

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Spring, the season of renewal is upon us. Flowers and trees are in their colorful best. The early migration is in full swing. Pollinators are busy doing Mother Nature's work of propagating so that flora is rejuvenated. The winter winged residents from Mexico, Central and South America are on the move. Many are building nests to raise young in Madera Canyon. Their songs echoing throughout and colorful plumage candy to our eyes. Others, passing through give us a brief but enjoyable visit. We've also made some notable progress fighting back the pandemic that turned our 2020 world upside down. Many have received both vaccinations, restrictions are beginning to relax, serious incidences and deaths are on a declining trajectory. I hope that you have and continue to endure this challenging time in good health.

VIS and MONDAY CLEAN UP

After a Covid spike setback earlier in the year, the VIS is open again. Summer hours are 8am-12pm on weekends (10am-2pm Winter). Anita Woodward had some large whiteboards printed with some of the information one would find in the Hiking Guide. This combined with PPEs and CDC (USFS) protocol has enabled our volunteers to work safely. Whether you are seasonal or year around, the VIS can always use help. Shifts are 2 hours. If you are interested in becoming involved, please send an email to info@friendsofmaderacanyon.org with the subject heading VIS.

BOARD MEETINGS

Friends in Deed has re-opened for meetings. The Board liked the idea of meeting at the Proctor Ramada, but understandably there are some times of the year that is just is not practical. Not wanting to give up entirely, it was decided that we would try a hybrid approach. We will

hold meetings the third Friday of each month at Friends in Deed in June, September, December, January and February. The other months will be at the Proctor Ramada (no meetings in July and August). You are always welcome to attend.

MUSIC (IN) NEAR THE CANYON

We had five successful concerts this Spring at Historic Canoa Ranch. Kudos and go out to the MIC Committee and volunteers that helped to make this so. There are a lot of moving parts that go on behind the scenes. I'd also like to recognize Pima County Parks & Recreation for working with us to provide a venue. You may have received a poll asking your preference for future concerts. The top vote getter was back at the Proctor Ramada followed by Historic Canoa Ranch and then some type of combination of the two. The MIC Committee will use this as a baseline to plan the next series. Thanks to all of you who came out and supported Music Near the Canyon. Interested in helping with future concerts? Reply to info@friendsofmaderacanyon.org with the subject heading MIC.

GRANTS and FUND RAISING

Christine Olsenius has been busy working on a grant offered by the AZ State Parks. It has an educational bend. She will collaborate with Doug Moore, Education Director to see where we can focus our appeal. Thank you all that participated in AZ Gives Day. Funds raised will go toward educational pursuits.

ON GOING PROJECTS

At the time of this writing, we did not know if the Baldy/Supertrail and Turnaround project would commence in time to be completed so as

not to intrude on sensitive nesting season for owls. If not, the project will be pushed back to August or September.

FIRE SEASON

Stage 1 fire alerts were being issued for several counties in Arizona. While Pima and Santa Cruz were not mentioned as of mid-May, it is only a matter of time. Be fire safe when visiting the outdoors.

So let's get to the Chatter...

Doug Moore, Education Director will give you an update on the highly acclaimed Virtual Learning Program and a Species Spotlight on snakes. John Titre will share some news from the USFS prospective and what our youth are doing to contribute to the well being of Madera Canyon. David Linn will tell us about the Adopt-A-Roadway program and some thoughts on Hiking during the pandemic.

Enjoy! To our seasonal residents that have left for milder climes and those that choose to remain here, have a wonderful summer, stay heathy and let's make it a real monsoon!

Rusty Lombardo, President

FoMC Education- Going forward

By Doug Moore, Education Director

The past 1 ½ years has been a challenge for the FoMC Education Program. With no school, no canyon activities and no in-person contact, our traditional programs & activities came to a complete halt. Luckily, the internet provided a way to forge ahead with virtual connections.

Modernizing/updating the website, then developing and posting nature learning content on the website has allowed the Ed Program to

blossom in a new direction. We now not only have virtual contact with our students and teachers, but also the general public. Anyone world-wide can access and use our nature/conservation materials- content is just a “click” away. The Virtual Learning Program is now a vital, active part of our education program. And more exciting on-line content is coming! We are also trying to maintain a relevant social media presence with the FoMC Facebook page.

As to our more traditional activities, vaccinations and current downward Covid trends seem to indicate that we’ll be able to carefully return to nature walks and outdoor activities this summer. Ongoing drought and the heat of May & June don’t make for ideal conditions right now, but the possibility of a good monsoon season- the forecast is favorable- create exciting possibilities for birding, nature hikes and bug nights in July and August..... Keep your fingers crossed (and get vaccinated)!

