



The Creekside Almanac

A seasonal publication of Prescott Creeks Preservation Association

Autumn 2001



Volume 7 Issue 3

Meaningful Interactions with the Land at Watson Woods!

by: Michael Byrd

WE NEED YOUR HELP ...

during 14 tree planting days in January and February. These days are scheduled to plant native trees and shrubs to help mitigate vegetation lost during bridge construction. We will plant approximately 800

the project plantings will be supplied with a temporary drip irrigation system to help the vegetation get established in their new home.

The City of Prescott is cost-sharing the project with PCPA on a 50/50 basis. The City's contributions for the project include funding for the purchase of plant and irrigation materials, and funding for project management. PCPA is supplying some materials and we are counting on volunteers to supply labor for all of the tasks at hand. We hope you will be one of those volunteers!

How can you help?

PCPA strives to provide our membership and others with meaningful interactions with our local creeks! What better way to do this than through planting trees? *You* can directly contribute to *Continued on page 4...*



Windblown Cottonwood Leaves & Cotton. 2000 Photograph by Michael Byrd

cottonwood and willow cuttings adjacent to Granite Creek, and 500 trees and shrubs on the now barren abutment at the end of the bridge. Before construction began, there was a large monotypic stand of Apache plume on the western terrace of the Preserve. Construction activities completely eliminated about 1 acre of this stand, so part of our project will re-create it by planting approximately 800 individuals. All of

CreekWatch Corner

by: Joel Barnes

News from the Manzanita CreekWatch Group.....

If you found yourself strolling along Manzanita Creek last month, you'd have discovered this little stream once again decorated this corner of Prescott with beautiful shades of gold, red, and yellow. With the coming of winter, Manzanita and all of our local creeks are beginning their seasonal slumber, patiently awaiting the warmth of spring. This also happens to be a fine time for transplanting trees and shrubs, so the **Manzanita CreekWatch Group** will coordinate another riparian restoration event over the weekend of January 19-20. This CreekWatch Group planted nearly 30 Fremont cottonwoods, red willows and velvet ash trees last April along *Continued on page 5...*

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Lizards and Toads and Snakes, Oh My!

by: Erika Nowak

Have you ever been walking along a creek, seen a lizard, a frog, or a snake and wondered where they live, what they eat, or how they interact with the rest of the environment? PCPA asked these and other questions for Watson Woods Preserve and we designed a yearlong study to help answer them. Reptiles and amphibians are important components of riparian ecosystems and they are particularly sensitive to habitat alteration due to their limited mobility. These animals are predators on insects, fish, small mammals, birds, and on each other. As the favored prey items for birds such as the Common Black-hawk and the Zone-tailed hawk this group and their eggs are an important link in riparian food webs. They are also eaten by many other birds, fish, and mammals. Many reptile and amphibian species are dependent on permanent water and some people believe they can be used as indicators of the ecological "health" of a given riparian area.

In 2000, Prescott Creeks Preservation Association received funding from the Arizona Water Protection Fund to carry out our herpetology (the study of reptiles and amphibians) project at Watson Woods Preserve. The purpose of this study was to help guide management of the Preserve by determining baseline diversity, relative abundance, and spatial and temporal distribution of these species within the Preserve. Also part of this grant was the development of interpretive materials that are available to the public.

Herpetologists Erika Nowak and Matthew Spille conducted the research from April to October 2000. The techniques we used to find reptiles and amphibians included pitfall traps, cover boards, funnel traps, time-area constrained walking searches, dip netting of ponds, and nighttime amphibian surveys. All trapping methods were designed to capture the creatures alive and to not harm them.

During the surveys we documented 14 amphibian and reptile species, including one

salamander species, three frog and toad species, six lizard species, and four snake species. All told, over 2,300 individual amphibians and reptiles were captured or sighted: 82 terrestrial and approximately 1,780 larval amphibians; 457 lizards; and 42 snakes.

Amphibian activity peaked twice, once during spring rains (April-May) and again during monsoon rains (July-August). These peaks coincided with the breeding season. Adult lizard activity peaked during July, with baby lizards appearing after mid-July and peaking in September. Snake activity peaked three times, once in May as they came out of hibernation, once again in July with the advent of the monsoon season, and finally in September as baby snakes became active.

Bullfrogs were the most common amphibian species at Watson Woods, followed by Woodhouse's toad. Only one adult Southwestern toad was found, making it the rarest amphibian at the Preserve. This find is particularly exciting because this species has a limited range. It is thought to be declining across its range due to habitat loss and hybridization with the more common Woodhouse's toad.

