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Halloween Spooktacular 2015

By Jeff Price, State Park Interpreter I

Ocotillo Wells SVRA held its first annual Halloween Spooktacular, and it was a howling success! Hundreds of OW visitors came out for trick-or-treating and the many fun, spooky, and inspiring activities which were offered that night.

The evening started off with trick-or-treating in Howling Meg Circle where hundreds of kids and their parents were able to safely trick-or-treat, desert-style. Candy was donated by the Friends of Ocotillo Wells, Park staff, Quad Stop, as well as by visitors who brought candy to share.

After a trip around Howling Meg Circle to fill up on sugary snacks, the visitors had numerous choices of what to do next. Some of the costumed participants signed up for the costume raffle in the Discovery Center, with prizes donated by Friends of Ocotillo Wells and Motor World of El Cajon. While there, they could also take part in our interpretive arts and crafts. The kids (and the adults!) had a blast making spooky spiders and "Frankencups" as they learned about the Junior Ranger programs that are offered every weekend.



Just outside on the Discovery Center deck, our interpreter was giving short programs on one of the most popular Halloween critters—the bat! As soon as the sun began to set, bats were attracted to the lights and the bugs that had been lured there. Once the bats were flying, we turned on our ultrasonic microphone and listened to the bats in real time as they navigated and hunted right in front of our eyes!

(Continued on next page...)

Halloween Spooktacular 2015 *continued...*

Once satisfied with their dose of bats on the prowl, the mock graveyard with “Dead Edgar” lured our visitors with its creepy vibe. Once there, they could reach into the mystery containers in his coffin and try to guess which of his body parts they had found! At the end, there was a very special container for those brave enough to plumb its depths with their hands;

we heard many high-pitched screams from Dead Edgar’s direction that night!



After that spooky experience, many visitors decided to go for a walk on the wild side at our Spooky Scorpion Safari. Following a short presentation about the wonderfully weird lives of desert scorpions, visitors were armed with black lights and set out for a guided quest on the famous “Scorpion Hill.” Dozens of scorpions were seen glowing that night, and our visitors gained a new appreciation for these often-feared denizens of the desert.

Running low on sugar and wanting to warm up, our visitors were then able to visit the Friends of Ocotillo Wells and make S’mores around a pleasant campfire. Our visitors who wanted to commemorate their Halloween adventures could also take a picture with the spooky



(Continued on next page...)

Halloween Spooktacular 2015 *continued...*

legends of Ocotillo Wells. No words yet on what kinds of ghost stories were told, but they definitely prepared them for the next part of the adventure!

Finally, visitors had the chance to experience our haunted trail. With zombies that would pop out from behind the next bush, remote-controlled spiders driven by clowns, witches (and their cat!) who would give directions to the lost, and a bush that came to life, the trail itself was a spooky experience for many that night! The haunted house further along the trail was also a huge hit. With fog billowing out of the entrance, spooky music filling the air, and a new scare around every twist and turn, it was one of the highlights of the evening.



We would like to thank everyone, including all the different departments, that made the event possible. Without you, our visitors would not have had the great experience they had. In fact, one visitor had such a great time that he felt Sacramento needed to know. Sacramento forwarded the following message to us:

"To whom it may concern,

I just wanted to commend the staff at the Ocotillo Wells SVRA for putting on a spectacular Halloween party last weekend. We were looking for something that our son (9) would enjoy and we were out at our vacation home in Borrego Springs, so we chose Ocotillo Wells over the other Halloween events in the area, and man are we glad we did. I have never seen a friendlier staff, and the event was planned out extremely well. The highlight of the evening for all of us was the Scorpion Hunt. We met a number of very helpful rangers and my son is looking forward to the junior ranger program. Again, your organization is lucky to have people like this working for you." ~Eric

We would like to reiterate his last comment; State Parks, Ocotillo Wells SVRA and its visitors are very lucky to have such a dedicated, hardworking team. So thank you! And if you want to participate at next year's Spooktacular, let us know!

