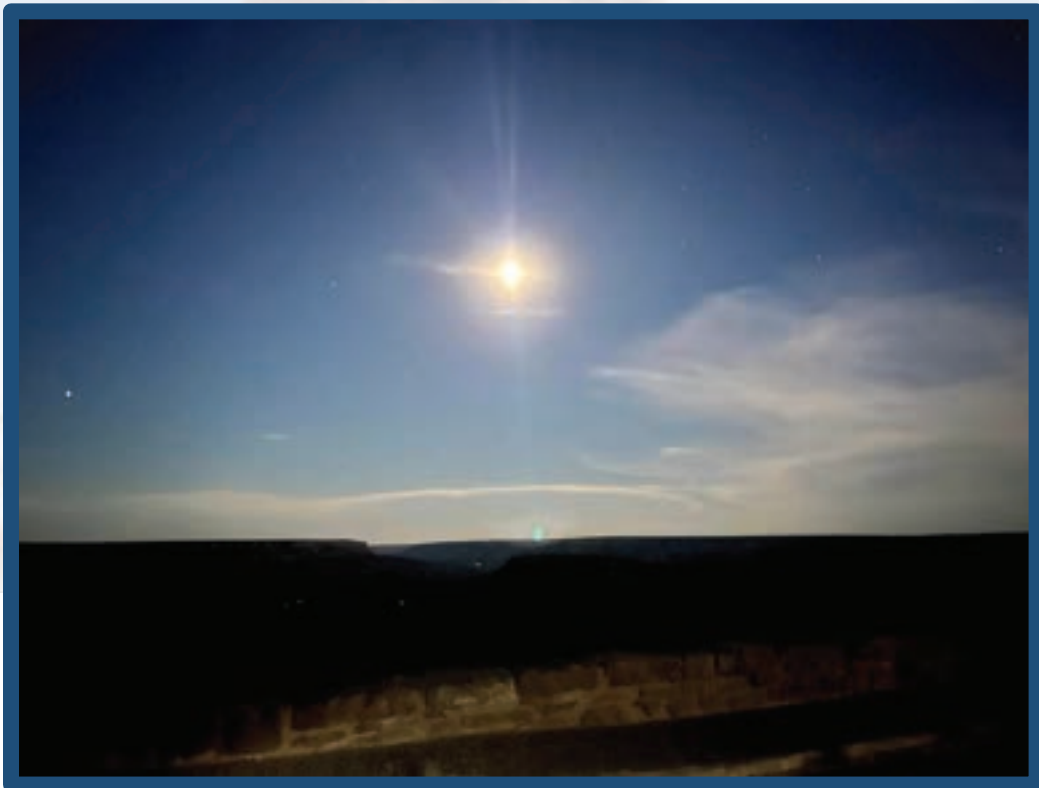


**Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation**

*Issue No. 54*

*On the Edge!*



**Photo by Pebbie Comer**

**“Sunset at Palo Duro Canyon”**



## **Training Day at Palo Duro Canyon**

**by  
David Fischer**



**David Fischer  
Park Superintendent**

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, staff at Palo Duro Canyon State Park participated in training focused on the Park's natural and cultural resources as well as how we interpret these resources for the public. It was a great opportunity to take a step back from the day-to-day routines and

deepen our understanding of the Canyon we help steward.

We spent time learning more about the Canyon's unique geology, native plants, and wildlife and the long human history tied to this landscape. From early indigenous inhabitants to more recent settlers, the stories of the Canyon are as layered as the rock walls themselves.

Ongoing training like this helps us to do our jobs better. When we understand the science and history behind the landscape, we're better equipped to share that knowledge with visitors in meaningful and accurate ways. It also helps us make more informed decisions when it comes to preserving and managing the Park.

