



VIP2VIP



Season 9, Volume 1

Big Bend National Park's Volunteer Newsletter

October 1, 2009

Current Volunteers

Castolon

Chisos Basin

Teresa and Gary Cowan—Visitor Center (2)

Danny & Diana Edwards—Camphosts (1)

James & Jackie Reese—Camphosts (new)

Persimmon Gap

Panther Junction

John & Elaine Jonker—River Patrol (3rd)

Rio Grande Village

Royann & Royce Brockett—Camphosts (11th)

Linda & John Lightbourn—Camphosts (2nd)
arriving October 26

Linda & Kenn Sutton—Backcountry (3rd)
arriving October 10

Part-time

Jim Bishop—BBNHA

David Ewing—RGV Backcountry

Steve Harper—Resource Management

Steve Wick—Resource Management

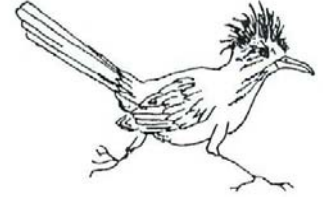
Reine Wonite—Interpretation

Heidi Erpeldinger-Welch—Backcountry

Robert Bowie—Maintenance & ScRm

*Number in () indicates years of service at BBNP

*Welcome
Natasha Moore,
New Volunteer
Coordinator*



By Jane Brown



elcome Back, Volunteers!

As you settle in, you will notice that old friends and work partners have left and many new faces have arrived to take their places. Very likely, the first new face that you will encounter will be Natasha Moore, Angelina's replacement, who arrived at the end of July and will be providing guidance as the Volunteer Coordinator. Finally we will have two people working with the Volunteer Program! So here is the skinny about Natasha. She is a native of the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas where she spent a lot of time at the Buffalo National Scenic River envying those who worked as Park Rangers!

She graduated with a B.S. in Environmental Soil and Water Science from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. As a college freshman, she was tagging along with a cute guy at the Career Fair and ended up with a summer job as a Park Ranger at a very busy Army Corps of Engineers lake. Summer job followed summer job, which led to a STEP student position and finally two permanent jobs over the next six years in Arkansas and Alabama.

Shortly after landing a GS-07 position in Tuscaloosa, Natasha was accepted as a volunteer in the U.S. Peace Corps and headed for a rural village in Bolivia near the Argentina border. She fell in love with Bolivia and the volunteer work that she was doing there and ended up staying for four years.

Upon returning to the United States Natasha began her search for a new job and the National Park Service came through with the best offer. Her first location was as a seasonal ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison followed by San Juan National Historic Site in Puerto Rico, Sequoia- Kings Canyon National Park. Eventually, she was fortunate to get a term appointment at a small historical park in Hawaii, the Kaloko-Honokohau National Historic Site. Settling into island life for the next three years was a breeze, but the cost of living in Hawaii finally caused her to move back to the mainland, taking a position at Chickasaw National Recreation Area, only four hours away from her family. Somehow she found the energy to begin work on her master's degree in addition to accepting this new challenge at Big Bend National Park.

Her hobbies include Irish dancing, belly dancing, multiple outdoor activities, knick-knack collecting and traveling.

Welcome, Natasha to Planet Big Bend!

Hiking for Smokey

by Jane Brown

Do you like to hike in your free time at Big Bend? Here is a new opportunity to have fun, get some exercise, and make yourself even more useful than you already are! Plus you can earn a very cool T-shirt!



The following is a description of the work that would be undertaken while hiking. Wearing your uniform would be a necessary part of the job.

Wildland Fire Prevention/Education Activities

Refer to the various wildland fire brochures to provide informative contacts with park visitors to convey the dangers of un-planned wildfires. Educate visitors that campfires are prohibited outside of the river corridor. Ensure overnight visitors in the High Chisos have been issued the wildland fire evacuation card during high fire danger periods. Visit the backcountry campsites and examine them for fire remains. If any fire rings are found, disperse the rocks. Any partially burned wood should be removed. Complete a written report of fire prevention/education activities and submit this report to the Fire Management Office.

After your hike, you would need to write up a short report describing what you did.

