



Volume 61
Issue 3

TELESCOPE

The Official Newsletter of the Death Valley Natural History Association

Fall 2016



Sustaining the Legacies: Mining and Death Valley

By Nathan Francis, Board Chair DVNHA

Death Valley entered my radar about five years ago when I moved to the region to work as land manager for Rio Tinto Minerals (U.S. Borax). Until then, I admit it had not been on my bucket list of places to visit. But as my knowledge about the area grew, so did my passion for everything it offers — including its rich history and culture.

People outside of the mining industry are often surprised at how intertwined the company's history is with that of America's national parks, and particularly Death Valley. In fact, they are very closely aligned.

It was in Death Valley that the Pacific Coast Borax Company got its start in the late 1800s. The company eventually became U.S. Borax before being acquired by Rio Tinto in 1967. Stephen T. Mather, a former marketing executive from Pacific Coast Borax, inspired the creation of the National Park Service in 1916 and served as its first director.

The connections don't stop there. Executives from Pacific Coast Borax helped Death Valley become a national monument in 1933, and U.S. Borax executives successfully lobbied to give it national park status in 1994.

Since then, Rio Tinto has continued to play an active role as a steward of the land, promoting and preserving Death Valley and its mining heritage through donations and sponsorships. The company also hosts students from The University of Utah

College of Mines and Earth Sciences to show them first-hand the region's legacy of mining. It is my job at Rio Tinto, specifically, to ensure the company's mining legacy sites in the area are safe and sustainable. As this year's board chair of the Death Valley Natural History Association, I am honored and privileged to broaden that role and my support of this national treasure.

Certainly, my interest in the Death Valley area goes beyond my professional role. My wife and I often explore the region with our four sons. Some of our favorite spots include Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, the mesquite flat dunes, Golden Canyon, and the salt flats at Badwater. Our kids are gaining an appreciation for the park, and we hope they maintain that throughout their lives.

There are steps we can take today to ensure our children, and their children, continue to enjoy Death Valley. Scotty's Castle is being restored following the October 2015 floods, and work is ongoing to protect the Devils Hole pupfish, but we have to think long-term. I aim to strategically place the association in a position to support Death Valley National Park in the decades to come, and to achieve sustainable revenue sources for those operations.

Death Valley has become a part of who I am. And I am thrilled to be a part of ensuring its bright and sustainable future. Thank you for also being a part of this endeavor.



Spectacular views from Zabriskie Point, 20 Mule Team Canyon, and Harmony Borax Works. Photo Credit: Bry Cox

Meet DVNHA's Newest Staff Member

DVNHA's new Death Valley Field Institute Director, Renee Rusler, has 20 years of experience with the National Park Service (NPS). She holds BS and MS degrees in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Renee most recently comes from Whitman Mission National Historic Site outside of Walla Walla, Washington, where she managed frontline operations for 13 years. During this time she conducted interpretive training for staff and coached presentations at the site. She was responsible for creating and organizing special event weekends each summer, as well as the Park's 75th Anniversary programming. In addition, she served as a Certifier for the NPS Interpretive Development Program: training park rangers nationwide.

Renee also served seasons in Joshua Tree National Park, Badlands National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, and spent over four years in Death Valley National Park as an Interpretive Ranger at Scotty's Castle. In a way, you can say Renee has returned home to share the unique ecology, landscape, and night sky of Death Valley with others!

Along with other programs, Renee will be administering her first season of "Hiking Death

Valley": a five-day, educational hiking program through our Road Scholar partnership. At a glance—

participating in any of the Road Scholar Programs with DVNHA, provides a guided hiking experience while staying in Death Valley at Furnace Creek Resort. This is an opportunity to journey through Death Valley National Park with experts as you travel through dramatically beautiful landscapes. Explore a variety of terrain while hiking through carved scenic canyons, crystallized salt pans, ancient lake deposits, alluvial fans, mesquite flats, and mud playas.

Hike Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes and visit Badwater, the lowest

place in North America (282 feet below sea level). In Salt Creek, hike the trail of pioneers who searched for a safe route to the gold country of California, and learn about the endangered fish in Death Valley. Explore the terrain of desert alluvial fans and learn the boom-to-bust story of the ghost town of Rhyolite. This is also a unique and up-close way to understand how geology tells its incredible story of change in one of the most amazing national parks in the United States!

