

Mountain Lines

Vol. 19 • No. 5 • Summer 2013



Preserve Ancestors

Yavapai traditions value
Preserve lands.

The Lookout

A view worth the time it
takes to get there.

Families in Nature: Flowers of the Desert

Why did we have so many wildflowers
this year? Find out here!



McDowell Sonoran
CONSERVANCY.



Mike Nolan, Executive Director

This *Mountain Lines* celebrates a fundamental reason why visitors come to Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve: for inspiration, reflection, and

connection with the natural world. It's a place to recharge the spirit and find physical and mental renewal in a beautiful natural setting.

Visitors can connect with human history in the Preserve. People have hunted, browsed, walked, and worked these lands for nearly 10,000 years. Ancient petroglyphs on scattered rocks speak to the spirit of the Hohokam people who once lived here. Old stock tanks, building foundations, and fencing speak to the more recent human history, remnants of the cattle-ranching tradition of the late 1800s to mid-1900s.

Wildlife abounds in the Preserve and many visitors find delight in viewing it. Spring wildflowers and cactus flowers spread color across the landscape. Birders seek the more than 100 species of birds that call the Preserve home, and many keep checklists of what they've seen there. Others delight in the occasional glimpse of deer, bobcat, and other

mammals, or one of the many reptiles that live there.

Others find physical and psychological benefits from visiting. They hike, run, and ride for the fitness benefits. Many come with family and friends and enjoy the social interaction and time spent together, the opportunity to share a passion for nature and the outdoors.

Visiting the Preserve helps people feel connected to nature and to earlier times. In this issue you can read about Native American perspectives on the land and animal spiritual imagery. Learn about the medicinal and ceremonial uses for plants found in the Preserve. Consider the role that just being in nature plays in lowering stress and enhancing mental health.

We need nature in our lives more than ever today. In creating the Preserve, Scottsdale citizens demonstrated that they care about and seek the opportunity to foster deep connections and daily contact with the natural world. Through the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, you are helping to maintain and protect a natural area that has a deep impact on thousands of visitors every year, and we hope, for generations to come. 

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Cover Photo: The northern mountains provide a place for spiritual connection. Photo by D. Bierman

About Us

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy champions the sustainability of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve for the benefit of this and future generations. As stewards, we connect the community to the Preserve through education, research, advocacy, partnerships and safe, respectful access.

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Patrol Program

More than 25,000 miles patrolled in 2012! That amazing number says it all about how committed our McDowell Sonoran Conservancy volunteers are to caring for the Preserve. Two years ago we realized we needed a better way to track our Patrol Program activity. We captured hours spent on patrolling trails, but didn't track the specific trails and patrol frequency by trail. We knew the effort that our volunteers were putting into patrolling, but we couldn't say much about the effectiveness of our patrols, or whether we were even patrolling some of the more remote trails.

As a result we initiated a subtle but substantial change to our Patrol Program. We asked ourselves and our partners at the city: what does a successful patrol effort look like in terms of outcomes? Coverage and frequency were two critical elements identified to track, so we could ensure that all the trails were being patrolled at an appropriate frequency.

Preserve staff developed a schedule that divided the 60 miles of trails in the McDowells into four categories of patrol frequency: daily, three times a week, weekly, and bi-weekly

during the high season. A lower frequency schedule was developed for the summer months. It fell to Bobby Alpert, volunteer chair of the steward Patrol Program, to figure out a way to meet the schedule and to orient the program toward outcomes.

Bobby invited patrollers, at their option, to agree to hike a particular trail at a specified frequency. He asked bike patrollers to commit to patrolling some of the more remote trail segments, because bikers could get to them quickly. The website reporting was redesigned so patrollers could record where they patrolled and make comments on issues they found. New reports were created to show the date, time, and trail segments patrolled to allow us to track coverage and frequency of patrols.