Experience Archaeology in the Colorado Desert

By Hayley Elsken, Archaeologist

Welcoming all history buffs, aspiring Indiana Joneses and assorted others!

If you would like to help protect the history and culture of Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA), we have an opportunity for you.

On the weekend of December 12th and 13th, the California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (CASSP) will be holding training at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in the Begole Archaeological Research Center. During the training, volunteers will learn about the history and archaeology of the Colorado Desert, how to take archaeological site photos, how to record an archaeological site, and what steps to take if an archaeological site is damaged. The training on Saturday will be a classroom segment from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with lunch provided. On Sunday, the class will run from 9 a.m. to approximately 2:30 p.m. and will include hands-on training with a trip to an archaeological site. Snacks and water will be provided (please bring your own lunch).

When you complete the class, you have the opportunity to become an Archaeological Site Steward at Ocotillo Wells SVRA. As a site steward, you would be volunteering to visit one to two sites in the park three or four times during the year and monitoring those sites. This includes taking pictures of the site, writing down if there are any changes, and observing if there are any natural disturbances (like animal burrows or heavily-shifted sands) and any human disturbances (like off-road activity). You will then file a report of your activities with the Park's CAASP Coordinator or District Archaeologist. Site stewards assist the Cultural Resource Department in keeping track of the conditions of archaeological sites, which is a great help since there are over 700 sites located in Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

If this sounds like something you are interested in, or you want to find out more information on the CASSP, please visit their website at www.cassp.org or email Hayley Elsken, the CASSP coordinator at Ocotillo Wells SVRA, at hayley.elsken@parks.ca.gov. To register for the class, go to www.cassp.org, fill out the registration form, and follow the instructions. The cost of the training is \$25 and includes membership to the Society for California Archaeology. The class is filling up quickly, so make sure to register as soon as you can!



Society for California Archaeology Logo

First Annual Critter Olympics

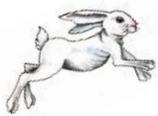


By Megan Parde, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

Young Olympians will be arriving at Ocotillo Wells SVRA on Friday, November 27, 2015 for the first annual Critter Olympics. They will start off by discovering the adaptations that six amazing critters have developed to survive in the harsh desert environment. Olympians will then put their physical abilities to the test in six Olympic-like challenges that correspond to each of the animals' physical and behavioral adaptations. Events will include:

- Coyote Howl—Coyotes use their howl as a basic form of communication. What might they be saying?
- Iguana Push-ups—What is a lizard trying to show us when it bobs up and down?
- Jackrabbit Jump—Jackrabbits sometimes use a zigzag pattern as they jump. How might this help avoid being caught by predators?
- Death Feigning Beetle—This beetle has a hard protective shell. For what does it need the protection?
- Roadrunner Run—Roadrunners are weak flyers. Why would speed running be an important substitution?
- Tarantula Hair Flick—Tarantulas have irritating hairs that they are able to flick off. Who might they be trying to keep back?

Competitors will be broken down into the age groups of 6 and under, 7-9 and 10-12 with the top athletes of each challenge earning a coveted Critter Olympic gold medal. Registration will take place between 10:00-10:30 am at the Soens Youth Track across from the Discovery Center with games running from 10:30-noon. Participants will be treated to a BBQ lunch courtesy of Friends of Ocotillo Wells at noon while the results are being tallied. The final closing ceremony starts at 1 pm.



Interested in more information on how to get involved? Contact Sharon at sharon.weil@parks.ca.gov.

Meet Adriana...

Hi. My name is Adriana Troncoso, and I am new to Ocotillo Wells. I am working as a Maintenance Aide in the Housekeeping Department. I love it here because I get to work with wonderful people and enjoy the beauty of Ocotillo Wells and the surrounding area.



When Wildlife Goes A-Fowl

By Sara Lockett, Environmental Scientist

Working in Ocotillo Wells, staff members most frequently encounter typical desert species such as reptiles, rabbits, and roadrunners. However, there are occasionally surprise visitors. Recently, the Resources Department received a call about an injured mallard hen, or a female duck, that had fallen into cholla spines. The spines had, unfortunately, pierced the mallard's foot and there were some on her underbelly. Spines had to be hand pulled during removal. As staff began removing the spines, she remained calm and cooperated with the procedure. Once spines were removed and her wounds were cleaned, she was released at the Salton Sea.

