

WINTER 2007



TRUST

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

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

Saguaro Hill ~ A Vision for the Future By Mike Rigney, Executive Director

Saguaro Hill is an icon for this community in so many different ways. Like the desert that surrounds us, Saguaro Hill has a high density of saguaros. And, like some Cave Creek and Carefree residents, the saguaros are time-tested and bear battle scars from run-ins with people who didn't know any better. And just like the community, there are many new and young saguaros trying to put down roots and survive the hot summers.

The Desert Foothills Library is also emblematic of our community—fiercely independent, focused on the future and growing. The partnership that has developed among the Library, the Town of Cave Creek and DFLT is also symbolic of so much that has happened lately in our community.

Concerned about the possibility of development encroaching on Saguaro Hill, the Town of Cave Creek approached DFLT to partner with the Town to acquire additional land for open space and trails. DFLT embraced the opportunity and, in turn, partnered with the Library to create a new entrance and botanical garden adjacent to the Library's new building. DFLT and Library Board member Jon Coates stepped forward to lead the fund-raising campaign. Former Board member Carol Rudolph donated an office condominium to help fund both the land acquisition and the Richard E. Rudolph Memorial Garden.

With so many new people moving to this area who do not understand the ways of the desert, DFLT hired landscape designer Stacy Fischer (formerly with another DFLT partner organization) to develop a design for the garden which will highlight the many beautiful, wildlife friendly, low-water use plants that make the Sonoran Desert such a unique place to live. DFLT also plans to expand the existing trail network and provide new interpretive displays and seating areas from which visitors can enjoy the scenic vistas of Black Mountain, New River Mesa and Elephant Butte.

As the Library moves rapidly to completion this spring, we are encouraging DFLT members, Friends of the Library and anyone who cares about our community to step forward and help in our ambitious goal of raising \$500,000 to cover the cost of land acquisition and trail improvements and to provide a secure endowment for stewardship.

Our goal is to develop a new focal point for the community, provide a must-see destination for anyone with relatives from out-of-state, and create a quiet refuge for residents and visitors alike, but we can't do it without your help. We hope you all will contribute to the Saguaro Hill Expansion and Enhancement project and make this dream a reality.

**Conserving
Arizona's
Future**
A Citizen's Initiative

Thanks to all of you who supported Prop 106! Although we did not prevail, State Trust Land reform is so critical to DFLT's conservation goals we will keep at it. We'll keep you posted on our progress.

Lovely Luminaria

The 2nd Annual DFLT Holiday Luminaria was a wonderful evening of stargazing, good cheer and neighbors helping neighbors. Well over one hundred people turned out at the Jewel of the Creek Preserve to enjoy star and moon gazing provided by the wonderful and expert astronomers of Stargazing for Everyone. Hot cocoa and cider were drunk and cookies were eaten, especially Theresa Rigney's incredibly delicious star cookies!

Thanks to the generosity of those who attended, lots of canned goods were collected for and distributed to the Foothills Food Bank.

The DFLT would like to thank all those who attended for coming and sharing the nighttime beauty of the Jewel of the Creek; our wonderful board members and volunteers for all their hard work; Stargazing for Everyone for their astronomical expertise; and Rhonda and Lee Anderson of Spur Cross Stables, for allowing us to use their parking lot.

MESSAGE from the President

Dear DFLT members,

Edward O. Wilson, renowned entomologist, teacher and author, has recently written a small book that, despite its size, is a gigantic argument for the preservation of Nature, which he defines as “that part of the original environment and its life forms that remains after the human impact. Nature is all on planet Earth that has no need of us and can stand alone.”

However, he says, the reverse is not true. Mankind cannot survive without Nature. “Upon its delicate health we depend for every moment of our lives,” he says. And he worries that we are unwittingly destroying our only hope for survival.

Composed as a letter to a fictitious Southern Baptist pastor, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth* argues with passion and deep understanding that science and religion, despite their differing world-views, have a shared and overriding interest in the defense of living Nature. Wilson was raised an evangelical churchgoer in Alabama, but he now calls himself a secular humanist, persuaded by the scientific evidence of evolution. In this small volume he undertakes to persuade a man of God that solving some of the greatest environmental problems of the 21st century is the only way to save the Creation, however one defines it.

