



VIP2VIP



Season 14, Volume 4

Big Bend National Park's Volunteer Newsletter

February 2, 2015

Current Volunteers

Castolon

- Jep Robertson—Camphost (2nd)
- Bonnie Winslow—Camphost (2nd)
- Ken & Vicky Conway—Visitor Center (2nd)
- Paul & Judy Tarr—Visitor Center (2nd)
- Steve & Tina Ehrman—Backcountry (9th)

Chisos Basin

- Ed Davis—Camphost (10th)
- Jim & Mary Lynn Murrell—Camphosts (5th)
- Phil & Peggy Spruell—Visitor Center (3rd)
- Terry Brackeen—Visitor Center (4th)

Panther Junction

- Steve Blythe (3rd) - VaRP River (3rd)
- Daisy Welch (4th) - VaRP River (4th)
- Joan Spalding—ScRM (2nd)
- Riley & Karen Caton—EMS (4th)
- Karren Brown—Admin (2nd)
- Pat Staggs—Maintenance (1st)

Persimmon Gap

- Mike Manning—Visitor Center (1st)
- Dave Yorkowitz—Visitor Center (1st)

Rio Grande Village

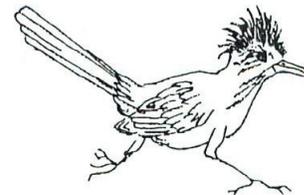
- Dave England—Backcountry (2nd)
- Allen & Becky Wilson—Backcountry (1st)
- Susan Treneer—Camphost (1st)
- Don McCord—Camphost (1st)
- Joe Larrance—Visitor Center (1st)
- Mike & Jeanette Sage—Visitor Center (1st)

Resident and remote volunteers

- Reine Wonite— Park Videographer (11th)
- Jim Bishop—BBNHA
- Tom Alex—ScRM (1st)
- Jeff Bantle—ScRM (1st)

* Number in () indicates years of service

A twitter, a tweet, a post or a bleep... like us or follow us, isn't this neat?!



By Maria Lavender (Interp Ranger & Social Media Coordinator)

Did you know Big Bend National Park has its own *official* Facebook page and Twitter feed? Whether this stirs excitement, fear, or just muddled confusion, you should be aware that these new forms of education and communication exist in this far-away land of the Big Bend. To help you discover ways these tools can be of value to you and/or the visitors you encounter, here is a quick primer on Social Media and how Big Bend is involved.

Social Media are computer-based tools that allow people to create, share, and exchange thoughts, products, and artistic endeavors on the internet in a network or community forum. Unlike typical 'media,' Social Media invite the community to reply, reflect, and contribute openly to the ongoing conversation. Some of the major players in Social Media are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Flickr, among many others. The main difference between Facebook and twitter? Twitter is used for quick one-liner updates and snippets of information, and Facebook can be used to post more in-depth content and conversation. When you 'follow' a Twitter account, you get 'tweets' from them on your Twitter account (or to your phone via text messaging); when you 'like' a Facebook Page, you get updated posts from them on your page.

Facebook has become the Social Media giant with over 1 billion users throughout the world! No longer just a tool for individuals to post pictures of their families and posts about their feelings and ideas, companies and organizations create profiles on Facebook to create a buzz about them. To engage thousands, or even millions, of people across the world is a powerful thing. This power does come with strings, of course. If an organization uses Social Media, it is crucial to be constantly vigilant on the sites used, in order to prevent them from becoming nothing more than an avenue for unintended rants and ramblings.

(continued on page 2)

A twitter, a tweet, a post or a bleep...like us or follow us, isn't this neat?!...continued

The National Park Service has strongly encouraged all Parks to participate in social media with the objective *“to enhance and protect the overall reputation of NPS...to proactively create positive content and reactively respond to potentially contrarian posts while maintaining complete transparency in the process.”*

To continue to engage the public and encourage the next generation of advocates for National Parks, Big Bend has created a Facebook profile and a Twitter feed, and may use more forms of Social Media in the future. By eagerly accepting the invitation from the digital world, we can provide a positive, professional, and inspirational presence, united in our voice that these are special places worth chatting about. Now the conversation can be in person, on the computer screen, or on the phone in your hand. Access to Big Bend has never been easier!

How *you* can participate:

Let our visitors know we are on Facebook and Twitter!

Without signing up or committing to anything:

Visit or share the Big Bend Twitter Feed here: <https://twitter.com/BigBendNPS>

Visit or share the Big Bend Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/BigBendNPS>

If you have Facebook Page, ‘like’ us to receive updates in *your* news feed

If you have a Twitter account, ‘follow’ us to get brief up-to-date news and insights



We are pleased to welcome back returning volunteers Bonnie Winslow (Cottonwood camphost), Paul and Judy Tarr (Castolon Visitor Center), Ken and Vicky Conway (Castolon Visitor Center), Phil and Peggy Spruell (Chisos Basin Visitor Center) and Jim and Mary Lynn Murrell (Chisos Basin camphosts).

Welcome back returning volunteers!

