

# 2021 Annual Gratitude Report



Coyote / Raynor Vandeven

## Advocacy + Education + Collaboration



The Coalition's mission is to protect the biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona through science-based advocacy, education, and collaboration.

We work 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.



Anna's Hummingbird / Bob Shea

Red Spotted Toad / Roger Carpenter

## Letter from the Board President

While 2021 brought its share of continued global challenges, I remain ever grateful to have this community by our side as we weather life's storms together. The ongoing successes of the Coalition, made possible because of your support, include our persistent advocacy for sustainable, sensible development practices, watershed-based, water conservation policies, and regional efforts to update and streamline ordinances to reflect our shared reality; partnering with federal and state agencies, local governments and non-profits to improve wildlife connectivity, including removing miles of obsolete barbed wire fencing in the Avra Valley, while setting an even more ambitious goal for this coming year; ongoing wildlife camera and field work near Interstate 10 to identify and rectify wildlife movement barriers; and our continued wildlife monitoring efforts region-wide. Thanks to you, we continue to grow stronger, including a new paid internship program! All of these accomplishments occur in the context of climate change contributing to declining reliable Colorado River flows and increasing aridification. Nevertheless, we persist in doing whatever we can to improve our resilience and adaptation, thanks to you supporting the wide variety of Coalition projects driven by our collective mission and passion for protecting the health and diversity of the Sonoran Desert!

*Christina McVie*



Mountain Lion / Lucy Camera

## *Where mountain lions walk, ecosystems thrive*

### 2021 was the “Year of the Mountain Lion” for our wildlife program

This was the year of the mountain lion for our wildlife camera program. Our wildlife cameras proved their worth and Desert Monitor volunteers were rewarded for their efforts when, during a hot June summer night in Oro Valley, a **female mountain lion traveling Big Wash used the wildlife underpass to cross beneath Oracle Road.** Our cameras continued to photograph her moving northeast that night, deeper into Catalina State Park and into the foothills of the Catalina Mountains. **This marks the first record of *Puma concolor* using the Oracle Road wildlife crossings since their construction.**

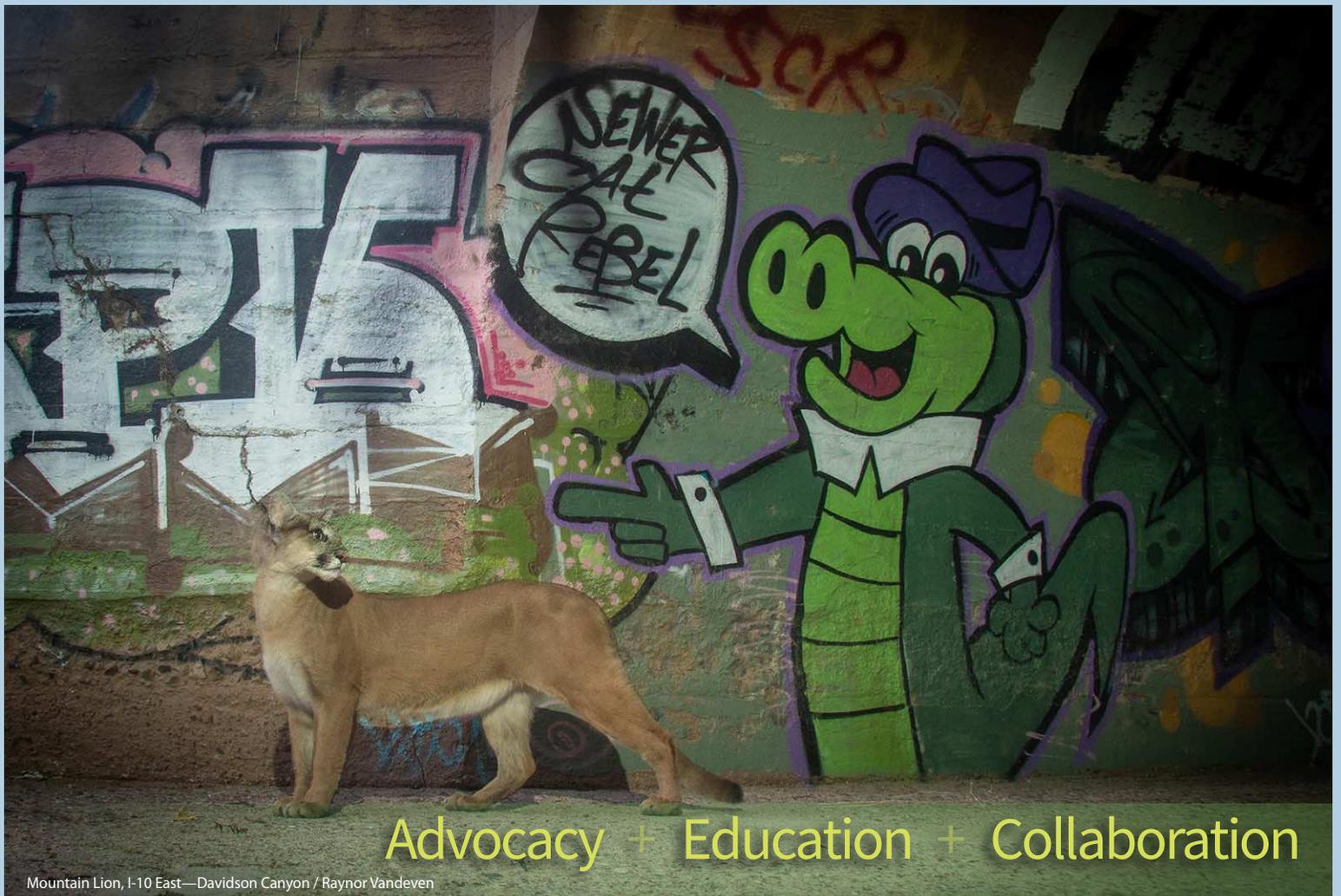
As a female, based on her slender neck and the lack of the more telling male characteristics, she might have weighed between 65 to 140 pounds and was close to seven feet in length, with tall hind legs and a graceful tail long enough to sweep the ground in

