DarkSky Festival
Thousand Hills State Park
Kirksville, MO
April 9 -11, 2027

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The Thousand Hills DarkSky Festival

Our DarkSky Festival is an opportunity for people to enjoy and celebrate our natural nighttime environment, and particularly the beauty of a star-studded night sky. Thousand Hills State Park is Missouri's first DarkSky certified State Park and provides wondrous views of the night sky in-and-around Thousand Hills Lake.

You can help us protect our night sky and nature at night by getting involved in our DarkSky Missouri movement. Volunteer your time, spread the word, and help fund our work. Visit DarkSkyMissouri.org to learn more.

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Weather-Related Festival Updates

Festival plans may shift depending on the weather. We intend to proceed as planned even if skies are cloudy, but rain may require us to move indoors to the Truman State University Campus. For real-time updates, please visit our website at darkskymissouri.org or follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/darkskymissouri.

Event Schedule

The following Dark Sky Festival events are planned for April 9-11, 2027

Friday, April 9, 2027	
3:00 PM Onward	**Registration and Information Table Open**
4:15 PM - 5:30 PM	**Program: Nature Walk, Redbud Trail** Jim & Evelyn Wilson, North Star Chapter Missouri Master Naturalists Step into the heart of Missouri's natural beauty on a guided nature walk through forests, riverbanks, and scenic trails. Along the way, you'll discover native plants, spot signs of wildlife, and learn about the delicate ecosystems that make this region so vibrant.
5:30 PM – 5:45 PM	**Welcome to the Festival** Jesze Doleh, Thousand Hills State Park Superintendent.
6:00 PM – 6:45 PM	**Program: Nighttime in Missouri State Parks** Speaker: TBD
7:00 PM – 7:30 PM	**Program: Protecting the Night Sky** Speaker: TBD
7:40 PM – 8:00 PM	**Program: What We Will Be Observing Tonight and How to Observe** Speakers: Amateur Astronomers Join a series of engaging talks led by passionate amateur astronomers as they share insights on what's visible in tonight's sky, offer tips for navigating the telescope field, and preview the evening's observing programs.
8:00 PM – 11:00 PM	Telescopes: The Moon, Star clusters, nebulae, and galaxies! Bats! Lighting Demos: The good, the bad, and the the ugly Astrophotography 101

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Saturday, April 10, 2027	
Morning	
7:00 AM – 8:15 AM	**Program: Nature Walk, Petroglyph Trail** Leaders: Susan & Bob Schneider, North Star Chapter Missouri Master Naturalists
8:00 AM – 9:15 AM	**Program: Nature Walk, Redbud Trail** Jim & Evelyn Wilson, North Star Chapter Missouri Master Naturalists Step into the heart of Missouri's natural beauty on a guided nature walk through forests, riverbanks, and scenic trails. Along the way, you'll discover native plants, spot signs of wildlife, and learn about the delicate ecosystems that make this region so vibrant.
8:15 AM - 9:15 AM	**Program: Mindfulness and/or Yoga** Eric Dickson, Associate Dean for the School of Arts & Humanities, Truman State University
9:30 AM – 10:30 AM	**Session I: Connecting with Nature I** Speaker I (Birds): TBD Speaker II (Pollinators): TBD
10:30 AM - 10:45 AM	**Break**
10:45 AM – Noon	**Workshop I: DarkSky Advocacy** Speaker I (Five Principles): Colin DeGraf Speaker II (How to purchase DarkSky Products): Vayujeet Gokhale Speaker III (Advocacy in your community): Jean Nock
Noon – 1:30 PM	Lunch Break
Afternoon	
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM	**Session II: Connecting with Nature II** Speaker I (Invasive Species): Aries Williams Speaker II (Human Health & Safety): TBD
2:30 PM – 3:15 PM	**Program: Phone Apps for Nature** Speakers: TBD iNaturalist, Merlin/eBird, Globe at Night, Plant ID
3:15 PM – 3:30 PM	**Break**
3:30 PM – 4:30 PM	**Workshop II: Homegrown National Parks** Adair County Missouri Master Gardeners

