



EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

P.O. Box 842 • Sonoita, Arizona 85637-0842 • (888) 364-2829

www.empireranchfoundation.org

"Grasslanders" Learn of Ecology & Ranching

ERF's *Wild About the Grasslands!* ranching heritage and ecology program returned to the Empire Ranch this summer. Seventeen middle school students were part of the excitement during this week in the "wild," June 16-20. The week began with learning to use the naturalists' tools contained in their expedition daypacks. Then, before they could say "fun in the sun," they were off on a hike down the Heritage Discovery Trail.

During the week they engaged in orienteering and geocaching at Oak Tree Canyon, and learned about mural painting and nature sketching. They took many hikes to identify birds, animal scat, and cast animal tracks. Much to their surprise they discovered tracks of a mountain lion and a Great Blue Heron. They ventured to a remote area on Las Cienegas to use geospatial technology in science investigations and a wet/dry water monitoring project.

Guest leaders used humor and stories to teach students about ranch history, had fun in the mud with them as they made adobe bricks, introduced a Harris' Hawk and the basics of falconry and raptor study, demonstrated the art of "branding" on old pieces of wood, and led them in a ground surface survey of areas treated in the recent prescribed burn. On the final day, parents and family members attended an ice cream social celebration and the unveiling of the mural, Empire Ranch in the Heart of the LCNCA: Past, Present, and Future. What an incredible week it was for all!

(continued on p. 2)



Orienteering, mural painting, and daily hikes were only part of the fun (photos: K. Herold & D. Schorr)

Our Members Are Key to Our Success!

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who has responded our membership renewal letter sent in May. As of July 20, there were 234 membership renewals, with contributions totaling \$37,692. Thank you so much for your support!

We are pleased to welcome 42 new members, and 14 members who have renewed after a one-year lapse. We are, however, still waiting for more than 200 members to renew. While so much was accomplished last year with your support, there is much more to be done.

We hope the following line from Laura Wheat's poem (p. 2) "Keep history alive, please, help me last" will inspire you to fill out the membership form on page 4 and mail it today. Together we can help the Empire Ranch to last and thrive.

Don't Miss It!

Cowboy Life on the Empire Ranch

**2008 Empire Ranch Roundup
Open House**

**Empire Ranch Headquarters
Las Cienegas National Con-
servation Area, Sonoita**

Saturday, November 1, 2008

**See enclosed flyer, or visit
www.empireranchfoundation.org**

Laura Wheat, then a senior at Buena High School in Sierra Vista, approached Sarah Miller, ERF past president, about conducting an oral history for the Empire Ranch Foundation as a key component of her Girl Scout Gold Award project. In June Laura interviewed Billie and Mac Donaldson and added their oral history to our collection. She also wrote the following poem about the Empire Ranch. ERF is grateful for Laura's assistance in our oral history program and we wish her continued success as she begins her college education at the Northern Arizona University.

I Am The Empire

This is dedicated to all who have lived and worked on the Empire Ranch and made it what it is today.

Look around and what do you see?
Rolling open spaces, a creek, and some trees.
A beautiful land out here in the west,
You may not believe it, but it's some of the best.
First, let me introduce myself, while I still have the chance,
Before my story begins, howdy, I'm Empire Ranch.
I've been here forever, since Creation, I know,
But in more recent history, I really start to show.
When 1870 rolled around,
Edward Nye Fish bought this bountiful ground,
For six years he stayed and cared for me,
Ranching his cattle and helping make what you see.

I am the Empire....

Then three men - Hislop, Harvey, and Vail,
Purchased me for two grand when I went on sale.
They added more rooms and continued to build,
Both family and livestock, with these I was filled.
Soon a new company, they had created,
Empire Land and Cattle Co., they named it.
Then Southern Pacific Railroad rates began their ascent,
So on a cattle drive to California, all the cowboys went.
For the next 32 years the Vails kept me alive,
During this time, I grew tremendous in size.
But, in 1928, the Vails sold me to Boice,
He and his partners sure made a good choice.
The Chiricahua Cattle Co. took great care of me.
Frank Boice moved in and here raised his family.
He and Mary were sole owners, starting in 1951,
My house was modernized, but renovations were far from done.

I am the Empire....

Cowboys, you know, are a trademark of the west,
And being a ranch, I've seen some of the best.
The real cowboys are great and those movie stars - wow!
Like when John Wayne filmed Red River here - holy cow!
But in 1956, oh, that year was grim,
Mr. Boice passed on; sons Pancho and Bob took over for him.
For thirteen more years, as owners, they ranched me,
Then Gulf American Corporation laid down their cold money.
They wanted to build houses on my beautiful land,
But I was leased in '72 and hooray, the Boices ranched again!
Then sadness struck again in 1973,
Pancho died in a plane wreck, so his son Steve kept taking care
of me.

