

Ocotillo Wells SVRA Visitor Guide



Inside...

- Destinations**
Pages 2-6
- Programs**
Pages 7-9
- Get Involved**
Page 10
- Critical Info**
Page 11
- Park Map**
Pages 12-13
- OHV Rules & Regulations**
Page 14
- Astronomy**
Page 15
- Rocks & Fossils**
Pages 16-17
- The Desert**
Pages 18-19
- The Human Past**
Page 20-21
- Staying Safe**
Page 22
- Photo Album**
Page 23
- OHV Adventures**
Page 24

Your Adventure Starts Here...

Ocotillo Wells SVRA offers the adventurer the best of both worlds. Not only is the park home to unique resources, it is also home to action-packed terrain ideal for off-highway enthusiasts.



With over 85,000 acres, the park offers various types of terrain--dirt roads and trails, sandy washes, narrow canyons, mudhills, rocky slopes, dunes and more--inviting those with a passion for speed and adventure as well as beginners. From adrenaline junkies to relaxing families Ocotillo Wells has something for everyone.

While you are here, we encourage you to take time to enjoy the other resources in our park. Ocotillo Wells is a surprising haven for wildlife perfectly adapted for this harsh land: home to scorpions, sidewinders, roadrunners, coyotes, burrowing owls, badgers, and kangaroo rats, among others.

While you are riding at Shell Reef, take a look beneath you and you'll find fossilized oyster shells over four million years old. Take a trip out to the Pumpkin Patch and be wowed by their bizzare shapes and sizes. Head to the Gas Domes and check out gas bubbles rising up from deep beneath the surface of the earth! The geology of Ocotillo Wells is not only fascinating, it tells a story five million years in the making.

With the epic terrain, amazing wildlife, world class geology, and mesmerizing history, chances are you'll be on an exciting adventure before you know it.










Greetings from the "Super"!

The Ocotillo Wells SVRA staff would like to welcome you to your playground of adventure, recreation, and discovery. Roughly one million visitors make their way to our desert each year. While off-road vehicle recreation is the draw to this park, you will quickly discover that this place is home to a variety of plants and animals. In addition, we are proud to be the keepers of significant historic sites and geologic wonders.

Be sure to Tread Lightly! The stewardship of your park is appreciated.

Garratt Aitchison
District Superintendent



-  Destination
-  Restroom
-  Anza-Borrego Desert SP Boundary
-  Anza National Historic Trail
-  Highway
-  Trail
-  Designated Trails Only Area

1

Pumpkin Patch

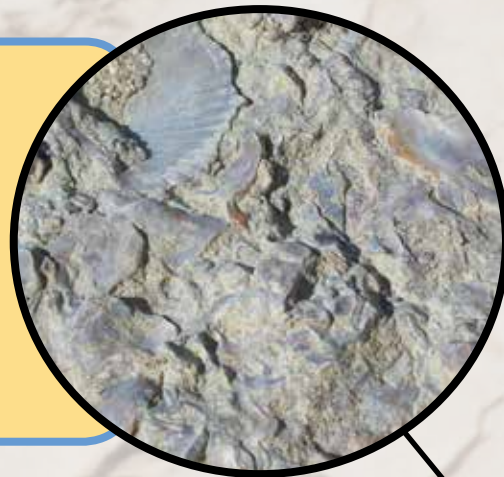
These round rocks were created long ago when the climate was wet, then shaped through centuries of erosion. Sadly, the Pumpkin Patch has shrunk over the years. Leave the “pumpkins” here so your grandchildren can take their grandchildren to see the “Patch.”



2

Shell Reef

About five million years ago, this desert was covered by a sea. At the top of Shell Reef, one can see the proof: a five-foot thick layer of fossilized shells. This hard “coquina” resists erosion so well it has preserved the ridge, and a window to the past.



3

Devil’s Slide

This ancient mountain nub was once the site of gold prospecting. People have reported seeing ghostly lights here, usually at night after rare rainstorms. Nowadays its dark rock face and nearby sands present a popular challenge for a variety of OHVs.



4

Discovery Center

This is your “one-stop shop” at OW. Learn about your desert through exhibits. Stock up on water and maps. Get face time with knowledgeable staff. Enjoy the accessible nature trail, shaded picnic area, and come by later for night programs in the amphitheater.



5

Blowsand Hill

Strong winds have piled sand in this notch. The finest, lightest sand grains are deposited on the top; the larger, heavier grains collect at the bottom. This is the most impressive concentration of sand at Ocotillo Wells, and a popular, fun spot to ride.



treadlightly!

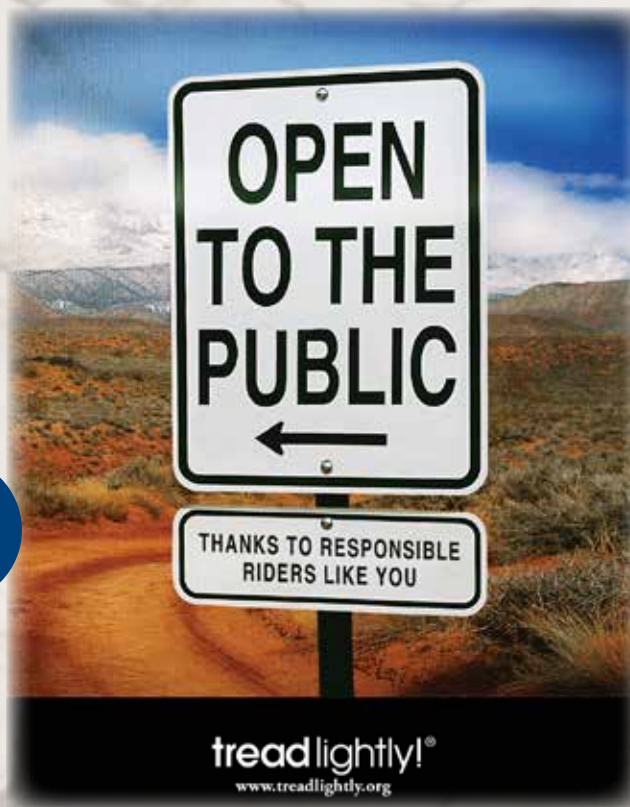
ON LAND AND WATER



Ocotillo Wells SVRA is committed to the principles of Tread Lightly! This simple, common sense framework is an excellent way to ensure continued access to public lands for OHV recreation by respecting the places we all share.

Travel Responsibly
Respect the Rights of Others
Educate Yourself
Avoid Sensitive Areas
Do Your Part

By following these guidelines, you are helping conserve OWSVRA. For more info, go to treadlightly.org.



treadlightly!
www.treadlightly.org



Coral Wash Arch

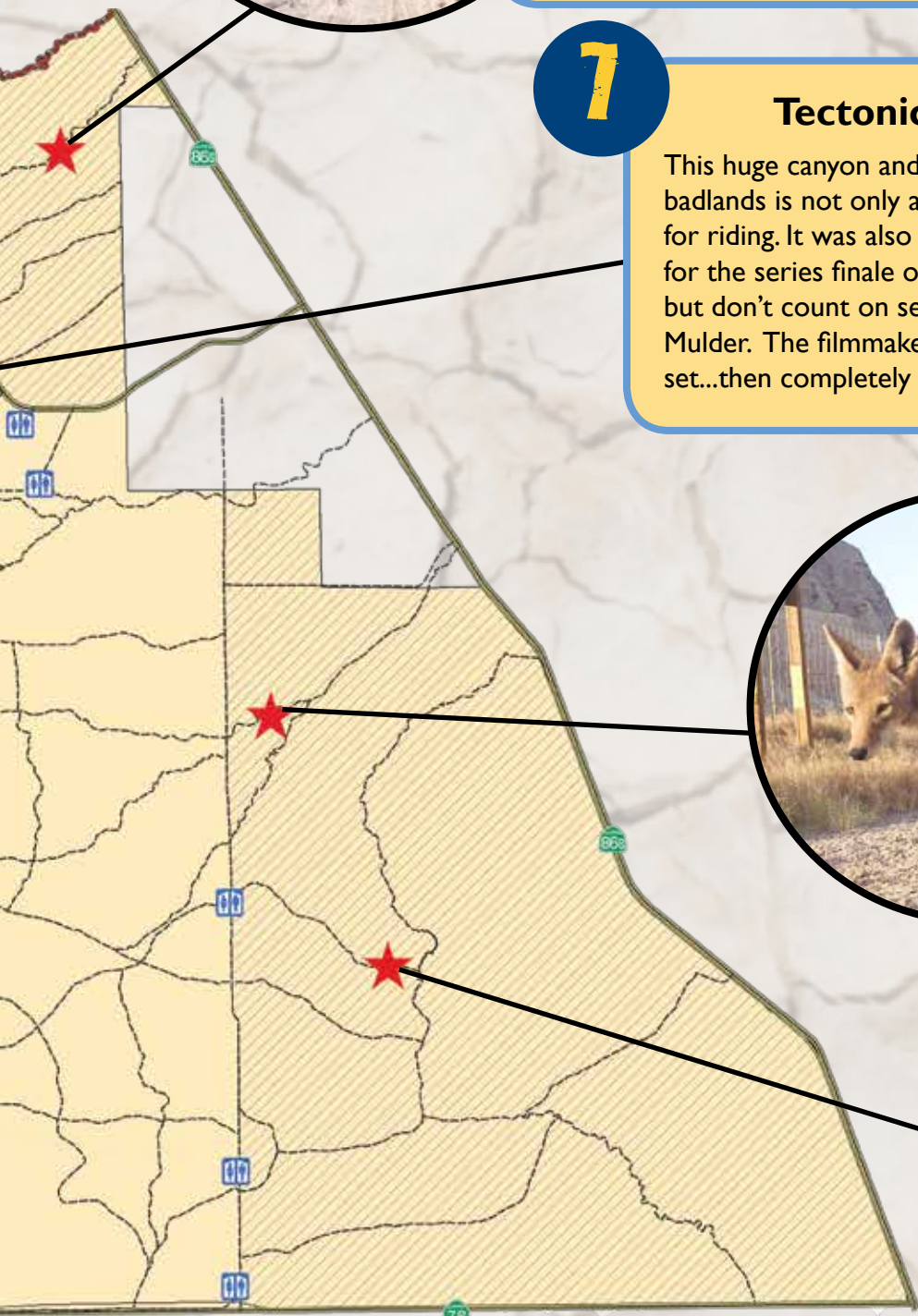
6

This astounding arch is roughly 1.6 miles west of Highway 86 along Coral Wash, a wash located in the area known as "Truckhaven." Driving up Coral Wash offers technical challenges and maneuvers while winding between the narrow walls lined with prehistoric layers.

7

Tectonic Gorge

This huge canyon and neighboring badlands is not only a popular place for riding. It was also the location for the series finale of *The X-Files*, but don't count on seeing Scully or Mulder. The filmmakers blew up the set...then completely cleaned it up.



Tule Spring

8

Following a subterranean fault line, water from the mountains trickles out here. Named for the rare tule reeds that grow here, Tule Spring is also very popular with the local wildlife as you can see in this shot from one of our motion-activated cameras.



9

Gas Domes

Amazingly, this weird waterhole stays wet year-round and produces a stream of gas that bubbles up through the muddy water. This "crown jewel" of Ocotillo Wells also offers views of the Salton Sea—a salty, below sea-level lake accidentally created in 1905. Stay on trails on the east side of Poleline Road.

Barrel Springs

10

Sand holds water like a sponge here, allowing thorny mesquite to grow and providing food and shelter for many animals. Prospectors even drew water from a barrel placed in a hole, hence the name. Badgers are sometimes seen here. That's right, OW has badgers!





- ★ Destination
- Ⓜ Restroom
- Anza-Borrego Desert SP Boundary
- Anza National Historic Trail
- Highway
- - - Trail
- Designated Trails Only Area



11

Dusty

This steep hill is used as a navigation point for exploring the Truckhaven region. The peak of this unique point is topped with a novelty phone booth. Nearby, one can find some intriguing pieces of “off-road folk art,” including totem poles and a concrete motorcycle.



