arizona *does* have more than its share of arid land. In fact, the state is home to 22.3 million acres of Sonoran Desert. And while it can be uninviting, it's also full of life, and one of the best places to see it is along the Florence-Kelvin Highway.

The 32-mile journey begins with an

OPPOSITE PAGE: Plants along the Florence-Kelvin Highway start their show of color as spring arrives. **BELOW:** A summer monsoon unleashes its fury over the desert near Florence.

unimpressive run through a smattering of suburbia before arriving at the point where you'll need your camera. In fact, after turning east onto the Florence-Kelvin Highway from State Route 79, you might even wonder if you veered the wrong way. Don't fret. In a matter of minutes, you'll see creosote bushes, chollas and ocotillos, and possibly colorful spring wildflowers — in shades of yellow, red, orange and purple — that carpet the desert floor after heavy winter and spring rains. You'll also see saguaros, with their giant arms reaching toward the sky.

The desert road is paved for the first 12.3 miles before turning into graded dirt. It's an easy drive, and the traffic is

usually light, allowing sightseers to literally stop and smell the wildflowers. At mile 14.5, the road enters a box canyon (if the weather is inclement or if rain's a possibility, don't enter) and turns sandy. But it's temporary. Once you're out of the canyon, it's back to gravel and those stunning Sonoran Desert views. The blue sky appears even more dramatic against the desert soil.

About a mile beyond the box canyon, after passing Barkerville Road, you'll spot an outcropping of boulders. It's a curious — and seemingly sudden — shift, and those dominant saguaros are dwarfed by the giant rocks that are piled on top of each other.

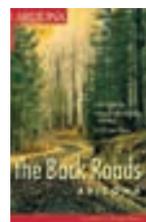
After crossing a cattle guard at mile 18.8, the road opens up a little, and you might be tempted to speed up. But be careful. The road dips and unexpectedly goes from gravel to sand at times. The curves also become much sharper where the landscape morphs from vast, open desert to rugged mountain terrain on the approach to the Tortilla Mountains. In the distance, you'll see a huge gash in the mountainside, courtesy of an open-pit mine. You'll also catch a glimpse of a lush riparian area fed by the Gila River.

At mile 27.7, the road passes the A-Diamond Ranch headquarters and begins to climb. Look to your right and you might see a stunning panorama of wildflowers.

By mile 30.3, the journey comes to an end, and before you know it, you're back on pavement. After crossing the Gila River on the one-lane bridge called the "Jake" Jacobson Bridge of Unity, you'll enter the tiny town of Kelvin, where the road connects with State Route 177.

ADDITIONAL READING:

For more scenic drives, pick up a copy of our book *The Back Roads*. Now in its fifth edition, the book (\$19.95) features 40 of the state's most scenic drives. To order a copy, visit www.arizonahighways.com/books.



tour guide

Note: Mileages are approximate.

LENGTH: 32 miles one-way

DIRECTIONS: From Phoenix, go east on U.S. Route 60 for 21 miles to State Route 79. Turn right (south) onto SR 79 (Pinal Pioneer Parkway) and continue for 18 miles through Florence to the Florence-Kelvin Highway and turn left (east).

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: None

WARNING: Back-road travel can be hazardous, so be aware of weather and road conditions. Carry plenty of water. Don't travel alone, and let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.

INFORMATION: Florence Visitors Center, 520-868-4496 or www.visitflorenceaz.com

Travelers in Arizona can visit www.az511.gov or dial 511 to get information on road closures, construction, delays, weather and more. **AH**



Second Water Trail

Hyacinths, anemones, Mexican goldpoppies, desert lupines ... this time of year, wildflowers take center stage along this spectacular hike.

BY ROBERT STIEVE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL GILL

Most trails have a hook — a highlight, a focal point, a reason people hit the trail in the first place. On the Bright Angel, it's the Grand Canyon. On the Weatherford, it's the Inner Basin. And on West Clear Creek, it's West Clear Creek. Throughout most of the year, the centerpiece of any hike in the Superstition Wilderness is the rugged Sonoran Desert landscape — despite its proximity to the sixth-largest city in the United States, this is one of the most remote areas in all of Arizona. In the springtime, however, the hyacinths, anemones, Mexican goldpoppies and desert lupines take center stage.

