

YOUR AMERICAN WEST

PARKS

Saguaro Census:
Counting on the Future
A Current of
Communities Connecting

EVENTS

Youth Poster Contest
Sacred Scarlets
Poetry Workshops

PRODUCTS

I Belong in a Park
Collection



Poetry workshop at Montezuma's Castle National Monument (courtesy of Zack Frank). [See page 18 for more.](#)

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Western National Parks Association (WNPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, serving more than 70 national parks in the western United States.

The Home Office and The National Parks Store are located at 12880 N Vistoso Village Drive, Tucson, AZ 85755. Learn more by contacting info@wnpa.org or visiting www.wnpa.org.



A Special Thank You

We are grateful for the service of each of our board members who retired from their positions in 2019: Gerard Baker, Gary Davis, May Tran Patel, Beth Vershure, and board chair Ernie Quintana. All of us at WNPA thank these individuals for their contributions, passion, and dedication to furthering WNPA's mission.

This year we welcome Chris Monson as a new board member. "All of us at WNPA are thrilled that Chris Monson has joined our board of directors," said WNPA chief executive officer James E. Cook. "Chris brings a set of important and relevant skills, knowledge, and experiences that will help our organization continue to grow and reach our goals. He has great love for our national parks and brings both a local and national perspective to our work."

Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

Constituent. Stakeholder. Advocate. Steward. These words reflect a central commitment of Western National Parks Association (WNPA): to foster a strong sense of belonging between people and national parks. Direct experience of the nature, culture, and deep history protected by these public lands can turn a visitor into a conservationist. In this issue of *Your American West*, we spotlight WNPA-supported efforts, in two partner parks, to create this sense of belonging—through citizen science and through youth involvement.

At **Saguaro National Park**, the National Park Service (NPS) is training groups of dedicated citizens to do field research on the population dynamics of saguaros. This iconic cactus of the Sonoran Desert has been hard hit by a long-term drought and other landscape changes. Through the Saguaro Census, citizen scientists—many of whom have no prior research background—collect critical data that NPS staff and other professional scientists could never gather alone. In doing so, these individuals develop a lasting bond with the park. WNPA has contributed to the Saguaro Census through long-term funding. This year, WNPA staff went a step further by fielding a volunteer census team. In this issue's Research Matters section, read about their transformative experience as they searched for "baby" saguaros and craned their necks to measure giant adults.

At **Big Thicket National Preserve**, an art exhibition and a new outdoor program are focused on building connections between young people and the wild ecosystems of the preserve. In *The Many Colors of the Big Thicket*, a temporary exhibition at the visitor center, young artists from across the state of Texas express their creativity and observational skills in works that showcase the land, waters, and creatures of the preserve. Soon to be launched, the Community Youth Paddling Program recruits participants from local communities in Southeast Texas, especially those close to the preserve. On free ranger-led kayak trips, groups of children, teenagers, and young adults will have opportunities to learn new skills, to test their independence and teamwork, and to take on stewardship projects that will strengthen the NPS's work in the preserve. WNPA promotes this program through funding additional training of a young-adult instructor and guide for the kayak trips.

This issue highlights programs at these two parks, but WNPA also collaborates with many other partner parks to strengthen this crucial sense of belonging. At **Guadalupe Mountains National Park**, a youth poster contest gives participants a chance to see their artistic creations on the park's annual pass. The Heritage Days event at **Tonto National Monument** fostered belonging through a sense of history. At **Tuzigoot National Monument**, a Sacred Scarlets lecture—complete with an introduction to a captive-bred scarlet macaw—is an opportunity to feel a centuries-old affiliation with wild beauty and the archaeological riches of the monument.

This spring, WNPA is offering a new way for you to sustain and share this sense of belonging—through purchasing I Belong in a Park products. The message inscribed on these t-shirts, water bottles, and stickers shows your connection and commitment to our national parks. Besides encouraging others to feel the same bond, your purchase supports the work of the NPS in the West. Like the citizen scientists of Saguaro National Park and the young stewards of Big Thicket National Preserve, you can proudly say, "I belong in a park."

Sincerely,

James E. Cook
Chief Executive Officer

Saguaro Census: *Counting on the Future*

By Jennifer Shopland

Long-term research by NPS staff and other scientists suggests that, since the 1990s, a punishing drought has severely hampered the germination of saguaro seeds and growth of young plants into healthy adults.

Looking like a jumbo dill pickle with spines, the small saguaro was barely visible under a shrubby palo verde tree. Maria DelVecchio, WNPA’s senior marketing manager, spotted it and stopped midstride. Squatting beside it for a closer look, she called over her shoulder, “Found a baby.” Her fellow volunteers on the WNPA Saguaro Census team flashed thumbs-up. With Jesús Duenas, a **Saguaro National Park** intern, leading them, they converged on the small cactus. While one of her teammates wove a numbered pin flag through the spines and another read its Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates, Maria unfolded a wooden ruler and measured its height. “Ten-point-two centimeters.” Jesús recorded the data on a field form. As the rest of the group moved on, Maria took a minute to estimate the saguaro’s age. Ten-point-two centimeters. Four inches. About 15 years old. She thought about how lucky this little plant was to be alive.