If you find an injured animal in the park, please report it to park staff immediately at either (760) 767-1084 or (760) 767-1302. Try to take a moment to assess the situation from a safe distance—the more information you can provide, the more prepared staff will be to respond. Do not attempt to handle injured



Photo by Kitty Gravett



Photo by Kitty Gravett



Photo by Brian Woodson

wildlife for both your safety and the animal's. It may seem that providing food, water, or medicine is beneficial, but these measures can actually cause more harm by stressing out the animal further. While it can be difficult to stand by, the best response is to allow trained staff to handle the situation.

Ocotillo Wells' Natural Butterfly Garden

By Natalie South, Environmental Services Intern

With just a small amount of rain, one can often detect changes in the desert wildlife. Aside from fresh plant growth itself, plants that are starting to bloom attract a wide variety of insects. Among these insects is the Orange Sulphur butterfly (*Colias eurytheme*). These butterflies are often found in close association with blooming Desert Buckwheat (*Eriogonum deserticola*) and can be observed in large numbers feeding on the nectar of flowering desert shrubs. In other parts of the country they can be a nuisance to commercial alfalfa plants, but at Ocotillo Wells they are a welcome pollinator to desert plants. These butterflies are relatively small with wingspans reaching a maximum of 2.75 inches and their color patterns vary. Their color patterns are influenced by many different factors including sex, season and genetics. However despite their name, Orange Sulphur's often appear more yellow than orange. The wings may have a hint of pink and dark margins (much more recognizable in males), with forewings having a darker spot and hindwings having a lighter, pink or orange spot.



Photo by Craig Fischer

Orange Sulphurs can be found throughout much of North America. These butterflies, and others, can be observed in many places at Ocotillo Wells, anywhere their flowers and plants of choice can be found; the photo above was taken on Tarantula Wash. Considering their affinity for a plant of the *Eriogonum* genus, Eriogonum Wash would also be a great place to observe these lovely insects!

Meet Steve...

Steve Thompson credits his passion, for the outdoors, to his childhood on a farm in Wisconsin. The desire to learn through experience guided him to the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, where he studied Environmental Education and Interpretation. For the past three years he has steadily hopped from the high deserts of Arizona, parched Nevada, the chaparral of southern California, and even the lush mountains of southern Oregon. He is excited to start another chapter in his adventures at the stunning Ocotillo Wells SVRA!



OW Maintenance News

By Karen Pena, Office Technician

At the end of the season last May, our Maintenance Supervisor, Dennis Raymond retired after 38 years of State Park service. Maintenance Mechanic Chad Van Doren graciously jumped in to fill the void and take on the enormous supervisory task, in addition to his large responsibility of leading the maintenance and day-to-day upkeep of the Park's water systems. The water treatment group, with Chad overseeing, maintains multiple wells and their systems, as well as the water received from the canal at Heber Dunes. They test the water on a daily basis to ensure our water is pure, and has nothing that could put employees and visitors at



risk. Along with that, Chad is also responsible for the Park's heating and air, electrical and solar gates, among other things.



Some of the Maintenance Department's summer projects included facility assessments, repairing air conditioning units, major repairs to the Discovery Center, painting public restrooms and planning for the upcoming season.

Thanks & Farewell

Please join us in saying "Thanks and Happy Retirement" to Julie Humann. Julie has been with California State Parks for over 20 years; the last 15 years she has been part of the Ocotillo Wells team. She has seen and been a part of the great growth of the OWSVRA. At one time she was the only Worker I for our entire district, along with only two other permanent employees and three seasonal employees. Over the years she has been a part of many aspects of the maintenance program from being part of the water testing crew mentioned above, to the outsourcing of vehicle repairs, the start-up of the Maximo Program, to the district Fire Extinguisher Training. Currently Julie leads the housekeeping staff in keeping the park clean. In addition to monitoring the park for cleanliness and litter, tracking along with disbursing supplies, Julie helps maintain our fire extinguishers, the lighting systems in the CXTs, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and helps ensure that the housekeeping staff stays on track.



