



# Southern Nevada WILD

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## Welcome to Wildlife Education

Hello and welcome to the premiere issue of Southern Nevada Wild. As an educator in southern Nevada, you are probably looking for resources that can connect your students with their world. The Bureau of Conservation Education at the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) can help you!

It is the aim of NDOW's wildlife education program to inform young Nevadans about the place they live and its natural resources, like wildlife. Working together with other agencies and organizations that educate about our natural resources, we hope to overcome the latest disorder facing our youth, "nature deficit!" Even if you think that the power standards have nothing to do with wildlife, we ask you to take a look inside these pages. You may just change your mind.



Through wildlife-related activities, children can learn math, science, reading and writing skills, and art, too. Learning about the animals that share our environment can lead to the development of values and ethics. With global climate change and the many other issues that our young people will face in their lifetime, what a better way to reach them than through wildlife.

*"Without knowing it, we utilize hundreds of products each day that owe their origin to wild animals and plants. Indeed our welfare is intimately tied up with the welfare of wildlife. Well may conservationists proclaim that by saving the lives of wild species, we may be saving our own."*

- **Norman Myers**, *A Wealth of Wild Species*, 1983

## What is Wildlife?

The Nevada Department of Wildlife protects wildlife, but what exactly is wildlife? Look at the words – wild and life. Does wildlife mean all life that is wild? All life in the wild, or natural world, can be called flora (plants) and fauna (animals). When we say wildlife, we are talking about animals that live in the wild. Are your pets wild? No, they live with you. Wild means they live by themselves in the natural environment and not with people. Dogs, cats, aquarium fish, and farm animals live with people and have to be taken care of. Wildlife can take care of itself. What about "wild" burros, "wild" horses, and "wild" pigs that live in our desert? Along time ago, these animals lived with people, until they were set free. So we can't really call them wild. They should really be called "feral" – that's the word for something that used to live with people, but now lives on its own. Even though wildlife doesn't live with us, we should think about it and care about what happens to it.



## The Desert Tortoise

Have you ever seen a desert tortoise? Desert tortoises live in the Mojave desert. The Mojave Desert is located in parts of Nevada, California, Arizona and Utah. Desert tortoises are threatened with *extinction* because they are losing the special places where they live. The tortoises live in a special house called a burrow, which is underground. This keeps them warm in the winter, and cool in the summer. They like to sleep all winter, and that's called *brumation*. You can compare this to bears that spend the winter in *hibernation*. When the weather starts to warm up, desert tortoises and other cold-blooded reptiles can come out and warm up. Every year, when tortoises emerge from their burrows, the people in the desert know it's spring, just like the groundhog tells people it's spring in other parts of the country. Tortoises aren't turtles, because they live only on land. Turtles can also live in the water. Of course there's not much water in the desert! We might only see four inches of rain in one year! So desert tortoises have to conserve, or save, water in their bodies. They can hold water for a long time. If a tortoise is scared, he could lose all his water at once. We have to be careful around these animals. We should be careful around all the things that live in the desert.



## Springtime Celebrations!

Springtime comes early in the Mojave Desert, and is full of things to celebrate. It's almost as if we have to get all our activity in before it gets too hot! You may already know about some of these, but you'll probably be surprised to see others:

**National Environmental Education Week – April 15 – 22, 2007**

**National Wildlife Week – April 21 – 29, 2007**

**Earth Day - April 22, 2007**

The **National Arbor Day** is **April 27, 2007**, but check for events in your local community that may vary slightly from this date. Often Arbor Day celebrations are tied in to Earth Day events. Earth Day has been around since 1970, but Environmental Ed. Week is relatively new. It was no accident that all these nature celebrations happen almost at the same time. We can take the whole month of April to celebrate our awareness of the environment with our children. Get online and check websites for events near you and see how you can become involved.

## Clark County School District Connection



If you are a teacher with the Clark County School District (CCSD), you probably already have an Interact account. On Interact, there are sources to assist you in finding field trips and curriculum. **CHOLLA** is a consortium of CCSD and local agencies that collaborate to provide opportunities for linking and extending classroom learning to the community. Agencies include public and private museums, nature centers, wildlife, and environmental organizations, and regional, state, and national parks. The Interact "conference" called **Beyond the Classroom** has been prepared to introduce teachers to the many local field trip opportunities and supplemental educational materials that support the Nevada State Standards and Clark County School District curricula.

