

## BAS Volunteers at the Bruneau Observatory

The Boise Astronomical Society has enjoyed a long term relationship with Bruneau Dunes State Park, in which BAS provides volunteers to help out at the Observatory in exchange for use of certain park facilities for our annual Idaho Star Party. Our yearly commitment is 200 hours of volunteer time during the observing season; late March to mid-October, on Friday and Saturday evenings. Our volunteers help out the park, its guests and BAS at the same time.

Since the Observatory is minimally staffed, they primarily need assistance in manning additional telescopes and interacting with park guests. Volunteers only need to be able to find and identify a few of the brighter objects in the sky, like the Moon, naked eye planets and a few bright Messier objects, like M13, M31, M57, etc., and answer a few questions. These objects and information about them can be found easily with a smartphone astronomy app, star chart book or with the assistance of Observatory employees. Telescope volunteers are not expected to be master astronomers. Much of the time a volunteer will simply maintain a telescope aimed at two or three objects during an evening for park guest viewing. It's pretty easy and a lot of fun.

Volunteers may bring their own telescopes (at their own risk) but the Observatory has several Dobsonian and SCT scopes dedicated to volunteer use. Observatory personnel can show you how to setup and operate them.

Volunteer hours include time spent at the Observatory; setting up, observing and taking down of the equipment. Time in transit to/from the park does not count. This usually amounts to 3 to 5 hours of volunteer time, which must be logged into the BAS notebook in the Steel Reese building office, on-site. Again, Observatory personnel can show you how to do this. The Observatory only needs one or two BAS volunteers on any given night, unless they request more to handle an expected large group. Only volunteer hours by current dues-paid BAS members count toward our BAS volunteer time. Our liability insurance only covers current BAS members.

Bruneau Dunes State Park is requiring all BAS volunteers who interact with park guests to submit to a criminal history background check, for the protection of the park and its guests. It costs us nothing, involves filling out two forms and submitting them to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. The printable forms and an explanation memo can be found here:

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BAS1/files/IDPR%20Background%20Check/>

This background check must be completed before you may do any volunteer work at the Observatory which involves interaction with park guests. The park will allow BAS volunteers to do other maintenance type work, not involving guest contact, without the background check.

The Observatory personnel would like to have advance notice of when BAS volunteers plan to come to the Observatory. Also, the Observatory's hours of operation change with the time of sunset during the observing season. Please contact the BAS President (phone or email) to be put in contact with the Observatory personnel or for any other questions regarding volunteering at the Bruneau Observatory.

If every BAS member would put in just one evening a year volunteering at the Bruneau Observatory, we would easily fulfill our commitment to the park and BAS for the observing season.

Randy Holst  
President, BAS