Main Street Event Center

Opened in 2015, this ADA-accessible facility is available for rental and is the ideal location for your events. The enclosed area provides tables, shade ramadas, a central fire pit, grills, electrical outlets, lighting, and is adjacent to showers and restrooms. For further information, call 760-767-0166.

12

13

Soens Youth Track

Enclosed and lined with protective hay bales, the Youth Track provides a safe riding area for children to practice. It is for riders 12 and under on 70cc engines or less, and is dedicated to Harold Soens, who worked tirelessly to open up the world of OHVs to kids.



14

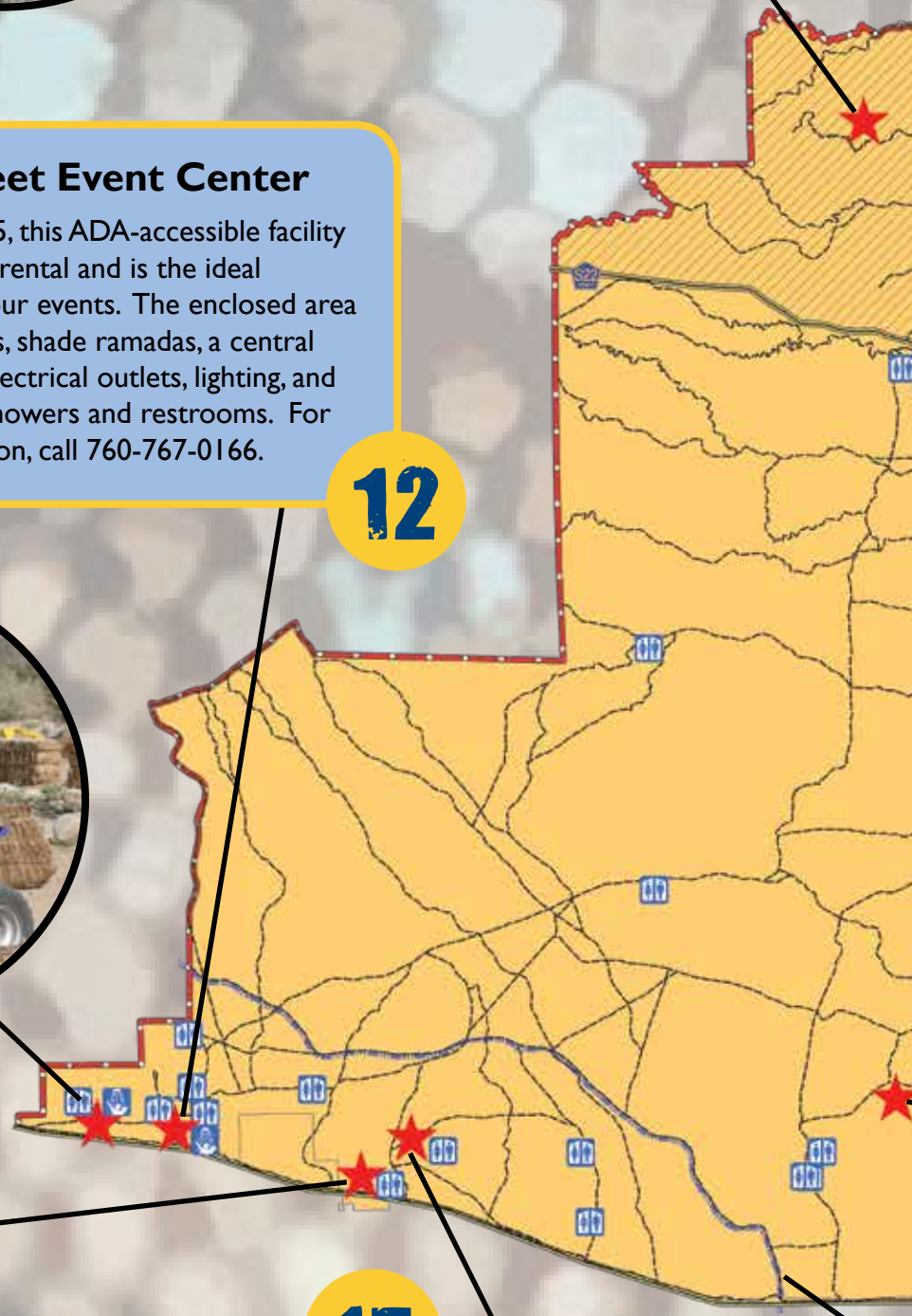
Denner ASI Track

ATV Safety Institute classes are offered here. Children or accompanying adults must have an ATV Safety Certificate to ride (see page 14 for more details). This facility was named for Roy Denner, a champion of OHV recreation.

15

Holmes Camp

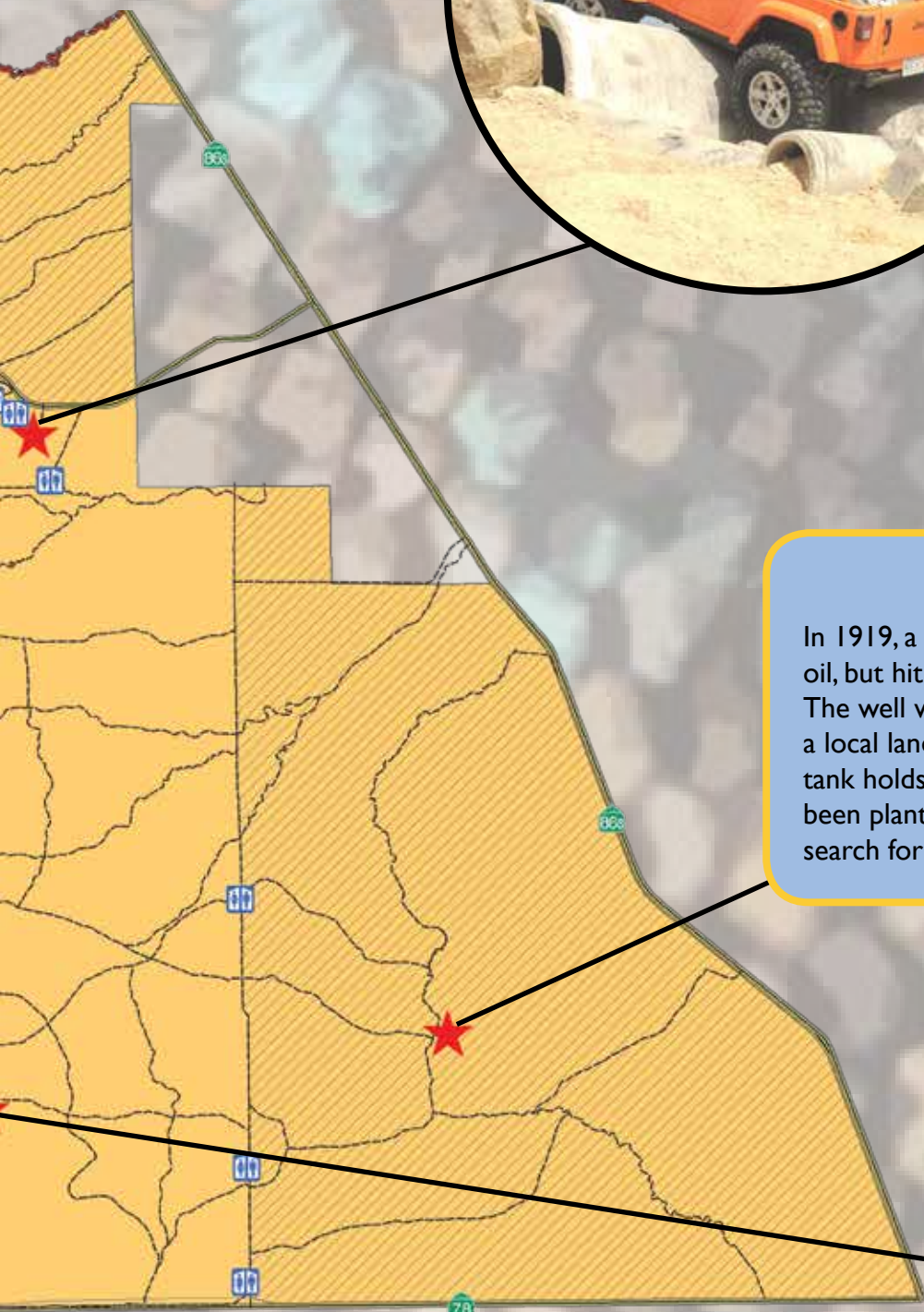
Once the homestead of a local turkey rancher (who planted the shady tamarisk trees that still stand), today Holmes Camp is a popular camping location. This site features two fully-accessible ADA campsites, as well as pay showers and much-needed shade.



16

Truckhaven 4x4 Training Area

In March 2011, Ocotillo Wells SVRA was proud to unveil this new adrenaline-fueled addition. Spread across 30 acres in the northern section of our park, it consists of 23 colorfully named, top-of-the-line obstacles constructed from huge tires, logs, concrete tubes, boulders, concrete, dirt, and more. These obstacles are ranked in three difficulty ratings and await the brave (or crazy). This one-of-a-kind, state-of-the-art destination is the result of a dynamic partnership between CA State Parks, Tierra Del Sol, and W.E. Rock. The course was designed to protect the area's desert feel. Included is a vehicle-free, shaded observation area with picnic tables from which to watch the action, plus restrooms. See you there!



17

Artesian Well

In 1919, a derrick built here drilled for oil, but hit geothermal water instead. The well was abandoned, but became a local landmark. Today a plane fuel tank holds water and palm trees have been planted. Panels here detail the search for "black gold" at Ocotillo Wells.



18

Old Hippy Commune

This was home to a counter-culture commune in the early 1970s (seen below in a historic photo). Trailers, shacks, a cellar, and even a bus housed the "hippies." Little remains except the concrete foundations for windmills that generated electricity and pumped water. Far-out man!



The de Anza Trail

San Felipe Wash is the historic route of two epic expeditions led by the Spanish officer Anza in the 1770s. Anza guided about 240 settlers from Mexico to San Francisco Bay. Waysides detailing the experiences of these heroic settlers invite you to follow in their footsteps.



19

Artwork courtesy of Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

Destination Discovery



Destination Fun!

Just off highway 78 in the southwest corner of Ocotillo Wells SVRA lays a veritable treasure trove of resources designed to improve your off-roading experience. Whether you want to pick up a map, hunt for scorpions, see the stars, practice at the youth track, or simply take a shower, Destination Discovery has you covered. The Discovery Center is also home to our amazing Jr. Ranger programs! So bring a lunch and spend some time; there's plenty to discover! Destination Discovery is a must do for off-roading families!



Discovery Center

No trip to Ocotillo Wells SVRA is complete without a visit to the Discovery Center. This building is home to a variety of interactive displays which tell the behind-the-scenes stories of Ocotillo Wells. The Discovery Center is a great place to take an in-depth look at what makes Ocotillo Wells such a special place. (It's also where we keep the maps, so it's a pretty great place to start your adventure!)



Native Plant Garden

Ocotillo Wells is situated in the Colorado Desert. Receiving less than five inches of annual precipitation, this rugged desert is one of the harshest on earth. As such, the variety of life found in our native plant garden is among the most adaptable found anywhere. Capable of not only surviving, but THRIVING in this desert's harsh conditions, each plant in our native garden is truly remarkable in some way. From the towering Blue Palo Verde trees to the heavily clad Barrel Cacti, each native plant plays an important role. A pleasant stop along your journey awaits you in OW's native plant garden.



