

inside:



TAKE A CLASS!  
TAKE A TRIP!  
page 2



SPLISH  
Splash!  
page 3



page 4  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
SPOTLIGHT



MUSEUM  
EVENTS  
page 6

# Desert Museum Discovery

Spring 2022

## WEAVING a DESERT TAPESTRY

By Elena Makansi, Social Media & Marketing Specialist

**If the desert was a tapestry, riparian areas would be one of its threads, weaving life itself through the canyons and valleys.** Flowing water carves corridors populated with large trees, dense understory, and wildlife.

Along the banks of rivers and streams, such as the Santa Cruz, San Pedro, Salt, and Gila Rivers, a unique and vital habitat type supports these desert oases, known as desert riparian habitat.

Riparian areas are found within every biome on earth and share a few fundamental characteristics: they are dynamic, frequently disturbed and flooded sites that support communities distinct from the adjacent environments and serve as transitional zones between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

Here in the Sonoran Desert riparian areas stand out! Rivers, streams, floodplains, cienegas, and arroyos are essential to supporting the desert's incredible biodiversity. Yet they are also critically degraded, many lost entirely, due to a variety of environmental stressors and human factors. The cottonwood-willow forests and mesquite bosques of the U.S. southwest and northern Mexico are increasingly rare.

In the desert southwest, riparian areas support the majority of the region's wildlife but only cover 2% of the total area. Populated with ash, walnut, sycamore, and Russian olive trees, these critical zones provide nesting, forage, cover, and water for songbirds, hummingbirds, hawks and falcons, deer, beavers, javelina, and many more. They improve water quality, recharge aquifers, and reduce floodwater runoff. They build healthy soil, reduce erosion, and stabilize stream banks. Additionally, they provide economic and recreational value to human communities. Benefits abound!

Thank riparian areas for much of the wondrous wildlife that sing, soar, and swim throughout this region. Find herons, egrets, kingfishers, and ospreys hunting in local preserves like Sweetwater Wetlands and the El Rio Open Space Preserve, where more than 300 and 240 species of birds, respectively, have been identified. The springtime bird migration in March and April is an excellent time to visit riparian corridors to catch a glimpse of the common yellowthroat, summer tanager, and Bell's vireo. The Anza

...continued on page 2



Trail along the Santa Cruz River and the San Pedro National Riparian Conservation Area make excellent nature watching spots!

These beautiful birds are charismatic indeed, but crouch down and observe the water as well. The San Berdardino and Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuges support populations of endangered native fishes, amphibians, and reptiles. The Desert Museum cares for and breeds populations of some of these precious animals, including the Sonoyta pupfish, Sonoyta mud turtle, Longfin dace, Gila topminnow, Yaqui catfish, Sonora chub, and Mexican gartersnake. The Museum works with conservation partners to monitor, breed, and release populations of these animals that depend on viable riparian habitat for survival.

Locals might also be familiar with a unique habitat type termed "dry riparian" or xeroriparian areas. Dry washes, or arroyos, only flow after heavy rainfall for a few hours or days a year, yet they retain many characteristics of traditional riparian areas. Stroll along your local arroyos and seek shady respite beneath mesquite, blue palo verde, or ironwood trees, and look for whitethorn and catclaw acacias, desert broom, creosote, and desert willows in between your ambling. No matter where you go to enjoy and observe nature, remember to recreate responsibly!



Belted Kingfisher  
*Megasceryle alcyon*

“Thank riparian areas for much of the wondrous wildlife that sing, soar, and swim throughout this region.”

**FUN FACT!**

The kingfisher's nesting patterns are rather unique. The male and female birds take turns excavating a 3 to 6-foot tunnel in a soft stream bank. The horizontal tunnel is dug angled upward and the bird builds a "room" at the end for nesting. The upward direction helps mitigate flooding.

## Take a class! Take a trip!

### Adult Classes & Trips with the Desert Museum!

#### ARIZONA'S HUMMINGBIRDS – JEWELS OF THE SOUTHWEST April 16, 2022

A hummingbird's life history is an incredible story of evolution. They have the highest metabolic rate and the greatest metabolic range of any vertebrate. Everything from their iridescent plumage to their aerial acrobatics is a wonder to behold. We will look at their biology and behavior as well as learn tips for identification in this class. \$40/\$44

#### ALL ABOUT OWLS • MAY 14, 2022

Arizona is home to thirteen species of owls. Join us as we take a close look at their similarities and differences. We will discuss their biology and key identification characteristics. With their almost mystic reputation, many myths surround owls but are they accurate? Join us as we sort through the facts and fiction of these silent hunters. \$40/\$44

For more details and to register for classes and trips: 520-883-3025 or [desertmuseum.org/adultclasses](http://desertmuseum.org/adultclasses). (\$00 member/\$00 non-member pricing)

