When you donate to Sky Island Alliance, we put your dollars to work in ways that have the greatest impact.

Engaging CITIZEN-SCIENTISTS

- Springs
- Wildlife Monitoring
- Invasive Species Removal
- Endangered Species Conservation
- Planting
- Watershed Restoration
- Outreach Events
- Office

In 2017, 500 people volunteered 12,672 hours to Sky Island Alliance's citizen-science and restoration initiatives. Volunteers from Mexico donated over a third (36%) of those hours. We even had one volunteer who personally donated 500 hours!

Restoring HABITAT

- 1,895 plants installed, 32 species
- 5 new ponds created
- 2 ponds revived
- 110 acres of invasive plants treated along 4.4 miles of riparian habitat

Protecting SPRINGS

- 80 U.S. springs monitored
- 5 Mexican springs monitored

Sky Island NATURE WATCH PROJECT

- 150,123 observations
- 6,552 species
- 3,221 observers

Monitoring WILDLIFE

- 493 observations
- 14 transects; 21 miles tracked
- 80 participating trackers

Our mission is to protect and restore the biodiversity and natural heritage of the Sky Islands. We use science, education, and advocacy to connect the binational landscapes, people, and wildlife of the Sky Islands for the benefit of all.
2017 was a tough year for everyone who cares about our fellow humans, clean air and water, and sharing space with other creatures. Amid accelerating climate changes, including a blistering heat wave during June, the wildlife, waters, and wild places that make the Sky Island region so amazing were under attack.

The U.S. Administration cut funding to protect our natural resources, rolled back protections for clean water and public lands, and pushed to build additional border walls.

Cross-border conservation could have been seriously undermined by politics, but you kept the binational collaborations going strong.

You supported monitoring where wildlife are moving and finding water within the Path of the Jaguar.

You built capacity to survey and protect springs in Sonora by training students and biologists in Mexico in the same techniques managers use in the U.S. Sky Islands. You brought degraded ecosystems at the U.S.-Mexico border back to health. You helped document the biodiversity at stake in the Sky Islands Borderlands through bio-blitzes and roadkill surveys. And, you stood with the wildlife and wild places in need of a voice and support.

In 2017, we raised more money from you, our individual donors, than we ever have in our 28-year history. Thanks to you, we put more wildlife cameras in the field, engaged more students in the U.S. and Mexico, and reached more people across these nations with the beauty and majesty of the Sky Islands.

I’m proud to be part of this alliance with you.

It will take more than on-the-ground conservation to ensure our Sky Islands thrive into the future. It will take dedicated and empowered local citizens in Sonora and Arizona, and it will take young conservationists seizing the leadership reins to build a movement. Together, we make it all possible.

Sincerely,

Louise Misztal

Executive Director
The success of the Alianza Mariposa Monarca (Monarch Butterfly Alliance) inspired us to create two new Sonoran student-led groups.

Escuadrón de Rastreo de Fauna Silvestre (Wildlife Tracking Squad) helped SIA to establish a tracking transect in Sonora. This group focuses on areas near the model of predicted jaguar habitat connectivity in the Northwestern Jaguar Recovery Unit.

This information will help us understand wildlife movement patterns through the southern Sky Islands. It also will help us detect key linkages for our focal species.

Springs have been a big part of SIA’s work for years, but we’ve only recently documented springs in Sonora. Our challenge is that much of the land in Sonora is private. Landowners are the only ones who know for sure where springs are located.

We realized we needed volunteers dedicated to finding springs in Mexico. We helped form the Grupo de Exploración de Manantiales en Sonora (Sonoran Springs Monitoring Group) and ensured they received training from the Springs Stewardship Institute. The group is now ready to fill the information gap that we face in the elusive Sonoran springs.

