

WELLSPRING NEWS

Summer 2026

Published by the Friends of Agua Caliente, Inc. (FOAC)

Tucson, Arizona

From the President

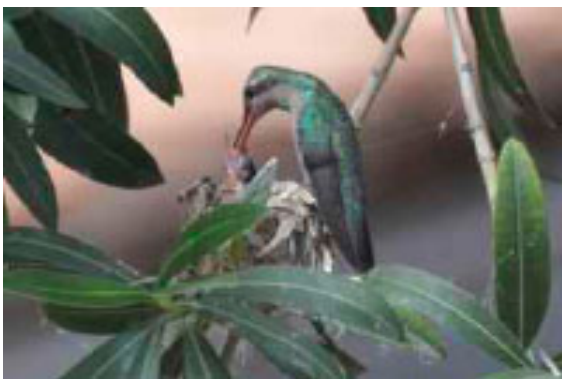
Dear Friends of Agua Caliente,

Summer and the heat are definitely here, and people are heading out earlier and earlier for their morning walks or jogs at the park. An early riser myself, I often meet new folks enjoying the cooler morning temperatures, strolling along the edge of one of the ponds or clipping at a moderate pace along the paths. Smiles abound, and comments center on the serenity and beauty of Agua Caliente. Indeed, we do adore our park and strive to collaborate on projects and educational initiatives to raise awareness and beautify this oasis.

We have been instrumental in promoting educational efforts. Among these are continued support for the monthly Speaker Series held in the Rose Cottage and stipends for Teacher Workshops held at the park.

Earlier this year, several board members once again volunteered their time and worked with the Southern Arizona Research, Science, and Engineering Foundation (SARSEF) to judge its annual K-12 science fair. There were many outstanding entries, and FOAC awarded \$600 in prizes to the top three.

Additionally, the number of applicants for our Graduating High School Senior Scholarship has grown exponentially. We had 20 applicants this year, up from 9 the previous year. Applications included an essay requiring students to connect their experiences, goals, and interests to the mission and vision of the Friends of Agua Caliente. Six scholarships were awarded, totaling \$10,000.



Broad-billed Hummingbird Feeding Chick

Photo by Susan Knoll

Work projects by the Pima County Conservation Lands and Resources (CLR) department in June included exterior and interior painting of the Ranch House. A recent pond study and fish survey indicated the presence of native fish species as well as non-native species, including mosquito fish and crayfish. Further study results are still forthcoming.

Unfortunately, the spring is not flowing, and the well pump has been running for long hours daily to maintain water levels in the ponds. Let us hope for a good monsoon to bring some relief.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer!

Sylvia Olberding, FOAC President

FOAC Scholarship Awards

The Board of Directors is proud to announce the recipients of this year's FOAC scholarships. Applications more than doubled from previous years. High school seniors from across Tucson applied, submitting essays about themselves and how their goals and interests align with FOAC's mission, along with letters of recommendation and academic transcripts. After careful review by the FOAC Scholarship Committee, six outstanding students were selected for their academic achievements, community involvement, and passion for conservation and environmental stewardship. We congratulate these remarkable young individuals and wish them every success in their pursuit of higher education!

Sylvia Olberding,
Scholarship Committee Chair



Three of the scholarship recipients that were able to meet in person with the Scholarship Committee

Karson Darre – Sahuarita High School
Jordan Hess – Cienega High School
Finnegan McGill – Tanque Verde High School
Cady Trausch – Flowing Wells High School
Cayla Vimmerstedt – Tanque Verde High School
Quinn Vann – Flowing Wells High School

Membership

THANK YOU for your extremely generous support this past year. If you have not yet renewed, please consider continuing your support. We will mail out any renewal requests for the 2027 year in October.

Here is a recap of our 2025-2026 membership. We have a total of 316 supporters and you have contributed a record amount of funding: \$49,651. This includes 294 renewals (73%) and 22 new supporters. Your dedication to Agua Caliente Park is phenomenal.

FOAC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, so your support may be tax deductible. Membership is \$15 for an individual, \$25 for a family, \$50 for organizations, and donations of any amount are appreciated. Please send name, address, and email along with a check to Friends of Agua Caliente, Inc., PO Box 32005, Tucson, AZ 85751-2005. You can also securely support FOAC with PayPal or Credit Card from our website or using this QR code:



Your dedication to the Park and FOAC is greatly appreciated.

Jim Knoll, Membership

ENDANGERED HUACHUCA WATER UMBEL (*Lilaeopsis schaffneria* var *recurve*)

The Huachuca Water Umbel, a semiaquatic perennial, is native to southern Arizona and northern Mexico primarily along the San Pedro, Santa Cruz, Rio Yaqui and Rio Sonora river systems. It's easy to overlook this rare plant. It looks like grass but is a perennial made up of hollow leaves. Tiny white flowers arranged on an umbrella-like structure can appear anytime from March through October. Each flower produces 5-7 seeds, and it can also reproduce via rhizomes.

The plant was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act in 1997. It is confined to desert wetlands, which have been shrinking over the last century. It's been some time since Tucson had rivers that flowed year-round. As such, many of the wetland and riparian plants, including the water umbel are becoming rarer.

After a lightning strike caused the fire at Agua Caliente Park's spring in September 2022, Pima County designed and installed a Desert Garden just south of the spring. Pima County's Native Plant Nursery (PCN) grows their plants from seed and provided all the plants for our new garden. This nursery is also one of the few institutions (along with Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, The Desert Botanical Garden, and the Phoenix Zoo) that maintain a collection of Huachuca Water Umbel. PCN's plants can be found at Las Cienegas National Conservation Area and near the spring at Agua Caliente Park. The plant is doing well in both locations.

