

Trails

The Newsletter of the Permian Basin Outing Club

July 2011

The Outing Club July Trip Report

Point of Rock Rappelling, Davis Mountains Preserve Hiking, Fort Davis State Park—Camping and Hiking—story and photos by Andy Price

I know, I know—you're thinking it was too hot to be out there in that hundred degree temperature in the middle of July in this terrible drought we are having. The fact is, we had a good size group, the trip was a blast, and storybook weather. If you didn't make this one, you missed out on a great experience and good company and conversation. We had some of our regular troops and some new recruits. Let me give you some details on our storybook weekend. Richard Galle (our leader) and I were car pooling in his new Toyota pickup. These trips can be made with minimal costs when you pull together as a group. We left Midland about 1:00 p.m. with clear hot sunny skies. By the time we were passing through Balmorhea the temperature had dropped, dark clouds were immediately east of us and the air had that heavenly smell of fresh rain in the desert.

Setting up Camp: At Madera Draw, outside of Balmorhea, the rain started pouring. It was great. After a short time we noticed where fires had burned through the area. There was the smell of rain and a faint smell of burnt wood. Outside of Fort Davis, past the turnoff to the Fort Davis State Park the rain became very heavy and it started hailing small

pea size hail. Richard pulled off for a short time until it let up. We checked in at the park and drove to camp. Dave Taylor, part of our group and a professional photographer, had already set up his tent and just got back from taking photos from Skyline Drive. We spoke for a while and set up our tents. The rain had become a small drizzle and then stopped. The rest of the group started arriving and setting up their tents. The camp sites were nice with a creek that ran immediately behind us and full service bathrooms a hundred yards or so away. Some of the group did not arrive until 7:00 p.m. or so. We all welcomed them.

Friday Night at Camp: Friday night the group gathered together in the cool moist night air. Glad to see old friends, to make new friends and to be away from it all. The newest member to the club was Amanda LaPlante. Through conversation, the group noticed quickly that the young lady is no stranger to the outdoors. This time of evening is what I think of as the golden hour. The day is over, folks have had their dinner, and it is time to enjoy just being in the outdoors with the group. We learned that Tom Elliot and Meagan Burkholder are getting married in October and we

congratulated them. Snacks and drinks started to come out along with a couple of guitars. Something that is getting to be a trend with our group is "pass the guitar" time. Anyone that wants to play a little or sing a song gets a chance. It doesn't matter what your level of playing or singing is-



we are there to have fun. This time

during "pass the guitar" we were in for a nice surprise when the young lady Sarah Cherry was handed Richard's classical guitar and she started playing beautiful classical music. Everyone just stopped, stared, and listened in that magical moment in the Davis Mountains. John Denver was right. There is a Rocky Mountain high. Several of us played, some only played one or two chords and others played several and we all enjoyed it. There was special excitement in the camp that night because the main event for the next day was rappelling at Point of Rocks. There were several of us who had never done any rappelling, including me. **(cont. on page 2)**

Special points of interest:

- July trip to Davis Mountains special in so many ways
- Lots of pics thanks to Andy
- August Summer Mummer

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....Andy's July trip report continued.....

I went to sleep that night wondering if what it would be like to step off that ledge. The night temperatures were in the low 60's and the day temperatures were in the mid 80's.

Saturday Morning: Saturday morning we talked about how nice it was to sleep in such cool weather. I had promised several people I would have coffee ready first thing in the morning. I had put water on to boil and set out my instant coffee. I noticed no one was coming over to drink my coffee. Tom Elliot, my neighbor, put on a large pot of freshly ground coffee that he personally had roasted just before the trip. The intoxicating aroma filled the air. I had no shame at all and went over and mooched a cup. The taste was to die for. Tom was very popular that morning. Soon the group congregated around Richard Galle, our club and trip leader. He was bombarded with questions and requests about the day's events but mainly about rappelling at Point of Rocks. In a short time the group had loaded up and headed for Point of Rocks.

