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Blowsand Reader

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010

Superintendent's Notes

By Kathy Dolinar, District Superintendent

"If you build it, they will come"—and if you provide an opportunity for people to learn in a fun-filled environment, not only will they come but they will leave with a new appreciation for the world around them. That's exactly what happened as a result of our first annual "Roughneck Rendezvous," an event that perfectly illustrates that famous movie quote (one of *my* all-time favorites).

The Rendezvous was a special geocaching event, the first ever in our state parks. Once again our forward-looking OW team took a chance and hosted a very popular but sometimes controversial form of recreation. And thanks to our interpretive team, our district staff, our family of volunteers, and, of course, our visitors, the event was a huge success.

Across the board (through surveys and casual conversation) participants told us that what they liked the best about the event was *the opportunity to learn about and be inspired by our park's resources*. It is clear that we *can* reach most of our visitors and fulfill our educational mission.

People *are* willing to be educated, but we need a captive audience—which we can only get by providing quality recreational activities that draw them to our park. However, if we choose to discourage or even ban the activities that bring people to our parks, we lose this opportunity to educate and inspire them as future partners in our mission.

The Roughneck Rendezvous was a way to share a bit of our history and connect with a growing segment of our society who blend their love of the outdoors with an interest in technology (GPS).



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Superintendent's Notes *continued...*

Two years ago, our park decided to be proactive and develop and implement an official geocaching policy. Partnering with geocaching.com in order to reach out to the geocaching community, we initially placed just four interpretive caches in the park. They proved very successful. For the Rendezvous event our interpretive staff developed and placed over one hundred caches, each containing an interpretive message (some in the form of natural history and geological "trading cards"). These, too, proved very popular, and we will be leaving caches at 20 of our most popular sites for year-round exploration.

Addressing the commissioners during the public comment portion of the commission meeting last week, a member of the public stated: "Thank you to Ocotillo Wells for showing us that if you provide something for people to do, they will come to it and recreate responsibly." I personally would like to thank all who were involved in providing our park visitors with this magical experience. I appreciate all of the hard work, dedication, passion and never-ending energy that you put into this highly successful event. I hope that your efforts will inspire others to "dream big" and discover new ways of keeping our parks' mission alive.

A Recent Sighting

By Jeff Price, State Park Interpreter I

While out in the park in late February (doing a practice run for an auto tour), I had an exciting sighting. A hint of movement alerted me to one of the most



beautiful reptiles our park has to offer. This male fringe-toed lizard was soaking up the sun and didn't seem to mind the photographer taking his portrait. In fact, he seemed to *want* to show off his wonderful coloration!

Wildflowers are Here!

By Sophia Kast, State Park Interpreter

March is here and so are the wildflowers! Starting out slowly at the end of February, the flowers have finally started to bloom in abundance. Sand verbena and dune evening primrose cover the sides of the trails near Devil's Slide and Barrel Springs. Brown-eyed primrose and popcorn flower dominate the brand new amphitheater area. Always a favorite, many desert five-spots are poised to bloom just southwest of the ranger station.



However, this year's winner is the elegant desert lily. These fragrant flowers are popping out all over the park, even in the places where little else grows. As long as the weather doesn't get too hot or too windy, the bloom should be long and beautiful!

Roughneck Rendezvous Wrap-up

By Jeff Price, State Park Interpreter I

Success! That one word sums up the entire Roughneck Rendezvous Geocaching Adventure. Many participants came to this first ever event put on by a state park wondering whether we would be up to the task. I am proud to say that, thanks to a wonderful team of park staff and volunteers, we exceeded their wildest expectations. Many visitors commented how professional and well-run this event was, and how they had never seen a first year event done so professionally and with so much enthusiasm from all involved. The answer to the question “What would make next year’s event better?” on the majority of the questionnaires we passed out was, “Nothing! It is already perfect!”

A success of this magnitude depends upon a great team working together to create an experience that participants won’t soon forget! So we offer a big thank you to the Interpretive, Maintenance, Resource, Volunteer, Administrative, Law Enforcement and Friends of Ocotillo Wells teams for making this an excellent event that will go down in the Ocotillo Wells history books! Please enjoy the following pictures featuring but a few of the 200 registered participants and 600 attendees!



(Continued on next page...)

