



# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE NEWSLETTER

Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

Fall, 2018

## How Does Our Garden Grow? Attracting Pollinators at BMCP

If you happened to pass by the Nature Center anytime in the last couple of months, you may have noticed that a lot of work has been taking place. With the final approval of the Board, development of an expanded pollinator garden finally got underway. Two Joshua Tree National Park employees– Trails Foreman Jamie Bouknight, and Accessibility Coordinator Patty Gerhardt visited the site on April 18 to review our plans for trails through



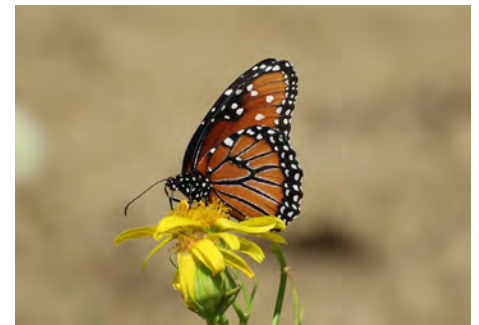
Larry Rosen, Etienne Decludt, and Bill LaHaye handle the delivery of decomposed granite soil used in the pollinator gardens. Photo by Meg Foley

the gardens and to advise us on issues related to physical accessibility of the garden trails and the general site.

Using native desert plants grown through a partnership with The Living Desert and decomposed granite soil obtained from Morongo Valley Elementary School, creation of the 'new' garden, and expansion of the 'old' garden, began in May. Larry Rosen played several key roles in obtaining the granite soil, arranging for the services of two day laborers paid by Calvin Cree, and working with Meg Foley to find funds to purchase needed materials and garden supplies including a drip irrigation system.

After a massive brush pile was finally cleaned out, the granite soil (and plenty of rocks!) were moved by hand into the individual garden plots. We started with three plots at the lower end of the garden. The first native desert plants were placed in the ground on May 22 follow-

ing a garden design created by Joe Zarki. On Day 1, we even had our first garden butterfly, a beautiful queen, *Danaus gilippus*, that dutifully visited every flowering butterweed that we had planted. By the following day, 64 plants had been placed, and a real pollinator garden



Long live the queen, our first garden visitor! Photo by Joe Zarki

began to emerge. BMCP Board member Bill LaHaye served as a technical advisor and our resident 'green thumb' guy. Bill reviewed the work for proper planting (continued on p. 5)

## Fidelity Volunteers Invest Their Time at BMCP... by Leslie Burkhardt



Photo by Leslie Burkhardt

Coordinated by fellow employee Mariya Dunkel, Fidelity Investment of Palm Desert sent seven strong volunteers for our 4th Saturday in June work project. To escape the midday heat, this dynamic team woke before dawn to move and spread truckloads of wood chippings in our heavily used kiosk and picnic areas. Members also swept portions of the Marsh Trail boardwalk to keep it free of debris to accommodate people with mobility impairments. Friends of BMCP extend their gratitude to the Fidelity Investment volunteers for all their 'sweat equity'!

## Hoyt Award Winners Honored for Their Work



Past Minerva Hoyt California Desert Conservation Award winners gathered on April 5 with the newest honoree, Pat Flanagan. Hoyt Award winners are recognized for their outstanding and sustained achievements in the conservation of California's desert lands. Pictured from L to R: Dee Zeller (2013), Ruth Rieman (2012), Pat Flanagan (2017), Steve Rieman (2012), Cindy Zacks (2016), and Nancy Karl (2015). Betty Zeller was a co-honoree with Dee in 2013.

Photo by Julianne Koza

**National Public Lands Day,  
Saturday, October 6**

BMCP Parking Lot, 8 a.m. - Noon  
Nature Activities, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

Did you know that more than 1/3 of America's lands are public lands? Give back to the places we go to learn, play and relax on October 6, 2018, the 25th annual National Environmental Education Foundation's National Public Lands Day! Volunteer to help Friends of BMCP and Bureau of Land Management with trail trimming and pruning, as well as invasive species removal. Volunteers receive snacks and commemorative NPLD t-shirts while supplies last. Tools, work gloves, and water will be provided. Projects are suitable for families with children over the age of 12.

