

# YOUR AMERICAN WEST

## PARKS

Hubbell Trading Post Hosts  
Sheep-to-Rug Event

Book on White Sands Explores  
the Park's Timeless Geology

## EVENTS

Independent Bookstore Day  
Anza Trail Virtual Fun Run in April

## PRODUCTS

Mini Block Sets Equal Maximum Fun!  
Southwestern Culture on Display  
at The National Parks Store





The tassel-eared Abert's squirrel can be found at Bandelier National Monument (courtesy of Sally King).

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**James E. Cook**  
Chief Executive Officer

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## Details

Western National Parks Association (WNPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, serving more than 70 national parks in the western United States.

The Home Office and The National Parks Store are located at 12880 N Vistoso Village Drive, Tucson, AZ 85755. Learn more by contacting [info@wnpa.org](mailto:info@wnpa.org) or visiting [www.wnpa.org](http://www.wnpa.org).



## Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

After eleven wonderful years at the helm of WNPA, I announce with some mixed emotions that I'll be retiring sometime this summer. A nationwide search for my successor is well under way, and updates will be shared as they arise. First and foremost, it has been a pleasure, honor, and privilege working alongside all of you and our partner parks to create a great visitor experience, fostering love and appreciation for our national parks.

We can all be proud of WNPA's remarkable legacy over the past 84 years. We've touched millions of people and have made a real impact. Whether it's a product that inspires a child, a book that engages an adult, or an educational event in a park sponsored by WNPA that enriches a visitor's experience, together we've created intellectual and emotional connections that are at the heart of our mission. Through those connections, people form a lifelong bond with parks and a desire to protect them.

Since making the decision to retire, I've had some time to reflect on our mission and successes. One of the things I'm most passionate about is that, in 2012, we began a journey to uphold the principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in our work. Through WNPA's products, programs, and services, we collaborate with our National Park Service (NPS) partners to make our partner parks more accessible, more welcoming, and more inclusive of all peoples and their stories in order to represent the full breadth of experiences related to these important lands.

But significantly more work remains to be done in this area. It's important that we institutionalize JEDI principles from top to bottom within our organization, and in everything we do—from the products we source to the books we publish to the programs we offer to the people we hire and the inclusive organizational culture we create—because we have a solemn obligation to tell the story of these cherished lands with the utmost integrity, inclusion, and respect for history. The story of our parks is the story of America in all its glory and shame, and we must tell it with confidence through multiple perspectives and voices.

When I arrived in 2011, the director of NPS reached out to WNPA and other nonprofit partners seeking assistance to help NPS advance its goals related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and relevance. With the support of the NPS, we expanded our mission in 2012 to include community engagement. It was a natural and logical transition for us to expand from our long-standing mission of supporting NPS education, interpretation, and research to reach out beyond the boundaries of national parks and connect with underrepresented communities that may not have had opportunities to experience parks. Further, through community engagement, we create more opportunities for complete and inclusive storytelling in the parks we serve. Investing more time and resources in community outreach is vital if we are to ensure the long-term relevance of parks and that parks are inclusive in the stories they represent.

As I approach my final months on the job leading WNPA, I am very grateful to our dedicated and talented board of directors, staff, and NPS partners, and to our many members and donors. You all help WNPA make the national park experience possible for everyone. Thank you for your past support and for your support going forward! WNPA needs and appreciates you!

In retirement, I look forward to seeing you in a park and sharing a great park experience with you!

James E. Cook  
Chief Executive Officer



# Research Matters

Every 10 years, National Park Service researchers and colleagues venture out to remote areas of [Saguaro National Park](#) to take a survey of desert vegetation in 45 plots surrounding the majestic saguaro cactus, whose towering bodies and upraised arms are as much a southwestern cultural symbol as a staple of the desert landscape. This large-scale monitoring effort, dubbed the Saguaro Census, links generations of researchers going back as far as the post-World War II period. In the latest survey, conducted in 2020 and supported by Western National Parks Association, researchers found that desert vegetation has been remarkably stable despite extreme weather over the past 30 years, but that climate change may affect the long-term health of the saguaro.

Below is an article on a multiyear research project called the Saguaro Census.



*Although NPS researchers have observed a slight decline in the number of trees in the park, the number of saguaros has greatly increased (courtesy of Raychel Sanner, Unsplash).*





*NPS biologist Don Swann, holding a wildlife camera, said the Saguaro Census is a “partnership of generations” (courtesy of Konner Speth).*

## Desert Plants at Saguaro National Park Resist an Old Foe: Drought

By Dave DeFusco

Desert vegetation surrounding the saguaro cactus in **Saguaro National Park** has been remarkably stable despite the presence of extreme weather over the past 30 years, according to a progress report on an ongoing research project, Three Decades of Ecological Change: The 2020 Saguaro Census, Phases I and II, supported by Western National Parks Association (WNPA).

The research, conducted by University of Arizona master’s candidate Emily Fule and park biologists Don Swann and Adam Springer, is part of the fourth survey associated with the [Saguaro Census](#). The researchers found that, since 1990, the total number of perennial plants has increased in both the Tucson Mountain District (TMD) and Rincon Mountain District (RMD) of Saguaro National Park, which is located in Pima County, Arizona.

The two districts are separated geographically by the city of Tucson. The TMD, often referred to as Saguaro West, encompasses 24,818 acres of land, much of it designated as wilderness, while the RMD, or Saguaro East, contains 67,000 acres of wilderness.

The census, which takes place every 10 years, is a large-scale monitoring effort of the park’s signature plant, the majestic saguaro, whose towering bodies and upraised arms are as much a southwestern cultural symbol as a staple of the desert landscape.

In 2020, the researchers found that the total number of individual plants, or stems, in the RMD had nearly doubled to 5,056 from 2,659 in 1990; in the TMD, the number of plants had swelled to 4,394 from 2,822, up 44 percent. Total plant cover also expanded significantly during the past three decades. In the RMD, cover extended to 15,500 square feet in 2020 from 11,300 square feet in 1990; in the TMD, it jumped to 10,300 square feet from 9,000 square feet.

Although researchers observed a slight decline in the number of trees in the park, the numbers of prickly pear and saguaros, as well as brittlebush, a smaller perennial plant that favors warmer conditions, have greatly increased.

“There is some evidence that the long-term drought of the past 20 years is beginning to impact some species,” said Swann, “but the results also show how slowly desert plant communities change. Many plants that were present on the plots in 1990 are still there today.”

The saguaro surveys are taken on 45 plots, each approximately 10,000 square feet. Twenty plots are randomly located in the TMD, and 25 are located within saguaro habitat in the lower elevations of the RMD. Within these large plots are 1,100-square-foot subplots.



During the surveys, the researchers record all plants on each subplot and map their cover area.

