

Arizona and the Sonoran Desert

Recommended Reading

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Compiled by Harold Wood

Arizona

Awesome Arizona: 200 Amazing Facts about the Grand Canyon State

by Roger Naylor (2023)

Winner of the 2024 “Best History Book” award by the Arizona-New Mexico Book Awards, this compilation of Arizona trivia manages to capture the essence of the state, from its rowdy past to its epic landscape bulging with mountains, slashed by canyons, and blown apart by volcanoes. Learn about trees that once shaded dinosaurs, the West's most legendary gunfight, the world's largest antique, the best-preserved meteor crater on earth, where the post office still delivers mail by mule, the longest poker game in history, how Arizona saved the unicorn, and so much more.

Arizona National Parks and Monuments: Scenic Wonders and Cultural Treasures of the Grand Canyon State

by Roger Naylor (2024)

Featuring color photographs and maps, this new guide details all thirty-four of Arizona's federal reserves, with an overview of what makes each park unique, a thorough description and history, and information about hiking trails, camping, boating, fishing, tours, and more.

Arizona State Parks: A Guide to Amazing Places in the Grand Canyon State

by Roger Naylor (2019)

Arizona residents have learned that our *State* parks, although often overlooked by visitors looking for the better-known federal parks, offer equally great experiences of natural wonder that our national parks and monuments do, with the added benefit of being mostly located closer to population centers. The State Parks provide some of the best hiking, camping, fishing, boating, stargazing, and wildlife watching in the state.

The Nature of Arizona, 2nd ed: An Introduction to Familiar Plants, Animals & Outstanding Natural Attractions

by James Kavanagh and Waterford Press (2018)

A richly illustrated field guide highlighting more than 300 common and unique plants and animals and 100 of Arizona's outstanding natural attractions. It is intended to provide novices with a simplified docket reference to the familiar and distinctive species of plants and animals and outstanding natural attractions found in Arizona, and the diversity of its ecosystems. Learning the names and something about these fellow creatures help us learn how to live with them. Especially useful for newcomers to the state.

Arizona Journey Guide: A Driving and Hiking Guide to Ruins, Rock Art, Fossils, & Formations

By John Kramer and Julie Martinez (2007)

A richly illustrated guide to major features of interest in Arizona, with a focus on Paleontology, Archaeology, and Geology.

Wild in Arizona: Photographing Arizona's Wildflowers: A Guide to When, Where, & How

by Paul Gill and Colleen Miniuk-Sperry (2012)

A beautifully illustrated guide with colorful photographs, suitable even for arm-chair travelers. The book offers a guide to visit each location listed, suggesting what time of year to visit, the ideal time of day, how rugged a vehicle you need, a hiking rating, and giving detailed directions with maps.

The Sonoran Desert

The Desert Year

by Joseph Wood Krutch (1952)

Recording the first year-long encounter with the Sonoran Desert by a retired East-coast literature professor, this book is highly entertaining with simple prose, yet philosophically profound. Winner of the John Burroughs Medal for narrative natural history writing. (Complimentary copies available for Sun City Oro Valley residents or for donation to local libraries - contact: harold@planetpatriot.net.)

The Voice of the Desert, a Naturalist's Interpretation

by Joseph Wood Krutch (1955).

This delightful book - scholarly and informed though it is - is first of all a product of the exuberant enthusiasm that only a convert can bring to his subject. Joseph Wood Krutch came to Arizona's desert in his middle years—a man of letters who had spent his entire adult life in the cities and countryside of the Northeast. He found that the desert around Tucson was exactly right for him - that he was healthier and happier in its bright, dry air than ever before. The result is this joyful, wise, and witty credo by a man who knows that the proper study of mankind extends to all of nature.

Home is the Desert

by Ann Woodin, Introduction by Joseph Wood Krutch (1964)

The wife of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, raising four sons in the wilder part of Tucson, tells how she came to love the brilliant desert of the American Southwest at her doorstep, helped in part by the bold and insatiable curiosity of her four young sons, along with a menagerie of baby animals the family helped to raise before releasing to the wild or returning to the museum. She is witty and poetic, gay, and humorous, while vividly revealing the beauty of the desert.

A Naturalist's Guide to Sabino Canyon (2nd Edition)

by Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists (Ned Harris, Anne Green, Carol Tornow), 2012.

