



THE FIELD OF VIEW (F.O.V.)  
National Public Observatory Newsletter  
**“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 SIX SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS

Fall 2005

## NPO celebrates City of Rocks S.P. Observatory with NMSP

By Jessica J. Savage

As the National Public Observatory president considered what the newly installed observatory at City of Rocks State Park will mean to the Stars-N-Parks program, he was suddenly green with envy.

“It means Matt won’t have to haul his telescope down there anymore,” said John Gilkison, who will meanwhile continue to transport his 12-inch Meade to the other parks in Southern New Mexico. Gilkison was referring to Silver City resident Matt Wilson, who as the primary NPO Stars-N-Parks presenter at City of Rocks, will be the beneficiary of the 14-inch Schmidt Cassegrain go-to Meade telescope.

“It’s a major addition to the state park,” Gilkison said. “The views through it are brighter. It will help us when we do programs for them.”

Gilkison and Wilson were on hand as the telescope was installed in the new solar-powered roll-off roof observatory and participated in an informal “First Light” ceremony – the first time someone looks through the eyepiece of a telescope – with park officials, including Park Manager Ken Avalos and Natural Resources Planner and Chief Naturalist for New Mexico State Parks Steve Cary.

The observatory is located in the recreation area where the Southern New Mexico Star Party is held biannually. The south side of the building has two 3-foot wide double doors that open up to a height of six feet, and will allow the telescope a clear view of the southern horizon, which is

must for astronomical observing since it’s the part of the sky that’s always changing. The telescope is situated on a robo-pier stand for easy height adjustment. “It’s not a portable telescope,” Gilkison said.

A video monitor is on order that will allow park visitors to sit outside the observatory in chairs and view what is being seen through the eyepiece of the telescope if they don’t wish to stand in line inside the observatory, said Cary, during a telephone interview from Santa Fe.

The area near the observatory has been developed to accommodate star parties with the addition of three eight-foot by eight-foot concrete pads that serve as platforms for portable telescopes and will eventually offer power supplies to plug in electronic devices.

New Mexico State Parks will celebrate the opening of the astronomical observatory on Saturday, October 1 during the Southern New Mexico Star Party in a public grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

“We’re trying to make it as big as possible,” said Erica Asmus-Otero Public Information Coordinator for NMSP. Local officials from the area including state representatives and the mayors of Silver City, Deming and Lordsburg have been invited to participate in the grand opening, she said.

Another state official – Governor Bill Richardson – has also been strongly encouraged to participate in the event as a way to kick off his Astronomy Appreciate Day proclamation with a state park astronomy focus, Cary said. The proclamation is set for October 8 but all astronomy events in the month of October will be publicized by Lazlo Lazowska, Night Sky Program Director of the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance in his announcements, which will emphasize the importance of the state’s majestic night skies.

The grand opening will start around 5 p.m. with a ribbon cutting and recognition of major players in the

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**Steve Cary, the Chief Naturalist for the NM State Parks looks on as John Gilkison the NPO President makes adjustments to the newly installed 14 inch telescope at the observatory.**

## NPO celebrates City of Rocks S.P. Observatory with NMSP continued

acquisition of the new asset, paid for with state capital improvement funds, followed by a celebratory reception, Cary said. State parks may have glow-in-the-dark sweatshirts promoting their night sky programs and a telescope to give away for the grand opening.

The NPO has astronomy-related items that will be given away such as two "first light kits" valued at \$29 and containing a star atlas, a binocular book, and a star wheel; 14 planespheres and star wheels (four in Spanish language) valued between \$10 and \$4 each; and four LED blue lights.

The ceremonies will be followed by a Stars-N-Parks program beginning at 8 p.m., giving the public its first chance at looking through the new telescope, plus star party attendees will be on hand to help attendees view celestial objects through their own telescopes that will be set up in the area.

"It's a big step toward bringing the night sky to New Mexico's citizens and park visitors," Cary said of the new observatory, which is the first of four planned observatories to be installed. "It will help the night sky be loved and appreciated in Southern New Mexico."

The observatory and Reach for the Stars, a night sky educational initiative recently funded by the legislature, are a response to the enthusiastic attendance at night sky programs that state parks has been holding in its' rural recreation parks.

