

Mountain Lines

Vol.14, No. 3 December, 2006 Preserving Our Desert and Mountains www.mcdowellsonoran.org

ATV Donated to City's Preservation Department

An all-terrain vehicle for use on trail maintenance and trail building projects has been donated to the City of Scottsdale through the combined efforts of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, DMB, Inc., and DC Ranch.

In addition to the 2006 Polaris Sportsman 500 EFI (4WD) all-terrain vehicle, the donation also included a tug and a trailer.

"The ATV will be an enormous help," explained Claire Miller, McDowell

Sonoran Preserve Manager for the City of Scottsdale. "On the recent invasive grasses removal project for example, we had to haul heavy tools a couple of miles into the Preserve, do the removal work, then not only haul all the tools back out, but also haul out all the bags of grass we dug up as well; the ATV and tug will allow the volunteers to accomplish far more in a shorter period of time, and let them focus the physical work on the actual task at hand rather than packing stuff in and out."



Jerry Miller, volunteer crew coordinator for MSC and Claire Miller, City of Scottsdale Preserve Manager with the new Polaris ATV at Lost Dog trailhead

Claire also explained that as new and longer trails begin to open in the Preserve, the donation will facilitate transporting extremely heavy materials such as signs, cement and water in preparing those trails for public use.

MSC provides volunteer work crews for the wide variety of Preserve projects Claire oversees. Jerry Miller, an MSC Steward volunteer, coordinates the work crew program for the organization.

"As the City's partner in caring for the Preserve, we were really pleased to have been able to coordinate the donation," said Ruthie Carll, MSC's managing director. "This is a huge asset to the staff and volunteers who work so hard to save this precious resource, and it will allow them to take on bigger and more remote projects."

...and speaking of Trail Projects

MSC work crews take on a trail building or maintenance project just about every week. It's great exercise, and not only does the Preserve smell better than the gym, no one will give you a dirty look for not wiping off the equipment with a towel when you're done. Plus it's a great feeling to know you've had a hand in helping protect a unique ecological treasure for future generations. Volunteers range in age from teens to folks in their 80's, so there's a job for every fitness level. Email info@mcdowellsonoran.org or call 480-998-7971, ask to be added to Jerry's monthly notification list, and when you get it, pick a project or two you'd like to participate in. *It's that easy.*

"The realities of nature surpass our most ambitious dreams."

~Edward O. Wilson, Biologist

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Visit Our Website At www.mcdowellsonoran.org

from the managing director



MSC is Growing and Evolving

Picture what someone would look like if they took a drink from a fire hose and

you'd know what an old coworker of mine looked like when she asked what I'm up to with the MSC.

Since the last issue of Mountain Lines came out, we have officially opened the new office and thrown a grand opening event, trained our largest class of new Steward volunteers, led 16 hikes, participated in the Tour de Scottsdale and the Art in the Preserve events, conducted special McDowell Sonoran Preserve Month programming, worked on 23 trail projects, and took our outreach booth to 14 events — all while working diligently on Prop 106. *WHEW!* I never fail to be amazed by what this organization accomplishes!

During the next 3 months, board members, staff and volunteers will be using their brains as much as their backs as we create a master plan for MSC's future. The first phase of planned growth focuses on our ability to care for the Preserve and the organization itself. We're calling it the "capacity building phase". This will be followed by the "education phase" where our efforts will focus on programming for the public. Many ideas will be entertained. Some will make it into the plans while others won't. If you have ideas for us or would like to participate in planning sessions - please email me at ruthie.carll@mcdowellsonoran.org.

Thank you for supporting this great organization. Keep your eyes and ears open for new things from MSC!

MSC Library Wishlist

We are building a library of books to support our volunteer training efforts. Each issue of Mountain Lines will feature 10 books that we identified as "must haves". If you are interested in donating one of these books, please contact Debbie at 480-998-7971x100.

