

the Rainmaker



WATERSHED NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ALTAR VALLEY

WINTER 2008 NO. 5

Winter Rain Edition

Welcome to the Altar Valley

Summer monsoons were generous this year. Now we hope for the gift of good winter rains. Rainfall patterns vary throughout the valley, so neighbors are always happy when it rains on someone!

The appreciation of rain in this region is just one of many topics that bind people together within the Altar Valley watershed. For over a dozen years now, people have found common ground and worked as the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance. The Alliance emerged in 1995 when landowners, State and federal resource managers, and interested citizens began talking about fire management and keeping watershed lands in agricultural production. An Altar Valley Watershed Resource Assessment was completed in 2000, thanks to an Arizona Water Protection Fund grant. That same year the Alliance became a 501(c)3 not-for-profit conservation organization.

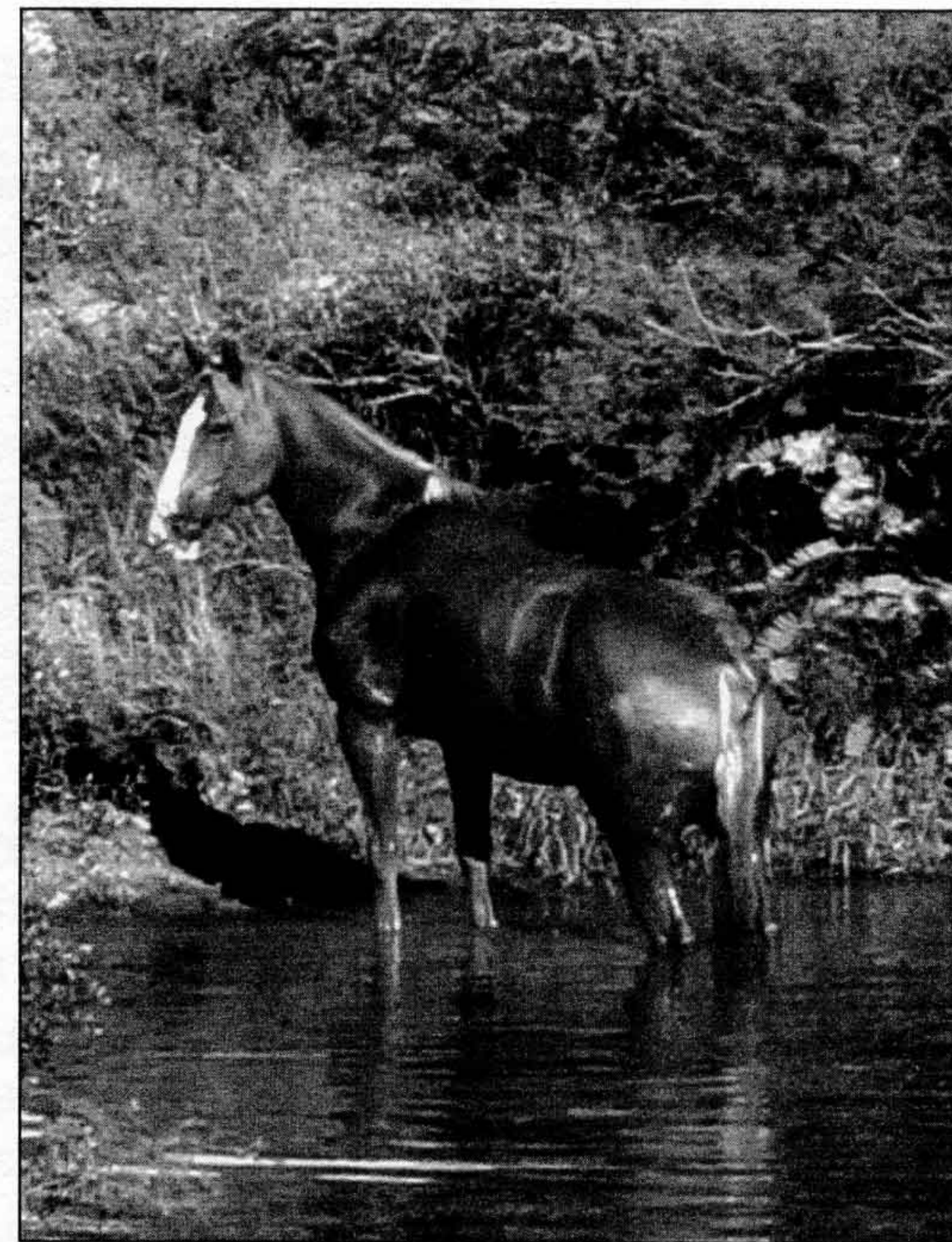
The scientific foundation of the resource assessment proved useful as the Altar Valley emerged as a key area for wildlife and habitat conservation for Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. The quest to return fire to the watershed to control undesirable plants and shrubs, as well as efforts to curb watershed damage caused by erosion, helped to launch a watershed fire plan and restoration initiative focused on getting conservation work done on the ground.

Exciting projects and funding possibilities prompted the Alliance to invest in organizational housekeeping this past year. The Alliance's mission continued to resonate true, and so the new bylaws state that "this corporation is organized for the purpose of leaving the next generation with a healthy productive watershed, a thriving agricultural community, and rural life enriched by the culture and history of the Altar Valley."

The new bylaws state that "the Board of Directors shall consist of individuals who [consent] to represent a ranch or agricultural operation in the Altar Valley Watershed ... In addition, the Board of Directors will vote to include up to three (3) members at large to serve on the Board." The

Alliance Board now includes representatives from the University of Arizona, two bee keeping businesses and a small vineyard, along with the livestock industry that has been the backbone of the organization.

Task Forces sanctioned by the Board do the day to day work for Alliance projects. Citizens and agency staff interested



"... this corporation is organized for the purpose of leaving the next generation with a healthy and productive watershed ..."

in a project may serve on a task force. Here is where the challenging and exciting work of partnership and collaboration really take place. Read on for news on these projects.

Finally, we have determined a fitting name for all the people who give time, money, and other resources to the Alliance -- you are Stewards. Your contributions enable everyone working together on behalf of the Altar Valley watershed to as we advance stewardship of this beautiful and productive landscape. Best of wishes to all of you during the fresh new year of 2009!

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Fire

SIERRA VISTA RANCH FIRE

A prescribed fire was sparked on the Sierra Vista Ranch on July 14, 2008. The burn went off like clockwork at 10 a.m. Weary, smoke-blackened firefighters were monitoring the last flames at 5 p.m. Not a fence post was charred, not a foot of fire line was jumped and acres of mesquite scrub and Lehmann's lovegrass were reduced to gray ash. By that evening, lizards were scuttling over the still-warm ash just minutes after the flames had passed.

Within days, a kestrel began hunting the burned area where quail wander through the blackened landscape. When the monsoon began in late July, a light veil of green grasses blanketed the burned area and deer wandered through to water at the filling tanks.

The Sierra Vista Burn was a remarkable cooperative effort involving 10 separate entities, 35 firefighters, and many individuals. Coordinating the burn took hours of advance planning over a period of almost a year. The date of the burn was moved three times.

Many landowners in the Altar Valley recognize the vital role fire plays in a healthy ecosystem, but paperwork and redtape can discourage the most avid of fire proponents. The Alliance has hit this challenge head on through its Altar Valley Fire Management Plan, due for completion early in 2009.

The point of the fire plan is to coordinate and simplify Endangered Species Act compliance for prescribed fire in the valley. It will also guide coordination between all the players.

Beginning in 2009, the US Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), which serves as the lead federal agency for the fire plan, will reach out to watershed land owners to see who would like to burn each year and begin plans for each project.

The Sierra Vista Ranch was a perfect fit for a trial run for burn planning and implementation. The ranch had not been grazed for five years and had a thick covering of dried grasses, cacti, and shrubs that needed to be removed. The ranch also shares a boundary with the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (BANWR), which has a well established fire program where approximately 1/5 of the refuge is burned each year. The refuge was able to include the 180 acres Sierra Vista burn



Fire crew building fire line before the prescribed fire.

in their annual allotment of acres available to burn, and the fire was conducted under their auspices.

Many volunteers and agency representatives helped prepare for the burn. In the spring of 2008, Marty Teugel (US Fish and Wildlife Service), Kristen Egen (NRCS) and David Seibert (Alliance Restoration Team) met with ranch co-owner Melissa Owen to plan details for the burn. Summer interns and fire crew from BANWR and volunteers walked the project area to survey for Pima pineapple cactus, and endangered species. Archaeology surveys were performed by NRCS. Vegetation monitoring sites were established and inventoried within and outside the burn project area.



Monitoring the fire.

The next step was preparing the project area for the burn. Funding from the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program paid for a fire line around the ranch house, outbuildings and vineyard. Butch Wilson, Rod Lopez and Russ Babiak, BANWR fire specialists, spent hours plotting the burn area, checking the fire line, black-lining the area (burning a line to help contain the fire) and assessing wind direction and speed.

After several false alarms, the 14th of July turned out to be burning day. Pinning down the date for a fire is tough, since winds, humidity and temperature conditions need to be just right -- plus fire personnel must be available, which can be complicated during fire season. The BANWR fire crew, along with fire colleagues from other area gathered at the ranch for a morning briefing and the fire began at 10 am. Stay tuned for more news after NRCS returns to inventory monitoring sites!

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Surveys for various endangered species and archaeology are a critical and expensive part of fire project planning. Regulatory compliance, as well as funders, often requires follow-up monitoring. Surveys and monitoring are expensive! Via the fire plan project, the Alliance hopes to make sure pre and post-fire surveys and monitoring are done efficiently and wisely, guided by the best available science.

Another key concern is liability, particularly on or near Arizona State School Trust lands administered by the Arizona State Land Department. The land department's policy is to contain and extinguish natural fires as quickly as possible, to limit the burn area and the potential costs and liability associated with a large fire. Similar concerns exist for prescribed fire. The Alliance is partnering with The Nature Conservancy to seek alternative methods for addressing the liability problem.

Regardless of these challenges, land owners and agency personnel must accept that fire will return to the Altar Valley with or without our intervention. Large wildfires have burned in the fuel laden Baboquivari Mountains the past two summers, threatening Kitt Peak National Observatory. The May 2008 Solano Fire burned 2, 545 acres at a total cost of \$1,315,046 (Solano Wildland Fire Update - May 14, 2008, Bill Watt, Lead Public Information Officer).

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD 2007

awarded to

**ALTAR VALLEY
CONSERVATION ALLIANCE**
by PIMA COUNTY and
ARIZONA FARM BUREAU



Alliance Board Members Tom Sheridan, Peggy Rowley, Mary Kasulaitis, Mary Miller and Pat King showing off the Arizona Farm Bureau State Environmental Stewardship Award!

Alter Valley Conservation Alliance (AVCA), located in the Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona, works on habitat restoration and conservation in the Alter Valley, including preservation of family ranching against development pressures, erosion control along the Alter Wash, the return of natural fires and prescribed burns, and protection of native species, including six that are threatened or endangered. In 1995, 12 local ranching families formed the Alter Valley Conservation Alliance. For its first project, the AVCA created a plan to return natural fire to the valley, because government agencies extinguish lightning-started fires immediately rather than letting them burn. The group has also used grant monies to produce a resource assessment that helped identify needed conservation actions. Additionally, the group has had Americorps volunteers build erosion-control structures and surveyed Pima pineapple cactus at King's Anvil Ranch. This is only a sampling of the conservation efforts this group has achieved. Today, we recognize them for their ongoing effort to ensure a healthy environment while preserving the ranching way of life.

