



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Joshua Tree National Park

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## JOSHUA TREE News Release

Release Date: August 14, 2017

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### Joshua Tree National Park Celebrates Designation as an International Dark Sky Park

**JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK, Twentynine Palms, California** – Saturday night, in a ceremony sponsored by Copper Mountain Community College, Joshua Tree National Park Superintendent David Smith accepted a plaque acknowledging the designation of the park as an International Dark Sky Park. IDA Chapter Leader Tom O’Key presented the plaque on behalf of IDA, the International Dark-Sky Association. Photographer Wally Pacholka presented a slide show on “The Beauty of America’s Dark Sky Parks.” O’Key says aesthetics are not the only reason to choose outdoor lighting with care. Wildlife, plants, and humans can all benefit. “We all evolved with biorhythms based on a natural day/night cycle of light and dark, changing gradually through the seasons. Even human health may be compromised when we mess with that. And glare doesn’t make anyone safer. It just makes it harder to see the tripping hazards in front of us and the bad guy hiding in the shadows.”

The efforts of neighboring communities were also applauded as supporting dark skies in the park, which made this designation possible. Residents were encouraged once again to choose warm colors and moderate levels of outdoor lighting, to install “fully shielded” lights (shining only down, not up or out) to avoid glare, and to consider using motion detectors. The park has received designation at the “Silver Tier” level, but that could be raised to “Gold Tier” in the future with improvements to lighting not just in the Morongo Basin north of the park, but also in the Coachella Valley to the west and south.

Applying for status as an International Dark Sky Park is a rigorous process; it requires not only mitigating light pollution from within the park, but also partnering with our local communities to further reduce lighting impacts from outside the park. Park Physical Scientist Luke Sabala has worked tirelessly on this effort for several years in partnership with night sky stewards in the Morongo Basin.

“The designation of Joshua Tree National Park is truly singular in the sixteen-year history of the International Dark Sky Places Program,” says IDA Executive Director J. Scott Feierabend. “Never have we seen such a complex nomination, whose success is a testament to all those who have worked hard toward the successful management of this unique nighttime environment.”

IDA Program Manager John Barentine says “Joshua Tree’s International Dark Sky Park status is a tremendous achievement. That such a protected place exists within a few hours’ drive for over 22 million people ensures that starry nights and views of the Milky Way will continue to inspire Southern Californians for years to come.”

Joshua Tree National Park Superintendent David Smith said “There is nothing more magical than to leave the hustle and bustle of Southern California after a busy week, come into the park, and take in the gift of dark skies.

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*The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.*

Camping in the backcountry of Joshua Tree, you can watch the Milky Way overhead. For so many of our visitors, national parks are where they come to discover the night."

"I think the best part of this designation has been the chance to work with all of our local communities to find ways that we can protect night skies - both at Joshua Tree and throughout the Morongo Basin. The Marine base has taken huge steps to protect our night skies as have our park neighbors. We are committed to helping protect this vanishing resource for the next generation."

***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, 15 Communities, 52 Parks, 11 Reserves, three Sanctuaries and four 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>.*

***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>. For more information about night skies in national parks, visit <https://nps.gov/nsnsd>.*

*For more information about Joshua Tree National Park, see [www.nps.gov/jotr](http://www.nps.gov/jotr), or follow us on Twitter @JoshuaTreeNPS, and on Facebook at Joshua Tree NPS*