



Welcome to **Big Morongo Canyon Preserve**

*Where the Desert meets a
unique, lush sanctuary for wildlife.*



Location

Big Morongo Canyon Preserve is located in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, California. It begins about one-half mile southeast of the town of Morongo Valley in the Little San Bernardino Mountains and opens at the bottom into the west end of the Coachella Valley northwest of Desert Hot Springs. Elevations on the Preserve range from 1700 feet on the canyon floor to over 4,000 feet at the ridge tops.

Size

The preserve encompasses 25,000 acres of public land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and 185 acres of San Bernardino County Regional Parks land.

History

For many centuries Big Morongo Canyon was used by nomadic Indians as an easy route between high and low deserts. In the canyon, water was available, game plentiful, and the grade was gentle. The last people to inhabit the canyon before the advent of white settlers were the Morongos, a powerful clan of the Serrano Indians. In 1846 the Morongos were moved to a reservation, and the canyon passed from one

rancher to the next until 1968, when 80 acres were sold as a partial gift to The Nature Conservancy by J.L. Covington. Soon afterward 160 acres of adjacent land to the north was obtained by San Bernardino County to form the Big Morongo Canyon Regional Wildlife Preserve. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recognizing the outstanding ecological features of the area, designated nearly 25,000 acres of ridge and canyon as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The urbanization that has occurred in the Morongo Basin has eliminated habitat and constrained wildlife movement. In order to prevent Big Morongo Canyon from becoming a biological island without viable connection to larger habitat blocks, it is essential to preserve the remaining corridors connecting Joshua Tree National Park, Big Morongo Canyon, the San Geronio Wilderness, and San Bernardino National Forest. This will help to maintain genetic diversity of desert bighorn sheep and other wildlife. Recognizing the need to maintain important wildlife corridors, bighorn sheep lambing areas and watering sites, BLM and private land conservancy groups have worked together to acquire lands to expand the ACEC boundaries.

Geography

The Preserve has a desert climate with hot, dry summers and moderate winters. Rainfall is scarce, with an average annual total of 8 inches. Snow melt from the San Bernardino Mountains flows underground until it emerges from the mountains northwest of Morongo Valley and flows intermittently on the surface of the creek bed. The water percolates quickly into the sandy soils as it crosses the Morongo Basin, but as the water enters Big Morongo Canyon it encounters finely pulverized rock called fault gouge along the earthquake fault. This layer of ground rock is impermeable to water, and acts like a dam, bringing water to the surface in a series of perennial springs, whose waters disappear into the sandy layers further downstream. Within the Preserve occur some of the oldest rocks in the state of California, dated at almost two billion years. They consist of former granitic rocks that have been altered by heat and pressure to form gneisses and schists.

Plants

The lush vegetation of the oasis in Big Morongo Canyon stands in sharp contrast to the surrounding desert slopes. A high water table in the canyon has made the growth of tall trees possible despite the desert climate. The desert springs ecosystem and the Mojave riparian Forest here are considered to be some of the best in California. In addition, the area is of botanical interest because it includes two

desert vegetation zones, the Mojave and the Sonoran. Dry slopes are characterized by low creosote bush scrub at lower elevations, and pinyon-juniper woodland at higher elevations.

Wildlife

The Preserve offers food, cover and water to many resident birds, and shelters many migrant and vagrant species. Several rare or unusual species are known to nest at the Preserve, including "Least" Bell's Vireo, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Lucy's Warbler, Summer Tanager and Vermilion flycatcher. Many other species are numerous during the Spring and Fall migration seasons. A number of mammals occur here including desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, mountain lion, gray fox, kit fox, raccoon, bobcat, coyote, kangaroo rat and other rodents. The availability of water brings the bighorn sheep and other animals into the canyon during the hot, dry summer months. Several species of reptiles and amphibians are also present, including gopher snakes, California king snakes, common whiptail lizards, chuckwallas, coast horned lizards, side-blotched lizards, and Pacific tree frogs. Among the thousands of invertebrates occurring in the Big Morongo Canyon, a few conspicuous forms include the Western Tiger Swallowtail and Lorquin's Admiral butterflies, several species of dragonflies and damselflies, and water striders, all here because of the permanent water supply.

