

With funding from the Arizona Community Foundation, Tucson Audubon Society is participating in a statewide Citizen Stewardship program, serving with other organizations, including The Phoenix Zoo, as a study group to produce portable programs that promote citizen stewardship. The goal is to improve people's relationships with and understanding of our natural heritage, especially animals and their habitat, so that everyone may lead more sustainable lifestyles.

By Jeff Williamson, President and CEO, The Phoenix Zoo

It's warming out. New stuff is moving in and the neighborhood is getting a bit crowded. Cities are getting bigger and many spend a great deal of time interacting with virtual worlds through technologies. Life is complex; we're busy with much to do. In our rush, are we dashing past our source of sustenance? Do we recognize NATURE as the original source of nurturing, and is it relevant in our lives? Can and should we rely on invention and technology to assure future access to water, breathable air, stable land and soil, and biological richness sufficient to assure the ability to provide for the future?

A group of us believe one of life's important lessons is found in care-giving or stewardship for each other and community, and at its foundation, nature. We are exploring ways of encouraging our neighbors to join us in engaging our environments in ways that add value. We are piloting programs that are focused on inspiring citizen stewardship. These programs are intended for the old and young, the prosperous and those working hard to provide, and for the diverse cultures that compose our rich landscape.

Working successfully to reduce the impact of our environmental footprint is important. We need to stabilize our climate, fight invasive species that challenge indigenous biodiversity, and make nature in its reality relevant to a world anesthetized by virtual creations that exist without appropriate consequences.

Please join us as we try to design strategies that encourage living well with a deep respect for and contribution to healthy landscapes, watersheds, and natural communities.

If you have a moment, pick up Dr. E. O. Wilson's new book, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*. Dr. Wilson is the ant guy who has taught at Harvard for 40 years and won two Pulitzer Prizes. A practical man who has spent his life exploring how nature helps sculpt societies and how our choices influence the evolution of nature, Dr. Wilson is calling on all communities to reengage in a meaningful and healthful relationship with nature. His thoughts and considerations are an important call to stewardship.