



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!!

Volume 2, Issue XVII

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

Winter 2003

Stars-N-Parks program funded by the Space Grant Consortium

by Jessica Savage

LAS CRUCES, N. Mex. -- Recognizing the National Public Observatory's public outreach program's contribution to scientific and aerospace literacy, Stars-N-Parks has been selected as a recipient of funding by a national and state space organization.

Stars-N-Parks will receive \$4,000 in 2004 by the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration under their public service program, which aims to create programs that support literacy in science, engineering, technology, and mathematics, for the citizens of New Mexico.

“This really opens up what we want to do,” said NPO President John Gilkison. “The grant is just a beginning.”

The Stars-N-Parks program has been conducted at Leasburg Dam State Park since its inception in the fall of 2001, and has grown to include programs at five other state parks within a 100-mile radius of Las Cruces. The long-term goal of the NPO is to have a permanent observatory at a facility with

camping and a state park would be an ideal location for such an arrangement.

“State parks is the other half of the equation,” Gilkison explained. “They're the venue, while we're the expertise.” Receiving funding means the NPO will finally be compensated for something it has been doing for two years as a service to the parks, Gilkison said.

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Southern New Mexico Star Party Scheduled for April 15, to 18, 2004

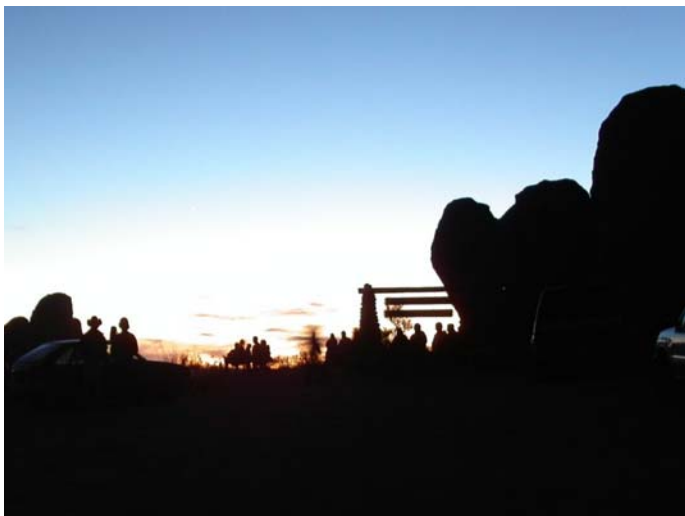
by John Gilkison

The Southern New Mexico Star Party, a three day regional star party held at City of Rocks State Park is scheduled to run from Thursday April 15, 2004, ending Sunday April 18, 2004.

See the application form insert in this newsletter for information and a fee schedule to attend. This will be our fourth regional star party the National Public Observatory has hosted at City of Rocks State Parks since 2002.

Enjoy three nights of premier dark sky observing with other seasoned amateur astronomers in an exotic location of camp sites nestled among house size boulders. We hold the star party in the reservation area so we will not be disturbed by other campers who aren't amateur astronomers. The reservation area is on the east side of the park just north of the electric camp site area and set back in from the road way. We have our own

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Members of the public gathering for a Total Lunar Eclipse of the Moon program at City of Rocks SP.

Space Grant Continued from page one

The parks have to serve the public and in a sense, we're bringing \$4,000 to the parks.

In a letter of support and appreciation, New Mexico State Parks Director David Simon said, "NPO's success in reaching out to parks and the general public in Southern New Mexico is part of a state-wide phenomenon. Public demand for night sky programs increases each year and State Parks hopes to expand our efforts in this area. We see organizations like NPO as an integral part of the solution to meeting public demand for information about our solar system, our galaxy and worlds beyond."

An estimated 900 people attend Stars-N-Parks programs annually, including those who attend our special programs for Solar and Lunar eclipses, and our public night during the Southern New Mexico Star Party held biannually at City of Rocks State Park.

The grant will allow the NPO to pay a fee to the presenter who conducts the laser-pointer Sky Tour at the program and reimburse them for mileage to and from the park. It will also pay many of the behind the scenes expenses associated with announcing the program in the newsletter, to the media and on the Internet through the website.

The NMSGC is one 52 state consortia programs funded in part by NASA, and is part of the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program, managed by NASA. The consortia's carry out the goals and missions of the fellowship, which was established with the 1988 National Space Grant Act. Usually associated with a university, the consortia administer programs in research, education and public service. The NMSGC is located on the campus of New Mexico State University.

