

# YOUR AMERICAN WEST



## PARKS

International Dark Sky Parks

Forgotten Winchester Exhibit

White Sands Full Moon Nights

## EVENTS

Military Encampment  
at Bent's Old Ford

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## PRODUCTS

Golden Spike 150th  
Anniversary Collection

*Channel Islands National Park,  
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Forgotten Winchester  
Rifle Replica Pen



The Milky Way can be easily seen at **Great Basin National Park**. [See page 12 for more.](#) (courtesy of NPS).

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Cover: In November 1805 the Corps of Discovery, led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, reached the Pacific Ocean. Having found the most practical and navigable passage across North America, their mission was complete. Their route is designated today as the **Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail**. (courtesy of NPS).

**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



As the sun shines down and the temperatures rise at the **Western National Parks Association** (WNPA) Home Office in Tucson, Arizona, our staff is focused on finding unique ways to appreciate and enjoy our national parks out of the summer sun. Part of our mission at WNPA is to introduce these places of historical, cultural, archaeological, and natural importance to individuals who have yet to experience them and to solidify their importance to those who have.

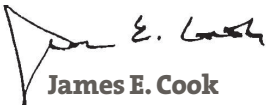
For this issue of *Your American West* we focused on looking at the parks from different perspectives. There are many hidden gems in the National Park Service (NPS), some that can be seen only if you look very closely or visit after the sun goes down.

Several of our partner parks, including **Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park** and **Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve**, have been distinguished as International Dark Sky Parks thanks to their beautiful and undisturbed night skies. Consider partaking in some of the nighttime activities at our partner parks (mentioned on [page 12](#)) and enjoy a perspective seldom seen by daytime adventurers. You might even see a shooting star!

Explore some exceptional parts of our country that harbor hidden histories. Visit the Forgotten Winchester—a rifle left resting unseen against a juniper tree for over one hundred years—at **Great Basin National Park**. Take a step outside the continental United States, bask in the sea breeze, and experience coastal California as it might have been thousands of years ago at **Channel Islands National Park**. Or journey back to the past with living history tours and live reenactments at **Bent’s Old Fort National Historic Site** and **Fort Union National Monument**.

We hope this issue of *Your American West* inspires you to take a deeper look at our national parks and experience something new. Just make sure that while you’re enjoying the parks and everything they have to offer you have sunscreen, a hat, comfortable shoes, and lots and lots of water!

Sincerely,

  
**James E. Cook**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Thank you to our Kiva Room sponsor:**

**Thank you to our Education Partner:**



# Babysitters Wanted

By **Alyssa Ellsworth**, graduate student of chemistry and science communication at the University of Arizona

The sun rises over the Rincon Mountains east of Tucson, Arizona, beaming hues of orange, pink and purple into the sky. Warmth pours into the desert valley below. Plants and animals meet another scorching day with no clouds in sight. Too many successive rainless days could mean a drought is imminent.

Life in the Sonoran Desert has adapted to the annual rhythm of pounding summer storms and humming winter rains. Extended periods of drought, exacerbated by climate change, are devastating even to the saguaro cactuses that are adapted to live in arid habitats.



*Scientist Daniel Winkler examines young saguaros protected by a mesquite tree at Saguaro National Park.*

The Sonoran Desert of southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, is the only place in the world where these towering cactuses (*Carnegiea gigantea*) grow. Lying just east and west of Tucson, the two units of Saguaro National Park protect these giants, which are the largest cactuses in the United States. These slow growers can live up to 200 years and reach 70 feet in height, according to the park.

Western National Parks Association and Friends of Saguaro National Park are supporting research that monitors the health of the park's namesake cactus. One project seeks to better understand why living under or near desert nurse trees can aid the saguaros'

survival. "Nurse plants can be thought of as an umbrella protecting the young saguaros from drying out on hot summer days and from freezing on cold winter nights," said Cecil Schwalbe, an ecologist emeritus with the U.S. Geological Survey.

This research adds to evidence that young saguaros also receive a "water benefit" from their nurse trees.

