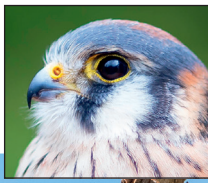


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desert museum Discovery

Summer 2021

Happy New Year!

Most Americans know New Year's as January 1st, but for O'odham it is a season that includes the months June and July.

By Jacelle Ramon-Sauberan,
Tohono O'odham

Summer time in the Sonoran Desert brings longer days, triple-digit temperatures, and monsoons. For O'odham, summer holds an extra place in t-i:badag (our hearts) because it is when we harvest Bahidaj (Saguaro fruit), sing down the rain and celebrate the start of the O'odham (new) Year.

My family and many other O'odham, including the late Juanita Ahil, have been picking Bahidaj within the Saguaro National Park before it was even a park. Within the park's boundaries is a Bahidaj Camp where Ahil's family has carried on the traditions of harvesting, as well as sleeping outside under traditional O'odham ramadas with no running water or electricity.

The camp dates back to the early 1900's when Ahil's family would travel by horse-drawn wagon to the area to harvest. Ahil's great niece, Stella Tucker, took over the camp until her passing in 2019. Stella's daughter Tanisha Tucker is in charge of the camp now with help from family.

In the 1950's, my mom recalls staying at the Gilbert Ray Campground, formerly known as Palo Verde Campground, with my great-great grandparents when they would harvest Bahidaj. She told me that a lot of O'odham would stay in that area, most traveling by horse and/or wagon.

In 1961, the Saguaro Nation Park West (SNP), which was then called Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Monument, was established.

Believe or not, the Park staff had no idea the Bahidaj Camp existed or that O'odham came to the area to pick Bahidaj, according to the SNP website.

In 1962, SNP allowed O'odham to pick fruit but wanted to put an end to it. Steward Udall, who was the Secretary of the Interior at the time, did not want SNP to stop the O'odham from carrying on their tradition of harvesting, which they had been doing in the area for time immemorial. Udall went ahead and amended the regulations concerning resource protection. Today, there are annual permits signed by SNP and the Tohono O'odham Nation.

If it wasn't for Udall's help, O'odham families such as mine would not have access to our ancestors, our relatives; the Saguaro(s). In our traditional stories we are taught that the Saguaro was once human and we should always treat them as such. In O'odham we call Saguaro(s) ha:san/ha:hasan.

When you think about a person and a Saguaro there are quite a few similarities. A Saguaro stores as much water as possible in their flesh and the

...continued on page 2



Once the monsoons have arrived and the jewed (earth/land) has been cleansed, it signifies the start of our new year. Summer time is the most beautiful time to be in the Sonoran Desert.



human body is made up of roughly 60% of water. The thorns on the Saguaro are for protection and their structure is tough. As for humans we have hair on our arms and multiple layers of skin for protection. Not to mention the appearance of a Saguaro looks very much like a human.

When we harvest Bahidaj, I was always told to ask the Saguaro for permission, never take more than you need, and to always give thanks. During our

harvest, we also pull down the clouds with a kui-pad (tool or pole we use to pick the Bahidaj with), to welcome the monsoon rains.

O'dham make syrup, jam, and ceremonial wine out of Bahidaj. More recently, I have seen O'dham use the Bahidaj seeds in such things as cupcakes. My favorite way to eat Bahidaj is by dipping a cemait (O'dham tortilla) into the syrup—there is nothing that compares to the deliciousness.

"A Saguaro stores as much water as possible in their flesh and the human body is made up of roughly 60% of water"

Take a class! Take a trip!
Adult Classes & Trips with the Desert Museum!

ARIZONA-SONORA
DESERT
MUSEUM



Prickly Pear Harvest • August 15 & 21

August is the season that the beautiful red fruit of the prickly pear cactus ripens. This edible plant is ubiquitous in the Sonoran Desert! Learn how to collect and process the fruit, how to use it in different dishes, and learn to prepare the tender green pads for "nopalitas". You'll also learn the significance of prickly pear for people and animals. **Members \$50; Non-members \$55.**



**Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde
September 27 - October 1**

Explore some of the most impressive archaeology in the United States. Our tour will focus on Puebloan sites of southwest Colorado and northwest New Mexico. Highlights include seldom visited areas of Hovenweep and Lowry Pueblo site, a full day exploring Mesa Verde, and another full day at Chaco Canyon, which hosts more than 90 Kivas! **Our guides are Jesús García, Research Associate, and geomorphologist/Native American historian Fred Nials.**

