

A Day at

COTTONWOOD

SPRING

PRICE

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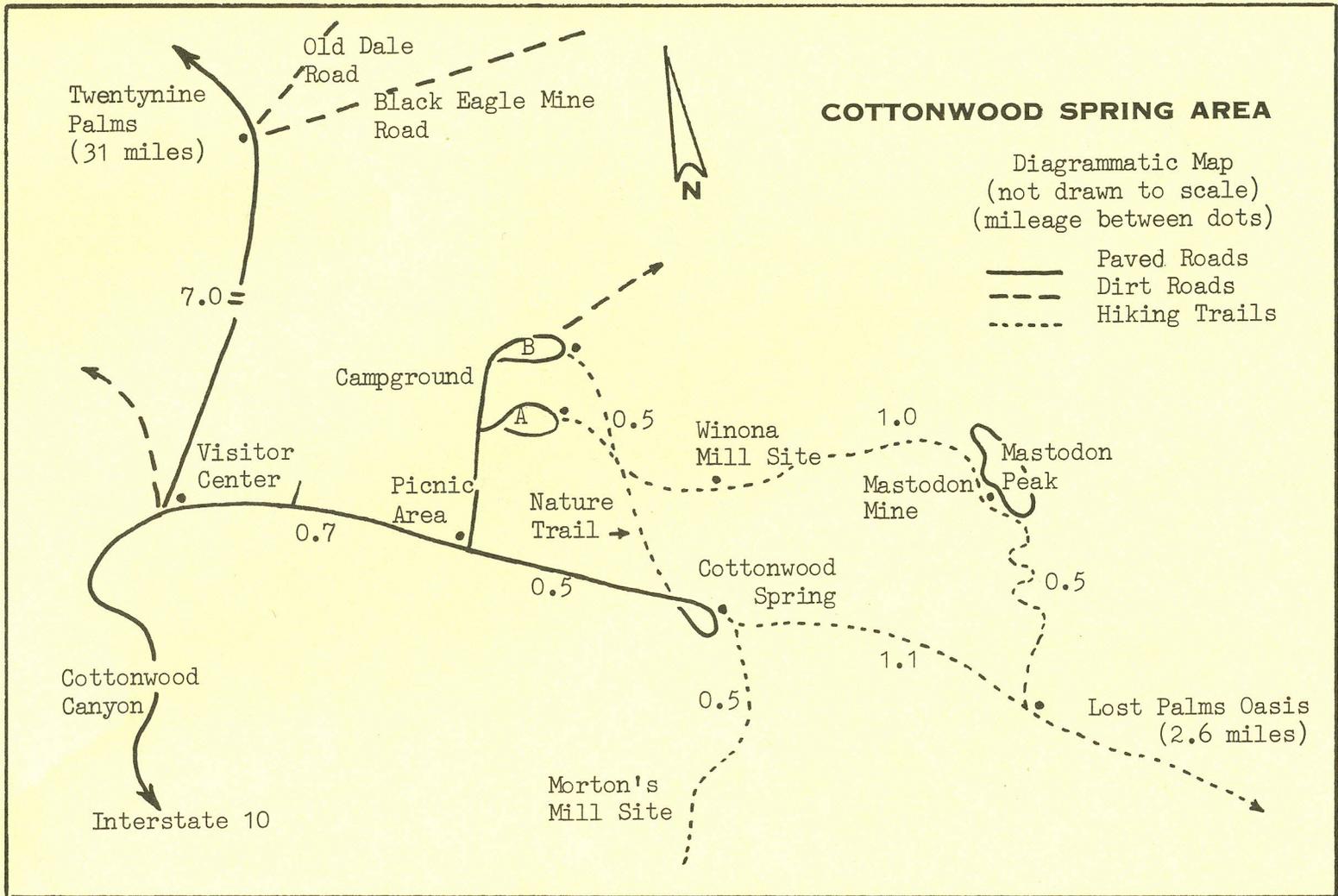
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JOSHUA TREE
NATIONAL MONUMENT
CALIFORNIA



