Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve
Field Guide

PRESERVE
Vistoso™

Friends of
Vistoso Trails
Nature Preserve

Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve

In June 2018, Vistoso Golf Course went out of business, leaving behind 208 acres of intact Sonoran Desert amidst greens, fairways, golf cart pathways, and other course features. **Preserve Vistoso** was established in 2019 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated to the preservation of the land. After more than two years of community engagement, fundraising, and a partnership with The Conservation Fund, Preserve Vistoso **achieved its goal**. The former golf course was purchased and a conservation easement was implemented in early 2022.

The **Preserve Vistoso Board of Directors** (led by **President Gayle Mateer**), **The Conservation Fund** (with leadership from **Mike Ford**, The Conservation Fund's Southwest Director), and the **Oro Valley Town Council** (with leadership from **Mayor Joe Winfield**) all played crucial roles in this process. After an extensive clean-up and fire risk mitigation, the land was transferred to the Town of Oro Valley in July 2022 and is now open to the public under its new name, **Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve**.

The Field Guide

This field guide is not intended to be comprehensive. The data within is based primarily on observations from **iNaturalist**, a web-based tool for observing and identifying wild organisms. **The most common and most remarkable species** found within the preserve are represented here. Those who spend a great deal of time in the preserve are sure to see more than is pictured in this book. An appendix follows with a more extensive (and growing) list of species found in this remarkable natural setting.

Photography

All photos in this guide were taken either in **Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve** or in close proximity to it. Most of the photos are the author's, but special credit is due to Oro Valley-based photographers **Eliseu Cavalcante** and **Gordy Parkhill** for their assistance in documenting the biodiversity of the preserve and for the inclusion of their photographs.

Author's Note

I live just a block from one of the entrances to Vistoso Trails, and I am in the preserve on my bicycle almost daily, often with my children, **Kip** and **Bell**. The existence of the preserve has been an immensely positive factor in my life and for my family. We love nature and the preserve allows us to experience the best of the Sonoran Desert safely and conveniently. It is a true luxury and a privilege to have Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve so close to home here in Oro Valley.

I am deeply grateful to my wife **Emilia** for giving me the gift of time. Without that, I would never have been able to do any of this. I also very much appreciate the help of my friend **Andy Hogan**, a docent at Tohono Chul and Sabino Canyon, who has guided me and taught me much along the way. Andy's spouse **Joanne Hogan**, a fellow docent, assisted with editing the text. Thank you!

Jake Smith, Oro Valley
February 2024

How You Can Help

First and foremost, take care of the preserve! **The ecosystem is still recovering —** and will be recovering for decades. Avoid damaging plants or other life in the preserve. Don't litter. Please pick up any litter you see. Keep dogs leashed. Obey all posted preserve rules. If you would like to contribute to documenting the wildlife found in the preserve, we encourage you to join iNaturalist at inaturalist.org/. It is free of charge and benefits science and conservation efforts. It's also a lot of fun!

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Town of Oro Valley
Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve

Temporary Map – Summer/Fall 2022
More info at www.orovalleyaz.gov

OV ORO VALLEY ARIZONA

Legend
- Temporary trailhead
- Walking/biking paths
- Underpass

DETAIL AREA
ORO VALLEY
TUCSON
10
19
77
86
10

Stonegate

Richmond at Vistoso Highlands

W Vistoso Highlands Dr

N Hidden Springs Dr

Vistoso Resort Casitas

N Hidden Springs Dr

Hyatt Worldmark

Vistoso Highlands

Golf Casitas I

Golf Casitas II

W Pebble Creek Dr

Stone Terrace

W Desert Fairway Dr

W Vistoso Highlands Dr

Vistoso Highlands

The Pinnacle @CPV

Summit North @CPV

Centerpointe Vistoso (CPV) Clubhouse and Pool

W Pebble Creek Dr

Summit South @CPV

Stone Canyon

Stone Village

Desert Crest II @CPV

Bella Vista

W Vistoso Highlands Dr

Fairfield Rancho Vistoso

Desert Crest I @CPV

N La Cañada Dr

The Cove @CPV

Stone Canyon

Siena

Cortona

Monticello

Stonefield

Sommerset Canyon

Torreno

W Desert Fairway Dr

Rancho Vistos Blvd

N
E
S
W

Using the Guide

At the start of each section you will find a list of pictured species and the page numbers on which they occur. Then within each section species are very roughly arranged in terms of how common they are, with some additional grouping also used. For example, in the reptiles section, snakes are grouped with snakes (from most common snake to least common snake). Plants and insects are organized alphabetically by scientific name. For more information on any given species, click on its common name in the notes box. You will be directed to the species' Wikipedia page or similar.

An appendix can be found at the end of the field guide with a comprehensive and growing list of all species sighted in the preserve. The scientific names listed there are hyperlinked to iNaturalist observations of the species at Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Care has been taken to choose photos representative of each species, but note that there is often **significant variability and sexual dimorphism** within a species. This cannot be fully accounted for within the scope of this guidebook.

Each species pictured in the guide has a small block of notes accompanying it. One of the categories of notes is **Sightings**. This is intended to convey the relative frequency with which a species is observed. This exists for most animals, but not for insects, plants, or fungi . These are the rough definitions for the **Sightings** notes:

Abundant: A preserve user will almost certainly see one or more of these animals every time they use the preserve (walking or riding at least 2-3 miles).

Common: A preserve user will almost certainly see one or more of these animals 1-3 times a week assuming they use the preserve most days (walking or riding at least 2-3 miles each time).

Occasional: A preserve user will likely see one or more of these animals once or twice a month assuming they use the preserve most days (walking or riding at least 2-3 miles each time).

Uncommon: Sightings are few and far between at best and difficult to predict.

If **Seasonal** accompanies any of these labels, it indicates the animal is present in the preserve (or visible in the preserve) only at certain times of the year. In those cases the definition applies only at that time. These definitions are very rough and intended as guidelines only. Luck and time spent outdoors are often the most important factors in spotting wildlife!