

Official Newspaper of
Amistad National Recreation Area
The High Bridge Tribune
Volume 1, No. 1
Winter 2003-2004

A Chihuahuan Desert Paradise

A splash of blue stands out against limestone cliffs. The honking of a



DEVILS RIVER ARM OF LAKE AMISTAD

great blue heron, interspersed with the descending trill of a canyon wren, can be heard off in the distance. This landscape, which at times appears stark and desolate, comes alive with color after a rainstorm. Amistad National Recreation Area (NRA) is a land of contrasts...and of hidden treasures. The same water that draws people to boat and fish today, sustained over 300 generations of hunters and gatherers.

They left behind a record of their existence through colorful rock art panels, bits of tools, and fibers preserved for thousands of years by the arid desert climate.

Situated on the United States-Mexico Border, Amistad NRA is known primarily for excellent year round, water-based recreation including: boating, fishing, swimming, scuba diving and water-skiing. Amistad NRA also provides opportunities for picnicking, camping and hunting. The reservoir, at the conflu-



GREAT BLUE HERON

ence of the Rio Grande and Devils rivers, was created by Amistad Dam in 1969. In addition to excellent recreation, this area is rich in archeology and rock art, and contains a wide variety of plant and animal life. So whether you come to boat, to ponder ancient mysteries, or to listen to bird song and watch the desert bloom, Amistad has something for you.

Please visit Amistad NRA's official home page:
<http://www.nps.gov/amis>

Amistad International Reservoir
At water conservation elevation 1117 ft. above seal level:

- 64,860 surface acres
- 851 miles of shoreline (547 in the U.S.)
- Rio Grande arm- 74 miles
- Pecos River arm- 14 miles
- Devils River arm- 25 miles



AMISTAD DAM - AERIAL VIEW

Amistad Dam
- Completed September 8, 1969
- 6.06 miles long
(1.81 miles are in the U.S.)
- 254 feet above river bed

FAST FACTS

Amistad National Recreation Area
- Established November 28, 1990
- 57,292 acres of land and water
- 2002 visitation- 952,000

Why Do The Lake Levels Change?

Amistad Reservoir is in a desert. Because irregular rainfall and seasonal fluctuations in water demand, there can be dramatic changes in Amistad's water level.

The primary purposes of the dam are water storage (mostly for agriculture and domestic use) and flood control. When the dam was built, recreation was low on the priority list. Recent drought has dramatically affected rec-

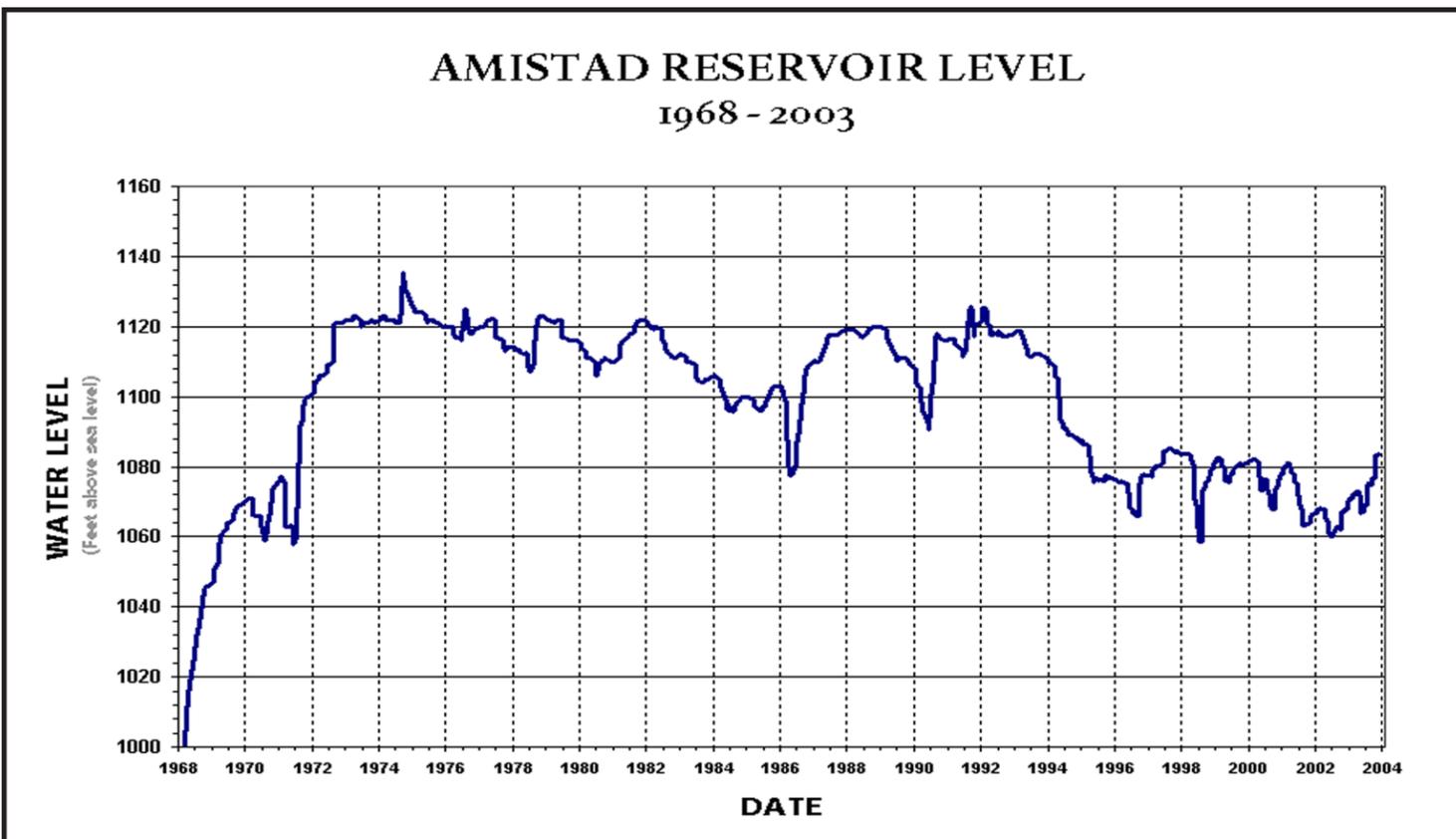
reation on the lake- record lows were reached in August, 1998. Since then, occasional large storms have kept the lake level steady, but even at these lower levels, Amistad is still a big lake.

