

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2022

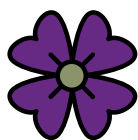


Long Canyon Trail, Long Time Coming

Friends of the Desert Mountains and the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy, held a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Long Canyon Trailhead on Friday, December 3rd 2021. 9.1 total miles one way, Long Canyon Trail now has a newly restored 1.5-mile section that connects the Coachella Valley to the Long Canyon Trail Route within Joshua Tree National Park. The trailhead is located on Long Canyon Road, near its intersection with Hacienda Avenue, Desert Hot Springs. Commencing with last month's grand opening ceremony and inaugural hike led by Friends of the Desert Mountains.

Construction of the trail had been a long time coming. Desert Hot Springs Councilmember, Gary Gardner recalls reading a resolution request from 1994 in the city's archives. In that span of time, unfortunately, illegal trash dumping had become rampant. A multi-organizational effort to clean up the trash and create a new outdoor recreation venue was ignited. Other speakers at the trail's opening included La Quinta Councilmember and CVMC Chair Kathleen Fitzpatrick, La Quinta Mayor and CVCC Chair Linda Evans, FODM Executive Director Tammy Martin, Joshua Tree National Park Superintendent David Smith and Mojave Desert Land Trust Communications Director Jessica Dacey.





Native Flora Spotlight: *Washingtonia filifera*

Susan Forgrave

One of the plants often taken for granted across the Coachella Valley is the *Washingtonia filifera* - a widely cultivated and very popular ornamental palm. What is not so well-known is that the *W. filifera* is the only palm native to the Western United States and is the country's largest native palm.

Commonly called the California Fan Palm, the *W. filifera* has an intriguing botanical history. There is some evidence that it is a relic of the Pliocene period (5.3 million to 2.6 million years ago). A botanical relict is defined as a surviving plant that was abundant in a large area at an earlier time but now occurs only in a few small areas. This palm is known to have existed over a large extent as far north as Colorado, Wyoming, and Oregon. Still, today's oasis environment has been restricted by both water and climate to widely separated relict groves.

W. filifera has received a "Near Threatened" status within its native habitat by the IUCN Red List. Unfortunately, due to urbanization, palm oases are disappearing. Increased agriculture has lowered groundwater supply while other phreatophytes such as mesquite and tamarisk compete for limited water resources. Palms receiving percolating water through rock fractures could perish with a fault shift. While the California Fan Palm is resistant to most fungal and bacterial infections, crown rot sometimes infects trees that have been injured by lightning strikes or fire. Palms are occasionally decapitated by lightning. A specific host of the Giant Palm Borer Beetle, this palm is more at risk from potential invasive species. But what is always disturbing is the thoughtless vegetational damage and vandalism caused by some hikers and four-wheel enthusiasts.

This palm has some interesting adaptations. One is its resistance to fire. Most trees have their vascular layers around the trunk just below the bark to carry water and nutrients throughout the tree. In palms, however, the vascular system occurs in scattered bundles throughout the interior of the trees. Because of this construction, fire can char the whole exterior of a palm without causing significant damage. Fires can benefit the palm by clearing the understory of excess brush and decaying plant material. A survey of oases along the San Andreas Fault revealed fire effects on palms at all sites. Naturally-occurring oases fires are usually ignited by lightning strikes. Prior to the nineteenth century, Native Americans practiced fire management in oases, burning them at intervals of about four years. Burning increased the yield of fruit crops and removed the dead shag from trunks for easier access to crops. Oases were spiritual places for the Native Americans, and all parts of the palm had a use. This was and remained a greatly revered plant.



A Message From the Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteers have been an integral part of my career experiences. As I begin my 4th month as Friends of the Desert Mountains' Volunteer and Administrative Coordinator, I find myself in constant admiration of our volunteers, with each possessing a unique skill set. The quote, "You could not pay people to do the work that our volunteers achieve," should not be received negatively. The volunteers of FODM have a tireless work ethic, a driven dedication, and an undeniable passion to connect people to the land. Due to this incredible group, FODM shall continue to make a difference and accomplish the impossible. Each volunteer has my respect, admiration, and appreciation. Thank you for dedicating your time and, in some cases, blood, sweat and tears, to our mission.

- Christopher King

January Lectures

Lectures and events have limited capacity
RSVP is required; please contact
cking@desertmountains.org

HISTORY OF THE SAN JACINTO MOUNTAINS

Thursday, January 13th at 1PM

PLANTS ARE PRODUCERS

Wednesday, January 19th at 10AM

DESERT LAKESHORE

Thursday, January 20th at 3PM

January Events

AMERICAN EXPRESS GOLF TOURNAMENT

January 19th - January 23rd

DESERT LAKESHORE FIELD TRIP

Monday, January 24th

Save the Date

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION LUNCHEON

Saturday, February 5th

INTERSECT PALM SPRINGS

Thursday, February 10th - Sunday, February 13th

TOUR DE PALM SPRINGS

Saturday, February 12th

5K FUN RUN

Saturday, February 26th

MUSIC IN THE GARDENS

Saturday, February 26th

WILDFLOWER FESTIVAL

Saturday, March 5th

This Month in Photos



Do you have a photo you want to be featured in
the volunteer newsletter?
Send it to: cking@desertmountains.org



PICTURE OF THE MONTH
Thomas Forgrave



Thanks for all you do,
We appreciate you!

Christopher King
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