

Asombro Insights



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
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Mammal Madness

Asombro's first of seven Wildlife Wonders events was held on March 16th at our outdoor classroom, the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, with over 60 mammals (mostly humans) in attendance.

This series of events, each featuring multiple, hands-on, educational booths, is supported, in part, by a grant to Asombro from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's Share with Wildlife program.

At one station, NMSU graduate student, Hailey Jacobson, presented her work with the endemic Organ Mountains Colorado chipmunk and was available for questions from eventgoers. Her fieldwork saw her hiking all over the Organ Mountains and noting changes in how the chipmunks are using available habitat in response to drier, warmer conditions.

Attendees were also treated to the unveiling of a new card game, Endless Forms, created by perennial park patron, Anthony Bailey. Three promotional cards were available to participants by visiting the different stations. At one station dedicated to showcasing Endless Forms, guests could learn to play and chat with the game's creator.

Scientists from the Long-Term Ecological Research Program, including Conrad Nelson, set out a few traps the night before the event, so visitors saw and learned about a couple of adorable kangaroo rats, which were released back into the desert after the event.

To showcase more mammals not as easily observed, Second Chance Wildlife Rescue brought mammal skulls, antlers, horns, and pelts to inform and educate.

Another exhibit invited guests to have fun with origami, folding paper into animal shapes with the added twist (crease?) that the paper animal's size reflected its observation frequency in sightings submitted through the iNaturalist app at the Nature Park.



Anthony Bailey (right) plays his card game, Endless Forms, with a Mammal Madness visitor.

We hope you were able to drop by and that learning about mammals left you feeling warm and fuzzy. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who made this novel event a success.

If you missed the first Wildlife Wonders event, have no fear; there are more Wonders on the way!

Wildlife Wonders

- **Bird Bonanza (Part 1)**
- April 20th - 9 a.m. to noon
- **Radical Reptiles**
- May 18th - 9 a.m. to noon
- **Going Batty**
- July 27th - 7 to 9 p.m.
- **Butterfly Flutterby**
- August 24th - 9 a.m. to noon
- **Bird Bonanza (Part 2)**
- September 28th - 9 a.m. to noon
- **Dive into the Playa**
- October 19th - 9 a.m. to noon

Taking Wonder on the Road

Asombro staff had an outstanding time at the Santa Ana Pueblo in Sandoval County, New Mexico, while hosting a teacher workshop there on March 6th. The workshop, “Engaging Students in the Wonders of Science,” was attended by 14 professionals, all of whom work with youth at the Pueblo in Natural Resources, Education, or Wellness Department roles.

This training came about after Pueblo members learned about Asombro via a “Come Rain or Shine” podcast episode in November 2022 and then reached out to discuss options for a training event.

Asombro’s Executive Director, Dr. Stephanie Bestelmeyer, and Program Leader, Gabriela Franco, presented 10 lessons developed from our Schoolyard Desert Discovery, Climate Change, and Sustainable Ranching projects. Along with top-notch instruction, participants received classroom sets of materials and supplies, fully preparing them to begin lessons with Pueblo youth.

Asombro staff thought it was a wonderful, positive event, and, judging by these rave reviews, so did attendees:

“Thank you so much for your knowledge! Looking forward to working with you more in the future!”

“This workshop was very interesting and informative. The activities that were shown and explained to us were great! We will be implementing some of these into our programs. Thank you!”

“Love how the lessons are easily relatable and easy to understand for a person who does not have a scientific background.”



“Dr. B” teaches educators at Santa Ana Pueblo.

Spring has Sprung!

Warmer temperatures have led to blooms at Asombro’s Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. Many cacti, forbs, and shrubs are signaling that spring has arrived. And with desert blooms comes desert pollinators, so watch for bees, butterflies and moths on your next visit to the park.

