



# The Bear Claw



The Sandia Mountain Natural History Center Newsletter

May/June 2008

## Let's Reduce Our Use

We live in a society that offers us many conveniences. Some are more eco-friendly than others. The problem is that we don't always consider the impact that our decisions have on the environment. The sad thing is that there are ways that we can all reduce our use and make simple changes that will positively affect our environment and our wallets.

Let's consider some major ways that we can stop contributing to the landfills all over the world. For starters, use a water bottle that is safe to refill and stop buying the throw away ones. Over 22 billion empty plastic bottles end up in the trash every year. More than 70 million bottles of water are consumed each day in the U.S. This uses 1.5 million barrels of oil per year! And that cup of coffee you buy every morning on your way to work? If you aren't using your own refillable mug, you could be contributing up to 20 pounds of paper waste per year, not to mention the plastic lids! Don't forget those plastic bags that all of our purchases come in. If you used your own canvas bag to stores, we could put an end to all of the plastic bags floating around our streams, oceans and landfills. It was estimated in 2001 that the U.S. alone used between 500 billion and 1 trillion bags that year! But I recycle, you say? Unfortunately many recycling companies collect our waste and merely sell it to other companies that take what they can use from it and end up dumping the rest. The harsh reality is that it costs more to recycle a plastic bag than it does to make one. It has been estimated that it costs about \$4,000 to process and recycle 1 ton of plastic bags that can sold on the commodities market for about \$32. It is our responsibility to reduce what we are using and to be sure that the things that we are recycling are actually being recycled.

The rise in the price of our resources as well as in the goods we buy has affected us all. We can all

save money and resources by making small adjustments in our lifestyles. Consider carpooling, walking, biking, or taking the bus or train to get from one place to another, instead of driving yourself. Buy local. By purchasing produce and other goods grown in our local area, we not only are getting fresh produce and supporting local farmers, but also supporting less use of resources from producer to consumer. There are things we can do around our homes to reduce the use of our natural resources, as well. Things like sealing air leaks around doors and windows, insulating the hot water heater and the attic, switching to energy efficient compact fluorescent bulbs, using a programmable thermostat, changing to low flow showerheads, and replacing old appliances with Energy Star labeled appliances are small, cost effective ways that we can start conserving our natural resources.

There are many ways that we can lessen our impact on the environment without emptying our wallets, and all it takes is us as individuals to re-evaluate our lifestyles and adjust accordingly. Remember, the small changes we make today can make a huge a difference for tomorrow.

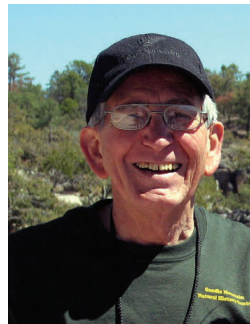
**FUN FACT:  
A MOSQUITO  
HAS 47  
TEETH.**

**NUMBER OF PEOPLE  
SERVED AT SMNHC:**

**SINCE JULY 1ST:  
14023**

**MAY/JUNE: 153**

## In the Spotlight...



Larry Littlefield, a recent retiree to Albuquerque, has been a SMNHC Volunteer for almost 2 years. A retired Professor of Plant Pathology, he taught graduate and undergraduate courses in plant pathology and mycology for 20 years each at North Dakota State and Oklahoma State Universities. His research work focused primarily on light and electron microscopy of fungal infections of agronomic and horticultural plants.

Larry likes volunteering at SMNHC because it provides the opportunity to be outdoors and to work with elementary school level education in ecosystems. He also volunteers weekly with the US Forest Service in a variety of tasks including trail maintenance, removing dead trees and reducing fuel loads (fire management). Larry especially enjoys photography as a hobby and is currently preparing with Julie Hall a book on common plants of the SMNHC. Other favorite activities include travel and visiting art and history museums.

**ATTENTION:  
The Bear Claw Newsletter is now be a bi-monthly publication.**

## Upcoming Events at SMNHC:

### July 5, 9:00-3:00

Spend the day in the mountains hiking our trails, visiting two hands on exhibit rooms, and observing birds and animals from our wildlife observation deck. July will offer an hour-long **Plant Identification** education session at 10:00 AM.