her wake. She had been sighted on our cameras before, and in years past, always west of the highway in Big Wash and on Arizona State Lands close to the wildlife bridge and Sun City area. **Will we see her again, now that she has a whole new mountain range to explore?**

So secretive, we usually only get a photo every other year, especially because we monitor their travel routes rather than within prime mountain lion home



Mountain Lion, Sopori Wash



Mountain Lion, I-10 East—Davidson Canyon / Raynor Vandeven

ranges... but this year our Big Wash puma wasn't alone at the party. **We also photographed a young sub-adult with kitten spots barely faded from their coat exploring the northern end of the Tucson Mountains, a mating pair traveling south together across I-10 near Cienega Creek, and a healthy adult padding patiently behind a herd of javelina in the Sopori Wash wildlife linkage.** The light of the moon paled in comparison to the gleam in the puma's full eyes. **Where mountain lions walk, ecosystems**



Mountain Lion, Tucson Mountains



Mountain Lion, I-10 East



Mountain Lion, Sopori Wash



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## *Fencebusters tackle legacy fencing in Avra Valley, improving connectivity for wildlife*

**Your support for this new project is improving wildlife movement between protected open spaces**

**In 2021, your support helped launch a new collaborative conservation project in Tucson's west valley to improve and enhance wildlife movement between natural areas by removing miles of deadly fencing barriers.**

In December 2021, a group of 65 volunteers representing multiple agencies and non-profits came together one weekend morning and removed three miles of old barbed wire fencing in northern Avra Valley west of the Tucson Mountains. Three tons of barbed wire, fence posts, and other related metal was hauled away by project partners. This improved the ability of wildlife to move freely between Tucson Mountain Park, Saguaro National Park, the Tohono O'odham Nation, and Ironwood Forest National Monument. **Volunteers were especially enthusiastic to get their hands dirty and do something positive and tangible together for the**

**Sonoran Desert after almost two years of increased isolation due to the pandemic.**

In March 2022, a second multi-day fence removal event was held in southern Avra Valley near Three Points, again resulting in many tons of metal being removed from the landscape. Despite some intense winds and dust, volunteers were again excited to see such an immediate impact to the landscape.





**On the last day, one of our project partners observed a herd of deer running across the grasslands freely and quickly, something that they could not have done just days before!**

After this event, the steel wire was sold for scrap (with the generated funds designated for future projects) and fence posts were donated to Pima

County for reuse. **Saguaro National Park is also holding fence removal events within the park boundaries for park volunteers, and more events are being planned for Fall 2022 and beyond.** We are energized by the amount of enthusiasm from supporters like you that this work is being done, and we hope that you can join in a future effort.

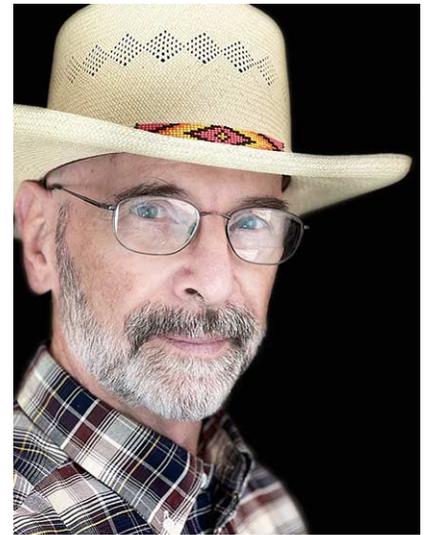
*Many thanks to our first cadre of volunteers for opening up natural landscapes so wildlife can move freely between protected areas!*



## 2021 Volunteer of the Year: *Virgil Swadley*

*“Tending to Coalition critter cameras and identifying animals in the photos is my way to help CSDP in their program to protect and enhance our desert wildlife.”*

— *Virgil Swadley*



Volunteer of the Year is a distinction not always earned by long service or the most hours contributed but can also be for exceptional effort across one or more volunteer activities, or maybe because of one memorable beyond-the-call-of-duty endeavor. But when someone can wear all these hats, it can't be ignored! Virgil Swadley joined the Coalition in 2000, and in 2017 participated in our first foray into wildlife camera monitoring in the Tucson Mountains with a “micro bioblitz” that has lasted five years and counting.