Thank you Julie for all you've done!

Third Annual Kids Adventure Connection

By Karina Hassell, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

What better way to start the New Year than with a family-oriented festival at your favorite OHV Park! Ocotillo Wells SVRA will be hosting their Third Annual Kids Adventure Connection on

January 16-17, 2016. This will be a fun, action-packed weekend, which will include hiking, crafting, storytelling, singing, camping and stargazing, among other exciting activities. This enriching outdoor experience will allow families to discover the desert environment and the numerous resources it has to offer. In addition, campers will also learn about desert survival techniques in a fun way. Food, snacks and an evening bonfire will be provided. There is no



charge for participating—just bring along your camping gear, enthusiasm, and love for the desert. Every child must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Pre-registration is required. For more information, please contact Sharon Weil at Sharon.Weil@parks.ca.gov.



Meet Sarah...

My name is Sarah Reisman and I am happy to return to this area. I have lived in Borrego Springs on and off my entire life, and love the desert. Through the years I have enjoyed experiences working in several state parks. I am excited to learn and seek out the opportunities OWSVRA has to offer. I am working as a Maintenance Aide for Housekeeping.



New! Ocotillo Wells SVRA Visitors Guide

By Eileen Napoleon, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation



We are excited to announce the release of our new Visitor Guide for Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The guide describes 19 of our most popular destinations, with maps and photos to show you where they are and what they look like.

Interested in finding out about our programs? The guide tells about our most popular programs—those that are presented at the Discovery Center, and those that are presented out in the park at your riding destinations.

As in previous Visitor Guides, the new guide includes a park map (the center fold), critical information that you'll need in case of emergency, and park rules and regulations.

Want to read about park geology, fossils, desert animals, and our night sky as you relax at your campsite? The Visitor Guide contains short articles with lots of

pictures on all of these subjects. You can also read about the history of Ocotillo Wells and find out how to contribute your own photos to enrich our park history.

A huge "THANKS" to all the contributors and reviewers who helped create the new guide, and a special thanks to Jeff Price, State Park Interpreter I, who managed the project and put it all together.

Stop by the Discovery Center to pick up your copy of the latest and greatest news from Ocotillo Wells, or watch for a copy in the weekly Welcome Kits.

Meet Megan...

Megan Parde grew up in Wisconsin and spent her time traveling, hiking, curling (that game in the Winter Olympics with the people who sweep really fast) and becoming a connoisseur of cheese. While in college at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she obtained a degree in Anthropology but still didn't know how she wanted to use it. After college, she traveled around doing different odd jobs including working for the concessionaire at Yellowstone National Park where she developed an interest in being able to work outside with people. From there she continued to travel while working in the interpretive departments at Big Hole National Battlefield, Oregon Caves National Monument and Zion National Park. She is now excited to join the Interpretation team with California State Parks for the first time.



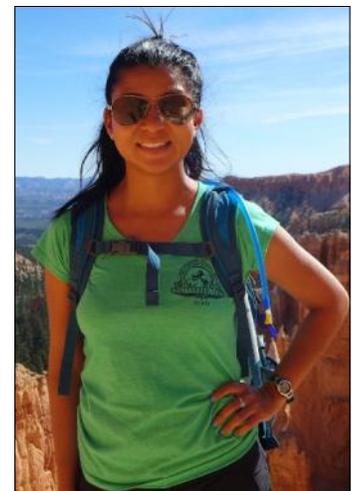
Do You Know...

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

Check your answer on page 23

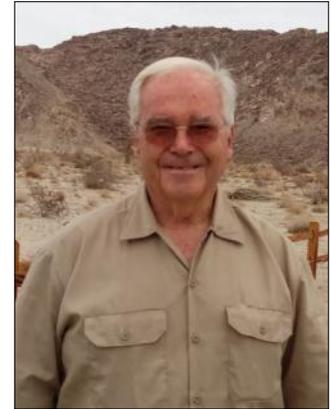
Meet Karina...