### July 22, 9:15-2:15

Learn about the natural history of the Sandias at a 5th grade level through hiking and activities at **Homeschoolin' in the Home Range 2 Ecology Day!** Pre-registration required. \$3 parking fee.

### August 2, 9:00-3:00

Spend the day in the mountains hiking our trails, visiting two hands on exhibit rooms, and observing birds and animals from our wildlife observation deck. May will offer an hour-long **Orienteering** education session at 10:00 AM.

### September 6, 9:-3:00

Spend the day in the mountains hiking our trails, visiting two hands on exhibit rooms, and observing birds and animals from our wildlife observation deck. September will offer **Guided Hikes**. Please call ahead to reserve a spot.

**For more information call us at (505) 281-5259 or visit our website: [www.nmnaturalhistory.org/SMNHC](http://www.nmnaturalhistory.org/SMNHC)**

The Sandia Mountain Natural History Center (SMNHC) is a natural history and 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 and Science.

Sandia Mountain Natural History Center, C/O NMMNHS, 1801 Mountain Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 87104

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For more information about the Center, visit our website at: [www.nmnaturalhistory.org/SMNHC](http://www.nmnaturalhistory.org/SMNHC)

## Protecting Your Home in Wildfire Areas

Summer is here! Flowers are blooming (Paintbrush, Claret Cup & other cacti, Lupine, Penstemmon, Phlox, Chocolate Flower, Blue Flax, and Mullein) birds are singing, and fires are burning.

The Trigo fire caused hardship for many families and also for the Ecosystem. Many people lost homes or possessions and parts of the fire were not a “good” fire for the ecosystem, either; too much brush & trees caused the fire to burn too hot and damage soil & big trees.

Fire is a natural part of this ecosystem. To minimize damage to structures we need to build them out of fire-resistant materials (especially roofs and windows), protect vents from pulling in burning material, and have “defensible space” around buildings—at least 30 feet of little or no flammable vegetation, and 100-200 feet of “thinned” vegetation beyond that. Also put propane tanks and firewood piles at least 30 feet from your house and at the same elevation as the house. For more complete and detailed information about protecting your property from fire, check out the New Mexico State Forestry Division’s guidelines at [www.emnrd.state.nm.us/fd/index.htm](http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/fd/index.htm) “Firewise Communities”. Increase the chance of your home surviving a wildfire!

### Activity of the month:

On summer hiatus

## Safety Tips For Hiking With Children

Recently an animal attacked a 5-year-old boy in the Sandias. The boy had run ahead of his parents on the trail. He was injured, but is doing OK. While it is, of course, very important to keep our children safe, it is also important for their development and health to be outside. Children love nature instinctively – there’s so much to see, hear, smell, and experience, and they’re able to be active and move around. Large animal attacks in the Sandias are very rare. It is MUCH more dangerous to put your child in a car than to take them hiking: So, here are some safety tips to help keep children safe on the trail:

1. Always keep young children in sight.
2. Teach children what to do if they get separated from you (stay put and call for help) – getting lost is one of the most common ways for children to get hurt.
3. Pick trails that are appropriate for your children’s abilities; teach them how to hike and supervise them closely through difficult spots so they don’t injure themselves.
4. Avoid hiking near dusk or dawn with small children if mountain lion or bear activity has been noticed in the area.
5. Teach children how to react to large wildlife – Look bigger by holding a jacket or backpack over your head, back away from the animal, and make noise. Do NOT run!
6. Go properly prepared on hikes – bring extra water, some food, a rain jacket if there’s a chance of rain / during monsoon season, and a cell phone if possible. A topographic map is always a good idea, especially for longer hikes. Also remember the sun is stronger at a higher altitude, so wear sunscreen and hats!

Enjoy yourself and your child will also, gaining a positive attitude toward outdoor exercise and a sense of curiosity that will serve them well in health and learning increases!

## Teacher resource spotlight...



### Public Programs

Come to our public programs, bring your family, have fun, educate yourself! July is Plant Identification (and uses), August is orienteering, September is natural history of the Sandias. For more information see page 1.

**Homeschoolin' in the Home**  
**Range Ecology Day**  
**July 22nd, 9:15-2:15PM**  
**Call to register or for more information.**

### Ecology teaching tip:

On summer hiatus