

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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News Release

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December and New Year Events at Your New Mexico State Parks

Santa Fe, NM – Whether you enjoy bird-watching, hiking, hand bells or literally want to plunge into the New Year, New Mexico State Parks is your official sponsor of adventure!

“Our New Mexico culture is rich with celebrations during December. New Mexico State Parks has something everyone can enjoy, whether it is fishing, hiking, or coming together as a community to enjoy holiday spirit,” said State Park Director Tommy Mutz.

December Events

- Join a bird guide from the local Audubon Society on a tour in search for birds at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park on December 7 from 8:15-9:30 a.m. Explore the bosque while you're at it! Wear comfortable hiking shoes and bring binoculars.
- Holiday music will be performed on hand bells by the Touch of Joy Ringers at Living Desert Zoo & Gardens State Park in Carlsbad on December 7 from 10 to 11:15 a.m. inside the Visitor's Center. On December 14 from 1-3 p.m., celebrate the season with children's crafts and face painting. Children can make holiday cards for their favorite Living Desert animal and hang them on the tree. Activities are free in the Visitor Center and regular entrance fees apply to go through the zoo.
- Elephant Butte Lake State Park Luminaria Beach Walk will take place on December 14 from 5-8 p.m. at the Dirt Dam area within the main entrance to the park. The breathtaking pathway will be lined with 4000 luminarias and 25 host sites with free refreshments, a boat parade, hayrides, caroling and a special appearance by Santa Claus!
- Located at Sugarite Canyon State Park, the annual Christmas on the Chicorica is December 14 from 5-8:30 p.m. Listen to holiday music and stroll the trails graced by luminarias and of course, don't miss the chance to visit with Santa!
- Rockhound State Park hosts Holiday Lights on December 14 from 5 - 6:30 p.m. More than 1000 luminarias light the visitor center, native garden and labyrinth. Hot cocoa and cookies will be served.
- Cerrillos Hills State Park near Santa Fe is hosting a Holiday Open House on December 18 from 4-6 p.m. to ring in the season. Park staff has almost completed their naughty and nice list. Come see if you rate a sugarplum or a lump of coal. Humbug optional.
- Learn about celestial cycles and how early cultures used the night sky to time their daily lives at Oliver Lee State Park's Celestial Cycles Winter Solstice Star Party on December 21 from 5-6:30 p.m. Often celebrated as Yule, Winter Solstice begins at 10:11 a.m., and marks the longest night of the year. Dress warmly and meet at the group shelter to view

the stars and constellations in the dark skies above.

- In Northern New Mexico, Hyde Memorial State Park is having a Holiday Star Party on December 21 from 6-8 p.m. as well! Come celebrate the season and see the green laser tour of bright stars and constellations followed by close-up views of star clusters, nebulae and galaxies through telescopes. Meet at the lodge.
- Leasburg Dam State Park is Turning Back the Sun all day on December 21! From 11 a.m. - 10 p.m., witness and learn about this natural phenomenon occurring in the middle of winter and how Native peoples observed, recorded and interacted. Presentations and interactive activities during the day include sun telescopes, Pueblo adobe horno bread baking and dancing by members of Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and a presentation by the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces using various telescopes. Dress warmly and bring a folding chair.
- Join us at the Luminaria & Tree Lighting event at Pancho Villa State Park on December 22 from 6-8 p.m. This community event provides holiday spirit, cookies and hot chocolate. Pancho Villa State Park is located at the intersection of Highways 9 and 11 in Columbus.

Happy New Year!

- Take the Polar Bear Plunge at Sugarite Canyon State Park on New Year's Day! At 1 p.m. participants will jump into the frigid waters of the park's Lake Maloya to raise funds for a Veterans' Memorial in Raton. Registration donation per plunge participant is \$15. Co-sponsored with the Raton Department of Parks and Recreation. Register today for a t-shirt! If you can do this, your resolutions will be a piece of cake.
- Oasis State Park's First Day Hike is on Jan 1, 2014 from 1:30-3 p.m. Join Valerie Russ for a refreshing walk through the sand dunes. Please meet at the south pond parking lot. 6.5 miles north of Portales.
- Get your new year started off on the right foot. Join a leisurely hike through Cerrillos Hills State Park on the first day of 2014 from 1 - 3 p.m. Interactive frivolity will be featured!
- Two hikes will take place at Elephant Butte Lake State Park on January 1, to include an Elephant Butte Historic Dam Hike and the Luchini Trail nature hike, both from 12 - 3 p.m.
- Hike with interpreter Debra Herbst on the Bluff Trail at Bottomless Lakes State Park at 10 a.m. on January 1.
- Ute Lake State Park will host a Start Your Year Right Hike at 10:30 a.m. at the Logan Park Area on January 1.
- Explore Table Mountain at City of Rocks State Park starting at 9 a.m. on January 1.
- Join a ranger on the Discovery Trail and welcome in the New Year at Sumner Lake State Park from 1-2 p.m. on January 1.
- The Rio Grande Nature Center State Park in Albuquerque is having a Winter Bird and Bat Festival on January 11, 2014 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sponsored by the Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center, this event focuses on bird and bat survival techniques, habitats and migration. Speakers, guided bird and nature walks and children's crafts are featured.

For more information and a complete listing of all New Mexico state Park events, call 888-NMPARKS or visit www.nmparks.com

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The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.