

SUMMER 2006



# TRUST

*"The splendor of the desert can last only as long as you care to preserve it."*

The mission of *Trust* is to transmit the passion of the Desert Foothills Land Trust.

## Sonoran Symphony 2006 New Silent Auction Successful

As the sun dipped behind the hills of Cave Creek, stillness settled upon the 600 guests gathered on the driving range of the beautiful Rancho Mañana Golf Resort. The Desert Foothills Land Trust's 11th Annual Sonoran Symphony, dedicated to Jocelyn and the late H.B. Wallace in grateful recognition of their many years of generous support, was about to begin.

Bob Fox from Wild at Heart took the stage and in a well-loved tradition, released a rehabilitated great horned owl. In years past, released owls usually flew off to the west and then into the hills in search of their own dinner. This owl chose a different route. With the beat of its powerful wings, it swooped silently straight up the middle above the seated guests before banking to the south and gliding off into the hills.

A gasp and a collective sigh escaped at such majesty and then more magic as the symphony began with sweet music under a darkening sky. The Phoenix Symphony, under the direction of Virginia G. Piper Musical Director, Michael Christie began with John Williams' *Cowboy Overture*, followed by selections from Aaron Copeland's *Rodeo*.

And then, Grammy Award-winning Western artists Riders In The Sky took the stage with classics *Ride Cowboy Ride* and *Back in the Saddle Again*. Who knew that Maestro Michael Christie was also a talented baritone ... the infamous Montana Mike? RITS did, and they "gently" persuaded him to sing along with them on a beautiful

rendition of *Cool Water*. They sang of the *Yellow Rose of Texas*, of *South of the Border* and *In the Arms of My Love*. Their performance of *Rawhide* would have made Frankie Laine jealous! Then they performed their own Grammy Award winning Woody's Roundup Medley from the movie *Toy Story 2*. Next up was the poignant *Red River Valley* and *Ghost Riders in the Sky*. The show ended with Dale Evans' *Happy Trails* and the sing-along accompaniment of a goodly number of symphony guests, who were suddenly 10 years old again.

DFLT would like to thank Mike Allred and Rancho Mañana Golf Resort, The Phoenix Symphony and Maestro Michael Christie, Riders In The Sky, John Malcolm and Chef Eric Flatt of Tonto Bar and Grill, Razmataz for all the wonderful center-pieces and other decorations, the raffle prize donors (ED Marshall Jewelers,

Discount Tire Company, Razmataz, M/M Haskell and M/M Siepmann and Stoude-mire's), all our wonderful and generous sponsors, our symphony guests, *True West Magazine* (Bob Boze Bell), *The Peak Magazine* (Les Conklin) the Calendar Cowgirls, the Symphony Committee (Chair Linda Revane, Cheryl Van Brunt, Marianne Mathews, Event Coordinator Dottie Kobik, Jacky Davis, Ron Siepmann and Mike Rigney), Write Design, Foothills

Printing, Wild at Heart and our many hard-working and dedicated volunteers. We absolutely couldn't do it without you!

Our first ever Symphony Silent Auction was a rousing success thanks to the indefatigable efforts of Cheryl Van



Ben and Charlotte Campbell and Roger and Erika Greaves (Photo Wes Lorincz)



David Haskell and the Calendar Cowgirls (Photo Ron Siepmann)

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## MESSAGE from the President

Dear DFLT member,

Here in the Desert Foothills habitat loss is so common it's not hard to imagine a time when all natural desert will have disappeared under the bulldozer. So far Desert Foothills Land Trust has managed to set aside over 500 acres for future generations, but it's a big job, and we're a small organization. We work with Cave Creek, Carefree and even Scottsdale and Phoenix, which have preservation programs, and we join forces with other land preservation organizations and with agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, the Arizona State Land Department and the Tonto National Forest. But still, we could use more help.

