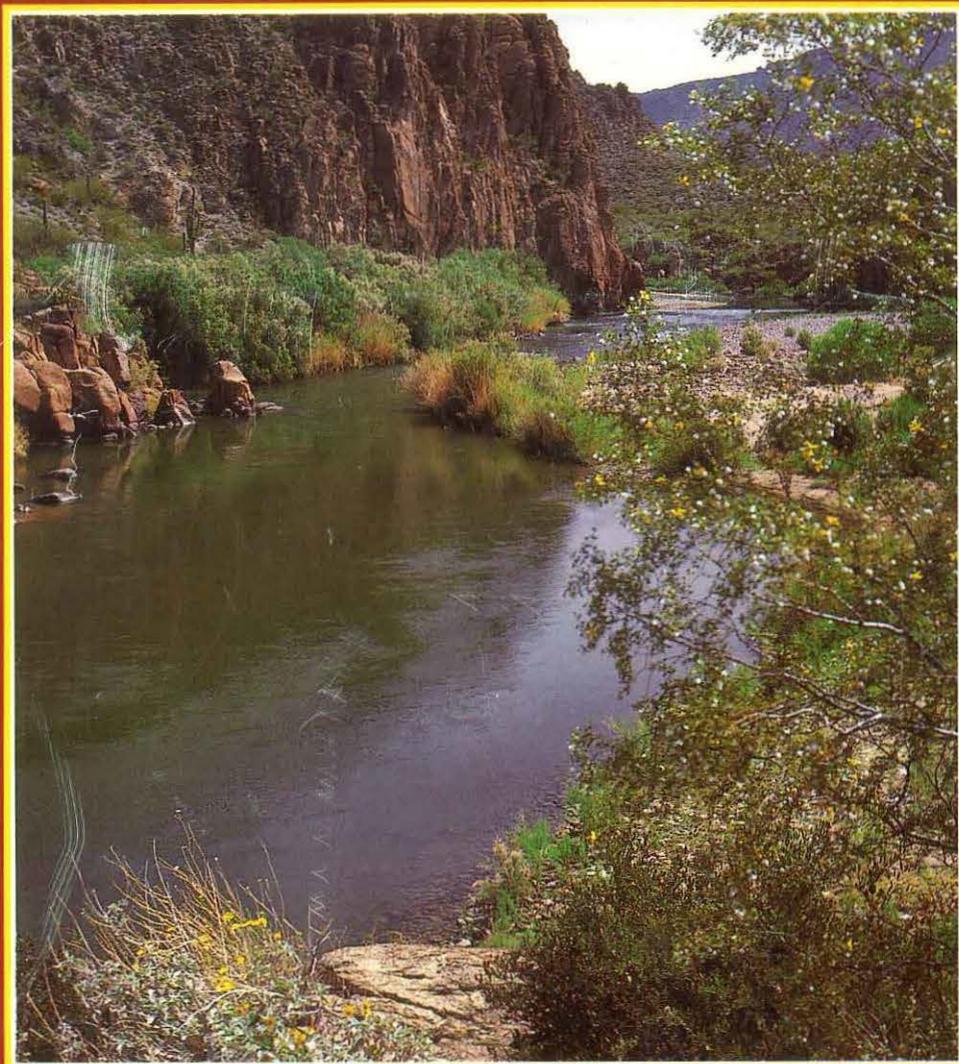


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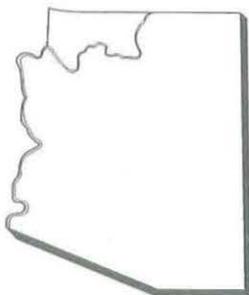
A R I Z O N A

Rivers and Streams

GUIDE



Arizona Rivers and Streams Guide



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GILA RIVER — US 666 Bridge to Bonita Creek

LENGTH: 24 miles

SEASON: Mid- February — April

ACCESS: Paved road, dirt road

ELEVATION: 3475' -3130'

FEATURES: Scenic canyon, rare hawks, boatable stream

CAUTIONS: Short season, fences, private property

MAPS: USGS - York, Guthrie, Gila Box

USBLM - Safford District

This stretch is best known for its dramatic scenery and the rich wildlife community it supports. Downstream of US 666, cliffs rise so abruptly along the river's edge that they form a gorge called the 'Gila Box.' The Box is a popular stretch with river runners. Most years it has a rafting season, albeit a short one. Low water boaters are extending this season.

