



# The Bear Claw

The Sandia Mountain Natural History Center Newsletter

The mission of SMNHC is to work within New Mexico communities to develop an ecologically literate citizenry.

Volume 3, Issue 7 - November 2008

## More Awards Bestowed Upon SMNHC

In July of this year, one of our long time volunteers, Daniel Bush, was nominated for and awarded the "Roger Tory Peterson Nature Education Achievement Award" in recognition of his boundless energy and generous offering of time. Daniel volunteers at the SMNHC both on the school hikes and on various work projects. In addition, he often travels with the SMNHC staff doing outreach for natural science education at various schools around the state.

In November, Julie Hall, our APS teacher, was recognized by the

New Mexico Environmental Education Association (EEANM) and received their "Outstanding Environmental Educator Award" for ability and commitment to environmental education.

These awards reflect the high standards of commitment and ability of all of the instructors and volunteers that spend the day with our school children and their chaperones at the SMNHC.

## In the spotlight...

For the first time at the SMNHC there is confirmation of a ringtail visiting one of the springs on Mud Spring Loop. Motion sensor cameras have been placed at two watering holes near the center. The cameras have given staff valuable insight into life on the trails when no one is looking. The ringtail is not alone out there, the cameras have caught plenty of squirrels, bears, grey foxes, hawks, turkeys, coyotes, deer, skunks, owls, bats and what we think is a fuzzy mountain lion butt. The data collected over the years will give SMNHC instructors first-hand knowledge of wildlife patterns and habits that can be passed on to thousands of students and visitors. Starting in spring, we will have a SMNHC blog to post the photos on for everyone to see.



**FUN FACT: ONLY 3 ANIMALS HAVE BLUE TONGUES; THE BLACK BEAR, CHOW DOG AND THE BLUE-TONGUED LIZARD.**

## Upcoming from SMNHC: December

The education page will now be a separate newsletter released quarterly, while the Bear Claw returns to being issued monthly. Its new name and form debuts this winter.

## Sierra Club Funds the Center's Traveling Ecology Field Program

SMNHC has been awarded a \$35,000 grant by the Sierra Club to support the SMNHC's Traveling Ecology Field Program.

The field program is an innovative, four-hour program that introduces students across the state to their local ecosystem. Trained naturalists from the center meet students in a local "wild area" such as a state park or national forest and lead them on a hands-on, discovery-based journey into the natural world around them. The goal of this free, standards-based program is to introduce over 2,500 students to the beauty and wonder of New Mexico, while instilling an appreciation for the intricacies and interconnectedness of our ecosystems.

"The Sierra Club rarely sponsors other organization's efforts, but we feel the SMNHC's program is unique because of the opportunity it provides to connect our children with the outdoors, contributing to their cognitive, physical, mental, and emotional

well being," stated Michael Casaus, the Sierra Club's NM Field Director.

The SMNHC is a featured partner in the Sierra Club's nation-wide initiative, "Building Bridges to the Outdoors." The Sierra Club began awarding its "Building Bridges to the Outdoors" grants to NM organizations in 2007 in response to recent studies suggesting that outdoor programs can reduce the incidence of childhood obesity and the effects of attention deficit disorder. Recent studies have also shown that: ...young people, especially minorities and underserved youth, who participate in outdoor educational programs, improve their academic performance, develop leadership skills, gain respect for themselves and the environment, and develop positive relationships with their peers and community members.—  
[www.sierraclub.org/youth/newmexico](http://www.sierraclub.org/youth/newmexico)

According to Dr. Spencer Lucas, New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science Interim Executive Director, "The role of the Sandia Mountain Natural History Center in environmental education for New Mexicans continues to grow in importance, and we are grateful for the support of the Sierra Club in helping the Center accomplish its mission."

By the end of the school year, SMNHC staff will have traveled thousands of miles delivering the Ecology Field Program to elementary-aged students in New Mexico from Roswell to Raton and Silver City to Chama. The beauty and ecological diversity of New Mexico is a special gift that the SMNHC and the Sierra Club hope all New Mexico students will get the chance to enjoy.

The Sandia Mountain Natural History Center (SMNHC) is a natural history and environmental education facility located on the east side of the Sandia Mountains in Cedar Crest, New Mexico. The SMNHC is owned by Albuquerque Public Schools and operated by the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science.



Sandia Mountain Natural History Center, C/O NMMNHS, 1801 Mountain Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 87104

Phone: (505) 281-5259 Fax: (505) 286-5433

For more information about the Center, visit our website at: [www.nmnaturalhistory.org/SMNHC](http://www.nmnaturalhistory.org/SMNHC)

