Corn Springs Wildlife

Keep your eyes and ears open, and you may see or hear the residents of Corn Springs:

1 - Antelope ground squirrel—listen for its high-pitched "chip" as you approach. It is specially adapted to life in the hot desert as its body temperature can reach up to 104° F!

2 - Black-tailed hare ("jackrabbit") —actually a hare since the young are born fully furred in forms (shallow hollows) as opposed to rabbits which are born blind and hairless in burrows.

3 - Verdin—a small grayish bird with a yellow head and whitish belly found along the road and wash. Like the antelope ground squirrel, they are active year-round, even on the hottest days.

4 - Merriam's kangaroo rat— active only at night, so keep a lookout when it gets dark. They are very efficient at conserving water and can survive on a diet of dry seeds, using the water produced through digestion instead of drinking.

5 - Cactus wren—nests primarily in cholla and has a loud, harsh, persistent call (similar to a dying car engine being turned over).

6 - Roadrunner—this comical large bird is built to run and seldom flies. It gets it moisture from a diet of insects, lizards, snakes, and the occasional egg from other birds.

7 - Western pipistrelle—Another night creature, the desert's smallest bat may be seen flying around at dusk. Its zig-zag flight path enables it to capture up to 1/2 its weight in insects every night.

8 - Phainopepla—eats mistletoe berries. Is recognized by its distinctive headcrest, black coloration with white patches under each wing, and single "whistle" call.

Photo Credits

1- rmlt.wordpress.com
2- USFWS
3- Alan D. Wilson
4- Michael and Patricia Fogden
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7- USGS
8- Jacob Spendalow

CORN SPRINGS CAMPGROUND

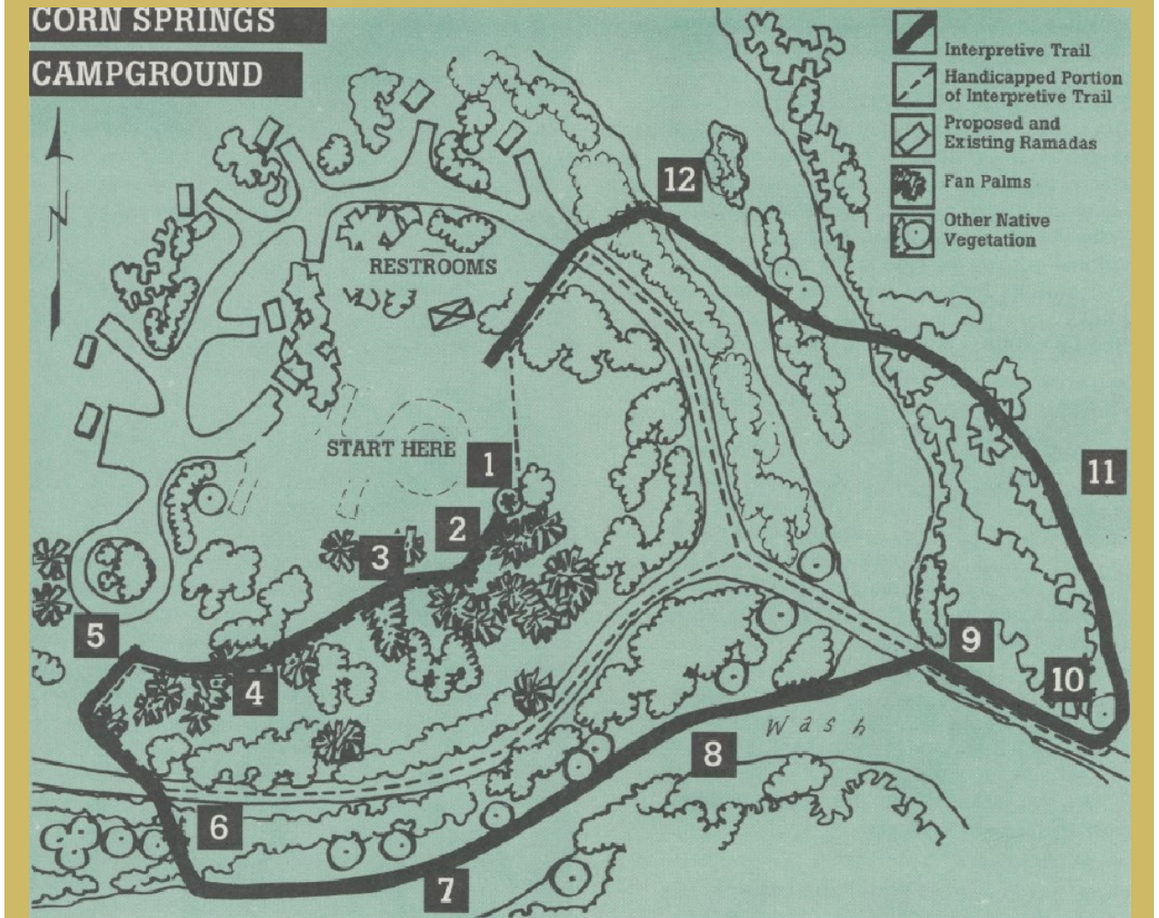
Information and Interpretive Trail Guide

