



## San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

Incorporated as California Audubon Society 1913

P.O. Box 7769 Van Nuys, CA 91409-7769

*"For nature education and the conservation of wildlife"*

September 24, 2010

Dear Senator Boxer:

The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society urges you to support the California Desert Protection Act of 2010 (CDPA). The CDPA of 2010 is landmark legislation that would protect wildlife habitat, preserve open space, and enhance recreational opportunities while supporting responsible renewable energy development and the ability of the military to protect the United States of America.

The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society is a non-profit chapter of the National Audubon Society whose mission is to protect birds and other wildlife in the San Fernando Valley, southern California and throughout the United States. We provide environmental education opportunities, seminars, presentations and field trips for our members and the diverse community of the San Fernando Valley. We also advocate for the protection of birds, other wildlife and their habitat through regulatory, legislative and legal means.

One critical area that would attain national monument status with the passage of this act, ensuring permanent protection, is the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Big Morongo Canyon Preserve is nestled in the Little San Bernardino Mountains East of Highway 62. The riparian area within Big Morongo Canyon is one of the 10 largest cottonwood and willow riparian (stream) habitats in all of California, has been designated an Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy, and is home to 247 avian species. Additionally, the year round stream is a critical source of water for bighorn sheep that live in nearby Joshua Tree National Park.

Our organization makes annual field trips to the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, and many of our 2000+ members make their own trips, to see this spectacular example of a desert oasis. However, the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve is only one of the areas protected by the CDPA of 2010. It would also protect wildlife habitat in the following ways:

- Adds 29,000 acres to the Mojave National Preserve, almost 40,000 acres to Death Valley National Park, and almost 3000 acres to Joshua Tree National Park. The proposed addition to the Mojave National Preserve, the Castle Mountains, is a rare high desert grassland ecosystem which has been identified as a possible place to reintroduce pronghorn antelope.

- Creates two new national monuments- the 133,000 acre Sand to Snow National Monument and the 941,000 acre Mojave Trails National Monument. Both monuments serve to protect critical wildlife corridors- between the San Bernardino Mountains and Joshua Tree National Park or Joshua Tree National Park and the Mojave National Preserve. These corridors will become increasingly important as climate change alters our California desert and animals are forced to move elsewhere to find suitable habitat.
- Designates three new areas for wilderness, including over 173,000 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System, and enlarges four existing areas by a total of 172,000 acres. Wilderness designation is an excellent way to preserve wildlife habitat because it is the highest form of public land protection in the country.
- Adds over 70 miles to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System along the Amargosa River, Deep Creek, Surprise Canyon and Whitewater River. River corridors are key migration routes and genetic highways for numerous plants and animals. Preserving them in their pristine state ensures that future generations can continue to enjoy our desert rivers as well as the diverse species that rely upon them.
- Preserves critical habitat for federally listed wide-ranging species. The CDPA 2010 protects hundreds of thousands of acres of critical desert tortoise habitat and connects existing habitat to those proposed additions. Importantly, the bill protects desert bighorn sheep migration corridors and critical flyways for migratory birds and waterfowl.

We also believe that habitat protection not only protects wildlife, but generates tourism revenue throughout the California Desert. In fact, in 2003 visitors participating in outdoor activities in the Mojave Desert contributed \$230 million to the local, regional and national economy. The creation of additional national monuments, wilderness areas and wild and scenic river segments will increase tourism revenue, sustain local businesses and protect our national heritage for future generations.

Please support the California Desert Protection Act of 2010.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kris Ohlenkamp  
Conservation Chair SFVAS