

cnews...

Earth Day Plant Sale:

In honor of Earth Day, April 20th, CNUW will be hosting a plant sale and origami statue auction, featuring Sonoran Desert animals, from Wednesday, April 20th until Friday, April 22nd in front of the Student Center on the S.C.C. campus, from 8am-3pm on Wed. and Thurs., and 8 am until 12 pm on Friday. All proceeds from sales will fund CNUW's continuing operations in conservation biology, ecological restoration and environmental education, including future plans to educate the public of the need for increased citizen science within our communities; a subject that will be covered in length in later issues of "cnews." The plants available for purchase will be native to the Sonoran Desert in an effort to increase awareness about the necessity and benefits of xeriscaping, or landscaping with native plants.

Much attention has been given, as of late, to the ongoing drought that has affected the entire Sonoran Desert, and to the comparatively high level of rainfall we received this winter here in the valley. Many people mistakenly believe that this past season's generous rains solved the "water problem" in Arizona, and ended the need to conserve water. As anyone who attended the city's Town Hall meeting here on campus in February concerning the state of Arizona's water supply can attest to, we here in the valley should still be very much concerned about the extremely low levels of ground water available, and the oftentimes foolish squandering of this most limited resource.

In addition, one other very important aspect of desert life is continually overlooked or ignored—the amazing biodiversity that exists within the Sonoran Desert. Urbanization and sub-urbanization, over-grazing of desert grasslands, over-hunting and fishing and the introduction of non-native species into the Sonoran Desert ecosystem are just some factors contributing to the loss of food, habitat and valuable resources for many species of desert wildlife, making it increasingly difficult for these species to survive, and creating a looming threat to the preservation of biodiversity within our desert home.

One simple way to combat or address both of the above-mentioned concerns is by planting native plants in both urban and sub-urban landscaping, whether residential or commercial. Not only do native plant species, which have evolved in this arid desert climate over thousands of years, require a limited amount of water for survival, they also provide habitat and food for innumerable desert animal species. Xeriscaping is not only cost effective and practical in terms of conserving our most limited desert resource, water, and in conserving an often equally valued resource, money, it is also unmistakably beautiful; one need only to visit CNUW's Wildlife Demonstration Gardens (the Peace Garden) here on S.C.C.'s campus to confirm that. We'd like to ask then, that you commit to the planting of at least one native plant species, be it a mesquite tree or a brittlebush, in your own yards, and assist in ensuring a future for the biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert.

Listing of plants for Sale:

Desert Lavender	Scarlet Sage	Mt. Lemmon Marigold	Soaptree Yucca
Chocolate Flower	Desert Spoon	Chuparosa	White Evening Primrose
Brittlebush	Fairy Duster	Chaparral Sage	Angelita Daisy
Desert Wolfberry	Hackberry	Canyon Penstamen	

Meet Your Desert Neighbors:

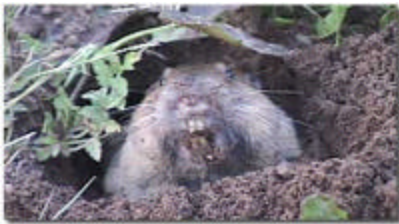
The Valley Pocket Gopher and The Sonoran Gopher Snake:

By: Kathleen Grigg

I was eating my lunch out by the pond in front of the Student Center, when a swift movement caught my attention—suddenly dirt was flying out of the ground, seemingly from nowhere . . . then I discovered the culprit. The valley pocket gopher is about 6-8 oz. and 8-12 inches long. It's a mole-shaped, neck-less rodent with tiny eyes and ear-flaps, and unmistakable yellow-faced teeth. They inhabit the burrows that they create in easily excavated soils, like riparian areas, washes or farmlands. Burrows can be up to 200 yards long, and are produced by moving up to 4 tons of soil. While feeding under ground on tubers, roots and other vegetation, these gophers, often considered pests, aerate the soil and provide deep channels that conserve run-off; they are a very important Sonoran desert species.

