

Hike Phoenix's Wild Side | Roosevelt Lake Revives

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

MARCH 2006

expanded edition

wild
about
flowers
10 trips
for blossom
hunters

Abused Birds Find
a Parrot's Paradise

Rafters Seek
Salt River's
'Love Level'

wildflowers pages 18-31

COVER/PORTFOLIO

18 A Crescendo of Color

Photographers revel in the response of desert annuals to a wet year after a decade of drought.

24 The Great Flower Chase: Petal to the Metal

A writer races to find that perfect patch of wildflowers.

BY BILL BROYLES

30 Wildflower Guide

Join the flower furor at one of 10 places where the blossoms bloom.

BY JOBETH JAMISON

8 Roosevelt Revives

A desert reservoir shakes off a decade of drought to delight fishermen and adventurers.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY NICK BEREZENKO

32 Salt River's 'Love Level'

An intrepid rafter finds that just enough spring runoff on a desert river can wash away his black-and-blue memories.

BY TOM DOLLAR PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE THOMPSON

38 A Parrot's Paradise

Abused cockatoos, macaws and conures make a colorful comeback at the Oasis Bird Sanctuary.

BY MELISSA MORRISON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TERENCE MOORE

40 Hiking the City's Wild Side

Phoenix and other valley cities savor the intersection of nature and civilization on desert preserve hiking trails.

BY LAWRENCE W. CHEEK
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ELMS JR.

48 An Instamatic Priest Records History

The frenetic Father Schwarz recorded turn-of-the-last-century images of life on Arizona's Indian reservations with his Brownie camera.

BY VICKEY KALAMBAKAL

PRECIOUS PETALS

Silky white and pollen-peppered, the petals of a prickly poppy blooming in the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area reveal the softer side of a defensive plant. This bulbous bloom is also referred to as "cowboy's fried egg." See story, page 18. BRUCE GRIFFIN

■ To order a print of this photograph, see information at right.

{also inside}

2 DEAR EDITOR

3 ALL WHO WANDER
An old woman's grief explains the lure of wildflowers.

4 VIEWFINDER

Fate gives a photographer new direction.

5 TAKING THE OFF-RAMP

Explore Arizona oddities, attractions and pleasures.

50 ALONG THE WAY

Hyperactive prairie dogs put on an entertaining spring show.

52 BACK ROAD ADVENTURE

The forgotten road to Minnehaha trades rough travel for long views.

56 HIKE OF THE MONTH

Willow Springs trail reveals hidden treasure in the Goldfield Mountains.



online arizonahighways.com

Take a spring break to enjoy the desert in bloom and discover treks in the city. Go to arizonahighways.com and click on our "Spring Escape Guide" for:

- A peek at eight favorite wildflower destinations
- Hikes with city sights

HUMOR Gene Perret is less than carefree with modern technology.

ONLINE EXTRA Discover the archaeology of Mission San Xavier del Bac.

WEEKEND GETAWAY Scientists and stargazers coexist at Biosphere 2.

TRAVEL THROUGH TIME World War II glider pilots trained in Arizona's desert.

EXPERIENCE ARIZONA Use our statewide calendar of events.

WILDFLOWER WATCH See our photographers' wildflower reports.

{highways on television}

Arizona Highways magazine has inspired an independent weekly television series, hosted by Phoenix TV news anchor Robin Sewell. For channels and show times, log on to arizonahighways.com; click on "DISCOVER ARIZONA"; then click on the "Arizona Highways goes to television!" link on the right-hand side.

Photographic Prints Available

■ Prints of some photographs are available for purchase, as designated in captions. To order, call toll-free (866) 962-1191 or visit www.magazineprints.com.

FRONT COVER Delicate blooms of Mexican goldpoppies open along the Apache Trail. NICK BEREZENKO

■ To order a print of this photograph, see information above.

BACK COVER A sunset in the Superstition Mountains' Lost Dutchman State Park illuminates Mexican goldpoppies and Coulter's lupine. As evening approaches, the supple peach goldpoppy petals begin to elegantly unfold. JEFF SNYDER

■ To order a print of this photograph, see information above.

Not Your Biggest Fan

I don't know why, Peter, but I just haven't been your biggest fan since you took the reins. Maybe it was your politics poking through, or perhaps with change some fear seeped in. As an Arizona native long of tooth, I hold dear Arizona Highways as a little part of my soul.

I should tell you that I am a large, hard man roughened by the Arizona sun and many adventures. With that said, this morning as I read your story ("All Who Wander," December '05) about your grandfather and Lake Powell, I must admit it nearly moved me to tears. I found it very well written and an extremely honest window to your soul. It instantly smacked me with what should always be the priority in life, at a time when perhaps I needed such a smack.

Marshall Stone

I doubt you needed a smack; it sounds like you know a lot about living life with joy and courage. I am touched that my recollections of Walt meant something to you. Of course, this doesn't mean you should not keep a sharp eye on me to make sure that my mushy-headed thinking doesn't mess up a great magazine.

Issue Betrayed Tradition

I'm a fifth-generation Arizona native. When you ascended to the editorship, I was pleased. I've followed your writings in the magazine over the years, and enjoyed some of your books. My conviction is that someone with your love of Arizona could only bring good things to the magazine I've cherished my entire life.

The 2005 Christmas issue gave me pause. The crowning event of each year for most readers is the Christmas issue.

This issue was a break with that tradition, with an overabundance of text, some only distantly related to Christmas. I think you too frequently indulge in nepotism with stories and pictures of your own family. I think that practice compromises editorial objectivity, and clouds your vision. I will continue to subscribe, but hope the magazine doesn't become a vehicle of your personal agenda, as opposed to the grander purpose it has served in the past.

Bill Johnson, Oro Valley

Savoring December Issue

I am so happy the December 2005 issue was not the typical pine tree and snow on the Mogollon Rim cover. What better way to celebrate the holidays than to have your best photographers and writers give thanks for this beautiful state? I will savor every minute of my reading this month.

Jill Morgan, Tucson

Your December 2005 issue was really outstanding. The stories caused me to reflect on my life and

all the good things that have come my way. The pictures are awesome, seeming to bring forth the spirit of the stories. Many thanks to the writers and photographers for sharing with us.

Rex Franklin, Lewiston, MI

No More Trick Photographs

I like all Arizona Highways photographs, but not Gary Ladd's "Nature's Mirror" (November '05), the portfolio of mirrored photographs. Since you're new at the job as editor, I'd like to remind you that most of us want photographs of Arizona as it is, and not as it ain't. No more trick photographs, please.

Mark Murray, Reston, VA

The portfolio of reversed images had us arguing about it before we ran it, so I figured it might get some interesting reactions. I loved it; Publisher Win Holden was dubious; Director of Photography Pete Ensenberger enjoyed it; Photography Editor Richard Maack thought it tried to be clever and failed. Hopefully, it at least got people talking and thinking about photography. We're photo-fanatics here at Highways, so we jump at any chance to chat about it.

Not a Nitwit After All

I have been reading Arizona Highways each month, cover to cover, since my oldest son moved to your wondrous state in January 1999. I visit every year, using your magazine as the "map" for my guide.

Never has your now-defunct "Humor" page led me on a journey of discovery in Arizona. In fact, I found the humor on that page to be rather sophomoric, to be kind, and never did I laugh myself silly, as Anthony Morris evidently used to do, as he described in "Dear Editor," "Hey Peter, You Nitwit," November 2005.

In short, I don't miss your humor page at all, and you are not a nitwit! If Mr. Morris really wants to laugh, he should subscribe to Mad Magazine, or just read his newspaper about local politics.

Andy Thompson, Landenberg, PA

Don't Disdain Christmas

Thank you for your wonderful magazine. Michael, of Tempe, ("Dear Editor," January '06) inspired me to write you because of his disdain for your Christmas-related content. I don't eat Native American or Mexican food or practice their customs, but I do enjoy learning about them. Though I'm not about to start worshiping the sun and moon, learning about the beliefs of other cultures helps me understand where my neighbors came from.

Just because my tastes, practices and beliefs are different doesn't mean I have to change or criticize theirs. Your magazine helps me understand the culture and people around me who, by the way, were here a long time before me.

Jacqueline S. McGovern

Publisher WIN HOLDEN

Editor PETER ALESHIRE

Senior Editor BETH DEVENY

Managing Editor RANDY SUMMERLIN

Research/Web Editor SALLY BENFORD

Editorial Administrator CONNIE BOCH

Editorial Assistant PAULY HELLER

Director of Photography PETER ENSENBERGER

Photography Editor RICHARD MAACK

Art Director BARBARA GLYNN DENNEY

Deputy Art Director BILLIE JO BISHOP

Map Designer KEVIN KIBSEY

Arizona Highways Books

Editor BOB ALBANO

Production Director KIM ENSENBERGER

Promotions Art Director RONDA JOHNSON

Webmaster VICKY SNOW

Director of Sales & Marketing KELLY MERO

Circulation Director HOLLY CARNAHAN

Finance Director BOB ALLEN

Information Technology Manager

CINDY BORMANIS

FOR CUSTOMER INQUIRIES

OR TO ORDER BY PHONE:

Call toll-free: (800) 543-5432

In the Phoenix area or outside the U.S.,

Call (602) 712-2000

Or visit us online at:

arizonahighways.com

For Corporate or Trade Sales:

DOLORES FIELD

Call (602) 712-2045

E-MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

editor@arizonahighways.com

Regular Mail:

Editor

2039 W. Lewis Ave.

Phoenix, AZ 85009

Governor Janet Napolitano

Director, Department of Transportation

Victor M. Mendez

ARIZONA TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Chairman Dallas "Rusty" Gant, Wickenburg

Vice Chairman Richard "Dick" Hileman,

Lake Havasu City

Members James W. "Jim" Martin, Willcox

Joe Lane, Phoenix

S.L. "Si" Schorr, Tucson

Delbert Householder, Thatcher

Robert M. "Bob" Montoya, Flagstaff

INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL MAGAZINE ASSOCIATION

2004, 2003, 2001, 2000, 1998,

1992, 1990 Magazine of the Year

WESTERN PUBLICATIONS ASSOCIATION

2002 Best Overall Consumer Publication

2004, 2002, 2001 Best Travel & In-transit Magazine

2003, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1995, 1993, 1992

Best Regional & State Magazine

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITERS

FOUNDATION

2000, 1997 Gold Awards

2005 Bronze Award

Best Monthly Travel Magazine

Arizona Highways® (ISSN 0004-1521) is published monthly by the Arizona Department of Transportation. Subscription price: \$21 a year in the U.S., \$31 in Canada, \$34 elsewhere outside the U.S. Single copy: \$3.99 U.S. Send subscription correspondence and change of address information to Arizona Highways, 2039 W. Lewis Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85009. Periodical postage paid at Phoenix, AZ and at additional mailing office. CANADA POST INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS MAIL PRODUCT (CANADIAN DISTRIBUTION) SALES AGREEMENT NO. 41220511. SEND RETURNS TO QUEBECOR WORLD, P.O. BOX 873, WINDSOR, ON N9A 6P2. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Arizona Highways, 2039 W. Lewis Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85009. Copyright © 2006 by the Arizona Department of Transportation. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. The magazine does not accept and is not responsible for unsolicited materials provided for editorial consideration.

PRODUCED IN THE USA

Why Do I Dream of Purple Hillsides and Last Year's Poppies?

SET OFF FOR THE SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS in the flush of a Sonoran Desert spring, impelled by a familiar seasonal urge of still mysterious portent.

I do not know why the uncertain promise of desert wildflowers every spring draws me as helplessly as a hummingbird mainlining nectar. Why do I scan the November skies for rain, thinking always of the blooms of March? Why do I dream of purple hillsides? Why do thousands of people troop through Picacho Peak State Park in a good flower year? Why can I still recall every good patch of flowers 10 years later? Why does the mere thought of seeds waiting in the stony soil excite me?

I can't tell you. I only know that every March I must seek out the capricious gifts of spring.

So I call in sick and head for the front slopes of the Superstitions as soon as the Desert Botanical Garden's wildflower hotline puts out a poppy alert. I park at the Lost Dutchman State Park and hurry up the trail, festooned with camera gear, driven by some frivolous version of the gold fever optimism that has long drawn prospectors to these contorted slopes. It's an apt metaphor—since these



The poppies of spring can draw thousands of people to Picacho Peak State Park. PETER ALESHIRE

volcanic formations have no more business harboring gold than they have hiding tiny poppy seeds.

I hike on up the slope, drawn by a hallucinatory shimmer of color ahead of me.

Rounding a boulder with my eyes fixed on the slope ahead, I nearly trip over the old woman sitting on an igneous stool jutting into the trail. I stumble; she stands, steps back and reaches out for my elbow. She starts the gesture to steady me, but then sways forward off balance so we prop up one another. We sway awkwardly together, then right ourselves.

"Sorry," I blurt, "I wasn't watching where I was going. It's the flowers."

"Darn flowers," she says. "They're very distracting," I say.

"They do take your mind away," she agrees, wistfully.

We fall easily into conversation, for we sense our common purpose. Besides, she reminds me of my mother. She looks to be in her early 70s, neatly dressed with shoes too nice for the trail and her silver-white hair sprayed into respectful decorum. She has mild, kind, deep-brown eyes, the patient eyes of a woman who has kept everyone tucked in and pulled together without taking more than a crust of credit.

She had lived a loving and ordinary life. She was raised in a little Ohio town and met the love of her life

during World War II just before he was shipped off to the Pacific. He managed to return safely to her, so they married, bought a little house and started having kids. He used to have bad dreams about those Pacific islands, but she would sit and soothe him back to sleep. They grew together like cottonwood roots. He liked action movies, she liked romances—so they traded off choosing the movie. He liked hunting and she let him go off and do it because men are odd and you have to let them be sometimes. She was baffled by his desire to shoot deer until she realized it was just his excuse for going out into the woods. She came to understand that their differences linked them as surely as their similarities and perhaps explained why they never got bored with one another. They stayed married for 51 years and raised four children before the cancer took him.

Now she has come out to visit her boy, who lives in Phoenix. Her son, a computer engineer, went off to work and she read in the newspaper that the wildflowers were blooming in the Superstitions, so she had set out to have a look. Ever since her husband died, she's been doing little things like this, seeking out some scratchy, bouldery, wild place. She feels close to him in such places, although sometimes it gives her a sharp pang of regret that she didn't go with him on his hunting trips—even if it was just to sit in camp and wait for him. Of course, there's nothing more useless than regret, she says.

At length, I leave her to her memories and the flowers, and head on up the slope, thinking about my mother and how much she would have liked the woman and the cockeyed optimism of the wildflowers now waving in the warm breeze on every hand. I turn off the trail in a Wizard of Oz patch, hopping from boulder to boulder across the pond of poppies.

I come to rest finally on a twist of lava in an orange inflorescence.

I understand now.

I seek out the flowers because they die, but return. I seek out the flowers because they persist, despite the harvester ants and the terrible droughts. I seek out the flowers because they glory in the light for their translucent moment, then set seed as an act of faith. I seek out the flowers because my mother loved them, as I love them, as my children love them. And I laid flowers on my mother's grave not in mourning but in hope of spring.

As the light fades, I go back down the trail to thank the old woman. But she is gone. I hope she reads this.

editor@arizonahighways.com

Twist of Fate Turns Photographer in New Direction

FATE HAS A way of dropping us off at life's crossroads without a map. The path we choose has profound consequences for the journey ahead.

For photographer Kate Thompson, a tragic loss opened a door in her life and sent her down a new career path. Turns out it's the path she was meant to be on all along.

Thompson thrives on outdoor adventure, so she's the photographer I called on to shoot our story on rafting the Salt River in this issue, "Looking For Love Level," beginning on page 32. Anyone who's rafted the Salt knows the thrills and perils of navigating its frenetic current during the fast-water flows of spring runoff. A



A slow shutter speed blurs the action, softens the edge and brings a sense of urgency to outdoor adventure photography. KATE THOMPSON

perfect fit for Thompson's skill and experience.

"I spend a lot of time on the water photographing whitewater boating and sea kayaking," she says. "Particularly, I love how light dances on water and how the human figure interacts with that quality."

"This story was so much fun to shoot because of the people on the trip and my comfort level with this environment."