Amistad Reservoir is fed by three major rivers, the Rio Grande, the Pecos and the Devils rivers. The headwaters of the Rio Grande and Pecos River are located in high, snow-capped mountains in Colorado and

New Mexico, but an extensive system of dams on both rivers captures river water for domestic and agricultural use long before the Texas state line.

Below Fort Quitman, downstream from El Paso, Texas, the Rio Grande is essentially dry. In most cases, the Rio Grande's primary flow into Amistad Reservoir comes from the Rio Conchos, which joins the Rio Grande at Presidio, Texas. The Rio Conchos car-

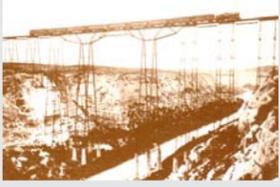
ries water from the Sierra Madre Occidental in the Mexican state of Chihuahua; its headwaters are near Creel, Chihuahua, close to the famous Copper Canyon. Increasing numbers of dams on the Rio Conchos also limit how much water feeds the Rio Grande and, ultimately, Amistad Reservoir. Only large tropical storms over the Sierra Madre or from the Gulf of Mexico have significantly raised the reservoir's level. ❖



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The High Bridge Tribune



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The High Bridge Tribune: the official newspaper of Amistad National Recreation Area. The Pecos Railroad High Bridge is symbolic of the long span of human history represented at Amistad NRA. The high bridge (pictured above and on front cover) was built in 1892 for the Southern Transcontinental Railway; the current bridge was finished in 1944.

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National Park Service
United States Department of Interior

Help Us Plan Our Future



Dear Friends of Amistad:

Amistad National Recreational Area is beginning the development of a new general management plan (GMP).

Just as its name implies, this plan will provide a framework to guide long-term park management decision-making, based on a vision of what people wish to see at Amistad in the future. We need your help in describing that vision and developing the overall management goals through which we will achieve it.

In developing a vision for the future of Amistad NRA it is important to review the park's purpose, its diverse cultural and natural resources, and the potential for public appreciation and understanding of these distinctive resources. The planning process will describe specific desirable resource conditions and visitor goals for the park's future and design alternate management strategies for achieving these goals. This process will be more successful if you share with us your own vision for the park's future.

As part of our planning process, we will be meeting with many federal,

state, and local government agencies and officials as well as private organizations. Communication and cooperation with other government agencies will identify common interests and goals. Developing partnerships with other agencies can offer creative and efficient ways to achieve our future goals at Amistad. In fact, this type of cooperation is essential to developing a plan that meets the needs of the American public and fulfills the National Park Service mission to protect our most precious cultural and natural resources.

Please join us in this effort to develop a plan that charts a sustainable future for Amistad NRA. Send in your comments and let us know if you want to be on our mailing list. We will keep you informed throughout the planning process with public meetings, newsletters, postings on the web site, and a draft plan. If you have any comments or questions at any time, please feel free to contact me at:

Alan W. Cox, Superintendent
Amistad National Recreation Area
HCR 3 Box 5J
Del Rio TX 78840
(830) 775-7491

E-mail:Amistad_planning@nps.gov

Or visit the NPS Planning website at <http://www.planning.nps.gov/plans.cfm>.

Please accept our thanks in advance for your input and assistance in this

important process. We appreciate your interest in Amistad National Recreation Area and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Alan W. Cox
Superintendent

A Bit of History

Amistad National Recreation Area was established in 1990, twenty-one years after completion of Amistad Dam. The dam, a joint project between Mexico and the United States, was built on the Rio Grande to store water and prevent flooding. The name *Amistad* is Spanish for friendship, to commemorate the spirit of cooperation between two neighbors. The International Boundary and Water Commission operates the dam.

Amistad National Recreation Area was established by the United States Congress to provide recreation and enjoyment of the U.S. side of Amistad Reservoir, and to protect its scenic, scientific, and cultural resources. The National Park Service manages the NRA, in coordination with various state and federal agencies. ✪

New Binational Fisheries Plan



Bronze Eagle Sculptures on Top of Amistad Dam

A new Binational Fisheries Management Plan has been developed by Amistad National Recreation Area, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and various agencies in the government of Mexico. The plan will coordinate fisheries management on both sides of the international border in Lake Amistad.

Alan W. Cox, Superintendent of Amistad NRA, said, "Before this plan, there was no coordination between United States and Mexican agencies. There is sport fishing on both sides of the border, and commercial fishing on the Mexican side. Nobody was keeping an eye on the health of the entire fishery to ensure everybody was doing things right."

The Binational Fisheries Management Plan will coordinate research programs and monitoring projects between Mexico and the U.S., and creates an open dialogue between all lake users, from sport anglers to commercial fisherman. Both nations have committed to keeping Amistad's fisheries resource in tip-top shape. ✪

PWC Ban Still In Effect

As a result of a federal court order, the operation of personal watercraft (Jet Skis, Seadoos, etc.) is currently prohibited in Amistad NRA. This is not a permanent ban, and the park is drafting a management plan that may allow personal watercraft use in 2004.

You may tow your PWC to the Mexican side of Lake Amistad and operate it there. An Amistad lake use permit is not required for a towed vessel. Check with authorities regarding permits required for use in Mexico. ✪



The Monarchs of Amistad

Fall at Amistad National Recreation Area brings one of the most impressive animal migrations in the world- passage of thousands of Monarch butterflies. The Monarchs pass through the Del Rio area on their way from southern Canada to their winter homes in the mountains of central Mexico.

