

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area 2017 Annual Report

General:

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area is located in the Heart of the Texas Hill Country just 17 miles north of the tourist hub of Fredericksburg, TX and 23 Miles South of Llano, TX. We were designated an International Dark Sky Park with a Gold-Tier Status in 2014 and maintain that status by offering new night time programs focusing on preservation and education, educational outreach, and continuous monitoring of the night sky above the park with a Sky Quality Meter that is attached to our headquarters building. The park had over 285,000 visitors in 2017. While the park is generally used by daytime visitors, a number of those visitors came to the park specifically for night sky programs and independent enjoyment of the dark skies above Enchanted Rock.

The Park contacts are:

Doug Cochran
Superintendent/Enchanted Rock State Natural Area
830-685-3030
Doug.Cochran@tpwd.texas.gov

Lighting in the Community

This past year, the city of Fredericksburg hosted a Dark Sky Summit for communities interested in developing a dark sky community. Representatives from the IDA, Dripping Springs, Fredericksburg and other communities were present. Additionally, the Hill Country Alliance held a Leadership Summit. Several dark sky leaders, including Enchanted Rock, presented a program on dark skies.

Sky Quality

Sky Quality is taken 24 hours a day/365 days of the year by the SQM attached to the headquarters building of the park. To access the readings at any time you can follow this link: <http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/enchanted-rock/dark-skies>

This online feature also talks about Stargazing, Bortle Scale Readings, Naked Eye Limiting Magnitude (NELM), and charts that show the darkness above Enchanted Rock at any given time of day. Below is the average MPSAS. Due to a lightning strike the SQM was inoperable from late April until mid-May.

Average MPSAS 21.75

The sky quality has been constant over the last twelve months. Staff is communicating with the following municipalities, Llano, Fredericksburg and Mason on development of a Dark Sky Reserve. The application is being developed and considered for implementation.

Education and Outreach

“Rock Star” parties are normally held throughout the year, “Night Hikes” and talks about Nocturnal Animals are given by interpretive staff regularly, with a strong emphasis on conservation.

Below is a synopsis of events at Enchanted Rock for the last twelve months.

Marvel at the Moon presentation

07/07/17 – 60

07/21/17 - 24

Dark Sky Outreach/Talks/Presentations

09/22/17 – 90

05/19/17 – 30

Dark Sky Festival / Perseid's Meteor Shower Special Event

8/12/17 – 787

Grand Total - 991