



**February 2026**

*Echoes from the Canyon* is a regular publication of the Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists.

**Contents**

Winter Activities

Curious?

Mt. Lemmon Blog - Mt Lemmon Hikes virtually

Great Horned Owl Nesting Timeline

Who Sleeps in the Winter?

The Mighty Saguaro

It's Snowing

*Note: Click on photos to enlarge them. Click the View in Browser link above to translate.*

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## Winter Activities

For more information on any event or presentation check out our [Event Calendar](#).

- **Sabino Canyon Bird and Nature Walk:** 1st and 3rd Sundays 8:00–10:30 a.m. Meet at the Visitor Center.
- **Saguaro - A Desert Giant Walk:** Sundays 10:00–11:00 a.m. Meet at the Visitor Center.
- **New! Nature Journaling:** Monday, February 16 2:00–4:00 p.m.; March 2 and 16, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. See event calendar for meetup location.
- **Plant and Bird Walk:** Tuesdays 8:30–11:00 a.m. Meet at the Visitor Center.
- **Intro to Sabino's Geology and Nature Walk:** Tuesdays 8:30–11:00 a.m. Meet at the Visitor Center.
- **Mt Lemmon Nature Hike:** 1st and 3rd Wednesdays 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. See calendar for meetup location.
- **Sabino Canyon Geologic Features:** Thursdays 8:30–11:00 a.m. Meet at the Visitor Center.
- **Panning for Garnets:** Thursdays 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Check website on Thursday morning to confirm both location and time.
- **Let's Explore Sabino Hike:** 2nd and 4th Fridays 8:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Meet at the Visitor Center.
- **Friday Trail Hike:** 1st and 3rd Fridays 8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. See calendar for meetup location and varying times depending on meetup location.
- **Hydrogeology Hike:** 1st and 3rd Saturdays 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Meet at the Visitor Center.
- **Family Fun Hike:** Saturday 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., February 28. Meet at the Visitor Center

## Educational Presentations

All presentations are located at the Visitor Center unless otherwise noted.

- **Quail Corner for Kids:** 2nd and 4th Sundays 9:00–11:00 a.m.
  - **Skulls and Pelts, Wildlife of Sabino Table:** Tuesdays 9:30 a.m. 12:30 p.m.
  - **Ancient Cultures Table:** Fridays 9:00–11:00 a.m., January 16 and 30, February 6, 13, and 27. Saturdays 1:00–3:00 p.m. January 24, February 21 and 28.
  - **Ask a Naturalist Table:** Saturdays 10:00–11:00 a.m.
  - **Stop 1 Chat:** Saturdays 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., February 21, March 7, and 21. See calendar for the day's topic.
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## Curious?

### Naturalist Kathy



I've been asked why I feel the need to identify the plants and animals I see while hiking the trails in Sabino Canyon. That question usually is followed by "I enjoy what I see, I don't need to know what it is." To me, that's like scanning the headlines without knowing the story.

Examples: the lizard you walked by is a regal horned lizard, it squirts blood out of its eyes when disturbed; the rattlesnake that startled you was really a harmless gopher snake; the insect that lives inside the white stuff on prickly pear cactus is still used to make red dye; and the dark clump of dirt you walked by is cryptobiotic soil—pour water on it and watch it come alive!

Knowing the superpowers of the flora and fauna around you makes for a more interesting walk or hike—something you can share with friends, family, and out of town guests.

If you're curious, join one of our naturalist led nature hikes, they're informative and fun, or check out the new Nature Journaling class, where you can observe nature and be creative.

A useful tool to help identify your sightings is iNaturalist. You can visit the site online [here](#) or download the app.

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## Mt. Lemmon Blog

### Moth Massacres and a Gopher's Handsome Face

If you have a good excuse for not hiking the many trails of Mt. Lemmon (too hot, too cold, too far to drive)—you can hike Mt. Lemmon virtually.

Just [click here](#) to read a blog written by naturalist Cathy about SCVN Mt. Lemmon nature hikes, held on the first and third Wednesday of the month. You'll feel like you tagged along.

Among other gems, you'll discover a moth massacre and the perfect spot for an indigenous kitchen. You'll see the handsome face of a pocket gopher, plus a fungus that glows in the dark. You'll read about ethnobotanical properties of plants (anyone need a way to stupefy fish?), plus a pinacate beetle that felt threatened and another that followed a hiker like a BFF.

