

Friends of the Desert

Issue 65 Fall 2024

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

Reflections on 26+ years of protecting the desert

Thank you for continuing to invest in the legacy we've created together

As I write this, it is my last day of employment with the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection. Tomorrow, I transition to the Board of Directors and retirement. Reflecting on the last 26+ years, I am proud of so many accomplishments and successes we have achieved together. Leading an organization that was instrumental in the designation of the Ironwood Forest National Monument, the adoption of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, working to ensure the passage of both a significant open space bond and the first-ever voter-supported funding package for wildlife crossings, are all big milestones, along with so many other exciting and positive projects that resulted from those significant achievements. But it is the ongoing work protecting land parcel by parcel and working on new conservation policies by educating and advocating that I have always found so rewarding.

The Coalition is in good hands. I leave the organization with a tremendously capable and caring staff. We have built a strong voice for conservation that will continue into the next decade and more.



Carolyn Campbell, newly retired after founding and leading the Coalition for 26+ years.

That is the foundation we have built, together with the passion and expertise that exists in our community.

I love this organization. I love this work. I am so proud of what we have all accomplished together. **You continue to inspire me.**

I want to sincerely thank the Coalition's amazing Board of Directors, staff, member groups, Advisory Committee, and supporters for entrusting me with the leadership of the Coalition. Thank you for celebrating this new season with me — I will continue to be involved with the Coalition as we face the challenges of the future, including our ongoing fight against the I-11 West Option and advocating for robust funding for wildlife linkages in the next RTA plan. **And I hope that all of you will continue the work of this incredible organization in the years ahead.**

For the desert,

Carolyn Campbell

Celebrating our volunteers! Congratulations to Andrés Martínez on being our Volunteer of the Year

We are celebrating and raising a toast to our many volunteer awardees, and to our Volunteer of the Year — Andrés Martínez! Andrés has been a Desert Monitor for four years and manages five wildlife cameras with his dad Ruben: the SAGUARO, VIEW, TOAD, MARTINEZ & BUCK cameras, located in Catalina State Park. Andrés has been one of our most consistent and dependable volunteers and has a knack for camera placements that take great wildlife photos, especially of deer!

To all our volunteers, thank you for being an integral part of our team taking action to protect the Sonoran Desert and its wildlife.



Andrés and Ruben Martínez, out in the field checking wildlife cameras.

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 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 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, Nopales Group

Sky Island Alliance

Society for Ecological Restoration

Tortolita Alliance

Tortolita Homeowners Association

Tucson Audubon Society

Tucson Herpetological Society

Tucson Mountains Association

Wildlands Network



CSDP staff: Kate Hotten, Jessica Moreno, Kathleen Kennedy, and Jonni Zeman

An exciting new chapter begins

Kathleen Kennedy and Kate Hotten are continuing the Coalition's commitment to collaboration

Earlier this year we formally adopted a co-leadership model at the Coalition. The Co-Executive Director role was a natural next step for our own Kathleen Kennedy and a reflection of how Carolyn and Kathleen have shared leadership responsibilities for many years. Kathleen has worked for the Coalition for the past 17 years and brings deep knowledge and experience in operations, fundraising, and communications.

We're now excited to welcome to the Coalition our newest hire, Kate Hotten, who joined Kathleen and the team in September as our second Co-Executive Director. **Kate brings nearly two decades of expertise to the Coalition from her work in landscape conservation, advocacy, spatial planning, and risk management.** To read more about Kate's journey to the Coalition, see our [staff page](#). Kate will now lead the Coalition's policy, planning, programs, and partnerships work.

We enter this new phase with excitement and optimism, energized by the talent of our entire Coalition community.

Thank you for being with us on this journey!



Kathleen Kennedy Co-Executive Director

Kate Hotten Co-Executive Director

Jessica Moreno Conservation Science Director

Jonni Zeman Program & Communications Coordinator

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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A full year of habitat restoration at the Oracle Road wildlife crossings

Your support is creating a positive impact for wildlife in the Catalina-Tortolita Mountains wildlife linkage



Above: Carianne Funicelli and a large group of volunteers planting agaves on the wildlife bridge, in partnership with Bat Conservation International.

