

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 24, Issue 3 (July - September 2015)

Board & Staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Justin Van Zee - President

Gene Gant - Vice
President

Mark Sechrist - Secretary

Donna Yargosz - Treasurer

Gil Tellez - Board Member

STAFF

Stephanie Bestelmeyer, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Rink Somerday
Program Coordinator

Stephanie Haan-Amato
Science Education Specialist

Libby Grace
Science Education Specialist



CONTACT US

Asombro Institute
for Science Education

PO Box 891
Las Cruces, NM 88004

575-524-3334 (voice)

575-646-2315 (fax)

information@asombro.org

www.asombro.org

Happy 25th Anniversary, Asombro!

On August 27, 1990, a grassroots group of community members officially incorporated the nonprofit now called the Asombro Institute for Science Education. Beth Morgan, a longtime supporter, wrote a story highlighting Asombro's history, using information from organizational documents and from founder Ron Hudson. The full story can be found on www.asombro.org.

Here are excerpts from the article that focus on activities from the first 10 years.

A Brief History of Asombro

By Beth Morgan

"We're from the land of dusty roads, rattlesnakes, and horny toads," or so the song goes.

Upon looking a little closer, one sees that there are hawks, owls, rodents, deer, bobcats, foxes, coyotes, mountain lions, insects, and a plethora of plant life.

Las Cruces City Commissioner Ron Hudson knew this as early as 1978 and sought to capitalize on it with a regional attraction to be called the **Las Cruces Nature Park**, which he envisioned as being something like the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum near Tucson. Alamogordo had its zoo. Las Cruces, the second largest city in the state, Hudson thought, needed a place for families to go, too.

Hudson was one of sixteen original board members working on the project. Supporters incorporated as a non-profit in 1990, with a botanical garden foremost in their plans. A development plan optimistically proposed opening the park with animals and the initial phase of a botanical garden by 1993.

In early 1997, the project underwent a name change. Now the **Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park**, the board named herpetologist Paul Hyder the park's first director. Hyder had been conducting educational programs for the park with area schools for five years. Shortly after this announcement, the park's location had switched to a 1,000-acre tract of land on the southwest border of and in the

possession of the Jornada Experimental Range, a facility of the Agricultural Research Service, a research branch of the United States Department of Agriculture.

"There was no physical park until they got the Jornada Range site," Hudson said. With the Jornada site on the table, the possibility of a mutually beneficial working partnership bloomed. The Jornada had been inviting school children out to learn about science for years. As the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park's goals were along similar lines, it seemed like a win-win situation.



In 1999, Jornada Experimental Range scientist Jeff Herrick worked with local school children, inspiring them to learn more about desert ecology. These early field trips set the stage for Asombro's current field trips, attended by more than 1,700 students annually.

Continued on page 2

25th Anniversary (continued from page 1)

The public first laid eyes on the site in an open house in June that year. It would require an act of Congress and just over another 10 years, for the site to be officially conveyed to the nature park.

In 2000, the park hired its new director—and first paid staff person— Stephanie Bestelmeyer, a Ph.D. scientist with experience teaching K-12 students. She and then park science officer Hyder, found among their first challenges explaining to the public that while the park remained undeveloped, it followed in the footsteps of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, which started with educational programs. These programs began to be the focus, through the park's association with the Jornada. They worked with the majority of the local schools, as well as some from Hatch, Alamogordo, Anthony, Canutillo, and El Paso.

With the aid of its volunteers, the park then spent 90 percent of its donations on educational programs, an impressive tradition that has continued to this day.

Please visit www.asombro.org for highlights from 2000 on and the full article, "A Brief History of Asombro."

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar now for fun, family-friendly events at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.



Butterfly Flutterby

Saturday August 15, 9:00 AM - Noon, \$3

Celebrate the wonder of all things butterfly at this popular annual event.

BioBlitz

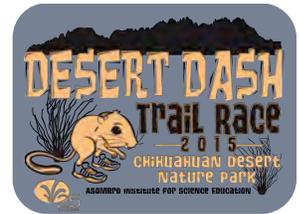
Saturday September 19, Schedule of events coming soon, Free

We're inventorying the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park to collect a list of the many plants, animals, rock types, and soils that call the Nature Park home. Learn from local experts how to survey an area and add to our list.

Desert Dash Trail Race

Saturday November 14

Sign up now for the Desert Dash 5K, 10K, half marathon, or children's 1-mile trail race. To register and for more information about sponsoring the event, please visit <http://asombro.org/dash.htm>.



