

Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation
Issue No. 46

On the Edge!



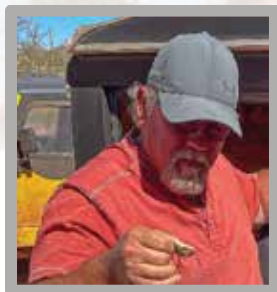
Photo Provided by Eddie Tubbs
Volunteers Renovating Bird Blind Behind Trading Post



**Photo by Eddie Tubbs
Linda Durante and Karen Copeland**

**Wildlife Viewing Area
By Linda Reimann Durante**

Constructed several years ago by the Texas Master Naturalist-Panhandle Chapter, new life was recently breathed into the Wildlife Viewing Area (WVA) by the Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation. Led by board member Rodney Hess, the water feature at the area was repositioned and reconstructed by a small team of volunteers in January 2023. Rodney then built new and repositioned existing bird feeders to provide supplemental food for our avian friends. Now, volunteers maintain the area that is full of wildlife and human visitors.



**Photo by Eddie Tubbs
Rodney Hess**

The Wildlife Viewing Area is also called a “blind,” because it hides human presence from the wildlife so that viewing

and photography can occur without disturbing the birds and other creatures.

Features of the blind include identification photos taken by local photographers of the birds found in the Canyon, a list of spring arrival dates for migratory birds, a bench (or you can bring your own stool), ledges on each window to lean on or to rest a camera and lens on, and a log book to record sightings. The blind is covered as well to protect viewers from the sun.

The water feature, a small pond with a waterfall, attracts many species of birds and is an essential element for any viewing area. The rocks around the pond are situated for aesthetics and to cover the pond liner. The rocks are held in place with landscape glue to keep them from shifting when large wildlife visitors drink from the pond. Turkey and deer don’t mind drinking directly from the pond, but birds prefer the shallower areas near the waterfall. If you are patient, you’ll likely see a Northern Cardinal drinking from the backside of the waterfall. When the sun hits the waterfall (mid-to-late morning), you may capture an incredible photo of the Cardinal quenching its thirst.

Volunteers receive instruction on when to feed and rake the area, skim the water of debris, and make repairs as necessary to maintain the water feature and surrounding area. The seed is provided by the Texas Master Naturalist-Panhandle Chapter and Partners.

Generally, the best time to view wildlife and for photography is in the morning hours when the sun isn’t casting harsh shadows on the blind. Evening is a good time as well as far as lighting is concerned, but, because feeding typically takes place during the cooler morning hours, there are usually more birds earlier in the day.

But don't focus only on the feeders and water feature to spot wildlife. Sometimes deer are waiting on the periphery for the right time to approach the pond, and birds hang out in the brush. Then stop by the Trading Post for a grilled cheese sandwich or hamburger, or grab a sandwich to go to a picnic area in one of the day-use areas. The Wildlife Viewing Area is a great start and a great end to any day in the Canyon. We hope to see you soon. *Ld*



Birding Class in Blind



Photo by Eddie Tubbs



Peek-a-Boo



Photo by Eddie Tubbs

Visitor to Wildlife Viewing Area



Ready for a Shot
Photos by Eddie Tubbs



Thomas Milone
Acting Superintendent

Rain or Shine

The hope for rain has been a constant hope everywhere I have lived, and the Texas Panhandle is no different. We see a dark cloud in the distance and cross our fingers. If we are lucky enough, we might catch some of that rain in Palo Duro Canyon State Park. If so, the Canyon seems to change overnight. All those yellow and browns turn to green, and new life starts popping up everywhere. What a time to be in the Canyon

After the last month or so of rain, I recall an old saying, “Be careful what you wish for. Despite all the benefits the rain brings to the Canyon, the rain is not conducive to Park operations. Over the last month, rain has brought washed-out bridges, closed campsites, rockslides, closed roads, and the infamous—closed trails. This struggle, however does show how incredible our team of rangers do their jobs.

This morning, as I write this, I woke up in the middle of night to a phone call from one of our State Park Police Officers. “There is a flash flood in the Canyon,” the officer said, “and we are evacuating camping loops.” Certainly, this is not the kind of call one hopes for. This police officer coordinated

with local fire departments and emergency services to traverse flood waters and safely relocate over 30 campsites with no injuries and little-to-no-property damages. We are incredibly lucky to have such expertise on our team.