Example #1 Fire Prevention Report (Backcountry Foot Patrol)

On March 1 we hiked the Juniper Canyon Trail and contacted 15 backpackers, one group heading up into the Chisos and the other group heading down towards the Dodson Trail. We found evidence of three wood fires at two well-established zone campsites along the Juniper Canyon Trail. Two fires were found at N 29°14'21", W 103°15'13" and one larger fire that had spread N 29°14'49", W 103°15'38". We dispersed and rehabbed both areas.

On March 2-3 we were back in the Chisos for another backpack, checking the designated campsites Blake was not able to get to during his trail patrol on March 1. We checked LW-1 through 3, LM-1 through 4, BL-1 and 2, SW-2 through 4, SE-1 through 4, NE-1 through 5, and CO-1 through 3. We found no remnants of fires at these sites. At Blake's request, we checked the southwest rim viewpoint (across from the toilet on the south rim). We found and dispersed remnants of one wood fire right on the rim (N 29°13'32", W 103°18'08").

During this backpack we contacted 9 backpackers and 32 day hikers and spoke with them about the fire danger. We handed out the card with wildland fire information as necessary. Cigarette butts were found at SW-4 and near the junction of the Colima and Boot Canyon Trails.

If you have access to a government vehicle and regularly perform backcountry road patrols, you could also participate in this program, although I suppose we would need to call it "Driving for Smokey". Here is an example of a backcountry road patrol report.

(continued on next page)

(Hiking for Smokey continued)

Example #2 Fire Prevention Report (Backcountry Road Patrol)

On March 10 we conducted a backcountry/fire prevention patrol into Pine Canyon and Juniper Canyon roadside campsites. We checked NM 1-2, PC 1-4, Rice Tank 1 -2 and JC 1-2 sites. We found and removed charcoal from the remains of a wood fire in campsite PC -3. The campfire area was rehabbed. Three campsites were occupied with visitors (10 total). These visitors were contacted and warned of the high fire danger and provided with wildland fire information.

If you are interested in getting involved in the "Hiking for Smokey" program, see Karen Roberts or Tim Beck at the Fire Management Office at Panther Junction or me at the Volunteer Office.

Panther Junction WiFi

All the volunteers, seasonal employees and employees of Forever Resorts have come to expect access to wireless internet at Panther Junction. This service has been provided for the community courtesy of Big Bend Natural History Association at no charge. However, repeated lightening strikes this summer (and every summer) have caused continual maintenance problems with no one nearby to make the repairs. Consequently, the WiFi will remain out of service until November 1st. Hopefully all the lightening will be over by then. Wifi is available at Chisos Mountain Lodge in the Basin. Thank you Mike Boren, Jim Bishop and BBNHA for making this very useful communication tool available to the volunteers stationed at PJ!



Update on Bob and Sally Jones, long time volunteers at Persimmon Gap:

Sally writes:

"We are still in Florida, waiting out the recession!! Bob is teaching in a small college in Vero Beach--intro Oceanography--and is enjoying it. The trailer is parked on the lawn of a little house we own here, where our son lives. We bought it as rental property 27 years ago and he has been our only tenant!

We are sooooo homesick for Far West Texas and would rather be right there in Big Bend National Park.

We had a volunteer job this summer in a state park not far from the house--it is a beach/day use park. Bob collected litter and trash 4 days a week, but also produced a plant list and rewrote the beach and coastal hammock walking tour brochures. They always put "the women" in the ranger station, so there I was collecting entrance fees, writing annual passes, making pavilion rentals, answering the phone ("What's the surf like today??" "Are there any waves?"), acting as dispatch. All by myself 6 of the 8 hours each day. It was terrible!!! So tell Jim how much I learned about what he did for a number of years. There were some bright moments--I actually got to know some nice visitors who were daily visitors to the park--a school teacher who came in early each morning to catch a few waves and just relished her freedom in the summer so much, a lady surf instructor, certain families who were just so nice--I got to where I could remember even how many children they had with them!!! But all in all it was unrewarding work--certainly no intellectual component involved as there always was at Persimmon Gap. The best thing about it was a beautiful site for the trailer which was shady and a few degrees cooler. We had lived in Vero Beach for 10 years ('74-'84) but don't remember a summer as hot as this one. So that site was a blessing. But we were glad to be done, and wouldn't dream of going back next summer."

