

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

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A Celebration of Biodiversity - BioBlitz 2015

By Rink Somerday, Ryan Pemberton, & Stephanie Bestelmeyer

The Asombro Institute for Science Education held a BioBlitz at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park on Saturday, September 19. This BioBlitz was a 15-hour event in which teams of volunteer scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members worked together to find and identify plants and animals. We also included rocks and soils. While we know rocks and soils are not “bio,” we have so many interesting geologic features at the Nature Park, we just had to include them!

We had three primary objectives for the event:

1) Bring attention to the diversity of plants and animals in the Chihuahuan Desert.

2) Give the public an opportunity to work with and learn from local experts.
 3) Start a species inventory list at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.

During the BioBlitz, 30 local scientists worked with other project participants to record a total of 201 species of plants and animals and three rock types. While we know this is just a small fraction of the total diversity within the Park, this is a great start considering the uncharacteristically cool, wet, and cloudy weather that day.

Many people braved the elements to participate in the BioBlitz. In addition to surveys, visitors learned about desert soil, food webs, small mammals, animals that live in the playa, bear ecology, animal senses, bat echolocation, and reptile diversity through short educational presentations that took place through the day.

For a full report on the BioBlitz, including a list of species recorded that day, please visit Asombro’s website (www.asombro.org).

| Taxon | Number of Species Recorded |
|------------|----------------------------|
| Plants | 103 |
| Arthropods | 43 |
| Reptiles | 3 |
| Birds | 44 |
| Mammals | 8 |
| Rock types | 3 |



Left: Rock wren (Salpinctes obsoletus) spotted at the BioBlitz. Photo by Nancy Stotz. Right: Scott Bundy from NMSU teaches BioBlitz participants to identify common arthropods.

Meet Asombro's Newest Staff Member - Ryan Pemberton

On August 10, Asombro welcomed our newest staff member, Ryan Pemberton. Ryan jumped in with both feet in his first week on the job as he helped prepare for and then host our 13th annual Butterfly Flutterby on August 15. He took it all in with good cheer, letting us know that he'll make a great new member of our team!

Ryan grew up in north-central Texas before attending the University of Georgia to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Forest Resources and one in Wildlife & Fisheries Biology. He then went back to University of Georgia to earn his Master of Natural Resources (MNR) in Environmental Education. He has also worked for nature centers, teaching all ages about the wonders that can be found in their own backyards and using nature to teach science concepts. When he is not working, Ryan can be found reading, birding, fishing, or hiking with his dog.

We started Ryan off by asking him some questions to help you all get to know him better. Here's what he had to say.

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

I was always outside as a kid - playing in the creeks and wetlands near my neighborhood, "hunting" jackrabbits and coyotes in the pastures of my grandparents' ranch, or climbing trees at recess. So nobody was surprised when I began pursuing degrees in forestry and wildlife biology. It was during the final project for my undergrad working

with a teacher at an Athens, Georgia elementary school that I fell in love with and noticed I had a knack for environmental education.



While in school for my MNR, I worked for many Athens outdoor institutions either using the outdoors as the classroom, or bringing the outdoors into the classroom. In Asombro, I saw the opportunity to bring my enthusiasm for science and nature to a new community, work with a group of people dedicated to promoting science literacy, and challenge myself and expand my knowledge base.

What is your favorite thing about the job so far?

While it can be exhausting, I am really enjoying going into the classrooms and on field trips. I also love having a new audience to share my awesome, corny jokes with.

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

In my first few weeks here, it has been the landscape that catches my attention most of all. I have never been able to see mountains from my front door before. They can be quite distracting while I'm out walking my dog because all I want to do is climb them and learn about the different plants and animals that make them home. The lightning storms are also pretty awe inspiring as well.

Red or Green?

Either, as long as it is hot and lacking beans. Real chili doesn't have beans in it.

Education Programs

**Thanks to your support, Asombro staff provided 606 hours of science for 12,465 students so far in 2015!
Here are the June - August 2015 programs.**

| | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 10-Jun | Interagency Council | 30-Jul | Alamogordo Water Festival |
| 16-Jun | Silver City Public Library - arthropod identification | 6-Aug | White Sand Elem. Back to School Day |
| 18-Jun | MESA camp - water and climate change | 10-Aug | J. Paul Taylor Academy - matter |
| 19-Jun | MESA camp - water and climate change | 12-Aug | J. Paul Taylor Academy - matter |
| 23-Jun | Hatch Public Library - bats | 15-Aug | Butterfly Flutterby |
| 24-Jun | Rockhound State Park - butterflies | 17-Aug | J. Paul Taylor Academy - matter |
| 1-Jul | Dorris Van Doren Library - arthropod identification | 19-Aug | J. Paul Taylor Academy - matter |
| 9-Jul | Take It Outside, NM camp - animal tracks | 25-Aug | Sierra Middle School - decomposition |
| 10-Jul | Nighttime in the Desert | 26-Aug | Sierra Middle School - decomposition |
| 21-Jul | WSMR day camp - animal adaptations | 27-Aug | Sierra Middle School - decomposition |

Desert Dash Trail Race

Sign up now to dash, run, jog, or walk through the desert at Asombro's third annual Desert Dash Trail Race. Distances include 5K, 10K, half marathon, and children's 1 mile.

Participants receive a technical t-shirt featuring this year's logo and chances to win age-group and overall awards for each race.

Registration prices increase on November 7, so register today. For information on registration, start times, and course maps, please visit:

www.asombro.org/dash



Asombro Yard Sale

October 31

A fabulous yard sale hosted by the Asombro Board of Directors will take place on Saturday October 31. All proceeds benefit Asombro's science education programs.

Date: **Saturday October 31**

Time: **8:00 AM - noon**

Location: **4000 Senna** (corner of Senna and Las Alturas)

Items include: glassware, decor items, books and DVDs, youth bed, bedding, edger, Huffy bike, jogging stroller, and much, much more!

HOLIDAY LUMINARIAS AT THE PARK

Join us on Friday, December 11 from 5 - 7:30 PM for Holiday Luminarias at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.

More than 300 luminarias will light up the paths, giving visitors a unique view of the desert. Stroll the paths, sing carols by the fire ring, roast marshmallows, and enjoy hot cocoa and other refreshments.



THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the generous donors who gave in the third quarter of 2015.

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Albertsons Final Quarter

Albertsons is discontinuing the Community Partners program at the end of 2015. They will include two additional quarterly payments at the end of the year, based on the last two quarters of shopping.

Help us maximize this final donation by using your Community Partners card when you shop. Don't have one yet? Call us (575-524-3334) and we will mail you a card right away. Show it to the cashier when you check out, and a percentage of your purchases goes right to Asombro.

Thanks for your support!



Asombro Science Education Specialist Libby Grace helps BioBlitz visitors with a fun desert food web game.

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

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