

SERPENTINE BENDS

Nominated ACEC: Serpentine Bends ACEC

Nominated by: BLM

Size: 4,200 acres

Historic Value

Relevance

The area contains historic era sites associated with early Guano Mining. These sites are considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Importance

- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

Scenic Value

Relevance

This area contains highly sensitive visual resource values including deep rugged canyons with sheer limestone cliffs. The geological composition of steep, winding canyons and mountain draws provides striking contrasts in topography. Cave openings and rock shelters dot the benched canyon walls. This area borders the scenic backcountry of Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

Importance

- Has more than locally significant qualities which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.
- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

Fish or Wildlife Resource

The nominated ACEC is habitat associated with the Gray-Banded Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis alterna*) and two subspecies of rock rattlesnakes, the Banded Rock Rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus klauberi*) and the Mottled Rock Rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus lepidus*). The Gray-Banded Kingsnake is listed as endangered and a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in New Mexico. The habitat of this species appears to be restricted to steep to precipitous hills and mountains between approximately 4,000 and 5,700 feet in elevation, below the juniper zone. The Banded Rock Rattlesnake is listed as rare or uncommon by the State of New Mexico as well as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The Mottled Rock Rattlesnake is currently recognized as sensitive by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and threatened by the State of New Mexico as well as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. These two species are secretive rattlers known to utilize karst features as a means of movement to avoid detection by predators. While habitat may range from pine-oak forest to scrub flatland, they are most often associated with rock outcrops where they lie in wait as ambush predators.

The sheer rock faces and ledges of the nominated ACEC serve as potential nesting spots for large raptors including but not limited to owls, hawks, and eagles. Eagle nest sites typically occur on cliff faces, rock ledges, or large trees and include at least one perch with a clear view of the open terrain where the eagles usually forage. Golden Eagles usually return to the same nest annually.

Importance

- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

Natural System or Process

Relevance

Nine special status plants are documented in the area. One, pincushion cactus, is a federally Threatened and state Endangered species. Two, button cactus and White Mt. beard tongue, are state Endangered species. The other six, mammillaria cactus, hedgehog cactus, pincushion cactus, Nama, rock daisy, and *Salvia summa* sage, are state sensitive species.

Importance

- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.