

**SKY  
ISLAND  
ALLIANCE**

Protecting our Mountain Islands  
and Desert Seas

# Restoring Connections

Vol. 17 Issue 2 Fall 2014

Newsletter of Sky Island Alliance



Waterfall at Reserva Ajos-Bavispe, courtesy Michael McNulty.



## A Message from Jan...

Just a few weeks ago, I received a call I thought might be some kind of prank. As it turns out, it was real. And it was wonderful news. This year, Sky Island Alliance is being nationally recognized for our conservation and restoration work protecting corridors for jaguars and flyways for elegant trogons.

In September, Don Henley, musician and founder of The Walden Woods Project, presented Sky Island Alliance with the prestigious **2014 Environmental Challenge Award**. I've only been working with you for three months, but already, I've been made to feel welcome by members, partners and the whole team. I was thrilled to accompany biologists Sergio Avila and Jessica Moreno to Boston, Massachusetts, to accept the award for all of Sky Island Alliance. With your support, we are the Sky Islands' strongest advocate for wildlife and wild places. This is your award, too!

With two Sky Island Alliance member and volunteer events held in September, I feel like I am getting to know more and more of you — our members. I am eager to hear your stories, ideas, and your conservation priorities. I look forward to thanking more of our donors and partners in person soon and am happy we can share this fall issue of *Restoring Connections* to show you — and the world — what you have helped accomplish.

From top:

All dressed up, we accepted The Walden Woods Project Environmental Challenge Award. Photo © Kevin Mazur/WireImage.

Jan and her new team, August 2014, courtesy Chip Hedcock.



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

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# GIVE

## Your Monthly Gift Matters! Become a Sky Island GEM

by Keri Dixon, Sky Island GEM and Development Director, with Alice Bennett, member and monthly donor since 2005

### Sky Island GEMs are members of our *Giving Every Month* donor program

You can be a GEM! Monthly giving is budget-friendly for you and provides a steady source of income to Sky Island Alliance. Because your monthly donation is run automatically, you help us reduce our costs. As a monthly donor, you save us the paper, printing and postage costs of reminding you to renew your membership. Knowing each monthly pledge is coming allows Sky Island Alliance to better budget and plan for our program work. *Your monthly gift helps us work smarter so your dollars go farther.*

Does making a donation to support wildlife make you feel warm and fuzzy? Do you enjoy investing in and witnessing tangible results? Multiply that by 12 when you become a monthly donor to Sky Island Alliance.

It's easy. That's one of the primary answers we hear when we ask current Sky Island GEMs why they give monthly. Sign up once using a debit or credit card. You may pause, change or stop your pledge payments at any time just by dropping us a line. Call Keri at 624.7080 x15 to set up your pledge.

### How it all started for Alice...

"I've lived in Arivaca since late 2003. I fell in love with southern Arizona as soon as I saw it —the mountains, the grasses that change color with the seasons, the rainy times, the hot, dry times, all of it.

When I heard about Sky Island Alliance at a fair booth, I immediately wanted to contribute because of my love for the area. I wanted to help protect the area from development, mining, and just too much use. Having worked for the USDA Forest Service, I'm familiar with all of the factions involved in management of public land, and I wanted to help the side of conservation, habitat restoration, and good management."

### Staying connected...

"I keep contributing because it's still important to me, and in the newsletters I see the good work being done. Donating is so easy because my monthly donation is automatically charged to my credit card; I don't have to remember to do it, and they don't have to send me reminders. It's great for everyone!"



## Inside this issue...

### RESTORE

Creating Habitat for Bats and Frogs 4



### CONNECT

Building Bridges on the Border 5



### FEATURE

Pulling it All Together 6



### ADAPT

A Treasure Hunt for Water 8



### PROTECT

A Land of True Legends 9



### EXPLORE

Our Expeditions Make a Difference 10



### VOLUNTEER

Spotlight on Chip Hedgcock 12



*This issue of Restoring Connections was edited by Keri Dixon and Jefferson Carter. Layout design: Julie St. John. ©2014 Sky Island Alliance. All rights reserved.*



