

# Friends of the Desert

Issue 45 Fall 2013

1998-2013: Celebrating 15 Years as a Strong Voice for People and Wildlife

## Birders Mean Business! Arizona's Watchable Wildlife Worth \$1.4 Billion Per Year

by Erin Olmstead, Development Manager, Tucson Audubon Society

### The Call of the Wild

Recent studies show that birdwatching is among the nation's most popular recreational activities, and growing. Why birding? Ask the **47+ million birdwatchers in America** why they love birds, and you'll likely get a range of replies as diverse as the birds themselves.

With colors and songs that can stop you in your tracks (just about anywhere), equally colorful and evocative names, and life stories replete with amazing feats of speed and stamina, not to mention the power of flight, birds are an exciting gateway to the natural world, right outside your door!

A new economic impact analysis suggests that Arizonans now have a billion more reasons to appreciate birds and wildlife.

### Quantity & Quality

Arizona's unique combination of geography and climate supports a whopping 400+ bird species — that's about half the total of all the bird species that can be found in the U.S. and Canada, in just 1% of the land area! Diverse and distinctive, Arizona's birdlife features many species found nowhere else this side of the border, virtually guaranteeing a slot on many a 'birding bucket list.' Combine all this with our rich cultural heritage, first-class destination services, and a plethora of unique wildlife experiences accessible from Tucson and it's no wonder we're recognized

as one of the top birding and nature destinations in the country, attracting ecotourists from all over the world.

### Survey Says... "Birders Mean Business!"

BIG business. You might be surprised to learn that Watchable Wildlife recreation in Arizona has a larger economic impact than hunting,

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Watchable wildlife activities, including observing, photographing, or feeding wildlife, contributed \$1.4 billion to Arizona's economy in 2011! Photo courtesy Tucson Audubon Society



## Who We Are

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection works daily to create a community where:

- 🌿 Ecosystem health is important;
- 🌿 Nature and healthy wild animal populations are valued;
- 🌿 Residents, visitors, and future generations can all drink clean water, breathe clean air, and find wild places to roam.

In 1997, the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl received protection under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). This spurred dozens of conservation and neighborhood groups to come together to form the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection (Coalition) in February of 1998. Since then, the Coalition has advocated for the development and implementation of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, with the goal of protecting our region's natural resources and biological diversity. The Coalition is a leader in local planning processes and conservation efforts.

The Coalition is currently comprised of 41 member groups. These groups represent well over 30,000 members. The Coalition staff works on a grassroots level with thousands of direct supporters. The Coalition has non-profit 501(c)3 status through the fiscal sponsorship of Coalition member group Sky Island Alliance, and is able to operate through donations from individuals and support from a variety of foundations.

**The Coalition's wide array of outreach, education, advocacy, grassroots activism, and conservation planning activities are focused on achieving consensus between all stakeholder groups, demonstrating overwhelming community support for regional conservation planning to ensure that our Sonoran Desert remains whole and viable for current and future generations to enjoy.**

**Learn more about the Coalition and how you can help support our efforts at [www.sonorandesert.org](http://www.sonorandesert.org)**

## Carolyn's Corner

For 15 years, the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection has led efforts to ensure that Tucson doesn't become another Phoenix. While that sentiment seems a bit cliché, it captures the nature of our work well. We value our Sonoran Desert, our mountain lions and pygmy-owls, our urban waterways, our native plants.



When a developer wants to raze a pristine piece of desert, he calls us. When Pima County wants to adopt new policies or ordinances regarding natural resources, they talk with us first. **We are the desert's defenders, and proud of it.**

This year, we celebrate our 15th Anniversary. As 2013 comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on the 15 years that the Coalition has been a force in our community. The work we have accomplished has, I believe, had a profound effect. Many of our conservation partners have a broad and multipronged mission. The Coalition, on the other hand, formed in 1998 with a very focused mission: to protect the beautiful Sonoran Desert of Pima County.

In 1998, we were losing an acre an hour to development by some estimates. Now, we have hundreds of thousands of acres of habitat preserved in our region as a result of \$200 million in voter-approved funding, thanks to the Coalition's work.

In 1998, Pima County roadways — all 4000 miles of them — were continually being widened and new roads were being built, bisecting large tracts of open space preserves and isolating wildlife species. Today, we have protected key areas from development and reconnected habitat with wildlife crossings. And this was accomplished with voter approval of \$45 million in a transportation plan solely for this purpose — unlike anywhere else in the country!

