



THE ROUNDUP



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Mission Statement: The Rio Verde Horsemen's Association is dedicated to protecting all horse properties, large and small facilities alike, and preserving horse privileges along with our rural lifestyle. The Association is committed to uniting our horse community in working toward these goals. Membership is open to all, horse owners and non-horse owners alike, who support our purpose. We are not a Homeowners Association; we do not restrict, regulate or police.

NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES

A Message from Your President

"Here I come to save the day!" That theme of Mighty Mouse rings through my head as I write a huge THANK YOU to the amazing men, and probably some women, who came out after our summer monsoon storms to grade our unmaintained county roads. These heroes volunteer their time and equipment to make life easier for us travelers without a thought of pay or a thank you.

Owning an older tractor, I can say new tires, tractor parts, even the consumption of fuel gets expensive, and yet these wonderful folks are happy with a smile, a wave, or a toot from your horn as you pass them by. Many would probably be grateful for a bit of fuel money, some might appreciate a yummy baked item or a dozen fresh eggs, but more often it's just your sincere thanks that warm their hearts.



Due to budget cuts and an increasing amount of development in outlying rural areas such as ours, sometime in the late 70's to early 80's Maricopa stopped their courtesy grading and maintaining of our *private* county dirt roads. I have had a few interesting talks with various Maricopa County Department of Transportation departments and basically, just because there is an easement for a public right of way doesn't mean county takes ownership of a road. Basically, it is up to us, as residents, to keep them drivable. Without the attention of a tractor, a washed-out road can quickly become a goat trail and impossible to maneuver unless you have a truck or 4x4 vehicle.

So, if you travel on a dirt road, then many of you will agree, often a hero drives a tractor sporting a ball cap or a cowboy hat! THANK YOU for your time and energy to make our commutes smoother on our vehicles and safer to travel.



Terry Holmes-Stecyk

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SURROUNDING PUBLIC LANDS AND OPEN SPACES

by Mike Oster, Area Awareness Committee

As RVHA members, we are blessed to live in a very special 10,000-acre area (almost 20 square miles) of the Rio Verde Foothills in the high Sonoran Desert.

The beauty of the area attracts residents and visitors alike, who appreciate the opportunity for rural and equestrian-related activities, and an alternative to city living.

Our 1 plus-acre residential only parcels underlie our rural definition. And our flora, fauna and weather are superb.

Depending on your perspective, you may feel that our somewhat remote location contributes to our inaccessibility or exclusivity. Either way, take a moment to consider why we are not just another contiguous community in the patchwork quilt of Maricopa County neighborhoods. Lucky us! We are literally surrounded by public lands and open spaces.

Each of these areas is operated under the stewardship and financial support of a government entity, and offers open access and recreational opportunities.

Maricopa County is committed to preserving our rural and equestrian lifestyle, and the natural environment.

First, a bit of history:

For many years, our area was a secluded valley far from the metropolitan Phoenix area. The Yavapai and Apache Indians occupied our region until the late 1800s. Ranching and cattle grazing operations were prevalent from the 1880s to the 1960s.

At that time, the Tonto National Forest, of which we were a part, began opening the area to private development via land trades. The original planning area of 320 square miles included several other communities that were not yet incorporated, such as Cave Creek, Care-free and Fountain Hills. Significant residential development did not begin until the 1990s.

To the North and East—Tonto National Forest

Fifth largest forest in the US, Tonto is managed by the Forest Service division of the USDA and contains almost 3 million acres of rugged and spectacular country. With over 200 miles of trails, the lands on our borders feature the beautiful Saguaro cactus-studded desert foothills.

To the South—McDowell Mountain Regional Park

In 1944, Maricopa County commenced planning and land acquisition to create the Park. It now totals 21,000 acres (33 square miles) and is one of the largest in the Maricopa County Parks System. With over 40 miles of trails, McDowell Mountain Regional Park rates as one of the most scenic with its majestic mountain views.

To the West-McDowell Sonoran Preserve

Now nearing its goal of 35,000 acres (57 square miles), the Preserve is owned and operated by the City of Scottsdale.

The City, and we, owe a debt of gratitude to the nonprofit McDowell Sonoran Land Trust, now the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. In 1994 it was with their wisdom and generosity that the preservation effort of our McDowell Mountains was launched. They worked with the City to successfully pass the sales tax increase in 1995 to fund future acquisitions and operating expenses.

That's all the time we have today, boys and girls. Watch for our next edition for information on new and planned developments including Scottsdale National Golf Club and the Desert Discovery Center.

Would you like to get more involved in RVHA but don't know how to do so? Join our Area Awareness Committee and be the source for one or more areas of interest, such as the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. Contact Terry or Mike for further details.