The results were outstanding. Next year, we look to expand this program into 70 or more miles of new trails in the north area. Patrol is one of the core services we provide to the Preserve and has matured into a successful, results-oriented program. Our thanks to all the stewards who hike, bike, and ride the trails with an eye toward trail safety and maintenance. 🐾

Source: Mike Nolan, Executive Director

Equestrian patrollers are needed for the north area. Photo by M. Jensen





Balanced Rock is known as a Native American ceremonial place. Photo by B. White

Yavapai Perspectives on the Land

By Barb Pringle

McDowell Sonoran Conservancy master steward

Our neighbors to the north and east of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, have a long and deep connection to the Sonoran desert and McDowell Mountains. Their ancestors once occupied about 10 million acres across southern, central, and northern Arizona. They lived, hunted, cultivated and gathered plants, and sought spiritual guidance from these lands and water from the sacred Verde River.

Following their suppression by the U.S. Army in the 1870s, the Yavapai were confined to three reservations in Arizona. One of the three resulting Yavapai Tribes, the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, was formed by Presidential Executive Order in 1903. It encompasses 24,000 acres of riparian, Sonoran desert and wetlands and is home to 950 tribal members. Today's Yavapai view their ancestral lands as spiritually significant and an important part of their lives.

The creation of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve gives everyone the opportunity to enjoy some of the Yavapai ancestral land. Accordingly, when we hike or bike a Preserve trail, it's worth knowing that, as novelist Susan Powers notes, underneath today's map of America lies a ghost geography—a network of Native American trails, villages, and traditions that existed long before most of our ancestors arrived. A member of the Yavapai community shared with me how her culture views its land and living inhabitants; I also spoke with the Yavapai government relations director.

Eagles, Dollars, and Soil

If you lived here in the 1970s, you likely recall the Orme Dam controversy. Construction of this dam was proposed at the confluence of the Verde and Salt Rivers, near the Yavapai reservation's southern border. The U. S. government offered millions of dollars, other land, and new homes in return for accepting relocation and the dam.

The Yavapai said no. Orme Dam would have flooded more than 65 percent of the reservation and covered its most fertile river bottomlands used for farming, cattle grazing, housing, and recreation. It also would have destroyed Yavapai sacred land. Adding insult to injury, the dam would have drowned critical Desert Nesting Bald Eagle (DNBE) habitat along the Verde River. These facts upset the surrounding Yavapai community, who mobilized in support of their ultimately successful effort to save their land. Government Relations Director Dr. Carole Klopatek explains that, "because the eagle helped protect the Yavapai people from the Orme Dam, now the Yavapai people work hard to protect the eagle." Today, the community takes pride in their DNBE population, which is one of the highest in Arizona, and in their environmental protection policies, which are more stringent than those of the federal government.

Though the Yavapai were fairly poor when they battled the dam proposal, they decided it was a fight worth



Eagles have great meaning for the Yavapai people.
Photo by M. Johnston



Yavapai Nation leadership speak at the opening ceremonies for Tom's Thumb Trailhead.
Photo by D. Bierman

making because this is their homeland. One woman, Kimberly Williams, recalls her father's words, "Put a dollar in one hand and the soil in another; which will last longer?"

Mountain Spirits

The Yavapai believe that mountain spirits, or deities, live in the mountains surrounding their lands—Four Peaks,



View from the Preserve looking toward Fort McDowell. Photo by R. Terlecki

the Superstitions, Red Mountain, and the McDowell Mountains. Although it's not tradition for Yavapai women to discuss these spiritual deities, Karen Ray, Yavapai cultural specialist/cultural manager/museum director, mentioned that these spirits help those in need. "The medicine man would meet with the family to understand their situation and then he would speak to one of the spirits. The spirit would visit the mountain and come back to the medicine man with guidance that he could take back to the family," she said. While few modern Yavapai follow this practice, Ray says that there are still a few families who occasionally request guidance from the mountain spirits.

Conservation Values

Past and current Yavapai farm their land and understood the concept of crop rotation long ago. Says Ray, "Our elders intuitively knew that you could not plant the same crop on the same land over and over without hurting the land." Traditional

crops still planted include corn, beans, and squash. Cattle graze the land and wild horses roam its open spaces. Residents practice fire-wise principles, as did their elders, by cutting back mesquite undergrowth. Invasive plants such as Tamarisk are removed to improve the Verde River water flow. Residents run a vigorous bald eagle nest-watch program and strictly monitor water quality. "The water of the Verde River is critical to the survival of the Fort McDowell Yavapai. One of our biggest priorities is making sure that the Verde continues to provide clean and plentiful water for all the living creatures that need it," explains Klopatek.

