

**Current Volunteers**Castolon

Joan &amp; Ray Kane –Camphosts (4th)

Bob Douat—Visitor Center (4th)

Toka &amp; Steve Smith—Visitor Center (2nd)

Tina &amp; Steve Ehrman—Backcountry (4th)

Chisos Basin

Ed Davis—Camphost (5th)

Marty &amp; Howard Benham—Camphosts (4th)

Mary &amp; Roy Urban—Visitor Center (2nd)

Persimmon Gap

Teresa &amp; Gary Cowan—Visitor Center (2nd)

Mark Kirtley—Visitor Center (14th)

Panther Junction

Elaine &amp; John Jonker—River Rangers (3rd)

Gretchen Kaija (SCA)

Ashley Thomas (SCA)

Robert Bowie—Maintenance (1st)

Rio Grande Village

Royann &amp; Royce Brockett—Camphosts (11th)

Linda &amp; John Lightbourn—Camphosts (2nd)

Glenda &amp; Robert Overfelt—Visitor Center (4th)

Jan &amp; Jim Allen—Visitor Center—(2nd)

Linda &amp; Kenn Sutton—Backcountry (3rd)

Part-time

Jim Bishop—BBNHA

Heidi Erpeldinger-Welch –Backcountry

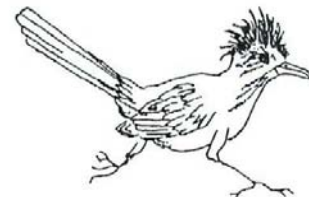
David Ewing—RGV Backcountry

Steve Harper– Resource Management

Steve Wick– Resource Management

Reine Wonite– Interpretation

\*Number in ( ) indicates years of service at BBNP

**How to  
Paddle a  
Canoe**

By Jane Brown

Last Friday I helped with the shuttle for the Fall Orientation river trip and while I was standing there at the river listening to Michael Ryan explain about safety issues and how to paddle a canoe, I was struck by a single thought...the huge amount of teaching that goes on at Big Bend. And on the same note the large amount of learning that goes on here as well. All of you are a part of this great dissemination of information, not only to the many visitors, but also to one another.

When you stop to think about it, it is truly amazing the amount of information we pass around on a daily basis! The Maintenance Rangers answer questions while they go about their duties. Claudia and Jim Hines are constantly interrupted with phone calls from people planning their upcoming vacations and field trips. The VUAs at the entrance stations and the Interpretive Rangers at the front desk at Panther Junction expect to answer the same ten questions over and over again and obviously deserve a medal, as do the volunteers who man the information desks at the outlying visitor centers. The camphosts constantly interact with visitors to provide park information as well as rules and regulations.



Why do we all continue to come back time after time to answer these continual questions? Bend Big is so amazing that it has to be shared! The environment with its unusual plants, geology, animals and interaction of water and wind constantly presents questions for the inquiring mind. The safety precautions that need to be taken to deal with this harsh environment also provide ample opportunity for teaching moments with visitors and new staff alike. So as we begin this fall season, let's take a moment to appreciate the great beauty that surrounds us and embrace our chance to share our knowledge of Big Bend with others. It could not get done without you! Thank you!

## *Hiking Club*

I am hoping to continue the "hiking club" here among the volunteers (and anyone else that wants to come along). I have done a lot of solo hiking and it really is a lot more fun and safer to hike with others. These hikes will not be Olympic events, but rather moderate exercise with time to smell the flowers along the way. We will be taking a radio with us.

### **Fall Schedule**

**November 10 Tuesday**      **Grapevine Hills** (meet at beginning of dirt road at 9:30 am and we will consolidate cars for the drive to the trailhead).

**December 4 Friday**      **Croton Springs**-time to be announced

We will be reimbursing for mileage for getting to and from these hikes at 14 cents a mile. I will send out emails to remind everyone of the dates and it would be great if you could email me back if you are coming.

