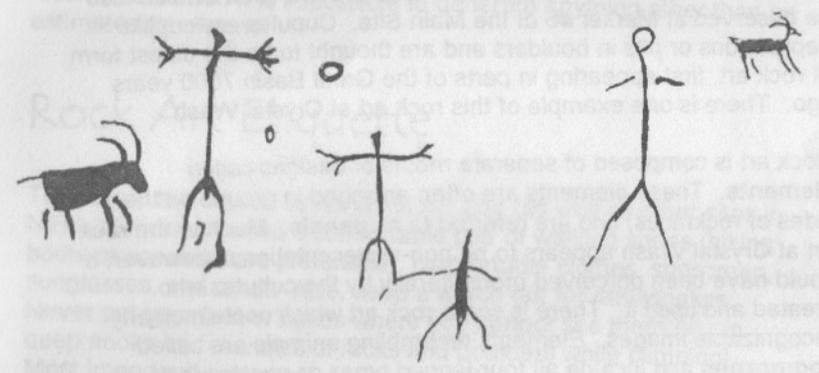


Location of the Crystal Wash Rock Art Site

To find the Entrance Site at Crystal Wash, turn onto Route 93 N at the intersection of 93 and Route 318. Look for a dirt road to the left just after you pass the 54 mile marker. (This road makes a sharp turn to the left going in the opposite direction.) Park at the end of this road which comes to an end about 50 yards off the highway. Follow the trail markers to the self-guided tour.

# The Crystal Wash Rock Art Site

## Entrance Site



Petroglyphs at Marker #6

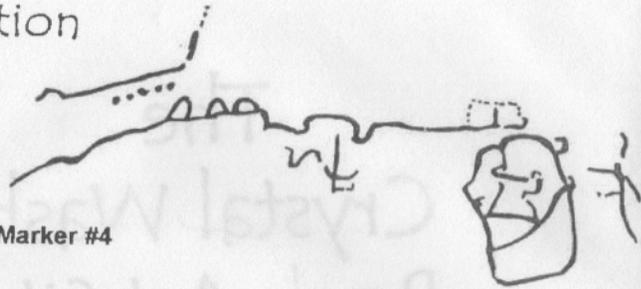
Ely Field Office  
 HC-33 Box 33500  
 Ely, Nevada 89301-9408  
 (775)289-1880

Caliente Field Office  
 P.O. Box 237  
 South US 93  
 Caliente, Nevada 89008  
 (775)726-8100

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



# Introduction



Petroglyphs at Marker #4

The Crystal Wash Rock Art Site, which is typical of much Great Basin rock art, is actually a small network of interrelated sites located in Lincoln County, Nevada. **Petroglyphs**, or rock art which is engraved, is the dominant rock art form at Crystal Wash. They are etched into rockfaces by pecking, abrading, scratching, or a combination of these techniques. **Pictographs**, or painted rock art, is only represented in small quantities at Crystal Wash. A third type of rock art known as **cupules** or **Pit-and-groove rock art** can also be observed at Marker #6 of the Main Site. Cupules are cuplike depressions or pits in boulders and are thought to be the oldest form of rock art, first appearing in parts of the Great Basin 7000 years ago. There is one example of this rock art at Crystal Wash.

Rock art is composed of separate motifs or designs called **elements**. These elements are often arranged in groups on the sides of rockfaces, and are referred to as **panels**. Much of the rock art at Crystal Wash appears to be non-representational, however, it could have been perceived more literally by the cultures who created and used it. There is some rock art which contain clearly recognizable images. Elements resembling animals are called **zoomorphs** and include all four-legged types or **quadrupeds**, as well as birds, insects, and other animals. Mountain sheep are the most common zoomorphs at Crystal Wash, and occur throughout the Great Basin and western United States. Human figures, or **anthropomorphs**, are the other recognizable forms found at Crystal Wash and exhibit striking variations in design.