On my way into the Park, I knew the immediate danger had passed but there would be problems, lots of problems. I had reports of 30 campers that were being held in the Pioneer Amphitheater parking lot with no place to go, rock slides that covered half the road, bridges covered in debris, a public demanding answers, and, you guessed it, trails that needed closing. I don’t think of myself as an anxious type, but I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t a little anxious.

When I arrived in the Park, I made a beeline for the bottom of the Canyon, heading down the hill ready to dodge rockslides. To my surprise, there were only the scarce remains on the road to let me know that a rockslide recently occurred. Our lead ranger had arrived in the Park with the initiative and experience to clear the road with the skidsteer, opening both lanes to traffic. Wow! With one road down I could now focus on the other roads.

When I arrived at the bottom of the Canyon, the assistant lead ranger and the rest of the maintenance crew and Park hosts were already clearing debris from camping loops and bridges. This allowed the Park to reopen a whole section of road in what I will call “record time.”

With two tasks down, it was time to head back to the rim to find the displaced campers a home for the evening. You have probably already figured out where I am going with this. The office staff had not only created a plan but had that plan in action and were firing on all cylinders. They had found a site for everyone, and, believe it or not, they

had even marked each trailhead to communicate to the public about the trail closures.

Talk about a team with drive. Talk about a team acting with purpose and care. The Palo Duro Team had lots of new faces, but you can bet your bottom dollar, rain or shine, they are dedicated to the mission of Palo Duro Canyon State Park. *Tm*



Rough Night



Ready for a Picnic



Editor's Notebook

Partners and the Zunis

Approximately thirty-five miles south of Gallup, New Mexico, sits the Zuni Reservation and the Zuni Pueblo. Twelve miles south of the Pueblo is the Hawjkuh National Monument, the first of the seven cities of gold (Cibolo) which Francisco



Bridge Anybody? Photos by Eddie Tubbs

Vasquez de Coronado sought in his expedition from Mexico City.

Several Years ago, Mary and I travelled to Zuni Pueblo and Hawjkuh to see a part of history that eventually included Palo Duro Canyon (Coronado's continuing search east for the cities of gold led him toward the Canyon). I can imagine that as Coronado approached the Pueblo from the south, the sun reflecting off the local sandstone of which Hawjkuh was built appeared to be a city of gold. Evidently, illusion leads to delusion, and Coronada continued searching.

Mary and I walked around the perimeter of one of the ruins, about sixty feet to a side. Mary went one way; I went another. When I joined Mary on her side, she said, "What's that noise?"

I asked, "What noise?"

"That noise," she replied and pointed to the side where I had just walked. "That rattlesnake."

Sure enough, I had walked past a rattlesnake, glistening from just shedding its skin. Since the formidable creature had let me pass without inserting its fangs in my leg, I let it live. Besides, to have killed it would have been a federal offence. When we returned to Amarillo, I bought a pair of hearing aids.

Also on the Reservation, nearer the Pueblo, we visited the site of three giant kivas excavated in 1936 by the University of Chicago, then filled in again. What was discovered, if anything, I don't know. However above the kivas is a bluff on which were painted, also in 1936, figures of Native Americans (pictographs) and a cliff on which are ancient petroglyphs.



Several years later, I accompanied David Townsend, Canyon Gallery manager, along with Frannie Nuttall and husband Randy (Frannie was Partners president at the time.) on a buying trip for the Gallery. We travelled to New Mexico and Arizona where David has Navajo, Hopi, and Zuni connections. Our last stop was at the home of Gilbert and Lucy Owaleon, Zuni residents and long-time friends of David. The Owaleons treated us to a tasty meal and then displayed pottery and jewelry created by the residents of the Pueblo. David purchased some of each to sell in the Gallery, an annual conclusion to the buying trip.

Fast forward to 2023. David again left on his buying trip, accompanied by different members of the Partners Board, one of which was Jerrie Howe. Seeing the poverty of the Pueblo, Jerrie, sent several Partners t-shirts with David and the others to give to the Owaleons to distribute among other residents of the community. (This was the 2023 buying trip chronicled by Jeanna Lilley in the March 2023 issue of *On the Edge!*). Because of the appreciation by the Owaleons and other residents of the Pueblo for the gift of the t-shirts, Partners, at its next Board meeting, adopted a plan to collect clothing, no longer used but in good condition, to be collected from donors and delivered to the Zunis by Partners. The first trailer load has been delivered by Rodney Hess (Board member and driver), Eddie Tubbs, and Jerrie Howe.





