

The Otter

SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF VERDE RIVER GREENWAY



VOLUME THREE
WINTER ISSUE

Beaver Join the Fight against Tamarisk!!



In the 1880's there were abundant beaver along the Verde River. You can read accounts of the beaver and their activities in Edward Alexander Mearns book of Mammals of the Mexican Boundaries of the United States published in 1907. Mearns documents the beavers prolific presence along the Verde and its tributaries. "*July 18, 1884, Fort Verde, Arizona.* – Beavers are abundant in the pools of Beaver Creek from above Montezuma Well to the Verde River. Mr. Henry Mehrens, a settler living just below Montezuma Well, says he frequently sees them in pools of Beaver Creek, which are there densely bordered by tule (*Scirpus*) and surrounded by willow and cottonwood trees, upon which they feed. He informed me that the beaver frequent the irrigation ditches of the ranches along the stream, doing damage to the ditches and shade trees planted along them." Sometime after Mr. Mearns book was published, the beaver became a rare species to see along the Verde and swimming in the pools of Beaver Creek.

See Beavers! Page 3

PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S LOG

Hi Friends,

With VWRC's third field season behind us, I am encouraged at the progress that this partnership has made towards its goals. All of you in some way have either participated and/or supported this initiative and are responsible for these successes. Hats off to you all!

As I think about the future of VWRC, I'm encouraged to see the broader interest in the partnership and the expanded scope of projects that VWRC partners prioritized at last month's Strategic Planning Workshop. It's time to capitalize on the momentum, trust and collaboration that VWRC has built & continue the important habitat and flow restoration projects in the watershed.

VWRC's future success is dependent on the continued support and participation from us all. Next month, during Arizona Gives Day, Friends of Verde River Greenway will be asking you to give to support our local Veterans crew for the 2015/16 field season. Join me on April 7, by giving a little back to support a healthy Verde River.

Anna

News you otter know

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MEANDERLAND**Lake Verde Club Estates: Staying ahead of Tree of Heaven**

Left: Homeowner's Association President, Jake Cecil, using a hack and squirt method on tree of heaven on the community property



Above: Verde Lake Club HOA's property is looking

During the winter of 2014, VWRC's AZ Conservation Corps crew worked to remove tree of heaven, tamarisk and giant reed from the home owner association property at Lake Verde Club Estates, south of the Town of Camp Verde. This small community has six riparian acres that are shared by all of the home owners that run along the Verde River. To the south of the property is a beautiful mature stand of Cottonwood and willow trees.



A small group of residents, headed by the President of the home owners association, Jake Cecil, were instrumental in having VWRC tackle the initial treatment of invasives on their property and are now spearheading efforts to keep these aggressive invasive plants from coming back. FVRG's Field Supervisor, Sara Van Marel conducted a mini training for Cecil and Jeanne Keller showing them how they can continue to treat the aggressive trees when they come back. Cecil said "other residents also have these trees by their homes and want to work to get rid of them and keep the trees from spreading. We're excited to finally be addressing this in the community."

Right: Homeowner, Jeanne Keller learning about tree of heaven removal

Written by: Laura Jones, Director of Community Outreach and Development

FIELD NOTES: WHAT ARE THE CREWS UP TO?

At the end of February VWRC's three crews wrapped up for the season. The Vetraplex crew spent their entire season working on different parts of the Jail Trail and the town of Clarkdale properties, successfully completing a 3 mile stretch on river right from private properties in Clarkdale all the way to the 10th street bridge. Matt's crew, VWRC's 8-person initial treatment crew, worked all over the watershed. They were able to complete treatment on a stretch of Prescott National Forest land on the Verde River starting just upstream of the Perkinsville bridge downstream to the Sycamore confluence; including a large private property. They also worked on Dead Horse property and private property just upstream of the Mingus Bridge. This, in addition to various private properties along oak creek in Cornville the crews were able to treat 1,118 acres across 18 river miles. The retreatment crew, a small 4-person crew, worked steadily along Oak Creek. Starting first with properties that were treated during the 2012/2013 season and then moving on to properties treated during the 2013/2014 season. The re-treated a total of 246 acres. With all three crews combined, 15,977 hours were spent working on removing invasive plants this season.

All three crews treated a total of 1,671.7 acres, initial and retreat, along 30 river miles, exceeding VWRC's annual goal by over 300 acres! Overall, the crews working really hard throughout the season



VWRC crews and FVRG staff at end of season grill out

and were rewarded with a grill out at Dead Horse to celebrate the season. From the conservation corps crews, many people are sticking around to continue on in the corps world by working on trail crews in Flagstaff or leading groups of young adults around the state. A few of the Vets have gotten trained in wildland fire fighting while others are still employed with The Vetraplex and can be seen working on landscape projects around the Verde Valley.

