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3rd Annual Kid's Adventure Connection

By Sharon Weil, State Park Interpreter I

What better way to start the New Year than with a family-oriented festival at your favorite OHV Park! On January 16-17, 2016, Ocotillo Wells SRVA hosted the 3rd Annual Kids Adventure Connection. This fun-filled, action-packed weekend was based on the California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, which provides all children the opportunity to experience all that the great outdoors has to offer.



On Saturday campers and their families participated in a variety of activities which included outdoor survival skills, techniques and activities, an adventure nature hike, a family off-road scavenger hunt, a night sky program, a celebration of park history, a BBQ dinner, and a traditional campfire program that included good ole s'mores. After a hearty breakfast on Sunday, campers



(Continued on next page...)

3rd Annual Kid's Adventure Connection *continued...*

had the choice to participate in arts and craft activities or the Ocotillo Wells Super Bowl football game.

The event concluded with an awards ceremony where campers received their Kid's Adventure Connection official patch, Junior Ranger books and badges. Everyone mingled after sharing warm hugs with new friends and "see you next year" well wishes!



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

Message from the Superintendent

By Garratt Aitchison, District Superintendent

As another Ocotillo Wells riding season winds down, I am reminded of the challenges we faced as well as the great things to come. I have mentioned the Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard (FTHL) in previous articles and feel obligated to do so once again. As part of a multi-agency conservation group, Ocotillo Wells staff has devoted years to studying this reptile. As a result of quality research, habitat conservation, and the stewardship of the park visitors, FTHL numbers in this off-highway vehicle park are exceptional. I am very proud of everyone's effort. While I may think that it's appropriate for us to pat ourselves on the back, it is important for all of us to remember that Ocotillo Wells is only one piece of the habitat puzzle in California. As the California Department of Fish and Wildlife prepares to make its recommendation to the Fish and Game Commission in the coming months, Ocotillo Wells staff is prepared to implement their decision in our management of this public park that is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Somewhat related is our progress on the park's General Plan www.planocotillowells.com. This joint planning document between Bureau of Land Management and State Parks will provide goals and guidelines for park managers, specify uses and locations for everything from distributed riding to facility development, and consider adaptive management as a key principle in overall park management. The spring/summer months may be a sign of school vacations, major league baseball (Go Angels!), and saying good bye to our fantastic seasonal staff, but for many of us it is time to start gearing up for next season. As always, I encourage everyone to reach out to me or my staff if you have any questions, suggestions, or just want to say hello. Have a great summer!



Welcome Back Alfredo!

Alfredo Jacobo says, "as Park Maintenance Supervisor for the Maintenance Department, my goal is to provide visitors with an outstanding experience while visiting our park. I plan to do this by providing them with clean and operational restrooms, showers and campsites. I will do this through organization and distributing the work load more evenly throughout the staff. It is important to me that they have good work morale and are productive. In addition, I will hold regular safety meetings and help each employee prepare for future career opportunities."



Alfredo Jacobo, left, is welcomed back to OW by Chad Van Doren

Geology Daze 2016

By Karina Hassell, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

This year, Ocotillo Wells SVRA held its 7th Annual Geology Daze. As part of the tradition, the festival took place over Presidents Day weekend, February 13-15. Several geology exhibits were set up to highlight the geologic wonders of the park.



On Saturday, February 13th, the Discovery Center was invaded with rocks, minerals, plate tectonics, erosion, natural disasters, and even geology from other planets. Visitors were able to do hands-on activities to understand the complex processes that take place on Earth. Some of the activities involved forming your own rocks, identifying

minerals, discovering concretions, measuring earthquakes and generating flash floods. The icing on the cake was having the Borrego Rock and Gem Club (B.R.A.G.) displaying beautiful rock samples, and providing visitors with the unique opportunity to open geodes.

On Sunday and Monday the exhibits were set up at popular destinations of the park, such as Pumpkin Patch, Gas Domes and Shell Reef. Visitors enjoyed riding around the natural settings while understanding their geologic importance. We hope to keep sharing the tradition with our rock star visitors for many years to come.



Where's Whiskey?

