

Hassayampa Times

Fall 2015



The **Big** Picture

Marty Lawrence, Preserve Manager

With most of the monsoon season behind us at this writing, we've registered 2.61" of moisture at the preserve from four storms that came by. On the evening of July 18th we got 1.2" alone, an entirely respectable bit of precipitation in its own right, and usually would be sufficient to cause a middling flash flood through the river. What I became aware of too late was that the average rainfall from the same cell just three miles away in Wickenburg was about five or more inches!! This contributed a bit extra water beyond my original calculations and I was able to witness the most water ever rushing by in the river during my 14 years at the preserve. It was a sobering view of the power of the desert storm.

Several neighborhoods around the town were hit hard and lost much unsecured property to the rapid flows. Unfortunately, much of this property came to rest on the preserve after the flow ebbed away after a few hours, so we'll have ongoing cleanup and recovery efforts continuing for months, I'm sure. The flood even came overland across most of Mesquite Meander trail, closing it as well as the expected three river trails. All the trail materials were put on 'high ground' the same morning by the work crew, since we knew rain was forecast. After recovery efforts by the work crew we eventually only lost two benches, two bridges, about 12 trail signs and gained a long list of tires and other trash, appliances and miscellaneous items (even a traffic cone from Yavapai County).

Mesquite Meander was reopened the following week, and Lion Trail will likely be re-opened soon; River Ramble will likely take a couple more weeks beyond that to complete. So we should be back to full trail capacity by the time visitation picks up again for the season, right?

As they say, we shouldn't count our chickens yet. Monsoon patterns still linger, and more flooding could undo our work and set us back again. On the heels of that, predictions are for a much wetter winter, owing to a strong El Nino pattern holding in the Pacific. The press has already labeled it a "Godzilla" brewing. We'll just have to keep our fingers crossed and our signs, bridges and benches dry until we see how things develop. Until we see you all again, enjoy the last waning summer days and get back here safely and soon. *Marty*

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Photo: Monsoon Lightning from Archives. ©HRP

Hassayampa River Preserve • 49614 N. U.S. Highway 60/89 (at milepost 114) • Wickenburg, AZ

Winter Hours • Sept. to mid-May • Wednesday - Sunday • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. - **Summer** • May 14 to Sept. 16 • Friday - Sunday • 7 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Monsoon 2015



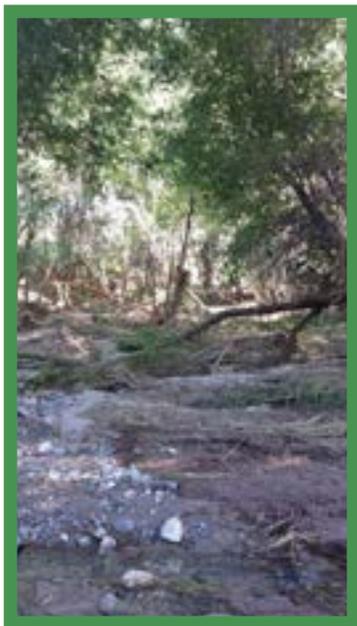
The river creeps up the steps of the trailhead during one of the several monsoons this season. It's kept the trail crew busy! © TNC Staff



Trash can in a debris pile. © TNC Staff



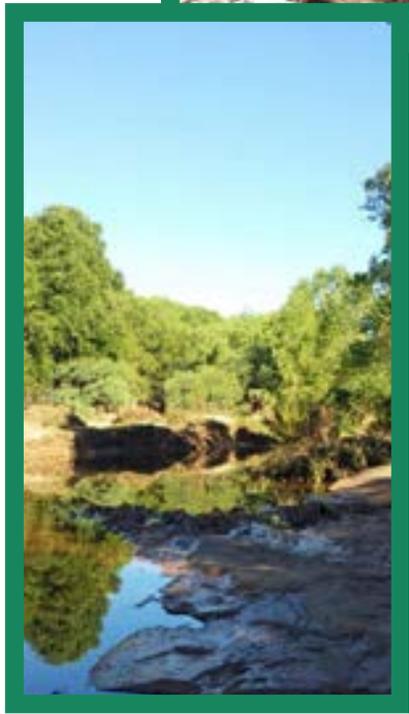
A water heater washes down river during the storm. © TNC Staff



