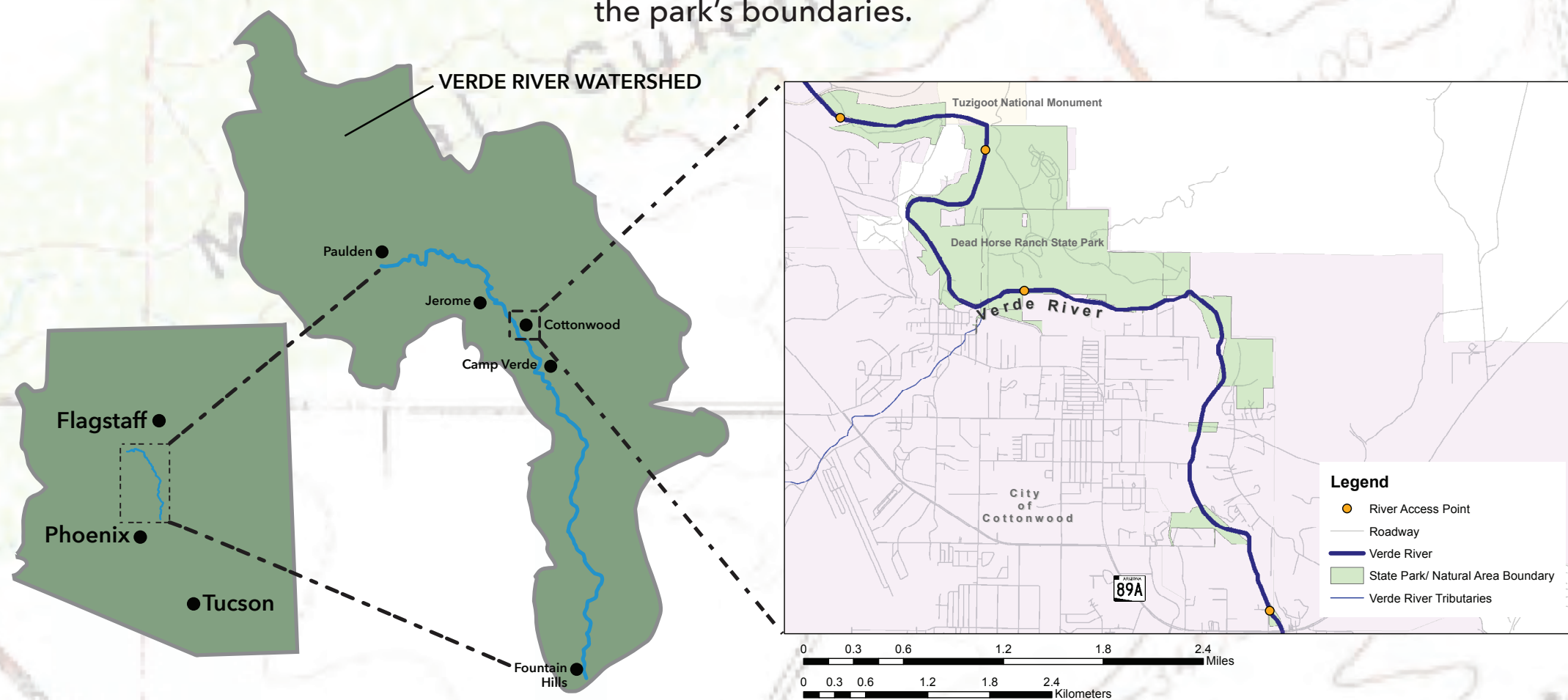


# VERDE RIVER GREENWAY STATE NATURAL AREA

The Verde River is an ecologically diverse riparian paradise nestled within Dead Horse Ranch State Park.

With its 149-mile of free flowing river, the Verde River spans a short six-mile stretch through the park's boundaries.



The Verde River's cottonwood-willow riparian gallery is one of the only 20 that still exists in the world. The riparian gallery consist of Fremont cottonwood, Goodding willow, mesquite and many more. The diverse forest line along the river is what defines this ecosystem as riparian, but the foliage is not the only factor that makes this environment unique.



Mesquite



Cottonwood



Willow

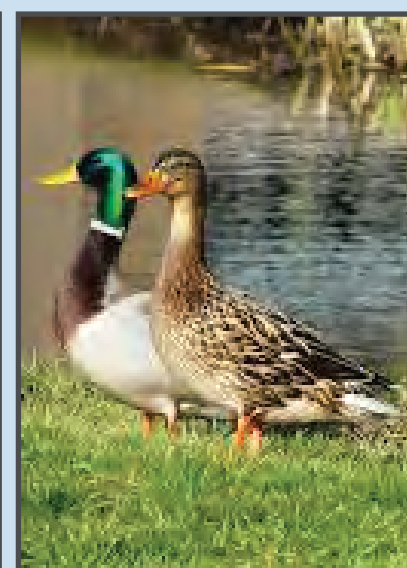
The Verde River is a migratory path and home to a vast array of birds. Some of our most viewed bird species include bald eagles, great blue herons, mallards, American coots, pied-billed grebes, wood ducks and hundreds more.