A SAGUARO’S STORY

This junior saguaro’s story started with one seed in 40 million—the number that an adult may produce in its lifetime. Its parent was a *Carnegiea gigantea*, one of the enormous elders of the Sonoran Desert that are found nowhere else on Earth and for whose protection Saguaro NP was established. This adult cactus may still be standing tall in another part of the park.

On a July day 15 years ago, perhaps a white-winged dove stuffed itself on the succulent red fruit produced by one of the creamy white flowers that had dotted the parent

saguaro’s arms. The dove may eventually have come to rest on a shrubby palo verde tree. It excreted the seeds, some of which fell to the ground. One seed germinated. The tiny plant was given a leg up by its “nurse” tree: shade, protection from predators, a little extra water that gathered in the depression at the tree’s base. For over a dozen years, the young saguaro dodged ecological bullets in the form of thirsty pack rats and mule deer, scorching summers and winter freezes, failed monsoon rains. It survived to become the hidden treasure that Maria and her colleagues recorded on the 2020 NPS Saguaro Census.

Few seeds—or young saguaros—are so fortunate. Long-term research by NPS staff and other scientists suggests that, since the 1990s, a punishing drought has severely hampered the germination of saguaro seeds and the growth of young plants into healthy adults. Because they are growing in a national park, these youngsters are shielded from some threats to which saguaros outside the park succumb. For example, they are protected from cattle grazing and indiscriminate cutting of nurse trees, such as palo verde and mesquite. But they cannot escape the

consequences of the long drought and extreme weather events, which may be exacerbated by climate change. Likewise, they are vulnerable to region-wide, human-induced pressures like groundwater pumping in metropolitan Tucson.

To make matters worse, some ecological changes form a tangled net that amplifies the danger for saguaros struggling toward adulthood. For example, buffelgrass—a large, invasive bunchgrass introduced into the US



Young saguaro cactus sometimes take root in the most unlikely places—like perched in a rock cleft—where they could be easily overlooked by census counters (courtesy of NPS).



Southwest as cattle forage—appears to compete directly with young saguaros for space, water, nutrients, and shade. But buffelgrass poses an additional, less direct threat: wildfires. A desert floor covered with buffelgrass is a tinderbox that can explode into rapid, searing flames that destroy saguaros and other native plants. Buffelgrass, on the other hand, bounces back, stronger than ever. To add insult to injury, the establishment of this grass profits from rising ambient temperatures, which also increase the risk of drought and intense fire.

Knowledge is power. To adapt their management practices to these changing conditions on the landscape, NPS staff must know how the saguaro population is responding. Are the adults holding steady in the face of widespread threats? How many young individuals are surviving, and how quickly are they growing? These are the kinds of questions that the Saguaro Census at Saguaro NP was designed to answer.

In 1990, NPS scientists began this census to coincide with the US Census of human populations. A major component of the census is to count and measure saguaros on 45 randomly located plots spread across the park's two districts: the Rincon Mountain District and the Tucson Mountain District (known to many visitors as “Saguaro East” and “Saguaro West,” respectively). Each plot has an area of 200 by 200 meters. By taking repeated “snapshots” of the number and size of individual saguaros in a particular plot, investigators can compare data on growth and survival within age classes across the years.

From the beginning, park staff knew that they could not accomplish such a massive field effort alone. One of their strategies has been to train and deploy dedicated interns, who work with science advisers and saguaro experts to create the study design and to record data in the census plots. WNPA, among other organizations, has contributed toward funding of the research, especially the participation of interns. In doing so, WNPA has supported perhaps the most important function of interns: the training and oversight of citizen scientists—volunteer teams that are crucial to the success of the census fieldwork.

Park biologist Don Swann, a principal investigator and one of the founders of the Saguaro Census, described the role of these volunteers: “Citizen science greatly expands our capacity to gather basic knowledge and understand changes in the park's biodiversity. It has the added benefit of giving visitors, students, and others an opportunity to learn about and appreciate these complex ecosystems in a close-up, hands-on way.”



Saguaro Census volunteers make several passes through their plot to count tall, obvious cactus (top) then catch any small babies (bottom) that may have been overlooked (courtesy of NPS).

A CITIZEN SCIENTIST'S STORY

The story of a citizen scientist may start with a different kind of seed. When she was a teenager, Maria intended to study biology and was considering becoming a forest ranger. Professional life has taken her elsewhere, but Maria still loves wild places. Every Sunday, she makes a point of hiking in the desert and mountains around her hometown of Tucson.

Maria had been WNPA's senior marketing manager for less than a month when word spread through the main office in Tucson about a volunteer opportunity at Saguaro NP. Park staff needed a team of citizen scientists to complete the 2020 census of Plot 28, in the Tucson Mountain District. Although WNPA staff had volunteered for other efforts to support the park, they had never before fielded a Saguaro Census team. In short order, like-minded colleagues decided to take up the challenge, and early on a warm, sunny January morning, Maria and 11 teammates headed out to Plot 28.

