

YOUR AMERICAN WEST

PARKS

Tonto National Monument Glows
The B.A.R.K. Ranger Program
Welcomes Its Newest Member

EVENTS

Share Your Park Story during National Park Week
Carlsbad Caverns National Park Celebrates Its Centennial

PRODUCTS

Casa Grande Ruins National Monument by Rose Houk
REPREVE T-Shirts



Pueblo Ruins in **Wupatki National Monument** (courtesy of Randy Runtsch, Shutterstock.com)

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Purple asters buffeted by high winds at **Bandelier National Monument** (courtesy of Dean Fikar, Shutterstock.com)

Marie Buck
President and 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 or visiting www.wnpa.org.



Letter from the President and Chief Executive Officer

Spring is here, and we celebrate a season of growth and renewal for Western National Parks Association (WNPA) and our 71 partner parks. After facing unprecedented challenges, we reflect on and honor the spirit of collaboration and the journey we are all on together. As the days warm and lengthen, hope continues to blossom in our nation's most treasured places.

This issue of *Your American West* highlights the recent achievements and highly anticipated upcoming events that make WNPA and our partner parks such an important part of the nation's story. As WNPA prepares to celebrate our 85th anniversary as an official National

Park Service (NPS) education partner, we renew and deepen our commitment to advancing education, interpretation, research, and community engagement to ensure national parks are increasingly valued by all.

In March, WNPA returned to host The National Park Experience Pavilion at the Tucson Festival of Books with joy, gratitude, and excitement, as we welcomed featured authors, panelists, our NPS park partners, and a host of special events. Many thanks to WNPA staff members, volunteers, community members, artists, and storytellers who made the 2023 festival absolutely extraordinary. For upcoming events at WNPA in Oro Valley or at our partner parks, please visit wnpa.org/events/month.

This spring, I am thrilled to be continuing the outreach activities that strengthen our smaller partner parks and focus on community, culture, sustainability, and conservancy. We continue to advance the spirit of our "Small Parks—Big Impact" campaign to ensure that our parks get the funding they need and deserve. Our efforts promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in parks big and small, increasing access and ensuring that all people have a platform for sharing their park stories.

I am especially proud of the support WNPA provides to the evolving relationships between the NPS and American Indian tribes, nations, and communities. The history of the American West cannot be separated from the stories, cultures, and traditions of the region's Indigenous people. These stories are woven together with the intercultural stories of our parks to produce our enduring "quilt" of national experience.

Our partner parks are places of learning, of healing, and of joy. They continue to provide spaces for deep reflection, connection, and belonging that shape our stories and our lives. I continue to welcome your voices and stories about the ways parks have inspired and affected you. I am filled with gratitude for the many ways WNPA members support our parks and public lands, and I celebrate the future stewards and activists who will continue to preserve, protect, and love our national parks for many generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie Buck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marie Buck
President and Chief Executive Officer

Research Matters

The process of scientific discovery, ever evolving and illuminating, involves many voices from the diverse community of scientists around the world. Curiosity and deep respect for the beauty of the natural world inspire scientists to travel the pathways of observation and analysis, looking both to the past and to the future of each species of plant protected in national parks. At Pinnacles National Park in California, botanists have been studying the history and genetics of the complex classification of a novel jewelflower. Read more about the nuanced intersection of history and botany in this newsletter's research story.



Pinnacles National Park (courtesy of NPS)

***"What's in a name? That which we call a rose
by any other name would smell just as sweet."***

–William Shakespeare



A Jewel of a Tale from Pinnacles National Park

By Susan E. Swanberg, Associate Professor, Associate Director, School of Journalism at the University of Arizona

The chronicle of Pinnacles National Park's previously undescribed jewelflower illustrates the incremental way in which science progresses, the importance of determining the relationships between and among closely related plants, and the process of evolution itself. A research grant provided by Western National Parks Association (WNPA) is helping to support the work of scientists unraveling this complex story.

Within the web of life each organism has its place and its role. The loss of a single species can have far-reaching, often unanticipated consequences for an entire ecosystem. With the ability to identify and bestow individualized names upon similar-looking but distinguishable plant species, those who manage our national parks can more easily watch over and manage the living resources they protect – including rare species like the novel Pinnacles jewelflower. In addition, studying the relationships between and among plant groups can provide insights into how plant species evolve.

Pinnacles National Park

Pinnacles National Park (Pinnacles) is in the Gabilan Mountain Range, east of California's Salinas Valley and about 80 miles southeast of the city of San Jose. Pinnacles is roughly parallel to and east of the Monterey Peninsula. Named after its unusual rock formations, Pinnacles is known for its diverse bee species and its spectacular wildflower displays – especially during the park's peak blooming season from March to May. Pinnacles is dominated by chaparral but also includes a rockier habitat with sparse soil where the novel jewelflower has been found.

What's in a Name: A Brief Primer on Plant Classification

In the 1700s Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, developed a binomial (two-term) naming system for plants and animals. Under the Linnaean system, each species is given a scientific name consisting of the organism's genus (a rank between "family" and "species") followed by its species name. The naming process can be complicated and scientific names often include Latinized versions of a place of discovery or a discoverer's name. The term "jewelflower" is not a scientific name, but a common name given to members of at least three groups of flowers. Distinguishing among and accurately classifying the various groups of jewelflowers is one of the goals of this research project.

How the Pinnacles Jewelflower Story Unfolded

According to Pinnacles Vegetation Ecologist, Amelia Ryan, the novel jewelflower story began with a specimen archived in the Pinnacles herbarium, a rugged-looking wood building where plant specimens collected in or near the park are kept. In 1982, a volunteer botanist named [Cecilia Bjornerud](#) found and collected an immature plant that resembled other species of jewelflowers. Because the specimen had no fruit, however, it could not be identified. Later that same year Bjornerud returned to the area where the immature plant had been found and collected fruit-bearing specimens of the same species.

