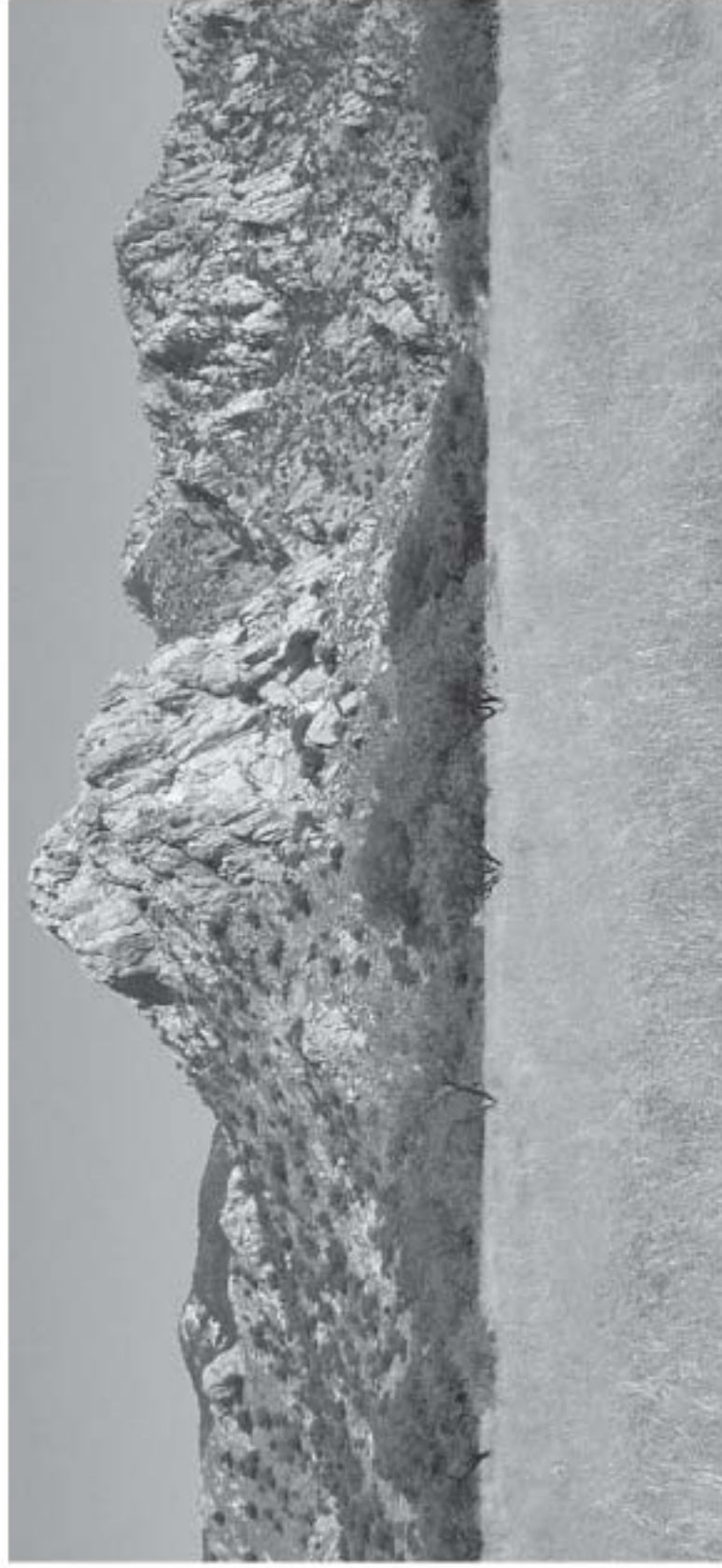


# ARIZONA OPEN LAND TRUST



## Rapid Loss Of Habitat Spawns Southern Arizona Conservation Program

Rapid growth predicted for Pinal housing market. Town growth means loss of rural lifestyle. 3.1 million more people likely in Arizona by 2020.