Biology undergraduates from the University of Sonora lead these student groups. They are so committed to their work and mission that they now operate in a self-sufficient manner. We deeply thank them and wish them the best of luck in their promising professional lives.
1. Areá Destinada Voluntariamente a la Conservación Los Fresnos
2. Coronado National Memorial
3. Highway 2
4. Cuenca Los Ojos Ranches
5. Sierra Aconchi
6. The Nature Conservancy Aravaipa Preserve
7. Davidson Canyon wildlife corridor
8. Galiuro Wilderness
9. Pajarito Wilderness
10. Mt Wrightson Wilderness
11. Appleton Whittell Research Ranch
12. Sowls' Ponds
2017 was a great year for trainings in our Mexican Sky Island region. We trained hundreds of professionals, students, and locals, successfully raising capacity to tackle conservation issues.
BINATIONAL RESTORATION WORKSHOP

Twenty personnel from Naturalia, that manage Área Destinada Voluntariamente a la Conservación Los Fresnos, and Coronado National Memorial exchanged ideas and challenges. While these professionals work less than 50 miles from one another, it’s often difficult for them to get together face to face. Trainings help to ensure ideas flow across borders to address our common conservation issues.

SPRINGS ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS

We held two bilingual workshops with the Springs Stewardship Institute; one at Cuenca Los Ojos’ Rancho Los Ojos and another in Aconchi, Sonora. This resulted in 35 newly-trained springs assessors!

ROAD ECOLOGY WORKSHOP

Led by Wildlands Network, this first-ever training was for engineers and professionals from the Secretaría de Comunicación y Transporte (Mexico’s transportation authorities). Over 100 participants learned about ecological fragmentation, and strategies for mitigating the impact of major highways and roads.
The first-ever road ecology workshop in Sonora was very well attended.

www.skyislandalliance.org

MEXICAN SKY ISLAND REGION

The high turnout for these workshops highlights the commitment of professionals, students, federal and local agencies, and communities in the Sonoran portion of the Sky Island region to protect and restore our regional resources and wildlife.
Sixteen members of the Mammalogy Club of the University of Sonora received training from SIA staff. The four-day training took place at Naturalia's Área Destinada Voluntariamente a la Conservación Los Fresnos.
We face big challenges and large-scale changes in the Sky Islands that affect wildlife and the natural areas they depend on. We can conserve healthy open space and thriving wildlife if we work together across boundaries and keep our eye on the big picture.

To that end, Sky Island Alliance has been leading a Transboundary Madrean Watersheds project with many partners. Our goal is to protect and restore the interconnected mountains, grasslands, deserts, and waters that support species diversity, promote healthy watersheds, and maintain the overall ecosystem integrity that enriches human communities.
SOME OF OUR KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2017 INCLUDE:

More than 30 regional organizations helped to shape a shared vision for the future of the Sky Islands. Together, we identified the most important places to restore and to preserve.

We developed science that supports the conservation and restoration of five Sky Island ecosystems, each of which is critical for biological diversity and wildlife pathways. These include Madrean pine-oak woodland, springs and streams, grasslands and desert.
Sky Island Alliance held our 2017 Fall Wildlife Tracking workshop at The Nature Conservancy’s Aravaipa Canyon Preserve in October. We had fourteen participants from the U.S. and Mexico, including students, professionals, and retirees.

Participants learned to differentiate the tracks of not only our nine focal species, but many other species as well. Some of the most exciting finds were the tracks of a bobcat, gray fox, mountain lion, and black bear.

Since our training, several U.S. participants have run new or revived tracking transects as part of the wildlife monitoring efforts for our Path of the Jaguar initiative. Also, two Mexican participants shared the knowledge that they gained with fellow students. These presentations, and the students’ initial participation, allowed us to form Escuadrón de Rastreo de Fauna Silvestre. This wildlife tracking club in Hermosillo helps to fill a need for qualified trackers in Mexico.
The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection (CSDP) became an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization in March 2018. Sky Island Alliance served as CSDP’s fiscal sponsor for 12 years, and we’ve enjoyed seeing them grow and develop over the years. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with CSDP to ensure long-term conservation of the Sonoran Desert and sound land-use planning, here in Pima County.
We provided recommendations to the Arizona Department of Transportation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and Pima County, which manages Davidson Canyon as part of the Cienega Creek Preserve. We will continue to advocate for the protection of the critical connectivity area and Cienega Creek.

