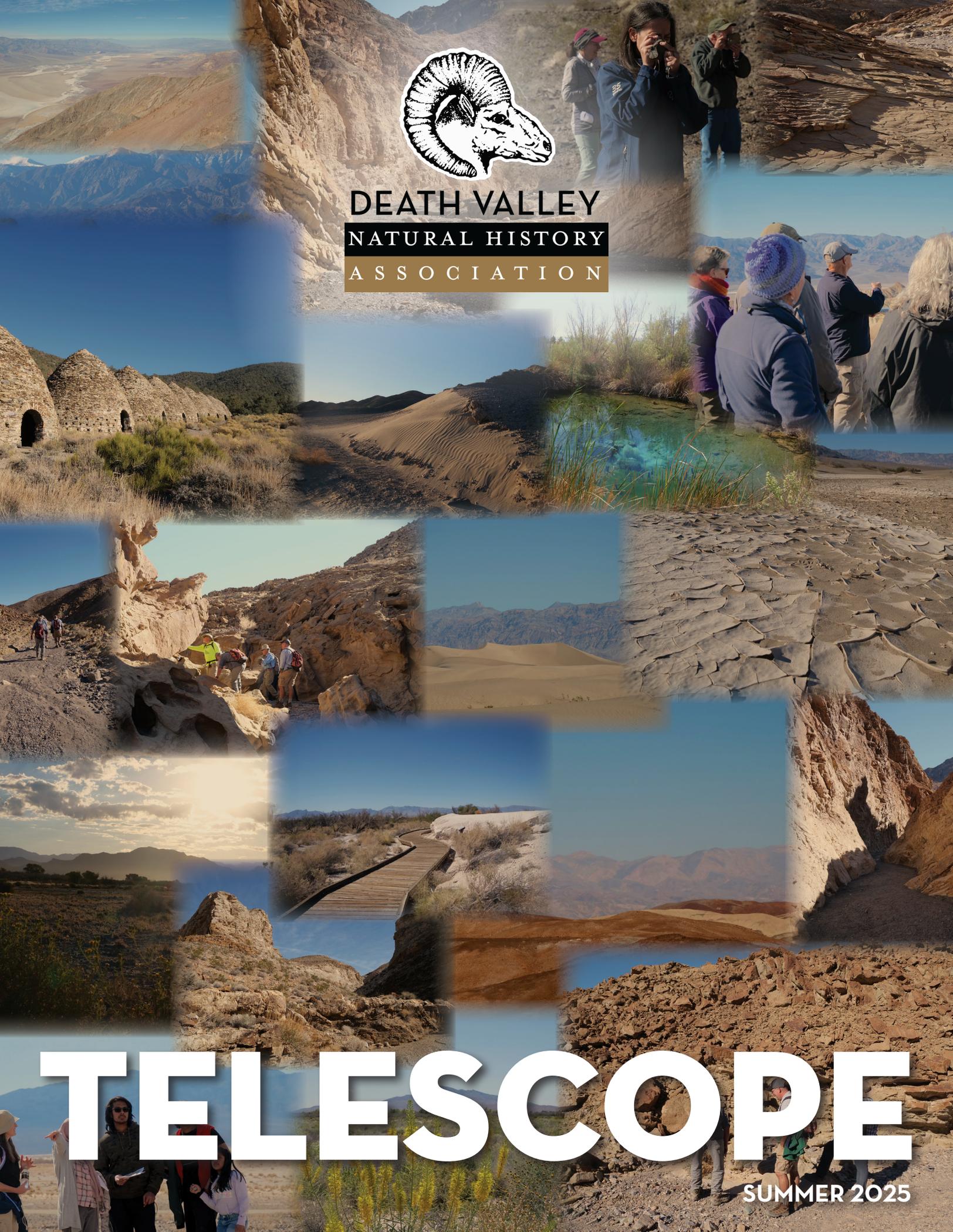




DEATH VALLEY
NATURAL HISTORY
ASSOCIATION



TELESCOPE

SUMMER 2025

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Written By: David Blacker, DVNHA Executive Director

Temperatures are getting hotter each day, it won't be long before summer is with us. This past winter has been better than most. We had almost no rain, that double-edged sword that brings both wildflowers and lakes while washing away highways and closing large parts of the park. While we had this respite from flash flood destruction, the State of California has been making final repairs and "armoring" Highway 190 so that we won't wash away the next time it does rain. The park is now almost fully recovered from two years of rain events that had impacted the entire park.