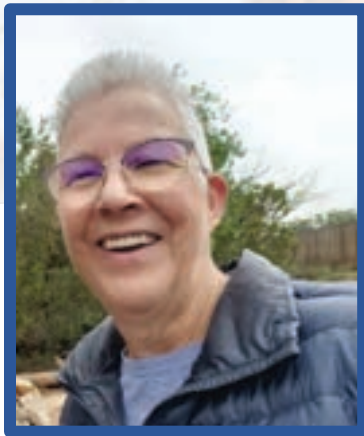
Palo Duro Canyon is a complex and dynamic place, and there's always more to learn. Staying connected to that knowledge is a key part of how we care for the Canyon—and how we help others appreciate it too. *Df*



**Photo by David Townsend**



**Editor's Note:** A strong wind blew through the Park on March 14, 2025. The following is Karen Copeland's account of destruction to the Wildlife Viewing Area. Karen is a member of Partners Board.



**Karen Copeland**

## **After the Storm** by **Karen Copeland**

The Wildlife Viewing Area (WVA) is a favorite destination for the visitors to Palo Duro Canyon State Park, not only for local photographers and birders but also for visitors from all over the US, many other countries and many who are not physically able to enjoy the beauty and challenge of our hiking trails. However, along with the rest of the Canyon, the WVA received significant damage due to a windstorm on March 14, 2025. The viewing blind structure was not damaged, but the wind destroyed protective cover for wildlife, making the wildlife more vulnerable to predation. The loss of trees and brush also took away protection from the wind and sun.



### **Clean Up**

**Photo by Eddie Tubbs**

**Eddie is a member of Partners Board**

The wildlife is resilient and has adapted quickly to the change. Since that time, Park personnel have removed the brush pile and restoration work continues.



### **Clean Up**

**Photo by Eddie Tubbs**

Members of the Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Board who were present in the Canyon to help with cleanup and to feed volunteers after the storm also pitched in to remove the downed trees and shrubs at the WVA to begin steps to restore the area.

Our volunteers will continue to provide food at the viewing area, and the blind will remain open to the public as we proceed with plans not only to restore the WVA but also to continue improving the area for the benefit of our wildlife and for the enjoyment of all our visitors and nature lovers. *Kc*



**Photo by Eddie Tubbs**



### **Dancing with the Comanches**

**Jack Determan**

**Park Operations Trainee**

### **Historical Hail**

**by**

**Jack Determan**

With all the recent storms in the Panhandle, one cannot help but think of the eternal history of weather patterns and of the distant human experience in this region. What comes to mind is this excerpt from Pedro de Castaneda in which we are given a glimpse into the detailed lives of those Coronada expeditionists of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

While traveling through the Southern Great Plains, these entrepreneurs arrived somewhere north of present-day Lubbock. This account comes days before the

discovery of the second series of canyons and ravines that we believe are descriptions of the Caprock Escarpment and Palo Duro Canyon.

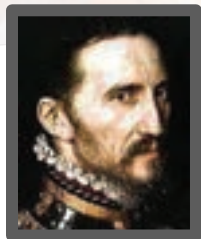
While encamped, Castanada wrote a great description of the weather of the High Plains of Texas where "...a tempest came up one afternoon with very high wind" producing "in a very short time a great quantity of hailstones as big as bowls, or bigger, falling as thick as raindrops."

Being a rather wet spring when these explorers departed from what is now New Mexico, there is little doubt that our past spring was not much different from theirs.

Castenada then proceeds to describe the fallout from this hail storm: "The hail broke all the crockery of the army and the gourds, which was no small loss, because they do not have crockery in this region."

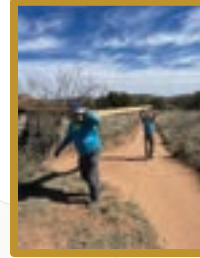
As I reflect on the destruction experienced by the Conquistadors, I can't but feel relieved that I have shelter and all my cooking utensils have been spared. And, although I do not have horses to worry about, I do have a truck that has been beaten sideways. All jokes aside, excerpts like this show the enduring environment and our shared experiences with those that came before us.

