Volunteers assist with vertical mulching to restore a denuded area.
MESSAGE FROM OUR JOINT EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Dear supporters,

We’re thrilled to present you with this compendium of accomplishments for the second half of 2021. As the new Joint Executive Directors of MDLT, we couldn’t be more honored to serve such a dedicated and generous community of donors, members, and volunteers. Your donations made a significant impact in desert conservation. They helped secure and protect hundreds of additional acres of important wild lands across the Mojave and Colorado Deserts. They helped us clear trash, restore habitat, maintain trails, and communicate important scientific and policy issues affecting the desert.

One accomplishment we’re particularly excited to highlight in this report is the launch of our new Prairie Falcon Conservation Program. Prairie falcons are extraordinary birds of prey that play an important (and often overlooked) role in the desert ecosystem. They can be found nesting in rocky outcrops or swooping over lowlands searching for prey. Human recreational activities are encroaching on their habitat within the desert. We’re working with a group of prairie falcon experts to establish a database of active nesting sites within the California Desert Conservation Area and address the threats impacting these majestic birds of prey.

Thank you for your continued support as we work to protect our next 100,000 acres.

Sincerely,

Joint Executive Directors Cody Hanford and Kelly Herbinson
ACQUISITIONS  July to December 2021

Through our Land Acquisition Process, MDLT purchases lands that have strategic conservation values and works to ensure that all acquired land is properly stewarded and maintained. Every land transaction supports the vision of a Mojave Desert with interconnected, permanently protected scenic and natural areas hosting a diversity of native plants and wildlife. Following are a few properties protected in the second half of 2021.

10 ACRES JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

This transaction required a great deal of research to find the heirs of the deceased owner, who died without a will in Chicago in 1955! Once the MDLT team found the heir, an only child, they completed an affidavit of small value to correct the deed transferring rights. These 10 acres are located in the very remote area known as Rockhouse Canyon in the southwest portion of Joshua Tree National Park.

80 ACRES MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE

An area known for cattle ranching within Mojave National Preserve, this property contains a historic corral constructed from railroad ties, metal cables, and wire mesh cattle fencing. The property is moderately covered in vegetation that can be described as a mixed desert scrub. National Park Service (NPS) representatives had their eye on this parcel for quite some time and were pleased to hear MDLT was able to acquire it. The property will eventually be conveyed to the Preserve.

28 ACRES PIUTE MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS

Two parcels located on the boundary of the wilderness area. This was likely the quickest escrow MDLT has ever processed - 27 days with a closing on Dec 28. Site inspection identified a unique concrete structure among rolling hills and incised drainages. The structure can remain on the property for the conveyance to the Bureau of Land Management since it is considered historic and located in a designated federal wilderness area.

40 ACRES SHEEPHOLE VALLEY WILDERNESS

Located on the eastern boundary of the wilderness in San Bernardino County, this parcel is comprised of uniformly spaced creosote bush scrub surrounded by soft, sandy soil. The property had five unique interests of varying percentages named on the title, so the transaction required the acquisitions team to work with paralegals in order to ready the deed for sale.
**85 ACRES MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE**

Located in the Lanfair Valley area of Mojave National Preserve, with Joshua trees and creosote bush, this transaction took some time to complete due to an erroneous legal description. These parcels had been stated priorities by the National Park Service (NPS) for some time. The property contains an open mine shaft. Normally, the mine shaft would be filled or covered with a gate before conveyance to NPS, but MDLT’s Natural Resource technicians discovered an owl had taken residence in what MDLT and NPS staff are now calling the “Hoot Owl Shaft.” The California Department of Conservation has agreed to install a fence around the site. MDLT and NPS will combine efforts to clean up the parcel prior to conveyance.

**20 ACRES MOJAVE NATIONAL TRAILS MONUMENT + 40 ACRES OLD WOMAN MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS AREA**

Two parcels from one seller: 20 acres in Mojave Trails National Monument and 40 acres in Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Area. Seller was initially hesitant to include the wilderness property and requested to do separate transactions with the caveat that if we did not close by the end of the year, she may not sell either parcel. With our team’s capability and assurance that we could complete the transaction swiftly, she agreed to proceed. We opened escrow on Nov 19 and closed on Dec 17, a record-speed transaction!

**WHY SELL YOUR LAND TO MDLT?**

- MDLT will pay you the fair market value that any traditional real estate sale would offer, plus we will personally handle paperwork and cover transaction costs for you.

- MDLT provides you with an easy, simple and customized process that is completed quickly.

- As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-governmental organization, MDLT can offer you a variety of tax benefits with a land conservation acquisition of your property that a traditional real estate sale would not.

