Your impact in 2016
When you donate to Sky Island Alliance, we put your dollars to work in ways that have the greatest impact.

Engaging Citizen Scientists

In 2016, 612 people volunteered 12,621 hours to Sky Island Alliance’s citizen science and restoration initiatives.

Restoring Habitat

- 6,015 plants installed
- 83 species; incl 8 milkweed species
- 4 new ponds installed
- 7 ponds improved

Monitoring Wildlife

- 404 observations
- 21 transects; 138 miles tracked
- 27 participating trackers
- 92 visits

Sky Island Nature Watch Project

- 15,230 observations
- 2,476 species
- 693 observers

Protecting Springs

- 42 U.S. springs monitored or assessed
- 25 Mexican springs monitored or assessed

Our mission is to protect and restore the biodiversity and natural heritage of the Sky Islands. We use science, education, and advocacy to connect the binational landscapes, people, and wildlife of the Sky Islands for the benefit of all.

Make a gift of support at www.skyislandalliance.org/donate

Sky Island Alliance is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization
Tax ID #86-0796748
Together, we are unstoppable!

Sky Island Alliance holds a vision for the Sky Islands as a place where nature thrives, open space and clean water are available to all species, and people are deeply connected to the region and its innate ability to enrich our lives. Thanks to the dedication of individuals just like you, our science, education, and advocacy are making great strides toward connecting the landscapes, people, and wildlife of the Sky Islands.

After stepping up as Executive Director for Sky Island Alliance in June 2016, I’ve had the pleasure of working with our dedicated and inspiring staff to reinvigorate partnerships, increase our capacity to work effectively in the U.S. and Mexico, and deepen our engagement in training young scientists who will help us study and conserve our Sky Islands.

Your steadfast support made 2016 a year filled with exciting new initiatives and accomplishments.

We kicked off our first series of springs surveys on private ranches in Sonora, Mexico and within the Ajos–Bavispe Reserve, building local knowledge and capacity for spring stewardship.

We convened diverse partners managing land and wildlife in the U.S. and Mexico to develop a shared conservation vision for the Sky Islands and advanced our understanding of what is needed to protect connected open space for wildlife.

We documented the efficacy of our extensive work in the Chiricahua Mountains to slow water as it flows down mountain drainages and create lush oases with diverse food and cover resources for wildlife. We’re making this work replicable and accessible across the region.

Thank you for helping us reach these conservation goals in 2016. And so much more...

As the challenges and opportunities facing the wildlife and human communities in the Sky Islands continue to change, Sky Island Alliance, with your support, is at the ready. Your financial support and the helping hands of hundreds of volunteers paired with our determination and know-how continue to make a positive difference for Sky Island wildlife and waters.

Sincerely,

Louise Misztal
Executive Director

Cover photo: Sunset over a pond at Brown Canyon Ranch. Sky Island Alliance creates ponds like this one in strategic locations to provide habitat for frogs, toads, and snakes, as well ensure a reliable water source for pollinators and other wildlife.
The collective impact of our work in 2016

1 Restoring and improving habitat
Our restoration team is ensuring high quality habitat is available for the diverse plants and wildlife throughout the Sky Islands. Our projects focus on removing non-native, invasive plants; repairing erosion, especially near springs and other water resources; and planting native flowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees that provide food and cover for pollinators and other wildlife. In addition, we are improving and creating open water habitat for species like the endangered Chiricahua leopard frog, who need ponded open water to survive.

2 Protecting springs
Among our most precious Sky Island resources, springs are life-givers and provide refuge for species adapting to climate change. Our team gathers the vital information needed to protect them and keep them healthy by documenting and monitoring springs ecosystems throughout the seasons and across the Sky Islands—with an increased focus on these resources in Mexico.

3 Monitoring wildlife
Using a combination of remote cameras and on-the-ground, year-round observation, our wildlife tracking team gather data that tell us when and where Sky Island wildlife are found. Telling the story of how the region’s diverse wildlife move across the landscape informs planning for restoration and connecting pathways across barriers, such as highways and roads. The information we gathered along Highway 2 in Mexico is setting the stage for installation of effective wildlife crossing structures to keep our Sky Islands connected.

