



September 2021

## In this issue

Page 1 - 2

Presidents Letter

Page 3

Trailhead Ambassador

Page 4-5

Trail Maintenance

Page 6-7

Graffiti Removal

Page 8

Membership

Page 9

Statistical Data

Page 10

Wildlife Project

Page 11

Calendar of Events

Hello all. Here we are on the brink of autumn, and it has been a strange year once again. I want to thank all the members who have been gearing up for volunteer work only to step back and change gears to do something else. From the Visitor Center volunteers who were idle then overwhelmed with visitors wanting to know what was open, to the Photography Team and Docents that couldn't go to Palatki then could go then no wait don't go...it's been challenging.

FOF members are important to the Forest Service and to me. Volunteer engagement is my most important task as president. It's not always easy when forces are conspiring to keep us shut in and idle. But never fear. Opportunities keep coming our way. Even though TM&C is on summer hiatus, they were tasked with digging out a culvert after the monsoon filled it with 4 feet of thick smelly mud. Seems like a seamstress is needed for some window/door coverings in the V-V Heritage Site. The Visitor Center is keeping its doors open so more volunteers are needed. Spence can still use more computer helpers for detailed work. Bev always needs writers for news items in the Red Rock News.

Our newest sub-committee under Special Projects led by Jean and Mike Ober is the Trail Ambassadors. I am so proud of the volunteers who have stepped up to HELP visitors to our trails make a safe and smart hike on a tough trail. The Bell Trail and Bruce Brockett overflow was where they have been setting up. What a nice thing to do, talking to people and explaining how much water they should bring with them. They had a heat gun that they pointed at the ground to show the temperature there to be 140°! Not only were they there for the heat but also the flash flooding. Kudos to the volunteers that have saved lives and spared the Search and Rescue Teams from having to go out so often.

On September 1<sup>st</sup> we'll be holding our Fall Board Meeting on Zoom at 9:00 am. ALL members are welcome and invited to attend. There's useful information shared at these meetings, and no one should be hesitant to join or think "oh, that's just for the Board". The Forest Service is there to answer member questions and provide insight into projects that may be coming up in the near future. Check your emails for the link to the zoom meeting.

October 1<sup>st</sup> marks the beginning of the Federal Fiscal Year (FY) of 2022. All of us need to update our Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) form(s) **ON or AFTER OCTOBER 1ST**. That's important because we need them signed for the next FY; the JHAs do not roll over from

FY to FY. For all of our wonderful new members who just recently joined, you may not know how to log into NEON and sign them so here are the steps:

Log into NEON (FOF website - <https://www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org/>)

Select "Members"

Scroll down to "Member Login" and select it

The "Account Login" screen appears – enter your login (first name – period – last name with no spaces) and your password

Once in, select "Volunteer" and go to the bottom to find "Review and Sign Job Hazard Analysis"

All the JHAs are there, and you simply select the one that pertains to you, read it, understand it, and "Acknowledge" it. Any questions are directed to your committee chair(s)

EVERYONE is required to select "Covid-19 Mitigation", read, understand, and acknowledge this JHA plus any others that pertain to their committee(s) duties

Committee Chairs and Volunteers – please make sure you enter all your hours for fiscal year 2021 no later than the first week of October so that we can "close out" the fiscal year.

This year, the Officer and Director Nominating Committee is pleased to announce that six members

have chosen to be put into nomination for another 3-year term: **Ed Hodges, Garry Neil, Terry Orlick, Deneise Piepiora, Jerry Piepiora, and Manny Romero.** Also, **Noreen Lisowski** has relocated out of state and has stepped down (a big thanks for the work on the Membership Committee). I'm also pleased to announce that four individuals have agreed to be put into nomination as new Board members: **Rod Cashin, Dale Evans Craig Swanson, and Lynn Zonakis.** Five members are retiring from the Board: **Ernie DiMillo, Peg Kern, Jean Ober, Mike Ober, and Bob Wych.** Thank you for your great contributions to our organization, I mean really, you've all contributed so much to the Board. It's appreciated.