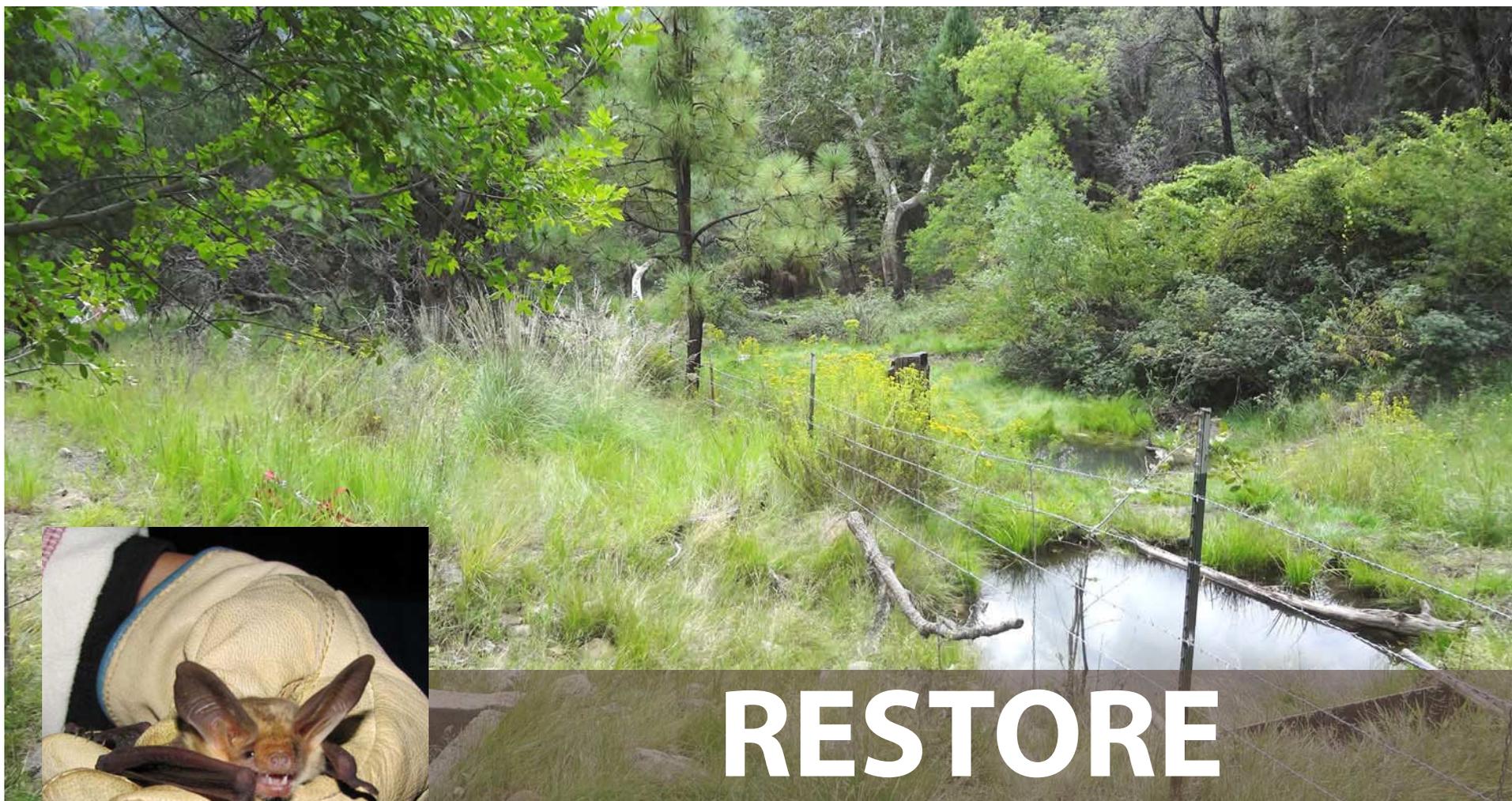
## Are you getting all the news from the #Skyislands?

Each month we share project updates, announce events, send action alerts and call for volunteers. Are you on our email list? If not, you could be missing out.

Sign up for our e-newsletter and volunteer opportunities here: <http://bit.ly/N0kGG5> or call Keri at 520.624.7080 x15 to update your contact information.



Hermit warbler (*Dendroica occidentalis*), courtesy Douglas Danforth.



# RESTORE



Inset: Douglas Ranger District Biologist, Reuben Gay, holds a pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) during a bat survey at Ash Spring, courtesy Janet Tyburec. Above: Four months after construction native plants are doing well, helped by monsoon rain. The Coronado National Forest quickly fenced the site to protect it from cattle. Site photo, courtesy Carianne Campbell.

## Creating Habitat for Bats and Frogs at Ash Spring: It's Working!

Project funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society's Climate Adaptation Fund

by Carianne Campbell

As the climate continues to warm and dry in the Sky Islands, springs are increasingly important refuges for wildlife. Sky Island Alliance, along with the Coronado National Forest (Douglas Ranger District), Arizona Game and Fish Department, Bat Conservation International, and others, created new habitat for bats and threatened Chiricahua leopard frogs in the Chiricahua Mountains. In this mountain range, vital mid and high-elevation water sources are becoming less common and increasingly important. The Chiricahua Mountains are a large, relatively wet, high-elevation range that connects the diverse Sierra Madre Occidental with the vast Gila Wilderness and the Rockies — a perfectly positioned stepping stone for a huge number of species.

In May of 2014, we constructed three new ponds during a Wetlands Creation and Restoration Workshop. Participants from four states and various agencies came together at the Southwest Research Station in Portal, Arizona, to learn from wetlands expert Tom Biebighauser. The ponds were designed to allow bats to drink from them,

Chiricahua leopard frogs to live and breed in them, and to also provide food and cover for pollinators and other wildlife.

