



Current Volunteers

Castolon

- Bill & Patti Marvin—Camphosts (4th)
- Dave Conway—Camphost (3rd)
- Bob Douat—Visitor Center (8th)
- Ron & Jane Payne—Visitor Center (6th)
- Steve & Tina Ehrman—Backcountry (8th)
- Mike Jiru—Maintenance (2nd)

Chisos Basin

- Ed Davis—Camphost (9th)
- Doug & Kay Combs—Camphosts (9th)
- Dave England—Visitor Center (1st)
- John & Cyndee Perry—Visitor Center (1st)

Panther Junction

- Elaine & John Jonker—VaRP River (7th)
- Joan Spalding- ScRM (1st)
- Riley & Karen Caton—EMS (3rd)
- Nick Lambert —Maintenance (1st)
- Larry & Julie Brabec—Maintenance (1st)
- Jim & Marlene Hufford—Maintenance (4th)

Persimmon Gap

- Mark Kirtley—Visitor Center (17th)
- Leonard & Sally Timm—Visitor Center (1st)

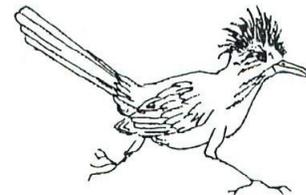
Rio Grande Village

- Amy Gibson—Backcountry (2nd)
- Steve Blythe—Backcountry (2nd)
- Daisy Welch—Backcountry (3rd)
- Jep Robertson & Renae Clark—Camphosts (1st)
- Wayne & Claudia Nicholson—Camphosts (1st)
- Glenda & Robert Overfelt—Visitor Center (6th)
- Terry Brackeen—Visitor Center (3rd)

Resident and remote volunteers

- Reine Wonite— Park Videographer (11th)
- Stacy Sirotnak—SCA ScRM
- Jim Bishop—BBNHA
- Mark Williams—VaRP
- Laurie Meadows—VaRP

Mountain Lion Survey



The National Park Service is partnering with the Borderlands Research Institute (BRI) based at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas to conduct a mountain lion study in Big Bend National Park. The study began in Fall 2013 and will focus on the Chisos Basin and surrounding area.

Dr. Patricia Harveson, project coordinator describes the purpose of this study as follows:
 “The National Parks offer a wide range of services from protecting our natural resources to providing recreational experiences for people. Providing these opportunities for people to enjoy our wild places includes the potential for conflict between people and the wildlife that occur there. Big Bend National Park is home to two large carnivores, mountain lions and black bears. While conflict at the park between people and black bear has been minimal, there have been 21 mountain lion encounters of concern since 2004. Encounters have ranged from mountain lions approaching people in a non-threatening manner to those of more severity, including actual attacks“.

One of the tools which will be used in conducting the survey is satellite/GPS collars which will be placed on some of our park mountain lions. Once the researchers know where the animals are, this information will be compared with human activity patterns around key areas in the Chisos Basin (e.g., trails, campgrounds, buildings, waters, etc.) in an effort to gain knowledge that could help mediate potential conflict. While the animals are sedated, they will also be weighed, blood samples will be taken for DNA analysis, and other data will be gathered.

Another goal of the project will be to help establish a long-term, noninvasive monitoring program for mountain lions in Big Bend by placing camera traps in strategic locations. These camera traps will help the researchers determine how many mountain lions use the area and how widely individuals range.

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Mountain Lion Study continued....

Other cameras will be set where lions have just killed prey such as deer or javelina to demonstrate which lions use the prey and how often they return to feed. The camera traps will also provide more information about black bears and other park animals.

In order to study as many of the lions that overlap human use patterns of the Chisos Basin development zone as possible, around 12-20 mountain lions may be captured / anesthetized, and collared/released in this first year.

Now we get down to the crux of the matter– exactly how are these collars going to get on these mountain lions? Trained dogs will be used to track and tree the mountain lions and then they will be sedated.