Monarchs flying from Canada to Mexico will travel up to 3000 miles in their fall migration. Del Rio and Ciudad Acuña are usually close to the center of the migration corridor, and most years you can see thousands of butterflies roosting in trees overnight around the lake and in town.

The return spring migration is more dispersed, and the Monarchs travel to northern Texas and Oklahoma to lay eggs for the next generation. Three or four more generations will recolonize the Plains all the way to Canada, until late summer butterflies resume migratory behavior.

One of the most impressive aspects of the Monarch migration is, unlike birds, individual butterflies have never migrated before, since the migratory generation is separated by three or four non-migratory generations. Pure instinct guides these remarkable insects.

Each fall, Amistad National Recreation Area offers a bilingual, binational educational program, 'Monarchs Across the Border,' to elementary school children in Del Rio, TX and Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila. The program covers the Monarch's amazing migration, the importance of its conservation, and emphasizes the Monarch as a resource shared among neighboring countries. ✪

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Val Verde County Sheriff: 911 or (830) 774-7513
Ambulance: 911 or (830) 775-1111
Diablo East Ranger Station: Intermittently Staffed (830) 775-6722
Rough Canyon Ranger Station: Intermittently Staffed (830) 775-1911
Pecos Ranger Station: Intermittently Staffed (915) 292-4544

Volunteering In Parks



National Park Service Volunteers at the Pecos River Overlook

When life has been good to you, a good way to “pay back” is to volunteer at a national park, a seashore, a recreation area, a historical site or any other designation given to those magnificent areas that preserve the USA’s resources.

Our national parks are under-funded and under-staffed. Not nearly enough money comes to the parks to keep them going like it once was. Many projects are dropped by the wayside when funds are not available.

We are retired and have a home in Fort Myers, Florida. In the past three years our temporary homes have been in Maryland on Assateague National Seashore; in Pennsylvania at Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site; in Florida at Fort Caroline National Memorial; in Del Rio, Texas at Amistad National Recreation area, and near Fredonia, Arizona at Pipe Spring National Historic Site.

We have spent as little as one month and as many as five months in these areas. Now we are going back a second time to some of these places because we love the areas, the people and the work.

We discovered the fun of volunteering in 1992. We began at state parks in Ohio and Florida. In 1996 we began to specialize in national parks only. We have been campground hosts, visitor center operators, trails and rails speak-

ers, amateur archeologists, and our greatest love, first person historical costumed interpreters for park visitors. We have also assembled picnic tables, delivered toilet paper to rustic out-houses, helped develop educational programs, baked homemade bread in the oven of an iron cook stove and made a homemade stew in a dutch oven on an open campfire. Other friends we have met make signs, clear trails, conduct hikes and give geological talks in some very pretty sites. In fact, we are writing this at Amistad NRA from a campsite overlooking the lake. Deer walk by every morning, yucca plants are just starting to bloom and the desert is slowly coming alive as it does only after a rain.

The national parks have a program that lets a volunteer park at an RV campsite, with electric, sewer and water, and the beautiful scenery in return for the volunteer’s service. The rangers tell us about other places of interest in the area that most casual visitors miss. The volunteers have pot luck dinners and use off- hours to socialize. We make many lasting friendships.

If you are interested in volunteering, ask for the pamphlet “VIP Volunteers in Parks” or go to the web site www.nps.gov/volunteer Another site www.volunteer.gov is for all government agencies.

- Ellie Knapp-Motter and Ron Motter
Park Volunteers

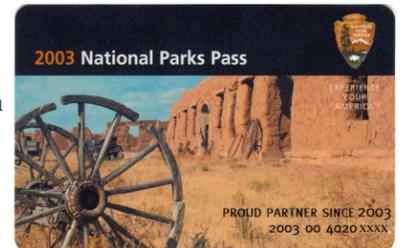
Amistad NRA Fees

Park User Fees	Regular	Golden Age/Access
Entrance Fee	None	None
Daily Boat Use (24 hours)	\$4.00	\$2.00
3 Day Boat Use	\$10.00	\$5.00
Annual Boat Use Per Calendar Year	\$40.00	\$20.00
Camping Spur 406	\$4.00/night/site	\$2.00/night /site
Camping San Pedro	\$4.00/night/site	\$2.00/night/site
Camping Governors Landing	\$8.00/night/site	\$4.00/night/site
Camping 277 North	\$4.00/night/site	\$2.00/night/site
Group Camp Sites San Pedro, 277 North, Rock Quarry	\$2/person/night 15 person minimum	\$1/person/night 15 person minimum

Park Passports

The National Parks Passport is a real bargain for the frequent visitor to National Park Service units. The pass is only \$50 and provides free entrance to its holder and everyone in the vehicle for one full year from the date of purchase. Not all parks have an entrance fee, but most of them do, including some entrance fees up to \$20. The pass is only good for entrance and does not include any user fees such as parking, camping, launching, etc.

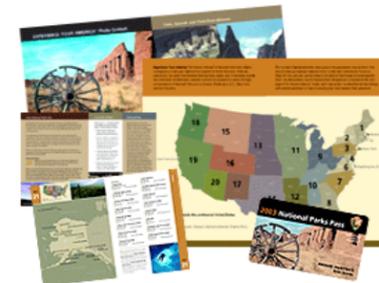
NATIONAL PARKS PASS



A handy booklet on the National Park areas is included with the purchase of a National Parks Pass.

Anyone may purchase a National Parks Pass; however, it may not be used for commercial purposes. See the individual park for commercial vehicle entrance fees.

A **GOLDEN EAGLE UPGRADE** can be purchased for \$15 to cover entrance into other federal fee areas, such as National Forests, and Corps of Engineers lands.



PARK SPECIFIC PASS

Some parks may have an individual annual pass for entrance to that park only. This is great if you live near a National Park and enjoy visiting it often. The cost is less than a National Parks Pass, but it is only to be used at the park in which you purchased it.