Our "narrow" mission of "saving the desert" has created lasting conservation with the variety of projects the Coalition has undertaken over the years. All of these projects have been necessary for our goal of attaining healthy ecosystem function in our piece of the Sonoran Desert. In addition to our core work on County development issues, habitat conservation, and wildlife connectivity, we have taken on threats from mining, transmission line siting, and climate change adaptation.

Over the last decade and a half, the Coalition has become the leading conservation group working to protect our Sonoran Desert. We only developed this power because of you, our supporters, that stand behind us and contribute your voices and time to our important mission. I am proud of our work.

And I am ready for the next 15 years! I am looking forward to the work we will do to ensure wildlife crossings that will reconnect the Tortolita Mountains to the Santa Cruz River and the Tucson Mountains; we will continue to fight Rosemont Mine; we will celebrate the passage of yet another open space bond to preserve more habitat gems of our region.

And finally, as we move into 2014 and beyond, I look forward to the next generation of committed activists. We are training and empowering our younger friends who have seemingly boundless energy and optimism. We need them. The earth needs them. And the Sonoran Desert needs them.

Because of you, we will celebrate an enduring legacy of open spaces, connected habitats, and flourishing species. Thank you.

*Carolyn Campbell*

# Birders Mean Business! continued from page 1

fishing, golf, or the Gem Show. Southwick Associates, a fish and wildlife economics and statistics firm, reports the total economic effect from 2011 watchable wildlife activities in Arizona to be **\$1.4 billion** (\$1.1 billion by residents and \$314.6 million by visitors). Southwick's analysis is based on raw data from the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. In this survey, "wildlife watching activities" include observing, photographing, or feeding wildlife.

When birders and other wildlife watchers visit, they spend money — mostly on lodging, food, and transportation. Local participants contribute too, with equipment purchases like optics, camera gear, and birdfeeding supplies (among other tools of the trade). These expenditures have increased since 2001, despite economic instability; in 2011, Arizona residents spent a total of \$665 million on watchable wildlife recreation, while **visiting wildlife watchers from out-of-state poured \$183.7 million new dollars into the state economy.**

Original expenditures by wildlife watchers generate rounds of additional spending throughout the economy, resulting in additional indirect and induced impacts that are commonly called the multiplier effect. Economic activity associated with both the direct spending and multiplier effect impacts is the total economic contribution resulting from the original expenditures.

Locally here in southern Arizona, **watchable wildlife recreation has a total economic impact of \$330 million, and supports about 3000 jobs in Pima, Santa Cruz, and Cochise counties.**

To support and grow this valuable industry, we need to promote responsible wildlife observation, provide destination events like the Tucson Bird & Wildlife Festival (held annually in August) to attract visiting birdwatchers and nature tourists, and protect and enhance the habitats upon which our wildlife depends. Local organizations, government, and business can work synergistically to build a bird-friendly and birder-friendly community and nurture 'The Goose that Lays the Golden Eggs.'

For more information, including Southwick Associates' full report (*Economic Contributions of Wildlife Viewing to the Arizona Economy, May 2013*), please visit [tucsonaudubon.org/birdingeconomics](http://tucsonaudubon.org/birdingeconomics).

## You Can Help!

Protecting our beautiful Sonoran Desert habitat directly supports our economy. Our connected and protected open spaces contribute to a high quality of life, provide places for hiking, bird-watching, and other recreational activities, and attract thousands of tourists every year. Your contribution to the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, through a donation, volunteering, or your voice, helps protect the Sonoran Desert today and into the future!

## Coalition Member Groups

Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest  
Arizona League of Conservation Voters Education Fund  
Arizona Native Plant Society  
Bat Conservation International  
Cascabel Conservation Association  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Environmental Connections  
Center for Environmental Ethics  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Desert Watch  
Drylands Institute  
Empire Fagan Coalition  
Environmental and Cultural Conservation Organization  
Environmental Law Society  
Friends of Cabeza Prieta  
Friends of Ironwood Forest  
Friends of Madera Canyon  
Friends of Saguaro National Park  
Friends of Tortolita  
Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association  
Native Seeds/SEARCH  
Neighborhood Coalition of Greater Tucson  
Northwest Neighborhoods Alliance  
Protect Lands and Neighborhoods  
Safford Peak Watershed Education Team  
Save the Scenic Santa Ritas  
Sierra Club—Grand Canyon Chapter  
Sierra Club—Rincon Group  
Silverbell Mountain Alliance  
Sky Island Alliance  
Sky Island Watch  
Society for Ecological Restoration  
Sonoran Arthropod Studies Institute  
Sonoran Permaculture Guild  
Southwestern Biological Institute  
Tortolita Homeowners Association  
Tucson Audubon Society  
Tucson Herpetological Society  
Tucson Mountains Association  
Wildlands Network  
Women for Sustainable Technology