Passing on Traditions

Many cultures abandon their history and traditions in a rush to be part of the modern world. This was happening with Yavapai youth. To halt this trend, cultural programs have been developed to pass on the traditions of grandparents and great-grandparents.

Young Yavapai can now learn their native language and ethnobotanical traditions. Field trips teach them how to harvest saguaro fruit and make jelly the traditional Yavapai way. They learn which native berries can be harvested and boiled with sugar into a tasty sweet beverage; that agave and banana yucca are dependable food sources; and that ocotillo, willow, and mesquite can be used for building.

"Just as we teach our youth to respect Yavapai traditions and lands, we appreciate the efforts of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy," says Ray. "You too work hard to protect Preserve land and educate people about its inherent value." 🐦

Learn More:

1. Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: www.ftmcdowell.org
2. Ethnobotany: www.fourdir.com/colorado_river_culture.htm
3. *Native American cultures of the Southwest: Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 10: Southwest*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1983.

Our Petroglyphs Legacy

By Peggy McNamara
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward

“This is an old and sacred place.”
Read on. The petroglyph makers have more to say.

“See the animals and people. See our symbols. They are so important to us that we labor with hammerstones to chip their likeness into this rock. They are so important that we take time away from hunting, gathering and farming to show them here.”

Why, you might ask, would people create petroglyphs? Scholars speculate about this and the list of their theories is long. Petroglyphs could be a form of pre-writing or a historical record. They could

be mythological symbols, geographical maps, trail markers, or boundary markers. They could be astronomical maps or records of celestial events. Some theorize that petroglyphs have ritualistic, cultural, or religious significance. A definitive answer remains elusive.

Petroglyphs appear around the world and some are estimated to be 40,000 years old. The American Southwest contains a high concentration of them. Archaeologists think the ones around Phoenix are the work of the Hohokam people who farmed here from approximately 1 CE until

around 1450. That makes the petroglyphs in Scottsdale’s McDowell Sonoran Preserve relatively young.

The youth of the Preserve’s petroglyphs doesn’t make them any less precious. However, their existence inside the Preserve does make them our responsibility. So, when you see them, treat them like their makers did, with respect. Look, but don’t touch. Read what they say and remember, “This is an old and sacred place.” 🐦

Petroglyphs are an indication of early Preserve inhabitants. Photo by M. Jensen



Watchable Wildlife: Animal Spiritual Imagery

By Susan Aufheimer
McDowell Sonoran Field Institute citizen scientist
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward



What would you think if a red-tailed hawk landed on your patio wall? A lot of us would look at it and say, cool! If you were a Native American, however, you may see something deeper in its appearance.

Different animals have meanings for many Native American tribes, who believe the appearance of these animals carries a message or an insight. Take, for example, the red-tailed hawk, which is thought to be a messenger bird. This is a powerful bird that can awaken visionary power and lead you to your life purpose; so when it shows up, pay attention! The snake is the symbol of death and rebirth for some tribes. When the snake comes into your life, you can look for a rebirth of creativity and wisdom. Spiders too have meaning. For some, the tarantula is the master weaver and appears to remind you of your own creativity.

Despite their size, hummingbirds could write a whole book of messages. They symbolize accomplishing the impossible. After all, they can fly backwards! Plus, they live in the desert and somehow find enough nectar, insects, and water to keep their tiny engines running at high speed for most of the day. Hummingbirds are fiercely independent and hard workers. Most of all they are joyful in their daily living. We all can take a page from this mighty little bird's book.

Chief Dan George, poet, activist, actor, and member of the Tseil-Waututh Nation, once said, "If you talk with the animals, they will talk with you, and you will know each other." The wildlife in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve offer plenty of opportunity to have such a conversation. 🦅

Learn More:

Animal Speak: The Spiritual and Magical Powers of Creatures Great and Small by Ted Andrews, 1993.

Red-tailed hawk. Photo by M. Jensen

Field Institute: Medicinal and Ceremonial Plants in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve

By Susan Aufheimer, McDowell Sonoran Field Institute citizen scientist
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward

The plants of the Sonoran Desert offer a bountiful source of nutritious food and a pharmacy filled with healing flora. The native people who inhabited the desert in and around the McDowell Mountains knew how to harvest and use the many plants we see as we hike the trails of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve.

