

Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation

Issue No. 47

On the Edge!



**Breakfast at the Visitor Center
Photo and Caption by David Townsend**

Eddie, second from left, you're off keyCf



Prairie Palooza Celebrates Texas Parks 100th Birthday in Palo Duro Canyon State Park

It started with the Texas State Park Board in 1923—a small movement to set aside public parks for future generations. One hundred years later, the Texas State Park system, a highlight of the Texas Parks & Wildlife, features 89 parks covering more than 639,000 acres (about half the area of Delaware).

Prairie Palooza is Palo Duro Canyon State Park's celebration, with events all day September 16th. It is sponsored by the Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation, the friends group of Palo Duro Canyon State Park, with cooperation from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Palo Duro Canyon State Park, and other numerous organizations across the Texas Panhandle.

"Prairie Palooza, with its authentic chuckwagon meal, celebrates the thousands of years of living heritage that is Palo Duro Canyon. We think there is no better place to celebrate 100 years of Texas State Parks than our favorite state park—Palo Duro Canyon State Park," says Eddie Tubbs, president of Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation

The day-celebration starts at 7:30 a.m. with the Sad Monkey Mercantile 5K race benefiting the Amarillo VA's suicide prevention program. Runners will meet at the Mack Dick Pavilion parking lot for a 7:30 a.m. start. Registration is just \$25 and can be

completed at

<http://getregistered.com/SadMonkey5K>.

Packet pickup is Sept. 15 from 5-8 p.m. at the Sad Monkey Mercantile.

At 1 p.m. is the Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation Chuckwagon Lunch in the chuckwagon camp next to the Pioneer Amphitheater parking lot. Fifteen chuckwagons will prepare authentic chicken fried steak lunches with all the trimmings for just \$25 per ticket. All tickets will be sold through Panhandle Tickets (www.panhandletickets.com); they are on sale now until they sell out or through September 13th. Tickets will not be sold on site.

Participation wagons include Texas Back Then from Vernon, TX; Slim Pickings from Sanger, TX; Wild Cow Ranch from Fritch, TX; Rockin' VX Chuckwagon from Cheyenne Wells, CO; Doc's Wagon & Co. from Chattanooga, OK; Rafter Z Wagon from Stephenville, TX; Five D Ranch from Texarkana, AR; J-D Wagon from Amarillo, TX; Lazy M Chuckwagon from Lamar, CO; Cross Timbers from Mustang, OK; Honey Do Spoiler from Pampa, TX; D.B. Wagon from Childress, TX; Little Dixie Chuckwagon from Choctaw, OK; 2M Wagon from Kim CO; Solano Wagon from Tucumcari, NM.

From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., more than 15 organizations from across the Panhandle will have booths and demonstrations in the Pioneer Amphitheater parking lot. Confirmed participants include Goodnight Ranch State History Site, Texas Forest Service, Old West Riding Stables, Cross Bar Ranch, Amarillo Veterans Administration Suicide Prevention Program, TPWD Game Wardens, Inland Fisheries, Sustainability and Accessibility Programs, Lake Mineral Wells State Park Tipi Program, TxDot Safety Program, Palo

Duro Canyon Heat Advisory Tent and Palo Duro Canyon Trail Team. More groups are expected to confirm participation as the date approaches.

End the day with a special abbreviated performance by the cast of the Outdoor Musical Drama TEXAS on stage in the Pioneer Amphitheater.

Admission to the state park is free all day. Park for free at the Sad Monkey Mercantile parking lot, less than a mile from the state park entrance, and hop on a free shuttle bus (sponsored by Visit Amarillo) into the canyon.

Dress comfortably, wear casual shoes, and don't forget your hat and sunscreen.

Want to continue the celebration? Stop by the Sad Monkey Mercantile after the TEXAS performance for a laid-back evening of music, beverages and company.

For up-to-the-minute information on all Prairie Palooza activity, check the Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation web site, www.palodurocanyon.com.

Press release by Eric Miller, Board Member.



Come and Get it!
Photo by Eddie Tubbs



The Gamblers (Hard Rock Miners)

Two-finger Pete said to Three-toe Sam,
“I’ll make you a bet as to who’s the best man.
“I’ll lay fifty bucks, and that’s quite a slug—”
added Pete as he gnawed a tobacco plug
“that I can beat you at your own game.
Whatever you do, I’ll do the same.”

“I’ll take that bet,” said Sam with a grin,
and he took the plug that was offered to him,
and he slammed the bar with his doubled fist,
and said, “But you name it. Go on! I insist.

“Bartender,” said Pete, and he spit out the plug
“Reach up on that shelf and give me a jug
of that dynamite whiskey that sells for a quarter.
Me and Sam’s got a bet, and I’m gonna start’er.”

The bartender handed the bottle to Pete
who took a stiff swig, then jumped to his feet
and spun around twice then grabbed for the bar
and said, “By whiskers that stuff’s liquid fire.”

Then Sam grabbed the bottle and turned it on end,
and it was half empty when put down again.
He swapped colors twice, his breath became short,
as he grabbed for the bar and glowered at Pete
and slowly collapsed in a disjointed heap.

“I win!” shouted Pete, and he picked up the bottle
and emptied the rest down his throat at full throttle..
The bartender watched as Pete’s silly grin
remained on his face as he joined his friend.

The bartender sighed and then picked them up.
He knew the old guys would sleep ‘til sunup.
Because, it seems, each night brought a bet,
And neither had ever won any bet yet. *Cf*



Thomas Milone
Acting Superintendent
“Where’d All the Money Go?”

