

PMPC BOARD NOMINATIONS

The following members have been nominated to fulfill three year PMPC Board positions according to nominations chairman Terry Horne. They are:

Mary Lu Allen
Steve Alonge
Heidi Fisher
Michael Goodman
Wendy Hodgson
Craig Weaver

Nominations will be voted upon at the May, 1, 2006 annual meeting. Other board members continue their terms.

EVENTS CALENDAR

This week! Upcoming Sonoran Parkway Alignment Meetings:

March 29, Pinnacle Peak High School (cafeteria on west side), 3535 E. Mayo Blvd. (west on Deer Valley Rd. from Desert Ridge).

March 30, Horseshoe Trails Elementary School, 5405 E. Pinnacle Vista Drive (east on Jomax from Tatum Blvd.).

Meetings start at 6:15 P.M. with map displays and presentation at 6:45 P.M. Plan to attend.

April 15, North Mountain Visitor Center - Coffee house & music events featuring jazz by 'Enigma' 9:00 A.M. - 11:00 A.M.

May 1, PMPC Annual Dinner featuring Travis Bean speaking on "Invasive Plants". Desert Botanical Garden; call 602-266-4501 for more details. Watch for invitation arriving soon!

May 22, Open Space Conference, AZ Parks & Recreation Assoc. for information or to register call 602-335-1962.

Clip this form and join or renew today. Make your check to "PMPC" and mail it to:

PMPC
P.O. Box 26121
Phoenix, AZ 85068 - 6121



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Name: _____

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Check if you wish to receive the PMPC newsletter via e-mail.

Join PMPC and help continue the mission of education, protection, and expansion of our Mountain & Desert Preserves!

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY (please circle)

Family / Individual \$20

Organization \$30

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT (please circle)

Slope Protector \$50 - \$100

Cliff Protector \$100 - \$500

Peak Protector \$500+

AREA OF INTEREST/EXPERTISE

(please circle)

Communications Membership

Speical Events Research / Archives

Trail Maintenance Legislative Action



Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council, Inc.
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TO:



LOOKOUT

Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council, Inc.

P.O. Box 26121, Phoenix, AZ 85068-6121

www.phoenixmountains.org

SPRING in the MOUNTAINS

By Tice Supplee

High clouds departed and a clear beautiful morning greeted participants in the 30th Annual PMPC "Spring in the Mountains" event held March 4, 2006 at the South Mountain Environmental Center.

The day began with the release of a rehabilitated Harris' hawk by the Arizona Game and Fish Department just south of the Education Center. The Sonoran Audubon Society then led a fun bird walk where highlights included a flock of Lark Buntings and a pair of Gilded flickers that were "in the mood for love", a sure sign that spring is in the air. White-crowned and Brewer's Sparrows were seen staging for the flight north.

Wendy Hodgson of the Desert Botanical Garden led a longer hike through the beautiful upland desert habitat at South Mountain Preserve. With wildflowers in short supply the hike focused on the trees of the Sonoran Desert. Hikes ended with a cowboy style breakfast that was served up by the folks (including L.V. Yates) of Biscuitflat Chuckwagon. Everyone wanted the gravy recipe, and the outdoor breakfast was fantastic!

Educational displays like the one by Audubon Arizona were a hit with children, giving them the materials to make pinecone and peanut butter birdseed feeders. While Arizona Game and Fish Department Wildlife Center had a fabulous display with live birds that fascinated everyone. "Howdy" a Burrowing Owl and a Turkey Vulture were real stars.

Liberty Wildlife had a display detailing a new training program designed to teach citizens how to become field volunteers on scientific projects. The first training workshop will be offered this spring. Contact Liberty Wildlife to learn more about this exciting new Citizen Science program.

The morning ended with a presentation by Dr. Jim Dawson about the Harris' Hawk. While Dr. Dawson spoke about the unique qualities of these desert raptors, a live hawk flew over the audience, giving us all an overwhelming appreciation for these birds. Spring in the Mountains also known as "Spring Trek" continues the tradition of public outreach started 30 years ago when PMPC members along with the Arizona State Horsemen's Association began a trail ride via Dreamy Draw to a breakfast site inside the proposed "Wilderness in a city".

Volunteers, Donors, Exhibitors and Contributors all helped make the 30th Spring Trek a wonderful day. Special thanks go to: Arizona Audubon, Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (AG&F), Sonoran Audubon Society, Liberty Wildlife, Windmill Water, Botanicals in Clay, Greenway Saddlery, Style Masters Hair Design, and of course to Biscuitflat Chuckwagon!

