



THE FIELD OF VIEW (F.O.V.)
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“Where the Public Meets the Stars”

Astronomy education, dark skies and quality experiences for ALL!!
www.Astro-npo.org

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STARS-N-PARKS PROGRAMS IN FIVE SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS

Summer 2008

Stars-N-Parks Fall 2008 schedule and federal grant funding announced

By Jessica Savage
National Public Observatory

LAS CRUCES – Residents visiting area state parks this fall will be able to learn about constellations such as the Big Dipper and Pegasus the Winged Horse, as well as the planets, galaxies and clusters when they attend one or more astronomy presentations being offered in the second half of 2008.

The National Public Observatory is sponsoring 18 Stars-N-Parks astronomy programs and the Southern New Mexico Star Party at five state parks through December 2008. The non-profit astronomy organization was recently awarded New Mexico Space Grant Consortium funding through their Public Enhancement program.

“I have been to these programs at Leasburg and Caballo State Parks - they are well run with participants including children and seniors,” said one of the NMSGC evaluators. “Presenters really enjoy themselves and their love of space comes through to the participants.”

Programs will be held monthly at Leasburg Dam State Park, located 15 miles north of Las Cruces in Radium Springs, and City of Rocks State Park, located 30 miles south of Silver City, between August and December 2008.

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A program will be held at Pancho Villa State Park in October and again in November. Deming residents can attend a program at Rock Hound State Park in August, September and again in November.

Hatch- and Truth or Consequence-area residents can attend a Stars-N-Parks program at Caballo State Park in September and October.

The Southern New Mexico Star Party will be held from Wednesday, September 24, 2008 through Sunday, September 28, 2008 at City of Rocks State Park.

Stars-N-Parks programs are held primarily in state parks on a Saturday during a portion of the month when the moon is either waxing or waning and won't interfere with observing.

NMSGC funding allows the NPO to pay presenters a stipend and mileage for their services. Presenters for the scheduled programs will be Matt Wilson at City of Rocks S. P., Sally Allen at Rock Hound and Pancho Villa State Parks, Jeff Jenkins at Leasburg S. P., Bobby Franzoy at Caballo S. P., and John Gilkison filing in as needed.

Stars-N-Parks attendees should arrive at the park an hour before sunset. This allows individuals to become familiar with their surroundings before dark and avoids vehicle headlight disruption of the program after it's begun. The formal presentation of the program begins after sunset, however dusk is an excellent time for informal instruction and becoming acquainted with other attendees.

Pay the \$5 day-use fee at the gate when arriving at the park or you may purchase a State Park Annual Day Use (ADU) pass at any state park or online at www.nmparks.com. The \$40 passes are good for one year from date of purchase and can be transferred to another vehicle.

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Spring Southern New Mexico Star Party, right to left 20 inch F/5 Dob, 13.1 inch F/4.5 Dob, a 14 inch Meade SCT in a observatory, and a 17.5 inch F/4.5 split tube Dob, blue in color.

Stars-n-Parks Fall 2008 schedule and Federal grant funding announced.

Continued

Each state has a space grant consortium office which is administered by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The NPO is a non-profit membership organization that sponsors the Stars-N-Parks programs. Donations can be made at the program and help pay the expenses of the presenters. For more information on the NPO visit the website at www.Astro-NPO.org or write astronpo@wildblue.net

Spring Southern New Mexico Star Party a good experience for all the attendees.

By John Gilkison

The Spring 2008 Southern New Mexico Star Party was off to a inauspicious start with less than a dozen attendees and a misunderstanding with park personnel about the NPO reserving the Pegasus area. So we set up at the pavilion in the Orion Group area as we used to in years past.

Our first attendee to show up was a Mr. John Shirley from Alabama. John was towing a 24 foot trailer upon which he had built sleeping accommodations. The last ten feet of the trailer was occupied by a fiberglass observatory housing a
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Matt Wilson stand besides his newly acquired 17.5 inch split tube Discovery Dobsonian telescope.



Bill Stiens with his 20 inch F/5 Obsession Dobsonian telescope at the Spring SNMSP

Continued Spring Southern New Mexico Star Party a good experience for all the attendees.

14 inch Meade telescope.

Bill Stien from Las Cruces showed up with his 20 inch F/5 Obsession Dobsonian. Then Matt Wilson who is our presenter at City of Rocks Observatory showed up with his new 17.5 inch Discovery split tube Dobsonian. We had winds during the day, but every night at sunset they died down.

