



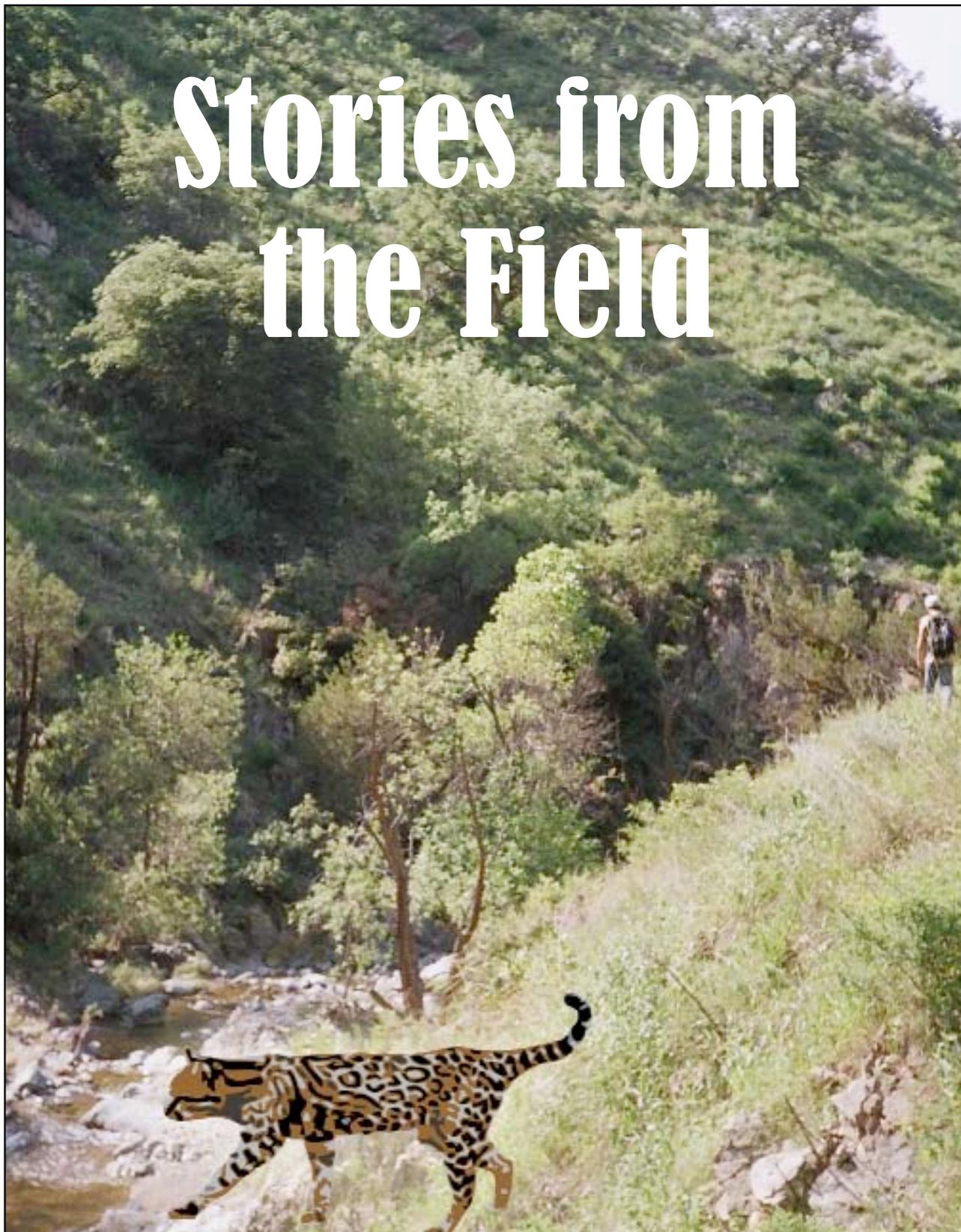
**SKY
ISLAND
ALLIANCE**
Protecting our Mountain Islands
and Desert Seas

Restoring Connections

Vol. 10 Issue 3 Autumn 2007

Newsletter of the Sky Island Alliance

Stories from the Field



"Where ocelots live," a remote canyon in El Aribabi. Photo by Sergio Avila.

Where is Oscar Now?

On his way to Tucson for the Donor's Party of course! Join us Saturday, November 17, 7:30pm at the Lodge at Ventana Canyon. Supporters of Sky Island Alliance have propelled Oscar hundreds of miles with contributions of \$50 or more — check out "Oscar's Trek" on our website and join us for a special surprise on November 17. Please RSVP to Moniqua at 624.7080 x17 or moniqua@skyislandalliance.org.

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The Northern Mexico Conservation Program



A special pull-out section on the collaborative restoration & research work of Sky Island Alliance and landowners just south of the border as they track the elusive *cuatro gatos*

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From the Director's Desk

"We're in the field this weekend."

As Sky Island Alliance hosts its twenty-fifth public field trip of the year this week, I am inclined to reflect on that ubiquitous phrase echoing through our organization so often. Whether it's the boundaries of the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Act, the wildlife linkage between the Dragoons and the San Pedro River, the road decommissioning project in the Santa Ritas, or the ocelot photos in Sonora, the majority of our policy development and protection campaigns start with a volunteer, a camera, and a data sheet – in the field. It's been that way for some time, and with a couple hundred folks pitching in throughout the year, we tend to cover a lot of ground, so to speak. The payoff is significant – we're making a measurable difference every time we swing the sledge, place the rock, or plant the tree cutting. This on-the-ground focus that Sky Island Alliance brings to land and wildlife conservation is a defining characteristic of who we are, no doubt. It will always be a core component of what we do and how we succeed.

In addition to the direct conservation impact, field events reap something even richer than the work itself. With a campfire in front, a long day of work behind, and the Milky Way glowing above, a certain connection takes shape amongst the people, places, and wildlife of the Sky Island region. Born out of a love for place – a love for wildness – the field binds us with the earth while teaching us something we would've never learned had we not been there. It may be as technical as knowing that more than 1000 miles of illegal, unmapped roads exist on the National Forest, thus prompting policy development that aims to



West side of the Sierra Azul. Photo by Sergio Avila.

lower road densities. Or it may be of another ilk, such as knowing how the west-side of the Galiuro mountain escarpment glows orange with the days last light. Regardless of its objective or subjective meaning, the connection and knowledge that flows from our field programs is quintessential.

Recently one of our staff sent a note around stating "I like the fact that at our office, we have shovels and tools scattered about – tells me something about who we are and what we do". This simple observation spoke so well to the applied nature and culture of our organization. It's no secret that if you come out with SIA on a field weekend, you're probably going to get dirty doing something important, and that's a good thing.

With all that time in the field, you can imagine that more than a few good stories have formed over the years. Who would've thought an ice cream truck would be driving back roads in the Santa Ritas on a brutal summer day, stopping to

hand out free popsicles to volunteers after walking roadless area boundaries for eight hours? How about running into that mountain lion taking a cat nap in the Peloncillos, or popping a tire in the middle of the San Francisco River in pitch dark? In this issue, Restoring Connections celebrates that connection through the tales of our staff, volunteers, and colleagues. Whether it's dangerous, hilarious, bizarre, or beautiful, we all have stories about what happened 'out there'. By telling those stories, we hope to further instill the importance of connecting people to place, while making a real difference on the ground. The truth of the matter is that applied land and wildlife conservation is a whole lotta fun, and our stories are important components of weaving this work into our lives and into our community of people who care.

Matt Skroch, Executive Director



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Sky Island Alliance is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the rich natural heritage of native species and habitats in the Sky Island region of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. Sky Island Alliance works with volunteers, scientists, land owners, public officials and government agencies to establish protected areas, restore healthy landscapes and promote public appreciation of the region's unique biological diversity.

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Coming home is the best of all

I had high hopes for my trip to San Diego. I'd be helping out with the California Society for Ecological Restoration conference, but surely there'd be time to wiggle my toes in the sand and skitter in the waves like an oversized peep. But no, the Santa Anas slapped my car upside the head and plumes of smoke from the fires greeted me as I rose over the pass. And while our little nook of San Diego — Mission Bay — escaped the fire, ash and smoke, all I wanted to do was find "the 8" and mainline it home.

Even without the fires, even given my homing instinct for a coast, any coast, even though after 17 years under the desert skies I crave the moisture... as Dorothy so succinctly stated, there is no place like home.

And I have many homes here in the Sky Islands, some more wild than others. But all magical. All sit under that infinitely blue and weather-rich sky. All have secret nooks where you can be invisible or rest or make time stand still. Many hold the memory of encounters with wildlife — bear cubs, bobcats, javelinas, bats and snakes. And some of my most favorite homes have running water. Ah, the luxury.

I am so proud to be affiliated with the organization that is protecting and preserving my homes — from working to create a wilderness area to protect the Tumacacori Highlands, to building partnerships and a conservation ethic with landowners south of the border, to setting the pace and the tone for the protection of Coronado Forest lands, to getting people out into the backcountry and investing sweat equity in tracking wild beings and restoring the landscape.

There will always be people and corporations who see things differently — who see the copper (money) beneath the surface or the development potential (money) of open space, and who tell us that we need to use the last of the aquifer before someone else does. But we cannot afford to let greed set the agenda. The time is now to create a new paradigm where communities stand up for each other and the landscape that shelters and nourishes them. We are a part of our physical landscape, our home, and it's time to honor that connection. I know, I know, you are already aware of this. But are your neighbors? your friends? the people you work with? It seems the only way we can truly make this shift work is to bring everyone else on board, one by one, two by two... It's time to preach outside the choir, outside the church. Sign up for a field weekend with Trevor and bring a friend; get a group of buddies and attend a tracking workshop so you can adopt your own transect; get your friends with cats (are they ever truly domesticated?) to adopt a camera so Sergio and his crew can not only bring back ocelot footage, but jaguar too; or just call up a long-lost friend and go on a hike. We don't need fires to remind us what's important... just step out doors and look in any direction... what can you do to help?

— Julie St. John, Editor

If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito — Betty Reese

Next issue: Population Growth

Restoring Connections is published three times a year; the deadline for our next newsletter is 15 January 2008. Material submitted after that date may be saved for subsequent issues.

Please email submissions to: julie@skyislandalliance.org, or mail them to Sky Island Alliance, PO Box 41165, Tucson, AZ 85717. Resolution of digital images should be at least 300 dpi if possible.

We want to keep this newsletter filled with inspirational, informative material, and we'd like your help! Do you write poetry? Draw, sketch, paint or photograph? Like to address regional conservation issues? Review books or websites? Anything that relates to the Sky Island region is fair game! You can respond to items in our recent newsletter, comment on your experiences as a volunteer or conference-goer, etc. Or give your favorite small-town restaurant a boost by writing a review and letting us promote it!

Welcome!

This past August, Moniqua Lane joined us as Development Associate, and is focusing her energies on raising the capacity of our programs through new members and major donors. She brings with her experience and skills that will help propel SIA into the future... welcome Moniqua!

We're incredibly pleased to announce that Lahsha Brown will join the SIA team, beginning December 1. No stranger to public lands conservation, Lahsha will focus her time on land protection efforts in the greater Peloncillo region, building consensus and momentum for federal legislation that will protect this magnificent region... welcome Lahsha!

feather rattle barrel

I am walking in the desert with my friend Steve. It is just past sunset but the colors in the sky are still raw with power. We wind and wend our way through brittlebush, prickly pear, cholla and mesquite. He is describing to me a tracking class he took the weekend before. Intuitive tracking. I listen quietly and soak in the desert around me. I feel a little anxious connecting with this beautiful swath of Sonoran desert because it will soon be under the developer's blade. But I do not dwell on its fate tonight. Instead I track Steve's path in my migratory brain, hoping that I will be able to find my way out here again. Steve and I are not the type of hikers to make a lot of quick progress. He stops often to illustrate an important point and I pause just as often to admire a strong cholla or a large barrel cactus that has been saved from lying in repose, like most of its size, by a number of well-placed rocks. We are looking for the Saguaro Grove. Steve has been coming out to this untrailed part of the canyon for years now and has a favorite stand of saguaros that he finds by following a ridge to its end. We are not taking the ridge route tonight to make it more of an adventure. I will stop him at times and say, Look at those saguaros over there! He will turn around to see where I'm looking and make a noncommittal reply. I don't mind. I'm having fun. At one point, when the light has almost completely faded from the sky, I stop a few feet from the base of a huge saguaro. I could be a small child looking up at my mother for all the awe and emotion I am feeling. "Steve, look," I say quietly. I notice more arms behind her, this saguaro, and whisper "Tres Hermanas." Three sisters. I can tell they are the guardians of this desert. So green, so round, so fuerte, strong in essence. I could spend the rest of the night, of my life, in their care. I could spend days listening as they weave their stories.