You'll learn a lot from this blog, which naturalist Cathy has written for four years. Entries are short, informative, fun to read, and will make you wish you were there.

Open to the public, the hikes are from one-and-a-half to four miles long, led by naturalist Cathy and naturalist Patty, and run from mid-October to mid-April. Dates/times/details about upcoming hikes can be found on the SCVN calendar under the heading “Mt. Lemmon Nature Hike.” [Click here](#) to get to the calendar.

**Below is an example of what is on naturalist Cathy's blog:**

**Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*) is always a showstopper! It has many interesting uses with the indigenous cultures such as shampoo, in cradle and bed construction, and as arrows. *Fallugia* is named for an obscure 17th century abbot/botanist. Early botanical explorers of the Southwest had many trials and tribulations. One of their biggest challenges was conflicts with the unfriendly Apache tribe. The mature flowers of this plant were thought to resemble the war bonnets of the Apache. You be the judge:**



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## **Nesting Great Horned Owls** by Naturalist Kathy



Somewhere near you there's probably a nesting Great Horned Owl—you just don't know it. If you heard a lot of hooting lately and then it abruptly stopped, that's a mating pair calling to each other. Look around; is there an old Cooper's Hawk or Raven's nest nearby? Do you see signs of owl droppings, large white splatters on the ground below a tree? If so, look up, with your mouth closed, and there may be one sitting just above you. With a naturalist's keen eye, you may even find an owl pellet—an oblong, fuzzy, gray blob—that contains the regurgitated remains

of undigested bits from the owl's latest meals.

Below is the Great Horned Owl's mating timeline, which can happen from October to December:

- Vigorous hooting, mostly done by the male, with the highest hooting activity just before egg-laying.
- Male selects the nesting site and brings the female's attention to it by flying to the nest and stomping on it. They don't make their own nest—they use old nests as well as cavities in trees, deserted buildings, cliff ledges, and human-made platforms.
- One to four eggs are laid and incubated for 30–37 days, mostly by the female; she rarely leaves the nest. She will be hard to see because she hunkers down in the nest during the day.

The male hunts at night, bringing food to the female, as well as defending the nest from predators. During the day he naps close by in the same or neighboring tree. Great Horned Owls usually mate for life and have only one brood per year. During years of food scarcity, they may not mate at all.

To read more about Great Horned Owls check out [All About Birds](#).

Click [here](#) for a fun owl pellet game called Sherlock Bones that the kiddos can play.

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## **Who Sleeps in the Winter: Last Family Fun Hike of 2025 Naturalist Adora-Marie**

The weather was perfect and the desert looked and smelled wonderful after a gentle winter rain when 24 adults and children hiked on the last Family Fun Hike of 2025. The theme was “Animals Who Sleep in the Winter,” and we discussed **hibernation**, **brumation**, and **torpor**.

Ten sleeping animals were hidden along the wide part of Bear Canyon Trail; hikers had fun using a checklist to find them. We learned something interesting about each one, including insects that hibernate in the adult form (ladybugs) and the only bird in North America that hibernates (Common Poorwill). Another interesting fact was that black bears, snakes, and other animals may not sleep all winter in our warmer climate, even in the mountains. Many animals wake up briefly on warm winter days in the Sonoran Desert.

The next Family Fun Hike will probably be a nighttime hike in conjunction with the Astronomy Days held periodically in the Canyon. We will use blacklights and flashlights to see what we can find in the desert.

Future Family Fun Hikes will be posted on our calendar. [Click here](#) to get to the calendar.



**At the end of the hike, under the watchful arms of a legion of saguaros, the 14 child hikers were put into groups; two books about sleeping in the winter were read to them. Reading to this group is naturalist Holli.**

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### **A Large Saguaro Can Hold 1,000 Gallons of Water**

Thanks for naturalist Gloria (who leads the 10 a.m. Sunday saguaro walk, along with naturalists Ginny and Bev) for submitting a great PBS video about how a saguaro can hold so much water. It's just two-and-a-half minutes long.

[Click here](#) to watch it.

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### **It's Snowing**

For people who miss the snow (or Midwesterners and Northeasterners who like to look at it but don't want to deal with it anymore), below is a video of Sabino Canyon after a snowstorm on March 13, 2021. It was taken by naturalist Phil, who also took the photo and wrote the haiku.



Beautiful snowfall  
It's a rare desert event  
Snow in Sabino

[Click here to watch the short video.](#)



*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/>

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