

Grand Canyon National Park Podcast, Monday May 12, 2008

Greetings from Phantom Ranch! by Ranger Matt Slater

With the wonderful weather we've been experiencing down here it's still quite busy, the campground and lodge are still full every night. During the days the temperatures have been in the upper 80's to low 90's with overnight lows in the upper 50's. Be sure to have plenty of water and salty snacks along the trail if you're planning on visiting us.

The wildflower's exploded down here this spring! The inner gorge was painted yellow for a couple of weeks with all of the brittlebush that bloomed this year. Although they have wilted down here with the dry warm weather we're experiencing now there is still plenty to see along the trail along with several species of prickly pear, the globemallows, paintbrush, desert four o'clock, and even the hop trees are blooming below Cedar Ridge on the South Kaibab. If you're heading up the Bright Angel Trail keep your eyes open just before the Devil's Corkscrew for the columbines that are blooming below the small waterfall to your right.

If anybody is interested in birds this is the time to be here with all of the males singing for that special someone. We've been seeing a lot of our summer residents returning including black-headed grosbeaks, Bullock's orioles, lazuli and indigo buntings, and our summer and western tanagers. On the days the wind hasn't been howling, our biologists have been having great success locating nests. Although these winds may make research difficult, it does bring down some birds that normally don't visit us along the river including American crows and western scrub jays.

The reptiles have also become more active. Lots of people have been seeing our whipsnakes and kingsnakes and there have also been a couple of rattlesnake sightings. While lots of people seem to be terrified of rattlers, the species we have down here, the Grand Canyon rattlesnake is not very aggressive. That's not to say that they can't hurt you, but if you just give them some space they will usually just slither away.

Most of the snow has melted off the north rim but you can't tell that by looking at Bright Angel Creek. The water is still quite high in the creek but the amount of sediment has definitely decreased. I can't wait for the warm days of the summer when we'll be able to soak down in the cool waters next to the campground. Hopefully within the next couple of weeks we may be able to get in for a dip.