

A Summer in Grand Canyon

by Kate Jurow

South Kaibab trailhead, 4:15 a.m.: I nervously checked my National Park Service radio as I headed down for a summer as the sole resident and manager of Cottonwood Ranger Station and Campground. I had hiked the canyon often with the Grand Canyon Field Institute (GCFI), but I had never before been here wearing the park service uniform identifying me as a canyon expert.

My first canyon hike was in 1994 as a participant in the inaugural GCFI Women's Introductory Backpacking class. I fell in love with the canyon and returned again and again. There was so much to discover: peace, space, serenity, adventure, self-knowledge, a remarkable natural world, and the traces of vanished biospheres and civilizations. To be able to spend a summer immersed in all of this was, to a Bronx-born city

lady and cubicle-dweller like me, a privilege and a gift far greater than the cost of the course.

While hiking in the canyon on September 11, 2001, our group heard through word-of-mouth of the tragedies. Emerging from the canyon into a different, frightening world, I was grateful to have had a grace period in the wilderness, and on that trip I resolved to act on my dreams and volunteer to work in the canyon the following summer. I was lucky that my application found its way to the Canyon District rangers, who offered me a volunteer post at Cottonwood.

That first morning as I headed down to Cottonwood, the sun slowly revealed me to hikers, and I began to understand the significance of my new role. A person in a ranger uniform is a source of advice and assistance, a wilderness authority.

I wore a National Park Service Volunteer uniform and insignia, not a ranger's uniform, but the distinction did not matter to people: They saw a ranger. I was entering a new world: the canyon infrastructure of heroes and rescuers.

Inner-canyon rangers are usually federal law enforcement officers. However, this is the least of their responsibilities: They are primarily medics,



Volunteer Kate Jurow on the trail near Cottonwood Ranger Station. Photo by Kate Jurow

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search-and-rescue experts, technical climbers, and conservation caretakers. They are spread very thin. Some are permanently stationed in high-traffic areas like Indian Garden and Phantom Ranch. Others are on trail patrol, responding to reports of injured or overdue hikers, or on conservation patrol, checking on natural resources and archaeological sites. One is always on “SARshift” (Search and Rescue), acting as coordinator and manager for inner-canyon emergency response. Some are on special duty: spotting wildfires or dropping by helicopter into impossible places to check on condor eggs. Backcountry rangers are also EMTs or paramedics. Inner-canyon rangers are a unique breed: courageous, independent, stubborn, resourceful. Just the traits needed in this beautiful but unforgiving landscape.

Mules and helicopters were my supply lifelines, and I soon grew accustomed to the logistics of my new life. But it was harder adjusting to my role change. I was no longer a hiker on a private outing; I was a highly visible public servant. Accustomed to looking to rangers for help and guidance, suddenly I was the ranger. I might feel helpless or unprepared, but I could hardly behave that way when someone banged on the station door hollering “Help! Ranger! Help!” No matter how I felt, I was there to serve, to inspire confidence, courage, and a promise of safety.

This responsibility lay on me heavily. The safety of others depended on my judgment and courage;

how would I measure up? My most frightening experience came during the monsoon season. Cottonwood rarely flash floods, but when it does it is dramatic and dangerous. One September day, we knew storms were on the way, but the first sign that things were serious was when Ranger Marty phoned and told me to look for the ranger’s life preserver and think about evacuation and rescue plans. Like all rangers, Marty was not one to get excited easily, so his call shook me up. Then it started to rain again. It had been raining heavily for several days; the ground was saturated and the creeks flowing fast—prime conditions for flash floods. The North Rim rangers began to call with regular updates: “An inch of rain in the last hour.” “One-and-a-half inches in the last hour.” I ran back and forth to Bright Angel Creek gauging the rising water level. Ranger Peggy at Phantom called and reminded me to radio them if a flood crest passed Cottonwood, so that they could prepare at Phantom. Ranger Marty phoned again for a morale and safety check. Dispatch called, the heart of the canyon radio net, advising me of a National Weather Service Severe Storm Warning and Flash Flood Alert. My level of apprehension rose yet again: over the entire summer, I had never received a phone call from Dispatch. The sky darkened and the rain intensified. Then over the radio came a General Alert to all inner-canyon rangers: severe storms imminent, prepare for danger. The sky turned black, and it began to thunder.

