



"Southern Skies Over Newport" by Denny Moutray

IDA

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

**NEWPORT
STATE PARK**
ELLISON BAY, WISCONSIN

CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION

Newport State Park
475 County Road NP, Ellison Bay WI 54210
920-854-2500

Manager:

Michelle Hefty

Michelle.hefty@wisconsin.gov

Report submitted by:

Beth Bartoli, Naturalist

Beth.bartoli@wisconsin.gov

LIFE AT A DARK SKY PARK DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

What strange and trying times we live in. This annual report will hold vastly different information than previous years. Park information is the same, of course, as is some of the basic data for this report. But Newport is a Wisconsin state park, which falls under the jurisdiction of state mandates and regulations. We must follow the state of Wisconsin's Bounce Back Plan, as well as the protocol of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources under the Fish, Wildlife and Parks division.

At the onset of the Covid pandemic, parks remained open, all park offices were closed, and interpretive park programs cancelled. This remains the case and will continue to be this way for the foreseeable future. All dark sky programs were cancelled as a result. At this point, there are no opportunities for any kind of programs, live or virtual.

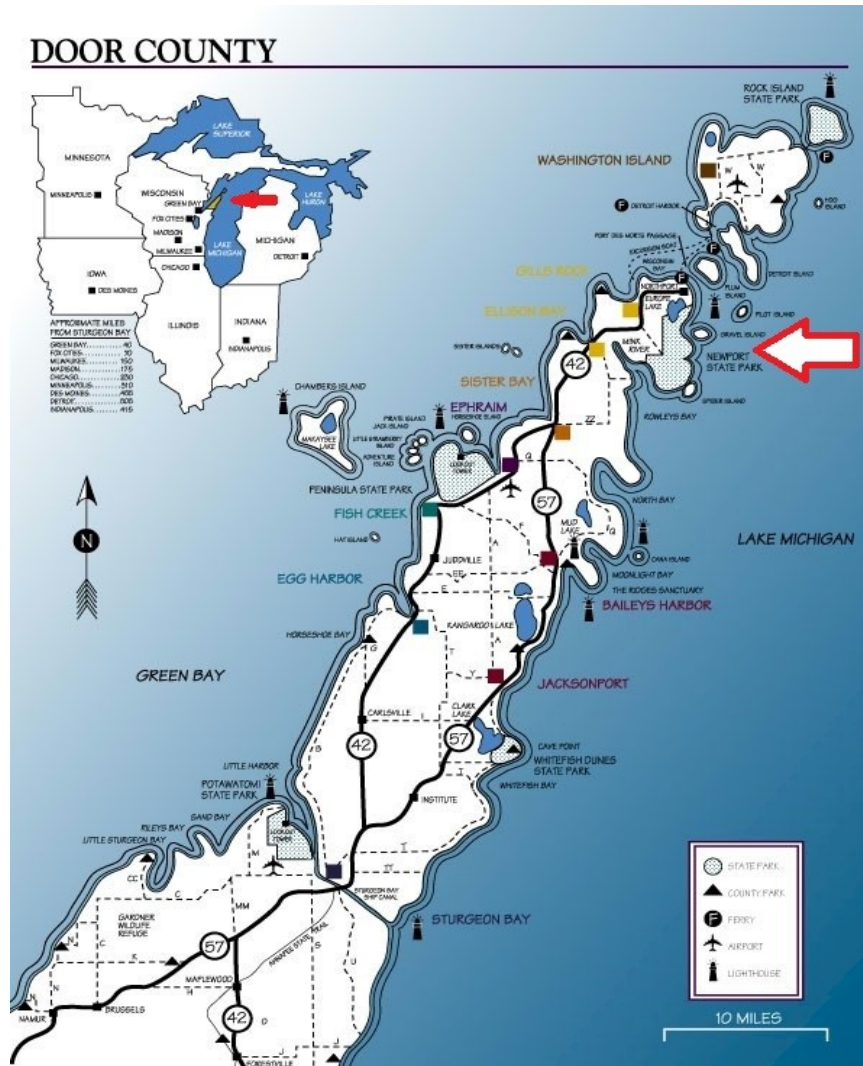
An interesting observation as the pandemic continues is the noted increase in visitors' interest in nature related activities, particularly in the dark skies. Phones are staffed at the offices, and we receive many calls inquiring about our dark sky park.