Bald Eagle



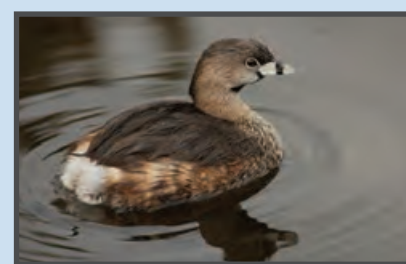
Great Blue Heron



Mallard Ducks



American Coot



Pied-billed Grebes



Wood Ducks

"Rivers flow not past, but through us; tingling, vibrating, exciting every cell and fiber in our bodies, making them sing and glide." ~ John Muir



# ANIMALS AT DEAD HORSE RANCH STATE PARK

Uncommon features that make up the Verde River's habitat are the four endangered fish that can be found swimming the waters. They include the spokedace minnow, Colorado pikeminnow, roundtail chub, and razorback sucker.

**FISH**



Spikedace Minnow



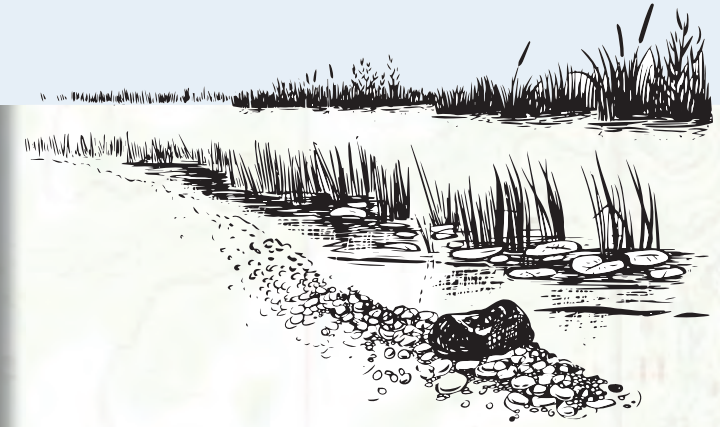
Colorado Pikeminnow



Roundtail Chub



Razorback Sucker



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## The Verde River's water source supports a large density and diversity of wildlife.

The American beaver thrives and influences change in our Verde River. Evidence also shows signs of river otters, mountain lions, bobcats, and deer visiting and foraging along the shorelines. Each season brings new challenges to the river. Changing temperatures, drought spells, and heavy rains during monsoon season reshape and determine the river's future.

**CRITTERS**



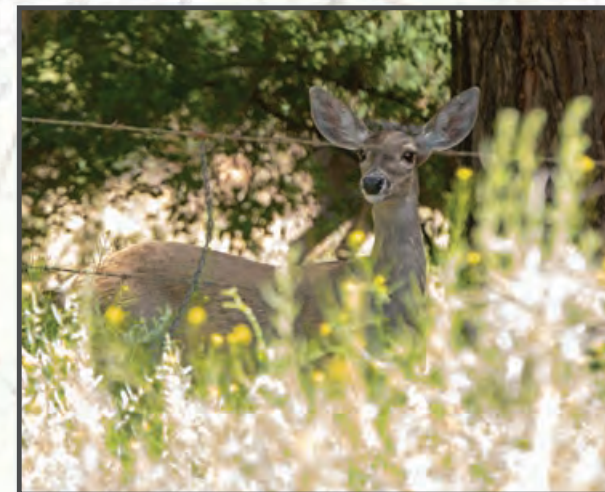
The American beaver holds the title as Arizona's largest rodent, weighing in at an average of 50 pounds. They maneuver their way through the river's water using their distinctive rudder-like tails. These mammals utilize the trees that line the shores of the Verde River for shelter and food by chewing their way through the bark to the soft tissue of the tree using their large incisors. Beavers tend to dam for lodging and have been known to burrow into the shorelines for protection from the harsh monsoon season floods.

Sighting an Arizona river otter can occur. They propel their bodies gracefully through the river using their long muscular tails. Their unique chocolate-brown fur has an oily guard that traps air against their skin, allowing them to stay dry. These critters produce a powerful musk at the base of their tail through a gland to mark their territory.



Bobcats are present in Dead Horse Ranch State Park. These mammals feed primarily on small animals and birds, but one could easily scamper away with a small pet. Typically, bobcats have an orange/gray shade with black spots. This species' young (kittens) are born with both fur and spots. Their coats' color and markings act as a camouflage that helps increase survival rates. Being small in size, bobcats battle with both animals and humans as predators.

One of two very distinct species of deer is found within Arizona. White-tail deer, also known as a Coues deer, are the most common within the park. They are easily spotted because of their large white tail flagging as they run. Their activity level is dependent on the temperature, and they are more inactive during the heat of the day. White-tail deer being herbivores who consume seeds, shrubs, mesquite beans, sagebrush, and juniper throughout the park. The likely life-span in the wild for a deer is approximately 10 years. Fortunately, their distinctive eye placements enhance their ability to see predators, which in turn increases their survival rate.



The presence of top predators is considered an indicator of ecosystem health and can play a vital role in biodiversity. It can contribute to regulating prey species in abundance. In the Southwest, the largest predatory mammal is the mountain lion. This elusive predator occupies a large range and hunts various prey species throughout its range.



## Wildlife Watching

Arizona's wildlife species are as varied as the habitats they call home. From the low cactus-studded flats of the Sonoran Desert to the highest alpine peaks, the diversity of Arizona's wildlife may surprise you! Your state parks are a great place to experience Arizona's native animals in their natural settings and gain insight about their existence in this gorgeous state.