Once on the ground, interns divided the WNPA team into groups of three to five people. An expert from Saguaro NP accompanied each group, guided their work, and



recorded the data that they collected. Maria's group started walking off-trail along a defined swath of desert, marked with flagging. Whenever they saw a saguaro within the boundary of their swath, they stopped to pin-flag it, record a GPS location, and measure it, as they did for the little 15-year-old that Maria found under the nurse tree. Height measurements were relatively straightforward for the smaller plants—team members could use the folding ruler. But for saguaros taller than 4 meters (about 13 feet), two teammates had to measure height by looking through clinometers and then comparing their results for accuracy. These handheld optical devices measure angles that can then be converted to heights. The technique may sound like simple

geometry, but according to one of Maria's teammates, WNPA publishing manager Sara Maher,

“Using the clinometers took some getting used to, but once we got the hang of it, it was really cool seeing how tall the saguaros actually are.”

For these big saguaros, the team also recorded the number of stems (arms), the number of



Top: Saguaros grow large in the Rincon Mountain District of Saguaro National Park (courtesy of Ingrid Curry/Shutterstock.com). Bottom: WNPA staff Brad Sutton, left, and Joanna Johnson, right, use clinometers to measure the height of tall saguaros with the assistance of Saguaro National Park volunteer intern Mely Bohlman, center. Independent calculations are made then compared to ensure the cactus' height is accurately recorded (courtesy of NPS).

cavities (many of which were nest holes used by birds), and any visible damage or rot.

After the first pass through each swath of the census plot, the survey groups switched paths to do a second sweep. The focus of this second pass was to find the smaller saguaros that might have been missed on the first trip through. As the day went on, teammates

Finally, all the saguaros in Plot 28 were accounted for, and the team made one last pass to collect the pin flags, as well as the flagging that marked the plot boundaries. At the end of six hours in the field, one of Maria's teammates, graphic designer Brad Sutton, was not tired but energized. For him, the experience was a throwback to his days on staff at Joshua Tree National Park, where

“I’ll never forget the experience of being part of the Saguaro Census. I’ll always have that special connection to the park.”

entered into friendly competition. Points were scored for recording the tallest and the smallest. Points were lost for mistaking a hedgehog cactus (which can look very similar) for a young saguaro. Finding the most “babies” was a major goal of the game. One tiny saguaro, almost inaccessible in a thicket and nearly invisible to most team members, was named Christine in honor of its discoverer, WNPA’s chief financial officer Christine Horvath.

he valued time spent in the field with resource experts “I’ll never forget the experience of being a part of the Saguaro Census,” he said. “I’ll always have that special connection to the park.” Maria agreed: “I can never look at a saguaro the same way again.”

Like other groups that have participated in the census, the WNPA team was able to see the results of their efforts soon afterward. The NPS interns and investigators



WNPA staff Renee Renna (left) and Saguaro Next Generation Ranger Corps intern Keely Lyons-Letts wrap up measuring one cactus and begin scanning for their next subject (courtesy of NPS).

quickly compile the data for each plot and post displays and summaries on the census website, along with photographs of the team members in action. Maria and her teammates learned that they had counted and measured more than 150 saguaros in their section of Plot 28. When their data were combined with those from the survey of the rest of the plot, the total count was 539 saguaros in an area of slightly less than 10 acres. Thirty-three of those individuals were as short as or shorter than Maria's 15-year-old. Good news—in 1990, only 393 saguaros were counted in Plot 28. Both the higher count and the distribution of young saguaros among age classes in 2020 suggest that these cacti are surviving and growing.

The big-picture results are encouraging, too. Analysis of the data from the 2010 census showed a 65 percent increase, since 1990, in the number of saguaros recorded across all 45 plots in the two districts. Mathematical estimates placed the total population for the park at nearly two million. Don Swann emphasized the value of continuing this research in 2020 and beyond: “We’re

concerned about the future of saguaros in the park because, in general, we have seen far fewer young saguaros surviving in the past 25 years than we saw during the period from the 1960s through the early 1990s. However, we’re not alarmed, because saguaros are a long-lived plant, very resistant to drought, and capable of reproducing for over 100 years. Continuing the Saguaro Census will allow us to keep an eye on how the population is doing in the long term.”

For centuries, saguaros have been an integral element of the deep cultural traditions of the Tohono O’odham, whose annual harvest of saguaro fruits continues in Saguaro NP to this day. With the Saguaro Census, citizen scientists of all ages and cultures can be part of a different kind of harvest: the gathering of information that NPS staff could never gather alone. Browse the [Saguaro Census 2020 website](#), and you’ll see high-school-age faces (some serious, some smiling) among the team photos. Like Maria’s little saguaro, these young scientists are a source of hope for the future of Saguaro NP’s beloved giants.



WNPA staff counted more than 150 saguaros during their time in the field as part of the 2020 Saguaro Census (courtesy of NPS).

Since 1938 WNPA has funded scientific research to help advance the management, preservation, and interpretation of our national parks. Your American West will feature one of these stories in each of the next few issues. Discover more of the historical, social, and environmental research projects WNPA has funded in recent years on our [website](#).

People & Happenings

Black History Bingo Night

On Saturday, February 22, **Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site** celebrated African American History Month with a bingo night. Participants played on African American heritage-themed bingo cards, and park rangers called out bingo numbers while also providing facts and historical information about African Americans who shaped US history. To top off the fun, prizes were given out while snacks and socializing were enjoyed by all. WNP is proud to help fund events like this one, which combine education with a celebration of African Americans and their contributions to our past.