Thompson's love of the outdoors springs from experiences in her youth. She grew up on a horse farm on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and she explored routes through the estuary of Chesapeake Bay by sailboat and canoe at an early age. But even then, she longed for the American West. As a kid, she collected pictures of Western landscapes and pasted them into her journal.

"My parents figured I would not stick around the farm, and allowed me to go West when I turned 18," Thompson recalls. She moved to the opposite coast to attend college in Eugene, Oregon, and immediately found a job as a whitewater river guide.

Although her interest in photography began in high school, Thompson was never serious about it until she met Flagstaff photographer Dugald Bremner when she was in her mid-30s. By then she was already immersed

in a career in soil and water conservation, working four years for the U.S. Geological Survey before starting her own business as an ecological consultant.

"Dugald was always encouraging me to take pictures in the field, since most of my projects involved working around archaeological sites and rivers," Thompson says. Soon her relationship with Bremner grew into more than a budding romance.

That's when tragedy struck.

"Just as we were making plans to get married, a twist of fate was tossed at me in June 1997," she says. "Dugald died suddenly in a kayak accident in the High Sierras while on a photo assignment."

Time stood still, her future abruptly and cruelly altered.

The weight of the fatal news was crushing for all of us who knew Dugald Bremner. I met him in 1986 when his work first appeared in *Arizona Highways*. Bremner's action-packed images have always instilled readers with a sense of being along for the ride on his living-on-the-edge adventures. But knowing his love of the outdoors, he'd have been out there exploring new territory and living life to the fullest even if he wasn't working on a photo assignment.

"I decided to continue his photo business, wishing to honor his legacy and allow his work to have a natural lifespan," Thompson says. "During this time, I immersed myself in the world of photography and discovered a powerful creative process within me."

She studied thousands of Bremner's images as she familiarized herself with his photography files, and she read every photography book and magazine that she could get her hands on. Gradually, interest in her science career faded as she found strong support from the tight-knit Flagstaff photo community to carry on Bremner's work.

"When I was kicking off my photography career, David Edwards, Sue Bennett and John Running encouraged me to stick with adventure photography, but to trust my own style," Thompson explains. "My style shows a softer edge of adventure and is reverent of nature. I like to bring out the feminine qualities of nature. I constantly experiment with slow shutter. Blurry photos make hard edges fall away and allow the abstractions of nature and motion to come through."

Photography intertwines with adventure and gets her out where she can push the bounds of her physical and creative abilities. She's found her rightful niche in photography, doing what she was born to do.

Summarizing her transformation, she says, "My path of editorial photography symbolizes my path of savoring life intensely, while meeting the many challenges that arise."

A path well chosen for the journey ahead.

Peter Ensenberger can be reached at photodirector@arizonahighways.com

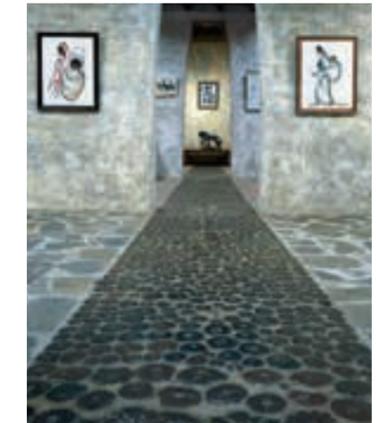


Mission for Art Inspired by a Legend

More than 470 years ago, legend says the Virgin Mary appeared on a lonely hill in Mexico to an Indian convert named Juan Diego. The lovely apparition demanded that a church be built on the site, once dedicated to the Aztec goddess Tonantzin. Armed only with miracles, the old Indian persuaded

the bishop in Mexico City to erect a church on the hilltop. The humble church erected in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who was later named the patron saint of Mexico, welcomed religious pilgrimages for centuries.

Enamored with this romantic story, the late Tucson artist Ettore "Ted" DeGrazia built the



Health Aid From Lizards and Cacti?

Gila monsters and prickly pear cacti share something besides sand, rocks and the common knowledge that careless handling can have painful if not dangerous consequences.

Surprisingly, both of the desert dwellers are being studied by scientists as a treatment for type 2 diabetes, a disease that affects more than 18 million Americans.

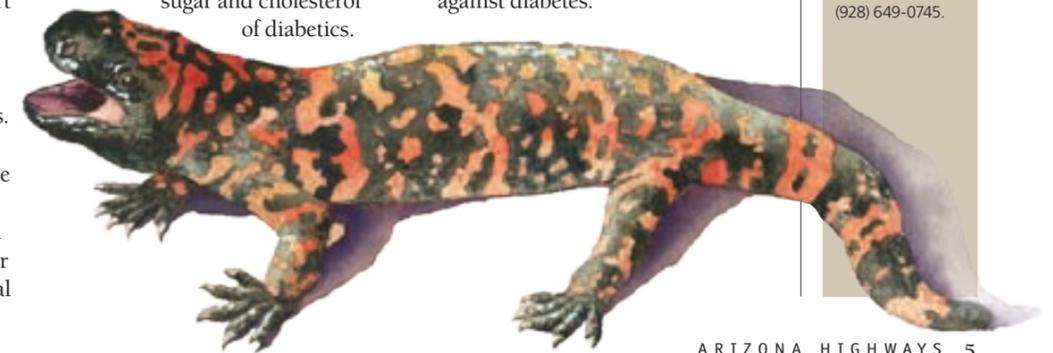
Gila monsters may take a bite out of diabetes. A hormone in the saliva of the poisonous lizards, exendin-4, can stimulate insulin secretion and reduce blood-sugar levels in diabetics. Recent clinical

trials with a synthetic version of the hormone, called exenatide, were promising. The trials are complete, and the FDA-approved drug—brand name Byetta—is available by prescription.

Meanwhile, scientists at the University of Arizona are studying the effectiveness of substances found in prickly pear cactus pads and fruit in lowering the blood-sugar and cholesterol of diabetics.

In studies conducted in Mexico, prickly pear, or *nopal*, as it is called in Spanish, has been found to lower the insulin requirements of diabetics, as well as the LDL or "bad" cholesterol.

Gila monsters and cacti—two ancient and classic symbols of Arizona's mysterious deserts—are paving the way for modern science and giving new hope in the fight against diabetes.



EVENTS

3/06

Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park welcomes back the buzzards returning from their annual migration to



Mexico on March 25. The turkey vultures roost each summer in the eucalyptus grove of Picketpost Mountain. Information: (520) 689-2811.

Chuck Wagon Cookies circle 'round the ole campfire for a cook-off during the **16th Annual Festival of the West in Chandler**, March 16-19. Authentic 1880s-era chuck wagons, cooking utensils, gear and garb offer a taste of the old West. Information: (602) 996-4387.

Rock on at the **Verde Valley Gem and Mineral Show** on March 18-20 in Cottonwood. Folks who dig geology enjoy instructional exhibits, lapidary and dinosaur fossils. Information: (928) 649-0745.

Arizona's Toulouse-Lautrec

When Lon Megargee, known as Arizona's cowboy artist, fell on hard times, the whole state benefited. The rancher sought and lassoed the state's first public art commission when his drought-plagued ranch went bankrupt. He promised then-Gov. George W.P. Hunt to capture "the various industries of Arizona in a pictorial, symbolic manner." He delivered.

In an article published March 26, 1914, the *Tombstone Prospector* observed, "Megargee uses color with a boldness that astonishes more conservative painters, but no one can deny that the colors are all in the subjects he paints. Northern Arizona scenery, cowboys and Indians are his delight."

See for yourself how Megargee's style eventually earned him the nickname of the "Southwest's Toulouse-Lautrec." The rich talent the artist tapped when his ranch went bust now lines the walls of



the historic Arizona Capitol in murals that capture the grit and glamour of an emerging state—all

of it symbolic of the triumph over hardship. Information: (602) 542-4675.

LIFE IN ARIZONA 1 9 1 4

EARLY PHOENIX HOME WAS SOLID AS . . . CONCRETE

In 1914, Charles Hugh Dunlap built a unique residence at 650 N. First Ave. in Phoenix—a solid concrete house. Five arches graced the dwelling with simple gentility. Beneath its red-tiled roof, wood-paneled interior walls and polished wood floors added elegance.

Dunlap ran an ice business, and his home featured a chute to slide frozen blocks from the delivery truck into the icebox. His wife, Dora, oversaw summertime meal preparation from a

basement kitchen with street-level windows high on the walls. Hose-and-nozzle hookups throughout the house connected to a central vacuum-cleaning

system. A glass-topped copper water tank on the roof predated modern solar heating.

However, Dunlap's grandson, also named Charles, says that this system—lacking today's solar collectors—"only worked well in summer."

Dunlap died in 1929, and when Dora passed away during the Depression years, the house sold for \$16,000. Listed on the Phoenix Historic Property Register since 1986, the Dunlap House today functions as an office building.



Wrinkles in Time

When a man destroys a work of art, we call him a vandal; when he despoils a work of nature, we call him a developer.

—Joseph Wood Krutch

Poetic Apaches

The Apache Indians were poets at heart, as evidenced by the more than 600 place-names registered on the sprawling White Mountain Apache Reservation, many of them accessible only by horseback.

Nadah Nch'ii Datsilgai means "a flat open space beneath bitter mesal."



A low cone-shaped mountain on the horizon is called Nadah. A rock formation unnamed on standard maps is known by the Apaches as Tsee Ligai Dah Sidil, meaning "a compact cluster of white rocks rests above eye level on an incline."

Information: (928) 627-1992.



Boxcar Schoolrooms

During the 1930s, northern Arizona lumberjack families wanted to make sure their children received proper academic "training," so they sent students off to school listening for "All aboard" instead of a school bell.

In those days, lumberjacks working in the Coconino National Forest brought their families with them to live in the logging camps. Since the camps moved from time to time, a practical place to educate the lumberjacks' children was in a boxcar on the camp rail siding.

The logging company would

outfit a railcar with window curtains, painted walls and linoleum floors, as well as a blackboard and teaching materials. An additional railcar was remodeled as the teacher's home. As the logging camp moved, the school traveled with it to the new location, ensuring that the children's education wasn't derailed. When the logging industry started relying on trucks to move lumber from the forest and the camps became permanent, the boxcar schools were discontinued and loggers built stationary schoolhouses.

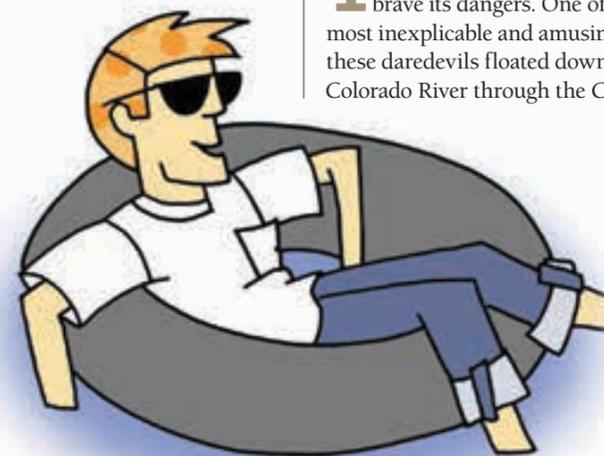
Inner(tube) Peace

The Grand Canyon has always attracted stuntmen who brave its dangers. One of the most inexplicable and amusing of these daredevils floated down the Colorado River through the Canyon

on an inner tube in 1957.

Bob Billingsley of Ajo intended to float from Lee's Ferry to Phantom Ranch, a relatively easy trip. But instead of coming ashore at the ranch, the 39-year-old evaded his wife and brothers and kept going. His family feared the worst, but the merry inner-tuber was having a grand old time.

After he had traveled 200 miles, workmen pulled him from the water above Pearce Ferry after completing one of the wildest Canyon rides ever. Everyone expressed shock at his survival, and *The Arizona Republic* said "the untamed Colorado had been cheated of a victim."



Question of the Month

What is Welsh's milkweed?

A perennial herb that flourishes on the shifting sand dunes of the Paria Plateau in northern Arizona, Welsh's milkweed displays hairy oval leaves with clusters of cream-colored flowers tinged rose in the center.

Found only in five locations (two in Arizona and three in Utah), the plant grows 10 to 40 inches tall by anchoring itself in sand with a vertical rootstalk and horizontal runners, helping stabilize dunes by holding sand in place.

On the endangered species list since 1987, Welsh's milkweed is threatened by increased off-road vehicle activity.

CONTRIBUTORS
LEO W. BANKS
SALLY BENFORD
BUZZ BRANDT
RON BUTLER
PAULY HELLER
CARRIE M. MINER
KELLY TIGHE



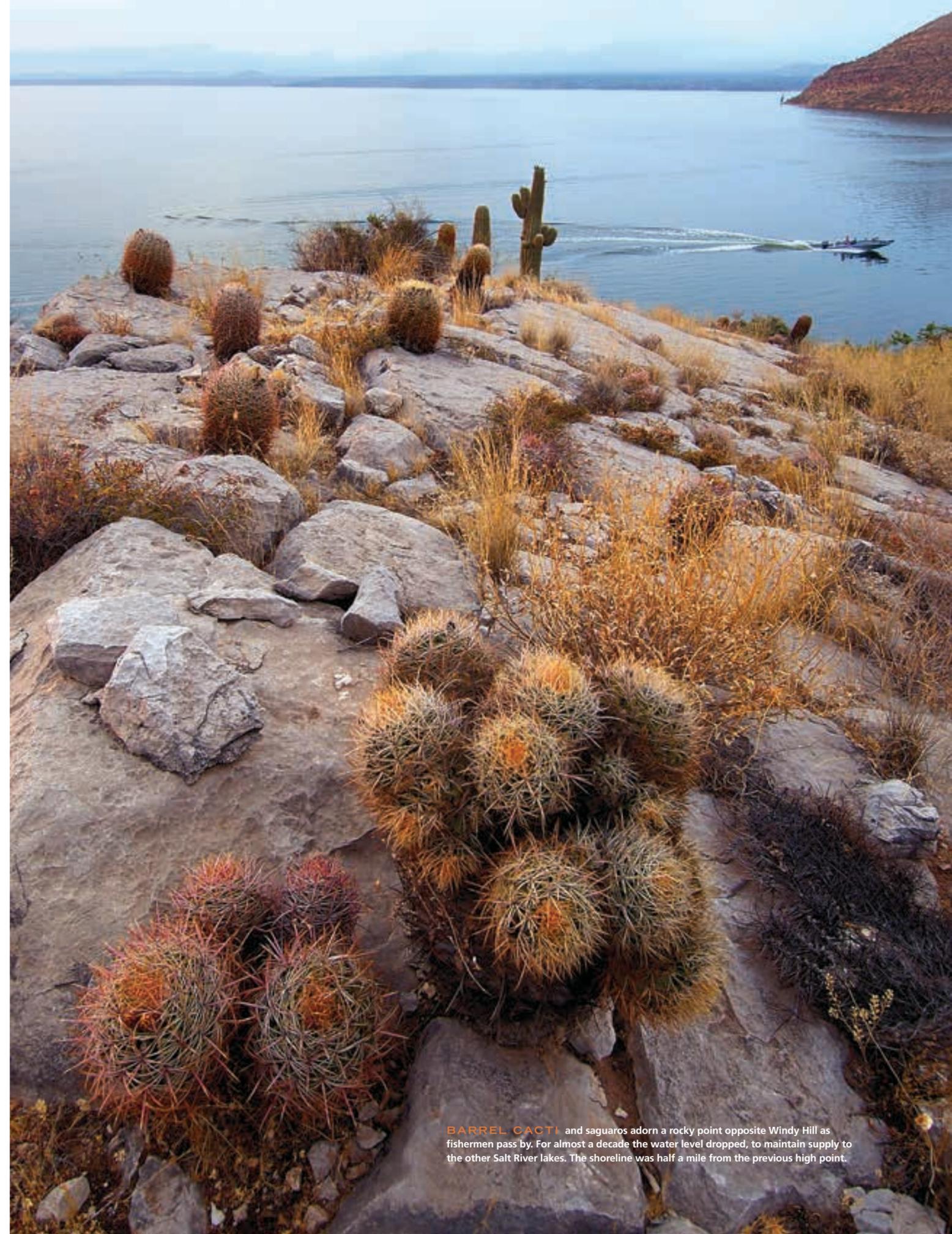
ROOSEVELT REBOUNDS

Text and Photographs by NICK BEREZENKO

2C IMAGERY

A Desert Reservoir Shakes Off Drought
to the Delight of Fishermen and Adventurers





We had waited so long, we were beginning to doubt it would ever happen.

