

Mountain Lines

Vol. 20 • No. 1 • Fall 2013



Brown's Ranch Trailhead

Honors the landscape through architecture.

Wildlife Corridors

How they connect significant habitat in the Preserve.

New Trails Open!

More than 60 miles of sustainable trails now open.



McDowell Sonoran
CONSERVANCY.



Mike Nolan, Executive Director

This issue of *Mountain Lines* celebrates an important milestone in the history of the Preserve: the opening of Brown’s Ranch Trailhead and the trails in the north region.

The northern region is geographically different from the mountains in the south part of the Preserve — a flatter, rolling terrain punctuated by individual mountains. In many ways, it makes for easier hiking, biking, and horseback riding, so visits to the north are expected to increase rapidly as people experience the beauty and relative accessibility of the area.

The north area has always been important for connectivity, a theme you’ll see throughout this issue. First, it creates a connection from the McDowell Mountains to the Tonto National Forest, which can enhance wildlife movement, help maintain genetic diversity of plants and animals, and generally strengthen the overall health of the ecosystem.

There is also the issue of trail connectiv-

ity. The Maricopa Trail passes through the north region, which will eventually connect the entire valley along a lengthy loop trail. In coming years the City plans to add a trail from Tom’s Thumb to the north region, and from the Lost Dog Wash area north through the mountains, which will eventually make it possible to hike the Preserve between its northern and southern borders, from Lost Dog Wash to the Tonto National Forest.

The north region also celebrates the human connection to the land. It was the site of Brown’s Ranch, an extensive working cattle ranch through much of the last century. It’s home to other evidence of human habitation dating back nearly 10,000 years. Interpretive signs at the trailhead and a coming cultural guide that we are producing will help explain and interpret how humans have interacted with the desert here for thousands of years.


I hope you’ll visit the Brown’s Ranch Trailhead and plan some trips to explore the north area this fall. You’ll find it an interesting change from the mountains and a beautiful landscape to explore. 

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Cover Photo: *New Trails are open in the northern region of Scottsdale’s Preserve.*
Photo by: B. White

About Us

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy champions the sustainability of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve for the benefit of this and future generations. As stewards, we connect the community to the Preserve through education, research, advocacy, partnerships and safe, respectful access.

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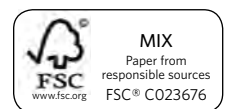
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Changes to the Gateway

Evolution is “a gradual process in which something changes into a different and usually more complex or better form.” While we tend to think of this in terms of biology, evolutionary processes take place in many areas, including the design and features of trailheads. Changes are now underway at the Gateway Trailhead designed both to improve the visitor experience and the physical condition of the trailhead itself.

The major change involves creating a new indoor/outdoor space to house more permanent interpretive exhibits in which the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Pathfinders can operate. Pathfinders are volunteer stewards who staff trailheads and help ensure that visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. The space will not increase the physical footprint of the existing structure or in any way modify its LEED Platinum certification. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a rating system for the design, construction, and high performance of green buildings. However, the folding door system will allow for a dedicated interactive visitor space that can be secured during off-hour periods.

A similar space exists at the new Brown’s Ranch Trailhead. Once completed, the City of Scottsdale, the Conservancy and the designers recognized the benefits of such a space, particularly its ability to provide a more in-depth presentation of information. The Gateway Trailhead will now evolve to include some of the best new features at Brown’s Ranch. In addition, the granite pathway from the parking lot to the trailhead will be replaced by exposed aggregate concrete to reduce wash-outs during heavy rains. Completion of the project is scheduled for fall 2013.

Design services are being provided by Phil Weddle of WEDDLE GILMORE Black Rock Studio, a Scottsdale architecture firm. Weddle has been working on Preserve projects for over a decade and is a leader in Arizona for LEED Platinum projects.

We are excited about these changes and hope that they enhance your experience in Scottsdale’s Preserve. 

Source: Jace McKeighan, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward

Gateway Trailhead modified to better accommodate trailhead hosts.

Photo credit: B. McFarland, 2013 Focus on Conservation Photo Contest Best of Show





Brown's Ranch Trailhead: Honoring Traditions and the Sonoran Desert

By Barb Pringle
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy master steward

Architecture offers perhaps the best evidence of how human societies have lived and evolved. The best forms of architecture, say experts, pay homage to the traditions of the past, but interpret them in ways that speak to present and future generations. Frank Lloyd Wright, viewed by many as one of the world's greatest architects, was a visionary and philosopher on the subject of architecture. He also had a deep and powerful presence in Arizona, particularly as represented by Taliesin West, his one-time winter home and school. He said, "Architecture is life, or at least it is life itself taking form and therefore is the truest record of life as it was lived in the world yesterday, as it is lived today or ever will be lived."