By Lesley Manent and Matthew Dawson

I started my day at the park walking my dog up a trail towards Borrego Butte. As we walked in the still air and the calm of the morning, I heard a faint whimper coming from the butte. Listening carefully, I whistled. Was it coyote pups? Or was that a dog? I went back to camp to get binoculars. Riding my ATV to the base of the butte, I found a spot to listen and look for any movement, but I heard and saw nothing.

Being somewhat frustrated, I went to the Discovery Center and told Sharon Weil, who was working that day at the front desk, that I thought I heard a dog at the top of Borrego Butte. Sharon said a missing dog had been reported that morning. She quickly called the people who filed the report, and we met at the Discovery Center. Together, we drove closer to where I had heard the faint whimper, and the owner started yelling "Whiskey, Whiskey." Luckily, we heard the sound again; it seemed to be coming from up on the butte. The owner yelled "that's him, that's him!" The area is very steep and rugged, and sounds echo off the rocks. My next thought was where exactly is he and how are we going to get to him?



I hurried to the Ranger Station for assistance, hoping someone could give me information about how to climb the butte. Those big boulders were very intimidating, but that was the only way we were going to be able to rescue Whiskey. I explained the situation to Lifeguard Matthew Dawson and his supervisor, and asked if he'd like to go for a hike with me. Without hesitation, and with a nod from his supervisor, Matt gathered his gear and backpack and we both headed towards the butte.

Each of us took different routes so that we could listen for Whiskey's cries for help, whistling and calling his name as we climbed. And then there was silence. We held our breath and whispered to ourselves, "come on Whiskey, tell us where you are." Minutes later he barked again! Matt, yelled "I heard him, I see him." He then quickly and without hesitation scaled the huge boulders to the top of the butte. Whiskey was stuck on a ledge behind the boulders with nowhere to go. Perhaps he had been chased by coyotes or just so scared from the fireworks the night before that he couldn't stop running. Matt leaned toward the scared little guy and stretched as far as he could, grabbing Whiskey safely from the ledge. Exhausted and tired, Whiskey hung in Matt's arms, legs dangling, as the trek down the butte started. It took a while, but Whiskey was handed off to his owners with his tail wagging.

It was a very happy ending to a long day. It just goes to show that park staff are not only here to help the human visitor, but also the four-legged ones as well!

Dog Days

By Megan Parde, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

Dog Days was a howling success at Ocotillo Wells SVRA. On February 27th dogs and their humans were invited to the Discovery Center for an interpretive festival dedicated to our furry friends. Once there, humans were welcomed with tips and tricks on how to keep their dogs safe in the hot, dry environment of the desert and how to respond if they found or lost a dog at Ocotillo Wells. Visitors could then demonstrate their knowledge in the Desert Dog Safety Game. Additional booths included a dog trainer giving tips to teach dog obedience, a dog groomer demonstrating ways to care for those extra furry friends, and a dog adoption for those wishing to adopt or foster a dog.

The highlight of the day was the Desert Dog Fashion Show where awards were given out for those dogs who performed best in the categories of cuteness, obedience (tricks) and costume. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make the event possible, and a special thanks those dogs who participated in the event.



**We had a
PAWsome
time!**



On your mark...get set...CRAWL!

By Rafael Velazquez, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

What started off as a few rock obstacles has turned into a full-fledged rock crawling challenge. Our RC course debuted earlier this year at the First Day Ride festival and visitors can't get enough.

We've added a few new obstacles to the mix. Some obstacles are a walk-in-the-park, while others will make you want to rip your hair out. There's something here for everyone from the newbies to the trail bosses. A special shout-out goes to Robert, Maribel, Pete, Victor, Ramiro and Carlos of the Trails crew! Over the course of a few days, these enthusiastic individuals engineered several new obstacles out of 30 tons of rocks!



Focus is key

We plan on extending the course, but we need your help. Let us know what obstacles you want to see. Everyone is encouraged to bring out their own RC rock crawlers. Look out for special

days when rangers guide visitors through the course while practicing Tread Lightly!® principles along the way. Challenge your friends. And as always, have fun and watch your tilt!