"We've had 50 people in line to see Jupiter," Cary said. "It's a response to public demand and we hope it draws even more people."

Of the estimated 75 programs held each year, the NPO had sponsored 30 Stars-N-Parks programs at parks within a 100-mile radius of Las Cruces.

**City of Rocks State Park observatory after construction was finished in early June 2005. Note three observing pads for amateurs astronomers to assist in programming.**



A 21 day old Moon rising on the 28th of August 2005 with an electrical storm and the Hyades in the east.

### New Members and Renewals in the NPO

#### Lifetime Memberships

**Margaret Holohan, of New York, NY**  
**West Light, of Deming, NM**

#### Regular Renewals

**Bill Chrisley, of Radium Springs, NM**  
**Rose Chrisley of Radium Springs, NM**  
**Gregory Conlin, of Silver City, NM**  
**Bob Cantrell, of Las Cruces, NM**  
**Ed Flashpoebler, of Dallas, TX**  
**Andrew Gilkison, of Radium Springs, NM**  
**Tim Hunter of Tucson, AZ**  
**Jeff Jenkins of Las Cruces, NM**

## NPO celebrates City of Rocks S.P. Observatory with NMSP continued

By partnering with the NPO to provide the programs, Cary said, attendees enjoy the benefits of the state park's equipment installed in a dark sky site. "It's fun, educational and informative because of the equipment and people," he said.

We invite readers to join us for the Southern New Mexico Star Party by camping out for an evening or more at the park between September 29 and October 1, 2005 to celebrate the grand opening of the observatory and a chance to view the heavens through this new asset. "The City of Rocks is still a great camping site," Cary said. And that it is.

To register print out and send in the registration form available online at [www.Astro-npo.org](http://www.Astro-npo.org).

### Fall Star-n-Parks Schedule for the National Public Observatory

Saturday September 24, 2005 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 6:56 PM, NT 8:10 PM Venus low in the West, Uranus and Neptune available for observation, the Fall sky is becoming well presented, program ends at 9:50 PM.

**Thursday September 29, ends Sunday October 2, 2005 SNM Star Party at City of Rocks State Park. Three day star party is a register and pay event, there is Stars-N-Parks program on Saturday, see below**

Saturday October 1, 2005 City of Rocks SP, SS 6:46 PM, NT 8:00 PM Venus low in the West, Uranus and Neptune high, the Summer milky Way runs from the NE to the SW, Mars rises by program's end at 9:40 PM J Gilkison

Saturday October 22, 2005, Oliver Lee SP, SS 6:14 PM, NT 7:25 PM Venus low in the west, Uranus and Neptune available for viewing. Mars rise at 7:22 PM will be 20 degrees high by programs end. The Fall sky with Andromeda Galaxy will be available for viewing.

Saturday October 29, 2005 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 6:14 PM, NT 7:25 PM Planet Mars high in the East, Uranus and Neptune in the West, the Fall Sky predominates, program ends at 9:05 PM. Daylight Savings Time ends, Mountain Standard Time begins on October 30<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 AM

Saturday November 5, 2005 City of Rocks SP, SS 5:07 PM, NT 6:20 PM Venus and the Moon low in the SW, Mars, Uranus, and Neptune available for observing, Fall Sky predominates, program ends at 8:00 PM.

Saturday November 19, 2005 Rock Hound SP, SS 4:58 PM, NT 6:10 PM Venus and the Moon low in the SW, Mars, Uranus, and Neptune available for observing, Fall Sky predominates, program ends at 7:50 PM J Gilkison

Saturday December 3, 2005 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 4:55 PM, NT 6:05 PM Venus and the Moon low in the SW, Mars, Uranus, and Neptune available for viewing, the Fall Sky predominates, program ends at 7:50 PM



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Write us at NPO, Box 19

Radium Springs, NM 88054

or

Visit our website [www.astro-npo.org](http://www.astro-npo.org)

The National Public Observatory's first national advertisement as published in the September/October 2005 issue of The Night Sky magazine which is a Sky & Telescope publication. The advertisement may be found on the upper left hand side of page 87.

**Annual Membership Application or Renewal:**  
Please circle one of the following:

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Libraries	\$50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
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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!*