

Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation

Issue No. 50

On the Edge!



**Cardinal in Shower
Wildlife Viewing Area**

Photo by Eddie Tubbs



David Fischer
Park Superintendent

I'm very excited to announce the arrival of our new Assistant Superintendent, Zack McMeans, who joined our team on March 20th. With a wealth of knowledge, experience, and a commitment to servant leadership, Zack has already proven his value to our park's operations and local community. *Df*



Zack is a 2017 graduate of West Texas A&M University (go buffs) and a former seasonal maintenance assistant of Palo Duro Canyon State Park. Upon graduation, Zack worked at WTA&MU in various roles, such as the Student Conduct Coordinator for the main campus and the Student Success Coordinator of the Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences. In 2021, Zack took a leap into the private sector where he started a career with Cintas as the Management Trainee. Zack quickly worked up the ranks at Cintas, serving as a sales representative

and most recently the Service Manager for their Fort Worth location. During his time at Cintas, he led a team of 20 employees and managed a portfolio of 2,300 customers. Outside of work, Zach enjoys traveling and spending time outdoors hiking, hunting, and kayaking.

Zack said, “I’m excited to get back to TPWD and rejoin the team at PDC. I knew from my time as a seasonal operations ranger that the mission of Texas Parks & Wildlife was a special one, and I can’t wait to join an already stellar staff in continuing their work. There is nowhere else that I’d rather be.”

We’re certainly thrilled to welcome Zach back, and I can’t wait to see how his leadership serves our team, our visitors, and our community. *Df*

In addition to Zach, we are thrilled to announce the well-deserved promotion of Jack Determan to the position of Park Operations Trainee at Palo Duro Canyon.

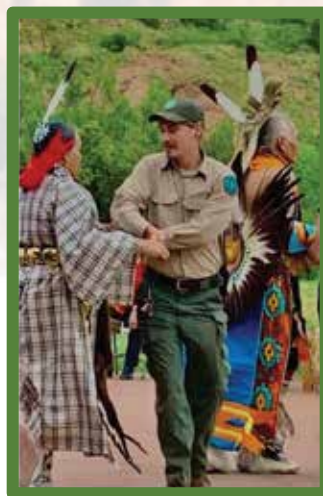
Jack has been an integral part of our team for the past five years, showcasing his dedication and passion every step of the way. Starting as a seasonal maintenance assistant, Jack’s relentless commitment and expertise propelled him to the role of Maintenance Specialist III.

With an extensive understanding of Palo Duro Canyon’s natural and cultural resources, Jack brings invaluable knowledge to his new role. His certifications as a cultural resource monitor, wildland firefighter, and chainsaw instructor highlight his commitment to our operation, excellence and safety.

Beyond his professional endeavors, Jack’s adventurous spirit shines through his hobbies. From backcountry camping to exploring the diverse landscapes of the United States, his passion for the outdoors knows no bounds. As a mixed martial artist, Jack regularly hones his skill in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and kickboxing, embodying discipline and perseverance.

Behind every great professional is a supportive network, and Jack is no exception. He cherishes quality time with his incredible wife, Cece, and their three beloved pets.

Please join us in congratulating Jack on his promotion. We look forward to witnessing his continued growth and contributions to Palo Duro Canyon’s success. *Df*



**Jack Determan
Dancing with Comanches**



Bailey Hess

Editor's Note: Bailey Hess is a member of the Partners Board.

It's finally here! The long-awaited, new-shade structure for the Lighthouse Trail has officially been constructed. This particular project was one of passion, and not even years of waiting for approval or waiting for the weather to cooperate could stop the shelter from being constructed. For those that may be unaware, the Lighthouse Trail in Palo Duro Canyon State Park is not only the most traversed trail in the Park but also the Park's most infamous when it comes to rescues. What, you may ask, is it that makes this iconic trek so dangerous? Heat and lack of shade and water sources are the culprits. While not a particularly difficult trail to traverse during fall and spring, the trip takes on a completely different life when the summer months come around

