



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Flagstaff Area National
Monuments
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News Release

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Flagstaff Area National Monuments Awarded International Dark Sky Park Designation

FLAGSTAFF, AZ –The National Park Service (NPS) and International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) are pleased to announce Flagstaff Area National Monuments – Sunset Crater Volcano, Walnut Canyon and Wupatki – have been designated as an International Dark Sky Park by the IDA. The monuments and their immediate environs produce little light pollution of their own, with minimal amounts from Walnut Canyon and Sunset Crater Volcano and almost no light pollution at Wupatki. The monuments are near Flagstaff, a city with a population of over 65,000 people. In 2001 Flagstaff became the first International Dark Sky City and has progressive lighting codes that prevent unnecessary light pollution. Earlier this year, the NPS nominated the monuments for dark sky park status to celebrate efforts to protect their dark skies and share them with the public.

“Today’s announcement of IDA Dark Sky Park status for Flagstaff Area National Monuments is an important step forward that ties dark skies preservation efforts in the City of Flagstaff to protected lands elsewhere on the Colorado Plateau,” IDA Executive Director J. Scott Feierabend explained. “It also reminds us not only that fine views of starry night skies can still be found practically on the city’s doorstep, but also that naturally dark nights are a key aspect of Northern Arizona’s historical and cultural heritage.”

“Each of the monuments offers a spectacular night sky that reflects the criteria for designation as a Dark Sky Park,” said Caleb Waters, Maintenance Mechanic Supervisor, who led the effort. Waters went on to say, “Achieving this designation was a collaborative process. The park staff worked with our regional and national offices to gather and interpret data, make lighting retrofits, and get the message out to visitors.” Using current research, addressing park lighting, and hosting astronomy events with community partners such as the City of Flagstaff, Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition and Lowell Observatory, the Flagstaff Area National Monuments achieved the International Dark Sky Park award.

“Working with IDA and local partners, we hoped to get the designation as part of our celebration of the NPS Centennial in 2016,” said Superintendent Kayci Cook Collins. “The timing is perfect.”

In honor of the International Dark Sky Park designation, the monuments will be celebrating throughout the year with ranger programs focused on the dark skies. Join us for the following programs in May:

Wupatki National Monument – Friday, May 6th – Guided Night Hike from 9:00 pm – 10:30 pm

Join a park ranger at Wukoki Pueblo for the Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower. In the Northern Hemisphere, The Eta Aquarids, can produce 30 meteors per hour. It is produced by dust particles left behind by comet Halley. The shower runs annually from April 19 to May 28. It peaks this year on the night and morning of May 6–May 7. The new moon will ensure dark skies this year for what could be an excellent show. All ages welcome to this free event. Wukoki Pueblo is three miles east of Wupatki Visitor Center off of Wukoki Road.

Wupatki National Monument – Saturday, May 28th – Art by Starlight Event from 7:30 pm–10

pm. Find out how science and art work hand-in-hand at Wupatki National Monument's Art by Starlight event. A park ranger will give a sunset talk on how astronomers throughout history have used drawing, painting, and other art media to document their discoveries and fire the imagination. Visitors will be invited to relax under the stars and make their own drawings of what they see. Participants should bring binoculars, flashlights, water, and chairs or blankets. Cameras and art supplies are welcome but optional, as the park will provide pencils and paper. All ages invited to this free event. The ranger talk will begin at 7:30 p.m. with stargazing and artwork until 10:00. Lomaki is located at milepost 31 on the Sunset Crater– Wupatki Loop Road (FS 545).

About IDA

IDA established the International Dark Sky Places conservation program in 2001 to recognize excellent stewardship of the night sky. Designations are based on stringent outdoor lighting standards and innovative community outreach. Since the program began, 14 Communities, 32 Parks, 10 Reserves, two Sanctuaries, and three Dark Sky Friendly Developments of Distinction have received International Dark Sky designations. For more information about the International Dark Sky Places Program, visit <http://darksky.org/idsp>.

The International Dark-Sky Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, advocates for the protection of the nighttime environment and dark night skies by educating policymakers and the public about night sky conservation and promoting environmentally responsible outdoor lighting. More information about IDA and its mission may be found at <http://www.darksky.org>.

Visiting the Monuments

Walnut Canyon NM is located 10 miles east of downtown Flagstaff via I-40 and can be reached at (928)526-3367 and on the web at www.nps.gov/waca. Sunset Crater Volcano NM is located six miles north of Flagstaff via Hwy 89 and can be reached at (928)526-0502 and on the web at www.nps.gov/sucr. Wupatki NM is 26 miles north of Flagstaff via Hwy 89, and can be reached at (928)679-2365 and on the web at www.nps.gov/wupa. All three monuments are open daily, except December 25, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Milky Way Over Wukoki Pueblo, Photo by Stan Honda

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