

FALL 2023

Don Maldonado Photography

Master Planning for the Visitor Center Re-Imagined Begins!

In March 2023, in collaboration with the USFS, the Friends announced it would be undertaking a master planning process to re-imagine the Visitor Center at Sabino Canyon. This has been a long-standing goal identified in the Forest Service's Sustainable Recreation Plan which was adopted in 2015.

I am pleased to announce that Friends has entered into an agreement with Weddle Gilmore Architects of Scottsdale Arizona to lead a planning/architectural/engineering team to master plan the *Visitor Center Re-Imagined*. The selection of the Weddle Gilmore team follows several months of a competitive and rigorous review process by the Friends' project Steering Committee and our Board of Directors.

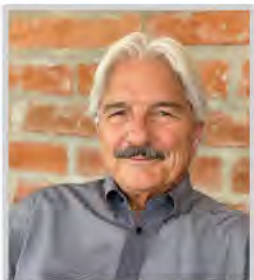
The Weddle Gilmore team brings a wealth of experience in planning and designing innovative and sustainable visitor centers throughout the American Southwest. These visitor centers, like Sabino Canyon, are often at the interface of an urban environment and a protected wildland area. The Weddle Gilmore team brings a special sensitivity to designing with nature in which built structures use natural, on site, materials to blend with the ecology of the local landscape all the while enhancing the visitor experience.

The planning process will take 10 to 12 months and will result in a Canyon visitor and community vision of an updated, innovative, and sustainable visitor center. The main components of the plan will include:

- ✓ Assessment of how to enhance the Visitor Experience
- ✓ Design Narrative – An Architectural Program Statement
- ✓ Conceptual Plans including Site Plan and Structure Renderings
- ✓ Construction Cost Estimates for Budgeting Purposes
- ✓ Plan of Finance to Address Final Design and Construction Costs
- ✓ Development Timeline
- ✓ Preliminary Interpretive Planning for Educational Exhibits

Many thanks to our Steering Committee, the USFS, our Partner Organizations, and the many Friend's members that have supported this effort.

If you would like to contribute to the master planning effort, our many other projects, or renew your Friends membership please use the enclosed remittance envelope or go to our website at sabinocanyon.org.



Thanks for your support,
Jim Darling, President of the Board

"After thorough discussion and with unanimous consensus we chose the Weddle-Gilmore team. They have designed several great visitor centers, have a good sense and appreciation of the Sonoran Desert, and have assembled a great team of sub-consultants. Let the visioning fun begin!"

Judith Peters - Former President of the Volunteer Patrol and Steering Committee Member

Canyon Interpretive Outpost Update

By Hank Harlow
FOSC Director

If you are hiking by the Rattlesnake Trailhead near tram stop # 1, look at our new sign mounted at the front of the parkway. Territorial Sign did a wonderful job displaying our proposed architectural design for the adaptive reuse of the stone building to become the Canyon Interpretive Outpost.



In mid-June Evan Eglin of Eglin and Bresler Architects, Rob Caylor of Caylor Construction and Dennis Caldwell of Caldwell Graphic Design made an on-site inspection with FOSC and NFS representatives to appraise the scope and timeline for Phase I of the project. Many issues were discussed dealing with how to create 400 sq ft of interior space, maximize natural lighting for exhibits, provide solar capacity to accommodate air conditioning and maintain security of the building without requiring a full-time staff or volunteer.

Phase II of the overall project is to design and develop an interpretive native landscape in the

70' x 100' area between the road and stone building which will entice visitors to explore the exhibit. Phase III is the natural restoration of the area between the back of the stone building and Sabino Creek. There are a dozen 1930's stone and concrete tables nestled along the creek which, with care, will be developed into an inviting picnic area and focus point for outdoor educational programs.

The Canyon Interpretive Outpost is surrounded by beautiful vistas representing desert, riparian, and mountain habitats. The newly formed interpretive subcommittee has advanced a proposal to take advantage of this location celebrating the diversity of wildlife which is there to discover. An important objective of this exhibit will be to emphasize the value and fun of being an observer; to know what to look for as well as where and when to look for it. Caldwell Graphic Design has submitted sketches for the exhibits. Each wall will have murals for visitors to view as if looking through the structure into the adjacent habitats and become aware of what to discover only a few steps away. Exhibits will emphasize the themes of Season, Water, Biodiversity and Cultural Use.