- Contact our Acquisitions Coordinator, Dustin Scott, today for a personal consultation! dustin@mdlt.org or 909.797.5496.
23 PARCEL INSPECTIONS
ROUGHLY 500 ACRES

20 WILDLIFE LINKAGE SIGNS INSTALLED

28 TONS OF TRASH REMOVED

40 ACRES RESTORED INCLUDING 200 FEET OF TRAIL RESTORED

12 TORTOISE SURVEYS CONDUCTED WITH 7 OF THEM YIELDING SIGNS OF TORTOISE

**WHEN YOU SELL LAND TO MDLT**

Once land is conveyed to the Mojave Desert Land Trust (through acquisition or donation), there is much more work to do.

- MDLT holds some parcels permanently while others end up being acquired by government agencies to be incorporated into national parks and monuments, and federal wilderness.

- The lands team regularly inspects properties and cleans them up as needed.

- Parcels are often ‘packaged’ together to transfer to the Bureau of Land Management or National Park Service. They are then merged with existing protected lands.
Prairie Falcon Conservation Program

In Fall 2021, MDLT launched the Prairie Falcon Conservation Program, an exciting new donor-supported initiative to benefit prairie falcons in the California desert. Prairie falcons (*Falco mexicanus*) nest high in rocky outcrops throughout the arid plains and desert wilderness of the western United States. They typically return to the same nesting sites (“eyries”) year after year; however, human activities in the California desert, such as encroaching development, illegal off-highway vehicle activity, and recreational shooting, are impeding upon their habitat. Consequently, prairie falcons are abandoning some historic eyries that have been used for generations.

Through the Prairie Falcon Conservation Program, MDLT is building a database of active nesting sites and evaluating and addressing threats to these eyries. And because eyries are also important habitat for other raptors and wildlife, protecting eyries and conserving prairie falcons benefits the entire ecosystem.

MDLT is also establishing a Prairie Falcon Working Group in collaboration with conservation groups, state and federal agencies, and wildlife experts to create an ongoing dialogue about prairie falcon conservation, promote public awareness, and pursue joint funding opportunities to reduce threats to eyries.
IMPROVEMENTS TO MDLT’S NURSERY POTTING SHED

Many thanks to the Mojave Water Agency and the Clif Family Foundation for providing grant funding needed to complete several much-needed repairs and improvements to our potting shed. With a grant from Clif Family Foundation, we installed lattice on the south side to block extreme sun and wind, polycarbonate panels to the east side to block spray from the irrigation system from affecting the workspace, and we will be constructing a large storage room which will house clean containers for our plants. Funding from the Mojave Water Agency allowed us to install a concrete floor which provides a clean (and cleanable) surface on which to work. All of these improvements are part of our ongoing effort to produce healthy, pathogen-free nursery stock for desert restoration.

NURSERY

MDLT staff grew blue palo verde (*Parkinsonia florida*), honey and screwbean mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa, P. pubescens*), smoketree (*Psorothamnus spinosus*), and catclaw (*Senegalia greggii*) for a restoration project in the Colorado River watershed. Seeds collected near Needles were sown in late July and the plants grew quickly during August and September. The majority of these plants will be outplanted at the Colorado River restoration site in March of 2022.

8,953 plants were grown in our nursery in 2021!
Restoration Work

In August 2020, the Dome Fire burned over 43,000 acres of dense Joshua tree woodland in Mojave National Preserve. Deserts are slow to recover from wildfire, and areas like the Cima Dome are particularly important climate refugia for the Joshua tree.

In 2021 MDLT granted Riley Scaff, an undergraduate researcher at Pitzer College, a permit to conduct a study on MDLT land that burned in the Dome Fire. In his study, Scaff is testing several species and treatments to identify the best methods for restoring the native plant community to the burn area.

MDLT’s native plant restoration nursery is growing the 456 plants needed for the project. Species such as eastern Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia ssp. jaegeriana*), desert sage (*Salvia dorrii*), and apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*) will be grown over the next 10 months. They will be outplanted at the site this fall.
SEED BANK COLLECTIONS

Numerous warm season annuals emerged following monsoonal rains in early August that brought as much as two inches of rain in less than an hour. Water flowed through MDLT’s Quail Wash property bordering the west entrance of Joshua Tree National Park. Within a couple of weeks of the downpour, seedlings of chinchweed (*Pectis papposa*), fringed amaranth (*Amaranthus fimbriatus*), sticky spiderling (*Boerhavia triquetra*), California caltrop (*Kallstroemia californica*), six weeks grama (*Bouteloua barbata*), and needle grama (*Bouteloua aristidoides*) were visible. We even saw many perennial species that typically bloom in spring in full flower.