The 30 years of data suggest that long-term climate warming, suburban sprawl, and random events such as wildfire and above-normal precipitation are significantly affecting growth patterns. All of the plants they mapped flourished after cattle grazing ended in the 1970s, and during wetter, cooler conditions throughout the 1980s

TMD that has decreased slightly in cover and density. Brittlebush, which exploded in numbers in 2010 following heavy summer rains in 2006, decreased in number in both districts by 2020 but increased in cover as individual plants became larger.

“This project highlights the huge plant diversity that we can see in the low-elevation Sonoran Desert,” said Fule, the lead author of the report who did most of the

**“It’s a fascinating park if you’re a biologist,” said Swann. “It goes from low desert elevations, where it’s very hot and dry, to 9,000-foot elevations that are overspread with conifers. Being at the top of the Rincon Mountains is like being in Maine or Oregon.”**

and early 1990s. Since then, the park and desert Southwest have experienced extended long-term drought, punctuated by short wet periods.

Drier, warmer conditions have been favorable for prickly pear and cholla, but less so for shrubs. Researchers in 2010 discovered a surge in small subshrubs that resulted from heavy summer rains in 2006. Some individual plants were killed by a deep freeze in 2011, but the long-term effects, according to the researchers, appear to be relatively small.

“It’s a fascinating park if you’re a biologist,” said Swann. “It goes from low desert elevations where it’s very hot and dry, to 9,000-foot elevations that are overspread with conifers. Being at the top of the Rincon Mountains is like being in Maine or Oregon.”

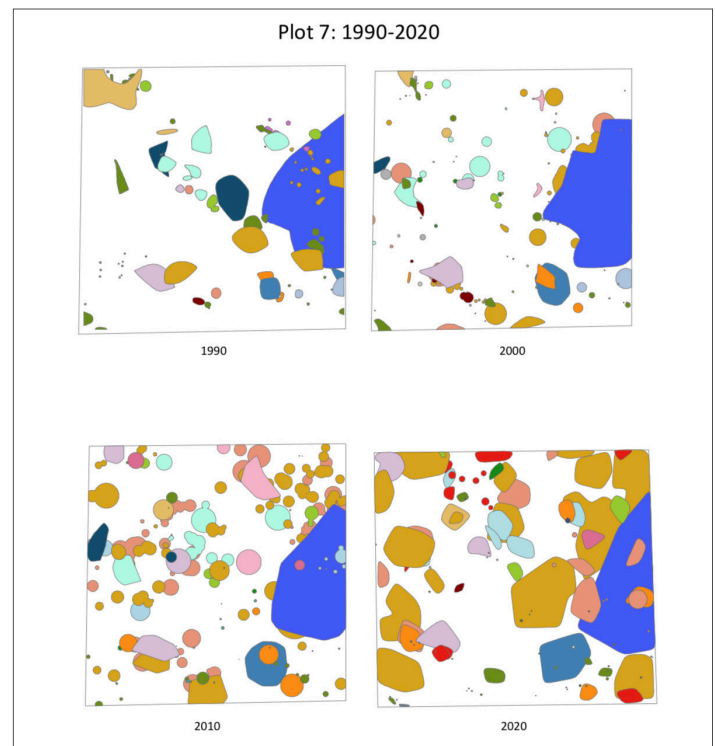
The research is taking place in the Sky Island region, isolated mountain ranges that are an extension of the Sierra Madre range. The area contains a mix of dry desert and subtropical plants. A lot of these plants grow like saguaros, said Swann, and their reproduction and growth are tied to reliable summer rains.

While the general number and cover of plants have ballooned in the park since the 1990s, there have been winners and losers among species. Among common trees, velvet mesquite and foothills palo verde have declined, whereas whitethorn acacia and wolfberry have prospered. Among shrubs, the density and cover of creosote, pelotazo or hoary abutilon, and jojoba have remained stable, while fairyduster and limberbush have increased.

Nearly all common subshrubs have expanded in range, except for triangle-leaf bursage, a common species in the

fieldwork, as well as the data management and mapmaking. “In only 1,100 square feet, it was common to find over 20 different species, and on several plots, we found as many as 30 species.”

Among cacti and succulents, prickly pear stands out as a dominant plant, more than doubling in cover in the RMD



*The mesquite tree represented in blue has maintained a steady presence through decades of drought, while brittlebush represented by the gold areas took advantage of heavy summer rains in 2006 to expand its range. Mesquite and saguaros typically live for many decades (courtesy of Emily Fule).*

since 1990. Pincushion cacti’s cover has doubled in the same period, while barrel cactus cover has declined by more than half. From 1990 to 2020, the overall cover of three common cholla species increased mainly because of an eruption of jumping cholla.



Plant communities, however, aren't shaped by just large-scale, long-term environmental change. Rare events, such as wildfires, freezes, windstorms, and droughts, can spur their growth or hasten their decline. Since 1990, the park's plants have been met with three very wet winters, a summer of torrential rain in 2006, and a deep freeze in 2011 that together defied the prolonged drought and historically high temperatures.

During that wet summer in 2006, shrubs, such as brittlebush, multiplied to such an extent that surveyors in 2010 had to modify their sampling methods to accurately map the plants that were by then 3 to 4 years old. The freeze in 2011 was a sudden reversal of fortune for many of the cold-intolerant brittlebush, which died off in significant numbers. Overall cover did expand, however, as they continued to mature.

Indigenous peoples drew sustenance from saguaros long before the cacti became a celebrated symbol of the American west. The Tohono O'odham, or Desert People, have lived in the Sonoran Desert for thousands of years. Their harvesting of the saguaro fruit is a centuries-old practice that reaffirms their relationship with their traditional environment. They use the flowers, fruit, seeds, thorns, burls or boots, and ribs of the saguaro for food, ceremonies, fiber, manufacture, and trade, and they use the fruit and seeds to make a ceremonial wine that is used in the Navai't, and the Vikita, or harvest ceremony.

Saguaros are masters of survival, and they reproduce for more than a hundred years, but the species doesn't produce a fresh crop every year. They like cooler, wetter desert conditions, and are especially resilient once they mature, but climate-induced drought over the long term may affect their numbers in the park.

"Adult plants tend to survive and be much more resilient to drought than young plants," said Swann. "Saguaros are a good case study of this. Once they reach a certain age when they can store water, it's incredibly resilient to change and drought, whereas the new ones are decreasing in number. We're not alarmed by this development, but we're keeping an eye on it."

*Saguaro Photo by Karl Magnuson on Unsplash*

The park's evolving vegetation has also affected two species of deer in the park—white-tailed deer and mule deer—which like to eat saguaro flesh that hoards water. White-tailed deer tend to inhabit higher elevations and like to hide in the forest, while mule deer roam the grasslands and desert. Over the past 30 years, the researchers have seen a shift in behavior.



