



# Arizona Game and Fish Department Wildlife Matters

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## Agency Liaisons

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## Welcome Legislators



### Welcome back

*Congratulations on your recent election to the Arizona State Legislature. The Arizona Game and Fish Commission and the Arizona Game and Fish Department look forward to working with you during the upcoming 48<sup>th</sup> legislative session.*

*This year our budget proposal contains many items that sportsmen and conservationists have said are important to them including: habitat restoration, shooting range development, hatchery renovation, and watercraft safety. The Department is also requesting a non-wildlife series classification and compensation adjustment.*

*The Department welcomes the opportunity to meet with you and discuss these important issues, or any other questions or concerns you may have, so together we can improve wildlife management and outdoor recreational activities for all Arizonans.*

*Arriving shortly in your mailbox will be our 2007 wildlife calendar and an informational handout on legislation that may show up on your desk.*



## Arizona Waterways



### Arizona Waterways Deadliest in 2006

PHOENIX- Many people only think of Arizona as hot desert with cactus, snakes and dirt roads, and not a popular place for outdoor water recreation. However, the U.S. Coast Guard actually lists Arizona as one of the most dangerous states in the country to operate watercraft, with six of the nation's 15 most dangerous waterways.

"In 2006 alone, Arizona waterways were the location of 255 accidents with 153 injuries and 14 deaths," says Kevin Bergersen, Arizona Game and Fish Department boating law administrator. "That represents Arizona's worst boating fatality record since 1998. We want to help turn things around by encouraging people to take boating safety classes."

Over the last ten years, Arizona has seen an average of 4.3 million boat use days by boating enthusiasts and visitors from nearby states with stricter laws. According to Behavior Research Center's 2006 Arizona Watercraft Survey, boat use days in our state continue to remain high by boaters from Arizona, California, Nevada and Utah. Mohave County is the dominant boating location in Arizona. The Colorado River and lakes Havasu, Mohave, Mead and Powell are the hot spots where most accidents occur.

While user and accident rates appear to be growing, boating safety course attendance is not going up at the same rate in Arizona. Seventy-eight percent of all recreational boaters and watercraft users involved in accidents have never participated in any type of formal boating safety education. This training is not required in Arizona.

The state's high rate of boating accidents makes it clear that changing behavior and educating the boating public are critical needs. The top reasons for boating accidents in Arizona are operator inexperience, weather, navigation rule violations, and operating under the influence.

"For example, five out of 14 fatalities this year were wind-related. This strongly reinforces the need for boaters to understand the importance of respecting the effects of weather," says Bergersen. "If you fall overboard in strong winds, it is highly unlikely you will be able to return to your boat or personal watercraft with the wind pushing it away



## Wildlife Crosswalks



from you."

Bergersen says every boater and watercraft user has the responsibility to learn basic techniques and rules about trailering, maneuvering, useful/required equipment, aids to navigation, signals, carbon monoxide poisoning and emergencies on the water.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department currently offers boating safety education free to the public. To sign up for a free boating safety course, call Arizona Game and Fish Department at (602) 789-3235 or go to [azgfd.gov](http://azgfd.gov).

### **First-of-its-kind report identifies habitat linkage areas critical to state's wildlife**

PHOENIX - A potential key to conserving wildlife and making highways safer as our state continues to grow was made public today with the release of Arizona's first-ever statewide Wildlife Linkages Assessment.

The report, a two-year collaboration between state and federal agencies, conservation groups and a higher educational institution, identifies 150 "linkage zones"—areas connecting places where wildlife lives—that are important to animal movement and migration.

"ADOT is fortunate to be collaborating with visionary partners who are committed to assuring Arizona remains a viable, healthy place in which every species can thrive," says Sam Elters, state engineer for the Arizona Department of Transportation. "This report will serve as a valuable resource for planning and designing future infrastructure improvements."

The burgeoning growth of Arizona's population and infrastructure—roads, fences, railroads, canals and urban development—has fragmented wildlife habitat or created barriers that can inhibit some species from moving between habitat areas.