Awash in my own personal flood of adrenalin, I dashed through the campground, noting which sites were occupied so that I could find them quickly in an evacuation. I readied the lifejacket as well as rescue ropes and a throw-bag. When I returned to the station, numerous hikers were huddled under the eaves of the building. I joined them outside, and while we sat besieged by wind, lightning, and thunder, we chatted lightly about canyon storms, while I tried to conceal my own fear. Regularly I excused myself to slosh through the campground, survey the cliffs for waterfalls, and check the level of the creek.

Cottonwood never flashed. The eye of the storm passed quickly, and Bright Angel Creek began to roar by in amazing colors: pale green, then yellow and light orange, deepening slowly to blood red. After a few hours, the color changed to buff, and I realized that I was seeing the rock layers, washing in sequence off the cliffs and rushing down to the Colorado. The rest of the afternoon saw soaked and shaken hikers squishing into the campground with tales of lightning strikes and rockfalls—but no injuries.

This experience and others changed me forever. When I returned home from the canyon, I decided that the best preparation for disaster was not plastic sheeting and duct tape. No, I decided that the most sensible thing to do was learn from the rangers and become a person who is useful in emergencies, so I embarked on EMT training, which I completed this summer.

As a volunteer I always consulted ranger mentors or SARshift for critical decisions, but my patients and frightened hikers never saw those authorities. All they saw was me, and I had to face them with confidence and calmness. The gratitude and respect that they returned to me still resonates, and seems out of proportion to my interventions. Like most of us, I don’t usually have to deal with issues of life and safety. But at Cottonwood I did, and it taught me about fear, courage, leadership, and humility, and reset my concept of what’s important in life. Every day I learned more about myself and about the people who choose to take the trails.

Kate Jurow lives in Boston and has been visiting the canyon for more than a decade, including numerous GCFI backpacking trips and two GCFI river trips. She is hoping to work again in the inner canyon this fall as a seasonal backcountry ranger.

Top: Hikers moving along the North Kaibab Trail in Bright Angel Canyon. Photo by Mike Buchheit

A Canyon-Sized Work of Art

by Todd R. Berger

Wider than the wingspan of a California condor and taller than most National Park Service rangers (hat included), Bruce Aiken's colossal painting Shoshone Point is now on display at Grand Canyon Association's Books & More bookstore at Canyon View Information Plaza in Grand Canyon National Park.

The painting's owner, John Thurston of Tusayan, commissioned Aiken to paint the 6-foot by 9-foot work as a tribute to Thurston's late parents. For a time, the painting hung in Thurston's home, but this summer, Thurston offered to allow GCA to

hang the painting in the bookstore so canyon visitors could view Aiken's largest work to date. GCA officially unveiled the painting on June 16, 2003, during a reception at the store.

GCA is making available several reproductions of the painting, including posters, lithographs, limited-edition giclée prints, and postcards. All items are available at GCA bookstores in the park, by mail order at (800) 858-2808, or online at www.grand-canyon.org. The giclée prints must be special-ordered from the artist through GCA. Thurston has requested that any royalties he would normally

receive from sales of products based on the painting be donated to a fund to benefit area schoolteachers, and GCA will honor Thurston's wishes.

Although nothing can compete with the real thing, Aiken's monumental painting comes about as close to mimicking the Grand Canyon as mere humans can. GCA thanks Bruce Aiken and John Thurston for their generosity, and we invite all to come over to Books & More for a look at the work of a master.

Todd R. Berger is the managing editor of the Grand Canyon Association.



