

Arizona Rangelands

Quarterly Newsletter

December 2020 Issue

2020 Photo Contest
Co-Winning Photo
"A Boy and His Dog"
By Flavie Audoin



Society for
Range
Management
Arizona Section



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On the Cover...

2020 Arizona Rangelands Photo Contest Co-Winning Photo:

“A Boy and His Dog” photographed by **Flavie Audoin** features Dennis Moroney of the 47 Ranch in McNeal, AZ. Flavie is a PhD student at the University of Arizona in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment. The other Co-Winning photo, titled “Nice Light on Clouds” was taken by Dennis Moroney himself, and will be featured on the cover of the March 2021 Quarterly Newsletter. The runner-up photo titled “Grama near Sonoita” was photographed by Ashley Wright (UA Cooperative Extension Area Assistant Agent, Livestock) and will be featured on the June 2021 cover. Other photos submitted to the 2020 photo contest will be showcased throughout all future newsletter issues. Thank you to everyone to submitted photos, and congratulations to our winning photographers!



Save the Date!

The Arizona SRM annual winter meeting and fundraiser auction will be held virtually February 03-05, 2021.

The format will be much like the summer meeting. Agenda items include break out sessions, technical presentations, general membership meeting, and an award presentation. If you have a topic would like to present please send an email to Emilio Carrillo (President-Elect) emilio.carrillo@usda.gov

Congratulations
to the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance for celebrating their **25th Anniversary!**



President's Message—*Erin Thomas*



Me and my grandma when I graduated from the U of A with a degree in rangeland management.

By the time that this is published, November's Native American Heritage Month will be over, and we'll be moving on to Christmas, and, finally, the new year. I'd still like to reflect on Native American rangeland management because in Arizona, tribal lands make up over 25% of the land ownership. There's a very good chance that you have, are, or will work with tribes or tribal members. Native Americans utilize rangelands much like the rest of the state. We ranch. We recreate (look up Native Women's Wilderness, Adventures for Hopi and Natives Outside). We hunt and fish (Native American Fish and Wildlife Society). Our feet are firmly rooted in the land, and most of that land happens to be rangeland.



My grandma, Nona Lee Chee, and little sister, April, at our home in White Cone, Arizona.

When I was small, if you asked me who my hero was, my response was always my grandma. My grandma is extraordinary. She was born around 1930 and escaped having to go to boarding school, created a home and raised a family. She also raised sheep, goats and horses her whole life. My grandma is a rancher.

So is my dad, brother, sister, husband, my late grandfather and paternal grandmother. So are countless indigenous people across the world. We

don't look like the Trailboss or like lots of cowboys portrayed on the covers of *Western Horsemen* or the *Arizona Cattlelog*. But we're here and have always been.

As a Society, we are headed in the right direction in terms of acknowledging tribal rangelands and the complexity of their management. We had a year dedicated to Native Range in our Section where we did field tours and were graciously hosted by the Hualapai Nation and San Carlos Apache Tribe for our annual meetings. We saw the good work of the Tolani Lake Water Users Association in Tolani Lake on the Navajo Nation, the White Mountain Apache Tribe, and the Hualapai Nation. Visiting each of these nations demonstrated how tribal communities and governments are working to manage their natural resources to create something that works and is relevant to them.



Navajo artist Marcus Cadman created this painting to honor Section member Jessica Orozco. Jessica was a Navajo woman, botanist, and rangeland manager. The Navajo woman on the horse is a nod to the SRM's Trailboss icon.

This Section cultivated the Jessica Orozco Memorial Honorarium which seeks to send two Native American students to the SRM Annual Meeting annually. The Native American Rangeland Partnership and the Native American Rangelands Training Initiative (nativeamericanrangelands.org) provides training opportunities to tribes using a model that is tailored to each tribe and is ever evolving. On a global scale, there is a campaign for the UN to designate an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (iyrp.info), indigenous people included. **Continued on Page 4...**

President's Message (Cont'd.)

...Continued from Page 3 Tribal nations have the potential to transform rangeland management, if they haven't already. My vision for the management of tribal rangelands in Arizona involves: 1) having our Native American rangeland professionals be able to go home and work there, 2) our tribal members having a general knowledge of what rangelands are and why they are important, and 3) for our tribal governments to have the resources, knowledge, and workforce capacity to develop culturally relevant and dynamic rangeland management programs that work for our unique land bases.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate Delane Atcity (Dine/Taos and originally from Tuba City, Arizona) for being elected to a national SRM Board of Directors position.

Happy Native American Heritage Month and Happy Holidays!

