

# the Valley View

Cascabel...hard to find....harder to leave.



Issue #21

An Occasional Cascabel, Arizona Newsletter

June 2026

## In this issue

We celebrate Mary Taylor for capturing Cascabel history. Lou Anne Kirby has more memories of Paige Canyon. Archeology SW and Tohono O'odham tribal members revisit the village here. LSPWA lawsuit to protect this valley and remembering two beloved community members we've lost.

## Cascabel

**A bare bones accounting of some significant happenings along  
the San Pedro River  
by Mary Taylor**

Cascabel is a place and a community. The place is an area about 40 miles long and ten miles wide along the San Pedro River, beginning about 8 miles north of Benson. There is no post office, no school, no service station, no quick mart and just the beginning of a general store. There is only one road in, through and out of the area with some ranch access roads. The Community is mostly made up of special, different 'characters', independent, but cooperative when needed. Through cooperation and good will they have built a fine Community Center (1989) without government or private loans. Quilt making and raffling, bake sales, donations and other fund raisers and lots of time, sweat, physical effort and expertise have made the Center a very special place.

Historically, the area has a long and interesting background. When early explorers, Coronado in 1540 and Father Kino 1706, first came they found a lush valley of grass, running water, cottonwoods, abundant game, fish and peaceful, farming Indians.

By 1865, settlers, Mexican and Anglo, began to farm in the area but were driven out by the Apaches who had, by that time, driven out the farming Indians. In 1868 the Leach Wagon Road was built through the area to join military posts to the North and South and provide a less hazardous way for travelers going west.

The Redfield family settled at Redington in 1875 and were followed by others who found it a great farming and ranching area. Soon there were so many families, a need was felt for a post office which was established and called Redington. A year later and seven miles south, the Soza family of Tucson settled, created a farm and ranch, built a chapel and a school, hired a teacher and raised 14 children. Life was hard and uncertain.

Shortly after the Sozas came, Frank Pool from Tucson, moved to a choice spot six or seven miles south of Sozas, near Hot Springs Wash. He wrote in his journal: "It is one of the most beautiful valleys I ever saw. When I arrived, a few farms were already under cultivation, grass everywhere. Fine cattle ranged from the Mexican line to where the San Pedro River joins the Gila River. There was wild game in abundance and the river teamed with fish.



Photo: Sue Newman

The Bayless family of Tucson came to the Redington area in 1885. One of the descendants, Jack Smallhouse, and his family operate the ranch at this time (1995). In 1887, the year Geronimo (Apache leader) was captured, the entire area and part of northern Mexico was shaken by a severe earthquake, causing many changes in stream flow and natural springs.

People came and went, population fluctuated. In 1902 the Pool Post Office was established at Mr. Pool's ranch, but was discontinued in 1913.

Alex Herron had a ranch and a small store a short distance north of Hot Springs Wash. In 1916, when he applied for a post office he wanted to call it Pool, after the former post office close by. The name was turned down by the authorities. Later, on the way to Benson, Herron met a Mexican with a rattlesnake the man had killed. Herron asked the man the name of the snake and the reply was 'Cascabel'. Herron decided to call his post office by that name. (Information from Arizona Place Names by Barnes.) The old school at the Soza ranch had been hauled down to a new location just north of the new Post Office, and another room added to accommodate the increasing enrollment. The school also served as a community gathering place with box socials and 'barn' dances. Many interesting stories are told about those times and in recent years two Pool School reunions have been held at the new Community Center. The school was disbanded and torn down in the 1970's. A bus comes from Benson now to pick up and return students from the area.

The 20's and 30's saw hard times in many places. For a while, people came to make a living along the river, with a garden, a few chickens, a goat or cow and wild game. Eventually these folks lost heart and moved back to towns where living was a little easier. By 1936 the Cascabel Post Office was discontinued.

