

**OCOTILLO WELLS  
DISTRICT**

**SPECIAL POINTS  
OF INTEREST**

- Happy Retirement Vic!  
Pages 4-5
- Summer Floods  
Pages 6-7
- Trail News  
Page 8-9
- Waterline Project  
Pages 10-11
- Rodney, Off-Roadent  
Pages 12-13
- Heber Dunes Interp  
Pages 14-16
- Meet Kerry, Crystal,  
Sam & Kaye  
Pages 16, 24, 25, 27
- New Publications  
Pages 19, 25
- Do You Get... Feeling?  
Pages 20-21
- New 2013 ROV Laws  
Page 23
- Western Grebe Saved!  
Page 24
- Ravenous Termites  
Pages 26-27
- Friends of OW  
Pages 30-31
- Upcoming Events  
Page 29, 31

**INSIDE THIS  
ISSUE:**

Visitor Services	1-3
Cultural Resources	17
Biological Resources	18
OW Maintenance	22
Heber Dunes	28-29

# Blowsand Reader

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 3

MAY-OCTOBER 2012

## Ocotillo Wells Safe Rider Program!

Visitor Services has started two new programs this 2012-2103 riding season. The first program is the Ocotillo Wells Safe Rider Club. When a Ranger sees a youth rider 16 years or younger setting an outstanding example of responsible and safe OHV riding behavior, the Ranger will stop the youth to say, "Thank you" for setting an example of good OHV behavior and protecting other riders and Ocotillo Wells SVRA. At this time, the Ranger will give the youth a Safe Rider Club card. The youth and the

### The FIRST recipient of the Safe Rider Club T-shirt...



Four-year-old Haylee Clark proudly displays her new OW Safe Rider Club T-shirt! Congratulations, Haylee!

### Another Safe Rider!



Aidan Sanders, 9 years old, proudly displays his new OW Safe Rider Club T-shirt! Congratulations, Aidan!

parents then go to the Discovery Center, where the youth gives the Safe Rider Club card to the Discovery Center staff. In return, the youth rider receives an Ocotillo Wells Safe Rider Club T-shirt.

Each year Ocotillo Wells SVRA continues to work and educate park visitors on safe OHV riding practices. The kickoff for the Ocotillo Wells Safe Rider Club program was the weekend of October 26, 2012. The kids and their parents are very excited to see this kind

*(Continued on next page...)*

## Ocotillo Wells Safe Rider Program! *continued...*

of program in place and are very supportive. The program is funded by donations from Tierra Del Sol, North County Yamaha, JD Built, Inc., and Friends of Ocotillo Wells.

The goal of the Ocotillo Wells Safe Rider Club program is to continue making a difference in the OHV community by educating the next generation of off-road enthusiasts and promoting responsible OHV use. As of November 4, 2012, Ocotillo Wells SVRA has handed out 27 Ocotillo Wells Safe Rider Club T-shirts.

## Visitor Services

By Jim Collins, State Park Peace Officer

Although the summer is often tremendously slower and full of long patrols through a park with little to no visitors, we here at the Ranger Station still manage to stay busy. We spend most of the summer on the less than exciting tasks such as catching up on our endless stacks of Traffic Collision reports, writing our lesson plans for Firearms, Defensive Tactics and Emergency Medical Responder training, and completing all the “Summer Projects” assigned to us. However, we still manage to get some occasional excitement here. The excitement this summer consisted of helping several people who thought Ocotillo Wells SVRA would be a great place to explore when the temperature was well over 115°. They experienced heat exhaustion first hand! We helped dig two-wheel drive cars out of the S-curves in the middle of a hot summer day, searched a car for drugs when it was 110 degrees with 75% humidity, and had *three* separate search and rescues in one day. We also had the always fun and interesting 5150 contacts. In addition to our usual duties here at Ocotillo Wells SVRA, some of the Ranger staff was sent to work the Rubicon Trail near Lake Tahoe, as well as to assist Lake Perris SVRA and Silverwood Lake during their busy season. Needless to say, we here at the Ranger Station are more than happy to see the cool weather return and the hordes of visitors start their annual migration back to our lovely park.

Be sure to read about the two new Visitor Services programs that have started this season—the Ocotillo Wells Safe Rider Club (front page) and the East of Poleline Bandana program (page 3)!



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 Publisher/Editor: Beth Shugan bshugan@parks.ca.gov (760) 767-5370  
 Contributors: Ocotillo Wells staff, Friends of Ocotillo Wells, and occasional outside contributors

# East of Poleline Bandana Program

The second Visitor Services program that started on the 2012 Halloween Weekend is the East of Poleline Road Bandana Program. This program is sponsored by San Diego Off-Road Coalition (SDORC).

The purpose of this program is to educate park visitors that off-road travel East of Poleline Road is only on designated routes, camping on State Park managed lands is limited, and land ownership is a mixture of State Parks, Bureau of Land Management, and private property parcels.

**Ocotillo Wells SVRA**  
East of Poleline Road is Designated Trails Only

Ocotillo Wells SVRA  
5172 Hwy 78  
Borrego Springs, CA 92004  
(760) 767-5391

**When does this take effect?**

- The regulations are effective in effect.
- During the 2012-2013 desert off-road riding season, park visitors will be educated on these rules and regulations.
- Enforcement of these rules and regulations will begin immediately.

**East of Poleline East Facts!**

- East of Poleline Road is a "Designated Trails Only" Area. You must stay on Designated Trails Only.
- Camping on State Park Managed Lands East of Poleline Road is Limited.
- Land ownership East of Poleline Road is a mixture of State Parks, Bureau of Land Management, and private property parcels.

