

Arizona Coach Talker

Newsletter of the Arizona Guides Association

Volume 39, Issue 5

June ~ 2026

~ Monsoons are Coming.... ~

Perhaps, we should say "Are the monsoons coming?" According to climatologists, Arizona is expected to have a wet monsoon season this summer. Monsoons always provide some respite from our ranking as the hottest place in the U.S. So, fingers crossed! And, remember that you can always head to the high country to cool off even for just a day. Explore one of our six National Forests, such as the higher elevations (up to 7,400 feet) of the Tonto National Forest closest to the Valley.

~ Arizona's National Forests ~

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest: Located in east-central Arizona, this forest spans over 2 million acres and features the White Mountains and Mogollon Rim, with elevations ranging from 3,500 to over 11,000 feet. It is noted for having more rivers and streams than any other southwestern forest.

Coconino National Forest: The third largest at 1.85 million acres, it surrounds the Mogollon Rim and includes major landmarks like the San Francisco Peaks (home to Arizona Snowbowl), Oak Creek Canyon, and the red rocks of Sedona.

Coronado National Forest: Comprising 1.78 million acres across twelve separated mountain ranges in southeast Arizona, these "sky islands" rise sharply from the desert and include the Santa Catalina and Chiricahua Mountains.

Kaibab National Forest: Totaling over 1.5 million acres in north Arizona, it is divided into three units, including the Kaibab Plateau on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon and areas surrounding the city of Williams.

Prescott National Forest: Covering a large area of central Arizona near Prescott and Camp Verde, it features eight wilderness areas, including the accessible Granite Mountain Wilderness, and ranges from desert chaparral to ponderosa pine forests.

Tonto National Forest: The largest and most varied forest in the state, it stretches from the cactus-covered Sonoran Desert near Phoenix (1,400 feet) to pine-clad mountains along the Mogollon Rim (7,400 feet), containing artificial lakes like Theodore Roosevelt Lake.

Hi Everyone!

Congratulations on wrapping up another incredible season. Your hard work and dedication has been a force for Arizona and our AGA. It has been a pleasure working beside such a professional group of people, as always.

Now it's time to enjoy a well-earned break and recharge. Hopefully, I will see some of you at our annual wrap-up and election meeting on May 31st. Our board and committees have been working hard all year and are looking forward to sharing with you some of our ideas for the coming year.

Have a great summer.

*Sincerely,
Diane Schaeffler
President, AGA*

In case you missed it in the news.....

A Small Quake follows hundreds in Southern Arizona. A magnitude 2.5 earthquake struck near Why, Arizona, earlier this month, rattling a small rural community in Pima County near the western border of the Tohono O'odham Nation. According to the USGS, the quake hit around 3:30 p.m. with no damage or injuries reported, not unusual at that magnitude, when shaking is often felt by those close to the epicenter but missed entirely by others.

The tremor comes on the heels of a more significant stretch of seismic activity in the broader region. A weeklong swarm of nearly 300 earthquakes struck the Arizona-California border earlier this month, centered near Brawley, California, with the largest reaching magnitude 4.7. Geologists say the swarms are driven by fluid movement through a hot, tectonically active crust in the Imperial Valley—an area influenced by the Imperial Fault and the San Andreas fault system—and do not necessarily signal a larger quake is imminent.

Arizona as a whole still sees hundreds of earthquakes annually due to several active faults across the state, even as California, Nevada, and Utah draw more seismic attention.

For some Valley residents it's the “wedding cake building.” For others, it's “that castle on the hill.” Whatever the moniker, its official name is Tovrea Castle at Carraro Heights, one of Phoenix's most iconic landmarks. The historic structure at 52nd Street and Van Buren has stood for almost 100 years and is a familiar sight for anyone driving the Loop 202 Freeway. Its tiered architecture and surrounding cactus gardens make it one of the most photographed and distinctive sights in town.

Getting inside, though, isn't easy. Public access is limited and the only way to tour the attraction is through the official Tovrea Castle Phoenix ticket lottery, which occurs twice a year. Tickets are in high demand and tours frequently sell out. The next Tovrea Castle Phoenix ticket lottery, for tours scheduled from September through December 2026, opens on June 1 and closes June 15. If you want to see the inside of this unique Valley treasure, here's everything to know about the latest Tovrea Castle lottery.

