



BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE NEWSLETTER

Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

Winter, 2018/2019

Sneakers Met Lug-Sole Boots on National Public Lands Day

What makes National Public Lands Day arguably the most incredible volunteer event each year at the preserve?

On Saturday, October 6, the combined efforts of 77 volunteers logged almost 400 hours filling to the brim a dumpster generously donated by Burrtec of Palm Springs. By the end of the day, long stretches of thorny honey mesquite that threatened to overwhelm our most popular trails were trimmed back. Participants removed invasive plants near the Old Barn foundation and other locations, and the preserve's boardwalk trails were swept of all debris.

A nationwide event, National Public Lands Day (NPLD) was started by the National Environmental Education Foundation and is held each year to promote public enjoyment and volunteer stewardship of our public lands. Local NPLD participants were energized with granola bars donated by Nature Valley. Although many never-ending maintenance projects remain, thanks to Public Lands Day volunteers, the Big Morongo



Many helping hands gathered on October 6 for National Public Lands Day at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Volunteers contributed nearly 400 hours of hard work and countless smiles in support of their public lands.

Photo by Leslie Burkhardt

Canyon Preserve (BMCP) is now ready to welcome our winter visitors.

As a special project this year, BLM Archaeologist George Kline, Britt Wilson, President of the Coachella Valley Archaeological Society, Sean Milanovich, Palm

Springs Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, and several other volunteers and Archaeological Site Stewards took to the field to survey and update BMCP's cultural resources. After a long morning's work, George Kline treated hard-working

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Barn Owls Delight Morongo Birders article and photos by Joe Zarki

Recently, a small group of birdwatchers gathered at the base of a palm tree in Covington Park. Peering up into the deep shadows of a dense skirt of palm fronds, they were delighted to see the wizened, white face of a barn owl gazing back at them. Like several others that day, I craned my neck upward trying to frame a few photos that might capture the owl's ghostly visage. It wasn't until I downloaded my photos later that evening that I realized there was a second face looking at me in one of my photos. Apparently Covington's barn owls were raising a family.



On Halloween, a young barn owl gave a special treat to birders at the Wednesday bird walk.

The presence of these distinctive night-flyers, known to science as *Tyto alba*, suggests that this might be a good time to brush up on our knowledge of one of the preserve's resident avian predators.

Barn owls are a medium-sized owl with a length that averages 13-15 inches and a wingspan of 3-4 feet. Barn owls represent one of two main evolutionary branches of the owl family– the Tytonidae. Worldwide, there are as many as 17 species in two genera with most species found on the Australian continent. Their

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Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 15
 BMCP Parking Lot at 7:30 a.m.

ALL ARE WELCOME

Birdwatchers are needed for the 119th Annual National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. It's fun, it's free, and we can use your help.

Teams will be formed to bird a variety of habitats within a 7.5-mile radius of the preserve. At 4:30 p.m. we will gather to tally the day's results and enjoy pizza. The event is free, but donations to Audubon will be gratefully accepted.

Bring binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, layered clothing for changeable weather, lunch, and drinking water.

If you have questions, contact Joe Zarki at 760-366-8913, or jwzarki@gmail.com.

Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

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- Elizabeth Wyatt, Education Director

NEWSLETTER

Editors: Leslie Burkhardt, Joe Zarki

Winter, 2018/2019

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CHATting WITH DEE...Honoring Larry Rosen by Leslie Burkhardt

Chatting with Preserve Host Dee Zeller for this issue, he made it clear that, despite unusual sightings of ovenbirds, a varied thrush and a clay-colored sparrow, the big news at the preserve this season is Larry Rosen. On October 10 at the Annual Membership Meeting, Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve were all truly delighted to honor Larry's many volunteer accomplishments with a name plaque on the "Recognition Rock".

