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Nature

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• Richard Quick, Naturalist for the Museum of Natural History, will give a presentation about amphibians and reptiles at 10 a.m. Saturday, **Aug. 28**, in the park classroom.

Keystone Heritage Park and El Paso Desert Botanical Garden — 4200

Doniphan (across from Frontera). Hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays year round. Admission: \$2 (\$1 children, seniors and military). Information: 584-0563, keystone-heritagepark.org or elpasobotanicalgardens.org.

The park's 2-acre Botanical Garden features native plants, amphitheater, butterfly garden, wedding garden, children's maze, and a Butterfly House.

Keystone Heritage Park has 189 species of migratory and local birds, and a 4,500-year-old archaeological site.

Keystone's Chihuahuan Desert Experience (immediately west of the wetland) is open daily from 7 a.m. to noon for walking and bird watching.

The El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon will be at the Observation Deck 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 14 and 28**, for anyone interested about the chapter or area birds.

Franklin Mountains State Park — Most hiking and mountain-biking trails begin in the Tom Mays area, off Transmountain Road on the west side of the park (east of I-10).

Entry fees are \$4 per person, free for age 12 and under (with family). Hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Information: 566-6441.

Guided nature hikes begin at 9 a.m. Saturday and Sunday, **Aug. 7-8** and **Aug. 21-22**. Cost is \$7 for ages 13 and up and \$1 for ages 5-12 (includes park entry fee). Hikes range in distance and difficulty. Reservations required: 566-6441, ext. 24 or kelly.serio@tpwd.state.tx.us (tours also may be given any weekend by advance reservation).

• A Junior Ranger Hike is 8 a.m. Saturday, **Aug. 14**. Cost is \$7 for ages 13 and up and \$1 for ages 5-12 (includes park entry fee). Call for reservations.

• A Moonlight Hike is 7 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 21**. The trail hike is rated moderate.

Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary — 9500 North Loop, near Loop 375. The 43.5-acre site is managed by El Paso's Audubon Society. A variety of migratory birds, as well as some year-round species, can be seen there. The sanctuary is open to the public 8 a.m. to noon Saturdays and 2 p.m. to dusk Sundays. Admission is free. Information: 545-5157 or 747-8663.

The next public workday session is 8 a.m. Saturday, **Aug. 7**. Everyone is invited.

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park — UTEP's Center for Environmental Resource Management offers free guided walking tours and other activities at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park in El Paso's Mission Valley. Tours last about two hours. Information: 747-8663 or rio-bosque.org. Upcoming events:

- Bird Tour, 8 a.m. Sunday, **Aug. 8**.
- Introductory Tour, 8 a.m. Sunday, **Aug. 15**.
- A Community Workday is 8 to 11 a.m. Saturday, **Aug. 21**.
- Monthly faunal monitoring is 7 to 10 a.m. Saturday, **Aug. 28**.

Meeting place is a bridge crossing Riverside Canal. Take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Drive, turn left and travel 1.5 miles.

Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site — The site is famed for many Native American rock paintings and unique geology.

Hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday through Sunday. Admission: \$5 (free for children 12 and younger). Additional cost for tours (including birding tour and morning hike): \$1 for ages 5 and older. Information: 857-1135 or texas-stateparks.gov.

The park's campground will be closed for utility upgrades through the month of August and possibly early September.

Pictograph, rock-climbing bouldering and hiking tours are available at 9 and 11 a.m. Wednesday through Sunday, by prior arrangement. Call 849-6684.

The monthly birding tour is 7 to 9 a.m. on the third Saturday of the month (**Aug. 21**). Advance sign-up encouraged.

A nature and pictograph tour is 7:30 a.m. Saturday, **Aug. 14**. The strenuous hike is about 3 hours long. Registration required.

To get there: Take Montana Avenue (U.S. Highway 62-180) all the way into the Hueco Mountains then turn left on Ranch Road 2775.

North Mountain is available for self-guided day use, for up to 70 people at a time. There is an annual orientation program for visitors. Guided access is offered to the rest of the site. Call for reservations and other information: 857-1135.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park — The park is about 160 miles east of El Paso, off the Carlsbad Highway (U.S. 62-180). Information: (575) 785-2232 or nps.gov/cave.

Summer hours (Memorial Day through Labor Day) are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily; tours available 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last entry into cave via natural entrance is 3:30 p.m. with last entry into cave via elevator 5 p.m.

A star party is 6:30 to 10 p.m. the second Saturday of each month.

Plan 3-1/2 hours for a walk-in tour and 1-1/2 hours for Big Room tour. Cost is \$6 (\$3 for ages 6-15 or seniors with discount card). The park's audio self-guided tour is \$3 extra (also available in Spanish).

