

Friends of the Desert

Issue 54 Summer 2018

A Strong Voice for the People and Wildlife of the Sonoran Desert

Photo: Bob Wick-BLM-CC Flickr

Celebrating 20 Years of Sonoran Desert Protection

Your support has protected open spaces, wildlife linkages, desert habitat, and wildlife — thank you!

by Kathleen Kennedy, Associate Director

Can you believe it? We've been working together to protect and re-connect the Sonoran Desert for 20 years! As we celebrate this milestone with you, it's been gratifying to both reflect back on everything we've accomplished together and look ahead to new dreams and goals. **More than anything, this is an anniversary for all of us to celebrate together.** Thank you for everything you've done for the Sonoran Desert over the last two decades — your time spent attending meetings, writing emails or letters, making phone calls, and volunteering; your financial donations; and your encouraging words and energy have all been so important. Thank you for sharing your passion for the Sonoran Desert with your friends and family, and with us. **You are part of a true community of conservationists passionate about the beautiful Sonoran Desert. Together, we are making a positive difference every day.**

In February 1998, the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection was formed by a group of dedicated conservation leaders. Nineteen conservation groups, both large and small, banded together to advocate for Pima County's approval of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. **These leaders realized that speaking together as one voice would have a much larger impact in the community than working independently. And this strategy has worked, over and over again, throughout the last two decades.**

Our Executive Director, Carolyn Campbell, has helmed the Coalition since the beginning and I have worked for the Coalition in various capacities for 11 years now. Other staff you may remember include Jenny Neeley, Susan Shobe, Lori Andersen, Sean Sullivan, Gabe Wigtil, and Hannah Stitzer — we are grateful for each of them and what they contributed to the Coalition over the years. Today, super-stars Sarah Whelan and Jessica Moreno round out our team. Our member groups, reaching over 40 at one point, continue to be instrumental to our success, giving their time, expertise, and financial contributions towards Coalition projects. A huge thank you to our member groups, past and present. **And you! You are the most important piece of this puzzle. Thank you for being a part of this journey — without you, none of this work would be possible.**

As we look back on the last 20 years, thank you for being a critical part of so many important accomplishments that we can all be proud of, including:



A mule deer in Oro Valley, out for a stroll in a Sonoran Desert wash. Photo courtesy DEER camera (Margie O'Hare, Bob Cratty, and Terry Minks).

You are part of a true community of conservationists passionate about the Sonoran Desert. Together, we are making a positive difference every day.

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan

Created by Pima County in 1998, the SDCP is the foundation for our conservation projects and goals. It has been nationally recognized and still serves as a model for habitat conservation plans around the country. With your support, the Coalition continues to be a lead community advocate for the SDCP.

Ironwood Forest National Monument

Created in 2000 by President Bill Clinton after the Coalition and other community groups campaigned for its protection, Ironwood Forest is located 25 miles northwest of Tucson and protects over 129,000 acres of beautiful and rugged Sonoran Desert habitat. Within the Monument, over 470 species and subspecies of plants thrive. Ironwood Forest is home to up to 177 vertebrates and 821 invertebrates, including a herd of desert bighorn sheep. The Coalition also launched the Friends of Ironwood Forest, now a Coalition member group.

continued



Carolyn's Corner

An Idea Big Enough to Match the Mountains

So much to celebrate over the last 20 years

The Coalition works to create a community where: ecosystem health is protected; nature and healthy wild animal populations are valued; and residents, visitors, and future generations can all drink clean water, breathe clean air, and find wild places to roam.

