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# Letters from the Desert

by: Diane Vaszily, with Letters from Nan Byrne

## WANT TO FEEL AT PEACE?

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Living in the desert is a wonderful opportunity to feel at peace, surrounded by the subtle scents, animal scurrings and majestically changing colors of the mountains, buttes and hillsides. After being here a while, I can think of nothing to match the connectedness which comes from living in the Cave Creek environs. So, of course, when I am away for long periods, I yearn to hear, smell, see and feel the wonders of the desert. My dear friend and desert buddy provides me with those opportunities through her vivid letters. Even though I am mired in swamp at the other end of the continent, her words bring me back to this beloved place. Read on and I'm sure images, sounds and scents will appear between the lines for you as well.

October, 1998

“A bit of reprieve and respite for the first few days of September – the skies drenched the earth as we drove east. The Owens Valley is gorgeous – the eastern Sierras on the west, the western White Mountains on the east... We did get a storm to visit the bristlecone pine grove in the White Mountains. They're awe inspiring!”

April, 1999

“The biggest and best news in Cave Creek and environs – RAIN and even SNOW! Ever imagine a ‘white Easter?’ The flaky stuff didn't stick here but the mesas again were glorious on a drive up Tonto Hills way. Sunday made me think of Mid-western calendar art. You know we've been parched – drought



photo by Thomas McGuire

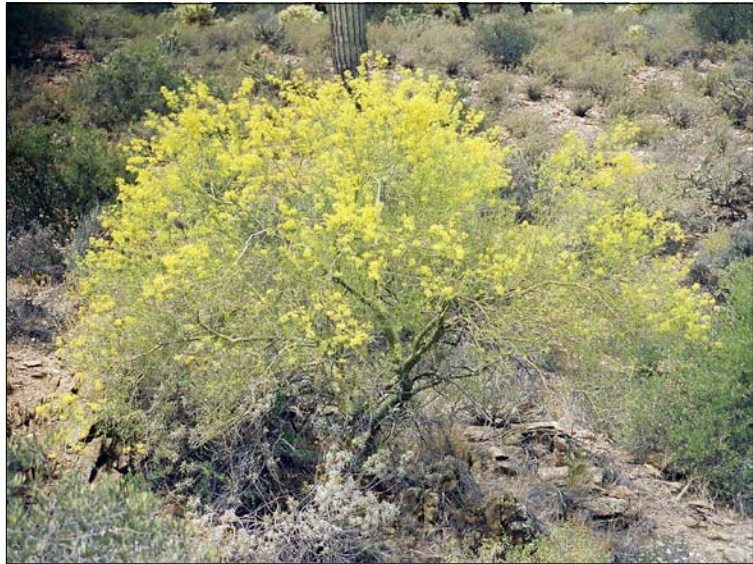
[used by permission]



was hunkering in again. These April rains won't turn everything around completely; however, a quarter click is better than nothing! We'll take it. The hikes have been good. Discovery Walk is this month as we scuttle about looking for some rich areas to share. The desert breath will be upon us."

May, 1999

"Brave flora, despite drought's stresses. The Foothill palo verdes are aglow in their masses of flowered yellow, saguaros are crowning bonnets of creamy colored posies and the opuntias, prickly pear and cane chollas accent the desert floor with blossoms of lemon yellow and other variations. Catclaw, white ratany and desert senna perfume the breezes



**Foothill Palo Verde on the Go John Trail**

[photo by Dave Mills]

with their distinctive aromas. It isn't even too hot – yet; cold fronts continue to travel through, bringing not rain but cool breezes. Temperatures drop enough for open windows at night. This magical, mysterious desert never ceases to amaze and charm me! Ditto – right?...News Flash! A western Tanager in my back yard this morning – what a gift!"

Late May, 1999

"The hike: we headed 'way past Seven Springs to Forest Road #41 (the one with the switchbacks and turn to the backside of New River Mesa), the area filled with activity even I can remember. In the early '70s there was an onyx mining operation just to the north of the turn. Not much is left but a sedimentary-looking 'cliff,' interestingly enough, a 'stew' of rock formations – conglomerates and pieces of onyx (which is a form of quartz). I think some volcanic pieces lurk underfoot as well...A short trudge up this old road brings one to a saddle with some inviting rocks to sit and rest. And when one is sitting and resting, taking a closer look – one is resting



on petroglyphs! Then, down below are rock alignment remains (trashed by cattle) and glory be! the beginnings of a metate and lots of potsherds! The wildest artifact is a huge smashed '60s boom box, its inner circuits and buttons fully exposed. One has to speculate who did it and why there? Mysterious circumstances!”



**petroglyph in Seven Springs area**

<http://www.horsebackarizona.com/seven-springs-rides.html>

Summer, 1999

“The pizza oven of summer is upon us, but soon you’ll be here and it will be such good medicine for you!”

Yes, Nan, such good medicine. Thanks for the infusion of desert!