**Bandanas Sponsored By:** OFF-ROADER AND PROUD OF IT! SAN DIEGO OFF-ROAD COALITION WWW.SDORC.ORG

To learn more about the San Diego Off-Road Coalition and to join the organization Please Visit: [www.sdorc.org](http://www.sdorc.org)

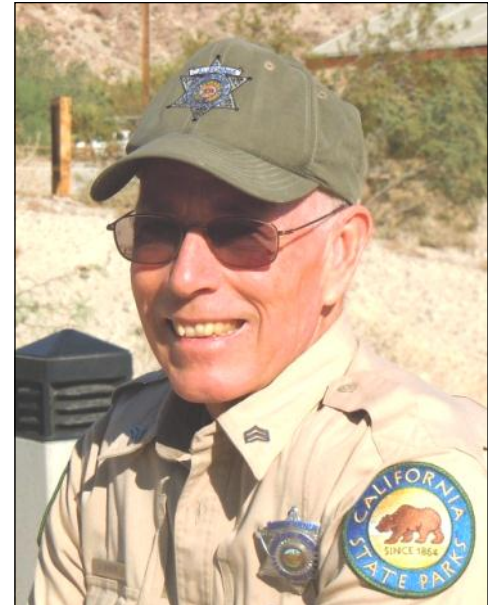




# Happy Retirement, Vic!

On November 13th, the staff of Ocotillo Wells SVRA joined together to celebrate the retirement of long-time State Parks Supervising Peace Officer Vic Herrick. After thirty years with the Department, Vic certainly has a lot of tales about which to reminisce. Shortly after Vic joined the Department as a Ranger, the rangers became peace officers. It was a new and exciting time. To deal with the issue of firearms, rangers were issued bowling ball bags in which to carry their firearms. Vic has very fond memories of his bowling ball bag!

Working throughout the state has provided Vic with a lot of great opportunities. He spent time with the majestic redwoods in the North Coast Redwoods District, cruised boat patrol at Lake Oroville SRA, and marveled at the beauty of the California desert, most recently at Heber Dunes SVRA



**We wish Vic good luck in the new chapter of his life—  
RETIREMENT—and happy fishing!**



*(Continued on next page...)*

# Happy Retirement, Vic! *continued...*





# Summer Storms Flood the Desert!

By Beth Shugan, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

During the summer months, thunderstorms frequently develop, but the rain usually lasts only a few minutes as the storm moves quickly through. However, on July 13th, a large tropical storm dumped 2.02 inches of rain on the community of Ocotillo Wells over several hours. Borrego Springs, the neighboring town, only recorded .67 inches of rain! Highway 78 was closed much of the night due to deposits of mud and boulders up to 24 inches deep on the roadway. The OW Airport was also under 2 feet of water. Heavy rains fell for over two hours and then light to moderate rain fell for another three hours. Unofficial reports that there were about 700 lightening strikes during the storm.



Photo by Steve Quartieri

The OW headquarters area had flowing water and soil erosion...



Photo by Steve Quartieri

...but look at the resulting green!



Photo by Steve Quartieri



Highway 78 at Tarantula Wash



Photo by Brian Woodson

Above, Highway 78 is covered with rock and mud debris (in depths up to 24 inches) following a sudden downpour. Dan Christiansen is preparing to traverse the shallower side of the highway.



*(Continued on next page...)*

# Summer Storms Flood the Desert! *continued...*

It took less than three minutes for water to be flowing down San Felipe Wash north of Highway 78!



Photo by Henry Hernandez

Photos by Mike Howard, except where indicated.

# Trails News

By Brian Woodson, Park Maintenance Supervisor, Trails

Here are some of the activities the Trail crew was involved with this summer:



Left is a view of Poleline Road (looking toward the south) on the downhill run before Gas Dome Trail. This is the typical end result from our first late summer storm's activity that changed many of the washes and trails in our parks. Both of our Heavy Equipment Operators were kept pretty busy getting our roads and trails back to a safe condition in the weeks following the storms.

Back in May the Trail crew had some training on shaping rock in preparation for building rock steps behind the auto shop. We learned how to identify faults in the rock and how to break the rock along those faults into the desired shape for the steps. Here, the crew observes while Martin Rubalcava holds a rifting hammer along the desired break, and Anthony Beepath hits it with a striking hammer. This is repeated over and over and along the line or length of the cut, until the rocks cracks or breaks apart. Shaping a rock in this way produces a more natural appearance than if the shaping was done by mechanical tools. (Submitted by Ryan Walasek.)



*(Continued on next page...)*



# Trails News *continued...*

As we posed for this picture, the smell of the spent charge from our Magnum Buster still lingered in the air. We had just finished fracturing this boulder which had been obstructing some of the wider OHV traffic in Tectonic Gorge. We used our Cobra Combi (a gas-powered rock drill//breaker tool) to drill a hole through the middle of the boulder. Once the drilling was completed, we filled the hole with water and set our Magnum Buster barrel down on top of the opening. The Magnum Buster works on the principle of forcing expanding nonexplosive gases into a noncompressible water barrier which, in turn, finds microscopic fissures in the rock and knifes them apart. This makes the boulder small enough for us to remove from the trail corridor. (Submitted by Martin Rubalcava.)



Left to right: Cesar Casillas, Martin Rubalcava, Joshua McCue and Ryan Walasek.



Photo by Brian Woodson

Martin Rubalcava and Maribel Bonillas put the finishing touches on the installation of one of our new Polaris-donated East of Poleline regulatory signs that informs park visitors to keep on the designated trail system.

# Water Pipeline Project

By ~~Beta Bligas~~ ~~Senior District Services Manager~~

It had long been a dream of District Superintendent, Kathy Dolinar, to have water at Main Street for the park visitors. The next step in that vision will be a new restroom with shower facilities at Main Street. Additionally, the well at the Park Headquarters has been slowly failing to keep up with demand, especially on holiday weekends when water had to be trucked in to the storage tanks



Adam Asche begins the pipeline project by carefully excavating at the Toner water storage facility to allow the crew to tie into the existing system.

to keep the showers flowing. The decision was made to pipe the water from our good well at the Toner property to meet both needs—a pipeline of over three miles that was designed and constructed by park staff in order to get it in the ground before the 2012-2013 riding season. The route was chosen last spring to minimize resource impacts and required team coordination with the OW Resources staff (Environmental Scientist Kevin Ponce, Assistant Archaeologist Margaret Kress, Archaeological Project Leader Joanna Collier), OHMVR Division Associate Archaeologist Alicia Perez, Geographic Information System (GIS) Research Analyst II Don Solleder, Maintenance Chief Glyne Johnson and Northern Service Center Construction Supervisor II, Sri Rao and District Services Manager Tina Robinson. A cultural survey was completed for the entire route for environmental compliance. Project construction began in September and those working on the project construction—Glyne Johnson, State Park Equipment Operators Dan Christiansen and Adam Asche, Park Maintenance Supervisor Brian Woodson, Maintenance Mechanic Chad Van Doren, Sr. Maintenance Aide Ryan Walasek, Park Maintenance

Worker I Shay McGhee, Park Maintenance Assistant Martin Rubalcava, Senior Maintenance Aide Maribel Bonillas, Park Maintenance Assistant Anthony Beepath, Don Solleder, Bio monitor Joni Bye, Southern Service Center Archaeological Project leader Michael (Bucky) Buxton with assistance from Kevin Ponce and Associate Archaeologist Jennifer Parker—endured weeks of *hot* temperatures (especially in the trench) to bring the water west. After the pipeline was completed, restoration of the work site commenced and will continue over the next months as needed. You may see dead plants along its alignment, and we ask that you “tread lightly” on these areas as we are trying to get the pipeline route restored so that it does not leave an scar on the land or have increased erosion. Please give a big hand of thanks to everyone who worked on this project—from the person who envisioned it and got the funding for it, to the people in the trenches.