Text by Jerry A. Moore

Drawings by Vic Koch & Jerry Moore



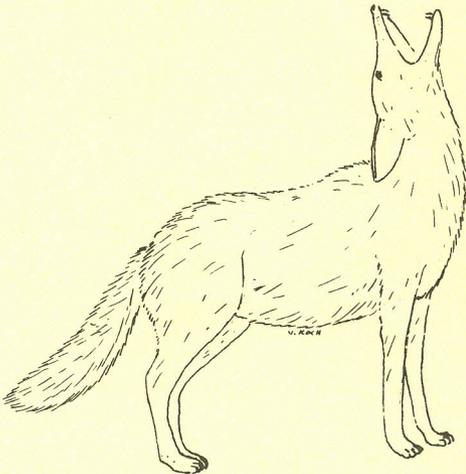
INTRODUCTION

The Cottonwood Spring area lies in the southernmost section of Joshua Tree National Monument. Although the area shows traces of earlier human habitation and now has a campground and ranger station, it is primarily a natural, undisturbed piece of desert. Containing elements of the low-lying Pinto Basin, as well as of the Mojave Desert regions to the north, the Cottonwood area is a transition zone between the Colorado (Low) and Mojave (High) Deserts. At approximately 3000 feet, it is marked by creosote bush and Mojave yucca but no Joshua trees. In the Monument, Joshua trees are restricted to the higher central and western portions and may be first seen 25 miles to the north near White Tank Campgrounds.

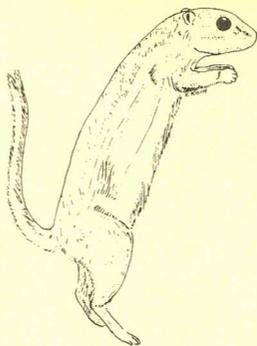
Entering from the south, the Cottonwood Spring Visitor Center offers an opportunity to learn about Joshua Tree National Monument. Although small, the center has a topographic wall map showing area detail, and other exhibits featuring plants and animals native to the region. These are excellent aids in planning a trip through the Monument.

Cottonwood Campground was moved from Cottonwood Spring to its present location in 1964. The picnic area, built in 1968, provides water, restrooms, fireplaces and picnic tables with ramadas.

The trail system at Cottonwood consists of several trails, varying in length from ½ to 8 miles. A variety of desert plants and wildlife can be seen on each of the trails. A self-guiding nature trail is located between the campgrounds and Cottonwood Spring.



Walking the trails during the day may provide an inaccurate impression of the abundance of desert wildlife. Mammals, birds, and reptiles may be numerous but are often inconspicuous. Coyotes, kangaroo rats, antelope ground squirrels, and bats are the most commonly seen of the 46 species of mammals found in the Monument. Many reptiles blend with their surroundings, but chuckwallas, zebra-tailed and horned lizards, and desert tortoises may be easily observed. Birds are conspicuous throughout the year, primarily around oases. Most birds are transients; however, Gambel's quail are observable, year-round residents.



The hills, flats, canyons, and washes contain a variety of desert plants. Mojave yucca and creosote bush are dominant; jojoba, holy cross cholla and bladderpod are common. In lower Cottonwood Canyon grow the not so common ironwood, palo verde, smoketree, ocotillo, and brittle-bush. The Cottonwood area begins the spring flowering season at Joshua Tree National Monument, usually in February. In years of adequate rainfall, desert dandelion, lupine, chia, phacelia, and many other wildflowers color the landscape.