Coalition Member Groups

Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest
 Arizona Native Plant Society
 Bat Conservation International
 Cascabel Conservation Association
 Center for Biological Diversity
 Center for Environmental Ethics
 Defenders of Wildlife
 Desert Watch
 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
 Genius Loci Foundation
 Native Seeds / SEARCH
 Protect Land and Neighborhoods
 Safford Peak Watershed Education Team
 Save the Scenic Santa Ritas
 Sierra Club – Grand Canyon Chapter
 Sierra Club – Rincon Group
 Sky Island Alliance
 Society for Ecological Restoration
 Southwestern Biological Institute
 Tortolita Homeowners Association
 Tucson Audubon Society
 Tucson Herpetological Society
 Tucson Mountains Association
 Wildlands Network

Twenty years ago, I was asked to facilitate a small group of conservation groups that wanted to have a say in conservation issues in our greater metropolitan area. The opportunity at hand was the recent federal listing of the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl as an endangered species. This fierce little owl was not the first animal to be in trouble in the Sonoran Desert, and with the pace of development in our metropolitan area, it was sure to not be the last. Our new environmental coalition wanted to change this trend, and we knew we needed to get involved. The Coalition quickly grew to dozens of groups, and we got to work.

The early days were a little, say, tumultuous. We had a Board of Supervisors that rarely saw a large-area rezoning that they didn't like. And the County Administrator loved to build new roads. But working closely with the elected officials and *really* educating them paid off. In 1999, Pima County kicked off the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Canoa Ranch was saved from 8000 housing units and Pima County acquired most of the ranch over the next few years. This was the first rezoning that the Board of Supervisors had said no to in over 25 years. And so it began.

For the first time in decades, Tucson has had an idea big enough to match its mountains. — Chuck Bowden, 1999

Of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, renowned author and Tucsonan Chuck Bowden said in 1999, "For the first time in decades, Tucson has had an idea big enough to match its mountains. The town that once had the gumption to create a San Xavier del Bac or an Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum may be coming back from years of bondage to sprawl and greed."

What brings me the most joy, however, is that so many of you have joined us on this journey. When the Coalition was formed, we got funding from our member groups – to the extent that the groups could help. We sometimes wondered if we could keep our doors open. Within a short time though, so many individuals and a handful of small foundations admired our work and noticed our effectiveness. You stepped forward and continue to support us and, while we still have member group support, we have become a sustainable organization of like-minded conservationists. Thank you for supporting Sonoran Desert protection for the past 20 years – let's keep dreaming big and fighting for this place we all love.

Coalition Staff

Carolyn Campbell *Executive Director*
Kathleen Kennedy *Associate Director*
Jessica Moreno *Conservation Science Director*
Sarah Whelan *Program & Operations Manager*

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection is an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Our EIN # is 82-2156664.

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20th Anniversary Happy Hour

Please join us to celebrate 20 years of protecting the Sonoran Desert together!

Thursday, September 20, 5–7pm
Public Brewhouse, 209 N. Hoff Ave.
in downtown Tucson.

Website: www.sonorandesert.org
facebook.com/sonorandesertprotection
 738 N. 5th Ave., Suite 212, Tucson AZ 85705
 Office: **520.388.9925**



Ironwood Forest National Monument. Photo courtesy Bob Wick, BLM-CC Flickr

Celebrating 20 Years of Sonoran Desert Protection *continued*

Conservation Lands System

Under the direction of a team of renowned scientists and community partners such as the Coalition, Pima County adopted the Conservation Lands System (CLS) in 2001. This map and associated policies have resulted in the preservation of thousands of acres of important wildlife habitat around Pima County on both private and public lands. The CLS continues to be applied today to private developments and Pima County projects. It ensures that our important riparian areas and wildlife habitat remain protected and connected. The Coalition works directly with developers and homebuilders to make sure that their projects are compliant with the CLS, leading to better projects for the people and wildlife of Pima County.

Open Space Protection

In 2004, Pima County voters overwhelmingly approved the Open Space Bond with over 2/3 of voters giving the thumbs up to open space protection. The Coalition led the public education and outreach campaign leading up to the election. This bond included \$174.3 million for the purchase of important open space. Pima County protected over 200,000 acres of open space with this money, an incredible accomplishment! The Coalition continues to advocate for new open space purchases as opportunities arise.

Regional Transportation Authority Plan

The Regional Transportation Authority Plan was approved by voters in 2006 and included \$45 million in wildlife linkages infrastructure. These monies have funded the construction of wildlife crossings and wildlife fencing around Pima County such as the Oracle Road wildlife bridge, the protection of bat habitat on local bridges, and important research on Sonoran Desert wildlife. The Coalition led the effort to have this money included in the RTA

Plan and serves on the RTA's Wildlife Linkages Working Group. We are also the community leader in public education and outreach efforts to ensure Pima County citizens stay well-informed on the importance of protecting wildlife linkages and the specific RTA projects.