Many of us have sampled the treats provided by the prickly pear cactus—prickly pear tea and prickly pear jelly—but many of us don't know what the native people knew: the prickly pear pads can be skinned, cooked, and eaten. Researchers now believe that the natural pectin contained in the pads helped native people lower "bad" cholesterol.

Native people revered the healers in their society who used a variety of plants to treat the sick. Brittlebush, one of the most common plants in the Pre-

serve, produces a sap that healers used to cure sores and toothaches. The jojoba bush, another common plant, produces leaves that can be brewed into a tea that soothes inflamed mucous membranes.

The saguaro cactus, which grows only in the Sonoran Desert and is prominent throughout the Preserve, played an important role in the lives of native people. Among the saguaro's many uses, its fruit was made into a thin porridge to soothe the stomach of a woman after childbirth and to help her produce milk. Its fruit also served a ceremonial purpose when fermented and made into wine. The Tohono O'odham, who live further south of the McDowells, held elaborate wine celebrations called Singing Down the Rain to bring rain during the monsoon season, ensuring the fertility of the land and the people.

We do not suggest you grab a handful of creosote leaves and stuff them into your mouth, even though this plant is said to have many medicinal qualities, including curing bad breath. We ask you to imagine a life dependent on the flora surrounding you, and realize that much of what you might need in the way of nutrition, medicine, and spiritual help is living and growing right at your very feet. That's what the native people before you understood about the plants of the Sonoran Desert. 🐦

Learn More:

www.tucsonbotanical.org, "Desert Plants/Desert Peoples: Ethnobotany of the Sonoran Desert, Teacher Information"

www.azcentral.com/news/native-americans/?content=fruit-harvest

www.herbalsafety.utep.edu/herbs-pdfs/chaparral.pdf

www.uapress.arizona.edu/onlinebks/PROPHET/PLANTS.HTM

Prickly pear cactus bud. Photo by T. Roche



Prickly pear cactus pad. Photo by B. White



Panoramic view of Tom's Thumb Trailhead.

Photo by D. Bierman







Amidst It All A Quiet Lookout

By Bob Roliardi
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward

It sits overlooking America's sixth largest city. The Valley of the Sun sprawls from it into the west. As one sits upon it you can picture life below among the buildings, roads and people. Yet here one is much farther removed than by a few miles in distance and a few hundred feet of altitude from the modern world.

Here on the Lookout you have been fortunate to walk into the past. You are surrounded by a silence that is created by mountains, desert, and the wind. You are in the middle of Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve in the Valley's northeast corner. You have made a journey of a

millennium in less than an hour's drive for most people and a walk of a few hours. This is a very small price to pay for a journey that can deliver such a peaceful and personal opportunity.

There are many great places to hike in the Valley or very nearby. But the Lookout is different. Unlike Camelback Mountain or Piestawa Peak there are no crowds, nor a confined feeling at the top. This is a broad expanse of lunar-type boulders and, at 3,858 feet, it is one of the highest points in the Preserve for hikers. The Lookout was created by nature and preserved by humans for contemplation. The view is panoramic, encompassing the west

and east valleys. In the distance to the east Four Peaks, the Superstitions, and Weaver's Needle appear. In the foreground you see the combination colors of brown and green in the Verde Valley and if the timing is right, the fountain of Fountain Hills erupts. To the west Camelback, Piestawa Peak, and South Mountain appear between the high rises of Phoenix and Scottsdale.

It does take a greater commitment of time to seek this silent refuge amidst our urban home. There are a couple of logical access points and well-marked trails in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve that will bring you to the Lookout. None of them are easy walks.

The two primary paths to the Lookout are the Tom's Thumb Trail and the East

View from The Lookout. Photo by B. White



Left:
Interesting rock
formations at
the Lookout.
Photo by B. White



Fountain Hills can be seen in the distance. Photo by B. White

End Trail. Both are rated “Difficult,” and East End Trail, which rises 1,100 feet in 1.3 miles, is thought by many to be the most challenging in the Preserve. From the Gateway Trailhead (1,720 feet) on Thompson Peak Parkway, the Lookout is about 5.5 miles one way on the Tom’s Thumb Trail. How long it takes, of course, depends on the speed we choose.

