

Desert oasis in Mesa protects endangered species

12 News , KPNX 8:42 PM. MST November 26, 2016



MESA, Ariz. - If you're looking to find a rare desert environment without leaving the city, you need only to go as far as the northeast corner of Mesa to find one.

The Red Mountain Campus of Mesa Community College has created a desert oasis called a cienega at the corner of Power and McKellips roads in Mesa.

"A cienega is a desert wetland found in nature, usually spring-fed, containing a moving source of water," said Griffin Logue, exhibits curator for MCC.

Walking through the environment, every detail has a unique and authentic purpose.

"Everything we have in this ecosystem is something that could be found natively in the state of Arizona," Logue said.

This is also an area to help protect endangered animals, like the gila topminnow, the desert pupfish, the lowland leopard frog and many others.

"We are actively working to conserve this species by allowing them to breed here," Logue said. "When the population gets robust enough, we can take those populations to start new refugee populations or go take them back to the wild where they were once found."

Surrounded by classrooms, this allows students an opportunity to see a rare environment up close and conduct their own research.

"Overall, it's a really good learning experience. And it's really good immersion with some of the native plants and animals," said Donovan Colburn, a student at MCC.

"It helped me experience something that I didn't even know existed in Arizona," said Sierra Wallace, another student.

And these environments are pretty rare to see.

"Sadly, these types of environments are not found in Arizona like they used to be," Logue said. "A lot of these water wetlands systems, their water has been drained for our purposes or paved over to be housing developments."

The cienega is open to the public, and your visits can be summed up in one phrase:

"I would definitely say memorable," Colburn said.

Copyright 2016 KPNX

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

To find out more about Facebook commenting please read the [Conversation Guidelines and FAQs \(http://staticDomain/conversation-guidelines/\)](http://staticDomain/conversation-guidelines/)