

Patagonia Regional Times



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Canelo Hills Residents Report Surge in Hunting Abuses

By Dave Lumia

Hunters gonna hunt. And people who live in remote areas where game is prevalent understand that.

But some hunters are gonna abuse the privilege. And that's not so understandable for those remote-living folks, many of whom are hunters themselves.

Five residents from the Canelo Hills area met recently with the PRT to express concerns about being overrun with "bad actors" during the Coues whitetail deer season that concluded in December. They said other neighbors share their concerns but were reluctant to speak out.

Among the behavior the residents said they witnessed during the 2025 season:

- A beheaded deer and gut-shot fawn, left in the field
- Mounds of trash and human waste
- Scouting with drones
- Untended campfires
- Overstaying time limits
- Threats and intimidation tactics on private property
- Shooting within a quarter-mile of residences
- Road hunting from all-terrain vehicles

Dave Whitaker, an avid hunter who has lived in the Lyle Canyon area for seven years said, "This year something changed and the traffic was at least two-fold of what it's ever been, probably more. And the disregard for what I consider ethical hunting practices was kind of rampant."

The Canelo Hills area is part of Unit 35A, which runs from south of Highway 82 to the Mexico border, from Lochiel on the west to the San Pedro River on the east. It is one of the most popular whitetail hunting areas in the state, with a total of 1,165 whitetail permits issued for four separate rifle hunts in 35A in 2025 – beginning Oct. 24 and ending Dec. 31.

The residents who met with the PRT explained that they are not anti-hunting and stressed that they believe the "bad actors" are a small minority, but that minority grew "exponentially" in the past year due to the sheer number of hunters in the area. The cause for the increased volume is unclear.

Whitaker said he witnessed signs south of Parker Canyon Lake declaring the area to be a military zone and off-limits to recreational use.

"That was a pretty popular area, Jones Mesa, a lot of people hunted down that way, and a lot of it you can't reach now. I think people that

See Hunting, p. 20

Seniors Night Celebration

Pair of victories mark final home game for Lobo seniors



Photos by Dave Lumia

Ximena Gonzalez, Emma Lewton, Brianna Majalca and Valeria Castellanos (left to right) were honored during PUHS Senior Night ceremonies after the Lobos defeated North Phoenix Prep 38-31 on Jan. 27. The girls concluded their regular season with road victories over San Manuel and Lourdes Catholic, giving them a 10-13 overall record and No. 23 ranking heading into this weekend's 1A South region playoffs in St. David. The top 24 teams qualify for the state tournament.



Gus Varela, Jaxon Yslava, Gavin Arbizo, Noah Gallardo, Miguel Albarran and Diego Padilla (left to right) were honored during Senior Night ceremonies prior to the Lobos' 63-54 victory over North Phoenix Prep on Jan. 27. The boys concluded their regular season with three consecutive victories over San Manuel, Lourdes Catholic and ASDB and will take a 14-13 overall record and No. 23 ranking into this weekend's 1A South region playoffs in St. David. The top 24 teams qualify for the state tournament.

Patagonia Regional Times



MISSION STATEMENT

To be a reliable and engaging source of news for the communities of eastern Santa Cruz County—open to all views, focused on local issues, written and edited by local people, and providing a platform for community education and involvement.

WHO WE ARE

We are a nonprofit news organization, funded by paid advertising, donations and grants. The PRT is distributed in print monthly in eastern Santa Cruz County, weekly in the PRT News Bulletin and on our website.

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Send your idea to editor@prtnews.org

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Moving On - Reflections On the Last Nine Years

"Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." —Thomas Jefferson

By Marion Vendituoli

I came across this quote as I was cleaning out my PRT files, sorting through them to see what should be tossed and what might be worth keeping. I couldn't agree with Old Tom more, especially after the year we've just lived through. Never has it been more crucial for us to stay informed about what is going on locally, regionally and nationally.

I don't remember who handed me this scrap of paper with Jefferson's words. It could have been Donna Reibslager, who, nine years and 90 issues of the PRT ago, put her faith in me to continue this bold experiment in local news gathering that she and Walter Andrew had brought into existence in 2009. Or it could have been Ann Katzenbach, my predecessor, whose kindness and support showed me how to do this big job.

Or, I don't know, maybe it came from a reader. My inbox has seen a constant flow of comments, contributions, suggestions, praise, and occasionally criticisms from our readers, which has been a source of great pride (and sometimes amusement) for me over the past nine years. Our success as a local news organization stems in large part, I believe, from the fact that our readers feel a strong sense of ownership of the PRT.

This was my vision from the start, but it was a group effort that accounts for the PRT's continued presence here in the eastern side of the county. Extraordinary people live here and many of them, past and present, have worked hard to grow the paper. I have been lucky enough to work with the likes of Laura Wenzel, Janie Trafton, Aisha Sander, Cynie Murray, Nisa Talavera and Priscilla Bolanos. Without their creativity, knowledge and dedication, the PRT would not have thrived. Special thanks go out to Assistant Editor Jay Babcock who has gone above and beyond, especially this past year, to keep the PRT going as I have been dealing with ongoing health concerns.

When I first took over this job, every month I would let out a huge sigh of relief that we had pulled off another issue. We put out the March issue, but who knew if there might be an April issue? But our band of volunteer writers would show up month after month, come up with news stories, do the hard work of chasing down leads and telling our community's stories.

Without the dedication and guidance of the PRT Board of Directors, the PRT would most definitely not have survived. We all owe them a debt of gratitude for their confidence in the crazy idea that a newspaper written by volunteer citizen journalists would be a sustainable model.

And obviously we couldn't have done this work without our readers, sponsors, and loyal advertisers who have supported the PRT with their donations and patronage, keeping the PRT available to all our residents at no cost for the past 16 years.

I am sure the PRT has an exciting future ahead. In a perfect world, I would continue to steer this ship forward, but it is time for me to step away from my role as managing editor. This is my last issue as editor, although I hope to keep writing for the paper.

I am not worried about the future of the PRT. The Board has hired a new editor to continue our



mission: Pilar Martinez, who comes to us with a strong background in journalism, having worked for the Associated Press, AZ Daily Star and the Tucson Citizen. She also worked for 25 years for the Univ of Arizona in a number of roles, including Senior Director of Strategic Communications. I look forward to seeing where the paper goes from here under her leadership.

Life takes you down some unexpected paths. Back in 2017, when Ann Katzenbach called me to ask if I would join the PRT board, I blurted out, "No thank you to the board. I want to be the editor." No idea where that came from. I hadn't given it any conscious thought, but it felt right, even though I took the job the same week that I submitted my paperwork for Medicare.

I imagined the job to be one I could do in my pajamas, eating bonbons. How hard could correcting people's grammar be anyway?

I was quickly disabused of that notion as I realized that I was now responsible for not only content, but layout, marketing, fundraising and all the back-of-the-house operations. There was a steep learning curve. I gained ten pounds in a month, and my computer called me "Ann" for the next year.

For the past nine years I have been driven by my firm belief in the importance of the PRT in our local landscape. It has required my daily attention, even while Frank and I gained three more grandchildren, built a new house, bought cows and chickens, and are dealing with illnesses we never imagined we would have to face.

Things did not always go to plan. I realized early on that I really didn't know what a bonbon was exactly and I had to make do with bags of spice drops from Tractor Supply. And marching around in my pajamas scared the cows, so that was out.

But what I had not expected was the feeling of pride and accomplishment every month when we sent the paper to the printers or when I saw people lined up to grab the latest issue from a newsbox. I didn't realize how honored I would feel to be able to share our area's stories, and to work with, and get to know, people with such passion for our communities, talented writers and dedicated board members.

It's been a big job, but I am so proud of all that we have accomplished together.

Local News Matters

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'Together We Fly' Sculpture Planned for Doc Mock Park

By Mary Tolena

Patagonia's rich abundance of birds has brought the town many gifts and benefits over the years. It attracted major funding decades ago that led to the town's treasured nature spaces, the Patagonia-Sonoita Preserve and the Paton Hummingbird Center. It inspires local artists and backyard naturalists. It provides the daily delight of listening to their lively chorus. And Patagonia's birds attract a steady stream of enthusiastic birders from all over the world who add species to their life lists and lift the town economy.

Inspired by the birds' importance and special energy in the town, artist Keith Spooner wanted to offer a major metal sculpture to add to Doc Mock Park. Last September, she presented three concepts to the town council, which was pleased to hear her proposal, though it could not provide any town funding. The council unanimously chose the concept that was her favorite, too: a set of five vertical feathers entitled "Together We Fly."

"To me, the five feathers represent members of our community. It takes multiple feathers to create flight," Spooner said. "Just like when members of our community come together, we can accomplish great things that take flight."

At over eleven feet tall, the sculpture will be a dramatic addition to the park at the south end of town. There is plenty of open space there, and the town council wanted it to be visible from Highway 82 from both directions.

"I know that eleven feet seems tall, but when you're driving by in a car, it won't seem that tall in the scale of the park," Spooner said.

An eleven-foot public sculpture needs careful planning and a strong foundation, and a structural engineer is currently analyzing the drawings. "I want to make sure my materials are thick enough and the fasteners are substantial enough against wind loads," Spooner said. "We want to add some external lighting and a lot of rock and gravel around the base."

Spooner will be holding a fundraiser at the Patagonia Lumber Company on Sunday, March 1, to raise money for the ground preparation, foundation structure, concrete pour and lighting. She hopes to raise \$20,000, and already has a number of pledges. Bricks

with sponsors' names will become part of the base.

"Together We Fly is a community sculpture, belonging to all of us — not only those who participate in the physical creation of it physically and monetarily, but also to all of us who enjoy and appreciate it as a representation of who we are as a community," she said.

Spooner is also a metal fabricator who builds information displays and signage. She built several of the park's interpretive signs, including the ones at the southern ramada and the entrance to the Cemetery Trail.

She grew up in Ohio and West Virginia, and has been an artist and creator from a young age. "I grew up drawing, painting, sewing myself costumes and making different things. I went to college for fine arts, and I've been a graphic designer my whole life."

After Spooner moved to Phoenix in 1997, her work included environmental graphic design, creating layouts and fabrication drawings for built objects like freestanding signage and maps for public spaces. "Working with the fabricators, I learned a lot about building things for public wear and tear," she said.

Spooner got her start with hands-on welding and metal work when a neighbor knocked on her door.

"I moved into a new house, and this old man who lived down the street, Gene Hanson, came to my door one day," she said. "He had a welder with him and a couple pieces of steel, and he said, 'You've got to weld this for me. I have a pacemaker, so I can't weld anymore.'"

"That was my start in welding. Gene taught me a lot of things, and I took a class at a community college in Phoenix. Since I already knew how to design, [my work] just took off."

Spooner was already a stone sculptor at that point, having gotten her inspiration in a gallery in Colorado Springs a few years before while traveling with her mother.

"We were looking at this piece of stone sculpture, and my mom said, 'You could do that. And I'm like, 'Yeah, I think I could.' So I came home from vacation and gathered the things that I thought would work to carve stone—just things from Home Depot." Over time, she figured out her processes and got professional tools.

Spooner took her first couple of



Photo by Mary Tolena

Keith Spooner, shown here in her fabrication shop, will be holding a fundraiser at Patagonia Lumber Company on Sunday, March 1, to raise money for the ground preparation, foundation structure, concrete pour and lighting for her new public sculpture.

stone sculptures to a gallery in Phoenix and was immediately invited to do a solo show.

By 2019, Keith and her wife, Wendy Spooner, were looking to leave Phoenix. "Wendy and I were just ready to get out of the city," she recalled. "We lived downtown and loved it for a long time, but it was just getting too congested. We wanted more peaceful surroundings. And mainly, we'd been talking for a long time about moving to a smaller community where we could have a bigger part in it.

"Wendy's parents had lived in Tubac and Green Valley, and we would go down there to visit them. So when we started looking, we circled a big area on Zillow and looked everywhere from Tubac and Green Valley to Benson and Sonoita," Spooner recalled. "Then we came to Patagonia. As soon as we drove into town, we thought, 'This is totally it. This is this is where we want to be.'"

It didn't take long for Keith and Wendy to get involved in the community. Keith took on various graphic design projects. She built the aforementioned information signs for Doc Mock Park, as well as gates and fences on private properties.

The couple's biggest undertaking was to buy the Patagonia Lumber Company bar in 2024. "That has been a great way to meet people and get to know our community," Spooner said. "You realize how wonderful this

community is when you spend every weekend with them. People have been extremely supportive and appreciative."

The Lumber Company provides a way to give back, too. "There are many organizations and causes that are worthy and deserve funding. Wendy and I are happy to host many of those organizations' fundraisers at the Patagonia Lumber Company," she said.

Beyond the aesthetic lift to Doc Mock Park, Spooner hopes that the Together We Fly sculpture will reinforce the power of art in the community.

"Art is already an important aspect of our community, so having permanent art installations to be enjoyed on a daily basis by our citizens and others who visit our community seems appropriate and natural," she said.

Spooner believes that public art can encourage creativity and self-expression, inspire community pride and identity, strengthen social bonds and foster a sense of belonging. She hopes the Together We Fly sculpture will inspire additional art pieces in the park, whether sculptures or other types of artistic expression.

"We are a community who accomplishes great things together, as flight is only achieved by the cooperation of the group of feathers working together as one," she said. "This sculpture is a mark we are making at this time in our history, of who we are: a community who comes together."

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Friday Morning STEAM Classes Stimulate Kids' Imaginations

By Sondra Porter

Every Friday morning for 12 weeks last fall, 12 local 4th-8th grade students gathered at the Patagonia Volunteer Fire & Rescue's upstairs loft to participate in a new program called 'The Universe Within: Making Music' offered by the Mat Bevel Company, an arts and science nonprofit.