Wednesday night we had a sparsely attended public program but this worked out for the best when we had a video crew show up to shoot footage of the program and interview us. We had more time to deal with the documentary crew than we normally would have had. The Stella Cam worked well showing off Omega Centaurus and M81 & M82 for example.

Thursday and Friday we had very good nights of clear seeing. We broke out the charts and started tracking down obscure NGC objects with the 20 inch and the 17.5 inch. I was very pleased to be able to observe Leo I which is a Local Group dwarf galaxy just north of the bright star Regulus. I have attempted to observe this galaxy before in smaller telescopes but was always unsuccessful before this.

On Saturday night we had a public program for about three dozen boy scouts and about a dozen members of the public. The Stella Cam really helped us here giving us the ability to show objects to groups of ten at a time. By this method we got everyone in the group a look at several different classes of objects rather than making everyone wait in line just to view a few objects during the whole program.

National Public Observatory Stars-N-Parks New Mexico Space Grant Consortium program schedule from August of 2008 through September 2008

**SP = State Park SS = Sunset, PS = Program Start, PE = Program End
Stars-n-Parks Programming ends in June, resumes in August 2008**

NM State Parks Reach For The Stars Programs

11: Saturday June 7, Caballo Lake SP, SS 8:13 PM PS 9:00 PM PE 10:55 PM, Moon is 24% illuminated, Jupiter is 13 degrees up by the end of the program, Jeff Jenkins presenting.

Stars-n-Parks programming ends for the Spring / Summer resuming again in August 2008.

N.M. Space Grant Consortium Programs

1: Saturday August 23, 2008, Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:35 PM, PS 8:45 PM, PE 10:15 PM Venus Mercury conjunction low in the west, Jupiter well up in the south, the summer Milky Way is well presented, Jeff Jenkins presenting.

2: Saturday August 30, 2008 City of Rocks SP, SS 7:30PM, PS 8:40 PM, PE 10:10 PM, Venus, Mars, Mercury conjunction low in the west, Jupiter up in the south, the summer Milk Way is well presented, Matt Wilson presenting.

3: Saturday August 30, 2008 Rock Hound SP, SS 7:30PM, PS 8:40 PM, PE 10:10 PM, Venus, Mars, Mercury conjunction low in the west, Jupiter up in the south, the summer Milk Way is well presented, Sally Allen presenting.

4: Saturday September 20, 2008 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:00 PM, PS 8:10 PM, PE 9:40 PM, Venus Mars and Mercury conjunction still low in the west, Jupiter in the south, the summer Milky Way still available, Jeff Jenkins presenting.

5: Saturday September 20, 2008 Caballo Lake SP, SS 7:00 PM, PS 7:40 PM, PE 9:40 PM, Jupiter still in the south, losing the summer Milky Way, Bobby Franzoy presenting.

Southern New Mexico Star Party starts Wednesday September 24, 2008, ends at noon Sunday on September 28, 2008

6: Wednesday September 24, 2008 City of Rocks SP, SS 6:55 PM, PS 8:05 PM, PE 9:35 PM, Jupiter still in the south, losing the summer Milky Way, John Gilkison presenting.

7: Saturday September 27, 2008 City of Rocks SP, SS 6:50 PM, PS 8:00 PM, PE 9:30 PM, Jupiter still in the south, losing the summer Milky Way, Matt Wilson presenting.

8: Saturday September 27, 2008 Rock Hound SP, SS 6:55 PM, PS 8:06 PM, PE 9:35 PM, Venus Mars and Mercury conjunction still low in the west, Jupiter in the south, the summer Milky Way still available, Sally Allen presenting.

See the full schedule at www.astro-npo.org

Mr. John Shirley from the state of Alabama stands next to his trailer mounted observatory dome housing his 14 inch Meade SCT. The sleeping quarters are home made.



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ABOUT THE NATIONAL PUBLIC OBSERVATORY PROJECT

Tens of thousands of people visit major U.S. research astronomical observatories every year. These research facilities do not advertise, and quite altruistically, set aside monies and time from their limited budgets to accommodate the public. Many people travel great distances for the opportunity to observe through a world-class telescope but due to the high cost of telescope time, this generally is not feasible. Where observatories have been able to set aside a night for public observing, it is often booked up well in advance.

While some upscale observatory/lodge facilities have been developed, none have been established to reach families or individuals looking for an intimate public park/camping experience with the proper telescopes, facilities, and knowledgeable tour guides.

The National Public Observatory, Inc. has been established to provide this kind of facility and we need your help.

Please join the National Public Observatory or make your tax-deductible contribution today!