BUT ONE WEEKEND IN THE WINTER OF 2004-2005, there it was: saguaros standing limb-deep in water and cottonwood, willow and tamarisk trees submerged to form an Amazonlike jungle. A great expanse of water glistened in the desert sun.

After nine years of drought, Theodore Roosevelt Lake was finally full.

When this granddaddy of Arizona reservoirs, 80 miles east of Phoenix, was dedicated in 1911, the 280-foot-high cyclopean-masonry gravity arch dam ranked as the world's highest stone masonry dam. But when tree-ring studies showed that the Salt River could deliver far bigger floods than the dam builders realized, the federal government in the 1990s raised the dam another 77 feet and covered it with concrete.

And then we waited for the lake to rise.

But a decade of drought intervened. Instead of rising, the lake shrank to just 9 percent of its capacity.

Along came the winter, and a glorious thing happened. A gush of rains filled Roosevelt to the brim, to the great relief of thirsty Phoenix, perched on the edge of water-rationing. And our hearts rejoiced at seeing this jewel in the desert come alive once again.

I have always loved Roosevelt, for it was here that my father and I fished and bonded. Before Roosevelt, Dad had always been a bank fisherman, sitting for

hours watching the still, baited line. I just didn't get it. It looked boring. But then one day in the early 1980s we went to Roosevelt and discovered bass fishing.

As my father sat engrossed on the bank pulling in the occasional small bluegill, I watched bass fishermen purr past in their specialized bass boats. Perched on pedestal seats, they flung plugs and spinnerbaits into shoreline cover. My heart would jump every time they got a bite and set the hook, jabbing the rod up into the air, its loaded curve vibrating as they reeled in a lunker. Monster fish. Beautiful, hefty fish. Bass and crappie. Now this was fishing of a different color.

On our next trip to Roosevelt, I took the advice of the guy at the bait shop and bought some rubber worms. As I fixed a 9-inch-long, magenta-colored plastic worm onto a monstrous 3-inch hook, Dad scoffed, "So you think bass like to play with toys?"

Grumbling darkly, I threw the glitzy concoction into the lake next to some bushes and let the slip-sinker drop to the bottom. Then I twitched the line slowly, hopping the worm along the bottom. To my amazement, I felt the "tap" on the line I'd been told about. A tiny, hollow "dink." Could that possibly be from a gaping-jawed bass sucking in the worm? I set the hook by raising the rod-tip forcefully and immediately felt a heavy quivering weight. It was a

SALT RIVER SUNRISE

When full, the lake covers 21,493 acres near the confluence of Tonto Creek and the Salt River. By February 12, 2005, after heavy winter rains, the Salt River was dumping nearly a billion gallons of water per hour into Roosevelt Lake, 57 times the normal flow.

BARREL CACTI and saguaros adorn a rocky point opposite Windy Hill as fishermen pass by. For almost a decade the water level dropped, to maintain supply to the other Salt River lakes. The shoreline was half a mile from the previous high point.



DAM DRAMATIC Roosevelt Dam, built in 1911, was covered in concrete and raised in 1996. The oldest artificial reservoir in Arizona, and once the world's tallest masonry dam, Roosevelt Dam is named for President Theodore Roosevelt, who was instrumental in approval of the Federal Reclamation Act in 1902.

fish! And what a fish. It surged, ran and fought. Dad came over and looked at the 2-pound bass dubiously. "Hmm," he said, "you got any more of those fancy worms?"

And so it was we became bass fishermen, Dad as adept and ardent as I. We even bought an aluminum bass boat. On our many trips to Roosevelt, we had long philosophical discussions about the predatory nature of bass, how to entice them, how to hook them. We became a team, and I remember those days as golden—the shared challenge, the smell and feel of the water, the glowing sun, the thunderous silence, the morning fog, the honking geese, the lavender sky. It was peace, beauty and certitude. As if all time had stopped. That old saying is true, "God doesn't count the days you spend fishing against your total number of allotted days."

Dad and I fished mainly near the mouth of Tonto Creek, but Roosevelt stretches 22 miles long and harbors many shallows where the bass congregate during the spring spawn to lay their eggs and guard their nests. Fishing is always best in the year or two after the lake rises to swallow up bushes and trees, which provide nutrients for the smaller creatures the bass like to eat and cover for the bass.

Unbeknown to us, the flooding that produced great fishing in the 1970s and 1980s worried water managers, who in 1984 determined the dam wasn't tall enough. Moreover, Roosevelt supplies Phoenix with water, and that booming desert city has an insatiable thirst. The Bureau of Reclamation, Salt River Project and a coalition of six Phoenix-area cities came up with the \$424 million to modify Roosevelt Dam.

Begun in 1989 and completed in 1996, the improvements included a new 1,080-foot-long, robin's-egg-blue bridge, a \$2.3 million visitors center, eight concrete boat ramps and 10 separate developed



BOOMING BASS Early morning bass fishermen fling lures toward the Tonto end of Roosevelt Lake. In the years following a rise in water level, bass fishing booms because submerged brush provides nutrients for small fish and cover for bass.

campgrounds with 950 campsites. Those campgrounds include paved roads, children's playgrounds, fish-cleaning stations and solar-powered restrooms. The Bureau of Reclamation came up with \$42 million to pay for all this, and the Forest Service instituted a fee demonstration program to run it.

But the completion of the dam upgrade coincided with one of the deepest dry spells of the past millennium, which nearly emptied the lake by fall 2002.

My father died the year that renovations on the dam began,



UNDERWATER CACTUS Acacia bushes and a saguaro stand submerged in Cholla Cove at Roosevelt Lake. May 1, 2005, Roosevelt Lake reached its all-time high, 96 percent full. The reservoir contained nearly 1.6 million acre-feet, or 518 billion gallons of water, just 3 feet short of its storage capacity



and my interests in Roosevelt expanded beyond fishing. In early spring 1999, I took a girlfriend canoeing down the Salt River arm of the lake. We launched on the river at the Diversion Dam area and alternated between exhilarating, riffly rapids and dragging the canoe over sandbars. We were alone for the whole day, lost in our own private world. Under her tutelage, I discovered the wonder of bird-watching.

Along the banks, we saw phainopeplas, vermilion flycatchers, killdeer, great blue herons, and golden and bald eagles. In the reedy lagoon at the head of the lake, an explosion of birds included Western grebe mates sprinting together across the water in their courtship display, brightly painted bufflehead ducks bobbing on the waves, canvasback ducks guarding their nests, an osprey diving for fish and double-crested cormorants forming heraldic shields on snags. Most amazing of all, though, were the white pelicans, gawky on sandbars but majestic in

flight, delightfully soaring serenely over the tops of saguaros.

Nature is ebb and flow, both cyclical and perverse—especially when we tinker with the environment and affect the climate. Whatever the reason, the 9-year drought yielded, at least briefly, to the wet winter of '04-'05. By February 12, the Salt River was dumping nearly a billion gallons of water per hour into Roosevelt Lake—57 times the normal flow. Tonto Creek was flowing 353 times over its average. In one weekend, the lake rose 14 vertical feet. And on May 1, Roosevelt Lake reached its all-time highest capacity, 96 percent full. The reservoir contained nearly 1.6 million acre-feet, or 518 billion gallons of water, and gleamed 3 feet short of its storage capacity.

On Solstice Day, midsummer, one of the hottest days in the year, I embarked to check out the new, full-to-the-brim Roosevelt, this time with a new girlfriend, Su. Our first surprise was with the \$10-million marina. In the shade of its high canopy stood orderly



BIRD BATHS A western Grebe's babies take refuge on their mother's back and also dive for cover. Other birds at Roosevelt Lake include phainopeplas, vermilion flycatchers, killdeer, great blue herons, golden and bald eagles, bufflehead and canvasback ducks, ospreys, double-crested cormorants and pelicans.

LOVELY LAKE The center of Roosevelt Lake shimmers, with the Superstition Mountains and Four Peaks Wilderness in the background. Once the largest man-made lake in the world, Roosevelt is still the biggest of the six Salt River Project lakes.

rows of sailboats, runabouts, cruisers and even a fair number of regally outfitted houseboats, both rental and private. Roosevelt had definitely gone upscale.

We motored out to the Tonto end. Western grebes scooted up ahead of us. At our approach, the baby birds hopped on their mother's back and then, squawking, they all dove for cover.

In the flooded jungles of the Tonto shallows, fishermen complained that the bass had so much cover now that they had spread out all along the shoreline and were tough to catch. But wait till 2006, or better yet, 2007. All the rich nutrients in the water will make the bass population go gangbusters.

We tied up in the shade of a drowned cottonwood tree and spent



SMOKE ON THE WATER

On June 22, 2005, the Three Fire burns at Roosevelt Lake in the Three-Bar Wildlife Area northeast of Four Peaks. The fire scorched about 60 percent of the wildlife area, which Arizona Game and Fish Department had operated as an outdoor laboratory for more than three decades. The study, which examined predator influence on mule deer populations, ended with the fire.



MAN AND NATURE Jetskier Tim Haenisch of San Diego skims along Roosevelt Lake near Windy Hill Campground. Among its recreation opportunities, Roosevelt offers jetskiing, fishing, bird-watching, camping and canoeing at a wildlife refuge.

most of the day alternating between dips in the water and lazing in the sun, struck by how lush our jungle was, compared to the dried-out grasses on the hills surrounding the lake. A gift from the winter rains, the fire hazard posed by the grasses had prompted the Forest Service to close the roads into the wilderness above Roosevelt.

That afternoon, billowing gray clouds approached and a menacing wind buffeted the boat. It felt like the roar of a blast furnace. Then the lightning began.

We saw the flash that started what became the 16,000-acre “Three Fire” on the hills just above the highway.

The next day we headed for the Salt River end of the lake. By noon the midsummer heat was excruciating, necessitating periodic dips. We spent our time watching the plume of smoke from the fire billow into a mushroom cloud on the western horizon. By evening half the lake was covered in smoke, but our side remained clear. Waterskiers and waverunners skimmed back and forth in front of us.

Although the rise in the lake level swallowed most of the old beaches, we managed to tie up for the night on a rocky point opposite Windy Hill.

As Su and I watched the disk of the setting sun glow blood-red behind the pall of the fire, I thought about change and memory.

And I remembered the jet-skier we overheard that afternoon on the dock at the Windy Hill Campground. He was preparing his kids for rides on the jet ski. “It was way cool,” he was telling them. “I was going full out this morning towards the Tonto end of the lake when I caught up to a flying heron. He was just toolin’ along, straight as an arrow. So I pulled in just under him and adjusted my speed so

we were going together. We went like that for maybe a couple of miles. And do you know how fast he was going? I clocked it. He was doing 32 miles an hour, just flappin’ along. Boy, it was neat.”

So I thought about those treasured hours on the lake with my Dad as I gazed out on the new lake, with a different shoreline but the same shimmer of water. I felt a great comfort in knowing Roosevelt Lake will continue to provide such moments for future generations of parents and their children. ■■

Nick Berezenko considers himself lucky to live in centrally located Pine, “only a stone’s throw” from Roosevelt Lake.



LOCATION: 80 miles northeast of Phoenix.

GETTING THERE: From Phoenix, take U.S. Route 60 east to State Route 87. Turn left (north) and drive 65 miles to State Route 188. Turn right (south) onto State 188 and drive 26 miles to the lake.

FEES: \$4 per vehicle and \$2 per watercraft per day; campground \$10 per night; double sites, \$15 per night, which includes day use fee.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Dispersed camping at the Indian Point Boat Launch at north end for the day-use fee. To reach Indian Point, visitors must ford Tonto Creek, which sometimes requires high-clearance vehicles and is impassable when the creek is flooding. The Forest Service Visitors Center is near the marina, 2 miles south of the dam. The privately owned Roosevelt Lake Marina rents watercraft.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Roosevelt Lake Marina, (928) 467-2245; www.azmarinas.com/RooseveltLake. Tonto Basin Ranger District, (928) 467-3200; www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto/recreation/rec-camping-index.shtml.

WINTER'S WET OVERTURE YIELDS A FLOURISH OF FLOWERS

After nearly a decade of drought, the long-suffering seeds concealed in the hard ground of the Sonoran Desert seized their moment in a joyful symphony of red, violet, blue and yellow orchestrated by Mexican goldpoppies, globemallows, verbena and owl clover. Last spring, our photographers scattered to record the month-by-month movements of nature's masterpiece. We can only hope this month will bring an encore despite a dry winter.

CRESCENDO OF COLOR

Superstition Mountains Mexican goldpoppies and lupines drape the slopes of the Superstitions, east of Phoenix, in one of the best wildflower displays in the state. The Sonoran Desert has more plant varieties than any other desert on Earth. It shows during a good wildflower season, determined chiefly by fall and winter rain, but also by factors like temperature and wind. GEORGE STOCKING ■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.



Sedona Cream cup flowers and a lone prickly pear bathe in the glow of a setting sun, before Sedona's red rocks and Bear Mountain. Cream cups, members of the poppy family, do not produce nectar, but their exceptional pollen attracts solitary bees. However, the flowers rely mostly on the wind for pollination. ROBERT McDONALD ■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.



Harquahala Mountain Foothills Brittlebushes favor rocky desert mountain slopes and protect their territory. When rainwater drips from their leaves, chemicals are dissolved that inhibit germination of many plants. The branches of this member of the sunflower family were chewed by Indians for their fragrant resin, and the plant has also been called *incensio* because Spanish settlers used it for incense in early churches. ROBERT McDONALD ■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

THE GREAT FLOWER CHASE PETAL TO THE METAL

BY BILL BROYLES

*When that autumn with his shoures sote
The droughte of sommer hath perced to the rote,
And NASCAR races to our desert bare,
We'll go all a'rovin' in search of loveliest blossom fair.*

—Nutta Poet

EVEN IN THE DESERT, people weary of winter. Eyes probe the landscape's languid browns and grays for an omen of green, the subtle swelling of a bud that ignites life's fuse and explodes into the Great Flower Chase.

Word of a bumper crop of spring wildflowers wafted my way early in January 2005 from a friend at Death Valley, followed by a postcard and e-mail messages. I held my breath hoping for a glorious Sonoran bloom, anxious to not seem overanxious, but dreading disappointment. Then rapid-fire reports from Alamo Lake, Lost Dutchman and Picacho Peak state parks raised expectations. The Great Flower Chase rides waves of color—first the gaudy wildflowers, then full-blossomed trees, then vivid cacti, and finally raging summer flowers. We yearn to surf them all.

The phone rang with a call from an East Coast friend who works for *National Geographic*. He's a savvy world traveler who loves to fly a little motorized paraglider over places where the rest of us would die of fright. Born in Beverly Hills and looking like a lanky

surfer, George Steinmetz is at home hitchhiking across Africa or camping on a deserted island. Now he was dead serious about shooting flowers, so he fretted about the light, the dust, the wind and the competition. He wanted to know when he could catch the show.

Peak blooms seldom last more than two weeks in any area, so flower chasers keep the camper gassed-up. In early February to mid-March 2005, a banner year, one could go nearly anywhere below 1,500 feet from northern Baja California to Death Valley, Palm Springs to Phoenix, and be overwhelmed with stunning displays. But as days warm, the palette can fade in a snap.

So I called Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum ecologist Mark Dimmitt, who pilots a wildflower hotline and monitors a network of keen observers. His reply was succinct: "Tell him to drop everything and come NOW!" George rushed to Arizona.

Why this mania to chase flowers? After all, how fast can a flowering plant run? (Or do they pedal?)

To hear Mark tell it, "My first springtime trip to the desert without my parents was in 1964 when I was a sophomore in high school. I found huge fields of wildflowers that



Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge Evening primrose and sand verbena In the wild, evening primroses act as primary colonizers, springing up in any patch of bare, undisturbed ground, often in poorer environments such as roadsides and embankments. The soft-haired, sticky sand verbena with trumpet-shaped flowers can spring up dramatically after a rain, carpeting desert washes for miles. JEFF SNYDER ■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.