Courtesy of NPS.



WNPA publishing manager Sara Maher (right) delivers donated books to Literacy Connects library manager Violet Kennedy (courtesy of Literacy Connects).

2019 Holiday Book Drive

Over the last holiday season, WNP and [Literacy Connects](#) partnered for a book drive with a special focus on children's books. Literacy Connects is a Tucson-based literacy nonprofit that works to create solutions to many of society's most persistent problems through literacy and arts programming. The National Parks Store in Tucson hosted a collection box for people to drop off used books in good condition, but also gave customers the opportunity to purchase new books at the store and leave them for donation. WNP's online store also participated, with customers receiving free shipping if they purchased a book for donation. The book drive was very successful, allowing WNP to donate 2,381 books to Literacy Connects! The donated books will be used in programs that promote early literacy, school readiness, independent reading, and increased vocabulary and fluency.



Youth Art Exhibition

The Many Colors of Big Thicket

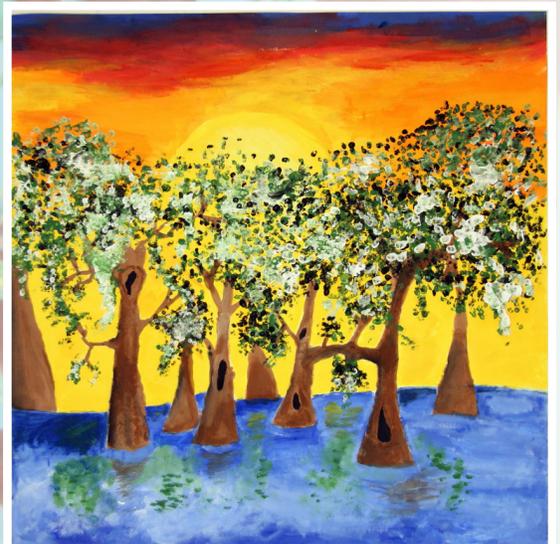
Paying attention—it's the cornerstone of both art and natural history. Observation is the first step in the scientific method and the first glimmer in the visual artist's eye. It's also the gateway to understanding and protecting the wild creatures and places that we love.

In a world of digital distractions, how can we hope that children and teenagers will take this first step toward preservation? In *The Many Colors of the Big Thicket*, a temporary exhibition at the visitor center of **Big Thicket National Preserve**, young artists from schools across the state of Texas prove that such a hope is well-founded.

From flamboyant wood ducks to majestic bald cypress trees, the animals and plants of the Big Thicket offer a palette of colors from subtle to shocking. In partnership with the [International Fiber Collaborative](#), 577 students from 15 middle schools and high schools were inspired to capture these hues. More than 70 of their creations enliven the exhibition space at the Big Thicket NP Visitor Center. Their work continues the long tradition of painting, photography, and other visual arts that is interwoven with the history of national parks.

Founded in 2008 as a nonprofit, the International Fiber Collaborative develops community programs that create collaborative opportunities in art and civic engagement. The International Fiber Collaborative promotes programs that link learning and creativity in the arts to science, math, engineering, and the humanities.

From December 15, 2019, through April 30, 2020, see the “biological crossroads” of the Big Thicket through the eyes of these young observers of the natural world. Your view of the preserve's wild denizens may never be the same. To see the submissions, [click here](#). For more information about Big Thicket NP, [click here](#).



Background: *Thriving Season* by Vanessa, Caney Creek High School. Top to bottom: *Warbler on a Branch* by Jocelyn and Sedona, Buffalo High School; *You Don't See Me* by Amanda, Aedan, and Ethan; *Cypress Sunset* by Tucker and Dylan, Buna Jr. High School

A Current of Communities Connecting

Imagine yourself floating in a kayak down the Neches River through **Big Thicket National Preserve**. Above you, Spanish moss stretches down from the branches of bald cypress trees. As the kayak passes, a red-eared slider slips silently into the water from its basking log, leaving its fellow turtles behind. From a tree trunk on the shore ahead, you hear resonant drumming, then a piercing call, and suddenly a crow-sized black bird with a harlequin-striped face and a crimson crest flies over your head and away up the river. A hundred years ago, this woodpecker might have been a rare ivory-billed (now probably extinct). But yours was a pileated, a smaller but equally stately relative, and a fleeting vision never to be forgotten.

Now imagine that the only wild place you know is the postage-stamp park across town and that your only woodpecker acquaintance is a cartoon.

WHEN NATURE IS A STRANGER

Nature-deficit disorder is a real phenomenon. Most of us suffer from it. Both adults and children are spending more and more time indoors, and evidence is growing that this withdrawal from the natural world is taking its toll—physically, mentally, and emotionally. Immersion in nature is not just a matter of enrichment; it's a matter of survival.

Loss of intimacy with nature causes suffering to the land, as well. For Big Thicket N Pres, some of the forces creating large-scale landscape change (for example, oil and gas exploitation in and around the preserve) are known. Others (such as infiltration of salt water into the preserve's freshwater systems, caused by rising sea levels) are projected. Forces like these may best be met in the realms of politics and consumer choices. But unlike many federally protected lands, Big Thicket N Pres was founded with legislation that mandates access for hunting, fishing, and trapping, among other activities.