Eastern Fence lizards were the most common lizards at the Preserve, followed by Desert Grassland whiptails and Plateau Spotted whiptails. Alligator lizards and Gila Spotted whiptails

Continued on page 5...



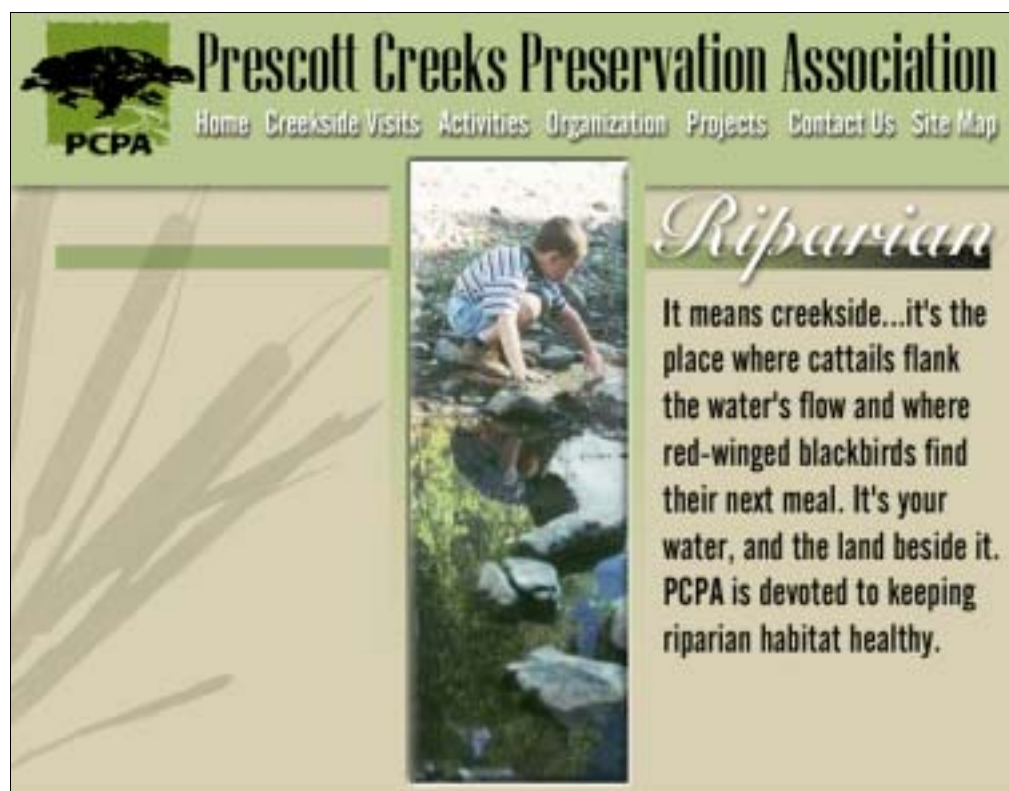
This native Eastern Fence lizard shows its intolerance for exotic species by biting an immature bullfrog. Photo by M. Spille. 2000.

PCPA IS NOW "ON-LINE!"

If you're in the habit of using the Internet as an educational tool, or as a way to stay up to date on local issues and events, you now have a new resource. PCPA's new web site is available at:

www.prescottcreeks.org

Now you have direct access to information about the creeks of Prescott! PCPA members and others interested in the creeks can see what PCPA is doing and find information about upcoming events related to the creeks. Much of the information is specifically related to PCPA, but we want this site to also be a community resource so you will find information about other groups and their creek-related activities. The possibilities are unlimited!



Creekside Visits

- Places to go
- Things to do
- What you might see

Activities

- Our newsletter
- Current events & volunteer opportunities
- Fundraising

Organization

- Join PCPA
- Who is PCPA?
- Some of the other folks we work with

Projects

- Watson Woods
Riparian Preserve
- CreekWatch Network
- And More!

Please stop by the PCPA web site to familiarize yourself with our mission, our board of directors, or to learn more about our local creeks and to find out about ongoing projects and upcoming activities. Keep in mind that there are still a few areas of the site that still need to be filled in, but these "construction zones" should be completed soon. In addition to highlighting Watson Woods Riparian Preserve, we have devoted a section of the site to the Prescott CreekWatch Network with space for each CreekWatch Group to contribute something related to their own group and creek(s).