Brown's Ranch, Scottsdale's newest trailhead

Opened to the public on June 10th, Brown's Ranch Trailhead is the latest addition to Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve's public access areas. It provides parking for 200 vehicles and 24 horse trailers, as well as restrooms, a shade ramada, covered amphitheater, interpretive signage, video, exhibit space, and water for two-legged and four-legged guests. This northern region of the Preserve is popular with mountain bikers and equestrians, so the trailhead provides a place for cyclists to park their bikes, as well as hitching rails and a water trough

Brown's Ranch Trailhead is nestled in the landscape. Photo by: B. White



Brown's Ranch Trailhead draws design elements from historic pole barns. Photo by: B. White

for thirsty horses. McDowell Sonoran Conservancy volunteers were actively involved in this project and will be a continued presence in the future.

History informs design

When Phil Weddle, principal architect, and his design team at WEDDLE GILMORE Black Rock Studio began designing Scottsdale's Brown's Ranch Trailhead in early 2011, they drew their biggest inspiration from early Arizona ranch architecture. Weddle explains, "We looked at historical photos of the actual structures that were part of Brown's Ranch. Our design was informed by those buildings; our desire

was to create a modern interpretation of what once existed in the area."

Brown's Ranch was part of a larger cattle business established in 1916 by E.O. Brown and his partners. Cattle ranching died out in the 1960s as the land became more desirable for development. In 2000, the City of Scottsdale purchased a large portion of this area to include in the Preserve. Remains of the old ranch buildings exist today.

Weddle and his team were particularly inspired by the pole barns commonly used in western ranches. These are unadorned structures that use large poles as vertical structural members along with girts, which provide structural



Brown's Ranch Trailhead design honors those who ranched in the area. Photo by: B. White

and lateral support to the wall panels. In keeping with the structure's simplicity, the construction materials were also simple and connected to historical western ranch design. They selected board-formed concrete and weathered steel; reclaimed wood was used for the "barn doors" which slide open on horizontal steel girts to reveal an interpretive center documenting the lives of ranchers and native people who once lived in the area.

Honoring the landscape

Weddle's firm also paid close attention to the physical significance of this northern region of the Preserve. "When we do these types of public projects, we talk about how to design a facility that builds connections to the Sonoran Desert. We want to create a design identity that's in unison with the desert and that enables visitors of all ages and abilities to celebrate, engage with and experience the land. And, it's very important that we do our utmost to minimize the environmental

impact of construction. We want the finished structure to seem as if it has always been there."

In early design stages, the team did extensive site analysis to better understand key geological features, such as the striking rock formations in the region, and to get a sense of the physical terrain and any unique landscape lines. "We took note of the rolling terrain and any unique landscape lines. For example, in the early 1990s, there was a small wildfire in that area, and it left a distinct difference in the density of plant life on one side of the planned site. This was important for placement of the trailhead. We also noticed a nice stand of saguaro cacti in the area and our goal was to protect and preserve them."

Community input

When designing a public facility such as Brown's Ranch Trailhead, Scottsdale requires a series of open meetings so community members can express their concerns and their ideas

on what the facility should provide.

Weddle and Scottsdale city staff met with Conservancy volunteers, neighbors, equestrian and mountain biking groups and the wider Scottsdale community. The biggest concerns centered on protecting view corridors and minimizing traffic. Potential key user-groups were excited about the opportunity to enjoy cycling and horseback riding on improved area trails.

Because view corridors were of great concern, Weddle's team conducted studies to ensure that the trailhead had minimal visual impact on surrounding homes. To that end, they met with residents of the six homes closest to the trailhead. They drew profile lines from the second-story windows of these homes to determine how tall the proposed structure would have to reach to impede residents' sight lines.

Fortunately for the architects and neighbors, the area's rolling terrain allowed placement of the parking lot and trailhead behind a hill where they are

utterly invisible to adjacent homes. Visit and watch as the trailhead slowly unfolds and reveals itself; it seems to epitomize the idea that good architecture organically arises from its site and is shaped by its surroundings.

Neighbors who were once detractors have become proudly invested in their beautiful new amenity. Peggy McNamara, a Conservancy steward, lives nearby and heard from many neighbors who were initially concerned about this project. "They were worried about trailhead structures being visible from the neighborhood, light pollution, night-time activities in the Preserve, and cars parked on neighborhood streets. Scottsdale's neighborhood meetings were very helpful for airing concerns and developing solutions. The city also hosted a sneak preview just before the trailhead opening. The preview was mobbed! After seeing the finished trailhead, people were very complimentary about how well it turned out. Now, my neighbors use the Preserve, instead of the neighborhood, to exercise," she said.

Sustainability standards


Brown's Ranch Trailhead is a pilot project for Scottsdale's voluntary, newly-adopted International Green Construction Code (IGCC), an emerging code for sustainable design and construction. (LEEDs certification now is available only to buildings of a certain size and this building was too small to meet the standard.)

As with other Scottsdale trailheads, a range of sustainable features are incorporated within the project's design and construction. A 9kw photo-voltaic solar array was included with the goal of equalizing energy production and

consumption to attain a net zero annual energy expenditure.

