

The Otter

SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF VERDE RIVER GREENWAY

Springing into Action



VOLUME THREE
SPRING ISSUE

Big Spring Natural Area has been getting a lot of much needed attention lately. Located just upstream of the Tuzigoot Bridge on Town of Clarkdale property near the water treatment plant the spring area is quickly becoming a popular area for many town residents. Beginning in November, The Vetraplex crew spent 970 hours removing the invasive species from the area. Before that, the spring was mostly hidden in a dense, tall



stand of Tamarisk and Tree of Heaven. For the past year and half, trail improvements have been made by the “Dirty Dozen”. This group is made up of FVRG volunteers led by a more determined than ever Marsha Foutz. Yavapai County Adult Probation, Clarkdale/Jerome Elementary School and Prescott College students all contributed to the restoration efforts.

Once the tamarisk was removed it quickly became obvious that there was a treasure in the Big Springs area. FVRG volunteers got to work right away spreading woodchips (the biomass from the invasive removal) and improving the trail. They’ve logged countless hours and devoted many Saturday mornings to

See **Big Springs** Page 6

PROGRAM COORDINATOR’S LOG

Hi Friends,

I hope you’re enjoying the warmth of summer after our wetter and cooler than normal spring in the Verde Valley and southwest; I especially enjoyed the flowers this spring!

This spring VWRC started to strategically plan for our future as a partnership. Our stakeholders prioritized actions that will further our collective vision that the Verde River and its tributaries comprise a diverse, self-sustaining and resilient riparian system through stakeholder participation. Look for an update on VWRC Strategic Planning in our next issue of *The Otter*.

The ever-present task of fundraising has also been at the forefront of our activities this spring. We received several grants that will continue to support our work in riparian areas and are eagerly awaiting news on several proposals that would fulfill our funding needs for the year.

Have a great summer!

News you otter know about VWRC

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Arizona Conservation Corps Wants **YOU!**



NOW HIRING

- Enthusiastic people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are interested in saving the environment and having fun.
- Must be willing to work hard, camp out in any condition, and never surrender.
- Project work in the Verde Valley will include invasive species removal using chainsaws and hand tools.



For more information and to apply
visit www.azcorps.org

Questions? Contact Michelle at

928-526-3280 or michelle@conservationlegacy.org

Partners Update: Verde NRCD Ed Center

The Verde Natural Resource Conservation Education Center (NRCD) provides sustainable water and agricultural outreach. The natural environment provides an exciting, hands on, real world laboratory for students to develop skills relating to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Last year our highly qualified teachers provided instruction based on Arizona State Standards and FREE fieldtrips to over 7,000 students in grades K-8.



The three day "Top Ten Wanted Dead & Alive Species"

program educates 7th grade students about the economic, social and ecological impact of native and invasive species in the Verde River watershed by creating "Wanted" and "Found" posters. A fieldtrip to Montezuma Well included:

- **Macro Invertebrates Activity:** The students identified life from three different water sources by using an identification key.
- **Well Walk:** The students become familiar with aspects of Montezuma Well by participating in a Scavenger Hunt.
- **Mapping Activity:** The students identified native and non-native plant species by completing an area survey.
- **Invasive Activity:** The students identified invasive and native species by participating in an activity and taking pictures.

Mountain View Preparatory Academy Class on a Field Trip to Montezuma's Well. Pictured here are MVP students during the invasive activity and the macro invertebrate activity.



Finally back in the classroom, student's used photos from Invasive Activity to identify Distinguishing Features, Reward, and Effect on Nature (Crimes) of "found" species.

It is only possible for students to learn and to appreciate our natural resources by understanding how fragile they are. The best place to develop that passion is not the classroom; it happens in a natural



**Submitted By: Lynda Zanolli Verde NRCD Ed Center Director,
verdeedcenter@gmail.com, 928-963-0238**

ANNOUNCEMENTS!

FVRG's New WEBSITE!!!!

**Friends of Verde River
Greenway has launched
its new Website !**

**Click on the Link below to
check it out!**



**Thanks Everyone for your
Support on Arizona Gives
Day! Together we raised over
\$8,000!**

Or Visit www.verderivergreenway.org



**Special thanks to the private landowners and organizations that
joined FVRG and VWRC Partners in improving habitat in the
Verde Watershed this quarter.**



Thanks for improving
wildlife habitat in the
Verde Watershed!!

- ♦ **Olive Fox**
- ♦ **Robert Porter**

BIG SPRING NATURAL AREA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



making it a wonderful place to enjoy. But, they didn't stop there; they implemented an "adopt-a-trail" program. Eight adopt-a-trail volunteers have taken responsibility for maintaining a ¾ mile stretch of the trail. Their duties include:

removal of secondary invasives and trail maintenance. Marsha has even invented a new system for removing goat heads from the area. (Pictured above).