If you have questions, contact  
Leslie Burkhardt at 760-363-1159,  
or [LBurkhardt@BigMorongo.org](mailto:LBurkhardt@BigMorongo.org)

**Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve**

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Leslie Burkhardt, Volunteer Coordinator  
Caryn Davidson, Education Director

**NEWSLETTER**

Editors: Leslie Burkhardt, Joe Zarki

Fall, 2018

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**CHATting WITH DEE, About Bobcats at BMCP... by Leslie Burkhardt**

Visitors to the preserve have been delighted and awed by occasional glimpses of bobcats, *Lynx rufus*. Named for their short, black-tipped tails, Bobcats are larger than domestic cats, but smaller



than mountain lions. Preserve Host Dee Zeller has seen his share of bobcats. "If you stay very still and quiet when you first see a bobcat, you stand a good chance to observe these impressive animals in their natural habitat."

Twice over the years, a mother bobcat has crossed the Marsh Trail boardwalk in front of Dee followed, one-by-one, by two or three kittens. At the first part of July, when Dee and Meg were talking in the Executive Director's trailer, Dee suddenly nudged Meg, and pointed out the screen door, quietly saying, "bobcat." When he noticed her distant gaze, he pointed downward to the handsome feline on the porch almost directly in front of her. The bobcat hopped off the porch, crossed over to the pool of water near Dee's trailer, took a good long drink, and then slowly ambled back into the surrounding brush.

Dee and Assistant Preserve Host George Cunning owe a special debt to the bobcat, as one of its favorite meals is the California ground squirrel, *Otospermophilus beecheyi*. These clever rodents are often able to raid even the most well-fortified of the preserve's bird-feeders. Now that the squirrel population is under better control, more human efforts can be directed to routinely taking down feeders each night to discourage a bear that paid an unexpected and destructive July visit to both feeder stations.

The bobcat's varied diet of smaller animals also includes snakes. Dee has seen bobcats catch red racers, *Coluber flagellum piceus*. Two bird-watchers, enjoying this spring's bird migrants, also were surprised by a bobcat subduing a rattlesnake. However, George witnessed the year's epic battle when a bobcat took on two, large gophersnakes, *Pituophis*



Photos by George Cunning

*catenifer*. As George's photos attest, the coiling snake seemed to have had the upper hand for a few moments, before the bobcat ultimately prevailed.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT by Meg Foley**

The Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve are dedicated to the exploration, preservation, and stewardship of the preserve. The Friends protect and manage the BMCP's resources, provide educational programs, access for wildlife viewing, and recreational opportunities for the enjoyment of its visitors.

We achieve our mission by raising funds to provide school buses, print literature and maps, purchase supplies and tools, and maintain infrastructure like the Nature Center and boardwalks. Our

activities are largely conducted by BLM volunteers, trained and coordinated by the Friends.

The Board of Directors, led by President Dave Miller, continue to plan and fund-raise to meet the needs of our increasing visitation. Last fall the Board embarked on a strategic planning session to guide operations for the next three years. This fall we will review the plan and discuss some much larger topics, like the Friends role in funding a visitor center. Many years ago, preserve representatives met

(continued on p. 3)

