

MEET OUR 2026 HERITAGE DAYS PRESENTERS!



Luke Koenig — KEYNOTE: “*The Peloncillos: the Gem at Our Doorstep*”

Luke is the Gila Grassroots Organizer for New Mexico Wild. Luke works to connect the communities of southwest New Mexico to the landscape to better advocate for meaningful protections for wild places. He has previously worked in various conservation roles across the West, including as a crew leader for Utah Conservation Corps, as a seasonal park ranger in Yellowstone National Park, and a volunteer program manager for Wild Arizona.



Ron Hyde — “*When Dinosaurs Roamed Our Land*”

Ron is an educator, museum professional, and science advocate with a lifelong passion for paleontology, natural history, and public education. A member of the National Center for Science Education (NCSE) since 2006, Ron is also the founder of the Southern Arizona Museum of Science and Technology, where he works to promote scientific literacy and community engagement through exhibits and educational outreach.



Katie Davis — “*Wildlife in the Borderlands—Keeping the Balance*”

Katie is the Executive Director of Wildlands Network. In this role, she oversees a bi-national team of conversation experts in the US and Mexico, designing and implementing projects to reconnect, restore, and rewild North America. She has spent her career building campaigns, partnerships and coalitions to protect and restore wildlife habitat. She has relied on her training as an ecologist and as an environmental attorney to give her a broad perspective for attaining continental connectivity for wildlife. Katie travels here from Salt Lake City, where she lives with her husband and two kids.



Reed Peters & Margaret Wilch — “*Cave Creek Canyon Updates*”

Reed has owned Cave Creek Ranch in Portal since 1998, and is the current President of Friends of Cave Creek Canyon (FOCCC), the nonprofit sponsor of Heritage Days. FOCCC has worked to repair, reopen, and staff the Portal Visitor Information Center, and has been instrumental in rebuilding and reopening many Chiricahua Mountain Trails. **Margaret Wilch is FOCCC’s Education Director**, overseeing numerous community education events and classes, including “Teachers in the Wild.”



Michael Gaglio — “*Water Harvesting in a Time of Drought*”

Michael is a biologist with over 20 years of experience providing ecological restoration with a focus on regenerative design and conservation-oriented techniques. Drawing on his experiences from around the world, Michael’s work specializes in desert ecosystems, rainwater harvesting, green infrastructure, earthwork, re-vegetation, wetland design and construction, and ecology.



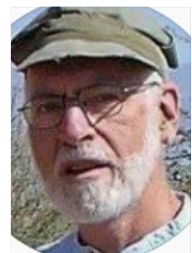
Emily Burns — “*Springs: The Lifeblood of the Chiricahuas*”

Emily joined Sky Island Alliance in 2019, based at the Tucson office. As the Program Director for the Northern Sky Islands, she directs work and staff in the U.S., conducting wildlife research through SIA’s Border Wildlife Study and Sky Island FotoFauna projects. She oversees water monitoring through Spring Seeker and riparian surveys and conducts conservation advocacy and restoration activities across public and private lands.



Mike Anderson — “*Lights, Camera, Action!: Movies Made in Cochise & Hidalgo Counties*”

Mike has been interested in Borderlands history for as long as he can remember. A former newspaper reporter and managing editor, he taught Arizona and world history as a high school social studies teacher and is the author of Warren Ballpark: Images of Sports. His numerous articles on southern Arizona have been published in the Journal of Arizona History and Cochise County Historical Journal. Mike is a frequent contributor to Heritage Days.



Howard Topoff — “*Signs of the Times: The Long Road to Douglas*”

Howard is Professor Emeritus of Psychology of the City University Of New York and has been conducting field research in the Chiricahua Mountains since 1965. As his hearing declines, he spends his time while driving to Douglas by focusing on road signs on Route 80 and has divided the signs into the following categories: Essential, Useful, Silly, Ridiculous and even Dangerous. His analysis involves the Highway Department, local residents, dead residents, Border Patrol, and even trash. Get ready to learn a little and laugh a lot!

Saturday, September 19, Geronimo Event Center, Rodeo, NM