The land, the water, and the wild inhabitants of the Big Thicket can sustain this kind of use in the long term only if its human residents, neighbors, and visitors are guided by understanding and love.

PADDLING TOWARD CONNECTION

Through a new program, the NPS staff at Big Thicket NP are challenging both nature-deficit disorder and the disconnect between wild ecosystems and human communities. Now in development, the Community Youth Paddling Program soon will offer free ranger-guided kayak trips in the Neches River, Village Creek, and Pine Island Bayou areas of the preserve. A program intern (see [Focus On](#)) is recruiting participants from community youth and college groups. Recruiting efforts are concentrated on local communities in Southeast Texas, especially those close to the preserve, and on youth who may not have had previous exposure to the wild.



Big Thicket National Preserve protects an incredible diversity of life as its waterways course through nine different ecosystems (courtesy of NPS).

Up to 12 paddlers can be part of each kayak trip. No previous experience with water sports is required. The Big Thicket NP paddle team will tailor the length of each trip to the needs of the group, as well as to their age and experience, but most trips will last three to four hours. The team will provide all paddling equipment, safety gear, and on-site training. Groups with paddlers younger than 18 years of age must have two adult chaperones.

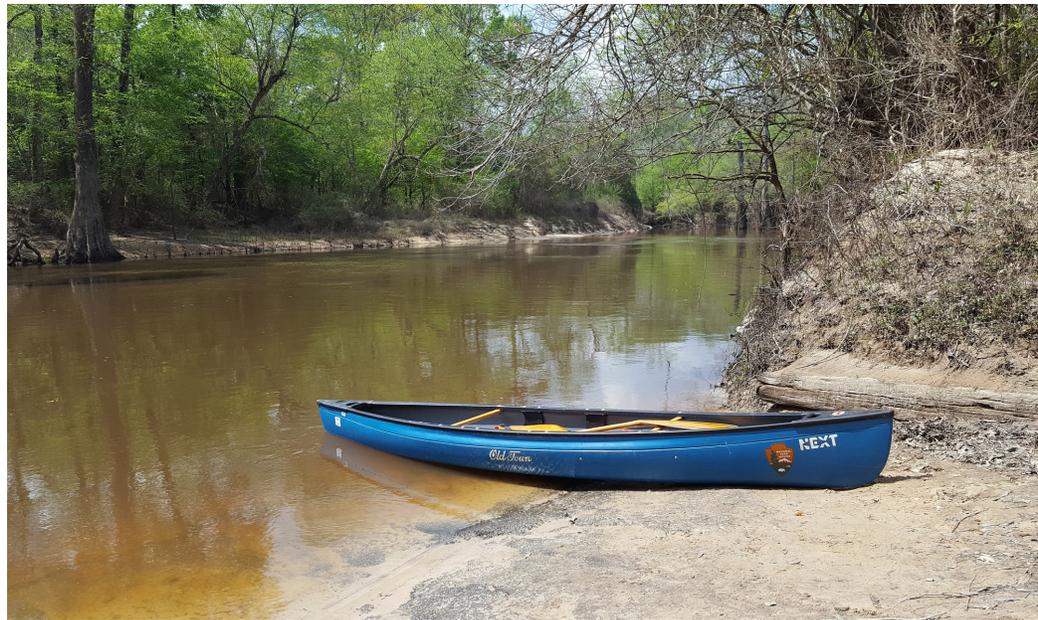
As they explore the river, creeks, and bayous of the Big Thicket with the preserve rangers and the program intern, young paddlers will have an opportunity—maybe the first in their lives—to practice natural history in a truly wild setting. Observing a crayfish as it scuttles through the shallows, photographing a bald eagle as it scans the water for fish, sitting quietly in a kayak under a huge beech tree—experiences like these can bring peace as well as excitement. They can also inspire a sense of connection among—and with—the forces of nature.

The physical and psychological challenges of being on the water can be game changers, too. Paddlers will be given instruction in basic water-safety skills at the start of the trip, but the journey will bring many chances to hone and test their proficiency. As the group navigates the waterways, the value of teamwork will be immediately apparent, but building self-reliance will be just as important. Balancing independence and cooperation can be a powerful exercise for combating the forces of isolation that many young people struggle with at home.

During the trip, each group of paddlers will do a small volunteer service project for the preserve. Even something as simple as a trash cleanup at the boat launch or take-out point can create a sense of responsibility and stewardship. Like Big Thicket N Pres, all public lands need protection—and not just by the work of government staff. In the long term, preservation can be achieved only by a support network that includes local communities—and local youth.

TAKING THE BIG THICKET HOME

Can four hours in a kayak change the life of a kid or a young adult? Research in the field of conservation psychology suggests that the answer is yes. For the Community Youth Paddling Program, time will tell. But Jason Ginder, chief of interpretation and education at Big Thicket N Pres, and the program team believe that these young paddlers will take home the resilience, awareness, and closeness to the wild that they experienced while on the water. Richard Louv, the author who coined the term “nature-deficit disorder,” wrote, “Recent studies focus



Numerous access points provide a variety of trip options for paddlers of all skill levels (courtesy of NPS).

not so much on what is lost when nature experience fades, but on what is gained through more exposure to natural settings, including nearby nature in urban places.” In the Big Thicket, a bond between human communities and natural communities may be restored one paddle trip at a time.

