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Rio Grande Nature Center
State Park
2901 Candelaria NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107

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In the Visitor Center, you will find exhibits describing the bosque and its plants, geology, and animals. The Discovery Room offers hands-on exhibits for children, including footprints in a sandbox and a rubbing table. The Observation Room overlooks a three-acre pond offering up-close encounters with ducks, geese, turtles, and dragonflies in sight and sound. It also houses an inhouse-only reference library with publications on birds, herbs, trees, and other aspects of natural history. At the Nature Center front desk are park trail guides, binoculars, and field guides to borrow.

Opened in July 2011, the Nature Center's \$1.2 million education building offers 5,500 square feet of new space to meet the needs of 130,000 children and adults who visit the park each year. In addition, A showcase of green building techniques and features, the multifunctional building houses offices and classrooms/meeting rooms for talks, public screenings, and special events as well as student activities. Heated and cooled with high efficiency rooftop photo-voltaic power panels, the structure is a net-zero energy user, generating as much energy as it consumes. Cisterns store storm water for restrooms and for irrigation of native plants; building materials include adobe, renewable straw and bamboo, certified sustainable wood, and recycled

Admission
\$3 per vehicle
\$15 per bus

Leashed dogs in the park are allowed **ONLY** on the exterior path bordered by a fence that extends west from Candelaria NW. (guide dogs excepted).

Remember to "pooper-scoop"

Hours:

Monday - Sunday

Gates open 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Visitor Center open 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day

The RGNCSP is one of 35 parks in the New Mexico State Park system. To view the State Parks' web site, [click here](#).

Your Nature Center!

Located in the bosque, or cottonwood forest, and by the wetland bordering the Rio Grande, the Nature Center is the focus of the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park. A refuge from the city life of Albuquerque, the park offers opportunities to experience 270 acres of woods, meadows and farmland flourishing with native grasses, wildflowers, willows and cottonwoods.



Porcupine in winter

components. Located east of the entrance road, the half-acre site, previously bare dirt where a house once stood, will create new habitat for wildlife.

Outside, the Nature Center has interpretive nature trails and demonstration gardens to explore. The Riverwalk Trail is an easy one-mile loop through the bosque and along the river, passing through open meadows and heavily wooded areas. The Bosque Loop Trail, about 0.8 mile, is an easy walk through the bosque with a spur to the river. Reserved for education and research, the southside Discovery Pond invites visiting school children to sample aquatic life in hand and under the microscope.

Numerous birds migrating along the Central Flyway stop by the park, while other birds are permanent residents. Among those likely to be observed in winter are waterfowl, such as ring-necked ducks and American wigeons; northern harriers, ruby-crowned kinglets, hermit thrushes, chipping sparrows, dark-eyed juncos, western meadowlarks, sandhill cranes, and bald eagles also touch down in winter. Summer migrants include warblers, western meadowlarks, black-chinned hummingbirds, black phoebes, and western kingbirds.

Other birds often seen at the Nature Center include Cooper's hawks, great-horned owls, American coots, Canada geese, ring-necked pheasants, mallards, wood ducks, black-capped chickadees, great blue herons, northern flickers, and both downy and hairy woodpeckers.



Reptile, insect, and mammal inhabitants of the park include turtles, toads, lizards, bull snakes, native bees, butterflies, moths, dragonflies, beavers, muskrats, porcupines, cottontail rabbits, pocket gophers, rock squirrels, and coyotes.

Candelaria Wetland

Opened in 2001, the Candelaria Wetland is an important new outdoor arena for Albuquerque, the Nature Center, and the Rio Grande Valley. This nine-acre amphitheater of land and water is attracting performers from near and far. Located east of the Nature Center and north of the parking lot, this stretch of valley land was once an uncultivated section of Candelaria Farms, a dry, overgrown, scraggly meadow of tough grasses rooted in thick, fine



sand below a thin surface of clay. Reborn as Candelaria Wetland, the area now includes two ponds offering five surface acres of water and four more acres of meadow for visiting waterfowl and shorebirds; some, like snow geese and ibis, are first-time visitors to the Nature Center. Immigrant mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and arthropods, all current residents of the Middle Rio Grande Valley, have moved in, too. Planted with 98 species of native aquatic and riparian vegetation, Candelaria Wetland restores habitat once common in the Albuquerque reach of the Rio Grande, wetland rich in plants and animals that has been reduced since 1935 by development and agriculture to less than 20% of its former self. This \$155,000 project is a cooperative,

continuing effort by the city's Open Space Division, Hydra Aquatics, Inc., New Mexico State Parks, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, General Electric Co., and the Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center.

One important dimension of the project is data collection about the plants and animals that are moving, and will move, into and through the area. This research will continue through all seasons for many years to come. What plants and animals have colonized the wetland? How do they interact? How will their status and interactions change over time?

REMEMBER!!!

The value of the Rio Grande Nature Center is in its living occupants — from dragonfly to toad to crane to cottonwood. Listen, look, feel and touch, but be careful to respect the vegetation by staying on the trails. Feel free to take photos and leave behind only a desire to return.

Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center
344-7240

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