

THE WESTERN SHOSHONE

Rock art was just one way these ancient people expressed themselves. It also played an important role in their spiritual lives. Even today, Native American Indians acknowledge a belief in the sanctity of rock art. According to Indian tradition, rock art was located in places of spiritual power where, with the aid of images themselves, their shaman could communicate with the spirit world.

Thousands of years ago, inhabitants of western America left a message to their gods, ancestors, or perhaps those traveling behind them. As visitors, we are privileged to see these messages and must treat *all* rock art sites as special places - much like a museum or place of worship - to be enjoyed, preserved and protected for the benefit of future generations.

**Please . . . help us protect
this site for those who
come after you.**

TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE ROCK ART SITES

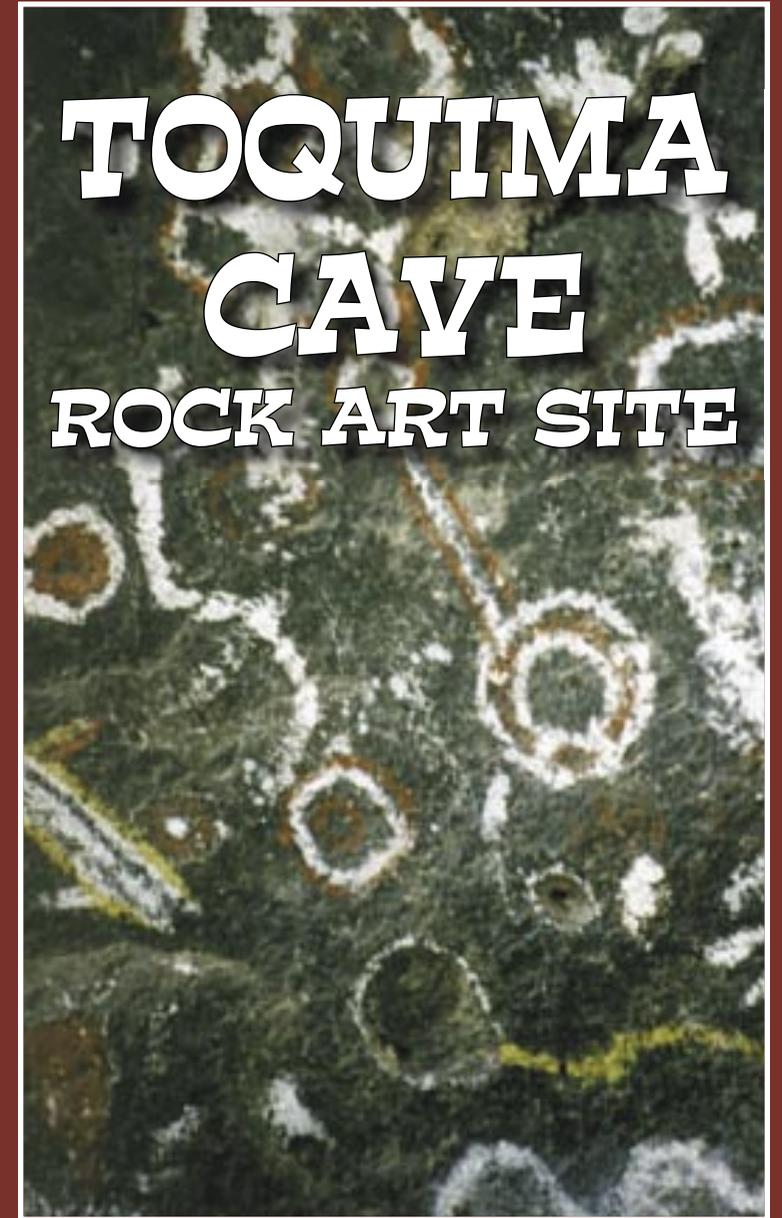
- ◆ Never deface rock art.
- ◆ Do not attempt to remove rock art.
- ◆ Never build fires near rock art sites.
- ◆ Avoid climbing or leaning on rock art.
- ◆ Never chalk, trace or apply anything (even water) to rock art panels.
- ◆ Do not touch pictographs. The oils from your hands damage or change the pigments.

USDA Forest Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Austin Ranger District
100 Midas Canyon Road
P.O. Box 130
Austin, Nevada 89310
(775) 964-2671

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



AUSTIN RANGER DISTRICT



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Intermountain
Region

Humboldt-Toiyabe
National
Forest

TOQUIMA CAVE

Toquima Cave is not really a cave, but a prehistoric rock shelter formed from volcanic rock. This “cave,” however, provides you with a rare opportunity to glimpse into the lives of ancient peoples of western America. Through the rock art found in Toquima Cave, these people worshiped and recorded their history and important stories. Please explore and discover this unique archaeological site with care.

ROCK ART describes designs painted on or carved into rock surfaces.

Pictographs are painted on rock surfaces. **Petroglyphs** are carved or scratched into rock surfaces. While the most ancient rock art consists of pits and grooves, more recent styles show greater complexity by incorporating abstract, linear, geometric, human (anthropomorphic) and animal (zoomorphic) shapes.

Over 300 independent images have been recorded in Toquima Cave, with two rock art styles represented: the Great Basin **curvilinear** style (dots, circles and squiggles) and the **rectilinear** style (lines, chevrons and tally marks).



PAINTING IN COLOR

Four different minerals were used to make pigments in Toquima Cave: *Gypsum* (the primary ingredient in plaster) was used for white; *Hematite* and *Goethite* (both iron oxides) for red and yellow pigments; and *Charcoal* was used to produce black.

Other pigments were created from a variety of natural resources. Depending on the color desired, clay, chalk, bird droppings, plant juices, nut shells or berries, were used. These resources were harvested, collected, or acquired from far-away places through ancient trade networks.

Preparation of the pigments involved crushing, drying, or cooking the natural ingredients. Containers used for mixing and holding pigments might have been stone slabs or



bowls, shells, large leaves, bark trays, gourd bowls, bone bowls, or clay pots.

Ancient peoples used a variety of tools to apply pigments to rock surfaces. A majority of pictographs in Toquima Cave are finger paintings. However, other applicators might have included: human or animal hair brushes, sticks, chewed twigs, grasses, split bones, feathers, fur, moss, or leather.