Where have you been since your last volunteer experience in Big Bend.....

Teresa and Gary Cowan have been volunteering since September 1 at the Chisos Basin Visitor Center. They will be resuming their old post at Persimmon Gap Visitor Center on November 1.

Teresa writes:

"WOW, are we glad to be back at Big Bend National Park! It is so good seeing all of our old friends and we are blessed making new friends too!

We were both so sad to leave Big Bend and we really hated to leave. However, we did have some family obligations to tend to so we went to Calvert, TX where Gary's daughter lives and he helped her with some fencing for her horses, then we went on to Ohio to help Gary's parents. Gary's mother had back surgery and his Dad was new to taking care of himself. We helped out by attempting to lighten the household chore load. Gary's Dad also wanted some trees trimmed so we cut trees with the help of a "cherry picker" to get up to the really high branches. The backyard looked like a tornado had come through there and we began loading everything up and hauling it away. The really big logs we took to the Ball and Arrow Club that we belong to for use as firewood. The Ball and Arrow Club sponsored a "Rendezvous" while we were there, so we camped out in primitive "Fur Trade Era" costumes and canvas tent for a weekend. I made tortillas on a wood burning grill and folks came around to eat hot tortillas with grilled sausage, onions and peppers. Gary competed with his muzzleloader & "hawk" (tomahawk) throwing. I did not compete this time.



We then went to our timeshare in Williamsburg, VA and did the tourist thing in that area for nine days. We were there for the culmination of the anniversary celebration of the "Fife and Drum Corps". We toured Jamestown Settlement, Jamestown NP and Yorktown NP. On our return trip to Ohio, we went through Luray, VA and went up Skyline Drive. We camped two nights in Shenandoah NP and I actually stepped foot on the AT. YES, I actually walked on the trail, not like the governor of SC claimed to do, I actually was there. Gary has actually hiked the AT prior to our getting married but it was a first for me to see a very small portion of it. We have every intention of returning to VA as it is a beautiful state and still so much to see.

We returned home to Del Rio to get doctors visits out of the way and get ready to get back to Big Bend."

Update from John and Elaine Jonker

Our summer trip was basically a trip from Big Bend through Michigan to the Boundary Waters area in northern Minnesota and back to Big Bend by the same route. We visited our daughter in Austin coming and going.

We visited the Buffalo National River in Arkansas and did multi-day river trips coming and going.

In Michigan we visited family and hit Elaine's family reunion. We spent four days on South Manitou Island, a part of the Sleeping Bear National Seashore. The Sleeping Bear area is just a few miles from the farm where Elaine grew up. In the UP of Michigan we spent a few days in Porcupine Mountains State Park and did a fifteen mile day hike through the largest stand of old growth forest between the east coast and the Rockies. In Northern Minnesota we did two week long canoe trips in the Boundary waters and many wonderful day hikes. We spent a week hiking and boat touring around Isle Royal National Park (continued on next page)

Jonkers continued.....

We have spent many vacations in the North Woods but this is the first time we were there during the spring wild flower season. Spring does not end until early July in the North Woods. Wonderful! On the way back, for a change of pace, we spent a week at the EAA Air Venture air show in Oskosh, Wisconsin.

Danny and Diana Edwards have been volunteering all summer, first at the Chisos Basin Visitor Center and now at the Chisos Basin Campground. They have been a huge help this summer and have done a great job.

They write: "We met in San Diego in 1990, got married in 1991, and still lived in San Diego when Danny retired from the Navy in 1998. At the end of 2000, we decided to make a move to Flagstaff. In the fall of 2003, we once again moved, this time to Madison. Danny is from Milwaukee and most of his family still lives in the area.

We first became full-time RV'ers in April 2006 when we sold our house in Madison, along with most of our stuff. We have always been campers, starting out in a tent, then going to a 17-foot trailer. Now we live in our 26-foot fifth wheel.

Our first couple of volunteer positions were in Wisconsin state parks, where our primary duty was cleaning fire pits. We spent our summer there, then we traveled south to the Pineywoods of Texas for the winter. Diana's family lives in the Houston area, so we volunteered at two different state parks near there for about five months. We left the Pineywoods after spring break and that was when we made our first trip to Big Bend National Park. We loved the area and during our stay, talked to many volunteers about their experience here. We continued traveling through Texas and New Mexico and eventually headed back to Wisconsin to again volunteer in two different state parks.