Death Valley National Park: A Land of Extremes • November 7 - 12

Stark in appearance and haunting in name, Death Valley is a very-much-alive desert set between high, snow-capped mountains. Some of the high and low points of our travels include the Valley Panorama from mile-high Dante's View down to Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America at 282' below sea level. We will visit long-abandoned borax works and the ghost towns of Rhyolite and Leadfield, the shifting dunes of Mesquite Flats and spectacular pastel dunes of Artists' Palette. **Our guides are geologist Bob Scarborough and Jesús García.**

**Natural History of the Sonoran Desert
Early Fall • Dates TBD**

Dive into the desert! This two-day experience covers desert ecology, climate, mammals, birds, reptiles, botany, and geology. We will take a plant hike, go behind-the-scenes at the Museum, and have the opportunity to meet live animals! **Members \$140; non-members \$154.**



NO TEETH NEEDED to Form These Cavities!

by Robin Kropp, Education Specialist

Put yourself in the mind, or more precisely, the head, of a woodpecker. Your skull and beak are perfectly adapted to gouge holes in wood to gather insects and sap, carve nest chambers, and drum out territorial displays. These jackhammer blows exert great force, yet you suffer no head, neck, or brain injuries. How?

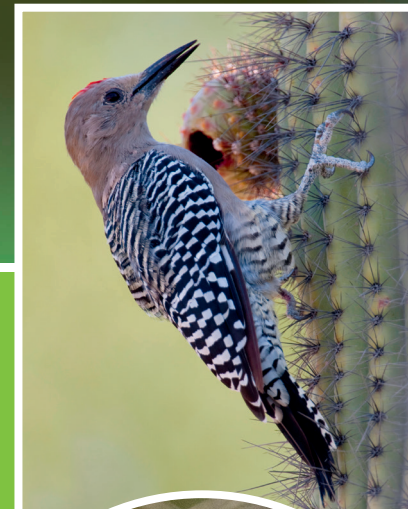
Woodpeckers, and their relatives the sapsuckers and flickers, have unique spongy, compressible skull bones, and tongues that wrap around the back of their skulls to act as shock absorbing springs.

These adaptations fit the bill for prickly home improvement: both Gila woodpeckers and gilded flickers nest in saguaro cacti. Building begins in midwinter when a pair maneuvers between rows of spines to excavate a nest cavity. As they chisel into its tough skin and succulent tissue, the

cactus forms a waterproof callus over the wound. This dries over months and forms a hard nest chamber. What better place to fashion a nest – a tall, spiny fortress whose watery mass slowly absorbs the heat of the day and releases it at night, maintaining perfect comfort inside?

Fortunately for other cavity-nesting birds, these woodpeckers often leave to construct new nests, opening premium real estate in a habitat with few trees for other birds.

Who else uses saguaro holes?



American Kestrels

North America's smallest falcons, kestrels are a wide-ranging and adaptable species, but all require nest cavities to raise young. They pair up in the early spring and feed their chicks grasshoppers, dragonflies, lizards, mice, birds, and occasionally, bats. In urban areas, they may use holes in palm trees as well as human-made nest boxes.



Elf Owls, Western Screech Owls, and Ferruginous Pygmy Owls

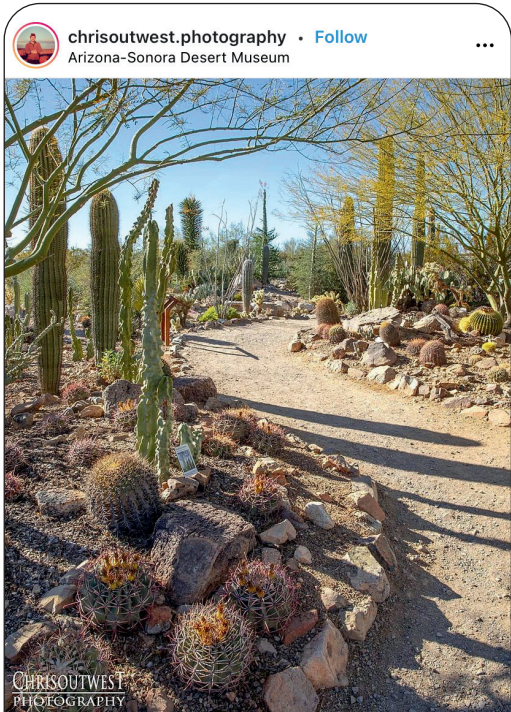
Elf owls prefer saguaro cavities because the cactus offers a relatively stable microclimate ideal for these tiny birds. Elf owls migrate to central Mexico for winter and return to the Sonoran Desert in spring to nest. They raise their voracious young on a diet of arthropods such as moths, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, and scorpions. Western screech owls and the now-rare cactus ferruginous pygmy owls are year-round residents who select saguaro nests in late winter and advertise them to potential mates with trilling hoots. Their menu includes a similar crawly spread, as well as small lizards, rodents, amphibians, and birds.