Think of the possibilities - send us your ideas! friends@sabinocanyon.org



Slow Season Highlights "It's Never Slow"

By Don Delmastro

District Ranger • Coronado National Forest • Santa Catalina Ranger District

With temperatures approaching 110 degrees, the parking lot is nearly empty at the Sabino Canyon visitor center. The summer months are often referred to on the district as the "off season" or "slow season," and compared to the thousands of daily recreators we saw in the spring, Sabino certainly looks empty. Don't be fooled by the empty parking lot though, for the hard-working team at the Santa Catalina Ranger District there is never a slow season.

The Ventana fire started on June 20th and initially looked frighteningly similar to the Bighorn fire just two years prior. Both were started by lightning in remote areas of the Pusch Ridge Wilderness and exhibited similar fire behavior. The biggest initial challenge for the fire-fighters on both fires was gaining access through the harsh and unforgiving terrain. To slow the fire's spread Forest Service aircraft dropped large amounts of retardant. But retardant alone is often ineffective without "boots on the ground" to back it up, and this is where the two fires differed.



A specialized team out of Salmon, Idaho, the Salmon Heli-Rappelers was called on to rappel in and cut a helicopter landing zone that could be used to shuttle in additional crews and supplies. Fire crews used the opportunity of this highly specialized team to tie in with the retardant lines to contain the fire. Ground crews, supported by helicopters conducting highly accurate bucket drops, continued to work the fire in 105-degree heat without shade for several days, ultimately stopping the fire's forward progress late in the evening of June 22nd. Mopping up the Ventana fire continued through the next two weeks, and, as we entered July, the team started to settle into a quieter routine.



On July 9th a rock slide directly above the popular Phoneline Trail quickly ended that serenity and saw the Sabino warehouse once again turned into an Incident Command Post. The district's fire, recreation and biology teams all came together to assist the Pima County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue and the Southern Arizona Rescue Association (SARA) in managing the incident. Because of the amazing team effort and quick response, the team was able to swiftly identify that there were no injuries or damages to any infrastructure. The trails crew and their hard-working team of volunteers spent the next several weeks hiking and assessing the effected trails. These trails are now open but it's important to remember that rock slides are always an inherent danger when recreating in a canyon.

Forest Service Update Continued...

Unfortunately, natural disasters are not the only thing the district team has to deal with. Preliminary reports of damage to the bridges in Sabino came in the early hours of July 6th and looked like accidental vehicle damage. As information continued to flow in over the next week, it became clear that the damage was more extensive and clearly deliberate. Someone had intentionally damaged the stonework to several bridges in Sabino Canyon. While this was not the first incidence of vandalism this year, it is certainly the most severe. Luckily the damage is cosmetic in nature and does not jeopardize the structural integrity of our bridges. District law enforcement will be increasing night patrols in the canyon and guests are asked to be more vigilant. As always, if you see something, say something.



FOSC Youth Board Members Make Valuable Contributions to the Community

By Conrad Grims
Vice President

Three years ago, the FOSC board agreed that adding one or more youth members to our board would be both a service to the youth member and a step toward securing the future of the organization. With those ends in mind, Riley Blute was elected as a full member of the Board (see Riley's article in the FOSC Fall 2021 newsletter). Riley was in 9th grade at the time and was selected because a Board member knew of his experience in and devotion to the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area.

Following Riley's addition to the Board, his school principal was approached with the idea that every two years the school staff, in consultation with the current youth board member, would nominate another 9th grade student to be added to the FOSC board, resulting in the presence of at least two youth members on the board at all times. In the Fall of 2022, the school nominated and the board accepted for membership 9th grade student Arianna Dupont. For the ensuing year, we will have a 10th grader and a 12th grader on our board.

Participating in the Board's business has been a learning experience for our youth members, and having two very bright (very busy) high school students involved has enervated the Board. These are intelligent, energetic young people who have a special interest in the Recreation Area which will no doubt long endure.

