

# New Ownership and New Role For Three Canyons

By Lynn Davison

Patagonians have watched the adventures and misadventures of Three Canyons since 2005. The original development went under in 2008 and the property is currently held by the National Bank of Arizona. The late breaking news is that a newly formed company, Wildlife Corridors LLC, purchased the property in a deal that is due to close in early December. The new owners will have 1250 acres of land, including a critical corridor for wildlife movement among the Santa Rita, Huachuca, and Patagonia Mountains.

So who is Wildlife Corridors and why are they so committed to this property? I recently spent an hour in Ron Pulliam's study, listening to the story. Like any card carrying former professor, he began by describing his concern about the trends in the landscape in southeastern Arizona over the past 40 years and his vision for preserving and restoring one of the most bio-diverse regions in the US. Pulliam is one of the founders of Borderlands Restoration, one of the two organizations that formed Wildlife Corridors to own and manage Three Canyons. The other parent organization is Bio R, a non-profit focused on habitat reconstruction to support wildlife and based in California and Australia. According to Pulliam, Borderlands is committed to protect and restore a "working landscape" that supports people and wildlife to successfully coexist. One part of the Borderlands strategy is to directly protect the few very special places that

are key to conserving the biodiversity of our region...places like Three Canyons.

The Three Canyons property sits smack in the middle of two sections of the Coronado National Forest. This strip of private land has been identified by Northern Arizona University professor of Biology, Paul Beier, as one of the most critical corridors (shown as area highlighted in white map) in Arizona for wildlife movement between hot-spots of biodiversity. As you can see from the map, the northern portion of the Three Canyons property is the only land left within the critical corridor free of development and capable of promoting movement of wildlife between the Santa Rita and Huachuca mountain ranges. Protection of that wildlife passage in perpetuity is the primary reason for the purchase.

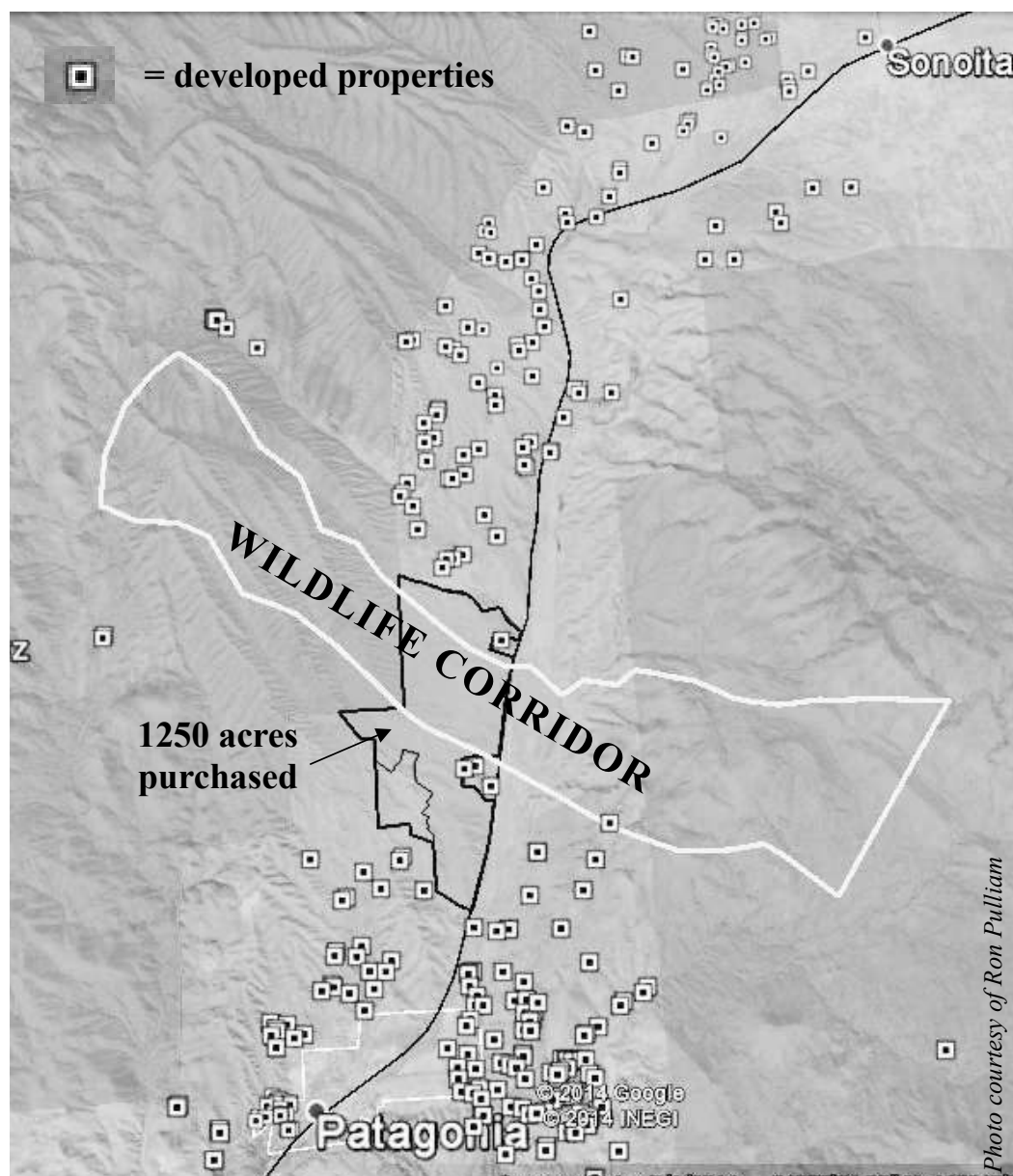
The 1250 acres purchased by Wildlife Corridors, part of a larger tract of land originally designed to have 189 homes, will be split into three sections with different uses. The majority, 916 northernmost acres, will be set aside as a wildlife corridor. A residential area, most of which is not owned by Wildlife Corridors, is already divided into 40 home sites, 16 of which were already purchased prior to the sale. A buffer zone of approximately 100 acres, between the wildlife corridor and the residential area, will be used for a combination of recreational and agricultural uses. For example, Borderlands will place several green houses in the buffer zone to support native plant propagation for restoration projects.

The new owners plan to establish a community advisory group to help determine specific uses within the property. Pulliam says they intend

the advisory group will represent a broad spectrum of people and interests in our community. Not surprisingly, many are already weighing in with ideas for equestrian trails, hiking trails, hunting opportunities, grazing and more. The owners suggest they are open to all ideas that can be compatible with the primary goal of preserving the wildlife corridor. They also appear

source of water. The property is the home of a fully installed water system that was designed to serve 200 home sites. Given the maximum of 40 home sites now planned, there will be considerable excess capacity for future on or off site uses.

Wildlife Corridors has six major investors who have raised approximately 50% of the purchase price. The balance will be held in the form of a third party loan to be paid off primarily by the sale of home sites and/or development rights. The company is looking for other investors who share their vision and support their business model. That model includes a commitment to reinvesting 80% of any profit generated by Three Canyons to a corridor protection fund that will assure the wildlife corridor is well managed in perpetuity.



to be interested in making Three Canyons a community asset that promotes the local economy, provides recreational opportunities for local residents, and is a potential

The new owners will hold a public meeting later this month to present their vision for Three Canyons to the community. Stay tuned for more details.