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4:30 PM - 6:30 PM	**Dinner Break**
6:30 PM - 7:45 PM	**Program: Nature Walk, Petroglyph Trail** Susan & Bob Schneider, North Star Chapter Missouri Master Naturalists
	Step into the heart of Missouri's natural beauty on a guided nature walk through forests, riverbanks, and scenic trails. Along the way, you'll discover native plants, spot signs of wildlife, and learn about the delicate ecosystems that make this region so vibrant.
	Program: Yoga Jesze Doleh, Missouri State Parks
8:00 PM – 11:00 PM	Telescopes: The Moon, Star clusters, nebulae, and galaxies!
	Bats!
	Lighting Demos: The good, the bad, and the the ugly
	Astrophotography 101
	Join amateur astronomers for an engaging journey through the cosmos as they showcases the celestial wonders visible in Missouri's spring sky. From planets and constellations to deep-sky delights, our astronomers will share expert tips on how to spot and enjoy these nighttime treasures—whether you're using a telescope, binoculars, or just your eyes.
Sunday, April 11, 2027	
Morning	
7:00 AM – 8:15 AM	**Program: Nature Walk, Petroglyph Trail** Leaders: Susan & Bob Schneider, North Star Missouri Master Naturalists
8:00 AM – 9:15 AM	**Program: Nature Walk, Redbud Trail** Jim & Evelyn Wilson, North Star Chapter Missouri Master Naturalists
	Step into the heart of Missouri's natural beauty on a guided nature walk through forests, riverbanks, and scenic trails. Along the way, you'll discover native plants, spot signs of wildlife, and learn about the delicate ecosystems that make this region so vibrant.
8:15 AM - 9:15 AM	**Program: Yoga** Jesze Doleh, Missouri State Parks

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Information Tables

Information tables on display: Saturday, April 10, 2027, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

Organization	Website
DarkSky Missouri	DarkSkyMissouri.org
Lights Out Heartland	LightsOutHeartland.org
Missouri DNR	https://dnr.mo.gov/
Missouri Department of Conservation	MDC.MO.gov
Conservation Federation of Missouri	https://confedmo.org/
Missouri River Bird Observatory	MRBO.org
Missouri Stream Team	MOStreamTeam.org
Missouri Environmental Education Association	https://meea.org/
Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative	https://mobci.net/
Truman State University	https://www.truman.edu/
Raptor Rehabilitation Project	https://cvm.missouri.edu/alumni-and-friends/raptor-rehabilitation-project/presentations/

INFORMATION TABLES AVAILABLE FOR ORGANIZATIONS!

If you need a table/chairs/canopy for the event, please let us know prior to the event. You can email us at darkskyfestival@darkskymissouri.org

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Campground information:

- Camping by reservation at https://icampmo.usedirect.com/MSPWeb/ or call 877-ICampMo (877-422-6766) 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. CT seven days a week
- 25 electrical only sites (no water or sewer) - $27.00 per night (30 amp) and $29.00 per night (50 amp)
- 4 Family sites (no water or sewer)- $48.00 per night
- 12 Non-electric sites- $15.00 per night
- Dump stations available in Campground, water hydrants available throughout campground.

Motels

Multiple vacation rentals are available in the area with Vrbo and Airbnb.

Visit: https://visitkirksville.com/t/where-to-stay for more information.

Restaurants

Some of the most popular restaurants in and around Kirksville can be found here: https://visitkirksville.com/t/where-to-eat

We are working with area motels, lodges, campgrounds, and restaurants for special discounts and deals for festival goers! Stay tuned for more information!!

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More Information on Kirksville

For more information on hotels, restaurants, things-to-do in the area, please visit the Kirksville Tourism website at https://visitkirksville.com/

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Is there a fee for entering the park area or for the event itself?**

The event is free.