This is the third article in a series by Mike Oster, Chair of our Area Awareness Committee. Previous newsletter articles include:

Spring 2017

Announcement of the Committee and its Work

Summer 2017

Trends in the Greater Scottsdale Area



Desert Gardening in the Rio Verde Foothills

by Brian McCarthy

Writing about gardening is about as broad a subject as one could tackle. All of you are already likely gardeners, whether you plant a few flowers, water your showcase lawn, or sell your produce to local restaurants or at the farmers market. Some of you will surely be classified as experts but if you are like me, gardening remains a black art, which has the appeal of both a science experiment and a rewarding hobby.

I don't think of myself as a great gardener, but I have been successful in growing both fruits and vegetables in the area. It takes a great deal of trial and error, but my attempts to learn the basics and weed through the vast quantities of irrelevant on-line information and translate the successes of others to our desert environment has been rewarding. I've been gardening out in the Rio Verde Foothills for over 10 years and can honestly say that I've made just about every mistake available. Today, I have a very productive 3-season vegetable garden, powered mostly by horse manure, and an amazing, albeit young, fruit orchard.

Two years ago, I undertook to start an orchard and met with all the issues...cattle, javelina, birds, insects, etc. I now have several productive Meyer Lemon trees, and an assortment of citrus trees including tangerines, clementine, blood oranges, Lisbon lemons, limes and much more. I will admit to having murdered a few fruit trees along the way, foolishly applying sworn success strategies harvested from the many websites available.

As confidence grew so, too, did the orchard, adding 5 peach trees, 4 apple trees, a plum tree, 2 apricot trees, 4 varietal figs and 4 pomegranates - 38 trees in all. All are growing like weeds and delivered great fruit. We have some grapes and delicious blackberries and raspberries as well. Lots of peach jam, fig preserves, tons of salsa, and spaghetti sauces from the vegetable garden.

I usually do two seasonal vegetable gardens, one late fall for cabbage, carrots and cauliflower and one early spring for standard fare. Timing can be tricky here, especially in the fall. I don't typically start a second tomato crop since we are usually not here in September and October.

As requested by the RVHA directors, I gave a talk at Lori Bridwell's ranch on September 8th. I produced a long, technical, and inclusive presentation prepared for those able to attend. For those interested in the subject but were unable to attend, it was suggested that there might be some interest in the subject as a series of articles.

The presentation topics included:

- Soil preparation: pH, nutrients, amendments, etc.
- Micro-climate impact on plant selection.
- Plant seasonality in the desert. Climate 9-9.5.
- Desert sun impact
- Water application
- Understanding chill factors and fruiting times and their impact on plant choice.
- Protection from desert critters
- High density, vegetable gardening and varietal compatibility
- Minimum work/maximum output gardening: Practical step by step advice. -i.e. How to plant productive tomatoes, cruciferous vegetables etc.



Soil preparation

Let's put the steps in sequence for simplicity. Make a decision. What type of garden do you wish to start? The choices include in-ground, raised-bed, planter, simple pot or many other variations. Size doesn't matter. My vegetable garden is 16 ft by 16 ft and we can't eat all the vegetables grown there. BTW, my horses love cabbage leaves...who knew!

It is essential to understand the components of soil for garden success. The most important step in soil preparation is one that is usually overlooked -pH!

As stated by Leigh Reich, Fine Gardening, "Every plant has its preferred range of soil acidity, and when the pH level is out of that range, a host of ills may follow. A basic understanding of pH will not only help keep your garden healthy but also assist you if things go bad. Here is what you need to know to make smart decisions about managing your soil's pH.

What is pH?

The acidity or alkalinity of a substance is measured in pH units, a scale running from 0 to 14. A pH of 7 is neutral. As numbers decrease from 7, the acidity gets higher. As numbers increase from 7 so does the alkalinity. Soils generally range from an extremely acidic pH of 3 to a very alkaline pH of 10. This range is a result of many factors, including a soil's parent material and the amount of yearly rainfall an area receives. Most cultivated plants enjoy slightly acidic conditions with a pH of about 6.5. Pin oak, gardenia, blueberry, azalea, and rhododendron are among the plants that demand a very acidic pH of 4.5 to 5.5.

What does pH do?

Soil pH has indirect yet far-reaching effects on plants. Plant nutrients become available or unavailable according to the soil's pH level. Yellowing between the veins of young leaves indicates an iron deficiency, a condition arising not from a lack of iron in the soil but from insufficient soil acidity to put iron into a form that a plant can absorb. Most plants thrive in slightly acidic soil because that pH affords them good access to all nutrients.

The darker side of soil pH is plant poisoning. Too low a pH level can render the plant nutrient manganese available at toxic levels; geraniums are particularly sensitive to this, showing their discomfort with yellowed, brown-flecked, or dead slightly acidic soil because that pH affords them good access to all nutrients. leaves. A pH level that is too low also liberates aluminum—not a plant nutrient—in amounts that can stunt root growth and interfere with a plant's uptake of nutrients. At a high pH level, the plant nutrient molybdenum becomes available in toxic amounts.

