

Desert Dwellers

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Keep Buffelgrass out of Oracle Foothills Estates



Buffelgrass. Inset shows inflorescences (seed heads).

Have you seen this grass in our neighborhood? Please help by eradicating it wherever it shows up.

We all love our Sonoran Desert – the saguaros, the paloverde trees, the variety of desert flowering plants, and all the wild animals that depend on our desert habitat. Imagine if it all disappears within a decade! The experts tell us it could actually happen.

The problem is a weedy grass called buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) introduced to our desert from Africa. Our Tuc-
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son climate is perfect for buffelgrass, and it's spreading at an alarming rate. It's along many of our Tucson roadsides, and it's spreading up the face of our mountains.

This grass grows in dense stands, crowds out native plants, and can fuel frequent and devastating fires in what has been generally a fireproof desert. When buffelgrass burns, it kills the surrounding native saguaros, palo-verdes, and other plants that are not adapted to fire. The natives will then never return – what will return is a sea of buffelgrass – a monoculture – that will continue to burn in following years. It will ruin the beauty of our neighborhood, cause fire to be a continuing threat to our homes, and decrease our property values.

In the past two years, the invasion of buffelgrass has reached a critical stage in Tucson. Every year the number of acres of buffelgrass in Tucson is doubling. With this exponential growth, the cost of removal is becoming almost insurmountable. Large areas of the foothills of the Catalina Mountains are already covered in buffelgrass. Experts say we need an *army* of volunteers to eradicate it; the longer we wait the worse it will get and the more effort it will take to eliminate.

On thing we can do for our neighbors is to keep it out of Oracle Foothills Estates. Once it gets started, it will be a big job to keep it off of everyone else's property. If it gets in the washes and starts growing up the sides of the canyon hills, all our homes will be threatened by fire. Cost and effort to remove it are minimal at first, but can

be huge if we wait and let it spread.

To remove buffelgrass, you can use a pry-bar to pull the whole plant up including the roots. Place the whole plant including the root ball immediately in a plastic bag, so that you don't spread the seeds around the neighborhood. If the stand is too big to pull by hand, you can spray it with Round-Up. But spraying is only effective when done during the green-up, which may only be 2-6 weeks in July or August, depending on rainfall. If the patches of buffelgrass get big, the cost of Round-Up can be expensive. Spraying 1 acre of buffelgrass will cost \$100 for 2 gallons of concentrated Round-Up and about 10 hours of labor. If you wait a year and let it get to 2 acres, it will cost \$200 and 20 hours to eliminate it. One treatment will not be enough – you will need to follow up for the next two years to eliminate the seedlings.

Please make it a priority to keep buffelgrass out of our neighborhood. If you see it on your property, please destroy it. If you see it on a neighbor's property, please let them know. You might even offer to help them remove it, because it will threaten your property if it spreads.

For more information about buffelgrass, including identification photos, steps for removal, and other ways you can help, go to www.buffelgrass.org, and click on **Get Involved**. If you need help identifying buffelgrass in our neighborhood, I will be glad to help.

Joan Scott

joanscott@comcast.net

Help Stamp Out Graffiti

Pima County will be implementing a graffiti abatement program for private property this year. Currently residents can call **792-TAAG (792-8224)** to report graffiti on **public** property, i.e. street signs and sound barrier walls. When you call, be prepared to give a specific location, the type of property that is defaced (sign, block, brick, stucco) as well as your name and phone number. As soon as the private property abatement program is started, residents will be able to use the same number to report graffiti.

Changes on the Board

Having been recently elected to the OFNA Board of Directors in September, **Tim Amalong** was forced to resign when he and his family sold their Oracle Foothills home and moved back to Sahuarita. We were very sorry to see the Amalongs leave the neighborhood. To fill the vacancy on the Board, **Jesse Wood** was nominated from the floor at the last Board meeting and unanimously elected. To give you a quick look at Jesse's life, he says:

I was born in Pecos, Texas, but later moved to Abilene, Texas where I still manage the family farm. I attended Texas A&M University where I studied petroleum geology and pedology (the study of soils). Currently I work with the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service as a soil scientist. While at Texas A&M, I met my future wife, Olivia. We moved to Tucson in 1994, and into our house on Genematas Drive in 1995.