*Emily Fule, a master's candidate at the University of Arizona, did most of the mapmaking and data management for the fourth survey of the Saguaro Census (courtesy of Don Falk, University of Arizona).*

"In the 1970s, the whitetail deer inhabited elevations at 5,000 to 6,000 feet and their presence in the desert was unusual," said Swann. "Now they've moved into the desert where plants provide cover for them. Since mule deer can't see as far, they're uncomfortable with the plant cover."

Swann called the Saguaro Census a "partnership of generations." He said the team of researchers, which includes five hundred volunteers, is grateful for the support from WNPA and the Friends of Saguaro National Park that is allowing them to continue the 80-year-old program.

"Saguaro National Park is particularly biologically diverse and has a rich scientific legacy that we feel responsible for continuing," he said. "A lot of people who started the studies that I'm working on have been dead for a long time. Like them, I hope that I become a conduit for young people to continue these studies long after I'm gone."

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*Since 1938 WNPA has funded scientific research to help advance the management, preservation, and interpretation of our national parks. WNPA has partnered with the University of Arizona School of Journalism to provide engaging stories about the research projects completed with the aid of WNPA funding. Your American West will feature one of these stories in each of the next few issues. Discover more of the historical, social, and environmental research projects WNPA has funded in recent years on our [website](#).*



# People & Happenings



*In late November, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, seventh from left, paid a special visit to Chaco Culture National Historic Park. She did some hiking and met with park staff and WNPA team member Rose Trujillo who is to Secretary Haaland's right.*

## INTERIOR SECRETARY DEB HAALAND VISITS CHACO CULTURE

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland paid a visit in late November to **Chaco Culture National Historic Park** to rally support for the Interior Department's proposed actions to protect Chaco Culture NHP, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, from drilling. She took the occasion to hike through Pueblo Bonito and meet with park staff, including Rose Trujillo, a WNPA team member, who also hosted tribal leaders and members of Congress.

"As we reflected on the brilliance and resilience of the Pueblo people who once shared meals, raised families, and lived life at Chaco," said Secretary Haaland in a letter to park staff, "I could not help but be grateful for the work you do to protect this sacred place. Your relationships with tribes and the surrounding communities contribute to your success."

She added, "It was incredible to hear about the research you do to document the cultural significance, purpose, and day-to-day lives of the ancestors who walked among those walls."



*At the Tucson Festival of Books, the Junior Ranger Jamboree in the Western National Parks Pavilion is an example of WNPA's mission to provide culturally relevant outreach events and meaningful community connections (courtesy of NPS).*

## PRESENTATION ON DIVERSIFYING COMMUNITY OUTREACH LEADS TO PUBLISHED ARTICLE

Caroline Lochner, WNPA regional program manager, and Cam Juarez, community engagement and outreach coordinator at **Saguaro National Park**, presented the session, "Diversifying Community Engagement," at the 2021 National Association for Interpretation (NAI)



national conference in December. During the session, they suggested that a diverse workforce, culturally relevant outreach events, and meaningful community connections lead to raising awareness, reaching new audiences, facilitating conservation stewardship and diversifying attendance at their sites. NAI will publish their article, “A Conversation about Diversifying Community Engagement,” in the July/August issue of *Legacy Magazine*.

## PARK HISTORIAN, COLLEGE STUDENTS, ARE WNPA AWARD WINNERS

An internationally recognized national park historian and two college students who want to teach their communities about the benefits of national parks have earned [annual awards presented by WNPA](#).

Dr. Alfred Runte, a noted Seattle-based historian and author who made major contributions to Ken Burns’s America’s Best Idea series on PBS, received WNPA’s Stewart L. Udall Award for his lifelong dedication to sharing his passion for protecting national parks and other American wildlands.

Anna Flores and Eva Vieyra, both participants of the **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area** youth program, are recipients of the WNPA’s Ernest Quintana and Marty Sterkel Education Program Scholarship. They plan to share with their Latino communities the spiritual and cultural connections they made at the national parks.

Flores worked as a Spanish communications assistant and an interpreter. She created programs that brought to light

rarely told stories of the park, as well as about its features Paramount Ranch and Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing. Vieyra improved trails and planted oak trees in the national recreation area that she didn’t know existed until she joined Santa Monica Mountains NRA Youth.



Violet Kennedy, library manager for Literacy Connects, receives a WNPA donation of more than a hundred books.

## WNPA DONATES BOOKS TO LITERACY CONNECTS

Over the 2021 holiday season, WNPA donated more than a hundred books to our partner Literacy Connects, a nonprofit based in Tucson, Arizona, during a book drive that focused especially on children’s books. For the fourth year in a row, used books and newly purchased books were collected at [The National Parks Store](#) and donations were accepted at the [WNPA online store](#). The donated books will be used in programs that promote early literacy, school readiness, independent reading, and increased vocabulary and fluency.

Eva Vieyra



Dr. Alfred Runte



Anna Flores





# In the Parks



Once a sheep's wool is cleaned and brushed, the weaver threads the loom (courtesy of Mindi Gusman).

## HUBBELL TRADING POST HOSTS SHEEP-TO-RUG EVENT

### The Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site

held a sheep-to-rug event for park visitors in November as part of Native American Heritage Month to showcase the process, history, and stories of traditional Navajo weaving.

Most Navajo rugs are made from wool, and are hand-dyed using plants found in the area, but weaving is only 20 percent of the work. A significant step in the process is caring for the sheep. In spring, the sheep are sheared, and then the wool is cleaned and carded, a necessary step before spinning when the sheared fleece is brushed. Once the wool has been prepared, the weaver threads the loom. Depending on the difficulty of the pattern and size of the rug, it could take several months to finish.

According to Navajo myth, the Diné, or the people, were led to the Southwest from the underworld by the Holy People. Spider Man taught the Navajos how to make a loom from sunshine, lightning, and rain. Spider Woman taught them to weave.

From Spanish settlers, they acquired churro sheep, noted for their long, fine, lustrous wool, and from the Pueblo people, they adopted the upright loom and weaving techniques.

Weaving is a sacred art, embodying creation stories, prayers, ceremonial practices, and the ancient and historical past. In weaving, the individual preserves *hozho*—order, beauty, balance, and harmony.

Diné philosophy, spirituality, and sheep are intertwined like wool in the strongest weaving. Sheep symbolize the good life—living in harmony and balance on the land. Before they acquired domesticated sheep on this continent, Diné held the *idea of sheep* in their collective memory for thousands of years.

## BOOK ON WHITE SANDS EXPLORES THE PARK'S TIMELESS GEOLOGY

In the book *White Sands National Park*, scheduled for publication this summer by WNPA, author Susan Lamb takes readers on a journey through **White Sands National Park** that not only sheds light on a vital link to our origins as a species, but is also a portal to the Pleistocene era, when woolly mammoth shared the landscape with prehistoric humans.





