

Desert Dwellers

Volume 7, Issue 1

March/June, 2004

Mountain Lions in Oracle Foothills Estates

By Joan Scott

Do we have Mountain Lions in Oracle Foothills Estates? Probably an occasional one passes through the neighborhood. Although I have never seen one and have never seen a photo of one here, several neighbors have reported rare sightings. I live in the neighborhood, but I also work for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. I do know that several years ago my agency had to tranquilize and relocate a lion that was in Friendly Hills Trailer Park, just south of us, down the wash from our neighborhood. That lion probably walked through our neighborhood to get to the trailer park.

But, I feel fairly comfortable telling our neighbors that I do not believe we have any resident mountain lions – none that stay around here as part of their home range.

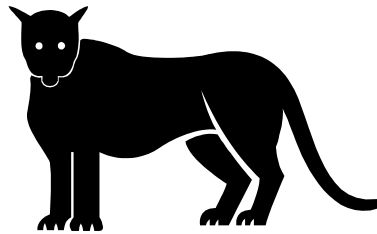
In the Sabino Canyon area, the story is different. There, the lions have become tame. The lions do not shy away from people, but hold their ground when approached and even growl at people walking by. That's not a good situation. A good lion is afraid of people. If it's not afraid, something's wrong, and something bad can happen. The problem in Sabino probably happened because the food for the mountain lion is just too good right next to the urban area. People feed wildlife, either intentionally, or just by allowing garbage, pet food – even pets themselves – to become food for wild animals.

In Oracle Foothills Estates, we probably don't need to be afraid of lions. I believe we are just too far from the open wild lands (in this case, the Coronado National Forest boundary) to have lions regularly visiting our neighborhood. And, there is no evidence that we have any lions here that have become tame to human presence. If on the rare (lucky!) chance that you would see a lion, he should be more afraid of you than you are of him. That's the way lions normally behave.

Nevertheless, it never hurts to review the tips from the Arizona Game and Fish Department of what to do if your encounter a mountain lion. However, you will be more likely to see a lion when you go camping than in

our neighborhood.

- ◆ **Do not hike, jog or ride your bicycle alone in mountain lion country:** go in groups, with adults supervising children.
- ◆ **Keep children close to you:** observations of captured wild mountain lions reveal that the animals seem especially drawn to children. Keep children within your sight at all times.
- ◆ **Do not approach a mountain lion:** most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.



- ◆ **Do not run from a mountain lion:** running may stimulate a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If there are small children there, pick them up if possible so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the mountain lion.
- ◆ **Do not crouch or bend over:** a person squatting or bending over looks a lot like a four-legged prey animal. When in mountain lion country, avoid squatting, crouching or bending over, even when picking up children.
- ◆ **Appear larger:** Raise your arms. Open your jacket if you are wearing one. Pick up small children. Throw stones, branches, or whatever you can reach without crouching or turning your back. Wave your arms slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice. The idea is to convince the mountain lion that you are not prey and that you may be a danger to it.
- ◆ **Fight back if attacked:** many potential victims have fought back successfully with rocks, sticks, caps, jackets, garden tools and their bare hands. Since a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal.



Flood Insurance



If you recently applied for a building permit to add to your home or applied for a new mortgage with lower interest, and you are located near a wash, like most of us, it is likely that you were required to have flood insurance on your home.

This newly required flood insurance is a result of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) implementation of a more stringent review of properties that have the possibility of flooding. This FEMA program is a direct result of the costly damage caused by hurricanes and subsequent flooding of homes without flood insurance. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) has been moving west for some time and is now affecting all of us.

So what is the big deal?

1. Flood insurance is very costly, as much as \$800 per year for a home in the flood zone.
2. The flood zone maps that FEMA has put in place are quite old and very inaccurate at best.
3. The cost to process a document that would remove your property from the flood zone - Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) - is very high, \$500 to \$1000. This LOMA, if required, could be a necessary document for the sale of your home.

What Should I Do Now?