The removal of the invasive plants left a lot of biomass that needed to be reduced. Much of it was burned or chipped by Town of Clarkdale employees. Yavapai County Adult Probation spent hours hauling slash from under the bridge to burn piles, helping to make the area more inviting and promoting natural regrowth of native species. The burning left areas that needed some attention, that's where Prescott College stepped in to help. A class of ten students spent a morning vertical mulching and mapping secondary invasives such as horehound. The students had been studying riparian restoration and were very interested in techniques used by VWRC and possible employment and research op-

portunities.

During the past 18 months, Big Springs has made a complete transformation from an invasive laden environment to an inviting community trail. It is areas and projects like this that showcase how important collaboration is to the Verde Watershed's health. Over thirty individuals representing five different organizations came together at different times to help with this project, and it's not even finished yet. The



Ron Condon working on the once massive chip pile



Before

portunities. Town of Clarkdale is continuing to work

Written by: Sara Van Marel, Field Supervisor

Prescott College students working on vertical mulching in an area that was used to burn biomass



After



Smokey Gettin' Some Love

Over three hundred 2nd grade students converged at Dead Horse Ranch State Park for the annual Nature Outdoors field trip on May 11 and 12. The event was a true partnership in the VWRC tradition, with representatives from Verde NRCD Ed Center, Coconino National Forest, Friends of Verde River Greenway, National Park Service and Arizona State Parks.

Sticking to the system that had worked in the prior years, classes arrived at DHRSP and were divided into four groups, allowing for two thirty-minute sessions and a one hour hike. This model was repeated three different times to include thirteen different classes in small group sessions. Precision and timeliness were key to the success of this event. FVRG representative Laurie Parker pitched in to move each group between sessions.

At the Coconino National Forest ramada, Rangers Anthony Montiel and Candice Marks focused the kids on wildfire safety and prevention. One lucky kid from each class got to dress in firefighter gear to demonstrate the tools needed to safely fight fires.

The National Park Service ramada was literally “hopping”. Rangers Mary Ontiveros, Deb Decovis and Laura Varon-Burkhart engaged the students in activities about common insects. The students learned the different parts of insects by watching one of their classmates dress as a grasshopper.



NATURE OUTDOORS FIELD TRIP

Afterwards, they participated in a game designed to get them moving like the critters they learned about.

The DHRSP Rangers Justin Swiger, George Christianson and Margie Sanchez led each class on a hike along the riparian area. Along the way, they stopped to examine the “bone box”, looked for wildlife tracks, watched for birds, and pointed out native and invasive species of plants.

Every great day deserves a great finale and this day was no different. Smokey Bear arrived with his friend Woodsy Owl to take pictures and exchange hugs with the kids before they loaded onto the bus for their trip back to their schools. Special thanks to Sara Van Marel (FVRG) and John McNamara (USFS) for their participation in this part of the event.



The co-

VWRC Partners

ordination of such a large event is not an easy task, but the educators from Verde NRCD Ed Center were up to the task by working with administration, bus drivers and teachers at four different schools in the Verde Valley - Clarkdale, Oak Creek, Mountain View Prep, and Dr. Daniel Bright Elementary. Additionally, each child received a bag full of fun and informative goodies to keep.

The City of Cottonwood and the Town of Clarkdale deserve a special thank you for their financial sponsorship, as these 2nd graders were able to spend a beautiful day outdoors, learning about nature, at no cost to the schools.

The Nature Outdoors field trip provides an incredible opportunity for kids to learn about nature in their own backyard and meet the VWRC partners who are such excellent stewards and role models.

Written by: Laurie Parker, Program Administrator

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE WATERSHED, STATE, BASIN

VWRC partners were loudly proclaimed at the 2015 River Rally North America held in May at Santa Ana Pueblo, NM. This annual event, sponsored by the River Network, focused on five themes: tribal opportunities and breakthrough, water security and scarcity in a climate changed world, solutions and innovations to deliver clean water, novel collaborations to expand impact and get to scale, and organizational development for river groups and watershed organization.

Of over ninety submissions from all over the US, Canada and Mexico, VWRC/FVRG's accomplishment bio was one of four selected to be highlighted at the packed house for the welcome breakfast. Our efforts to restore habitat in the Verde watershed were used as an example of a collaborative partnership with substantial measurable results.