You will find a nomination ballot in this issue of Branching Out and you can easily vote online by accessing a link that will be sent to you in a separate communication that will arrive via email in October.

The FOF Annual Membership Meeting will be held on Saturday November 6th at 10:00 at the Beaver Creek Workstation. At this meeting, we'll also hold our annual awards ceremony and play catch-up from 2020. The Forest Service's Volunteer Appreciation Picnic to follow, starting at 11:00. With that being said, the event may have to be changed due to you-know-what. So maybe we might even make it a drive-through event, who knows. We will have to figure it out, but we will do something because you are all valuable volunteers and well worth the effort.

**Annie Glickstein**

**Check out the FRIEND'S website**  
**[friendsoftheforestsedona.org](https://www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org/)**

Last year the Friends received a call from the Red Rock Ranger District asking for volunteers to assist staff on a special project to help visitors to Bell and Bruce Brockett Trails avoid heat related injuries. With record breaking number of days exceeding 100+ degrees many visitors sought relief in the Coconino National Forest waterways of Oak Creek Canyon, Verde River and Wet Beaver Creek.

One area in particular located on Wet Beaver Creek known as the “Crack” saw an increase in usage and heat related emergencies by ill-prepared day-trippers. These novice hikers put a huge strain on the local fire department and search & rescue personnel. Forest Service (FS) staff developed a Preventive Search and Rescue (PSAR) program to provide educational information at the Bell and Bruce Brockett trailheads with support from Sedona Friends of the Forest (FOF) volunteers. During the hottest part of 2020, this PSAR program called “Trail Ambassadors” was successful with 30% of encounters seeing people going to other more suitable locations for their family and hiking skills or into town to purchase more water and salty snacks. This effort helped decrease the number of emergency calls due to heat related issues.

We spent multiple days at the Bruce Brockett Trailhead greeting visitors who were unfamiliar with the heat, local trails, and were looking for places listed on social media as an “easy hike” to a great place to swim. When giving the true nature of the hike and the effects of the heat, many chose to go elsewhere to spend the day. A warning to people bringing their dogs was to feel the ground to realize what their pups’ paws were feeling. There were several instances of burned and bleeding paws caused by the extreme heat of the trail.

If you are planning a visit this summer to beat the 100+ degree weather, here are some things to know before you attempt the “Crack”. It is 3.5 miles (7 miles round trip) and has no water access until the end with full exposure to the sun and heat. This hike is not recommended for young children or dogs. The last 1.5 miles has a significant elevation gain. If starting from Bruce Brockett, **do not** miss the junction to the parking lot on your return hike. Consider starting at dawn or in

the late afternoon to avoid dangerous heat. A normal walking pace for most people on a sidewalk is about 3 miles per hour. Expect to be hiking for about 2 to 2 ½ hours before you get to the water. Remember that you have to do the same thing on the return to the parking lot.

Be Prepared with ONE GALLON of water per person, balance hydration with salty snacks, bring a first aid kit and know how to use it. We met a family of five who said they had enough water, each one held up a 16-ounce bottle of water (one young boy had already drank half of his) they were surprised when we told them one gallon EACH. They decided that they really were not prepared and left to come back another day. If using a water filter or iodine tablets to treat creek water it is best to go above the Crack to obtain your water.

Proper footwear and sun protective clothing is highly recommended. One hiker came off the trail holding the sole of her sandal which had delaminated.

Wear plenty of sunscreen, a wide brimmed hat, and sunglasses. We saw many arrive ready to swim but not prepared to hike the 7-mile round trip in full sun.

Cell coverage can be sketchy when hiking in the wilderness. Always let someone know where you are going when you are intending to return. That way, if you are not back when you say you are, people can start looking. Stay on the designated trails. Water is not enough, if you are sweating a lot, you also need salty snacks to avoid dehydration.

Know the signs of heat illness, headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, cramping, decreased urine output.

The FS and FOF plan on continuing the Trail Ambassadors program this summer with the help of their volunteers. If you see them at the trailhead, stop by and say hello. They are there to help you have an enjoyable visit by offering wilderness hiking information, making sure you have adequate water, and helping you avoid unexpected weather changes.

