

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area 2015 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 275,000 visitors in 2014. While the park is generally used by daytime visitors, over 1,700 of those visitors came to the park specifically for night sky programs.

The Park contacts are:

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Lighting in the Community

This past year, the city of Fredericksburg to our south adopted a lighting ordinance that required that all new businesses have Dark Sky compliant lighting. The city of Llano to our north passed a resolution at their city council meeting to consider a Dark Sky ordinance. The City of Mason recently passed an Outdoor Lighting ordinance. The cities of Fredericksburg, Llano, Mason, Hill Country Alliance and Enchanted Rock SNA are coordinating the application and ultimate designation of a Dark Sky Reserve around Enchanted Rock.

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.

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 should be submitted this fall to the IDA for consideration.

Arts and Culture

This past year has seen a rise in visits from those interested in astral photography. This November we will feature a digital photography workshop put on by Texas Parks and Wildlife to feature night sky photography for beginners and those that want to have a better understanding of their digital cameras.

Education and Outreach

In February 21, 2015, Enchanted Rock State Natural Area held its first ever “Enchanted Rock Star Festival”. The park had 2,500 visitors for the day with an estimated 800 in attendance for the festival. Astronomy groups, guest speakers, booths, and activities for young and old highlighting the night sky were a huge success. The next festival is scheduled for November 2016. “Rock Star” parties are held frequently throughout the year, “Night Hikes” and talks about Nocturnal Animals are given by interpretive staff regularly, with a strong emphasis on conservation. Projects done by students in Fredericksburg this past year featured messages about light pollution and the benefits of dark skies for our health and well-being.

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

Night Hikes

09/14/2014- 24 people

10/31/2014-27 people

06/20/2015- 7 people

07/24/2015- 27 people

08/08/2015 – 9 people

Full Moon Hikes

12/13/2014 – 50 people

07/31/2015 – 48 people

Rock Star Parties (3 cancelled due to weather/Festival)

10/17/2014 -52 people

11/21/2014 -21 people

02/21/2015 – 800 people (Rock Star Festival)

Dark Sky Outreach/Talks

01/22/2015 – 26 people

02/03/2015 – 17 people

02/19/2015 – 463 people (all of Llano Middle School)

03/23/2015 – 24 people