Nothing against the bluebonnets in Texas or the cherry blossoms in D.C., but there aren't many wildflower spectacles that can rival the explosion of color that washes over the Arizona desert in February, March and April. To see a delicate flower emerge from the unforgiving soil is a good reminder that Mother Nature is capable of just about anything. It's a sight worth seeing, and there are a number of trails that'll get you there. Second Water is one of the many.



The route begins at the First Water Trailhead. Initially, you'll be on the Dutchman Trail, which leads to Second Water after about 10 minutes. Just beyond the intersection you'll come to First Water Creek. Most of the time,

there won't be any water, but in the springtime, it's a possibility. If the water is flowing, you won't need a boat to get across — just a little agility. From there, the clearly marked trail follows a gentle route through saguaros, chollas,



OPPOSITE PAGE: Garden Valley Arch overlooks Weavers Needle on the Second Water Trail. ABOVE: Spring flowers bloom in the Superstition Wilderness.



trail guide

LENGTH: 6.6 miles round-trip
DIFFICULTY: Easy
ELEVATION: 1,940 to 2,420 feet
DIRECTIONS: From Phoenix, drive east on U.S. Route 60 for approximately 25 miles to Tomahawk Road (Exit 197) and turn left. Drive north for 3 miles to State Route 88 (the Apache Trail), turn right and drive approximately 5 miles to the First Water Trailhead, which serves as the starting point for the Second Water Trail, as well.
VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: None
DOGS ALLOWED: Yes (on a leash)
HORSES ALLOWED: Yes
USGS MAP: Goldfield
INFORMATION: Mesa Ranger District, 480-610-3300 or www.fs.usda.gov/tonto

LEAVE-NO-TRACE PRINCIPLES:

- Plan ahead and be prepared.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly and pack out all of your trash.
- Leave what you find.
- Respect wildlife and minimize impact.
- Be considerate of others.

paloverdes and ocotillos to an intersection with the Black Mesa Trail. Keep left and look around. After a wet winter, the desert floor in this area, known as Garden Valley, is carpeted with wildflowers and grasses. Think focal point.

Continuing, there's a steady dose of Sonoran Desert, and after about an hour, you'll come to one of the more interesting saguaros in the world. At some point in its long life, the stately plant suffered some kind of trauma that bent it in half, leaving a good portion of the cactus lying on the ground. Fortunately, the saguaro bent but didn't break, thus allowing it to keep living and keep growing. As of this writing, three new "arms" had sprouted up from the horizontal section on the ground. Like the surrounding wildflowers, this is another one of Mother Nature's many miracles.

Ten minutes beyond the cactus phenomenon, the trail begins a downhill

run toward Boulder Canyon. This is where most of the elevation change occurs along the trail. It's not much of a challenge, but it helps deter the masses. As you work your way down, you'll see a canyon to your right. That's Second Water Canyon, which parallels Boulder Canyon up ahead. Canyons are common in this wilderness, and they tend to look the same to an untrained eye. It's one of the reasons so many people get lost and, in some cases, die in the Superstitions. There's no risk of getting lost on this trail, though. It's easy to follow and eventually leads to a thicket of reeds growing in a riparian area just before Boulder Canyon. The lush scene will surprise you. And so will the creek that marks the end of the trail.

After about an hour and a half of hiking, you'll come to an intersection with the Boulder Canyon Trail and a tributary of La Barge Creek. Like First Water Creek ear-

lier, there's a good chance of seeing water in this stream if winter storms have delivered an average amount of precipitation. As far as turnaround points on a trail go, this has to rank as one of the most spectacular. The surrounding rock walls of the canyon, the saguaros dotting the landscape, the flowing stream ... it's almost enough to make you forget that wildflowers are the focal point of this hike. **AH**

