

EXPLORING

Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve

Humans and Sonoita Creek

Humans have lived on the land comprising the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve since 2000 B.C. Early peoples included indigenous populations such as the Hohokam and Sobaipuri, who were sustained by Sonoita Creek and its fertile landscape. By the 1700s, Spain had taken over the area, with Jesuits building an overnight house, or visita. After Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico issued land grants in the region bringing large numbers of livestock into the area. Ranching continued when this land became part of the United States in 1854. In 1882, The Santa Fe Railroad built an 88-mile line that ran along the creek, while livestock and farming continued into the 1900s. In 1966, The Nature Conservancy bought 309 acres along the creek creating the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve - the first Nature Conservancy Preserve in Arizona.

Wildlife Corridor

Each mountain range in Southeastern Arizona is separate and distinct, giving rise to the name Sky Island mountains. In between the mountains are lower elevation deserts, mid-elevation grasslands and developed areas. This mid-elevation grassland habitat provides an important link for wildlife between the Santa Rita Mountains to the north and the Patagonia Mountains to the south. Areas like the Preserve provide animals

critical access to water as well as opportunities to mate outside their own family groups thus strengthening their genetic line. The mountain lion, and the endangered jaguar and ocelot all can use corridors like this one to travel between mountain ranges.

Sonoita Creek

Year-round running water creates valuable habitat for plants, which in turn, creates the right conditions for the varied wildlife that lives on or passes through the Preserve. Migrating birds stop here to fuel their journey further north while resident wildlife enjoys the luxury of water in an area surrounded by arid land. Among the most extensive and productive riparian habitat in Southeast Arizona, the Preserve's Cottonwood - Willow habitat has significantly decreased due to human development. The Nature Conservancy and other partners in the Sonoita Creek Watershed are working to preserve the perennial flow of the creek through land purchases, conservation easements, and restoration efforts.

Floodplain

The open meadow was once the floodplain for Sonoita Creek. During monsoonal floods, the creek was able to spread out here and the moisture was absorbed back into soil and the aquifer. The gentle flooding was perfect for Fremont Cottonwood seedlings growth. Presently, upstream development and the railroad grade have forced the creek into an incised channel, so it rarely floods into the historic floodplain. With the lack of younger cottonwoods, this habitat, critical for so many plants and animals, may no longer exist once the cottonwoods die. The Preserve and local partners are working on cottonwood restoration efforts to preserve this important habitat.

Cienega and Spring

Cienega is a term for wetlands that exist in the arid Southwest. Cienegas provide conditions for unique species such as yerba mansa and horsetail reeds. The cienega here on the Preserve is what remains of a much larger wetland that extended across much of the Town of Patagonia. This remnant is spring fed, and part of the same groundwater system that feeds the creek. Only 1-2 percent of the original cienegas in the Southwestern United States still exist today.

Mesquite Bosque

Mesquite forests support one of the highest densities of breeding birds - such as Lucy's Warbler - of any Southwestern habitat type. The trees' deep root systems reach the water table allowing them to produce abundant flowers and fruit. These forests not only feed and shelter numerous species of breeding birds, but also diverse and abundant animal life including desert cottontail rabbits and javelina. What animals and birds will you discover?