“Where’d all the money go?” This is a common question as our fiscal year is coming to a close. Usually, this is followed by, “Is that really how much toilet paper costs?” Park operations’ costs are deceptively high, and that does not account for any “surprises.”

After Prop 54 passed in 2019 where 100% of sporting goods sales’ tax go to TWPD, we have seen quite a bit of money pushed back into the parks, a specific amount to Palo Duro Canyon State Park. So I will ask again, “Where’d all the money go?”

I have not been at Palo Duro Canyon (PDC) long but have heard stories of missed opportunities for improvements and areas of the Park that have been described as bordering neglect. I will add that it does not take long to ride through the Park and find areas in need of improvement.

The good news is that money is being pushed into PDC. The bad news is that it’s going to take time to really feel the benefits. The worse part is that the general public will probably never know the efforts for improvement, and this can cause negative impressions about the Park.

PDC needs new restrooms, upgraded campsites, and new shade shelters just as much if not more than every other park; these are the kinds of improvements that are exciting and tangible for our guests. But what PDC really needs is some new “bones.” The Park infrastructure is not in a place to handle the surge of guests we have seen in the last couple of years and likely was struggling before. We have failing pipes left and right, consistent road issues, broken fences, and lack the space to welcome guests in a timely manner.

These improvements have been TPWD’s focus since the new funds have arrived. Hopefully, all readers are aware of the recent improvements: new fiber internet lines, a \$1.7 million paving project, a new water plant, three roof replacements, new vehicles, and new staff. But I’m excited to discuss what’s on the way.

First, we have a fencing project that will be breaking ground soon to replace the entire fence around the longhorn pasture as well as around the rim cabins, maintenance yard, and a residence. By the time this article releases, we will have already broken ground on our massive rim utilities project resulting in a complete overhaul of our water/wastewater system on the rim of the canyon. Finally, we have a huge team of TPWD employees and outside agencies putting the final touches on our brand new headquarters design.

This list is far from comprehensive and gives a better picture of “Where’d all the money go?” The whole state will be excited when they arrive at the new headquarters, see that our cabins are open, are able to use operational restrooms, and get great/safe views of our longhorns and the canyon. But, y’all get to be excited with us, as well, for the steps that got us there. *Tm*



**Bradley Kliemann
Park Interpreter**

Our Veins of Water

As we've found out these last few months at Palo Duro Canyon State Park, water is powerful and has the capacity to completely change our landscape. Of course, this is how the Canyon came to be. It's somewhat ironic that much of this rainfall fell during the month of May when our interpretive theme of the month was how water connects us not only to other Texans but also to America and the world. Water not only connects us to the people we see today but also to people who came to the Canyon across time. These waters are like veins in the body we call the State of Texas, the United States, and the world we call earth.

Here in the Panhandle, it can be easy to feel a disconnect from the rest of the state. Far from the hustle and bustle of Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and Austin, it almost feels as if the only things that connect us to these cities are the state lines on our maps.

As far as those distant locations may seem, we are connected as well by the waters of Texas. Several of Texas's most iconic and important rivers begin in our northwestern high plains. Rivers in the state,

such as the Brazos and Colorado, get their start in Panhandle adjacent places.

No mention of iconic rivers in Texas would be complete without mentioning the Red River. Getting its start in Palo Duro Canyon as part of the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River, the Red River continues its journey to create the border between Texas and Oklahoma. Of course, our red-colored quartermaster soil is what gives the Red River its distinctive color and name.

The Red River not only connects us to others in Texas and Oklahoma but also to millions of other Americans as it flows throughout Arkansas and Louisiana. It eventually dumps its waters into the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers. The Mississippi River connects us to other Americans and to the rest of the world through the expanse of the ocean.

Water in the Canyon ties us not only to the people we see in front of us but also to the people whose footsteps we walk in. Whether it's the Comanches following bison, Spanish Conquistadores seeking relief, ranchers herding their cattle, or visitors to the Park, we all need the water.

While today's visitors may not visit the Canyon in search of quenching their thirst, when they come, they can see what water has done and what it continues to do in the Canyon. As you read this, I hope you will consider how water connects us to the Canyon as well as the world around us. *Bk*



**June Storm 2023
Photo by Eddie Tubbs**



In the Company of Cranes
by
Ann Coberley

They fly by with purpose
in perfect formation,
wings brushed
with the left over covers of sunset,
fluttering shadows across the face
of a rising moon.

By waves they make their way
to scattered lakes
that lie like jewels across the prairie,
just beginning to reflect
the vast and starry sky.

I think about the comfort
of their companionship,
about resting feather to feather
through a long and windy night,
reassured by the soft sounds
of other souls nearby.

The world is big and we are small,
no more to be left alone
than these graceful creatures,
who descend each night
with raucous greetings,
happy to pass the dark hours
in company.



On the Path of the Moon
by
Ann Coberley

I walk with the moon,
follow its luminous path
that tilts down
toward the canyon's ridge.

Rustles and whispers
of nesting and roosting
remind me that other souls
once slept here,
that they mused on the shadows
of the same ancient moon.

Sometimes I think I feel them,
here on this sacred land,
where they fought their final battles,
where their bones
have dried and crumbled,
where they took their last free breaths
in the fierce prairie wind.

They say
that farther down the canyon,
on dark nights
when the moon is red,
you can hear the echos
of their war chants,
and the screams
of painted ponies.

I only know they blessed this land,
that they called it Mother,
so I listen for their prayers
as the wind picks up,
and the moon travels on
toward morning.



Dr. Coberley is a Board Member of
Partners.



**May 2023 Storm
Photo by Eddie Tubbs**



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