



Migrating Mountains

by Treven Hooker

On November 16, 2017, 9 students from City High School embarked on an adventure into the Santa Catalina Mountain. This was the third expedition of the semester, and a wonderful time of year to explore the conifer forested canyons and springs. Using Sunset Trail, our mission was to study high elevation biomes, mountain springs and water, Pascua Yaqui traditions and history, and read a story from *The Animal Dialogues*, by Craig Childs.



The air was crisp, fiercely dry, and cold as we exited the van. This prompted the age-old question of whether or not we should bring our jackets. Most of us decided it was better to be safe than sorry, and we all plunged into the woods hungry for adventure. We soon encountered a steep creek that held a slow trickle. It was evident this area receives substantial water when we came to cliff ledges and swim-worthy deep pools. This prompted water source questions like, "if it has not

rained in months, where is this water coming from?" So we discussed mountain springs, and the storage, pressure, and sediment that causes this miracle in the desert. It's these springs that trickle down to the Tucson Basin and feed the Sonoran Desert below. Students were quick to put their head in the water, splash around, and play with the precious resource.

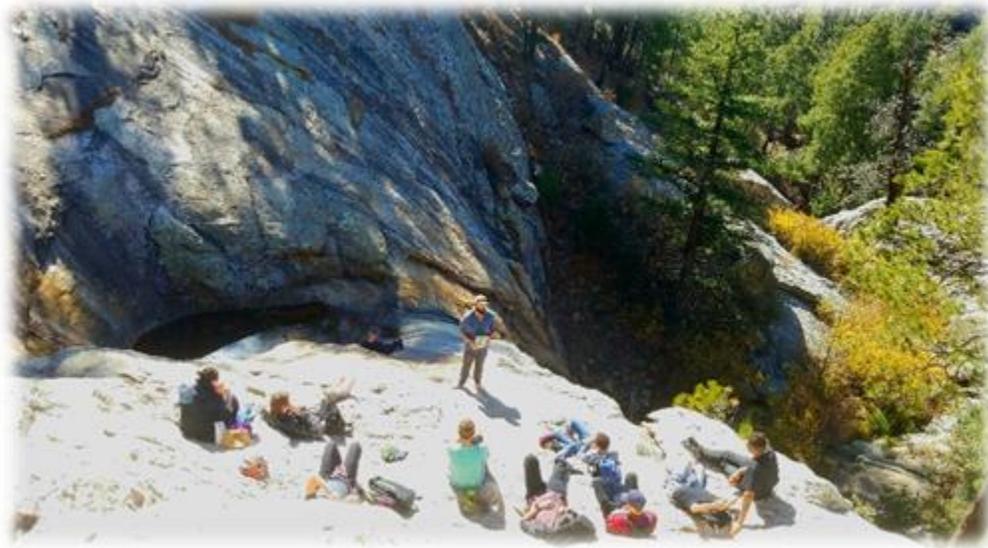
Hiking through the forest is different than the cactus and succulent dominated land below, where space is kept at a needle's length. Here the trees seem to respect distance, and bushes and shrubs are pliable compared to their spiked cousins. Our trail led us to a large exposed piece of granite with a 15-foot drop into a deep pool, which then fell another 25 feet before entering an even wilder canyon below. This presented us with a large platform from which to observe massive views and endless trees. These students have discussed Sky Islands before, but this time we related it to human migration, and the dependence people have on these mountains. Native cultures such as the Yaqui had dwellings high in the Catalina Mountains, and would travel between low desert villages and high mountain homesites.

Martin Acuna is a Seeds of Stewardship intern from City High School and is a member of the Pascua Yaqui Nation. He taught the group about the history of the Yaqui, demonstrated ceremonial practices and taught the group Yoeme words, the Yaqui language. He explained his views on nature, and what he has learned from



his culture about nature's relationship with humans. After this, we all found a nice place to rest while I read from *The Animals Dialogues*. In this book, Childs describes an encounter he had with a mountain lion while deep into a conifer forest. It was a personable, scary, and life changing experience. This story helped remind us that things in the wild have their own lives, personalities, and experiences. Our encounters with them are not like those at the zoo or with inanimate objects, but truly intimate exchanges. For the students, this was a lesson that although we were on a field trip, the places we go are wild and demand respect.

After the story, we devoured lunch on top of the large rocks and cliffs. Then we loaded our packs onto our backs and began our return hike. It was steep trekking, but the students were energized and ready for more adventure. It did not take long to get to the vehicles, even with lessons along the trail. It was a wonderful expedition, one that gave students a perfect day in forested mountains.



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