Pro tip!

Watch a saguaro hole and try to spy other species! You just might spot ash-throated flycatchers, brown-crested flycatchers, purple martins, cactus wrens, Lucy's warblers, and house sparrows.



Social Media Spotlight!



chrisoutwest.photography • Follow
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

26 likes
chrisoutwest.photography Under the shade of the Palo Verde at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum!



desertdaphidyl • Follow
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum



7 likes
desertdaphidyl I saw a beautiful photo of Cruz the mountain lion from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum on their IG feed today and it reminded me of this day. Not sure what they were looking at so intently, but it must have been fascinating! #desertmuseum #cruzmountainlion #visittucson

bonbonmontero • Follow
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum



117 likes
bonbonmontero Desert Vibes for our Spring Break 2021 🌵🌻🌺

natandmadigo • Follow
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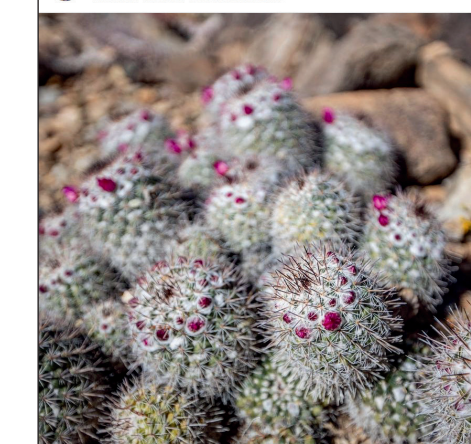
20 likes
natandmadigo This was the best museum I've ever been to. So incredible. We spent TWO DAYS here. And that still wasn't enough time. We learned SO MUCH.



lovejennyblog • Follow
Tucson, Arizona

45 likes
lovejennyblog This week was Emma's Spring Break, so I took a couple days off work so we could play before she returns to school full-time (tomorrow 🌞). Since we couldn't leave town, we decided to explore our own backyard with a trip to the Arizona-Sonoran @desertmuseum and @roostercogburnostrich Ranch. We had a great time and it was a nice reminder that we don't need extravagant trips in order to make fun memories - we can do that right here at home too!

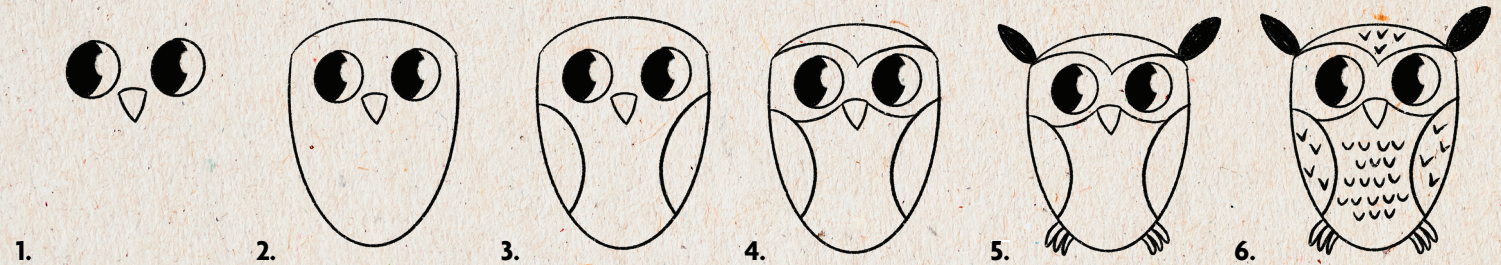
rvingmum • Follow
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum



56 likes
rvingmum Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, AZ. Don't let the name fool you...this is more like a zoo than a museum. I LOVED the cactus garden. I never knew I loved cactus as much as I did until I saw all the different varieties. Kids loved the desert animals.