When gopher populations in a particular area become too high, nature has a way of balancing itself—enter the Sonoran Gopher snake. This snake, which is 5-7ft. in length, is powerfully built and is tan, yellow, cream, or brown in color, with classic “blotches.” Although completely harmless, this snake is often mistaken for a rattlesnake because of its loud hissing and the protective shaking of its tail it which sounds like a “buzz” or “rattle.” The gopher snake has a recessed lower jaw, an adaptation for accessing the burrows of its prey. Often times, the “combat dance” that territorial males engage in is mistaken for male-female courtship—this “dance” is so consuming, that gopher snakes will ignore even human onlookers when involved in it.

All in all, the relationship between these two desert species exemplifies nature's amazing ability to maintain its ecosystems, without human involvement.



Gopher at work.



Meet the Members of CNUW:

Feature Bio: Ray Leimkuehler:

“My name is Ray Leimkuehler, and I have lived in the Sonoran Desert all of my life. I consider the desert to be as much a part of my life as my personality. I've worked for the Center for Native and Urban Wildlife for since Fall 2000 and have been involved with all of CNUW's major projects. Over the years I've had many memorable experiences, including our restoration at Brown's Ranch, where we planted over 200 Palo Verde and Mesquite trees or the time we went to the Huachuca Mountains to observe the release of the Ramsey Canyon Leopard Frog into ponds at the base of the mountain. I mention two experiences, but there literally hundreds of stories I could tell about the Sonoran Desert, Brown's Ranch the Education Tours we give, and working with all the wonderful people who have passed through CNUW during the time I've been here. As of this Fall, we've been on campus for five years, and with luck and hard work we'll be here for many more. It is my hope that I am able to continue to be part of CNUW's future for many years to come.”



Tid Bits:

Roy Barnes, Director of CNUW, and fellow CNUW members, Andy Cummings and Natalie Case will be attending the center for North American Herpetology's Sonoran Reptile and Amphibian Conference April 16-17th.

CNUW members and SCC students, Andy Cummings, Christopher Kolstad and Adrianna DeFranco have been nominated for the Excellence Under the Stars Award, given by SCC, and will receive their awards at SCC's award ceremony on April 20th. CNUW staff congratulates you all!

Upcoming Events:

April 20-22: CNUW Plant Sale in front of the Library from 9am-5pm.

April 20: Liberty Wildlife Presentation of Sonoran Desert Raptors
12pm-1:15 pm in LS119 at SCC (free and open to the public).



Unsung Heroes:

There are a few people who were not available for CNUW's fifth anniversary group photo, but who are nonetheless invaluable members to our team. We'd like to take a moment here to recognize and thank each:

Gretchen Ishler: Gretchen has volunteered for CNUW's Educational Tours since. She is also a docent for CNUW's partner organization, the McDowell Sonoran Land Trust, which runs the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, where CNUW conducts restoration work at Brown's Ranch.

Jim Evans: Jim has been volunteering for CNUW for 5 years, and is CNUW's longest-running non-employee Educational Tour guide. Jim first became involved with CNUW through a former CNUW employee reference, and decided to volunteer himself. His wealth of information concerning conservation biology makes him a favorite for Ed. Tours among the fourth-graders and CNUW members alike.

Natalie Case: Natalie has been working or volunteering for CNUW since 2000, in various capacities. Natalie accomplishes all CNUW's animal husbandry, including cleaning tanks and feeding every animal. She also often times waters the plants in the greenhouse, and maintains the aquaculture tanks in the greenhouse/vivarium. Natalie also maintains the fish tanks in the Biology building lobby and marine biology laboratory. Natalie works evenings, and so you may not have a chance to meet her or necessarily associate her with CNUW's operations, but she is an immensely important part of CNUW's success. Thanks, Natalie, for all your hard work!