

N-GEN

*Pushing the arc of
desert research*



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OUR VISION

The Next Generation Sonoran Desert Researchers is a network of individuals committed to the rich social and ecological landscape that spans the mainland Sonoran Desert, the Baja California Peninsula, the Gulf of California, and the US-Mexico borderlands. This interdisciplinary network addresses the research and conservation challenges of our time within this multinational region. Dedicated to the spirit of the Sonoran Desert, N-Gen

- (1) catalyzes research and biocultural collaboration
- (2) develops capacity for innovative transdisciplinary action
- (3) influences decision makers in both countries to promote a conservation ethic that matches the grandeur of the landscape.

N-GEN is a community united to promote a conservation ethic that matches the grandeur of the Sonoran Desert

N-GEN PILLARS

With over 10 years of action since our founding in 2012, these are our guiding principles.

-  **Strengthen Our Collaborative Core**
Focus and reinforce our efforts to catalyze collaboration, to elevate all initiatives, weave community, and be an independent science-based voice across the region. Maintain a commitment to a balanced membership and engagement, especially elevating opportunities for engagement in the U.S., as we have in Mexico.
-  **The Human-Nature Interface**
An increased inclusion of arts and humanities in N-Gen projects, with an emphasis on socio-ecological, transdisciplinary, and transboundary themes.
-  **The Value of Conservation**
Expand our role in creating economic compensation and models that incentivize conservation in the Sonoran Desert.
-  **Applied Scientific Action**
¡Estudios chingones! Leading projects that other entities cannot undertake, connecting the efforts and results to members of the larger Sonoran Desert community, including and especially, decision makers.
-  **Capacity Building**
Develop and offer practical and useful work/life enrichment opportunities.
-  **Communication and Outreach**
Increase our efforts to highlight the work being done across the region, with a focus on inclusion, making connections, local presence, clear entry points for engagement, and elevating voices.
-  **Future Forward**
Create ways to integrate youth, maintaining the *next* in Next Generation.

STRENGTHEN OUR COLLABORATIVE CORE

N-GEN PROJECTS

These are the active projects and committees that are the focus of our efforts.

Communication

- Overall strategy and execution

Art/Science

- Overall strategy and execution
- D5: Forging Timeless Expressions in the Sonoran Desert
- Transborder art (10 years of the Border BioBlitz)

Biocultural Diversity

- Food (General)
- Food in the Desert, Special Issue La Jornada del Campo
- Agave (Ruta del Maguey)

Conservation / Expeditions

- Expedición El Pitayal
- Transboundary Marine
- Border BioBlitz
- Tiered Learning / Applied Expeditions
- One Ocean Expedition

Translate Research to Science Policy Practice

- Gulf of California Ocean Health Index
- N-Gen Cumbre Mares del Desierto La Paz 2026

N-Gen Capacity Building

- Walkscapes
- N-Gen Field Grants
- Mentorship Program
- Sonoran Desert Security Protocol
- Sonoran Desert Archive
- Collective Calendar

THE REGION



The Sonoran Desert—the mainland Sonoran Desert, the Baja California Peninsula, the Gulf of California, and the US-Mexico borderlands—is an endless laboratory. From the Sierra Madre, to the waters and islands of the Gulf, to the desert flats, this is our world.



WEBSITE

www.nextgensd.com
IS THE CENTER FOR
RESEARCH IN THE
SONORAN DESERT

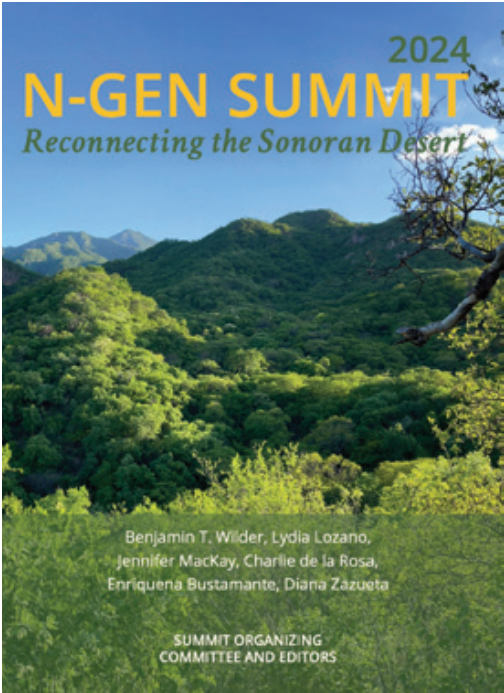
Our bilingual website is the platform to facilitate access and communication for a network of collaborators. It is both a reflection of the actions of this community and a tool to expand them.



STRENGTHEN OUR COLLABORATIVE CORE

SUMMITS

One of the best ways to connect those committed to the understanding and conservation of the Sonoran Desert is in person. Once every several years, N-Gen holds a region-wide Summit. The first was held in Tucson, Arizona (April 2012), the second in Guaymas, Sonora (October 2015), and third was held in Álamos, Sonora (April 2024).



