

desert museum Discovery

Why should we care about native bees? The honey bee has dominated the pollinator spotlight for a long time, but now native bees are getting their fair share of the buzz.



What's the Buzz at the Desert Museum?

by Cheryl Blake PhD., Bee Team Volunteer

...Here's why - they are often better pollinators than honey bees, they pollinate a much larger percentage of our food crops than we previously thought, and they work for free! And the Tucson area has one of the most diverse populations of native bees in the world, with more than 700 species!

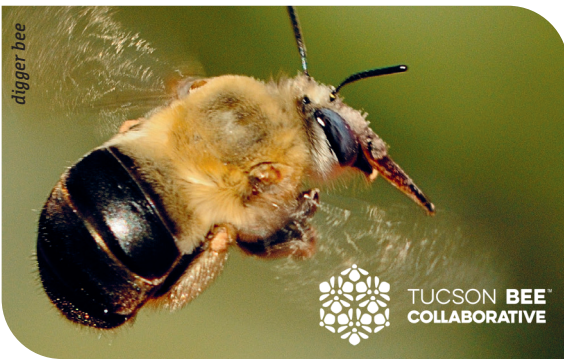
The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's Conservation Science Manager, Dr. Kim Franklin, and a team of dedicated volunteers have been studying native bees for several years. We hope to better understand the abundance, diversity, and seasonal activity of bees in addition to helping our community appreciate the remarkable biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert. To further this work, we have partnered with Dr. Wendy Moore, Associate Professor, Department of Entomology, University of Arizona and Jennifer Katcher, Biology Instructor, Pima Community College to create the **Tucson Bee Collaborative** (tucsonbeecollaborative.org).

Through this Collaborative we are documenting the exceptional bee diversity of the Sonoran Desert. We want to understand who these bees are and how best to conserve them. The Museum has a group of expert volunteers who collect and curate the bees. We collect bees from several locations around Tucson, including the Museum itself. Other sites include Las Milpitas de Cottonwood Community Farm

(Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona), a location near Agua Caliente Park, and a location near Saguaro National Park West.

To promote wonder and appreciation of the natural world, the Tucson Bee Collaborative is involving high school, college, and university students in this research. All bees are identified to genus by Museum volunteers, and many are further identified to species by DNA barcoding. Students from the University of Arizona and Pima Community College are extracting DNA from bees and comparing the DNA sequences of a specific gene in the bees to a world-wide database of that gene to determine their identity. With support from the Agnese Nelms Haury Program in Environment and Social Justice, soon students from Sunnyside and Flowing Wells High Schools will also be barcoding bees! These students are involved in authentic and important research and are learning to use the tools of molecular biology that can advance their education and careers.

...continued on page 2



...continued from front cover

How can you help our native bees? You can help native bees by planting native plants or by providing habitat. Many bees nest underground, so provide them with an area free of gravel so they can access the soil. Build or buy a bee home – there are many places to purchase a bee hotel and free plans for building your own on the internet. Avoid using pesticides that can harm bees. Start a community bee-friendly garden in your local park or school. *The bees will love you for it!*



ARIZONA-SONORA
**DESERT
MUSEUM**



Change is constant...

...how our education department quickly adapted!

by Michelle Constanza Miner, M.S., Education Specialist

METAMORPHOSIS

For decades the Museum has been delivering expert in-person programming to thousands of youth and adults annually. However, the rapid escalation of world events gave the Museum a new challenge that so many can relate to: virtual teaching!

In March, staff quickly morphed their living spaces from work-free sanctuary to office and production studio. With critical support from departments such as marketing, graphics, and IT, our team of teachers (myself included) was able to transfer programming to a virtual platform in just two action-packed weeks!

LIKE A PADDLING DUCK

Our education team is like a duck paddling vigorously below water to appear as though it is easily floating atop. Tireless work off-camera resulted in a stream of seemingly effortless programs. Paddling through March, April, and May, **we developed and delivered more than 50 free online programs**, reaching thousands of households around the world through Zoom and thousands more through Facebook Live. With themes like Backyard Biodiversity and Dibujando la Vida del Desierto, *we served schoolkids, families, and adults. Zookeepers and guest educators were featured not only from the Desert Museum, but also our local Reid Park Zoo and Akron Zoo in Ohio.* We then launched paid youth programs, and even held adult programs and workshops such as Cholla Bud Harvesting, How to Cook Nopalitos, and Sips with Scientists.

CHANGE IS CONSTANT AND SO IS TEAMWORK!

