



# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE NEWSLETTER

Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

Winter, 2021/2022

## Volunteers 'Make a Difference' at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

It was a lovely fall morning when some 40 hardy volunteers showed up at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve on Saturday, October 23, to show support for their public lands by helping with a long list of needed work projects. A second reason for the gathering was to celebrate Dee Zeller's 25 years as the preserve's resident caretaker (see story on p. 6).



Zoe Dagan and Anna Dining enjoy the bright morning sunshine as they cut brush along the Mesquite Trail.  
Photo by Joe Zarki

Make a Difference Day ties in with the highly successful National Public Lands Day volunteer program held each year on the last Saturday of September. For a variety of reasons (the ongoing COVID pandemic, hot weather, improved participation, and event support), it was decided to hold this year's public lands volunteer event for BMCP in late October.

Planning for Make a Difference Day was carried out by agency representatives Jihadda Govan of Sand to Snow National Monument and Chelsea Collins and Daniel Kasang of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). On-site planning and coordination were provided by Friends' Executive Director Jocelyn Silverlight and, of course, Dee himself. Snacks, refreshments, and event t-shirts were available for participating volunteers.

Volunteers were organized into small teams to tackle brush clearing and exotic plant removal along the Marsh Trail. Another group carried out brush clearing on the Desert Willow Trail and installed water bars along the trail's steep incline. Brush was cleared and chips laid along the preserve's entrance road, and encroaching vegetation was trimmed along the Mesquite Trail. Overgrown plants



Volunteer José Jimenez drags a mesquite branch to the dumpster for disposal as part of the day's garden work.  
Photo by Joe Zarki

were also removed from the boardwalk trail leading to the Education Center. Larry Rosen and Bill LaHaye directed volunteers in trimming mesquite trees from crowding the perimeter of BMCP's two gardens. A large dumpster was brought into the Nature Center parking area, and it was quickly filled with massive amounts of cleared brush from the morning's work projects.

(continued on p. 7)

## Living the Dry Life at Big Morongo Canyon... by Eric Sippert

As a relative newcomer to the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve and the desert in general, it is easy to assume that current water levels are the norm when in fact we are in the midst of a profound period of drought. Scientists ponder if the American West is experiencing a "megadrought." Quoted in National Geographic, Benjamin Cook, a climate researcher at NASA states, "This is a bigger event than the 1950s drought in the Southwest or the Dust Bowl drought in the Central Plains." Even as an oasis, Big Morongo Canyon is not immune to

these changes. Of course, as I became familiar with the history of the preserve and spoke with volunteers, I learned that current water levels are anything but normal. Vast portions of the area surrounding the Marsh Trail were covered in water. Frogs were abundant and the preserve was once even a dumping ground for goldfish.

Today things have changed. Drought has a powerful effect on the flora and fauna of the preserve. Over the summer the water fountain at the nature preserve

served as a key source of life for many of our animal friends. Each morning and afternoon groups of deer ranging from three to ten visited. A black bear occasionally stopped by to 'wet his whistle.' Up at Dee's trailer a bobcat kitten played in the water and a rare kit fox visited one lucky day for a drink. On the rock outcroppings beside the Mesquite Trail's old car, desert bighorn sheep looked down waiting for an ideal time to cross on their search for water.

(continued on p. 7)

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

## Christmas Bird Count

**Saturday, December 18**

7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

This year's Christmas Bird Count, the 122nd for Audubon and the 41st count for Morongo Valley, will, by necessity, be done quite differently due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We will be using a smaller number of people in teams comprised of household members or friends in close COVID social groups. This year's count is not open to the general public. Participation must be arranged in advance.

There will be no pre-count gathering or post count dinner this year. Count results will be posted on the BMCP website.

If you have questions, contact Joe Zarki at 760-401-3903, or [jwzarki@gmail.com](mailto:jwzarki@gmail.com).

## Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

### Board of Directors

Jan Anderson  
Ann Garry  
Evan Hoffman-Jastermsky  
Maureen McCarty  
David Miller  
Tish Miller  
Jane Mootz  
Laura Sherrod  
Kathy Smith

### Staff

Jocelyn Silverlight, Executive Director

### NEWSLETTER

Editor: Joe Zarki

Winter, 2021/2022

P.O. Box 780  
Morongo Valley, CA 92256

Phone: 760-363-7190  
Email: [bmcp@bigmorongo.org](mailto:bmcp@bigmorongo.org)  
Web: [www.bigmorongo.org](http://www.bigmorongo.org)

## Three to Be Honored on Recognition Rock... by Jane Mootz

The Board of Directors of the Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve have voted to honor three people for their long and outstanding service to the Preserve.

**Jane Olson**, who has served in so many positions— as a Director on the Board, leading bird walks, organizing the Education program and materials, giving educational programs, providing a booth for Earth Day and Public Lands Day, and writing eloquent articles for the newsletter. The list is endless.

**Patrick Casey**, who served as a Director on the Board for many years and lent his legal expertise and knowledge to the Board.

**Meg Foley**, who served as only the second Executive Director of the Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Meg stepped in and actually set the standard for that position. Her many hours on-site were invaluable in managing the day-to-day activities at BMCP.

A ceremony to honor these very special people will take place during the next annual meeting of the Friends to be held on October 12, 2022. The 2021 Annual meeting was cancelled due to constraints necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Fall Education at Big Morongo... by Jocelyn Silverlight

With the help of volunteers, our fall education program has hit the ground running. Thanks to Kim McClinton, Caryn Davidson, Caroline Conway, Brenda Spires, Maureen McCarty, Jose Jimenez and Karen Nelson, we have reinvigorated our program. October weekends were filled with learning the difference between spiders and insects. We had multiple displays and activities where learners of all ages could participate. In November we expanded our hours to have two shifts on Saturdays and Sundays- 9:30-12:30 and 12:30-3:30. Participants in November learned about animal homes. Besides displays of real life animal homes, we placed a few flags on the trails to indicate where some real life animal homes may be including pack rat middens and bird nests. We also used this as an opportunity to talk about why it is important to stay on trails so as not to disturb the home of an animal. Kim McClinton, who has been at the helm of shaping our program, says that the program "opens kids' eyes to what they're used to already seeing in the preserve". Kim says that she is most surprised at how much children already know and credits that to parents/guardians and teachers. Besides take-home worksheet activities, kids are leaving with an adventure pack that is funded by the Conservation Lands Foundation. Inside the adventure pack are materials to make a bird feeder, a water bottle and other items like magnifying glasses. Ad-



Kim McClinton, a recently retired teacher and now a volunteer docent, preps for a children's program.

Photo by Jocelyn Silverlight

ditionally there is a link to our virtual tour of the preserve. We plan to have rotating content each month and are looking forward to reimagining and reopening the Nature Education Center in the near future. If you are interested in getting involved at this exciting time with the Education Committee, please contact Jocelyn Silverlight at [director.bmcp@gmail.com](mailto:director.bmcp@gmail.com), or by calling 760-792-1843.

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

## Chatting With Dee... by Donna Thomas

A number of rare wildlife sightings were highlights of BMCP's fall season. A kit fox and a bobcat kitten were a surprise at Dee's porch water dishes. The domestic-cat-sized kit fox was very thirsty and overcame any reluctance to approach humans. Dee hadn't seen a kit fox at BMCP since the 1990s. The bobcat kitten also came for water, surprisingly appearing without its mother. Bobcat kittens normally stay with their mothers for many months. Dee saw no other bobcats at BMCP this fall.



In November, bird counters walking along the road that leads to Covington Park encountered a group of 11 deer (does and their young) headed the opposite direction towards Dee's trailer. Unfazed by the birders, the deer merely skirted the people and continued towards their destination. Because this is the 25<sup>th</sup> generation of deer since Dee has been at BMCP, it is no wonder that they are accustomed to people and to coming to his water dishes.

Due to the preserve's surface waters drying up in recent years, Dee's wish for BMCP next year is the installation of a professionally designed and installed water feature at the Education Center. Our current water feature has failed several times, wreaking havoc and causing it to be shut down. With wild-

life now dependent on artificial sources of water, a reliable water feature is essential to retaining many of our birds, mammals, and other wildlife.

