National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Natural Landmarks Program

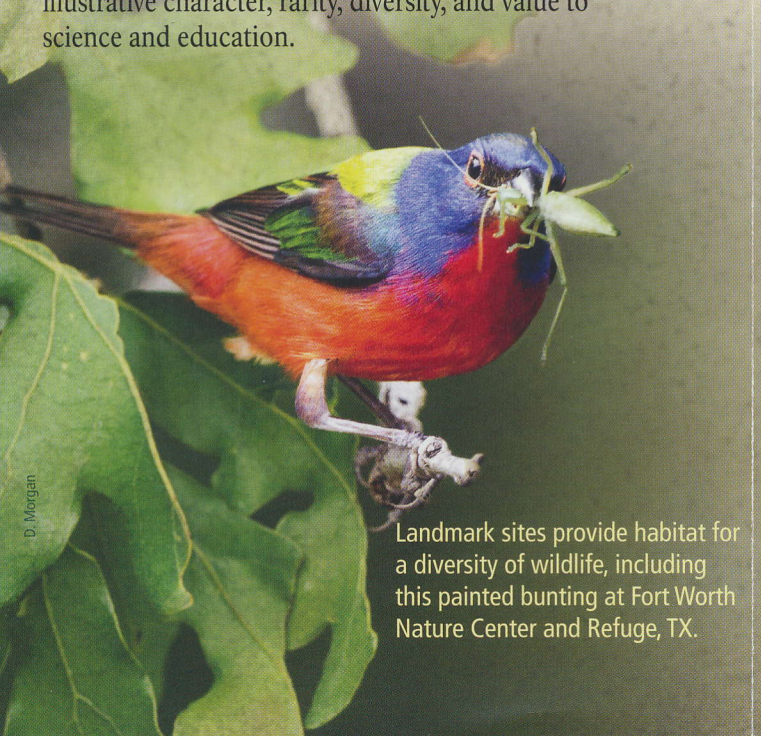
National Natural Landmarks Program

Supporting Conservation of America's Natural Heritage

Q: What is a National Natural Landmark?

A: An area given federal designation for outstanding biological and/or geological features

National natural landmark designation formally recognizes a site as possessing outstanding biological or geological features, providing an important example of our nation's natural history. National natural landmarks are designated by the Secretary of the Interior after in-depth scientific study. Designation is based on the site's condition, illustrative character, rarity, diversity, and value to science and education.



D. Morgan

Landmark sites provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife, including this painted bunting at Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge, TX.

Q: What features does natural landmark designation recognize?

A: All things biological and geological

Natural landmark sites are designated because they contain outstanding examples of particular biological and/or geological features, such as unspoiled wetlands and springs, undisturbed northern red oak forest, white cedar and mixed conifer swamps, prairie grasslands, unusual and highly decorated caves, volcanic necks and igneous intrusions, and evidence of past flora, fauna and ecosystems. Each site tells a piece of the story of America's natural heritage. Woven together, they illustrate the rich and diverse tapestry of the country's natural landscape.

S. Myers

B. Pardini

G. Gusse

G. Hornal

Photos, top to bottom: Onondaga Cave, MO; Morrison-Golden Fossil Areas, CO; Ship Rock, NM; Reelfoot Lake, TN

Q: Who owns National Natural Landmark sites?

A: Anyone

Landmark sites are owned by a variety of public and private land stewards. Most national natural landmarks are not units of the National Park System, rather they are in city, county or state parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, nature preserves, or even in someone's backyard. Participation in the program is voluntary and all new designations must have owner permission.

D. Zeliff

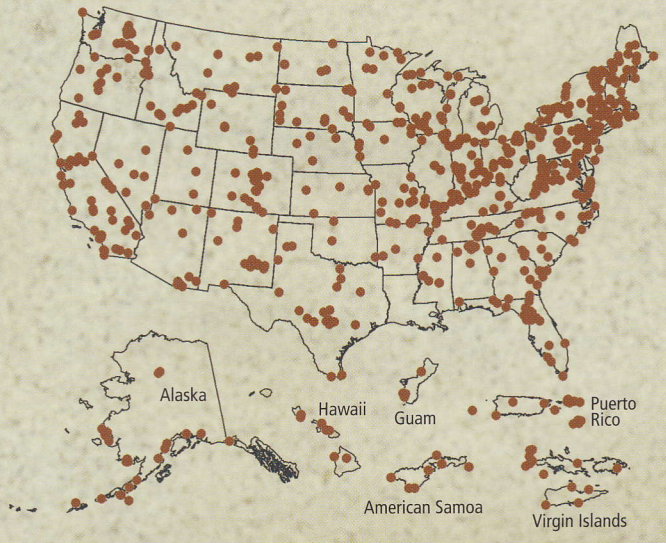
Trona Pinnacles, CA

Q: Where are National Natural Landmarks located?

