


**Massacre Rim
Dark Sky
Sanctuary**

International Dark-Sky Association Dark Sky Area



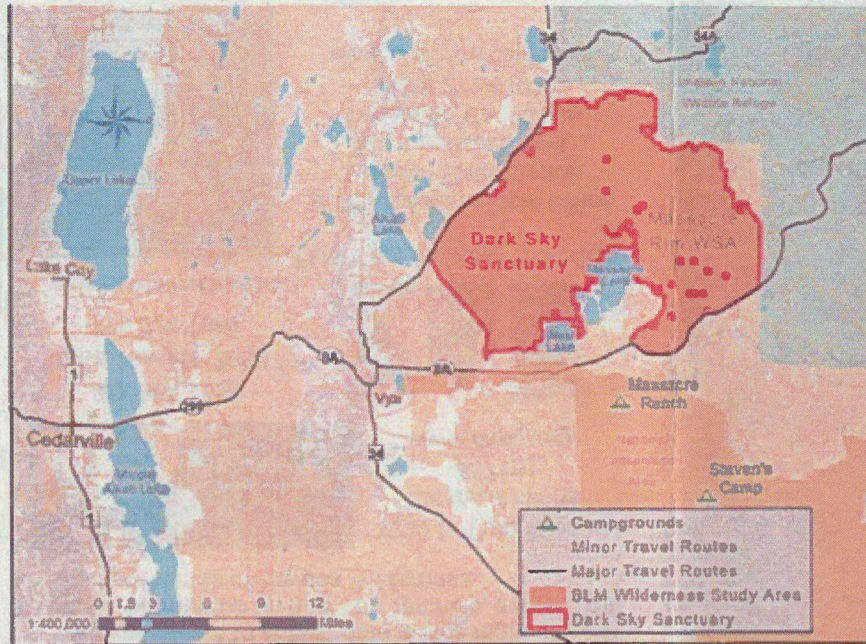
Milky Way Galaxy over the Massacre Rim Dark Sky Sanctuary
Photo by Richie Bednarski



Massacre Rim Dark Sky Sanctuary

The Massacre Rim Dark Sky Sanctuary, a designated Dark Sky Place, is located in the northern Great Basin, approximately 25 miles northeast of Surprise Valley, California. In this remote part of the nation, the dark sky is phenomenal and on a moonless night, the sheer number of visible stars makes it difficult to identify constellations.

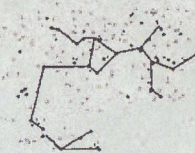
The western boundary of the Sanctuary is defined by the Massacre Rim, a dramatic 1,200 foot tall fault escarpment descending into Long Valley, Nevada. The topography allows for fantastic stargazing opportunities; the Sanctuary encompasses two volcanic plateaus surrounded by wide valley floors. Elevations range from 5,600 feet to almost 7,000 feet, with night sky becoming clearer at higher elevations. The area is home to a variety of animals including mule deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, greater-sage grouse, and golden eagles.



Star Gazing Opportunities

Located more than 150 miles north of Reno and surrounded by only a few small communities, the Massacre Rim suffers little from light pollution. Light pollution is the illumination of the night sky caused by artificial light and air pollution. Many lights installed in homes, businesses, street lights, and billboards use lighting fixtures that are too bright and aimed upwards or sideways. The light then scatters through the atmosphere and creates "sky-glow," which diminishes the view of the night sky. It is estimated that two-thirds of Americans cannot see the Milky Way from their backyard due to sky-glow.

The Massacre Rim Dark Sky Sanctuary represents one of the darkest places in the nation. The best star gazing happens in July when the Sagittarius and Scorpio constellations are highest in the sky. The Perseid's Meteor Shower also peaks in early August and the Sanctuary is the ideal location to view shooting stars.



This Sagittarius constellation is aligned with the center of the Milky Way galaxy. From the Northern Hemisphere, look southward in July and August to find the Teapot of Sagittarius.

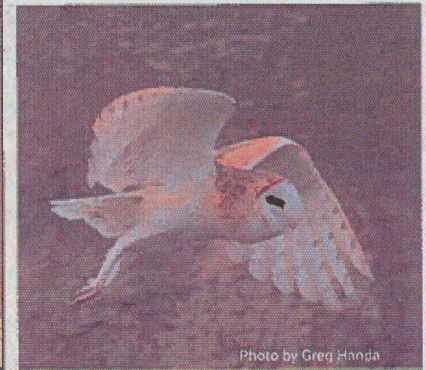


Photo by Greg Handa

Beyond the Stars

Light pollution is a serious problem to animals and plants. Nocturnal animals found throughout the Massacre Rim area are sensitive to the glow of artificial light.

Whereas bats, owls, badgers, foxes, and mountain lions all rely on the cover of darkness for hunting, cottontail rabbits, pika, and kangaroo rats all rely on the cover of dark for protection while foraging.

Plants also are affected by light; some plants, such as evening primrose (*Oenothera spp.*), coyote tobacco (*Nicotiana attenuata*) & blazing star (*Mentzelia laevicaulis*), bloom in the dark.

Artificial light can affect how long plants keep their leaves and prevent them from going into winter dormancy at the right time.



Photo by Richie Redwinski



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Plan Your Visit

The Massacre Rim Dark Sky Sanctuary is located in a remote part of northwestern Nevada. While opportunities for stargazing are available throughout the year in nearby towns, the roads in the Sanctuary are not maintained in the winter.

Here are some safety tips for an enjoyable trip:

- Before leaving town, check your gas level, air pressure in your spare tire, and tire-changing equipment. The nearest gas stations are in Cedarville, California and Gerlach, Nevada.
- Before leaving, check weather and road conditions. Many of the roads within the Sanctuary are rocky, dirt roads and/or cross seasonally-wet lakes.
- Bring plenty of water.
- Prepare for the extremely variable weather in the high desert.
- If you are planning on travelling on the roads within the Sanctuary, 4-wheel drive and high clearance are recommended.
- Stay on existing, designated routes.
- Let someone know where you are and when you will be back - this is typically no cell phone service east of the California-Nevada line.

Nearby campgrounds, Massacre Ranch and Steven's Camp, are free and open to the public. Both campgrounds have camping spots and a cabin where you can stay for up to 14 days.

Contact the Bureau of Land Management's field offices in either Cedarville, California or Gerlach, Nevada for more information. Travel safe and always carry a full-size spare and extra water!



The International Dark Sky Association is a non-profit working to protect the night skies for present and future generations.

Unlike other pollution, light pollution is reversible, simply replacing outdoor lighting fixtures with shielded lights that direct the light downwards will reduce sky-glow. Replacing outdoor lighting with lower wattage bulbs will not only lower energy costs, but reduce light pollution as well.

For more information please go to www.darksky.org and learn about other Dark Sky areas around the world.

Friends of Nevada Wilderness has been working with volunteers to collect data on the night sky. For more information on how you can help, contact the BLM or Friends of Nevada Wilderness.



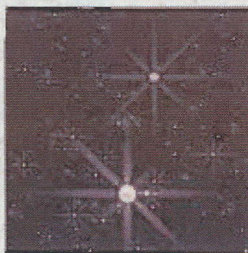
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