

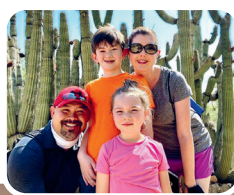
inside:



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Read more about the Baby Qs and the Museum's conservation work in our blog "Desert Diaries".



desert museum Discovery



New Challenges and New Hope for the Sonoyta Mud Turtle

By: Elena Makansi, Social Media and Marketing Specialist

In the midst of increasing geopolitical and ecological challenges in the borderlands, ten healthy Sonoyta mud turtles (*Kinosternon sonoriense longifemorale*) hatched at the Desert Museum in 2020, proving these resilient reptiles are ready to keep fighting.

Quitobaquito Springs is a true oasis in the desert, a rare freshwater source just a few hundred feet from the U.S./Mexico border and the last remaining U.S. natural habitat for the critically endangered Sonoyta mud turtle, of which about 150 individuals remain. The ten Sonoyta mud turtles (affectionately named the "Baby Qs"), in addition to 3 hatched in 2017, give us hope for the future of these near-extinct animals.

The Herpetology staff, with Courtney Christie (Keeper II) as lead, are closely monitoring the growth and health of the babies, tracking data like size, weight, and diet, which will help us to better understand these seldom studied animals. They are offered a varied diet of tiny mealworms and crickets, bits of krill, and immature roaches. Courtney also modified their enclosures with rocks, hiding spots, and vegetation, all to increase their life expectancy and encourage activity with new textures and food choices to explore. Housed singly, she can track who's eating, reduce risk of drowning, catch health issues quickly, and even

see individual personalities emerge. She can easily spend up to 20% of her day working with these endangered turtles behind the scenes, but it's worth it as the Museum is committed to conservation.

The Museum has been caring for an assurance population of Sonoyta mud turtles and pupfish since 2007, and in 2016 joined forces with Organ Pipe National Monument and Pinacate Biosphere Reserve in Sonora, Mexico to collaborate on Sonoyta mud turtle and pupfish conservation and education.

The borderlands of the Sonoran Desert face complex political challenges that exacerbate ongoing water table decline and could have long-term impacts on an already fragile ecosystem. Despite the federal protections granted under the Endangered Species Act, the Baby Qs' home faces a new challenge: the waiving of environmental reviews along the U.S./Mexico border to speed up border wall construction just 100 yards away from the Springs.

...continued on page 2

...continued from front cover

It is difficult to say yet exactly what the ecological impacts of border wall construction will be on Quitobaquito Springs. However, water-intensive cement mixing, building trenches, widening roads, and other construction activities have already severely impacted sensitive ecological sites throughout the borderlands. This, combined with climatic changes including, most recently, record high temperatures and a dry summer, point to a precarious season ahead for the Quitobaquito Springs and its inhabitants like the Sonoyta mud turtle, pupfish, and spring snail.

Thanks to the dedicated staff at the Desert Museum and our partners in conservation and advocacy, the Baby Qs still stand a fighting chance! Even in the face of political and cultural challenges, conservationists, ecologists, and community advocates will do everything they can to ensure survival of these turtles, their wild cousins, and the desert oasis they call home.



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“ **QUOTE FROM A KEEPER!!!!...Courtney Christie, Herpetology**
“One thing that’s really cool is that there’s a lot to investigate. How do we effectively help this species if they can’t stay in the wild or the pond totally dries up? It’s exciting to be one of the only people working on this. It makes our institution, and my job, special.” ”



By: Sonya Norman,
Public Programs Coordinator

Winter Gardening *in the* Desert

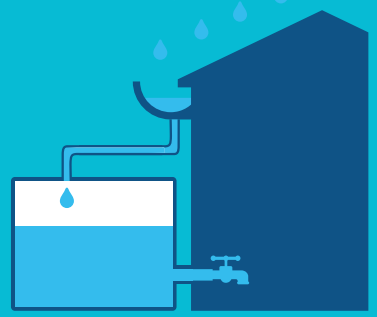
Now that our summer has ended, it is the perfect season to spend outdoors!

To get started on a winter garden, remember that seeds need food too. That is, there must be organic material mixed with your desert dirt. If you have a compost heap in your backyard, water it, stir it up, then after a few weeks sieve out the finer soil and use that for your garden. Or, buy from a local composter.

If you suffer the curse of caliche, then you might construct an elevated bed out of wooden planks. Otherwise, ideal garden beds are sunken in the ground using the dug out dirt as a walkway between beds. This way you walk on high, dry ground and your plants are in lower basins, which will retain moisture and collect rainwater. You can get a head start and purchase plants, or begin them from seed. Either way, once the plants are a few inches tall you will want to place mulch around them. Straw will do the job, as well as Mexican Palo Verde needle duff, which my neighbors happen to have plenty of. What to plant? The most successful winter crops for our climate are greens such as lettuce, spinach, bok choy, kale, and chard, as well as peas. Dig in, get dirty, and enjoy the cool outdoors!