As far as numbers go, park attendance has increased on average about 14% over last year. July and August of 2020 showed staggering 40% and 32% increases, respectively, over July and August of 2019. Although we can only go by our automated car counts, we surmise that many of these were evening/nighttime visitors.

As we progress through the challenges this pandemic brings, uncertainty is the word that describes all. We do not know if and when programming will start again. We look forward to next year and our new "normal".

PARK INFORMATION

Newport State Park is located along a rugged shoreline near the north east end of Wisconsin's Door Peninsula. Designated a Wilderness Area by the Wisconsin DNR, it offers 26 miles of hiking and biking trails. With areas of boreal forest, wooded uplands, meadows and miles of shoreline, there is something for everyone.



Managed as a wilderness park, this makes us a quiet sort of park and an ideal place for sky viewing. We are committed to keep things as natural as possible. Situated at the end of a peninsula which sits at an angle, much of the park juts out into Lake Michigan, giving Newport 11 miles of shoreline. All of the eastern borders are DARK! We are located at least 5 miles from 2 very small communities, Ellison Bay on the Green Bay side and Gills Rock to the north at the end of the peninsula. Newport received Silver status in April of 2017. There are no plans to apply for status upgrade at this time. In addition, Newport is 100% compliant with all lighting within the park.

SKY QUALITY READINGS

Date	Area	GPS Coordinates	Unihedron Sky Quality Meter	Dark Sky Meter iPhone app
06/18/20	Park Entrance	N45.2347° W86.9978°	21.03	20.17
“	Maintenance Road Intersection	N45.2349° W86.9960°	21.66	20.98
“	Parking Lot #2	N45.2339° W86.9893°	21.77	21.63
“	Parking Lot #3	N45.2380° W86.9878°	21.81	21.79
“	Sugarbush	N45.2482° W86.9988°	21.85	21.11
“	Europe Bay	N45.2594° W86.9861°	22.19	22.01
08/16/20	Park Entrance	As above	20.38	20.06
“	Maintenance Road Intersection	“	21.74	21.01
“	Parking Lot #2	“	21.52	21.45
“	Parking Lot #3	“	21.66	20.92
“	Sugarbush	“	21.49	21.11
“	Europe Bay	“	22.97	22.54

FUNDING

As with many of the Wisconsin State Parks, we rely heavily on our friends groups for funding of projects and programming. Newport Wilderness Society, the parks friends group, provides funds for many things related to our dark sky park. NWS has generously supported the purchase of telescopes, binoculars, eye pieces, power supplies, brochures and signage.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Newport State Park is nestled at the northern end of Door County, an area rich with artistic history. It is a haven for artists, musicians, photographers and writers from all walks of life. It is evident from the photos accompanying this report that there are photographers that gravitate to our dark skies. You Tube videos are plentiful about Newport's dark skies. Denny Moutray has been more than generous with his photos, as he allows us to use his images in all of our ads, brochures and merchandise.



Volunteers doing a Naked Eye Limiting Magnitude Star Count, Newport State Park

Photo by Denny Moutray

OUTREACH

Speaking at civic and community meetings has been an ongoing priority of the staff at Newport. We have used IDA's "Loosing the Dark" video as well as "Intro to Lighting" PowerPoint program at many events. Unfortunately, we have not been able to attend any kind of meeting or do any presentations.

CONCLUSION

We look forward to seeing what the future brings to our Dark Sky Park up here at the top of the thumb of Wisconsin. We are encouraged by the interest of people searching for a truly dark sky to gaze at the heavens and ponder the vast universe we are all a part of. There seems to be an almost primal draw to get out and look to the sky, perhaps searching for answers to questions unknown. We live each day, knowing full well that not even the sky is the limit.



Star trails at Europe Bay Beach, Newport State Park. Light is a buoy in Lake Michigan

Photo by Denny Moutray