## SLOW-AND-STEADY GROWTH

Statuesque saguaros are the living monuments of Saguaro National Park, which was established as Saguaro National Monument in 1933 to protect a forest of these giant cactuses east of Tucson. The monument was expanded in 1961 to include 25 square miles west of Tucson, and in 1994 the U.S. Congress elevated its status to a national park.

The saguaros' arms stretch up to the sky in yoga poses. Their fleshy, ribbed green skin is covered in menacing inch-long black spikes. Spongy material below the skin can expand to store water when there is plenty, then contract as the cactus absorbs the water.

The roots of a saguaro have adapted to catch as much water as possible during a rainstorm.

## Research Matters

An apple a day may keep the doctor away for some humans, but now researchers are looking into the ways that saguaro cacti stay healthy in hostile desert conditions. Ecologists from the US Geological Survey are studying the relationship between the towering desert giants that call **Saguaro National Park** home and their desert "nurse trees." Similar to human nurses, desert "nurse trees" seem to care for nearby saguaros. The research conducted at Saguaro NP will help park staff preserve and protect this icon of the American Southwest.

Read on for a summary of this research project.  
This article was originally published [online](#).

“The tallest saguaros only have a taproot about 1 meter (3 feet) deep, but roots close to the surface are extensive,” said Daniel Winkler, a research ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey who conducted much of the new saguaro research. A network of shallow surface roots can soak up rainwater faster than a deep taproot can.

White flowers on top of a saguaro’s trunk and on the tips of its arms attract nectar-feeding bats, birds and insects. Pollinated flowers produce thousands of tiny black seeds inside bright red fruit. The fruit provides food for birds, bats, tortoises, javelinas, coyotes and humans. The seeds travel unharmed through the digestive system of animals and onto the ground in excrement.

While an adult saguaro can survive harsh conditions, its offspring often struggle to establish themselves. There are two notable periods of saguaro decline in recent history. From the 1930s through the 1960s the decline was thought to be caused by heavy cattle grazing and extensive tree clearing. The current decline is attributed to climate change, which has lengthened drought periods. Young saguaros are extremely sensitive to drought.

Saguaros growing under desert trees, such as mesquites, ironwoods and paloverdes, tend to thrive. Thorns covering the trees’ branches prevent cattle from trampling young saguaros. The trees also moderate the heat and cold fluctuations of day and night in the desert.

Temperature and moisture are poorly understood factors that help determine the fate of young saguaros. Scientists wanted to learn more about which sources of water are the most important for their growth.

## NEW RESEARCH AT SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK

The goal of this new research was to learn more about how a young saguaro benefits from growing under or near a nurse tree. The hypothesis was that the deep-rooted tree might inadvertently “share” the water that it lifts from deep below the ground.

Researchers set up soil moisture sensors and collected samples of groundwater and rainwater, as well as root tissues from saguaros and their nurse trees. The water samples were studied at the atomic level. A single molecule of water is usually two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. A tiny fraction of water has a deuterium atom in place of a hydrogen atom and is commonly known as “heavy water.” Deuterium has an extra neutron that adds measurable mass.

The fraction of deuterium present in groundwater and rainwater is different, so the researchers could determine which type of water a young saguaro used at different times of the year. Winter’s gentle precipitation soaks deep into the soil because of lower plant transpiration and evaporation and is tapped by trees with deep roots. Scientists had thought that the shallow-rooted saguaros only take up water from the quick, powerful summer rains, which run off quickly.

