

## To The Rescue! Citizen Scientists Wanted!

The Sonoran Desert is the most diverse desert on the planet! Our desert is home to hundreds of native species of plants and animals. Obscurely different from other deserts the Sonoran Desert has two rainy seasons, while all others have one. How lucky we are here in Arizona to live so closely with one of the most spectacular landscapes on earth.

So what now? Most claim they know the importance of preserving and protecting areas like the Sonoran Desert for future generations to enjoy and experience. What can be done? Besides the general maintenance of public preservation areas, national parks, and trails, there are some unique opportunities that allow a greater connection with desert life. The McDowell Mountain Field Institute offers a Citizens Scientist Program. If a passion exists for the preservation and protection of plants and animals then this is the perfect opportunity. The McDowell Mountain Conservancy has over 33,000 acres in Scottsdale. The Citizen Scientist program allows volunteers to work hand in hand with biologist at the Conservancy. There are several different free orientations the Institute offers to members of the community. Complete all these training courses and you will become a Citizen Scientist. A Citizen Scientist is involved with leading the surveying and research projects for the Institute's human impact studies.

The Field Institute has spent the last 3 years surveying the flora and fauna located on the preserve to determine a benchmark for future study and preservation of the incredible biodiversity.



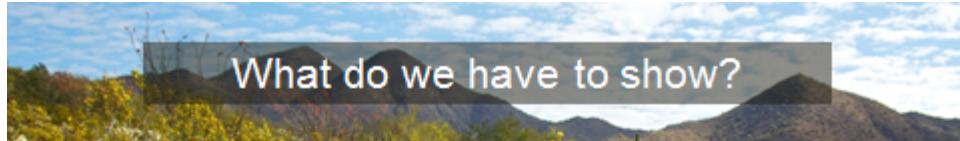
### What is out there?

- Flora – 372
- Biotic communities –  $\geq 9$
- Mammals – 24
- Herps (reptiles and amphibians) – 30
- Birds – 125
- Invertebrates – over 250
- Total = over 790 types of plants and animals!

### What does all this mean?

- Plant diversity
- Habitat diversity
- Animal diversity
- Ecosystem diversity = ecosystem resilience
- Baseline data





- **Publications**

- Flora and fauna report (In progress)
- Plant and animal checklists



- **Educational and research tools**

- Flying insect collection
- Data in free, on-line databases



Manager Melanie Tluczek is a spark of life. Her perseverance with the institute has lead to the involvment of hundreds of volunteers. This is history in the making. She personally leads several training courses, one I had the pleasure of attending. During the course Melanie touched on the work the Institue is invloved in, at the moment mainly human impact studies on the trails of the preserve, as well as surveying what plants and animals inhabit the desert along side us. She even provided field work tools for trainees to conduct a mock field study, we recorded what types of species of plants and animals were present in a mock study area. The knowledge gained at these training sessions allows a deeper understaning of the work done for the conservancy. The importance of the work is huge for understanding the biodiversity we have in the Sonoran Desert and how we can all help make a difference. The main goal of the institute is to Preserve our native habitats so we can offer the gift of their beauty and diversity to future generations.