

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park Receives International Dark Sky Park Designation

MONTROSE, Colo., and TUCSON, Ariz. (8 September 2015) – The International Dark-Sky Association and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park are proud to announce the official selection of Black Canyon as an International Dark Sky Park. This highly sought designation means that Black Canyon has exceptional opportunities to observe dark skies and has implemented a program of dark sky preservation, education and opportunities for the public to enjoy the night sky.

Black Canyon sits on the edge of the great open spaces shared by western Colorado and southeast Utah, making it a refuge for phenomenal dark, protected skies. It is also close to large population areas, giving visitors the distinct opportunity of being able to observe dark skies without having to travel great distances from urban centers. This blend of opportunities has made Black Canyon a dark sky destination for many years.

Beginning in 1998, Black Canyon partnered with the Black Canyon Astronomical Society in Montrose and Delta, Colorado, to present a variety of programs. Thousands of visitors have stepped up to a telescope at Black Canyon and said “Wow!” The support and dedication of the membership of the astronomical society was integral in making this designation possible.

With that support, park staff and local astronomers have been working for several years to make improvements in park lighting, ensuring that it is night sky and wildlife friendly. Staff and local astronomers perform light fixture and bulb replacement, dark sky monitoring, outreach programs, news media articles and in-park interpretive programs that engage the public in the dark sky discussion and conservation efforts.

“Black Canyon is thrilled to be the ninth National Park Service site designated by the International Dark Sky Association as a Dark Sky Park,” Superintendent Bruce Noble said. “There are many opportunities throughout the year for local, national and international visitors to enjoy the night sky at Black Canyon and learn more about our conservation efforts encouraging the appreciation of such an amazing resource.”

The park was greatly assisted in this effort by the National Park Service (NPS) Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division, NPS Intermountain Regional Office, Colorado Plateau Dark Sky Cooperative and Western National Parks Association. A special thanks goes to the membership of the Black Canyon Astronomical Society. This endeavor would not have been possible without their expertise, commitment and support of dark skies at Black Canyon.

To celebrate the new Dark Sky Park status, visitors are invited to attend astronomy programs offered on the South Rim throughout the month of September. These include evening programs and night sky viewing on September 9, 11, and 16 along with a special observation of the total lunar eclipse on September 27.

Other astronomy events take place throughout the year, culminating with the 7th annual Astronomy Festival in June 2016. This includes four days of astronomy and solar programs. Sky Rang-

ers, local astronomers, special speakers and volunteers present programs relating to the many benefits and thrills of dark night skies.

For more information about Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, visit www.nps.gov/blca and www.facebook.com/blackcanyonnps. For more information about night skies in national parks, visit www.nature.nps.gov/night.

Image



The Milky Way rises over the North Rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison.
Credit: Greg Owens (<http://www.owensimagery.com/gallery/black-canyon/>)
<http://bit.ly/1IFFEyF>

About the IDA Dark Sky Places Program

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, 11 Communities, 28 Parks, nine Reserves and one Sanctuary have received International Dark Sky designations. For more information about the International Dark Sky Places Program, visit <http://darksky.org/idsp>.

About IDA

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>.

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