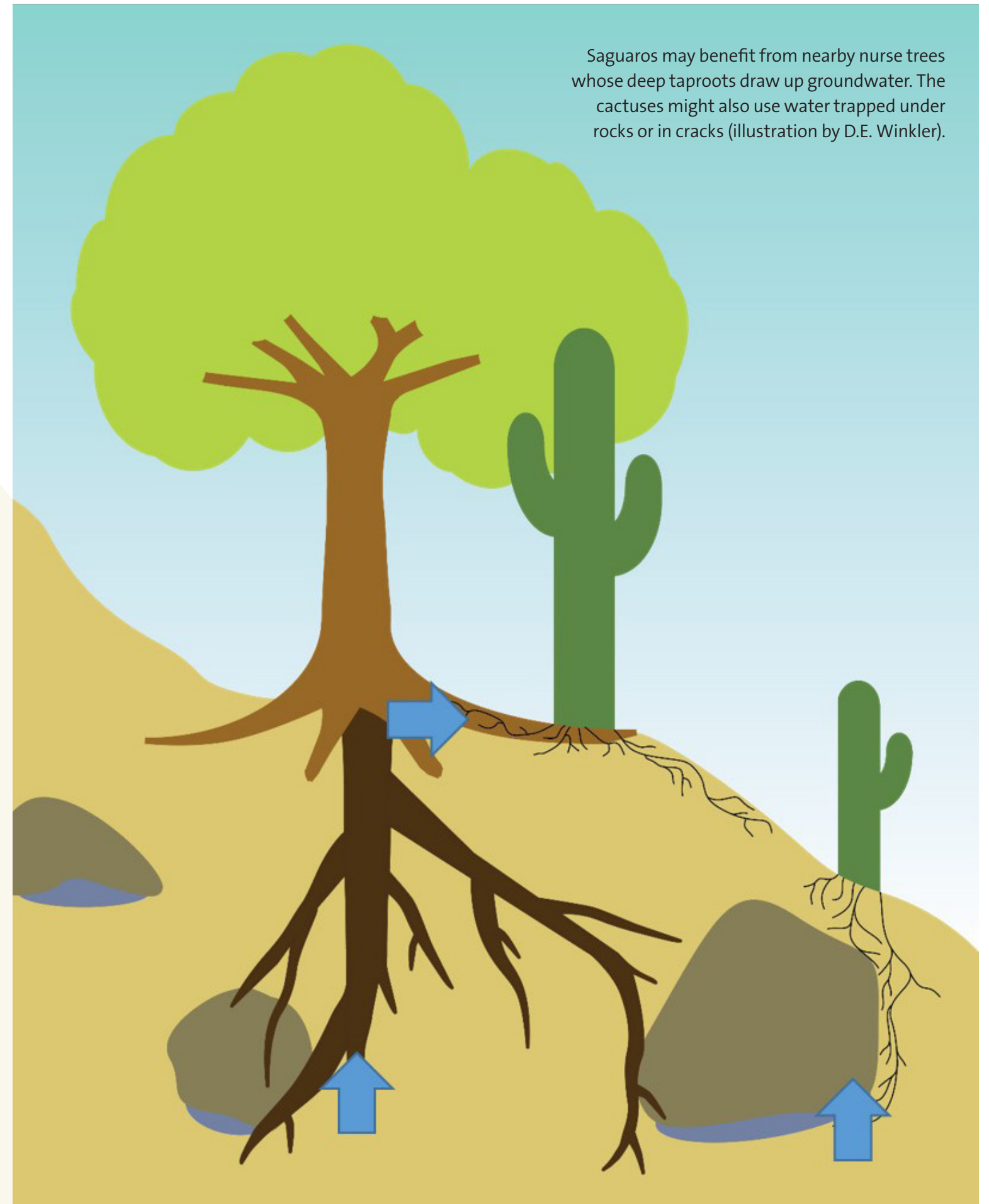
The study revealed that saguaros use water year-round. By comparing the samples collected, the researchers learned that young saguaros likely access the deep groundwater that nurse trees draw to the surface. The sharing of water occurs when the trees’ shallow surface roots “sweat” during the hot, dry months.

Understanding saguaro growth patterns will help park biologists and managers make informed decisions that will protect young cactuses in the face of higher temperatures and prolonged drought. Understanding the potential importance of nurse trees to young saguaros’ survival will promote land management practices that lower the rate of tree clearing.

“I want the resources of the park to be available for future generations,” said Don Swann, a park biologist who took part in this research project.

Scientists have researched the saguaro for more than 100 years, but they still have much to learn. “Studying the saguaro cactus is the ultimate challenge because they have such a long lifespan,” Winkler said. “They outlive humans.”