Well-written illustrated pocket guide to the geology, ecology, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, insects, arachnids, trees, cacti, shrubs, and wildflowers found not only in Sabino Canyon, but throughout our local ecosystem.

Hidden Life of the Desert (2nd Edition)

by Thomas Wiewandt (2010).

This book is the companion to the superb film, *Desert Dreams: Celebrating Five Seasons in the Sonoran Desert*. Filled with spectacular photographs of the landscapes, plants, and animals of the desert, this book takes us through each of the five seasons of the desert, using many of the same images of the film. The film has little narration, but instead fills us with wonder as the sights and sounds of the changing seasons fill our senses. The book will evoke the same spirit of wonder and delight, but provides some further background about the plants and animals shown. A final chapter, "Facing the Future," addresses how people fit into this story, asking "Have we come to the desert as a friend or foe? What does the future hold for our fellow creatures, and for us?" Both this book and the film it is based on is essential reading for both newcomers and long-time residents.

The Desert Smells Like Rain: A Naturalist in O'odham Country

by Gary Paul Nabhan (2022)

Originally published more than forty years ago, *The Desert Smells Like Rain* remains a classic work about nature, how to respect it, and what transplants can learn from the longtime residents of the Sonoran Desert, the Tohono O'odham people. Nabhan writes with eyes of a scientist but with the ears for language of a poet's. Nabhan's point is that we transplanted desert dwellers have a great deal to learn from longtime, environmentally conscious inhabitants if we are not to destroy our fragile home.

The Sonoran Desert: A Literary Field Guide

by Eric Magrane (Editor), Christopher Cokinos (Editor), Paul Mirocha (Illustrator) (2016)

A collection of words and images that melds art and science, with more than fifty contemporary poets and writers. Each creative contribution is joined by an illustration by award-winning artist Paul Mirocha and scientific information about the creature or plant authored by the book's editors.

In The Arms of Saguaros: Iconography of the Giant Cactus

by William L. Bird, Jr. (2023)

A cultural history of the iconic Giant Saguaro, and how it grew into a western icon, used in advertising, pop art, professional art, fashion, travel guides, and entertainment. Filled out outstanding large photographs and artwork from yesteryear.

Southern Arizona Nature Almanac: A Seasonal Guide to Pima County and Beyond

by Roseann Beggy Hanson and Jonathan Hanson (2003, 2015)

This book reveals the incredible diversity of the desert Southwest by highlighting its most compelling features and natural phenomena for each month of the year: blooming plants, wildlife activity, places to visit, weather, and prominent constellations. Unlike most field guides organized by genus and species or flower color, this book organized with a month's worth of natural happenings you're likely to experience during that time. Handy appendixes include lists of birds, mammals, reptiles, butterflies, and a desert plants "blooming calendar."

Birds of Southeastern Arizona

by Richard Cachor Taylor (2010)

This 430-page guide helps you to understand and connect to our unique bioregion, whether or not you consider yourself a birdwatcher. Compact enough to fit inside your pocket, this guidebook contains hundreds of stunning color photographs, along with charts showing elevation and seasonal migration patterns for each species, and maps identifying different habitats. Enjoying and protecting birds and their habitats has the multiplier effect of protecting everything else that shares space with them, including us.

A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert (Second Edition)

by Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (2015)

A comprehensive natural history, compiled by more than forty scientists and/or naturalists, covering the region's biodiversity, geography, geology, weather, plants, animals, and conservation issues. Text accompanied by numerous photographs, maps, diagrams, and 450 finely rendered drawings.

Living With Wildlife

There's a Bobcat in My Backyard! Living with and Enjoying Urban Wildlife, An Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Guide,

by Jonathan Hanson (2004).

Maybe you're not completely comfortable when confronted by the wild desert creatures. But have no fear - please! Not only do these critters mean you no harm, they can also be a source of e of immense delight. Generously laced with humor and brimming with helpful information, this book can turn you from a mere bystander into an active participant in an environment in which we all - people and wildlife - must coexist.

Bringing Birds Home: Protect and Conserve Birds Through Creating and Enhancing Habitat in Urban Areas

by Tucson Audubon Society

By using intentional design, urban landscapes can offer quality habitat for birds and pollinators.

Very helpful, specific to our Sonoran Desert, this 53 page booklet is a guide to not just providing homes for birds, but also for beautiful and useful native plants, butterflies, lizards, bats, native bees, and protecting the night sky.

Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard,

by Douglas W. Tallamy (2020).

This book addresses a vision for a new grassroots approach to address the biodiversity crisis by adding native plants and removing invasive ones where we live. Because native plants are so primary and essential here, this book provides great inspiration. Make your backyard a water-wise and wildlife-friendly one!

Get on the Map: Homegrown National Park.

How to join the movement where homeowners everywhere turn their yards into conservation corridors that provide wildlife habitats for native flora and fauna.

Available free from: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

Foundational Reading

The following section lists books that are not limited to Arizona, but are nearly-essential *foundational* reading for understanding and appreciating the desert Southwest and indeed, all wild nature in North America.

A Sand County Almanac (and Sketches Here and There)

by Aldo Leopold, 1949.

No other single book of American nature writing – with the exception of *Walden* – has achieved such lasting stature as *A Sand County Almanac*. An established classic in the field, revealing the intricacies of ecology for the general public, this book is mandatory reading for anyone wanting to understand the natural world and our place in it. Included is Aldo Leopold's seminal essay "The Land Ethic" is widely recognized as a significant turning point in conservation philosophy and a guide for the future.

Desert Solitaire

by Edward Abbey, 1968, 1998.

An absolute must read about the Southwest, containing poetic essays mixed with angry but humorous polemics in defense of the American West. The 20th anniversary edition by University of Arizona Press (1988) is the definitive version, but there are many reprints and second-hand copies available.

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants

by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013).

Drawing on her life as a professional scientist, and as a Native American woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings offer us gifts and lessons, even if we've forgotten how to hear their voices.

Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature

by Jon Young, Ellen Haas, Evan McGown (2016)

This 500 page manual is a guide to discovering a real connection with animals and plants, and a sense of belonging through knowing our place on the planet. More than a field guide, the book provides methodology for learning more about the Book of Nature, and an understanding of the natural cycle of learning and enhancing awareness. Organized in two parts, the first part is a "Mentor's Manual," preparing mentors, educators, and parents to lead people new to nature study to learn more about nature in ways that fit their ecosystems. Part Two is an "Activity Guide" offering dozens of activities, stories, songs, and games.

Coyote America: A Natural and Supernatural History

By Dan Flores (2016)

A highly readable account of the incredible survival story of the coyote. As soon as European immigrants began ranching and herding in the Western USA, they began working to destroy the coyote. Despite campaigns of annihilation well into the 20th century, coyotes didn't just survive, they thrived, expanding across the continent, thriving wherever we thrive, and finally are earning our respect, as we finally recognize their free "pest" control services by controlling the rodent population.

Your Quick Start Guide to Nature Journaling

by Wild Wonder Foundation (2023)

This fun and powerful practice helps you slow down, pay attention, notice more, and get curious about the wonder and beauty around you. Keeping a nature journal is one way to help restore the kind of connection with the natural world that is so necessary if we are to find the beauty that improves our lives. Free downloadable booklet from <https://www.wildwonder.org/>

Nature Journaling for a Wild Life

by Roseann Beggy Hanson (Tucson: Natural Selection Press, 2020)

How nature journaling nurtures deeper understanding, appreciation, and love of nature, helping us to practice mindfulness by learning the art of *seeing* instead of just looking. This book is a guided private workshop, incorporating an 8 week guided course to learn about nature journaling, with tips, illustrations, weekly assignments, and blank pages. Also include 5 appendices to help you put together your nature journaling kit.

Nocturnalia: Nature in the Western Night

by Charles Hood and José Gabriel Martínez-Fonseca (2023)

As most of us are here during long winter nights, this guide will help you learn about and explore the evolutionary adaptations of owls, bats, and other nightlife animals; the natural history of nighttime plants; and the celestial patterns that regulate this after-dark kingdom.

The Sky at Night: Easy Enjoyment from Your Backyard

by Tim Hunter (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2023)

We are so lucky to be able to see a myriad of stars that are unavailable to others; 99% of the people in the United States do not have regular access to appreciate this beauty. This book will enable you to explore space right at home with short easy-to-digest chapters. Emphasis is on naked-eye viewing with an occasional reference to using a pair of binoculars or a small telescope, encouraging beginners to explore the skies while giving them a solid understanding of what they see. Building on his writings for the long-running “Sky Spy” column in the *Arizona Daily Star*, Tim Hunter will help you understand and experience the wonders of the universe.