



Annual Report

2025



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Great Basin National Park

At Great Basin, you can walk among the world's oldest living trees, gaze at the cosmos from the darkest night skies, explore subterranean passages, and find inspiration in a wilderness of solitude. From 13,063-foot Wheeler Peak to sage-covered foothills 7,000 feet below, Great Basin National Park is a sample of the incredible diversity of the larger Great Basin region.

Every Guardian Is Making an Impact

As the Park's official nonprofit partner, Great Basin National Park Foundation exists to expand what public funding alone cannot achieve. In 2025, Great Basin Guardians helped ensure that Great Basin National Park could continue delivering exceptional education, science, and stewardship during a time of real constraint.

Because of investments from Great Basin Guardians — like you — private philanthropy helped fuel innovation, protection, education, and stewardship, and maintain Great Basin National Park as a place of wonder, learning, and connection for present and future generations.



Credit: David Hunter



Message from our Executive Director

Great Basin National Park is extraordinary not only for what it protects, but for what it makes possible. As we moved through 2025, the Park faced federal hiring freezes and reduced operational capacity, placing real limits on what Park staff can do alone. This is where partnership matters.

Great Basin National Park Foundation exists to complement - not replace - public funding. Philanthropy provides the flexibility to respond quickly, invest strategically, and advance projects that would otherwise be delayed or unrealized. In 2025, donor support helped bridge staffing gaps, sustain education and research programs, and ensure that Great Basin continues to serve students, visitors, and communities across the region.

As we look toward the Park's 40th anniversary in 2026, **we hope more people will step up as Great Basin Guardians** - recognizing that smaller parks need strong advocates, particularly during times of fiscal uncertainty.

Our focus remains clear: protect the integrity of this landscape, expand access to learning and discovery, and ensure that Great Basin National Park remains an ecologically intact place of inspiration for generations to come.

Thank you so much for standing with us and with Great Basin National Park.

- Aviva O'Neil, Executive Director



Celebrating the Park's

40TH

ANNIVERSARY

1986 - 2026





Investing in the People and Mission of NPS

Flexibility is especially critical during moments of uncertainty. In the spring of 2025, probationary employees, representing 20 percent of Great Basin National Park's staff, were terminated as part of a nationwide action affecting the National Park Service.

Great Basin National Park Foundation acted immediately, providing short-term employment for the five terminated employees and allowing them to continue the work they care deeply about while the Park navigated next steps. This immediate response, made possible by Guardian support, helped preserve institutional knowledge, sustain critical work, and support the people who care for this extraordinary place.

We are glad to report that four of the five employees (three pictured left) remain in the Park today as permanent rangers.

Spring was a testament to the power of partnership and the role philanthropy can play in sustaining both people, place, and the long term mission of the NPS.



“The Great Basin has a unique, majestic quality that is inspiring and leaves me wanting to explore more. I am able to do so, thanks to the support I have received. It is humbling to witness the efforts and advocacy for the Park by the community during a time of extreme uncertainty.”

- Probationary Ranger

Education, Science, and Stewardship

Great Basin National Park Foundation conducts all the education and outreach programs for Great Basin National Park (GBNP), reaching thousands of students locally, regionally, and nationally. Through classroom lessons, virtual learning, Park field trips, and overnight programs, students engage directly with the amazing natural and cultural history of GBNP.

