



Field Institute Newsletter

October 2012

This is what's happening at the McDowell Sonoran Field Institute as of October. Please also watch your email for periodic reminders and additional information.

Flora Update

The Field Institute's flora list now contains more than 300 plants! *Proboscidea althaeifolia*, otherwise known as devil's claw or unicorn plant, and many other plants are blooming in the northern areas of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve right now. Flora training for citizen scientists was conducted on September 28.



Devil's Claw (*Proboscidea althaeifolia*). Steve Jones, 2012.

Fauna Update

The fauna surveys continue to yield excellent results.

Small Mammals

We resumed small mammal trapping in September at the Gateway Trailhead and Fraesfield Mountain where we captured and released four species of rodents, including Merriam's kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys merriami*).



Field Institute intern Kellie Elliott releasing a kangaroo rat, which paused a moment before returning to its habitat.

Birds

Formal surveys show that the Preserve is home to 95 bird species, and incidental sightings by alert citizen scientists walking the trails have increased our list to more than 100 species.

Insects and Arthropods

Surveys of flying insects and ground dwelling arthropods will resume fieldwork in October.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Our reptile and amphibian survey (herp survey for short) added the Long-nosed snake (*Rhinocheilus lecontei*) and the Sonoran Desert toad (*Ollotis alvaria*) to our species list.

Human Impacts Study

The Field Institute's intern for the Wildland-urban Interface (WUI) project is currently mapping the communities surrounding the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. When complete, the maps will allow us to compare our survey data to variables such as housing density in the surrounding neighborhoods. Mapping the communities will also help us reach out to provide information and get feedback from these communities in the future.



Aerial view of a community near Lost Dog Wash.

Field Institute Survey and Program Schedule for October 2012

Flora: Plant Collection

October 5, 8:00 a.m. Plan on 3 hours. Meet at the Gateway Trailhead and split into teams to cover selected trails in the southern portion of the Preserve. Contact Melanie Tluczek at melanie@mcdowellsonoran.org if you did not attend the training.

October 19, 8:00 a.m. Plan on 3 hours. Meet at the intersection of 136th Street and the power line road (also called Lone Mountain Road) and split into teams to cover selected trails in the northern portion of the Preserve and Tom's Thumb area.

Flying Insects

October 6, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Dr. Ron Rutowski and Marianne Skov Jensen will lead a workshop on photographic techniques for flying insects. The workshop will include instruction and practice. Meet at the Gateway conference room.

Throughout October. More fieldwork. Details TBA. Training will be conducted in the field.

Reptiles and Amphibians

October. Time and place TBA. Nighttime survey with some difficult hiking. Training is required prior to participation. Contact Melanie Tluczek at melanie@mcdowellsonoran.org if you have not been on this survey before.

Small Mammals

October 16, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Set live traps at Sunrise trailhead. Training is required prior to participation. Please contact Melanie Tluczek at melanie@mcdowellsonoran.org if you have not been on this survey before.

October 17, 6:30 a.m. Plan on 2 hours. Collect live traps that were set the previous night and take notes on animals trapped. Release animals.

October 17, 5:30 p.m. to 6:00 pm. Set live traps at Sunrise trailhead. Training is required prior to participation. Please contact Melanie Tluczek at melanie@mcdowellsonoran.org if you have not been on this survey before.

October 18, 6:30 am. Plan on 2 hours. Collect live traps from previous night and take notes on animals trapped. Release animals.

Birds

October 13, 6:30 a.m. Plan on 4 to 5 hours. Brian Ison from the Desert Rivers Audubon Society will lead a bird survey down Lost Dog Wash. This is open to beginner, intermediate, and expert birders and is a great way to learn the science behind creating a bird list. The hike will go about a mile up Lost Dog Wash over uneven terrain with very little elevation change. Training will be conducted in the field. Meet at Lost Dog Trailhead.

Coming Events

Keep an eye out for more details on these activities:

Seed Bank Study: Help collect soil from the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. We will place the soil in a greenhouse to germinate the seeds and see what kinds of plants will grow under optimal conditions.

Ground Dwelling Arthropod Identification Workshop: Learn to use a microscope to identify ground dwelling arthropods collected from pitfall traps. This workshop will be taught by Dr. Stevan Earl and colleagues from Arizona State University.

McDowell Sonoran Field Institute Meeting: November 17, 10:00 a.m., at the Gateway conference room.

—Quote of the Month—

We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

—Aldo Leopold, 1887-1948, American author, scientist, ecologist, forester, and environmentalist