

Fire in the Superstitions: Ecological Effects of the Woodbury Fire

The fall 2019 SALT Speakers Series continues Dec. 4th with “Fire in the Superstitions: Ecological Effects of the Woodbury Fire”, presented by Mary Lata. (Note this session was originally scheduled for Nov. 20th - but had to be rescheduled due to Mary’s schedule!)

Mary is a Fire Ecologist with Tonto National Forest, and recently completed the 50-page “Fire Ecology DRAFT Report - Woodbury Fire, June 8th-July 15th, 2019”.

Mary will discuss RAWs (Remote Automatic Weather Stations) data and how they contribute to the present and future work of fire ecologists in the management of landscapes in a fire-prone environment. How did the Superstition’s unusually wet winter of 2018-19 contribute to the severity of the Woodbury Fire? Can all this (and much more) give us a glimpse into the future of the Superstitions and other areas of the Southwest? Mary will share her preferred position on a fire, and how that helps her better understand the consequences of fire and of fire management actions.



A native Iowan, Mary’s fire career started in 1993 with 3 seasons of mostly tallgrass prairie restoration on an internship with The Nature Conservancy. From 1999 to 2001, she worked for the National Park Service at Badlands National Park in South Dakota and as a Fire Effects Monitor out of Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico, which included an assignment on a Wildfire Use Fire - and became addicted to the study of fire! She did her PhD research on a full-ride fellowship, then accepted a permanent job as the Fire Ecologist for the Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands before completing it. There she managed the fuels, watershed, and botany programs. She ultimately completed a Ph.D. in Geoscience at the University of Iowa - while working full time. In 2010, with an eye to improving the management of fire regimes on a landscape scale, she moved to Flagstaff as the Fire Ecologist on the core team for the Four Forest Restoration Initiative. Desiring to get to get back on the ground, in May 2018 she became the Fire Ecologist for the Tonto National Forest in Arizona.

The “Fire In The Superstitions:...” series will wrap up Dec. 11th with a discussion of how wildlife were directly affected by the fire and will continue to be over the next several decades. Might there be some positive outcomes?

“Fire in the Superstitions” is part of the SALT Speakers Series, which is co-sponsored by the Superstition Area Land Trust (SALT) and the Apache Junction Parks & Recreation Department. Talks are, held in the Apache Junction Multigenerational Center, 1035

N. Idaho Rd. from 6:30-7:30 PM in Rm. B-117 on most 2nd and 4th Wednesdays October-April. ALL are free and geared for the public.

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