**Jean Ober**

We don't know about you, but we are so over this pandemic! It has definitely been a time of change, stress and defining a new "normal". TM&C volunteers have had anything but a normal year. We've done a lot of starting work and then being required to stop – partly due to the pandemic and then due to wildland fires and the heat of summer. Regardless of these challenges, our volunteers are always willing to put on their hardhats, grab their tools and make Sedona's trails as fun, safe and beautiful as possible.

Before the heat and monsoons took hold, our incredible volunteers were able to do some general trail maintenance (Brins Mesa, Jordan, Munds Wagon, Ramshead, and Herkenham), install 2 new kiosks (Midgley Bridge and Huckaby trailheads), and remove a dozen trees from West Fork. We still have several trees down on Fay Canyon, Long Canyon, Loy Canyon and Sterling Pass (just to name a few) and those will be removed in the coming months.

Thank you to everyone that has been submitting reports of trail damage – especially due to the monsoons! We are working with USFS to prioritize monsoon-related damage and have already started cleaning up some of the damage.

At 6:30am on a hot July day, a small group of volunteers met at the Bell Rock Vista to tackle a blocked drainage culvert. Jumping right in, or more like sinking in, were **Mike Boyd, Jerry Checchia, Ernie DiMillo, Tim Fogarty, Annie Glickstein and Melissa Pontikes**. The group took turns shoveling the wet, heavy, fetid mud and debris searching for the two metal drains. One of the trickier aspects of the work was the fact that no one could take a step without sinking several inches or outright falling in the ever-shifting slippery mud. After almost 2 ½ sweaty hours, the group was able to clear the area of debris and create a new drainage channel. After several new monsoon rains, the culvert was reassessed and the drains remain clear!

Other monsoon-related trail repair that has been completed includes the removal of flash flood debris and filling-in of trenches on trails in the VOC, West Sedona, and Dry Creek area.

**We are currently targeting the week after Labor Day to resume our Friday morning work sessions ... fingers crossed!**

We can't thank our volunteers enough for all that they do. Their willingness to tackle a variety of jobs, many times at the last minute, is both humbling and inspiring. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

**Melissa and Mike**



**Ernie DiMillo, Mia Tranz and Kyle Robb (USFS)** digging holes for a new kiosk at Midgley Bridge



Culvert drains clogged with mud and debris on Bell Rock Pathway



Left: **Ernie DiMillo**

Right: **Jerry Checchia**

Digging for a drain on Bell Rock Pathway



The crew clearing the drain and a new channel on Bell Rock Pathway.

Front to back: **Ernie DiMillo, Annie Glickstein, Tim Fogarty, Melissa Pontikes and Jerry Checchia**



Cleared culvert drains on Bell Rock Pathway

*Are we having fun yet?*

Happened to come across some of my earlier Branching Out reports from 2015 and 2016. Just amazed at how much has changed, yet our mission remains unchanged. From having a team of less than 20 members using primarily sandpaper and wire brushes to the nearly 70 members today equipped with a myriad of tools (both physical and electronic), there isn't much we can't handle.

Probably the best news (except for not having any graffiti to remove) is that by working individually and as groups, we cover a lot of ground in a timely fashion. In spite of receiving literally hundreds of reports, if not in sensitive areas, we remediate the damage in just days.

I have included a few recent photos of our teams in action (or taking a break) and what we still encounter on a regular basis. It takes a special group of volunteers who are willing to go out time and again to remove this damage and return the forest to its natural state. Our greatest reward comes from the many hikers we encounter on the trails who thank us for our efforts.

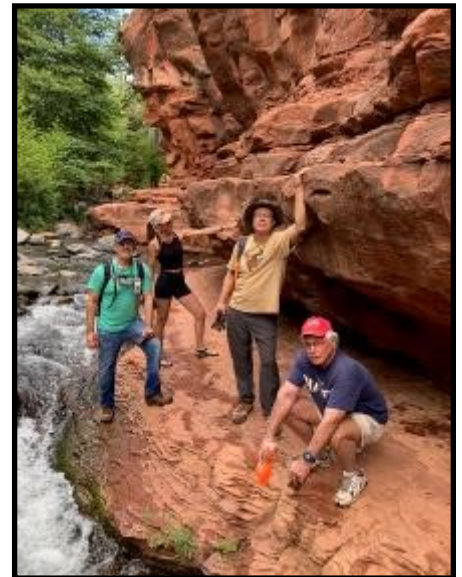
The entire graffiti team looks forward to seeing you on the trails.