Restoration

Thinking Like a Watershed

Altar Valley Restoration Work

Unites Diverse Groups for Common Cause

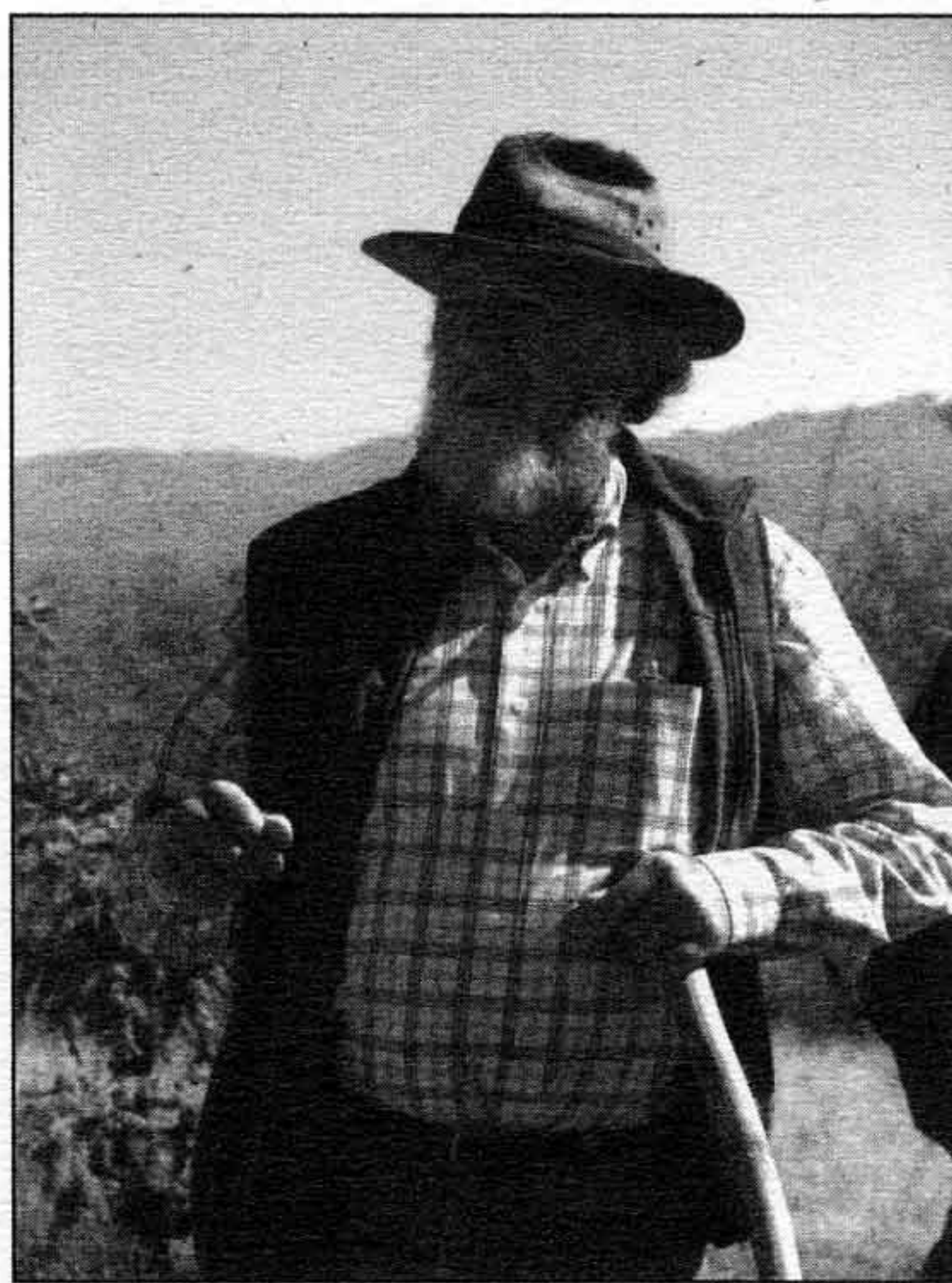
The Altar Valley watershed's 610,000 acres is the largest watershed still unfragmented by development in Pima County, AZ. Tackling rangeland improvements; erosion concerns and habitat restoration over this vast area requires the collaboration and dedication of many individuals and groups.

To help promote a concerted restoration effort, the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance (AVCA) began sponsoring hands-on training and education workshops. Since 2005, the Alliance, with the help of area ranchers, farmers, miners, the University of Arizona, county, federal and state agencies, has brought stream hydrology expert, Bill Zeedyk, to the watershed for erosion control, dirt road repair and water harvesting workshops.

In April 2008, AVCA and Bill Zeedyk held a two-day workshop on the Elkhorn and Anvil Ranches studying and discussing erosion problems and restoration techniques along two arroyos. Bill and 30 students studied the topography and erosive situations. They assessed previous erosion control work and discussed the next steps required to enhance those earlier efforts and correct new situations. This field work introduced many newcomers to the Altar Watershed and to the philosophies of Bill Zeedyk who stresses -- "Do No Harm" -- "Keep it Simple", "Get the Biggest Bang for the Buck," and keep it "Low Tech

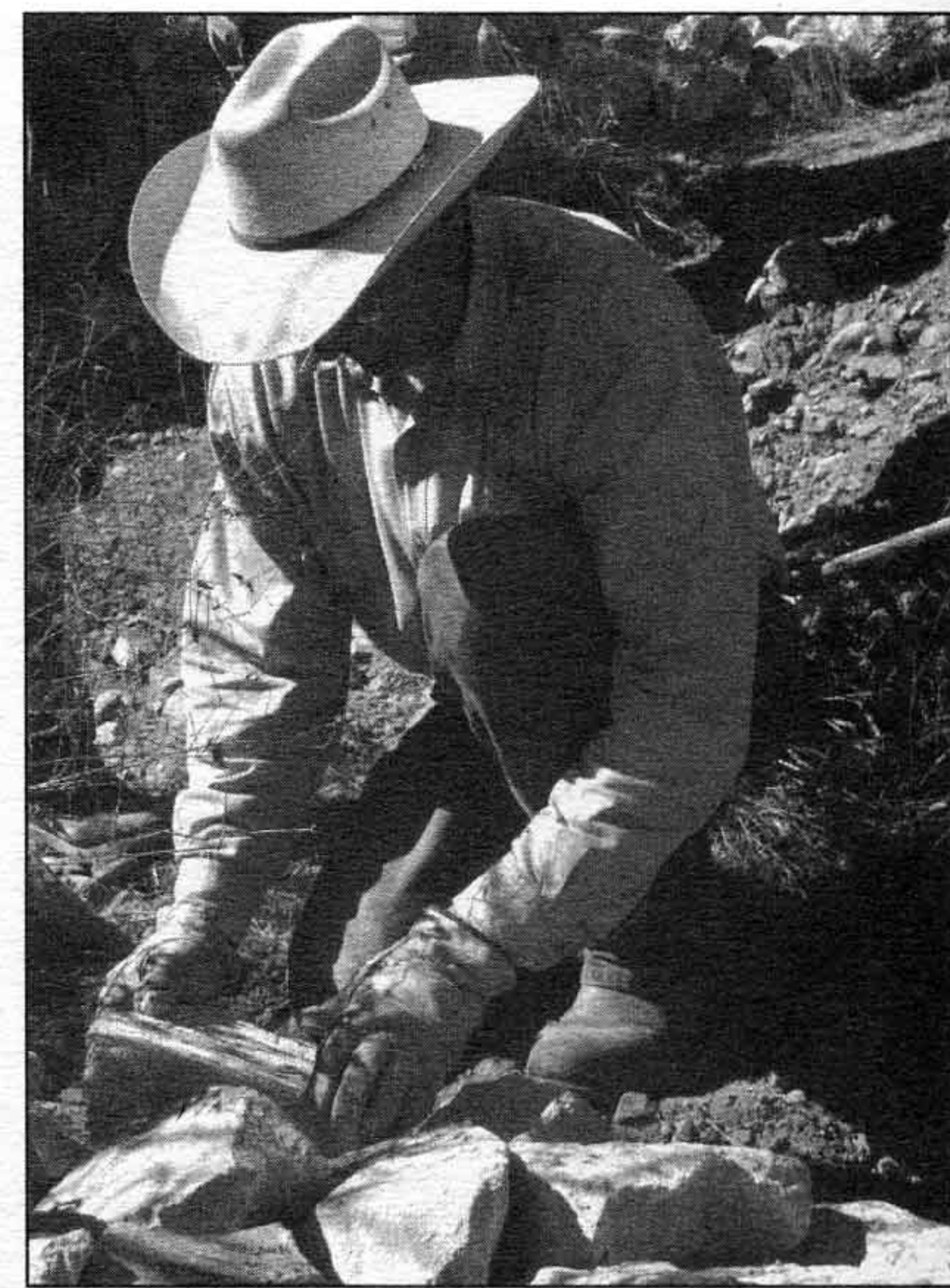
- Low Risk and Low Cost."

The April workshop set the stage for these new trainees to return in October to



Bill Zeedyk

- **Do no harm**
- **Keep it simple**
- **Get the biggest bang for the buck**
- **Keep it low tech, low risk, low cost**

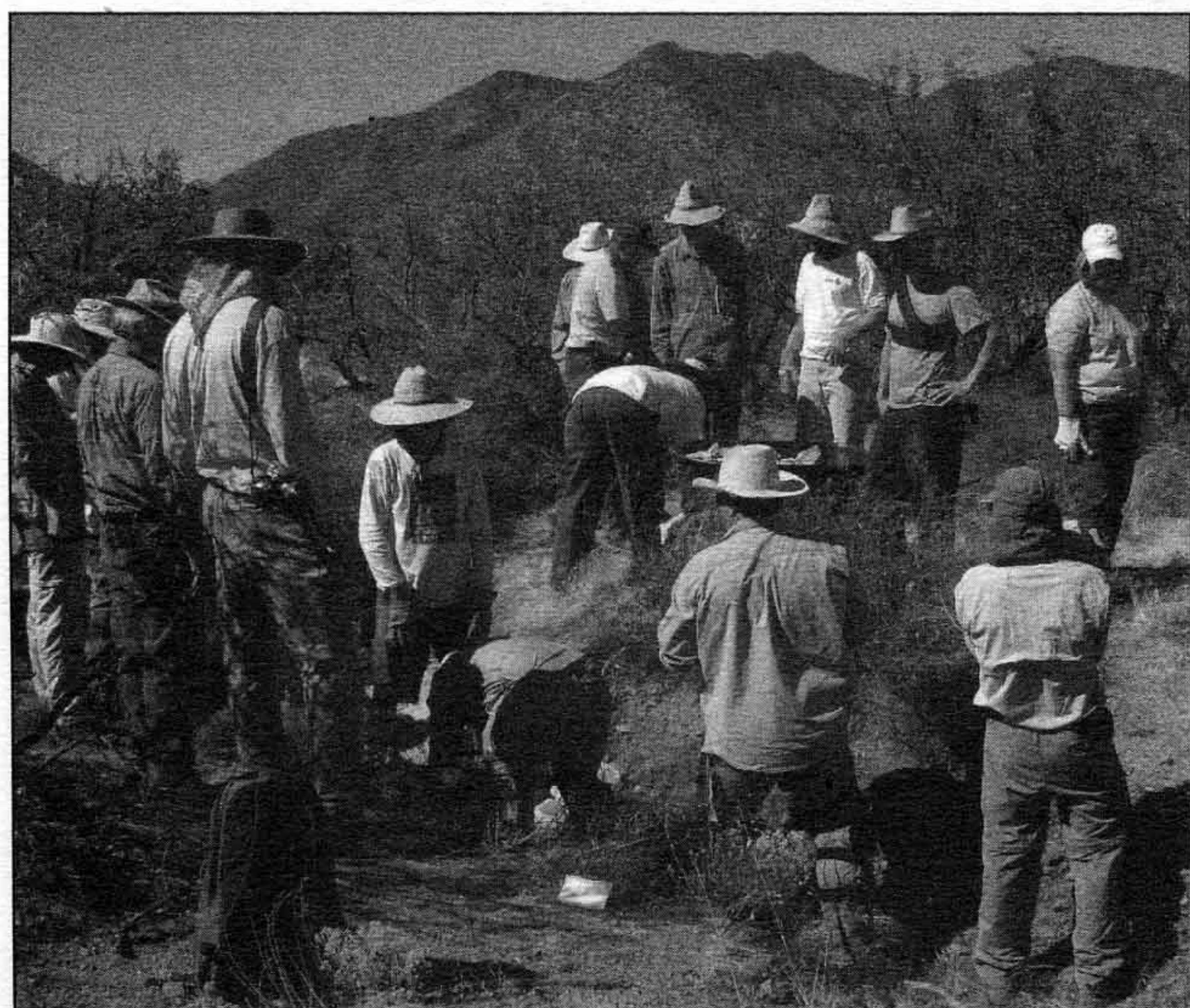


Pima County's Jon Sullivan placing rocks in an erosion control structure.

