

Trail Tracks

Fall 2009

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PEAVINE TRAIL – NEW CHALLENGES!

By Nigel Reynolds

If you think of the Peavine Trail as a wide and level trail ideal for easy hikes, moderate jogging or undemanding mountain biking, you haven't fully explored what's new. Chris Hosking, the City of Prescott trails specialist, has excelled himself with a northern extension of the Lakeshore Trail, swallowing up the former Cove Trail and expanding into the wonderful rocks of the Granite Dells.

Start at the Peavine's south end (Sun Dog Ranch trail head) and go north for one mile to a trail junction. Before this point, you may be lucky enough to see a blue heron fishing in the waters of the lake (see photo). Turn left at the junction onto the Lakeshore trail, a winding and undulating trail that has been around for some time and makes a nice change from the straight and level Peavine. However, where this trail used to end by rejoining the Peavine, it has recently been extended north to encompass the old Cove trail, which was a short dead end to a pretty cove in Watson Lake.



The best is yet to come because Chris has found a way to continue the Lakeshore trail much farther north, winding between the spectacular granite boulders of the Dells. These million-year-old rocks are quite sheer in places. Chris told me that it took him a number of attempts before he was able to find a route for a viable trail. Needless to say, it twists and turns, climbs and drops. This is not a trail for the faint hearted – only try it if you like a challenging hike. There are places where the trail goes over the native rock, so the path would be unclear were it not for the white dots of paint which guide you through this labyrinth.

Choosing the trail route was hard; building the trail was even harder. It was constructed by the "Over the Hill Gang" – a dedicated group of fellows, all over 60, who rose to the challenge. When you traverse this trail, you will notice places where they had to move large boulders to fill in deep gullies, the work probably accompanied by curses and epithets directed at Chris

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Our Mission

Yavapai Trails Association is dedicated to protecting, preserving, and developing recreational, non-motorized trails. We are an all-volunteer group that represents the interests of hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.

YTA evolved from the Yavapai County Trail Advisory Committee appointed by the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors in 1989. One of the chief reasons for forming was to find ways to prevent the loss of access to existing trails as the county becomes increasingly urban.

There was also a need to help individual communities develop and coordinate their trail systems and to work closely with developers and others to secure new trails and maintain continued access to existing trails.

We are a non-profit corporation with federal 501(c)3 designation, and our operating expenses are funded by dues and donations. We are supported by many other organizations and recognized by the cities of Prescott, Prescott Valley, and Chino Valley, as well as Yavapai County, the USDA Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the state of Arizona.

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Join Us!

If you are not yet a member of YTA, we welcome you to join us in active participation. We have many different projects requiring a variety of skills. We need help with everything from making phone calls to constructing trails. Individual/family memberships are only \$15 a year, and organizational/business memberships are only \$30 a year. Please keep in mind also that all monetary donations, excluding dues, are tax deductible.



for this crazy endeavor! If you are a skilled mountain biker with good balance, energy, and plenty of muscle, you will enjoy this challenging trail.

If you just stick to the main lake-shore trail, it is about two miles from start to end at its northern junction with the Peavine. I recommend you explore further by taking the short Tree House Loop as well and the spur to Secret Cove, which ends at a rocky crag overlooking an inlet from the lake. You can scramble down to the water's edge, from which viewpoint the photo was taken.

At each junction, there are great maps on signposts, so you won't get lost (you can also see a map on the City website). Chris is not only inventive when it comes to trail routes, his signs are made from aluminium cut from old Stop signs, so they are sturdy and inexpensive – yes, "aluminium" is spelled that way where Chris and I come from!



Secret Cove, on spur trail

THE PEAVINE AT A CROSSROADS

By Ron Smith

As the City of Prescott continues to expand with new commercial and residential developments in its northeast corner, the preservation of the wonderful attributes of the Peavine Trail continue to be challenged.

The most recent of these is the proposed "Road 39" crossing of the Peavine at the western extent of the Granite Dells Estates development.

Under a planning contract with the City of Prescott, Lyon Engineering presented for review a draft of 5 design alternatives for the site where Road 39 would intersect with the Peavine Trail. This recent meeting offered the engineering firm an opportunity to present their plan for the site and accept comments from the approximately 20 or so interested trail advocates who attended. In my estimation, the firm did a good job of outlining in considerable detail the construction elements of the proposed trail crossing at Road 39. The plan is available on the City website for public comment.

