

# YOUR AMERICAN WEST

## PARKS

Seasons of Sand

Birdfest

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## EVENTS

The National Parks Store

Big Thicket National Preserve

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## PRODUCTS

Saguaro Mini Blocks

Cliff Dweller

Drinking Glasses



Canyon de Chelly (courtesy of Gerorge Burba, Shutterstock).

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## Letter from the Executive Director

Happy New Year to all! 2018 is here, full of fresh promise and opportunities.

This issue of Your American West highlights the connection between parks and our nation’s veterans. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women of the military, but maybe you didn’t know how much their efforts helped build our parks. In this issue, we thank them for their service as volunteers and as full-time National Park Service (NPS) staff. This issue also pays special tribute to the brave Native American men and women who serve this country.

As always there is a multitude of programming and events to enjoy in our parks and beyond. Western National Parks Association (WNPA) is proud to continue as a major sponsor of the Tucson Festival of Books (TFOB), to be held March 10 and 11 at the University of Arizona Mall. This year marks the 10th year of TFOB, the third largest book festival in the country. WNPA’s festival theme will be “People need parks, parks need people.” Parks do need people, and we thank all of you for your support through your purchases in our park stores and urban locations, generous donations, and sponsorships.

2018 is also the year WNPA marks our 80th anniversary. From our humble beginnings at **Casa Grande Ruins National Monument** to having 71 partner parks under our umbrella, WNPA is proud to partner with NPS and these magnificent places.

With sincere thanks for your support,

**James E. Cook**

**James E. Cook**  
Executive Director

### Board of Directors

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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).

# Special Recognition & Community Partners

## Special Recognition: Comcast

Comcast, one of our community partners, is a proud supporter of WNP. Since 2014 they have helped WNP introduce about 7,500 kids to our national parks. Comcast believes strongly in providing opportunities for youth to explore, learn about, and become stewards of our public lands. Comcast and NPS also share a commitment to our military. These organizations employ 13,000 and 5,800 active duty military and veterans, respectively. Thank you, Comcast, for your support of our national parks and our national heroes.

## Meet Your Team: Christine Horvath

WNP is delighted to welcome Christine Horvath to the Home Office as our new Director of Finance and Administration. With an extensive background in the world of finance as well as a love and respect for national parks, Christine is perfectly suited for the work we do here. An avid cyclist, Christine says Tucson's Saguaro National Park East is her favorite park because it's more "than just a visit, it is a training circuit." She cycles the eight-mile loop for "climbing, cadence, and speedwork [training]. Nothing beats finishing the loop and having a PR [personal record]!" We're glad to have you on board, Christine. Welcome!



Christine Horvath (courtesy of Christine Horvath).

## Community Partners



- AdventureKEEN
- Bon Voyage Travel
- CliftonLarsonAllen
- Enchantment Resort
- Holualoa Companies
- Impact Photographics
- The Mahoney Group
- Pigment & Hue, Inc.
- Splendido
- Sunday Afternoons

## Celebrating 80 Years

WNP is turning 80 this year! This brief [retrospective video](#), debuted at the November board meeting, is part of the celebration. The video includes well-wishes from a few community members, including Tucson mayor Jonathan Rothschild and participants in the Stewart L. Udall Parks in Focus program. Also in honor of the 80th anniversary, the WNP board initiated a program called "We Love Our Parks," encouraging board members to visit all 71 partner parks. WNP produced a video showcasing [their adventures](#) so far. Enjoy!

Western National Parks Association

celebrating 80 years



Participants in the Stewart L. Udall Parks in Focus program.

WNP board member Laura Brown, right, with Aztec Ruins National Monument park store manager Elisa Bird (courtesy of Laura Brown).





Thank you, veterans (courtesy of Aaron Burden, Unsplash).

## Veterans and Parks

The national parks wouldn't be what they are today without our nation's veterans. In the time between 1872, when Yellowstone, the first national park, was created, and 1916, when NPS was founded, the US military oversaw many of the earliest national parks. Over 100 of the 417 NPS sites today have a tie to the country's military history, including Western forts of the 1800s like **Fort Davis National Historic Site**, Cold War sites, commemorations of wartime casualties, battlefields such as **Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park**, and cemeteries. Acting NPS director Michael T. Reynolds said, "These special places pay tribute to our veterans and serve as reminders of their selfless service and sacrifice throughout the history of our nation."