Pam Rossetter, Board Member



Water umbel growing in the water with palms coming up behind it.



Water Umbel along with some little fish.

References:

<https://www.pima.gov/1403/Native-Plant-Nursery>.

<https://www.fws.gov/species/huachuca-waterumbel-lilaeopsis-schaffneriana-var-recurva>

Party for the Planet

In April, several Friends of Agua Caliente (FOAC) Board Members participated in Party for the Planet at Reid Park Zoo. Party for the Planet is put on each year by the AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) at zoos across North America. The theme for this Earth Day celebration was Habitats: conserve, create and connect to nature. FOAC joined 22 other organizations in Reid Park Zoo's event garden where visitors enjoyed nature based games, learning about conservation, seed saving, composting and more! Attending organizations included local nonprofits, educational programs, parks, libraries, community groups, and professional environmental and conservation based organizations. At our table we shared



photos from our wildlife cameras, and handed out pamphlets on nature programs. Children delighted in picking out wildlife coloring pages. We welcomed stories about Agua Caliente Park from park patrons and introduced the park to others for the first time. We are grateful for the Park staff in putting this event on and the opportunity to participate in such a fun and educational activity.

Tina Baker, Social Media

Agua Caliente Spring

The sources and pathways of the water that now only infrequently flows from the natural spring-head are not completely understood.

Rainfall and snow on the Catalina Mountains, shallow and deep rock fractures, as well as significant heat generated hundreds of feet below the surface, contribute to this complex and changing system. Historically, the spring produced between 350 and 500 gallons per minute. The greatly reduced and often absent flows are likely the result of extended drought and extensive drawdown of the aquifer from area wells.

Following the lightning-caused fire in fall 2022, the County elected to restore the impression of the historic flow by installing a pump-back system from the pond allowing pond water to be discharged along the stream to maintain perennial flow.

Source: Pima County, Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation

FOAC Website: <https://friendsofaguacaliente.org>

Electronic Newsletter

Sending the newsletter electronically saves *FOAC* postage and you receive it in color.

If you did not receive an electronic version and would like to be placed on the electronic distribution, please send an email to:

info@FriendsOfAguaCaliente.Org

We do not release our database to anyone.

Board of Directors

Sylvia Olberding, President

(Scholarships)

Jerry Martin, Vice President

Pam Rossetter, Secretary

Peggy Denny, Treasurer

(Newsletter)

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Jim Knoll (Membership)

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Joyce Roughton

Sandy Sarah (Co-Founder)

Lou Spivack

Joanne Triplett

Board email addresses are:

FirstLast@FriendsOfAguaCaliente

Ranch House Visitor Center & Art Gallery

Come tour the historic Ranch House and art gallery.

During July and August, the Ranch House is open on Friday, Saturday & Sunday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. In September and October it is open Wednesday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and in November and December the hours are Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. (closed for county holidays).



Don't miss the exhibit currently on display in the art gallery through August 23rd. *Living River of Words Youth Poetry and Art 2025 Traveling Exhibit* is an exhibition of award-winning poetry and mixed media art by local children who share their views of the natural world.

July & August Nature Programs

Birding at the Park

Explore the ponds, mesquite bosque, and surrounding desert of Agua Caliente Park in search of its rich bird life. Offered FREE thanks to the generous support from the Friends of Agua Caliente.

7/15/2026 • 7:00 AM – 8:30 AM

8/5/2026 • 7:00 AM – 8:30 AM

8/19/2026 • 7:00 AM – 8:30 AM

Blacklights and 'Bugs'

As the sun sets, the desert comes alive with a vast array of fascinating wildlife, many of which are insects, like moths and beetles. As part of National Moth Week, we will set up a blacklight and see what creatures reveal themselves! This program is FREE.

7/21/2026 • 7:30 PM – 9:30 PM

FOAC Website: <https://friendsofaguacaliente.org>

Bat Walk

Explore the nocturnal world of bats, beginning with an introduction to their diversity, biology, and conservation. The group will then set off on a casual stroll with a bat detector to determine which species are flying over our heads. Cost is \$10.00.

7/30/2026 • 7:30 PM – 9:30 PM

8/26/2026 • 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

To register for any of these programs or to check in later on what's happening for the remainder of the year, click this link [Register Here](#) or navigate to <https://www.explore.pima.gov/> and select the Environmental Education block.

Friends of Agua Caliente, Inc.

P.O. Box 32005

Tucson, AZ 85751-2005

Social Media

Looking for information on Agua Caliente Park events, the history of the park, or learning about what you might see at the park? Check out our Facebook page, our website and our YouTube channel:

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofaguacaliente>

<https://friendsofaguacaliente.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@friendsofaguacaliente9557>

Each month on Facebook we share Pima County National Resources Parks and Recreation's online and in person nature events including those located at the park. There are historical tours and lectures as well! You'll also learn about the art exhibits showing in the Ranch House Gallery.

Each month we highlight flora and fauna at the park, share beautiful landscape photos and share improvements to the park made possible in part through donations from people like you (renovations, park benches, the main pond bridge, and drinking fountains to name a few).

You too can share your experiences at the park by sending your photos through Facebook Messenger or email to:

TinaBaker@FriendsOfAguaCaliente.Org

We will share your photos to social media with credit to the photographer.

**Tina Baker,
Social Media**