Dee first met Larry when he started volunteering at the preserve in June 2009 taking bird photos each week to create a simple photo book. Dee probably had little way of knowing then how indispensable Larry was to become to the mission of BMCP. That small photo project became the foundation of the bird section in a comprehensive redesign of displays in the Information Kiosk -- a project that Larry spearheaded. With his interest in birds, he began to regularly attend the Wednesday and Saturday bird walks, soon becoming a Bird Walk Leader himself. Larry is now averaging a little over 55 hours per month of volunteer time. Dee remarked,

"Over the years, Larry always became the very thing that this preserve needed."

Larry has demonstrated time-and-time again an uncanny ability to turn dreams into reality by equal parts determination, ingenuity and team-building skills. His most current project-in-progress is the renovation of the Pollinator Garden. He and an incredibly talented and diverse team of volunteers have collected seed, hauled dirt and rocks, built countless rock borders, created water systems, gently re-directed nibbling mule deer fawns, and collaborated with BLM and the Living Desert to create an accessible area where visitors can learn about the complex ecosystems that help to create the rich abundance that is Big



Larry Rosen is the latest volunteer to be honored on Recognition Rock. Photo by Leslie Burkhardt

Morongo Canyon Preserve. Once he has an idea, Larry assembles the team that can get the job done, and they all get busy.

It is a great pleasure to honor the hard-working, sweet-smiling, doggedly determined, and thoroughly wonderful Larry Rosen. Congratulations Larry and thank you!

MEET BMCP'S NEW EDUCATION DIRECTOR by Elizabeth Wyatt

Big Morongo Canyon Preserve welcomes Elizabeth Wyatt, our new Environmental Education Director. Elizabeth comes to the preserve from Copper Mountain College, where she teaches writing and literature and has served as the college's Basic Skills Coordinator. She has been working in education since 2005, when she joined the Teach For America corps in Brooklyn, New York.



– climbing rocks, learning about the desert, and practicing and teaching yoga. She holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing and an M.A. in English from UC Irvine and has taught in higher education since 2007. She is passionate about exploring the desert with students of

all ages and welcomes teachers to plan a visit to the preserve with their classes.

"I look forward to combining my backgrounds in education and the outdoors by serving BMCP as Director of Environmental Education. I'm excited to share the preserve's magic with the community by supporting and developing our Education programs."

BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT by Meg Foley

The year 2018 has been an incredible one, thanks in part to you and your support of the Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve (BMCP). Volunteers, donors and community partners joined forces to ensure the Preserve is a refuge for wildlife and for future generations to enjoy, just as you do!

Traditionally, Friends groups raise funds to support a specific agency or park. Our work includes fundraising but so much more: education; interpretation; trail maintenance and publications, just to name some of the projects and programs.

Some of 2018 highlights include new projects and expanded programs. We created a new Pollinator Garden to attract butterflies and hummingbirds and restored the original garden. The project was filled with plants grown from seed collected from BMCP creating a "living seed bank" as well as an attractive garden of the Preserve. Eighteen butterfly species have already been recorded in the gardens as well as many other types of insect pollinators.

We hosted and provided transportation for over 800 students and teachers for tours of the preserve. School tours are tailored to classroom curricula and grade level.

Nearly 1,000 linear feet of boardwalk were repaired on the Marsh and Mesquite Trails, thanks to volunteers from Sands RV Club. The Urban Conservation Crew worked for weeks to remove several tons of limbs, left by volunteer pruners, from the trailsides. The limbs were chipped by BLM Fire and then spread by volunteers for weed control.

We updated our website to be "mobile friendly".

The Friends hosted five Interpretive Bird Walks per month, led by volunteers who contributed 969 hours who spent a total of 3,583 contact hours with 954 bird watchers!

A Citizen Science Project to monitor water levels in multiple areas of the Marsh was started.

Volunteers contributed 7,149 hours—valued at \$27.59 per hour by the state of California—providing work valued at a total of \$196,690! Approximately 400 of the hours are contributed on National Public Lands Day by volunteers who can't contribute additional work days. The bulk of the work at BMCP is accomplished a group of 35 active volunteers.