Kevn Lambson of Idear Studios in Prescott Valley provided artwork for the site. Once Kevn had the look and shape of the site crafted, it was handed over to PCPA's "Jack of all Trades" Michael Byrd for content and maintenance. We are learning as we go, so please let us know if there are problems with the site, or if you have ideas about how it can be improved. Throughout the site you'll find numerous opportunities to contact us! Enjoy your surfing!

Interactions ...continued from page 1

the improvement of your local creeks and community. Not only will this project improve the aesthetic qualities of the new road, but it will also re-create habitat (or *homes*) for the many birds and mammals that live at Watson Woods. Workdays will include thorough instruction, an opportunity to learn about the creeks, complimentary snacks, and **loads of fun!** This is a great way to meet new people, give back to your community, and it's a great way to help the creeks and all the critters who call the Preserve home.

Project Schedule:

Cottonwood & Willow Harvesting:	January 19 th & 20 th , January 26 th & 27 th
Cottonwood & Willow Planting:	February 2 nd & 3 rd
Upland Tree & Shrub Planting:	February 9 th & 10 th
Irrigation Installation	February 16 th & 17 th , March 2 nd

The work at hand will be strenuous, but there will be tasks available for all ages and all levels of fitness, so feel free to bring the family or come with friends. We'd love to have your help. Please RSVP as soon as possible, so that we can schedule you for the task(s) of your choosing. Call Emily Talmage at 443-7508, or email her at volunteers@prescottcreeks.org. Or you may want to check out our website at www.prescottcreeks.org (see related story on Page 3).

Some Perspective on the Project:

Shortly after I began my work with PCPA, the City of Prescott announced their plans to construct a road and bridge through Watson Woods Riparian Preserve (a known possibility when PCPA signed its 25 year lease with the City). PCPA then began the long, arduous task of negotiating for the best possible road and bridge through Watson Woods. Our main concerns involved minimizing the constriction of the Granite Creek floodplain and the impact to wildlife. These negotiations took the better part of three years before actual construction commenced, but PCPA is extremely happy with the outcome. We got a longer bridge, fewer trees were lost, the City chipped in for staff time and they are contributing to this winter's planting project. For the past year and a half my duties have been almost exclusively focused on managing the road construction project at Watson Woods, ***but now the bridge and road are complete and it is time for PCPA to get down to the real work of planting trees!*** We hope to see you this winter!

City of Prescott Parks & Recreation Staff Help Out

On Friday December 7th, Dana Diller, Rudy Litka, Steve Mancha, and Kenny Freeman worked with Preserve Manager Michael Byrd and PCPA Board Member Matthew Turner to install 1,400 feet of two inch PVC pipe for Watson Woods' irrigation system! While Rudy and Steve operated 4WD backhoes in perfect weather, the rest of us were smoothing the trench, laying the pipe and taking care of things on the ground. One of the backhoes was brand new at the start of the day and PCPA was honored to break it in for the City. More than anything, we'd like to thank the City, especially these gentlemen, for their time and dedication on this project. We couldn't have done it without them. If you see them, please tell them thank you for supporting PCPA!

**Prescott
Creeks
Preservation
Association**

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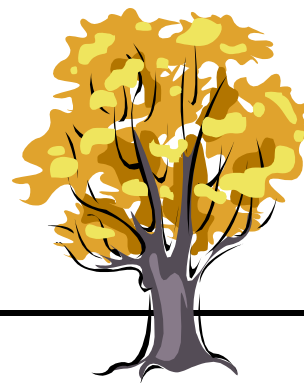


**The Creekside
Almanac....**

....is published
seasonally

Staff/Editor/Publisher

Michael Byrd
Preserve Manager



CreekWatch ...continued from page 1 Manzanita Creek adjacent to the Mtn. Club Park, and then a group of Prescott College students helped us install an irrigation system. About half of these trees survived (which is an acceptable survival rate), so the weekend in January will augment the first planting. The weekend will also include an educational slide presentation on the ecology and stewardship of our local creeks (Saturday 1/19/2001 at 10am at the Mountain Clubhouse-910 Clubhouse Drive). All are welcome, especially current or prospective members of any CreekWatch group.

