



Shape the Future

Canyon Chatter

Friends of Madera Canyon

March 2025



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On the cover.

The photo series on the cover of this month's Chatter are courtesy of Ed Freedman. They are significant for a couple of reasons. The Pyrrhuloxia or Desert Cardinal is for the most part an omnivorous bird. They eat seeds, flowers, fruits, and insects. I even found a report of them eating part of a decomposing mouse, but I have yet to find lizards on the menu. Thus, the photos confirm a lizard in the diet of the bird. The lizard is a Schott's Tree Lizard, *Urosaurus ornatus schottii*, a common polymorphic species. The most common morph that I (JCM) see in and around Madera Canyon are the blue morphs. However, the one in the photo is an orange morph. Its mouth is open, and it has a red upper jaw in the oral cavity. It is unclear if this is from bleeding or from oral pigment. If its blood it may have resulted from damage from cactus spines. The photographer's thanks go to Henne Quisser for photography assistance and David Hawks for lizard identification.

How to Join Friends of Madera Canyon

Below are links to join as a new member, renew a membership or make a donation. The links will take you to a secure server to use a credit card or an automated payment. Do you have any questions? Let us know. If you prefer to help by writing a check, please make your check payable to Friends of Madera Canyon - mail to:

FOMC
PO Box 1203,
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Links

[A NEW MEMBERSHIP - RENEW A MEMBERSHIP](#)
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From the President

Stewardship

Implicit in our work as Friends of Madera Canyon is the idea of being good stewards, of the infrastructure in the Canyon and of the land itself. We are charged with accepting what past members of the Friends have achieved, building on that foundation, and passing along to those who will come after the responsibility of stewardship in their time.

What follows are a few examples of ways in which the Friends in 2025 endeavor to meet that ongoing obligation through the many and varied ways in which we participate.

Troop 247: Continuing the Habit of Helping

Below is a photograph of the pillars on the path to the Proctor Ramada. As you recall, the wood for two of the pillars was rotting. Because of the work of the scouts of Troop 247 and their leaders, the rotted wood has been replaced and a part of the Canyon infrastructure improved. Scoutmaster Terrence Donnelly is a member of the FOMC Board of Directors.

If you have seen the tiles on the pillars recently, you know that a few are cracked. Another FOMC volunteer is looking into ways to repair the tiles without having to remove them from the pillars.

The pillars and tiles are examples of work done by past Friends' groups to provide ways of educating the general public—and the elementary school aged youngsters hosted by Naturalist Doug Moore and his crew of docents—about the natural wonders that can be seen in Madera Canyon.

It is certain that Troop 247 and Donnelly will continue to find ways to model the habit of helping to their peers and to the rest of us.

Restoration as Stewardship

Invasive Species: At the Annual Meeting in January, John Scheuring shared with us the challenge of combatting invasive species in the Canyon. One interesting takeaway: many of the troublesome grasses were introduced by folks making their best efforts to address some problem that merited new ideas about ways to help Nature. He reminded us that the effort members of FOMC made last fall to impact a small area of Yellow BlueStem grass needed to be followed by ongoing and recurring work to eliminate the immediate problem and then remain vigilant less it recur.

So, the Friends are undertaking the challenge of spraying on a schedule to be developed in collaboration with the Forest Service and ensuring that, within the Friends' ranks, we have individuals trained in that work.

Trail Restoration: Madera Canyon is lined with trails, many of them remnants of old trails created by miners, indigenous people, and hikers in the past. Maintaining the trails in the Canyon—and those in the Wrightson Wilderness above—is an ongoing challenge, given the impact of weather and usage. Forest Service personnel have observed that inconsistent attention to some trails over the years, due in part to the variable levels of staff available over time, has cre-

ated a trail system needing constant restoration and repair work to ensure a positive hiking experience for those hiking the trails.

FOMC personnel have stepped in to help with both the “easy” trails around the picnic areas to the more challenging ones leading into the Wilderness areas (which has its own crew of workers, featured in a recent Green Valley News story). Activities range from “brushing” to moving rocks and re-shaping trends.



