

ALERT

TOP STORY

Southwest symbol: Tucson author traces the saguaro's rise to global icon

Ann Brown Special to the Arizona Daily Star
Sep 10, 2021



Monsoon clouds stripe the western sky just after a monsoon shower at Saguaro National Park East.

Kelly Presnell, Arizona Daily Star

Ann Brown Special to the Arizona Daily Star

The lanky saguaro, *Carnegiea gigantea*, is the quintessential symbol of Southwest. We see them every day.

Towering saguaros dot much of the Southwestern desertscape.

Their image and distinctive shape adorn jewelry, fabrics, greeting cards, salt-and-pepper shakers, and just about any tchotchke imaginable.

And every morning, a saguaro with four outstretched arms greets readers to Page 1 of Arizona Daily Star's print edition.

Historian William L. “Larry” Bird Jr. traces the saguaro’s ascension from biological oddity to global icon in the well-researched, richly detailed “In the Arms of Saguaros: Iconography of the Giant Cactus,” recently published by the Desert Laboratory on Tumamoc Hill, University of Arizona.

While the saguaro is the central character of the readable academic work, “In the Arms of Saguaros” presents new views and understanding of Tucson’s history.

“In the Arms of Saguaros” tells unknown stories and the arc of how the saguaro became an icon,” says Benjamin T. Wilder, director of the Desert Laboratory on Tumamoc Hill, who edited the book.

Bird first lived the Old Pueblo in the mid-1970s as a graduate student and had a student job at the Arizona Historical Society. He received his master’s in American history from the University of Arizona in 1975.

He headed east to Washington D.C. for his doctorate from Georgetown University and a career with the Smithsonian Institution. Curator Emeritus of the National Museum of American History, Bird’s research specialty areas are advertising, mass media, politics and popular culture.



Dr. William "Larry" Bird Jr., curator emeritus in the Division of Political History at the Smithsonian Institution has written a book, "In the Arms of Saguaros: Iconography of the Giant Cactus."

Mamta Popat, Arizona Daily Star

Over the years, he collected souvenirs and ephemera from the Southwest, especially items from campaigns to attract visitors to the area. He created a personal collection from picking up "a postcard here, a poster there," says Bird, who's been a Tucson resident for about six years.

At a used bookstore, Bird found a magazine with an arresting image on the cover: A Ray Manley 1950 photo of Marcia Louise Luglan wrapped in the arms of a saguaro.

While the Southwest-themed project had been in the back of his mind for decades, this photo fascinated Bird and spurred him to pursue the topic. The photo is the frontispiece of "In the Arms of Saguaros."

As a historian he was trained to see relationships between events, Bird says. With that framework, he created a well-annotated work that's packed with illustrations and photographs, and establishes connections between people and the prickly plant.



Postcard. Saddle and Surrey Guest Ranch, Tucson.
Published by Ray Manley Commercial Photography,
Tucson, Arizona, ca. 1958.

William L. Bird collection

Bird began with the curated material and wrote the narrative from the material — much like a museum exhibit, says Wilder. Bird gives an objective, scholarly account of sensitive topics like cultural appropriation and erasure, Wilder says.

Through that aperture, Bird traces the saguaro's natural geographic range and explains the impact of early survey parties, botanists and cactus collectors, and the saguaro's expanding popularity and presence in world's fairs, exhibitions, botanical gardens and "cactus houses." Many of the actions were insensitive to Native Americans or the environment.

Bird presents the role of somewhat disorganized, conflicting advertising and creative publicity efforts in the Southwest's development. He shares

pieces of Tucson's history that are punctuated with recognizable names, like developer Roy Drachman, novelist Harold Bell Wright and photographer Manley.

Among the insightful tidbits of history included are the evolution of the Arizona territorial and state seals and the placement (or not) of the saguaro, and the background of Desert Sanatorium that broke ground in 1924 and became Tucson Medical Center.

Proceedings of the Desert Laboratory

Desert Laboratory on Tumamoc Hill | Contribution No. 3

IN THE ARMS OF SAGUAROS

Iconography of the Giant Cactus



WILLIAM L. BIRD, JR.

To keep Tucson top-of-mind in the 1940s, staged “gag” photos of smooth-skinned models standing barefoot with a prickly saguaro and posed models wearing a “sunsuit” of cactus aimed to attract attention to the Southwest. Cozying up to a cactus required removing spiky spines, padding the cactus and cutting the plant to accommodate a thin-skinned person.

These photos staged on saguaros appeared on postcards, brochures, newspapers, and magazines captured the imagination as a western symbol, Bird says in the book. “By the early 1960s, there was little question that the saguaro symbolized a free, open, and welcoming land, and, if one were lucky enough, the leisure time in which to enjoy it.”

Saguaro images remain popular, as evidenced by the memes, clothing, knickknacks and other memorabilia and themes featuring the towering cactus, such as the colorful, boxy saguaros created for the 2019 Coachella Music Festival.

Bird is the author of several memory-evoking books that dovetailed Smithsonian exhibits. These included World War II posters, the paint-by-number trend of in the 1950s, holiday displays, and souvenirs, keepsakes and curios.

“In the Arms of Saguaros” is the third contribution in the “Proceedings of the Desert Laboratory,” an online, open-access journal that aims to continue the desert research on Tumamoc Hill.

“It is a ‘contribution’ to knowledge,” says Bird. “It is the functional equivalent of a long-form academic article.”

The first contribution “Proceedings of the Desert Laboratory” was the illustrated “Oasis at the Desert Edge: Flora of Cañón del Nacapule, Sonora, Mexico.” The second was “Campos de Fuego: A Brief and Fantastic History of an Expedition into the Volcanic Region of the Pinacate.”

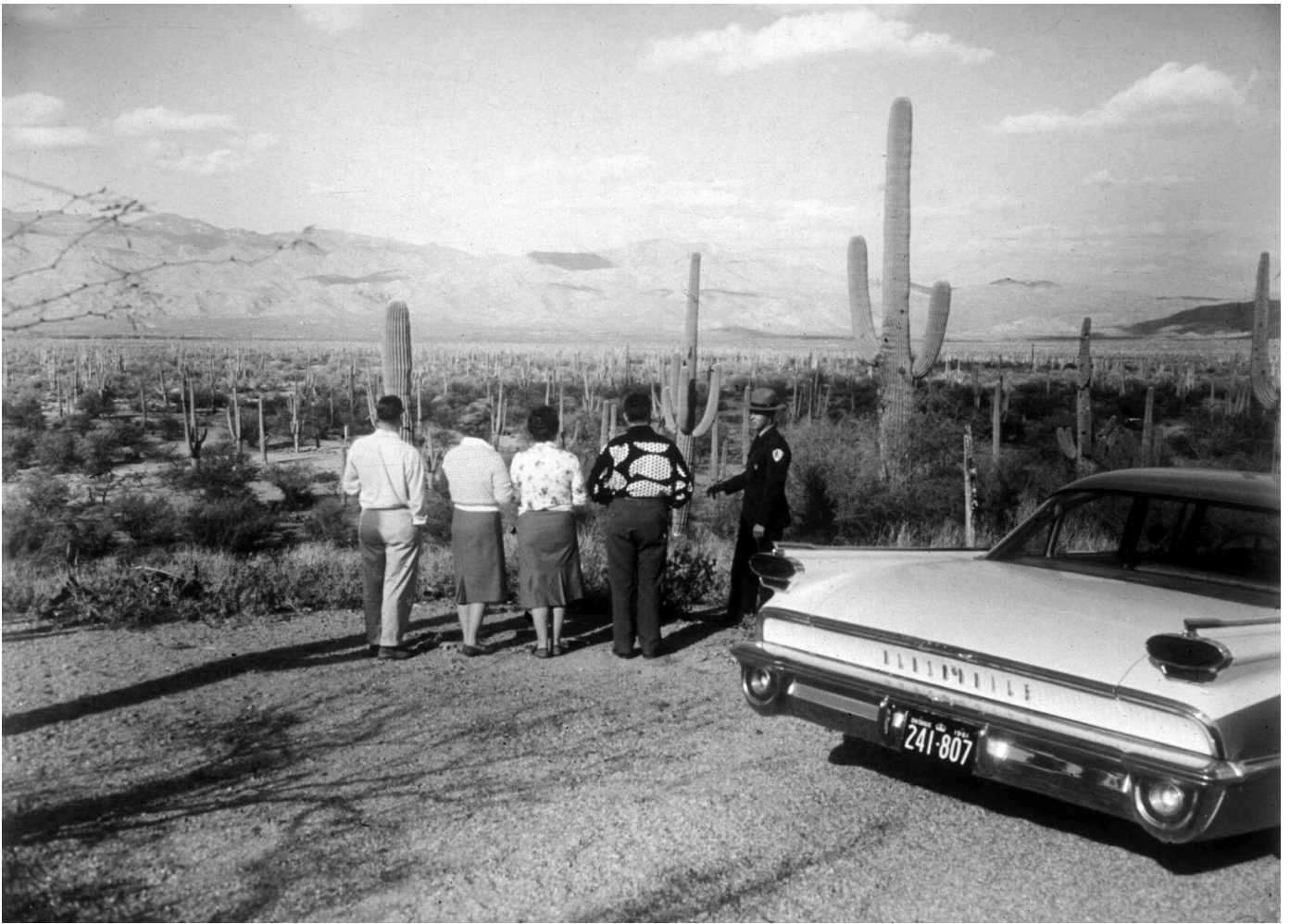
Wilder expects to produce about one proceeding a year all focused on the arid regions.

Still awestruck by the desert, Bird says on a recent trip to Gates Pass in the Tucson Mountains he was reminded of being metaphorically “in the arms of the saguaros.”



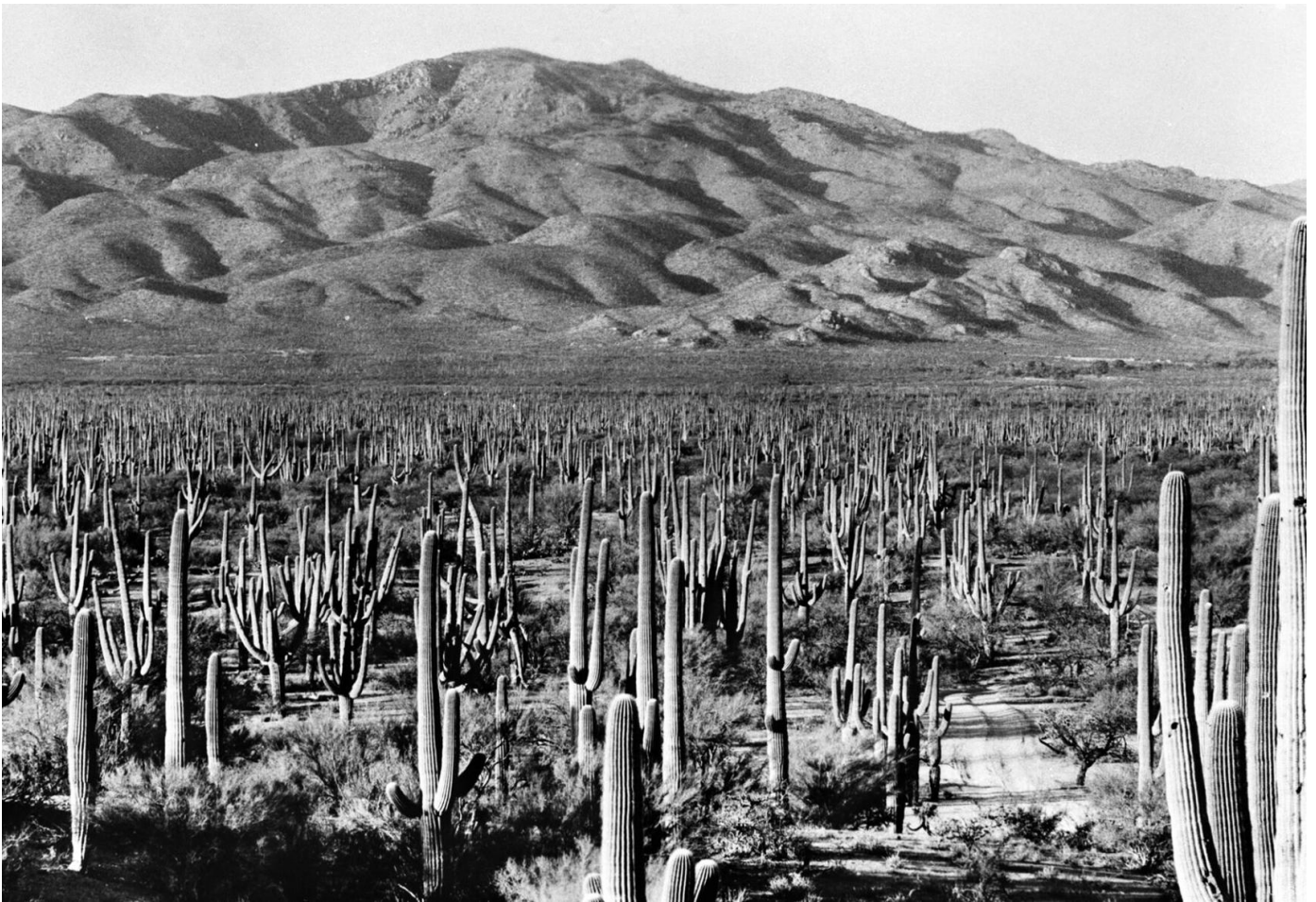
Maricopa women gathering fruit from Saguaro cacti. 1907. In his pursuit of North American Indian portraiture, Edward S. Curtis pictured the saguaro fruit harvest. Photograph by Edward S. Curtis.

Library of Congress



A park ranger with visitors on the loop drive in Saguaro National Monument in 1961.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park



Saguaro National Monument in 1935

Courtesy Saguaro National Park



Photographer Ray Manley, with Howard Kinney, pose Jane McIntosh for a Tucson Sunshine Climate Club publicity photo. 1954. The photo's caption sheet explains that poses known as "cactus gags," became a staple of southern Arizona travel and tourism publicity: "Spines are removed to make gag shot possible." In this case, the photographers padded the topmost rungs of the ladder.

Courtesy of Carol Manley Robinson

Photos: Saguaro National Park through the years

Saguaro National Park



The sun sets behind a stand of saguaros along Kinney Road at the Tucson Mountain District of the Saguaro National Park in 2010.

A.E. Araiza / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



The Saguaro National Monument cactus garden in 1955.

Tucson Citizen

Saguaro National Park



The Saguaro National Monument visitors center in 1955.

Tucson Citizen

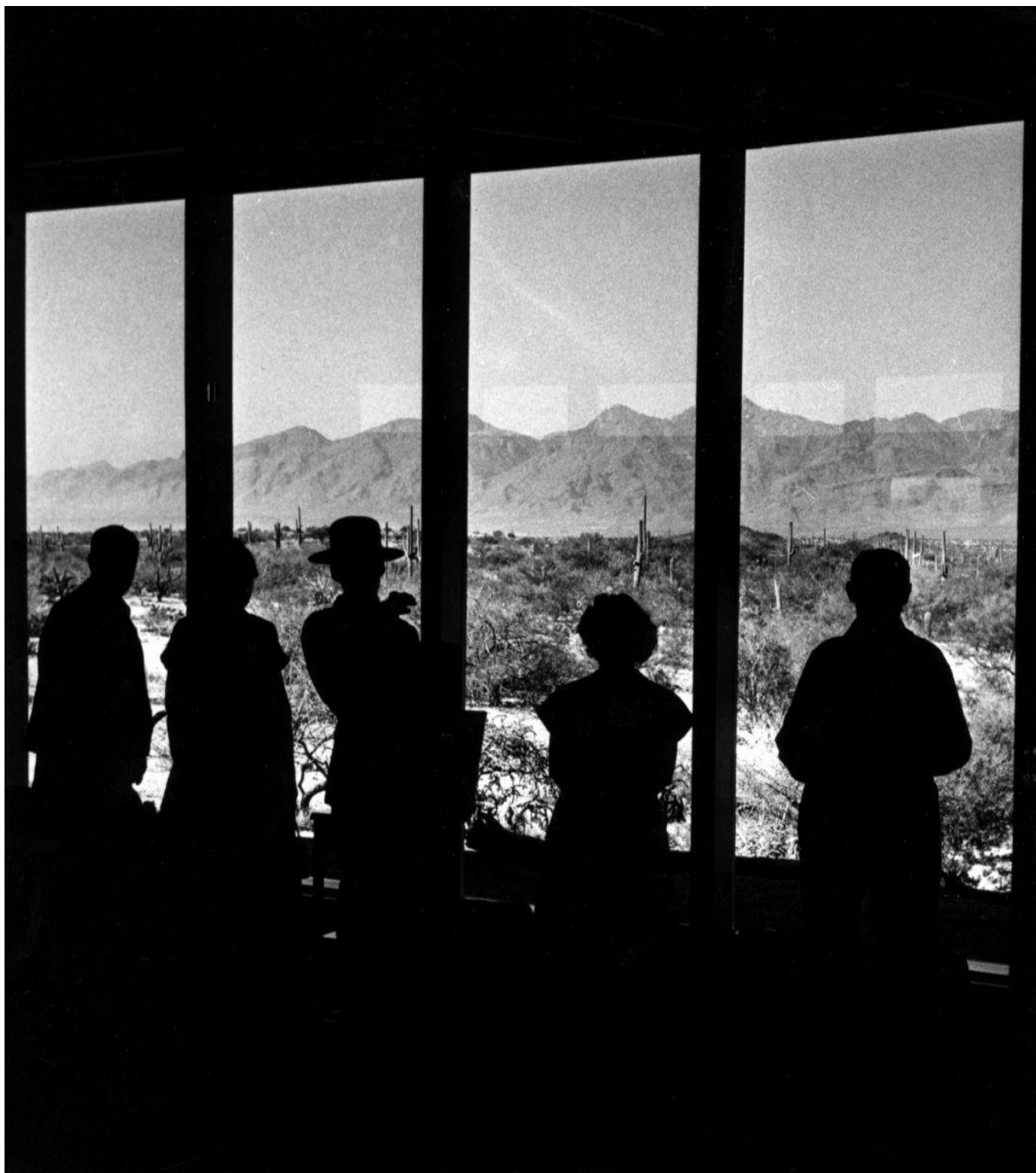
Saguaro National Park



The Saguaro National Monument visitors center in 1955.

