

Mojave Rattlesnake

Be careful! The Mojave rattlesnake, *Crotalus scutulatus*, is a venomous snake that can be found throughout the Western Mojave desert. It is capable of delivering large amounts of potent venom into its prey. The Mojave rattlesnake is a mostly crepuscular and nocturnal snake that feeds on rodents, lizards, and birds. Please admire their beauty from a distance and try not to disturb them.



Beware of Rattlesnakes!



Burrowing Owl

Despite their name, burrowing owls, *Athene cunicularia*, don't dig their own burrows but prefer to adopt vacant tortoise burrows, or kit fox or ground squirrel dens. Unlike most other owls, these small birds are often active during daylight. The owls nest underground, and during the breeding season small family groups may be seen close to their burrows. The burrowing owl population is decreasing and the species is listed as a Species of Special Concern by California Department of Fish and Game.

Black-tailed Hare

How does a non-burrowing animal, such as the black-tailed hare, keep cool? Behavior patterns such as being active at night and spending the daytime under rocks and bushes help to decrease loss of body water; but, did you know that their large ears radiate heat when environmental conditions are right? Jackrabbits also have other complex physiological processes that enable them to tolerate high temperatures. Unlike some rodents, they cannot survive entirely on dried food, but require some moist food or free water.



Animal Loop

Trail Guide

In addition to the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), 27 other species of reptiles, 29 species of breeding birds, 23 species of mammals and many species of arthropods live on the Natural Area. Most desert dwellers are well camouflaged. To make the most of your visit.



MOVE SLOWLY: You will have a greater chance of seeing many of the desert residents.



MOVE QUIETLY: Noise frightens many of the animals.



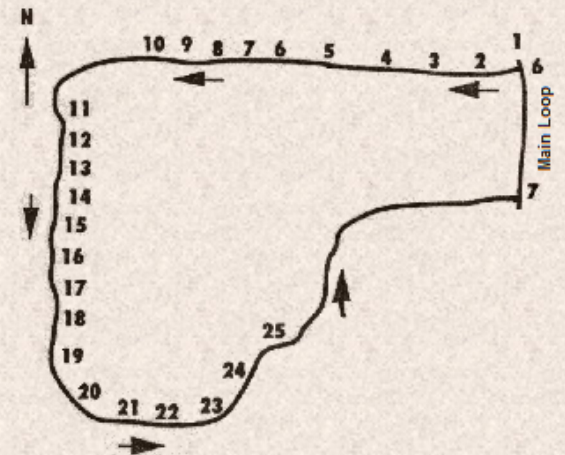
WATCH CAREFULLY: Movement is often a key to the presence of an otherwise hidden animal.



LISTEN: Some animals make sounds. Birds may sing. Rattlesnakes buzz or "rattle."



REMEMBER: When it is cool, many animals can be found warming in the sun. As the air and ground become hot, many animals will stay in the shade or in burrows.



Some species you might see

Desert Tortoise

As the name implies, the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area was designated as such to help reverse the rapid decline of desert tortoise populations in the Western Mojave area. Keep your eyes peeled and you may see one resting in its burrow or walking around foraging on grasses, flowers, and other plants.



Ant Rings

Harvester ants collect and eat the seeds of desert plants. They dispose of the seed cases and husks in a mound encircling the colony entrance. Seeds that were missed and disposed of in this "house cleaning" may germinate the following season to form a 1 to 2 feet diameter "ant ring".



Gopher Snake

The Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area is home to many species of reptile including several snakes such as this attractively marked Great Basin gopher snake, *Pituophis melanoleucus deserticola*. Snakes are an important and vital component of the desert ecosystem. Gopher snakes are nonvenomous and feed mainly on kangaroo rats and pocket mice.

Western Whiptail

The western whiptail lizard, *Aspidoscelis tigris*, is a common lizard of the arid west. This lizard has a very long tail that can reach twice the length of its body. Additionally, whiptail lizards can drop its tail when attacked by predators. The tail will continue moving, which may distract the predator and allow the lizard to escape.



Desert Horned Lizard

The desert horned lizard, *Phrynosoma platyrhinos calidiarum*, is often encountered on trails especially in the early morning and afternoon. Despite their distinctive appearance when viewed at close-hand, desert horned lizards are a cryptic species whose coloration provides superb camouflage against the desert floor. Although they eat a variety of invertebrates and even some vegetation they have a predilection for harvester ants, of which the DTRNA boasts 3 species.



Mojave Ground Squirrel

Like the desert tortoise, the Mohave ground squirrel, *Xerospermophilus mohavensis*, is listed as threatened under California's Endangered Species Act. Unlike its cousin, the Antelope squirrel which has a white side-stripe, the Mohave ground squirrel is all brown. The Mohave ground squirrel is vegetarian with a fondness for fiddleneck (*Amsinckia tessellata*) and other annuals.