### **Super Supervisor of the Month— Michael Ryan, Rio River Ranger**

Michael Ryan has been a Rio District River Ranger for eleven years. Prior to his career with the Park Service, he worked as a river guide for Far Flung Outdoor Sports for ten years. During those years, Far Flung had an operation in Mexico and Michael spent the winter in Mexico, the spring and fall in Big Bend and the summer in Taos, New Mexico. Sounds like a glam life to me!

The story of how Michael met his wife Bernadette sounds like a river romance novel. During one of the winters in Mexico, Far Flung subcontracted to provide river trips for Far Horizon Tours whose home office was in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Far Horizon arranged archaeological trips into Mexico and Bernadette Devine was one of their tour leaders. Apparently seven days on the river was enough to convince the pair that their paths should cross again. They now have a son, Caelan who is six years old and a first grader at San Vicente School. Caelan is already an experienced river runner having done all the canyons in the park.

The Ryans are currently building a house north of Study Butte up in the Christmas Mountains. The house is "off the grid" and forty percent complete. The most recent housing excitement has been the installation of four solar panels so they can now run power tools. That should speed things up!

We will continue to highlight a supervisor every month in the VIP newsletter, so if you have a super supervisor that you want us to interview, let us know!

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

### Jim and Jan Allen:

“We reluctantly & sadly left Rio Grande Village last year at the end of January. It had been a wonderful and exciting season for us – our first time to volunteer at BBNP. What a treat working at the cozy Visitor Center at RGV, revamping the cactus garden, etc. Everyone we met at BBNP was so great and helpful. But our season here was over and we had commitments elsewhere.

After a brief visit to the Copper Canyon in Mexico, we made our way up to northwest New Mexico, returning to another park that we love, Chaco Culture NHP. What a season we had there. Jan lost her volunteer status when she was hired as an archaeologist on emergency hire status. She went on to find a major new archaeological site at Chaco. Jim continued to work as a volunteer, working as campground host, visitor center front desk, escort for film crews, giving evening programs, etc. We hated to leave Chaco and Jan’s new job, but we had obligations to be at Bryce Canyon NP on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Bryce is always exciting in the summer. It is a very busy park and visitation was up over 30% from the previous year. At Bryce, we worked behind the desk at the Visitor Center, did roving interpretation, and gave many evening programs. A wildfire burned through the park in mid-July, so we also were hired to do fire interpretation. The weather there is perfect for the summer and we had a wonderful RV parking site.”

**Glenda and Bob Overfelt:** It looks like there was some exciting travelling going on at the Overfelt household since they left Big Bend last January. Glenda and her daughter, Beka, went to Rome and Florence in March and had a great trip. Robert and Glenda took ALL their family (8 adults and 1 toddler) to Anchorage to visit their niece and nephew. They spent 10 days in Alaska and four days in Homer (possible volunteer opportunity there in future), enjoying the scenery, wildlife, culture and crab legs. The first weekend of October found them viewing the beautiful colors in northern New Mexico and the balloon fiesta in Albuquerque.

**Bob Douat** spent the summer working for the Forest Service in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area in far NE Utah. His job consisted of working the boat launching ramp on the Green River at the foot of the Flaming Gorge Dam. He writes, “there were no motor boats but lots of drift boats and rafts. The first 15 miles of the river downstream of the dam are considered to be one of the top 3 fly fishing spots in the country.” Bob and Nudge are looking forward to their fourth winter at Big Bend, which is still his favorite and we are very glad to have them back.



Nudge in command

**Kenn & Linda Sutton—**“Kenn and I spent a great summer on the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park near the village of Grand Lake. Our RV site was at 9000 ft. next to a meadow where herds of elk and an occasional moose came to graze. We had a beautiful view of the Never Summer Mountains from our RV windows, but it literally was never summer. We had freezing temperatures nearly every morning, highs in the low seventies and lots of rain. In spite of the weather, we had a wonderful time with campfires (quite a novelty to us Big Benders!), impromptu potlucks and a very friendly bunch of volunteers. Our job consisted of leading interpretive talks at a historic site, working in the visitor center and trail roving. On our free days we hiked or took short trips to places like Steamboat Springs, Mt. Evans and even to the Snowy Range in Wyoming. We also had lots of company with long visits from family and friends. We spent time in Buena Vista, Colorado and Great Sand Dunes National Park on our way back to Big Bend where we plan to spend a nice WARM winter!”