Together, these efforts will help provide the highest-quality pathways for wildlife under Interstate 10, allowing them to move between the Sky Islands. This work is made possible by our dedicated corps of citizen-scientists. We will continue to engage communities, land managers, and citizens to ensure all our spectacular biodiversity and the critical resources they require endure.
We launched the Path of the Jaguar campaign on Arizona Gives Day raising nearly $20,000.

The Path of the Jaguar isn’t a literal road or trail. On their journey north from Mexico to stake out new territory, jaguars need regular access to clean water and food, and they need safe passage through wild areas free of development and disturbance.

Our campaign seeks to document and brand high-priority pathways for wildlife movement and to increase connected open space. We seek to support recovery and persistence of the iconic jaguar, thereby protecting connected open space for many other species.

We asked you to share why you give to SIA. We were inspired by your responses:

“In a time when politicians insult and attack our neighbors, Sky Island Alliance builds alliances and relationships with like-minded individuals and organizations in Mexico. Sky Island gives me the opportunity to contribute my sweat as well as my money.”
- Bill Bemis

“Many things, social and environmental, are bigger than profits or politics. Sky Island Alliance is a known, “hands-on, get-it-done,” non-governmental provider with resources to act on those bigger issues. That helps me to believe that we can still do many good things – if we just step up to meet today’s special challenges.”
- Bill McGuire

“Sky Island Alliance values the relationship between humans and all that live within our extremely unique desert home. Teaching us to respect native plants, animals, and people within our Sonoran landscape. Perhaps this will help us learn to treat one another with grace as well.”
- Kate Hodges

“In light of our new presidential orders for a border wall, it’s imperative now, more than ever, that we need funding and social support to keep these lands open to our special wildlife.”
- Adam Leitman

photo credit: Luis de la Fuente
YOU PRESERVE WILDERNESS WATERS

Sky Island Alliance staff and volunteers hiked into four designated wilderness areas to assess springs and other waters. Over many days, we surveyed 84 sites in the Galiuro, Miller Peak, Pajarita, and Mount Wrightson Wilderness Areas – traveling from 4000’ to 9000’ and in temperatures ranging from 25 to 95 degrees.

We have a number of beautiful little oases out there. They are spectacular spots. We felt lucky to be at each one, and amazed each time we came upon water emerging from the ground.

That water creates the most incredible ecosystems. Based on the vegetation around them, about half of the springs are perennial. Most (90%) had water, usually with a flow of <10 gallons per minute (GPM). But Power’s Garden in the Galiuros was 300 GPM!

About two-thirds of the springs are rheocrene, flowing springs that emerge into one or more stream channels. Others are hillslope springs. We also found hanging gardens, cave springs, helocrene (wet meadow) springs, and limno screnes (pool forming) springs.

Many springs aren’t mapped – only about a third appears on topo maps – and we found seven that weren’t known to us at all. Roughly half of the springs in the Wilderness have been developed for use by humans and their livestock, but many developments aren’t being used anymore.

Additionally, about 20 of the sites were small rock dams, rather than springs. Many were amazingly well built, perhaps as long as 100 years ago.

Overall, we engaged about 50 people who donated over 2,500 hours. Some volunteers were botanists, birders, and others trained in spring assessments. A few special volunteers came out with us time after time, making the trips and the work we accomplished possible.

Spending time with these volunteers was as gratifying as visiting the springs themselves. They are really remarkable and tough folks.

The Coronado National Forest funded this work, which will help them to maintain their water rights for wildlife and other uses. The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust also provided critical funding.
SKY ISLAND ALLIANCE STAFF

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YOU RESTORE NATIVE HABITATS

Water is a precious resource, especially for endangered species in the Sky Islands. In 2017, we created new aquatic habitat in two locations:

APPLETON WHITTELL RESEARCH RANCH
We worked with student interns at the Borderlands Earth Care Youth Institute to construct three new ponds. These will support habitat for lowland leopard frogs, federally-threatened Mexican garter snakes, and bats.