Phacelia

Globemallow

Lupine

Mexican goldpoppy

Owl clover

Primrose

Brittlebush

Ajo lily

Drive-by wildflower hunting

Of the 200-odd species of showy spring flowers, here are 8 that tourists can quickly learn to identify at 60 mph from an Arizona highway.

utterly astounded me because they were so unexpected, and the carpets went on for many miles, more colorful and astoundingly more extensive than I ever imagined. I took pictures with my Brownie camera and assumed that the desert put on this spectacle every spring, and I resolved to see more of them. All through college and most of graduate school I never saw another carpet of flowers. I forgot about the photos and came to regard my memory of the glorious bloom as just a dream.

“Then in 1973 another banner year happened. My memories of the sophomore spectacle returned, plus the memories of all the barren years in between. I was hooked. Although 1978 and 1979 were banner years, there wasn’t another desert-wide spectacle until 1998. The rarity of these good years has only cemented my addiction. As soon as the spectacle fades, the memory feels as much like a dream as my first experience. I like to dream.”

This explains why from January to May Mark huddles over his Web site, sharing hourly reports from friends and issuing predictions on the next flower eruption, as if a volcano of riotous color threatened the nation’s eyesight. He speaks reverently of the trophy years—1941, 1978, 1979 and 1998—and even the splendid runner-up seasons that come along every six or seven years: 1973, 1983, 1992, 1993 and 2001. Unfortunately, despite a wet winter, 2005 didn’t make the all-stars.

I had assumed that flower-followers would have a snappy nickname, like Petal Posse, Camera Commandos or Gang Green, but Mark says they aren’t that organized. And unlike birders, they don’t keep life lists, preferring instead to see the greatest games,

not every player on every team.

George called again, worried about the spotty display, although most of us would kill to savor such an outburst. But George wanted ballroom carpets of flowers, not pretty throw rugs. I tried to calm him by reminding him that the desert frequently looks dead, brown and drab, so we’re grateful even for green. “Think of it this way,” I offered, “green is a color, too.” He did not seem mollified.

Two days later, the phone rang. It was calm, unflappable George again. “The flowers are unbelievable! I’ve never seen anything like it! Oceans of purples and blues! Get down here!”

A flower-chaser stands somewhere between a raving tornado-chaser and a delirious NASCAR fan. While the wildflower season persists, Phoenix hosts a Nextel Cup race, and the fleet of brightly painted racecars and hauler trucks rival the colorful mountain slopes beyond the track. For an afternoon, the cars flash around the oval at nearly 200 mph like a swirl of flowers in a dizzying cyclone.

So why are some wildflower years spectacular and others ordinary? The causal chain of meteorological highs and lows and Pacific Oscillations is enough to glaze my eyes, but fortunately I don’t need to know all about the engine to enjoy driving the car. Basically, some winters are wetter and warmer than others. Seeds from past years wait patiently for perfect conditions—50 to 70 degrees during daytime between October and February, plus a regular train of storms, each dropping more than half an inch of rain. When that bell rings, the seeds explode and grow like, well, weeds. Some dry years we may see a single flower

atop a short stalk; other years, following El Niños, we find hundreds of flowers on a bush as big as a VW.

My phone rang again and another friend shouted, “Come to the Kofa!” I hit the road before dawn, but I was not the only one chasing flowers. On the highway, I met head-on millions of butterflies looking for plants on which they can lay their eggs. Mostly they were painted ladies, which rely on stored fat to fly for hundreds of miles. Later I learned that the butterfly bloom extended from Death Valley to Tucson. I winced every time one splattered on the windshield, comforting myself with the hope that enough painted ladies would lay eggs to ensure the next explosive generation—even after the wasps, birds, and beetles eat their fill.

When I stopped for gas in Gila Bend, a cactus wren picked my car’s grill for butterflies and bugs. The gas station owner and his brother raved about the flowers along the highway south of town. I regaled them with stories of globe mallows taller than my upstretched arm and socks stained yellow with pollen, but their stories soon topped mine.

A little farther down the road, I pulled into a rest stop to get a look at a brilliant patch of yellow. I watched as a young father and his wife led three giggly youngsters up a short trail through roadside flowers. He was on crutches, but gamely urged them on with “We gotta see this.”

At the Kofa National Wildlife refuge I met up with photographers Jack Dykinga, John Shaw, Larry and Donna Ulrich, and Jeff Foott. Like gold prospectors gleaning news of the latest strike, they had been in touch by cell phones for weeks to share tips

about showy locations. They rendezvoused occasionally to compare notes and laugh about the frustrations of trying to catch prisms of color inside 4x5 boxes. They’re also competitive, so none minds being the first to discover a plush cove of color or grabbing a shot the others envy. Photos are a way to keep score.

They parked their campers in echelon like F-16s poised on the runway for a scramble. Guys in high-tech trucks chasing petite, delicate flowers? Maybe it’s the floral perfume. An hour before sundown, we headed for Kofa Queen Canyon, homing in on flowers like nectar-starved bumblebees.

Jeff is renowned for his wildlife photos, but this time of year flowers lure him here. He’s also well known for his mountain climbing exploits, having been Yosemite National Park’s first climbing ranger and a rope-partner of rock climbers such as Yvon Chouinard, Royal Robbins and Steve Roper.

Jeff had left home several weeks before. He’d been to Death Valley and was now working the Kofa and Arizona’s low desert. From there he would drift over to New Mexico, and then crisscross back to the Sierra Nevada foothills, then maybe to Moab and southern Utah, back to the High Sierras and finally the Rockies. “I go as long as my energy holds out.”

He loves the chase, yet he admitted, “Flowers can be frustrating. They’re hard to predict. A weather front can roar through with wind or heat and wither the whole scene, leaving you hundreds of miles from the next good photo stop. And sometimes I get so tired of shooting flower pictures that I call ‘time out’ and go take pictures of rocks.”

Back at home again, my phone rang late

at night, and George began talking without so much as a hello. “I’m down here by the border. The flowers are outrageous. They’re as far as I can see. Unbelievable. I’ve shot all my film in two days. The caterpillars are starting to eat all the primroses. I’ve never seen anything like it, even in pictures!” You would think he had discovered a new planet.

Botanist Janice Bowers, who’s studied wildflowers for 30 years, knows their colors. She’s grouped them: 33 percent of the desert species have yellow flowers, 29 percent white, 17 percent purple or lavender, 11 percent pink and red, 7 percent blue and 3 percent orange. Mix these on a canvas of green leaves, brown soil, black rock and blue sky, and we’re doubly grateful for color film. She reminds us that the real purpose of colors is to attract pollinators, not photographers, but we don’t care. We’re willing to share with a few zillion butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees.

If I had one of those racecars that’ll do 200, maybe I could race around Arizona and catch a glimpse of every single flower. But with a spring like 2005, I’d need a faster car, maybe one of those flashy 330-mph top-fuel dragsters from Firebird Raceway. Instead, I rely on my 2-mph feet.

Needing to set their seeds before May’s heat, the spring wildflowers rapidly wind through their short cycle and I catch my breath. In April, the trees and cacti will launch their fusillade of blooms, so I must rest up—although I hear rumors of paloverde blooms near Wickenburg and saguaro buds west of Ajo. Of course, come

summer, I can plan on walks in the forest at Flagstaff, and summer rains will bring fields of caltrop, globemallow, rock daisies, prickly poppies, chinchweed, daturas and senna to the desert.

There’s no rest for the compulsive chaser, so I keep my sleeping bag in the car. And in deep December, when listless winter wraps the desert in somber hues, I’ll start checking the wildflower hotlines and wait for Mark to pronounce the flower chaser’s equivalent of “Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines.” He’ll wave his green flag—“Come NOW!”—and we’ll be off again. **AH**

Bill Broyles is out chasing wildflowers again. You might enjoy his latest book, Dry Borders: Great Natural Reserves of the Sonoran Desert, which he co-edited with Richard Felger.



ADDITIONAL READING: *Arizona Wildflowers* is a practical, full-color guide for locating and identifying Arizona

wildflowers year-round. Published by *Arizona Highways*, it describes and pictures more than 100 species. Softcover, 128 pages, \$18.95 plus shipping and handling. To order, call toll-free (800) 543-5432 or visit arizonahighways.com and click on the “Travel and Guide” link under “Browse Our Books.”

online Get daily wildflower “hot spot” information at arizonahighways.com (Click on “Wildflower Watch”)



Eagletail Mountains Owl clover carpets the slopes of the Eagletail Mountains. One of the showiest wildflowers in the desert, owl clover often appears with other flowers due to its parasitic nature. It connects to other plants' roots, sucking water and minerals. GEORGE STOCKING ■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.



Cabeza Prieta Primrose Cabeza Prieta is home to as many as 391 plant species. With enough rain, primrose, as well as vervain and marigolds, can transform the landscape in early spring. **NICK BEREZENKO** ■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

WILDFLOWER GUIDE

by JoBeth Jamison

Wildflower-watching can be fruitless or fantastic. Some blooms come early, some come late and some don't come at all. Some grow along the road, some require a committed off-road excursion. But, like winter snowflakes, each spring flower brings unique beauty. Here are some of our favorite springtime spots to fawn over flora, when a wet winter and a mild spring conspire. Check contact numbers for current status.

THE WILD SIDE

Lost Dutchman State Park

6109 N. Apache Trail, Apache Junction
Who says there's no gold in them thar hills? Mexican goldpoppies, golden bursts of brittlebush, mustard evening primrose and countless other brightly colored spring petals sometimes pave the picture-perfect slopes of the

Superstition Mountains. The especially scenic wildflower vistas along the Jacob's Crosscut, Siphon Draw and Discovery trails are worth their weight in blooming bullion and may well be the treasure trove that Jacob Waltz mentioned. Hey, you never know. (480) 982-4485; www.azstateparks.com/Parks/parkhtml/dutchman.html.

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

South of Ajo off State Route 85
Organ Pipe National Monument is best known for late bloomers. Its namesake cacti blossom nightly, in the peak of summer heat, with lovely lavender-white flowers. However, the park's spectacular show of spring flora also often provides music to the eyes with big, vibrant blooms from the area's other 25 species of cactus. Walk the Victoria Mine Trail or the Grass Canyon Trail to glimpse plush carpets of desert color in good years. May through July, try an early morning excursion on the Bull Pasture Trail to catch both the night and day

bloomers. (Use caution in remote areas near the U.S.-Mexico border. Call ahead for closures and alerts.) (520) 387-6849; www.nps.gov/orpil.

Picacho Peak State Park

60 miles south of Phoenix, off Interstate 10, Exit 219, Picacho
During many springs, the bajadas surrounding this historically poignant peak are a prime locale for fields of Mexican goldpoppies. The colorful signs of life make it hard to believe that this was more than 140 years ago a Civil War battlefield. Enjoy the springtime rebirth from the Nature Trail or Calloway Trail. (520) 466-3183; www.azstateparks.com/Parks/parkhtml/picacho.html.

Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge

West of State Route 85, Ajo
Meaning "dark head" in Spanish, Cabeza Prieta is a lonely but bright spot for wildflower-watching. Chock-full of highly adaptable desert animals, the Sonoran Desert sanctuary also

often hosts a bevy of beautiful blooms that know how to hold their water. Be mindful, though, because this is a rough and remote area. Named for forty-niners who perished during the harsh journey to California, the name Devil's Highway still applies. Carry food and water and drive a reliable four-wheel-drive vehicle. (Use caution in remote areas near the U.S.-Mexico border. Call ahead for closures and alerts.) (520) 387-6483; www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/arizona/kofa.html.

Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

Between Interstates 10 and 8, 11.2 miles southwest of Quartzite, off U.S. Route 95
Come springtime, the prickly protections of desert life share their extreme-weather world with nature's softer side, especially around the Kofa and Castle Dome mountains. Along the De La Osa and Kofa Queen trails, sunset-colored sprays of Mexican goldpoppies, bladderpods, brittlebushes and fiddlenecks rounded out with cool-hued accents of Coulter's lupines, desert lavender and

primroses bring seasonal sugar and spice to the rough-and-tumble refuge. That said, remember that refuge-roaming is anything but a cakewalk. Carry food and water, and travel in a reliable four-wheel-drive vehicle. (Use caution in remote areas near the U.S.-Mexico border. Call ahead for closures and alerts.) (928) 783-7861; www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/arizona/kofa.html.

Pinal Pioneer Parkway

State Route 79, Florence to Catalina
If it's a motion picture you seek, catch the wildflower action along scenic State Route 79 between Florence and Tucson. Beautiful any time of year, the 42-mile stretch grows to legendary status in a good spring with an all-star cast of fearless flora that can bloom all along the route and practically up from under the two-lane road. Enjoy an intermission and a picturesque picnic lunch at the Tom Mix marker, a memorial to the Hollywood cowboy who died in a car crash near this spot in 1940. www.desertusa.com/mag99/marstories/wildftour.html.

THE GARDEN VARIETY

Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park

37615 U.S. Route 60, Superior
After a 1917 Red Cross mercy mission to Russia, mining magnate Col. William Boyce Thompson observed that human life is largely dependent on plant life. His personal discovery planted the seeds for this public botanical park, dedicated to "the fostering of educational, recreational and research opportunities associated with arid-land plants," of which, wildflowers are an integral and pleasing part. (520) 689-2811; www.azstateparks.com/Parks/parkhtml/boyce.html.

Desert Botanical Garden (Harriet K. Maxwell Desert Wildflower Trail)

1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix
There are no guarantees in life, so they say. "They" obviously haven't been to Phoenix's Desert Botanical Garden. Not unlike Boyce Thompson

Arboretum, this plant life preserve simulates and maintains the natural conditions that produce spring desert wildflowers along designated pathways. While some years may prove more remarkable than others, the park promises glorious flora even when Mother Nature cannot. (480) 941-1225; www.dbg.org.

Tucson Botanical Gardens (William McGinnies Wildflower Garden)

2150 N. Alvernon Way, Tucson
Despite the surrounding city sprawl, the desert continues to come alive at the Tucson Botanical Gardens. Each spring the specialty William McGinnies Wildflower Garden swells with abundant bouquets of penstemons, lupines, desert marigolds and countless other colorful blooms. (520) 326-9686; www.tucsonbotanical.org/html/garden_wildflower.html.

Tohono Chul Park

7366 N. Paseo del Norte, Tucson
Tohono Chul's cup usually runneth over with piping hot beverages and pampered guests at their renowned tearoom but, come March, the acclaimed park also pours forth a generous serving of fragrant springtime petals. (520) 742-6455; www.tohonochulpark.org.

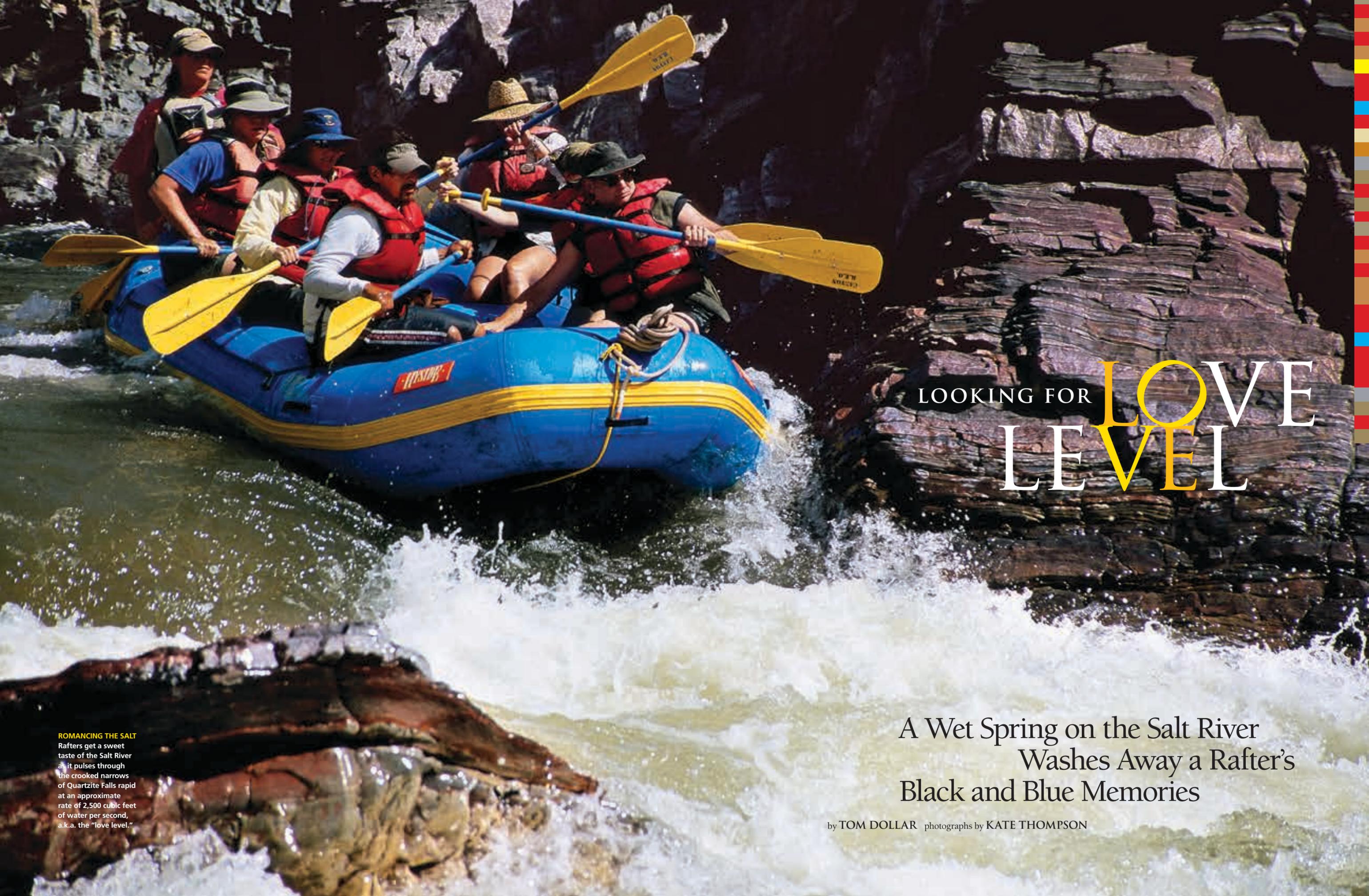
Additional Information:

For up-to-the-minute updates and alerts on statewide wildflower conditions go to arizonahighways.com or visit these Web sites: www.azparks.gov/wfslideshow/wildflowerindex.htm; www.desertmuseum.org/programs/flw_blooming.html; www.desertusa.com/wildflo/wildupdates.html.