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*Friends of the Desert Design & Layout: Julie St. John*

# Jaguars in Arizona: Threats and Critical Habitat

by Randy Serraglio, Center for Biological Diversity



This male jaguar has been photographed multiple times by the Arizona Game and Fish Department in the Santa Rita Mountains in recent months. The Rosemont Mine poses a grave threat to this jaguar and the protection of critical habitat for this entire species. Photo courtesy AZGFD/USFWS

Of all the diverse critters that call our region home, probably the most charismatic, mysterious, and seemingly exotic—the one that really blows people’s minds—is the jaguar. It’s associated more with tropical jungles than the arid Southwest, but jaguar actually evolved here in North America before expanding south. They were once found throughout the Sky Island mountain ranges of southern Arizona, until they were exterminated in the past century.

Thankfully, a core breeding population of jaguars has persisted just 125 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico border, so there may come a day when a U.S. jaguar population is more than just ancient history. Individuals continue to range north into the U.S. to reclaim their historical homelands. With the full protection of the Endangered Species Act, they now have a fighting chance to survive.

Only one jaguar is currently known in the U.S., although there may be more of the notoriously elusive top predators. A jaguar monitoring project has photographed a lone male repeatedly in the northern Santa Rita Mountains over the past year. Photographic evidence confirms that this is the same cat that was treed by hunters in the Whetstone Mountains in 2011.

It should come as no surprise that a jaguar has shown up in the Santa Ritas. Less than a hundred years ago, they were very likely breeding

## What You Can Do

The Forest Service recently released the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Rosemont Mine. Stay up-to-date by checking out the FEIS at [www.rosemonteis.us](http://www.rosemonteis.us). The Coalition is currently working with our partners to write formal objections to the FEIS and we will continue to fight this proposed mine in the year ahead.

there. At least four jaguars were killed in the Santa Ritas between 1917 and 1920, at least one of which was female. These mountains provide quality habitat and excellent connectivity to Mexico. Photo evidence indicates that not only is the big male apparently thriving there, it’s been using wildlife corridors identified in multiple studies as being critically important to many species, not just jaguar.

The photo locations also indicate that this pioneering cat—and U.S. jaguar recovery in general—is facing a grave threat. Several of the photos were taken immediately adjacent to the area targeted for destruction by the Rosemont mine. Thousands of acres of public land in the heart of the jaguar’s stomping grounds in the Coronado National Forest would be permanently destroyed by a mile-wide, 3,000-foot deep pit and billions of tons of toxic waste piled as high as 800 feet atop the rolling, oak-studded slopes of the Rosemont valley.

In its draft proposal to designate critical habitat for the jaguar, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service took the unusual step of calling out the Rosemont mine specifically in its discussion of threats to jaguar recovery in the U.S. The Service plans to finalize the critical habitat designation by the end of 2013, with more than 850,000 acres included in the latest draft.

For the Rosemont jaguar—and every other jaguar that follows him into the U.S.—the completion of critical habitat cannot come a moment too soon. Species are twice as likely to recover with such a designation, which prevents destruction of the habitat characteristics the species needs to thrive.

Clearly, as the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection and many of its member groups have maintained in comments on the critical habitat proposal and the Coronado National Forest’s Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the mine, there is no way the Rosemont mine can be compatible with jaguar recovery in the U.S. The critical location and vast scope of destruction caused by the mine would be devastating to the prospects of reestablishing jaguar here.

The Coronado recently backed off its target date for a release of a final EIS, largely due to the vehement resistance it received from cooperating agencies, including Pima County, which reviewed a draft of the document. The mine is problematic on many levels—it’s likely to push the Tucson area above acceptable air pollution limits and it’ll pump billions of gallons of precious groundwater from our aquifer. It threatens to dewater nearby Davidson Canyon and Cienega Creek—which contribute up to 20 percent of Tucson’s annual groundwater recharge and provide habitat for many of the species covered under the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan—and contaminate these precious riparian areas with toxic pollution.

As long as jaguars are outnumbered by copper mines in the U.S., there is much work to be done. The Coalition has been a strong voice in the campaign against the Rosemont mine and will continue working to preserve the scenic Rosemont valley and protect the American jaguar as integral parts of the health and well being of Pima County.