In 1887 Sereno Watson, the well-known botanist and curator of Harvard University's Gray Herbarium from

1873 until 1892, had described and named a particular jewelflower, *Caulanthus lemmonii*, after self-taught botanist Sara Plummer Lemmon and/or her husband, John Gill (J.G.) Lemmon, also a self-taught botanist.¹ Bjornerud identified the plant she collected and archived it in the Pinnacles herbarium as a plant of the *Caulanthus lemmonii* species.

As a side note, the name Lemmon should be familiar to those residing in the Tucson area as Mount Lemmon, the highest point in the Santa Catalina Mountains, was named after Sara Plummer Lemmon, who travelled to Tucson, Arizona, on her honeymoon in 1881. Sara Lemmon and her husband climbed Mount Lemmon in a hazardous trek described by J.G. in an article published that same year.²

In 1986 botanist, Vern Yadon, collected a specimen he designated *Caulanthus lemmonii* near Chalone Creek – on private property outside of the park. About twenty years later another botanist, Tom Leatherman, was looking through and organizing the Pinnacles herbarium, when he found several plant specimens he thought had been misidentified, including the specimen Bjornerud had archived. Leatherman thought the volunteer’s plant more closely resembled plants in a related genus, *Streptanthus*.

In 2000 Leatherman hired two professional botanical contractors, Roy Buck and Glenn Clifton – both *Streptanthus* experts – to review the contents of the herbarium. Buck and Clifton thought the plant identified by Bjornerud as *Caulanthus lemmonii* might be a new species. Between 2000 and 2003 several new populations of the novel jewelflower were discovered. According to Ryan, after an initial flurry of activity regarding the jewelflower, things slowed down. Roy Buck became busy with other identifications and, unfortunately, died in 2019.

There were many potential ancestors of the novel jewelflower including a jewelflower called *Streptanthus insignis* as well as several *Caulanthus* species. Ryan grew the novel jewelflower species and *S. insignis* in ideal conditions. As the plants grew and matured, Ryan determined that the novel species had features that were not similar enough to *S. insignis* for *S. insignis* to be a likely ancestor of the novel species.



Pinnacles Jewelflower (*Streptanthus species-nova*)
(courtesy of Keir Morse, 2008)

With the many differences between all the possible ancestral species and what Ryan believed was a novel jewelflower, it became clear that a molecular genetic analysis would be necessary to clarify the plant’s family tree. Ryan reached out to [N. Ivalú Cacho, Ph.D., a plant evolutionary biologist and specialist in classification and nomenclature of plants at UNAM in Mexico City](#), to handle the molecular genetic aspects of the project. The research team was awarded a WNPA grant, and the project took off again.

Genetic Analysis to the Rescue

Cacho’s role in this project was to conduct a molecular genetic analysis of the novel jewelflower to determine once and for all if it was a new species and where it fit in with its relatives. Genetic analysis is very time consuming and difficult – especially where the entire sequence of the organism under study is unknown. In that case, scientists design experiments using relatively short stretches of DNA sequences, often from known genes, they can then compare and use to genetically distinguish plant groups from one another.

Before the advent of DNA sequencing, plants were described and differentiated from one another primarily according to their morphology, although botanists might also look at the habitat in which a plant lived. For

¹Sereno Watson, (1888) “Contributions to American Botany,” *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol 23, no. 2: 261.

²J.G. Lemmon, “A Botanical Wedding Trip,” *The Californian, A Western Monthly Magazine*, 4 (July-Dec. 1881) 512.

example, one plant species might have a grouping of fertile flowers at the top of a main stalk, and another species might have a similar-looking group of flowers at the top of its stalk that is sterile; or one plant species might be able to adapt or even thrive on serpentine soil, whereas another species might not be able to survive in a serpentine-rich environment. According to evolutionary biologists, plants should not be lumped together into the same classification just because they resemble each other superficially.

It appears that this is what happened with the novel jewelflower and several closely related plants. As a matter of fact, quite a few plants with similar structures had been lumped into what is called the “Streptanthoid Complex,” a grouping that includes plants from four different genera (the plural of genus): *Streptanthus*, *Caulanthus*, *Thelopodium*, and *Stanleya*. The lumping of plants that are similar in appearance, but not of the same genus is confusing to the botanist trying to sort out plant family trees and has implications for the management of rare plant species.

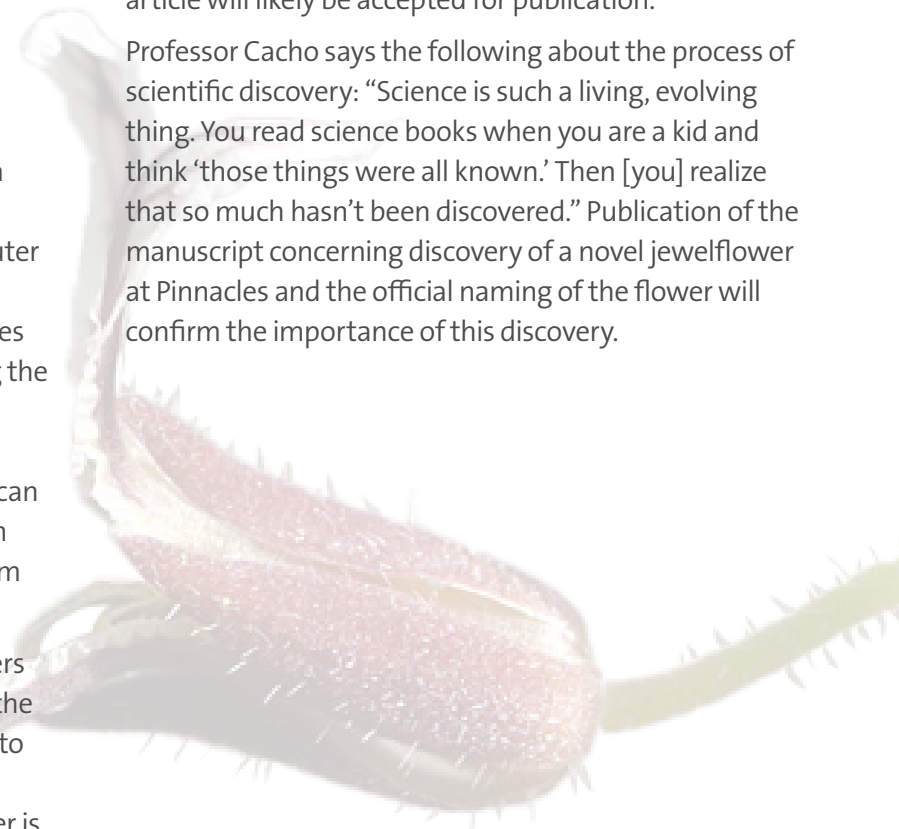
Molecular genetic analysis can be used to decide which plants or animals should be grouped together as having a common ancestor and which groups are not closely related. Once informative sequences for a group of similar plants have been identified, those sequences can be aligned using sophisticated computer programs that analyze the differences among the sequences and enable the scientist to develop theories about the genetic relationships between and among the plants from which the DNA was extracted. Add to a plant’s morphological characteristics the habitat in which the plant resides, and DNA sequence analysis can lead to highly accurate plant family trees that explain which plants are ancestral and which are derived from those ancestors.