Brian Woodson navigates the water truck alongside the trench using the front-mounted water cannon to wet down the fill dirt, while Dan Christiansen uses the D5 Dozer to complete the backfilling.

(Continued on next page...)

# Water Pipeline Project *continued...*

By Brian Woodson, Park Maintenance Supervisor, Trails

While working on the water line project, there are many different things we must do to set a pipe and move on to the next section. To the right, Josh McCue just finished using a digging bar to pry a section of new pipe onto the pipeline that's already been laid out. Shay McGhee is standing above and to the right looking over our equipment to make sure everything is getting bumped up and set to get the pipe cleaned out and ready to lower carefully into the ditch. (Submitted by Joshua McCue.)



Above, Josh McCue finishes with a digging bar.



Above and left, Shay McGhee, Chad Van Doren, Ryan Walasek and Brian Woodson work in the trenches.



Adam Asche uses the excavator to gently shade the assembled pipeline to prevent any rocks that get pushed into the ditch during the backfilling process from breaking or cracking the pipeline.

## Major milestone...we have water at Main Street!

Left to right, Brian Woodson, Adam Asche, Chad Van Doren, Ryan Walasek, Shay McGhee, Martin Rubalcava, Maribel Bonillas, Anthony Beepath, and Don Solleder.





# Rodney, The Off-Roadent

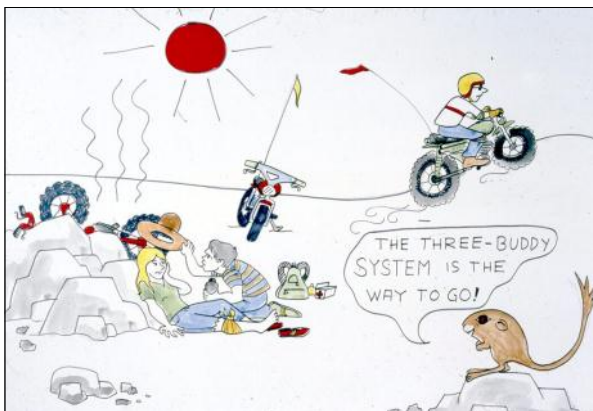
By Andrew Fitzpatrick, State Park Interpreter I

Everyone loves a mascot. Mickey Mouse, the Pillsbury Dough Boy, the Geico Gecko (or Cavemen)—these names bring instant recognition and evoke memories of magical movies, tasty baked treats, and auto insurance. Not so long ago, Ocotillo Wells had its own mascot: Rodney the Off-Roadent, a witty, wise, and loveable rascal of a kangaroo rat.



Created in the early 1980s by an unknown artist, Rodney helped teach riding safety through a series of hand-drawn panels to the children who recreated in early Ocotillo Wells SVRA. As the park and OHV recreation evolved and grew, our Off-Roadent mascot was sadly all but forgotten, the educational panels that featured him lost in storage. But some forward-thinking staff helped save these panels from the dumpster while cleaning out a storage unit. Here, featured for the first time in decades, we can get to know Rodney again and visit a simpler time for off-roading, an era before the quad when three-wheelers ruled the trails.

Rodney promoted the park and stressed safe and considerate riding habits. Here are a few of his panels:



Rodney encouraged a three-person buddy system.

**Do you know who created Rodney? Call us!  
(760) 767-5393**



Rodney loved OWSVRA!



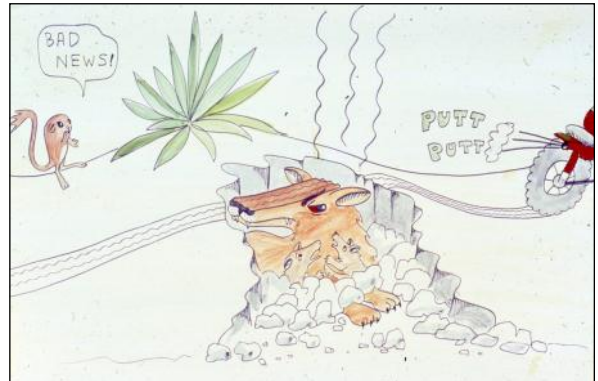
Rodney wanted everyone to wear protective gear.

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# Rodney, The Off-Roadent *continued...*



Keep a clean campsite!



Rodney asked riders NOT to ride over dens of animals.



NEVER have a campsite like this!



Rodney encouraged leaving some land undisturbed!



**Do you know who these Rangers are?  
Do you have any information about  
Rodney? Call us!**





# A Time for Everything... Heber Dunes Interp

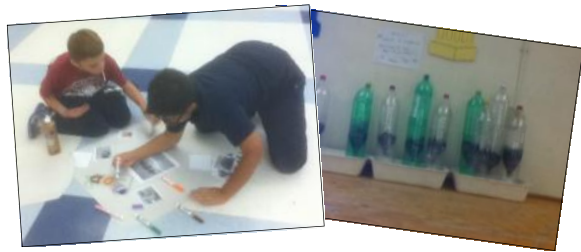
By Jaime Mendez, State Park Interpreter I

Each year warm springs gradually give way to the long hot days of summer which in turn fade almost imperceptibly into fall. It's the natural rhythm of the desert world. For the staff at Heber Dunes, spring usually wraps up the busy off-road season, gives some a summer break, and others an opportunity to tackle the remaining items on their to do list.

This year, however, our intrepid staff marched to the beat of a different drummer. It turned out, though, that the melody remained the same. See if you recognize this twenty-first century version of an old favorite.

## ***A time to plant...***

For Interpreter Jaime the seeds of change were carefully tucked into a new After School Jr. Ranger Club and then gently planted into the ASES (After School Enrichment and Safety) program at three El Centro elementary schools.



Washington Elementary students hard at work on their projects.

## ***A time to harvest...***

Hedrick, left, and Desert Garden's new Jr. Rangers show off their certificates.