Though the canyon is dramatic, the river within it has only a few mild rapids. Boaters with less developed skills and less specialized equipment routinely make this run. It's also a good place to see hawks and eagles — strays from Eagle Creek which hosts one of the most diverse raptor communities in the Southwest. Because of its remote character, impressive scenery, and unique wildlife, the Gila Box has been nominated as a wilderness area and has been recommended for study as a possible National Park. If you can't boat it, wait until it's low and hike it — it's worth the trip.

ACCESS: Upper: Driving north into Clifton on US 666 the road splits into four lanes. After the four lanes merge into two the Old Safford Hwy branches to the west and leads to an old bridge. Lower: Drive 7 miles west out of Safford on US 70, north on the San Jose Road 6 miles, then east on the City of Safford Utility Road and down Bonita Creek Road.

jeopardy, or candidates for those designations have been identified here — threatened Mexican black hawks, endangered peregrine falcons, threatened spokedace and loach minnow. Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep have spread into the area from New Mexico.

FACILITIES: Some primitive campsites at the Old Safford Hwy Bridge and along Bonita Creek. Limited facilities in nearby towns.

CAUTIONS: At low water two fences can be life threatening obstacles just below the put-in. Private property borders the river at some spots. It should be avoided.

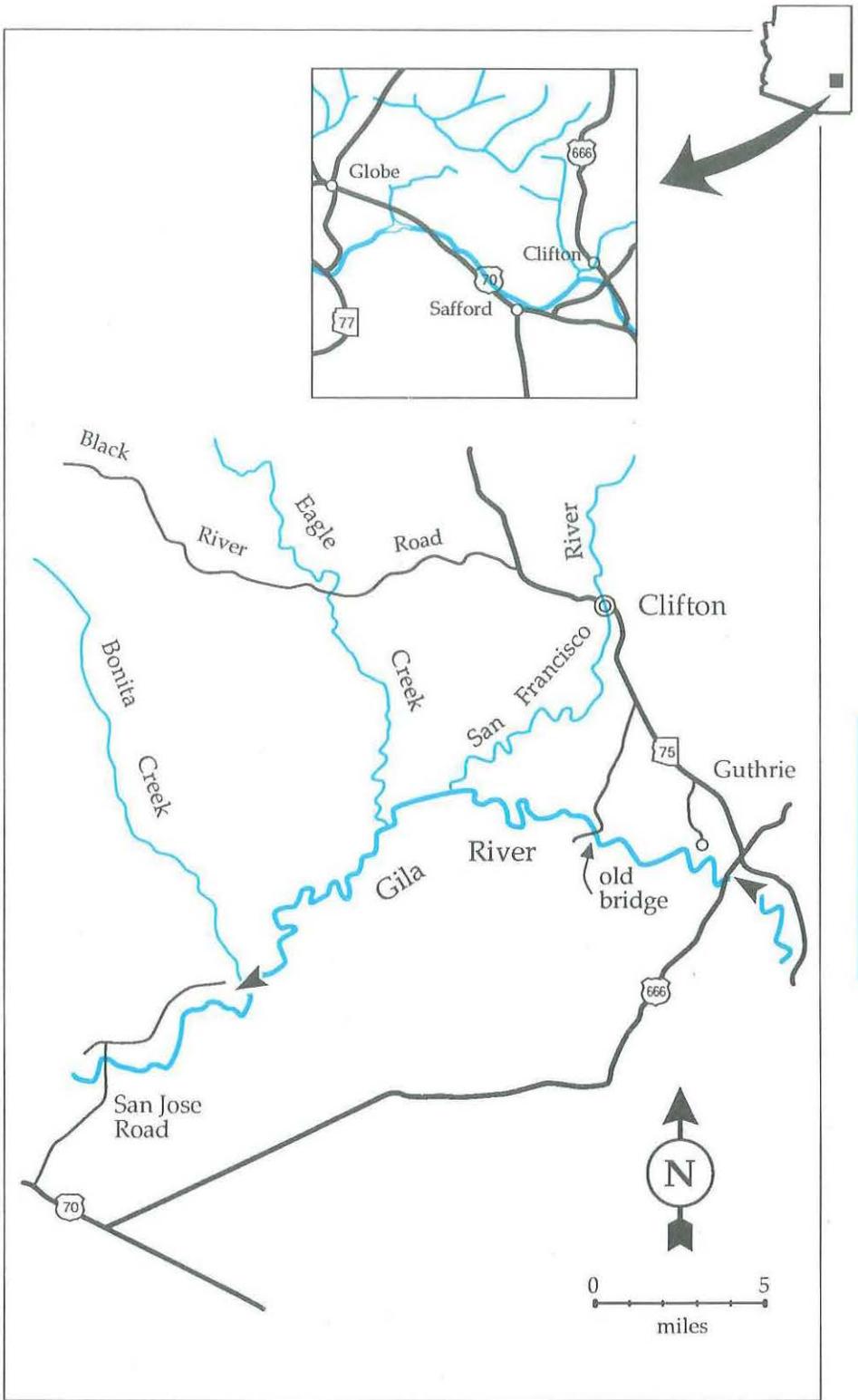
WILDLIFE: Some 14 species listed as threatened, endangered, in

