

# THE GRAND CANYON River Runner

Number Five

preserving public access to the Colorado River

Fall, 2007



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## CRMP Update

By Jonathan Simon

Since public interest in recreational river trips down the Colorado River through Grand Canyon National Park began to increase dramatically in the early 1970s, the National Park Service (NPS) has regulated the use of the river corridor in order to protect the Park's resources from harm and to ensure the quality of the visitor experience. Since 1972, the NPS has periodically developed and implemented river use management plans to limit and allocate use among different user groups, to ensure a high quality visitor experience, and to ensure that such use occurs in a manner that protects and conserves the Park's natural and cultural resources. Over the years, as the demand for Grand Canyon river trips continued to increase, these planning efforts generated substantial controversy, particularly over the allocation of use between professionally-guided and outfitted (i.e., commercial) and self-guided (i.e., noncommercial or "private") user groups, as well as over the NPS's continuing authorization of motorized watercraft and helicopter exchanges, particularly given the NPS's proposal that the river corridor be designated by Congress as "potential wilderness" under the Wilderness Act of 1964 (which remains outstanding today).

In February 2006, the NPS issued a new Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP) that revised and updated the previous river management plan developed in 1980 and revised in 1981 and 1989. The new CRMP is based upon a comprehensive environmental impact statement (EIS) issued in November 2005, which evaluated a range of alternatives for the identified issues, including overall visitor use levels, allocation of use between professionally-guided and outfitted (i.e., commercial) and self-guided (i.e., noncommercial or "private") user groups, levels of motorized use, and visitor use management options.

The EIS also evaluated impacts to natural and cultural resources, visitor experience and wilderness character, and social and economic effects. Among other elements, the new plan:

- achieves a 50/50 split between professionally-guided and outfitted and self-guided use, by increasing the self-guided use allocation primarily in the shoulder and winter months;
- adopts a mixed motor/no-motor alternative, with motorized use prohibited from September 16 through March 31;
- allows passenger exchanges at Whitmore from April 1 through September 15;
- reduces commercial group sizes;
- establishes use patterns based on daily, weekly, and seasonal launch limits to reduce crowding and bottlenecks; and
- limits all recreational users to one river trip per year from Lee's Ferry to Diamond Creek.

In the view of GCRRA and other leading groups representing recreational users of the Grand Canyon's river corridor, the new plan, while not perfect, is an outstanding accomplishment.

The core elements of the new plan reflect a set of joint management recommendations that GCRRA submitted to the NPS as part of a coalition of four groups representing the river-running concessioners, private boaters, and members of the public who utilize the professional river services that the concessioners exist to provide.

These recommendations—submitted by GCRRA, the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association, Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association, and American Whitewater—called for, among other things, an equal allocation of use between commercial and noncommercial use on an annual basis, the continued authorization of an appropriate level of motorized use,

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seasonal adjustments that would result in fewer river trips occurring at one time, and improvements to the noncommercial permit system. That the final plan largely reflects this agreement among these diverse stakeholders on these historically divisive issues marks a huge step forward for the management of recreational use of the Grand Canyon's river corridor.

Despite this achievement, in March 2006, River Runners for Wilderness, Rock the Earth, Wilderness Watch, and Living Rivers filed a lawsuit in federal district court in Arizona challenging the new CRMP. Subsequent to the filing of the lawsuit, and over the objections of the plaintiffs, the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association and Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association each intervened in the case to represent the interests of their members (the concessioners and private boaters, respectively) and to help defend the new plan.

The general premise of the lawsuit is that the new plan authorizes river running concessions services that are contrary to applicable law. More specifically, according to the plaintiffs, the new plan violates the NPS's "duty" to preserve the "wilderness character" of the river corridor because it—like the previous plan from 1989—continues to allow the use of motorized watercraft, helicopter passenger exchanges, and generators. The plaintiffs also allege that the concessions services authorized under the new plan—with respect to motorized use and the overall amount of use set aside for use by members of the public who choose to use concessioners for their trips—are neither "necessary and appropriate for public use and enjoyment" of the Park nor "consistent to the highest practicable degree with the preservation and conservation" of the Park's resources and values. Moreover, they claim that the plan's allocation of use between professionally-outfitted and guided boaters and self-guided boaters inequitably favors access by members of the public who choose to use concessioners for their trips and authorizes unnecessary amounts of such use at the expense of self-guided boaters. Finally, the plaintiffs allege that the NPS failed to properly evaluate the potential environmental impacts of motorized use.

Pursuant to the agreement of the parties and the judge in the case, in late May 2007, the plaintiffs filed a motion for summary judgment, seeking a ruling in their favor based upon the administrative record compiled by NPS in support of its record of decision issuing the new plan. In early

August, the government and the intervenors each filed their responses to the plaintiffs' motion, as well as their own cross-motions for summary judgment. The government and the intervenors responded strongly to the plaintiffs' claims, arguing that each of their claims lacks merit and should be rejected.

First, the government and intervenors explained that the plaintiffs had not shown that there was any duty that the NPS violated in continuing to permit motorized river trips and helicopter exchanges in the Park. There is no statute or regulation that prohibits the NPS from continuing to authorize motorized river trips and helicopter exchanges in an area—such as the Park's river corridor—that never has been designated by Congress as "wilderness" or "potential wilderness" under the Wilderness Act, and the NPS management policies on which the plaintiffs seek to rely do not prohibit motorized trips and are nevertheless not judicially enforceable against the Service in court.

Next, they explained that, under applicable law, the NPS has broad discretion to manage the use of Park resources and authorize concessions for the benefit of the public, and that the NPS's decision record clearly shows that the Service properly considered the types and amount of concessions services that are necessary and appropriate. For instance, they pointed out that the NPS had found in the EIS that "eliminating motorized use would force the NPS to significantly lower current levels of authorized use to minimize crowding and conflicts" and that "[r]educing or eliminating motorized recreational use would have the further effect of significantly limiting the wide spectrum of use and range of visitor services currently available to the general public, contrary to the NPS's management objectives." They also explained that the EIS fully evaluated the impacts of the concessions services authorized under the new plan and does not support the plaintiffs' claim that such services (including, specifically, motorized trips and helicopter exchanges) will cause adverse impacts and impairment to the wilderness character and natural resources of the Colorado River corridor.

The government and intervenors further defended the new plan's allocation of use between professionally-guided and outfitted boaters and self-guided boaters. In addition to pointing out that one of the plaintiffs' arguments already had been expressly rejected by the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in a prior case involving

management of river use in the Grand Canyon, they explained that the plaintiffs' singular focus on relative demand between professionally-guided and outfitted use and self-guided use as the determining factor for setting the allocation reflects an improperly myopic view of the NPS's mandates for management of the Park, and, in any event, does not support the plaintiffs' claim to a greater proportion of the allocation for self-guided use. They further explained that the plaintiffs' argument is belied by the fact that the new plan evenly distributes user-days between the two groups on an annual basis.

Under the court-approved schedule in the lawsuit, the plaintiffs have until September 3, 2007 to submit their response to the government's and intervenors' cross-motions for summary judgment and their reply to the government's and intervenors' opposition to the plaintiffs' motion. The government and intervenors then have until October 3, 2007 to submit their reply to the plaintiffs' response to their respective cross-motions. After all of the papers have been filed, the judge may or may not hold an oral hearing prior to issuing his ruling on the merits of the case. There is no timeline for when the judge might then issue a decision in the case.