National Audubon Society Field Guide: Deserts

Archaeology of the Southwest, Linda S. Cordell

A Field Guide to Rock Art Symbols of the Greater Southwest, Alex Patterson

Food Plants of the Sonoran Desert, Wendy Hodgson

The Hohokam, Desert Farmers and Craftsmen, Emil Haury

Arizona, Marshall Trimble

Commanders and Chiefs, Elaine Waterstat

For Land's Sake: The Autobiography of a Dynamic Arizonan, Kenyon T. Palmer

The Last Bugle Call: A History of Fort McDowell, Bill Reed

History and Geology of the McDowell Mountain Regional Park Area, McDowell Park Association

About The MSC

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy's commitment to the community is to champion for the preservation of the Sonoran Desert and its Mountains, facilitate the community's relationship with preserved land, and develop a culture of stewardship within the community.

It is our goal to secure for future generations their unique environmental and archeological heritage.

Mountain Lines

Official publication of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, published four times per year.

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Debbie Frey, Office Manager

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The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Enjoy Crisp Winter Mornings on an MSC Free Guided Hike

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy guided hike season continues with 15 hikes scheduled in January and February. All the hikes are free. Each will begin at 8:30 a.m. They will be led by MSC volunteers who are schooled in desert subjects. We will stop frequently to admire and discuss what we see. Nonetheless, the trails are rocky and uneven, and some climbing may be involved.

There is no need to register for any of these hikes. Plan to arrive at the meeting place about 15 minutes before departure time. Hikers are required to bring adequate water and wear sturdy, covered shoes or boots. Hats, sunscreen and snacks are suggested, and lunch, where noted.

For detailed directions to the meeting places, please visit our website at www.mcdowellsonoran.com.

Saturday, Jan. 6, Windmill.

13 miles, about 6 hours. Bring lunch. Meet at the Trailhead Staging Area lot in the McDowell Mnt. Regional Park (\$5 fee for park entry).

Sunday, Jan. 7, Balanced Rock.

4 miles, about 3 1/2 hours including carpooling. Meet at the end of Alma School Rd. north of Dynamite Blvd.

Saturday, Jan. 13, Ethnobotany Hike on the Cactus Trail.

3 miles, about 3 1/2 hours including carpooling. Meet at the end of Alma School Rd. north of Dynamite Blvd.

Sunday, Jan. 14, Ironwood Wash.

7.5 miles, about 4 hours. Bring lunch. Meet at the lot at 104th St. just south of McDowell Mountain Ranch Rd.

Saturday, Jan. 20, Holes, Tracks and Scat.

2 miles, about 2 1/2 hours. Meet at the Lost Dog Trailhead lot on 124th St. north of Via Linda.

Sunday, Jan. 21, Sunrise Peak via 128th St.

Climb about 1,000 feet in 2.3 miles, then another 200 feet in 0.3-mile to the peak. About 3 1/2 hours. Meet at the end of 128th St. north of Via Linda.

Saturday, Jan. 27, Dixie Mine.

5.5-miles, about 4 hours including carpooling. Meet at the Lost Dog Trailhead lot on 124th St. north of Via Linda.

Sunday, Jan. 28, Birding Walk.

About 2 hours. Meet at the end of 128th St. north of Via Linda.

Saturday, Feb. 3, Quartz Trail.

5 miles, with a 500-foot elevation gain. About 3 hours. Meet at the lot at 104th St. south of McDowell Mountain Ranch Rd.

Sunday, Feb. 4, Cholla Mountain Loop.

A rugged, 8 miles, about 4 1/2 hours. Bring lunch. Meet at the end of Alma School Rd. north of Dynamite Blvd.

Sunday, Feb. 11, The Micro Desert.

4.5 miles, About 3 hours. Meet at the Lost Dog Trailhead lot on 124th St. north of Via Linda.

Saturday, Feb. 17, Geology Hike on the Amphitheater Trail.

5.7 miles, about 3 hours. Meet at the end of Alma School Rd. north of Dynamite Blvd.

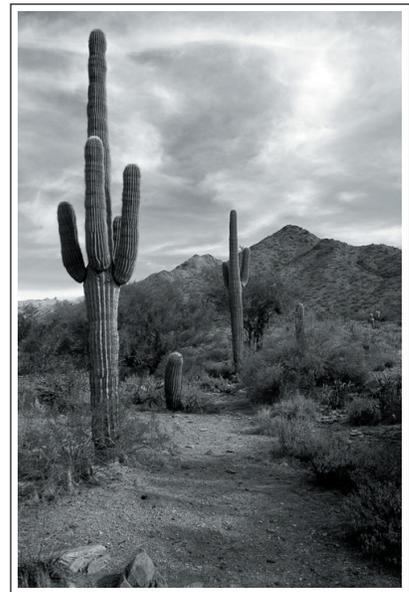


photo courtesy of Steve Maniscalco

Sunday, Feb. 18, Sunrise Peak via 145th Way Trailhead.