Written by **Sara Van Marel, Field Supervisor**

Beaver! Continued from Page 1

Today if you look carefully as you kayak or walk along the Verde you can still see evidence of the beaver gnawing on trees and the soft paths they create through the cattails along the river banks. If you're up early in the morning or being quiet along the banks at night, you can sometimes hear their tails slapping on the water's surface, it sounds like someone tossed a 20 pound boulder into the water beside you. On some stretches of the river, they are ever present, building dams that create deep pools or wide stretches of



Evidence of tamarisk that have been cut down by beaver.

meandering water, giving a marshy quality to the riparian area, much like it was back when Mearns was writing about the Verde River.

When you spy evidence of beaver, it seems that the cottonwoods, willows and sycamores are their trees of choice. They gnaw them down, large or small, strip the branches off and build dams along stretches that run wide and slow. As people that are engaged in removing invasive trees from the Verde River and its tributaries, I often wonder, why don't the beavers take down the tamarisk to build their dams? I learned that the beaver are attracted to these native tree because they emit a pheromones the beavers like.

When a few of us went to visit a private property recently we came upon a wonderful surprise. We found a stretch of the river where we could see there were beaver. There were trees gnawed down, the river was a little wider and the banks a little more marshy, and there was a beaver lodge sitting about 5 feet from the rivers edge. It had fresh mud slapped into place, so we knew that someone was living in it. We quickly moved on, not wanting to disturb the reclusive residents. As we made our way down stream we saw more evidence of the beaver gnawed stumps. But what was different about these stumps was the color. They had a reddish-brown color, similar to tamarisk, not the color of cottonwoods or willows that were nearby. So we stopped and looked around more closely and there we found it. Tamarisk trees that had been gnawed down by beaver! Our friends had finally taken up our cause, and were working with us to remove the invasive plants from their community.

Written by: **Laura Jones, Director of Community Outreach and Development**

MAX CASTILLO, 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Steven "Max" Castillo started his career with Arizona State Parks on January 20, 1975 as a seasonal Ranger, he quickly became a full time employee with the agency on December 1, 1975. Almost three years before I was born, wow! Max was assigned to Verde River Greenway in April of 1998 and was the third Greenway Coordinator preceded by the first coordinator in '89 Bonner Davis, then Kevin Stevens. The Mission of the Greenway at that time was very similar to what it is now however the verbiage may have changed slightly. The mission was to protect the riparian corridor along the 180 mile stretch of the Verde River and preserve the very rare Goodding's Willow and Fremont's Cottonwood forest.

Some of Mr. Castillo's major accomplishments while in his position, when there were still funds available, include working with the Heath's on the purchase of 60 acre parcel formerly known as Valley concrete. The operation was located in the river bottom between Dead Horse Ranch and Old Town Cottonwood. Another notable accomplishment was the purchase of 60 acres known as "Stone House" located between Dead Horse Ranch and Rocking Chair Ranch Road.

In 1999 Max Castillo was awarded employee of the year. The agency paid for him to visit Ano Nuevo State



Max waist deep in Oak Creek during a Streambank Stabilization Workshop in April 2014

park on the California coast. When I asked Max what he has enjoyed most about his career in parks he said working in his "office". Not the office with computers, paper, and phones, but his outdoor office under the sun and occasional clouds. I do agree with him that getting paid to lead hikes, ride mountain bikes, shoot guns, operate equipment, teach kids, and interact with the public are some of the more enjoyable aspects of wearing the uniform.

While speaking with Max this morning, as we leaned over the hood of my truck, he is very grateful for the assistance the park has gotten from VWRC to remove the invasive species along the Greenway. After years of trying with only volunteer help, all the while these invasive species continued to grow and spread.

I will miss working with Max, the past eleven years went by way too fast. Max has always listened to my complaints and I could always count on him to look at a situation from a "seasoned perspective". He is the type of person that can be relied on to back you up and have your back. I learned just about every aspect of what a Ranger does from him. Even though his time in uniform is up, his watch will never end.

I'm sure everyone on the mailing list for this article has in one way or another had the fortunate opportunity of crossing paths or working with Max, and undoubtedly would agree to his professionalism and dedication to the cause of protection and preservation of the resources for all of us to enjoy.



Written By: Justin Swiger, Assistant Park Manager, Dead Horse Ranch State Park

Thank you Max Castillo for 40 years of service and dedication to improving riparian health along the Verde River Greenways and beyond!!!!

FUNDRAISING AND AWARDS

VWRC Partners in the Spotlight!

