



Name-Our-Newsletter Contest

We've received some good suggestions so far! We'll extend the contest for one more month to give everyone a chance to enter. If you haven't sent in your suggestion, now's your chance to enter and win a Conservancy field guide. Email Melanie Tluczek at melanie@mcdowellsonoran.org.

Thank You!

We've heard lots of positive feedback on our first newsletter. Please continue to tell us how our newsletter can help support you—our McDowell Sonoran Conservancy citizen scientists.

Flora Update

The McDowell Sonoran Field Institute (MSFI) plant list has grown to 320 taxa (the word "taxa" includes species and sub-species), up from a little more than 300 last month. Our list includes several plants never before recorded in Maricopa County, including annual windmill (*Allionia choisyi*) and water jacket (*Lycium andersonii* var. *deserticola*)!



Allionia choisyi, photographed by Steve Jones.

We also finalized plans to start the seed bank study, which will begin on November 2. A seed bank is a collection of ungerminated seeds contained in the soil. We will collect soil from various places around the McDowell Sonoran Preserve and will grow out the seeds in a greenhouse at Scottsdale Community College. By providing the seed bank with optimal water and light, we hope to germinate species that might lie dormant and escape detection in our survey. We will continue to update everyone with photos and information about the plants as they emerge and will hold an open house when we start to see results.



Lycium andersonii var. *deserticola*, photographed by Steve Jones.

Fauna Update

Reptiles and Amphibians

The reptile and amphibian group conducted its last survey of the season on October 13, at Lost Dog Wash. Reptiles and amphibians are starting to go into hibernation as the weather cools. Dave Weber, our "herp" expert from the North American Field Herping Association, will conduct training in early spring to kick off the season, so look for updates in January or February 2013, if you would like to be part of this survey.



"Mystery mouse" trapped and released during the small-mammal surveys at Sunrise Trailhead.

Small Mammals

In October, our small mammal surveys conducted at Sunrise Trailhead live-trapped 23 animals, mostly desert pocket mice and packrats. We also trapped an atypical pocket mouse with an unusually short tail, which doesn't fit any of the descriptions in our field guides. We are working with experts to identify the species of this mystery mouse, and will keep you updated.

Insects

MSFI's flying-insect survey intern has been working hard identifying insects from the photographs submitted by volunteers, and has been getting to know the Preserve. This month we held our first "bush beating" event! Bush beating involves hitting shrubs with

sticks to knock insects onto a white sheet below, where they can be netted, photographed, and released. Bush beating helps us find the more cryptic and reclusive insects. The event was quite a success!

Birds

The MSFI bird list is up to 108 species! John Weser from Scottsdale Community College snapped this photo of three Lawrence's Goldfinches while searching for flying insects. These birds are infrequent visitors in the winter months, and a nice addition to our bird list! If you have any photos of birds that you would like to share, email them to Melanie.



Lawrence's Goldfinches, photographed by John Weser at Black Hill Tank near Fraesfield Mountain, October 2012

MSFI Survey and Program Schedule for November 2012

Second McDowell Sonoran Field Institute Meeting

November 17, 10:00 a.m. Meet in the conference room at Gateway Trailhead. We will update you on MSFI research program findings, present the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) project, and discuss the future goals of the MSFI program. Whether you are a longstanding volunteer on our ecological surveys or would like to learn more about our research program, this is a meeting you won't want to miss! Contact Melanie for more information.

Flora

The fall field season is over, but the seed bank study will be up and running early in November. Keep a lookout for updates on the seed bank study on the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy website. Click "News" at the top of the homepage.

Flying Insects

November 4, 5:00 pm. Plan on 3 hours. Meet at Thom's Thumb Trailhead for our first light-trapping event and see moth and insect species that come out only at night! Light trapping involves placing a large light behind a white sheet stretched on a frame. The light attracts insects that land on the sheet where they can easily be identified. Light trapping has never before been done on the Preserve, so many of the species you will see will be completely new to our survey. We need volunteers to help document these creatures. No previous insect knowledge is necessary to participate. This event does not involve any hiking, but be sure to dress warm and bring your coffee thermos!



Reminder



Many MSFI surveys require participants to hike off trail over rough terrain. Always be sure to wear sturdy hiking shoes, a hat and sunscreen for day trips, and to bring plenty of water. Outings conducted after dark require a flashlight or headlamp. If you have any questions about a hike or activity, please contact Melanie.

Ground Dwelling Arthropods

November 8th, 8:30 am. Plan on 1 hour. Meet at Lost Dog trailhead to collect ground-dwelling arthropods from our pitfall traps. No training necessary.

November 9th, 8:30 am. Plan on 1 hour. Meet at Tom's Thumb trailhead to collect ground dwelling arthropods.

Small Mammals

November is the last month of trapping because cooler temperatures endanger small mammals caught overnight in steel cages. Volunteers are needed to set as many traps as possible! This is a great chance to interact with the wildlife of the Preserve and learn how to differentiate small rodent species. If you are new to this survey, contact Melanie to schedule training. This fieldwork involves off-trail hiking over moderately difficult terrain.

November 13, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Set live traps for small mammals at Marcus Landslide. Meet at Thom's Thumb Trailhead.

November 14, 7:00 am. Plan on 2 hours. Collect live traps set the previous night, take measurements of the animals, determine their species, and release the animals at the locations where they were caught. Meet at Tom's Thumb Trailhead.

November 14, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Re-set live traps at Marcus Landslide. Meet at Tom's Thumb Trailhead.

November 15, 7:00 am. Plan on 2 hours. Collect live traps set the previous night, take measurements of the animals, determine their species, and release the animals at the locations where they were caught. Meet at Tom's Thumb Trailhead.

Coming Events

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 his colleagues from Arizona State University.

—Quote of the Month—

Submitted by Karen Ollar, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy corporate-project volunteer from American Express

To say nothing is out here is incorrect; to say the desert is stingy with everything except space and light, stone and earth is closer to the truth.

*—William Least Heat-Moon, in *Blue Highways: A Journey into America**

***Felis concolor.* Definitely not a small mammal!**



Photo: G. Andrejko