



Shape the Future

Canyon Chatter

Friends of Madera Canyon

October 2026



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ON THE COVER Pronghorns are native North American mammals. Frequently called “pronghorn antelopes,” they are not true antelopes. They belong to the family Antilocapridae and are the only surviving member, making them distant relatives of giraffes and okapis rather than true African/Asian antelopes. The fastest land mammals in North America, they can reach 55 to 60 mph and have large eyes with a 320-degree field of vision. These adaptations helped them survive predation by *Miracinonyx*, commonly called the American cheetah. It is now an extinct genus of large cat native to North America during the Pliocene and Pleistocene epochs, living from about 3.1 million to roughly 10,000–12,000 years ago. JCM

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Join Friends of Madera Canyon. Below are links to join as a new member, renew a membership or make a donation. The links will take you to a secure server to use to make an automated payment. Do you have any questions? Let us know. If you prefer to help by writing a check, please make your check payable to Friends of Madera Canyon - mail to: FoMC, Box 1203, Green Valley, Arizona, 85622-1203. **A New Membership, Renew a Membership.**

From the President

Caring for Life on Earth

On the 5th page of *The Nature of Madera Canyon*, Doug Moore quotes Mark Jerome Walters, in an excerpt from the latter's "Democracy of Caring," 1966:

Dodo: Extinct, 1680s
Great Auk: Extinct, 1840s
Passenger Pigeon: Extinct, 1914
Dusky Seaside Sparrow: Extinct, 1987

"Science can teach us cause and effect, but only philosophy can teach us the meaning of kinship, that interconnectedness means more than mere mutual dependency. The extinction of the dusky seaside sparrow teaches us that outward journeys—even to the moon—can never take us as far as inward ones; that searching is different from seeking; and that facts about the universe are no substitute for a philosophy of caring for life on earth. They all teach us that to preserve animals we must first preserve the multitude of habitats in which they live."

I recently read Willa Cather's masterpiece, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. It is a fictionalized version of the life of Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy, the first Archbishop of Santa Fe, who served from 1875 to 1885. Cather's descriptions of the land and its people who were Lamy's environment are sensitive and insightful, one of many reasons to read the book.

On pp. 178-79, Cather summarizes what she believed to be the "philosophy" of the Navajo Lamy encountered regarding the land: "When they left the rock or the tree or the sand dune that had sheltered them for the night, the Navajo was careful to obliterate every trace of their temporary occupation. He buried the embers of the fire and then remnants of food, unpiled any stones he had piled together, filled up the holes he had scooped in the sand....just as it was the white man's way to assert himself in any landscape, to change it, make it over a little (at least leave some mark or memorial of his sojourn), it was the Indian's way to pass through a country without disturbing anything; to pass and leave no trace, like fish through the water, or birds through the air."

"The land and all that it bore they treated with consideration; not attempting to improve it, they never desecrated it."

Romantic myth or fair description of a whole people? To be taken as an accurate representation or as aspiration? You and I will bring our own experiences to evaluate such descriptions. Every culture has its myths, those they have created for themselves and those that are created for them by outsiders. Often the myths are the aspirations.

Cather's words, though, do address Walters' call for a philosophy of caring for life on earth. So do the works of others, writers, film makers, activists. Below in this issue, you can read Editor John C. Murphy's description of a series of actions by the Federal Government that also conform to a philosophy but not one that seems focused on preserving "the multitudes of habitats" Walters asserts are essential to caring for life.

The idea of public lands and of thoughtful, controlled growth of populated areas that affirms the importance of clean air and water, of habitats conducive to supporting Mother Nature, not fighting her, and of setting aside wilderness as sanctuaries for all to enjoy, has been a remarkably controversial political topic since the first National Park was established.

As self-proclaimed stewards of Madera Canyon, the Friends have been an effective advocate for ensuring public access to the Canyon that does not, unintentionally, do harm there. To be true to our Mission, we must continue to do so, recognizing that not everyone is likely to share our commitment. That is the reality of democracy.

Dan White

October 2026



There is only one Earth

By Harrison Schmitt / Apollo 17 - <https://tothemoon.im-ldi.com/gallery/Apollo/17/6#AS17-148-22727>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=171069392>.



Shine Forward: Giving Where We Live

Madera Canyon draws a wide mix of people: weekend picnickers, birders from around the world, hikers heading up Mt. Wrightson, families from down the road. The canyon belongs to all of us, and it has stayed beautiful for nearly 40 years because this community decided to care for it together.

