

Friends of the Desert

Issue 63 Fall 2023

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

Taking Care of the Wildlife Crossings

Our new Desert Wildlife Crossing Crew volunteers will restore and improve habitat on the Oracle Road wildlife crossings

Exciting news! The Oracle Road wildlife crossings are getting a glow up! It's been seven years since the Sonoran Desert's flagship wildlife bridge and sister wildlife underpass were officially declared "open for business." Thousands of animals have used the crossings to navigate passing over or under Oracle Road safely. These crossings have become a point of pride for our community. Now they need a little love and maintenance and the Coalition is up for the task.

Over the next year, our newly formed Desert Wildlife Crossing Crew will be getting together monthly for "Habitat Restoration Days" to remove invasive plants, distribute seedballs, and plant native trees and plants. All this work will result in wildlife crossings in tip-top shape so they remain attractive to local wildlife for many years to come.

Our first Habitat Restoration Day was on September 8 and our Desert Wildlife Crossing Crew volunteers flagged invasive species such as buffelgrass, tick grass, and Russian thistle and got a start on removing these plants. In one morning we filled 8 large trash bags with invasive plants.

Up next? Our Fall 2023 Habitat Restoration Days will focus on planting ironwood trees, spreading seedballs, removing more invasive species, and doing an assessment of the underpass. Throughout the next year, we will also be designing and installing new interpretive signage for both crossings and producing a series of educational videos.

Want to join our Desert Wildlife Crossing Crew? Head over to our RSVP page for the entire year-long project and sign up for the days you can volunteer. *We'd love to have you join us for this exciting and much-needed new project!*



Funded in part by



SANTA CRUZ VALLEY
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Fall 2023 Desert Wildlife Intern Andrew Grusenmeyer is already making a difference on the first day of work!



We'd love to have you join us for this exciting and much-needed new project! RSVP for our new Habitat Restoration Day events at <https://bit.ly/3F5TQIR>

Thank you for making all this possible!



Carolyn's Corner

Full moon reflections on 25+ years of protecting the Sonoran Desert

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

We are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on traditionally Native lands, including those belonging to the O'odham, Tohono O'odham, and Pascua Yaqui.

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
 Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Tucson Broadband
 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 Alliance
 Tortolita Homeowners Association
 Tucson Audubon Society
 Tucson Herpetological Society
 Tucson Mountains Association
 Wildlands Network

As I sip my coffee on an early Friday morning, I am watching a very full and bright Harvest Super Moon while I write this article. The early morning is peaceful and quiet, which brings reflection. I am filled with wonder — wondering how many full moons have passed in the 25 years that the Coalition has been working to protect this beautiful desert that the bright moon is shining on. Has it really been that long? I am also filled with gratitude. Gratitude for the support from this community, a community of people that share our passion for keeping the desert alive and thriving, and involvement at all levels of the intentional work that we have been doing for two and a half decades. This support keeps my passion stoked, keeps our staff and board inspired and engaged and, I hope, gives optimism that the Sonoran Desert remains a vibrant and living place, even as the reality of climate change becomes a stark picture.

Our Coalition will continue to do the hard work to address the issues that face us each day. We are accomplishing this together as a community and are proud of this.

But in this moment, I pause with wonder and gratitude for the 25-year journey we have been on together, working to protect this amazing place. Thank you for your part in this journey so far, and into the future.

Carolyn Campbell

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Photo by David Pederson

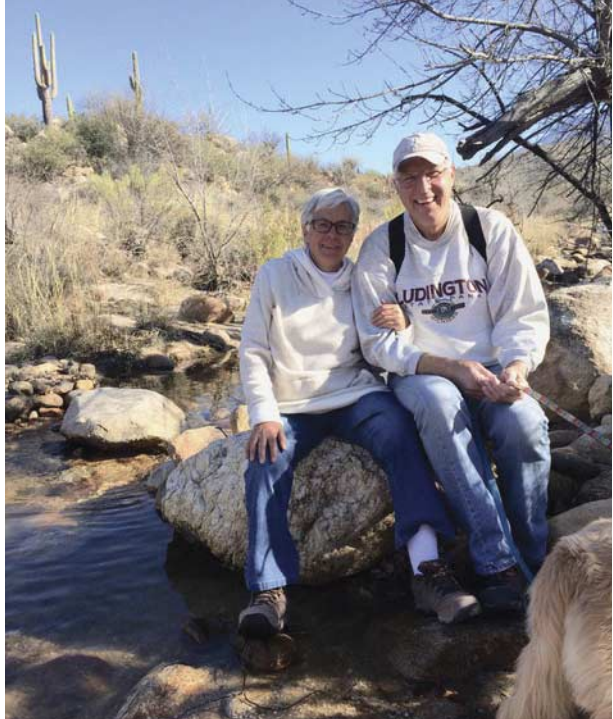
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The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection is an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Our EIN # is 82-2156664.

