

**OCOTILLO WELLS
DISTRICT**

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST**

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Blowsand Reptile

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 7 & 8

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Superintendent's Notes

By Kathy Dolinar, District Superintendent

While park visitation slowed down in July and August, a high level of work continued throughout the district. Our Resource staff braved high temperatures daily in their ongoing studies in the field. The Visitor Services staff assisted in other busy summer park units. Maintenance kept projects going despite a lack of personnel. Admin worked on closing out the old budget and preparing for the new, while the Interp Department developed new panels and brochures as the Management team pushed ahead with its plans for the future.

I attended meetings with a truly diverse group of stakeholders: OHV user groups, Native Americans, Freeman contractors, EDAW for the general plan, mediation groups for Freeman, geothermal developers, internal staff and BLM. I spent part of a day with all of the above groups on site at the Freeman property looking at ways to put strategic measures into place. It's a pleasure to work with people who hold so passionately to their values and yet are willing to do whatever it takes to move forward. However, as much as I can appreciate their passion, their diverse goals and strategies challenge me to integrate them with our mission, namely that Ocotillo Wells will be alive and well for years to come. Further, each challenge that I feel that I have pigeon-holed leads me to a challenge that is still in uncharted waters. My years of experience prior to coming here seem like a fish bowl where the inhabitants were all familiar to one another and the environment was static. OW is the open ocean where you, the energetic and passionate team that I lead, help me to enjoy the excitement and avoid the dangers.

The Ocotillo Wells District is part of a larger movement by the division to have up-to-date or new general plans in place for all SVRAs. (A general plan is the guiding document that ensures that our parks are able to meet their mission for many years and it consists of many elements including: interpretation, resource management, concessions, facilities, needs assessment, features, and goals.) Ocotillo Wells last completed a general plan in 1981. At the time the district was 13,000 acres. We are now over 90,000 acres which includes OWSVRA, Heber Dunes SVRA, and the partnership Freeman properties. All general plan decisions including those regarding services, facilities, and funding must take into account such growth. Each area will have its own general plan at the end of the process. We are hoping to complete the process over the next several years.

Continued on next page...

Superintendent's Notes

continued...

We have entered a contract with EDAW, an environmental consulting firm in San Diego, for the completion of the plan. The plan includes an EIR, during which public comment and input are gathered on proposals for the future of the park. Our staff is dedicated to putting into place plans that are able to keep our mission alive and meet the many changes that lie ahead.

Kathy Dolinar

Desert Safari Award

By Bo Neece, Tierra Del Sol



Tierra Del Sol gives an award of appreciation to OW for hosting the 2008 Desert Safari.

District Superintendent Kathy Dolinar accepts the award on behalf of the Ocotillo Wells District.



From a time that once was...



To a time that is now...

What will the future
look like?

Photo and quote provided by Carmen Lucas

A Light Show in the Desert

Each summer, tropical moisture from Mexico and the Gulf of California moves up into the desert southwest and provides the desert's summer dwellers with an incredible display of nature's power and beauty. This year has been no different.



Photo by Margaret Kress

Throughout the summer, isolated thunderstorms have moved throughout the area, providing us a spectacular show complete with huge thunderheads, lightning filled-nights, and the incredible smell of desert rain.



Photo by Julie Humann

The morning after the thunderstorm can provide mother nature's grandest treat...

The Desert Sunrise.

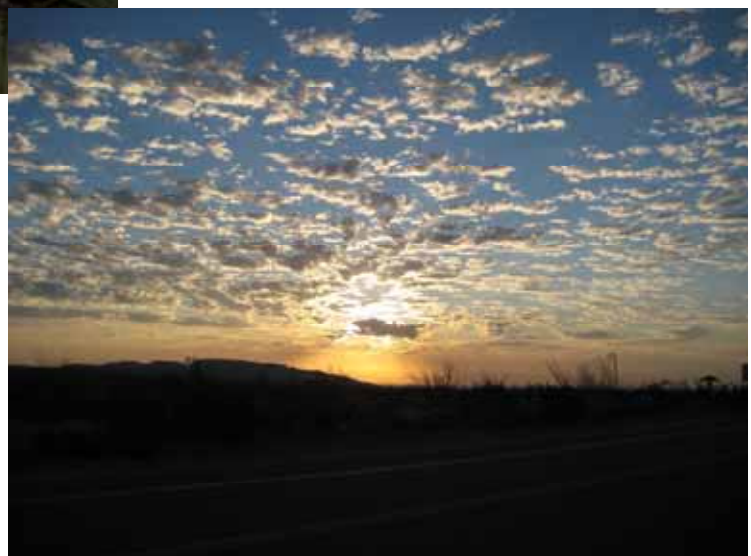


Photo by Margaret Kress

Beach Play Day

On July 23, more than 700 inner-city youth between the ages of 8 and 17, from throughout California, gathered for an incredible day of fun and recreation at Huntington State Beach.