N-Gen Summits are singular events that allow us to:

- Create alliances between the social and ecological paradigms, which is no longer an option but a necessity.
- Develop new mechanisms to share the realities and wonders of living and working in the Sonoran Desert.
- Spark conversations, ideas, and discoveries that otherwise may have never happened.
- Foster serendipity.



2012:
90 PARTICIPANTS
49 MX, 41 US
37 INSTITUTIONS
11 MX, 26 US
22 SESSIONS

2015:
170 PARTICIPANTS
82 MX, 60 US,
and 28 Indigenous
71 INSTITUTIONS
43 MX, 28 US
30 SESSIONS

2024:
275+ PARTICIPANTS
186 MX, 68 US, 36 Agave
producers and 25 Indigenous
100+ INSTITUTIONS
67 MX, 35 US
58 SESSIONS



**MARES
DEL DESIERTO
DESERT SEAS**
Cumbre N-Gen | N-Gen Summit
La Paz, BCS - Nov 2026

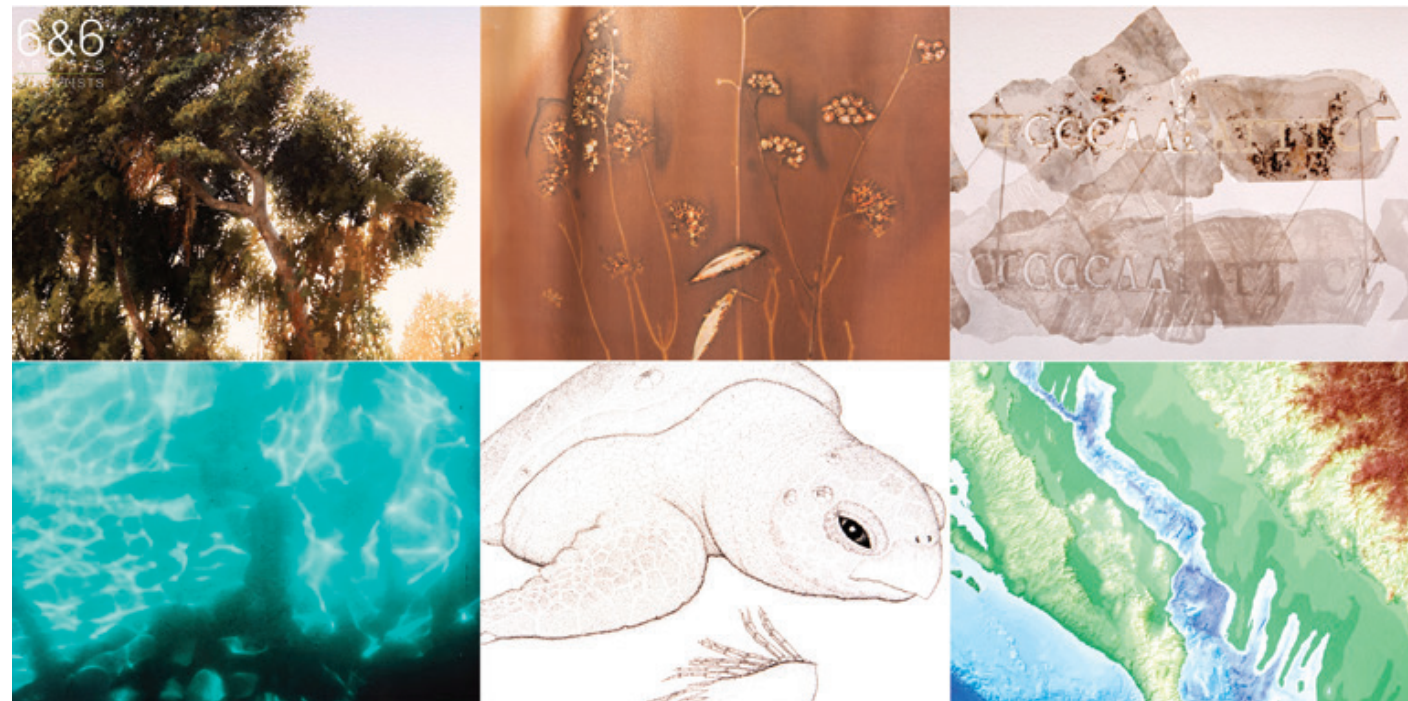
THE HUMAN-NATURE INTERFACE

ART - SCIENCE

Communicating the beauty and science of the desert

Observation is the catalyst for creativity. Art and science set forth from the same point of departure to inform and enrich our understanding of the world.

