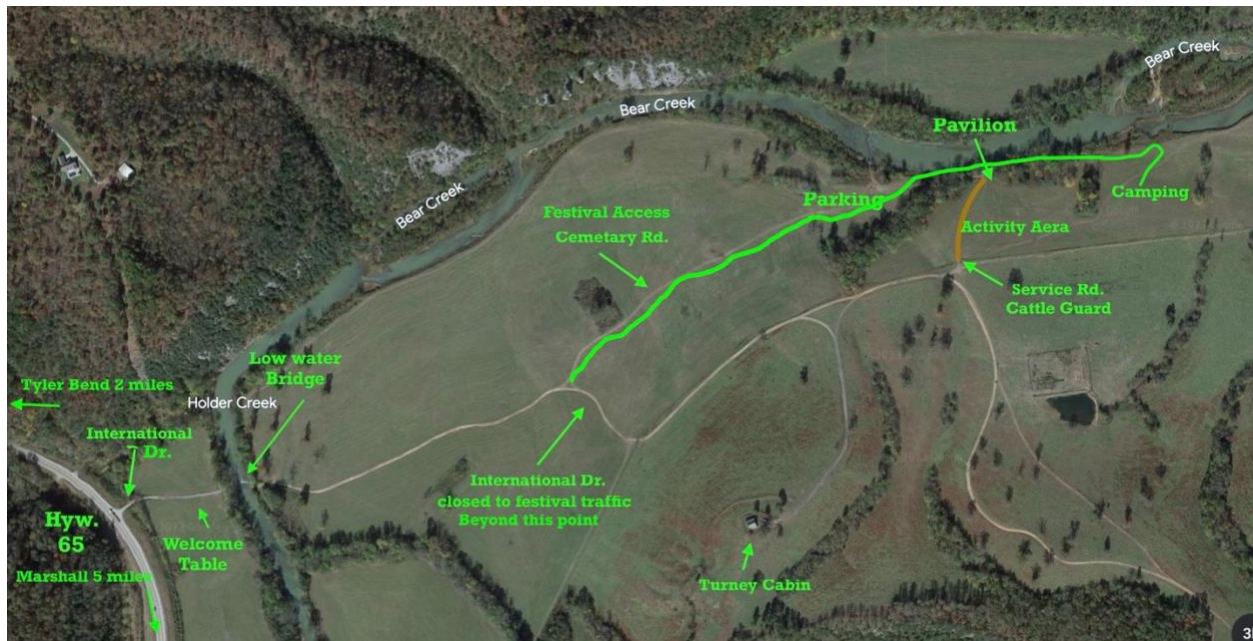


2023 Festival Guide & Program Bear Creek, September 14 - 16

(May 15th draft – subject to change, subscribe to [Dark-Sky Event News](#) to stay abreast)

LOCATION

The festival will take place off US Highway 65, a few miles south of the Buffalo National River, along Bear Creek, on part of 1200 acres owned by Bear Creek Log Cabins. The turn-off is on an unpaved one-lane county road, “**International Drive,**” and will be well-marked with feather flags. Most Festival Activities take place along Bear Creek near the pavilion. A more detailed map of the activity area will be provided onsite and in later editions of this guide.



ACTIVITIES

The daytime programming will include information tables, workshops, lectures, and real-time telescopic solar images. Children’s activities will include a celestial art contest, stomp rockets, giant bubble blowing, and STEM demonstrations involving fluid dynamics, energy, and geology. See the schedule below for more details. Scouts can participate in a program that leads to the astronomy badge and also a special event Dark-Sky badge.

The centerpiece of the event is the nighttime program. Beginning with a guided naked-eye tour of the summer Milky Way and a “star party” in which telescope volunteers from several states share views of the major planets and deep-sky objects - galaxies, open clusters, globular clusters, nebulae, stars that are dying, and being born. Participants with binoculars can find and observe a list of prominent celestial objects in a [Celestial Scavenger Hunt](#).

If it is cloudy, we will not despair, as there will be engaging alternative programming lined up for each night.

ACCOMMODATIONS – WHERE TO STAY

Semi-primitive camping is available on-site that can be reserved in the Festival Store during the [Festival Registration Process](#). \$35 per vehicle for up to 6 persons for the three nights of the event, or \$30 for just Friday and Saturday (discounts available for ANSA members and event Volunteers). There is potable water, porta-potties, and electricity at the pavilion. Tents, vans, or small campers (A-frames, popups, and teardrops) are allowed. [Tyler Bend campground](#) is only a few miles from the event and boasts flush toilets and showers. Grinder's Ferry, also a park service site, provides free primitive camping with vault toilet facilities. For more plush accommodations, there are other campgrounds, RV parks, cabins, bunkhouses, and vacation rentals in the area. Visit the Festival webpage section on [where to stay, eat, and other things to see](#).