Whether for a food garden or landscaping, harvesting rainwater is an eco friendly practice for desert dwellers.

Join us for a Rainwater Harvesting Tour January 16th or February 6th. For details and registration search for Adult Classes on our website.



pro tip!

Just a note on being an earth-friendly gardener: I always use scrap wood, salvaged plastic, etc. for my gardening needs. It is a fun challenge to see what I can repurpose.



Great Horned Owl by: Priscilla Baldwin

TREASURED LEGACIES

ARIZONA-SONORA
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The upcoming book, *Treasured Legacies*, chronicles the Desert Museum's years of dynamic conservation programming while celebrating Priscilla Baldwin's contributions to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Through photographs and Priscilla's scratchboard art, this beautiful book includes a history of the Desert Museum, from its establishment in 1952, to ongoing initiatives that continue the founders' vision of conservation, preservation, and education. *Treasured Legacies* is a publication of Desert Museum Press and is scheduled to be released in 2021. **To help us celebrate Priscilla's message of 'Conservation: The Gift of Life' and to reserve your copy, please send an email to: arts@desertmuseum.org.**

The year 2020 has been unimaginably challenging for us all and we hope you and your family are staying healthy and safe. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is so grateful for your support and friendship. Thank you for being a part of our Sonoran Desert family.



Ways YOU can help the Desert Museum!



BECOME A MEMBER!

Renew or become part of the pack at desertmuseum.org/members/! Members get fantastic benefits, and receive member-exclusive information about what is happening at the Desert Museum.



SELECT US!

If you select the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum as your beneficiary on [AmazonSmile.com](https://www.amazon.com), you will make a contribution to the Museum every time you shop.

SHOP FOR US!

Buy an item off our Amazon Wishlist to give a gift of useful items for the Museum at desertmuseum.org/support/wishlist

DONATE.

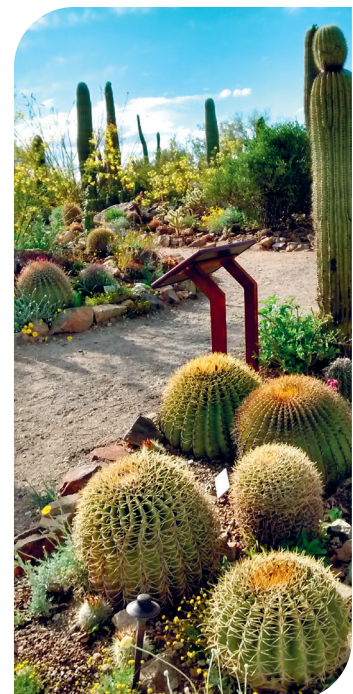
Make a donation before the year ends: We are so appreciative of your support! Go to desertmuseum.org/donate.

Remember with the 2020 COVID-19 CARES Act relief bill, you can claim up to a \$300 deduction per person for charitable giving, and you will not need to itemize on your 2020 tax return to get it!

If you do itemize, you may deduct charitable contributions up to 100% of your adjusted gross income. Please consult your tax advisor to learn more, and ensure you take full advantage of these opportunities before 2020 is over!

The Desert Museum has faced millions in revenue loss from a first-ever closure and continuing lowered admissions as people travel less. Throughout this, the Museum has maintained top quality, uninterrupted care for all living collections; however, our need for support continues.