Three times recently Dee's trailer hoses have been punctured. Dee theorized that a bear, in retaliation for the preserve acquiring a new bear-proof trash bin, was attacking the hoses. Then one night he heard a ruckus outside his trailer and stepped out with a flashlight to see what was going on. Guess who saw the shadow of his flashlight and came around the corner to investigate—a gray fox. Dee then exonerated the wrongly accused bear, now realizing the teeth marks in the leaking hoses had been the perfect size for a gray fox—not as wide as a bear's bite.



Kit fox at Dee's trailer.

Photo by Bob Cullen

A dickcissel and a varied thrush were delightful bird sightings. The dickcissel was only the second one Dee has seen at BMCP. Dee last saw a varied thrush here over 16 years ago. Both birds were seen because they came for resources where observers gather, by Dee's porch and by the Education Center's water feature and feeders.

## Executive Director's Report... by Jocelyn Silverlight

Fall is here, the cottonwood leaves are beginning to turn, and the air is cooling down to remind us we made it through this brutally hot and dry summer. Fall in Big Morongo has brought more visitors to the preserve, especially as COVID restrictions have loosened. Our days are getting shorter, and we are looking towards a hopefully wet winter to raise our groundwater. As we welcome back our fall and winter visitors, I am especially grateful and impressed by our summer volunteers whose commitment brought them to either the kiosk as ambassadors or to the trails as part of trail crew. I am also grateful to our everyday walkers and birders who braved the heat of the summer and maintained a presence at the preserve.

In my first six months as Executive Director of Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, I had the opportunity to meet so many wonderful folks who hold such a special place for the preserve in their hearts. It is very likely for me on any given day to hear how unique and won-

derful this place is and how many people hold it in such high regard.

I am very proud of our education volunteers who have helped me reinvigorate our program. In lieu of school tours, we have switched to a stationary outdoor model with monthly rotating content. I am in the process of revising our COVID protocols with the hopes of reimagining and reopening the Nature Education Center back to the public in 2022. We hope to be able to officially restart Wednesday Bird Walks as well. It is important that as we reopen we do so thoughtfully and safely, so keep an eye out for announcements on that front.

We had a very successful National Public Lands Day/Make a Difference Day on October 23rd and were very pleased to honor our very own Dee Zeller's 25 years as Preserve Host. This was also a great opportunity to work with our various government agencies and we accomplished a great deal that day. Working with Dee has been a crash course in

learning about everything from birds to history to indigenous plant use, and he has been very generous in sharing his knowledge, even if the questions from me are as random as, "Do mule deer make noises because I think I just heard one?" Or, "Someone asked me what the grey birds with white markings are, any idea?"

As we head into 2022, I am looking forward to building more processes for operational organization and communication so that we can continue to grow in visitation but still ensure that our important flora and fauna are protected. I would like to expand our volunteer base and recruit new folks to join us. Ideally our seasoned volunteers will mentor new volunteers. Keep an eye out in 2022 for new arts programs, citizen science projects and community events. Big Morongo Canyon Preserve is not only special because of its unique landscape, plants and animals, but it is made more wonderful by the hearts of visitors and supporters like you.

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

## The Magic of Mesquite... Elize VanZandt

It's not hard to find mesquite at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Two species of mesquite are found there: the abundant honey mesquite, *Prosopis glandulosa*, with its bean-shaped seed pods and the much rarer screwbean mesquite, *Prosopis pubescens*, with its unusual twisted seed pods.

The Mesquite Trail circles around large stands of this thorny shrub; in places water flows next to the trees, and at other places no water is visible. Ninety percent of the roots are in the upper three feet of soil, so mesquite is found where the water table is high enough for the roots to reach it. However, these trees can also grow very deep roots. A live root was discovered at a copper mine at over 160 feet down. These long taproots can enable them to withstand times of drought but are not their main life support.



Mesquite blossoms add a pleasant fragrance to Morongo's trails in spring. Photo by Joe Zarki

A good time to visit is in spring, when the mesquite is growing new, bright-green leaves and putting out pale yellow flowers on three-inch-long catkins. The branches grow in a zigzag shape, with joints protruding every few inches, and sporting wicked thorns. Almost every joint also hosts two twin pinnate leaves, giving them a feathery look. Each flower spike contains a multitude of tiny flowers, and a spray of five or six flower spikes will spring from the crooks in the branches. Over a season's time, a mature velvet mesquite can produce over a million flowers.

