

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 22, Issue 4 (October - December 2013)

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New and Expanded Science Education for 2013/14

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer, Ph.D.

The 2013/14 school year is well underway, and the Asombro staff is busy engaging students in new science programs as well as expanded versions of successful programs from previous years.

Elementary school students delight in Asombro's classroom and field trip programs. Several of these programs connect science with the new Common Core State Standards in language arts and math. Teachers have their hands full as they work to meet the new standards. We make sure science isn't forgotten by modeling programs that connect science with new standards in other subjects.

Third graders at East Picacho Elementary School, J. Paul Taylor Academy, and Las Cruces Catholic School are part of this year's *Experience Science Program*, funded in part by a grant from El Paso Electric. Program Coordinator Rink Somerday and volunteer Donna Yargosz visit each class monthly for hands-on science programs.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Wolslager Foundation, 5th graders at 10 schools in Las Cruces and the Gadsden Independent School District are participating in the expanded *Science Interns Project*. Fifth graders work with Asombro staff to learn a science topic and then teach this information to younger students at their schools through hands-on stations. The 5th grade Science Interns gain science understanding, leadership qualities, and teaching skills while the younger students learn science and gain role models.

Asombro staff will also help students merge science and language arts this year through the *Desert Stories* pilot project, funded by the Hunt Family Foundation. Asombro staff are busy planning and creating the curriculum for the project, which will engage students in learning science and presenting science content in a writing project. The project will launch in January 2013.

Asombro continues to engage middle school students in hands-on science programs this year. The Las Cruces Public School District is once again providing funding so Asombro can offer inquiry-based science programs to every 7th grader in the district. Part of this *Stepping Out for Science Inquiry* program also includes field trips to the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park for many 7th graders.

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Vista Middle School students go birdwatching in their Science and Action afterschool program. Photo by Stephanie Haan-Amato.

Luminarias in the Desert

December 14th, 5-7pm

By Anna Keener

Join us to celebrate winter in the desert with luminarias at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. Come stroll along candle-lit trails. The sights and sounds of the desert at night are worth a visit.

The event is free and will take place on December 14th from 5-7pm. We will light the luminarias at 5:00pm. Kids can decorate their own luminaria and add it to the trail. Enjoy free hot chocolate and Christmas music. Be sure to bundle up, and bring water and a flash light.



Luminarias at dusk. Photo by Will Keener

2013/14 programs

(continued from page 1)

Middle and high school students from six schools are also participating in Asombro's new *Research Experience Field Trip* program, which includes pre-field trip classroom programs, a field trip, and post-field trip classroom programs. Teachers choose the topic Asombro will cover from a varied list including geology, biodiversity, the desert biome, and more.

Science Education Specialist Stephanie Haan-Amato is leading another new program at Vista Middle School. Once a week, students explore the ecology of their schoolyard with her. They are creating a field guide to share their new knowledge with "ecosystem pen pals" in San Diego, California.

Finally, the *Desert Data Jam* is back for its third year. This competition for high school students has been very successful in getting students to work with real data sets and design ways to explain data to nonscientists. We're proud that our project is being replicated this year in Baltimore, Maryland and Miami, Florida, expanding this innovative project to students in other parts of the United States.

As you can see, Asombro will be busy this year! We are very grateful to all of you for your support of unique science education in our community.

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the generous donors in July, August & September 2013.

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Photo by Thomas Bestelmeyer

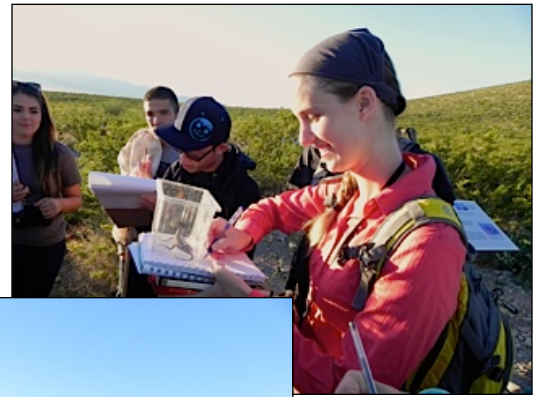
NMSU Zoology Class Explores the Nature Park

By Rachael Ryan, New Mexico State University

Dr. Timothy Wright from New Mexico State University gave students the opportunity to get out of the classroom and explore the desert on Sunday, September 22nd.

