



Echoes from the Canyon is a regular publication of the Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists (SCVN)

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It Was Flowing for a While!



The canyon had some great water in late March, but the flow over the dam has once again disappeared.

Photo taken in March of Sabino Dam and the creek by Naturalist Marty Horowitz.

Invite Friends to Subscribe

Feel free to invite your friends to receive *Echoes from the Canyon*. Forward this newsletter to them and have them [click this link to subscribe](#).

They will join with you in learning about nature walks and hikes, educational programs, books to read, and see gorgeous photos of the canyon's flora and fauna.

They can rest assured that their contact information is secure and will not be shared with anyone. They can unsubscribe at any time.



SCVN - How it Began 40 Years Ago

Condensed from an article written by founding SCVN member David Lazaroff

On a Monday morning in January 1977, David Lazaroff reported for duty at the Sabino Canyon Visitor Center. He had been hired as an Environmental Education Specialist and his chief task was intended to be running workshops for teachers, using educational materials that had been created by the Forest Service for use nationwide. However, David soon perceived an educational opportunity of another kind, tailored specifically to the beautiful and fascinating environment of Sabino Canyon. He imagined children arriving regularly at the canyon and being led by knowledgeable volunteers on nature walks and in "hands-on" educational activities. David described his idea to his boss, Robert Barnacastle, who unhesitatingly offered his support and participation.

Volunteers at Sabino Canyon received additional training and in the spring of 1978 they staffed a pilot program for children. Teachers and children loved it. As the program grew in popularity, it became clear that some of the activities being enjoyed by children would appeal as well to adult visitors of Sabino Canyon. In 1982 a few volunteers began meeting the general public for opportunities such as gold panning. This was the beginning of the "adult interpretation" part of today's volunteer program.

SCVN formally became a non-profit organization in 1984, passing its first set of by-laws in 1984.

Training classes are still being given each year to members of the community who are passionate about environmental education and the unique desert ecology that makes Sabino Canyon such a special place. Visit <https://sabinonaturalists.org/join-us/> to learn more about becoming a Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalist.

Santa Catalina Butterfly Count

Naturalist Fred Heath

For the past 14 years, a North American Butterfly Association (NABA) spring butterfly count has been carried out in the Santa Catalina Mountains including Sabino Canyon in late March or early April. The NABA butterfly counts are similar to Audubon Christmas Bird Counts in that folks count all the butterflies they can find in a 15 mile diameter circle. Although this butterfly count is named the Sabino Canyon count, the center of the circle is at the junction of the east and west forks of Sabino Creek, which besides including all of the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area covers spots along the entire General Hitchcock Highway right up to the top of Mount Lemmon. Obviously in the early spring there are few butterflies at the higher elevations, so most of the focus is on the lower elevations. This same count circle is used in late July for the summer version of this count. In the summer count, we have the opposite situation. Then there are very few butterflies to be found at the lower elevations. Besides, it's too hot there for most counters to even be in the field by late morning.

This year's count was held on April 8th, with 22 people in 11 parties spread out in the count circle in search of butterflies. In Sabino we had 10 people participating, split into 4 parties. Half the species found on the entire count are "usually" seen in Sabino itself, but not this year. The hot dry weather we've experienced over the past year has kept many plants from germinating. Many of these plants would have been butterfly host plants (what the caterpillars eat) or their flowers would provide nectar for adults. The counters in Sabino proper only found 11 species, while the total species count was 50 species, slightly lower than the 56 species average. Although the overall number of species was respectable, the number of individuals, 603, was less than 40% of an average year!

224 of these individuals were a single species, the Marine Blue, and 200 of them were found in Sabino proper. The Marine Blue uses a number of shrubs and trees of the pea family such as Acacia, Mesquite, and Baby Bonnets



Fatal Metalmark
Photo by Naturalist Debbie

(*Coursetia*) as host plants which grow at the lower elevation of Sabino and tend to leaf out even with the little rain we had in mid-March.

Hopefully, this year's Sabino Canyon summer count in July will be preceded by decent monsoon rains and goodly numbers of butterflies. Stay tuned.

To learn more about Arizona's butterflies check out the Southeast Arizona Butterfly Association.

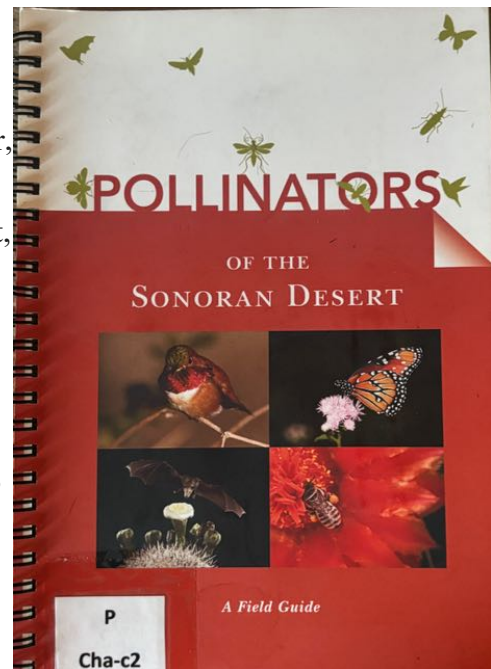
<https://seaba.org>

Book Review: Pollinators of the Sonoran Desert A Field Guide By Nina Chambers

Book Review by Naturalist Rebecca, SCVN Librarian

March through October our Sonoran Desert blooms with flowers and hums with pollinators. Butterflies, bees, other insects, bats, and birds carry pollen from one plant to another, ensuring fruit and seeds for the next generation. This guide book illustrates the various pollinators of our Sonoran Desert, noting specific plants that various pollinators choose.