Habitat Conservation Planning

After over 15 years of planning, Pima County's Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSCP) was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2016. This ground-breaking plan protects 44 vulnerable, threatened and endangered species around Pima County. The Coalition worked with Pima County every step of the way to ensure the MSCP contains the most robust and scientifically based conservation policies.

Conservation is a never-ending process – new threats emerge and new opportunities arise all the time.

Community Science

Most recently, the Coalition has been a leader in community science (formerly called citizen science). Our popular Wildlife Camera Monitoring Program, launched in 2012 with four cameras, and has grown to over 45 cameras deployed in our threatened wildlife linkages. The photos from these cameras provide important data on wildlife presence, diversity, and movement in three local wildlife linkages. Our new Critter Cam program (see insert) engages local elementary school students and teaches them about wildlife linkages and Sonoran Desert wildlife.

continued

Volunteer/Desert Champion Spotlight: Christine St. Onge

Originally a “Jersey Girl,” I spent most of my adult life in California. There, my first volunteer opportunities created within me a passion for and commitment to wildlife conservation. I moved to Tucson in 2005 and one of my first memorable experiences was seeing a bobcat casually strolling through someone’s property while we were driving by. It wasn’t long before I had found several organizations where I could contribute my time in order to protect this wonderfully unique environment I now call home. I first was introduced to CSDP in 2011 by a friend. Soon after, I met Carolyn Campbell, the recipient of Sky Island Alliance’s Mike Seidman Memorial Award at the organization’s awards dinner. My first volunteer experience with the Coalition was helping at a Wild and Scenic Film Festival. From there I found myself attending open space bond meetings, in the office sorting wildlife photos, and soon in the field placing and monitoring cameras.



The most rewarding aspect of my volunteer work is seeing the impact that CSDP has had in acquiring and preserving open space land in our precious desert. I always feel so appreciated and welcomed when I show up at the office to sort through the latest batch of wildlife camera photos. It’s really the highlight of my week to see javelinas having puddle parties, raccoons fiddling about in little pools of water, coyotes cavorting in the washes, along with all the other rare and unexpected treasures that pop up on the screen. But it’s not just about cute critter cams. It’s also about conservation successes like the construction of the Oracle Road Wildlife Crossings. As an avid equestrian, I am very grateful to CSDP for myself, and for the preservation of biodiversity within our beautiful Sonoran Desert.

Thank you, Christine, for all your hard work as a Desert Monitor, Desert Identifier, and all-around amazing volunteer!

Leave a Legacy for the Sonoran Desert

Are you interested in protecting tomorrow’s wildlife today with a legacy gift to the Coalition? A legacy (or planned gift) is a gift that you decide to give at some future date. There are various types of legacy gifts, including bequests in your will or trust, being included as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, IRA, or life insurance, and gifts of real estate. **Legacy giving allows you to make a generous gift that you might never be able to give during your lifetime — and have a huge impact on the people and wildlife of the Sonoran Desert.** Want to learn more? Give us a call at (520) 388-9925, head to sonorandesert.org/donate-now/legacy-giving, or send an email to Kathleen Kennedy at Kathleen.Kennedy@sonorandesert.org. We’d love to talk with you.

Celebrating 20 Years of Sonoran Desert Protection *continued*

With so many wonderful accomplishments to celebrate, what lies ahead? What new goals and projects are we dreaming up? **First and foremost, with your support, we will continue to build on and leverage everything we’ve accomplished so far. Conservation is a never-ending process and all the projects listed above continue to evolve — new threats emerge and new opportunities arise all the time.**

As a community, we will:

- ✳ Continue advocating for protected open spaces, both on public and private lands.
- ✳ Work tirelessly to re-connect our threatened open space preserves. Along with continuing current projects, we’ll be shifting our sights to the Interstate 10–Davidson Canyon wildlife linkage area.
- ✳ Strenuously oppose any proposed interstate in Avra Valley west of the Tucson Mountains. Working with a wide array of partners, we are advocating for the re-design of Interstate 10 to both accommodate increased traffic flow and re-connect our downtown area. We will also continue to oppose the Rosemont Mine and monitor this project as it evolves.