So we want to bring your attention to opportunities that exist within our organization for volunteers. For example, we can use occasional office help for such things as data entry, filing, mailing and newsletter preparation. We need more stewards to monitor the conditions of our preserves. Our docent program is expanding, and you could train to give guided tours. We would be happy to talk with you about participating on one of our board committees, such as special events, membership or fund raising, if those are your interests. DFLT's Desert Awareness Committee would like to expand its Desert Reach science program, currently presented to local 4th graders, so they're looking for people who enjoy working with school kids. And of course we're always looking for dedicated board members.

Sometimes it takes awhile to find the right slot, but that's OK. If you want to work on behalf of land preservation, we want to work with you. In fact, if someone out there has experience or would like to gain experience in coordinating volunteers, perhaps you'll call and help us out.

If any of this sounds appealing to you, please get in touch with Mike, Thom or Kay, in our office. Tell them, also, if you'd like to talk with a board member. And please pass this newsletter on to your friends or neighbors, especially if they are newcomers to our area. Many people move to the Desert Foothills because they like the natural desert and want it preserved. Talking to them about ways to do this may be your first act as a DFLT volunteer. We thank you.

Jacky Davis

  
President

## Sonoran Symphony *cont. from p. 1*

Brunt and the wonderful array of items donated by many area businesses and artists. Our sincere appreciation and grateful thanks go out to Cartwright's Sonoran Grill, Cave Creek Roadhouse, Dove Valley Ranch Golf Club, Farrelli's Cinema Supper Club, Fender Guitar, Four Seasons Resort, Grayhawk Golf Club, Harold's Cave Creek Corral, Haskell-Siepmann, Susan & Lance Kaufman, Michael's at the Citadel,



Kathy Radina, Bob Boze Bell, Mark and Marilyn Nadeau (Photo Wes Lorincz)

Randy Galloway, Julia Patterson, Rancho Mañana Spa, Schumacher European Ltd., Tonto Bar & Grill, Westin Kierland Resort and Yokohama Tires.

We're already hard at work preparing for the 12th Annual Sonoran Symphony, to be held Saturday, May 5, 2007. Mark your calendars! We'll let you know who the guest artist will be as soon as they're booked!

## 2005 DFLT Board of Directors

### Officers

President  
*Jacky Davis*  
Vice President  
*Charles Breed*

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*Maureen Berkner*

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### Staff

Executive Director	Michael Rigney
Conservation Director	Thom Hulén
Office Manager	Kay Vargas



## “Conserving Arizona’s Future” on the Ballot for November!

On the last day of June, I had the pleasure of helping to transport over 300,000 signatures gathered in support of Conserving Arizona’s Future (CAF) to the Secretary of State’s office. This short trip from the Arizona Education Association’s office on Central Avenue to the Capital took only 20 minutes but represented thousands of hours of volunteer signature-gathering and years of negotiation just to get State Trust Land reform before Arizona voters. Now the work begins to pass Proposition 106 (the number assigned to our Initiative by the Secretary of State)!

As if being on a very crowded ballot wasn’t enough, the legislature decided at the last minute to place a “spoiler” referendum on the ballot to confuse voters even further. This bill preserves far fewer acres of State Land, does not provide for greater community input on Land Department planning decisions, and does not ensure over-



A portion of Cave Creek would be preserved if Proposition 106 “Conserving Arizona’s Future” is passed by voters in November.

sight or additional funding for the State Land Department. In addition, non-profit organizations like ours would be frozen out of the process to acquire state lands for conservation!

It will take a concerted effort on the part of everyone interested in protecting State Trust Lands for future generations to ensure the passage of Conserving Arizona’s Future. There

is likely to be a well-funded anti-CAF campaign supported by the Homebuilders Association of Arizona and the Arizona Cattle Growers Association. Our consortium of conservation groups, educators and business leaders will need financial resources to take our message of land reform and conservation to the voters. If you would like to support the campaign to pass Conserving Arizona’s Future, send your non-tax deductible contributions to DFLT (PO Box 4861, Cave Creek, AZ 85327) with a note indicating “CAF” fund.