In the late 1920s, Italian immigrant and entrepreneur Alessio Carraro built the tiered, 5,000-square-foot structure as the centerpiece of a luxury desert resort that never materialized. Arizona cattle baron and meat-packing mogul A.E. Tovrea bought the 44-acre property in 1931. After his death the following year, the castle became the home of his wife, Della, for three decades.

These days, the city of Phoenix owns the castle and it's listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Tovrea Carraro Society, a local nonprofit, manages and maintains the property. In 2025, it unveiled two rebuilt outbuildings on the grounds, the Carraro Cottage and the Caretakers' House, that were previously destroyed by monsoon thunderstorms.

When the society's public tours of the property began in 2012, demand was overwhelming. As a result, a ticket lottery was introduced to manage the sheer number of people eager to storm the castle for a look inside. Thousands of tickets will be available for purchase by those selected at random through the lottery. Here's how it works: Tovrea Castle tour tickets cost \$22 each with children 2 and under admitted free. Tickets can only be purchased by those 18 or older. Only one lottery entry per person is allowed.

Anyone interested in entering the Phoenix Tovrea Castle ticket lottery can visit the website below from June 1-15 and click the link for the fall 2026 lottery. Entrants must provide their name, phone number and email address, and may select up to three preferred dates and times between September and December 2026. Tours are held Fridays through Sundays, and each winner may request up to four tickets. A confirmation email is sent once the entry is submitted. Lottery winners will be notified by email after the drawing concludes. Winners then have 72 hours to purchase their tickets. If they fail to respond or complete the ticket purchase in time, another entrant will be selected and contacted. <https://tovreacastle tours.com/castle-tours/>

Arizona is known..... for its vibrant sunsets, with skies often painted in shades of red, orange and purple. But what makes sunsets in Arizona so striking? The answer lies in a combination of geography, atmosphere and timing. Arizona's dry desert climate plays a significant role in creating colorful sunsets. The air is filled with small dust particles and molecules that scatter light as the sun sets. This scattering effect is what produces the vivid colors often seen in Arizona skies.

The color of the scattered light is determined by the size of molecule or particle and the actual wavelength of light, according to *Arizona State Parks and Trails*. Because Arizona is generally dry, dust particles are able to float effortlessly on the breeze so there's a lot of them available for scattering. More particles equal more color.

Matt Salerno, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Phoenix, told The Arizona Republic that the wide-open skies and valley landscape in Phoenix contribute to the dramatic sunsets. High clouds and the contrast between desert and mountain landscapes enhance the visual effect. The phenomenon known as "purple mountain majesty" occurs when mountains appear to turn purple at sunset due to the way light is reflected.

According to *Arizona State Parks*, the most vivid sunsets often occur during monsoon season. The strong winds from seasonal storms stir up dust and sediment, increasing the number of particles in the air and enhancing the scattering of light. Whether you're catching a sunset from a mountain trail or your backyard, Arizona's unique combination of landscape and climate makes for some of the most beautiful sunsets in the country. Metro Phoenix, rated a to spot by Fodor's Travel, has many great places to sit back and enjoy the view. Here are a few popular spots:

Lost Dutchman State Park: Arizona State Parks says that one of the more popular sunset viewing spots is Lost Dutchman State Park in the Superstition Mountains near Apache Junction.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: The San Tan Mountains are another excellent sunset viewing location, especially for those in the southeast Valley. Try a short hike, bring a picnic or go biking while you wait for the sun to dip.

Papago Park: Hole in the Rock has long been a popular sunset spot, but there are more scattered throughout the park. You can't beat watching the sun descend behind the downtown Phoenix skyline. You can even watch it from the Desert Botanical Garden, which is inside the park.

South Mountain: Even if you aren't looking to take a hike, you can always drive up to Dobbins Point for a stunning sunset view. The lookout point offers a 360-degree view of metro Phoenix.

Tempe Town Lake: If you want to see the sunset over water, try stopping by Tempe Town Lake for a different kind of sunset view. You can enjoy the sunset's reflection on the water from the pedestrian bridge or even rent a boat for an extra calm experience.

Airport News.....

