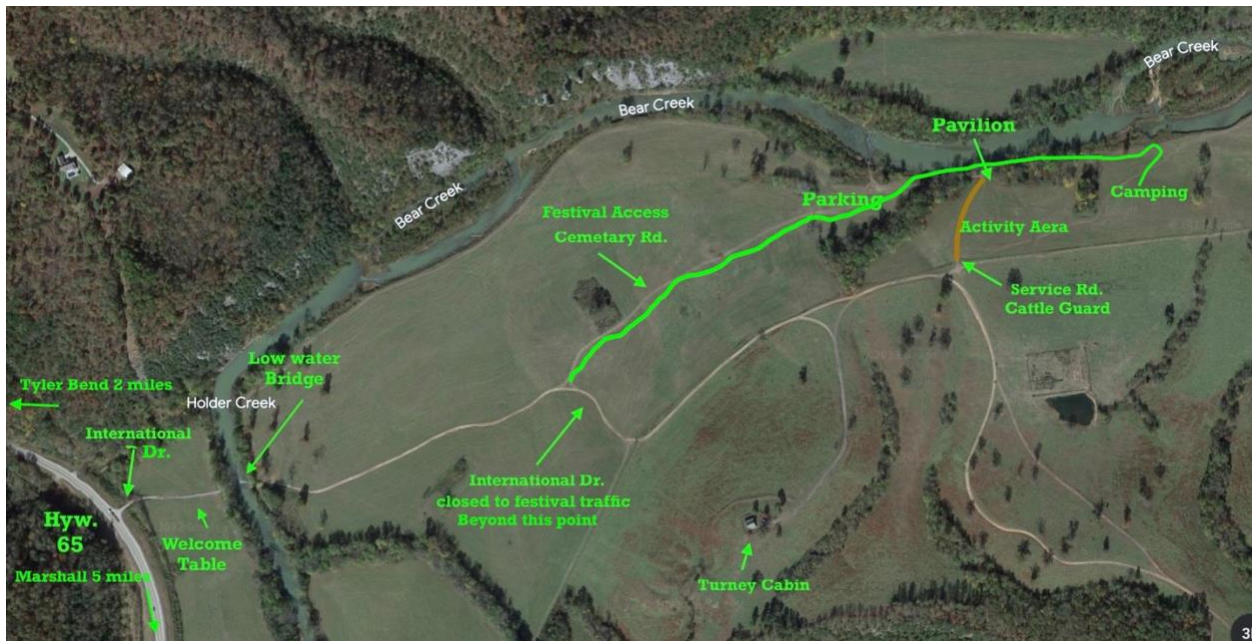


2024 Festival Guide & Program Bear Creek, September 26 - 28

(Initial 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 can be downloaded from the [Festival Website](#).



ACTIVITIES

In addition to the many activities the area offers, see [Places to Stay, Eat, and Visit](#), the **daytime programming** will include information tables, exhibits, workshops, lectures, children’s activities, and real-time telescopic solar images. Children’s activities include stomp rockets, giant bubble blowing, scale model solar system, and STEM demonstrations. See the schedule below for more details.

Boy and Girl Scouts can participate in a program that leads to an Astronomy Merit Badge and a unique ANSA Dark-Sky badge. To participate, download the Scout Program Guide document from the festival webpage. To participate, you must register for the Scout Program in addition

to [registering for the festival](#), or belong to a participating scout troop that has signed up using [this link](#).

The centerpiece of the Festival is the nighttime program, which includes guided naked-eye tours of the summer Milky Way and a “star party” in which telescope volunteers from several states share views of the major planets, galaxies, open clusters, globular clusters, nebulae, stars that are dying, and being born. In an optional Celestial Scavenger Hunt, participants with binoculars can challenge themselves to find and observe a list of prominent celestial objects. See the guides section of the Festival webpage for links to these.