Partner efforts on the Verde were once again recognized by the luncheon key note speaker, Sandra Postel. An internationally distinguished thought leader in the protection of freshwater ecosystems, Sandra shared her perspectives on the biggest challenges and successes of river health, speaking at length of the flow restoration work headed by Kim Schonek of The Nature Conservancy.

FVRG representatives Laura Jones and Laurie Parker and TNC representatives and Mickey O'Hara and John Ford participated in workshops presented by watershed peers, scientific experts, and advocates from across the country and around the world. Many thanks to the Walton Family Foundation and The Nature Conservancy for funding this amazing opportunity to learn from experts, expand our watershed management network, and bring international attention to our conservation efforts.



VWRC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY

No July meetings, enjoy your summer!

August

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Wednesday, August 19, 9-11 AM

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

Sustainable Funding Meeting

Tuesday, August 25, 2015, 10 AM-Noon

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting Room

Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 25, 2015,

Where: TBD

SEPTEMBER

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Wednesday, September 16, 2015 9-11 AM

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

Sustainable Funding Meeting

Tuesday, September 22, 2015 10AM– Noon

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting room

VWRC Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 22, 2015, 1–3 PM

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting Room

Save these Dates for VWRC

**September 21-October 2– Crew
Training**

September 26-Verde River Day

Come Visit Us

**Mondays at Cornville Farmer's
Market**

**Thursdays at the Cottonwood
Farmers Market**

Volunteer with VWRC!

**Please contact Laurie Parker from FVRG at
admin@verderivergreenway.org**

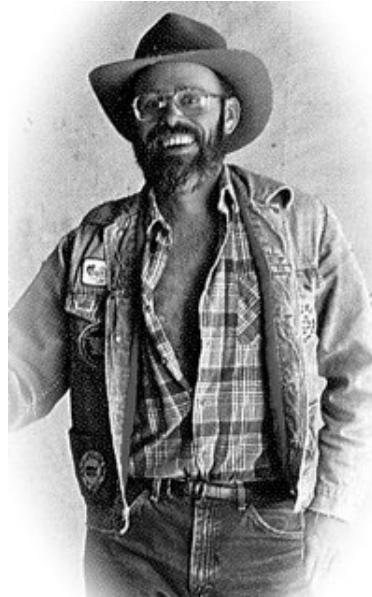
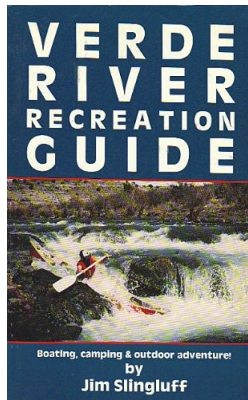
No experience necessary!

For additional event info visit verderivergreenway.org

Jim Slingluff

Friends of Verde River Greenway was saddened to hear of the passing of Jim Slingluff on March 20, 2015. Many people across the state of Arizona knew about Jim's work to preserve the Verde River. Many were familiar with his exploits as an avid whitewater canoeist; he guided trips on the Verde for many years.

In 1990 Jim authored the **Verde River Recreational Guide** and over the years he served as a survey volunteer for the Arizona Game and Fish Department, playing an important role to confirm the Verde as a navigable river.



Jim will be missed by his many friends and extended family. Jim's family asked, in lieu of flowers, for people to make gifts in honor of Jim's work to Friends of Verde River Greenway and the Alzheimer's Association. We

thank the following people for honoring Jim's memories with gifts to Friends of Verde River Greenway: Alta Musgrove; Marjorie Young and the Southern Arizona Paddlers Club.

Written by: Laura Jones, Director, Community Outreach

Friends of Verde River Greenway (FVRG) and the Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC) say thank you to the private foundations, federal and state agencies and individuals that provide funding for our programs. If you would like to join them and support our work, please go on-line or click below...

Support
Friends of
Verde River
Greenway



By
Clicking
here!

Special Thanks to VWRC & FVRG Volunteers!!!

Marsha Foutz	Becky Brassfield	Tony Gioia	Oren Thomas
George Reeve	Kimberly Poucher	Charlie Hawken	Sydney Van Northwick
Chip Norton	Kipian Horcos	Krystina Karczewski	Lucky Thomas
Chris Jensen	Jim Kreunen	Martin Yassi	Courtney Lozenich
Mal Otterman	Jodi Allen	Hugh Taylor	Kat Sorensen
Duane Edwards	Theresa Hughes	Jeremy Mc Murtry	Ben Dawson
Martin Ball	Ron Condon	Colette Condon	Rune Tellefsen
Hank Dingemann	Shannon Shaw	Felicia Coates	Bob Rothrock
Jim Quinn	James Mast	Kumara MacLeod	Elaine Rothrock
Joan Otterson	Sarah Sonrenbery	Mackenzie Macner	Kristin Rothrock
Harry Sweet	Mick Emerson	Joseph Holway	
Earl Poucher	Lo Modric	Joel Barnes	

