



Trails

November 13-15 Trip Big Bend Ranch State Park

As you probably know, the November trip this year is planned for the Big Bend Ranch State Park near Presidio. We have taken this same trip in the past and have enjoyed exploring new territory for many of us and have entered the somewhat mysterious Solitario both times that we have camped in the park. There are a lot of rather strange and eerie stories about the Solitario told over the years by visitors and working cowboys. If you ever saw the Solitario from the air or really studied a topo map of the area, you'd consider that strange, as well. At any rate, the weekend that we will be camped at Big Bend Ranch State Park coincides with a big Open House sponsored by the State

Parks system. There will be nature hikes, displays, and all sorts of other special events planned by the park staff. This is not to say that you are required to attend any of these events....you can simply camp or explore the park or do whatever your little heart desires. At one point we had quite a few members that had indicated that they were planning to go on this trip and, as it turns out, we have plenty of camping space for everyone. Our trip leader, David Crum as arranged for us to have the campsite Pila Montoya all to ourselves. We have camped there in the past and everyone seemed to enjoy the spot. It's pretty much at the end of the road past park

headquarters at Saucedo and we were able to stay up all night if we wanted to and not disturb any other campers. We suspect that the park will be fairly crawling with visitors with all of the festivities planned for that weekend but there is plenty of space to go off and be by yourself if that's what you want. We'll have maps to the campsite and additional info at the November meeting 10th meeting.



Speaking of the November Meeting

As always, the last meeting of the 2009 PBOC calendar year will be at Casa Lopez at 4415 W. Illinois on Tuesday, November 10, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. We will be finalizing plans for the November 13-15th trip to the Big Bend Ranch State

Park. As always, this is a great time to bring a guest that might be interested in joining the club or someone that just wants to see what a bunch of lunatics we actually are. There will be some discussion of the upcoming December 5th

PBOC Christmas Party, as well. As is our custom, we will have the party at the Sibley Nature Center. We still have some planning to do to pull the party off without a hitch some come with your thinking caps on!

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Special points of interest:

- *Nominations needed for Club President*
- *2010 PBOC Calendar announced*
- *Christmas Party coming soon!*

October Trip Report—Steven Schafersman

Have you ever thought of the prospect of hiking 15 miles in Guadalupe Mountains National Park with a heavy backpack? Five PBOC members did exactly this in late October. Sean Patty, Andy Price, Diane Post, Gae Kovalick, and your writer hiked from Dog Canyon to McKittrick Canyon in two days, camping overnight on McKittrick Ridge far above the canyon. The hike was extremely strenuous; some parts of the trail were very steep, especially the descent from McKittrick Ridge to the bottom of McKittrick Canyon. I would never have made it without my Leki hiking poles. My legs were sore and stiff for two days afterward, and others experienced the same. Why would anyone do something like this?

The Guadalupe Mountains scenery was magnificent. Dog Canyon was in full autumn colors, with brilliant red, orange, and brown Bigtooth Maple, Gray Oak, Sumac, and Walnut trees and other shrubs filling the canyon floor. The 1,600 foot ascent to the ridge top was gradual and not difficult at all. Other trails led off in different directions, the Tejas Trail to Pine Springs and the Bush Mountain Trail to Bush Mountain. These trails run along the edge of The Bowl, a region of the Guads surrounded by mountain peaks. These are trails for future exploration. Dog Canyon was such an excellent campground that the PBOC has scheduled it again from the October 2010 trip. We will camp, day hike, and perhaps backpack one night and return to Dog Canyon.

The ascent to McKittrick Ridge went through Dog Canyon, with lovely grassy meadows, areas of typical Chihuahuan flora such as ocotillo, prickly pear, yucca, and lechuguilla agave, and steep-walled canyons filled with maples, walnuts, sumac, oak, and madrone trees. The open ridge tops were covered by catclaw acacia, creosote, yuccas of various types, and huge expanses of shin oak whose tops had grown over the trail. Shin oak doesn't get more than three feet high, so our legs brushed against it constantly at

high altitudes, forcing us to hold our poles above it. I mentioned this fact to a backcountry ranger who told me that trail maintenance was scheduled this winter to cut the shinary next to the trail. I also saw tiny mountain flowers of red penstemon and blue flowers of a mint.