Wildrose Road is now open, and you can again get to the Charcoal Kilns and Telescope Peak. Only the lower portion of Wildrose Road leading into Panamint Valley is still closed. Of course, while all of this has been going on, we have been busy as well.

Our partners out at Ash Meadows NWR have been busy with a number of recovery projects. One of the main projects has been the restoration of the area around Crystal Reservoir. With the drainage from Crystal Spring being returned to its natural course, the water feeding the reservoir has been cut off and is slowly returning to its natural state. The reservoir was never a natural feature of the area; it was created to help with irrigating fields of alfalfa.

With the help of members like you, we have been able to assist our partners with \$112,029.00 in direct aid and \$259,101.00 in indirect aid. We have supported the Dark Sky Festival, paid for buses for education programs in the park, helped with Devils Hole pupfish recovery work, and helped support operations at Ash Meadows NWR that kept the visitor center open. And the year is not done. We still have a history project and a summer intern to fund. And work has begun on the new Salt Creek Boardwalk. The National Park Service



View from Wildrose. Photo By: Kendra DeSomma

has completed the design of the new interpretive panels. DVNHA has raised \$20,000, and we partnered with our friends at The Fund for People in Parks for another \$30,000. And we will soon have incredible new waysides for you to read when you come to visit this fall.

Speaking of fall, you should start making plans now! Be sure to check out dvnha.org for updates and trip planning, and take a look at the Death Valley Institute page for upcoming programs. Be sure to check and make sure our emails aren't going to your junk mail so you can get advanced notice of special programming. This might include a special night sky program during the Geminid Meteor Shower!

We have a lot of people already calling about Scotty's Castle Tours. At this time, we don't know when or if we will be able to give tours at Scotty's. We will meet with our NPS partners in August to discuss Scotty's and what will and will not be possible with ongoing construction.

Until next time, stay cool and hydrated, and we will see you soon!

ASH MEADOWS

Celebrating a One-of-a-Kind Oasis

Written By: Shannon Hurn, Refuge Manager Ash Meadows NWR

Last year Ash Meadows celebrated with a 40th Anniversary party hosted at the Visitor Center. This year the June 18th celebration more quietly reflected on what it takes to protect a species stronghold in the Mojave Desert.

For eons this valley evolved and changed slowly but dramatically into a desert. Desertification resulted in isolating species, that then adapted to the specific conditions found at Ash Meadows. More recent decades quickly reshaped the landscape with increased human migration and the use of Ash Meadows for homesteading, farming, ranching and mining. In 1984 when Ash Meadows was newly established as a Refuge by a land grant to USFWS from The Nature Conservancy, the 23,000 acres needed major restoration efforts to reclaim this space as a haven for the rich diversity of species still persisting here.

Over the last 41 years approximately 50% of the Refuge has undergone restoration efforts. These efforts have resulted in the reestablishment of a variety of habitats, from wetlands and alkaline meadows to desert uplands. Warm Springs, Tubbs, Fairbanks, Jackrabbit, and several other spring systems again support rare and endemic species, including the iconic Spring-loving centaury and two species of pupfish closely related to those in Devils Hole, the Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish and the Warm Spring pupfish.

Visitors to Ash Meadows are drawn by its serene beauty and the opportunity to connect with the natural world and champion the continued existence of Ash Meadows' rare plants and animals. Their support is critical, as is the on-going, lasting efforts of our neighbors and community. Nuwu and Nuwvi still watch over their ancestral lands and share with us their vision of Ash

Meadows' future. The Nature Conservancy, Death Valley Natural History Association, Amargosa Conservancy, Friends of Amargosa Basin, Outdoor Nevada, residents of Nye County, and many, many others make Ash Meadows a priority for their outreach efforts and rally to protect this important place.