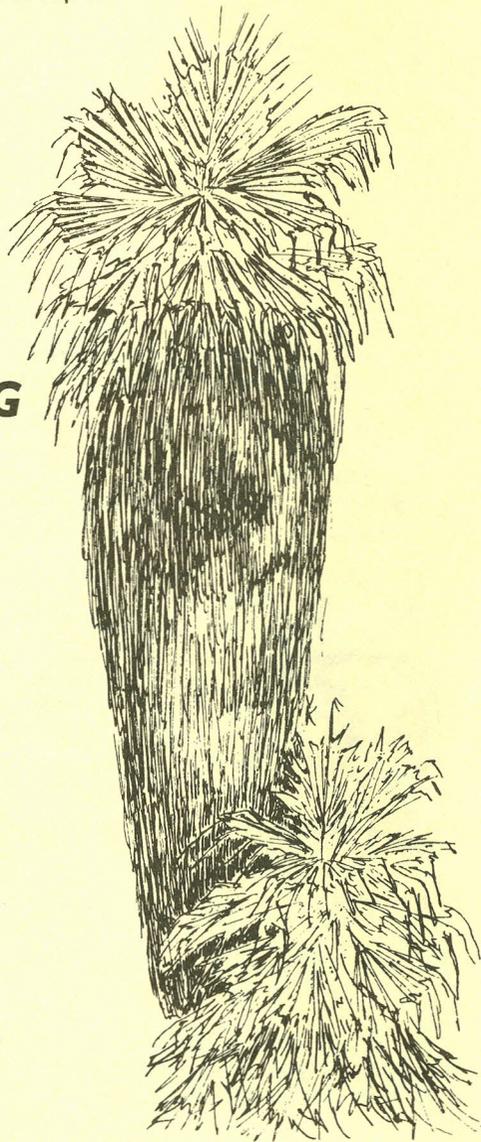
Since the establishment of Joshua Tree National Monument, man's impact on the Cottonwood Spring area has become greater each year with increases in visitation. However, the impact on the surrounding area and backcountry has been slight. We ask your cooperation in keeping the Monument in as natural a state as possible.

COTTONWOOD SPRING

Cottonwood Spring was an important area of activity during the mining years of 1870-1910. Being one of the two water sites between the Dale Mining District and Mecca, the spring was a popular stopover for freight haulers, prospectors, and other desert travelers. At one time water from the spring was pumped 18 miles to the Iron Chief Mine in the Eagle Mountains. The cottonwood trees and California fan palms planted by the miners are now virtually all that remain, except for traces of the old pipeline and road.

The output of Cottonwood Spring was as much as 3,000 gallons a day in the early 1900's. In recent times the output has dropped to a few gallons a day. Since the 1971 San Fernando earthquake, the spring's activity has increased slightly, and the flow is now variable up to 30 gallons an hour.

WARNING: This water is not potable.



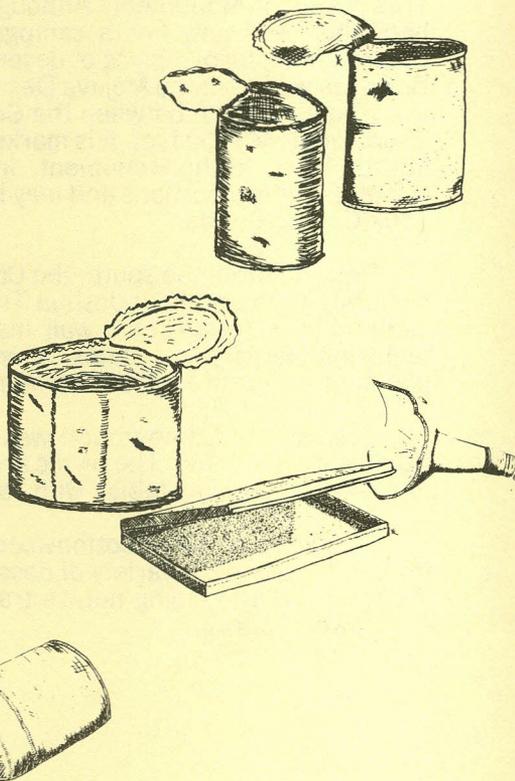
WINONA MILL SITE TRAIL

Starting at the eastern ends of loops A & B in the campground, the trail to the Winona Mill Site winds $\frac{1}{2}$ mile through the desert landscape.

The Winona Mill Site is the remains of a mining operation, started by George Hulsey in the 1920's. The claim included a ball and chain mill and a gold mine at Mastodon Peak. The mill was used for the crude refinement of gold ore from the Mastodon Mine and the smaller claims of the Dale Mining District. Although no buildings remain, traces of their presence can be seen in the remains of water tanks and the foundations of several buildings.