#### BIODIVERSITY AND ANIMAL BEHAVIOR OF THE CHIRICAHUA MOUNTAINS: A SUMMER FIELD CAMP May 20–26, 2022

This week-long course provides an introduction to the flora and fauna of southeastern Arizona. Based at the Southwestern Research Station of the American Museum of Natural History, it includes studies of the animals of the high desert and mountains. We will have the opportunity to interact with other scientists, attend their seminars, and even accompany them into the field. \$1350

#### SAGUARO FRUIT HARVEST JUNE 25, 2022 OR JUNE 28, 2022

High summer is the beginning of the O'odham calendar, as this is the time to harvest saguaro fruit. Spend the morning gathering and preparing fruit in the traditional manner using a harvesting pole made from the ribs of the giant cactus and explore the saguaro's importance to the culture and ecology of our region. \$60/\$66



“Beyond entertainment, Riparian Adventure will provide deep, interactive learning experiences about water in the desert.”

# We have a NEWS FLASH!

## RIPARIAN ADVENTURE MAKES A SPLASH

By Lynnae Wenker, Director of Philanthropy

A new interactive exhibit is in the works at the Desert Museum, which will bring an experience like no other to southern Arizona! Riparian Adventure will provide a multifaceted educational experience that will allow guests to explore water and aquatic organisms of the Sonoran Desert region. The term "riparian" loosely translates to streambank, and the Desert Museum's Riparian Adventure will include major upgrades to the current riparian habitat including renovation of the otter exhibit and conversion of the Cottonwood Café into a herpetological conservation and education center as well as creation of a fun new streamside learning-through-play experience!

The project concept has been in discussions since 2019, but at the height of the pandemic the Museum faced massive earned revenue losses, so the project was

put on hold. Having weathered the pandemic, and anticipating a more robust return to tourism, the Museum is moving forward with planning and fundraising for this unique exhibit.

Similar to the concept of a "splash pad" play area in other organizations, but aligned with the Museum's water conservation ethos, this interactive exhibit will feature a motion-activated simulated stream, surrounded by a native riparian environment in which visitors can play. It will provide a cool natural oasis for kids and families to enjoy, especially in Tucson's hotter summer months.

Beyond entertainment, Riparian Adventure will provide deep, interactive learning experiences about water in the desert. It will highlight the imperiled status of water, and the importance of conservation of streams,

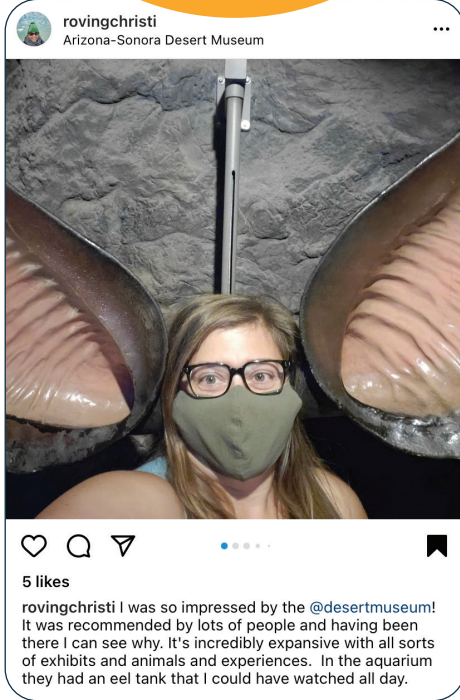
and other desert water sources for protecting all desert life. It will also educate visitors about the plants and animals whose existence relies on freestanding water in the desert. Simultaneously, the exhibit will emphasize the incredible work the Desert Museum has done to save many reptiles, fish, and amphibians that depend on rivers and streams during all or part of their life cycles. Riparian Adventure will increase visitor engagement while being directly in line with the Desert Museum's mission.

Once the Desert Museum has secured the funds to create this exciting new exhibit, it should take approximately 18 months to complete. It's thrilling to anticipate a new addition to the on-grounds experience for guests! We hope that visitors will jump into the fun and make a splash at Riparian Adventure.

If you are interested in learning more, or would like to donate to support the creation of this project, please contact [philanthropy@desertmuseum.org](mailto:philanthropy@desertmuseum.org) or you can make a gift online at [www.desertmuseum.org/donate](http://www.desertmuseum.org/donate) and select Riparian Adventure on the drop-down menu.



**SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT**



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



**I think I Pan. I think I Pan. KIDS' ACTIVITY!**

**DESERTS ARE SUPER DRY—BUT HOW DRY?**  
Scientists can measure dryness with pan evaporation and you can do it, too!

**WHAT YOU NEED: INSTRUCTIONS:**

- A baking pan
  - Water
  - A timer
  - A ruler
- Fill the baking pan with an inch of water.
  - Place baking pan in a sunny location and time how long it takes for the water to evaporate. *Make sure there is not a drop left.*
  - Write down the amount of time it took for the water to evaporate entirely in the sunny location. *Repeat in a shady location.*

**SUNNY LOCATION**

**SHADY LOCATION**

**LENGTH OF TIME TO EVAPORATE**

**LENGTH OF TIME TO EVAPORATE**

- Did it take longer for the water to evaporate in the sunny or shady location? Why?
- **CHALLENGE:** Try the pan evaporation experiment on a windy day. What changes do you predict?
- The amount of water the air is able to suck up can tell scientists how long water will stay in an area. *This is very important in riparian areas where plants and animals depend on the water to survive!*




# MUSEUM EVENTS & UPDATES

**SATURDAY, MAY 14, 6:00 P.M. – 9:30 P.M.**

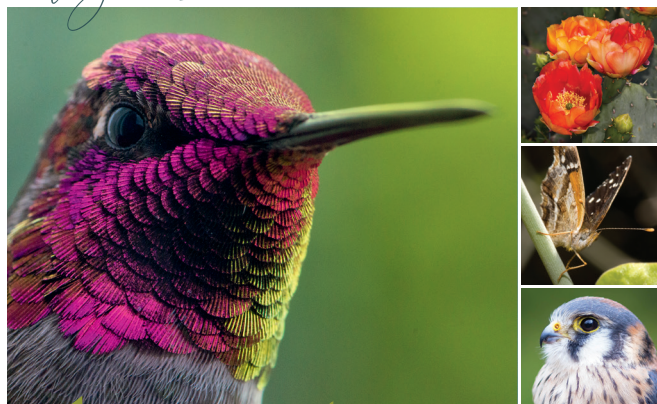
**JOIN THE DESERT MUSEUM FOR OUR ANNUAL CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL, PARTY FOR THE PLANET!**

Stand among the saguaros at the Desert Museum and sip on the best local and regional brews in the Southwest and learn how to help protect endangered species (like our beloved Mexican gray wolves). Jam to vibrant tunes, stargaze, visit with animated animals, and more. For more information, please visit [www.desertmuseum.org/partyfortheplanet](http://www.desertmuseum.org/partyfortheplanet).

**NEW SUMMER HOURS:**   
JUNE 1ST - SEPT. 30TH: 7:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

**COOL SUMMER NIGHTS ARE BACK!**   
Experience the desert at night with themed events every Saturday from June 4th to Sept. 3rd, 2022. Open until 9:00 p.m.

*arizona-sonora desert museum's*



**desertGALA<sup>2022</sup>**

**EVERY SUMMER HAS A STORY. START YOURS WITH US!**

Our camps combine the best of STEM. Kids from first grade through high school will be engaged with animals, art, and adventure!



**MUSEUM EXPLORERS:**  
GRADES 1-6  
**COLORS OF THE DESERT:**  
GRADES 6-8  
**MOUNTAIN EXPLORERS:**  
GRADES 9-12

ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM

**PARTY OR THE PLANET**

**SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2022 6:00 - 9:30 PM**  
CELEBRATE ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY  
WITH AN EVENING OF BREWS, MUSIC & FUN!

DESERTMUSEUM.ORG #SIPPINFORSPECIES

**SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 4:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.**

**JOIN US AND SPONSOR TODAY! DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER FOR THE ONLINE AUCTION! ALL EVENT DETAILS FOUND AT [WWW.DESERTMUSEUM.ORG/GALA](http://WWW.DESERTMUSEUM.ORG/GALA)**

Our 29th annual Gala will offer an online auction with premium selections, a virtual presentation showcasing Desert Museum updates, virtual visits with some of our famous animal ambassadors, and the raffle drawing of this year's coveted bronze jackrabbit sculpture created by local artist Mark Rossi.



**MAJOR DONORS +\$10,000**

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Jeffrey Reveal  
Debbie Arntsen

**In honor of Lisa C. Young**  
John D. Speth

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**In honor of Camille and Uri Palmer**  
Raina Bartlett

**In honor of Jake Muller**  
Lois Manowitz

**In honor of Grumpy Gringo Fine Cigars**  
Spencer Arnaud

**In honor of Mark Bertolini**  
Spencer Arnaud

**In honor of Daniel Haroldson**  
Judeen Schulte

**In honor of Lane Watson**  
Benjamin Watson

**In honor of Carol Kirkland**  
Lars Mortenson

**In honor of James M. Thomas**  
Blake Thomas

**In honor of Barbara Carr**  
Sue Carr

**In honor of Dianne Kalal**  
David Kalal

**In honor of Susan S. Small**  
Mary and Charles Miller

**In honor of The Friday Docent Captains**  
Aubrey and Deanna Mendelow

**In honor of Ryan Crooks**  
Dianne Paulus

**In honor of Swede Warneke**  
Michael Dohm

**IN MEMORY OF**  
**In memory of Reyn Voevodsky**  
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**In memory of Gerald Hoeft**  
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Mary Dosch Doubleday  
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Kim Scott-Florian