We have enjoyed the years spent in the neighborhood because of the camaraderie of the neighbors, as well as the variety of wildlife, and we feel fortunate to call this neighborhood home.

We greatly appreciate Jesse's willingness to accept a position on the Board!



Angelo and Jay placing Kino Blue boulders at Triangle Park

Enhancements Continue

Work goes on at the Triangle Park, with more vegetation being planted all the time, and now some lovely "Kino Blue" copper ore boulders are adding interest and beauty to the park. Soon a flagstone pathway will snake through the trees and desert plants. The grant from Pro-Neighborhoods as well as generous donations from some neighbors have made it financially possible to continue enhancing to this neighborhood project. If you haven't seen the park lately, please stop by and take a look.

**Get to Know Your
Oracle Foothills
Neighbors**

*Maureen Sullivan . . .
and Judy Foley and Kathy Rooney*

Three Irish Girls from Boston



How did three Irish friends from Boston end up in a big house in the desert? Just the luck of the Irish . . . and good planning. Maureen Sullivan and her friends Judy Foley and Kathy Rooney recently relocated to Tucson, found a wonderful big house in Oracle Foothills Estates and are thrilled to be here. Maureen lived her entire life in the Boston area, working for many years in the travel industry in accounting, account management and other capacities. "It was great back then," she said, "airlines used to give us tickets to take our corporate clients on trips, hotels would wine and dine us." Her first trip was to Jamaica, after which she was seriously bitten by the travel bug. "But that's all changed. I got out at just the right time." Lower commissions, low-fare airlines and internet booking turned the travel world upside down. Though Maureen loved the work, she doesn't miss it. Of course she misses the people, but not all of them. Two became her good friends and years later they ended up moving together to Arizona. Maureen met both Judy and Kathy through her work and they have remained friends all these years.

After leaving the travel business, Maureen started her own house cleaning business, building it up over seven years with both individual and large clients, including two child care facilities. But when her friend Kathy told her one day that she thought she would like to move to Tucson, both Maureen and their friend Judy responded, "Well, we think we'd like to go with you!" Kathy's sister and her husband live here and all the gals had visited and fallen in love with the desert. All their houses went on the market and they set about preparing for the big move. Fortunately for the three women, Kathy's sister found the perfect house for them, one large enough to give each their own space. And they are enchanted with the neighborhood, finding the people friendly and the desert magnificent. Having coffee in the Arizona room overlooking a cactus-studded desert is the

perfect relaxation. Wonderful restaurants, nearby shopping and so many interesting activities have enamored the women of their new home town.

Maureen's two children and eight grandchildren are all still in the east. Her son and his family live in Florida, while her daughter and family are in the Boston area, just 10 minutes from where Maureen lived. Recently her daughter and two grandchildren visited for a week and "didn't want to go home!" The 12-year-old grandson wants to come back for the monsoons, and sit in the Arizona room to watch the storms. He's doing a report for school on Arizona, using video and stories from his visit to Sabino Canyon, the Desert Museum and Gates Pass. Their favorite place, believe it or not, was Chuy's! Following in her mother's footsteps, Maureen's daughter has established her own house cleaning business, taking over Maureen's clients when she left. When her step-granddaughter recently got married and had a baby, Maureen was shocked to discover that she's now a great-grandmother!

Kathy has two sons, one of whom will be getting married in September. She also worked in the travel industry and plans to stay busy with some type of work here. Two cats, one with "an attitude," are Judy's 'children'. Relating how she and Maureen met, Judy says that on her first day at work, Maureen started talking to her and she "hasn't stopped since!" Although she's originally from Boston, Judy spent a dozen years or so in Florida before moving to Arizona with her friends. In Tucson, Judy teaches swimming to young children.