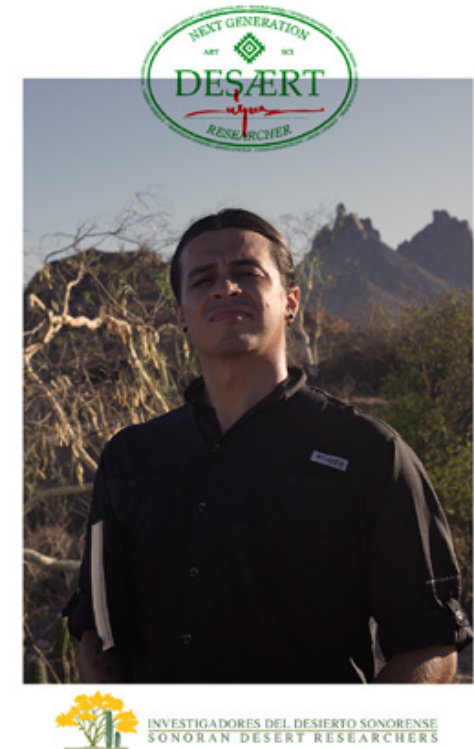
A remarkable community of artists is based in the Sonoran Desert. N-Gen strives to connect researchers and artists to create the opportunities to showcase our region. Our greatest effort to date has been the realization of the 6&6 transdisciplinary project.



6&6 Artists | Scientists

6&6 was a transdisciplinary collaboration to explore the patterns and processes of the Sonoran Desert and Gulf of California to impart a deeper appreciation of this region. It culminated in a gallery exhibition in 2019 at the University of Arizona Museum of Art. We are currently developing our next large art-science effort, D5: Forging Timeless Expressions in the Sonoran Desert.

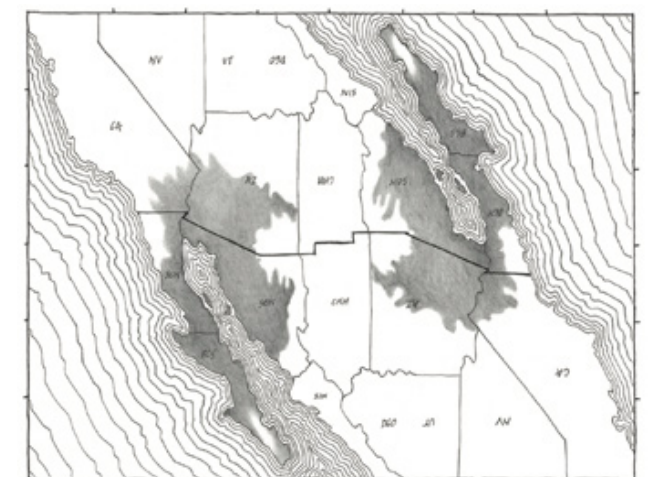
6 & 6
ARTISTS
SCIENTISTS



DESAERT

We believe that art can create emotions, challenge, inspire, and mobilize, connecting people with the landscapes, wildlife, cultures, communities, and stories that surround them. Today, more than ever, we need to join our voices to protect the ecosystems of the Sonoran Desert and adjacent regions. That is why we launched DESAERT, a campaign to:

- Spread art inspired by the Sonoran Desert
- Strengthen the dialogue between art and science
- Inspire the care and conservation of these territories



THE VALUE OF CONSERVATION

AGAVE ROADMAP

Conservation can generate shared benefit when it aligns ecological restoration, cultural heritage, and economic growth to create lasting value across the Sonoran Desert.

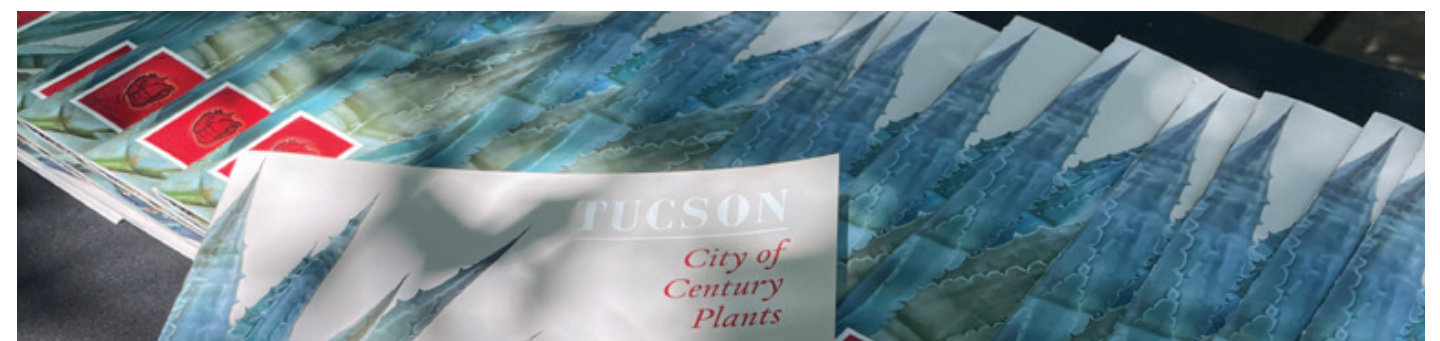
In 2023, 2024, and 2025 N-Gen has convened the Agave Renaissance Summit, bringing together more than 300 participants from the United States and Mexico to explore how conservation, culture, and economic opportunity intersect through agave.