Roughneck Rendezvous Wrap-up *continued...*



Admin Ledger

By Delane Hurley, Staff Services Analyst

The rains seem to be subsiding and Ocotillo Wells will soon see the beauty of wildflowers pop up all around us. But wildflowers aren't the only thing preparing to pop up. The Administration Group continues to see plenty of action even as our park prepares to take a siesta from the busy riding season. The District Office is bursting at the seams and will be getting a remodel. A big thank you goes to Warren White of the Northern Service Center for his endless work to get this moving. New construction will be popping up; Delane, the new contract analyst, is working to get the ball rolling on a parking lot for the Discovery Center. Thanks also go to Hannah Walloupe of the Sierra District for coming down to assist during this wild time! Meanwhile, Linda will continue to keep afloat working on CAL-Cards, invoices and PAPOs; thanks Linda! Kitty, always flooded with timesheets, is doing her usual great job of keeping our new hires on track. Way to go! Charles, back from his trip to Hawaii, is off and running to take care of our financial data and providing management reports. Leda, our fearless leader, continues to handle and oversee the administrative process, holding steady to our shared vision of an ever-better OWSVRA.

Besides our normal work we also found time to do some training:

- Charles attended a very informative Intro to Parks training at Mott Training Center.
- Admin hosted Record Retention training led by Ted Holm—Central Records (SAC) for employees from OW, Anza-Borrego and San Diego Coast.
- Caitlin took the ASI Instructor's course.
- Kitty gave a training class for employees on riding quads.
- Kitty and Caitlin participated as Range Aides for a Quad class for Sheriff's and CalPAL kids from Temecula.

In addition to all our other activities, the Admin group was able to help in the geocache event by running the registration booth and the awarding of the prize tickets.

Meet Carol...

My name is Carol Grunewald. I have four children, nine grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Due to the California state park budget cuts, I transferred from Anza-Borrego Desert State Park after working at Palm Canyon for 11 years. I enjoyed working at Palm Canyon, but Ocotillo Wells is great too. I especially like exploring the back roads. I look forward to my new position with the OW maintenance team.



New Bug Guide

By Jeff Price, State Park Interpreter I

Wildflower season is upon us, and for most visitors that means endless hours gazing at, photographing and generally marveling at those botanical gems of the desert. Some visitors will look beyond the flower blooms and observe the buzzing, waddling and zipping that occurs around them! Yes, our desert bug season is now upon us! In our desert we are blessed with some of the most colorful insects around, and to help everyone know what they are looking at, we have produced a Desert Bug Guide. It highlights 21 of the most common insects, arachnids and true bugs found within Ocotillo Wells with a major expansion planned for next year. So the next time you're in the area looking at the wonderful flowers, stop by the District Office and pick up the new bug guide to learn more about the buzzing, flying, and waddling gems that are sometimes ignored.



Meet Michael...

My name is Michael Krechmar. I feel fortunate to have been chosen for the PMA position here at OW. I came from the Santa Cruz Mountain Sector-Big Basin State Park, California's oldest state park, where I worked as a Park Aide for two years and fell in love with the redwood forest. Prior to working at Big Basin, I lived in Clearwater, Florida. My wife and I traveled through Europe and the islands, and we also traveled by RV across America. In 2007 I lost my wife to lung cancer. I have two children, Tina & Chris, and also have two grandchildren. I like all types of music and enjoy playing the piano and guitar. I also speak and write German. I have never been on an ATV or dune buggy and wonder if it's like a snowmobile or a jet ski... I am looking forward to a new and exciting adventure in the desert, where I have found a dedicated, proud and very friendly working environment.



Astronomy Corner

By Ali Barnes, State Park Interpreter

We at Ocotillo Wells certainly have one over the hustle and bustle of San Diego—our inky black night skies. The night sky in the Borrego Valley is one so special that Borrego Springs has recently achieved the prestigious International Dark Sky Community Certification, being the second community to receive this distinction behind Flagstaff, Arizona. Throughout the busy riding season, the Interpretation Department has taken advantage of these crisp, dark skies by inviting visitors to partake in a stargazing program. At dusk, we entice visitors to join us at the ranger station with a campfire, hot chocolate and marshmallows, and best of all, the Celestron 11-inch telescope.

When not in line to take a peek into the telescope, visitors were curious to know what stars and constellations were overhead. Interpreters are geared with green laser pointers (green light travels much further than red light) to help guide visitors across the blanket of stars above them. Because the winter sky is dominated by the constellation Orion, the hunter, we focused much of our time around him, and believe me, there is more to him than his belt. At his right shoulder glows the red supergiant star, Betelgeuse. Because Betelgeuse is nearing its end, it is predicted to explode into a supernova that would outshine the moon in the night sky in the next thousand years.