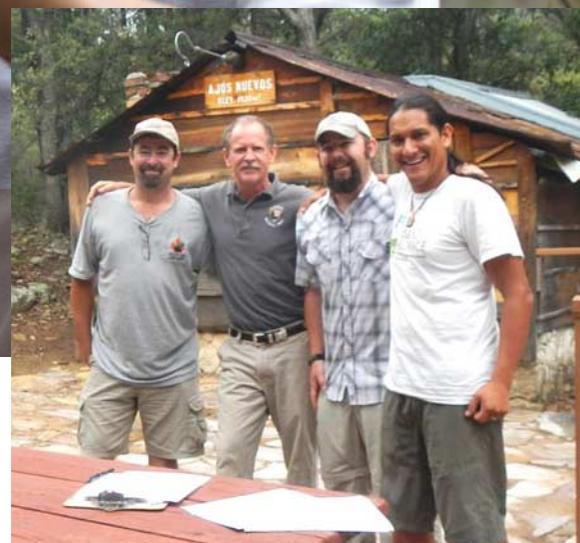
During construction, we salvaged native grasses, sedges, and herbs for direct transplanting (to become re-established on the site). In addition, Sky Island Alliance volunteers installed native plants grown by Borderlands Restoration and Nighthawk Natives nurseries to increase the diversity of flowering species (i.e., nectar resources) available. Another novel plant material resource came in the form of native grass hay, donated by The Nature Conservancy's Aravaipa Canyon Preserve. We were pleased to be able to use this sustainable resource (some of which SIA volunteers have planted in retired agricultural fields!) that provides erosion control and a source of native grass seeds.

The ponds have already proven to be a hit with our intended audience! Expert bat biologist Janet Tyburec documented 16 species of bats utilizing the new water source during acoustic and mist-net surveys at the end of July 2014, and Dawn Wilson of the Southwest Research Station confirmed the presence of Chiricahua leopard frog tadpoles in early September. Sky Island Alliance Adopt-A-Spring volunteers will be keeping tabs on the seasonal changes at Ash Spring, helping us keep the Coronado National Forest apprised of any management needs for maintaining this important new water source for wildlife. Our partners are motivated to find more ways we can work together to protect springs and enhance wildlife habitat in critical locations in the Chiricahua Mountains and beyond — stay tuned for information on how YOU can get involved!

hab·i·tat: the natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism



Above: A biologist from Ajos-Bavispe Reserve shows a (non-venomous) Sonoran mountain kingsnake to students during a recent MABA expedition, courtesy C. Treadway. Inset, left to right: Mario Cirett, SIA Board member and Director of Reserva Ajos-Bavispe; Don Swann, Saguaro National Park Biologist; Jason Mateljak, Chiricahua National Monument Biologist; and Sergio Avila, during our 22nd wildlife tracking workshop in Sierra Los Ajos, courtesy Jessica Moreno.



## Building Bridges

### Developing cooperative relations in sister parks and reserves in the US-Mexico borderlands

by Sergio Avila

This summer, Sky Island Alliance embarked on a new project — building international bridges! These are not the steel or concrete bridges that you see on roads; we are building connections between governments, colleagues and people who share conservation goals. We initiated a joint project with the U.S. National Park Service to develop a partnership among five national parks and reserves in the U.S. and Mexico. In the U.S., the initial project includes Saguaro National Park, Chiricahua National Monument, and Coronado National Memorial in Arizona. And in Mexico, the participants are the Ajos-Bavispe National Forest Reserve and Wildlife Preserve in Sonora, and the Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park in Baja California, both managed by the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP).

National parks and reserves along the U.S.-Mexico border share and protect a rich diversity of landscapes and wildlife. In our region, sub-tropical plants and animals blend with desert and Madrean species. Jaguars, elegant trogons, saguaros, Mexican gray wolves and, historically, grizzly bears make up a colorful wildlife mosaic.

However, wildlife habitat along both sides of the border is under increasing threat. Climate change, human population growth, and heightened border activities threaten survival and recovery of sensitive species. Parks on both sides of the border share common conservation goals and face common threats. We have come together to coordinate projects that will address these threats and goals.

In August, Sky Island Alliance signed conservation agreements with Saguaro National Park and with Reserva Ajos-Bavispe, establishing a working relationship and information exchange. To kick things off, we held a week-long bilingual workshop at Reserva Ajos-Bavispe in Sierra Los Ajos, Sonora. We hosted eighteen biologists from six national parks and preserves in Mexico (Pinacate Biosphere Reserve, Alamos y Rio Cuchujaqui, Ajos-Bavispe, and Los Fresnos Private Preserve in Sonora; Islas del Golfo in Sinaloa; and Maderas del Carmen in Coahuila) along with representatives from Saguaro National Park, Chiricahua National Monument, and Coronado National Memorial. Then in September, we connected Saguaro National Park with its “sister parks” in Baja California — *Sierra San Pedro Mártir*

and *Parque Nacional Constitución de 1857* — during a week of field visits and engaging conversations about wildlife monitoring, fire management and cross-border collaboration.

