

Earth Day 2017 happenings in Mesa

By My News Mesa
April 21, 2017



Salt River Horses. (Sally Mesarosh/MyNewsMesa.com)

If you're looking to catch a glimpse of some local wildlife for Earth Day on April 22, we have four places around Mesa where you might find a few desert creatures without too much effort. We can't promise you'll find all of those mentioned, but there's a pretty good chance you'll come across a few species you haven't seen before during your exploration.



Velda Rose Desert Nature Trail Rabbit. (Photos



by Sally Mesarosh/MyNewsMesa.com)
Rose Desert Trail, Peach Faced Lovebird.

Velda

Be sure to use caution when hiking and bring plenty of water with you on your adventure.

[Velda Rose Nature Trail](#), University Drive and Recker Road, Mesa.

You'll find a nicely maintained desert trail with birds, lizards, squirrels and rabbits in the heart of Dreamland Villa Retirement Community. It's open to the public and boasts several species of bird, including hummingbirds, cactus wrens, woodpeckers and colorful peach-faced lovebirds.



Usery Park, Red Finch.



Velda Rose Desert Nature Trail, Gila

Woodpecker.

Residents whose homes back up to the one-mile trail often place birdfeeders in their yards to encourage wildlife. An occasional javelina has been known to wander through the area.

[Usery Mountain Park](#), 3939 N. Usery Pass Road, Mesa.

This park has 3,648 acres set at the western end of the Goldfield Mountains, adjacent to the Tonto National Forest. If you don't have time to hike one of the many trails inside the park, make a quick stop at the Nature Center and out back you'll find beautiful scenery and a small area with bird feeders. Finches, doves, quail and many other varieties of birds frequent the area.



Mesa, Dove.



Velda Rose Desert Nature Trail.

[Salt River/Bush Highway](#), from Mesa or U.S. 60 take either Power Road or Ellsworth (User Pass) Road north to the Bush Highway, which extends along the Lower Salt River. Stop and buy a Tonto National Forest Pass so you can pull off at Granite Reef, Phon D. Sutton, Coon Bluff or any of the other parking areas.



Salt River Horses.

If you're lucky you'll find a group of Salt River Horses by the river, wild horses that roam the area. Walk along the river a bit and you're sure to see Harris's hawks, heron, egret, eagles and other riparian and upland birds. Other wildlife includes beavers, frogs, lizards, snakes, and more.



Velda Rose Desert Trail, Peach Faced Lovebird.

[Mesa Community College Red Mountain Campus](#), 7110 East McKellips Road, Mesa.

In the center of campus, you'll discover a small cienega, a desert wetland, where endangered species find refuge. Endangered Gila Topminnow, Lowland Leopard frogs and native desert pupfish live in the pond thanks to several partnership projects with Arizona Game and Fish, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Phoenix Zoo.



MCC Red Mountain, Harris's antelope squirrel.

There's a desert tortoise that lives in the cienega who can be found chomping on flowers from nearby trees. You'll also find Harris's antelope squirrels scampering around the grounds.



MCC Red Mountain, Desert Tortoise.

Wherever you choose to go, take a few minutes to appreciate our local wildlife on Earth Day. Enjoy!

– **Sally Mesarosh is a freelance writer and photographer for MyNewsMesa.com.**

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