Looking for a bookto read for your next flight? Sky Harbor debuts *Free Little Library* where travelers can take a book or donate one at the *Free Little Library* in Terminal 3. The library is designed to provide books for readers of all ages, according to airport officials.

The library is part of a partnership with the *Phoenix Public Library* and *Friends of the Phoenix Library*. "It fills our hearts with joy to help bring this Free Little Library to life at Phoenix Sky Harbor in partnership with Phoenix Public Library. Books have a special way of inspiring and connecting people, especially when they are far from home," said President of the Friends of the Phoenix Public Library Alejandra Bucon. "The Friends of the Phoenix Public Library is honored to provide the books that make this space possible and hopes each one brings a moment of happiness to every traveler who discovers it."

What started as a part of Phoenix Sky Harbor's 90th anniversary celebration has turned into a staple program at America's Friendliest Airport®. Since the first event in 2025, Sky Harbor has celebrated a variety of *Culture Corner* events, connecting rich diversity, creativity and the cultural heritage of Arizona with travelers and employees.

The *Culture Corner* features free monthly events for all visitors and can be found in Terminal 3 near Gate F4, along with the PHX Free Little Library. The program transforms the airport into a welcoming gateway to the region and brings community organizations, performers, and educators directly to travelers.

You may see some of the 14 new faces across the terminals and information counters through June 25. The PHX Guest and Employee Experience team, in collaboration with VIP Hospitality LLC, has welcomed the return of the JF Oberlin University internship program in partnership with Arizona State University Global Launch. This is the 12th anniversary of this initiative, offering college students from Tokyo, Japan, a unique opportunity to study abroad and gain front-line experience in the hospitality industry.

Each intern is paired with an experienced PHX Navigator or Guest Service Representative. They will have the opportunity to receive hands-on training in airport processes and exceptional customer service while also strengthening their English communication skills.

News from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).....

The Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT) launched the *Starstruck: Arizona Dark Sky Expedition* passport, a free digital guide connecting travelers to 30+ premier stargazing spots and certified Dark Sky communities in celebration of International Dark Sky Week in April. Arizona is home to 22 officially designated International Dark Sky places and many additional parks and communities offering ideal stargazing conditions, making the state one of the best spots in the country for enjoying the grandeur of the night skies.

“Arizona’s night skies are a natural treasure, and our new ‘Starstruck’ digital pass is the ultimate map for anyone looking to experience that cosmic wonder firsthand,” said Alix Skelpsa-Ridgway, Director of the Arizona Office of Tourism. “With one of the world’s highest concentrations of Dark Sky places, we’re making it easier than ever to find these breathtaking views across the state.”

“Flagstaff’s legacy as the world’s first *International Dark Sky City* is built on the idea that the night sky is a resource worth protecting for everyone, a deeply held value in our community,” said Danielle Adams, Executive Director of the Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition. “The ‘Starstruck’ digital pass guides visitors toward meaningful, awe-inspiring encounters with the stars while fostering a deeper respect for our unique Arizona dark-sky ethos.”

The launch harnessed the draw of Arizona’s 23 officially designated International Dark Sky places and many additional parks and communities offering ideal stargazing conditions, which make our state one of the best spots in the country for enjoying the grandeur of the night skies. <https://www.visitarizona.com/places/dark-skies>

There are more than 200 certified Dark Sky Communities, Parks, Reserves and Sanctuaries across the world as accredited by Arizona-based DarkSky International. With more than 20 located in Arizona, the Grand Canyon State is one of the most popular regions for Dark Sky places.

Scottsdale Tourism Updates....

Metro Phoenix thrill-seekers won’t have to wait much longer to ride the Valley’s first permanent Ferris wheel. The Boardwalk SkyWheel is set to open soon at Arizona Boardwalk, the sprawling entertainment and shopping complex in Scottsdale at 9500 E. Vía de Ventura. The 80-foot-tall attraction located behind the Boardwalk’s Butterfly Wonderland features 18 climate-controlled and fully enclosed gondolas offering 360-degree views of the north Scottsdale desert and surrounding mountains.

A ride on the Boardwalk SkyWheel will cost less than a trip to the Arizona State Fair or even Southern California’s Magic Mountain. The SkyWheel is being built to celebrate Arizona Boardwalk’s 10th anniversary. The Scottsdale entertainment and shopping complex, which first opened in 2016, is already home to attractions like OdySea Aquarium, Cyber Quest Arcade, UFO Experience and the Museum of Illusions.