Participants have engaged guiding questions at the heart of agave's future: What does responsible growth look like for agave? How can conservation, production, and innovation work together while honoring cultural traditions and ecological limits?

Building on the momentum of the Summits, N-Gen is leading the Agave Roadmap—an emerging collaborative framework to guide action across the Sonoran Desert. The project brings together researchers, producers, conservationists, and community leaders to identify shared priorities for sustaining a holistic agave system - from pollinators to plants to people.



This engagement with agave is about investing in the people, knowledge, and creativity that sustain it, linking conservation with livelihoods, innovation, and pride in the desert's living heritage.



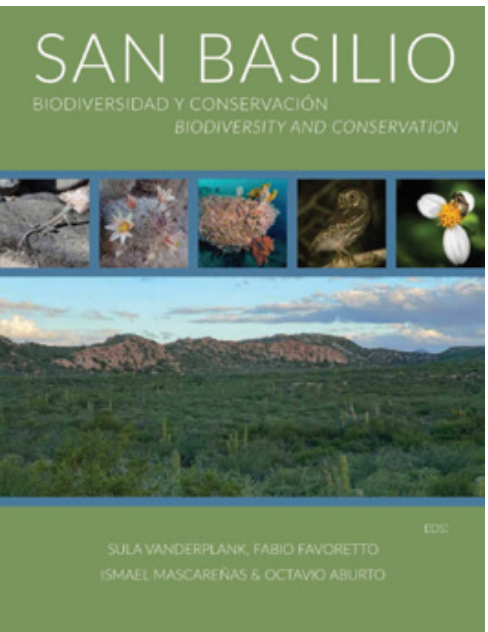
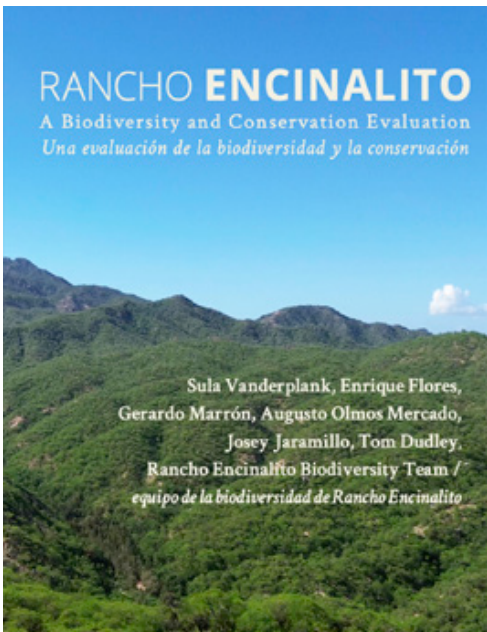
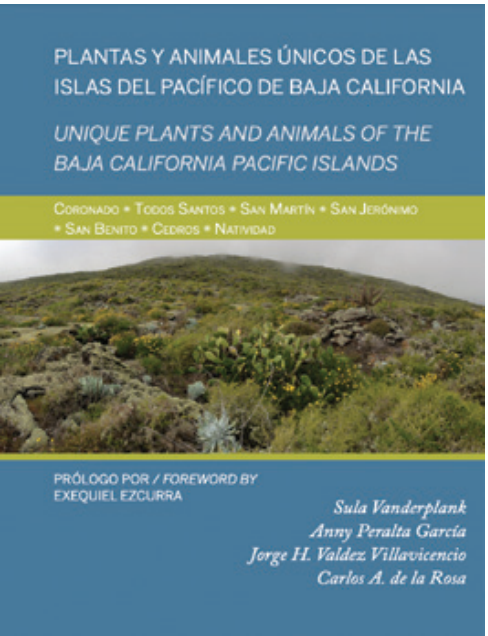
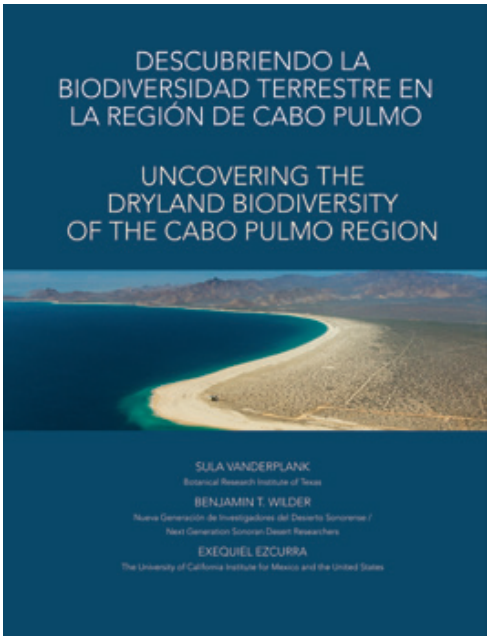
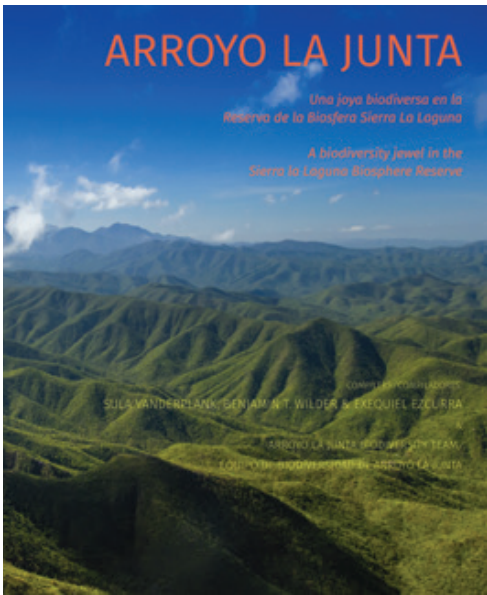
THE AGAVE ROADMAP ADVANCES A VISION FOR A SONORAN DESERT WHERE CONSERVATION IS ABOUT PRESERVING WHAT EXISTS AND CULTIVATING AN ENDURING AND EQUITABLE FUTURE FOR THE COMMUNITIES WHO CALL IT HOME.