The Nature Conservancy 

Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve

ARIZONA

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nature.org/patagonia

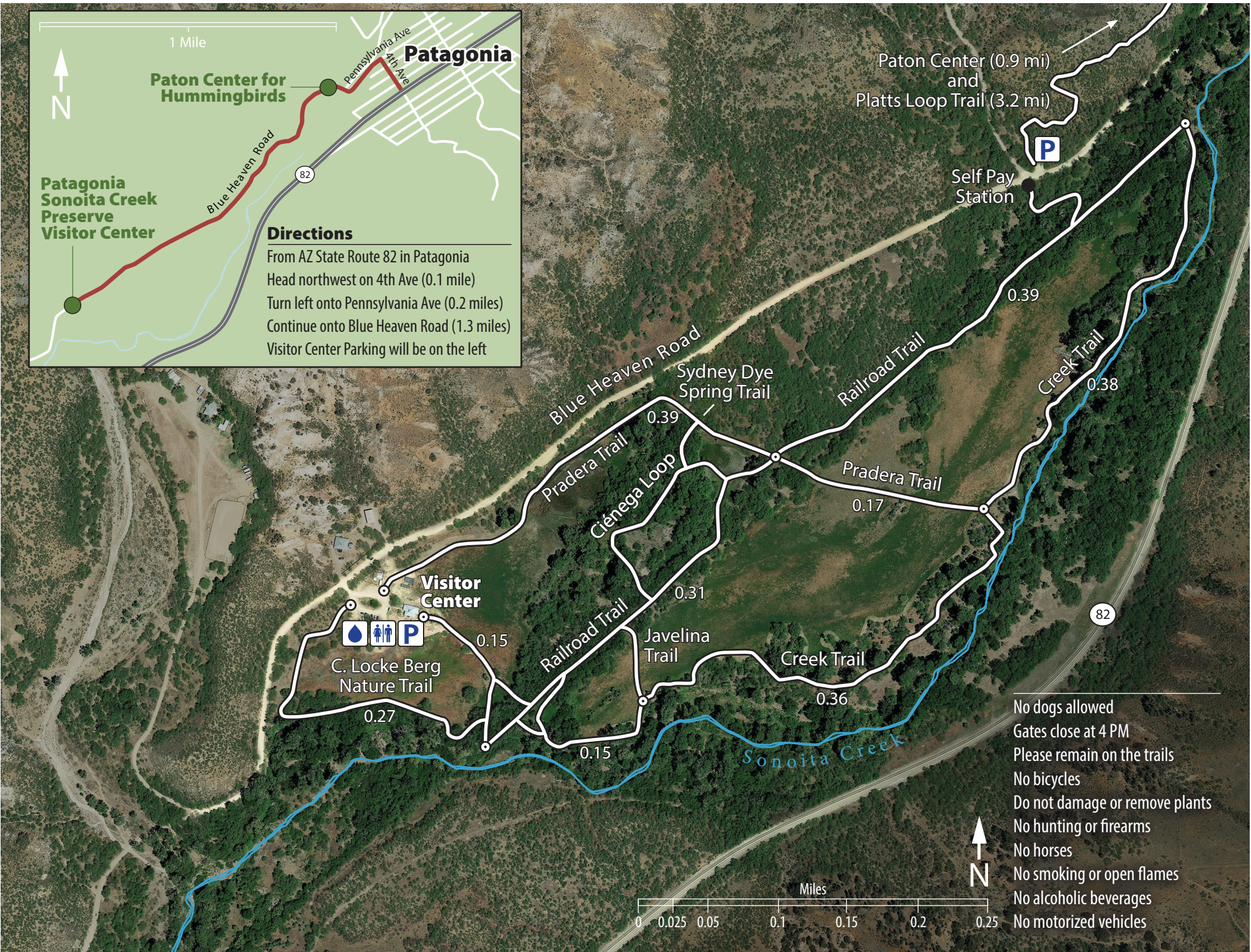
Patagonia

Paton Center for Hummingbirds

Patagonia Sonora Creek Preserve Visitor Center

Directions

From AZ State Route 82 in Patagonia
 Head northwest on 4th Ave (0.1 mile)
 Turn left onto Pennsylvania Ave (0.2 miles)
 Continue onto Blue Heaven Road (1.3 miles)
 Visitor Center Parking will be on the left



- No dogs allowed
- Gates close at 4 PM
- Please remain on the trails
- No bicycles
- Do not damage or remove plants
- No hunting or firearms
- No horses
- No smoking or open flames
- No alcoholic beverages
- No motorized vehicles