

Mountain Lines

Winter 2014



See the New Brown's
Ranch Trailhead Exhibit

Where science meets public participation

Managing a 500
Volunteer Organization

Providing meaningful service opportunities

Chasing Butterflies

Delicate creatures offer clues
to ecosystem health



McDowell Sonoran
CONSERVANCY.



Mike Nolan, Executive Director

As Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve doubled in size and miles of trails over the past five years, it created an immediate need for more volunteer stewards to help

manage and provide services for visitors. In just four years, the number of active stewards has more than doubled and now exceeds 550 and continues to grow.

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy is engaged in a unique experiment to provide Scottsdale with trained volunteers as the primary workforce to patrol and manage the Preserve and its trails and to offer services such as free hikes, group tours, trailhead hosts, education programs, and more to the hundreds of thousands of visitors who now use the Preserve. Our citizen scientists work with professional scientists on ecological and historical research, ongoing monitoring of changes to plant and animal populations, and other projects that contribute an unusually high level of knowledge to the understanding of how best to manage this large urban Preserve.

Managers of most publicly owned parks, preserves, and natural areas recruit and use

volunteers who help with various tasks. Few, if any, have a group like our stewards, who are largely self-managed, trained to the level needed for the tasks they agree to undertake, and able to lead organized, high-level programs and activities that benefit all who use the Preserve. Last year their cumulative contribution totaled nearly 45,000 hours.

This has made our steward program a model for other public land managers, around the valley and around the state, who face reductions in funding and increases in demand from users. Their search for solutions is leading more and more of them to study how we recruit, train, organize, and deploy volunteers, and to consider how they might implement something like it to help them manage their lands.

Driven by a love for the Preserve, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy stewards are a dynamic and evolving group that is responding to the management needs of the Preserve. This issue celebrates our stewards, their programs, and their accomplishments. The next time you visit the Preserve and see a steward in a blue shirt, thank them for their commitment to protecting Scottsdale's crown jewel: the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. 🌿

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Cover photo: A mid-winter snow adds beauty and precious water to our desert Preserve. Photo by: Erich Braun

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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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The Master Steward Recognition Program

More than a decade ago, steward leadership began its search for an appropriate recognition to acknowledge a steward's outstanding commitment of time and talent in the service of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. It was decided that stewards selected for this award would receive the title of Master Steward. Today, it is still the most prestigious recognition available to our volunteers.

To be recognized as a Master Steward, volunteers must have a minimum of five years of service as a steward and 1000 reported cumulative hours of service during a five-year period. They also must be active participants in at least four activities, with one having a leadership component attached.

The dynamic growth of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve during the last few years has been the catalyst to our growth

as a much larger organization. We now recognize that our steward mentor group was going to be an important factor in helping our newer volunteers to connect to our organization and our mission in the Preserve. We also recognized the fact that our stewards had to have a higher level of education about our beautiful Sonoran Desert, so we are making continuing education an important part of stewards ongoing training.

We recognized our first Master Stewards in 2005. To date, 28 men and 20 woman have received this esteemed recognition. They are a diverse group, coming from all over the world and bringing a wide range of backgrounds and skills to the Conservancy. We look forward to recognizing our next group of Master Stewards. 🌿

Stewards participate in the geology survey of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. Photo by: Marianne Jensen





Stewards assist in installing insect traps for the insect survey near Lost Dog Trail. Photo by: Marianne Jensen

Conservancy Stewards Inspire Volunteer Organization Manager

By Kathy Dwyer
Director, Steward Operations

As one of our Master Stewards (Class 5) passed me for the second time on the recent 30-mile Tour De Scottsdale that benefitted the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, I reflected on the strength, resilience, and passion of our many Conservancy steward volunteers and, of course, on my struggle to catch up to him! Despite my inability to reach that physical goal, this experience is just one of the many recent activities that, to me, reflect the relentless drive and persistence exhibited by the Conservancy's steward community.