The Hulsey family and friends planted a great number of trees and shrubs exotic to the area. The cottonwoods, eucalyptus, and pomegranates make Winona a favorite area for wildlife.

The washes and canyons of the Winona area are interesting areas for observing wildlife and wildflowers.



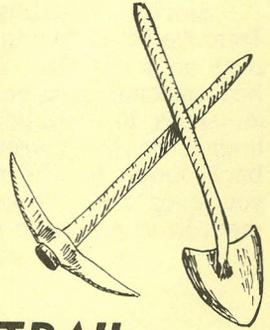
MASTODON PEAK TRAIL

The trail leading eastward from the Winona Mill Site winds through a number of small canyons and washes to Mastodon Peak. The peak, named by the miners for its resemblance to a prehistoric elephant's head and trunk, is an interesting geologic formation of quartz monzonite. A 3-mile hike can be made from Winona to Mastodon Peak, and back to Cottonwood via Lost Palms trail.

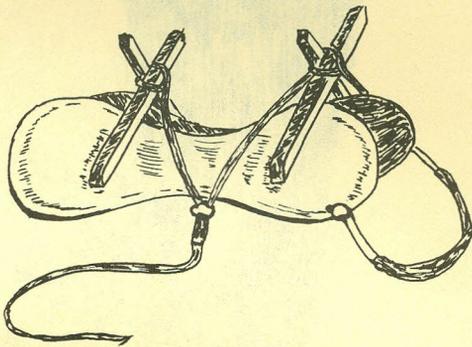
On clear days, hikers may have outstanding views of the Monument, the Salton Sea, and the surrounding desert, from the trail and from the top of Mastodon Peak.

The Mastodon Gold Mine, at the base of the peak, was operated by George Hulsey between 1919 and 1932. When the mine was in operation, ore samples taken from the original shaft were assayed at \$744.00 a ton. The mine was never worked seriously; after faulting severed the main vein, it was abandoned. The claim has since been invalidated. Open vertical mining shafts still remain; exercise caution when exploring the area.

There are numbers of interesting geological formations readily accessible from the trail, including some dikes and intrusions. The canyons and washes along the trail are favorite areas for animals, particularly reptiles; desert tortoises are occasionally seen. This area is also a favorite spot for desert plants, many of which only bloom in the protection of the canyons and washes.



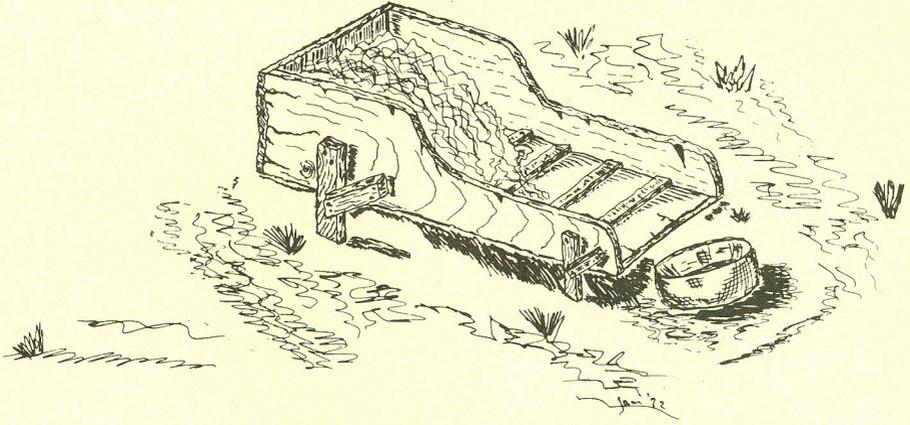
MOORTE N'S MILL SITE TRAIL



One of the most interesting but least hiked trails follows the wash south of Cottonwood Spring. About one quarter of a mile from the spring are the remains of the old freight wagon road. Little Chilcoot Pass, built by the miners in the 1880s, bypasses a rock waterfall and descends into Cottonwood Canyon.