Our most challenging addition is a four-foot-tall mountain of stone

See you on the trail...

Wildflowers: What's the big deal?

By Eileen Napoleon, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

What can live in extreme heat and dry conditions and still survive, even thrive? Desert plants and animals, and they've been doing this for thousands of years. Along the way, they've developed some amazing survival tactics.

Wildflowers are the opportunists of the desert. When conditions are right—the right season, the right sunlight, the right temperature, the right rainfall, and the right soil—they will grow, bloom and seed quickly, then die. With good luck and timing, they may cover a hillside with color for several days.



Wildflowers are called “annuals” because they live for one growing season. They grow from seeds and must produce seeds before they die—their way of reproducing. But not all seeds produce plants annually—some of the seeds lay dormant in the soil waiting for the right conditions, and sometimes they wait for years. Think about it...if every seed sprouted after a rainstorm, but the rainstorm was followed by hot, dry weather, all the young plants would die before they could flower and produce seeds. Then the plant would go extinct.

Wildflowers are smarter than this, and they make good choices about when to grow and about how many seeds will sprout each year.

- If there is enough rain, many of the seeds will grow into flowers, each producing more seeds.
- If there is not enough rain, many of the young plants will die before growing flowers and producing seeds.

But the plant won't go extinct. Why? Because there are more seeds in the soil that can sprout next year or many years from now, when conditions are right. Some seeds will be eaten by birds and desert



Desert Lily

(Continued on next page...)

Wildflowers: What's the big deal? *continued...*

animals, but if the plant makes enough seeds, some will survive to grow into wildflowers when conditions are right.

Here are some of the spectacular wildflowers that found the right conditions to grow this year at OW:



Brown-eyed Evening Primrose



Sand Verbena



Pincushion



Desert Chicory



Phacelia



Little Gold Poppy

White-lined Sphinx Moth Caterpillars

By Sara Lockett, Environmental Scientist



Photo by Henry Hernandez, Senior Park Aide

Many populations of desert insects and other critters are linked to the seasonal wildflower bloom. One such species is the white-lined sphinx moth, *Hyles lineata*. This year, thanks to the rains, there was a strong wildflower bloom, which supported a high number of caterpillars and their migration.

In the US, there are over a hundred species of sphinx moths, of which the white-lined sphinx moth is one of the most common. When the caterpillars are mature enough, they burrow underground. As they undergo metamorphosis, they burrow their way to the surface and emerge as moths. As the population expands, the caterpillars will emigrate—particularly during the wildflower season or after monsoonal rains.

The caterpillars eat from a wide variety of plant species. Sphinx moths, however, do not eat the plants themselves, but feed on the nectar, which has both water and a high sugar content. For this reason, evening primrose is one of the preferred hosts for this species. As the moths feed on the nectar, they also pollinate the plant, completing the cycle!

Visitor Services

By Luke Ware, State Park Peace Officer

On March 9th, Ocotillo Wells SVRA Ranger Luke Ware and Heavy Equipment Mechanic Jan Cahill teamed up with Fox Shox at Plaster City OHV Area for shock tuning. Fox Shox Master Shock Tuner Wayne Israelson runs the Motorsports Program at Fox and was on hand to assist the OW staffers tune the Fox Shox that are currently being tested on two OW Law Enforcement vehicles. The Fox Factory Series 2.5 shocks being evaluated are owner rebuildable and revalvable, meaning that they can be tuned by Ocotillo Wells staff to meet the excruciating demands that are placed on them during the season.

The first step was to give Wayne, "The Shock Whisperer," a ride in the trucks. Afterwards, the shocks were pulled off the vehicle by Jan and then disassembled and adjusted in the Fox Shox service truck by Wayne and his staff. Upon reassembly, the shocks were reinstalled by Jan and another test run was performed with Wayne in the truck to get a feel for the new shock valving. By the end of the day, three sets of shocks were removed, revalved, reinstalled, and tested for functionality. Both trucks are working much better thanks to all the staff involved. OW staffers thank Fox Shox for providing outstanding client support.



