

Ranger Reflections



The City of Austin Park Rangers

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Lifeguard Training



This Fall, the Park Rangers will be attending Lifeguard Training classes. This certification will allow the Park Rangers to lead water based activities such as kayaking, snorkeling and other unique programs. This training also helps the Park Rangers establish a better understanding for medical and safety procedures.



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Special points of interest:

- Briefly highlight your point of interest here.

Beginner Bouldering

Park Ranger Matt Roberts had wanted to get a Rock Climbing Program running for a long time. However, it wasn't until a few months ago that the idea became a reality. With the help of one of his fellow rangers, he started our first outdoor rock climbing program with Camacho. It wasn't long before the program began to build momentum and they found themselves running climbing programs on a weekly basis. However, Matt wasn't satisfied he wanted to do more. He wanted to get a bouldering program going as well but didn't know where to start. There is plenty of bouldering to be done in the Greenbelt, but none of it is beginner friendly and he wanted to change that. The Park Rangers needed to find a way to introduce bouldering to beginners. One day Matt was over at the old Austin Nature and Science Center Challenge Course, when he noticed a 12x12 foot wooden vertical wall that didn't seem to have been used in some time. The untreated wood was splintering off and the nails were coming out of the wood. It was in need of a makeover, but it had potential.



Fortunately, Matt was able to borrow a belt sander from some of the maintenance staff over in the Sign Shop at the Central Maintenance Complex and sand down the splinters protruding from the wall. He hammered the protruding nails back in and added some screws for structural security. The next step was to find an appropriate paint that could handle the Austin heat and weathering. Another trip to the Maintenance Complex was made and again the maintenance staff came through! The wall was painted Forest Green and left to dry. The following day the climbing holds were installed that we had purchased along with the rock climbing gear and just like that, the City of Austin had a Bouldering Wall! The set routes (often called boulder problems) were challenging for the kids but were not too difficult like the boulder problems in the Greenbelt. The kids couldn't wait to get back on the wall and try the problems again and again. Matt talked about appropriate spotting techniques (how to help the kids land safely when they fall) and he also taught the kids some cool bouldering techniques which helped several of them reach the top of the wall. Thank you to all the city staff that stepped in to help get us supplies also a special thanks to Park Ranger Matt for all your hard work!



NFPBA Event

The Park Rangers recently spoke with the students from the National Forum for Black Public Administrators organization about careers opportunities with the Park Ranger program. Guest speakers from Forestry and Community Gardens also joined in and gave insightful presentations. After the conclusion of the presentations, Park Rangers Julie Webber and David Papke led the students on an interactive tour of the ANSC animal enclosures. The students were excited to see the animals and to learn interesting facts about them. We look forward to working with NFPBA next year!





Astronomy!



Outdoor education activities can take many forms – sports, exhibits, interpretive programming – but almost universally neglect half of the natural world: the sky. The night sky is filled with wonders and constantly changing, and is accessible even from a light – polluted city like Austin. Austin’s Park Ranger Astronomy program is using large, mobile telescopes to bring the wonders of the universe to neighborhoods throughout the city.

On cloudless nights throughout the year, Park Rangers with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department set up a large telescope in Butler Park. Over the course of the evening, the Rangers take participants of all ages on a tour of the visible objects in the night sky, while at the same time providing interpretive presentations about the science, history, and cultural significance of what we see in the night sky. On a typical night participants may begin with a breathtaking view of the mountains and craters of the moon, take a tour through the solar system, and end looking at the faint light of a galaxy millions of light-years away.

Starting in December 2013, the Park Ranger Astronomy Program will be bringing programs to neighborhood parks throughout the city, as well as in Butler Park. On cloudless Friday and Saturday nights, Rangers will be out and ready to share the final frontier with you and your family! Schedule details have yet to be determined; however this information will be available both in this newsletter and on the Parks and Recreation Department website.

As the bright stars of winter rise earlier and the nights grow longer, why not share an evening with the Park Rangers and learn about the second half of the great outdoors?

The night sky is a constantly changing place, with new objects coming into view every month. Here’s a brief preview of the next few months in the Austin sky:

November – Venus dominates the evening sky, standing out as a bright “Star” in the hours after sunset. At around 11 pm, Jupiter begins to rise in the east.

December – As the bright stars of Orion, Gemini, and Taurus fill the evening sky, Jupiter becomes a more dominant presence, rising in the east as early as 6pm. Venus begins to disappear in the Sun’s glare.

January – The cold nights of January will be highlighted by the “Opposition” of Jupiter – the planet’s closest approach



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The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require assistance for participation in our programs or use of our facilities, please call (512) 974-6700.



Park Ranger Cadet Program

The Park Rangers have recently partnered with students and teachers from Aikens High School in order to establish a Park Ranger Cadet program. This program provides students the opportunity to work with the Park Rangers and to learn about topics such as outdoor education, outreach, enforcement and customer service. On October 25th the Cadets met with the Park Rangers as well as staff from the Camacho Recreation center so that they could conduct water testing on the Lady Bird Lake. Cadets began the day by kayaking across the lake where they met up with scientist Andrew Clamann from Watershed Protection. Andrew spoke with the students about urban riparian ecology, insects, plants, pollution, water quality and nutrients. After the presentation, the students kayaked back to Camacho Rec. Center where they participated in team building activities, water testings' and learned more about the Park Ranger Program. We are proud to have the opportunity to work with these bright young adults and look forward to future events!