Walking Path and Picnicking

A brief stroll down OW's 1/3-mile ADA Pathway can lead you to a variety of special places. Ocotillo themed shade ramadas are found along the path, making perfect spots for an afternoon picnic. Along the way, much of OW's native vegetation is boldly identified. The Amphitheater, situated halfway around the walkway, is home to OW's weekend stargazing programs, a sure delight for anyone who's ever looked up during dark desert nights and wondered "hey, what's that?" The pathway is also a great place to look for scorpions when they emerge to satisfy their hunger on warm evenings.



Tread Lightly! RC Course!

One exciting project currently in the works at Ocotillo Wells is the Tread Lightly! RC course. This remote-controlled vehicle track will present a series of obstacles designed to test the off-roading capabilities of any RC vehicle. The track will encourage users to observe the Tread Lightly! principles, chief of which is to stay informed about where you are and what you're riding. It's going to be a lot of fun!





Festivals

Roughneck Rendezvous Geocaching Adventure

Our annual three-day geocaching festival is held right here in OW. Over the course of the weekend participants are able to log caches and collect trading cards, which can be exchanged for raffle tickets. Each rendezvous culminates with a giant raffle featuring exciting prizes donated by local businesses and off-roading outfitters. The annual Roughneck Rendezvous is a great way to get to know your desert by riding out and “cache”-ing in!



Hot Stars & Heavenly Bodies

Ocotillo Wells’ annual astronomy festival is out of this world. For this special weekend rangers, scientists, and astronomy enthusiasts of all ages gather for a celebration of the cosmos. From fun-filled Junior Ranger activities during the day to great dark sky stargazing at night, “Hot Stars & Heavenly Bodies” is sure to offer something for everyone. The weekend’s festivities blast off Friday night and continue through Saturday night. Attractions include solar viewing, a range of amazing telescopes, guest speakers, constellation tours, astronomy-themed activities, a slew of cosmic videos, and of course, free hot cocoa! We hope you’ll join us for part or all of what is sure to be a stellar event!

Geology Days

Ocotillo Wells’ Geology Days festival is always a rockin’ good time! Visitors are invited to experience OW’s unique geology through a number of hands-on interpretive activities throughout the park. The special Rock-otillo 4x4 tour explores how the park’s landscapes reveal an exciting history spanning millions of years of geologic upheaval and change. Exhibits at Gas Domes and Pumpkin Patch highlight our geological crown jewels. So join us for this fun-filled weekend at Rock-otillo Wells!



Kids Adventure Connection

The Kid’s Adventure Connection is an action-packed weekend designed to open up the outdoors to California’s children and their families. Kids spend the weekend exploring the desert while discovering what makes Ocotillo Wells such a fascinating place. Activities include scavenger hunts, desert animal games, seed-planting, stargazing, trail rides, demonstrations, and of course, camping under the stars. Group meals are enjoyed around the campfire, with everyone sharing laughs and exciting stories from the day. This family-focused event is a “must-do” for Ocotillo Wells’ kids!

Bug-a-palooza

Come springtime, Ocotillo Wells bursts to life amidst a cascading chorus of chirping, buzzing, and whirring wings. Bug-a-palooza is a celebration of all things creepy and crawly. From beetles to butterflies to arachnids and more, the sheer variety on display in the desert is an insectivore’s delight! This weekend-long event features interpretive displays, insect-focused Junior Ranger programs, guest speakers, bug “magnets,” and a night tour to search for the infamous giant desert hairy scorpion! Guests are invited to explore the desert from a bug’s eye view, examining how the web of life here derives much of its diversity from these crafty critters.





Off-Highway Adventure Tour Series

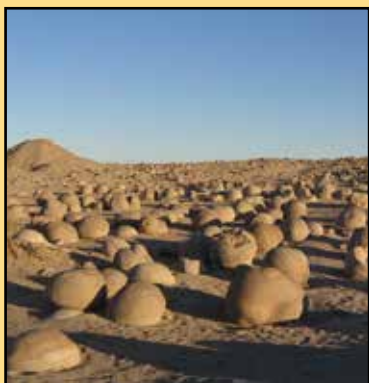
What do bobcat latrines, X-Files set locations, casts of mammoth femurs, and glow-in-the-dark scorpions have in common? They can all be spotted during Off-Highway Adventure Tours at Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area, of course!



Regardless of skill level, tour leaders strive to make every experience rewarding for a wide variety of folks.

Whether your interests lie in local history, the surprising complexities of desert geology, night-time off-roading under the full moon, or the ancient (and surprisingly water-filled) history of the Borrego Valley, we've got a tour to fit the bill.

Whether you're a curious beginner, a seasoned off-roader, or a somewhere in-between, the Off-Highway Adventure series at Ocotillo Wells is sure to provide a unique way of experiencing the desert to the fullest.



Safety is of paramount importance to our knowledgeable tour leaders. As such, participants are required to have a high-clearance 4-wheel drive vehicle, snacks & water, and—perhaps most importantly—a sense of adventure! Tours meet at a variety of locations throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA, most frequently right at the Discovery Center off Highway 78 at Ranger Station Road.

Along the way you'll have an opportunity to test your off-roading skills in some of the more seldom-visited locations the park has to offer.

Tours take place most weeks of the winter season. For more detailed information regarding specific tours, give us a call at (760)767-5370. Brochures highlighting each tour can be obtained at Ocotillo Wells SVRA Discovery Center. We hope you'll join us for a fun, excitement-filled adventure!

Off-Highway Adventure Tour participants frequently come back for more. When asked about the experience, one happy visitor responded: "I had a GREAT day of adventure. I learned so much about the composition of the desert that I had never known. Great fun and excellent info!"



Off-Highway PAL

Ocotillo Wells sponsors the OHPAL program that pairs at-risk youth with instructors and equipment. The program uses the appeal of OHV recreation as a "gateway activity" to welcome young people into a learning environment that promotes responsible recreation.



Guides At Your Fingertips

Since you can't comfortably carry one of our park naturalists around in your glove compartment, we offer five Desert Guides to visitors. Pick up these booklets from the Discovery Center or one of our Traveling Exhibits and you'll be able to show off your knowledge of the birds, mammals, reptiles, bugs and wildflowers of Ocotillo Wells. Next thing you know, you'll be one smart "desert rat."



CHECK IT OUT...



Ocotillo Wells SVRA is on Facebook!



Please "Like" Us (after all, we like you)

Facebook.com/OcotilloWellsSVRA

Trading Cards

Our park is certainly in the big leagues. What better way to celebrate our desert all-stars than with trading cards.



Ocotillo Wells SVRA offers more than 180 unique cards featuring our MVPs from the animal, plant, geologic, historic, and OHV leagues. Some are hidden in geocaches; some are waiting "on deck" at the

Discovery Center; others are available at our Mobile Park Exhibits or on tours, and new ones are always coming off the bench. Collect the whole set!

5 MUST SEE Programs!



Mobile Park Exhibits

Making your riding destinations more enticing since 2009! For times, dates and locations, check the Discovery Center, our website, or the park bulletin boards. Join our e-mail list for updates and follow us on Facebook.



1

Desert Animal Extravaganza

An up-close and personal look into the lives of some of Ocotillo Wells' year-round residents! From lizards to snakes, badgers to coyotes, tarantulas to black widows, plus bugs of all shapes and sizes—OW has its share of amazing creatures. Be sure you see the live, glow-in-the-dark scorpion!



2

Stargazing

Join us at our amphitheater for an incredible look at our dark side—the night sky. Our park astronomers will amaze you with views of the Milky Way, distant galaxies, nebulae, stars, and planets through our 11-inch telescope. You will revel in close-ups of the Moon's craters and lunar seas.

3

Gnarly Beasts Of The Past

What is the gnarliest beast to ever call Ocotillo Wells home? Imagine a time when massive mammoths and ancient camels were hunted by hungry saber-tooth cats. Picture a shark the size of an RV chasing walrus through the sea above Shell Reef. Discover these and other megacritters at the Gnarly Beasts of the Past.



4

Secrets of the Salton Sea

Delve into the story of California's largest and most misunderstood lake. A variety of maps, newspaper articles, and illustrations help you understand the past, present, and future of the nearby Salton Sea. Check out vintage photographs of the Salton Sea when it was a paradise beach vacation destination. We even bring a sample of the modern beach to you.



5

Junior Rangers

Discover the amazing geology, history, wildlife, and other secrets of the desert at your favorite off-highway park, and earn a sweet Junior Ranger badge through our Junior Ranger programs located at the Ocotillo Wells Discovery Center.



Join us for an action-packed afternoon of games, crafts, and exciting fun-filled activities that will make this magical place come alive. There is no better way to discover the desert than learning about the desert! Get your kid a head start

at being a responsible, educated rider. These programs are for kids ages 7 to 12. Activities take approximately 45 minutes. Check at the Discovery Center, our weekly schedule, e-mail, or Facebook post for times, dates, and weekly themes.

Mini Rangers

Designed specifically for 3-6 year olds, this program gives your kids an early start on understanding their desert with games, crafts, activities, and more! This program is full of fun experiences that will give your little one a greater appreciation for where they ride!

Traveling School Programs

Have you ever secretly wanted to pack up the desert and bring it home to share with your students? There is no need to get your bags sandy because our park educators can take the desert to you! Ocotillo Wells SVRA is proud to offer Traveling School Programs for area elementary classes. Through these programs students have the opportunity to explore desert wildlife in an interactive and educational experience. With the use of displays, crafts, and games, our park educators share our local critters and their adaptations to this harsh land. Rest assured, this program is designed to meet curriculum standards.



If you are interested in scheduling a program, or for more details, please contact us at (760) 767-5393.



Get Involved

The Friends of Ocotillo Wells



Founded in 2008, the Friends of Ocotillo Wells is a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to supporting, preserving and promoting off-highway vehicle recreation at Ocotillo Wells SVRA and the surrounding area.

The Friends help provide a variety of programs and resources for this unique riding area. These include boosting our educational programs, coordinating desert cleanups, and the general promotion of the park, not to mention various other projects. Currently, Friends of Ocotillo Wells has a board made up of dedicated off-road enthusiasts who, in conjunction with guidance from park management, direct the association for the benefit of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

We encourage you to become a member of the Friends of Ocotillo Wells and enjoy the benefits and satisfaction that come with supporting Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Membership benefits include an online newsletter, discounted merchandise, stickers, and more. Because Friends of Ocotillo Wells is a non-profit organization, membership fees are also tax deductible.

Want to be a part? Just fill out the form and mail it to:

**Friends of Ocotillo Wells
P. O. Box 388
Lakeside, CA 92040**

Or you can simply log on to friendsofocotillowells.com.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes. I would like to support the work of The Friends of Ocotillo Wells and enjoy the benefits of the membership category checked below.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt a Wash | \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$500.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift or Donation | \$ _____ |

Membership Information:

Name(s) _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State Zip Code _____
 Telephone _____
 Email _____
 Date _____

Please make check payable to the Friends of Ocotillo Wells

- Yes, I am interested in becoming a volunteer

For Office use only

Date _____ Amt Pd _____
 Membership category _____
 Card given _____

Volunteer Opportunities

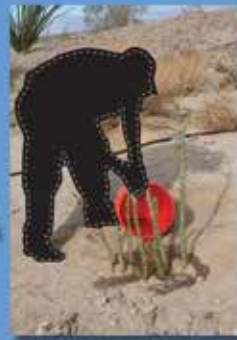
Volunteering at Ocotillo Wells SVRA is a rich and rewarding way to share your knowledge and passion for the desert and off-roading sport with others, as well as learning new things along the way. The opportunities here offer many diverse activities and assignments that can fit into almost anyone's lifestyle.

From park host to roving the trails, you are sure to find something that is both fun and rewarding. Here are some of the opportunities we offer:

- Desert clean-up crews
- Hosts for the Truckhaven 4X4 Area
- Help with festivals
- Archaeological site stewards
- Volunteer patrols

Contact us now and let the fun begin!

Who's missing?



YOU ARE!

Become an OHV State Parks Volunteer!

