My family and many other O’odham, including the late Juanita Ahil, have been picking Bahidaj within the Saguaro National Park before it was even a park. Within the park’s boundaries is a Bahidaj Camp where Ahil’s family has carried on the traditions of harvesting, as well as sleeping outside under traditional O’odham ramadas with no running water or electricity. The camp dates back to the early 1900’s when Ahil’s family would travel by horse-drawn wagon to the area to harvest. Ahil’s great niece, Stella Tucker, took over the camp until her passing in 2019. Stella’s daughter Tanisha Tucker is in charge of the camp now with help from family.

In the 1950’s, my mom recalls staying at the Gilbert Ray Campground, formerly known as Palo Verde Campground, with my great-great grandparents when they would harvest Bahidaj. She told me that a lot of O’odham would stay in that area, most traveling by horse and/or wagon.

In 1961, the Saguaro Nation Park West (SNP), which was then called Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Monument, was established. Believe or not, the Park staff had no idea the Bahidaj Camp existed or that O’odham came to the area to pick Bahidaj, according to the SNP website. In 1962, SNP allowed O’odham to pick fruit but wanted to put an end to it. Steward Udall, who was the Secretary of the Interior at the time, did not want SNP to stop the O’odham from carrying on their tradition of harvesting, which they had been doing in the area for time immemorial. Udall went ahead and amended the regulations concerning resource protection. Today, there are annual permits signed by SNP and the Tohono O’odham Nation.

If it wasn’t for Udall’s help, O’odham families such as mine would not have access to our ancestors, our relatives; the Saguaro(s). In our traditional stories we are taught that the Saguaro was once human and we should always treat them as such. In O’odham we call Saguaro(s) ha: san/ha:hasan.

When you think about a person and a Saguaro there are quite a few similarities. A Saguaro stores as much water as possible in their flesh and the...
human body is made up of roughly 60% of water. The thorns on the Saguaro are for protection and their structure is tough. As for humans we have hair on our arms and multiple layers of skin for protection. Not to mention the appearance of a Saguaro is so unique. My favorite way to eat Bahidaj is by dipping a speciality bread into the syrup made from Bahidaj. My favorite way to eat Bahidaj is by dipping a speciality bread into the syrup made from Bahidaj. Our guides are Jesús Garcia, Research Associate, and geomorphologist/Native American historian Fred Nials. We will prepare the tender green pads for “nopalitos”. You’ll also learn about the significance of prickly pear for people and animals. Members $50; Non-members $55.

Take a class! Take a trip! Adult Classes & Trips with the Desert Museum!

Prickly Pear Harvest • August 15 & 21
August is the season that the beautiful red fruit of the prickly pear cactus ripens. This edible plant is ubiquitous in the Sonoran Desert! Learn how to collect and process the fruit, how to use it in different dishes, and learn about the significance of prickly pear for people and animals. Members $50; Non-members $55.

Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde September 27 - October 1 Explore one of the most impressive archaeological sites in the United States. Our tour will focus on Puebloan sites of southwest Colorado and northwest New Mexico. Highlights include seldom-visited areas of Governer's and Loving/Pueblo sites, a full day exploring Mesa Verde, and another full day at Chaco Canyon, which boasts more than 100 Kivas! Our guides are Jesús Garcia, Research Associate, and geomorphologist/Native American historian Fred Nials.

Death Valley National Park: A Land of Extremes • November 7 - 12 Stark in appearance and haunting in name, Death Valley is a very much-alive desert set between high, snow-capped mountains. Some of the high and low points of our travels include the Valley Panorama from mile-high Darwin View down to Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America at 282’ below sea level. We will visit long-abandoned borax works and the ghost towns of Rhyolite and Leadfield, the shifting dunes of Mesquite Flats and spectacular pastel dunes of Artists’ Palette. Our guides are geologist Bob Scarborough and Jesús Garcia.

For more details and to register for classes and trips: 520-883-3025 or desertmuseum.org/adultclasses
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Kids’ activity!

Show us your own owl & saguaro!

Draw your own owl!

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Buffelgrass is a grass that was introduced into North America in the 1930’s and now threatens our wild and urban spaces, and everything in between.

In the Sonoran Desert ecosystem, there is usually bare ground between February and March of 2021, the Desert Museum and Tucson partners worked with Caminantes del Desierto A.C. in Hermosilla, Sonora to coordinate mapping of urban buffelgrass by residents of both cities. After downloading an app to their phones, 31 community members mapped 2,542 buffelgrass patches! This information will be made available to government and non-governmental organizations to help plan treatment and restoration work. You can join the project at: https://saveoursaguaros-uagis.hub.arcgis.com/.

Stingray Touch is now fully open for touch and feeding experiences of the Sonoran Desert.

Want to know how else you can support your Desert Museum?

- Make a donation online at www.desertmuseum.org/donate
- Make an IRA qualified charitable distribution
- Come and visit us!
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.

Vanishing Circles is a collection of paintings and drawings acquired for the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum by the Michael C. and Priscilla V. Baldwin Foundation. Each of the animals, plants, and habitats portrayed in the collection is endangered, threatened, or otherwise compromised in the Sonoran Desert Region.

The Vanishing Circles collection at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum Art Institute serves to increase awareness of the threats to the rich biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert. Conservation through Art Education is the driving force of the Art Institute, and this collection is the embodiment of the notion that seeing the desert through the lens of art increases our understanding of the interconnectedness of the natural world.

Visit the exhibit this summer and learn how you can help save our desert.

Experience the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum — past and present — through Treasured Legacies, a new book from Desert Museum Press honoring 70 years of education and conservation. Enjoy the historic tales of Hal Gras’s Desert Ark and thrill to the majesty of today’s Raptor Free Flight birds as they soar through the southern Arizona skies. Delight in the charming scratchboard art of Priscilla Baldwin as we celebrate Priscilla’s message of “Conservation: The Gift of Life.”

Reserve your copy now.

Email: arts@desertmuseum.org

Now you can take art and photography classes on your device! The Art Institute is offering over a dozen classes with new ones added monthly. To register visit our website: desertmuseumarts.com or call us at (520) 883-3024.