The Friends Board passed a budget for 2019 that is over \$113,000. The amount sounds staggering but reflects a lean budget given the work we anticipate completing in 2019. Nearly 40% of the budget is devoted to Education Programs: bus funding, supplies, printing, and a part-time Environmental Education Director. Almost 30% is slated for recurring expenses: Portalet rental, CalFire and UCC Crews to perform aerial tree trimming and removal, heavy trail repair and fuel load reduction, map and literature printing, liability insurance, pollinator garden building materials, and event supplies and postage. We seek grant funding for a majority of the budget as we expand our membership and donor program. Over 54% of the 2019 budget will be covered with grant funds, a situation not sustainable over the long-term.

We will bring more students to the BMCP for tours in 2019, including our first outreach to the Coachella Valley that will bring students from the neighboring community of Desert Hot Springs. Teams of new Docents will be trained to help guide students. We plan a "Bio-Blitz", whereby teams of scientists will lead volunteers in surveying the BMCP. The surveys will assist BLM in updating species lists (mammals, amphibians, and reptiles) so they are as accurate as the bird and plant lists maintained by volunteers. We are developing teams of Ambassadors who will meet and greet visitors. Our audience demographic is changing to include many visitors who are visiting public lands for the first time; it is vital to reach these new visitors to promote their safe enjoyment while helping them learn about our unique environment.

Dee Zeller continues to be the sole steady BLM presence as a preserve host.

Become a Docent

The dictionary defines *docent* as "a trained volunteer guide. A docent is at once a volunteer, a teacher, and a guide."

The Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve will host docent training for anyone interested in introducing local students to the wonders of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Thanks to sponsorship by the Conservation Lands Foundation, we will be able to offer funding for buses to bring elementary school students from the Morongo Unified School District and Desert Hot Springs to learn about habitats, animal homes, and geology. Docents also assist with summer day camp and may lead tours for adults as we expand BMCP programming.

Docent training will be held on the mornings of January 17, 24 and 31. Each training session includes the background and history of BMCP, as well as flora and fauna, and interpretive methods. Materials will be provided for take-home reference.

Our new Director of Environmental Education, Elizabeth Wyatt, is already busy booking school tours for what may be a record breaking season of student visits to BMCP. Many of the students who visit experience their first introduction to public lands at the preserve. There are few things as gratifying as sparking curiosity and introducing people to the wonders of the preserve's unique natural habitats.

The Friends are one of the few organizations still offering bus funding for school field trips. We believe there is no substitute to hosting students in the landscape to foster appreciation for the outdoors.

Docents will receive a nametag, uniform shirt, and a free Live Scan background clearance (required when working with children). You will be able to shadow experienced docents until you feel comfortable leading a group on your own.

If you are interested in docent training or would like more information, please contact the preserve at bmcp@bigmorongo.org or call (760) 363-1159.

Article by Meg Foley

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BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

History Trails, Part Three, *Farmlands to Big Morongo Canyon Preserve* by Steve Hanson & Larry Rosen

The post-World War II period was one of tremendous population growth across southern California. Military bases established during the war expanded during the Cold War era leading to larger populations in many desert communities. Growth occurred on the high desert between Morongo Valley and Twentynine Palms as the area shifted from a farming and ranching economy to one based on services, residential expansion, and recreation.

The Morongo Valley residents were concerned with the preservation of the natural environment and their community character amidst the pressures of growth in the area



This 1996 image looks northwest over the former Covington ranch, now part of Covington Park.

Photo courtesy of Morongo Basin Historical Society

and surrounding desert communities. This concern led the Covington family and others to protect much of the natural beauty of their property.

On April 25, 1949, the Covington family donated five acres of meadowlands to the citizens of Morongo Valley to be used for a park. In 1958, the Morongo Valley Community Services District took over responsibility for the park.

Samuel Levin, the owner of the Biltmore Hotel in Palm Springs, purchased 143 acres of the original Warren Ranch property from the Covington family in the 1960's. He lived in what is now the preserve's Natural Science Education Center.