By mid May, our education team grew accustomed to that #workfromhome life. So, naturally, cue more change! In anticipation of our first ever virtual summer camp, Backyard Explorer's, we gradually, and safely, resumed working on

grounds with our beloved animal ambassadors and introduced them to our 2020-style of teaching. *With live animals like skunks and owls back in the mix, all future e-programs are sure to be a hoot!*



Our Museum education family, like families everywhere, faced abrupt unexpected challenges and had to work together to meet them. Having a team so dedicated to conveying the Museum's mission of harmony and love — no matter the circumstance — is a testament to the inspiration we draw from the extraordinary Sonoran Desert community to which we belong.

SIGN UP FOR FREE VIRTUAL PROGRAMS, BOOK EXCLUSIVE PROGRAMS FOR YOUR GROUP, OR EVEN INVITE AN ANIMAL TO YOUR NEXT ZOOM!
WWW.DESERTMUSEUM.ORG/DESERTONLINE

An even wilder west

by Debra Colodner, Director of Conservation Education & Science

You've probably seen the photos and videos of wild animals venturing further into human habitat during the time that humans were under various degrees of "lock down" due to coronavirus.

Wild boars in Haifa, Israel, mountain lions in Santiago, Chile, and mountain goats in Llandudno, Wales have become internet stars. As a Sonoran Desert resident, you may have reacted to these reports with a yawn – we are lucky to live in a place where wildlife sightings in and around our cities regularly enrich our lives. Recently, in an amusing role-reversal from the way we usually view bighorn sheep in their enclosure at the Desert Museum, some Tucson neighbors posted a video of bighorns curiously peering into their "enclosure" through glass patio doors. As intriguing as these encounters may be, it is safer for both animals and humans if animals are not drawn to urban and suburban areas. Science can help us design infrastructure that supports biodiversity, while minimizing the need for wildlife to enter our "enclosures". We want to give a shout out to the many people and organizations that are helping to preserve the biodiversity in our region while keeping people safe as well.

One of the most impactful improvements we can make to our human landscape is to build wildlife over- or underpasses across major roads. These help reconnect important fragments of wilder habitat, help funnel animal movements away from neighborhoods, and help reduce car-animal collisions. The Arizona Game and Fish Department just released data from 4 years of monitoring the Oracle Road over- and underpasses and recorded over 10,000 wildlife crossings by 26 different species (11 species of the 26 used the overpass while 25 of 26 used the underpass). More animals have been finding and using these each year, with numbers increasing annually. The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection and their partners are monitoring wildlife cameras along I-10 east of Tucson in order to help develop plans for future wildlife over- and/or underpasses in the Rincon-Santa Rita-Whetstone wildlife corridor. So far, they have seen 11 different mammal species and turkeys. New cameras have been installed along the proposed I-11 route west of Tucson to help get a better understanding of the impacts of the proposed new highway on wildlife as well.

Sky Island Alliance just launched a new study to document wildlife use of 35 miles of the border region slated for construction of a new wall. The new wall would stop the natural movements of many animals, including jaguars, wolves and ocelots (which are currently subjects of binational reintroduction efforts), pronghorn, black bear, pygmy owls and box turtles. An array of over 50 wildlife cameras in the Patagonia Mountains, San Rafael Valley and Huachuca Mountains in Southern Arizona and Northern Sonora will capture photos and video, generating tens of thousands of images weekly. In just the first few months, the cameras have captured images of 33 species using this area, including mountain

lions, white-nosed coati, ringtail, bobcat, gray fox, javelina, kangaroo rat, jackrabbit, white-tailed and mule deer, Montezuma quail, American kestrel, Northern harrier, Mexican jay and red-tailed hawk, demonstrating the incredible biodiversity of this region. This research can and should inform the design of any future border infrastructure.

The Desert Museum's conservation efforts currently focus on protecting the natural habitats of many of these charismatic wildlife species. Our buffelgrass research and mitigation programs aim to prevent the conversion of our saguaro forests to grasslands, and prevent fire, like the recent Bighorn Fire, from spreading into communities at lower elevations. We are also studying our native bees, lynchpin pollinators that help maintain the healthy diversity of wild ecosystems. All of these conservation activities help keep the animals we love to see as they should be: wild and safe.

wildlife crossings work!

...they help reconnect important fragments of wilder habitat, help funnel animal movements away from neighborhoods, and help reduce car-animal collisions.



DONORS

the lifeblood of the Desert Museum



With COVID-19 causing nonprofits across the nation to struggle, the Desert Museum is not immune. Throughout the COVID-19 closure and gradual reopening, the Desert Museum's education, research, conservation, and living collection needs remain intact. The plants and animals need care, staff need support, and programs must continue, to get back on our feet!

