



Growing Native Plants for Ecosystem Health

By Molly McCormick

Native plants play important ecological roles in the health of

our Sonoita Creek watershed. Native grasses provide food for species such as the rare Baird's sparrow, as it overwinters in the grasslands. Milkweeds are essential for monarch and queen butterfly caterpillars; these butterflies won't lay eggs on any other plants. The seeds of our oak trees provide food for many creatures, including the black bear.

The orange trumpet flowers of the desert honeysuckle are an important food source for the 12 or so species of hummingbirds that spend time in our watershed. Sacaton, vine mesquite, and other grasses hold soils together when storm water threatens to wash everything downstream. All of these roles have been strengthened by thousands of years of interaction with critters and natural processes. This evolutionary mutualism helps make the ecosystem of our

home resilient, better able to resist fire, flood, disease, climate change, human impact, and other environmental disturbances.

Plant diversity is an important factor in ecosystem health. Borderlands Restoration (BR) has a native plant propagation center, dedicated to producing more native plants for our watershed. The center is currently funded through a grant with the Bureau of Land Management, restoration projects, and plant sales.

Caleb Weaver heads a team of volunteers who collect and clean the seeds of native plants for use in the nursery. Kate Tirion produces native plant seed at her Deep Dirt Farm Institute. Greenhouse manager Francesca Claverie; staff members Anita Clovesco-Wharton and Andrea Stanley; and various volunteers grow plants by mixing soil, sowing seeds, preparing cuttings, transplanting seedlings to larger

pots, managing pests, and daily watering.

The BR greenhouse has been growing! Last year we propagated 10,000 plants for use in restoration projects and plant sales. We are looking to double our production in 2015. Over the past year, we added weekly volunteer days, a shade structure to house "adolescent" plants, a new employee, and a contract with the National Park Service, and we collected more than 300 accessions of seeds. Last winter, the BR greenhouse grew thousands of milkweeds for monarchs. The project with Southwest Monarch Study included 11 different species of milkweeds. We will continue to grow milkweed and currently have five species growing for next year. The nursery is propagating approximately 75 total species of native plants; that's a lot of diversity!

Come help create a resilient

watershed! Greenhouse volunteer Tuesdays are from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Contact Francesca at afclaver@gmail.com or phone her at (760) 996-0893. Seed cleaning at the seed lab is from 9 a.m. to noon on Mondays. Be a part of a science project studying forage for Baird's sparrows at the seed lab. Learn to identify seeds from 1 to 5 pm on the following Tuesdays: December 2, December 16, December 30, and January 13. Contact Caleb to RSVP: weaver.caleb@gmail.com or (860) 237-0381.

Stop by the Borderlands Trading Post on Third & McKeown for locally produced native plants, crafts, and herbal products. Hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday 10-1; Friday and Saturday 10-3. Thanks for supporting local business!

Molly McCormick is the Restoration Project Manager/Outreach Specialist for Borderlands Restoration.

Patagonia Museum Plans Bus Tour to Mexico

By Herman Quiroga

The Patagonia Museum is currently planning a fundraising bus tour to Banamichi, Sonora. The tour will begin on Friday, February 27, and will return on Sunday, March 1. More details will be available as soon as all the terms are finalized.

On Friday, December 5, at 4 p.m., volunteers will gather for a Highway Cleanup. The Museum volunteers do cleanups every 90 days.

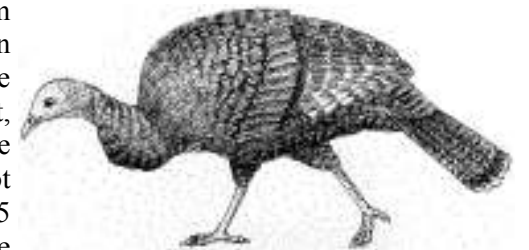
A monthly Lochiel Schoolhouse workday is planned, to begin at 9 a.m. on Saturday, December 6. The Museum will hold its Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 17, at 10:30 am.

For information about these events, or the regularly scheduled meetings please visit www.thepatagoniamuseum.org.

ANSWER TO OUR WILD NEIGHBORS

Submitted by the Mowry Tracking Team

Well, if this is a guy you're after, his name is Tom and he might want to pay close attention to the holiday menu. Wild turkeys like areas with hardwood trees combined with some open grassland. They are more prone to stroll than fly, seldom staying airborne for more than a quarter of a mile. The male and female look very different, with the tom being twice the size of his hen friends, and not particularly exceptional at 25 pounds. Where the hen has the



usual bird stylings, the tom has gone more punk; some have a bluish head and non-essential red adornments that can change color with their mood. Turkeys have a wide variety of less-than-musical vocalizations. The classic gobble can sometimes carry for a mile. Toms are notorious lady's men and go a bit over the top with their courtship, spreading their tail feathers, dragging their wings, drumming, booming, spitting - whatever works. The males often court with their brothers in tow, presenting an even more spectacular display.