## ***A time to build up...***

A mini Discovery Center, split rail fences, and freshly graveled walkways blossomed to go along with the new Heber Dunes General Plan. Heber staff was tired but proud of their accomplishments.



*(Continued on next page...)*



# A Time for Everything... Heber Dunes *continued...*

## **A time to tear down...**

Fall arrived along with the news that construction on the planned administration/maintenance shop and group picnic area was to begin shortly. Interpreter Jaime packed up the office while Maintenance Worker Alfredo and Park Aide Luis tore down the maintenance shop.



## **A time to keep...**

Meanwhile Ranger Vic was busy cleaning out his office.



## **A time to throw away...**

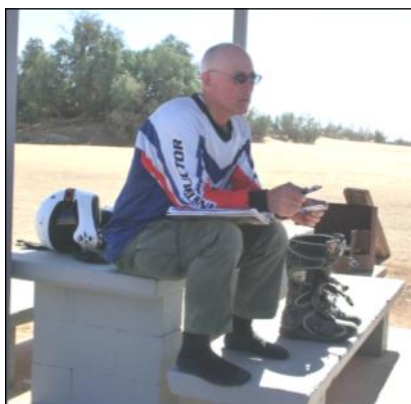


## **A time to cry...**

The realization that the construction project was the least important of the changes impacting Heber Dunes left staff members in a somber contemplative mood.

Alfredo's work load and responsibilities were expanding, and the staff was shrinking.

It was time to say goodbye to Park Maintenance Aide Luis. His work season was coming to a close.



Ranger Vic's departure, though, would be more permanent. He thought long and hard, juggled the numbers, looked at all his options, and finally came to the difficult decision that it was time to retire. His last day would be November 20.



Luis



Alfredo

*(Continued on next page...)*

## A Time for Everything... Heber Dunes *continued...*

### ***A time to laugh...***

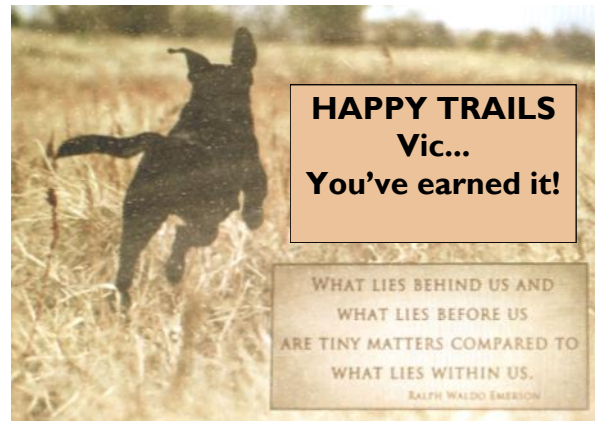
No sooner had the news of the pending departure of half of the Heber staff been announced than the front door swung open and who should walk in but none other than Park Maintenance Aide Eduardo Talamantes ready to begin a new season! The frowns slowly began turning into smiles.

Before long the mood lightens and the stories and reminiscing begin. Someone asks, "What do people really get for all their hard work?" As if on queue, the conversation ceases as each ponders his response, which allows the strains of a familiar melody playing quietly in the background to take center stage.

There is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves for as long as we can for there is a time for every purpose under heaven.

### ***Turn, Turn, Turn...***

The author's apologies to King Solomon, Pete Seeger, the Limelighters, and the Byrds.



## Meet Kerry...

The Interpretation staff welcomes Kerry Soltis! Kerry grew up in Minnesota climbing trees, riding horses, and building snow forts. She studied environmental science at the University of Minnesota and tried to think of a career that would pay her to go hiking. She finally decided on being an interpreter for state and national parks. After graduating, Kerry moved to Utah and spent three years at Cedar Breaks National Monument. There, she led geology talks, guided hikes, and star parties, and just generally had a good time. She has recently come to Ocotillo Wells SVRA to become a desert rat and brush up on her winter astronomy.



# Site Stewardship

By Margaret Kress, Assistant State Archaeologist

To start off the new season, Ocotillo Wells (OW) Site Stewards (archaeology volunteers) met for a potluck lunch meeting with Assistant State Archaeologist, Margaret Kress on December 8, 2012. The OW Site Stewards are part of a much larger Site Stewardship group called the California Site Stewardship Program led by Chris and Beth Padon. These volunteers, who work at parks across the state, spend their time monitoring archaeological sites, looking for any changes to the site such as damage caused by erosion, animal burrows, looting, camp fires, etc. Site Stewards are asked to monitor sites within Ocotillo Wells at least twice a year, at the beginning and end of each season. Currently, there are nine Site Stewards volunteering at OW. Training



Marc and Aleta La Fontaine at the Site Steward potluck lunch and meeting.



From left: Steve Chaney, Marc and Aleta La Fontaine, and Curtis Grinnell at the Site Steward potluck lunch and meeting.

programs such as artifact identification, radio usage, Saharan mustard eradication, and site visits will be offered to current Site Stewards throughout the season. A training program for new Site Stewards will be offered Fall 2013, so if you are interested in becoming a new Site Steward next season, please contact Jennifer Parker, Associate State Archaeologist at [jparker@parks.ca.gov](mailto:jparker@parks.ca.gov) or at 760-767-1326.



# American Badger

By Kevin Ponce, Environmental Scientist

The American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*) is found in North America and is somewhat similar in appearance to the European badger. It is found in the western and central United States, northern Mexico, and central Canada. This little fellow was seen in the middle of the day at Barrel Springs here in Ocotillo Wells digging for water or prey. Badgers are a California Species of Special Concern, so if one is encountered in the park, please enjoy their presence at a distance and do not harass the animal.

The habitat of the American badger is typically open grasslands with available prey (such as mice). The species prefers areas with sandy loam soils where it can dig more easily for its prey, such as prairie regions or deserts like Ocotillo Wells.



Photo by Bucky Buxton

This badger was photographed this summer in Ocotillo Wells.

Although largely nocturnal, American badgers have been reported to be active during the day as well. They do not hibernate, but become less active in winter where temperatures dip below freezing. Badgers sometimes use abandoned burrows of other animals such as foxes or animals similar in size. They will sometimes form a mutually-beneficial relationship with coyotes. Because coyotes are not very effective at digging rodents out of their burrows, they will chase the animals while they are above ground. Badgers, in contrast, are not fast runners, but are well adapted to digging.

