



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 SEVEN SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS

Spring 2006

Columbus shines as beacon of night sky protection for Luna County

By Jessica J. Savage

Blazing a trail in Luna County night sky ordinances, the village of Columbus has become the first municipality in the county to regulate outdoor lighting.

Ordinance No. 301 – Protecting the Night Sky was adopted unanimously by the board of trustees in early February, and will take effect in 90 days.

“By the time summer rolls around, both towns and Luna County will be protected,” predicted National Public Observatory member Wes Light, who has been actively seeking to educate community leaders on the issue of dark skies.

Owner of Sunshine Wells Ranch, a mini-resort with an astronomical observatory, Light said he approached the business community first by giving a presentation to the Deming-Luna County Chamber of Commerce. In his presentation, Light said he explains how maintaining the generally dark skies of the region through friendly outdoor lighting are good for the local economy, astronomy tourism and result in long-term energy savings. Chamber members were impressed with Light’s presentation and passed a resolution in support of the night sky.

Armed with the resolution, Light said he began a series of presentations to the city of Deming councilors, the Luna County commissioners and finally, the village of Columbus trustees last November. Each group received a packet that included a copy of the resolution, cont. above

sample ordinances, articles on dark skies, an explanation of benefits and photographs. The trustees are the first government entity to take action and pass an ordinance.

“I’m happy because it stands as an example to the rest of the county,” Light said.

Columbus will also be an example of night sky protection if recommendations made in a recent lighting survey at Pancho Villa State Park are implemented.

NPO President John Gilkison recently completed an outdoor lighting survey of Pancho Villa State Parks under their Reach for the Stars program, which seeks to bring the park into compliance with the Night Sky Protection Act and facilitate astronomy education in the parks.

To conduct the survey, Gilkison said he took pictures of the lighting fixtures and evaluated two years of utility bills for the park. The dark sky-friendly fixtures he will recommend will use less energy, yet provide the same amount of lighting current fixtures do. “They’ll be able to see just as well or better with no glare,” he said.

This will result in a \$30 per month savings, after recouping the costs of installing new lighting over the next two to three years. “It’s going to cost money for the fixtures but energy savings will pay it back,” Gilkison said.

The survey and implemented recommendations will serve as a model for other state parks, making both the village and its local state park good examples of communities that are sensitive to dark sky issues.

In talking with citizens and community leaders in Luna County about night sky protection, Light said he has met with a receptive audience. “Most people are favorably disposed,” he said. “It’s being accepted without arm twisting.”

Many residents have told Light that they’ve had negative experiences with light trespass, he said. They’ve noticed that over time their view of the Milky Way galaxy has diminished as light pollution Cont. on Pg 2



Pancho Villa State Park looking Northeast towards the Village of Columbus, New Mexico . Columbus passed a comprehensive Outdoor Lighting Ordinance in February of 2006.

Cont. Columbus shines as beacon of night sky protection for Luna County

Cont from pg one

has had an encroaching effect in the rural area. Other people have bought property in the area because they wanted to get away from the bright lights of cities like Tucson. Light said people are aware of the Stars-N-Parks astronomy programs at state parks and want them to continue under dark skies.

The new night sky ordinance was modeled after the ordinance adopted by the city of Las Cruces. Residents have 10 years to comply with the ordinance, however, one of its provisions allows for anyone who is negatively impacted by non-compliant outdoor lighting to obtain a bid for the cost of bringing it into compliance. The affected person may then pay the costs of replacing the lighting, and the owner will not be required to reimburse the person paying for the bid. Light said he intends to speak with local builders about appropriate lighting fixtures.

Although Light's mini-resort will benefit by county-maintained dark skies, Light said his love of dark skies goes beyond business. "It's something I believe in and always have," he said.

New Members and Renewals in the NPO

Jeanette Martin of Las Cruces, NM
 Michael Slaman of Albuquerque, NM
 Lazlo Lazawska of Santa Fe, NM
 Cristina Trowbridge of New York City, NY

Las Cruces Codes Enforcement, Carol Rehder, and Lazlo Lazawska (just left of center) pose next to a city bus after a group outdoor lighting tour on February 17, 2006.



Orion rises over City of Rocks State Park during the January 28th, 2006 Stars-n-Parks program.

The Southern New Mexico Star Party moved to April 20th through April 23rd 2006

by John Gilkison

The Spring 2006 Southern New Mexico Star Party held at City of the Rocks State Park (April 20-23rd) has been scheduled for late April rather than early April to take advantage of the warmer weather and to allow for an earlier rising of the Sagittarius portion of the Milky Way. We noticed in early April the Milky way rises too late for most observers so by moving the star party forward two weeks we get an earlier rise time of one hour.