**Marty and Howard Benham** last volunteered at Big Bend in the fall of 2007 at the **Basin Campground**. Here is some of what they have been doing since they left Big Bend March 1, 2008.

“We traveled through New Mexico and Arizona on our way home to Kansas. After arriving home to the Wichita area, we had two garage sales and an estate sale. Our kids came before we had public sales and picked out anything special they wanted. We sold our house (at our first garage sale!) Between the three sales and Craig's list (nothing illicit mind you) we sold most of our 20 year accumulation of stuff, and most of the furniture. You would not believe what people will buy! One lady bought \$40 of limestone rocks that we had picked up in the highway right of way. Another person bought all of the jigs that Howard made while working on our stripper canoe.

Our house closed on October first and we officially became full time RVers. We are Texans now and have two lots with a large concrete pad and shelter on one lot and a shop on the other one at Fort Clark Springs, Texas. (about 35 miles east of Del Rio on US Highway 90. Howard and I did most of the work on the shop with some help from Ed Davis who stopped by on his way to BIBE last year. He was our first visitor. There are full hookups on both sides so we can accommodate our fellow RVers.

Besides all the moving and constructing, Marty had both knees replaced last year and Howard had his left knee replaced in May of this year. We spent May and June in Kansas for Howard's surgery and rehab and July and August at our son's place in the Jemez Mountains NW of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Much cooler than either Kansas or Texas that time of year. September and October was spent at Fort Clark working on our place and enjoying the wildlife that wander in and out of our yard. All kinds of birds, wild turkeys, both Axis and White tail deer, and armadillos are frequent visitors.“

#### **Royce and Royann Brockett, Camphosts at RGV**

“This is our 11th season at BB. We have not volunteered at any other parks as Royce hasn't gotten anywhere near the end of his "places to explore in Big Bend" list. With 800,000 acres here, he just keeps adding things to do!! Thank goodness for digital cameras, no messing with film and developing but instant gratification. He does great photography while checking out places off the beaten path.

Since we left last Jan. we sold our rockscaped house in Albuquerque in March, after only 2 weeks on the market, expected it to take a lot longer. So then had to hustle to move. Loaded up the RV and moved to Kerrville TX (off I-10 an hour northwest of San Antonio) to be closer to our sons and families in San Antonio and Copperas Cove, Texas. We bought a larger house with big yard and grass to mow, on a ridge with a view and a gazillion deer roaming the neighborhood. Don't know what we were thinking, but now have lots of room for company and visiting grandchildren. Plus it's a few miles closer to Big Bend!

Made a trip back to Albuquerque in August and then out to the Grand Canyon for a few days. While there we visited with Rangers Dave & Laura Van Inwagen and Jessica and Wyatt. They like their new home and jobs. The weekend we were there was when Pres. Obama made his visit also, so they were busy setting up security. We were anxious to depart before roads were shut down for the motorcade so left early in the morning. And here we are back at RGV which is lush and green compared to last year this time. The deposits of river silt seem to have given a boost of growth to the campground vegetation. We look forward to a great season and happy campers.”

**Steve and Toka Smith (volunteered at Chisos Basin VC last year but are moving to Castolon Visitor Center this fall)** left their Roadtrek in Kansas and flew back home to Alaska after their session in Big Bend ended last spring. But wait, it was too soon, as they arrived in Fairbanks to find about 30" of snow covering their driveway. Steve spent the summer shoveling snow, for the most part. Toka spent the summer volunteering with the Fairbanks Visitor and Convention Bureau as well as working a few days a week at a local quilt shop. Driving back to Texas they were stranded a few days in the Colorado snow storm in October--some irony, trying to escape snow in Alaska, they are trapped by it in Colorado.