The program culminated on Jan. 16 with a grand finale presentation by the students to a full house of family members and friends at the PVFR loft.

As 'The Intergalactic Ensemble,' the students put on an impressive display of music making, some from instruments they had crafted themselves. The audience learned about the history of the mountain dulcimer along with a dulcimer trio playing. The physics behind wind instruments was demonstrated and explained. Various percussion instruments—a popular mode with the kids—were used in many sizes and shapes. In one presentation, students used percussion, string, and wind instruments to add sound to an original music story they had created. Their model projects, employing strings, chimes, percussion, wind and mechanical movement to create music, showed an inventive combination of art and instrument making.

Throughout the weekly sessions, pupils actively engaged in a multitude of creative activities designed to "spark the natural creative genius in kids by combining STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) subjects, visual arts, and creativity," according to the company's mission statement.

Mat Bevel Company program director Paula Schaper explained the process and equipment the kids used to create rhythm machines and hand chimes. For the rhythm machines, "the kids used hardware, wrenches, 3D printed gears, a motor mount and hammer on a peg board base with a 360-degree motor and programmed Arduino (a software platform)," she said. "The machines change rhythm by adding or removing eight tickers. Afterwards the kids add finishing touches with paint, clay, jewels, vinyl decals to reflect the unique culture of their planets."

During one of the last sessions in early December, the group began brainstorming ideas for ways to show their families and others what they had learned. With only two practices, they pulled together their smoothly run, final demonstration. One parent noted she was amazed at the kids' understanding of the principles of how each instrument worked.

On presentation day, each student played and displayed their rhythm machine and the set of chimes they had made. Each machine and chime set



Photo courtesy Mary Tolena

Paula Schaper and Mary Tolena (in back row) led participants in 'The Universe Within: Making Music' program where students built their own instruments.

looked different because of the artistic touches added by individuals, but the basic operation of every machine was the same.

Schaper has been facilitating "The Universe Within" courses since 2019. At the January presentation, Schaper said that she appreciated working out the quirks and problem solving with the group to create their instruments. Schaper works in conjunction with another teacher during each class. For the music unit that teacher was Mary Tolena, who has special musical expertise.

"This is Mary's first time," Schaper said. "She is very interested in music and the kind of teacher you hope every student gets to learn from—professional, knowledgeable and deeply committed. She brings care, curiosity and enthusiasm into every session, and has contributed enormously by strengthening the curriculum and sharing her wide range of musical instruments."

Until 2024, the group met at Patagonia Elementary School. In 2025, the location changed.

"We moved from Patagonia Elementary to an out-of-school program when Patagonia Elementary and Patagonia Montessori moved to four-day weeks," Schaper said. That way, "We could serve students from any school on those Fridays, including students who are homeschooled and students from Elgin Elementary. Patagonia Volunteer Fire & Rescue has generously donated space for the program."

Other programs besides the "Music Making" unit that have been offered—and may be offered again in the future—include "Community Heroes" and "Creating New Worlds."

In "Power Up Communities," the current Friday morning unit that began Jan. 23, students are designing a sustainable "electri-city" using circuits, motors, batteries and the Arduinos software platform to power lights, sounds and moving parts. The unit

will conclude with a public "Circus of Electricity," where students will share their creations and show how energy and electricity help communities work and thrive.

Mat Bevel Company was created by the nonprofit's founder Ned Schaper, Paula Schaper's brother, in 1990. The program was developed and implemented in Patagonia and has also been taught at the Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office Summer Camps. It is offered for free through a

number of generous donors, mostly local, including The Burton Family Foundation/Patagonia Regional Community Fund, South32, Arizona Commission on the Arts, Sonora Investment Management and Steve Bowles.

For this school year, the program is further supported through a generous grant from Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative to help further expand the program in Southeastern Santa Cruz County and also to expand the program into Cochise County.

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Verse Against the Machine



Contributed photo

Longtime environmental advocate Russ McSpadden's first book is a collection of poetry drawing on his experiences in the borderlands.

By Robert Gay

Southern Arizona environmental organizer Russ McSpadden will discuss "Borderlings" his new book of poetry, at the Patagonia Public Library on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14 at 2pm.

McSpadden traces his environmentalism back to the coalfields of West Virginia, where his grandfather died of black lung disease. It's no surprise that environmental justice has been

a theme running through his activist career.

Since 2012 he has worked for the Center for Biological Diversity as Southwest Conservation Advocate, involved in research and campaigns relating to biodiversity, iconic species (jaguar being his favorite) protection, watershed and wildlife corridor preservation, bi-national cultural significance of the borderlands, gentrification, light pollution, wildlife and community impacts of mining and border wall

construction, container wall resistance, and environmental education.

With "Borderlings", his first collection of poems, McSpadden joins a long history in American letters of passionate activist-writers attempting to make sense of the pervasive and powerful wildness of the West as it meets capitalist development's appetites for land, water and minerals.

As a writer, McSpadden has always been drawn to poetry as a way of finding deep emotional answers. He's in the camp of Albert Einstein, who famously said, "I never came upon any of my discoveries through the process of rational thinking."

The path through these poems is not easy. There will be surprises, just as there are everywhere in the Sonoran desert. Discoveries, tenderness, juxtapositions, creatures, moments, even words, that you weren't expecting. Ever hear of 'war kiss', 'God-coffin' or 'gastroinfinity'?

As for the flow of words in these poems, don't expect either rhymes or complete sentences. There is occasional regular punctuation, but a shortness of commas and especially periods and capital letters. In reading you'll be washed over by associations and innuendos.

What you might expect in a book focusing on borderlands experiences is some Spanish. McSpadden has worked on *ambos lados*, both sides, so yes, there's a little Spanish, such as the slang for Border Patrol, *la migra*, which means migration. But his broad knowledge and an undergraduate degree in literature mean he's able to use bits from Tibetan, Nahuatl, French,

Latin and German when they suit the moment.

The poems in "Borderlings" are not conventional love poems. So what are they? The love you can find sprinkled in these pages is for the magic of life at every scale, from bacteria to planet, overlaid with the knowledge that you do not destroy things you love. "Borderlings" is available for order online at artspeakpress.com/shop/p/borderlings

OBSERVING JAVELINAS FROM BENEATH A DYING TREE

By Russ McSpadden
2. *Quercus Arizona*

In the year 1200, in the twilight, this white oak first fell as an acorn, I'm sure of it
You can even see it falling from your finger
into copper-cursed arroyo
Rare alluvium, igneous fever

Now the white oak looks to be dying, right now
dying at last in this moonlight and I'm so happy
And nervous all the time

And surrounded by javelinas
I believe I'm in the right universe, terrified
at the sureness of my placement
I see three shimmering peccaries in a small beam of moonlight
many more I can only hear
rutting through the blessed border of air and grubs
bending the soil
surpassing anything I should be knowing

'Dark Sky' Designation a Work in Progress for Sonoita-Elgin

By Carrie White

Call it an awakening, that slice of evening when the sun descends and stars appear. As the sky darkens, nature's lights become brighter—and so does the glow emanating from porches, patios and barns. Artificial light.

While people may not move to eastern Santa Cruz County for dark skies, they soon come to appreciate them.

Josh Montesana in Sonoita recognizes the value of dark skies. "There are few places left where we can truly enjoy the wonder of the universe, and I want my daughter to have the experience of spending time with family under the stars," Montesana said. Additionally, he has come to know astronomy enthusiasts who came to the area and built observatories, a testament to the unique quality of our night skies.

"It only takes one clear night to create a lasting memory," he said.

Looking at community surveys—as far back as the 1990s—protecting dark skies and creating those lasting memories was a community value.

Again in an April 2025 town hall

sponsored by the Sonoita-Elgin Preservation and Planning Committee (SEPPC), maintaining dark skies was a popular concern.

Consequently, the SEPPC made it their top priority, with committee member Gail Christmann leading the endeavor.

"I've been working professionally with lighting since 2008," Christmann said, citing her association with Design Lights Consortium (DLC). DLC is an independent nonprofit organization providing data and information on, among other things, the reduction of light pollution. She noted that Santa Cruz County already has a dark skies ordinance. But pursuing an International Dark Sky Community designation—something the committee is focused on—would emphasize the importance of this issue on visitors and new residents. Other nearby Dark Sky communities include Tubac and Bisbee.

"This certification is an opportunity for community members to opt in to helping the effort, encouraging neighborly conversations (both with residents and businesses) rather

than turning in neighbors for lighting violations," said Aaron Gudenkauf, a member of the SEPPC. The committee's efforts, he noted, are strictly educational, given that people may not be aware that they are in violation of a lighting ordinance.

The original county lighting ordinance was created in 2007 and ratified in Nov. 2024.

The ratification process gave local residents two years to comply—until Nov. 2026.

Four lighting zones were established in Santa Cruz County based on acreage and land use. Those two factors determine how much lighting—measured in lumens (lm)—is allowable. Information on maximum total outdoor light output requirements is available on the county website along with examples of acceptable and unacceptable lighting fixtures.

Additionally, home and business owners need to be aware that "color" plays a part in light intensity. For example, white or blue light is more intense than yellow, red or orange. So bulbs and fixtures play a big part in the

equation—not just the wattage.

Juan Ceballo, chief building official for Santa Cruz County, applauded the SEPPC efforts in bringing awareness to the issue.

"Education is our biggest ally," Ceballo said.

In terms of community support, the SEPPC has garnered 22 letters from local residents and 16 endorsements from area businesses. In the months ahead, committee members will survey local businesses with equipment that measures lumens.

"I think for some people lighting is a security issue," Christmann said. She suggested when looking at one's outdoor lighting, things to consider include what are you trying to light, why are you trying to light it, when does it need to be lit, and how much lighting is needed.

"There are tons of studies on the impact of artificial light," Christmann said. People and some animals are meant to sleep at night.

Some animals aren't," Christmann said. "It means a lot to let nature be nature."

R.I.P. MCGRUFF THE CRIME DOG



By Cassina Farley

This is the first time in my memory where it hasn't gotten cold enough to freeze the lantana in my yard. Instead, it's blooming. The hackberry in my backyard still has leaves on its branches and there are violets blooming in January. If I were a simple person I'd be happy but I know that it's too warm for winter.

When I was a kid, water flowed in the creek through town and ran that way well into my teen years. At the crossing near Paton's the water was deep enough to splash birders with my grandma's Ford Granada. Now the only time the creek sees water is during a few and far between monsoon floods. The kids of this town haven't had the joy of collecting tadpoles from puddles kept full from daily summer rain.

In the '80s and '90s, highway 83 was a dark and windy road that saw little traffic in the evening hours. Now it's a super highway filled with big trucks, wide loads and winery traffic.

We used to be able to take a drive to the valley and not see a soul. Now we see Border Patrol and construction vehicles. What used to be an unencumbered view all the way to Mexico now has a wall blocking it. Wells are dug to further deplete the water and scars are being scratched across a countryside that used to belong to all of us. It makes my heart ache. Now I can't go

on the left side of the Valley Loop nor can I drive on the right. The mine and all its traffic have erased my memories of my dad's old stomping grounds and the footprint of his old home in Harshaw. It's best for my heart to avoid the area altogether.

Nationally, I remember when you could trust the news. We certainly didn't have AI giving us false information. When Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather told us the top news stories it wasn't skewed "right or left," it didn't take into account if it made a politician look bad. If the politician looked bad, that was their problem.

We used to hold elected officials accountable and now they are allowed to align themselves with whatever cause will make them richer.

This is our fault. I am not naive. I know corruption has always existed in government. I just know we used to impeach it.

In my elementary school we were introduced to McGruff the Crime Dog by a local police officer. McGruff's job was to "sniff out crime." We were all on

board. Gen X kids were taught respect and admiration for law enforcement. They were the good guys. We waved at cops. We high-fived the campus cop, knowing he was keeping us safe. Now we have masked guys grabbing people off the streets and terrifying schoolkids, a far cry from what I learned growing up. For those of you that agree with this new law enforcement tactic, help this Gen X kid understand how we went from McGruff the Crime Dog sniffing out crime and us having a "cops are heroes" mindset to this new reality. It feels like a death. Rest in peace, McGruff.

If you're reading this and thinking about running for office, here are some platforms I'd definitely vote for: more tadpoles in our puddles, make law enforcement heroes again in the eyes of children, politicians and news anchors can only tell the truth, make mines in hometowns bad, no walls ever and smooth driving conditions everywhere.

A girl can dream.

Cassina Farley can be contacted at cassinaandzachfarley@msn.com

TRANSITION ZONE

By Keith Krizan

I've been thinking lately about picking up where I left off, but I'm not exactly sure where I was when I left, and am I really the same person I was when I left?

About one year ago my older brother, John, with whom I was not particularly close, contracted a disease of the blood. He had been a life-long distance runner, rising early to log his seven miles before going off to work, first as a union carpenter and then as a golf course maintenance worker.

For years he followed a steady routine. Up at 3:00 am, some carbs and fruit for breakfast, slip into some running shoes and take off down the road in the predawn darkness. Spring. Summer. Fall. Winter. I used to tease him that the people in our western Connecticut town were likely setting their watches as he silently passed through the seasons.

As we age, and our various physical systems prove not to be quite as robust as they once were, simple balance becomes less dependable. I, for one, am not as fond of gravity as I once was.

John had tripped once before, without consequence, but this one morning in November, three years ago, he was not able to engineer a soft landing and he dislocated his shoulder. Being the early morning, with nobody up and about, he walked, in pain, to the hospital. There, after a few attempts, they managed to "pop" the head of his

humerus bone back into the socket. There was nothing

funny about it.

Two operations followed, the second one finally succeeding, which led to two years of recovery while his ulnar nerve regenerated at the rate of one millimeter per day. An excruciatingly slow transition to recovery.