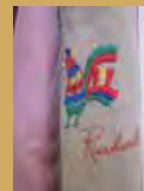
Graywater and rainwater is harvested at the site. Great sensitivity was used during grading to minimize erosion as well as native plant displacement. Many of the building materials are noncombustible, which will aid in fire control. In fact, the presence of the trailhead as a staging area could help firefighters battle future blazes in the area.

A celebration of the opening of the northern lands is set for October 19th at Brown's Ranch Trailhead. By then, Conservancy trail construction

and maintenance volunteers will have completed the Jane Rau Interpretive Trail, which winds through a beautiful boulder-lined canyon east of the trailhead. The trail honors Jane Rau, co-founder of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy and a long-time (and current) volunteer. Come join us in October to celebrate a marriage of history, architecture and desert environment, all wrapped up in the gift that is the Brown's Ranch Trailhead. 

For more information about the grand opening celebration, visit our website at www.mcdowellsonoran.org/opening.

Brown's Ranch Trailhead Exhibit



Cattle Track Couture: Fashion by Rachael Ellis

In the 1930s, Arizona pioneer George Ellis purchased a 10-acre property on the Arizona Canal that grew into a haven for art and artists known as Cattle Track Arts Compound. Rachael Ellis, his wife, was a multi-talented pioneer woman, raising greyhounds with George, running her home, teaching, playing the violin, training horses and raising her children. She also sewed extensively, designing and revamping beautiful clothing for herself, her daughter Janie, as well as costumes for the theater company she ran with Janie until the 2000's.

Beginning October 19, 2013 and continuing through April 30, 2014, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy will highlight these masterful pieces in an exhibit at the newly opened Brown's Ranch Trailhead in Scottsdale. In Cattle Track Couture, Janie will exhibit gorgeous, multihued ensembles, outerwear, dresses, and vests Rachael stitched over the years using luxurious fabrics. A coffee-table book authored by family friend Lucy Diggs, *Cattle Track Couture — Fashion by Rachael Ellis*, will offer historical family photographs and is possibly one of the best tributes to Scottsdale pioneers. Come peek into a fascinating slice of Arizona history.

Source: Janie Ellis

Exhibit sponsored by the Sonoran Desert Women, a women's group dedicated to supporting the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. Open Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday morning from 8–11 a.m. For more information about joining the Sonoran Desert Women, visit our website at mcdowellsonoran.org/women

Wildlife Corridors in Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve

By Susan Aufheimer
McDowell Sonoran Field Institute citizen scientist
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward



Large desert animals, such as mountain lions and mule deer, need plenty of room to roam. A male mountain lion's home range can extend up to 300 square miles. Mule deer (the favorite prey of the mountain lion) need an average of 15 square miles to call home. To survive, all animals, regardless of size, must have the freedom to move about according to the availability of food, water, and mating opportunities within their particular territory.

Even though many Valley cities set aside natural open spaces and create desert preserves, the balance of nature within those spaces can change significantly. Wildlife is often isolated on an island of natural desert surrounded by houses and roads, cut off from full use of its natural territory. Large animals leave the area seeking a better and broader habitat, and as large predators disappear, smaller animals take over, and the balance of nature begins to shift. When animals are confined to a small area, inbreeding becomes a threat, leading to weakened offspring and failure to thrive.

One of the greatest accomplishments that expansion of Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve has achieved is its connection to larger natural areas—Tonto National Forest, McDowell Regional Park, and the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation land. This connection increases available open space by many thousands of acres, enabling populations of animals to continue their natural movements and promoting genetic diversity.

The Preserve, through the City of Scottsdale's land acquisitions, provides what is known as wildlife movement corridors, whose primary function is to connect significant habitat areas. With the acquisition of the area known as Brown's Ranch, for example, a mountain lion can now travel to Tonto National Forest, through land that will not be subject to future development or wildlife isolation.

So why not build a connection from Tom's Thumb to Brown's Ranch to allow even greater opportunity for passage within the Preserve? A parcel of land was specifically purchased by the City of Scottsdale in 2011 to provide such a linkage. The parcel comprises 2,500 acres and runs par-


allel to 128th Street. While extremely important for free flow of wildlife, this particular corridor presents complications for animal movement because Dynamite Boulevard runs through it. According to Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGF), roads are a major threat to the long-term existence of wildlife populations.

The question becomes, to what extent does Dynamite Boulevard impact animal passage and can any negative impacts be mitigated? To answer that question, AZGF conducted road-kill surveys along Dynamite Boulevard where it runs through the corridor. Their goal was to learn which animals use the corridor now, and to collect enough

data to devise a plan for maximizing the effectiveness of the corridor to increase wildlife connectivity.