I am the Empire....

Then just a year later, I changed hands again,
Though Anamax Mining didn't buy me for my land.
They wanted my water, they wanted to mine,
And they thought that I was the perfect find.
But when Anamax came in, the Boices went out,
The cattle were sold when their lease ran out.
When nothing became of their mining scheme,
I was leased again, with the Donaldsons I was teamed.
When the owners changed again, the Donaldsons stayed,
Though they moved off my land, they worked here during the
day.
In 1988, the Bureau of Land Management came,
Conserving my land was their primary aim.

I am the Empire....

In 1997, a new foundation began,
That wanted to help more than just my land.
They wanted to keep my history alive,
So future generations could see how I survived.
So they started repairs and spread the word,
'Bout the history and importance of my owners and herds.
The Empire Ranch Foundation received 95 grand,
To help preserve and restore my house and my land.
So, as you can see, I am more than just a ranch,
I have history and want to live, so give me a chance.
Don't let me die, don't forget my past,
Keep history alive, please, help me last.

I am the Empire...

Written by Laura A. W. Wheat,

February 2008

*- Cadette/Senior Girl Scout Troop 1224, Sierra Vista, Arizona
- Girl Scout Gold Award Project*

"Grasslanders" (cont. from p. 1)

The spark that ignited an appreciation of the outdoors and ranching culture last summer continues to burn brightly in the lives of these children! We are enormously grateful to the many expert volunteers who made the event possible, and for seven generous tuition scholarships provided by the: Anne C. Stradling Equine

Foundation, Arizona Rangers-Sonoita Company, Fred Baker, Headquarters West, Ltd., Patagonia Elementary Parent Teacher Club, and the Patagonia-Sonoita Rotary. With their help, and the financial support of ERF members and BLM, *Wild About the Grasslands!* and other educational initiatives will continue make a difference for our children and youth.



Legacy Day included lining up for roping 101, getting down to adobe mud casting, and the fine art of Dutch Oven cooking. (photos: C. Auerbach)

Legacy Day 2008

A record number of 70 students from Elgin Middle School attended our annual Legacy Day event this year. They were greeted with an engaging talk about the history of the Empire Ranch and the daily life of today's cowboys. Next, four experienced ropers provided roping lessons and encouragement. Intense concentration prevailed as students learned the proper way of coiling a lasso to avoid tangling their ropes as they attempted to rope a target.

Another class, Dutch-oven cooking by the campfire, was taught by two outstanding ranch cooks. There were plenty of

doughy, sticky hands to be seen as each student made biscuits. Needless to say the newly baked biscuits were consumed on the spot and never made it to the hearty Dutch oven cowboy lunch served for everyone at noontime.

Following lunch, students constructed an adobe wall from the bricks they made. Again, hands were soiled--not by flour but by mud. The day-long event closed with everyone feeling a greater appreciation of the ranch life experienced over the years here on the Empire Ranch. Thanks to all of the volunteers and instructors, it was a fun and uniquely educational day for all.

When Horses are Teachers

Can a historic ranch contribute to the well-being of modern-day children? Some 25 kids from the Tohono O'odham Nation would testify that it certainly can. In May, the Empire Ranch hosted a three day "Advanced Horse Camp." Camp director Silas Johnson, a traditional leader and teacher on the Tohono O'odham Nation west of Tucson, explains: "Horse camps teach children responsibility and promote holistic healing. Although there is plenty of adult supervision, it is the horses who are the teachers and the therapists."

Horses and ranching have been part of O'odham culture since the late 17th century. *(continued on page 4)*



Preservation Progress on Many Fronts

ERF Board members and BLM staff attended a briefing meeting on May 2, 2008 at which the preliminary results of the structural/seismic evaluation of the Ranch House, Adobe Hay Barn, Hired Man's House, and Grove house were presented. Project engineer Mel Green noted that the four buildings examined are not hazardous, although in an earthquake their structural integrity might be severely compromised. Generally, height to thickness ratio of walls and integrity roof/wall connections determines stability. The height to thickness ratio of the walls meets standards; however, in most cases the roof is not connected to the walls. This situation should be remedied as other preservation work is undertaken

on the buildings.

A draft of the final report of the evaluation was submitted by Statistical Research Inc., ERF's preservation contractor, and reviewed by the Preservation Committee in June. The draft report was used by BLM and ERF at its July 19th planning meeting to set preservation priorities for the coming year, which includes initiating permanent repair of the zaguan lintel.