My brother is right-handed and he had damaged his right shoulder so there were many things that he had to learn how to do with his non-dominant hand, but he was healing. He first returned to walking a mile a day and then to three, graduating to a slow jog to keep the pain to a minimum.

It was against this backdrop that, one year ago, he received the diagnosis that would make the shoulder episode seem to be child's play by comparison. My own run through a transition zone began then. I flew back that December to offer him moral support.

John was eventually presented with two options. Chemo cocktails, of declining efficacy, until the cupboard ran empty, or a bone marrow transplant, with some hint of an experimental protocol, should he decide to fight. He chose to go to battle.

The problem was that he needed to show that there would be someone to care for him when he was discharged from the hospital. I volunteered to be that someone. Whatever distance that might have existed between us would have to be subsumed into the greater narrative of what, exactly, is the meaning of family in this 21st century.

I am in my youngish 70s, if there

even is such a thing, but I still want my life to carry some meaning, to have purpose. Besides, maybe if I could learn a lesson, I could still be around to teach a lesson.

I could do a chapter or two here about the ups and the downs. The miracle workers in our great hospitals and in the Veterans Administration medical system, about the people who show up every day. The names of the people that sweep the floors, that remove the trash. The nurses and doctors, many from foreign lands, who must have been exceptional in their faraway schools, who found their way to these shores to cure my brother.

There were many dark days as spring became summer and fall became winter. There was no one moment when a switch flipped, but gradually there was improvement, then steady improvement, a time when "failure to thrive," an actual medical term, became something else, and that all the pill counting, and the meal prep, and the keeping of doctor's appointments could be taken over by people that did not need to be around 24-7. I had toggled many times between hope and despair. Hope had won.

In mid-December the VA came and

ramps were installed into my brother's house. A nurse was provided to sort the 20-something meds that are still necessary, and a home healthcare aide to help with household chores and transportation.

I had been replaced. I could go. My brother and I had never been huggers. The feeling of understanding that runs between siblings, because of all those shared early experiences, can mostly suffice, but something had changed. As I was leaving to go back to Arizona, we embraced each other. Our relationship had morphed. I had grown.

I pointed my car southwest. I was delighted to see SW continue to show up on the GPS. The drive was not without its adventures, but gradually the thousands of miles wore down to hundreds. I was elated at the sight of my first prickly pear in west central Texas.

Elgin is an ecotone, a transition zone between two different ecosystems. Eastward is the San Pedro Valley which is where the desert tips towards the Chihuahuan. West is Patagonia and the Santa Cruz Valley, decidedly Sonoran.

I live in between, in the Sonoita-Elgin grasslands, and it sure feels good to be home.

ERRORS AND OMISSIONS

In the January 2026 article "Wildlife Habitat Restoration, One Step at a Time" the article incorrectly stated that Jonathan Horst was involved in the creation of a pond on Gary Nabhan's property in Patagonia. In addition, the correct name of Horst's company is baselineShift.

In the January 2026 article "The Headless Horseman at the Circle Z" the article incorrectly stated that Gilbert Quiroga raised four sons. He has five sons.

We apologize for these errors.



Jan. 3: A caller said a male is ramming a truck into trees in the area of Gardner Canyon Rd by the campsites. The caller said there is another male yelling at the driver to 'stop.' The call was plotted on Gardner Canyon Road, 2.3 miles from 83.

A caller from Holbrook Drive advised that his truck has a big dent and his license plate is missing. He says he does not know where or when it happened.

Jan. 5: A deputy reported that male had been arrested on a warrant at 2400 SR 82.

Jan. 7: Fourth party information of a male trapped inside of a truck by a cliff in the area of a cabin outside of Patagonia.

Jan. 10: A deputy requested a call card at 700 SR 82 for a DUI investigation.

Jan. 14: A caller from Patagonia reported that their ex keeps harassing them over the phone and is threatening to send explicit photos of the caller to their friends and family. The caller said they are afraid the ex will show up at their residence.

Jan. 15: A caller from Patagonia reported a violation of an active protection order. The caller said the person was attempting to make third party contact with the caller.

Jan. 16: A caller said they'd encountered a vehicle that had driven off the roadway near the intersection of Lower Elgin Rd and SR 83. The caller said the truck is unoccupied and appears to have flipped.

Jan. 17: A caller from Sonoita said

their vehicle was damaged by cattle as they left it parked to go hiking on 4655 Forest Service Road.

A caller from Acorn Drive outside Patagonia and advised that a residence is on fire. The caller said they didn't know if anyone was inside the house but they can see a dog. The caller said they were honking their horn to see if someone got out of the house but no one did.

A caller from Sonoita requested a deputy to violence between the caller and their spouse. The caller said the spouse is in the kitchen and the caller is in the bedroom but a little bit ago the spouse twisted the caller's arm and took the caller down. The caller said the spouse has guns in the house and is under the influence of wine.

Jan. 18: A caller from Patagonia Lake Rd. and SR 82 said a Patagonia Lake ranger is in pursuit of a white truck pulling a black boat for passing the toll box running cones.

A caller from Acorn Drive outside Patagonia said one of the transformers was hit and needed a report for insurance purposes.

Jan. 22: A caller from along SR 82 requested a deputy due to a UTV theft from the caller's home.

A deputy reported encountering a subject with an extraditable warrant on a traffic stop at the intersection of SR 83 and Curly Horse Ranch Road.

Jan. 24: A caller from Patagonia requested a deputy due to the caller

See Blotter, p. 11

Habitat (Cont.)

daleas, cane chollas, various prickly pear cacti, Palmer agaves, and others. Thus, the woodland and xeriscaping around our home continues to build upon itself—all allowed to evolve naturally without pruning.

As we planted we also created a series of berms and swales, allowing our sometimes scant Arizona precipitation to deeply penetrate the soil to benefit the plants. Augmenting these passive rainwater harvesting techniques, we used smaller dead plant parts as mulch around our new plants, helping them keep hydrated. This approach also keeps our house "firewise." We purchased truckloads of rocks—from fist-sized to massive boulders—and added logs of various sizes to serve as more or less permanent mulch in our restored wildlife habitat. Demarcating the perimeter of our near-house habitat restoration project, we built various "free-stack" rock walls containing countless refuges for smaller wildlife such as ornate tree lizards. All of these non-plant habitat features not only increase water infiltration into the ground and reduce drying winds, but

also add much beauty to our home's landscape. Finally, we created two small, linked wildlife ponds on a former parking area which are now a magnet for thirsty animals.

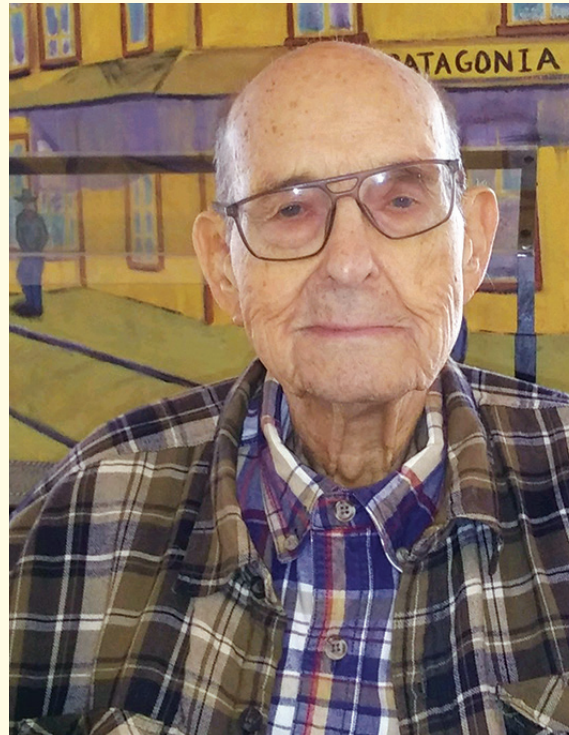
Needless to say, we are thrilled with the results of our home's habitat restoration. Our 170-species-strong backyard bird list includes the likes of Elegant trogon and Montezuma quail—all without bird feeders. Other wildlife appreciated from our home has included mountain lions, bobcats, coyote, common gray fox, ringtail, collared peccary, desert cottontail, antelope jackrabbit, various reptiles, and huge Sonoran Desert toads. It has been an ongoing bestiary that never fails to inspire.

Next month, I will share the habitat management practices at large at Raven's Nest Nature Sanctuary.

Vincent Pinto and his wife, Claudia, run RAVENS-WAY WILD JOURNEYS, their Nature Adventure & Conservation organization devoted to protecting and promoting the unique biodiversity of the Sky Islands region. RWWJ offers a wide variety of private, custom-made courses, birding & biodiversity tours. Visit ravensnatureschool.org

IN LOVING MEMORY OF FREDRICK CARLYLE ROBERTS III

APRIL 15, 1935 - DECEMBER 20, 2025



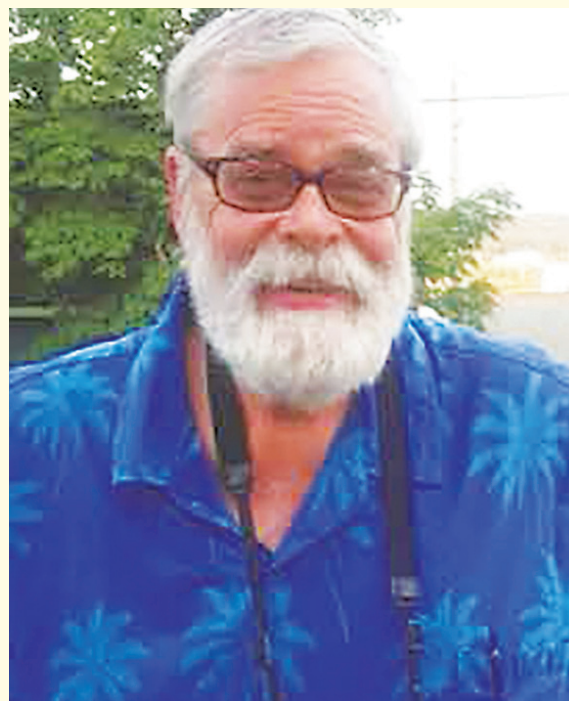
It is with deep sadness, and also deep gratitude for a life well lived, that we share the passing of Fredrick Carlyle Roberts III who died peacefully on December 20, 2025 at the age of 90.

Fred was a well-known and deeply loved member of the Patagonia community. Over the years, he formed many friendships and connections, leaving a lasting impression through his wit, intelligence, strong opinions and unmistakable presence. Patagonia was not just where Fred lived—it was where he belonged, and where his life was woven into the fabric of the community.

Fred lived life on his own terms and remained true to himself until the very end. His final days were calm and

peaceful, marked by dignity and care. Those who knew him will remember his sharp mind, his stories, his humor, and the authenticity with which he moved through the world.

SIEGFRIED REMPEL DECEMBER 2, 1950 - JANUARY 14, 2026



Abundance by Sarah Ban Breathnach

Siegfried Rempel lived a very happy life in Freeport, Nova Scotia (summers) and Patagonia, Arizona (winters). Siegfried shared his wonderful life with Terri Schindel, his wife; Robbi Schindel, sister-in-law; Caleb Rempel, son; Joel Schindel, stepson; and Jade Facie-Rempel, grandson; and extended family and friends in both Canada and the United States.

Siegfried was the recipient of a kidney from a special donor that extended his life by several

years. We would like to thank all of you for your support and prayers throughout our transplant journey.

There will be no memorial. In lieu of flowers and gifts, please donate to the Patagonia Regional Aquatic Center (PRAC) in memory of Siegfried Rempel to PRAC, P.O. Box 1052, Patagonia, AZ 85624

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." — Simple

The PRT Welcomes Two New Board Members

Kate Peake

By Carrie White

It's obvious that words matter to Kate Peake. Words that become sentences, that become paragraphs, that become chapters, that become books fill her classroom shelves at Patagonia Middle School.

Words also become newspaper articles. And as a strong believer in what rural newspapers bring to a community, the English language arts teacher is joining the Patagonia Regional Times' board of directors to serve a three-year term.

"Local news is everything," Peake said. "In a climate where major news organizations are either closing or merging, and voices and perspectives are becoming narrower, the PRT is an incredible resource."

A newspaper with much to love, she said. Cassina Farley's column provides ongoing engagement in local life. Other volunteer writers share passion for plants, insects, birds and astronomy: "They touch on all the reasons people love it here."

Peake and her husband, David, have two sons, Cameron and Rozier. She was introduced to Patagonia in 2016 when David, a geologist, was hired for local contract work. The family was living in Fredericksburg, Texas, but after two visits she realized what friends had told her was true: "It's a magical place." They moved.

"I love the natural beauty," Peake said. "I can walk out the door and bike or hike forever."

It's the people, too. "The community here is so engaging," she said. "People have strong opinions and



they're willing to speak them and live them. But they are also willing to talk to other people, work together, meet people in the middle."

Peake's job at Patagonia Middle School came about as she was pondering a return to education. Previously she had worked for Teach for America in inner city St. Louis. Teach for America looks to ensure all children have an education and focuses on low-income communities.

"I wasn't ready to go back," she said, citing the birth of her second child. But when told the application window was closing, "I was worried that someone else could get this job and stay forever and I wouldn't get to do it again. I knew if I didn't try, I would regret it."

No regrets. "Some of my favorite moments with the PRT have been when the students can see themselves in the paper," Peake said. Expanding youth voices in those local pages is something she sees as a win for the community.

Mary Tolena

By Carrie White

When Mary Tolena rolled into Patagonia in October 2020, Covid was sweeping the country with no end in sight.

A nomad who'd been living the van life for 3½ years, Tolena quickly realized she had stumbled upon someplace special. Those indicators: a museum, a senior center, a youth center, an arts center, a natural food store, a radio station and, of course, a newspaper.