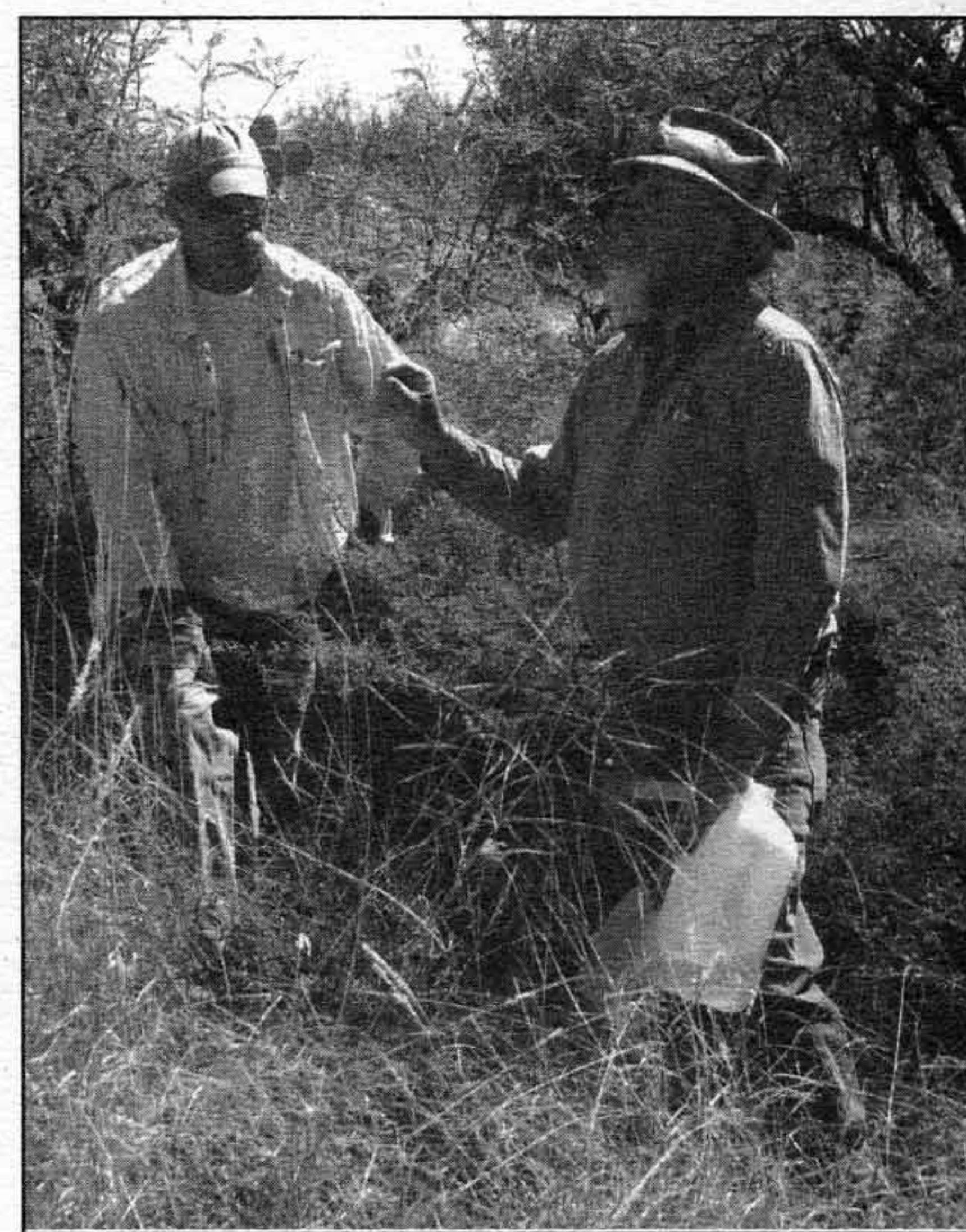
work on the ground. The actual arroyo restoration work completed in the fall with Bill and dozens of volunteers was made possible through funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Partners Program, equipment donation from Pima County and material donation of rocks from Sierita Mining and Ranching.

For these projects, Bill suggested a series of small structures strategically placed in eroding areas that are critical to habitat and working landscape operations. The erosion control structures are low tech and low cost, requiring little more than picks, shovels, rocks, wheel barrows and good old-fashioned physical labor.

Also in October, Bill educated managers and machine operators from the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (BANWRT), Pima County, US Forest Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and US Border Patrol on how to build and maintain roads that "lie easily on the land." Well drained roads harvest water and return it to the surrounding country. Without such care,



Arroyo workshop group working and learning at Elkhorn Ranch..



Bill Zeedyk knee deep in a healing arroyo.

roads capture water and overload drainageways—a principal cause of severe erosion problems

“These workshops have been successful,” says Mary Miller of the Elkhorn Ranch and Vice President of the AVCA, “We can see results and are learning to critique and improve our own work. We have brought many groups together to work on the land and experience this working landscape. Many of these people have never worked together before. We have trained new people to organize restoration projects and we are building relationships with new volunteer groups. Plus we are identifying new sources of funds, resources and expertise.”

**University of Arizona
Anthropology Ph.D. Candidate
Selected to staff the Restoration Team**

We are pleased to introduce David Seibert as the AVCA Restoration Coordinator.

David was introduced to the Alliance in the summer of 2007 while he was completing a fellowship at the University of Arizona (UA Southwest Center), with cultural anthropology professor and AVCA Community Representative, Tom Sheridan.

David’s primary tasks were to assess the AVCA’s and partners’ informational needs and to identify funding sources for future collaborative work in the watershed.

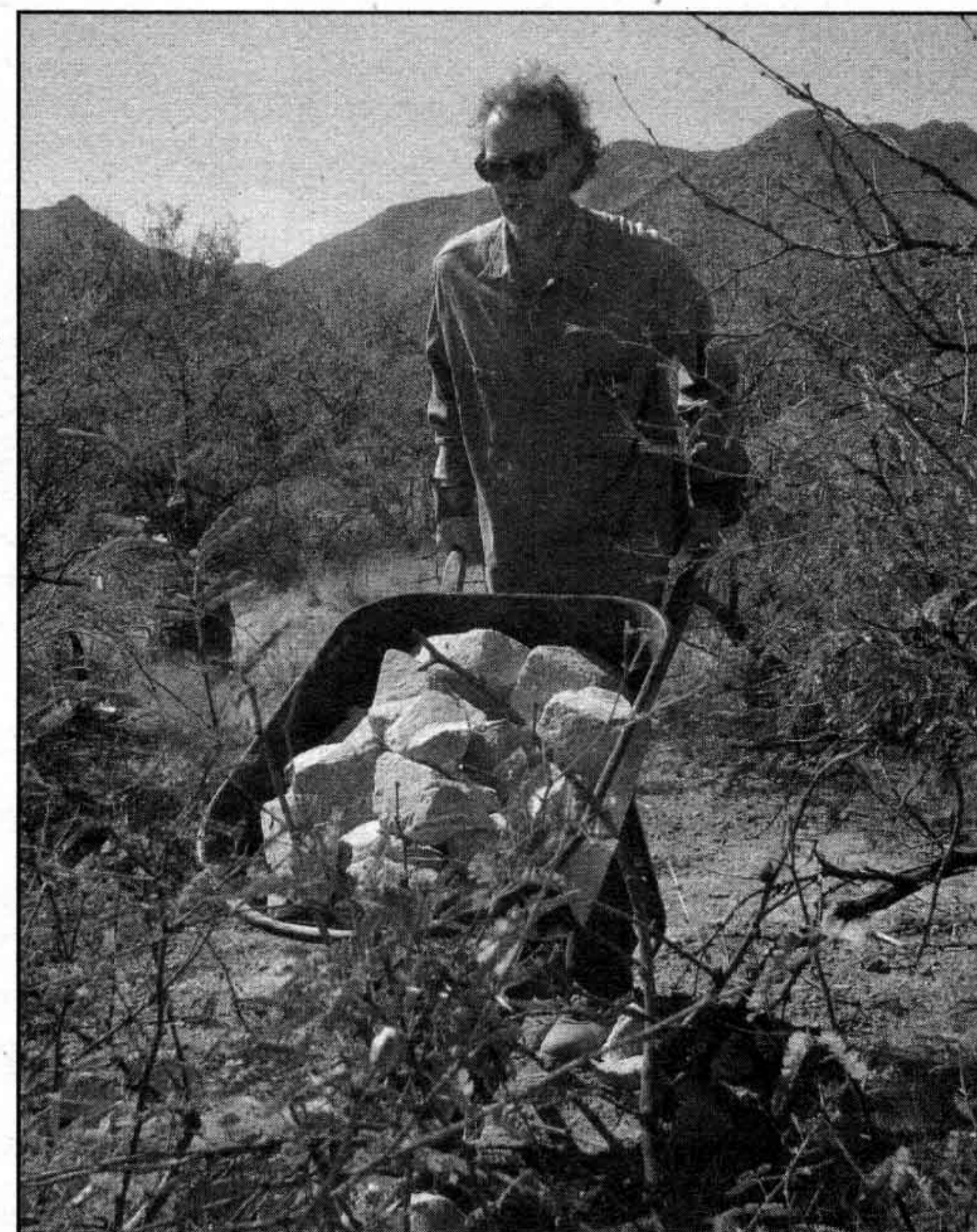
As David’s fellowship work progressed he interviewed ranchers, farmers and agencies about their work and hopes for the watershed. Through this interviewing process David learned of a potential source of funding through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Intrigued by the potential of David’s work to advance watershed health, NRCS utilized Environmental Quality Incentive Program funds to support David as a part-time Technical Service Provider. In this role, David works for both NRCS and AVCA. Project funding has also been provided through a Partner’s Grant through two USFWS Partners Programs grants

In addition to coordinating collaborative efforts in the watershed, David helps with forage monitoring on the various ranches involved in rest-rotation grazing programs with

NRCS. He also help with AVCA outreach efforts through newsletter contributions and organizes AVCA workshops and restoration work days.

As the restoration team project coordinator David hopes to combine local knowledge with scientific research on ecological, hydrological and social variables on a watershed-wide scale.

“Along the way, we hope to increase the capacity and size of a network of volunteers for future restoration projects,” said David. He is hoping to recruit volunteers through



