



Cascabel Conservation Association

Supporting Conservation, Community, and Contemplation in the Middle San Pedro Valley

2022 CCA NEWSLETTER

11/19 Open House & Fundraiser — see page 6



Ariane Mohr-Felsen

Liverman Scholars harvesting peas at the community garden, spring 2022.

Liverman Scholars Visit Cascabel

THIS YEAR'S NEWSLETTER features the voices of the University of Arizona Liverman Scholars. One of the program organizers, Kevin Bonine, had brought students to Cascabel in the past and knew what a rich place it is. This was the first year of this program, and the students spent a long weekend in Cascabel: speaking with residents, listening to the land, connecting this place to the places they are from and the concepts they are exploring. The **Diana Liverman Scholars Program** “aims to prepare UArizona undergraduate students as the leaders and problem solvers of tomorrow.” This is accomplished by building relationships with other students and local environmental actors across academic disciplines, to meet significant societal challenges. The Program is grounded in a connection to land, community, and one another, and offers students real-life experiences of place. As part of their studies, students travel to diverse sites throughout Arizona—such as Cascabel—whose past, present, and future “embody the grand challenges of our state and region, from climate change to systemic disparities.” Students then learn about environmental story-telling and give back by creating communication pieces for their hosting organizations.

CCA and our sister organization Saguaro-Juniper were very lucky to have the Liverman



Deetra Meegan Kumar

Liverman Scholars exploring Cascabel, spring 2022.

Scholars join us! They brought a breath of fresh energy and we are delighted for the ways the voices and art of a new generation enrich our community and this newsletter. We are grateful for the presence and contributions of all participants. Here, we have highlighted several of the student contributions and would hope to showcase others in the future.

Kelly Nicole Rushford, Brenai Smith Shires, and Chris Zatarain

Kelly, Brenai, and Chris created a multimedia project that incorporates music, photography, and written reflection of their time in Cascabel in the context of a rapidly-changing world. The piece “Cascabel Meditation,” which follows on the next page, accompanies the text and photos that are excerpted here.



Tohono O'odham pottery shards, by Chris Zatarain, UofA undergraduate.

On Hermitage:

A SIMPLE SHELTER NESTLED within a mesquite bosque. Within those walls, philosophers, artists, and seekers of all kinds have come to find solace, peace, and understanding in the midst of this mystical landscape.



Cracked clay soil in the San Pedro riverbed, by Chris Zatarain, UofA undergraduate.

On Cascabel:

CASCABEL IS IN THE...heart of the San Pedro River valley, a place of refuge for migrating birds, a community of land stewards, and a site of hermitage for enlightenment-seeking souls. It is home to an abundance of living beings and life-giving forces, an oasis at the meeting of the giants. The Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts, the Rocky Mountains, and the Madrean Sky Islands all convene here. It is home of the Tohono O'odham, who endure, and their elders, the Hohokam, whose mark on the land is subtle but everlasting.



Susan Tolleson

The Corbett Center Hermitage among blooming wild poppies.

On the San Pedro River:

DOES IT ACHE AT THE LOSS of its engineers, the departed beavers who nourished the soils with the byproducts of their work? As the world changes, do more of the creatures of this place face the same fate as the great brown bears that once roamed these hills? As the world changes, this place might change too.

Chris Zatarain: “Cascabel Meditation”

To hear the composition of Chris Zatarain, hover your phone's camera over this QR code and follow the link that appears. He describes the musical journey in the text below.



THIS GUIDED MEDITATION WAS MADE with the intention of creating a multi-sensory experience that would metaphorically transport the listener into the intentional community of Cascabel. This place-based exploration was formed by weaving together elements of prose and poetry, original instrumental music, and field recordings to tell the story of someone visiting this place for the first time.

The meditation can be divided into three main sections, and begins with a lush and intimate musical introduction that features bird song, ambient sound, and seeks to set an introspective mood and evoke a sense of sacredness....

The adoration of the Earth is then turned into concern, heralded by a crack of monsoon thunder, which moves to anxiety, and then to mourning. The middle section seeks to speak to some of the many environmental changes that have impacted the region negatively, contemplating the future of this place. This section features a melancholy cry through a raging storm—but as many of us who live in the Sonoran



San Pedro River profile, by Dervla Meegan Kumar, UofA Ph.D. candidate.

Desert know: with these powerful, raging storms comes life and joy. The clouds clear with a reminder that there is, in fact, hope.

The final part of the meditation features the people, past and present, who have lived in communion with the land and actively fight for its protection. This begins with a jump back in time to visit an ancient Indigenous city and then a return to a campfire gathering with Cascabel's modern residents. The piece finishes with an interruption by some of the other inhabitants of the valley, serving as a reminder of humanity's small place in a much larger world.



A Cascabel goat (Belt), by Chris Zatarain, UofA undergraduate.

Excerpted from “The Magic of Goatwalking” by Diego Alejandro Palmisano

ON THE SHORT JOURNEY I HAD with goats during my time in Cascabel, I learned a few lessons from these beasts of burden.

1. *For a goat, the best path is the fastest path.*

Sometimes it is gentle and meandering. Oftentimes, it is an uphill battle where the footing is nowhere. A goat does not care. If it sees a tasty leaf on crest of a cliff, the goat will find a way.

2. *The herd is life.*

Goats will follow the herd until death. They will defend each other and make sure all are protected. To become an epic goat walker, you need to become a herd member. That means you need to learn how to read the herd for signs of discontent or exhaustion and act as a member within the herd.