# Open Space Remains a Top Priority for Pima County Residents

## 2015 Bond Election will fund future open space purchases

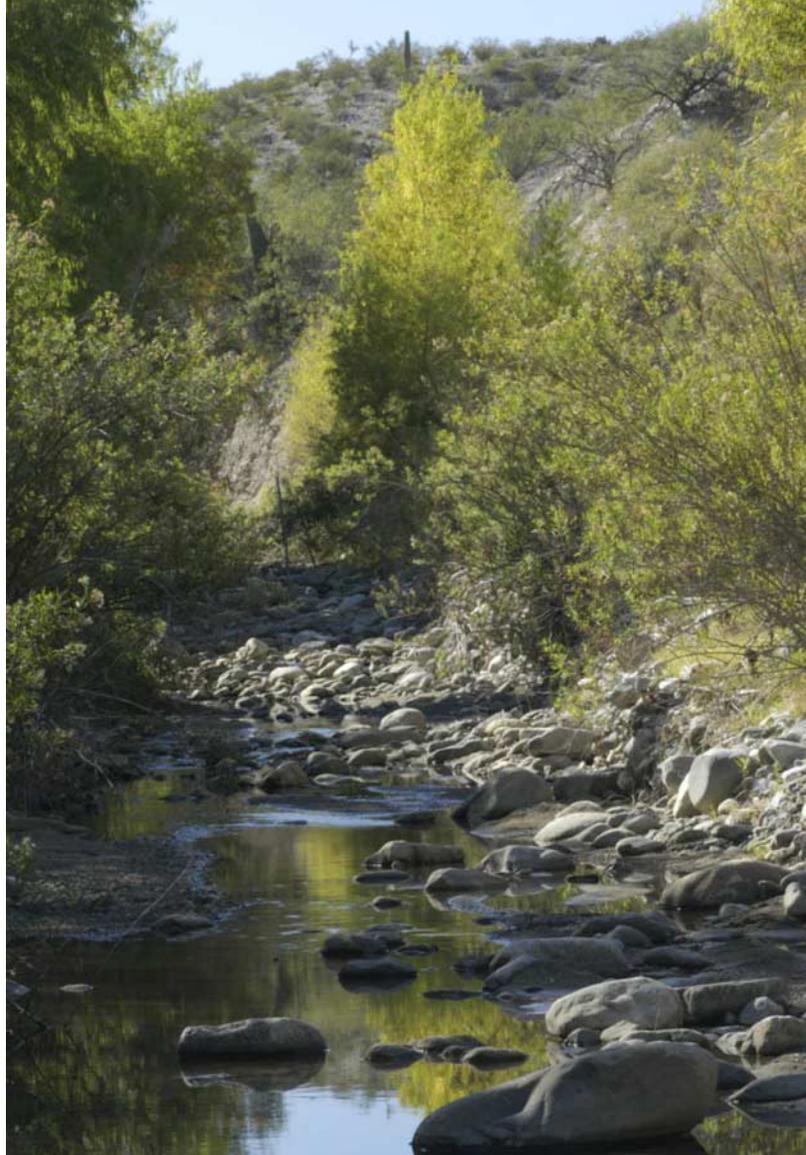
Pima County will have to wait even longer to purchase new open space lands. On September 20th, the Bond Advisory Committee voted to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to delay a new bond election until 2015 instead of holding it next year. County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry recommended the delay, citing the slow recovery of the economy. Bond monies are based on property values, which have lagged further behind in the economic recovery. Among other issues, the County Administrator posits that even if bonds were *authorized* by the voters in 2014, the bonds could not be issued until early 2016. **Bond funds are critical to the community by providing needed money for preserving important natural areas, maintaining neighborhoods, and restoring historically significant areas.**

Despite the ongoing election delay, Pima County residents are still showing strong support for conservation. In July, a survey was released to obtain resident feedback on which projects voters would like to see funded. Currently, over \$1.6 billion worth of total projects have been proposed for funding.

Survey results show Habitat Protection Priorities and Community Open Space as top choices in the Historic, Cultural, and Natural Area Conservation category. The results prove that residents want to see ecologically sensitive lands protected and hold these as important priorities in Pima County. **If you participated in the survey and supported funding for more open space, thank you!**

These results are in line with previous bond elections. In 2004, Pima County residents displayed solid support for acquiring conservation lands by approving over \$174 million in bond funds. In the 1997 election, \$28 million was approved for the same purpose. These funds made the lease and purchase of nearly 200,000 acres of land possible for conservation. Lands include rugged areas of the Tucson and Tortolita mountains, desert grasslands, and vital riparian habitat.