APPLIED SCIENTIFIC ACTION



EXPEDITIONS

N-Gen Expeditions are a perfect example of how to link the N-Gen network with primary science and/or conservation objectives. Regions of particular interest are selected as locations for all taxa biodiversity inventories led by the scientific experts of the area in question, N-Gen members. Either in response to controversial and large-scale development programs that require biodiversity baselines or a proactive opportunity to better understand an underexplored region, N-Gen expeditions address an immediate need with the highest caliber science available in the U.S. or Mexico.



PUBLISHED EXPEDITION REPORTS



N-GEN IS 1,400+ RESEARCHERS



ACROSS 41 DISCIPLINES IN 21 REGIONS



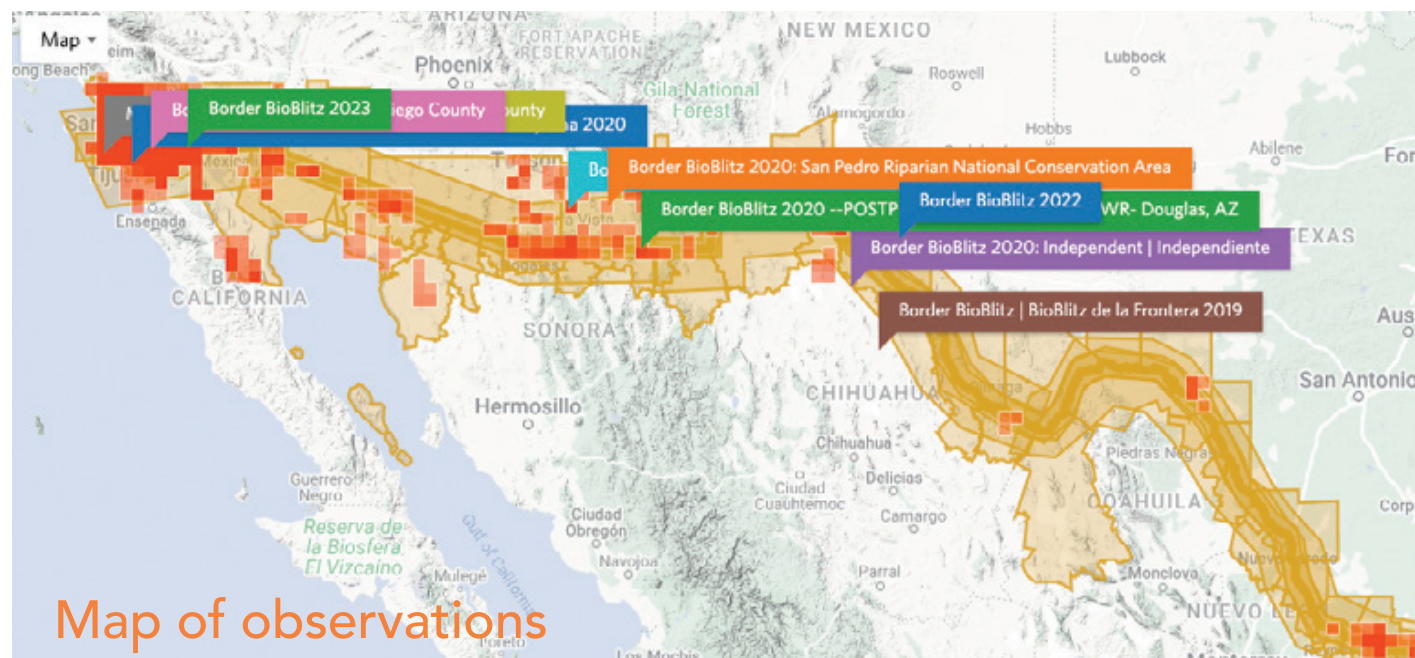
APPLIED SCIENTIFIC ACTION

BORDER BIOBLITZ

The Border BioBlitz is a community science effort to record as many species as possible along the U.S.-Mexico border. N-Gen and collaborating organizations invite researchers and community members to document the stunning biological diversity of the borderlands.

