

# Asombro Insights

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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## Teachers Excited to Practice Problem Solving with Asombro

It felt like Christmas in July when, at the end of a long day together, Asombro staff passed out bins of classroom materials to eager teachers. When we told all attendees they would receive a kit of materials, including three new scales, one teacher squealed "Wow!" and did a little happy dance in her seat.

This summer, Asombro hosted two teacher workshops that centered on scientific problem solving through the engineering design process. In June, middle and high school teachers explored Agrivoltaics, the dual use of land for energy production and agriculture, as a potential pathway to environmental and economic sustainability. In July, 3<sup>rd</sup>- 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers tackled issues around wildlife conservation, focusing on four Species of Greatest Conservation Need in New Mexico.

In preparation for these workshops, Asombro educators spent much of the school year creating and testing seven lessons on these subjects. Lessons introduced students to the problems and current research, which enabled them to consider pros and cons, ask questions, brainstorm solutions, create arguments for various options, and build, test, and critique prototypes. By focusing on current, real-world problems and research, students see that most of the time there is not one "correct" solution but many options with trade-offs that have to be considered. Thinking scientifically can help us compare through the options and the trade-offs.

One teacher told us "the activities and concepts are directly applicable to the students I work with, It's very helpful to have materials that relate to NM species rather than more exotic species."

For more than 20 years, Asombro's "magic formula" for teacher workshops has always been 50% increasing teacher knowledge and confidence in the subject area and 50% practicing new lessons Asombro developed for the classroom. Teachers leave with the knowledge and materials to implement these lessons in their classrooms right away!

These workshops were funded by the USDA/ARS Jornada Experimental Range and Southwestern Cotton Ginning Research Laboratory and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's Share with Wildlife Program. We are thrilled that these funding sources will continue into 2026, allowing us to repeat both workshops with new cohorts of teachers!



*Above: Middle and high school teachers visit an agrivoltaics experiment at NMSU's Leyendecker Plant Science Center*

*Below: Elementary teachers use a watershed model and spray bottle to model how a playa forms after a rainstorm and how pollution is carried in runoff*



## CONTACT US

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Science Education

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# Welcome to the Board

Meet Asombro's newest board member: **TOM WILLIAMS**



We asked Tom to introduce himself and explain why he supports Asombro's mission:

I connect most with Asombro's providing a public desert ecosystem experience at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park and a student scientific experience in the public schools. Since joining the board, I've enjoyed most learning about the many programs offered to students in their classrooms and about the improvements being made to the park. I'm impressed at how much staff, volunteers, and the board contribute to make the program so successful.

I was born and raised in the small town of Artesia, NM, and have lived in the big cities of San Diego and Washington, D.C. My wife, Pam, and I retired in Las Cruces and like it because it offers a good mix of small-town community spirit and big city opportunities to enjoy culture, restaurants, and nature. Having graduated from New Mexico State, we enjoy the music and educational programs offered there. I've also enjoyed teaching and tutoring at Dona Ana Community College. I normally choose red [chile] but do choose green if I'm told the red is really hot.

We are thrilled to have Tom's experience and voice on our Board of Directors. Thanks Tom!



You're Invited to

## WILDLIFE WONDERS AT THE CDNP

Asombro invites you to fly, crawl, and slither to our outdoor classroom, the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park for family-friendly celebrations of desert animals!  
**56501 N. Jornada Road, Las Cruces**



**Wildlife Conservation Day**  
**Aug 30<sup>th</sup>, 9:00-12:00**

Wildlife Conservation Day celebrates the amazing diversity of NM wildlife and offers a variety of engaging activity stations designed to delight and educate visitors of all ages:

- See live playa shrimp
- View specimens from the NMSU Wildlife Museum
- Collect free animal trading cards and learn to play them in a biology-based strategy game, Endless Forms
- Enjoy family-friendly crafts and activities centered around under-appreciated New Mexican wildlife in need of conservation



**Desert After Dark**  
**Oct 11<sup>th</sup>, 5:30-7:30 pm**

It's time to Get Batty in the Desert After Dark. This event is a rare chance to stay up late in the park. Explore the trails and a variety of engaging activity stations for visitors of all ages:

- Meet a live Great Horned Owl and Red-tailed Hawk courtesy of Raptors of New Mexico Foundation
- See a live scorpion glow under a blacklight and learn about UV fluorescence
- Make a bat mask
- Collect free animal trading cards
- Enjoy family-friendly crafts and activities featuring desert nightlife

Wildlife Wonders is made possible, in part, by generous support from the Carroll Petrie Foundation and the NM Dept. of Game and Fish's Share with Wildlife Program. While both events are free, a **suggested donation of \$5 per person or \$10 per family is appreciated to support Asombro's educational programs.**

# Thank you, Human Systems Research

In December 2024, Asombro was the proud recipient of the donation of more than \$20,000 to our endowment from Human Systems Research, Inc.

Human Systems Research, Inc. is a nonprofit scientific and educational institution that has pursued basic and applied research in archeology and related fields. Started in 1972, they focused on the archeology of the Tularosa Basin and Southern NM. Being a nonprofit allowed for mission-based programs focused on research, education, and preservation.

When they decided to close their doors after more than 50 years of mission-driven work, they chose to donate their endowment fund, held by the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico.

They donated \$20,636 to Asombro's endowment, which will provide long-term funds to ensure for the future of Asombro.



# Volunteer This Schoolyear!

Asombro is seeking enthusiastic volunteers to:

- Work along side our educators to facilitate hands-on learning and inspire a love of science in students.
- Care for the trails and amenities at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.
- Help behind the scenes to prepare education materials.

Classroom and field trip volunteers assist Asombro educators by working with small groups of students, leading them in activities, and managing materials and answering student questions.

Friends of the CDNP meet six times a year to maintain our trails and help with small maintenance projects. In between, they serve as our eyes on the park when staff are busy elsewhere.

Behind the scenes, we meet for one hour a month at the office to prepare for upcoming programs.



*Above: Friends of the CDNP preparing for trail work*

*Below: A Volunteer helps students measure a yucca plant.*



No classroom or outdoor experience necessary.

Contact Bonnie Jean Knighton at  
Bonnie@asombro.org  
575-524-3334

# THANK YOU! We are grateful to our generous donors from April through mid July 2025.

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## Grant and Other Funding for Projects Provided By:

Carroll Petrie Foundation  
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USDA SW Climate Hub



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*What's New* at Asombro's  
**CHIHUAHUAN DESERT NATURE PARK?**



Despite recent rain, it's still a dry year at the CDNP. By July 14<sup>th</sup>, we had only recorded a cumulative 1.04 inches of precipitation in 2025. By July 29<sup>th</sup> that had gone up to 3.26 inches. It's amazing to see the desert react to even that small amount of rain. Park Manager William Lukefahr has been spotting mosses and other moisture dependent species popping up.

You can explore and contribute to our species list on [iNaturalist](#). Or keep an eye on our rain gauge on [weather.donaanacountry.org](http://weather.donaanacountry.org)

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

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*Have you considered putting Asombro in your estate plan? Please contact Steph Bestelmeyer (575-524-3334) if you are interested in learning more.*

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