I remember how, a few years earlier, I had found great symbolism in feathers and knew that each feather that fell across my path would give flight to my hopes, my dreams. I look at these three sisters and know I have come full circle. It is now my turn to give flight to their dreams. Saguaro dreams. I try to earmark this location in my memory so that I can return. But for now, we, Steve, is bent on finding the grove. We do. And it is impressive, but I continue to look over my shoulder, searching out the sisters, but they have retreated behind the curtain of my sight. The mountains are glowering obscenely with cloud-reflected city lights. Any saguaros I see are ghost sticks in the distance. We are making our way back down the wash to Steve's truck. He is worried about snakes. This is the time of year when they begin to reclaim their desert lands. As it grows darker and we are intuiting our way through cactus stands and strands of barbed wire fence, he stomps his feet and pricks his ears, his whole head and upper body following, at noises that could be rattles. — Julie St. John



Remembering

IN MEMORIAM

Nancy V. Seever

22 JUNE 1928—8 AUGUST 2007

Last August, the Sky Island Alliance family lost one of our exceptional volunteers. It is with a heavy heart I type words telling everyone that Nancy Seever passed away on August 8, succumbing to leukemia. Nancy's vibrancy makes it strange to imagine that she is no longer laying down her footprints on some dusty Sky Island road. That's how I see Nancy. Ground truthing roads for Trevor or looking for wildlife tracks.

Nancy was a longtime Sky Island Alliance supporter and volunteer. She joined the tracking program at the beginning, having participated in Group 1's tracking workshop held back in 2001. Nancy's first adopted tracking transect was in our Cienega Creek Project in Mescal Arroyo. Later she moved to the Dagoon Project, first surveying Slavin and then Smith Wash. I know that her tracking partners miss her smile, her humor, and her love of all nature's critters.

Nancy wanted to ensure that other folks got to have as much fun as she did tracking for Sky Island Alliance. In her honor a scholarship fund has been set up so that the workshop fee for one volunteer-in-need is covered for each future workshop. I am pleased to inform you that this fall we are welcoming Kristina Stramler as a new volunteer tracker courtesy of Nancy. Thanks Nancy.

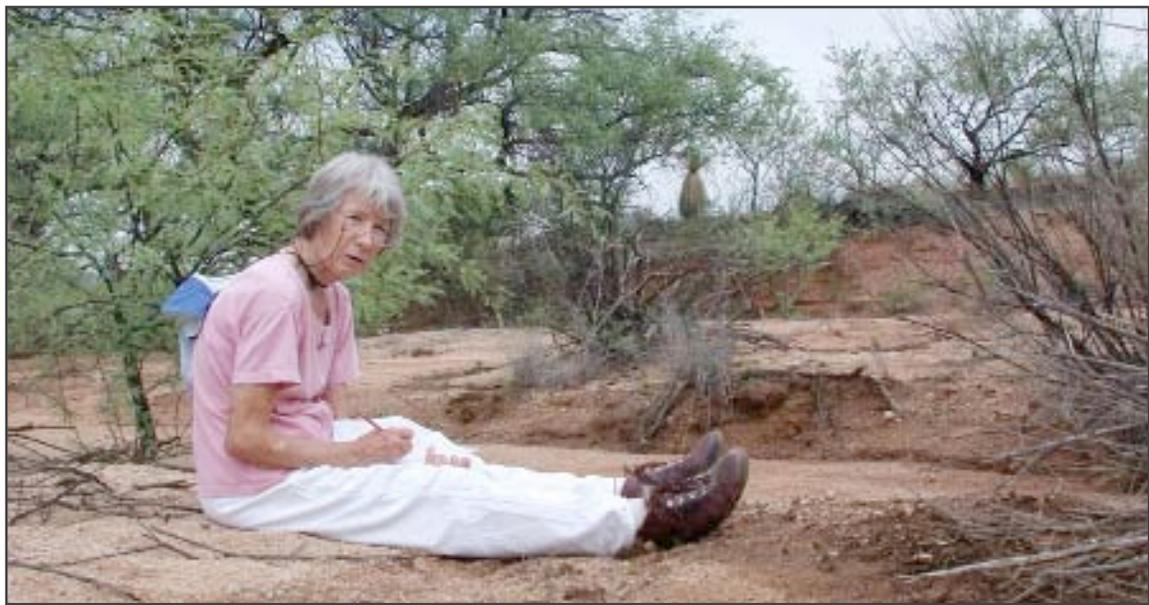
Yes, my heart is heavy as I write this, but I know that Nancy will be out there everywhere, tracking and laughing with me forever.

I've asked others in Nancy's Sky Island Alliance family to add a few words. Please read Gita Bodner's eloquent and touching remembrance on this page, and Matt Skroch's fine words just below.

— Janice Przybyl

Nancy Seever was a volunteer extraordinaire at Sky Island Alliance. With a perennial smile and 'can-do' attitude, Nancy brought joy to the dozens of field projects she was part of over the years. She continually amazed those who worked beside her with a strength and determination that eclipsed her age and physical limitations. Nancy was an avid outdoorswoman who loved spending time in the field, ever learning about the diversity of life and ways to protect it. Whether it was restoration projects, wildland inventories, or wildlife tracking, she did it all. She was a core part of SIA's volunteer crew, and became a close friend to many of us. Nancy's legacy at Sky Island Alliance will not be forgotten.

— Matt Skroch



Along Slavin Wash in the Dragoons, where a rainstorm had laid the perfect canvas for fresh tracks. Photo by Gita Bodner.

Nancy and I began as tracking partners. At the end of one early car-pooled day in the Dragoons, she asked me in to her house to puzzle out how her old computer might talk with a new camera so she could send photos to her sons. What I thought was a favor—bridging a gap between generations' technologies—turned into a blessing beyond the bounds of time.

I knew I'd happened upon a special friend the moment I set foot in her tiny, wild yard full of hummingbird feeders, goldfish pond, and the willful mimosa tree that she climbed each season to trim it back towards the height her co-op association allowed. Inside her small home she lived in the ocean of her own creation: blue-gray floor painted with octopi, starfish, sharks; hammock chair suspended in the water column. I can see Nancy there now, legs slung over the arm of a bright red chair, tennis shoes kicking like a teenager's.

Before long Nancy was the ticket to my first season at the opera, the source of my new 17-year-old hand-me-down sedan that I drove over the 200,000-mile mark (and that she had driven down countless dirt roads to Sky Island Alliance field weekends; it always needed realignments).

Best of all, Nancy showed me a window into a fully compassionate life that stuck by its principles. Nancy pulled no punches judging against those who harmed the natural world. Yet in the trials of others, she saw what each person had overcome even as she described how they might have trespassed against their fellows. Nancy, as it turns out, had been a social worker almost from birth, open to the sorrows of others but also to their joys, understanding and lending a hand. She began her life's work in Chicago's "settlement houses" where families like hers lived among the urban poor and cast-outs, sharing lives and building hope. She would have been a young girl there during the War, holding whichever babies needed holding so their single or widowed mothers could work to support them. From there through years of running camps for disadvantaged youth, raising her own family, solo sailing on Lake Michigan, going to the Dominican Republic in her sixties with the Peace Corps, becoming SIA Volunteer of the Year in 2003 and 2005 before triple hip replacement, traipsing through Italy to see her grandchild—what a life!

The last few months with Nancy were a blessing as well, getting to know the sons of whom she was so proud, their father, the bright-eyed grandson whose finger-paintings she displayed like Picassos, and other family. Nancy's gracious good humor rose to the occasion, even in the hospital where she collected slightly morbid cartoons over which we shared laughs, but didn't dare show the nurses...

It pleases me to be able to share stories from my time with Nancy—and the stories keep coming. Three weeks ago marked the start of my annual field season with volunteers; I always get a bit nervous before it begins, wanting it to be productive and satisfying for everyone involved, wondering if I'll have missed some piece of prep work that will throw a day off track. So it was no big surprise to dream that first day before it happened, trying, in the dream, to know what a stream needed to become healthy again, and how our hands could make it so. And into my solitary angst came Nancy, first person onsite, climbing the hill. "Nancy, aren't you... um... um...?"

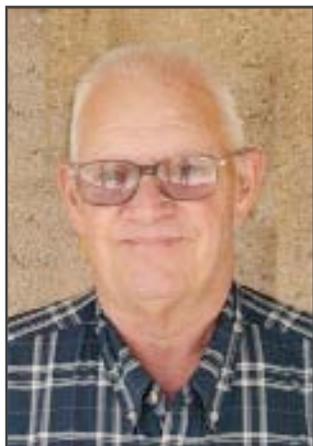
And she grinned, "Oh, I wouldn't let a little thing like that keep me from coming out to help!"

— Gita Bodner

IN MEMORIAM

Tom Wootten

20 MARCH 1939—7 AUGUST 2007



The past August I received a message from fellow SIA board member Angel Montoya that our friend Tom Wootten was gone. Tom was one of my oldest friends and a long-time supporter of conservation (including many SIA projects). I first met him through

his wife Eleanor, who was an undergraduate with me in Wildlife Science at New Mexico State back in the 80s. (*Eleanor, who had returned to college after raising a family solely for the joy of learning, was always blowing the curve in class for the rest of us less-motivated students.* ☺) We soon found out that we shared a love of the outdoors and became fast friends. Tom had been able to take an early retirement from a career in banking and had gone back to school and gotten a degree in Horticulture. This area was truly his passion and he ran Las Cruces' only native plant nursery for many years. He was always looking for opportunities to talk to people about the advantages of desert-adapted landscaping. I once asked him how successful this business was in comparison to his other financial endeavors. He said that once he counted up all the hours he put in and the startup costs that he was probably losing money, but that it was the "right thing to do."

At the time, we had just started working on the BLM's wilderness evaluation and recommendations for southwestern New Mexico. Our official group at that time was the New Mexico BLM Wilderness Coalition (a predecessor to the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance), but Tom thought we needed a catchier acronym and came up with the Committee of Wilderness Supporters. (He thought a headline such as "COWS Support Wilderness Bill" would get more attention.) One of the areas in which he worked the most was the Peloncillo Mountains that run along the Arizona/New Mexico border. In the 80s, this range was relatively unknown and unexplored for wilderness potential. Tom took numerous trips to the region and found several areas that the BLM had either overlooked or chosen not to include. He was especially interested in the Lordsburg Playa area because he felt that this was a "habitat type that was totally unrepresented in the Wilderness system."

The team of Tom and Eleanor were always fascinating naturalists to have on a field trip, with Tom focusing on the plants and Eleanor focusing

IN MEMORIAM

Robert Zahner

5 OCTOBER 1923—1 SEPTEMBER 2007

On the first day of September this year, the conservation community lost a dear friend and indefatigable advocate: Bob Zahner. Bob and Glenda kept a home in Tucson and a home in Highlands, North Carolina, making lifelong friends and supporting environmental causes in both the Southwest and the southern Appalachians.