For more information about Big Thicket N Pres, [click here](#). Do you know a youth group or college organization that could benefit from the Community Youth Paddling Program at Big Thicket N Pres? If so, please get in touch with the coordinators at 409-951-6826 or bith_paddleprogram@nps.gov.

Focus On

Avery McElhone

Community Youth Paddling Program Intern,
Big Thicket National Preserve

Joining the Community Youth Paddling Program from the Texas Conservation Corps (TXCC) is intern Avery McElhone (pictured right). Avery was inspired to coordinate the program at **Big Thicket National Preserve** by her love of water sports and her desire to share that passion with the youth of the area. This is her first project with TXCC, although she has worked on other international conservation projects with Global Explorers (now No Barriers Youth) and Girl Scouts. She has been devoted to water sports since she joined her local rowing team at age 13.

Avery has already designed and programmed emails and social media for the paddling program at Big Thicket N Pres, as well as an automated reservation form to reach a wide audience through a user-friendly process. She has also built a database of contacts for the program. Every day, she expands the program's outreach through these hard-earned efforts. (Avery wrote that she isn't a "tech-savvy person," and this technical work has been challenging.) When asked about the rewards, she responded, "The most rewarding part of my work is yet to come. Once I receive my kayak instructor certification, I will be able to lead trips and taste the sweet fruit of all my efforts."

Her favorite memory of an encounter with nature in the Big Thicket? "On a paddle excursion down the Neches [River] with a group of Sea Scouts, we found a massive softshell turtle hung up on a trotline. It took a group effort but we were able to rescue her. It was a really great teaching opportunity for the scouts about pollution, stewardship, and responsible fishing practices."

Avery's heartfelt message to the young paddlers who will join Big Thicket N Pres's new program is this: "Anyone can paddle. Paddling is a great way to build

confidence by trying new things and developing new skills. Exploring your waterways is a physical activity that's for everyone because you are in control of your pace. This program is so exciting because you can try out paddling for free with certified instructors to guide you every stroke of the way."

WNPA is proud to support Avery's internship at Big Thicket N Pres through funding for her training as a kayak instructor.



Youth and college students interested in a free kayak program should call 409-951-6826 or email bith_paddleprogram@nps.gov for more information (courtesy of NPS).

New & Notable Releases

I Belong in a Park Collection

Each national park is a special place protecting our nature, culture, and history. Parks give everyone—no matter who you are or where you're from—the opportunity to feel like you belong. WNPA's new, exclusive I Belong collection gives you the chance to share why you belong and to show off your passion for parks.



Insulated Water Bottle

This stainless steel insulated water bottle, featuring the I Belong in a Park logo, keeps hot drinks hot and cold drinks cold for hours. The handle has a spring-loaded opening so the entire bottle can be clipped to your pack, keeping your hands free. The 32-ounce capacity means you'll stay hydrated during your next walk in a park. Plus, each time you refill, you help cut down on recyclable waste! [Available online.](#)

Stickers

Show your excitement for parks when you are on the go with our I Belong in a Park vinyl sticker! Choose your favorite color, or pick up all three, and apply them to your water bottle, laptop, notebook, wherever! [Available online.](#)



T-shirt

Your love of the parks will show when you wear this exclusive t-shirt. Available in two colors, our I Belong in a Park t-shirt features our exclusive logo and a tagless collar and is made from a super-soft, cotton/poly blend material. Wear your park pride! [Available online.](#)

Check store.wnpa.org for new products in the I Belong collection!

Featured Events & Activities

Please note: Events may be postponed. For information on the status of events in parks, check each park's event calendar on [page 20](#).

Guadalupe Mountains Annual Youth Poster Contest: Recreation for All

Deadline: Thursday, April 30

Guadalupe Mountains National Park
400 Pine Canyon Drive
Salt Flat, TX 79847

Do you know someone between 6 and 17 years of age who has a favorite memory of exploring public lands—hiking, biking, paddling, caving? If so, encourage her or him to re-create the experience in a drawing or painting, and this artwork could appear on the 2021 **Guadalupe Mountains National Park** annual park pass. Partnering with the National Cave and Karst Research Institute and the US Bureau of Land Management, Guadalupe Mountains NP invites submissions to this year's youth poster contest with the theme Recreation for All! The contest is free to enter and is supported by WNPA. For more information, [click here](#).

Sacred Scarlets is a nonprofit dedicated to the conservation of scarlet macaws and promoting awareness of their history in the desert Southwest (courtesy of Sacred Scarlets).