Rappelling at Point of Rocks: It was early morning with partly cloudy skies when we arrived. In other words, perfect weather as can be seen in the photos. Richard had experienced volunteers Tom Elliot and Amanda LaPlante to help with getting gear up the mountain. Once at the pinnacle of the cliff, Richard anchored his gear with Tom's assistance. I happened to be in a spot near the top and Richard yelled out "Andy, I guess you're first." A little surprised, I stood up and looked down and thought what on earth have I gotten myself into? Richard started coaching and said "keep three points of contact and

come around this way." Once at the peak, I enjoyed the view. Richard was systematic, everything checked and rechecked. I listened intently as Richard gave instructions. He was in no hurry and explained clearly the technique in how to rappel down. By now, Chris Cherry had made it



Meagan going over the edge to the peak and was standing next to me. Chris enjoyed the view as well. Now it was time to start my first ever rappel down the cliff. Everything worked exactly like I was taught. Over the edge and on my way down, it was an absolute thrill. Another one of those Rocky Mountain highs. When my feet touched the bottom I was disappointed it was over. Richard methodically walked each person through the training and rigging. I am sure all first timers who rappelled that day would agree Richard is a great instructor and builds each person's confidence. It also helps to know he is one of the most experienced mountain climbers in West Texas and has taught over 2,000 persons how to do this. The youngest member of our group that day was Katie Cherry (you know, the daughter of Chris Cherry and the sister of Sarah who played classical guitar for us at camp). Katie a high school lady, climbed up to the peak of the mountain in no time at all. She listened enthusiastically to Richard's training and looked calm as she stepped off the edge of the cliff and began to rappel down. Mom and dad watching on below were very proud.

Rappelling operations were completed by 12:00 and it was time for lunch. We headed to Fort Davis for a sit down meal at a local restaurant. What a deal.

McDonald Observatory: After lunch, the group headed to McDonald Observatory. On our last turn into the observatory a road crew had the entrance blocked. We were told they were paving the road and we could come back in a couple of hours. So we traveled to Davis Mountains Preserve.

Davis Mountains Preserve: The drive to the preserve was nice with low hanging clouds and the smell of rain in the air. Tall pine trees

"None of us are as dumb as all of us."



For the uninitiated.....this is rain....



Katie rappelling



Amanda climbing the peak

started to appear once we got near the visitor center. Richard spoke with his friend Chris, the director. We drove on up the mountain where it had rained only an hour or so before our arrival. Taffy Armstrong was proud to get mud on her new Ford SUV. We parked and split into two groups and did some short hiking. One group went to the top of the mountain and the other hiked down a creek bed. Refreshed from a little exercise, we then headed back. We stopped by the visitor center (...continued page 3)

August 6th Summer Mummies

The PBOC has 30 members/guests going to the Saturday, August 6th Summer Mummies. This will be our August “trip.” Brandon managed to get us tickets up front in the “pit” area of the theater so that you can get an up close and personal view of the play. The old club made this an annual event and a chance to get out of the summer heat. For those of you that haven’t been to the Mummies, you’re in for a treat. (It would be good to wear casual clothes and probably a shirt that you can leave the shirt tail out of your jeans/pants/ect. The reason for that will become obvious if you’ve not attended before.

As in PBOC/Summer Mummer’s of the past, we will extend an invitation to eat with everyone prior to the play. Brandon and I thought that Rosa’s Café at 2501 N. Big Spring Street would be a good choice since we can get in and get out without much delay. We will meet at 5:45 p.m. at the café. Brandon will have all of your tickets then and there and if you decide that you don’t want to eat with the group, Brandon will make sure that you can get your ticket at the



front door of the old Yucca Theater. The Yucca Theater is at 208 N. Colorado in downtown Midland. The play starts at 8 p.m. but you’re advised to be there by 7:30 so we should have plenty of time to eat and get to our destination; so for all of you that purchased a ticket, we’ll see you at the play.

Andy’s July trip report continued.....

at the observatory and were told it was too late to have access.