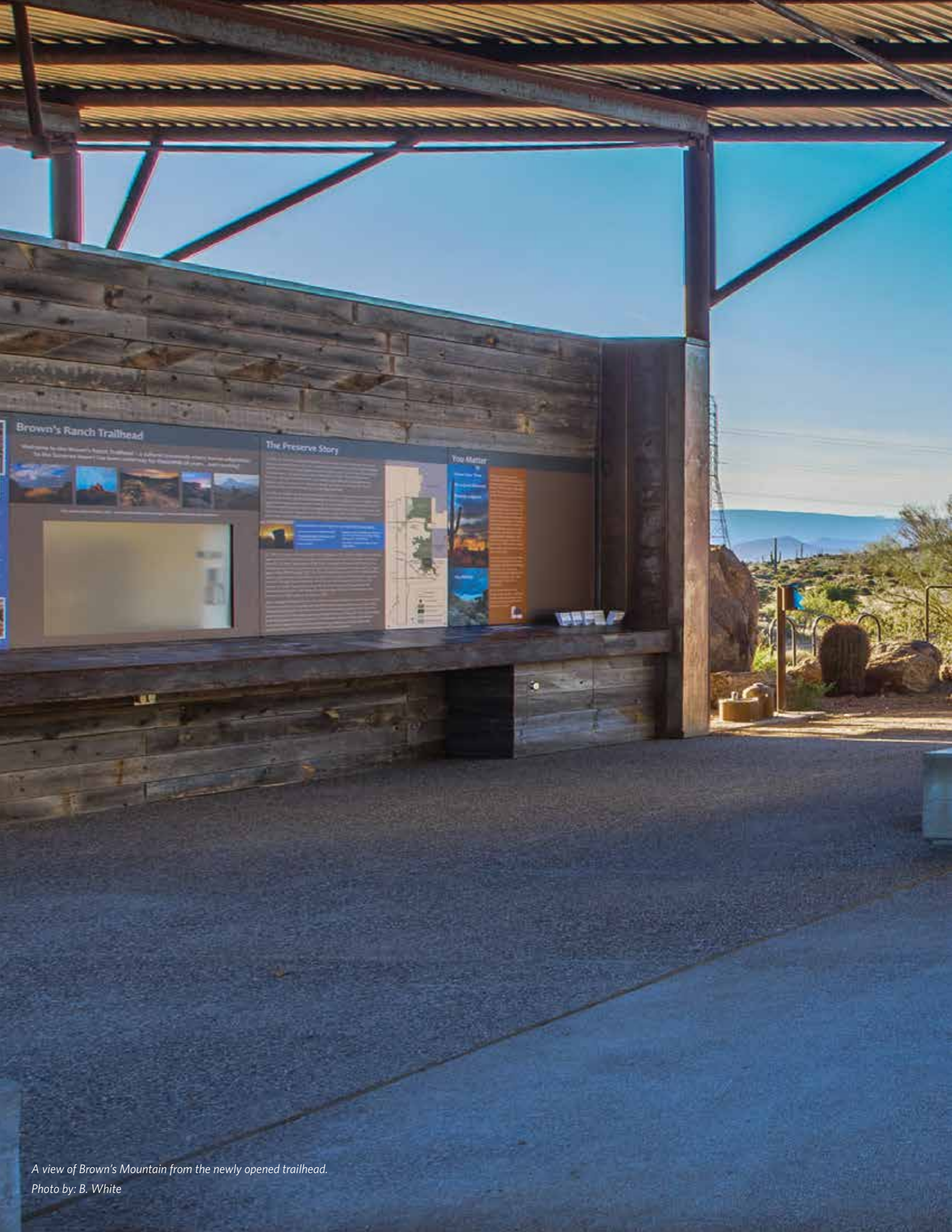
After analyzing the results, AZGF developed several recommendations for improving corridor management, including long-term monitoring of wildlife movement and outreach efforts to inform local residents of the importance of the corridor. In addition, AZGF recommendations for road improvement included installing multiple wildlife-crossing structures over Dynamite Boulevard and constructing several culverts of different sizes beneath the road to accommodate passage of the largest animal down to the smallest lizard. Those recommendations

were delivered to the City of Scottsdale for its review and pending action.

The study of the Brown's Ranch-Tom's Thumb corridor is only one example of the efforts being made by the City of Scottsdale, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy to scientifically research how best to manage wildlife corridors throughout the Preserve. While establishing such corridors does not make up for loss of habitat outside the Preserve, the corridors inside the Preserve help reduce the negative effects by allowing animals to move freely in and out of their remaining habitat, keeping open the opportunities for maintaining biodiversity. 

Preserve corridors run alongside 128th street and cross Dynamite Boulevard. Photo by: B. White





A view of Brown's Mountain from the newly opened trailhead.
Photo by: B. White



Breakfast on Brown's Mountain

By Peggy NcNamara
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward



Grab your breakfast and take an early morning hike on the newly opened trails leading to Brown's Mountain summit in the northern region of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. You'll find the view from Brown's Mountain rivals the view from any mountaintop restaurant.

