Meet the Monument

Meet the Monument is an event that introduces the Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM) to the public. The Friends of Ironwood Forest realize that there are many people who have no idea what the National Monument is, or where it is located. Meet The Monument is designed to get people out on the ground and introduce the Monument and its unique, undeveloped beauty to the community.

The Friends of Ironwood Forest work closely with the Bureau for Land Management to design an event to bring people out to the desert, give them several options to experience the Monument first hand, and introduce them to the Friends group that is committed to preserving and protecting this special place. The day is structured to be a learning experience, not a festival. There are no vendors, just presenters and information. To ensure security, the BLM sweeps the area a few days prior to the event.

Created by Presidential Proclamation in 2000, the Ironwood Forest National Monument was designated to protect the rare Nichols Turks Head cactus, the last remaining native herd of Big Horn Sheep in the Tucson Basin, the abundance of the Desert Tortoise, and the largest stand of Ironwood Trees in North America. The Monument is designed to protect these species, and the natural processes that sustain them. The IFNM also protects a wide variety of archaeological sites, dating back as long as 5,000 years ago. Meet The Monument activities are designed to give participants information on the desert flora, fauna, and natural history specific to the IFNM and get them outside to enjoy this national treasure in our backyard.

Saturday, November 16, 2013 will be the third annual Meet The Monument event. This year former and current faculty members from the UofA and other local experts will cover the botany/fauna/birds/insects etc of the Monument, then lead short walkabouts into the desert to illustrate what they have just talked about. A National Geographic photographer will lead two hikes and provide instruction on how to photograph the desert.  Hike leaders from the UofA Ramblers and two local Marana Hiking Clubs coupled with naturalists to point out local plants of interest will lead 8k and 5k hikes into the desert.  A former Board member and retired herpetologist from U of Nebraska and a volunteer educational ranger at Saguaro NP West will lead a natural history hike up the wash behind the event site for those not inclined to a longer walking challenge.  The Tucson Herpetological Society will be on hand to discuss and display Gila Monsters, snakes, and lizards to illustrate these populations. The Archaeologists who did the original cultural survey of the Monument will discuss the pre-history of the area and display artifacts from some of the local archaeological sites. And this year the event will be closed with a Yoeme (Pasqua Yaqui) Deer Dance ceremonial beginning around 2:00 pm.

Meet The Monument is from 8 am to 3 pm at the base of Ragged Top peak. Participants should dress for the weather as all the activities take place outside. Please bring your camp chairs, water bottles, and lunch. The Friends provide extra water and port-a-potties on site. More information is available at ironwoodforest.org