Born in 1923, Bob studied forestry in the booming post-WWII era, eventually becoming a Professor of Forest Ecology at the University of Michigan and then Clemson University. Always an advocate of sustainable forestry, biodiversity, and wilderness, Bob opposed the dominant paradigm of the 1950s and 1960s by arguing for the protection of old-growth forests and criticizing clearcutting at a time when most foresters claimed that extensive clearcuts and old growth liquidation—



on the birds. Tom was great at helping even the most "challenged" potential botanists learn their plants and would patiently explain ways of telling the types apart and share some of their amazing attributes. All it took to perk his interest was to tell him of an unusual plant species that you had found and he would be out the next weekend to investigate.

Tom eventually re-retired from the nursery business and, after a brief time in Tucson, he and Eleanor settled in a beautiful location along the upper Gila River near Gila, New Mexico. This new "retirement" didn't allow much grass to grow under his feet and he was soon busier than ever promoting conservation causes. Their home, located near The Nature Conservancy's Lichty Ecological Research Center, provided them an opportunity to interact with and support many of the researchers who used the facility to conduct their studies.

Tom and Eleanor were not newcomers to the area of supporting scientific research. While still in Las Cruces, the two of them founded T & E, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to appreciation and preservation of our native flora and fauna. (The name is another one of Tom's creative acronyms and plays on both Tom's and Eleanor's initials and "threatened and endangered" species.) This group helped fund mini-grants to support research of many often overlooked or understudied species in the

even on the national forests—were the most appropriate way to manage forestlands. Time proved Bob's perspective much the wiser one.

Bob and Glenda raised a family in a low-consumptive back-to-the-land manner in Highlands and made a permanent mark on the western North Carolina conservation movement.

Later in life, they spent many winters at their second home in the west Tucson Mountains, supporting Sky Island Alliance and many other environmental organizations in southern Arizona. Bob was brilliant yet humble, a teacher and mentor but not pedantic, persistent but not stubborn, a committed advocate but not strident—a model for the conservation movement. Bob died peacefully in his sleep at home at the age of 83, working for the cause ceaselessly to his last day on this beautiful earth, kept just a little greener because of this remarkable man's efforts. We send our love and gratitude to Bob, Glenda, and the whole Zahner clan...

— Paul Hirt for the Board, staff,
& friends at Sky Island Alliance

Southwest. This support was crucial to many graduate students, helping them conduct research not funded by the mainstream sources. T & E has also worked to share the resultant research findings with the land management agencies to help them better manage these natural resources.

Tom was a long-time supporter of the work of Sky Island Alliance and would frequently ask about some of the projects and issues with which we were working. He had been nominated several times to join our board, but while stating that he felt that it was a great honor to be asked, felt that he needed to decline in that "it was too important a job to be taken lightly" and that it would take away from his time spent on other conservation work.

The thing that I will remember most about Tom is that he was one of the few individuals I have met who could "walk the talk." Conservation was not just a "cause of the moment" but became incorporated in most aspects of his life. He was tireless in his dedication and became even more active in his later years. Since his passing, Eleanor has said that even she has been amazed at how many people have contacted her to tell how Tom had touched their lives through his work and passion. It is this legacy that will be the longest lasting and should inspire others for generations to come.

— Steve Marlatt
Sky Island Alliance Board member

Setting a new set of tracks

by Gene Isaacs, Wildlife Linkages Program volunteer

“Come forth into the light of things,” William Wordsworth posed in 1798, “let Nature be your teacher ... knowing Nature never did betray the heart that loved her.” I’ve come to the conclusion that yes I need a divine teacher. I have read the books, listened to lectures, perused the reference materials, and I still don’t know much about the wild world. The problem is that I’m big-city born and raised. My work-life has been spent entirely in tall buildings with efficient air conditioners and musical elevators. I don’t know how to “come forth into the light of things.” But Sky Island Alliance is doing their best to rescue me from my civilized ignorance: they’re introducing me to the wilderness, training me to be purposeful, and letting me indulge my Thoreau dreams.

The enticement was a newspaper blurb inviting the curious to a track count at Audubon Ranch. It was admittedly just a whim, something for me to do on an otherwise dull Saturday morning—the cartoons were all re-runs. I was amply rewarded, though, with a bunch of canine and ungulate tracks, cat and bear scrapes, desiccated critter scat, javelina rootings, coati nose rings, and an enthusiastic Janice to explain them all. The “call of the wild” beckoned to this old dog; but, I’m a slow learner, and it took many other track counts, and the gentle persuasiveness of Sky Islanders, before I saw the “green” light and signed up to be an official transect tracker.

The initial training requires five days. There have been ten classes to date, at various locations. Our group (class number eight) camped at Empire Ranch, part of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. The weather was great; the food was tasty and plentiful; and the trainers were



Javelina courtesy Charlotte Lowe-Bailey.

undoubtedly the best in the West. I’m not sure of the exact numbers, but it seemed like the teachers outnumbered the students. They were all nature and wildlife mavens; with, in addition to their impressive scholarly credentials, years of practical, hands-on experience studying and writing about and chasing after our target species. And they didn’t always rush to get home when the school bell rang, either; they supped and boozed and schmoozed with us in the evening, passing on important tracking lore in the same practical way American Indians, Kalahari Bushmen, and Australian Aborigines taught their attentive progeny: they yarned around a campfire while sipping frosted bottles of jungle juice.

But they mostly educated us in the field, showing us the differences between the tracks of canids and felids, coatis and raccoons, black bears and barefoot immigrants. They taught us how to count toes and lobes, to measure prints—length and width, planter pads, strides and straddles. They encouraged us to involve all our senses—including our seldom-used sixth sense—to effectively eavesdrop on what the critters are doing. An allergy to cats, for instance, can be a distinct advantage if your sneezing alerts you to the recent presence of a mountain lion. We learned about the tracker’s basic tools—GPSs, maps, cameras, and the all-important KTM rulers. And, *à propos à la mission*, they schooled us on the Wildlife Linkages Project protocol and how to document our findings so they would be both scientifically relevant and politically useful to the overall goal of protecting the Sky Islands from ... just about everything.

After the graduation bash and after the tassels are turned, graduates are matched up with experienced trackers and assigned to a transect.

For Nature lovers—for all lovers—the first time is the epiphanic moment when true understanding begins. Fortunately, it is part of the protocol that the experts—often the same experts who taught us—continue to evaluate and accredit and critique our reports. In addition to preventing someone’s Great Dane hiking companion from being counted as the northern-most Jaguar in the America’s, their feedback helps to continually refine a volunteer’s observation skills and improve their tracking methods.

The specific purpose of transect tracking is to repetitively survey an assigned area in order to identify and document any large predators using it as a corridor between the Sky Islands. Most transects are less than two miles long, but it generally takes four or more hours per visit for a thorough investigation. The system works admirably, with a well-deserved bonus for the budding naturalists: the repetitive, concentrated perustrations get them away from the distractions of civilization and provide the best possible forums for their continuing education.

Nature herself—and the rest-of-your-days continuum of experience—has proven to be the best teacher. Although it’s a physically demanding activity, the unofficial, pacifistic, ulterior purpose of transect tracking is for the volunteers to quietly enter the world of their own Walden Pond, letting the critters themselves—by reading the tracks and signs—relate the fascinating neighborhood gossip. Nature reveals Her secrets slowly and heuristically; and with each addictive visit to Eden, through the seasons, over the weeks and months and years and lifetimes, we neoteric volunteer trackers will gradually learn to love—and work hard to protect—each and every one of Mother’s creatures.

Spring on Sycamore Creek

Richard Kittle

Pale bouldered hills dotted pink
penstemon
above Bear Creek Falls;
dry rock crevice spilling over wild
red geranium sings

—Catalina Mtns., 2005

Beavers in the Sky Islands

by Karla Pelz-Serrano, a University of Arizona graduate student studying Wildlife Management & Conservation

A lot of people ask me, “Are there beavers in Arizona?” The answer is yes! Although their populations are smaller than the populations in the northern U.S. and Canada, there are still beavers in the southwestern U.S. and northwest Mexico despite their near-extirpation a hundred years ago for their valuable fur.

Beavers are called ecosystem engineers because they modify their ecosystem to benefit themselves and other species. I have always thought beavers were great creatures and very smart because they create their own dams, maintain them perfectly, and keep the water level as they like. Therefore I was very happy when the opportunity to study beavers was offered to me. And what a great opportunity — to study beaver populations that required conservation efforts to maintain their place in the Sky Islands.

Beavers of the Sky Islands used to inhabit beautiful riparian areas with crystal clear water and big willows and cottonwoods that provided cover and food for many riparian species. However, in the last 20 years, most of the riparian areas of southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico have been completely disturbed or destroyed by human activities, and much of what remains is in a severely degraded condition. Moreover, the presence of cattle in the riparian areas has affected the conditions of these ecosystems, polluting the water and damaging the riparian vegetation. These factors have constricted beavers to small riparian systems, leaving their populations in critical condition.

The good news is that in the Sky Islands there are still some riparian areas in good condition, with big cottonwoods and willows —and these areas still harbor beavers. It is crucial that we protect these areas because we will no longer have beavers or other riparian dwellers in the Sky Islands if the effects of cattle and human activities continue to degrade the riparian ecosystems.

One important population of beavers in southwestern U.S. resides in the San Pedro River National Conservation Area. Beavers were reintroduced to this riverine system in 1999 to benefit plants and wildlife by increasing the river’s water retention and restoring the quality of the riverine forest. This population established successfully, but little is known about their actual ecological or conservation status. Other important, but less studied beaver populations in the Sky Islands reside in Sonora, Mexico, in small portions of the Cajon Bonito and Bavispe River systems

Beavers are not the only species endangered by fragmentation; many species are facing its effects including reduction in populations, geographic isolation, endogamy, etc. An important tool in

evaluating the consequences of fragmentation on wildlife is genetics, which promotes the conservation of genetic diversity and allows decision makers to generate management plans.

During the years I have been studying beavers, I have realized that there is little information about their genetics. Gaining genetic information about beavers in the Sky Islands is crucial for future conservation management plans.

In order to carry out my research I require tissue samples (hair, ear snips, mouth swabs, etc.) of the beavers in my study areas. Therefore, I must trap the beavers using Hancock traps that are specially designed for beavers. Beavers do not get hurt in these traps and my handling of the creatures is minimal as I only weigh them, mark them with a microchip, and take the hair and/or ear snip. Then the beaver is released and I go back to the laboratory to analyze the samples.

Beavers are such great animals to work with. When they are in the traps they do not stress out like other animals, and they are not very aggressive which makes easier to work with them. In addition, during this study I have been able to observe some of their behaviors. When you are around their territory they slap their tail in the water or in the ground to communicate to the other members of their colony that predators or something weird is going on. Another interesting behavior is that they use their resources very wisely. Even though they cut and gnaw on a lot of trees, they actually reuse those trees. A lot of people think that they cut the trees and leave them behind as waste — but I have observed that they reuse them to build their dams or they eat the entire thing! Also, after beavers cut some trees, they leave them alone and in this way the trees can regenerate. In the same way, when they have been using a lot of the resources in an area, they move to a different area so the previous one can regenerate and the ecosystem carries on the natural succession of species.

Beavers are a very important component of the riparian ecosystems in the Sky Islands. We have the opportunity to help not only the beaver, but also other species that benefit from the presence of beavers. Next time you go to a river or stream in the Sky Islands and you see cut trees or you hear a slap in the water you may be watched by a beaver. Take a minute to look around you and if you are lucky enough you may see a beaver of the Sky Islands.



Beaver courtesy Terry Spivey, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

the Presence, I

*Notes from the field,
author unknown*

Tumacacori Mtns., Santa Cruz
Co. Peñasco Canyon
29 Jan 02 1200 hours –

Partly cloudy. Ground damp –
rained last night.

We know he was here!
You can feel his presence. I
think the deer and javelina
know also, very few tracks, no
thrashing bushes or falling
rocks above us.

The only sound is a raptor
screaming in a canyon too
steep to climb into.

In a flat section of the canyon
after climbing down dozens of
bedrock falls we see a path
leading up to an oak grove. In
the mud, a couple weeks old,
we find tracks, large, very
large prints, at least 4 inches
across.