As you might imagine, there are a number of conservation topics (including Conserving Arizona’s Future) that are important to all of our members, and often require immediate action. There are also events or membership opportunities that come up between our quarterly newsletters. That is why I would like to call everyone’s attention to our efforts to develop a comprehensive email list of our membership. Thanks to the efforts of our Webmaster and Board Member Bernie Molaskey, we have the capability to send you all emails with timely information at the “click of a mouse.” If you’re like me, you get 50 or so emails a day. So we promise you that we will limit our email notices to those we feel are essential to our mission and provide you, our supporters, with opportunities you might otherwise miss.

I am also pleased to report that our cooperative effort with Black Mountain Conservancy, the Towns of Cave Creek and Carefree and the Tonto National Forest to prioritize land conservation opportunities is progressing well. With national organizations like The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy providing technical expertise, we plan to have a Geographic Information System (GIS) developed by fall that will provide the foundation for community-based land conservation planning. We will email you and post on our web site ([www.dflt.org](http://www.dflt.org)) dates for community meetings to discuss the results of this important effort.

Stay tuned for more information on our collaborative efforts with the Desert Foothills Library to create a desert interpretive garden at the new library expansion, new entrance, displays and expansion of our Saguaro Hill Preserve. The 2006-2007 season holds great promise for state and local land conservation but remember, “the splendor of the Desert can last only as long as you care to protect it” — this year more than ever!



### Trivia Contest Answers

- 1 – D
- 2 – J
- 3 – A
- 4 – F
- 5 – B
- 6 – E
- 7 – H
- 8 – G
- 9 – C
- 10 – I

## Restoration at the P.A. Seitts Preserve at Go John Canyon



By Thom Hulen,  
Conservation Director

In 2004 The DFLT was awarded a grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust to do some habitat and trail restoration at the PA Seitts Preserve in Go John Canyon (PASP) and to complete a comprehensive floristic survey of each of the DFLT's thirteen preserves.

To accomplish these tasks, DFLT teamed up with the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG) and the Center for Native and Urban Wildlife (CNUW) at Scottsdale Community College (SCC), Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona (VOAZ) and the Town of Cave Creek. Before any work on restoration could begin it was necessary to have a complete picture of the conditions at the PASP.

The DFLT had good species lists of the flora on its preserves, but there had been no systematic inventory undertaken over an entire year. Perennial plants like shrubs and trees were recorded, but there were many annual plants that were missed in previous inventories. Fortunately, the 2004-2005 winter season was wet and several species germinated and blossomed for the first time in several years. One plant not recorded at the PASP until this time was the beautiful Paleface larkspur which grew along the legacy trail leading to Surrey Road off Cave Creek Road.

The floral inventory work was led by Kathy Rice, Curator of the Rare Plant Collection at the Desert Botanical Garden and DFLT's resident volunteer botanist Steve Jones. The inventory is an important management tool that when used to compare future inventories will help the DFLT determine the effectiveness of its management of each preserve.

While conducting the floral inventory Kathy and Steve collected seed from dozens of species to be used for the revegetation portion of the project.

Overall the PASP, as all the other DFLT preserves, is in good ecological condition in spite of the invasive plant species found there and a few highly eroded trail segments that affect cultural resources found in the preserve. The flora inventories identified the invasive plant species. This information has been incorporated in management operations. Several hundred volunteer hours have been recorded at this preserve in 2005 and 2006 removing salt cedar.