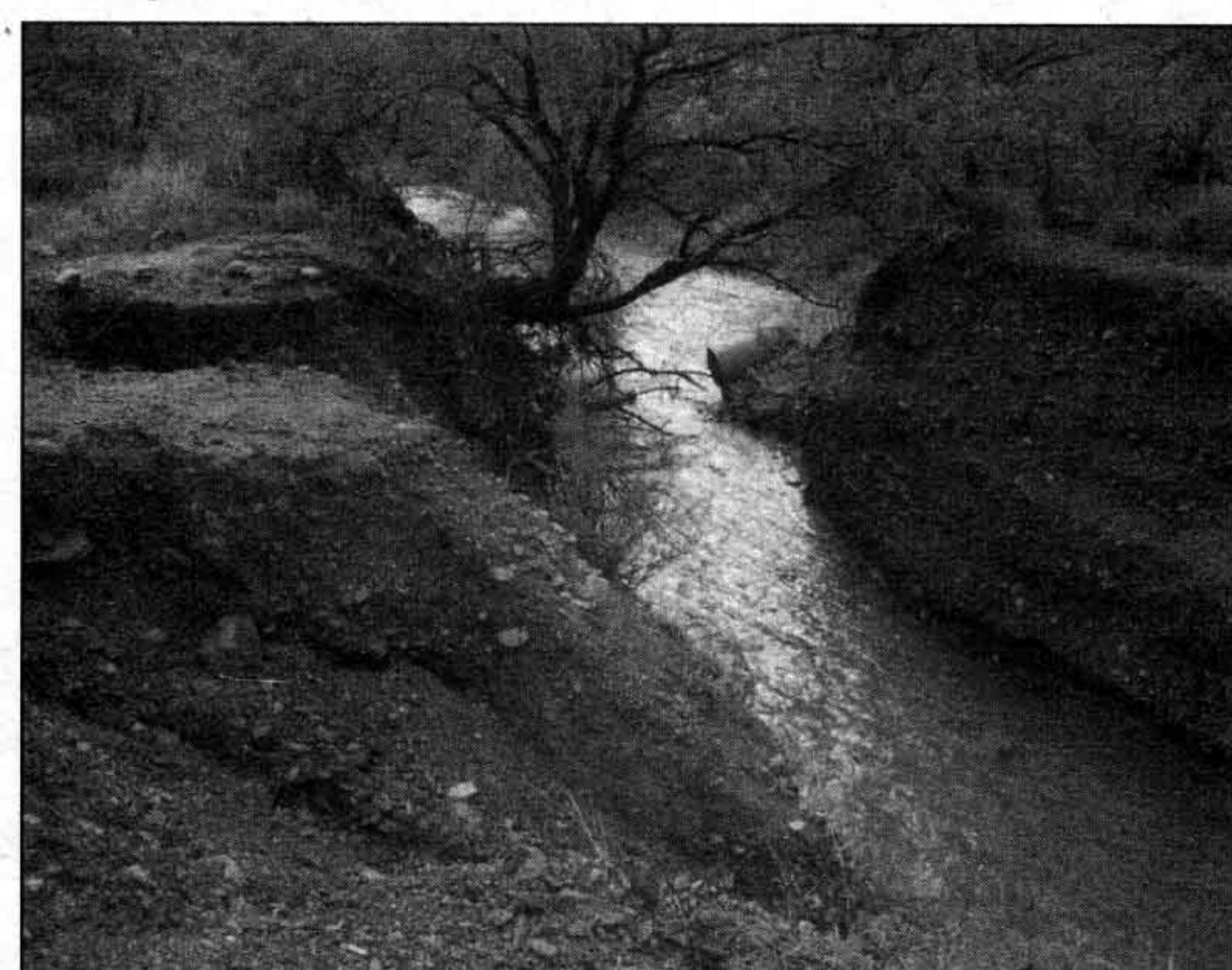
David Seibert at work in the Altar Valley.

the UA and the UA Master Watershed Program as well through an Environmental Anthropology class that he will be teaching at Pima Community College.

“Collaboratively we are working to enhance and restore wildlife habitat, rangeland productivity and biological diversity on a watershed scale,” said David. “Bringing people together to work on restoration forges common ground and an understanding of the watershed as a working landscape. In a larger sense, these efforts also bridge the divide between rural and urban communities.”



Left ... The road aspect of Zeedyk’s work focuses on teaching people about draining roads properly. Well drained roads are easier to maintain and put water back on the land where it belongs.



Right ... Roads without effective drainage load too much water into channels, resulting in erosion. The channel gets deeper and deeper, pulling precious sediment and water downstream.

Jaguar Research in the Altar Valley

Jack and Anna Childs caught a new passion when their mountain lion hounds treed an adult male jaguar on a summer 1996 hunt on the east slope of the Baboquivari Mountains. Jack and his friends picked up their cameras instead of their guns. This moment sparked what has become the Childs' life work over the past dozen years and a research project called the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project.

Earlier that same summer lion hunter Warner Glenn and his daughter Kelly made a similar decision when their dogs treed a jaguar in rocky crags of the Peloncillo Mountains. Glenn published a series of spectacular photos in a book called *Eyes of Fire*. Book proceeds were used to launch a fund to reimburse ranchers for livestock killed by jaguar.

Since the Childs' chance encounter in 1996, they've been seeking jaguar using a series of trip cameras. Childs and colleague Emil McCain obtained 75 photographs of two different male jaguars between March 2001 and January 21, 2009 (McCain & Childs and Brun). One of these individuals is considered to be a resident of the United States (the other may be a migratory member of the breeding population in Mexico) (McCain and Childs, 2008). Connective habitat north through Mexico and healthy core habitat in the borderlands of the United States make it possible for the jaguar to come as far north as it does.

Jaguars are listed as "endangered" as per the Endangered Species Act (McCain and Childs, 2008). Responsibility for the jaguar in the U.S. lies with the Jaguar Conservation Team, a multi-agency team led by the AZ Game and Fish Department and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Representatives from many organizations and interested citizens attend "JAG team" meetings. The Malpai Borderlands Group, a non-profit led by southeastern Arizona ranchers (including Warner Glenn) has taken a lead role in urging the team to seek the cooperation of ranchers, landowners, lion hunters and others.

Jaguar conservation in the U.S. is reliant upon open, expansive and undisturbed natural habitats. Human development is one of the main deterrents to jaguars and ranching is largely responsible for much of this open territory, according to Peter Warren of The Nature Conservancy. In addition, healthy productive watersheds

Courtesy of Borderland's Jaguar Detection Project



"The jaguar's presence here in the Altar Valley indicates that the watershed and prey base are healthy." Emil McCain, Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project field biologist.

provide habitat for wildlife and the jaguar's prey base, consisting largely of deer and javelina.

The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance's interest in watershed restoration and continuation of ranching in the Altar Valley aligns well with the needs of the jaguar. Through watershed restoration projects and proposed prescribed burning the Alliance is working to improve the habitat in the Valley, which will benefit not just the jaguar but all the animals that inhabit this area.

The project's recent research and photos have once again thrust the Altar Valley into the forefront of jaguar conservation. The Depredation Fund begun by Warner Glenn and colleagues at the Malpai Borderlands Group issued their first payment to the Anvil Ranch for a calf kill in the northern end of the Baboquivari Mountains.

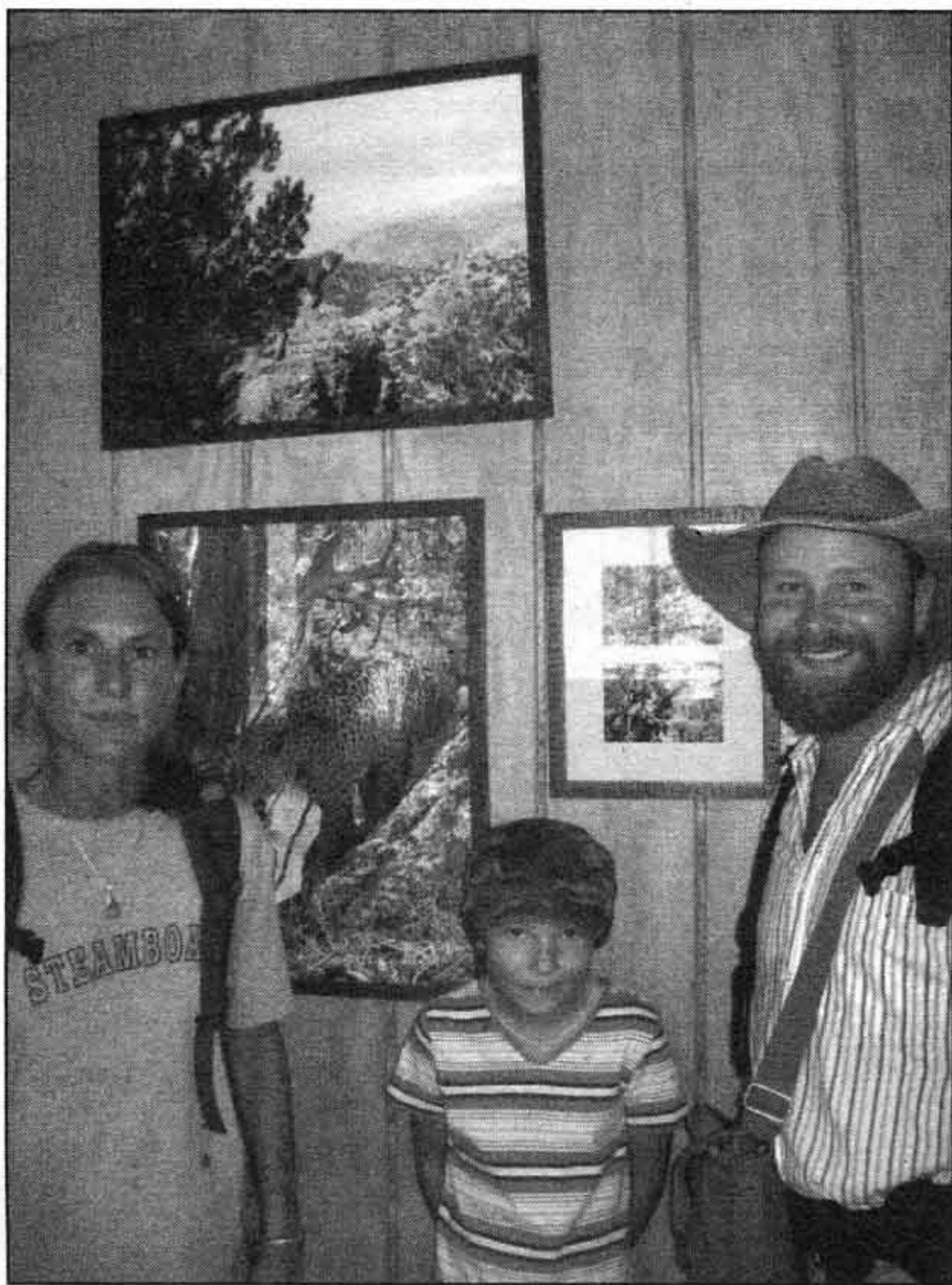
While challenged by the occasional presence of jaguars and their impact on livestock, Altar Valley ranchers are committed to doing their part towards jaguar conservation. Seven Altar Valley watershed ranches, and the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, participate in the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project. Luckily watershed ranchers can help best by continuing to do what they do best—good ranching.

Sources: McCain, Emil B., and Jack L. Childs. *Evidence of Resident Jaguars (Panthera onca) in the Southwestern United States and the Implications for Conservation.* *Journal of Mammology*. 89.1. (2008): 1-10 *ASM Journals Online*. 17 Feb. 2008.

Warren, Peter. *The Nature Conservancy*, Personal Communication. 21 Feb. 2008.

McCain, Emil. Personal Communication. Dec. 20, 2008.

Jack and Anna Mary Childs and Janay Brun, Personal Communication. 11 Feb. 2009.



Janay Brun, Alicia Miller and Emil McCain

SCIENTISTS AT WORK On My Family's Ranch

by Alicia Miller, age 9
August 2008

Robles Elementary School
4th grade Science with Ms.
Amber Gordon

I spent the day with two real scientists. Emil McCain and Janay Brun work for the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project. We hiked up the mountains to put in a camera. We walked in a stream.

We saw a bull snake that was trying to imitate a rattlesnake. We also saw a shiny green bug and a mountain skink.

Emil was raised on a ranch in Colorado. His parents were very encouraging and like wildlife. He especially liked tracking wildlife in the snow. In school, he learned that his interest in animals was called biology. He went to Colorado College. He went to Costa Rica to help with jaguar research. He lived with a family who took him to a zoo that had a jaguar. The jaguar was ignoring all the people, but it came right up to where Emil was and looked right at him. He felt it was a sign or message that the jaguar wanted him to help learn about them.

Janay was hiking with her dog and saw a jaguar in the mountains. She met Jack Childs and decided to help with the jaguar research project. She has been a volunteer at the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Now she does mountain lion research on the refuge.



Camera test jaguar Alicia Miller!

A protective box is bolted to a tree, with a digital camera inside. Vegetation was clipped in front of the camera to clear the view.



Emil and Janay place nasty smelling perfume opposite the camera to attract jaguar and other cats.

The jaguar project:

- 45 camera spread between Nogales & Three Points.
- Takes pictures of wildlife.
- Photographes of 2 different jaguars named Macho A and Macho B.

When they found a good tree in an area where wildlife travels, they drilled holes in the bark to attach the camera. Then they put perfume in another tree that was across from the tree with the camera. Next they put skunk smelling stuff on a rock across from the camera tree. They said that all kinds of cats roll in it. Then we walked home and had sodas. Then we put pictures on my mom's computer.

THE BORDERLANDS JAGUAR DETECTION PROJECT

Visit www.borderjag.org to learn more about this research project, a 501(c)3 organization that accepts donations and offers a fun interactive "adopt a camera" program.