Here, according to Wilson, and summarized by the acronym HIPPO, is a list of factors leading to the decline of Earth’s biodiversity and quite possibly to its eventual inability to sustain humanity:

H habitat loss, including that caused by human-induced climate change

I invasive species (harmful aliens, including predators, disease organisms, and dominant competitors that displace natives)

P pollution

P human overpopulation, a root cause of the other four factors

O overharvesting (hunting, fishing, gathering)

Wilson is a deeply committed, highly esteemed and very persuasive scientist and writer. Nothing else I’ve ever read is a clearer statement of the case for taking care of Planet Earth. I’d be curious to hear from other readers. The book is at the Desert Foothills Library.

Jacky Davis



President

Sponsor Our Saguaros

The Cave Creek Complex fire, one of the worst in Arizona history, scorched hundreds of thousands of acres of Sonoran Desert, killing thousands of ancient saguaros. Although the fire was caused by natural forces, humans are taking an active role in helping nature recover. A group of Desert Mountain residents together with the Desert Foothills Land Trust and Tonto National Forest representatives are raising funds to re-vegetate a portion of the burned area.

A symposium entitled “Wildfires in the Desert” was the kickoff event held at Desert Mountain for this effort. The symposium featured Forest Service and Land Trust experts talking about the causes of the fire and fire fighting strategies employed during the fire.

Desert Foothills Land Trust is helping to foster a fundraising program called “**Sponsor Our Saguaros**” (S.O.S). The program’s goal is to raise money to buy 2,000 saguaros for the U.S. Forest Service to plant on a 50-acre parcel near Desert Mountain.

Your help is needed in this effort.

\$500 will sponsor 20 saguaros on 1/2 acre

\$300 will sponsor 10 saguaros on 1/4 acre

\$150 will sponsor 5 saguaros on 1/8 acre

To become a “Saguaro Sponsor,” please make your check payable to DFLT and note on the check “S.O.S. Program” and send to DFLT, P.O. Box 4861, Cave Creek, AZ, 85327. Please note if you wish your sponsorship to be in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone (this is a great gift for grandchildren). You will receive a map showing your sponsored “acreage” and Certificate of Sponsorship.” For more information, please contact program coordinator Sylvia Owens (480-488-4352) or DFLT Office Manager Kay Vargas (480-488-6131)

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Desert Foothills Wildflowers This Season

by Paul Santori, Sr.

The area has been short of rain, but there still are many things to see. Paul Santori Sr., a Valley of the Sun desert photographer, provides some tips on finding them.

In a wet year the flowers are everywhere, and some species bloom in incredible numbers. Carpets of Poppy, Lupine, Brittlebush and Globemallow cover hillsides, desert floors and washes. They can be so thick it's hard to figure out where to step! The winter and spring of 2004/2005 was a year like that, wet (winter) by desert standards, at least compared to the previous 9 years of drought (of course this is a desert).

Well, 2006 hasn't been very wet, so we're having none of that. But we did have monsoon rains in late summer, plus a little scattered precipitation since, so we've had more wildflowers to look at lately than we did in drought years. It's been mostly perennials, and it has taken some effort to find them. But, this has turned out to be a good fall for both sightings and for photography.

Where were they this fall? It didn't take us long to notice wildflowers were very scarce on the low desert floors (very dry), but we were consistently seeing them in desert foothills habitat. So, we shifted our focus to areas in and around Cave Creek, Carefree, New River, the east side of I-17 north of the Carefree Highway up to the Tonto National Forest area, and in similar terrain in the Bradshaws. It's all about water. We've learned to follow rivers, riverbeds and washes with water at or near the surface. We look for washes with damp areas, and occasional small pools of water, some probably dug by critters – they do know where to find water when it's available. Some elevation (foothills) has consistently paid off (water more likely). We cover a lot of ground, as much as 60 miles a day some days, since what will bloom next and where is highly unpredictable. Lately we've been making a point of covering many elevations on a given day, from maybe 1500 ft. up to 4400 ft. When we find an area or wash with a lot of flowers, we park and hike.

