



# EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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[www.empireranchfoundation.org](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org)

## Young Naturalists Go Wild at the Empire Ranch



June marked the start of ERF's new outdoor education program. Twenty-one middle school students from Sonoita, Elgin, Patagonia, Vail, and Tucson braved a thunderstorm to attend the first day of *Wild about the Grasslands* summer day camp, which was held during June 11-15 at the Empire Ranch. These youngsters experienced fun, hands-on learning activities focused on ecology and conservation stewardship. Their excitement was contagious!

Rare habitats of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area came to life for the young "naturalists" as they observed wildlife, investigated macroinvertebrates, created herbariums, tested water samples, and made nature inspired journals, flags and collages. Students practiced orienteering skills, used GPS units to find

geocaches and participated in a vinca monitoring project at Empire Gulch. History came alive for the students as they listened to humorous stories about life on the ranch, learned about the restoration of the Ranch House, and took a ride on a horse drawn wagon.

Students were inspired by local experts Erik Powell, Katherine Cudney, Mac Donaldson, Brad Cooper, Karen Simms, Jeff Cooper, Phil Ogden, Mat Killeen, Kurt Bahti, Jeff Simms, Dieter Steklis, Gerald Korte, Steve Boice, Pancho Boice, Daniel Boice and Dick Schorr. These dedicated individuals devoted their time and enthusiasm to provide all with meaningful learning experiences.

The program would not have been successful without the support and generosity of so many. Volunteers Mira Carlisi, Tim Corkill and Drew Corkill, alumni of local schools, took time from their college studies and busy schedules to assist the program facilitators each day. We are grateful to them for their service work. Much thanks and appreciation to the Elgin/Sonoita  
*(continued on p. 2)*



## Members Respond to Empire Ranch Needs

Facing the challenge of shrinking financial support from the BLM and new challenges to preserve the Empire Ranch buildings, you have responded generously! As of July 15, 253 members have responded with contributions totaling \$38,474. Average giving rose to \$152 per membership this year from \$124 per membership last year. So far we have 58 new members, and 24 returned after not renewing last year.

Thanks for rising to the challenge of our needs! Elsewhere in this issue you can read about the projects your donations are making happen right now! However, we are still waiting for about 300 members to renew. If you are one of those, please fill out the reply form on p. 4 and mail it today. We need your help! Thanks again!

## Roundup Rescheduled to October 27

"Growing up on the Empire Ranch: A Western Experience" is the theme for the seventh annual Roundup at the Empire Ranch Headquarters in Sonoita, Arizona to be held Saturday, October 27 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Yes, this date is different from the one we announced in the May 2007 issue. We rescheduled in order to avoid a conflict with the Santa Cruz County Fair.

**Please consult the flyer insert for more information about this day-long, family-friendly event. We hope you'll join us!**

*Did you, or someone in your family, experience the Empire Ranch as a child? If you have photos or memories you're willing to share, please contact the Empire Ranch Foundation by calling 888-364-2829 or e-mail to [abunting@sunnacast.net](mailto:abunting@sunnacast.net). Thanks!*

*Published by the Empire Ranch Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management. The purpose of the Foundation is to protect, restore, and sustain the Empire Ranch historical buildings and landscape as an outstanding western heritage and education center. Donations to the Foundation may be sent to: P.O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637-0842.*

## Wild at Empire (from p. 1)



Cowbelles, Patagonia Elementary School Parent Teacher Club, Anne Stradling Equine Foundation, and the Sonoita Fuel Stop for contributing camp scholarships for seven students.

The Empire Ranch is an official member site of the Hands on the Land (HOL) program and will be featured in the September issue of the HOL newsletter. Grant funding, received through sponsorship by the BLM -Tucson Field Office, launched our outdoor education program. We contracted with Gail Corkill, program director, Netzin Steklis, conservation scientist, and Patty Cooper, education specialist, for program start-up, curriculum development and purchase of instructional materials and field classroom equipment.

The *Wild about the Grasslands* summer program ignited a spark that is sure to make a difference. Funding is needed to continue this program and future education programs at the Empire Ranch. To learn more, contact the Foundation or visit the site profile on the HOL website, <http://handsontheland.org>.



(photos: M. Carlisi & N. Steklis)

## ERF Volunteers Tackle Important Projects

The Empire Ranch volunteer task force has experienced a revival this year. Acting on the advice of the ERF Advisory Board we recruited more than 50 volunteers who put in over 250 hours on scheduled work days on April 14, June 16 and August 18.

In April Sonoita-area Boy Scouts and their dads and friends cleaned out the Mechanic's Shop whose roof had been blown away by a freak wind. Another crew cleaned the Huachuca House from top to bottom so it could serve as the logistics and support station for the Artist Shootout. Others swept and tidied up the historic ranch house.

In June gutters and drains were cleaned out in anticipation of summer rains, dangerous limbs were removed from trees close to the house, and an enthusiastic crew prepped living room and dining room walls in the Victorian Addition to be painted on August 18.