The SkyWheel is the second midway-style attraction at Arizona Boardwalk, which already features a traditional carousel. The Boardwalk SkyWheel will be the only permanently fixed Ferris wheel in metro Phoenix. Temporary Ferris wheels are typically featured at seasonal events like the Arizona State Fair and local carnivals each year across the Valley.

Exactly when the Boardwalk SkyWheel will begin spinning in Scottsdale, though, is still up in the air. The Arizona Boardwalk previously announced that the ride would open in mid-to-late April.

Each ride on the Boardwalk SkyWheel will be \$9 for the first person and \$6 for each additional guest in the same gondola. Rides take about 5 to 8 minutes and up to 6 people can ride in a gondola at the same time. Discounts of up to 40% are available when Arizona Boardwalk patrons bundle SkyWheel rides along with other Arizona Boardwalk attractions. Tickets can only be purchased at the Boardwalk.

<https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/arts-culture/boardwalk-ferris-wheel-opening-in-scottsdale-40666495/>

Find the latest events and all things Scottsdale at:

<https://www.experiencescottsdale.com/maps-guides/official-visitors-guide/>

Sedona News

Outbound Sedona has officially opened on the former Poco Diablo Resort property, marking a major new chapter for one of Sedona’s long time hospitality landmarks. After a thoughtful reimagining, the resort now welcomes guests with updated rooms and a refreshed ballroom for events and celebrations. Throughout the

property, inviting gathering spaces give visitors room to relax, connect, and settle into the red rock experience. On-site dining and wellness offerings add to the sense of arrival, giving visitors a new way to enjoy Sedona from a property with deep local roots.

Outbound is a collection of properties throughout the U.S., including Jackson Hole, WY; Mammoth Lakes, CA; Stowe, VT; Park City, UT; and Outbound Yosemite.

Tlaquepaque Arts & Shopping Village has launched a new website designed to make planning your visit even easier. One of the standout features is the interactive village map, which helps guests navigate shops, galleries, and restaurants throughout both Tlaquepaque North and South. It's a simple upgrade that makes it easier to explore the village, find your next stop, and discover a few corners you might have missed before.

<https://tlaq.com/>

You can always find out the latest events and things to do in Sedona by checking their tourism websites.

<https://visitsedona.com/events-calendar/annual-events/> and <https://visitsedona.com/events-calendar/>

On April 25 the Verde Valley Archaeology Center and Museum opened the exhibit “Tim’s Cave Reimagined: Stewarding a Cultural Collection.” This exhibit tells the story of the sighting of prehistoric artifacts by helicopter, a recovery effort by the U.S. Forest Service, a theft and federal investigation, while weaving in the history of the ancestral Hopi and the importance of visiting sites with respect.

On July 21, 1991, Andy Seagle, one of five passengers on a helicopter tour, spotted a grouping of ollas at the mouth of a small cliff dwelling outside Sedona. The size of the ollas are significant, with the largest measuring two feet in diameter and weighing nearly 50 pounds. They were left at the cliff alcove around 800 years ago by the Sinagua, also called the Hisatsinom, the Hopi word for “the ancient ones.”

“For people who reside in Sedona and visitors to the area, it’s paramount to understand the context of the land and the incredible cultures that still exist, as well as their cultural material,” VVAC’s Executive Director Monica Buckle said. “This exhibit is something to be celebrated because of the achievements of the Native Americans that masterly created these remarkable ollas. Sedona and the Verde Valley can help amplify the legacies of the various cultures that have come and gone for millennia through this region, and cherish that cultural integrity.”

The exhibit emphasizes the significance of the tribal collaboration integral to the process of naming heritage and cultural sites in present-day. It also features easy ways people can enjoy sites while visiting them respectfully. The exhibit will be open one year. The museum will operate on summer hours starting Monday, May 18, and will be open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with last admission at 3 p.m. until Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 7. For more information, visit: <https://verdevalleyarchaeology.org>

After years of planning and environmental review, construction is underway on the Turkey Creek Trail System, a large-scale non-motorized trail project on national forest land designed to expand recreation access while protecting sensitive terrain. The project, led by the U.S. Forest Service with substantial support from community partners and private donors, will ultimately include about 35 miles of interconnected trails for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. The system is intended to provide new recreation opportunities and help relieve pressure on heavily used trails elsewhere in the Sedona area.