**In memory of Elizabeth J. Ohm**  
Rebecca Ohm

**In memory of Betty L. Vance**  
Judith and Gary M. Vance

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Sylvia Pishioneri

**In memory of Bernard O. Seraphin**  
Dr. Supapan Seraphin

**In memory of Marilyn J Stuart**  
William Dowling  
Robert G. Bemis  
Helen Wilson

**In memory of Gary Wilkinsin**  
Mr. and Ms. Mark Maedge

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Frank Smolinski

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Diana and Jay Caldwell

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**In memory of Heidi Glosser**  
Ann Grodzicki and Paul Federico

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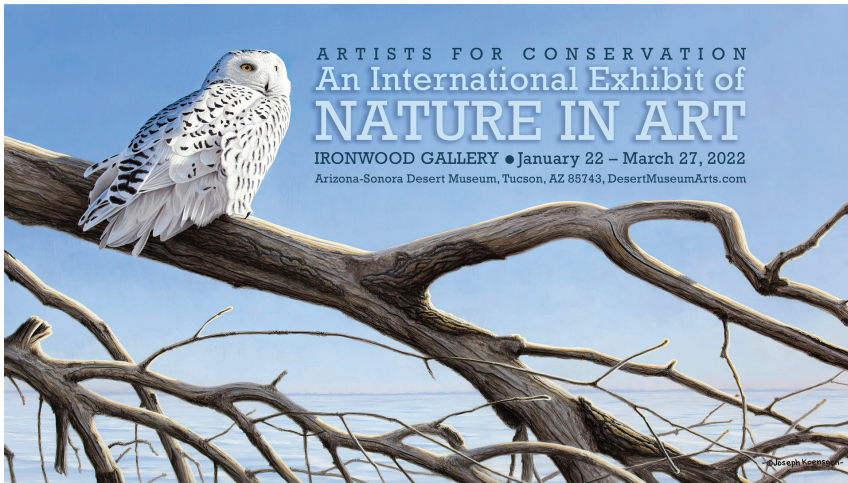
# DESERT MUSEUM ARTS UPDATE

[www.desertmuseumarts.com](http://www.desertmuseumarts.com)

ARIZONA-SONORA  
DESERT  
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NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
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ARIZONA-SONORA  
DESERT MUSEUM

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.



## AN INTERNATIONAL EXHIBIT OF NATURE ART through March 27th, 2022

**Artists for Conservation (AFC) is the world's leading artist group supporting the environment and represents 500 of the world's leading nature and wildlife artists from over 30 countries.** AFC's mission is to support wildlife and habitat conservation and environmental education through art that celebrates nature. Unique to this exhibit, each artwork is dedicated to a conservation organization of the artists' choice, with at least 40% of the proceeds from the sale of each painting supporting conservation initiatives around the world.

**IRONWOOD GALLERY HOURS**  
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Daily



## SPRING STUDENT ART through May 15th, 2022

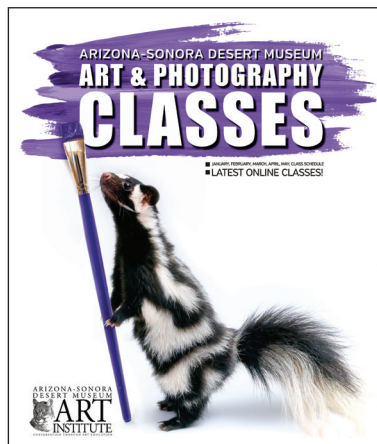
Enjoy this exhibition of original works by the students of the **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Art Institute.** These unique pieces interpret the magic of the desert through a variety of mediums including mosaic, oil, scratchboard, photography, with many available for purchase.

**BALDWIN GALLERY HOURS**  
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Daily

## SPRING ART CLASSES

This spring discover your talent as an artist while you enjoy the Desert Museum. The Art Institute offers individual classes as well as a certificate of completion program in nature art. The unique backdrop of the Museum becomes your classroom, while you draw, paint, or photograph an array of animals and desert botanicals.

For more information about exhibits or classes at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's Art Institute, visit [www.desertmuseumarts.com](http://www.desertmuseumarts.com), call (520) 883-3024, or email [arts@desertmuseum.org](mailto:arts@desertmuseum.org).



**Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum**  
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[www.desertmuseum.org](http://www.desertmuseum.org)

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**Design & Layout:** Nancy Serensky  
**Photo Credits:** Rhonda Spencer, Jay Pierstorff  
The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is located on the ancestral lands of the Tohono O'odham (Desert People).