MEMBERSHIPS RENEWALS IN THE NATIONAL PUBLIC OBSERVATORY

Lynford L. Ames of Las Cruces, NM
David Cole of Berwick, PA
Bob Crelin of Branford, CT
Amy Claesson of Elephant Butte, NM
Bobby Franzoy of Hatch, NM
William Hovartor of Silver City, NM

Spring 2004 SNMSP Continued

roofed pavilion, which is very useful for moving your gear under in case of inclement weather. There are six picnic tables to keep all your paraphernalia high and dry if it rains.

Last spring this observer saw some of the darkest skies and best transparency I have ever seen in New Mexico at the Southern New Mexico Star Party. Observers were treated to the naked eye visibility of several spring globular clusters which heretofore I had tried to see unsuccessfully at other sites.

We think the NPO regional star parties are an important part of our mission. They keep us in touch with our amateur astronomy base and help bring in new members. A one-year complimentary membership in the NPO comes with every three day registration. Current members have the benefit of being able to register at a lower rate.

Our public night on Saturday at the SNMSP is one of our best attended public nights usually. At the Fall 2003 SNMSP we had over seventy members of the general public in attendance. Without several telescopes and the seasoned amateur astronomers to handle this large a group we would have been overwhelmed.

While the Southern New Mexico Star Party isn't a large event, we keep hoping it will catch on and grow. There seems to be an astronomy vacuum in the Silver City and Deming areas since there are no organized astronomy clubs. The SNMSP is sure to please any amateurs in New Mexico and surrounding states who normally attend other venues. It is very close and reasonable traveling distance for many amateurs in southeastern Arizona also.

So, we hope you will consider the Southern New Mexico Star Party for your next regional star party. We think you will like and enjoy it. Being small means you get to know everyone and make new friends in astronomy. The setting at City of Rocks State Park is beautiful and worth the trip in it's own right. In fact we keep referring to City of Rocks State Park as one of the best kept secrets in the New Mexico State Park system. We look forward to meeting you there under the stars this spring.

Cedar Key Star Party scheduled February 2004

Cedar Key Star Party 2004 will be held from Feb. 15-21 2004 near Cedar Key, Florida. Cedar Key is one of the last dark-sky areas in Florida. The star party was started in 1999 to raise public awareness about the unique dark-sky resource of Cedar Key.

Unlike most star parties where amateur astronomers camp out next to their telescopes, at CKSP attendees stay in gulf-front condos, B&B's and motels. Activities include three nights of public education stargazing, four nights for the amateurs volunteering their time, daily solar observing sessions and even binocular stargazing hayrides.

The days are left open to explore the wonders of the "Nature Coast" that include: dolphin, manatee and bird watching, fabulous seafood and barbeque, dining, fruit and flea markets, boat tours and fishing just to name a few. Come find out why CKSP is known as the most laid-back star party in the world! For more information go to:

<http://www.UpStateAstro.org/stars/cedarkey.html>

A Maksutov 105 still photo, frame grabbed from our (Stella Cam EX) of the southern regions of the Moon showcasing the crater Copernicus.

NPO Stars-N-Parks Schedule for all Southern New Mexico State Parks from December to April of 2004. For Information call John or Lana Gilkison at 505-527-8386

Saturday December 13, 2003 Leasburg Dam State Park-SS 4:56 PM, Sky tour 6:00 PM, Telescope Tour 6:30 PM, Mars, Venus, Uranus, Neptune, Saturn rises near the end of the program at 7:30 PM

Saturday December 20, 2003 Pancho Villa State Park SS 4:56 PM, Sky tour 6:00 PM, Telescope Tour 6:30 PM, Venus, Uranus, Mars, Saturn rises by end of program at 7:30 PM.

Saturday, January 24, 2004 Oliver Lee SP, SS 5:27 PM MST, program starts at 6:40 PM. Observe the Moon, Venus, Mars, and Saturn as well as the Winter sky.

Saturday February 14, 2004 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 5:46 PM MST, program starts at 6:50 PM. Observe Venus, Mars, and Saturn and the Winter sky.

Saturday February 21, 2004 Pancho Villa SP, SS 5:52 PM MST, program starts at 7:00 PM. See the Moon, Venus, Mars, and Saturn, and the Winter sky.

Saturday March 13, 2004 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 6:09 PM MST, program starts at 7:20 PM. Observe Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter rising. The Spring sky is now prominent.

Saturday March 20, 2004 Rock Hound SP, SS 6:14 PM MST, program starts at 7:20 PM. Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn observable as is the Spring sky.

Saturday April 10, 2004 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:29 PM MDT, program starts at 8:30 PM. Venus, Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter, as well as the Spring galaxies.

Thursday April 15 to noon Sunday April 18, 2004. Southern NM Star Party at City of Rocks SP.

Saturday April 17, 2004 City of Rocks SP, SS 7:34 PM MDT, program starts at 8:40 PM. Venus, Mars, Saturn Jupiter, and the Spring galaxies.

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!