Soil pH also influences soil-dwelling organisms, whose well-being, in turn, affects soil conditions and plant health. The slightly acidic conditions enjoyed by most plants are also what earthworms like, as do microorganisms that convert nitrogen into forms that plants can use.”



So, before you do anything to amend your soil, test the pH. There are inexpensive kits available but the best way is to spend about \$32.00 and send a soil sample away to a test center in Arizona. You will get your report with information to add the amendments they recommend. It's well worth it and can make the difference between a struggling garden with so-so cropping and an amazing garden. In my first year of vegetable gardening, I tilled the soil, added fertilizer, peat and a bunch of “recommended” other stuff including Epsom salts. I planted 15 varieties of tomatoes and struggled all spring to deliver a small crop of tomatoes. This spring, I planted 20 tomato plants in the same location in raised beds, mixed in aged horse manure with shavings, fish emulsion, egg shells, coffee grounds and banana peels. As a result, I harvested somewhere near 300 lbs of delicious tomatoes. Plants grew tall enough that I had to use rope suspended from overhead to keep them up.

Our desert soil here is usually very alkaline, in the range of pH 7.5 to 8.5. It typically has only 1% organic material (vegetables like a minimum of 40%). In my tomato example, tomatoes prefer a slightly acidic environment. Cabbage, broccoli etc. prefer a slightly alkaline soil. When pH range is mismatched with the optimal pH range of your plants, the plant roots struggle to absorb the available nutrients. Often, this is when a friend suggests you add more fertilizer. It's not the lack of nutrients, it's the inability of the roots to use the

nutrients which cause them to struggle. Adding more fertilizer often just damages the roots and injures the plant. This is the same for all plants. Growing a lawn in alkaline conditions and using east coast seed designed for neutral pH will doom your best efforts to grow grass.

So, start with pH. Test your soil. And select the right plants. Start saving your egg shells, banana skins and coffee grinds. You won't be disappointed.

Good luck.



THANK YOU, Brian McCarthy, for sharing your gardening secrets, as well as your trials and errors, to finally achieve the right environment to create a successful garden in our desert. I have full confidence I will finally harvest a tomato or two and might even get a zucchini or yellow crookneck to grow.

Brian, your jams were delicious. Perhaps you'll be giving us a canning lesson next year. ;-)

Venue cancellations can't deter the determined board of RVHA to give our members information and a fun, educational evening. Thank you, Lori Bridwell, for opening your home to the 22 members who signed up for a fabulous presentation. Snacks were provided, laughter was heard, as we all ended the evening with a head full of tips and hopes of having a wonderful garden this season.

Comments from presentation by attendees:

"It was extremely information," said Janie Terry

"Brian did a wonderful job! We had planned to leave a little early to attend our next door neighbor's pot luck, but hated to leave :)", said Kim Edwards

LEAVES

How silently they tumble down
And come to rest upon the ground
To lay a carpet, rich and rare,
Beneath the trees without a care,
Content to sleep, their work well done,
Colors gleaming in the sun.
At other times, they wildly fly
Until they nearly reach the sky.
Twisting, turning through the air
Till all the trees stand stark and bare.
Exhausted, drop to earth below
To wait, like children, for the snow.

by Elsie N. Brady



NO MORE LOST PETS!

If you or someone you know has ever lost their beloved pet, dog or cat, you have experienced the anxiety of worrying about them while hoping they'll be returned safely. Almost daily I see a post on Facebook about a found or missing dog, often without any form of ID. There are many avenues to help reunite pets with their family but the easiest and fastest method is proper identification.

ID Tags

The most common, cost-effective way to ID your pet is to put a collar on them with a metal or plastic tag that has their name and your phone number on it. Unfortunately, relying solely on this method of ID leaves too much to chance. Your pet may slip or break free of its collar, or someone may not actually call to let you know your pet has been found.



Micro chipping

Microchips are "a tiny transponder about the size of a grain of rice that uses radio waves to transmit information about your pet." A microchip is usually placed between your pet's shoulder blades. If you and your pet should become separated and it ends up in a shelter or at a veterinarian's office, the employees will use a scanner to detect the registry information and phone number of the microchip company your pet is registered with. Then the microchip company will contact the owner. It is important to keep current information registered with the micro chipping company as well.

Too much time is wasted looking for owners who don't have ID on their pets. Feed and pet supply stores are very inexpensive choices for getting tags and micro chipping done and will help your pet find its way home sooner.



REMEMBER CATALINA?

by Nikki Julien, Director of Education
Southwest Wildlife Conservation Center

She was the cute baby bobcat that we introduced to you in the June Newsletter. Catalina came to Southwest Wildlife as an imprinted bobcat. She was taken from her family during a very sensitive time. When her eyes opened there were humans caring for her instead of a bobcat mom. She became accustomed to humans for her needs. By the time she reached us at the tender age of 2 weeks old, she was very interested in interacting with humans—not good! An adult wild animal that has no fear of humans is dangerous to us and to itself.