Returning to our traditional Fall 4th grade fieldtrip schedule in 2021 completely depends upon the schools, teachers and administrators. Students will likely return to in-class learning, but the possibility of field trips remain uncertain. I will maintain communication with our teachers and monitor the situation. The docent volunteers are ready & eager to return to work. If a school is able and willing to do a field trip, we will be ready.

That’s it for now..... Watch for summer activities later in FoMC e-mail blasts. Enjoy the canyon! Stay safe- be heat smart and keep hydrated!

Madera Canyon Species Spotlight: Snakes

By Doug Moore, Education Director

Even in late spring, Arizona temperatures often vary from day to day. Some days are quite warm, others more temperate and cool. It can be a bit of a rollercoaster ride- especially up on the mountain. And spring nights remain relatively cool, a chilly 50's at best. But as April gives way to May, cooler days become rare and overall warming announces the coming of summer heat to the canyon. Warm days and nights mean that many canyon animals, particularly reptiles, will be more active. It will be a good time to watch for snakes.

Madera Canyon, with bajada and foothills below, supports an impressive species list of snakes. Some 27 species reside in the many habitats and plant communities between the Santa Cruz Valley and peaks of the Santa Ritas, including seven venomous rattlesnake species. They vary widely in size, coloration and life habits. Local snakes range from small, worm-like Smith's Black-headed Snake that maxes out at 12" to large, muscular Sonoran Gophersnake that can top 6+ feet in length. Many species, such as the rattlesnakes, Glossy Snake and Nightsnake, sport cryptic hues of earth tones and blotches that blend with their surroundings. In contrast, other species like Knobloch's Mountain Kingsnake, Long-nosed Snake and venomous Sonoran Coralsnake are brightly colored and strikingly marked.

Sonoran Gophersnakes are versatile generalists found in every biotic community in the Santa Ritas from desert to mountain. They are usually out during the day, but become nocturnal during hot weather. Primarily a rodent predator, this non-poisonous constrictor also eats lizards, other snakes, birds and raids nests for eggs. Twin-spotted Rattlesnakes, one of three small montane rattlesnake species found in Madera Canyon, are specialists restricted mainly to rocky talus piles on the highest slopes of the canyon. Primarily out during the day, these venomous pit vipers chiefly eat lizards, but will also take small

mammals and birds. The other two montane rattlesnakes in the canyon are Banded Rock Rattlesnake and Arizona Ridge-nosed Rattlesnake.

Species, like Coachwhip, Sonoran Whipsnake and Eastern Patch-nosed Snake are diurnal, active and feeding during the day. Long-nosed Snake, Sonoran Lyresnake, Nightsnake and Sonoran Coralsnake are local serpents that are primarily nocturnal. Most rattlesnakes, Common Kingsnake and other species take advantage of seasonal temperatures- diurnal during the mild temperatures of spring and fall, then becoming nocturnal as summer temperatures soar. Moderate temperatures & humidity following monsoon rainfall often stimulates activity levels.

The most commonly encountered snake in Madera Canyon is Black-tailed Rattlesnake. It pays to stay alert, as they can be on any trail from Proctor well up into the Mt. Wrightson Wilderness. Other more commonly seen canyon snakes are Knobloch's Mountain Kingsnake and Sonoran Whipsnake.

Few animals elicit such strong emotional responses from humans as snakes do. But- love 'em, hate 'em or terrified of 'em- it is extremely important for everyone to realize that snakes are integral to the environment, in need of protection and preservation! Observe, but leave them be. Do not kill or collect them! Snakes are amazing examples of evolutionary design and adaptation. Many species, like Knobloch's Mountain Kingsnake and Green Ratsnake, are becoming rare in the wild. Captive-bred snakes are available for hobbyists that want to keep them. Other than scientific research, there is no reason to capture and keep a wild snake!

In the coming warmer days, a snake crossing the road up to Madera Canyon is often your best chance to see a wild one. Coachwhips are regularly seen crossing between Continental School & Box Canyon Rd.- often out even in surprisingly hot weather. Long, graceful snakes, they

can be solid or partially black, pinkish red, tan or rusty. Western Patch-nosed Snakes often cross around the Florida Canyon bridges up towards Proctor. Up to three feet, they are swift, slim snakes, tan with two brown stripes down the body. Cool afternoons and evenings after a rain and humid monsoon nights are active periods- time to really watch for wildlife on the road! Mojave and Western Diamond-backed rattlesnakes can be seen on the same stretch where Coachwhips prowl during the day.

Wildlife- especially snakes, does not fare well on roads with high-speed vehicles. Other animals are out there too, so drive reasonably, stay aware and keep a sharp look-out. It can be well worth your time and effort. Live snakes are much more interesting to observe than flat, dead ones!!

