

Amrita Khalsa  
Liverman Scholars: Cascabel Reflection Piece  
4/15/22

There is a sense of hope for the future at Cascabel, from time spent visiting the Cascabel community with the Liverman scholar program. The land of Cascabel sits on Tohono O'odham land and from our visit with Archaeology Southwest we, the Liverman Scholars, saw remains of terrace agricultural practices, which displays there was once a sustainable agricultural system. As a Food Studies Major myself, I was intrigued.

The community of Cascabel sits at an intersection of the Chihuahua desert, Sonora desert, and Mohave desert, and the residents are ecologically centered, focused on preservation of the biodiverse San Pedro River Valley. With ecological sustainability in mind, visitors will notice compost toilets and a solar-heated shower, and many residents have chosen a totally off-the-grid lifestyle. Everyone who is a part of the Cascabel community, whether seasonal or full-time resident, has the desire to conserve and preserve the land of the San Pedro River Valley. Everyone has the desire to reconnect with the land, earth, biodiversity, and wilderness of the region, and Cascabel is a community of alternative and simple living.

The residents of Cascabel range from families with children to older, retired individuals, which gives a sense of the demographic of individuals who participate in this community and shows a range of age in the communal living environment. As the cascabel community is rural, one may ask how community members support themselves to continue to participate. Some residents are full-time while others live there on a seasonal basis; some are financially secure, while others work remotely to have economic means to support living in this alternative lifestyle community.

When our Liverman scholar group first arrived to Cascabel, we sat and reflected on the space at the hermitage center, and as time went on, I saw this to facilitate a contemplative, spiritual, self-reflective experience. For guests who want to participate and connect to the land and the values of the community, individuals can go to the Cascabel hermitage. The hermitage is a space reserved for any individual to have an invaluable contemplative experience of solitude and self-reflection while being in the unique biodiverse ecosystem of the San Pedro River Valley. Cascabel's unique location is home to a wide biodiversity of flora and fauna. Part of this diverse landscape in which the Cascabel community is situated reminds me of the high desert of northern New Mexico of hilly and bushy terrain. From my time spent at Cascabel I felt a strong atmosphere of community living which surprisingly reminded me of a community I lived in in northern New Mexico. There people could also join a full-time community on a seasonal basis and participate with activities such as a community garden.

While the community in New Mexico was focused on Sikh religious and yoga practice, Cascabel is focused on ecological conservation. However, both communities had a sense of slowing down, connecting deeper with oneself through meditation and self-reflection, and a strong emphasis on community and communal living. I grew up in Tucson, Arizona, and was raised in the Sikh religion, which comes from the state of Punjab in northern India, however I did not have a close community to participate with in Tucson. When I decided to pursue a associates degree in Santa Fe, New Mexico I was also able to participate in the community in northern New Mexico. I appreciate having the experience of growing up in a spiritual

community and finding the importance in connecting within oneself through solitude, meditative practice, and self-reflection. Through my time with the Liverman scholars at Cascabel I came to relate to and make a connection between both communal living environments and recognized that the hermitage site at Cascabel can provide a solitary space to connect to oneself amid busy life in a modern world. As the hermitage site sits in the biodiverse ecosystem of the San Pedro River Valley, individuals can have an experience through slowing down and connecting with the earth and land, a necessary reminder to individuals like the Liverman scholars who come visit amid our busy college studies.

Northern New Mexico



Cascabel Conservation Association



(Photo Credit Kelly Rushford)