## WNPA is planning events surrounding the release of the book, so keep an eye out on our events page for dates and times, or follow WNPA on Facebook or Instagram.

During the Pleistocene, which started 2.5 million years ago and ended about twelve thousand years ago, the alkali flats and nearby lakes attracted mammoths and mastodons, saber-tooth cats, North American camels, and 8,000-pound sloths. In 2011, a research team including Matthew Bennett, a paleontologist at Bournemouth University in Britain who received travel funding from WNPA, and David Bustos, resource program manager at White Sands NP, surveyed a megatrack site, which revealed the first collection of human tracks: 27 individual footprints that vanished into a dune.

Their research was published in [Science](#) and received widespread attention from the science press, because



human tracks interacting with Pleistocene megafauna had never been seen before. The tracks are at least eleven thousand years old, as ancient as the last ground sloth. A human followed quite literally in the sloth's footsteps.

The park preserves 350 officially recorded archaeological sites, with potentially thousands within its boundaries and more

discovered every year. Stone spear and other projectile points tell of hunters, gatherers, and farmers who lived there at least thirteen thousand years ago. On the edge of the dunes, columns of fire-hardened gypsum, known as hearth sites, contain four-thousand-year-old artifacts and plant remains. Bits of broken pottery and traces of communal dwellings, called pueblos, dot the flats and the base of the mountains to the west of the dunefield, which is nestled in the Tularosa Basin and surrounded by the San Andres and Sacramento Mountains.

Following these and other discoveries, White Sands was redesignated a national park in 2019 with a more detailed purpose: "to protect, preserve, and restore its scenic, scientific, educational, natural, geological, historical, cultural, archaeological, paleontological, hydrological, fish, wildlife, and recreational values and to enhance visitor experiences."

Another astonishing feature of the park is its dunes, a windswept expanse of gypsum unlike any on Earth. The dunes encompass 275 square miles in southern New Mexico—White Sands NP covers 115 square miles—and are visible from space. Among the park's extraordinary natural resources are its silent landscape and velvety dark skies that make starkly visible a panoply of stars and planets.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, the author reminds us, noticed something that modern science tells us is true: everything flows. By all accounts, [White Sands NP](#) is a living organism and an irresistible lure for scientists from around the world who want to uncover its ancient secrets in the gypsum.

### LEWIS AND CLARK TRAIL JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM WINS NAI MEDIA AWARD

**The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail** Junior Ranger program has won a [first-place media award](#) from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI).

Each year, agencies and organizations engaged in public outreach submit publications, videos, digital campaigns, and exhibits for competition in NAI's media awards. Entries are reviewed by a panel of professionals in the fields of interpretation, design, and media.

Part of the National Park Service's popular Junior Ranger program, the Lewis and Clark Trail Junior Ranger program is hosted at more than 30 locations in 13 states along the [Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail](#). Participants pick up a free booklet and work on educational activities to earn a Junior Ranger badge.

*The Lewis and Clark Trail Junior Ranger Activity Journal* was awarded the first-place NAI Media Award in the book





A Lewis and Clark Trail junior ranger booklet is shown at Fort Peck Dam and Lake in Montana, one of 30 participating locations along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. WNPAs partners with NPS to develop and distribute Junior Ranger activity booklets as part of its support of 70+ national parks (courtesy of NPS).

category after receiving top marks for thoughtful messaging and innovative online components. Congratulations to our park partner for this important recognition. Learn more about the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, which follows the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition across North America and passes through the territories of more than 60 tribes.

While visiting a park, children can take part in the free NPS Junior Ranger program. After completing an educational activity booklet, kids are sworn in by a park ranger and welcomed to the NPS “family” with a certificate and badge. Many children make it a mission to collect as many Junior Ranger badges as they can.

WNPA partners with the NPS to develop and distribute Junior Ranger activity booklets as part of its support of 70+ national parks. We also provide financial aid to parks to assist with the costs of running Junior Ranger programs such as ordering badges and designing activities and ensuring children can explore, learn about, and protect national parks. Read more about the [Junior Ranger program](#).

## LECTURES ON AMERICAN HISTORY KICK OFF THE AMERICA250 SERIES

Western National Parks Association began its commemoration of America’s 250th anniversary in 2026

with a five-part lecture series on American history by retired lawyer and historian Jack Lasseter. During the series, hosted by [The National Parks Store](#), Lasseter discussed the Declaration of Independence, founding fathers, US Constitution, US Supreme Court, and the American legal system. The talks, held from November to March, drew three hundred guests.

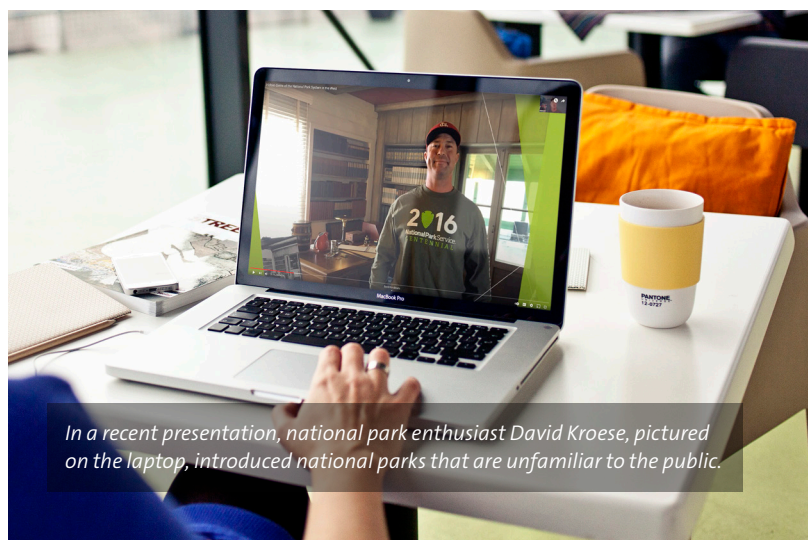
The talks are part of a broad effort, called America250, representing a coalition of public and private partners creating initiatives and programs to honor the 250th anniversary. For more information about what the US Semiquincentennial Commission has planned, visit [America250.org](#).

## TALK ON NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM’S HIDDEN GEMS

WNPA Park Protectors were treated to two virtual programs on the Hidden Gems of America’s National Park System in December and January with author and national park enthusiast David Kroese. During each two-hour presentation, participants were introduced to national parks that are unfamiliar to the public, including sites across the continent and into the Pacific and Caribbean, including some of WNPA’s spectacular natural and historical partner parks.

One of the hidden gems that Kroese cited is [Chiricahua National Monument](#), dubbed a “wonderland of rocks” by the National Park Service, which includes an 8-mile paved scenic drive and 17 miles of hiking trails, providing opportunities to discover the beauty, natural sounds, and inhabitants of this 12,025-acre site.