So much damage done by our sleepy little stream when it becomes a raging river! © TNC Staff



Steps leading to the head of the trails. The river rose up over the steps and towards Palm Lake Trail. © TNC Staff



The trails are a wet, muddy mess! © TNC Staff



Mud Hen. © TNC Staff

Happenings

Bernadine McCollum, Project Coordinator

It's been an interesting summer with the delay of the Maricopa County Park transition and the monsoon deluges in Wickenburg that wiped out the river bottom trails. A big thanks goes to the Saturday work crew for their cleanup efforts and to those who have hosted and led tours through the summer months.

We kicked off the summer with our 6th annual kids camp followed by our July scorpion hunt which is always popular with kids and adults. In addition to the usual array of scorpions, the 40 attendees were treated to the sight of a gila monster waddling around the

parking area for several minutes and a scorpion with babies on its back. Scorpions give live birth to up to 100 babies that ride on their mothers backs for 10-20 days until their exoskeletons harden. The exoskeletons, even when fossilized, glow under and ultraviolet light. The biological purpose of this fluorescence is still somewhat of a mystery to scientists.

It's always sad to see long term (and short term!) volunteers hang up their vests, which is what Lorraine Thompson has decided to do after 18 years of hosting in the visitor center on Saturday mornings. She will be missed.

Speaking of volunteers, we need to add visitor center hosts and trail docents for the coming season. Please recruit your friends and neighbors and invite them to our volunteer orientation and potluck luncheon, 10 to 1 p.m., Friday, November 6. We can also arrange for training to fit their schedule.



Long-time volunteer Lorraine Thompson is retiring. We all will miss your help and your smile, Lorraine! © TNC Staff

Bernadine



Have a skill that isn't on our volunteer list? Come on in and talk to Bernadine. We didn't know we needed a photographer, a graphic artist, or a snoop until they presented themselves. HAVE NO skills?? That doesn't mean we can't use you. Call: (928) 684-2772



A mother scorpion with young ones on her back. See article above. © TNC Staff

Events this season

June 29, 2105

Friends of the Hassayampa / Hassayampa River Preserve

Enclosed please find a check in the amount of \$21.00. My youngest daughter, Samantha – age 7 – recently had a lemonade stand with her older sister and a friend. They determined that half of the money collected would go to charity. When we got home Samantha decided that she would supplement her \$10.00 charity money with \$11.00 from her saved allowance money. She wanted it sent to the Nature Conservancy or in her words “the place we went with Oma and Opa where they are saving nature.” My parents (Jack and Else Janus) are both members and do volunteer work at the Nature Conservancy and my girls have both been to the Hassayampa with them. Clearly their visit was memorable and the work you are doing there has impacted at least two young people. I am hoping that they will be the generation that helps save Mother Nature.

Thank you for the work you are doing.

Bianca Gruetter (on behalf of Samantha Gruetter)

Jack and Else Janus with granddaughter Samantha.
© TNC Staff



Don't miss out on the fun!
Visit nature.org for a full list of our upcoming events.



A gila monster is a rare sight! © Don Coughlin



The ever-popular scorpion hunt!
This year 40 folks turned out to hunt for the elusive creatures. © TNC Staff



Students working on a project in the Seeds class. © TNC Staff

Friends of Hassayampa (FOH)

By Debbie Keiser, FOH President



Did the summer flash by for you like it did for me? Don't get me wrong, living in Arizona makes us wish the summers pass quickly, but as we age the time just seems to go by faster each year. The summer rain was great for the vegetation but the flooding has once again made it a challenge to keep the river crossing trails open. Nature has its way of showing us who is the boss.

