



FRIENDS OF CITY OF ROCKS NEWSLETTER
(Vol. 3, No. 1, May 2019)
MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Friends of City of Rocks State Park, Inc. (website: <http://www.friendsofcityofrocks.org>; e-mail address: friends@friendsofcityofrocks.org) is to help support the New Mexico State Parks in the enrichment of the park area. Specifically, the Friends aim to enhance, preserve and promote park use, to participate in nature as responsible stewards of the earth, to create an awareness of the wonder, fragility and importance of the park, to develop and improve existing education/interpretive programs, to develop and improve public awareness of the park, and to encourage public participation and/or membership in the Friends group.

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE FRIENDS!

Interested in helping out City of Rocks State Park? Consider joining the Friends. Typical Friends activities include highway cleanup, cutting and splitting firewood for sale to park campers, operation of a gift shop in the park Visitor Center, fund-raising, etc. To join, a) complete and send in the membership application form at the end of this newsletter, OR b) download, complete and submit a membership application from the Friends website (see above). NOTE: If you are already a member of the Friends, it is time to renew your membership! You can do so using the same form mentioned above.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, May 24, 2019. Friends of City of Rocks General Meeting. 7:00 PM- 8:30 PM. Western New Mexico University campus, Harlan Hall, Room 111. Program will be presented by Ms. Roxanne Solis-Snyder, who will premiere

her new park video featuring natural and cultural highlights in the park.

Saturday, May 25 2019. Star Party. This event begins at 9:15 PM. Meet at the Gene and Elizabeth Simon Observatory at the Orion Group Site.

Saturday, June 22 2019. Star Party. This event begins at 9:25 PM. Meet at the Gene and Elizabeth Simon Observatory at the Orion Group Site.

ANCIENT HUMAN HABITATION AT CITY OF ROCKS STATE PARK
by Roxanne Solis-Snyder



Title image: Roxanne Snyder July 15, 2018

Take a walk into the past, at the City of Rock State Park where you can experience the area much as the ancient inhabitation experienced it, in the landscape, nature, wildlife, and the brilliance of the stars lighting up the night skies. Come and see the evidence of the many that made their way to the park and surrounding areas. A hands-on display box where can experience what it was like to hold metates and mano grinding tools used for maize production. A variety of arrowheads, skinning tools, pottery shards, and a Spanish coin can be seen within the parks visitor's center.



Rockshelter Area and Isolated Petroglyph Panel.
Photo by Michelle Reed

Petroglyphs dating back possible before 5000 B.C. to the late 1600 A.D. from the Cochise and Chihuahua Archaic Traditions that formed the “Mogollon” Prehistoric Formative Periods A.D. 200 - 1540 and the Mogollon Cultural tradition “Mimbres” A.D. 200 – 1150/1200 known for their pottery craftsmanship prevalent in our modern-day Mimbres Culture of the area.



Photo by WNMU Museum 2003 Retrieved: 3/3/2019

<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/f2/30/78/f23078faf408e024519b72fb540a2dbc.jpg>

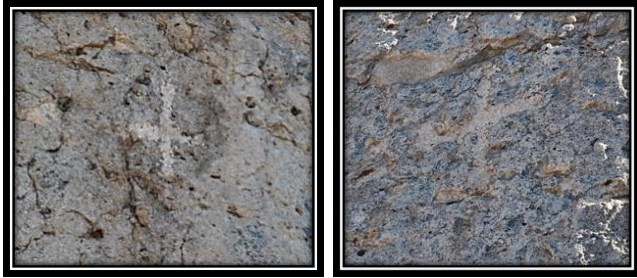
Boulders some reaching 40 feet in height are situated in a city-like formation where many indigenous people called home in possible Pit-house villages, Kiva communities and rock shelters.



Rockshelter Area. Photo by Michelle Reed

Also, where Spanish Conquistadors like Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and Don

Juan de Oñate explored the area for riches and fought off the nomadic Apache tribes of the southwest over land.



Possible Spanish Crosses or Apache. Photo by Michelle Reed

Modern-day Kokopelli pictographs from approximately the 1960s' hidden amongst the boulder along the roads and pathways of the City of Rocks.



**Kokopelli #1 & 2.
Photo by Michelle Reed & Lillianna R. Snyder-Solis**

AVIAN MASTERS OF THE DAY

Article and Photos by Tony Godfrey

In the last newsletter, I discussed what avian masters of the night one could encounter during a visit to the City of Rocks. Now let's take a look at what avian masters a visitor could encounter during the day.

Turkey Vulture

On any given day during the months of March through October, it would be hard for a visitor to not notice a Turkey Vulture soaring high over the park. This large carrion-eater can be identified by its black plumage with a paler undertail and two-toned underwings. Another key feature is that when seen head-on, its wings are slightly raised in a shallow V. This species spends much of the winter months in Central America and northern South America.



