

Murphy Gap

Murphy Gap is a natural corridor that has been used throughout time by the first inhabitants, a famous explorer, and now you. It lies between the Golden Gate Mountain Range to the north and the Mt. Irish Range to the south and provides an access route between Coal Valley to the east and Wild Horse and Garden valleys to the west. Today local cattle and sheep ranchers use the corridor to get to the valleys where they graze their livestock.

Murphy Gap lies within the Alamo Bolide Impact Crater, one of only 27 marine impact craters on earth. Approximately 360 million years ago, a large crater-forming body of unknown origin, known as a bolide, crashed into the Devonian sea northwest of Alamo near Groom Lake. The impact and resulting tsunamis transformed, fractured, rearranged, and dispersed rocks of various types in an area covering over 62,000 square miles;

Pronghorn

The fastest hooved mammal in North America, pronghorn can be found grazing in the rolling valleys and lower mountain slopes throughout Basin and Range National Monument. The open spaces with low vegetation allow the pronghorn to see predators and flee, running up to 60 miles per hour when threatened.

Pronghorn are not true antelope, rather they belong to a family of even-toed, hooved mammals unique to North America: the Antilocapridae. The name Pronghorn comes from the prong that grows from the front of the male's 12 inch horns.

Early Travelers

Archaeological evidence dating back to 13,500 years ago suggests early hunter-gatherers utilized resources along nearby Pleistocene lakes (which dried about 11,000 years ago). For thousands of years and into modern day, people travel through natural gaps, like this one, to seek resources in different areas. Evidence of the former lakes in the valleys on both sides of the gap can be seen in the muddy playa basins and ancient shorelines.

Railroad Exploration

John C Fremont, an American explorer, may have traveled through Murphy Gap on his fifth and final expedition (1853-1854).

Tasked with identifying a winter route for the transcontinental railroad, Fremont followed close to the 38th parallel, which runs just a bit north of Murphy Gap.

Despite the bitter cold, snow, and the loss of one life, Fremont reported that a railroad along the 38th parallel was viable in the winter. In 1869, the

transcontinental railroad was built much further north passing through the Nevada towns of Ely, Battle Mountain, Winnemucca, and Reno:

Nevadans for Cultural Preservation www.nvfc.org