The trail continues down Cottonwood Canyon for another $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to Moorten's Mill Site (lying on the western edge of the canyon). "Cactus" Slim Moorten prospected in the area in the early 1930s. In 1934 he built a 5-stamp mill on this site. The mill was used to process gold ore from his three claims in the Cottonwood area. Deserted in 1939, very little remains of the mill and cabin.

Many of the plants that are unique to desert washes are found in Cottonwood Canyon. In the spring and fall months the canyon has abundant varieties of birds, mammals, and reptiles.

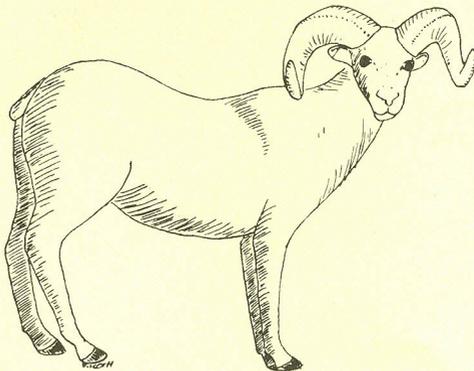


LOST PALMS OASIS TRAIL

One of the most memorable hikes in the Monument is along the trail to the Lost Palms Oasis. A demanding 4-mile trail through canyons and washes leads to one of the most beautiful native fan palm oases in California. Over 110 California fan palms are found in the deep canyon, surrounded by walls of quartz monzonite. The palms are sustained by an underground spring. At one time, the spring's output was enough to create several pools under the palms, but there has been very little surface water present in the past few years. However, the palms and other vegetation receive enough water to remain healthy. There is another smaller group of palms, in an upper canyon adjacent to Lost Palms Canyon, called "Dike Springs."

WARNING: Drinking water is not available and water which may be pooled is not potable; always carry an adequate supply.

The Lost Palms area is an ideal habitat for the Desert Bighorn sheep, as well as many other forms of wildlife. Sheep are most often seen around oases in the summer months because they need water about every three days. The remoteness of Lost Palms makes it a haven for other plants and animals not often seen in many areas of the desert.



General Information

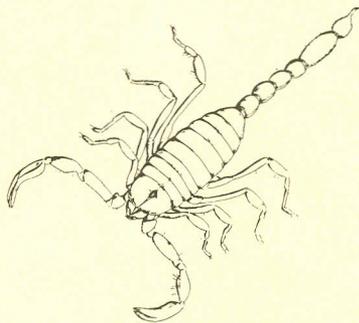
The small canyons and washes that are easily accessible to the main Monument road are good places for wildlife and wildflowers. The portion of the road passing through Cottonwood Canyon is also a good area to explore.

Although off-road travel by vehicles is not permitted anywhere in the Monument, there are several dirt roads and jeep trails that are open. The character of these roads, however, is subject to change without notice. It is recommended that visitors stop at the nearest ranger station before traveling on remote roads.

Not everything that crawls or flies in the desert is "deadly;" in fact, desert areas are safer than many other portions of the country. Due to the high daytime temperatures, most animals (except bees, wasps, roadrunners, and lizards) are active at night or during twilight hours. Tarantulas may be seen during the day, but are not dangerous. Scorpions, spiders, centipedes, and small snakes hunt "bugs" of various kinds which are attracted by particles of food such as sandwiches, cookie crumbs, and candy. At any place where such food particles might fall (such as sleeping bags, blankets, or clothes), these animals could be found. Daytime finds them hiding usually under logs, fallen tree limbs, rocks, or even in your clothes, bedrolls, or shoes. Always check or shake everything before using!

Most of the bites and stings of scorpions, centipedes, tarantulas, etc. are usually no worse than bee stings. Rattlesnake bites are usually not deadly, but are serious enough to get medical aid as soon as possible. Remember—always look where you put your hands, feet, and seat.

Desert temperatures can become extremely high and draw out body moisture. Travelers should drink at least a gallon of water a day during hot weather. Don't let a careless mistake spoil your desert outing.



JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Joshua Tree National Monument is one of the areas administered by the National Park Service, a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Monument was established to preserve the richness and variety of the resources of this desert area. Preservation extends to all natural, archaeological and historic objects, so that visitors today and for generations to come may enjoy this desert in its natural state.

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