Left: Aiken's Shoshone Point at GCA's Books & More store. GCA photo by Todd R. Berger

Above: Artist Bruce Aiken during the unveiling of Shoshone Point at GCA's Books & More store on June 16, 2003. GCA photo by Todd R. Berger

A Contemplative Journey

by Katharine “Katie” Sullivan

“We’re embarking on an inner rim to rim,” creatively stated Eve Watson, participant in Contemplative Journey: Inner and Outer Landscapes. This Grand Canyon Field Institute (GCFI) course, led by Naropa University professors Deborah Bowman and Deb Piranian, and cofacilitated by myself, has become the impetus for a new range of GCFI classes. GCFI has successfully offered field classes that challenge and enrich body and mind for over ten years. Building on that success, GCFI has introduced a number of classes that not only enrich body and mind, but heart and spirit as well.

After introductions, the inaugural 2003 Contemplative Journey class began with each person sharing what they hoped to receive from the course. Responses included “learning about the canyon and myself,” “rest and playful rejuvenation,” “community with others,” “tapping into my creativity,” and “perspective on life and remembering what’s important to me.” Thus began four days of facilitating the pursuit of our participants’ goals. Through walking and sitting meditation, poetry reading and writing, hiking, yoga on the rim, nature sensory and observation activities, naturalist walks, group sharing, and much more, participants had the chance to connect with the canyon and connect with themselves. The course offered many opportunities for both solitude and community, as well as creative expression and exploration in a nonjudgmental and playful atmosphere. Participants had time to

reflect on their lives and to see how nature offers lessons and metaphors for living a balanced life. Creative or artistic expertise wasn’t needed to enjoy this class. It was inspiring to me how the mix of connection with nature, compassionate facilitation, and quiet time brought out the best in each of us.

During a poetry session one participant wrote:

Desert: heat waves roll across
Still, parched land in a white-hot blaze.
Lightning slashes! Rain scours.

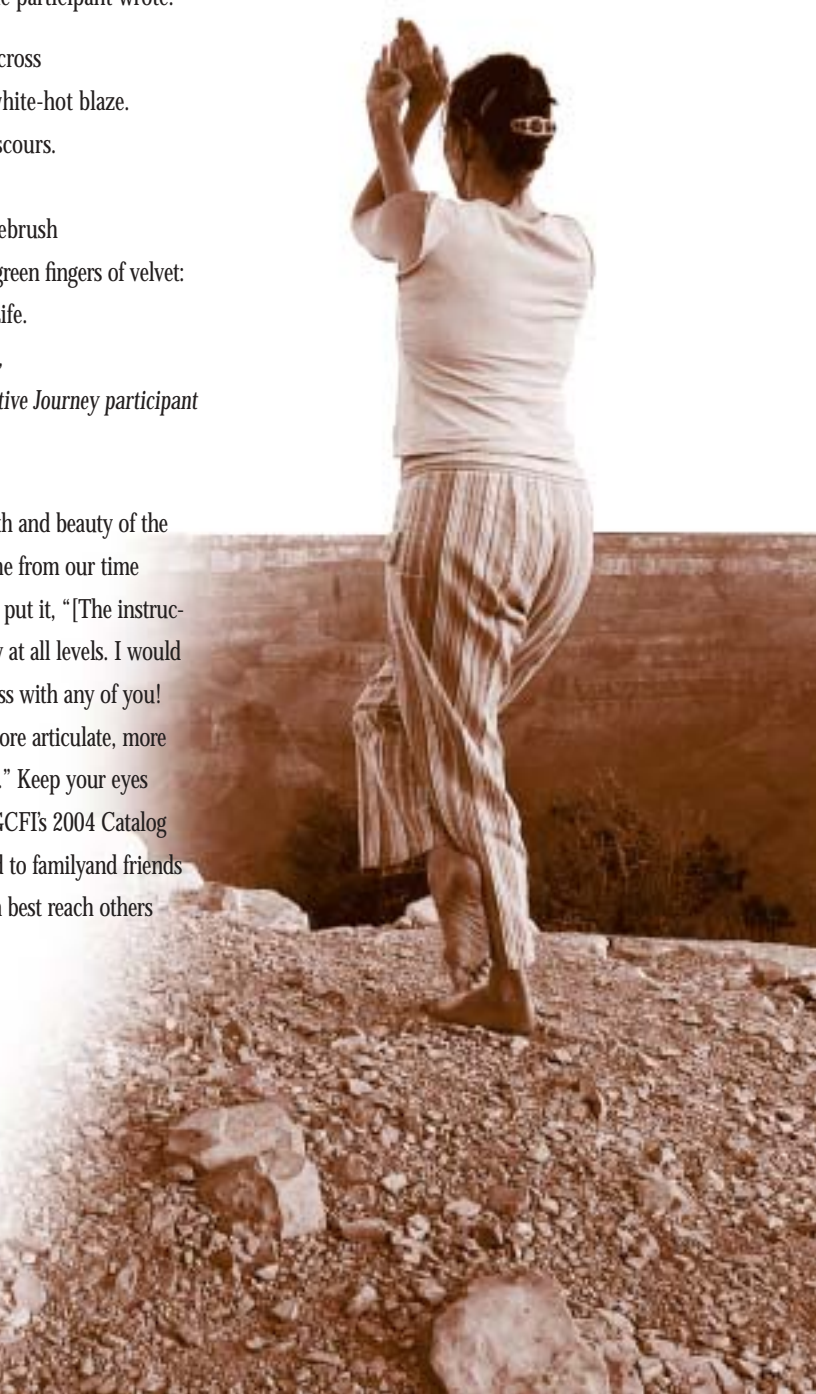
Sharp, spicy scent of sagebrush
Pushed skyward by gray-green fingers of velvet:
Gifts for the Bringer of Life.