Trails News

By Ryan Walasek, Park Maintenance Assistant

The Tierra Del Sol event has come and gone, leaving only memories and tire tracks in the sand—and a few things needing repair.



Rob and Ramiro reset a winch post

One of the projects the Trails team has completed this winter is tearing down the old wire fence around the Soens Youth Track, and building a wooden barricade in its place. The knee-height barricade is much more pedestrian- and parent-friendly.



Other exciting Youth Track news: Trails, with assistance from the Heavy Equipment Operators, is working on a new/additional section of track. It will be a small hill climb followed by a short rocky stretch. These will be set up with small-scale intersection signs, and the entire youth track will have trail markers to mimic trails and roads in the rest of the park.

Another project Trails worked on was making Campbell Wash more rideable. Between windblown sand, and some rain and subsequent flooding that moved rocks and dirt, Campbell was

(Continued on next page...)

Trails News *continued...*



Pete and Victor work on placing rocks and Pete does a test drive

almost impossible to ride all the way through. Our intrepid Trails crew went out and moved rocks and shoveled sand to make it easier to get through. Of course, the desert being what it is, conditions can and do change, so exercise caution as you ride.



Chuck, Victor, and Carlos handle the rock bars while Andrew operates the winch

Heber Happenings

By Jaime Mendez, State Park Interpreter I

Cow Tales and Hay Bales



Gypsy—Heber Dunes' official State Park Cow—checks out the park's new Kubota and wonders what type of a State Park job her new ag degree qualifies her for.

Didn't know that Heber Dunes had an official State Park Cow?

You're not alone. Neither did any of the 2,403 visitors to the Heber Dunes' Mid-Winter Fair & Fiesta booth. You might say it was just a cow tale. What wasn't a cow tale, but what many didn't know and wanted to find out was how to get a job with California State Parks. Young and old alike were amazed at the variety of careers employee hopefuls could pursue with State Parks. They were surprised at the difference in career opportunities available to those with an advanced degree. Booth visitors also had the opportunity to explore ranger career options with Heber Sector Superintendent Kent Miller as well as interpretive careers with State Park Interpreter I, Jaime Mendez.

Sorry folks—the State Park Cow position has been filled!

(Continued on next page...)

Heber Happenings *continued...*

Desert Challenge

Junior Rangers had all rolled over and played dead like a death feigning beetle and zig zag hopped like a desert hare. Now it was time to team up and learn more about these interesting desert creatures. Each team chose an animal and got down to work. With the help of Mother Nature and her teaching partners, Junior Rangers researched,



Newly minted Golden Bear Paw medals ready for finishing touches. The proud medal winners of McKinley and Washington Elementary After School Junior Ranger Clubs proudly display their winning Desert Challenge posters.

designed, illustrated, and summarized fun facts for the First Ever Desert Challenge poster event. The goal was the coveted “Golden Bear Paw” medal. Winners also got to have their work displayed in the Heber Dunes’ booth at the fair. Everyone worked hard on the posters plus learned how to work toward a goal and together as a team!

(Continued on next page...)

Heber Happenings *continued...*

Maintenance on the Move!



Heber Maintenance crew, with some much needed help from OW, seen here constructing barricades, during control burn practice, and continuing the never-ending cachanilla control project.

The new year brought Maribel back to Heber Dunes to assist maintenance aides Luis and Cesar with more barricade construction work. Not long after that project was completed, the fire team arrived and held its monthly meeting at Heber. The meeting was followed with a controlled burn practice.

March brought heavy equipment operator Dan down to Heber to work on the cachanilla encroachment project. Thanks to everyone for jobs well done!

Heber's March Brain Teaser

submitted by Martin Rubalcava,
Park Maintenance Worker I

What is a cachanilla, and why does it need to be controlled?

(Continued on next page...)

Heber Happenings *continued...*

Eggciting Activities



Easter sunrise at Heber Dunes SVRA; the Junior Ranger versions of egg camouflage; a “mother bird” rolls her egg to keep it uniformly warm.