The land at the PASP has been used by people for several centuries. Early Archaic period (7500 B.C. – 100 B.C.) hunters and gathers no doubt used the area for subsistence, but it was not until the Hohokam period (A.D. 1 -1450) that



Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona work to stabilize new trail. (Photo Gail Landry)



Left: Thom Hulen oversees planting of trees to restore habitat on disturbed portions of the P.A. Seitts Preserve. Bottom: "Tall Pot" method of growing palo verdes to enable tap root development. (Photos by Mike Rigney)



Activities for this program generously supported by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust.



we see the land in the area intensively utilized. Hohokam canals, habitation and tool processing sites and trails are evident. One such trail, used in subsequent years by historic settlers, courses through the present day preserve and through many archaeological sites. One particular trail segment that was heavily used by Cave Creek residents was eroding and exposing a noteworthy Hohokam site. If efforts were not made to protect the site it would eventually be lost forever.

To protect the site we decided that the trail should be closed and an alternate trail be established that would direct hikers, horseback riders and mountain bikers away from the site. To accomplish this task the DFLT partnered with Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona (VOAZ) to design and construct a new trail and to build appropriate barricades that would close the old trail. Michael

Baker, VOA's mastermind, designed and organized volunteers to implement the trail work. After performing hundreds of hours of planning and fieldwork the VOA completed this portion of the project in 2005. Now the archaeological sites are protected and there is a safe and sustainable trail that can be enjoyed without impacting our cultural heritage.

During this time we also determined that a portion of the trail that climbed out of the creek bed onto a terrace was so steep that when it rained significant amounts of sediment eroded and flowed into Cave Creek. This trail

segment was closed and a new, less erodable and safer trail was built.

Traversing through the PASP are several redundant roads and other areas denuded of plant cover. The funding from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust enabled DFLT to partner with CNUW to reestablish the plant cover.

Restoring degraded habitat can be difficult if not impossible, so we must remember that we should strive to have minimal effect on the land. In some cases it is simply impossible to “restore” the land. An ecosystem that evolved over millions of years and that was modified in a few hours, days or years can take many years to recover. Our goal with this project was to speed up the recovery by replanting plants that match adjacent successional communities.

Most of the disturbed lands at the PASP are areas where vegetation was removed by the action of wheels and feet crushing plants and the displacement of the upper layers of the soil. A few areas were damaged by illegal dumping. In some cases disturbance is a foot or two deep, but mostly they are only a few inches deep. Just enough to move the dark brown patina stained gravel (desert pavement) to expose the beige colored sediment underneath leaving a scar. It can take thousands of years for the desert pavement and patina to re-develop once disturbed. In addition, if these disturbed areas are continuously subjected to the weight of vehicles, people or livestock the soil can become so compacted that plants can no longer grow there. Often erosion channels are created that can cause destructive down cutting during winter and monsoonal downpours.

The first restoration task was to identify trails, roads and areas that need to remain open for stewardship and recreational activities. Fortunately it was obvious which trails suited this need. By observing where the local users hiked and rode their bicycles and horses it was determined that these trails led to destinations that users appreciated. Often there was more than one trail that led to the same place. In a few

cases the user preferred a trail that was unsustainable, meaning highly erodable, unsafe or was impacting an archaeological site. Under these cir-

in adjacent undisturbed areas. DFLT Board member and volunteer Melanie Williams, CNUW’s Stacy Fischer and intern Monica Martinez contributed to



A trail was closed to protect a sensitive archaeological site (Photo Gail Landry)

cumstances the old trail was abandoned and a new trail was established. In the case of redundant trails the best trail was selected for continued use and the other trail was abandoned. The abandoned trails and other disturbed areas were selected for restoration.

Restoring abandoned areas can sometimes be accomplished by closing the area off. Placing a barricade, i.e. fence, rock alignments or a sign can accomplish this task. Keeping people from disturbing the area any more will allow nature to direct the recovery.

Often abandonment is not enough or is too slow of a process to direct recovery. Restoration and stewardship in the form of building erosion control structures and planting of suitable vegetation is necessary.