The predominant style at Crystal Wash is the Great Basin Pecked Style. This includes the substyles of Great Basin Representational, Great Basin Curvilinear Abstract, and Great Basin Rectilinear Abstract. In addition, there are also some small traces of the Great Basin Painted Style (Heizer and Baumhoff, *Prehistoric Rock Art of Nevada and Eastern California*, pp.197-208; 1962). All of the rock art depicted in this manual can be found at the Crystal Wash Entrance Site.

Rock art is found wherever there has been human activity. It is found at both public and private sites, and played an essential role in the transmission, reception, and storage of information. Although we cannot be sure what most rock art means, we suspect it was deeply significant to those who created it. We know that some rock art was ceremonial and therefore contained sacred knowledge. Other speculated uses for rock art are the marking of game trails, the designation of cultural territories, and the functioning as astronomical markers pertaining to such phenomena as the solstices and equinoxes. Even with the development of scientific dating methods, we still find it difficult to accurately calculate the age of most rock art. Sophisticated methods of C-14 dating have been designed to analyze the tiny particles of organic matter which collect in the grooves of petroglyphs after having been etched onto the rock surface. Despite the continual refining of these methods, there are still significant problems related to the contamination of the organic matter. In some instances, rock art can be related to artifactual material that is datable and thought to be contemporary with the rock art, but often it is impossible to generate anything other than an estimated timeframe.