Photo by Eddie Tubbs

Rodney Hess with Donated Clothing

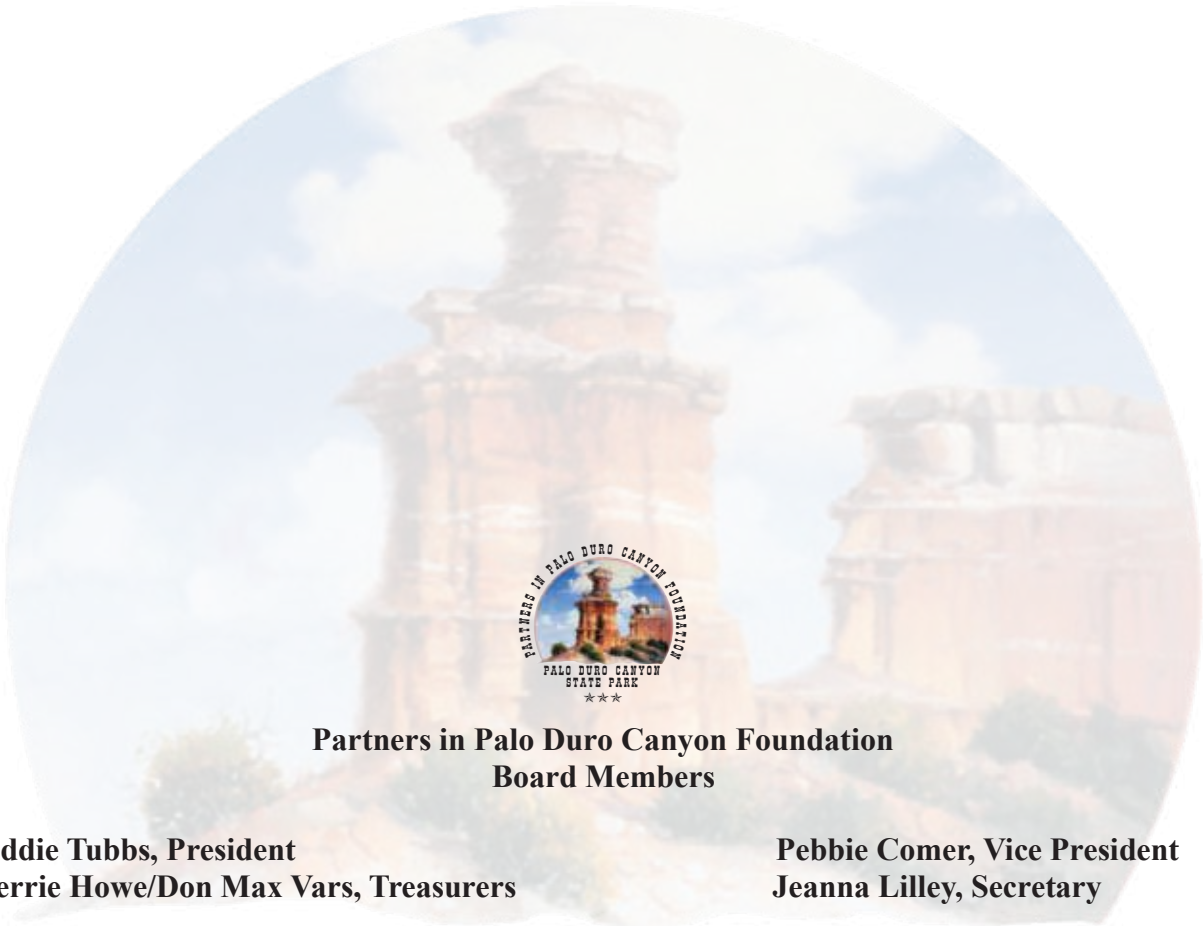
Whether this charitable event will continue is unknown at the time, but to collect the clothing and deliver it to the Zunis was a blessed event for both Partners and our Zuni friends. *Cf*





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