This season's dates run November 2016–March 2017. If you are interested in joining us, please visit: roadscholar.org. Search for program #6120 for itinerary, date availability, and to register.

We hope to see you soon!



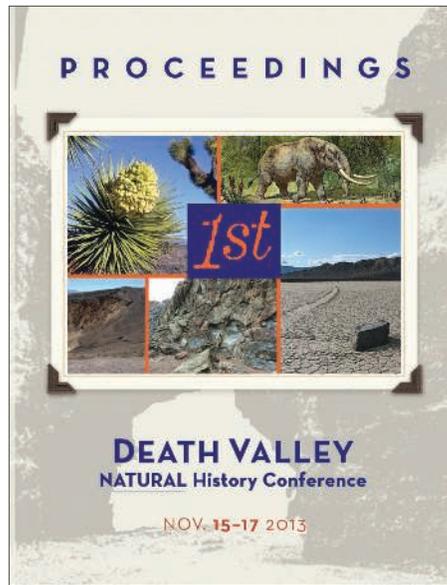
Anne Ennes of NPS Harpers Ferry Center Textile Laboratory and Gretchen Voeks, Scotty's Castle Museum Curator pack the curtains of the Scotty's Castle Upper Music Room prior to being sent to NPS Harpers Ferry Center Conservation Facilities. They will be worked on by a specially trained textile conservator. The process includes thoroughly cleaning, stabilizing tears, and replacing the protective lining not original to the curtains, but necessary to protect them. The curtains require a substantial amount of work after decades of sunlight exposure, heavy use, and exposure to water leaks. The Park will also install a Plexiglas liner for the windowed wooden doors these curtains hang from. This will assist in minimizing future heat and UV damage when the curtains return to Scotty's Castle. The curtains are no longer drawn each day which assists with lessening damage from use. Photo Credit: NPS.

Proceedings are in!

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

By David Blacker, Executive Director



September 30th was the end of our fiscal year and as I write this, we're preparing next year's budget and working with our partners to identify their needs and how we can help. Once again, we will be able to help support the Death Valley R.O.C.K.S. education program and managing a number of grants, but I know you are all sitting on the edge of your seats concerning the work at Scotty's Castle. I'm pleased to announce that we are 15% of the way to our goal for the Centennial Challenge! Stay tuned to our e-newsletter and Facebook page for updates on Scotty's as the weather cools and work begins in earnest.

Fiscal 2016 year has been the biggest in the history of DVNHA. On September 21st we passed \$1.2 million in store sales and have provided over \$280,000 in aid to Death Valley National Park (including this awesome

Centennial Cake—just part of the support DVNHA provided for the NPS Centennial). We were also able to provide more than \$20,000 in support of Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge this year!

Renee Rusler will be leading our new season of Death Valley Field Institute programs starting with our sold out Geology Weekend, and moving into our new Road Scholar season. Keep an eye out for the release of our next Copper Canyon Hike dates and other programs still to come.

You may also want to start planning your next trip to Death Valley or Ash Meadows now, so you can beat the rush. If you're looking for a great time to visit, I recommend the first two weeks of December with fantastic weather and no crowd. Some really cool new products are also on the way for the fall season so get your credit cards ready!

Since the flooding last October, I know we have hit you all pretty hard for Scotty's Castle donations and I just wanted to take this chance to thank all of you who have shown your love for this amazing place by sending in what you can. We have raised over \$58,000 this year and have been able to do some great work at Scotty's. We couldn't have done it without you. So, thanks again and let's hope that fiscal year 2017 is even better!

David



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Fiscal Year 2016 just closed!
Thanks to our supporters, we had the best year, ever!



**They dart
 through the water
 like playful puppies.**

The Devils Hole pupfish—one of seven types of pupfish living in the streams and springs of the Death Valley area—can only be found in one narrow chasm, feeding and breeding on a single 170 square foot submerged shelf.

They are one of the rarest fish on Earth and we almost lost them! Brought back from the brink of extinction, the Devils Hole pupfish won a Supreme Court case, helping inspire a law that now protects other threatened species. Having survived perhaps 10,000 years of isolation, their future need not be uncertain.



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