Tucson Citizen

Saguaro National Park



The Saguaro National Monument visitors center in 1955.

Tucson Citizen

Saguaro National Park



The Saguaro National Monument West visitors center, left, with two rangers' apartments under construction in 1966.

Tucson Citizen

Saguaro National Park





Saguaro National Monument East unit loop drive in 1958.

Tucson Citizen

Saguaro National Park



Saguaro National Monument East, ca 1950s.

Tucson Citizen

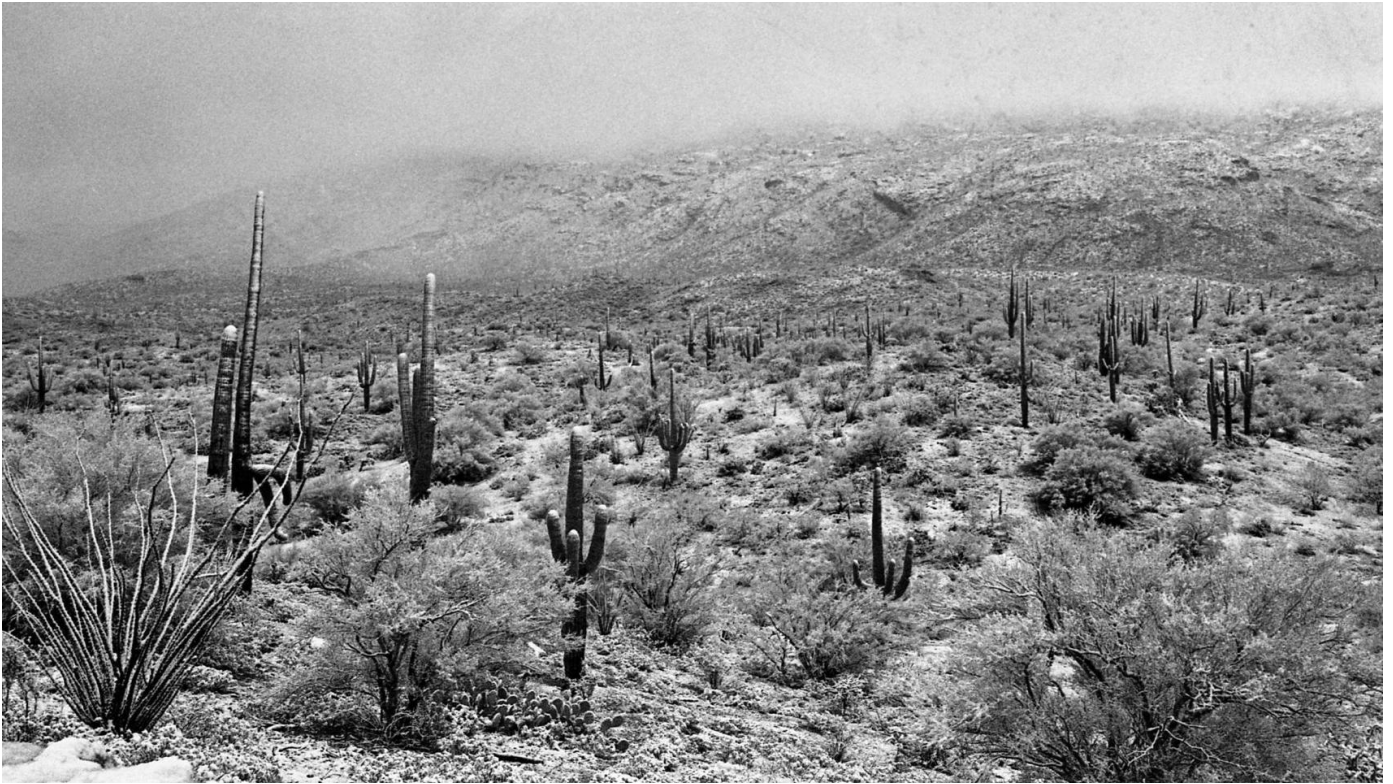
Saguaro National Park



Saguaro National Monument in 1935.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

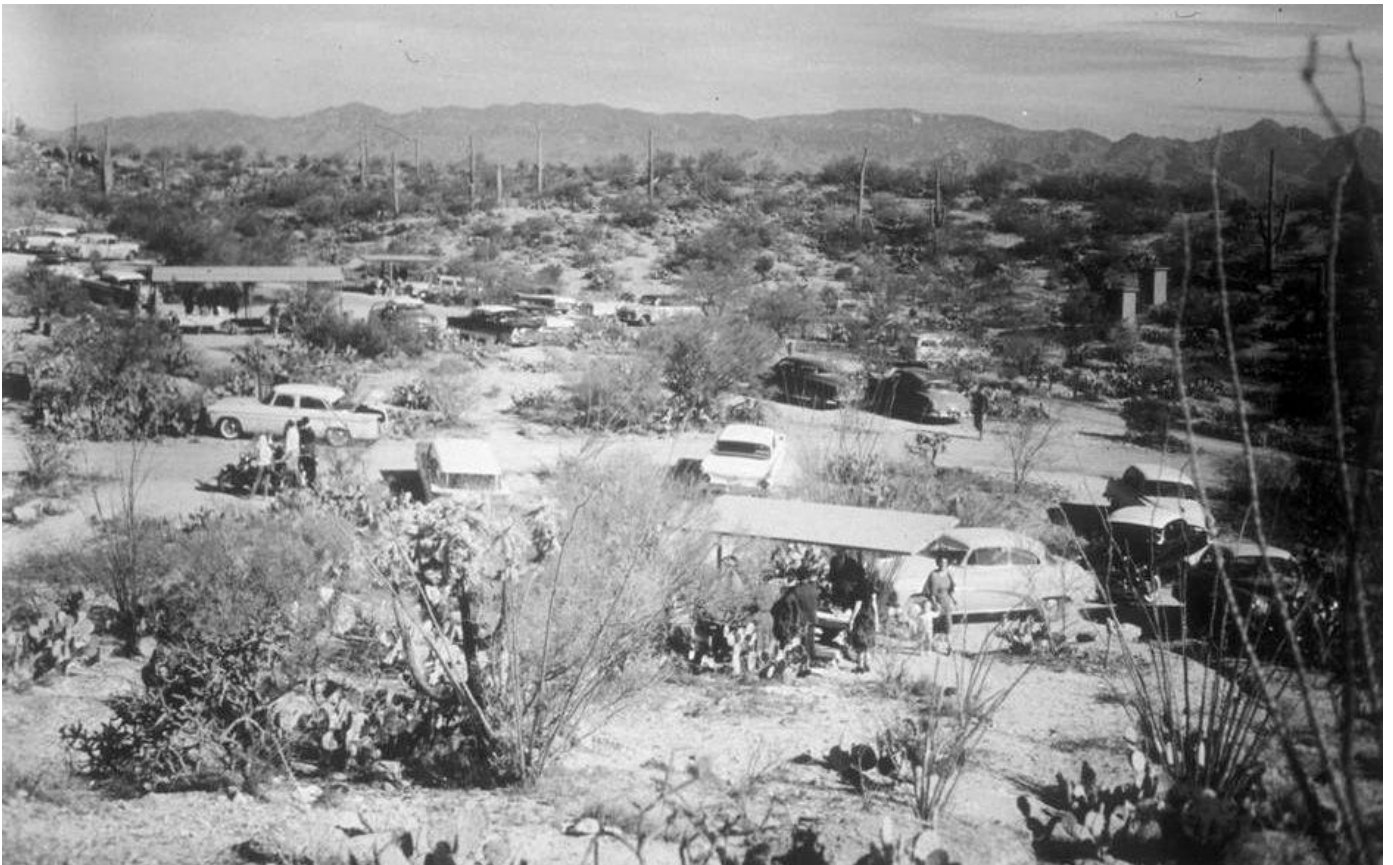
Saguaro National Park



Snow at Saguaro National Park East (then called Saguaro National Monument) on Dec. 23, 1965.

Tucson Citizen

Saguaro National Park



Undated photo (probably 1950s) of tourists enjoying picnics and hiking at Saguaro National Monument.

Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park



Saguaro National Monument visitors center ca 1940s.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park



Home Shantz, a plant scientist and president of the University of Arizona in the 1920s, was instrumental in establishing Saguaro National Monument in 1933.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

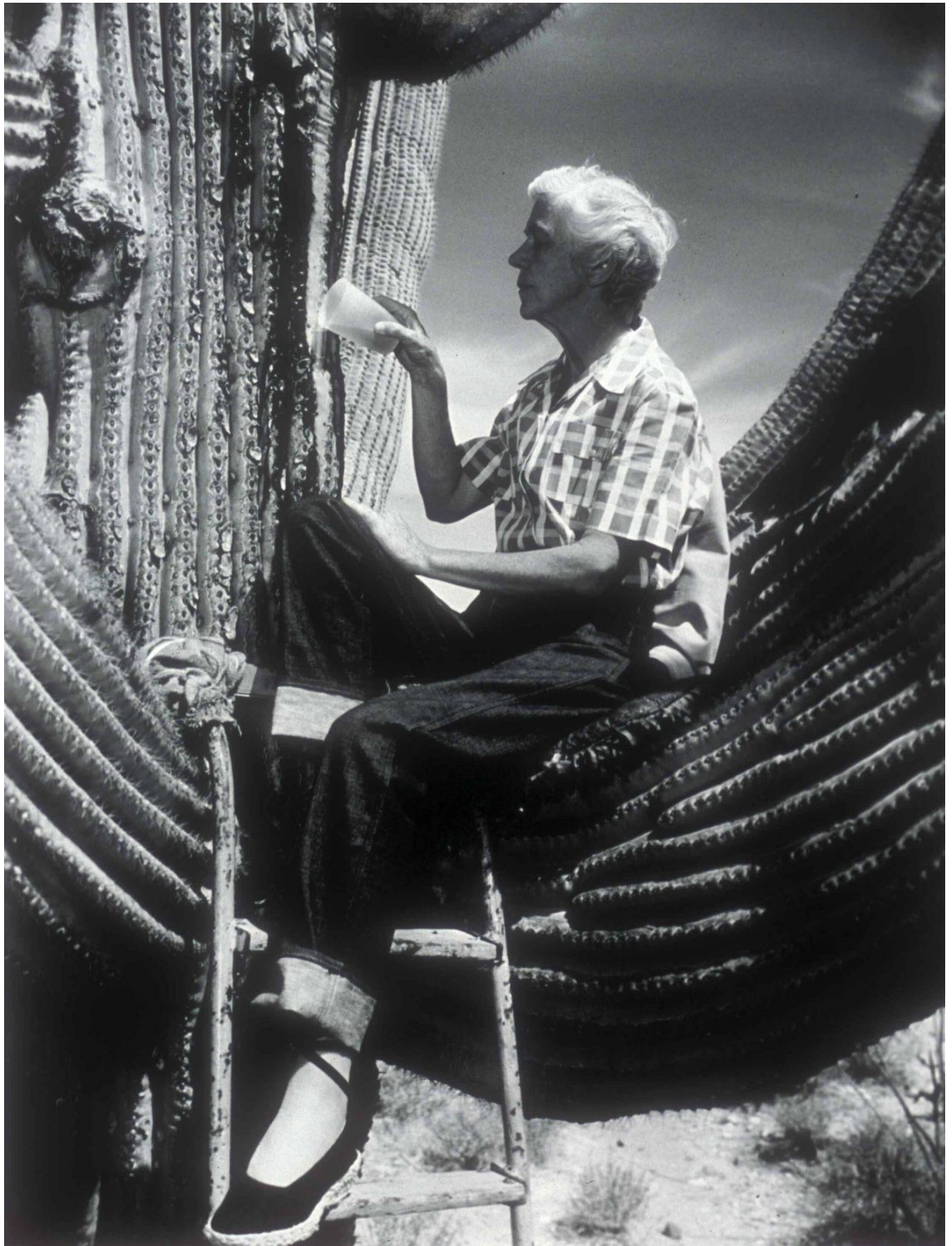
Saguaro National Park



Panorama of cactus forest in Saguaro National Monument, 1931.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park



Dr. Alice Boyle applies Penicillin to a Saguaro cactus at Saguaro National Monument. Dr. Boyle's studies of saguaros included treatments with penicillin that were somewhat successful. Later research showed that the loss of old saguaros was a result of age and periodic freezes, not a "blight"!