Sky Island Alliance’s role in this project, as a non-governmental organization, includes facilitation of cross-border visits, organizing meetings, and developing an agenda that will benefit parks on both sides of the border. This project provides an opportunity to “scale up” individual efforts, creating a broader, more detailed picture of the status of wildlife. We are assisting in the creation of cooperative partnerships based on shared enthusiasm and interest. We are setting the groundwork for long-term, meaningful collaboration and increased communication among parks on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. We are building bridges between people.

*We would like to thank Saguaro National Park Biologist Don Swann for his enthusiasm and initiative in developing this project.*



Velvetpod mimosa (*Mimosa dysocarpa*) overlooking the Pajarito Mountains moments ahead of a monsoon storm. This image was captured on the final day of our Springs Botany Blitz, courtesy Carianne Campbell.

## Helping wildlife and ecosystems in the face of drought, climate change, and escalating water issues

by Louise Misztal

Hiking along the ridge of the Pinaleno Mountains from Emerald Spring to High Peak Cienega amid the charred tree trunks of a stand replacing fire, you can enjoy spectacular views. Previously, this was dense woodland, but beetle kill and fire have made it possible to see for miles. You can look southwest to the Galiuro Mountains and Rincon

Peak beyond, south to the Dragoon Mountains and northeast toward the Gila River and Wilderness. I have hiked in at least 30 Sky Islands throughout the region, first as a Sky Island Alliance volunteer and now as an employee. Recently, wanting to understand springs has led me trekking, often with volunteers along, into all

kinds of interesting nooks and crannies, sometimes far from any trail I would normally follow.

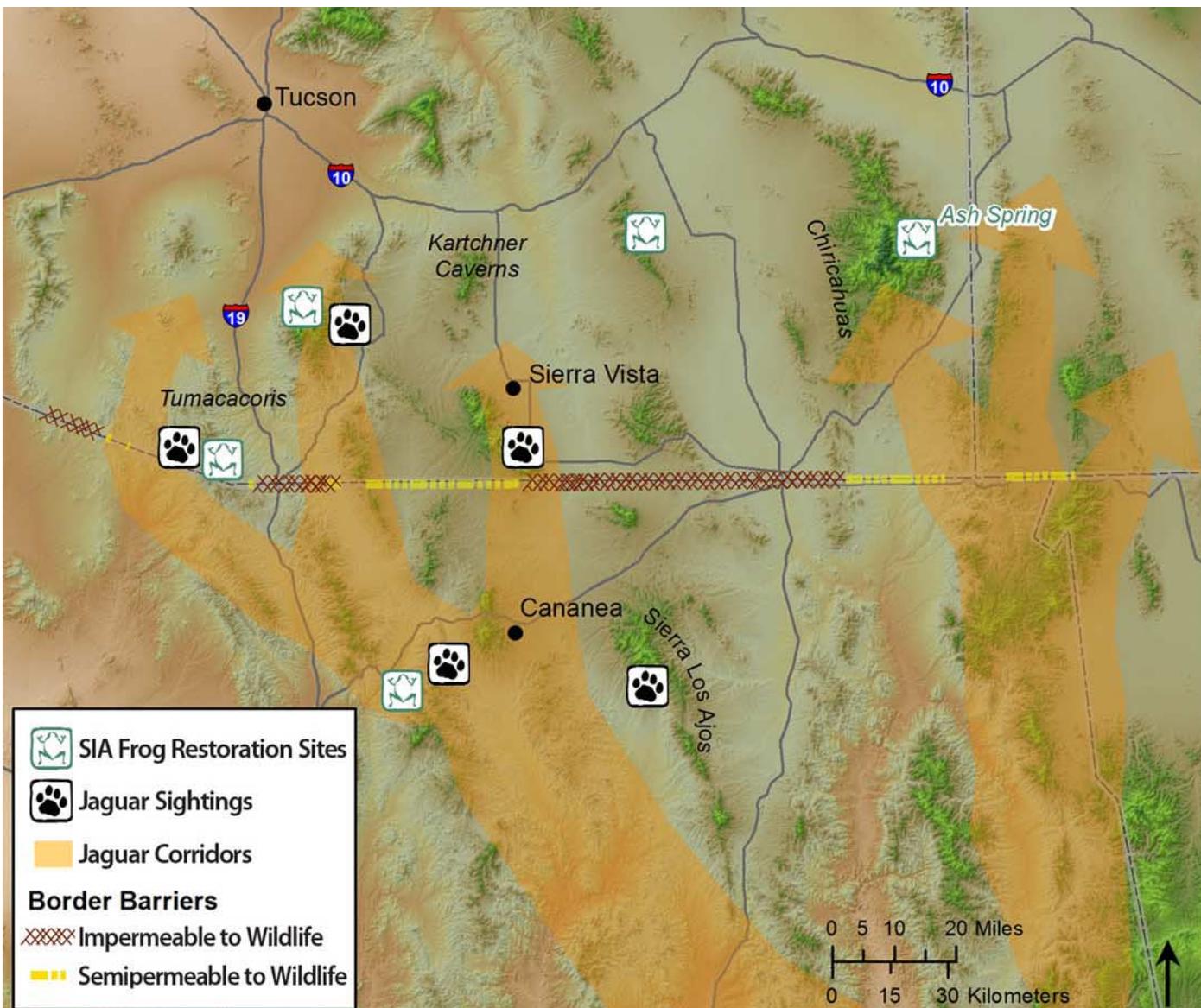
The more I traverse the Sky Island region, travel beloved valleys and river corridors between sky islands, and hike mountain ridgelines, the stronger grows my sense of the *connectedness* of the region. So does my knowledge of the *individuality* of each range and even of particular springs and creeks within a