World War II caused a further decline in the population. All those work hardened, ranch raised boys joined up, saw the world and decided when they came back, that they could do better financially by going to college or working in town.

Things were pretty quiet for awhile until the late 50's when electric power was brought in, bringing with it the convenience and luxury of coolers, refrigerators, better lighting and more convenient water pumping equipment. Housewives could even have a washing machine.

In the early 60's the City of Tucson bought the old Pool place and some adjoining land along the river for water rights to the land. Officials had planned to pump water from the San Pedro watershed to Tucson. This was eventually pronounced illegal and the project abandoned. In 1985 the acreage was sold at auction to developers. This land was divided into irregularly shaped, nearly 40 acre parcels and put up for sale. Choice lots went rather quickly and new faces were seen on the river, new marks on the land and more cars on the road.

In 1970 a new State road was proposed through the area from Benson to San Manuel, to replace the old 1868 Leach Wagon Road. Surveys were made, some rights of way were purchased, four big bridges were built, money appropriated to finish it, then through some political convolution, the project was abandoned and money diverted to another area. Thus, is our condition determined. Our road is called 'primitive' (actually Cascabel Road).

Portions of the lower San Pedro River were designated as one of the Last Great Places in 1990. The Bureau of Land Management purchased some of the local riparian river bottom acreage to preserve the wildlife habitat and perennial stream. Those who appreciate the unique qualities of the area are pleased that it will not be otherwise exploited.

Phones, faxes and more convenience arrived in 1993, provided by the Midvale Telephone Co. It is a service taken for granted by so many, but doubly appreciated by those who have done without for so long. Before we used a radio telephone up on the hill.

The really interesting history of the area is in the stories of the people. Tales of tragedy abound along with stories of floods, droughts, illness, murders, accidents, feuds, scandals, romances, wild cows, wild rides, screw worms, everyday entertainment, humor, attitudes and ways of doing things.

Even today neighbors tell of the mountain lion that recently held the community hostage for 10 days. Sometimes they speak of the little Mexican national boy who became separated from his people and starved to death because he was too afraid to ask for help.

It is hoped that folks who have lived here or heard these stories will write them down so they will be preserved, perhaps as an addendum to this manuscript.

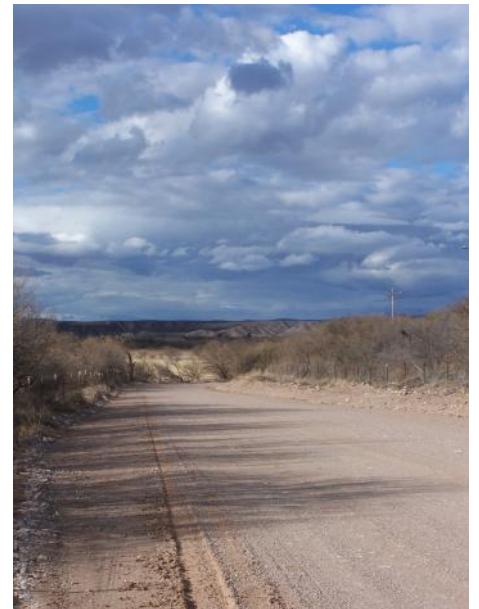


Photo: Sue Newman

## Reconnecting to O’odham Heritage:

### Recent Visits to the San Pedro Valley by the

### Tohono O’odham Nation’s Cultural Preservation Committee

By Bill Doelle, Archaeology Southwest

Bill describes his role as “facilitator” for two recent visits to the San Pedro by the Cultural Preservation Committee of the Tohono O’odham Nation. Here he provides a summary of those visits.

For more in-depth blog posts, visit Archaeology Southwest website:

The Cascabel community played an important role in two recent field trips by the Cultural Preservation Committee of the Tohono O’odham Nation. The first trip was a flyover of roughly half of the San Pedro River watershed that was made possible by EcoFlight, a nonprofit that uses flights in small planes to help conservationists and their partners gain a holistic view of places that are valued and deserve protection. The second trip involved several hours in the Cascabel community and featured a tour of the protected Baicatcan Sobaipuri site, visits to an ancient and a modern “agave plantation,” and a lunch-time feast and extended conversation at the Cascabel Community Center.