Inset: A new agave planted on the wildlife bridge in August 2024. Thank you for supporting this project!



We're not done yet!

Join us for upcoming Habitat Restoration Days

Our work at the Oracle Road wildlife crossings continues, with a focus on:

- * Repairing ongoing erosion issues at the wildlife underpass
- * Invasive species removal along the wildlife fencing
- * Guiding animals to the safety of the crossings with improved funnel fencing
- * New Desert Education Workshops for local youth
- * Maintaining new plants from this past year

These work days are an opportunity to be involved in real, lasting restoration and conservation efforts that benefit local wildlife.

We hope you can join us!



These wildlife crossings have come a long way since construction was finished in 2016 — take a look!

- * 100 native plants and trees planted
- * 50 agaves planted
- * 50+ bags of invasive species removed
- * 2,000 animals using the bridge and underpass each month
- * 1 Sonoran Desert tortoise found by volunteers crossing the bridge
- * 235 volunteers at 12 Habitat Restoration Workdays
- * 735 volunteer hours
- * 10 partner organizations
- * 19 YouTube videos created about the project
- * 6 new informational signs installed at the wildlife crossings



The Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area (SCVNHA) connects people to the historic and cultural foundations and the living landscapes of the Santa Cruz Valley and actively works towards its long-term stewardship.



Thank you to Carianne Funicelli at Strategic Habitat Enhancements for your incredible partnership on this project.

Thank you for supporting this important and exciting project



Check out our YouTube channel for the latest work at the Wildlife Crossings



Join our team!
RSVP now for an upcoming Habitat Restoration Day

The pygmy owl's call to action

Exciting changes to our wildlife monitoring program ahead

by Jessica Moreno, Conservation Science Director

Our wildlife monitoring efforts occasionally feel represented best by one species or another, whether it be kit foxes or mountain lions, badgers or bighorn sheep. Today I'm thinking about the pygmy owl. The cactus ferruginous pygmy owl is smaller than a can of soda, but has a personality as big as the desert sky. Their fluttery *too-too-too-too* call, in E flat, is like the sound of a stuttering tea kettle or nature's imitation of a car alarm. For so rare a bird, their voices sound comfortably familiar. As we turn our focus more to Avra Valley along the proposed I-11 West Option route, and plan for building bridges and connections across I-10 at Avra Valley Rd, it feels appropriate to imagine the pygmy owl watching and waiting for what we do next.

There are many treasures of the desert, from its people to the many sounds, sights, smells and experiences of its beautiful, prickly, teeming life that can imprint on your mind and soul. But the presence of the pygmy owl, a disappearing species with a fighting spirit, is one of those that adds a sense of the sacred. It will take new approaches and an all-in effort to help these little owls survive. Checking cameras this crisp cool morning, one can't help but listen for that familiar call hanging in the winter air. It might just save us all.

Going Solar

Our wildlife cameras are getting an upgrade! Tucson Electric Power is helping us transition our wildlife cameras in the Tucson-Tortolita Mountains Wildlife Linkage to solar power. We'll be holding a series of volunteer work days with TEP employees this fall and we can't wait to share the results.



A cactus ferruginous pygmy owl in the Altar Valley. Photo courtesy Pima County.

2024 Wildlife Monitoring Program Highlights

- * Added 6 new cameras on the CAP Canal and in Tortolita Preserve
- * Helped plan the new Santa Cruz River wildlife ramp
- * New online volunteer training courses
- * New solar-powered wildlife cameras

Welcome Aster Schaefer, our new Desert Wildlife Intern!



Please give a warm welcome to our Desert Wildlife Intern, Aster Schaefer! Aster (he/they) is an Arizona Master Naturalist and a student at Pima Community College seeking a transfer degree in Liberal Arts. As a Desert Wildlife Intern, he will be helping us manage our wildlife camera database and contribute to our projects that protect wildlife and Sonoran Desert habitat.

Having a prior background in botany, they are most excited to add desert wildlife identification to their repertoire in a setting that also provides real-world contributions to biodiversity initiatives.

Help us reach our goal of raising \$125,000 by the end of the year—donate today and join us in protecting one of the world's most biodiverse deserts for future generations.



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