GOLDEN ACCESS PASSPORT

The Golden Access Passport is free of charge to U.S. citizens who are permanently physically disabled or blind. A Golden Access Passport admits its holder into all National Park Service units and many other federal fee areas for the lifetime of the holder. Other federal fee areas include those managed by the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Entrance is also permitted to everyone in the pass holder’s vehicle. The pass holder may also be entitled to 50% off all user fees such as camping, launching, and parking. Where there is an individual fee, such as a cave tour, then only the pass holder is entitled to 50% off. Everyone with him/her must pay full price. The passport must be obtained in person along with proof of disability, and it is nontransferable.



GOLDEN AGE PASSPORT

The Golden Age Passport is a lifetime entrance permit for U.S. citizens 62 years of age and older. This pass allows its holder the same benefits as the Golden Access. The Golden Age Passport must be obtained in person with proof of age. There is a one-time fee of \$10 for this pass to cover administrative costs. It is nontransferable.



Volunteering at Amistad



Interested in volunteering at Amistad National Recreation Area? Fill out an application and send it to: Amistad National Recreation Area, HCR 3 Box 5J, Del Rio, TX 78840 ATTN: Volunteer Coordinator or email to: Amis_Interpretation@nps.gov.

Park Activities



Amistad National Recreation Area offers water-based recreation and protects our natural and cultural heritage. Amistad (Spanish for friendship) Dam, built by the United States and Mexico in 1969, forms International Amistad Reservoir on the Rio Grande, Pecos, and Devils rivers. Buoys mark the US/Mexico border along the Rio Grande arm of the lake. Enjoy your visit to Amistad NRA!



CAMPING

The National Park Service operates four campgrounds. All sites are primitive with no hook-ups, and feature grills, vault toilets, and covered picnic tables. Only Governors Landing has potable water. All sites are first-come, first-served. Reservations are not available except for Group Campsites. A dump station is located at Diablo East.

SAN PEDRO

Open all year
35 Sites with long, flat spaces, suitable for RVs or tents. Also, 5 tent-only sites.
Camp Hosts on site in the winter months.

GOVERNORS LANDING

Open all year
15 Sites, suitable for RVs less than 28 feet or tents.
Camp Hosts on-site in the winter months.

SPUR 406

Open all year
8 Sites, for RVs or tents, shoreline camping available.

277 NORTH

Open depending on lake level
17 Sites, for RV or tent, shoreline camping available.
Camp Hosts on-site in the winter months.

GROUP CAMPSITES

Located at San Pedro, 277 North and Rock Quarry. All are primitive group sites and have covered picnic tables and fire ring. Sites may be reserved up to 3 months in advance.

Privately owned campgrounds and RV parks with hookups are also available in the Del Rio area.



FISHING

CAST A LINE

The beautiful blue water of Lake Amistad provides excellent fishing and attracts many anglers to Amistad NRA.

BANK FISHING

You can fish from the shoreline anywhere outside of harbors and designated swim areas. Courtesy fishing docks are located at Governors Landing, Rough Canyon and at the end of Spur 454.

WHAT TO FISH FOR

Some of the "favorite" catches at Lake Amistad are Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, Striped Bass, Channel Catfish, and Black Crappie.

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Texas fishing license requirements apply when fishing on the U.S. side of Lake Amistad. When in Mexican waters, you must adhere to Mexican fishing regulations, which differ considerably from Texas regulations in terms of size and catch limits. The Mexican border is indicated by numbered buoys running along the main channel of the Rio Grande.

NOTE: Amistad Marine on Hwy 90W is now selling Mexican fishing licenses and boat permits. 830-775-0878. Mexican fishing licenses and boat permits are also available from the SAGARPA office in Ciudad Acuña at 380 Zapata, two blocks east of Blvd Guerrero (turn at the Chevy dealer). Office

hours are 8-3 Monday- Friday. The phone number in Acuña is 877-2-58-14 and 877-2-62-38.

NOTE: Mexican law strictly prohibits possession of guns, ammunition, and illegal drugs. Anyone caught in Mexican waters with contraband will receive a mandatory prison sentence and a substantial fine.



SCUBA DIVING

Amistad's exceptionally clear water makes it an excellent place for scuba diving. A dive cove is located at Diablo East. Depending on lake levels there are several submerged ranch houses to explore. Check with a park ranger or at park headquarters before you dive, and pick up a copy of "Dive Amistad Safely." Use your dive flag, know your safe limits and never dive alone. Don't try scuba diving without training.



SWIMMING

Swimming at Amistad is a great way to escape the desert heat. Unsupervised swim beaches are located at Governors Landing and at Diablo East. You may swim in other areas of the lake as well, except in harbors and around docks. Water temperatures range from 54 degrees in winter months to 86 degrees late in summer.

Swim safe!

- ◆ There are no lifeguards on duty; all swimming is at your own risk.
- ◆ Stay within reach of children.
- ◆ Never swim alone.
- ◆ Diving from the cliffs is extremely dangerous and is not recommended at any time.
- ◆ If you swim from a boat, make sure the boat is anchored and the engine is turned off.
- ◆ Never start a boat engine while swimmers are in the water.
- ◆ It is recommended that small children and non-swimmers wear Coast Guard approved life jackets; some areas in Lake Amistad have sudden drop offs into deeper water.

Remember: Water activities and alcohol do not mix. Many drownings are alcohol-related and can be prevented by not drinking alcoholic beverages before or during water sports.



HUNTING

Unlike many National Park Service areas, Amistad's enabling legislation allows limited hunting. Archery and small-game shotgun hunting is permitted on about 2,200 acres of federal land in five hunt areas. Texas hunting regulations and seasons along with Amistad's regulations are used to manage hunting.

Free permits are available IN PERSON only at the visitor information center with the following documentation:

- . Texas Hunting License
- . Drivers License
- . Hunter Education Card (if born after September 1, 1971).

While hunting, hunters must have the permit in their possession, must fill in the Hunter Data Sheet daily, and return the form by March 15, 2004. Failure to comply will result in loss of future hunting privileges.