Saguaros may benefit from nearby nurse trees whose deep taproots draw up groundwater. The cactuses might also use water trapped under rocks or in cracks (illustration by D.E. Winkler).



*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

## Golden Spike National Historical Park 150th Anniversary Celebration

The future of the United States changed forever on May 10, 1869, when the Union Pacific Railroad and the Central Pacific Railroad met at Promontory Summit in Utah Territory and completed the first transcontinental railroad. The last spike was connected to a transcontinental telegraph, allowing people across the nation to hear the completion of the 1,776-mile track.

The location was officially designated Golden Spike National Historic Site—named after one of the four precious-metal spikes used in the completion ceremony—in 1957 and redesignated as **Golden Spike National Historical Park** in 2019.

People from all over the country gathered in the park to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the accomplishment that transported people, materials, and culture across the United States and changed our country forever. The event

included live entertainment, historical reenactments, steam locomotive demonstrations, and more.

Read the guest feature below to learn more about the event!

### GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

**Gary Wilden, park store manager at Golden Spike NHP**

“I have been planning this trip for five years. When I told my wife I was going, she wanted to know where I was going to get the money. I told her, ‘Honey, I have been planning this trip for five years. I have the money.’”

This was the sentiment of many people who attended the 150th anniversary of the “Wedding of the Rails” in Promontory Summit, Utah, on May 10, 2019. With a record of more than 33,000 people attending, this three-day celebration hosted very few frowns and many, many smiles. The weather could not have been better. It rained the day before and two days after, but nothing hampered the celebration.

*Thousands gathered in Promontory Summit for the 150th anniversary of the transcontinental railroad.*



*Visitors enjoy spectacular views and melodious sounds at a full moon night concert event. (courtesy of NPS).*

The US Postal Service introduced three new stamps for the occasion. The celebration included a flyover by three F-35s and two cannons fired, and fireworks went off during the well-choreographed original program. The event was broadcast on three different local television channels as well as over the Internet for the whole world to see. The lines of cars to enter the event stretched for six miles. Volunteers came from all over Utah as well as other states to make this event a success.

### GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

## Under the Light of the Full Moon

**Anette Dunshee, park store manager at White Sands National Monument**

Summer is here, bringing with it the return of **White Sands National Monument's** Full Moon Night series. Nothing is as magical as experiencing the stunning beauty of a sunset at White Sands NM followed by the brilliant glow of the full moon over the glistening dunes.

Over the years the NPS, with the support of WNPA, has hosted a wide range of programs, including ranger presentations about current and ongoing research, programs about southwestern history and culture, live musical performances, storytellers, and astronomy talks. Each program provides an opportunity for park visitors to form their personal connection to this unique place.

On these special evenings the park's hours are extended to allow visitors time to discover the beauty of White Sands NM in a unique way. This year, depending on the night, you can enjoy the exuberance of one of the Fort Bliss Army bands, learn about prehistoric life at White Sands NM, or be carried away by the enchanting performance of Native American flutist Randy Granger. Whether you choose to hike under the light of the full moon or to participate in one of these special presentations, you will take away memories that will last a lifetime, memories to be shared with friends and family alike.

The Full Moon Night series occurs May through October. For more information, visit the park website [here](#).

# In the Parks

## Forgotten Winchester Exhibit Opens

An old model 1873 Winchester rifle was leaning against a juniper tree when discovered by **Great Basin National Park** archaeologist Eva Jensen in 2014. The gun's wood had turned gray and the barrel had rusted, helping to camouflage it from passersby. It is likely the gun had been sitting in the same spot for over one hundred years.

The gun, named the Forgotten Winchester, was inspected and stabilized before being returned to the park and placed in an eponymous exhibit in the Great Basin NP Visitor Center in spring 2019. Partnering with the Great Basin National Park Foundation and the Fund for People in Parks, the NPS has designed a display for the rifle that recreates the way it looked when it was found against the juniper.

The exhibit also displays the single cartridge found in the gun upon x-ray inspection and presents an informative look at the role the Winchester rifle played in the history of the American West.