The "bat season" generally lasts from late May through mid-October. Daily bat flight talks (about 15 minutes long) are offered just before sunset at the amphitheatre outside the natural entrance. Then — bats willing — visitors are treated to the sunset spectacle of clouds of bats flying out of the cave entrance.

Other guided tours are available.

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument — 44 miles north of Silver City on NM Highway 15, the dwellings are in the middle of the majestic Gila Wilderness. Entrance fee: \$3 per person; \$10 per family. Information: (575) 536-9461 or nps.gov/gicl.

The trail to the cliff dwellings is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Everyone must be off the trail by 7 p.m. Visitor center is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monument Superintendent Steve Riley will offer a free one-hour tour of the TJ Site on at 11 a.m. Saturday, **Aug. 14**. Advance reservations required; space is limited.

Regular tours offered at noon. Early arrival requested. "Trail to the Past" guided tours are 1:30 p.m. Saturdays at the Lower Scorpion Campground.

White Sands National Monument — The glistening gypsum dunes are about 15 miles southwest of Alamogordo, N.M., on U.S. 70. Hours (through Sept. 12) are 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. for the Dunes Drive. Visitor Center hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. All visitors must exit the park by one hour after sunset.

Entrance fee: \$3 age 17 and older. Free for children. Information: (575) 479-6124, ext. 236 or (575) 679-2599, ext. 232; or go to nps.gov/whsa.

Ranger-guided Sunset Stroll Nature Walks

begin one hour before sunset daily. Experience a sunset over the white sands and observe the plants, animals and geology of the dune field. Walks last about one hour.

Patio talks are 1:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays at the Visitor Center. Rangers will answer questions and give tips on enjoying the monument.

A Full Moon Hike is 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, **Aug. 24**. Admission is free, but reservations required as space is limited. Register at nps.gov/whsa.

Full Moon Night is 8 p.m. Wednesday, **Aug. 25**, featuring the Herpetology Simplified Science Show, a hands-on educational program about the world of snakes with Donna Hoidahl. No reservations accepted.

Lake Lucero tours are offered on the last weekend of each month. This month's tour is 5 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 28**. Participants drive their own vehicles 17 miles beginning at the Small Missile Range gate on U.S. 70, 25 miles west of the White Sands Visitor Center, then hike 3/4 mile to the source of the white sands. Reservations are required. Cost is \$3 per adult; \$1.50 age 16 and under.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park — 110 miles east of El Paso on the way to Carlsbad, the 86,416-acre park includes the highest point in Texas: Guadalupe Peak, 8,749 feet. Entry fee: \$5 for ages 16 and older, good for one week and all trails. Camping is \$8 per site per night. Information: (915) 828-3251.

New Mexico State Parks — Day-use fee is \$5 when visiting any state park. Camping fees: \$8 for primitive site; \$10 for developed site (electrical hookup \$4 extra). All programs are free with park entrance, unless otherwise listed. Information: (575) 744-5998 or nmparks.com.

• Elephant Butte Lake State Park — Information: (575) 744-5998.

Drag boat races are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, **Aug. 14-15**.

The Socorro Bass Club fishing tournament is 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, **Aug. 22**.

A free Boating Safety class is 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 28**.

• City of Rocks State Park, north of Deming off U.S. 180. Information: (575) 536-2800. A "Rattlesnake Myths" presentation is 3 to 4 p.m. every Saturday.

• Oliver Lee State Park, Highway 54 south of Alamogordo at the Dog Canyon turnoff. Information: (575) 437-8284.

The Amateur Astronomers Group hosts a summer sky viewing 8 to 9:30 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 7**, at the Group Shelter.

Dripping Springs Natural Area — The recreational area is at the base of the Organ Mountains at the end of Dripping Springs Road, about 10 miles east of Las Cruces. The area includes hiking trails, and La Cueva Picnic Area. Visitor center is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Access to the main trail is 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and the park is closed promptly at 7 p.m.

Admission is \$3 per vehicle. No pets allowed (except for assistance animals). Information: (575) 522-1219.

Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park — Carlsbad, N.M. Admission: \$5 (\$3 ages 7-12; free for 6 and under). Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (last entry at 3:30 p.m.). Information: (575) 887-5516. Take U.S. 285 north of Carlsbad; follow signs to the park.

The Carlsbad Community Band hosts a free outdoor concert 3 to 4:15 p.m. Sunday, **Aug. 1**. Bring a lawn chair.

Live country music with New Mexico's Treasures is 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 21**, followed by a full moon walk 7:45 to 8:15 p.m.