Please Contact Us at (760)767-5391
 or visit parks.ca.gov under the "Jobs" tab.



Emergency? CALL 911

Ocotillo Wells Rangers provide 24-hour emergency services. The three nearest hospitals are: Pioneer Memorial in Brawley (760) 351-3333; Palomar Medical Center in Escondido (442) 281-5000; John F Kennedy Memorial in Indio (760) 347-6191. Stay safe while riding.

Alcohol Beverages containing alcohol may only be possessed and consumed within established campsites. Do not carry alcohol while out riding or away from camp.

Open Camping The park does not take reservations, nor does it charge for open camping. Open camping is permitted in most of the park for 30 days per calendar year. No permits, passes, or stickers are necessary. See park map for more information.

Weather The desert here is a land of extremes. Be prepared for quick swings in temperature, especially in winter. Intense winds are common and flash flood danger exists year-round. Seasoned “desert rats” wear layers of clothing. **Always carry water and a map with you.** Be aware of your environment at all times.

Respect Plants & Animals Do not capture, disturb, harm, hunt, or harass wildlife. It is unlawful to ride over, burn, cut, disturb or remove trees and plants. Respect these living things and we can keep this park open and available for future generations.

Firearms It is unlawful to possess or discharge any weapons in the park. Nearby public lands maintained by the Bureau of Land Management are available for shooting. Contact the BLM or stop by the Discovery Center for info.

No Collecting Everything that you find in the park—rocks, artifacts, plants, animals, etc.—needs to stay in the park. Sadly, through the years, places like the Pumpkin Patch have shrunk due to collecting. If trash looks old, leave it where you found it. Historic “trash” tells an archaeologist a lot about how this place was used in the past.

Park Radio Station To keep informed, tune into the park’s informational radio station, AM 1620, Radio Rock-otillo. We broadcast current events, fun facts, park policies, and reminders about our programs and services.

Sky Lanterns The use of sky lanterns spreads litter across the park and also creates unsafe fire conditions. The use of sky lanterns within Ocotillo Wells SVRA is prohibited.

BURNING PALLETS EQUALS FLAT TIRES!

When a pallet is burned, the nails remain.

With up to 180 nails per pallet, that’s 180 chances to get a flat tire!

No pallets at Ocotillo Wells SVRA.



Fireworks You are not allowed to possess or discharge any fireworks, rockets, pyrotechnics, or explosives within Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

Litter Nothing ruins our desert scenery like litter. Properly dispose of trash in the dumpsters provided by the park. Strong wind conditions can blow litter, so keep it bagged at your camp. Don’t forget to recycle.



Firewood Only natural and untreated wood products are permitted for campfires. **You**

cannot transport, possess, or burn pallets. Collecting native wood in the park is prohibited.

RV Dumping You are not allowed to dump waste water (“gray” or “black”) into toilets, on the ground, or into any standing water. Facilities are available in nearby communities.

Military Munitions This area was a military training site. Potentially dangerous ordnance may remain in the area. **If you come across any munitions, leave them there and contact a Park Ranger. Do Not Touch!**

Accessibility

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the Discovery Center at (760) 767-5393 or 711 relay service. This publication can be made available in alternate formats.



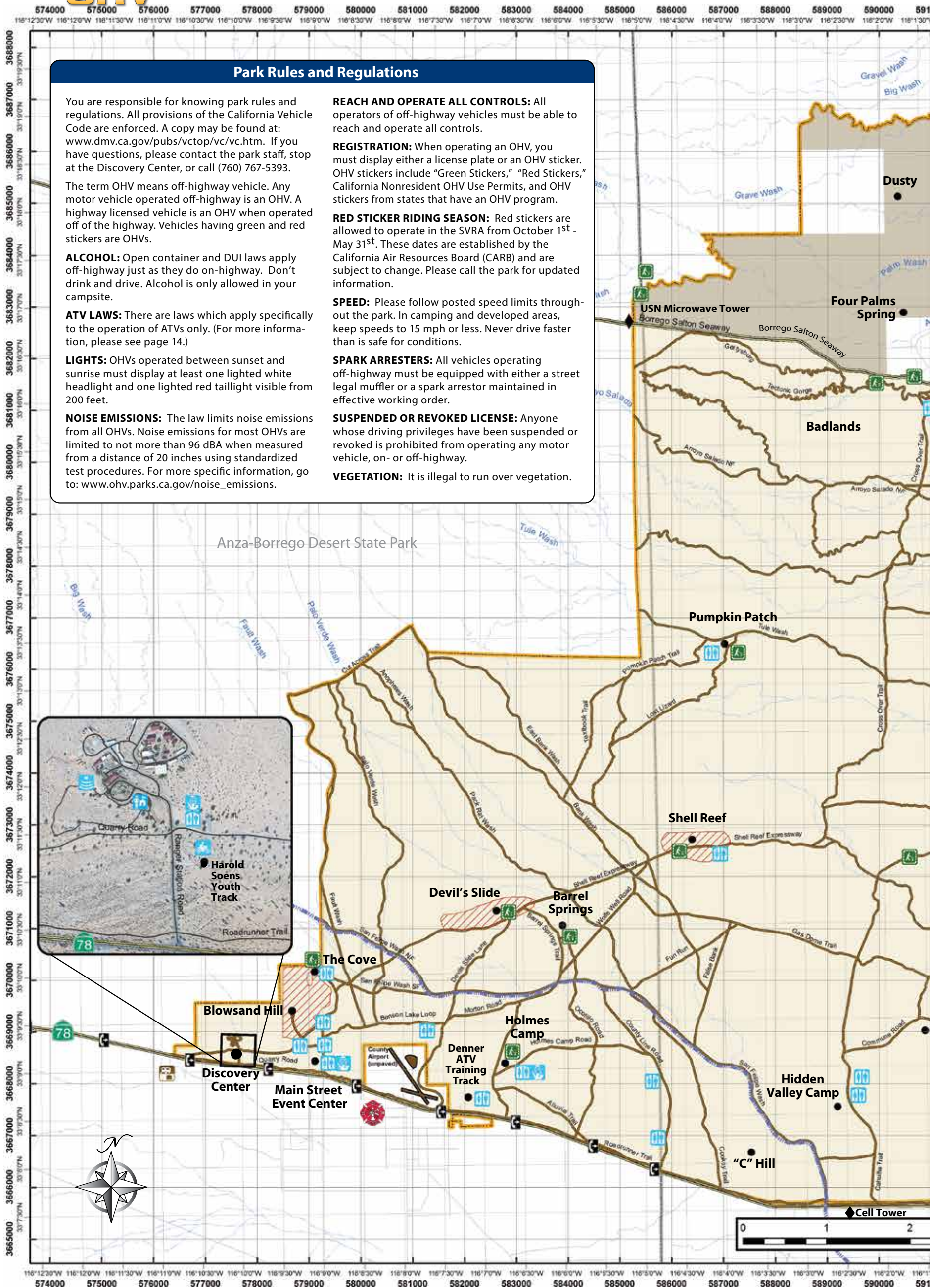
Save Your Pets’ Lives

Each riding season, numerous pets are lost in OWSVRA. Loud noises like the sounds of engines or illegal fireworks startle pets and cause them to run off. Left unattended or allowed to wander off leash, your pets could become a meal for our local coyotes.



- Please keep pets under direct supervision at all times.
- Control pets on a leash no more than 6 feet long.
- Make sure your pet has ID tags on its collar.

Following these steps will help to keep your pets safe.



Park Rules and Regulations

You are responsible for knowing park rules and regulations. All provisions of the California Vehicle Code are enforced. A copy may be found at: www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/vctop/vc/vc.htm. If you have questions, please contact the park staff, stop at the Discovery Center, or call (760) 767-5393.

The term OHV means off-highway vehicle. Any motor vehicle operated off-highway is an OHV. A highway licensed vehicle is an OHV when operated off of the highway. Vehicles having green and red stickers are OHVs.

ALCOHOL: Open container and DUI laws apply off-highway just as they do on-highway. Don't drink and drive. Alcohol is only allowed in your campsite.

ATV LAWS: There are laws which apply specifically to the operation of ATVs only. (For more information, please see page 14.)

LIGHTS: OHVs operated between sunset and sunrise must display at least one lighted white headlight and one lighted red taillight visible from 200 feet.

NOISE EMISSIONS: The law limits noise emissions from all OHVs. Noise emissions for most OHVs are limited to not more than 96 dBA when measured from a distance of 20 inches using standardized test procedures. For more specific information, go to: www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/noise_emissions.

REACH AND OPERATE ALL CONTROLS: All operators of off-highway vehicles must be able to reach and operate all controls.

REGISTRATION: When operating an OHV, you must display either a license plate or an OHV sticker. OHV stickers include "Green Stickers," "Red Stickers," California Nonresident OHV Use Permits, and OHV stickers from states that have an OHV program.

RED STICKER RIDING SEASON: Red stickers are allowed to operate in the SVRA from October 1st - May 31st. These dates are established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and are subject to change. Please call the park for updated information.

SPEED: Please follow posted speed limits throughout the park. In camping and developed areas, keep speeds to 15 mph or less. Never drive faster than is safe for conditions.

SPARK ARRESTERS: All vehicles operating off-highway must be equipped with either a street legal muffler or a spark arrestor maintained in effective working order.

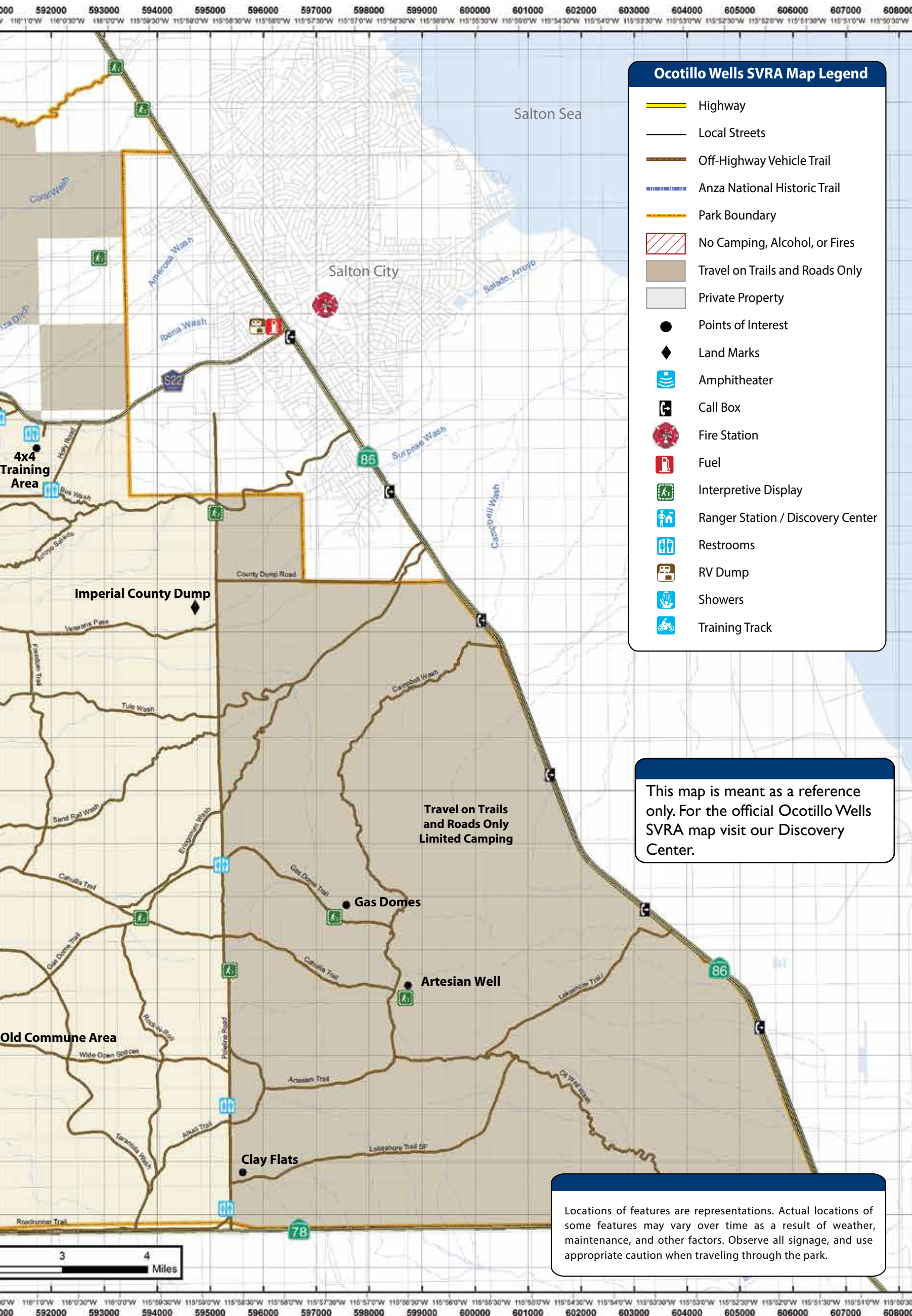
SUSPENDED OR REVOKED LICENSE: Anyone whose driving privileges have been suspended or revoked is prohibited from operating any motor vehicle, on- or off-highway.