NON-NATIVE PLANTS AND URBAN AREAS - SHOULD WE CARE?

By Wendy C. Hodgson

Non-native plant species have received considerable attention by scientists, and more recently, the press, politicians and land managers - and for good reason. Most people do not understand exotic species' capability of altering the desert and urban landscape dramatically.

Why and how certain exotic plants become invasive is not well understood (there are some interesting hypotheses, including the role of increased CO₂ in the atmosphere due to fossil fuel burning and vehicle emissions). But, it is certain that certain exotic plants will become invasive over time. In our desert ecosystems, buffelgrass is one of a number of exotics that is of great concern.

The Sonoran Desert is an ecosystem not evolved with fire.

This perennial warm-season grass is native to Africa and was imported in the 1930's to Arizona as forage for cattle. It thrives in arid conditions, often out-competing native plants for water, sunlight, nutrients and space. In addition, during dry periods this grass provides fuel for fast-moving fires. The Sonoran Desert is an ecosystem not evolved with fire; native plants are widely spaced and the annuals that do fill in such spaces during and after periods of favorable rainfall are generally small. Long-living species including saguaros and ironwoods usually die after intense or repeated fires.

Overgrazing and other man-initiated impacts that are changing our diverse succulent desert to a woody shrub and/or grass monoculture ecosystem, have contributed to this problem. According to Dr. Mark Dimmitt, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, "just ask people to imagine their beautiful desert hillsides covered with grass without the saguaro, without the paloverdes, without the ironwoods.... These invasive weeds are threatening to turn our desert hillsides into grass, not a grassland, but a monoculture wasteland" (Arizona Daily Star 2005). Red brome is another exotic that has virtually taken over much of the Sonoran Desert, and any attempt to eradicate is generally

accepted as moot. This plant also contributes to extensive and hot fires such as Arizona's second largest fire in recorded history, the Cave Creek Complex fire of 2005.

Tucson has "reached the threshold," according to Travis Bean, a University of Arizona Senior Research Specialist and exotic plant expert at the School of Natural Resources, adding that "the desert as we know it could be destroyed" (Bean 2006). Buffelgrass now exists in dense flammable stands along every major surface-street and highway in Tucson, "with Phoenix only a few years behind." Travis adds that Tucson and

Phoenix have now become the source of buffelgrass spread into the surrounding deserts. With growth of these cities there will be greater chances of human caused fires and establishment of this and other exotics. Our Sonoran Desert habitat, "the ecological backdrop to southern Arizona's lucrative eco-tourism, resort and development industries, could become a thing of the past, leaving a monoculture of burning buffelgrass in its wake," according to Travis.

Is all of this unsubstantiated over-reactions and rabble-rousing rhetoric? No. A number of cases of destructive fires in Pima County have been analyzed and the common denominator for all has been the abundance of buffelgrass in and near these areas (Bean 2006). We can now predict when and where such events will occur with the presence of flammable stands: Saguaro National Park, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Ironwood Forest National Monument, Coronado National Forest - and the majority of Phoenix's system of Natural Parks and Preserves. Within Papago Park, buffelgrass populations appear to be

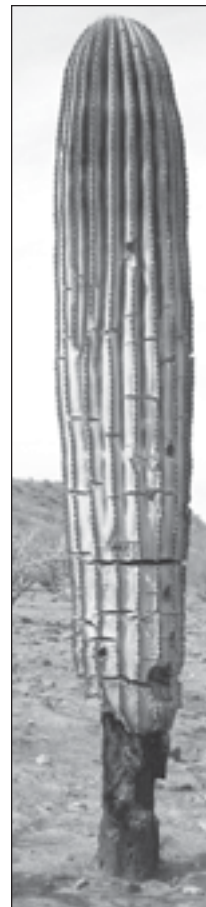
increasing. In a number of our preserves, including South Mountain Park, there occur large populations of buffelgrass, Sahara mustard and fountain grass, all species that contribute to large, damaging fires. Still not convinced? Consider this: with a greater interface of urban areas and their inhabitants with the parks and other more "wild" areas, such fires will continue to impact homes, businesses, and human life (Bean 2006). Increased fire risk presents challenges to local fire departments, threatens utility infrastructures and eventually may lower property values and raise insurance rates.