Despite an extensive investigation into the origin and ownership of the Forgotten Winchester, nothing is known for sure, but many have created stories about the gun and its possible owner. Maybe the owner was a rugged cowboy looking for a lost sheep, or perhaps an American Indian hunting in the area.

Artifacts like the Forgotten Winchester give a glimpse into the past, allowing us to interact with and imagine a part of American history as it might have been.



Staff at Great Basin National Park and installation of The Forgotten Winchester exhibit in 2019 (courtesy of NPS).



Just a few of the many spectacular photographs featured in Channel Islands National Park, Second Edition. Clockwise from left: California sea lions (courtesy of NPS/Brett Seymour); Cathedral Cove on Anacapa Island (courtesy of George H. H. Huey); red gorgonian coral and kelp bass. (courtesy of NPS/Brett Seymour)

## A New Chapter for Channel Islands National Park

After nearly 20 years in print, *Channel Islands National Park*, the NPS-approved guide to the history, geology, ecology, and tourism of this incredible place, is all new.

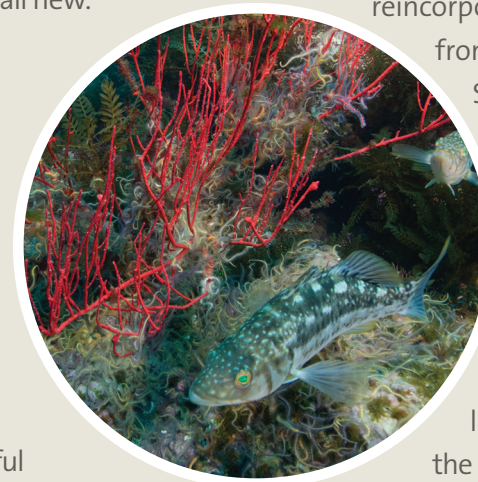
The stunning second edition features completely updated content and gorgeous new photographs from one of our nation's most biologically diverse national parks.

*Channel Islands National Park, Second Edition* is also the first of WNPA's exclusive [general interpretive publications](#), or GIPs, to receive a complete update to both its text and design in several years. GIPs are beautiful and educational park-specific guides, making them the perfect souvenir for a park visitor or an incomparable resource for a researcher or student.

"Channel Islands NP was established as a national monument in 1938, the same year WNPA was created

as Southwest Monuments Association. As Channel Islands expanded from two islands to five and was reincorporated as a national park, WNPA grew from supporting 18 monuments in the Southwest to more than 70 parks across 12 Western states. It is only fitting this park be the first to receive a fully revised and redesigned GIP," said Sara Maher, WNPA's publishing manager.

*Channel Islands National Park, Second Edition* goes on sale July 16, but those lucky enough to visit Channel Islands NP in the next few weeks can pick up the book at the park store before the official on-sale date. Books can also be preordered from WNPA's [online store](#) through July 15. Learn more on [page 14](#) or by clicking [here](#) or [preorder your copy now](#) and receive a 20% discount and a free Channel Islands NP sticker with purchase.



## Get Starry-Eyed for These International Dark Sky Parks

National parks are known for protecting important historical, archaeological, and natural resources, but they also protect something not seen during daytime hikes: the night sky. The International Dark Sky Association is dedicated to combating light pollution and protecting the night sky by educating the public about night sky conservation and providing people with tools and resources to help preserve the darkness of the night sky.

The International Dark Sky Association gives special designations to places with exceptional starry skies—perfect for public enjoyment—and nighttime environments with special scientific, natural, educational, or cultural significance.

In May, **Tonto National Monument** and **Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve** were designated as International Dark Sky Parks. Other parks in the Southwest with the designation are **Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park**, **Capulin Volcano National Monument**, **Chaco Culture National Historical Park**, **Great Basin National Park**, **Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument**, and **Tumacácori National Historical Park**.

### Take a walk on the dark side and check out these special summertime night sky events!

#### BLACK CANYON NIGHT SKY TALKS AND VIEWINGS

*Every Wednesday and Friday through September 27*

Talks 7:30 PM–8:30 PM, telescope viewing 9:30 PM–11 PM  
Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

10346 Hwy 347, Montrose, CO 81401

Enjoy ranger-led talks in the South Rim Campground Amphitheater and use telescopes to get a closer look at the night sky! Black Canyon Astronomical Society

will attend on the nights closest to the new moon. For more information, click [here](#).