Maureen has resumed her housekeeping business here and is hoping to find some clients in the neighborhood. Free estimates will be happily given, and references are available. **So, if you need a housekeeper, give Maureen a call at 888-1976.**

If you see them out walking the neighborhood, say hello to our own "Golden Girls" and welcome them to Oracle Foothills!

Manufactured Housing in CR-1?

For those of you in the neighborhood who lived through the long, sad, infuriating predicament of having a manufactured house in Oracle Foothills which became an instant slum and a magnet for crime, it must have come as a shock to read in the Daily Star about Chuck Huckleberry's new plan to allow manufactured housing once again in our zoning, CR-1. At the behest of Supervisor Richard Elias, the Pima County Board of Supervisors is being asked to revisit the question of manufactured housing in residential zones. Although our supervisor, Ann Day, objected to having her district even considered for such housing, she was overruled. As a result of this new impetus, a committee is being formed which will consist of neighborhood activists, manufactured housing industry representatives, non-profit representatives, a member of the Pima County Planning and Zoning Commission and a representative from the Assessor's office. I have been appointed by Ann Day to be her representative on the committee, which should begin meeting soon. The OFNA Board of Directors has also formed a committee on this subject, on which Jesse Wood and I will be serving. We will stay tuned to the issue, keep you informed of developments and represent the neighborhood views to Pima County.

While I understand and appreciate the need for affordable housing, I am totally opposed to allowing manufactured housing into established neighborhoods of site-built homes. Advocates argue that affordable housing will not reduce surrounding property values, since it is the value of the land that remains high. They also state that the manufactured housing industry has changed in response to the market, with the new houses being of such quality that they are indistinguishable from site-built homes. Based on our experience here, I strongly disagree with both arguments. Some neighborhood representatives are not concerned about the relaxation of the rules since someone purchasing a manufactured house will not be able to afford a lot in the foothills. That also is not necessarily true. What then is the point of changing the laws?

If you have opinions on this issue, both Jesse and I would be happy to hear from you.

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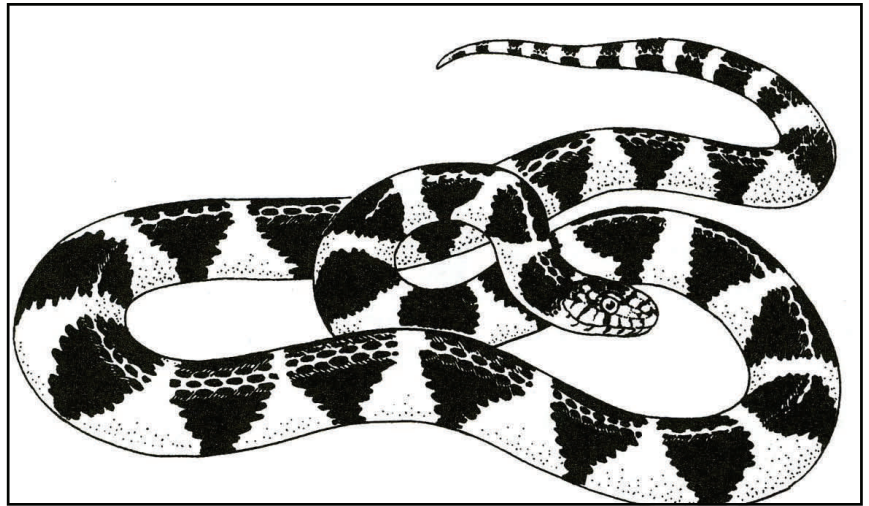
Board Meeting

The next meeting of the Oracle Foothills Neighborhood Association will be held on April 23rd at 7 pm, in the home of Camille Zachmeier, 650 E. Agave Drive. For more information or directions, contact Greg Smith, 408-7568, greg@gregandkelly.us