Each year, Beach Play Day participants are treated to a variety of activities which focus on developing a lifelong interest in outdoor recreation, building self esteem, trying new activities, and making healthy lifestyle choices.



This year's activities included an overnight campout, an ATV riding course on the beach, body surfing, climbing walls, a giant Slip-n-Slide, Hoop-A-Pa-Loo-Za, beach relay races, and a safety demonstration complete with a helicopter rescue from the State Park Lifeguards. It was an action packed day of fun!



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Beach Play Day *continued...*

Beach Play Day is an annual event that is sponsored by California State Parks, State Parks Police Activities League (SPPAL), California Police Activities League (CalPAL), and the California National Guard.

As in prior years, the ATV riding course was set up and staffed by members of the OHMVR Division Headquarters, Hollister Hills, Hungry Valley, Oceano Dunes, Ocotillo Wells, Prairie City and volunteers from various OHV user groups.

A special THANK YOU goes out to the volunteers and staff who helped out with this year's event... We could not have done it without you! I am sure you will agree that...

All of the hard work was well worth it when you saw the smile on each kid's face!



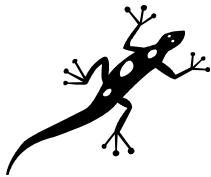
This year's Beach Play Day team of volunteers (white shirts) and OHMVR staff (tan shirts).

The Reptile Guide



This summer, the Interpretive Department, with the help of Joe Hopkins, produced our first-ever desert reptile guide. Using images acquired from Bruce Edley, we were able to produce a 22-species, 4 page color booklet identifying the common desert reptiles inhabiting our park. Currently, we are in the final stages of producing a Spanish version of our guide.

Make sure to pull-out your copy included in this issue or pick one up at the Ocotillo Wells District Office or at Heber Dunes SVRA.



Desert Glass Snake
Aristonotia bicolorata abertiata



Colorado Desert Short-tailed Snake
Chionactis occipitalis annulata



California Kingsnake
Lampropeltis getula californiae



"Red Racer" or Coachwhip
Masticophis lateralis



OW Birthdays...

Allison Boyle
Dan Christensen

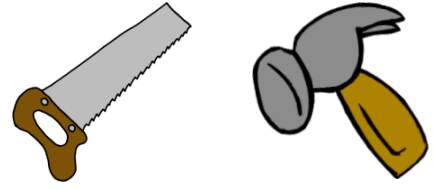
September 2nd
September 4th

Adam Borello

October 2nd



Ocotillo Wells Maintenance



By Brian Woodson, Park Maintenance Worker II

Hello, again, and welcome to the hottest of our seasons. July and August find most of our seasonal employees let off for the summer with the exception of Mario Rebelez, our one remaining Maintenance Aide who takes on the housekeeping duties that normally require a crew of six or so during the rest of the year.

The maintenance shop remodel is starting to draw to a close. We have finally finished the Interpretive Department office conversion (formerly the Park Maintenance Supervisor’s office) complete with new cabinets and furniture, painted walls and new linoleum tile flooring (thanks to my PMWI Julie Humann who is a whiz with the tile). We’ve also wrapped up framing the doors and painting the walls of the newly refinished bathroom and PMWII and PMWI office complete with new linoleum floors as well.

The setup of our new, albeit temporary, shop project area is also coming to a close. The hot weather provides a perfect opportunity to stay cool and hydrated while working inside on various woodworking projects.

Some of my fellow employees and I had the pleasure of attending the 11th Annual Beach Play Days event held at Huntington SB. This event gave us the chance to help make a positive impact on future generations that may one day visit our park and enjoy the opportunities that we have to offer. (Plus, it’s really, really nice to get out of the desert when the average temp is 115 degrees plus!)

Well that about sums up our latest and greatest in the Maintenance Department here in the O.W. Stay tuned for more exciting news during the upcoming months of September and October.

Desert Habitat Guide

During the summer, the Interpretive Department, along with Eric Hollenbeck and Joe Hopkins, redesigned the Desert Habitat Guide. The guide describes each of the major habitat types that occur in Ocotillo Wells as well as suggests places to explore each of them.

Watch for our self-guided Native Habitat Off-Road tour brochure this winter. It will lead you on a path of discovery as you visit each of these habitats first hand.



Biological Resources

By Joe Hopkins, Environmental Scientist

Biological Resources' main task throughout the summer is completion of the surveys for flat-tailed horned lizards. OWSVRA is one of the research areas included in the monitoring protocols prescribed by the Interagency Coordinating Committee for Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Management (ICC). The Occupancy Plot protocols were instituted in 2006 and this year is the first year that OW was able to establish and work 120 sites that fit Imperial County protocol. (Even though we only did 105 sites last year, OW was the only

participating area that even did any Occupancy Plots at all.) We have finished all 120 plots and having been able to revisit some of the promising ones where no flat-tails were found on the initial visit. Our success rate already has surpassed last year's and most promising is that many plots were rated as positive because baby flat-tails were found. Last year, we had no babies at all. We only need three more positive plots to reach 40% which would be outstanding.