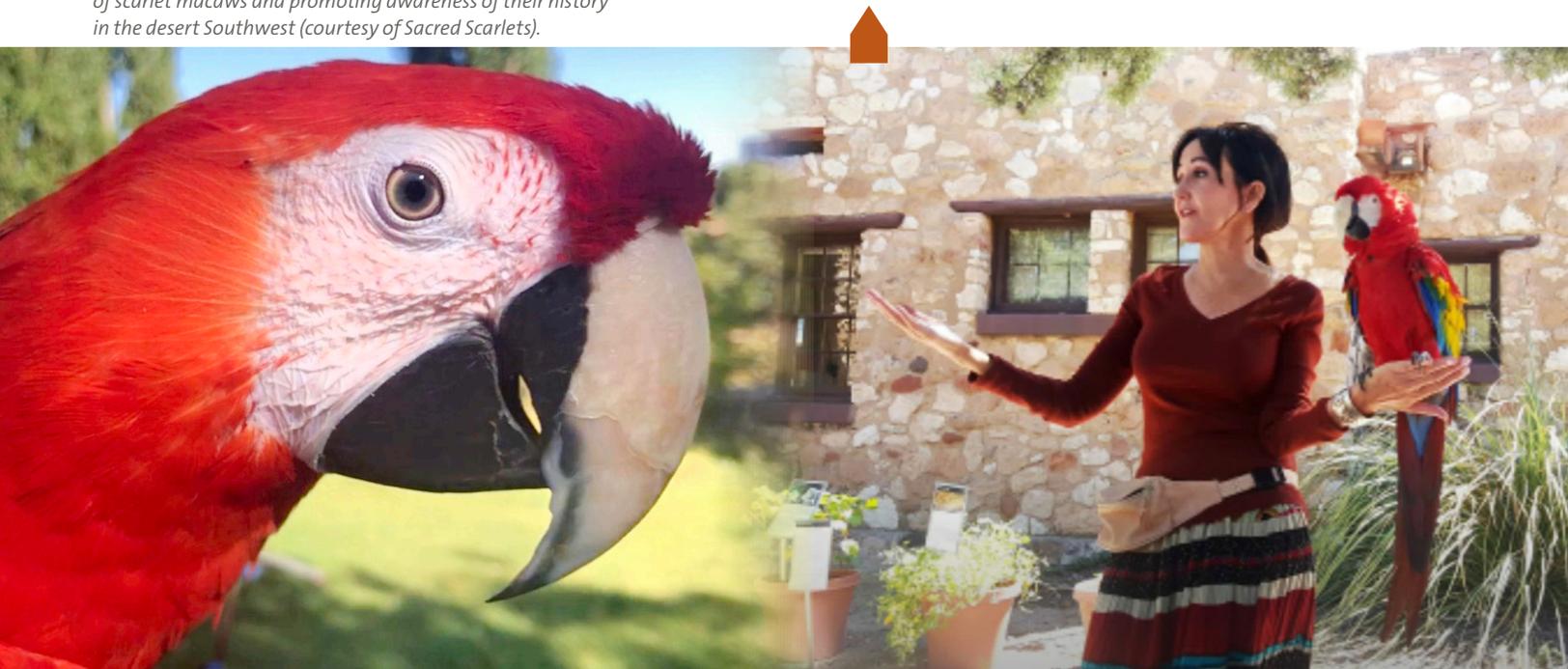
Sacred Scarlets Lectures & Demonstrations

Sundays, May 31, June 28

10 AM each day

Tuzigoot National Monument
25 W Tuzigoot Road
Clarkdale, AZ 86324

Discover why scarlet macaws fascinated the ancient peoples of the Americas. Join Kelley Taylor, founder of Sacred Scarlets, for a WNPA-sponsored lecture and demonstration at **Tuzigoot National Monument**. Remains of these brilliantly colored parrots have been found during archaeological excavations at Tuzigoot NM and are evidence that macaws were traded into this area from lands hundreds of miles south in Mexico. Each presentation features a young captive-bred scarlet macaw as an ambassador for the protection of the birds in the wild. These introductions to the conservation of the species and its long history in the Southwest are free of charge with regular admission to the monument. For more information on the lecture series at Tuzigoot NM, [click here](#). For more information on Sacred Scarlets, [click here](#).





The Great House stands tall over the desert landscape at Casa Grande Ruins National Monument (courtesy of NPS/Pam Tripp).

Poetry Workshops

In celebration of National Poetry Month, free poetry workshops are being held at the following Arizona national parks and monuments. Jodie Hollander will be leading the workshops, which will focus on the significance of place in poetry.

Wednesday, April 22 (Rescheduled for October 15, 2020)

Casa Grande Ruins National Monument

1100 W Ruins Drive

Coolidge, AZ 85128

Friday, April 24 (Rescheduled for Fall 2020)

Montezuma Castle National Monument

5525 Beaver Creek Road

Rimrock, AZ 86335

Please check each [park's website](#) for more details and new program dates.



The cliff dwellings at Montezuma Castle National Monument hold a commanding view over Beaver Creek (courtesy of Zack Frank).

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Many NPS facilities and events are closed or canceled. Check with individual parks regarding changes to park operations. If you choose to visit a park, follow CDC and state and local guidelines to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and practice Leave No Trace principles.

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Colorado (courtesy of NPS).

Tucson Festival of Books

Congratulations Essay Contest Winners!

WNPA and the Metropolitan Education Commission invited southern Arizona students in grades 9–12 to participate in an essay contest promoting the continuing significance of national parks in our ever-changing world. Winning essay writers received cash prizes and were to be recognized at the Tucson Festival of Books.



