



# Ironwood Tree Experience

Youth. Nature. Community.

## Our Mission:

To create healthy and resilient communities, Ironwood Tree Experience makes it possible for young people to engage with the natural world and be stewards of the environment.

## Envisioning Urban 2 Wild

### Spring 2022 Program Report

In partnership with The Wilderness Society, Ironwood Tree Experience recruited six youth interns ages 15 through 19 to experience a 10-day expedition to learn about the Urban to Wild Program in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Interns connected with Indigenous lands, Albuquerque's urban areas, and the Rio Grande Watershed, and engaged with renowned New Mexican leaders and organizations who are addressing climate change, environmental justice, and conservation to ensure that Albuquerque is a healthy and biologically and culturally diverse community.

Through a comparative community lens, interns collaborated to envision a restorative and resilient future for Tucson and Southern Arizona which culminated in an envisioning workshop for the Tucson community.



*We acknowledge that these programs were held on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Tohono O'odham and the Tiwa People. We honor their presence and stewardship of these lands since time immemorial through experiences that connect youth with their desert community.*

**The EU2W program is made possible by The Wilderness Society.**

**ITE youth scholarships are granted by the  
Dustin and Kristen Yoder Memorial Foundation.**





# Program Review

6 EU2W interns, ages 15-19, spent a total of 250 hours participating in the field, meeting ABQ U2W partners and presenting to community leaders. They met a total of 10 partners in Albuquerque.

## EU2W 2022 Calendar

### June 6

Program Orientation Meet & Greet

### June 9

Day Trip to Mt. Bigelow, CNF.USFS

### June 13

Depart for Albuquerque, NM

### June 14

Meet TWS Partners and  
Explore the Rio Grande River

### June 15

Connect with National/Local EJ  
Leaders at a Community Garden

### June 16

Connect with Community  
Sustainability Projects

### June 17

Connect with Nature and Culture

### June 18

Explore Albuquerque

### June 19

Santa Fe expedition

### June 20

Envisioning workshops

### June 21

Envisioning workshops and Presentations

### June 22

Return Home

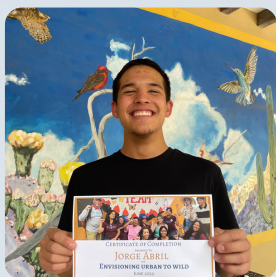
### June 25

Community Presentations and Celebration

## Community Partners

The Wilderness Society, Dustin and Kristen Yoder Memorial, Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, Los Jardines Institute, NM Dream Team, NACA Inspired Schools Network (NISN), Petroglyphs National Monument, Ancestral Lands Conservation Corp, Rio Grande Nature Centre, Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program, Bachechi Environmental Education Building, Fatima Luna from the City of Tucson Mayor's Office, Annie Rempe from the Arizona Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, Naomi Torres from Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, NPS





## **Jorge Abril, 18 years old**

My name is Jorge. I am a quick learner, and I love the trips I have been on with Ironwood Tree Experience. I am an outgoing person, and I love talking with new people about new things. I also love to be out in nature. Some of my favorite things to see are the different natural views that you do not see in the city. I love animals, especially my dog. One of my biggest themes in life is to persevere through everything I do. I just graduated from Nosotros Academy and am really excited to see what comes next!



## **Bianca Carnazza, 17 years old**

My name is Bianca. I am a 17-year-old junior at Rincon High School. What I love about Ironwood Tree Experience is that it's very supportive, nurturing, and is a judgment-free zone. I have done three programs with ITE: Youth Action Community, Desert Youth Heritage Project, and Youth for Blue Skies. For me, I love how community and nature come together because it is really important. For example, there were a bunch of kids who did a walkout to show their passions. Community is about action, family, being supportive, and beauty!



## **Terra Gomez, 19 years old**

Hi! My name is Terra Simone, and I am an architecture student in the CAPLA program at the University of Arizona. I was born and raised in Tucson, and I enjoy learning about community and sustainability, which is why I love Ironwood Tree Experience. Through ITE's various internships, I have learned so much about my connection and love for my home here in the Sonoran Desert. I hope to design and build homes that work with and are made from the surrounding environment.



## **Jazmine Lopez, 16 years old**

Hello, my name is Jazmine Lopez. I am 16 years old, and I am Mexican and Native American from the Tohono O'odham Nation. As I become more of my own person, I find more of an interest in my traditions. I am starting by reconnecting with nature because I know that my culture is very connected to the earth. The trip to New Mexico will be the second trip I've taken with Ironwood Tree Experience. ITE is amazing because it gives you the chance to realize that we can have amazing memories without technology.



## **Jesus Mendoza, 15 years old**

Hi, my name is Jesus Mendoza. I am a Sophomore at University High School. I value the staff and interns at Ironwood Tree Experience because they all have a positive attitude and are always willing to help. They are always there for you if you just want to talk about things happening in your life because they really care for you. I have been to one ITE program, Youth for Blue Skies. What I value about my community is how we care about climate change and want to thrive in making the environment a better place to live in.