The gates opened at 5:30am. Twenty-six early risers gathered at Heber Dunes to watch the sunrise and celebrate Easter morning—a tradition established long before there was an official park. Festivities continued throughout the day. Junior Rangers and their parents discovered that desert birds were really good at hiding their eggs. Everyone helped Big Bird match up the eggs with the right bird followed by an old-fashioned egg roll. Camouflaging an egg is messier than it looks! All in all, over 300 visitors enjoyed a beautiful day at Heber Dunes!

Warm Weather Desert Safety

By Jason Fincher, State Park Peace Officer

Spring is upon us and the temperature is constantly rising. Before we know it, temperatures in Ocotillo Wells will exceed over 100 degrees. With higher temperatures come additional hazards. One must be cautious to avoid being a victim of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke. With the proper planning, one can possibly avoid becoming a heat casualty. When riding, ensure you have plenty of water on your body. Hydrate the day before riding. Take breaks when riding. Try to find a shaded area to take a breather and drink some water. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of heat illness.



Heat Cramps are caused by an imbalance of chemicals (called electrolytes) in the body as a result of excessive sweating. This condition causes the casualty to exhibit:

- Muscle cramps in the extremities (arms and legs)
- Muscle cramps of the abdomen
- Heavy (excessive) sweating (wet skin)
- Thirst

Heat Exhaustion is caused by loss of water through sweating without adequate fluid replacement. It can occur in an otherwise fit individual who is involved in tremendous physical exertion in any hot environment.

- Heavy (excessive) sweating with pale, moist, cool skin
- Headache
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Loss of appetite

Signs/Symptoms which may occur:

- Heat cramps
- Nausea—with or without vomiting
- Urge to defecate
- Chills (gooseflesh)
- Rapid breathing
- Tingling of hands and/or feet
- Confusion



(Continued on next page...)

Warm Weather Desert Safety *continued...*

Heatstroke must be considered a medical emergency which may result in death if treatment is delayed. A casualty suffering from heatstroke has usually worked in a very hot, humid environment for a prolonged time. It is caused by failure of the body's cooling mechanisms. Inadequate sweating is a factor.

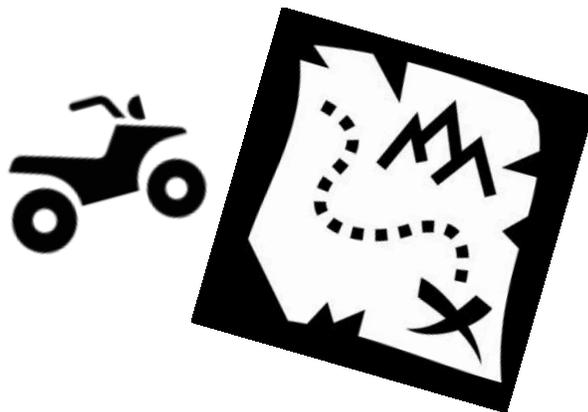
- The casualty's skin is red (flushed), hot, and dry
- May experience
 - ◊ Weakness, dizziness, confusion, headaches, seizures, nausea (stomach pains), and respiration and pulse may be rapid and weak.
- Unconsciousness and collapse may occur suddenly.



Being a heat casualty can be prevented by staying hydrated. Remember hydrate or die.

Always take a battle buddy when riding. Have some form of communication, either a cell phone or two-way radios. If you are not able to take a battle buddy, give a five-point contingency plan to a responsible party. I like to use the acronym **GOTWA**.

- G**—Going, where I plan on riding
- O**—Others coming with me
- T**—Time I plan on returning
- W**—What to do if I fail to return at the estimated time of return, i.e., call my cell phone
- A**—Actions, what I will do if I get lost or stranded, i.e., call you using radio or phone



Astronomy Weekend

By Steve Thompson, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

The stellar “Hot Stars and Heavenly Bodies” festival at Ocotillo Wells was a blast! The Discovery Center was surrounded by games and activities, engaging visitors of all ages throughout the day. “Rings around Saturn” ring toss was a big hit; everyone was encouraged to toss a ring to win a prize. After participating in a few games, visitors were encouraged to take a stroll through a scale model of our solar system and stop along the way to investigate the Sun using solar viewing telescopes. Woody Schlom was back this year with his new *Sky Truk* trailer and imaging equipment allowing visitors to experience the living power of our Sun. Alongside Woody, Oceanside Photo and Telescope had their own solar telescope engaging visitors with close-up views of sunspots and even filaments!