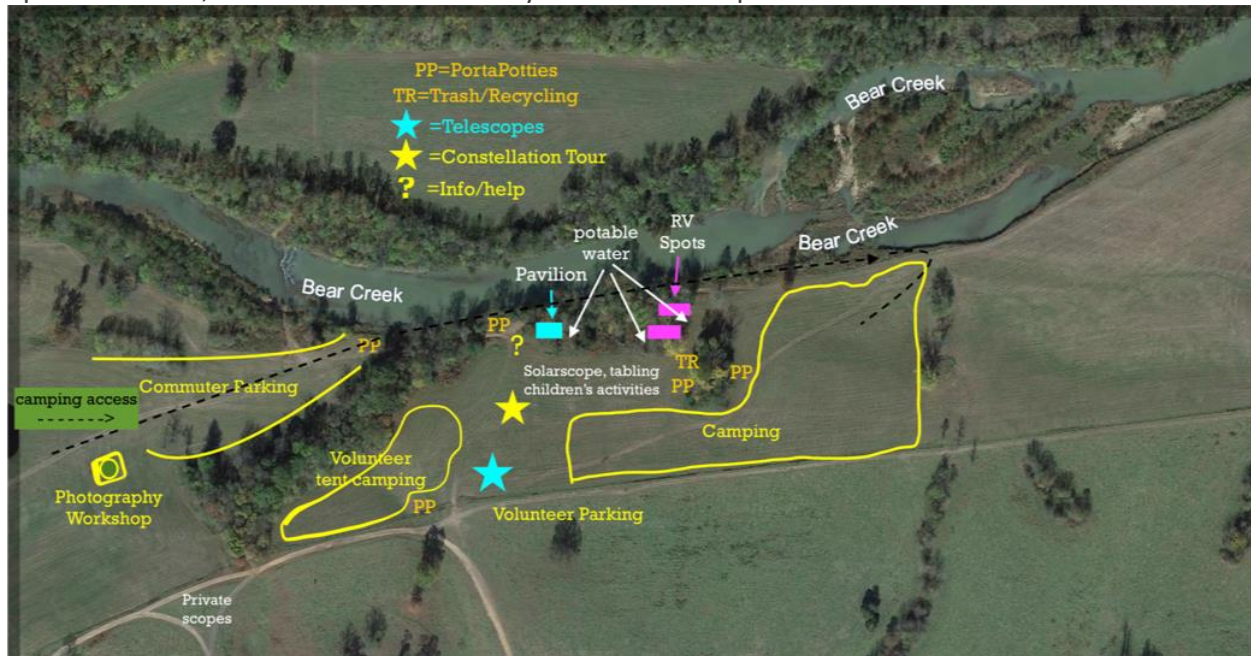


WEATHER

Any outdoor event is subject to weather impacts, and a star party requires clear skies. We schedule the event for three days during the time of year when the night sky is most likely to be clear to maximize our chances for one or more good nights. It is very important not to attempt to do your own forecasting. Normal forecasts are not granular enough to provide useful guidance for evening cloud cover. Leave it to the event team to provide forecasts during the event. Besides, if it is cloudy, there will be engaging alternative programming. Come, enjoy, and leave the weather worrying to us.

ACCOMMODATIONS – WHERE TO STAY

Bear Creek Cabins offers semi-primitive camping onsite adjacent to the festival activities in an open field area, as shown on this Activity Area Event Map.



Campers will be able to park next to their camping site. Small campers (A-frames, pop-ups, teardrops) and tents only. Driveway lanes will be marked. There is potable water, electricity at

the pavilion, trash, and recycling facilities, and porta-potties in a number of locations, as shown on the map above. Please recycle what you can.

Campsites can be reserved using links provided during the registration process. \$35 per passenger vehicle (\$25 for event volunteers) for up to six people. \$5.00 extra for small camping trailers (teardrops, popups, A-frames). More information for campers is provided in [the registration process](#).

Other area camping options include [Tyler Bend campground](#), only a few miles from the event; this US Park Service campground boasts flush toilets and showers. Grinder's Ferry, also a Park Service site, provides free primitive camping with vault toilet facilities.



The area has many other campgrounds, RV parks, cabins, bunkhouses, and vacation rentals. Visit the Festival webpage section on [where to stay, eat, and other things to see](#).

PREPARATION

Dress warmer than you think. People rarely spend time out of doors after dark fail to realize how much colder it feels when the sun goes down. Consider bringing a warm beverage.

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, the light must 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 **but** not before the welcome desk opens each day, as shown in the schedule below. 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 may seem more interesting in the dark. **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. If you arrive early, please park out of the way and drop into the welcome desk promptly when it opens.

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. Investigate whether there are some places to stay that welcome pets. There is an **exception for legitimate, properly trained service animals.** This does not apply to support animals. See the notes below for more information.

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. Anyone planning to observe into the evening may benefit from a 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.

Private Telescopes - People intending to observe with a telescope should be set up in the private scope area, not in the star party observing area. See the Activity Area Map. Only scopes sharing views with the public should be in the Star Party area.