- If you do not presently pay flood insurance, do not plan to refinance your mortgage, sell your home, remodel or add a room to your home, and are situated **well above a wash**, do nothing.
- If you are located in a wash or near the water level when we have heavy run-off, I recommend placing flood insurance on your home if you do not presently have it. Make sure your present coverage is sufficient.

that your residence is located in a flood zone (Zone A*) and you feel that you are well above any chance of flood, you can:

- a. Verify the information with **Pima County Flood Control District** at 201 N. Stone Ave., 4th Floor, Tucson, AZ 85701(**520-740-6330**). With your address they can provide you with a copy of the flood control map showing your home. This is the only way to obtain a map at the present time.
- b. Remember I stated that these old FEMA maps are very inaccurate and if Pima County feels you could be removed from the flood plain, you have more options:
 - Hire a licensed civil engineer, surveyor or hydrologist to prepare and certify the necessary forms to request FEMA to remove you from the flood zone. Verify in advance that these professionals provide this service, as many do not.
 - If you have some time, Pima County is upgrading these ancient flood maps and should have our washes corrected within a year, providing their budget problems do not get worse. Since the present maps reflect the flood areas wandering from side to side in our washes, this updating could either remove you or place you in the flood plain.

If all I did was confuse you, please feel free to contact me any time – perhaps I can untangle this web.

Jay DeAngeli
690-1107

ejdeangeli@earthlink.net

*Flood Zone A is the 100-Year Flood Plain, not meaning that it floods once every 100 years, but that it has a 26% chance of flooding every 30 years!

Vegetable Gardening: Success at Last?

By Tom Scarborough

When Harriet and I moved to Canyon View Drive from our little house way out on the southwest side, we left behind what I truly believe was the best organic vegetable garden in the whole valley. It was four hundred square feet of three-foot deep soil full of earthworms and able to grow anything. This had been pick and shoveled out of some of the hardest soil (if you can call it that) I'd ever seen. But after several years and who knows how many tons of organic matter being dug in, we could grow anything. The garden went full tilt all year round. Squash and eggplant and asparagus and chiles and corn and cucumbers and cantaloupes and beans and tomatoes thrived during the summer and in the winter these gave way to beets, turnips, kohlrabi, all kinds of greens, sugar snap peas, and broccoli.

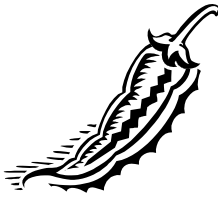
We moved into our present house in November of 1988. I scoped out the grounds and began to make plans to bring a garden to this place as well. I figured to keep it a bit smaller, as the 400 square feet produced way more than we could use, and I think most of our friends and workplace colleagues were getting a bit tired of having bags of assorted produce dropped on their desks and doorsteps.

I made my move in the spring of '89. The builder had put a small planting bed in front of the house, maybe about 6 x 10 or so. I dug in manure, turned everything over two or three times, and when the soil warmed up, I plunked in a dozen jalapeño plants. I figured this would be a good start, and that I could add other things to the plot as time went by. Well, the next day I peeked out the window, and my garden plot was empty. Yikes! The critters had grazed every one of my jalapeños right to ground level. I began to rethink this whole thing when I looked out the next morning and saw that they'd now dug up the roots and eaten them as well.

Over the years between the ill-fated jalapeño experiment and now, I've tried lots of things. I put a big raised bed in the backyard, nicely framed with redwood and filled with good quality topsoil and lots of organic matter. I put a two foot chicken wire fence around the top of it, figuring that the rabbits and ground squirrels wouldn't get over that and into my plants. Well, they didn't do it overnight, but by the following weekend, I had a nice redwood box with no plants.

So for the past several years, I have satisfied myself with ornamentals, carefully selected through trial and error – what the beasts didn't eat got to survive. But this Darwinian approach just didn't make me completely happy. I needed to grow some things we could eat. The

dwarf citrus has done pretty well. A lemon, a blood orange, a kumquat and a tiny grapefruit tree which finally seems to be getting its act together seem to be holding their own. I just added a Mexican lime and a Valencia orange to the mix. The only problem here seems to be getting the blood oranges through to full ripeness before the woodpeckers and thrashers decide to sample each one. Why can't they just focus their attention on half the crop? I'd gladly give them that much if they'd leave the balance intact for Harriet and me. I



also planted some habañeros and chile pequines (bird pepper) in big pots on top of an old picnic table. These have done fairly well, but you know, it's just not enough.