Water Restriction Update

In spite of having good rains recently we are still under Stage 2 Water Restrictions here at the park. All the volunteers and residents at Panther Junction, Castolon, Persimmon Gap, and Chisos Basin are being asked to read their water meter at the first of every month. There is a line on the volunteer digital timesheet that says: “Water meter reading _____” Just jot the reading in there and I will forward it on to the responsible party.

Water issues are most critical at Panther Junction, Persimmon Gap, Chisos Basin and Castolon. Therefore these locations need to be particularly aware of their need for water conservation. If you have trouble finding or reading your water meter, let me know and I will try to get additional information to you. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter!

New faces and new places

Mike and Jeanette Sage are from Missouri where they have a small farm. Mike retired from Citibank Mortgages and Jeanette retired from nursing in 2011. They have been traveling through the U.S. since then, visiting over 20 national parks and many state parks. The Sages volunteered at Henry's Lake State Park in Idaho this past summer and discovered that volunteer work is a great way to explore, embrace new experiences and develop good friendships. They love the outdoors, hiking and the west in general. This is their first national park volunteer experience and they will be working at the Rio Grande Village visitor center.



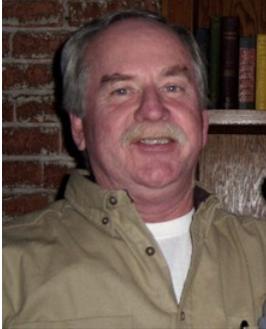
Susan Treneer started volunteering for the National Park Service in the fall of 2010. She says, "I feel very lucky that my first assignment was as an interpretation volunteer at Gila Cliff Dwelling Nat'l Monument. This really shaped my whole vision of retirement and I've been volunteering in the southwest ever since. I love studying the history of the ancient southwest and have accumulated a few thousand volunteer hours at GICL, Petrified Forest National Park and Chaco Culture National Historic Park. I look forward to expanding my knowledge of the Chihuahuan desert at Big Bend." Susan will be volunteering as camp host at Rio Grande Village campground.

Dave Yorkowitz was originally from New York and retired as a federal government employee. For 30 years he worked all over the country as a criminal investigator and tax expert. Dave is a full-time RVer and enjoys volunteering. He has volunteered at Badlands National Park, Minuteman Missile National Historic Site and Padre Island National Seashore in Corpus Christi, Texas. Upon leaving Big Bend, he will be going back to Badlands National Park and then on to Petrified Forest National Park.



Mike Manning has been living in Tucson, Arizona for the last five years and volunteering on the weekends at Saguaro National Park and with the Skyland Alliance. He is a retired IBM software development manager. He and his wife now live in Austin, Texas where she is still working. Mike decided to try a session of volunteering at Big Bend on his own. He will be helping out at Persimmon Gap Visitor Center and residing in Panther Junction

New faces and new places



Don McCord was born in Santa Monica, California and went to Santa Barbara in 1980 to teach at his high school alma mater. He later became a licensed contractor specializing in remodeling and eventually moved to Durango, Colorado in 2003 with his daughter and two cats. There he worked at two resorts as Facilities Manager. He enjoys hiking with his dog Ripley, biking, horseback riding, reading, college football, photography, camping, backpacking, road trips. This is Don's first volunteer experience with the NPS and he will be working at the Rio Grande Village campground.

Joe Larrance is originally from Traverse City, Michigan where he had a career in accounting. He and his wife have volunteered at Farragut State Park in Idaho, Straits State Park in St. Ignace, MI and most recently at Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. They are accompanied by their granddaughter who is being home-schooled by her grandmother. Joe's hobbies include restoring old homes, skiing, hiking and canoeing. Joe is a USMC Vietnam vet, was a scout leader for 30 years and he and his wife have 10 children and 18 grandchildren. Joe will be volunteering at the Rio Grande Village Visitor Center.



Scott Cook comes to us from Acadia National Park where he worked seasonally in the Maintenance Division. Prior to that, he was a journeyman HVAC mechanic and has a home base in Nashville, Tennessee. Scott visited Big Bend last winter and is looking forward to spending additional time here. He will be working with our new plumber, Bryce Thompson but not for long. It looks like he has landed a job and are happy for him. His hobbies include canoeing and wildlife photography.

Ken and Vicky Conway are new/old volunteers—they volunteered for two summers at the Chisos Basin Visitor Center but have never met many of our “winter” volunteers. They were living in Marathon, Texas when they volunteered previously but have since moved to the mountains of Georgia to be near family. Ken worked for Texas Parks and Wildlife and Cameron County Park System for 28 years. He and Vicky volunteered as missionaries in El Salvador for the Christian Children's Foundation for a number of years.



What is a Key Exchange Hike?

For those of you who like to hike, Big Bend is full of all kinds of opportunities. One of the favorite hiking activities is a key-exchange hike. An example of a key-exchange hike is Laguna Meadows-Blue Creek. One group starts at Chisos Basin and hikes up Laguna Meadows. A second group starts out at Blue Creek and hikes toward Laguna Meadows. They meet for lunch (in a perfect world) and exchange car keys (do not forget to do this!). Then they continue on to the end of their respective trail, and drive off in the other party's car. Arrangements are made ahead of time to shuffle vehicles after the hiking is over. Steve and Tina Ehrman are very willing to arrange key exchange hikes in the West District. Contact them at mountainehrman@hotmail.com or 432-477-2339.