Amelia Ryan, N. Ivalú Cacho, Ph.D., and other members of the research team have worked together to solve the puzzle of the novel Pinnacles jewelflower. According to Professor Cacho, they have accumulated enough evidence to say definitively that the novel jewelflower is not *Caulanthus lemmonii* but a new *Caulanthus* species,

one that has not been described before – although *Caulanthus lemmonii* is in fact a close relation. They might also have resolved some of the puzzling genetic relationships among plants within the “Streptanthoid Complex.”

More than twenty years after it was first identified as a new species and forty years after it was first identified as a member of the *Caulanthus* genus, the novel jewelflower is close to being formally recognized and named. Before a scientific discovery is accepted as valid, however, the evidence is reviewed by other experts in the field or fields in question. Scientists involved in the discovery will write up their research in a manuscript and send that manuscript to a relevant and reputable journal. The editor of the journal will assign review of the manuscript to several scientists who are experts in the field. The reviewers might pose questions regarding the manuscript or critique the methods used by the scientist-authors. Once all issues with the manuscript are addressed to the journal editor’s satisfaction, the article will likely be accepted for publication.

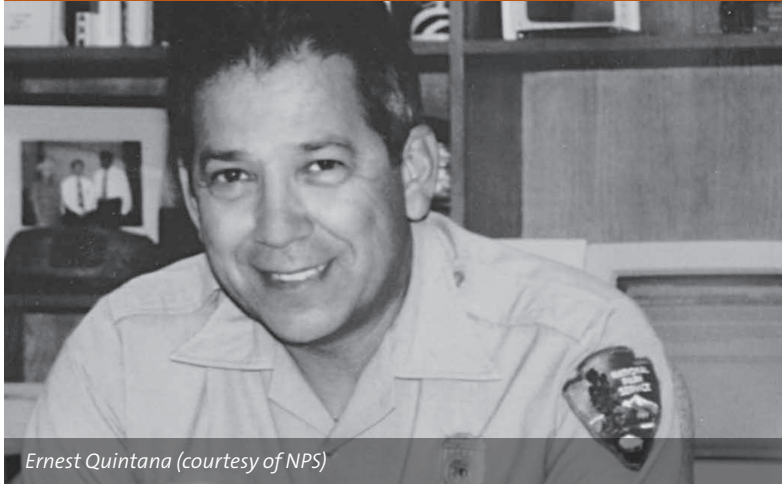
Professor Cacho says the following about the process of scientific discovery: “Science is such a living, evolving thing. You read science books when you are a kid and think ‘those things were all known.’ Then [you] realize that so much hasn’t been discovered.” Publication of the manuscript concerning discovery of a novel jewelflower at Pinnacles and the official naming of the flower will confirm the importance of this discovery.



Pinnacles Jewelflower (Streptanthus species-nova)
(courtesy of Keir Morse, 2008)

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

People & Happenings



Ernest Quintana (courtesy of NPS)

SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTS DIVERSITY, CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

The [Ernest Quintana and Marty Sterkel Education Scholarship](#) was started in 2011 to support young adults pursuing careers that encourage diversity in the workforce. Two scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 each are awarded for internships with the NPS, government agencies, and nonprofit heritage conservation organizations.

During their distinguished, decades-long careers with the NPS and continuing after retirement, Quintana and Sterkel shared a desire to bring new communities to the national parks. Their outreach efforts educated communities with less access to national parks and helped to foster interest in both visiting the parks and working with them.

Sterkel suggested they create a scholarship fund to help NPS interns complete college and pursue careers in conservation. With WNPA's guidance, the fund caught the attention of applicants and donors alike. The scholarship is now funded by additional private donations from generous individuals, and eligibility has been opened to a broader range of career opportunities.

"I see the positive impact this fund has on the lives of the young individuals receiving it," Quintana says. "These students are dedicated to the pursuit of a career, and this program helps them be successful."

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER CALLUM CINTRON MAKES THEIR FINAL REPORT

Ernest Quintana and Marty Sterkel Education Scholarship winner Callum Cintron wrote their final report on their experience at the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) 2022 National Trails Workshop in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Cintron embodies WNPA's core values in their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work, evidenced in their commitment to raising awareness of the "real impacts of colonization." WNPA awarded Cintron a \$2,500 scholarship to deepen their knowledge and gain important experiences in promoting diversity and justice in national parks.

In their report, Cintron discussed the highlight of their program participation. [Watch Callum's full final report video here.](#)

"This opportunity was a massive overall highlight in my life," they said. "Being low-income and disabled I truly never thought I would be able to travel, let alone participate in an in-person multi-day workshop."

Cintron shared the life-changing revelations they experienced about the "true why" of park ownership as it relates to Native American communities, Indigenous land, and Indigenous-made histories and art.

"I was witnessing the major gaps in Indigenous sovereignty and rights in regard to public lands,"



Courtesy of Callum Cintron

Cintron wrote. "A hike to see the amazing scenery of New Mexico led to a lasting impression and drive for me to continue my work at the intersection of DEI and the outdoors."