## **Samantha Miranda, 16 years old**

My name is Samantha, I am sixteen years old, and I have done the Youth for Blue Skies internship with Ironwood Tree Experience. It has given me many new opportunities, taught me many new skills, and allowed me to meet some incredible people. I find nature fascinating in so many ways but especially in all of the life that it holds and how all of that life lives in harmony together. I think the diversity and symbiotic relationships in nature serve as a great example for how our communities should be.



# Program Highlights: Meeting ABQ Partners

## Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge



Built from a grass-roots community effort, Valle de Oro (VDO) is the first urban wildlife refuge in the South West. To prevent another wasteful industry from taking the land, the Mountain View Community fought and gained the attention of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The community put a name to their effort and created Friends of Valle de Oro and the refuge was established in 2012.

The interns learned about the eight Standards of Excellence, a framework that keeps community partners engaged in wildlife conservation, and concluded the day by exploring the refuge's Field Mural Tour accompanied and birdwatching.

*"I liked how there was a little rest area for migrating animals to come as they go, and my favorite mural was the Carpe Mañana "Cease tomorrow". It was cool. I also saw a bumblebee."*

*-Jorge Abril*

## Los Jardines Institute

To build and support a healthy and sustainable community, Los Jardines Institute focuses their work on environmental and economic justice and education.

After meeting crew members Sofia Martinez, Richard Moore, Francine Bivens, and Xavier Barraza, the interns learned more about their collaborative work with community members such as the VDO and the importance of re-educating the community to encourage the reconnection and reconciliation with the land. Interns also learned about barriers to nature, such as unreliable transportation, systemic racism, lack of green spaces and funding.

*"I learned how deep the nightshade roots grow (over a foot at least)- super deep and hard to pull out of the ground because the roots are so strong; you have to get under the dirt because if not the thorns poke through the gloves and stab you." -Jazmine Lopez*



## Petroglyphs National Monument



Interns visited Petroglyphs National Monument which protects symbols carved into the site's volcanic rocks. The petroglyphs are about 400 to 700 years old, the oldest dated from 2000 BC. The Petroglyphs hold cultural significance for the Pueblo people since most of the petroglyphs were created by their Puebloan ancestors before the Spanish settlers came. Additionally, petroglyphs from the Navajo and Apache people are found dated between 1300 and 1680s.

Interns explored the Piedras Marcadas trail and observed elements frequently seen in the Rio Grande River valley such as human figures, animals, and other geometric figures.

*"It was really cool seeing the art that was there- a coyote under a moon, a woman giving birth to a baby. Hearing that some of it was thousands of years old was insane, and thinking about how they were messages for other nomadic groups. There's probably a lot of other stuff that's been lost that happened here..."*

*-Terra Gomez*



# Program Highlights: Meeting ABQ Partners

## NM Dream Team and NACA



At NM Dream Team, interns met UndocuHealing Organizer, Aailinn Martinez and Campaigns Manager, Fernanda Banda, and learned about the UndocuHealing program and collaboratively exchanged ideas about how to connect youth to nature. NM Dream Team advocates for education not deportation, believing that everyone has a right to education and success regardless of their status.

Interns also met Makhpiya Black Elk, the community impact director of NACA Inspired Schools Network (NISN). NACA is committed to establishing indigenous schools to enhance individuals' identities and create a healthy and resilient environment.

*"I liked how NM Dream Team asked ITE ideas on how to connect youth to nature and from NACA, I learned about the importance of resources and how they help indigenous youth."*

*-Jesus Mendoza*

## Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps

Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC) based in Acoma Pueblo, Navajo Nation, Zuni Pueblo, Hopi-Kykotsmovi, and Albuquerque, seeks to cultivate local land stewards by working with tribal, local communities and land directors to lead land conservation services.

Interns met Albuquerque's program coordinator, Glen Catlin Ami and US Fish and Wildlife Service representatives before watering young cottonwood trees and exploring the Bosque in the outskirts of VDO.

*"I had a good conversation with Catlin- we talked about native invasive species and how communities don't understand the importance of native species and how unhealthy lawns can be to the environment. We need to educate ourselves and others about this issue."* -Bianca Carnazza



## Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program



With BEMP educators Annie Montes and Shelby Bazan, interns headed out for a fieldwork day in the Bosque Area off of Albuquerque's Tingley Park. BEMP monitors the Bosque's health by researching the impact of anthropogenic activities and ecological drivers such as floods and fires. Interns gathered data on the water table, measured the rain gauge, and collected natural debris from BEMPS research buckets. To conclude the day, interns learned about native species in the Bosque and how to identify trees by analyzing their leaves.

*"I thought it was cool being able to collect the data because I always love doing that. We also saw some ants that had nested under the buckets of litter-fall and a velvet ant."*

*-Sam Miranda*



# Program Highlights: Meeting ABQ Partners

## US Forest Service



Plant pathologist, Gregory Reynolds and entomologist, Steven Souder from US Forest Service, visited the interns at their campsite to talk about invasive species, plant diseases, and fungi. Interns analyzed bark beetle damage and observed them under a microscope. They also learned how to identify dwarf and leafless mistletoe on juniper trees throughout the campsite.