The completed system will include about 21 miles of newly built trail, two miles of rerouted trail, more than 10 miles of adopted social trails and the closure and rehabilitation of more than 10 miles of unauthorized routes. A new main trailhead is also planned, with parking for more than 35 vehicles and space for horse trailers. Two trail segments have opened to positive public response, including the Del Sol Trail and the recently completed Third Rock Trail, which offer expansive views of the surrounding landscape.

News from the Grand Canyon.....

Each winter Grand Canyon wildlife staff carry out an essential effort to understand and manage the park’s bison herd on the North Rim. This annual count helps managers understand the current population and plan for potential capture and removal efforts later in the summer and early fall.

GCC works in partnership with the park to fund annual population surveys, ensuring managers have the information they need to make thoughtful, science-based decisions about herd health and habitat balance. Surveys are carefully timed before calving season, and in a typical year, fresh snowfall helps staff spot bison

more easily across the landscape. Even in a year with unusually dry conditions and limited snow cover, the team was still able to complete this important count this winter. This data is used in population models to estimate total herd size and guide future management actions.

The 2026 bison population estimate indicates that there will likely be more than 300 bison on the North Rim this summer. NPS staff will return in the summer to account for new calves, building a more complete picture of the herd. After last year's wildfire prevented planned bison management efforts, early estimates suggest the herd may have grown by as much as 30 percent.

Public support makes this kind of critical conservation work possible, helping protect Grand Canyon's unique and delicate balance.

The North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park is now open for the 2026 summer season. This season marks a meaningful return following the 2025 Dragon Bravo Fire. While the North Rim experience will look different this year, it offers a rare opportunity to witness the canyon in a quieter, more reflective state where resilience and recovery are part of the landscape itself.

Visitors can expect access to select scenic drives, viewpoints, and trails, with a focus on day use and limited backcountry opportunities. Services will be minimal, and visitors should plan ahead for a more remote experience, including limited or no access to potable water, fuel, lodging, or other amenities within the park. Throughout the season, the General Store and Gas Station will provide essential supplies, along with grab-and-go food and beverages.

The North Rim Campground is expected to reopen for tent and RV camping (no hookups) as conditions allow, with reservations available through <https://www.recreation.gov/> once confirmed. As recovery efforts continue, conditions may change, and temporary closures may occur to ensure visitor safety. We encourage all guests to stay informed and come prepared. For additional information, visit www.nps.gov/grca/northrimstatus.htm.

The North Rim looks forward to welcoming guests back where the journey is as much about discovery as it is about perspective.

Arizona Water

When a 336-mile canal system needs to traverse the State of Arizona, how do you get the water it carries across a road ... or a river for that matter? For the CAP system, the solution to "cross" these obstacles was to install inverted siphons, or pipelines, deep in the ground so Colorado River water could continue its journey uninterrupted.

The CAP system has ten siphons, all with similar basic anatomy. The siphons are massive pipelines, up to 21' in diameter and often miles long. But the forces that make them work is simple physics – here's how. As water is moving through the canal, a check structure regulates the flow as it passes through the inlet transition, where the canal connects to the round siphon and water enters the underground pipe. The siphon, which can be steel or concrete (watch for an upcoming article about the types of siphons), carries the water under the obstacle. Once past it, the siphon angles to ground level where it transitions back to the square canal shape as water flows through the outlet transition and continues its journey through the CAP system. You can see in the infographic that the outlet is at a slightly lower elevation than the inlet. This intentional engineering design ensures the water, despite friction from the pipe, can flow through the inverted siphon and out the other end. The decrease in elevation is only a few feet and varies with each siphon, based on friction calculations for each specific situation. Inverted siphons are another critical, and hidden, component of the CAP system, an engineering marvel that ensures reliable water deliveries to Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima counties.

<https://knowyourwaternews.com/how-does-the-water-cross-the-road-through-an-inverted-siphon/>

Knowing your water resource is critical to living anywhere in Arizona. What is the CAGR? The Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District (CAGR) was created in the mid- 1990s to help water providers and land owners comply with Arizona's groundwater laws. CAGR plays an important role in Arizona's groundwater management by replenishing groundwater pumped by its members. Visit the CAP website for a broader view of Arizona water history and efforts to sustain quality of life by protecting and managing Arizona's water resources.

<https://knowyourwaternews.com/what-is-the-cagr-here-are-three-things-you-need-to-know/>

Items of Interest

The cotton fields and deserts of Pinal County continue to be the hotspot for population growth in Arizona. Despite containing only about 7% of Arizona's population, four of the state's ten fastest-growing cities since 2020 were in the county located between Phoenix and Tucson, according to census data released Thursday. Meanwhile, many older communities in rural southern Arizona saw populations decline.

Coolidge was Arizona's fastest-growing city between July 2020 and July 2025, growing by over 48%. Maricopa, Casa Grande and Eloy were also in the top ten, all growing by more than 25%, with Maricopa seeing the largest net increase at over 19,000 new residents. Pinal County has been among the nation's fastest-growing counties for years.

<https://news.azpm.org/p/azpmnews/2026/5/15/229771-pinal-county-leads-arizona-in-growth-while-some-southern-arizona-cities-lag/>

Arizona is home to one of the most intense stretches of road in the country — U.S. Route 191, a remote highway that cuts through the mountains of eastern Arizona. The section between Clifton and Alpine is especially infamous, with hundreds of tight turns, steep drop-offs, and almost no major towns for miles. This part of the highway has more than 400 curves in roughly 120 miles, winding through the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest and rugged mountain terrain. With sharp switchbacks, narrow lanes, and dramatic elevation changes, it's often ranked among the most challenging drives in America — especially for drivers unfamiliar with the road.

Older locals might remember the route by another name. Until 2003, the highway was known as U.S. Route 666, which led to the nickname "The Devil's Highway." Because of the number and symbolism, the road gained a reputation for eerie stories and dangerous driving conditions. The name was eventually changed to U.S. 191, but the legend stuck. Today, the road is still a favorite for motorcyclists and adventure drivers, but it demands caution. With constant turns and steep mountain terrain, it's the kind of highway where drivers quickly learn why it earned its reputation.

Phoenix's iconic Mystery Castle has a new owner promising to preserve the once-threatened landmark. The 1930s stone castle near South Mountain Park and Preserve has been closed to the public since 2022 and had been set for demolition. But the Arizona Preservation Foundation now reports the property has been sold. The Harrell Family of Companies, which bought the site, has been involved in other historical preservation projects throughout Arizona.

"The new owner has made a commitment to preserve the Mystery Castle while creating a destination event venue — one that will allow new generations of Phoenixians to experience this irreplaceable piece of Phoenix history," the Arizona Preservation Foundation said.

Arizona Game and Fish.....

Free Fishing Day will be June 6, 2026. Many anglers have friends who have never been fishing but are curious to learn. One of the best ways to introduce them to this long-standing pastime is to take them out on Arizona's Free Fishing Day. This year is the perfect time to do it, as the Arizona Game and Fish Department will not require fishing licenses at any state waters or community lakes as part of National Free Fishing Day on June 6. Fishing is already a bargain. Arizona fishing licenses start at just \$37 for resident adults (18 and older) and \$55 for nonresident adults. A combination hunt and fish license for youths (ages 10-17, residents or nonresidents) is only \$5.

While a fishing license is not needed on June 6, bag limits and other Arizona fishing regulations still apply and must be observed on Free Fishing Day. Children under 10 can fish for free all year in Arizona.

<https://www.azgfd.com/fishing-2/licenses-and-regulations/#fishing-rules-regulations-in-arizona>

Chiricahua leopard frogs will have a new place to call home this spring as a new project restores freshwater ponds in the White Mountains. The Arizona Game and Fish Department partnered with the

Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC) and Wetland Restoration and Training, LLC to renovate six ponds at the Department's White Mountain Grasslands Wildlife Area located near Springerville, Ariz.

With the help of federal and state forestry crews and a team of dedicated volunteers, the group deepened the ponds and added aquatic-safe liners, which will prevent seepage and create a permanent water source for the Chiricahua leopard frog— an imperiled amphibian species that is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Major threats to the Chiricahua leopard frog include habitat loss, drought and competition from invasive species like American bullfrogs. The ponds will also have the added benefit of providing water to a variety of species living in the area's grassland plains and rolling hills including American pronghorn, Gunnison's prairie dogs, and burrowing owls.

Located south of Winslow in the Sitgreaves National Forest, the Chevelon Canyon Wildlife Area offers watchable wildlife opportunities among the Mogollon Rim's Ponderosa pine forests, meadows and wetlands. The area consists of five parcels of land totaling almost 158 acres and providing protection for sensitive riparian habitats in the region. Resident elk, turkey and deer call the area home, along with sensitive species like desert suckers, speckled dace, Little Colorado spinedace, northern goshawks, golden eagles, belted kingfishers, Mexican spotted owls and peregrine falcons.

For more on the area itself, check out the website:

<https://www.azgfd.com/location/chevelon-canyon-wildlife-area>

For some tips on how to get the most out of your wildlife viewing, visit:

<https://www.azgfd.com/wildlife-conservation/wildlife-viewing/wildlife-viewing-tips/>

Did You Know.....

Arizona's three wine-growing regions Sonoita in Santa Cruz County, Willcox in Cochise County and the Verde Valley in Yavapai County — are all official American Viticultural Areas (AVAs). Earning an AVA designation means a wine region can describe more accurately the origin of the wine, including specific geographic or climatic features that distinguish it from other regions and affect how grapes are grown. The designation helps consumers understand the area in which the wine is produced and, ultimately, helps visitors connect with the authenticity of the area.

The saguaro cactus blossom Arizona's official state flower, is a nocturnal wonder that peaks from mid-May through June. While only living for 18 hours, these white, melon-scented blooms specifically attract nectar-feeding bats for pollination. Emerging in a unique counterclockwise pattern, the blossoms eventually become ruby-red fruit, signaling the Tohono O'odham New Year — a beautiful example of the Sonoran Desert's deep cultural and biological heritage. <https://azstateparks.com/saguaro-cactus-flower>

Monsoon starts **June 15 and ends Sept. 30.** The word monsoon comes from the Arabic word mausin, which means season or seasonal winds. The change in winds during a new season is what causes a monsoon storm. The winds change during the summer season because the land becomes warmer than the nearby ocean, and monsoon winds always blow from the cold towards the warm. Since the ocean is colder than the land in the summer, the winds blow from the ocean toward the land. Then, the moisture from the ocean condenses into rain, and that's how Arizona gets its beloved monsoon season.

A male ocelot set a record by traveling more than 100 miles across four different mountain ranges in Southern Arizona, the longest documented trek for the species. Over 388 days, the elusive cat navigated rugged terrain and crossed multiple highways, appearing only in scattered nighttime trail camera sightings. Youth in the Tohono O'odham Nation's San Xavier District named the cat Himdam, meaning "traveler." Ocelots are among the most endangered wild cats in the U.S., with small, fragmented populations threatened by habitat loss and vehicle collisions.

South Mountain Preserve is so large, it contains three whole mountain ranges, the Ma Ha Tuak, Gila, and Guadalupe. It contains 28 towers that broadcast radio and TV.

What is the name of Arizona's official state fossil, a prehistoric creature discovered near St. Johns? In 1988, the Arizona state legislature designated the petrified wood of *Araucarioxylon arizonicum*, a prehistoric conifer, as the Arizona state fossil. Arizona is well known for its vast petrified forest, part of which lies within the bounds of the *Petrified Forest National Park*.

Arizona embraces playful oddities, including its own "Poozeum", the world's largest collection of fossilized... like a bathroom of dinosaurs in Williams, AZ.

Jerome, AZ has a unique museum Showcasing over 1500 real skulls and an oddities parlor filled with unique curiosities. Included are 1000 different species including mammals birds reptiles amphibians and fish it is a partnership with caduceus the Verde valley winery. <https://theskullatorium.com/>

The Phoenix Zoo is home to the world's oldest living mandrill in captivity. Nikki, born on January 13th 1987 resides at the phoenix zoo having outlived the species median life expectancy of 18.3 years by more than double...she is 37 years old..... adding another unique distinction to Arizona's lineup of unique oddities.