## *Independent French film makers plan visit to Big Bend*

### *Subject of their documentary... Volunteerism in the United States*

*By Jane Brown*



Aline DEFORGE & Emmanuel PRESSELIN are independent filmmakers from France. They are committed to contributing to a better understanding of foreign cultures through video documentary filmmaking. Their films are designed for public screenings followed by a discussion between the audience and the filmmakers. They support all of their productions and do not rely on external financing or commissioning.

They are currently making a documentary film about Volunteerism in the US. In order to make a faithful and in-depth report, they have been taking part in volunteering programs and events over the last few months and have shared the life of volunteer teams in order to understand their motivations and methods.

They want to include a segment on volunteers like yourselves who live in RVs and work at the national parks, film some of you at work, hear your stories and understand more about your lifestyle.

I spoke with Aline on the phone and discussed some of their reasons for pursuing this subject. (Incidentally, her command of the English language is very good.) She said that volunteering is something that the French do not really do. The national attitude is that the government should do everything for the people. Many people in France think that all Americans are completely motivated by money. However, as we all know, many Americans are involved in public service work of every kind. Aline and Emmanuel believe that through the screening of this film followed by a discussion session afterwards, some of these pre-conceived notions about the United States can be dispelled.

Some of you have already expressed a willingness to participate in this project. I just hope that we will all be able to view the finished product at some point. There are still a few details to work out, but I think that it sounds like fun!

#### ***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. You can find the Jonkers in person at the River Cache (Maintenance Bldg. 477-1137) unless they are shuttling or canoeing.

## Events in the Area

**November 6-8—Chili Cookoff**—43rd Annual Terlingua International Chili Championship Cookoff; for more information go to [www.chili.org/terlingua](http://www.chili.org/terlingua) or call 210-877-8827.

**November 10—Grapevine Hills Hike**, meet at the turnoff to Grapevine Hills at 9:30 am

**November 14, 2009 — Big Bend Ranch SP — La Fiesta** — Big Bend Ranch State Park welcomes a new era of family recreation and outdoor adventure opportunities. Come celebrate with the state park staff and residents of the local communities of the Big Bend area as Texas Parks and Wildlife Department presents this public awareness event at the ranch. Free park entry, a free barbecue lunch and a variety of free tours and activities will be offered to each guest who wishes to participate in the outdoor recreation opportunities promotion of Texas' premier primitive wilderness park. Accessible for the mobility and visually impaired. 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.; reservations required (432) 358-4444

**CPR Refresher courses** are scheduled for Nov. 18th & 19th. Let me know if you are interested in attending. You only need to attend one of those days. An email is forthcoming on this issue. Check your little cards from the last time you attended and see if you need to be there!

**November 20-21, 2009 Art Walk and Gallery Night**, Alpine, Texas—art galleries will be open until late into the night and special events are scheduled.

**November 30th—Volunteer Cookout at Daniels Ranch Picnic Area.** Jane and Natasha are showing up around 4:00 pm to get the coals started. We will be bringing hotdogs and hamburgers for the volunteers. Make your plans to join us for a fun evening at RGV. Dinner at 6:30 pm. Bring side dishes, a bag of chips, or drinks.

**Friday & Saturday, November 27 & 28 Thanksgiving Open House and Invitation to Membership, Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center & Botanical Gardens, Fort Davis.** Admission free for all visitors. Come and find out about the many once-in-a-lifetime experiences you can enjoy by belonging to the CDRI. Guided hikes are planned for 1:00 PM on Friday and 10:00 AM on Saturday. Stop by the Visitors' Center for maps, cookies, and hot chocolate. Admission is free for everyone!

### ***Hiking for Smokey***

*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! After your hike, you would need to write up a short report describing what you did. I can provide you with an example of a Fire Prevention Report upon request.*

If you are interested in getting involved in the "Hiking for Smokey" program, see me at the Volunteer Office.

### We are looking for a few good stories!

There is now a blog on the Volunteer Page of the BIBE website and we are looking for stories, reminiscences and personal narratives about your volunteer experience at Big Bend. Email any contributions to me at [Jane\\_Brown@nps.gov](mailto:Jane_Brown@nps.gov) and I will post your musings and a photo.

Thanks to all you volunteers who contributed to the newsletter by sending me your "update". It is a big help.