You, too, can become a Park Protector and take advantage of these special events by [clicking here](#) to become a member.



In a recent presentation, national park enthusiast David Kroese, pictured on the laptop, introduced national parks that are unfamiliar to the public.



# Focus On

## PARK PROTECTORS PROVIDE OTHERS OPPORTUNITIES TO ENJOY NATIONAL PARKS

If you believe that national parks are worth preserving and that everyone should be able to experience them—you are a Park Protector! Join this growing community of park lovers and help WNPA support national parks.

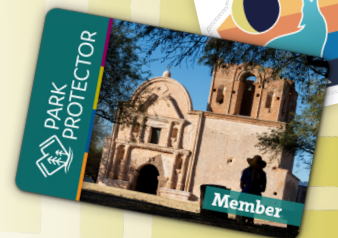
Connect with others like you who value what national parks have to offer and who want to make sure everyone can enjoy the national park experience now and into the future. Fill out a form at any WNPA park store or sign up online at [ParkProtector.org](https://ParkProtector.org).

Benefits include access to special members-only deals and merchandise; digital newsletters featuring park stories, news, and events; advance email notification of presentations, virtual events, and educational opportunities; 10 percent discount at our stores in national parks and online at [store.wnpa.org](https://store.wnpa.org); reciprocal discounts, excluding craft items, at four-hundred-plus public land sites; and tax-deductible membership dues.

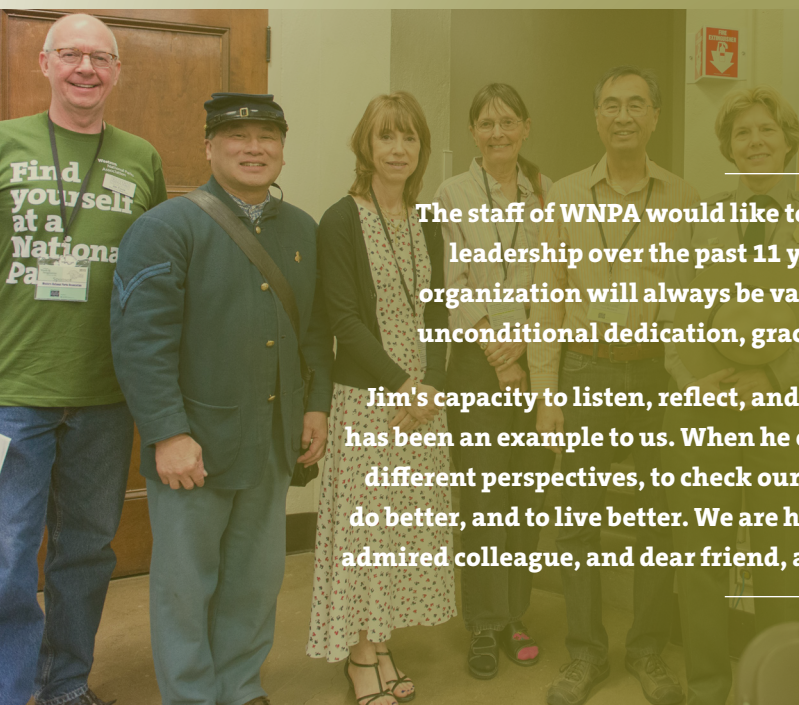
Access to [exclusive Park Protector products](#), including mesh caps, water bottles, pins, and decals, makes it easy to show your support for national parks and proudly proclaim your Park Protector status. The unique logo symbolizes our shared love and connection to the landscapes, waterways, ecosystems, and diverse history found in WNPA's 70-plus partner parks.

Park Protectors helped make possible transportation for local third-grade classes to Pecos National Historical Park, purchase of a solar telescope for Timpanogos Cave National Monument, and staff training at Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve. [Park Protectors](#) also fund community programs, special events, and educational opportunities; kickstart scientific research projects for the protection and preservation of parks; create educational and recreational opportunities for children and junior rangers; and create awareness of lesser-known parks and stories from the West.

**Join the Park Protector program and we'll see you in the parks!**

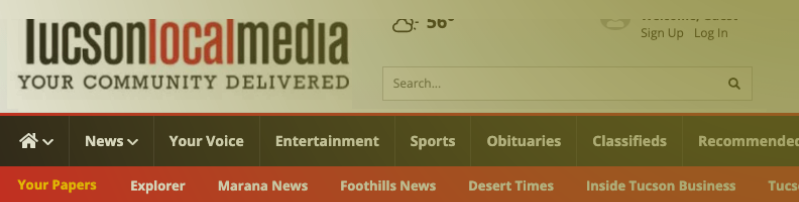
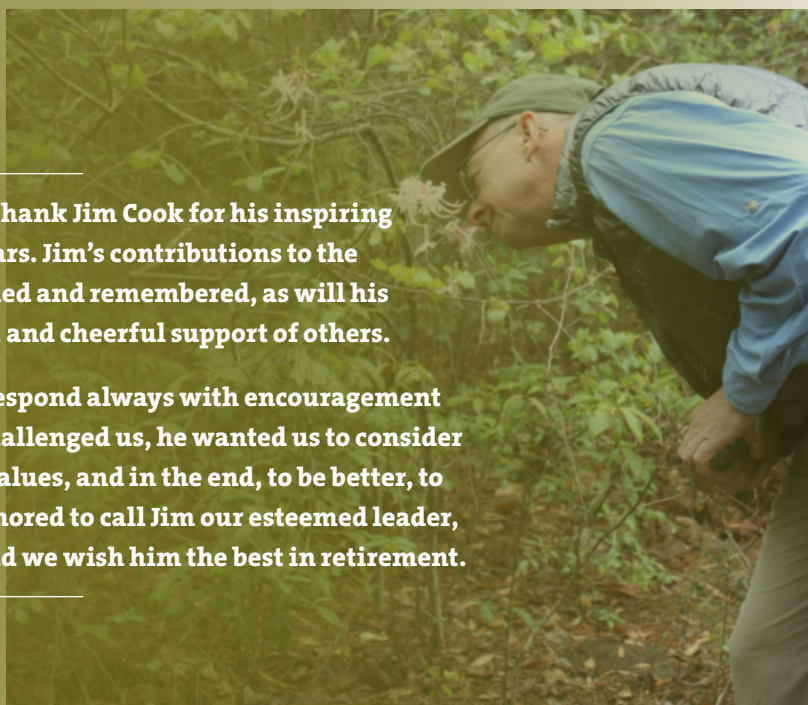






The staff of WNPA would like to thank Jim Cook for his inspiring leadership over the past 11 years. Jim's contributions to the organization will always be valued and remembered, as will his unconditional dedication, grace, and cheerful support of others.