Grand Falls east of Flagstaff on the Navajo Reservation, is over 181 feet tall and known for the beautiful rainbows created by the impact and spray of the falls. For scale, Niagara Falls is 176 feet and the actual waterfall is only 70 feet due to rocks at the base. So yes, Grand Falls is taller than Niagara Falls!

NOTE: The Grand Falls are currently closed to the public.

Education its essential and what we do!

The First Farmers of the Desert..... a free lecture will be Tuesday, June 23, 2026, 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Location: Mustang Library, 10101 N 90th Street, Scottsdale, AZ.

Speaker, Adriana Zavala, from the S'edav Va'aki Museum (previously Pueblo Grande Museum) for a presentation, followed by an up-close look of artifacts. Learn about the Ancestral Sonoran Desert People, known to archaeologists as the Hohokam, who lived in Phoenix and the surrounding areas over a thousand years ago. Find out how they not only survived, but thrived in the desert by utilizing the landscape, building irrigation canals, and growing a variety of crops.

RSVP at the website: https://www.mcdowellsonoran.org/event/lecture-the-first-farmers-of-the-desert/?vcrmeid=cd09hGE1PEaCvV3are0i4g&vcrmiid=NB4WF_kaqkOa7ej0vt6MeQ

Keeping Arizona Wild:..... *The People, Partnerships, and Purpose Behind Conservation*, a free lecture, will be Tuesday, July 28, 2026, 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm, Location: Mustang Library, 10101 N 90th Street, Scottsdale, AZ.

Join Arizona Game and Fish Commission Chair, Marsha Petrie Sue, for an inside look at how Arizona conserves and protects more than 800 wildlife species across our state. Learn how the Arizona Game and Fish Department operates without state tax dollars—relying instead on conservation funding, partnerships, and dedicated citizens—to support its \$152 million wildlife conservation mission. Marsha will also share how collaborative efforts with organizations like the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy help protect the habitats and wildlife that make Arizona such an extraordinary place.

RSVP at: <https://www.mcdowellsonoran.org/event/lecture-keeping-arizona-wild-the-people-partnerships-and-purpose-behind-conservation/below>

If you are interested in becoming AGA Certified for Arizona as a tour guide, and you have been a member for 1 year prior, you qualify to study for the test. The cost of the test information is \$10 and may be obtained from: Princely Nesadurai at pkntamil@yahoo.com. Your check should be payable to the Arizona Guides Association and marked for "Certification Test".

Benefits of AGA Certification:

- Gain confidence about Arizona history, geology, flora and fauna
- Become recognized by your peers as an exceptional source of information
- Heighten your visibility for career and job opportunities within the tourism industry

If there is a speaker or topic you would like AGA to bring to the membership please let the education committee know. Email: agaedprogram@gmail.com

And don't forget to visit the websites I always include at the end of the newsletters.....they are all about exploring Arizona and broadening your education. 😊

Get Outside !!

Greer is the highest-elevation town in Arizona, offering a cool escape from the summer heat for those living in Phoenix and other lower-elevation cities. In fact, the average summer temperature highs are in the mid-70s!

<https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/trip-ideas/arizona/hidden-waterfront-town-az>

The subterranean hike to explore the Lava River Cave in Flagstaff is among the coolest Arizona adventures anyone can have — and that's in both the literal and figurative sense.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r03/coconino/search?s=lava+river+cave&search=>

June is National Great Outdoors Month and Arizona's state parks are here for all of your adventuring and exploring needs!

<https://azstateparks.com/great-outdoors-month>

Websites to visit

Arizona Potential New National Park Clears Major HurdleChiricahua National Monument.

<https://gearjunkie.com/news/new-national-park-arizona>

Get Your Kicks at the Sedona Heritage Museum to see how Sedona relates to Route 66.

<https://www.redrocknews.com/2026/05/29/get-your-kicks-at-the-sedona-heritage-museum/>

What are 'Third Spaces in Downtown Phoenix? Explore the vibe downtown!

<https://dtphx.org/post/meet-me-downtown-finding-friends-in-third-spaces>

Learn more about the conservation efforts of this organization.

<https://skyislandalliance.org/2026/05/himdam-the-remarkable-ocelot-that-traversed-4-sky-islands/>

www.arizonaguides.org

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