As bleak as this sounds, there is hope. We must remember that we created the opportunities for their successful establishment following our unintentional or intentional transport of these plants. We can slow or reverse some of the problems that we have created.

There is much we do not know about introduced species and how they affect habitats. Some introduced species may serve a function in colonizing overgrazed or highly eroded areas where native plants may not survive, providing habitat for other plants or wildlife. It is clear, however, that certain species do become invasive after a period of time. We must persuade or support those whose mandate is to set and carry out policies addressing appropriate management of our public resources based on sound science. More of the public, politicians and land managers need to take the issue of non-native plants seriously.

The Pima County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to manage invasive species within the county (Bean 2006). The Arizona Department of Agriculture listed buffelgrass as a restricted noxious weed and Governor

Napolitano created the Invasive Species Advisory Council in 2005. Public education is key to the successful recovery of desert habitats.



The exterior, or epidermal layer, of desert plants can not withstand fire.

Those people living near the preserves have a responsibility to learn what plants are appropriate for their landscapes. Do not buy known or potentially invasive species such as fountain grass or African sumac, and discourage nurseries from selling these plants. Forbid landscapers from planting invasive species in your yard or at your place of business. Vehicles, including those used in construction, shoes, clothing, wind and animals often transport seeds - take the time to clean them off. Educate others - too often the media misses the chance to educate and inform, referring to desert fires as "brush fires," with no reference to non-native plants as the primary fuel-providing source (Bean 2006).

Consider becoming involved in or helping create programs that are aimed at eradicating these species, such as The Sonoran Desert Weedwackers, a community network of volunteers coordinated by the Tucson chapter of the Arizona Native Plant Society (ANPS). This volunteer weed eradication program operates in cooperation with the county, national park service, botanical gardens, museums and other scientific institutions (Siegel 2002).

PMPC and the Arizona Native Plant Society, Phoenix Chapter, have initiated plans to develop a buffelgrass eradication program in Phoenix Mountains' parks and preserves. In addition, Travis Bean is our guest speaker at the May 1, 2006 PMPC annual meeting at the Desert Botanical Garden. Travis will discuss recent findings regarding invasive plants, demonstrating how we need to be very careful with what we plant in our yards, particularly around the Mountain Preserves.

This will be a wonderful talk and I hope many of you can come to hear Travis Bean.

Species of Extreme Concern in our Sonoran Desert

Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*)
Fountaingrass (*Pennisetum setaceum*)
Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*)
Red Brome (*Bromus rubens*)
Tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*)
Hawk's-eye (*Euryops multifidus*)
Arugula, rocket-salad (*Eruca vesicaria* ssp. *sativa*) Yes, the same plant you like in your salads.

Other Species of Concern

African sumac (*Rhus lancea*)
Stinknet (*Oncosiphon piluliferum*)
African-daisy (*Osteospermum* spp.)
Yellow-bird-of-paradise (*Caesalpinia gilliesii*)
Tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*)
Corn-mustard (*Sinapis arvensis*)
Johnson grass (*Sorghum halapense*)
Natal grass (*Melinis repens*)

References:

Bean, T. 2006. Buffelgrass in the Sonoran Desert: can we prevent the unhooking of a unique American ecosystem? *The Plant Press* 30(1): 4-5.

Siegel, B. 2002. Community responds to invasive grass threat. *Arizona Native Plant Society*. http://aznps.org/html/exotics_weedwackers.html.

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The Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council is dedicated to protecting our Phoenix Mountains Preserves.



Issue of Concern

EDGE TREATMENT UPDATE

By Mike Goodman

The council land use subcommittee recently reviewed the proposed changes to the edge treatment guidelines. The revisions will most likely go before the City Council sometime in May. The subcommittee was asked to consider expanding the guidelines to cover the entire city to help protect areas like the north side of South Mountain (at 24th Street for example) which is being destroyed because the city lacks a policy.

The subcommittee asked the Planning Department to go to all Village Planning Committees impacted by Preserve areas to ask them if they would support expanding the guidelines. You can help by contacting any members you know on these committees to ask them to support the guidelines. Help by attending upcoming meetings. Check public agendas on the city web site www.phoenix.gov.

Also, you can help by contacting the members of the Council Subcommittee and ask them to support expanding the edge treatment guidelines citywide.

The council members are Claude Mattox (chair), Dave Siebert, Greg Stanton, Peggy Neely, and Tom Simplot.