Financial Support as Stewardship

The Importance of Annual Gifts: The largest income category (36%) comes from gifts made by individual donors. In this manner, we are not so different from scores of other non-profits organizations doing worthwhile work in the world whose capacity to do the work is dependent upon the generosity of people who value that work.

There are no funds coming from any level of government. But we are proud to be part of a public-private collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service to preserve, conserve, and restore the Canyon.

Ways to Give Annually: Every year, you and I pay membership dues. Those dues comprise 16% of income to the Friends. Some members are able to add amounts—gifts—to their dues, ranging from \$25 to \$2000. Others have directed their Required Minimum Distribution income to the Friends. However one can give and however much, all such support is received with gratitude and a commitment to ensure that the income the Friends receive is used wisely and specifically to achieve the activities that support the Mission.

Planned Gifts: If you could live forever, would you continue to support the work of the Friends of Madera Canyon to preserve, conserve, and restore the Canyon? If you answer is yes, a planned gift might interest you. All of us have been advised to write a Will so that those who come after us can act in ac-

cordance with our wishes. You and I hike the Nature Trail and support the awarding of a scholarship each year, both of which bear the names of Bud and Mary Gode, people who loved the Canyon and chose to leave a legacy.

Each of us has the option of following their lead. Inevitably, there are many factors that go into what we want to have happen to our estates when we have passed away. If giving to the Friends of Madera Canyon is one of your considerations, we would be happy to talk with you.

To repeat what I wrote above: We are charged with accepting what past members of the Friends have achieved, building on that foundation, and passing along to those who will come after the responsibility of stewardship in their time.

Thank you for your help in our stewardship endeavors.

Dan White



Scout Troop 247 put the finishing touches on the identification boards in Proctor Parking Lot. Photos courtesy of Scout Troop 247.

Music in the Canyon

Music in the Canyon

Proctor Ramada at Madera Canyon

This year Music in the Canyon 2025 will once again be held in the Canyon. The concerts will be held at the Proctor Ramada, which is located in the first turn off of the entrance to the canyon. There will be limited seating in this venue so tickets will sell out quickly.

Tickets go on sale March 5 and can be purchased by [clicking here](#). The concert tickets will be \$35 and the concert times will be 3:00 to 4 30 p.m. March 30, April 6, 13, and 27. All sales are final and tickets will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

American West, highlighted by the roots and americana of Tucson, and the grit and beauty of the Sonoran Desert. Soulful and haunting harmonies along with arrangements which captivate the mind and tug at the heart.



March 30th

CS&M, an acoustic folk rock band in the style of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young



April 6

Khris Dodge Entertainment presents Erin Anderson. She has frequently entertained in musicals and at the Gaslight Theatre.



April 13

Liz and Pete A well-known duo and cultural icon of the Tucson musical scene. They will present an array of original music as well as arrangements from Americana genre.



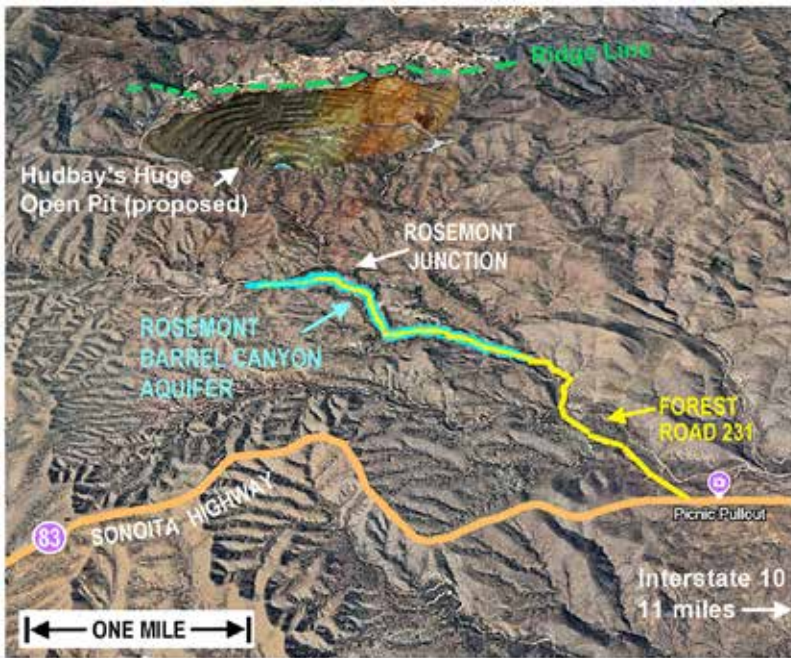
April 27

The Mountain Saddle Band A cowboy band echoing the bygone days of cowboy music and country sounds.