With over 25 years of experience in managing volunteers (mostly in New York museums and cultural institutions), I think the Conservancy features one of the strongest, most engaged

volunteer groups with which I have had the honor to serve. This volunteer program is be one of the best in the country and I truly believe we are proving that fact.

Many non-profit organizations consider their volunteers to be "unpaid helpers" who are recruited to assist staff, but here at the Conservancy each and every steward is a core asset who helps lead the organization towards its goals. Also, many non-profits lack strategies that enable volunteers to become engaged in an organization's decision-making, goal development, and mission accomplishment. Other organizations feature a volunteer workforce majority, but provide no clear channels to

tap into the diverse ideas and opinions of this valuable resource. Susan Ellis, president of Energize, Inc., a training firm that specializes in volunteerism remarks, "Having volunteers is not a strategy, nor is having more next year a meaningful goal . . . Volunteers expand the brain of an organization (as well as its heart)." And I think this perspective is definitely personified by our stewards.

At the Conservancy, the volunteer stewards have essential roles in managing, creating and expanding our mission and our goals. In fact, the Conservancy grew from volunteer roots, developing in less than 16 years from a small advocacy group with a single yearly orientation class, to an organization supported by over 500 volunteers who are sustained

Bike Patrol stewards, surrounded by friends take a break near Granite Mountain during a recreational ride in the Preserve. Photo courtesy of: Carole Burton



by a variety of 'knowledge-sharing' programs ranging from multiple annual orientations and mentorship opportunities to history and natural resource presentations and science-based research activities. And, like the McDowell Sonoran Preserve itself, volunteer staffing has doubled over the past two years to meet the obligations of our growing acreage as well as the diverse interests of the community.

Recently, a steward committee, led by a Lead Steward developed Stewardship 2020 to identify emerging issues that the Preserve and the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy may face over the next five years. The group also made recommendations and proposed an action plan on how to address these issues with respect to their alignment with the Conservancy mission and its vision stated in the 2015 strategic plan,

to be "the leader in urban preserve management through the excellence with which it exercises stewardship over Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve." By tapping into the multitude of ideas developed by stewards - the group most familiar with the Preserve's demands - the Conservancy recognizes the addition of greater skills and perspectives that each and every steward can bring to the overall thinking and management of this organization. Challenges faced by the Conservancy are routinely shared with volunteers who, as representatives of the community, ask good questions, give suggestions, and brainstorm possible solutions.

This kind of partnership ensures that we can maximize the contributions of volunteers early in the Conservancy's strategic planning process, and

ensure that the implementation plans are well thought-out by the individuals who may be impacted the most. Plus, the stewards' varied points of view, diverse personal histories and occupations, and contacts throughout the community bring a superior perspective to our strategic development that could not be accomplished through only a small group's assessment of upcoming challenges.

The scope and depth of volunteer activity in Preserve management is also enhanced by the diverse demographics that highlight our steward group. The lines between differences in ages, genders, backgrounds, income levels, etc. blur as we all work together toward a common goal - building on our individual talents to plan for and protect a resource that we all can be proud of.

In turn, I want to ensure that the Conservancy will continue to offer a program

A steward teaches hikers about a hike to Brown's Ranch. Photo by: Marianne Jensen





A botanist prepares a plant for pressing and later study during the flora survey near Lost Dog Trail. Photo by: Marianne Jensen

where stewards can continually feel valued. First, we offer meaningful, interesting experiences for all stewards. We provide training or mentoring for those new to a task, and ensure everyone gains new skills, knowledge or friendships during their time with us. I will keep the cadre and the public informed on how steward work is 'making a difference' and will share such success stories through this publication, our website, our Thursday email to stewards, *The Insider* (our quarterly publication of the McDowell Sonoran Field Institute), and *The Preserver*, our monthly publication for stewards. And last but certainly not least - because it is the stewards' commitment and productivity that enables the Conservancy to flourish - we will ensure ALL stewards feel appreciated for the contributions they give to the Preserve and the community.

