

October 2008



Clarity Tunnel Photo by Richard

## Caprock Canyons State Park Trip Report

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Michael Nickell and I left the Permian Basin fairly early Friday morning to get to Haynes Canyon which is north of Caprock Canyons State Park and where we planned to camp over the weekend. The canyon is private but I've had permission for decades to get into it. Rick Day, who met us in the canyon Friday night introduced me to the canyon years ago and it was a place of refuge for me when I lived in Plainview for 10 years. Anyway, Michael and I got to the canyon at mid-day and checked out the somewhat perilous road down to the bottom and found that it was navigable. We came back out

and checked out McKenzie Lake which is north and east of Silverton, Texas. The lake was beautiful and just as I remembered it. We then worked our way back to Haynes Canyon to get sunset shots and to meet Rick Day that evening. The three of us planned to camp there. The sunset over the canyon was absolutely beautiful (pictures later). Rick met us after sunset and informed us that the lake where he owns property north of Matador had received between 12 to 14 inches of rain that week and both of his boats had sunk (a project for next weekend). It was cloudy above us but before the 3 of us

went to our tents we had an abundance of stars. On Saturday morning we woke to a heavy fog that made the canyon look like something out of King Kong. We knew that we needed to get to Caprock Canyons State Park by 9 a.m. to meet Tom Cooper, Janie, and Pablo but we let time get away from us clambering over rocks and going down the stream bed to get pictures. When we realized that we were late we reluctantly left the canyon to go find Tom for our bike ride. When we arrived at the state park we ran into James and Kayla Woods who had made it to the park and had enjoyed...**cont. on pg.2..**

- Caprock Canyons a complete success for the few attending
- 2009 Calendar ideas needed
- Get ready for the beautiful Davis Mountains in October

## 2009 Calendar

Okay, now we're getting really close to needing to plan for the 2009 Calendar. We need to think about gas prices (or a new way to get everyone to the sites cheaper!). This year a few officers of the club will get together in November to come up with the upcoming year's

calendar (so you can narrow your complaints to a few folks!). Please submit your ideas to me as soon as possible so that I can generate a list for those making the decisions. Also be thinking about the slate of officers that you want presiding over the club for

2009. This may not seem like a big deal but a lot of work goes on in the background that never comes to light in the meetings or in the newsletter so take it somewhat seriously. Send both of those items to me as soon as you can and I'll start the lists.

## Caprock Canyons.....cont...



**"Leaders are like eagles. We don't have either of them here."**

hiking several of the trails. After visiting with James and Kayla we began our search for Tom and his crew. After a bit we found Tom enjoying a book at one of the scenic areas and put together a plan for taking the "rails-to-trails" bike tour. Rick decided that he was going to part ways with us at the juncture to explore several mesas for Indian sites (which, by the way, he found!). We met up with Janie and Pablo and worked out the details for the bike shuttle. We showed Janie and Pablo where to meet us after dark (we wanted time to watch the bat flight and do a little cycling under the near full moon). We left for South Plains to begin our journey and actually got onto the trail at around 3 p.m. A few bike adjustments later we got down to business and really got to trucking. The skies were partly cloudy but no threat of rain (in fact we finished the trip under completely clear skies). The temperature was perfect for biking and we took advantage of the lighting to take hundreds (I'm not exaggerating here) of pictures. Along the way I

barely missed (thankfully for him)...a good size bull snake. A very short while down the trail I had gotten a bit ahead of the guys and had one of those serendipity moments. I look up just in time to see a cougar about to cross the trail. When she saw me she did a quick 180 and then thought better of it and whipped another 180 and sprayed gravel as she leapt across the trail. I waited a couple of minutes to make sure that she didn't have kittens following her (you don't want to get between momma and the kids). Tom caught up to me at this time and we both waited to make sure that we weren't going to receive a glancing blow from a big cat, and then proceeded to the bridge in front of us to scour the canyon for one more glimpse of the cat. No such luck. This was only the fourth time in my life that I've seen a cougar in the wild and I felt really blessed to get the opportunity. We proceeded through magnificent canyons until all 3 of us reached Clarity Tunnel. We had a couple of hours before we could expect the bat

flight so we took the opportunity to sit and have a meal. We explored the tunnel and the bats were already in a "warm-up" flight in the tunnel but it was at least an hour before they finally emerged. Michael and I placed ourselves in the tunnel to get pictures of the bats flying out. I never would have believed this if I hadn't experienced it for myself, but....when the bats began their flight, the batting of millions of wings created an incredible wind flow out of the tunnel. I mean....if you were wearing a windbreaker it would have been flapping! The flow of bats lasted for over 10 minutes of nonstop wings. It was better than anything that I've seen at Carlsbad Caverns...just incredible. After the flight we took off under a full moon and in about 30 to 45 minutes we emerged at Monk's Crossing...our takeout spot. After shuttling to gather up my truck, Michael and I decided to head home...so we bid our friend adieu and left for the long drive home. A wonderful trip!