Congratulations to aides Steve Wilcox and Cheryl Gillott who were promoted to Senior Park Aides as of July 1. Welcome back to Senior Park Aide Willie Copeland who returned July 1 and walked right into the fire, so to speak. This was his first experience with the flat-tail surveys since he only joined Resources in March. We bid farewell to Environmental Services Intern Donna Hopkins who has already returned to her 7th graders at Borrego Springs Middle School. She again enjoyed her time here doing surveys as well as creating some interpretive panels.

In addition to the staff, we had some distinguished volunteers who participated in our flat-tail surveys. Anza-Borrego Tracking Team members Arun Balakrishnan, Donna Ghosh, and John Konecny all worked plots. Special commendation goes to Robin Halford, the owner of the Desert Robin in Borrego Springs and author of a hiking guide to our neighboring park, Anza-Borrego, who volunteered almost 80 hours and worked 31 plots with us. She really enjoyed her experiences in the park and looks forward to exploring more of it. Next time you are shopping at the Center in Borrego, please stop by her shop and thank her for her efforts.

(Continued on next page...)



2008 Flat-tail Survey Team

Left to Right: Gary Slattery, Steve Wilcox, Sarah Wessitsh, Cheryl Gillott, Joe Hopkins and Willie Copeland.

Biological Resources *continued...*

As promised in the last issue of the *Blowsand Reader*, here are a few more of the strange animals that found their way into our reptile pitfall traps last spring. Also please look elsewhere in this issue for Critter Cam, a collection of some of the photos from our remote wildlife cameras that have been deployed throughout the park this summer.



Above: And sometimes we get reptiles in our reptile pitfall traps! This baby from the Oil Well Dune array was possibly an omen of the many juveniles found during our surveys.



Above: This creature is not from Star Wars; rather, it is a weevil found in one of the OW pitfall arrays.



Above: We were fortunate that this desert shrew at Heber was still alive. Shrews need to eat their body weight every few hours to survive. Who knows what else may have been in the bucket with it!



Above: This huge insect is a mole cricket which fell into our bucket at the Gas Dome Dune pitfall array.

Creosote Bush

By Peggy Hurley, Park Maintenance Assistant

I learned the meaning of the word *ubiquitous* while reading an article about the creosote bush. Indeed, they are “seemingly present everywhere” as defined in one dictionary, at least throughout the Southwest desert. I think that this fascinating woody shrub is often overlooked simply because it is so common.

Many landscapers disregard the creosote, treating it as an unwanted pest. Being as pro-native plant as I am, I would like to remind desert dwellers that creosote bushes make lush privacy hedges requiring less water than most other choices. Though brown and spindly in drought conditions, the creosote will green up readily after a rain or in the lightly watered yard.



Notice the rotated flower petals, indicating pollination has occurred.



The creosote is often covered with profuse yellow flowers whose petals will rotate after pollination, making them less visible to passing insects. The bush is later decorated with hairy seeds that glow when backlit by the sun. Occasionally, there are golf ball-sized brown galls hanging on the bush, which are sometimes mistaken for seeds. These galls are the creosote’s defense mechanisms at work as it protects itself from the creosote gall midge.

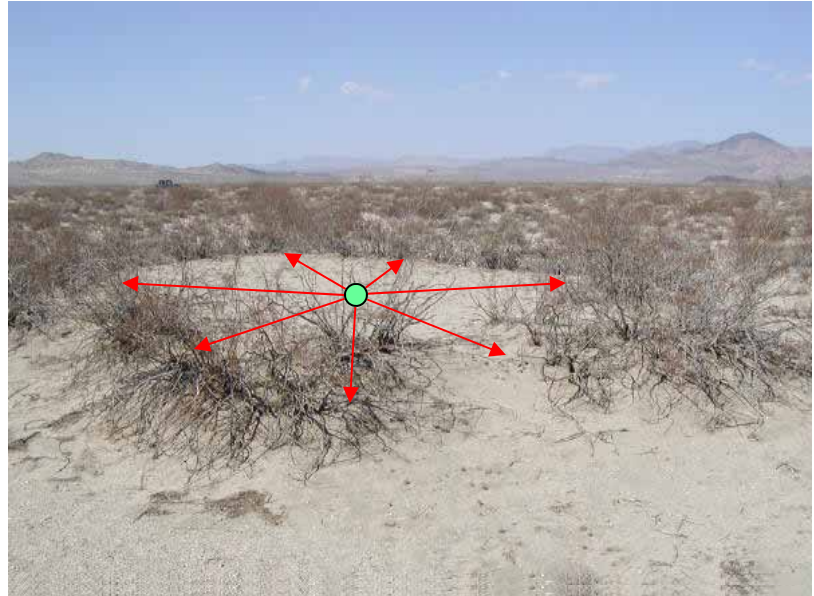
The dark green of the creosote stands out in the faded landscape of other desert plants that have adapted to the heat with their pale leaves. The small, compact leaves of the creosote have a resinous, waxy coating that protects the plant from excessive water loss, allowing it to flourish in the desert even with its darker coloration.



