

PIMA COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS AND RECREATION VOLUNTEER NEWS

ISSUE NO. 72

JANUARY 2016

WELCOME ERIN SOL

Please join us in welcoming Erin Sol as Program Specialist working part-time with the NRPR Environmental Education team. Erin is a Tucson native with a wealth of experience as an educator, naturalist, and volunteer coordinator. Erin has been on the job for just a few days and her infectious enthusiasm for community outreach is already making an impact. Over the next couple of months Erin will



take a whirlwind tour of the wide range of NRPR educational programs and activities. As she gets her bearings we will identify the specific program areas where Erin will take a lead role for the team. Erin will also continue her work as Outreach Coordinator with the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center and encourages all of you to sign up for Beat Back Buffelgrass Day on January 23, 2016.

VOLUNTEER MEETING

Friday, January 29, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Brandi Fenton Memorial Park Visitor Center, 3482 E. River Road

The Buffelgrass Menace: Invasive buffelgrass is threatening our beautiful Sonoran Desert community. Learn about the efforts underway to protect both our natural and urban areas from this highly flammable scourge. Presented by Erin Sol, Outreach Coordinator of the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center and NRPR Environmental Education Specialist.

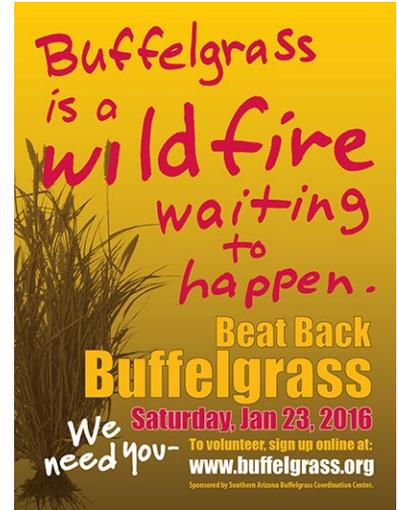
BEAT BACK BUFFELGRASS DAY JANUARY 23

For the 9th annual Beat Back Buffelgrass Day Pima County NRPR and the City of Tucson are co-hosting a buffelgrass removal project at Kennedy Park. The site is on an easy-to-moderate slope and is family-friendly with restrooms nearby. We'll be digging out buffelgrass and picking up litter. It's a great way to learn how to identify and properly eradicate



Photo: Doris Evans

buffelgrass. Plus, we'll be reducing the risk of brushfires in the area. We're working to rid Tucson of buffelgrass – one neighborhood at a time! We look forward to having you join us to finally put this site into maintenance mode. To learn more or volunteer, visit: www.buffelgrass.org.



A GEOLOGICAL WALK THROUGH TIME

On February 27, the Environmental Education team pilots a new program focused on reconstructing our region's history by piecing together geologic clues. Families band together on a short hike in the Tucson Mountains, sleuth through time, collect evidence, explore geological processes, and decode the stories of the surrounding mountains. At the end of the journey participants piece together a timeline to discover how this area transformed from ocean, to swamp, to desert supporting all manner of life including trilobites, dinosaurs and of course, humans. Though the program is initially offered as an Outdoor Family Day event, it will be adapted for school groups beginning in the 2016-17 school year. If you are interested in joining us, please email Julie Strom (Julie.Strom@pima.gov) we'd love to have you participate!

Outdoor Family Day: A Geological Walk through Time

Saturday, February 27, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Tucson Mountain Park Desert Discovery Center, 7798 W. Gates Pass Road

SCHOOL PROGRAM EVENTS

January, February, and March offer many opportunities for volunteers to get involved with youth programs. First, we host a wildlife interpretive table at the annual Ted Walker Youth Day at Old Tucson Studios. This event on Thursday, January 28, attracts up to 4000 (yes, 4000) school-age children, parents, and teachers. This year the NRPR table will highlight our Bat Research Simulation activity. Students will be able to learn about the fascinating natural history of bats as well as their huge economic importance through interactive ac-

tivities such as bat netting simulation. Volunteers may sign up for the morning shift (8:30 – 11:30 a.m.) or the afternoon shift (11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.). A hot dog lunch is provided for all volunteers to this event.