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

## Summer Encounter, 2018... by Caryn Davidson

This year's Summer Encounter was offered in two sessions, running June 18-22 and, again, June 25-29. Local students were treated to a jam-packed schedule of hikes, arts and crafts, guest speakers, and complimentary snacks and lunches. Thanks to a generous grant from the Conservation Lands Foundation, no fees were charged for this community event. Many outstanding volunteers stepped up to support the Summer Encounter, and their assistance was invaluable. Heartfelt thanks go out to Jamie Haney, Carla Harrower, Heavenly Hughes, J Lyn Hughes, Mary Kay Moore, and Elizabeth Wyatt. Guest speakers included Tracy Albrecht of the BLM; Sarah Jane Pepper and Simone Steger of Joshua Tree National Park, and Karen Nelson. Leslie Burkhardt, Meg Foley, and Dee Zeller of BMCP pitched in on Friday Family Fun Days, when the campers' family members were able to join the kids, participate in a variety of activities, and enjoy a BBQ lunch as guests of the preserve. It was a wonderful collaboration that provided many memorable summer experiences to the youth of the Morongo Basin.



Clockwise from top: Summer campers get a lesson on geology from Caryn Davidson; hike into the cool woods along the Mesquite Trail; make a pair of bat wings at a program by Joshua Tree National Park rangers; and learn Cahuilla words by playing a 'match game.'

Photos by J Lyn Hughes



### Executive Director's Report (cont. from p.2)

with Bureau of Land Management staff to develop a concept for a visitor center. At that time, BLM funding was available to build visitor centers, however agency funding will not likely be an option in the foreseeable future. It is a challenge to accommodate the growing education programs in the undersized meeting room in the Education Center, which also doubles for meeting space and an "exhibit" area. The location, far from the entry parking lot, doesn't reach all of the public when the building is staffed, but it has provided an appreciated contact and interpretive point for visitors.

Thanks to the efforts of the Board and a small core of active volunteers, volunteer hours were expanded in 2018. Between October, 2017 and April, 2018, 3,764 hours were contributed vs. 3,566 for the same time period the prior year. Some of the increase may be attributed to the many volunteers who participated

in National Public Lands Day— a record breaking 120. We hope to host a greater number on October 6th when we again recognize National Public Lands Day. Large numbers of volunteers allow us to accomplish tasks like trimming outlying trails and hauling the trimmed brush off the trail. Our challenge is to turn the 'one timers' into 'regular' volunteers who will return and help at the preserve.

Central to our mission is education and interpretation. People tend to preserve what they know and love— the subtleties of the desert environment are better appreciated after an introduction. Thanks to a grant from the Conservation Lands Foundation to reprint literature, translate some publications into Spanish, host Summer Encounter, and pay for student transportation, we can expand our reach. A generous gift received last year for transportation allowed us to quadruple the number of students hosted. By

leading weekly bird walks, occasional hikes, and grade-specific themed tours for local students, children and adults are introduced to the BMCP and develop an appreciation for its resources. This spring 805 students, chaperones and teachers were accommodated compared with 270 last year! We plan to expand offerings for visitors as more volunteer guides join the ranks.

BMCP offers many roles for volunteers no matter a person's interests or abilities. We need help leading tours, performing small repairs, pruning vegetation, and interacting with the public. We also need help with a number of administrative tasks: data input, media development, and database management. There is always something new to see at BMCP and like most volunteers, you will receive more than you give. I invite you to contact us if you can spare a few hours a week or month.

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

## History Trails, Part Two: *The Oasis Pioneers* by Steve Hanson & Larry Rosen

By the mid-1800s only a few of the Serrano People remained in the Big Morongo Oasis area. The year 1846 saw the birth of John Morongo. John was part of the Serrano's Cio Morongo Clan. He was one of a family of seven children.



Above: John Morongo is shown here with his family at their home near Morongo Valley. Below: Captain John Morongo (date unknown).

Photos courtesy of 29 Palms Historical Society

Around 1864 another smallpox epidemic hit the area, and the Morongo Clan moved to Potrero, near Banning. John was well educated and spoke several Indian dialects along with English, French, and Spanish. He went to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Colton, California and was the first official "Captain" of Potrero Ajenio, also called the San Gorgonio Agency.