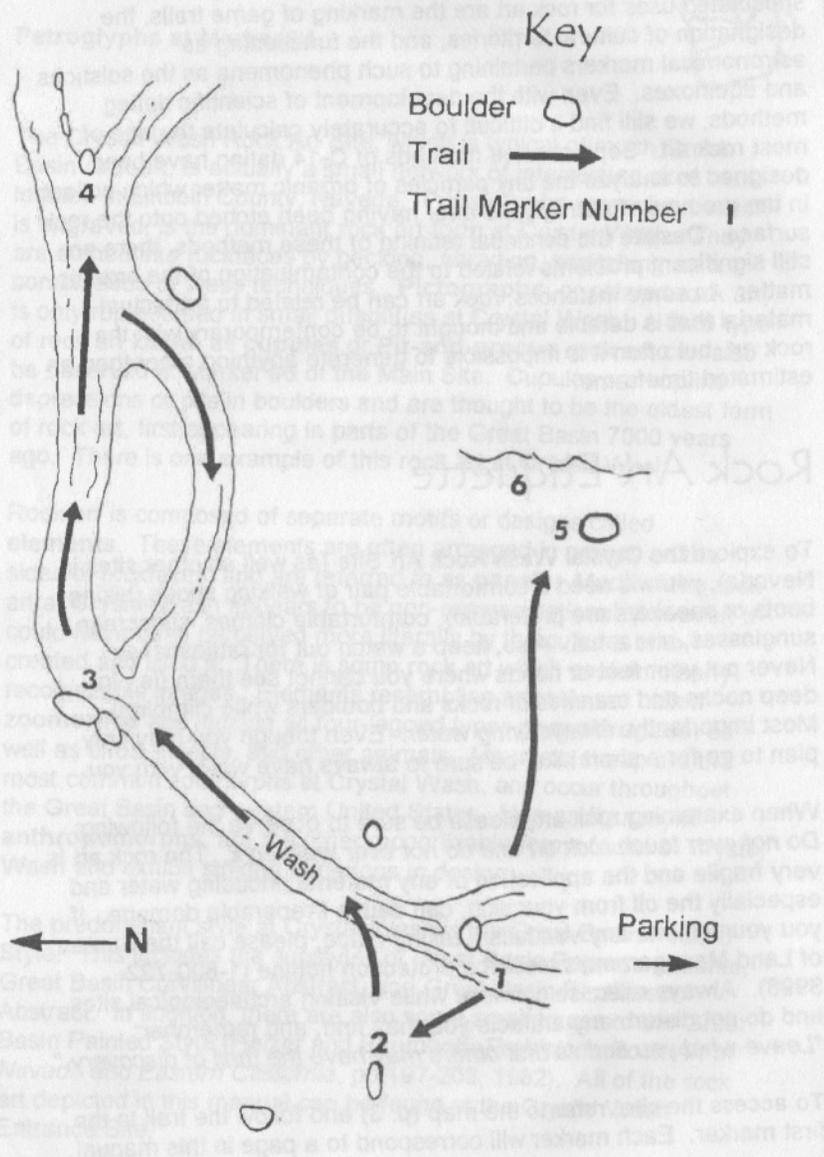
## Rock Art Etiquette

To explore the Crystal Wash Rock Art Site (as well as other sites in Nevada), you will need a comfortable pair of walking shoes (hiking boots or sneakers are preferable), comfortable clothes, sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat. Also, keep a watch out for rattlesnakes. Never put your feet or hands where you cannot see them (ie., in deep nooks and crannies of rocks and boulders while climbing). Most importantly: *always bring water*. Even though you may only plan to go for a short hike, be sure to always have water with you.

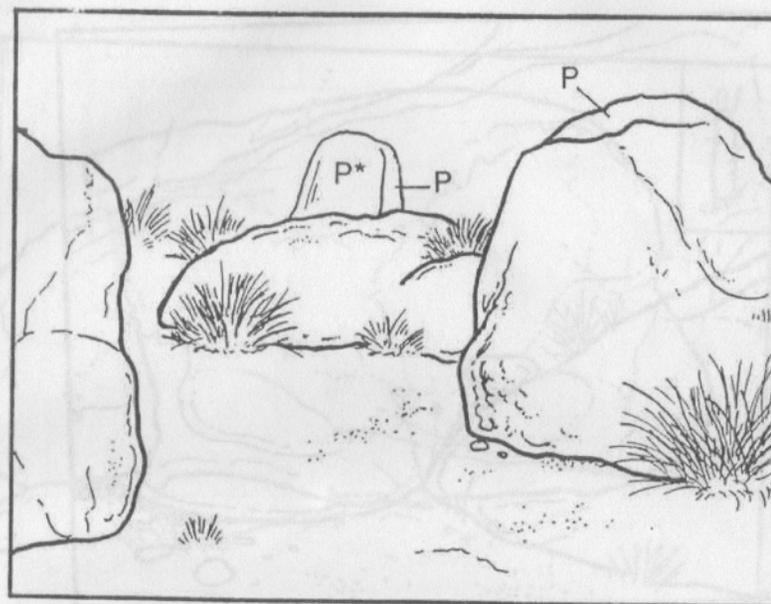
When examining rock art, please be sure to observe the following: *Do not ever touch rock art and do not ever walk on it*. The rock art is very fragile and the application of any material, including water and especially the oil from your skin, can cause irreparable damage. If you yourself see any vandalism taking place, please call the Bureau of Land Management's resource protection hotline (1-800-722-3998). Always exercise courtesy while visiting archaeological sites and do not disturb any artifacts you may find, and remember: *"Leave what you find so that others may have the thrill of discovery."*

To access the site, refer to the map (p. 3) and follow the trail to the first marker. Each marker will correspond to a page in this manual.