More information and maps are available at the visitor information center and on our web site: www.nps.gov/amis.



PICNICKING

Relax and enjoy lake side views at any of Amistad NRA's eight picnic areas. Each area is equipped with covered picnic tables, grills, and vault toilets. Group picnic shelters are available by reservation only.



MARINAS

Boat Rentals

Lake Amistad Resort & Marina 830-774-4157

Rough Canyon Marina & Store 830-775-8779

Air Force (Southwinds) Marina 830-775-5971

Authorized Fishing Guides

Herschel Black Jerry Black Glen McGonagill
(830) 775-3639 (432) 292-4710 (830) 775-6720

Don "Ray" Hanselman (830) 774-1857
"Mike" Fambro (432) 292-4638
Gene Peil (830) 775-7243

Charlie Rumfield
(830) 774-3484



PROGRAMS

COWBOY COFFEE

An informal talk with an NPS ranger or other guest is held every Thursday morning at 10 AM from January through March. The programs are rotated among 3 of Amistad NRA's campgrounds, Governors Landing, San Pedro and 277 North, and are held at the Campground Host's site. Cowboy Coffee talks are open to the public and **free** of charge. Bring your favorite mug, a comfortable chair, and lots of questions!

EVENING PROGRAMS

From December to March, evening programs are offered on various Saturday evenings at 7:30 PM at locations throughout Del Rio and Val Verde County. Topics cover a variety of subjects and are presented by experts in their respective field. Contact the park for a schedule. Evening programs are free of charge. Dress warm and bring a flashlight.

BIRD WALKS

A guided bird walk is offered every third Saturday of the month from September to May. We meet at Amistad NRA Visitor Information Center on Hwy 90 W at 8am. From there we carpool to the Rio Grande below Amistad Dam. Bring binoculars, birding books, checklists, drinking water, snacks, and wear sturdy shoes. Bird walks are **free**.

Sept 20, 2003 - Oct 18, 2003 - Nov 15, 2003
Dec 20, 2003 - Jan 17, 2004, - Feb 21, 2004
Mar 20, 2004 - Apr 17, 2004 - May 15, 2004

SUGGESTED BIRDING/ WILDLIFE VIEWING LOCATIONS

AMISTAD NRA

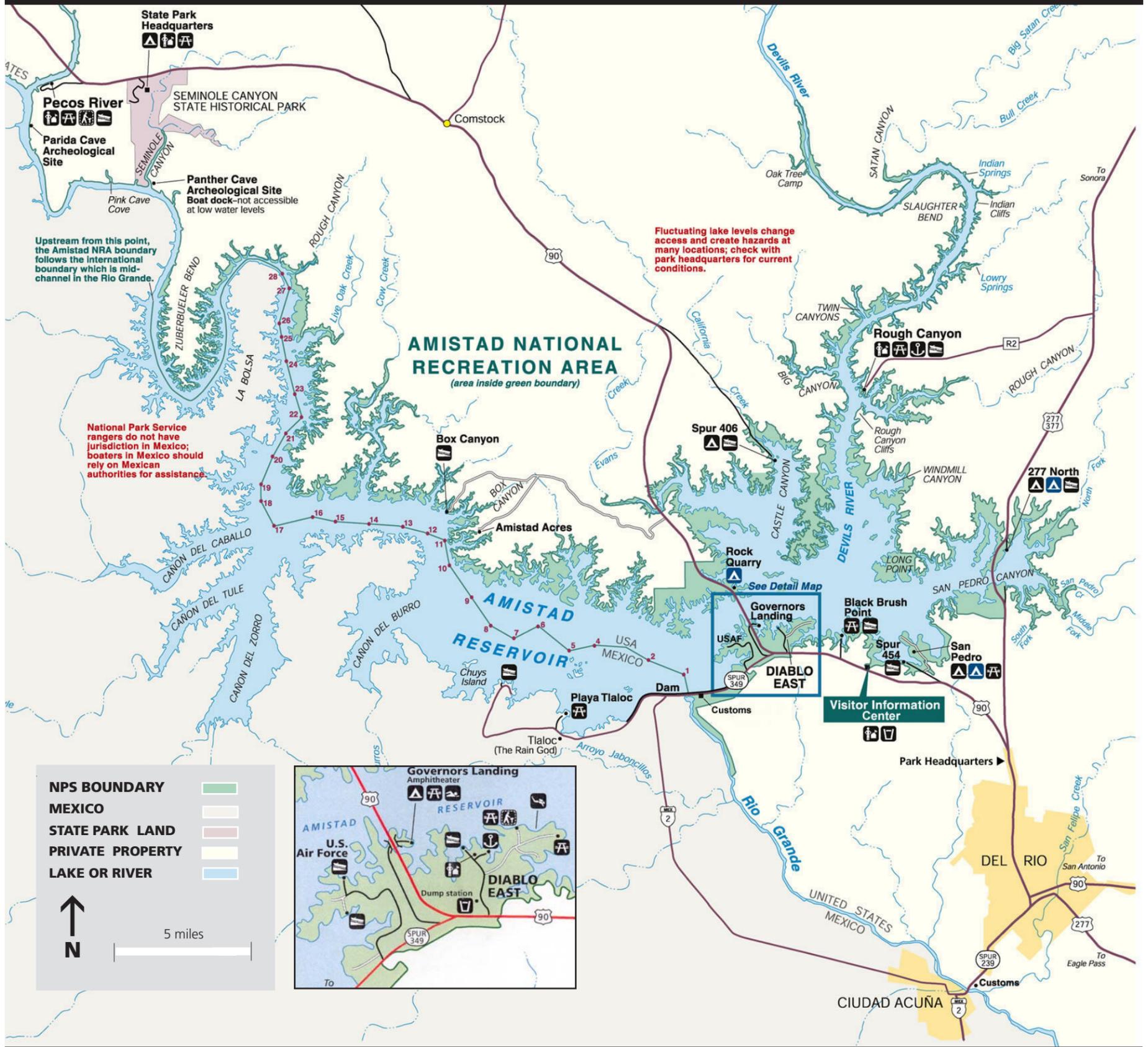
Spur 454: San Pedro Campground - Good for desert birds; very good for migrating and wintering sparrows. Good for butterflies in season.