Jim's capacity to listen, reflect, and respond always with encouragement has been an example to us. When he challenged us, he wanted us to consider different perspectives, to check our values, and in the end, to be better, to do better, and to live better. We are honored to call Jim our esteemed leader, admired colleague, and dear friend, and we wish him the best in retirement.



## James Cook takes the helm at WNPA

Feb 10, 2011 0

f t e p b

James E. Cook is the new executive director/CEO of Western National Parks Association (WNPA), an Oro Valley-based nonprofit. Founded in 1938, the WNPA supports education, interpretation and research at 66 national parks in 12 western states.

Jim stands beside Tisha McCombs, a WNPA operations manager in California and Nevada, and John Todd, a WNPA field operations manager, at the Parade of Roses in Pasadena in 2016. NPS participated in the Parade of Roses to celebrate its centennial. | Jim pauses to appreciate a mountain azalea at Big Thicket National Preserve. | Jim and Sunny the Saguaro, the mascot of Saguaro National Park, having a good time at the Tucson Festival of Books. | Jim met with authors Irving David Moy, Lisa See, Ruthanne Lum McCunn, Tom Richard, and Carol Shively before a panel discussion on the book Asians and Pacific Islanders and the Civil War at the Tucson Festival of Books. Jim was a contributor to the book, and WNPA shares copyright credit with Eastern National Park and Monument Association.





# New & Notable Releases

## MINI BLOCK SETS EQUAL MAXIMUM FUN!

Celebrate your love for national parks even when you're at home. Choose from our wide selection of thematic block sets, each designed to enhance your understanding of our national parks and their environment. From classic to whimsical, we have the right activity for you. Plus, you'll feel good knowing that your purchases support national parks.

This set creates a [miniature replica of Casa Grande \(Great House\)](#), as seen at [Casa Grande Ruins National Monument](#). The Great House was built during the 1300s and is one of the largest prehistoric structures ever built in North America. The 635-piece set, for ages 7 and up, features educational information about the Great House.

You can build a [miniature replica of Montezuma Castle National Monument](#). This 20-room, high-rise apartment nestled into a towering limestone cliff tells a story of ingenuity, survival, and prosperity in an unforgiving desert landscape. The 568-piece set, appropriate for ages 7 and up, features educational information about [Montezuma Castle National Monument](#), which is dedicated to preserving Native American culture.

This set creates a [miniature replica of Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site](#). Southern Cheyenne, Arapaho Plains Indians, and trappers traded for buffalo robes at Bent's Old Fort in the early 19th century. For much of its 16-year history, the fort served as permanent settlement on the Santa Fe Trail between Missouri and Mexican settlements. The 629-piece set, appropriate for ages 7 and up, features educational information about [Bent's Old Fort NHS](#).





# New & Notable Releases



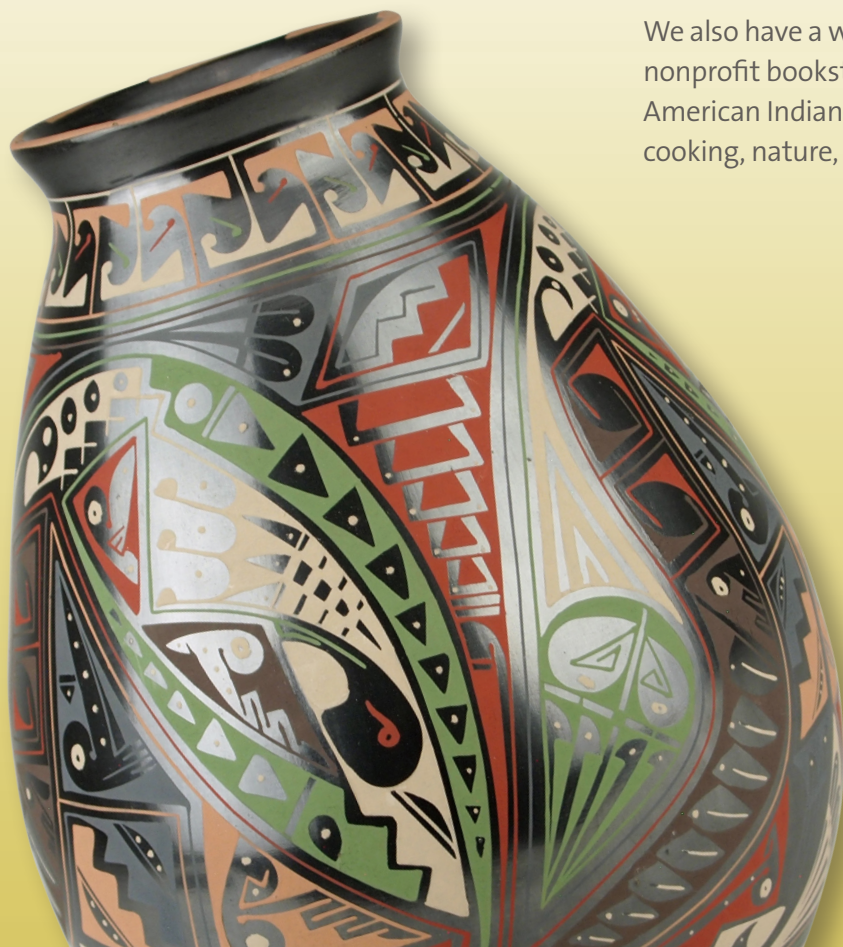
## SOUTHWESTERN CULTURE ON DISPLAY AT THE NATIONAL PARKS STORE

**The National Parks Store** in Oro Valley opens a window into Southwest culture, artistry, and history. You'll find a stunning variety of authentically traditional and modern interpretations of Hopi kachina dolls, Zuni fetishes, Navajo jewelry, and basketry, weaving, and pottery from different cultures.

Other local cultural offerings include handmade Mexican crafts, such as popular Oaxacan woodcarvings and Mata Ortiz pottery; packaged food made of desert ingredients; and ceramics, soaps, home goods, and other gifts with a Sonoran Desert theme.

We're the only store that carries the work of master craftspeople Jacobo and Maria Angeles (Oaxacan woodcarvings); Agustin Cruz Prudencio (Oaxacan woodcarvings); and Priscilla Nieto (Santo Domingo jewelry).

We also have a wide selection of books. As an independent, nonprofit bookstore and publisher, WNPA carries titles on American Indian and American history, national parks, cooking, nature, and children's stories.



**THE  
NATIONAL  
PARKS  
STORE**



# Featured Events & Activities



## Independent Bookstore Day

**Saturday, April 30, online and in person**  
**Thursday, April 28–Monday, May 2, book sales**

One day. Fifty states. Hundreds of bookstores. As a book publisher and manager of an independent bookstore, WNPA is thrilled to participate in Independent Bookstore Day, which will feature sales, events, and giveaways [online](#) and in person at [The National Parks Store](#) in Oro Valley, Arizona.

