

Opinion: Graffiti destroying national landmarks

By Marjorie "Slim" Woodruff, High Country News

The Coconino sandstone at Grand Canyon means many things to many people. To the hiker, it indicates that he or she is almost at the top. To the artist, it is a graceful sweep of sculptured stone, and to the geologist, it evokes the trade winds blowing across Aeolian dunes 265 million years ago. But to the graffiti punk, it is a blank canvas.

It's a snap to scratch names, drawings and dates into sandstone. Fortunately, most of the time it is easy to erase the same, using water, a scrub brush and some occasional blue language. For vandalism that's not as easily removed, such as marks made by paint or with black or colored markers, park rangers have more powerful tools at their disposal, using rock-colored resin mastic to cover the panel, for example. In the worst cases, however, sometimes they end up having to cut out part of the rock.

Graffiti is surging at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Joshua Tree, Arches and Zion national parks, and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. At Capitol Reef and Independence Rock, ignorami scrawl their names over 100-year-old pioneer inscriptions. Even 4,000-year-old drawings from the Archaic Period have been scribbled on.

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