Many people do not realize that the Desert Museum does not receive regular annual state, federal, or tax subsidies to operate. The majority of operational support for the Museum comes directly from visitor admissions, memberships, other earned income, and donations. However, with millions in losses resulting from COVID-19, this is a critical time to generate philanthropic support, so the Museum is able to come out stronger on the other side! With the help of generous donations, the Desert Museum will continue our important work.

Recognizing the Desert Museum's urgent need during this unprecedented time, the P&M Baldwin Foundation stepped up immediately to make a leadership gift of \$500,000 in support of the Desert Museum. "The need for us to make this substantial donation is now, and we hope it will point the way for others," says the Foundation Secretary. The P&M Baldwin Foundation was created to support the Desert Museum and Desert Museum Art Institute. The Foundation's priority focus is conservation through art education. *Their significantly generous leadership gift has inspired more supporters to "join them" and take action with another six-figure gift, and another incredible story:*

Is there really "love at first sight"? That's an easy one: the answer is "YES!" And this includes not only love between people, but also love of places. The two of us first arrived in Tucson at different times and from different directions, but we both were hopelessly smitten by the Sonoran Desert. What did the Baja Arizona-Sonora Region give us? Its compelling beauty in all its moods—from dramatic monsoons to cleansing heat to chromatic sunsets to winter snows—and in all of its manifestations, from sky island mountain ranges to forests of saguaros to creosote flats to the Sea of Cortez. Immersion in its

fascinating natural history of plants and animals with unique adaptations and interactions that taught us to observe and led us to mature as scientists. The diversity and aliveness of its cultures and peoples.

The Desert Museum graciously hosted some of our first forays into scientific research and teaching, and its beautiful displays and grounds fast-tracked our understanding of local ecology.

How have we been giving back? So far, mostly by volunteering. As adjunct professors at UA we've helped to advise students; we volunteer to pull invasive buffelgrass in Saguaro National Park; we've helped the League of Women Voters to register and educate voters; we've joined their Science and Conservation Council, which advises the Museum's Staff and Trustees, and Mary is serving her first term as a Museum Trustee.

But now, with the COVID-19 crisis upon us, it is time to do more. The Desert Museum is an icon of our city and region, and is critically important to our community. Having to close its gates to visitors during peak season was devastating. The need is great, and so we have fast-forwarded our planned giving to make a major financial pledge to assist them now. We hope that you will be inspired by the story of our love affair with Tucson to join us in supporting our unique and wonderful Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum!



Nick Waser and Mary Price are Emeritus Professors of Biology from the University of California Riverside and Adjunct Professors in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Arizona. They hold Ph.D. degrees from UA and have taught and done research in ecology nationally and internationally over the past five decades.

AN EXTRA SHOUT OUT and THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR DONORS! 2/1/2020- 5/31/2020

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The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is so fortunate to have supporters like these who have pledged to sustain the organization's ongoing work. Thanks to them, and supporters like you, every bit helps. We are all in this together.

You can learn more here: www.desertmuseum.org/donate.

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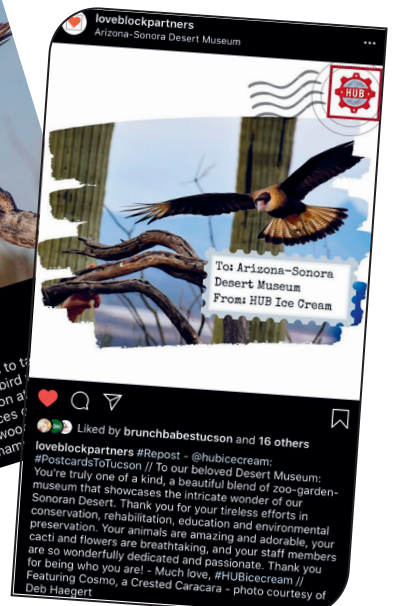
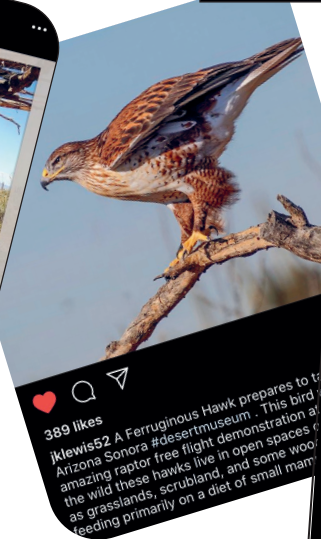
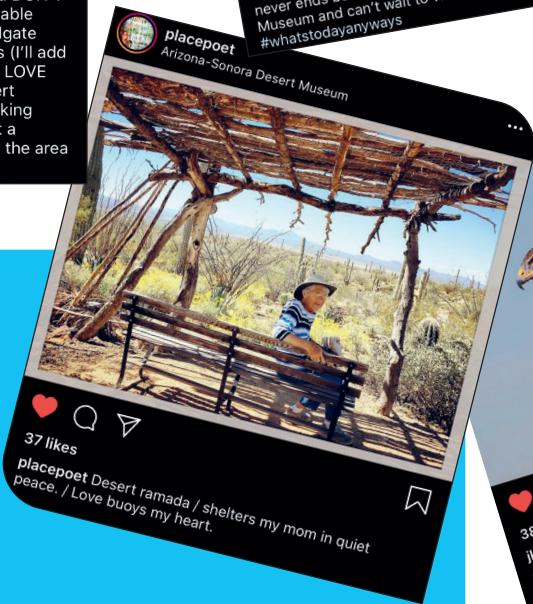
2/1/2020 - 5/31/2020