Our day activities continued rolling through to the early afternoon where visitors were able to build their very own model rockets, become “Dark Sky” Junior Rangers, and even pretend they were controlling one of the numerous rovers found on the Moon and Mars.



As darkness descended over OW, we were joined by Steve Matousek of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Matousek enthralled visitors with a presentation about the need for and development of the Juno spacecraft mission. Juno has spent nearly five years, traveled several hundred million miles, to finally arrive at Jupiter this July!



Soon after Mr. Matousek’s talk, telescopes began popping up like mushrooms, giving people a chance to view planets, nebulas, galaxies, and much more. Ocotillo Wells’ park astronomers Rafael and Steve T. were joined by several guest astronomers. The precise view through Dr. Rickard’s *Dobsonian* telescope revealed the Galilean moons of Jupiter; the wide field of view of Frazier’s massive Vixen binoculars demonstrated why two eyepieces can sometimes be better than one. Meanwhile, Woody Schlom used camera and imaging equipment to project detailed images of space objects from his telescope onto a large screen.



A big thank you to all participants and staff that made this event such a success this year, see you all next time for *stellar* fun!

Eggcellent Spring Time Celebration

By Sharon Weil, State Park Interpreter I

Ocotillo Wells SVRA celebrated spring in the desert by offering the first ever Eggcellent Spring Time Celebration on Sunday, March 26, 2016. Approximately 300 park visitors and local community members participated in a morning filled with spring-themed activities and family fun.

A sunrise “meet and greet” was held at the Discovery Center with coffee, hot chocolate, pastries and brightly-decorated eggs being served. Peter Cottontail, the official “rabbit” of ceremonies officially kicked off the event with a traditional egg hunt for children 12 and under. Attendees then had the opportunity to participate in a variety of interactive interpretive activities such as Whose Egg Is That, The Jack Rabbit Jump and Spring Has Sprung in the Desert Bingo. Peter Cottontail was also on hand to take photos to help commemorate the family’s spring time visit.



The fun concluded with a chili dog BBQ lunch which was sponsored by Friends of Ocotillo Wells. This springtime event “unofficially” marked the end of the 2015-2016 riding season, but plans are already underway for additional special family festivals and events for the upcoming year.

Meet Andrew ...

Andrew Jens joined the Trails crew early this year as the new Park Maintenance Assistant. He came from the San Andreas District, where he worked at Hungry Valley SVRA for the past three years as a seasonal Maintenance Aide. While employed at Hungry Valley, Andrew worked in the auto shop as the mechanic’s helper and took charge of the shop when the mechanic left his park position. From time to time he would work for other departments that needed him, including Trails and Housekeeping. In his free time, Andrew likes to go exploring and get out on the trails to enjoy off-roading. Welcome to the OW team Andrew!



Dropping Knowledge: Archaeology Style

By Hayley Elsken, Tricia Dodds and Jim Cassidy

January, February, and March were busy months for the Cultural Resource Department. The members attended multiple trainings and meetings. All three members attended the Society for California Archaeology Meeting, an annual gathering of archaeologists from across the state to discuss