In 1872 Hans and Margaret de Crevecoeur settled in the valley pitching their tent near the former Serrano Village at the oasis. They soon had a son, Ben de Crevecoeur. Ben was the first white child born in the basin that ran from Morongo Valley to the Colorado River. The family brought their stock of sheep and cattle,

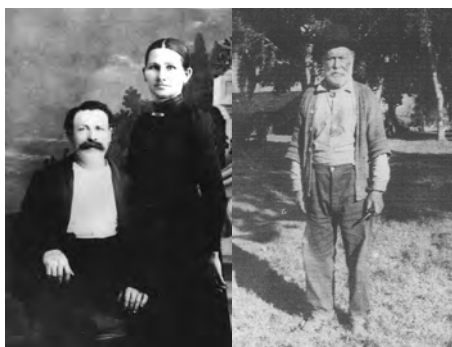


Left: Ben de Crevecoeur. Right: De Crevecoeur taking part in the 1909 Willie Boy posse.

Photos courtesy of Holdings of Special Collections & Archives, UCR Libraries, University of California Riverside

and they ran cattle until they left the valley in 1879. Ben was educated near Banning and later became a U.S. Marshal. He was one of the posse members tracking Willie Boy during one of the most celebrated manhunts in the history of the American West.

Mark "Chuck" Warren gave up driving freight wagons over the Chuckwalla Trail and searched for water resources



Left: Mark & Sylvia Warren. Right: Mark Warren in his later years.

Photos courtesy of 29 Palms Historical Society

in Yucca Valley. He established a water source that later was known as Warren's Well. Around 1885, Mark took over the Hans de Crevecoeur Morongo Oasis ranchland. There, he built an adobe house for his family that also became a stagecoach stop and way station for travelers on their way to the Dale Mining District. The Warren adobe became a gathering place for the area since, at that time, the Big Morongo Canyon Trail was the main route of travel between the high and low deserts. Sometimes as many as 30 overnight lodgers were using the house and large barn for shelter.



This 1914 view of Warren Ranch shows a white tent under the trees. The tent served as the first classroom in Morongo Valley.

Photo courtesy of Morongo Basin Historical Society

The Warrens moved to San Bernardino in 1912. After their departure, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Pollard leased the ranch.

The Pollards arranged to create the first school in Morongo Valley for their children. It was held in a tent on the ranch for a short time until it blew down. The Pollards continued to serve travelers at the Warren Ranch until 1917 when Mark Warren died.

Following Mark Warren's death, William and Martha Covington purchased Warren's Ranch. Mr. Covington homesteaded adjoining property to bring the ranch's size up to 640 acres.



William and Bertha Covington and their children Vaden, Sara, and Leonard.

Photo courtesy of 29 Palms Historical Society

Years passed and Sam Levin, the future owner of the Biltmore Hotel in Palm Springs and the Purple Lantern restaurant in Morongo Valley, purchased the original Warren Ranch property from the Covington family. He took up residence in later years on the oasis living in what is today the Nature Center building.

The next article will follow the evolution of the Warren and Covington land into the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve.

### References

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# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

## How Does Your Garden Grow? (cont. from p.1)

and watering, and pruned many of the plants to ensure vigorous root growth for their long-term survival. Each plant was placed in a root cage to discourage gophers, and certain plants received above-ground protection as well.

A second delivery of soil occurred on June 28, and Donna Yerman and Linda Christian donated a tractor and their time as operators to move all the dirt. Several more frenetic days of planting took place under increasingly hot summer weather. By the end of July more than 220 native perennials of 17 different species were 'installed' in the two gardens. To date our survival rate is more than 90%, and many plants that were initially cropped have put out new growth and flowers. Native plants were carefully chosen to provide both caterpillar food plants and nectar sources for adult butterflies. Attention was paid to the flowering season for each of these plants so that butterflies that emerge at different seasons will find the

plants they need. So far, ten butterfly species have been found in the gardens.