3. *Herding goats requires you to read the earth.*

When with the goats, you need to be quick-witted, smart, and know what means what. In many ways, you are no better than the kids of the herd. You are new, young, and inexperienced. The goats will choose the ways that are safe, and you need to trust in the goats during these times.

Nadira Sage Mitchell

IN THIS DRAWING OF TWO HANDS, the older pair is holding the younger pair. The younger pair of hands is holding a saguaro flower and a juniper branch. My goal was to depict the passing of the torch from the older generation to the younger generation of land stewards. I based the hands on my mom and myself. I used a saguaro flower and juniper branch to literally depict the Saguaro Juniper Corporation and the pair of hands to represent the human involvement in the environment. The hands are an acknowledgment that humans are directly tied to the land and that we are the safeguards, the stewards, and the protectors.



Peyton Elizabeth Smith

A **KEYSTONE SPECIES** of the Sonoran Desert is the saguaro cactus. The saguaro is bold, broad, and the definition of a survivor. The juniper tree, a versatile and hearty staple of many environments, also grows in the river valley of Cascabel. The juniper tree nurses the saguaro cactus when it is young, it protects it from heat, and shields it from cold. Individually, the saguaro cacti and juniper trees are able to survive quite well. Together, though, they are able to absolutely thrive.

Just like the saguaro cactus, I can survive on my own. However, thanks to the Liverman Scholars Program, I have learned a valuable lesson about myself...a stubborn, passionate, strong-willed and passionate person. Just because I can do everything alone, I am better when I work with others. To really thrive, every saguaro needs her juniper tree.

Amrita Khalsa

I GREW UP IN TUCSON, and was raised in the Sikh religion, which comes from the state of Punjab in northern India; however, I did not have a close community to participate with in Tucson. When I decided to pursue an associate's degree in Santa Fe, I was also able to participate in the Sikh community in northern New Mexico. I appreciated having the experience in a spiritual community and finding oneself through solitude, meditative practice, and self-reflection.

From my time spent at Cascabel I felt a strong atmosphere of community which surprisingly reminded me of this community in New Mexico. Both communities had a sense of slowing down, connecting deeper with oneself through meditation and self-reflection, and a strong emphasis on community and communal living.



The Sikh community land in northern New Mexico.



INVITATION TO SUPPORT CCA

CASCABEL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION is flourishing due to generous donations and the efforts of talented volunteers. However, serious threats to the San Pedro Valley continue to come from many fronts, and the current political and conservation climate in our country poses many barriers to our efforts.

CCA remains dedicated to our unique vision for the Middle San Pedro River to promote the health, stability, and diversity of the whole community. Realizing this vision comes with mounting costs. We remain an organization supported almost entirely by donations and volunteers; this support ensures the sustainability of our programs.

We appeal to you to join us in our efforts by making a monetary donation, becoming a member, or volunteering your time and talent. CCA operates in a consensual manner and your participation is welcome. To learn more about our work visit our website at www.cascabelconservation.org.

*Please add your voice to our vision
and fill out the form on the next page!*

CCA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I, _____ [print name],
wish to become a member of the **Cascabel Conservation Association: Supporting
Conversation, Community, and Contemplation in the Middle San Pedro River Valley**.
I understand that I will receive announcements of CCA meetings, minutes, mailings, and
invitations to participate in events and decision making.

MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT: I support the mission of the Cascabel Conservation
Association and am in accord with its efforts to function in a consensual manner, and
agree to abide by applicable covenants and/or conservation easements when on CCA land.

SIGNED _____ DATE _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

CCA DONATIONS



☐ *I would like to make a monetary donation to CCA.*

☐ *I would like to help at CCA work parties. Please contact me when they are scheduled.*

You may also learn about online giving options at: www.cascabelconservation.org/donate

Please mail this application and/or checks payable to:

CCA
6146 N Canyon Rd
Cascabel AZ 85602

SunZia Updates

by Pearl Mast

AFTER A LULL IN THE FIGHT to stop a major utility corridor from being established in the Middle San Pedro Valley, we're back in the trenches. SunZia Southwest Transmission project wants to place a massive new electric transmission corridor on the west side of the San Pedro river. They again have permitting processes pending at state and federal levels of government, giving us opportunities to hammer home the message that one of the last functioning desert river ecosys-

tems in the Southwest is not the place to put a major new power line corridor.

Because of our efforts over the last several months, SunZia decided not to pursue a major construction yard in the heart of Cascabel, and they agreed to limitations on the use of roads in Cascabel. CCA also continues working with other community groups to stop the whole project, which would undermine our decades of conservation work in the Valley.



SunZia's 150 foot-tall towers would run in a double row across the middle of this view of Paige Canyon, with Mica Mountain (part of Saguaro National Park East) in the background.



Straw Bale Hermitage

Hermitage Program Open House & Fundraiser

MARK YOUR CALENDARS and plan to join us for this full day Hermitage Program sponsored event on **Saturday, November 19th**. Activities will include a commemoration ceremony at the Straw Bale Legacy Site, and a tour of the new

Caravan Hermitage. Light refreshments will be available at the Corbett Center. Be on the lookout for an invitation with all the particulars, as the date approaches.

Excerpt from the Saguaro-Juniper Preamble

IN ACQUIRING PRIVATE GOVERNANCE of land, we agree to cherish its earth, waters, plants, and animals in a way that promotes the health, stability, and diversity of the whole community. This entails attentive stillness to meet and know the land as an active presence.

CCA New Logo

THIS NEWSLETTER INTRODUCES CCA's new logo. Many thanks to Carol Meckling for art work, Michael Puttonen for graphic design, and to Erik Revere, Alex Binford-Walsh, and Pearl Mast for coordinating the effort.



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