Restoring reaches of Manzanita Creek is a priority of the Manzanita CreekWatch group. Each group meeting has time allocated for the sharing of

observations and experiences along the creeks, meeting information as well as creek-related news. The Group Journal and Granite Creek watershed map are displayed at the Clubhouse for all to see. If you would like to participate in the Manzanita Creek restoration weekend in January you can obtain more details by contacting Joel Barnes at 778-2090 ext. 2206 or via email at jbarnes@prescottcreeks.org.

Also, plans are now underway to form an **Aspen CreekWatch Group!** This group's first gathering will be sometime in January, so if you live near Aspen Creek and are interested in joining this newest CreekWatch Group you can contact us at creekwatch@prescottcreeks.org.

Lizards ...continued from page 2

were the least common species. Plateau Spotted whiptails are interesting because they are one of several all-female whiptail lizard species. In these species, females lay eggs that develop into genetically identical copies of themselves; clones, in essence.

While no snake species was detected often, Western Terrestrial garter snakes are the most common and Striped whipsnakes appear to be the least common, with only one sighting. However, the difficulty associated with detecting snakes in general makes any estimation of relative abundance difficult for these taxa.

Based on historical documentation at, or near, the Preserve, researchers expected to find 15 more species than were found. These species include the New Mexico spadefoot toad, the Lowland leopard frog, the Short-horned lizard, and the Common Collared lizard. The lack of these species, and the relative paucity of the species observed, may be due to degraded conditions from sand and gravel extraction, and many other historical uses of Granite Creek and the Preserve area. Over the last 150 years it is believed that the riparian forest associated with Granite Creek has been reduced in size from its once 1000 acre size the 160 acres now found at Watson Woods. During that time the forest and creek have been heavily altered through channelization, filling, stock grazing, and pollution.

One of the most important recent factors in the local and regional decline of amphibian and reptile species may be the introduction of non-native bullfrogs, fish, and crayfish. These aggressive species are abundant at the Preserve and are known to eat amphibians and reptiles during all of their life stages, as well as to compete with them directly for food and egg-laying sites. During drier periods of the surveys, these undesirable, exotic species were only found in a few deep pools in Granite Creek and in the Watson Woods pond, but after monsoon rains, they spread out along the entire length of the creek and even into the upland areas within the Preserve. Their widespread distribution throughout the Preserve suggests that they could negatively impact other species.

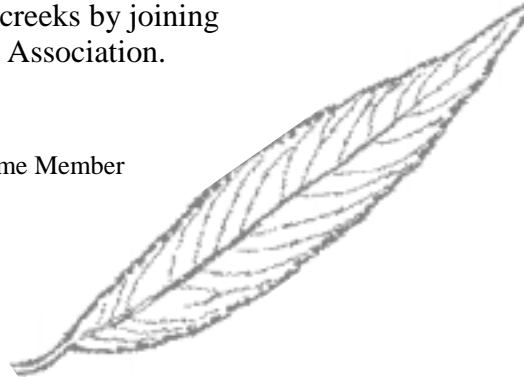
While this study did not answer all of the questions we had about the herpetofauna at the Preserve, it did establish a baseline of information. From here we will continue to monitor populations for changes, and we will continue to ask more questions! The short-term nature of our study may be responsible for species that were not detected, so we encourage Preserve visitors to look for these cryptic and secretive animals and to report their sightings to PCPA (email at watsonwoods@prescottcreeks.org). Photographs are extremely helpful with identification. Please supply one if possible. For more information about reptiles and amphibians at Watson Woods Preserve, please pick up a checklist from PCPA.

The Membership Page

Yes, I would like to contribute to the preservation and restoration of Prescott's creeks by joining Prescott Creeks Preservation Association.

Membership Categories

- Forest (\$1000+) Lifetime Member
- Tree (\$100+)
- Root (\$50)
- Seed (\$25)
- Soil (\$10)
- Pollen (Volunteer — 24 Hours per year) Date: _____



I have donated _____ to Prescott Creeks Preservation Association.
 Name _____ Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Telephone _____ Email _____

Please send this application to: **PCPA, P.O. Box 3004, Prescott, AZ 86302.**
 Your financial and volunteer supported is greatly appreciated.

Our Membership...

PCPA is a local non-profit organization striving to bring the community of Prescott together to help preserve Prescott's riparian communities. Education and grassroots networking are essential to our mission. Membership fees are based on a sliding scale, depending on how you can contribute. We have six groups; pollen, soil, seed, root, tree, and forest. Each signifies a different level of support. Members will receive our seasonal newsletter The Creekside Almanac.



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This issue... *Winter is the Time to Plant Trees!*