INFORMATION: US BLM, Safford District Office.

USES:



Class I-II



GILA RIVER — US 666 Bridge to Bonita Creek 109



GILA RIVER — Coolidge Dam to Winkelman

LENGTH: 10 miles

SEASON: Perennial flow

ACCESS: Dirt road, paved road

ELEVATION: 2350' - 1900'

FEATURES: Wild canyon, desert river

CAUTIONS: Lethal logjams, cold water, remoteness, strainers, hot summer heat

MAPS: USGS - Christmas, Hayden, Winkelman

USBLM/BIA - BLM, Phoenix District; San Carlos Apache Reserv.

Gila River boating offers a way to enjoy a ten-mile section of Gila River upstream from Winkelman. This float has gentle rapids, except during flooding periods. Canoes, kayaks, and small rafts can do the river in two to three hours, depending on put-in, flow, and winds. Trees and other hazards make tubing and boating dangerous.

The Gila flows all summer due to releases from Coolidge Dam. The boating season lasts about March to August. Put-in points may require high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicles. No permit is needed if you start near Christmas on BLM land for a six-mile trip. If you have a state recreation permit, you can put in near Dripping Springs for a ten-mile run.

ACCESS: From Globe take Hwy 77, 25 miles south to Dripping Springs. Take-out is normally at the park in Winkelman. (Needles Eye Wilderness farther upstream has no public land or river access.) Several companies offer raft trips. Contact Tucson BLM for a complete list of Outfitters. Permits are required.

FACILITIES: There is a developed campground off Rt 3 on San Carlos Lake (reservation permit required). Gas, groceries and permits are available at the San Carlos Marina. Other facilities in Peridot and Globe.

WILDLIFE: There is a herd of elk that was stranded years ago while

being transported to the mountains to replenish hunted-out herds. They are referred to as Arizona's desert elk because they live at a lower elevation than any others in the state. Other animals include javelina, mule deer, eagles and osprey.

CAUTIONS: Numerous log-jams and strainers make this stream extremely dangerous - life threatening. Because of its remoteness rescue is sometimes impossible. This is not a boating or tubing area.

INFORMATION: USBLM, Tucson Field Office; San Carlos Apache Indian Res; Gila County SO, Hayden