The American badger is a fossorial carnivore, meaning it digs for its prey in the earth. It preys mainly on pocket gophers, ground squirrels, moles, woodrats, deer mice, kangaroo rats, and voles, often digging to pursue prey into their dens, and sometimes plugging tunnel entrances with objects. They also prey on ground-nesting birds, such as the bank swallow and burrowing owl, and lizards, amphibians, carrion, skunks, insects, including bees and honeycomb, and some plant foods such as corn, mushrooms and other fungi, and sunflower seeds. All of these prey items can be found within Ocotillo Wells making the park perfect habitat for the Badger.

# New Visitors Guide for the 2012-2013 Season

By Andrew Fitzpatrick, State Park Interpreter I

There is a timeless saying often heard bandied about Ocotillo Wells—“Go Big...or Go Home.” We took our unofficial motto to heart in crafting this season’s Visitors Guide and the proof is eight additional action-packed pages. Now the public can enjoy 20 pages that delve deep into all that is OWSVRA. Among the new features in this guide are:

- Full two-page spread park map. It’s located in the center of the guide, so that it can be removed easily, and the two back pages behind the map include the Rules & Regulations and Critical Info sections. Just grab it and go dudes.
- An Off-Road Photo Album of historic snapshots (given to us by long-time park visitors) documenting the epic history of OW’s OHV recreation.
- Hard-hitting exposes on our gnarliest critters: scorpion, tarantula, sidewinder, and the take-no-prisoners American Badger (forget about the honey badger, this guy cares even less).
- Full details on the new law effecting ROVS, aka side-by-sides or UTVs.
- Introductions to our prehistoric indigenous predecessors and to the history of Hollywood in Ocotillo Wells.

All of this would not have been possible without the support of our local sponsors: Red Earth Casino, Perry’s Desert Tire Center, West Shores RV Park, and Luv 2 Camp, collectively, made this publication possible.



## Do you know...

**Which tree has wood that is so heavy and dense that it will not float?**

Answer...

*The desert ironwood!*



# Do You Ever Get the Feeling That...?

By Steve Quartieri, Interpreter III

Do you ever get the feeling that your passion and hard work has gone unnoticed? Well, according to our park visitors...fear not! Your hard work and passion has been noticed by many, and it is GREATLY appreciated! And for proof and inspiration, take a moment to read some of the visitor comments we have received....

This email was recently submitted to California State Park Headquarters in Sacramento....

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]  
 Sent: Monday, November 19, 2012 3:54 PM  
 To: Info  
 Subject: Hats off...

Hi there,

My husband and I have been coming to Ocotillo for years and years and now these last 4 years we've been bringing our 3 children. I just wanted to say how much we enjoy Ocotillo and all the positive changes that have been going on. The park has never been more kept. The programs offered are amazing. I'm not sure of the persons responsible but I want to say hats off to you and thank you. We look forward to the many memories to come. And we will also be signing up as members.

Sincerely,  
 The [REDACTED] Family

This comment letter is not the only one of its kind! Other visitors have been raving about the improvements at OW as well. The following are direct quotes from a series of surveys the Interpretive Department has been conducting. The last question on the survey asked visitors for their comments in general. Here are some of their responses...

- Thanks so much, CA State Park Rangers Rock :)
- Keep up the good work!
- We have enjoyed all the park has to offer.
- Love all of the Maintenance and Ranger presence. Very Happy Camper!
- Park facilities are great! Very impressed by the cleanliness. The staff is awesome—very knowledgeable & great to talk to. Routes are very well marked.
- Love the Discovery Center and its hands-on environment.
- Park improvements, signs, trails graded, bathrooms... Very nice additions.
- What a great place, worth driving from San Diego!
- Thank you Ocotillo Park Rangers—you sure are lifesavers!
- My family really enjoys the Astronomy programs and the hot chocolate. Thank you!
- We love the interpretive programs—truly a family experience!

*(Continued on next page...)*



# Do You Ever Get the Feeling That...? *continued...*

- Thank you for all of this, it means a lot to our family.
- This place is awesome.
- We love the family atmosphere here at OW!

And lastly, I cannot over state how many positive comments our Discovery Center and field interpretive staff has heard about the improvements that have occurred at Ocotillo Wells. New restrooms, an extreme 4x4 obstacle course, a stargazing amphitheater, Discovery Center, new shade ramadas and picnic tables in popular camping areas, graded and well signed trails, new street signs and route markers throughout the park, new Denner ATV training track, and an overall safer family atmosphere.

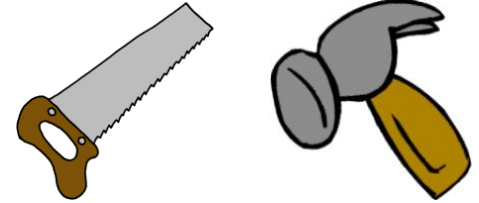
Without a doubt, your hard work and passion has been noticed and appreciated by our guests.

***Together, we have built a park that we can all be proud to be a part of!***



# OW Maintenance

By Rickey Lizasuain, Park Maintenance Worker II



It seems that the new season at OW has brought some changes to the park. There are new faces, and of course, old faces—all happy to be back at work.

Our friends who visit Ocotillo Wells SVRA might be surprised to see that there is something new going on with our public showers. We changed to a token-machine system before Halloween.

We thought we would simply be able to mount and hook up the machines, but nothing is that simple. You will see new rooms with a blue face shield. That's all you can see from the front, but it's what goes on behind them that I would like to tell you about.



At the Maintenance shop, we have a wide variety of workers with many different

talents, so as a team, we constructed two new token rooms. Starting with what we call the 300 Building on Ranger Station Road, we began digging out some of the dirt around the original sidewalk for new concrete footings. Once the dirt was removed, Jeff Smith and Eric (Chris) Dahl installed reinforcing steel rebar and added some new ballards before pouring concrete for the new section of ADA-compliant sidewalk. After the concrete was poured, the real work began. Jeff Smith and Leon Jordan started laying the block walls, adding a new door jamb as they built the room. As soon as the room was complete, Rickey Lizasuain began matching the roof to the original roof line. Once that was finished, Dennis Raymond did the electrical work, and Jeff Smith and Leon Jordon painted the building.



The token building at Holmes Camp was added to the CXT showers by Rickey Lizasuain and Leon Jordan. We used a poured-in-place room by setting concrete forms for the walls and roof and poured the concrete as one unit. After the concrete was set, we stripped the forms leaving a



concrete room. In the process, with the help of Jeff smith and Leon Jordan—and Martin Rubalcava and Anthony Beepath from the Trails crew—we mixed 170 60-pound bags of concrete **by hand!** It was very hard work, but the building should last for many years. After all the projects were complete—on time—the buildings were turned over to the Rangers.