That spirit of shared care is what Friends of Madera Canyon is built on. Our volunteers staff, the Visitor Information Station, pick up litter with the Canyon Cleanup Crew, maintain trails, lead education programs as docents, and guide young naturalists as they discover the canyon for the first time. None of it happens without neighbors who give their time, their talents, and their support.

This fall, there's a new way to be part of that circle of giving.

What is Shine Forward Southern Arizona?

Shine Forward Southern Arizona is a year-round giving initiative from the Greater Green Valley Community Foundation. It connects people who are new to the area and those who have called it home for decades with local nonprofits whose missions match their values. Friends of Madera Canyon is proud to be one of them, alongside many organizations doing good work across our region.

The website makes it easy to learn what each nonprofit does, what it needs, and the difference it makes. It's a wonderful way to discover the causes that make Southern Arizona such a special place to live.

Why your gift matters right now

Through November 30, 2026, participating nonprofits are competing for a share of a \$25,000 prize pool. The organizations that come closest to reaching, or go furthest past, their fundraising goals will be rewarded. Every gift to Friends of Madera Canyon through Shine Forward moves us closer to that goal and helps stretch your generosity even further for the canyon.

Your support helps keep trails safe and open, brings children outdoors to learn about the Sky Islands, and sustains the volunteer programs that make every visit to the canyon a little better.

Foundation's 4th Annual Sip, Swirl, Shop & Shine Forward event at Historic Canoa Ranch. Each entrance includes 10 wine or beer tasting tickets.

The event runs Saturday, November 14, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Historic Canoa Ranch. Expect Arizona wine and craft beer, live music, food trucks, and holiday shopping, plus a chance to meet the local nonprofits behind Shine Forward. More details are at ggvcf.org/events.

How to give

Visit <https://www.shineforwardsoaz.org/all-causes/>

Find "Friends of Madera Canyon" or visit our page directly:

<https://www.shineforwardsoaz.org/amp/campaigns/friends-of-madera-canyon/>

Make your gift by November 11 to receive your event entrances, or by November 30 to count toward the prize pool.

We'd be honored if you chose Friends of Madera Canyon. And if another cause on the site speaks to you, we hope you'll give there too. A stronger nonprofit community makes for a stronger Southern Arizona, and that's good for the canyon as well.

Thank you for being part of a community that shows up, gives back, and shines forward.

With gratitude,
Kristin Wisneski-Blum
Executive Director, FoMC

Respect The Canyon

Doug Moore and Jim Burkstrand

Welcome to Madera Canyon. Every year, hundreds of thousands of visitors come to experience the rugged Sky Island beauty, world-class birding, and serene trails of the Santa Rita Mountains. We invite everyone to explore, enjoy, and connect with this incredible place.

In return, we ask all visitors to be mindful stewards. **Respect the Canyon** is our visitor education program dedicated to helping you enjoy the outdoors responsibly—pairing leave no trace principles with practical steps to protect the canyon's living landscape. It begins with understanding our shared impact.

Our educational initiative is built on three pillars: understanding why our presence matters, learning how to adapt our behavior during our favorite activities, and working together to keep Madera Canyon thriving.

Protect Their Peace™ is the Why of the program. We often walk through a wild place believing that, because we stayed on the trail and left nothing behind, we caused little disturbance. But published research shows that our presence alone can change wildlife behavior. Animals may see, hear, smell, or otherwise detect us before we ever know they are nearby. Some flee, hide, become less active, or change where and when they travel. We may never see the reaction, but that does not mean it did not occur.

That realization helped inspire Protect Their Peace™. And as the idea has grown, so has our understanding of who “they” are. Protect Their Peace™ is about the entire living community of Madera Canyon—wildlife, plants, insects, and the natural systems that connect them.

We have just released a new video in both English and in Spanish describing Protect Their Peace. You can see those videos here.

The first video is Protect Their Peace™ English with the video link https://youtu.be/af2_

The second is Protect Their Peace™ Spanish with the video link <https://youtu.be/>

We also have a series of Activity videos, each in English and Spanish, with more to come.

These describe the HOW to change your behavior when you visit Madera Canyon so you can Respect the Canyon.

You can see those videos by either accessing our web site at <https://friendsofmaderacanyon.org/respect-the-canyon/>

Or by looking at them directly on YouTube

Respect the Canyon – Picnic English https://youtu.be/whcuoAUK_-E

The Bird Page

LOWER CANYON, LATE MONSOON

Bob Pitcher

September 19, and Doug Moore, Friends Education Director, has a nature walk scheduled this morning on the Proctor loop of the lower Madera Canyon Nature Trail. I go along, ostensibly to co-lead the walk as far as birds are concerned, mostly to see what Doug has to say about the plants and bugs we see along the way. And, of course, just to be in the Canyon.