As the Refuge celebrates 41 years of conservation and education, it serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of protecting our species and unique landscapes. Ash Meadows' continued success stands as a testament to the dedication of the USFWS, Tribal communities, partner groups and devotees of the Mojave Desert working together to ensure that this rare place remains preserved for future generations.



Spring-loving centaury blooms. Photo By: Rod Colvin

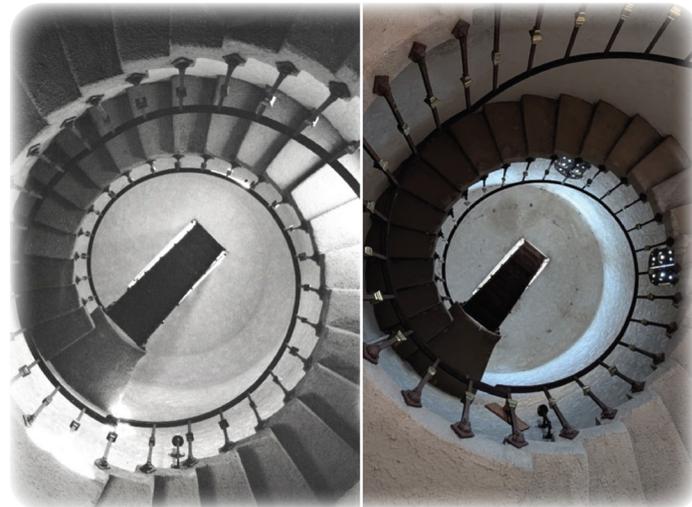
DEATH VALLEY

All That Glitters is Not Gold

Written By: Philip DeHudy, Lead Museum Technician DVNP

Scotty's Castle is replete with ornamental flourishes made of carved wood, ceramics, stonework, and plaster; however, it is the metalwork in iron and copper alloys that truly catches the eye. The cast iron railing on the spiral staircase in the Flag Tower in the Annex displays seventy cast brass baluster knuckles using four different patterns. They were likely produced in Los Angeles under the supervision of the designer Charles Alexander MacNielledge and the architect Martin de Dubovay and installed in 1929.

In the ninety-five years since then, corrosion grew on the brass, as the Flag Tower does not seal out monsoon rain, abrasive windblown desert dust, or the immense summer heat. While oxidation presents as a blue-green patina, brass corrosion appears as areas of reddish-pink metal as the zinc part of the metal alloy is removed, leaving brittle copper behind. Without intervention the corrosion spreads, leaving the surface pitted and irregular, allowing for even greater penetration of moisture and dust into the metal. Complicating matters, prior cleanings left behind polishing agents in the incised decorative patterns which hardened into dense chunks tightly adhered to the surface.



Left: Looking up in the Flag Tower 1929, DEVA 15593 by Arthur "Tommy" Earl Atkins
Right: Similar angle 2024. Photo By: Philip DeHudy

Conservator Gretchen Voeks assessed their condition and developed a treatment plan, which has been carried out by NPS and Great Basin Institute staff that includes removing accumulated dirt and dust with mineral oil and soft cloths, followed by buffing, polishing, and gentle mechanical removal of the oxidation layers, polish residues, old wax coatings, and the corrosion underneath it all. Once the brass is shiny and pristine, a new layer of protective wax sealant is applied to protect the surface from future wear. The wax gets into all the nooks and crannies of the brass, preventing moisture and dust from interacting with the metal.

Scotty's gold remains elusive, but visitors will see plenty of shiny metal the next time they stop by for a tour at Scotty's Castle!

While we're thrilled by the continued enthusiasm, please note that Scotty's Castle tours are on hold at this time. No additional tours are planned. To receive future updates, become a member and be sure to sign up for our emails. This is the best way to stay informed.