→ [Frequently Asked Questions \(PDF\)](#)

An Invitation to help with a BioBlitz in the northern Santa Rita Mountains

On the morning of March 23, Dave DeGroot and dozens of vol-



ROSEMONT BARREL CANYON AQUIFER, BIOBLITZ SITE

The location of the Barrel Canyon Bioblitz.



A drone shot of the trees along the Barrel Canyon aquifer. Sierra Club Borderlands.



A nocturnal, trail camera photo of a Couse Deer.

unteers will walk among massive trees above an ancient aquifer in the Rosemont Valley's Barrel Canyon. They're calling their endeavor a "BioBlitz." The goal will be cataloging hundreds of plants and animals in this vibrant ecosystem.

Barrel Canyon is still open to the public, although it lies directly below Hudbay's planned Rosemont Pit, which when complete would be a hole much larger than Meteor Crater in northern Arizona. Toxic chemicals are expected to drift downward from the pit into Barrel Canyon, and water will be pumped up to the mine operations from the canyon's aquifer. An industrial-strength pump is installed in Hudbay's Rosemont Junction property, which sits squarely atop the aquifer.

DeGroot has been a docent with Friends of Madera Canyon for many years, and has been an avid hiker throughout the Santa Rita Mountains. He and Andrea Hoerr of Great old Broads for Wilderness have brought together a half dozen environmental organizations in their March 23 BioBlitz effort.



“An easy-to-use cell phone photo app called iNaturalist will be our means of identifying species and collecting observations in an online folder,” DeGroot says. “This app has been used in successful plant and animal studies in Tucson and all over the world.

“A bioblitz like this,” he continues, “unites the efforts of dozens of amateur observers. It can actually be a lot of fun. There’s the potential of discovering a threatened/endangered species. Plus, iNaturalist findings are often used by researchers and – in this case - organizations that may be concerned about the huge new mine out there.”

BioBlitz information and a registration form can be found at the Living Desert Alliance website under “Events.” You can also click the following link: <https://livingdesertalliance.com/santa-rita-mtns-bioblitz>



A Gray Hawk (aka Mexican Goshawk) and a Turkey Vulture - both birds photographed in Barrel Canyon by Dave DeGroot.

The Birding Report

Bob Pitcher

A Midwinter's Walk

January 22: I need a Canyon fix. I was up two weeks ago, to a Madera in high winds, temperature falling quickly through 40, and snowflakes in the air, blown down from the storm up above. The only birds were at the Santa Rita Lodge feeders. There had been no other watchers there, and I hadn't stayed long.

Today is more like winter in Southeast Arizona: sunny, bright, and 52 at Proctor Road when I park there at 9:10. True, there's been no rain in a very long time now, but I have hopes of seeing mountain birds this morning.

What's this, though: four semitrailer flatbeds lined up near the Visitor Information Station at Proctor? It's the Great Restroom Installation Day, long-promised by the Forest Service – new restrooms for Proctor and both the Whitehouse and Madera Canyon Picnic Areas. Pleased to see that, but will it scare off the birds?¹

Hasn't so far – around the parking lot are a pair of Canyon Towhees, a Mockingbird, and a few White-crowned Sparrows. As I start down the trail, a Gila Woodpecker calls, a distant Raven grunts. No water in the creek at the crossing, and all the leaves are off the sycamores but a few hangers-on, now brown and brittle-looking. But there's still plenty of fruit on the hackberry trees. Three Hermit Thrushes lurk there in the shadows, and there's an active Ruby-crowned Kinglet in the honeysuckle bushes, the first of half a dozen I see on the trail.