The County has run into some financial difficulties for taking over the Preserve in January of 2016. The Friends of Hassayampa will carry on as we have in the past and look forward to working with the County Vulture Mine Park in 2017. Supporting children's projects

will once again be the main effort of FOH. The Nature Rangers will have another year of exciting projects, and funding to bus school children to visit the Preserve is also available.

Thanks to Bernadine's efforts, FOH received a \$500 grant from Walmart to help with the Nature Ranger program. I would also like to thank all of you for supporting FOH with donations and membership. We are always looking for new people with exciting ideas to help make the Preserve a wonderful place to visit and learn about nature. The next FOH board meeting will be October 21 at the Preserve.

Meet interesting new friends • Attend fun events for volunteers • Free admission to the preserve and TNC's Ramsey Canyon and Patagonia-Sonoita preserves • Free or reduced admission to events scheduled at Hassayampa.

Volunteer Opportunities For Information: (928) 684-2772

VISITOR CENTER HOST: Welcome visitors and introduce them to the natural and human history of the preserve. Desired commitment of 4 - 8 hours per month.

PRESERVE STEWARD: Maintain trails, clear brush, repair fencing, eradicate invasive plants, and spruce up the desert garden. Desired commitment of 4 - 8 hours per month.

TRAIL DOCENT: Lead adult and student groups on interpretive nature walks within the preserve to provide a

high quality visitor experience. Tours are scheduled Wed. - Sat. as requested.

ADMINISTRATIVE: Assist with general office tasks, help with the quarterly newsletter and event publicity. Assist with planning and organizing classes and special events.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE: Assist with general repair and maintenance of the Visitor Center and other buildings within the preserve complex.



We ALWAYS need more volunteers.

Don't be shy! Come on in and talk to us.

Tossed and Found

By Judy Rubin,
Preserve Archivist

This bottle was found in the “dump” at the edge of the preserve’s property. It was probably produced and sold in the 1970’s or 80’s, and apparently contained Anacin. The metal cap is badly rusted and almost impossible to read. Both sides of the bottle are embossed with the name “Whitehall” which is the name one of the companies that made Anacin over the years.

Pharmaceutical companies seem to merge about every 10 minutes, so the history of this little bottle is complicated. Originally, AH Robins Co. made Anacin. The Anacin product was purchased in 1930 by American Home Products, which merged with Wyeth.



Anacin bottle. © Judy Rubin TNC

The Whitehall Pharmaceutical Co. was headquartered in Richmond, VA, and is now a subsidiary of American Home Products (AHP). Sometime after 1957 AHP merged with AH Robins, forming the Whitehall-Robins Division of Wyeth. This conglomerate has been responsible for Robitussin, ChapStick, Dimetapp, Preparation H, Anacin, and dozens of other healthcare products over time. The bottle could have been purchased in Wickenburg.

By keeping your eyes open you can find amazing things hidden away at Hassayampa!

**Become a
volunteer**

Meet interesting new friends • Attend fun events for our volunteers • Get free admission to the preserve and The Nature Conservancy’s Ramsey Canyon and Patagonia-Sonoita preserves • Get free or reduced admission to events scheduled at the Hassayampa River Preserve.

I Just Wanna Be A Marsh!

By Sherry Slocombe, Preserve Archivist

Holly Richter, The Nature Conservancy's first manager of the preserve, often said "Palm Lake is trying to become a cienega again!" Cienega is a Spanish word for desert marshland, or swamp. Holly was right!

Originally, Palm Lake didn't exist. All that was there was a low spot catching overflow from the natural springs near what is now the picnic area. It probably looked much like the area seen today from Willow Walkway - a damp area with small streams of water meandering through it, home to green herons, full of cattails, watercress and yerba mansa.