N-Gen, now more than ever, remains committed to a vision of the Sonoran Desert that knows no boundaries. Forces are at play that threaten our fundamental values and aim to physically reshape the borderlands. N-Gen, with many collaborators, is working to make linkages across an increasingly divided landscape.

The Border BioBlitz uses the iNaturalist/Naturalista platform to collect data on the plants and animals of the US/MX borderlands. Since 2018 over 100 teams and 1,000+ community scientists have taken to the field to document wildlife using their cell phones and cameras.



Since 2018
the Border
BioBlitz has
documented:

146,712 observations

6,678 species

5,116 identifiers

926 observers

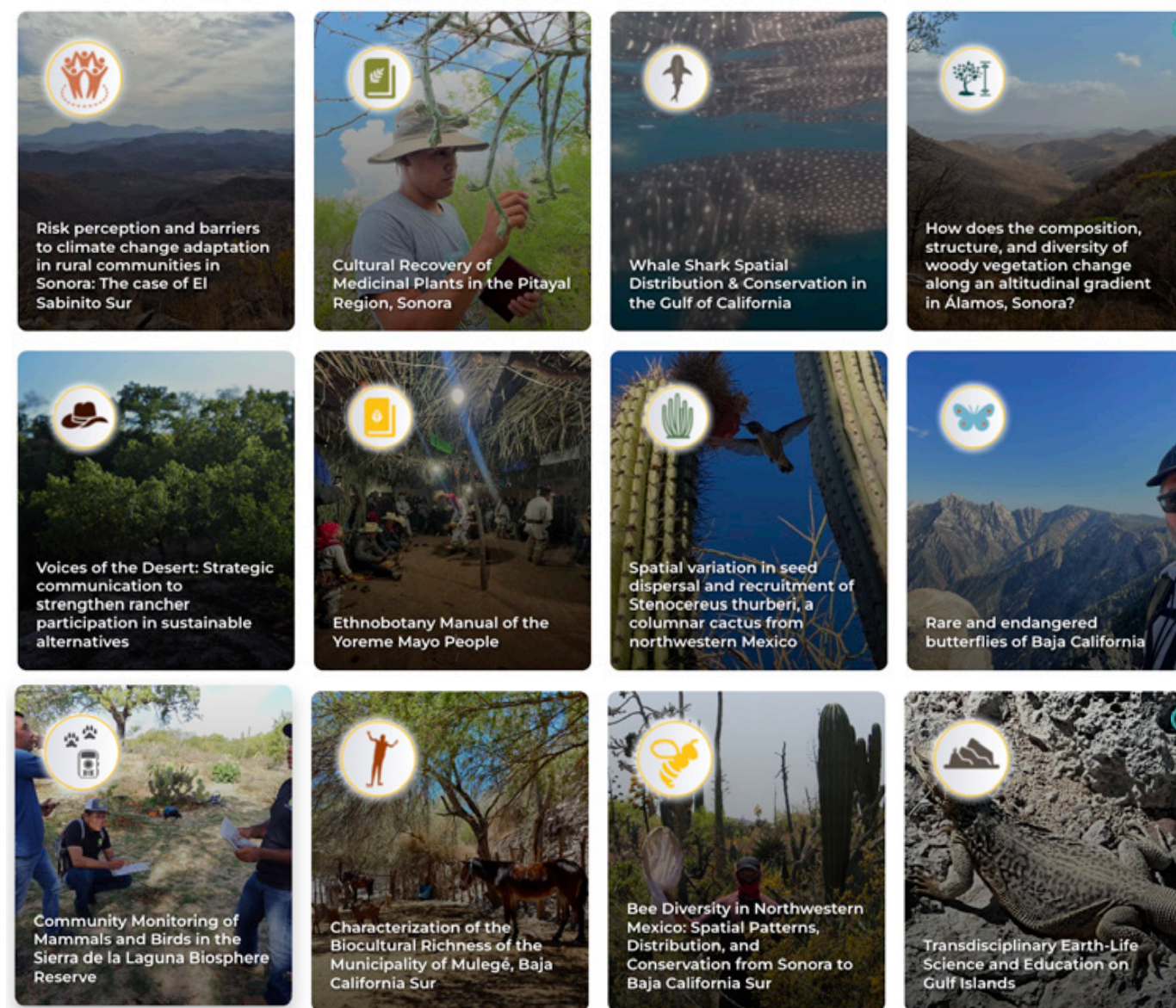


CAPACITY BUILDING

N-GEN GRANTS

The N-Gen Field Grants program provides financial support to student, Indigenous, early-career, and collaborative research in the Sonoran Desert, linking scientific knowledge with local action through partnership with the Northwest Mexico Union of Field Stations (UNEC).