The rock outcrops along Dog Canyon were finely laminated back-reef and lagoon deposits containing elongated tiny blebs and pores within the laminae known as fenestral fabric, created by wave wash on muddy tidal flats. These pores hold the major oil and gas reservoirs of the Permian Basin geological region. The rock formations in Dog Canyon are the San Andres and Grayburg Formations. The San Andres is the largest producing formation of the Permian Basin; it outcrops in Dog Canyon so is visited and studied by geologists, but eastward it is in the subsurface and drilled for its petroleum. It is important for geologists and petroleum engineers to see the rock from which they discover and extract oil and gas, so they have to visit Dog Canyon to do this.

Hiking to the bowl edge of McKittrick Ridge, we eventually left the upland desert plants and entered the alpine forests of Juniper, Piñon Pine, and Ponderosa Pine above 6,000 feet. We camped beneath large trees at a high elevation. McKittrick Ridge Campground was quite nice with platted beds for the tents. The wind blew but we put up the tents, had dinner, and went to bed when it became dark, about 7:30 p.m. We were so exhausted we slept for over eleven hours. After midnight the wind ceased. Of course you could see all the stars and the Milky Way at night through the tops of the pines if you left the tents. The weather for the entire trip was very good and we were lucky, since on Monday a cold front came in and it snowed in the mountains.

"Simplicity....the simplest solutions are often the cleverest. They are also usually wrong."

After breakfast we set out the next day along the canyon ridge. The giant steep-walled canyons were magnificent in the massiveness and extent. Sheer cliffs of bare limestone thousands of feet high surrounded us, and at their base tree-filled canyons of maple in bright red and yellow colors were visible. In one direction you could look eastward out toward the mouth of McKittrick Canyon to the Delaware Basin below. In another direction you could see the dipping strata of the north wall of McKittrick Canyon that is described in geology textbooks and climbed by the Permian Reef Trail. We hiked along a ridge trail, sometimes passing between two mountains on a narrow ridge that fell off steeply on both sides. Along our trail, now in the Guadalupe reef formations, we passed by many outcrops of limestone, some of which contained fossils. The Permian Reef is not similar to the tropical reefs of today, since modern reefs are constructed mainly of corals while Paleozoic reefs are composed of many different marine invertebrate organisms. I took photos of Permian sponges, algae, horn corals, crinoid stems, and pisolites of many different sizes. We passed by one

massive sponge reef that I photographed. These are the constituents that actually built up the Permian Reef millions of years ago. I didn't see fusulinids, indicating the highest water energy facies, as you find on the Guadalupe Peak trail.

Our 2,600 foot descent from our campground to the floor of McKittrick Canyon was steep and difficult—for me anyway. Every step had to be made deliberately or you could twist an ankle which would create an unpleasant situation. We passed two separate high country rangers on the way down. These were both young men who apparently had no trouble making the steep climb without the aid of poles. Of course, they were only day-hiking and carried very light packs. One was accompanied by a

(continued on next page)

October Trip Report cont....—Steven Schafersman

woman photographer. Both rangers carried walkie-talkies or satellite phones strapped to their chests and I was glad to see those, since at the moment I encountered them I wasn't sure I could make it down and might need to be carried out! Both asked for our backcountry permit and we had to tell them that Sean had it and he was an hour in front of us. Diane, Gae, and I couldn't keep up with Sean and Andy. But we all did get down with no problem and the last three miles were quite easy since this part of the trail is relatively flat. Near the Grotto and Hunters Line Cabin I encountered Gordon Bell, a Guadalupe Mountains National Park Ranger and the Park Geologist. He is a friend of mine so we talked about some of the geology I had seen on the McKittrick Canyon trail and how it was different from the Permian Reef Trail. For a review of some of this

and a photo of Gordon with his name misspelled, download this document:

http://www.nature.nps.gov/GEOLOGY/inventory/publications/reports/gumo_gre_rpt_view.pdf.