For many, being able to walk and observe requires about 30 minutes to complete one mile. You do the math and set your own pace. For this walk, slower is more conducive to contemplation. From the new Tom’s Thumb Trailhead, (2,813 feet on the northern border of the Preserve, south of Dynamite Road near 128th Street), the trip is shorter at about 2.6 miles one way and slightly steeper.

Remember that there is no water available at the Tom’s Thumb Trailhead. Always bring more than adequate water; you might come across a fellow hiker in need.

Don’t hike to the Lookout just for a workout or to see how fast you can cover the miles. Consider your journey to be an opportunity for solitude and contemplation. If you are not one to hike by yourself, this might be the time to do it and focus on your inner communication. If hiking is always a group activity for you, consider setting some ground rules. No conversation outside of what the hike inspires. No long drive necessary. No high clearance vehicles required. Enjoy the opportunity for solitude right in your own backyard.

If you choose to take this journey, do not hurry. This is a hike to linger upon. Go to the Lookout to enjoy the journey as well as the destination. Linger at the top. Contemplate. Go there to sit and think. Be peaceful with yourself. Revel in knowing that among the millions in our urban sprawl, you are in a place that belongs to the millenniums. You are in a place that, because of the forethought of local residents, will have a future shaped by the eternal forces of nature.

For more information about the McDowell Sonoran Preserve along with detailed maps for the hike, visit www.mcdowellsonoran.org. 

Mind and Desert

By Nancy Howe
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy lead steward

Each spring, the McDowell Sonoran Preserve comes alive with citizen scientists and their teachers. Botanists, biologists, and geologists count and measure, capture and release, observe and speculate. We all know the Preserve as a natural history hotspot.

But surprising to some, the Preserve is an equally rich resource for students and teachers of human nature. Both Conservancy Steward Julie Ohlinger and Conservancy Sonoran Desert Women member Phyllis Strupp find that the Preserve is a highly effective inspiration for their work, even though the two women offer guidance in different fields of expertise. The trails and mountains of the Preserve serve

as a springboard from which both Ohlinger and Strupp draw powerful lessons about resiliency and the courage of the human spirit.

Ohlinger is a psychotherapist who provides cognitive behavioral therapy, and specializes in grief counseling. She had worked in hospice and with cancer survivors before opening her private practice in 2000. But it wasn't until 2009, when she experienced the profound healing of her own grief while hiking in the Preserve, that Ohlinger conceived of a new approach for her practice, which she renamed "Stays On the Mountain."

"A friend and I started hiking two or three times a week. As we'd hike, we'd talk. Our mantra was that whatever we said on the mountain would stay on the mountain. Grief was a process and walking was a way for me to gain fresh perspectives. Now I have a saying, 'When words fail, nature will speak,'" says Ohlinger.

Back then, Ohlinger weighed more than she wanted to and it was on the Preserve trails that she realized her hiking was resolving her grief and leading to a series of behavioral changes. "First, it put miles on my feet. Hiking changed my metabolism

Many trails in the Preserve offer a sense of natural connection. Photo by S. Cullumber



and how I saw myself. I started hiking as a person in need of healing from grief and from unhealthy behaviors," she recalls.

Over the course of a year, Ohlinger became a different person, she says. "I didn't lose 60 pounds, I left them in the Preserve," she says. That is when she decided to expand her practice to embrace what she had experienced in her own life. "Whenever I have clients who feel stuck in their thinking, I ask them to try walking with me in the Preserve. There is nothing stagnant about the mountains, the Preserve is always changing. The trail is always different: the light changes, the weather changes, the geology changes. We are always rewarded with insights and realizations that never could have occurred in my office."

Some of Ohlinger's clients get far more than they had hoped for. Ohlinger often receives referrals from physicians whose patients are seeking bariatric surgery. "Bariatric candidates are required to go through counseling because if the out-of-control eating doesn't change, the surgery won't remain effective. Physicians are intrigued by my approach, and it works. I've had clients who come in planning on surgery, but after they start hiking, they work out their story. Many

continue hiking to the point where they no longer need surgery or antidepressant medication. The brain does something different when we do something different," says Ohlinger.