Climb about 900 feet in 1.5 miles to a saddle, then 200 feet more in 0.3-mile to the peak, about 3 1/2 hours including carpooling. Meet at the Lost Dog Trailhead lot on 124th St. north of Via Linda.

Saturday, Feb. 24, New Little Granite Loop.

A rugged 8.5-miles, about 5 hours including carpooling. Bring lunch. Meet at end of Alma School Rd. north of Dynamite Blvd.

Sunday, Feb. 25, Big Saguaro Loop.

5 miles, about 4 hours including carpooling. Meet at the end of Alma School Rd. north of Dynamite Blvd.

What Do We Do Now?

by Carla, Executive Director

I know that we are all still heartbroken at the defeat of Prop. 106 – but please know that you *all* did a *wonderful* job—and that your dedication and hard work are *greatly appreciated!*



We can dissect over and over what went wrong (and trust me, many of us are), and we can commiserate about the fact that the campaign did not go as we may have wished, but the most productive action we can take right now is to move forward.

We have to remind ourselves that *we cannot give up-* because once this land is gone, it's gone.

Unfortunately, without some degree of state trust land reform, we have no tools to feasibly complete the entire Preserve that the people of Scottsdale have voted for. The City has done a stellar job purchasing/protecting all the private land within the voter-approved boundary. What is left is approximately 19,000 acres of state trust land. Even though the majority of this land has been reclassified as suitable for conservation under the Arizona Preserve Initiative, purchase cannot occur since that program has been halted. Legal minds agree that API will not be legal until the proper changes are made to the Arizona Constitution and Federal Enabling Act.

Currently, members of the Conserving Arizona's Future coalition are having discussions within their own groups and with each other as to what our future options for state land reform realistically are – and how we could possibly achieve them. Discussions and stakeholder outreach will probably take place over the next few months, before any definitive plan is put in place.

"Till now man has been up against Nature, from now on he will be up against his own nature."

~Dennis Gabor

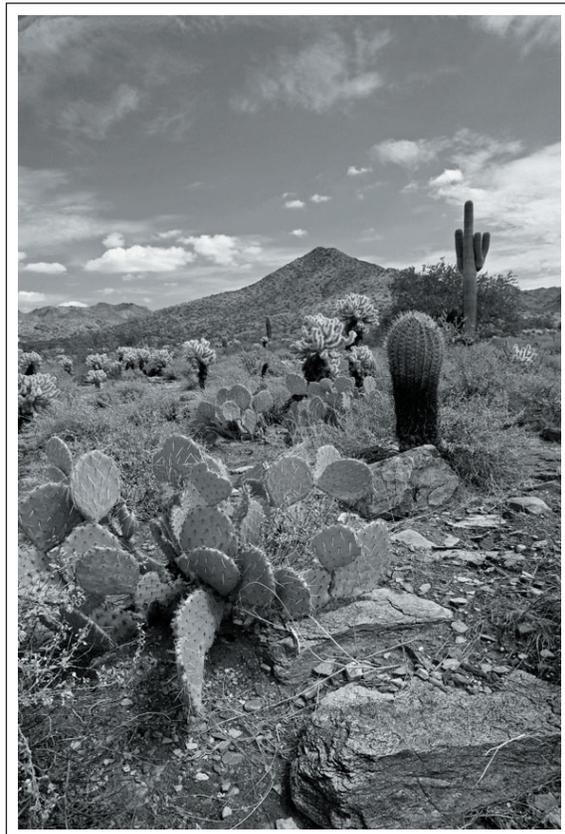


photo courtesy of Steve Marniscalco

Some of the ideas being discussed are:

- Exploring if the Arizona Legislature has changed enough in the recent election to be able to address the necessary reform package.
- Imploring the Governor, with her amazing electoral mandate, to make state trust land reform one of her key goals for the next two years.
- Gauging whether there is enough financial wherewithal and wide public support to put another initiative on the ballot.
- Narrowing the focus of the reform to address solely what is needed to make the API functional again.