The presentation was summarized with an at-grade crossing as the preferred alternative. The City and the Engineering firm reached this conclusion by way of somewhat subjective numerical scores within a complex decision matrix that considered such factors as safety, convenience, and cost. For sake of brevity, I will dwell mainly on the two most preferred options, an at-grade crossing and a separated grade crossing bridge overpass. The remaining three options were underpasses via box culverts and seemed to have little support from either the interested trail users at the meeting or the design engineers/

In the final analysis, the bridge crossing of Road 39 came out in the matrix with a score only 11 percent lower than that of the at-grade crossing. The bridge crossing would be constructed with a 310-foot southern approach ramp with a 5 percent grade. The northern approach ramp would be 600 feet long at a similar grade. This plan includes an additional pedestrian/bicycle bypass, 12 feet wide at street grade level. The grade-level alternative, on the other hand, would include a number of safety features such as stop signs (for trail users), and other informational and warning signs. This would allow non-stop vehicular traffic on Road 39.

As you are all aware, your YTA Board has been opposed to at-grade crossings of the Peavine Trail at any location. Some of our concerns were addressed in part within the decision matrix but not weighted favorably from the viewpoint of potential trail users. Here, dear reader, here is where you can help. This plan will be available for public review and comment until October 30 and can be viewed on the City website at http://www.cityofprescott.net/_d/peavine_report.pdf.

We urge you to let your City Council and Staff know what you think. There was no consideration in this plan for any survey of public opinion and consequently leaves a gap in the developed proposal.

We are asking all of our members and other trail advocates to help keep the Peavine Trail intact by opposing any proposed at-grade crossings.

SEPARATED GRADE TRAIL CROSSINGS

By George Sheats

There have been recent discussions regarding future pedestrian crossings at vehicular roadways such as on the Peavine National Trail. The Peavine currently has no developed arterial roadways between Prescott Lakes Parkway and Highway 89A. There is a natural surface access road to a ranch and the old 89A roadway which both have limited private use. Several thousand acres from the Granite Dells area of the Peavine, northward to east of the Prescott Airport are now being annexed and platted for commercial and residential developments. As a result of the planned development on both the east and west side of the Peavine, it will be necessary to add and expand the width of roadways to accommodate future traffic volume estimates. The City of Prescott uses a 120 foot width guideline for arterial roadways which could accommodate 2 lanes of traffic in each direction plus a turn lane and shoulders.

When requirements, such as with the Peavine exist, to completely separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic, this is accomplished by using 'separated grade' crossings. Two common solutions are the use of either bridges/overpasses or box culverts. Because the width and weight requirements for pedestrian traffic is so much less than for vehicles, the use of either a pedestrian bridge or pedestrian box culvert is by far the least costly solution. The easiest to

install, most durable, and least costly type of pedestrian bridge is the 'pre-fabricated steel truss bridge'. These bridges are designed and assembled at a manufacturing facility, certified, and shipped to the final location for installation. A single span 120 foot bridge would likely be shipped in two pieces and assembled on-site during a short final installation timeframe of a few days. Three common manufacturers of steel truss pedestrian bridges are: contech-cpi.com, bigrbridge.com, and excelbridge.com. You can check out some of their currently installed bridges on the Web.

The approximate cost of a 120ft. steel truss bridge 12 feet wide would be about \$1000/ft or \$120,000. The type of decking such as wood plank, concrete, asphalt, etc. may add or subtract from this figure. The cost of the steel truss bridge is only one of the cost components in the separated grade crossing. The bridge design would start with preliminary engineering and soil analysis for the area of crossing. The bridge companies will be able to assist with the designs for the abutments which support and

stabilize both ends of the bridge. The abutments can also be designed and fabricated at the bridge manufacturing facility before completion on the final job site. Another major component of the bridge costs is the amount of grading, excavation, and fill material required to raise the level of the pedestrian trail to the bridge height above the roadway. Along with this comes the stabilization of the pedestrian trail by using material to secure the side slopes leading up to the abutments. As the height of the abutments and fill material increases, the associated costs multiply rapidly. If the vehicular roadway can be lowered to reduce the material fill requirements, this can reduce the costs. If the right-of-way width for the trail can allow the use of a reduced slope, such as a 2.5 versus a 1.5, costs such as for cement slope wings and sides, or for other stabilization materials could be reduced.