Here are some of the trails that this works on:

Laguna Meadows/Blue Creek
Oak Springs/Window Trail
Chimneys
Juniper Canyon/Pinnacles/Boot Canyon
Dodson/Upper Smokey Creek/Mule Ears
Solis/Cross Canyon/Mariscal Canyon
Hot Springs Trail
Dodson
Dodson/Elephant Tusk



TRACKING MAINTENANCE VOLUNTEER TIME

All the volunteers here at Big Bend very likely perform maintenance duties from time to time. Technically, picking up trash when you hike a trail, sweeping the front porch at your visitor center, or collecting and disposing of fallen limbs in the campground all fall under the category of maintenance. You are maintaining the park, making it safer and cleaner. All maintenance work is being tracked via two software systems, FMSS and FBMS.

FMSS:

This program is used to track labor and materials to each location for several reasons. First off, it is mandatory, and secondly, to show the costs needed to maintain a particular location each year. This data helps to (1.) prioritize our locations for funding (which buildings are getting the most use) and (2.) keep track of when maintenance is done so we can plan for when it will be needed again (such as a re-roofing or interior paint for a new resident). If we have a dozen homes due for new roofing, for example, we can create a project and request funding, and we will have the data to back up that request.

FBMS attempts to link budgetary accounts to work projects so that monies which are earmarked for residential housing are actually paying workers who are performing work on residential housing, for example.

Major work that is done for maintenance by volunteers now needs to be tracked via a special timesheet that identifies which property is being worked on and in some cases, what tools are being used. I have that timesheet and can get a copy to you if you feel that you are doing a significant amount of maintenance work which needs to be tracked.

Obviously, any volunteers who are working for the Maintenance Division will be using these timesheets. Of course, now the question arises, "What is a significant amount of maintenance work?" If you spend 6 hours a week snagging trash out of bushes, picking up limbs, cleaning grills and bear boxes at RGV Campground, then the Maintenance Division would like to know about it. If you participate in a repair project as a special duty, that should be identified. This is not an overwhelming amount of data keeping...the timesheet is available digitally as well as a printed form. Your assistance with this tracking would be appreciated. If you have questions about whether something needs to be tracked, let me know and I will try to get an answer. - Jane Brown

Events in the Area

Saturday, February 7—Pioneer Reunion sponsored by BBNHA, 1-5 PM at the Panther Junction Community Room. Reservations are recommended - \$13.50 per person for members, \$15.00 for non-members. Call 477-2236 for more information.

Thursday, February 12—VIP (Volunteer) Community Potluck Dinner at the Panther Junction Community Room. Everyone is invited. Come and bring a covered dish to share. If possible, save on trash by bringing your own plates and silverware. Iced tea will be provided. Food is served at 6:30 pm.

February 12-14 Chihuahuan Dirt Desert Fest, Lajitas, Texas; Desert Sports, Big Bend Ranch State Park, Lajitas Resort and Big Bend National Park are throwing their annual three-day bike festival ...geared to dirt lovers of every size, ability and adventure-readiness. Last year over 450 riders from far and wide chose from an exciting menu of guided rides on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Find out more at www.desertsportstx.com/mountain-bike-event/

Thursday, February 19—2015 Terlingua Word Off will take place at The Starlight Theatre. Recitations begin at 7 pm. All participants will need to sign up promptly at 6pm. Due to time constraints, there will be a cut off of 25 speakers, each designated no more than 5 minutes. Sign up will be on a first come, first served basis. This is a great event...one of my favorites! “Writers, storytellers, liars, stand-ups, ad-libbers, poets, ballad spinners and otherwise dedicated manipulators of the spoken or written word will open their mouths — and who knows what will come out.”

Friday and Saturday, February 27-28– 29th Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering, Alpine Texas. For more information see www.texascowboypoetry.com If you love being “out west”, this is a great event. Lots of free sessions on Friday and Saturday during the day. The evening performances cost \$. Poetry, storytelling and lots of music—don’t miss it! Overnight reservations can be tricky at this late date....but a day trip is a possibility.

Hiking Club scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 26

The hiking club is a chance for volunteers (and anyone else who wants to come!) to get together for a hike, visit with one another, and see something that you might not see on your own. These hikes are not Olympic events, however, this month will be a fairly long hike, but not too much elevation gain and loss. We will be tackling the Apache Canyon Trail in the West District, a hike of 8 miles round trip (plus some exploring at the terminus).

Meet at the rear parking lot of Panther Junction Headquarters at 8:30 am. If you are coming from Castolon, meet at Mile Marker 4.5 on the Ross Maxwell Scenic Highway (north of Ward Spring if you are coming from the south) at 9:00 am. (I am guesstimating on the Mile Marker). We will be driving the gold van. Bring plenty of food and water, sunscreen and a long sleeve shirt.

If you know that you are coming, it is a good idea to email mail me and I will know to wait for you if you are running a few minutes late.



Hiking Club outing on January 26th