A visitor nearing the thick green bosques will be greeted by a loud hum of bees

buzzing around the fragrant flowers. These will most likely be our desert ground-dwelling bees. Researchers have counted 64 kinds of solitary bees at mesquite flowers. Many other insects are also attracted to the flowers, such as the intimidating blue-black tarantula hawks, butterflies, mantids, crab spiders, and various beetles. Numerous bird species can also be found around mesquite. The screwbean mesquite is also the host plant for the rare Palmer's metalmark butterfly.

Like other members of the legume family, the pollinated flowers develop into pods. Each pod is about eight inches long, with each seed pinched off into a section, so the pod looks crimped. At this point, a number of other insects come along to help themselves. One of these is the bruchid beetle, which lays eggs in the green pods; the larvae bore into the seeds, sucking them dry. Look for seed pods under the trees with exit holes where the mature beetle has come out.

With so much predation on the seeds, it's a wonder that any survive to become new plants. But it seems seeds that endure are often ones that pass through a vertebrate gut, since gut juices can kill the beetles before they completely core out the seeds. And many animals eat the fallen pods and seeds: quails and ravens, jackrabbits, pocket mice, kangaroo rats, coyotes, black bears, and bighorn sheep, to name a few. Other animals, such as mule deer, rabbits, and skunks like the tender young leaves and bark.



Mesquite beans were a staple in the diets of Native peoples as well as local wildlife. National Park Service photo by Alessandra Puig-Santana

Mesquite co-evolved with large herbivores, such as mastodons and ground sloths, which ate the pods and dispersed



A female marine blue butterfly lays her eggs on a mesquite flower bud. Photo by Joe Zarki

the seeds widely in their feces. After the Pleistocene megafauna became extinct, the range of mesquite shrank, just like the nearby Joshua trees in the higher elevations. Seeds need to fall where they can be scarified by floods or weathered in wet soils. The drier climate after the last Ice Age has also been a factor in reducing the range of mesquite.

Mesquite can also be a harbor for seeds of annual plants. Perhaps the seeds are blown or washed under the sheltering branches of a mesquite and come to rest against the trunk or a fallen branch. The shade creates a buffered environment where moisture is temporarily held, giving the new plant a boost. Another harboring effect is that nitrogen becomes concentrated in mesquite islands. In the desert, a lack of nitrogen can be as limiting as a lack of water. The extensive root system of a mature mesquite pumps available nitrogen to the canopy, aided by symbiotic bacteria that form nitrogen-fixing nodules around the roots, thereby boosting the supply. In fact, mesquite has the ability to accumulate more nitrogen than nearly any other desert plant. When the leaves and pods fall, the nitrogen in the litter below the canopy enriches the topsoil there. That makes these mesquite stands essentially self-fertilizing.

As Gary Nabham writes in *Gathering the Desert*, "In the ocean of extreme heat and drought which we call the Sonoran Desert, *Prosopis* is a protective harbor, an island of shade, nutrients, and moisture." This is the magic of mesquite, a magnet for life from the smallest seed to the animals that look to its bounty for their survival, and for the humans who once revered it.

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

## 2021. Picture the Year, If You Will...



Feeders and water features are great places to see a wide variety of wildlife; birds and mammals are equal opportunity users. Seldom seen at preserve feeders are a lovely calliope hummingbird (April 2), a thirsty bobcat kitten (September 22), and a first winter dickcissel (September 1).  
Photos from left to right by Derek Hameister, Bob Cullen, and Margaret Hoggan



Not really rare, but always fun to see, is a greater roadrunner with a carry-out lizard lunch (April 14). More unusual are an American snout butterfly (November 10) and a rare Lucy's warbler (May 22). American snouts are fall visitors, and they were seen in impressive numbers this year.  
Photos from left to right by Donna Thomas, Joe Zarki, and Matt Grube



How many of us would recognize a cackling goose? Long Beach birder Derek Hameister heard its distinctive 'cackling' call when it flew overhead (October 5). A band-tailed pigeon (August 4) allowed birders close looks as it got a drink. Gray catbirds have been seen a surprising number of times in recent years (October 5).

