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LYBROOK BADLANDS



EXPLORE



New Mexico, USA

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An other-worldly land...

Managed and protected by the Bureau of Land Management, the Lybrook Fossil Area also commonly referred to as the Lybrook Badlands is an area of extensively eroded badlands with scattered strange rock formations, clay domes, massive hoodoos, and fossils from the late Cretaceous Period (dinosaur, crocodilian scutes, and turtle shell).

How the Rocks Formed

Seventy million years ago, this area was covered by a shallow sea and coastal swamps. What remains can be seen in the black layers of coal formed by plants and animals that died, sank into the mud, and turned to rock.



At the end of the Cretaceous Period the seas withdrew and the dinosaurs disappeared. The seas left behind a flat plain – a layer of sandstone over soft shale and mudstones. Between 50 and 30 million years ago the Rocky Mountains rose to the north and east and other mountains to the west. As the rain washed down from the mountains, it wore away the sandstone, cutting through to the softer layers beneath. In some places, pieces of sandstone remained, protecting the layers below from the rain and water, and forming column-like “hoodoos.”

Geology

The geology of the region is more diverse than it's counterpart the Bisti. Here in the northern region remains the Nacimiento Formation which formed during the Paleocene Period, long after the dinosaurs vanished. Erosion from the northern San Juan Mountains helped strip away the southern portion, exposing the lower Kirtland and Fruitland Formation of the Cretaceous Period. This southern area is characterized by rolling mounds of mud and siltstones with interdispersed sandstones. Hoodoos in Lybrook are significantly more massive in comparison to those in the Bisti.



The Land Today

Today the wilderness is home to ferruginous and red-tailed hawks, golden eagles and prairie falcons, all of whom nest in the area. Ground dwelling burrowing owls also nest there, living in abandoned prairie dog burrows. Other birds include piñon jays, ravens, quail and morning doves. Gunnison's prairie dogs, rabbits, coyotes and badgers live in the wilderness, as do various lizards, snakes, tarantulas and scorpions.

Facilities

There are absolutely no facilities out in this region. Before exiting US 550, there is a Red Mesa Express convenience store whereby one has the last chance to get snacks and fluids.

Help keep the wilderness wild!

Lybrook is a wilderness area and there are no facilities or trails. Hiking, backpacking and primitive camping are encouraged. The area is traversed by numerous oil and gas field roads. Be cautious when driving these roads as these trucks can be very large and require most of the road way. These landforms took millions of years to form but can be destroyed in an instant! Please do not climb on delicate geological features. You are welcome to look at any fossils of plants and animals that you find, however under Federal Law, you CANNOT collect fossils of animals with bones (vertebrates). You may not sell any fossil that you collect from Federal land.

How to Get There

The Lybrook Badlands is located approx. 67 miles south of Aztec, NM and can be reached by taking US Highway 550. From US 550 turn onto CR 7900 (turn to Chaco Culture National Historic Park). A little over 5 miles you will encounter the signed turn for Chaco Culture National Historic Park. Proceed past that T-intersection for another 1/10th of a mile and look for a dirt road to the left (east bound). This unnamed oil field road will take your through the center of the badlands. Several roads turn to the north with each providing a different view of the badlands.

During inclement weather the oil field roads through the Lybrook Badlands are impassible.

Report destruction or vandalism to: US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
6251 College Boulevard
Farmington, NM 87402
(505) 564-7600