range. Understanding the beauty and diversity of one tiny spring site and its importance in the much bigger Sky Island Region epitomizes Sky Island Alliance's work. We remove invasive bullfrogs and conduct habitat enhancement for Chiricahua leopard frog at small sources of water across the region which contributes to the survival of the species in a much larger area. These same waters may be visited by jaguar that are moving long distances between Sky Islands and across the U.S.-Mexico border in search of food and a mate. This work is increasingly important as human activities like construction of large swaths of border walls that are completely impermeable to wildlife narrow species' options for accessing food and water (see map).

We envision a landscape of interconnected and protected habitats where wildlife like jaguar, coati and skunk can move easily between Sky Island mountain ranges, and where special places are protected to provide safe harbor for less mobile species, like frogs.



White-nosed coati, courtesy Ken Lamberton.



## Jaguars and Frogs

We are expanding habitat opportunities for the federally-threatened Chiricahua leopard frog. Opening up new aquatic habitats and lessening the pressures of the invasive predatory bullfrogs, we are giving Chiricahua leopard frogs more places to live and connecting frog populations, geographically. These activities are important for recovery and resilience. And we see evidence that it's really working. In doing this work for frogs, we are increasing available water for other wildlife. A huge number of species, from dragonflies and springsnails to mammals like bats and jaguars, benefit!

**Did you know?** Although they take their name from the rugged mountain range, Chiricahua leopard frogs are found (historically) from the Mogollon Rim throughout Northwest Mexico.

Yet destruction of habitat and climate change put relentless pressure on all parts of the region. The southwest has been identified by the National Climate Assessment as one of the U.S. regions most sensitive to climate change. We are already experiencing temperature increases, summer heat waves longer and hotter than in the past, and reduced stream flows. Many sky island animals and plants are no match for modern civilization and its impacts. Often special places receive little help recovering from damaging events like fire or protection from new stresses such as roads. And, often, the importance of one wildlife linkage, one sensitive plant population, or one spring is overlooked. After all, there is another one nearby, right?

### Our Commitment

Protecting wildlife and ecosystems in the face of climate change requires new ways of thinking about land management and natural systems. It requires the collaborative implementation of new strategies that transcend traditional boundaries.

Working with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, Sky Island Alliance is more committed than ever to conserving the area's diversity of species and the ecosystems they depend on. We take a unique approach: combining site-specific strategies to protect and rehabilitate key habitats for wildlife, with larger-scale strategies that will give wildlife and their

habitat a fighting chance to adapt to a changing climate.

### Sweat, Love and Dedication

Our work has always included strategic collaborations and the sweat, love and commitment of volunteers. Working across political boundaries, we bring managers, landowners, scientists and conservation groups together to solve big conservation problems. We connect people like you, our members and volunteers, to conservation through the collection of scientific information in the field, to make the mountains and valleys healthier for wildlife and people.



## Connecting people to nature, for wildlife

When we're all out there together in the field —volunteers, conservation groups, landowners, and agency personnel, we make time and space to share big ideas and debate them. It is often surprising how group projects — at isolated spring sites, in remote canyons or high-altitude wet meadows — can stimulate conversations about new ways to collaborate, strategize and help native wildlife. Together, we work through challenges and develop cohesive approaches. We achieve meaningful conservation.

Volunteers visit Ash Spring in September 2014, courtesy Carianne Campbell.



Above: Larry Stevens of the Springs Stewardship Institute looks for invertebrates, courtesy Carianne Campbell. Inset: *Eryngium lemonii*, courtesy Michael McNulty.



## On a Treasure Hunt for Water

by Louise Misztal

Wildlife and water are feeling the heat of climate change. Annual average daily maximum temperatures in Arizona have increased as much as 5.4° F, and the region continues to experience a significant drought. Water is becoming increasingly critical for wildlife and ecosystems as the region becomes more arid. In addition, larger, more severe fires, followed by intense monsoon precipitation, alter streams, springs and entire watersheds in rapid and sometimes catastrophic ways. Springs are biological gems of the Sky Island Region, often nestled away in otherwise dry canyons and hillslopes. They are a key source of water both for humans and wildlife. Despite their importance, springs have been poorly studied. We have very little information about the amount of water at springs, the types of species and ecosystems they support and existing threats. Without this information, it is not possible to effectively conserve springs with high biological value or to restore damaged springs so they can better support wildlife and ecosystems.