My name is Karina Hassell and I am pleased to be part of the interpretive team for this season! I was born in the small and beautiful country of Panama. From a very young age, I was motivated to explore and discover things around me. I started my academic career in engineering, but soon enough I discovered my true passion. I was introduced into the world of interpretation by working in a non-profit organization in rural Panama. After two wonderful years, I decided to continue my academic growth and came to the U.S. to become a geologist. I have been fortunate to work in great places, where I can combine my love for science, the outdoors and kids. I look forward to creating unforgettable memories for our visitors and to take the desert to those that cannot come to us.



Meet Randy...

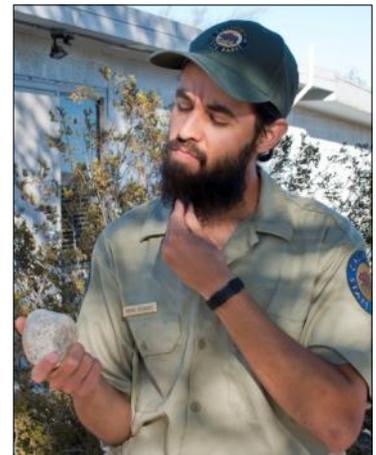
My name is Randy Andrews. I was born in southern California and grew up in Lakeside, moved to Ramona in 1974 and then to Ranchita 2.5 years ago. Before getting my contractor's license in 1992, I framed custom homes for Gongora Construction for 12 years. I also ran pick-up crews for over 1,000 units. My wife and I have been married for over 41 years and have two sons and one daughter. We raised our granddaughter until she was eight, and we now have five granddaughters and two great grandsons, with another on the way. Working here is great. I love to FIX things, so this is the perfect job for me. I am working as a Maintenance Aide in the Maintenance Department.



Meet Rafael...

Rafael Velazquez made his way to the desert hoping to share his love of the night sky with anyone who will listen. He grew up in southern California and made his way through various parks before ending up at OW. "The night time here is just brilliant. We're so off the beaten path, it makes for some sweet stargazing."

We caught up with Rafael doing what he loves to do: taking long walks looking at cool rocks. Looking is one thing; just don't ask him to ID a mineral for you. "I'm a bad geologist in that I can't quite tell a plagioclase from a dolomite." He's an earthquakes and volcanos kind of guy. "I look forward to learning about the nature out here. A lot of gnarly things call this place home."



Ocotillo Wells Fun Fact...

Did you know...

Flat-tailed horned lizards capture ants with their sticky tongue—not by grabbing them with their jaws! They have been known to eat up to 200 ants in one day!





America's State Parks First Day Hikes

By Steve Quartieri, State Park Interpreter III

With New Year's Day just around the corner, it's time to start planning your First Day Ride of 2016, and where better than Ocotillo Wells SVRA to kick off the New Year in style.

In support of the nationwide First Day Hikes event on January 1st, the Ocotillo Wells Interpretation team has planned a wide-variety of activities for your family's enjoyment; many with an OHV twist... Participants will be able to:

- ◆ Enjoy a tasty cup of Coffee, Hot Chocolate, or Apple Cider
- ◆ Test your skills at the OHV Safety Carnival Games
- ◆ Show off your rock crawling skills on the Tread Lightly! Remote-Controlled Jeep Adventure Trail
- ◆ Become an official Ocotillo Wells Junior Ranger at one of the programs
- ◆ Create a commemorative "I Love OW" art tile about your favorite part of OW
- ◆ Display your pride-and-joy in the Rig-of-the-Year OHV Show
- ◆ Map Your Family's First Day Ride on the Supersized Park Map
- ◆ Take selfies of your favorite OW destination and share them with the park
- ◆ Be a part of the Commemorative Group Photo
- ◆ And, of course, chow down at the Old-fashioned Hot Dog Roast

The festival is intended to promote not only healthy lifestyles, but also a connection to the outdoors. So be sure to join us New Year's Day at the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Discovery Center for this fun-filled family festival!