In the event that the judge rules in favor of the plaintiffs, the case will proceed to a second phase to determine the appropriate relief to be granted. Although it is unclear what such relief might be, any remedy could have important consequences for the types and levels of Grand Canyon river trip opportunities available in the future to those members of the public who wish to run the river with a NPS-licensed outfitter and guide service, as well as for the quality of the visitor experience for all users of the river corridor.

Jonathan Simon is an attorney with Van Ness Feldman, PC, and represents Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association.



PHOTO © CATHARINE COOPER

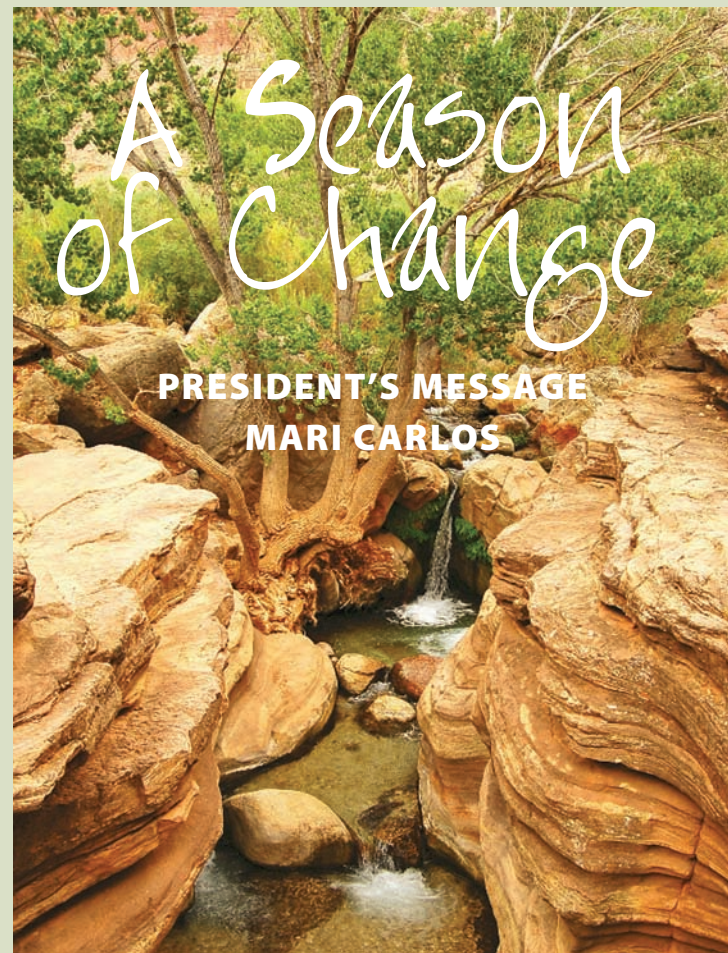


PHOTO © MARI CARLOS

## Change is a reliable constant in Grand Canyon. Climate, seasons, geology, attitudes, politics – They all change, reform, evolve, sometimes right in front of us.

As I write this there are boatmen scouting rapids that have not been scouted for many summers. A very active northern Arizona monsoon season and countless torrential rains have blessed the Colorado Plateau, renewing the desert and reshaping the Canyon. There have been many reports of inner Canyon flash floods. The resultant debris flows have altered rapids and challenged river runners since midsummer.

Many of you will recall the rockfall that so altered the look of the patio at Deer Creek a couple of winters ago. In April there was a crumbly trail of sorts, over and around the huge pile of fractured Bright Angel shale. I surmised that a couple of decades of nature's house cleaning would batter the shale, shoveling it into the chasm and hence into the river. Imagine my surprise to learn that a single flash flood this July swept away the entire rockfall. A private trip camped across from Deer Creek caught it on video and posted it on YouTube. It will show you a sight that few are privileged to witness, a major flash flood in Grand Canyon.

The house cleaning at Deer Creek was indiscriminate. In addition to complete expulsion of the rockfall, the flash flood also took out the venerable old cottonwood at the back of the patio. This photo was taken in July, 2006.

Those who have spent many more years in the Canyon than I have could no doubt recount many stories of landscape rearrangement. Three stand out in my mind. National Canyon, with its smoothly polished floor, enticed me to walk barefoot on my first visit there.

Several years later I found it covered in cobble and gravel. The floor of Blacktail was also completely filled in in recent years, but it used to have water for much of its length, including a small pool or two to wade through. Carbon Creek once boasted a magnificent stromatolite at the back of the canyon. Then a flash flood rolled it down into the slot canyon where it was broken apart. I have heard that some of the larger pieces still reside in the upper portion of the slot.

Politically the Canyon has seen a great deal of reshaping this year. An increase in private trip launches and fewer total motor launches have generated some concern about crowding. Much of the on river success of the new plan will depend on how well recreational users can adapt to an increase in oar powered launches. Lacking the ability of motor boatmen to 'go long' when camps are already taken, oar trip leaders are reminded daily that communication is everything. To that end Grand Canyon River Guides and Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association have jointly produced a courtesy booklet to foster better on river communication skills. While commercial guides have long understood the importance of sharing camping and hiking plans with other trips, many private boaters have little or no Grand Canyon experience. The courtesy booklet gives a better understanding of the camping etiquette that works best in Grand Canyon.

In a surprising twist of fate I found myself on a three person private trip this spring. My boating companions are both on the board of directors of Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association, with whom we signed and submitted to the National Park Service a set of joint recommendations on key elements of the Colorado River Management Plan. More than anything else I saw this as an opportunity to do a little political bonding and perhaps to lay the groundwork for future cooperation between our organizations. I also wanted to find out just how different or how similar we are – private boaters and commercial boaters – and to test my theory that we are in fact just different subsets of the same animal.

I'll leave the trip details for another day, but I do want to share some of my observations and experiences from our Grand trip. Our interaction with commercial trips was one hundred percent positive, even though initially they did not know who we were. They were gracious and eager to help, usually offered in the form of spare ice or even a meal. (We scored several lunches.) We double camped with an OARS Dory trip, an uncommon occurrence in the Grand. We had seen a high volume of trips setting up for a Tapeats or Deer Creek hike the next day and knew that camps were going to be scarce, so we invited the Dories to share with us at Stone Creek when they floated past late in the day.

Several times, when a commercial trip leader learned the make-up of our little flotilla I was asked to talk to their group about GCRRRA. How ironic it was to be able to talk to commercial boaters from the perspective of a private trip.

Finally, I would like to say a word about one of the contributions to our newsletter. Attitudinal changes may be more difficult to achieve than rearranging the patio at Deer Creek. It is a fact of human nature that long-held prejudices rarely die. Kathleen Jo Ryan has tackled this challenging topic in her most recent documentary, Right To Risk, and in her article within these pages. The documentary is a hugely insightful piece with the power to change entrenched attitudes, beautifully filmed in an arena that we know well, and with participants who will rock you to your core. Profoundly moving, thought provoking, life enriching – Right To Risk will imprint on your soul as indelibly as that first morning you woke up in Grand Canyon. It is a Must See.

See you downstream.



# Right to Risk

PHOTOS & TEXT BY KATHLEEN JO RYAN

Standing at the Rim of Grand Canyon the awe never wanes. On every trip, overwhelm is fresh again. Although I try to personalize this feeling with familiar knowledge, the expanse and magnitude are far beyond my comprehension.

How is it possible to visit a place so familiar yet feel so estranged? I strain for a glimpse of the ribbon of life running through the heart of this vast space. What color is the river today? How many cubic feet of water are running?

These are not technical questions; they are grounding, familiar, "How are you?" "How is your life force?" Just asking these questions transports me down there and connects me to the river.