"The PRT was high on my list of community assets," said Tolena, one of two local residents to join the newspaper's board in 2026 for a three-year term.

The next day, after camping overnight outside town, she found herself saying "yes" to buying a piece of land that would fulfill a dream and the needs of the community—TerraSol, a camping haven for hikers, cyclists, birders and travelers.

Since that time, Tolena has embedded herself into Patagonia with practiced mindfulness—observing, listening—with one question still not fully answered: How did this place get so special?

One thing she does believe is that a community paper is essential to that answer.

"A community is strengthened the



more it knows about itself," Tolena said. "The PRT is a vehicle for us to keep learning about ourselves, keep telling the stories that keep this community strong—what people do and have done, and how it interconnects."

As far as the future of the PRT, Tolena knows from her business background that financial stability is at the top of the list. A volunteer citizen journalist herself, Tolena loves that so many resources are given freely to the PRT, the most precious of which being people's time.

"We are in really challenging times in the world outside of our little bubble," Tolena said. Helping people appreciate what's important here, and why, is, as she sees it, an ongoing mission for the PRT.

Join the Press Core

Why do we call it the Press Core?

Because our monthly supporters are the very core of the Patagonia Regional Times. Every dollar counts toward creating our monthly newspaper, the PRT website, weekly e-newsletters, and breaking news, all services we provide to our community at no cost.

Visit prtnews.org for more information



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Notes From SEFD

Fire Services Before SEFD



Contributed photo

SEESI volunteers gather around a fire truck in the early 1990s.

By Eddie McArthur

Happy anniversary to us!

SEFD as an actual fire district was formed in 2006. We will celebrate our 20th anniversary this year. However, we owe a big debt to those individuals who began fire services in this area, literally beginning with nothing.

In 1946, Sam Frazier, a Sonoita resident who ran a gas station/car repair shop, recognized that the area needed some sort of fire protection services. He bought a surplus 1941 fire truck from Fort Huachuca and operated it at his own expense. Along with a number of old time volunteers, Sam fought grass fires. He later added two Army surplus trucks that he equipped with water tanks and pumps that ran on muscle.

After 30 years of service to the community, Sam Frazier retired, and in 1979 Alonzo "Jokey" Spencer took over as fire chief. He had volunteered on the fire lines with Frazier and continued on with the old equipment, upgrading when he could. In the mid-'80s the pumps of the big trucks were upgraded and one was plumbed for 1½ inch hoses. Jokey Spencer, at his own expense, took training and became the first EMT in the area. The little volunteer group now had fire control, search and rescue and EMT services.

In 1984 Sonoita Elgin Emergency Services, Inc. (SEESI) incorporated as a nonprofit, tax-exempt entity. Mrs. Bettie Ann Beck donated land to build a fire station. Mrs. Beck, Sam Frazier, and Jokey Spencer turned the first shovels of dirt. The entire community, from contractors to volunteers, helped

to build the station along with Border Patrol and even an Air National Guard unit from Chicago.

John Everhart, who owned a construction company, drew up the plans and supervised much of the building. He became the next fire chief and hosted the open house on September 16, 1989 when the building was open and operating. He began to work on replacing the old equipment and upgraded communications. There were discussions around that time about forming a fire district (as opposed to the nonprofit and mainly volunteer group), but it was not considered feasible.

Wes Chambers moved to Sonoita in 1988 and joined the Fire Department in 1989. He began serving on the SEESI Board of Directors in 1989 and was elected president of the Board. He continued to serve as a fireman and began EMT training. When Chief Everhart resigned in August 1989 to tend to his business, Chambers became chief. This was a time of great changes as better equipment and training were added. CPR classes for local residents were given at the station; Red Cross blood drives were held; and SEESI joined the Arizona State Fire District to learn how to establish a fire district in the future. Chambers remained chief through 1998.

As the decade of the 2000s began, it was becoming more apparent that additional changes were going to be needed, first and foremost to become an actual fire district supported by real estate taxes in order to have consistent funding. An upcoming article will take us through that time and the early days of our existence as SEFD.

TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

By PRT Staff Reporters

January 14, 2026

At Call to Public, Patagonia Middle School eighth graders Isabella Felix and Ayla LaDage requested Council to approve their bake sale on Feb. 7, at Quiroga Lane, to raise funds for an end-of-year field trip. It was later approved in New Business.

The legacy and life of former Mayor Richard "Ike" Isakson was honored by a statement by Mayor Wood and a minute of silence.

In New Business, Chris Gardner, a registered geologist, reported on antimony in South32's discharge to Harshaw Creek and potential mobilization of existing contamination in the Harshaw Creek watershed.

Mayor and Council approved the Town Manager to sign a \$33,290 contract with KE&G construction for well cap repair and work on the wastewater treatment plant's electrical panel.

Three Town Ordinances were adopted, modifying the Town Code. No. 25-01 adds a new subsection on Town Manager's duties as an amendment to Town Code Section 3-2-1. 25-02 provides changes to Chapter 12, Water and Sewer. These changes implement the fees and rates previously adopted by the Town Council, and replace all references to "Town Clerk/Treasurer" with "Town Manager." 25-03 amends Section 7-1-5 of Chapter 7, Building, to reduce overall building fees and simplify the process of assigning value to a construction project.

Council voted to repeal Town Code Section 2-6-3 in order to allow passage of Town Ordinances in one reading, streamlining the former two-reading process.

Presiding Magistrate Concepcion Bracamonte swore in Judge Miguel A. Lopez as Court Magistrate pro tem, for a term of one year.

Jan. 21, 2026

Council consulted in executive session with Town Attorney Mike Massey and received legal advice concerning the "Early Actions Funding Agreement" draft now being considered among signatories in the Hermosa Community Protection and Benefits Agreement (CPBA) process.

January 28, 2026

Council chambers were standing room only, with about 50 people at the meeting, and another half-dozen or so on Zoom.

The Mayor noted a change of date

for the eighth-graders' bake sale from Feb 7 to Feb 13, at the same location.

In Call to Public, Anna Darian, Executive Director of Patagonia Area Resource Alliance, expressed concerns she'd been hearing from residents about possible toxicity of local water supplies from Hermosa water discharges. Chris Werkoven raised questions of whether there could be a "plume" of toxicity after the closure of the Hermosa, and wants to be sure strong monitoring is part of the protections that get written into the CPBA. Gregg Gorton presented a fact sheet on antimony and its effects.

South32 Hermosa President Pat Risner gave an extended update on Hermosa water monitoring results. He claimed some facts on the timeline had been distorted by those questioning the discharge practices, testing and results. Risner went on to explain the timing of sampling and why a single exceedance of a water standard is not viewed as a health risk. He explained the design of Hermosa's water treatment plants, and their flexibility to respond to changing conditions.

Spirit 100 cycling event organizer Zander Ault recapped last November's event. He said 450 visitors had come to the town for the weekend, spending an average of \$670, with 77% staying for the whole weekend. Riders spent an average of \$2,000 on race weekend. His data shows that \$234,505 was spent in Patagonia during the event; \$30,000 was gifted to the Arizona Trail organization. Ault appreciated three local organizations as partners: Borderlands Restoration Network, Patagonia Area Resource Alliance, and the Patagonia Museum.

Ault said that for this year's Spirit World event, planned for November 5-8, organizers hope to be granted permission by Council to use the main park area for a Saturday evening music event, and to use the Town's property along Harshaw Ave. for visitor camping.

Council adopted Ordinance 26-01, which allows for the passage of Ordinances in one reading by repealing Town Code's Section 2-6-3.

Council voted to recommend to the AZ Department of Liquor License and Control that a special event license be granted to Community Homes of Patagonia for a brunch and concert fundraiser on February 14.

Council approved the paying of the Town's current bills.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Grateful for Help

This isn't about a lot of details and drama. Use your imagination for that. This is just my effort to thank two young men who stopped to help me with my flat tire near The Little Red School House. They were local boys

from the Patagonia/Washington Camp/Lochiel area who, as traffic rushed by, chose to make my problem their business. And they were remarkably helpful. Thank you so much.

Cynthia Berk
Patagonia



UPDATE ON CURRENT ACTIONS

AS 2026 ROARS ON, WE WANTED TO SHARE THE LATEST ON PARA'S ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO PROPOSED MINING IN THE PATAGONIA MOUNTAINS:

US Forest Service Environmental Review

PARA and dozens of experts closely reviewed the U.S. Forest Service's Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed South32 Hermosa mine. We raised serious concerns that the federal review does not fully account for risks to water, wildlife, and nearby communities. The final document should be published in March 2026, and we are pressing the agency to strengthen its analysis before any final approval in fall 2026.



PHOTO BY ERIC HERMAN

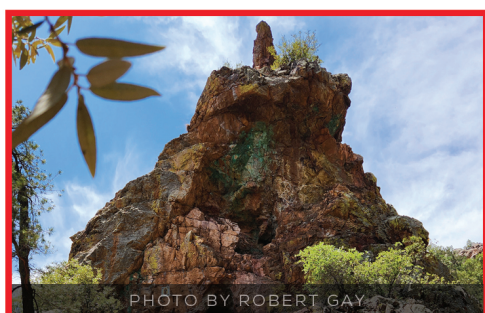


PHOTO BY ROBERT GAY

Humboldt Canyon Drilling Lawsuit

PARA, alongside Earthjustice, is challenging the U.S. Forest Service's decision to allow Barksdale Resources to conduct exploratory drilling in Humboldt Canyon. The lawsuit argues the agency failed to properly evaluate the cumulative impacts of this new drilling near the South32 Hermosa mine. The case is now moving forward on appeal.

Hermosa Mine Air Quality Permit Appeal

PARA, alongside the Center for Biological Diversity, appealed South32's Hermosa mine air quality permit to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA found problems with the permit and required the state to revise it. We are currently reviewing the revised permit and continue to advocate for enforceable protections that safeguard public health and air quality.



PHOTO BY ANNA DARIAN



PHOTO BY WENDY ISLAS

Antimony Found in Local Waterways

Recent monitoring revealed elevated levels of antimony, a toxic heavy metal, in water discharged from the Hermosa mine site. These findings triggered a state investigation and renewed concerns about water contamination and transparency. PARA is calling for stronger oversight to protect local water resources.

Closing Mining's Water Law Loopholes in Arizona

Last year, PARA launched a new Water Is Life campaign focused on modernizing Arizona's water laws that still give the mining industry extraordinary exemptions that allow massive groundwater extraction with little oversight or accountability. We are already in active conversations with lawmakers and representatives advocating for this region and mine-impacted communities across the State.



PHOTO BY ANNA DARIAN

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Student Intern Joins PRT

By Dave Lumia

Isabella Knaggs, an undergraduate senior at the University of Arizona, has joined the PRT for the spring semester of 2026 as an intern news reporter.

Knaggs is pursuing a degree in journalism, with a strong interest in accountability journalism, bilingual storytelling, and human rights reporting. Through her academic and professional work, she has focused on policy decisions, local events, law enforcement practices, and media coverage that shape Southern Arizona.

In addition to her work here at PRT, Knaggs is currently writing and reporting as an intern for the Sonoran Journal, the official magazine of the Southern Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. In this role, she contributes thoroughly reported stories that highlight local businesses, events, and community services or centers.

Aside from her internship work,



Knaggs is currently reporting on a long-form journalism project titled The Ant in Their Hand. Through field reporting, interviews, and document analysis, the project aims to connect Americans using empathy and hold government agencies accountable.

When she isn't working, Knaggs loves running, reading, and spending time with her loved ones. After graduation, she hopes to continue working in journalism, focusing on immigration, border policy and human rights reporting.

Five Donors Win PRT Prizes



Photo by Dave Lumia

PRT Board President Carrie Lumia presents Mary Truman with her raffle prize. Truman was one of five donors to the PRT who won PRT memorabilia.

By Amy Glass

The PRT's NewsMatch 2025 campaign is complete.

Thank you to the 322 donors who contributed \$39,421 to help sustain the operations of the Patagonia Regional Times.

Your support ensures that our community has coverage of school board decisions, local elections, public safety, and community events that won't come from any other news source.

These are stories only we tell, and they are essential for people making daily choices that affect their families and neighborhoods.

Your support qualified us for an \$18,000 match from NewsMatch and the Rural News Network.

A special shout out goes to the following donors who were selected in our NewsMatch drawing for PRT memorabilia: Mary Truman, Susan Petrus, Robert Enyeart, Maria and Larry Denicke, and Cheridyn and Ryan Egan.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY COWBELLES Scholarship Opportunity

(Available to US Citizens – resident of Santa Cruz County)

One of the major purposes of the SCC Cowbelle is to provide funds for education programs and scholarships to deserving high school seniors. The amounts of scholarships awarded will vary, depending on the available funds and number of applicants.

- Student must carry 12 credit hours/semester and maintain a 2.5 GPA to be eligible.
- Student must be pursuing studies in courses and careers directly or indirectly related to benefit the cattle industry.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 1 (postmarked).
For Application please visit: sccc4.wordpress.com

Blotter (Cont.)

having four of their tires slashed the previous night.

Jan. 26: Border Patrol advised that two body armor plates have gone missing at the station at 3225 SR 82.

Jan. 27: A caller from Patagonia requested a welfare check on a parent who has not been doing well and has

not been answering their phone for a few days. The caller said the parent has cancer.

Jan. 28: A caller from Patagonia reported that someone was using their social security number to open an internet or telephone account.

Jan. 29: Border Patrol advised of a "failure to yield" vehicle going to Patagonia.