BLM

Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office

Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262
760-833-7100

www.recreation.gov



Campground Rules:

- Camp in designated spaces only.
- Use fees are required for camping.
- Drive only on established roads.
- Cross-country travel by vehicle is prohibited.
- Shooting is prohibited within 1/2 mile of the campground.
- All pets must be on a leash.
- Quiet hours are between 9:00 pm and 8:00 am.
- Build fires only in fire pits and stoves.
- No plant or wildlife collection in campground or oasis.

9 campsites; 1 group site is available with tables, grills, potable water, and shade ramadas. Accessible vaulted toilets.

Nearest Gas Stations:
Chiriaco Summit (24 miles northwest of Corn Springs on I-10)

Nearest Public Telephones:
Chiriaco Summit

Emergency Phone Numbers:
All Emergencies—911 (24 hours)

Federal Interagency Communications Center (FICC):
San Bernardino (888) 233-6518
(24 hours service for fire and law enforcement)

WELCOME TO CORN SPRINGS!

This scenic fan palm oasis is located deep in a canyon of the Chuckwalla Mountains. It has been operated by the Bureau of Land Management since 1968. The area has been designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to provide special management attention to its rich and diverse wildlife and vegetation, unique archaeological sites and scenic values.

Your cooperation is needed to assist BLM in the conservation of Corn Springs, so that its unique features and wildlife will continue to delight future visitors to the area.

Palm trees at entrance to campground

Stop 1

The trail begins by leading off into the palm oasis. Native California fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*), are named for our first President, George Washington. This species reaches upward of 70 feet. They are excellent indicators of where water is close to the surface. The fan palm was a valuable resource to the Native Americans who would use it as a source of food and tools. The fruit of the fan palm was eaten raw, cooked, or ground into flour for cakes, while the stems were used to make utensils for cooking. The Cahuilla tribe used the leaves to make sandals, thatch roofs, and for making baskets.

The large shady tree on your left is a tamarisk, or salt cedar (*Tamarix* spp.)Tamarisk is common throughout the arid and semi-arid regions of the world. The Athol tamarisk, imported from India or Pakistan, grows easily in the warm climates of North America. It is highly successful, competing with native species for water.

Stop 2

Many of the palms in the grove have been burned as a result of fire. Burning does not kill the palms unless the growth tip at the top of the plant has been damaged. The most likely reason for the dead palms is due to changes in the water table as a result of seismic activity. Old palm fronds found at the bottom of the palms are generally left in place as they provide essential habitat for birds, rodents, and other animal species.

Stop 3

In front of you lies the Chuckwalla Mountain range for which the surrounding wilderness area was named for. These mountains are part of the Colorado Desert section of the Sonoran Desert. Common plants include ocotillo, barrel cactus, and creosote bush, one of the world's oldest living things with some specimens believed to be 10,000 years old with successive generations growing outward in clonal rings.

Flowering ocotillo

Desert plants exhibit a variety of mechanisms for reducing water loss. They might have few small opening for breathing or small lacquered leaves to minimize evaporation. Some, such as the ocotillo, are dormant or leafless in the very hot summer period. Many have sharp spines to protect them from being eaten, such as the catclaw at Stop 4 who's spines are curved like a cat's claws, earning it the nickname "wait-a-minute" bush for obvious reasons.

Stop 4

You are standing on what is believed to be the site where the most famous occupant of Corn Springs built his home. Between 1915 and 1932, Gus Lederer, the "Mayor of Corn Springs" was a permanent resident here. Gus lived here among the burros, for whom he would cook pancakes each morning. Unfortunately, this kind, quiet prospector/painter received a deadly bite from a black widow spider in 1932 and was buried 3 miles from the campground at Aztec Well.