This year I'm trying another tack, and it seems to be going well so far. I inverted a bunch of the old clay pots I had around the yard, and set big plastic pots on top of them. If the critters are going to get to the goodies, they're going to have to pretend they're climbing Half Dome in order to do it. I filled 'em up with good soil, added a bunch of new lines to the drip system, and planted four varieties of tomatoes, three varieties of chiles, bush cucumbers, an eggplant, and two varieties of squash. I'm pleased to report that so far, all is well. All of the tomatoes have fruit on them, the jalapeños and Anaheim chiles have set their first peppers, and the habañeros are flowering like crazy. Maybe we're going to get to bite into a just picked, warm from the sun tomato in a few weeks. I've missed that, and now it looks like it might happen again. The only thing running through the back of my mind right now is that maybe those woodpeckers and thrashers will find tomatoes as much to their liking as blood oranges.

I like cohabitating with all the critters in the neighborhood. I love watching the lizards, and each spring I keep my eye out for the first round-tailed ground squirrel to make his or her appearance. I saw my first baby quail of the year yesterday, trailing along behind mom and dad like a string of peanuts. I get jazzed when I see one of our resident Harris' hawks or see a cardinal at the sunflowers and a half dozen lesser goldfinches munching on thistle seeds. I enjoy having quail nesting in the potted plants and doves building their flimsy nests on top of the patio columns. But these guys need to learn to live with me as well. I'll give them their due, but I really do think they ought to let me have a tomato or two, and a blood orange now and then.

That's only fair, isn't it?

Resources

Here are some phone numbers, websites and addresses that may be of use to residents of Oracle Foothills:

Pima County

Animal Control

- ◆ Enforcement:
(520)743-7550
- Licensing:
(520)743-7666
- ◆ www.pimaanimalcare.org/
- ◆ 4000 N. Silverbell Rd.

Transportation (Street Issues)

- ◆ Annabelle Quihuis, aquihuis@dot.co.pima.az.us
- ◆ 740-6410
- ◆ www.dot.co.pima.az.us/transportation.cfm

Zoning Enforcement

- ◆ 741-6740

Supervisor, District 1

- ◆ Ann Day, aday@exchange.co.pima.az.us
- ◆ 740-2738
- ◆ 130 W. Congress St., 11th Floor, Tucson, AZ 85701

Pima County Cooperative Extension (For questions on plants and gardening issues)

- ◆ cals.arizona.edu/pima/
- ◆ 4210 N. Campbell Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85719-1109
- ◆ 520- 626-5161

Sheriff

- ◆ 911
- ◆ 741-4900

Flood Control

- ◆ 201 N. Stone Ave., 4th Floor, Tucson, AZ 85701
- ◆ 740-6330

Maps (Parcels, Aerials, topography & many overlays)

- ◆ Www.dot.co.pima.az.us/gis/maps/mapguide

Federal Government

Congressman Jim Kolbe

- ◆ www.house.gov/kolbe/
- ◆ 520-881-3588
- ◆ 1661 N. Swan Rd., Tucson, AZ 85712

Senator John McCain

- ◆ mccain.senate.gov/
- ◆ 450 W. Paseo Redondo, Suite 200, Tucson, 85701
- ◆ 520-670-6334



An Election Year

In case you've been on an adjacent planet and haven't noticed, this is a presidential election year. Too often we Americans take our freedom and democracy for granted and fail to participate in the most elementary and important function of the democratic process—voting. Regardless of your views, your party affiliation, or your level of involvement, every citizen has an obligation to participate in the election of those who will determine the future of the nation and the world.

