



**For immediate release  
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## **Wildlife corridor grows with land sale from Institute of Mentalphysics to Mojave Desert Land Trust**

An important wildlife corridor in Joshua Tree is one step closer to being permanently protected with the Mojave Desert Land Trust's acquisition of 227 acres from the Institute of Mentalphysics on December 1.

The land consists of much of the open space immediately to the north and west of the Institute. Its acquisition will connect several parcels within the wildlife corridor that are owned by the Land Trust on either side of Highway 62.

The corridor provides passage for many species of wildlife including coyotes, bobcats, owls, badgers, and potentially desert tortoise. It is very biodiverse. Plants include Joshua trees, silver cholla, burrobush, and creosote. Wildlife spotted on the land include red-tailed hawk, jackrabbit, ground squirrel, desert iguana, and side-blotched lizard.

This and other corridors – or habitat linkages – in the Morongo Basin will help plant and animal populations remain healthy, and will prevent Joshua Tree National Park, the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, and Sand to Snow National Monument from becoming isolated habitat.

Scientists have long known that if habitat becomes fragmented, the fragments may not be large enough for some species to persist, resulting in local extinctions. In the desert, that includes bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, and carnivores such as mountain lions and bobcats. Habitat linkages also provide a source of repopulation after catastrophic events such as wildfire. The recent fire on the Land Trust's Section 33 property illustrates this need. They also allow the range of plants and animals to shift northward and/or up in elevation in response to climate change.

The protection of the area around the Institute will result in a wide swath of protected land on either side of Highway 62, providing ample opportunities for wildlife to move through the corridor. It will also result in nearly a mile-wide open space buffer between Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree, helping to preserve the rural character of both communities. In the future MDLT will explore ways of ensuring the safe passage of wildlife across Highway 62. This could include working with transportation agencies and the state to construct wildlife crossings.

This acreage was last purchased in 1941 by Edwin John Dingle, the founder of the Institute for Mentalphysics, who hoped to build a city in the "majestic Mojave Desert". The Institute is the oldest

and largest retreat center in the Western United States and has the largest collection of Lloyd Wright buildings. The architect described the surrounding desert as having a “tranquil nobility and internal beauty”, with “centuries-old Joshua trees standing like sentinels”.

Terry Taylor-Castillo, Executive Director of the Institute for Mentalphysics, said she believes Edwin Dingle would be pleased with the sale: “This is a very open and healing space. To Edwin Dingle, the desert represented freedom and contemplation. It helps us preserve the main campus and the land that he loved to look at. We will always have that view protected now and be able to appreciate the natural ecosystem and what is supposed to grow there.”

“We are pleased to be able to conserve this beautiful property with its dramatic desert wash, uninterrupted views, and abundant native plants and wildlife for existing and future generations,” said Geary Hund, Executive Director of the Mojave Desert Land Trust. “We appreciate the efforts of Terry Taylor-Castillo and the Board of Directors of the Institute to help make this acquisition a reality, and we look forward to partnering with them in future efforts to restore and manage the property. It’s a very exciting step toward the permanent protection of vital habitat linkages in the Morongo Basin.”

As with many areas, the land will require active stewardship by MDLT to address issues such as non-native grasses and mustards.

**Note to editors:**

Photos and map can be downloaded [here](#).

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*The Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission to protect and care for lands with natural, scenic, and cultural value within the Mojave Desert. Since its founding in 2006 the land trust has conserved nearly 90,000 acres, donating more tracts of land to the National Park Service in the last decade than any other organization. In addition to acquiring land, the land trust established a seed bank to ensure the preservation of native species. MDLT operates an onsite nursery at its Joshua Tree headquarters which propagates native species for ecosystem restoration. MDLT educates and advocates for the conservation of the desert, involving hundreds of volunteers in our work. For more information, visit [mdlt.org](http://mdlt.org).*

*The Mission of the Joshua Tree Retreat Center, also known as The Institute of MentalPhysics, is to demonstrate an inclusive and equitable model by:*

- *Offering an intentional habitat centered around deep inquiry into spiritual practice.*
- *Enhancing the spiritual science of MentalPhysics.*
- *Providing unique educational opportunities in organic architecture and regional culture.*