Author and Carefree resident, Phyllis Strupp focuses on the human condition that she observed while studying the Sonoran Desert. Her 2004 book, *The Richest of Fare*, is a photographic and spiritual exploration that provides the reader "a guided tour to the desert's life-changing spiritual power."

Strupp deepened her understanding of mind-body-spirit connections through her experiences in the desert and as a theological mentor and a clergy wellness-program faculty member.

She sees the desert as a place for inspiration and likes to head for the hills with her husband, Peter, or a friend. "When I hike in the Preserve, I go up and out of myself, relating to plants, animals, rocks, the sun, the sky, and the ancient human inhabitants of the land, especially at an unconscious level. Then when I come back to myself, problems look smaller, blessings look larger, ideas come faster," she explains.

Strupp weaves together what she calls the desert's "important spiritual truth: the world around us doesn't always give us the nourishment and abundance we desire." In response, Strupp's approach is to provide clients with a way to discover new avenues to meaning and purpose in their lives, which drive personal well-being and the achievement of goals. In some ways, Strupp is tapping into the concept of "biophilia," a theory that postulates that man needs contact with nature to be happy and healthy and lead a meaningful life. (Reread our Fall 2012 issue for more on the topic of biophilia.)

For both Strupp and Ohlinger, a passage from *the Richest of Fare* aptly describes their relationship with the Preserve: "There's something about the land. That mixture of soil, rocks, landforms, air, light, water, plants, animals, sights, sounds, textures, scents, flavors: the land, the place where we live. Always there, in so many ways, supporting us, nourishing us, restoring us." 🐦

Hiking provides some a respite from stress.
Photo by M. Czinar



Flowers of the Desert

by Susan Aufheimer
McDowell Sonoran Field Institute citizen scientist
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward



I thought I was dreaming—the whole world seemed to turn yellow, spattered with highlights of blue ... and a little red. I had to ask myself, Where am I? What time is it? It was springtime in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve! And, what a magnificent display it was! This spring we enjoyed one of the most dazzling blooms we've seen in years. If you and your family hiked the Preserve during this stunning exhibition, chances are one of you had a question or two about why one year is better than another and what happens to all the flowers after they bloom!

Your child might have wondered why he saw so many flowers this spring when last year the flowers were sparse by comparison. Tell him it's all about the weather, and that every spring bloom is different from the last one. Was the winter too warm? Too cold? Did the winter bring too much rain or not enough? This year's display of flowers seems to tell us that the weather came through just about right.

Your child might have asked where all the flowers go when they disappear. Wildflowers turn into seeds that drop to the ground to await next spring's awakening. The flowers on cactuses, trees, and shrubs turn into fruit, beans, or nuts. Not apples or kidney beans or cashews, but prickly pear and saguaro fruits, mesquite and palo verde beans, and jojoba nuts, as examples. Many are edible but more are better suited to wildlife taste buds.

The default color for most of our desert flowers seems to be yellow—yellow flowers on brittlebush and creosote, yellow fiddlenecks, yellow poppies, and more. Blue complements the yellow—blue lupine carpets rocky places that are already covered with yellow poppies. Peeking out from their hiding places are bright red flowers on the chuparosa shrub, and a delicate white chicory flower pokes out from beneath. As spring draws closer to

Poppy. Photo by R. Buchbinder

summer we begin to see magnificent saguaros bearing white bridal bouquets on each arm, and hedgehog cactuses carrying deep orange-red nosegays as part of the wedding party.