Floristic surveys conducted by Kathy Rice and Steve Jones provided the basis for deciding which plants to use for revegetation so that disturbed areas would match the species composition and successional stage with adjacent areas. The goal was to have the restored area look just like the undisturbed area. Since the floristic surveys of the preserves encompassed an entire year it was possible to select seed from plants

this task. Foothills palo verde, Blue palo verde and Velvet mesquite seed were sent to CNUW for planting in the tall pot growing system they helped develop. The tall pot system is an elegant way to grow desert trees that require little or no irrigation after they are planted. Each seed is placed in a 4 inch wide, 30 inch long plastic irrigation pipe. The potting soil, a mixture developed by CNUW is held in place at the bottom of the pipe by wire mesh. After the seed germinates the tree develops a 20 to 30 inch long tap root that provides the plant with a significant advantage once it is placed into the ground. The trees transplanted at the PASP came from seed of trees growing on the preserve. Using seed from locally adapted plants gives the trees another advantage because they are from plants that evolved under the conditions found at the preserve.

Transplanting the trees at the site involved auguring holes deep enough to accommodate each the long tap root of each tree. This was no easy task at the PASP. The soil was so hard, rocky and mixed with caliche that it took a considerable amount of effort to dig and clean out each hole. Many holes needed the use of a steel wrecking bar to pry

*continued next page*

out rock. Once the holes were dug they were each filled three times with water and the water was allowed to soak into the soil on all sides of the hole. Some holes were dug in soil so compacted, that it took several hours for the water to soak in. The trees were planted about 24 hours after the last watering. The tree is placed into the hole and watered once; hopefully for the last time. After this initial watering, rainfall usually provides all future water. A chicken wire barrier was constructed around each tree to protect it from hungry and thirsty herbivores such as rabbits and deer.

Before the revegetation could take place in some areas tons of illegally dumped trash had to be removed and hauled away. The Town of Cave Creek's maintenance crew equipped with a backhoe and two dump trucks removed the trash. Today, where construction debris was once an eyesore and public danger, a new palo verde-mesquite woodland grows.

Eroded trail segments were abandoned or stabilized so that erosion is no longer a threat to the land. Rock dams, trail contouring and water diversion features were constructed to control erosion. It must be remembered that erosion is a natural force and is a necessary component in soil building

and other geographic and geologic processes. The goal at the PASP was to minimize anthropogenic erosion. Michael Baker and VOAZ were responsible for all the erosion control design and construction for this project.

Today all of the trails in the PASP are in excellent condition, the destructive erosion impacting an archaeological site has been minimized and there are dozens of thriving new trees gracing formerly barren areas. Even though much work has been done there is still more to do. The DFLT with its partners will continue to plant trees and shrubs and conduct periodic maintenance of the trails. As you know the DFLT is committed to long-term stewardship of its thirteen current preserves and this commitment will extend to all future preserves. Fortunately the DFLT has the support of partners like the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, the Town of Cave Creek, Desert Botanical Gardens, Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona, the Center for Native and Urban Wildlife at Scottsdale Community College and the Desert Foothills Community to help steward the land and habitat that makes our community so special.

## Hot Deals & Cool Stuff!

As part of our "Work Smarter, Not Harder" credo, we're reorganizing the DFLT office space to get the most bang for our office-space buck as possible. We're sorting, cataloging, boxing old records, making more efficient use of our off-site storage spaces and just generally cleaning house. Old, unused computer equipment was donated to AZStRUT, which uses the equipment to teach technology repair skills to high school students ... a win-win situation!

And do we have some exceptional deals for you, our members, courtesy of our need for space! Consider it a chance to do some early holiday shopping! DFLT merchandise at sale prices!! Denim shirts, golf shirts, L/S dark green shirts, polar fleece blankets in a pillow (perfect cushioning for hard stadium/gym bleacher seats!) and Wildflower CDs for identifying our desert flora (if it ever rains again). Sizes and quantities are limited so hurry! Here's what's available!