To ensure future enjoyment of Arizona's natural treasures, learn about Leave No Trace by visiting: www.blm.gov/education/1nt/principles.html.

online

Root out other favorite bloomin' spots at arizonahighways.com
(Click on "Spring Escape Guide")



LOOKING FOR **LOVE**
LEVEL

A Wet Spring on the Salt River
Washes Away a Rafter's
Black and Blue Memories

by TOM DOLLAR photographs by KATE THOMPSON

ROMANCING THE SALT
Rafters get a sweet taste of the Salt River as it pulses through the crooked narrows of Quartzite Falls rapid at an approximate rate of 2,500 cubic feet of water per second, a.k.a. the "love level."

WATER RESISTANT

At any level, Class-IV rapids like the Maze in Salt River Canyon are consistently challenging and require the unflappable and unflippable skills of guides like John Shocklee.



spring rain has kissed the landscape, producing lush green grasses, forbs and shrubs. Vivid yellow colonies of brittlebush blanket entire hillsides, strawberry and claret cup hug rock niches, and tributary creeks harbor red and yellow monkeyflowers and a few lingering Mexican goldpoppies.

As if celebrating this bonanza of buds and bugs, a canyon wren's descending trill echoes at seemingly every bend in the river, black phoebes dart from rock perches to nab insects in flight, belted kingfishers dive from overhanging snags to snap small fry from the current and vermilion flycatchers and lesser goldfinches flit through stream-side brush.

In truth, love level begins miles away and months prior to the rafting season with a deep snowpack high in eastern Arizona's White Mountains. Come spring, rivulets of snowmelt rush into the Black and White rivers, which eventually merge to form the Salt.

EDDY AND THE CRUISERS
Below, rafters eddy out at the mouth of Canyon Creek to enjoy a hike through the serenity of a saguaro and rock-laden landscape before rolling back out into the rapids.

Bountiful snow and a slow, steady melt give the most love. Years of drought and scant snowfall give no love.

But too hot too soon sends deadly floodwaters churning through the canyon. In early 2005, a quick thaw and heavy rainfall generated a 41,400-cfs torrent that rolled giant boulders, reshaped beaches, carved new channels and uprooted miles of shoreline-choking tamarisk trees. The biggest flood in recent times occurred on January 8, 1993, when water surging at 143,000 cfs boiled through the Salt River Canyon, a 100-year event. "Apocalyptic level" comes to mind.

It took me 15 years to get back on the Upper Salt River, but since then I've rafted it three times with professional river guides. The guides knew all the rapids by name and relished relating boating-mishap stories linked to Quartzite Falls, Corkscrew Rapid, Devil's Pendejo and others in the Class-IV, raft-flipping category. All spoke reverentially of the Salt, ranking it among the top-10 white-water rafting rivers in the American West.

Assemble a half dozen hardy outdoor enthusiasts, put them on a raft running a wilderness river, season with a dash of risk and you've got a recipe for esprit. We're

... too hot too soon sends **deadly floodwaters churning** through the canyon.

"Love Level." Whisper those words into the ear of a white-water rafting guide on the upper Salt River and she'll sigh and give you a satisfied smile.

Love level is what you get when the Salt's current is running just right, neither too fast nor too slow—somewhere around 2,500 cubic feet per second (cfs). At love level, most rapids on the Salt, even ones in the adrenaline-pumping Class IV category, smooth out and make a boating guide's job just a tad less stressful.

"At love level you can just line up Eye of the Needle and slide right through," says lead guide Matt Sayre. By contrast, the same rapid at 6,500 cfs would truly test a boater's skills. But worst of all is "black-and-blue level," when the 750-csf current sends rafts pinballing off boulders, scrunching over gravel bars or bottoming out, forcing rafters to jump overboard in river sandals to hoist the raft or

blister their hands hauling lines. At this point, it isn't fun anymore.

Black and blue—like my first flawed raft trip on the Salt some 23 years ago. Brand new to Arizona and all Western rivers, I could have used a copy of *River Running for Dummies*—if there had been such a booklet.

BACK THEN WE LAUNCHED OUR RAFT below the bridge spanning the gorge at U.S. Route 60 for an unhurried, four-day, 52-mile float to the take-out at the State Route 288 bridge. But we immediately ran aground on the well-named Baptism Rapid, waded in, pulled free, jumped in—and promptly ran aground again. So it went,

rapid after rapid as the mid-May temperature soared above 100 degrees and the current ran black and blue with a vengeance.

Somehow, we fought downriver as far as Cibecue Creek before giving up, 7 miles from our put-in. All my memories of that trip are black and blue—a scraped knee, beastly heat, a bruised hip and a steady stream of not-so-original cussing. Lost forever are all impressions of landscape, vegetation, wildlife, tributary creeks, birds, butterflies, flowers or swimming holes.

But forget black and blue. This is about love level. And in the spring of 2005, the love that floats our boat has spread from the shoreline to the cliff heights. Abundant





GREETINGS FROM CAMP 'HIGHER-WATER'
When higher water meets higher ground at love level, left, both novice and veteran rafters can enjoy easy access to the canyon's best beaches, like this one at Arch camp, below Salt Banks.

THAT LOVE LEVEL FEELING
From right to left, lead guide Katrina Hynes, Robynn Ekel and commercial-guide-in-training Mac Stant exude the love level state of mind, or should we say *joie de fleuve*?



'No man steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.'

HERACLITUS, *Greek philosopher* 500 B.C.

going to get this raft downriver, and we're going to do it together. A tough rapid coming up? Bring it on! "Four strokes forward!" our guide shouts.

"Right forward, left back! All forward! Paddle hard! Keep paddling!" And we've made it through The Maze, a gnarly Class-IV run. Shouts of triumph and seven paddle blades are raised aloft in a "high-five" salute as we float on down into quiet water below the big drop.

We pile seven into the raft, three on a side, with river guide Katrina Hynes commanding from her perch in the stern. Robynn and Jeana are from Williams; Catherine from Durango, Colorado; Hannah and David from Seattle; and Mac from Holbrook. As odd man out, I'm occasionally called on to relieve a paddler, but mostly I ride in one of the supply rafts rowed by guides Karl Hynes, John Shocklee and Matt Sayre.

Others before him must have observed it, but around 500 B.C. Greek philosopher Heraclitus coined the aphorism: "No man steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man."

Indeed, rivers do change over time, especially volatile desert rivers, which change

with the hour. A spring cold spell can lock up snowmelt for days, converting love level to black and blue. A cloudburst miles upriver can send water gushing down tributary creeks to spawn a roaring flash flood in the main channel.

But people change, too. "He's not the same man," Heraclitus noted in the second half of that oft-quoted maxim. Certainly, I've changed since that first aborted run down the Salt 23 years ago.

But what intrigues me especially are the changes in a group of boaters in just a few days on a wild river.

At the beginning, there's apprehension, particularly among first-timers facing half a dozen Class-IV rapids with a big reputation for dumping paddlers overboard. One is named Little Boat Eater.

By day two, confidence grows. We become a team, thanks to the expert instruction of Katrina, our guide. So we relax and start getting acquainted, bonded by hikes up tributary creeks—Walnut, Canyon, Hess, Coon—and the camaraderie of sleeping in the open, sharing meals and chatting around a campfire.

By the fourth day, some of us think we've

got the hang of this river-running stuff—it may be hubris—but there's even talk of organizing a run on our own.

At the take-out, we exchange hugs, e-mail addresses and promises.

Had love level splashed right into our boat? Or was it merely the bond of a risky adventure?

Guess you'll just have to raft the Salt to find out. **AH**

Tucsonan Tom Dollar wrote the book Guide to Arizona's Wilderness Areas, in which he includes more information about the Salt River Canyon Wilderness. His last run downriver in April 2005 was the best ever.

Rivers are like home to photographer Kate Thompson of Dolores, Colorado, who has been guiding and conducting research on Western rivers since 1980. Not until 1998 did she start photographing river adventures for a living.



RAFTING COMPANIES: Canyon Rio Rafting, (800) 272-3353 or www.canyonrio.com/salt.htm. Mild to Wild, (800) 567-6745 or www.mild2wildrafting.com; In A Raft, (800) 462-7238 or www.inaraft.com/salt-river.htm.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: The rafting season on the Upper Salt River is brief, usually March 1 through May 15. Local weather can be very changeable. Consult with commercial rafters about gear.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Tonto National Forest, Globe Ranger Station, (928) 402-6236.

A Parrot's Paradise



A scarlet macaw is among 400 birds that have found their way to Oasis Bird Sanctuary on a pecan orchard in Cascabel, north of Benson. Although popular because of their striking appearance and ability to talk, macaws require more effort than traditional pets and often outlive their human owners.

OZ, A MOLUCCAN COCKATOO, has plucked all his feathers, leaving a fluffy white head atop a scrawny naked bird body. He looks like a streaker wearing a kachina mask.

Waylon was the spoils of a divorce. "There was an ad in the Phoenix paper about five years ago that said, 'If he's not adopted by Saturday, he goes in the stew pot,'" says caretaker Sybil Erden of the citron cockatoo currently clinging sideways to his cage. In response, Waylon flaps his wings and shrieks, a sound that evokes Anthony Perkins' knife coming down on Janet Leigh in the Psycho shower. "And this is why the guy wanted to give the bird up," Erden adds.

"Hi, Ellie-Deli, you're a good girl!" she says to a white sulphur-crested cockatoo who clacks her tongue in welcome. "Ellie would actually be a wonderful companion except she is missing a wing and no one wanted her," Erden tells me.

Four hundred handicapped, neurotic, elderly and antisocial birds have all found a haven at the Oasis Bird Sanctuary, located on a 23-acre pecan orchard in Cascabel.

The reason that birds native to the Amazon, Indonesia, Australia and Africa ended up in this patch of Sonoran Desert is that cockatoos, macaws, conures and other parrot species weren't meant to live in captivity, Erden says. The result is a large number of feathered pets—1.2 million annually, she estimates—abandoned by owners who can't take the resulting noise and the bad behavior. That number also includes birds that outlive their owners; some species can live as long as a century.

By *Melissa Morrison* & *Photographs by Terrence Moore*

Their presence in the dusty desert is startling. The screeches, sing-songs, caws and warbles coming from the lines of tree-shaded cages evoke a Dickens-era insane asylum. A yellow-naped Amazon named Max mumbles in a way that's almost human, like English heard through a wall.

And their colors are shockingly beautiful: parrots whose green is nearly fluorescent, a Moluccan cockatoo's creamy Chanel pink. The dozens of cockatiels who share a cage the size of a child's bedroom have identical circles of orange on their cheeks, like vaudeville rouge. The lovebirds, who reside nearby, are soft hues of orange, blue and green, shading into each other like Easter eggs.

"Lovebirds started it all for me," Erden, 54, says. "They're my jewels."

Erden, who has a pair of rainbow lorries tattooed on her back, used to be a Phoenix artist but gave herself over to bird rescue after she began volunteering with For the Birds, a rescue organization. When

cages eventually replaced her furniture, she realized she had a new calling. She started the Oasis in 1997 and moved to Cascabel in September 2000 when she found the acreage.

She is a self-taught bird expert who lives on the premises in a trailer that's filled with 13 cats, five dogs and many reptiles. The sanctuary relies on grants and private donations, for both cash and equipment. Erden runs the Oasis with six paid staff members and dozens of volunteers.

The birds also care for each other. Most are housed in pairs. Many breeds bond for life, regardless of gender, which is why one of the first things Erden does with a new arrival is find it a compatible cagemate. The resulting relationships are touching. Jacqueline and Sparky Dave are from different continents and would never have met if not for their captivity. But now Jacqueline, a pink Moluccan cockatoo, and Sparky Dave, a green Amazon, are a couple.

In another cage, Pablo, an orange-wing Amazon, helps his pal, Paco, a Mexican redheaded Amazon who is nearly blind, find the food.

Next door, Jack has plucked off most of his feathers, but that doesn't matter to his partner, also named Paco, this one a female and fellow Amazon, who had rejected other potential roommates. When she saw Jack, "she fell in love with him," Erden says, adding wryly, "She sees his inner beauty."

Partners even accompany sick birds to the hospital, which is located in a nearby trailer covered with vivid bird murals. Mickey, a Maximillian pionus, is there because he has cancer, and Minnie keeps him company. "They always do better if their mate stays with them," Erden says.

Other cages contain Sergeant Peeps, an elderly lovebird who has a beak injury, cockatoos too old to remain outside, and a lovebird who had a stroke and can't fly. A vet visits regularly, but Erden sometimes sleeps on the foldout couch to give a patient medicine, which she did most recently for a wheezy duck named Marvin.

When the inevitable eventually happens, the birds are buried in the adjacent cemetery, a small patch of dirt with stones marking the graves. A small statue of St. Francis, the patron saint of animals, oversees it. ■

Melissa Morrison, who lives in Phoenix, was awed by the colors and sounds of the sanctuary's residents.

Terrence Moore of Tucson found it refreshing to observe the loving care of mostly unwanted birds.



Sun conures



Executive Director Sybil Erden cuddles two black lorries, brother and sister Othello and Ophelia, who have lived together for years.

Below, Associate Director T.J. Georgitso converses with Ellie, a sulfur-crested cockatoo, who is missing a wing. Many birds are placed with companions to enhance their social and behavioral environment, and even help handicapped cagemates with physical tasks.



LOCATION: 72.5 miles east of Tucson.
GETTING THERE: From Tucson, drive east on Interstate 10 about 45 miles to Exit 306 (Pomerene Road).
 Because visits to the sanctuary are by appointment only, the staff will issue directions when your appointment is confirmed.
HOURS, DATES: The Oasis leads tours upon request. Call in advance to schedule. Mid-April through mid-October are the best times to visit.
FEES: A donation of \$10 is suggested.
TRAVEL ADVISORY: Gravel and dirt roads comprise the final 8 miles of the route to the sanctuary.
WARNING: Do not attempt to cross washes after a rainstorm.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: (520) 212-4737.

PHOENIX URBAN HIKING



Three Mountains Cast Blessings Across the Intersection of Nature and Civilization

BY LAWRENCE W. CHEEK PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ELMS JR.

