



*Black Mt. News 24 March 1983*

## 'Optional' tax to go to wildlife

Nongame animals soon will benefit from one of the best pieces of wildlife legislation ever passed by the Arizona legislature. A simple check-off system on the State Income tax form will enable everyone to donate to wildlife either by designating a tax deductible portion of their refund or by enclosing a check with any monies due. The funds generated by the check-off will create a Wildlife Contribution Fund earmarked for a new Nongame Wildlife Branch of the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Why should anyone donate to nongame wildlife? This new branch is vital. Of the approximate 800 vertebrate species of wildlife inhabiting Arizona, fewer than 100 are game species pursued by hunters and fishermen. Until now the financial burden of managing all the wildlife has fallen upon the sportsmen whose hunting and fishing licenses contribute the major portion of the Department's revenue. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior, more people in the United States engage in wildlife observation and wildlife photography than participate in hunting and fishing. Typically, the pleasure afforded by nongame pursuits has never generated income for the department. Birdwatching, undoubtedly the most popular form of wildlife observation, does not require a license. Through logical cause and effect, nongame species thus receive a very thin slice of Game and Fish's budgetary pie; the revenues generated by game licenses are spent on game species management.

Out of 300 department employees only one is a nongame biologist. A successful response to the check-off will insure that nongame species, which until now have received far less study and attention, get their fair share of management and protection. All wildlife is affected by the condition of habitat and part of the department's task is to identify the habitat needs of each wildlife species and to preserve or improve that habitat in the face of an expanding human population.

In order to achieve this goal of habitat identification and protection, the department needs to have an ongoing program that monitors nongame

resources by collecting, analyzing and disseminating information on nongame wildlife species and wildlife habitat. For the past three years the Arizona Natural Heritage Program has collected such information, so far concentrating its efforts on those species which are the most limited, rare, or poorly known.

The Heritage Program has set up a data management system that provides a central repository for information on nongame species. For the first time locality information from throughout the state is retrievable from one source, proving to be a cost-effective method of producing input to decisions like highway construction.

The check-off will provide for incorporation of the Heritage Program into Game and Fish to continue and expand its efficient approach to maintaining natural diversity in Arizona. And why worry about that diversity? Perhaps because of the wildlife itself or perhaps because diversity offers practical benefits: Research with various animal species has produced a broad spectrum of medicines and there is no way of knowing just which species might provide vital cancer fighting agents or derivatives for the treatment of multiple sclerosis.

So, whatever your interest in wildlife might be — aesthetic, pragmatic or humane — when state income tax is due, prove yourself a friend to all the creatures living in Arizona and check it off!

*Arizona Nature Conservancy  
Newsletter, Dec. '82*

Wildflowers are going to be spectacular this spring and the Conservation Committee has some great wildflower hikes planned!

- March 27, Sunday — Meet at Cave Creek School parking lot at 1:30 p.m.

- April 6, Wednesday — Meet at Cave Creek School parking lot at 9:30 a.m.

- April 16, 23, 30, Saturdays — These are tentatively set. Watch this column for further details.

All hikes are non-strenuous and there is no charge.