There are two ways to reach Brown's Mountain summit. Both start at Brown's Ranch Trailhead. If you take the shorter route, you'll hike north on the old dirt road leading to Brown's Ranch. In just a few minutes, you'll pass under the power lines and quickly come to the trail marker for Brown's Mountain Trail.

Turn onto that trail and meander along toward the mountain. The trail gently rises, slowly revealing more of the surrounding mountains and desert scenery. A short hike will bring you to the first switch-back on the trail. More quickly than might seem possible, you reach the light-colored tuff* layer of rock prominently visible near the top of the mountain. Then suddenly after rounding a sharp curve, you see the first view of Phoenix.

After taking time to appreciate the view, press on and climb up switchbacks to a trail marker just 0.2 miles below the summit of the mountain. There is an arrow to a scenic lookout, where a short path leads to a wonderful view. It's a side trip you shouldn't miss. The view is almost 360 degrees and offers a good excuse to take a breather before tackling the last and steepest part of the trail.

The last part of the trail has steep inclines, loose dirt and slippery stones before getting to the summit. At 3,253 feet, the view is superb! Hot air balloons often seen in the western sky will seem to be at eye-level. Or, walk to the edge of the summit, peer over a sheer wall and look down at the top of Cone Mountain. You can also find several interesting artifacts on the summit—two concrete slabs and the stub of a wooden power line pole. These remnants are from more than half a century ago. The origin of the slabs, one with names and "1958" written in the concrete, is unknown. The use of these slabs is being researched by the Pastfinders, a group of history researchers with the McDowell Sonoran Field Institute, the research center of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy.

After investigating the top of the mountain, plan to have breakfast and a mileage count. You should have hiked 1.5 miles and gained 533 feet in elevation. Get out the binoculars to take a better look around before it's time to go.

The steep way down to where you meet the scenic lookout path requires a lot of care. Many bring hiking poles to help. After reaching the viewpoint area, you have a choice of which trail to take back, the shorter way or a 2.5-mile trail that will lead around the back of the mountain. Whichever way you choose, though, the way back to the trailhead is all downhill.

What!?! You say you don't want to hike to the summit of Brown's Mountain? Then there's a loop trail around the base of the mountain that takes



*Brown's Mountain Trail takes you to the summit.
Photo by: B. White*

you by historic Brown's Ranch. Many old artifacts are there, left from the time when it was a working ranch between 1917 and 1970. You can see parts of the old homestead and other remnants from ranch life still in place.

Back at the trailhead, linger at the ramada to read about the area's history and look at the photographs. The story, accompanied by a timeline, begins with the arrival of the first people in 7000 BC and continues to the present.

So, grab your breakfast and get going. Whatever you bring to eat will taste better at the top of the mountain or at the old homestead. 🏹

** Tuff is consolidated volcanic ash. Geologists theorize that the tuff on Brown's Mountain was deposited during volcanic activity occurring in the Superstition area around 15 to 25 million years ago. The black basalt rock visible at the top of Brown's Mountain is quickly-cooled lava that was deposited on the mountain during the same epoch.*



Redesigned Trails Ensure Access and Sustainability

By Nancy Howe
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy lead steward

When you read the new map of Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve's northern region, you'll discover that the 60 miles of renamed trails and redesigned routes reveal as much about the people and politics that shaped this region as about the landforms themselves. The first trails that criss-crossed the state trust lands north of Dynamite Road were mostly carved by moto-cross riders. Mountain bikers soon followed in their tracks. Before the Internet, these biking-trail maps were intimate bits of knowledge, hand-drawn onto topo maps, photocopied, and passed around within the riding communities. New users added their own discoveries, photocopied the revised maps, and passed them around, again and again.

About 1996, details from the individual maps reached the Internet, where generous riders like Dale Wiggins consolidated the information into the "100 miles of single track," making the spaghetti-like trail maps universally available. Over time, maps proliferated, published in blogs and on-line community forums. Trails were identified by the informal names early riders — both moto-cross and mountain bikers — gave them, or by the numbers that appeared on trail signs, or occasionally by both. (Numbers came into use starting around 2000 when the land transitioned into the Granite Mountain multi-use area, managed by a consortium of government agencies including Arizona Game and Fish, Arizona State Land Department, the Tonto National Forest, and the City of Scottsdale.)

As the north became part of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, both the land and the trails fell under new management objectives. Multi-use recreation gave way to Preserve goals of habitat and cultural resource protection, along with non-motorized public access to popular destinations. "Our first task was to learn what the public wanted in the north," recalls Scott Hamilton, senior preserve trail planner. A series of open houses in April 2012 gathered input from citizens: What destinations did trail users seek? What trails

*Some trails under the power lines have been redesigned to promote sustainability.
Photo by: B. White*

were local favorites? What trails could be closed to support habitat protection? The resulting Conceptual Trails Master Plan was approved by the city council later in August.