VEGETATION: It is illegal to run over vegetation.

Vehicular Recreation Area

Ocotillo Wells

x 10 • Borrego Springs, CA 92004 • 760.767.5391





D.U.I. & Open

Containers Laws that pertain to driving under the influence of alcohol and open containers on the highway are exactly the same off the highway. **Never drink and drive.**

Speed The speed limit within 50 feet of campsites, people, or animals is 15 miles per hour. California's basic speed law also applies: don't drive faster than is safe.

Passengers You are prohibited from carrying passengers on ATVs unless the vehicle is designed by the manufacturer for both an operator and one passenger.

Whips & Flags To ensure that your ATV is visible, you must have a whip-pole, rod or antenna at least 8 feet up from the ground attached to your ATV. Within 10 inches of the top there must be a solid orange or red flag.

Curfew If you are under 18, you cannot remain in the park between 10 PM and 6 AM unless you are with a parent, guardian, or designated adult.

Safety Equipment All ATV and ROV riders are required to wear a helmet, and OHV riders should wear proper protective apparel.

Registration All vehicles must be registered. A current license plate and/or OHV identification sticker must be clearly displayed on your vehicle. "Red Sticker" season runs from October 1 to May 31. If you are visiting from another state, and your vehicle does not have a current registration from your home state, you must purchase a California Nonresident OHV Use Permit before you recreate on any California public lands.

Lights Any OHV operated between sunset and sunrise must have one lighted white headlight and one lighted red taillight. Both lights must have a range of 200 feet.

Garbage Dumping The dumpsters located in the park are only for trash created while camping or visiting in the park. No toxic materials are to be disposed of in the park.

Dumpster Diving In order to ensure your health and safety, entering or climbing on the dumpsters is prohibited, as is removing any contents.

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Boundary To the west, Ocotillo Wells SVRA borders Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. This park is only open for street legal vehicles on designated trails.

ATV Safety Classes & Info....

Ages 14 - 17 All riders ages 14 to 17 must possess an ATV Safety Certificate, or be under the direct supervision of a parent, guardian, or other adult who has completed an ATV safety course AND has an ATV Safety Certificate in their possession.

Ages 13 and Under If you are age 13 or under, you **MUST** (1) Be under the direct supervision of an adult at all times, (2) Be able to reach and operate all of the vehicle controls, and (3) Have completed an ATV safety course or be under the direct supervision of an adult who has completed an ATV safety course AND has an ATV Safety Certificate in their possession.

Ocotillo Wells is proud to offer ATV Institute Safety Classes many weekends from October 31st through April 1st. For more information please contact the Discovery Center at: 760-767-5393

ROV Laws: Operation and Safety Requirements:

- Operator must be 16 years old or under the direct supervision of a parent, guardian, or other adult.
- Safety helmet required for operator and passenger(s).
- Seatbelt/safety harness required for all occupants.
- Passenger(s) must occupy a separate seat location designed and provided by the manufacturer, except they may occupy a seat installed and fully contained in the vehicle rollover protection area in vehicles manufactured in 2013 and earlier.
- Passenger(s) must be seated upright with back against the seatback and able to grasp the occupant handhold when seatbelt/safety harness is properly fastened.

Contact Information

Park Hours:
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In an Emergency:
Call 911.

For More Information Contact:
Ocotillo Wells SVRA
5172 Highway 78
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
General Information: 760-767-5391
Discovery Center: 760-767-5393
© California State Parks, 2015



East of Poleline Road Policies

- ◆ Riding east of Poleline Road is designated trails only. If the trail is not on the park map and marked with carsonite signs, it is not a designated trail.
- ◆ Camping 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.

These rules and regulations have always been park policy. Enforcement is, and has been, in effect.



Half the Park is After Dark

How far into the distance can you see on a clear, cloudless day in Ocotillo Wells? Five miles? Ten if you're up high? Try 93 MILLION miles. That's the distance to our nearest star: the sun. In the evenings, the distance you can see swells drastically into the realm of billions, trillions, and even quintillions of miles.

With the aid of park telescopes, you can peer across vast galactic distances without ever having to leave Ocotillo Wells.

The simple arrangement of lenses, filters, and mirrors found in these powerful tools bring the heavens to the desert, illuminating and enriching even

the hottest of days and the darkest of nights.

Ocotillo Wells' remote desert climate provides an ideal location for stargazing.

The park's specially filtered Coronado solar scope is powerful enough to reveal the looping flares, spindly filaments, and otherwise remarkable surface features of the sun.

In the evenings, our 11-inch Celestron scope unveils a shimmering mix of stars, planets, nebulae, and even the inconceivably distant galaxies of deep space. Join us, day or night, for an intergalactic journey of cosmic proportions!



Top 4 Reasons To Look Up!

1

Jupiter

This gas giant is the largest planet in our Solar System. It's so huge that it could fit over 1,000 Earths inside it! Through a telescope, Jupiter's cloud bands look like thin brown stripes. You will also notice what looks like four small stars lined up on either side of the planet. Those aren't stars—those are Jupiter's four largest moons!



2

Andromeda Galaxy

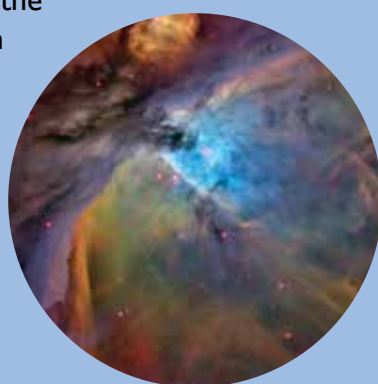
The Andromeda Galaxy is a large spiral galaxy similar to our own Milky Way. It contains about one trillion stars, give or take a few million. Andromeda Galaxy is seen in the night sky as a faint smudge. At 2.5 million light-years away, it is the most distant object you can see with the unaided eye. A telescope will reveal the bright galactic bulge at Andromeda's center, and the fuzzier spiral disk.



3

Orion Nebula

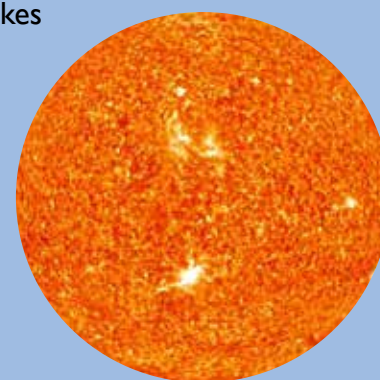
This cloud of dust and gas is a stellar nursery where stars are born. It is a naked-eye object visible as a hazy smudge in the middle of Orion's sword. Through a telescope you will see a bright, bluish glow speckled with glittery stars. The brightest stars form a squashed rectangle in the center of the nebula, and are known as the Trapezium Cluster.



4

The Sun

Did your mom always tell you to "Never look at the sun?" That is usually a great idea, but with a specialized telescope you can safely look at our own star! Light from our star takes 8 minutes to travel the 93 million miles between the earth and the sun! Look for flares, coronal mass ejections, and sun spots. Look for a solar scope program in your weekly schedule.





May the Geologic Forces Be With You

Over millions of years, geologic forces have shaped the landscape of your desert. You can see evidence of these forces in the rocky slopes, sandy washes, and eroded badlands. Each feature tells a story that reveals its geologic past.



The Force of Water

When you think of a desert you think of a place without water, but the water associated with summer rains is the most powerful force of erosion in Ocotillo Wells. During summer rains, water rushes down the washes of OW carrying considerable amounts of sand, gravel, and rocks downstream. When the washes dry up, large deposits of sand are left behind.

The Force of Wind

Wind is another powerful force shaping your desert, and is responsible for creating some interesting patterns in the sand. Wind blows sand over the mountains as it travels across OW. As the wind rounds Blowsand Hill, it slows down and deposits sand grains, forming a huge dune. While riding, take a minute to look for unique patterns in the ever shifting sands.



The Force of Faults

Earthquakes are another powerful force shaping your desert. Earthquakes occur along deep fractures in the surface of the earth called faults. During an earthquake, the earth moves up and down or side-to-side along these faults. In the photo to the left, you see where a light-colored rock layer has shifted up and down along a fault. These faults can be large zones like the San Andreas Fault located on the east side of the Salton Sea, or small branches radiating from a larger fault.

Can You Find The Force?

As you can see, your desert is full of geologic wonders, sculpted by the powerful forces of water, wind, and faults. While riding in OW, take a minute to stop and look at your ever-changing desert; the next time you ride through, it might look completely different!



Gnarly Beasts

5 Million Years Ago

1 Million Years Ago

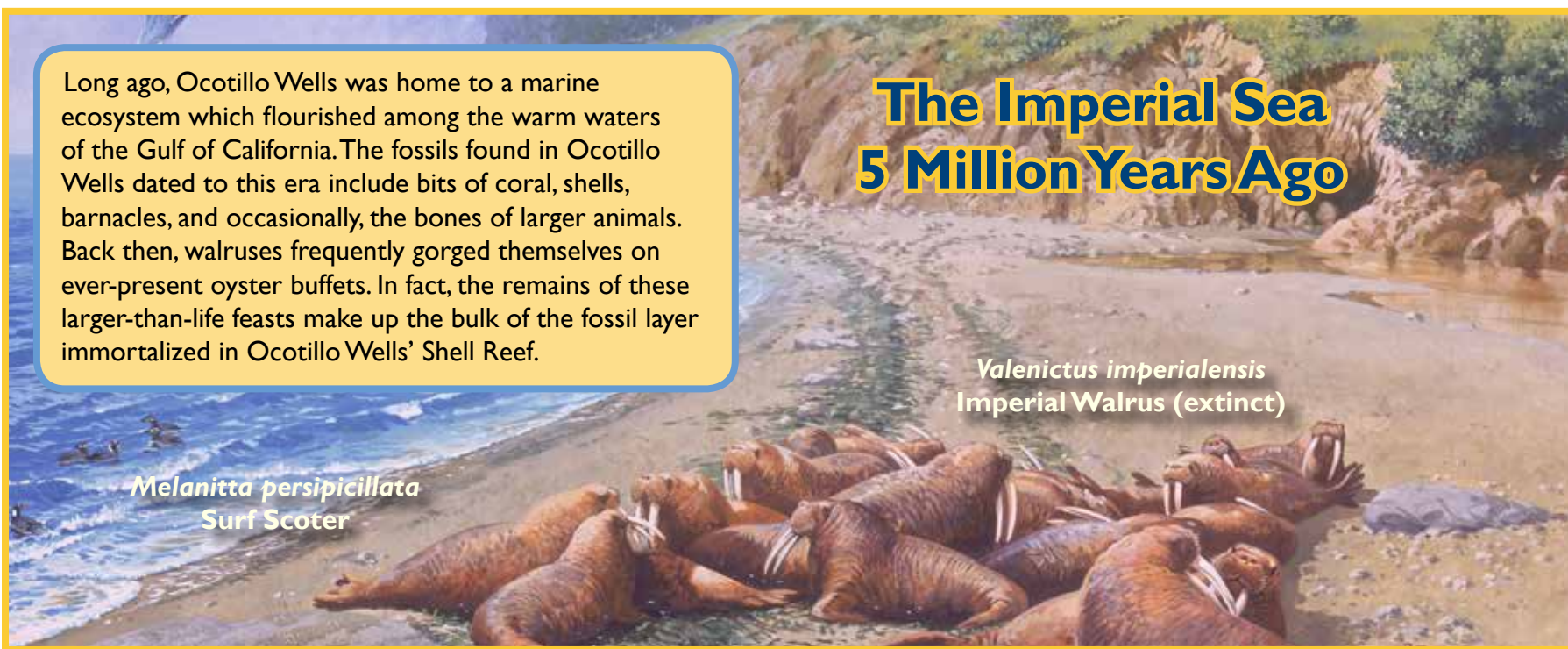
3 Million Years Ago

Long ago, Ocotillo Wells was home to a marine ecosystem which flourished among the warm waters of the Gulf of California. The fossils found in Ocotillo Wells dated to this era include bits of coral, shells, barnacles, and occasionally, the bones of larger animals. Back then, walrus frequently gorged themselves on ever-present oyster buffets. In fact, the remains of these larger-than-life feasts make up the bulk of the fossil layer immortalized in Ocotillo Wells' Shell Reef.