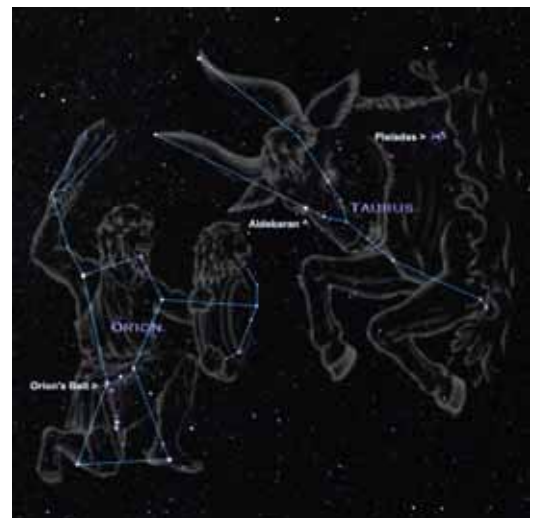


Betelgeuse is not Orion's only stellar feature. Orion would not be the great hunter he is without his sword, which is represented with a group of stars at his hip. A closer look at this sword in the telescope, however, reveals the Orion Nebula. Although it may only look like a mere wisp of smoke through the lens, this nebula, like all other stellar nebulae, is where millions of stars are being born.

Upon hearing this, one of our astute Junior

Rangers tugged on my sleeve and told me, "It's just like a star nursery where all the baby stars grow!"

One last look at Orion reveals a faint arc of stars that traces out his shield. He holds it in position against the aggressive constellation to the west, Taurus the bull, who is clapping his hooves, ready to charge. One of Taurus' main features is his glowering red eye known as the orange giant star Aldebaran, nicknamed the "Bull's Eye." Behind Orion to the east is his loyal hunting dog, the constellation Canis Major. Some say he is at the ready to protect his master, but it is hard not to wonder whether



(Continued on next page...)

Astronomy Corner *continued...*

he is merely giving the constellation Lepus, the hare, a good chase. Whatever the case may be, Canis Major's main feature is the star Sirius, the brightest of all the stars in the night sky and not to be confused with the satellite radio station.

If you ever happened to be looking to the south sometime before January, the brightest star in the sky is not really a star at all but the largest planet in our solar system, Jupiter. Glowing a bright silver, Jupiter was one of the brightest objects in the night sky from the summer into the beginning of winter. However, he has finally caught up with the sunset and is no longer visible after dusk. Luckily, we were able to catch him in his last few months with the telescope earlier this season. Looking through the telescope unveiled the distinctive banded atmospheric clouds on the planet's surface. Visitors were astounded that not only could they see the planet's banded clouds, but were even able to see its four largest moons (photo above).



Although Jupiter has disappeared into the sunset these days, we now await the arrival of Mars *and* Saturn, respectively, every night as the spring approaches. A look at Mars (photo at left) through the telescope has allowed visitors to gaze at its northern polar ice cap, a wonderful juxtaposition of stark whiteness to the rest of the planet's earthy red rock. A look at Saturn through the telescope reveals its rings in all their glory. Late March is the best time to view Saturn as it makes its closest approach to Earth. If you have not had a chance to see these two planets yet, you have

plenty of time since they will be the main features of the night sky throughout the spring and most of the summer.

As the evening temperatures begin to rise throughout the season, I encourage you to venture outdoors and take advantage of the pristine night sky over the Borrego Valley. If you have the whole night or just a few minutes in the evening to spare, come join the interpreters at the ranger station to peek through the telescope, have a go with the smaller Astroscan telescopes, and learn a little bit about the night sky above you. We will provide a cozy campfire and snacks as we guide you around the night sky looking at stars, planets, galaxies, nebulae, and even the moon!



Biological Resources

By Joe Hopkins, Environmental Scientist

After writing extensively about rain in the November/December issue, I can hardly believe that rain would again be the subject of the lead paragraph this issue. In fact January was a record month: the 4.1 inches recorded at Headquarters is the most for any month at any location at OW; the 2.85 inches at Ocotillo North in that one month surpassed the YEARLY average at that location; the 2.51 inches at Barrel Springs was 11 times its monthly average for January; even the new gauges at Corner and Pole Line with 2.79 surpassed the totals read there in 2009, the only full year they have been in place. Furthermore, the decent, if not record-setting, rainfall in February should sustain the wildflower bloom.



When we found this 0.37 inches awaiting us January 19 at Barrel Springs, we didn't realize it was a mere drop in the bucket compared to what we would have by the end of the week.