At one time only Native Americans frequented the property, which they referred to as "Cold Springs." The area was covered with natural springs, which fed the cienega. Our cienega is one of fewer than 20 left in Arizona, and our riparian site is one of relatively few left, due to overgrazing and groundwater pumping. And what is now Palm Lake has played various roles in that story.

When the first Europeans arrived, riparian forests of cottonwood and willow trees, mesquite bosques, and cienegas dotted the parched land. With access to water, the first settlers raised cattle. A far-seeing young man named Frederick Brill bought a ranch, called Spring Valley, in the mid-1800's, and he tapped into the main spring, bringing water to his ranch house and the spring house. He built irrigation trenches to get water to his fruit trees. At the time, there were 26 natural springs located around the property. Today the main springs still flow through a small cienega before emptying into Palm Lake.

Brill, a successful farmer, decided to try something new. He excavated a low area, fed by the spring, and made a



A typical cienega, or desert marsh, contains wild grass, native shrubs, reeds, and meandering, spring-fed waterways which grow and shrink with the rain. © Sherry Slocombe, TNC

I Just Wanna Be A Marsh!

small walled-in pond for the purpose of raising carp, which he sold for food to miners in the area. The plan worked well, and he built several more carp ponds. The remains of one can be seen from Mesquite Meander. With the main flow of water from the spring going into the carp ponds, only the rains sustained the marsh area. In the late 1880's Brill moved to Phoenix, and after a period of absentee ownership, he eventually put the ranch up for sale.

By 1911 the land belonged to the Sangers, who used it for their mining headquarters, later turning it into a dude ranch called "The Garden of Allah", with the spring-fed carp pond being used for recreation. Again, most of the water fed the pond, leaving only a little for the cienega. But, it was enough to sustain a small marsh.

A small marshy area still existed along the west side of the pond. The constant refurbishing of the pond kept the marsh at bay, but it was just waiting. The water table was high, and along with the rains, there was enough water to keep the area moist and alive.

In 1935 there was a large flood, which destroyed 64 cabins built along the river. There was a lot of damage to the riverside properties. During this period, from the 30's to 1960, the future preserve property was a guest ranch, a health resort, a retirement home, and a constant food and water source for cattle roaming the area. The Shady River-Palm Lake Guest Ranch and Mobile Home Park was one of the incarnations.

By 1960 the property was again for sale. One group of investors proposed an enlarged campsite and recreational vehicle campground with a bona fide lake. They dug out the marshy area and let the water fill it up to create what was officially dubbed Palm Lake. The investors' plans fell through. The next owners' vision of a trailer park/recreation area became reality and much of the riparian landscape became barren due to overuse. Hunting, fishing, and off-roading were allowed on the property. At times boating was allowed on the small lake, and in the 70's there was a pay-for-a-day fishing business. All the while, maintenance on the lake continued. Wild grass and cattails constantly encroached, and new trees sprang up along the banks. Nature was constantly trying to reclaim the marshy area.



Remains of a carp pond wall. This one has just been uncovered by water from a wash during a storm. © Judy Rubin

I Just Wanna Be A Marsh!

By the 1920's the Garden of Allah was hugely successful. The Santa Fe railroad added a stop at the ranch to accommodate all the guests from the East and folks coming from Phoenix for the day to picnic near the water. In 1925, the property became a private residence again, but was soon resold, and the new owners brought back the Garden of Allah resort, once again using the pond for recreation.

Luckily, The Nature Conservancy bid against a sand and gravel company to acquire the land in 1986 and began a huge, year-long project to clean up the stacks of tires, rusting cars, abandoned tents and camping gear, and mobile homes.

The Conservancy soon planned to use Palm Lake as a rearing area for endangered fish from local hatcheries. The fish would remain in the lake until large enough to hold their own against predators and would then be released into suitable rivers in the state. Construction began. (See photos next page.) A special drainage system was employed, allowing the lake to be emptied without any fish being drained away. Volunteers waded into the muck to rescue the existing fish, which were taken to a lake in Sun City. The pond was enlarged, deepened, and small coves were constructed where young fish could safely congregate. Special tank trucks arrived and delivered the new fish - five species in all: Colorado River Squaw Fish, Razorback Sucker, Bonytail Chub, Gila Topminnow, and Desert Pupfish.