**Jerry Piepiora**

Chairman

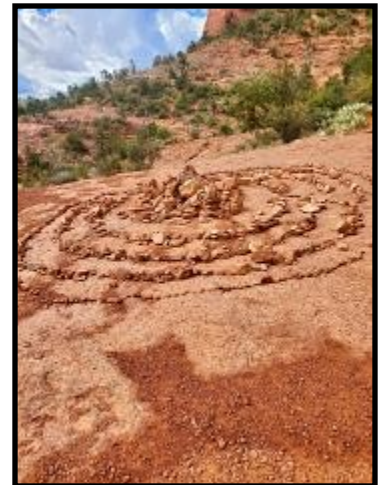


"no matter whether working in groups or individually, our team never lacks for learning opportunities - always something different, now including spray paint on trees..."



## Graffiti Removal

Just showing the varied “opportunities” we experience on a regular basis. Everyone of these were cleaned. Think we all know what a finished product would look like. Not bothering to include those. JTE



## Membership

Noreen Lisowski (our Membership Chairperson) has relocated with her husband to Colorado, and we want to thank her for her work while she was here in Sedona. Craig Swanson will be taking over as Membership Chairperson in October (thank you Craig).

Some members may not have been mentioned previously and I apologize right now, but since May 1<sup>st</sup> we have the following members that joined our ranks: **Bob Bare, Annette & Vince Bilotta, Art Brady, Ed Buonvecchio, Darrell Earnshaw, Rob & Sarah Elliott,**

**Andrew Epstein, Martin & Julie Feder, Brian Galyon, Beatrice Hanks, David Irvine, Drake Jackson, Bernard Kalscheuer & Ellen Covairt, Merrill Leffmann & Dieter Bollmann, Nicole Martinez, Amanda Maxwell, Dawn Miller-Aird & Paul Aird, Catherine Powers, Frances Riemer, Mike & Nancy Rousonelos, Kerri Simonian & Mark Bales, and Donald Worfolk.**

As far as reports, I thought it might be interesting to look at our membership over the last few years

**Annie Glickstein**

FOF Membership Data as of 7/28/21 (using calendar years)				
		Annual	Life	Total
2021	New Members Added in 2021 thru 7/28	40	5	45
2021	Past Members not renewing for 2021	60		60
2021	Current Membership (as of 7/28/21)	224	376	600
2020	New Members Added in Calendar 2020	52	27	79
2020	Past Members not renewing for 2020	47		47
2020	Computed membership at end of 2020			615
2019	New Members Added in Calendar 2019	50	24	74
2019	Past Members not renewing for 2019	40		40
2019	Computed membership at end of 2019			583
2018	New Members Added in Calendar 2018	65	25	90
2018	Past Members not renewing for 2018	46		46
2018	Computed membership at end of 2018			549
2017	New Members Added in Calendar 2017	50	25	75
2017	Past Members not renewing for 2017	31		31
2017	Computed membership at end of 2017			505
<b>Notes:</b>				
No easy way to accurately reflect past membership by Annual/Life since many members initially join as Annual members and then upgrade to Life at some point				
13 members who are deceased are excluded all together, as our records do not identify the year of death				
Since we allow a long grace period for renewal (thru the end of March), the end of year membership has been calculated to remove the non-renewers that were recorded during the subsequent year				

## Volunteer Hours

This fiscal year has certainly had its ups and downs as far as our volunteer efforts are concerned, between the pandemic, the fires, and the floods! Comparatives really

are meaningless in this environment, but they do help to shed light on what our volunteers have been able to accomplish.

