

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area 2016 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 292,000 visitors in 2015. 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

Scott Whitener
Interpreter/Resource Specialist/Enchanted Rock State Natural Area
830-685-3030
Scott.Whitener@tpwd.texas.gov

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 Dark Sky ordinance earlier this year. 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 21.84

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. Digital photography workshop coordinated 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. Classes were held on:

03/18/16 - 14

07/09/16 - 22

09/17/16 - 22

Education and Outreach

“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.

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

Night Hikes (3 cancelled due to weather)

10/31/15 - 4

11/22/15 - 34

01/02/16 - 17

02/13/16 - 59

03/11/16 - 22

03/18/16 - 21

Full Moon Hikes (2 cancelled due to weather)

09/27/15 - 75

05/21/16 - 32

Rock Star Parties (3 cancelled due to weather)

09/11/15 - 37

03/12/16 - 65

05/06/16 - 84

07/08/16 - 93

Dark Sky Outreach/Talks

03/12/16 - 90

03/16/16 - 9

Perseid's Meteor Shower Special Event

8/11/16 - 590

Grand Total - 1290