Even with the acquisition of these areas, there still remains \$2.6 billion worth of valuable conservation lands alone that are eligible for future purchase. The approval of bond funds for this purpose would ensure the protection of biologically critical lands, the completion of wildlife linkages, and would create connected ecosystems of open space. The Coalition is optimistic that voters will continue to support



The lush riparian area of Edgar Canyon was part of the Six Bar Ranch open space purchase on the northeast side of the Santa Catalina Mountains. Pima County purchased this property in 2006.

the acquisition and preservation of valuable lands through expenditure of bond monies. These funds have made positive and far reaching impacts in the past, and we are looking forward to the ongoing support of the community to speak up for open space and protect this rich area in which we live.

## How Your Support Makes a Difference

The Coalition works directly with Pima County to facilitate open space purchases and advocate for a significant amount of money for open space in a future bond election. Your voice in the recent bond election survey drove Habitat Protection Priorities and Community Open Space to the top of the list of funding priorities. With your help and your voice, we will continue to fight for more open space around Tucson and Pima County!

# The Painted Hills— A Treasure for All City and County Residents

by Ed Verburg, Tucson Mountains Association and Bruce Gungle,  
Painted Hills area resident

Drive west out of Tucson on Speedway Blvd., or better yet, take Anklam Rd., and after passing Greasewood Rd. and another half mile of neighborhoods, you'll roll past the iconic Painted Hills. If it's the winter or early spring, chances are you'll pass a car with out-of-states plates or a rental sticker pulled off the side of the road and there will be a couple of people and maybe some kids taking pictures of each other before the classic upper Sonoran backdrop of rocky ridges and thousands of saguaros. These Painted Hills are many folks' introduction to the Sonoran Desert, and it's really no surprise. Sandwiched between two designated scenic roads (Anklam and Speedway), the Painted Hills are rife with mature saguaros (over 9,000), a number of rocky peaks and ridges (their tops protected by Pima County's Protected Peaks ordinance for their remarkable scenic value), and the full spectrum of saguaro-palo verde habitat. In other words, it's the out-of-town visitors' first up-close opportunity to touch, smell, and stand within a landscape they've only seen before in movies, photographs, and cartoons. And on top of that, the whole 287 acres of the Painted Hills function quite effectively as wildlife corridors for mule deer, javelina, bobcats, and the occasional mountain lion trying to get on over to somewhere else.

The Painted Hills property has had a long and winding, you might even say *convoluted* history. The five parcels that make up the Hills were first nominated for protection in the 1997 Pima County Open Space Bond Election. The people of Pima County once again voted to preserve the Hills in the 2004 bond election. Alas, it was not to be...at least not right away. Two developers stepped in front of the County and purchased the land in 2004 and 2005. Eventually one of the developers obtained all five of the parcels (for a total of \$4.35 million), and then turned around and sold it all to Land Baron Investments, Inc., of Las Vegas, NV, operating on behalf of the Dallas Police and Firefighters Pension System (as TDB Tucson Group, LLC of Dallas, TX), for \$27 million. Eventually Land Baron won approval for a plat utilizing Pima County's cluster option, which allowed 260 units for development. Houses would essentially ring the perimeter as well as run deep into the Hills along the floor of each canyon.

Just as it seemed that time had run out for the lovely Painted Hills, in April of 2008 Tucson Water's Interim Director Chris Avery informed Kimley-Horn & Associates, Land Baron's engineers on the Painted Hills project, that they had failed to renew their one-year letter of water assurance, which had expired in February 2008. This letter had guaranteed water delivery for the project. Additionally, in December of 2007 the City of Tucson had implemented a change to their water policy. Until further guidance was received by Mayor and Council, Tucson



The majestic Painted Hills rise west of downtown Tucson. Community groups, including the Coalition, are working to permanently preserve this property.

Water was not allowed to provide water service outside the current obligated service area. In an attempt to obtain access to Tucson Water, Land Baron requested annexation by the City of Tucson late in the year 2009. Against the wishes of Councilmember Regina Romero, whose Ward 1 abuts the Painted Hills, the Tucson City Council initially voted to allow annexation. Newly appointed Councilmember Paul Cunningham then saved the day by moving a vote to reconsider the action, and the Tucson City Council finally killed the annexation request. The Pension Fund sued the city, but was denied their claim for water service against the wishes of the City of Tucson by the Arizona Supreme Court. The Pension Fund then went to the Arizona State Legislature and lobbied for legislation requiring the City to supply water. The City was able to convince the legislature to let them negotiate a land trade instead, purportedly seen as a win-win by most parties of interest. Several downtown parcels were considered, but last year, when the negotiations were concluded, no land trade materialized with the City and/or County.