UNEC is a collaborative network of organizations managing field stations with a shared mission: to promote ecosystem and biodiversity conservation through scientific research, community engagement, and the development of transdisciplinary research networks.



Grants awards are \$5,000 USD for collaborative and \$1,500 USD for Early Career Grants.



13 Collaborative Grants (4 Active)
22 Student and Early Career Projects (8 Active)



CAPACITY BUILDING



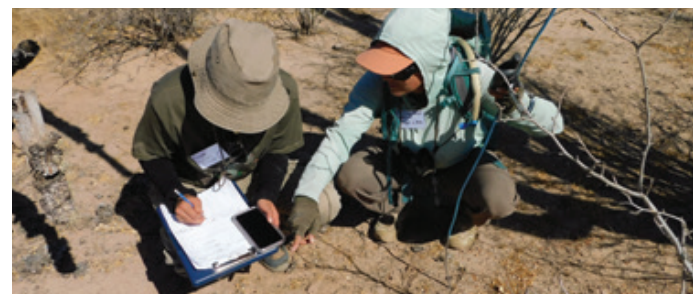
MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

At the center of N-Gen's vision is the goal to give those at the beginning of their careers an opportunity to connect to, learn from, and engage in a larger cross-border and cross-disciplinary community across the Sonoran Desert region.

The N-Gen Mentorship Program directly supports the next generation of leaders in our region. The program creates a space for connections in which a mentor (an established researcher, conservationist, artist, or other professional) can offer their support, vision, and experience to an early-career member (mentee) of the network.

The dynamic consists of one-on-one meetings, where mutual respect, collaboration and exchange of experiences are promoted.

 **45 MENTORS / 45 MENTEES** 

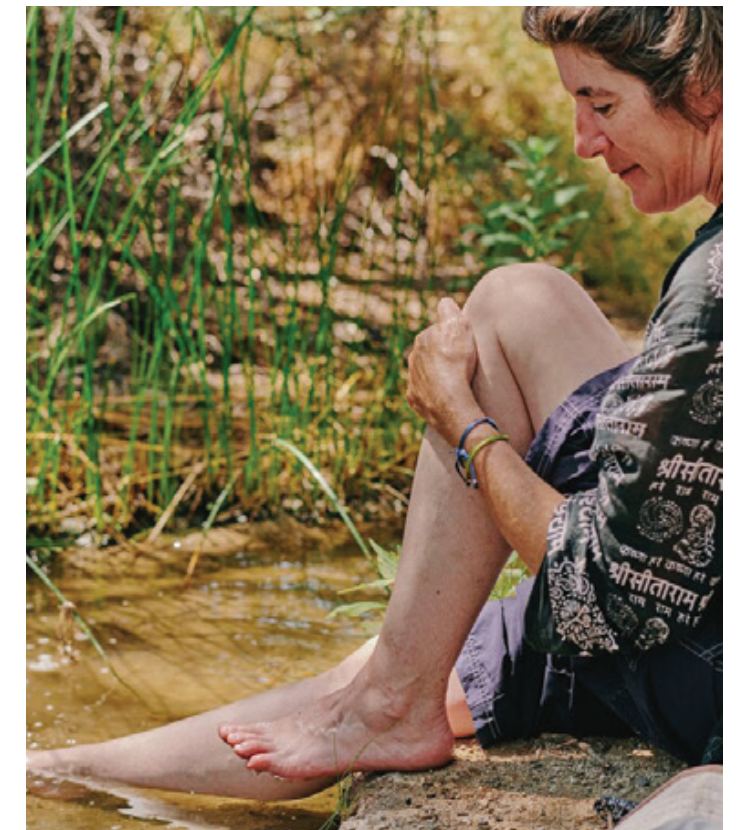
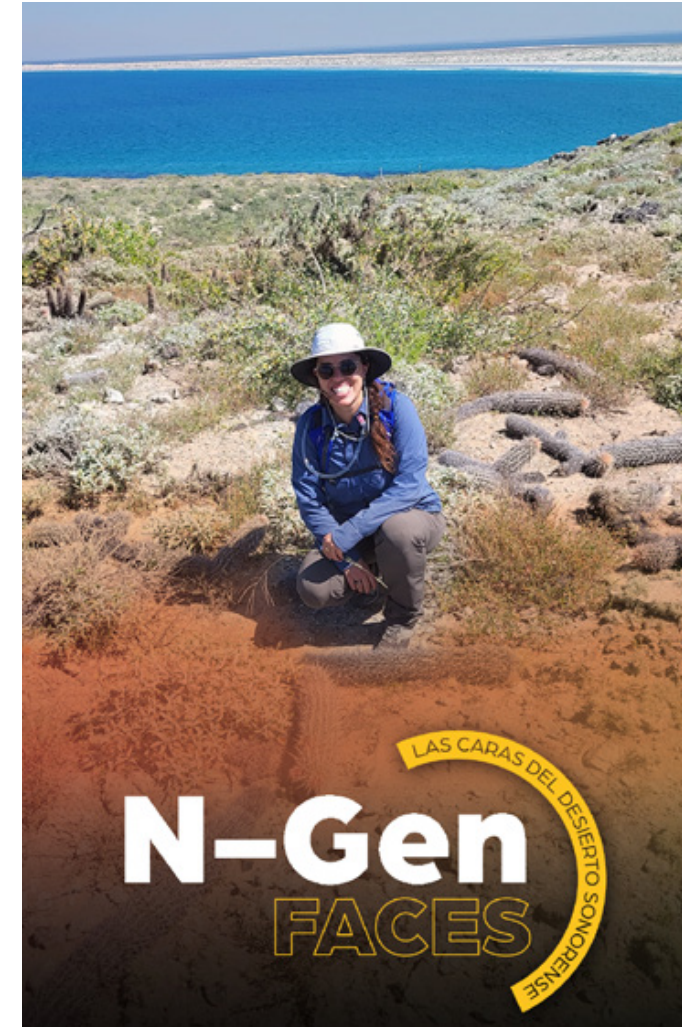