TO LEARN MORE

- Also look for Ambushed on the Jaguar Trail (Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2008) by Jack L. and Anna Mary Childs. This book tells the story of their research project and features amazing wildlife photography.
- *Sonoronensis*, Winter 2008 issue featuring jaguar, published by the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.
- Eyes of Fire by Warren Glenn.

Altar Valley History -- The Ronstadts

The Ronstadt family was prominent in early Southern Arizona history, and many of us are familiar with Fred Ronstadt of Tucson and his descendants, of whom the best known is Linda. However, Fred's younger brother Jose Maria "Pepe" Ronstadt was also prominent in Tucson politics. In the interest of local history, Pepe was responsible for the development of several ranches in the Altar Valley and the establishment of a strong tradition in the cattle business.

Jose Maria Ronstadt was born in Altar in 1879, the son of Frederick Augustus Ronstadt and Margarita Redondo. Frederick Augustus, a university-educated engineer, had come to Sonora from Germany in the 1850s. He was active in business, especially mining, and also served in the military. His second wife, Margarita Redondo, was the daughter of Don Jose Maria Redondo, a prominent Sonoran cattleman and merchant. Their children were raised in mining camps and haciendas all over Sonora, wherever Frederick found mining work or was prospecting. Their oldest son, Fred, came with his father to Tucson in 1882 to serve an apprenticeship as a carriage maker to Winnall Dalton and his brother-in-law, Adolfo Vasquez. Winnall was the son of Henry Dalton, an early California ranchero who had owned much of Los Angeles county at one time. Winnall's mother's father was the Governor of California. The U.S. seemed to afford more promise than Sonora, so on the advice of their father, the Ronstadt children settled here. Jose Maria "Pepe" went into ranching, politics and public service.

Pepe (also known as Joe) came to Tucson in 1885 with his family and began attending public schools. His father passed away when he was quite young. When he was in high school, he edited a Spanish-English newspaper called *El Trueno*. Keeping busy as did brother Fred, Pepe worked for several businesses, the *Citizen* newspaper and later ran a mining company store in Altar. He made good use of his bilingual skills.

In 1901 Pepe met and married Hortense Dalton, daughter of Winnall and Maria Jesus Vasquez Dalton. (Fred's second wife was Hortense's sister, Lupe.) In 1903, the only son, Carlos was born. Pepe purchased the Verdugo ranch in the Altar Valley in 1908 and named it the Santa Margarita after his mother and daughter. A trip to the ranch from Tucson took three days in a wagon. Pepe loved the ranch and put a lot into it. In 1929 the ranch was described by Bernice Cosulich: "A charming ranch house is...surrounded by trees, giving off somehow

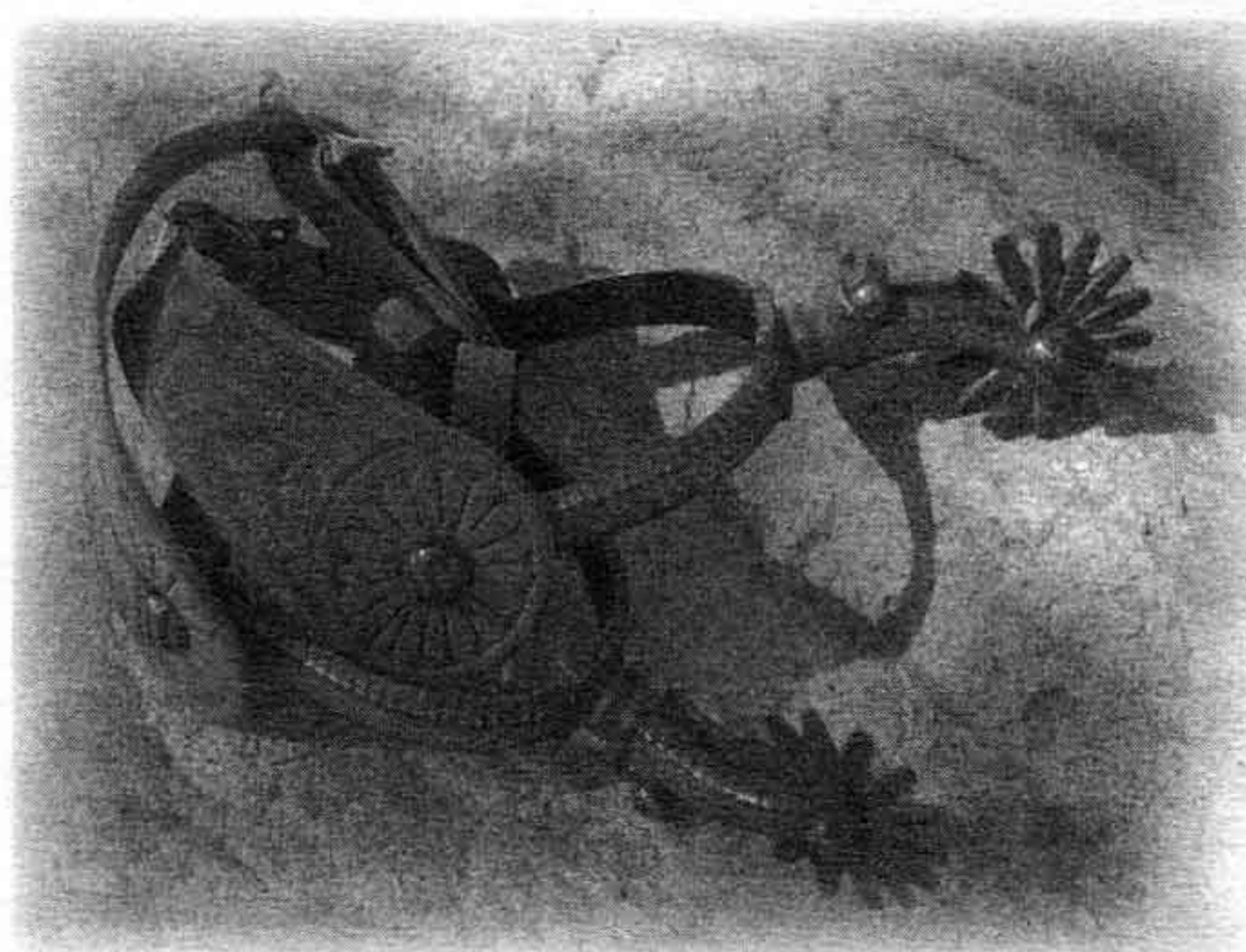
the atmosphere of an old Mexican hacienda. Bunk houses, corrals, barns and all other equipment required for ranching life are about..."

In partnership with Henry Dalton, his uncle, Pepe purchased Las Moras ranch and the Thomas Canyon area in the early 1900s, and also part of La Osa. Las Moras had been built up in the late 1800s by Col. Sturges. The lower part of Thomas Canyon had been homesteaded by Manuel King, who didn't end up proving up on it. Henry Dalton was instrumental in bringing in registered Hereford bulls to cross with the Mexican corriente cattle they had imported. Because of this, Santa Margarita Ranch was one of the first to fence. Before that, open range prevailed. The roundups were communal affairs, starting at Sasabe and ending up at Robles Ranch (now Three Points).

Pepe formed the Baboquivari Cattle Company in partnership with Alex and Harry Berger, and in 1929 they bought the Aros Ranch, Buena Vista and Los Encinos. The latter had been owned by Harold Bell Wright, noted western author whose stories had attracted many people to Southern Arizona. When Pepe added them to Santa Margarita, he had one of the largest ranches in the area. Separately from Pepe, Fred also acquired a ranch in the area and named it Las Delicias, after the Cananea homestead where he was born. As was typical, the family had a home in Tucson, where Pepe was active in the Democratic party. After helping Woodrow Wilson get elected, he became Postmaster of Tucson and served for eight years. He was also a founder of the Southern Arizona Bank and later Pima County Supervisor. It was during his term of office that the courthouse was built and the first bridge across the Altar Wash constructed. Pepe was involved with the cattle industry, including the livestock sanitary board and the Arizona Cattle Growers Assn. Sadly, Pepe died of heart disease in 1933 at the age of 53.

Meanwhile, his son Carlos had become involved with his father's businesses from an early age. Spending summers at the ranch, he came to love the cattle business. He majored in agriculture at the University of Arizona and worked for a year or two in Texas for Armour Meat Co.

He married Betty Graves of Phoenix and they had two children, Karl and Nina. Upon his father's passing, Carlos became president of the cattle company and with his mother's assistance, bought out several of the partners. Continuing the tradition of public service, he became an officer of the Southern Arizona Bank and a board member of Tucson Gas and Electric. He expanded



Ranch Roundup

RANCHO EL MIRADOR

Rancho el Mirador, "Ranch of the panoramic view," is the aptly named southernmost ranch in the Altar Valley. The view south across the valley into Mexico is impressive.

In 1929, William H. Brown came to Sasabe from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to stay at Rancho de la Osa. Impressed by the Altar Valley, William felt compelled to stay.

He set up a cattle ranch bordering La Osa. His grandson, Roy Isaman, speculates that William had visions of creating a guest ranch. Although dude ranching was ultimately left to neighboring La



Osa Ranch, Rancho el Mirador had a number of visitors over the years. Among these visitors were Ted and Ginny Hayes. Ted was an athletic trainer and trained the famous boxer Jack Dempsey. Like William, they were enamored with the place and stayed as guests for the rest of their lives. The Hayes and other visitors are remembered through portraits plastered on the walls of the old pool house bar.

Part of the original ranch burned down in 1963 in an early-morning house fire. This misfortune was turned into an opportunity to modernize the main homestead, and electricity and heat were brought to the building.

The ranch now belongs to Betty Isaman, William's daughter. When William passed away in 1971 Betty relocated from her home in Bethesda, Maryland to the Altar Valley to take over the responsibilities of running the ranch. Her son Roy helps with the management and will someday take over full responsibility for the ranch.

Much of the simplicity and serenity of Rancho el Mirador has remained the same since its founding. Other aspects of the ranching life have changed. On the southern border of the ranch stands the fence that the Department of Homeland Security is constructing to secure the U.S. - Mexico border. The fence is a very visible marker of the problem of illegal immigration.

Betty laments the change she has seen in the social atmosphere of the borderlands. She recalls a time when she would have taken a quick trip to Mexico for dinner. Today she wouldn't feel safe.

All in all though, she says that most things have stayed the same. "Not too much has changed, the big activity of the day is still to go into town to get the mail and see the neighbors."

... The Ronstadts continued

into the Santa Cruz valley when he bought the Agua Linda operation which had originally been a Mexican land grant to the Otero family. However, the usual cycle of ranching prevailed, where smaller ranches are bought up to form a big ranch that lasts a while and then is broken up again, and in the fifties, Carlos sold the Altar Valley ranches. That wasn't the end of the Ronstadt contribution to the cattle industry, however: Carlos' son Karl still owns and operates the Baboquivari Cattle Company.

By Mary N. Kasulaitis, The Connection, August 2008. Thanks to Karl Ronstadt and Nathan Sayre. References: Borderman: memoirs of Federico Jose Maria Ronstadt, edited by Edward F. Ronstadt; Pioneer Cattlemen of Arizona by Roscoe Willson; Tucson Citizen and Arizona Daily Star articles.