This nineteen-year ritual of reconnection from the rim is always the same, always thrilling. Images from my ten river journeys dance in my mind. Breathing deeply to inhale space into my soul, I am renewed, refreshed, and filled with gratitude for this knowledge.

Gratitude carries me. How extraordinarily blessed I am to 'know' there are secret places down there... intimate places known only from the river. It was this gratitude and desire to share the unique river perspective that inspired my first Grand Canyon project, the book "Writing Down the River" and companion public television documentary.

My passion is to return, again and again. I do not allow thoughts that one day I might be denied another river journey or access to my special viewing points along the rim.

However, what if in an instant my abilities were changed or rearranged?

What if someone else perceived that I was not capable of returning and denied me access? What if, even as I explained my yearnings, or demonstrated my abilities, another's perception saw only limitation, and barred my experience?

What if, no matter how I protested that I am still the same person only with a different way of negotiating life, it was determined that "in my best interest and safety" my

access was denied?

How would I cope? How would I, an independent, adventurous soul, handle being dismissed, or labeled incapable, "disabled"... like a damaged car parked out back. How would I handle the frustration and anger of being denied access to live my life?

Yet, in an instant, any one of us can be in this position. In fact, in our society one in five of us is already there, living with a disability, perceived to be incapable of participating fully in life.

On September 10, 2001, we were loading our boats at Lee's Ferry to launch a seven day trip. This was the first "Writing Down the River" trip with a group of friends and three writers from the book, for a river-writing journey.

While photographing the details and excitement of put-in, I observed the trip next to us packing their boats. There was a young man with quadriplegia being loaded onto a boat. I was stunned. I knew the adventure that lay ahead. I stood motionless, camera at my side, not able to photograph this intimate moment. Before I could ask about his trip, we needed to load our boats and push off down river.

The image stayed with me. However, the night before our take-out, we learned about the tragedies of 9/11. Our reentry to the 'rim world' was surreal. Trying to comprehend what the rest of the world had been living with consumed every thought, and the image of the young man faded from memory.

Several years later, while traveling to Grand Canyon with my brother, John Ryan, I recalled and shared this story. He asked if anyone had produced a documentary on accessible trips.

We set about answering that question. We started with three Grand Canyon river outfitters that I had worked with for the "Writing Down the River" project: Bruce Winter, Arizona River Runners; Rob Elliott and Alan House, Arizona Raft Adventures; and Cam and Laurie Lee Staveley, and Garrett Schniewind, Canyon Explorations.

The responses to our initial queries were guarded. The outfitters were committed to offering the Grand Canyon rafting experience to everyone for the sole purpose of sharing the journey. Not, we were told, emphatically, for public relations. Their goal was to make it possible for everyone, regardless of ability, to

experience Grand Canyon from the river.

We learned that accessible river trips had started in 1991, with collaboration of the outfitters, Grand Canyon National Park, and outdoor adaptive recreation programs. The City of Phoenix, Parks and Recreation, Adaptive Recreation Services were among the first to organize accessible raft trips.

By spring of 2005, we had formed a creative alliance with the City of Phoenix Adaptive Recreation Services, their River of Dreams nonprofit affiliate, and all three outfitters to produce a documentary, "Right to Risk: A Fifteen Day Journey Through Arizona's Grand Canyon."

We asked fourteen adaptive recreation programs across the country to nominate applicants. Our goal was to reflect the diversity, ethnicity, age, physical challenge, and culture of our nation's disability community.

We selected eight individuals, all of whom live with disabilities, including blindness, cerebral palsy, paraplegia, quadriplegia, spina bifida, and multiple sclerosis. Just like all of us who have chosen this grand adventure, they were passionate about the opportunity.

On May 12, 2005, our two motor rigs – one for passengers and one for film crew – and five oar boats pushed off shore at Lee's Ferry for a fifteen-day adventure. Our river community of 36 included eight adventurers, eleven support staff, including an ER doc and flight nurse, nine river guides and film crew of eight.

We chose the title "Right to Risk" to represent a universal theme: that at the heart of one's ability to enjoy life is the right to make choices, to develop and pursue life goals, and to participate fully. This film shows people with disabilities as active participants, challenging the myth of disability as tragedy.

What we learned is just how wonderful, rewarding and full of accomplishment life with a disability can really be. Although society thinks the struggle is disability, "Right to Risk" reveals that the real struggle is to maintain dignity and assert self-determination – the right to risk. Our hope in making this film is that we can change perceptions and remove some of the attitudinal barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from participating more fully in our society.

"Right to Risk" asserts that it is every individual's right to choose what they are willing to do and risk in pursuit of their dreams. It also provides a great metaphor for almost every aspect of our lives, whether choosing to run the Colorado River or pursue a new career path.

Our approach was to challenge preconceptions and stereotypes about people who have disabilities with the actual experiences of people living with disabilities. Common cultural misperceptions consistently and spectacularly underestimate what people can do, how happy they are, the level of self-esteem, and virtually every other measure of competence, productivity and quality of life.

"Right to Risk" debuted on public television stations across the country last November.

We signed a three-year distribution agreement with American Public Television so that public television stations may broadcast the program at any time. We also produced a high definition version, which is being broadcast on the national PBS HDTV Channel several times a year. We invite you to check with your local public television station to find out their broadcast schedule.

In addition, we produced a fully accessible DVD, featuring an audio menu, video description option, and closed captioning, which is available online at: [www.righttorisk.org](http://www.righttorisk.org)

Our next phase is to build on the "Right to Risk" theme to change perceptions and educate the public about the issues of disability. We are collaborating with the National Organization on Disability (NOD) and other national organizations to launch a national public awareness campaign beginning in October during National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

We hope that "Right to Risk" can raise awareness that misperceptions are inaccurate, that disability is a difference not a defect.

Every day persons living with disabilities must overcome conscious and unconscious prejudice – often invisible to the rest of society. The barriers they face begin with attitudes rooted in misinformation and misunderstandings about what it is like to live with a disability.

Much has been done to remove physical barriers to full participation; however, society's attitudinal barriers are still well entrenched. We hope that with this film and your help, we can begin to change public perceptions of disability and challenge stereotypes and cultural stigmas that create barriers.





# COLOR IN THE GRAND CANYON

BY WAYNE RANNEY

Color is one of Grand Canyon's most striking and well-favored attributes. Everywhere we look we see a profusion of wild and riotous colors in the landscape - gold, tan, red, buff, gray, green, orange, even purple, silver, and pink. Sure we are drawn to the rugged profile of the canyon in a very significant way - as bipedal creatures who crave exploration, the canyon's contours draw us repeatedly into its remote corners. But Grand Canyon's colors have a different appeal to our artistic nature and evoke strong emotions in us. Consider that Barranca del Cobre in Mexico is shaped very much like our own Grand Canyon and has vertical dimensions quite similar to it. Yet the barranca's single rock type leaves it virtually barren with respect to color, and for this reason it is often forgotten when people consider the "wonders of the world".

**What makes the fantastic colors in Grand Canyon's rocks? How did they get here and what can they tell us about the geologic history of this earthly spectacle?**

Perhaps we should first note that color in a rock can be a very transitory feature. Think of the Redwall Limestone. This massive and well-known layer is named for a color that truly belongs to the formation above it! The Redwall is actually a gray rock that is only coated on its outer surface by material that has washed down from the overlying Supai Group. As pieces of the Redwall cliff spall off, the more muted color of the limestone is exposed. How ironic that one of the canyon's more famous rock units should be named after a color that it does not have.