Over the course of the workshop, Cintron practiced

their public speaking skills and “deepened [their] knowledge of Indigenous experiences with outdoor recreation.” Unencumbered by financial burdens and other duties, Cintron was able to relax and enjoy their hobby—photography—as they explored the outdoors, led roundtable discussions, and discovered more about issues of tribal sovereignty as it relates to public lands and national parks.

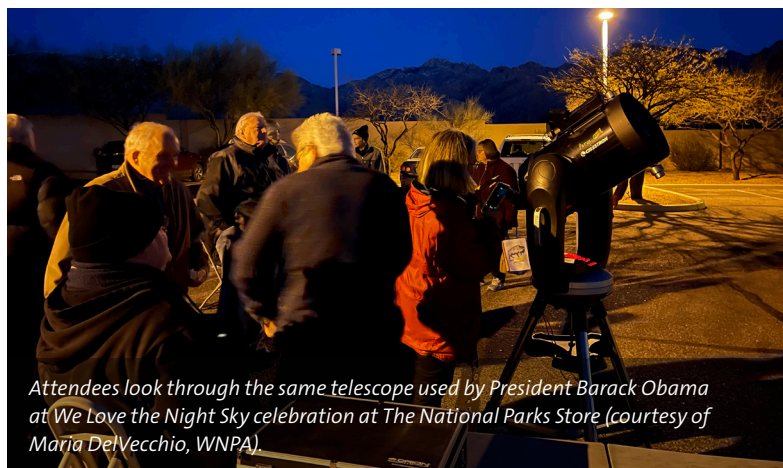
Lifelong—this is the word Callum Cintron used several times to describe their experience. They wrote, “To commemorate my trip, I got a tattoo. The outline is the PNTS/National Trails System ‘pregnant triangle,’ the words are in PNTS/NTS’ font, and the trail leading to the Sandia Mountains is the exact one from the Native Lands National Trails Logo. The tattoo is not only my own memory of the amazing trip but a reminder to keep fighting for cultural and natural preservation.”



Obi Kaufmann (left) and Carrie Katzenmeyer (right), artists-in-residence at [Whiskeytown National Recreation Area](#) (courtesy of [Whiskeytown National Recreation Area](#))

WHISKEYTOWN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA ANNOUNCES TWO ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

On January 26, [Whiskeytown National Recreation Area](#) announced that Obi Kaufmann of California and Carrie Katzenmeyer of Minnesota have been selected for the Artist-in-Residence program in the park this spring. As a park with a rich legacy of art, Whiskeytown NRA announced the return of the Artist-in-Residence program, a program WNPAA is proud to support. Kaufmann and Katzenmeyer will be provided with free camping for two to three weeks at either the Peltier Bridge Primitive Campground or Brandy Creek RV Campground. In exchange, they give the park license to use digital images of at least one piece of their artwork specifically for park interpretive and education purposes. The artists will also spotlight their experience in some type of public setting. After the residency, artists will receive a WNPAA-funded stipend.



Attendees look through the same telescope used by President Barack Obama at *We Love the Night Sky* celebration at [The National Parks Store](#) (courtesy of Maria DelVecchio, WNPAA).

AUTHOR TIM HUNTER LEADS A NIGHT SKY CELEBRATION

Dr. Tim Hunter, author of *The Sky at Night*, led the *We Love the Night Sky* celebration at [The National Parks Store](#) on February 15, 2023. A professor emeritus in the Department of Medical Imaging at the University of Arizona College of Medicine, Hunter has been the author of the “Sky Spy” column in the *Arizona Daily Star* for more than fifteen years. As a member of the Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association and cofounder of the International Dark-Sky Association, Hunter’s efforts to raise awareness around light pollution earned him the Presidential Award of the Astronomical League (2004) and the Amateur Achievement Award of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (2005).

The WNPAA-hosted event also featured a talk from a national park ranger and an appearance from David Levy, who co-discovered Comet Shoemaker-Levy in 1993. Warmed by hot chocolate and cookies, participants saw Jupiter through the same telescope used by President Obama at the White House. Guided by Hunter, Levy, and other astronomers, participants learned how to appreciate the night sky through telescopes and with the naked eye. Books were available for purchase and signing.



Author Tim Hunter speaks about his book, *The Sky at Night: Easy Enjoyment from Your Backyard* (courtesy of Maria DelVecchio, WNPAA).

In the Parks

THE NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE PAVILION RETURNS TO TUCSON FESTIVAL OF BOOKS

The National Park Experience Pavilion made a jubilant return to Tucson Festival of Books (TFOB) on March 4 and 5! Featuring more than 350 authors, the event is the third-largest book festival in the country. With excitement and energy, WNPA once again hosted The National Park Experience Pavilion with panels and presentations from renowned authors and storytellers sharing their wisdom and perspectives from the National Park Experience Stage. Our park partners came to share information about their parks, connect with park lovers, and provide educational activities for all. The Junior Ranger Jamboree activity introduced more than five hundred kids to our national parks! Beloved mascots Pancho the Vermilion Flycatcher of [Tumacácori National Historical Park](#) and Sunny the Saguaro from [Saguaro National Park](#) both made appearances, and people from all walks of life shared their love of parks in a public art project that brought stories together into a “quilt” of experience.

[The National Parks Store](#) and [Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site](#) welcomed TFOB attendees featuring craft, apparel, books, and unique gifts to purchase. Visitors lined up for authors to sign their books after engaging panels and enjoyed the rug talks of Hubbell’s trader as he wove together the history and artistry of Navajo rugs. Master weaver Ruby Hubbard joined, honoring attendees with her presence and



Kids explore artifacts as they complete their Junior Ranger activity at Tucson Festival of Books (courtesy of Joshua Elz).

perspective. WNPA-featured authors discussed a range of relevant issues and shared their personal connection to public lands and parks, from the healing power of nature to the ways that special places inspire poetry and creativity. The Pavilion had terrific representation from our partner parks and community partners:

- [Canyon de Chelly National Monument](#)
- [Navajo National Monument](#)
- [Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site](#)
- [Saguaro National Park](#)
- [Coronado National Memorial](#)
- [Casa Grande Ruins National Monument](#)
- [Tumacácori National Historical Park](#)
- [Chiricahua National Monument](#)
- [Fort Bowie National Historic Site](#)
- [Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail](#)
- [Brown v. Board of Education National Historical Park](#)
- [Southern Arizona Office](#)
- [Desert Research Learning Center](#)
- [Parks in Focus—Udall Foundation](#)
- [Arizona National Scenic Trail—USDA Forest Service](#)
- [Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area](#)



WNPA hosts The National Park Experience Pavilion at Tucson Festival of Books (courtesy of Joshua Elz).

