



The Ranger Review

Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Well, & Tuzigoot National Monuments

The Color of Life

By Ranger Sharlot Hart

Walking the trails is a delight for any park ranger. One of my greater joys in this circumstance is lizard watching with you, the visitor. So many people pass by a lizard hiding in plain sight. It seems like these reptiles are frozen in time, until they suddenly make a break for it, scurry across the path, and disappear out of sight.

Recently, I saw two Clark's Spiny Lizards which didn't scramble to the opposite side of the tree branch as they usually do. They stayed, posing for pictures like they were born superstars. The visitors and I responded as true paparazzi, taking photos and staring at the gorgeous blue belly of the male.

That's how we knew it was a Spiny lizard, or a member of the genus *Sceloporus*. We have a couple of species of Spiny lizards, and the males of most species have a blue patch on the sides of their bellies and on their throat.



A male Clark's Spiny Lizard showing off his brilliant turquoise throat.
Photo by Thomas C. Brennan

Otherwise, their coloring is grey, tan, yellowish brown, black, or all of those mixed together. Females in the group don't have blue patches. Since the rest of their coloring camouflages them in their desert homes, the blue patches on the males seem to scream out to females: choose me as your mate! But the females of the two larger species in this group, the Clark's and Desert Spiny Lizards (*Sceloporus clarkia* and *S. magister*), have a trick of their own: during breeding they develop reddish orange heads!

The fun with body color doesn't stop there. As these lizards get older, their normal coloring and markings may fade, especially in males.

Further, Clark's and Desert Spiny Lizards display metachromatism which is when the temperature cools, so that they can absorb more heat from the sun. on the flip side, when it gets hot, they get lighter in color to reflect away the sun's rays and keep themselves cooler.

When you're out on a trail, take time to watch a lizard. They have amazing adaptations to survive out in the harsh desert; color is just the tip of the iceberg. Can you spot others?

Ribbons of Green

Arizona. The Grand Canyon state is known for its picturesque rock formations, beautiful lightning storms, and even the Sonoran Desert and the silhouette of the Saguaro Cactus. Something this state is not known for is water. Yet, water is life-blood of every living thing on this planet and Arizona is no different.

Water is a limited and precious resource everywhere, but it is easier to see just how precious in a desert environment like in Arizona. Here in the valley of the Verde River, people from all over the state flock to this ribbon of green that shades and protects this great river. But why are the plants that surround the Verde River so important?

These ribbons of green that protect the water are called Riparian areas. Riparian is one of the few words whose definition is constantly based on politics. If you look in any land management organization, and compare their definitions of what a Riparian area is you will find that there is no agreement on how to define it nor how to manage and protect it.

What they do agree on is that a Riparian area is an area of water and the land that surrounds it. The vegetation and wildlife that the water supports varies from place to place

and thus the reason why there is so much confusion.

Riparian areas or zones are all interconnected with each other, and the ones here in Arizona are no different. It is in these little edens of green that you find birds of every color and species. Some that are migrating through, and some that are raising a new generation. It is here that you find plants like ferns that you would be hard pressed to find anywhere in this dry state. It is here that large animals come to drink and eat their fill of the lush, green vegetation. And it is here that you find the presence of people both in the past, present, and you will see in the future. But for how long?

Riparian areas are rare in Arizona, and all of life needs them to continue on for the survival of all. But they are constantly being stretched further and further by the constant demand of water. Currently, there are only a few natural ones left, but they are by no means untouched in the constant demands for water.

Everything on Earth needs water to survive. These Riparian areas are so precious, not only to us as humans, but also to the plants and animals that rely on them. That's what makes them so special and so unique. And that is why we need to protect them.

Upcoming Events:

June 4-13, 2010

Festival of Native American Culture.

June 5-6, 2010

Fee Free Days at all National Parks.

June 8, 2010

10:30 am at Montezuma Castle: presentation by Al Cornell on Fire and Ancient Society.

June 10, 2010

10:30 am at Montezuma Well: presentation by Jerry Honawa on Hopi and Hopi Gardening.

7:30-10:30 pm at Tuzigoot: Evening program on Astronomy with telescopes and music provided.

View Through the Lens



Sego Lily (*Calochortus nuttallii*) Photo taken at Montezuma Well National Monument in May by Ranger Laura Albert.

Did you know?



Montezuma Castle was made a National Monument in 1906 by President Theodore Roosevelt. Even then, visitors to the monument were allowed to climb up several ladders to enter this amazing structure! It wasn't until 1952 when the National Park Service stopped allowing people to go inside the ruins in order to protect the ruins from being destroyed by thousands of feet walking on and inside it daily.

Picture of a man carrying his son up to the ruins in 1946. (NPS Archives)

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Word Search

Use the list below to find all of the words in the puzzle.

X	E	H	U	M	M	I	N	G	B	I	R	D	S	E	L	T	C
C	A	P	C	L	I	F	F	S	W	A	L	L	O	W	L	T	O
F	C	O	S	G	E	D	B	L	A	C	K	H	A	W	K	O	T
F	A	R	R	O	W	H	E	A	D	L	L	A	E	L	I	N	T
I	C	I	A	F	B	A	M	F	C	O	T	T	O	N	N	W	O
R	T	R	T	R	H	Q	O	E	I	I	L	R	L	L	G	E	N
S	U	W	T	D	P	U	N	M	R	E	O	A	T	I	S	J	W
N	S	Q	L	M	O	A	T	I	R	T	P	E	S	R	N	A	O
E	S	X	E	J	T	M	E	J	I	T	A	D	A	R	A	V	O
R	N	Y	S	R	T	U	Z	I	G	O	O	T	W	I	K	E	D
W	M	O	N	T	E	Z	U	M	A	C	A	S	T	L	E	L	E
N	T	B	A	O	R	H	M	K	T	F	R	Q	A	G	S	I	D
O	U	E	K	L	Y	V	A	L	I	S	C	U	C	B	I	N	E
Y	R	N	E	K	S	X	W	T	O	Q	H	I	A	E	N	A	R
N	Q	A	R	W	H	J	E	U	N	U	E	R	M	N	A	C	E
A	U	C	E	A	E	A	L	R	E	A	O	R	U	S	G	C	R
C	O	V	O	U	R	V	L	Q	T	S	L	E	Z	B	U	T	O
L	I	Z	A	R	D	E	P	A	N	H	O	L	N	O	A	U	M
U	S	M	U	T	N	E	O	A	T	R	G	F	O	B	T	Y	A
R	E	B	T	E	F	L	E	O	O	I	Y	U	C	C	A	A	C
P	U	E	B	L	O	B	T	R	A	D	E	J	M	A	A	B	Y
C	L	I	F	F	D	W	E	L	L	I	N	G	A	T	B	A	S

Word List:

Sinagua	Montezuma Castle	Tuzigoot	Montezuma Well
Corn	Cotton	Yucca	Beans
Squash	Irrigation	Cliff Dwelling	Pueblo
Trade	Salt	Pottery Sherd	Arrowhead
Lizard	Rattlesnake	Kingsnake	Cactus
Sycamore	Cottonwood	Turquoise	Archeology
Hummingbird	Black Hawk	Canyon Wren	Cliff Swallow
Squirrel	Deer	Javelina	Bobcat



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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The Ranger Review is designed to give you more information about what to see and do while visiting our sites. We hope that you enjoy seeing our parks from a Ranger's point of view!

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