And you (and the visitors) may ask, is this safe for the animals? While the capture, sedation, and radio-collaring of mountain lions will result in some stress for the animal, and there is risk with any such operation, there is no other way to gather the data that BRI will need to monitor mountain lion movements in relation to human use of the park. Information from the camera traps alone would not provide enough data to effectively evaluate the potential for conflict between the two species. According to Raymond Skiles, Park Biologist, the trackers and their dogs will get up very early to start a capture operation. There could be very short-term trail or area closures to accommodate the activity, but there will be very little impact upon normal visitor activities. The tracker being contracted for the work is very experienced in this activity and has performed this service on other public lands. Below is a more scientific document that describes the field methods and activities that will be undertaken. The other question that is sure to come up from visitors is, if the researchers can take their dogs on the trail, why can't I? Refer them to Big Bend National Park Permit for Scientific Research and Collecting #BIBE-2013-SCI-0039. If they have one of those, they probably can take their dog on the trail!

**Field Methods and Activities
Big Bend National Park
Borderlands Research Institute**

Approximately 8-12 adult and sub-adult mountain lions will be captured using trained dogs and to a lesser extent box/barrel traps. Procedures for trapping and handling have been approved by Animal Care and Use Committee at Sul Ross State University, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (permit SPR-0592-525) and the National Park Service Animal Care and Use Committee. Leg-hold traps or snares will not be used.

Captured mountain lions will be immobilized with an appropriate tranquilizer and immobilization will be reversed after 30 minutes, but within one hour of initial induction. Mortality-sensitive satellite/GPS radio collars will be affixed to captured mountain lions.

Capture periods

Capturing of mountain lions in the Basin and surrounding Chisos Mountains will occur during the black bear denning season (January 15 -April 15) to avoid inadvertently capturing bears. During this time, we will focus our efforts on using hounds or box-traps to capture and radio-collar lions.

It will also be necessary to include some additional mountain lion captures outside of this time period. We will not trap or use hounds from May through June when very young black bear cubs will have recently emerged from dens. From July through December, we will attempt to capture mountain lions only outside of the Chisos Mountains, in areas where black bears do not typically occur.

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Look who is coming to Spring Orientation!

There are going to be a lot of new faces in the park around January 19th as the new spring volunteers arrive for Orientation, which begins on January 20.

Here is the lineup!

Walt Oglesby and Louise Jewell arrive to take over duties at the Rio Grande Village campground for the spring. They hail from Blowing Rock, North Carolina but spent late summer of 2013 at Fort Craig Historic Site (BLM) near Socorro, New Mexico, which was their first volunteer experience. They visited Big Bend NP last winter and fell in love with the place.

Dennis Hanson, who has also volunteered at Gila Cliff Dwellings, Aztec Ruins National Monument, and Cape Romain Wildlife Refuge (near Charleston, SC) will be the new visitor center host at Rio Grande Village.

Bonita Auman will also be hosting at the Rio Grande Village Visitor Center and comes to us from Spring Mills, Pennsylvania. She has worked previously as a fee collector at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and will be accompanied by her husband, although he does not plan on volunteering.

Bonnie Winslow joins us as the Cottonwood Camphost for the spring. She has worked previously as a seasonal ranger for a number of parks and most recently as a site host for BLM at San Pedro National Conservation Area near Sierra Vista, AZ.

Karren Brown will be assisting the Administrative Staff this spring and was a NPS superintendent (Cape Lookout NP and Lake Meredith NRA) before retiring in 2006. She currently lives in Elizabethtown, KY and she worked at Big Bend NP in the 80's and still "loves the place". She is looking forward to doing "anything that doesn't require decision-making" while she is here this spring!

Charlotte Whitesides and her friend **Jeanette McKinney** will be manning Castolon Visitor Center beginning in February. Charlotte and her husband, Bob, volunteered at Big Bend NP in 2007 and in the intervening years, her husband passed away. However, she rounded up a recruit to accompany her for an encore appearance and we are glad to have her back. Both Charlotte and Jeanette spend most of their time in Giddings, Texas, 55 miles east of Austin and they will be accompanied by Charlotte's little dog.

Ted Griffith will be volunteering at Castolon Visitor Center and comes to us from Denton, Texas. He will be accompanied by his wife but she isn't planning on volunteering. He retired from law enforcement and is looking for a change of pace. This is his first experience volunteering in a national park.

