

Current Volunteers**Castolon**

- Ray Dixon & Ona Magee –Camphost (2nd)
- Phil & Margaret Hodgens—Camphosts (3rd)
- Ron & Jane Payne—Visitor Center (4th)
- Larry & Martha Head—Visitor Center (new)
- Steve & Tina Ehrman—Backcountry (6th)

Chisos Basin

- Ed Davis—Camphost (6th)
- Jim & Mary Lynn Murrell—Camphosts (2nd)
- Jim & Jan Allen—Visitor Center (4th)

Persimmon Gap

- Jim & Marlene Hufford—Visitor Center (2nd)
- Mark Kirtley—Visitor Center (16th)

Panther Junction

- Elaine & John Jonker—River Rangers (5th)
- Jody Hauser—ScRM (new)
- Heather Holzman (SCA)
- Amy Gondran (SCA)
- Anesa Owen (SCA)
- Alex Brauer—ScRM (1st)
- Pat Wentworth-Maintenance (1st)
- Bob Wirt—ScRM (Alpine) (10th)
- Bud Frankenberger—ScRM (9th)
- Walt Lemonovich—Maintenance (new)
- Beth Bishop—ScRM (4th)
- Reine Wonite– Interpretation (8th)

Rio Grande Village

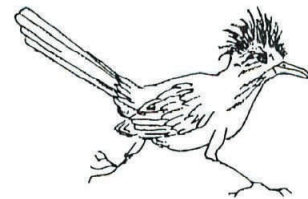
- Mike & Nancy Coe—Backcountry (3rd)
- Kenn & Linda Sutton—Camphosts (6th)
- Gary & Diane Fable—Camphosts (5th)
- Rick & Karen VanBlair—Visitor Center (new)
- Daisy Welch—Visitor Center (1st)
- Michael Jiru—Maintenance (1st)

Part-time

- Jim Bishop—BBNHA
- Diana Edwards—Dispatch (3rd)
- Steve Harper—ScRM (8th)
- Dana Milani—ScRM (1st)

*Number in () indicates years of service at BBNP

Going to the Dark (Sky) Side



A visit from the National Park Foundation is planned for early February to check out the completion of the “Best Lighting Practices” project here at Big Bend National Park.

The goal of this project was to improve the natural lightscape at our park. A "Natural Lightscape" is a place or environment characterized by the natural rhythm of the sun and moon cycles, clean air, and of dark nights unperturbed by artificial light. Natural lightsapes, including dark night skies, are not only a resource unto themselves, but are an integral component of countless park experiences. Big Bend National Park is one of the best places in the United States to come for a natural lightscape experience, thanks to these efforts to reduce light pollution in several areas of the park.

The completion of this grant-funded partnership project has really changed the exterior lighting situation throughout the park. The first phase included dramatic improvements to the exterior lighting at the visitor center and service station in Panther Junction. The second phase included similar changes to the outdoor lighting in Chisos Basin. The work has been accomplished through grants from the National Parks Foundation, the Friends of Big Bend National Park, Forever Resorts, Inc., Musco Sports Lighting, LLC and efforts of Big Bend Maintenance staff. These grants are intended to improve Best Lighting Practices throughout the National Park Service, and Big Bend National Park is the first park to receive the benefits of this grant.

The goals of the project include reducing night sky light pollution, reducing electrical energy consumption, and providing adequate lighting. In addition to the night sky benefits, lower operating costs for the lights will help the park budget.

The newly installed night sky-friendly lighting at the Panther Junction's visitor center entrance has reduced lighting from 480 watts to less than 14 watts. At the same time, the new lighting allows the visitor to easily access the after-hours maps and information available at the visitor center entrance.

At Chisos Basin, as recorded from Emory Peak, 3000 lumens was measured in 2003 due to a dozen unshielded permanent outdoor fixtures. In 2011, a similar measurement was taken from Emory Peak after the retrofit which resulted in 500 lumens before 11 pm and 5 lumens after 11 pm.