This time of the year is usually for report writing and attending trainings and conferences. And there was a lot of that in 2010. Senior Environmental Scientist Eric Hollenbeck was rarely seen around here in January with a week at Resources Management Training at Marconi, a week of Management Practices at Marconi, and a week of Freeman and/or General Plan meetings at various locations. Environmental Scientist Gary Slattery attended The Wildlife Society Western Conference in Visalia, and he and ES Joe Hopkins attended the Salton Sea Bird Festival for the one day devoted to desert birds. Joe and Environmental Services Intern Donna Hopkins helped prepare the 2009 flat-tailed horned lizard report for the Interagency Coordinating Committee and Joe started analysis of our 2009 data for the OW Habitat Monitoring Annual Report.

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Biological Resources *continued...*

There was time for other activity though. Joe, in cooperation with one of our park partners, the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association, presented a program on reptiles and amphibians for a select group of 4th and 5th graders at the Borrego Elementary School. Gary used the abundance of rain to try to get more plants from the greenhouse transplanted in the park—and on a positive note, not too many of the earlier transplants in San Felipe were flooded away.

This is not what happened to our lizards in the rainfall—this is not even a lizard from our park. It's a marine iguana from the Galapagos, one of the reptile species of the world featured in Joe's talk at the elementary school.



Usually there are no surveys this time of year, but one of the recommendations of the peer review committee on the OHV Habitat Monitoring System was that bird surveys need to be done at different times of the year. Spring surveys are normally done in April, but at the committee's recommendation, selected sites would also be surveyed in February and March. The four surveys done in February did pay some dividend: observations of Say's phoebe courtship behavior and of male phainopepla fighting for territory. The committee had proposed extra surveys to try to catch nesting behaviors, which, for some desert birds, occurs in late winter. We also observed a new species, the sage thrasher, which, according to the comprehensive book on birds of the region by Anza-Borrego bird experts, ES Paul Jorgensen and Ranger (retired) Bob Theriault, would have been less likely to be seen in April. We also had increased numbers of white-crowned sparrows, a common winter resident which is often gone by the time we do April surveys.

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Biological Resources *continued...*

Practically everyone from the Resources Building—biological staff, an archaeologist, and GIS-- went to Freeman with personnel from Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to examine a major deposit of petrified wood and to develop a damage assessment form because this area is being overridden by vehicles leaving the designated trails.



Senior Park Aide Tien Tran photo-documents the paleo site while Eric gets a closer look. GIS Analyst Don Solleder is GPSing the location while Archaeologist Margaret Kress surveys the landscape for any archaeological features. ABDSP personnel Paul Johnson (left) and Scott Musick (walking ahead) are also pictured.

Meet Julie...

Julie Leiser graduated with her BA in Anthropology from UC San Diego. During that time, she completed two study abroad programs in Egypt and the Yucatan that emphasized research on the Egyptians and the Maya. Julie came to Ocotillo Wells after an internship at the Southern Service Center in San Diego. She lives in Vista with her Beagle/Chihuahua, Bailey and her two cats, Guinness and Corona. Before working for state parks, she was a bartender for six years.



Critter Cam

By Joe Hopkins, Environmental Scientist

Could you find the coyote in last month's photo?

To all our loyal readers, could you find the coyote in the Critter Cam (Part III) article in the last issue of the *Blowsand Reader*? This was an impossible task, especially since the copy printed in the newsletter made it even more difficult to see. Below, left, is the original photograph and at the bottom is a copy of the picture with the mid-tones adjusted so you can compare the two photos.



Original photo from the November/December *Blowsand Reader*.



Adjusted photo—the coyote is standing just to the left of the post.

Meet Martin...

Hello my fellow citizens of this wonderful land of OW. My name is Martin Silva Rubalcava. I was born and raised in Brawley, CA, but I come here by way of La Quinta, CA, where I have lived the last 18 years. The last five years I worked with the CA Dept. of Food and Agriculture in the Coachella valley. My hobbies include hiking (of course), golf, softball, basketball, movies and wildlife. I would like to thank everyone for making me feel welcome and I look forward to many "happy trails."



Interpreter's Corner

By Steve Quartieri, Environmental Scientist

The past few months have been an exciting time in the Interpretation Department here at Ocotillo Wells. During this time, several exciting projects and events have been brought to life in our park. They include the opening of our new 100-seat amphitheater, the delivery and set-up of our new 1,400 sq. ft. Discovery Center, the first-ever geocaching event in a California State Park, the installation of seven new interpretive panels, and the development and production of numerous new interpretive publications. Oh yeah, and all of this went on while the interpretive team presented 100 interpretive programs and exhibits to over 10,000 visitors. Awww...just another incredible performance from the incredibly talented team here at Ocotillo Wells. Thanks to all of you for your support!



The new Ocotillo Wells amphitheater.