Committee	FY21 Hrs. thru July	FY20 Same Period	Change in Hours	% Change
Air Quality	36	239	-203	-84.9%
Cultural Resources	3,822	5,162	-1,339	-25.9%
Graffiti Removal	1,492	1,396	+96	+6.9%
Interpretive Pgm	68	218	-150	-68.8%
River Rangers	75	229	-154	-67.2%
Special Projects	556	246	+310	+126.1
Trail Maint&Const	1,176	1,692	-516	-30.5%
Trail Patrol	9,377	10,217	-840	-8.2%
VIS	283	2,006	-1,723	-85.9%
Water Sampling	0	0	0	0
Wildlife/Fish/Rare Plants	2,013	3,935	-1,922	-48.9%
Admin/Meetings	1,246	1,422	-176	-12.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,144</b>	<b>26,761</b>	<b>-6,617</b>	<b>-24.7%</b>

As a reminder, please report ALL hours (including Admin hours for Committee chairs and all Trail Patrol hours by individual members) as soon as possible at the end of each month, no later than the 7<sup>th</sup> of the next month. This allows us to consolidate and update the hours in each member's NEON profile in a timely fashion. This month-end (September) is the most important one, as it will be the FINAL opportunity to report hours for FY21. So please **ensure all your hours are in by October 7, 2021**, at the very latest. No late Trail Patrol reports, please!

## NEON (Member Information Software)

With the start of the new fiscal year for the Forest Service in October, remember that all our active volunteers will need to sign the appropriate JHA's (Job

Hazard Agreement) once again (on or after October 1st). When you log in to our administrative system (NEON – Nonprofit Enterprise Online Network) to do this, take a moment to also review all your information and update as appropriate. You can also view your total FOF hours by fiscal year from 2014 forward.

To log in, go to the Friends website ([friendsoftheforestsedona.org](http://friendsoftheforestsedona.org)), click on "Members", then scroll down and click on "Member Login". Instructions are provided directly below the Member Login link.

**Peg Kern**

A kestrel success story to follow on **Dave Kennedy's** March "Newsletter" article in Wildlife Projects. In 2020, **Peggy and Richard Spencer** (FoF) placed four kestrel nesting boxes in the Rimrock region along FS 618 - no activity was noted that year. When they moved from the area, I assumed the boxes and, as Dave Kennedy did with his boxes, moved them to nearby but more shaded locations in February of this year. In mid-March I began monitoring the boxes every other week with the aid of a fiberoptic scope/phone app. In mid-April Box 3, which is situated near open pastureland, had two eggs. Three more eggs (along with an adult) were present when the box was checked two weeks later...



The success story continued in mid-May with all five eggs hatching.



At around three weeks of age, prior to fledging, **Janie Agyagos**, Red Rock Ranger District Wildlife Biologist, assisted Arizona Game & Fish in banding the young raptors – three males and two females. A check of the box in Mid-June revealed five juveniles appearing to develop some attitude.



Some time between June 12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, the kestrels fledged. The fledging kestrels are the stars of this success story but equally important to note is the group effort to this end involving the "American Kestrel Project" for guidance, the youth scouting group that made the nesting boxes, Red Rock Ranger District working with Friends of the Forest to place and monitor the boxes and the Arizona Game & Fish Department for banding the young. All are looking forward to continuing the effort and reporting back next year.

**Dale Evans**



**FRIENDS OF THE FOREST SEDONA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS MEETING**

**September 1, 2021 @ 9:00 a.m. via Zoom**

**November 6, 2021 @ 10:00 a.m. Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony**

**Beaver Creek Workstation**

**December 1, 2021 @ 9:00 a.m.**

**ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.**

**PLEASE JOIN US AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FRIENDS AND HOW WE ASSIST THE U. S. FOREST  
SERVICE**

The Friends of the Forest, Inc. is dedicated to assisting the U. S. Forest Service in maintaining, protecting, and restoring the scenic beauty and natural and cultural resources of forest lands for the enjoyment and use of present and future generations. The objective of this nonprofit, volunteer group is to work in partnership with the U. S. Forest Service in tasks it does not have the manpower or the funds to accomplish on its own.