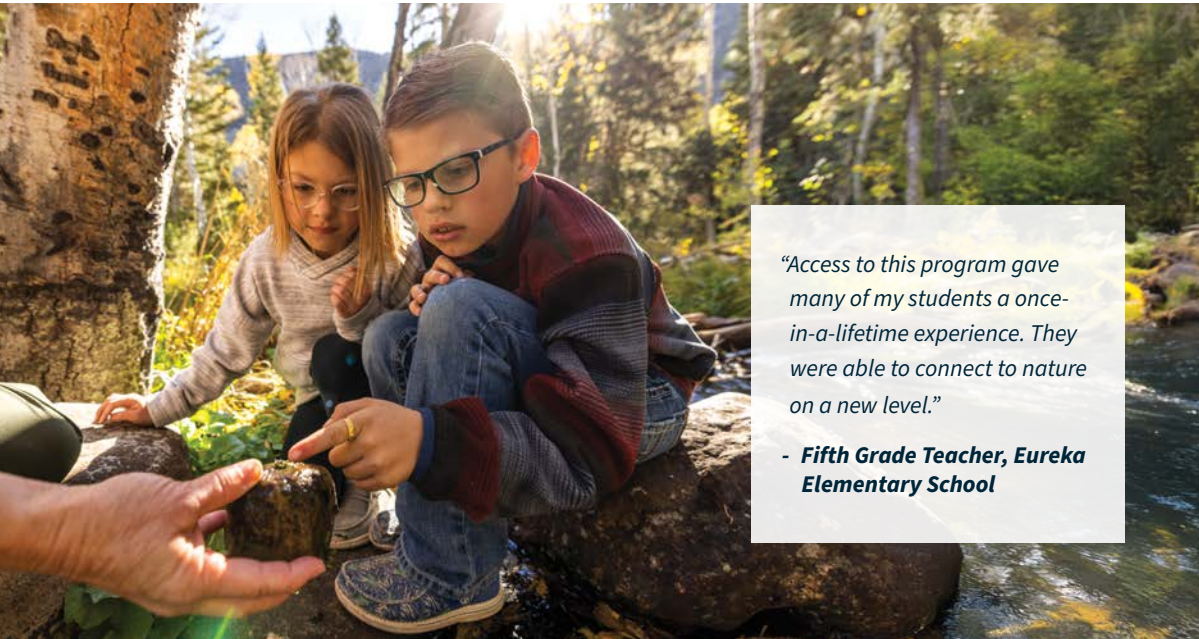
“The program offers a unique blend of scientific insight and engaging storytelling, making complex topics accessible and fascinating. This is an exceptional resource for anyone seeking an enriching, well-designed educational experience.”

- Professor, Wichita State University



Many students experienced a national park, hands-on science, or outdoor learning for the first time. At a time when students average limited outdoor time and science proficiency remains a challenge nationwide, access to immersive, place-based education is more important than ever.

By working with partners including the National Park Service, National Park Foundation, PBS Reno, the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration, and our GBO partner universities, the Foundation ensures that students — regardless of geography or circumstance — can engage with Great Basin National Park and see themselves as future scientists, explorers, and public land stewards.



“Access to this program gave many of my students a once-in-a-lifetime experience. They were able to connect to nature on a new level.”

- Fifth Grade Teacher, Eureka Elementary School

2025 Highlights

2,891

Students served

88

Classroom programs

84

Virtual programs

26

Field trip programs

2

Overnight programs

Through our collaboration with PBS Reno Curiosity Classroom, an additional 3,119 students in 168 classrooms across Nevada were served.