The park's first-ever amphitheater made its grand opening to a standing room only crowd of geocaching enthusiasts and park dignitaries during our Roughneck Rendezvous on Friday, January 29th, 2010. It was a very special event which included interpretive programs about early navigational techniques and the evolution of GPS technology, and even a special appearance by the "OW Oil Man" who told us about the early days of oil prospecting and drilling here in the park. It was a wonderful evening of programs

which concluded with hot chocolate, s'mores and stargazing through our giant telescope. What a magical opening to what was only a dream just eighteen months ago!

The amphitheater was the culmination of many months of sweat, hard work and remarkable patience not only on the part of the Interp Department, but our entire park staff. As in all successful projects, many incredibly talented people played significant roles in completing this monumental task. From our District Superintendent, Kathy Dolinar, who believed in and fought adamantly for the project since its conception, to the entire Administration Department who successfully completed and awarded the building contract—from Jana Gillock who managed the initial phases of construction, to our new Chief of Maintenance Glyne Johnson, who took over the construction management role of the project during its most trying times and skillfully guided us to the finish line, and finally to the members of the Maintenance and Interpretive teams who worked so diligently on the landscaping surrounding the amphitheater and walkway. Together, as great teams do, we worked through the

(Continued on next page...)

Interpreter's Corner *continued...*

challenges that were before us and produced an incredible structure that will be around for generations of visitors to enjoy. We have reason to be proud of our accomplishment!

The amphitheater is sure to host many interpretive programs and events in the future. It will be the home to a variety of evening campfire programs, stargazing programs, weddings and other special events not even dreamed of yet. We look forward to a long and storied future for our amphitheater and we invite you to be a part of it!



Campfire at Roughneck Rendezvous geocaching event

young and old, can discover some of the hidden secrets of the desert. The Discovery Center will be surrounded by an expansive deck on two of its sides. The deck will be home to various outdoor interpretive exhibits including a park relief map depicting the many trails found in our park. The center will also be the base of operations for several of the park's interpretive programs, including Junior Ranger programs, interpretive talks, as well as various



Setting up the Celestron for the astronomy program

The recent delivery of the park's first-ever Discovery Center was another significant milestone for our park. The Discovery Center is a new 24' x 60' modular building that will serve as the new point of contact for our visitors starting in the fall of 2010. It will include a reception area where visitors will be able to gain first-hand knowledge about the park from our experienced staff. It will also house numerous interpretive exhibits about the biological, geological, and cultural treasures found in the park, and it will be complete with a hands-on laboratory where kids,



Delivery of the Discovery Center

(Continued on next page...)

Interpreter's Corner *continued...*



public service programs, and it will also serve as the meeting point for several of our off-road adventures into the park, both vehicular and foot.

This project is another great example of what a talented team can accomplish when they put their minds to it. As with all successful projects, many incredibly talented people have contributed to its success and many more will contribute in the center's future. As with most projects, this one has definitely had its

challenges and stressful moments. However, thanks to the hard work and perseverance of the park's team, the dream of having a Discovery Center for park visitors to enjoy is now one step closer to becoming a reality. I tip my Stetson to all of you involved. Thank you!



The Discovery Center is the anchor of the larger plan to develop the area around the District Office into a destination for our park visitors. Plans for the area surrounding the Discovery Center include a one-third mile ADA-accessible interpretive loop trail that will lead visitors to the amphitheater, to newly developed picnic areas, and then back to the Discovery Center where their journey began. This trail will also serve as the access point to our longer foot trail that will lead hikers through the newly-developed recreation area in the park. Watch for more information about the Discovery Center grand opening this fall.



The Oil Man (Andy Fitzpatrick) talks about the quest for oil at OW

Park Interpreter Andrew Fitzpatrick (aka Mr. Doyle, the Oil Man) recently authored a 32-page interpretive publication about the quest to find black gold at Ocotillo Wells. This oil history guide is the culmination of two years of research in which Andy spent many hours digging through the bowels of several local historical societies.

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Interpreter's Corner *continued...*

This historical look at oil exploration in the park is available free of charge at the OW District Office. Be sure to pick up your copy today.

The interpretive publications team has been working at a feverish pace to develop and produce numerous incredible additions to what has become a significant collection of quality interpretive publications at Ocotillo Wells.