- ✳ Improve and refine our Community Science projects with clear goals and objectives to ensure they are collecting the best data possible. This includes working with partners such as Arizona Game and Fish Department and Pima County and providing regular reports to our volunteers.
- ✳ Maintain productive working relationships with local governments, state and federal agencies, community partners, and landowners to ensure we are poised to tackle new projects as they occur.

Last but not least, we want to hear from you! What are your dreams for the Sonoran Desert? What projects do you care about the most? And where can we improve? Keep your eye out for a quick survey this fall where you can let us know what you care about — we can’t wait to hear from you!

Once again, thank you for being such an important part of this community. **Your support over the past 20 years has been absolutely essential and I hope you are proud of everything we’ve accomplished together.**



Left: Manzanita students use binoculars for the first time. Use of binoculars allowed students to view the wildlife bridge up close in a non-invasive manner. Binoculars on loan from the Tucson Audubon Society. Right: Taking finger painting to the next level, Manzanita students learn about color shades and camouflage in the Sonoran Desert.

Leading the Next Generation into the Field

Critter Cam Program expands from one to four schools in the next year

by Sarah Whelan, Program and Operations Manager

Thanks to the help of our volunteers and supporters like you, we have been on an incredible journey engaging the youth of our community in our work. Two years ago, the Robotics Club of Manzanita Elementary School was interested in what roadkill could tell us and how technologies are used to pull data from the field for analysis that leads to potential solutions. This curiosity led to the Coalition's partnership with public educator Charlotte Ackerman building a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) curriculum around remote wildlife cameras, data management, species identification, field experiences, and more.

Thanks to you, we are expanding the Critter Cam Program from one to four elementary schools!

Coalition capped off this experience with Critter Cam Field Day in March 2018. We led students out into the field for a firsthand experience in field-based biological research, bringing full circle the material learned throughout the school year.

What's next as we head into the 2018-2019 school year? Thanks to supporters like you, we are expanding our efforts district-wide in the Catalina Foothills School District, taking this program from one to four elementary schools! It's our goal to engage the youth of our community in the importance of conservation on all scales, in the hopes that they will carry with them lessons learned as they grow scholastically and personally. The next generation of conservationists are here, they're curious about the natural world around them, and they're eager to know more. When approached with the opportunity to work on this program, we didn't hesitate. It's important to invest in the next generation and that is why we're leading them out into the field.



Coalition volunteer Carl Boswell leads the next generation out into the field to service wildlife cameras paired with the Critter Cam project.

Monitoring the Sonoran Desert

Coalition's wildlife camera project engages community and gathers important data

by Jessica Moreno, Conservation Science Director

The Coalition's wildlife camera monitoring projects are engaging the community while gathering critical information about species richness and diversity. We currently have two project areas: the Tucson Mountains and Avra Valley Study Area northwest of Tucson and the SR77 Wildlife Crossing Study Area in Oro Valley. We have been using this data to protect these wildlife corridors and help track the need (and success!) of wildlife crossing structures, and contributing additional information to studies led by Saguaro National Park and the Arizona Game and Fish Department. To date, we have 3 years of monitoring data in the Tucson Mountains and Avra Valley area and nearly 6 years of data from the SR77 Wildlife Crossings Study Area. In total, we have collected nearly 73,000 photos of wildlife representing more than 60 different species, including rare occurrences of bighorn sheep, mountain lion, white-nose coati, and badger.