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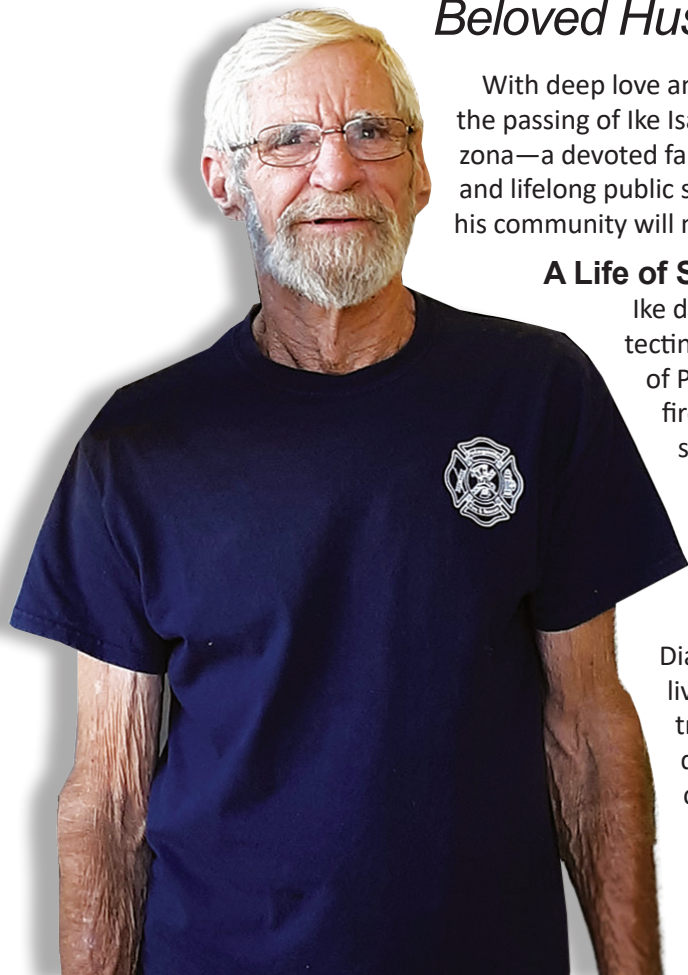
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF Richard "Ike" Isakson

*Navy Veteran - Fire Chief – Firefighter – EMT – Former Mayor of Patagonia
Beloved Husband – Father – Brother – Community Hero*



With deep love and sorrow, we announce the passing of Ike Isakson of Patagonia, Arizona—a devoted family man, first responder, and lifelong public servant whose impact on his community will never be forgotten.

A Life of Service and Courage

Ike dedicated his life to protecting and serving the people of Patagonia. As a volunteer firefighter and EMT, he responded to countless emergencies—always calm, capable, and courageous in the face of crisis.

Working side-by-side with his beloved wife, Diane, Ike helped save many lives. Together, they were a trusted and steady presence during people's most difficult moments.

Their partnership went far beyond marriage—it was a shared mission of

service, healing, and care. Whether arriving at the scene of an accident or providing comfort after an emergency, Ike and Diane were there—not for recognition, but because that's simply who they were.

Ike's commitment to his town extended into civic leadership. As a former Mayor of Patagonia, he served with integrity, humility, and a fierce love for his community. He advocated for local families, supported emergency services, and helped guide the Town through times of change with clarity and compassion.

Devoted to Family

More than anything, Ike was a family man. He is survived by his devoted wife and partner in life and service, Diane and by his beloved children; Lori, Mark, Julie, Rebecca, Rick, Robin, Ryan, Aarron, and Devina as well as his many grandchildren. Each of them carries forward his quiet strength, his sense of duty, and his deep kindness.

He also leaves behind his cherished siblings: Zeke, George, Jim, Penny, Paul, and Peggy—a close-knit family who shared a bond rooted in love, laughter, and lifelong support.

Ike was the kind of man who showed up—for his family, his town, and anyone in need. He didn't seek attention. He simply answered the call—again and again—with steady hands and an open heart.

"To save one life is to save the world" –the Talmud

Ike's legacy lives on in the lives he saved, the town he served, and the family he loved beyond all measures.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly asks that donations be made in Ike's memory to Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue.

I am one of the lucky ones, Ike chose my family to love and hold dear. The blessing to be his daughter has always been the most cherished. The love my mom and him shared is something I've only seen in movies outside of their bond.

Before he came into our lives, we experienced life, not this country. He took us cross country on a road trip, to sites I'd never believed I'd see. Countless fishing excursions, San Diego, all around the southwest, even on a casino trip. (Aarron and I may or may not got them in trouble at a casino, haha.) One thing that still makes me laugh is he always told me to "put a shirt on under that." He made sure I dressed age appropriately, however I still heard that in my 30s.

Ike's love for this community was unconditional. When things got tight with coverage, he stayed for duty. Duty always called. One time I caught my finger in bike chains and insisted he call the helicopter. I mean, it was Ike, he saved the world and would save my finger lol. Needless to say it was a little boo boo and asking for the helicopter was me being dramatic, even so, he will forever be my hero.

I love you Ike, with my soul. You run through my blood and I'm blessed to be apart of you.

- Your loving daughter, Devina Schreiber, until we meet again....



Contributed Photo

When I first joined up I headed out on a non-emergency scouting trip with the Chief. I got the truck ready and presumed to drive, as I do. Well, Ike rolls up and the expression etched into a Chief's face screamed, who the heck is this new guy. No words needed, I shifted over to shotgun and knew immediately I liked this fella, understood him. My many rides to fire and mostly medical calls, and time hanging out, with Ike began. I even drove him...once. Ike was a quintessential leader by doing. No fluff, no nonsense...just react and do the job. He had a grandfather's empathy for every patient I worked with him. His commitment to Patagonia, the Department, and his family was ultimate. I value the time we shared on each our journeys. I'll continue to see him up and down Patagonia's streets perpetually, watching out for all of us.

-Eric

My folks retired to Patagonia in 1994 and over the years I would often hear stories about Ike and Diane. My mother so enjoyed the yard sale that the Fire Department held and we would often go to browse through the offerings but what she enjoyed even more was the socializing that would be a part of the experience. Towards the end of her life, I would often get calls about medical issues as they came up and my father would always say "it's ok, we've called Ike" which gave me comfort knowing that they had the support right there in town that they needed until an ambulance could arrive from Sonoita. I experienced that myself when my father had an incident and it was my turn to call Ike. He and Diane showed up promptly and arrived with that steady calm that I had always heard about.

After the Ike's memorial service on Saturday, the first thing that my father said to me when we were driving away was how much Ike meant to him and my mother. Ike was a man who was truly committed to service and his community and he will be greatly missed by many.

- Diana Assenmacher



Contributed Photo

There are so many memories through the 26 years of our friendship, it is hard to choose. I will always remember all the fun times and laughing so hard we had tears in our eyes. It was always a challenge to beat Ike at cards or marbles. I learned a lot from Ike when I became an EMT. He was always calm, no matter the call. Ike always had my back. The best memory I have is how he looked after my daughter, Madison. She couldn't say "Ike" it came out "Ki," and that's his forever name. Thank you for being there through the years and all the fun we had!

- Denise Bowdon

Ike's service brought him joy, and the many ways he served his community were a focus of his memorial activities including songs and internet posts. Another of his joys was overlooked in the remembrances I saw and heard, and that was dancing. He loved to dance. He even taught dance for a while. Because I don't get out much, the only times I saw him dance were at the Steak Frys, and the Firefighters Balls we had at the firehouse. I still can see he and Dianne dolled up and dancing at the ball back in 04 or 05. How gracefully and smoothly they moved, and how they could dance to anything. Both of them so happy, and so in love, it was as if they were floating, not even touching the floor. Of all the places I went with Ike, of all the things we did, it's that image that will always stick out most in my mind.

- Zay Hartigan
Fire Chief 458
Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue

I was always glad to see Ike. However, there were times when I was relieved to see Ike. And in those times, he would lock eyes with me from across the way, and I knew everything would be ok—because Ike was there.

- Cynie & Joel Murray

Ike was a great mentor to me. I was a hazmat, industrial firefighter. Not a lot of that here in Patagonia. But there was a place for me here with C.E.R.T., as well as the Firewise program. Patagonia Fire making me a member was a gift I will always treasure. And Ike will always be my Chief. Rest Easy 477

- Jeff Maxwell



Contributed Photo

I heard a story at a graduation once, it never made a lot of sense to me until now...

Everyone had two important dates that surround them, their date of birth, and their date of death. The thing that separates those dates is a little line called a dash. What you do with that dash is what matters the most.

I knew Ike as a serious man: we went to EMT classes, partnered up quite a bit, and learned a lot together. Once we finished classes, I joined the department, worked alongside him for many years, went to multiple trainings in Laughlin, BTLs on the river, got ourselves in a few stick situations where Diane was ready to go in the getaway vehicle, yikes. We talked my husband into joining the department, fought fires together, and became great friends. We worked together with the Marlboro men on one of their last sets of commercials, joined a bowling team, and started game nights where we made marble boards, sequence boards, and learned crazy rummy, along with some wild game klugenflur, cards and marbles combined! We had some crazy times together!

Ike was serious when he had to be, fun when he wanted be, and a great friend to everyone he met. Ike know that he had to give his all, he knew what the dash between those dates meant. It meant that he was here to leave his mark. He had to have known early on that he was here to make a difference, that he was going to leave an impression on everyone he greeted, that he was going to help make the lives of others better.

Ike was the dash between his dates. He leaves so many people with good, special memories. He leaves us knowing how to live a full and happy life. He leaves us knowing that his dash made a huge difference in all our lives! You will be missed deeply my friend! Thank you for your dedication, support, and love for your family, your friends, and your community.

-Michele Turner



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Glimpses Into Our Past

Dixie Collie Walker

By Alison Bunting

“Fun and Trials of Pioneering,” an autobiography written by Dixie Collie Walker for her children, provides a first-hand account of the experiences of Arizona one-room schoolteachers in the early 20th century. Schools were in remote, small communities, so finding a place to live was a challenge, and living alone was scary. Schools closed when populations decreased, requiring relocation to other districts, and transportation was on horseback or on foot.

Dixie Collie Walker (1894-1991) was the youngest of Ruben (1846-1925) and Lucinda (1852-1926) Collie’s 13 children. Born in Kentucky, she moved with her family to Texas when she was about ten. The next move was in 1910 when she and her brother Stone (1892-1982) joined their parents and older brother Bill (1879-1966) in Elgin. Ruben, Bill, and Stone all filed homestead claims and began ranching in the Elgin/Vaughn area.

In 1911, at age 17, Dixie passed the Arizona teachers certification exam, beginning a ten-year teaching career. Dixie’s first teaching assignment was in the Mowry mining community, about 30 miles from her parents’ home in Elgin. She bought a horse for transportation and lived in a tent cabin rented from Orton Phelps. She had about 30

students, most of Mexican descent. Only a few spoke English.

In 1912 Dixie began to teach in the mining town of Greaterville. The pay was better but there was no place for her to live. Her brother Bill constructed a one-room shack and a corral for her horse near the Greaterville store, operated by Silas Piper. One night Dixie awoke to the sound of someone trying to enter her home. She fired her Colt 45 and shot Mr. Piper who had mistaken her door for the outhouse. [The Border Vidette 1/18/1913]. Piper was wounded in the wrist and lung and died several months later. [The Border Vidette 3/22/1913]. Dixie was understandably reluctant to continue living alone. Fortunately, Carl Schofield, Rosemont Forest Ranger, invited her to board with him and his wife and daughters, allowing Dixie to finish the school year.

Her next teaching assignment (1913/1914) was in Maricopa, south of Phoenix at the junction of the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Maricopa and Phoenix Railroad. She lived in the town’s hotel and was able to walk to school. From 1914 to 1917 Dixie taught in the farming district of Potrero, six miles north of Nogales. She boarded at the Nogales ranger station, initially with the Albert Abbott family and later the

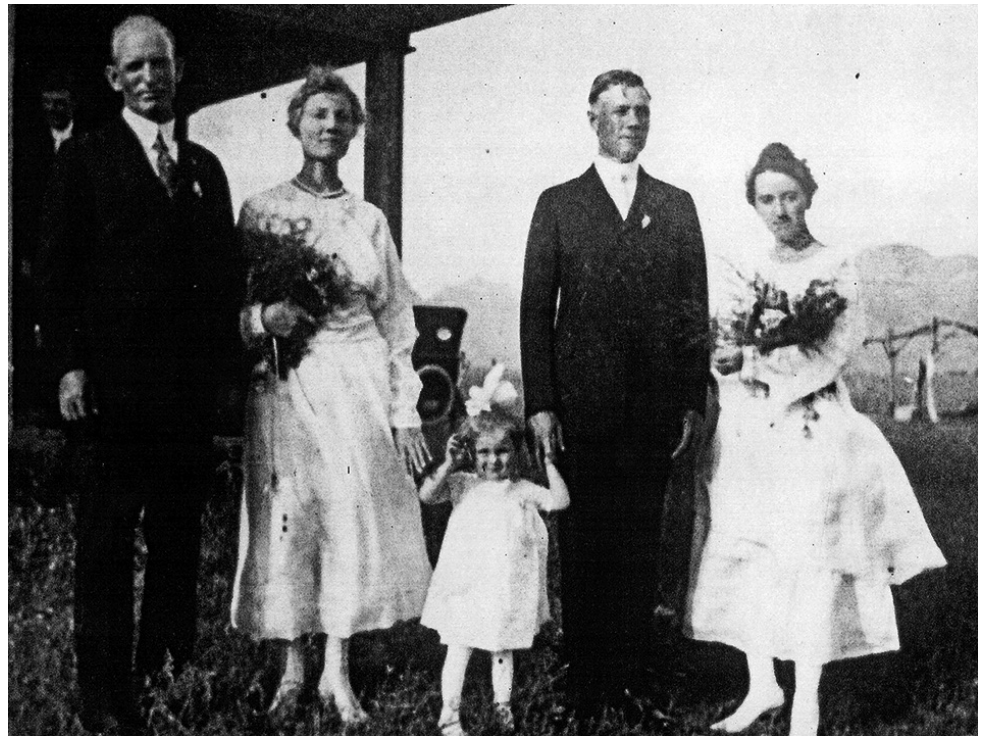


Photo courtesy of the Collie family

Double wedding photo taken in 1910. (From left): Almond Walker, Dixie Collie Walker, Leslie Collie, Stone Collie and Fern Bartlett Collie.