# Map of Entrance Site



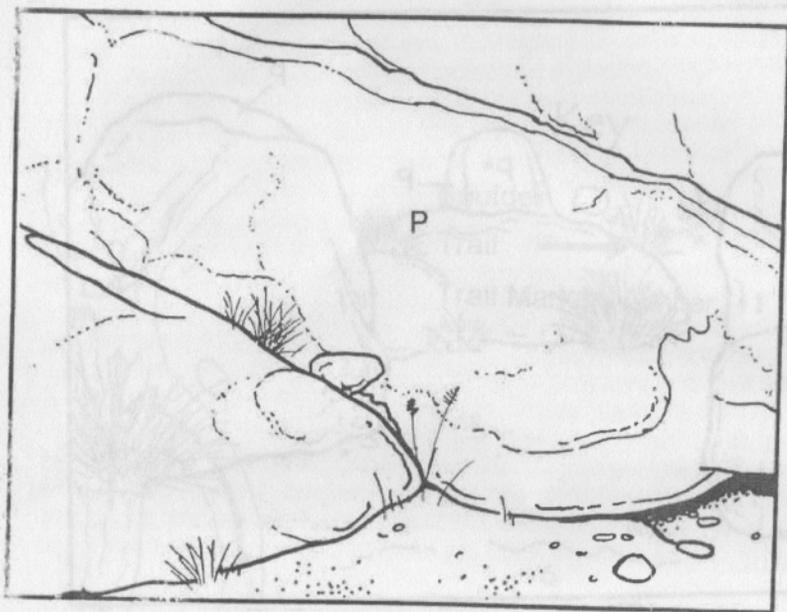
# Marker #1



Stretching out before you along the wash is the Crystal Wash Entrance Site. Generally speaking, the panels are sporadically placed and there is very little representational imagery at this site. There is, however, one notable exception (see Marker #4). There are also two boulders which are heavily incised with petroglyphs and contrast with the more typically cryptic nature of this site. (The smaller boulder in the center of the illustration is one of these.) The placement of these petroglyphs suggests a possible travel route, with the rock art providing information along the way. This would have been a public site since the rock art is easily accessible. There is also nothing to suggest this was a habitation site, however, the occasional lithic flake found in the wash indicate that some stone tools were made here.

\*P=petroglyph

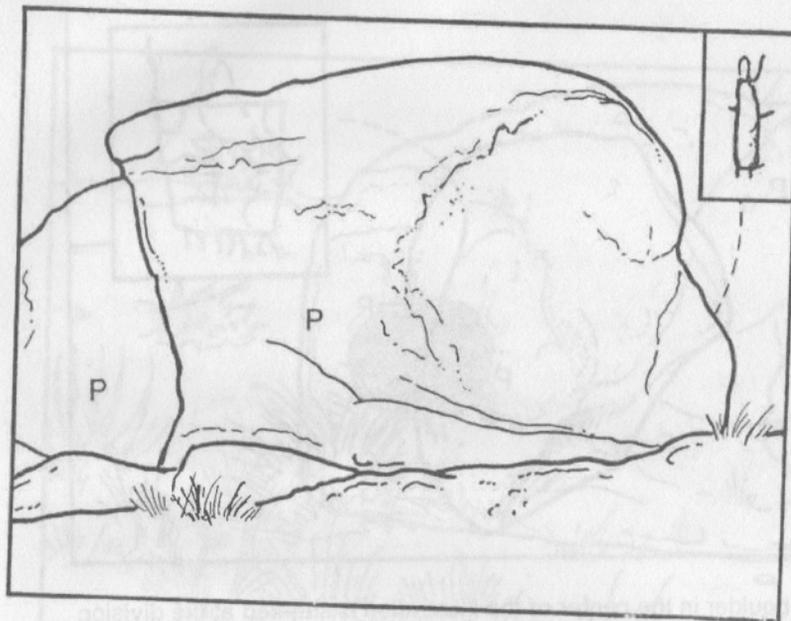
## Marker #2



Most of the petroglyphs at this site tend to be directly associated with the wash, however, this panel is somewhat more set in from the wash than many of the other panels. These non-representational motifs are typical of the Great Basin Curvilinear Abstract Style.