New staff hires and improvements to herbivore exclusion fencing and harvesting methods meant we were able to collect over 40 lbs of seed for a pilot seed increase project with the Bureau of Land Management in 2021 - a 700% increase over that collected in 2020. In 2022 we are developing propagation and seed harvesting protocols and growing out seed of three species of desert tortoise forage plants.

21 conservation collections made in 2021!

New seed collections:

- *Allionia incarnata* (trailing windmills)
- *Boerhavia coccinea* (scarlet spiderling)
- *Boerhavia triqueta* (sticky spiderling)
- *Bouteloua aristidoides* (needle grama)
- *Bouteloua barbata* (six weeks grama)
- *Kallstroemia californica* (California caltrop)
- *Mollugo cerviana* (carpetweed—not native)
- *Muhlenbergia porteri* (Porter’s muhly)
- *Sporobolus flexuosus* (mesa dropseed)
- *Funastrum utahense* (Utah vine milkweed)
- *Amaranthus fimbriatus* (fringed amaranth)
- *Pectis papposa* (chinchweed)
Friends of the Seed Bank

The purpose of the Mojave Desert Seed Bank (MDSB) is to store and produce genetically appropriate seed for revegetating damaged wildlife habitat and enhancing wildlife connectivity corridors. MDSB currently has 684 seed collections representing 220 taxa, including eight species of special concern. It is a living database of the Mojave Desert, with millions of seeds now safe for decades to come and available for use in wildlands restoration and research.

A dedicated group of donors contributes $1,000 each year to support this program. Plus we’re excited to announce that an anonymous donor gave an extraordinary gift of $750,000 in 2021 to support the Seed Bank.

Thank You 2021 Friends of the Seed Bank Members

Shaun Gonzalez
Suzy Johns
Mark Luellen
Danielle Segura
Soren Sorenson

If you’re interested in making an annual $1,000 donation to support the Seed Bank, please e-mail seedbank@mdlt.org.

MDLT collected the seeds of six weeks grama (Bouteloua barbata), shown in these photos.
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

MDLT typically has a wide range of activities that volunteers assist with from clean-ups to seed cleaning. While we were limited due to COVID protocol requirements this year, we are thankful to those of you who were able to help with several of the activities we were able to organize in the second half of 2021. If you are interested in volunteering with MDLT, visit mdlt.org/support/volunteer for more information.

SEPTEMBER

**Long Canyon Peak Clean-up and restoration project**

**17 VOLUNTEERS**

**94.5 HOURS**

In September, the Mojave Desert Land Trust conducted three community clean-up and restoration projects on the northwest portion of its Long Canyon Peak property. Seventeen volunteers provided a workforce that completed vertical mulching at two restoration sites, cleaning up three dumpsites, and installing sensitive ecological area signage.

DECEMBER

**Section 33 clean-up**

**4 VOLUNTEERS**

**24 HOURS**

Two MDLT staff and four volunteers picked up garbage along the northernmost border of our Section 33 property, from the Joshua Tree Memorial Park to the Joshua Tree welcome sign. In total, 177 pounds of trash and debris were removed from the property’s northern boundary.
Thank you to our volunteers:

Alan Araujo  
Madena Asbell  
William Bartels  
Kalani Ben  
Andrew Brase  
Ken Brock  
Lani Brown  
Dana Burkert  
Maryana Carreon  
Paul Chakalian  
Jess Dacey  
Nikol Elaine  
Susie Garcia  
Jean Graham  
Jessica Graybill  
Bruce Guthrie  
Kurt Hamm  
Colleen Herr  
Jerry Irvine  
Jeremy Joo  
Amy Langston  
Ryan Kory  
Bruce Kroeze  
Yvonne Legrice  
Chris Mays  
Arch McCulloch  
Chatel Mcketrick  
Carol Mellette  
Justin Merino  
Michael Mora  
Conrad Lambert  
Michael Osthoff  
Tena Petrovic  
Raechel Pietraszak  
Kara Presley  
Hana Putnam  
Kristen Richardson  
Bettina Rosmaria  
Kenna Ryan  
Chris Shinar  
Lauren Silvosky  
Jacilee Wray  
Tom Rottman  
David Roubini  
Leah Rubin  
Odelia Rubin  
Mary Cook-Rhyne  
Dustin Scott  
Donna Thomas  
Caitlin Truman  
Mike Willeford  
Christopher Wilson  
Daniel Wood  
Campbell Hall  
10th Grade Class

Stuart Davis and Alex Boice cleaning graffiti off a rock in Mojave National Preserve (left) and the rock after their hard work (right)
EDUCATION: WISDOM: 6 Interns

WISDOM is a six-month internship program for college-aged women in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. October marked the end of a six month study of night sky quality in eastern Mojave Trails National Monument, a bird survey, and bighorn sheep monitoring in Afton Canyon Natural Area.