Theodore Knipe family.

By 1917 Dixie finally was able to teach closer to home, first in the new school in Rain Valley and later in Sonoita. She lived at home when teaching at Rain Valley and in the unoccupied Sonoita railway section house when teaching in Sonoita. Sadly, the flu epidemic of 1919 closed schools in the area and the student body at Sonoita school dropped so much that a teacher was not needed when schools reopened in early 1920.

Dixie next accepted a position in Russelville, Cochise County. There she

met Almond E. Walker (1889-1960), a cowboy at the C Bar ranch where Dixie boarded.

They married in August 1919 at a double wedding ceremony where her brother Stone married Fern Bartlett. Dixie taught in Russelville for the 1919-20 school year.

In the fall of 1920 her first son was born and her teaching career ended. She and Almond moved to Tucson in 1922 where Dixie worked as a cafeteria cook for many years and the couple owned and operated the Walker Riding Stables.

STARSTRUCK

Planetary Alignments



During the last week of February, and especially on the 28th, four planets will be on parade just after sunset near the western horizon with two more hovering above. An internet search can provide approximate locations. Only Mars will be absent from the show. It’s a view that should not be missed. It is estimated that an alignment such as this one occurs, perhaps, just once every 100 years. And, when it happens,

it’s a chance to do more than just look outward.

All of the planets in our solar system orbit the sun on separate

planes, and at different speeds and distances. They are never truly close to one another. Instead, and only just from our viewpoint, every so often they seem to bunch together. We call it an alignment though the planets never appear in a straight line.

During this phenomenon, just as we can see them, Earth is also simultaneously in the spotlight of all those distant worlds. The alignment, then, is an opportunity to recognize that every photo can become a selfie, every glance outward can provide introspection, and every step forward can reveal past steps. As it is on Earth, so it is in space—for what is seen can also identify, define and give context to the observer.

Later this month we will be able to see—with the help of a telescope—nearly every planet at the same time. And, while there is no one on those planets to look back at us, we have the ability to turn our eyepieces around. What that outbound view can uncover is not just a fleeting gathering of our solar system neighbors, but also a consideration of all that led up to that

gathering, in space and on Earth. We can ask ourselves what meaning that offers. And, we can imagine what we would see if there were, indeed, to be a selfie taken of the observers.

As the sun sets, try to catch a brief glimpse of Saturn, Mercury and Venus just above the highlands west of Nogales, with a mesmerizingly bright Jupiter standing watch over them. That all of these objects, many millions of miles apart, should look so close together should give us pause. And, in that moment, while we form our opinions of each of the planets, we might ask ourselves what that tells us about ourselves.

A digression: how is it that two people can have such opposite views of great movies or books or important figures in history? How is it that there are some for whom geographical wonders like the Grand Canyon elicit but a shrug? Clearly, our responses say as much about ourselves as about the object in question.

Perhaps, now more than ever, it is crucial to understand the viewer just as much as what is being viewed. The study of the stars is not unlike so much of what we study on Earth. We are discovering and learning new things every day. And yet, such serious problems continue to confound us. It is as if for every new achievement we

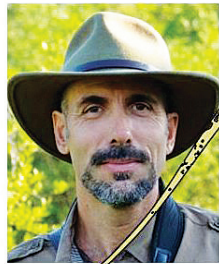
seem determined to refute or negate something already known and rightfully accepted. We may be, as Joni Mitchell wrote over 50 years ago, stardust and golden, but we still seem caught in the devil’s bargain.

There’s a purity we see when looking at the planets. They may have changed over the past four billion years, but it has all been without our interference. We have watched a comet break apart and tear into Jupiter. We now know that flowing water on Mars was lost when its atmosphere was stripped away. We have learned that Saturn’s rings, still magnificent, will one day disappear.

We accept all of it because it’s solely nature, and it is entirely out of our control.

That’s simply not true of our own planet. We play a role. Though that seems brutally obvious, it is clear that we still desperately need to be constantly reminded of that fact. That’s what we can see while taking in the beauty of an occasional planetary alignment. We can reverse the lens, as if in a selfie, and think about what we’ve done and what we need to do to maintain this home of ours that, among all other things, still lets us admire and stand in awe of the heavens.

Harold Meckler can be contacted at byaakov54@gmail.com



Nature Journeys

By Vince Pinto

Build Your Own National Park!

By Vince Pinto

In a day and age of widespread extinctions and ever-diminishing natural areas, every square foot of habitat matters. Enter your “backyard.” Whether you own ten square feet of barren turf or hundreds of wild acres, you have a genuine opportunity to bolster the biodiversity of the Sky Islands. Added up, formally protected areas simply do not equate to sufficient habitat to support our local biodiversity in the long term. We need a groundswell of people transforming their yards into genuine wildlife habitat—collectively adding up to a de facto national park, if not in name then certainly in its positive ecological effects. In this two-part article I will chronicle some personal habitat restoration success stories, hoping to inspire you to become—or continue to be—an Earth steward.

Unless your backyard or land is already in a perfectly natural state with only native plant species—a rarity these days—chances are there is much room for managing it better to increase biodiversity. Fortunately, several key habitat restoration initiatives are underway in our area. Each organization is committed to restoring habitat for the benefit of our local flora, fauna, and fungi. You can do the same and, as encouragement, I’ll share the example I’m most familiar with: our 42-acre Raven’s Nest Nature Sanctuary.

In 2008, Claudia and I purchased the 42 acres owing to its location—a short walk to the nearly 10,000 acres of Sonoita Creek State Natural Area and a five-minute drive from Patagonia Lake State Park—as well as the land’s varied topography and its great potential to support local biodiversity in this prominent wildlife corridor. We saw exciting ecological restoration opportunities both around the house and across the land at large.

We began in earnest around the house because, while we loved it, the land ringed it looked like a moonscape: largely devoid of native vegetation, with mostly mowed, nonnative grasses as well as a few nonnative trees. Pursuing an aggressive and hands-on “out with the bad, in with the good” strategy, the first thing we did was to remove the foreign trees—two Chilean mesquites and a lone African sumach. Both species support little in the way of local wildlife and, even more insidiously, are known to escape into the wilds at large. Don’t be afraid to “rock the boat” by

removing nonnative vegetation essentially useless to wildlife. Oleander is another example of something that can be replaced with native plants that have coevolved with local wildlife. All around our house we planted dozens of native species—mostly trees, shrubs, vines and succulents—with the goal of creating an open woodland underscored by diverse xeriscaping. We knew that a successful habitat restoration project would not only attract far more wildlife, but also improve year-round temperatures inside the house—warmer in winter, cooler in summer. Efficiently landscaped houses also have increased property values.

As a wildlife biologist and ethnobotanist, I based our selection of native plant species on their natural distribution in the area, their value to wildlife, and their human utility—most of our selected plant species furnish food, medicine, or other useful items. We were looking for species that naturally occur within about 50 miles from our home and within 500 feet of our 4,000 ft. elevation. This approach maximized survivorship of the young plants. Some of our key species include evergreen sumach, hopbush, velvet ash, Arizona rosewood, desert honeysuckle and spiny hackberry. The actual list is much longer, as we strove for overall plant diversity as well as multiple individuals of certain species. While they occur outside of our 50-mile radius, we also planted a handful of Arizona cypresses for their evergreen shade and wildlife value.

We often grouped plantings in “habitat Islands,” minimizing water use via our custom soaker system. This also maximized value to wildlife by providing



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Photo by Vince Pinto

The Pintos have transformed a barren yard into a habitat that provides refuge for a variety of wildlife.

dense thickets where shade, food, and protective cover all come together. One example of this successful planting strategy is a habitat island anchored by a huge evergreen sumach, growing cheek-by-jowl with a scrub oak, an Arizona rosewood, a yellow trumpet, numerous wild cotton shrubs and a hollyleaf barberry. This particular habitat island has grown into its own world, hosting countless birds and other wildlife over the years. It has created

favorable conditions for a good number of volunteer velvet mesquite saplings, enlarging the size of the island, its value to wildlife, and the overall beauty.

Meanwhile, our Arizona grapevines and clematis vines have reproduced and spread, as have the desert honeysuckles (the blossoms are a favorite food of hummingbirds), fragrant marriolas, whitethorn acacias, hopbushes,

See Habitat, p. 7

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Take a Hike!



Photo by Wayne Tomasi

Bathtub Tank

By Wayne Tomasi

El Pilar and Bathtub Tank are landmarks centrally located in the upper basin of Adobe Canyon. Although both destinations can be reached from virtually any direction, this column describes the shortest, easiest and most direct route.

The hike to El Pilar and Bathtub Tank begins at the end of the Adobe Canyon Road (FR-234), which is in miserable condition and impassable for passenger cars, low-clearance vehicles, tricycles and less capable trucks and SUVs. The Adobe Canyon Road leaves Route 82 about a half mile south of Milepost 28. After turning onto Adobe Canyon Road, bear sharply to the right and drive approximately one mile, passing several private driveways. The good road ends where it turns sharply to the left and crosses a broad creek-bed. After a couple hundred yards, the road turns sharply to the right, passes through a gate, and begins a precarious journey up Adobe Canyon. In a few minutes you enter the Coronado National Forest and pass FR-4088 on the right. Continue driving north past a sign stating that Adobe Canyon Road dead ends in three miles.

If you manage to drive to the end of FR-234, the hike to Bathtub Tank is less than half a mile. If you continue to El Pilar, add another half mile to your hike. If you decide to park somewhere along the road and walk to the end of FR-234, the mileage will obviously be longer. FR-234 ends approximately five miles northwest of Route 82. The road is narrow, rocky, rutted, and crosses Adobe Creek 23 times. There are large dips in the road at many of the creek crossings that you have to creep over, regardless of what kind of vehicle you are driving. A reasonably fast hiker can probably walk the road almost as fast as a cautious person can drive it.

Note that FR-234 ends in a circular turn-around large enough to accommodate several vehicles; however, the circle is a tight fit and could be a difficult maneuver for a long vehicle or one pulling a trailer.

The most direct route to Bathtub Tank and El Pillar is up the narrow west arm of Adobe Canyon, which leaves FR-234 a couple of hundred yards before the turnaround. There is no official trailhead marking the beginning of the route but the entrance to the canyon is obvious.

After approximately 220 yards of



Photo by Wayne Tomasi

El Pilar

easy walking, you arrive at Bathtub Tank, which the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) constructed sometime in the early 1930s. The tub consists of a man-made 15-foot-long concrete dam across a narrow channel in a large, fortress-like outcrop of solid rock that nearly pinches off the canyon. A small reservoir resembling a bathtub sits between the concrete wall and the native rock. A sizable section of the wall has eroded away so the tub is not nearly as deep as when constructed. When the bathtub is full, water flows over the opening in the wall, creating a ten-foot-high waterfall spilling into a natural pond at the foot of the barrier. In the distant past, a galvanized pipe carried water from the tub into a concrete cattle trough at the base of the wall on the right side of the waterfall.

There is a securely mounted 12-foot-high steel ladder attached to the rock on the right side of the basin. To continue to El Pilar, climb the ladder and work your way over the rocky ledge above the tub and continue walking up the narrow gorge. Within a few minutes, El Pilar comes into view, although it may be difficult to see through the dense growth of trees and underbrush. El Pilar is a 50-foot-high sandstone spire standing guard over the narrow passageway between the grass-covered hidden valley above and the marshy lowland below. The CCC constructed a concrete dam next to El Pilar, creating a shallow reservoir (or tank) above it with the same purpose as Bathtub Tank: to store water. The dam actually adds a bit of charm to the area because a steady stream of water flows over the barrier, giving the large pool at the base of the wall

a garden-like appearance. To reach the upper basin, follow a well-trodden path up a natural ramp on the right side of the spire to a wide, man-made slot in the otherwise solid rock wall between El Pilar and the adjacent hilltop. The upper basin is covered with tall grass growing in a moist bed of rich, loamy soil.

An alternate route to El Pilar and Bathtub Tank is up the narrow main arm of Adobe Canyon. This hike begins up a footpath off the north end of the turnaround and immediately enters a narrow drainage bordered with plants typical of the Sonoran Desert. The trail climbs over an embankment and then drops to the rocky bed of the drainage. Hike up the wash 25 feet to where the trail veers up the left bank and then quickly returns to the creek. The path winds back and forth across the wash several times over the next 200 feet and then climbs a steep hill on the left. About a third of the way up the hill, the trail passes through a hiker's gate between two large posts and then climbs out of the drainage next to a fence on a narrow ridge resembling an earthen dam. Although the trail continues up the ridge approximately a mile to where it connects to FR-4088, do not follow the trail. Instead, make a sharp left turn and walk west across a narrow land bridge to an opening in a fence. Pass through the fence, drop about 20 vertical feet, and follow the path a couple hundred feet along the south edge of a grassy marsh to El Pilar.

Return the way you came or continue down the narrow canyon to the main arm of Adobe Canyon and then on to Bathtub Tank, FR-234, and your vehicle.

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2025 Christmas Bird Count

By Donna Edmonds

On an unusually warm morning, 57 birders set out on Dec. 18 to find every bird they possibly could for the 126th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Total number of species (112) and individual birds sighted (4,586) is a little lower than usual for the Patagonia circle, which is 15 miles in diameter, centered near Harshaw townsite and divided into 21 sectors.