(Continued on next page...)

Creosote Bush *continued...*

While the dark color makes the creosote bush slightly unusual, the title of the “Oldest Living Plant” heightens its esteem. Through generations of permutations, its underground “trunk” can split and expand outward into ever-widening rings. Though the rings are composed of individual plants, they are essentially clones of the original bush as older branches die and newer branches sprout from the expanding underground biomass. The oldest and largest ring is christened “King Clone” and is thought to be over 11,000 years old—over twice the age of the bristlecone pine which previously held the record.



The green circle indicates the original center of the creosote bush. Overtime, the bush grows outward, forming a clonal ring with the youngest branches at the outer edge.

The Native Americans had many uses for the creosote. A tea was made from the stems and leaves to treat stomach ailments. The vapors of the tea were inhaled for respiratory infections and the bush’s antibacterial properties could be put to use as a poultice for wounds and burns.



The gall of the tiny creosote stem midge.

Known as “greasewood” in some areas, the Creosote provides the signature scent of the desert after a rain. The wet bush releases its oils into the atmosphere, the smell reminiscent of the other creosote- the oily liquid obtained by distilling wood or coal tar- after which it was named.

It may be common, it may be everywhere, but it should not be treated with disdain. I find this ubiquitous bush with its ubiquitous yellow flowers to be more than interesting. And the fact that the Latin name is the flowing “*Larrea tridentata*” is only a bonus.

Admin Ledger

Administrative Staff

The Ocotillo Wells Administrative staff enjoyed downtown San Diego this month, visiting the San Diego Natural History Museum and the San Diego Coast District.

The museum gave us a behind-the-scenes tour of the museum's enormous animal, insect and botanical collections. We discussed the possibility of Ocotillo Wells employees being part of a team that would help to gather botanical samples for the museum. During our visit we observed the preparation of the leg of a giant Galápagos tortoise. It began with removing of the flesh by scalpels and immersing the remaining carcass into the flesh-eating beetles' container for a period of time. In the end the museum had a clean skeleton and shell for display. We also viewed various animal skins, skeletons and stuffed animals and were shown a presentation on how birds and insects are prepared and displayed.

Although we were too early to see the water exhibit (which is now open), we did see the water conservation exhibit on the ground floor. The water exhibit specifically examines how water resources have affected various populations and cultures. Of special interest is the Colorado River and snow pack segment, and the segment showing how water shortages will affect San Diegans today and in the future. The exhibition illustrates how people in the past have adapted to environmental conditions. Artifacts from the museum's collections provide a unique view of the relationship between climate change, conservation issues, and cultural adaptation.



The San Diego Old Town volunteers gave us a spectacular interpretive walking tour of what life was like in Old Town San Diego back in the mid 1800s. The volunteers do a historical re-enactment, dressed in attire correct for the time period.

(Continued on next page...)

Admin Ledger *continued...*

We were so fortunate to see the beginning phase of the Cosmopolitan Hotel restoration project. Boy, that is a huge project! The Cosmopolitan Hotel originally dates back to the late 1820s.



In the rear courtyard of the hotel, during preparation for the remodeling, San Diego cultural staff uncovered the remains of the missing west wing original foundation while excavating the back yard.

Our day ended with an enjoyable lunch in Old Town with the San Diego Administrative staff. We would like to thank all of the San Diego staff and volunteers for a great day!



Meet Margaret...

Please join me in welcoming our newest member of the Archaeology team, Margaret Kress.

Margaret graduated from the University of California – Santa Barbara with a BA in Anthropology in 2004. After taking a year off to live in Princeton, NJ, she decided to further her education in graduate school. Two years later, she graduated from the University of Montana in Missoula with a MA in Anthropology – Forensic Option. While in graduate school, Margaret worked in the University of Montana Forensic Anthropology Lab creating a database for maintaining the inventory of the lab, and using independent study hours for learning facial reconstruction techniques. She also spent time working on several human and non-human skeletal cases for the Montana State Crime Lab. Following graduation, Margaret returned to her hometown of Redlands, CA and volunteered in the archaeology lab at the San Bernardino County Museum. Now she is using her forensic skills as an Archaeological Specialist, working with Jennifer Parker, Associate State Archaeologist.



Ocotillo Wells Fun Fact...

Did you know ocotillos can sprout new leaves within a few days of a rain storm? Even in the dead of summer!

Ocotillos, as well as many other desert plants, are highly adapted to survive in this extremely arid environment. During most of the year, the plant appears to be an arrangement of large, spiny, dead sticks, but following a rain storm, the ocotillo sprouts a new set of leaves within a few days, only to shed them when the soil dries out.

Watch for ocotillos that are green this summer as you drive through the desert. That is a sure indicator that thunderstorms have recently moved through the area.