## Anza Trail Virtual Fun Run in April

Join the second annual Anza Trail Virtual Fun Run, from April 16 to 29, and share your progress with a nationwide community of exercise enthusiasts on the [event's Facebook page](#). You can run, hike, walk, or bike along your

favorite trail in your local area for as many miles as you choose. To participate, log on to Facebook, search Anza Trail Virtual Fun Run, and click on either “interested” or “going” to post your mileage and a picture of yourself. If you use your own Facebook page, add the hashtag #AnzaTrailVirtualFunRun to your post.

Your mileage will be added to the running tally of the fun-run team that will cover more than 1,200 miles from Nogales, Arizona, to San Francisco. This year's theme is Crossing Paths, and there will be posts about cultures that intersect, overlap, connect, or emerge at the sites along the trail. Participation is free, but if you'd like to support the event, you can purchase a participation pack through the [WNPA online store](#).

## National Park Week

**April 16–24**

Every April, during the presidentially proclaimed [National Park Week](#), we join with the [National Park Foundation](#), the official charity of America's national parks, to celebrate America's treasures. National Park Week is a time to explore amazing places, discover stories of history and culture and volunteer at and [find your park](#).





Parks across the country will host a variety of special programs, events, and digital experiences. Entrance fees are waived on April 16 to kick off National Park Week and encourage everyone to enjoy their national parks.

## Free Entrance Days in the National Parks

All National Park Service sites that normally charge an entrance fee will offer free admission to everyone on these fee-free days in 2022:

**April 16: First day of National Park Week**

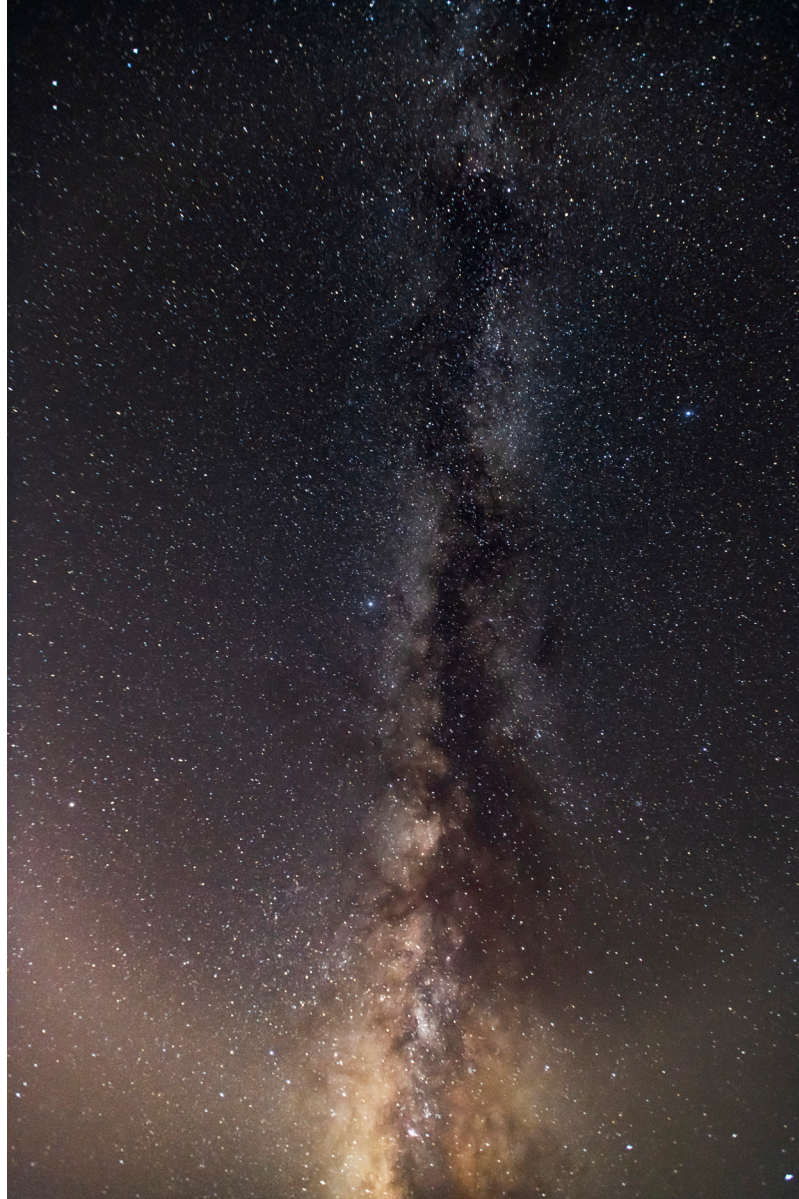
**August 4: Anniversary of the Great American Outdoors Act**

**September 24: National Public Lands Day**

**November 11: Veterans Day**

The entrance fee waiver doesn't cover amenity or user fees for activities such as camping, boat launches, transportation, or special tours.

*Top, The White House Trail at Canyon de Chelly National Monument is the only one in the park that doesn't require a guide. Today, Navajo live on and farm this land, and the park and Navajo Nation co-manage the land's resources (courtesy of NPS). Bottom, Bear Gulch Reservoir at Pinnacles National Park is important habitat for the red-legged frog, a threatened species in California (courtesy of Kurt Moses, NPS).*



*Nighttime views and environments are considered critical park features that the National Park Service protects (courtesy of Brad Sutton).*

## Stargazing at Capulin Volcano National Monument

Capulin Volcano National Monument, named a Gold Tier Dark Sky Park by the International Dark-Sky Association, will provide giant telescopes that will enable you to see planets, galaxies, nebula, and other amazing sights in the dark northeastern New Mexico skies.

**Saturday, May 28**

**Saturday, June 18 and 25**

**Saturday, July 2 and 23**

**Saturday, July 30**

The dark sky viewing on May 28 will start at 8 PM. On all other dates, viewing will start at 8:30 PM. For more information, call 575-278-2201.



## Exhibit Explores Relationship between Trees and Humans

This exhibition, featuring more than 50 images of trees and the historical, cultural, and scientific narratives inspired by them as seen through the lens of artists and scientists, is taking place through July 23 at the Alice Chaiten Baker Interdisciplinary Gallery at the University of Arizona.

The exhibition, *Trees Stir in Their Leaves*—the title inspired by a line from a Mary Oliver poem—was organized by the university's [Center for Creative Photography](#) and the [Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research](#) in collaboration with Western National Parks Association.

The installation has assembled optical tools, wood samples, writings, and film, as well as video footage provided courtesy of [Saguaro National Park](#). The photographs investigate people's complex

public programs at the Center for Creative Photography, said the exhibit is meant to inspire conversation among academic disciplines on the variety of ways that trees tell stories of communities and the aesthetic, scientific, and cultural connections between people and trees.