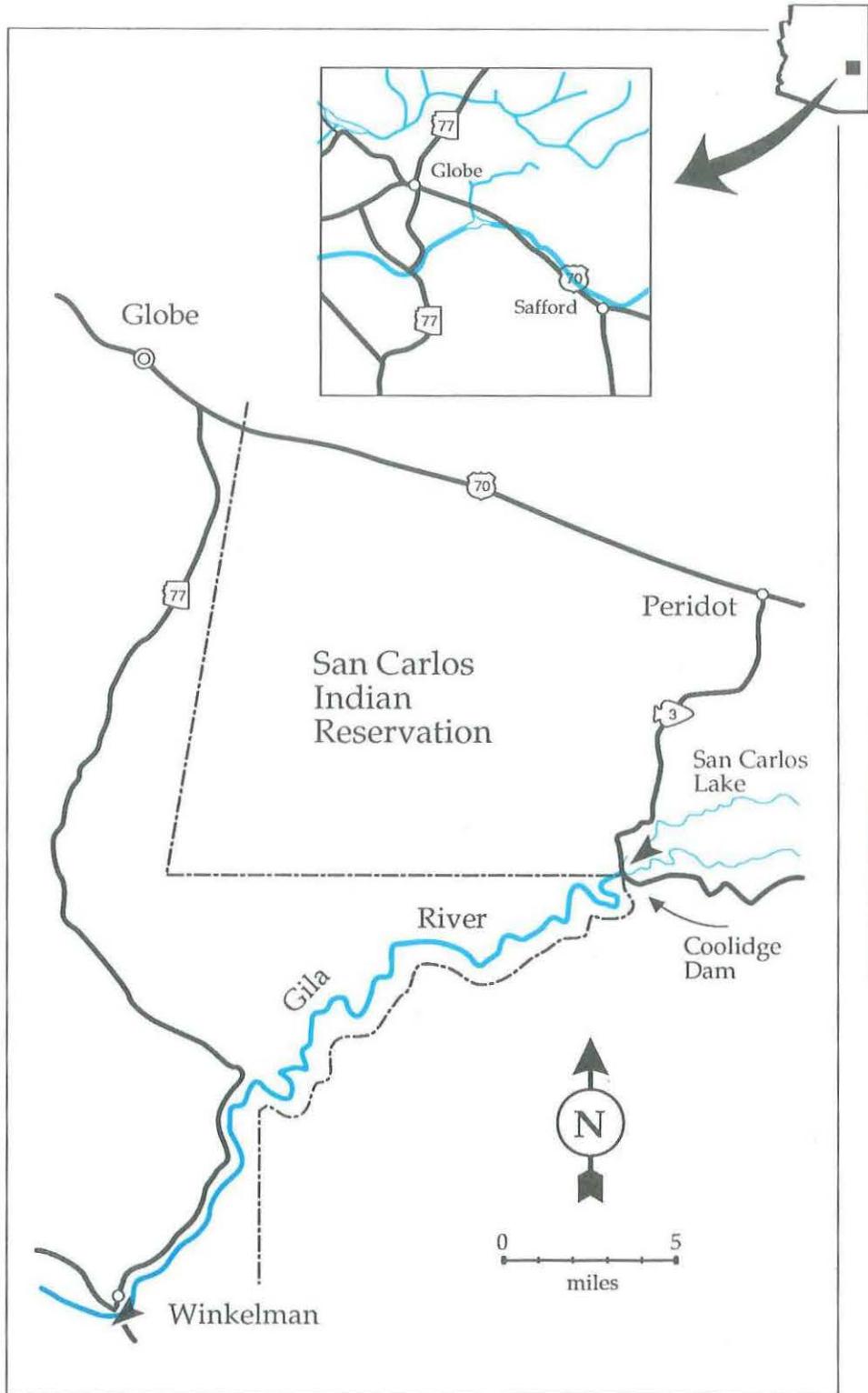
USES:



warm

fee

eagles



East



GILA RIVER — Kelvin to Ashurst-Hayden Dam

LENGTH: 19 miles

SEASON: May-September

ACCESS: Paved road

ELEVATION: 1750' - 1575'

FEATURES: Extreme remoteness, flowing water

CAUTIONS: Lethal log-jams, cold water, extreme remoteness

MAPS: USGS - Kearny, Grayback, North Butte

USBLM - Tucson Field Office

Below Kelvin, the Gila River loses some of the nastiness that characterizes it between Coolidge Dam and Winkelman. There are still logjams and branches stretched over the water, but they're not as common nor as dangerous as upstream. The drive to Kelvin, past mile after mile of copper mines and tailings piles, certainly doesn't promise much scenic beauty, but on the river all that changes. The riparian area is extremely lush, full of cottonwoods, willows and mesquite, reminding some people of tropical rivers. Back from the stream are rolling hills covered with the cactuses and scrub of the Sonoran Desert.

Boaters who have run this stretch recommend using small inflatables instead of canoes because of the former's tendency to bend around limbs and snags rather than break. If you've got time to fish in between dodging limbs and spotting birds, there are some catfish and bass.

ACCESS: Upper: Drive south out of Superior 17 miles on AZ 177 and turn east toward Kelvin. The road leads to a bridge across the river.

Lower: Drive south and west out of Kelvin on the old Florence highway. About 14 miles out of town the road passes some large boulders on the north side. Turn north on a graded road here and follow the main route of travel about 6 miles to the river.

FACILITIES: There is a developed campground east of Superior along US 60 at Oak Flat. Cochran has primitive campsites along the stream at the take out.