COMMUNICATION

N-Gen is committed to telling the stories of the research community across the Sonoran Desert.

As the role of science in society is increasingly challenged, N-Gen believes that the profile of modern scientists should include the communication of our work, taking into account the following:

- The challenges of social and environmental change require a new approach and a role for scientists in society. Scientists must leave our comfort zone and actively connect the processes and results of our research with the rest of society.
- Science communication is the translation of science for different audiences into narratives and clear messages that balance scientific rigor and broad interest.
- By communicating science we are sharing our passion.
- The communication of science implies the inclusion of a trans-disciplinary perspective.



FUTURE FORWARD

TRANSDISCIPLINARY CONSERVATION

At the core of N-Gen is the *next generation*.

Sparkling curiosity and instilling a passion to explore and learn is fundamental. Within N-Gen projects, we are creating ways to integrate youth and children and promote environmental awareness and intergenerational engagement, inspiring new generations.



EDUCATIONAL EXPEDITION

Using the wonders of the Gulf of California, N-Gen brought together experts in science, education, and land management with Baja California high school students to pilot a tiered mentoring structure where students and experts in turn teach one another from the unique lenses each brings. At the same time the groups effort was able to assess the status and threats of the social ecological health of Parque Nacional Bahía de Loreto. The efforts establish a robust model for applied experiential-based learning and a baseline for scientists and decision makers in the Loreto region.



SUPPORT OUR WORK

More than ever, there is a need for opportunities and actions that unite us across borders and perspectives in the pursuit of a more just and healthy Sonoran Desert.

It has been and continues to be our honor to work towards this shared goal.

Any amount of support makes a significant impact – from supporting a young student in the mentorship program, an early career or collaborative research project, to the space to come together and create collaborative solutions.

Make a secure gift online via the Sonoran Desert Research Fund at the International Community Foundation:

<https://nextgensd.com/?form=NGSDR>

You can also send a check made out to “International Community Foundation” with “Sonoran Desert Research Fund” in the memo line and mailed to: 2505 N Ave National City CA 91950.

All payments are 100% tax deductible as gifts to the 501C3 fiscal sponsor of N-Gen, the International Community Foundation.

Contact: nextgensd2012@gmail.com

Learn more and join N-Gen: <https://nextgensd.com/>

This report was created in 2025 by Next Generation Sonoran Desert Researchers (N-Gen).

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All images courtesy of N-Gen.

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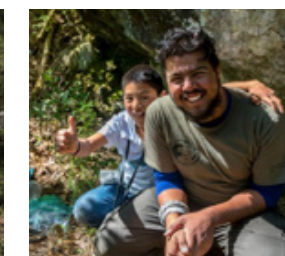
Mariana Reyna



Michelle María
Early Capistrán



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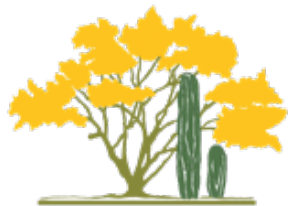
Ricardo Rodríguez



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INVESTIGADORES DEL DESIERTO SONORENSE
SONORAN DESERT RESEARCHERS





FORWARD