

Wilderness.net's Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Old Woman Mountains Wilderness in 1994 and it now has a total of 165,172 acres. All of the wilderness is in California and is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Description

This wilderness area consists of bajadas; extensive flat aprons of alluvium; and the massive, fault-lifted Old Woman Mountains that extend some 35 miles north-south and up to 28 miles in an east-west direction. The elevations within the wilderness extend from 800 feet in the drainage bottoms to over 5300 feet at the top Old Woman Peak. The mountains take their name from a granite monolith resembling the figure of an old woman, known as the Old Woman Statue (5,000 feet high). The Old Woman Mountains were the discovery site of the Old Woman Meteorite. This meteorite was discovered in 1975 and is the largest meteorite found in California and the second largest in the United States. The meteorite was on display at the Smithsonian Institute from 1978 to 1980 and is now on permanent display at the Desert Information Center in Barstow, California. The Old Woman Mountains Wilderness falls within a transition zone between the Lower Colorado and Mojave deserts and encompasses many different habitat types. Creosote bush scrub dominates the lower elevations, grading into mixed desert scrub at middle elevations with juniper-pinyon woodland at the higher elevations. The dry washes are characterized by catclaw acacia, cheesebush, desert lavender, little-leaf ratany, and desert almond. Wildlife is typical for the Mojave Desert; including a permanent population of bighorn sheep, mule deer, bobcat, cougar, coyote, black-tailed jackrabbit, ground squirrels, kangaroo rats, quail, chuckar, roadrunners, rattlesnakes, and several species of lizards. Numerous raptor species are likely to be found in the area; including prairie falcons, red-tailed hawks, golden eagles, Cooper's hawks, American kestrels, as well as several species of owls. The washes and canyons provide good habitat for several species of songbirds, and the bird densities and diversity is further enhanced by the presence of the known 24 springs and seeps. The bajadas provide excellent desert tortoise habitat; 49,683 acres of the wilderness area have been identified as critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise.

Leave No Trace

How to follow the seven standard Leave No Trace principles differs in different parts of the country (desert vs. Rocky Mountains). Click on any of the principles listed below to learn more about how they apply in the Old Woman Mountains Wilderness.

1. [Plan Ahead and Prepare](#)
2. [Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces](#)

3. [Dispose of Waste Properly](#)
4. [Leave What You Find](#)
5. [Minimize Campfire Impacts](#)
6. [Respect Wildlife](#)
7. [Be Considerate of Other Visitors](#)

For more information on Leave No Trace, [Visit the Leave No Trace, Inc. website.](#)

Location

Old Woman Mountains Wilderness is located in San Bernardino County, California approximately 35 miles west of Needles, California. The northern boundary of the wilderness is approximately 9 miles south of historic Route 66. Maps of the area can be obtained from the Bureau of Land Management Field Office in Needles, California.

Area Management

The Old Woman Mountains Wilderness is part of the 109 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking, backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to *"secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness"* as called for by the Congress of the United States through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Please follow the requirements outlined below and use Leave No Trace techniques when visiting the Old Woman Mountains Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

Permits are required for commercial or organized activities.

Contacts

Needles Field Office
1303 South Hwy 95
Needles, CA 92363

Phone: 760-326-7000
Fax: 760-326-7099
Email: BLM_CA_Web_NE@blm.gov

Links to Other Websites

[Bureau of Land Management, California](#)

Links on Wilderness.net

[National, Regional and Local Wilderness Organizations \(NGOs\)](#)

A listing of societies, organizations, coalitions and other wilderness-related advocacy and stewardship groups.

[Career and Volunteer Opportunities](#)

A listing of sites providing information about wilderness- and environmentally-related career and volunteer opportunities.

Applicable Wilderness Law(s)

| Law | Date | Acreage Change (in acres) |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Public Law 103-433 | October 31, 1994 | 146,020 |

California Desert Protection Act of 1994 - Public Law 103-433 (10/31/1994) "California Desert Protection Act of 1994" An Act to designate certain lands in the California Desert as wilderness, to establish the Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks, to establish the Mojave National Preserve, and for other purposes.

— [download 103-433](#)

Recreational Opportunities

Hiking, horseback riding, hunting, camping, rock hounding, photography, and backpacking are examples of activities that can be enjoyed in this wilderness. The wilderness boundary was drawn to exclude five non-wilderness corridors or 'cherrystems', which provide vehicle access to the interior of the wilderness area.

Climate and Special Equipment Needs

Temperatures are fairly mild in the early spring, late fall, and winter; generally 30-80 F. Summer temperatures are extremely hot. Temperatures are commonly over 115 F and can get well over 120 F. Always carry water; desert springs are not reliable water sources.