HUBBELL TRADING POST HOSTS DEMONSTRATION OF THE NAVAJO SHOE GAME

In February, [Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site](#) hosted a demonstration of Késhjéé', the Navajo Shoe Game. This National Park Service–sponsored event gave visitors a chance to experience an important part of Navajo culture. Community members and visitors gathered in the historic wareroom to share in this special winter game that tells the story of how day and night came to be. Two teams, representing the night animals and the day animals, take turns hiding a yucca ball in one of four moccasins and trying to guess where the ball is hidden—this game might last all night. Songs are sung about the animals who first played the game, who could not agree on which celestial object should stay in the sky. Ultimately Késhjéé' is a game about choices and balance, and continues to build community in Navajo culture.



Visitors to [Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site](#) experience Késhjéé', the Navajo Shoe Game (courtesy of NPS).

TONTO NATIONAL MONUMENT GLOWS DURING A SPECIAL HOLIDAY EVENT

By the light of a nearly full moon, visitors at [Tonto National Monument](#) hiked the Lower Cliff Dwelling Trail with glimmering luminarias to light their way. For this annual December event, children in the area and other community members decorated many of the luminaria bags that lit the trail. The visitor center bustled with activity as people enjoyed hot chocolate and cookies and took pictures with the gingerbread cliff dwelling display. Within the first two hours, 120 visitors passed through the visitor center, many on their way to hike the sparkling trail. This free event brought people



Luminarias line the trail at [Tonto National Monument](#) (courtesy of NPS).

together to appreciate the unique and vibrant culture of Tonto NM, represented by the two Salado-style cliff dwellings that glowed with the light of the luminarias and the night sky.

NEW SNOWSHOES BRING VISITORS TO THE DESERT WINTER AT GREAT BASIN NATIONAL PARK

[Great Basin National Park](#) in the winter is a place of stillness and serenity. The Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive and Baker Creek Road are both closed to vehicle traffic, which means the park offers a quiet and contemplative space for skiers, snowshoers, and campers. The desert winter experience is truly a magical one, despite posing unique safety challenges. To improve access to this experience, the park's snowshoe loan program lends snowshoes for free to visitors, kids and adults alike. The snowshoe program is regularly funded through visitor donations—this year, WNPA supported the purchase of new snowshoes in multiple sizes and the repair of damaged shoes. This program brings more people into the quiet stillness of the desert winter wonderland. In contrast with a world that seems to move at rapid speed, some visitors might find a winter visit to Great Basin NP to be exactly what they need.

ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT HOSTS FORMAL TRIBAL CONSULTATION

On February 7, [Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#) hosted a formal consultation with the park's affiliated tribal leaders. In the heart of the Sonoran Desert, Organ Pipe Cactus NM has a rich cultural heritage inextricably connected to the stunning desert landscape. Bordered

in the east by the Tohono O’odham Nation and in the south by Mexico, the park’s trinational culture makes collaboration an integral part of its interpretation and preservation. For this event, many tribal leaders traveled to convene and consult on the park’s Long-Range Interpretation Plan. With WNPA’s support, attendees enjoyed a special meal after traveling to the park. With the shared goal of protecting this [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\) biosphere reserve](#) and telling the park’s untold stories, this event was a significant reflection of the collaborative relationship between the park and affiliated tribal communities and nations.



Visitors enjoy the old-fashioned frontier Christmas at [Fort Larned National Historic Site](#) (courtesy of NPS).

FORT LARNED TREATS VISITORS TO A CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Last December, [Fort Larned National Historic Site](#) held their annual Christmas Past celebration. Visitors enjoyed the traditions of an old-fashioned frontier Christmas at one of the best-preserved Indian Wars–era forts in the country, located on the Santa Fe Trail. Hot apple cider and popcorn were provided in the visitor center along with demonstrations by the fort’s blacksmith, in addition to the living history demonstration in the barracks and officers’ quarters. Visitors took pictures with Santa, then enjoyed a ride in his horse-drawn carriage, decorated with sleigh bells and Christmas wreaths. Throughout the event, Fort Larned Christmas carolers serenaded visitors, volunteers, and staff as they sampled 1860s-style desserts and learned about holiday traditions on the frontier. Kids of all ages decorated Christmas ornaments to take home with them as a memory of this unique

cultural experience.

AZTEC RUINS NATIONAL MONUMENT TURNS ONE HUNDRED

This year commemorates [Aztec Ruins National Monument’s](#) centennial. President Warren G. Harding established the monument on January 24, 1923 to “protect an exceptionally well-preserved great house community along the banks of the Animas River, and provide opportunities for greater understanding of the evolution of the Chacoan culture.” Designated as a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) in 1987, Aztec Ruins NM preserves a special part of the ancestral Puebloan people’s migration journey.

To celebrate, the park will host special events throughout the year that showcase the cultures, traditions, and people of Aztec Ruins NM. On January 24, in partnership with the monument, the Chaco Culture Conservancy hosted an online panel discussion focusing on the park’s Founding Day. The audience heard the valued perspectives of speakers from the park’s affiliated tribes: Dr. Shelly Valdez-Kawaika of the Pueblo of Laguna Tribe, Jon Ghahate of the Pueblos of Laguna and Zuni, and Curtis Quam, who was born and raised in Zuni, New Mexico. In the coming months, visitors and community members can look forward to music, art, and traditions in recognition of this very special centennial.