In February, the annual Agua Caliente History Day for approximately 180 fourth graders rolls around again. This event provides six activities that highlight Arizona History including local archaeology, Hispanic history, and ranching. Volunteers are needed to assist staff presenters from 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 9. Lunch is provided by Friends of Agua Caliente Park for event volunteers.

In March, we repeat the history day activities at Canoa Ranch for area fourth graders. This event is somewhat smaller than History Day at Agua Caliente Park with about 75 students, parents, and teachers attending. Volunteers are needed for half-day shifts (8:30 – 11:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.). Lunch is not provided for Canoa Ranch History Day.

You do not have to be a regular school program volunteer to participate in these fun events. To sign up, contact Steve at steve.russell@pima.gov.



will spark an idea of how you might bring attention to the guided walks, talks, tours, and other fun outdoor activities in Pima County parks.

AVOIDING INTERPRETIVE PITFALLS

The following is an excerpt from a handout called “Avoiding Interpretive Pitfalls” by Volunteer Doris Evans:

Avoid anthropomorphism—giving animals, plants, rocks, etc. human attributes. Examples: the roadrunner is the clown of the desert, the wise owl, the sly fox, sneaky snake, etc.

Refrain from using judgmental words such as “good”, “bad”, “nasty”, “dangerous”, “cute”, or “ugly”. Instead point out the niche of the animal and its importance in the environment. Allow people to form their own opinions, rather than subjecting yours. Kids, especially, are impressionable and to suggest a negative quality will unduly influence their attitude, perhaps forever.

Avoid giving the impression that animals “like” to do something, such as “Cactus Wrens like to nest in cholla cactus” or “Javelinas like to eat prickly pear”. Instead say, “Cactus Wrens instinctively choose plants, such as cholla cactus in which to build their nests”. Or “Prickly Pear cactus is a major part of the diet of javelinas”. Animal behavior evolved along with the environment in which they live and their nesting and feeding is adapted to it. There is probably not much “liking” going on.

Avoid anthropomorphic words and phrases such as “struggle for survival”, “harsh environment”, “the snake is the enemy of the packrat”. These give the message that the environment is a difficult, uncomfortable, and dangerous place.

We often hear people speak of the desert as a harsh environment. It may seem harsh to us when temperatures soar, but to the plants and animals that live here, it is not harsh. They are adapted to the conditions of heat and drought, stickery and thorny plants, and the available food. Just as the whale is at home in the ocean depths and the polar bear is perfectly comfortable in Arctic cold, the desert wildlife thrives in the desert.

THREE LECTURES YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS

In January we have three dynamic speakers scheduled for our Agua Caliente Park Lecture Series. On January 10, author, historian and lecturer Jan Cleere presents *Legacies of the Past: Arizona Women Who Made History*. On January 24, University of Arizona Geosciences Professor George Davis presents *Geology of the Rincon Mountains*. And on January 31, Barbara Marriott tells the stories of men who lived in the old west during its hell-raising, dangerous, and sometimes unbelievable frontier days, during her presentation, *Tales of Arizona's Pioneer Men*. Lectures are on Sundays, from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m., at the Agua Caliente Park Rose Cottage and are free for volunteers. Just let us know if you plan to attend. We hope to see you there!

ONLINE REGISTRATION AND PROMOTION

Many thanks to Volunteer Liz Pedersen for bringing new users to the NRPR online registration site (www.pima.gov/nrpr). Liz recruited 12 friends from her Newcomers Club to register and attend “Wake up with the Birds” at Agua Caliente Park. Liz reports that one of her friends was thrilled to have found a pottery class while she was on the website. Perhaps this story

**Interested in Volunteering? Email us at eeducation@pima.gov
Call us at Environmental Education Office 520-615-7855**

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