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A Natural History of the Anza-Borrego Region: Then and Now

Mike Wells and Marie Simovich

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This book evolved from a course on the natural history of the Anza-Borrego region that was developed by the authors over a 16-year period and taught at the University of San Diego. It tells a coherent story of how the landscape and features of a desert region evolved over time and how organisms that inhabit the desert have adapted to the conditions found there by taking many different evolutionary paths to deal with aridity, heat, and saline soils. The result is an amazing biological diversity that has evolved in response to these conditions.

This book is encyclopedic in detail and is yet very readable. Each illustration was handcrafted to tell a story and to help the reader better understand the fascinating story of this unique desert place and its first human inhabitants. This is the “go-to” book for anyone wanting to understand the natural environment of the Anza-Borrego region.

This is a beautifully written and marvelously comprehensive resource for anyone interested in Anza-Borrego. From the physical conditions that create desert environments through the history of human activities, the richness of biodiversity and conservation threats, this is vital reading about a remarkable area.

Judy Gradwohl, President and CEO, San Diego Natural History Museum

MIKE WELLS completed a 34-year career with California State Parks in 2010. His first permanent assignment in 1977 was Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, where he served as a state park ranger. Over the next three decades he enjoyed assignments all over California, serving as a ranger, resource ecologist, and park superintendent. His final assignment was district superintendent of the Colorado Desert District, which includes ABDSP. Mike has a PhD in physical geography from a joint program with San Diego State University and the University of California, Santa Barbara.

MARIE SIMOVICH received her BS and MS in biology from Cal Poly Pomona and her PhD in biology from the University of California, Riverside, studying a spadefoot toad hybrid zone in the Sonoran Desert. She taught Population Biology, Conservation Biology, and Desert Biology at the University of San Diego for 31 years. Overlapping this time, she has worked extensively on the population biology of ephemeral pool crustaceans including those found in desert playas. She remains a research associate at the University of San Diego and at San Diego State University.

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