1st Place Armando Zuniga

10th Grade | Flowing Wells HS

How To Bring More Diversity in National Parks

“National Parks can bring the whole family together and create memories that will last a lifetime.”



2nd Place Sophia Miller-Orvis

11th Grade | Flowing Wells HS

Younger Generations and the National Parks

“These parks are all gorgeous and everyone deserves a chance to see at least one or two of them in their lifetime.”



3rd Place Hunter Olivas

10th Grade | Flowing Wells HS

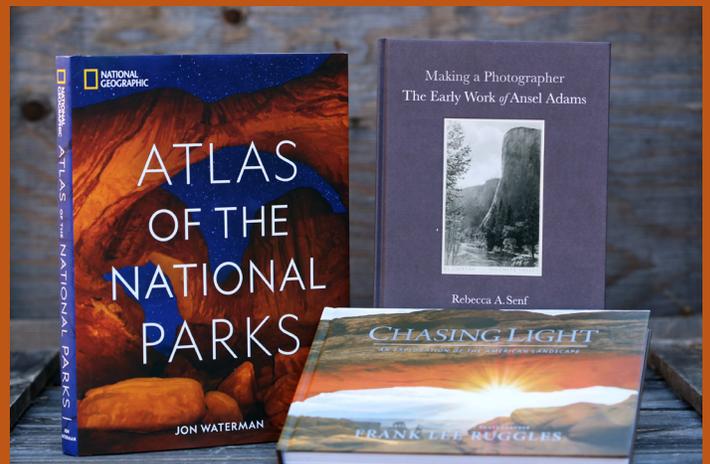
National Parks and the Changing World

“Youth must be educated in the value and majesty of these preserves.”

25% Off Select Book Titles

from the Tucson Festival of Books

The Tucson Festival of Books (TFOB) is one of the largest book festivals in the country, featuring more than 350 authors across all genres. WNPA is a major sponsor of the festival and hosts our popular The National Park Experience Pavilion every year. Unfortunately, TFOB was cancelled for 2020, but you can still experience The National Park Experience Pavilion by reading books written by the authors who were scheduled to appear. These books cover travel, nature, conservation, history, and, of course, our national parks, and now they're 25% off! Purchase yours at store.wnpa.org today!



For more events at WNPA-affiliated sites near you, check out their websites!

Arizona

[Canyon de Chelly National Monument](#)
[Casa Grande Ruins National Monument](#)
[Chiricahua National Monument](#)
[Coronado National Memorial](#)
[Fort Bowie National Historic Site](#)
[Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site](#)
[Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
[Montezuma Castle National Monument](#)
[Navajo National Monument](#)
[Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#)
[Saguaro National Park](#)
[Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument](#)
[The National Parks Store](#)
[Tonto National Monument](#)
[Tumacácori National Historical Park](#)
[Tuzigoot National Monument](#)
[Walnut Canyon National Monument](#)
[Wupatki National Monument](#)

California

[Channel Islands National Park](#)
[Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site](#)
[John Muir National Historic Site](#)
[Mojave National Preserve](#)
[Pinnacles National Park](#)
[Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial](#)
[San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park](#)
[Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#)
[Whiskeytown National Recreation Area](#)

Colorado

[Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site](#)
[Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
[Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
[Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve](#)
[Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site](#)

Kansas

[Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site](#)
[Fort Larned National Historic Site](#)
[Fort Scott National Historic Site](#)
[Nicodemus National Historic Site](#)

Montana & Wyoming

[Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
[Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument](#)

Nevada

[Great Basin National Park](#)
[Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)

New Mexico

[Aztec Ruins National Monument](#)
[Bandelier National Monument](#)
[Capulin Volcano National Monument](#)
[Carlsbad Caverns National Park](#)
[Chaco Culture National Historical Park](#)
[El Malpais National Monument](#)
[El Morro National Monument](#)
[Fort Union National Monument](#)
[Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument](#)
[Pecos National Historical Park](#)
[Petroglyph National Monument](#)
[Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument](#)
[White Sands National Park](#)

Oklahoma

[Chickasaw National Recreation Area](#)
[Washita Battlefield National Historic Site](#)

Texas

[Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument](#)
[Big Thicket National Preserve](#)
[Chamizal National Memorial](#)
[Fort Davis National Historic Site](#)
[Guadalupe Mountains National Park](#)
[Lake Meredith National Recreation Area](#)
[Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park](#)
[Padre Island National Seashore](#)
[Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park](#)
[San Antonio Missions National Historical Park](#)

Utah

[Golden Spike National Historical Park](#)
[Timpanogos Cave National Monument](#)

Trails

[Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail](#)
[Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail](#)
[Santa Fe National Historic Trail](#)
[Trail of Tears National Historic Trail](#)

Support Our Mission

Your Support is Vital!

Due to the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), WNPA has ceased operations at our park stores, eliminating a crucial source of funding for our more than 70 partner parks.

Since our founding in 1938, WNPA has given nearly \$113 million to national parks, funding educational and interpretive programs, research projects, park store personnel, and more. Help WNPA continue our mission of advancing education, interpretation, research, and community engagement at national parks throughout the temporary closure of our stores by shopping or donating at our online store.

Your support during this critical time helps ensure WNPA can continue sharing the national park experience with everyone.

DONATE TODAY

Western
National Parks
Association