Implementing the trail master plan became a multi-faceted challenge. First, the city needed to restore integrity to the trail system. Many existing trails, gouged into the foothills and mountains by motor and mountain bikes, reflected the thrill-seeking bias of their users. Trails followed the “fall line” of the slopes, taking the steepest and most challenging route, a straight line down a hill. “That is a problem because fall-line trails are erosion nightmares,” explains Hamilton. “Trails that follow the fall line create giant ruts. When you create ruts, you lose soil; when you lose soil, you lose plants and habitat,” says Hamilton. “We understand that fall-line trails are fun for riders. They are challenging and they are fast. But they are also costly to the Preserve environment. None of the historic trails out here were built to adhere to the land contours and grade, which is the first step in creating a sustainable trail environment. We knew we’d need to address that head on.”

Second, the city needed to respond to the desires of the true owners of the land, the citizens of Scottsdale. “People want access, at different levels of difficulty, to the most beautiful sites in the Preserve,” says Hamilton. “That means providing high-quality, safe trails to places like Cathedral Rock and the top of Brown’s Mountain, while maintaining large areas free of trails for habitat protection, like the extensive area east of Brown’s Ranch.”

Guided by the trail master plan, the City’s Preserve planners and managers adopted a fresh approach toward all the trails, evaluating each to balance access with sustainability. Trails with extensive fall-line

segments were re-designed to respect landform contours and to maintain grades of less than 10 percent to limit erosion. Existing trails were retained whenever possible, rebuilding segments only where necessary to protect the soil. Scenic destination trails were re-routed, and in some cases, new trails were added in anticipation of high use.

“We expect more bikers, more hikers, more equestrians, and more climbers, and we’ve created a trail system that supports all of them,” says Hamilton. For example, two trails provide

access to Brown’s Mountain, one from the front and one from the back. “We could have left just the one trail, around the back, but we know how we all are,” he explains, smiling. “If someone rides up Brown’s Mountain along the back trail, and, from the peak, sees his or her car in the lot, it is likely that person will think, ‘I’m not going all the way around the back when I can just drop down the front.’ So to best serve our users, we created sustainable, contoured trails that access Brown’s Mountain on both sides, front and back,” says Hamilton.

A view of Brown’s Mountain Trail from above. Photo by: B. White





Trails were renamed and signed to help direct visitors. Photo by: B. White

The third design innovation is the series of ever-expanding loops that the trails create over the nearly 20,000-acre expanse of the new northern region. Just as the Gateway Loop Trail is the highest-use trail out of the Gateway Trailhead, planners anticipate that the Brown's Ranch Road / Brown's Mountain Trail and the Granite Mountain Loop Trail will be the high-use trails out of the Brown's Ranch and Granite Mountain Trailheads. Beyond these two basic loops, all the trails in the north region are being re-conceived and re-named to invite users to build their own loops, either to add distance, difficulty, or more rugged terrain to their outings. Trails without well-known destinations or that skirt the outer regions of the Preserve will draw fewer people. The endless loop opportunities invite users to create their own personal experiences in the Preserve. Says Hamilton, "What we choose to do in the Preserve reflects our emotional connections to nature, how we identify ourselves, what we do for fun, and how we connect with our families. We rebuilt the trails to give each of our users the freedom to create their own, personal routes through the Preserve." This create-your-own-trail design

philosophy, which presents users with a series of inter-connected, loop segments, will also guide development of the 100 miles of future trails opening next year in the northernmost reaches of the Preserve and in the gooseneck region to the south.

Preserve users and their impacts in the southern region prompted the final series of innovations in the north. When it comes to reckless or rule-breaking behavior, "We've seen it all," says Hamilton. The most obvious "lesson learned" from Hamilton's years of managing the Preserve's trails deals with trail signage. In the northern region, every junction has a sign with an emergency-marker identifier composed of two letters and a number: the letters reflect the trail name and the number is usually a sequential segment number. Roughly 80 signposts dot the northern region, many with multiple signs (170 signs in all), to orient users across the 60 miles of new and rehabilitated trails. The signs are physically bigger to accom-

modate more information, and made of galvanized steel instead of aluminum to deter vandals from "taco'ing" the signs; that is, bending them into a U-shape. Messages on the signs promote Preserve etiquette with about a dozen key ideas such as yielding the trail to horses, don't pick up desert tortoises, and stay on the trail. In areas near the Preserve perimeters, the reminders are more pointed: the Preserve closes at dark, removing natural materials violates Preserve rules, and guidelines for users with dogs. "We tried to make the signs more effective by using less formal language," Hamilton adds. "We didn't go as far as the campaigns that have been so effective in Colorado, but we hope that people will read the signs and recognize that we all depend on each other to protect the Preserve." 🐦

Learn more:

www.mcdowellsonoran.org/maps
<http://jeffco.us/sheriff/animal-control/poop-fairy/>

The Maricopa Trail

by Jace McKeighan
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy steward


The acquisition of the northern region of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve has been a great accomplishment for both the City of Scottsdale and the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. This land is important for protection of habitat, linking the mountains with the Tonto National Forest, and providing recreational trail connection. Trails in the area are important on a local and regional scale. Not only do they allow visitors access to more than 60 miles of trail, but the trails also create linkages to the Maricopa Trail. If you have not heard of the Maricopa Trail, then it is certainly time that you did.