Saturday Night Camp: One of our members is a marathon runner. At the end of the day, John Eberly will take out jogging for long periods of time while some of us enjoy a rest at camp. Saturday evening we had dinner and gathered into a group circle. We were in for a treat when Amanda, our new member, pulled out all the fixings for SMORES and shared them with the group. Yes, those tasty morsels of chocolate bits, toasted marshmallows, and graham crackers that are guaranteed to give you a sugar buzz. From there on, the evening was full of lively conversation of life’s experiences, past club trips and future plans. Tom heard a rustle in the creek bed adjoining our camp. A couple of us grabbed our flash lights. Fifty feet from camp were five javalina hogs strolling along in and out of the brush. We all agreed these were bigger than the javalina we have seen at Big Bend. After about ten minutes, the javalina had passed and our focus went back to camp life. Later that night half of the group turned in. The other half formed a smaller circle, turned off the camp lantern and began to speak in quite low voices. Soon stories of things that go bump in the night began to be shared. The two most foreboding scary stories were told by Richard Galle and Meagan Burkholder. Richard told the story of how a few years ago, he was teaching rappelling to the outing club at Point

of Rocks. At night he and several others hear a low guttural laughing sound coming from a point on the side of the cliff. He gave details how this happened several times throughout the entire summer. Oh yeah—Richard can do that laugh real spooky like. Meagan told a story about being awakened one night by a five year old boy dressed in green coveralls. I don’t remember all the details but I crawled into my sleeping bag that night feeling a bit edgy about any sounds I heard. After a good day and fun evening, I drifted off to sleep.

Wildlife in Camp: About 3:00 in the morning, I heard the sound of paper rustling and someone say “get—get”. I throw on my shoes, unzip my tent and jump outside. There is Richard chasing off a SKUNK. That is one brave man. Richard said “That skunk was going through the trash.” I told Richard “you did good, you ran him off without him spraying my tent.” He said “I threw some water at him and it worked.” Then he said help me hang the trash in this tree. After trash detail we turned in. I drifted off to a deep sleep and then I hear this crash bang sound. I thought that silly skunk is back. I get outside my tent and there, digging through a steel hinged camp box that was knocked over and contents spilling on the ground, is a javalina hog. This time I go, “get—get.” Richard arrives again as the hog is slowly, comfortably, calmly walking away down the creek. I put the camp box up on the concrete

*“When you wish upon a falling star,
your dreams can come true. Unless it’s
really a meteorite hurtling to the Earth
which will destroy all life. Then you’re
pretty much hosed no matter what you
wish for. Unless it’s death by meteor.”*

picnic table. Richard simply said “See you in the morning.” What a night—ghost stories, a skunk and a javalina hog. Am I ever going to get any sleep.

Sunday morning at Camp: Sunday morning was cool, moist and the smell of Tom’s coffee filled the air. Tom had several club members hovering around his campsite waiting to soar in for coffee as soon as it finished brewing. The club was content having had a nice weekend. Conversation was about the critters that visited the camp the night before. Dave Taylor reported a skunk, a fox, and two deer passing by his camp. Talk soon turns to what time everyone is heading home and the next club trip. No one seems in a hurry. Here and there folks start to break camp. This is always the tough part of the trip. Some say goodbye and others just drift away. As we drove away and started out of the Davis Mountains the sun broke through the clouds and the storybook weekend faded away in our rear view mirrors.

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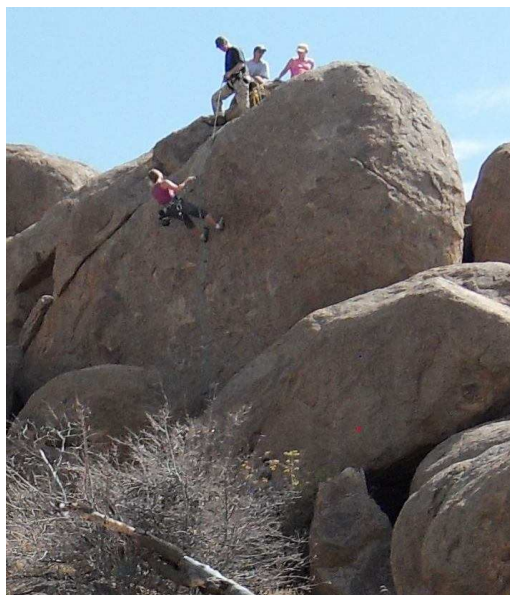


Tom rigging rope



Taffy stepping off the ledge

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



Amanda rappelling



Davis Mountains Preserve group