The Story of Lil' T

by Sergio Avila from a happy birthday email to Trevor Hare

[Noises of wind and rain in the background, trees falling, water running furiously in the streams, mud sliding from the hillsides, a dark haze blurs the view...]

It was a stormy night of March; it had been raining and snowing in Colorado for the past nine months, people were wondering what was going on with the weather. It was an omen.

Animals seemed nervous, as knowing something would change their lives forever; snakes had been seen in areas where nobody had seen them before; frogs had broken their breeding cycles, and their calls were heard from long distances in Colorado's front range. Critters were screaming for freedom and protection.

[Read with deep voice, like the voice at the end of Michael Jackson's "Thriller"]:

The time had come for them to roam and rule the entire world! HA HA HA!

At their home, the Hares were waiting anxiously for the weather to be calm. The fire was burning in the fireplace and everybody was comforting the person they called "Mom."

Ms. Hare had had nightmares and headaches like never before; she was feeling sick, but had an endless urge to eat chilaquiles and huevos, and drink a beer once in a while. The smoke of cigars surrounded her in a blurry atmosphere as in indication of visions of the future; visions that comforted her more than anything else.

Suddenly, she knew it; the time had come and she was ready for it. It was time for the journey of her life; a journey she never imagined would be so long, strenuous, and... *tremendously painful.*

Ms. and Mr. Hare rode (there were no cars in those ancient times) to the hospital (an old barn adapted as a "clinic"). Doctors and nurses were awaited them — they knew of Ms. Hare's nightmares and headaches, they knew the risks, and they were willing to take them.

It was the midnight of March the 13th of 19... 35 (?)... the year is not important.

Labor went easy and doctors were amazed of Ms. Hare's strength and courage; she was known as a strong woman and a leader in her community. Nobody ever thought she was about to face the biggest and hardest of her

challenges ever...
Nobody!

[Keep reading with deep voice.]

"Lil' T" — as he was known by his family — was born surrounded by those who would become his closest friends and allies: frogs, snakes and tortoises (are there tortoises in Colorado?). His little bald head was conspicuous from the distance — his parents always knew where he was — as he played in the forests with his little toys: a shovel, a pick and a lounge chair. He loved making fires, he hated going to "meetings" with the "toad council" and the "serpent alliance," or "TC" and "SA," as he called them.

Lil' T's mom's headaches continued for several years, and actually got worse with time; she never thought headaches could be so hard and last for so long. Her son would recommend "cuidado" all the time, not knowing he was the reason of the headaches. She had to put little amounts of hops in his bottle, so she'd be able to sleep at night.

Every day, driving back from work — the Hares had a car by now — Lil' T's dad would have to remove rocks and brush that Lil' T used to block the driveway. And when Lil' T saw this, he would scream: *[read with little kids' voice]* "Dad, that pisses me off!"

At the age of 2, Lil' T was spotted removing "for sale" signs around his neighborhood. He had a moustache at 3. His first camping trip was at the age of 4. He didn't go hiking, but instead sat down in front of the fire and drank his first six pack of Guinness.

Lil' T grew up in Nature, as a matter of fact, he didn't wear shoes or pants until he had to go to high school. High school was quite the surprise: Lil' T thought he'd be the teacher! Reality pissed him off.

Lil' T's story is one of a man whose place in life is yet to be understood. It's a story of passion, of hard work, of hours in front of the fire and days in front of water ponds in search of critters.

[Ed. Note: How much of this is Truth? Fiction? Join Trevor on his next field weekend and see for yourself — see his field schedule on page 15.]



Could it be? In an earlier lifetime... Lil' T, the Tarahumara Frog (*Rana tarahumarae*). Photo by Jim Rorabaugh, USFWS.

the Riparian Species Inventory Workshop

by Jefferson Carter for Trevor Hare

Dorsolateral fold, sexually dimorphic tympanum, vestigial oviducts.
I don't know the terminology yet.
I don't know if I'll ever know the terminology. I forgot how much these people, these biologists, like funky smells.
Formaldehyde. Secretions. Decay.
I want to be useful, to be of use, but I don't know. I can't even kiss my wife goodbye until she brushes her teeth.
Our group leader knows the protocols. Between study sites, wash yourself down with 5% bleach solution. Do not urinate near ponds & streams. He doesn't personalize the subject, which is *Rana chiricahuensis*, the chiricahua leopard frog, endangered by *Rana catesbeiana*, the bullfrog, invasive, omnivorous as a lawnmower. He knows we'll like hiking to the banks of the water body after dark, aiming our flashlights, gigging the bullfrogs, whose corpses we'll tag & sort, sort & tag until dawn.



SKY
ISLAND
ALLIANCE
Protecting our Mountain Islands
and Desert Seas

The Northern Mexico Conservation Program



First remote camera photo of wild ocelot in the Sky Island region.

Cats, Cows, Cameras, and Cuencas *A Trip into the Sonoran Sky Islands*

by Paul Hirt, Sky Island Alliance Board President

Slogging through backlogged e-mail one evening, the tedium of my daily grind vanished when I opened a message from Sergio Avila, Sky Island Alliance's Northern Mexico Conservation Program coordinator. He was soliciting volunteers to help him replace batteries and film in the remote motion-sensor cameras he had set up on two ranches in the mountains south of Nogales. Despite the assurance of a packed weekend of cross-country trekking in the relentless June sun, I hesitated not a moment to accept Sergio's invitation. His promise of "hiking, birdwatching, snake-searching, star gazing, fire camp singing and more" intrigued me, but the real draw was the opportunity to visit the Sonoran Sky Islands—a region unknown to me—with a knowledgeable scientist to assist with Sky Island Alliance's search for the northern jaguar.

Since the day I first saw rancher Warner Glenn's poster-sized photograph of the jaguar he and his hunting dogs encountered in the Peloncillo Mountains in February 2006, I have been fascinated with this amber-eyed creature and with the puzzle of how these magnificent tropical cats make their way several hundred miles from Los Pavos in the Sierra Madre to the U.S. To help answer this question, Sky Island Alliance launched a research effort in early 2005 to identify habitat and migration corridors for large cats in the rugged region between the Sierra Madre of Mexico and the Tumacacori Highlands in the US (northwest of Nogales) where Jack Childs' research team has been photographing jaguars with remote cameras for over 10 years.

Sergio and his research colleague and volunteer Guillermo guided three of us greenhorns—Julie St. John, Chris Roll, and I—to the two locations where cooperative landowners have allowed Sergio to set up cameras. Our adventure started in a small village north of Imuris on Mexico Highway 15 where we abandoned the pavement and bounced our way up hill and dale for several hours until we arrived at a remote ranch deep into the bowels of the Sierra Cibuta. Every five miles or so, a ranch house appeared out of the rocks and scrub attesting to the fact that this was a working landscape. Perhaps too worked over. Boney cattle, ubiquitous cowpies, and harrowing stretches of knee-deep dust in the lowlands marked our path.

Eventually we arrived at our destination where our hosts greeted us warmly. We deposited gift bags of groceries, set up a crude camp in the meager shade of some mesquites, and then hopped in Sky Island Alliance's trusty but sorely tested jeep "Barney" and climbed even deeper into the Sierra Cibuta on a "road" that certainly did not deserve the name. We had about three hours before the summer sun set to find five cameras in various canyons anchored at knee level to trees adjacent to likely wildlife pathways. The heat, thorns, and parched ground strained our endurance, but each camera we found raised our spirits. How many pictures had been snapped? Would it prove to be a productive site? Would we finally get a jaguar photo? The sense of purpose drove us on until the last rays of sunlight faded.

Proving that scientific research is not always a thrill of discovery, this ranch showed poor results. Two of the five cameras had been stolen and the other three yielded few wildlife photos, although we did get several pictures of mountain lions, deer and coyotes. Sergio explained that mountain lion habitat was likely jaguar habitat, too. One canyon from which a camera was stolen drained from the international border to the north and was frequented by local people and perhaps migrants and drug runners—a risky place to set up a motion-sensor camera. The land was also severely overgrazed; a hindrance to the survival and free migration of animals through the Sky Islands. We returned to camp after dark exhausted and slightly discouraged, but hopeful that the film we retrieved might reveal that the landscape still supported large predators. [Although we didn't get any exciting photos from that trip — just cows and burros; coyotes and rabbits —three months later we captured a female and at least one (spotted) mountain lion cub on film.]

In our two-day adventure, Sergio wisely saved the best for last. At first light the next morning we packed up camp and returned to Imuris for a delicious breakfast at a roadside taco stand. Re-filling on gas and cerveza, we headed east on Highway 2 to the Cocospera River and Rancho El Aribabi where Sky Island Alliance has seven cameras set up. Optimism gushed from Sergio and Guillermo all morning. They had been to this ranch several times before. One month after setting up cameras in February 2007, one roll of film came back from the developer with a picture of an

Text by Matt Skroch and Sergio Avila, map by Cory Jones, photo essay of fieldwork checking the progress of the remote cameras by Sergio Avila, Paul Hirt, SIA volunteers and, of course, the remote cameras (see white borders at end of trail).

Program Mission

Through the establishment of partnerships with landowners, Mexican conservation organizations and agencies, Sky Island Alliance promotes and coordinates scientific research, ecological restoration, and land management practices that support the ecological integrity of the Mexican Sky Islands.

Collaboration & Trust

When the majority of land use decisions lie with a single landowner, most successful conservation projects begin with trust, and the fate of conservation initiatives is determined by the relationship built between the landowner and the organization. Sky Island Alliance's Northern Mexico Conservation Program focuses (for now) in northern Sonora, where a vast area of land is privately owned, and typically managed in large blocks. We are currently engaged in cooperative restoration and research projects in the Sierra Azul, Sierra Cibuta, Sierra El Pinito, Sierra la Madera and will continue outreach and research efforts in other Sonoran Sky Islands.