The colors of the trees between Pratt Cabin and the Grotto were spectacular. Bright red and yellow maple trees and brown and tan sumac and walnut trees were everywhere. We encountered frequent day hikers with cameras. I imagine what they thought of us with our backpacks on. Did they envy or admire us? I remember seeing backpackers on this trail over the years since I visit Pratt Cabin every November, and I was always envious and admiring them. Now I am one of them. Past Pratt Cabin to the trailhead there was little tree color at all,

so you have to hike beyond Pratt Cabin to see the amazing fall colors.

Wally Post made the hundred mile trip from Dog Canyon to pick us up in McKittrick Canyon. You need a pick-up ride to hike across the Guads as we did. Sean and Andy left one of their cars at McKittrick and then drove all the way back to Dog Canyon to retrieve the other car. You can also have two groups, exchange keys, and meet in Carlsbad to retrieve your cars, but then one group has to climb the steep 2,600 feet west from McKittrick to Dog Canyon while the other has the more leisurely 1,600 foot climb east from Dog to McKittrick Canyon. That will always be the source of some disagreement.

The 2010 PBOC Calendar

The 2009 Club Officers and a few other movers and shakers got together with the emailed suggestions from club members to assemble the 2010 PBOC Calendar. There were a whole list of great ideas and I think that the club will be very pleased with the results. One of the most requested trips was a repeat of our September trip to the Buffalo Trail Boy Scout Ranch. The Scouts only charged

us \$2 a person a night and furnished with fully functional restrooms complete with hot showers! As a club, we're not used to that kind of treatment so we booked the Scout Ranch twice for 2010, once in February and again in September. We had 46 members

"Reality....it's overrated...who needs it?"

on the last trip there, a new attendance record, and everyone enjoyed it so much that they requested a minimum of at least one more trip planned for next year. We're also finally going to float the Devil's River! The complete 2010 PBOC Calendar is included in this newsletter!

Club Officers

It's already time to elect our new Club President. As has been practiced for decades, the club president is the only officer elected and he selects his "cabinet" of officers, i.e. Vice Prez and Editor. We already have a repeated nomination but we're open until this Friday, November 6th at 5:00 p.m. to receive any additional nominees. The president of the club's main duties are to act as a contact person for potential new

members and to promote the club whenever applicable. He/she also helps in booking meeting places, helps Sibley staff carry out PBOC events, etc. It can't be overstated how important this position is....besides, the new president has the privilege of receiving the "golden symbol of the office" in the solemn inauguration ceremony. This is a very serious occasion, not to be taken lightly! So, if you have a good idea for a new president

get that nomination into me posthaste!



**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PERMIAN
BASIN OUTING CLUB**

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2010 PBOC Calendar

January 22-24—Big Bend National Park, Backpacking—Patrick Dearen

February 19-21—Boy Scout Ranch, Backpacking/Camping—Richard Galle

March 26-28—Alamito Creek Preserve, Camping—David Crum

April 16-18— Independence Creek—Sean Patty

April 30-May 2— Devil's River Float Trip — Sammy Hunnicutt

June 25-27—Pat & Sharon Barber Ranch—Pat Barber

July 30-August 1—White Mt. Wilderness, Ruidoso, Backpacking—Brandon Hawkins

August 20-22—Caprock Canyons State Park, Camping/Mt. Biking—Richard Galle

September 24-26—Boy Scout Ranch, Hiking/Camping—Sammy Hunnicutt

October 15-17—Dog Canyon Guadalupe, Backpacking—Steven Schafersman

November 12-14 Carlsbad Caverns National Park—Sean Patty

December 4—PBOC Christmas Party

We're on the web at:
www.sibleynaturecenter.org



Photo by Steven Schafersman



High Mountain Drifters—photo by Steven Schafersman



What can I say.....WOW! - photo by Sean Patty