In addition to the scheduled volunteer work days on the third Saturday of even numbered months, volunteers have worked on the Heritage Discovery Trail under supervision of BLM's Catie Fenn, and on maintenance of the Ranch House and documentation of impacted historical trash sites working under supervision of BLM's Chris Schrage. All volunteer work is approved in advance and supervised by BLM personnel.

Come out for our next volunteer work day on October 20 when we'll be preparing the Empire Ranch Headquarters for our annual Roundup Open House! Future volunteer projects include prepping and painting the exterior of the Children's Addition and repairing the old wooden corrals. Please call us at 888-364-2829 if you would like to participate.



Volunteers giving living room walls a facelift in June (photo: C. Auerbach)

## May 2 Legacy Day Builds on Tradition

Legacy can be defined as something that has been handed down by someone before. Our theme this year was "living in the frontier times." Under the experienced eye of ranch manager and cowboy, Joe Quiroga, of the Diamond C Ranch (pictured below), 60 students from Elgin Middle School built a retaque corral fence some 100 feet long.

Working with mesquite brush being cleared on the Empire Ranch by the BLM, construction began using primitive materials to demonstrate how livestock confinement was done in Southern Arizona and in Sonora, Mexico. Imagine the pride when the same youngsters will show off their contribution to the legacy effort 20 years or so from now.

Besides the corral fence building, Anna Coleman taught the students how to spin and weave wool. Reata braiding (rawhide rope making), an ancient craft

(continued on p. 4)



Retaque fence under construction (photos: C. Auerbach)

## Empire Artist Shootout - A Bang Up Success

The April 2007 Artist Shootout photo shoot at the Empire Ranch Headquarters was spectacular. In response to artists' requests, the schedule differed somewhat from last year. It began on April 27 in the afternoon and concluded at noon on April 28, thus providing opportunities to capture the first morning light at 5:00 a.m. and shoot well into sundown.

Forty-nine artists attended. Tom Dorr shared his experience by helping to plan the shootout and orienting the artists. Judging from the rave reviews, the event exceeded expectations and sparked imaginations. A small sampling of names you'll recall from previous Empire art shows included: Santos Barbosa, Sherry Blanchard-Stewart, Karen Bonnie, Nancy Denzler, Bernie Fierro, Fred Hambly, Diana Madaras, Patricia Mathes, Buck and Jessica McCain, Owen Rose, Charles Thomas, and Sandra VanderWall.

The 85 models really pushed to provide ever more choices to photograph. Dave and Doreen Daiss spearheaded the period dresser scenarios. One of the most popular was in the kitchen of the main house where the Robinson family created a convincing representation of a mother and daughters cooking the old fashioned way. Besides many of the popular favorite scenarios such as a cowboy poker game complete with ladies of the night, prairie girls and gents around a chuck wagon fire, and gunslingers, some new ideas emerged. Dr. Charles Krone stepped back a few decades in his profession to portray an 1800's doctor doing surgery in the saloon tent.

Not to be outdone were contemporary cowhands from local ranches, who demonstrated every day ranch activities, like saddling a horse, feeding and grooming, roping, and carrying a saddle. Patty Wand and Ross Knox, a mule packer, set up a cow camp scene, and even served a campfire dinner to a few stragglers on Friday night. The prize for the most animals went to the Lyman family who came with horses, chickens, and a calf. Among the newcomers were Noberto Padilla from Mexico, Cody Friestad from Cave Creek, and Clay West, a Texan who rode a bucking horse. It was a tired, but inspired, bunch of people who enjoyed the farewell luncheon in the living room of the Ranch House.



*A few of many colorful vignettes at the Shootout (photos: G. Auerbach. & P. Erskine)*

## Foundation Receives Its First Endowment

In July ERF received \$25,000 to establish the *Nathan Russell Vail, Jr., Endowed Fund* to support the history and archives programs of the Foundation, including processing, housing and maintaining the Foundation's archives and related educational programs. We are extremely grateful to the Nathan Russell Vail, Jr., Charitable Remainder Trust and to Tim Vail for this generous and welcome gift.

The late Nathan Russell ("Russ") Vail, Jr., (1921-2005) was a grandson of Walter L. Vail, and was a professional cattle rancher and partner in the Vail Co. and Vail & Vickers Co. land and cattle enterprises. His son Tim Vail is currently a member of the ERF Board of Directors.

## Preservation Advances in Many Areas

The Foundation and BLM have made great progress on a number of collaborative preservation projects since our last report. We're moving steadily closer to our interim goal of establishing a "historic house shell" safe for the public to visit and interpreted for their information and enjoyment.

Recently, much work has focused on the Victorian Addition. The worn living room carpet has been removed, revealing a finished concrete that resembles floor surfaces in adjacent rooms. Walls have been patched and are in the process of being repainted; we also hope to repair or replicate the light fixtures. Door and window panes have also been reglazed.