Other colors, however, are more deeply fixed within the rocks. Take the spectrum of warm tones seen in numerous formations: the deep red of the Hermit Shale, the eye-dazzling orange found in the Hakatai Shale, or the dark purple of the Shinumo Quartzite. All of these various shades of red result from small amounts of iron present in the rocks which react with oxygen to become oxidized (like rust). The sedimentary layers, composed dominantly of colorless quartz grains, would otherwise look white were it not for the small amounts of iron oxide that exist within them. The iron originated with specks of dark, iron-rich minerals (like mica or hornblende) that were once flecked among the white quartz grains. As groundwater moved through the sediment, it attacked and dissolved the iron-rich grains, releasing iron solutions that penetrated the pore space in the sediment and coated each quartz grain with these reddish oxides. The sediments may have been mostly white when they were originally deposited on the banks of a Supai river or in the dunes of a Shinumo desert, but if the sediment contained just a fraction of iron-rich grains the quartz would become bathed in the "dye" that these iron-rich minerals released.

There is never enough iron in the rocks, of course, to mine for metal, but the various shades of red do represent the relative concentrations of iron or its variable state of oxidation. The Coconino Sandstone may have been red at some point in its history, only to be bleached white by petroliferous fluids that may have flowed through it later (the hydrogen sulfides in oil dissolve iron oxide). Perhaps you've seen the "Moki marbles" in Utah, iron concretions formed when similar petroleum-rich fluids invaded the Navajo Sandstone and remobilized the thin iron coatings

from the surface of each grain to spherical concentrations. When the oil encountered groundwater "downstream", the iron reformed in concretions.

The various shades of green seen in the Bright Angel Shale make it one of the more attractive formations in the Grand Canyon. These colors too result from the presence of iron, but instead of it being oxidized, the iron here is in a state of "reduction". This is the opposite of oxidation and can be thought of as anti-rust. But what is reduced iron? If sediment accumulates in an oxygen poor environment like a swamp, or wherever organic matter is present (which "steals" oxygen), then iron will become reduced. It turns out that the Bright Angel was derived from granite which delivered lots of mica to the shale beds. This is where the iron originated. However, the Bright Angel was ultimately deposited off-shore in a marine environment that harbored many marine creatures like trilobites. As we all know, living creatures eat and therefore poop. Ironically, it turns out that the organic waste from trilobites may be the reason for the cool green colors seen in the Bright Angel Shale!

Understanding the reduction process helps explain those curious white or green circular spots sometimes encountered on red rocks in the Grand Canyon. These are called "reduction spots" even though they are actually spheres that exist in three dimensions within the rock. In the center of these spheres pieces of organic matter like a leaf fragment or the root of an ancient tree may be found. This organic matter created reducing conditions that affected the way the iron presents itself to us today. Although the larger mass of rock may contain grains that were oxidized and are thus red, the grains within the influence of the organic matter will become reduced and turn green (see photo). These features are common in the Supai Group rocks or the Dox Sandstone. Look for fantastic reduced traces of ancient plant roots in the Supai Group rocks in North Canyon.

The pink color in the Zoroaster Granite comes from the potassium contained in its feldspar crystals. Silver reflections in the Vishnu Schist are a type of mica called muscovite. Black in the Brahma Schist is from amphibole mineral. Everywhere we look we see an array of colors in Grand Canyon, adding just one more layer of attraction to a canyon that had us hooked long before we ever really noticed what color it was!



Wayne Ranney is the author of "Carving Grand Canyon" and "Sedona Through Time". He is professor of geology at Coconino Community College in Flagstaff and a trail guide with the Museum of Northern Arizona. He has taken over 35 river trips through the Grand Canyon. Visit his web site at [www.wayneranney.com](http://www.wayneranney.com).

## Georgie

When I was about 7 or 8 years old, I spent most of my time outside of school "working" in my parents' Drugstore in Page, AZ (Page Rexall Drug). One of my favorite pastimes in the store was to watch the saleswomen as they peeked at the photographs returned by the processing center, before the customers picked them up. Often, the subjects in the photographs were not exactly the "G" rating my parents would have approved of, but the women often let me peek over their shoulders anyway.

One customer who regularly brought her film in for developing was Georgie White. She had adopted the eccentric outfits (leopard skin) by that time, and her leathered skin and frizzled hair made her an intimidating figure for a sheltered kid!

One day, Georgie came in to get her pictures, and while she was paying I found myself standing next to her. When she looked down at me, I rudely offered, "I saw you naked."

Georgie looked down that nose of hers, squinted her eyes at this impertinent kid, and very calmly spit on me.

I, of course, went running to the back of the store to hide, and ever after that encounter, I would hide when Georgie would come in to shop.



NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY, CLINE LIBRARY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES, BILL BELKNAP COLLECTION

Many, many years later, just a year before Georgie passed, I finally got to take my first river trip. While my group was waiting at Lee's Ferry for pushing off, I noticed Georgie's group readying as well. Being "grown up" by that time, I found the courage to approach her.

"Georgie? I don't know if you remember me, but..."

And she squinted her eyes and said, "Do you want me to spit on you again?"

We ended up talking, and laughing about the memory, but I was never more amazed than with her vivid memory. I thought of her everyday on that river trip, using her legacy as a guide to enjoy the river so much more.

Jane E. Ward

Graduate student, History, NAU  
Page, AZ

## Public/Private Partnership

TO DEVELOP

### Alternative Motorboat Technology for Grand Canyon National Park

The National Park Service and the Grand Canyon's professional river outfitters have embarked upon a unique joint effort to develop and implement alternative motorboat technology suitable for commercial river operations within Grand Canyon National Park. Formally proposed by the river concessioners last fall, the goal of this program is to develop and implement an environmentally-sensitive non-fossil fuel based motorboat propulsion system with silent or very low noise operating characteristics.

The river outfitters have pledged considerable financial resources to this effort. For its part, the National Park Service is seeking matching funds from a major agency program known as the Centennial Initiative. This program is currently being considered by Congress and enjoys broad support. (More information about the Centennial Initiative can be found at [www.nps.gov/2016](http://www.nps.gov/2016).) The National Park Service recently announced that the Grand Canyon alternative motorboat project will be eligible to receive up to \$840,000 in Centennial Initiative matching funds over the next few years.

The Grand Canyon outfitters will begin work in earnest on their alternative motorboat project next year. The effort is scheduled to continue for ten years, and will include partnerships with private sector alternative vehicle specialists, multiple prototype development, and rigorous field testing and comparison of competing systems and technologies. The program is scheduled to conclude with the wide scale implementation of a new, cutting edge, environmentally-sound alternative motorboat propulsion system proven safe, reliable and durable for operations on the sensitive and challenging waters of the Colorado River within Grand Canyon National Park.

## Here today, gone tomorrow, Canyon style.



Photo of Deer Creek patio, September 2006, after a major rockfall which occurred unwitnessed sometime the previous spring. Notice the big chunks of rock, spalled off from the cliff above.



Photo of Deer Creek patio, September 2007, following the flash flood of July 2007 (the one seen on YouTube). The debris from the rockfall has been completely swept away and no piece of it can be found anywhere above the narrows.

PHOTOS © LINDA KAHAN



# POSTCARDS FROM THE CANYON

Friday morning, our second day in the canyon, we are a little over twenty miles from Lees Ferry. The day begins with a breakfast of bacon and eggs, hot coffee and juice.