Now isn't that something special!*Jd*



**Pedro de Castanada**  
Picture provided by Jack Determan

## **Shelter at Junction of Lighthouse and GSL (Givens, Spicer, Lowry) Trails.**



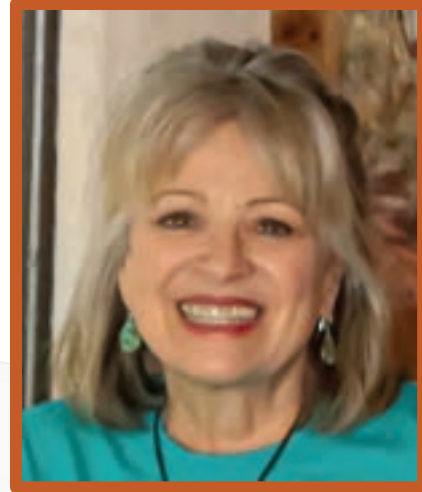
### **Construction of Shelter by Bailey Hess**

A little over four years ago, in response to a need for more shade on the Canyon's most popular and most deadly trail, the Lighthouse Trail, a project was proposed to build a shelter that would be completed by the Palo Duro Canyon Trail Team with financial assistance from Partners. However, in the fall of 2023 the Team was approached by an eagle scout who was looking for a worthwhile project for him to work on. The Team offered to him the idea of the shelter, and he jumped at the chance to bring the shelter to life.

At 12X12 in size, the shelter sits at the intersection of the Lighthouse and Givins, Spicer, Lowry (GSL) trails, providing a much needed break from the sun and heat for hikers on both routes.

While the main structure was built by the scouts last summer, the finished project now sports a stone slab floor to protect against erosion, benches, a picnic table for seating, and stair steps from the trails to the shelter.

No doubt the eagle scout earned his badge. The Trail Team earned a reward as well—a job well done. *Bh*



**Pebbie Comer**  
**Partners President**

### **Odds and Ends by Pebbie Comer**

#### **New Items that Partners has added to the Coronado Lodge**

The CCC exhibition has been refurbished and updated. Some of the interpretive and descriptive labels and placards had faded and were hard to read. The exhibit was cleaned and new labels were made. Lisa Jackson provided information from her archives on the CCC for the updated information.

While cleaning out a backroom, Partners crew found a 1937 newspaper that describes work by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) in Palo Duro Canyon. The articles are accompanied by pictures. The newspaper will be added to the display cabinets in the CCC room. The addition will add another dimension to the wealth of information provided about the CCC.



**Bailey Hess**

**Editors Note:** Bailey is a member of Partners Board



An antique telescope has provided generations of visitors the ability to view the Lighthouse from the Visitor's Center, especially those visitors who are unable to make the almost 6 mile roundtrip to the formation. The telescope will be preserved and will continue to provide visitors the experience of viewing the Lighthouse through a 1930s telescope. However, a more modern viewing of the Lighthouse will be available as well.

A kiosk will be set up to feature a 50 foot screen with an interactive telescope that kids can manipulate to look at the Lighthouse and other formations in the Canyon. When "home" is hit, the telescope will automatically reset itself on the Lighthouse

We are now proud to provide a "water bottle filling station" for the many tourists that visit Palo Duro Canyon State Park. The "filling station" is located in the Coronado Lodge (Visitor's Center) next to the Aoudad exhibit.*Pc*

**Editor's Note:** Mary Fowler assisted with this article.



Not actual fountain. For reference only.

## A Curious Bird

by  
Editor

The road runner—now there's a curious bird. In fact, he is doubly curious. He is curious to watch, and he is curious watching us.

At one time a road runner made a regular appearance on the ledge of the east window of the Canyon Gallery. Whether he was preening himself or just curious as to what those curious creatures inside the building were doing, was anyone's guess. Once in a while, he would appear on the ledge outside the large window facing south. (I'm never sure of the directions in the Gallery, so give me some slack if my directional sense is wrong.) Since the road runner didn't confide with me, I never knew how he chose a window.

Once, a long time ago, I left open the front door of my house. A road runner walked in. The back door isn't far from the front door, so he walked across the room, looked out the back door, turned around and walked out. I thought he was rather impertinent, but he paid no mind to me. I was somewhat curious myself.

*El Paisano*, the countryman—he makes himself right at home. I don't mind living with him around, because he dines on reptiles.

A large monument to the road runner is displayed in Fort Stockton, Texas





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*On the Edge!*

*June 2025, Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation, Editor: Carl Fowler*