I arrive early this morning, to scout around a little. By 7:30 these days, the sun has risen far enough above the Canyon rim to light up the trail here at Proctor Road, and I figured the birds would be stirring. And there might be some good ones! Earlier in the week, two rarities have been reported from this stretch of the Canyon, and the reports were accompanied by good pictures of both birds. One was a Short-tailed Hawk, soaring over the trail. These small and migratory tropical raptors are very rare in Arizona; one can usually expect to see them in this country only in south Florida, in and near the Everglades. But during the past decade or so, a pair of Short-tails have been up near the top of Mount Lemmon most every year, and have successfully nested there. Last year, one and possibly two Short-tails were seen irregularly in Madera Canyon, and the same this year, with sightings now somewhat more often. One might conjecture the hawks are, if not breeding here, at least looking the Canyon over as a possibility.

The other rare bird reported from the Proctor loop this week was a Northern Parula, a stray eastern warbler. True, they're among the more frequently seen of eastern warblers in southern Arizona, but usually at lower elevations. This one seems to have been an adult male Parula, bright yellow breast, a greenish back, bluish-gray between. In the event, we see neither of these birds on our walk this morning.

Proceeding with my scouting, the first birds I noticed were a pair of Common Ground Doves calling to – or, it may be, at – one another down along the lower course of Madera Creek. These little birds have been much more common in the Canyon over the last couple of years, and seem to be breeding here successfully. Four were reported at one time earlier this week.



Common Ground Dove.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Columbina_minuta_339990519.jpg

Where the creek crosses Proctor Road, the Arizona Sycamores are alive with little birds. Within a few minutes I see Bridled Titmice, Lesser Goldfinch, a young Bullock's Oriole, a female Summer Tanager, and at least two of several species of warbler: Painted Redstart, and Nashville, MacGillivray's, and Wilson's Warblers. Nearby were two Lazuli and a single Varied Bunting, along with a pair of Gila Woodpeckers and a Blue Grosbeak. Turkey Vultures were just then leaving their roost or roosts in the Canyon and soaring out over the grasslands. I returned to the parking lot with high hopes for the morning's birds.



Above. A mostly yellow warbler with a green back, gray head, and white eyering. The lower belly is white, sandwiched in between yellow breast and yellow undertail coverts; this is a distinctive pattern helpful for identifying the species from below. Females and young birds are similar but the colors are more washed out and pale. Photo from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

There were only six of us in all, Doug and I and four Friends members. Ten or a dozen is about as many as one likes on the walks for best results – any more and it's likely not everyone will get a chance to see everything that's found. By the time we started out a few minutes past eight, the Proctor parking area was filling fast with Saturday hikers.

The theme for the walk had already been set, however. It was to be plants and especially bugs rather than birds this morning. Yes, we saw birds, even a pretty good number of them for the time spent; but every few feet along the trail, Doug would find a bug or a plant to show us – he knows them all. The recent rains have made everything green in the Canyon. What may in the drier seasons have been bare ground is now thick at least with grass and often with flowering plants of one sort or another. Each kind of plant is likely to have at least one species of insect associated with it. Caterpillars of moths and butterflies all have their favorite food plants – some feed only on a single plant – and many lay their eggs on that plant as well. There were certainly a lot of butterflies about this morning. Though the Proctor trail is shady for the most part, it was a sunny day. And, as Doug remarked, “Butterflies like sun.” We saw easily fifteen or twenty kinds in all on our walk: snouts and blues and sulphurs, and on and on. (I don't know my butterflies well at all.)



A Giant Mesquite Bug (*Thasus* sp) from Patagonia Lake, Arizona. Photo by Alan Schmierer.

There were also beetles and true bugs along the trail. The true bugs have an order of the insects all to themselves. Doug introduced us to leaf-footed mesquite bugs, to ground beetles, and to both the big horse lubber and plains lubber grasshoppers. We occasionally heard a cicada or katydid. As far as other invertebrates, we saw several of the small bowl-and-doily spiders (sheet-weaving spiders) and a large green lynx spider guarding her eggs. The highlight of the walk, though, was a large green sphinx moth caterpillar, with spikes and horns and bright white spots.

I've remarked that everything was green along the trail. There were in fact relatively few flowers out to add much color. The monsoon in the Canyon, Doug thinks, hasn't been quite good enough for a good showing of flowers, at least not yet. A lot of plants seem ready to shoot up and bloom, but others have stayed shorter and bloomed half-heartedly. There were some Arizona Sunflowers along the way, but nowhere near the tangle produced by a really heavy monsoon. Nor was Madera Creek running, either at the crossing with Proctor Road or farther up, at the two bridges along the loop. Only a puddle remained at the crossing, though big enough that deer were coming to drink from it.