Volunteers – Volunteers are needed for all manner of activities, helping on the welcome and information desks, helping with parking and merchandising, set up and taking up and taking down, and managing the A/V system. We can never have enough telescopes, and we are looking for someone to video some of the daytime presentations. Volunteers register free and get a 20% discount on camping and merchandise. [Go here to register as a volunteer.](#)

Food – There will be a ninety-minute break in the afternoon for dinner. If camping onsite, you may want to bring a portable cook stove. Otherwise, the options are to eat cold, eat in town, or visit the food truck if there is one onsite. The Festival website has a section on [where to eat and stay](#) with more information.

Problems, Questions & Emergencies – The welcome volunteers should be able to answer most questions when you arrive. Alternatively, check with the ANSA information table near the pavilion. In case of an emergency, contact 911.

Program Outline – The program below is subject to change. Later editions will be more detailed, so check back close to the event and subscribe to [Dark-Sky Event News](#) to stay abreast of updates.

Thursday

Thursday is an evening event only.

4:30 - Welcome & Information tents open. Pre-purchased Merchandise can be picked up at the information tent.

6:00 – Bring your food to the Pavilion for dinner and mingle with the volunteers.

7:00 – The program begins with a welcome, an intro to the Festival, a weather report, and a reminder about activities and how to take part in the nighttime events.

7:30 – How to measure sky glow with Globe-at-Night citizen science project.

7:45 - What's Up Tonight presentation – Rocky Togni.

8:30 – Constellation Tour, telescope observing, and nightscape photography workshop (if held on Thursday night, see workshop program) begins. (astronomical twilight ends ~8:42) (If cloudy, programming will be announced at the pavilion)

Friday

Pre-event Activities:

Off-site:

The area abounds with potential activities that are not part of the festival. See the [Searcy County Activity Guide](#) for activity 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.

On-site:

9:00 – 11:00 AM – Nature Hikes (wildflower walk, bird walk, creek walk, to be determined). Sign up at the North Central Arkansas Master Naturalists (NCAMN) Table near the Bear Creek pavilion.

10:00 – 11:00 AM – Stream Team, North Central Arkansas Master Naturalists. Learn how water quality and macroinvertebrate insects are monitored by naturalists working with AGFC. Sign up at the NCAMN Table near the Bear Creek Pavilion.

Festival Activities at Bear Creek:

3:00 – Welcome & Information tents open.

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 workshop presentations. “TBD” means a precise time for a workshop has not yet been determined.)

- About library telescopes (NCAMN/ANSA).
 - Using small telescopes and binoculars for sky-watching
 - How to participate in the festival scavenger hunt
- Connect the Constellations (NCAMN)
 - Learn about the night sky by playing a fun game with star charts. (continuous)
- Central Arkansas Astronomical Society meteorite table.
 - Touch, examine, and learn about meteorites (continuous)

- Birds and Light Pollution (Audubon & LOH)
 - How birds are impacted by light pollution during migration and other bird safety concerns. (continuous)
- Responsible lighting (ANSA)
 - Self-certifying your home lighting as night sky friendly (4:15, 5:15)
 - Measuring light pollution in your neighborhood and reporting it as a citizen scientist to Globe-at-night. (4:45)
- The STEM table (NWSA)
 - Hands-on experiments involving the creation of impact craters and orbital mechanics. (continuous)
 - Crater modeling (TBD)
- Explorer Scientific
 - telescopes and related equipment (continuous)
- Wild Ones, Arkansas Monarch and Pollinator Conservation Partnership & NWACC
 - Learning to use iNaturalist and Seek Apps to find and report on wildlife near you as a citizen scientist, and information/consultation for landscaping with native plants. (4:15, 4:45, 5:15) Check out the lightning bug display any time.

Other activities, not at tables, for adults and children.

- Real-time solar projecting solar images (4:00 – 5:00)
- Giant bubble blowing (4:00 – 5:00)
- Stomp Rockets (5:00 – 5:45)

Pavilion Activities and Presentations:

5:45 – Welcome and intro to the Festival, weather report, and reminder about activities – MC

6:00 – Dinner Program – The basics of photographing the Milky Way, 1st of two lectures - Hal Mitzenmacher, Brennen Nicole and Eric Stinnet

7:30 – Welcome, intro to the Festival, weather report, and reminder about activities, and door prizes – MC

7:45 – What’s up tonight – Rocky Togni

8:15 – How to take part in the night time activities.

8:30 – Constellation Tour, Telescope observing, and nightscape photography workshop begins (astronomical twilight ends ~8:42)(If cloudy, programming will be announced at the pavilion).

Saturday

Off-site - See Friday’s list.