Once completed, the Maricopa Trail will be more than 420 miles long and link all 10 Maricopa County parks surrounding Phoenix and its suburbs, as well as the Preserve. It will consist of a loop trail encircling much of the urbanized area of greater Phoenix, with four spurs that will connect the loop with outlying regional parks.

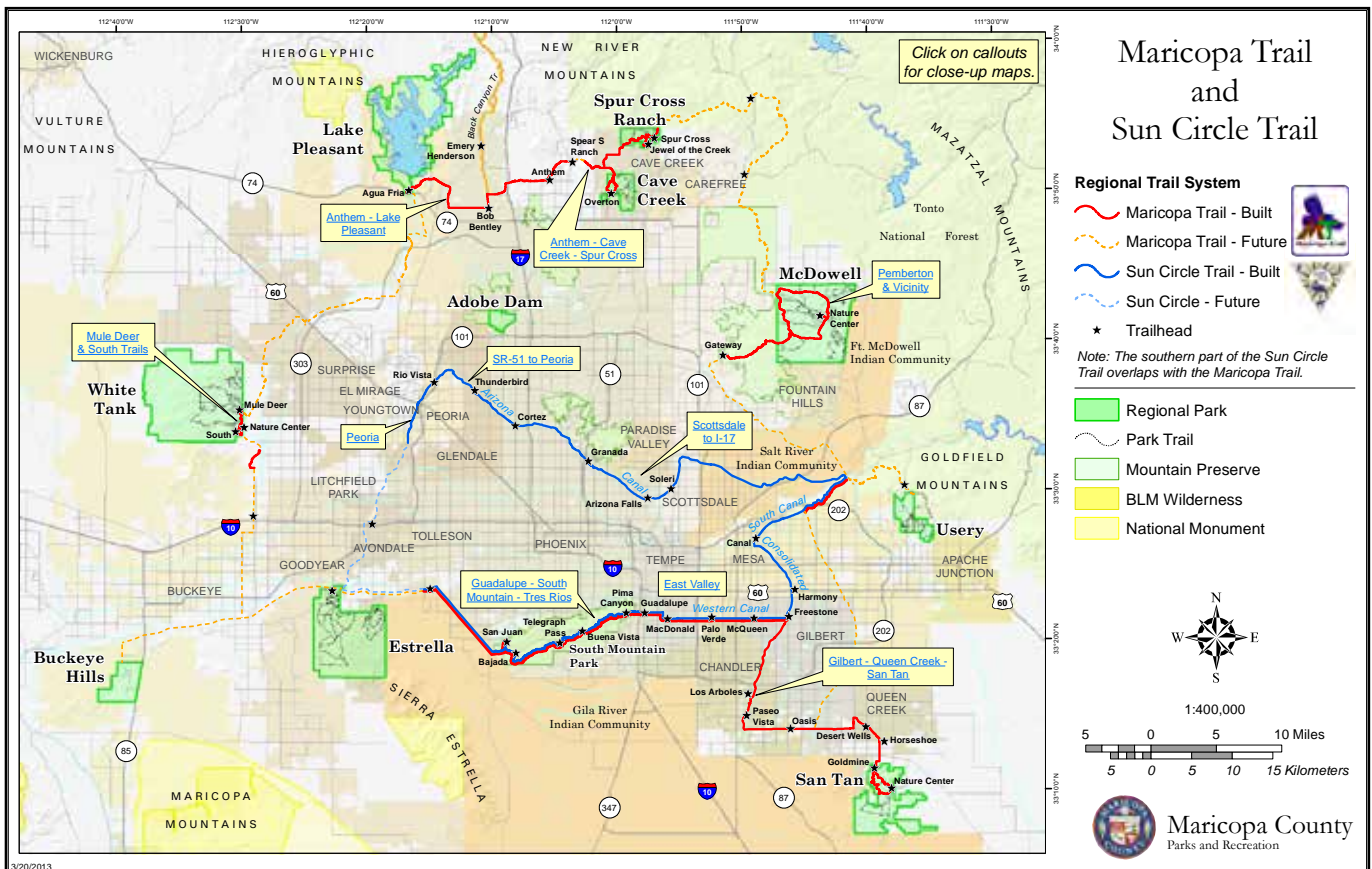
The genesis for the trail was February 2000, when the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors formed the Maricopa

County Trail Commission and unveiled plans to develop a Regional Trail System. The plan established the Maricopa Trail, and identified future trail corridors throughout the County, including the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. The Maricopa Trail completed the midpoint of its construction approximately one year ago.