4 Training conservationists
Lasting conservation of the Sky Islands depends on diverse people working together effectively across the landscape. We’re working to build capacity in our neighbors and partners by developing and sharing new methods, bolstering skills, and providing training in best practices for springs surveys, wildlife monitoring, and restoration. We also nurture the future generation of conservationists by hosting interns, who join us in the office and in the field each year.

5 Sky Island Nature Watch Project
To advance conservation we must know what is at stake. We use pollinator and botany bio-blitzes to catalogue the diversity of life in our Sky Islands and connect scientists with residents and students, utilizing modern and easy-to-use tools like iNaturalist. In addition to these large, organized events, hundreds of citizen scientists contribute observations to our Nature Watch Project throughout the year.
Stormy skies are a welcome sign of replenishing monsoon rains in the Sky Islands.
Healing the land, building community: the Rancho el Carricito story

There are moments when you realize, *This is way bigger than me*. That is the feeling you get when a project planned as two workshops for 20 – 30 students quickly expands into six days of restoration work, attracting more than 120 students, professors, and community members!

**The outpouring of interest and enthusiasm for restoring the land on the 10,000-acre Rancho el Carricito, near Cananea, Sonora, Mexico, showed that we were doing the right work in the right place.**

Eager volunteers installed dozens of erosion control structures, including trincheras, rock rundowns, and Zuni bowls across the ranch. One of the most important springs on the ranch was protected to ensure that it remains a healthy resource for the diverse plants and animals that rely on it. With the addition of a large stand of willow poles, we also increased habitat for migratory birds and pollinators in this wildlife corridor. Workshops like these increase local knowledge and capacity, allowing projects like these to ripple out through the community.

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Thank you to the de Hoyos family, Instituto Tecnológico Superior de Cananea, Universidad de la Sierra, and all the volunteers for creating this amazing experience!

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**Measuring our impact in Mexico**

- 59 professionals and students trained in springs assessment
- 25 springs assessed
- 4,336 volunteer hours donated by Mexican nationals. That represents 34% of our volunteer effort in 2016!

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Volunteer effort in 2016
Sky Island Alliance and the Springs Stewardship Institute partnered to train personnel at the Ajos-Bavispe Forest Reserve and Wildlife Refuge, near Cananea, Sonora, Mexico. Over four beautiful, autumn days we trained 20 professionals in springs assessment techniques, empowering local biologists to better understand and be stewards of these precious water sources. In addition to the training, we ended the year with surveys of springs on private ranchlands in northern Sonora—bringing our 2016 total of surveyed springs in Sonora to 25!

With a second training for Mexican students and agency staff and more springs surveys in early 2017, we’re making headway in closing the information gap about springs resources in the Sky Islands south of the border in Mexico.

We’re grateful to our donors and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Wildlife Without Borders Program that helped to fund this work.
Our volunteers make all the difference!

In 2016, more than 600 volunteers donated 12,621 hours of time to Sky Island Alliance. Where were all those hours spent to help achieve our mission? Everywhere, really! From the office to the wildlands, you make our work possible. THANK YOU!

Large landscapes, big thinking

When challenges mount, we rise. Sky Island Alliance is at the forefront of a new and critical approach to conserve our land, waters, and diversity of life at the scale and complexity necessary to address current challenges, such as climate change, prolonged drought, and fragmentation of critical habitat.

Since 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been developing an ambitious approach to science-based conservation through geographically focused Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC). Sky Island Alliance has been a leading partner in this work since the start, bringing our long experience and expertise on crossborder collaboration to create positive change on the ground. Our Sky Islands sit at the heart of the Desert LCC planning area. With our partners, we are developing a sweeping conservation plan that will focus preservation and restoration efforts in the most important locations and implement projects at the scale necessary to have real and lasting impact.