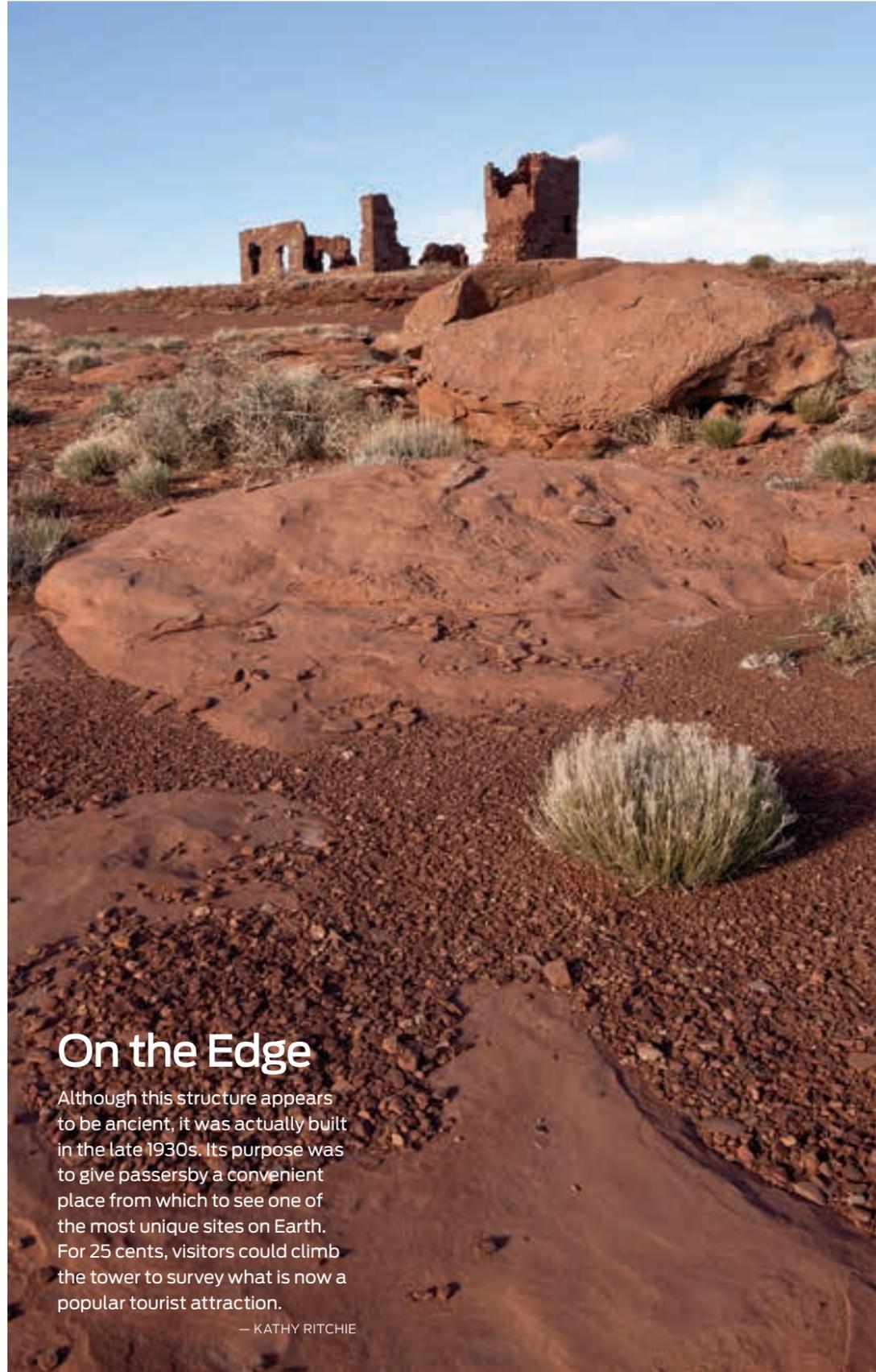
ADDITIONAL READING:

For more hikes, pick up a copy of *Arizona Highways Hiking Guide*, which features 52 of the state's best trails — one for each weekend of the year, sorted by seasons. To order a copy, visit www.arizonahighways.com/books.



KEVIN KIBSEY

where is this?



On the Edge

Although this structure appears to be ancient, it was actually built in the late 1930s. Its purpose was to give passersby a convenient place from which to see one of the most unique sites on Earth. For 25 cents, visitors could climb the tower to survey what is now a popular tourist attraction.

— KATHY RITCHIE

January 2011 Answer & Winner

Purcell Mural, Chloride. Congratulations to our winner, Mary Jane Stearns of Fort Mohave, Arizona.