PREPARATION

Dress warmer than you think. People so rarely spend time out of doors after dark anymore that they fail to realize how much colder it feels when the sun goes down. Consider bringing a thermos or cup, as hot beverages and snacks will be available at the pavilion, where there may also be a community campfire, depending on the weather.

It takes twenty minutes or more to **fully dark adapt your eyes**. Exposure to white light will erase dark adaption in a flash. So, white light flashlights,

cameras with flashes, and digital devices, unless used in a night vision mode (red screen), are not to be used. Unless you want to use a sky chart or record observations, none of which is essential to enjoy the constellation tour or the star party, you can do without a flashlight. But, if you want one, it needs to be either red or amber in color. These can be readily purchased online or in some larger retail outlets. Arts & craft stores typically carry a red film that you can apply to a regular flashlight. However, the easiest solution is to buy one of the little keychain flashlights in the [Festival store](#), which comes with a neck lanyard. You will want to purchase these when you register for pickup at the event, as we will not stock many extras to sell at the event.

Parking – Whether camping on-site or commuting to the event from somewhere else, please plan to arrive, if at all possible, well before the evening activities are scheduled to begin at 6:45 PM. This is especially important if you have not registered or have merchandise to pick up. Late arrivers will face a skeleton welcome crew, experience less event guidance, and have less convenient parking, not to mention that crossing the low-water bridge will seem more

interesting. If camping on site, late arrival will prove particularly problematic as, barring an emergency, no vehicle travel will be allowed in or out of the camping area after 8:00 PM.

Pets – Sorry, if we allowed pets, dogs would have to be on a leash, and dogs on a leash and telescopes don't mix. So pets are not allowed.

Observing on your own - Binoculars are great for sky-watching (see the binocular guide download on the festival webpage). After the program, they could be used with a sky chart, Learn the Constellations Booklet, or a smartphone app (if it has a night vision feature) to do your own exploring or to participate in the celestial scavenger hunt. The only telescopes allowed on the field during the star party program are those of volunteers who are sharing views with the public. Go here to register as a volunteer.

Anyone planning to observe into the evening may benefit from some ground blanket, sleeping bag, mat, or reclining chair. If you like, you can climb to the top of the ridge where the Turney Cabin is located to observe an open horizon.

Programming for Scouts - There is a special program for scouts to achieve astronomy-related merit badges for Girl and Boy Scouts, as well as a special Dark-Sky Event Patch. Part of the program will occur at the pavilion at the Buffalo National River's Tyler Bend campground, two miles north of Bear Creek. More details are available on the Festival website next to the link to this document.



Campers – Campers will be able to park next to their camping site. Small campers (A-frames, pop-ups, teardrops) and tents only. Driveways lanes will be marked. These will be shown on the activity area map when it becomes available. Park on either side of the drive at ~14' intervals, placing a tent or camper beyond your vehicle. There is water, electricity, two large trash cans, and a grill at the pavilion. However, given the number of likely campers, you may want to bring a portable cook stove, plan to eat cold, eat in town, or visit the food truck. There will also be portable toilets located in several locations on-site for campers and visitors. There is more information for campers on the registration page, which you should already have seen. <https://darkskyarkansas.org/festival-guest-registration/>

Program Outline (Subject to change, later editions will be more detailed. Subscribe to Dark-Sky Event News to Stay abreast of updates.)

Thursday:

6:00 – Welcome & Merchandise pickup desk opens (See map)

6:45 – Welcome and door prizes, along with important information

7:00 – Presentation, topic to be decided

7:30 – Transition to telescope show and tell (If cloudy, programming will remain at the pavilion)
8:00 – Constellation Tour (nautical twilight ends ~8:12)
8:30 – Telescope observing begins (astronomical twilight ends ~8:42)

Friday:

Pre-event Activities:

The area abounds with potential activities that are not part of the festival. See the Searcy County Activity Guide for inspiration and the Dining Guide for meal inspiration. In addition, you might inquire about tubing at Grinder’s Ferry or Shine Eye. For an eye-opening insight into how settlers lived in the Ozarks not very long ago, visit the Collier Homestead at Tyler Bend, one of the last homesteads grants.

8:00 – 11:00 AM – Nature Hike, North Central Arkansas Master Naturalist. Gather at the NCAMN Table at 8:00.

Festival Activities:

3:00 – Welcome/merchandising desk opens.

3:15 – The Sun, Real-time solar telescope views.

4:00 – Tabling (“tables” may be help-yourself unstaffed sources of information, continuously staffed or periodically staffed for topic-specific workshops. See workshops below.)