"Some animals are dependent on the connecting areas to reach food and water sources or to migrate to areas important in their ranges," says Ray Schweinsburg, research program supervisor for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. "Anything that creates a barrier effect can isolate wildlife and disrupt the ecology of an area. Habitat fragmentation is recognized as one of the main

causes of species declines, and even extinctions, globally.”

The assessment is a resource for planners and engineers, providing suggestions for the incorporation of linkage zones into their project planning. If linkage considerations can be integrated early in the planning process, these areas have better potential to be maintained or conserved.

The Arizona Wildlife Linkages Workgroup began collaborating in April 2004, beginning with the “Missing Linkages” workshop that brought together biologists, engineers, planners and land managers to share information. Since then, the group has worked together to identify large blocks of protected habitat, the potential wildlife movement corridors through and between them, factors that could possibly disrupt the corridors, and opportunities for conservation.

“The assessment released today is just the initial step in what will be a continuing effort to identify and map potential linkage zones that are important to Arizona's wildlife and natural ecosystems,” says Paul Beier, professor of conservation biology and wildlife ecology at Northern Arizona University.

“This has been a tremendous learning experience for everyone at the table,” says Janice Przybyl, wildlife linkages project coordinator with the Sky Island Alliance. “While road engineers are becoming appreciative of the ecological needs of wildlife, wildlife biologists are gaining insights into the process of highway construction. Having a common language is empowering and can help move us toward implementation of transportation infrastructure that facilitates landscape permeability for Arizona's wildlife.”

“This effort can help agencies, planners, private landowners and other stakeholders work together with a coordinated approach toward conservation and highway safety goals. The linkages assessment is a step forward in protecting Arizona's wildlife as the state addresses the challenges associated with accommodating for the growth of Arizona's population and economy,” says Lori Faeth, Gov. Janet Napolitano's policy adviser for natural resources, agriculture and the environment.

The full assessment is expected to be posted on the Arizona Department of Transportation Web site at [www.azdot.gov](http://www.azdot.gov) within the next two weeks.



## January Key Dates & Events

**Jan. 1-31, 2007**

**1:00 p.m.**

### **Daily Guided Tour**

How old are saguaros? What bird drilled those rows of parallel holes in eucalyptus tree bark? Learn about desert plants and animals on a daily guided walking tour lead by Arizona State Parks volunteers at Boyce Thompson Arboretum this month and throughout the winter (except December 25). Meet in the visitor center lobby at 1:00 p.m.; tours typically last about 60-90 minutes and proceed along the main trail, seeing most Arboretum collections. Walks are included with adult admission of \$7.50, or \$3 for ages 5-12. The Arboretum is located at U.S. 60, milepost 223, about one hour due east of Phoenix.



**January 13 and 28, 2007**

**1:30 p.m.**

### **Edible / Medicinal Desert Plants Guided Walk**

Walk the Curandero Trail at Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park and learn some of the ways native people of the Sonoran Desert have used plants for food, medicine and fiber over thousands of years. Apache Junction author Jean Groen leads the January 13, 2007, and stick around when the walk is through - Jean usually shares mesquite cookies or other desert foods. Choctaw Nation member and ethnobotanist David Morris will guide this tour again on January 28. Please note: the Curandero Trail has moderately steep sections and is not accessible by wheelchair. Walks are included with adult admission of \$7.50, or \$3 for ages 5-12. The Arboretum is located at U.S. 60, milepost 223, about one hour due east of Phoenix.

**Jan. 14, 2007**

**10:00 a.m.**

### **Photoshop Class**

Apache Junction photographer Edith Krueger-Nye will teach a class in Photoshop digital imaging software Sunday, Jan. 14, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a lunch break. Class will be taught at Boyce Thompson Arboretum in the Lecture Room of the Smith Building, and will cover Photoshop techniques such as layers (an essential skill with this program); correcting lighting and color. Class is included with regular daily admission and there is no additional fee to attend, but spaces are limited and pre-registration is required. Sign up by contacting the artist by email at [edithnye@msn.com](mailto:edithnye@msn.com) or by phone at (480) 288-9313. Daily admission is \$7.50, or \$3 for ages 5-12. The Arboretum is located at U.S. 60, milepost 223, about one hour due east of Phoenix.



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*Department Staff have contributed to this publication in the form of articles and  
photographs.*

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Legislative Affairs Division