Fulmar research crew

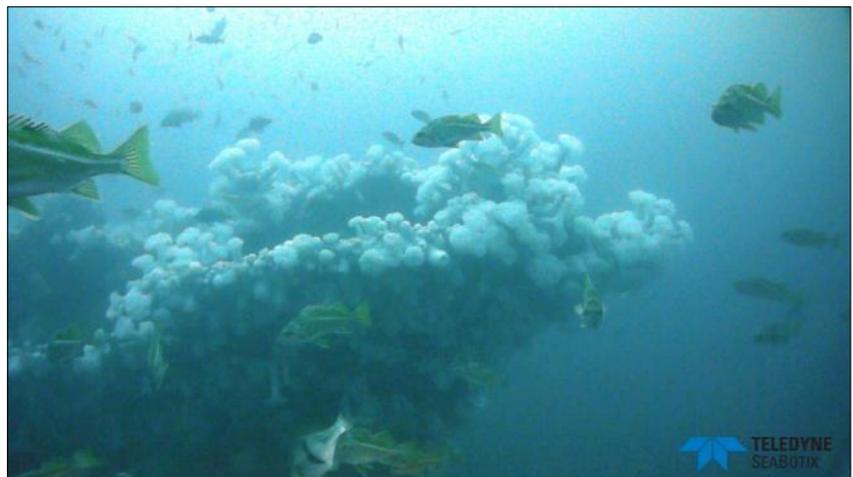
new and fascinating research in archaeology, held in Ontario, CA March 11th to 13th.

Tricia Dodds, Jim Cassidy and Hayley Elsken all presented papers focusing on work they have done with California State Parks.

Tricia (Ocotillo Wells, Associate State Archaeologist) presented on her work with the California State Parks' Maritime Heritage Program. As part of the recent agreement signed between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and California State Parks, the two agencies are collaborating on maritime heritage projects throughout California, specifically where NOAA's and State Park's boundaries overlap. NOAA is working with various agencies on a two-year mission to record wrecks in the Greater Farallones

National Marine Sanctuary (GNMS). During the most recent expedition in October 2015, Tricia worked with NOAA to investigate and record shipwrecks in the GNMS.

Several new wrecks were discovered and recorded, and Tricia presented on two shipwrecks from the expedition. One shipwreck that was identified was the *Ituna*, an iron-hulled fishing trawler that sank in a storm. In 1920, *Ituna* was en route from San Francisco to Reedsport, Oregon, when it encountered a storm. The vessel's seams split and the forward hold flooded, and the ship eventually foundered 15 miles northwest of the San Francisco Lightship station. *Ituna* went down



Bow of the *Ituna*

(Continued on next page...)

Dropping Knowledge: Archaeology Style *continued...*

at the bow within ten minutes. The survivors fought heavy seas for seven hours before their lifeboat arrived at the San Francisco Lightship station where they were rescued. Another shipwreck that was investigated was the tramp steamer *Selja*. In 1910 on a foggy afternoon, *Selja* was sailing from Yokohama to San Francisco. Meanwhile, the passenger cargo steamer *Beaver* was northbound to Portland from San Francisco. By the time the two vessels sighted each other in the fog, it was too late. *Beaver* was on top of the crest of a large swell, and *Selja* was on the bottom of the trough on the same swell. *Beaver's* bow slammed hard on *Selja*, cutting deeply into the steel hull on the starboard side. *Selja* had ten onboard, and all but two escaped to lifeboats. The losses of *Ituna* and *Selja* are another reminder of the perils that ships encountered along California's treacherous coast.



Archaeologists Surveying in Ocotillo Wells SVRA

Jim (Ocotillo Wells, Associate State Archaeologist) gave a presentation titled *Before Lake Cahuilla: In the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area (OWSVRA)*. Archaeological investigation in OWSVRA has focused on the formation of Lake Cahuilla during the Late Prehistoric period (about 1500 years ago until the time of the first contact with Europeans). Lake Cahuilla formed multiple times during the Late Prehistoric when the Colorado River flooded. Lake Cahuilla was situated where the Salton Sea currently sits, but was about three times larger than the modern day Salton Sea. While sites along this shoreline compose the most abundant and complex sites, ongoing research reveals the possibility of significantly earlier human occupation dating into the Early Archaic (8000-4000 years ago) and perhaps even the terminal Paleoindian period (more than 8000 years ago). Jim discussed artifacts found in OWSVRA and the surrounding area that support the idea of earlier human occupation. He also presented methods to find older sites in OWSVRA.



Human-like sandstone concretion

Hayley (Ocotillo Wells, Archaeological Project Leader) presented a paper on manuports and their

(Continued on next page...)