In a three-way partnership, the Tucson Mountains Association, the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, and Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association recently approached County officials about moving forward with the purchase of the Painted Hills. We also held two public forums in August focused on the Painted Hills, their importance to all of eastern Pima County, and the need for the County or City to step up and do something to get the ball rolling again. Residents from across the County attended the public forums, and there was overwhelming community support for the preservation of this property. In particular, participants voiced interest in the possibility of making Painted Hills a part of Tucson Mountain Park if connectivity can be established. The results of the public forums were summarized and forwarded to the County for appropriate action. Key additional reasons for purchasing the property include:

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# Donor Spotlight: Julie St. John

How fortunate I am to live in the Sonoran Desert! To have this amazing backdrop of mountains, plants and wildlife always so accessible to me — whether I'm looking out the window (I can see the Catalinas from my home office), driving through town (oh how the perspective changes when you venture out of your normal routes!), or best of all, feeling the sloshy 2-liter thud as my pack swings onto my back and I start walking *into* my homescape.

It was love at first sight for me and the Sonoran Desert. After a couple of years, I discovered and began working in Tucson's environmental community, diving headfirst into national and international issues. But something kept tugging at me and I finally realized it was that I wanted to give back to the sense of place and community that evolves in your life when you're where you belong. Your homescape.

I'd belonged to a homescape before — the woods and creek of my childhood home in Ohio were (and still are!) pretty much untouched. And I think that's what allowed me to recognize almost instantly just how special, how timeless, the Sonoran Desert is. That the creosotes outside of my house on Water Street were probably clones of clones of clones from hundreds of years before; that the former wash outside my midtown front yard had already been paying direct tributes to the Rillito for thousands of years when my house was built in 1948. These moments of awareness allow my imagination to step outside of my day-to-day reality and take a much-needed deep breath.

Ahhhhh. Mountains. Saguaros. Hawks. Javelinas. Bobcats. Snakes. Even the danged wait-a-minute bushes and shindaggers. Ahhhh. They are my

neighbors, my fellow beings, they are the true, natural-born choir of the Church of Mesquitey and I feel hallelujahs rise in my heart every time I breathe it all in.

It's not just the plants and critters that need the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection to be the catalyst behind open space preservation, habitat conservation planning, and wildlife linkages... WE ALL DO.

It's not just the tree huggers and the greens who need the Coalition to gather and motivate our political leaders for state trust land reform and water resources policy planning... WE ALL DO.

It's not just the air we breathe and the water we drink (plus the myriad of biological processes we are not even aware of that we need to survive) which need the Coalition to give voice to the real consequences from the proposed Rosemont Mine and other short-sighted get-rich-quick schemes... WE ALL DO.

And it's not just me and the rest of the choir who need to give monthly support to help the Coalition protect our homescape... WE ALL DO.

The Coalition's work is essential and effective and its staff is tirelessly (and inspiringly) can-do. The steady stream of individuals' funding for its day-to-day work allows the Coalition the flexibility to move forward strategically when opportunities present themselves. I have seen so many changes in my almost quarter of a century here, and I cannot tell you how relieved I am to know that the Coalition is here to make sure the Sonoran Desert has a voice. You all have my eternal thanks and support for all you do.



## Painted Hills *continued from previous page*

**CONSERVATION:** The County has a good reputation for preserving open space and providing excellent parks for residents. While it makes good business sense to purchase the Painted Hills, it also complements the strong conservation ethic in the County.

**WILDLIFE:** The land offers habitat for a diverse range of wildlife, including mountain lions, bobcats, javelina, fox, mule deer, hawks, and a wide variety of other species.

**RECREATION:** The property is close to downtown and would provide easy access for outdoor recreation including hiking, wildlife viewing and birding, and general enjoyment of the sweeping Tucson Mountain vistas.

**ECONOMIC:** There clearly are significant returns related to tourism. Pristine habitat immediately adjacent to a population of over half a million people and just three or four miles from the downtown is a rare amenity in this or any part of the country.