The engineering and actual installation and related trail and street construction tasks could be performed with a variety of local resources such as City Public Works, AP&S, Civiltect,



Grade seorated pedestrian bridge

Continued on next page

Vastco, Fann, Lyon Engineering, etc. etc. The different components of a separated crossing could be bid out separately or as a 'general contractor' sub-contracted project. The bridges would follow both AISC and AASHTO Pedestrian Bridge guidelines in order to be 'certified'. If the bridge surface, entrances/exits, etc. need to be 'ADA' disabilities compliant for trails these costs need to be included. The total costs then for a separated grade crossing using this pedestrian bridge approach would likely be 3-4 times the initial cost of the steel truss bridge alone. Using the above estimates the project could add up to \$300-400K. Costs associated with the vehicular roadways and general soil and storm water drainage control plans would create project costs associated with their own components. Costs associated with these items can become large, and in most cases, not an added cost as the result of the pedestrian bridge. Other potential upgrades that could increase costs would include cement pedestrian path entrances and exits to trail, landscaping, irrigation, and lighting. Sometimes a cement box culvert project can cost as little as half the cost of

a pedestrian bridge approach. If the specific area has issues associated with flood control, erosion, unstable soils, etc. a culvert approach may actually be higher in costs for the separated grade crossing versus the pedestrian bridge.

The funding and justification for a separated grade crossing is a project within itself. Ideally a Master Plan exists for an area or unique asset such as the Peavine Trail. A developer would be presented with the plans, easements, statutes, history of related grants, trail status, etc. at the early stages of the planning process. The increased values of property along a unique asset such as the Peavine should offset a majority of the added costs associated with the separated grade crossing. Besides the trail becoming an alternative transportation route for the new businesses and residents of the area, it is a gateway for recreation to the Granite Dells and Watson Lake areas. Shared funding approaches and the possible use of TEA grants can minimize the burden to a single entity related to the added costs for the crossing. Good planning can make the justification for separated grade crossings an 'automatic'.



Steel truss pedestrian bridge over terrain feature

CONTACTS FOR TRAIL EXCURSIONS

You may occasionally encounter something of concern you would like to relay to the Forest Service. It could be either to enhance your visit, correct a problem, or alert them to a potential problem. The responder will need general information about the trail you are on, your location, or forest location. If you have one, A GPS coordinate reading is the best information possible. CAUTION: do not make a phone call about a possible illegal action while you are at the site; wait until and are at a safe location before relaying information.

Below is a list of phone numbers you may want to enter put in your cell phone to contact the various regional forests where you may be located:

Coconino National Forest
928-527-3600

Kaibab National Forest 928-635-8200

Prescott National Forest 928-443-8000

Additionally, the website fs.fed.us/r3/coconino (or prescott or kaibab) can get you to some general information or provide comments regarding your visit/concerns.

YTA has recently sponsored a PNF group that does trail work. The contact for that group is Rob Hehlen. rhehlen@fs.fed.us. Please contact him with any special updates or concerns you may have, or more importantly, if you have time to help him work on any of the trails.

UPPER VERDE RIVER WILDLIFE AREA

By Ron Smith

On September 12 I had an opportunity to hike with friends into the Upper Verde River Wildlife Area. It was a trip sponsored by the Yavapai Group of the Sierra Club and led by Gary Beverly.

This spectacular reach of the river is located just 8 miles north of Chino Valley. Three miles of the Verde and lower Granite Creek are included within the preserved state-owned area, which incidentally, is open to public use.

This is an exciting place to visit with some expectation of seeing some unusual birds, mammals, and reptiles. Some of the rarer animals mentioned in a Game & Fish brochure are belted kingfishers, yellow-billed cuckoo, and river otters. There are also three species of native fish that occur here: the longfin dace, roundtail chub, and razor back sucker. Fishing for the chub is legal. Our group also encountered a number of reptiles not the least of which was a coiled blacktail rattlesnake and a large fence lizard.

The canyon, at an elevation of around 4200 feet, features a lush and varied assortment of riparian and other high desert plants. The river bottom is a mixed deciduous forest that includes Arizona ash, boxelder, walnut, hackberry, and several species of willows and cottonwoods. On dryer slopes mes-

quite dominates. The invasive tamarisk is interspersed with the native vegetation and it is the goal of a couple of volunteer groups to rid the area of that exotic plant.

To reach this increasingly popular spot, travel north from Paulden to the Verde Ranch Road. Travel east on this road for about 1 mile, then turning right, crossing a railroad track. Drive about 3.4 additional miles across a broad flat before descending into the river canyon. A high clearance vehicle is recommended though not absolutely necessary. Facilities at the road terminus include a restroom, picnic table, parking, and an interpretive kiosk.