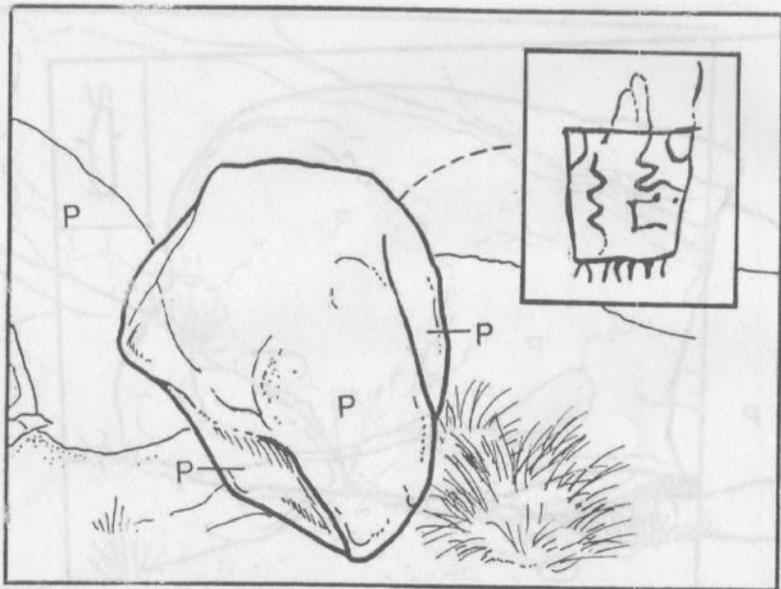
A suggestion which might make this tour even more enjoyable would be to sketch the rock art as you make your way along the trail.

## Marker #3



The small motif depicted on the right is an image which may or may not be an anthropomorph; the small projections extending out from this shape could possibly be arms and legs (see inset). There is only one other figure at this site that may be an anthropomorph--see (Marker #4.)

## Marker #4

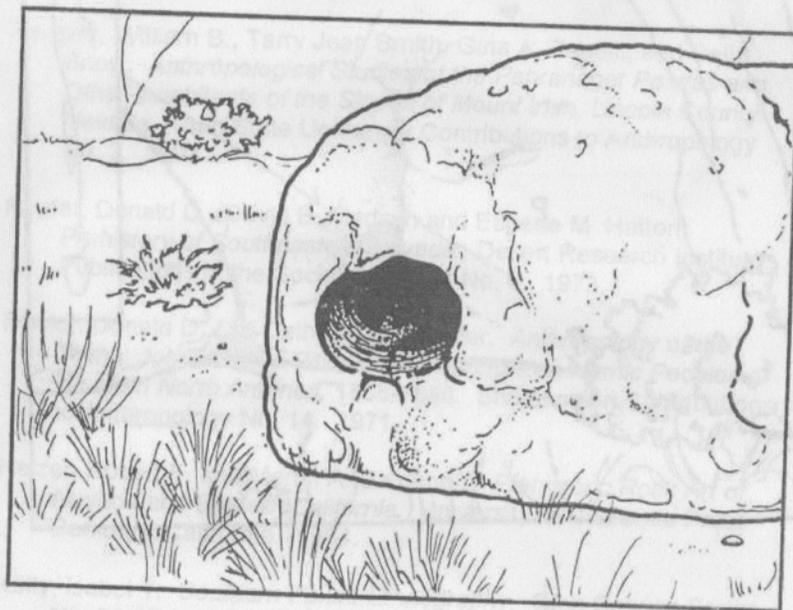


The boulder in the center of the illustration is situated at the division of the wash and is heavily embellished. Nearly underneath this boulder in the front is a panel consisting of three very faint, wavy lines. They are waterworn due to the periodic flooding of the wash. On the opposite side (see inset) is a motif known as a "wearing blanket" which may be an anthropomorph dressed in a woven cloth. This image is comparable to others of this type and are characterized by a "woven" pattern in the body of the figure. Some, like this one here, appear to have fringe at the bottom of the blanket. These figures are generally known as "patterned anthropomorphs" and are depicted with a variety of dots, bars, and other designs arranged in a well-ordered manner. Since the Pahranaagats have no known weaving tradition (other than baskets), it is possible this motif represents the presence of Southwestern Puebloan cultures who occupied this area contemporaneously with the Pahranaagats (AD 500-1250).