I walk up the rise along Proctor Road itself, partly for the views off to the west and back to the east ridge of the Canyon, partly to see what sparrows may be up in the brush here. I've often seen a White-throated Sparrow here in the winter; it's the common winter sparrow farther east but rare here. None this year, but with the White-crowns, there's a pert Lincoln's Sparrow, looking like he'd rather be in deeper cover.

Back on the walking trail, I'm soon under the big oaks. They still have their leaves for the most part, which will stay on them until new spring growth pushes them off their tree. While still green, the oaks do look a little dry and dusty. Going along the trail, about all that's green are the oaks and the evergreen junipers, apart from the occasional cane cholla and yucca. Hardly any birds along here, apart from a small flock of Dark-eyed Juncos, one of them the Oregon subspecies. And the underlying hum of insects that one hears in the Canyon from Spring through Fall is also missing now.

¹ As you'll see, the birds seemed oblivious to all that activity. The Madera restroom had been put in by the time I left the Canyon, and Proctor was the afternoon job. The Whitehouse installation would have to wait, I was told.



Hermit Thrush, *Catharus guttatus*. Public domain photograph by National Parks Administration, nature conservation, tourism, free to use, no copyright restrictions image.



The Yellow-rumped Warbler. This image is from Pixabay and was published prior to July 2017 under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain .

At the first bridge, though, here's a mixed flock of little birds, searching through the oak leaves and the bare twigs of sycamore for what bugs they can find: three or four Bridled Titmice, a pair of White-breasted Nuthatches, a noisy Ladder-backed Woodpecker, another Kinglet or two -- one a male with his ruby crown showing -- and the prize: a bright, handsome male Townsend's Warbler.

I watch these a while, and then take the unpaved spur trail up the slope to the bridge-staircase at the foot of the Whitehouse section of the trail. At the very top of a leafless tree right over the bridge are four House Finches and a Yellow-rumped Warbler, our commonest winter warbler. Just upstream from the bridge there's still water in the creek bed, with a little current running through it, at least as much water as there had been a month before.

And here there is some green -- grass, I think at first. But it's not: these are horsetails (*Equisetum*), with thinner stems than I've ever seen, and flourishing in the dampness.

I linger here to see if birds will come to bathe and drink, but they don't. A couple of full-grown does do come for a drink. At first they don't see me, and when I say hello, they shrug and go back to slurping, as shy as all the Canyon deer are.

Back down the spur trail to the paved western section, the more open part of the walk. The mixed flock has moved over here, and I now find a pair of Bewick's Wrens with them, my first of the year. A little farther along, there are a pair or three of Lesser Goldfinches, bright in the sun. And flying out of the big round juniper to the left of the path, and now perched in a bare soapberry sapling in a finch -- and not a House Finch, but the more delicately marked female Cassin's Finch, a rarity in the Canyon.²

Much pleased, I continue back toward the Proctor Road crossing, seeing two bright yellow-faced Verdins along the way, and a group of Mexican Jays, the Canyon mascots. Now there are *four* Hermit Thrushes under the hackberries and, last bird of the walk and good luck for the new year: a bright male Northern (Arizona) Cardinal!



Smooth Horsetails, *Equisetum laevigatum*. Photo from near Pool Creek in Dinosaur National Monument, 40.498,-109.013, Moffat County, Colorado, 18 Jun 2008.

² So unusual, in fact, that ebird won't allow the sighting -- but, just the same....