Catalina loves to explore! Photo by volunteer Etienne Martin

Imprinting is irreversible so we knew right away that Catalina could never be released and would live in the sanctuary the rest of her life—possibly 20 years! But, if she was going to stay with us, she had to continue to be tolerant of humans. We need to clean her enclosure, give her food, and give her medical care while keeping her safe and the animal care personnel safe. So Catalina got quite a bit of socializing from our staff until she got too big for her little kitten attacks to be “cute” anymore. It was time for her to move out to her permanent home.

At the beginning of August, Catalina moved out of the nursery and into an enclosure along our tour route. Four other bobcats already live there. To make sure everyone would get along, Catalina was placed in a cage within the enclosure so she could safely meet the bobcats without the possibility of getting hurt. Even from her visit, the other bobcats were very interested in her and by the second visit they exchanged nose kisses! After several more visits, the small cage was opened and Catalina was allowed to walk into the big enclosure. She’s been home ever since!

As a sub-adult (a pre-teen you might say), Catalina is testing out what it means to be in her wild bobcat body. Like any kitten, she loves to jump, pounce and chase. But unlike a domestic kitten, bobcats have a wild side that is anything but tame! The adults are teaching her bobcat manners and bobcat ways. Catalina is already losing her interest in her human moms and embracing her “bobcattiness”.

Though we get babies in all summer, most of the babies who are brought to our facility are releasable. We minimize human contact so they are as wild as they can be when released. Being wild will help them be successful. A healthy fear of humans will keep bobcats and other wild animals away from roads, dogs and yards. Seeing Catalina while she is still a youngster is a rare event, so I hope you will join us for a tour within the next few months to meet her. Register



Cat Play—Catalina in the nursery back in June. Photo by Education Director Nikki Julien

for a tour on our website under the Visit Us tab: <https://www.southwestwildlife.org/visit-us/>

Your tour fee goes directly to helping us care for wild animals at our sanctuary. You can further help by becoming part of our Wild Family by giving a monthly donation: <https://www.southwestwildlife.org/donate/wildfamily/>

TRAFFIC CAMERAS

Submitted by Mike Oster

Depending on your point of view, you can stop smiling or start smiling on your way into town now.

The City has advised us that the traffic cameras westbound on Rio Verde Drive between 120th St and Alma School Rd, and eastbound on Dynamite between Pima and Alma School Rd have been removed and there are no plans to replace them.

A study of the traffic at these locations revealed that we do a pretty good job obeying the speed limits and no longer require adult supervision. Let's consider this a reward for a job well done, not an inducement to drive faster.

Those Saguaros with lenses on Dynamite Rd and Happy Valley Rd are still a bit of a mystery, but they are not in service of traffic enforcement.



HORSE CAMPING 101

by Claudia Jordan

The sun on your face, exploring new country by horseback, and the comradery of friends is what horse camping is all about. It's a wonderful way to get back to basics and celebrate life.

I have been an avid camper all my life and started horse camping in the early 2000s with my girlfriends at Mormon Lake. At first, I slept in the back of my pick-up truck or used a tent. Then I graduated to a pop-up camper on my truck, and now we have an Living Quarters Horse Trailer. Cecil and I love to take long weekends off and horse camp or go with friends. Memorable trips such as a week ride in Monument Valley are possible. Life is good!

Preparation is key to making your horse camping a positive and enjoyable experience.

Selecting Your Campsite

Where do you want to go? There are a wide variety of locations and types of camping and campsites to consider, from prepared horse campsites to pure wilderness areas. For beginners, going to a prepared campground is a good start, such as Groom Creek in Prescott or Little Eldon in Flagstaff. They have pens, hitching posts, water, a prepared campsite to park your trailer, and riding trails.

For any campsite, you must consider time of year, water, feed, where your horses will stay, trailer parking, and riding trails or cross-country areas for riding. If you are going to an unimproved forest area, you must be self-contained all the way around. You can camp anywhere in the National Forest on or near a forest road, unless it is prohibited by signs. It is recommended to preview the area you want to camp and ride in advance.

Water and Feed

It's easy to bring hay or pellets, but water has to be considered carefully. Is there a water source where you are going? If so, you may fill water buckets or barrel from your trailer after you arrive. Bring a hose, and be positive water is at your location prior to leaving home. (Always bring some water from home for emergencies.) If you are depending on a running creek, remember that most Arizona creeks are dry during summer. You can always fill up with water from home, just know it adds a lot of weight and affects your gas mileage. Use a water container system that is easy to fill and easy to get water into your buckets with a hose.

Horses love grazing, especially if they are not used to it. Walk the area first, making sure there is no broken glass or big holes. Use grazing as a backup to the hay or pellets you bring.

