



## News from Our Sister Park



*The basin and gypsum sand at Cuatrociénegas*

**D**id you know White Sands National Monument has a Sister Park? Well, we do! *Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna Cuatrociénegas (APFFC) and White Sands National Monument (WSNM) are 560 miles away from each other but both are located in basins surrounded by mountains.*

WSNM lies in the Tularosa Basin and APFFC lies in the Cuatrociénegas Valley. The geologic processes that form the gypsum dunes are very similar. Dissolved minerals in water are pulled to the lower part of the basin and steadily, the concentration increases in shallow lakes.

In Cuatrociénegas, the dunefield is small compared to the dunefield at White Sands—only 0.8 square kilometers. Despite the size difference, both places share a lot of common species and ecosystems and both are inside the Great Chihuahuan Desert. So far, we have detected 129 shared vertebrate animal species without counting amphibians and fish. Both parks also contain fossilized trackways that are thousands of years old.

How would you have known about this unique phenomena if you had not read about it here? Sharing amazing parks with visitors is what interpretive park rangers do around the world—from Yellowstone to the Serengeti. The basics of heritage interpretation are universal and adaptable to every

culture and park. In September of 2012, White Sands park rangers hosted a five-day interpretive workshop for park rangers from our sister park, El Área de Protección de la Flora y Fauna Cuatrociénegas in Mexico.

Monument staff shared the basics of heritage interpretation with three rangers from Cuatrociénegas. Sister park staff provided cultural insights that will help White Sands staff develop information and programs that are more relevant to Latino audiences. “All workshop participants really enjoyed the opportunity to learn from each other and strengthen the relationship between the two sister parks,” remarked Chief of Interpretation Becky Wiles.

White Sands and Cuatrociénegas have enjoyed a productive partnership for more than five years. Our parks have collaboratively worked on scientific research studies, shared management strategies, and interpretive materials such as signs and brochures.

As different countries become more and more globalized, the collaboration of international agencies and U.S.

agencies that protect wildlife will become far more widespread. Ideas and skills to better become stewards of special places like White Sands will come from a multitude of people with different cultural backgrounds and different ideas. Who knows what amazing discoveries we will make as we study more unique places like White Sands and Cuatrociénegas at the same time!



*White Sands and Cuatrociénegas Staff*