In order to vote, you must first be registered. **You may register to vote in Pima County if:**

- ◆ **You live within Pima County at least 29 days prior to the General Election.**
- ◆ **You are a United States Citizen.**
- ◆ **You are 18 or older, or will be 18 by the next General Election.**
- ◆ **You have not been convicted of a felony or treason, or if you have, your rights have been restored.**
- ◆ **You have not been adjudicated an incapacitated person**

Registering is easy. Voter registration forms are available at:

http://www.recorder.co.pima.az.us/voter_forms.html

Just click on “register to vote”. Print, fill out and mail the form to your County Recorder's Office. You will also find forms at all **libraries, post offices** and at the **Motor Vehicle Department**. Mail the completed forms to:

Pima County Recorder's Office
115 N. Church Ave.
Tucson, AZ 85701

Early Voting: Prior to each election, locations will be established for early voting. For this year's September 7th primary, you will be able to start voting on August 5th, thus making it possible for you to vote at your convenience. You may also choose **to mail in your ballot**. Just call the Recorder's office at **740-4340** to request a ballot. The general election will be held on **November 2nd**.

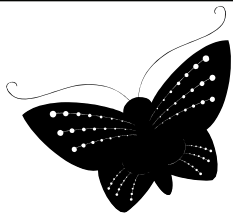
The Pima County Recorder's website is a very helpful resource for all information regarding voting:

www.recorder.co.pima.az.us

If there is anyone who would like a **ride to the polling place**, either for early voting or on election day, please call me (**Carole DeAngeli, 690-1107**) and I will be happy to take you there, or to help you in any other way regarding voting.

Make sure you have a VOTE in America's future!

WWW.OFNA.ORG

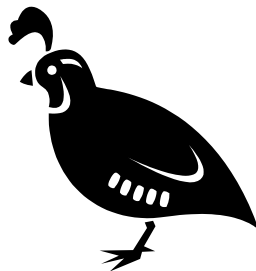


Spring Day Musings from Yvon Drive

by Barbara Schuessler

The desert air is filled with birds chirping and doves cooing, as a Gila Woodpecker sips from a claret cup. A claret cup cactus bloom that is. Spring has sprung and seventeen scarlet blooms bring splendor to this hedgehog cactus, nestled between the fragrance of the freshly misted creosote bush and the yellow paloverde tree. The small yellow flowers of the paloverde radiate a golden halo from all of its green limbs as the bees work their magic. The large woodpecker sporting its black and white striping on its back and tail, now perches conspicuously on the trunk. His bright red cap glistens as he drums out his rhythmic tapping of delectable delights, such as grubs and other insects. Its strong, hooked claws hold him firmly upon the trunk and his tail feathers help to prop it upright. His sharp bill hammers out a unique rhythm connecting, seemingly, to the heartbeat of the earth itself. A bold, Curve-billed Thrasher darts on the ground underneath, using its large bill to flick aside debris and dig in the soil in search of food. Running in spurts with its strong legs, the sickle-shape bill flicks away at the ground in an almost belligerent way as its yellow eyes dart inquisitively looking for more insects, seeds, fruit or berries.

A couple of Gambel's Quail strut around, scratching and poking at the ground. The plump gray male has a burnt orange cap with the head feather arching up from the forehead. He looks like a tiny, avian sultan, as his upright plume beckons from his rust colored turban. His face and throat are masked in black and outlined by a white strip running across the forehead and down the side. Staying close together, the couple moves about quickly in a courtly manner. Their upright plumes bobbing as they forage for the day. They walk amongst yellow and purple flowers. Wildflowers, cactus flowers, flowers on bushes, flowers on trees, many different colors and shades -- but, oh the spectacular red flowers of the leafy ocotillos are providing their life essence to a hovering hummingbird. Hummingbirds could not live without flowers, and many flowers could not live without their pollination. This fearless flyer flies



backwards, forwards and sideways, and appears to not be afraid of any predator. Seemingly full of joy, this bejeweled tiny bird shimmers iridescent colors in the light. It moves on to the red tubular flower of the Chuparosa. Drawing nectar, it has the ability to move its wings in a figure 8 pattern -- certainly makes one pause with wonder and reverence. Reflecting upon the symbol for infinity.