While our current focus is Sonoran Desert wildflowers and critters, and technically Sonoran desert is below 3500 feet, we generally work up to about 4400 feet, where many of the same Sonoran Desert species appear. Burned areas north and south of Seven Springs had surprisingly good blooms last spring and this fall. Much of the wildflowers' competition for water and sunshine was consumed by the fires, so certain wildflower species have been flourishing. For example, last March we saw large carpets of Verbena on hillsides near Seven Springs, in quantities and concentrations we had never seen before (for Verbena), and, in late August, more Sacred Datura than we had ever seen before. Not only did we find the usual desert flowers (Verbena, three Nightshade varieties, Desert Straw, Arizona Honeysuckle, Buckwheat, etc.), but often in the burned area we found things like Morning Glory, Scarlet Creeper, gourds and other species we'd never seen in the wild desert before in 15 years of exploring.

Some of our recent best finds over the past 12 weeks were found along or near the:

- Table Mesa Road between I-17 and Seven Springs.
- Table Mesa Road west of I-17.
- Bloody Basin Road, past Joe's Hill, through Bloody Basin, and on to Seven Springs (60 mile trip).
- Rackensack Wash, several miles north of Sears-Kay archeological site.
- Camp Creek Wash, maybe a mile south of Rackensack wash.
- Castle Hot Springs Road between Lake Pleasant and Wickenburg.
- Joe's Hill area north of Anthem.
- Agua Fria River in the New River area on either side of I-17.

In September we found Arizona Caltrops for the first time, in many locations, including several acres of it just south of the Carefree highway, on the west side of I-17. Along Table Mesa Road several miles east of I-17, we found a hillside with a lot of Desert Rose Mallow plants in bloom last Sept.

18, and found a few still blooming in the same area Nov. 1. We had never seen a hillside with dozens of Desert Rose Mallow shrubs before. On late Nov. and early Dec. outings we saw standing/running water in parts of the Agua Fria, Cave Creek, and Seven Springs Wash, always good for seeing wildflowers along the edges. Both the Spur Cross Regional Park and the Jewel of the Creek Preserve also had running water in early December.

Speaking of the Jewel, about the first week of December we explored DFLT's Jewel of the Creek, P. A. Seitts, and New River Preserves. The Jewel of the Creek preserve, just south of the Spur Cross Preserve and Cave Creek Regional Park, truly lives up to its name. This riparian preserve is an exceptional blend of Sonoran Desert views, large Cotton-woods and Sycamores, water, rock walls, and more. Judging from the water, size of the trees and the general terrain, there should be wildflowers



WILDFLOWERS of the Sonoran Desert CD features 1,286 large plant and flower images for 172 species, 5 built-in slideshows, a specific wildflower criteria search tool and more. www.phoenixwildflowers.com

there pretty much year-around. We spotted 8 species during our visit. The New River Preserve, another riparian beauty, winds along a section of the Agua Fria. Interestingly this area includes some large Palm trees. While the flora was very dense in spots, that didn't slow us much and we enjoyed exploring there. The P.A. Seitts Preserve at Go John Canyon, by Cave Creek Regional Park, provides a beautiful example of Sonoran Desert foothills, featuring a scenic canyon, a good cross-section of Sonoran Desert Flora, and easy-to-moderate well groomed

cont. page 4

Wow, if 2006 was not busy enough, 2007 will be even busier.

The DFLT and the Volunteers for Outdoors Arizona (VOAZ) will continue their relationship of helping land recover and the building and maintenance of sustainable and safe trails. In 2007 the Jewel of the Creek Preserve will have the current loop trail extended in two places so the visitors will have a better opportunity to experience the splendor of the preserve. One trail extension will be located on the west-



Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona (VOAZ) attack a clump of saltcedar. Photo by Gail Landry.

ern edge of the preserve and will ascend the hillside where it will connect with a trail on the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA). The main purposes of this trail are to provide Jewel of the Creek Preserve visitors a view of the upland Sonoran habitat located there and a safe and sustainable way for SCRCA's guided tours to access the riparian area at the Jewel of the Creek Preserve. This trail will be open to the public to the border of the Jewel of the Preserve and the SCRCA. Public access to the SCRCA will continue to be located at its current entrance on Spur Cross Road.