Such headlines show up in Arizona newspapers regularly. With the second largest growth rate in the nation, it's no surprise! Pinal County tops southern Arizona's growth rates with 54% between 1990 – 2000, with neither Santa Cruz at 29% nor Pima County at 27% far behind. And

these numbers are twice the national average for that period. Similar growth patterns in Cochise (21%) and Graham (26%) counties are resulting in a massive housing explosion for the area. Sensitive, biologically diverse wildlife habitat are being lost to growth pressures.

The Arizona Open Land Trust (the Trust), through our Southern Arizona Habitat Conservation Priorities (SAHCP) program funded by the MET Foundation, has been working to address concerns of the impact of these growth rates on wildlife habitat across southern Arizona. Building on our

*cont.*

## Rapid Loss Of Habitat, cont.

Eastern Pima County Conservation Priorities study that was adopted by the Pima County Board of Supervisors in 2003, the SAHCP program offers scientific data about habitat richness to identify areas which jurisdictions might consider conservation efforts. The program identifies unfragmented landscapes, as well as important wildlife corridors crossing State and Interstate highways in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, Pinal and Santa Cruz counties.

In addition to outreach with private landowners, the SAHCP program promotes strengthening conservation goals jurisdictionally, assisting local jurisdictions as they develop policy regarding land use. Through ongoing outreach to Board of Supervisors, other elected officials, and staff in the six county study area, the Trust is able to

support open space components in comprehensive plans and influence the update and adoption of local natural resource ordinances that protect riparian areas, wildlife corridors, and open space. Ongoing discussions with county officials and staff are focusing on additional funding mechanisms, such as general obligation bonds for open space, as well as offering supporting information for developing local conservation plans. A goal of the SAHCP program is to engage local jurisdictions, through meetings with agency officials (both elected and staff) in planning potential conservation areas. Efforts are particularly focused on balancing growth and development with conservation goals such as watershed protection and protection of connected high value conservation lands. (See insert of SAHCP map.)



*Adult Female Aplomado Falcon*

Photo Credit: Cal Sandfort, The Peregrine Fund

## East is East and West is West

*By Charlotte Hanson, New Board member of the Arizona Open Land Trust*

The adage "East is East and West is West" assumed a new and personal reality when last October my husband and I moved from Long Island Sound to the grasslands of southern Arizona. Becoming residents of the West is not at all the same as traveling in the West. The compelling beauty, the startling landscapes were now mine to revel in and, as with any kind of ownership, to fret over.

Driving through immense terrains with far off horizons and few roofs was first a shock and then a relief: the eastern tip of Long Island from which we had moved has some of the highest real estate prices in the country. The Hamptons are legendary in the giddy prices commanded per 1/4 acre and the tranquil North Fork of the island is rapidly catching up. In Suffolk County land trusts work to preserve 40 acres, 25 acres and sometimes, if the case is strong, even only an acre. Clearly, to raise monies sufficient to offer cost effective and creative methods of land conservation is a daunting task when New York City's wealth and wishes for second homes are but two and a half hours away.

On the landscape I left, each new cul de sac and McMansion is noticeable, leaving clues to their presence even when trees remain or new landscaping springs up. There is more traffic, more run-off, more noise, diminishing vistas, and less public access to ponds, shores, and creeks. The rhythm of the seasons isn't quite what it was: fishermen encounter careening motorboats, red tides destroy shellfish beds, off-road bikes race over farm fields, outdoor lighting dims night skies.

The West, I thought, was beyond such intrusions. Its hulk— its vastness— seemed to assure its own preservation. And when I began to fret over what I was really seeing

as opposed to what I wanted to see and heard statistics that did little to support my thinking, I had to look again at my new world. The 118,000 acres of Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge southwest of Tucson is one of the ten most endangered wildlife refuges in the country. Arizona lost 12 million acres of farm or ranch land in the last 25 years. Last year Arizona had more new inhabitants than any other state.

