



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Capitol Reef National Park
HC 70 Box 15
Torrrey, UT 84775

435 425-3791 phone
435 425-3026 fax
www.nps.gov/care
www.facebook.com/CapitolReefNPS
www.twitter.com/CapitolReefNPS

Capitol Reef News Release

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Contact: Lori Rome, Chief of Interpretation
(435) 425-4110
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Capitol Reef National Park Receives International Dark Sky Designation



Chimney Rock at Capitol Reef. Jacob Frank

Capitol Reef was proclaimed in 1937 as a national monument and established as a national park in 1971. It is known for the spectacular geology of the Waterpocket Fold, diverse ecological habitats, cultural landscape and recreational opportunities, and as a refuge of pristine dark night skies.

Because of the darkness of the night sky and the park's commitment to reducing light pollution and educating the public about night skies, the park has become the seventh unit of the National Park Service (NPS) to achieve designation as an "International Dark Sky Park" by the International Dark-Sky Association. The designation of Capitol Reef National Park (CRNP) as a "Gold Tier" park, signifying the highest quality night skies, comes during International Dark Sky Week, an annual event to raise awareness of light pollution and celebrate the beauty of the night sky.

Over the past year, park staff has followed through on a commitment to attain this designation. The park conducted an outdoor lighting inventory, made improvements to outdoor light fixtures that increased the park's "night-friendly" lighting from 30 percent to 70 percent, completed night sky monitoring, and engaged the public and local community in dark-sky conservation. With this designation, CRNP begins the process to bring all of its outdoor lighting up to the new standard and continue to monitor night skies and provide outreach and education.

"This year's Heritage Star Festival on October 9 and 10 will celebrate the achievement of this International dark-sky designation and provide the public information about our conservation efforts, as well as encourage the appreciation of Capitol Reef's beautiful night skies," says Superintendent Leah McGinnis. The park was assisted by the NPS Natural Sounds & Night Skies Division, which provided technical support and helped the park build its popular public astronomy programs, and by the NPS Intermountain Regional Office, both in Colorado. Additional assistance with the project came from park partners—the Entrada Institute and Capitol Reef Natural History Association—as well as from volunteers.

CRNP's Gold Tier dark-sky designation exemplifies the efforts of the NPS to embrace "Starry Starry Night," an NPS initiative that the agency has pledged "to lead the way in protecting natural darkness as a precious resource and create a model for dark sky protection by establishing America's first Dark Sky

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Cooperative on the Colorado Plateau.” Other federal agencies, state parks, tribes, businesses and citizens are part of this cooperative, which emphasizes the economic benefits of sustainable tourism that dark skies can provide while maintaining the heritage, beauty and wonder of the stars above.

For more information about Capitol Reef National Park visit www.nps.gov/care. For more information about night skies in the national parks, visit www.nature.nps.gov/night. For more information about the International Dark Sky Association, visit www.darksky.org.

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