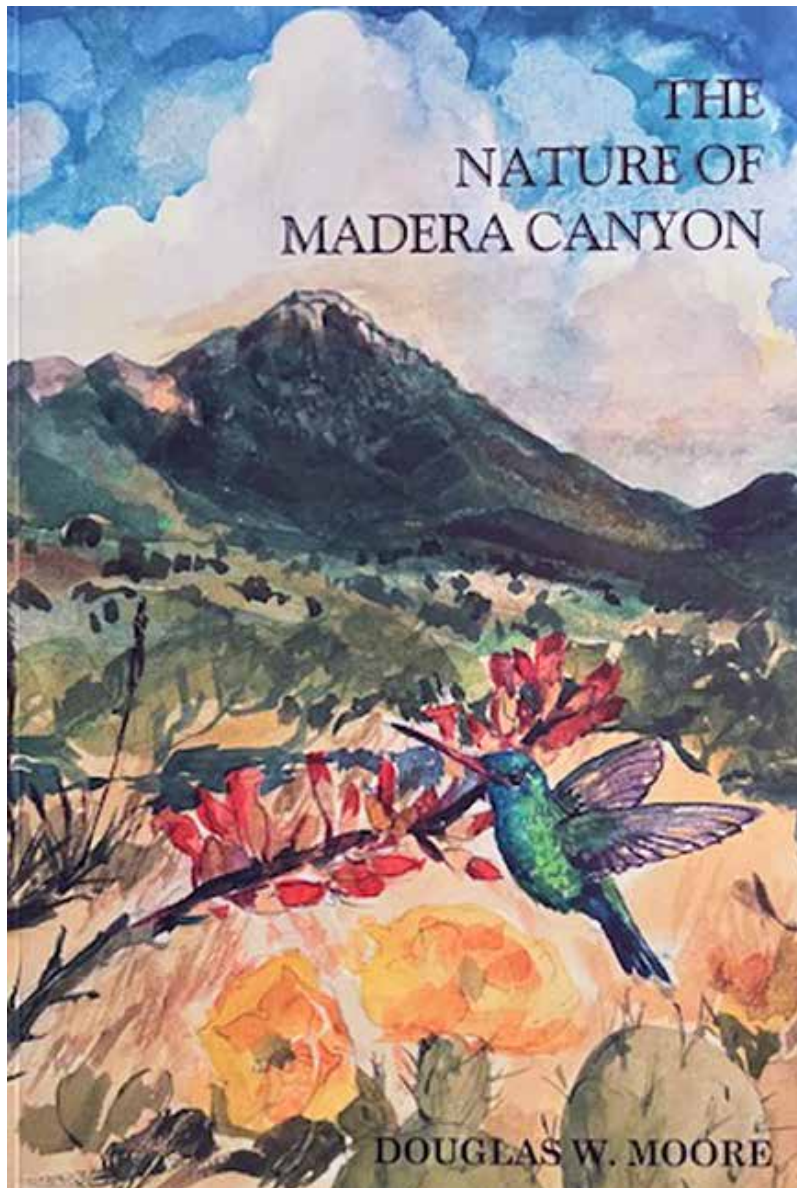
Books

BOOK REVIEW: THE NATURE OF MADERA CANYON By Douglas W. Moore. Reviewed by Bob Pitcher.

This attractive volume by the long-time Education Director of the Friends of Madera Canyon is the only full-length treatment of all aspects of the Canyon's ecosystem. Starting with the formation of the Sky Islands and the geology of the Santa Rita Mountain range, of which Madera Canyon is a part, Moore goes on to treat in separate chapters Madera's life zones, its plants, animals, and the manner in which they all fit into the Web of Life. The ways human beings have affected the Canyon are also included, in both prehistoric times and more recently.

Nature is fully illustrated, with both photographs, many in color, and black-and-white drawings by the author himself, who's certified in natural-science illustration. The text is supplemented by appendices listing Madera Canyon's minerals, plants, mammals, birds, and reptiles and amphibians.

Anyone with an acquaintance with Madera Canyon soon comes to love the place. Deeper knowledge of the Canyon's nature only deepens one's affection.



The *Nature of Madera Canyon* was published in 1999, but is by no means out of date, and remains the only work of its kind. *Profits from the sale of the book go to the Friends to help fund our programs of Canyon preservation and conservation.*

The Nature of Madera Canyon is available for \$20.00 at the Santa Rita Lodge in the Canyon or directly from the Friends.



The Editor's Desk

Declining Wildlife, Hunting with Dogs, and Social Traditions – a suggestion

The World Wildlife Fund ([WWF, 2024](#)) reported on dwindling wildlife by examining population trends of 5,495 mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles, and amphibian species. The WWF report found a 73% drop in animal populations between 1970 and 2020.

Habitat loss and invasive species are the primary drivers of declining wildlife. As populations crash other causes of wildlife mortality become more important. Hunting is one of them.

Using dogs to hunt has become a contentious topic, dividing anti-hunters from the hunters who use dogs to pursue a sport with a long tradition. When hunting, one or more dogs may be used to track wounded wildlife over challenging terrain or to flush animals like deer or rabbits from dense cover. As a result, hunters can frequently fulfill their ethical duty to do all in their power to recover the game by using dogs.

