



The Aravaipa Watershed Conservation Alliance

2023 Year in Review

Included in this Issue

- 2- President’s Message
- 3- Member Spotlight
- 5- Bird Sightings
- 6- Upcoming



Understanding the Watershed

A watershed has five important functions:

- It collects water from rainfall
- It stores water of various amounts and for different times
- It releases water as runoff
- It provides diverse sites for chemical reactions to take place
- It provides habitat for flora and fauna.

Watershed management aims to care for natural resources in a way that supports human needs for water, food, fiber, energy, and habitation, while supporting other agreed attributes linked to recreation, esthetics, and/or ecologic function.

Simple rock dam erosion control can reduce the flow of flash flooding by 50%, increase water retention by 28% as well as increase seasonal water flow times by 3 to 4 weeks. (Dr. Laura Norman)

A Message from the President



Matt Magoffin

President of AWCA since 2020

To Our Aravaipa friends,

As 2023 comes to an end, the AWCA would like to thank all who have visited our website, Facebook and Instagram pages, giving us great stories about your love of Aravaipa and adventures in the area.

We thank all of you who donated to our nonprofit and those who have partnered on projects. We hope to do some workshops in 2024 to benefit all our stakeholders and continue building an implementation plan.

We welcome new faces and new ideas, so feel free to contact me at matt.magoffin@aravaipa.org if you want to learn more about what you can do.

Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram and be sure to watch the website, Aravaipa.org for information on what is happening!



Member Spotlight



The Harben Family

Russ was voted in as a new AWCA Board Member this year and his wife Megan also works as a volunteer. We're happy to welcome the Harbens to Aravaipa!

OUR FAMILY'S JOURNEY TO THE AWCA

By Russ Harben, *Board Member*

In May 2022, our family purchased a small parcel in the Eureka Springs Ranch area of the upper Aravaipa Valley. As a family with three young kids living in Phoenix, with no connections or prior history in the area, some people might have considered it an odd purchase. But as it turned out, it proved to be fortunate, because it led us to the AWCA.

While we've always enjoyed spending time outdoors, a busy family life and a schedule filled with kids' activities and appointments prevented us from frequently venturing afar. During the pandemic we rekindled our interest in activities such as camping, gardening, and building a more sustainable, self-reliant lifestyle. As we explored Arizona, first from a tent, and then from a travel trailer, we found ourselves wanting to build a deeper connection to the land, and to have a space we could call our own.

Our first trip to the Aravaipa came when we set out to view a property listing that had caught our eye. The remoteness, ecological diversity, and natural beauty of the area were all factors that helped us decide to make the purchase. As we set to work exploring and improving our newly acquired land, we recognized the need to learn more about the natural processes within the watershed. We also started to look for ways that we could become more connected to the local community. Our research led us to find the AWCA, and we decided to attend our first event, a community stakeholder meeting in July 2022.

As newcomers to both the area and the AWCA organization, we weren't sure how we would be received. We were relieved and pleasantly surprised to be warmly welcomed by the Magoffins and the other board members and staff. Over the next several months, we learned more about the AWCA's goals and activities, and set out to become more involved. We accepted an invitation to provide input and collaborate during the development of the Conservation Watershed Management Plan. This involvement ultimately led us to join the AWCA as a volunteer & board member.

As our family reflects over the last year and a half of our time in the Aravaipa, we're grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the AWCA, and we appreciate the positive impacts it has had on our family, the local community, and the health of the watershed. The warm welcome and acceptance we received demonstrated to us that the AWCA values contributions from a wide range of stakeholders and members of the community. We hope that our story serves as an invitation for anyone who is interested in helping preserve and improve the Aravaipa watershed to come learn more and get involved with the AWCA.



Bird Sightings



Southwestern Willow Flycatcher



Yellow-billed Cuckoo

This summer The Nature Conservancy documented nesting territories for two new bird species at Aravaipa Canyon Preserve. Over the years visiting birders and staff have made observations of many rare species passing through Aravaipa Canyon. Usually, these sightings are thought to be of species moving through the area on their way north or south, but with recent listings of Yellow-billed cuckoo and Southwestern willow-flycatcher upgraded to endangered species, TNC decided to find out if these two species were nesting. Using a federal protocol known as “call-playback,” bird surveyors played a recording of the call and listened for an answer, then took GPS points documenting a possible territory. After three separate surveys for each species, crews were able to document 13 separate nesting territories for Southwestern willow flycatcher in just a two-mile stretch over the canyon. Something that makes this significant is that Southwestern willow flycatchers have only been known to nest in exotic Tamarisk habitat, a species staff at Aravaipa have removed over the years in favor of native riparian species. These surveys show that both of these species can thrive without the presence of Tamarisk, and may actually prefer native riparian.

The results for Yellow-billed cuckoo were even more impressive, documenting some of the highest densities anywhere in Arizona, birds answered every time the call was played. While Southwestern willow flycatchers need to be near water, Yellow-billed cuckoo can use a variety of habitats including mesquite bosque up and down the Aravaipa Valley. Neighbors can listen for its’ distinctive call during the summer. Interestingly, old timers used to call Yellow-billed cuckoo the “Rain Crow” since they start calling just before the arrival of the monsoon.



Upcoming



Next year should see...

- Annual Stakeholder Meeting
- Erosion Workshops
- Water Harvesting Workshop
- New BOR Phase 1 Grant
- Fundraisers

Join Our Email List

to keep up with our upcoming projects and events!
Join by emailing your name to awca@aravaipa.org