WE LOVE SEEING THE MUSEUM THROUGH YOUR EYES!
Tag @desertmuseum and use #desertmuseum for a chance to be featured!

Kids' activity! Draw your own owl! It's a Hoot!



Show us your owl & saguaro

Tag #desertmuseum on social media or email a picture to: education@desertmuseum.org

MAPPING buffelgrass



Buffelgrass is a grass that was introduced into North America in the 1930's and now threatens our wild and urban spaces, and everything in between.

In the Sonoran Desert ecosystem, there is usually bare ground between plants, but buffelgrass fills in all that space, creating a continuous flammable carpet. Most of our native plants, like the iconic saguaro cactus, cannot survive a buffelgrass fire, which also threatens homes, businesses, utilities, people, and pets.



In February and March of 2021, the Desert Museum and Tucson partners worked with Caminantes del Desierto A.C. in Hermosillo, Sonora to coordinate mapping of urban buffelgrass by residents of both cities. After downloading an app to their phones, 31 community members mapped 2,542 buffelgrass patches! This information will be made available to government and non-governmental organizations to help plan treatment and restoration work. You can join the project at: <https://saveoursaguaro-uagis.hub.arcgis.com/>.



Stingray Touch is now fully open for touch and feeding experiences. Spend time with these amazing animals and learn why rays and the Gulf of California waters they swim through are so vital to the health of the Sonoran Desert.



Want an even more memorable experience with these captivating creatures? Feeding opportunities are available at 9:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. for an additional small fee. **Open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**



THANK YOU!

Thank you to all who participated in the online auction and donated, and thank you to our most generous sponsors of the event - without you, this would not be possible. Your participation in the 2021 Virtual Gala helped to raise \$183,000 to support our great work in the Sonoran Desert region.

Want to know how else you can support your Desert Museum?

- Make a donation online at www.desertmuseum.org/donate
- Name the Desert Museum in your will
- Donate appreciated securities & stocks
- Make an IRA qualified charitable distribution
- Come and visit us!



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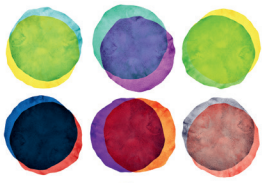
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DESERT MUSEUM *ARTS* UPDATE

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.



**VANISHING
CIRCLES**

Visit the exhibit this summer and learn how you can help save our desert.

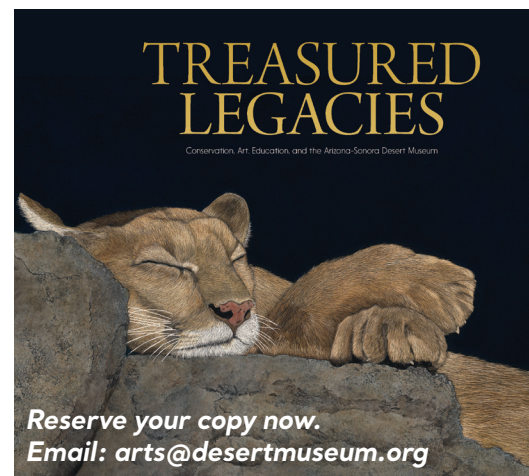
PORTRAITS OF DISAPPEARING WILDLIFE OF THE SONORAN DESERT REGION
IRONWOOD GALLERY • MAY 15, 2021 - AUGUST 15, 2021

Vanishing Circles is a collection of paintings and drawings acquired for the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum by the Michael C. and Priscilla V. Baldwin Foundation. Each of the animals, plants, and habitats portrayed in the collection is endangered, threatened, or otherwise compromised in the Sonoran Desert Region.

The Vanishing Circles collection at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum Art Institute serves to increase awareness of the threats to the rich biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert. Conservation through Art Education is the driving force of the Art Institute, and this collection is the embodiment of the notion that seeing the desert through the lens of art increases our understanding of the interconnectedness of the natural world.

TREASURED LEGACIES

Experience the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum — past and present — through *Treasured Legacies*, a new book from Desert Museum Press honoring 70 years of education and conservation. Enjoy the historic tales of Hal Gras's Desert Ark and thrill to the majesty of today's Raptor Free Flight birds as they soar through the southern Arizona skies. Delight in the charming scratchboard art of Priscilla Baldwin as we celebrate Priscilla's message of "**Conservation: The Gift of Life.**"



**TREASURED
LEGACIES**
Conservation, Art Education, and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

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The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is located on the ancestral lands of the Tohono O'odham (Desert People).