

## **Trail Running in the Preserve**

### **By Bob Cafarella, Conservancy Steward**

Trail running can be great fun. The scenery is often outstanding and constantly changing bringing a sense of well being and encouragement to continue. The people one meets are generally friendly and are knowledgeable about trail etiquette which can be a big deal during a trail run. Trail runners express that they feel a greater sense of accomplishment when completing a run on the trail as opposed to in a neighborhood. There are a few extra considerations one should keep in mind and follow when trail running as opposed to running in a neighborhood or other built up area.

#### General Considerations

Surface- trails range from smooth to extremely rocky. If you are the type that is prone to tripping it is strongly recommended you begin your trail running on a relatively smooth trail. Once you get the hang of it you can try a rocky trail. You will quickly find that it is necessary to pay much more attention to the trail in front of you than when running on pavement.

Grade (hills)- this will be a fundamental consideration for each run. Running up and down hills takes more concentration and effort than running on flat ground. Running down steep hills can be extremely taxing on the knees and when going uphill it can seem like your heart is going to leap out of your chest. One point is clear. Consistent up hill running will relatively quickly greatly improve one's cardio-vascular system.

Trail etiquette- although traditional trail etiquette applies, a trail runner should yield to those walking/hiking. Most often, a hiker will stand to the side of the trail when he/she sees you coming. When approaching from the rear make your presence known early enough to not startle the individual.

What to bring- since by running the individual has the potential to penetrate deep in the Preserve where there may be few others it is a good idea to take a cell phone, and depending on the distance you plan to run, water. One should also be aware that when running the effect of the sun is not as apparent due to the natural cooling that occurs while moving. Trail runners should use sun screen, and consider wearing a head cover and sunglasses.

Wildlife- if you are lucky you will get to see wildlife. What a great reward for all the effort you are exerting. Trail runners, particularly when running in remote areas, should scan the trail ahead and the rocks and boulders on and along the trail and listen for indications of a snake or other small critter. Although it is highly unlikely you will encounter any critters along the trail, it could happen.

Running tips- when running uphill it is best to take short choppy strides. This will conserve energy and assist in breathing. Probably more important, when going down steep slopes zig zag across the trail to check momentum and protect knees.

### Selecting a Trail in the Preserve

If you are not that familiar with the trails in the Preserve first review the Preserve Trails Map to determine trail locations, connections, distances, difficulty and elevation change. You can pick up a map at many Preserve trail heads or the MSC Office.

The Preserve provides trail running opportunities whether you are a beginner and somewhat clumsy or you are a seasoned and advanced runner. Trails around the periphery of the mountains and in the north area tend to be more level and smooth, wider and contain less grade. The Preserve also provides the advantage of using one or more connecting trails to create loops so that the scenery is changing and always new. There are a number of trails in the Lost Dog Wash Access Area that are great for beginners. One may want to begin with the Ringtail-Anasazi Loop.

Using the Gateway as a starting point, there are a numerous increasingly challenging loops that the trail runner can enjoy. A sample includes- progressing in difficulty and distance, the Horseshoe-Saguaro Loop, the Gateway Loop and finally the very challenging Windgate-Bell Pass Loop.