

# CNUW MAKES NOISE AT SCOTTSDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Center for Native and Urban Wildlife (CNUW) at Scottsdale Community College was established to teach our students the philosophy and techniques of conservation biology through active participation in ecological restoration and conservation education outreach programs. CNUW students learn by restoring desert habitats and by teaching younger students to appreciate and value their desert environment. CNUW recently received the Outstanding Program award (in the Teaching and Learning Category) from the National Council of Instructional Administrators Exemplary Initiatives Competition 2001-2002.

### ONE PAGE SUMMARY:

**Issues:** The Center for Native and Urban Wildlife (CNUW) evolved to meet the demands of SCC students and the community of Scottsdale, AZ., in support of the need to preserve undeveloped desert. CNUW is a response from SCC to the citizens of its community, who have voted five times in the past 10 years for the preservation of desert habitat within its city limits. We hope that in future years CNUW will provide lifelong learning opportunities at SCC, not only by beginning the education of future conservation biologists, but by teaching the value of our natural desert ecosystems to our children and our communities through participatory educational experiences.

**Processes, Timeline, Participants, and Resources :** Founded in January 2000, The Center for Native and Urban Wildlife was established by a grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust in partnership with the McDowell Sonoran Land Trust. Since its origin, CNUW has added a greenhouse/vivarium, a pond, a wildlife demonstration garden, an outdoor plant propagation facility, and a desert learning center to the SCC campus. These facilities serve as the cornerstone of CNUW's unique educational and desert restoration programs that first teaches college students the basic tenets of conservation biology, and then trains them to teach others those basic principles.

**Results and/or Impact:** The teaching of science has taken some new directions at SCC through CNUW. Hands-on experiences provide opportunities for students to learn scientific methodology and to apply scientific principles to real-world situations, thus developing and refining students' critical thinking skills. To provide such opportunities, CNUW has developed an environmental outreach program that

teaches the concepts of biodiversity, conservation, desert restoration and the scientific method. The conservation education programs are designed for outreach into the elementary schools, largely to 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes. During the spring and fall semesters of 2001, over 1600 elementary and middle school students toured CNUW's facilities and participated in pre- and post- tour learning activities developed at CNUW. These grade school children are learning about the value of biodiversity, why some species are declining in numbers, and the necessity of wildlife preserves, even in urban settings.

### **Lessons Learned:**

1. The Value of Partnerships.  
CNUW has been able to greatly expand the quality and quantity of both its restoration and education outreach efforts through the careful cultivation of partnerships with other environmentally-oriented organizations and institutions. CNUW has collaborated with the Arizona Game and Fish Department on joint efforts to raise and release endangered and threatened fish and frog species. CNUW has partnered with the City of Scottsdale, the McDowell Sonoran Land Trust, and the Desert Foothills Land Trust on a variety of environmental projects establishing, restoring, and preserving natural desert ecosystems. CNUW has also worked with the Liberty Wildlife Foundation, a wildlife rehabilitation organization, in the development of its educational programs.
2. The Value of Prepared Flexibility.  
Although there is a great need to educate the public about the importance of biodiversity and its preservation, the establishment of actual academic programs which can have impact in this area requires considerable effort, patience, and a willingness to collaborate, compromise, and construct alternatives when events dictate the need to do so. Developing a culture of prepared flexibility can go a long way toward helping a fledgling entity to survive during the earliest years of its existence.
3. The Key to Replication.  
The key to replicating this program beyond Scottsdale to other communities is tapping into the growing concern among citizens and their elected representatives about the loss of open space in America's communities. CNUW is and was a response from SCC to the citizens of its community.

### **Concurrent Session Proposal:**

CNUW's presentation will include:

1. An overview of the Center for Native and Urban Wildlife (CNUW) at SCC including:
  - a. the need for this entity and its activities
  - b. the developmental history of CNUW
  - c. CNUW's ecological restoration programs
  - d. CNUW's educational outreach programs
2. Creative Writing and Restoration Ecology – promoting creative understanding of the Sonoran Desert.  
Excerpts from “Letters from Brown's Ranch”
3. A Toad Calling Contest and an explanation of why we should all listen much more closely to what the voices of frogs and toads have to tell us.