Thanks to members' financial support, volunteer contributions, and with help from a \$24,000 cost share grant from BLM, three contracts are being awarded this summer: one to repair the roof blown off of the Mechanic's Shed; a second to remove

*(continued on p. 4)*

### ERF members...SAVE the DATE!

#### Members Pot Luck Lunch Buffet

Saturday - November 17, 2007 - Noon to 2:30 pm

At the Ranch Headquarters

Join us ... for our annual members-only Pot Luck Buffet served from the recently repainted Dining Room in the 1880's Victorian Addition. Bring your family's favorite dish, and sample the delights of many others. Tours of the historic buildings will be available. Invitations will be mailed October 18th.

## Empire Ranch Historian Max Witkind Retires

On July 1, 2007, Max Witkind, BLM Archaeologist, retired from the BLM Tucson Field Office, after many years of assembling historical and archaeological information about the Empire Ranch, and providing guidance and background to our ERF/BLM partnership's preservation and restoration efforts.

We would like to recognize Max's seminal and enduring contributions and to wish him well. Clearly, the feeling is mutual. On informing us of his departure, Max commented, "I will always look back on my times with the Foundation as one of the most rewarding and fulfilling times in my professional life."



### Gifts in Remembrance

The Empire Ranch Foundation deeply appreciates recent donations received in memory of:

Rex Allen	Carey Ingram
Elizabeth Anderson	Dusty Vail Ingram
John Paul Andree	Pierre M. Janssen
Boice Family	Ferne Lewis
Kitty Boice	Robert Bolton
Grant Bunting	McGee
Gordon Cox	Nancy C. Menth
Reagen & Hettie	Jane Nabours
Lee Gardner	Frank Seibold
Joan Hedgcock	Al Vail
Maria Hoopes	Ed Vail
Gene & Alvessa	Russ Vail
Hummel	

## Legacy Day (from p. 1)

used on the Empire Ranch to restrain animals, was demonstrated by local cowboys. Water and its importance for the range cow was examined by the students under the guidance of Bob Katting from the University of Arizona's College of Agriculture. In keeping with the frontier theme, a ranch-hand dutch-oven lunch of beef brisket, frijoles, and tortillas was served by local ranchers and friends to this hungry working ranch crew. This was Empire Ranch Legacy Day at its best.

## Preservation (from p. 3)

old carpet and asbestos tile now in the Victorian Addition dining room and linoleum in the kitchen; and a third to complete Phase 2 repairs to the weakened foundations of the Victorian Addition West Gable. All should be completed by year end.

We also hope we've found a source for rough-sawn, dimensional lumber that we can use to repair the corral fences, as planned for upcoming work days.

In anticipation of construction of the first segment of the Heritage Discovery Trail later this summer, we have recorded artifacts in a historic trash scatter near the Hired Man's House. The trail segment, as well as a public restroom, will be installed sometime in August.

Many of these (and future) efforts are accomplished through the support of ERF volunteers (see article, p. 2). It's a great way to contribute some "sweat equity" towards efforts to preserve the Empire Ranch. Please consider joining us at future Volunteer Work Days, and read about your efforts in the next preservation update.

## New ERF Publication Available

The publication "History of the Empire Ranch" (October 2006) reproduces the timeline exhibit designed by Paul and Sarah Miller (currently on display in the Victorian Addition) into a four-fold color brochure. The publication is available for download as a .pdf file from the ERF website [www.empireranchfoundation.org](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org). Printed copies in limited quantities may be requested from Empire Ranch Foundation, P. O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637, or email [erfadmin@empireranchfoundation.org](mailto:erfadmin@empireranchfoundation.org).

### Working Calendar

#### August

18 Volunteer Work Day, 8am-Noon

#### September

15 ERF Board Meeting, 9am-Noon

#### October

20 Volunteer Work Day, 8am-Noon

27 2007 Roundup Open House: "Growing Up on the Empire Ranch: A Western Experience," 10am-4pm

#### November

17 ERF Board Meeting & Election of Officers, 9am-Noon

17 Members' Potluck Lunch, Noon-2:30

#### December

10 Entries due for Empire 100 Art Show

#### January

21 Empire 100 Art Show - Members & Friends Reception, 4pm-7:30pm, Northern Trust, Tucson

22+ Empire 100 Art Show - 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, through February 29, Northern Trust, Tucson

## 2007/2008 Membership Reply

*Yes, I want to help save the Empire Ranch for future generations!*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please enter name(s) as you wish it to appear in acknowledgments.)

Street/P.O. Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed     MasterCard     Visa Card     This is a new address

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Card Number                      Exp.Date.                      Signature

This donation is also in \_\_\_memory/\_\_\_appreciation of \_\_\_\_\_

This is a gift membership from: \_\_\_\_\_

### EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION



- \$25 Homesteader
- \$50 Total Wreck Miner
- \$100 Wrangler
- \$250 Vaquero
- \$500 Jefe
- \$1,000 Patron
- \$5,000 Cattle Baron
- \$10,000 Territorial Governor
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other

**Please Mail To: Empire Ranch Foundation, P.O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637**

The Empire Ranch Foundation has an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit classification; donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.