Bob and Pam Bono will be joining us as assistants in the Maintenance Division. Bob is a military retiree from Ebensburg, Pennsylvania and the couple has participated in many Habitat for Humanity "builds".

The returning volunteers will be showing up around Feb. 1. They include Mike and Nancy Coe (Backcountry East District), Walt Lemonovich (Backcountry East District), Lewis and Susan McCool (Cottonwood Camphosts), Phil & Peggy Spruell (Chisos Basin Visitor Center), Jim & Mary Lynn Murrell (Chisos Basin Camphosts), Linda Jarvie (Maintenance for Feb., then Chisos Basin Camphost) and John and Delona Roth (ScRM). Daisy Welch and Steve Blythe are moving to Castolon Maintenance.

Rules (curmudgeon alert)

by Daisy Welch, backcountry patrol volunteer for the East District at Big Bend National Park

Our job here at BBNP is to enforce various rules designed to protect the resources of the park and the visitors. So we drive and hike all over our side of the park, checking. Mostly we pick up after the visitors.

The vast majority of the visitors leave no trace of their camping in the primitive sites. A corner of a granola bar package, the plastic tag off a bread bag, a piece of paper towel that blows away. I can remember my kids being blind to these things when we were camping. Now and then, the visitors have clearly just let their trash lie, cans, bottles, clothing, bags and wrappers, and used antiseptic towelettes (but the desert is clean....).

Since there are no toilets, they are to bury their poop, and take the TP away with them. This is more likely to be disobeyed. Buried with TP, under a cairn with TP, we go out with the tongs and retrieve the TP, reburying the rest. How far they go from the tent to do this varies, some folks need a lot of privacy...

And No Ground Fires. Stoves OK. Camping without a fire? Not an option for many visitors, who go to some lengths to hide the evidence. So we get out a bucket and a shovel to take it away.

This week we found two sites with lots of trash, and one with a huge, uncovered pile of poop (was a cow here?) with lots of TP strewn around. The other piggy site also had a fire that included one of the log barriers the park puts to keep cars where they belong.

I have a lot of time to wonder about why people would do this. Probably they don't care about either the cleaners (may not even know we exist) or the next folks to come to the site. And they think that no one will know who did it. This will change, now that we have a computerized web based system that tells who is where, when., It gives us the chance to prosecute them, or at least leave a nasty gram that will appear if they return to the park and try to camp again and elicit a finger shaking . I don't think it will solve anything, but maybe they will think twice now that we can tell who made the mess. How about some game cameras in these sites? If the NSA can do this, why not the NPS?

The TP problem is probably due to poor toilet training. Since kids like to play with poop (Play-Dough) there is a good deal of parental shrieking about touching poop, and lots of talk about how dirty it all is. Imagine squatting in the bushes to do your business in a pre dug hole, and then trying to wipe yourself while still squatting. Then you have to put the used TP into a plastic bag. And there is no sink to wash up afterwards. So I do have some sympathy for this. But to find a big uncovered pile, hardly off the path, well, it makes me murderous. He (?) also left his underpants. The video could go viral.

Right now, the desert is wet, fire danger is low, but the need to have a fire pays no attention to this. Too many ads for camping include a cheerful campfire. I heated with wood for years, so dealing with firewood is not high on my list, and it leaves a mess. To have to have a fire so badly that you would try to burn an old phone pole amazes me. I'm considering leaving some booby trapped pieces of firewood that will emit a terrible stench if burned.

So in the end, it comes down to an utter disregard for other people. No empathy for the family who arrives at a site and finds a mess instead of the pristine desert, not a care for two older volunteers who must clean up after them. They better bring their mother with them next time.

Ok, now I got that off my chest.

Events in the Area

January 1 Pea Off— *(this is not what it sounds like!)* **24th Annual Black-eyed Pea Cookoff** and fund raiser for the Last Minute Low Budget Productions. This event takes place on the porch at the Terlingua Ghostown. If you think that you can cook a mean pot of black-eyed peas, plan on turning in your creation at 2:00 pm. Cooks can prepared the peas on site or deliver them from home. If you want to sample, make \$5 donation and you get a bowl, spoon and black-eyed peas and cornbread, not to mention good luck for the next year! The turn in time for the cakewalk is 3 pm...yes, a real cakewalk and lots of fun!