The other trail extension will guide visitors to the area of the Jewel of the Creek Preserve known as the pond. Currently this area is open to the public for guided hikes only.

VOAZ will use these trail construction events as training sessions for their crew leaders, as well as training sessions for REI employees and volunteers who do trail work around the state. At one training event, residents of Los Sincuidados who will training

to be trail stewards at the H.B. Wallace Preserve on Lone Mountain. Training events are scheduled as follows: Jewel of the Creek: 6 January 2007; H.B. Wallace Preserve 7 January 2007.

Michael Baker of VOAZ is formulating a trail master plan for the H.B. Wallace Preserve on Lone Mountain. Presently there is an extensive trail system throughout the preserve. Many of the trails are redundant and or are highly erodable and not sustainable. The trail master plan will identify which trails are to be abandoned and which trails are to be improved and brought up to current trail standards. Included with this plan will be estimates on how much work (time and labor) it will take to implement the recommendations and a complete maintenance schedule complete with a workshop for Los Sincuidados residents who are willing to become trail stewards.

In the coming months and years, there will be ample opportunities to volunteer for restoration projects on the H.B. Wallace Preserve. All of the trails classified as redundant or unsustainable will need to be replanted with native plants and numerous erosion control features will have to be constructed. Check out future newsletters for a schedule of events.

Preserve Steward Training

The Spring 2007 Preserve Steward Training class is scheduled to begin on February 13, 2007 and continue on the following Tuesdays until March 20, 2007, from 9:00 am-12:00 pm.

Training is a series of in the field seminars on the natural and cultural history of DFLT's many preserves. Trainees will learn how to monitor preserves to insure that the natural and cultural values remain intact. Each session will meet at the DFLT office, but will be conducted in the field at a different preserve each week. Be prepared to hike at least one mile each week. A training manual will be provided to each trainee. Please call the DFLT office at (480) 488-6131 or email kvargas@dflt.org to sign up for the classes.

WILDFLOWERS *cont. from page 3*

easy-walking trails. Another beautiful preserve indeed!

How about this winter and spring? Once again, it's all about water, even though unusual frost patterns could impact some species. Unless we get some significant precipitation now, the annuals will be in short supply. We'll see some, in small quantities, and small if any carpets. Lacking significant rains we'll still see a lot of species but it will take some effort to find them. I'll be betting on and hiking the desert foothills.

The "Wildflowers of the Sonoran" CD I created in the spring/summer of 2005 includes a lot of winter/spring photography from both 2004 and 2005. I derived a histogram from the 1286 CD photograph dates, as a way to roughly examine the timing of wildflower species blooms in winter/spring, at least in relation to each other, in 2004/2005. See table page 5.

This gives a few clues as to what we might expect, as my photoset usage at least partly reflects how many species I photographed by month. While not a scientific measurement by any means, it is based on the use of actual pictures shot in the wild desert at a time I was shooting everything I found. Clearly most of the action was between December and June. The archive built up to a peak, then fairly quickly fell off as the weather warmed up. The heaviest activity was March through May. I'm expecting a similar profile this winter/spring. If we get a lot of precipitation now, we'll see more annuals, carpets, and species, particularly the harder to find species, in the March-June period. For example, it was in the spring of 2005 (wettest winter/spring in 10 years) we finally found for the first time and photographed the elusive Desert Mariposa, Sego Lily, Larkspur, White Tackstem, Delphinium, and more, after nearly 15 years of hiking.

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A Night Under the Stars Asleep At The Wheel!

by Cheryl Van Brunt

You are cordially invited to the 12th Annual Sonoran Symphony benefiting the Desert Foothills Land Trust. The date is Saturday, May 5, 2007 at 5:30 pm. This year our western group performing with The Phoenix Symphony will be "Asleep At The Wheel" – the 9-time Grammy winning "Kings of Texas Swing." Asleep At The Wheel has performed with the likes of Willie Nelson, Vince Gill, George Strait, Huey Lewis, Brooks and Dunn, Dolly Parton, and Garth Brooks, just to name a few.