Partial Results

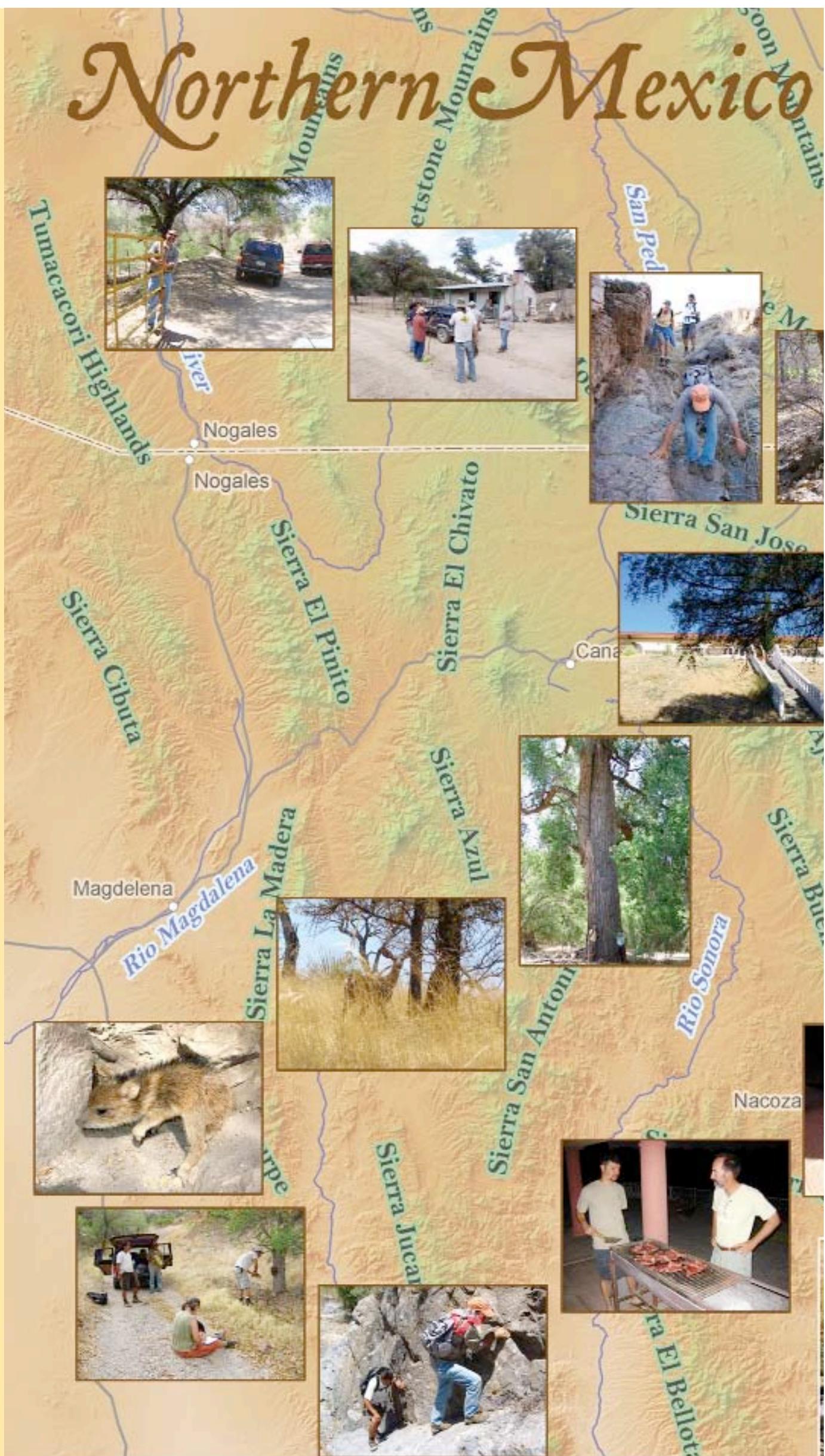
The Northern Mexico Conservation Program started relationships with landowners through a non-invasive research project that aims to identify outstanding ecological attributes. Sky Island Alliance has recently captured the first images of wild ocelots in the Sky Islands, only 25 miles south of the international border and just a week before this issue went to press, a sixth ocelot photo was confirmed, representing a second individual. Other species captured in film include beautiful mountain lions and bobcats, numerous Coue's white-tailed deer, large coati troops, four species of skunks, entire javelina families, curious gray foxes, coyotes and ringtails and Mexican brown opossums, all since February of 2007.

Cuatro Gatos

Predators are at the top of the food network, and because of their ecological requirements felines are good indicator species of ecosystem health. The Sky Island region hosts four species of felines, and acts as a major geographical link for nearctic (mountain lion and bobcat) and neotropical (jaguar and ocelot) species. Their presence is an ecological endorsement for this unique area where open space, prey populations, mating pairs, rugged topography and connected roadless areas are available. We have detected evidence of these gatos in the Sonoran Sky Islands, and so far have photographed three of them.

For more information

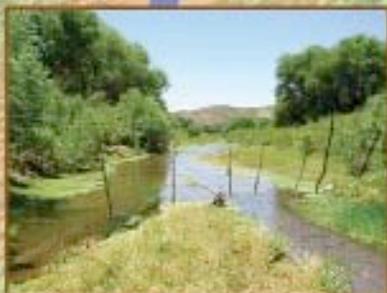
www.skyislandalliance.org
Sergio Avila at 520 624-7080 x16 or
sergio@skyislandalliance.org



Conservation Program

From gate etiquette to never-before-documented remote camera footage of board president Paul Hirt on the prowl for carne asada tacos (he'll tell you, though, that he was seeing if the remote camera was aimed properly to catch a jaguar's movement), to the critters we met (and didn't meet) along the way...

Do you see what's going on in the last photo?



Cats, Cows, Cameras, & Cuencas

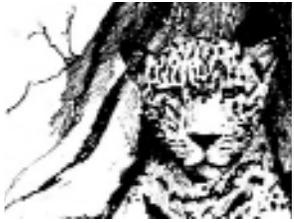
continued

ocelot in broad daylight. The ranch owner, Carlos Robles, was thrilled. His ranch house sits on a small bluff above the Cocospera, one of the healthiest riparian areas I have seen in the Sky Islands. We set up camp under an expansive covered patio, grabbed water bottles and snacks, jumped into Barney, and headed for the hills.

The first (and second and third...) thing we noticed were the deer—Coue's white-tailed deer everywhere. Every time we rounded a bend we saw another group. So many, we stopped counting after an hour. Cat bait. We also noticed the trees: widely scattered, mature Mexican blue oak, hackberries, junipers, ponderosa pines in the steep canyons, and grass growing between all of them. Raptors, snakes, a baby javelina... life everywhere, abundantly. We found all the cameras, none stolen, and film used up in most of them. We saw mountain lion evidence (tracks, hair, scat) in many locations. After a long, hot, but thoroughly enjoyable afternoon of scrambling into ravines and trudging up wooded washes, we returned to the ranch headquarters where Guillermo "el asadero" grilled us a fine meal over mesquite coals and we spent a lovely evening on cots under the stars dreaming of the chase.

A week later, back in front of my computer slogging through my chronically overstuffed e-mail inbox, another message arrived from Sergio. Our ocelot friend had shown up in three more photographs from the film we removed during our trip. Several, young and adult mountain lions appeared in our photographs, too. (I am hoping for some souvenir pictures.) No jaguar photos yet, but the conditions are right and we have only just begun our study. Carlos Robles' two brothers who own adjacent ranches have invited SIA to place cameras on their land too. Our dream: remote-sensing cameras spread about from the US border to the northern-most breeding population of jaguars in the Sierra Madre to identify migration corridors in order to inform conservation efforts in the Mexican Sky Islands. Two nations, one ecosystem, and a partnership to protect it.

Sky Island Alliance promotes and supports public appreciation of the region's unique landscapes and species. To learn more about Rancho El Arribabi, please visit www.elarribabi.org/wordpress/.



Jaguar country

art and text by Jessica Lamberton, SIA volunteer

This is the second day of our trip, and the cold air has that crisp early morning scent that I've come to associate with the smell of black coffee. The cottonwood-cloaked cienega of Rio Cocosperra lies directly below us, where last night leopard frogs called piercingly in the dark. Beyond extends the rolling hills, jagged Sierra Azul Mountains, Madrean oak woodland and grassland of northern Mexico. Jaguar country.

Despite the presence of cattle, black-tailed jackrabbits scatter in herds in front of Sergio Avila's Jeep Cherokee and disappear in the abundant grass. The smell of the skunk musk we use as bait has already permeated throughout the vehicle and over our gear, but I welcome it. The breeze is in my face and I'm headed for adventure.

Traveling with our team are eight remote heat-sensing trail cameras donated or purchased through research grants, which we successfully negotiated through border customs. Triggered by the body temperature of passing mammals, these cameras capture a sample of the region's ecology. The images provide data on species distribution and behavior, and occasionally allow us to identify individuals by their unique markings and spots. The cameras we set today will help us understand where jaguars are crossing into the U.S. and assist with future conservation planning.

Although jaguars once lived as far south as the rainforests of Argentina, the northernmost known breeding population is 180 miles south of the border, in a jaguar reserve surrounded by cattle ranches. In 1996, two separate Arizona jaguar sightings by hunter-conservationists Jack Childs and Warner Glenn spurred overdue endangered species listing. The next ten years of research confirmed four resident males living in the U.S. There are no known female jaguars in the United States. The last recorded female was eradicated, along with her kittens, in 1963.

I am on a quest to catch on film the elusive *primera hembra*. I begin to feel her eyes on the back of my neck.

I saw my first jaguar tracks two years ago — four paw prints embedded in the mud where the big cat had crouched to drink. I was working on a research project with the help of Emil McCain and Mike Quigley, who invited me for a weekend of camera trapping as a part of the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project in early October. We set up our cameras encased in bear-proof metal boxes, and laughingly crawled back and forth on all fours to set off the trigger. Next time, there may be pictures of jaguars tracing our steps.

Today Sergio has come prepared with topographical maps provided by Carlos, our patron ranch owner. With enthusiastic concentration, Sergio leans over to make a small precise X, marking a possible camera site where rugged landscapes, bottleneck gullies and natural drainages funnel wildlife traffic. His four-wheel drive takes us as far as we can go on dirt roads, and we hike, climb or scramble over the rest.

Scanning the ground at my feet, I search for wildlife sign in the form of tracks, scat and scrapes. This site is ideal for tracking. Emery and Mexican blue oak shade a tangled stream disappearing and appearing among granite boulders and soft soil. The sides of the perennial wash are high and densely vegetated, so most animals traveling through here (including Coue's white-tailed deer, javelina, gray fox, bobcat and skunk) would take the easy route along the water, leaving signatures behind them in the mud.

While tracking we find the skull of a black bear, eroded by water, weather and time. The zygomatic arches of the cheekbone are cracked and missing, and later we identify it as a young female. We also come across the remains of a deer, a few scattered segments of spine and a femur left bleaching in the sunny creek bed.

Mountain lion tracks give us pause; jaguar prints are not as distinctly lobed, the wide plantar pad larger in proportion to the round toes to support greater weight. They can be challenging to distinguish, especially with ill-defined tracks. If the habitat supports mountain lions, however, it is a good indication that jaguars could be successful here too.

Satisfied with our site, we break up into our assigned tasks, securing the camera to its tree,

recording GPS location, camera number and battery condition, labeling and loading film, setting the time delay, clearing a line of sight and carefully camouflaging the expensive equipment. We place the camera in the shade so the heat-detecting technology works most effectively, facing it away from the sun to avoid glare in the picture. After testing the distance and aim of the sensor, we move upwind while one of us breaks open the bait.

Many biologists I know prefer to use their own concoctions, carrying with them a tackle box of hoarded vials and airtight jars filled with potent substances, usually made of scat or urine. On this trip, we use skunk glands. Applied to a rock or branch at the target spot, these smelly predator calls attract the interest of nearby territorial carnivores that might otherwise miss our camera's narrow view.

The smell clings to my clothes and hair. With a subtle shift in the breeze, it almost visibly wafts in our direction bestowing us with our own personal skunk auras. I wonder if a female jaguar would be more attracted, as I would, to Calvin Klein's "Obsession," a men's cologne containing civet scent and rumored by jaguar biologist Eduardo Carrillo to work miracles in attracting the reticent cats to a camera.

Months later, I was to see a picture of that site with the small figure of a spotted cat sliding gracefully into the frame. This was the first confirmed northern ocelot sighting since 1964. An emotionally powerful image for each of us — are these smaller cousins, too, returning? What will these cameras reveal next?

When I close my eyes, jaguars gaze back at me.

You can be part of JAGUAR and OCELOT conservation efforts in the Sky Island Region! Adopt a camera and support on-the-ground research and conservation.

- \$45 provides: **Film camera initial setup*** (film, batteries, film processing) and first set of photos
- \$150 provides: **Film camera initial setup and checkup*** and 4 sets of photos (6 months)
- \$250 provides: **Film camera initial setup and checkup*** and 7 sets of photos (1 year)
- \$500 provides: **Digital camera purchase, setup and checkup*** and 4 sets of photos (6 months)

All donors receive:

Individual membership to Sky Island Alliance for one year — 3 newsletter issues, e-news, alerts, volunteer opportunities, invitations to events, and more — An email update on the status of your camera after every checkup and a list of species photographed — Prints of your three favorite wildlife photos — A Sky Island Alliance Certificate of Appreciation — Acknowledgements on project reports, presentations, etc.

Interested? Please contact Sergio Avila at sergio@skyislandalliance.org

For more information on this project, please visit www.skyislandalliance.org/jaguars.htm

* Camera purchase, setup and checkups are conducted by Sky Island Alliance. All photos will retain Sky Island Alliance's copyright.

Keeping up with the tortoises

the Desert Tortoise Education Program at Saguaro National Park

by Kaitlin Meadows, Saguaro National Park volunteer

I'm not getting any younger. I'm slowin' down. I like sitting out under a big old mesquite on hot days. When it gets' cold, I want to tuck myself in somewhere and hibernate until the first warming rays of spring. It's a little scary, more and more I'm coming to resemble the critter I love.

The Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is a remarkable creature. Protected in Arizona and listed as endangered in California and Nevada, desert tortoises are being researched by a consortium of interested agencies in Tucson. Studied in Saguaro National Park since the 1980's, an alliance in 2003 between Saguaro National Park, the Arizona Game and Fish, and the Friends of Saguaro National Park created the Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Program to study and track the lives of the park's tortoise population. The program's goal is to promote tortoise conservation through education of the general public, park visitors, and students of all ages, particularly high school students in Tucson public schools

That's where I come in. I'm a volunteer with the program. Tortoises have always captivated me. It started with the tale of the Tortoise & the Hare which gave me hope that a plodding, head own, stay out of trouble game plan might actually get me through. In San Diego, while working for the San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society and Project Wildlife, I saw up-close what tortoises face in the wild. I worked with tortoises hit by cars, chewed to pieces by dogs, used as hockey pucks by inebriated teenagers on sand buggies, and saved some who were literally pulled from under huge earth movers that were clearing mesas for new housing developments. It was daunting.

Besides patching up the tortoises (who could never be returned to the wild and suffered a huge mortality rate), I desperately wanted to do something more. But what? Ask and ye shall...

Transplanting to Tucson in 2003 has had many wonderful blessings, including a fantastic love affair with the Sky Islands and an extraordinary life mate. Working with Saguaro National Park's Desert Tortoise Education Program offers me an exquisite opportunity to share my love of tortoises and to educate students & families about how everything is connected—the sensitive native



Tortoise tracking courtesy Saguaro National Park.

plants so essential for the tortoise being choked out by the buffelgrass, the impact of 50 MPH motor vehicle traffic on very slow moving reptiles, the effect of abandoned dogs on a fragile population of tortoises. It gets people to thinking and I can't help hoping facts will engage them and make them care. For instance?

Well, not only are tortoises long lived (they may live up to 40 years in the wild, maybe up to 100 years in captivity), they have been on our planet for 175 million years, mostly unchanged. In only the last 100 years, human contact has critically jeopardized the tortoises' continued existence. Tortoises are ectotherms (unable to control their body temperature internally) so they must carefully jockey between sun and shade while worrying about predators and drought, habitat fragmentation and invasions of non-native plants and grasses. They need our help.

Don Swann, a wildlife biologist with the National Park Service, leads an enthusiastic team of park staff and volunteers, graduate students and fledgling wild life biologists on an adventure of learning more about tortoises. Did you know, for instance, that tortoises have a huge bladder, possibly up to 40% of their body cavity, to store all the water they can when they find it, conserving it for dryer times? When they get frightened they can suddenly release that stored

water to make room for pulling their vulnerable appendages inside the protection of their shells. If the tortoise cannot replace those fluids, it will die of dehydration. That fact is a great incentive NOT to bother or pick tortoises up in the wild. Kids get it.

The exciting part of the Desert Tortoise Education Program for me is actually taking small groups of enthusiastic high school students out to radio track tortoises that park wildlife researchers have carefully outfitted with radio transmitters. The kids use very cool telemetry equipment, compasses, GPS systems, and weather data-gathering tools to help compile data sheets. The students make observations about habitat, weather, proximity to burrows, plant communities, signs of health and trauma, scat (kids LOVE poop!), and how far the tortoises have moved since the last time they were tracked. It's awesome!

So next time you get a wee bit down about the ways of the world, the state of the state, the dingle of the dangle, remember, each of us as we can, doing what we can, when we can, sending a generous donation to a handful of our favorite wildlife and conservation groups as a special, life affirming gift to ourselves or spending a Saturday pulling buffelgrass. I gotta hope, I do believe, every little bit helps.

A campaign is born

by Mike Quigley, Wilderness Campaign Coordinator

I have a story to tell you, maybe two that are one. The stories take place in the woods, in the deserts, in the mountains, in libraries, in meetings, in offices, in kitchens, in the halls of the United States Congress.

Once, long ago, our country was mostly wild. Once, long ago, wilderness was something to be feared, something to be tamed, something to be conquered and converted: to farmland, mines, towns. That was a long time ago. We've managed to conquer and convert an awful lot of it. And today it is our remaining wilderness areas that need protection if they are to survive.

Early in the 20th century, as the automobile began to take off, some forward-thinking folks realized that wilderness was endangered — by cars at the Grand Canyon, in Yosemite valley, in beautiful and special places where it once took horses or mules or miles by foot to get to. These smart folks — people like Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Ansel Adams, Howard Zahniser, and others — believed that wilderness was essential to the American spirit and to the development of our national character. They saw that wilderness slipping away before their eyes and they worried about the consequences of that for the future of the American spirit and our national character. They began to set aside National Parks to protect special landscapes, but that was not enough.

The answer came with the Wilderness Act of 1964. While there is interesting history leading up to the Wilderness Act (check out Doug Scott's book *The Enduring Wilderness* for more detail and background), the key point for our story is that this law gives us the tool with which to preserve the wilderness we have left. The Wilderness Act passed Congress with 13 dissenting votes. Thirteen dissenting votes — that's almost unheard-of these days; and it shows that from the beginning Wilderness protection has been an American value, not a partisan issue. With that law, Congress established the National Wilderness Preservation System "...to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."

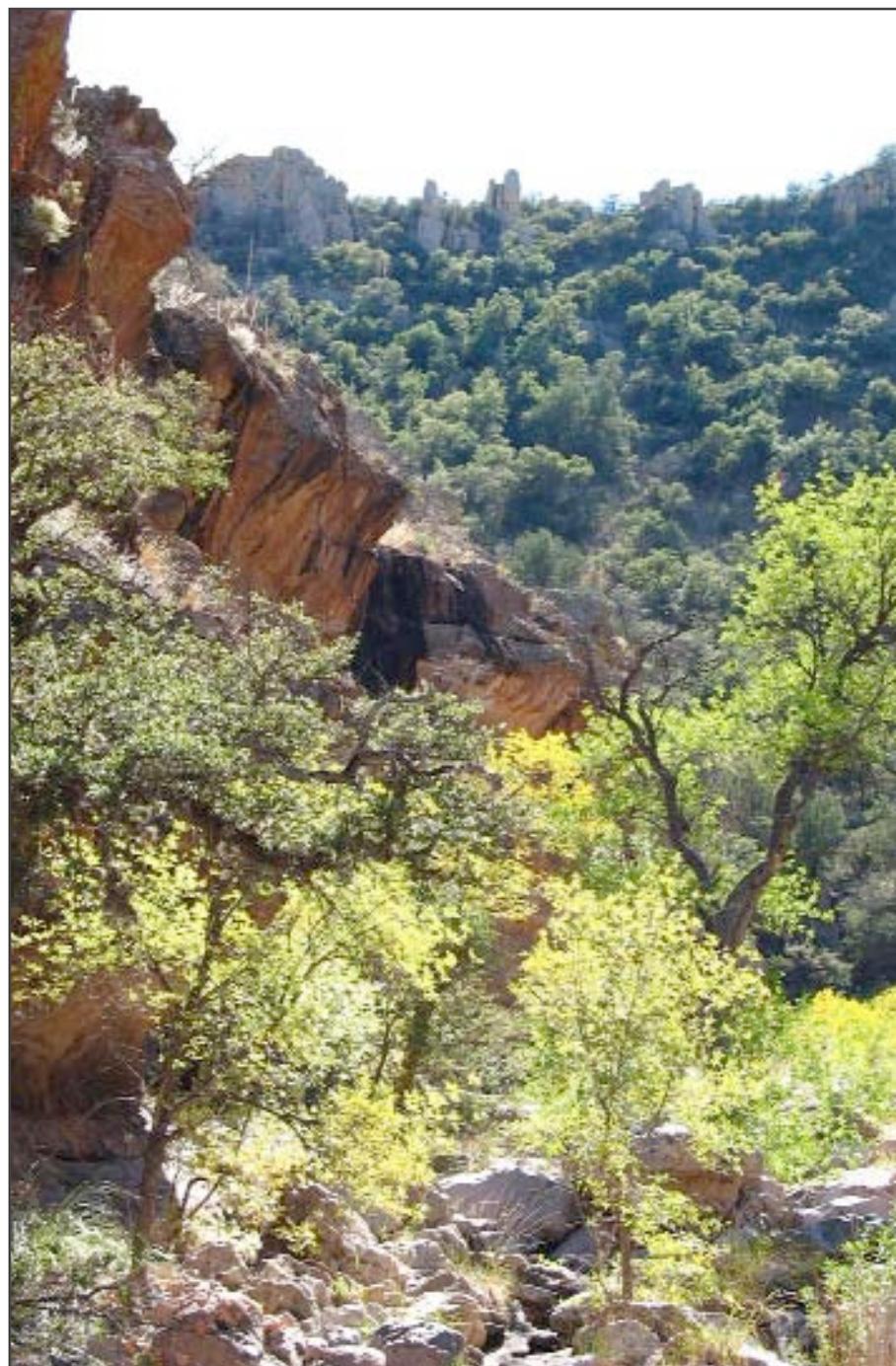
Fast-forward to the late 1990s and early 2000s. It's a weekend in southern Arizona and there are folks gathered around a campfire on a Sky Island Alliance field weekend. From their jobs in shops, offices, and plants, they give their weekends to help preserve the land and living things of the Sky Island region. They have spent the day walking dirt roads. Carrying topo maps, cameras, and GPS units — along with their water and lunch — they've worked in small groups mapping where the roads are, their condition, where they are impassable and where there are new, illegally-created two-tracks. It's slow work; it's dusty

work; it can be hot during the day and cold at night. But these folks do this, and a whole lot more — some once-in-a-while, some weekend-after-weekend — trusting that they are doing a good thing for the land, trusting that something good will come of it. That night around the campfire, they share stories, laughter, maybe a little tequila, and a lot of hope. They are in the Tumacacori Highlands.

After the weekend, and many others like it, when the volunteers are back at their day jobs, Sky Island Alliance staff tabulates the data and begins looking for patterns, troublespots, opportunities. Someone notices that there's an area southwest of Tucson that is about 84,000 acres of intact habitat. An area that has rough four-wheel drive access roads but an intact, rugged, wild core that is free of roads. This is significant. The area is within an hour's drive of over a million people and yet is still functioning natural habitat, home to the federally listed as threatened native leopard frogs, elegant trogons, deer, javelina, mountain lions, and more. The area is still Arizona as Arizona used to be. The area is the Tumacacori Highlands.

Fast-forward to 2002. Arizona is growing rapidly. So rapidly and so much, in fact, that we have enough new people to get another Congressional seat. Raúl Grijalva runs for the new seat and wins, becoming the Congressman for Arizona's District 7. The district includes parts of south, central, and west Tucson, the Tohono O'odham Nation, Nogales, and north almost to Phoenix and west all the way to Yuma. The district includes a lot of special places. The district includes the Tumacacori Highlands.

Congressman Grijalva, a long-standing friend of the conservation community, wants to do right by the environment. Sky Island Alliance and our friends at the Arizona Wilderness Coalition, Campaign for America's Wilderness, The Wilderness Society, and the Sierra Club look at the puzzle pieces and bring them together. The most immediate threat to the Tumacacori Highlands is a proliferation of new,



The Tumacacori Highlands have habitat a predator can, er, really sink its teeth into. Photo by Mike Quigley.

illegally-created roads by irresponsible off-road vehicle users. What's the best tool to keep that from happening, the best way to preserve that wild habitat? Wilderness designation, which limits motorized and mechanized use. But that's a high bar, that requires an Act of Congress, signed by the President. Hmmmm, the area is entirely in Congressman Grijalva's district. The Congressman wants to do right by the environment. Discussions are had; the Congressman likes the idea. A campaign is born.