The "Virginians", as we are known by our fellow rafters, are again on Emily's raft. Once in the river we are almost immediately slammed by the 47 degree water in North Canyon Rapids. The Grand Canyon River Guide book says it's a 4 to 5 on a scale of 10 rapid with a 12 foot drop. We soon learned not to trust the book too much as many innocent looking rapids got us very wet and jolted.

Twenty One Mile Rapids, followed with another cold wet drop of 12 feet. We were now in Sunrise Canyon looking at redwall limestone formations with colors of gold, Indian red, burnt umber with many shades, shadows and hues in amazing shapes. The sun is hot and the water a beautiful aqua green color.

By the time we stop for lunch at Redwall Canyon I think we must be in God's abstract art gallery. Seven days later and many more scenes like this, I'm sure we were.



Ralph Flink  
Nellysford, VA

August, 2007

Flash floods. You could see all the way down the canyon that there had been a lot of flooding; just about every side canyon had a new debris fan coming out. Deer Creek, as the wonderful video shows, had really been hammered. Others have reported on the removal of the big rockfall and the cottonwood above the Jacuzzi pool; down by the river there were lots of tree trunks and the rocks seemed shifted a bit. I've seen a couple of big floods over the years; one at Elves Chasm, when Royal Arch Creek flashed in a major way when we were on the other side of the creek and a huge red waterfall came out of the notch in the Redwall just downstream. Another time we passed Havasu (after hiking at Matkat, probably not too smart!) and it was a big red mudflow, spitting out logs and huge cacti and trash and all sort of stuff. We camped at Fern Glen and there was a 10-foot fence of driftwood before you could get to the beach. A few years ago, below Lava, we got into a sudden violent storm that hailed and thundered, and then water and rockfalls began coming off the cliffs; we watched lots of boulders flying out of the multi-colored waterfalls, and talked to a Hatch boat that had seen a rock about the size of a refrigerator hit the river about 20 feet in front of them; they said it looked like artillery. We camped on the left above Whitmore and a flood went right through the camp; fortunately we were all on one side.



Roy Webb  
Salt Lake City, UT

Dear Grand Canyon People-of-the River,  
I'm reflecting on the 6-days river adventure I took three summers ago, and it still makes my heart leap. I'd heard for years about the exquisite scenics, evolving mountain light, the camaraderie, sunsets that make you cry, magic mystery of the River, and the thrills upon chills as one 'catapults' over Lava Falls and every rapid in between.

I'd lived the experience through my obsessed river friend and her years of photos. Yes, dear friend, some day, when I am not terrified of deep water, heights and ledge scrambling, I will do it. "Ah, when you're old enough?" she asked. Okay! Finally so fearful that I even took lessons on "how to tread water without hysteria," I signed up. Chuck and I did our homework on River history, packed up our gear, and I hid a sarong for his River birthday surprise. I had stayed in wilderness before. But I had NO idea! I had no concept of the impact of stillness and beauty waiting around each bend in that Canyon. Or of the stars hanging an inch over my head every night. I had no idea how quickly our dory group would bond and boost each other. Or how bright and inclusive and fun our expert crew would be. I hadn't a clue they would all be storytellers, master boatmen, gourmet cooks and jolly good company. And I never dreamed I could be so brave. For me, that is. To "do" a train bumping through that muddy, rushing water! And to ride a dory over every falls, not once climbing onto the raft with Alan. I high-sided and I hollered and I felt joy and terror in every move. The impossible became possible. That calming, professional crew, the happy team cheers, Chuck's solid support, and knowing this was the chance of a lifetime unleashed confidence in me I didn't know I had.

I can only encourage any scaredy cat out there who longs for an unequalled experience to go for this one. You cannot miss. You will be changed. Thank you, Grand Canyon people, from the depth of my river-drenched sarong.



Sandie Nisbet  
Olympia, WA

I have had many "best days" in the Canyon. In fact, my worst day in the Canyon is still better than most days out of the Canyon. The most magical day was actually a night. Spring 2002. An Ivo Lucchitta trip with a group of soil scientists. Cardenas Camp, where the river starts running west and the walls open up to rolling hills. Total darkness with a dancing campfire, laughter, wine, and stories. Brightness started to rise above the eastern cliffs, and the brilliant full moon inched its way over the walls. A small group decided to hike up to Hilltop Ruin to celebrate the full moon on this perfect night. I had not done any night hiking before and had drunk a glass of wine, so was leery of such a foray. However, my adventurous side kicked in and I decided to do something I hadn't done before. The Canyon is one place where I've done many things I hadn't dreamed of doing before. Why should this be an exception? The full moon was fully up and over the Palisades by now, so headlamps were prohibited, and unnecessary. The climb was well lit and the effects of the wine caused me to be a little more cautious than usual, although there were no missteps. Nine of us adventurers climbed to Hilltop Ruin and sat along the rocks ringing the ancient structure. The river valley was banded by silver and black with the moon's light on the rolling hills. Well below, we could see the glow of our campfire and hear laughter from those remaining behind. The river was a ribbon of diamonds. We sat in mutual silence, each in our own thoughts, experiencing this most intense beauty and serenity. All I have to do now is close my eyes, and those moments rush back and bring tears to my eyes.



Jan Taylor  
Arcadia, CA

Before 9:00 AM on June 16 we entered the Colorado at Lees Ferry on my first trip into the Canyon and my first real wilderness experience. I was full of excitement and wonder as we slipped into the Canyon and the walls kept rising higher and higher. I couldn't help but become fascinated by the many and odd shaped boulders seemingly teetering on the edges of the Canyon rim. I thought of the Road Runner cartoons and the boulders rocking back-and-forth, threatening to fall any minute. We stopped for lunch at about mile 20. After lunch as our rafts backed out into the river there was a noise, loud -- some thought is sounded like a gunshot, others thought it was more like a dynamite blast sometimes heard in a movie. Quickly looking downriver we saw something disappearing into the river followed by a large boulder "bounce" off the side of the canyon and into the river at North Canyon Rapid followed by a thick and expanding cloud of dust that encompassed the entire Canyon for quite some time. Walker, our fabulous CRATE guide, pulled over to the side of the river as we approached the rapid. He scouted out the rapid to see if anything had changed the way the river moved through the area. There was no sign of the boulder(s) and gradually the dust began to clear. Not only was this exciting but it made watching the rim of the Canyon a bit more exciting for the next eight days.



Deanna McConnel  
McLean, VA



# Western Honey Mesquite: The Desert's Provider



WESTERN HONEY MESQUITE, *PROSOPIS GLANDULOSA* VAR. *TORREYANA*—KRISTIN HUISINGA PHOTO  
FILE NAME: T20 PROSOPIS GLANDULOSA KH

BY KRISTIN HUISINGA

Western honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa* var. *torreyana*) is a large tree in the pea family (Fabaceae or Leguminosae). It can grow to almost 7 meters tall but it mostly has a more horizontal habit than many desert trees that grow more upright (like catclaw acacia). Mesquite often marks the Colorado River's pre-dam high water line, especially in Marble Canyon, indicating where seasonal peak flows averaging over 100,000 cubic feet per second once reached. Along the river, mesquite bosques form rounded hills as they stabilize sand dunes and talus slopes with their extensive root systems. A sturdy taproot delves deeper in search of groundwater. Because they have both deep taproots and many lateral roots, mesquite trees are able to survive very dry conditions.

Mesquite is often confused with catclaw acacia (*Acacia greggii*), which shares similar habits. Mesquite bears straight, paired thorns, while acacia has sharp, curved prickles that resemble cat claws. The leaves of catclaw acacia are also much smaller and have fewer leaflets than those of mesquite.