VWRC Steering Committee Members

Friends of Verde River Greenway-**Chip Norton**
 The Nature Conservancy- **Kim Schonek**
 Coconino National Forest- **Laura Moser**
 Arizona State Parks- **George Christianson**
 Arizona Game and Fish Department-**Wade Albrecht**
 Salt River Project-**Heather English**
 National Park Service-**Tina Greenwalt**
 Natural Resource Conservation District-**Chris Jensen**
 USFWS (Partners for Fish & Wildlife)-**Kris Randall & Jennifer Kaplan**
 Tamarisk Coalition-**Jamie Nielson**
 Yavapai-Apache Nation-**Vivian Stevens**
 Prescott National Forest-**Kris Theil, Dorothy Baxter & Michael Kellett**
 Verde Valley Land Preservation- **Steve Estes**
 Verde NRCD Ed Center- **Lynda Zanolli**

Staff: Anna Schrenk, Laurie Parker, Laura Jones, Sara Van Marel and AmeriCorps Member Robby Bryson

Facilitator: Tahnee Robertson, Southwest Decision Resources



VWRC Sub-Committees

Outreach, Education and Engagement

Co-coordinators: Steve Estes and Laura Jones

Members: Anna Schrenk, Jamie Nielsen, Lynda Zanolli, Laurie Parker, Mary Ontiveros, Dorothy Baxter, Sara Van Marel

Research and Monitoring

Co-coordinators: Ruth Valencia and Michael Kellett

Members: Laura Moser, Chip Norton, Jamie Nielsen, Max Castillo, Anna Schrenk, Kris Randall, Robby Bryson

Planning and Implementation

Co-coordinators: Anna Schrenk and Laura Moser

Members: Chris Jensen, Kim Schonek, Chip Norton, Ruth Valencia, Sara Van Marel, Robby Bryson, Dorothy Baxter

Sustainable Funding

Co-coordinators: Jamie Nielson and Chip Norton

Members: Anna Schrenk, Wade Albrecht, Laura Jones, Kristin Jespersen, Kris Theil, Jenise Nyquist, Sara Van Marel

ALTERNATIVE PLANT OF THE QUARTER

Native Plants of the Verde Valley

Get to Know: stream orchid, or giant helleborine (*Epipactis gigantea*)

A large, showy, perennial plant in the orchid family (Orchidaceae), the stream orchid is also known as “chatterbox orchid” because the cup-shaped lower petal of the flower has the look of a lower lip and tongue, which moves (chatters) when the stem is gently tapped or shaken. This orchid is found throughout the Verde Watershed wherever it has a consistent source of water- stream banks, seeps, springs, wetlands, and hanging gardens in canyons. In fact, stream orchid is one of the few orchids known to live in desert environments of North America. As long as there’s an oasis, seep, or spring- they are even found in Death Valley National Park!



What it looks like

- Alternate, lance-shaped bright green leaves with parallel veins.
- Several tall stems growing up to 3 feet in height, with multiple flowers per stem, arising from leaf axils.
- Orchid flowers have sepals and petals in multiples of 3. Stream orchid flowers are red-brown and green, with purple veins. Lower petal sometimes has areas of yellow.
- Pollinated by insects, flowers in May and June, produces large amounts of tiny seeds (dispersed by wind and water), and also spreads by creeping rhizomes (horizontal shoots that put out new stems).

Additional Information

Threats to stream orchid survival include water diversions, grazing, invasive exotic plants, and other forms of habitat loss.

Stream orchid has traditional ethnobotanical/medicinal uses, and provides nectar for flying insect pollinators.

These orchids can be cultivated in the garden, but before you buy one make sure it was grown at a nursery, not collected from the wild!

By working to control the spread of non-native, invasive plants in the Verde Valley, VWRC is also helping native plant communities that are home to our beautiful stream orchid and many other unique native plants- a valuable part of our Arizona natural heritage.

FVRG Board of Directors

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Tony Gioia — Vice President

Harry Sweet— Treasurer

Peggy Chaikin— Secretary

Board Members

Marsha Foutz Bob Rothrock, Steven “Max” Castillo,
Kim Schonek, Denise Lerette

Written by: **Jamie Nielsen, Tamarisk Coalition**

FVRG and VWRC

P.O. Box 2535

Cottonwood, AZ 86326

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Cottonwood, AZ 86326

(upstairs above the Red Rooster Cafe)