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT:** The broad support demonstrated during the bond elections is actually even stronger today. A recent Pima County

survey of residents regarding bond project preferences illustrates this is the case. Eight of 10 voting districts ranked Habitat Protection and Associated Lands as their top priority in the category of Historic, Cultural, and Natural Area Conservation

There must be clear and ongoing community support for this purchase to move forward. We encourage Pima County to protect this land in order to preserve the habitat values and wildlife connectivity permanently for future generations. Please contact your County supervisor and ask that they endorse the purchase of this property.

## You Can Help!

Strong and continued community support is needed to ensure the protection of Painted Hills. Contact your County supervisor to let them know you support the purchase of this area and ask them to do the same! Don't forget to spread the word about this unique and treasured space. Go to [www.sonorandesert.org/2013/08/08/paintedhills](http://www.sonorandesert.org/2013/08/08/paintedhills) for a list of County Supervisors and their contact information.



**Huachuca Water Umbel** Listed as endangered in 1997, this plant is a good indicator species for the health of riparian ecosystems and is found in moist soil. The Pima County Native Plant Nursery is working to grow this plant for re-establishment. *Photo by Bill Radke, USFWS*

**Lesser Long-Nosed Bat** Listed as endangered in 1988, this species is a key pollinator in the Sonoran Desert. It feeds on fruit and nectar from plants such as saguaro and agave. This bat roosts in caves and abandoned mines and buildings. *Photo courtesy USFWS*

## 40 Years of Protection *The Endangered Species Act and Our Work*

Without the Endangered Species Act (ESA), iconic wildlife species like bald eagle, American crocodiles, whooping cranes, grizzly bear, Florida panthers, and grey wolves would likely be extinct. Smaller, lesser known, species have also benefited, including many here in the Sonoran Desert.

In fact, the ESA was a strong component in the founding of the Coalition, and has been a driving force in our efforts for conservation and policy change in Pima County. In 1997, the cactus ferruginous

pygmy-owl was listed as an endangered species. This listing left uncertainty and confusion among citizens and developers on compliance with the ESA. Recognizing that this little owl needed strong protection and that land use in Pima County needed reworking, dozens of concerned groups came together to form the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection in 1998.

2013 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the monumental Endangered Species Act. Signed into law by President Nixon on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1973, the United States Supreme Court viewed it as a means “to halt and reverse the trend toward species extinction, whatever the cost.” This Act was unlike anything that came before it and provided the strictest protections for species threatened by habitat loss, human impacts, and faced with extinction.

In addition to creating a uniform system to federally list flora and fauna as endangered, the ESA included “critical habitat,” which designated special considerations for areas essential to the conservation of a species. This Act was the catalyst for the creation of wildlife refuges and the recovery of many species, including the peregrine falcon and the increasing success of the California condor.

After we formed fifteen years ago, the Coalition pushed for the adoption of the groundbreaking Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). This plan was the first of its kind in the nation, incorporating sound science and a variety of stakeholders to form a land use plan that designated guidelines for biologically important areas critical for ecological function. This included specifications for endangered and threatened species.



**Chiricahua Leopard Frog** This stout bodied frog was listed as endangered in 2002 due to habitat loss and competition from invasive species. Relying on aquatic habitat, it feeds mainly on insects and fresh-water shrimp. This species has been documented in Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge and Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. *Photo by Jim Rorabaugh, USFWS*

# 40 Years of Protection

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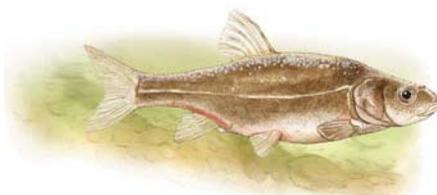
The SDCP was developed hand-in-hand with the creation of Pima County's Multiple-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP). This allows compliance with the ESA for Pima County to properly avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to endangered species. The "taking" (kill, harm, harass, etc.) of federally listed species is illegal, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can grant a Section 10 incidental take permit. This permit allows the "take" of endangered species in the process of lawful activities, such as development, but requires a MSCP to minimize and mitigate the effects of such actions.

The plan is in its final stages and identifies 44 wildlife species in need of protection, providing specific regulations based on habitat impacts using landscape-level regional reserves in the Conservation Lands System. While only seven of these 44 species are currently listed as threatened or endangered, all of them have the potential to be listed over the 30-year life of the permit.