The flyover took place on March 6. The flight plan replicated a key portion of Father Kino’s journey down the San Pedro from what is today Fairbank to just north of San Manuel. Kino was the initial Jesuit missionary in the region and journals from Kino and his military guards reveal important information. Two Sobaipuri (the term Father Kino used for the O’odham-speaking residents of the entire San Pedro River valley and the Tucson Basin) settlements near Fairbank were celebrating a recent victory over enemy Jano and Jcome groups. And the journals note that Coro, the leader of the Sobaipuris of the southern San Pedro, had



Our plane and the Tohono O’odham Cultural Preservation Committee members (L to R): Lucius Lopez, Jesse Navarro (Chair), Naomi Monte, Bill, Stella Luna (Staff coordinator), Gloria Johnson, Leslie Luna. Photo [EcoFlight](#).



In 2008, Sarah Herr does the final brushing of the floor of a Sobaipuri house we visited. The individual rocks here are readily recognized today.

Photo: Archaeology Southwest

brought his people down to live in the large village of Quiburi just north of modern Fairbank. There was conflict between the northern and southern Sobaipuris. Of great relevance to modern residents of Cascabel, the archaeological site protected by CCA and ASW is likely the Baicatcan village that was Coro’s village prior to moving south.

On March 27 the Cultural Preservation Committee came to Cascabel and got to visit the Baicatcan archaeological site. Several community members participated in the tour. Initially we gathered around an oval-shaped rock outline—remnants of a Sobaipuri house. We discussed how the rocks would have had flexible branches of desert willow or arrowweed butted up against them. They would have been bent over and lashed together to form a framework for a house of “poles and mats” as they were described in the historical journals.

The Committee members understood clearly that these oval cobble outlines were homes of their ancestors, and they asked us to give them privacy so that they could converse among themselves and offer a blessing.

A short while later, we continued the tour and then headed back to the Cascabel Community Center for a wonderful lunch prepared by the Cascabel Community. After lunch, we rearranged our chairs into a large circle and opened a discussion. It was here that the paths toward common ground and future collaboration became tangible, as we discussed ways to expand the relationship between the Committee members and the Cascabel community. The community's deep connection to the land was apparent, and they expressed their pleasure in welcoming the Committee members back to their homeland.

Committee chair Jesse Navarro said, "The meal reminded me of gatherings at the feast house in my district. And we really appreciate the welcome we have received here." Committee member Gloria Johnson shared that "I felt a very deep connection to our ancestors while we were carrying out the blessing at Baicatcan." Impressed with the abundant cottonwoods, mesquite, and saguaros, Leslie Luna also underscored how important it was that Kino's documents linked O'odham place names to the landscape.

We departed Cascabel after this open discussion. We continued north to San Manuel, stopping at several places to view and discuss the beauty of the landscape and key points about the O'odham history of the valley. We hope that this long and meaningful day and the earlier flight through the valley are just the beginning of a direct relationship with the Tohono O'odham Nation's Cultural Preservation Committee.



Photo: Lisa Vogel

Meet Saguaro Juniper's new apprentice [Raquel Stearns](#).

A fresh graduate of Warren Wilson College in NC that offers experiential learning. She chose organic farming. She fits right in here with major irrigation efforts and working with our cows and horses.



Photo Sue Newman

## We have lost some of our luminaries



Photo: Tom Kowal

Mike Gray died Jan 8, 2026

He was in service wherever he went, seeking and finding how he could join in and serve. From Desemboque to the Dakotas and Cascabel in between. His love extended to all. A true Quaker.