Interns met twice monthly. Interns Lauren Alba, Analisa Brown, and Stacey Yoon recorded light pollution data in the eastern portion of the monument. Their research completed a baseline of data about the Mojave Desert and showed that the monument can be placed in consideration as a Dark Sky Sanctuary in almost all locations.

Giselle Sandoval, Leah Thomas, and Ali Kalinowski set out to collect data about avian species over the course of six months. In the summer months, temperatures averaged 100° F during the day in the canyon. These temperatures typically drive away visitors who would otherwise be able to participate in citizen science projects, therefore, little to no bird data has been previously recorded for the summer.

Bird observations were made throughout the canyon. The interns observed bird species within a 250-meter radius for ten minutes at each location. Overall, 33 bird species were observed during the internship with turkey vultures (Cathartes aura) being the most commonly viewed species. The most unexpected sighting was a Cooper’s Hawk. This data can be used for improved management strategies in Afton Canyon.

Species observed in Afton Canyon

- Black Phoebe
- Black-throated Grey Warbler
- Black-throated Sparrow
- Brewer’s Blackbird
- Bullock’s Oriole
- Cactus Wren
- Common Raven
- Cooper’s Hawk
- Eurasian Collared Dove
- European Starling
- Gray Flycatcher
- House Finch
- House Sparrow
- Lesser Goldfinch
- Lesser Nighthawk
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Mourning Dove
- Phainopepla
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Savannah Sparrow
- Say’s Phoebe
- Turkey Vulture
- Western Kingbird
- Western Wood-Pewee
- White-crowned Sparrow
- White-throated Swift
- Wilson’s Phalarope
- Wilson’s Warbler
- Yellow Warbler
CAMPFIRE TALK
15 ATTENDEES
NOVEMBER 13

In celebration of Native American Heritage Month, MDLT and the Native American Land Conservancy (NALC) partnered to discuss the history of tribes in the area and the current work being done by NALC to protect and steward sacred lands. The event was hosted in two parts: a special gathering where guests were able to meet each other and listen to the Cahuilla Bird Singers who visited from the Coachella Valley, and a Campfire Talk on the importance of stewarding sacred Native American Lands.

NATURALISTS AT LARGE
110 STUDENTS
OCTOBER 19, 20 & 21

Tenth grade students from a west LA school participated in a citizen science project on MDLT’s Section 33 property in Joshua Tree. Students and their chaperones joined MDLT staff to complete a survey of plant regrowth on a 155-acre parcel that was devastated by fire in 2020. Using the citizen science app, iNaturalist, students helped to identify and post observations of flora regrowth in the burned areas. Students’ observations helped to compare and record plant species seen before and after the fire and deepened their knowledge of biodiversity.

DDFS SATURDAY ACADEMY
63 STUDENTS
NOVEMBER 13

MDLT’s educational staff taught students at Yucca Valley Elementary School about the geology of the area, how rocks form, and where they can go to see examples of each of these types of rocks. Students in grades K-3 learned the three main types of rocks: igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary. Students in grades 4-6 learned about the difference between rocks and minerals, why scientists learn about the differences, and where they can go to find rocks and minerals. Then students used their knowledge to look at different mineral types in soils around the school grounds.

PUBLIC HIKE TO SAMUELSON’S ROCKS
15 HIKERS
DECEMBER 4

Staff led a group of artists from the Atlas Obscura program from BOXO on a 3-mile hike to MDLT’s Samuelson’s Rocks property in Joshua Tree National Park.
ADVOCACY UPDATE  July to December 2021

A leader in bringing new funding to the desert region
MDLT co-sponsored legislation that passed in 2021 establishing a California Desert Conservation Program under the state Wildlife Conservation Board. AB 1183 provides a mechanism for new grant funding for tribes, local government, and non-profits for biodiversity conservation, cultural and historical preservation, recreation projects, restoration of damaged lands, and climate resiliency projects in the California desert. The bill was sponsored by MDLT, Defenders of Wildlife, Hispanic Access Foundation, and Vet Voice Foundation, and introduced by Assembly Member James Ramos (District 40). MDLT worked with our partners to gather support for the bill. In September 2021, Governor Newsom signed AB 1183 into law, and on January 1, 2022, the first dedicated state funding for conservation and restoration in our desert region became a reality. While the California desert region makes up 28% of the state, it has largely been left behind where conservation funding is concerned. The region is severely lacking in direct investment to protect and restore invaluable natural and cultural resources. The enactment of this legislation will give a significant part of our state’s natural and cultural heritage the much-deserved support it needs.