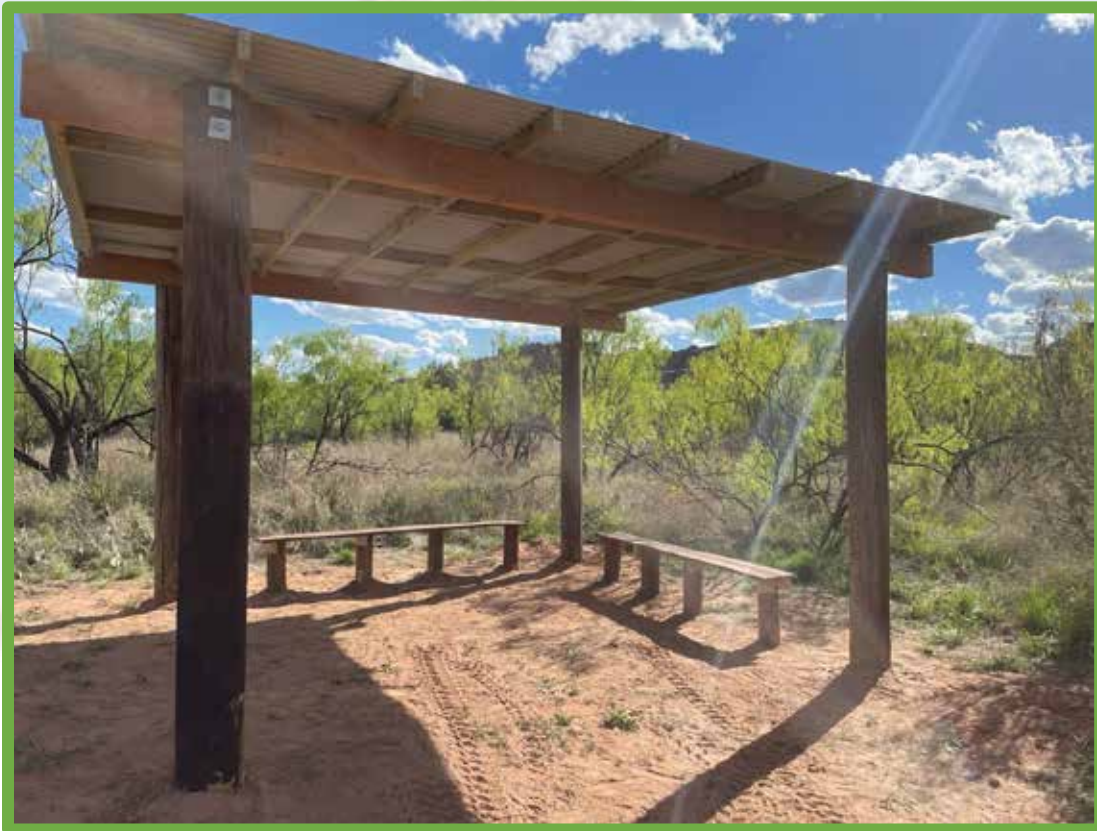
The Lighthouse Trail is a six-mile, out-and-back trail, that takes visitors from the main Park road to the Park's iconic poster child—the Lighthouse rock formation. Due to the secluded nature of the trail, there is nowhere for hikers to obtain more water, and in the summer there are very few places to escape the intense summer sun. As of this year, there are now a total of four, man-made shelters along the Trail that provide hikers small but oftentimes life-saving refuge. This new 12' x 12' shelter was specifically constructed at the point where the Lighthouse Trail and the Givens, Spicer, Lowery (GSL) trails intersect to interrupt what was once a nearly mile-long stretch between two previously existing shelters and gives hikers on both paths a large patch of shade to rest in before continuing their planned excursion.

A large shout-out needs to be made to Xcel Energy for donating many of the construction materials. Carson May, a scout currently working on his Eagle Scout rank, and his troop members who constructed the shelter, and, of course, the financial support of Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation made the shelter possible.

It takes all of us to make Palo Duro Canyon State Park a beautiful and safe place to visit. We are beyond thankful that this project was completed in time for the upcoming summer season.

Bh





Photos by Eddie Tubbs



The Sad Monkey

Many years ago, the chug, chug of a miniature railroad with an appropriate whistle took visitors on a two-mile excursion beneath a rock formation that resembled the face of a monkey (with imagination). Appropriately, the formation was given the name “Sad Monkey.” Several years ago the face fell off. The result brought sadness to visitors, some who still come to Palo Duro Canyon State Park seeking a ride on the Sad Monkey Railroad. They remember riding on the little train when they were children and want to experience again the nostalgic memory of that visit.

Several years ago (at my age, everything is “several years ago”), my wife, Mary, and I had an opportunity to drive through the State of New Hampshire. The drive passed another rock formation named “Old Man of the Mountain.” Sadly, the granite formation that resembled the face of an old man was no longer there. It too had suffered the fate of the Sad Monkey and fallen into the valley below. The only faces left of both are the piles of rocks at the bottom of each. I suppose, in a way, it is fortunate that the little railroad expired before the Sad Monkey’s face met its fate. The passengers of the little train were still able to see the formation before it expired. Appropriately, the name is still there, even though the face isn’t; and before the force of gravity worked its work, the tears of the Monkey washed the cinders from the eyes of the railroad passengers. (Please allow me a little poetic nonsense.)

At this point I’ll leave the Old Man to someone else.

I rode the train when I was much younger. It has been gone now for at least forty years. The Park had it removed when it became dangerous because of lack of upkeep and repair. Along the path of the tracks which have been long gone, one can still find miniature railroad spikes. I’m not certain whether these spikes are considered artifacts, but perhaps if you should find one, you might check with the Park personnel to be sure you aren’t walking out with an historical treasure.

The memory of the railroad lives on. The train can still be seen. It is located south of the square in Canyon, Texas, renovated and displayed for all to see. (“Oh Mommie, look at the choo choo!”) As noted above, the name of the formation is still on the map. In addition, a mile or so before the Park entrance is the Sad Monkey Mercantile. It’s well worth a visit. *Cf*



Photographer Unknown



**Partners Board Members Linda Durante and Karen Copeland View Their
Handiwork in the Wildlife Viewing Area
Photo by Eddie Tubbs**



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