

# Watches nature's balancing act in her yard

by Jane Ekrom

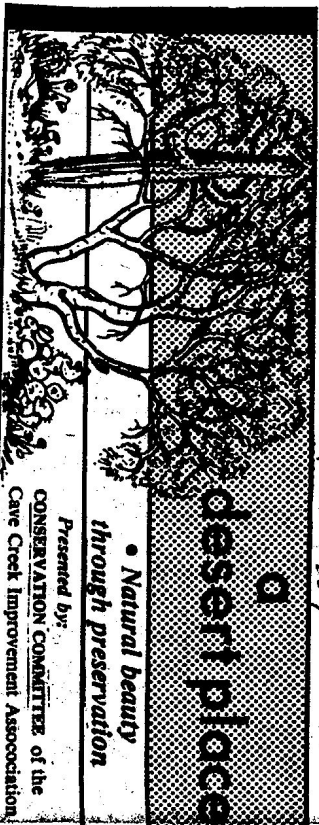
Early one morning as I was looking out my window for creature movements, I spied a flurry of activity that to this day I marvel at.

Under the wood steps leading from one deck level to the higher one appeared to be either a rabbit with a squirrel's tail, or a squirrel with a rabbit ears. Actually, it was a squirrel and two rabbits, rolling about.

I thought they must be fighting, but sometimes they would part and soon out popped one of the rabbits, who stood by, outside the fracas, shaking all over.

At this point, I wanted a closer look. A large diamondback rattlesnake had something large in his mouth and was being attacked by the rabbit and squirrel. It appeared to be a baby animal.

The important thing to note here is that the animals were helping each other. The other rabbit never did re-enter the scene, just sat outside shaking.



• Natural beauty through preservation

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CONSERVATION COMMITTEE of the  
Cave Creek Improvement Association

The snake was trying to get his head back down into the large hole from where, I suspect, he had stolen the baby in the first place. It was an incredible sight with the squirrel, the rabbit and the snake rolling and tumbling furiously about.

Although I'm a firm believer in not interfering in nature's activity, I did attempt to get in closer and possibly disperse part of the crowd. It was too late for the baby.

The rabbits and squirrel came out from under and stayed close by, while the snake faced me squarely with his jaws wide open and full of his catch. He started

towards me, but I used my snake stick to hold him off. He dropped the catch and continued coming at me. I backed off and he turned and grabbed his catch again.

The rabbits and squirrel ran for the bushes and I went inside. The snake went under the deck to finally enjoy his meal. I was left with a feeling that I had just witnessed one of nature's incredible dramas.

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Last spring I wrote about a Says Phoebe that built a nest in one of the portholes on the front wall of my house. Portholes you ask? That's to let in a rush of air. The thick glass doesn't let much heat in, in the summer.

Anyway, this past fall a cactus wren decided to build a nest there. One day here came the Says Phoebe again, spotted the new nest and apparently didn't like somebody using her space. She came frequently to pull out sticks and grasses.

One day, a bright yellow strip of packing tape about 10 inches long appeared. No doubt a real prize for Mrs. C. Wren.

When Mrs. S. Phoebe saw that, she came just to try and pull it out and the wren would chase her away. One morning when I went to see who was winning, I noticed the yellow tape was missing and I was glad I had taken a picture of the wren nest, tape and all just a few days before.

From that day, I never saw the phoebe attack the nest again and thought that would surely be the end of the story with the phoebe winning the ribbon and the wren, the nest.

Just two days before this writing, a tragedy happened. The cactus wren flew into my screened porch where my dog snoozes. It was running about on the floor getting dead bugs. Of course, my dog decided that was breakfast and grabbed the poor bird. I ran out and opened the jaws, but it was too late and the little wren died in my hands.

So once again the nest is empty, but with this wonderful spring weather, the porthole might yet have another tenant soon.

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Readers comments and suggestions should be sent to Conservation Committee, P.O. Box 4212, Cave Creek, AZ 85331.