Turkey Vulture.

Golden Eagle

When seen in flight, this very large and impressive bird shows long wings and wing tip feathers spread like fingers. With a good view in decent light, it may also be possible to see its golden nape that gives the species its common name. Due to its extremely large territory, as much as 77 square miles, the Golden Eagle may only occasionally be found soaring over the park. The oldest documented Golden Eagle was banded in Utah in 1980. It was recaptured in the same state in 2012.



Golden Eagle.

Northern Harrier

The Northern Harrier typically hunts by gliding low over the desert floor and other open areas, while holding its wings in a V-shape. A look at the distinct white patch at the base of its tail will confirm your identification. It is common in our area from October through March. During the summer months, it can be found breeding across Canada and the northern United States. It is interesting to note that the majority of Northern Harriers seen at the City of Rocks are of the browner females. This is probably due to the fact that the grayer males will sometimes have more than one mate.



Northern Harrier.

Cooper's Hawk

During the four years that I worked at the City of Rocks, I would occasionally encounter this hawk in the park. I suspected that the birds would visit from the nearby Mimbres River, where the riparian habitat is more suitable. This mid-sized hawk can be identified by its long barred tail with a rounded tip. The smaller Sharp-shinned Hawk, with a square-tipped tail, should also be looked for when visiting the park.



Cooper's Hawk.

Swainson's Hawk

This large hawk with pointed wingtips is fairly common in the park from April through October. When seen in flight, note the distinctive white wing linings that contrast with the blackish flight feathers. This long-distance migrant spends the winter in the grasslands of northern Argentina, Paraguay and southern Brazil. A good place to search for this species at the City of Rocks is to look for it perched on one of the rocks leading to observation point during the early morning hours.



Swainson's Hawk.

Red-tailed Hawk

This is the most widespread hawk in North America and is the most frequently hawk encountered at the City of Rocks. I would like to add one final point to ponder. So many times have I heard someone say "I just saw an eagle", when in fact it was a Red-tailed Hawk. Never have I heard someone say "I just saw a Red-tailed Hawk", when in fact it was an eagle.



Red-Tailed Hawk.

THE MOUND BUILDERS

Article and Photo by Tim Geddes

Most visitors to the park want to know; "What makes those mounds?" The

answer is a rodent called the banner-tailed kangaroo rat. Rodentia is the largest order of mammals and they are found in most terrestrial environments. No mammal is better adapted to living in the desert than kangaroo rats. Water is a by-product of aerobic respiration and the rats can store this metabolic water in their bodies. Water conservation is an important adaptation for desert life.



Kangaroo Rat Mound. Bailey, V. 1931.

Mammals of New Mexico. North American Fauna No. 53, 412 pp.

<http://museum2.utep.edu/chih/theland/animals/mammals/dipospec.htm>

There are three species of kangaroo rats in New Mexico and the banner-tailed is the largest with a head body length of five and three quarters of an inch and a tail seven- and three-quarter inches long. The Merriam's and the Ord's kangaroo rats are each a few inches shorter.



Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys spectabilis*). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banner-tailed_kangaroo_rat



Merriam's Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys merriami*)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merriam%27s_kangaroo_rat



Ord's Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys ordii*)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ord%27s_kangaroo_rat

Other rats can dig burrows but the banner-tailed can construct large mounds up to ten feet in diameter and two- a- half feet high. Gravelly soil is preferred. The system of subterranean passageways and rooms can be three feet below the surface. It takes generations of rats to build a large mound. These mound cities have several openings and are home to snakes and other desert dwellers. Owls, coyotes, foxes, badgers, and snakes' prey on kangaroo rats and the rats are host to fleas, ticks, and roundworms. With this many enemies the rats are mainly active of dark, moonless nights. Kangaroo rats feed on the seeds of grasses and they store the seeds in fur-lined cheek pouches. Seeds stored underground can absorb moisture because of the higher humidity. Mating is usually in the spring with two to five young being born. The babies are weaned after about three weeks and switch to a seed diet.

Kangaroo rats are truly desert animals. In a place where humans would be unable

to survive without houses, air conditioning, and grocery stores these small rodents are at home. Walk the desert at night with a flashlight and you may see one of these creatures of the night.

IT'S A PRICKLY WORLD AT CITY OF ROCKS STATE PARK (2): WATCH YOUR FEET!

Article by William (Bill) R. Norris, Photos by Russ Kleinman unless otherwise noted.

It's hard to overlook several large cactus species growing in open soil or emerging between clumps of desert grass at City of Rocks State Park. For instance, brown-spined prickly pear (*Opuntia phaeacantha*) and Englemann prickly pear (*Opuntia engelmannii*) are easily recognized by their large, flat pads that are covered with spines. Eight different prickly pear species (*Opuntia* sp.) occur within the park boundaries.