The Phoenix Symphony will perform their characteristic "western Symphonic music" while Asleep At The Wheel will provide the "Texas Swing" laced with humor and nostalgia.

The event will once again be held at the beautiful Rancho Mañana Golf Resort and a gourmet dinner catered by renowned Tonto Bar and Grill's Chef Eric Flatt and Manager John Malcolm.

We will also feature our signature Super Raffle Drawing and, for the 2nd year, a Silent Auction with items such as works from local artists,



sumptuous dinners at fine local restaurants, luxurious resort packages, massages, etc.

Individual tickets are \$250 each and a large portion of each ticket is tax-deductible. Or you can organize a table of 10 for your friends and co-workers or sponsor a table for your business. Sponsorships range from \$3,000, to \$15,000 with superior placement and a table for 20 guests. Table sponsorships and individual tickets go quickly so make your reservations now for a great night under the stars and for a good cause.

We are always looking for good volunteers, donations of Silent Auction and Raffle items. If you are an artist and would love to showcase your work, or the owner of a business (anything from a coffee shop to a luxury resort) and would like to donate any tax deductible items or help us with the event, please contact our office at 480-488-6131.

We look forward to seeing y'all again along with some new faces on Saturday, May 5, 2007. Watch for your invitation in the mail in March and mark your calendars today!

WILDFLOWERS *cont. from page 4*

Wet or dry, one special thing to watch for is the spring blooming of the cacti, as it is quite a show, and it goes on for a couple months or so, seemingly one species at a time. All the cacti have spectacular, often brilliantly colored, showy flowers, in dramatic contrast to their rough, sharp-spined cacti structures. These flowers are great to photograph. But watch your step! If you bump a Teddy Bear Cholla cactus, for example, you will need a pair of pliers to pull out each barbed spine, one at a time. I did that once, had to pull about 60 spines out of my leg, one at a time. There are many better ways to spend an hour.

The desert is a beautiful place. We'll be out there a lot this coming spring, and hope you can make some time to get out there as well.

Timing of Blooms Winter/Spring, 2004/2005

Month	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Photoset	7	24	23	53	102	45	4

Apologies

We tried something a little different this year with our annual membership appeal and, like all new things you try, you don't always get it right the first time. We engaged a mailing service to send out our membership renewal letters and to solicit new members from the local community. Duplicate addresses were supposed to have been purged from the mailing list before it was sent out. Apparently that was not the case for some of you who received both a new member solicitation and a renewal notice.

We are sorry for the duplication and are working with the mailing service to see what went wrong and take steps to correct the problem in any future mailings they handle for us.

Rest assured your name and address are held in strictest confidence and have not been and will not be shared.



2007 Spring Hike Schedule

It's supposed to be an El Nino year, so we might get really lucky with the wildflowers again this Spring, folks!

We have scheduled two docent-led hikes to the breathtaking Jewel of the Creek Preserve and two hikes to the incredible P.A. Seitts Preserve and three hikes to the historic Preserve at the Cave. Also, in case you misplace your newsletter, all of our hikes for the spring season will be listed on our web site www.dflt.org.

- January 27** **The Cave, 10:00 A.M.**
- February 10** **The Jewel, 10:00 A.M.**
- February 24** **P. A. Seitts, 10:00 A.M.**

- March 10** **The Cave, 9:30 A.M.**
- March 24** **The Jewel, 9:30 A.M.**
- April 14** **P. A. Seitts, 9:00 A.M.**
- April 28** **The Cave, 9:00 A.M.**

As an added bonus this year, we are scheduling guided hikes to the H.B. Wallace Preserve on Lone Mountain which will be held on March 17, 2007 at 9:30 am and a guided hike at the New River Nature Reserve on April 7, 2007 at 9:00 am. Both of these hikes will last approximately three hours.

Please call the DFLT office at 480-488-6131 or email Kay Vargas at kvargas@dflt.org to sign up for the hikes.

Cave Hikes are limited to 20 hikers. All other hikes are limited to 30 hikers.

*Please call the DFLT Office at **480-488-6131** or email kvargas@dflt.org to make reservations.*