For more information about this and other Ocotillo Wells SVRA activities, stop by the Discovery Center or call us at (760) 767-5393. For you tech-savvy visitors, visit our Ocotillo Wells SVRA website, or follow us on Facebook.



Heber Dunes Happenings

By Jaime Mendez, State Park Interpreter I

Oh the places we'll go...

The 2014-15 season ended and summer began with even s'more fun things to do for Heber Dunes SVRA's Afterschool Junior Rangers Clubs. Proud parents watched as 96 newly-minted Junior Rangers received their badges and certificates. California Passports were awarded to four second-year Junior Rangers. Consistent participation in the Junior Ranger Plastic Bag Catcher project earned 25 community-service-minded Junior Rangers their cougar patches. Everyone celebrated with s'mores baked to perfection in the pizza box solar ovens the kids had constructed. Junior Rangers will never have "nothing to do" during those lazy days of summer because each one received a Junior Ranger Logbook to take home that is jam packed with fun things to learn about State Parks and the natural world.



Desert Gardens 2015/16 Afterschool Junior Rangers Club proudly raise their paws in the traditional grizzly wave!



Meanwhile, back at Heber Dunes, Interpreter Jaime wrapped up the 2014/15 season drafting the text for the new Heber Dunes SVRA map.

(Continued on next page...)

Heber Dunes Happenings *continued...*

It wasn't long, though, before September had arrived along with the 2015/16 season and 75 new smiling Afterschool Junior Ranger faces. This year—by popular demand—the first through third graders at Desert Gardens were chosen to participate in the program, giving the Junior Ranger bag catcher community service project competition a jump start (100% weekly participation is the norm for this group!). “Nature—a never ending story” is the focus for this year's activities. Junior Rangers—afterschool and in the park—will have never ending fun exploring the wonders around them.

While Mother Nature was judging pumpkins and Maintenance Worker I Martin Rubalcava, was bucking new straw bales onto the practice track, ATV instructor Jim Rue, was kicking off the season with new ATV safety students. Yes—your eyes are not deceiving you—that is a student on a 3-wheeler in the photograph! Out on the dunes Ranger James Claar has been busy educating our visitors on the new park operating hours—8am-sunset. In addition to our other activities, Heber Dunes' staff has been busy moving into the new building and are pleased to announce that our new ranger/maintenance facility is now open and ready for business. A great way to kick off the new season!



Open and ready for business!

Visitor Services

By Adam Borello, Supervising State Park Peace Officer

This past summer has seen some big changes in staff within the Ocotillo Wells Visitor Services Department. In fact, the crew this year has only three individuals who were part of the team last year. Those three are Supervising State Park Peace Officer Russell Fortin, State Park Peace Officer Brittany Veater, and Office Technician Cheryl Schulz. Over the summer we lost two Peace Officers to transfers within the department. Those officers, Mike Dippel and Sasha Wessitsh went to Lake Perris and Lake Folsom, respectively. They are missed tremendously as they left a vacancy in our K-9 program and our medical program. Our summer additions of State Park Peace Officer Luke Ware and Supervising State Park Peace Officer Adam Borello helped to keep us sufficiently staffed, and filled the vacancy that Visitor Services had in its Supervisor ranks this past season. With the return of State Park Peace Officer Jason Fincher in October from his military deployment, we were poised to have more officers this season than last...but that didn't last long as we lost State Park Peace Officer Eric Christiansen to a transfer to another agency during that same month. Fortunately, we were able to advertise and fill our K-9 position with Angelica Rios, who started mid-November. Sooooo... with two OW positions expected to come out of our current State Park Peace Officer Academy, we seem to have this season's staff locked in and ready to serve the public. Come on by the Ranger Station anytime to meet any of the number of new faces mentioned above. Particularly, we'd love to find out what we can do to help in making Ocotillo Wells the best it can be!

