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Binational Gathering Underway to Help Shape the Future of the Sky Island Border Region

TUCSON, *Ariz.* – Hundreds of scientists, land managers, students, and conservationists have gathered this week for the Biodiversity and Management of the Madrean Archipelago Conference. The 2018 theme for this premier regional event, known as the Madrean Conference, is “Collaboration Now for the Future.”

As regional temperatures soar and the threat of border wall construction looms, the conference highlights collaborative solutions to address threats to wildlife and wild lands in the Sky Islands, a binational border region named for its forested mountain “islands” surrounded by desert and grassland “seas”. The conference will host a diversity of voices, values, and perspectives that support biodiversity, conservation, and human well-being in the Sky Islands.

“We must work together across borders to keep wildlife thriving and water flowing for future generations,” said Louise Misztal, executive director at Sky Island Alliance. “From jaguars to wildfires to preserving precious springs and streams, the Madrean Conference brings together the expertise and commitment to tackle the conservation challenges of the 21st century.”

Named one of “the best places in the biosphere” by preeminent biologist and naturalist Edward O. Wilson, the Sky Island region is a place where species, people, and cultures from north and south overlap and mix to form a unique bioregion. This conference is the fourth in a series that began in 1994 and will present cutting edge research as well as practical on-the-ground community solutions to protect our shared resources.

Krista Schlyer, award-winning photographer and author of *Continental Divide: Wildlife, People and the Border Wall*, said, “I’ve learned that often you cannot separate wildlife and ecology from the human experience. We are a part of it, and this is very clear in the borderlands. So often, when there is a damaging policy, it is the least powerful that are most impacted by it and the least able to do anything about it—and the least powerful often includes people, wild creatures, and ecosystems.” This conference explores ways that humans can be part of the solution.

“We know we are out of alignment with nature and seek to rectify that,” said Mary Ellen Hannibal, author of *Citizen Scientist: Searching for Heroes and Hope in an Age of Extinction*. “A new kind of collective is emerging, one that is helping to create a healthy and meaningful future for all indigenous earthlings—rooted, four-footed, flying, and yes, staggering around upright with smartphone in hand.”

Sky Island Alliance is a regional nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the biodiversity and natural heritage of the Sky Islands in the U.S. and Mexico.

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