



Cherry Springs State Park, a Stargazer's Paradise

Cherry Springs State Park is home to Pennsylvania's first Official Dark Sky Park, home of The Black Forest Star Party, and the flagship park for The National Public Observatory's Stars-n-Parks Program. In fact, the dark skies program at Cherry Springs is so successful that the Federal Park System has used it as a model for dark sky preservation.

The Dark Sky

The absence of light pollution and the extreme darkness of the night sky have astronomers proclaiming Cherry Springs to be the best choice in the northeastern United States for amateur stargazing. Cherry Springs State Park boasts a 300 by 600 foot observation field with a 360-degree view of the sky set atop a mountain.

Under ideal conditions, visitors can see over 6,000 stars blanketing the sky from horizon to horizon, and see near space objects like satellites, iridium flares, and the planets and moons of our solar system. Here, the Milky Way is a distinct, broad band that crosses the sky. Distant galaxies, colorful nebulae, comets and other deep space objects are often seen and photographed at Cherry Springs. The broad, dark observation field is a great place to view periodic phenomena like meteor showers and Aurora Borealis.

In April of 2000, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources recognized the dark night sky as an important resource and designated Cherry Springs State Park as the first Dark Sky Park.

Stars-N-Parks Program

The National Public Observatory (NPO) offers free, monthly public stargazing programs called the Stars-N-Parks program. This program seeks to protect the night skies in and around America's public parks, to bring public education astronomy programming to those parks and to promote eco-tourism at parks all over the United States. With much of our population now living under severe light pollution, few understand or appreciate the wonders of a dark country sky and for visitors this protected public park will offer the night sky, as it should be seen. Volunteer educators from the National Public Observatory set up telescopes for public viewing and lecture on the wonders of the night sky. Weather permitting, these programs are offered during the dark of the moon, weekend nights from May through October.

Contact: NPO's Stars-n-Parks Program Coordinator – Thom Bemus, 2003 DCNR Volunteer of the Year, Phone: 716.386.7150 E-mail: bemusabord@highstream.net

Black Forest Star Party

This annual stargazing weekend is held each September and is sponsored by the Central Pennsylvania Observers. There are guest lectures, public stargazing and astronomy equipment vendors. Hundreds of astronomers attend this extremely popular event.

Cherry Springs State Park

Cherry Springs State Park is located about 30 miles south of the New York/Pennsylvania border, due north of State College deep in the midst of the Susquehannock State Forest. There are few places east of the Mississippi, which offer these dark pristine skies, which makes this park so rare and treasured.

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or call Melissa Brabender at 717-234-3055.**