In 2012 Sky Island Alliance started working with trained volunteers to survey springs in the region. We started our work in the Cienega Creek Basin and have surveyed almost 100 springs. Our teams have hiked many miles cross-country through steep and thorny terrain to collect vital information about the

wildlife and water present at these biological treasures. We then translate this information into positive change on the ground by working with springs stewards to protect high value areas and to restore springs that are damaged but have high potential to support wildlife and provide aquatic habitat. We have already enhanced habitat at nine springs by planting native pollinator shrubs and increasing water availability, food and cover. This directly benefits species like Chiricahua leopard frogs and insectivorous bats.

There are approximately 1,200 springs in the U.S. portion of the Sky Island region, and many more in Mexico. We have only just begun the work necessary to explore, conserve and restore these miraculous places. Daunting, yet with so many committed

volunteers who love hiking off into the mountains on a treasure hunt for a tiny source of water, we know we can do it!

As the Sky Island region continues to get warmer and rain becomes less reliable, bats, birds, frogs, and carnivores like jaguars will increasingly rely on springs for survival. We can give these animals a better chance to adapt to the changing climate by conserving and restoring springs ecosystems. Over the next year, we will be working to extend springs surveys into northern Mexico and more remote areas such as high elevation Wilderness areas. We will also continue work with volunteers and springs stewards to implement restoration strategies that make more water and habitat available.

sky is·land: Nature writer Weldon Heald coined the term "sky islands" in 1967 to denote mountain ranges isolated from each other by intervening valleys of grassland or desert. The valleys act as barriers to movement of some woodland and forest species, somewhat like saltwater seas isolate plants and animals on oceanic islands.



Inset: Sky Island Alliance was first to discover ocelots in Cochise County. SIA's Jessica Moreno is taking the lead in our effort to protect this Land of Legends for our future. Above: Whetstones in fog, courtesy Bob Van Deven Archives.

# In Memoriam: Charles Bowden 1945-2014

by Ken Lamberton

I'd only met him a few times. The first was in the winter of 1996 at the University of Arizona in a creative writing class taught by Richard Shelton. I had arrived early before anyone else. Then someone I didn't recognize walked in and took a seat in the back of the room. He seemed hyper-vigilant. I thought he was a homeless man escaping from the cold.

Mostly I knew Chuck Bowden from his books. I had just read *Frog Mountain Blues*, about the environmental devastation of the Santa Catalina Mountains. He talked about how disillusioned he was. How he believed the book would change people's attitudes about this desert landscape he loved. He was our Rachael Carson, writing about the coming silent spring. Only every spring, there were fewer and fewer voices. He spoke about never closing his eyes to the destruction: "I will always know the darkness on the edge of town."

I asked him about some trivial point of writing, like how he described seeing his first coati as if the branches had parted and there stood a unicorn. He said he often can't recall details of what he has written. That once put down in words, he turns his attention elsewhere. I think this is how Chuck Bowden held onto his sanity after seeing things most people would recoil from. He stood witness while the rest of us weren't even looking. This was his life: He looked. He wrote. Then he moved on.

*"The places worth clinging to are the places nobody quite knows what to do with. That's where the life is. That's why we should feel lucky. What we want and what we need seems to have the power to last. We can count on it, even if most other people can't even notice that it exists. God, in his infinite wisdom, has created places like Sedona and Santa Fe as sacrifice areas. Out here in nowhere, we are lucky. Nothing happens. Progress seems nil. We have a future."*

Charles Bowden was an integral part of Sky Island Alliance's Art in Wilderness publication, promoting Wilderness protection for the Tumacacori Highlands. Above is an excerpt from the piece he wrote for the book, titled "The Importance of Being Nowhere." He is missed but not forgotten.

## A Land of True Legends

### Valuing, preserving open space more important than ever

by Jessica Moreno

Open space and wild places are key to our future and quality of life. A cornerstone of our economy, this natural resource provides a resilient buffer and safeguard from drought, fire and flood of climate change.

Wild lands and wilderness is where biodiversity thrives. Jaguars and ocelots live here. Water seeps and gathers here. Wilderness is the smell of oak and rain, the dirt that collects under your nails, and is the source of clean water you pour from the tap. Wilderness is also a natural thrill — a racing heartbeat at the sound of a trogon call and that rustle beyond the canyon bend. It is here, in this open space, we can find common ground and common value.