Access

From Los Angeles, the Preserve can be reached by traveling approximately 95 miles east on Interstate 10 to its junction with State Highway 62, at the northeast end of the business district of Morongo Valley, turn right on East Drive. Proceed about 200 yards to the Preserve driveway on the left. Turn into the Preserve at the large rock sign and follow the lane to the parking lot.

Trails begin at the kiosk where there is a choice of several paths that will take you into different habitats. The Marsh Trail is a wheelchair accessible, full access boardwalk trail through marsh and stream habitats. Information

on trails, their length, difficulty and points of interest can be found in brochures at the kiosk or by making personal contact with the preserve hosts who live on site.

Please

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

Take a virtual tour
of our trails and find
comprehensive lists of
the birds, plants and
animals at:

www.bigmorongo.org

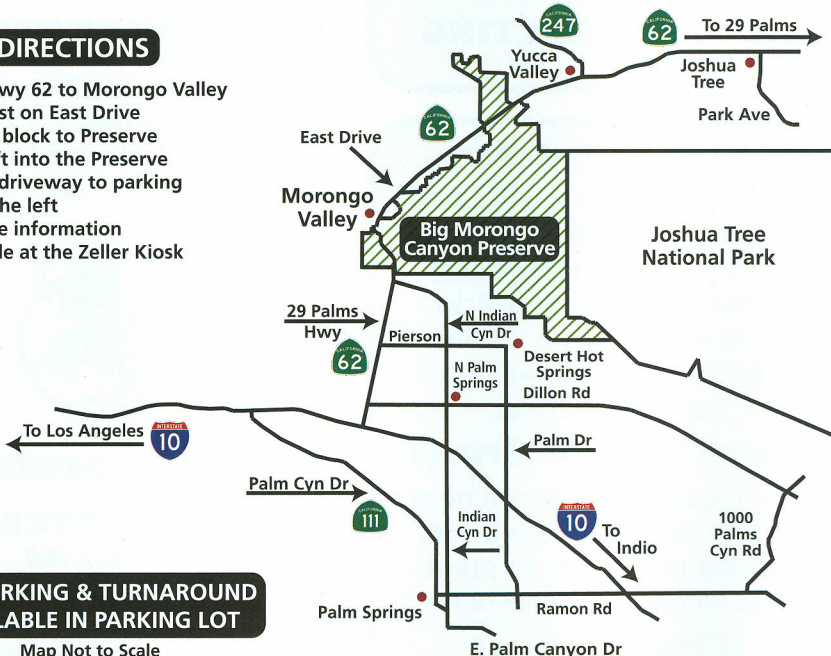
Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

11055 East Drive, Morongo Valley CA 92256

(760) 363-7190 • www.bigmorongo.org

DIRECTIONS

- State Hwy 62 to Morongo Valley
- Turn East on East Drive
- Go one block to Preserve
- Turn left into the Preserve
- Follow driveway to parking lot on the left
- Preserve information available at the Zeller Kiosk



**BUS PARKING & TURNAROUND
AVAILABLE IN PARKING LOT**

Map Not to Scale

Hours:

7:30 am to Sunset Daily
Year Round

*Help protect this oasis by
following these rules throughout
Big Morongo Canyon Preserve:*



**NO SMOKING OR
FIRES OF ANY KIND**
HIGH FIRE DANGER!



NO DOGS



NO BICYCLES



**NO MOTORIZED
VEHICLES**



NO SHOOTING



NO CAMPING



NO COLLECTING

Please remember...

Big Morongo Canyon Preserve is a special protected area for wildlife. Rattlesnakes, Mountain Lions and Ticks may be encountered. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times

Please stay on Trails!

The requests above will help ensure the safety of visitors and the protection of plants and animals that live here.

Thank You!

Management

Big Morongo Canyon Preserve is managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. A portion is also managed through long-term cooperative agreement with San Bernardino County.

Contributions

Tax Deductible Contributions:
Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve
P.O. box 780
Morongo Valley CA 92256

Inquiries

Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve
P.O. Box 780
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(760) 363-7190
www.bigmorongo.org

Bureau of Land Management

Palm Springs-South Coast FO
1201 Bird Center Dr
Palm Springs, CA 92262
760-833-7100
www.blm.gov/ca/palmsprings

Volunteer Opportunities

The preserve needs volunteer assistance for trail maintenance and special projects. Docents are also needed to assist in leading tours. Contact us for more information.



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