#### GREAT BASIN STAR TRAIN

*Friday, July 12, August 2, and September 6, 7:30 PM–10:30 PM*

Nevada Northern Railway Museum  
1100 Ave. A, Ely, NV 89301

Take an exhilarating celestial journey aboard the Star Train! Ride the historic northern train route with **Great Basin National Park** park rangers, who will talk trivia, give out prizes, and answer questions. The train will stop out of town and give

passengers the chance to look through the park's high-powered telescopes! For more information, click [here](#).

#### BY THE FULL MOON

*Tuesday, July 16; Thursday, August 15; and Saturday, September 14, 6 PM–9:30 PM*  
El Morro National Monument  
NM-53, Ramah, NM 87321

Hike the 2-mile Headland Trail under the light of the full moon at **El Morro National Monument**! Bring warm layers, water, and a flashlight as you embark along uneven surfaces and gain

250 feet of elevation under the moon's glow. For more information, click [here](#).

#### CANDLELIGHT TOUR

*Saturday, August 10, 7:30 PM–9 PM*  
Fort Union National Monument  
3115 NM Hwy 161, Watrous, NM 87753

Experience **Fort Union National Monument** by the light of a lantern. Take a guided tour through the fort and learn about Fort Union's history through a series of historical vignettes performed by costumed actors. For more information, click [here](#).

#### CELEBRATION OF THE MOON

*Saturday, September 7, 5 PM–11 PM*

Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve  
11999 State Hwy 150, Mosca, CO 81146

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of NASA's first Apollo mission to the moon's surface, this event is scheduled during a two-thirds-full-moon to allow for optimum lunar crater viewing. Join park staff and astronomers to see and learn about objects in the night sky! For more information, click [here](#).

#### FOURTH ANNUAL ASTRONOMY FESTIVAL

*Friday, September 20–Sunday, September 22*

Chaco Culture National Historical Park  
1808 Rd. 7950, Nageezi, NM 87037

Join **Chaco Culture National Historical Park** for its Fourth Annual Astronomy Festival! Celebrate astronomy with the park staff and watch the same night sky the ancestral Puebloans saw hundreds of years ago. For more information, click [here](#).

# New & Notable Releases

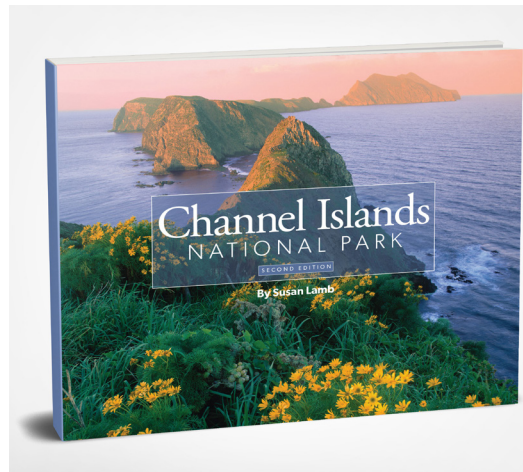
## Golden Spike 150th Anniversary Collection

On May 10, 1869, the Union Pacific Railroad and the Central Pacific Railroad met at Promontory Summit in Utah Territory. This wedding of the rails formed the first transcontinental railroad in the United States. The golden spike, now a symbol of this historic moment, was one of four precious-metal spikes used in the ceremony. Today the site of this event is preserved at **Golden Spike National Historical Park**. Celebrate the 150th anniversary of this momentous event by browsing our limited-edition anniversary collection at [store.wnpa.org](https://store.wnpa.org).



## Channel Islands National Park, Second Edition

*Channel Islands National Park, Second Edition* is the National Park Service-approved guide to the history, geology, ecology, and tourism of one of our nation's most biologically diverse national parks. Updated content and stunning new photographs, including spectacular underwater shots, make this second edition an incomparable resource for visitors and researchers alike. You can preorder your copy at [store.wnpa.org](https://store.wnpa.org)! Orders placed before July 15 will receive a 20% discount and a free **Channel Islands National Park** sticker with purchase!