The Vetraplex has been awarded the 2015 Success Award for Yavapai County from the Arizona Small Business Development Center Network. They will be honored at a luncheon on the grounds of the Arizona State Capitol later this month. According to the SBDC Arizona “this award honors not only your personal success, but also the positive impact you and your fellow winners have had on your communities and Arizona’s economy.”



“Arizona Gives Day is a powerful 24 hour online giving experience that unites Arizonans around causes they believe in.”

This year Friends of Verde River Greenway is asking you to give to specifically support our Veterans Crew during the 2015/16 treatment season.

Watch your email for more information on how you can support VWRC’s Veterans crew during Arizona Gives Day



Support Local Verde Valley Veterans!

Almost \$3 Million awarded to Benefit the Verde River

The Nature Conservancy and it’s local partners (Verde Natural Resource Conservation District, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Tamarisk Coalition and Friends of Verde River Greenway) was awarded \$2.8 million in funding from the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), a new program under the 2014 Farm Bill administered by USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service. Funds will support the Verde River Flow and Habitat Restoration Initiative.

Friends of Verde River Greenway was awarded \$50,000 from Freeport-McMoRan Foundation’s Social Investment Fund program to continue habitat restoration work in the Clarkdale area.

VWRC WELCOMES NEW TNC VOLUNTEERS MICKEY AND JOHN

John Ford

John is a new AmeriCorps Riparian Restoration Coordinator for The Nature Conservancy and Friends of Verde River Greenway Volunteer. He grew up in the country of Northern California before attending college at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Fueled by a passion for the outdoors, he pursued his education in various aspects of environmental protection. Aside from his professional interests, he also enjoys playing music, mountain biking, and writing.



Mickey O'Hara

A new addition to The Nature Conservancy team in the Verde Valley, Mickey recently relocated from Colorado. He graduated from Colorado School of Mines in 2011 with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering and has since been exploring the American West and working in the outdoor industry. Mickey was introduced to riparian restoration work while working as a Crew Leader for the Southwest Conservation Corps in 2014 and is very excited to continue working to protect rivers in the Colorado River Basin. In his free time, he enjoys outdoor pursuits such as mountain biking, backpacking and ski mountaineering.



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!!



- ♦ **Jordan Family Trust**
- ♦ **Margie Barr**
- ♦ **Kenneth Cruff**
- ♦ **Daniel Kates**
- ♦ **Verde Canyon Railroad**

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE WATERSHED, STATE, BASIN

2015 Tamarisk Coalition Conference

This past February, Friends of Verde River Greenway and representatives from Prescott National Forest, Coconino National Forest, AZ Game & Fish Department, AZ State Forestry and Verde Natural Resource Conservation District, took a sunrise train across the desert to attend the annual Tamarisk Coalition Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This meeting was the twelfth annual conference hosted by the Tamarisk Coalition, which is an opportunity for riparian groups, professionals, and academics working in the Southwest to come together to collaborate, network, and learn from one another.

The workshops, concurrent sessions, Q&A, and field trips during the three-day conference focused primarily on advancing riparian restoration in the West. Though hosted by the Tamarisk Coalition, the sessions extended well beyond the subject of tamarisk and the tamarisk leaf beetle to include wildlife and habitat, biological control, biomass removal/use, native plant restoration, stream-bank bioengineering, and others. The sessions were grouped into thematic blocks that discussed similar topics from different point of views or different watersheds, overall painting an in-depth picture of each topic.

Friends' staff members Anna Schrenk and Robby Bryson contributed in two sessions and a poster. Anna co-presented with Jamie Nielsen, Restoration Ecologist with the Tamarisk Coalition and VWRC Partner, on the True Cost of Restoration, explaining how the cost of restoration work extends beyond field crew work on the ground and the importance of documenting in-kind contributions. Also, Anna joined representatives from the Cross Watershed Network to discuss best practices for success with collaborative partnerships and stakeholder groups. During the poster session, Anna and Robby created a display detailing VWRC's work, accomplishments, and lessons learned.

The conference overall was a success with over 165 attendees representing dozens of agencies and groups throughout the Southwest. The relationships strengthened and new information acquired there will help Friends be a more effective and impactful organization.

The contingent from the Verde boarded the west-bound train in the afternoon on our return trip where we enjoyed the views, talked about the conference and enjoyed a meal in Amtrak's dining car!