Volunteer work days in April and June included recontouring the soil between the Heritage Trail and the Hired Man's House to be sure water drains away from the House and preparing the Headquarters buildings for the monsoons by cleaning gutters and drains. General clean-up; test-

ing of electrical outlets and wires; removal of several modern additions, including metal furniture, modular shelving, and hazardous plumbing pipes; and moving the heavy safe in the office to relieve pressure on the west wall and floor were also accomplished.

A team of Girl Scouts from Sierra Vista painted realistic window panes on the plywood added by BLM over the doors and windows of the Field House as a safety measure while future uses of the building are being considered. The plans for the corral repairs are complete and will be undertaken as soon as historic lumber is obtained. Please plan to join us at the next volunteer day on October 18th; call (888) 364-2829 for more information. **3**

Horse Camp *(cont'd from p. 3)*

tury, but traditional connections to the land have been severely disrupted by urbanization and poverty. The Empire Ranch, with its open spaces and excellent corral facilities, provided an opportunity for the kids to practice their horsemanship while enhancing their self confidence and sense of belonging.

The children learned riding, roping, and rodeo skills, studied ranching techniques, and cared for the animals. Other experiences included lessons in O'odham history and culture and soil and water conservation, participating in a mesquite-reduction service project, and a tour of the historic Ranch House.

Funding from BLM's Take it Outside program, and a partnership between Tohono O'odham Boys and Girls Club, the Tohono O'odham Community College, the Forest Service Nogales Ranger District, the Coronado National Forest, the Empire Ranch, LLC, the BLM Tucson Field Office, and the Empire Ranch Foundation made this event possible.

Si Johnson would like to see the Empire Ranch Horse Camp become an annual event and noted that "placing kids into a new environment helps them stretch. Out here, nature does most of the stretching, and helps with mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual healing." His goals fit well with BLM's "Take it Outside" program and the Forest Service's "More Kids in the Woods" project, both of which hope to encourage the next generation of stewards, while improving the health of our nation's families, children and communities.

"Take It Outside!"

In April, the Bureau of Land Management-Tucson Field Office and the Empire Ranch Foundation were awarded \$4,800 from the "Take It Outside: Children and Nature Initiative" (TIO) program. This national BLM program was established to encourage children and their families to spend more time outdoors on the public lands, and to encourage and develop stewardship of the public lands. The TIO funding will launch ERF's Geospatial Technology for Outdoor Recreation and Stewardship project developed by Gail Corkill, our Outdoor Education Program Director, in collaboration with Netzin Steklis, Conservation Scientist and Ecology Educator.

Gifts in Remembrance

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

Rex Allen
John Paul Andree
Pete & Clorene Bidegain
Earl F. Glenn, Jr.
Laura (Dusty) Vail Ingram
Ferne Kemp Lewis
Charles Putnam
Julia Scribner Ruch
Bill Schulmeyer
Godfrey Sill
Lyle & Dorothy Strung
Al & Russ Vail
Edward N. Vail

and in appreciation of:

Marion Hyland
Annalyn Watt
Karen Wyatt

The project's aim is to introduce middle school students, ages 11-14 years, to geospatial technology by learning to use global positioning system (GPS) units and geographic information systems (GIS). Students will work with BLM biologists to collect data for resource monitoring, create a map of special points of interest on the LCNCA, and develop an outdoor recreation information field guide.

Benefits will extend to participants of ERF's successful *Wild About the Grasslands!* program, the Equipment Loan Program funded by the Patagonia Regional Community Foundation, and children and their families attending other ERF and BLM education programs at Empire Ranch.

Working Calendar

[Location: Empire Ranch Headquarters, unless otherwise noted.]

August

16 Volunteer Work Day, 8am-Noon

September

20 ERF Board Meeting, 9am-Noon

October

18 Volunteer Work Day, 8am-Noon

November

1 2008 Roundup Open House:
"Cowboy Life on the Empire Ranch"
10am-4pm

15 ERF Board Meeting and election of officers, 9am-Noon

December

3 Entries due for Empire 100 Art Show

January 2009

15 Empire 100 Art Show - Members & Friends Reception, 4pm-7:30pm
(Show runs through March 13)

2008/2009 Membership Reply

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

Name: _____

(Please enter name(s) in your preferred format for 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 _____

Please add me to your listing to receive email updates and e-newsletters

This is a gift membership from: _____

EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION



- \$35 Homesteader
- \$50 Total Wreck Miner
- \$100 Wrangler
- \$250 Vaquero
- \$500 Jefe
- \$1,000 Patrón
- \$2,500 Majordomo
- \$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.