Western honey mesquite occurs from California, east to Texas and south to Baja California and Mexico. In Grand Canyon, it is first seen around the Marble Canyon Dam site, continuing to around Hance Rapid. In the Inner Gorge, catclaw acacia largely replaces mesquite, although

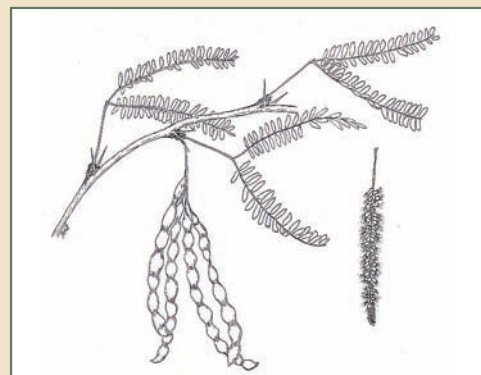
scattered populations grow on tributary deltas and in side canyons. Mesquite is not common again in the river corridor until below National Canyon, where it continues to the Grand Wash Cliffs. John Wesley Powell may have been the first to record this species in Grand Canyon, noting it in his August 9th journal near River Mile 39.

"The river is now quiet; the canyon wider. Above, when the river is at its flood, the waters gorge up, so that the difference between high and low water mark is often 50 or even 70 feet, but here high-water mark is not more than 20 feet above the present stage of the river. Sometimes there is a narrow flood plain between the water and the wall. Here we first discover mesquite shrubs, -- small trees with finely divided leaves and pods, somewhat like the locust."

Tree cores from Grand Canyon document ages of up to 750 years for western honey mesquite trees. Mesquite is thought to have evolved with the mega-faunal grazers of the New World, such as mammoths and camels, which became extinct at the end of the Pleistocene. Today, deer, fox, and coyote eat the sweet, nutritious pod, and in doing so, carry the seeds away from the parent plant. Some seeds escape the digestive juices that scarify the tough seed coat and are deposited in moist manure, an ideal microhabitat for germination. Seeds buried by rodents and ants also start new plants. Look for the tiny holes on the seedpods that are exit channels of parasitic Bruchid

beetles (*Acanthoscelides* spp.) that eat the seeds during their larval stage. In the lower Canyon, there are two species of parasitic mistletoe (*Phoradendron californicum*, *P. juniperinum*) that infest mesquite and catclaw acacia trees by robbing them of water and nutrients, often leading to their demise.

For many cultures mesquite was key to their existence, providing not only fuel and food, but also inspiring them to craft. The long list of uses (food, fuel, shelter, weapons, tools, fiber, dye, cosmetics, medicine) attests to its central role in the cultures of the Southwest, even today. The pods supply a dependable food source high in sugar and protein. The pods are ground into a coarse meal for use in gruel, cakes, beverages, and baked goods. Native Seeds/SEARCH in Tucson, Arizona sells the meal, which is a delightful addition to pancakes, cobblers, breads, cookies, and soups. Because the pods have a natural sweetness to them, try eliminating some of the sugar in these recipes. Mesquite provides one of



WESTERN HONEY MESQUITE, *PROSOPIS GLANDULOSA* VAR. *TORREYANA*—MAR-ELISE HILL DRAWING  
FILE NAME: T19 PROSOPIS GLANDULOSA MEH

the richest sources of pollen and nectar for honeybees, resulting in delightful honey. The wood produces long-lived coals and imparts a savory aroma used to flavor BBQs. The demand for mesquite charcoal has led to the overharvest of the wood, but the pods provide the same aroma and could provide a more sustainable alternative. The sap was used to mend pottery and to make a black dye. In the deserts where crop success was variable, mesquite provided a dependable source of food that could be stored for months, even years, if necessary.

Kristin Huisinga is co-author of the recently published and long awaited *River and Desert Plants of the Grand Canyon* with co-authors Lori Makarick and Kate Watters. Kristin has a masters degree in botany and is a river guide for Arizona Raft Adventures. Her most praiseworthy river trip breakfast is mesquite flour pancakes.



PHOTOS © MARI CARLOS

## Song of the Canyon Wren

By Laurali Noteman

*Have you ever woke to the Canyon Wren, as he warbles down the scale?  
And then lay in wait until he speaks again, to sing this Canyon's tale?*

*He sings of a time when oceans rose and lapped against this shore.  
When that which lived swam the seas, and the land grew from molten core.*

*Life left behind its history, embedded in the loam,  
As gray green giants grazed these plains and called this canyon home.*

*As oceans fell and stream beds formed they left their mark as well,  
With footprints held within the mud and captured in the shale.*

*Then man appeared and dwelt within these halls of stone and sand,  
His story told with petroglyphs of his and another band.*

*He wrote of war, peace and life, as generations found their way,  
Their spirits dwell within these walls where they lived and played and stay.*

*The Spanish came to conquer all, to make conquest of this place,  
They vanished too, this harsh new breed, a dishonor to their race.*

*They enslaved the tribes with brutal force; they took both life and time.  
But still the canyon reached beyond mere man's incessant crime.*

*Another age came into play to make their lives as well,  
You see the dwelling left behind, no more now than a shell.*

*They herded cattle, worked the land, they mined for copper ore;  
They turned this place back to God and the Canyon Wren once more.*

*You may leave your mark as many have, but take heed with what I say,  
For those that try and make this Canyon theirs have had to walk away.*

*The Wren trills deftly of eons past, and warns of times to come.  
With pride he sings and shares his tale and offers peace to some.*

*You may come and rest in late day shade and visit for a spell,  
Then listen to the Canyon Wren and know he bids you well.*



# GRAND CANYON LIZARDS

BY GEOFF CARPENTER

Lizards are among the most visually conspicuous of all the riparian fauna along the Colorado River corridor in the Grand Canyon.

Most species are active during daylight hours and rely heavily on vision, using head bobs and push-up displays (mostly males) that are unique to each species as a communication mode. Lizards do not have internal mechanisms to produce and maintain a constant high body temperature, depending on sunshine and basking to raise their body temps for activity. During the spring lizards are active during the middle of the day, when it is warmest, but during the heat of summer activity shifts to two periods, in the morning, and during the late afternoon and evening; mid-day temperatures are too hot for activity.

Among the lizards in the Grand Canyon, most are highly social and especially the males exhibit a number of behaviors associated with establishing, maintaining and defending territories, and in wooing potential mates. Other species rely more on smell and taste (olfaction) in their day-to-day routines. Latin, or scientific names serve a useful function in the scientific community in that they provide a standardized binomial (two part name, Genus and species) for each individual species, and are often descriptive of the appearance of the species, or even who first described them. Common names are also often descriptive, but often they vary regionally, and sometimes two or more actual species may be called by the same common name. Latin binomials, and brief "translations" (loose interpretations by the author) are provided below with the first mention of each lizard species, just for fun (and, hey-hey-hey, you might learn somethin' before we're done).

Most of the lizard species occurring in the Grand Canyon are closely related, and were formerly grouped together in the family Iguanidae (which has now been divided into a number of families). These include the side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*; "from the region of the Ute tribe, discovered by Army surgeon Stansbury"), the tree lizard (*Urosaurus ornatus*; "tailed lizard w/ ornate pattern"), the desert spiny lizard (*Sceloporus magister*; "lizard w/ pores on the thighs, the teacher/master"), the collared lizard (*Crotaphytus collaris* "pointed hammer head with a collar"), the chuckwalla (*Sauromalus ater* "bad lizard that's black"), the desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*; "toad-bodied lizard with a broad flat nose"), the zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*: beautiful lizard having the form



ADULT CHUCKWALLA @ MARI CARLOS



COLLARED LIZARD @ MARI CARLOS



WHIPTAIL EATING A SIDE BLOTCHED LIZARD @ MARI CARLOS

of the fabulous lizard-like dragon) and the leopard lizard (*Gambelia wislizeni* Gambel; named after those who crossed America with Workman party, collected type specimen near Santa Fe during the Mexican war).