DESERT

REPTILE GUIDE

Ocotillo Wells SVRA
&
Heber Dunes SVRA



Photo by Bruce Edley

Long-nosed Leopard Lizard
Gambelia wislizenii



Photo by Bruce Edley

Desert Banded Gecko
Coleonyx variegatus variegatus



Photo by Cris Sanguino

Desert Iguana
Dipsosaurus dorsalis



Photo by Bruce Edley

Common Chuckwalla
Sauromalus ater



Zebra-tailed Lizard
Callisaurus draconoides rhodostictus



Flat-tailed Horned Lizard
Phrynosoma mcallii



Southern Desert Horned Lizard
Phrynosoma platyrhinos calidiarum



Desert Spiny Lizard
Sceloporus magister



Colorado Desert Fringe-toed Lizard
Uma notata



Long-tailed Brush Lizard
Urosaurus graciosus



Photo by Bruce Edley

Side-blotched Lizard
Uta stansburiana



Photo by Bruce Edley

Great Basin Tiger Whiptail
Aspidoscelis tigris tigris



Photo by Bruce Edley

Desert Glossy Snake
Arizona occidentalis eburnata



Photo by Bruce Edley

Colorado Desert Shovel-nosed Snake
Chionactis occipitalis annulata



Photo by Bruce Edley

California Kingsnake
Lampropeltis getula californiae



Photo by Bruce Edley

“Red Racer” or Coachwhip
Masticophis flagellum piceus



Photo by Bruce Edley

Spotted Leaf-nosed Snake
Phyllorhynchus decurtatus



Photo by Bruce Edley

Sonoran Gopher Snake
Pituophis catenifer affinis



Photo by Bruce Edley

Long-nosed Snake
Rhinocheilus lecontei lecontei



Photo by Bruce Edley

Desert Patch-nosed Snake
Salvadora hexalepis hexalepis



Photo by Bruce Edley

Western Diamondback Rattlesnake
Crotalus atrox



Photo by Bruce Edley

Colorado Desert Sidewinder
Crotalus cerastes laterorepens

Meet Sarah...

Please join me in welcoming our newest member of the OW Team, Sarah Wessitsh.

Sarah only recently joined our staff and she has already made significant contributions to our team. After spending her first few weeks covering the front desk in the District Office, Sarah joined the resource team to do flat-tailed horned lizard surveys. And, boy, can she find flat-tails! Joe Hopkins, one of our Environmental Scientists states that Sarah has one of the highest find rates on the resource team. Way to go, Sarah! When asked about her success finding flat-tails, she replied, "I just love to go out and find flat-tails."



Sarah was born in Laos and moved to a foster home in the United States when she was only eight years old. She spent her high school years growing up in the Central Valley of California where she graduated from Porterville High School. After getting married to her sweetheart of 13 years, Sarah says her longtime dream of getting married and having a family has finally come true! Recently, Sarah realized another dream when she was sworn in as an American citizen- an honor she feels very proud of.

We asked Sarah to write a few words for our article and true to her personality, her thoughts were of others...

"I want to say THANK YOU to my husband, Sasha, for loving me and being there for me. I also want to give a shout out to all the people that work at OW: THANK YOU for being so friendly and helpful. Working here has been a good experience for me; I have learned a lot. Thanks for helping me and for letting me be a part of OW."

Recycling Trivia...

What is the "life span" of these commonly discarded items?

1. Glass Bottle _____
2. Cigarette Butt _____
3. Plastic Grocery Bag _____
4. Aluminum Can _____
5. Plastic Coated Box _____



Answers: 1) approx 1 million years, 2) 1-5 years, 3) 10-20 years, 4) 200-5000 years, and 5) 5 years.

Source: California Waste Management Board

Critter Cam

By Joe Hopkins, Environmental Scientist

Our remote wildlife cameras have given us hundreds of pictures over the two months they have been deployed. Here are a few of the better, and sometimes more surprising, shots.



Above: A prairie falcon has been a regular visitor at the watering hole in Eriogonum Wash.



Above: The same site gets a “rave(n)” review as he voices his approval.



Above: A turkey vulture cools his legs (and later drank) from this water source east of the dump off Pole Line Road.

Continued on next page...



Critter Cam *continued...*



Left: A delicate kit fox senses danger at Barrel Springs. So far, kit fox have avoided getting caught in a daytime photo.

Right: The Barrel Springs badger is not deterred by the presence of two coyotes.



Left: A coyote strikes an early-morning pose in what are referred to as “crepuscular rays,” “God’s rays,” or “angel’s hair.”

Toner Property Development

By Jennifer Parker, Associate State Archaeologist, & Margaret Kress, Archaeologist Specialist.

In preparation for the new Toner Property Development, an archaeological survey was conducted in order to ensure that all historical features and artifacts are preserved.

In 1929, Albert Worth Toner moved from Indiana to the Colorado Desert in order to improve his health after WWI. Along with his neighbor, Elbert E. Benson, Toner became a turkey rancher with approximately 10,000 turkeys. There are also the remains of an irrigated field where Toner grew alfalfa, along with a vegetable garden. Toner relocated his turkeys a few miles to the east in 1935 when the US Navy used Benson Dry Lake as a landing field. The Toners remained on this property until the mid-1970s.