The West doesn't deal in acres but in thousands of acres. When land use changes in the West, huge and complex issues follow, dwarfing in quantity those faced in the East. In some ways the size alone of undeveloped land is seductively deceptive. To imagine change on such large amounts of land strains the imagination and seems impossible. Unfortunately, such change is possible and plentiful. Challenges to intelligent stewardship of land and preservation of its wildlife are everywhere. Fortunately, to meet such challenges there are an impressive array of dedicated land trusts in the state, eager to partner with municipalities and land owners to protect the valuable resources of this unique and varied place. I am grateful to the Arizona Open Land Trust for giving me an opportunity to participate in its exciting work.



*There was a lively discussion of conservation challenges in southern Arizona at the Trust's Fall Friends' event hosted by the Florence.*

## Welcome Two New Board Members

Earlier this year we welcomed Christine Conte as a member of the Trust's Board of Directors. Christine works as Director of the Center for Sonoran Desert Studies at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. The Trust worked very closely with Christine during the campaign for the May 2004 Open Space Bond campaign and is excited to have her expertise on the Board.

In August the Trust's Board of Directors welcomed the newest member to the Board, Charlotte Hanson. Charlotte lives in Sonoita with her husband Thor and served as a Board member for the Peconic Land Trust in New York before moving to Arizona. We are excited and honored to have Christine and Charlotte as our newest Board members.



*Michy McArthur, John Chinnock and Christine Conte*

## West Branch Landowner Plan Update

A year has passed since completion of the Landowner-Based Restoration and Management Vision for the West Branch of the Santa Cruz River. Our restoration and land protection work at the West Branch continues with great success and much progress has been made towards accomplishing the goals and objectives identified in the plan. Through partnerships with the Arizona Open Land Trust, Tucson Audubon Society, the University of Arizona, and others, the West Branch community has revegetated bare floodplain with native plants and velvet mesquite trees, constructed two refugia ponds for rare toads and frogs, established monitoring programs for lizards, and created a West Branch Native Plant Nursery where landowners can receive free native plants to restore natural vegetation to their property. So much progress has been made that we are starting to work on an update to the 2004 landowner management and restoration plan. A series of neighborhood meetings will be held later this year and early next year. The landowner restoration and management plan is an evolving document that will greatly benefit from community and agency input. Please contact Vanessa Bechtol [520-577-8564 or [vbechtol@aolt.org](mailto:vbechtol@aolt.org)] if you are interested in participating in the plan update.



*Landowner Beryl Baker and Marty Jakle of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service inspect progress on a refugia pond*

## Thank You

*Thank you for your continued support of the Arizona Open Land Trust*

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## Expansion of Tortolita Mountain Park – Carpenter Ranch

Nestled against the expanding Tortolita Mountain Park, just north of the Pima-Pinal County line, the Carpenter Ranch is home to diverse Sonoran Desert vegetation with a dense mesquite and palo verde bosque. The Arizona Open Land Trust recently assisted Pima County in acquiring the stunning 360-acre Carpenter Ranch located in the Tortolita Mountains. With the addition of the Carpenter Ranch, Pima County's Tortolita Mountain Park now totals 3,805 acres including Cochic Spring, an important riparian area. The Park protects habitat for several wildlife species such as the endangered Cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl and other bird species, Western red bat, mountain lion, javalina, bobcat, mule deer, and desert tortoise.

In addition to expanding the Tortolita Mountain Park for the protection of wildlife habitat, the Carpenter Ranch offers notable cultural resources that warrant protection. A prehistoric site found on the property contains ceramic and flake-stone artifacts, believed to be part of the Hohokam ceramic period ranging from A.D. 300 to 1500. Researchers speculate that the site may have served as a temporary resource procurement camp for the Hohokam people. The property can provide useful information to archaeologists and anthropologists concerning Hohokam land use patterns,

lithic technologies, and early resource gathering in the Tortolita Mountains.

The Carpenter family homesteaded the ranch and raised cattle there since the early 1920's. Donald and Sarabeth Carpenter inherited the operation from Donald's father and have lived and ranched there for forty years. Under a ten-year Ranch Management Agreement mutually crafted by the Carpenters and Pima County, the Carpenter family will continue to occupy and manage both the Carpenter Ranch and the Cochic Spring property on behalf of Pima County.



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3127 N. Cherry Ave.  
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