Murray Springs Clovis Site

Visit the Murray Springs Clovis Site to learn about one of the two sites in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) where evidence has been found of humans living along the San Pedro River 13,000 years ago. An interpretive trail through the site has wayside signs and offers views of Curry Draw where the excavation occurred.

History: During the Pleistocene, at the end of the last Ice Age around 13,000 years ago, a distinctive group of Native Americans lived in most of North America. They specialized in hunting large animals but also utilized smaller animals and plants. Archaeologists have named this group the Clovis Culture, because the first evidence was found near Clovis, New Mexico. The Clovis were master stone workers who made distinctive stone spear points known as Clovis Points. These points are an unmistakable sign that a prehistoric site is associated with these ancient Paleo-Indians.

Evidence of wildlife from 13,000 years ago was found along the San Pedro River in Curry Draw in 1966 by University of Arizona archaeologists Dr. C. Vance Haynes and Dr. Peter Mehringer. Excavations conducted there from 1967 to 1971 revealed 16 Clovis Points, stone debris from tool working, the bones of butchered animals, cooking hearths, and a campsite. Evidence was found that the Clovis hunted mammoths, bison (an extinct form larger than buffalo), camels, American lion, dire wolf, and many smaller animals at the site. Six Clovis sites have now been discovered within a 50-mile radius of Murray Springs, including the Lehner Ranch Site, also in the SPRNCA.

The self-guided interpretive trail at Murray Springs is approximately 3/4-mile-long, with wayside signs about the Clovis Culture, the animals found there, and the archaeological excavations that took place. The area became part of the SPRNCA in 1988. It was declared a National Historic Landmark in 2013.

Plan your visit: The interpretive trail at Murray Springs is smooth and level but you must be able to traverse earthen steps in and out of a dry wash before entering the site - know your limits. Summertime temperatures can be hot so be sure to bring adequate water and dress for the weather.

The trailhead access road and parking area is gravel surfaced. The road is narrow but passable by car. There are no picnic facilities or water at the trailhead. There is room for horse trailers.

The San Pedro Trail and Interpretive Loop: The San Pedro Trail is open to hiking, equestrian riding, and bicycling including the section along Curry Draw and historic railroad to the main trail from Highway 90 to Escapule and River about 2 miles east. The Murray Springs educational/interpretive trail starts about 100 yards east of the trailhead and it is closed to bicycle riding and horses. Many different people use the trails - respect their rights.

Camping: Camping is not allowed at the trailhead, parking area, or educational trails. Backcountry camping is allowed 1/2 mile from the trailhead and public roads. A permit is required for camping, available from self-service stations located at most trailheads. There is a $2 per person per night fee.

Dispose of Waste Properly: Pack out all your trash. Please clean up after your dog on the interpretive trail and pack out the waste. A waterless toilet is provided in the parking area.

Leave What You Find: Vegetation, archaeological, historical, and paleontological sites and artifacts are protected by federal law. It is illegal to damage, destroy or remove any artifacts or structures in the SPRNCA. Metal detecting is prohibited.

Potential hazards include thorny vegetation, steep drop-offs, unstable ground, rattlesnakes, large predators, venomous insects, extreme temperatures, and others.
San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area
Murray Springs Area

Directions: From Sierra Vista go east towards Bisbee on Highway 90 about 4 miles, north on Moson Road about 1.25 miles, and east on Murray Springs Road 0.5 mile to the trailhead parking area.

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