Spur 406: Good for desert birds; in summer use spotting scope for interior least terns over Lake Amistad. Good butterflies in season.

Hunt Area 1: Great for desert birds. Check with Amistad NRA for hunting status.

Rio Grande Below Amistad Dam: Very good for riparian birds. Open by guided tour only. See bird walk schedule above.

Map of Amistad National Recreation Area



BIRDWATCHING (cont.)

DEL RIO

Duck Ponds - Cienegas Rd: Good for aquatic birds.

River Road: (follow Vega Verde Road past gravel pits to dead end) Good for riparian birds.

Laguna de Plata: (on Garza Lane) Good for wintering waterfowl and winter grassland sparrows.

San Felipe Creek: Good for riparian birds, and green and ringed kingfisher.

South Del Rio near Winery: (Valenti St. and River St. off Nicholson, and Guyer Lane off Qualia Drive) Good for migrating warblers.

TRAILS & RAILS PROGRAM

The National Park Service has teamed up with Amtrak to provide educational programs onboard the Amtrak passenger train. Park staff and volunteers explain the fascinating natural and cultural history

along the rail route through southwest Texas. They bring alive historical figures such as Judge Roy Bean and talk about the construction of the second transcon-



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train arrives into Del Rio.

NOTE: The National Park Service will accommodate groups with advance notice. Given advance notice, the Trails & Rails volunteers will board the train regardless of arrival time into Del Rio.

Reservations:

To make a reservation on Amtrak, call 1-800-USA RAIL (1-800-872-7245). You will make your reservation for the Sunset Limited and you do not have to mention the Trails & Rails program. Our program is presented onboard regularly scheduled Amtrak passenger trains. The National Park Service is not involved with Amtrak prices, reservations, etc.

TRIPS:

Del Rio to Sanderson trip: You will need to have someone shuttle you/your group back to Del Rio from Sanderson. On your way back you can visit the Terrell County Museum in Sanderson, stop by the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry, also sure to check out Seminole Canyon State Historical Park!

Del Rio to Alpine trip: If you choose to go all the way to Alpine and take the eastbound Sunset Limited back that night, plan on an extended layover in Alpine. Depending on the timing of the trains

(westbound and eastbound), you may have from 5 - 10 hours in the Alpine area. If that is the case, you may want to rent a car and drive to Fort Davis, McDonald Observatory, to Marfa or to Big Bend National Park. Just be back in time for the eastbound train. To check on the train's arrival status into Alpine, call 1-800-USA-RAIL (1-800-872-7245).

We welcome you to join us for an interesting and educational description of the world outside the train windows. For more information call 830-775-7491 ext. 223.



INFORMATION

Amistad NRA's new visitor information center is located 10 miles west of Del Rio on Hwy 90 West, and, as of January, 2004, will be open 7 days a week, 8 am - 5 pm, closed Thanksgiving Day, December 25 and January 1. The center has various interactive displays, a theater to watch a short film on the recreation area, an information desk, and a full book store and lounge area.

The book store is stocked by Big Bend Natural History Association and has many great titles and fun things for sale. You can purchase field guides, books on Texas history, rock art, Texas Indians, borderland history, maps, star charts, wildlife posters and puzzles, childrens books and much, much more!

The information center has all National Park Passports for sale, and annual or daily boat permits (see page 3 for info on passports and permits).

A Guide To Common Venomous Animals of the Desert

Most Common Culprits Are Stinging Insects

You will be more likely to encounter stinging insects like bees, wasps and ants, rather than snakes or any other poisonous dwellers in the desert. They are more abundant and they are out when you are – in the daytime. Bees are very important pollinators. Most species of flowering plants rely on them. Bees will generally leave you alone unless you get too close to their hive and they try to protect it. If a bee flies near you, do not swat at it. Swatting will only make it defensive; instead, just stay still. Honey bees especially are attracted to bright colors and sweet smells. If you go hiking in the desert, try to avoid wearing bright-colored clothing and using colognes or fragrant hair products. Some people are very allergic to bee stings and should carry a sting-kit in their first aid bag. Bee stings are known to cause anaphylactic shock in some individuals and, if not treated immediately, can be fatal.

The other common culprits are ants. Ants are very abundant in the world, and there are many different species. In the southwestern U.S. there are three types of venomous ants. Fire ants are 1/16 to 1/4" in size, yellow, red or black in color, have long legs, and fine hairs on their head and abdomen. They are found mostly in open areas with dry to moist soil. Harvester ants are reddish-brown and 1/4-1/2" long. They live in fields, bare areas, and sand. Field ants can be black, red, brown or black and red, and are 1/16-1/4" long. These are common both in the desert and in urban areas.

The giant desert centipede is about 8-12" long, and its body is light orange to yellowish in color. Both head and tail are darker. The body has an average of twenty segments, each containing one pair of legs. Centipedes live mainly outdoors in damp, dark places (like under rocks, boards or debris), but they can also be found indoors in basements, garages and closets of houses built in or near the desert. Desert centipedes feed on insects and other small creatures, and they are active year-round. Don't touch! This fellow has large, pincer-like jaws and can inflict nasty pain, but the bite is not a serious injury. You can best avoid these creatures if you are careful where you put your hands and feet.

Rattlesnakes

Rattlesnakes are common throughout the desert southwest. It is unlikely you will encounter a rattlesnake during the daytime in the hot summer months, but it is a good idea to carry a flashlight with you if walking around the desert at night, since this is when they are most active. If you encounter a rattlesnake, give it a wide berth and allow it to move before attempting to walk past it. They do not want to harm you any more than you want to bother them. Do not kill it! All snakes are an important part of the ecosystem. They help keep nature in balance. Many harmless snakes look like and, at times, even mimic rattlesnakes. The gopher snake is a good example. It will shake its tail in the leaves, and even hiss at you. A rattlesnake can be identified by its flattened, triangular-shaped head, and it usually has some sort of rattle. It will also have elliptical pupils (cat's eyes).