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We love seeing the Museum through your eyes and want to start sharing your posts!

social media SPOTLIGHT

ARIZONA-SONORA
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Are you an art lover?

Transform your home into an art studio! From drawing to watercolor to Zentangle, your favorite Art Institute instructors are bringing you free virtual art demos. Whether you need inspiration for a new project or you're a beginner celebrating your inner-artist, we are excited to spend time with you online. **Visit our Facebook or webpage to see what's coming and watch past videos!** Learn more at www.DesertMuseumArts.com.

Want to be featured in our next 'Social Media Spotlight'? Tag @desertmuseum and use #desertmuseum for a chance to be featured!

Hey Kids
(and adults too)!

Summer Scavenger HUNT

How many of these plants and animals can you find in your neighborhood?
Circle them as you discover the desert around you.

ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM

BACKYARD DIVERSITY!



GAMBEL'S QUAIL



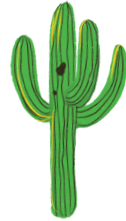
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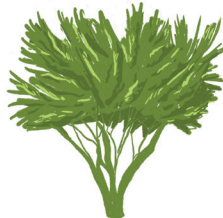
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CREOSOTE BUSH



WESTERN DIAMOND-
BACK RATTLESNAKE



GIANT SWALLOWTAIL
BUTTERFLY



LONG-NOSED SNAKE



CICADA



DESERT SPINY
LIZARD



COUCH'S SPADEFOOT



The mission of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the Sonoran Desert.

RECIPE RECIPE RECIPE

HARVESTING PRICKLY PEAR PADS: PREPARING NOPALITOS

The Mexican name for the prickly pear plant is nopal. Thus comes the name nopalitas, describing the tender, edible pads of the nopal. Early summer and again during monsoons provide two opportunities for eating this abundant desert food. *You will want to harvest from smooth-padded *Opuntia ficus-indica*, or Indian fig, which grows into tall plants, and is only found in the city; not from the spiny, native *Opuntia engelmannii*, which grows wild in the desert. Select bright green, smaller, recently-grown pads.*

NOPALITOS COLORADOS

- 2 tbs oil
- 1 onion
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 jalapeño
- 4 c sliced nopalitos
- 14 oz can crushed tomatoes
- 2 tsp cumin
- 2 tsp oregano
- ½ tsp rosemary
- salt and pepper



With knife, remove glochids (bumps where the spines will, or have just emerged) from the pads. Slice pads like French fries, place in pot of boiling water, boil for ten minutes. Drain and set aside. Chop onion, garlic, and jalapeño. Sauté in oil in a large pot until onions start to turn translucent. Add spices. Stir frequently, allowing to cook for a few minutes. Add the nopalitos to the sauté mix. Stir for another minute, then add the crushed tomatoes. Simmer ten minutes longer, stirring to keep from burning bottom of pot. ***Serve with tortillas, chips and/or beans!***

DID YOU KNOW?

OPUNTIA FICUS-INDICA ARE CONSUMED WIDELY AS FOOD. THE FRUITS ARE WIDELY COMMERCIALIZED IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD, EATEN RAW, AND HAVE ONE OF THE HIGHEST CONCENTRATIONS OF VITAMIN C OF ANY FRUIT.

JAMS AND JELLIES ARE PRODUCED FROM THE FRUIT, WHICH RESEMBLE STRAWBERRIES OR WATERMELON IN COLOR AND FLAVOR.



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