Today, NPS employs 5,800 veterans. They serve in a variety of careers, from pilots to wildlife biologists to human resource specialists. James Pearce, a veteran who was wounded in combat and is now a park ranger at the National Mall and Memorial Parks, said, "I am very proud to be part of the National

Park Service, where I can continue to serve and give back to my country, just in a different uniform." With veterans making up around 28 percent of the NPS workforce, it is clear parks need veterans.

But how do we give back to the members of the military, who have already given so much? Not many know that all active-duty military members can receive a free annual pass at many NPS sites. This pass allows the pass holder and guests to enter more than 2,000 Federally-managed recreation areas, including national parks, free of charge for one year. Additionally, many veterans qualify for a lifetime Access Pass, which is available to any US citizen or permanent resident with a permanent disability. Like the Annual Pass, the Access Pass enables free entrance to all national parks. If you or someone you know is interested in either of these passes, more information can be found [here](#).

Veterans have done so much for our country, serving to protect not only US citizens, but also our treasured national parks. To veterans everywhere, a heartfelt thank you from WNPA.

# New & Notable Releases

## Saguaro Mini Blocks

Now you can own the desert in miniature! Once towering and now made tiny, these saguaro mini blocks stand only three-and-a-half inches tall when constructed. With 158 pieces to put together, you'll have tons of fun creating your own desert landscape. Small parts; ages 7+. Available online at [store.wnpa.org](https://store.wnpa.org).



## Park Ranger Truck

Up a mountain, across a beach, through a river, over rough terrain—park rangers need to go anywhere the job takes them. That's why their trucks are so tough! Now you can have a toy park ranger truck of your own. It will take you anywhere your imagination travels! Small parts; ages 3+. Available online at [store.wnpa.org](https://store.wnpa.org).

## Cliff Dweller Drinking Glass Set

Have a drink, desert style. This four-piece glass set showcases the artistry of Ancestral Puebloans with evocative designs based on pottery remnants found near **Aztec Ruins National Monument**. The designs, "Mesas," "Diamondback," "Canyons," and "Rain," are black on frosted glass, bringing to mind the black-on-white style of Ancestral Puebloan pottery. Add this stunning set to your collection today. Available online at [store.wnpa.org](https://store.wnpa.org).



# Featured Events & Activities

## Hopi Katsinam Trunk Show

*Saturday, January 6, 10 AM–5 PM*

The National Parks Store  
12880 N Vistoso Village Dr.  
Tucson, AZ 85755

Katsina dolls, carved representations of Hopi deities, have captured the public imagination for decades. Enjoy a remarkable selection of katsina, or kachina, carvings from the finest Hopi artists. Talks about the history of this traditional Hopi art will take place at 11 AM and 2 PM. For more information, click [here](#).



## Hubbell Rugs and Jewelry Trunk Show

*Saturday, January 13, 10 AM–5 PM*

The National Parks Store  
12880 N Vistoso Village Dr.  
Tucson, AZ 85755

See hundreds of handcrafted Navajo rugs and fine silver and turquoise jewelry straight from **Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site**, the oldest continuously operating trading post in the American Southwest. At 3 PM Friday, trader Edison Eskeets will discuss the “the Long Walk of the Navajo” and the role of Hubbell Trading Post in Navajo history. Rug talks by trader Edison Eskeets will be at 11 AM and 2 PM. For more information, click [here](#).

## Free Entrance Day

*Monday, January 15*

All national parks will offer free admission to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr., Day.

## Yoga in Your Park

*Saturday, January 20, 9 AM–10 AM*

Mission San José at San Antonio  
Missions National Historical Park  
6701 San José Dr.  
San Antonio, TX 78210

Do yoga in the park at Mission San José! Balance your mind, center your body, and appreciate the wonderful sights of **San Antonio Missions National Historical Park**. This event is presented in partnership with Mission Heritage Partners, Mobile Om, and NPS. For more information, click [here](#).