Dropping Knowledge: Archaeology Style *continued...*

importance in the archaeological record, focusing on one particular site located in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Manuports are natural objects, normal rocks and minerals that have not been changed by humans. The natural items become manuports when a human picks up the object and moves it to a new location. Many manuports are raw rock material that humans plan to use for future tools. The manuports Hayley talked about were gathered for their looks and shape instead of their usefulness. The rocks included concretions like the ones at Pumpkin Patch (though a lot smaller), petrified wood and pumice. A few of the sandstone concretions were shaped like humans, birds and snakes. Manuports are hard to identify, since they have not been altered by humans, but are still important enough for archaeologists to pay attention to them.

All three archaeologists at Ocotillo Wells District enjoyed their time at the Society for California Archaeology meetings and their talks were well received.

New ASI Class Instructors!

Ocotillo Wells SVRA has five new ATV Safety Class instructors! During March, Greg Schumaker, OHV Training and Safety Coordinator for the OHMVR Division, visited Ocotillo Wells SVRA to train members of the park staff to become ATV Safety Institute instructors. Class participants took part in a four-day program that covered instructional techniques, class curriculum, riding techniques, and of course, the paperwork. Congratulations to Anthony Beepath, Corey Ingersoll, Andrew Jens, Anthony McGhee, and Luke Ware for successfully completing the course. We look forward to being able to offer ATV safety classes to the public next season!

Interpretive team members Megan, Karina, Rafael and Eileen not only served as students for the instructor training class, but they got to experience the fun of riding an ATV.



Bug-a-palooza

By Jeff Price, State Park Interpreter I

Bug-a-Palooza was almost blown out, but we still had a blast! The winds were whipping the bug sheet around so much, that we implemented Plan B. Visitors were treated to a great presentation—"Scorpions: Friend or Foe?"—in the Discovery Center. During the program, people learned about the good that scorpions do for the environment, and the pest control they provide around people's property.



After the presentation, with the wind blowing as hard as ever, visitors gathered up their black lights and were led on a scorpion safari along the Discovery Center trail. The highlight of the evening was finding a gigantic Giant Desert Hairy scorpion on the first safari of the night! It was 4" without the tail. A specimen of that size was not expected on such a chilly night. All in all, everyone had a blast, learned to respect the "creepier" of the crawlers, and braved the desert winds. Join us on April 9th for Bug-a-Palooza Part II!



Military Exhibit

By Megan Parde, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation

While in OW you may have seen a flyby of a military *Osprey*, a helicopter/plane combination which can fly up to 277 mph. Yet, scattered beneath the sand throughout Ocotillo Wells are long forgotten clues of an even older military history. Strong winds or rain storms move sediment, exposing once hidden ordnances such as old bullets, rockets or even bombs. Although these objects should never be handled or moved due to the possibility of still being active, they are an interesting insight to some of the history of our park.

During World War II, the US knew it would be going to fight in the Sahara Desert—a hot environment where they had little experience. OW and the surrounding area had a very small population at that time. Combine that with similar conditions as the Sahara Desert and it is no surprise the military decided this would be a great place to train troops before sending them over.



Three-inch-wide rockets were once used at OW for target practice.



Practicing Ospreys are all that remain of a once heavily-used military training area at OW.

To commemorate these historic times in our park, come check out the new Military History exhibit. Take a closer look at some of the objects that have been found in the park, and discover some of the technologies used at the time. This exciting new exhibit is set up on select weekends during the riding season. For exact days and times, be sure to pick up a copy of our weekly program schedule at the park's Discovery Center or our website www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/ocotillowells.

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Military Exhibit *continued...*



The very first Jeeps were created for WWII and people have been Jeeping at OW ever since.



Bombs like this have still been found in recent times at OW. Although they are old, they may still be active and should never be handled.



Soldiers in Africa during WWII faced an environment similar to what can be found in OW.

**WAR
SOUVENIRS
CAN KILL!**

TYPE • SHAPE • SIZE • COLOR IS NO FACTOR
AMMO IS DESIGNED TO DESTROY!

DON'T TOUCH!

CONTACT:
Sheriff's Department or Police Department

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

Events at Ocotillo Wells

Watch for special event weekends and interpretive programs beginning again in late October!



Ocotillo Wells District

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