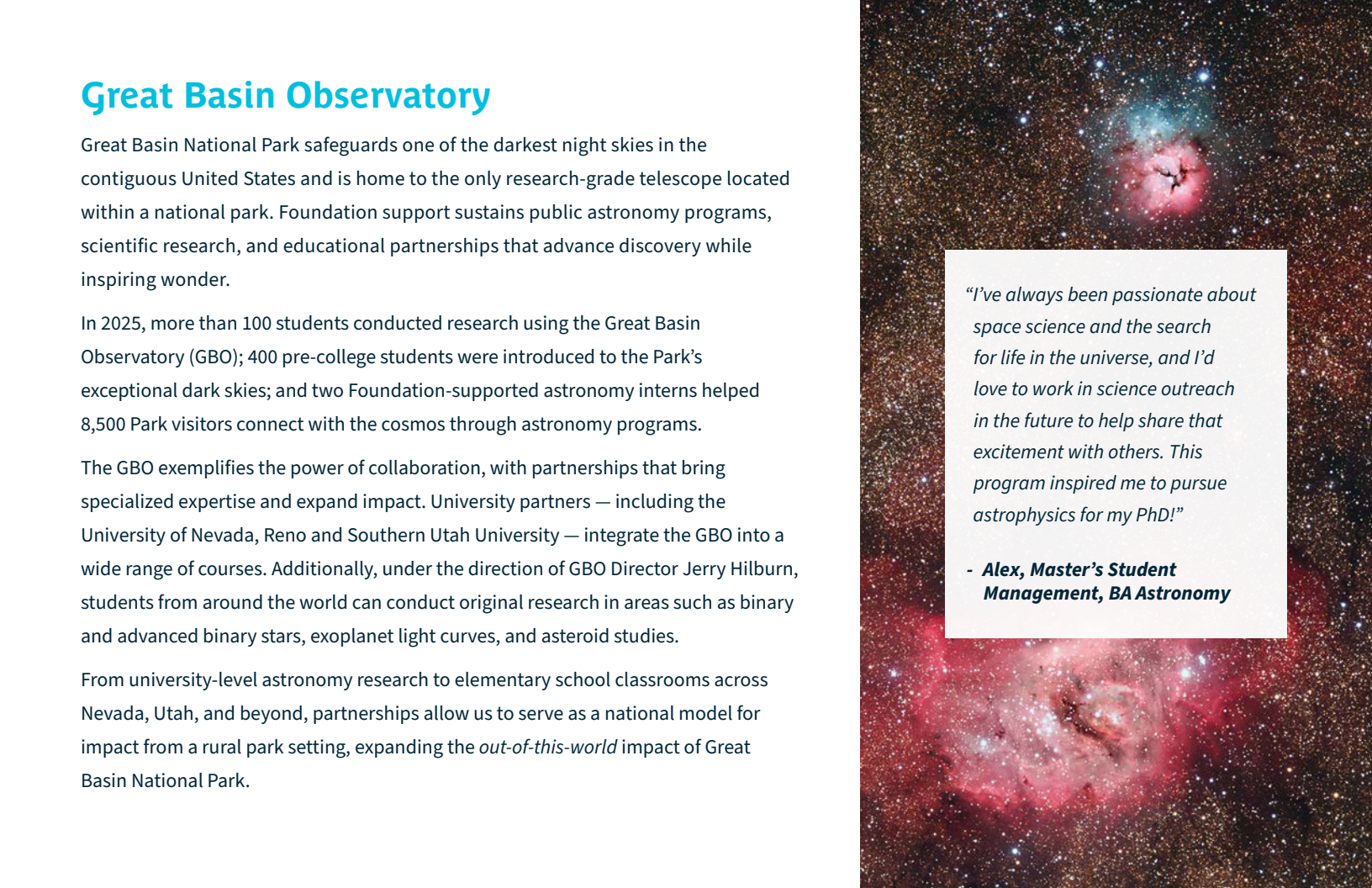
Great Basin Observatory

Great Basin National Park safeguards one of the darkest night skies in the contiguous United States and is home to the only research-grade telescope located within a national park. Foundation support sustains public astronomy programs, scientific research, and educational partnerships that advance discovery while inspiring wonder.

In 2025, more than 100 students conducted research using the Great Basin Observatory (GBO); 400 pre-college students were introduced to the Park's exceptional dark skies; and two Foundation-supported astronomy interns helped 8,500 Park visitors connect with the cosmos through astronomy programs.

The GBO exemplifies the power of collaboration, with partnerships that bring specialized expertise and expand impact. University partners — including the University of Nevada, Reno and Southern Utah University — integrate the GBO into a wide range of courses. Additionally, under the direction of GBO Director Jerry Hilburn, students from around the world can conduct original research in areas such as binary and advanced binary stars, exoplanet light curves, and asteroid studies.

From university-level astronomy research to elementary school classrooms across Nevada, Utah, and beyond, partnerships allow us to serve as a national model for impact from a rural park setting, expanding the *out-of-this-world* impact of Great Basin National Park.



“I’ve always been passionate about space science and the search for life in the universe, and I’d love to work in science outreach in the future to help share that excitement with others. This program inspired me to pursue astrophysics for my PhD!”

- Alex, Master’s Student Management, BA Astronomy

2025 GBO Research Snapshot

Objects Studied



58

Asteroids



135

Double Stars



46

Exoplanets



26

NGC Fields



5

Cataclysmic
Variable Stars



4

Extended Study
Variable Stars



5

Kuiper Belt
Minor Planets



30

Research papers



2,000

Volunteer hours

“The mentorship and support I received through the observatory made it possible for me to engage in serious astronomical research outside a traditional academic setting.”

- Vaishnavi, BS Physics, MS Data Science

“The support and passion shown throughout each process were nothing short of amazing.”

- Darwin, Undergrad, Wake Tech Community College

Lion Lessons

In 2025, we created Lion Lessons: *Learning from Great Basin's Top Predator*, a place-based curriculum designed to help middle school students explore ecosystem dynamics and the complex realities of wildlife management through the lens of the Great Basin Mountain lion. The five-part program which includes lessons led by our educators, data analysis, and teacher-led activities, grounds next-generation science standards in a landscape students know firsthand.