30x30 California: Standing up for the desert
MDLT actively engaged with partner groups to ensure the desert region was seen and heard by state leadership in the development of California’s program to conserve 30% of the state’s land and waters by 2030 (known as 30x30). MDLT staff worked with partner groups to create outreach materials. We attended statewide workshops about the program, made public comments, and actively participated in collective comment letters to the California Natural Resources Agency to raise awareness of the critical role deserts play in carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation.
ADVOCACY UPDATE  July to December 2021

Making the case for a new national monument
Important groundwork was done to legislatively provide permanent protection of thousands of acres in the Chuckwalla Mountains region of eastern Riverside County, as well as habitat in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern could be connected to federal wildernesses to create a new national monument, establishing vital wildlife corridors and protection for rare plants, desert tortoise habitat, tribal cultural resources, further preserve World War II training camps, and expand recreation opportunities for local communities. With an intimate knowledge of the Chuckwalla Bench, MDLT was able to help document the resource values of this special area, characterized by high biological diversity, outstanding geologic features, and remarkably scenic landscapes that encompass a wide array of nationally significant scientific, historic, and cultural objects. The area also contains some of the best wilderness values, scenery, and recreational opportunities that remain unprotected in the US. This effort is led by the California Wilderness Coalition with support from MDLT and other partners.

Light trespass
In December 2021, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to pass a new Light Trespass Ordinance that would promote our desert’s dark skies. The vote repealed the previous Glare and Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, and provides for varied lighting standards in the desert/mountain communities and the urban regions of the county. The key change is a requirement for outdoor lighting fixtures to be shielded in unincorporated San Bernardino County. Community members and local organizations have campaigned for a number of years on the need for a new ordinance. In 2021, MDLT worked with our partner groups to create and present a PowerPoint presentation to the San Bernardino Planning Commission, then provided public comment to the San Bernardino County Supervisors at their final decision-making meeting, with our action alert and social media campaign helping generate public support to influence the decision.
In July, Mojave Desert Land Trust hit a new milestone in California desert conservation. Thanks to your support, over 100,000 acres of significant lands have been preserved by the Mojave Desert Land Trust since 2006! In celebration of this milestone, MDLT kicked off a campaign inviting conservationists to contribute $100 toward MDLT's efforts to conserve the next 100,000 acres. Thank you to those who contributed to the campaign!

$1,000 DONATION
From our long time partner

$500 DONATION
Terrysa Guerra
Robert Jungmann
Rose Marcario

$200 DONATION
Marilyn Lutz
Ronald Radziner

$100 DONATION
Linda Bailey
James Bedrossian
Cynthia Bennett
Susy Boyd
Casey Cox
David Dewenter
Aaron Dodson
Jim Donnelly
David Driscoll
Bruce Emerton
Pat Flanagan
Erin & Mark Gatlin
Anne Graham
Wendy & Paul Hadley
Susan Haller
Geary Hund
Clark Hunter
Mindy Kittay
Margaret Kravitz
Noreen Lawlor
Melissa Lee
Sean Maguire
Danielle McCombs
Arch and Nelda McCulloch
Brian O’Connell
Jay Redd
David Roubini
Miriam Seger
Danielle Segura
Bond Shands
Laraine Turk
Peter Vlastelica
Sherry Wickham
Louise Woo
Matthew Woodman
Joseph Zarki

Pat Flanagan, MDLT’s first executive director, points out a Nolina on Nolina Peak, the first parcel protected by Mojave Desert Land Trust. This 639-acre parcel is now a part of Joshua Tree National Park.
WE APPRECIATE ALL THE WAYS YOU GIVE!

Facebook fundraisers
Happy Birthday and thank you to everyone who chose to give their birthday presents to MDLT! We appreciate you hosting a birthday fundraiser to support the Mojave Desert Land Trust. It helps us to preserve desert lands. Please let us know your e-mail and snail mail address so we can thank you properly!

Donate your old car to MDLT!
Make a difference while you shop. AmazonSmile donates to the Mojave Desert Land Trust when you do your shopping at smile.amazon.com/ch/72-1603033

Stasher Bags
1% of Mojave Collection sales are donated to MDLT. These reusable, radically functional platinum silicone storage alternative to single-use bags are brilliant for the environment! Dishwasher safe, microwave ready, freezer friendly, stovetop safe and oven strong. Visit Stasherbag.com to learn more or purchase.

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