*Sharon Williams,
2003 Contemplative Journey participant*

I was awestruck by the depth and beauty of the creative expression that came from our time together. As one participant put it, “[The instructors] created places of safety at all levels. I would go deeper into the wilderness with any of you! Thanks for making us all more articulate, more flexible, and more beautiful.” Keep your eyes open for similar classes in GCFI’s 2004 Catalog of Courses. Spread the word to family and friends and let us know how we can best reach others who may be interested.

Having served as a Grand Canyon park ranger/naturalist for ten years, Katie Sullivan now works as a naturalist/facilitator, writer, and yoga instructor. She offers courses and retreats in Grand Canyon, Flagstaff, and northern California that celebrate nature, creativity, and well-being. Look for her courses in the 2004 GCFI catalog listed under the Creative Arts section.

Contemplative Journey participant Bonnie Platt practicing yoga at Shoshone Point. GCA photo by Todd R. Berger



The Champion Cliffrose?

by Dave Thayer

The cliffrose is one of the most common and beautiful of Grand Canyon National Park's trees and shrubs. Many of us look forward to the springtime flowering of the cliffrose's fragrant, cream-colored blossoms, which cover the plant from April into November. Plumed seeds appear after the flowers. Each flower has five to ten seeds, and each seed has a one-inch silvery-white plume.

Cliffrose is in the rose family (Rosaceae). The scientific name is *Cowania mexicana*. Leaves are 1/2- to 3/4-inch long and deeply divided into three to five narrow lobes. Leaf edges are rolled under. The leaves are glandular, covered with tiny white dots. Usually a twisted shrub with gray to reddish-brown shreddy bark, the ever-green plant occasionally grows to tree size and can grow as high as twenty-five feet, according to Arthur M. Phillips III in his book *Grand Canyon Wildflowers* (Rev. ed.).

The Navajo historically used the bark for baby diapers: It is very absorbent, and, unlike juniper bark, it causes no rash. The Navajo also used the stout branches for arrows.