Snakes of the Santa Cruz Valley up into Mt. Wrightson Wilderness:

Western Threadsnake	Mexican Gartersnake (historically)
Sonoran Coralsnake	Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake
Smith's Black-headed Snake	Mohave Rattlesnake
Yaqui Black-headed Snake	Black-tailed Rattlesnake
Ring-necked Snake	Tiger Rattlesnake
Nightsnake	Twin-spotted Rattlesnake
Sonoran Lyresnake	Banded Rock Rattlesnake
Sonoran Gophersnake	Arizona Ridge-nosed Rattlesnake
Glossy Snake	Green Ratsnake
Eastern Patch-nosed Snake	Sonoran Whipsnake
Western Patch-nosed Snake	Coachwhip
Long-nosed Snake	Common Kingsnake
Checkered Gartersnake	Knobloch's Mountain Kingsnake
Black-necked Garte	

Madera Canyon Snakes
* possible to see on Proctor Loop



Western Lyresnake *



Gophersnake *



Sonoran Whipsnake *



Black-tailed Rattlesnake *



Green Ratsnake *



Sonoran Mountain Kingsnake



Ring-necked Snake *



Rock Rattlesnake



Twin-Spotted Rattlesnake



Ridge-nosed Rattlesnake

Vehicle Congestion, Monitoring Trail Use and Interpretive Signs

By John Titre, Recreation Program Manager USFS

Parking continues to be an issue in Madera Canyon. Proctor is often full on weekends along with the parking at the top of the Canyon as shown here on a Saturday morning. A meeting with Coronado engineers was held to consider expanding parking near the Proctor Parking Lot. This location could also be used to support a shuttle system thereby reducing traffic further. A meeting was held with a shuttle provider to pilot test such a program on weekends possibly this summer.



A Boy Scout Eagle Project installed trail monitors on Old Baldy and Super Trails to count hikers. The Scout and his sister can be seen here setting up a track monthly those numbers Canyon collected Canyon.



monitor. The intent is to hiking use and compare with vehicle use in the by the Friends of Madera

Two interpretive next coming Parking pollinator explain the

signs will be installed in the months for the Proctor garden. The idea is to importance of these plants

for bees and butterflies and why their numbers are decreasing. It should also encourage others to grow pollinator plants where possible.

The second Proctor Loop been a huge the Green Valley small children, one of the five beauty and



interpretive sign will go on the Accessible Trail. This trail has success and is popular with community, families with and anyone who likes to sit on benches and take in the sounds of nature.

Adopt-A-Roadway Program Volunteer Trash Pick-Up

By David Linn, Vice President

Would you be interested in the Pima County Adopt-A-Roadway program to “own” a two mile section of a nearby roadway to Madera Canyon (E Whitehouse/Madera Canyon Road)? Pima County Department of Transportation's (PCDOT) Adopt-a-Roadway Program (AAR) was established in 1992. The PCDOT program is designed to help beautify Pima County by facilitating trash removal on arterial and collector roadways. Volunteer groups participating in the program save the taxpayers of Pima County approximately \$250 per mile cleaned, which translates into thousands of dollars saved. By adopting a roadway, civic and other nonprofit organizations help to generate pride in their community and create economic benefits to all citizens of Pima County.

Through the Adopt-a-Roadway Program, nonprofit organizations make a two-year commitment to pick up litter at least twice a year along a two-mile stretch of county roadway. The areas of responsibility are marked with two AAR signs bearing the organization's name.

Organization's Responsibilities

Organizations interested in the Adopt-a-Roadway Program may become involved by contacting the AAR Coordinator at the Pima County Department of Transportation at **(520) 724-6410** or [submit a request online](#). A packet of materials will be mailed to each interested party. Included in the packet is a list of available roads, a Right-of-Way Use Permit Application, a Special Event Waiver Form, and the program policies and procedures.

Pima County Department of Transportation's Responsibilities

- Approve roadway selection based on traffic volumes, speeds and shoulder widths.
- Provide safety training and safety rules and regulations to organization's group supervisor for distribution to program participants.
- Supply safety vests and trash bags for use by volunteer organizations.
- Remove filled trash bags from roadside and dispose of properly.
- Erect signs identifying the name of volunteer organization.
- Pima County reserves the right to approve, disapprove and/or edit names or acronyms on the signs.

Safety Rules/Regulations

Safety of the volunteers is the number one priority of the Adopt-a-Roadway Program. All volunteers must receive proper safety training prior to arriving at the job site to perform any clean-up activities. The following guidelines are designed to help ensure the safety of each volunteer and must be adhered to at all times.

- All participants must be at least 14 years of age. For every 10 teenagers participating, there must be one adult supervisor at least 21 years of age.