The beauty of the hummingbird transcends cause and effect. It is the promise of the rainbow after the rain. The feathers appear dull until the light hits them and then they shine with gem-like luster. As I water my plants, the lovely Black-chinned Hummingbird hovers closely, as if to just say hello and then darts through the water. Reminding me of my days as a little girl, running through the sprinklers and having a blast. Evoking memories, as well as a smile, I watch as it lands on the twig of a Salvia. Its slender tongue nabbing a small insect. House Finches feast on the Mexican Honeysuckle nearby. Hopping from flower to flower they are joined in their flower feast by a Lesser Goldfinch. The brilliant yellow chest bounces around like rays of sunshine, as he performs his aerial acrobats and finally lands on a branch to sing his song.

High in the sky, the majestic flight of a Cooper's Hawk is captured by its shadow as it falls to the earth's floor. Mourning Doves scatter and quail call to one another. A male quail perches high on a Mesquite branch - like a plump prince - warning his covey and calling loudly. A Zebra-tail Lizard runs swiftly, curling its tail over its back and exposing its zebra stripes. Meanwhile, beneath the tree, two snakes are entwined. Conjuring up the image of the caduceus. The symbol of medicine. The symbol of wisdom expressed through healing. Because it sheds its skin as it outgrows the old, the cycle of death and rebirth are revealed by the snake.

During this season of rebirth revisited, quail eggs are hidden where many cannot see. Yellow is everywhere, so vibrant, nothing more glorious than a cactus flower reflecting the sunlight. Some of the paloverde blooms have fallen; dusting the ground like a lemon yellow powdered

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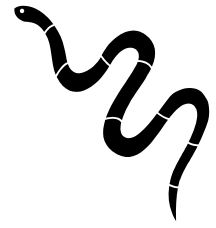
sugar topping. The Black-collared Lizard, a miniature replica of years gone by, darts through the yellow dusting and stops to do push-ups. A lanky, yet graceful, Jack Rabbit lopes on down and begins to nibble at the ground. Cottontails hop and play. Putting their ears down and becoming statues, then jumping and running. A Pyrrhuloxia dangles from a branch like a trapeze artist. This Southwestern version of a cardinal, expertly opens a seed pod with its strong, down-curved, yellow bill and consumes the seeds. Proclaiming his territory, by singing a whistling-like song.

As his song fills the air, the woodpecker flies over to a tall, majestic Saguaro. He stands on top looking west towards the sunset. The warm golden and orange hues paint the sky, while sparrows return to their nests in the Saguaro. Flying into their holes you can hear small peeps

of rejoicing babies. The quail couple meander over to a pyracantha and jump inside to settle down and roost for the night.

The woodpecker, tips his red cap, and drinks from the Saguaro bud. The flight of another woodpecker comes on the winds of dusk. Flashing white wing patches as it flies in its up and down pattern. It has a unique flight pattern. Following its own unique rhythms and flight. Rhythm is a powerful percussive instrument -- just like the woodpecker. She lights on the Saguaro. Her bill is strong and sharply pointed. Her long barbed tongue catches a gnat. The sun is setting. She settles in her home. All is quiet.

All needs to be preserved.



Board Meeting

The next regular meeting of the OFNA Board of Directors will be held

on:

June 28th

7pm

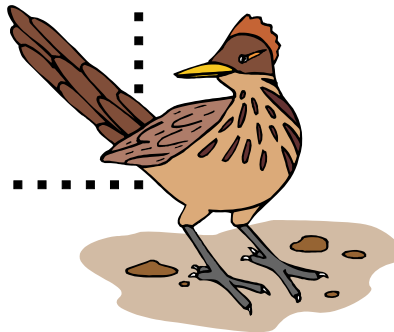
5431 N. Agave Drive

(The home of Kitty Schwartz)

For more information, please

call

Jay DeAngeli, 690-1107



Mea Culpa!

Please note that I reported the new OFNA mailing address incorrectly in the last newsletter. Below is the correct New Mailing Address:

**OFNA
P.O. Box 35783
Tucson, AZ
85740-5783**

Newsletter Notes ~ This newsletter is published 4 times annually (usually!). If you have comments, suggestions, criticisms, or would like to contribute an article, please contact:
Carole DeAngeli, 690-1107, ejdeangeli@earthlink.net

I welcome and encourage articles from all neighborhood residents!

'04 OFNA MEMBERSHIP \$50 PER YEAR

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