

2008 Tres Rios Nature Festival

Imagine thinking of the Valley of the Sun as the “Valley of the Three Rivers.” It gives a completely different feel to our community. When people first settled in the valley, it was the water that drew them here. Before Phoenix was a city and Arizona was a state, the Salt and Gila rivers flowed freely through the Valley of the Sun. Those waters nourished animal and plant life along the rivers’ banks and created a rich natural environment.

When the Salt River was dammed in the early 1900s, life in the Valley changed. Farmers had a reliable supply of water, aiding the economy in the little towns of Phoenix, Tempe, Mesa, Scottsdale and Glendale. However, the river channel changed to a dry river bed – now recharged by wastewater treatment plants or excess irrigation flow.

But, have you seen the Gila River lately - there is still a lush riparian areas – the Baseline and Meridian Wildlife Area (B&M Wildlife Area). This river is filled with natural flow, ground water and yes, water from the wastewater treatment plants – year-round! It is an incredible spot in the metro area. So, did you know we have an urban Wildlife Area? The B&M Wildlife Area is a property managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and yes, right here in our backyard is a piece of the Gila River that has been set-aside for wildlife.

B& M stands for Baseline and Meridian and you will discover that wildlife was not the only fascinating qualities of this river system – the history of our community is amazing. For example, Monument Hill stands above the confluence of these rivers, it was here in 1865 that it became designated by the Astronomical Survey as Arizona’s “Initial Point”. Interestingly two teams selected the spot, first a team from the Mexican Boundary Commission and then by the American team.

What does this mean? This is the reference point from where the rest of Arizona surveyed. Baseline Road is actually the east-west baseline and 115 Avenue is the north-south meridian. So from a survey perspective you are standing on Township 1 North and Range 1 East. Today, Monument Hill is used by Phoenix International Raceway. Heading south on 115th Avenue from

I-17 you approach a bridge across the Gila River. If you pause on the bridge, you will see Phoenix International Raceway to the south and the Gila River below. The river bottom is teeming with life and the when a race is on the raceway - it is also. It is again incredible to see these two areas to close together.

This area is home to abundant wildlife, boasting over 150 species of birds, not to mention mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians.

All this in our backyard!

Explore with us!

The Festival is an exciting opportunity for the whole family to learn about the amazing wildlife habitat and history of these systems. Come celebrates the rich heritage and natural beauty of the Gila, Salt and Agua Fria Rivers.

What to expect at the event:

Educational programs and tours will be offered throughout the weekend. The Nature Talk Series will offer programs on lizards, and bugs, and hawks – oh my! An exciting children’s area with hands-on crafts, live wildlife, up-close encounters with critters, educational displays, storytelling telling and more! There area also activities for the more serious wildlife enthusiasts and bird watchers –including an early morning birding tours and lectures on birding topics.

Location: B&M Wildlife Area – adjacent to PIR in Avondale Arizona
Take Avondale Blvd South – until you cross the river (approx 6 miles)

Dates: March 15 & 16th, 2008

Times: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. both days

Cost: FREE

For More Information Contact:

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