But the plan hit a snag. In the summer, oxygen levels in the lake became so low that the fish could not survive. Only certain fish, like catfish, can survive in low oxygen water. Again, the lake was emptied, with volunteers rescuing the remaining fish.

Holly Richter's words were repeated: "Palm Lake wants to be a cienega!" This time people listened.

The lake you see today is one of the favorite spots in the preserve. From the cattails at one end, to the open water at the other end, it is a tranquil place to bird watch or just sit and enjoy the view. But if you pay attention throughout the seasons, you will see that the cattails are advancing out into the lake and the banks of the lake are filling up with new trees, grasses, and plants. This is especially visible when the water levels are low.



Archival photo © TNC Staff

Eventually, silt and plant life will fill in most of the lake. It will become what nature always intended it to be: a cienega!

The Big Dig



All photos © TNC Staff



In 1987 it was decided to raise endangered fish in Palm Lake. First the lake had to be drained, and non-native fish removed. A trench was dug to drain off the water, a pump was set up, and so it began. Crews with nets removed fish living in the lake. Others removed cattails. It was a huge undertaking, all done by volunteers. See article "I Just Wanna Be A Marsh."



Who Is This?

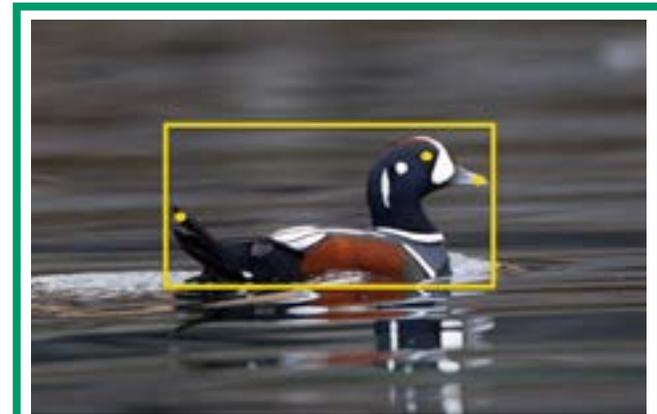
From Cornell Lab of Ornithology

In a breakthrough for computer vision and for bird watching, researchers and bird enthusiasts have enabled computers to achieve a task that stumps most humans—identifying hundreds of bird species pictured in photos.

The bird photo identifier, developed by the Visipedia research project in collaboration with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is available for free at allaboutbirds.org/photoid. The identifier is capable of recognizing 400 of the mostly commonly encountered birds in the United States and Canada.

“It gets the bird right in the top three results about 90% of the time, and it’s designed to keep improving the more people use it,” said Jessie Barry at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. To see if Merlin can identify the bird in your photo, you upload an image and tell Merlin where and when you took it. To orient Merlin, you draw a box around the bird and click on its bill, eye, and tail. Merlin does the rest. Within seconds, it looks at the pixels and combines powerful artificial intelligence techniques with millions of data points from humans, then presents the most likely species, including photos and sounds.

Merlin’s success relies on collaboration between computers and humans. The computer learns to recognize each species from tens of thousands of images identified and labeled by bird enthusiasts. It also taps in to more than 70 million sightings recorded by birders in the ebird.org database.



Using Merlin Bird Photo ID, users draw a box around a bird in a photo and click on the bill, eye, and tail. Merlin does the rest, using computer vision to identify the bird—in this case, a Harlequin Duck. Photo by Christopher L. Wood.

Fall-Winter Hours!

As the weather cools down, it's time to enjoy hiking
the trails of the preserve.

Our new hours are:

Wednesday - Sunday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, until mid-May.