Ranching Families Unite to Provide Healthy Grass-Fed and Natural Beef

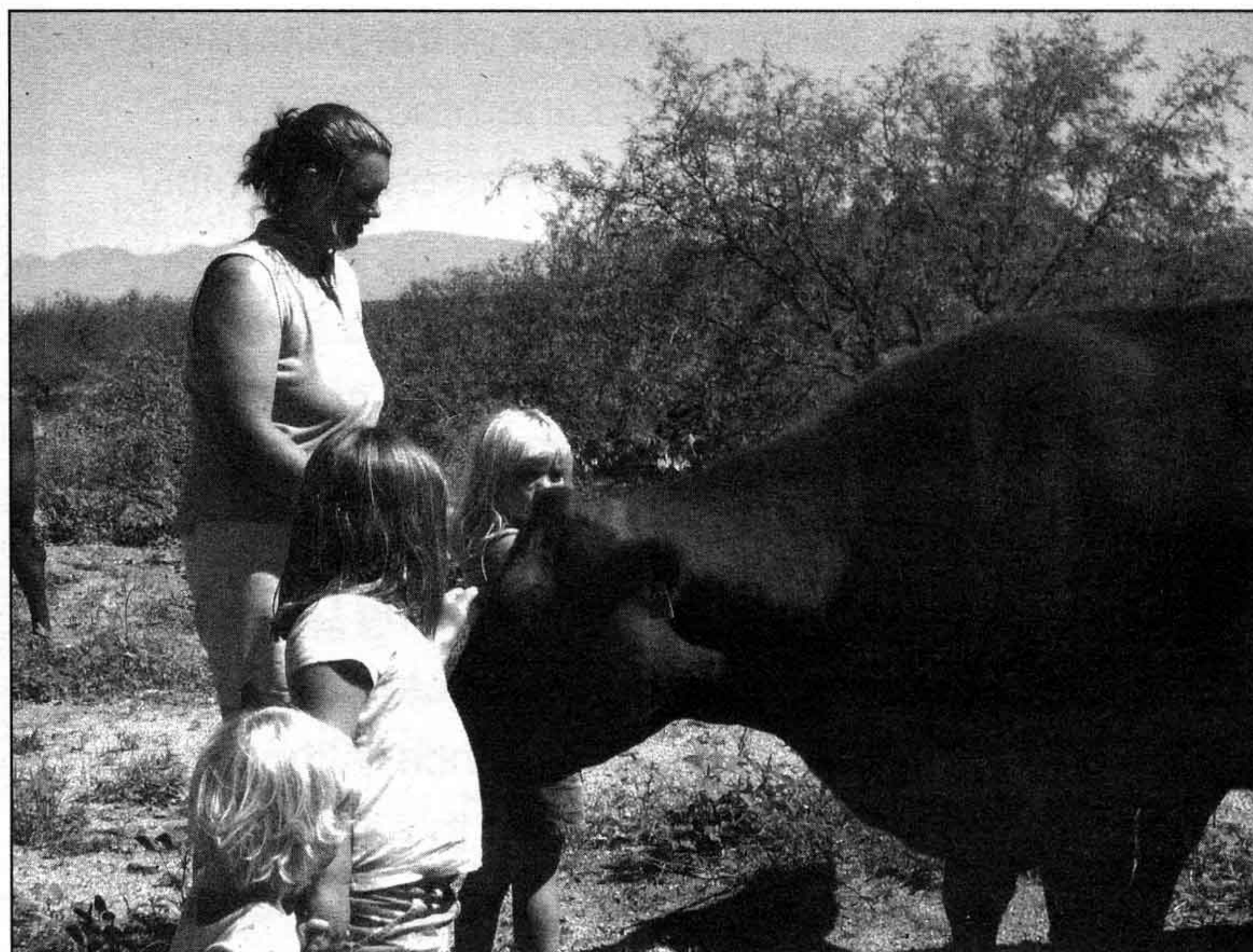
Two historic Arizona cattle ranches, the King's Anvil Ranch and the McGibbon's Santa Rita Ranch are offering locally produced beef to Southern Arizona customers through their new grass fed and natural beef labels.

"We began to realize there is a large group of people that want to know where their food comes from," says Andrew McGibbon of the Santa Rita Ranch. "We feel there is a demand for beef grown as 'nature intended.' Our philosophy is that cattle with quiet dispositions, grown slowly on native and pasture grasses, who are handled calmly and with care, tend to produce higher quality beef."

Although it is still considered a niche market, more and more consumers are interested in organic, pasture-raised or natural foods. This market seems to be driven by several factors. Some consumers are looking for beef products with a lower saturated fat and higher unsaturated "good fat" content. Others want to help support the idea of locally grown foods and sustainable ranching and farming. Others are concerned about mass produced meat and vegetables being potentially contaminated by bacteria, antibiotics, hormones or insecticides.

Grass-fed or grass-finished beef is lower in saturated fat. Grass-fed cattle are naturally leaner than grain fed cattle -- they deposit less fat throughout the meat and less fat on the exterior of the meat. Grass-fed beef offers a higher concentration of Omega3 and Omega6 fatty acids and a better balance between the two fatty acids. It has also been shown to be higher in conjugated linoleic acid, CLA, a "good fat" which shows promise in helping fight cancer and cardiovascular disease.

"Omega3's, Omega6's and CLAs are essential unsaturated fatty acids for humans," explains Dr. John Marchello of the University of Arizona (UofA) Meat Science Laboratory. "Cattle, which are ruminants, animals with multi-chambered stomach, can take grass, which is



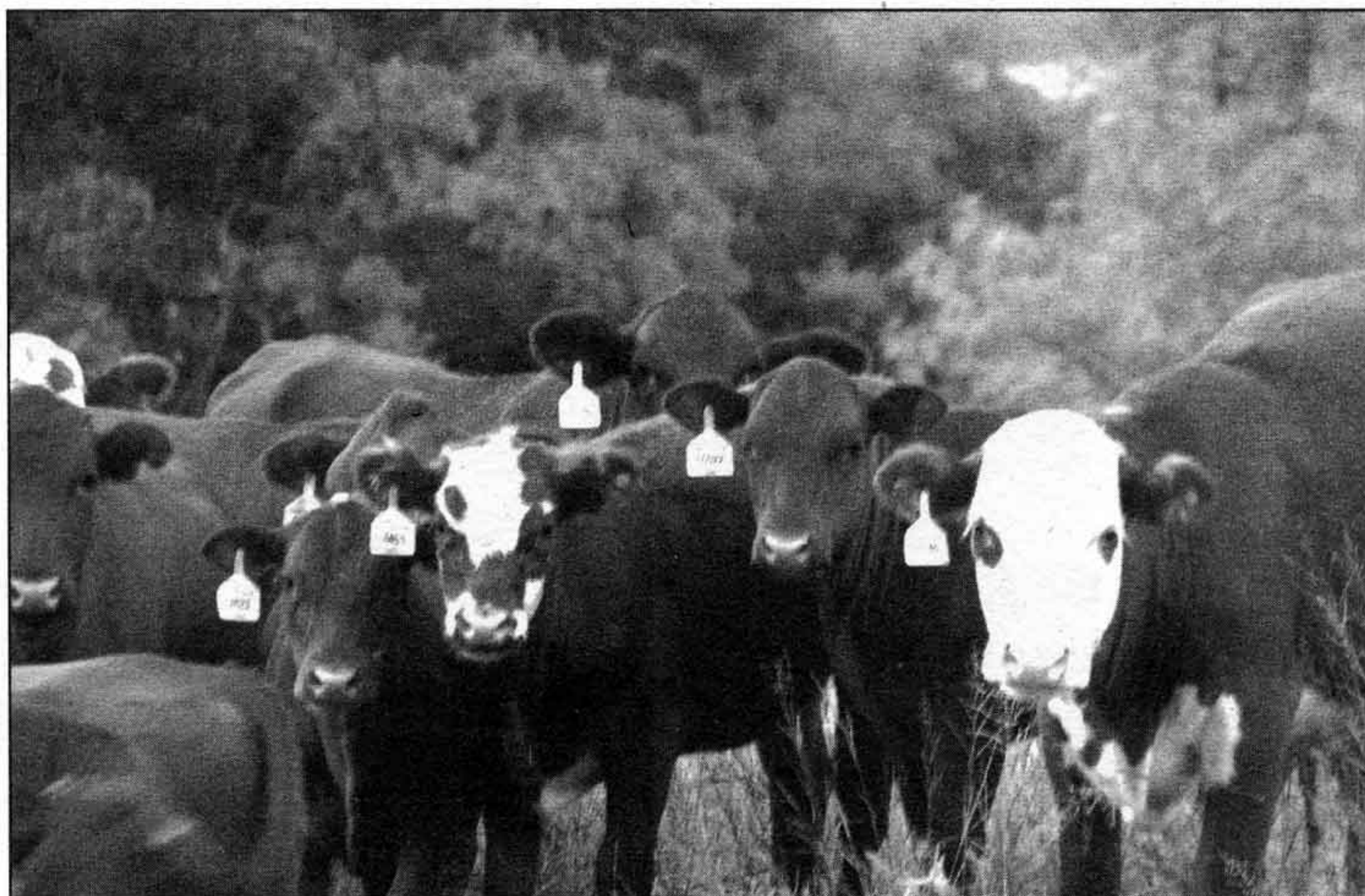
Ranching is a family affair for Micaela and her girls.

naturally high in Omega3's and Omega6's, turn that grass into muscle (meat), fat and bones. The grass fed animal deposits more of those essential unsaturated fatty acids into the meat because the grass diet passes more quickly through the cow's main stomach, the rumen. This allows more of the unsaturated fatty acids to be deposited into the meat."

According to Dr. Marchello, when cattle are fed a highly concentrated grain diet most of the digestion takes place in the rumen. While the unsaturated acids are in the rumen, the microorganisms found in the rumen can turn the unsaturated fatty acid into saturated fatty acids.

The Kings and McGibbons have had many fatty acid tests done on their grass fed and natural beef at the UofA Meat Science Lab. The meat from the strictly range or grass-fed cattle, contained up to 8 grams of Omega3's per 100 grams of beef. The unsaturated fatty acid levels, ranked in the 80-89th percentile.

Beef sold under the Natural Label has been fed grass, grain and hay. The Omega3's dropped to approximately 3



Red Angus/Hereford cross cattle make excellent grass-fed candidates.

grams/100 and the unsaturated fatty acid levels dropped, but remained above 50 percent.

CLA's are also present in grass fed beef. In one of the samples of grass fed beef, it was calculated to be 4%. It has been shown that the longer the beef was fed a grain ration, the less CLAs and Omega3's were present in the beef. But even the natural beef that has been on corn for 60 days still has CLA's present at approximately 0.6%.

"I don't know how this compares with a regular feedlot calf, which is usually on grain for 120 days," says McGibbon. "We are just happy to offer a healthier beef product. However, in all the marketing we do, we want the consumer to know that we support and appreciate production agriculture. U.S. production agriculture has fed this nation and many others for decades. We are just trying to serve a smaller market and diversify our operations."

The two families that have come together to offer this organic and natural beef have a great deal of



Cattle with quiet dispositions, who are handled calmly and with care tend to produce higher quality beef.

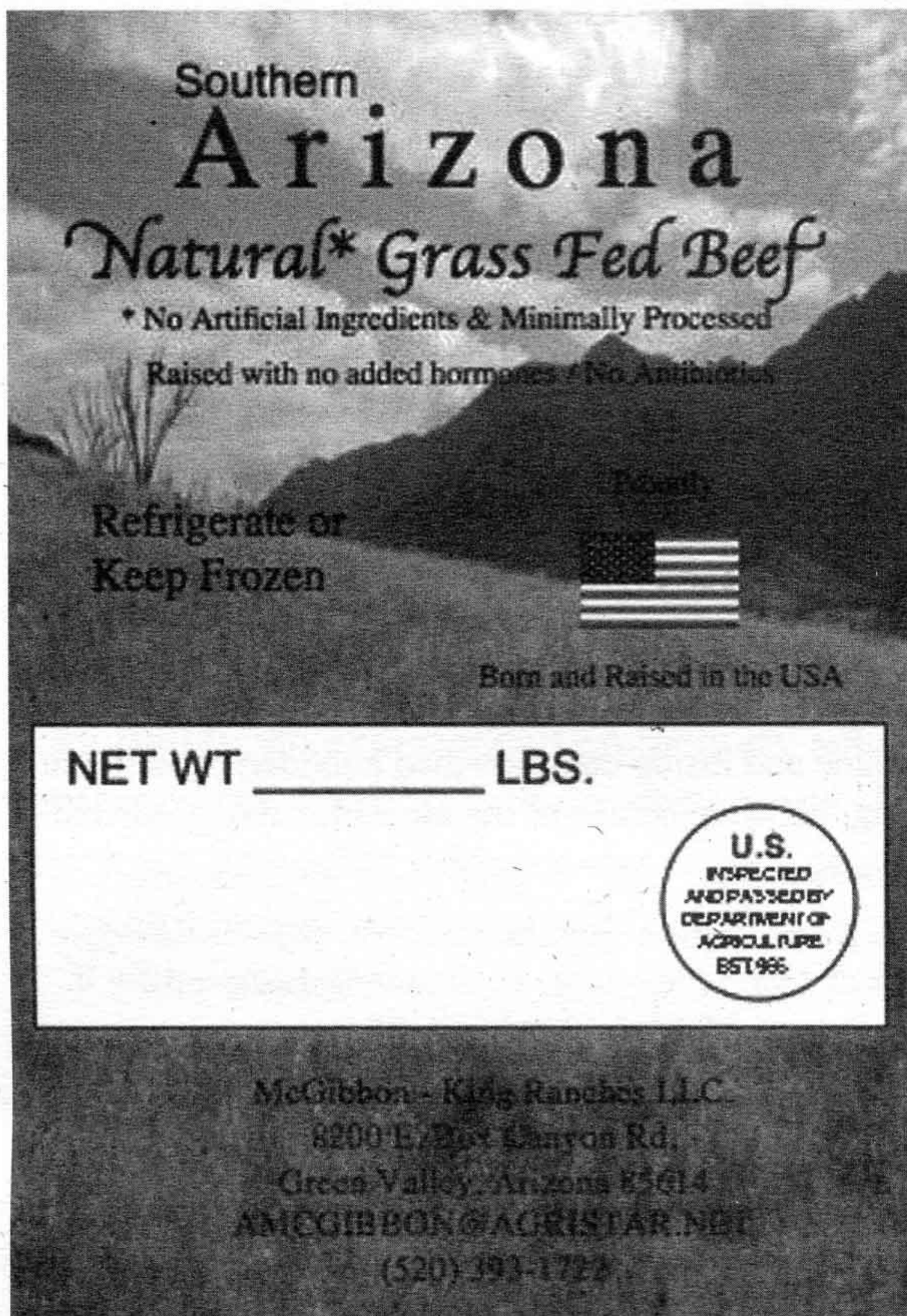
AZ. Micaela and Andrew McGibbon wed in 1999. Joe, Micaela and Drew formed the McGibbon-King Ranches LLC in the fall of 2007 to formally launch their grass fed and natural beef business.