Around 1963, the Audubon Society recognized the site's exceptionally rich bird habitat and became interested in creating a wildlife sanctuary. At the same time, The Nature Con-

servancy (TNC) decided to become involved in the ecological preservation of the land. The Covingtons owned an 80-acre stretch of land that bordered the canyon and offered to sell it for \$20,000.

Joan Wilson wrote an article "High Desert Dreaming," and then things began to happen. The city of Morongo Valley organized a festival and raised \$1,000. The Nature Conservancy donated \$4,000, and the Covingtons reduced their price for the eighty acres by \$5,000, leaving a balance of \$10,000, which was paid off in a relatively short time.

It wasn't until Sam's death in 1969 that the County of San Bernardino bought the Levin's property.

The Nature Conservancy's original 80 acres was combined with the 160 acres owned by the County increasing the wildlife refuge to 240 acres. The property was dedicated as a Wildlife Preserve in 1974.

A flash flood devastated the area in 1978. The canyon lay dormant, and Sam's old house gradually disintegrated.

The Nature Conservancy, San Bernardino County, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) formed a partnership to manage the lands organized in 1982 to create the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Also, the BLM recognized the ecological features of the area and designated almost 3,700 acres of the ridge and canyon as an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" (ACEC).

On January 31, 1984, 11 conservationists met in Sam Levin's old house that had been restored by Elwood "Woody" Hengst. The Nature Conservancy appointed Woody to be the new manager of the wildlife preserve.

With the help of volunteers, Woody built a kiosk and a 4-foot wide asphalt walkway that led to the marsh where a similar 4-foot wide boardwalk continued to a large viewing platform. Additional boardwalk was added accessing the interior of the swamp, an area that was otherwise nearly impossible to penetrate.

On April 27, 1992, a wildfire burned about 50 acres of the preserve including a number of mature trees. Faced with the complexities of managing lands of three entities and



Built in the 1980s, the Cottonwood Trail led BMCP visitors into the marsh. Photo courtesy of Robin Kobaly

rebuilding facilities damaged by the fire, the Nature Conservancy chose to focus their efforts on its primary mission of acquiring conservation lands. Consequently, it asked if BLM would take over management of the ACEC, the county land, and their own 80 acres. BLM agreed pending the development of a site budget and management plan.

Robin Kobaly, then working for the BLM, was asked to determine the costs to take over management of the preserve, as well as to write a plan for how BLM should manage the TNC, County, and BLM lands at Big Morongo, and to develop a budget to accomplish the restoration and rebuilding of the burned infrastructure.

In 1994 Robin took over as preserve manager, and by 1996 she hired Dee and Betty Zeller who became its resident volunteer hosts, aided by additional volunteers. Dee and Betty provided a welcoming presence for the growing number of birdwatchers and other visitors.

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Robin Kobaly was the BLM's first site manager at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Photo courtesy of Robin Kobaly

BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

Barn Owls Delight Morongo Birders (cont. from p.1)

most distinctive feature is a white, heart-shaped facial disk with very dark eyes. They have light plumage ranging from tan to beige to white, often speckled with small dark spots. They lack ear tufts and have a comb-like appendage on their middle talon called a *pectinate* claw. This feature may be an adaptation to aid them with grooming and controlling lice. The beak is straw-colored, and their call is characterized as a 'hissing shriek.'

Both barn owls and owls in the Family Strigidae, often called typical owls, share anatomical features such as forward facing, fixed eyes, binocular vision, and ear openings that are in asymmetrical positions on the sides of the skull allowing them to precisely locate noisy prey. Owls are famed for their excellent night vision as well as their ability to locate and track their prey by sound. Studies have shown that the hearing of barn owls is so sensitive that they can capture prey in total darkness. Owls are also known for their silent flight thanks to soft, feather edges and a light body weight relative to their wing area. This gives them a buoyant flight that reduces the need for extra wingbeats as they glide soundlessly toward their unsuspecting prey.