# New 2013 ROV Laws

By Steve Chaney, Resource Senior Park Aide

Assembly Bill 1595 (Cook) was approved by Governor Edmund G. Brown on July 24, 2012. This law will add a definition for Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle (ROV) to the California Vehicle Code. This law will also provide rules regulating the operation of ROV's. AB 1595 is a manufacturer association (ROHVA) sponsored bill designed to address concerns for the safe operation of ROV's. **The laws will become effective on January 1, 2013, unless otherwise stated.**

Assembly Bill 1266 (Nielson and Cook) was approved by Governor Brown on September 25, 2012. This law will amend two specific laws introduced by AB 1595.

AB 1595 defines an ROV as a manufacturer-designed vehicle to be used primarily off-highway, has a steering wheel, has non-straddle seating for both operator and passengers, has a maximum speed capability of greater than 30 miles per hour and an engine displacement of 1,000 cc (61 ci) or less.

AB 1595 requires that an operator shall be at least 16 years of age or be directly supervised in the vehicle by a parent, guardian or parent-authorized adult, and that the operator and passengers must wear a DOT-approved helmet and a seat/shoulder belt or safety harness. Operators shall not allow a passenger unless the passenger can grasp the occupant handhold while having the seatbelt/shoulder belt properly fastened and be seated upright with his/her back against the seatback. (AB 1266 amended the law by removing the requirement to have his/her feet flat on the floorboard.)

In addition, amended by AB 1266, and **effective July 1, 2013**, passengers may not occupy a separate seat not designed and provided by the manufacturer.



The full text of AB 1595 and AB 1266 can be found on the OHMVR web site [www.ohv.parks.ca.gov](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov) by clicking the Laws/Safety tab. There is also a link to the ROHVA web site where you can take their on-line ROV Safety Course. This will be a prerequisite for the hands-on ROV Safety courses that will be offered in the near future.

Comments, suggested improvements to the bill and concerns may be sent to: [ohvinfo@parks.ca.gov](mailto:ohvinfo@parks.ca.gov) with a subject line of AB 1595. The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division will respond to all inquiries.



# Western Grebe Saved!

By Beth Shugan, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

On Monday, October 29th the Friends of Ocotillo and several members of the San Diego Off-Road Coalition (SDORC) remained to clean up following the SDORC Fun Run held the previous day. As they were taking trash to the dumpsters, Anne Marie Osborne, sister of a SDORC member and Steve Chaney, an OW Resource Senior Park Aide saw a Western grebe lying on the side of Cahuilla Trail. Western grebes, like loons, need water to take flight once they land because their legs are positioned far back on their bodies (typical for diving birds). Several birds have become confused in the past and mistakenly identified the roads as ponds or waterways.



Steve and Anne Marie knew that the grebe would not survive for long lying in the desert, so they came to the rescue. When Steve picked up the grebe, it began squawking loudly in protest, but as soon as he handed it over to Anne Marie to hold, the grebe quieted right

now—just takes a woman's touch! They drove the grebe to the OW headquarters area and enlisted the aid of Interpretive staff members Ken Conway and Ralph Mergen. The grebe was placed in a carrier and Ken and Ralph drove to a local pond to release the bird. As the carrier was opened on the bank of the pond, the Western grebe began squawking again, perhaps saying that being caged was no fun! However, once the grebe was in the water and swimming away, he continued to squawk, but this time perhaps to thank everyone who helped return him safely back to water.



# Meet Crystal...

About a year ago, I moved with my astronomy-loving husband and our hilariously cute Pomeranian from Riverside, California to Borrego Springs. This is my first time working for a State Park, which allows me to work outside and enjoy the desert at the same time. When I'm not at work, you can find me volunteering at the Borrego Springs Branch Library. The Maintenance Housekeeping Department welcomes Crystal to their team!



# New Off-Highway Auto Tours

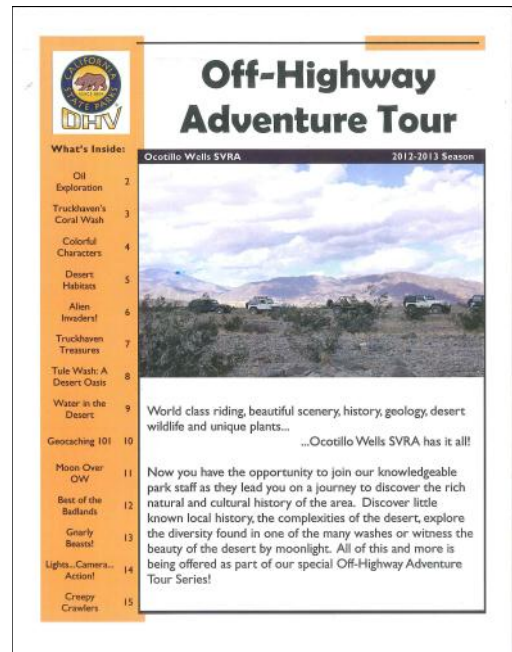
By Beth Shugan, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

The new Off-Highway Adventure Tour Series booklet describing the various 4x4 off-highway trips for the 2012-2013 season is now available!

Whether you are interested in the history of oil exploration, desert habitats, nocturnal creepy crawlers, movies filmed in OW, water in the desert, colorful characters who once lived here, moonlight trips through the desert, ancient animals, invasive species, visits to the Truckhaven area, or learning about geocaching, there is something for you!

All tours are led by an OW Interpretive staff member and typically last 4 or 5 hours. A 4-wheel drive vehicle with high clearance is required. We ask that you be willing to carpool and be sure to bring plenty of water, lunch and a sense of adventure!

For more information, stop by the Discovery Center for your copy, or call 760-767-5370, send an email to [owinterpretation@parks.ca.gov](mailto:owinterpretation@parks.ca.gov), or visit our website at [www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/ocotillowells](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/ocotillowells).



## Meet Sam...



The Interpretation Department welcomes Samantha Solomon to its team. Sam writes, “ever since I was a little girl, I have been coming to Ocotillo Wells. I love off-roading and I love the outdoors; both have inspired a career path for me. I attended Humboldt State University and in May received a B.S. in Natural Resources Planning & Interpretation with an emphasis in Recreation. Wherever there is an off-road recreation destination is where I love to work and play. Last summer, I worked at St. Anthony Sand Dunes in Idaho, and the summer of 2011, I worked at the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area.”