## October meeting



We will have our regularly scheduled meeting on October 7th at 6:30 at Casa Lopez Restaurant at 4411 W. Illinois in Midland. We will be giving out information on the October 10-12th trip to the Davis Mountains. David Crum is putting together a very special activity that will get us

onto land that the general public rarely gets to see. We will probably need a head count in order to inform the Nature Conservancy our numbers but I'll ask for that later.

As always, try to come to the

meeting even if you're not planning to go on the trip. And for you football fans, I've got a satellite radio that I'll be monitoring to catch all of the Big 12 action (unapologetically, I might add....I'm an addict). See you at the meeting!

## October 10-12 Davis Mountains Trip

Okay, here's the poop on the October 10-12th trip. As you might remember...or if you're like me...have to be reminded, we traded the September and October trips so in October we will be headed to one of our favorite spots...the Davis Mountains. David and Kay Crum, you may remember, moved to Ft. Davis some time ago and have all kinds of new contacts...one being the Texas Nature Conservancy. David has swung a deal for us to get onto some of their land. At this time, David is working to get us onto Mt. Livermore, which is the second highest peak in Texas (behind Guadalupe Peak). This will be a day hike and he feels that we may be able to drive a good portion of the way so if your legs and lungs are a bit under par you won't have to work *too* hard. There will be a very small fee attached (they've got to make their operations dollars too) but it will be very affordable to everyone. David is still working on the deal so

we don't know yet if we will be camping on Conservancy land too but, if not, the state park is just around the corner and I'm sure that you can choose your site of operations (for those of you that hold dearly a civilized restroom and shower). We also have the option to do a little more rappelling off of Point of Rocks (some 260-280 feet) if the opportunity is something that folks want to do (hospital girls!). Whatever your taste, October is a wonderful time to be in the Davis Mountains with the trees changing their foliage and the temperatures becoming ideal. There are star party opportunities, the Scenic Loop, the fort, McDonald Observatory, and many other options....(some pretty good restaurants in town to boot). I'll go ahead and ask you to start committing by email so that I can get the word to David. This does take some planning so if you'll let me know I'll pass the numbers on to David. My email is:

[richard@sibleynaturecenter.org](mailto:richard@sibleynaturecenter.org)

I know that David needs numbers for the Conservancy so please let me know (I already have word from some of you so no need to reply a second time). We will need enough time to secure campsites on either Conservancy land or at the state park so let me know.

On another note, please keep in mind that November's trip is scheduled for the Guadalupe Mountains National Park on the weekend of November 14-16th. Sherri is now planning that trip and could probably use some ideas of what you would like to do. We are hoping that the trip is planned just right for the foliage change in McKittrick Canyon (a photographer's dream) but there are a lot of other things to do in the park as well. Be thinking about what you'd like to do in addition to McKittrick. That's all for now!



Some of the bats of Clarity Tunnel—photo by Michael



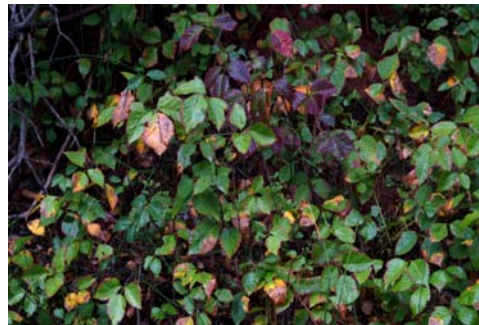
Feather—photo by Michael

**"Before you attempt to beat the odds, be sure you can survive the odds beating you."**

## A few pictures from Caprock Canyons trip



Canyon wall in Haynes Canyon—photo by Michael



Just *some* of the flora found in the canyons—photo by Michael



Despite the ominous look, the weather Friday was great—photo by Michael

# The Newsletter of the Permian Basin Outing Club

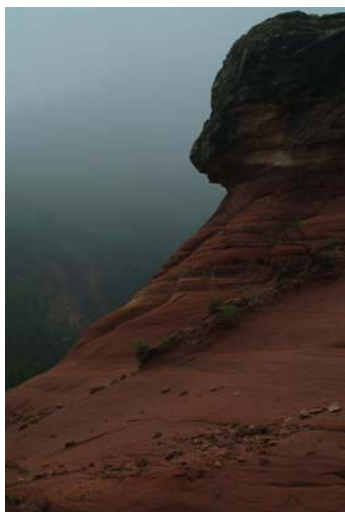
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**We're on the Web at [www.sibleynaturecenter.org](http://www.sibleynaturecenter.org)**

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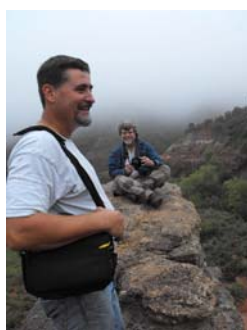
Rock formation in Haynes—  
photo by Michael



We're going back soon when  
the cottonwoods turn! -photo  
by Michael



Some of the rich colors in the canyons –  
photo by Michael



Rick & Michael –photo by Richard



Tom on the  
bike trail—  
photo by  
Richard



Panorama from above Clarity Tunnel—photo by Richard



Panorama of Haynes Canyon looking south toward Caprock Canyons State Park—photo by Richard