During its inaugural year, every 6th and 7th grade student at White Pine Middle School in Ely, Nevada participated. Student surveys found that more than half of participating students reported increased interest in ecology, wildlife biology, and conservation.

"Before I thought that animals weren't super important. Now I know their importance to the ecosystem."

- **White Pine Middle School student**



Credit: Marko Bajzer

“Students enjoyed learning about tracking mountain lions and how they are collared... They were able to see how one organism can change an entire ecosystem.”

- White Pine Middle School Teacher

Artist-in-Residence

Artist-in-Residence (AIR) programs offer tremendous opportunities for engagement between parks, artists, and park visitors, continuing a long tradition of sharing and interpreting the landscape through artistic mediums.

The Foundation supported four AIRs in 2025 and will support four AIRs in 2026. 2025 artists included visual artist Meghan Catherine Dragon, twin sister dancers and choreographers, Meghan and Caitlyn Baylor, and photographer Jack Straton.





Credit: Paul Atkinson

Looking Ahead

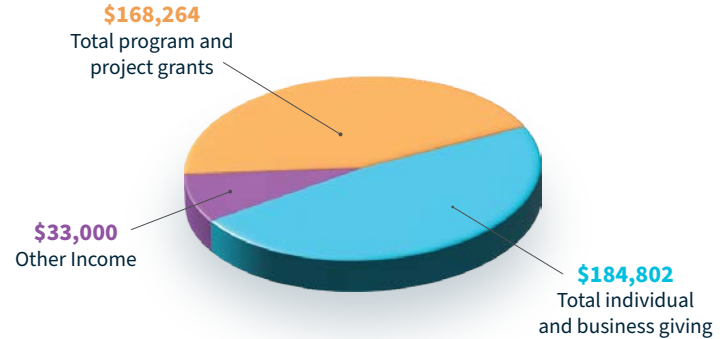
As we move toward 2026 and the 40th anniversary of Great Basin National Park, the Foundation remains focused on strengthening partnerships, expanding access, and advocating for the Park during a time of continued fiscal uncertainty.

With your support, Great Basin National Park will continue to inspire wonder, discovery, and stewardship — today and for generations to come.

Thank you for being a Great Basin Guardian!

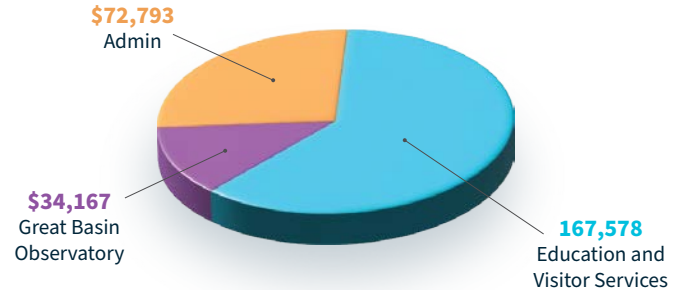
2025 Total Revenue

\$386,109



2025 Total Expenses

\$274,539





In Memory of Peg Rees

Margaret, “Peg” Rees, a beloved scientist, educator, mentor, and Great Basin National Park Foundation advisory board member, passed away on February 5, 2025. Peg was known for her tenacity, passion for geology, and unwavering commitment to education. For 32 years, Peg served on the faculty of the Department of Geoscience at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Peg loved the Great Basin and did some of her earliest field studies in the Snake Range. She even has a Great Basin trilobite named after her, “*Bolispidella reesae*”. She helped form the partnerships that brought the dream of the Great Basin Observatory into reality and expanded the educational efforts of the Foundation. We are so grateful that Peg’s family and friends have chosen to remember her by investing in a place and mission she held dear.

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National Park Foundation

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Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership
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The Jack Van Sickle Foundation

STALAGMITE GUARDIAN \$5,000 - \$9,999

Robinson Nevada Mining Company
San Manuel Gaming and Hospitality Authority
The First National Bank of Ely

SUSTAINING GUARDIAN up to \$1,000

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Edgerton Legal, LLC
Nevada Division of Tourism
Silver Sage Center for Family Medicine
Western Cave Conservancy
Verizon

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Daniel Watts
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Upcoming Events

Monthly virtual programs
Begins January 27, 2026

Celebrate 40 years social
gathering, Craft Wine and
Beer - Reno, NV
May 14, 2026, 5-7pm

Learn more about events - follow
us on social media and subscribe
to our email newsletter



Credit: Paul Atkinson

Great Basin National Park Foundation

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