The Web site www.championtrees.org lists the largest tree in the United States of each species. According to the Web site, the current champion cliffrose is a Nevada specimen. However, the girth (circumference) measurement given for this tree is certainly in error: 196 inches breast high.



The measurement should presumably read either 19 inches or 16 inches, with 16 being the more likely figure. No cliffrose has ever approached 196 inches, or 16 1/3 feet, in girth. The height is given as 12 feet and the spread as 17 feet.

Given this likely error, it is quite possible that Arizona's Grand Canyon has the true champ. A cliffrose on the South Rim has measurements of 33 inches in girth, 18 feet in height, and 18 feet in average spread of branches, considerably larger than the Nevada specimen if one assumes that the listed girth is incorrect. The likely grand champion cliffrose stands close to Mather Point, right beside the road about 100 yards east of the Desert View Drive junction where Arizona 64 takes a sharp turn at a stop sign. It is on the south side of the highway just before the paved turnout, where you can park to see our likely champion up close.

Dave Thayer, also known as Canyon Dave, leads tours of Grand Canyon's geology, scenery, plant life, wildlife, and fossils. He is the author of Checklist of the Wildlife of the Grand Canyon Area: Birds, Mammals, Fish, Amphibians, and Reptiles and A Guide to Grand Canyon Geology along Bright Angel Trail, both published by Grand Canyon Association.

Grand Canyon's champion cliffrose? GCA photo by Todd R. Berger



“There’s Always More That You Can Do”

by Todd R. Berger

“There are times when I feel like taking pictures is a really silly way to spend one’s life,” professional photographer Gary Ladd, renowned for his color-saturated images of Grand Canyon and Lake Powell, told me this summer. “But on the other hand, I can’t really find any other way to spend one’s life that is significantly better. [And making my living in photography] did allow me to spend a lot of time in places that I really enjoy. I really connect with the canyons of the Southwest.”

The humble yet immensely talented Ladd has been focusing his lens on the canyons of the Southwest for thirty-three years; he has logged some 75 backpacking trips and 25 river trips in Grand Canyon during his photographic explorations. He learned his craft by trial and error, and he describes himself as a “slow learner,” but you only need to pick up one of his books or see an exhibit of his work to know that regardless of how he learned to photograph the Grand Canyon, Ladd has mastered the art.

“The best images come out of putting in extra work,” Ladd said. “If I’m lazy, I’m not going to hang around for an extra hour [when] I know the light will be better. . . . or I won’t come back to a good spot. . . . I won’t do whatever it takes to make that image better. There’s always more that you can do.”

Ladd is fascinated by the geometric shapes of the land in the Southwest, including “the shade that

comes from the cliffs, and the way that the light reflecting off them changes.” And unlike most of us, he can capture on film those shapes and shades that so fascinate him. He said simply, “I’m looking for the best images I can come up with.” What he can come up with is extraordinary.

Given the hundreds of days Ladd has spent in the canyon and the dangers of the wilderness he has chosen for his favored subject matter—most notably the harshness of the canyon’s climate, the hazards of rapids and rockfalls, and the multiple opportunities for a full-fledged freefall from some canyon height—it is surprising that Ladd or his co-travelers have never suffered significant misfortune in the canyon. “We make frequent trips into really remote, rugged sections of the canyon,” he said. “And I think of all of the people who went on those trips and all of the footfalls, all of the loose rocks we walked across, all of the rappels, all of the climbs. . . . There were millions, literally millions, of potential ankle sprains, or something worse. And virtually nothing happened. I don’t know how to account for that . . . maybe somebody was just watching out for me.” However, he added, “I’m going to give myself a little credit and just say I’m smart about the canyon. I know the place really well and I know [how to travel in the canyon] without being injured.”