Over the past eight years, Desert LCC partners have built a shared vision for our lands, waters, and wildlife, and we are crafting a new model for meeting today’s conservation challenges. We’ve broken down barriers, developed new science in support of management needs, revealed shared values, and connected work and resources across boundaries to achieve conservation outcomes we could not previously achieve as individual organizations and entities.
Doris Duke Conservation Scholars (left to right)Tracey Wingate, Naomi Primero, and Katherine Bui spent three weeks tromping through the wilds with us in July 2016. They learned and sweat and smiled through it all. Thank you! Your futures are bright.
Walking into the wild Galiuros

Our work often allows us to explore some truly extraordinary places! In 2016, an intrepid group of professional botanists and volunteers trained in springs assessment protocols trekked out into the wilds of the Galiuro Mountains, just east of Tucson, Arizona, with staff from Sky Island Alliance and Coronado National Forest.

On an eight-day epic journey, our crew visited seven riparian sites in the range, assessed 12 remote springs, and collected specimens of 64 different plant species—one third of which were newly documented species in the range.

Why would all these folks venture into the wilds with heavy packs filled with monitoring and collecting equipment in addition to their own camping gear, clothing, and food? The first step to protecting these treasures is knowing what’s out there.

Although the Galiuros are one of Arizona’s largest Sky Island ranges, there is surprisingly little known about the plants and springs that bring life to these beautiful, hard to access highlands. While other ranges in the region have upwards of 1,500 documented plant species, there are only 600 plant species documented from the Galiuros, because botanists just haven’t been there.

And what about the water resources? The Galiuros sit at the northern end of the San Pedro River Watershed, where water rights are currently disputed, making up-to-date springs data extremely important.

We were excited to begin to fill this gap in scientific data on the life and waters of the Galiuros, and we’ll be venturing out again to build the base of knowledge necessary to protect and restore these unique ecosystems.
What do Chiricahua leopard frogs, lesser long-nosed bats, and monarch butterflies all have in common? Life just got a little better for all three species in the Sky Islands!

Water is life, so we are working to ensure reliable access to water for wildlife. We’ve been creating a network of open water habitat in the Chiricahua and Huachuca Mountains. One of the special places we worked in 2016 is at Camp Rucker in the Chiricahuas. By building a series of shallow, interconnected ponds and wet meadow habitat in the footprint of an old, spring-fed livestock tank at the historic cavalry camp, we improved access to water for all wildlife. Importantly, these ponds, coupled with improvements to native vegetation, lay the groundwork for Arizona Game and Fish Department to reintroduce a population of endangered Chiricahua leopard frogs in 2018!

We’re grateful to our donors, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the US Forest Service for funding this work. Additional support was provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society through the Climate Adaptation Fund, established through a grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.
Ensuring safe passage for wildlife

Why did the javelina cross the road? Food and water? Shelter and mates? The reasons could be many, but it is our job to make sure he makes it safely to the other side.

Creating safe passage for wildlife begins with knowing where wildlife travel. In 2016, we expanded our roadkill surveys to Highway 2, a busy roadway which runs through northern Mexico near the international border with the United States. This highway teems with heavy, semi-truck traffic, nearly 24/7, posing a serious threat to wildlife.

A day spent conducting roadkill surveys can be sad and disheartening, but on the other hand, every animal we identify, living or dead, is a valuable data point. The data we gathered throughout an entire year along this highway provide us with a comprehensive picture of hotspots where animals are falling victim to collisions with vehicles.

The Secretariat of Communication and Transport, the Mexican transportation authority, is putting our data to use. They are committed to mitigating the fragmentation effect that Highway 2 has on habitat and wildlife corridors by placing wildlife crossings (underpasses and overpasses) in these vehicle–wildlife conflict hotspots.

Protecting vital pathways for wildlife is a key part of our work at Sky Island Alliance—and when humans can travel more safely along roadways and wildlife can move across the landscape, it is a win–win.

