



The Creekside Almanac

A seasonal publication of Prescott Creeks Preservation Association

Spring 2001



Volume 7 Issue 1

NOXIOUS WEEDS—THE SILENT INVADER

by: Susan Schuhardt—Resource Manager for Prescott National Forest, Chino Ranger District

There is a silent, stealthy threat creeping toward Prescott. Many people are not aware of it, yet it could affect their lives. Weeds!?! Sure, we all have weeds in our yards. They are the plants we don't like, such as horehound, goatsheads, foxtails, and dandelions. These plants are well-established and may be here to stay.

But some plants are especially aggressive and undesirable. They

are moving to the United States from other continents, brought by accident in hay, seed, and ships ballast. Without their natural predators to keep them in check, they take over native vegetation, forests, rangeland, and people's yards. The particularly bad weeds are called "noxious", and they are defined by the State of Arizona to be particularly undesirable, destructive, and difficult to control. The State keeps a list of restricted noxious weeds.

Weeds are overtaking 4,600 acres/day on public lands in the West. We're relatively lucky here in Prescott—we don't have a big infestation of weeds, so we are in a good position to prevent their spread. It is important for people to know what to look for, so they can spot new infestations and get rid of noxious weeds as soon as they are found. Weeds know no boundaries—it's important for neighbors, government, and community groups to work together to stop weeds from spreading.

Why are noxious weeds so bad? They degrade wildlife habitat by not providing the food and shelter that native plants provide for

wildlife. They ruin recreational areas—trails, lakes, campgrounds. Who wants to walk around in a patch of Scotch thistle? They reduce the amount of forage available for livestock. They increase the possibility of erosion because they have taproots as opposed to the fibrous roots of native grasses, so they don't hold the soil as well. Once a piece of land is infested with noxious weeds, property value decreases. Land is much harder to sell and may be worth 60% less.

How are weeds spread? In a variety of ways—by wind, by water along creeks and irrigation ditches, in animals' fur and droppings, in mud stuck to vehicles tires, on peoples shoes and clothes. One of the important jobs after finding a patch of weeds is to keep it from spreading. The best strategy to control weeds is to find out how big the population is, then work on the edges to control it, get rid of any small outlying patches, and gradually work inwards on the main population.

Weeds are like a biological wildfire, spreading fast and out of control. They drastically affect w i l d l a n d

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Scotch thistle found at Watson Woods Preserve. (→ Note winged stems.)

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communities, damage watersheds, increase soil erosion, and hurt recreational values. However, while fire effects are temporary, the effects of weeds can be permanent. Wildfires are self-healing, while weeds can be far more damaging and continue to spread. Infestations start small, then spread like wildfire. Seeds can be carried a long way and start "spot fires." Another difference between fire and weeds is that fire is often put out before it is an acre in size; with weeds people wait until populations are hundreds of acres, then try to do something. When populations are small they are much easier to control.

Dalmation toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*).

Toadflax, also known as butter and eggs, is a noxious weed in Prescott. It is 2-3' tall with yellow flowers like a snapdragon. The leaves are bluish-green, heart shaped, and wrap around the stem of the plant.



Brought to the US from Europe as an ornamental, it's beauty makes it hard to believe it can be a problem. However, it spreads and crowds out the native vegetation or landscaping, and can become the only species growing in an area. Weeds can be deceiving because there may be only a few plants for several years, not appearing to spread. They are adapting to the site, though, and building their reserves. Then when the right weather conditions come along, they spread very quickly. At a site in Colorado toadflax increased 1200% in 6 years. In Wyoming it spread from 4 acres to 2,000 acres in 12 years. Toadflax reproduces by seeds and by root sprouts. The roots spread horizontally a few inches underground and put up flower stalks, up to 10" from the parent plant. Vertical roots can reach down 6'. This perennial can live in dry soils, and robs the moisture from other

plants. Dalmation toadflax is becoming common around Prescott, but if enough people work together, it can be controlled. It can be pulled or dug up by hand, though complete eradication will require repeated efforts over several years. It is easier to get the root out when the soil is moist. It can be treated with herbicides, too. Also, insects that destroy toadflax seeds in its homeland are available. After long and careful testing to ensure they will not attack native plants, several have been approved for use in the US.

Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*)

This is a very large, spiny thistle. It differs from the native thistles because the leaves go all the way down the stems (wings); the native thistles have stem sections without "wings" between the leaves. With Scotch thistle, the lower leaves are very large, up to 2 feet long and 1 foot wide. The leaves are grayish and slightly fuzzy. The plant grows a rosette of leaves the first year, (a cluster of leaves close to the ground), then puts up a 4-6' flowering stalk the second year. Scotch thistle can form impenetrable stands too thick and thorny to walk through. It's present in a few places in Prescott and Chino Valley. The best time to control this plant is during the rosette stage, before it flowers. Plants can be dug up or sprayed with herbicide. If digging, be sure to get about 1 foot of root below the ground level so the plant doesn't re-sprout. Seeds remain viable in the soil for 6 years, so repeated treatments will be necessary. It is important to keep the plant from setting seed. Even if the stalks are cut down when they start to bud, there is still enough energy in the plant to grow and mature the seeds on the dead stalks!