Containing Your Horses

The easiest is camping at an area with horse pens. You can bring your own portable horse pens, if you have them. You may also try a picket line (picket line), but this takes a little more knowledge and experience. The horses have a lot of freedom with a picket line and it doesn't take up much space. As a last resort, you can always tie your horse to the trailer or a tree. Be sure to tie your horses securely, using proper length, quick release, and a cotton lead rope. The rope should be short enough so the horse cannot get his hoof over the rope. Check it frequently. If you ride a lot during the day, your horse will welcome the rest. Use work to insure a peaceful night for your horse.

Equipment

Bring your usual riding and grooming tack, and have extra lead ropes and reins. Don't forget fly spray for horses and bug spray for yourself. For riding, bring a rain slicker, saddlebags or horn bags for water and food, knife, compass, and map. GPS doesn't always work. A good quadrangle map or Delorme state map book are invaluable. You can also visit the ranger station for free topo maps and ask for recommendations.

We like to bring a small firearm to fit in the saddlebag. It is not recommended to wear a gun or knife or anything on your belt or backpack in case you get unloaded from your horse. It could cause serious injury. However, do always carry a knife on your person; a clip knife can fit in your pocket for all situations. First aid kits for horse and rider should be in your trailer.



Bring water and feed buckets for each horse. Five gallon containers may come in handy to haul water. Bring a manure fork and lawn garbage bags for manure if you are in a prepared campground.

Horses

Experienced, calm trail horses are best for camping. Having a horse buddy along will help keep your horse quiet. If you haven't already, practice at home trail riding over different terrain, going through gates, equestrian step overs, stepping over logs and walking through water. Also practice trailer loading and your horse standing tied to the trailer, tree or post, for long periods of time. Before leaving, make sure your horses are well shod and it's not near time for new shoes.



If you plan to go on long rides while camping, and your horse is not used to it, please have a training plan well in advance to help your horse build muscles and stamina (and the rider!). It's best to be able to mount from the ground as a mounting block or rock may not be available on the trails.

For a dry run close to home, trailer overnight to McDowell Park, Bronco Trailhead, White Tanks, or Usery Park. Try out your skills, horses, and equipment before committing to a remote area.

Now you're ready to begin your next adventure!



RATTLESNAKE BIRTHING SEASON

by Terry Holmes-Stecyk

Just a reminder for us who live in the Sonoran Desert, prime snake habitat season is here. Female rattlesnakes give live birth to around 10 to 15 babies following the monsoons of July and August. They are fully equipped with venom and have almost no rattle to speak of. They gain a rattle section every time they shed. If you are out working in your garden or walking anywhere that has vegetation, be sure to look where you are going to step.



These young rattlers are completely independent of their mother. They remain in the area of their birth for the first 7 to 10 days, until they shed their first baby skin and add their first rattle. The litter then begins to disperse in search of food.

If you live in the desert you will eventually cross paths with a rattlesnake so be aware of these five things during baby rattlesnake season:

Baby rattlesnakes range in length from 6 to 12 inches and are easily camouflaged by brush and grass.

Baby rattlesnakes do not have rattles until they first shed their skins, so there will be no infamous “chica-chica” sound before they strike.

Despite their impish size, baby snakes have enough venom to be very dangerous if they bite a human.

Adult rattlesnakes do not always rattle an audible warning before or while they are biting.

It's a good idea to call the poison center if you notice an unidentified small cut or wound, even if you feel no pain. With the lack of a telltale rattle warning, people can be bitten without knowing what has happened until they notice their symptoms and attribute them to a snakebite.



RVHA will offer rattlesnake avoidance classes in the spring to help your dogs gain the skills to avoid them. However, any avoidance training depends on the dog being able to smell their presence **BEFORE** they strike. It's a good idea to keep the number of the nearest 24-hour vet clinic handy, just in case.

DONKEYS, DONKEYS EVERYWHERE!!

Submitted by Joyce BergHansen

It would be an understatement for me to say that donkeys have played a major role in opening up the world to me. As I entered into my Miniature Donkey breeding operation fifteen years ago I never dreamed I would find myself in so many foreign lands marveling at the versatility of the donkey. While visitors to donkey breeding operations in the United States have no clue what they are used for beyond herd protectors, other countries find their donkeys invaluable to their very existence.

I cannot deny that my herd held huge sentimental value. I was attached to each donkey as their individual personalities made each adorable long-ear unique. Each of my donkeys had a name and a pedigree. They were routinely vaccinated, wormed and examined by the veterinarian and the farrier. Meticulous records were kept on each donkey to document their healthcare and breeding history. All of this was done to ensure that they remained healthy and in excellent condition as they spent their life at my ranch. My situation is not unique to most serious breeders in the US. We are fortunate to have every available resource to care for our donkeys at our disposal. We know they are hearty little creatures that have survived adverse conditions around the world for centuries, yet we are conditioned to provide the most comprehensive care, and then some, to our donkeys.