The City of Rocks State Park Observatory is finished and will be fully operational for the star party. The park trenched a new electric line from the observatory to the pavilion where we set up our telescopes so we will have extra electric power to supplement our power cart.

We also notice the weather in early April was not only cold but often cloudy, so we are hoping the later schedule for the star party will yield us more cloud free skies. We also have scheduled two public nights to give us a better chance of hosting a public program.

The National Public Observatory has some new lenses for our Stella Cam EX we hope to be able to share with you and the public during this year's SNMSP. We have acquired a 200 mm F/2.8 Cannon Lens that has 72 mm's of aperture. We think this will display deep sky objects better than the traditional 135 mm lens we have used in the past. We also have acquired a 6 mm lens that operates at F/1.8. This lens allows us to display 60 degrees of sky and showcase whole constellation at once.

Registration forms for the Spring 2006 SNMSP are available at the NPO Website at www.astro-npo.org or E-mail me at astro-npo@zianet.com.

Spring 2006 Star-n-Parks Schedule for the National Public Observatory

Fall 2005 SS = Sunset, NT = Nautical Twilight

: Saturday March 18, 2006 City of Rocks SP, SS 6:10 PM, NT 7:20 PM Mars & Saturn, Aires to Virgo, Bootes rising, Cetus setting, program ends at 8:50 PM. Matt Wilson presenting.

: Saturday March 18, 2006 Carlsbad Caverns NP, SS 6:10 PM, NT 7:20 PM, Experience a green laser guided tour of the constellations, and the brighter stars. Observe Mars & Saturn, and the ecliptic Aires to Virgo. A one hour telescope tour will include Orion Nebula, galactic open clusters, and some spring galaxies. The program ends at 8:50 PM. John Gilkison presenting.

: Saturday March 25, 2006 Oliver Lee SP, SS 6:15 PM, NT 7:25 PM Mars & Saturn, Aires to Virgo, Bootes rising, Cetus setting, program ends at 8:55 PM. John Pijawka presenting.

: Saturday April 1, 2006 Leasburg Dam S P, SS 6:20 PM, NT 7:30 PM three day old Moon, Mars, & Saturn, Taurus to Libra, Ursa Major well presented, program ends at 9:00 PM. Jeff Jenkins presenting.

: Saturday April 15, 2006 Cabello Lake S P, SS 7:30 PM, NT 8:40 PM Mars, Saturn, & Jupiter which rises at 9:05 PM, Taurus to Libra, Milky Way runs N to S, is setting in the W, program ends at 10:10 PM. John Gilkison presenting.

Thursday April 20th, to Sunday April 23rd, 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.

: Thursday April 20, 06 or Saturday April 22, 2006 City of Rocks S P, SS 7:35 PM, NT 8:45 PM Mars & Saturn, Taurus to Libra, Cont upper right

full up, Orion setting in the West, program ends at 10:15 PM. M Wilson or Gilkison presenting.

: Saturday April 29, 2006 Oliver Lee S P, SS 7:40 PM, NT 8:50 PM two day old Moon, Mars, Saturn & Jupiter, Hydra full up, Orion setting in the West, Taurus to Libra, program ends at 10:20 PM. John Pijawka presenting.

Saturday May 20, 2006 Leasburg Dam S P, SS 7:55 PM, NT 9:05 PM Mars, Saturn, & Jupiter, Gemini to Scorpius, Comet Swasserman visible, Milky Way on horizon all around, Omega Centaurus observable, program ends at 10:35 PM. Jeff Jenkins presenting.

: Saturday May 27, 2006 City of Rocks S P, SS 8:00 PM, NT 9:10 PM Mars, Saturn, & Jupiter, Gemini to Scorpius, Comet Swasserman visible Realm of the Nebulae overhead, globular cluster Omega Centaurus observable, program ends at 10:40 PM. Matt Wilson presenting.

Saturday June 3, 2005 White Sands NP, NT 9:10 PM, to 10:40 PM. Gilkison & C Wilson.



Cristina Trowbridge, our former NPO Secretary holding a pair of 20 X 100 mm Binoculars during a visit to the Gilkison household for dinner on February 24, 2006. Cristina currently works, teaches and lives in New York City, NY.

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

	Member	Sponsor	Supporter	Patron	Lifetime
Individual	\$35	\$50	\$100	\$400	\$600
Family	\$50	\$100			
Student or Retiree	\$20	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Astronomy clubs < 80 members	\$50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Libraries	\$50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Corporate & Government	\$100	\$200	\$400	\$1,500	\$2,500

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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!