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## Clean-up puts 'scenic' back in scenic landmark at Upper Verde River ranch

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Post



About 40 volunteers made quick work of demolishing the old outbuildings at the "burnt ranch" on the Upper Verde River April 13. The tumbled-down structures posed a hazard to those who come to enjoy the scenic spot.

Formerly a working ranch, the home burned down years ago, leaving little more than the foundation and some bricks from the fireplace. The barn and chicken coop/shed walls eventually collapsed, as well, becoming nothing more than roofs lying atop jackstrawed piles of boards and posts.

## Special to the Review/Art Merrill

Volunteers haul away remnants of "burnt ranch" buildings near the Upper Verde River on April 13 to make it safer and more scenic for visitors.

Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZG&F) bought the 800-acre ranch property a few years ago, using Heritage Fund money derived from the sale of state lottery tickets. Located along the Verde River near Paulden, it's a key location where AZG&F wanted to protect several endangered species of native fishes.

The property is open to the public and it draws campers, swimmers and the occasional fisherman who doesn't rate success by the size of the fish. ATV riders also frequent the spot, though the legal riding in the recreation area is very limited.

Volunteers gathered there April 13 to clean up the property. Though four pickup trucks and three trailers each took two loads of materials to the landfill, some timbers and other detritus remain stacked at the site, awaiting transport. Some of the AZG&F guys brought elk burgers, venison sausage and chili, and we had a good lunch before throwing the second load into trucks and trailers.

It is a beautiful spot; if you go, please take a trash bag and bring out more than you brought in. To get there, take Highway 89 to Paulden and turn right on the Verde Ranch Road. Cross the railroad tracks, bear right at the water tank, and it's about 20 minutes down a bad road. When you see that you're obviously near a canyon rim, take the right hand road that drops down to the Verde River.

You'll want to drive something with more ground clearance than a standard car, and don't drive a vehicle you care a whole lot about. I can't imagine wanting to go there when the road is muddy, from the looks of some of those ruts.

AZG&F encourages those with fishing licenses to take all the bullfrogs and crayfish they want from the Verde. Being non-native species that eat everything within reach, they are a problem.

(Art Merrill writes an outdoor column in the Prescott Valley Tribune called "Get Out!" which recently published this article. Contact him at [amerrill@prescottaz.com](mailto:amerrill@prescottaz.com).)

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