All of these will ultimately require a vote of the people of Arizona. It is our hope that, working together, we can ensure this will happen no later than the elections in 2008.

In the meantime, it will be crucial that we hold off any attempts to move our land – and environmentally sensitive lands across Arizona – forward for development before the necessary reform and resulting tools can be put in place.

The State Land Department has now said that none of Scottsdale's lands are in their next five year development cycle. However, if a developer applies for any of this land, the Department will have to deal with it. Led by Preserve champion Mayor Manross and a very supportive City

continued...

Council – backed up by a very vocal and committed citizenry – we believe that Scottsdale will be able to work with the State Land Commissioner and Governor to fend off any of those attempts.

This will not be easy and we must remain vigilant!

To that end, I would like to ask all of you who want to help, to do the following, so we can have an even stronger team of advocates for this great land:

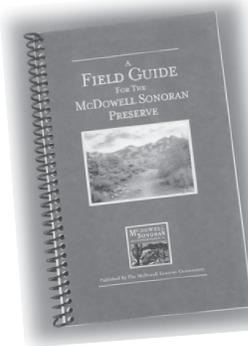
- Send your name and email address to preserve@mcdowellsonoran.org – even if you have sent it before.
- You will be added to the MSC ALERT list - don't worry, we don't fill up your mailboxes unless there is an important Preserve update we would like to share with you or there is a critical Preserve issue we need your active help on.
- If an issue arises, we will encourage you to write letters and/or attend public meetings related to the Preserve. We may even ask you to join a demonstration.
- Get mentally ready to help us get on the ballot in 2008!

What YOU can do now:

In light of the failure of Prop. 106 and some of the very misleading things that were written during this negative campaign about land conversation, it would be good to get supportive letters going in to the newspapers and our elected officials - both on a local and state level. These letters should remind everyone that you, the people of and visitors to, Arizona, care about preserving this precious land. That despite the disturbing campaign by our opponents that so confused the voters, we don't want to lose the places that make our state so special.

If you are so inclined, it would be greatly appreciated.

The Perfect Holiday Gift For Your Hiking Buddy...



The first field guide written especially for Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve has been published by the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy.

The 140-page guide contains information not only on the plants and animals found in the Preserve, but also on the geological history and cultural history of the area as well.

"We designed the guide to be a hands-on reference book for use at home or on the trail," explained Fred Klein, an MSC Steward who served as editor for the guide. "It was written by MSC stewards and volunteers who not only have expertise in the areas they are writing about, but also have many hours of experience on Preserve trails, leading hikes and patrolling."

Cost of the Field Guide is \$15, plus \$4 for shipping and handling. Order online at www.mcdowellsonoran.org, or mail your check for \$19 made payable to McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, MSC, 16435 N. Scottsdale Rd., Suite 110, Scottsdale, AZ 85254. Be sure to include your name and address for return mailing. Or, pick one up at the office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.



Was that a Hummingbird?

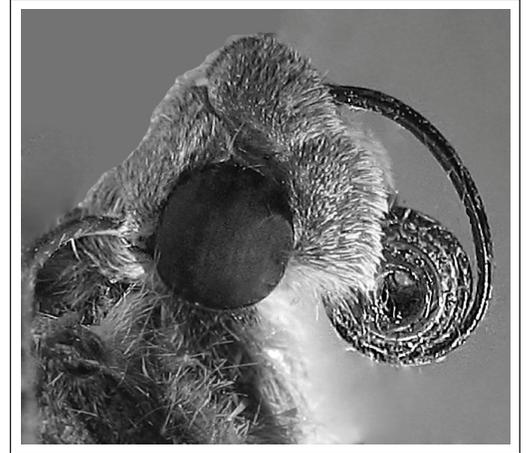
Hummingbirds are the only creatures that can hover, fly backwards and beat their wings so rapidly that they appear to blur - right? **Wrong.** In the Valley we have another animal that also can do all of that: the Sphinx Moth.

