
Book Review

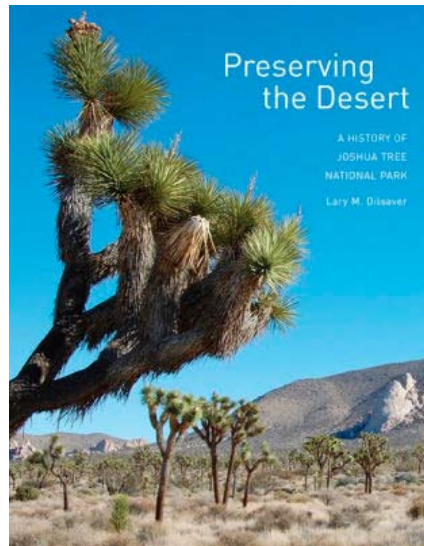
Preserving the Desert: A History of Joshua Tree National Park

By Lary Dilsaver,
(Staunton, VA: George F.
Thompson Publishing Co.; 468
pages; softcover, \$38.50)

Joshua Tree is one of California's newest national parks, but it began as a national monument in 1936. It was upgraded to national park status as a result of the California Desert Protection Act of 1994. The park is a mecca for climbers, but it was established because of its rich biological diversity, as is evidenced in its name. It also been the locus of various exploitive industries, mostly mining, but also water extraction and exportation, transportation, and land speculation.

This new book is a comprehensive examination of its history, development, boundary changes, conflicts, champions and detractors, and the men and women charged with its management and protection.

The importance of women in the environmental movement cannot be overstated. Minerva Hoyt was the motivating force behind the monument's creation, and her relentless advocacy is well documented here. The author also includes other writers and protectors of the desert, including Philip Munz and Willis Jepson.



The author addresses various (and numerous) controversies head-on. It's with the intent of making them case studies for present and future managers, who need to know the history, the issues, the resolutions (or lack thereof), and the existing pitfalls as more challenges arrive, many of which have their roots in past actions and decisions.

The beauty and delicacy of the desert(s) shine through the narrative. Joshua Tree NP contains portions of both the Mojave and Colorado Deserts, which is reflected in the park's rich biological plant and animal species list. The landforms are rugged and dramatic, and the human history is rich and compelling, as well as long. He also includes information on several state parks, including Anza-Borrego

Desert SP, Red Rock Canyon SP, Saddleback Butte SP, and Salton Sea SRA.

Dilsaver delves into current and future issues in an informed and balanced manner. He is an experienced and skilled geographer who has written several monographs on the national parks, including co-authoring a history of Sequoia-Kings Canyon NP with William Tweed, and writing a fascinating book on Cumberland Island National Seashore. The maps and photos are plentiful and excellent. And, the book's production is handsome and first rate. It's a rugged volume that will serve the reader well, both at home, in the office, and in the field.

Reviewed by Robert Pavlik



Desert roots run deep. Reviewer Bob Pavlik with his brother at Joshua Tree, 1968.