Thanks to the talented writing and creative skills of Beth Shugan, Donna Hopkins, Lesley Manent, and Alison Barnes, the group teamed up to produce 40 new trading cards to add to our ever-growing collection of collectable desert trading cards. These new trading cards include the flat-tailed horned lizard, the ocotillo, Pumpkin Patch, Shell Reef and Gas Domes, just to name a few. All of these new cards, as well as the ones previously developed by the interpretive team, were used during the park's recent Roughneck Rendezvous and *wow, were they a hit!* Each event geocache contained a different trading card. For participants to successfully obtain credit for a cache, they needed to read the information on the trading card and then answer a question. Many participants commented on how much they learned about the resources while participating in the event. In fact, many educators have requested a complete set of the trading cards for use in their classrooms. Great job team!



And lastly, Beth and Jeff Price recently put together a 21-species Desert Bug Guide for Ocotillo Wells. This is the fourth guide in our Natural History Series which now includes Desert Guides for Wildflowers, Reptiles, Mammals and now Bugs. Beth is currently working on our next addition to the series, Desert Birds.

This season has truly has been an amazing year so far; however, the last couple of months have been especially significant for the Interpretation Department. Together we are beginning to see, first hand, the fruits of the entire park's hard work and dedication to our interpretive program. Stay the course my friends, I foresee many bountiful harvests in the years to come.

Trail News

By Brian Woodson, Maintenance Supervisor, Trails

The storms are here and we are definitely getting runoff!

These last two months found the trail crew busy for several days after the week-long storm, heading out on the trails to pump some of the “lakes” off the roads so that our operators could regrade them for our first annual Roughneck Rendezvous geocaching event. With help from our Heavy Equipment Operator, Dan Christiansen, as well as some time spent by Dennis Raymond, Park Maintenance Supervisor, and even Glyne Johnson, Park Maintenance Chief II on a borrowed motor grader, we were able to get the roads set and ready for the weekend-long event.

As far as sign work goes, we have made further progress in the area east of Pole Line Road with the installation of the “route” markers that we mentioned in the last article. Oil Well Wash, Campbell Wash, Lakeshore Trail, and Pole Line Road are among the trails that we were able to finish so far.

Even the Freeman Property got two new interpretive panels put in at Four Palm Springs.



Brian Woodson, Julio Valadez and Cesar Casillas install four new interpretive signs at Shell Reef!



(Continued on next page...)

Trail News *continued...*

We also continue to make progress in photo-documenting all of the old signs that had been previously installed. This process, as well as photo-documenting any new sign installations, helps to maintain an accurate inventory of what we have in the park.

That's all of the highlights for now. From all of us on the Trail Crew, "Thanks for reading, and stay tuned..."



The Interpretation Department would like to convey a special "THANK YOU" to Brian, Julio and Cesar for their great job installing these new interpretive panels in our park!

OW Maintenance



By Julie Humann, Park Maintenance Worker II (Acting)

It was all hands on deck for the maintenance staff. The Discovery Center's new deck and stairs were our top priority project for the months of January and February.



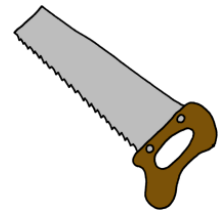
Work in progress on the Discovery Center's deck and stairs.

Ramada replacement and residence painting also continued. Other small tasks were completed including: painting the residence area propane tanks, fire marshal requests, a shower pan installation and other small repairs of the residence trailers. The maintenance team also repaired a water main leak in the employee parking area.

The housekeeping and maintenance staff assisted with the setup and cleanup of the park's geocaching special event. Several special events during the months of January and February kept the housekeeping staff busy. Thanks to all their hard work, the park looks great.

(Continued on next page...)

OW Maintenance *continued...*



The Discovery Center now has a new deck and stairs.



On rainy days we started on an inside project—the installation of a drop ceiling in the block house. The break room was completed and additional materials ordered to continue the project.

Stay tuned for more maintenance news.

Big “Thank You” from Borrego Elementary

By Joe Hopkins, Environmental Scientist

I just wanted to share with everyone how pleased the folks are at the elementary school every time our used printer cartridges are taken over there. For the benefit of the many new employees who may not have been informed, the school recycles all ink or toner cartridges from printers, faxes, and copiers, no matter what shape or size. It is easiest to slip the cartridge into the box from which you are taking the replacement. Please put the recycled unit in the office of Environmental Scientist Joe Hopkins in the Resources Building. Again, a huge thanks from Borrego Elementary!

The Heber Dunes Report

By Vic Herrick, Supervising Ranger

February was an eventful month in that we hosted our second public involvement/workshop meeting on the 7th. Some excellent information was gathered by surveys that were filled out by workshop participants which included a wide diversity of visitors and stakeholders. They ranged from local school teachers, to agricultural consultants/farmers, landowners, and, of course, off-road riders/enthusiasts. Several participants who may have otherwise been missed were personally invited by our maintenance aide, Travis Layton. Travis was riding his own Honda CR250 motorcycle in the park, and some riders seemed to respond to *his* invitation when others' had failed.