There were some surprises. Lawrence's goldfinches, in an irregular irruption (a dramatic population surge), were counted on three checklists in and near Patagonia (58 birds total). A winter wren continues to hang out on Nature Conservancy property.

A rough-legged hawk that normally winters far north of SE Arizona has been spotted in San Rafael Valley for several weeks.

Ruby-crowned kinglet (192) and chipping sparrow (1,087) numbers were higher. Grassland sparrow numbers were lower, in part because of the continuing dry weather. Truck noise and dust made for difficult identification also. No Montezuma quail were seen in any sector.

Approximately 2,700 circles in the US, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America are birded each year between December 14 and January 5 and provide valuable information about birds and their movements in response to weather and habitat changes.



Photo by Mark Doyle

A participant in the Christmas Bird Count scans for birds in the San Rafael Valley.

Species	Number	Species	Number	Species	Number
Mallard	5	Woodhouse's Scrub Jay	3	White-crowned Sparrow	209
Mallard (Mexican)	2	Mexican Jay	233	White-throated Sparrow	2
Ring-necked Duck	1	Common Raven	249	Vesper Sparrow	35
Gambel's Quail	79	Horned Lark	1	Savannah Sparrow	98
Wild Turkey	13	Bridled Titmouse	68	Song Sparrow	20
Eurasian Collared-Dove	51	Verdin	12	Lincoln's Sparrow	14
Inca Dove	32	Bushtit	41	Sparrow sp	100
Common Ground Dove	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	192	Canyon Towhee	44
White-winged Dove	102	White-breasted Nuthatch	70	Abert's Towhee	24
Mourning Dove	74	Species	Number	Green-tailed Towhee	3
Greater Roadrunner	1	Brown Creeper	1	Spotted Towhee	42
Anna's Hummingbird	27	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	5	Western Meadowlark	9
Broad-billed Hummingbird	10	Rock Wren	13	Eastern Meadowlark (Lilian's)	1
Violet-crowned Hummingbird	3	Canyon Wren	4	Red-winged Blackbird	25
Great Blue Heron (Blue form)	2	House Wren	1	Brewer's Blackbird	23
Black Vulture	23	Winter Wren	1	Great-tailed Grackle	2
Golden Eagle	3	Marsh Wren	1	Orange-crowned Warbler	22
Northern Harrier	3	Bewick's Wren	91	Yellow-rumped Warbler	147
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	Cactus Wren	1	Species	Number
Cooper's Hawk	4	European Starling	3	Y-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)	59
American Goshawk	1	Curve-billed Thrasher	21	Y-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)	1
Red-tailed Hawk	10	Northern Mockingbird	2	Black-throated Gray Warbler	5
Great Horned Owl	1	Western Bluebird	134	Townsend's Warbler	1
Mexican Spotted Owl	1	Hermit Thrush	29	Painted Redstart	3
Red-naped Sapsucker	28	American Robin	20	Hepatic Tanager	4
Acorn Woodpecker	36	Cedar Waxwing	29	Northern Cardinal	24
Gila Woodpecker	88	Phainopepla	4	Pyrrhuloxia	5
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	52	House Sparrow	55	Lazuli Bunting	3
Arizona Woodpecker	13	American Pipit	1		
Northern Flicker	83	House Finch	136	ADDITIONAL SPECIES SEEN	
American Kestrel	18	Pine Siskin	6	Sora Rail	1
Hammond's Flycatcher	5	Lesser Goldfinch	143		*CW
Gray Flycatcher	3	Lawrence's Goldfinch	58	Prairie Falcon	1
Dusky Flycatcher	3	Chestnut-collared Longspur	1	Northern Pygmy Owl	1
Black Phoebe	12	Rufous-winged Sparrow	1	Williamson's Sapsucker	Total 3
Say's Phoebe	18	Chipping Sparrow	1087	Male	1
Cassin's Kingbird	8	Brewer's Sparrow	4	Female (1 CW)	2
Hutton's Vireo	6	Black-throated Sparrow	9	Rough-legged Hawk	1
Cassin's Vireo	5	Lark Sparrow	14	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	1
Plumbeous Vireo	3	Dark-eyed Junco	48	Chihuahuan Raven	2
Loggerhead Shrike	2	Dark-eyed Junco (Pink-sided)	17	*Count Week – Sightings three days before or after the official bird count date	
		Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed)	10		

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In 2025, the PRT received \$74,384 in donations from 400 donors. We are so grateful for this continued support. We recognize you, our donors, as true partners in our mission to be our community's source of information. Our readers depend on us and we depend on our donors to continue to bring our unique local stories to Eastern Santa

Cruz County.

Over the past 16 years we have become the voice of our community. This past year we shared a range of articles covering topics including the local impacts of the County Treasurer's embezzlement, the home insurance crisis in our communities, challenges facing our local fire departments, environmental

threats, programs to mitigate wildfire risk in our communities, the lack of state support for our local schools, and so much more.

In 2025, we distributed, for free, 2400 copies of our print edition each month, our website averaged 22,120 views monthly, our Facebook page saw an average of 90,000 views each

month, and our weekly newsletter had 1900 subscribers. Your support made all this possible.

Your donation speaks volumes of shared values and a commitment to creating positive change. Together, we provide unique, trusted local news, and we are deeply grateful for your unwavering support.

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Check It Out at the Library Treasure Trove of Local Works Waiting to Be Discov- ered in Our Reading Room

By Sarah Klingenstein

Author Philip Caputo strolled into the Patagonia Public Library one day last month to drop off a signed copy of his latest book, "Wandering Souls." According to Booklist, his most recent work is "a searing yet deeply compassionate story collection that explores the fragile borders between survival, guilt, and redemption." We accept!

The "magical kingdom of Patagonia" has always drawn creative people to live in its mountains and its villages. Caputo is one of a handful of local authors we like to call our own. And the Patagonia Public Library has set aside a trove of their works in the Reading Room. The multiple-award-winning writers who fill up that trove with the greatest bounty are Caputo, Gary Paul Nabhan and Jim Harrison.

Philip Caputo may be best known for the memoir "A Rumor of War" (1977), recounting his experiences as platoon commander in the Marines in Vietnam. Before the book's debut, Caputo had spent years as a journalist, including as a war correspondent who saw the fall of Saigon and was wounded in the Lebanese civil war.

Since then, he has written almost 20 books, including two memoirs, five books of general nonfiction, and 11 novels. The author's books are set all over the world from Sudan to South Florida. "Crossers," published in 2009, is a novel set against a backdrop of

drug and illegal-immigrant smuggling on the Mexican border.

Many days, he says, even most days, he can be found working on his next project in the library's Reading Room. We are proud to carry over 15 of Caputo's works. Check one out and maybe you can discuss the work with the author when you return it to the library.

Gary Paul Nabhan lives among us as an ethnobotanist and ecologist with a great interest in native foods and their peoples. Referring to Nabhan's first published book, "The Desert Smells Like Rain" (1982), author Barry Lopez wrote, "Gary Nabhan's compassionate observation of Papago land ethics is important work, capable of broad application. He is a naturalist in the full sense of the word, because he has not forgotten the people." That describes Nabhan's entire oeuvre (so far) of 35 books, with titles including "Coming Home to Eat," "Tequila!," "Agave Spirits," which won the James Beard Award, and his most recent book, "Against the American Grain, Borderlands History of Resistance."

In it, Nabhan tells the stories of those who have shaped our history through bold resistance. "Whether they were Indigenous, LatinX, Catholic priests and nuns, Quakers, or cross-cultural chameleons, it has been the resisters, performance artists, grassroots organizers, nomads, and spiritual leaders from the desert mar-



Photo by Linda Shore

The Patagonia Library carries books written by several award-winning local authors.

gins of society who constantly reshape the faces and fabric of America," he wrote. Our little library offers up over two dozen of Nabhan's works. Come in and sample a few!

"Devouring Time: Jim Harrison, a Writer's Life," is a new biography of Harrison, and it joins 30 of Harrison's works housed in our library. Harrison is known most popularly for his novels (remember the novel-turned-film "Legends of the Fall"), poetry and essays, and, among proud locals, for holding court at the Wagon Wheel during his final years spent in Patagonia. In Todd Goddard's biography, Harrison emerges "as a complicated man possessing large appetites for drinking, smoking, food, and sex" (publishersweekly.com).

His greatest passions were poetry and nature. Harrison wrote that his "intimacy with the natural world had been a substitute for religion, or a religion of another sort." "The River," one of Harrison's later poems, is illus-

trative:

*Then again maybe we'll be cast
at the speed of light through the
universe
to God's throne. His hair is bounteous.
All the 5,000 birds on earth were
created there.
The firstborn cranes, herons, hawks,
at the back
so as not to frighten the little ones.
Even now they remember this divine
habitat.
Shall we gather at the river, this beau-
tiful river?
We'll sing with the warblers perched
on his eyelashes.*

— Jim Harrison, "The River" (excerpt),
Dead Man's Float (2016)

Todd Goddard will speak about Harrison and read from his new biography at the Tin Shed Theater on Feb. 21 at 2 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Patagonia Public Library.

Hunting (Cont.)

traditionally hunted that way had to come north."

Arizona Game and Fish Department public affairs community liaison Mark Frieberg confirmed that the number of permits were the same as for 2024 but said the department is not aware of any areas closed to recreational use. "I have spoken to the field supervisor for this area, and we are not aware of any new areas that are closed to hunting," he said. Frieberg referred further inquiries to the Border Patrol, which did not respond to requests for comment.

The Canelo Hills residents say the overcrowding is compounded by a lack of enforcement by Game and Fish. Game and Fish has 74 game wardens throughout the state, responsible for 76 game management units. Frieberg said there are six assigned to the sector that includes 35A. Whitaker said he has never encountered a game

warden "in seven years of hunting here."

Therein is part of the problem. By and large, hunters are charged with policing themselves. It's a bit of a wild, wild west.

"Every other state that I've hunted in, you've got to go to a tagging station, and they have to log it in," Whitaker said. "I could shoot a deer out here where nobody sees anything, process it in the field, the meat goes in the bags, I can go home without putting a tag on that deer and I could hunt tomorrow. It's nothing other than personal integrity."

Frieberg encouraged anyone witnessing a violation to contact Game and Fish's Operation Game Thief Hotline. But Whitaker said he sent photos after coming across the decapitated deer and killed fawn and never heard back. And the hotline is of little use for nuisance or private property concerns.

"If you're in trouble out here, you're

on your own," Dru Montemayor said.

Montemayor recounted an encounter she had with a hunter attempting to use a private road in the Lyle Canyon area. "He asked if he could come in, he started arguing with me," she said. "I emphasized the fact that we all feel the same way, this is a private road, and you are trespassing. And he took his gun out of the case and put it on his lap. That is intimidation."

Nora Stewart said when a neighbor of hers asked some hunters not to leave behind trash, "as they were leaving, they shot over her head."

Sandy Fletcher said this is the first hunting season she abstained from horseback riding. "We rode all over this place last year, I just wore my vest," she said. "I didn't even dare go out this year because there were so many more hunters out there. It almost felt overwhelming, overpopulated with hunters, like it wasn't really safe out there."

Whitaker said he also altered his usual routine this year. "My son and I hunt several areas on Brushy (Canyon) on a regular basis, and we gave up on it this year on the second day of our season," he said. "There's a trail that goes from Brushy Canyon Road up over the hill and down onto Lyle Canyon, it makes about a ten-mile loop, and they were just riding that loop, riding that loop, riding that loop, road-hunting from their rigs."

The Canelo Hills residents were united in their suggested remedies to the situation: Fewer permits. More enforcement.

"We need ten of them (game wardens), not one," Whitaker said.

Added Stewart: "I doubt that any of these hunters are ever going to see this article. I'm not asking to speak to the hunters themselves. I'm asking to speak to enforcement, and to put pressure on the officials to do something."

WORD SEARCH

First Postmasters of Santa Cruz County

By Carrie White

S Q N P F P L K M Y R Z T A D R O W E D
 R Q N D V Y Z Y G X F H A S S D U U D E
 E E N Y I L U L X C O S W N N X F J W T
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 R N C N L S H H N O D G W S M D A Y Y M
 T Q U R S U J A H E C H Q N A B S M D M
 R H Z J G A S M I M F U B N S V M L O U
 E N A H N U A Z D M Z Z G C S I O U N H
 B D E T I I Z J S S I I W W T W W R C A
 O S D L L I K J D X L N D M E K R E O R
 R L U L L M J F D L M U N Y E K Y D O A
 K J I R B V M L E S J A W I L N Z L L L
 F W X Y A P Z T J X C E E E E F X E E C
 K Y B Q Y C T C L V P X Z K G B H R Y N
 P W Z I Z E O Z S O L P B H T K O E K C
 V W L L S I L L O C N E B U E R C N Q O
 K P I J V I W G M U O U N D K Q J B D W
 C H A R L E S B A N K H E A D O N A Y E

Post offices played an essential role in the transformation of the American West. They were a lifeline for isolated settlers and they fostered community identity. This Word Search recognizes the first postmasters who manned these rural outposts.

The space between first and last name has been removed.

Word List

Abner Elder – Lochiel
 Charles Bankhead – Duquesne
 Chas Mowry – Patagonia
 Clara Hummel – Sonoita
 Corydon Cooley - Mowry
 Dan Gillette – Harshaw
 Julius Andrews – Ruby
 Lizzie Durand – Salerno

Minnie Bond- Alto
 Reuben Collis – Elgin
 Robert Rogers – Canelo
 Thomas Hughes – Crittenden
 Thomas Steele – Greaterville
 William Hopkins – Washington
 Camp

What Is That?