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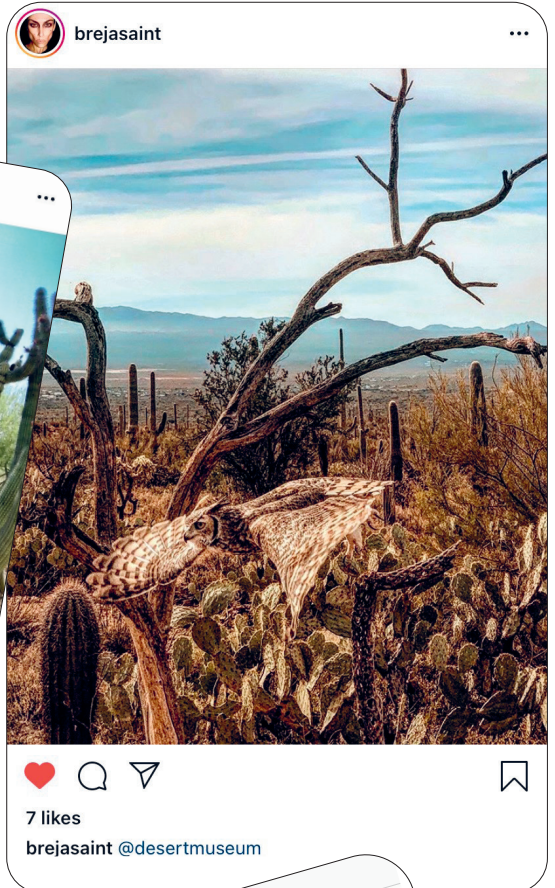
In memory of John Zimmerman
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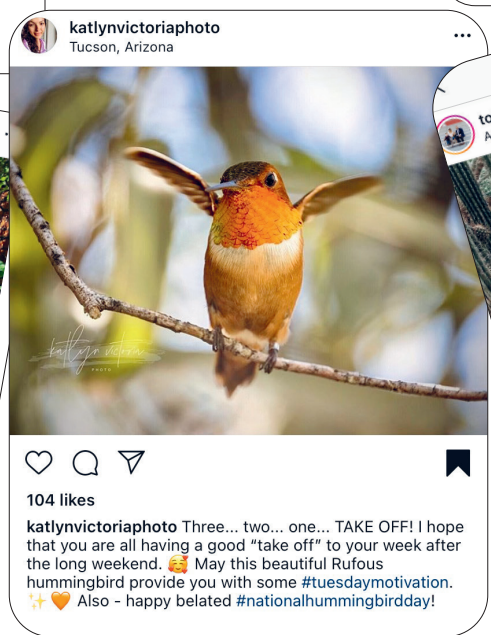
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We love seeing the Museum through your eyes and want to start sharing your posts!

social media SPOTLIGHT

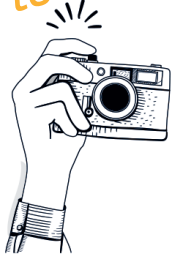


Want to be featured in our next 'Social Media Spotlight'? Tag @desertmuseum and use #desertmuseum for a chance to be featured!



Sonoran super shots challenge

Hey Kids
(and adults too)!



SONORAN SUPER SHOTS ✨

PHOTO CHALLENGE!



Can you snap a pic of each of these Sonoran Desert scenarios? **Go Wild!**

Remember to tag #mydesertmuseum for a chance to have your Sonoran Super Shot featured on our @desertmuseum social media!



Something that slithers



A stunning sunset



Stand tall:
Give your best saguaro impression



An animal you admire



Be a gem!
Rock a mineral pic



What does the importance of water mean to you?



Family



Something silly



Can you capture a scent? Snap a pic and describe what it smells like



Take flight: a bat, bird, or falling leaf—who's in the sky?



Something you've never noticed before



Livin' large: A home, a nest, or a burrow



updates from the Art Institute

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The Art Institute has created a 2021 calendar featuring student work! We solicited pieces in all forms and mediums that reflect how our students' experiences at the Museum influenced their art. The result is a delightful calendar that speaks to the artistic beauty of the Museum.

All proceeds benefit the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. You can purchase it online at www.desertmuseumarts.com, by phone at 520-883-3024, or in person at the Ironwood Gallery.



The Art Institute is honored to host the International Society of Scratchboard Artists 9th Annual International Exhibition. The ISSA was launched in 2011 and is dedicated to the promotion of scratchboard as fine art, providing support to artists, and education to the public about this amazing medium!

Both an exhibition and competition, over 60 handcrafted pieces of art defy expectations.

The exhibition will run in the Ironwood Gallery from November 6th, 2020 – February 7th, 2021. Find the award winners on our website!



Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
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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.

The best holiday gift? Reducing your ecofootprint!

BY AMY ORCHARD AND THE JUNIOR DOCENTS

SHOP LIGHTLY

Bypass the energy needed to create a new item (and its packaging) and gift something you aren't using yourself. Shop your local thrift store or create a piece of art from natural objects.

SKIP THE WRAPPING PAPER

Use a scarf to wrap your gift and this becomes a two-for-one present! Old newspapers, magazine pages, and calendars make colorful substitutions. Remember- shiny or metallic papers cannot be recycled.

AVOID FOOD WASTE

Be mindful about your menu. Plan for a smaller menu with (likely) fewer guests. If you have leftovers, replace plastic wrap with beeswax wrap that can be used repeatedly.

CHOOSE BOOTS OVER BOXES

Pull on your hiking boots and give the gift of quality time in nature. We suggest finding a place in a National Forest or Park that you have never visited and have a new adventure, safely and together.

SHOW THE PLANET YOU CARE

Give a bit of your holiday time participating in a community science event such as the Audubon's Annual Christmas Bird Count or joining the Sky Island Alliance's FotoFauna Project. Your data helps protect and preserve our plant and animal friends.

The greatest gift we can give anyone and our planet is kindness.

Happy holidays from the Junior Docents!