Notice many of the palm trees have no tops. Even though they are dead, these trees still play an essential role in the ecosystem by providing nesting opportunities for cavity-nesting birds such as woodpeckers, elf owls, and American kestrals.

Stop 5

Another common Colorado Desert plant includes white bursage (*Ambrosia dumosa*), a low, rounded grayish shrub with white stems. It is called burrobush because wild burros seem to prefer it to all other available plants despite its bitter taste.

Now cross the road to continue the rest of the trail.

Stop 6

Notice the ironwood tree (*Olneya tesota*) in the wash to the right, one of the desert's most beautiful trees. It produces a wisteria-like flower during May and June. The wood is so hard that it cannot be worked with ordinary tools. The Native Americans used ironwood for arrow points and tool handles.

Desert mistletoe heavily infests the ironwoods. It is a parasitic plant which saps the tree's energy and will eventually kill it. Ironwoods exude a gummy substance to push off mistletoe seeds as they try to implant. Unfortunately, it is not always effective, especially during droughts.

Desert mistletoe

Head left down the wash to the next stop.

Stop 7

Mesquite (*Prosopis* sp.) was an important food item of the native Americans. The bean is sweet and nutritious and can be eaten raw or cooked. It can even be made into glue, used as black dye for hair or pottery. The wood was vital for building homes and making furniture. The mesquite beans produce methanol gas and alcohol that can be mixed with gasoline to produce "gasohol". However, problems of slow growth, harvesting, and refining would have to be resolved before this could be a viable supplement to gasoline.

Proceeding down the wash, stop and rub the leaves of the green cheesebush (*Hymenoclea salsola*). Some say it smells like Roquefort cheese.

Stop 8

Here you see a palo verde (*Circidium* sp.) tree. Palo verde means "green stick" in Spanish. In the spring, the yellow flowers make a spectacular show. During the dry season, the green branches drop their leaves and take over the job of photosynthesis, the process of converting sunlight into food. The wood is soft and brittle and unsuitable for burning as it rapidly burns to ash leaving no coals and giving off an unpleasant odor.

Stop 9

The petroglyph panels before you are the most obvious evidence of occupation of this area by Native Americans. Presently, it is not possible to determine the exact dates of the petroglyphs or even who created them.

The purpose and meaning of the petroglyphs may also never be known. One recurrent theory is that they were created in hunting places by Shamans (priests) to ensure a successful hunt. Some people have identified a "corn" symbol on the rock face near the top. See if you can find it.

Petroglyphs near campground

A major East-West Indian trail runs through Corn Springs. The spring was probably visited by a number of groups moving through the area. Corn Springs falls within the Chemehuevi tribe territory. The Chemehuevis occupied the eastern portion of Riverside County starting around 1100 AD, except along the Colorado River, which was occupied by other tribes. This hunter-gatherer population numbered approximately 500-800 people.

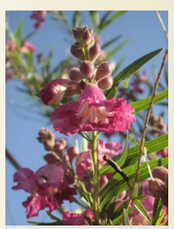
Stop 10

You are probably being watched this very moment from a rock ledge above you. The rock outcrops provide shelter and basking sites for the large, slow-moving Chuckwalla lizard. When "chucks" are frightened, they retreat and wedge themselves in rocky crevices. They gulp air which bloats their bodies, making it nearly impossible for predators to pry them loose. Females and young are banded, while males have a black head. These heavily built lizards carry an emergency "pantry" in their tail; they store reserve fat to use later when food is scarce. It is surprising that the largest lizard in the desert is completely vegetarian.

Stop 11

When you climbed up this rocky face, you may have noticed many low, rounded, silvery-grayish shrubs, or brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*). Notice that the leaves are much larger than the burrobush. In the spring, brittle-bush bursts into a bouquet of beautiful yellow daisy-like flowers. Native Americans used the resin that fell to the ground while the plant was in bloom for a chewing gum/pain reliever. It was also used to make incense.

Stop 12



Desert willow

The desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) in front of you marks your last stop. Although commonly called a willow due to its resemblance to the narrow-leafed weeping willow, this wash-loving tree is actually related to the catalapa, a tree in the trumpet-vine family. Unlike true willows, the desert willow has large, lavender, orchid-like flowers, making it a prized ornamental. Native Americans also used this plant to make tools.

This concludes your guided tour. We hope you enjoy your visit at Corn Springs.