Tierra Seca Update—Jacob Brown

As the seasons change and the semester wraps up, students are quite busy. There is a happy bustle to it all in-between utilization measurements and final class reports. We have 23 plants left to learn from *North American Wildland Plants* for the Plant Identification test at the SRM national virtual meeting. We are playing virtual URME Kahoot as a study tool as well. Tierra Seca was afforded the opportunity to assist with the yearly Elkhorn Ranch monitoring in Altar Valley. Monitoring went quite well and was conducted safely with all students reporting having a fantastic time. As the clock ticks forward, competitions and recruitment are becoming our focuses for next semester. We are hoping to have in-person events by the second half of next semester to improve student involvement and experience. In the current state of things, we will Bear Down!



President

Erin Thomas
Erin.Thomas@usda.gov

Past President

Andrew Brischke
Brischke@cals.arizona.edu

Director North

Andy Habgood
Andrew.Habgood@usda.gov

U of A Chapter President

Jacob Brown
UofATierraSeca@gmail.com

President-Elect

Emilio Carrillo
Emilio.Carrillo@usda.gov

Secretary Treasurer

Ashley Hall
AshleyS3@email.arizona.edu

Director South

Kent Curley
Kent.Curley@usda.gov

ASU Chapter President

Sienna Stea
SStea@asu.edu

Vice President

Joshua Grace
JGrace@azland.gov

Director North

JD Eddy
JEddy@azgfd.gov

Director South

Brett Myers
Brett.Myers@usda.gov

Arizona Section Website

www.azrangelands.org/



Science Committee Updates

Cooperative Extension has a new **ecological restoration portal** for Arizona (<https://ecorestore.arizona.edu/>). The new portal is a 'one-stop-shopping' for all things ecological restoration that should be useful to anyone in Arizona who is interested in native gardening, ecological restoration and vegetation management in general. Although the site is live, it is very new and we are still working out the kinks.

If you have any comments, please let Elise Gornish know at egornish@email.arizona.edu.

New research using the Santa Rita Experimental Range data shows that although both grazing intensity and

rainfall presented similar humpbacked trends with plant community cover, new models demonstrated that **the reduction of plant cover from the 1990s has been mainly caused by a decrease of rainfall rather than grazing intensity**, particularly due to profound reductions of the intensity of relatively small rainfall pulses (e.g. 5.1–15 mm/day) during the dry season. Paper can be found here:

[https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1365-2664.13780?](https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1365-2664.13780?casa_token=Tce1gIoRcJgAAAAA%3Ax9E2yRSOC4VDj7LmhnfaZCDoBcRjDBnEKJzk-Chf4Eoqnfvcjv3Km24US2VRlmlVa-hUZZn_k88nHog)

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WINTER MEETING AUCTION REMINDER

A big **THANKYOU** to everyone who brought and donated items for last year's auctions!!

Have no fear, we will still be holding our annual fundraising auction! We are planning an online silent auction for our winter meeting.

News coming soon.

Please start collecting/making items to donate for the silent auction!

If you have an item you would like to donate please send a photo and description of the item to Alisha Phipps

Alisha.Phipps@usda.gov



HAS ANYONE SEEN PEPE?

Reward to be issued by Andrew Brischke upon the return of our beloved Pepe, the bobblehead chihuahua.

Director South Report—*Brett Myers*

I hope this newsletter finds everyone safe and healthy. These are certainly some challenging times in Southern Arizona, not only with the COVID-19 virus, we are also experiencing record droughts, heat, and wildfires – pretty much a recipe for disaster.

As most of you have probably experienced firsthand, this has been a dry summer. Dr. McClaran recently sent out an email that included data (1922-Present) for the Santa Rita Experimental Range (SRER), and the summer monsoon was drier than ever recorded—3rd driest September, driest August to date, and the fifth driest July. Low rain combined with record heat resulted in approximately 10% of average grass biomass production (M.P. McClaran, Personal Communication, Oct. 22, 2020).

Our beloved Catalina Mountains suffered a tragic wildfire this year. June 5, 2020 a lightning strike started the fire and 119,978 acres later on July 23, 2020 the Big Horn Fire was reported as 100% contained. Dry, windy, and hot conditions were not ideal. As with most wildfire, tragic losses can occur with post-fire events, so Federal, State, and Local agencies are addressing these issues.

Welp, this report will sure ruin a good day. I'll attempt to raise a smile from ya'll with a photo the Tucson Field

Office took with the “We are Rangelands” sign that was floating around. My hope is this photo will not leave this newsletter and be used elsewhere LOL!