As human population increases—and agriculture and subdivisions grow—natural habitats greatly decrease. Application of chemicals to remove pests from agricultural crops also kills insects necessary for crop production. Add to that our dependence on honey bees (introduced in the 1600s, they pollinate 80 percent of crops) and pollinators can be in trouble, as honey bees might outcompete native bees for nectar and pollen.



This guidebook was written for you to learn more about the pollinators of the Sonoran Desert. You will be introduced through photographs, diagrams, food sources, range, and conservation status. This field guide also has a Spanish translation. The author encourages planting a pollinator garden with appropriate food, shelter, water, and space. Listed within the book are pages of plants, flowers, ground covers, shrubs, and trees that will surely attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

Pima County Library System has one copy at the Joel Valdez Library for in-library use only. You can also order from your favorite used book store.

Trash Smashers

A shout out of thanks to the Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists who picked up trash along Sabino Canyon Road (plus Sabino Canyon's two parking lots) on March 8.

SCVN has been toting out trash from Snyder Road to Rudasill for 20 years as part of the Pima County Department of Transportation's Adopt-a-Roadway program. This last time, 50 pounds of trash were smashed. The most unusual finds were a pair of tighty-whities and a drumstick (the band kind, not the KFC kind).

According to the Pima County Adopt-a-Road website, volunteers from many organizations have cleaned more than 300 miles of roadway, saving Pima County tax payers thousands of dollars at approximately \$250 per mile.

To find out more information visit <https://www.pima.gov/816/Adopt-a-Roadway>



Naturalist Jane nabs a piece of trash from the wilds of the Sabino Canyon parking lot. (Photo by Naturalist Cheryl)

A Visit to the Hohokam Ruins

Naturalist Terry

Thirteen Sabino Canyon Vounteer Naturalist trainees and trainers experienced their own version of “Back to the Past” on March 8, when they took a field trip to the University of Arizona Hohokam Ruins. This archaeological site, located in a residential neighborhood near Tanque Verde Road, is closed to the public. This was a pretty special opportunity, without question! Dr. Barbara Mills, U of A Regent Professor in the School of Anthropology, was the guide and expert.

Dr. Mills shared the history of this property and how the university is utilizing it as a resource for their students. After touring the lab and learning about the adobe buildings on the site, we were able to walk out to the ancient mounds.

One of the most fascinating parts was seeing small pottery sherds that may have been made between AD 500-1450. We were literally looking at the past in real time! For each sherd found, Dr. Mills spoke of the possibility of its being made locally, or if it came here as part of trading with other groups near Phoenix, or perhaps even further away.

Dr. Mills gave a trainee lecture in the fall; this trip made her lecture come alive, and gave Volunteer Trainees a deeper understanding for teaching Back to the Past.

Fun Fact: This site was a national park for a very brief period of time.

Special thanks to Dr. Mills and the staff at the U of A for making this field trip happen.



A Claw and a Hummer



Naturalist Mark sent these photos of a Gila Monster claw and of a Costa's Hummingbird. Mark took the Gila photo on the road to Bear Canyon before Bear Bridge. Said Mark, "It was down in a culvert and looking the other way," so he wasn't about to be bitten.

As for the Costa's Hummingbird, it was sitting on a nest near Bear Bridge on February 28. "Seems early doesn't it?" said Mark.



Public Interpretation Spotlight

Panning for Garnets

Who leads this event? Naturalists Ralph, Alison, Kathe, Bev, and Ilene.

What do you do and where? We pan every Thursday morning, usually just above shuttle stop 3 on the main road. This year, since we've been short on rain, we spent some time near the new Interpretive Outpost by the Rattlesnake trailhead. Without a stream, we dry pan and use trays of water to demonstrate wet panning. We also have lots of rocks and minerals to display. In March, we went back to the stream by shuttle stop 3, which was fantastic.

How long have you been doing this PI event? Tim for over ten years, Alison for six, Kathe for five years, Bev for four, and Ilene for two.

Why is this subject matter of interest to you? We're all interested in rocks, minerals, and the geology of Sabino Canyon. Besides, who can resist playing in the water?

What is your favorite part of the event? Seeing visitors thrilled to find garnets and surprised that magnetite can "dance." And, it's great that people are so interested in the Canyon's geology. People also love to share their own stories, and we like to hear them. We talk with people from all over the world, and who appreciate us as volunteers. We agree with Tim when he says "This is the best job I've ever had."

What is the most interesting/odd/funny/unusual question you have ever been asked? Every week at least one person (usually many more) asks if we've found gold. Tim explains that while there once was a claim, there is no worthwhile evidence of gold at Sabino Canyon. The rest of us give a variation of that answer or kiddingly say "Not yet!"



Naturalist Tim, left, shows visitors how to remove magnetite from the pan. (Photo by Naturalist Ricki)

STEM Night at Senita Elementary

SCVN participated in the Senita Valley Elementary School's STEM Night on April 9th. Nats Mark and Steve were there with the fantastic Skins and Skulls table. Each student received a bingo card. When they came to the SCVN table they got a sticker, and when they got a BINGO they are put in a raffle for tickets to the Flandrau Planetarium!

It was a fantastic and fun evening educating kids about the amazing animals of Sabino Canyon.



(Photo by Naturalist Steven)

That's All Folks

Echoes from the Canyon is published monthly except July and August by members of the Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists. If you are interested in learning about the Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalist program or about educating the public and/or children in learning about the flora and fauna of this unique riparian environment of the Sonoran Desert, please visit

<https://sabinonaturalists.org/join-us/>



[Sabino Canyon](#) Naturalists



Sabino Naturalists Website