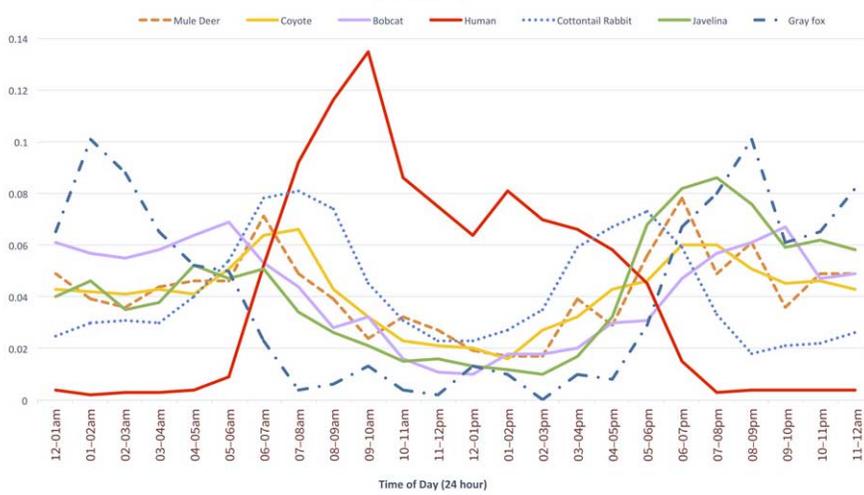
Photo courtesy DAVID camera—Frank Pitts

Left: Wildlife camera photos are automatically stamped with the date and time, allowing us to see how animals behave on the landscape throughout the day, season, or year. Throughout the day, we can see how animals interact with other species, including people. Here we see that the peaks of activity around dawn and dusk — a behavior we call crepuscular — is common for many species in the desert. This could be a learned behavior to avoid the presence of people on the landscape, as well as an adaptation to avoid the heat of midday.



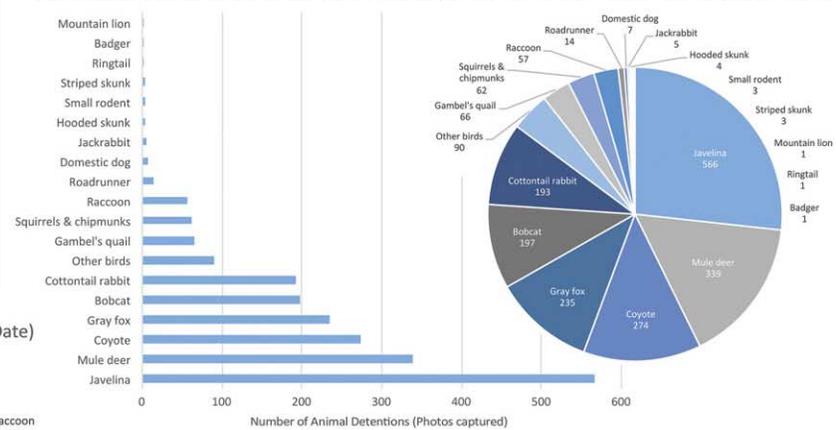
Photo courtesy LUCY camera—Keith Kleber

Selected Species Activity by Time of Day (2012-2017)

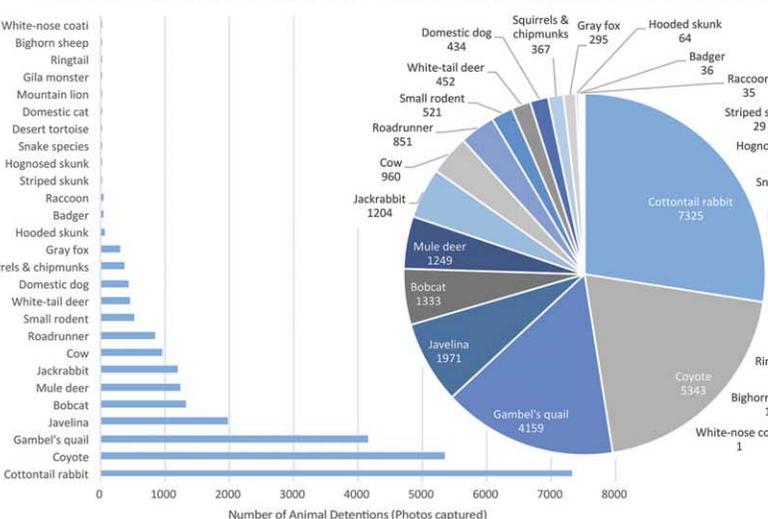


Right: In the Tucson Mountains, our focus is outside the existing Saguaro National Park monitoring area, at the northern part of the mountain range. This area is understudied, constrained by existing development, and threatened by potential I-11 highway expansion. Javelina and mule deer currently dominate this landscape with coyotes and gray fox. Viable movement corridors northeast and west to the Tortolita and Silverbell mountains will be critical for the genetic health of these species, and for the already less-common bighorn, mountain lions, and mesocarnivores like skunks and ringtail.