# The Ravenous Termites of Ocotillo Wells

By Jeff Price, State Park Interpreter I

When you hear the word “termite,” what is your first reaction? For most it will be to call your local exterminator and hope for the best, which is a wise choice if they are using your home for food! Yet, many do not realize how important the termite is to our desert and how different our desert would be without the millions of termites toiling beneath our feet.



Ocotillo Wells is probably home to several different species of subterranean termites that have adapted to the desert environment in many different ways. Colonies of subterranean termites primarily live deep underground where their numbers can reach into the hundreds of

thousands. A very simple animal with a very complex social caste system, a colony will consist of workers, soldiers and reproductives. Workers are the caste that forage for food, soldiers are the caste that build shelters and protect the colony, and the reproductive caste expands the colony and produces young reproductives that start new colonies.

A large colony can have a foraging area of about an acre, and they are

ravenous for wood! All of the desert species will construct tunnels out of their fecal pellets whenever they need a pathway above ground in order to preserve the high humidity that they need to survive in the dry desert. Some species, like the desert encrusting termite, will construct these tunnels and galleries over small annual plants and grasses that have died, to eat the wood and plant material inside, leaving only a hollow tube behind. Other times, the desert encrusting termite will construct a gallery over a fallen tree or large branch and eat the weathered outer layer of wood, leaving the unweathered wood for another year. The desert subterranean termite (the common name for a distinct species) actually does feast on the sound wood of dead trees and buildings. It will move into a building through cracks in the foundation and create fecal pellet tunnels to protect it on its way to where the wood is. Sometimes you will find evidence of their feast in the form of “drop tubes” which are fecal pellet tunnels that drop down from a beam of wood in search of more wood below. If you see these, get professional help since you have a large infestation that could potentially harm the structure.



*(Continued on next page...)*



## The Ravenous Termites of OW *continued...*

At this point you may be asking why termites are so great if they can cause so much damage. Well, without termites we would have to wade through dead vegetation if we wanted to go anywhere in the desert! Since the desert environment is so hot and dry, many decomposers like bacteria and fungi are not common and cannot keep up with the amount of dead vegetation produced each year. A dead ocotillo can last 28 years before it is fully decomposed! The ravenous termites of Ocotillo Wells can definitely keep up and they do a spectacular job of returning those trapped nutrients back into the soil for other plants to use. On an even better note, the protozoans in the termite's gut, which help it break down the cellulose in wood, act as nitrogen fixers, fertilizing the desert even more! So while some species see our homes as food and can cause damage, most termites and most of what they consume is helping to keep our desert free of massive amounts of dead vegetation and fertilizing the still living plants at the same time. The next time you are in the desert, look for the termite encrustations and castles and thank the little guys for keeping your desert a fun and healthy place to play.



## Meet Kaye...

I busted onto the 'cleaning scene' early in life. With Nurse Betty for a mom and Bob the apricot farmer/concrete contractor for a dad, my first jobs in Hemet consisted of picking up smoochy ripe apricots from the backyard and tomato worms from the garden, washing dishes, housecleaning, and later, dinner prep. Nurse Betty's mantra 's were, "don't step over it, pick it up!" and "always look up and if the front door is clean, you can bet the rest of the house is clean too." After losing Nurse Betty to cancer and with two kids under the age of 4 and a teacher husband, I began an 18-year cleaning frenzy. Dirt became my business. Cleaning houses, small businesses and bartering until my dad's death and a second divorce drove me to the mountains of Leadville, Colorado.

With the dream of someday attending a university, I spent 10 years in Napa studying, serving internships, obtaining a real estate license, earning a B.A. in Psychology and finally, a K-12 Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential. The Maintenance Housekeeping Department welcomes Kaye to their team.



# Heber Dunes Report

By Kirk Shea, State Park Superintendent II

In the coming months you may notice something different about Heber Dunes SVRA. It might be that the buildings aren't quite where you remember them. It might be the new construction workers busy around the maintenance yard area. It might be piles of dirt where they weren't sitting before. All of the above are probably true.

Starting November 2012, construction on the new Heber Dunes SVRA Ranger Station/ Maintenance Shop will begin. This new project has been in the design phase for many years and has finally made it to the construction phase. This new

3000 square foot building will house the Heber Dunes Visitor Services, Maintenance, Administrative and Interpretive staff.

The old temporary trailer and maintenance shop will be moved a slight distance for the new construction to begin. Visitors will still be able to contact staff and use the park's facilities as they have in previous years. In about one year though, things will improve.



CURRENT COMPLEX

For nearly a decade the maintenance staff has had to use a small sea container for their shop facility. Until just a few years ago, this facility didn't even have adequate air conditioning. Working in the summer months, with temperatures reaching 120 degrees, was extremely difficult, to say the least. In about a year though, the new facility will be complete and the maintenance staff will have the ability to work in a proper shop with air conditioning. Storage and work areas will be increased so that tools and supplies are stored in a single area and protected from the desert's harsh environment.



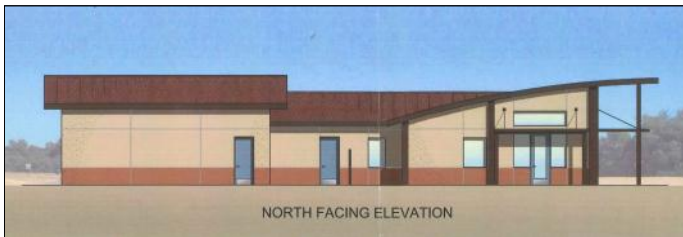
FUTURE COMPLEX

The visitors to the park will also benefit greatly from this project. Not only will they have a central location to contact park staff, but a new day use facility is also being constructed in front of the new building. This new facility will provide shade for visitors, a raised area for visitors to watch their family and friends ride, a place to have picnics, and place for children to play in the desert. Lighting in the day use area will help improve safety and the visitor experience during nighttime hours.

*(Continued on next page...)*

# Heber Dunes Report *continued...*

As you can see from the pictures, this will be a great facility that will allow the park to better provide services to the public. Thank you to the Northern Service Center and those involved in the planning and construction of this great project.



NEW DAY USE AREA

# Roughneck Rendezvous IV

**Don't miss Roughneck Rendezvous IV, our annual geocaching event, January 26-27, 2013!**

Come experience the fun-filled geocaching activities and raffle at Ocotillo Wells.

There will be plenty of geocaches accessible by 4WD vehicles, but if you don't have 4WD, don't worry; there are 25 walking caches, some of which are located on an ADA-accessible path. All earn tickets for the evening raffle.