Photo: Lon Brehmer

David Blocker died March 1, 2026

David Blocker was a good man, multitalented and kind hearted. Friends and family gathered March 2nd, 2026 to celebrate his life and bury his body in the Claywork's family cemetery. We miss him.

Next issue will have a discussion of how to plan a green burial ...what's legal and what is required by the State.

# The Paige Canyon Years

By Lou Ann Kirby

From her soon to be published book, *The Outdoors Was Bigger*

To appreciate life in Paige Canyon, it's necessary to understand the topography. Paige Canyon is but a small segment of Paige Creek, a watercourse that originates on Rincon Peak to the south and flows north for about 10 miles to empty into the San Pedro River at Cascabel. For much of its length, Paige Creek, unlike many other mountain washes in southern Arizona, carries a year-round flowing stream. At least it did before 1950. I don't know what effect climate change and water usage may have had since then.

For most of its length, Paige Creek is bordered by wide stretches of flood plain carpeted with grasses and low-growing shrubs like catclaw and desert broom. Paige Canyon is a two-mile stretch of the waterway where precipitous rocky hills and limestone cliffs enclose its narrow floodplain. In the winter, sunlight reaches the canyon floor only at midday from late morning to early evening. The rest of the time the canyon floor is a kaleidoscope of filtered sunlight. Where my parents built their home there was a level field of rich topsoil not more than 10 acres in size where my dad had planted a field of hay. A grove of sycamores lined the creek and three or four native black walnut trees (*nogales*) spread their roots near the water.

Access for human visitors was on foot or horseback. Not even a buggy or wagon could negotiate the rockfalls in the creek or the steep trails down the hillsides. On horseback a rider had to make an arduous climb around rockfalls to go upstream to Happy Valley or downstream to Cascabel.

Paige Canyon was about as isolated as it was possible to be and still be within 75 miles of a major city, Tucson.

"We live out back of beyond," my mom said.

The sycamore grove was my "secret ancient bower" when I was four to seven years old. People sometimes describe me as "remote" or "unapproachable," which always surprises me because I don't feel disinterested. I do like to wrap myself in solitude. The sounds of silence, I find comforting.

I attribute my love of quiet harmony to those early years "unter den linden," literally under the plane trees (sycamores). Their leaves whispered to me, the stories and fairy tales Mom read to me echoed in my mind, the creek murmured beside me, and I dressed and fed a bevy of dolls. Winnie the Pooh and Uncle Wiggly Longears came for tea parties.

Mom said she found me crying one day. When she asked what was wrong, I said I had so many dolls I was tired of feeding and dressing them all.

That was my home from birth to age 7. My friends were my mom, dad and older brother, Clinton, a patient older horse named Peanuts, a dog named Shep, and various horned toads, lizards, June bugs, and chipmunks (more accurately ground squirrels). Occasionally a neighbor from Happy Valley would stop to visit on their way to or from Cascabel.

I did not spend all my time in the sycamore grove. Dad said if I could get the bridle on Peanuts, I could ride him outside the corral. Peanuts was content to carry me bareback around the corral, but he didn't take to letting me bridle him. For hours every day, we had a routine. He put his head down so I could put the bit in his mouth, but when I tried to put the headstall over his ears, he put his head up so I could not reach them. I turned an empty horseshoe keg upside down for a stool to stand on, but as soon as I reached to hook the bridle over his head, he lowered his head to the ground. We did this every day until one or the other of us, usually Peanuts, got tired of the game. The next day, I would come back and try again.

Eventually a day came when I succeeded. I don't know whether I got quicker or taller or whether Peanuts just gave up, but I called Dad to come see. Dad was as good as his word and thereafter Peanuts and I took many jaunts around the homestead.

One day, a man named Lester Glenn came downstream from Happy Valley heading to Cascabel to pick up his girlfriend for a dance at the school. Lester was 17 at the time but I was five so to me he was a man.

"You are a pretty little girl," Lester told me. "If you had a horse, I'd take you to the dance with me."