A city is blessed in many ways by mountains around it or within it. They claw rain out of passing storms. They offer recreation and geographic identity. And there is an intangible fulfillment, perhaps something spiritual, about snuggling up to mountains. They seem timeless and imperturbable, anchors in creation that will outlive all the ambitions and tragedies of the civilization churning around them. Geology can be a symbolic relief valve, letting the steam out of the morning news. And here, in this intersection of nature and civilization, something interesting is always happening. The mountains of Phoenix aren't big or daunting—most Arizona peaks, as well as serious climbers, look down on them. But the modest ranges scattered around the city offer the ideal form of urban hiking: They're accessible to almost everyone, and they challenge our heads at least as much as our feet.

ANCIENT MESSAGES Audrey Elms, above, studies one of the many Hohokam petroglyphs that dot the 16,000-acre city-owned South Mountain Park in Phoenix.



Formed 14 million years ago, the 2,608-foot high Piestewa Peak offers a panoramic view of downtown Phoenix. The peak was renamed in honor of Army Private First Class Lori Piestewa who was killed in Iraq in 2003.

SOUTH MOUNTAIN

South Mountain ripples across what once was the southern horizon of Phoenix like an immense dike heaved up by Ma Nature to contain the tumult of the sprawling metropolis. Silly girl—what made her think we hyperambitious humans would respect a logical boundary to anything? Phoenix started to leak around the east end of South Mountain in the 1970s; today the range is three-quarters surrounded. In a daylong 13-mile hike following the sun along the east-west spine of the range, I plod for three hours before I lose sight of subdivisions lapping at the mountain's southeastern skirts.

But South Mountain doesn't seem beleaguered or disrespected. Absolutely the contrary. Phoenix bought the entire rock in 1924 to protect it from development, and today touts it as the country's largest municipal park. At 25.8 square miles, it's 9 percent larger than Manhattan.

"Phoenix was 7 or 8 miles away when the city

SOUTH MOUNTAIN PARK/PRESERVE

Trails: 12 trails cover 58 miles.
High Point: Mount Suppa at 2,609 feet.
Highest Trail: Dobbins Lookout at 2,330 feet.
Fun Fact: South Mountain Park hosts 3 million visitors a year.
Trailhead: Take Interstate 10 east to the Elliot Road exit. Turn south onto Elliot, then turn east onto 48th Street to Pima Canyon Road. Turn left into the parking lot.
Information: (602) 534-6324; www.phoenix.gov/parks/hikesoth.html.
Duis autatem do delenibh



TOUCH OF SHADE Dave and Tanya Supenski enjoy the shade of a South Mountain tunnel after hiking a portion of the 58 miles of trails that zigzag through the park.



bought it," said Jim Burke, the city's deputy parks and recreation director. "It was pretty visionary."

Most of the trails on South Mountain are 600 or 800 years old. "They're essentially Hohokam," Phoenix city archaeologist Todd Bostwick told me, "the same trails they used."

Bostwick has written a provocative book, *Landscape of the Spirits*, chronicling the abundant rock art on South Mountain and proposing that some of it records the journeys of the tribal shamans into the spirit world, perhaps in meditative trances. They may well have undertaken these journeys on South Mountain. "It was a place for a spiritual experience and a retreat

from the noisy, smelly villages in the valley—remember, they were an urban society."

I like the implied connection—that this big rock served the Salt River Hohokam people exactly as it serves us today.

An hour into my end-to-end traverse of South Mountain, I leave the National Trail for a side trip to one of the spectacular petroglyph panels I remember from a previous encounter. Bostwick says the difficulty of interpreting ancient rock art shouldn't keep us from trying, and I want to revisit the panel with this permission in mind.

Its most intriguing image is a set of parallel wavy

lines abutting a human figure that seems to be dancing or leaping. It looks like a man running from a flash flood—and suddenly I realize that immediately behind this pile of granite is a monster arroyo. Studying the eroded backside of the boulders, it's obvious that floodwater regularly runs 10 or 12 feet deep here, and has done so for hundreds or thousands of years.

Was the illustration a warning—or a memorial? More likely the latter, I decide. But the puzzle only enhances my South Mountain experience. In most human cultures, mountains are harbors of mystery (nobody ever reported seeing a Sasquatch roaming

ROUGH LIFE Saguaros, ocotillo, brittlebush, desert lavender as well as almost every variety of Arizona cacti call the Piastewa Peak area home. Some 54 species of birds and a host of animals live throughout the craggy desert landscape.
TOM DANIELSEN

the prairie), and they will always remain so—unless we keep civilizing them.

For a ridge that peaks at a modest 2,690 feet, South Mountain offers an amazing variety of landscape. The National Trail skirts steep canyons and deep arroyos, and winds through grumpy heaps of dark brown granite and granodiorite, alternating with soft hillocks fuzzed with desert grasses. To the halfway point, the trail offers frequent views of the city, but then it slips

down between parallel ridges and civilization blinks out. For the last 6 miles and three hours, I encounter no people, see no buildings, hear no distant rumble of traffic. I could just as well be on the Arizona Trail, 50 miles from the nearest tendrils of civilization.

Except that I have five bars of signal on my cell phone. Which is good, because I have to call my ride and tell her where to extract me from my not-exactly-wilderness trek.

CAMELBACK MOUNTAIN AND PIESTEWA PEAK

Camelback Mountain/Echo Canyon Recreation Area

Trails: Two trails designated as “easy” and two “difficult” (each 1.2 miles long).

Fun Fact: President Lyndon B. Johnson visited Phoenix to celebrate the 1968 land exchange that returned Camelback Mountain’s 2,700-foot summit to the City of Phoenix.

Cholla Trailhead: From Camelback Road, turn north onto 64th Street/Invergordon Road to the parking lot. Walk north to Cholla Lane to the trailhead.

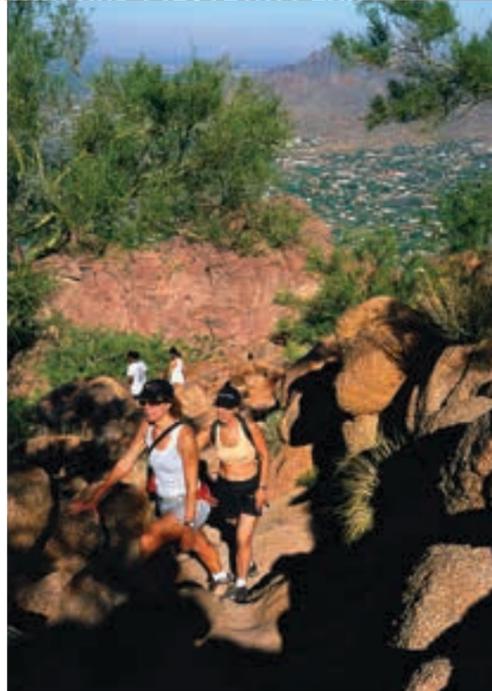
Piestewa Peak/Dreamy Draw Area

Trails: Seven trails.

Fun Fact: Summit Trail accommodates 4,000 to 10,000 hikers a week.

Piestewa Peak trailheads: From State Route 51 drive east on Glendale Avenue/Lincoln Drive, turn north (left) onto Squaw Peak Drive and continue to the parking area.

Information: (602) 262-7901; www.phoenix.gov/parks/hikephx.html.



GETTING A WORKOUT Chicagoans Karen Rish and Lauren Streicher work on the 1,200-foot elevation gain that leads to Camelback Mountain’s summit.

CAMELBACK MOUNTAIN, PIESTEWA PEAK

Starting up the Cholla Trail to the 2,704-foot summit of Camelback Mountain, I overhear a teenager reassuring her companions that for her this is going to be, like, a walk in the park. “I hiked the entire Grand Canyon in a day, guys!”

Camelback and the nearby knuckle of Piestewa Peak are essentially Phoenix’s outdoor gyms. Judging from the fast-paced walking (and running), the gear and snippets of conversation, it’s a good guess that fewer than half the hikers are ascending these mountains for the scenery.

A two-legged mountain goat passes me, hopping boulder-to-boulder with a heart-rate monitor strapped to one arm and ultraminimalist provisions—a half-liter water bottle—cached in a waist holster. His female companion, working her way up more deliberately and sanely, is falling behind. “Slow down!” she shouts.

ABOVE THE CITY An urban hiker sweats his way to the top of Piestewa Peak, which is primarily comprised of a type of granite known as schist.

“We’re not here to have fun,” he yells back. “This is a workout!”

On 2,608-foot Piestewa Peak, I start a conversation with a mellower hiker, who introduces himself as Nick Palomares, a 73-year-old retired military man and ROTC instructor. He says he’s trekked to this summit every weekday for eight years—yes, including summers. “I’m diabetic, and this plus the diet keeps my blood sugar under control,” he says. “I just don’t think about the heat. I freeze my water bottle overnight, and when I get to the top I have a nice, cool drink.”

We have an urge to climb mountains that is so powerful that it must be instinctive. A sweaty stream of humanity surges to the summits of Camelback and Piestewa day after day, while the more interesting 3.7-mile Freedom Trail around Piestewa Peak is usually as lonely as the moon. To reach a summit, even a modest one just a quarter-mile above the valley floor, is an unambiguous accomplishment that positions us above the rabble. It’s harder to explain the point of ambling around a mountain.

I have almost quit trying to explain why we humans climb mountains. I only know why I do it. As essayist Scott Russell Sanders noted: “Time in the wilds . . . reminds me of how much of what I ordinarily do is mere dithering and how much of what I own is mere encumbrance.”

Plus you see things. Plodding slowly up Camelback, I see plenty: polychromatic gardens of lichens, boulders harassed into wonderfully improbable shapes by erosion, hedgehog cacti scratching out a living in a meager fissure of decomposed granite and stray soil.

I also see oddities among my fellow humans. What does it mean that we attack Camelback outfitted with cell phone and iPod? I suspect that these devices symbolize our estrangement from nature, our inability to embrace the mountain without importing these trappings of culture. We have an intense urge to civilize mountains, especially those that happen to be right inside our cities.



A Lizard's Tail

Some Like it Orange

By Adelheid Fischer Photographs by Kim Wismann



In winter, the late-afternoon sun glances off the desert varnish on the rocks of South Mountain Preserve at the southern edge of Phoenix, causing the hillside to shimmer. The Akimel O'odham, whose tribal lands once included South Mountain, took note of this odd-looking phenomenon and called them the Greasy Mountains, saying Coyote once stole some meat and hid in the mountains, dribbling fat on the rocks and giving them an oily looking sheen.

Visit these rocks in April and May and you'll observe another phenomenon every bit as enchanting as the legend of the glistening

rocks. It's breeding season for the common chuckwalla, the second largest of Arizona's 38 species of lizards. Measuring some 16 inches, the meaty lizards with their spatula-shaped bodies and chunky tails sunbathe on South Mountain's "greasy" rocks and entertain hikers with their clumsy calisthenics—pushups and head-bobs that male chuckwallas use to intimidate rivals.

But scientist Matthew Kwiatkowski has discovered that although South Mountain's chuckwallas are common, they're anything but ordinary. Since the late 1990s, Kwiatkowski, an Arizona State University natural

sciences lecturer, has spent countless hours sitting perfectly still in the searing heat watching creatures so skittery he can't so much as reach for a water bottle. But his tenacity has yielded findings that have made him famous in herpetology circles.

For instance, Kwiatkowski and his colleagues have discovered that the chuckwallas in South Mountain reach densities of 65 animals per hectare (the size of two football fields.) That's three to six times the density of the chuckwalla populations in the Santan Mountains southeast of Phoenix. In the desert preserves on the city's north side, the number of chuckwal-

las drops to only three animals per hectare.

The reason? Prime chuckwalla real estate. South Mountain provides a smorgasbord of dietary offerings for this vegetarian lizard, especially the blossoms of ocotillos, paloverde trees and globe mallows. Now mix in South Mountain's unusual geology, which features boulders sheared and stacked on the slopes like slices of bologna. These layers provide sheltered nooks and crannies for chuckwalla nurseries and escape routes for adults fleeing hungry coyotes, roadrunners and hawks. When harassed, the animals simply duck

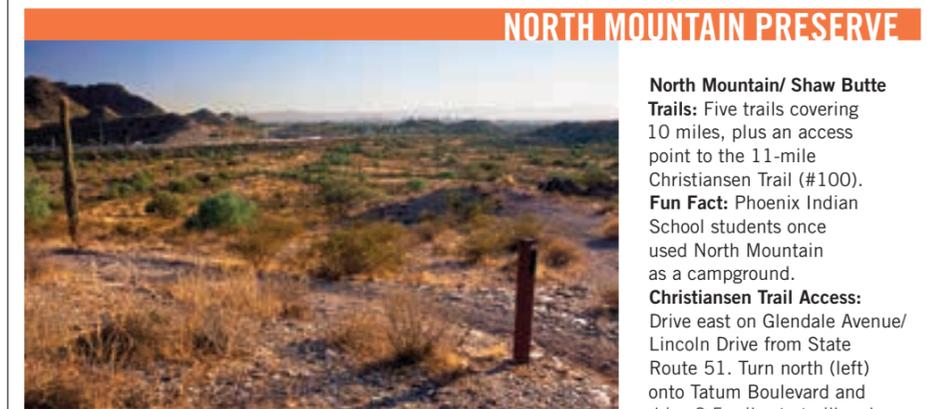
into a crevice and inflate their bodies like tough leather balloons, making them extremely difficult to dislodge.

Also, male South Mountain chuckwallas have a unique color scheme. Most other chuckwallas are tricolored, with white tails, red bodies and black legs and heads. In the mountains south of Phoenix—the Santan, Sacaton and Estrella mountains—male chuckwallas are bicolored with white tails and black bodies. In South Mountain, however, male chuckwallas are black with carrot-colored tails. Oddly enough, only the guys dress up. Females in all regions are mottled brown or gray. So why would the animals evolve bright orange tails that make them more conspicuous to predators as they bask on vulnerable rocky outcrops?

Kwiatkowski thinks he knows. Males get their orange color from plant pigments known as carotenoids. The more abundant and varied the food, the greater the potential for developing bright colors. In his own backyard experiments, Kwiatkowski discovered that female chuckwallas much prefer orange tails—the brighter the better. Perhaps a Day-Glo tail tells the females that the dashing male chuckwalla in question presides over a rich territory, thus increasing the chances her offspring will get a good head start in life.

Males may also flash their tails to intimidate rivals, Kwiatkowski observes. Their numerous scars and missing digits testify to a ferocity that earned them the Latin name *Sauromalus ater*, "malevolent black lizard."

Kwiatkowski is now trying to determine if the lizards with the brightest tails have the strongest bites.



NORTHERN VIEWS The 11-mile Charles M. Christiansen Memorial Trail cuts through the scenic Phoenix North Mountain Preserve. The multiuse Christiansen trail offers an easy to moderate hike.

NORTH MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

North Mountain/ Shaw Butte

Trails: Five trails covering 10 miles, plus an access point to the 11-mile Christiansen Trail (#100).

Fun Fact: Phoenix Indian School students once used North Mountain as a campground.

Christiansen Trail Access: Drive east on Glendale Avenue/ Lincoln Drive from State Route 51. Turn north (left) onto Tatum Boulevard and drive 2.5 miles to trailhead.

Information: (602) 495-5540; www.phoenix.gov/parks/hikenort.html.

NORTH MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

The Phoenix Mountains were beginning to be civilized by developers in the 1960s when activists rang the alarms. Several bond elections later, 7,000 acres of crinkled-up desert slashing diagonally across north-central Phoenix have been saved as the Phoenix Mountains Preserve, including Camelback Mountain and Piastewa Peak.

"It's pretty amazing," says Dave Hicks, "that we can hike 11 miles across the middle of Phoenix and never have to cross a street."

That's exactly what Hicks and I are doing. He's a veteran hiker who lives a few blocks from its west end. We're trekking the 11-mile Charles M. Christiansen Memorial Trail from Paradise Valley to its opposite end near 7th and Peoria avenues.

The trail takes the path of least resistance through valleys instead of lurching over ridges and peaks. This offers an obvious advantage: It's an easy trek. And, the mountains rising on either side wall off the city along much of the route. I soon forget that the city encircles us, a place where clocks and appointment books form the grid of life.

As if to underline the corridor's wildness, three coyotes pop out of the creosote and amble nonchalantly across the trail—the perfect symbol of gridlessness. They roam where they please, ask for nothing and adapt to whatever nature or civilization throws at them. We could do worse than live like this, and we have. This is another reason why we crave mountains: We sense that we have something important to learn from them.

