



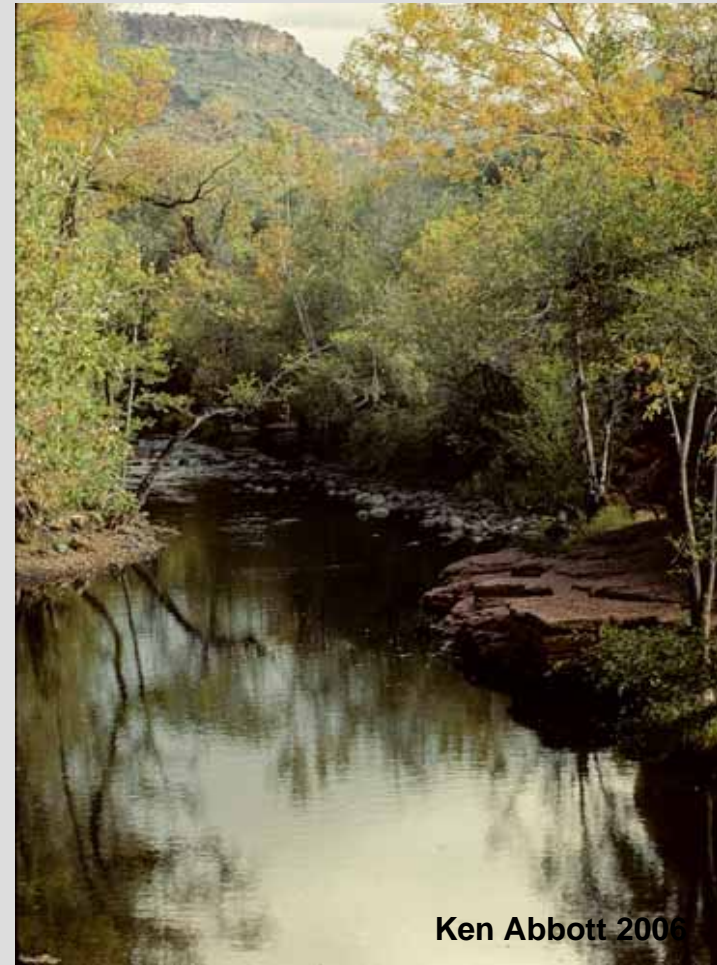
Because life is good.

Why We Should Care about the Verde River

January 28, 2009

The Center for Biological Diversity

- Is a non-profit conservation organization with 200,000 members and online activists
- Is dedicated to the protection of imperiled species and their habitats
- Believes that the welfare of human beings is deeply linked to nature
- Wants those who come after us to inherit a world where the wild is still alive



We want to keep the Verde River
flowing naturally with clean water



Randy Schreiner 2006

- Arizona is land of diversity whose rivers and streams are especially important
- These riparian areas provide valuable ecosystem services for humans and other species
- The Verde River is essential as one of the last perennial rivers in Arizona



Arizona: Land of Diversity



- Hosts nearly 5,000 plant and animal species
- Is ranked 4th in the nation for biodiversity
- Has the highest biodiversity ranking of any non-coastal state
- Has 135 species found nowhere else on Earth

Arizona: Land of Diversity

- Second highest number of reptiles
- Fifth highest number of mammals -
River otters breed at Verde River- one
of only two locations in Arizona



Walt Anderson 2008



Walt Anderson 2008

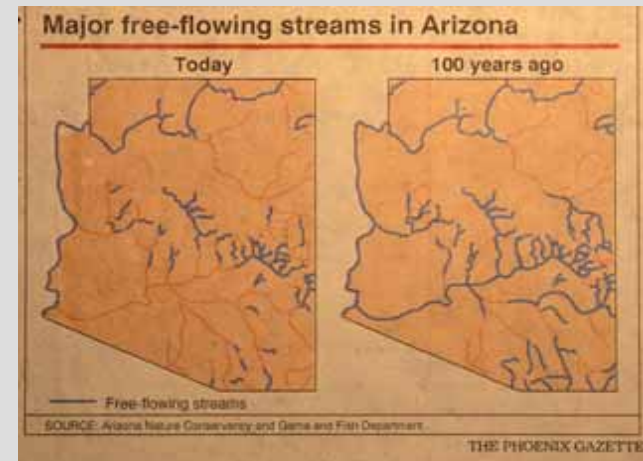
Arizona's Hot Spots: Rivers and Streams

- Riparian forests, such as that in the Verde River corridor, are some of the most biologically diverse and rich communities in Arizona ... and also the rarest
- Occupy less than one-half percent of the land in Arizona
- Yet 85% of the wildlife in our area depend on the Verde or its tributaries at some point in their day, year, or lives



Riparian Ecosystems

- Once formed continuous corridors of lush vegetation covering hundreds of miles
- Only a few free-flowing rivers remain in Arizona
- These *relic* communities have retreated to pockets where suitable climate and water regimes persist



Riparian Ecosystem Services

Biological connectivity for:

- Migratory pathways in times of change or seasonally
- Foraging, dispersal opportunities
- Genetic mixing (increasingly difficult for pronghorns to mix)



Riparian Ecosystem Services

The environment produces resources we often take for granted...

...like this



Ken Abbott 1980

...And This



Clean water, habitat for fisheries, pollination of native and agricultural plants, oxygen production, maintenance of genetic diversity, flood control, climate regulation, soil formation, nutrient cycling, recreation, spiritual renewal, biodiversity...

Riparian Ecosystem Services

- Resources necessary for human settlements
- Ecotourism - fastest growing sector of travel industry with 66% of visitors from outside the area
- “Reputational capital” fostered through open space, wild lands, viewscales



Verde River: A balancing act



- One of the last living rivers left in the state
- Second best native fish population in the state especially in the first 30 or so miles
- Contributes to the economic well-being of 3.5 million people
- Watershed provides 40% of Phoenix's surface water in the SRP service area
- As well as for Sedona, Clarkdale, Cottonwood, Camp Verde, Prescott, Prescott Valley, and Chino Valley

The Verde River is



- Longest - at 140 miles, the Verde is one of the longest free-flowing rivers left in Arizona – from Fern Mountain to Phoenix
- Largest - coming from one of the largest expanse of unbroken, high-quality native grassland in the entire Southwest
- Most expansive - comprising 10% of all Arizona riparian areas, one of the largest single expanses of Cottonwood and Willow

The Verde River is

- Best - with 8 species of native fish - one of the two best remaining native fisheries in Arizona
- Last - one of the two last places in Arizona where river otters still thrive
- Highest - often cited as having one of the highest densities of non-colonial breeding birds in North America
- Only - Wild and Scenic designations in Arizona



The Verde River is

- Fastest - Flows through one of the fastest growing counties in one of the fastest growing states
- Most endangered - according to American Rivers, the Verde is one of America's 10 most endangered rivers (2006)



Peter Ehler 2008

One of a kind and one of the last

- not just for us.



Walt A



All photos: Walt Anderson

Savetheverde.org

We don't want to say this used to be a river.



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