- Clean-up activities must be scheduled through the AAR Coordinator and must be performed only in daylight hours and during good weather conditions.
- Supervisors of both adult and youth groups should be assigned prior to departing for the work site.
- Participants should assemble away from the designated work site and carpool to reduce the number of cars at the litter pick-up site. Vehicles must be parked at least four feet away from the roadway.
- Large groups of 15 or more should be divided into two groups, with one group on each side of the roadway. Individuals must remain with the group to which they are assigned.
- Wear appropriate attire, including boots or hard-soled shoes (no sandals), comfortable clothes, gloves and hats.
- Safety vests must be worn by all participants at all times during the litter pick-up project.
- Assure that first-aid kits are available, and it is recommended that at least one person is experienced in administering first aid and CPR and that transportation is available to the nearest medical facility.
- Work as a group facing oncoming traffic at all times.
- Assure that water is available and in sufficient quantity to meet your group's needs.
- Alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited. Anyone under the influence of alcohol or narcotics shall be asked to leave the work site.
- Do not cross the roadway unnecessarily. Cross only at the designated locations that your supervisor has determined prior to starting work.
- Do not pick up litter in the medians or on any traveled portion of the roadway.
- Utility installations, culverts and drainage structures are off limits. Do not remove litter from these areas.

- Use caution when you encounter the following: cactus, animals, steep slopes, sharp rocks, insects, barbed wire, traffic, and other unusual circumstances.
- Do not pick up hazardous materials such as car batteries, animal carcasses, discarded chemical containers, or any object that appears questionable. Report these materials to your supervisor.
- Do not distract motorists with horseplay or abrupt, erratic movements. Horseplay of any kind is strictly forbidden. The roadways are potentially very dangerous.
- Avoid any roadway construction or maintenance projects. Pima County personnel will clean up these areas.
- When lifting objects use correct lifting techniques, keeping your back as straight as possible. Keep the object you are trying to lift close to your body and let your legs do not attempt to lift heavy objects that two of you cannot reasonably lift.

One of our partners, the GVR Hiking Club has adopted part of this route. They report that it would require walking about 1 mile of roadway and requires about 3 hours of volunteer time for each of the two clean up cycles. You would have the option of volunteering for 1 or both pick ups and would not have to be a year around resident. I suspect we would begin this program in late summer or early fall.

If you are interested, reply to info@friendsofmaderacanyon.org with the subject heading Adopt-A-Roadway.

Madera Canyon Circa 2020: A Hikers Prospective

By David Linn, Vice President

With the Covid-19 pandemic starting to lift this hiker would like to pay tribute to the bounty of the Canyon and to her stewards, the Forest Service and the dozens of willing volunteers.

Madera Canyon and the Santa Rita Mountains were a rich resource in southeastern Arizona for those of us floundering in the social isolation during the darkest days of the pandemic. Many felt this way; auto counts kept by the Friends of Madera show that Canyon usage in 2020 was up over 10,000 vehicles from 2019 and in March when the country shutdown, usage was up 300 percent.

This was highly obvious on the hiking trails around the Canyon. The Green Valley Hiking club stopped sanctioned group hikes from March to September, but this did not stop individual and friend groups from getting on the trails. We hiked a lot! And so did others. Later in the summer during and after the massive Santa Catalina Bighorn fire the Santa Rita's really filled up with hikers. The trailheads were full of cars by 7 am. Everyone was as crazy to get outside and hike as we were. Madera Canyon and the Santa Rita's were the only game in town and lived up to it. We found new places to explore, old mines, small springs and hidden peaks that I had never visited. My appreciation for the sheer beauty of this place with its outstanding flora and fauna grew and continues unabated. Now, as things look brighter and safer in this world, I bow my head and give thanks for this Canyon and what it has given me.

MEET SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT – MATTHEW MAYER

I am Matthew Mayer, a Senior at Walden Grove High School. Born and raised here in Tucson, as the oldest of three children. I have been interested in the natural world for as long as I remember. Madera Canyon played a big part in that, I grew up going there often with my grandparents and enjoyed every moment. With this Scholarship I will pursue a career in Natural Resources Management so I can keep doing what I love and hopefully preserve it for future generations so that they can feel the same sense of joy and wonder I feel whenever I am in the natural world.



I would never have made it this far without all the love and support from my family and mentors over the years. From UA Sky School to the KEYS Program and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Hopefully, I will be able to meet all of you and learn from you guys as well. The Canyon will always hold a special place in my heart and I hope to be able to return there often.

Congratulations to Matthew. Well deserved!

Thanks to the Scholarship Committee and Board members for their dedication in selecting Matthew among several candidates. Kudos to departing chair Ellen West and Carolyn Fowler. You have done so much over the years. Welcome Suzanne Stiles Burke – Committee Chair.