What Lester didn't know was that I did have a horse. Peanuts was up in one of the rocky pastures. After Lester went on his way to the dance, Dad looked around for me, but I had gone to find Peanuts. Later Mom told me she had Dad lower her into the well where she felt all around and made sure I had not fallen in the well. The only part of the incident I remember is finding Peanuts and starting to lead him home by his forelock. He was coming along behind me when a low-growing catclaw snagged my hair.

I remember the ground was hot and I stood on a dry cowpie to keep my feet from burning. I started to cry because I couldn't get free from the clinging shrub with its cat-like thorns.

That's when Clinton, eight years old at the time, found and rescued me. When I discovered that Lester had gone without me I was heartbroken.

I remember my dad said he planted timothy hay rather than alfalfa because horses could digest it better.



One year, Dad planted a field of timothy hay. I think that was 1937, the last year we lived in the little adobe house in Paige Canyon.

Dad harvested the hay with a scythe. Mom worried that he would cut off an arm or a leg with the big sharp instrument, but fortunately he was able to harvest a huge haystack and suffered no injuries.



Lou Anne at 5 and her dad, Dan Allen...hand harvested hay

The remoteness of the Paige Canyon homestead was worrisome for Mom. She feared someone would break a leg or arm or get snakebit. That's why Dad always left a horse - usually Peanuts - in the corral when he was away. He wanted Mom to have a way to go for help if the need arose.

The need that arose was a sick cow. The milk cow became bloated. When that happened, someone had to "stick" the cow, a stinky, messy procedure that released trapped gas and saved the cow's life. The person performing the "surgery" often got thoroughly sprayed with green slime. Farmers and ranchers rarely called veterinarians. That was something rich people with racing stables did.

Dad was at his parents' house at the Last Chance Ranch headquarters. Rather than try to take all three of us - Clinton, me and herself - she saddled Peanuts with a child's saddle and sent Clinton to ride the three miles to his grandpa. Dad was able to save the cow without having to stick her but Mom got scolded, first by Dad and then by Grandma for sending Clinton, who was seven, on so perilous a ride by himself.

"I don't see the problem," Mom said. "The horse knows

every step of the way and Brother is a good rider."

Mom always called Clinton "Brother" and Dad called me "Sister," but never the other way around.

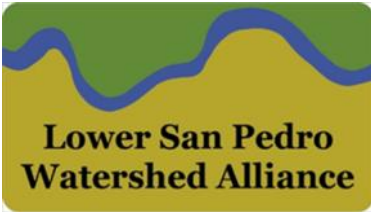
The only real injury to any of us happened when I almost lost a thumb - and it was my own fault. Clinton was chopping kindling for the woodstove on the concrete back porch of the adobe cabin. I was watching and trying to help by moving pieces out of the way as Clinton splintered sticks of stove wood. He swung the hatchet just as I reached. The blade sliced the fleshy part of my thumb but did not nick the bone. Our parents conferred about whether the injury merited a trip to Benson, an all-day trek that began with a six-mile horseback ride to Cascabel followed by a 30-mile drive to Benson. Darkness was already falling. They opted for "wait and see." By the next day, with the blood dry and the wound clean, it did not seem so bad.

I can still see the scar, one of several I acquired over my years on the ranch, mostly from barb wire. Once I was standing on the fence wires at a "let down" while Dad drove the team and wagon into another pasture. A wire popped loose and cut my arm. A "letdown" was a small section of fence where the wires were fastened with bent staples instead of being securely stapled to the fenceposts. The wires could be unhooked to allow a temporary opening.

In 1937, Dad took a job with California Parks and we spent the next year at Big Pine Flats in the San Bernardino Mountains.

We never again lived in the little adobe canyon house near the sycamore grove and the rippling creek. It was still part of the ranch and we often went there to picnic or tend the cattle but it was no longer our home.