As many of you are aware, the Desert Lifeguard (DL) program within the Visitor Service's department is a critical component of our park's medical provision to the public. This year we saw a very large turnover in our DL crew from last season. I am pleased to say that every one of the DL's hired this season are certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) and as has been the case during



DL Cameron Faris treats Supervising Ranger Russell Fortin during medical scenarios

the 20+ year legacy of the program, these lifeguards had already proven themselves to be the best within their home districts at our beautiful beaches and reservoirs throughout Southern California. Early indications from the twenty to thirty medical calls that we have run this year is that our DL crew is exceptionally competent and hard-working. Their leaders, DL's Matthew Dawson and Adam Fedele, are doing an amazing job of facilitating progression within their program and providing highly-competent medical service to our park visitors. With so many new faces this year our annual DL

(Continued on next page...)

Visitor Services *continued...*

training weekend was instrumental in providing quality training opportunities mirroring our 'typical' trauma-related injuries, which are unlike those typically encountered at our DL's home districts. The three days of training culminated in a multiple-agency multiple casualty incident (MCI) training scenario, which included participation by five of our allied agencies. The weekend was a lot of work for Instructors and training coordinators, and participants alike, but the positive feedback from all left no doubt as to the overall benefits of the efforts. We look forward to another great training weekend next year.



Supervising Ranger Russell Fortin, Sector Superintendent Andrew Ahlberg, Ranger Sasha Wessitsh and Heavy Equipment Operator/Patient Adam Ashe prepare for the scenario

Finally, I would like to mention the excitement of our Visitor Service's staff in receiving several



Ranger Luke Ware exits the new Polaris RZR OHV patrol vehicle and adjusts his earpiece as he ensures scene safety and enters the MCI training scenario

new OHV patrol units. We acquired three dual sport KTM motorcycles and a two-seater RZR. These vehicles will increase our area of response within the park, enabling us to reach areas that we previously could not with our pick-ups and SUV's. Additionally, our response times to medicals and law enforcement contacts will be decreased as these new OHV's are built for the varied and uneven terrain that is presented by our park. We are extremely appreciative of the time and support of those outside of Visitor Services in making these

(Continued on next page...)

Visitor Services *continued...*

acquisitions a reality and look forward to ensuring the benefits of such acquisitions are felt by our park visitors.



Meet Sara ...

Sara Lockett grew up in the Bay Area region of California. Spending her free time in the Sierra Nevada mountains helped her realize that she wanted to focus on natural resource management as a career. After graduating from Northern Arizona University with a Bachelor's in Biology, Sara went to work for the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Realizing that she wanted to do more work in the field, Sara accepted a position with Ocotillo Wells as an Environmental Services Intern in mid-July. Recently, Sara was promoted to an Environmental Scientist. Sara has enjoyed her time here so far and is looking forward to learning more about the natural resources diversity here at Ocotillo Wells.



Meet Luke...

Luke Ware is a veteran of the United States Air Force, where he served as a security response team leader at a nuclear facility in addition to having served in Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2011 Luke graduated magna cum laude from Humboldt State University with a B.A. in Recreation Administration and minor in Business.

Prior to State Parks, Luke worked as a BLM Park Ranger at Christmas Valley Sand Dunes OHV area in eastern Oregon and a Forestry Technician with the USFS at Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area.

Luke joined the Ocotillo Wells team after spending two years with State Parks at Big Basin Redwoods in Santa Cruz. Luke has brought a wealth of knowledge with him to Ocotillo Wells. He recently became a Firearms Instructor and Firearms Inspector. Additionally, Luke has over 20 years of OHV experience, making him a valued member of our team.



Meet Angelica...

Angelica Rios was born and raised in Sacramento, CA. She graduated from St. Mary's College in 2010 with a B.A. in Environmental Studies and a Minor in Communications. Angelica attended the State Parks Academy at Camp San Luis Obispo alongside Jason Fincher and Luke Ware, both of whom also work at Ocotillo Wells.