THE B.A.R.K. RANGER PROGRAM WELCOMES ITS NEWEST MEMBER

Meet Dwight, one of our newest B.A.R.K. Rangers! Dwight took the oath of the B.A.R.K. Rangers on February 4, 2023, in [Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot National Monuments](#). Part of the Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative, the B.A.R.K. Ranger program helps visitors provide a positive and safe experience for their dogs in national parks. As a new B.A.R.K. Ranger, Dwight has promised to always wear a leash, respect wildlife, stay in areas that are safe



and designated for pets, and have his humans clean up his waste properly. Congratulations, Dwight!



*Dwight the B.A.R.K. Ranger poses for the camera in front of **Montezuma Castle National Monument** (courtesy of Jill Bauer, NPS).*

CONCEPT 360 SUPPORTS THE FUTURE OF PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

Concept 360 is so much more than t-shirts! Established in 1987 with a mission to bring interpretive art to national parks and public lands, Concept 360 has grown to honor the legacy of company founders Sam and Liz Dunham. In addition to supporting national parks through the creation of beautiful, park-inspired apparel and accessories, they also commit to sustainability and conservancy to protect and preserve the world we live in. As a partner and vendor, Concept 360 has supported WNPA's mission and continues to create apparel and accessories that inspire future stewards of our nation's most special places—our national parks.



WNPA PARK PROTECTORS SUPPORT NATIONAL PARKS

Park Protectors are a part of a community of park advocates who are passionate about making the national park experience available to everyone. This year, Park Protector contributions helped purchase a beach wheelchair and beach walker at [Padre Island National Seashore](#) to provide greater access to this unforgettable park experience. At [Nicodemus National Historic Site](#), Park Protectors helped create and print brochures about the Nicodemus Township History Trail. An amazing 35,000 Junior Ranger badges were provided to [Bandelier National Monument](#), and Park Protector contributions supported cultural demonstrations at [Montezuma Castle National Monument](#) and [Tonto National Monument](#). Thank you, Park Protectors!



*Park Protector contributions help purchase beach wheelchair at **Padre Island National Seashore** (courtesy of NPS).*

Focus On

PARK MASCOTS PROMOTE PARK LOVE

Our national parks have been enlisting the help of some charismatic characters. Park mascots make parks more accessible to kids, educate visitors on the importance and complexity of the parks' ecosystems, and promote park love through fun and celebration.

A trio of these lovable icons brought the parks to the National Football League (NFL) Experience to cheer along with Superbowl fans. Sunny the Saguaro of [Saguaro National Park](#) raises awareness for the park in his Tucson community. Most often accompanied by a helper and a park advocate, Sunny visits with communities and inspires kids' curiosity about the park. Sunny wears a hat and badge, further

If you see a park mascot around, be sure to give them a high five and remember that the work they are doing supports our national parks.

encouraging the partnership between the community and the NPS. Pancho the Vermilion

Flycatcher is [Tumacácori National Historical Park's](#) mascot, though he prefers the term "goodwill ambassador." Pancho tells the story of the park and the O'odham people as they faced the arrival of the Spanish missionary Father Eusebio Francisco Kino. Pancho, short for Francisco, was named in honor of Father Kino, and spends his time helping to teach about Tumacácori's rich and complex cultural history. Sheila the Gila Monster, the newest member of this fun-loving trio, makes her home in [Tonto National Monument](#). WNPA provided supported for Sheila's arrival to the park in 2022—she is proud to represent one of the desert's most beautiful and iconic animals, the Gila monster. Sheila, Pancho, and Sunny are only three of the many mascots who are helping to spread the love of parks. Their appearance at the NFL Experience was another way for people to connect with their favorite parks.

WNPA DONATES BOOKS TO LITERACY CONNECTS

During the 2022 holiday season, WNPA shoppers donated nearly two hundred books to our partner Literacy Connects, a nonprofit based in Tucson, Arizona, during a book drive that focused mainly on children's books. For the fifth year, used books and newly purchased books were collected at [The National Parks Store](#), and book donations were accepted at WNPA's online store. This year, many of our donated books explored themes of science and nature, including children's books about coyotes, butterflies, bats, and more. Over the course of our partnership with Literacy Connects, WNPA—alongside our vendors, shoppers, and members—has coordinated the donation of more than 2,500 books that will be used to support the nonprofit's mission to connect people of all ages to a world of opportunities through literacy and creative expression.



Top, Pancho the Vermilion Flycatcher from [Tumacácori National Historical Park](#), Sunny the Saguaro from [Saguaro National Park](#), and Sheila the Gila Monster from [Tonto National Monument](#) pose at the NFL Experience, (courtesy of NPS). Bottom, WNPA publishing coordinator Laurie Miller (left), WNPA publishing manager Kathryn Yahner (middle), and Literacy Connects library manager Violet Kennedy helped organize the book drive (courtesy of Literacy Connects).

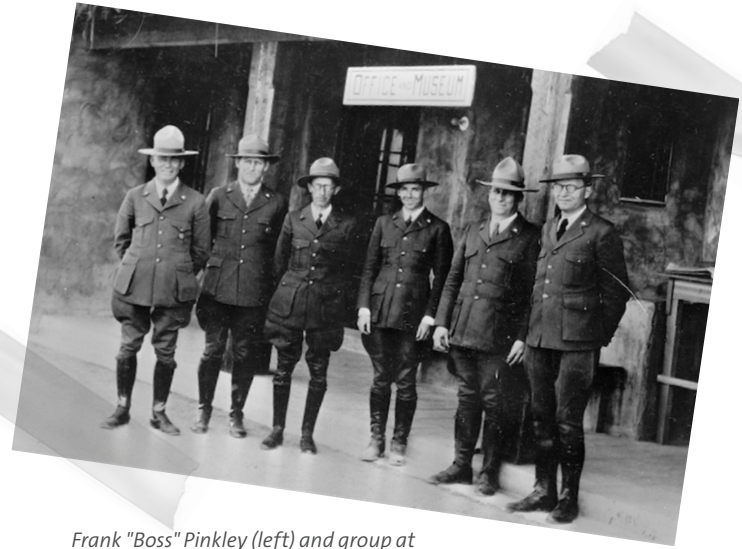
WNPA CELEBRATES 85 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

On July 22, WNPA will celebrate our 85th anniversary as a National Park Service cooperating association. In 1938, in the midst of the Depression, Frank Pinkley and Dale King led the charge for the establishment of Southwestern Monuments Association, which would become WNPA.