Dr. Wright brought his Zoology class on a field trip to the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park to gain hands on experience with local wildlife. Students hiked the trails at the Nature Park, cataloging a variety of animal species both at dawn and at dusk.

New Mexico is among the top five most biologically diverse states in the nation, and autumn is an ideal time to see what the Land of Enchantment has to offer. Students learned first hand why our state ranks as the second most diverse state for bird species and the third most diverse state for reptiles. Zoology students also took a night shift to see the different host of species that only come out after dark.



Coming Soon: Desert Dash Trail Race!

By Stephanie Haan-Amato

Have you registered for our inaugural Desert Dash Trail Race? All proceeds will be used for Asombro's education programs. The beautiful courses are located on the trails of the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, and the views are spectacular!

Events include a 10K race, 5K race, and 1K children's race.

Runners and walkers of all ages are welcome, and our trails are a judgement-free zone! We have fantastic awards for female and male overall and age group winners in the 10K and 5K events and age group winners in the children's 1K. We also have terrific door prizes.

Registration includes a 1-year membership to the Asombro Institute and a wonderful t-shirt designed by local artist, Alejandro Sosa.

Desert Dash 10K, 5K, & 1K Children's Trail Race
November 9, 2013 • 9:00am
Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

Register before Nov. 1 to receive the early-bird discount. Follow the links on our webpage, or stop by our office to pick up a registration form. It's quick and easy!

www.asombro.org/dash

Like us on Facebook for updates and more information:

www.facebook.com/DesertDashTrailRace



Spectacular views and wonderful company await you at the Desert Dash Trial Race. Photo by Will Keener.

Successful Fundraisers

By Paul Harper



A good time was had by all who attended our Moonlight Taste of the Desert Dinner in September. Photo by Kayla Carroll.

The Asombro staff and Board have been hard at work with education programs, yet we still found time for fundraising.

Our first event was the marvelous Moonlight Taste of the Desert Dinner. The party could have gone on all night, and thanks to our generous guests, we raised thousands of dollars for Asombro!

Asombro was picked as the beneficiary for the Southern New Mexico Electrical Golf Association Tournament at Red Hawk. We had a great time and hope to do it all over again next year.

A special thank you to Gil and Sally Tellez for their hands-on involvement in both fundraisers. They are our undisputed fundraising champions!



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FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

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Education Programs

Thanks to your support, Asombro staff provided 570 hours of science programming for 14,510 students so far in 2013!

8-Jul Jornada LTER - Ecology Short Course
 11-Jul Optimist Club - Asombro Institute
 12-Jul Nightlife of the Desert
 15-Jul to 26 Jul Biodiversity Teacher Workshop
 3-Aug Take it Outside, NM - Teacher Workshop
 8-Aug Grants Library - Fossils
 12-Aug White Sands School - Asombro Institute
 17-Aug Butterfly Flutterby
 27-Aug Central Elem. - Science Interns
 29-Aug J Paul Taylor Academy - Science Interns
 4-Sep Central Elem. - Science Interns
 5-Sep J Paul Taylor Academy - Science Interns
 10-Sep Central Elem. - Science Interns
 11-Sep LC Catholic School - I'm a Scientist, Too
 11-Sep J Paul Taylor Academy - I'm a Scientist, Too
 12-Sep J Paul Taylor Academy - Science Interns
 13-Sep Mayfield High School - Desert Data Jam
 14-Sep Geocache the Desert
 18-Sep Hillrise Elem. - Science Interns
 19-Sep Hillrise Elem. - Science Interns -
 23-Sep East Picacho Elem. - I'm a Scientist, Too
 25-Sep LC Catholic School - Science Interns
 25-Sep LC Catholic School - Habitat Stats
 25-Sep Soroptimist Club - Asombro Institute
 26-Sep Hillrise Elem. - Science Interns
 26-Sep Vista Middle School - Earth Squad
 27-Sep Monte Vista Elem. - Field Trip

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