Education Programs

Thanks to your support, Asombro staff provided 470 hours of science for 9,874 students so far in 2015! Here are the April and May 2015 programs.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1-Apr LC Catholic - soil | 16-Apr Central Elem - science night | 5-May White Sands Middle School - Career Day |
| 1-Apr LC Catholic - zoology identification | 16-Apr Sierra MS - land cover and use | 5-May Picacho Middle School - field trip |
| 2-Apr Monte Vista Elem - food web | 16-Apr Vista MS - decomposition | 6-May La Union Elementary - field trip |
| 2-Apr Monte Vista Elem - field trip | 16-Apr Sunrise GISD - food web | 6-May J Paul Taylor Academy - animals part 4 |
| 6-Apr MacArthur Elem - soil | 17-Apr Monte Vista Elem - liquids and gases | 7-May Lynn MS - field trip follow up |
| 6-Apr Gadsden Elem - desert stories | 20-Apr Fairacres Elem - soil | 8-May La Union Elem - desert stories |
| 7-Apr East Picacho Elem - science process | 21-Apr Sunrise GISD - animal color | 8-May White Sands Elem - field trip |
| 7-Apr Gadsden Elem - desert stories | 21-Apr North Valley - soil | 11-May Zia MS - microclimates |
| 8-Apr Sierra MS - ecosystems & microclimates | 22-Apr Toddler Story Time | 11-May La Union Elem - desert stories |
| 8-Apr Monte Vista Elem - animal color | 22-Apr Picacho MS - land cover and use | 12-May Sierra MS - wildlife CSI |
| 8-Apr Gadsden Elem - desert stories | 23-Apr Sunrise GISD - bird beaks | 12-May Zia MS - microclimates |
| 9-Apr East Picacho Elem - field trip | 27-Apr Monte Vista Elem - temperature and gases | 13-May Zia MS - field trip |
| 9-Apr J Paul Taylor Academy - soil | 27-Apr J Paul Taylor Academy - food web | 13-May La Union Elem - desert stories |
| 9-Apr Sierra MS - land cover and use | 28-Apr Sunrise GISD - science interns | 14-May Vado Elem - field trip |
| 10-Apr Sierra MS - field trip | 29-Apr Monte Vista Elem - science interns | 15-May Zia MS - biodiversity game |
| 13-Apr Monte Vista Elem - bird beaks | 29-Apr J Paul Taylor Academy - bird beaks | 19-May East Picacho Elem - arthropod id |
| 13-Apr J Paul Taylor Academy - land cover and use | 1-May Vista MS - Health Fair | 19-May Vista MS - land cover and use |
| 14-Apr Picacho MS - decomposition | 4-May Monte Vista Elem - science interns | 20-May Mesilla Park Elem - Learning Celebration |
| 14-Apr University Hills - soil | 4-May J Paul Taylor Academy - animal color | 21-May Hillcrest MS - field trip |
| 15-Apr Monte Vista Elem - states of matter | | 30-May Kids' Passport to the Desert |
| 15-Apr Vista MS - wildlife CSI | | |

Meet Asombro's New Staff Member - Libby Grace



Asombro welcomed our newest staff member in early July. Libby Grace joins the team as a Science Education Specialist and will bring her expertise and passion for teaching science to our team. We hope you meet her in person

soon. Until then, we asked Libby a few questions to help you get to know her.

What led you to your new position with the Asombro Institute for Science Education?

Growing up in the outdoor playground of Northern California, I was always curious about nature. With a desire to learn as much about the natural world as possible, I received a BA in Environmental Studies from University of California, Santa Cruz. It was during field studies through UCSC that I adopted the practice of letting nature be the classroom. Ever since, my goal has been to facilitate discovery of the natural world in young people and communities.

After a couple years teaching field environmental education, I decided to take my joy

of teaching into a classroom setting for two years in Chicago, IL, while I earned a MA in Teaching. Following a couple years in an urban environment, I felt the urge to get back into nature. Working for Asombro Institute for Science Education gave me the opportunity to get back outside and continue to bring the outside in.

What is your favorite thing about the job so far?

In science education, the world is the classroom. Further exploring ways to teach kids that science is everywhere and how it impacts their daily lives is very rewarding. I am inspired by the collective efforts of everybody involved at Asombro dedicated to positively impact students' lives through nature.

New Mexico is the Land of Enchantment. What do you find enchanting about our state?

The desert has always been enchanting to me. For a place that may seem barren from afar, there is much biodiversity once you take a closer look. There is a mystique about the desert that is exciting to investigate. Additionally, a vast, starry night sky never ceases to amaze and humble me. I am very grateful to call New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment, my new home.

Red or green?

Which one is less spicy? I am still building up my tolerance. 😊

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the generous donors in the second quarter of 2015.

Monthly Donors

Stephanie & Brandon Bestelmeyer
Carolyn Gressitt & John Freyermuth
Anna Keener
Marcella Newman
Deb Peters
Justin Van Zee
Walt & Linda Whitford

Peridot

Linda & Will Keener
Arlene Tugel
Susan Vantress
VFW Post 6917

Obsidian

George & Lynn Mulholland

Jasper

Anonymous
Gene & Maureen Gant
Mary Beth Harper
Jennifer Meskell
Native Plant Society of NM - Las Cruces Chapter
Thomas Sechrist

Gypsum

David & Nelida Anderson
Jo Banks
Lehman & Marianne Barnes

Gypsum (continued)

Mark Courtney
Jean Davis

Quartz

Anonymous (2)
Stanley Bardwell
Jean Berlowitz
Patrick Graham
Larry Ludwig
Mrs. Inge Peter
April Rogers
Vera & Burt Schwartz
J. Paul Taylor



Asombro Institute

FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

PO Box 891
Las Cruces, NM 88004-0891

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Las Cruces, NM
Permit No. 2014



Asombro Garage Sale

Calling all summer and fall declutterers!
We want your gently used items for Asombro's first Garage Sale, hosted by the Board of Directors. All proceeds of the October 31 sale will support Asombro's education programs. Call the office for details on donating your items.



This spring, Asombro staff got to watch six grey fox (Urocyon cinereoargenteus) pups being raised near our office. The bundles of energy were hard to capture on film because they never stopped moving!

YES! I want to support the
Asombro Institute for Science Education!

Quartz (\$15 +) Obsidian (\$250 +)
 Gypsum (\$50 +) Peridot (\$500 +)
 Jasper (\$100 +) Turquoise (\$1000 +)

Please make checks payable to Asombro Institute or charge to:
 Visa MasterCard
 Account Number: _____
 Expiration Date: _____
 Signature as it appears on card: _____
 NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ Zip _____
 PHONE _____
 E-MAIL _____
 Check here if you do NOT want to be listed in Asombro publications _____

Asombro Institute for Science Education,
P.O. Box 891, Las Cruces, NM 88004