



WELCOME TO THE DESERT VIEW CONSERVATION AREA

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROJECT PHASE I – JUNE 2020

Staging Area Overview



Staging Area Shelter



Staging Area Parking & Restroom



Interpretive Panels



Interpretive Panel Details



Beyond the Joshua Tree

Desert Plants and Wildflowers (Flora)

The Joshua Tree
(*Yucca brevifolia*)

Our local community and national park were named after this yucca plant. Growing about 3 inches per year, Joshua trees have been measured up to 50 feet tall. Average lifespan is 150 years but records indicate that some have exceeded 300 years. The waxy, green-white flowers are pollinated when the yucca moth lays its eggs inside the flowers. Seed pods are eaten by birds and rodents. Joshua trees were also used by the Cahillia tribe as a source of food and fibers. Local legend recalls that the tree was named by Mormon settlers due to the trees likeness to Joshua guiding the Israelites through the desert with outstretched arms.

Adaptability of Desert Plants

On average, the local area only receives about 8 inches of rain per year. With a winter low of just below freezing and a summer high of over 100 degrees, temperatures can fluctuate as much as 40 degrees between night and day. In order to survive this harsh environment, plants have adapted means to effectively capture and store water. Most desert plants either have prickly spines instead of leaves or small leaves covered with a thick, waxy skin that prevents evaporation.

Wildflowers and Seasonal Delights

Depending on the amount and timing of precipitation received in a year, the desert can appear to either be a barren, hostile environment, or display a colorful pallet of fast-growing wildflowers and grasses. Some desert wildflowers only germinate after they have had their outer shells roughed up while rolling around in the run-off from rainstorms. Typically, wildflower season spans from mid-March through mid-May. Once temperatures get above the 90s and the rains stop, wildflowers dry-up and disappear just as quickly as they appeared. Desert wildflowers are crucial food items for many desert wildlife species including the desert tortoise.

Cactus and Yuccas


Common cacti found in the DVCA include beavertail cactus, cholla cactus, hedge-hog cactus and barrel cactus. Cactus plants have a symbiotic relationship with the animals making their home in the DVCA. For example, animals using cholla cactus for protection and food, are needed by the cactus for dispersing its seeds and plant sections in order to propagate. Besides the Joshua tree, other yuccas and nolinns found in the DVCA have longer, bayonet shaped leaves. Their white flowers emerge on long, branching stems. The flowers, seeds and roots of most yucca plants are a source of food for animals and humans alike.

Protecting Sensitive Habitats

The DVCA is a wildlife corridor providing access to and from the Joshua Tree National Park. As such, it has great conservation value as many of the fragile desert habitats are being encroached upon by commercial development, residential housing, off-road vehicle activity, invasion of non-native plants and illegal dumping. A trail blazed in the desert becomes permanently etched into the landscape for decades and can take many years to revegetate. Good stewards of sensitive habitats pack out what they pack in, stay on designated trails, respect wildlife when encountered, and learn about and support means to maintain nature education programs. For information regarding becoming a volunteer docent in the DVCA, contact the District office at: 760-366-8415


Logos: SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, JOSHUA TREE

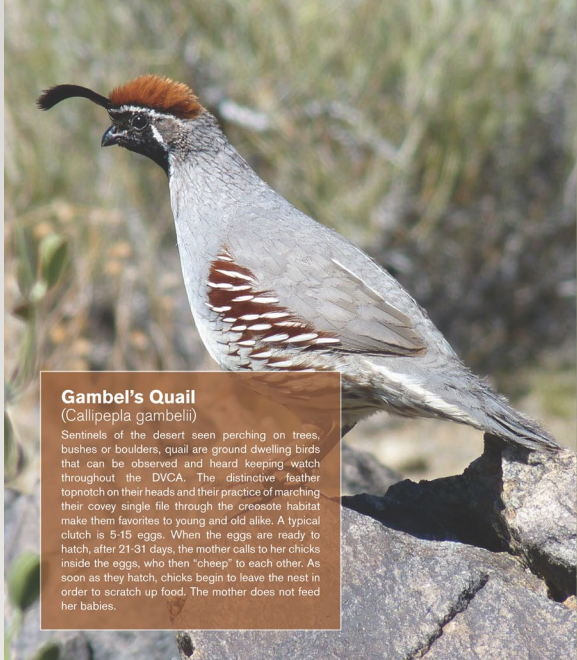
More Interpretive Panels



The Wildlife of Joshua Tree

Desert Animal Life (Fauna)





Gambel's Quail


(*Callipepla gambelii*)


Sentinels of the desert seen perching on trees, bushes or boulders, quail are ground dwelling birds that can be observed and heard keeping watch throughout the DVCA. The distinctive feather topknot on their heads and their practice of marching their covey single file through the creosote habitat make them favorites to young and old alike. A typical clutch is 5-15 eggs. When the eggs are ready to hatch, after 21-31 days, the mother calls to her chicks inside the eggs, who then "cheep" to each other. As soon as they hatch, chicks begin to leave the nest in order to scratch up food. The mother does not feed her babies.