If you don't know how to geocache, but want to learn, a Geocaching 101 class will be held on Friday, January 25th from 9 am to 1 pm. Meet at the Discovery Center.

**For more information, go to:  
[www.roughneckrendezvous.com](http://www.roughneckrendezvous.com)**

Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area Presents

## Roughneck Rendezvous IV

### LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

Featuring the Ocotillo Wells' Cast of Characters  
Starring in an Off-Highway Geocaching Adventure!

**2 EXCITING DAYS! January 26 & 27, 2013**

January 25th	January 26th	January 27th
12:00PM-4:00PM: Pre-Registration at the Discovery Center.	7:00AM-8:30AM: Registration	7:00AM-11:00AM: Join us for our Cache In Trash Out event and help keep Ocotillo Wells a clean and safe place to play!
CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS SUPPORTS EQUAL ACCESS. PRIOR TO ARRIVAL, VISITORS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED ASSISTANCE SHOULD CONTACT (760) 787-8775	7:00AM-8:00PM: Roughneck Rendezvous Geocache Souvenir Hunt! 8:00PM-8:00PM: Event awards and raffle!	11:00AM-1:30PM: Join us for a FREE BBQ lunch!

Accessibility icon (wheelchair) and DHV logo.

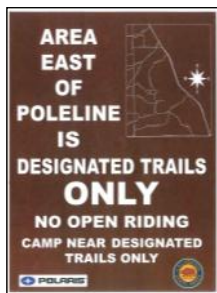


# Friends of Ocotillo Wells



Jan Chaney, President

Another season has gone by with lots of things happening. It is hard to believe that we have been assisting Ocotillo Wells for four years now. We were fortunate to get a trails grant from Polaris to help fund signs for the area east of Poleline Road, where riding is on designated trails only. BLM owns the land, but under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), OW manages and maintains the land. The new signs inform park visitors about the regulations pertaining to that area. You may only ride on trails that are marked, and only camp within 50 feet of a designated trail. Rangers and volunteers will be out in the park this season reminding people about the rules and handing out maps. Next year, visitors who disobey the rules may be ticketed. San Diego Off-Road Coalition has also been kind enough to provide bandanas imprinted with a map of the area (see East of Poleline Bandana Program article in this newsletter).



Our next project was the new Visitors Guide. When we found out that OW would not be able to fund the Visitors Guide this year, we found a few advertisers. We would like to thank the Red Earth Casino, Luv2Camp, Perry's Desert Tire Center and West Shore RV Park for stepping up and providing the

funding for this wonderful visitors guide! Without their support, we would not have a guide for the riding season. I would also like to thank Luv2Camp for once again donating to the coffee fund. This will make it possible to continue having the morning "meet and greet" with an interpretive staff member, and having hot chocolate at the stargazing programs.



The Rangers have a new safety program for the kids, with the help from TDS, North County Yamaha, JD Built, Inc., and Friends. We are providing T-shirts for the program. When a Ranger sees a child doing something that is correct, the Ranger will stop them and give them a special business card that they can redeem at the Discovery Center for a special safety T-shirt. We hope that this program will encourage the young child to respect the rules and watch the way they ride.

We are now preparing for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Roughneck Rendezvous. Boy, is this year a challenge with all the state cut backs. We would like to let everyone know that we have a website up and running for the event. Go online to get all the event information and preorder your shirts and merchandise. The website is [www.roughneckrendezvous.com](http://www.roughneckrendezvous.com). Please check it out; Jeff has put many hours developing the site and has done a very fine job.

Our Adopt a Wash program is going well. We have seven washes now, and we are working with Southland E&I Services, Inc., and Print World. They should be up shortly. I want to thank all of the adoptees that have adopted a wash. It really means a lot.

*(Continued on next page...)*

# Friends of Ocotillo Wells *continued...*

Please don't forget that we have wonderful things going on in the park all season. If you want information about the programs available in the park, please let us know and we can get you on the email address list. The Discovery Center is open every day to help you with any questions. Also, we are always looking for a few good volunteers. Speaking of volunteers, I would like to thank our newest members who have each agreed to a three-year term on the Board of Friends of Ocotillo Wells: Dennis Nottingham, Director at Large; Teena Nottingham, Treasurer, and Norm Ritter, Director at Large. We look forward to working with you. We know this will be a benefit for Friends of Ocotillo Wells and for Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Welcome aboard!

## Upcoming Events at OW



### Off-Highway Adventure Tours:

Four-wheel drive and high clearance vehicles are required!

Colorful Desert Characters	December 7	9 am-1 pm
Desert Habitats	January 4	9 am-2 pm
Alien Invaders!	January 7	9 am-1 pm
Truckhaven Treasures	January 11	9 am-2 pm
Tule Wash: A Desert Oasis	January 14	9 am-1 pm
Water in the Desert	January 18	9 am-1 pm
Geocaching 101, A Treasure Hunt	January 25	9 am-1 pm
Moon Over Ocotillo Wells	January 28	5 pm-9 pm

### Special OW Event Weekends

Geocaching	January 25-27	Astronomy	March 8-9
Geology	February 16-18	Bug-a-pa-looza	March 16-17

### Other Events:

CORVA Truckhaven Challenge	January 12
Tierra del Sol Jeep Club Desert Safari	March 1-2

For more information, go to [www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/ocotillowells](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/ocotillowells).



# Follow Ocotillo Wells SVRA on Facebook!



Find updates on changes in the park, historic and modern park photos, reminders about policies and regulations, and the schedule for our various interpretive programs. What a great forum for visitors to communicate and connect.



Check it out and “Like” us...because, after all, we like you.

[www.facebook.com/OcotilloWellsSVRA](http://www.facebook.com/OcotilloWellsSVRA)

## Weekly Ocotillo Wells Events

Interpretive events are held each weekend during the riding season. Here's a sampling:

Evening Stargazing @ the Amphitheater  
Jr. Rangers Programs for kids ages 7-12  
Gnarly Beast of the Past  
Desert Animals

Tracks, Skins, Skulls & Scat  
Talking Pumpkins @ Pumpkin Patch  
Talking Bubbles @ Gas Domes  
**New!** Solar Telescope

For dates and times, go to [www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/ocotillowells](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/ocotillowells)



### Ocotillo Wells District

5172 Highway 78, Box #10  
Borrego Springs, CA 92004  
Phone: (760) 767-5391  
[www.ohv.parks.ca.gov](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov)