



ARIZONA is exceptionally rich in biodiversity thanks to its unique mix of habitats—ponderosa pine forests and pinyon-juniper woodlands, vital rivers winding through the Sonoran Desert, and the sycamore-lined streams and Madrean pine-oak expanses of the Sky Island mountain ranges. Defenders



PATAGONIA MOUNTAINS © GOOCH GOODWIN

works in these high-priority landscapes to maximize benefits for wildlife, habitat and people.

Mogollon Rim: Promoting Recovery and Coexistence

Stretching 200 miles across the center of Arizona into New Mexico, the Mogollon Rim includes the national forests and wilderness areas of the White Mountains and the headwaters of the Little Colorado, Salt and Gila rivers. This relatively wild region is home to many species, including rare ones like the Mount Graham red squirrel, the threatened Apache trout—Arizona's state fish—and the most endangered gray wolf subspecies in the world, the Mexican gray wolf.

Spotlight: Coexisting with Mexican Gray Wolves

Defenders championed the reintroduction program that brought the Mexican wolf, a Southwest native eradicated by decades of sanctioned predator killing, back to the wild in the 1990s. We continue to fight to protect and expand the small and struggling wolf population now reestablished in Arizona and New Mexico by ensuring that policies and management actions are guided by science. Defenders helps ranchers, Native American tribes and land managers implement tools and management strategies to make livestock less vulnerable to wolves, including hiring range riders, providing specific deterrents

like fencing and fladry, and devising compensation programs that incentivize conflict avoidance and coexistence.

Sky Islands: Minding the Mining

The Sky Islands of southeastern Arizona, including the Patagonia Mountains, draw birders from around the world. Almost 280 bird species, including 14 different kinds of hummingbirds, have been documented in this area near the Arizona-Mexico border. Many of these species are at the northern edge of their range. This diversity is threatened by international mining companies that have claimed tens of thousands of acres in Coronado National Forest with the goal of digging immense open-pit mines.

Spotlight: Halting the Sunnyside Exploration Drilling Project

In partnership with the Patagonia Area Resource Alliance (PARA), Defenders is protesting plans for exploratory drilling in sensitive habitat and for upgrading infrastructure for mine development. With PARA we successfully litigated to stop the operators of the Sunnyside Project from drilling multiple holes to test for mineable ore along ecologically fragile Harshaw Creek, home to threatened Mexican spotted owls and western yellow-billed cuckoos.



MEXICAN SPOTTED OWL © GDOCH GOODWIN



MEXICAN GRAY WOLF © DANIEL GACHUZ

Borderlands: Fighting for Protected Areas

Although more than 1.3 million acres in the Arizona borderlands are officially protected as national monuments, national wildlife refuges and national forests, the 2005 Real ID Act exempts border wall construction from environmental laws. The result is widespread habitat destruction and harm to borderland ecology, economies and communities. Walls are now planned or already going up in national treasures like Cabeza Prieta and San Bernardino national wildlife refuges and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

An impenetrable border wall prevents large mammals like endangered Sonoran pronghorn and Mexican gray wolves from reaching the water and food they need to survive in the desert. The pumping of groundwater for wall construction threatens aquatic species like the Quitobaquito pupfish, which is found nowhere else in the world.

Spotlight: Stopping the Border Wall

In the effort to stop the wall, Defenders and a coalition of groups are using grassroots organizing, lobbying, litigation and science. To spotlight how the wall will harm ecosystems and wildlife, Defenders published *In the Shadow of the Wall*, a comprehensive two-part study, and an article in the scientific journal *Bioscience* endorsed by more than 2,500 scientists from around

the world calling on the U.S. government to abide by environmental laws when building the wall.

Beyond Borders: Supporting Cross-border Species Recovery

Recovery of endangered species is central to Defenders' mission. In Arizona, we rise to the challenge of protecting imperiled cross-border species like Mexican gray wolves, jaguars, Sonoran pronghorn, cactus ferruginous pygmy-owls, and a variety of fishes. We protect habitat by watchdogging federal and state agencies, opposing harmful development projects, and using science to call out threats and identify solutions.

Spotlight: Making a Science-based Case for Jaguar Restoration

Like Mexican gray wolves, jaguars are victims of the war on predators, which essentially erased them from the U.S.—the last female was killed in 1963. To make the case for reestablishing a population, Defenders convened leading jaguar scientists to document the availability of sufficient habitat and prey in Arizona and New Mexico. Our research indicates that habitat north of the Mexican border could support a viable U.S. jaguar population, information we and our partners are using to make a science-based case for the jaguar's return to their historic and rightful home in the Southwest.



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