Thursday, January 9 Volunteer Awards Dinner at the Panther Junction Community Room-social hour at 6:00 pm, Dinner at 6:30 pm. This is a special evening dedicated to showing our appreciation for our volunteers. Please make every effort to attend...we promise to keep the speeches short!

Friday, January 17 Hiking Club (see below), 9 am at Panther Junction VC.

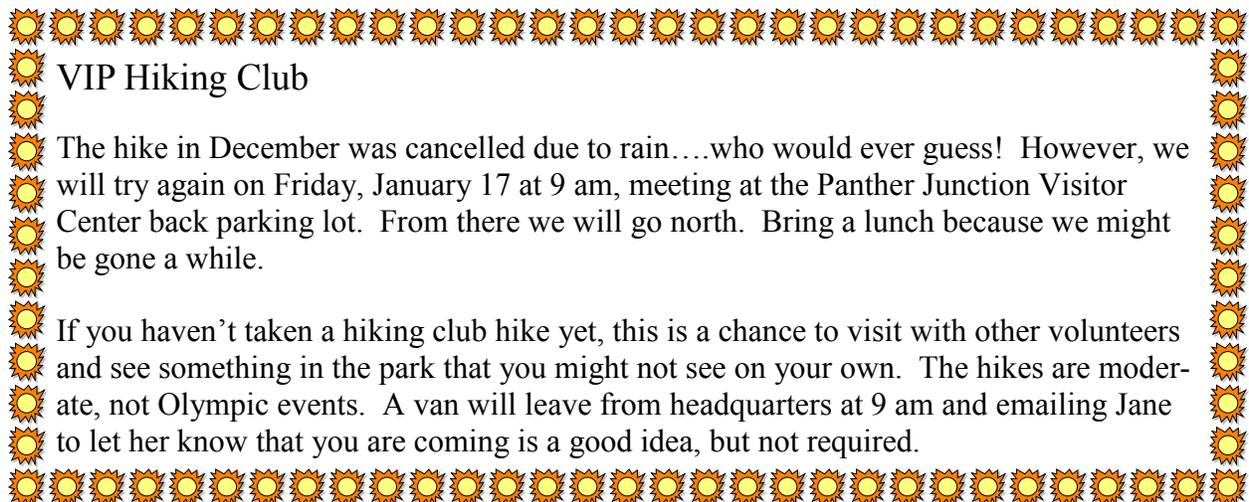
Sunday, January 19 Big Bend Ultra Run- for more information go to www.overlandracing.com. See page 4.

January 20—Spring Orientation begins-Many new volunteers are attending!

January 25—Terlingua Word off at the Starlight Theatre at 7:30 pm. This is one of my favorite events of the year in Terlingua. And you might ask, what is a word-off? Well, it is like a poetry reading with a time limit. Everyone around Terlingua brings any prose or poetry they have written in the last year and reads it on stage. It is lots of fun and there are really some good writers there. If you like to write poetry or stories, come and share. Or just come and listen to a great evening of local entertainment!

Terlingua Home tour—January 26—Here is your chance to visit some of the very unique homes in the Terlingua area. Tours leave from the Terlingua Ghostown at noon and 3pm. Tickets must be purchased in advance at the Big Bend Library (next to the school in Study Butte). Call 432-371-2639 for more information.

Every Saturday from 10am-2pm there is a Farmer's Market in the Terlingua Ghostown.

 VIP Hiking Club

The hike in December was cancelled due to rain...who would ever guess! However, we will try again on Friday, January 17 at 9 am, meeting at the Panther Junction Visitor Center back parking lot. From there we will go north. Bring a lunch because we might be gone a while.

If you haven't taken a hiking club hike yet, this is a chance to visit with other volunteers and see something in the park that you might not see on your own. The hikes are moderate, not Olympic events. A van will leave from headquarters at 9 am and emailing Jane to let her know that you are coming is a good idea, but not required.