## Oaxacan Woodcarvings Trunk Show

*Saturday, January 27–Sunday, January 28, 10 AM–5 PM each day*

The National Parks Store  
12880 N Vistoso Village Dr.  
Tucson, AZ 85755

Oaxacan artists Jacobo and Maria Angeles will show and sell their colorful and imaginative woodcarvings. This show celebrates their dedication to Mexican folk art and creating sustainable artistry. Enjoy artist demonstrations throughout each day. For more information, click [here](#).

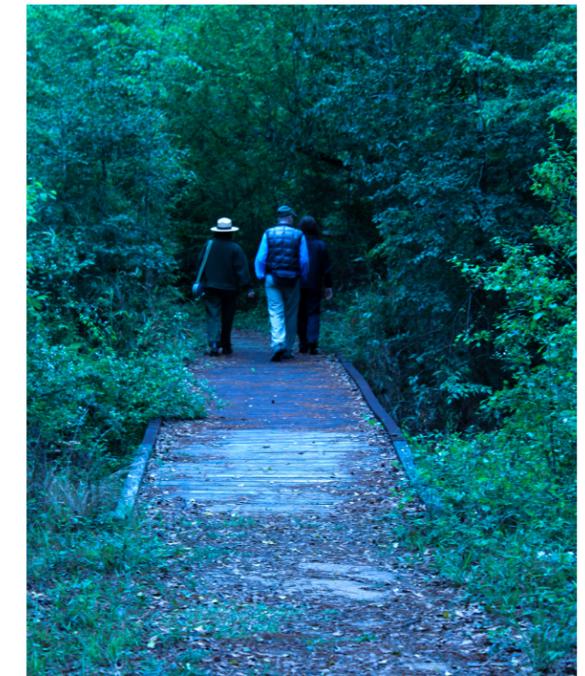


## Full Moon Night Hike

*Wednesday, January 31, 6 PM*

Big Thicket National Preserve  
6102 FM 420  
Kountze, TX 77625

Hike the park by moonlight and see **Big Thicket National Preserve** in an entirely new way! Space is limited. Call the visitor center at 409-951-6700 for more information and to register. For more information, click [here](#).



## Park-to-Park Hike

*Sunday, February 4, 8 AM–12 PM*

Tumacácori National Historical Park  
1891 East Frontage Rd.  
Tumacácori, AZ 85640

Learn more about the habitats and wildlife by hiking along the Santa Cruz River between **Tumacácori National Historical Park** and Tubac Presidio State Historic Park, then take the free shuttle back to your starting point. Park entrance is free for this event. For more information, click [here](#).

## National Park Adventure: Three Years, 417 Parks

**Monday, February 5, 2 PM**

The National Parks Store  
12880 N Vistoso Village Dr.  
Tucson, AZ 85755

Meet Mikah Meyer, the man on a three-year road trip to visit all 417 NPS sites. Hear his tales from the road after visiting almost 300 parks, and learn how he's working to make parks more accessible for everyone. For more information, click [here](#).



Mikah Meyer (courtesy of Mikah Meyer).

## Mata Ortiz Pottery Trunk Show

**Saturday, February 10–Sunday, February 11, 10 AM–5 PM each day**

The National Parks Store  
12880 N Vistoso Village Dr.  
Tucson, AZ 85755

Contemporary Mata Ortiz pottery displays pre-Hispanic influences fused with American Indian craftsmanship. Intricate pottery and vibrant Zapotec rugs will be available for purchase. There will be daily pottery firings at 11 AM and 2 PM and artist demonstrations throughout each day. For more information, click [here](#).



## Canyonlands Hike

**Saturday, February 24, 9:30 AM**

Big Thicket National Preserve  
6102 FM 420  
Kountze, TX 77625

Test your limits with this strenuous seven-mile off-trail hike through the rugged Canyonlands Unit of **Big Thicket National Preserve**. You'll see diverse terrain and wildlife and traverse a 150-foot elevation change. Call the visitor center at 409-951-6700 for more information and to register. For more information, click [here](#).