During a recent trip to Morocco I discovered just how much an entire society depends on the donkey. Forty percent of the labor force in Morocco is involved in agriculture. Seventy-five percent of the farms in Morocco are twelve acres or less with an average herd of four cows according to a 2009 USDA study of the Moroccan Agricultural economy. These small farms are completely dependent upon the donkey. Donkeys are the only transportation

available to the majority of Berber families. Most families own one or two donkeys. They are used in facet of the farm, hauling, plowing and transportation. In other words, the donkeys are invaluable.



While the Berbers are a kind family oriented people, they do not have the emotional attachment to their animals as we westerners. Their donkeys are considered a necessary tool to their survival. They do not give names to their donkeys, and attach no sentiment to their ownership. When

a donkey is worn out, they trade it in for younger donkey, just like we trade vehicles. They cannot afford to have an animal that does not earn their keep. They do not have access to veterinary care in many parts of the country. In addition, the expense of the veterinary care would be prohibitive. Even though their donkeys live within the walls of their cities, they are not considered anything more than a beast of burden.

There is no debate that those of us involved in Agriculture in the US have the best resources available to the industry. I am not aware of any other country that has the wherewithal to allow farmers and ranchers access to affordable machinery, fertilizer, seed, herbicides, irrigation, soil conservation, animal health and care. Imagine a country with an illiteracy rate of 50 % combined with an ancient culture that is slow to adapt to modern technologies. Most Berbers live well below the poverty line so the needs of their donkeys beyond a sparse diet and water are non-existent. Yet the majority of donkeys I observed look to be in better condition than you would think given the circumstances in which they exist.

Donkeys are not only used in the rural areas, they are very common and abundant in all the major cities. Moroccan cities have ancient walled areas called Medinas. The Medina is still an important component of life in Morocco. Each Medina has a center square and from that square a series of narrow streets in which business is conducted. Many of the narrow streets cannot accommodate a car so donkeys and mules are used to transport supplies to the shops located throughout the Medina.

The donkeys and mules I observed in the cities did not appear to be in as good of condition as those out in the rural areas. My theory is those animals in the rural areas most likely have more grazing available. Morocco is a desert climate so parasites are not as prevalent as in a wetter climate; however, in the urban areas you have a greater concentration of animals which promotes parasite contamination. Combine parasite infestation with less grazing and you have a donkey that is not getting the best nutrition. In addition, those donkeys in the urban areas are working under more stressful conditions where there is a lot of activity and concrete footing. The donkeys must navigate uneven pavement while pulling heavy loads all day, Those factors can take a toll on even the most seasoned donkey.

I was impressed to see the contribution donkeys make to the economy of Morocco. I was also saddened to see that they do not always receive the best care. Fortunately, during my visit I met with a member of the Moroccan Parliament and arranged for the opportunity to meet with the Minister of Agriculture. I want to propose a program designed to promote better healthcare, hoof care and nutrition for the donkeys of Morocco. A healthier donkey is more productive, and for a country that depends so much on the donkey this could improve the quality of life for the family that owns the donkey. It is a win, win situation.



During the next year it is my intention to return to Morocco to continue researching the plight of the Moroccan donkey. I need to

collect a substantial amount of data to properly assess the needs of the donkeys in order to prepare my presentation to the Moroccan Minister of Agriculture. Morocco is open to any program that helps improve the production of the small farmer.

This is a huge endeavor but one that will be worth the effort. If anyone can contribute any resource to this endeavor, please contact me at mattiebelyeu@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

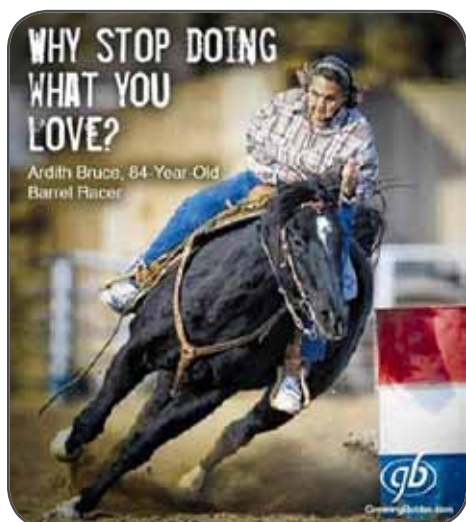
We're finalizing details for our fun-filled family picnic at Southwest Wildlife Conservation and Rehabilitation Center on Sunday, November 5th. Tour tickets will be discounted for RVHA members and we will provide a light lunch.

We've also plan a private bus tour on Saturday, December 16th, to visit several of the huge Christmas light displays around the Valley. RVHA will supply hot cocoa and cookies. Watch your email for more details.