## Forgotten Winchester Rifle Replica Pen

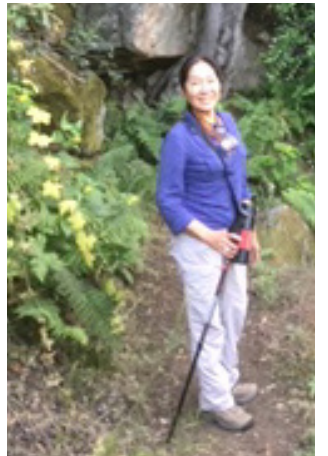
For over one hundred years, a model 1873 Winchester rifle rested forgotten against a juniper tree in **Great Basin National Park**. Exposure to the elements turned the gun's wood gray and rusted the barrel, helping camouflage it from passersby. A park archaeologist discovered the rifle in 2014, and the park opened an exhibit dedicated to the forgotten rifle in 2019. Take home a piece of long-forgotten history with our Forgotten Winchester Rifle Replica Pen, which will help you make sure you never forget your pen again! Get one today at [store.wnpa.org](https://store.wnpa.org)!



# Focus On

Sophia Wong has been an integral part of WNP for seven years, serving as the park store manager at both **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area** and **Channel Islands National Park**. After a long career in the retail and wholesale industries, Sophia wanted to work with natural parks because of her appreciation for nature and her desire to preserve it. She has cultivated many relationships with artists and organizations surrounding the parks, creating a diverse array of programming and educational experiences that appeal to adventurers of all ages and from all walks of life. "I have so many favorite parts of my job! Don't know that I can pick just one," wrote Sophia in an email, "but I feel extremely fortunate that my job combines my love for the natural environment and a sense of stewardship for our parks with a decades-long background in the retail industry."

Working in two different parks gives Sophia many opportunities to explore. "It's fascinating that Channel Islands NP and Santa Monica NRA are such different parks in all manner and yet they are only about an hour's drive away from each other (in good traffic)," wrote Sophia. "When at the Channel Islands Visitor Center, one may look out and see sea lions, pelicans, and perhaps even a bat ray, while only an hour away at the Santa Monica Visitor Center one might observe mule deer, coyotes, and woodpeckers." Thank you, Sophia, for all you do to help visitors experience and appreciate these beautiful parks!



Sophia hiking the Backbone Trail—her favorite trail—in the Santa Monica Mountains.



## Did you know?

1. Channel Islands NP is located off the coast of Southern California, near Ventura and Santa Barbara.
2. Two of the park's five islands—Anacapa and Santa Barbara—and the surrounding ocean area were designated as a national monument in 1938. The site was redesignated as a national park on March 5, 1980; three more islands—Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, and San Miguel—and their ocean environment were then incorporated into the park.
3. Archaeological and cultural resources on the islands indicate over thirteen thousand years of human habitation.
4. Channel Islands NP is home to more than two thousand species of plants and animals, 175 of which cannot be found anywhere else on Earth.
5. You can enjoy the park from the comfort of your own home and explore the Channel Islands from oceans to aeries with their live [webcams](https://www.wnpa.org/webcams)!

# Featured Events & Activities



## Big Thicket Junior Ranger Days

**Every Wednesday in July, 9 AM–12 PM**

**Big Thicket National Preserve**  
6102 FM 420 Rd.  
Kountze, TX 77625

Become a Junior Ranger and join the staff of **Big Thicket National Preserve** for their Junior Ranger Days every Wednesday this July! Learn about fishing, wildlife, outdoor safety, and plants during hikes, presentations, and hands-on experiences fit for kids ages 8–12. For more information about specific activities happening every week, [click here](#).

## Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Hatchling Release

**July–August, dates and times to be announced**

**Padre Island National Seashore**  
20420 Park Road 22  
Corpus Christi, TX 78418

Every July and August, the endangered Kemp's ridley turtles begin to hatch on the shores of **Padre Island National Seashore**, offering visitors the unique experience of watching the baby turtles make their way to the sea. Check out their [current nesting season page](#) to get an idea of approximate hatch dates, and check the [Padre Island NS Facebook page](#) during the season for specific dates and times.

## FEE-FREE DAY

**Saturday, September 28**

Enjoy fee-free entrance to all NPS sites in honor of National Public Lands Day!



*Kemp's ridley turtle hatchling at Padre Island National Seashore.*

## Military Encampment

**Saturday, August 24, 8 AM**

**Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site**  
35110 Hwy 194 East  
La Junta, CO 81050

Step back in time to see **Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site** in action! Although the fort served primarily as a private trading post, it also hosted several military expeditions and acted as a supply station during the war with Mexico. Explore the soldiers' camps and see the fort as it once was in this living history event! Admission is \$5 per person for ages 6 and up. For more information, [click here](#).

## America the Beautiful Quarters® Release

**Thursday, September 5,**  
**10 AM–10:30 AM**

**Trinity University**  
1 Trinity Place  
San Antonio, TX 78212

Attend the official release of one of the 2019 America the Beautiful Quarters® and celebrate the design honoring **San Antonio Missions National Historical Park**! The coin features elements of the Spanish Colonial Real coin and



symbols to represent important aspects of the missions. The ceremony will feature an official coin pour, the historical color guard, and a coin exchange booth. For more information, [click here](#).



## First Fort and Arsenal Tours

**Saturday, September 7,**  
**9:45 AM, 11:45 AM, and 1:45 PM**

**Fort Union National Monument**  
3115 NM Hwy 161  
Watrous, NM 87753

Walk the grounds where **Fort Union National Monument's** legacy began in 1851 on a tour offered only once a year! Get a glimpse of the fort's active years through a living history program depicting some of the training exercises performed by the US Army during their occupation of the fort. For more information, [click here](#).

*For more events at national parks near you, check out their websites!*

**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 Monument](#)

**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

## Buddy Bison Student Ambassador Hosts Kids to Parks Day at Pecos National Historical Park

National Kids to Parks Day was launched in 2011 by the [National Park Trust](#) to connect kids and families with local parks, public lands, and the great outdoors. In celebration of Kids to Parks Day 2019, **Pecos National Historical Park** partnered with the National Park Trust and National Park Trust Buddy Bison Student Ambassador Bryan Wilson to host a series of family events.

“As a Buddy Bison ambassador, I want to be able to share the love for our public lands with other kids,” wrote Bryan in an email. Bryan has been to 175 national parks, and he regularly volunteers at **Navajo National Monument**.

Guests of all ages were invited to become Junior Rangers by completing any one of the park’s several Junior Ranger activity books. Thirty-nine kids completed the program and received a Junior Ranger badge, pin, or patch and a free plush Buddy Bison.

A variety of hands-on activities offered something for adventurers of all ages. A workshop led by archaeologist Mary Weahkee of Santa Clara Pueblo and the Comanche Nation showed participants how to make yucca sandals like the ancestral Puebloans once did, and talks from the New Mexico Wildlife Center taught visitors about birds of prey and reptiles. Visitors even had the opportunity to touch a snake and a tortoise.

“There was a station where you could learn to shoot a bow and arrow or use a spear. That was my favorite, where I tried to shoot a fake javelina for target practice,” wrote Bryan. Bryan’s younger siblings preferred the craft booth with fish stamping.

The day ended with a raffle. WNP A donated [Junior Ranger sticker books](#), animal flip books, 7-in-1 Junior Ranger Adventure Tools, Junior Ranger flying disc activity packs, and other [Junior Ranger](#) prizes. Bryan wrote that everyone who attended walked out with a great gift.

“There were so many families that came out to participate and earn their Junior Ranger badges,” wrote Bryan. “One family was visiting all the way from Florida, and this was their first stop at a National Park Service site.”

Thank you, Bryan, for continuing to advocate for and connect new audiences to our national parks and public lands!



*Bryan Wilson and family (courtesy of Wilson family).*

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