

Canyon



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Current Answers to Common Questions from Visitors to Sabino Canyon

Flora and Fauna— (Adapted in part from the Southern Arizona Nature Almanac). The monsoons of the summer were modest at best, and any green in the Canyon is fading away. Bright orange fruits like tiny pumpkins dangle from the hackberry bushes, ocotillos have shed their leaves, and brittle bushes are living up to their name. Dryness marks the days again; dust moves in the air like mist. Fall, even with its hot, dusty cloak, is nevertheless a fruitful time in Sabino Canyon. Plants are putting out an abundance of berries, nuts, or beans; deep red fruits still cling to the pads of prickly pears cactuses, and miniature pineapple-like fruits adorn the tops of barrel cactuses. Birds, rodents, coyotes, foxes, even bears, gorge on this bounty, stashing and devouring as much as possible to sustain them over the winter months to come. By late October, we will feel our first “real” cold mornings in the canyon, and will be sure to notice the shorter days. Most of our wintering birds will be amassed, and the air will again be filled with birdsong and activity. In the desert scrub, cactus wrens may begin to build winter nests in cholla cactus and line them with feathers to keep them warm. On cool mornings, look for roadrunners standing with their backs to the sun, their head feathers raised to expose their skin to the warmth. Snake activity is slowing, though warm days will still find them searching for that last meal before hibernation.

Weather—Average October temperatures are 84 degrees maximum, 57 degrees minimum. Precipitation averages 1.21 inches. September brought a resurgence of the monsoonal rains, and almost 30% of the year’s rain fell during the month. After a drought-stricken start, year-to-date rainfall totals now exceed the average. Following high temperatures at the end of September, early October is cooler, although temperatures in the 90’s are bound to re-appear. Over twenty days should be clear, and the chance of rain is only moderate.

Sabino Creek—Despite high rainfalls in both the Canyon and the Catalinas during September, flow in Sabino Creek is very slight, so that hikers crossing bridges should have no risk of wet feet.

Trail Information—All trails are open in the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area and nearby foothills. The Canyon Road is open to all authorized traffic (e.g. bicycles, walkers, shuttles) to its end at mile point 3.8 at Stop 9. The Shuttle provides service to Stop 9, departing every hour from 9:00 to 4:30 every day. The cost is \$8 for adults for the 50-minute circuit. The Bear Canyon shuttle is running hourly from 9:00 to 4:00 every day for \$3.

Repairs and renovations—At Stops 3 and 5, removal of existing walls and replanting with native plants took place in September. A forest thinning project was completed on Mt. Lemmon across from the Palisades Visitor Center, at Spencer Canyon and at Mt. Bieglow.

Wildlife Sightings—Josh Taiz, Forest Service District Wildlife Biologist, reports that mountain lion sightings continued at a low level during September, with only unconfirmed sightings near Summerhaven and other remote locations.

Other—In appreciation for your work and dedication, we would like to share the recent remarks of Shari Ketcham, Acting Visitors Center Supervisor at Sabino Canyon:

First, I would like to start out with a poem called a tribute to volunteers:

Valuable is the work you do,
Outstanding in how you always come through.
Loyal, sincere, and full of good cheer,
Untiring in your efforts throughout the year.
Notable are the contributions you make,
Trustworthy in every project you take.
Eager to reach your every goal,
Effective in the way you fulfill your role.
Ready with a smile like a shining star,
Special and wonderful—that's what you are!

A wise person once said, “Snowflakes are one of nature’s most fragile things, but just look at what they can do when they stick together.” This quote encompasses the true meaning of our volunteer organizations like Santa Catalina Volunteer Patrol, Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists, and Southern Arizona Rescue Association that assisted the Forest Service with the Forest Closure.

We had the Santa Catalina Volunteer Patrol assisting us on Mt. Lemmon and on other various areas of the Santa Catalina Mountains and the Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists helping to patrol the Sabino Canyon areas and the Southern Arizona Rescue Association helping to patrol both the Santa Catalina Mountains and Sabino Canyon trails.

I would also like to thank the leaders of these groups who helped me to coordinate volunteers in various areas of the forest. I would like to thank Jan Nusbaum with Santa Catalina Volunteer Patrol, Dan Granger with Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists, and Scott Clemans with Southern Arizona Rescue Association.

Each and every one of you that helped with the Forest Closure deserve a heartfelt thank you. Without you, this Forest Closure would have been nearly impossible to execute. After all, it was hard enough as is keeping the public out of the forest. But, because of your individual contribution to helping with the Forest Closure and because of this triad of organizations sticking together to execute a single mission at hand, that this was one of the most successful forest wide projects to ever be accomplished using mostly volunteers. This feat proves how teamwork allows common people to accomplish uncommon results. For this, you should be extremely proud! Volunteers do not get paid because they are worthless, but because they are priceless. And that is what you all are.....priceless.

Thank you!

Website— SCVP now has our own website: www.scvptucson.org

The Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists website – www.scvntucson.org - has some information and links that may be helpful to patrol members. Further information on Sabino Creek hydrology and temperature can be found at sahra.arizona.edu/sabinocanyon

Questions, comments or suggestions: Contact Warren Icke at icke63@gmail.com. Thanks to contributors Shari Ketcham, Josh Taiz, Marylee Peterson, Jan Nusbaum, Carol Tornow, Peggy Wenrick, and the [Southern Arizona Nature Almanac](#).