Dogs, have traditionally been used for hunting wild game in North America and smaller and larger species are not excluded. Without dogs, sportsmen's success in the field would be severely limited for many types of hunting. Game recovery rates are also accelerated by using dogs to track the wounded prey.

Some anti-hunting activists have been enraged by this hunting method and have attempted to outlaw it several times. Numerous allegations of animal abuse, damage to cattle, crops, and property, as well as frequent trespassing by hunters, are among their complaints. To defend themselves against the accusations of the anti-hunting society, hunters must use dogs responsibly and morally.

This controversy appeared in the [Arizona Daily Republic](#) in early December 2024. Hunters from all over the region converged on north Phoenix to express their opinions at an Arizona Game and Fish Commission meeting.

The Center for Biological Diversity had submitted a petition that questioned the ethics of sport hunting with dogs wearing GPS collars and its impact on endangered jaguars, ocelots, and Mexican gray wolves.

The petition was not an official agenda item, but more than 60 hunters signed in to discuss it, filling the hours set aside for public comment with personal stories of hunting with their beloved dogs. They spoke about the practice's role in wildlife population management and their fears that a ban would be a step toward an outright prohibition on hunting.

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Hunters urged commission members to weigh conservation science against the wildlife advocates' perception as emotive appeals, and some even took their kids to the stage to repeat prepared remarks about the custom of hunting with hounds.

Perhaps one of the most famous hunters was Jim Corbett. Corbett grew up in the hill country of northern India in the late 19th century and was best known for hunting tigers. He was given a rifle at the age of eight and killed a leopard at age 10. Corbett shot his first man-eating tiger in 1907 and continued to hunt and kill such animals over the next four decades. Some of those years he hunted big cats with his dog, Robin. Animals such as the Champawat Tiger, the Leopard of Rudraprayag, and the Panar Leopard, had killed hundreds of human victims before their deaths at Corbett's hands. Corbett wrote five books about India with ***Man-Eaters of Kumaon***, becoming an international best-seller. Corbett became upset with the deforestation of India and the over-hunting of wildlife. He promoted wildlife photography as an alternative

to trophy hunting. He played a significant role in creating India's first wildlife reserve in 1934; it was renamed Jim Corbett National Park after his death in 1955. The Indochinese tiger subspecies received the scientific name *Panthera tigris corbetti* in his honor.

Carpet Sahib: A Life of Jim Corbett (1986) by Martin Booth became Corbett's definitive biography. Corbett's life is a model for individuals who want to be big game hunters today. The skills of modern hunters (and fishermen) can be valuable to wildlife conservation. Photographing animals (using trail cameras) can be useful, but removing invasive species is even more helpful. Hunting invasive species and removing them from their habitat is an excellent use of hunting skills. In many instances, invasive species are good to eat, and creating a demand for them in restaurants and grocery stores is a way to reduce their populations and make them less of a danger to the environment.

Invasive deer in the USA are abundant and include Sika Deer, Axis Deer, Fallow Deer, and Sambar Deer. Feral swine are a challenge to hunt and taste as good or better than domesticated pigs. Invasive birds include Ring-neck Pheasants, Red Junglefowl, Domestic Guinea fowl, Spotted Doves, Graylag x Swan Goose hybrids, Domestic Ducks, and Indian Peafowl. In the western states bullfrogs are aliens and their populations are out of control - but their legs are delicious.

References. [WWF \(2024\) Living Planet Report 2024 – A System in Peril. WWF, Gland, Switzerland.](#)

The Last Page



The Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) is not present in Madera Canyon or the immediate surroundings of the canyon. However it can be seen on the nearby Empire Ranch where the photo above was taken. The pronghorn is an even-toed, hoofed mammal indigenous to interior western and central North America. Though not an antelope, it is known colloquially in North America as the American antelope, prong buck, pronghorn antelope and prairie antelope because it closely resembles the antelopes of the Old World and fills a similar ecological niche due to parallel evolution. It is the only surviving member of the family Antilocapridae.

Send comments, articles, & announcements to:
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