Our roadside cleanup resumes on Saturday, October 14th. We meet at 8:00 am on the north side of Rio Verde Drive and 141st Street, right across from the Verizon Saguaro towers. The last cleanup for 2017 will be Saturday, December 9th. We will draw names for prizes for all who have participated throughout the year.

RVHA membership is currently at 491 members with 64 of those being new to RVHA members this year. Has someone recently moved to your neighborhood? Invite them to join the RVHA as last quarter memberships are reduced to \$12.50 for a single and \$17.50 for a family until December 31st. And remember, one does not need to own a horse to become part of our RVHA community.

Did you know RVHA has a Facebook page? If you enjoy social media and have a Facebook account, like and follow us! We share a lot of current information on our page throughout the month.



*Who says you are too old?
You are only as old as you
feel.*

A wooden sign with the letters 'BBQ' in a stylized, metallic font. To the right, a cowboy hat is visible, and a rope is coiled around the sign. The background is a light, textured surface.

It's been a little quiet during these hot summer months but RVHA has planned a summer survivor potluck and **BBQ**

When: Saturday, September 30th.

Time: from 6:30 - 9:30 pm.

Location: Lorill Equestrian Center, 30208 N 152nd Street

Members are **FREE**, just bring a nice salad, hot dish or dessert to share

Guests will be \$5.00

A wooden sign with the letters 'BBQ' in a stylized, metallic font. To the right, a cowboy hat is visible, and a rope is coiled around the sign. The background is a light, textured surface.

Mark your calendars for that evening and plan to come visit with friends, share your travel stories, listen to some great music from **American Traditions**, and enjoy a cool night under the stars. RVHA will provide water and soda, hamburgers and hotdogs too.



Submitted by Judy Taylor

Do you know your American roots? Do you have an ancestor, or want to learn if you have an ancestor, who fought in or supported the American Revolution? Then come join DAR! As we learned in grade school, the American Revolution was a colonial revolt that took place between 1765 and 1783. The American Patriots in the Thirteen Colonies won independence from Great Britain, becoming the United States of America. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is a nonprofit, nonpolitical women's volunteer service organization dedicated to promoting American historic preservation, education, and patriotism. Who are DAR Members? They are women, a lot like you, who come from diverse backgrounds and hold a variety of interests. Their common bond is their lineal descent from Patriots of the American Revolution. Any women, regardless of race, religion, or ethnic background who can prove lineage, can join. Since its founding in 1892, DAR now has 3,000 chapters in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 11 countries worldwide. Arizona has over 2,500 members in 41 chapters.

What do DAR members do? What do members participate in:

- Restoring and maintaining historic sites
- Preserving historical records and artifacts
- Locating, restoring and marking Revolutionary War Patriot grave sites and headstones
- Supporting schools, awarding scholarships and recognizing outstanding students
- Promoting education and citizenship through youth programs
- Volunteering to assist military veterans and active duty troops through a variety of programs
- Sponsoring special programs that promote the Constitution
- Welcoming new citizens at naturalization ceremonies



Why should I become a member? DAR provides the opportunity to:

- Contribute to important service projects
- Honor and preserve the legacy of Patriot ancestors
- Make lifelong friends
- Participate in unique social and service-oriented programs within your community
- Discover programs that appeal to your interests
- Gain valuable leadership experience
- Establish a network of contacts in your community and around the world

Is there a DAR Chapter in our area?

Yes, there are DAR chapters near our area. The closest one to the Rio Verde Foothills area is the Piestewa Peak Chapter that meets in the Grayhawk area of Scottsdale. They

meet monthly September through May. Usually there is social time, a guest speaker and a luncheon.

If you are interested in finding out if you have an American Patriot in your lineage, or would like to learn more about DAR, please contact Rio Verde Foothills resident, Judy Taylor at jtaylor359@aol.com. Judy is a Volunteer Field Genealogist for DAR and she would be happy to help you find your Patriot! Private genealogy services are also available.



HOW HORSES GOT HOOVES

All four-limbed, land-based vertebrates came from a common ancestor with legs that ended in five toes. Over time, many animals lost some of their digits: Hippos, rhinos and camels have four, three and two toes on each leg. But only one living group of animals ended up with a single toe per foot: the group containing modern horses.

A comprehensive new study, published last week in Proceedings of the Royal Society B, lends support to existing hypotheses about the dramatic transformation in horses' hooves through history. Namely, as horses evolved and got larger from their ancestral, dog-sized form, it was better to have one very robust toe than several smaller ones to support their increased body mass. Furthermore, having just one toe reduced the weight horses had to carry at the end of each leg, making it easier for them to run and maneuver.



The study is a careful examination of “a story everyone had taken for granted and hadn’t really tested thoroughly,” said Christine Janis, a professor emerita of evolutionary biology at Brown University who was not involved in the research.