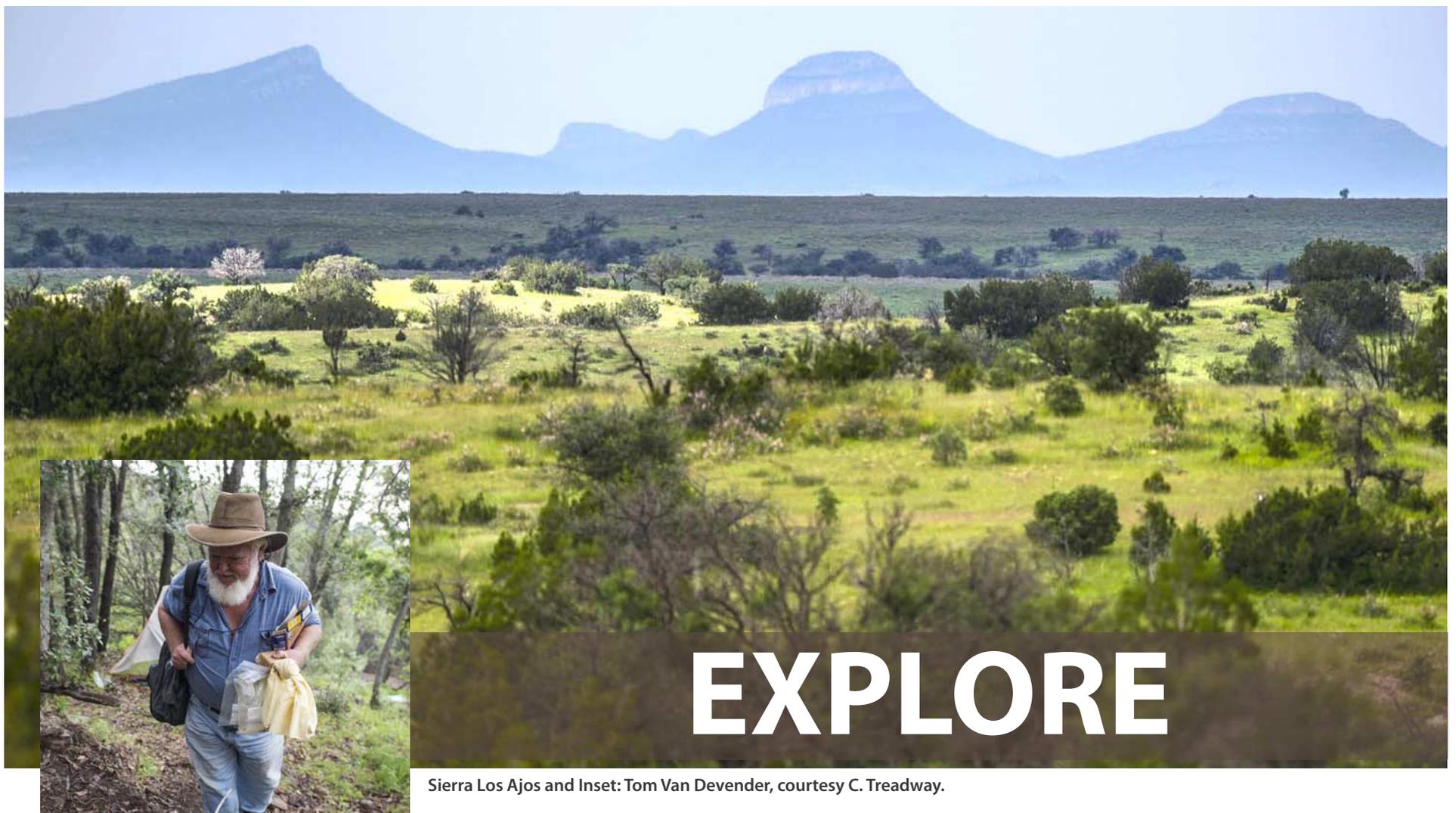
*Land of Legends* is a community effort to ensure the Whetstone, Drought, and Chiricahua Mountains remain open and wild — for our future and for generations to come.

The Whetstones, Dragoons and Chiricahuas are Sky Islands. These mountain ranges are the heart and foundation of the region's biodiversity, history, and economy. These last undeveloped mountain ranges in Cochise County, Arizona are vital watersheds. They protect the integrity of Kartchner Caverns. Their

scenic beauty gives us a competitive advantage over other regions in attracting new businesses, talented workers and investment in our communities. These mountains are critical sources of clean water, vital to Cochise County's flourishing vineyards and other agriculture industries.

To leave these magnificent but sensitive public land mountain ranges vulnerable to future development and inappropriate uses is to risk our own future and our quality of life. They are at risk from rapid urbanization, mining, fragmentation, and irresponsible off-road vehicle use. Current safeguards for these sensitive watersheds on our public lands are temporary and not strong enough to truly protect them.

We've hiked canyons; mapped roads; monitored springs; discovered ocelots and other wildlife; restored riparian areas; connected with businesses, landowners and community members; and we've shared what we know through talks and workshops, gathering support. The next step is having community-driven conversations about how we can best protect these natural treasures for our future.



# EXPLORE

Sierra Los Ajos and Inset: Tom Van Devender, courtesy C. Treadway.