## Zuni Fetish Carvings Trunk Show

**Saturday, February 24, 10 AM–5 PM**

The National Parks Store  
12880 N Vistoso Village Dr.  
Tucson, AZ 85755

Browse the wares from Kachina House of Sedona, Arizona! Hundreds of authentic Zuni fetish carvings will be available for purchase. These finely-crafted works of art embody a rich and mystical tradition that celebrates the connection between the spiritual and human world. Talks at 11 AM and 2 PM. For more information, click [here](#).

## O'odham Tash (O'odham Day)

**Sunday, March 4, 10 AM–1 PM**

Tumacácori National Historical Park  
1891 East Frontage Rd.  
Tumacácori, AZ 85640

What is a "tash"? It's a cultural celebration! Discover the heritage of the original residents of Tumacácori National Historical Park with art, music, and crafts. For more information, click [here](#).



## Native Basketry Trunk Show

**Saturday, March 24, 10 AM–5 PM**

The National Parks Store  
12880 N Vistoso Village Dr.  
Tucson, AZ 85755

Join American Indian crafts expert Terry DeWald as he explains the history and artwork of a wide variety of antique and contemporary basketry. Learn about the use of these baskets and how basket making has evolved before perusing an assortment of baskets for sale. There will be weaving demonstrations by Tohono O'odham weavers Fred and Della Cruz and talks at 11 AM and 2 PM. For more information, click [here](#).



Photo credit: Randy Metcalf

## Tucson Festival of Books

**Saturday, March 10–Sunday, March 11, 9:30 AM–5:30 PM each day**

The University of Arizona  
Tucson, AZ 85721

Come celebrate books, authors, and literacy! Now in its 10th year, the Tucson Festival of Books is the third largest book festival in the country. TFOB, as it's known, is free and open to the public. WNPA will be hosting our popular "National Park Experience" pavilion again, with informational and educational activities as well as pop-up shops for The National Parks Store and **Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site**. For more information, click [here](#).

Photo credit: Randy Metcalf



# People & Happenings



“Take only pictures, leave only footprints.”

*Painted rocks have been found at more national parks lately (NPS Photo, courtesy of Chickasaw National Recreation Area's Facebook page).*

## Leave No Trace

Sometimes even things done with the best intentions can be detrimental. A good example is the recent trend of park visitors leaving behind brightly-painted rocks. While park visitors mean well when they display their artwork, NPS does not look on it so kindly. In the setting of a national park, the rocks are littering at best and vandalism at worst. Defacing park land in any way counters the NPS mission to “preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources” of the land. Additionally, the paint may flake or chip off the rocks and become harmful or even toxic to wildlife in the area. Several national parks, including **Chickasaw National Recreation Area**, **Pinnacles National Park**, and **Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument**, have seen a rise in painted rocks. Visitors are also taking

rocks from the park for the purpose of painting them. This is theft. Visitors are not allowed to remove anything from a national park—except trash.

Another form of well-intentioned vandalism is the construction of rock cairns. While not toxic like painted rocks, these stacked rock constructions still take a piece of the natural landscape and create something unnatural. At **Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument**, a cairn of volcanic rocks was constructed on a trail overlook in an area intended for visitors with mobility impairments. In this case, not only did the cairn disturb nature, but it disrupted the park experience for other visitors. When visiting public lands, remember this sage advice: take only pictures, leave only footprints.

## Kids Need Parks, Parks Need Kids

Do you know any fourth graders? Do they have their Annual 4th Grade Pass yet? This pass, available to US students in the fourth grade (or its homeschool equivalent), lets kids visit more than 2,000 Federally-managed recreation areas, including national parks, for free. It's valid for one school year and the following summer, so the 2017–2018 pass will expire on August 31, 2018. Aimed at getting kids into nature at a time when they are primed for making connections with the world around them, this initiative encourages kids to become the future stewards of our public lands. This fee waiver, which also applies to occupants of the car with the fourth grader (hello, family trip!), makes visiting public lands a possibility for numerous children who may not have been able to afford such an experience otherwise. If you or someone you know is interested in this pass, more information can be found [here](#).

While visiting a park, some children 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! More information about the Junior Ranger program can be found [here](#).

WNPA provides financial aid to parks to assist with the costs of running Junior Ranger programs, such as printing booklets, ordering badges, and designing activities, ensuring children can explore, learn about, and protect national parks. This year, WNPA participated in #GivingTuesday, a global day of charitable giving following Thanksgiving. We're happy to announce we raised over \$2,500 to benefit Junior Ranger programs! James E. Cook, executive director of WNPA, says, “Our yearlong fundraising campaign is still ongoing, and we have a goal of raising \$80,000 to serve 80,000 Junior Rangers. The Junior Ranger program provides important park connections to children, the next generation of public land stewards.” To donate now, please visit our [donation page](#).

*Kids and parks like Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument make a great pair! (Courtesy of Twitter user @publiclandvr.)*



# Native American Heritage Month

November was Native American Heritage Month, a time devoted to celebrating the traditions, cultures, and contributions of Native Americans. NPS joins the Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum each year to hold events, lectures, concerts, webinars, and more, all honoring Native Americans. WNPA applauds this initiative and took part by bringing attention to Native American events throughout the year.

*Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument (courtesy of David Velk).*



*Navajo Code Talkers and cousins Pfc. Preston Toledo (left) and Pfc. Frank Toledo relay orders in Navajo over a field radio (courtesy of National Archives, photo no. 127-MN-57875).*

## Code Talkers

Thousands of brave Native American men and women have served this country: more than 12,000 in World War I (when Native Americans were still not considered US citizens), an estimated 44,000 in World War II, an estimated 10,000 in the Korean War, and more than 42,000 during the Vietnam War. What many don't know is how vital Native Americans were to our communication during these wars.

Code Talkers were first used in WWI, when Choctaw soldiers transmitted messages in their native language, making them indecipherable to the Germans. Later, as WWII escalated, Native Americans from 16 tribes were recruited to become Code Talkers. These Code Talkers transmitted crucial battlefield communications in their native language (a Type Two Code) or in a special word-to-letter code (a Type One Code). Navajo was the primary code language, with over 400 Navajo men serving as Code Talkers. Navajo has very complex grammar and was almost

never spoken by nonnatives; it is estimated that, when WWII began, fewer than 30 non-Navajo could understand it. Further encoding this language by establishing the Type One word-to-letter system (the Navajo word for "cat" meant C, the word for "dog" meant D, and so on) made it incredibly secure. The Navajo Type One Code is the most well-known, but Comanches, Hopis, and Meskwakis also made their own Type One Codes for their languages.

The Code Talker program came to an end during the Vietnam War. The program was kept highly secret. It was not until 1968 that their existence became declassified information. Years later, in 2000, the United States passed legislation to award Navajo Code Talkers the Congressional Gold Medal. In 2008, the Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008 was signed into law, honoring all Native Americans who served as Code Talkers in WWI and WWII.

*“Hubbell Trading Post is the oldest continuously operating trading post in the American Southwest.”*



*Hubbell Trading Post is located on the Navajo Nation.*

## Focus on Hubbell Trading Post

**Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site**, a living trading post in Ganado, Arizona, is a unique place. First purchased by John Lorenzo Hubbell in 1878, Hubbell Trading Post is the oldest continuously operating trading post in the American Southwest, with groceries, dry goods, and handwoven Navajo rugs for sale.

Trade was a very important part of Navajo life in the late 1800s. In 1864 “the Long Walk of the Navajo” began, with thousands of Navajo forced to walk more than 300 miles from their traditional lands to an internment camp called Bosque Redondo near Fort Sumner, New Mexico. The 40-square-mile camp was overcrowded; as many as 10,000 men, women, and children were held there, and conditions were exceedingly poor. During the four years the Navajo were held at Bosque Redondo, thousands died from diseases, starvation, and exposure to the elements.

The Navajo Treaty was signed on June 1, 1868, allowing the Navajo to return to a portion of their land. On June 18, 1868, the Navajo began their walk home. Upon their arrival, they found their way of life destroyed: their cattle dead, their fields decimated. Trade with men such as John Lorenzo Hubbell was one of the only ways to survive.

The Hubbell family continued to run the post until 1967, when it was sold to NPS. Today Western National Parks Association is proud to operate Hubbell Trading Post, keeping this important part of history alive.

## Sand Creek Massacre

The Sand Creek Massacre is a dark spot on the country’s history, but one that should not be ignored. On November 29, 1864, 675 men of the Colorado US Volunteer Cavalry, led by US Army Colonel John Chivington, attacked an encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho, slaughtering many of the men, women, and children there. Well over half of the approximately 230 killed were women and children. The site of this attack is now **Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site**.

Black Kettle, the most prominent Cheyenne leader in the village, had advocated for peace treaties in the past. It is said he raised the American flag and a white flag over the encampment as soldiers attacked, but this call for peace was ignored. Black Kettle escaped the massacre, but many other chiefs and the majority of Black Kettle’s people did not. George Bent, a surviving member of Black Kettle’s clan, said, “Black Kettle’s band, the clan he was in charge of, ‘Wu-ta-pi-u,’ were nearly all killed at Chivington’s Massacre at Sand Creek in 1864. Only few men were left.”

Black Kettle continued to push for peace, signing the Little Arkansas Treaty in 1865 and the Medicine Lodge Treaty in 1867. He was shot and killed by US soldiers led by Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer in the Battle of the Washita on November 27, 1868, almost four years to the day after the Sand Creek Massacre. The site of the Battle of the Washita, **Washita Battlefield National Historic Site**, is also an NPS park.

Both of these parks are deeply important sites which hold our nation accountable for past transgressions against Native Americans. “Not all of our country’s past has been virtuous,” said Sand Creek’s acting chief of interpretation, Rick Wallner. “We must remember the times we have acted contrary to our national ideals of ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’ The enabling legislation for Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site even states one of the purposes of the site is to ‘assist in minimizing the chances of similar incidents in the future.’ At Sand Creek, visitors can reflect on this tragic event and join in the hope such an incident never happens again.”

*Hundreds of Cheyenne and Arapaho were killed in the Sand Creek Massacre (courtesy of NPS Photo).*





WNPA and NPS staff from Hubbell Trading Post at the outreach table.

# In the Parks

## Hubbell Trading Post Celebrates Veteran's Day

The Apache County District II Veteran's Day celebration took place on November 9 in Ganado, Arizona, and **Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site** staff were delighted to attend this great event. WNPA and NPS staff teamed up at the Hubbell outreach table, greeting community members and spreading the word about upcoming Hubbell events and opportunities to tour the historic Hubbell home. They also held a raffle for a wood stove. Joe Tohonnie Jr. and the White Mountain Apache Crown Dancers of White River, Arizona performed a ceremonial dance. Videos of the performance are viewable on Hubbell's [Facebook page](#).

## What's the Word? Bird!

Birdfest is the event of the year for **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area**, and this year didn't disappoint! Dolly the California condor was there from the Los Angeles Zoo & Botanical Gardens, and 1,287 visitors greatly enjoyed all the bird activities of the day. Representatives from several Audubon societies, including Conejo Valley Audubon Society and Pasadena Audubon Society, attended to provide information and fun activities. One station was set up to create peanut butter and birdseed bird feeders, while others had coloring pages, owl pellet dissection, and a spin-the-wheel raffle. Nature of Wildworks held a demonstration with several live birds for a packed audience. There were also bird-themed items available for sale, including paintings, books, tote bags, hats, and binoculars for birding. It was a fun day for all, and a great way to celebrate birds.



Dolly the California condor was a big hit! (Courtesy of NPS Photo.)



There were many activities for children at Birdfest (courtesy of NPS Photo).

## Seasons of Sand

To celebrate her eight years as chief of interpretation at **White Sands National Monument**, Becky Burghart wanted to share her love of the land with visitors. The Seasons of Sand photography exhibit, which will be on display in the White Sands gallery until the end of January, features photographs taken by Burghart while working at, exploring, and learning about the vast gypsum dunes at White Sands from 2009 to 2017. She said, "Through the many sunsets, windstorms, and bright sunny days, my camera was always close at hand so I could photograph these vignettes of the amazing beauty found in this stark landscape."



The Seasons of Sand exhibit.

Mikah Meyer is on an epic three-year road trip (courtesy of Mikah Meyer).



## Spotlight

Meet Mikah Meyer, a man on a mission. He's on a three-year road trip to visit all 417 NPS sites. This will make him not only the youngest person to have visited all the sites (the current youngest is 39; Meyer will be 33 when his trip ends), but the only person to visit them all in one trip. Meyer, who is gay, also hopes to serve as a good example for LGBTQ kids and takes photos of himself with a rainbow flag at many of the NPS sites. He said, "I hope my rainbow flag photo series with iconic National Park Service sites helps the [LGBTQ] community feel more safe and welcome in the outdoors." His journey has received coverage from many media outlets, including NBC, NPR, and usatoday.com. In February, Meyer will come to the WNPA Home Office in Tucson, Arizona to give a talk about his travels. [Don't miss it!](#)

# Social Media Corner

Do you follow us on Twitter? WNPA was recently invited to cohost not one, but two national park-themed "Twitter chats" on the popular social media platform. The chats are one hour of discussion about national parks, with fellow park enthusiasts tweeting out answers to questions asked by the hosts. These Twitter chats are a great way to find others who share your interest in our public lands. Don't miss the next one! Follow us on Twitter to find out when the next chat takes place.

Follow WNPA on   



White Sands National Monument (courtesy of [@danielgross](#)).



Chiricahua National Monument (courtesy of [@bedenny](#)).



Saguaro National Park (courtesy of [@grampac](#)).



Channel Islands National Park (courtesy of [@jrrangertigran](#)).

# Membership Matters

Creating an amazing experience for park visitors is at the heart of WNPA's mission. It is the most significant kind of support given to partner parks. WNPA's field staff of over 100 employees works side by side with National Park Rangers to make sure a friendly face is available to visitors. The following letter from **Guadalupe Mountains National Park** superintendent Eric Brunnemann to WNPA and NPS staff recounts a recent visitor experience.

*Dear Art, Michael, Eli, Elizabeth,*

*I just received a call from Ron, a park visitor whose voice message absolutely insisted on a return call. So naturally, I did.*

*In about this order, Ron described his trip. When he walked into the Pine Springs Visitors Center, he received the best greeting he can ever recall. Art... you welcomed him "back again," having remembered his previous trip. That kind of hospitality was just over the top.*

*Elizabeth, you told him for the best fall colors, to go all the way to the notch. In other words, don't be dissuaded, keep going to the notch. Ron said he would have stopped, but because of your insistence, he trusted your advice. So, by the time he got to the notch, it was in fact, absolutely beautiful.*

*The next day, Michael urged him to now see the Lower Bowl and painted such a beautiful and encouraging journey, that Ron set out to do just that. En route, Ron met Eli who volunteered the beauty of the Upper Bowl. So, Ron did both; hiking to the Lower, then Upper. Ron described how the entire hike was absolutely wonderful. He couldn't stop talking about how you gave him the best hike he could have asked for.*

*Ron is planning to come back and camp. He is also going to buy another Season Pass so he can keep coming here. Ron insisted, visitors are not unaware and can tell the real thing. It was hard for him to find the right words, but he settled on "welcoming" and "genuine."*

*It's my pleasure to pass Ron's appreciation to you all, and thank you for the hospitality and comfort you provide our guests.*

*Thank you!!*

*Eric J. Brunnemann, Superintendent, Guadalupe Mountains National Park*



*El Capitan, Guadalupe Mountains National Park (courtesy of Gary Davis).*

**Art... you welcomed him "back again,"  
having remembered his previous trip.  
That kind of hospitality was just over the top.**

This is just one example of a positive, engaging interaction between WNPA field staff, NPS rangers, and valued park visitors. Your support of WNPA helps provide critical staff in partner parks. For more information about membership and charitable giving, visit [wnpa.org](http://wnpa.org) or contact Amy Reichgott, development manager, at 520-789-7406 or [amy.reichgott@wnpa.org](mailto:amy.reichgott@wnpa.org).

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