Brown-Spined Prickly Pear (*Opuntia phaeacantha*)



Engelmann Prickly Pear (*Opuntia engelmannii*)

Also conspicuous in the park is walking stick cholla (*Cylindropuntia spinosior*), which appears as an upright tangle of spiny cylindrical joints that threaten to “bite” when touched. It is amazing to me that cactus wrens and curve-billed thrashers routinely build their nest within the interior branches of this cactus.



Walking Stick Cholla (*Cylindropuntia spinosior*)

The most distinctive cactus in the park is probably fish-hook barrel cactus (*Ferocactus wislinzeni*), which is large,

plump to appearing overstuffed, and covered with hooked spines. This cactus is easy to spot in open grassland in the vicinity of Loop Road, but it is scarce elsewhere in the park. It is quite possible that this very attractive cactus, which is fairly common at lower elevations in the foothills of the Florida Mountains near Deming, was introduced at City of Rocks State Park.



Fish-Hook Barrel Cactus (*Ferocactus wislizeni*).

All of the above cacti can be easily seen from your car or campsite. That said, I encourage you to take a hike along the Hydra Trail in the park to look for other, less conspicuous cactus species that are equally beautiful and adapted to desert living. Though these cacti grow ankle high at most, they are fully armed with spines, so “watch your feet!”

One small, common cactus at City of Rocks State Park is Fendler’s hedgehog (*Echinocereus fendleri*), which looks like a spiny green pineapple. Stems of this cactus can occur singly or in small clusters. Spines of Fendler’s hedgehog,

which are straight and lack hooks, emerge from nodes (“areoles”) which occur along vertical ridges on the elongate stem.



Fendler’s Hedgehog (*Echinocereus fendleri*).

<http://swbiodiversity.org/seinet/taxa/index.php?taxon=12788>

If you are lucky enough to encounter this cactus in bloom, you will notice that the magenta flowers emerge just below the tip of the main stem.



Fendler’s Hedgehog (*Echinocereus fendleri*)

Another small, common cactus to be found in the park is beehive cactus (*Escobaria vivipara*), which appear as round, green globes covered by white cobwebs. Spherical stems of this cactus can occur singly or in small clusters.



Beehive Cactus (*Escobaria vivipara*).
<https://www.swcoloradowildflowers.com/Pink%20Enlarged%20Photo%20Pages/escobaria%20vivipara.htm>

Clusters of unhooked spines radiate from nodes (“areoles”) at the tips of protruding tubercles that comprise the stem in beehive cactus. Each tubercle has a distinctive groove on its upper surface, which is a diagnostic feature of most cactus species in the genus *Escobaria*.



Beehive Cactus (*Escobaria vivipara*)
<https://www.swcoloradowildflowers.com/Pink%20Enlarged%20Photo%20Pages/escobaria%20vivipara.htm>

Beehive cactus flowers are showy and magenta as in Fendler’s hedgehog. However, beehive cactus flowers always occur at the stem tip rather than emerging laterally as in the former species.



Beehive Cactus (*Escobaria vivipara*) flowers.

At least two other small cactus species, both much less common than either Fendler’s hedgehog or beehive cactus, occur in the park. One of these, pancake

nipple cactus (*Mammillaria heyderi*), gives the appearance of a low, dark green dome covered with clusters of straight spines. Pancake nipple cactus will appear turgid (fully hydrated) if you encounter it during the growing season, but in the winter it usually shrinks in volume and becomes flush with the ground (just like the Wicked Witch of the West in the Wizard of Oz ☺). In case you are wondering, tubercles of pancake nipple cactus lack the groove present in beehive cactus tubercles.



Pancake Nipple Cactus (*Mammillaria heyderi*). Photo by Steve London.

The final species in this summary of small cacti to watch for at City of Rocks State Park, Wright's nipple cactus (*Mammillaria wrightii*), is truly the reason why you should "watch your feet" when hiking off trail. Superficially, this species resembles beehive cactus, but Wright's nipple cactus possesses multiple hooked spines that would be as difficult and painful to dislodge from exposed skin as a

fishhook. I have seen this cactus once in the park, appearing innocent where it occurred in bare soil among clumps of grass. I know better.



Wright's Nipple Cactus (*Mammillaria wrightii*). Photo by Dale Zimmerman.

I hope that I have inspired you to go cactus hunting the next time that you are at City of Rocks State Park!

SUMMARY OF GENERAL MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF CITY OF ROCKS (FRIDAY, MAR. 29 2019)

by Susan Moseley

A general meeting of the Friends of City of Rocks took place on Friday evening, Mar. 29 2019 in Harlan Hall (Western New Mexico University campus).