Micaela holds a degree in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, from the U of A. Andrew graduated from Colorado State University with an advanced degree in animal science and Joe graduated from the U o fA in Agricultural Economics.

Beef sold under the grass fed label comes from animals that have roamed the range for nearly two years. If Mother Nature has been good to both the ranches, the calves will stay on rangeland until they reach at least 950 pounds. If extra feeding is necessary, the grass-fed cattle will be brought into a permanent pasture area and finished on green grass. The cattle selected for the natural label will remain on rangeland until they reach more than 800 pounds. They are brought closer to headquarters so they can be fed grass, hay and corn. These two US Department of Agriculture certified labels promise that the cattle have been minimally processed, have never had antibiotics and have never received added hormones.

"It is incorrect to say that your beef is hormone free because cattle, like humans, produce their own natural hormones," says Micaela McGibbon. "But we guarantee that our cattle sold as natural or grass fed have never been given added hormones or antibiotics at any time in their life."

For more information on the McGibbon-King Ranches LLC Grass Fed and Natural Beef contact Andrew McGibbon at amcgibbon@agristar.net.



experience and education in the cattle industry. The King's Anvil Ranch, which operates in the Altar Valley, will "celebrated" its 100th anniversary in 2008. Micaela McGibbon, (nee King), and her brother Joe King are fourth generation ranchers. Andrew McGibbon was born and raised on the Santa Rita Ranch, located in the Santa Rita Mountains, located East of Green Valley,

Partner Update from Pima County

The presence of Pima County as a vital partner in land management across the Altar Valley watershed continues to grow. Pima County continues to acquire properties of biological and cultural importance across the region from willing sellers in support of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP)'s conservation goals.

In the spring of 2008, the County added the Diamond Bell Ranch holdings to the list of working landscapes in the area. This brings the number of properties acquired in the Watershed to seven, with over 13,000 acres of fee title lands and over 62,000 acres of state and federal grazing leases. These lands remain as working landscapes. They are managed locally by ranching families that are members of the Alliance, with County oversight. Strong working relationships between local managers and County staff are an important element for successful conservation partnerships.

County-wide, the open space property inventory has expanded to over 100 properties covering over 80,000 acres of fee title lands and 120,000 acres of lease lands. In this total are three other working ranches that cover over 13,000 acres of fee land and 62,000 acres of grazing lease lands. Much of the recent land base was acquired under the voter approved 2004 Pima County bond program. Of the \$164 million approved by the voters over \$90 million still remains available for additional strategic acquisitions.

Pima County works with the other land management agencies and property owners in the watershed to generate well thought out management plans and projects. The County supports local initiatives financially and with

technical staff support. Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation (NRPR) has a multi-million dollar Bond project in for consideration in the proposed County Bond cycle for watershed restoration projects along the Brawley and Altar Wash systems.

A wide range of cooperative projects are on tap on the County properties in the Watershed. Projects will include trash clean ups, range condition monitoring, establishment of

new range monitoring transects, fencing projects, vandalism/off-highway-vehicle damage control, monitoring of wildlife species and cultural resources of special concern, waters for wildlife, Pima Pineapple Conservation Bank monitoring, recreational special events and trail rides for the public, installing recreational and regulatory signage and participation in a wide range of meetings and workshops.

Pima County looks forward to continuing its dual role as a participant in projects and supporter of the Alliance. The Alliance provides an inclusive forum for open discussions about land management issues of mutual concern in the Altar Watershed. It can solidify its leadership potential through the active and thoughtful participation of all the Alliance Board members and partners. The County hopes others,

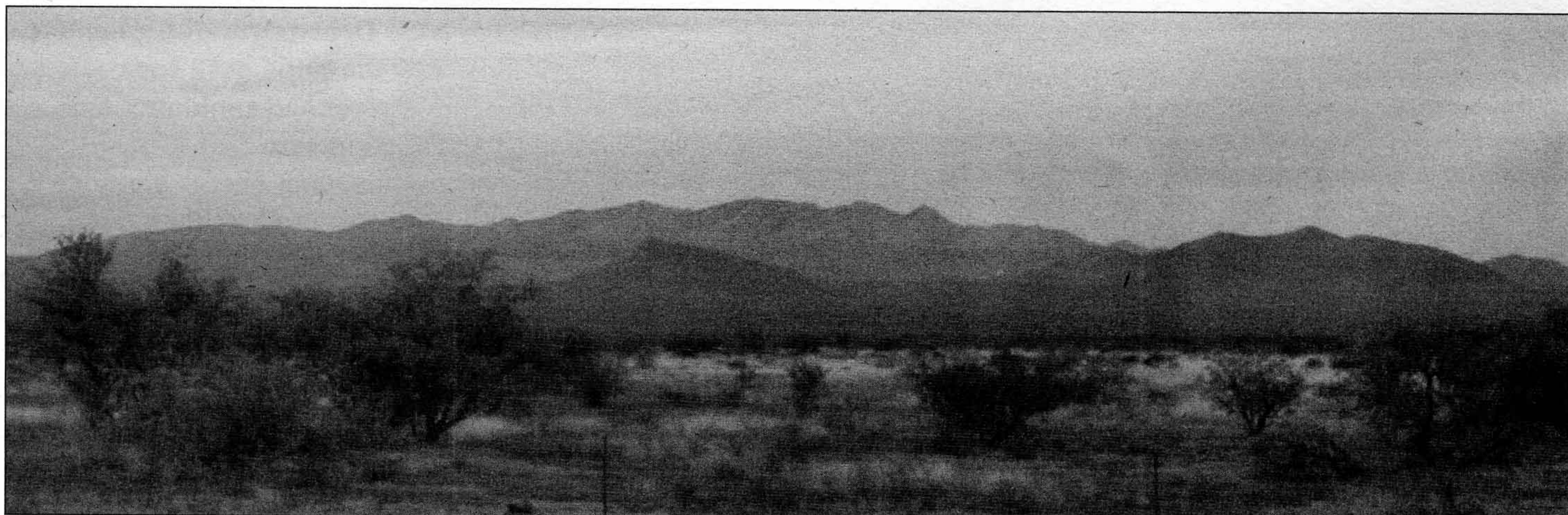
both outside and inside the watershed boundaries, will join in making the Alliance one of the most effective groups of its kind in Arizona.

*By Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Division Manager,
Pima County Natural Resources Parks and Recreation, 3500 W.
River Rd. Tucson, AZ 85741, 520 877-6161.*

Pima County partners with a land trust, the Arizona Land and Water Trust, to facilitate land protection transactions. If you would like to learn more about land protection tools and strategies, they are an excellent resource.

About Arizona Land and Water Trust

Arizona Land and Water Trust is dedicated to protecting southern Arizona's vanishing western landscapes and wildlife habitat by acquiring and managing sensitive lands. The Trust works with willing landowners to protect working farms and ranches throughout southern Arizona. Founded in 1978 as Arizona Open Land Trust, the organization merged earlier this year with Southeast Arizona Land Trust to continue their shared mission of protecting working landscapes, riparian corridors, wildlife habitat and the vast open spaces cherished by southern Arizonans. For more information contact the Trust at 520.577.8564 or visit us on the web at www.alwt.org.



Many thanks to our generous Altar Valley Stewards!

We greatly appreciate your financial support ... your enthusiasm and trust inspire us!

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NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKING BENEFITS ALTAR VALLEY YOUTH

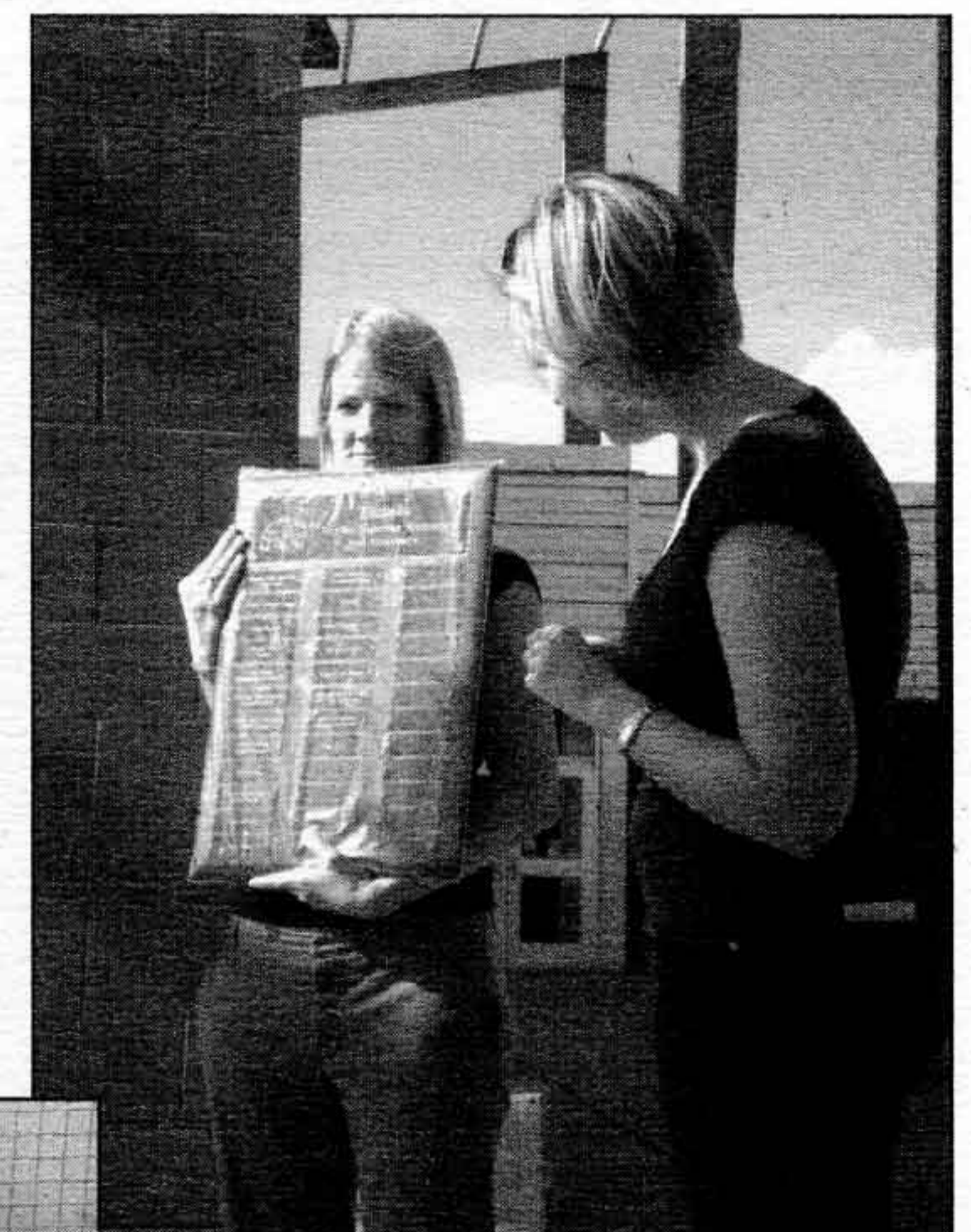
On 23 May 2007, San Fernando Elementary School celebrated the opening of a new facility in Sasabe, Arizona. The Arizona School Facilities Board provided funds to the district for a larger and more modern facility with the latest in computer and internet access, more spacious classrooms and a state-of-the-art playground area.

