Is this the Year?
I feel like the country is going through some much-needed Spring cleaning. It is refreshing to have Nada Culver at the helm at the BLM and having Deb Haaland, the first Native American Secretary of Interior, will be a great step forward for conservation of our public lands. We ended 2020 on a positive note with Congress overriding former president Trump’s veto of the National Defense Authorization Act, denying the Air Force’s efforts to expand and take over much of the Desert Refuge as well as the naval expansion around Fallon. Following on the heels of that huge victory we are excited to see the entire Nevada delegation supporting 1.3 million acres of Wilderness designations for the Desert Refuge – providing permanent protection from future military expansions. Of course, introducing legislation is a long way from it being signed into law but we are so much closer thanks to all of your support over the years. See our feature story on page 6.

It is with great honor that Jose Witt and I were selected by the National Wildlife Refuge Association as Refuge Advocate of the Year. Of course the progress we made fighting military expansion into the Desert Refuge would not have happened without the support of many organizations, Tribes, the Nevada delegation, our state government and all of the individuals who showed up at meetings, wrote letters and signed petitions.

Working to protect the Desert Refuge was a team effort and a labor of love and Jose and I are accepting this award for all of you.

The Sierra Sweethearts rendition of Born to be Wild always got the crowd up dancing. We hope that Kristell’s spirit is “out there on the highway, looking for adventure”. Our hearts go out to Eric and the rest of the Sweethearts. We will miss you, Kristell. Thanks for leaving a song in our hearts.

Wishing you all a happy Earth Day and hope you enjoy time out in the wilds this summer with friends and family.

Stay safe,
Shaaron
CAMPAIGN UPDATES

**WASHOE** We are gearing up to expand our advocacy for the incredible wild country in northern Washoe County. We will be out in the field rechecking areas and boundaries of some of the best Wilderness and wildlife habitat in the state, places that the American pronghorn and the Greater Sage-Grouse and so many other sagebrush obligate species call home. Protection of these amazing wild places fits in so perfectly with President Biden’s Climate Change Initiatives including the international 30 X 30 proposal.

We will be working with the Sierra Club and others to see places closer to Reno like the popular Virginia Mountains, pictured left, get the protections it deserves.

**WASHOE** We will continue working to protect the wide open spaces of Buffalo Hills and Poodle Mountain and to get permanent protection for the Massacre Rim WSA Dark Sky Sanctuary.

*Other areas important to conservation protection include the Hays Canyon Range and Wall Canyon WSA, and of course Wilderness designation for the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge.*

**PERSHING** In 2021 we will continue to push hard for the Pershing and Douglas county bills that will provide Wilderness protection in seven wonderful Wilderness areas in Pershing County, including the Grandfathers’ Wilderness in the Tobin Range, and of course the beloved Burbank Canyons Wilderness in Douglas County.

*Burbank Canyons WSA, pictured left, would be protected as Wilderness in the proposed Douglas County Public Lands Bill.*

**SOUTHERN** On March 3 our Nevada delegation took the extraordinary step to propose permanent protection for 1.3 million acres of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge as Wilderness as part of the Southern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act (S. 567 and H.R. 1597). See pages 6 & 7 for more.
It’s Spring & We’re Shovel Ready!

Northern Nevada Stewardship Update

Weed Warriors

We will of course be hosting our annual Wilderness Weed Warriors program in the Mt. Rose Wilderness and encourage anyone with a few spare hours on Wednesday or Saturday mornings in May and June to help us in our on-going battle against musk thistle. One development in this program is the addition of a re-seeding effort in the fall, so be on the lookout for those projects as they pop up on the calendar later this year. We will try to time those projects with incoming storm systems to give our seedlings the best chance for survival.

Feeling

a little stir-crazy after a long winter? Never fear, stewardship season is here in Northern Nevada! While we remain conscious of the ever-changing nature of the pandemic, we are excited to offer in-person volunteer opportunities again this season. We have updated our protocols to match the CDC and our agency partners’ guidelines, and will be asking our volunteers to take additional measures to make sure our events are as safe as possible. Keep an eye out on our Calendar of Events for event dates and details!