According to acclaimed author and former ranger Susan Lamb, WNPA began with \$234.50 and a conviction to “aid the preservation and interpretation of Southwestern features of outstanding national interest.” Read Susan Lamb’s [detailed history of WNPA](#).

Over the past 85 years, WNPA has played a vital role in the protection and preservation of our nation’s natural, cultural, and historical treasures. With the help of members, donors, and volunteers, WNPA has raised funds for educational programs, scientific research, and special events that foster a sense of conservancy and belonging and instill our heartfelt belief that every person belongs in a park.

Today, WNPA operates 68 park stores in national park sites across the American West. These stores offer a



Frank "Boss" Pinkley (left) and group at Casa Grande Ruins National Monument (courtesy of NPS)

wide range of educational and interpretive materials, including beautifully written and illustrated publications, and National Park Service–approved apparel and collectibles. One hundred percent of net proceeds help fund unique programs, research projects, and educational events.

Since our founding, WNPA has supported our National Park Service partner parks with more than \$136 million in aid. WNPA-sponsored programs, events, and educational endeavors help to ensure that our nation’s parks are protected and preserved so that all people, for all time, can have the opportunity to find themselves in a national park.



The National Parks Store in front of the Santa Catalina Mountains in Tucson, Arizona (courtesy of WNPA)

New & Notable Releases

WHITE SANDS NATIONAL PARK BY SUSAN LAMB

This beautifully illustrated, National Park Service–approved interpretive guide introduces readers to the cultural history, geology, ecology, and tourism of one of our nation’s most unique landscapes: [White Sands National Park](#). The book explores the intricacies of the landscape, its unique flora and fauna, its place in the surrounding desert climate, and its role in the lives of people and animals, from prehistory to modern day. Readers will come away with a visceral sense for the extremes and constant movement of a place like no other. Including ground-breaking new research findings, and reflecting White Sands’ 2019 redesignation as a national park, this guide is an incomparable resource for new and seasoned park-goers alike.

Susan Lamb is an acclaimed author of more than a dozen WNPA-published books about the Southwest and the natural world. A former ranger-naturalist for the National Park Service, she has an affinity for writing interpretive natural history. She currently lives in Flagstaff with her husband, photographer Tom Bean.



CASA GRANDE RUINS NATIONAL MONUMENT BY ROSE HOUK

This [beautiful book](#) by Rose Houk has been rereleased with new images and an updated design, adding four pages of content and creating a more vibrant and engaging experience for readers interested in the history and culture of this treasured park. The book’s photographs capture the starkly beautiful juxtaposition of the sophisticated architecture of the Great House and the blooming and sharp-edged desert flora. With great care, *Casa Grande Ruins National Monument* explores the rich cultural history and preservation of one of our nation’s most significant archaeological sites. Meticulous research and engaging storytelling make this book an essential resource for anyone interested in the cultural heritage of the stunning Sonoran Desert.



New & Notable Releases

32 OZ INSULATED STAINLESS-STEEL WATER BOTTLE

Our [stainless-steel insulated water bottles](#) keep hot drinks hot and cold drinks cold for hours. The bottle's handle has a spring-loaded opening so the entire bottle can be clipped to your pack, keeping your hands free. The 32-ounce capacity means you'll stay hydrated during your next walk in a park. Plus, each time you refill, you help cut down on recyclable waste! Choose from several unique designs.



ECO PALS PLUSH TOYS

Now you can safely snuggle your favorite animals! Our [Eco Pals plush toys](#) are responsibly made, using 100% recycled plush material and absolutely no plastic in construction, filling, or packing materials. Choose from more than ten cuddly animal designs, and help your child develop a healthy respect for the natural world.

REPREVE T-SHIRTS

These soft and colorful National Park Service–approved [t-shirts](#) are made from a tri-blend fabric with 50% REPREVE polyester. REPREVE fabric is made with high-quality yarn from recycled plastic bottles. This sustainable technique begins with the collection of post-consumer plastic bottles and ends with a wonderfully soft and strong yarn. WNPA's REPREVE t-shirts are made entirely in the United States and come in a wide variety of themes, designs, and colors.



Featured Events & Activities

Share Your Park Story during National Park Week

April 22 to April 30 is [National Park Week](#) this year! Every April, during the presidentially proclaimed National Park Week, the National Park Service joins with the National Park Foundation to celebrate America's most cherished places—our parks. This year, NPS is asking everyone to share their park stories. Each day during National Park Week, NPS suggests a story theme. From stories of connection and discovery to stories of inspiration and love, consider sharing your park story on social media using #MyParkStory. Connect with others or reflect on your personal relationships with parks during National Park Week.

Free Entrance Days in the National Parks

April 22 is a day of free admission in the national parks. Each site has something unique to offer—visit [NPS.gov](#) to plan your visit. Find yourself in a park and live your best park story. There are four fee-free days remaining in 2023:

April 22—First day of [National Park Week](#)

August 4—[Great American Outdoors Day](#)

September 23—[National Public Lands Day](#)