Over the next few years there are ups and downs. The Congressman is a freshman Democrat in a Republican House. The area is relatively unknown, even in Arizona. Supporters of Wilderness start talking about it with their friends and neighbors, with their local businesses and elected officials, with the media, in public presentations. Lots of people like the idea; some don't; some really don't. But supporters — volunteers and staff, some of the same people who once walked those dirt roads on a Sky Island Alliance field weekend — keep at it, keep speaking for the land. And more and more people listen.

continued next page

During this time, researchers with remote cameras get photographs of jaguars reclaiming their historical territory in southern Arizona... in the Tumacacori Highlands. Jaguars. Let's take a moment and consider the significance of this. The jaguar, largest new-world cat, creature of Mayan and Aztec mythology, top-level predator, on its own reappearing where it had once been hunted to elimination. This was front-page news. This was proof-positive of the quality of the land and habitat — generally, if a top-level animal is choosing and surviving in a place, that means everything under that animal is functioning well ecologically.

Fast-forward to 2007. The Congress has changed majority parties and Congressman Grijalva is now re-elected and Chair of the House subcommittee that hears all Wilderness bills. Wilderness supporters have reached a lot of folks and made a lot of friends for Wilderness. The effort has been collaborative and neighborly and some folks who used to oppose Wilderness have found that the supporters are reasonable, nice, well-meaning people like themselves, and progress and trust has been earned. The media has covered the effort: *Arizona Highways*, *Arizona Daily Star*, *Arizona Republic*, *Tucson Citizen*, *Green Valley News*, *Nogales International*, *Tubac Villager*, *Arizona Illustrated*, *High Country News*, and many more. Meetings have been held, opinions and concerns heard, negotiations conducted, text for a possible bill drafted; slides shown to thousands of people; music, essays and poems written; songs sung; paintings painted; beauty photographed; trips to Washington, DC. made by volunteers supporting Wilderness; letters to Senators written; hikes to show off the area taken (yeah, the job can be rough). And still, the area is 84,000 acres of intact habitat, it is still wild.

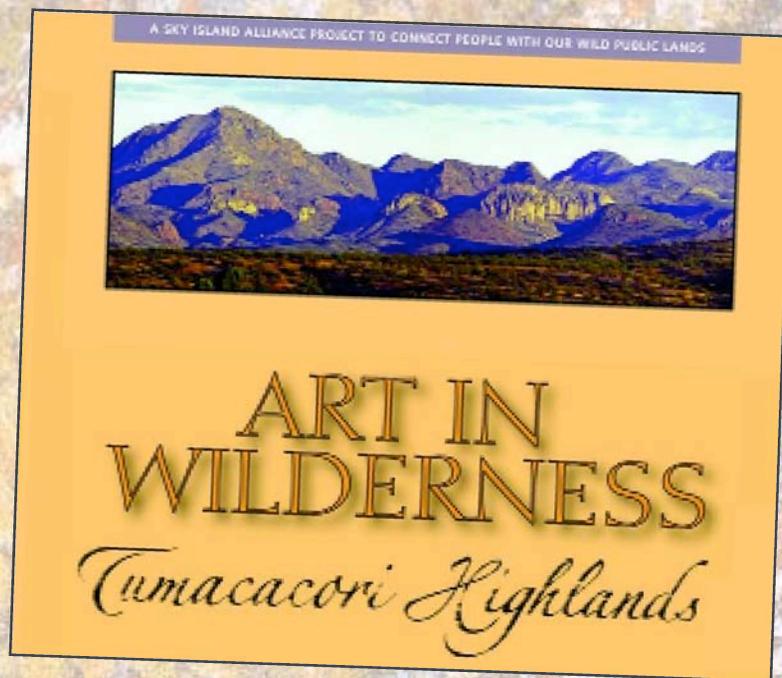
Now, Congressman Grijalva has introduced the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Act of 2007 (H.R. 3287) into the United States House of Representatives. Lots of people know about the area and support Wilderness. We aren't across the finish line, but we're in striking distance. With a little luck, and a lot of continued effort, we will secure Wilderness protection for the Tumacacori Highlands — the first designation in Arizona in 17 years. A real tool to preserve that special place. A real accomplishment. A real difference made. And to think it started with a few folks 80 years ago realizing wild America needed our help; and it started with a few folks volunteering their efforts and their weekends walking dusty dirt roads in a place called the Tumacacori Highlands. They trusted something good would come of it. Something good has come of it.

**"It was cold.
We were sitting
around a campfire.**

We'd hiked all day; we were tired. We were well fed. We were sharing stories, and songs, and tequila. We were photographers, writers, poets, songwriters, scientists, environmentalists, and naturalists. We were in the Tumacacori Highlands of southern Arizona. The firewood crackled, the air shimmered...

One spring weekend, a group of artists and conservationists gathered in the Coronado National Forest to camp and hike, learn and experience. The idea was to come together, learn from and share with each other, and then teach and share with others the values of a special place in our own backyard...

The idea became Art in Wilderness..."



**A magical collection from
19 artists, poets, writers,
photographers...**

**Beautiful 4-color
reproductions of
original art...**

**2 CDs with music
and readings...**

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they seek to protect...*

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Stories from far afield

by Trevor Hare, Landscape Restoration Program

What stories stand out in a field career that spans two decades? What common threads can define a story about a place, a time, a critter? Desert places and their reptilian denizens define the majority of my experience, but it is the oak savannas of the Sky Island Region where I now feel most at home. Where the smell of oak leaves and agaves promise paradise. Where death by sunshine is slower, where you can find water hidden in almost every cajon, and where desert dwellers meet their mountain cousins.

Six years ago when I started work for Sky Island Alliance I was only familiar with one Sky Island, having spent many moons chasing spotted owls and fondling mountain kingsnakes in the Huachuca Mountains. Also six years ago the Sky Islands were in a desperate drought and while we are not out of it and we may never be, it has rained and the places and critters I visit as part of my job have changed. The grass is thigh high, acorns litter the trees, and juvenile critters abound. I have walked through burns that are so thick with raspberries that you can't see the snakes. I have walked through canyons so wet boots rot. Just this summer I have seen more turkeys than in all my Thanksgiving dinners! And last summer it was the chiggers!

Over 20 years in the field and Trevor falling down stories abound, as do critter encounter stories. Cautionary tales are few but are always worth telling. Love stories occur out there as well.



Agave. Photo by Paul Hirt.

Laughable and laugh-out-loud stories, rain and snow stories, lost and stuck stories, lightning and lunar stories, fence and gate stories, beer and bacanora stories, these all fill my brain and provide a matrix and tapestry of life in the field for the Sky Islands.

I tend to exaggerate, a lot, but only when a story needs it. My uncle is the only living human to be

killed by an asteroid, right in the head! The guy who has been struck by lightning hundreds of times (well actually just a dozen or so). The rack on the first deer I ever killed, and the size of a trout I caught and then lost on the Crystal River. But something's I don't exaggerate about: the habitat and watershed destruction associated with off-road vehicles; the incompatibility of mining in the Sky Islands; the bureaucratic turf battles and red tape that can cripple conservation actions.

So what is my favorite story? It's the story that hasn't happened yet. The story of the Chiricahua leopard frog being re-discovered in of all places, the Chiricahuas. The vine snakes in the Santa Ritas, the parrots in the Pinalenos. These are the stories that keep you going. The story of a million acres of new Wilderness Areas in southeastern Arizona. The story of another MacArthur genius grant going to a small Sky Island region non-profit. The story of healthy watersheds and wetlands. The story of us.

Us? Yes, you and Sky Island Alliance. We are waiting for you all to come out in the field with us. Each year we have almost twenty opportunities to visit places that will stick with you, that will resonate in your brain, that will make the stories you will tell your grandkids. So come on out and make your own stories of the field, of the Sky Islands, of life.

Exercise in Point of View *Richard Kittle*

It's not like we have to *feel* the Universe
right now
each moment
sometimes
a tree is enough

I lie on my back
gazing up a Mexican blue oak
feeling up gnarled trunk with my eyes
across crooked limbs & pencil-thin fingers reaching
into finely crispate blue-in-olive green mane

Suddenly I know this tree
only this tree
this moment

here under blue-blue Arizona sky

this Tree *is* the Universe

— *Santa Rita Mtns., Spring, aught-2/Autumn, aught-5*

A good hike spoiled

by Trevor Hare, Landscape Restoration Program

Football and golf are games of yards and inches, biology and geology are about kilometers and millimeters, hiking is about two feet, a landscape and some common sense. Common sense as its name implies should be common but sometimes the landscape gets the better of any sense.

November and the cottonwoods and sycamores were ablaze, the creek was cool and clear, the air was crisp, and Aravaipa Canyon was beautiful. Unfortunately we were all doing road surveys in the uplands around the Wilderness and not playing in the creek. As the volunteers grouped ready to walk and explore their assigned territory, a few minutes of orientation and some cautionary words about cliffs, rockslides, snakes and hunters ensued and then we were off. The uplands surrounding Aravaipa Canyon are an amazing place of deep dry canyons, sheer rock buttresses, hundreds of feet high hoodoos, places named Hell Hole, Black Canyon and Hells Half Acre, the topographic relief turns a mile as the crow flies into three miles of torturous landscapes where the wandering can be wondrous but time flies and the walk out is at least as far as the walk in.

We started walking up out of Turkey Creek and west into the Wilderness and onto Wire Corral Mesa to walk out an old road and document recent use by ATVs off of the Wilderness boundary road and to document any uses in the Wilderness. Below us lay Wire Corral Draw and some very interesting rock formations. As we climbed down it was decided we would walk the draw down and then pop back up where the old closed road ended. On that old roadbed we had documented some horse tracks and a faint old boot track but there had been no motorized incursions into this part of the Wilderness. Hoodoos, reefs, windows and arches framed our wandering down the draw towards Aravaipa Creek. The draw bottom was a jumble of rock and ancient hackberry trees, and the canyon slopes were armored with prickly pear and giant stabbing agaves. The air was cool, the sun was warm and the hiking was slow and wonderful. As we started down the last of the draw towards Aravaipa it dawned on me that we need to get up and out of this. Glancing at my watch for which must have been the first time since lunch I realized we had about a half a hour to get up to the mesa and beat the sun down into Turkey Creek.

I stood an hour later on the edge of Aravaipa Creek looking at the top of a sycamore tree. Could I jump into the tree? Could I hold on? Would the creek wash my mangled body down to the San Pedro River? Probably not but I didn't

think I could make it back up the slot and drop I had just climbed down. I was looking for a way down to Aravaipa Creek where we would be able to walk back to camp in less than 15 minutes. The sun was gone and the light was fading fast. They were above, trusting and naïve volunteers, waiting for me to do something, anything. I called from below but the wind had come up and they couldn't hear. I have never been much of a climber, I always figured if you need ropes to get up a mountain you also needed to see a psychiatrist, but for the second time in my life I was wishing for a nice top rope.

As I scrambled up the slick rock I thought about falling, about how the rock would feel as it ripped through the skin, what the critters would think as I crashed down the cliff and became food. I thought about my family and my friends, and as I made it up and over that last nasty piece and my limbs were giving up and my heart was in my throat I thought where did my common sense flee to?

When I reached my co-wanderers, it was dark. I was shaking from the ordeal below and all I could think of was that the husband and father of the mother-daughter volunteers I was leading, albeit poorly, was gonna kick my ass. I would, in similar circumstances. We had already surveyed our meager rations, even more meager protective clothing and one lousy little flashlight. There was no way we were walking out in the dark. The agaves and cacti were waiting with reaching swords and spines and the rocks were treacherously stacked against us. I scouted ahead for a spot out of the wind that might protect us as we spent the night on the rocks. A natural amphitheater small and low and protected was chosen and we collected some wood. It was cold and uncomfortable but we had one tuna fish sandwich, one cigar, one bottle of water. I was exhausted and my limbs were still shaking from my ascent from the abyss. But a small fire, human companionship, a rain poncho and we were able to sleep fitfully as the wind howled.