Left: Before Treatment. Right: After Treatment. Photo By: Philip DeHudy

DEATH VALLEY

Car Conservation Returns to Scotty's Castle

Written By: Mary Simmons, Museum Technician DVNP

Recently, the historic cars and wagons at Scotty's Castle underwent their yearly conservation treatment. The eight vehicles, including Albert Johnson's 1914 Packard Touring Limousine and Scotty's 1934 Dodge Sedan, require this routine treatment to help maintain them. Over the course of a week, Conservator Audrey Harrison and Death Valley curatorial staff, which included two Museum Technicians, worked to complete the project. These vehicles assisted in the construction of the Castle, drove its visitors, and have been admired by thousands of visitors.

Treating the vehicles is careful and intensive work, made more challenging by Death Valley's scorching climate. Because of their age, the cars and wagons are not restored in the same way as the family car. Each vehicle undergoes a similar, but individualized treatment developed by the Conservator. These routine preventative treatments are necessary, as it promotes the longevity of the vehicles. Throughout the project, care is taken to avoid compromised areas and prevent harm.

The process includes removing the protective sheeting placed on the vehicles the year prior. This sheeting prevents most of the dust and debris from accumulating on the vehicles until they are conserved again a year later. After this, they are gently vacuumed and wiped down to remove remaining dust and dirt. For the metal components on the cars and wagons, they are treated with wax that helps prevent corrosion and protects the vehicle. Finally, the vehicles are wrapped in sheeting to minimize dust and debris settling on the vehicles until they are unwrapped next year. Preserving these vehicles in turn preserves the history and legacy of the Castle.



*The 1914 Packard wrapped in sheeting before being treated.
Photo By: NPS*



Removing the last of the protective sheeting from the stage wagon before beginning the cleaning process. Photo By: NPS

YOUR IMPACT

Discover the Universe in Death Valley NP

Written By: Kendra DeSomma, DVNHA Media Specialist

Death Valley National Park is celebrated for some of the darkest skies in the world.

Far from city lights, visitors find themselves immersed in a sea of stars that spark awe and curiosity. Yet many of the best stargazing spots are difficult to reach, limiting opportunities for all to witness this cosmic spectacle.

The Death Valley Natural History Association (DVNHA) is currently raising funds to create an accessible Dark Sky Viewing Area. By transforming a vacant site, we aim to provide a welcoming space where visitors of every ability can marvel at the night sky and learn why it deserves our protection.



Photo By: Patrick Taylor

An accessible viewing area ensures that everyone, including families, seniors, and visitors with mobility challenges, can journey among the stars without barriers. This planned site will feature smooth pathways, clear signage, and essential facilities, making it easier than ever to connect with the cosmos. Additionally, the viewing area will serve as an outdoor classroom, hosting educational programs and interpretive panels that illuminate the wonders of astronomy, the science behind our night skies, and the critical importance of minimizing light pollution.

Dark skies are more than a beautiful backdrop; they protect nocturnal wildlife, preserve natural ecosystems, and deepen our understanding of our place in the universe. By concentrating stargazing activities in one thoughtfully designed space, we ensure Death Valley NP's skies remain some of the darkest on Earth.

Ongoing support for the "Stars Above Sand" campaign is vital to fund the planning, design, and compliance requirements. Your generosity will help us bring this project to life—ensuring that visitors today and future generations, can look up and



Photo By: Patrick Taylor

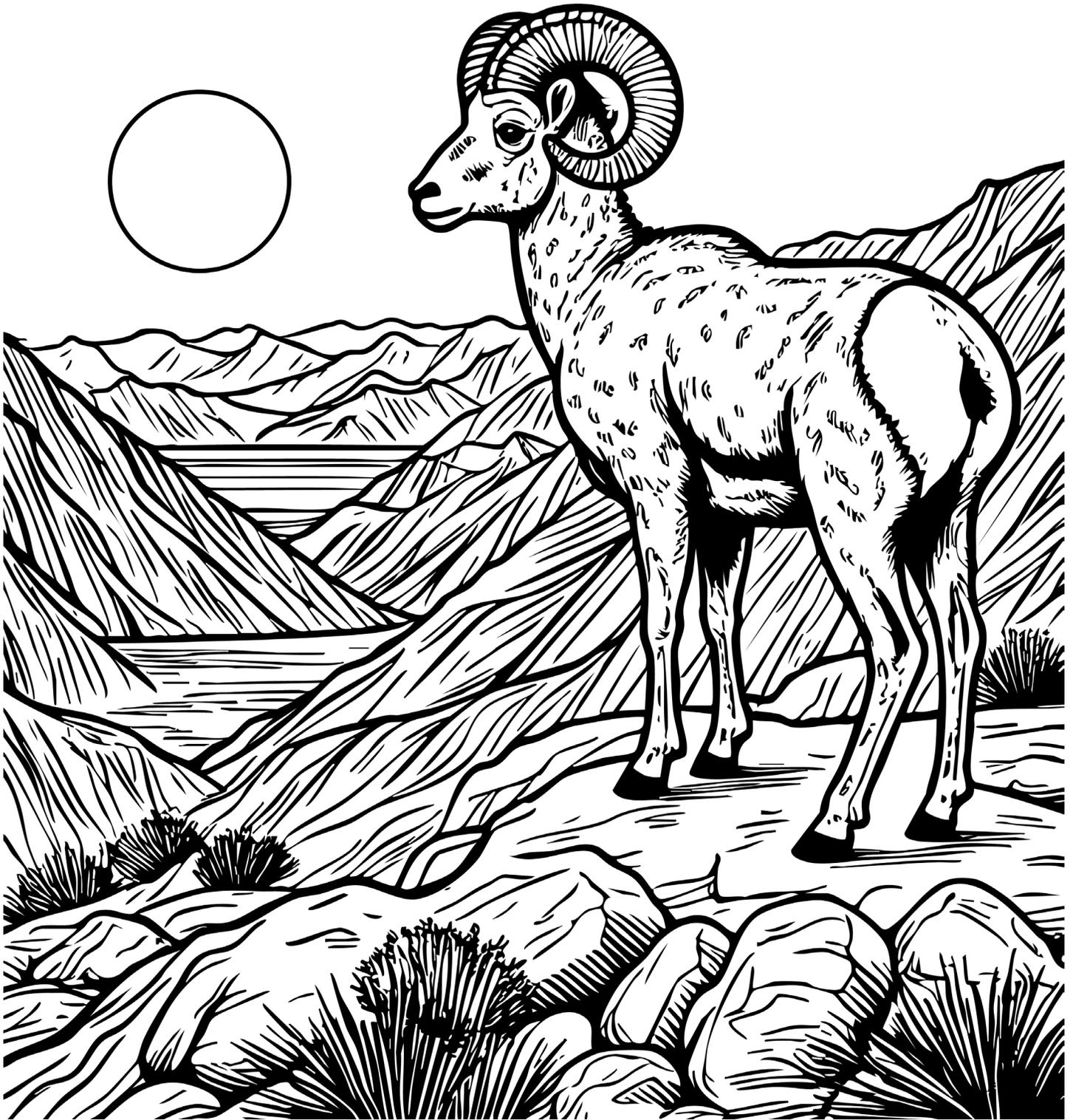
experience the boundless wonder of a truly dark night sky.

Please consider making a donation. Every contribution, no matter the size, takes us one step closer to opening up the universe for all to explore and appreciate in Death Valley National Park.

Scan the QR code below to learn more.



www.dvnha.org/stars-above-sand



Artwork By: Kendra DeSomma

Bring the Desert to Life: A Bighorn Sheep Coloring Page

Is that a sunrise, a sunset, or perhaps the moon overhead? You decide!

Grab your art supplies and bring this majestic scene to life with color.



DEATH VALLEY
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ASSOCIATION

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SUMMER 2025

Introducing The Telescope Caption Contest!



*Help us caption this comic!
Have a clever, funny, or
inspiring idea for what
these characters might be
thinking or saying?
Enter our Telescope
Caption Contest and
share your best idea!
The winning entry will be
featured in the next issue
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Submit your caption using
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