A: All over the map

Landmark sites are located in both rural and urban communities; some are well-known, others are hidden gems. While public access is not a requirement for designation, many sites are open to public visitation.

To-date, approximately 600 natural areas have received the distinction as a national natural landmark. Visit www.nps.gov/nnlandmarks to learn about landmarks near you.



Q: What does landmark designation do?

A: Recognizes and highlights significant natural features

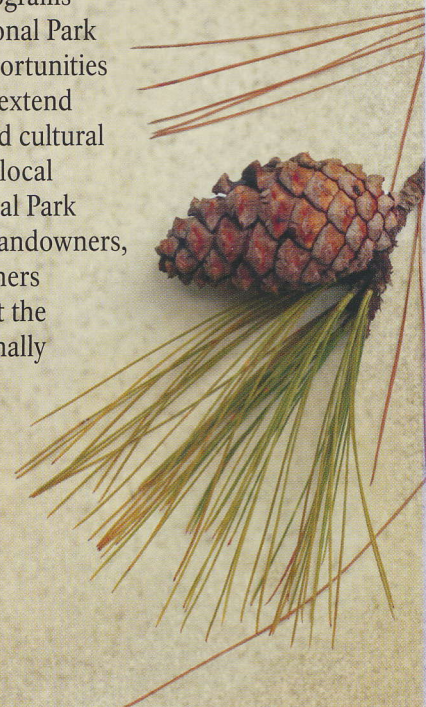
Raising awareness about the presence, location and significance of natural features at designated landmark sites provides valuable information for land-use planning. Well-informed planning efforts can minimize and prevent negative impact to resources at landmark sites.

Land acquisition is not a goal of this program and no new land use management requirements or restrictions are imposed. Protection of these nationally significant sites remains in the hands of its owners and managers. National natural landmark designation honors a landowner's wise stewardship and commitment to preserving a piece of America's natural history.

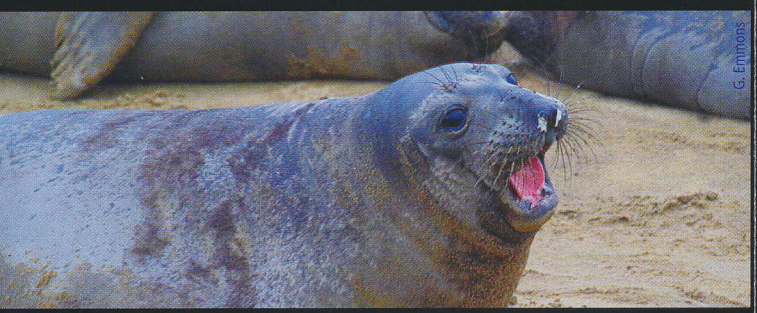
Q: Who administers the National Natural Landmarks Program?

A: The National Park Service

The National Natural Landmarks Program, established in 1962, is one of many community assistance programs administered by the National Park Service that provides opportunities to partner with others to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation to local communities. The National Park Service works alongside landowners, managers and other partners to encourage and support the protection of these nationally significant sites.



J. Pilarski



G. Emmons

Approximately 600 sites have been designated National Natural Landmarks in recognition of their outstanding biological and/or geological features.

A. Wescott

S. Koehler

Photos, top to bottom: Grapevine Mesa Joshua Trees, Arizona; Año Nuevo Point and Island, California; Cave of the Mounds, Wisconsin; Big Springs, Idaho

Walrus Islands, Alaska

For more information
please visit our website at:

www.nps.gov/nnlandmarks

Information provided includes a guide to landmarks by state, frequently asked questions, the regulations that govern the program and the designation process, and contact information for NNL Program staff.

National Natural Landmarks Program

Supporting Conservation
of America's Natural Heritage

Designed by Dennis Caldwell (caldwell-design.com) in cooperation with the National Natural Landmarks Program
Printed 2017
Recycled Paper