The preliminary survey work on the Toner Turkey Ranch is now complete. There are 46 archaeological features currently identified, including refuse dumps, transportation, water conveyance and topographical features, the homestead foundation, and the remains of the turkey hatchery.

As part of the preparation for the new construction, the majority of the trash dumps will need to be excavated. The data collected from the excavations will help researchers learn about consumerism and daily life in the desert. The construction material excavated will show types of materials that were available to the desert inhabitants of Ocotillo Wells while the general trash will tell the story of what was used and consumed by the Toners.



There will be an opportunity for other members of our staff to learn about archaeological excavations as we will be welcoming guests during our operational period. Contact the Cultural Resource staff to schedule a time to come get dirty!

Jennifer Parker (*above*) and Margaret Kress (*upper right*) are conducting an excavation on one of Toner's trash dumps.

Continued on next page...

Toner Property *continued...*



Above: This appears to be part of an adobe brick. We will search for additional evidence of adobe structures during the archaeological testing phase. *Right:* Sardine can with manufacture detail on its bottom.



Above: Trash deposit showing Blue Willowware dish, a spoon and a bottle along with various pieces of glass.



Cultural Resource Management

By Jennifer Park, Associate State Archaeologist

Our Cultural Resource Management Database is nearing completion, with more than 600 recorded archaeological sites. The database will be used for the development of three new general plans for the Ocotillo Wells District. All of the data will be imported into ArcMap to aid in analysis of site density locations throughout the parks. These areas will then be examined for site integrity and significance and placed into a comprehensive cultural resource management plan designed to ensure their protection. Our site records date back to 1930, beginning with Malcolm Rogers, who was an archaeologist beginning in the 1920s, and became a curator for the Museum of Man in San Diego in 1930. Rogers continued to conduct archaeological surveys in the desert regions until his death in 1960.

The Interpreter's Corner

By Steve Quartieri, Environmental Scientist

WOW... This summer has proven to be as fast paced and exciting as the all of the other months in the Interpretation Department. During July & August, I had an opportunity to meet with the Native American Land Conservancy Group. We worked on interpretive signage for the Freeman Property with our colleagues at Anza-Borrego, we had a behind-the-scenes tour of the San Diego Natural History Museum, we toured Old Town San Diego SHP, we participated in the Division's annual Beach Play Day event, we hired a new employee, and we started into a more aggressive planning phase of our first hiking trail at Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Oh yeah, did I mention we moved into our new office, too? Whew... Things are always on the move at OW!

Early in July, I was fortunate enough to meet with members of the Native American Land Conservancy and present our interpretive goals for the district. As part of the presentation, I asked the group for their input and ideas on how best to interpret their culture. This first meeting was a critical step in the process of establishing a working relationship between us, a relationship which I genuinely hope grows from here.

Also during the month, Supervising Ranger Kirk Shea and I met with our partners at Anza-Borrego Desert SP as we continue to develop interpretive signage that will be placed at entrance points into the newly acquired Freeman Properties. The signage will include a map of the area, basic regulations as well as information about the area. Members of the ABDSP team that are working on this project with us are Kent Miller, Gail Sevrens, and L. Louise Jee.

During the month of July, I also had an incredible behind-the-scenes tour of the San Diego Natural History Museum. This was a tremendous opportunity to meet the managers of the various museum collections including Entomology (insects), Birds & Mammals, Paleontology, Herpetology (amphibians and reptiles), and Botany. Already we have benefited from our new relationships. Starting this fall, our Natural Resource team will begin conducting beetle surveys as part of their semi-annual reptile pit-fall surveys. The resource team will be photographing and collecting a representative sample of each beetle species they find. Then we will be mounting the specimens using museum protocols, and we will send their picture to the Entomology Curator to confirm our identification. I foresee an interpretive panel about beetles coming soon!

In addition to working with the SDNHM on beetles, our staff will also be participating in the Plant Atlas project being conducted there. The goal of this project is to provide an internet accessible plant atlas for San Diego County. To accomplish this task, The SDNHM created a volunteer group called "Parabotanists" to go out into the county and collect representative specimens of each plant species that occurs in each grid (approx a 3 mile x 3 mile square). The Interpretive Department has joined the parobotantist group and we have adopted the eight grids that are in our park. So keep your fingers crossed for rain this winter!



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The Interpreter's Corner *continued...*

During July, I also had an opportunity to tour Old Town San Diego SHP. Currently the park is restoring the historic Cosmopolitan Hotel, and we were able to get a behind-the-scenes look at the restoration process as well as discuss their interpretive plans for the building and surrounding area. In addition to seeing the excavation, we were also treated to an outstanding living history interpretive program by the volunteer interpretive staff.

As you are aware, one of our projects this year is a complete makeover of the interpretive panels in the district. This summer, we were able to hire Jordan Arnold, an English major from Indiana University, to help develop a series of interpretive panels for the Shell Reef area of our park. The results have been exciting! Currently, the panels are in final development stage and soon will be on their way to the manufacture. In addition to the Shell Reef panels, Jordan is also writing various articles for our new visitor's guide. Jordan has done a wonderful job and we welcome her to the OW team!