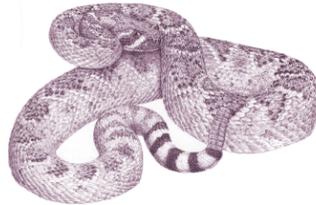
Bees and Wasps



Ants



Giant Centipede



Western Diamondback

Arachnids

There are numerous types of arachnids in the desert. One, in particular, that is commonly associated with southwest deserts is the scorpion. There are many species of scorpions in the U.S., most of which are found in Arizona. Unfortunately, scorpions have a reputation for being among the deadliest of the desert inhabitants of our region. This is not true, especially when the only scorpion regarded as life threatening to humans is found solely in some lower, riparian areas of Arizona. This species does not reside in Texas. Scorpion stings are painful, but not very harmful to most human beings.



Scorpion



Tarantula

Tarantulas are also well known in the southwestern deserts of the U.S. These hairy giants are more scary-looking than harmful. In fact, they are quite gentle unless provoked by humans, which could lead to a painful bite. Tarantula venom is mild and no severe injuries have been recorded in the U.S.

Black widow spiders, on the other hand, should be avoided all together. The venom is a neuromuscular toxin and can cause muscle cramping, nausea, vomiting, high blood pressure and weakness. Black widows are known for their red hourglass-shaped marking on their underside. They like dark, damp places like cellars and rock walls. Brown recluse spider venom can produce pain, swelling, and flu-like symptoms. The enzymes can cause tissue breakdown at the location of the bite. The brown recluse is identified by a violin-shaped marking on the body, right behind the head. These spiders normally live under logs, rocks and debris.



Black Widow



Brown Recluse

Helpful Tips....

- * Learn to identify venomous species.
- * Learn their habits.
- * Never try to catch a snake or other wild animal.
- * Shake out clothes, shoes and bedding when camping in the desert.
- * Be careful where you put your hands and feet.
- * Always bring a first aid kit and antiseptic to wash out a wound.

The Big Bend Natural History Association (BBNHA) bookstore, located at Amistad NRA's information center, has a good selection of field guides and identification books for desert plants and animals.

BBNHA is a non-profit organization. Book sales directly benefit interpretive activities, and educational brochures and publications such as this newspaper.

All wildlife are protected by federal laws. It is illegal to disturb, capture, harm or kill any wildlife within Amistad National Recreation Area boundaries.

- Illustrations and some excerpts and facts were borrowed from "Poisonous Dwellers of the Desert", a Southwest Parks and Monuments Association publication.

Amistad National Recreation Area Inspires Poetry

"If you have ever driven West on 90 out of Del Rio about 5 in the afternoon with the winter sun slowly descending, then you have seen all the faces of the Prickly Pear shining in the reflection of the sun. These lines of poetry express what I've experienced at Amistad NRA."

- Kay Tiff, Park Volunteer

Arriving at Amistad
The full moon is our welcome
Desert nights as bright as day
A light that makes the desert white.

In the darkness, red and green lights
Is the desert still celebrating Christmas?
Surprise - it is the bridge over Lake Amistad.

The prickly pear
Hold their hand mirrors
To the setting sun.

Back on the border
Tejano music in every store
Brown skins, Spanish eyes.

Amistad Lake in the morning cold
Misted over in grays
My eyes water from the wind.

A February sunrise
Light rising beneath the clouds
Modeling sunset colors.

Lake Amistad, your figure
Looks like a dragon
You hold ancient secrets.

Six Friends
Meander the streets of Mexico
Visiting and laughing in snatches of time.

At the ramp
A dance
Of trucks, trailers and boats.

Unexpected invitation
Boating on Lake Amistad
The thrill is unexpected too.

Dragon Lake, Beautiful Lady
Six friends on water
Gliding up Rough Canyon, water spraying behind.

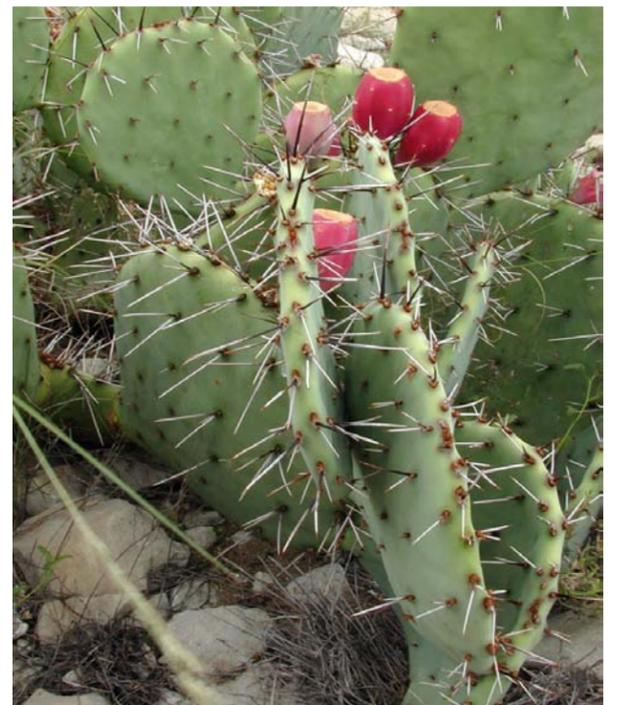
Indian Springs
Holds many written secrets
In the hollows of its rock towers.

Joe takes us for a short walk
He talks of 'olgy
Geology, Geomorphology, Archeology.

This day, This peace
This memory of water...
The eternal YES.

We stand watching the sky
Pink and Navy clouds on display
Lightning, the desert's pyrotechnics.

The Black Brush is not Black
Amazing Yellow Caterpillar Puffs
Overwhelming sweet scent.