I live in a city bracketed by mountains far higher than Phoenix's; the ominous cone of 14,410-foot Mount Rainier glowers at us like a white tiger at the kitchen window. But

the measure of a mountain is not its size or remoteness or degree of danger; it is in what we manage to take away from our experience with it.

From four days in the urban mountains of Phoenix I take connections—with nature, with a culture that evaporated almost 600 years ago, with a rhythm of time that is simpler and saner than what I tune in to in city life. For Phoenix to have preserved these mountains was visionary indeed. They are its best parks, its best neighborhoods, its best hope. ■■

ADDITIONAL READING: *Arizona Hiking: Urban Trails, Easy Paths and Overnight Treks*, (\$16.95, published by *Arizona Highways*) describes more than 70 trails in the state. The 160-page softcover book is illustrated with 120 color photographs. To order, call (800) 543-5432 or go to our Web site: arizonahighways.com.

Lawrence W. Cheek has written 14 books about his native Southwest. He now lives in the one suburb of Seattle that has a decent mountain in it.

David Elms Jr. has lived on the boundary of South Mountain Park for 15 years and considers it his backyard. He runs, hikes or bikes in the mountains daily.

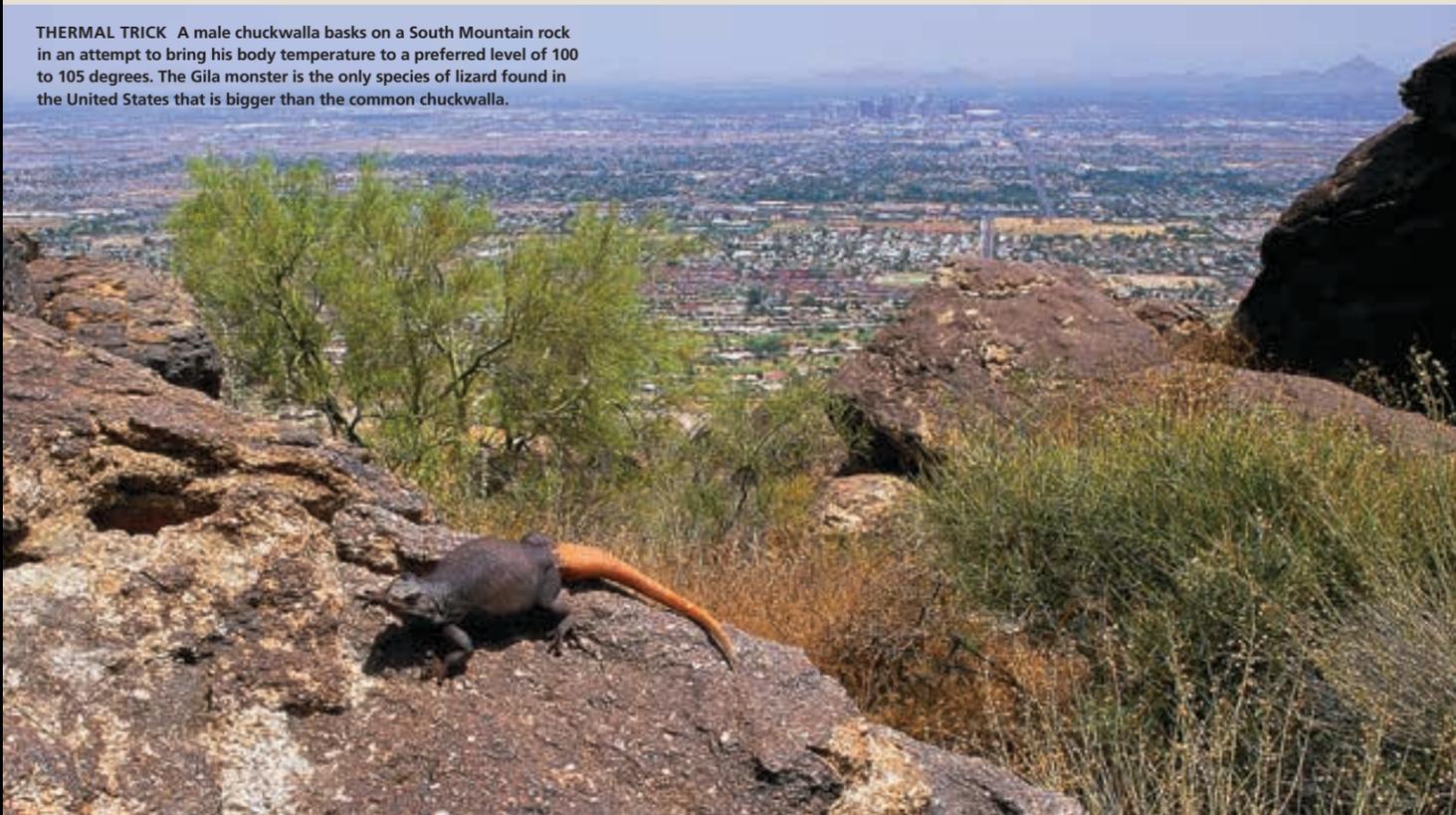


TRAVEL ADVISORY: Prime season is mid-October to mid-April. A gallon of water per person, per day is advised. Recommended:

South Mountain and Phoenix Mountains Preserve trail map; *Phoenix Area Mountain Parks* by Beartooth Publishing.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Phoenix Parks and Recreation, www.phoenix.gov/parks/hikemain.html; South Mountain, (602) 262-7393; Phoenix Mountains Preserve, (602) 262-7901.

THERMAL TRICK A male chuckwalla basks on a South Mountain rock in an attempt to bring his body temperature to a preferred level of 100 to 105 degrees. The Gila monster is the only species of lizard found in the United States that is bigger than the common chuckwalla.



SHOOZEY

THE PHOTOGRAPHER PRIEST

BY VICKEY KALAMBAKAL

Father Augustine Schwarz hoped to serve as a missionary in 1916 to a war-convinced world, but instead the earnest young priest found himself dispatched to the remote Indian communities of southern Arizona, where a keen eye and a Brownie camera made him a witness to an intimate history and a culture in the throes of change. The Franciscan priest used his little Kodak Brownie to snap photos of chapels, schools and celebrations, which he sent back to his five brothers and sisters in Chicago, thereby preserving history in black and white.

He worked first with the Pima Indians at St. John's Mission and Boarding School in Komatke, along the Gila River southwest of Phoenix. He taught the 500 students and struggled to build up his congregation in the face of competition from Protestant missionaries. He visited settlements like Fort McDowell, Wetcamp, Florence and Sacaton Flats, where he met with people living in windowless huts next to chicken coops.

Soon after his arrival, he traveled 30 miles to St. Francis of Assisi Church on the Salt River and photographed a procession carrying huge arches festooned with paper flowers, and preparations for a dinner of freshly slaughtered chicken and beef. He photographed students, like Thomas Jose, his wagon driver and the coronet player at St. John's Indian School.

With all of his traveling, the other priests and brothers began calling Father Schwarz "Shoozey"—a name that stuck. Years later, Shoozey told his nieces that he traveled first by mule, then by horse-drawn wagon and finally in an old touring car.

After three years at St. John's, Shoozey was transferred to the San Solano Mission on the Papago (now called Tohono O'odham) Reservation southwest of Tucson. He photographed the Yaqui matachini dancers during the three-day long fiesta honoring St. Francis Xavier, patron of the centuries-old Mission San Xavier del Bac.

At San Solano, Shoozey oversaw the completion of St. Joseph's Chapel in Pisinimo, and at the dedication he photographed dozens of children standing before the front doors.

The following year he helped build a church in Cowlic, west of Pisinimo, with \$3,000 donated by a group of lay Franciscans in Cleveland, and equipped it with a chalice imported from Germany and an altar and three paintings by artist Vladimir



MISSION BAND
Students of St. John's Indian School on the Gila Indian Reservation formed the St. John's Mission Band, photographed by Father Schwarz in 1921.



MOVIE SET
Father Augustine "Shoozey" Schwarz, third from left, on the set of the 1940 film *The Westerner*, with stars Gary Cooper, second from left, and Walter Brennan, a.k.a. Judge Roy Bean, right, near Mission San Xavier del Bac in Tucson.



POOR PADRE
Father Schwarz poses with his old Ford truck near San Solano. When ordained, Franciscan priests take a vow of poverty.



CELEBRATORY DANCE
A group of Yaqui Indians, photographed by Shoozey in front of Mission San Xavier del Bac, perform what he called "a religious dance," in celebration of the Feast of Saint Francis Xavier on December 3, 1919.



PATRIOTIC POSE
Students from the Anegam Day School on the Tohono O'odham nation pose with an American flag in front of St. Clare Church in 1920.

Shamburg from Chicago. The bishop of Tucson attended the dedication of the tiny, 15-foot-wide church.

In addition, the Franciscan fathers also opened day schools for Indian children throughout the Southwest. While previous generations of Indian children had been forced to leave their families and forsake their language at boarding schools, these small day schools did not separate children from their parents or their traditions and language. In 1922, Shoozey returned to St. John's Indian School, having learned enough of the native language that he no longer needed interpreters. He spent six months chaperoning the school band members on a fund-raising tour of the eastern United States.

Next he went to the Fort Apache Reservation, where he spent several years working with the students at Theodore Roosevelt Boarding School. At nearby Whiteriver, he photographed the Apache Indians' Mountain Spirit Dance, wickiup huts and the small Catholic church. Here, his younger brother, Arnold, also a Franciscan priest and an amateur photographer, joined him. The brothers drove around the reservation in an old Ford Father Arnold had acquired, a definite improvement over mules and wagons.

In 1927, Shoozey returned to the Pima (Tohono O'odham) Indian Reservation as the superior of the San Solano Mission in Topowa, and its recently completed stone church to which Shoozey immediately added a Nativity scene with money he had inherited. He returned to the Apache reservation for one more short stint, before going back finally to the Tohono O'odham where he celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest by dedicating an adobe church he helped to build. Before dedicating St. Paul the Apostle in Chiawuli Tak, Shoozey drove all the way to Chicago and back to pick up a donated neo-Gothic marble altar.

When World War II broke out, Shoozey was transferred to Yuma as a chaplain for German and Italian prisoners of war, probably due to his fluent German. From there, he moved to California where his health faltered. He suffered a heart attack in 1946 and was treated and released from a Los Angeles hospital. But on April 25, 1946, his fellow priests found him on floor of his room at 3 A.M., his rosary clasped firmly in his hands.

In Chicago his family held onto his photographs until niece Elizabeth Jones in 1986 donated them to Arizona State University, where Labriola National American Indian Data Center curator Patricia Etter maintains them. Many of Shoozey's pictures are now part of an online exhibit at www.asu.edu/lib/archives/schwarz. Enhancing the presentation are photographs showing the churches today—some in ruins, some still an active part of the community. ■

Vickey Kalambakal of Claremont, California, learned of Father Schwarz's photographs when she worked in the Labriola center as a graduate student at Arizona State University.

online
Find more Father Schwarz photographs at www.asu.edu/lib/archives/schwarz

Playful Prairie Dogs Put on an Entertaining Spring Show

COME SPRING AT my home in the Sonoran Desert, there's little need for television. Whenever I crave entertainment, I just pull up a chair, retrieve my binoculars and set my sights out the front door.

It's time for Prairie Dog Days here in Picture Rocks, a rural area west of Tucson. These adorable, beige-gray relatives of the squirrel, who weigh in at 1 to 3 pounds, are a joy to watch. Around mid-March to April, my front acre is a site of feverish construction activity as the prairie dogs emerge from hibernation and begin digging. Within a few weeks, cratered mounds and tunnels are everywhere: circling the mesquite trees, around the prickly pears, some on bare stretches of desert. I dub the colonies "condo country," and wait for the show to begin.

For several weeks, all I see are chubby adults, dashing with their short tails held high. They love to eat, and I accommodate them by supplying vegetable scraps and sunflower seeds. One day I place some seeds in front of a few burrows, then crouch, motionless, 5 feet away. After a few minutes, two inquisitive creatures poke their heads out of their burrows and view me with suspicion. I'm barely

breathing, but they sense danger and disappear. I retreat into the house and watch as they eventually scamper out and clutch the seeds in their tiny paws or drag away pieces of cucumber skin that rival their body length.

But several weeks later, when the youngsters born and nurtured in the burrows finally emerge, the real shenanigans begin. The precocious pups engage in rough and tumble games and a version of tag. Unlike their parents, these creatures are not yet desert smart.

One morning I find six "kids" playing on the concrete slab at the foot of my front steps. We lock eyes for a full 10 seconds; I'm stock still and they're up on their haunches, their black eyes measuring me. Then they scurry away, but return moments later to retrieve pieces of newly placed banana.

When I venture into condo country, I'm



A black-tailed prairie dog takes a break from its usual antics.

mindful of where I place my feet. Once I wasn't paying attention and stepped on a spot that gave way. I pulled away quickly, heart pounding. Had I destroyed the burrow? Was there a prairie dog inside? Fortunately my misplaced step was close to an entrance, so I reassured myself that if there had been a critter in the burrow, it would be hiding in the middle.

Some of my neighbors don't share my love of prairie dogs. The scrubby desert around here hosts manufactured homes and trailers, each typically sitting on several acres. This is prime real estate for prairie dogs, and they were here first. Yet some people set out poison; others fill the burrows with dirt.

I search the Internet, where I learn that prairie dogs live on in North America. Historically, their occupied habitat included areas in 11 states, Canada and Mexico. Current studies estimate that the prairie dog population declined 98 percent during the 20th century, and that they now exist on only 2 percent of their historic home range. Two of the five species are on the Threatened and Endangered Species list. Human eradication efforts are among the primary threats to prairie dogs, and that includes homeowners who can't tolerate a few holes in their desert landscape.

Someday the prairie dogs may be gone. With burgeoning development, dog days may be numbered. But on my front acre, they thrive.

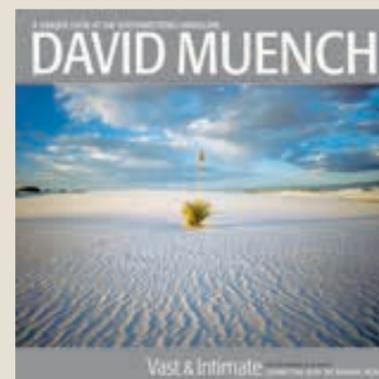
I go into the kitchen and chop up some carrots. The show must go on. **AH**



A pair of prairie dogs revel in the spring sunshine.

Discover a Gateway to Arizona's Inspiring Land

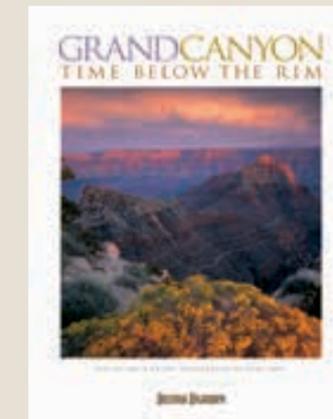
through *Arizona Highways* coffee-table books



David Muench's *Vast & Intimate: Connecting With the Natural World*
#ABGH2 ~~\$35.00~~ NOW \$17.50

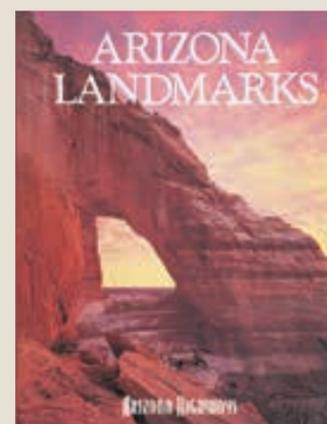


The Mountains Know Arizona: Images of the Land and Stories of Its People
#AMTH0 ~~\$39.95~~ NOW \$17.50

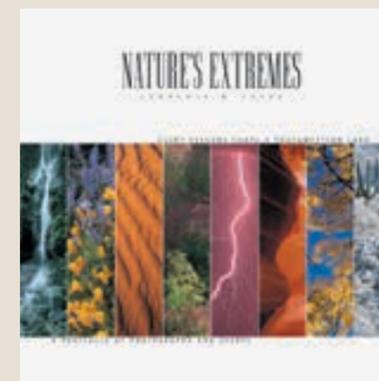


Grand Canyon: Time Below the Rim
#AGCH9 ~~\$48.95~~ NOW \$17.50

Through March 31, you can **SAVE 50%** or more on these Classics



Arizona Landmarks
#ARLH5NC ~~\$35.00~~ NOW \$17.50



Nature's Extremes: Eight Seasons Shape a Southwestern Land
#ACLH0 ~~\$29.95~~ NOW \$17.50

We offer 2 easy ways to order

Log on to arizonahighways.com or call toll-free 1-800-543-5432 (In the Phoenix area or outside the U.S. call 602-712-2000)

USE PROMO CODE
#8281-MKT5

ACT NOW! Offer Expires 3/31/06

Forgotten Road to Minnehaha Trades Rough Travel for Long Views

IN 1863, CHARLES TAYLOR, one of some three dozen frontiersmen traveling with the famed explorer Joseph Walker, wandered into what became the Prescott area. He liked what he saw, though he never struck much pay dirt in the gold rush that soon followed their arrival. Instead, Taylor took the harder road to riches, building a cabin in the rocky foothills of the Bradshaw Mountains and digging a potato patch whose yield he would load onto a groaning buckboard and take to town to earn a little spending money.

