

WOW

It's Vegas, Naturally!

WANDER . OBSERVE . WONDER

It has been called the Big Empty yet the Sagebrush Sea, which stretches across 11 of the United States, is teeming with wildlife. This sparse but spectacular ecosystem sustains an estimated 350 species of plants and animals. — and though it once stretched across 500,000-square miles, it is shrinking due to drought, fire, grazing, and development. Increasing our appreciation of the Sagebrush Sea can support its vitality.

WANDER

Going for a hike, walk, or run in nature? Try sauntering or wandering part of the way. Stop to take a deep breath and just be.

OBSERVE

As you wander, observe your surroundings. Is there a plant, animal, or rock or something else that catches your eye? Observe how you physically and emotionally respond to nature.

WONDER

Great leaders from scientists to spiritual guides believe that the desert has much to teach us about our world and who we are deep within. Albert Einstein said, "Look into nature, and you will understand everything better." It is believed that the desert speaks. How might experiencing the desert landscape and its flora and fauna speak to you?

SPECIES: SAGEBRUSH

Sagebrush is a silvery evergreen shrub that blooms with pale yellow flowers in late summer or early fall. Known by the scientific name *Artemisia Tridentata*, it provides food and shelter for animals such as burrowing owls, pygmy rabbits, mule deer, pronghorn, mountain lions, and the iconic greater sage-grouse which can survive nowhere else. Its strong scent, however, discourages some species. In fact, when attacked by predators like insects, the shrub emits compounds that neighboring sagebrush sense and react to by producing defensive chemicals that make them unattractive or poisonous to the predator. Other plants may also pick up the message and ramp up their defenses to reduce damage by attackers.

HABITAT

Silvery sagebrush is found in arid and semi-arid deserts, plains, and mountainous regions of the American West. Can you name the 11 states where it is commonly found?

HUMANS

As you wander and observe the desert, following are questions to wonder about (contemplate):

... Consider the Sagebrush. Would you consider it to be a compassionate plant? Why?

... How can you be compassionate to the desert and its species? Others who may rely on you?

... Interested in more Sagebrush Sea information and education? Visit

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/sagebrush-sea-about/12170/>



WONDER

Look at the lovely photo of the Sagebrush Sea glowing under a picturesque sky. Imagine the stories of just a few of the 350 species that call this landscape home. What species and story comes to mind?

Photograph courtesy of Chip Carroon, TNC volunteer



NEVADA

Nevada, my Nevada,
A desert and a sky,
A thousand miles of sagebrush
To greet the weary eye.
A thousand miles of sagebrush
Upon a field of gold,
A thousand miles of silence,
A charm that's never old!

Nevada, my Nevada,
An endless inland sea
Of alkali and sagebrush
And winds forever free,
Out of thy desert vastness,
Out of thy deathly dust,
There comes a lure that grips the heart
And kills the wanderlust.
A lure of length'ning shadows
Of sunsets in the West
Of winds forever sighing,
That soothe the soul to rest.

THE STATES SAGEBRUSH CALL HOME

The 11 western states with sagebrush habitat and sage grouse are: Nevada (where it is the State flower), Oregon, Washington, California (northern), Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, North and South Dakota. It is also found in two provinces of Canada.

WRITE A POEM ABOUT YOUR STATE AND ITS FLORA OR FAUNA

This soulful poem about Nevada ended up adorning a postcard.

Write a poem about your state's flora or fauna. Then create a postcard to send to family, friends, or your public officials. It just may appeal to their inner compass and deepen their appreciation for the health of vital ecosystems.

THE COMPASS is a network of nature-based places of hope, healing, and transformation supported by inspirational and educational resources for grounding yourself in the great outdoors and the goodness of your deep, inner nature.