Stay Safe,
Brett Myers



References:

InciWeb developed and maintained by USDA Forest Service, Fire and Aviation Management. “Bighorn Fire.” *Bighorn Fire Information - InciWeb the Incident Information System*, InciWeb, 14 Sept. 2020, inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6741/.

McClaran, Mitchel P., et al. “Santa Rita Experimental Range Long-Term Transect and Spatial Data.” *SRER Long-Term Data and Maps*, Sept. 2002, cals.arizona.edu/srer/data.html.

Director North Report—*JD Eddy*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and the opportunity to be part of this community for the last few years. This may be my last chance to address this audience through this newsletter as my two years as director north are coming to a close. It has been a pleasure to help steer this state chapter into the future for the important conservation and management needs of our range management community in Arizona. I look forward to maintaining involvement with you all and helping with the upcoming parent society meeting in Albuquerque. It has also been a pleasure to see the excitement for wildlife and livestock alike displayed by this great

group. Thoughts have ranged from managing our grasslands through means such as mastication, seeding, and fire, to spreading water across the landscape helping wildlife populations thrive. Hopefully these ideas and plans are helping with many operations, agency goals, and everyone's bottom lines.

This has been a difficult year for multiple reasons, but the continued drought is in the forefront of our thoughts as we look throughout this state and see the impacts the lack of water has had on our landscapes. There are a few areas that have gotten lucky this last year with ...*Continued on Page 7*



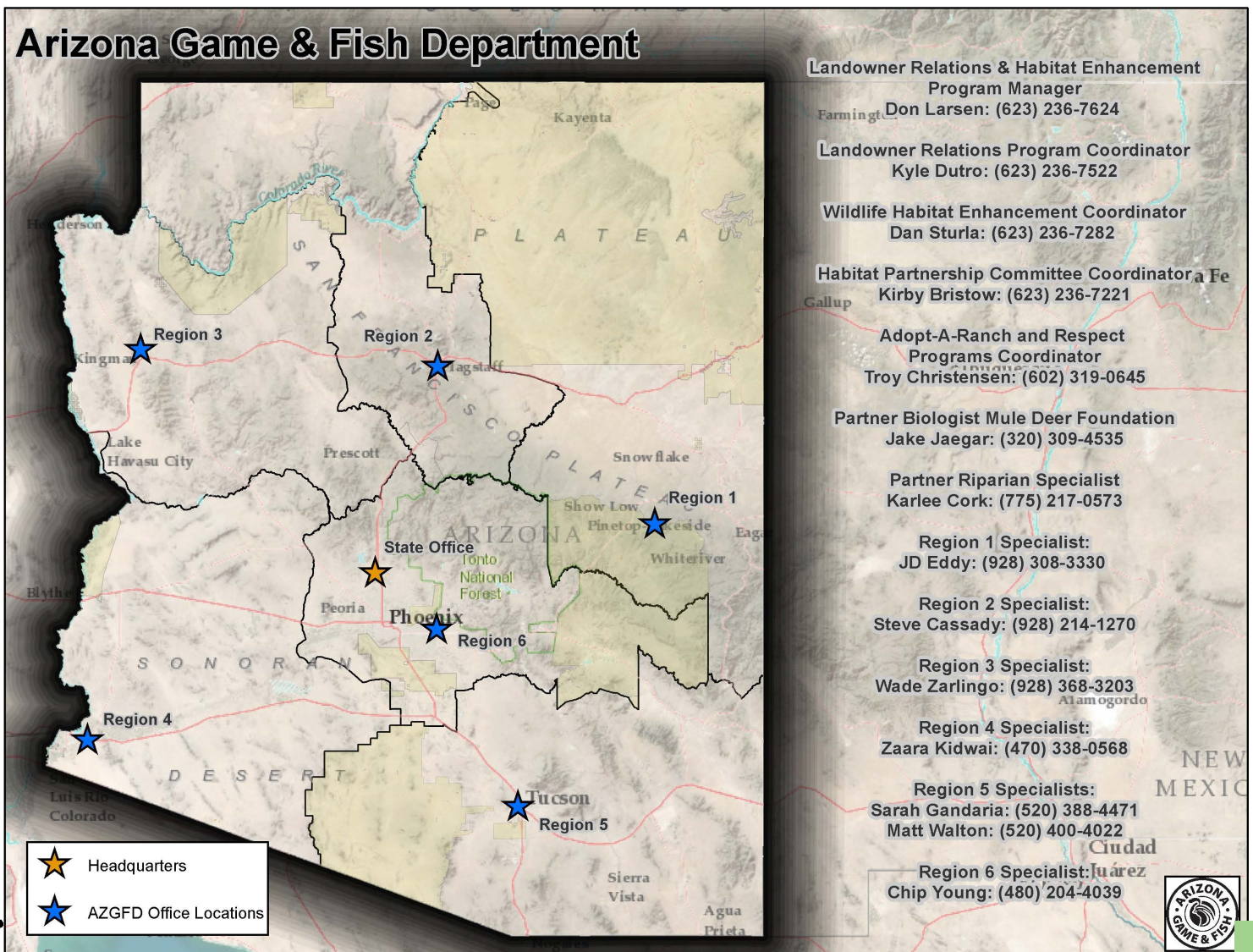
Director North Report—JD Eddy (cont'd.)