The road Taylor helped carve out of stone and earth is still there, extending from Kirkland Junction, southwest of Prescott, to the homestead he called Minnehaha, named in bookish tribute to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famed poem "Hiawatha." Later homesteaders and foresters extended the road high into the Bradshaws all the way to the hamlet of Crown King, a place well known but little visited—and for good reason: the dizzying dirt road that switchbacks up to Crown King from Cleator.

Still, that road looks like a superhighway compared to its poor cousin, the bumpy, 40-odd-mile path that descends along the spine of the Bradshaws down to Minnehaha, then into the handsome valley of the Hassayampa River. Here, having tested the mettle of the traveler, it dusts itself off, straightens its tie and puts on a presentable face.

That was the visage that greeted me on a warm day, when, in the company of my friends Richard Sims, director of Prescott's Sharlot Hall Museum, and Dan Shilling, a specialist in the new field of civic tourism, I went to have a look at Charley Taylor's domain.

The road's beginning gives no hint of the bumpy times ahead. Instead, Wagoner Road, as it's marked at its junction with State Route 89 near Kirkland Junction about 22 miles south of Prescott, is a well-tended, two-lane dirt affair that meanders across gentle, grassy hills and passes by neatly tended ranches and pastures full of well-groomed horses. All along the way, the road offers remarkable views that include several tall mountain ranges—the Bradshaws, the Sierra Prieta and the Weavers, plus hundreds of square miles of some of the richest grazing land in Arizona.

But past the newly repaved bridge over the Hassayampa River in the foothills of the Bradshaws, that pastoral gentleness gives way to something wilder. We caught a subtle portent of



Its days of usefulness long past, a rusting dump truck provides a splash of color in the abandoned hamlet of Minnehaha Flat, above.

A soft pastel sunrise bathes the shambles of a cabin possibly built on Charles Taylor's original home site, right.

Alongside the rugged bumps and gullies of the road to Minnehaha Flat, opposite page, an alligator juniper tree's fissured bark provides a variation on a theme.



{ back road adventure }

Established in 1906, the Crown King Saloon sponsors horseshoe competitions, cowgirl appreciation days and the “world’s shortest parade” among its lighthearted events.



VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS:

Four-wheel-drive, high-clearance.

WARNING: The road from Wagoner to Minnehaha Flat is

poorly marked. Allow five hours to reach Crown King. Take a friend or two with you, as well as plenty of water and food, and be prepared to hike cross-country for at least 10 miles in the event of car trouble.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Prescott National Forest, Bradshaw Ranger District, (928) 443-8000.



that change as the road descended into the bed of Minnehaha Creek, one of the Hassayampa’s many feeder streams: Where numerous quail had dotted the ground before, the bird life now consisted of one tough, annoyed-looking roadrunner, accompanied by a stubborn gopher snake that blocked our path as if to say, “turn around, get a hamburger in Skull Valley, and call it a day.”

We pressed on, following the cobble-strewn, boulder-littered, spine-lined streambed, through which a trickle of water flowed. We bounced up it, backing up from time to time to assay different approaches to getting over some of the trickier rocks, taking our time and enjoying

the scenery. In about half an hour’s time—just where my cell phone blinked “no service” most insistently—we came to a spot where the suggestion of a road went off to the left, another to the right. Either one works; we chose the rightward path, climbing out of the creek onto dry land.

Truth be told, boulders and tortuous streambeds notwithstanding, the possibility of taking a wrong turn was the more constant challenge. About 25 miles from the junction with State 89, the road goes “primitive,” as a few lonely signs warn, and it’s sometimes a challenge to distinguish the road from crisscrossing hiking trails or a few old scrape-away turns leading to long-abandoned mining claims. The road climbs, drops and climbs again over rocky hills studded with Spanish bayonet, prickly pear and yucca, never quite getting smooth enough to go more than 10 mph until, finally, it turns a bend to reveal a fine view of an old mine, with bits and pieces of heavy machinery still scattered across the face of a steep hill. We stopped to poke around in the ruins, glad to give our jarred spines a rest, and then topped that hill to find ourselves suddenly out of the desert and into cool pines. We had found Minnehaha Flat, Charley Taylor’s remote hideaway, marked by a ruined cottage, a clearing where the potato patch had once flourished and a rusting truck of more recent vintage.

We could have turned around at that point, having succeeded in our quest for Minnehaha, and retraced our hard-won steps. But buoyed with newfound confidence and cheered by a road that now allowed us to hit speeds of 15 mph, we pressed on through thick groves of ponderosa pines, finally making the junction

Beyond a paneless window and deteriorating opposite wall of the Minnehaha cabin, encroaching vines threaten a ponderosa pine tree.



with Forest Service Road 52, also called Senator Highway. The name is surely grander than the reality, for only a prospector’s overworked burro would consider that road a highway of any kind, but the vistas its precipitous single lane afforded into the rugged valley of the Hassayampa more than offset any criticism, encompassing a view of range after range far into the distance.

An hour of curves, laborious grades and the occasional vultures later, we were in the

mountaintop hamlet of Crown King, nursing a cold drink, swapping tales of all that we had just seen and toasting Charley Taylor’s memory before heading down that superhighway of a dirt road to Cleator and on to Interstate 17. We three had traveled many rough roads before, but agreed that this was one of the most challenging—not to mention magnificent, rewarding and just plain fun. We’re eager to travel it again. **AH**

Cottonwood trees tinged with autumn’s saffron brighten a wash near Stanton.

route finder

Note: Mileages and GPS coordinates are approximate.

- > **Begin at Wagoner Road** junction with State Route 89 near Kirkland Junction; drive southeast 6 miles. On the *Arizona Atlas & Gazetteer* map, this road is designated Forest Service Road 362. On *Arizona Road & Recreation Atlas* map, it is designated Yavapai County Road 60. (34°21.97’ N; 112°40.05’ W)
- > **Bear right after crossing bridge** over Hassayampa River. Go 7 miles.
- > **Turn left as dirt road** enters riverbed for a stretch, but look for the paved road with sign to Horizon Ranch on the left. Stay on it after brief paved stretch ends. Go 5 miles (pass windmill and water tank pointing way to Crown King and sign for boundary of Prescott National Forest).
- > **Bear left at sign marking junction** with Forest Service Road 9254A, which veers off to the right. Go 1 mile to mine ruins.

- > **Continue past mining operation ruins** on hill to your left. Go 2 miles to abandoned house.
- > **Continue 2 miles** past abandoned house to Minnehaha Flats. (34°09.85’ N; 112°24.36’ W)
- > **Continue north on FR 362** past sign marking Minnehaha Flats. Go 6 miles (steep road climbs towards Crown King).
- > **Turn right onto Forest Service Road 52** (Senator Highway) when FR 362 dead-ends (34°14.04’ N; 112°23.34’ W). Go 6 miles to Crown King (34°12.45’ N; 112°20.13’ W).
- > **Continue to the right on Crown King Road** (Forest Service Road 259). Go 27 miles to junction with Interstate 17 (34°17.02’ N; 112°07.17’ W).



Willow Springs Hike Reveals Goldfields' Hidden Treasure

Bristles sharpened by early morning sunlight, an imposing saguaro cactus dominates a hillside prickly with the Goldfield Mountains' variety of Sonoran Desert flora, below.



THE CHARTREUSE LICHEN covering the rock wall in the Goldfield Mountains' Willow Springs Canyon gives the afternoon light a fluorescent glow. The psychedelic green lichen and the odd, shimmering metallic striations in the rocks lend this little mountain range a distinctive appeal.

Sitting in the shadow of the renowned Superstition Mountains, the Goldfields often get shouldered out of the limelight by their myth-tinted neighbors. While prospectors combed the Superstitions for the fabled Dutchman's lost gold, racking up minerals more flamboyant than useful, the Goldfields actually produced about a dozen mines, a few in big style. Some say the Dutchman's gold actually came from a mine in the Goldfield Mountains.

Still, the Superstitions get most of the attention, including some 35,000 hikers who pack their

Like the Superstition Mountains, the Goldfields were formed by volcanism. The burning ash that spewed from volcanoes 15-35 million years ago, scientists say, ran so hot that the ash welded together wherever it fell, creating spires, buttes and mesas. This light-colored tuff contains quartz particles that produce a brilliant glow when hit by sunlight.

Once in the canyon, wide and still shallow, the route travels right on the gravelly floor amid classic Sonoran Desert landscape with saguaros, ocotillos, paloverde trees and a variety of cacti. In March, after a wet winter, several dozen species of wildflowers bloom.

By about mile 3, the canyon develops some character as the walls rise and start to close in. Wonderfully welded volcanic scenery shows off extraordinary displays of massive cliffs and curious formations containing hoodoos and strange statuary. The last 2 miles of the route require boulder-hopping and some minor scrambling down dryfalls. The chasm deepens and narrows on this last stretch, at times to less than 20 feet.

The hike ends in a cattail-choked cove of Saguaro Lake, often without another soul around. The only signs of life come from the sound of a boat hidden behind, or bird life hidden within, the 10-foot tall cattails.

The Goldfields' reputation may pale next to the Superstitions', but the mountain's veins of solitude, unique natural features and history still hold treasures. **AH**

Author Christine Maxa, right, picks her way between rough volcanic walls in lower Willow Springs Canyon.



LOCATION: 46 miles east of downtown Phoenix.

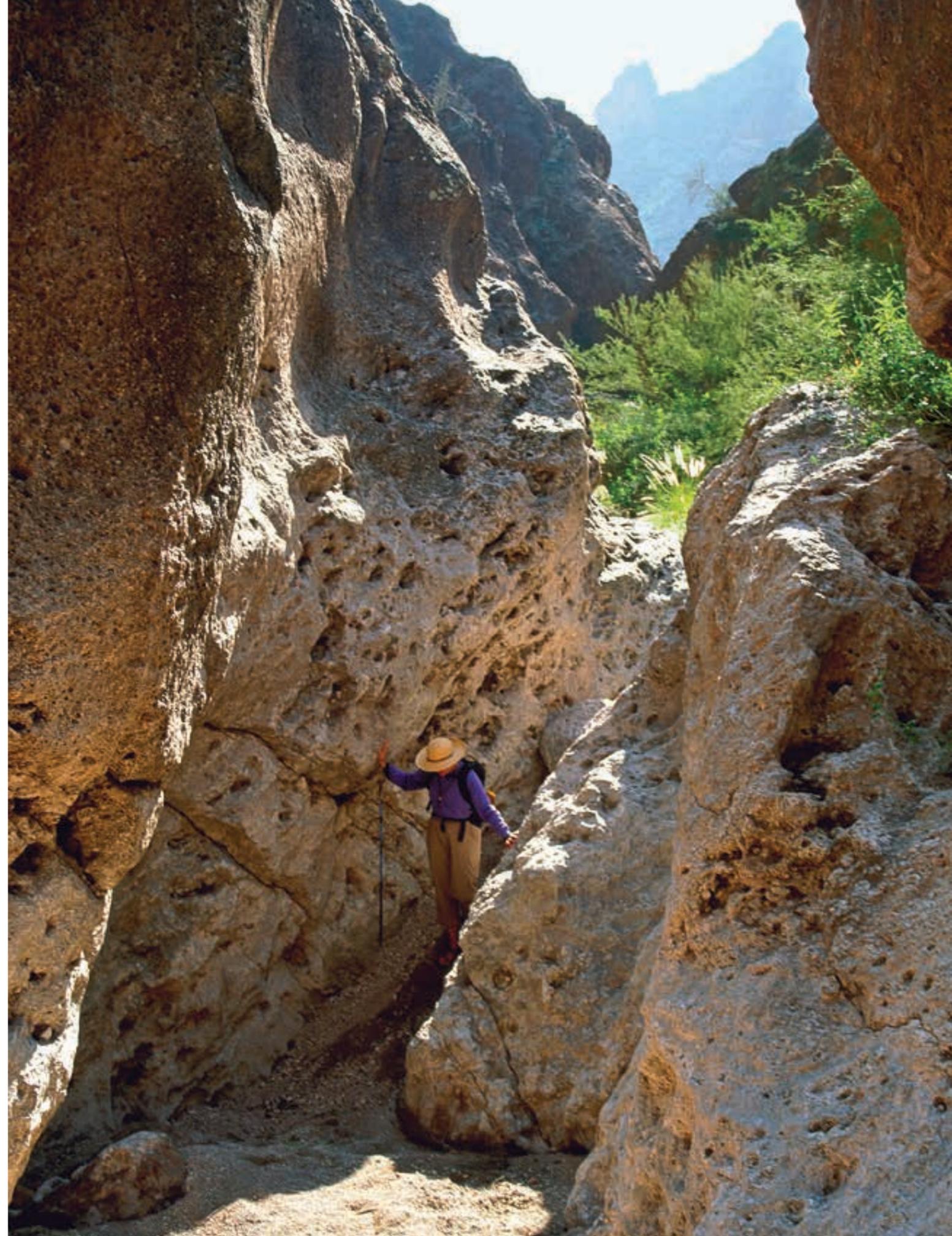
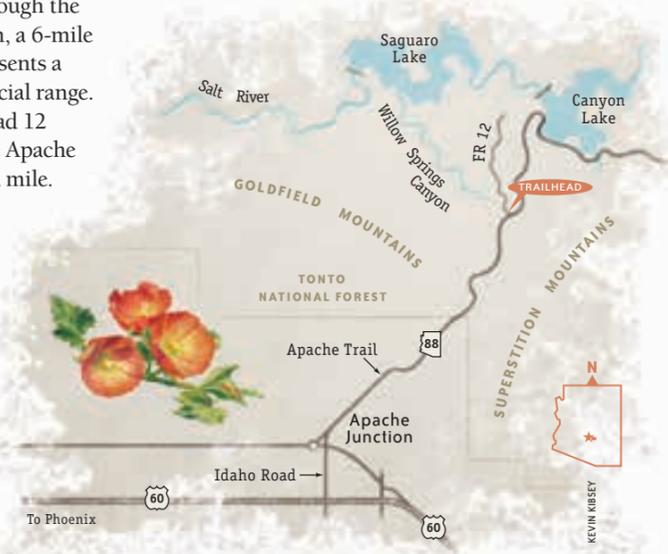
GETTING THERE: Drive east on U.S. Route 60 and exit at Idaho Road (State

Route 88); continue north on State 88, which turns right (east) and becomes the Apache Trail. Drive to the parking area near Milepost 204 on the north side of the road and begin at Forest Service Road 12.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Tonto National Forest, Mesa Ranger District, (480) 610-3300; www.mile204.us/Goldfields.

maintained trails each year. But a hike in the Goldfields traverses a backcountry similar to the Superstitions without the crowds. Although the Goldfields lack a developed trail system, a 6-mile hike down Willow Springs Canyon presents a moderate trek into the heart of this special range.

The hike starts on Forest Service Road 12 heading north from State Route 88 (the Apache Trail). Veer right at all forks for the first mile. As the road climbs up a hill, veer left at a fork that drops into Willow Springs Canyon. From the hilltop vantage, a panorama presents the Goldfields' striking topography, especially the golden patina tinting the ridgelines. Indians and early explorers called these layers "soapy stone," thinking they were high-water marks left by a great flood. Geologists say volcanic ash, or tuff, created the golden layers.



online Before you go on this hike, visit arizonahighways.com for other things to do and places to see in this area. You'll also find more hikes in our archive.