Travis is the latest addition to the Heber staff, and we are glad to have him. He brings with him the zeal and enthusiasm of an off-road enthusiast and also a very local perspective. A long-term resident of the Imperial Valley and a 1996 graduate of Holtville High School, Travis was born in El Centro and raised in nearby Holtville. He is the third generation of his family to ride here at Heber Dunes and Glamis/Imperial Dunes. (Holtville is a small town farming community which is about 7 miles north of Heber Dunes SVRA.) Like many local "farm kids," Travis started riding various off-road vehicles as a child, including motorcycles, farm equipment, and various trucks and cars that he would salvage with the help of his father and grandfather, both of whom are off-road enthusiasts with competitive racing and mechanic backgrounds. Travis brings some great skills to the job, some of which he acquired through his motorsports hobbies. He enjoys welding and the restoration of old vehicles which come to him in various degrees of disrepair. He has fully restored a '66 Vespa motor scooter, a '62 VW bug, and an endless variety of other vehicles belonging to friends and family.



Travis rides his motorcycle at Heber Dunes SVRA.

Travis loves to spend days off on long desert rides and camping with his friends and family. He is single, but with two toddler daughters, so he is a busy man. Travis expects to live in the Imperial Valley always, and he is well adapted to the culture and heat. He very much enjoys the riding opportunities in the area, and his background in motorsports, auto repair and mechanic skills make him a welcome member of the Heber Dunes SVRA team.

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The Heber Dunes Report *continued...*

Usually quiet and peaceful Heber had a few incidents at the end of the month that have caused concern. A vandal with a rifle shot a red-tailed hawk adjacent to the park, much to the chagrin of wildlife-appreciating Heber employees. Ranger Herrick suspects it is one of the pair that nested on the nearby SDG&E tower within the park last season. On the 28th we had a small brush wildfire occur, and within a few hours, a flood, the result of major vandalism to an adjacent canal. This resulted in an expensive and frustrating loss of precious water to a neighboring farmer and damage to the west perimeter road. Investigations are ongoing.



Travis loves to ride in Heber Dunes.



Left: A bewildered Supervising Ranger Vic Herrick examines the carcass of a Red-tailed Hawk.



Right: Vandalism and flood damage to a canal adjacent to Heber Dunes.

Visitor Services—November and December

By Jordan Fenwick, State Park Ranger

In the thick of it—the busy season, that is—we had close to 150,000 visitors over both the Thanksgiving and the New Years holidays. That means lots of medicals for the OW Rangers and Desert Lifeguards to which to respond. Everything went smoothly though, like a well-oiled machine. During the holidays, most days had as many as ten or more airships transporting injured OHVs to nearby trauma centers such as Desert Regional in Palm Springs or Palomar in Escondido, 90-minute rides by ambulance or 20 minutes by helicopter. In relation to the large number of riders in the park, the amount of major medicals is quite low. Nevertheless, it was great having a larger staff this season with eight Lifeguards working the busy weekends and eight Rangers, as well as some much appreciated assistance from several Anza-Borrego Rangers who came over to help out on those holiday late nights.



We recently received news that there will be two Rangers transferring here in early January, Callan McLaughlin will be coming from North Coast Redwoods and Jim Collins will be making the short hop over from Anza-Borrego. Callan is a defensive tactics instructor and Jim is a firearms inspector and will be helping me keep all our guns in tip top shape. We will meet them on the next page; we look forward to having them become part of the OW team!



So to all you loyal Blowsand readers out there in OHV land, The Ocotillo Wells Visitor Services Staff hopes you had a great holiday season and wishes you a wonderful 2010!

And finally, congratulations to Supervising Ranger Andy Ahlberg and his wife Heather, who gave birth to their daughter Adalynn Rayne on November 16. She weighed 7lbs. 2oz. and is their fourth child.



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Visitor Services—January and February

By Jordan Fenwick, State Park Ranger

The season is winding to a close and the temperatures are going to rise. January and February have been quite busy as the weather has been great and OW is an ever-popular destination on holiday weekends. Martin Luther King and Presidents weekends drew large crowds; OW staff, as well as local fire and medical, were kept busy. Rangers worked extended shifts these weekends while newly promoted Supervising Ranger Howard was away over Presidents weekend due to important



business at the Daytona 500. Both Medical and Law Enforcement calls have run smoothly so far this year due to our experienced Rangers and Desert Lifeguards and the addition of two veteran Rangers in January, Callan and Jim.

