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www.aztecnm.com

New Mexico, USA

@CityOfAztec

# BISTI / DE-NA-ZIN WILDERNESS



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# EXPLORE

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## ***An other-worldly land...***

Managed and protected by the Bureau of Land Management, the Bisti/De-Na-Zin wilderness is 45,000 acres of eerily eroded badlands and bizarre hoodoos located about 30 miles south of Farmington, New Mexico, in the Four Corners Area. "Bisti" (BIS-tye) is a Navajo word meaning "amongst sanstone," and De-Na-Zin (De- NAH-Zin) is the Navajo word for "standing cranes." Petroglyphs (rock art) showing cranes have been found south of the Wilderness.

## ***How the Rocks Formed***

It seems incredible that this fantastic desert landscape was all formed by water. Seventy million years ago, this area was covered by a shallow sea and coastal swamps. What remains can be seen in the black layers of coal formed by plants and animals that died, sank into the mud, and turned to rock. Petrified wood and whole tree stumps can be seen eroding out of the hills. Dinosaurs roamed this coast line too, including a Tyrannosaurus-like creature that has been nick-named the "Bisti Beast" a new species with a skull over a yard long. At the end of the Cretaceous Period (the Age of the Dinosaurs) the seas withdrew and the dinosaurs disappeared. The seas left behind a flat plain – a layer of sandstone over soft shale and mudstones. Between 50 and 30



million years ago the Rocky Mountains rose to the north and east and other mountains to the west. As the rain washed down from the mountains, it wore away the sandstone, cutting through to the softer layers beneath. In some places, pieces of sandstone remained, protecting the layers below from the rain and water, and forming column-like "hoodoos". These hoodoos can also look like mushrooms and arches.

## ***Geology***

The geology of the wilderness is very different from east to west. The west region (Bisti) consists of the Fruitland and Kirtland Formations, interbedded layers of shale, mudstone, coal, and silt. Stream channels are represented by sandstone. The red hills are from burning coal seams oxidizing the iron by underground fires. The eastern region of the wilderness (De-Na-Zin) contains the Ojo Alamo Formation of sandstone which caps the Kirtland Formation of shale. It is at the contact between the Ojo Alamo and Kirtland

formations that the extinction of dinosaurs occurs. The petrified wood in this region is more abundant, larger and longer than that found in the Bisti region.

## ***The Land Today***

Today the wilderness is home to ferruginous and red-tailed hawks, golden eagles and prairie falcons, all of whom nest in the area. Ground dwelling burrowing owls also nest there, living in abandoned prairie dog burrows. Other birds include piñon jays, ravens, scaled quail and morning doves. Gunnison's prairie dogs, rabbits, coyotes and badgers live in the wilderness, as do various lizards, snakes, tarantulas and scorpions.



## ***Help Keep the Wilderness Wild!***

The Bisti/De-Na-Zin is a wilderness area and there are no facilities or trails. Hiking, backpacking and primitive camping are encouraged, but mechanized vehicles (including mountain bikes) are not allowed in the wilderness area. These landforms took millions of years to form but can be destroyed in an instant! Please do not climb on delicate geological features.

Under Federal Law, you CANNOT collect fossils of animals with bones (vertebrates). You may not sell any fossil that you collect from Federal land.

## ***How to Get There***

The Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness is located approx. 36 miles south of Farmington, NM and can be reached in two ways; from NM Highway 371 (west access) or US Highway 550 (east access).

### **Bisti West Access**

From NM 371: Just north of mile marker 70 turn east on County Road 7297 and follow the gravel road for 3 miles to the west parking lot.

### **De-Na-Zin East Access**

From US 550: Between mile marker 127 and 128, turn west onto County Road 7500 and follow the road for 10 miles to the east parking lot. You can continue all the way to NM371 if you prefer the west Bisti region and turn north on NM 371.

**During inclement weather CR 7500 may become impassible.**

Report destruction or vandalism to: US Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Farmington Field Office  
6251 College Boulevard  
Farmington, NM 87402  
(505) 564-7600