



The Bear Claw



The Sandia Mountain Natural History Center Newsletter

The mission of SMNHC is to work within New Mexico communities to develop an ecologically literate citizenry.

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Free First Saturdays Are Back!

The Sandia Mountain Natural History Center (SMNHC) will once again open its gates to hikers, geocachers, picnickers and other outdoor enthusiasts in its third installment of the "First Saturdays". The first Saturday of each month, starting March 7th and continuing thru September 5th, visitors will have the rare opportunity to explore the beautiful 128 acres that make up the SMNHC.

Each Saturday program includes self-guided hikes, hands-on exhibits, geocaching, a bird viewing deck, as well as an education session that varies each month. The first education session will be guided hikes lead by one of the knowledgeable SMNHC instructors.

The hikes will begin at 10:00 am and will last approximately 2 hours with a number of stops to interpret the forest and explain general ecological principles. Future programs will focus on the numerous scientific research projects being conducted at the SMNHC, in depth discussions on our "Forest Health Initiative", and introduce visitors to the edible and medicinal plants of the area.

Each Month the gates are open from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm with the education sessions beginning at 10:00 am. As in years past the "First Saturday" programs are free and space is limited only for the guided hikes so please call ahead to reserve a spot. *Mark your calendar so you don't miss the opportunity to visit one of New Mexico's hidden gems.*
-Chris Moldelski



SMNHC's Outreach Program that serves New Mexico Communities is in full swing!

Winter Pre-visits to APS

Our intern, Alycia Knutson, and our APS teacher, Julie Hall, have been doing "outreach" at some of our APS schools scheduled for this spring. They brought along some "cool stuff" from the mountain ecosystem to "wow" the fifth graders and presented a quick review of what an ecosystem consists of. They also suggested how to dress and what students should bring along for a successful mountain experience. To date, Alycia and Julie have visited 13 schools, talking to about 1000 students. There are about 7 more schools to go. This program of outreach or pre-trip visits to the schools is in its second year and has proven to be successful in preparing the students for a great day at SMNHC.
-Julie Hall

COOL FACT: Gray foxes are the only wild canids that are adapted to climbing trees!

In the spotlight...



One of our current large projects happening at the SMNHC is researching and creating brand-new flash guides, and booklets as well as updating some of our activity sheets and dichotomous keys.

These exciting Lower-East Sandia Mountains/SMNHC guides will be pocket-able with color photos, easy ID points, important ecological info and just cool facts! To be used as educational aides for the students on their hikes as well as for any First Saturday participants to burrow for the day!

We've included a sneak peek of the Reptiles guide (see above and below) in this issue's Bear Claw. We are also producing a Scat/Track and Holes flash guide, a Birds booklet by color and silhouette, a Butterflies/caterpillars guide as well as a handy field-ready low lying vegetation guide!
-Alycia Knutson

Gopher Snake (or Bullsake) <i>Pituophis melanoleucus</i>	Eastern Fence Lizard (Prairie Lizard) <i>Sceloporus undulatus</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light belly with dark spots • Black patches on tan back Size: Up to 8 feet Habitat: Grasslands, piñon-juniper, and ponderosa-oak forests Food: Rodents, birds, lizards, insects Behavior: Diurnal in cool weather, at night in hot summer months. Slow moving. Snatches prey to death. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough grey/black/brown scales • Males have blue patches on belly Size: 5-7 inches Habitat: Desert grasslands, mountain meadows, piñon-juniper, ponderosa-oak, and mixed conifer forests Food: Insects, insect larvae, spiders, other lizard hatchlings Behavior: Diurnal. May perch on trees to wait for prey. Often engage in social displays to stake territory.
<p>Did you know? Gopher snakes are often confused with rattlesnakes, though they are much longer. They can even mimic a rattlesnake by coiling as if to strike, slaking their tail, and letting out a long HISSSS that sounds like a rattle.</p>	<p>Did You Know? Many lizards have a "third eye" on the top of their head, which detects non-visible frequencies of light.</p>

Please register by the Tuesday before the workshop

All workshops have a \$10 materials fee
To Register or for more information contact Susie Davis at Susan.davis@state.nm.us, 281-5259 or visit our website, www.nmnaturalhistory.org/smnhc

Upcoming Events:

First Saturday 2009

March 7:

Spring Guided Hikes *

April 4:

SMNHC Wildlife Research

May 2:

Fire Thinning & Forest Health

June 6:

Medicinal and Edible Plants

July 4:

Compass Use and Geocaching

August 1:

Animal Signs

September 5:

Fall Guided Hikes *

*reservations required: please call the office beforehand

Teacher Workshop

March 14, Sat. 9:30-4:30pm

Project Learning Tree

Where: NM Museum of Natural History & Science

Who: pre-K--8 Teachers (formal or non-formal), pre-service educators, scout troop/den leader, church youth leader, etc.

What: PreK-8. PLT is one of the leading environmental education programs in the country. It incorporates activities designed for all subject areas, settings, and learning styles. Through these hands-on, interdisciplinary activities, PLT helps students learn about ecology and conservation. Workshop participants will bring home the PLT Guide, including 96 ecology activities! Visit the PLT website for more information at www.plt.org.
Materials: Participants receive the PLT Activity Guide and other materials
EEANM, US Forest Service, and SMNHC

The Sandia Mountain Natural History Center (SMNHC) is a natural history & environmental education facility located on the east side of the Sandia Mountains in Cedar Crest, New Mexico. The SMNHC is owned by Albuquerque Public Schools and operated by the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science.



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