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Danby Lake

Endangered Desert Legacy



Location: The Danby Lake area is located in the Mojave Desert, in San Bernardino County north/northeast of the intersection of Highways 62 and 177. The area is bounded on the north by Cadiz Road, on the south by Highway 62, and on the west by Iron Mountain Pump Plant Road. The area has the Old Woman Mountains to the north, the Iron Mountains to the south and west, and the Turtle Mountains to the east.

Management Agency: Bureau of Land Management, Needles Field Office

Description: The area's landscape is dominated by Danby Dry Lake and associated bajadas and washes that drain into it. The Lake is layered with salt and sediments, while the surrounding uplands are mostly sand and rock. The area also contains wetlands that are critical to the species that inhabit the area, as well as migrating species. Elevations range from about 600 feet to about 900 feet.

Wildlife and Plants: The area is habitat for the protected desert bighorn sheep, as well as several species on the state watch list, including hepatic tanager and prairie falcon (photo above). Visitors to this area can also encounter the rare slender cottonheads, Harwood's eriastrum (photo above), Harwood's milk-vetch, and small-flowered androstephium. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has also recognized the area as a wildlife migration corridor.

Cultural Importance: This area is of utmost importance to local indigenous people. This area abuts Ward Valley, a sacred area for five local Native American tribes. Ethnographic accounts tell of trails, including the "Salt Song Trail" that went along the Colorado, east through the Chemehuevi Valley and connected early Native Americans with water sources at Mopah Spring, and the salt mines at Danby Lake and then continued around the southern end of the Turtle Mountains.

Activities: Rockhounds collect gypsum and halite here. The Lake's ancient shoreline has also yielded several meteorite fragments, causing it to be a favorite among meteorite hunters. Milligan ghost town is located nearby, for those who enjoy visiting ghost towns. The remoteness of the area makes it ideal for those who wish to enjoy the peace and solitude of nature while bird watching, wildflower viewing, camping, cross-country hiking, and star gazing.