The dynamic nature of the Conservancy's Steward Program has provided inspiration for me to examine new trends in volunteerism, to ensure we stay current with the changing times and nature of our community, and to continue to offer meaningful opportunities for the volunteers who have been with the Preserve through its 'growing years'. 'Entrepreneurial volunteers' have approached the Conservancy with independently-proposed projects which offer some new ideas for us to build on. For example, a new steward proposed an idea known as "Ages and Stages" to engage parents and their young children in cultivating an appreciation for our Sonoran Desert in the next generation of Scottsdale citizens. Episodic volunteering, which

offers significant short term experiences for those who may have limited time to dedicate to a goal, can complement the work of our existing volunteers, whether it be through a trail building or 'clean up' experience.

These are just a few ideas on the horizon for the bright future of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. This collaborative relationship that thrives through the active, self-motivated group of stewards working in concert with the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Board, the City of Scottsdale, and the community is positioning us to be a recognized model of steward advocacy for the country. And it thrills me to be a part of this exceptional group each and every day. See you on the trails! 🌿

Watchable Wildlife: Chasing Butterflies

By Julie Murphree
Arizona State University Instructor
Poly Science and Mathematics
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Darting around with a wingspan not much bigger than my little fingernail, I caught a glimpse of what I thought might well be the world's smallest butterfly. Fumbling with my binoculars and skipping over rocks, I scurried after her. My high hopes of identifying this dainty creature soon faded, however, as she retreated into a nearby muddy "watering hole". Her blue topside had transformed into a series of broken brownish bands as she folded her wings close to her body. My whimsical friend had all but disappeared.

Disillusioned, my thoughts turned to weaving my way back to the trail and re-joining the rest of the citizen scientists, students and researchers in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, all here for one purpose - identifying and counting butterflies. Together, we clambered over boulders, wound our way through the mesquite bosques and traversed the riparian area just below the Dixie mine. I wanted so desperately to make a difference as I knew how vital our data was to the Preserve, to the surrounding urban areas and even to the greater southwestern United States.

I am no butterfly expert. As an instructor at Arizona State University, my research has focused primarily on animal nutrition related to ungulates (hoofed animals) here in Arizona. It's easy to get the public involved in conservation efforts for such visible species. Everyone likes to see the "deer and the antelope play...", but butterflies? How can the public ever know of the clues they provide to us on the delicateness of this fragile ecosystem? They are incredibly sensitive to their environment. If their numbers are down, so too may be the health of the ecosystem.

The California Patch butterfly nectars on turpentine flowers. The North Preserve has numerous goldeneye plants to host this plentiful butterfly. Photo by: Marianne Jensen

Disappointment soon turned to enchantment. My invisible insect was suddenly joined by a kaleidoscope of colorful friends and the insignificant muddy puddle astoundingly began to dance with life, right before my eyes. Butter-orange butterflies flitted in, huddling closely together as if communicating some unspoken message. But wait....another even larger, vibrant yellow fellow joined in, skirting just above my head. I felt like Snow White in a Disney Cartoon. There was no time to break into song . . . no time for even a picture. It was time to tally their number . . . and quickly! Anyone who has ever attempted to count these vivacious creatures will soon come to question why they are ever called "Sleepy Oranges" in the first place. They are indeed fast and wary when pursued. I learned quickly that it is best to just remain motionless.

I have to admit, I was amazed. All this activity, all this drama . . . from the insect world? We had been on the Dixie Mine Trail barely 10 minutes and already what had begun as an uncertain adventure into the unknown territory of butterflies and boredom was anything but that. My deer and pronghorn rarely display such a show. Scorching temperatures that would send mammals scurrying for cover had no affect on our invertebrate friends. For the next three hours we would journey past ancient hieroglyphics and mine-shaft openings, witnessing firsthand man's footprint in this area and the resilience of nature. Butterflies at times, seemed too numerous to count and I was amazed at the skills of the experts.