A new rove beetle for southeastern Arizona

The largest beetle family is the Staphylinidae, with 63,000 species. Rove beetles tend to be found in decaying trees and fungus-infested logs. *Megalopinus* is the only genus in the subfamily Megalopsidiinae. Currently, four species represent the genus in the United States (Mainda 2023). Of these, only *Megalopinus lingafelteri* had been documented in Arizona. *Megalopinus billi* is a newly described species found in the Patagonia Mountains (Santa Cruz County) and Gardner Canyon (Pima County). Researchers described this species from a single male specimen collected in an oak savanna in Gardner Canyon in the Santa Rita Mountains. The beetle's occurrence in the cool semiarid environments of southern Arizona exemplifies the ecological importance of the Madrean Sky Islands for saproxylic beetles. Defining characteristics of this group include a body length below 3.2 mm and the head narrower than the pronotum.



Dorsal view of the new species *Megalopinus billi* male holotype (1); female paratype (2); scale = 1 mm. Photos by William B. Warner.

Reference

Mainda, T., Lopardo, L., and Michalik, P. (2026). The enigmatic *Megalopinus* fauna of Arizona (USA)– New distributional records and description of a new species (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae: Megalopsidiinae). *Soil Organisms*, 98(2), 195–201. <https://doi.org/10.25674/520>.

A New Mosquito from Southeast Arizona

A mosquito species previously known only from Mexico has now been documented in the United States for the first time. *Aedes amateuri* was previously known only from Mexico. Now researchers have confirmed it in southeastern Arizona, also the first documented record of the species in the United States. Perhaps even more intriguing: scientists aren't certain that it actually just arrived. The mosquito may have recently expanded north from Mexico, or it could represent an established population that simply escaped detection until now. Its lifestyle doesn't make finding it simple. Its immature stages are associated with temporary pools of water, which can appear in Arizona's arid landscape following sufficient monsoon rainfall.

Scientists have confirmed the presence of *Aedes amateuri* in southeastern Arizona's remote Madrean Sky Islands, marking the northernmost known record of the species. University of Florida entomologist Lawrence Reeves and colleagues identified the mosquito using both its physical characteristics and DNA barcoding. Specimens were found in the Santa Rita and Dragoon Mountains, and additional mosquitoes collected in 2026 were detected in Arizona's

In the Peloncillo Mountains, within about a mile of the New Mexico border. the species is known to feed on humans and other large mammals, including deer. However, scientists stress that there is currently no evidence that *Aedes amateuri* transmits disease or poses an immediate public health threat.

What makes the discovery especially intriguing is that mosquitoes have been studied extensively in the United States for more than a century, yet researchers are still finding previously undocumented species. Continued surveillance will be important for determining where this mosquito occurs, whether its range is expanding, and whether it has any future implications for human or animal health.



Aedes amateuri was previously known only from Mexico. Now researchers have confirmed it in southeastern Arizona—the first documented record of the species in the United States.

Reference

Reeves, L. E. and Renfro, K. L. (2026). *Aedes (Ochlerotatus) amateuri* Ortega and Zavortink (Diptera: Culicidae) in the Madrean Sky Islands of Arizona, USA: a new country record. *Journal of Medical Entomology*. Published September 4, 2026.



Friends of Madera Canyon is Announcing
the launch of an online store!



<https://www.bonfire.com/store/friends-of-madera-canyon-store/>



Support Friends of Madera Canyon! Purchase merchandise or make a donation via the online store!

Established in 1987, through educational programs, volunteer service in the Canyon, and outreach to the wider community, the Friends serve the public today and help to ensure that the wonders of Madera Canyon are preserved for future generations.



Save the Date: Where Nature Meets Inspiration
A Tribute to Madera Canyon
at the Tubac Center for the Arts
January 8 – February 14, 2027

To celebrate our 40th anniversary, Friends of Madera Canyon is partnering with the Tubac Center for the Arts on an exhibition of artwork inspired by our beloved sky island canyon.

Opening reception: Friday, January 8, 5:00 PM
Tubac Center for the Arts, 9 Plaza de Anza, Tubac

Calling our member artists! If you have created any art inspired by Madera Canyon you'd like considered for the exhibit, please reach out to Michele Gazica at michele.gazica@friendsofmaderacanyon.org by December 10, 2026 with the following information: Name of piece, subject, medium, dimensions, and sale price (if for sale).

More details: tubacarts.org/exhibitions/where-nature-meets-inspiration-a-tribute-to-madera-canyon





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