

2017 IDA Annual Report Big Bend National Park

**Submitted by Daphne Sewing, Acting Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services
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General

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Site visitation for Big Bend during FY17 was 388,290. Approximately 480 visitors enjoyed night sky and astronomy programs.

Lighting

No new lighting projects were completed this year. No new territory was added to the existing park. Efforts continue to educate park residents to utilize appropriate light fixtures and turn off outside lights.

Sky Quality

No night sky quality data was collected.

Conservation/Research

No research involving night skies was conducted during this fiscal year.

Funding

Night sky programs and education continue through the park's interpretation division. A \$5000 contribution from the Big Bend Conservancy, a fund-raising "friends" group, has made it possible to hire an astronomy intern through the Geoscientist-in-Parks program for three months in January, 2018.

Planned Programs

Big Bend is planning to increase the number of astronomy programs offered throughout FY18. Additional partnership opportunities with Big Bend Ranch State Park (currently seeking IDA designation) and McDonald Observatory are being explored with the goal of increasing programs in the regional area.

Outreach

Outreach efforts during FY17 included beginning discussions with the Marathon community for co-facilitated night sky programs.

Media Relations

The news media frequently mentions the park's dark night skies in their accounts of Big Bend experiences. Night sky photos are often posted on social media by visitors for others to enjoy.