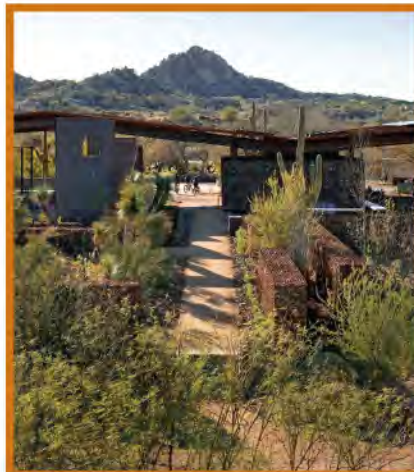
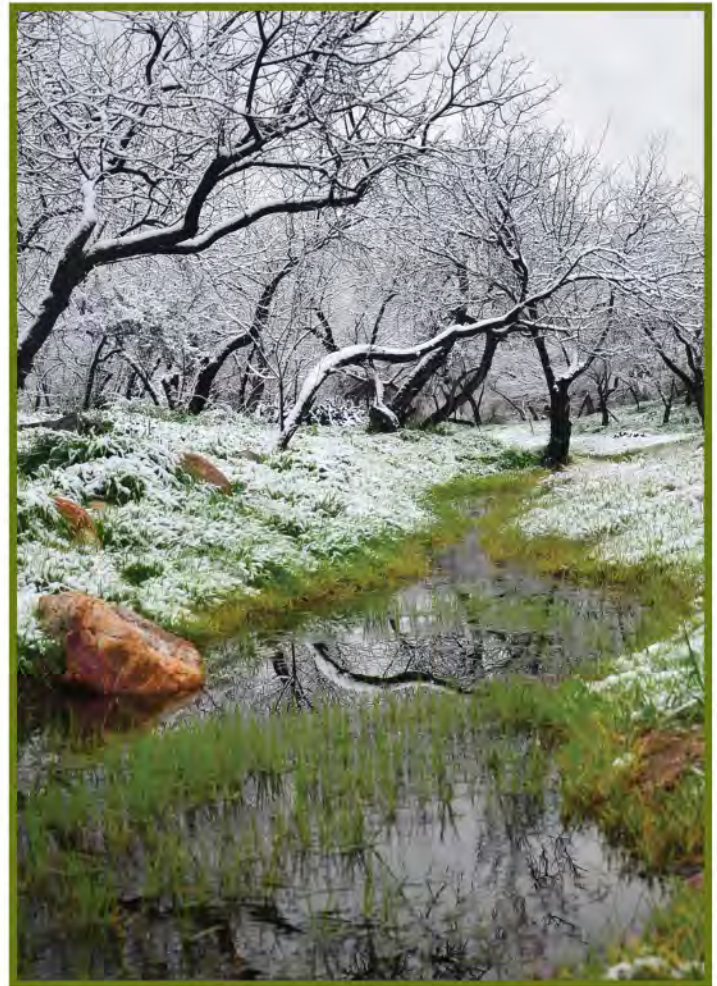
FOSC Youth Board Director Wins Photography Contest

By Arianna DuPont FOSC • Youth Board Director

The Adventures in Nature Photo Contest, sponsored by The Nature Conservancy, Arizona Highways magazine, and Cox Communications takes place in the spring every year. This year nearly 200 students ages 13-18 from across the state entered, with over 300 submissions.

To my astonishment, my entry won first place and was featured in the most recent publication of the Arizona Highways magazine. My photo, titled Seeking Sabino, was taken in Sabino Canyon in early March after an unexpected Tucson snowfall. My dad gave me permission to miss my first class of the day to capture this rare occurrence.

I was honored to have been recognized for my photo, especially considering the connection I have to its subject. I have always been drawn to the pristine natural landscape of Sabino Canyon, and I feel very fortunate to be involved with an organization that is so deeply committed to its preservation. The Friends of Sabino Canyon is a nurturing environment and everyone is truly passionate about the mission of conserving the awe of the recreation area. I have learned a great deal from attending meetings and events, and getting to observe the significant actions put into effect by the board and their positive impacts on the canyon. I am grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of this meaningful organization. I hope to continue to find my muse in the beauty that is Sabino Canyon.



More possibilities - send us your ideas! friends@sabinocanyon.org

FOSC and National Forest Foundation Focus on Invasive Species Treatment and protection of Sabino and Bear Canyons: Summer/Fall 2023 Update

John Goraj
Southern Arizona Program Sr. Associate • National Forest Foundation



Since the beginning of our partnership, FOSC contributions continue to have lasting impacts on our work in the Santa Catalina Ranger District. This partnership has allowed us to move closer to our collective goals of protecting, conserving and enhancing this incredible landscape. This collaboration has focused on invasive species mapping and removal, scientific expertise and consultation, trail surveys, trail restoration, strategic and comprehensive long-term planning efforts for habitat restoration and recreation management.

The NFF and the USFS established a treatment unit of 250 acres in the middle of the canyon based on FOSC-funded mapping data. In summer 2021, our partner, Rocky Mountain Ecology began treating these infested acres in 2021, and again in Summer 2022 with great success - treating and mapping over 183 acres out of 250.

