

# Odds and ends about the Foothills outdoors

by Frank Casanova

I've been wanting to write an article for this column since last fall on things I've seen or read, but the bigger boys and girls on the committee wouldn't let me until now. And now all my observations are outdated, but I'm gonna write 'em anyway!

Last fall an entrepreneur constructed an entrance for a new development east of Rolling Hills, called Carefree Heights Estates I believe. That title appeared to consist of individually mounted black letters on a masonry background. Within a week, the inevitable "Save Our Desert" was sprayed on the masonry and the letters began disappearing and were all gone within a short time. What was different in this case was that a sprayer with a different philosophy appeared on the scene and superimposed his (or her) own message: "Kill Ecology Freaks." This spring the developer repainted the entrance, replaced the name, and again within a week the first inscription reappeared. Ah! The beauty of the Foothills when the spray cans are in bloom! What do you think of this ubiquitous "Save Our Desert" spraying? Does the thought (if any) behind the inscription lend it any greater socially redeeming value than the graffiti on the subway walls of the cities? Wish you would write to Desert Place and tell us how you feel about this.

□ **Not the Foothills!** The November issue of *Audubon* magazine carried an article by Page Stegner describing three western utopias: Humboldt County (Calif.), Orcas Island (Wash.), and Sedona. Stegner had attended boarding school in Sedona some years ago and found the place changed. He wrote: "When one out of every 20 residents is a real estate agent, what is going to proliferate except real estate development?" I suppose the same question might be posed for some other areas.



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□ **Can coyote control cause rabbit proliferation?** Farmers in Idaho have been suffering crop damage due to a burgeoning jackrabbit population, so last winter they organized several rabbit drives which generated considerable controversy and attracted national media coverage. The Jan. 18 issue of the *Arizona Republic* carried two letters to the editor (authors unknown to this writer), both questioning whether Idaho's rabbit problem was the result of coyote control programs. On Feb 6 the *Republic* reported that a judge had ruled that the drives were OK, but that no one under age 16 could participate and that participants could not play baseball using the rabbits as balls.

□ **Lizard living:** In early February, Jo was out walking here in Cave Creek and spotted a rusty beer can by the roadside. After giving it several emphatic kicks to scare out any bugs, she picked it up and shook out the loose dirt. As she continued on her way, she repeatedly swung and shook the can in time with her steps. A good 100 yards down the road, a frantic scrambling began inside the can. As she jumped in one direction, the can flew in another and a small and very dizzy lizard plopped out. Guess that dark rusty can

had been a good "passive solar home" until she so rudely intervened.

□ **Critter cruelty:** Have you noticed the "Critters" column Sister Mary Laurana writes for the *Republic*? On May 8 her column was headed "Be Kind to Animals Week fails to communicate scope of cruelty." I thought it well worth reading. I sometimes think it would take a lot to push me over to vegetarianism. On the other hand, I don't want to be overrun by an uncontrollable dog population. Nor consider cows sacred.

□ **Library exhibit:** At the Desert Foothills Library during the month of June, the Conservation Committee will present an exhibit. This exhibit will display a sampling of the desert's inhabitants. Items will include fossils, nests, feathers, skeletons, insects, photographs and other educational materials. All of the specimens were found as is on the desert; nothing was killed or destroyed.

□ **Correction:** In last week's article on the cone-nose beetle, *Reduviidae* was given as the scientific name for "tree" bugs. It is the scientific name for true bugs, instead.