STELLAR VISTA
OBSERVATORY
Exploring Utah's Starry Nights

Special Speaker Event at the Kanab Library on October 30, 2025

On October 30th at 7pm, please join us at the Kanab Library for an inspiring lecture by Dr. Troy Allan about the numerous benefits that stargazing brings into our lives.

Dr. Troy Allan has chased the night sky from Portugal's *A Village of Stars* art residency to Great Basin National Park and the mountains of Colorado—exploring how awe can heal, inspire, and connect communities. A retired U.S. Army Chaplain and current Utah State University Extension professor, he blends science, storytelling, and policy to show why protecting our dark skies matters for mental health and the human spirit. His work bridges the worlds of research, art, and policy—helping communities protect and engage with night skies as a vital public resource.

Whether speaking at astrophotography workshops or leading community discussions on policy, Troy's passion is to help audiences see the stars not just as a spectacle, but as a source of healing, wonder, and shared purpose.

Desert Starlight Event Recap

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this year's Desert Starlight! We shared good food and great company. On the 19th, clear skies gave us the chance to stargaze and photograph the Milky Way. On the 26th, clouds moved in, but the evening was just as rewarding with Prof. Sadie Wilde sharing her research collaboration on the mental health benefits of stargazing, along with in-depth astrophotography insights from Kevin Dobo and Dave Lane.

A special thanks to the Kane County Office of Tourism, Dark Sky RV Campground, Action Photo Tours, and Dave Lane Astrophotography for collaborating with SVO to make this event possible.



Guests enjoy the Mediterranean-inspired spread from Chef Roger Mortensen





Debra Csenge and Kevin Dobo enjoying the rainbow at the pond



Eric Sims (SVO) provides an update on the observatory activities and construction and answers questions

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Star Party Roundup

More than 50 people attended the star party at Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park on September 12th! This star party was part of the Southwest Astronomy Festival which took place September 12-14, 2025, at various sites across southern Utah. Highlights of the nights included seeing Saturn's rings through the telescopes, the core of the Milky Way, and learning how to take beautiful night sky photos with a smartphone.

If you missed the last star party at the dunes, the fun continues on **Friday, October 3rd**! Join us at 7:30pm on the observation deck in the park for views of Saturn and the Andromeda Galaxy as well as a last chance to see the Milky Way until next summer.



Dark Skies at Coral Pink Sand Dunes

SVO is also involved in assisting Coral Pink Sand Dunes with the process of become a certified International Dark Sky Park! In 2024, SVO collaborated with the Park Manager to write a grant to replace existing light fixtures with ones that are dark sky friendly, and, over the past year, SVO volunteers have collected sky quality data to demonstrate how superbly dark the sky is in the park. SVO is also assisting with preparing the full application for certification, which we expect to submit before the end of the year. We are excited to be a part of this exciting time for Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park!

SVO earns the Nonprofit Credential Badge in Fundraising and Development!

SVO is delighted to announce that we have completed a many months-long process of earning the Nonprofit Credential Badge in Fundraising and Development from the Utah Nonprofits Association.

Jill Bennet, CEO of the Utah Nonprofits Association, sent the following to congratulate the team on their hard work:

> *"SVO meticulously reviewed, revised, and created standards and practices to guide their development work. ... By establishing sound fundraising practices and crafting a strong development strategy, SVO has set itself up for long-term success. This work, and it is indeed work, shows an intentional commitment to excellence. Congrats to SVO for a job well done."*

A huge thanks to Sylvia Sims, SVO's Treasurer, for organizing all the required documents and to the Development Committee for their diligence and engagement throughout the process.

And speaking of the Development Committee - if you are looking to get involved and make a difference in the community, consider volunteering with SVO! You don't have to point a telescope - we would love your help with fundraising, grant writing, social media, and more. Please contact us at: info@stellarvistaobservatory.org to get involved!

Counting the Stars in the Sky



Image courtesy of the European Southern Observatory

When I was a child, we would spend our summers in the Catskills in New York state. We were in a very rural area, about 10 miles from the nearest town. The cabins were primitive without telephones, televisions or any of the modern technology we take for granted these days. In exchange for these conveniences, we had a pool and lakes to swim in, thousands of acres of forests to wander through and the darkest skies to marvel at. I would lie under the stars most nights, looking at the milky way and wondering how many stars were in the uncountable sky. I'm sure that you too have asked this question at some point in your life.

Fortunately, we now have an answer, thanks to the Paranal Observatory in Chile. In 2010, astronomers from the European Southern Observatory started a survey of the Milky Way galaxy using the Visible and Infrared Survey Telescope for Astronomy (VISTA). After 13 years, VISTA has mapped over 1.5 billion objects and created a detailed infrared map of the Milky Way. In addition, the project created an accurate 3D view of the Milky Way's interior.

Observing specific patches of evening sky multiple times allowed astronomers to determine object locations, movement, and changes in brightness. The telescope's infrared camera was able to filter through cosmic dust and focus on "hypervelocity stars," whose extreme speeds originate from near-misses with the galaxy's central supermassive black hole, Sagittarius A*. *"We made so many discoveries, we have changed the view of our Galaxy forever,"* says Dante Minniti, an astrophysicist at Universidad Andrés Bello in Chile who led the overall project.

You can learn more about the survey here: ESO telescope captures the most detailed infrared map ever of our Milky Way | ESO . And more about Sagittarius A* here: Supermassive black hole seen in Milky Way's center | Popular Science .

Free Public Star Parties

Exciting viewing opportunities abound throughout the fall! Please join us for one of our free star parties!

- **Wednesday, October 1, 2025** - 8:00pm at Jacob Hamblin Park. Grand Circle Trailfest: Stargazing in the park – come see Saturn, double stars, and more!

- **Friday, October 3, 2025** - 7:30pm at Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park. Celebrate International Observe the Moon Night with Stellar Vista Observatory!

- **Friday, November 7, 2025** - 7:00pm at Jackson Flat Reservoir Boat Launch Parking Area. The Pleiades, Saturn, and the Andromeda Galaxy will be on display, and a gorgeous 90% Moon rises at 7:10pm!

Our events calendar is available at: Public Star Parties | Stellar Vista Observatory.

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