In July 2007, Diana got the idea that she wanted to go back to work and did just that, returning to the same law firm as a legal secretary that she had left in 2006. Danny also started work again that fall at a local computer company. We stayed in Madison (fortunately, we did not buy another house!) until February of this year when after two very harsh Wisconsin winters we were more than ready to hit the road again.

We moved to our newly obtained RV home base in Benson (just east of Tucson), and then headed to Big Bend. We volunteered in the Basin Visitor Center from mid-May until the end of August, and then we moved to the campground where we are the hosts for the months September and October. We wondered how we would adapt to the remoteness of Big Bend, but we have really enjoyed it. We have hiked over 350 miles, backpacked a few times, and most recently, became novice birders. We got hooked on birding after attending Flippo's program called "The Best Bird" and then we each had to have our very own Eagle Optics Ranger SRT 8x42 binoculars.

At the end of October, we plan to travel back to the Pineywoods and spend some time with Diana's family. In December, we will return to our home base in Benson, where we will stay through the winter. We have thoroughly enjoyed our time here at Big Bend and hope to come back next year."

Events in the Area

October 13, 2009, 6:00 pm—Catholic Mass will be celebrated in the Community Room at Panther Junction.

October 16-18 Ride for Trails Whether you are an experienced or new biker, you won't want to miss the 12th annual "Ride for Trails" motorcycle road rally. "Ride for Trails" has been popular, with participation growing more than 160 percent a year since thirty-five riders attended the first rally in 1998. This year more than 400 riders are expected. "Part of this growth is because of the awesome beauty of Big Bend and its curving mountain and open-desert roads our riders so enjoy," said Don Sharlow, a Friend and organizer of the event. "Another factor is that the rally is so much fun and a place where friends reunite year after year," he said. For more information go to: www.ridefortrails.com

October 17 Marathon2Marathon—Marathon, Texas This race began in 2003 and has been growing every year. It is a sanctioned and certified race. For more information go to: marathon2marathon.net

October 17 Ft. Stockton Sesquicentennial Old Fort Day and Concert This living-history event will host re-enactors, educators and other attractions, including the Texas Camel Corps, Buffalo Soldiers, artillery, stagecoach, cavalry, infantry, mountain men, Native Americans, musicians, storytellers, period vendor, food, historic buildings, wagon rides, craftsmen, period baseball, animals, gunfighters and more. Be on the parade ground at 9 a.m. for the opening ceremonies. Historic Fort Stockton, 301 East 3rd. At 6 p.m. the 150th-Birthday Committee will host a free dance featuring three bands in Rooney Park. For more information go to www.cityfs.net

October 27th Community Potluck Dinner, 6:00pm at the Panther Junction Ramada—The volunteers will be drifting in during the last week of October. Come and welcome them to Big Bend! Everyone is invited. Bring a covered dish to share, along with your plate and silverware. Water, iced tea and coffee will be provided.

October 31-November 1 Viva La Historia -, Terlingua, Texas—Celebrates local history with tours of the historic mines and villages in the area. Includes oral histories by people who previously lived and worked at the mines in Terlingua. Enjoy regional food, local music and dances. Historic Terlingua Ghost Town. For more information go to: www.vivalahistoria.com

Volunteer Opportunities from the Jonkers

Two river opportunities exist for VIPs and SCAs that count as extra volunteer hours and/or as a special project day.

- First, the RIO Rangers count on volunteers to help with their river shuttles which is a great way to see the park.
- Second, the RIO VIPs will attempt to get VIPs & SCAs on one of their river patrols when a mutual date can be agreed upon and if the required canoe skill levels are present. The RIO VIPs will email the VIPs and SCAs with more details once the new volunteers complete their training. You can find the Jonkers at the River Cache (Maintenance Bldg. 477-1137)

Ongoing Activities **Yoga** – Thurs. nights, 6-7:15 pm at San Vicente School Gym. Drop-in class \$10 or monthly \$30.

Instructor: Cynthia Hood (432-371-2877 or cynthiahood1@hotmail.com)