Relative Abundance of Species in the Tucson Mountain and Avra Valley Study Area (2015-2018 to Date)



Relative Abundance of Species in the SR77 Wildlife Crossing Study Area (2012-2018 to Date)



Left: With over 40 camera locations placed since 2012, we have a good look at the diversity of wildlife in this important wildlife corridor. Cameras were strategically placed both east and west of the highway, pre- and post-construction of the wildlife crossings. We can see a healthy balance of predator and prey species, and a reassuring occurrence of several different species of mesocarnivores (small to medium-sized carnivores like skunks and badgers) present in the area. With this data — now 68,909 photos of wildlife and counting — we can report status and trends on both sides of the highway before and after the crossings structures were built, and monitor the effects of a nearby new multi-use trail as well as the presence and absence of wildlife-funnel fencing over time.



The 3,200-acre Tesoro Nueve Ranch was purchased by Pima County in June 2018, filling in an important “piece of the puzzle” for open space protection in the Catalina Mountains. *Photo courtesy Brian Powell, Pima County.*

Pima County Purchases Important New Open Space Parcel

3,200 acres now protected on the east side of the Catalina Mountains

by Kathleen Kennedy, Associate Director

In June 2018, Pima County approved the purchase of the Tesoro Nueve Ranch on the east side of the Catalina Mountains. This 3,200-acre parcel is an important “piece of the puzzle” in the wildlife linkage between the Catalina and Galiuro Mountains, including the San Pedro River.

Tesoro Nueve is home to a variety of threatened fish, frogs, birds, and wildlife, including coatimundi and bears. We are very excited that Pima County will be adding this property to the county parks system.

According to a Pima County press release, “The total purchase price is \$1.55 million, with \$488,000 to be paid by the Regional Flood Control District and the balance to be paid by the County Administrator’s

Special Revenue Fund at closing, scheduled to occur before August 17. That fund includes \$1 million received from a 2014 Kinder Morgan mitigation agreement and can’t be used for purposes other than purchasing land for conservation. No general funds will be used to acquire the property... The

property was part of the estate of Katheryne B. Willock, a noted archaeologist and a generous contributor to the University of Arizona Libraries, who died in January 2017.”

Your support of protected Sonoran Desert open space continues to demonstrate to Pima County that these types of open space purchases are important and valued. Thank you!

The Tesoro Nueve Ranch is an important “piece of the puzzle” in protecting this wildlife linkage.



Photo courtesy Stacy Egan-CC Flickr

Thank You to All Our Supporters!

We have hundreds of individual financial supporters and volunteers, including our stellar group of recurring donors, our Desert Champions. We are so grateful for your donations, your volunteer hours, and your time spent speaking out on behalf of the Sonoran Desert.

The following foundations have supported the Coalition for many, many years. We look forward to continue making a positive impact for the Sonoran Desert together:

Wilburforce Foundation

MET Foundation, Inc.

Steven C. Leuthold Family Foundation

Deupree Family Foundation

Jade Tree Foundation



Wildlife Crossing Project on the Move

Post-construction goals and projects continue on the Oracle Road wildlife crossings

by Jessica Moreno, Conservation Science Director

The early morning air smells of humidity, rain-soaked soil, and triangle-leaf bursage, and the prickly pears still bear some fruit. This morning, Carolyn and I are in the field instead of the office to check on the wildlife crossings near Oracle Road and to meet with stakeholders about gaps in the wildlife fence.