- About library telescopes
- Nature at Night
- Touch, examined, and learn about meteorites
- Observing Solar Eclipses
- Birds safety
- Bird migration, the light pollution hazard
- Celestial scavenger hunt
- Responsible lighting
- NWA STEM
- Explorer Scientific telescopes and related equipment
- Wild Ones and Monarch Butterfly Conservation Partnership
- Maybe more to come

4:00 – Activities, adults and children. Note: underlined activities will not run continuously.
Please check in at the associated table well before the time indicated to sign-up.

Photo contest display and voting

A real-time solar observing scope

Children’s celestial drawing contest

Giant bubble blowing

Solar-cooked marshmallows & Smores

Hands-on science activities

Water Rockets

Crater modeling in clay

Scale solar system

All about Library Telescopes

Responsible lighting, certifying your home lighting as night sky friendly (ANSA)

Citizen Science project, measuring light pollution and reporting it to the Globe at Night project.

5:45 – Dinner break, food is on your own

6:45 – Welcome and door prizes (important information)

7:15 – Presentation to be decided

8:00 – Transition to observing area, telescope show and tell (If cloudy, programming will be at the pavilion)

8:15 – Constellation Tour (nautical twilight ends ~8:12)

8:30 – Telescope observing begins (astronomical twilight ends ~8:42)

Saturday

Off-site - See Friday's list.

9:00 – 11:00 AM – Nature Hike, North Central Arkansas Master Naturalist. Gather at the NCAMN Table at 9:00.

Tyler Bend Pavilion Campground:

10:00 – Girl and Boy Scout Astronomy Merit Badge program at Tyler Bend Pavilion

Bear Creek Festival:

1:00 PM Welcome/Merchandising desk opens along with solar telescope.

2:00 – Tabling (“tables” may be help-yourself unstaffed sources of information, continuously staffed or periodically staffed for topic-specific workshops. See workshops below.)

About library telescopes

Nature at Night

Touch, examined, and learn about meteorites

Observing Solar Eclipses

Birds safety

Bird migration, the light pollution hazard

Wildlife and light pollution

Celestial scavenger hunt

Responsible lighting, certifying your home lighting

NWAS STEM (fluid dynamics, electricity, and geology)

Explorer Scientific telescopes and related equipment

Wild Ones and Monarch Butterfly Conservation Partnership

About library telescopes

Maybe more to come

2:00 PM – Activities, adults, and children. Note: underlined activities will not run continuously. Please check in at the associated table well before the time indicated to sign-up.

Photo contest display and voting (AOPC)(time to be determined)
SpaceX nerf football distance and accuracy by age group (NCAMN)(3:15 – 4:15)
Solar scope
Children’s celestial drawing contest (Katherine Norwood)(3:15 – 4:30)
Giant bubble blowing
Solar-cooked marshmallows & Smores
Hands-on science activities
Water Rockets
Crater modeling in clay (3:15 – 4:30)
Scale solar system (2:00 – 3:15)
All about Library Telescopes (time to be determined)
Citizen Science project, measuring light pollution and reporting it to the Globe at Night project.

2:00 – Presentations

2:30 – Welcome and intro to the Festival

3:00 – Planning for and observing a solar eclipse

3:30 – Light Pollution, an overview of the harms and solutions

4:00 - break

4:15 – The Birth and Death of Stars

4:45 – Light pollution birds and wildlife

5:15 – What’s up tonight (Rocky)

5:45 - Dinner, food on your own

6:45 – Welcome and door prizes, photo contest winners (important information)

7:15 – Unfolding the Universe with NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope – Dr. Amber Straughn

8:00 – Transition to observing area, telescope show and tell

8:15 – Constellation Tour begins (nautical twilight ends ~8:12) (If cloudy, programming will be at the pavilion)

8:30 – Telescope observing begins (astronomical twilight ends ~8:42)

Possible Cloudy Night Program

Music

DIY planisphere (Library Telescopes)

The Resurrection of a Giant Refractor

The Night Sky Photo – What, when, where, and how I took these images.

Learning the Constellations

How Stars are named

A Very Brief History of Observational Astronomy
telescope types and choosing one.

Astrophotography with your phone

Moth count, spider, and glow worm hunt

Camping cooking class.

A dump cake or Dutch oven contest

Observing meteor showers

Sunday 17th – wake up, pack up, clean up.

THE END

A note about Clouds

It is a bummer when clouds attend a star party - they are not invited. September and early October are the least cloudy time of the year at night here in Arkansas, but it can still happen. So we have alternative programming for cloudy nights, and the daytime programs are not affected, so the event will continue, and we will still have fun and learn. In a way, our volunteers will be even more critical on a cloudy night, so plan to stay, stars or no stars.