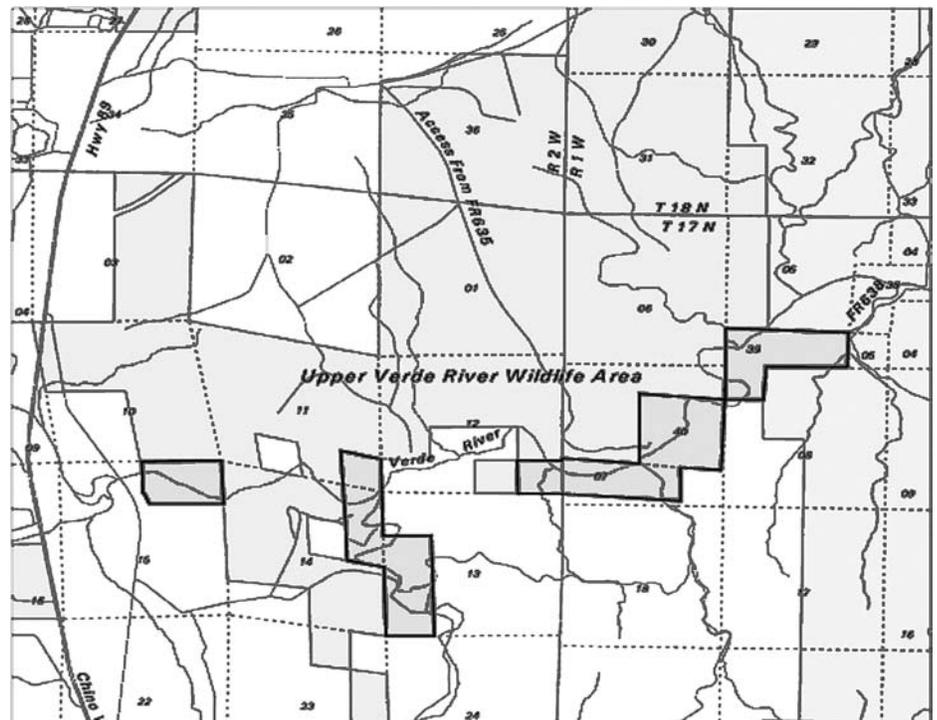
Find out more about the area by going online to: http://www.azgfd.gov/outdoor_recreation/wildlife_area_upper.shtml. There you will also find a link to a directional map of the area.

To learn more about Sierra Club outings to this and other areas, con-

tact Gary Beverly at 929-636-2638 or gbverde@cableone.net.



Section of upper Verde River



LOCAL HIKING GROUPS

Here are some internet links to some great organizations and opportunities for exploration, hiking, and volunteering for outdoor projects. We will provide information on equestrian groups in a subsequent issue.

Trekabout Walking Club: www.cityofprescott.net/_d/trek_oct09.pdf. This group is hosted by the City of Prescott Recreation Department. Hikes are led by city staff and volunteers from the Recreation Department, YMCA, and Yavapai County Health Department. The groups hike on Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning at 8:00am.

Prescott Hiking Club: www.prescottbikingclub.com/. This club is based in Prescott with members throughout the tri-city area. Membership is open to anyone. Activities include, in addition to a regular schedule of several hikes per week, picnics, campouts, and parties. The website posts a regular schedule though fall 2009, but is currently incomplete. Hikes are categorized as slow, fast, and nature or exploratory and provide a tailored experience for almost every level of interest and ability.

Prescott Outings Club: www.prescottoutingsclub.webs.com The Outings Club is one of the oldest in this area, having been in existence since 1975. An experienced guide leads their hikes, each of which is scouted in advance. The schedule offers hikes at almost every level of ability with distances ranging from about 3 to 10 miles distance and elevation gains ranging from nil to 2400 feet.

Sierra Club Outings with the Yavapai Group , Northern Arizona Chapter: <http://arizona.sierraclub.org/Yavapai/outings.html> This is a group with a mission for ecological education and advocacy, outdoor excursions, and trail maintenance. Their schedule for October and November is focusing on the upper reaches of the Verde River and associated publicly owned wildlife areas. An additional trip is planned this fall for the Woodchute Wilderness within the Prescott National Forest, though is currently unscheduled.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Individual or Organization Name (s) _____

Street Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

What related organizations do you belong to? _____

How do you use trails (horseback, bike, hike) ? _____

Do you have time or skills to contribute? _____ How? _____ Want to volunteer? _____

If you did not receive this newsletter in the mail, we would like to know where you picked up this copy:

Retail Store _____ Public Facility (e.g. Library) _____ Friend _____ Organization _____

Date _____ Membership Fee Amt. _____ Make checks payable to: YTA

If you would like membership in the YTA Historic Trails Committee, please check here (no added fee) _____

Annual Membership Fee: Annual \$15.00 for individual/Family; \$25 Organization/Business

Please clip out this coupon and send to Yavapai Trails Association, P.O. Box 403, Prescott, AZ 86302

Yavapai Trails Association
P. O. Box 403
Prescott, AZ 86302

A coalition of non-motorized trail users

We're on the Web at:
www.
yavapai-trails.org

