



## Finding Balance within Temporal Canyon

by Treven Hooker

On January 7, 2017, seven students from the town of Patagonia came together at the Patagonia Youth Enrichment Center. Outfitted with new backpacks and water bottles, their smiles were wide and spirits were high as students and staff loaded up into the van to head to the hidden

Temporal Canyon nearby.

To find Temporal Canyon, one must drive down 1<sup>st</sup> Ave until it turns into a long and windy dirt road. Ask the locals and they will tell you it's a dusty road to an old landfill. The views are great, but not an obvious gateway to the beauty that exists down in the canyon. As we drove, students grew more impatient, ready to bound into the wilderness ahead.

Our vehicle stopped at the trailhead, greeted by a large Arizona Trail sign. Temporal Gulch is Passage #4 of the Arizona Trail, a beautiful cut in mountain slopes that have rippled from the tall Santa Rita mountains to the west. As we headed down the trail large sycamore and oak trees, massive thickets of seep-willow, and rocky cliff outcrops that bulge from steep hills filled our views.

Riparian galleries offer a variety of riches for this biotic community. The supply of water is not only nourishing to the animals, but to the plants who use the water to create food and shelter used by inhabitants at lower elevations. The Sonoran Desert and our urban ecosystems rarely have trees that people can climb up comfortably. Only moments into our hike a large sycamore tree arched multiple thick trunks low onto the creek floor. Students found themselves quickly exploring the tree, scrambling across its white bark or hanging from the many branches. As we hiked through the creek, all the best climbing trees were explored, giving students a closer relationship to them and this canyon.



We decided to follow the creek and explore the water that flowed from the heights of the Santa Rita Mountains. It was on the rocky banks that we paused for lunch. Students sat and listened to the life that clings to the desert creek, and smelled the air that was sweetened with canyon ragweed and moist dirt. Thick yellow sunlight laid heavy on our faces and shoulders, bouncing off the water like twinkling Christmas lights.



As lunch was finished, we discussed our perspective on art, and how we express ourselves. I explained that our time in the wilderness is a great opportunity for expression, and I described all the people who have used the wilderness as inspiration. To demonstrate, I began finding round or odd shaped creek stones and balanced them on top of each other. Students watched and laughed because they did not believe the stones could balance, but

were shocked when a tower of rocks seemed to defy physics. Soon everyone was in the water attempting to build his or her own masterpieces. It was surprising that students caught on so quick and were creating nature art.

After our cairns had been built, appreciated, then let go back into the creek, we packed up and began our hike back. The students waded through the water, challenging themselves to stay strong through the frigid cold. Their process out of the canyon was long and drawn out, in hopes of prolonging our time outdoors. In time, we found ourselves back at the van. As we drove back, we experienced wonderfully lit landscapes and deep blue skies. It was hard to leave, but it just makes returning that much sweeter.



This Seeds of Stewardship outing made possible by a grant of funds from:

