



NEWSLETTER

of the

FRIENDS OF ROCKHOUND STATE PARK

October, November, December 2011

VISITOR CENTER

NEW MEXICO
CENTENNIAL
1912-2012
100 YEARS IN
A STATE OF
ENCHANTMENT

Rockhound Rocks!

by Sally Allen

Nestled in the Little Florida Mountains and located about 12 miles southeast of the city of Deming, Rockhound State Park was established in 1966 because of its interesting geology. Its volcanic origins provide visitors with the unique opportunity to hunt for beautiful rock specimens, including quartz crystals, blue agate, many shades of jasper, and banded rhyolite, as well as the much sought-after thunder-eggs and geodes.

The Visitor Center at Rockhound, which opened its doors in 2001, is home to an outstanding collection of rock specimens, as well as eye-catching exhibits about the actual geology of the region, the climate, flora, fauna, and history of the area. But visitors, upon entering the center, usually are drawn first to the colorful display of rocks that are kept on the information counter. These rock samples have all been gathered within the park and some have been in the collection since the opening of the center.

A particularly gorgeous jasper sample, weighing at least 25 pounds or so, was brought down off the mountain by former Rockhound ranger Gloria Reed. That was quite a feat by our petite ranger Gloria!

One day, the park crew was digging a hole for a water line and, lo and behold, a massive, sparkling specimen of quartz crystal, lined with rare blue agate, was unearthed. It has held an honored place in the collection ever since.

Last March, an enthusiastic Rockhound camper named Michael spent about two weeks staying in the park and, after dutifully digging on the mountain day after day, discovered a medicine ball-sized geode that was dragged down the mountain in the back of one of the 4-wheel-drive Polaris vehicles, with Ranger Art at the helm. The geode was carefully dissected and the top of it is now proudly displayed on the information counter.

Rockhounds, young and old, come into the center to check their new-found treasures against the rock samples to see exactly what type of geologic wonders have been found during their day in the park. In the park's busy season, between Thanksgiving and Easter, a week doesn't go by without a camper or visitor coming into the center and asking, "Gee, is it really true that we can take some of these rocks home from the park?"

"Absolutely," they're told!...

If you've never dropped by the Rockhound Visitor Center, you're in for a treat.



The Center is open every day except major holidays, 10 AM to noon, and 1 to 4 PM.



BEHIND THE COUNTER

One Thursday morning a few months ago two women from Florida walked into the Visitor Center. As their eyes adjusted from the bright sunshine outside they began to glance at the displays. From behind the counter, Sally Allen's lilting voice enthusiastically welcomed them. They approached her to ask about the trails around Rockhound State Park. As Sally explained the trail maps, she engaged them in conversation...she learned where they're from, where they're headed, what their interests are...all in a brief chat. In the conversation, Sally managed to peer over the counter and comment that they were wearing good sturdy shoes for the hike. She also managed to sneak in a humorous comment about how being alert to rattlesnakes is good. No lectures, no pedantic reciting of rules and cautions, just a friendly chat, and a warm welcome. Sally has been volunteering at the visitor center for many years. She can't even remember when she started. She was asked to fill in for a while but ended up greeting visitors every Thursday. Sally has also been managing the gift shop, selecting items, ordering and pricing items and keeping track of inventory.



She "retired" from her voluntary post in October. She says it's amazing to meet folks from all over the globe. The Visitor Center has welcomed people from every state in the US (including Hawaii & Alaska). Many Canadians find their way to Rockhound. Others travelers came from nations all over the world: Australia, England, Germany, and Israel to name a few.

Sally's involvement with State Parks began long before she and her husband Bill moved here. Sally was a volunteer and tour guide at Emerald Bay State Park (on Lake Tahoe) almost 40 years ago. She and Bill were married on Fannette Island there. She says, "It was the best wedding I've ever been to!"

Although Sally will continue to be in charge of the gift shop inventory, she will not be behind the counter. Visitors will continue to be greeted by our great camp hosts Norma & Charles, Marion & Dave, and Wanda & George.

Thanks, Sally for all the contributions you make to Rockhound State Park and the Friends group.

13 SQUARE FEET THAT BECAME A GOLDMINE!

On May 20, 2005 the Friends group introduced about 60 youngsters from the Anthony school district to the park. As they were touring the Visitor Center \$5 and \$10 were appearing in many hands all eager to buy some souvenir of their adventures. There was nothing available! It did not take long for our fearless leader (Jim Brady) to find vendors to provide a buying option to visitors. It began simply as t-shirts. Next came a specially designed bag to hold the 15 pounds of rocks allowed to be taken home. Originally an out of state supplier was used but in no time Jim located a local business: "All Things Created." Gary and June Loudon keep the rock tumblers humming providing great specimens for our visitors to take home. Sally Allen found a source for walking sticks; Jim Hazelton provides us thunder eggs and rattlesnake vertebrae earrings. Ron Wolfe and Greg Scarpella have provided framed photos and note cards. In October 2008 we were informed that we would have to apply for a competitive concessionaire permit to continue to operate the gift shop. We completed a rather extensive application that was approved January 21, 2009 but was subject to the renewal of the cooperative agreement which took until February 2010 to complete.



Gift Shop with
Wanda Taylor, Park Volunteer

10% Off for Friends!

MEETING: OCTOBER 26

ROBERT'S REPORT

1. Drilling of the new well is behind schedule, due to contractor Diaz scheduling. Robert hopes he can get started very soon. Currently, supply is keeping up with demand.
2. The inmates are doing a good job keeping the park grounds maintained.
3. New internet connection still in the works, but not yet installed.

NEW BUSINESS

1. The new Spanish Stirrup Rock Shop asked if they could put a link to Rockhound State Park on their website. Was a done deal before it could be brought before the Board, but there was no dissent.

2. MaryKay circulated the 2012 Friends' calendar of events.
3. The "Desert Alive! & Native Plant Sale" is scheduled for Saturday, April 14.
4. Sunday, April 15, Friends will host a Centennial Celebration, with the idea of having entertainment, speakers, demonstrations, food, etc. A signup sheet will be passed around at today's general meeting, asking for volunteers to serve on the Centennial Committee.
5. MaryKay circulated the Membership Application. No changes.
6. Dave Shephard, Programs Chair for 2012, informed us of some speakers already booked, and tossed around a few ideas for Board feedback. Sounds like some good stuff!



Paul Juergens, who lives in Deming and is a field biologist for the Peregrine Fund, gave a fascinating presentation on the trials and tribulations in efforts to restore the endangered Aplomado Falcon. The group's work includes sites in Texas and New Mexico, one of which is on the Pitchfork Ranch, just 35 miles northwest of Deming. After the presentation, Paul brought out Violet, his trained Peregrine falcon who had been waiting patiently on her perch. Paul's love of his work and these amazing birds was even more obvious as he talked about Violet. He knows her personality and moods, just as any pet owner might, but when they go duck hunting, they are an awesome team. She is released, goes completely out of sight and will suddenly reappear as she screeches down in a powerful dive for the duck. As Paul held her on his glove, he told great stories of the character of his falcon, and the abilities of Peregrine falcons in general. Peregrines are known as the fastest animals on the planet, having been documented to achieve speeds of 240 mph in a dive!

Click on this link to see more of what is being done by Paul and his organization.

<http://peregrinefund.org/aplomado>



WHAT IS FOR?

Friends of Rockhound State Park, Inc. meets on the last Wednesday of the month.

Board Meeting 9:00 AM

General Meeting 10:00 AM

Program 10:15 AM

Programs are free to the public

The Friends of Rockhound (FOR) is a non-profit volunteer organization whose purpose is to assist the New Mexico Parks Department to enhance, preserve, and promote the use of Rockhound State Park. FOR helps in many ways with interpretive programs, educational programs and special events. The Park has a new Visitor Center with many displays and a Native Plant Demonstration Garden dedicated to the interpretation of the Chihuahuan Desert. All of our activities and money raised are used to benefit Rockhound State Park and its visitors.



The Southwestern Night Sky

By Sally Allen

The enchantment of New Mexico does not stop when the sun goes down at the end of a beautiful, deep-blue sky day. Rather, I think it is just getting started! We are very fortunate to live in an area where, as local cowboy poet Mike Moutoux has said, **“The stars own the night sky.”**



Our dark night sky is one of New Mexico’s greatest natural resources. But with our population growing, it is harder and harder, as Walt Whitman wrote, to **“look up in perfect silence to the stars.”**

Here at Rockhound State Park, we have the opportunity to enjoy the dark night sky just as our ancestors did for thousands of years before us. It has been my good fortune to be able to hold star parties at the Visitor Center in the Native Garden for the past six years through my association with the New Mexico State Parks Stars-n-Parks program, our Park crew headed by Park ranger and manager, Robert Apodaca, and the non-profit National Public Observatory. NPO is a group of amateur astronomers who are crazy about sharing our telescopes and knowledge about the stars with anyone who will listen.

Such was the case on Saturday night, October 29th. I arrived at the park a little after sundown, not expecting too many people to be there yet. Well, was I mistaken! Earlier in the month, I had spoken to new Deming resident, Lon Shelton, who had decided to trade the swamps of Louisiana for the high desert of New Mexico. He is also quite an amateur astronomer (with many telescopes!) and photography buff. He volunteered to come and help out at the star party, to which I answered a resounding, “Yes!!” He brought along a bunch of his photography buddies and they were already there, able and waiting. We also enjoyed the company of several teachers and students from Red Mountain Middle School, as well as some park campers.

Halloween was in the air, so of course we had a cloth jack o’ lantern filled with candy to pass around, as well as a spooky theme for the night: Creepy Constellations. Ranger Robert was also kind enough to distribute some very cool, eye friendly red light key chains provided by the state parks. Before night fell, though, we were lucky enough to get to see a three-day-old crescent moon through the ‘scopes as well as a glimpse the planet Venus before she set in the west. Jupiter rose in the east during my laser presentation, so we viewed him afterwards. Follow both planets for the next several months and see them close in on each other and be just 3 degrees (a little wider than your thumb at arm’s length) apart in March, 2012!

During the evening we were also treated to meteors flashing by, and a number of satellites silently traveling in their never ending journeys around our planet...well, until gravity catches them! Of course, there were also the “creepy constellations,” several of which were Draco, the fire breathing dragon, and the mythological hero of old, Perseus, who is holding the head of the Medusa, the ugly Gargoyle sister whose hair was actually snakes and whose look turned everyone to stone. The star in the constellation that is supposed to be her eye is known as Algol, the Demon star.

After several hours of “oohing” and “ahhing,” we all said our thank you’s and good nights and packed up, successfully proving again Cowboy Mike’s adage that yes, the stars DO own the night sky here in New Mexico.



GARDEN PATH: NOVEMBER 16

Wednesday November 16, was a beautiful cool morning and fourteen volunteers, armed with wheelbarrows, shovels, and rakes, began attacking a huge pile of gravel (crusher-fines). The task was to spread the gravel on the newly created lower garden path and the labyrinth. It was great fun and great exercise. The Garden and labyrinth (and work crew) look great!





MEETING: NOVEMBER 30

Robert's Report

Water is sufficient while they await Javier Diaz to drill the new well. All paperwork is in place along with funds. Park income is up between 10-20% over 2010. Dave Johnson of Deming should be bringing internet access to the park in the next few days. The state contract with the department of prisons has allowed Robert to maintain many trails and get some good work done within the parks.

Unfinished business

The 2012 calendar was approved as amended
The 2012 dues shall remain the same

New business

Centennial committee has been formed and met. Items purchased where displayed.

1. December calendar was presented; signup sheet for "bag rattling" and the Luminarias night.
2. Folks were reminded to bring aluminum cans and Pepper's receipts (which are given to the Deming Garden Club)

There being no further business, President Art adjourned the Board meeting to the general meeting and a presentation by Gary Meyers of the Apache Homeland Casino.



Gary Meyers described the history and recent events concerning the Tribe and their efforts to open a Casino in our area. The people that would come to be known as the Fort Sill Apache Tribe were removed from their southern New Mexico homelands in 1886 with government assurance that they could return in two years. The Tribe was held as prisoners of war and imprisoned for 28 years from 1886 – 1914. The federal government has now recognized the tribe and has recognized the 30 acres they own east of Deming on Interstate 10 as a reservation.

On Wednesday, December 7, the Fort Sill Apache held a Town Hall Meeting at the Learning Center to inform local residents of their plan to go forward on the building of a Gaming Casino. The Town Hall meeting was the first of 3 planned meetings with local residents to keep them abreast and listen to concerns on their plans to enlarge their current casino and add slot machines and employ around 40 additional employees. They would also like to build a new facility that would include gaming, restaurant, and motel. They estimate it will take around 6 to 8 months to build the new building and would hire around 300 new employees. This is just the beginning. There are a lot of questions that need to be answered. An environmental impact study will be completed to help address those questions



PROGRAMS FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY & MARCH 2012

January 25: Dr. Curtis Monger, NMSU Department of Plant and Environmental Science will talk about the changes in biota and land appearance post Pleistocene lake.

February 29: Birthday Party Friends of Rockhound State Park, Inc., celebrates another year February 2012. Join us for some birthday cake!

Our annual meeting/election of officers is held every year in February. Generally the regional manager, Rolf Hechler or someone from Santa Fe attends. They bring us greetings from the state and can provide information about the health of the State Park systems, especially Rockhound/Spring Canyon. Our President, Art Vasquez, will present the **State of the Friends report for 2011**. We have a review of the monies earned and spent on behalf of the park. It is time to review our successes and to plan for more in the upcoming year.

March 28: Marilyn Markel, author and authority on Mimbres archaeology, pottery and culture, and past site manager of the Mimbres Cultural Heritage Site, will present a program on **Mimbres Indian Culture**.

BAG FOLDING: DECEMBER 7

Friends of Rockhound volunteers and Park Staff (33 of us) gathered to fold bags, fill each with sand and place a candle within to produce the luminaras for Saturday's 10th Annual Holiday Lights Festival at Rockhound State Park. The morning was great fun. The shop was filled with laughter, conversation and an occasional sing-along holiday song! With many hands helping, we were finished before noon and were treated to delicious *albondigas* (meat-ball) soup and warm tortillas--prepared by Jackie & Cheryl of Angel Wings Catering



♪ You've got to Know when to hold 'em

♪ know when to walk away

♪ know when to fold 'em

♪ know when to run



Playing in the sand



Wicks go up..?



Watch out, Here comes Quality Control!



Oops

HOLIDAY LIGHTS: DECEMBER 10

by MaryKay Brady



It was a dark and stormy night---no it was not! It was a clear evening leading to a great full moon. This year's added attraction was the beauty of the snow on the backside of the Floridas.

Over 150 folks gathered for the 10th annual Holiday Lights program. 1,152 candles flickered in the light wind that kept the temperatures comfortable. Friends' members served about 170 cups of hot chocolate, 5 gallons of hot cider and who knows how much coffee. Helen, Larry and Joan were busy serving cookies provided by local businesses, **Angel Wings Catering** (Cheryl Fontane and Jackie Rankin) and **Enchanted Tea Room** (Art & Brenda Vasquez). Derek and Katha kept the water hot and the coffee perking all evening. We experienced none of the electrical events of other years as they had pots plugged in everywhere. The local GOP via Carol and Russ shared some goodies from their earlier holiday event and Santa Claus held forth in a rocking chair provided by Sally. I saw some rather adult looking folk sitting on his lap. Never are we too old to believe!

As usual, Keith and Jerry handled counting and parking issues. Park staff and volunteers kept the Visitor Center open for our guests. Once again, those great youngsters from Green Clover 4H came with their youthful enthusiasm to light the candles. As 4H members they are required to provide a community service each year. We are grateful for their help, as these older bones could not bend over the required 1,152 times.

So Holiday Lights #10 is in the records as we look forward to planning #11. Many of our Deming residents do not drive at night so we need to work out carpools, shuttle bus or Senior Center involvement so more residents can enjoy this magical evening.

(We received \$112.65 in donations. The 2 cans that Barbara O'Leary Thomas made for us have really done well.)

Thanks & Happy Holidays to all . . .

Photo by Ron Wolfe



Friends of Rockhound State Park, Inc.

a non-profit 501-C3 New Mexico Corporation

3005 Driver Rd SE
Deming, NM 88030-7314
Phone: 575-546-1931

www.friendsofrockhound.org

Reminder

**2012 Dues are due January 1, 2012
and can be mailed to:**

FRIENDS
3005 Driver Rd SE
Deming, NM 88030-7314

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Art Vasquez	President
Sally Allen	Vice President
Veronika Barnes	Secretary
Donna Whitten	Treasurer
MaryKay Brady	Board Member
Nancy Grinnell	Board Member
Jim Hazelton	Board Member
Derek Brady	Board Member at Large

CHAIRPERSONS

Entertainment	Veronika Barnes
Program & Greeter	Carol Wootton
Publicity	Sally Allen
Newsletter	Betty Griffin

MEMBERS AND SPONSORS

Friend \$25

Joy Kincaid

Carol Ann Levy

Greg Scarpella & Sandy Zalecki

Good Friend \$50

Enchanted Tea Room

Skip & Pat Sherman

Princess & Delbert Thompson

Ron & Sue Wolfe

Best Friend \$100

Baca's Funeral Chapels

Howard & Patty Roth

Three Chips Construction

Tinley Tee Tire Company

LIFETIME MEMBER \$500

Lyle & Bobbi Megli



*You are a stranger only
once, after that you are a
Friend. .*

MEMBERS

Bill & Sally Allen
Jeanne Marie Banderet
Charles & Veronika Barnes
Phil Barrett
Leslie & Mary Bass
Derek & Katha Brady
MaryKay Brady
Ellis & Shirley Breckenridge
Betsy & Wayne Clark
Kevin & Lori Coleman
John & Marilyn Cornfoot
Tom & Sherrill Davis
Eugene "Roscoe" Dorriere
Peter & Polly Edmunds
Nan & Donald Fitzgerald
Robert & Patricia Floyd
Cheryl Fontane & Joe Sena
Larry & Joan Foster
Barbara Fictenmueller
David & Marilyn Goble
Tom & Hazel Gonzales
Greg & Nancy Grinnell
Bob & Barb Hanson
Keith Harris
Gary & Nancy Hawthorne
Jess Hays & Debbie Gwin
Jim & Sandy Hazelton
Craig & Russ Howell
Gene Jercinovic & Betty Griffin
Glenn & Jo Kruger
Charlene & Dale LeMaster
Gary & June Loudon
Herbert & Suzanne Madero
Connie Martin & John Sutherland
Sam (Sally Ann) Miller
Gustavo & Frances Morales
Pamela A Morgan
Ric & Linda Morgan-O'Connor
David & Judy Mueller
Wanda Meyers
Helen Noury & Dan Ryan
Julie & Armand Orban
Jerry Owens
Lee & Sharon Pattison
Ellen Pelton
Shelley & Perk Perkins
Gene & Joyce Peterson
Joe & Berda Polichio
Jim & Jackie Rankin
Robert & Gayla Rochambeau
Konrad & Diana Scheel
Keith & Mary Schwarzer
Betty Shay
David & Ruth Shephard
Ronald & Dorothy Siepman

Jack Smith & Janet StCyr
Ruth Smith
Jimm Thomas & Barbara
O'Leary-Thomas
Floyd & Janice Utterback
Art & Brenda Vasquez
Pete & Mickey Vincken
W. Lowell White
Donna Whitten
Will (Wayland) & Marty Willis
Peggy Wion
Dick & Carol Wootton

Honorary Members
All park volunteers

Park Staff

Robert Apodaca
Art Benevidez
Carlos Tafoya
Jeff Montes (seasonal)

HELP WANTED!

Volunteers are always needed for the various programs/functions held by the Friends group. It takes EVERYONE to make this thing grow and survive. Think about your skills and abilities from your working world and know that we NEED you. This is a special year as we celebrate 100 years of statehood 1/6/1912 to 1/6/2012. We are planning a truly remarkable event on Sunday, April 15th. Do put this on your calendar—an event not to miss.

Do you have suggestions, comments, corrections or an article you wish printed in the Newsletter?
Contact Betty: betgrif42@gmail.com