



Great Basin
National Park Foundation

Annual Report

2021



A Silver State Superstar

From 13,063 foot Wheeler Peak to sage-covered foothills 7,000 feet below, Great Basin National Park is a place that defies description. The only national park residing entirely within the state of Nevada - Great Basin National Park is a wilderness of solitude, diversity, and surprise. From the deepest caves to the highest peak, oldest trees to the darkest skies, this is a place where you can connect with the earth and the heavens all at once.



Guardian Impact

In 2021, 84% of our budget was invested in Park interpretation, preservation, and education. In-kind contributions of partners and volunteers equal approximately \$100,000 more in direct investment. Individual Guardians contributed 50% more in 2021 than 2020. Increasing individual and business giving is a priority in our capacity building campaign focused on creating sustainable support for Great Basin National Park. Partnerships and innovative solutions have ensured that Great Basin Guardians make a great impact even with a relatively small budget.



Great Basin Guardians

Great Basin National Park Foundation works to preserve, enhance, and protect Great Basin National Park for present and future generations. As the official nonprofit partner of the Park, we can only fulfill our mission because of Great Basin Guardians like you. Guardian support of innovative research, dynamic educational programs, and needed park infrastructure improvements, enhance the Park visitor's experience and help to inspire a new generation of Great Basin National Park stewards.

Cover Photo: National Parks Services (NPS)





Photo: NPS

Great Basin Education

Great Basin National Park has many unique resources- hardy ecosystems with endemic species and the oldest trees on the planet, tangled underground caverns, a remote wild beauty and the darkest of skies. The Park has asked Great Basin National Park Foundation to take the lead in developing and implementing educational programs that connect young and old, both in the Park and throughout the Great Basin region, to this singular place.

In 2021, we supported three Scientist in the Park interns, one Reach for the Stars intern, and an artist-in-residence. Together, they helped the Park reach over 8,000 people through astronomy programs, cave tours, and elementary through high school programs. We updated the Junior Ranger booklet, supported the annual citizen science BioBlitz, and the annual Astronomy Festival. We also supported wayside exhibits in the Alpine Lakes Loops, Bristlecone Pine trail, and Mather Overlook, and secured a permanent backcountry repeater for the Park to ensure visitor safety.



Photo: NPS

Dark Skies and Wonder

Known for having the darkest, clearest, and most stable skies in the contiguous U.S., Great Basin National Park is a gateway to the cosmos. This is a precious marvel, as 80% of Americans cannot view the Milky Way from where they live due to light pollution. Great Basin National Park Foundation helps to connect thousands of youth and adults to Great Basin's spectacular dark skies each year through telescope viewing, research, education, and outreach.

When we douse the light, a child can discover that the universe is lit by lamps humans did not switch on, deepened by distances we cannot fathom, moved by forces we do not understand...Mystery opens the human spirit to what is beyond it...Darkness feeds a sense of wonder, a young person's great gift –astonishment at a world alive with marvels.”

— Gift of Darkness, Kathleen Dean Moore



Photo: John Vermette - johnsastrophotos.com

Dark Skies, Bright Minds

The Great Basin Observatory, the only research-grade astronomical observatory located in a U.S. National Park – celebrated its 5th anniversary in the summer of 2021. To help celebrate, students who study double star systems, black holes, and cataclysmic variables came to the Park to share their research with the public (it was the first Park visit for all of them). Since the GBO is in the darkest of places but operated completely remotely, it allows students from universities and high schools in urban light-polluted regions of Nevada, Utah, and California to peer deep into the universe.

This year we created a short planetarium film about the GBO and Great Basin dark skies, including how and why to preserve them. We also created a semester-long online module for educators to work with high school students to conduct double star research and produce peer reviewed academic papers. We brought youth from the Ely Shoshone tribe to their first Great Basin National Park Astronomy Festival. And we facilitated another successful STARFEST research symposium.

We installed a new high-resolution spectrometer at the GBO which can be used to look for exo-planets and even extra-terrestrial life, and we helped spot several large asteroids for NASA/SETI. For the third year in a row, the annual GBO scholarship was awarded to a talented female undergraduate (Ava Covington, University of Nevada, Reno). As it turns out, female students are the majority of GBO researchers.



Photo: Gretchen Baker

Legacy Guardians

Long-time board member Michael Niggli announced this summer that he and his wife, Linda, are committing a \$250,000 legacy gift to Great Basin National Park Foundation. This planned gift is the first of its kind to support Great Basin National Park and the Great Basin Observatory.

“Linda and I wanted to announce this gift to inspire a community of long-term thinking and commitment towards the Park. Whether gifts are large or modest, together as a community we can ensure Great Basin continues to have the darkest skies, most engaging educational programs, and the best research grade telescope. I feel great knowing my gift will support into perpetuity a place I treasure.”



Thank You 2021 Great Basin National Park Guardians

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Great Basin National Park Foundation

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