Cackling goose and gray catbird by Derek Hameister; band-tailed pigeon by Margaret Hoggan

**Dee Zeller Is Honored for 25-Years of Volunteer Service...** by Meg Foley

*On October 23, 2021, Dee Zeller was recognized during the Make a Difference Day event for his 25-years of service (much of it with his beloved wife Betty) as the preserve's resident caretaker. Meg Foley looks back at some key events during Dee's long and successful tenure.*

Dee and Betty Zeller were hired in 1996 as "hosts." Their basic duties included opening and closing gates and maintaining an 'official' presence. Their presence had an immediate effect and dissuaded unsavory elements from conducting criminal activities in the parking lot. Although not part of their job description when recruited, Dee developed the bird walks and assumed trash and restroom cleaning duties. Betty grew the Education and Volunteer programs. Vibrant docent training programs were developed and many capital improvements, like boardwalk construction, were completed.

The growing number and severity of local wildfires greatly impacted Dee and Betty's tasks. The 2005 Paradise Fire was the largest fire, to date, in Morongo Valley's history. The fire consumed the old barn, nearly the entire boardwalk through the Marsh and Mesquite Trails, and over 3,000 acres in the wilderness areas. The following July, the Sawtooth and Millard Fires raged for nine days and, after merging, burned through 86,000 acres stretching from Pioneertown, the northern sections of Morongo Valley and west to Cabazon. Wildfires left the preserve more vulnerable to future floods and debris flows. However, BMCP provided critical post-fire habitat for wildlife due to the quicker recovery of its riparian ecosystem.



Dee's duties have required many things over the years including dressing in a protective Tyvek suit. Photo by Meg Foley

Numerous other smaller fires occurred resulting in a greater workload for Dee and Betty, who coordinated most repairs and adapted programs to fire impacted landscapes. The ensuing rehab work lasted for years after most fires.

The community of Morongo Valley also greatly benefited from Dee and Betty's involvement. Betty served as the membership manager for the Morongo Valley Chamber of Commerce. She was very involved in "Christmas Cheer for Children," a program that served an average of 25 families and 100-125 children annually, providing each child with a coat and gifts. BMCP co-hosted Earth Day events for years and participated in "Fiesta Days," a local event with a 55-year history. The Zellers' community involvement was recognized when they received the "Green Award" in 2011 from the Chamber and were honored as Grand Marshals who led the "Shortest Parade in the World". Betty was also involved with the Morongo Valley Elementary School Foundation, whose mission supported teacher needs and field trips.

In 2011, Dee and Betty Zeller traveled to Washington, D.C. as the recipients of the Bureau of Land Management's "Making a Difference" National Volunteer Award, recognizing their 15-year tenure. The Zellers were presented the Minerva Hoyt Conservation Award by the Joshua Tree National Park Association in 2014 for their environmental stewardship and education activities. Jim Kenna, the Bureau of Land Management's State Director and formerly Manager of the Palm Springs office, flew in to present the award, personally paying for his travel!

In 2015, we lost our beloved friend Betty Zeller after a lengthy illness. With Betty's passing and, over the years, other very active, irreplaceable volunteers began raising funds on behalf of the Friends and sought grant funding to provide some staff presence to help Dee manage the day-to-day preserve operations and recruit more volunteers.

October of 2015 found Senator Dianne Feinstein asking for "public input" as she prepared to ask President Obama to use the Antiquities Act to designate three new California Desert national



Dee relaxes with Bear and some of his Morongo 'family' during the October 23rd 'Make a Difference Day' celebration. Photo by Joe Zarki

monuments. Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, visited the preserve with Dee and Robin Kobaly as she considered inclusion in the Sand to Snow National Monument. President Obama signed a proclamation, in 2016, designating the 154,000-acre Sand to Snow National Monument, to preserve critical habitat, wildlife corridors, and recreation opportunities in southern California.

Visitation to BMCP began to increase around this same time, effectively doubling by 2017. For many years, visitation held at a steady 50,000 – 60,000 visitors annually, but by 2015 visitor traffic had increased to an estimated 100,000 per year. Not only have visitor interactions increased for Dee, but trash and restroom use increased his daily tasks.



