

## **Dark Sky Annual Report for Clayton Lake State Park Clayton, New Mexico**

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The Clayton Astronomy Club operates and maintains the Star Point Observatory, at Clayton Lake State Park. The observatory was built by the New Mexico State Parks Dept. and is one of two in the state. The club's primary goal is public outreach. We have monthly star parties scheduled during the week of the new moon every month from April through October. We do a few star parties by request when club members are available. We also do a star party for the annual Trout Derby, which last year drew in 8000 visitors over the 3-day event.

The lake had approximately 82,000 visitors last year. Because of the lake's gold tier status, we have people from all over the world who have come just for our dark skies. We have had a few astrophotographers come and spend one or more nights at the observatory. One of these, David Elmore of Colorado, came in March and spent 3 nights imaging. He later traveled to South America and told me in a phone conversation after the trip that he obtained better images at Clayton Lake than he did in the Atacama Desert.

The Clayton Astronomy club has, and will continue to offer interpretive and educational night sky programs. At every star party, we do a presentation on night sky preservation. We use the Milky Way as a prime example. Many people have never seen it and we are often asked "are those clouds?" That's our cue to start educating people on light pollution. Sometimes we also hand out flyers showing examples of good lights and bad lights. We have had 9 star parties so far for the 2016 season (3 were rained out) with guests. Many of these are from different states and some from different countries. In October we plan on having star parties for the local schools with students from Clayton, and Texline, TX.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact myself or club secretary Rosemary Breffle at the above numbers.

Sincerely,  
Pete Mansfield  
President, Clayton Astronomy Club