Continued on page 2

Panorama from Emory Peak 2003 (top) and August 2011 (bottom)



The retrofit was accomplished with white LED luminaires of moderate intensity. Many of the fixtures were custom designed by Musco for this project. The lighting was directed at a particular task with area light limited to a few areas, such as the front of the Lodge, Panther Junction parking lot and Chisos Basin parking lot. Low voltage contributed to the economy of the project and there was no attempt to light roadways. Electric illumination was also combined with reflective paint (on stairs, for example) to conserve lumens.

There are three goals of outdoor lighting: safety, security and convenience. Within a remote national park such as Big Bend, safety is the only goal that is really of concern. This goal is defined as light being available for common tasks to be performed safely, such as walking from a vehicle to a building. Goal Number two, security is *either* the feeling of being safe for an individual, or the prevention of opportunistic theft, vandalism, or assault. There is just too much acreage in Big Bend to consider outdoor lighting as a factor in providing security. Convenience, the third goal of outdoor lighting, means a level of outdoor light that makes uncommon outdoor tasks easier, such as the ability to read a paper document or recognize another person's visible features. Within the parameters of the "Best Lighting Practices" in Big Bend National Park, this goal is neither desirable or achievable. Bring your flashlight!

Big Bend National Park has among the darkest and most dramatic night sky vistas in the lower 48 states, and is an excellent place for astronomers of all experience levels to enjoy the night sky. In addition, many visitors to the park enjoy the increased visibility of the night sky as a resource and experience in and of itself. With the newly installed lighting this important resource will remain available and more accessible for years to follow. "I am extremely pleased with the partnership and partners who came together to improve this important park resource," said Superintendent Bill Wellman. "I also wish to thank our park's maintenance employees, who provided expertise and services that helped this project become a reality."

Local communities are also getting into the act. Gil Bartee, Alpine, Texas Chamber of Commerce member, co-chairs the local chapter of the International Dark-Sky Association, a group that aims to keep light pollution at bay globally. "We work with the IDA to really try to enhance dark skies in the Big Bend Region," Bartee said. Bartee's group, the Texas Southwest IDA, wants a huge chunk of Far West Texas — from the McDonald Observatory to the Rio Grande — designated by the international group as an International Dark Sky Place. The recognition would make Big Bend the largest dark sky place in the U.S. "Essentially what we're trying to do is create one of the largest continuous dark sky regions in the continental U.S.," Bartee said. The group has seen many successes. The state legislature created a law requiring counties within 57 miles of an observatory to regulate light usage. The Texas Southwest IDA lobbied for the new law. Last year, Bartee and his committee worked with the City of Alpine to rewrite lighting ordinances, requiring new outdoor lighting in the city be fully shielded. *Check out the group's website, bigbenddarkskies.com, for various suggestions on how to keep your lighting low.*

New Faces New Places

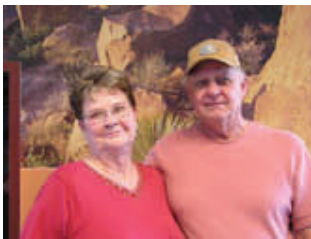
Larry and Martha Head come to us from Shelbourne, Vermont but have lived in many interesting places during their careers. Martha has a Master Degree in teaching English as a Second Language and spent time in Japan, Thailand, Mexico and New York City working in that field. She says that actually teaching ESL in New York was probably the most interesting because there were people from all over the world needing to learn English. Larry grew up the Aleutian Islands of Alaska and attending college in Fairbanks. He joined the Army after college and they sent him back to Alaska. He is a bush pilot, has flown commercial flights and air taxis in Alaska and has also taught flying. They have been full-timers for 5 years and have volunteered at many locations. The list includes Button Bay State Park in Vermont, 3 state parks in Washington State, Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge and LBJ National Historic Park in Texas, J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, and Acadia National Park.



Walt Lemonovich made the trek from Cleveland, Ohio to be with us this winter volunteering with the Maintenance Division as an electrician's helper. Walt is on the verge of retiring as owner of a small company, Cleveland Ignition Company. He has volunteered for the last five years at Cuyahoga National Park near Cleveland as a “trail blazer”. His duties included offering information and assistance to park visitors and reporting to law enforcement rangers. Walt's hobbies include hiking, trail running and riding his motorcycle.