Our new hiking trail at Ocotillo Wells SVRA has moved into a more aggressive stage of development. Current plans call for a series of loops totaling 2-3 miles that will take visitors on a path of discovery across an alluvial flat, through narrow rock canyons and culminating in a scenic overlook of the area. The trail will be complete with interpretive panels, a trail guide and seating areas. As part of the planning process, we met with members of the natural and cultural resource departments as well as members of the maintenance team to discuss the plan and review the preliminary trail route. Brian Woodson will be heading up the trails team and will be playing a major role in the development and construction of our hiking trail. Thanks, Brian!



As I have said many times before...

It is an incredible time in the Interpretive Department at OW!

The Heber Dunes Report

By Vic Herrick, Supervising Ranger

As I write this on 9/6/08, Heber Dunes still swelters in the intense summer sun. Sept. 1st is the traditional opening day of dove season in California, when hunters from far and wide converge on the Imperial Valley and nearby rural lands to hunt the fast flying game birds. With its forest of large Tamarisk trees, Heber Dunes attracts nesting and roosting doves who find refuge here after feeding in the surrounding agricultural lands. A few hunters were apparently confused while hunting on the adjacent lands and wandered into Heber Dunes where they shot some doves. They also, unfortunately, killed a neonate western diamondback rattlesnake. Ranger Herrick attempted to educate them regarding the killing of animals on state land, and some of the men seemed quite fascinated when he pointed out that the snake had just ingested a mouse. All wildlife, including game birds are protected within the boundaries of State Parks, Heber Dunes included.

Ranger Herrick reports seeing dozens of the recent immigrants to California, the Eurasian Collared-dove, which was introduced to the island of Bermuda off the East coast in '74 and quickly crossed the Gulf Stream and moved Westward. Several pairs nested at Heber Dunes this season, joining the resident population of white winged and mourning doves. Early morning and evenings are a pleasant time at Heber, with dozens of pairs cooing and calling, each of the 3 species with its own melody variations, as the sun rises or sets.

The abundant Tamarisks at Heber play a curious ecological role, supporting some native species (the native doves) while inhibiting others (native plants). Heber employees reported finding dozens of eggshells under the Tamarisks, evidence of successful hatching. Heber Dunes also acts as a de facto refuge for wildlife, with the doves an apparent benefactor.

A few hardy souls still ride each evening at Heber Dunes, and it is a rare day when nobody rides. A few El Centro P.D. Cal-PALs classes have been held here, and we are hoping to increase these events in the future.

Steady improvements to Heber are evident, with maintenance worker Alfredo Jacobo making trash cans available and stable at the new ramadas. These convenient new cans have been helpful in reducing the amount of trash littering the park, a chronic problem.

Work on the new restrooms has commenced, and construction is proceeding rapidly. Many readers will see the restrooms complete by the time they arrive for the Off Road Season of '08-'09. There are also plans for a new office/reception area to be established in the future, along with a training track. Readers may have heard about the failure to pass a State Budget, and that, of course, has impacted Heber as well as other parks. However, Heber Dunes remains open daily, and you are encouraged to come out and ride and have a good time in a safe and clean environment.

Heber Dunes Maintenance

By Alfredo Jacobo, Park Maintenance Worker I

Great things continue to happen at Heber Dunes SVRA.



Right: In August, we broke ground on our new restroom facility which is scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2009.



Above: During the summer, Heavy Equipment Operator Dan Christensen graded the perimeter road at Heber Dunes, making it safer for travel.



Above: As part of the improvements to the picnic areas at Heber Dunes, we have also installed new trash cans adjacent to the picnic tables and shade ramadas.

Visitor Services

By Adam Borello, State Park Ranger

Here are the stats for June and July:

- 4 Arrests
- 3 Traffic Collisions
- 1 Major Medical Assist
- 3 Minor Medical Assists
- At least 5 assists for other local enforcement agencies



Summer in the desert... Hot, Hot, Hot! State Park Rangers became scarce, though not nearly as scarce as park visitors. Summer is historically the time of year that our Ranger staff burns off vacation time, and that's one tradition we have no problem adhering to! Rangers visited relatives and spent time with their families.

All that time away from our daily contacts, both enforcement and informational, can be highly detrimental to maintaining our skills, however. Many of the skills that we rely upon to do our jobs are highly perishable. That is, if we don't use 'em, we can lose 'em. This is just one reason Ranger Borello, Supervising Ranger Ahlberg and Superintendent Sanguino volunteered to work other state parks for the 4th of July weekend.

Ranger Ahlberg and his K-9 Urban had their hands full at Oceano Dunes while Ranger Borello and Superintendent Sanguino worked Santa Cruz District at Seacliff Beach. Ranger Borello patrolled the beaches on an ATV brought up from OW while Superintendent Sanguino played an invaluable role at the Incident Command Station, working radio communications and various other details. All three had a wonderful time working with other officers, from both our department and other agencies. Ranger Borello was particularly excited about his first foot pursuit which ended with a warrant arrest and an 'evading an officer' charge.