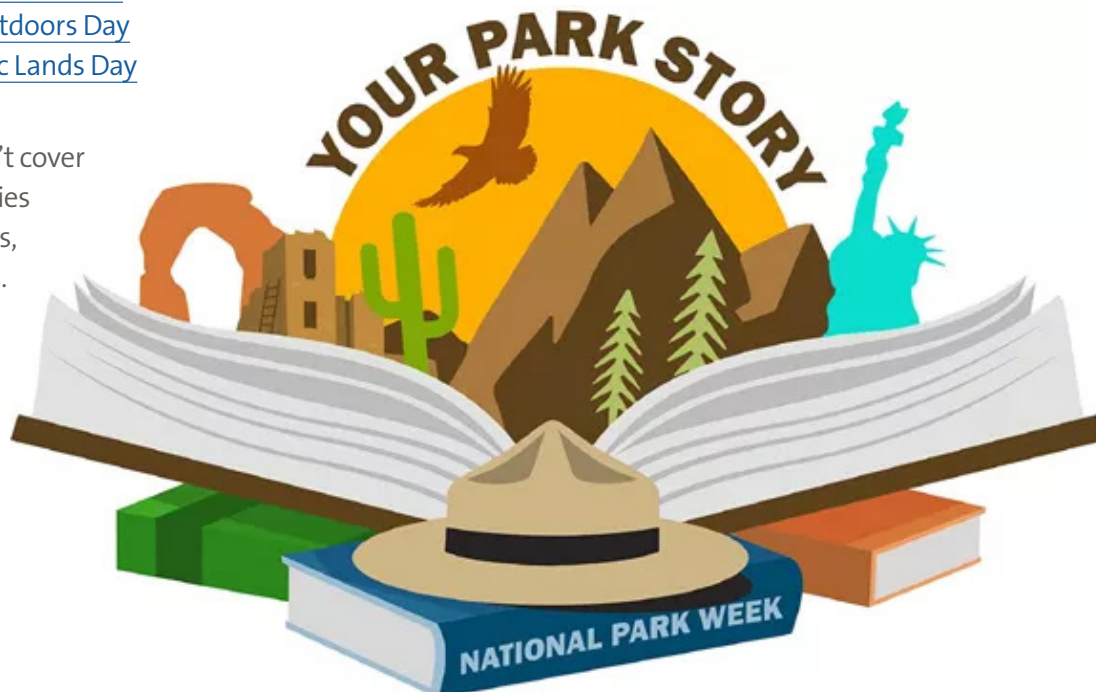
November 11—[Veterans Day](#)

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



Carlsbad Caverns National Park Celebrates Its Centennial

[Carlsbad Caverns National Park](#) was designated first as Carlsbad Cave National Monument by President Calvin Coolidge on October 25, 1923. Redesignated as a national park in 1930, this extraordinary and historic place offers beauty and wonder both above the ground and below. As part of their yearlong centennial celebration, the park has sent their mascot, Carl S. Bat, on a worldwide tour to visit other public lands and [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#). Follow Carlsbad Caverns National Park on social media for updates.



Kids in Parks

Flagstaff Area National Monuments Plan Youth Birding Program

Wildlife-watching creates meaningful connections between youth and their public lands—in many cases, birds are the most accessible form of wildlife. Located in urban and remote locations throughout the world, birds are present both in our backyards and out in the wilderness. With this in mind, the Flagstaff Area National Monuments—[Walnut Canyon National Monument](#), [Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument](#), and [Wupatki National Monument](#)—are developing a monthly youth birding program to spark interest in the outdoors by viewing and learning about the diverse bird species that live in northern Arizona. The walks, led by NPS rangers, will take place on many public lands, including the Flagstaff Area National Monuments and Coconino National Forest. With WNPA support, kids will gain an appreciation for the beauty of birds and gain a deeper sense of belonging in their national parks.

Junior Ranger Program Supports Learning and Literacy

The Junior Ranger program encourages kids to explore national parks. Unique programs are offered in almost all parks, so kids can share their stories and build their sense of belonging and conservancy. While most Junior Rangers are between five and thirteen years old, no one is too old or too young to participate in the fun activities and learning the program provides.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, kids and families have had to find new ways to support their learning and wellness. The Junior Ranger program has provided online resources that directly support children's education, especially during remote learning. When Junior Ranger Naomie, was 11 years old, she shared that she loves working on Junior Ranger activity booklets. "I started them in my house for extra help



Courtesy of Naomie's mom, Melanie

in reading and spelling," Naomie shared with WNPA. "My grades improved, and so did my self-confidence."

This year, National Junior Ranger Day is on April 29. WNPA partners with the NPS to develop and publish Junior Ranger activity booklets for many of our partner parks. Learn more about becoming a Junior Ranger at wnpa.org/junior-ranger-program/.

Every Kid Outdoors Brings Fourth Graders and Families to Parks for Free

Every Kid Outdoors provides free admission to hundreds of parks, lands, and waters to US fourth graders and their families and friends. Research shows that kids ages 9 to 11 are open to new ideas—exploring a park at this age influences kids to experience strong bonds with nature and our nation's stories. Parks are special places, and young people who develop a sense of belonging in a park will likely grow to be future stewards of the land.

To get started, go to <https://everykidoutdoors.gov/index.htm> Follow the instructions on the website and print out one pass per fourth grader. Educators can print out one pass for each of their fourth-grade students.

The pass admits the fourth grader, all accompanying children under 16, and up to three adults for free to more than two thousand federally managed recreation areas, including all national parks. Every kid belongs in a park, and this program helps make that happen!



For the most current event information at WNPCA-affiliated sites near you, check out the NPS app or their park page at wnpa.org. For events at The National Parks Store in Tucson, AZ, visit wnpa.org.

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 Historical Park](#)
[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](#)

Support Our Mission

Small Parks. Big Impact.

As a nonprofit education partner of the [NPS](#), [WNPA](#) raises funds for our national park partners. Your contributions to our fundraising efforts are directed to parks to improve the visitor experience and expand educational opportunities, while aiding operations.

Your generous gifts help us support more than 70 park sites in 12 states.

From meteor craters, awe-inspiring caves, and calming preserves to battlefields, historic forts, and sites of cultural significance, our Western parks have a big impact. Your donations, along with sales from our national park stores, help fund

- [Scientific research and discovery](#)
- [Junior Ranger programs](#)
- [Ranger-approved interpretive programs, events, videos, and books](#)

WNPA devotes 100% of our financial resources to support these goals. We need your investment of \$150 or more to continue this critical work. If you have already donated, thank you for your support.



SMALL PARKS

BIG IMPACT

[Support Parks Now](#)

Western
National Parks
Association

