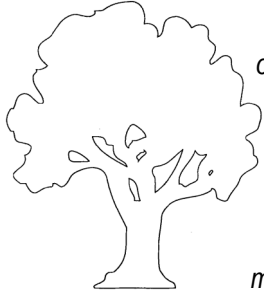


**Welcome to the
Rio Grande Nature Center State Park!
You are in a special place - home to
many plants and animals.**



*This brochure points
out a few of the special
features of the park.*

*As you walk around
the park, slow down,
look, listen, and let
yourself feel what it
means to be connected
with Nature.*

Did you notice the big, beautiful old trees? These are Cottonwood trees, the defining tree species in the forest along the Rio Grande. This riverside forest is locally known by the Spanish word for forest, *Bosque* (pronounced *boh-skay*).

You are standing in the Rio Grande Rift! A rift is a geological feature that forms by the pulling apart and thinning of the Earth's crust. The Rio Grande (river) exists because of the rift. Most river valleys are eroded or cut by the rivers that flow within them. Unlike most rivers, the ancestral Rio Grande did not erode the broad, flat valley through which it now flows. One to two million years ago, water flowed into the low areas caused by the rift. Without the rift, there would have been no Rio Grande and no Rio Grande bosque.

About the Park:

- The original Nature Center was completed in 1982.
- The Rio Grande *Nature Center* State Park is managed by New Mexico State Parks. Similar in name – but different - is the Rio Grande *Valley* State Park. Rio Grande *Valley* State Park refers to the forest along the Rio Grande and is managed by the City of Albuquerque.
- Management of the Park is authorized by a lease agreement between the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division (landowner) and the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, State Parks Division.
- We are a small park – about 38 acres.
- The Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization that supports the Park by providing volunteer staff and funds for park projects and programs.
- It all looks so natural now, but the ponds were constructed and much of the vegetation was planted in order to create wildlife habitat and to provide opportunities for education and visitor enjoyment.
- About 300 species of birds can be seen at the park. About 40 of these are year-round residents; the rest are seasonal visitors. Our two most popular year-round avian residents are the wood duck and the roadrunner, New Mexico's state bird.

"Take only memories ... Leave only footprints"

Day Use Fee = \$3.00 per vehicle (exact cash or check)
Friends of the RGNC permit holders and NM State Parks annual permit holders enter free with valid permit displayed.



**RIO GRANDE NATURE CENTER
STATE PARK**



**EXPLORE
THE PARK
GROUNDS**

Know Before You Go

Check out our website to find
out about changes
to hours and amenities

NMPARKS.COM

Park Phone 505-344-7240

2901 Candelaria NW

Albuquerque, NM 87107

Rio Grande Nature Center State Park's mission:

"To preserve and protect the Rio Grande Bosque, educate the public about the Rio Grande ecosystems, and to foster positive human interactions with those systems"



Gardens at RGNC are maintained by volunteers

Mariposaville Garden
(south of the parking lot, next to Group Shelter)

This garden was established in 2003 to promote pollinator awareness and conservation.

Look for roadrunners, squirrels, rabbits, and flowers that attract pollinators.

What are pollinators? Birds, bats, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, small mammals, and, bees are pollinators. They visit flowers to drink nectar or eat pollen. As they move from flower to flower, these animals carry some pollen with them and drop it off at the next flower that they visit. Pollinators help to fertilize flowers so that they can reproduce.

Take a closer look at the flowers here. Notice their various adaptations, including flower color, flower structure, fragrance, and making nectar and pollen. Look for long flower tubes for long tongues like hummingbirds and moths and landing platforms for bees and butterflies.

Did you notice the logs with holes drilled into them? This is our Bee Hotel - cozy cavities for bees to make their nests.

Nearly all our native bees are solitary or only semi-colonial, unlike honeybees which live in large colonies serving a single queen. Although they are numerous, honeybees are not native to the USA.



Wildlife Viewing Areas

Candelaria Viewing Platform (far east end of the parking lot, in the overflow parking lot) Platform looks out onto Candelaria Nature Preserve. Mid-September to end of March, this is often a good spot to see Sandhill Cranes.

- Which way is East? (Hint: in Albuquerque the mountains are always East)
- What do you think the weather is like on the mountain right now?
- Speculate: What wildlife do you think could be out in the fields? (hawk, coyote, Canada Goose)

Candelaria Wetlands Overlook (Northeast end of parking lot) Viewing Area includes "Naturalist Notebook" (tilework by a local artist). Common birds seen year-round include Canada Geese, Mallards, American Coots, Pied-billed Grebes, and Herons

- According to the tile journal, "*someone walked along here before I arrived*" To whom/what is the artist referring?
- List two year-round animal residents that are illustrated on the tiles.
- List three exotic trees illustrated on tile.
- What is the name of the artist who created this beautiful tilework?

Visitor Center Pond (just outside of the west door of the Visitor Center)
Animals commonly seen at this viewing area include: Wood Ducks, Ring-necked Ducks, Mallards, Canada Geese, Red-eared Sliders and Painted Turtles

- Check out the illustrations read the descriptions on the wall.
- What do you see on the pond today?
- Did you notice the sculpture above the Visitor Center door?



Native Plants Garden aka Main Garden (south of the Visitor Center)

This 1.5 acre demonstration garden was created in 1989. It features native and xeric vegetation, 200 individually labeled plants, bird feeding stations, bird baths, rock piles, mature trees, bee hotels, butterfly puddles, a fairy glade, and shaded benches.

The goals of this garden are to grow native plants for public education and enjoyment, provide habitats for native wildlife and offer a quiet, restful place for visitors.

- Look for birds, insects, mammals, amphibians and reptiles.
- Examine the interpretive signs throughout the garden to learn more.
- Locate the stone sculpture of a herp (amphibian or reptile). What type of animal is it?
- Quietly watch the feeders. How many wild animals can you see?

The set of benches under the big Cottonwood tree is referred to as the "Outdoor Classroom". This area is used for the education programs. Please - no eating in the Outdoor Classroom.

Keep wildlife healthy and trails and gardens free of trash. People food is not healthy for wildlife. The Group Shelter is the only location in the park for picnics. Tables and trash cans are provided.



Thank You