WILDLIFE: Boaters report seeing great horned owls. Songbirds are plentiful in the riparian canopy during spring and summer. Redtailed and Harris' hawks soar above.

CAUTIONS: Watch out for logjams and strainers. Releases from Coolidge Dam are sometimes erratic. During winter the river can be very low as water is stored behind the dam for the summer irrigation season.

INFORMATION: USBLM Tucson Field Office; Pinal County Sheriff's Office, Florence

USES:

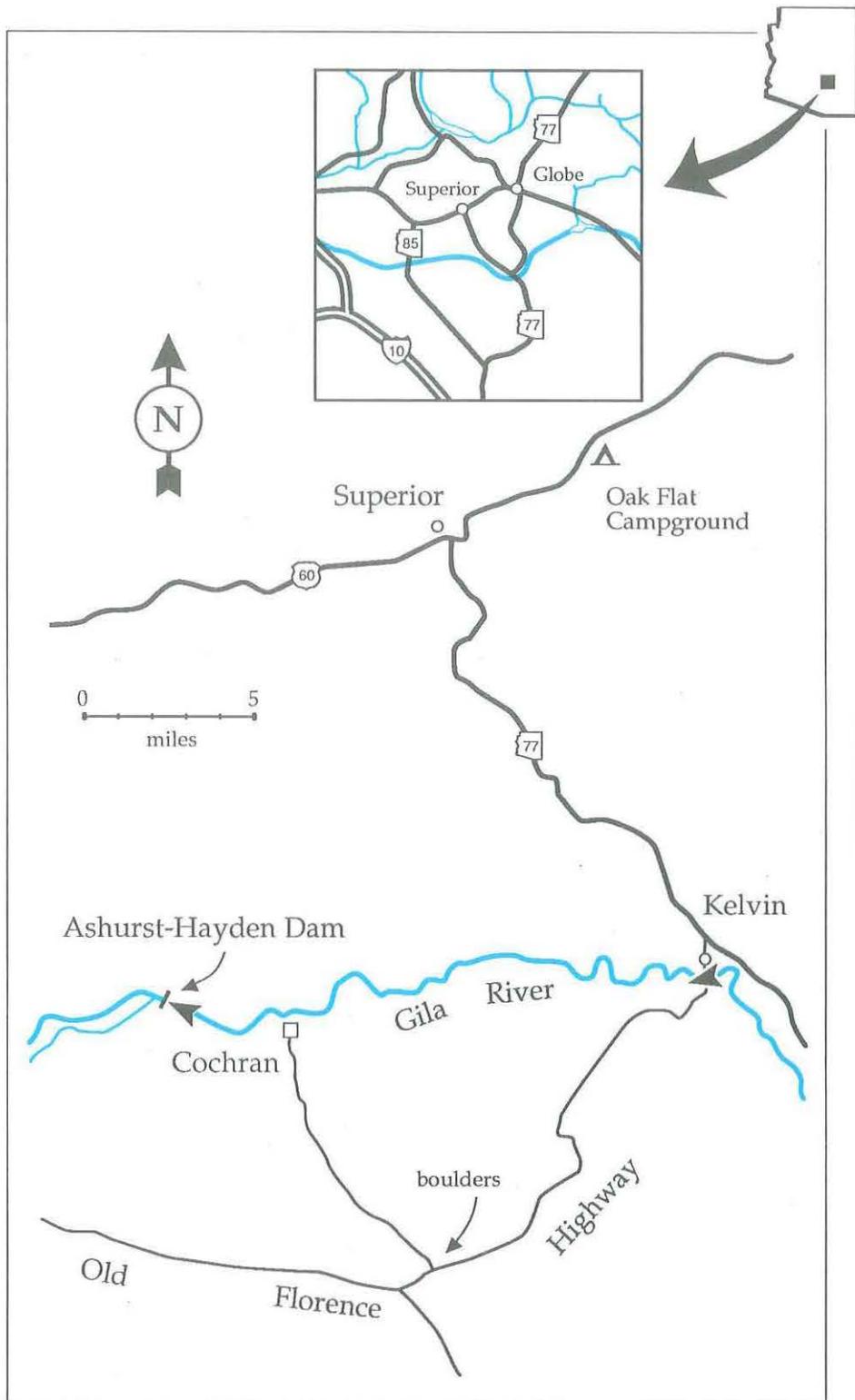


Class I & II



warm





East