Written By: Robby Bryson, Field Data Coordinator/AmeriCorps Member

Welcome to the VWRC Steering Committee

Michael Kellett—Prescott National Forest,
Natural Resources Staff officer

Save these Dates for VWRC

Verde Valley SciTech

March 21-29

www.vvscitech.org

AlterNATIVE

Plant Expo at Verde River Growers

April 18, 9-4pm

Verde Birding and Nature Festival

April 23-26th Dead Horse Ranch

www.birdyverde.org

VWRC Strategic Planning Workshop

May 28, 2015

Verde Valley SciTech Festival: Engaging students

Friends of Verde River Greenway will once again promote the Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition and the science of conservation work at the Arizona SciTech Festival, a state-wide celebration of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) held annually in February and March.

Events in the Verde Valley will kick off with the SciTech Outdoor Science Fest on March 21, 10 am to 3 pm at Dead Horse Ranch

State Park. The signature event is hosted by Verde River Valley Nature Organization (VRVNO) and will feature interactive activities on topics including technology used for mapping and sampling, geocaching, geology, water testing and more. VWRC partners including FVRG, AmeriCorps and Arizona Conservation Corps will explain GIS technology and equipment used in to map invasive species and speak about



ARIZONA SCITECH
VERDE VALLEY
scitech festival

conservation career opportunities. Visitors to the VWRC ramada will also use a dichotomous key and microscope to classify macroinvertebrates pulled from the Verde River and learn the importance of these species as indicators in the overall health of a watershed. Another VWRC

partner, Lynda Zanolli, Verde Ed Center, will also provide a hands on water education activity.

The VWRC team will also have a booth at the other

SciTech events scheduled throughout the week in the Verde Valley including Mingus Union High School, Camp Verde High School and the final event at the Yavapai College SciTech Expo on March 27, 6-7:30 pm.

Written by: Laurie Parker, Program Administrator

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

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Chip Norton

Chris Jensen

Mal Otterman

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Hank Dingemann

Jim Quinn

Joan Otterson

Harry Sweet

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Becky Brassfield

Kimberly Poucher

Kipian Horcos

Jim Kreunen

Jodi Allen

Theresa Hughes

Ron Condon

Shannon Shaw

James Mast

Sarah Sonrenbery

Mick Emerson

Lo Modric

Tony Gioia

Charlie Hawken

Krystina Karczewski

Martin Yassi

Hugh Taylor

Jeremy Mc Murtry

Colette Condon

Felicia Coates

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**

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

Volunteer with VWRC!

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

VWRC Map & Monitor property for invasive plants.

No experience necessary!

ALTERNATIVE PLANT OF THE QUARTER

Native Plants of the Verde Valley

Get to Know: Arizona alder (*Alnus oblongifolia*)

Arizona alder is a member of the birch family and one of the largest of the native alders, this tree is found living in canyons and along streams throughout the Arizona “transition zone”, and in the mountain regions and sky islands of Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Mexico, including Arizona’s White Mountains.

What it looks like

- Bark is dark gray, smooth, becoming blackish and breaking into shallow vertical plates in age.
- Pretty red buds on twigs.
- Alder has **lenticels** on the bark- these are like pores, allowing the tree to “breathe” through its bark. (Want to check out more lenticels? You can also see lenticels on the skins of apples and pears.)
- Leaves are oval or oblong, with **doubly serrate** margins. (The edge of the leaf is toothed, with a second “tooth” on each “tooth”.)
- Male and female flowers are produced on the same plant. Male flowers are long, yellow-green catkins, hanging in clusters. Female flowers are small and reddish-green.
- Fruits look like tiny pine cones, ripening in the fall and persisting on branches through the winter.



Alder supports life “under the surface”

Did you know that alder plays an important role in the aquatic food chain in the Verde River and creeks in our watershed? Trees that grow along streams drop leaves, twigs, nuts and seeds into the water. This organic material is an important food source for fungi, bacteria, and small critters called aquatic macroinvertebrates. These critters, in turn, are an important source of food for fish, and the circle of life goes on! Leaf input from a mix of native trees- like alder, ash, cottonwood, and sycamore- supports healthier and more diverse aquatic communities than leaf litter from a single, invasive species like salt cedar or tree of heaven.

VWRC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Wednesday, April 15, 2015 9-11 AM

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

Sustainable Funding Meeting

Tuesday, April 28, 10AM- noon

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting Room

Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 28, 2015 1-3 PM

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting Room

MAY

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Wednesday, May 20, 9-11 AM

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

Sustainable Funding Meeting

Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 10 AM-Noon

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting Room

VWRC Strategic Planning Workshop

Tuesday, May 26, 2015 ,

Where: TBD

The Verde Valley is home to an array of unique and fascinating native plants. By working to control the spread of non-native, invasive plants in the Verde Valley, VWRC is giving a helping hand to native plants - a valuable part of our Arizona natural heritage.

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

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FVRG and VWRC

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