But what about his wood-and-canvas 4x5 camera and the associated equipment he carries with him? Surely his presumably delicate camera equipment has taken a beating during a canyon scramble or a dunk during a river trip? “I’ve been

lucky,” he said. “I’ve banged it up, it’s blown over, it’s fallen a couple of times. But I’ll tell you, those cameras are [much tougher and simpler than modern 35mm cameras]. If the camera falls over, well, you kind of push it back into shape, you patch up the tear in the bellows, and you’re back running again in 15 minutes. With a 35mm camera, you’re mostly out of luck.”

Ladd, who is based in Page, Arizona, has had his work featured in numerous publications, including *Life* and *Arizona Highways* magazines. He is the photographer for the books *Grand Canyon: Time Below the Rim* (see back page), *Along the Rim: A Guide to Grand Canyon’s South Rim from Hermit’s Rest to Desert View* (published by Grand Canyon Association), and the soon-to-be-published *Gary Ladd’s Canyon Light*. Ladd’s images of the inner canyon and surrounding wilderness areas were on display this summer at Kolb Studio in a GCA-sponsored exhibition.

Todd R. Berger is the managing editor of the Grand Canyon Association.



Top, left: One of Gary Ladd’s 4x5 cameras. GCA photo by Todd R. Berger

Above: Photographer Gary Ladd takes a break during an August booksigning at GCA’s Books & More store. GCA photo by Todd R. Berger

A View from the Bottom

by Brad L. Wallis



Looking up toward the rim, five thousand feet of rock unfolds before my gaze. Humans inserted into this landscape are minuscule compared to the massive landforms that surround me. It has been eleven months since I accepted the position of executive director for the Grand Canyon Association. Finally, I stand on the banks of the mighty Colorado River and view Grand Canyon from the bottom looking up, the world inverted.

To me, the Colorado River has always represented the lifeblood of this beautiful part of the world. It is symbolic of the threads of life that join everyone and everything on the Colorado Plateau. My life, my concept of home, are intertwined with this river and the lands that feed it.

The Colorado River is not always as big and powerful as it is at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. I have been to what many westerners consider the headwaters of this river, to a place where I could cup my hand and divert its flow, where it is

crystal clear and ice cold, a mere trickle of water headed north out of the Wind River Range in Wyoming. I was fascinated that this river began its journey heading north, away from Grand Canyon. A few miles downstream it skirts the northern flank of this range and slowly turns in a giant U and heads south, a course that it will never turn away from again, despite tremendous obstacles in its path. At this place, it is called the Green River; here, it will alternate between placid undulating curves and tremendous rapids as it carves its way through mountains and valleys heading for the sea.

Life here at the bottom of Grand Canyon clings to water, ribbons of green in what otherwise would be an expanse of barren rock. It is the same in much of the land this river drains, vast tracts of earth, punctuated with strands of life where the water flows. Ninety percent of all native life-forms on the Colorado Plateau live

within a few hundred yards of this river or its tributaries. Water is life on the Colorado Plateau.

The inner-canyon environment is extreme, rock and sky being the main components, with generous amounts of heat thrown into the mix. Here, the bones of the earth are laid bare; igneous rock almost two billion years old shows its face. The concept of deep time is somehow easier to contemplate in this setting. If the earth had a desire to communicate the relative insignificance of humankind, this would be a great location to do it.

I find it an honor to be charged with leading an organization that exists to educate people as to the uniqueness of this place. The canyon has much to teach, if we have but the wisdom and ears to hear.

Brad L. Wallis is the executive director of the Grand Canyon Association.

Your Member Dollars at Work

GCA and Park Activities Since the Last Edition of Canyon Views

June 20: Photographer Gary Ladd and authors Craig Childs and Michael F. Anderson signed copies of their work at GCA's Books & More store at Canyon View Information Plaza. Ladd returned to sign more books and posters on July 17, and August 21.

July 3: Chief Financial Officer Debbie Picard left GCA to accept a position in New Mexico. We at GCA wish Debbie all the best.