Seeds of Success

One such project is the Seeds of Success initiative. As part of this nation-wide program, and with the help of the Great Basin Institute and the Nevada Department of Wildlife, we will assist our agency partners in collecting certain target species of native seeds from priority seed zones across the state. These seeds will be carefully categorized and tracked, used for research and development, and eventually grown out to be used in landscape and ecosystem restoration efforts.

And Much More...

We are planning to return to a semi-normal stewardship schedule filled with fence removal in the Santa Rosa’s, trail work in Eastern Nevada, plenty of projects in the Black Rock Desert, Dark Sky monitoring throughout the state, and much, much more.

Southern Nevada Stewardship

From celebrating Earth Day doing restoration work in Wee Thump Joshua Tree Wilderness to removing graffiti in the Mt. Charleston Wilderness come summer, the Southern Nevada Stewardship Team will have a busy 2021 season as we welcome volunteers back into the field. Of course, all appropriate safety procedures will be followed.

The team is ramped up to see our regular volunteers again and welcome new ones. Volunteering for a stewardship project is a great way to see and learn about our beautiful landscapes, practice how to recreate responsibly and meet fabulous new friends.

Check out our Northern and Southern stewardship project schedule at:
nevadawilderness.org/calendar_of_events
Nothing Stops Volunteers from Loving Their Land!

We Must All Be Good Stewards

THE 2020 pandemic saw a huge increase in people getting out to enjoy public lands in Nevada, what may be one of the few positive “new normals” of the year. What we hope doesn’t become normal is the increasing wear and tear on our public lands due to careless use.

Stewardship is a big deal at Friends. We rely on volunteers to maintain and sustain our public lands through service projects; from litter removal, to trail building, to week long service-learning-experiences like our Alternative School Break program. Our volunteers donated over 6,000 hours of service in 2019. That’s an amazing amount of work! In 2020, volunteers observing COVID protocol served over 1,100 hours stewarding Nevada’s Wilderness Areas, forests, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas – even with an extremely restricted volunteer program.

We just can’t thank these dedicated folks enough for all the amazing work they do!

But you don’t have to volunteer for Friends to make a difference. When we care for a place, we are – whether we know it or not – stewards of that place. The increased visitation to our wild places has created an increased need for every visitor to be a steward of them. Small acts of stewardship, like staying on the trail and picking up a few extra pieces of trash, make a big difference!

Federal land managers just don’t have the resources to clean up after everyone who heads outdoors. Whether deep in the Wilderness, on your favorite Red Rock Canyon hike, or at your local park, a little bit of stewardship goes a long way! Leaving no trace of your visit is one of the best ways to steward public spaces and respect those who will come after you.

While we have been working remotely (not in the remotely-in-the-Wilderness way) and miss seeing large groups of our volunteers, many people have been carrying the torch. Our staff and AmeriCorps members have been in the field, along with our great community partners at Get Outdoors Nevada, Southern Nevada Conservancy, Litter-Free LV, and the Nevada Outdoor School. Our good friends over at Trashy Trail Runners have been doing amazing work, organizing individuals to clean up trails in and around the Spring Mountains. Countless individuals have kept our spirits up by sharing their own efforts – spontaneous acts of stewardship! – on social media, tagging us @friendsofnvwild. Nevadans have really come through and shown that even a pandemic won’t keep them from showing their public lands a lot of love.

Continued on Page 9

SPRING MONITORING

Since August 2020, the Springs Monitoring Team - Coordinator Chantal and AmeriCorps members Tara and Tali - has surveyed 133 springs (and counting)! Many of these springs hadn’t been visited in decades and are now dry, but we’ve also come across surprisingly profuse flows, such as the one pictured below in Fern Canyon. We have been lucky to witness much of the precious wildlife that rely on these springs, from birds to bighorn, and our local tiny spring snails! While out, we also monitor surrounding Wilderness and identify good spots for future spring restoration projects for our volunteers who are now able to get back out into the field!

These dedicated volunteers have been waiting for a chance to safely get back out to do springs monitoring and restoration. In January, we kicked off the 2021 volunteer program with a virtual training session. More than 100 people tuned in, including 50 new volunteers! Trained volunteers can now head out to survey springs independently whenever they want, collecting valuable data while staying safe and contact free. Volunteers have already been out to many springs, donating dozens of hours of time! In the coming months, we’re looking forward to holding in-person training to cover more advanced data collection, like measuring water quality and flow.