Bobcat

(*Lynx rufus baileyi*)

This medium-sized cat is named for its short tail. The DVCA provides ample habitat for bobcats but they are seldom seen due to their reclusive nature. Bobcats can pounce on their prey from a distance of up to 10 feet. In 2019, a bill was passed banning the hunting of bobcats in California.





Big Horn Sheep


(*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*)


Majestic Big Horn Sheep sometimes wander through the area while grazing on fresh grasses and wildflowers. They have split hooves giving them excellent climbing and balancing skills. Except for mating season, males and females typically travel in segregated herds. Both rams and ewes have spiral horns with the rams' horns weighing up to 30 pounds.

Red Diamond Rattlesnake

(*Crotalus ruber*)

The desert is home to a number of different types of rattlesnakes. The Red Diamond Rattlesnake, makes its home among the granite boulder areas lining both sides of the DVCA. Rattlesnakes are the only venomous snake in California. They will not always shake their rattles in warning, particularly during cold weather. Most rattlesnake bites occur to the fingers and hands. Always be mindful of reaching into rock crevices or beneath shrubs. If you encounter a rattlesnake you should, freeze to avoid attracting attention, listen to assess the situation, and then slowly back away.





Scorpion


(*Hadrurus hirsutus*)


A member of the Arachnida class, scorpions have 8 legs like spiders. Their tail has venom used to kill its prey, but the species found in the DVCA is not deadly to humans. Young are born live and carried on the mother's back for 10-15 days before venturing out on their own. Scorpions spend the daytime in the shade under rocks and in crevices. They are active at night, when they feed on insects, spiders, and even other scorpions!

Tarantula

(*Aphonopelma idiom*)

These black hairy giants of the spider world and of horror movie fame are actually quite shy. Their venom is not poisonous to humans but feels more like a bee sting. Females can live to be 20 years old. Tarantulas are most active in California deserts during the fall mating season, when males will leave their burrows in search of a mate.





Chuckwalla

(*Sauromalus ater*)

These large lizards can reach up to 20 inches long and are regularly seen sunning on boulders throughout the area. The common name comes from the Shoshone word *caaxwal* or *Caahulla*, axwal. When startled, chuckwallas crawl into crevices in rocks and inflate their lungs making it very difficult for them to be extracted.



Desert Tortoise

(*Gopherus agassizii*)





California State Reptile

The Desert Tortoise is the official reptile of both California and Nevada. While in the 1920's there were circa 450 desert tortoises per square mile in parts of the Mojave Desert, today, the species has a conservation status of "Threatened" under both the Federal and California Endangered Species Acts due to the marked decline in population and habitat. Adult tortoises weigh between 8-15 pounds, are 8-15 inches in length and may live as long as 60-80 years in the wild. Adults can survive for several months without drinking. They are herbivores and get most of their nutrition from the annual grasses, perennial plants and wildflowers they eat.

Survival in the Harsh Desert

Tortoises are well-adapted for desert environments. They dig underground burrows that protect them from the extreme heat and freezing temperatures experienced in the desert climate. Tortoises also dig basins to capture rainwater for drinking. Between April and July, females lay up to three clutches of 4-8 ping-pong ball sized eggs which hatch in August or September. They hibernate during the winter months, spending about 95 percent of their lives inside their burrows.





Threats to Habitat and Species

The main threats to this vulnerable species are habitat loss, diseases, and predators such as ravens and coyotes. Human activities such as urbanization and utility development have caused the loss of desert tortoise habitat, and spread of disease among wild tortoises. Ravens prey on hatching tortoises. Dogs may destroy burrows, the most important shelter and retreat option a tortoise has. Many tortoises are killed by motor vehicles, so please be sure to look under your vehicle before moving it within the DVCA.

What to Do if you Encounter in the Wild

Remember you are in their territory. Do not approach or pick-up a tortoise unless they are in danger of being harmed. They have a defense mechanism that causes them to void their bladder and lose their liquid reserve when frightened. A tortoise that voids its bladder may subsequently die of dehydration if it is unable to replenish its water reserve. It is against the law to harass a desert tortoise or to take it home. Do not feed it! Licensed tortoise rescue facilities can provide you with important care and adoption information. Please do not release pet tortoises into the DVCA because they may carry diseases that infect wild tortoises.



Conservation Status: Vulnerable



The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (also known as the IUCN Red List or Red Data List), was founded in 1984, is used by conservation biologists to identify and inventory the global conservation status of biological species. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is regarded as the global authority on the conservation status of species. The Desert Tortoise is considered **VULNERABLE**, while not in immediate danger of extinction, the effects of humankind are negatively affecting their natural habitat.

Trail Signage



Trail Distance Markers x 10



Tortoise Trail Alignment



Big Horn Sheep Trail Alignment



More Big Horn Sheep Trail Alignment



Additional Signage



Additional Gates





THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE DESERT VIEW CONSERVATION AREA

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