Boating Safety



Each year, tens of thousands of visitors come to Amistad to enjoy boating, fishing, and other water sports. The National Park Service is committed to ensuring that their visit is safe and enjoyable. You can help protect yourself and other lake users by knowing and obeying state and federal boating laws.

LAKE USE PERMITS

◆ A valid Amistad lake use permit is required for motorized vessels of any length, and for non-motorized vessels 14 feet or longer. Lake use permits can be obtained from machines at Diablo East, Rough Canyon, and the NPS Visitor Information Center on Highway 90 West.

◆ Annual and daily lake use permits are available. If you purchase an annual permit from a machine, you must exchange the receipt and obtain a sticker from the Visitor Information Center, Diablo East Marina, or Rough Canyon Marina. Attach the sticker to the port (left) side of your vessel, near the registration numbers. Annual permits expire on December 31 of the year they were issued.

NOTE: Personal Watercraft use at Amistad NRA is temporarily prohibited (see article on page 2).

REQUIRED SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs):

◆ All vessels must have one Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III, or V wearable PFD for each person on board. Check the labels inside your PFDs if you are not sure what type they are. These PFDs must be in good condition, readily accessible, and the correct size for the people on board.

◆ All children under 13 years of age must wear their PFDs while the vessel is underway.

◆ All vessels over 16 feet in length (except canoes and kayaks), are required to have one Coast Guard approved Type IV throwable PFD on board.

Audible Warning Device:

◆ All vessels must have a functioning horn,

whistle, or other adequate sound-producing device on board.

Required Lights:

◆ All vessels operated between sunset and sunrise, or in periods of low visibility, must display a white light visible from 360 degrees around. In addition, power driven vessels must display red and green navigation lights while underway between sunset and sunrise, or during low visibility.

◆ If you plan to launch your boat before dawn, remember to turn on your lights until sunrise.

Fire Extinguishers:

◆ All vessels with permanently installed fuel tanks are required to carry a functional "B" or "B,C" fire extinguisher on board.

◆ Extinguishers must be charged and in good working condition.

◆ If you are not sure whether you are required to carry a fire extinguisher, play it safe and carry one anyway.

BOATING RULES

Obey Buoys and Other Markers:

◆ Cut your throttle to idle speed in no-wake zones in harbors. No-wake zones were established to protect docked boats from damage. Remember, you are legally responsible for any damage caused by your wake. These areas are marked by orange and white buoys with a circle and the words "flat wake" or "no wake."

◆ Respect closures. Some areas of the lake are closed to protect swimmers, divers, and wildlife. These areas are marked with signs and/or orange and white buoys with a crossed diamond.

◆ Do not attach your vessel to buoys or other navigation aids. Doing so is illegal, as it may cause buoys to move, endangering other boaters.

Watch For Hazards:

◆ The lake level is constantly fluctuating, exposing new rocks and shallow areas. If you are unfamiliar with an area, or water levels have changed since you

were last there, slow down and keep an eye out for underwater hazards. It is impossible for the National Park Service to mark every rock and obstacle in the water; you are responsible for operating carefully and avoiding accidents.

◆ Be especially careful beyond buoy #28 on the Rio Grande, and near Indian Springs on the Devils River. Shallow areas and rocks have caused accidents in these areas.

◆ Some hazards are marked by orange or orange and white buoys with a diamond symbol.

Check Weather Reports:

◆ Weather conditions can change rapidly on Lake Amistad. Check weather reports before you leave the dock, and tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return. Get off the water as soon as possible if high winds, large waves, or storms develop.

Follow the "Rules Of The Road:"

◆ When meeting another boat head-on, keep to the right.

◆ When crossing the path of other vessels, yield to vessels ahead and to the right of you.

◆ When passing another vessel from behind, stay clear and pass on the safest side.

◆ Remember that non-motorized vessels always have right-of-way over motorized vessels.

Water Skiing and Wakeboarding

◆ You must have a second person in the boat as observer. A rear view mirror is not sufficient according to federal law.

◆ Persons being towed must wear a Coast Guard approved PFD.

◆ You may not tow a skier or wakeboarder within 500 feet of a harbor, a swimming beach, or a mooring area, or within 100 feet of a person swimming, fishing, or diving. No one may be towed between sunset and sunrise. ⚡

Join Our Family

*Please accept our
Invitation to join the
Big Bend Natural
History Association*

The Association's goal is to educate the public and increase their understanding and appreciation of the Big Bend Area and what it represents in terms of our historical and natural heritage. You can be an important part of this effort when you become a member.

BBNHA was founded in 1956 to aid educational, historical, and scientific programs for the benefit of Big Bend NP, Amistad NRA, and their visitors.

Your Benefits as a Member

- A 15% discount on items sold by BBNHA
- A 10% discount on most seminars
- Current Big Bend calendar
- Discounts at many other association bookstores in visitor centers at other national park sites
- Opportunity to support scientific, educational, and historical programs in Big Bend NP and Amistad NRA

Past and present projects include:

- Operate book sales outlets in Big Bend National Park and Amistad National Recreation Area
- Publish trail guides and brochures and assist with the publication of The High Bridge Tribune
- Sponsor an on-going Seminar program
- Provide annual grants for research projects and administer grants and gifts received for the park
- Support the parks' volunteer and educational outreach programs

Yes!

*Please enroll me as a
member of BBNHA*

ANNUAL DUES

___ Individual (\$25) ___ Associate (\$50)

___ Corporate (\$100)

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

___ Individual or Family (\$250)

___ Corporate (\$500)

___ Benefactor (\$1,000)

___ New Member ___ Renewal

Mr./Ms./Mrs. _____

Address _____

City _____ State/ZIP _____

Make check payable to BBNHA or charge to:

___ Visa ___ Mastercard ___ Discover

Card No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

DETACH AND MAIL TO:

BBNHA, P.O. Box 196
Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834
Telephone: (915) 477-2236
e-mail: bibe_bbnha@nps.gov