Visiting butterfly expert, Chris Tenny, identifies the differences between similarly marked butterflies. Photo by :Marianne Jensen

"This is just what I was hoping to see," proclaimed Dr. Ron Rotowski, professor and invertebrate specialist at Arizona State University. The recent monsoon rains had left behind damp ground and puddles to which many butterfly species gravitate. They appeared to be unaffected by the bees, who also loved these wet areas .

Just how many species would we see today? And what would their numbers tell us?

"Twelve Sleepy Oranges!" I heard Dr. Rotowski call out to the recorder, one of my students, close behind me at the watering hole. "And over there, One Cloudless Sulphur." (That was the vibrant yellow fellow that was darting around my head!) Flying lazily back and forth was the common red-brick colored butterfly sometimes mistaken for the Monarch . "A

Queen!" Ron shouted out. I quickly learned how vital it is, when chasing butterflies to not forget to look down at your feet, for surely enough you may be able to spot the small orange and black Tiny Checkerspot butterfly flying close to the ground in a languid fashion.

We counted over 20 species of butterflies that morning on the Dixie Mine Trail. Of the 30 documented species in the area, these numbers supported the fact that this riparian ecosystem was doing fairly well, at least for the time being.

"There's one invisible something or other in the corner of the mud puddle . . . by herself," I chimed in.

I was thrilled when Ron confirmed that she was indeed the Western Pygmy Blue, the smallest butterfly on earth!

That day, I ended chasing butterflies with a huge smile on my face. All was well with our invertebrate friends. 🦋



*This photograph shows Granite Mountain as seen from near Fraesfield Mountain.
Photo by: Lynne Russell*



The Case of Raptors and Power Lines

By Melanie Tluczek
McDowell Sonoran Field Institute Director

A raptor perches high atop a power line pole, searching the ground below for a meal. It spots its prey, spreads its wings, and then zap! An electrocuted bird falls dead on the ground.

What!??? Please . . . read on. There is something of a happy ending.

Raptors, also known as birds of prey, include hawks, eagles, falcons, owls, and vultures. As predators, raptors play a key role in the ecosystem by keeping prey populations in balance. They eat rodents, reptiles, bugs, and other birds. Some of their unique features are their sharp talons and powerful, hooked beaks for catching and eating prey. But these fierce birds of prey are sensitive to human influence.

In the case of power lines, the raptor's hunting and nesting habits make it vulnerable. The power pole provides a

high, clear view of anything below that moves. But when a particularly large bird, such as an eagle, hawk, or some species of owl stretches its wings to fly, the wings may simultaneously come into contact with two different electrical elements, resulting in electrocution. Since the 1970s, researchers have documented large numbers of raptors that have been killed by electrocution from power lines. This finding prompted power companies to take action, and many of them retrofitted power line systems to decrease the chances of raptor mortality due to electrocution.

Through the flora and fauna survey conducted between 2011 and 2013, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Field Institute experts and volunteers

documented 14 raptor species in Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve. This includes seven species of hawks: Harris's hawk, northern harrier, sharp-shinned hawk, red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, golden eagle, and zone-tailed hawk. There are three species of owls. The largest is the great-horned owl, the western screech owl is smaller, and the elf owl is the smallest. Turkey vultures are a common sight in winter. You can recognize them by their dark, angular wings with "ragged" looking edges. We also documented three falcon species: the American kestrel, the peregrine falcon, and the prairie falcon.

Exactly one year ago in the December 2013 issue of Mountain Lines, "The Ecological Resource Plan, Science by the People for the People" article discussed the Field Institute's joint effort with the City of Scottsdale

Power lines transect the Preserve along Power Line Road in the North Preserve. Photo by: Barry White



to develop an Ecological Resource Plan (ERP). This document uses scientific findings to guide the management of the natural resources of the Preserve. Those resources include geology, water, plants and animals, and the connections that bind them together into a functioning ecosystem. The ERP has a special focus on the plants and animals that are referred to as sensitive species that either face potential decline due to human activity or are sensitive to environmental change. Raptors fall into this category. It also happens that Arizona Public Service (APS), the public utility responsible for the power lines traversing the Preserve, is a longtime partner of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. APS has a particular interest in our raptors and contributed funds to the ERP effort in order to ensure that the issue of raptors and power lines will be addressed.