The sole member of the family Teiidae in the canyon is the western whiptail lizard (*Aspidoscelis tigris*; "shield-bearing legs with a tiger pattern"), and geckos are represented only by the rarely seen western banded gecko (*Coleonyx variegates*; "sheathed fingernails with a variegated pattern"). The gila

monster (*Heloderma horridus*: "warty skin and distrustful") is related to the monitor lizards, which include the Komodo dragon.

Side-blotched lizards and tree lizards are of similar size and shape, and are close relatives. In fact, they were originally included in the same genus (*Uta*). These are both fairly small lizards, about 60 mm snout-vent length (SVL; lizard sizes are reported as SVL as tails break often, and total length thus varies considerably). The ground-dwelling side-blotched lizards have a dark blotch on the side just behind the front leg, and are perhaps the most common lizard in the canyon as they are found throughout. Males have blue speckling and blue on the belly (these colors are shown when the lizard is displaying), while females have some longitudinal striping and lack the blue belly. Tree-lizards have a longer tail, prefer vertical surfaces, and have bars across the body. Males have blue bellies and both males and females have colors on their throats. If you cannot see these small lizards well enough to identify them by pattern, you can use their push-up displays to tell them apart. The side-blotched lizard display is a set of rapid front-legged bobs, while the tree-lizard uses all four legs to perform two slow push-ups, followed by several more rapid ones. Both of these species are found throughout the canyon; look for tree lizards "dripping" off vertical faces of schist and Redwall near the river's edges as you are boating.

Spiny lizards are also common throughout the canyon. These are larger bodied lizards, with males reaching up to 140 mm SVL. They are territorial, hanging out primarily in tamarisk and mesquite trees and on boulders. Spinys are sometimes polygamous, with a single male defending a territory that includes two or more females. Males have blue throats and bellies while females' heads become distinctly orange during breeding season. Spinys are common residents of camps in the corridor and are often seen along hiking trails. While the species so far discussed are territorial and primarily sit-and-wait predators (on insects, spiders, etc...), tiger whiptails are nomadic foragers and do not defend territories. This species is also common throughout the canyon, working mostly on the ground, nosing around shrubs and rocks rooting out small prey.

Collared lizards are less common than the above lizards, and are of a fairly large size, up to 120 mm SVL. They have a distinct collar that looks like a couple of black necklaces, and can have lots of blue and orange coloration. When they are really moving, collareds can get up on their hind legs and exhibit bipedal locomotion. There is almost always a collared lizard active where the trail up Saddle Canyon turns up-canyon and traverses the slope. Also look for collared lizards on cobble fields in side canyons and where the river widens. Chuckwallas are the only "vegetarian" (herbivorous) lizard in the canyon, and can reach sizes up to 225 mm. Chuckwallas like large boulders with crevices that they can retreat into; they eat green vegetation and flowers, and they like it hot! These large-bodied lizards are often active at the hottest times of the day, as they must bask in order to raise their body temps so that they can digest plant matter. Good places to encounter chuckwallas include the Tapeats

Sandstone ledges at the Little Colorado confluence and the patio at Deer Creek, but keep your eyes open, as they are found where suitable habitat exists throughout the canyon.

Western banded geckos are not the 'typical' kind of gecko, as they possess eyelids and toenails, whereas "traditional" geckos lack eyelids and have toe pads that adhere and allow them to climb vertical surfaces (which banded geckos cannot do). These lizards are nocturnal insectivores and are rarely seen in the canyon. The best way to encounter a gecko in the corridor is to run "night ops" with a headlamp, looking around rocks and along ledges. Desert



DESERT SPINY LIZARD WELCOMES YOU @ MARI CARLOS

horned lizards are known only from the Lee's Ferry area in the canyon, where they seem to be fairly abundant. Horned lizards are ant specialists, and wait along ant trails, picking off ants to fill their bellies. Gila monsters are large-bodied venomous lizards that raid nests and eat the eggs and young of other reptiles, birds and mammals. Gila sightings in the canyon are rare, and known locations include Granite Park, Pumpkin Spring, and along the road at the Diamond Creek take-out. Long time guide Drifter Smith spotted a Gila at mile 214, river left, in early April, 2007. Zebra-tailed lizards were once reliably encountered on the dunes at Diamond Creek (L. Stevens, personal communication), but were apparently extirpated during the 1983 flooding. This species has been recorded recently up Peach Springs Wash, along with leopard lizards in the large washes that occur along the Diamond Creek Road (G. Carpenter and L. Stevens, unpublished data).

So get out there and observe and enjoy the lizards. And take photos, as we're always on the lookout for good photos and new location records.

Herpetologist Geoff Carpenter advises readers who wish further information on Grand Canyon's snakes and lizards to refer to Amphibians and Reptiles of Arizona (Brennan and Holycross; AZ Game & Fish), the best available resource at this time. A Grand Canyon specific guide is in the works! (Co-authors Carpenter, Holycross, Brennan, L. Stevens, Drost, Lovich et.al.)



August 2006

We were taking another Grand Canyon trip in monsoon season. I wondered if I needed my head examined, but then remembered that a trip -- even in the rain or, more significantly, mud -- could be an adventure because after all, it is The Grand Canyon, and not just The Interesting Canyon, or The Kind of Cool Canyon, or anything else. We had been talking about it for months: we had emailed, schemed, planned, ordered online from Fred's liquor store in Page, haggled airfare and Vegas hotel rates, and agreed that we would all meet at the Las Vegas car rental at precisely sometime before 11 a.m. on the Friday before our launch on Saturday. We were going to drive through Zion National Park and wanted to hit Page in time for orientation at 6:30 that night. Thus, it would be important to meet on time so we could lunch in Saint George or dawdle a bit gaping at the huge walls driving through Zion.

So on the Thursday before our Saturday launch, various transportation authorities, in particular those in Great Britain, decided to share the news that a plot had been discovered wherein British Airways, Continental Airways, and no doubt several other airways with flights between Britain and the United States were targeted by folks with plans to blow up planes over the Atlantic. My friend Peter was set to leave Glasgow about 2 hours after this announcement and had to make his decision whether to fly to the USA or not. With his nervous wife seeing him off at the terminal, he got on his flight and after numerous delays and the inconvenience of having to repack his baggage, he bravely set out to be in Las Vegas at the appointed time to meet us at the car rental counter.

In the meantime, our friends Deborah and Kirk had somehow managed to pack their luggage correctly and descend into Vegas, having flown in from Bellingham and Alaska respectively. My husband Nels and I weren't going to leave from Seattle until Friday early on the day of our rendezvous, and all we could hope for was that our flights would leave and arrive on time. We had very little time allowed for changing meeting plans.

After divesting ourselves of anything gel-like at the airport (knowing we would have to make a trip to Basha's in Page to replenish), we somehow managed to make our plane on time and arrived and shuttled to the car rental. With a bit of phoning and a couple of short delays, we all connected!