Silverwood Lake SRA was Angelica's first assignment as a State Park Peace Officer. At Silverwood, Angelica enjoyed patrolling the lake by boat, which was especially fun on windy days. Silverwood also has many wild and domestic animals which found themselves in need of help. As an animal lover, Angelica was always ready and willing to help in a time of need.

Angelica now joins Ocotillo Wells as a Canine Handler, which is something that she has wanted to do ever since her hiring interview with State Parks. Time and hard work has brought Angelica to this point in her career.



Trails News

By Ryan Walasek, Senior Maintenance Aide

As if the summer wasn't hot enough...

In August, the Ocotillo Wells fire team travelled to Carrizo Marsh off S-2 for a controlled burn, in cooperation with Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Carrizo Marsh is an important water source for bighorn sheep and other sensitive or endangered species. In 1976 a flood washed out much of the native vegetation and introduced tamarisk, which rapidly took over. Tamarisk trees consume large amounts of water; removing the tamarisk trees will return natural water flow through

the area. This will encourage native vegetation to regrow, expanding the native wetland habitat, and increasing the amount of surface and ground water.



Under the scorching summer sun, the temperature was 105, and dressed in all the fire safety gear, it was a challenge to stay cool. The OW fire team is composed of (left to right) Chris Dahl, Chad Van Doren, Shay McGhee and Don Solleder.

(Continued on next page...)

Trails News *continued...*

The Trails Department’s main project in the 2014-2015 season was peeler core barricades.

These are constructed across washes and areas where people should not ride or drive, although walking beyond them is fine. Barricades along Poleline Road are to



enforce BLM rules—specifically that riding should only be done on official, signed trails. Other barricades, such as those around Gas Domes and the Crossover Camp, as well as those found inside washes like Arroyo Salado and Tule, are to prevent erosion of hillsides and the sides of washes, and protect plant and animal life—including yours.

First, the logs are cut in half and one end rounded. Then they are set in the ground and the cross pieces set on top and attached. Finally, reflectors and any relevant signs are put on the barricade.



Reaching Out to the Off-Road Community

By Sharon Weil, State Park Interpreter I

The Ocotillo Wells Interpretation Department recently attended the Orange County Sand Sport Super Show, September 18, 19, and 20, in Costa Mesa, and the Lucas Oil Off-Road Expo, October 3 and 4, in Pomona. These popular and well-attended shows mark the unofficial kick-off of the desert riding season. Staff visited with thousands of attendees over the five days.



A big attraction during this year's shows was the Gnarly Beasts of the Past display, where the stories of the ancient animals who roamed the Borrego Valley was told. Whether it was the huge tooth from the giant megalodon, femur bone of the Columbia Mammoth or skull of the short-faced bear, everyone wanted to hear more about these ancient creatures



of the past. As visitors moved through "time" they were able to look closely at the skulls and skins of modern day animals that call Ocotillo Wells home such as the coyote, bobcat and badger. Everyone loved being able to touch a real animal pelt and see what the animals skulls looked like. But as always, the highlight was the live animal display. There is nothing like a glowing scorpion, a beetle

(Continued on next page...)

Reaching Out to the Off-Road Community *continued...*

that plays dead and a lively discussion about the tarantula's mating habits to get the OHV community ready for a gnarly season of riding.

Staff answered questions about riding trails, available recreational facilities, passed out park maps, visitor guides, mammal, bug and reptile guides and interpretive trading cards. In addition, both events were awesome opportunities to reach out to the off-road community to promote safe riding, Tread Lightly! principals and responsible use of their state parks.



Did You Know...

The answer to the question on page 11 is:

The desert ironwood!

Look for these along Quarry Road near the Discovery Center.
They are one of OW's gems!



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

Upcoming Festivals

Special Ocotillo Wells Weekends

First Day Ride	January 1, 2016
Kids Adventure Connection	January 16-17, 2016
Geology Daze! Geology Festival	February 13-15, 2016
Bug-a-Palooza Bug Festival	March 4-6, 2016
Hot Stars & Heavenly Bodies Astronomy Festival	March 12, 2016



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