When it comes to raising a family, barn owls take the adage 'there's no place like home,' and stretch it to encompass a wide range of suitable nest sites. As cavity nesters, barn owls are happy with nests on ledges, in caves, in wells, in tree cavities, in lava tubes, and of course, in barns and other abandoned structures. They also readily use nest boxes. For

History Trails, Part Three (cont. from p.4)

The 1992 fire destroyed the entire existing boardwalk, built originally from Douglas fir planks nailed to creosote-soaked telephone-pole log sections. It also burned signs, benches, fences, and much of the wooded marsh habitat from the kiosk over to the Yucca Ridge Trail. The Mesquite Trail remained unburned. The wildfire spurred the creation of the Friends of BMCP so donations could be kept at the preserve to fund restoration projects, to receive reimbursement of fire insurance funds from the county, and to secure funds from the Federal Government.



Barn owls are sometimes active during the day, especially if they have nestlings to feed.

years, they occupied the old historic barn on the Warren Ranch until it burned in a 2005 wildfire. The barn owl's flexibility about nest sites has enabled it to occupy all continents except Antarctica, one of the largest ranges of any bird species. Barn owls have an equally catholic diet taking a variety of small mammals from mice to young rabbits in size. They will also eat small birds, reptiles and amphibians, and a variety of insects.

Barn owls typically mate for life, although they will choose a new mate if one of the pair dies. Barn owls lay nest clutches of 2-8 eggs, rarely as many as 13. Eggs are somewhat more elliptical in shape than the rounded eggs of many other owl species, perhaps to help keep them in place in the owls' haphazard nests. Eggs

hatch over a 4-6 week period. Young are altricial and require food and care from the parents. The male of the pair will bring food to the female while she tends to the nestlings. Barn owl mothers are able to leave the nest to hunt on their own after about two weeks. Young barn owls have big appetites, and a single clutch can consume up to 70 pounds of prey before they fledge. When conditions are favorable, barn owls may raise more than one brood in a year, and while there is some seasonality to breeding activity, barn owls may be raising young at almost any time of the year.

Like most owls, barn owls are primarily nocturnal, and they are seldom active during daylight hours. However, when raising young, they may on occasion hunt during the day to meet the needs of the growing nestlings. Barn owls face predation from their larger cousins, the great horned owl. When they do take flight during the day, they are often mobbed by smaller birds. Rodent poisons can kill barn owls if they eat prey that has ingested the poison. Long-term threats to barn owls come from the loss of nest sites and open habitats as agricultural lands are converted to housing tracts.

Recent visits to the barn owl tree have not revealed the presence of young owls, but that may suggest they have already fledged. The somewhat secret lives of our heart-faced friends add an intriguing element of mystery to Big Morongo's native bird life.

Restoration and development of the trails began, and by the end of 2000, the final leg of the reconstructed boardwalk was hammered out.

References

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The 1992 wildfire burned 50 acres of the preserve's riparian habitat. It was fought by Cal Fire and local Morongo Valley firefighters. Photo courtesy of Robin Kobaly



Images of NPLD, clockwise from upper left: BLM Archeologist George Kline shows how to flint knap; Dee Zeller and Chase Perry take a welcome break; AmeriCorps and Urban Conservation Corps enrollees pitch in to help; and Yucca Valley High School students show their 'can do' school spirit. Photos by Meg Foley and Leslie Burkhardt



Executive Director's Report (cont. from p.3)

His tasks include opening and closing the preserve gates, leading tours– bird walks and special tour requests, emptying trash cans, sorting recycling, cleaning and stocking the restrooms, tending to any visitor issues (dogs; smoking etc), filling bird feeders, and dealing with any emergencies. Thanks to the drought and advanced age of many of the cottonwood trees, Dee has had to deal with an increasing number of fallen limbs. Limbs that fall across roads, trails, or parking lots must be removed. Dee's greatest value to BMCP visitors occurs when he shares his vast knowledge and experience of the flora and fauna.

The Friends' goal is to supplement Dee's work by providing more assistance on the ground– the major factor in seeking funding for part-time staff positions.