2. **Will there be food vendors? Will food or water be available for public purchase on Friday and Saturday?**

Water will be available at hydrants by bathrooms. We will have a big orange cooler with water to fill attendee water bottles. No water for sale. We are working with the park concessionaire to figure out snack and food options. Stay tuned!

3. **What sort of tables/booths are you planning?**

Tables include DarkSky, Audubon, MDC, Master Naturalists, MRBO, and so on. Astronomy groups will provide demos and help with telescopes as needed.

4. **Will power be available at booths on or at the observing field?**

Power is available at some of the shelters, near the restaurant and store. If you are a vendor or have a display table and need to have power, please contact us.

5. **Do you know what cellphone reception is like in the viewing area?**

Cell phone reception is spotty.

6. **Can we park our cars next to our telescopes?**

Cars won't be allowed to park by telescopes so that visitors can more easily go to each telescope. However, telescope operators can unload/load then go to the parking area which is nearby. Detailed maps and directions will be provided once we finalize our plans.

7. Do you plan any festival T-shirts?

More info on this soon…

8. What should the public bring? What should volunteers bring?

Public: Festival goers will need to bring chairs, ground cloth/blankets for sky viewing, insect repellant, sunscreen, food/drinks/snacks as there will be no food vendors at the event site. Please dress for the weather conditions, layers are best, with a reminder it will be colder than you expect due to being next to the Thousand Hills Lake. Temperatures in early April can dip into the low 30's at night. The average lows in Kirksville in early April are about 40° F and average high is about 75° F.

Volunteers: Volunteers at tables will need to bring tables/chairs/canopies. We can provide these if needed, however please let organizers prior to the event by emailing us at darkskyfestival@darkskymissouri.org.

Note to Everyone: Please remember this is a DARK SKY event. It takes twenty minutes or more to fully adapt your eyes to the dark, and any exposure to white light will erase dark adaptation in an instant. So, white flashlights, cameras with flashes, and digital devices, unless used in a night vision mode (red screen) are discouraged and asked not to be used. If you need to use a flashlight, please use a red or amber colored light, which can be purchased online or at larger retail stores. You can also adapt your flashlight by using red magic marker to color lens, or taping a red film over the lens

9. Any activities on Sunday?

No activities are planned for Sunday afternoon and evening. The morning events are listed above in the schedule. However, please take advantage of this unique area. Visit the Kirksville tourism website to learn more.

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Other Notes from the Organizers

Food and Water:

- Food will not be available at the festival site, so be sure to bring your own provisions. Drinkable water is available at the festival site.
- There are multiple restaurants in Kirksville, Mo, as well as gas stations and grocery stores.

Dress for the Weather:

- Remember to dress for the weather, as temperatures can fluctuate at this time of year. Temperatures could range from 70-80's during the day, dropping into the 40's and 50's at night. And remember, temperatures are always cooler by the water, with Thousand Hills Lake bordering the telescope viewing area.
- Remember to bring sunscreen, bug spray, chairs, blanket/ground for sky viewing, water and snacks, and a redlight flashlight to keep the night sky visible for all to enjoy. It takes 20 minutes or more to fully adapt your eyes to the dark, and any exposure to white light will erase dark adaptation in an instant.
- We will have red markers and red film available at the festival greeting table to adapt your white light flashlight. Please bring red light flashlights or/and headlamps if possible.
- We will be watching the weather forecast closely, hoping for clear skies, but if cloudy weather prevails, we will fall back on our backup indoor venue at Truman State University. More details to follow as we get closer to festival time!

Drawings:

- There will be a drawing with multiple door prizes for multiple winners, on Saturday afternoon after speaker programs conclude, so be sure to enter at the festival greeting table!