Ranger Wessitsh had a very productive summer, both by spending more time at Ocotillo Wells than any other ranger, and by attending two week-long training seminars. One dealt with Traffic Collision Investigation, while the other was a DUI investigation course. Ranger Wessitsh's knowledge of these subjects will be invaluable for both himself and the rest of the Ranger staff this coming season and beyond.

With all reports from last season completed, rangers began to focus on the upcoming season. The Desert Lifeguard program takes up a lot of Ranger Ahlberg's time, while organizing the volunteer program was among Ranger Shea's priorities. With one season under their belts all of the Rangers began to look at ways they could improve their patrols this coming season. For Rangers Borello and Wessitsh, one of those ways was to better organize our posse boxes (police jargon for our patrol bags and the multitude of forms for arrests, medicals, and various other daily routines). All of us are looking forward to the coming season with excitement and confidence.

Continued on next page...

Visitor Services *continued...*

And finally, the Rangers would like to commend the Ocotillo Wells Maintenance Department for their assistance and rapid response in relation to garbage dumped on the Freeman Property. At the end of July, rangers on patrol noticed large piles of debris that had been dumped in Palm Wash. This information was passed on to the OW maintenance department and within two days they had the garbage removed. And this was no small amount of garbage, mind you. The cleanup required the use of a back-hoe and dump truck.

This is just another example of the teamwork that occurs here at OW!



Road Trip

By Marcella Barker, Office Assistant

Clear across the United States to the Bronx, New York, that's how far this Blowsand Reader traveled this summer. It was amazing! This Blowsand Reader witnessed Yankee Stadium in "playing condition" for its final year.

The first regular season baseball game was played at Yankee Stadium on April 18, 1923, with 60,000 fans in attendance. Babe Ruth hit his first homerun in the Stadium, which was described as being the "real baptism of Yankee Stadium." Yankee Stadium truly is the "House That Ruth Built."



Photo by Alejandro Lopez

Marcella Baker travels to NY with her Blowsand Reader in hand, a 2,721 mile trip one way. Apparently, the news about Ocotillo Wells is getting around!

The Coyote... Our Critter of the Month

By Jordan Arnold, Park Aide

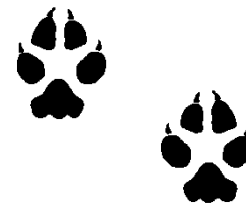
The coyote is a member of the dog family. Its scientific name, *Canis Latrans*, literally means “barking dog”. The name ‘Coyote’ was developed from the Aztec word ‘Coyotl’.

Coyotes are very smart creatures, and can easily adapt themselves to their environment. When training their young, it is not uncommon for a coyote to bring a live mouse to their pups in order to teach them to hunt and gather food on their own. In terms of traveling, coyotes are fast runners, able to reach close to 40 mph. Although very rare, coyotes are able to breed with both

dogs and wolves. With a highly developed sense of smell, coyotes are very sensitive and aware of their surroundings. When agitated, the coyote’s bushy tail is held horizontally in a sign of aggression.

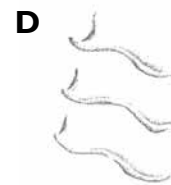


Watch for these critters throughout our park.



Tracks in the Sand

Many different animals call Ocotillo Wells SVRA home. See if you can match each animal track with the correct animal name.



A) Coyote, B) Kangaroo Rat, C) Roadrunner, D) Sidewinder, E) Dog, F) Raven.

What's Your Favorite OHV Area?

These are some of the OHV areas found in and around the State of California. Their names never lie wholly in a straight line; they bend and twist in every direction to challenge your mind.

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

Carnegie
 Clay Pit
 El Mirage
 Glamis
 Hangtown
 Heber Dunes
 Hollister Hills
 Hungry Valley
 Imperial Sand Dunes

Jawbone Canyon
 Mammoth Bar
 Oceano Dunes
 Ocotillo Wells
 Plaster City
 Prairie City
 Razor
 Stoddard Valley
 Superstition Mountain

The July & August Weather Log...



July

High Temperature	July 1 st	116.0 degrees
Low Temperature	July 24 th	74.4 degrees
Average High Temperature		107.4 degrees
Average Low Temperature		83.0 degrees
Maximum Wind Gust	July 13 th	37.0 mph
Rainfall for the Month		0.02 inches

August

High Temperature	August 1 st	114.5 degrees
Low Temperature	August 23 rd	76.8 degrees
Average High Temperature		105.0 degrees
Average Low Temperature		83.3 degrees
Maximum Wind Gust	August 19 th	32.0 mph
Rainfall for the Month		0.46 inches

Number of days
over 100 degrees
Between June 1st
and August 31st:

82

Number of days
Below 100 degrees
Between June 1st
and August 31st:

10

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



Ocotillo Wells District

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