

Bringing Back the Natives

We are in the final stages of a three year project to restore two ponds at Agua Caliente Park.

As the main pond fills with water from the spring and well we are preparing the pond for the return of native aquatic wildlife that were once widespread throughout the Tucson Basin. Initially the pond will be empty of much aquatic life especially as the pond sealant is still settling in the pond. That is what is creating the current rich blue color. Once the sealant has settled, we will begin to carefully introduce native aquatic species and other native species will return on their own.



Photo: Bruce Taubert, Arizona Game and Fish Department

▲ The Gila topminnow (*Poeciliopsis occidentalis*) is a small (1-2 inch) fish native to the greater Gila River watershed in Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Sonora, Mexico.

In the coming months we are also planning on introductions of longfin dace, Gila Chub, and several other native fish species. Keep a look out for turtles on the logs placed in the pond and the wildlife island. Although not native, the grass carp will also be returned to help control aquatic vegetation in the pond. With time, the rich diversity of plants, fish, and wildlife will return to the ponds. We hope you are as excited as we are to see the pond's habitats develop over time.

This effort to restore our native aquatic heritage in Pima County will start with the introduction of endangered Gila Topminnow to do the important job of eating mosquito larva. These beautiful tiny native fish will thrive in the ponds at Agua Caliente, and their populations will increase, as long as we can keep the non-native and invasive predatory fish (mosquito fish, bass, aquarium fish) and frogs (bull frogs) out of the ponds. The introduction of non-native fish will adversely impact the successful restoration of the Gila Topminnow.

▼ Gila Chub



Photo: Jeff Simms, BLM

▼ Lowland Leopard Frog



Photo: Celeste Andressen, The Nature Conservancy

Photo: Doris Evans



▲ Flame Skimmer Dragonfly

▼ Pupfish



Photo: USFWS



Photo: Jim Rorabaugh, Tucson Herpetological Society

◀ Sonoran Mud Turtle

We need your help! Be a supporter and steward of the unique natural resources of Agua Caliente Park.

Never release any kind of animal in the pond or at the park. If you see someone releasing any pets or wildlife at the park please speak up and inform park staff.



The project to restore native fish and wildlife depends on everyone's cooperation