Tan S/S Golf Shirts with Green Logo on Sleeve  
S, M & L \$15.00 each

Black S/S/ Golf Shirts with Tan Logo on Sleeve  
M only \$15.00 each

Denim L/S Shirts with Green Logo above Left Pocket  
S, M, L, XL & 2X \$25.00 each

Denim L/S Shirts with Tan Logo above Left Pocket  
M, L & XL \$25.00 each

Dark Green L/S Shirts with Tan Logo above Left Pocket  
S, M, L & XL \$25.00 each

Dark Green Polar Fleece Blanket in a Pillow  
\$25.00 each

Paul Santori's Wildflower CD  
(plant ID database) \$15.00 each

Call or stop by the office or email Kay at [kvargas@dflt.org](mailto:kvargas@dflt.org) to place your orders. Hurry!! At these great prices they won't last long!



### SAVE PAPER – SAVE ME!!

Okay, okay ... so paper really doesn't come from saguaros!

BUT ...the best way to save the trees and the saguaros is to use less paper. The more DFLT members who choose to receive the newsletter electronically, via email, the less paper we use, the less postage we pay, the less dollar and time costs expended. Less paper = more trees. Less postage and costs = more funds for conservation and stewardship.

Joining our email list will keep you up to date on upcoming DFLT activities and on issues and legislation (such as the Conserving Arizona's Future initiative) that impact land conservation. It also means no waiting for your mail to catch up to you as you travel back and forth between winter and summer homes.

So, if you'd like to step up to the plate and help save those distant cousins of our majestic saguaros, please sign up for the email newsletter at the DFLT website. It's quick, it's easy and it's environmentally responsible. Go to [www.dflt.org](http://www.dflt.org) and scroll to the bottom of the page. Fill in your name and email address. It's that simple! The saguaros will thank you!

# No Sweat Fundraiser And Trivia Contest

The No Sweat Campaign is baaaack! Please help us raise extra funds for some much-needed office improvements. Over the summer, we're cleaning house and getting more organized so we can work smarter, not harder! Mike, Thom and Kay will do the sweatin'. All you have to do is send a donation. How easy is that? All those who donate will receive a beautiful Gambel's Quail bookmark by Cave Creek artist and DFLT supporter, Linda Budge.

Just in case you are bored, sitting on the verandah sipping that ice cold lemonade ... why not try your hand at our Heat-Hot-Fire-Summer-Sun match the song to the artist quiz? The answers are on page...oops...you'll just have to read the entire newsletter to find the answers!

## Match the Song to the Artist

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Great Balls of Fire              | A. The Doors                               |
| 2. Summertime                       | B. The Lovin' Spoonful                     |
| 3. Light My Fire                    | C. Rosemary Clooney                        |
| 4. Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight | D. Jerry Lee Lewis                         |
| 5. Summer in the City               | E. Martha Reeves and the Vandellas         |
| 6. Heat Wave                        | F. Bessie Smith                            |
| 7. Hot Rod Lincoln                  | G. Allman Brothers Band                    |
| 8. The Heat is On                   | H. Commander Cody & His Lost Planet Airmen |
| 9. The Summer Knows                 | I. Glenn Miller Orchestra                  |
| 10. Sunrise Serenade                | J. Sam Cooke                               |



## Non-Native Plants and Grasses are Wildfire Fuel *by Kay Vargas*

Playing hooky from the office is a rare occurrence for me, but every time I do, I learn something new. Early in February, Conservation Director Thom Hulén took me for a drive up to Seven Springs to see just about the only wildflower display going ... a small patch of sand verbena. Along the way I got to see

be presented with a landscape of ocher and black, of shriveled prickly pear lying apparently lifeless on the desert floor, of once proud saguaros that looked as if they'd been blasted in a war zone. I took photos and ached inside at the incredible devastation that the Sonoran Desert biome is not biologically equipped to handle or recover from easily.