Dee holds a Department of Interior award recognizing his 25 years of volunteer service at BMCP. Photo by Joe Zarki

(continued on p. 7)

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

## Make a Difference Day (cont. from p. 1)

A special thanks should be given to the Wildcorps Project group of the Student Conservation Association who were among the day's participants contributing essential labor and sweat equity to this year's Make a Difference Day.

A number of BMCP 'regulars' served as point people for helping plan and organize the day's activities including Emma Busk from the BLM, Meg Foley, Ann Garry, Kim McClinton, Laura Sherrod, Eric Sippert, and Kathy Smith.

At the end of the morning, volunteers were thanked for their efforts and gathered under the shady cottonwoods outside the Education Center to relax and take part in the special program honoring Dee Zeller, for his long and historic service on behalf of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve.

## Living Dry at BMCP (cont. from p. 1)

As winter very slowly arrives, there are grounds for hope. On the Mesquite Trail boardwalk standing water is visible and frogs can be heard. Many fewer animals visit the fountain near the education center; a sure sign that they have other sources.

Although anecdotes about water levels are useful, it is vital to collect and track data as well. As summer drew to a close, a team of volunteers once again began weekly monitoring water levels in the preserve at three water monitoring stations. The team includes Dot DeGenaro, Mary Kay Moore, and Steve Kerr, who work in conjunction with Executive Director Jocelyn Silverlight and BLM's Emma Busk. With this data we have a fuller picture of drought-induced changes. What we still don't know is when this drought will end and what will be the cumulative effects.

## Dee Celebrates 25 years (cont. from p. 6)

Government shutdowns, the longest beginning in 2018, affected visitation due to the public perception of "free admission" to Joshua Tree National Park. COVID 19 "stay at home" orders also increased BMCP's visitation and brought a very different audience, many experiencing "the outdoors" for the first time. Even though programming was interrupted, Dee's workload grew from the influx of people.

Dee's tenure of 25 years makes him the longest serving BLM member of the Palm Springs Office. Over the years, he has led and estimated 1,200 bird walks resulting in an estimated 4,700+ visitor contact hours. These hours do not include the all the time spent with small groups or individuals seeking information about the preserve flora and fauna – his greatest joy. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to Dee and Betty for their long record of outstanding public service on behalf of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve.



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) \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Secure Credit Card Donations and Monthly Gifts May Be Made at:**

[www.bigmorongo.org](http://www.bigmorongo.org)

**ENCLOSED GIFT:**

- |                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 10.00    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 50.00    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 250.00   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 750.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1,000.00 |                                    |

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

EMAIL  MAIL  NEITHER

## SUPPORT

### 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](http://www.bigmorongo.org). Donations may also be tax deductible.

# BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE



NEWSLETTER  
*is published by*  
Friends of BMCP  
P.O. Box 780  
Morongo Valley, CA 92256

GO GREEN...to choose the digital option  
for receiving your newsletter, email:  
[bmcp@bigmorongo.org](mailto:bmcp@bigmorongo.org).



---

## CALENDAR

AT BMCP

DECEMBER – MARCH

Gate open 7:30 a.m. to Sunset

365 days a year

### WEDNESDAY BIRD WALKS

All bird walks have been cancelled during the pandemic and will not be rescheduled until permitted by state and county regulations. Please stay tuned for announcements concerning the resumption of activities as soon as conditions allow. Recently seen bird lists are updated weekly and may be viewed at: [www.bigmorongo.org/birds](http://www.bigmorongo.org/birds)

### NATURE CENTER

Outdoor Education Station: Saturdays and Sundays. Volunteers and staff will be on hand to share displays and to answer questions.

Friday, Saturday & Sunday: Ambassadors will be at the kiosk to provide information on the latest BMCP happenings. They are very happy to make recommendations for walks based upon weather, fitness, and time.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

December 18, 7:30 a.m. -4:30 p.m. Morongo Valley Christmas Bird Count. See p. 2 of this issue for further details.

Volunteer Trail Crew– scheduled on occasional Sunday mornings. COVID-compliant work situations, limited to small numbers. Work may entail hauling brush, pruning, weeding, and/or raking. Contact Jocelyn for additional dates or to enroll as a volunteer at: [bmcp@bigmorongo.org](mailto:bmcp@bigmorongo.org)

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