APS also has a wildlife protection program that includes educating the public about raptors and electrocution. On their website, they state that Harris hawks, red-tailed hawks, and great-horned owls are the species most affected by power lines in the valley metro service areas. To reduce the risk of electrocution to these birds, they install customized perches, put covers on electrical equipment, cover wire, and construct new facilities when necessary.

However, even with the best modifications, electrocution can still happen. When one does, it is important to look for the cause so that it does not happen again. This is where the ERP comes in. A large part of the work of the ERP consists of identifying potential human threats or changes to the Preserve ecosystem, and developing ways of monitoring whether threats are occurring. With one and eventually two power lines stretching across the Preserve, monitoring the area for deceased birds is an important component of the plan. If a dead bird is found near a power line, the next action would be to determine the cause of death. If it is electrocution, then the investigators determine what aspect of the power lines caused the situation so a fix can be implemented. By developing a regular monitoring program, we can catch any problems early and work with APS to address them. This saves time, money, and most of all our majestic Preserve raptors. 🦅



Harris hawks are raptors that live in family groups of two to seven birds. Photo by: Marianne Jensen.



The Bajada Nature trail signs illustrate some of the flora, fauna and geology of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. Photo by: Don Bierman

Fun in the Preserve

By Peggy McNamara
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward
and Field Institute Citizen Scientist

School field trips, youth group tours, extended family tours, trailside nature exhibits and more! What's all this? It's fun in the Preserve hosted by the volunteer members of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Nature Guides program.

Nature Guides are Conservancy stewards who not only love to learn about the plants, animals, geology and history of the desert; they also love to tell others about it. This group offers you multiple opportunities to explore the McDowell Sonoran Preserve while learning about its natural and cultural resources.

Nature Guides conduct school field trips in the Preserve, customized for all age groups, that allow participating students to connect to the desert through outdoor tours. On Preserve visits, students explore the Bajada Nature Trail and the new Jane Rau Trail - both barrier free trails. Kids have the opportunity to touch, hear, and even taste things that will enhance their Preserve experience. If funding is in short supply, a program called PACE (Passport to Access and Connection to the Environment) founded by Conservancy steward, Christine Kovach, will help with transportation costs for school children and the disabled.

Do you have an event that is bringing family or friends to town, and would you like to show them the spectacular beauty of this place you call

home? Or are you a youth group leader who wants a way to connect kids with the outdoors? A private Nature Guide tour will show your group the hidden treasures in the Preserve.

If you would rather experience a learning adventure with just your immediate family, you can take advantage of our Family Friday talks. Our expert speakers often bring crawling, slithering friends with them so you can have an up-close and personal experience. Will it be snakes, a Gila monster, a desert tortoise or maybe bugs? Find out by visiting the Preserve on Family Friday. These events occur at the Gateway Amphitheater on the first Friday of the

month, and at the Brown's Ranch Amphitheater on the third Friday. The talks begin at 4:30 PM and last for one hour. Look for them from October through March, but not in December.

An encounter with one of our Trailside Naturalists will enhance your Preserve experience. These experts answer questions and share items that Preserve visitors can touch, hear, and sometimes taste. You will find them at the Gateway and Browns Ranch trailheads on various Saturdays from October to May.

We know that children need the physical, mental and social benefits of a healthy, active outdoor lifestyle. They

learn more when they can experience nature through all five senses. When they experience nature with a Nature Guide, they will also learn about our community's heritage and the importance of caring for the environment. Senior citizens can benefit from this just as well as youngsters. That's why the Nature Guides conduct interpretive hikes for seniors that originate at both Senior centers in Scottsdale.

So, check out the Nature Guide schedule on the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy web site given below, and make a date some educational fun!

www.mcdowellsonoran.org/content/pages/schoolGroupsAndYouth#sthash.