In early spring, looking across the desert floor and up the mountains, you probably saw a blanket of green covering the ground. Most of us think “grass,” but think again. It’s comb bur, a low-growing annual with tiny white flowers that are so hard to see, you have to stop and concentrate on finding them. It’s also the fresh leaves of other plants that are soon to bloom, such as the blue lupine and purple desert hyacinth

and scorpion weed. And, yes, desert grasses are springing up too, but most of them are annuals that are gone before our summer heat sets in. What is the most prevalent flower in the Preserve? Well, that depends on the time of year and where you walk in the Preserve. In March, it’s probably the yellow flowers of the brittle-bush or creosote, along with yellow poppies and blue lupine. In April, the blue palo verde shows off its yellow flowers everywhere you look, and the cactuses break out in festive color, from the diminutive hedgehogs to the sprawling prickly pears. In May, it’s

all about the saguaro and its night-blooming white flowers that turn into brilliant red fruit the following month. For more information, the Conservancy publishes *A Field Guide to the McDowell Sonoran Preserve*, which provides photos of the most common flowers you are likely to see anytime during the year. Ask about this guidebook when you take one of the scheduled guided hikes led by a Conservancy steward. No matter how or when you decide to see the Preserve’s glorious colors, just resolve to DO IT! 🐦

As the weather warms, volunteers can track wildflower growth from lower elevations to higher elevations.

Photo by E. Filsinger



Preservation Partner Profile: Arizona Public Service (APS)

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy's responsibility is the land currently protected within the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, which is within the APS metro Phoenix service area. APS power lines run along eight miles of newly acquired land in the northern-most section of the Preserve, and we have worked with APS to appropriately manage desert vegetation along this power-line corridor.

Serving the Southwest since 1886, APS generates, sells, and delivers electricity and energy-related products and services. APS serves more than a million customers in 11 of Arizona's 15 counties, and is the operator and co-owner of the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, a primary source of electricity for the Southwest. A community leader in environmental excellence APS was awarded in 2010 and again in 2011 the EPA's ENERGY STAR Award for Sustained Excellence, the EPA's highest ENERGY STAR honor, for APS's continued leadership in energy efficiency.

As a 2013 Preservation Partner, APS provided support for the Conservancy's *Healthy Kids for a Healthy Community* program. This program is comprised of activities and resources including school-based activities, public programming through our Family Friday Sunset Series and guided family hikes, and educational tools such as the Family Passport. These *Healthy Kids* program activities are designed to reconnect youth with the outdoors and get them active for the health of future generations and the health of our natural landscape. APS supports program coordination,

program supplies, and field trips to encourage wellness and education through activities in the Preserve.

We also enjoy annual support from 30 to 50 APS employee volunteers at a habitat restoration project in the Preserve, usually held in the spring of each year. This volunteer support is even more important now as the Preserve has grown.

Thank you APS for your ongoing support! 🐦

Healthy Kids for a Healthy Community. Photo by R. Raish



Join Our Circle of Friends

As a community member who values the outdoors, and specifically the Sonoran Desert, you understand the importance of preserving and maintaining open space now to ensure its availability in the future. This shared appreciation of the desert is why we are inviting you to join us today as a Friend of the Preserve by returning this membership form.

- McDowell Sonoran Society (\$1,500+)
 Steward Circle (\$1,000)
 Trailbuilder Circle (\$500)
 Caretaker Circle (\$250)
- Pathfinder Circle (\$100)
 Hiker Circle (\$50)
 Other _____
- Please charge my credit card
 A check is enclosed

Credit Card # _____ Expiration Date: _____

Name as it appears on the card _____

Name(s) by which you would like to be acknowledged _____

Address _____ Email _____

_____ Phone _____

- I would prefer that my gift remain anonymous

Mail to: McDowell Sonoran Conservancy • 16435 N. Scottsdale Rd. • Suite 110 • Scottsdale, AZ 85254



16435 North Scottsdale Road
Suite 110
Scottsdale, Arizona 85254

Get the latest McDowell Sonoran
Conservancy info at:



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Brown's Ranch Trailhead Opening—Save the Date!

Join us as we celebrate the opening of the Brown's Ranch Trailhead and Interpretive Center October 19, 2013. Activities will include family-friendly programming in the shaded amphitheater and educational resources centered on stories captured from Arizona ranching and pioneer families. The trailhead offers access to the north area of the Preserve, including miles of trails perfect for hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use. Remnants of the Brown's Ranch Homestead are accessible from this trailhead, and a barrier-free trail that leads visitors among the unique boulders provides an extraordinary experience for those who are not able to hike great distances. For updated information, visit www.mcdowellsonoran.org/ranch. 

Artist's rendering of the Brown's Ranch Trailhead Building. Source: Weddle Gilmore Architects