"We created a multilayered experience with photography and dendrochronology," she said. "Visitors will learn how visual information and analyses are crucial to tree-ring research and environmental advocacy."

Dr. Jackson Fox said she sorted through more than a thousand images dating to the 19th century, including glass lantern slides, Kodachrome and Ektachrome projection slides, digital images, and microscopic photographs, to arrive at the more than 50 on display.

Among the many images, Patrick Nagatani's photographs of Japanese internment camps devoid of buildings but populated with trees demonstrate how he uses trees as a witness to history. Rosalind Solomon's stark photographs of denuded trees in eastern Poland

expose the fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

The exhibit also features Andrew Ellicott Douglass's Merriam Cycloscope, built in the 1930s for tree-ring analysis aimed at climate prediction. Douglass, a University of Arizona scientist in the early 20th century, is considered the father of dendrochronology, which is the study of annual tree rings.



The exhibit includes a triptych called *Trees National Champion Emory Oak, Arizona* (courtesy of Barbara Bosworth).

relationships to nature, from trees as creative inspiration or storytellers to records of civilizations.

The exhibit explores trees as a point of departure from which artists and scientists consider nature, place, progress, migration, connectivity, and catastrophe. The installation includes work by Ansel Adams, Lola Álvarez Bravo, Barbara Crane, Kozo Miyoshi, Aaron Siskind, Rosalind Solomon, Doug and Mike Starn, John Yang, and more.

Dr. Meg Jackson Fox, associate curator of academic and

"The exquisite images in this exhibit tell the story of the evolution of visual technology, of the impact of humans on the landscape, of the migration of peoples, among other things," said Dr. Jackson Fox. "It's a poetic way of thinking about the layering of knowledge—of our visible and not-so-visible histories."

For the most current event information at WNPAA-affiliated sites near you, check out their websites. For events at [The National Parks Store](#) in Tucson, Arizona, visit [wnpa.org/events](https://wnpa.org/events).



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### **Arizona**

Canyon de Chelly National Monument  
Casa Grande Ruins National Monument  
Chiricahua National Monument  
Coronado National Memorial  
Fort Bowie National Historic Site  
Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site  
Lake Mead National Recreation Area  
Montezuma Castle National Monument  
Navajo National Monument  
Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument  
Saguaro National Park  
Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument  
The National Parks Store  
Tonto National Monument  
Tumacácori National Historical Park  
Tuzigoot National Monument  
Walnut Canyon National Monument  
Wupatki National Monument

### **California**

Channel Islands National Park  
Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site  
John Muir National Historic Site  
Mojave National Preserve  
Pinnacles National Park  
Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial  
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park  
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area  
Whiskeytown National Recreation Area

### **Colorado**

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site  
Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park  
Curecanti National Recreation Area  
Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve  
Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site

### **Kansas**

Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site  
Fort Larned National Historic Site  
Fort Scott National Historic Site  
Nicodemus National Historic Site

### **Montana & Wyoming**

Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area  
Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument

### **Nevada**

Great Basin National Park  
Lake Mead National Recreation Area

### **New Mexico**

Aztec Ruins National Monument  
Bandelier National Monument  
Capulin Volcano National Monument  
Carlsbad Caverns National Park  
Chaco Culture National Historical Park  
El Malpais National Monument  
El Morro National Monument  
Fort Union National Monument  
Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument  
Pecos National Historical Park  
Petroglyph National Monument  
Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument  
White Sands National Park

### **Oklahoma**

Chickasaw National Recreation Area  
Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

### **Texas**

Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument  
Big Thicket National Preserve  
Chamizal National Memorial  
Fort Davis National Historic Site  
Guadalupe Mountains National Park  
Lake Meredith National Recreation Area  
Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park  
Padre Island National Seashore  
Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park  
San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

### **Utah**

Golden Spike National Historical Park  
Timpanogos Cave National Monument

### **Trails**

Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail  
Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail  
Santa Fe National Historic Trail  
Trail of Tears National Historic Trail



# Kids in Parks



A bumble bee pollinates an African daisy (courtesy of Mileah, age 13).



A kit fox stands atop a rock formation at Saguaro National Park (courtesy of Heavenly, age 12).

## WNPA Provides Grants to Programs Supporting Youth

Western National Parks Association is providing \$7,500 each to the [Stewart L. Udall Parks in Focus program](#) and the [Ironwood Tree Experience](#) to support youth activities.

The Parks in Focus program connects middle-school students to nature through photography, environmental education, outdoor recreation, and creative expression, while the Ironwood Tree Experience's Youth Ambassadors for Southwest Cultures (YASWC) internship encourages young people to research and develop educational kits that focus on specific ecological, cultural, historical, and economic stories connected to the [Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail](#).

Each year, the Parks in Focus program introduces hundreds of young people from the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southern Arizona, and other area youth organizations to the natural wonders of the Sonoran Desert. Most participants in Tucson are between the ages of 10 and 14, are nonwhite, come from low-income, single-parent households, and have had little or no prior exposure to national parks or their local public lands.

The Parks In Focus program leads a variety of afterschool activities, weekend outings, and introductory camping

trips throughout the year to local natural areas and learning centers, such as [Saguaro National Park](#), [Chiricahua National Monument](#), Mount Lemmon, Tohono Chul Park, and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

In the summer, the program's most engaged participants from the school year are invited to attend a five-day camping trip to northern Arizona to visit Wupatki, Tuzigoot, Walnut Canyon, and Sunset Crater Volcano National Monuments, where they learn about the importance of parks and public lands.

Ironwood Tree Experience's internship programs focus on leadership projects in urban and wildland environments, connecting young people to their home through youth-inspired, place-based projects that build on natural assets, restore ecosystem services, and create livable communities.

In 2020, the YASWC internship program benefited eight students from seven Tucson-area high schools. Through field exploration, educational forums, workshops, and a five-day camping expedition to four national parks and monuments, interns gain firsthand experience and a holistic understanding of the history and importance of the Santa Cruz River Corridor of the Anza Trail.



parks in focus  
Udall Foundation



Ironwood Tree  
Experience



# Together We're Strong by Nature

Thanks to partners and supporters, Western National Parks Association weathered COVID-19 to continue its critical mission: WNPAs give to national parks funds and services that they can't get on their own. One hundred percent of our financial resources goes to this effort. Your investment of \$25 or more supports research that keeps parks strong, connects people with parks to replenish their own peace and strength, and helps children develop strong minds and bodies. Thank you for your support.

**Working together, we are all strong by nature.**

[Donate Today](#)



*Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is a favorite destination for horseback riding (courtesy of Connor L'Ecuyer).*

**Western**  
National Parks  
Association