July 31: GCA experienced its best sales month in the history of the association. We are profoundly

grateful to the thousands of members and other visitors who made this possible.

August 7-10: Supported by a grant from the Arizona Humanities Council, GCA sponsored North Rim Heritage Days, an annual celebration of the connections between native peoples and Grand Canyon. Events included cultural demonstrations, nature and rim walks, and archeology discussions.

August 16: Biologists from Grand Canyon National Park and the Peregrine Fund visually

confirmed the existence of a California condor nestling in the park. This is the first confirmation of a California condor born in the wild in Arizona in at least eighty years.

August 25: GCA welcomed John Pearson, our new chief financial officer. John worked for Southwest Parks and Monuments Association (now Western National Parks Association) for many years and brings a wealth of nonprofit experience to GCA.

Calendar

September 5-20: Grand Canyon Music Festival. Come hear folk, jazz, country, pop, and classical music at one of the most beautiful places on earth. Call (800) 997-8285 or check out www.grandcanyonmusicfest.org for more information.

September 13-14: Members' Gathering. Look for a full report in the Winter 2003 issue of *Canyon Views* (to be mailed in December 2003).

September 20: Prescott Book Festival. At Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott. GCA will exhibit publications and have staff on hand.

September 26: GCA Author Wendell Duffield at the Flagstaff Festival of Science. Speaking at NAU's Ardrey Auditorium, the author of *Volcanoes of Northern Arizona* will be the keynote speaker for the festival.

October 11: Opening of "These Rare Lands" Exhibit at Kolb Studio. Featuring the photography of Stan Jorstad. Runs through December 7.

October 15: Approximate closing of North Rim, including GCAs North Rim bookstore.

A Look Ahead: Upcoming Fall/Winter GCFI Classes

October 19-23: On the Trails of Bill Bass; *Member price: \$340*

November 1-5: Boucher to Hermit Natural History Backpack; *Member price: \$350*

November 6-9: Toroweap Exploration; *Member price: \$285*

January 5-9, 2004: Hermit to Bright Angel Winter Ecology Backpack; *Member price: \$300*

Call (866) 471-4435 or visit GCFI on the Web at www.grandcanyon.org/fieldinstitute for more information or to enroll.

Give Grand Canyon for the Holidays

Long- and Short-Sleeve California Condor T-Shirts

Celebrate the condors' historic second coming with our new Welcome Back! California Condor T-Shirt, now available in long sleeve as well as short sleeve. 100% cotton. Long-sleeve sizes S, M, L, XL (*Member price: \$17.81 plus S & H*), and XXL (*Member price: \$18.66 plus S & H*). Short-sleeve sizes S, M, L, XL (*Member price: \$14.40 plus S & H*), and XXL (*Member price: \$15.26 plus S & H*)

Grand Canyon: Time Below the Rim

Photographer Gary Ladd (see page 6) and author Craig Childs teamed up to produce the single-most extraordinary book on the inner canyon available. The large-format coffee-table book includes more than 170 photographs of the Grand Canyon by Ladd accompanied by evocative natural-history essays by Childs. Hardcover, 10 x 13, 192 pages. *Member price: \$41.61*

Holiday Greeting and Winter Splendor Notecards

Grand Canyon Association's Holiday Greeting Notecards include four different winter scenes (three of each in a set of twelve) with four different nonsectarian greetings. The all-new Winter Splendor notecards, blank on the inside with six different Grand Canyon winter scenics (two of each in a set of twelve) are also available. Tell those you love how much you care about the canyon with these lovely holiday notecards. *Member price (per set of twelve): \$8.46 plus S & H*

To order or for more information, call (800) 858-2808 or log on to www.grandcanyon.org



Canyon Views is published quarterly by the Grand Canyon Association to inform members of association and park activities, as well as of topics related to these activities. Please feel free to suggest subjects of interest and information you would like to see in *Canyon Views*. Address all editorial correspondence to Todd R. Berger, Managing Editor.

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