On Site:

9:00 – 11:00 AM – Nature Hikes (wildflower walk, bird walk, creek walk, to be determined). Sign up at the North Central Arkansas Master Naturalists (NCAMN) Table, located near the pavilion at Bear Creek.

10:00 – 11:00 AM – Stream Team, North Central Arkansas Master Naturalists. Learn how water quality and macroinvertebrate insects are monitored by naturalists working with AGFC. Sign up at the NCAMN Table, located near the pavilion at Bear Creek.

Festival Activities at Bear Creek:

1:00 PM Welcome & Information tents open.

12:30 – Girl and Boy Scout Astronomy Merit Badge program Bear Creek Pavilion

2:00 – Tabling (“tables” may be help-yourself unstaffed sources of information, continuously staffed or periodically staffed for topic-specific workshops. Collect raffle tickets by visiting select educational tables marked in **Bold** below.)

- About library telescopes (NCAMN/ANSA).
 - Using small telescopes and binoculars for sky-watching
 - How to participate in the festival scavenger hunt
- Connect the Constellations (NCAMN)
 - Learn about the night sky by playing a fun game with star charts. (continuous)
- Central Arkansas Astronomical Society meteorite table.
 - Touch, examine, and learn about meteorites (continuous)
- **Birds and Light Pollution** (Audubon & LOH)
 - How birds are impacted by light pollution during migration and other bird safety concerns. (continuous)
- **Responsible lighting** (ANSA)
 - Self-Certifying your home lighting as night sky friendly (2:15, 3:15, 4:15, 5:15)
 - Measuring light pollution in your neighborhood and reporting it as a citizen scientist to Globe-at-night. (2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30)
- The STEM table (NWAS)
 - Hands-on experiments involving the creation of impact craters and orbital mechanics. (continuous)
 - Crater modeling (TBD)
- Explorer Scientific
 - telescopes and related equipment (continuous)
- **Wild Ones, Monarch Butterfly Conservation Partnership & NWACC**
 - Learning to use iNaturalist and Seek Apps to find and report on wildlife near you as a citizen scientist, and information/consultation for landscaping with native plants. (4:15, 4:45, 5:15) Check out the lighting bug display anytime.
 -

Other activities, not at tables, for adults and children.

- Real-time solar projecting solar images (2:00 – 4:30)
- Rocket-Football Toss (2:00 – 2:30)
- Stomp Rockets (2:30 – 3:30)
- Giant bubble blowing (3:30 – 4:30)
- Children’s celestial drawing contest (CAAS)(4:15 – 5:45)
- Solar-cooked marshmallows & S’mores (2:30 – 3:30)

- O-scale solar system model (continuous)

2:15 – Welcome and intro to the Festival, weather report, and reminder about activities – MC

2:30 – The life cycle of Stars, the light of the universe – Allan Staib

3:00 – Artificial Light at night – harms and solutions - Bruce McMath

3:30 – Open, not yet determined.

4:00 - break

4:15 – Ken Foreman – Topic to be determined

4:45 – Our Ancestor’s Connection with the night sky as revealed in literature. Phillip H. McMath

5:15 – What’s up tonight – Rocky Togni & How to participate in the nighttime activities and review of scavenger hunt participation

6:00 – Weather report and reminder about activities, door prizes - MC

6:00 – Dinner Break program – Planning for a successful Milky Way shoot, 2nd of two lectures - Hal Mitzenmacher, E Brennen Nicole & Erik Stinnett

7:15 – Welcome back, weather report, reminder about activities, and door prizes – MC

7:30 – Dr. Jennifer Wiseman, NASA Hubble Space Telescope Senior Project Scientist -

8:30 – Constellation Tour, Telescope observing, and nightscape photography workshop begins (astronomical twilight ends ~8:42, If cloudy, programming will be announced at the pavilion).

Cloudy Night Program for Friday or Saturday night - not yet determined but it will be good.

Notes:

Service dogs –

1) You must be confident your dog is comfortable in dark crowds at night. Evening walks in crowded public places like some parks during events, might help your pup be comfortable and obedient in the festival conditions, but does not guarantee it. Needless to say, the animal must be on a leash at all times when on the event grounds.

2) There are rechargeable LED collars on Amazon. Choose a red light to respect others' night vision, and don't get a really bright one. This helps others be aware of your dog before you approach.

3) A red-light flashlight for yourself is essential to see hazards like tripod legs before you approach. Keep in mind that volunteers often spend thousands on their equipment and volunteer to share it with the public. A dog leash caught up in a tripod can cause enormous damage.

4) Be prepared to indicate the nature of the service your animal is trained to provide upon arrival and to remove the animal from the event if it becomes a problem.