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Thousand Hills State Park – Information

Website:

Thousand Hills State Park:
https://mostateparks.com/park/thousand-hills-state-park

Mailing Address:

20431 State Highway 157
Kirksville, MO 63501-7069
United States

Telephone Numbers:

- **Thousand Hills Office Phone: 660-665-6995**
- **Lodging, dining, Marina, Store: 660-202-8257**

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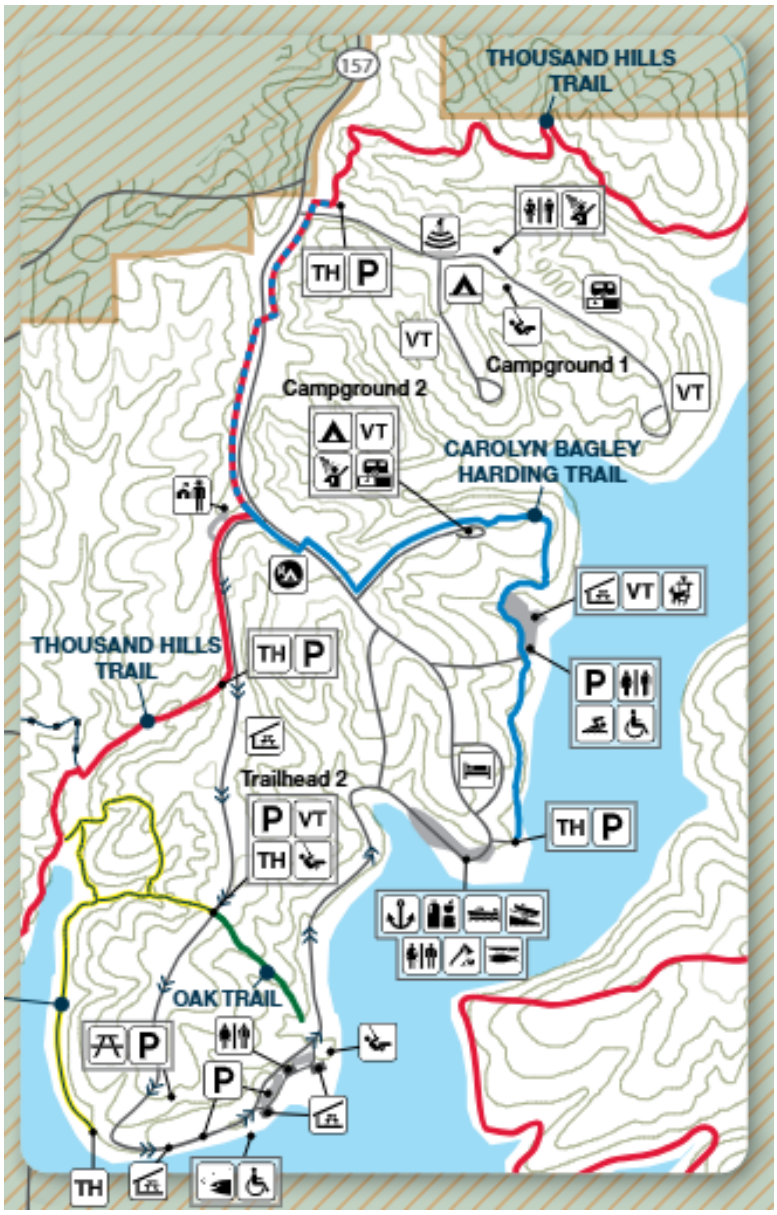
Map – Thousand Hills State Park

A detailed description of telescope set up areas, parking, and informational booths will be provided soon. Stay tuned!

