

# Arizona Land and Water Trust preserves over 1,000 acres of the Rose Tree Ranch in Santa Cruz County

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TUCSON, Ariz. (KOLD News 13) - The Arizona Land and Water Trust has protected 1,150 acres of the Rose Tree Ranch in Santa Cruz County, Arizona.

This property represents one of the few remaining and finest examples of native and restorable grassland habitat in Arizona.

This conservation effort adds to an expanding network of protected lands in the Sonoita-Elgin grasslands and the Upper San Pedro River Watershed.

The Rose Tree Ranch is part of a large working landscape and native grassland pastures located in the Sonoita-Elgin area that have supported livestock grazing since the turn of the century. The unfragmented native desert grasslands and mountain foothills of the ranch are home to a wide variety of wildlife species. Since the area remains sparsely populated, biologists suggest that ocelot and jaguar may travel through the area as an integral link in a movement corridor chain that rings the south-central Arizona mountains.

In addition to the federally endangered ocelot and jaguar, several notable species are also found within several miles of the ranch, including the lesser long-nosed bat, Chiricahua leopard frog, Sprague's pipit and pronghorn antelope.

“The Trust was pleased to have the opportunity to work with the owners of Rose Tree Ranch to permanently protect this property, a landscape which plays an integral role in the local agricultural and wildlife community and the functioning watershed,” said Liz Petterson, Arizona Land and Water Trust Executive Director.

Over the last twenty years, owners of the ranch have worked diligently as land stewards to protect and improve the property’s conservation values. They have partnered with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and the Arizona Antelope, Mule Deer and White Tail Deer Foundations on a wide variety of conservation and wildlife habitat projects.

The open space protected by this conservation easement is an important piece of one of the few remaining expansive and unfragmented landscapes in southern Arizona and provides a unique opportunity to help sustain agriculturally productive lands and scenic vistas in Santa Cruz County.

The United States Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Conservation Easement Program assisted with this project, focusing on protecting Grasslands of Special Environmental Significance and the Department of Defense’s Readiness Environmental Protection Integration Program also provided critical funding. A conservation easement is a voluntary restriction on future non-agricultural development. Each easement is individually tailored to meet the needs of the landowner and their goals for the property.

With supporters, landowners and funding partners, Arizona Land and Water Trust has now protected more than 59,000 acres throughout southern Arizona since 1978. The Trust holds over 24,000 acres in conservation easements.

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