The Sphinx Moth can be mistaken for a hummingbird because it can fly just as swiftly while it looks for flowers. With a wingspan of about three inches, it is among the largest flying insects in our desert. The hummingbird is green or gray and is active in the daytime. The sphinx moth is brown with white stripes and normally flies after dark. Sphinx moths are important pollinators in the desert, pollinating night-blooming cactuses and many other plants.



Sphinx moths have one thing that hummingbirds do not – a tongue that is longer than their body.

In insects, the tongue is called a proboscis. The Sphinx Moth's proboscis is rolled up in front of its face when it is flying. When a flower is found the proboscis is unrolled to sip its nectar.



The name "sphinx" comes from the insect's action as a caterpillar when it pulls its head into a sphinx-like posture while it is resting or threatened. After hatching from a tiny egg, the caterpillar eats voraciously, storing energy. Then it burrows into the ground, where it forms a chrysalis and completes its transformation into an adult moth.

When you are out gardening, remember this: caterpillars will develop into moths and butterflies that are important to the desert's natural balance. Killing the caterpillars that are eating your plants will deprive the environment of these useful creatures.

Strange Mushroom...

When most of us think of mushrooms we picture soft, small organisms shaped like umbrellas. But like just about everything else, it seems, the ones that live here in the desert are different. One example commonly seen along trails and in yards in the Phoenix area is the Desert Shaggy Mane mushroom. Unlike its relatives in mild climates, this mushroom is leathery and hard, resembling a puffball on a stalk.

The mushroom actually is just a small part of the organism. Most of its body, or micellium, is a mass of hair-like strands that spread through the soil. The mushroom part is like a flower in that its purpose is reproduction. In order for the spores (which you can think of as seeds) to spread, they need to get above ground so the wind can

carry them away; thus, when the time is right, the micellium grows a structure that bears the spores to the surface. You can imagine that it would be difficult for a soft mushroom to grow through the dry, hard desert soil. This is why the Desert Shaggy Mane is so sturdy. The outer covering eventually breaks down and its black spores blow away in the breeze.

Consider yourself lucky if a Desert Shaggy Mane pops up in your yard. These native mushrooms are important members of the soil community because they break down dead plant materials and allow their nutrients to be reused by new, growing plants. So from now on, when you see a mushroom, think "healthy" instead of "rotten."



steward corner

Record Steward Class Graduates

Members of the largest graduating class in the history of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Steward program received their certificates from Scottsdale Mayor Mary Manross November 18 in the traditional graduation ceremony held at Greasewood Flats.

The 36 graduates completed the required course work for certification which includes Preserve history and policies, first aid, GPS use, map reading and more.

“Our MSC stewards are a special and diverse group who protect and maintain a precious resource using their skills, talents, and experience to accomplish that goal” explained Steward Chairman Bernie Finkel.



becoming a friend of MSC

Join Our Circle of Friends

Your tax-deductable membership contributions help preserve a unique ecological treasure that otherwise would be lost.

Your gift can make a difference today and for generations to come.

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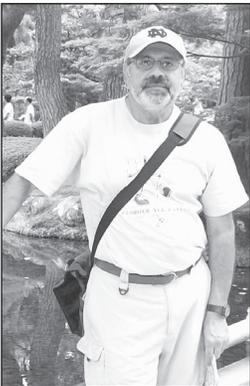
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news and notes



Welcome MSC's Newest Board Member

Wali Naibi has been elected to serve on the board of directors of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. Elected to the board in August, Naibi's term will run until 2008. He is serving as a member of the board's finance committee.

Naibi also serves as a volunteer Steward for MSC and is a hike leader.

He is a retired international banker.

*If the Stars should appear one night in a thousand years,
how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many
generations the remembrance of the city of God which had
been shown! But every night come out these envoys of
beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.*

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Advanced Classes Begin

If you're already an MSC volunteer who would like to learn more about the Sonoran Desert and the Preserve, please consider attending our advanced classes beginning Thursday, November 30th. Topics include desert ecology, flora and fauna, geology, ethnobotany, ancient and modern history, and mining. If you've already completed Steward training and would like to become a Hike Leader or a Pathfinder, some of the advanced classes are required for these roles.

To sign up or to get additional information, please contact Debbie Frey at debbie.frey@mcdowellsonoran.org.