Rick and Karen Van Blair most recently lived in Niceville, Florida, but as Rick said, “they weren't nice enough and had to leave”. Rick is a retired USAF avionic system technician and Karen specialized in accounting and owned her own bookkeeping business. They have been full-time RVers since March 2010 and have a big yellow Labrador Retriever named Gus. Their hobbies include hiking, biking, travelling and Rick enjoys photography. He is also into Dutch oven cooking. Since becoming full-timers, they spent a lot of time volunteering at the Hillman Ferry Campground at the Land-Between-the-Lakes in Kentucky and actually wintered over there last year. However, in spite of their excellent RV site in Kentucky, the road was calling and they continued on their journey, arriving at Big Bend for this spring session where they will be manning the Rio Grande Village Visitor Center.



One Magee and Ray Dixon volunteered briefly at Castolon Visitor Center last April, but have come back this spring for a longer stay as Cottonwood Camphosts. They are especially happy to be at Castolon because it will enable them to spend some extra time with Ona's grandson, Ranger John Roberts. They are from Hye, Texas and we are glad to have them back!

Ike Roberts receives top conservation award

Reprinted from the Alpine Avalanche

The Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts recently honored Ike Roberts with its most prestigious award, the President's Award. He received the honor at the annual state meeting in San Antonio.

Roberts was recognized for his leadership and longtime commitment to conservation in the Big Bend region and beyond. He has served on the Big Bend Soil and Water Conservation District since 1992. He is also very active as a member of the Chihuahuan Desert RC&D as well as a member of the USDA-FSA County Committee for 40 years.



“Any time we have a conservation meeting, you can always count on Ike to be there promoting conservation. We need more conservation directors like him. He is dedicated to conservation and ready to word on its behalf,” said Jule Richmond, the district’s president. Roberts owns and operates a ranch in Brewster County and is retired from Paisano Land and Cattle Co.

Texas Comptroller Susan Combs was on hand to help present the award to Roberts. Roberts and his wife, Sue, have been married 43 years and have three children and five grandchildren, to whom he will pass his love of the land and conservation.

Ike Roberts is Joe Roberts’ dad (Joe Roberts is the East District Chief Ranger). Ike can often can be found volunteering at Big Bend National Park for various special projects. He and his friend, Pete Salas supervised the several weeklong fencing project last October at Cottonwood Campground and cooked lunch for everyone every day!

Hiking Club ! If you are new to Big Bend, the hiking club is a chance for volunteers (and anyone else who wants to come!) to get together for a short hike and see something that you might not see on your own. These hikes are not Olympic events, but rather moderate exercise with time to “smell the flowers” along the way. We will be taking a radio with us.

February 17 Friday *The volunteer hike for February will be Blue Creek to the Hoodoos. Meet at the rear parking lot of PJ Headquarters at 9:00 am to catch a ride with me. If you are coming from Castolon, meet at the Blue Creek trail-head at 9:45 am. Although the Blue Creek trail goes all the way up into the Chisos Mountains, we will be hiking several miles up this trail to a very scenic spot, and perhaps farther depending on interest. I will send out an email to remind everyone of the date.*



We had a great turnout for the Upper Burro Mesa Trail on Dec. 19th. Erhmans, Bumps, Frables, Daisy Welch, Smiths, Diana Edwards, Reine Wonite, Mike Jiru, Jamie Bertram and myself. The weather cleared up just in time ... a perfect day for a canyon hike!

Reminders for incoming volunteers

Scott Taylor, the park pilot, is quite willing for you to accompany him in the airplane on his regular patrol one time only while you are here as a volunteer this spring. In order to sign up for a chance to do this, you need to call him at 432-371-2398 and leave a message with your name and how you can best be reached. Let him know that you are a volunteer and indicate what days you are free. You can also email Scott at Scott_H_Taylor@nps.gov



When you submit reimbursements, either use paper clips to attach receipts to the reimbursement forms, or put them in an envelope. Please do not staple them to the reimbursement form or to a sheet of paper. Original receipts are required—no Xerox copies!