## Our Scientific Expeditions Make a Difference

by Tom Van Devender with Sergio Avila

**What is MABA?** Sky Island Alliance’s Madrean Archipelago Biodiversity Assessment (MABA) documents biodiversity in the Sky Islands of Sonora. MABA Expeditions are biological inventories conducted by scientists visiting little-studied Sky Island ranges. Thousands of observations and many images resulting from each Expedition are made available in our public database (at [Madrean.org](http://Madrean.org)) for use in research, resource management and conservation action. Our expeditions inventory new and known species

of plants and animals, involve state and international scientists with local residents, inform and support efforts to create new parks, and connect local communities to their land.

This year we led two major expeditions, in April and August.

In April, we traveled to the Sierra Huérfana (also known as Sierra Mazatán) in central Sonora, where we documented the plant and animal diversity over several days of hiking and exploring. Located east of Hermosillo, the Sierra Huérfana is

being considered as a new Natural Protected Area by Mexico’s CONANP. Our visit fostered a greater appreciation for the natural history of the region and interest in protecting Sierra Huérfana. The information we collected is helping to support official designation of the natural area.

One of the unique plants in Sierra Huérfana is a cycad called the “palma de la virgen” or “peine” (*Dioon sonorense*, see photo next page), a species nearly endemic to

Sonora and the northernmost cycad population in the world. Cycads belong to an ancient family of trees that lived in the Mesozoic era, 180 million years ago. On our expedition, we discovered a separate population of this rare plant growing in a new location.

Our expert and volunteer ornithologists observed 107 species of birds, including many Neotropical migrant species. Sierra Huérfana is an important stopover in their migration. MABA’s resident entomologist, John Palting, observed 120 different moths, while other participants recorded 38 species of butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies, and scientists visiting from Harvard University observed 25 ant species.

During this expedition, we demonstrated to the local community there is significant international attention and interest in the protection of their home mountain range. Many community members were present during our expedition and spoke with the participants. In addition to documenting notable species like endemic cycads and new species of ants, the expedition opened up a conversation with members of the community. We shared dialogue about conservation efforts in a working landscape.



Western Hercules beetle (*Dynastes granti*), courtesy Michael McNulty.



bio·di·ver·si·ty: the existence of many different kinds of plants and animals in an environment



Three months after Sky Island Alliance's expedition to the Sierra Huérfana, Pueblo de Alamos voted unanimously to protect their private lands. The community vote sends a strong message about conservation of private lands in Mexico.

In August, we explored Sierra Los Ajos — a high elevation Sonoran Sky Island with mixed-conifer forest that has a lot in common with the Chiricahua and Huachuca Mountains in Arizona. This is the largest range in the Ajos-Bavispe Reserva Forestal Nacional y Refugio de Fauna Silvestre. Although the Reserve was established in 1936, Sky Island Alliance's expedition this year was the first all-species inventory of this mountain range. The information we collected will aid in further study and science-based management of this spectacular Sky Island and the wildlife refuge.



Clockwise from top left:

The Sierra Los Ajos expedition team, courtesy C. Treadway.

*Artogeia rapae* in the Sierra Los Ajos, courtesy Michael McNulty.

Palma de la virgin (*Dioon sonorense*), courtesy Ana Lilia Reina-G.

Photographer Caroline Treadway participated in her first expedition this summer and shared beautiful, helpful images with Sky Island Alliance, courtesy Ana Lilia Reina-G.

A unanimous show of hands as Pueblo de Alamos votes to protect their private lands.



**SKY ISLAND ALLIANCE**  
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Courtesy Chris Roll.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Charles “Chip” Hedgcock

by Maggie Trinkle

Proof. Sky Island Alliance’s science, research, and discoveries are nothing without it. At a time when it seems like there are no corners of the world left untouched by humans, Sky Island Alliance’s international Madrean Archipelago Biodiversity Assessment (MABA) expeditions explore remote and rarely visited Sky Islands. Charles “Chip” Hedgcock is our lead photographer on these journeys. His exacting photographic vouchers of our floral and faunal discoveries are our proof; and his legacy.

Chip’s interest in photography began in high school. Whereas many photography programs are based out of Arts colleges, he chose a commercial photography program at Brooks Institute that he feels gave him an edge over traditional fine arts photographers. Early in his career, he worked for University Medical Center, photographing surgeries, procedures, and other medical subjects. As fascinating as human innards may be, he took what he learned from that position and applied it to the natural world.

Many of the stunning photographs of the Sky Islands we have published through the years are Chip’s work. A volunteer since 1998, Chip is often the eye behind the images that allows us to intently examine a fleeting moment in the desert and learn more. Chip’s eagle eye has documented our staff and organization’s growth over the last twenty years. Chip is proof of why Sky Island Alliance would not exist without our volunteers.

To see more of Chip’s work, you can visit his website at [charleshedgcock.photoshelter.com](http://charleshedgcock.photoshelter.com)



**VOLUNTEER**