As told in textbooks and evolutionary biology classes, the earliest horses were small, dwelled in forests and had four toes on their front legs and three on their back legs. Then, more than 20 million years ago, their habitat in North America started to shift from forest to grassland. In these new grasslands, ancient horses needed to move at faster speeds to evade predators and cover more ground for grazing. It made sense that a larger body and longer, more slender legs with fewer toes would help horses achieve that.

Brianna McHorse, a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard University, wanted to see if this narrative checked out. In the new study, she and colleagues scanned leg fossils from 12 kinds of horses,

ranging from the oldest ones that lived 55 million years ago to species in the same group as modern-day horses.

In previous work, the researchers had measured the stresses placed on the limbs of living horses as they performed various movements, like trotting, accelerating and jumping. Assuming ancient horses would have moved in similar ways, Ms. McHorse's team created a model to estimate the forces acting on the lower legs, including the toes, of different horses over evolutionary history.

Early on, when horses were smaller and had more evenly-sized toes, their side digits were essential for carrying some body weight, the scientists showed. However, over time, as horses evolved larger bodies and their side toes started to shrink, their center toes became larger and more robust, compensating for the extra load, until they were the only digits left.

Ms. McHorse emphasized that the study does not definitively answer why horses' side toes started to vanish. She suspected that transitioning to a single toe would have made it easier for horses to swing their legs back and forth at more impressive speeds (think of how it's harder to run with weights around your ankles).

In fact, the athletic prowess of horses struck her as the most fascinating aspect of this story. Horses are an exception to the general rule that smaller animals are more maneuverable. Even horses that weigh more than a ton can trot, jump or gallop gracefully.

"If I had no knowledge of horses and you said, 'Hey, there's this animal that's a big grazer and only has one toe,' I would probably not expect it to be capable of the kind of speed and jumping and other athletic feats that horses are capable of," Ms. McHorse said.

In fact, this single toe may have helped the beasts evolve the large size and agility they're known for today.

THE ARIZONA HORSE COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

by Jean Anderson

The Arizona Horse Council has been busy getting ready to host *The American Horse Council National Equestrian Trail Conference*, here in the Phoenix Area (have not yet found a facility, but we're working on it), November 2-4, 2018.

I am so proud to announce that our keynote speaker is Temple Grandin! Mary Temple Grandin is an American professor of animal science at Colorado State University, consultant to the livestock industry on animal behavior, and autism spokesperson. If you know about radio speaking/ group TED Talks, she has been a speaker on this program which airs on PBS. If you're interested, look her up on Google. She's an amazing woman. We look forward to having all of you hear her speak. We will be selling tickets for that lunch. This luncheon will be open to the public.

Since the Arizona Legislators are out of session right now, there is no news from us on any bills that might affect the equine community.

AzHC Foundation, a 501C3, is working on producing a new "Shared Use of Trails" Brochure. We hope to have it done by the end of this year.

Happy trails,
Jean Anderson

RIO VERDE FOOTHILLS REAL ESTATE UPDATE

Compliments of the Bonnie Burke Team – RE/MAX Fine Properties

Stats Run 01/01/2017-08/24/2017

Per the Arizona Regional MLS, January 1st – August 24th of this year, there have been 95 homes sold in the Rio Verde Foothills area. Ranging in price from \$235,000-\$1,910,000. Eighteen of these homes are new construction homes and 49 have been resale- single family properties, which only 7 of these homes have been distressed sales. The averages sales price for the Rio Verde Foothills year-to-date is approximately \$546,208. Our area is so diverse and each property is custom and unique so we have broken down sales statics by sold price.

Sold Price	Units Sold	SOLD - Price Per SQFT	Average Unit SQFT	Average Days on Market
Less Than \$499,999	53	\$165/sqft	2,578	165
\$500,000-\$699,999	26	\$178/sqft	3,348	149
\$700,000-\$999,999	12	\$191/sqft	4,199	223
\$1 Million +	4	\$245/sqft	5,404	176

*All information from the Arizona Regional MLS is deemed reliable but not guaranteed.

For more information or a free home price analysis call The Bonnie Burke Team – RE/MAX Fine Properties 480-720-8001.

4-H MEETING

by Tawnya Lehnen

I have been able to complete all of my 4-H leadership requirements over the summer. Therefore, we are going to have our first meeting on Thursday, September 21 at 6 PM. All children ages 5 and older are welcome to participate.



It appears that we do have enough of an interest and I have been able to complete all of my 4-H leadership requirements over the summer. Therefore, we're going to have our first meeting on September 21 at 6 PM, on a Thursday. All children ages 5 thru 19 are welcome to participate.

When: Thursday, September 21 st

Time: 6:00 PM

Where: 705 W. Happy Valley Rd., Phoenix, AZ

At this first meeting we're going to discuss a more permanent location to meet and hopefully we can come up with something right here in the Rio Verde Foothills area. We will also discuss a more regimented meeting schedule and get everyone signed up online for 4-H and generally get to know each other!

It should be a pretty awesome time!