When you get propane, be sure to have the clerk write "propane" and his/her initials on the receipt for reimbursement. Everyone at RGV store knows to do this, but in Study Butte or at the Panther Junction gas station (where you can drop off a tank) you will need to remind them.

Filling up Government Vehicles with gas or diesel

There are three factors that need to be considered when fueling a government vehicle:

- (1) The location you will be obtaining your fuel at: Inside the Park (Panther Junction, Rio Grande Village, or Castolon) or Outside the Park.
- (2) Is the vehicle a GSA vehicle (license plate starts with a "G") or a Department of Interior owned vehicle (license plate starts with an "I")?
- (3) Type of Fuel Needed (Gasoline or Diesel)

If you have any questions about this, ASK your Supervisor!

<u>Area</u>	<u>Vehicle</u>	<u>Fuel</u>	<u>Location</u>
Panther Junction & Chisos Basin	GSA	Gas or Diesel	PJ Concession Gas Station
Panther Junction & Chisos Basin	Interior	Gas or Diesel	PJ Maintenance Tanks
Rio Grande Village	GSA	Gas or Diesel	RGV Concession Gas Station
Rio Grande Village	Interior	Gasoline	PJ Maintenance Tanks or RGV Concession Gas Station
Rio Grande Village	Interior	Diesel	RGV Maintenance Tanks
Castolon	GSA	Gasoline	PJ Concession Gas Station (preferred) or Castolon Maintenance Tanks
Castolon	Interior	Gasoline	Castolon Maintenance Tanks
Castolon	GSA	Diesel	PJ Concession Gas Station (preferred) or Castolon Maintenance Tanks
Castolon	Interior	Diesel	Castolon Maintenance Tanks
Outside of Park	Either	Either	Any station that accepts gov fleet card*

When a preference for the PJ Maintenance Tanks is indicated and you are at Castolon, this does **not** mean that you should drive up to PJ **only** to fill up with gas. If you are coming up to PJ, include a fill up in your errands while here!

Events in the Area

Wednesday, February 8—VIP Community Potluck 6:30 pm at Panther Junction Community Room. Bring a covered dish to share, a plate and eating utensils. Iced tea and coffee will be provided.

Thursday, February 9—Love Your Park Trash Cleanup Day—Meet at the Panther Junction Ramada at 9 am. There we will divide into groups, sectioning off the portions of Panther Junction housing area, all around the school and back on the dirt road near the boneyard. Trash bags, gloves, and some long-handled trash pickers will be provided. Will last until 11:30am or until we run out of trash! If you can't make it to Panther Junction, join us in spirit by spending an hour where you are stationed picking up any trash.

Thursday, February 9—Classical Music Concert . Kerry Ohare(violin) Jane Brown (viola) and Judy Eron (oboe) will be performing a Dvorak Trio and a Mozart Divertmento beginning at 7 pm in Terlingua at LaKiva (in the Cave Room). No admission charge.

Wednesday, February 15 Valentine's Day Buffet—Meet for Dinner at **Tivo's Mexican Restaurant**—special buffet at 6:30 pm. Guacomole and chips, enchiladas, rellenos, beef tacos, rice, beans, tea and sopapillas all for \$17.25. Sponsored by Casa Grande Association. RSVP Claudia 447-1108 Payment due by February 8, 2012.

February 17 Hiking Club Hike to the Hoodoos on Blue Creek Trail-see page 4

February 16-18 Chihuahuan Dirt Desert Fest, Lajitas, Texas; Mountain bike event. Find out more at www.desertsportstx.com/mountain-bike-event/

February 24-26– 26th Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering, Alpine Texas. For more information see www.cowboy-poetry.org

February 24th at Railroad Blues in Alpine—Kenn and Linda Sutton's famous son, Wayne Sutton will be performing with his band, The Bryan Keene Band. Starts late, take a nap! Going to be fun!

Feb. 28 and 29—Red Cross CPR and First Aid Course will be offered. Depending on how many volunteers are interested in this class, it may be taught one or two days. Let Jane Brown know if you are interested in attending and which day is better for you. The class lasts most of the day and takes place at the Panther Junction Community Room beginning at 9 am. Bring your lunch.

The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered "Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."