A few other weeds that are found in or around Prescott include, white top, Russian and spotted knapweed, and bull thistle.

For more information about weeds and how you can help, please call on these people:

Susan Schuhardt at the Prescott National Forest: 636-2302.

Jeff Schalau at the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Service: 445-6590.

Bob Adams at the Natural Resources Conservation Service: 759-9301, extension 2.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PRESCOTT'S CREEKS?

by: Michael Byrd

Hello creek enthusiasts! Spring caught up to us before we could get the Winter issue of the *Creekside Almanac* out to you, but that doesn't mean we haven't been busy at work *Preserving and Restoring Prescott's Creeks*. On the contrary! Since our last issue of the *Almanac*, PCPA and other creek advocates have been hard at work planning and implementing numerous important projects. Below you will find a short description of what's been happening, and where applicable, who to contact to find more information or to get involved with these projects!

Watson Woods Bridge Update:

In the Autumn 2000 issue of the *Almanac* I gave an overview of the 69/89 Connector Bridge being built across Watson Woods Riparian Preserve. Construction began in July last year and the City of Prescott expects the contractor to have all on the ground work completed by the end of April this year. Completion of work will include all structural work on the bridge as well as initial mitigation work to the Preserve. As part of the contract, the City will require Fann Contracting to reshape the terraces and floodplain of Granite Creek to match (as closely as possible) their original condition before the project began. Once contouring is completed and pre-existing roads are rehabilitated to their previous condition as small two-tracks, the contractor will seed all disturbed areas with native grass seed. This summer we will begin trail system construction and continue active restoration planning! Call me for more information: 776-4490.

West Granite Creek Park / APS Miller Creek & Granite Creek Restoration:

As part of Arizona Public Service Company's voluntary remediation of a historic manufactured gas plant, approximately 3 acres of West Granite Creek Park was restored with over 30 species of native vegetation. APS contracted the local restoration firm Riparia, Inc. to design and implement the project. Riparia was also responsible for environmental education and community involvement planning. Over the months of January and February APS, the City of Prescott, and Riparia worked with over 100 community volunteers to plant 1000 native trees, shrubs and grasses. In May Riparia will complete the implementation phase of the project by planting approximately 1000 rushes and sedges (*Juncus*, *Scirpus*, *Carex*, & *Eleocharis*) in the Miller Creek channel! Please join us on Saturday April 28th for the official Grand Opening of the project. Contact Michael Johnsen, APS Community Relations Manager at 776-3657 for additional info.

Students Paint Human & Natural History Mural Along Granite Creek:

Elizabeth Newman of the Arizona Living Folklore Society spent the winter working with a handful of students at Prescott's Mile High Middle School learning about the human and natural history of the many creeks in Prescott. After multiple visits to the creeks, untold hours of research, and consultation with local historians and riparian experts, the students began painting a timeline mural along Granite Creek (on the concrete retaining wall below Bank of America on West Gurley St.). In addition to the students and Arizona Living Folklore Society participants include PCPA, Bank of America, Sharlot Hall Museum, the Prescott Brewing Company, the Organic Alley, and Alpha Builders. For a week by week description of this project check out the artists' website "livingfolklore.com", and click on the link for "Creek Mural Project."

Granite Creek Clean up & Earth Day:

The Granite Creek Clean up will occur between 8:30 and noon on Saturday April 21st. Participants should meet at the ramada at Granite Creek park to sign up. As always, there will be a barbeque and t-shirts available for all the trash-picker-up-ers! The Earth Day Celebration will occur on Sunday April 22nd in Granite Creek Park. Activities this year include environmental workshops, great food, and music. Be sure to get there for the mariachi band at 2:30!!

CREEKWATCH & the J.A. MCDOUGAL FUND FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

by: Joel Barnes

Upon receipt of the McDougal Fund grant last year, PCPA contacted the Yavapai County Public Works Department, who were very interested and eager to participate in the second phase of PCPA's creek signing project (see the Summer 1999 & Spring 2000 *Creekside Almanacs* for more info.). PCPA identified 12 local creek crossings for sign placement and the County graciously donated several hundred dollars to the project, as well as the time and labor for installation of the posts and brackets. All 24 signs were delivered to PCPA in September, and in October/November the posts and brackets were installed at the creek crossings. During this time PCPA developed a strategy for erecting the signs around town, and to coordinate the creek signing as part of the Prescott CreekWatch Network (PCWN).

The PCWN is a project still in a formative stage, with the ultimate goal of building an interactive network of citizen led CreekWatch groups located throughout the Granite Creek watershed. Each CreekWatch group will reflect the interests of their neighborhood community, with volunteer members working and playing together to protect, restore and to *celebrate* their nearby creek. The creek signing project supported by the McDougal Fund creates an excellent opportunity to bring local neighborhoods together and assess

SLIDESHOW

April 14th at 9:30 a.m.

Joel Barnes and other PCPA members will present a creeks slideshow on in the Prescott College Performing Arts Building (218 N. Granite St.). After the slideshow, Barnes and neighborhood participants will install 18 creek signs.

