

## Meet the Monument 2017

### Friends of Ironwood Forest

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 are not yet familiar with the National Monument, or its location. The MTM event is designed to get people out on site, and introduce the Monument's 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 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; it features presentations, information, and hikes.

Created by Presidential Proclamation in 2000, the Ironwood Forest National Monument was designated to protect the rare Nichol's Turk's Head Cactus, the most significant 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 more than 10,000 years. 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 to experience this national treasure.

Saturday, March 18<sup>th</sup> will be the 6th Meet the Monument event. This year former and current faculty members from the University of Arizona 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 presented. A National Geographic photographer will lead two hikes and provide instruction on how to photograph the desert. This event will also feature an authority on the historic Titan Missile program, and its interaction with the area within the Monument. 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.

The nature and photo walks will be held on gentle, flat terrain – suitable for almost every adventurer. The longer 8K hike will be for those with the experience and gear for The Monument's more challenging desert terrain.

Meet the Monument will be held from 8 am to 2 pm, at the base of Ragged Top peak. All activities take place outside – please wear clothing and footwear appropriate for the day's weather and activities, and bring drinking water and a lunch. The Friends of Ironwood Forest will provide extra water and port-a-potties on site. More information is available at [ironwoodforest.org](http://ironwoodforest.org)