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<tr>
<td>23</td>
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</tr>
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<td># of species observed</td>
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Mapping the Path of the Jaguar

The path of the jaguar isn’t a literal road or trail. On their journey north to stake out new territory, jaguars need regular access to clean water and food, and they need safe passage through wild areas free of development and disturbance.

*With your support we are protecting springs and restoring landscapes across the region, often within the likely migration corridors of jaguars—and myriad other Sky Island species!*

The map on the right shows where our projects intersect with the likely pathways of jaguars traveling north.
Corridors based on data from Stoner, et al. (2015)
You make this work possible!

We envision the Sky Islands as a place where nature thrives, where open space and clean water are available to all species, and where people are deeply connected to the region and its innate ability to enrich our lives. This is a big vision, and we couldn’t do it without you—our dedicated donors. THANK YOU!

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To our GEMs we send a super special thanks! By Giving Every Month, you sustain our work. THANK YOU!

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The Alianza Mariposa Monarca is perhaps the most heartwarming Sky Island Alliance success story of 2016. This group of students and young professionals in Sonora, Mexico, continue to inspire us more every day. They’ve been busy leading educational outreach with youth, rebuilding a defunct garden center to grow pollinator plants, educating communities about native plants, gathering data on the annual monarch migration... The list goes on. From the seeds we helped plant in 2015, this group has grown into a force for protecting pollinators and preserving biodiversity in Sonora—and they’ve inspired us to help support two new Mexican student groups (focused on documenting wildlife and monitoring springs) in 2017!

We’re grateful to our donors and the Turner Foundation for funding our work with the Alianza.

Next Gen conservationists are protecting pollinators in Mexico

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We’re grateful to our donors and the Turner Foundation for funding our work with the Alianza.
2016 Financials

**Income** $1,595,464

- **Donations** 52%
- **Grants** 29.5%
- **Contracts** 17%
- **Other** 1.5%

**Expenses** $1,049,682

- **Program Services** 89.5%
- **Administrative** 6.5%
- **Fundraising** 4%

### 2016 donors, continued

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14 SKY ISLAND ALLIANCE
What is your legacy?

When you include Sky Island Alliance in your will or estate plan, you sustain our work to protect springs, secure safe passage for wildlife, and restore our Sky Island landscapes for years to come.

Contact us at giving@skyislandalliance.org for more information about how you can leave a legacy in the Sky Islands or learn more online.

www.skyislandalliance.org/give
Sky Island Alliance Staff

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Executive Director

Carianne Campbell
Restoration Director

Sami Hammer
Conservation Biologist & GIS Specialist

Bryon Lichtenhan
Field Coordinator

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The Wildlife Conservation Society
Climate Adaptation Fund:
Driving innovation through strategic grantmaking
This year in Tucson we experienced the hottest June on record, with high temperatures climbing to 115° for days at a time. The blistering heat was followed by an intense monsoon season that produced the wettest July on record, with rainfall in areas of Tucson reaching up to nine inches. These extremes will continue, and the wildlife of the Sky Islands will be pressed to find the water and shelter they need to survive.

Enter the Wildlife Conservation Society Climate Adaptation Fund. The Fund was established to provide competitive grants for shovel-ready projects to help wildlife adapt to climate change and has been driving science-based conservation innovation since 2011 by supporting projects across the nation.

With support from the Fund, Sky Island Alliance is developing solutions and forward thinking approaches to help our diverse ecosystems and life persist amidst great change.

Sky Island Alliance receives funding from the Wildlife Conservation Society through the Climate Adaptation Fund, established through a grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Our 2016 Funders
You make this work possible. THANK YOU!

Arizona Game and Fish Department
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
Bailey Construction Services
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Borderlands Restoration, L3C
Bureau of Land Management
Clif Bar Family Foundation
Coronado National Forest
Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative
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USDA Forest Service
Wilburforce Foundation
Wildlife Conservation Society
The Coronado National Forest mule team supported our eight-day botany and springs expedition into the Galiuro wilderness.

photo credit: Brian Jones