Development of the Maricopa Trail has been a significant undertaking, requiring the acquisition of rights of way from many jurisdictions, as well as easements on canals, parks and utility corridors. The county then retained a private contractor to build 4-foot-wide trails through the desert terrain, funded by the Maricopa County general fund. Many miles of trail were funded and constructed by local agencies, including trails in the Preserve, but they will carry the Maricopa Trail designation when the final alignments are determined.

The Maricopa Trail offers a unique context in which to view the Preserve. As we celebrate the growth of the Preserve, we can take note of its place and importance in the larger geographic region. 

Map of the proposed Maricopa Trail. Courtesy of Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department



A Better Tomorrow


Thank you to the Valley Lexus dealers for their support of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy! Lexus believes that children have the potential, and the desire, to make the world a better place. To encourage children to pursue their dreams, Lexus supports organizations like the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy that build, shape and improve children's lives.

Helping to make our community a better place, the focus of Lexus design efficiency is to build a vehicle that is exceptionally lean in its use of raw

materials, its fuel and its impact on the environment—all the while pushing the boundaries of performance, luxury and quality. With bold styling, dynamically tuned suspensions, and adjustable drive modes, Lexus brings us a performance line that is designed to stand apart.

Thank you, Valley Lexus dealer's for your commitment to the environment and to our community! *As the presenting sponsor of the 2013 Tour de Scottsdale, you are helping us make a better tomorrow, all while supporting a great community event.*

Lexus Cycling Clinics

Lexus is teaming up with FASTER, the world's most comprehensive cycling performance center, to offer Tour de Scottsdale participants (from the beginner cyclist to the recreational rider, competitive cyclist to triathlete) training clinics to prepare you for the ride of your life! Check our website for up-to-date information on dates and locations. 



Tour de Scottsdale presented by Lexus

Sunday, October 13, 2013—6:30 a.m. start

Market Street at DC Ranch, 20645 North Pima Road (at Thompson Peak Parkway)

The 10th annual Tour de Scottsdale returns with the traditional 70-mile citizens' ride and popular 30-mile ride. Hosted by the DC Ranch Community Council, both courses begin at Market Street at DC Ranch and wind through Scottsdale, Cave Creek, Carefree, and Fountain Hills. With donations benefitting the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, the spectacular views of Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve underscore to riders that they are contributing to a great cause. Register at www.tourdescottsdale.net.





The Family Passport



The Family Passport is an interactive game booklet distributed free to families at Preserve trailheads that encourages kids to look for items as they hike with their family. When hiking with the booklet, families stay longer and parents talk more to their kids about the plants and animals they see in the Preserve. Families are encouraged to earn a stamp from each trailhead for a prize, which gets

kids excited about coming back to the Preserve. We also have learned through anecdotal feedback from families who are using the passport that additional games and activities done together along the trails enhances the Preserve experience.

Each trailhead section focuses on a different aspect of the Preserve, including desert animals, plants and geology spe-

cific to each area. Thanks to generous funding from APS, we recently added pages for Brown's Ranch Trailhead, offering a look at interesting facets of Arizona history, including how Native Americans lived on the land and what it meant to be a ranching family. 🦋



Join Our Circle of Friends

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy champions the sustainability of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve for the benefit of this and future generations. Our mission is a promise to our children, and theirs – to protect and promote the McDowell Sonoran Preserve so that it will flourish for years to come. Help us keep our promise to the future and return this form with your gift today.

- McDowell Sonoran Society (\$1,500+)
- Steward Circle (\$1,000)
- Pathfinder Circle (\$100)
- Trailbuilder Circle (\$500)
- Hiker Circle (\$50)
- Caretaker Circle (\$250)
- Other _____

Please charge my credit card A check is enclosed

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Name(s) by which you would like to be acknowledged _____

Address _____ Email _____

Phone _____

I would prefer that my gift remain anonymous

Mail to: McDowell Sonoran Conservancy • 16435 N. Scottsdale Rd. • Suite 110 • Scottsdale, AZ 85254





16435 North Scottsdale Road
Suite 110
Scottsdale, Arizona 85254

Get the latest McDowell Sonoran
Conservancy info at:



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Family Fridays and Trailside Naturalist Station added at Brown's Ranch Trailhead!



For all those that love the Family Friday Sunset Series held the first Friday of every month from November through April at the Gateway Trailhead, we have great news! We are offering an additional program each month at the new Brown's Ranch Trailhead, located at 30301 North Alma School Parkway. On the third Friday of every month from October through April, join us from 4:30 to about 5:30 p.m. to learn more about the Sonoran Desert and all that makes our home unique. Bring your family outdoors for some fresh air and a memorable family experience with the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy.

If Fridays won't work for you, stop by the trailside naturalist station every Saturday morning from 9:30 to 11:30. Volunteer experts answer questions and share items that allow Preserve visitors to touch, hear and even taste things that will enhance their outdoor experience. For more information, check our website at mcdowellsonoran.org/freefamilyfun. 🐦

*Conservancy Naturalist Judi Irons at the Gateway trailside station.
Photo by: S. Dodd*