Month	Narrows	Clayworks	N Cascabel
2026	A Wilkinson	Barbara Clark	Daniel Baker
January	2.03	2.10	1.98
February	0.17	0.20	0.28
March	0.15	0.11	0.08
April	1.03	0.06	0.05
May	0.23	0.15	0.14
<b>Total '26 ytd</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>2.53</b>
<b>Total '25</b>	<b>10.35</b>	<b>10.13</b>	<b>12.10</b>



## Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance Enters Lawsuit,

### Focuses on the River's Health

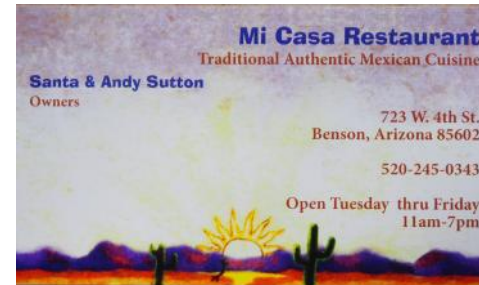
by Melissa Crytzer Fry, Chair LSPWA

In its attempts to protect the lower San Pedro River and its ecological and cultural resources, the Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance (LSPWA) is working collaboratively with the Center for Biological Diversity and the San Carlos Apache Tribe on a proposed lawsuit against the US Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the Copper Creek exploratory mining project near Mammoth. The BLM ignored citizen science data regarding the presence of threatened Mexican Spotted owls documented in the project area over several years, instead filing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) that allowed Canadian-owned Faraday Copper to explore on 67 sites of public land (70,000 gallons of water per rig; 24/7 operations; x 3 rigs).

LSPWA, in conjunction with Cascabel Conservation Association, is also working to inform community members in the watershed about the proposed Energy Transfer gas pipeline that will impact 50 miles of the watershed, with a proposed compressor station in Oracle and a "lateral" pipe in San Manuel, designed for a future Energy Center.

Also on the docket is wet-dry mapping; a series of well-monitoring studies (contact us if you live in the watershed and want to volunteer); a June follow-up meeting to the well-attended *Our Valley, Our Water* public meeting on March 31; and preparation for a regional-scale groundwater study that will shape future strategies and lay the groundwork for efforts to preserve and improve the area's critical water resources and natural habitats. LSPWA continues to write monthly "Get to Know the San Pedro" pieces in *The Miner* as a way to educate the community about the irreplaceable ecological wonders that exist in their backyards. Topics have included the rarity of Sky Islands, mesquite bosques, mitigation properties, riparian areas and – coming up – beavers on the San Pedro, and Global Important Bird Areas.

See our website for these articles and for more details about our activities: [lowsanpedro.org](http://lowsanpedro.org).



#### Cascabel Community Center

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Jim Etshoken and Bonnie Bell prep the helicopter landing pad for repainting.

Photo: Sue Newman

The latest in cow herding. Thanks Andy Smallhouse for getting them back to home range.

Photo Sue Newman





The Oasis Sanctuary is the forever home to over 700 parrots. Each and every one of these beautiful creatures has a unique personality, strong spirit, a challenging life story and a powerful will to live - often against all odds.

-Waylon  
Citron Cockatoo  
Joined the flock in 1999

# OUR MISSION IS A LIFE-LONG COMMITMENT

Established in 1997, the internationally recognized Oasis Sanctuary is the most highly regarded life-care facility for parrots in the United States. Nestled in the San Pedro Valley in southeastern Arizona, The Oasis provides permanent care, shelter and rehabilitation for parrots and other captive exotic birds.

Our first priority is, and will remain, the well-being and safety of the extraordinary birds entrusted to our care. These intelligent, social, highly complex, exotic animals are guaranteed a lifetime of care and compassion.

The Oasis survives solely on the donations and generous contributions of the public.

**Help us, help them. Please donate today!**



Visit our website for information on volunteer opportunities, estate planning and planned giving or to make your gift to the birds!  
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