If you missed the training, but still want to get involved, please email snvspringstewardship@nevadawilderness.org or check our social media for opportunities.
Is History in the Making?

the thousands of people who support Wilderness designation for the Refuge breathed a huge, pent-up sigh of relief on March 3 when Senator Catherine Cortez Masto and Congresswoman Dina Titus, supported by the entire Nevada delegation, introduced legislation that will do just that – designate more than 1.3 million acres of the Refuge as Wilderness.

The Southern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act (S. 567 and H.R. 1597) is truly a milestone. Even though this incredibly special place was designated a wildlife refuge in 1936, primarily to protect desert bighorn sheep habitat, it has been under almost constant threat from the U.S. military ever since. The Refuge had barely started to show up on maps in the 1940s when the forerunner of the U.S. Air Force secured joint management with USF&WS of more than half of the refuge. The military then turned the western side into a bombing and training range, closed it to public access and over the years made it more difficult for its management “partner,” the wildlife experts, to monitor whether commitments to protect habitat were being kept.

Then, just four years ago, as regular readers of this newsletter know, the military launched a new effort to take over even more of the Refuge and close it to the public. Claiming the 2.9 million acres they already had wasn’t enough, the Air Force wanted to abandon joint management, take primary jurisdiction over the USF&WS, and take over another 300,000 acres, closing that off to the public also.

Enough! Don’t bomb the bighorn! That was the battle cry from Friends, dozens of other state and national conservation groups, thousands of citizens, the state legislature and the Governor.

And our Congressional delegation heard, loudly and clearly. It’s hard to express our gratitude to Senators Cortez Masto and Rosen and Representatives Titus, Lee,

Seven Wilderness areas that were designated in 2002 are proposed to be expanded, including the Eldorado Wilderness.

Finally, a Wilderness Proposal for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge

Will 2021 be the year that the Desert National Wildlife Refuge finally gets the permanent protection it deserves? Now, 50 years after the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS) first determined that most of the Refuge should be designated Wilderness, will Congress and the President finally agree and say “yes, it does?”
Horsford and Amodei for all supporting this historic bill, *the single largest conservation bill in the state’s history.*

In addition to the 1.3 million acres of Wilderness in the Refuge, the bill designates another 340,000 acres of Wilderness in several areas, including *Mount Stirling,* in the *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* next to the *Gold Butte National Monument,* and an expansion of the *Eldorado Wilderness.* The bill would also expand the hugely popular *Red Rock Canyon National Recreation Area* by about 50,000 acres and set aside another 350,000 acres for Desert Tortoise and other species protection. No wonder so many people are so excited about this legislation!

But as the saying goes, it’s not over till it’s over. Nevada’s delegation makes up a small percentage of the total number of votes we need to make this proposal a reality. Will this be the year that **TWO MILLION** acres of public land in Nevada receive permanent conservation protection? It’s up to all of us to continue to speak up and speak out so together, after 50 years, we can finally make history in 2021!

To read more about the history of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, go to [nevadawilderness.org/campaigns](http://nevadawilderness.org/campaigns)

To help thank our Congressional delegation for introducing this bill, go to [nevadawilderness.org/contact_your_decision_maker](http://nevadawilderness.org/contact_your_decision_maker)

Also included in the bill are eight new Wilderness areas including the New York Mountains adjacent to the Mojave Preserve and Mt. Stirling which sits at the very north end of the Spring Mountains.

Hells Kitchen Wilderness is one of six new Wilderness areas in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. These new Wilderness areas hug the Gold Butte National Monument and border on Lake Mead itself.

The popular Red Rock Recreation Area is expanded by over 50,000 acres. With even more opportunities for visitors to explore.

Also included in the bill are nine new Special Management Areas that were proposed by Clark County to provide wildlife habitat protection to help mitigate urban growth. Buffington Pockets is one of those areas in the Muddy Mountains.
Crews News

Our crew members and everyone at Friends were overwhelmed with the outpouring of generosity during Giving Tuesday 2020. Donors gave over $19,000 dollars to support our trails program! We are so fortunate to have supporters with BIG WILD Nevada hearts who believe in us and share our commitment to Wilderness. Thanks to them, we will have some of the best and most safely outfitted crews in the country in 2021 and beyond.

After a limited 2020 pandemic season, the Central/Eastern Nevada Trail program is looking forward to a four-month season with two full paid crews. Friends is fortunate this year to have our experienced crew leaders, Tara and Meg, return along with some new folks from around the country.

With additional funding from the Great American Outdoors Act and the Recreational Trails Program, our crews will be maintaining trails this year in some of Nevada’s iconic Wilderness Areas. We’ll work on the classic North and South Twin Loop in Arc Dome where the trail crosses the creek up and through beautiful canyons. The Alta Toquima project will take us into some stunning bighorn habitat and the summit plateau of Mt Jefferson with 100 mile views of the surrounding area.

Near the end of the season we will do multiple hitches in Jarbidge, Nevada’s very first Wilderness. We will also team up with longtime partners, the Back Country Horsemen and Back Country Hunters & Anglers on a few trails this season.

New this year - we’re excited to open up trail work to volunteers! Our schedule is posted at nevadawilderness.org and we encourage experienced volunteers to join us on the trail for a few days or the entire hitch. Please contact Kurt Kuznicki at (775) 324-7667, ext. 207. Of course, we will be following federal and state Covid protocols for everyone’s safety.

Please come out and see some new places, camp under Nevada’s dark skies, have fun with like-minded people and help make a difference for Nevada’s Wilderness Trails. We hope to see you there.

Sheldon Crew

This year we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge, and we plan to honor the occasion by continuing our restoration efforts in 2021. The refuge is located in the remote and rugged northeast portion of Washoe County and northwest portion of Humboldt County. Spanning 572,896 acres managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sheldon is a prime example of the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem that supports healthy herds of pronghorn and over 270 species of wildlife.

Despite all the challenges that 2020 brought us, our crew was able to safely complete meaningful work on the Sheldon including the removal of over 4 miles of internal fencing and 3.5 tons of metal garbage. And this year, we are proud to announce that we have been awarded another grant from the Greater Hart Sheldon Conservation Fund to help us in our restoration efforts.

We are currently in the process of setting up this year’s Sheldon Crew. Our crews consist of both seasonal employees and AmeriCorps service members that live on the refuge in the historic “Little Sheldon Headquarters”. This year’s crew will focus on fence and fencing materials removal and building protective enclosures to protect wet meadows and springs. The work is hard and the environment is extreme but the experience that crew members gain creates memories that last a lifetime.

To learn more about our 11 years working on the refuge, go to nevadawilderness.org/explore to view our Sheldon Story Map. There you’ll see the history of our work through informative text and incredible photographs as well as a series of maps showing the results of the work in past seasons.

If you are interested in being a part of Friends’ legacy of work on the refuge please send a cover letter and resume to employment@nevadawilderness.org with “Sheldon Crew” in the subject line.
Conservation on Agenda in Carson City

Dark Skies Star in SB52
Senate Bill 52 (SB52), championed by the office of the Lieutenant Governor and Outdoor Recreation, calls attention to Nevada’s stellar dark skies and offers new incentives to preserve them.

The bill requires the Office of Outdoor Rec to create a new voluntary program that defines how various places like parks, byways, and other sites can receive an official Dark Sky state designation. So far, the bill has received unanimous bipartisan support in the legislature and is well on its way to final approval.

It’s critically important for many reasons to preserve our dark skies. Less light saves energy. Natural dark/light cycles maintain healthy circadian rhythms that all plants, animals and humans need to thrive. Saving dark skies conserves public lands for wildlife habitat and recreation rather than more intensive uses. And astrotourism is a growing attraction for visitors to rural Nevada. By diversifying their economies, rural communities can grow less dependent on extractive industries.

Nevada can play big role in 30X30
A global campaign to conserve 30% of the world’s land and water by 2030 has been embraced by many around the world, including the new Biden Administration. Environmental scientists have sounded an existential alarm – climate change, toxic pollution and species extinction must be addressed and reversed to maintain a habitable planet.

Assembly Joint Resolution 3 (AJR3) by Assemblywoman Cecilia Gonzales expresses the Nevada Legislature’s support for the international 30X30 initiative and urges the federal government to work with state and local agencies as well as all stakeholders to achieve the goal in Nevada. The resolution explicitly recognizes the need to honor the legacy of stewardship by Native Americans and the need to include all voices as the state moves forward. AJR3 has generated lively discussion. See below how you can help make sure it gets passed.

Pictured Right:
Buffington Pockets - Clark County

Conservation on agenda in Carson City

continued from page 5
We look forward to welcoming volunteers back to our stewardship projects and, in the meantime and always, invite everyone to practice small acts of stewardship.

The increased public interest in public lands and outdoor recreation has been a silver lining, and one that is hopefully here to stay. It’s been a great opportunity to reflect upon and appreciate all that volunteers give back to our community, to the lands we love, and to the experiences we share on those lands. We are grateful for them and are excited to welcome them back into the field in 2021. You just can’t stop Wild Nevada.

Let’s make every day acts of stewardship a new normal. Enjoy your hike, and don’t forget to bring a trash bag, please!

Please visit leg.state.nv.us/App/Opinions/81st2021 to share your support for these important bills:

**SB52** - Creates a voluntary program for prioritizing and protecting Nevada’s Dark Skies
**AB211** - Requires local jurisdictions to consider wildlife habitat impacts of certain new development
**AJR3** - Resolves that the legislature supports the global 30x30 initiative to protect 30% of global land and water by 2030
**AB88** - Requires a review and recommendation of changes needed to racist geographic place names
**AB378** - Gets rid of sagebrush rebellion language in the Nevada state law

Camping under the stars in Nye County. Stargazing is becoming more popular with outdoor recreationists, boosting rural economies.
Time to Look Inside

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access at Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Last year, in the midst of a pandemic and as Black Lives Matter protests emerged nationwide, we realized something: Wilderness does not exist in a vacuum, and by failing to acknowledge the diverse human components and histories of what we now call Wilderness, we are behind. After some clunky conversations and a few a-ha moments, we formed a team to focus our organization on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) in Wilderness spaces. The IDEA team now leads training and dialogue sessions to educate our staff on equity issues in the outdoors, as well as bring about actions to help us become more inclusive not just as a staff, but as an entire organization, including our board, members, supporters, and volunteers.

Access to nature is a right and everyone should feel at home when visiting wild public lands. We realize that this has not always been the case for many people in our community, and the future of conservation relies on that changing. Everyone should have the opportunity to feel safe, comfortable, and welcome in all of the different ways that we recreate on public lands throughout the state. It is our goal to work consistently and diligently toward public lands access and equity for all, and not make empty promises. We encourage you to read our full IDEA statement at www.nevadawilderness.org/IDEA, provide feedback, and help hold us accountable.

Consequence of History

By Kirk Peterson

2021 offers great potential for the conservation movement, but it also demands a long-overdue, deep introspection into the roots of our advocacy—personally and as an organization. Every last Wilderness we enjoy and love was once home to indigenous peoples who loved and lived in these places for countless generations before our ancestors arrived. Most of these indigenous peoples were forcibly and violently removed from these places long before the inception of Euro-American conservation. Our modern Wilderness ideology is based on the false premise that the wild landscape of North America evolved as a place devoid of human interactions. That notion is grounded in the deliberate amnesia of the genocide and atrocities at our colonial roots. Most Wilderness advocates today are where we are by virtue of our inherent social, economic, and/or racial privilege. This, in fact, has been the historical criticism of Wilderness and Wilderness advocates since the mid 20th century. Ironically, some of those critics, including individuals and corporations that profit monetarily from use of public lands, are themselves beneficiaries of even greater privilege and in many cases are continuing the exploitive policies against the land and peoples of lesser privilege.