Summer 2023, we were slated to treat 250 acres again in Sabino Canyon and 400 acres in Bear Canyon. Unfortunately, due to lack of monsoonal rains in these canyons, we have not been able to treat this year yet. Recently though, remnant rains from tropical storms throughout September might provide the green up necessary to effectively treat these areas again in the next few weeks into October. FOSC funds will continue to help support this important, but costly work.

FOSC funds have also been critical in supporting our invaluable partnership with the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. The Conservation Science Department at ASDM has provided valuable monitoring, treatment planning, analysis and years of invasive plant management experience into our collective efforts at Sabino Canyon, Bear Canyon, Finger Rock Canyon, Pontatoc Canyon and the Cobblestone Unit.

Lastly, FOSC support has contributed to a substantive trail rehabilitation here in the Catalinas. Together with Outslope Trail Solutions and the Forest Service, we have restored over 10 miles of trail, assessed more than 40 miles of trails, and have engaged over 80 volunteers in over 700 hours of trail stewardship to date.

2nd Annual Matthew Rothstein BioBlitz

By Hank Harlow
FOSC Director

The second Matthew Rothstein Annual BioBlitz (in honor of the memory of a young naturalist who passed away) was held at Sabino Canyon Recreational Area on August 12. The event was hosted by the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to identifying and conserving amphibians and reptiles throughout the United States and protecting areas where there are imperiled wildlife species.

A large group of volunteers assembled before 8am at the covered ramada next to the parking lot. ARC members started the event by introducing their organization and goals and our primary mission for the day. As they explained, a BioBlitz is an event that focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time. Participants were to work together to get a snapshot of the area's biodiversity. Entries of any species (animal, plant, or fungi) were to be made by submitting a photo on the iNaturalist app on our smart phones which would be automatically uploaded to the project database. Once all our observations for the day were submitted, ARC would provide us with a final species list within 24 hours. They then gave us a safety talk, made sure we all had water, a little something to eat, sunscreen and then left it to us to randomly mingle around to establish groups and destinations for the day. Amazing how people can just do this; at first it was like popcorn but then groups formed, some small, some larger and we all dispersed, not to see each other for the next 5 hours. My group was small, two besides me; a retired special ed teacher who looked like a hiker and desert enthusiast and a younger person who had a huge camera with a macro lens and after a few words, I learned he really knew his herps (amphibians and reptiles) and we decided that would be our focused wildlife group.

What a morning. A general hike for me is about 2.5 miles per hour, but we were down to about one quarter of that rate because we really saw a lot of critters that required their picture taken and uploaded to iNaturalist. I started my career as a university professor researching the thermobiology of reptiles and was amazed at the number and diversity of lizards in Sabino Canyon and how the number observed changed as the temperature rose. The group reassembled in the early afternoon at the ramada and again at Three Canyons Beer and Wine Garden to exchange stories and be entertained by the display of animals brought in for exhibit by the Tucson Herpetological Society. Remarkably, the tally by all participants was 405 observations of 197 species of plants, insects, spiders, birds, mammals, lizards, snakes, and amphibians. Along with that, a lot of stories were exchanged with newly made friends sharing an interest in the biodiversity of Sabino Canyon.





FRIENDS OF SABINO CANYON

Sabino Canyon Recreation Area
5700 N Sabino Canyon Road
Tucson, AZ 85750

FOSC Special Edition Summer 2023

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Jim Darling	Hank Harlow
Linden Darling	Jim McDougal
Jim DeGroot	Michael Reynolds
Arianna DuPont	Tyler Tingley
Cassie Gonzales	Susan Walker

FOSC Directors Emeritus

Terry DeWald	Jude McCarthy
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Regional Partner Organizations

Regional Partnering Center - Tram
Southern Arizona Rescue Association
National Forest Foundation
Santa Catalina Volunteer Patrol
Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists



Don Maldonado Photography

Join Us in Support of the 'Visitor Center Re-imagined'

Your donation of \$25 or more registers you as a member of Friends of Sabino Canyon (FOSC) for one year.

If you would like to donate to the Visitor Center Re-Imagined campaign, please use the enclosed return envelope or go to our website - sabinocanyon.org - to make a specific contribution to this historic effort.

Significant contributions are recognized on tile fresco panels at the Visitor Center.

FOSC is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



**SCAN FOR
MORE INFO!**



FRIENDS OF SABINO CANYON