We highlighted his volunteer efforts in 2020, after Virgil added Desert Identifier work to his Desert Monitor experience during the start of pandemic. Virgil, along with fellow Desert Monitor Keith Kleber, has been instrumental in the Coalition's expansion and monitoring of 22 cameras in the Tucson-Tortolita Mountains Wildlife Linkage. **When flooding threatened some of our camera placements, Virgil and Keith carried a step ladder into the field**

**to anchor the cameras higher in the trees.**

**Even rattlesnakes haven't deterred them.**

After the pandemic lockdowns lifted, Virgil was readily available to swing by front porches to drop and pick up supplies. **Then, this year Virgil became our first volunteer Desert Project Manager, taking a leadership role to help our Conservation Science Director keep the Tucson Mountains Project camera photo database in tip-top shape.** In 2021, Virgil clocked in 286 volunteer hours and 67 miles on the road for CSDP.

**Thank you, Virgil, for your consistent service, your humor, initiative, and infinite patience, and your willingness to learn database management for our Wildlife Camera Program.** There will be wildlife crossings across I-10 near Avra Valley Road in no small part due to your exceptional help. You are well deserving of our 2021 Volunteer of the Year Award!



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# Our Volunteers can do Anything... and EVERYTHING!



Ringtail / Raynor Vandeven

- + Total volunteer hours **1,180** (\$28.54/hr 2021 value according to Nonprofit Leadership Center = \$33,677 in volunteer match!)
- + Total volunteer mileage **3,925**
- + Total number of volunteers **66**
- + # New volunteers **19** (5 Desert Identifiers, 14 Desert Monitors)
- + Volunteer Retention **73.4%**

## Volunteers powered these programs in 2021:

- + Desert Advocates **59** hours **2** volunteers
- + Desert Monitors **720** hours **3,925** miles **48** volunteers
- + Desert Identifiers **354** hours **12** volunteers
- + Desert Roadies **12** hours **1** volunteer
- + Desert Mailers / Mailing on Tour **30** hours **6** volunteers
- + Other / Unspecified **4** hours **3** volunteers



White-tailed deer / Karin Bivens

## 2021 Wildlife Camera Statistics

- + # of cameras in the field **90**
- + # of wildlife camera project areas **4** (Oro Valley, Tucson Mountains, I-10 East, Sopori)
- + # wildlife camera photos **3 million total** over 10 years of the project
- + # species photographed **70 species total** over 10 years of the project

## 27 Events for 2021!

- + **18 program-related events** (Environmental Lobby Day, Camera Placements, Volunteer Check-ins)
- + **9 outreach presentations**

## Get Involved!

Interested in donating, volunteering, or using your voice to advocate for a Sonoran Desert?

Head over to [www.sonorandesert.org](http://www.sonorandesert.org) and learn more!



# Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest \* Arizona Master Naturalist Association \* 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 \* Great Old Broads for Wilderness –Tucson \* 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 \* Southwestern Biological Institute \* Tortolita Alliance \* Tortolita Homeowners Association \* Tucson Audubon Society \* Tucson Herpetological Society \* Tucson Mountains Association \* Wildlands Network



Horned Lizard / Carolyn Leigh



SonoranDesertProtection



SonoranDesertProtection



@ForTheDesert

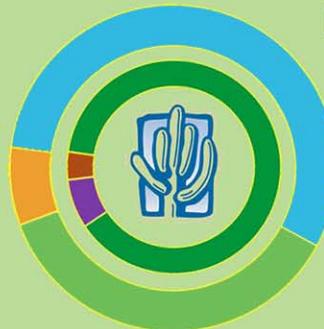
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Saguaro Flowers SNP East Freeman Homestead Trail / Debbi Golden-Davis

### Thank you. Gifts of all sizes make an impact in supporting a protected and connected Sonoran Desert!



**Net Income FY 2021 \$113,177**

**Total Revenue \$377,466**  
 Individual Donors 55.8%  
 Foundations (unrestricted) 36.4%  
 Restricted Grants & Contracts 7.8%

**Total Expenses \$264,289**  
 Program 88.4%  
 General Operations 7.4%  
 Fundraising 4.2%

*We gratefully acknowledge these foundation and grant funders who supported our vision in 2021:*

**Wilburforce Foundation \* MET Foundation \* Deupree Family Foundation \* Leuthold Family Foundation \* Alben F. Bates Foundation \* AZ Game & Fish Heritage Grant Program**