Cave Creek Complex Fire Devastation (Photo Kay Vargas)

firsthand, the devastation that last summer's Cave Creek Complex Fire wrought upon parts of our beautiful, fragile Sonoran Desert.

Saguaros and prickly pear aren't supposed to be ocher and black in color. They should be that lovely, unique desert green, sometimes silvery green, sometimes yellowish green, or in the case of prickly pear, sometimes even purplish-burgundy. It was appalling to

be presented with a landscape of ocher and black, of shriveled prickly pear lying apparently lifeless on the desert floor, of once proud saguaros that looked as if they'd been blasted in a war zone. I took photos and ached inside at the incredible devastation that the Sonoran Desert biome is not biologically equipped to handle or recover from easily.

My friend Donnie Houlihan and I wandered, hiked and explored every inch of the San Pedro River area that a couple

DFLT is working with the Tonto National Forest and a group of homeowners in Desert Mountain to replant saguaros and other native species on burned portions of the Forest. We will have more information on this exciting project in our fall newsletter.

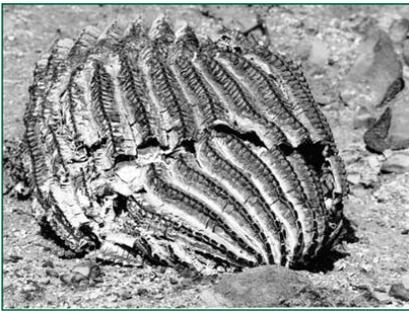
of young kids could get to and what I remember most about the desert itself (besides our unexpectedly close encounter with a coral snake) was the preponderance of cacti and the paucity of grasses (except on grazing land).

Boy, what a difference a half a century makes! Today's Sonoran Desert is replete with invasive vegetation ... the majority are aggressive, non-native, trees and grasses that compete with native plants for space and scarce water. Water hogging tamarisk (salt cedar) takes over riparian areas and forces native cottonwoods and willows to compete for what little water the tamarisks don't suck up. Buffelgrass, red brome, Sahara mustard, Johnson grass, Bermuda, fountain grass and *Schismus arabicus* (Arabian grass) are spreading across the desert floor, filling once empty spaces between saguaros and cholla, between prickly pear and barrel cactus and filling those open spaces with fuel!

*cont. back cover*



## Wildfire Fuel *cont. from p. 7*



Crispy barrel cactus after the Cave Creek Complex Fire. (Photo Kay Vargas)

burn fast and furiously at incredible speeds ... up to 7 mph in some cases. Unlike cacti, these invaders have adapted well to cycles of burn and re-growth, cycles that are as alien to cacti and the desert biome as snow is to the lower Sahara. By ignoring the spread of these invasive grasses we're allowing them to replace our lush Sonoran vegetation (cacti, trees and wildflowers), turning the Sonoran Desert into grassland that burns annually. Evolved to prosper through constant cycles of burn and re-growth, these invaders have in effect become a dangerous accelerant akin to spraying the desert with lighter fluid.

Yes, fuel! These invaders grow and spread during our temperate and sometimes wet winters then dry out in the summer. They combust quickly from lightning strikes, an unattended campfire, a carelessly tossed cigarette and

Wildfire adaptation is not part of the biological makeup of native Sonoran Desert vegetation, so the natives die and the invaders win.

According to Mark Dimmitt, Director of Natural History with the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, "these weeds can convert huge areas of our deserts into weedy wastelands. Fires below 3,000 feet are a very recent phenomenon and are completely unnatural."

Let's try to help the Sonoran Desert get back to its natural state. Don't plant non-native, invasives. Get rid of them if you have them. Sign up for one of DFLT's tammy-whacking parties (removal of tamarisk from riparian areas). Use weed-free hay if you have horses. Report noxious weeds to the Arizona Department of Agriculture. The Sonoran Desert needs our help to repel these dangerous invaders! The desert will thank us and so will our grandchildren.

*"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors.  
We borrow it from our children."  
-- Haida Indian saying.*