These pictures were submitted through our iNaturalist project (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/biodiversity-of-the-chihuahuan-desert-nature-park>), which is the app we use to document species sightings at the park. Come out for a hike or a stroll and maybe download the iNaturalist app beforehand (it’s free!) to record your observations. The beauty of the app is that you do not need to recognize the species you are seeing; uploads are identified by a community of naturalists and experts.



Desert Orange-tip



Western Honey Bee



Red-lined Moth



Honey-tailed Striped Sweat Bee

Next Friends Meeting

Our dedicated trail keepers, the Friends of the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, will be meeting again in early June. The work of these incredible supporters helps maintain the park’s accessibility and beauty, and they are immensely appreciated. New members are always welcome!

Date: Saturday, June 8th (and continuing to meet every other month on 2nd Saturdays)

Time: 8 AM - 11 AM (future meeting times will stay the same)

Location: Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (visit asombro.org/nature-park for directions), near the restrooms

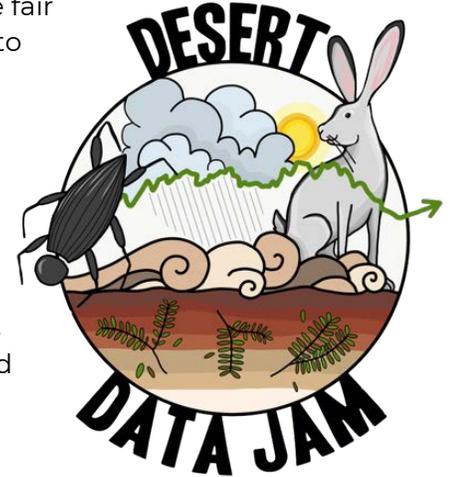
June’s Focus: Transplanting xeric plant species

Desert Data Jam

Desert Data Jam is back! For the last few months, Asombro staff and area teachers have been teaching Las Cruces seventh-graders about this unique challenge geared toward increasing scientific literacy.

Desert Data Jam presents students with multiple data sets, already collected through local research, in a succinct, two-page format. Students, working solo or in groups of up to three members, choose one data set and create a tri-fold board of various, required sections, similar to a science fair presentation. In the Desert Data Jam, however, students then get the opportunity to present the numbers in a fun, creative way that speaks to them. For instance, time spent by two types of cows in a grazing study could be represented by pizza (baked or printed), with different toppings representing times of day. If a student or group is more interested in music than cooking, creating an original song expressing their data might be their creative spin. Videos, knitting, sports... the options are only limited by student creativity.

While participating students will receive a classroom grade for their efforts, there is also prize money to be won. The first-place individual or team receives \$300, second place gets \$200, and third place takes home \$100. There are even gift certificates given for several honorable mentions.



You're invited to "Jam" with Asombro!

The 2024 Desert Data Jam contest needs volunteer judges. No scientific background is necessary and you will be given a very clear rubric with which to score presentations. Contest day is April 24th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and we ask that judges commit three hours to the event. Judging will take place at New Mexico State

University's Wooton Hall (2995 Knox Street) in Las Cruces.

If interested, please sign up by contacting Kelly (kelly@asombro.org).

Or if you would like to simply view all the amazingly creative presentations, an open house and award ceremony will be held April 25th at Wooton Hall from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.



THANK YOU!

We are grateful to our generous donors from January 1st through April 5th, 2024.

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Asombro Institute

FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

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Double Your Impact on April 26th

Southern New Mexico Giving Day on April 26th is designed to ignite giving across our region.



This year, Asombro is very fortunate to be receiving matching donations for the first \$850 donated. You read that correctly: your generous support of award-winning lessons brought to K-12 students in and around Las Cruces could be doubled, making an even greater difference.

In a recent evaluation, one teacher commented that Asombro's Science Educators are "sparking the love of science" in students. Your gift could be the reason a child gets excited about science.

More than 90 percent of all donations to Asombro support our innovative programs. Your support provides quality science education and brings the wonder of science and our desert to the children we serve.

Please mark your calendars for April 26th and visit <https://bit.ly/give4asombro> for more information. Only donations made through that website have the potential to be doubled.

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.

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