SOWLS’ PONDS
We helped ensure reliable access to water near The Nature Conservancy's Muleshoe Preserve in the Galiuro Mountains. Two new ponds will support lowland leopard frogs and federally-endangered Gila topminnow.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funded us to work. All ponds were planted with native pollinator plants grown from locally-collected seed.
Our efforts to eradicate invasive grasses in Bear and Sabino canyons continued with the growing help of some of our most dedicated volunteers and many new faces. Together, we removed buffelgrass, fountaingrass, and other invasives from 110 acres along 4.4 miles of desert streams. Removal of these invasive grasses helps restore the natural diversity of plants, which wildlife and pollinators depend on in riparian corridors.
OUR VOLUNTEERS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE
Laurie Anderson
Le Anna Perdue
Lea Carolina Ibarra
Wenglas
Leann Pham
Lee Stringer
Leila Gass
Lemuel Peace IV
Leonard Meitzner
Leslie Langbert
Lezly Garcia
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Lorrie Firth
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Canizales Juarez
Luis Alejandro
Grijalva Alvarado
Luis Alfonso de la Fuente González
Luis Soto
Lura White
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Malcolm McGregor
Malcolm Ryder
Marc Caballero-Reynolds
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Marcus Jernigan
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Maria Santillan
Mariana Sofia
Rodriguez McGoffin
Mariana Valeria
Cañedo Montaño
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Mario Ciret-Galan
Marisela Lozano
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Marna Dunn
Martin Centeno
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Marvin Bellamy
Mathew Muir
Matt MinJares
Matt Valente
Maya Griswold
Maya Stahl
Mayra Calullo
Mayra Fernanda
Munguia Vergara
Mekha Pereira
Melissa Donovan
Melissa Michelle Álvarez Mexia
Melissa Sanabia
Salas
Michael Gill
Michael Bissonzt
Michael Flores
Michael Headrick
Michael Hilton
Michael Huckaby
Michael Kim
Michael Koller
Michael Van Alsburg
Michael Van Pamel
Michaela Webb
Michael Ely
Michele Girard
Michelle Smith
Mike Hoening
Mike Garcia
Mika Valenzuela
Milo Rodriguez
Mitchell Hang
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Warren Knowles
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Wendy Lotes
Wendy Suseth
Castillo Yocupicio
Will Creamer
William Bonsky
Woodrow Eggers
Yasmin Quiroga
Yazmine Beltran
Yuma Montaño
Gaytan
Zane Cortes
Zeke Radler
Zoe Cortes
photo credit: Luis de la Fuente

Volunteer Hours

- 45% Endangered species conservation
- 21% Invasive species removal
- 17% Office
- 9% Outreach events
- 4% Planting
- 4% Springs
OUR 2017 FUNDERS

You make this work possible. THANK YOU!

Arizona Trail Association
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
California Community Foundation
Center for Biological Diversity
Clif Bar Family Foundation
Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative
Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program
Friends of Sabino Canyon
National Forest Foundation
National Park Foundation
National Park Service, Southwest Border Resource Protection Program
Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust
Patagonia, Inc.
Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center
The Rose and David Dortort Foundation
The Rossetter Foundation
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, WaterSMART Program
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. National Park Service
Wilburforce Foundation
Wildlife Conservation Society Climate Adaptation Fund*
Wyss Scholars Program

*Wildlife Conservation Society through the Climate Adaptation Fund, established by a grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

When you include Sky Island Alliance in your will or estate plan, you sustain our work to protect springs, secure safe passage for wildlife, and restore our Sky Island landscapes for years to come.

Contact Daniel at daniel@skyislandalliance.org or learn more online about leaving your legacy in the Sky Islands.

www.skyislandalliance.org/give