Common Kingsnake

Lampropeltis getula

With the rapid arrival of warm weather, chances are you'll be seeing our neighborhood snakes once again becoming active. Snakes are important and valuable members of the desert community, yet perhaps the least understood and the most feared. Helping to understand their role and debunk the myths also helps to reduce the fear that many people have of even harmless snakes. The common kingsnake, *Lampropeltis getula*, is a non-venomous, harmless member of the Colubridae family, which includes gopher snakes, garter snakes and whip snakes. The coloring and patterns on kingsnakes can vary greatly, but in our area most often consist of black or dark brown body with white or yellowish bands. All kingsnakes share the characteristic narrow and elongated head, long, pointed tail and smooth, glossy, slender body. Mature adults can range from 30 to 85 inches in length, but are usually in the range of 3 feet.



When the weather is mild, kingsnakes will be active in the mornings and evenings, becoming nocturnal as the intense heat arrives. Opportunistic defines the feeding pattern of kingsnakes, and they are happy dining on lizards, birds, eggs, frogs, mammals and other snakes, including rattlesnakes. Highly tolerant and probably immune to the venom of rattlesnakes, the king will bite the rattler behind the head, then throw coils of its body around the other snake, constricting it to death. Consumption may even begin even before the rattler is dead.

Mating takes place in spring and the female lays 5 to 17 eggs in summer. The mother's role is completed at that point, and the eggs hatch without her in late summer or early fall. Hatchlings will be 8 to 13" long and reach maturity in 3 to 4 years.

Although considered gentle, kingsnakes can become agitated when threatened, hissing, striking, shaking their tail, even coiling up and releasing a foul-smelling musk. Habitat destruction and extensive collection for the pet trade have reduced the population of kingsnakes in the wild. Consider yourself fortunate if you have a kingsnake in your yard, for it will help control the rodent population, and will keep rattlesnakes away.

Oracle Foothills Neighborhood Association
Financial Statement
1/23/07 - 3/18/07

Balance Forward	\$10,950
Income	1,076
Expenses	1,375
New Balance	\$10,651

Details are available to all members from the Treasurer,
Jay DeAngeli

Recommendations List

OFNA maintains a list of contractors, businesses and service people recommended by your neighbors. This list is updated regularly and is available in either electronic form (MS Word) or in hard copy form. Let me know if you need an updated copy:

Carole DeAngeli, 690-1107
ejdeangeli@earthlink.net

Please send me any additions or updates to the list.

Dumpster Day

On January 13th, OFNA sponsored the first neighborhood dumpster day. A large dumpster arrived on Saturday morning and by 2pm it was filled with all manner of debris from neighbors all over Oracle Foothills. Traffic was steady all day and everyone seemed happy with the service. Thanks to Karl Oxnam for initiating the idea and organizing the event. Also thanks to those who helped Karl throughout the day – Rich Capurro, Jay DeAngeli, Kim Braun and Ron Foreman.

CRIME

If you are on my neighborhood e-mail list, you already know that there was a rash of criminal activity in the neighborhood after the first of the year. The crimes included stolen cars, ransacked and burglarized cars and burglarized homes. And just this week, a neighborhood house was the subject of a drug bust.

Also there were numerous instances of young people going door-to-door soliciting donations and magazine subscriptions using phony information and outright lies. To discourage or eliminate this type of solicitation, purchase a **NO SOLICITORS** sign from a hardware store and post it prominently near your driveway or front door. The Smith family on Yvon Drive and the DeAngeli family on Agave both vouch for the effectiveness of such a sign.

Please inform your Neighborhood Watch Block Captain of any criminal activity in the neighborhood, and always report it to 911. If you do not know who your Block Captain is, please contact **Area Leader John Barbee, 297-3308, jb3572@earthlink.net**

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