When the wildlife crossings were completed on Oracle Road it was cause for much celebration — the culmination of over 20 years of research, advocacy, planning, and compromise to build several wildlife crossings and the first wildlife bridge in the Sonoran Desert to reconnect a threatened wildlife pathway between the Catalina and Tortolita mountains. The reward was immediate, with mule deer, javelina, coyotes,

bobcats, and desert tortoise using the new structures without delay. **Two years later, animals have made thousands of safe crossings back and forth, over and under, Oracle Road.** But the finished construction was not the end of the road for the Coalition, and several project goals continue:

- * Monitoring the approaches with wildlife cameras to track success.
- * Completing the essential wildlife-funnel fencing where gaps exist.
- * Installing signage.
- * Working with partners to monitor and improve revegetation post-construction.
- * Addressing emerging issues, including the new multi-use Big Wash Trail.
- * Conducting quarterly highway trash pick-ups.

The Coalition has 40 wildlife camera that monitor wildlife in the areas surrounding the wildlife crossings. **Since 2012, thanks to the help of an amazing team of volunteers, we have collected 68,909 wildlife photos in this area, representing over 60 different species, including the rarely seen bighorn sheep, badger, and mountain lion.** With this data, we have been

able to combine knowledge with Arizona Game and Fish Department’s ongoing studies to track trends and monitor success.

We’ve completed designs for wildlife signs (see article on back cover) near the crossings and adjacent areas, which are being printed now and will be installed soon. **In addition, we are working on educational signage for the multi-use trailhead on Tangerine Road, and a kiosk-type station with more detailed information for visitors.** With member groups and community partners, we are still looking at follow-up needs for the vegetation on the bridge and underpass approaches, including the possibility of adding new soil amendments and plantings. The original reseeding effort is working well, with only minimal invasive species plant growth. Monsoon rains have helped with the green-up of the crossing structures, but it will take time for complete regrowth of native vegetation.

The placement of the new Big Wash multi-use trail was a new surprise, and we have been working to reduce its impact on the wildlife crossings themselves. The trail runs north-south within Big Wash just west of the underpass and terminates at a state land boundary gate where hikers and bicyclists can potentially continue to the wildlife bridge and areas beyond. After the trail’s grand opening, a disturbing increase in off-road vehicle use occurred, causing disturbance and vegetation damage. Disturbance — noise, lights, and human presence — can make animals avoid the area and as a result avoid the only safe passages across Oracle Road. **Most of our local wildlife prefer to travel at night or in the cool**

The exciting part is being realized right now: A new standard for the future.

light of dawn and dusk. Our camera data clearly documents this trend and, working with the Sonoran Desert Mountain Bicyclists and Pima County, we were able to successfully get the trail closed to the public at night. Pima County also placed vehicle barriers at the trailhead and non-motorized use signage along the trail. This is an ongoing issue we continue to monitor.

continued

With your support, we have collected 68,909 wildlife photos representing over 60 different species.

Welcome Jessica Moreno, Our New Conservation Science Director!

The Coalition is excited to announce the hiring of our new Conservation Science Director, Jessica Moreno. In her new position, Jessica will be monitoring and protecting wildlife, connected habitat, and ecosystem health in the Sonoran Desert, along with engaging people to create stronger community connections and values with desert wildlife and open space. Jessica will be taking over the reigns of our popular Wildlife Camera Monitoring Project and our Critter Cam Program, among other projects. Jessica brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this position. Welcome Jessica!

I was raised by the desert. I don't know exactly when this led to my decision to be a biologist, but maybe it was that moment, shin-dagger thorns in my jeans, when I saw the sunset light up the Atascosa mountains after my first volunteer trip setting wildlife cameras. Or maybe it was leaving my bed at night with a flashlight to find the spadefoots calling after a flash flood. But the desert led me right here.

After graduating from the University of Arizona with a degree in Wildlife Management in 2007, I coordinated mountain lion and bobcat studies in the Tucson Mountains for the UA Wild Cat Research and Conservation Center. For the next seven years I worked with Sky Island Alliance, leading the Wildlife Linkages Program, studying jaguars and ocelots in the borderlands, and protecting

Wilderness through outreach, research, policy, and planning. I have served on the Arizona Wildlife Linkages Working Group, the Pima and Cochise County Wildlife Linkages Assessment Working Groups, and the RTA Wildlife Linkages Committee.