A Conservancy trailside naturalist sets up a temporary station where she talks to hikers about her desert artifacts. Photo by: Marianne Jensen



Steward Education: Past, Present and Future

By Marsha Lipps
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Lead Steward

As the McDowell Sonoran Preserve doubles in size, so does the need for a greater number of skilled McDowell Sonoran Conservancy stewards. Steward Education at the Conservancy helps to meet this need by providing a New Steward Orientation (NSO) class and easily accessible, quality continuing education classes. The current educational offerings were created to reflect the Conservancy mission to “champion the sustainability of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve for the benefit of this and future generations.”

The challenges in creating the courses were many.

- Increase the number of orientation events in order to enroll over 125 new stewards per year in NSO classes.
- Keep the number of students to the optimal size of 20 per class.
- Hold the classes in geographically desirable locations that will connect new stewards to the Preserve.
- Keep the logistics simple and make each NSO class consistent so it is easier to publicize and support the classes.

In 2012, the decision was made to offer the NSO class seven times a year on the second Saturday of the month at Gateway during the months of Septem-

ber through April, but not in December. Morning sessions cover topics ranging from learning about the Conservancy and how volunteers can participate to desert safety and managing first aid. The trainees learn about the 10 Conservancy programs, such as Construction and Maintenance, Patrol, Nature Guides and the Field Institute. The students then select several programs that are of interest to them before the end of the class. During lunch, the trainees have a chance to chat with the 10 program chairs to find out what it is like to work on that particular program. In the afternoon, students enjoy interactive topics

At the end of New Student Orientation, a new steward and her mentor talk about volunteer opportunities in the Conservancy. Photo by: Steve Dodd





Stewards and other hikers learn about the ancient and recent inhabitants of the Preserve during a Human History hike. Photo by: Lynne Russell

covering local natural history and the Preserve ordinance.

The day ends with graduation when the candidates become stewards-in-training. They receive their blue shirts and steward-in-training badges. By this point, new stewards-in-training feel enthusiastic and like they are a part of the Conservancy team.

But there is still more required before a steward-in-training becomes a full-fledged steward. Each trainee must complete a required 20 hours of Conservancy program work. To help them fulfill that requirement, they are provided with a logbook, called the Passport, where the trainees record their activities. The trainees also receive the New Steward Handbook, a reference guide on how to navigate the many Conservancy activities. Each trainee gets handouts listing the contacts for each program, and the date and location of

the program orientation events. Based on his or her preferred interest, each new steward-in-training is matched with a mentor present at the class who is knowledgeable with the programs in which the trainee is interested. The mentor advises the trainee about how to accumulate the required 20 hours from each program of interest. The mentor will continue to advise a new steward throughout the required 20 hours of work and even after he or she becomes a full steward. While Steward Education provides an enthusiastic overview of the steward experience, the mentors and individual programs take over the trainees' integration into the Conservancy.

But steward education doesn't stop after someone becomes a full-fledged steward. The Conservancy encourages stewards to continue increasing their knowledge of the Preserve in order

to interact effectively with the public. Continuing Steward Education offers basic natural history courses open to all stewards. The Conservancy will continue to meet the challenges of a maturing organization through expanded mandatory basic education, broader advanced education, and annual steward refreshers. Efforts are being made to offer new ways of delivering educational materials using lectures, steward development hikes, online learning available on the Conservancy's web pages, and video presentations on Conservancy's YouTube channel: McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Education. www.youtube.com/channel/UC33KF7AFASZli67tchRB56w

Please subscribe to the Conservancy's YouTube channel to be informed of new presentations. 🐦



This mountain lion is just one of the many animals and artifacts displayed in the Field Institute exhibit at the Brown's Ranch Trailhead. Photo by: Lynne Russell

Hide and Seek at Brown's Ranch Trailhead

There is something wonderful at the Brown's Ranch Trailhead. A new exhibit opened in the exhibition area of the trailhead entitled "McDowell Sonoran Field Institute - Where Science Meets Public Participation".