...Continued from Page 6 a little rain but overall the north eastern portions of the state are looking dry and production seems to be quite low. We are looking forward to the possibility of getting some snow this winter and gearing up for spring. As shipping season is coming to a close, I have had an opportunity to get out and meet with a few permittees and land owners since our last newsletter. In addition to range conditions, many folks are concerned that the increase in recreational use of much of our public and private lands throughout the state are having a negative impact on habitat and sometimes land managers' patience. It has been my experience that this is not the actions of the majority but rather a few uneducated folks with little regard for their actions' effect on others. Please reach out to myself or others in the Arizona Game and Fish Department's

Landowner Relations Program throughout the state with any concerns before these issues fester and result in restricted opportunities for the majority of our recreationalists that practice good etiquette while enjoying the outdoors. It is my experience that most of these folks are just trying to enjoy our beautiful rangelands we have all worked to protect and manage for the better, usually welcoming a little education in ranch etiquette in the process. Once learned they also help us spread the word to much of the rest of the community to help maintain these important opportunities for the folks of this great state. Looking forward to helping continue this important work and I hope this report finds you all well.

Thanks, JD

Arizona Game & Fish Department



2021 Board of Directors Candidate Bios

Updates

The annual Arizona Section SRM Board of Directors election is just around the corner! On the ballot this year, we will see candidates for incoming Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Director North, and Director South. Ashley Hall is stepping down as combined Secretary-Treasurer after several years of hard work and dedication. She is taking on a new role representing the Arizona Section as a Co-Chair on the Planning Committee for the 2022 SRM Conference in Albuquerque, NM, jointly hosted by the Arizona and New Mexico Sections. Joining Ashley as a Co-Chair is Andrew Brischke, who is the outgoing Arizona Section Past-President. Thank you Ashley and Andrew for your invaluable service to the Arizona Section! *Note: it's not too late to step up for our Section and volunteer to help with the 2022 SRM conference! Contact Ashley or Andrew to get involved. See Page 4 for contact information.*

Also finishing up a term on the Board of Directors are Kent Curley (Director South) and JD Eddy (Director North). Thank you to both for your contributions to the Arizona Section these past two years! **We are still looking for candidates to fill in these two Director roles.** Please contact Andrew Brischke for more information or if you would like to be considered. Candidate bios for the open Director positions will be sent to the Arizona Section Membership via a follow-up email. The 2021 Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer candidate bios are presented below:

Vice President—*Dr. Elise Gornish*

Dr. Elise Gornish is a Cooperative Extension Specialist in Ecological Restoration at the University of Arizona. Her research and outreach program largely focuses on identifying strategies for successful vegetation management strategies in natural and working arid land systems. Dr. Gornish is an early career leader in the fields of arid land restoration and weed management and has published over 50 papers and has presented over 150 times at various venues. In addition to vegetation man-

agement, Dr. Gornish is passionate about STEM inclusion and has recently become the Director of UA GALS (Girls on outdoor Adventure for Leadership and Science). This new program focuses on providing science learning and leadership opportunities to traditionally underserved female high school students through back-country programming. Dr. Gornish is also the current Arizona Section SRM Science Committee Chair.

Secretary—*Shai Schendel*

Shai Schendel is recently the Range and Botany Staff on the Kaibab National Forest for the South Zone out of Williams. After serving as an active duty Sergeant in the U.S. Army for almost five years traveling overseas as a Telecommunications Specialist, she spent the past 16 years with the Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Rangeland Management Specialist and District Conservationist. Shai has been a member of the AZ SRM since 2002 while attending ASU. She has served as Director North and loves the opportunity to be a member of this section. While not at work she spends her time with her two daughters doing what they love, 4H, livestock shows, gymkhanas, rodeos and hunting.