As the sky lightened we stirred and arose stiff and cold from the winter rock knowing that the real problem still lay ahead. We knew that those eleven volunteers in camp the night before had not had it easy. They knew where we were and sent out search parties, but the same conditions that had kept us up on the rocks had kept our searchers at bay. By eight we had found the road and by nine were approaching Turkey Creek. The morning sun was warm, so warm and the lush riparian vegetation shined below us. In the shade we found our friends...

In response to this incident, Sky Island Alliance instituted the following guidelines that are part of the orientation and are left in camp with the maps of survey routes and the volunteer sign-in sheet.

Sky Island Alliance Backcountry Travel Guidelines

Introduction

Safety is of utmost importance—always be aware of potential dangers (ie. rattlesnakes, steep slopes, weather, other humans, and flash floods).

What to have in your pack: extra clothes, water (winter 3 quarts, summer 4 quarts), flashlight, matches, food, compass and map, watch.

Never split a group up on your route, watch your time, be back by dark.

There will be a map of routes traveled by each group left in camp—make sure somebody from each group knows where others are going. Fill in sign-in/emergency contact sheet before leaving in morning—sheet will stay in camp.

If you encounter other people, be courteous and respectful, even if they are antagonistic. We are doing road inventories to assess the road network in this particular area. Have an introduction among all volunteers.

In case of an accident/injury never leave a person alone nor walk out alone for help.

Protocol for missing persons

Stay Calm!

Two hours after dark, begin to look at maps and determine where the group/individual might be.

Work on consensus—do not exclude members, but encourage meaningful discussion.

After looking at maps, determine feasibility and safety of going to look for them—what is the accessibility and weather? Determine a return time or point to meet with all camp members. Do not attempt to hike or drive into dangerous places at night.

If you do not find the group, determine how long it might take the group to walk out in the morning. Drive or walk their transect and look for them again in morning.

If you do not find the group/individual, contact Sheriff's office or call 911.

Wait for the sheriff as a group, if possible, to give directions and have maps ready.

Once the person(s) is found and safe, hold a debriefing with all members of the volunteer party.

Restaurant Review

by Mike Quigley, Wilderness Campaign Coordinator

Working for Sky Island Alliance, one often has the opportunity to travel around the beautiful Sky Island region. While there are those weekends and daytrips in the field where the scenery is fantastic, the air clean, the company good, the time flying by, there are also those days where we are sitting in meetings all day, or driving interstates and other highways to get to more meetings. Though a lot of that travel is within the region, we sometimes have to go farther afield. I've driven I-19 more times that I can count. And any trip through Phoenix at rush hour should qualify us for hazard pay.

Recently, I drove up to Pinetop to attend an Arizona Game & Fish Commission meeting where they were to consider taking a position on the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness proposal. I've been in Arizona a fairly long time, but I'd never been to Pinetop. First, as drives go, that's a long one but not so bad. After one gets out of Tucson there aren't too many traffic lights. The Salt River Canyon is beautiful; and that is one helluva road! That was some fun driving, but I don't think "fun" is the word I'd use if I'd driven it the first time in the dark late at night.

Now here's where I want to talk about an often overlooked hazard of this line of work: food. Where's a poor conservationist to eat when arriving late into a small town? Pull off the side of the road, light a fire, and grill up some carne and tortillas? Hmm, maybe that's not such a bad idea. But sometimes we get caught rushing and without our gear. What to do? Vending machine snacks and sodas at the motel? Fast food? By which I mean flavorless, textureless, greasy, fat-laden McFood that might reasonably be called neither "fast" nor "food." A travelling omnivore's dilemma to be sure.

In newsletters past, my colleague David Hodges would write restaurant reviews for little places in little towns. For when you just *need* to get good BBQ and are flying by Willcox at 75 mph. Or when you'll be arriving in Pinetop for the first time on a weekday evening. So before I left, I went to talk to David.

"There's this good Mexican place in Pinetop," he said.

"Great, what's it called?" I asked, pen and paper at the ready.

"I don't know, but it has a lot of windows," he said.

Hmmm. Okay. How many of those could there be?

Cruising into Pinetop just after sunset that night, I drove the main drag and scouted the possibilities. Hmm. A lot of windows.

I checked into the motel and asked the desk clerk where she would recommend for dinner.

"What do you like to eat?" she asked.

"Well, a friend of mine told me there's a good Mexican place here. Someplace with a lot of windows," I tried.

"Oh, Los Corrales," she said. "Go left, it's on the right before the Chevron. Best Mexican food on the mountain."

David knows his small-town restaurants.

Turns out the place is Los Corrales (845 White Mountain Blvd.).

It's a family Mexican restaurant, but it's more like a cantina: nice colors, non-obtrusive lighting. The room is large enough to accommodate a crowd, but the high-backed booths and interior walls divide the space nicely and keep the noise down. This would be a good place for a lunch meeting or post-meeting dinner. But let's get to the food.

The menu is extensive, with several different choices for tacos, fajitas, enchiladas, burritos, and with several combo specials — including a build-your-own special with a choice of up to three main items. There are soft drinks, wine, margaritas, and several different beers available — including several Mexican cervezas. There's also a lunch menu. Dinner prices range from \$8-15 or so. Cerveza prices are a little high, but it *is* a restaurant, and I wasn't drinking Bud Light.

The basket of chips and small molca of salsa came to the table quickly. The chips were below average, unfortunately, as if they'd absorbed some humidity; there just wasn't much crunch to them. The salsa was heavy on tomato and with a little kick.

I ordered an "enchilada zuisa" plate and a Negro Modelo. The cerveza arrived pronto with a frosty mug and a slice of lime. You gotta like a place where the beer is cold and you don't have to wait for it. I learned that from field work with Trevor.



In fact, you don't have to wait for anything at Los Corrales. I had hardly put a dent in the bowl of chips when the enchilada plate arrived. And I wasn't dallying, we're talking like 2 minutes from placing the order to having a hot plate of food in front of me. Now THAT's fast food. I thought it might be that the place was empty, or they wanted to turn over a one-person table quickly. But no, the place was doing a good business for a Thursday night and the tables around me were getting their plates of food just as quickly. I can't get a cup of coffee at most places in Tucson in less than 15 minutes some mornings and Los Corrales cranks out an enchilada, rice and beans in 120 seconds.

The enchilada zuisa is a burrito-size flour tortilla stuffed with shredded chicken and topped with cheese, salsa verde and a fried egg. I'm a sucker for anything with a fried egg on it. It comes with rice and refried beans. The chicken was straightforward and tender, and there was plenty of it. The salsa verde was tangy and there wasn't so much of it that everything else was drowning in it. The rice was rice. The beans were puree-smooth and very tasty. I think I saw on the menu that they offer lard-free refrieds but I don't really know; because, well, what's the point?

All-in-all, the food at Los Corrales was tasty, the prices reasonable (12 bucks less tax and tip for a plate and a Mexican beer), the room nice, the service polite and fast, and the location good (right on the main drag). If you find yourself doing field work near Pinetop and you need to sustain yourself with some *comida sabrosa*, check out Los Corrales. Or just ask around for the best Mexican food on the mountain, the place with a lot of windows.

the Presence, II

Notes from the field, author unknown

Tumacacori Mtns., Santa Cruz Co. Peñasco Canyon
29 Jan 02 1300 hours –

A chill settles over the little valley and my spine, as I realize I'm looking at the tracks of the Jaguar!

A Jaguar here in the US!

We sit down and contemplate this, furtively looking into the oaks and upper ridges.

We know he is up there, looking at us!

Wondering if he took one of us if the other would flee!

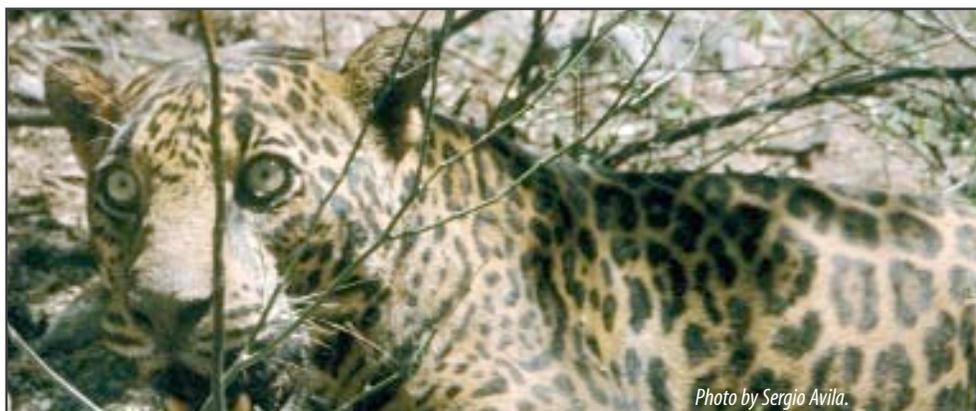


Photo by Sergio Avila.

Landscape Restoration Field Schedule: **Fall & Winter 2007**

30 November–2 December. Peloncillo Mountains Riparian Restoration. Get yourself muddy and help us erect one-rock dams to protect a ciénega watershed! Must RSVP and be able to leave Tucson at noon Friday.

14–16 December. Road Closure and Restoration Weekend. Get your hands dirty and play a direct role in improving the ecological health of your public lands! Within 3 hours of Tucson.

There's more!

Watch www.skyislandalliance.org for our 2008 schedule!

or contact Trevor at trevor@skyislandalliance.org or 520 624-7080 x14.

Join the Legacy Club!

Comprised of our monthly and quarterly donors, this program is an easy way to donate to SIA and helps us tremendously! By donating just \$10 a month, you can turn your yearly \$35 membership contribution into \$120. Or, by donating \$50 every quarter, your yearly contribution would total \$200! There are many different donation options through this program. If you are interested, please call Acasia at 520.624.7080 x10 or click on the Donate Now button at

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"Wilderness has virtue unto itself and needs no extraneous justification."
~ E. O. Wilson



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- 100% organic cotton; *not* pre-shrunk.
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- Wilderness quotation (see above) on the back!
- Men's on a putty-tan shirt, women's on a sage-green shirt.
- See pictures on our website at: www.TumacacoriWild.org

How many? What sizes?

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Quantity	Size	Quantity	Size
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Basic membership is only \$35, but if you add a little to that, here's a sampling of what your dollars can do: **\$50** will help us survey 30 miles of roads...

\$75 will sponsor volunteer training workshops... **\$100** will close one mile of road.

Fill this out, or donate online. It's quick, easy and safe!

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\$35 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other \$_____ (any amount helps and is appreciated!)

My check is enclosed

Please bill \$_____ to my: MasterCard Visa American Express

Card No.: _____ Exp. Date: _____

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Thanks to our volunteers

by Nancy Zierenberg

Read at the Volunteer Appreciation Party October 13...

Some of our board members
couldn't be here today,
but as a Board, we have something to say.
In the beginning there were a bunch of us
who got together to make a fuss.
We drew lines on maps,
discussed wolves and wilderness,
and how we always seemed to
have to settle for less and less.

Our bunch was made up of biologists,
botanists, ecologists and more.
All were wilderness freaks
who were gettin' kind of sore.
We were tired of seeing wild places
fragmented and chipped away
so were determined to be bold
and have our say.

The proposal that evolved to
protect our Sky Islands
incorporated good science
and we formed an alliance.
At first our growth was slow
but we somehow persisted
But it really turned around
when a bunch of volunteers assisted!

We laid out a plan to
do some ground truthing,
checking wildlife sign and

doing excess road sleuthing.
The wildlife showed us
their movement corridors
that helped us determine
the buffers from the cores.

It's all documented with techno. tools
We have photos and maps,
measurements and rules.
We've won partnerships
we never could have guessed
With the forest service, ADOT
and all the rest.

Put on conferences attended by herds
Made "sky islands"
common household words
But it never could have happened
without our faithful volunteers
You've built SIA's reputation
and shifted its gears

With our primo staff,
you've built the best there is,
You're loyal, competent, fun,
and gee whiz,
We just want you all to know
how grateful we is!

*With deep appreciation, from the
Sky Island Alliance Board*

Photo by Sergio Avila.