The star of the exhibit is a full-grown mountain lion! In addition, there are over 90 other specimens and objects that relate to or inhabit the Preserve. Visitors will enjoy seeing a variety of mammals, birds, insects, a stunning display of geological artifacts, learn about Preserve research and much more. A highlight of the exhibit is a Hide and Seek quiz where viewers are challenged to find selected exhibit items that are known to inhabit the Preserve.

McDowell Sonoran Conservancy staff, citizen scientists and stewards created the exhibit to demonstrate the work of the McDowell Sonoran Field Institute (MSFI), the research center of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy.

MSFI studies the environment, flora and fauna of the preserve, and the impacts of humans on its natural resources. The scientific studies collaborate with scientists and actively involve trained citizen scientists in the research.

Research results help to create a long-term resource management plan and education that contributes to the broader knowledge of these natural areas. In order to protect the Preserve, it is critical to understand the plants and animals that make it their home, and to understand the geology and human history that influences the natural communities that we see there today.

Visitors to the new exhibit will gain a greater appreciation for the ongoing science-based research on the Preserve that drives the decisions that will conserve the Preserve for future generations. The work of the MSFI and its citizen scientists continues to be essential in monitoring the health of the ecosystem and ongoing human impacts on the Preserve. 

Victory Road Leadership Conference Benefits the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy has been chosen by the Victory Road Leadership Conference to be the beneficiary of its much-anticipated event to be held on April 21, 2015 at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts. The 2015 program highlights compelling stories from influential leaders and innovators who have made profound and amazing journeys and discoveries, while often facing great adversity.

The Victory Road Leadership Conference boasts eight dynamic speakers including: **Merrill Hoge**, former NFL star and ESPN analyst; **Alison Levine**, team captain

of the first American Women's Everest Expedition; **Kirk Lippold**, Commander of the USS Cole; **Tori Murden McLure**, first woman to row solo across the Atlantic Ocean; **Chris Waddell**, first paraplegic to summit Mt. Kilimanjaro; **Eric Kapitulik**, founder of 'The Program' and US Marine Special Operations Officer; **Jack Andraka**, inventor and scientist, the youngest nominee for the Nobel Prize; and **Pat Williams**, NBA Hall of Famer and Vice President of the Orlando Magic.

To purchase tickets for the event go to www.myvictoryroad.com/register.html 

Join Our Circle of Friends

Through your support as a member of our Circle of Friends, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy can continue to protect and preserve everything you enjoy about Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve. Your contribution is vital to keeping the Preserve beautiful and a place to be enjoyed by this and future generations. This shared appreciation of our Sonoran desert is why we invite you to become a Friend of the Preserve by returning the membership form below. You may also make your gift online at www.mcdowellsonoran.org just click Support.

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11th Annual 2014 Tour de Scottsdale Benefits the Conservancy

Event helps support stewardship and education programs in McDowell Sonoran Preserve

The 11th annual Tour de Scottsdale welcomed more than 1,700 cyclists from across the southwest on Oct. 12, to raise funds to maintain Scottsdale's open lands. The Tour de Scottsdale circumnavigates the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, winding through north Scottsdale, Carefree, Fountain Hills and ending on Market Street at DC Ranch.

The Tour, presented by Lexus and produced by the DC Ranch Community Council, continues to raise money each year through sponsorship, registration and cyclist donations that support conservation and education programs at the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. This year's combined sponsorship and event participant registration resulted in a total gift to the Conservancy of over \$46,500.

At the end of the ride, Conservancy Executive Director Mike Nolan, Oliver Smith Jeweler's Lexi Miller, and DC Ranch Community Council Executive Director Christine Irish presented awards donated by Oliver Smith Jewelers to 70-mile men's and women's recognized finishers, and 30-mile men's and women's recognized finishers. 



Left to Right: Conservancy Executive Director Mike Nolan, Oliver Smith Jeweler's Lexi Miller, 70-mile women's recognized finisher Anna Sanders, 70-mile men's recognized finisher Lewis Elliot, and DC Ranch Community Council Executive Director Christine Irish. Photo by Jeremy Stevens