The Imperial Sea 5 Million Years Ago

Valenictus imperialensis
Imperial Walrus (extinct)

Melanitta perspicillata
Surf Scoter



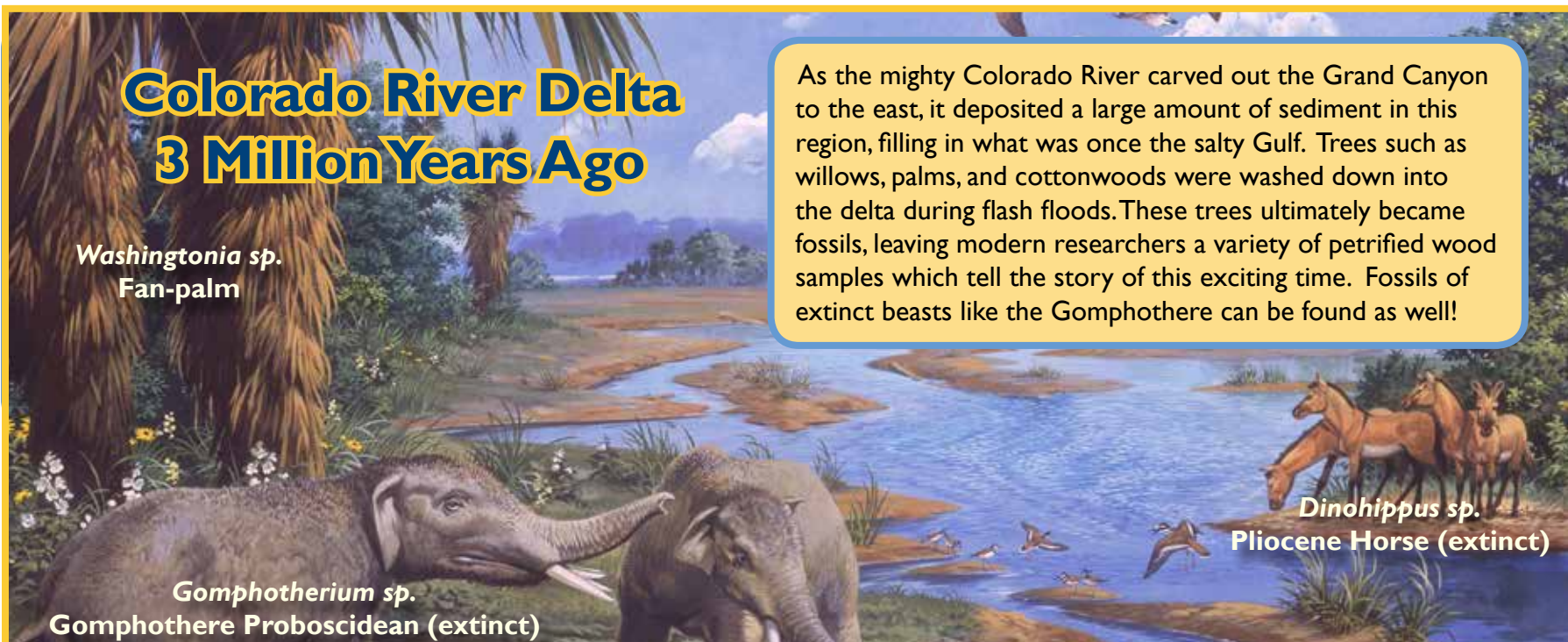
Colorado River Delta 3 Million Years Ago

Washingtonia sp.
Fan-palm

As the mighty Colorado River carved out the Grand Canyon to the east, it deposited a large amount of sediment in this region, filling in what was once the salty Gulf. Trees such as willows, palms, and cottonwoods were washed down into the delta during flash floods. These trees ultimately became fossils, leaving modern researchers a variety of petrified wood samples which tell the story of this exciting time. Fossils of extinct beasts like the Gomphothere can be found as well!

Gomphotherium sp.
Gomphothere Proboscidean (extinct)

Dinohippus sp.
Pliocene Horse (extinct)



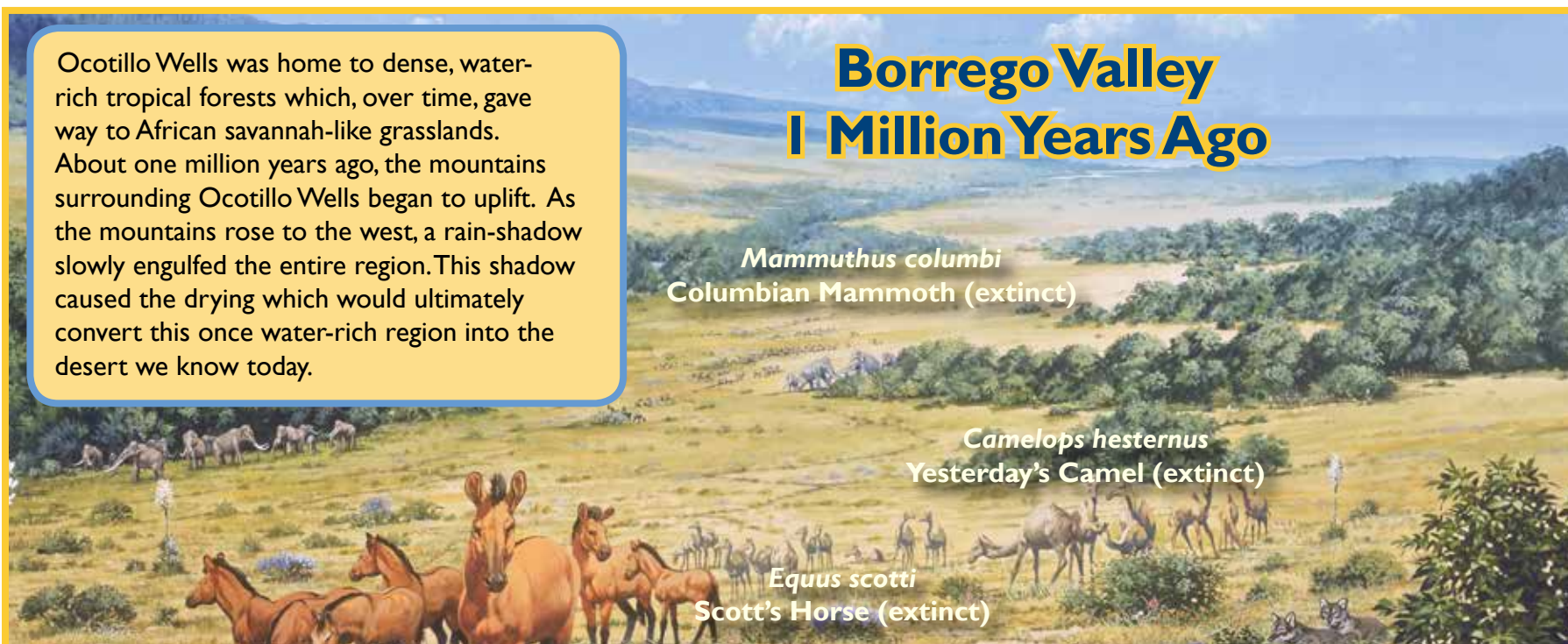
Borrego Valley 1 Million Years Ago

Ocotillo Wells was home to dense, water-rich tropical forests which, over time, gave way to African savannah-like grasslands. About one million years ago, the mountains surrounding Ocotillo Wells began to uplift. As the mountains rose to the west, a rain-shadow slowly engulfed the entire region. This shadow caused the drying which would ultimately convert this once water-rich region into the desert we know today.

Mammuthus columbi
Columbian Mammoth (extinct)

Camelops hesternus
Yesterday's Camel (extinct)

Equus scotti
Scott's Horse (extinct)



Artwork by John Frances, courtesy of George Jefferson.



Your Desert Neighbors

Predator or Prey: Who's on the Midnight Menu?



Coyote

Size: Weighs 25 pounds; up to 2 feet tall.

Survival Techniques: Keen vision, a strong sense of smell, and ability to run up to 40 mph.

Diet: Eats just about anything (omnivore). Keep your cats and dogs safe.

Hunting Behavior: Catches small prey by stalking. Catches large prey by forming packs and using teamwork.

Family Life: Strong family bonds. Uses a den for rearing pups, usually 4-7 at a time. Both parents feed and protect pups.

Did You Know?: Coyotes are very good swimmers.



Jackrabbit

Size: Weighs 3-6 pounds; about 2 feet long.

Survival Techniques: Ears act like radiators to cool body. Fur protects feet from hot sand.

Diet: Enjoys plants all year around from green, to dry and woody.

Escaping the Hunter: Good off-roader, can reach speeds of 40 mph (zigzag running) and leap more than 10 feet.

Family Life: Females produce 1-6 young several times per year. She gives birth in a shallow depression on the ground.

Did You Know?: They eat their own scat to get more proteins and nutrients.



Kit Fox

Size: Weighs 3-6 pounds; about 1 foot tall

Survival Techniques: Long, delicate ears make for great cooling by acting just like a radiator!

Diet: Favorite food is the Kangaroo Rat, but likes to dine on rabbits too.

Hunting Behavior: Uses its excellent hearing to locate prey. Catches prey with quick dashes using its short and stout legs.

Family Life: Mates for life and raises 4-5 pups in dens. While mom is nursing pups, dad brings home the food.

Did You Know?: Baby foxes are called kits.



Kangaroo Rat

Size: Weighs 4.5 ounces; about 4 inches long.

Survival Techniques: Can jump up to 9 feet in a single bound, using only hind legs!

Diet: Loves grass seeds. Sometimes stores the seeds in its cheek pouches.

Escaping the Hunter: Extremely fast; can turn on a dime; jumping is its best defense.

Family Life: Females produce 2-5 young several times per year. Pups live in mom's burrow for the first 6 weeks.

Did You Know?: They can go their entire life without drinking water.

3 Things You Didn't Know About the Ocotillo

1 Although it may look like one, the ocotillo is not a cactus. A closer look reveals that these needles are thorns, not spines. Desert iguanas and ground squirrels have been seen scampering up its branches.



2 Just days after a rain, a barren ocotillo sprouts tiny, bright green leaves and will shed these leaves after the soil becomes dry.