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

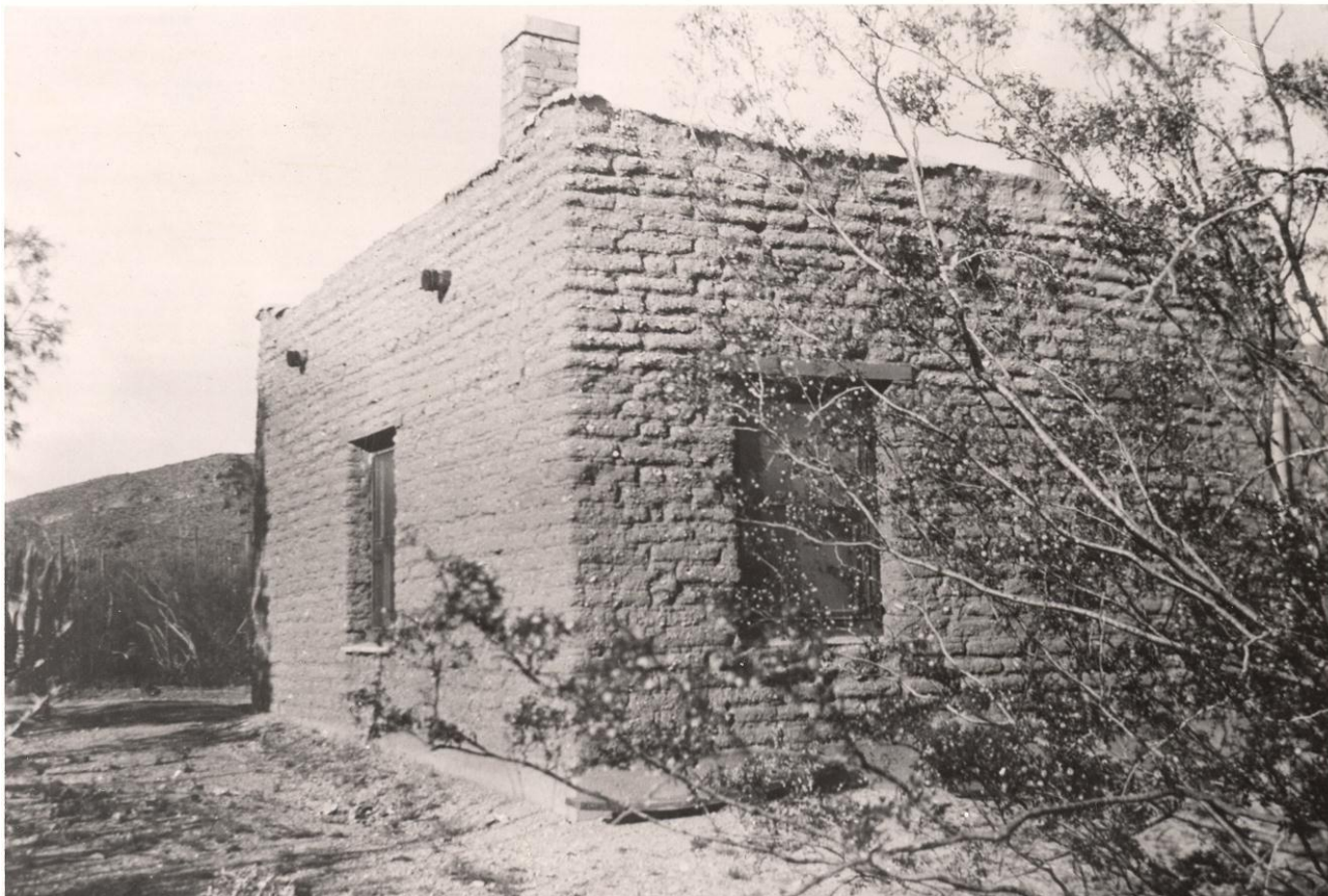
Saguaro National Park



The Freeman family in Saguaro National Monument in 1936.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

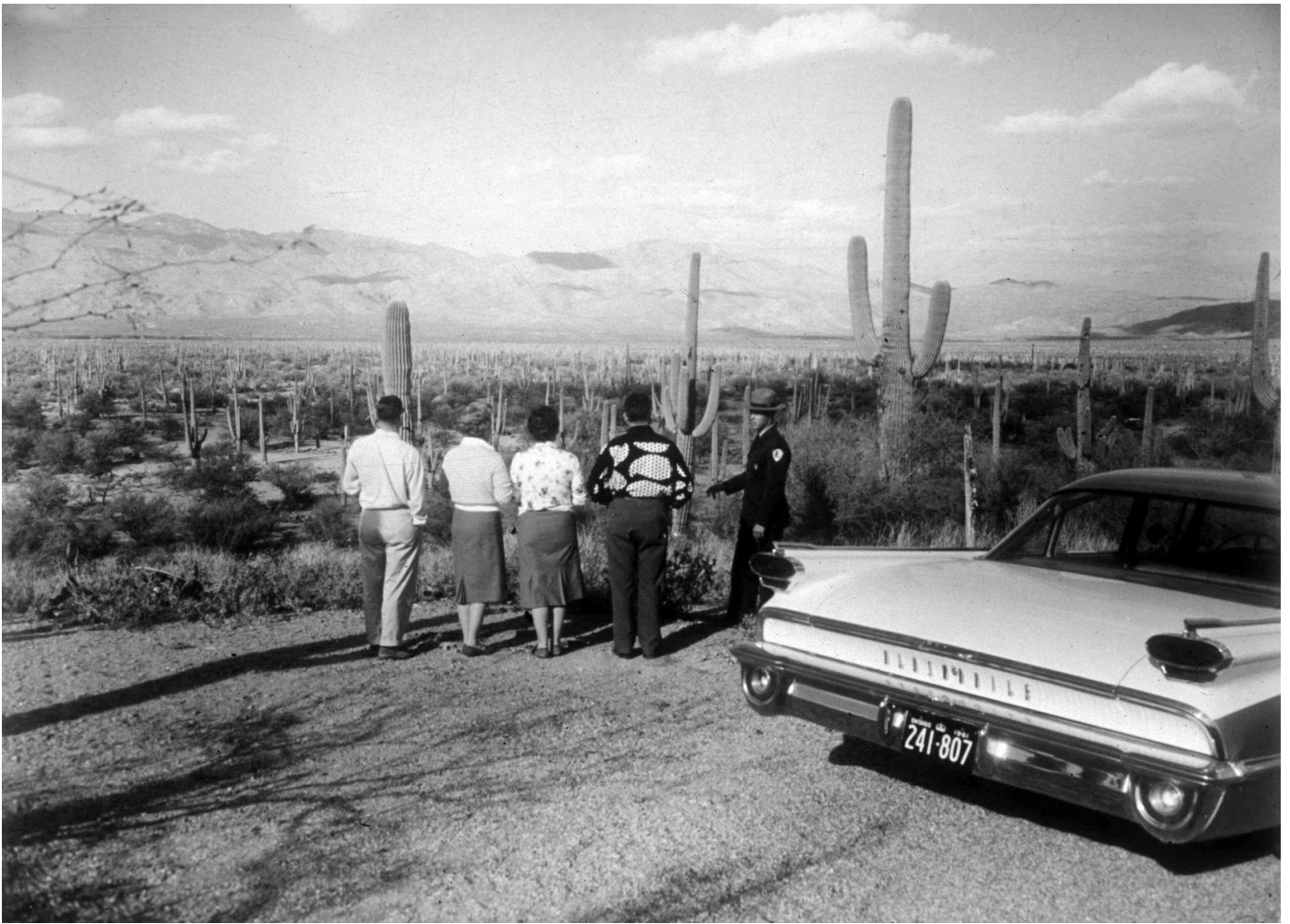
Saguaro National Park



Freeman's adobe home in Saguaro National Monument in 1934.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park



A park ranger with visitors on the loop drive in Saguaro National Monument in 1961.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park



Centennial Saguaro cactus outside the Saguaro National Monument visitors center.

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park



Saguaro National Monument cactus

Courtesy Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park



Snow storm in Saguaro National Monument in 1937.

National Park Service

Saguaro National Park



A view looking south from Signal hill at the Tucson Mountain Range in Saguaro National Park, Tucson Mountain District in 2016.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A view looking east from Saguaro National Park, along Picture Rocks Road in the Tucson Mountain District in August, 2016. In the distance, cloud rise over the Santa Catalina Mountains.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park





A Saguaro carcass framed at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A southerly view out the window of a picnic shelter built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s that was built with surrounding rock in the Ez-Kim-In-Zin Picnic Area at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A desert tortoise makes its way down Kinney Rd. in the Saguaro National Park West, Wednesday, August 10, 2016, Tucson, Ariz. Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A Saguaro cactus off Golden Gate Rd. holds a top full of flower buds at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A view looking south from Signal hill towards Wasson and Amole Peaks from left in Saguaro National Park, Tucson Mountain District in August, 2016.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Visitors take a look at trail maps on the patio of the Red Hill Visitor Center at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Visitors from Denver stroll one of the many trails off Golden Gate Rd. at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Panoramic view from Spud Rock, including the city of Tucson, from six images, ranging from southeast at left to northeast at right, near Mica Mountain on the western slopes of the Rincon Mountains in the Saguaro National Park on June 2, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A hawk watches from his perch at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*) perches on a rock near the Signal Hill Picnic Area at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Panther and Safford Peaks in the Tucson Mountains North of Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Ha:san Bak, Saguaro cactus fruit harvest



Stella Tucker uses the sharp edge of a stem of a Saguaro fruit to slice the husk to get to the sweet meat inside as she harvests the fruit in the Saguaro National Park in 2005.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Ha:san Bak, Saguaro cactus fruit harvest



Stella Tucker uses a kuipaD to harvest saguaro fruit in the Saguaro National Park 2005. During the early summer Tucker camps out in the park to harvest and cook the fruit just as her Tohono O'odham ancestors did. Tucker died in 2019 at age 71.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Ha:san Bak, Saguaro cactus fruit harvest



Bob Martens uses a kuipaD, lengths of Saguaro ribs topped by a small limb of creosote, to knock down ripe Saguaro cactus fruit as he helps Stella Tucker during the Tohono O'Odham harvest at Saguaro National Park in 2005.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Ha:san Bak, Saguaro cactus fruit harvest



Under the early morning sun, Jerry Yellowhair strengthens the joint where a small creosote branch is attached to a length of Saguaro rib to make a kuipaD, used to reach the Saguaro fruit.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



1907: Prominent Tucsonan Levi Manning and his family spent the summer at a get-away log cabin high in the Rincon Mountains.

Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park



Manning Camp in the Saguaro National Park East, in 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Some of the pots, pans and iron skillets used by the staff during their stays at Manning Camp in the Saguaro National Park on June 2, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

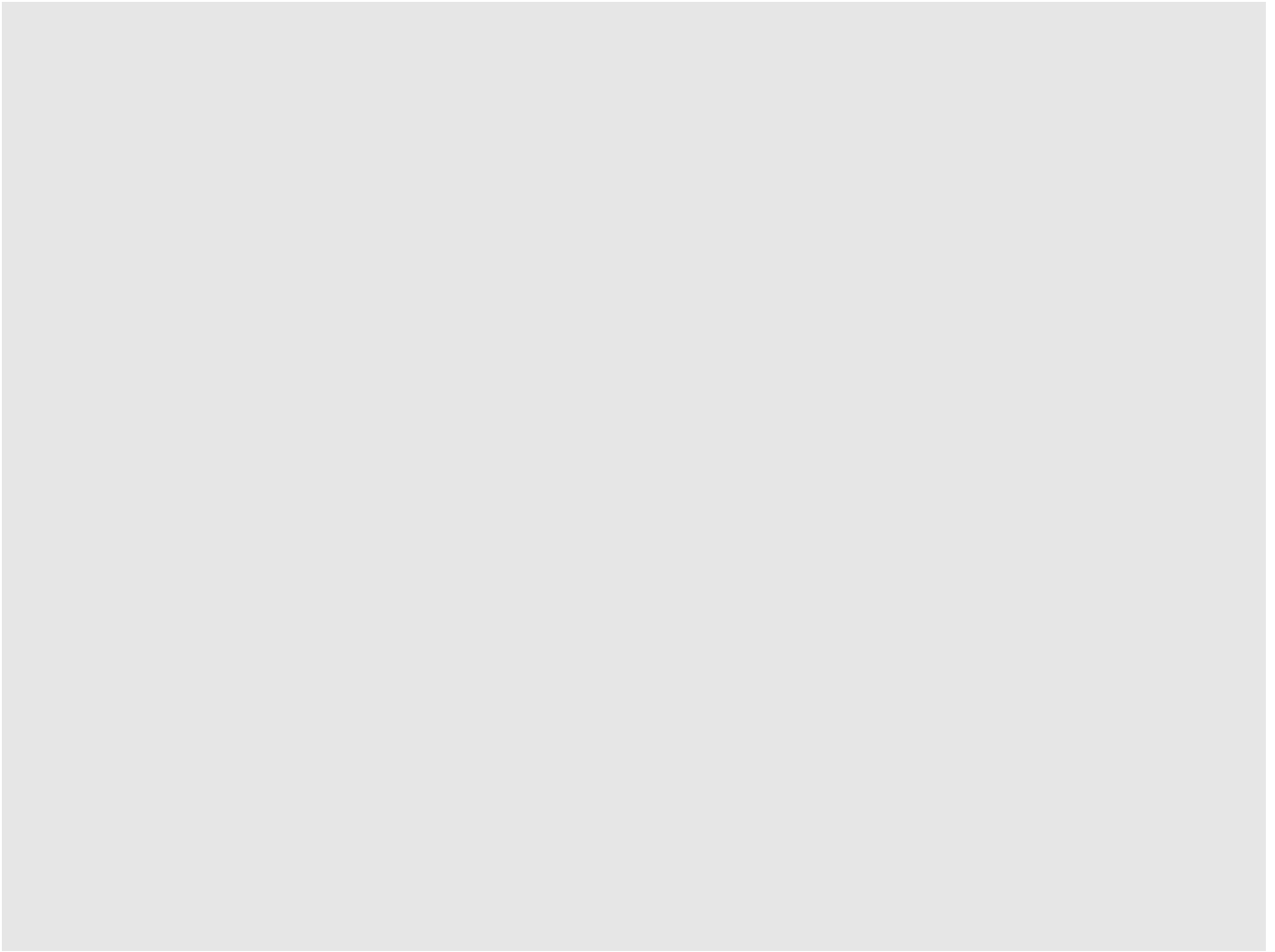
Saguaro National Park



Next generation ranger Ryan Summers, left, and wilderness ranger Shannon McCloskey look over the camps visitors log shortly after arriving at Manning Camp 8,000 feet above sea level in the Saguaro National Park, on June 2, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Horse shoes on one of the logs making a wall in the cabin at Manning Camp in the Saguaro National Park on June 2, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Next generation ranger Ryan Summers splits wood for the evening's fire at Manning Camp in the Saguaro National Park on June 2, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



The view east over Reef Rock, lower left, from Rincon Mountains near Manning Camp in Saguaro National Park, June 2, 2016

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

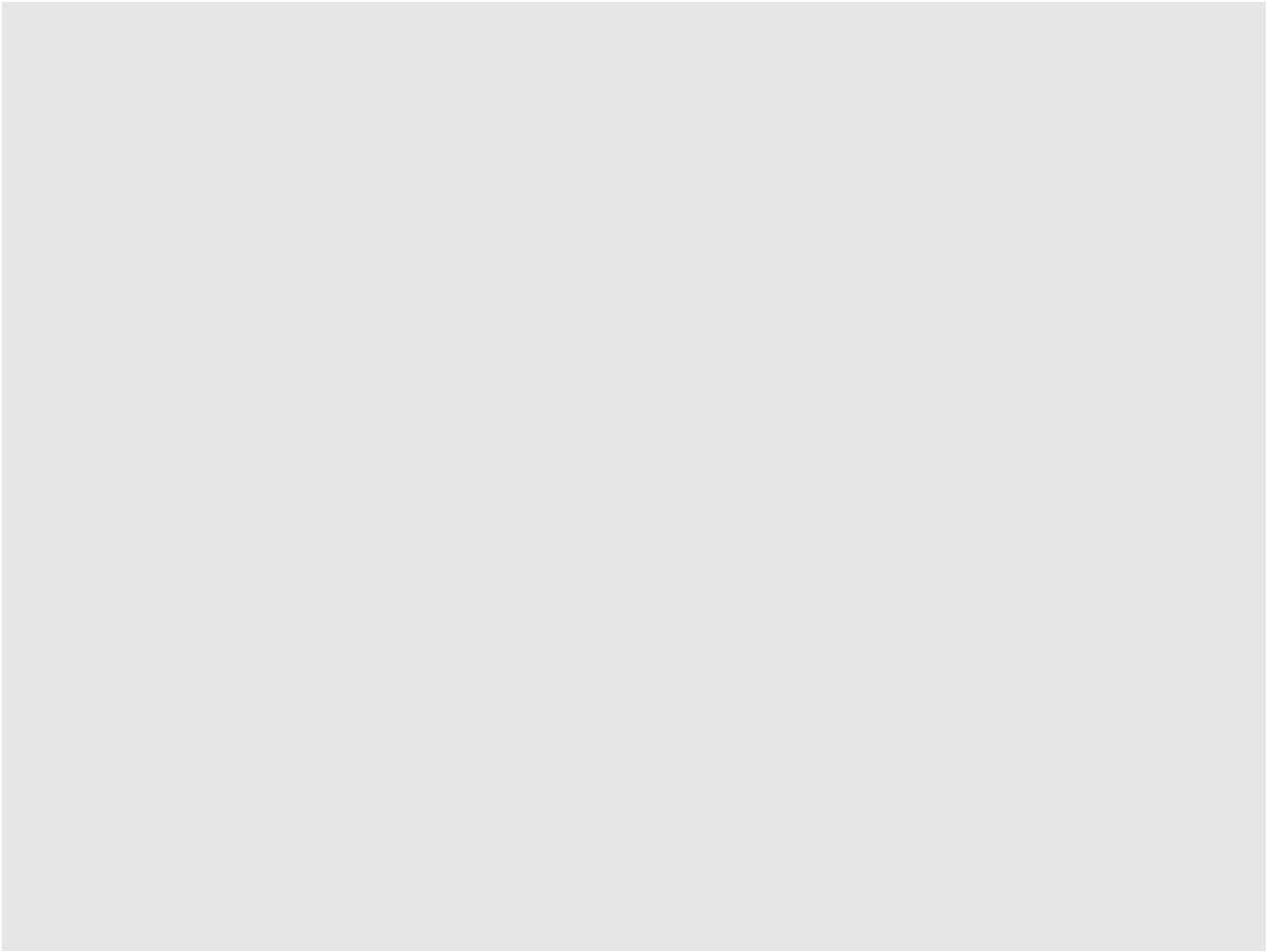
Saguaro National Park



Wilderness ranger Shannon McCloskey, left, and next generation ranger Ryan Summers prepare to do some upgrades to the facilities at Manning Camp in the Saguaro National Park on June 2, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

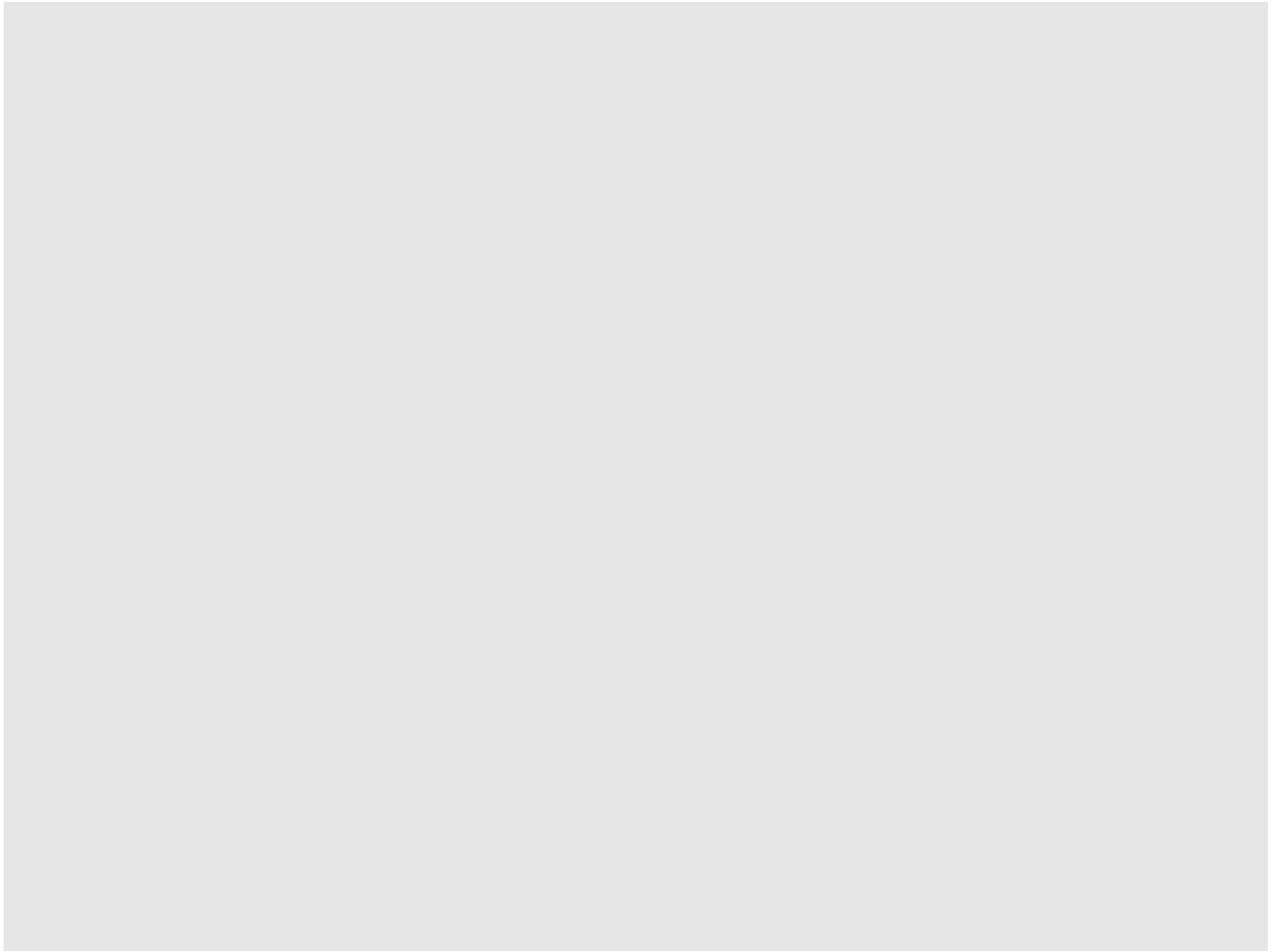
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Sid Kahla, left, and Thor Peterson get a pannier balanced on Goose while packing seven mules for a resupply of Manning Camp ranger station in 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

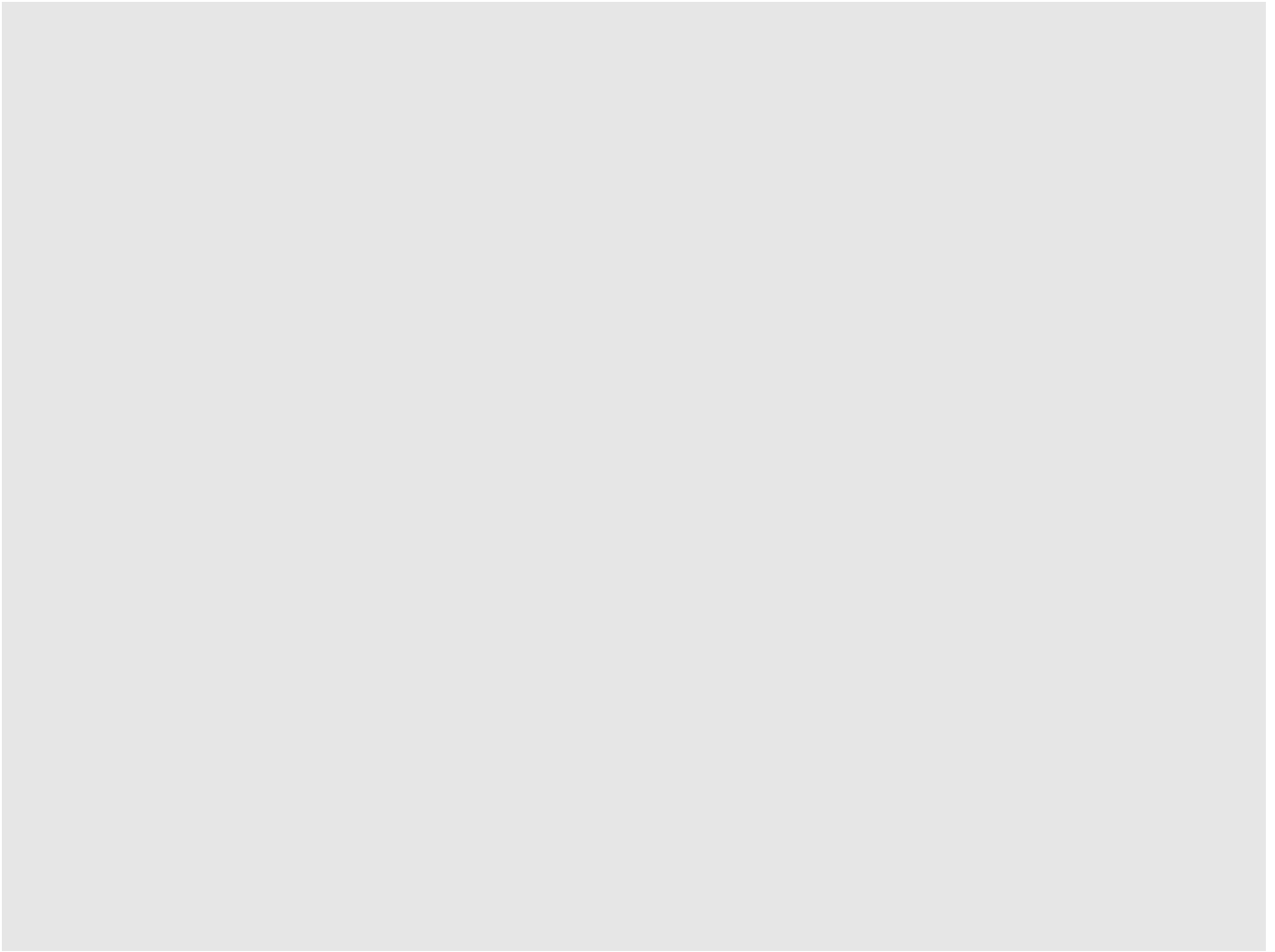
Saguaro National Park



Saguaro National Park trails supervisor Nick Huck, left, and chief of maintenance Jeremy Curtis split up a box of paper towels, distributing the weight evenly among the panniers while preparing for a pack mule resupply of Manning Camp on April 14, 2016. Seven mules were in the supply train and each mule can carry between 100 and 120 pounds.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

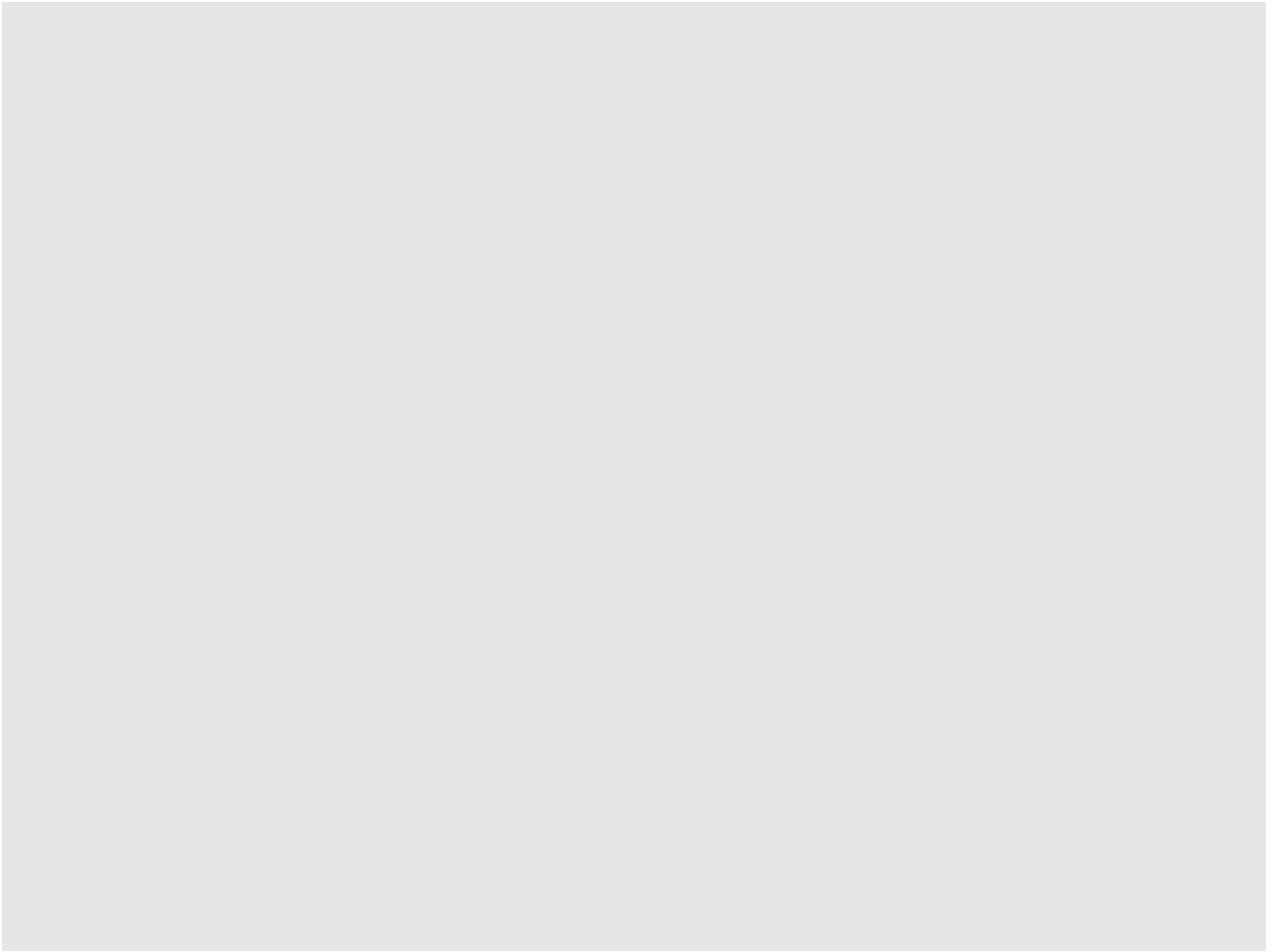
Saguaro National Park



Wasson and Amole Peaks at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

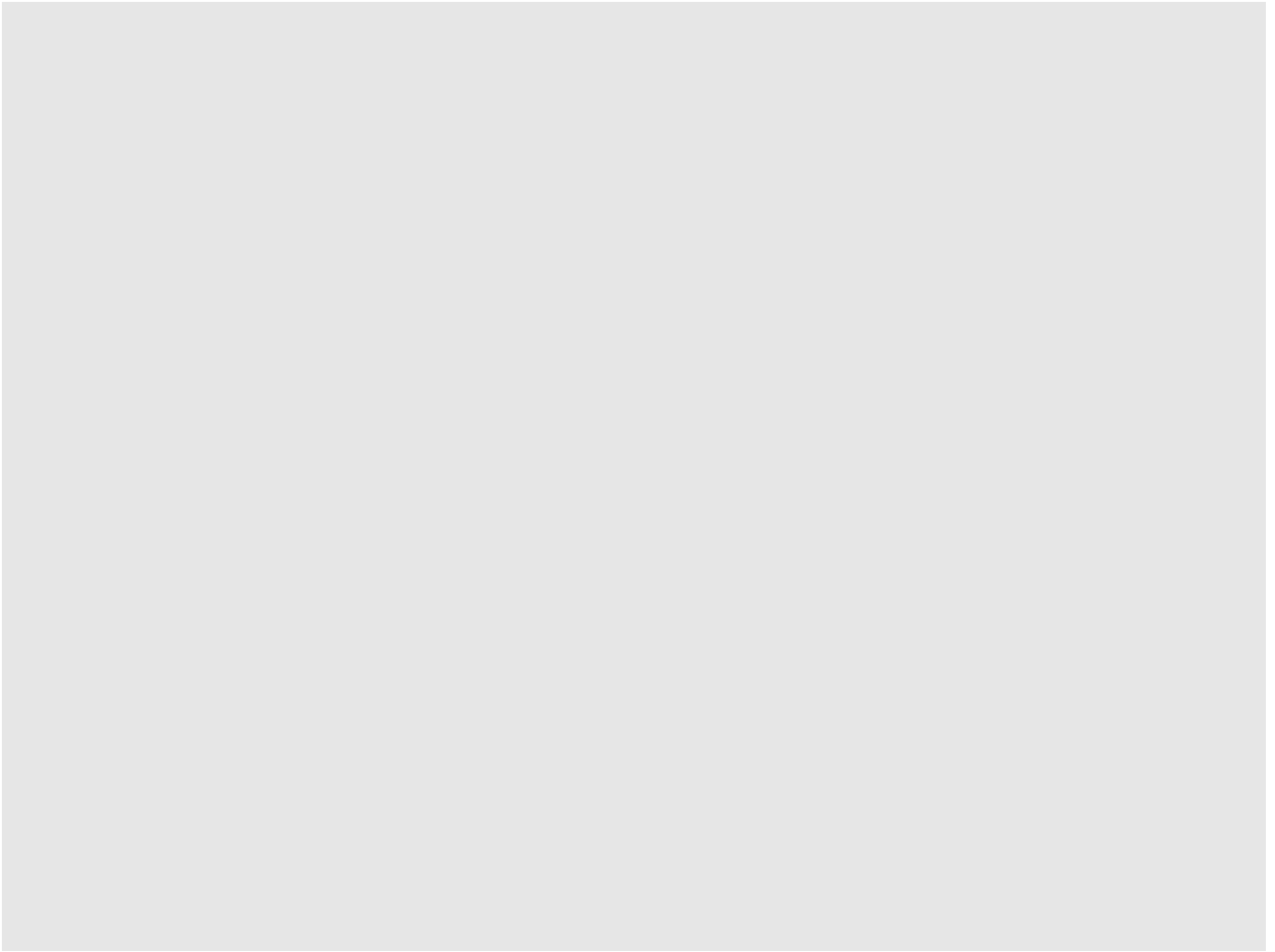
Saguaro National Park



Monsoon clouds gather over the cactus forest in the Saguaro National Park West, Wednesday, August 10, 2016, Tucson, Ariz. Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

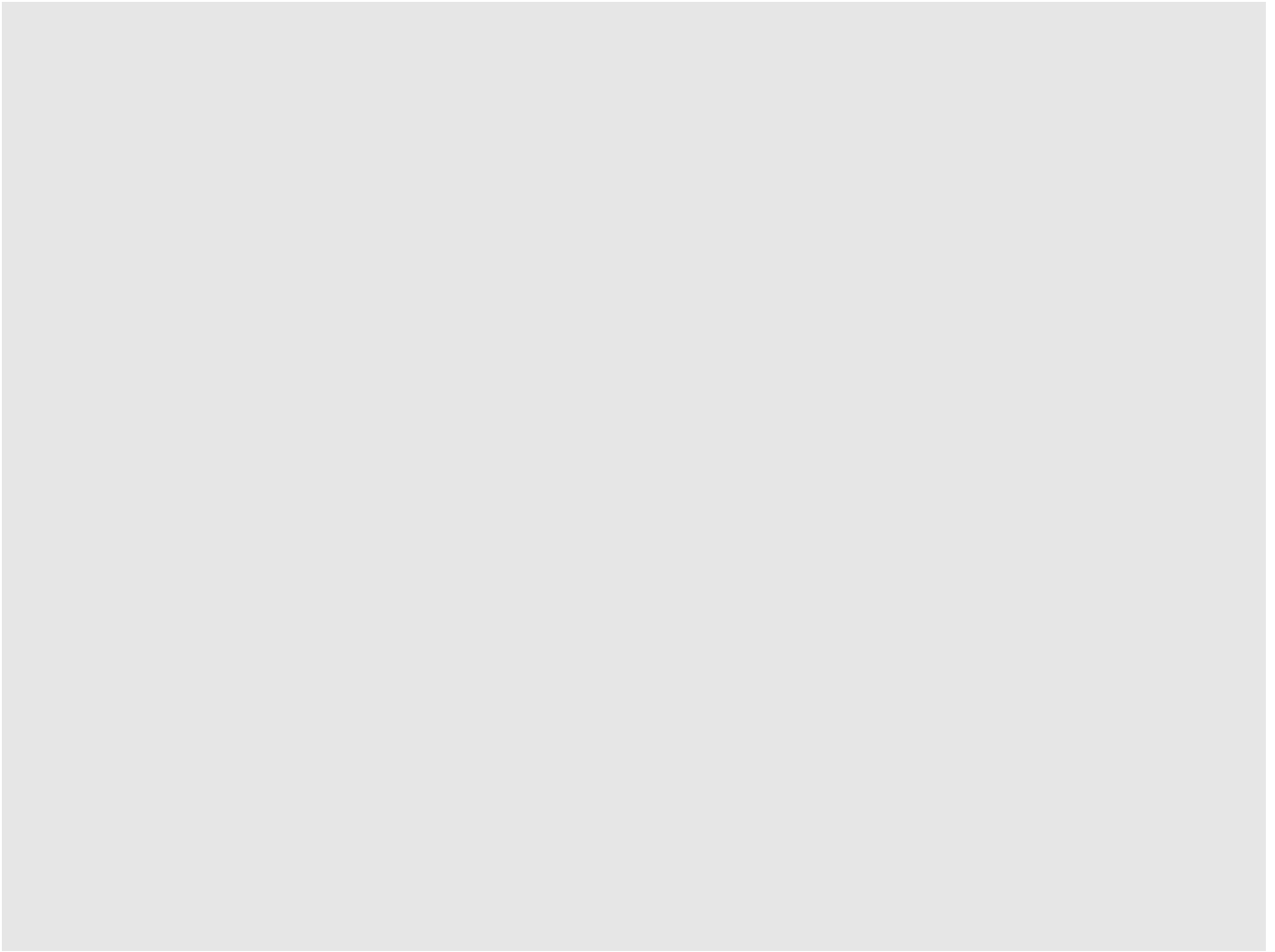
Saguaro National Park



Saguaro cacti backlit by western sun at the Saguaro National Park, West, The Tucson Mountain District (TMD) in 2015.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

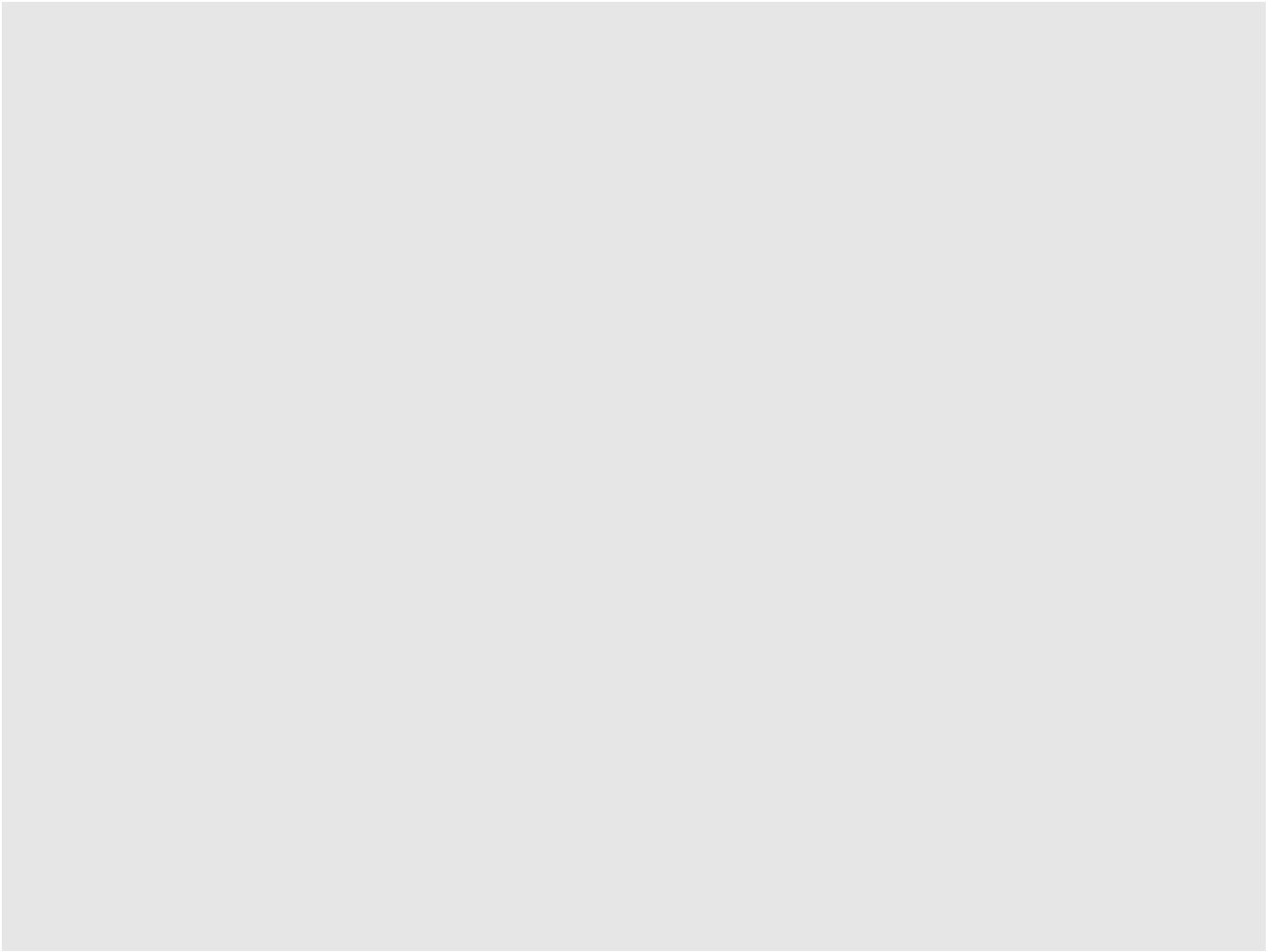
Saguaro National Park



A horizontal sliver of sun catches a stretch of cactus in front of the Rincon Mountains just off the Mica View Trail in Saguaro National Park East, Friday, August 12, 2016, Tucson, Ariz. Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

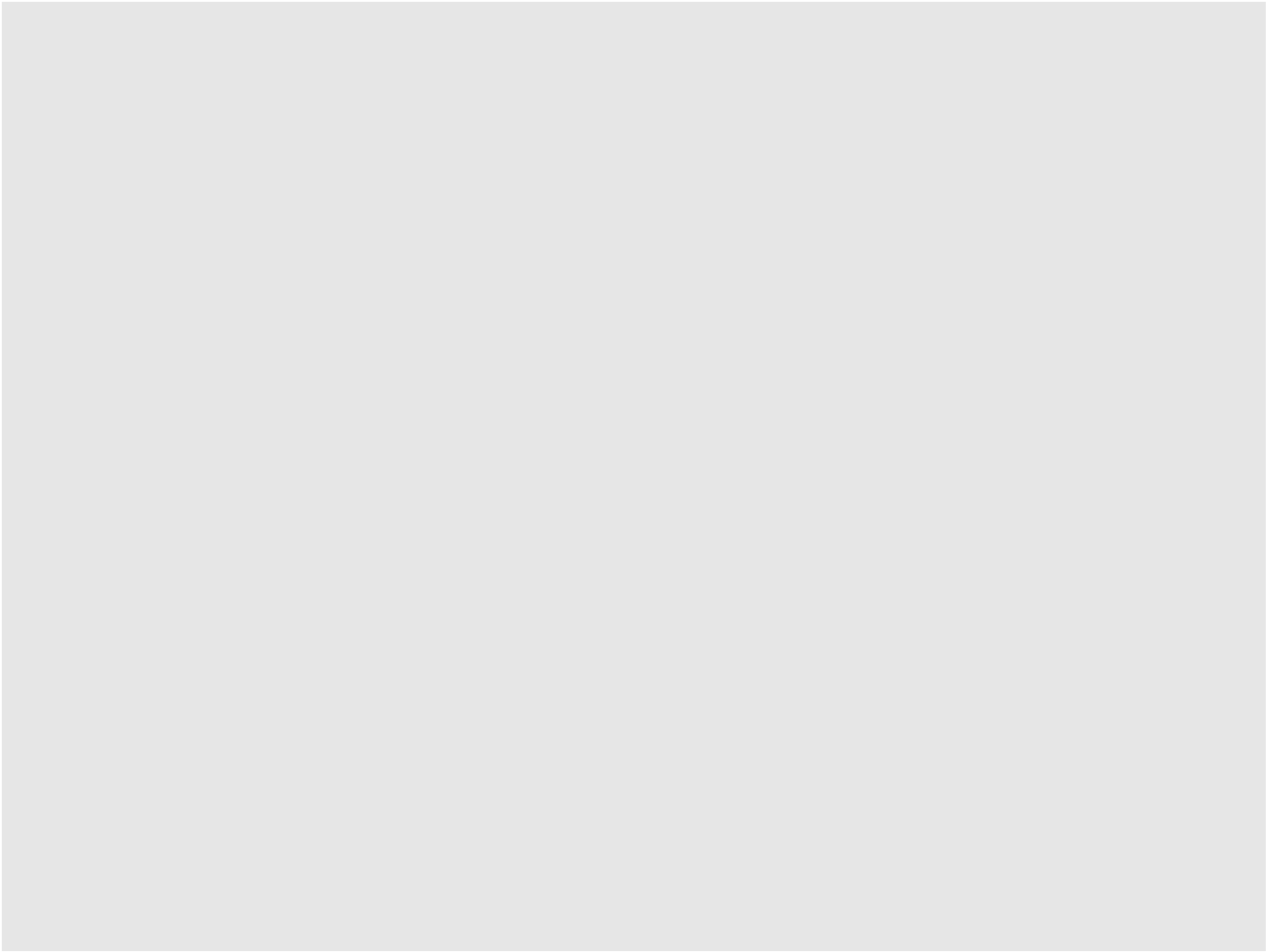
Saguaro National Park



This old stone building was constructed in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps at the Cam-Boh Picnic Area at Saguaro National Park West.

Doug Kreutz / Arizona Daily Star

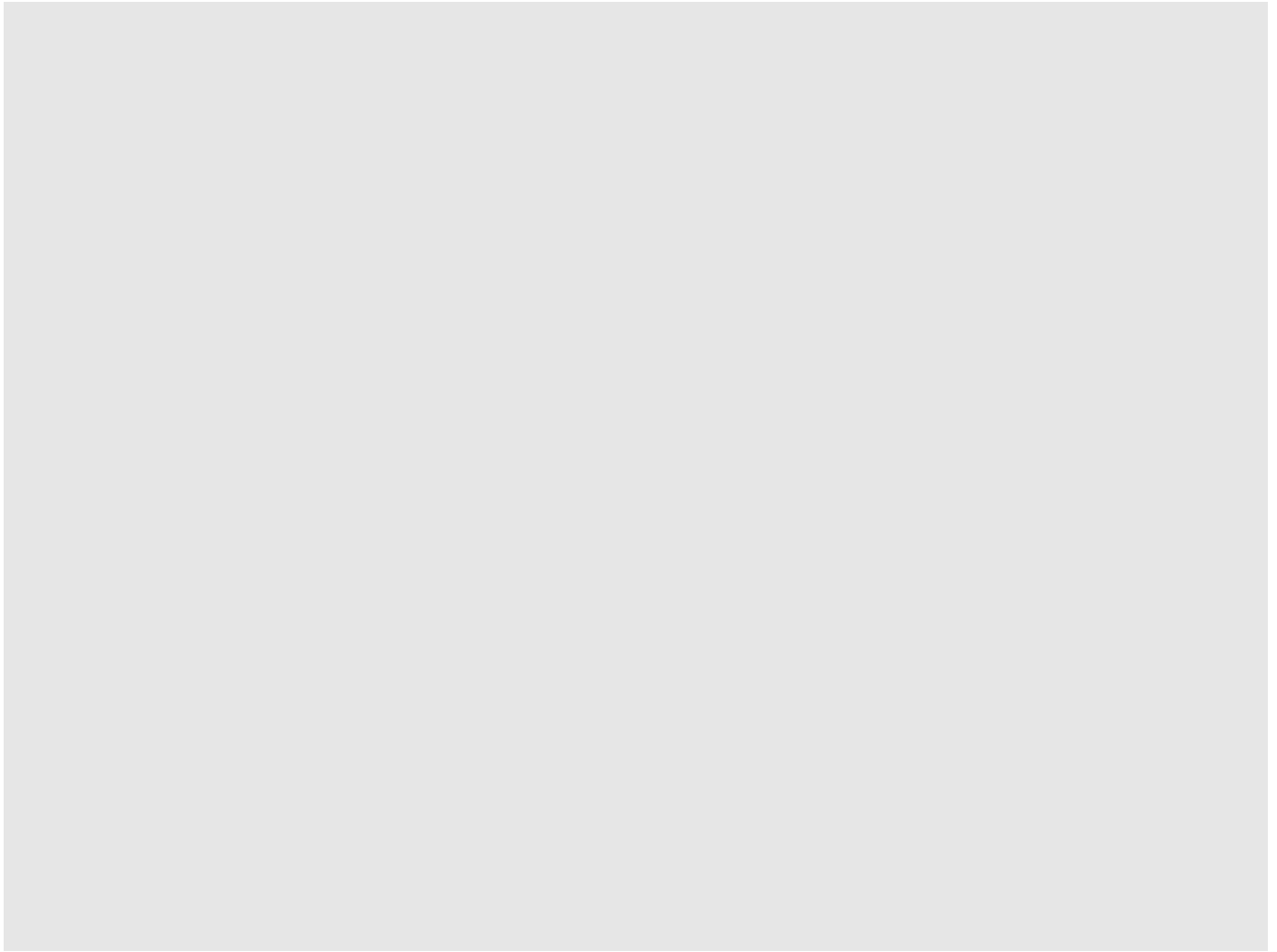
Saguaro National Park



In the aftermath of an evening summer storm, lightning arcs through the night skies over the Saguaro National Park West in 2012.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

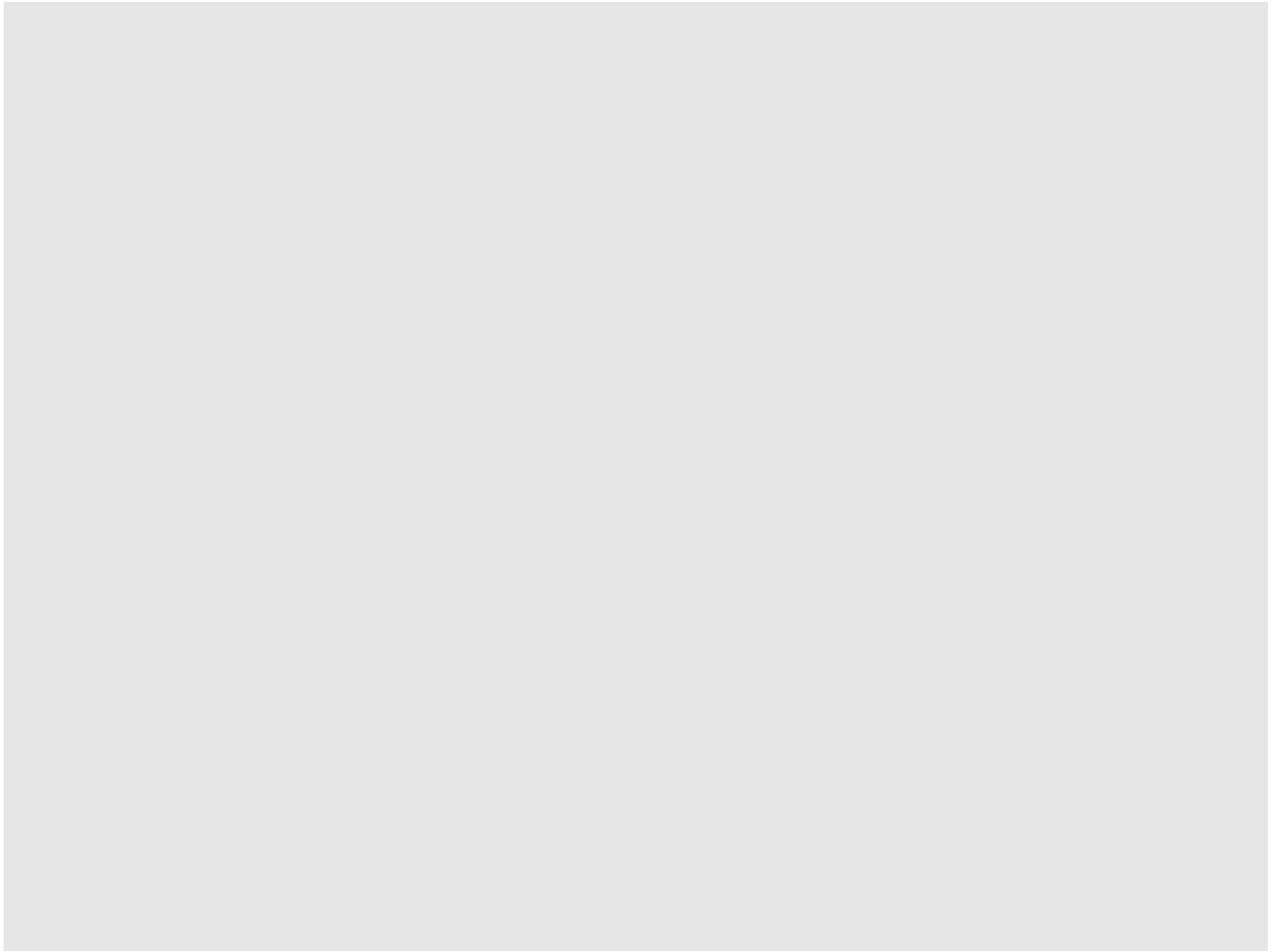
Saguaro National Park



Saguaro National Park trails supervisor Nick Huck, left, and chief of maintenance Jeremy Curtis split up a box of paper towels, distributing the weight evenly among the panniers while preparing for a pack mule resupply of Manning Camp on April 14, 2016. Seven mules were in the supply train and each mule can carry between 100 and 120 pounds.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

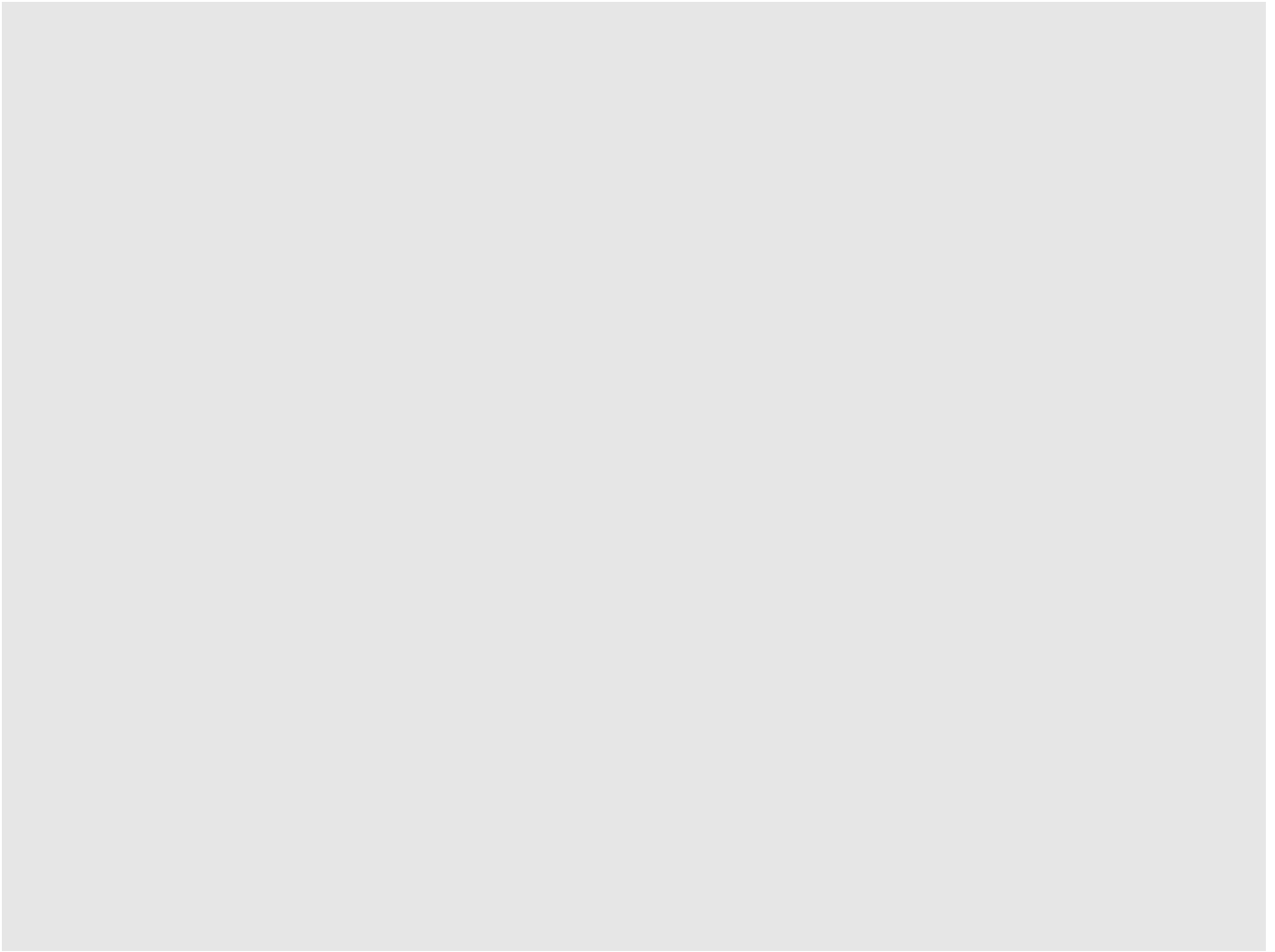
Saguaro National Park



A Harris' antelope squirrel, a year-round resident of the Sonoran Desert, comes out of from under a bush for a look-see near the Golden Gate Road at the Tucson Mountain District of the Saguaro National Park in 2010.

A.E. Araiza / Arizona Daily Star

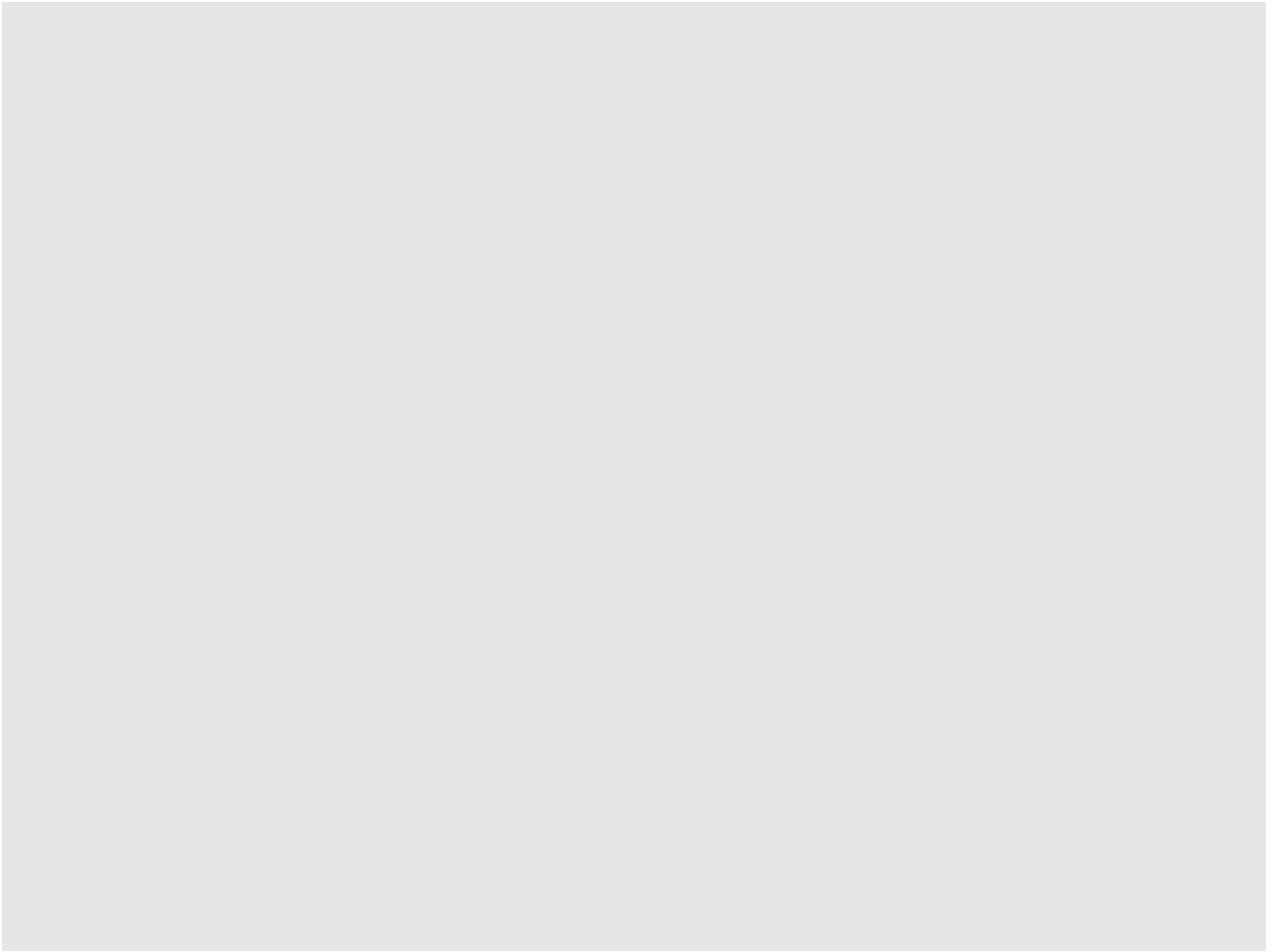
Saguaro National Park



A jack rabbit munches on some greens near the Broadway Trial Head at Saguaro National Park Rincon Mountain District in 2015.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

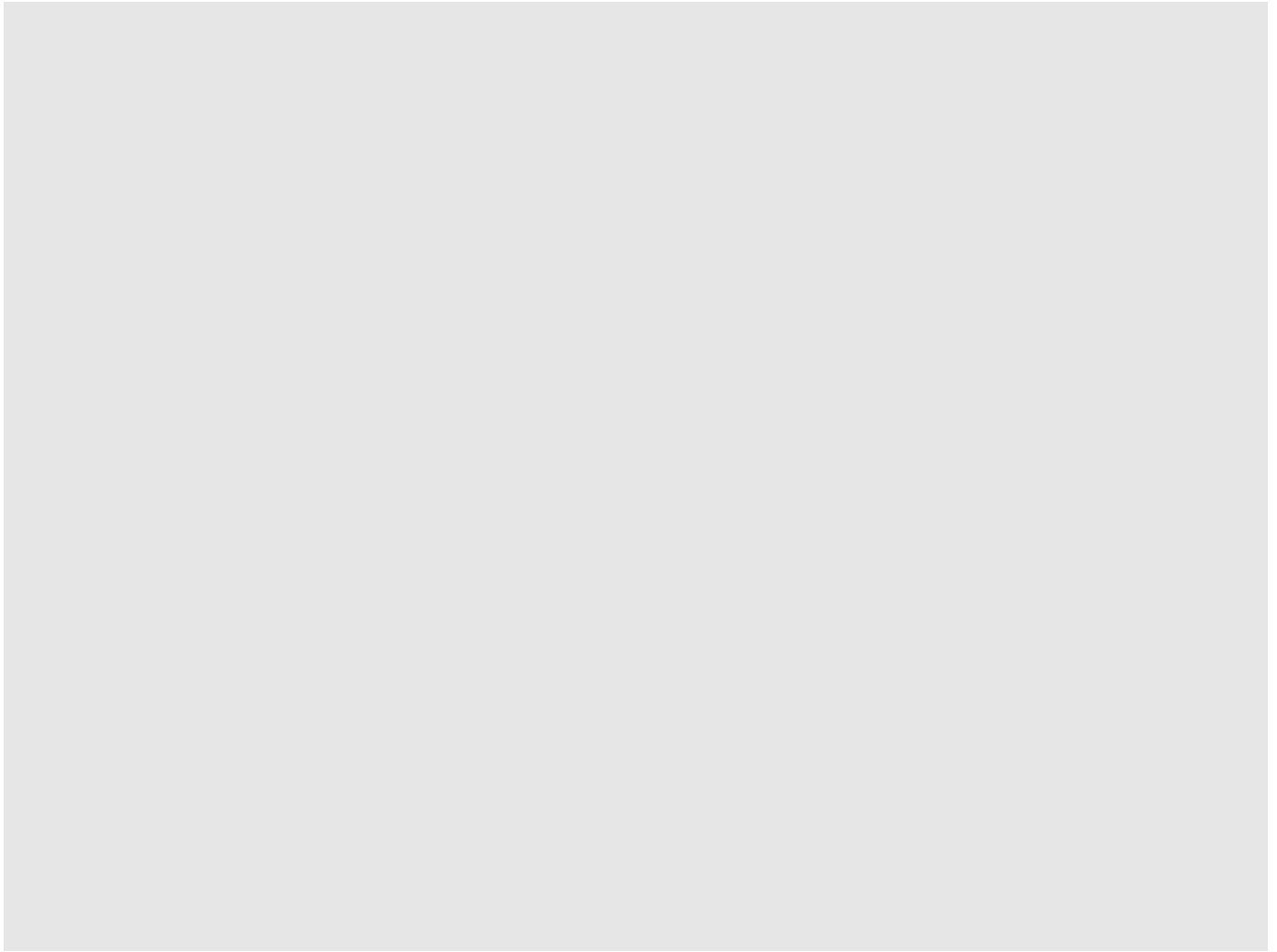
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Hikers in Saguaro National Park, like these on the King Canyon Trail in the park's unit west of Tucson, can pay park entrance fees at trailheads using a smartphone.

Doug Kreutz / Arizona Daily Star

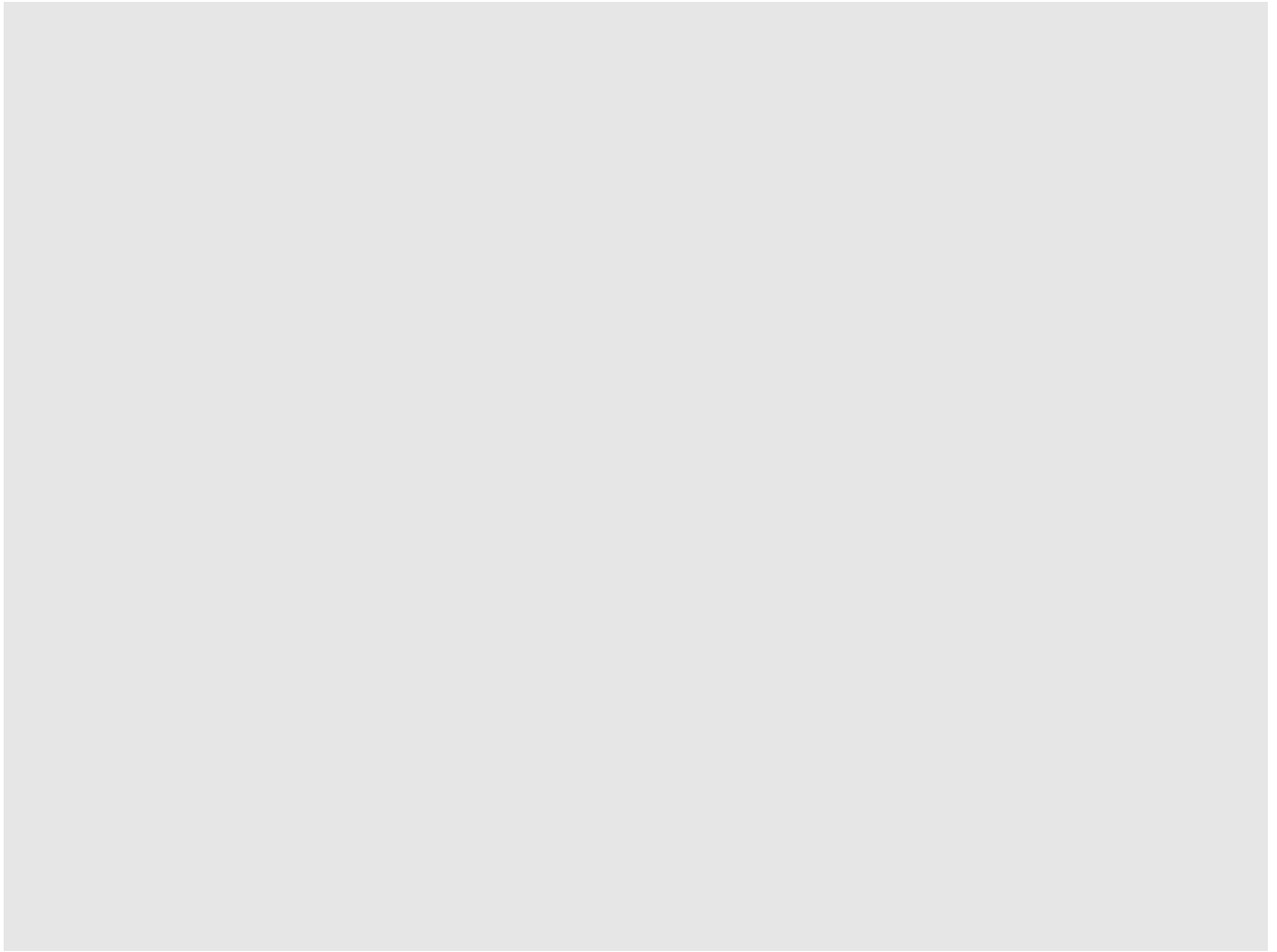
Saguaro National Park



Loop of connected trails at Saguaro National Park East, made up Shantz, Pink Hill, Loma Verde, Cholla and Cactus Forest trails in 2012.

Doug Kreutz / Arizona Daily Star

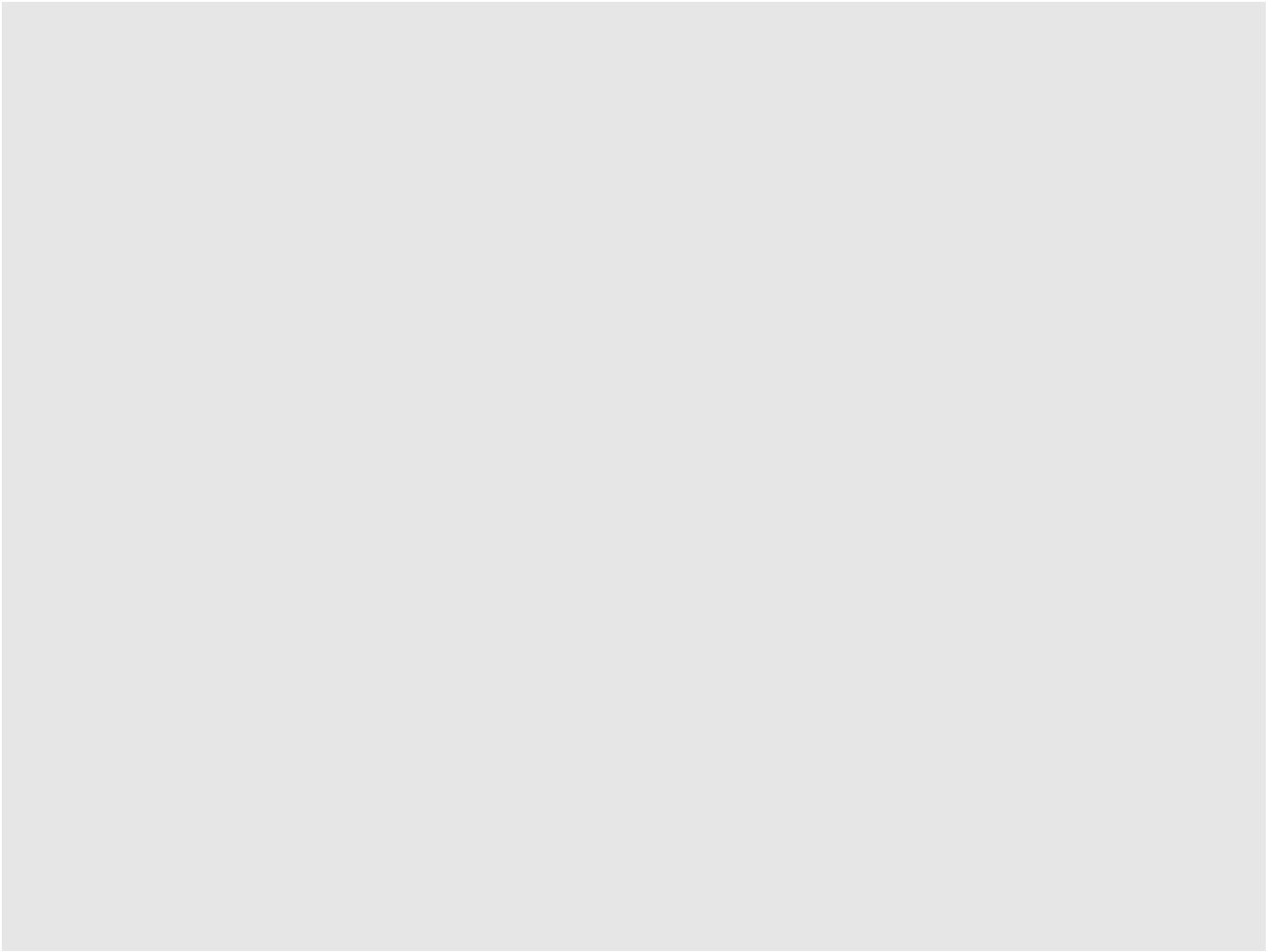
Saguaro National Park



From atop an outcropping under the Rincon Mountains, Next Generation Ranger Ryan Summers points out the ancient fault line that shifted and formed the Tucson valley to a group of visitors during a geology tour of Saguaro National Park East on April 26, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

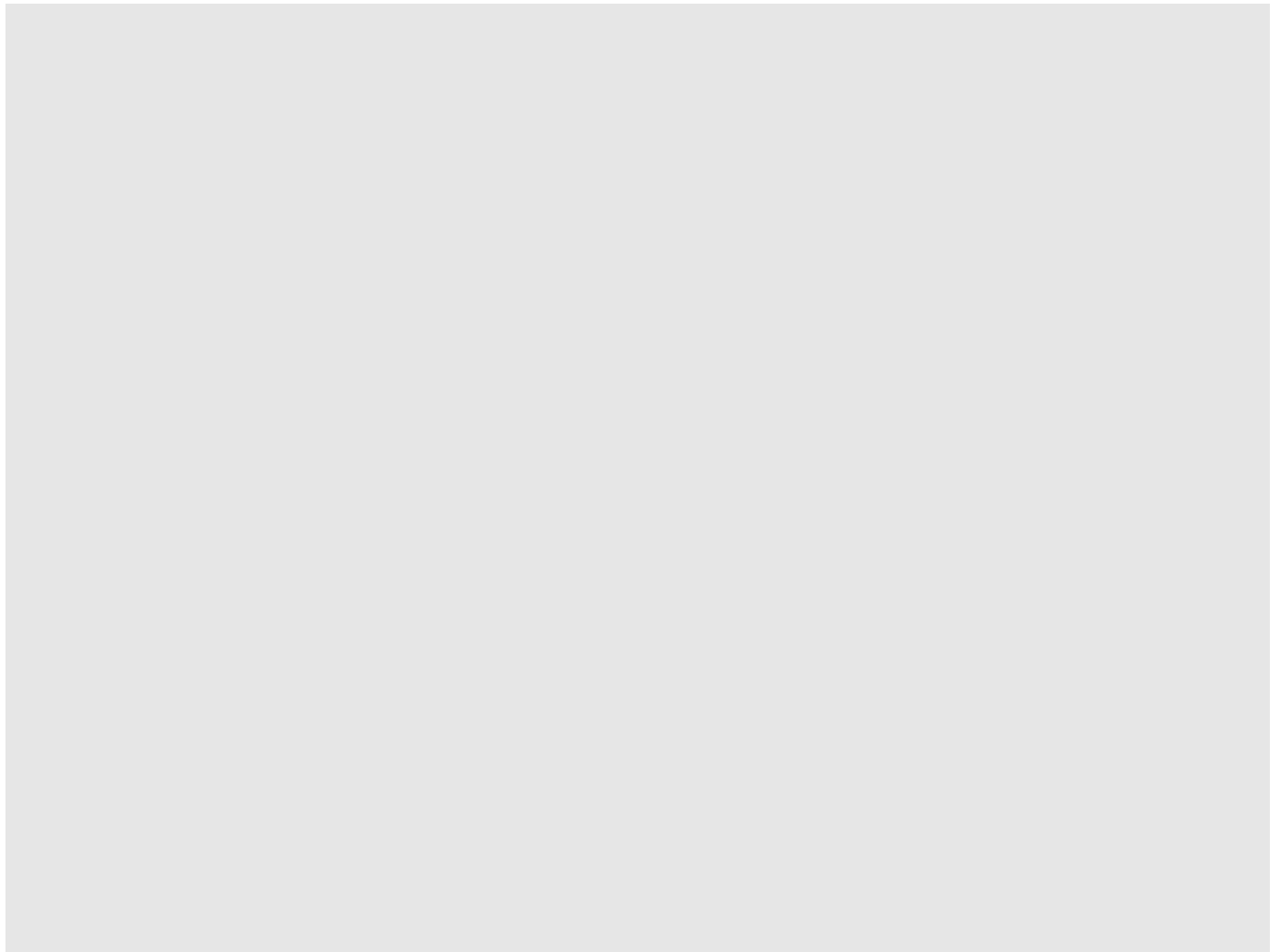
Saguaro National Park



Saguaros stand on a ridge line as massive storm clouds drift in the distance along the Hohokam Road at the Tucson Mountain District of the Saguaro National Park in 2010.

A.E. Araiza / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Chief of maintenance Jeremy Curtis gets the strap as tight as possible with the help of trail supervisor Nick Huck while preparing a 70+ pound propane tank for a pack mule resupply of Manning Camp in the Saguaro National Park, Rincon District on April 14, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Saguaro National Park --- Sunset can be a colorful time along a network of trails near the eastern end of Broadway.

Doug Kreutz / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Ranger Donna Gill points out cactus flowers and birds during the Twilight Glow to Moon Shadows hike on the Sendero Esperanza Trail at Saguaro National Park West in April, 2016.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Hedgehog cacti are in brilliant fuchsia bloom at many sites around Tucson from Sabino Canyon to Tucson Mountain Park and Saguaro National Park in 2015.

Doug Kreutz / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Russell Jones takes a picture at the Saguaro National Park West Red Hills Visitor Center in 2009.

James S. Wood / Arizona Daily Star

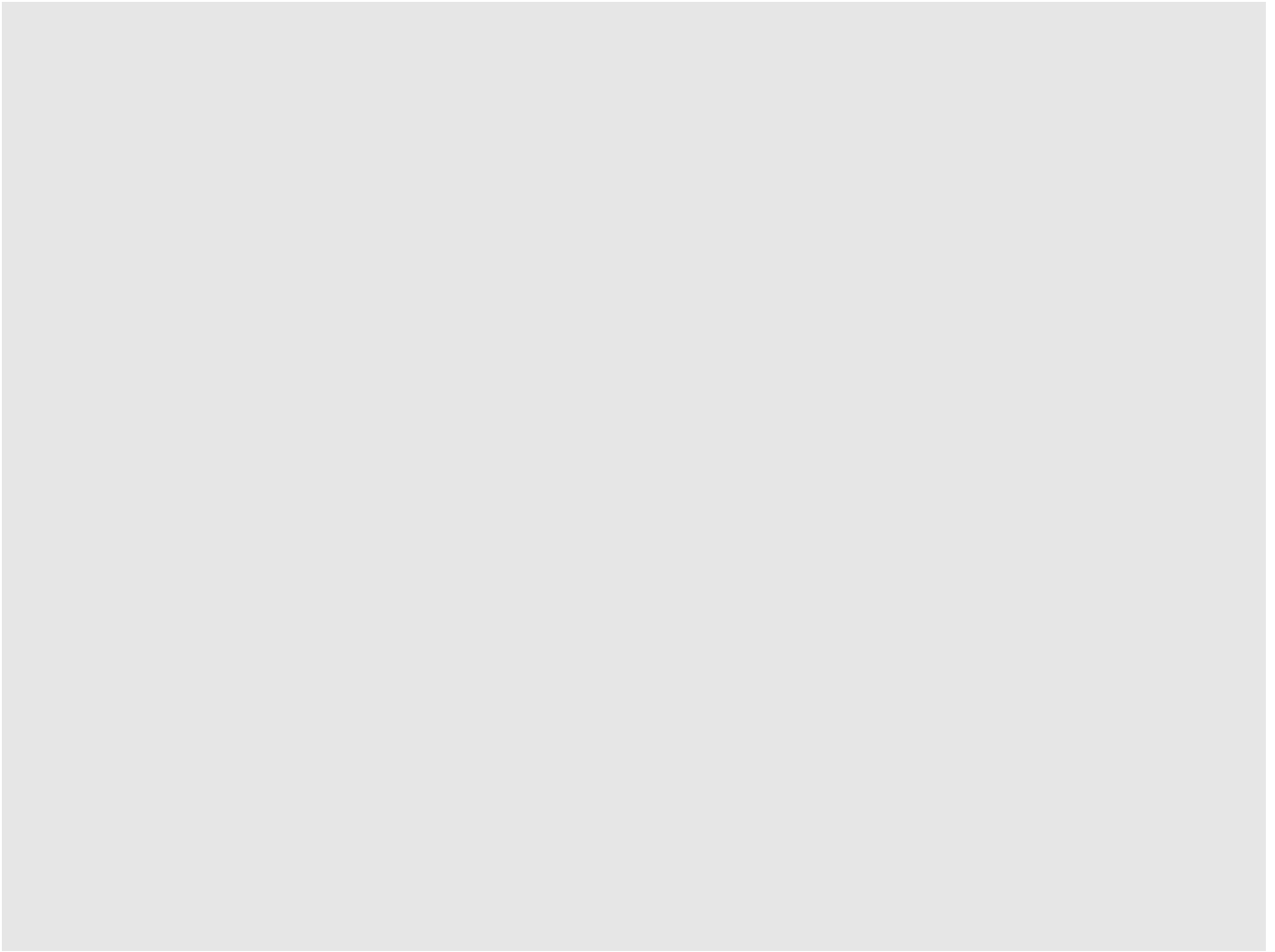
Saguaro National Park



Poppies were blooming profusely at Saguardo National Park West on February 23, 2015

Doug Kreutz / Arizona Daily Star

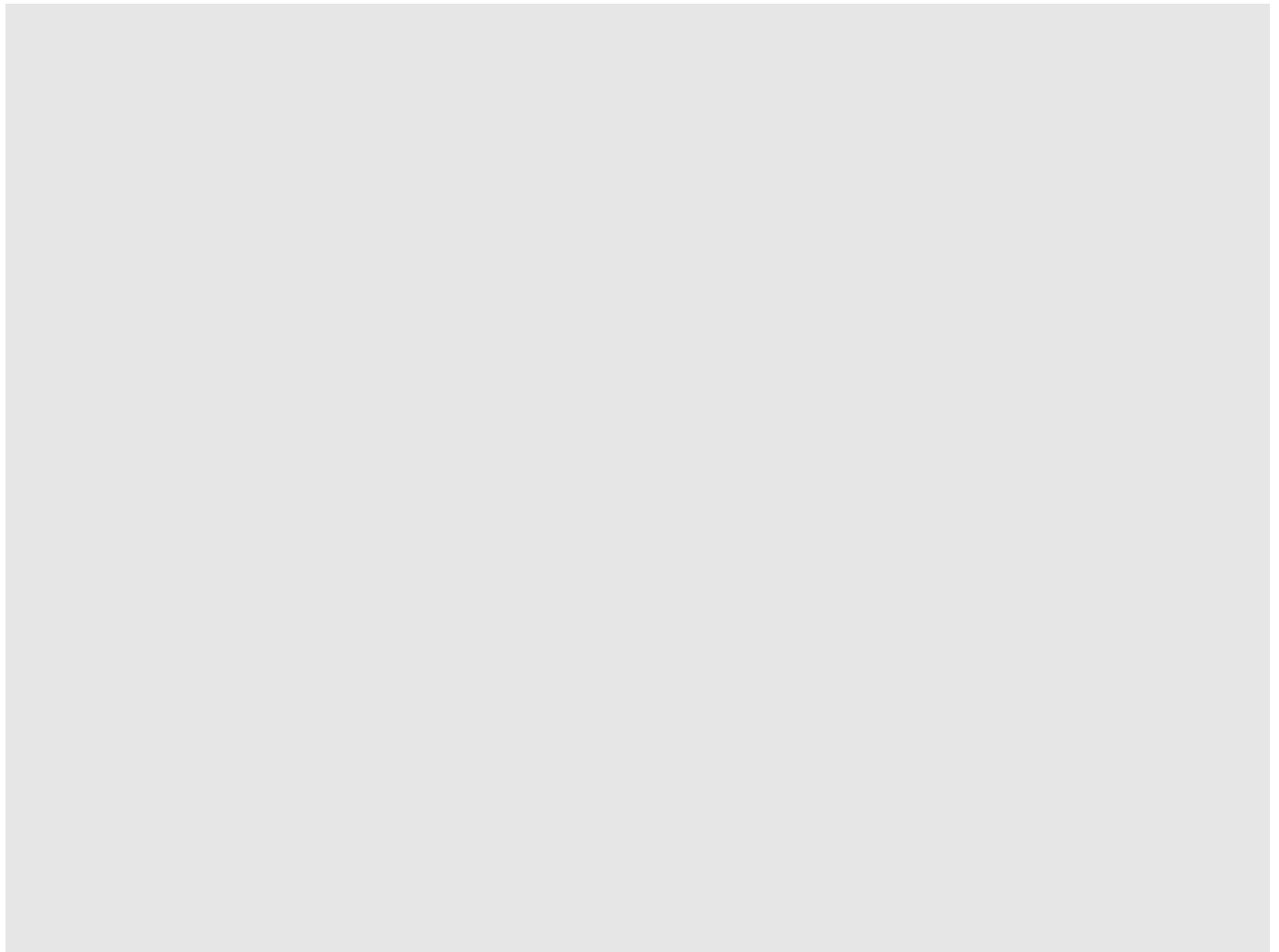
Saguardo National Park



Mike Ward of Saguaro National Park, left, and volunteer LaDeana Jeane observe a Saguaro cactus while conducting a census at the east section of Saguaro National Park in 2009.

James Gregg / Arizona Daily Star

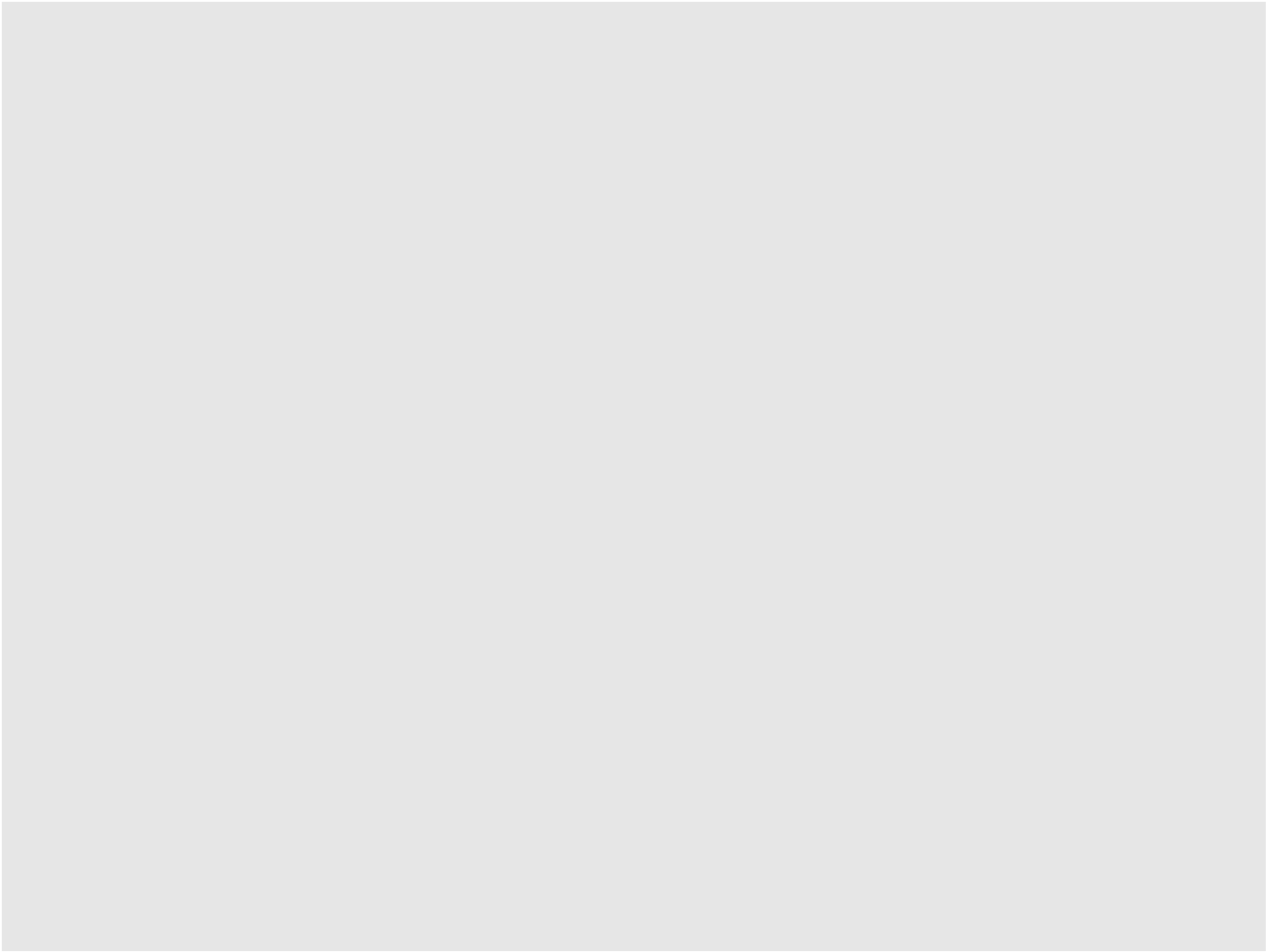
Saguaro National Park



Gavin Youngstrum drives a roller along the bed of the new Mica Springs Trail, work which will make it ADA compliant in Saguaro National Park East on April 22, 2016, Tucson, Ariz. Power tools and motorized equipment is used very rarely in the park. The trail is not in a wilderness area so the prohibition on the use of power tools and machinery doesn't apply.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

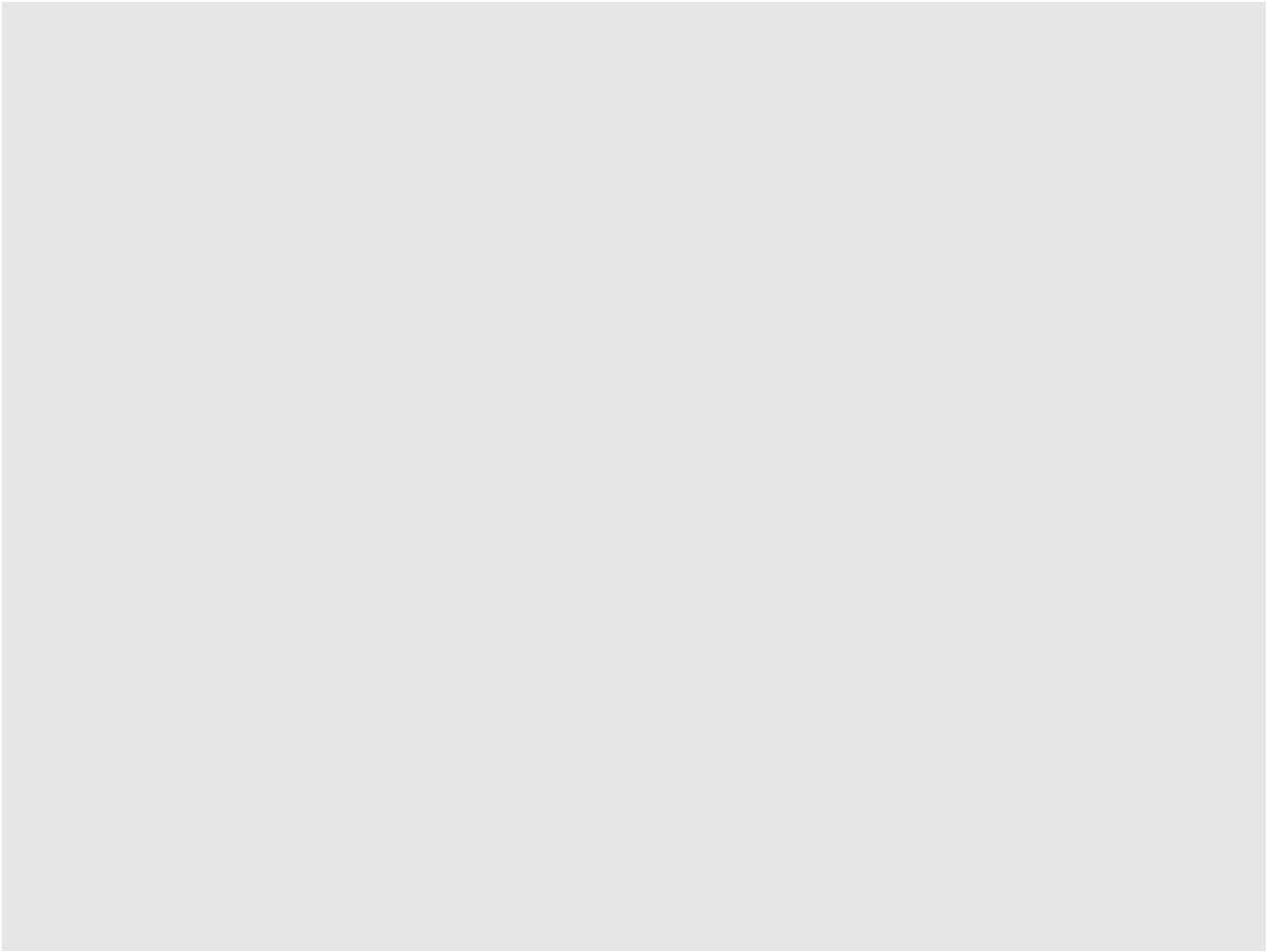
Saguaro National Park



A blue Arizona lupine mixed in with a handful of yellow bladderpod along the Ringtail Trail in Saguaro National Park Tucson Mountain District in 2013.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Park Ranger Ann Gonzalez watches the campers in her group as they go over a map during Junior Ranger Wilderness Day Camp at the Saguaro National Park in 2009.

A.E. ARAIZA

Saguaro National Park



Petroglyphs are among the many wonders at Saguaro National Park West.

Chris Richards / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Runners top the first climb as the sun rises at 6:30am, during the annual 8K Saguaro National Park Labor Day Run at Saguaro National Park East in 2007.

David Sanders

Saguaro National Park



A saguaro under the stars, including a smudge of the Milky Way, at the Broadway Trail Head at Saguaro National Park Rincon Mountain District in 2015.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Sunset reflected in a mud puddle left over from heavy rains a few days earlier at the Broadway Trail Head of the Saguaro National Park Rincon Mountain District in 2015.

Saguaro National Park



The moon hangs high over Wasson Peak as Ranger Donna Gill leads hikers during the Twilight Glow to Moon Shadows hike on the Sendero Esperanza Trail at Saguaro National Park West in April, 2016.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Volunteers help yank out the nonnative, invasive buffelgrass at Saguaro National Park East.

David Sanders / Arizona Daily Star 2009

Saguaro National Park



A bee works through a patch of baldderpod in the Saguaro National Park Tucson Mountain District along the Ringtail Trail in 2013.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Trail worker Brad Duffe redistributes material as he and his trail crew lay down a bed for a new surface, part of remodeling the Mica Springs Trail to make it ADA compliant in Saguaro National Park East on April 22, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Riders maneuver their mounts down a hillside just north of the Douglas Spring Trail in the Saguaro National Park Rincon Mountain District, Friday Nov. 27, 2015.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



Tim and Connie Phillips, from Salt Lake City, look for photo angles during the Twilight Glow to Moon Shadows hike on the Sendero Esperanza Trail at Saguaro National Park West in April, 2016. The retired couple sold their home and are "following the weather" across the country in their RV.

Ron Medvescek / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A few items, photos and brief entries in tiny notebooks from an unofficial shrine at Mica Mountain in Saguaro National Park on June 2, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



The sun sets over the Saguaro National Park Rincon Mountain District on Oct. 8, 2015.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park





Scarlett Gates and the rest of the tour group watch the last few minutes of daylight from a rock outcropping along the Tanque Verde Ridge Trail during their guided sunset hike in Saguaro National Park East on April 16, 2016.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park

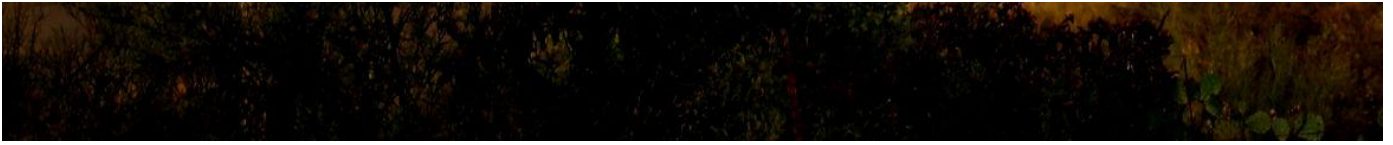


Gold poppies stand out against a backdrop of cacti and blue desert sky at Saguaro National Park west of Tucson on March 11, 2019.

Doug Kreutz/Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park





Rainbows pop up over Saguaro National Park East, as the first major monsoon storm of the season begins to roll into the valley, Tucson, Ariz., July 11, 2020.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A half rainbow arcs over Saguaro National Park East as a highly localized cell of monsoon rain sweeps through a small band of the eastern valley, Tucson, Ariz., July 28, 2020.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A light coating of snow remains on the Rincon Mountains seen nearby the Broadway Trailhead in Saguaro National Park in Tucson, Ariz. on January 27, 2021.

Mamta Papat / Arizona Daily Star

Saguaro National Park



A cactus in the Saguaro National Park East stands in front of the snow in the higher reaches of the Santa Catalinas, Tucson, Ariz., March 13, 2021.

Saguaro National Park



A lightning strike hits in the Saguaro National Park, east of Tucson, Ariz., July 29, 2021, one of several storm cells that skirted the city.

Kelly Presnell, Arizona Daily Star

Get the book

"In the Arms of Saguaros: Iconography of the Giant Cactus," by William L. Bird Jr.

- Download a free digital version and find a link to purchase a physical, 8-1/2 x 11-inch copy (\$40) via the University of Arizona Bookstore at tumamoc.arizona.edu/inthearmsofsaguaros
- Bird will be participating in and the book will be available at the Tucson Festival of Books, March 12-13, 2022, on the University of Arizona campus.