Having served on the Friends board for several years before becoming a staff member, I had information regarding our tours, visitation and management challenges. What I didn't see as a board member, and do now, is the impact of increased visitation on daily routines. The parking lot now frequently overfills when in the past, parking capacity was only exceeded during special events. More literature is needed every year to provide visitors with maps and education information.

The Executive Director position is budgeted for 24 hours per week. Most weeks I volunteer about the same number of hours. This summer's trail work was largely accomplished by Dee, myself, and Chase Sperry, a 15-year old student who devotes several hours of help every

Sunday morning. Friends' board members help with garden development, school tours, website maintenance, maintaining flora, fauna, membership, and program statistics. Unlike most non-profit boards, our dedicated, devoted board members are deeply involved in daily operations. In short, our team needs help to serve the preserve!

I hope you will be able to increase your support of the BMCP by making a much needed gift, by volunteering in 2019, or both! We will be able to accomplish our vitally important work with continued assistance from you!

All of us here at the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve wish you and yours a very happy, healthy 2019. We look forward to seeing you at the preserve!

BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

Sneakers Met Lug-Sole Boots on National Public Lands Day (cont. from p.1)

volunteers to a fascinating flint-knapping demonstration.

Beyond the numbers and the phenomenal results of this day, there are the many people working side-by-side to make NPLD 2018 unforgettable. The Friends of Big Morongo Canyon support volunteers were everywhere, welcoming and organizing event participants. Special mention goes to our volunteer work project leaders Ann Garry and Tish Miller. Preserve Host Dee Zeller, assisted by volunteer Caryn Davidson, and BLM Resource Specialist Joel Miner, also pitched in as work project leaders. Sneakers met lug-sole boots as Yucca Valley High School Students, coordinated by Cindy Zacks of Yucca Valley High School and Michael Mora of Mojave Desert Land Trust, worked alongside members of the 29 Palms Marine Base (on their day off!), as well as Urban Conservation Corps and Americorps volunteers. Our thanks to Kimberly Pope, 29 Palms Marine Base



Lucille was one of the youngest and mightiest volunteers turning out for National Public Lands Day.

Photo by Leslie Burkhardt

Community Liaison, and Jihadda Govan, Sand to Snow National Monument Manager, for recruiting the solid muscle and enthusiasm that powered our successful event. These teams, working together, accomplished so much.

And the families...amid the many people who roll up their sleeves to help are the *families*. Parents bring children that, for their size, may work every bit as hard as the strongest Marine. This was the year of the mother-daughter team. JoAnn Schiffer-Burdett, who is retiring this year after 32 years of service as Bureau of Land Management Outdoor Recreation Planner with many years of helping to coordinate volunteers at the preserve, brought a special guest to NPLD this year— her mother. Mom was immediately put to work washing apples. Yes, everyone gave their all to an absolutely unforgettable day. Many thanks to everyone!

Article by Leslie Burkhardt



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!

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- \$ 100.00 INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY SUPPORTER MEMBERSHIP
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ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS:

- \$ 10.00
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NEWSLETTER (WINTER, SPRING/ SUMMER, FALL ISSUES)

- EMAIL
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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.

Credit card donations can be made at www.bigmorongo.org. Donations may also be tax deductible. As a special thank you, new Friends receive a BMCP embroidered patch. Lifetime members also receive a canvas tote bag and two BMCP color patches.

BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE



NEWSLETTER

is published by

Friends of BMCP

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Morongo Valley, CA 92256

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CALENDAR

AT BMCP

DECEMBER – MARCH

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

December 15, Morongo Valley Christmas Bird Count, 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. See p. 2 for details.

January 4, Joshua Tree National Park Christmas Bird Count. 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. Contact Joe Zarki for details and an event flyer.

Docent Training, January 17, 24, and 31. See p. 3 for details.

Saturday Volunteer Work Project, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, Mar. 9, 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Meet at BMCP visitor parking area.

February 15-18, Great Backyard Bird Count. See: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>.

*Check www.bigmorongo.org for information
and updates on future events.*