**For Additional Info Call
Joel Barnes at:
776-0103**

their interest in forming a neighborhood CreekWatch group.

Joel Barnes & other PCPA members organized the first neighborhood CreekWatch group meeting, held on November 18th in Mountain Club. Participants celebrated Manzanita Creek with a natural history hike and by putting up six signs at three crossings in the Mountain Club area. In the spirit of the PCWN, we also discussed our values and concerns about Manzanita Creek and identified specific activities to do in the future such as natural history walks, water quality testing, and riparian restoration.

In addition to working with the County Public Works Department, PCPA partnered with Prescott College, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, and the City of Prescott to help get the PCWN off the ground. Prescott College has incorporated the PCWN into under-

graduate courses and independent studies, while ERAU is providing aerial flights over the Granite Creek watershed for research and educational purposes. Finally, the City of Prescott's Neighborhood Services Dept. has agreed to include the PCWN in their neighborhood planning. These partnerships will strengthen the long term viability of the PCWN and underscore the project's commitment to community-based conservation.

This creek signing project, made possible by the McDougal Fund for the Environment, provides an important step forward for the community of Prescott and the PCWN in regard to awareness and appreciation of our local creeks. PCPA is very grateful for this support! As the PCWN evolves, other projects could involve:

- Additional Phases of the Signing Project by working with ADOT, installing interpretive watershed maps in the Prescott area, and working with private neighborhoods.
- An interactive web-site
- Watershed workshops with additional CreekWatch groups: Water quality testing, more restoration work, & educational outings.

JUST IN!

PCPA received the J. A. McDougal grant for a second year to continue the Creek Signing Project!!

More details in the next issue.

THANK YOU YCCF!

ACTION ALERT: ARIZONA WATER PROTECTION FUND IN PERIL?

by: Michael Byrd

The Arizona Water Protection Fund, AWPf, has been PCPA's largest funding source to-date (almost \$90,000 for research and planning at Watson Woods), and there is a risk that this source may not be there in the future. But what is the Water Protection Fund, exactly?

The AWPf is an annual source of monies (allocated by the Arizona State Legislature) for the development and implementation of measures to protect water of sufficient quality and quantity to maintain, enhance, and restore rivers and streams and associated riparian habitat (Arizona Revised Statutes. Title 45. Chapter 12 1994). The Legislature also established in statute that the AWPf was to automatically receive \$5 million each year for river and riparian related activities (A.R.S. 45-2112.B).

Prescott Creeks Preservation Association

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....is published
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Staff/Editor/Publisher

Michael Byrd
Preserve Manager

Over the last few granting cycles the AWPf has received substantially less than the mandated \$5 million. In 1998 the total was \$1.6 million, in the years 2000 and 2001 the total was \$0. Recommendations for funding the AWPf in the current Governor's budget is again \$0 for the years 2002 and 2003.

This is not a good scenario for PCPA, or other groups (federal, state, and private) working to protect and restore Arizona's riparian habitats. As mentioned PCPA has received substantial funding from the AWPf to draft the Watson Woods Riparian Preserve Comprehensive Plan, develop interpretive materials, and conduct baseline research at Watson Woods. Restoration plans now in development for Watson Woods have identified the AWPf as a major source of funding. If this funding is not available, PCPA will need to identify other sources, and possibly delay the project timeline. But all is not dark and gloomy; there is light at the end of this tunnel. **The Joint Legislative Budget Committee has recommended allocations of \$2.5 million each for the years 2002 and 2003.** While this is not the total amount required by statute, it is a vast improvement over zero dollars!

This is where we need your help! You can let our Governor and state legislators know that you believe the AWPf is an important program that needs to be funded.

Please contact Governor Jane Dee Hull and Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and tell them that you support:

- The Joint Legislative Budget Subcommittee's recommendation of \$2.5 million in FY 2002 and FY 2003 for the Arizona Water Protection Fund.

Contact Info:

Governor Jane Dee Hull:
www.governor.state.az.us/

Arizona House and Senate Appropriations Committees
www.azleg.state.az.us/

or

Call or email me: 776-4490, mbyrd@CableOne.net and I will send a full listing of email and telephone contacts

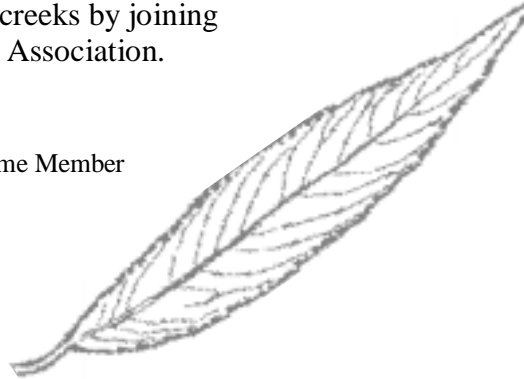
I wish I had more space here to give a complete accounting of this issue, but I don't. Please make your voice heard for Arizona's rivers and streams!

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.



P.O. Box 3004
 Prescott, AZ 86302

This issue... *To Arms! The Weed Invaders Are Here!*