*"I learned how to identify tree diseases and I enjoyed how they had displays and samples of what they were talking about. They showed us a sample of a diseased tree (bark beetles)- we got to touch it and see what it looked like."*  
-Jesus Mendoza

## Rio Grande Nature Center State Park

Interns visited the Rio Grande Nature Center visitor center and observed a variety of wildlife such as hummingbirds, snapping turtles, fireflies, and wood ducks before heading out to a nearby trail that lead to the Rio Grande for swimming and fun!

*"At the nature center I saw lots of turtles, frog, ducks, squirrel, hummingbirds, and dragonflies. Swimming in Rio Grande was really nice, there was lots of rocks but it wasn't freezing cold. We even played Marco Polo and picked up some trash."* -Jazmine Lopez



## Grower's Farmer's Market and Santa Fe



During their weekend expedition, interns visited the Downtown Grower's Farmers Market at Robinson Park and enjoyed local delicious pupusas. The interns explored New Mexico's urban surroundings and the importance of supporting its local businesses and communities.

The next morning ITE rode the train for a day expedition to the historic city of Santa Fe. Once in Santa Fe, the interns practiced their independence and explored the town of Santa Fe before gathering for lunch and visiting the New Mexico History Museum.

*"I really liked the farmers market, the different layout, there were a lot of small businesses that we didn't know about. And Santa Fe was fun; I used a lot of communication skills with a couple people- finding new places to go to and new lunch places."* -Bianca Carnazza



# Albuquerque and Tucson Presentations



**Albuquerque and Tucson interns, staff and partners gathered together after concluding presentations.**



**Albuquerque visual map interns created to develop their Tucson envisioning project**

For their EU2W presentations, interns facilitated rotating roundtable discussions with the Albuquerque and Tucson Communities. During the ABQ expedition, interns could reconnect with ABQ partners and ask questions to help finish developing their vision for Tucson and hear from partners about Albuquerque's progress and growth. Once in Tucson, the interns presented their final vision to their community. The interns focused on the following questions:

1. What is the importance of interconnected communities regarding natural ecosystems, culture, and infrastructure?
2. What barriers to nature occur in Tucson? What are some solutions?
3. What environmental initiatives in Tucson do you envision?

These questions guided the intern's envisioning and sparked collaborative and engaging conversation regarding the future of Albuquerque and Tucson's environment.



# Life Lessons

## How has the EU2W influenced your growth?

“ EU2W inspired me to go out to nature and get more involved with the Tucson Community and push for change. ”  
-Jorge Abril

“ I learned so much from BEMP, collecting data, and examining it to see how the environment is performing. ”  
-Sam Miranda



Bianca Carnazza collecting data from BEMP's research buckets at the Rio Grande Bosque



ITE staff Rebecca Perez holding parasitic mistletoe from Juniper trees



Sam Miranda watering trees with Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps



# Life Lessons

## What do you envision in Tucson?

“ Small pocket neighborhood parks everywhere throughout Tucson ”  
-Terra Gomez

“ Prioritizing culture and identity ”  
-Jazmine Lopez

“ Protect native species in Tucson ”  
-Bianca Carnazza



Bianca Carnazza showcasing ITE's day breakdown before departing camp to meet ABQ partners

“ Permanent free public transportation and get a green space route to go to Mt. Lemmon and different nature spaces in Tucson ”  
-Jesus Mendoza



Jesus Mendoza doing field work at Los Jardines Institute



ITE crew ready to enjoy and outdoor dinner at camp



# Recommendations + Next Steps

EU2W met all TWS outcomes with meaningful and intentional interactions with local Albuquerque partners. This not only strengthened the existing TWS connection but also connected us to amazing potential partners at a national level. Albuquerque's similarities to Tucson set a good model for future intentional programming for Urban to Wild. The Youth interns shared their visions and were valued by both the Albuquerque and Tucson communities. Overall, EU2W had an amazing turnout and was filled with diversity and enthusiasm for the future of Tucson.

## Recommendations

- Build in time for ITE and TWS to coordinate with partners and create an agenda
- More time for intentional program/project intros when meeting each partner
- More down time to ensure youth and staff are well rested
- Meeting collectively before expedition and setting staff expectations and goals
- More time for collective planning with ITE and TWS staff - review plan Prep students/partners on each other in advance (more formal intro)
- Provide more clarity and communication regarding roles
- Incorporate the TWS Communications team for some storytelling opportunities

## Next Steps:

As the program develops in Tucson, ITE is open to continuing to support youth engagement opportunities with TWS and other communities. ITE will use collected data from envisioning activities to inform program planning for the next EU2W expedition.

## Next Steps Ideas:

- Organize and prepare for EU2W 2.0 expedition where interns learn from another U2W city (Seattle, L.A), make recommendations and bring back to the community as the Urban to Wild program continues to develop in Tucson.
- Recognize rural to urban connections when planning for a resilient and sustainable community.
- Use recommendations to inform future Envisioning Urban to Wild programming in other Urban to Wild cities.