3 The ocotillo may look menacing, but it has provided food and shelter to desert dwellers for many centuries. Local Indian tribes brewed tea from its tasty flowers and constructed fences and roofs with its sturdy limbs.



Your Desert Neighbors Caught on Camera!

Can you identify the animals caught on our hidden cameras?

Ocotillo Wells' Resource Scientists install these cameras at various locations during the summer to survey the wildlife which whom we share our desert. As you can imagine, water sources are rare and visited regularly by animals looking for some liquid refreshment! Take a look at the temperature and time stamps on the pictures. When would you rather be out and about during the summer heat? How would you survive?



Battle Royale in the Desert



Nature is not always nice. The female tarantula hawk is one of those animals that you wouldn't want to meet in a dark alley. As adults, tarantula hawks feed on nectar, but their young must devour an entire tarantula to make it to adulthood.

When a tarantula burrow is found, the tarantula hawk evicts her victim from its burrow in preparation for the battle to come. With skills that would make a ninja proud, she delivers a powerful paralyzing venom via her 1/3" stinger. She will then lay her egg on the tarantula's abdomen before she buries the tarantula in its own burrow.

Once the wasp larva emerges, it will burrow its head into the tarantula's abdomen. First the wasp larva will start sucking nutrients and blood. It does this until it is almost ready to metamorphose into an adult wasp.

At this stage, the larva will tear into the tarantula's abdomen and eat all of the vital organs that had been spared until that moment—finally killing the tarantula. Using the burrow to pupate, the tarantula hawk wasp will emerge the next year on a sunny spring day as an adult, continuing the cycle of life and death in the desert.



Flat-Tailed Horned Lizards

The flat-tailed horned lizard is an Ocotillo Wells favorite. Once known as "horny toads," these small lizards thrive in temperatures that make us humans cringe! Designed in disguise they can be tough to spot with an amateur eye. Diurnal animals in the desert play a survivalist's game against any predator searching the well-illuminated sands. Birds can be especially troubling to such an animal. While some lizards possess superior speed like the zebra-tail, or size like the chuckwalla, the flat-tailed horned lizard uses its camouflage to seemingly vanish in the sand. It pays to look as much like the surrounding desert as possible. Double rows of fringing along the sides and tail make it so the flat-tail leaves no shadow; with a dorsal stripe like a stick shadow its camouflage is

almost perfect. As a cold-blooded reptile the flat-tail uses the sun's radiative heat for warmth, but the desert floor gets so hot that even the lizards eventually take shelter. A flat-tail may shimmy beneath the sand or take shelter in a nearby burrow. This lizard's diet is very particular, so they can't survive without an available food source. Even zookeepers have a hard time keeping captive flat-tails alive, so they aren't often kept for exhibits. More than 95% of the flat-tail's diet consists of harvester ants. The harvester ants they rely on are dependent on seeds from desert plants. When drought affects the plants, it affects the ants, and in-turn the lizard! Please enjoy this lizard from a distance (if you can spot one!), and be respectful of the sensitive habitat that supports this amazing creature.



Original photograph courtesy of Lesley Manent.

Native People Adapt and Thrive

It should come as no surprise that people have been coming to Ocotillo Wells for thousands of years, but it may surprise you that one of the attractions they were coming here for was—get this—water!



The huge freshwater Lake Cahuilla once existed where the Salton Sea is now, only much larger. This provided a reliable year-round source of fish, birds, other animals, and various useful plants. Native people built stone traps to catch fish, made pottery, baskets, stone tools, clothing and everything else they needed. Ingenious.

But even before the lake existed (and after it dried up), people were still living in the desert seasonally. When it got too hot, they would wisely head up to the mountains. While in the desert they harvested agave, mesquite, and other plants for food, clothing, medicine, fuel and shelter.



Courtesy of Palm Springs Historical Society. All rights reserved.

different native groups, but certain important places were used by all, such as Barrel Springs. People came together here to trade, share information, date, get hitched, perform spiritual ceremonies, and, of course to party.

At first glance, Ocotillo Wells may mistakenly seem just a “barren desert,” but for centuries it has provided food, clothing, and spiritual fulfillment to people living and thriving here. If you come across an archaeological site, please respect the legacy of the tough, clever people who came before us—don’t disturb the site or pick up any of the artifacts; it is illegal to tamper with, damage, or remove them.

A vast network of trade routes connected this area to the Colorado River, the Pacific coast, and beyond. Ocotillo Wells was at the boundary between the territories of

The Epic de Anza Expeditions Passed Through Our Desert

At the peak of the European struggle for empire in North America, Spain sent ambitious expeditions to settle the rich province of California and protect it from England, France, and Russia. Led by the very competent frontier officer Juan Bautista de Anza, this plan involved two parts:

First was an exploration to find a route through the desert in 1774. Second was a trek along the new route leading some 240 settlers and soldiers to San Francisco Bay in 1775.

These adventurous and very successful expeditions passed through the harsh wilderness

we now call Ocotillo Wells. Modern explorers can still follow Anza’s route through our park where signs explain the struggles and triumphs of his famous expeditions. For more details, stop by the Discovery Center.



Artwork courtesy of Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

The Hippie Commune



While little remains now, the Hippie Commune was once home to a small, tightly-knit community in the early 1970s. Some twenty men, women and children lived here in old buses, trailers, and even buildings made from scrap materials salvaged from local dumps. The “hippies” disappeared as mysteriously

as they arrived. Among the structures built at the Old Commune was a 6’ square underground room. Was it used as a root cellar to store food, a bomb shelter, or something else? One of the windmills used to pump water and generate electricity at the Old Commune is now said to reside at the nearby Blu Inn.



The Hunt For Oil



In the early 1900s, southern California was bursting with huge petroleum strikes. With so much money being made, there was soon excitement that more gushers would be found here. After all, the geology looked perfect. Local investors and big oil companies sank fortunes into the search for “black gold” nearby.

From 1919 to 1982, there were nine exploratory “wildcat” oil wells drilled within the borders of what is now our park. Huge wooden derricks (seen left) and later, steel-framed rigs were erected across this area. Though little remains of these structures, the name Ocotillo Wells itself is a product from this heady era of high hopes. To learn more, take a tour or pick up a copy of our historical guide on this story.

Training For World War II



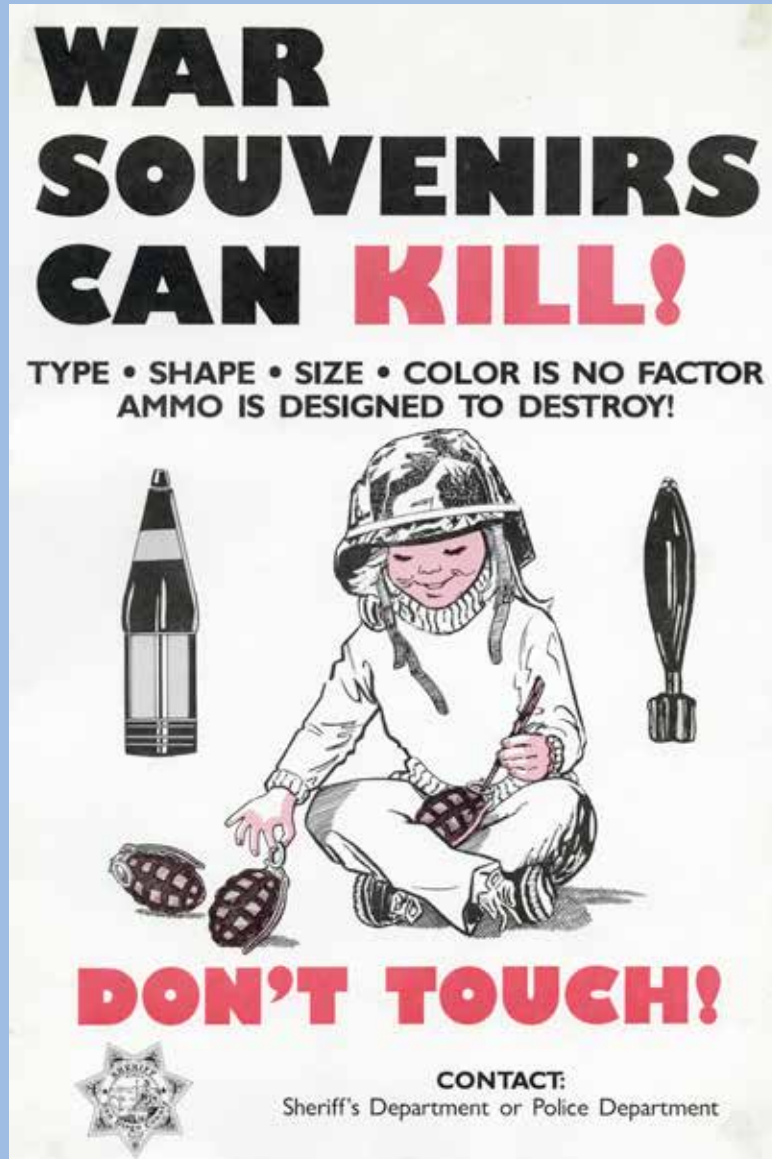
After the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Ocotillo Wells went from a sleepy backwater to a focal point of military training for the Second World War.

Navy planes that had been occasionally using nearby Benson Dry Lake (shown below), now began bombing practice targets located all across the area.

Soon Army and Marine units were practicing anti-aircraft artillery fire and performing combat maneuvers out here as well.

The conditions in the harsh and rugged deserts of southern California were perfect for conditioning American troops to fight against the Germans and Italians in the deserts of North Africa. In fact, this place was such a good match for the Sahara that they even filmed a war-time movie here.

Eventually, Caltech tested early rockets here for some high-tech research programs of the US military. Potentially dangerous relics of this exciting past remain in Ocotillo Wells.



If you find relic ammunition, leave it alone and contact a Ranger immediately!

Legends of Our Desert

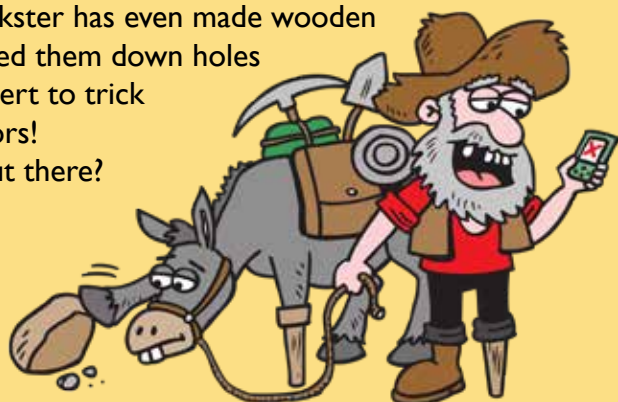
There are a lot of weird things going on in your desert, if you believe our local legends. Is there a grain of truth to these tall tales???



El Chupacabra
Translated as “The Goat Sucker” in Spanish, this creature is said to drain the blood of livestock! Scientists have now discovered a likely culprit, mangy coyotes and foxes. So if you have seen a mangy coyote, maybe you have seen El Chupacabra!

Peg-Leg Smith

Are you riding on a gold mine? Traveling through this area before the gold rush, Peg-Leg might have found gold nuggets covered with desert varnish in OW! Of course, when he realized what he had found, he didn't remember where he had picked up those particular nuggets! More and more prospectors have flooded into the region over the last 100 years as the story spread, looking for Peg-Leg's gold. One trickster has even made wooden peg-legs and dropped them down holes throughout the desert to trick the poor prospectors! Is the gold really out there?



Legend of Devil's Slide

Seen by the prospectors at the Three Buttes Mine over a century ago, the green glow of Devil's Slide is a perplexing mystery. Some say it is the ghost of Peg-Leg Smith, while others say it is the phosphorus in the rocks that creates the greenish glow. What strange things have you seen in the desert night?

