

PINYON-JUNIPER WOODLANDS VEGETATION COMMUNITY



Pinyon Juniper Woodland is one of the *most isolated* vegetation communities that exists in San Diego County. It is found in remote desert mountain ranges and in some areas on the leeward side of Mount Laguna. Another location is the mountains east of Jacumba that are close to the Imperial County line. Pinyon Juniper Woodland is dominated by Four and Single leaf pinyon pine trees. Pine needles grow in small bundles. Four-leaf Pinyon has bundles of four and sometimes five needles. Single leaf pinyon has needles that grow with one per bundle. The other species that is dominant within this community is the California juniper. While Pinyon pines have cones like most normal pine trees, the fruiting body of a Juniper is a berry-like structure.

Pinyon pines produce relatively large, sweet flavored seeds that were an important component in the diet of the Native Americans. Pine nuts that are purchased in the grocery store are similar to those from Pinyon pines.

Prior to the 1940's there are indications that an extensive Pinyon pine forest existed in the area near Jacumba. However, a large fire burned through the area and the trees were eliminated. Extensive Pinyon pine forest exist north of San Diego County in the San Jacinto Mountain range and to the south in the Sierra Juarez of Baja California. Pinyon jays are common frequenters of Pinyon pine forests, however, they are sedentary and only occasionally seen in San Diego County because the Pinyon juniper woodland that occur here are relatively small in area - apparently too small to support a permanent Pinyon jay population.

Because of their remote locations, the Pinyon juniper woodlands of San Diego County are inhabited by Southern mule deer and Mountain lions. Currently, there are approximately 8,100 acres of Pinyon juniper woodland in San Diego County. There are an additional approximately 12,000 acres of Juniper habitat in which Pinyon pines are not present.



Courtesy of the County of San Diego
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