I had met Peter online. He and I share a common last name, Bryson, and I had met him while searching for my Scottish ancestors. Teasing him, I told him he must be kin, and I insinuated myself into his good-natured correspondence and friendship (and was grateful that he didn't make fun of my stupid Yankee questions, at least to my face). I had seen photos of him and his family, his kayak, and scenes from some kayaking waters of Scotland. I had no trouble recognizing him as he stepped out of the taxi even without the Scottish Saltire emblazoned on his t-shirt.

We all somehow managed to fit all our duffels into the mid-size rental car, and with Nels driving and Peter riding shotgun (we figured our international friend deserved the best view) we set out for Page.

With some delay in getting through Zion (Friday night in August after all...), we made it to Page and met up with Helen and Les at Diamond River Adventures. We visited with them before orientation, and were excited to hear that we were on a single raft this trip with

only 14 passengers plus crew.

Our outlooks were cheery as we rode the bus the next day. Only an occasional cloud would ominously begin a steep white rise on the horizon, and we were all happy and somewhat naively dry and clean as we helped load the boat.

After launching at Lee's Ferry we made it all the way to the Paria riffle before having the mud join us. It had been monsooning for days previously. The river was frappuccino in froth, slippery on the pontoons, and insinuating grit into my swimwear at every rapid. The late August air was often chill and evaporative, and there were a few times when I allowed myself to think about going to Hawaii or maybe the Sea of Cortez on my next vacation. But only for moments, for soon the canyon walls wheeled above me, and the buttresses of the Redwall enfolded, and I merged into the experience, hot, cold, wet, dry, and starting to refocus and orient in the present, as all previous Grand Canyon River trips had taught me.

On the Colorado, the river was grinding on us much like it ground the canyon walls. We were muddy much of the day. We had mud in our tomatoes, our Miracle Whip, our pickles, our Oreos, our teeth, the hinges of our ammo cans. There was mud in my hair, mud on my sunglasses, mud on my bandana. If I tried to wipe the mud off my glasses, I wiped more mud onto the lenses. The only time it seemed less muddy was when the rain fell, sometimes soft, mostly intense, always cleansing. It was a rhythm of mud/cleansing/ mud. I wondered if the Anasazi had ritualized this cycle. It must have been a very common part of life in the Grand Canyon even then. At this time though, it seemed slightly disappointing to ponder the possibility of days of dreary, inclement weather. Nels and I had made several previous wet trips, including one in 2002 when the whole Canyon flashed. It was an epic voyage and certainly an exciting one, but definitely not one where we could lay dozing on the flat rocks on the Little Colorado. Time to buck up, though, as being from a wet climate was something I was used to in the Pacific Northwest, as well as for those of us from Alaska and certainly Scotland. Even the muddiest trip could always be an adventure.

**The first day out, Peter appeared with his bagpipes. They were absolutely stunning in appearance, the most incongruous thing I could imagine in the Canyon.**

I took a deep breath, thinking that while my husband and I had Scots ancestry and a somewhat uneducated affection for the pipes, perhaps other passengers wouldn't be so appreciative. After all, I had been on a small raft on another trip floating past a boatman who was playing recorded music, and while the songs were enjoyed by his own passengers, he had been met with some serious disapproval by the other passengers on my boat. However, Peter must have had few reservations, as he unabashedly blew up the bag, and with his cheeks puffed expansively like bulging red apples he began to play.

And he played grandly. If any instrument was made for the enormity of Grand Canyon, it was the great Highland Bagpipe. The sounds emanating from the drones were immense enough to match the songs of the rapids and in a way complimented their strength. The music reflected from the Redwall and returned to us enhanced and balanced, and amazingly deep. Our group of

passengers, far from being annoyed, was dumbstruck like lovers as they watched Peter play. People sat transfixed watching him sway a bit to the tempo with the flow of the river behind him. I personally found myself holding my breath as though breathing would somehow break the spell. After his first couple of tunes, he bashfully told everyone how he was just learning, since he had only been playing for about 5 years and to be a good piper takes at least 10 years of serious practice. We thought he was great! We called him back to play again.

On the river, he played at Redwall Cavern, further downriver at Whale's Armpit, and every morning before we got on the boat and at every evening in camp. It was a certain surprise to other rafters as they rounded a bend of the river to see Peter standing onshore piping and to watch their expressions as they heard the massive drones. It was so transient those few seconds as they swiftly went downriver, but many clapped and many yelled encouragement, and I felt oddly sad that they couldn't pull over and enjoy this enormous music played on this amazing instrument on this powerful river even for a short while longer.

Sometimes Peter educated us about bagpipes. He told us that there are several different kinds, and that they are not unique to Scotland or even to Ireland. He also let a couple of the guys try to play. My husband Nels gave it a good effort but couldn't get the bag to even fill. Wes, our Trip Leader, succeeded on a second day's attempt at coaxing a droning sound but had little success fingering the chanter into anything remotely musical. In exchange, they taught Peter how to play horseshoes, and he managed to win a game of his own within a short time.

By now the mud had become mostly inconsequential. The sand, the rain, the mud, and the sunshine just kind of settled in and became a part of us, uniting us in some terrestrial tribal bond. We mostly just merged with the natural, the way one learns to do on the river, some of us having to learn it again.

The trip, as all river trips, had to end. Despite the muddy river, the rain, and the sometimes abbreviated side canyon hikes always with a sense of caution for flash floods, it was a very memorable and cherished trip. In the great beauty of one of the Creator's best geology experiments, a trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon is a life affirming journey. Finding that peace with the river traveling through rain, being coated with mud, pummeled with rain, and sometimes seared by heat was a centering experience. Of course, making new friendships and rekindling old ones has always been part of a Grand Canyon trip. But I had been also been allowed the pleasure and privilege of listening to Scottish Bagpipe music on the Colorado River, ironically somehow so appropriate and also so uniquely odd.

To those who traveled with us and to those who traveled past us, what a great experience to hear the pipes a callin' us. And to Peter Bryson, Piper, we thank you for honoring us with your playing. May all Grand Canyon river trips be ever so fine.

Kayleen Bryson  
Snohomish, WA

PHOTOS © KAYLEEN BRYSON  
BACKGROUND PHOTO © MARI CARLOS



# BAGPIPES ON THE COLORADO





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Yes! I want to become a GCRRA member to help ensure my right to visit and enjoy a Grand Canyon river trip facilitated by a professional river outfitter licensed by the National Park Service.

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One-year:  \$15 individual  \$30 family (# family members \_\_\_\_\_)

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I've participated in a professionally-outfitted Grand Canyon river trip (check all that apply):

full canyon motor  full canyon non-motor (oar/paddle/dory/combination)  partial canyon motor

partial canyon non-motor (oar/paddle/dory/combination)  kayak support

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Mail this form along with your membership dues to:

Grand Canyon River Runners Association, P.O. Box 1833, Flagstaff, AZ 86002

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newsletter design : Catharine Cooper : cooperdesign.net

## CALLING ALL RIVER RUNNERS!

YOUR LITERARY AND  
ARTISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NEEDED FOR  
NEXT NEWSLETTER

Send us your journal entries, poetry, letters to the editor, humorous stories, photos, and original art work for publication in the next newsletter or on the GCRRA website. Electronic submissions are preferred, and MSWord is preferred for text contributions. We can also convert from WordPerfect, if necessary. Click on "Contact Us" on the GCRRA website :

[www.gcriverrunners.org](http://www.gcriverrunners.org) to submit all materials.

Technology challenged? Mail your contributions to P.O. Box 1833, Flagstaff, AZ 86002. If you need more information your question will be routed to the Editor.

Submission deadline for the Spring Issue is

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