To escape the cold and rain, Callan McLaughlin (on the left) transferred here from North Coast Redwoods, where he worked for two years. Before that he gained a lot of law enforcement experience working for two years at Lake Oroville. Now he's back in Borrego Springs where he attended high school.

Jim Collins made the short hop to OW from Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, where he had worked for two and a half years. Since he has helped out on busy weekends at OW and, like Callan, attended high school in Borrego Springs, Jim didn't need much familiarization with the trails and landmarks of Ocotillo Wells. We're glad to have them as part of the team.

Rangers Borello and Wessitsh attended FTO Training in San Diego last month. In this class, they learn to be Field Training Officers, instructing new officers who have just completed the POST academy portion of their training. They will now be even more valuable assets to the park and will join Rangers Ahlberg, Howard, and McLaughlin as the Ocotillo Wells Field Training Staff.

Due to the vast size of Ocotillo Wells, it is not uncommon for people to become disoriented and lost, or to run out of fuel in the more remote areas of the



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Visitor Services *continued...*

park. This results in OW Rangers and Lifeguards conducting Search & Rescue operations. One such incident occurred recently, when a visitor's motorcycle broke down and he became separated from his riding group in the area of Pole Line Road and Tule Wash. OW units began a search, which was made difficult by darkness and rough trails caused by recent heavy rains. Lifeguards McClung and Buss attempted to get to the area where the visitor was last seen and, due to an impassable wash crossing Pole Line, had to hike about 3 miles through the mud to search. After hours of searching, Ranger Collins found the missing rider walking along Gas Domes Trail west of Cahuilla Trail, over 5 miles as the crow flies from Tule Wash. He was dehydrated and considering drinking from puddles, but was unhurt.



Recently added to our code-3 vehicle lineup is our Polaris 6x6 Ranger. This side-by-side can get to many places in the park where larger vehicles can't, and has the ability to transport patients to a waiting ambulance or helicopter. The rear patient area is also moveable, allowing a patient to remain horizontal while the vehicle descends steep hills. In the photo, above, the Desert Lifeguards (from left: McClung, Dawson, Buss) seem to be having way too much fun in their new toy. Gotta love those helmets.



We've had some good storms come through the Ocotillo Wells area so far this year, and flash flood waters can wreak havoc in the park and on nearby roads, as with Hwy. 78 in the photo to the left. The water was moving very fast and when this 10-ton Caltrans plow drove through it, the flood waters nearly pushed it into the ditch.

Until the next issue of OW Visitor Services, have a great time out there in OHV land and please ride safely!

Bugs Found in Ocotillo Wells SVRA

The names of these bugs never lie wholly in a straight line; they bend and twist in every direction to challenge your mind.

T A F L I S O N W E N T D E R W
 A N T U O N A L T P O I N S I G
 R Z Z E H G T I B S A P E A I N
 A N Y L E L A R L W B R O C S D
 U T C A N B E I Y O T E W H D I
 L N O N R T S E A H I L S P F N
 A B A L F E R T I R Y H A T L E
 E H S L L N E I L G S E E A A T
 G N I S A P E A E B C O B D E A
 T T W E C G R R E E B G R O S W
 U R E W I T Y T A V N P P P I O
 B F F L O Y L P K I K P I A D D
 D Y L S U E D T A L R H W O E I
 A O Y I P P C R N A S A E N R W
 R L D T B A O E D K D R L U T K
 R E D E T I S T S E V O B L A C

ANTLION
 BLACK WIDOW SPIDER
 DARKLING BEETLE
 ELEGANT BLISTER BEETLE
 FUZZY CANNONBALL
 GIANT DESERT HAIRY SCORPION
 GREEN LACEWING

HARVESTER ANT
 INFLATED BEETLE
 PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY
 SOLITARY WASP
 TARANTULA
 WIND SCORPION
 WOLF SPIDER

The Weather Log...



January

High Temperature	Jan 11 th	75.1 degrees
Low Temperature	Jan 25 th	42.9 degrees
Average High Temperature		68.8 degrees
Average Low Temperature		51.6 degrees
Maximum Wind Gust	Jan 19 th	32 mph
Rainfall for the Month		4.10 inches

February

High Temperature	Feb 16 th	80.1 degrees
Low Temperature	Feb 23 rd	40.5 degrees
Average High Temperature		70.9 degrees
Average Low Temperature		53.2 degrees
Maximum Wind Gust	Feb 19 th	34 mph
Rainfall for the Month		0.82 inches

Data recorded at the Ocotillo Wells Ranger Station, Ocotillo Wells, California.



Ocotillo Wells District

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