The new building replaces a 1924 structure donated to the county by original settlers in the Valley. The beautiful old adobe building, a landmark in the town, was too antiquated to renovate.

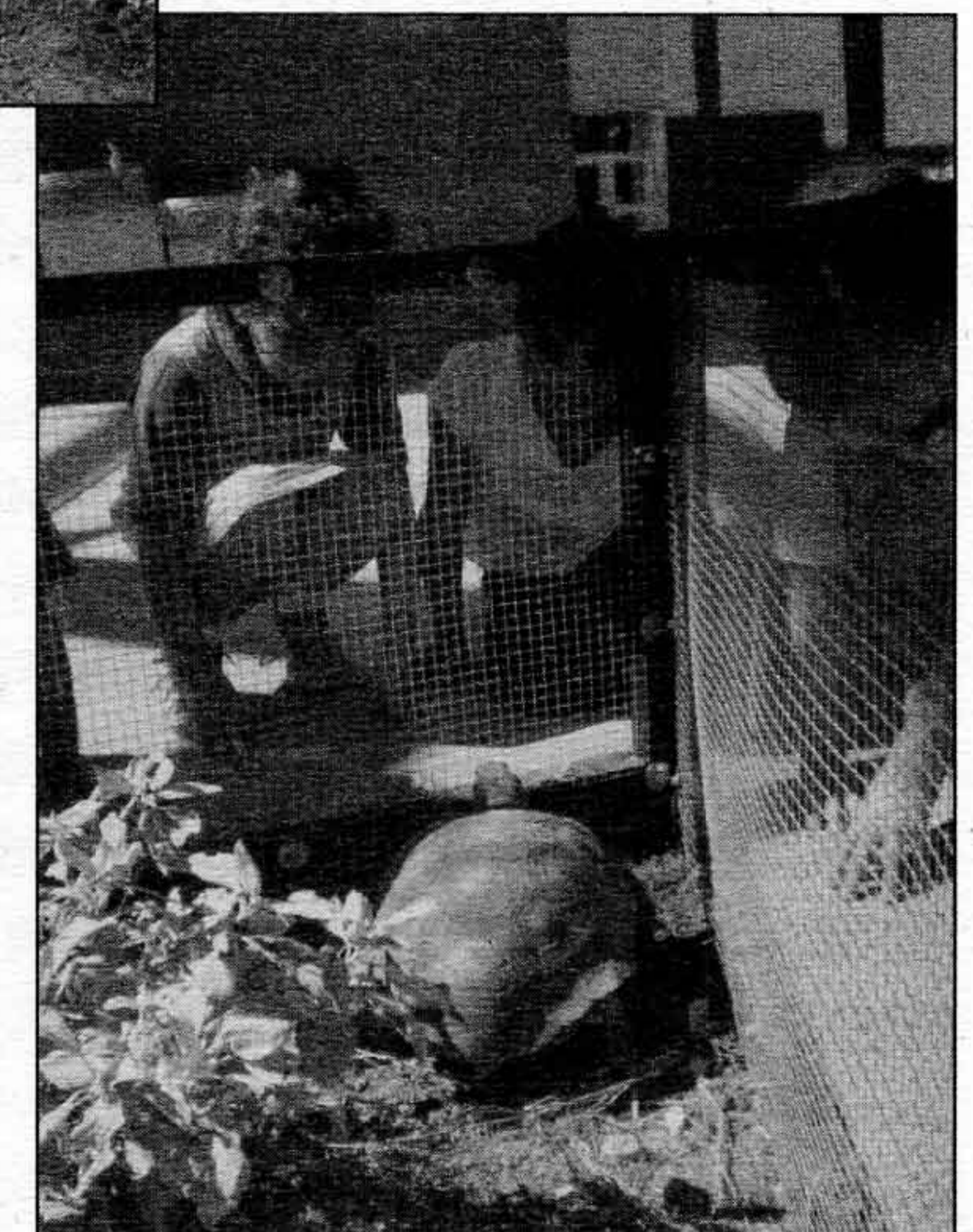
Students had the chance to learn about how to restore and revegetate areas following construction projects, thanks to partnership between the school and the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Volunteer Judy Bailey, an experienced elementary school teacher, combined her teaching and organizational skills to develop a project to enhance the school grounds and teach children about grassland ecology.

The school was also awarded a Heritage Grant from Arizona Game and Fish Department to design and establish a "Sonoran Desert Grassland Wildlife Habitat" on the school grounds. Information about applying for the Heritage Grant came from "neighborly networking" at an AVCA meeting! This area will not only provide protection for native birds and animals but serve as an outdoor classroom. Volunteers Judy Bailey and Joanne Koechler helped the students design their own nature trail and interpretive signs for the project. The habitat will surround a custom-built ramada donated by Sundt Construction Company and will include cisterns to hold rainwater harvested from the roof.

At the opposite end of the watershed, Robles Elementary School has completed construction of its school garden and Titus the Tortoise is in hibernation. A second Heritage Fund grant supported creation of an associated curriculum which unrolled this school year!



Robles Elementary School Science Committee members celebrating completion of the school garden. Now the teaching fun begins!



Robles Elementary School students eye to eye with Titus the Tortoise, in a school yard habitat funded by the AZ Heritage Fund.

INSIGHT FROM ALLIANCE PARTNERS

Today's environmental issues can be incredibly daunting and complex. When you begin to examine all of the interrelated details, the complexity of solving the fundamental problem can be overwhelming. No wonder the general public is often unwilling, or unsure of how, to tackle the big problems. As educators about the environment, one of our biggest challenges is to help people break down the complex issues into manageable and understandable elements. In my 30 plus years working with the public, I've always found some basic laws of ecology outlined by Barry Commoner back in the early 70's a great starting point.

Everything is connected to everything else

This is perhaps the most fundamental and important basic ecological concept of all. Without a clear acceptance of the connectedness of all things, we can't truly see the full impact of an environmental problem or possible solutions. From this simple idea, one can move to the more complex appreciation of things like food chains and food webs, nutrient cycles, global climate changes, and so on. There was no better illustration of this

fundamental concept than when we saw those dramatic first pictures of earth from the moon... Spaceship Earth!

Everything must go somewhere

On our earth, there is simply no away. We've been fooled into thinking that if we put it down the drain, cover it with dirt, seal it up in caves or burn it, we've gotten rid of our problems. How many current and future environmental problems are the results of simply not acknowledging this basic law of ecology? How often do you unknowingly violate the tenet by pouring toxic chemicals down the drain or tossing unwanted items into the trash? Remember your faucet is directly down-stream of someone else's drain.

Nature knows best

Nature knows best and even more importantly; Bats Last! Nature provides us with uncounted working models

of successful environmental problem solutions and proper management strategies. We need to be better able and willing, to study and follow these models. You shouldn't try to make Tucson look like New England. As we develop technological fixes to artificially created environmental problems, nature should be our guide. Remember, it's not nice to fool with Mother Nature!

There is no such thing as a free lunch

For every action we take or do, there are costs to, or impacts on, the environment. Depending on your perspective, those impacts can be perceived as positive or negative. The challenge is to minimize the negative impacts and optimize the positive impacts. Because all things are connected, we can't take just the human perspective as to what is positive. We are just one part of a complex environment. We humans do, however, have more ability to manage and mitigate our impacts on the overall system. We have a moral obligation to think and act in the broadest terms.

So, next time you are trying to communicate the important aspects of an environmental issue, don't forget to add the fundamental issue(s) behind

the complex one. Your audience will appreciate it and if we can all better follow Commoner's simple ecological laws, we might not need as many mandated laws and regulations. Remember, Nature Knows Best!

By Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Division Manager, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation.

COMMONER'S 4 LAWS OF ECOLOGY

1. **Everything is connected to everything else**
2. **Everything must go somewhere**
3. **Nature knows best**
4. **There is no such thing as a free lunch**



Special Thanks to Katy Briggs

Altar Valley Conservation Alliance Intern, Spring 2008.

Katy's research and writing launched the 2008 *Rainmaker*. Katy is a junior at Dartmouth College majoring in psychology, with a strong interest in biology and conservation.

Endangered Species as Assets

A LESSON FOR THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

The Iberian Lynx is the most endangered cat species in the world. It exists only in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal – slightly larger than Arizona). There are only 200 individuals in two small isolated populations. They have a specialized diet totally dependent upon European rabbits, which were virtually eliminated from the Iberian Peninsula in the 1990's due to disease. Then the lynx population crashed to dangerously low numbers. Despite these dire problems, the Iberian Lynx is making a comeback, thanks to heroic efforts by a diverse array of collaborating conservation partners.

A project called "Recovery of the Iberian Lynx Population in Andalucia" began in 2002. The project has been working on the following goals: 1) augment the size of the populations; 2) contribute to the maintenance of a healthy gene pool; 3) maximize and foster the connections between isolated populations; 4) maintain and encourage the traditional land uses, and promote the development of new alternative uses of Mediterranean forests and scrubland; 5) improve the perception of the role of the species in the rural spheres where it is found; and 6) recover and maintain viable populations of prey.

In March 2008 two of the Lynx Project's biologists and a veterinarian from the captive breeding program came to visit the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project. In return, the Lynx Project sponsored biologist Emil McCain to visit Spain to learn about their research techniques, local landowner involvement and perception of lynx conservation. McCain was impressed by the variety and magnitude of the efforts by the Spanish government. Captive breeding centers increase the numbers and maintain genetic viability. On-the-ground management has built up the prey base and prepared for reintroductions into suitable areas of their former range.

Witnessing the genuine enthusiasm and participation of the local ranchers was the most inspiring and personally rewarding aspect of the experience. Local people working the lands that the lynx inhabit have a strong vested interest in their long-term survival. It was a pleasant surprise to see that landowner involvement with endangered species

conservation can be driven by positive opportunities and social prestige rather than forced regulations or legal restrictions. In Spain, there are special benefits for property owners who assist in endangered species recovery. Cooperators receive priority in government assistance, subsidies and swift processing, consultation and execution of land management projects.

Due to the high population densities in relatively small European countries, conservation of open spaces and wildlife have become highly valued over time. The Spanish government recognizes that local landowners are the single most important aspect of endangered species conservation. Every year the Governor of Andalucia recognizes landowners with an award, emphasizing that their efforts yielded success for "X" percent of the world's population of the most endangered cat species. The media show how conservation is not only an environmental and social action but a service to the country and a source of pride. The project is currently pursuing tax and other financial exemptions for ranches

that support lynx. As a result of these actions, the Iberian lynx has become a very positive national symbol in Spain.

With a slight change in perspective, an endangered species become an asset rather than a liability. The presence of lynx is an indicator of land quality and the mutual benefits provided to the landowner and the lynx through conservation practices.

By Emil B. McCain - Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project - Amado, Arizona and Javier Rodriguez - LIFE Lince - Andalucia, Spain.

Coati, fox and mountain lion photographed by the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project. Scientists set out to study one species, and have now gathered long-term scientific data on over 20 species—all indicators of watershed health!



Photos courtesy of Borderland's Jaguar Protection Project

ALTAR VALLEY CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

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 Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project
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Please share your ideas and questions with us!

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 for future generations***



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