Remaining tasks include a second phase of propagation and planting targeted for next year. A seed collection trip is planned this fall for the upper part of the preserve. We hope to add about 10 more species of plants to make the garden even more attractive to a wider range of butterflies. Besides our target species,



The new pollinator garden after the first planting.  
Photo by Joe Zarki

the gardens are attracting many other pollinating insects including sphinx moths and tarantula hawk wasps. Small lizards abound on the site.

Many people apart from those mentioned above have contributed to its success. Kirk Anderson, Peter Siminski, and propagation specialist Bob Linstead provided more than 250 native plants grown from BMCP native seeds. Day laborers, Jesse and Angel, supported by Calvin Cree, moved tons of decomposed soil and rocks. Etienne Decludt and Steve Kerr faithfully turned out many times to help with planting and installation of the drip irrigation. Leslie Burkhardt, Meg Foley, Ann Garry, and Linda Sheehan showed up on a Saturday Volunteer Work Day to plant the garden. George Cunningham helped water the gardens once the irrigation system was running, and Robin Kobaly was a technical consultant on botanical issues. Thanks to one and all for your help.

by Joe Zarki and Larry Rosen



FRIENDS OF BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

PLEASE RETURN YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO:

**FRIENDS OF BMCP**  
P.O. Box 780  
MORONGO VALLEY, CA 92256

*Yes, I Want to Help!*

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

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**ENCLOSED MEMBERSHIP DUES:**

- \$ 25.00 STUDENT ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP
- \$ 35.00 INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP
- \$ 100.00 INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY SUPPORTER MEMBERSHIP
- \$ 750.00 INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

**ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS:**

- \$ 10.00
- \$ 20.00
- \$ 50.00
- OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

**NEWSLETTER** (WINTER, SPRING/ SUMMER, FALL ISSUES)

- EMAIL  MAIL  NEITHER

**BECOME A MEMBER OF**

**FRIENDS OF BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE**

Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) association organized for the support of programs at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve.

We are dedicated to the exploration, preservation, and stewardship of the preserve by protecting and managing its resources, and by providing educational programs, access for wildlife viewing, and recreational opportunities for the enjoyment of its visitors.

Donations to the Friends are fully tax deductible in accordance with the IRS and State laws. As a special thank you, new Friends receive a BMCP embroidered patch. Lifetime members also receive a canvas tote bag in addition to two BMCP color patches.

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE



## NEWSLETTER

*is published by*

Friends of BMCP

P.O. Box 780

Morongo Valley, CA 92256

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## CALENDAR

AT BMCP

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER

Gate open 7:30 a.m. to Sunset

365 days a year

### WEDNESDAY BIRD WALKS

Bird walks are held each Wednesday throughout the year excluding the 4th of July, Thanksgiving Eve, Christmas Eve or Day, and New Year's Eve or Day. From October through March, walks begin at 8 a.m. From April through September walks start at 7 a.m. Bring your binoculars and spend the morning strolling the trails with knowledgeable local bird walk leaders. Meet at BMCP parking lot. Beginning birders welcome.

### THIRD SATURDAY BIRD WALKS

Bird walks are held on the third Saturday of each month from October through May, excluding the 4th of July, Christmas Eve or Day, and New Year's Eve or Day. From October through March, walks begin at 8:00 a.m. In April and May, walks start at 7:00 a.m. No Saturday bird walks are held from June through September. Same format as Wednesday bird walks.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

September 8, New Volunteer Orientation, 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

October 6, , National Public Lands Day, 8:00 a.m - Noon; 12:30 -1:30 p.m. See p. 2 for details.

October 10, Friends of BMCP Membership Meeting, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Recognition of Volunteer Larry Rosen.

Saturday Volunteer Work Project, October 27 and December 1, 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. December event will include Holiday Refreshments. Meet at BMCP visitor parking area.

December 15, Morongo Valley Christmas Bird Count, 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Tentative date; details to follow.

*Check [www.bigmorongo.org](http://www.bigmorongo.org) for information and updates on future events.*