Treasurer—*Dr. Aaron Lien*

Dr. Aaron Lien is the newest faculty member in the Ecology, Management, and Restoration of Rangelands program at the University of Arizona. Although new to the faculty at UA, Aaron has been in Arizona for about 10 years, all of that time working in various positions at UA. He spent several years working on water issues before transitioning to range and public lands management. Most of Aaron's work has been in southern Arizona, but he hopes to start doing more in other parts of the state in the years to come. If elected to the SRM board, Aaron is looking forward to giving back to the society and to meeting and getting to know more folks from across the state.

WE ARE RANGELANDS



ARIZONA SHORT-TERM DROUGHT STATUS REPORT

NOVEMBER 2020

The unusually dry weather from the summer continued through November, leading to significant degradation of drought conditions across Arizona.

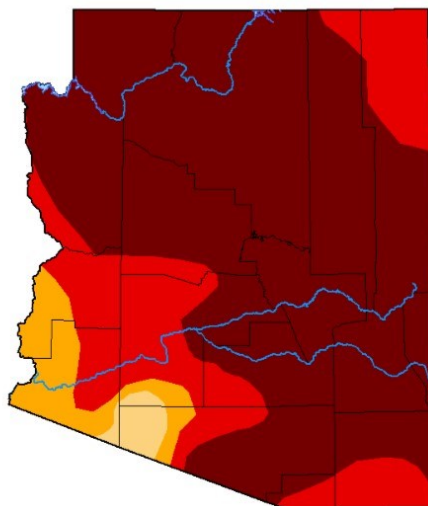
While only 9% of the state was in Exceptional Drought (D4) at the end of October, this drought condition expanded into every county except La Paz and Yuma and now covers 72% of the state. Meanwhile, Extreme Drought (D3) expanded throughout the southwest portion of the state, into La Paz and Yuma counties.

As extremely dry conditions continue, so does the risk of wildfire into the winter, until Arizona receives significant snow or rainfall. While a few areas along the rim reported very light snow showers during Thanksgiving week, the amounts were too small to alleviate drought or reduce wildfire risk significantly.

There is an increasing probability that the next several months will be drier than average as La Niña is now well established in the Pacific Ocean.

Summary produced by the State Drought Monitoring Technical Committee — December 2, 2020

U.S. Drought Monitor Arizona



November 24, 2020
(Released Wednesday, Nov. 25, 2020)
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	98.35	92.82	71.83
Last Week #1-17-2020	0.00	100.00	100.00	95.05	84.76	32.81
3 Months Ago 09-25-2020	0.00	100.00	97.45	82.36	42.25	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 12-31-2019	70.37	29.63	23.00	16.73	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-26-2019	0.00	100.00	100.00	83.97	69.95	3.37
One Year Ago 11-26-2019	8.68	91.32	70.86	38.52	1.00	0.00

Intensity:
 None (white) D2 Severe Drought (yellow)
 D0 Abnormally Dry (light yellow) D3 Extreme Drought (red)
 D1 Moderate Drought (orange) D4 Exceptional Drought (dark red)

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:
Richard Heim
NCEI/NOAA



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

2020 Arizona Section Plant ID Contest Winners

The 2020 Plant Identification contest held at the Arizona Section Summer Meeting was a virtual format this year. Instead of having physical pieces of local plants to identify, the contestants were presented with 34 detailed photos of different plants, both native and non-native, that are found in Arizona. It was a very close race this year! Taking first place was Willie Sommers (AZ DFFM). Second place went to Joey Dahms (NRCS), whose score was only less than five points behind Willie's. Congratulations to our contest winners, and thank you to every person who participated!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2020

- December 10 Arizona Geographic Information Council (AGIC) Natural Resources Series Southern Arizona Free Webinar
- December 15-16 AZ/UT Invasive Weed Virtual Update, Workshop
Contact: brischke@cals.arizona.edu
- December 15 Conserving Rangeland Pollinators in NM Webinar: <https://xerces.org/events/new-mexico/conserving-pollinators-on-new-mexico-rangelands>

2021

- January 03-06 American Forage and Grassland Council Annual Conference
- February 03-05 Arizona Section Virtual Winter Meeting**
- February 07-11 Society for Range Management Virtual Conference**
- December 06-09 8th National Grazing Lands Conference, Myrtle Beach, SC

2022

- February 05-10 SRM Conference, Albuquerque, NM**



Arizona Section Society for Range Management
c/o: Ashley Hall
Gila County Cooperative Extension
University of Arizona
5515 S. Apache Ave Ste. 600
Globe, AZ 85501