Link to event area: https://maps.app.goo.gl/JLuonoQrfZNY8wnW8



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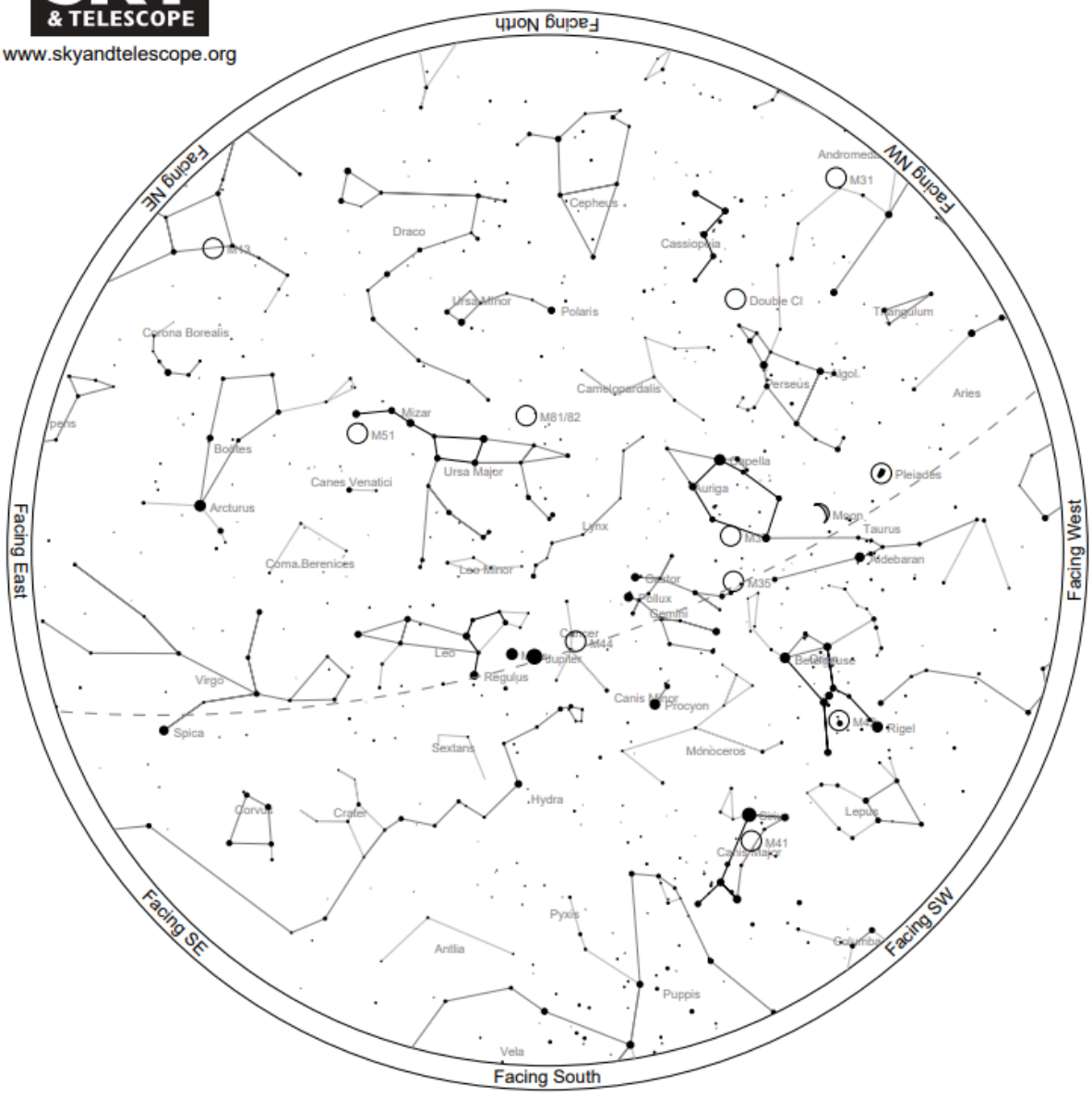
SKY & TELESCOPE
www.skyandtelescope.org

Sky Chart



Location: Thousand Hills State Park, Kirksville, Mo.
Latitude: 40° 11' N, longitude: 92° 35' W
Time: 2027 April 10, 21:00 (UTC -05:00)

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