KERRICK JAMES

Win a collection of our most popular books! To enter, correctly identify the location featured at left and email your answer to editor@arizonahighways.com — type "Where Is This?" in the subject line. Entries can also be sent to 2039 W. Lewis Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85009 (write "Where Is This?" on the envelope). Please include your name, address and phone number. One winner will be chosen in a random drawing of qualified entries. Entries must be postmarked by March 15, 2012. Only the winner will be notified. The correct answer will be posted in our May issue and online at www.arizonahighways.com beginning April 15.

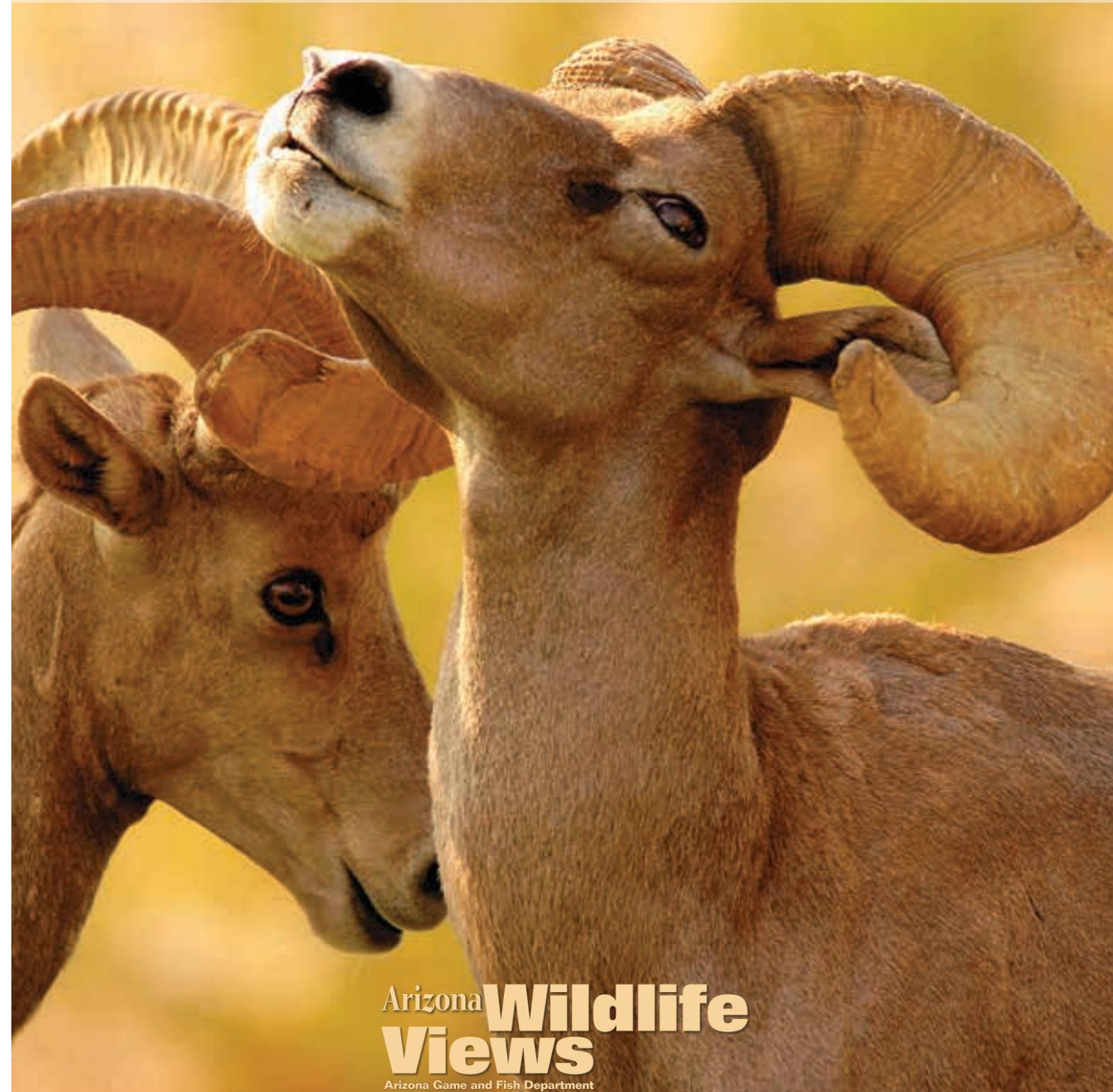
LARRY LINDAHL

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