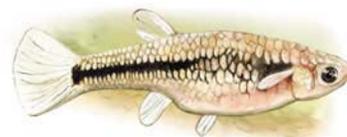
The ESA has had far reaching effects across the nation over the past 40 years, and Pima County is no exception. We are lucky to have such diversity of plants and wildlife, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth. The Coalition has worked tirelessly to ensure endangered species are protected and that this protection is incorporated into land use planning. The ESA provides much needed regulations to guarantee the survival of unique and sensitive species attempting to live amongst a multitude of negative impacts. The human population is growing quickly, and habitat encroachment shows no sign of slowing. The ESA is needed now more than ever to ensure that generations to come can enjoy the same rare creatures, and hopefully even see more of them with increased conservation lands and protection!



**Southwestern Willow Flycatcher** Added to the endangered species list in 1995, this small bird thrives in dense riparian habitats. Destruction of habitat has caused fragmentation and a severe decline in bird numbers. The San Pedro River has been dedicated as critical habitat for this bird.



**Gila Chub** This fish can reach a length of ten inches and utilizes diverse habitats based on age and time of year. Historically, this fish has been found in the Gila River basin but currently the only population considered secure and stable occurs in Cienega Creek. *Picture courtesy Pima County*



**Gila Topminnow** This guppy-like fish is currently found in the upper reach of Cienega Creek and was listed as endangered in 1967. They can withstand an extreme range of temperatures and was once the most common fish on the Gila River Basin. *Picture courtesy Pima County*

## Stay Informed!

Stay up to date on the progress of the MSCP by visiting the Pima County website at [www.pima.gov/cmo/sdcp/MSCP/MSCP.html](http://www.pima.gov/cmo/sdcp/MSCP/MSCP.html). The Coalition will continue to speak up and advocate for habitat protection by pressuring local government to make responsible land use decisions.



**Pima Pineapple Cactus** This cacti has been endangered since 1993 and is known for its yellow flowers that bloom with monsoon moisture. This plant has suffered from habitat loss. In 2002, the Pima County Board of Supervisors set aside 590 acres as a mitigation bank for this species. *Photo courtesy US Forest Service*



The Cascabel Conservation Association is a steward of the beautiful Middle San Pedro River north of Benson. They are fighting proposals such as the I-10 bypass and the SunZia transmission line project which are threatening this vital river valley. *Photo courtesy Gilbert Urias of Cascabel Conservation Association*

## Our Newest Member Group

# The Cascabel Conservation Association:

## *Stewarding the Middle San Pedro Watershed*

The Cascabel Conservation Association (CCA) joined CSDP in early 2013 and is headquartered in the San Pedro River Valley near Cascabel, Arizona, about 25 miles north of Benson. The association was originally formed as the Cascabel Hermitage Association (CHA) in 1996. CHA's founders were members of the Saguaro-Juniper Corporation, a conservation-oriented ranching enterprise inspired by Jim Corbett, a Quaker leader of the sanctuary movement. Their aim was to establish a non-profit group that could aid in protecting adjacent land from a militia group's proposed firing range. They found a donor who provided funds to purchase 400 acres along lower Hot Springs Canyon, a major tributary of the San Pedro River.

CCA's first program was to provide facilities for solitary desert retreats. With time the group expanded to host a yearly mesquite milling, educational workshops, a community garden, and its members became more active in helping protect the valley's environment. A major project was to facilitate 1800 acres of conservation easements now held by The Nature Conservancy in lower Hot Springs Canyon to maintain the wildlife corridor between the Galiuro and Rincon Mountains. Much of its later work has been done through the community's Cascabel Working Group, especially in resisting the I-10 bypass and SunZia transmission line proposals. In 2012 the CCA also purchased an interest in a 130-acre property at the confluence of Hot Springs Canyon and the San Pedro River.

Because of these enlarged activities, in 2012 the group reorganized to become the Cascabel Conservation Association, adopting a more comprehensive mission:

“The Cascabel Conservation Association is dedicated to the collaborative stewardship of the Middle San Pedro River watershed in a way that promotes the health, stability and diversity of the whole community, including its earth, waters, plants, and animals. We strive to integrate the needs of the land with the needs of a sustainable human community through educational, economic, agricultural, contemplative and other conservation-related endeavors.”

The group's most recent conservation efforts have been to help establish the Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance and to support the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's proposed Lower San Pedro River Collaborative Conservation Initiative.

CCA has a seven-member board of directors and over 130 members. Anyone who supports the CCA's mission is welcome to become a member. CCA has no membership dues and is supported entirely by donations.

For further information see [cascabelconservation.org](http://cascabelconservation.org) or contact Mick Meader at (520) 323-0092, [nmeader@cox.net](mailto:nmeader@cox.net).

# THANK YOU for your generosity. Your donations are making all of this work possible!

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