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Volunteers of the Year Spotlight

Thank you for everything you do, Pat and Henry Miller!

Congratulations to our 2023 Volunteers of the Year: Pat and Henry Miller. Pat Miller has been incredibly effective at advocating and organizing in Oro Valley to find the best solution to the fencing gaps near the Oracle Road wildlife underpass, fixing erosion issues, and supporting revegetation and interpretive signage for the crossings. Henry Miller is not only a Desert Monitor but also a Desert Roadies team leader, and he never misses a Highway Clean Up event. **The desert is a more wild and beautiful place thanks to Pat and Henry!**



Welcome Jonni, Andrew, and Jeremiah!

We've had a growth spurt! This past August, we welcomed Jonni Zeman as our new full-time Program and Communications Coordinator, along with Andrew Grusenmeyer (see front page) and Jeremiah Powers as our Fall 2023 Desert Wildlife Interns. **We are so excited for the fresh energy, expertise, and creativity that our newest team members are bringing to our mission.** Head over to our website to learn more and we hope you're able to meet Jonni, Andrew, and Jeremiah at a Coalition event soon!

Our Desert Wildlife Internship program is funded by the Deupree Family Foundation.



Desert Fence Buster volunteers hard at work removing old, dangerous, barbed wire fencing in Avra Valley.

New Desert Fence Busters events!

Join us this fall and winter for more fence busting in Avra Valley west of the Tucson Mountains

The Desert Fence Busters are back with a new slate of projects for Fall 2023 and Winter 2024. Interested in getting out on the landscape to remove old barbed-wire fences with immediate positive results for wildlife movement? Our next two events are 7am–1pm on Friday and Saturday, October 20–21, and Friday, November 17. RSVP on our website today!

The Desert Fence Busters is a collaborative community project that aims to identify and remove outdated barbed wire fences that limit healthy wildlife movement and endanger wildlife in the Sonoran Desert of southern Arizona.





New CSDP Merchandise now available

Pick up a new t-shirt and more!

Join us in celebrating over 25 years of Sonoran Desert Protection this year by purchasing a new CSDP t-shirt! This beautiful original design was created by our Program and Communications Coordinator Jonni Zeman and features a new interpretation of our logo and a variety of Sonoran Desert wildlife along with our classic tagline of “Un Amigo del Desierto es Un Amigo Mio” (A Friend of the Desert is a Friend of Mine).

You can order a new t-shirt, either short or long-sleeved, by visiting our website, giving us a call, or sending an email to admin@sonorandesert.org. You can also go to our new Threadless page at sonorandesert.threadless.com where you can order this design on t-shirts, stickers, totes and more!



**Stay
Connected!**



Exploring wildlife crossings across the country

Oracle Road Wildlife Bridge featured as second stop on Wildlife Crossings Across America Tour

This September, we had the honor of being a stop on the first Wildlife Crossings Across America Tour. It was a pleasure to share the success of the Oracle Road crossings with the tour team and we are honored to have been a part of their journey!

This tour was spearheaded by Beth Pratt, a lifelong wildlife advocate with the National Wildlife Federation, and inspired by P-22, the famous mountain lion that catalyzed the construction of the massive Wallis Annenberg wildlife bridge over the 101 freeway in Los Angeles. After the passing of P-22 earlier in 2023, Beth and her team decided to spread awareness of the importance of wildlife crossings in urban spaces even further.



A mule deer crosses the Oracle Road Wildlife Bridge. Photo courtesy AGFD.

This brought them to their recent journey: exploring 11 wildlife crossings across America and sharing with the world the possibilities of creating safe passages for wildlife. It was very inspiring to share more about the Oracle Road wildlife crossings and efforts to protect wildlife linkages across Arizona during their tour stop with us.

Thank you for supporting Sonoran Desert wildlife crossings — they are a true inspiration for so many around the world!

**Your year-end donation will
improve wildlife crossings
and protect open spaces!**



sonorandesert.org/donate-now/