- **Timothy Geddes presented a slideshow on Insect Diversity and Adaptation, followed by a question and discussion period.**

- **Geddes introduced the officers of FOCOR followed by introductions by attendees. Geddes and Norris spoke to the group about what the Friends organization does for the City of Rocks State Park.**
- **Needs of the Park**
 1. **A new check station providing shelter located at the entrance to the park still a top priority**
 2. **More volunteers needed to work at the current check station on Easter Weekend**
 3. **More volunteers needed to help with wood collecting and bundling**
- **Hanna Blood is working on a plan to modernize the native plant collection**
- **Steve Collie is working on getting the mulch delivered and will oversee the layout of new and current plants**
- **Friends purchased over 50 gallons of paint and stain for the two Park ranger house as well as paint for the fences and Visitor Center. This project is nearly completed.**
- **Discussion about setting next date for the Friends Hwy 61 cleanup. Geddes will contact the Boy Scouts about what date will work for them. It was suggested that Friends could also contact the Girl Scouts and/or the Aldo Leopold School who do community service on Fridays. This will probably happen in April or May.**
- **Linda Pafford reported that she had checked into trash pickup at the Park, and was told they would not drive out to the Park to pick it up.**
- **Susan Moseley reported that we have new colors of t-shirts at the store and all items are selling well; however, we need more volunteers to work there. Several volunteers have left or are leaving the end of April. Susan asked for anyone interested in volunteering get in touch with her or Gabe. All volunteers would have to be coordinated through Gabe Medrano.**
- **Norris reported that Roxie Snyder is working on a new video for the Park. Roxie reported that is coming along and a drone is being used in the making of the video.**
- **Norris reported the next newsletter will be out soon. Moseley said it is very popular at the local libraries and other locations throughout the community.**
- **Treasurer Report**
 1. **Susan Moseley presented her income/expense report for January and February 2019. Sales at the Store are doing well, with t-shirts and firewood being the biggest sale items.**
 2. **Susan reported that she sent in the 2018 annual Friends group report to Santa Fe. Efforts to get the tax exempt (NTTC) forms from the State are ongoing and she hopes to finally have this matter resolved soon.**

- 3. Susan gave an update on the upcoming Give Grandly event which will be held May 11th at the Farmer's Market in Silver City.**
- 4. Deck repair of the rangers' houses are in the works. Geddes reported that he approved Friends paying for window repair at the Visitor Center. Medrano is to contact the glass company to get this taken care of, as well as repair of window at his ranger house which was approve at the last Friends' meeting.**
- 5. There was discussion regarding the approved purchase of a PA system**

for the Star Parties at the Park. Charles Turner suggested we look further into what type of system would be best.

- Next meeting: May 24, 2019, 7:00 pm. Western New Mexico University campus, Harlan Hall, Room 111. Program will be presented by Ms. Roxanne Solis-Snyder, who will premiere her new park video featuring natural and cultural highlights in the park.**
- Meeting adjourned 8:15 p.m. Refreshments after the meeting.**

Membership Application

Friends of City of Rocks State Park, Inc. (FCR)

FCR is a non-profit 501(c) organization dedicated to enhance, preserve and promote park use. Your contribution and membership will give you the satisfaction of helping preserve and protect one of the most beautiful places on the planet.

_____ New _____ Renewal

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Yes, I want to support FCR. Enclosed are my annual membership dues. Dues and donations are tax deductible.

***ACTIVE MEMBER: (Voting)**

SPONSOR (Non-Voting)

_____ \$15 Individual

_____ \$25 Friend

_____ \$20 Family

_____ \$50 Good Friend

_____ \$10 Senior (single or couple)

_____ \$75 Very Good Friend

_____ \$500 Lifetime

_____ \$100 Best Friend

_____ \$500 Special Best Friend

In addition to my dues, I enclose \$ _____ as a donation (optional)

*Active dues paying members are those individuals who are entitled to vote at annual meetings and MUST participate in at least one of the following. Please check at least one of the following:

_____ Hospitality _____ Newsletter _____ Programs _____ Membership _____ Publicity

_____ Garden Care _____ Fund-Raising _____ Events _____ Scrapbook _____ Officer

Active Members receive free day admittance to City of Rocks State park

Thank you for your support and interest. Together we can create an awareness of the wonder, fragility, and importance of City of Rocks State Park.

Please send your check to: Friends of City of Rocks State Park, Inc., PO Box 74, Hurley, NM, 88043

Upon receipt of our completed membership application, you will receive a welcome letter, receipt, and membership card. For further information or questions, please call 1-228-363-1403.

Official use only

Date Received: _____ Ck#: _____ Cash: _____ Membership Card: _____