To proceed to Markers #5 and #6, go back to Marker #1. If you are facing the direction of the parking area, turn left at this marker. If you are facing away from the parking area, turn right and follow the trail to Marker #5.

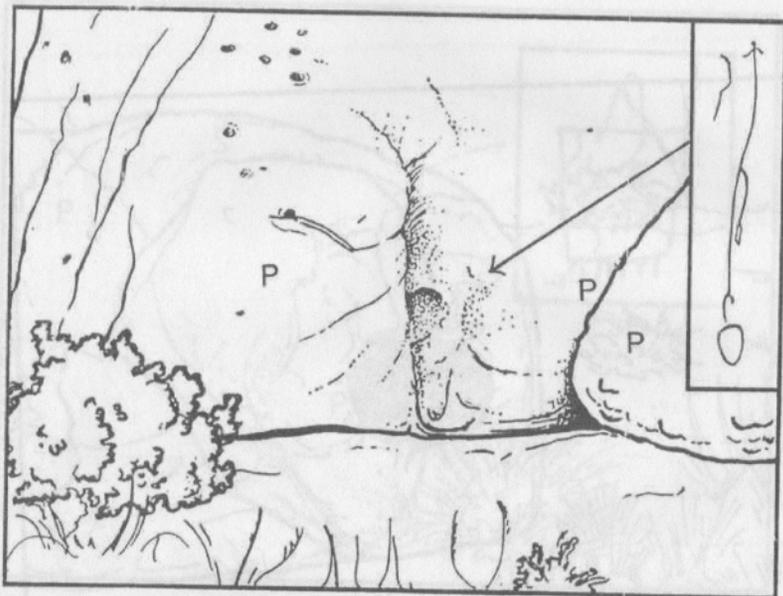
## References

## Marker #5



The roof of this small shelter has been painted with red ochre, a frequently used hue obtained from iron oxide. Although no discernable imagery seems to have been created in the application of this pigment, its placement was likely deliberate and is therefore not a natural occurrence. This shelter could have been meaningful to the individuals who used it and may have had ritual significance.

## Marker #6



This is a small habitation or camp site which would have accommodated a family-sized group of people. Sites of this type were often found near travel routes and could have functioned as stopovers for travelers on their way to another destination. Note the representational imagery in the form of "zoomorphs" (mountain sheep and other quadrupeds), and anthropomorphs. One figure (see inset) is a type called an "elongated anthropomorph", but there are other kinds of anthropomorphs at this site, too. The grinding slick at this site indicates that food processing took place here (found in the area to the right of these panels.) Grinding slicks were created when food (i.e., seeds, pine nuts) were ground on a flat stone surface with a mano, or hand-held stone, and over time this activity would produce a smooth surface. Portable grinding stones, or "metates" were also used. Besides plants, certain kinds of insects (i.e. grasshoppers, crickets) were dried and ground into meal, and minerals like hematite were ground for use in pigments. These were then mixed with an organic binding agent such as water, plant juice, saliva, or urine to create paint.

## References

For more information about the rock art of Nevada and the Pahrnagat Paiutes, please consult the following:

- Fawcett, William B., Terry Jean Smith, Gina A. Zanelli, and Celia Snow. *Anthropological Studies of the Pahrnagat Paiutes and Other Inhabitants of the Slopes of Mount Irish, Lincoln County, Nevada*. Utah State University Contributions to Anthropology No. 3. 1993.
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- Websites:
- ARARA--<http://zzyx.ucsc.edu/Comp/Bill/ARARA/ARARA.html>
- BLM--<http://www.nv.blm.gov/Ely/Default.htm>
- Piedra Pintata Books--<http://www.rock-art.com/books/>