By Tom Shore

Photo by Linda Shore

Do you ever wonder who stood on the spot you're standing on a hundred years ago? How about a thousand? Thanks to Dr. Hunter Claypatch and Cassina Farley's Lobo artists, a new display coming to the Museum will teach you more about the native culture of the past in our area.

The Santa Cruz Foundation for the Performing Arts

Benderly-Kendall Opera House,
 344 Naugle Ave., Patagonia, AZ

February Schedule

Feb 8 - The Benderly Quartet. Emily Chao, Juan Mejia, Raphael Lizama and Laura Casarez return to the Opera House this season with a special guest in a program that features La Oración del Torero (the prayer of the toreador) by Joaquin Turina and the String Quintet No 4 in G minor by Mozart, scored for two violins, two violas and cello.

Prepaid admission is \$35/adult or \$17.50/student. Pay online until noon on the day of the concert (using your preferred credit/debit card or PayPal) or by sending a check to SCFPA PO Box 875, Patagonia AZ 85624. Tickets purchased at the door on the day of the concert are \$40/\$20 (if seats are available)

Feb 22 - Bin Hu & Jing Xia "Duo Chinoiserie" "Resonant Wood and Vibrating Strings" performed by Bin Hu (European classical guitar) and Jing Xia (Chinese guzheng).

Prepaid admission is \$30/ adult or \$15/student. Pay online until noon on the day of the concert (using your preferred credit/debit card or PayPal) or by sending a check to SCFPA PO Box 875, Patagonia AZ 85624. Tickets purchased at the door on the day of the concert are \$35/\$20 (if seats are available)

Visit www.scfpapresents.org for more information

The Tin Shed Theater Patagonia Creative Arts Assn. February, March Schedule

February 21, 1pm: Author Talk - Todd Goddard, author of the Jim Harrison Biography, "Devouring Time"
 Free

February 20, 21 and 22 (7pm, 7pm & 3pm) Live Theater- "Marjorie Prime" written by Jordan Harrison and directed by Gail Cleveland. *It's the age of artificial intelligence, and 85-year-old Marjorie – a jumble of disparate, fading memories – has a handsome new companion who's programmed to feed the story of her life back to her. What would we remember, and what would we forget, if given the chance? In this richly spare, wondrous new play, Jordan Harrison explores the mysteries of human identity and the limits – if any – of what technology can replace.*
 \$5 at the door

March 13, 14 and 15 (7pm, 7pm, and 2pm) Live Theater- "Woody Guthrie's Roll on, America!" Directed by Jean Ann Foley, produced by Terry Stanford, musical director Melanie Morrison. *"Woody Guthrie's Roll On, America!" is a musical ensemble featuring many of Patagonia's talented musicians and vocalists, paying tribute to the life and music of America's most iconic folk singer, Woody Guthrie. The performance features some of Guthrie's most beloved songs, written while he rode the rails and traveled the dusty back roads with his people—Dust Bowl refugees fleeing poverty in Oklahoma in search of a better life in California. Guthrie's music carries enduring messages of justice, equality and compassion for people facing hard times—messages that still resonate powerfully today.*
 \$5 at the door

Dates and Times Subject to Change

If you would be interested in sponsoring upcoming events, contact Cassina Farley at 520-394-9369.
 Visit www.patagoniacreativearts.org or 394-9369 for more information.



BRIGHTER FUTURES TOGETHER

Growing up in Nogales, family was everything. **At South32, my sister and I found more than jobs** – we found opportunities to grow and make a difference right here at home.”

- *Brian, Field Technician
Exploration*

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- *Taylor, Geochemist Specialist*



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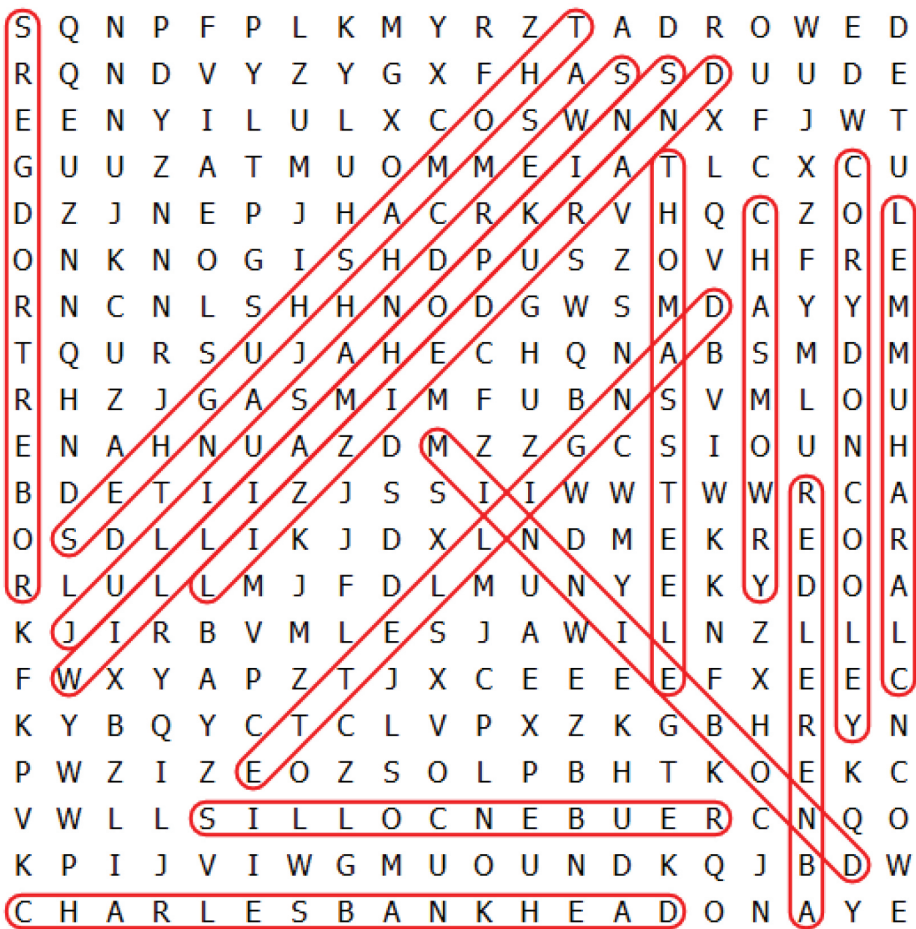


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Solution for this month's Word Search First Postmasters of Santa Cruz County



KPUP Broadcast Schedule Winter 2026

- Mon:** 5pm to 6pm: Swing Hour
7pm to 8pm: eTown repeat of Saturday's show
- Tues:** 10am to 12pm: World Jazz with Mark Berg
7pm to 9pm: Jazz and Blues with Fred Hansen
- Wed:** 5pm to 6pm: Swing Hour
7pm to 10pm: Sean Alexander show
- Thurs:** 7pm to 10pm: Possibility Explorers. "Celebrating Mushkil Gusha, the Remover of All Difficulties." Hosted by Graves
- Fri:** 7pm to 9pm: Hook's Sunken Roadhouse
- Sat:** 12pm to 1pm: eTown - "Educate, entertain and inspire listeners through music and conversation"
6pm to 8pm: Acoustic Café. A bit of country, rock, blues, folk, pop"
8pm to 10pm: Folk Alley "Folk Music Radio from WKSU-FM in Kent, OH"
- Sun:** 1pm: Sunday Classical Connection
- Daily Shows:** StarDate: 9am & 5pm/Best of the Oldies: 1pm to 2pm/
BirdNote: 6am and 10am/Growing Native with Petey Mesquitey:
MWF at 7am, Sunday at noon/
Feature Story News (FSN.com) Mon – Fri. 8am, 12pm and 6pm,
Sat. 8am & 6pm, Sun. at 8am
Patagonia Weather Forecast: Every odd hour.



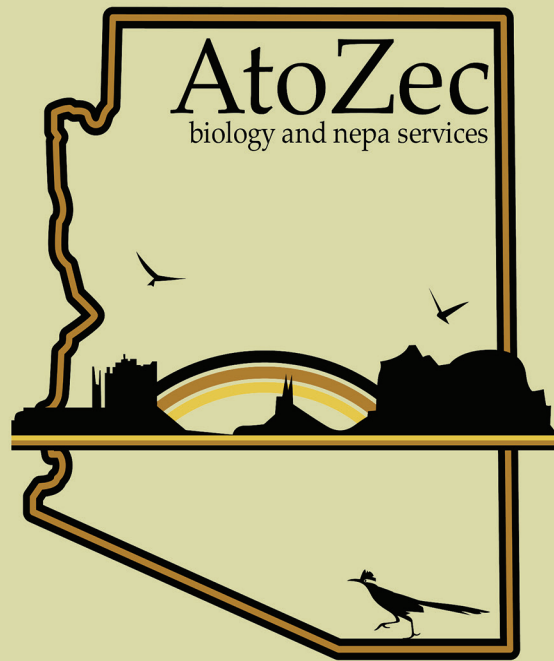
The Patagonia Regional Community Fund will begin accepting scholarship applications January 1, 2026 and closes March 16, 2026. Scholarships are available for high school seniors or adults returning to school at community colleges, four-year universities and career or technical schools. Apply by March 16. Through one application, you will also be matched to any of the other 90 ACF scholarships for which you qualify.



ARIZONA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

We're here to help you make a difference.
Call or click: 520.439.0595
or www.azfoundation.org/Patagonia

**PATAGONIA REGIONAL
COMMUNITY FUND**

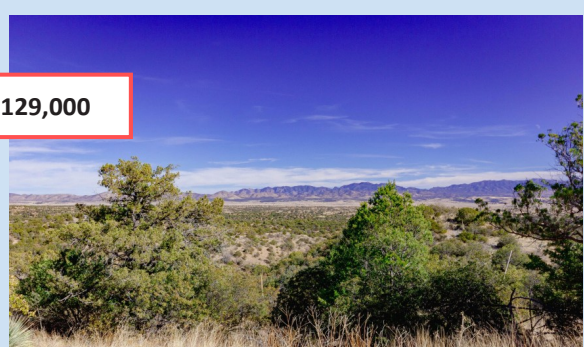


- wildlife and plant surveys
- wildlife camera studies
- biological assessments
- biological monitoring
- free services for local non-profits
- free education programs for kids
- and other flora/fauna requests

www.atozec.com | eric.herman@atozec.com | 602.635.0117



\$129,000



SAN RAFAEL VALLEY VIEWS!

MLS # 22401751 OLD DUQUESNE LOT 17C

Nestled in the trees in a quiet, gated subdivision in the Patagonia Mountains, this property already has 3 sheds, solar, and private well. BARBARA HARRIS 602 826-4026

\$350,000



JUST LISTED! 3 LOTS IN PATAGONIA

MLS # 22601577 327 N. 3rd AVENUE

Great investment opportunity. Three parcels surrounded by slump block fence. Casita w/utilities, storage shed, 2 sewer & water hookups. BARBARA HARRIS 602 826-4026

\$545,000



CHARMING ADOBE HOME WITH CASITA

MLS #22526424 450 COSTELLO LANE

Split level home on the outskirts of Patagonia, bordering the Nature Conservancy. 2Bd/2Ba, Great Room, large kitchen + Casita. BARBARA HARRIS 602 826-4026

\$98,000



LAKE PATAGONIA LOT WITH WELL—14.7 ACRES

MLS # 22532047 262 CIRCULO MONTANA

Beautiful mountain views, Ready to go with building pad in place and capped private well, Private yet close to shopping and services, JEAN MILLER 520 508-3335

\$759,000

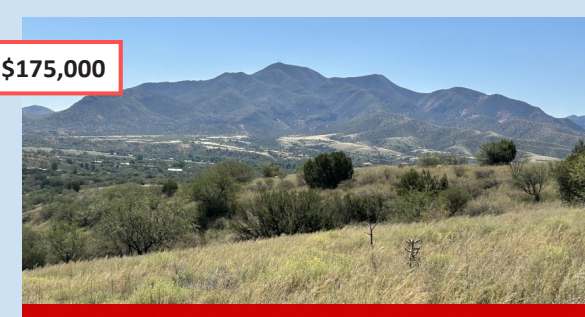


LUXURY HOME ON THE MESA

MLS # 22504897 109 RED MOUNTAIN CT

Stunning mountain views from this brand new home in Patagonia's prestigious gated community. High ceilings, 3Bd/2Ba, 2 car garage. JEAN MILLER 520 508-3335

\$175,000



VIEW LAND ABOVE PATAGONIA

MLS # 22422417 PROCTOR LANE 16+ ACRES

STUNNING land with gorgeous views of Red Mountain. 16.56 acres. Can be divided. Private, yet near Town. No HOA. JEAN MILLER 520 508-3335

\$385,000



THE CAFÉ IN SONOITA

MLS # 22523141 3280 HIGHWAY 82

Commercial property. Was a well-loved restaurant. Still almost ready to go with kitchen equipment and furnishings. Lots of room to expand. CHERYL VOLK 520 975-7271

\$625,000



LAKE PATAGONIA RANCH

108 STODDARD WAY 26.1 ACRES

Top of the world views! Classic ranch house w/3069 sf, 2Bd/3Ba plus loft. Private well. Horse facilities and easy ride out to State land. BARBARA HARRIS 602 826-4026

\$449,000



CASAS ARROYO SONOITA

MLS # 22519385 91 CASA ARROYO ROAD

Flocks of birds visit this lovely hill top home. Split level, 2Bd/2Ba, 2 car garage. Gated community w/greenbelt. Community pool. BARBARA HARRIS 602 826-4026

PATAGONIA: 327 McKeown Avenue, Patagonia, AZ
next to Gathering Grounds

Jean Miller, Owner, Designated Broker
Long Realty Sonoita/Patagonia
Direct 520-508-3335 Office 520 394-2120
jeanmiller@longrealty.com



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