There are two other resources you should know about. One is a field trip resource, found at [www.enviroedexchange.org](http://www.enviroedexchange.org). You can also sign up for the environmental education list serve here. Another helpful organization is the Nevada Natural Resource Education Council, at [www.nnrec.org](http://www.nnrec.org). This group serves as a clearinghouse for professional development opportunities for educators interested in environmental issues.

## Desert Woodrats

The desert woodrat is also known as a packrat. These animals can be eight to fifteen inches long. They collect all kinds of things to bring back, or *pack*, in their nest. They eat leaves, bark, berries and seeds. Since they live in a very dry area, the rats have to get their water from succulent plant leaves. They build a spiny nest of yucca leaves and pieces of cactus. This protects them from other animals. Packrat *middens* are what is left in the nest after the rat leaves and can last many, many years.



Sometimes the Joshua tree looks like it's been eaten. The desert woodrat chews the leaves of this yucca plant, either for food or for nesting material.

## Project Wild Makes a Comeback

Project WILD is one of the most widely-used conservation and environmental education programs among educators of students in K – 12. It is based on the premise that young people and educators have a vital interest in learning about our natural world. State wildlife agencies nationwide sponsor facilitator workshops, which train educators in the many facets of the WILD program. Teachers can then take the activities back to the classroom. The curriculum is correlated to specific content areas, as well as to the No Child Left Behind federal initiative. Soon the Nevada Department of Wildlife will have correlations to the Nevada state standards. Watch for Teacher Workshops coming this summer!



## Message from the State Coordinator



First, let me thank you for reading this edition of Nevada Wild. I am Kim Toulouse, the Nevada Department of Wildlife Staff Conservation Educator. I work on the state staff for the agency and I am in charge of the Wildlife Education program, Watchable Wildlife program, and the Volunteer program. Many of you may know me from Project WILD, Aquatic WILD or other educational workshops that have been conducted throughout the state over the past fifteen years. Some of you may know me from my past association with the Oxbow Nature Study Area or the Washoe Lake Wetlands as I was the Western Region education coordinator for quite some time a few years back. With the publication that you are now reading, we are attempting to re-establish contact with teachers and students throughout the state. We feel it is a great opportunity for you to get to know us, and participate in some of the awesome things we have planned for the future. We now have a staff of three Wildlife Educators, one in each region of the state. Additionally, we will again be offering Project WILD, Aquatic WILD and other workshops throughout the state. In the near future, we will also be offering advanced workshops that focus on a particular species or habitat. I look forward to establishing a relationship with you, and if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time. Thank you.



## Did you know?

The mission of the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) is to protect, preserve, manage and restore wildlife and its habitat for their aesthetic, scientific, educational, recreational, and economic benefits to citizens. NDOW has an entire bureau dedicated to public information and education: the Bureau of Conservation Education. Wildlife Education is just one aspect of what we do. Be sure to check the website, [www.ndow.org](http://www.ndow.org) for news features and wildlife interest stories.

NDOW is planning the opening of the Lake Mead Fish Hatchery visitor center sometime this year. In addition, a nature center is planned for 2008 on the grounds of the Overton Wildlife Management Area. Look for updates in this newsletter and on our website.

A traveling wildlife education trunk is available for checkout to teachers on a limited basis. The trunk contains pelts of many Mojave mammals, as well as horns, antlers, and a tortoise shell. Please call the southern region Conservation Educator to check availability.

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## Wildlife Word Puzzle

a c k w z y x t r m g h f t  
 j g d v g g b w n j e s a v  
 y n u p l a n t s l o t x q  
 u e l e b n c a h s l b c a  
 e v h m f l u o w b b e g d  
 l a m m a m g p a l f u e z  
 i d q f t a d h m h n s l o  
 t a o r l l v c o e e y l k  
 p x r j l s f k a r l d r p  
 e b k w a t y e t s n u x a  
 r o m a s q e u w c g j n m

Answer the following questions, then find the words in the puzzle, either across, down, up, sideways, or diagonally.

Wildlife means \_\_\_\_\_.

The place where wildlife lives is its \_\_\_\_\_.

Some animals eat meat, and other animals eat \_\_\_\_\_.

An animal with fur is a \_\_\_\_\_.

The Silver State is \_\_\_\_\_.

Nevada's state mammal is the \_\_\_\_\_.

The desert tortoise is Nevada's state \_\_\_\_\_.

The place we live is called the Mojave \_\_\_\_\_.

The desert is an \_\_\_\_\_ environment.