The urgency of Wilderness advocacy has never been more important than now. As our world faces increasing threats from climate change, toxic pollution and species extinction, greater society is awakening to the concepts that we conservationists have been living with for generations: that ecosystems, sustainability, and the knowledge that our earth is assembled from finite and perishable resources are all critically important. To be effective in the coming decades, however, our advocacy must also be relevant to the other overwhelming issue of the 21 century—social and environmental justice. This challenge requires confronting uncomfortable truths. To be effective, we must understand where we have come from as individuals, an organization, and as an advocacy community before we can enfold the diversity, justice, and equity we will need to remain relevant in the coming decades.

At Friends we have a work in progress to expand the narrative of our Wilderness areas on our website to better address the Indigenous history of these Wilderness lands that are a part of the landscape today. Please keep checking out the Explore pages on our website.
JOIN THE WILD NEVADA LEGACY CIRCLE

Friends is so grateful for our generous board members and other supporters who make up the Charter membership of our Wild Nevada Legacy Circle. These forward-thinking individuals have made the important decision to leave a legacy gift to us, demonstrating their commitment to protect and restore Nevada’s wild lands in perpetuity.

“I cannot think of a more meaningful legacy to leave for future generations than protection of the spectacular array of Nevada’s beautiful wild areas.”

—Tim Buchanan, Henderson

For more information: www.nevadawilderness.org/make_a_bequest or call Ralph Phillips, director of development, 775-324-7667 ext. 212 or email at ralph@nevadawilderness.org

Proceeds benefit wild places across Nevada!

Order today at NevadaWilderness.org/shop for these and additional merchandise
Or send this form with your check to Friends of Nevada Wilderness, PO Box 9754, Reno, NV 89507

FREE CALENDAR WILL BE SENT WITH GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Gift Membership x $25 = 
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Massacre Rim Poster x $20 = 
Wild NV Book (2nd Ed.) x $16.95 = 
Spring Mtns Map x $12 = 
Toiyabe Crest Map x $12 = 
Ruby Crest Map x $12 = 
DNWR North Map x $12 = 
DNWR South Map x $12 = 
Note Cards (set of 4) x $12 = 
2021 Calendar x $6 = 
Patch x $5 = 

Short Sleeve t-shirt 100% cotton Marine Blue OR Eggplant S M L XL XXL x $21 = 
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Wild NV Woman Short-Sleeve t-shirt Tie-Dye (runs small) S M L XL XXL x $25 = 
Featherweight FNW Logo Hoodie Washed Indigo S M L XL XXL x $30 = 
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Donations (not purchases) are tax-deductible. Proceeds benefit wild places across Nevada!
Friends of Nevada Wilderness is dedicated to preserving all qualified Nevada public lands as Wilderness, protecting all present and potential Wilderness from ongoing threats, educating the public about the values of — and need for — Wilderness, and improving the management and restoration of wild lands.

Northern Nevada Events

May 1st - Great Community Clean-up (Mt. Rose Wilderness)

May 8th, 12th, 19th, June 9th - Calling all Wilderness Weed Warriors - help us remove invasive musk thistle in the Mt. Rose Wilderness!

June 11th - Bull Thistle Extravaganza (Santa Rosa - Paradise Peak Wilderness) - Hike the beautiful Falls Canyon Trail while removing the invasive bull thistle weed.

June 18th & July 23rd - Volunteer Trail - Join our trail crew in Arc Dome Wilderness and help clear trails to improve the recreation quality!

June 25th - Seeds of Success Native Seed Collection (Location TBD)

July 9th - Fence Removal for Habitat Improvement (Santa Rosa Wilderness) - Hike through aspen groves and stunning vistas to remove a defunct barbed wire fence that poses a threat to wildlife.

July 16th - Seeds of Success Native Seed Collection (Location TBD) - Help us collect seed for a nation-wide effort to improve the effectiveness of our landscape scale restoration efforts!

Statewide Events

The Wild Speaker Series will go online during the COVID-19 Pandemic for the safety of our staff and supporters. Join us on First Thursdays via Zoom or Facebook live at 6:45pm for an online presentation. Each month we will invite a new speaker to cover topics related to Nevada’s wildlife, public lands, and local advocacy efforts. The Speaker Series is an interactive experience for the whole family!

Follow Us!
@FRIENDSOFNWILD

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Cover Photo by Kirk Peterson
Hole-In-The-Rock, Desert National Wildlife Refuge