With the Coalition I have found a community that brings my experience and passion full circle to protect the desert that I call home. CSDP's superhero team of staff, partners, and volunteers is a joy to work with. I focus on our community science wildlife monitoring projects, from volunteer data collection to analysis, and applying what we know to build safe passages for wildlife.

I also serve on the Executive Board of the Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society, and



in my spare time explore website design, writing, and photography. I have two children, Sofia and Mateo, and love outdoor cooking, wading barefoot in creeks, and the scent of wild open spaces.

Interested in our Wildlife Camera Monitoring Project? Please reach out to Jessica at Jessica.Moreno@sonorandesert.org or give her a call at (520) 388-9925.

Wildlife Crossing Project on the Move *continued*

Another challenge we continue to focus on is the need to fill gaps in the wildlife fence on the west side of the highway, where right-of-way issues required part of the fencing be placed away from the road. We continue to work with Pima County Flood Control District, local residents, the Rancho Vistoso HOA, and other partners, to find an innovative solution. This includes alternative fencing that further improves the effectiveness of the crossings and reduces instances of roadkill, while respecting the community and neighbors.

While my boots navigate the cactus and my eyes scan the ground for animal tracks, I can't help but think that the exciting part is being realized right now: A new standard for the future.

20 New Desert Champions for 20 Years!

We've set a goal of adding 20 new Desert Champions to celebrate our 20th Anniversary! Are you interested in giving regularly and automatically to support the Sonoran Desert and local wildlife? Our recurring donors, affectionately called our Desert Champions, give monthly or quarterly through our online giving portal or through their personal banks. Head to sonorandesert.org/donate-now/become-a-desert-champion to learn more. We can't wait to have you on board! Questions? Give us a call at (520) 388-9925 or send an email to admin@sonorandesert.org —we'd love to hear from you!



Photo courtesy Martin Ely, CC Flickr



New Proposed Interstate Continues to Threaten Avra Valley

Your support will help us fight any route near Saguaro National Park and Ironwood Forest National Monument

by Kathleen Kennedy, Associate Director

Coalition staff have been actively involved in stakeholder meetings around the proposed "Interstate 11." In recent months, Coalition Executive Director Carolyn Campbell and Coalition Board Chair Christina McVie both participated in stakeholder groups for the two proposed I-11 corridors, one co-located with I-19 and I-10 through Tucson and the other through the Avra Valley.

During meetings for both groups, we opposed the route alternatives through Avra Valley west of the Tucson Mountains. These possible routes would be adjacent to both Saguaro National Park and Ironwood Forest National Monument and run through the Tucson Mitigation Corridor (lands previously set aside as protected by the Bureau of Reclamation for impacts caused by the Central Arizona Project canal). A new group, the I-11 Joint Stakeholder Community Planning Group, released a position statement in August that describes our views on I-11 in more detail. The full text can be found at: <https://bit.ly/2Mg9es3>.

We expect a Draft Environmental Impact Statement with an identified Preferred Alternative to be released in early 2019. At that time, we will need your voice to speak up for the Sonoran Desert! Stay tuned as we know more and thank you for supporting this important work!

Ironwood Forest National Monument: Ragged Top.
Photo courtesy Bob Wick, BLM-CC Flickr



Art on the Landscape

Local biologist and artist lends her talent to the Oracle Road wildlife crossings

by Jessica Moreno, Conservation Science Director

Meagan Bethel is an inspiring biologist and artist, currently studying Wildlife Management and Conservation at the University of Arizona. In addition to her many other hobbies and interests, including volunteering at the Valley of the Moon and interning with Coalition member group Sky Island Alliance, Meagan also creates fantastic art inspired by the natural and fantasy world. Her work has appeared as logos and t-shirt designs for scientific conferences, the Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society, and other Tucson-

area groups. In 2017, she created a wonderful pen and ink drawing that will be displayed this year on our new wildlife crossing area signs for the Oracle Road wildlife crossing structures. Her art will truly be on the landscape! In the future, this piece may also be reproduced in metal for a larger educational kiosk about the wildlife crossing project (and perhaps also as a mural in our office). You can see more of Meagan's artwork at <http://doodles-of-a-bethel.tumblr.com/>. Thank you Meagan!