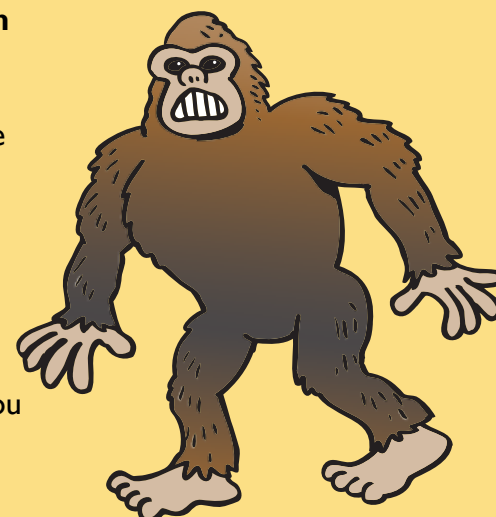


The Desert Galleon

Filled with exquisite Sea of Cortez pearls, this Spanish ship is said to have floated up the Colorado River on a tidal surge that left it stranded in the Salton Sink! Where do you think it washed ashore?

The Borrego Sandman

Did you think “Bigfoot” sightings were confined to the forest? Actually, the first Bigfoot sightings and reports were from the Spanish missionaries in Southern California! The Borrego Sandman is said to be 8' tall and weighs over 500 pounds. Have you encountered the Borrego Sandman?

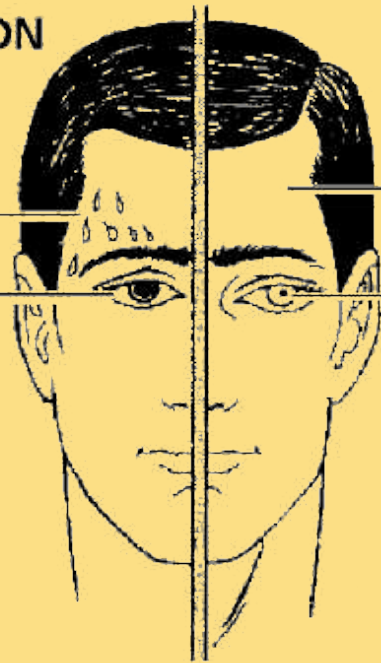




Beat The Heat!

HEAT EXHAUSTION

1. MOIST & CLAMMY SKIN
2. PUPILS DILATED
3. NORMAL OR SUBNORMAL TEMPERATURE



HEAT STROKE

1. DRY HOT SKIN
2. PUPILS CONSTRICTED
3. VERY HIGH BODY TEMPERATURE

Summer temperatures at Ocotillo Wells can soar above 120 degrees! Even during the “cool” times of the year, know the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Here are a few tips on how to avoid heat illness while visiting the desert:

- Don't visit if the temperature is too hot for your comfort level.
- Always bring, and drink, a lot of water.
- Stay in a shaded area.
- Wear a hat or other type of protection for your head.
- Do not drink alcoholic or caffeinated beverages.

If you or someone else is experiencing heat illness, move the patient to a cool area and call 911.



HAND SIGNALS SAVE LIVES!

Q: Have you ever wondered why riders coming toward you are holding up their hands with fingers showing a number?

A: The number of fingers equals the number of riders in their group behind them.

So the next time you see oncoming traffic, give them a heads up!

IT COULD SAVE A LIFE!

OW Photo Album



Photograph courtesy of Angus Smith.

Long before the creation of Ocotillo Wells SVRA, the old Department of Beaches and Parks managed our land in San Diego County. Their yellow patrol Jeeps were well-remembered by Angus Smith, who grew up here (seen above in 1959).



Photograph courtesy of Ray Ramsower.

The west side of Poleline Road has been a popular camping area for as long as many visitors can remember, although it was a bit more rustic back in 1966.

Generations of OHV History

It all began with Jeeps left over from the Second World War. With the fighting finished, the military sold them cheap—\$50 apiece on the docks. Soon a new form of recreation was born, as a motorized breed of desert explorers began coming to Ocotillo Wells and Truckhaven.

Over the years, new designs were created and vehicles such as the Manx, Baja Bug, and sand rail made their appearance. As the technology improved and adapted to the rough conditions, our desert hosted some intense off-highway races like the epic Borrego Rough 100. These drew thousands of spectators and participants, including the actor James Garner. Legend has it Hollywood racing fan and “King of Cool” Steve McQueen rode here too.

As the popularity of off-roading increased, in 1971 the OHV Division of California State Parks was created with ongoing funding through the Chappie-Z'berg Law. In 1976, Ocotillo Wells became a State Vehicular Recreation Area with a focus on family-friendly opportunities and sustainable riding.

We'd love to present more of this history, but little has been recorded. We need your help. Please share so we can celebrate this past together.



Photograph courtesy of Angus Smith.

On March 5, 1974, at around 11:10 AM, a training flight of Pacific Southwest Airlines was forced to make an emergency landing somewhere northeast of Borrego Mountain. Luckily, the sandy stretches of San Felipe Wash served as a natural desert runway. This episode (and its accompanying surreal photograph) fits well into the extraordinary history of Ocotillo Wells.



Einerson Family Trust.

Since its settlement in the early 1900s, Ocotillo Wells has meant a lot of different things to a lot of different people. Originally known as just Ocotillo, the residents added “Wells” into the name in the 1930s, to highlight the oil wells in the region.



More protected from the wind, the sands of Blowsand Hill are always a draw and make for quite a night spectacle! Even back in the 1980s!

Let's Write Our OWN History!

Ocotillo Wells was a birthplace of off-highway recreation.

To tell this story we need your help!

Please consider sharing your stories, photos, souvenirs, newspapers, old gear, antique equipment, or anything related to this exciting history with us. We can bring the past to life.

For more information, stop by the Discovery Center or call us at 760-767-5393.

Your Adventure Continues



California Off-Highway Vehicle Adventure Guide!

California has many opportunities for you to explore in your off-highway vehicle. So grab one of the guides from our Discovery Center or field exhibits and find some new places to play! Here are some of your fellow visitors' local recommendations.



Hungry Valley SVRA

Hungry Valley is the second largest unit of California State Park's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division. Located in the Tejon Pass north of Los Angeles and along the Interstate 5 corridor, Hungry Valley offers 19,000 acres and more than 130 miles of scenic trails for motorcycles, ATVs, dune buggies, and 4x4 recreation. All levels of OHV operator skills will be challenged by the wide variety of terrain and trails at Hungry Valley SVRA.

Johnson Valley

Johnson Valley is a varied landscape for the off-highway vehicle driver. It is punctuated by steep red rocky mountains, rolling hills, open valleys, dry lake beds and sandy washes. Elevations range from 4,600 feet at Hartwell Hills to 2,300 feet at Melville Dry Lake. Vegetation consists of creosote scrub, annual grasses, wild flowers and Joshua Trees. The 188,000 acre off-highway vehicle riding area has something for every rider at every skill level.

Superstition Mountain OHV Open Area

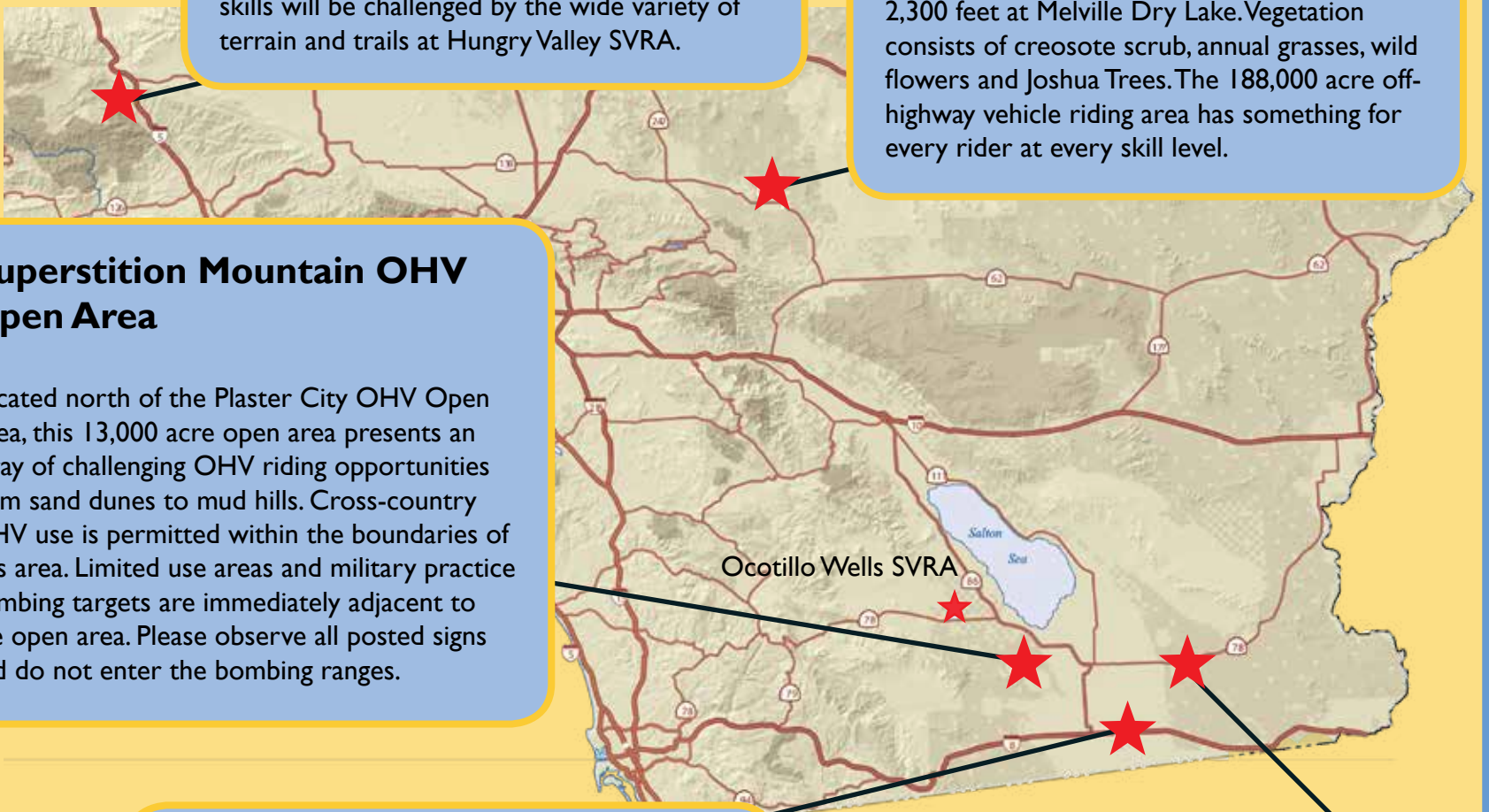
Located north of the Plaster City OHV Open Area, this 13,000 acre open area presents an array of challenging OHV riding opportunities from sand dunes to mud hills. Cross-country OHV use is permitted within the boundaries of this area. Limited use areas and military practice bombing targets are immediately adjacent to the open area. Please observe all posted signs and do not enter the bombing ranges.

Heber Dunes SVRA

Heber Dunes, located three (3) miles north of the Mexican border crossing at Highway 7 (Calexico/Mexicali) in Imperial County, is the most recent addition to the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division. This 343 acre day use only SVRA is especially popular with ATV riders; however, some dune buggies, utility vehicles and motorcycle riders also visit the park.

Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area

Located in the southeast corner of California, the Imperial Sand Dunes are the largest mass of sand dunes in the state. Formed by windblown sands of ancient Lake Cahuilla, the dune system extends for more than 40 miles in a band averaging 5 miles wide. Widely known as "Glamis" and a favorite location for OHV enthusiasts, the dunes also offer fabulous scenery, opportunities for solitude, and a home to rare plants and animals.



Due to unpredictable changes, we recommend contacting the appropriate land management agency for site specific information including operating hours, fees, and site/trail maps.