A Chihuahuan Desert Paradise

A splash of blue stands out against limestone cliffs. The honking of a great blue heron, interspersed with the descending trill of a canyon wren, can be heard off in the distance. This landscape, which at times appears stark and desolate, comes alive with color after a rainstorm. Amistad National Recreation Area (NRA) is a land of contrasts...and of hidden treasures.

Recreation Area (NRA) is a land of great blue heron, interspersed with the descending trill of a canyon wren, can be heard off in the distance. This landscape, which at times appears stark and desolate, comes alive with color after a rainstorm. Amistad National Recreation Area (NRA) is a land of contrasts...and of hidden treasures. The same water that draws people to boat and fish today, sustained over 300 generations of hunters and gatherers.

They left behind a record of their existence through colorful rock art panels, bits of tools, and fibers preserved for thousands of years by the arid desert climate.

Situated on the United States-Mexico Border, Amistad NRA is known primarily for excellent year-round, water-based recreation including: boating, fishing, swimming, scuba diving and water-skiing. Amistad NRA also provides opportunities for picnicking, camping and hunting. The reservoir, at the confluence of the Rio Grande and Devils rivers, was created by Amistad Dam in 1969. In addition to excellent recreation, this area is rich in archeology and rock art, and contains a wide variety of plant and animal life. So whether you come to boat, to ponder ancient mysteries, or to listen to bird song and watch the desert bloom, Amistad has something for you.

Please visit Amistad NRA’s official home page: http://www.nps.gov/amis

FAST FACTS

Amistad National Recreation Area
- Established November 28, 1990
- 57,292 acres of land and water
- 2002 visitation- 952,000

Amistad Dam
- Completed September 8, 1969
- 6.06 miles long
- 64,860 surface acres
- 351 miles of shoreline
- 14 miles
- Devils River arm- 25 miles

FAST FACTS

Why Do The Lake Levels Change?

Amistad Reservoir is in a desert. Because irregular rainfall and seasonal fluctuations in water demand, there can be dramatic changes in Amistad’s water level.

The primary purposes of the dam are water storage (mostly for agriculture and domestic use) and flood control.

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The primary purposes of the dam are water storage (mostly for agriculture and domestic use) and flood control. When the dam was built, recreation was low on the priority list. Recent drought has dramatically affected recreation on the lake—record lows were reached in August, 1998. Since then, occasional large storms have kept the lake level steady, but even at these lower levels, Amistad is still a big lake.

Amistad Reservoir is fed by three major rivers, the Rio Grande, the Pecos and the Devils rivers. The headwaters of the Rio Grande and Pecos River are located in high, snow-capped mountains in Colorado and New Mexico, but an extensive system of dams on both rivers captures river water for domestic and agricultural use long before the Texas state line.

Below Fort Quitman, downstream from El Paso, Texas, the Rio Grande is essentially dry. In most cases, the Rio Grande’s primary flow into Amistad Reservoir comes from the Rio Conchos, which joins the Rio Grande at Presidio, Texas. The Rio Conchos carries water from the Sierra Madre Occidental in the Mexican state of Chihuahua; its headwaters are near Creel, Chihuahua, close to the famous Copper Canyon. Increasing numbers of dams on the Rio Conchos also limit how much water feeds the Rio Grande and, ultimately, Amistad Reservoir. Only large tropical storms over the Sierra Madre or from the Gulf of Mexico have significantly raised the reservoir’s level.

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Dear Friends of Amistad:

Amistad National Recreational Area is beginning the development of a new general management plan (GMP). Just as its name implies, this plan will provide a framework to guide long-term park management decision-making, based on a vision of what people wish to see at Amistad in the future. We need your help in describing that vision and developing the overall management goals through which we will achieve it.

In developing a vision for the future of Amistad NRA it is important to review the park’s purpose, its diverse cultural and natural resources, and the potential for public appreciation and understanding of these distinctive resources. The planning process will describe specific desirable resource conditions and visitor goals for the park’s future and design alternate management strategies for achieving these goals. This process will be more successful if you share with us our own vision for the park’s future.

As part of our planning process, we will be meeting with many federal, state, and local government agencies and officials as well as private organizations. Communication and cooperation with other government agencies will identify common interests and goals. Developing partnerships with other agencies can offer creative and efficient ways to achieve our future goals at Amistad. In fact, this type of cooperation is essential to developing a plan that meets the needs of the American public and fulfills the National Park Service mission to protect our most precious cultural and natural resources.

Please join us in this effort to develop a plan that charts a sustainable future for Amistad NRA. Send in your comments and let us know if you want to be on our mailing list. We will keep you informed throughout the planning process with public meetings, newsletters, postings on the web site, and a draft plan. If you have any comments or questions at any time, please feel free to contact me at:

Alan W. Cox, Superintendent
Amistad National Recreational Area
HCR 3 Box 5J
Del Rio TX 78840
(830) 775-7491
E-mail:Amistad_planning@nps.gov
Or visit the NPS Planning website at http://www.planning.nps.gov/plans.cfm.

Please accept our thanks in advance for your input and assistance in this important process. We appreciate your interest in Amistad National Recreation Area and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Alan W. Cox
Superintendent

A Bit of History

Amistad National Recreation Area was established in 1990, twenty-one years after completion of Amistad Dam. The dam, a joint project between Mexico and the United States, was built on the Rio Grande to store water and prevent flooding. The name “Amistad” is Spanish for friendship, to commemorate the spirit of cooperation between two neighbors. The International Boundary and Water Commission operates the dam.

Amistad National Recreation Area was established by the United States Congress to provide recreation and enjoyment of the U.S. side of Amistad Reservoir, and to protect its scenic, scientific, and cultural resources. The National Park Service manages the NRA, in coordination with various state and federal agencies.

PWC Ban Still In Effect

As a result of a federal court order, the operation of personal watercraft (Jet Skis, Seadoos, etc.) is currently prohibited in Amistad NRA. This is not a permanent ban, and the park is drafting a management plan that may allow personal watercraft use in 2004.

You may tow your PWC to the Mexican side of Lake Amistad and operate it there. An Amistad lake use permit is not required for a towed vessel. Check with authorities regarding permits required for use in Mexico.

The Monarchs of Amistad

Fall at Amistad National Recreation Area brings one of the most impressive animal migrations in the world—passage of thousands of Monarch butterflies. The Monarchs pass through the Del Rio area on their way from southern Canada to their winter homes in the mountains of central Mexico.

Monarch butterflies flying from Canada to Mexico will travel up to 3000 miles in their fall migration. Del Rio and Ciudad Acuña are usually close to the center of the migration corridor, and most years you can see thousands of butterflies roosting in trees overnight around the lake and in town.

The return spring migration is more dispersed, and the Monarchs travel to northern Texas and Oklahoma to lay eggs for the next generation. Three or four more generations will recolonize the Plains all the way to Canada, until late summer butterflies resume migratory behavior.

One of the most impressive aspects of the Monarch migration is, unlike birds, individual butterflies have never migrated before, since the migratory generation is separated by three or four non-migratory generations. Pure instinct guides these remarkable insects.

Each fall, Amistad National Recreation Area offers a bilingual, binational educational program, ‘Monarchs Across the Border,’ to elementary school children in Del Rio, TX and Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila. The program covers the Monarch’s amazing migration, the importance of its conservation, and emphasizes the Monarch as a resource shared among neighboring countries.

New Binational Fisheries Plan

A new Binational Fisheries Management Plan has been developed by Amistad National Recreation Area, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and various agencies in the government of Mexico. The plan will coordinate fisheries management on both sides of the international border in Lake Amistad.

Alan W. Cox, Superintendent of Amistad NRA, said, “Before this plan, there was no coordination between United States and Mexican agencies. There is sport fishing on both sides of the border, and commercial fishing on the Mexican side. Nobody was keeping an eye on the health of the entire fishery to ensure everybody was doing things right.”

The Binational Fisheries Management Plan will coordinate research programs and monitoring projects between Mexico and the U.S., and creates an open dialogue between all lake users, from sport anglers to commercial fishermen. Both nations have committed to keeping Amistad’s fisheries resource in tip-top shape.

Help Us Plan Our Future
When life has been good to you, a good way to “pay back” is to volunteer at a national park, a seashore, a recreation area, a historical site or any other designation given to those magnificent areas that preserve the USA’s resources.

Our national parks are under-funded and under-staffed. Not nearly enough money comes to the parks to keep them going like it once was. Many projects are dropped by the wayside when funds are not available.

We are retired and have a home in Fort Myers, Florida. In the past three years our temporary homes have been in Maryland on Assateague National Seashore; in Pennsylvania at Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site; in Florida at Fort Caroline National Memorial; in Del Rio, Texas at Amistad National Recreation area, and near Fredonia, Arizona at Pipe Spring National Historic Site.

We have spent as little as one month and as many as five months in these areas. We are going back a second time to some of these places because we love the areas, the people and the work.

We discovered the fun of volunteering in 1992. We began at state parks in Ohio and Florida. In 1996 we began to specialize in national parks only. We have been campground hosts, visitor center operators, trails and rails speakers, amateur archeologists, and our greatest love, first person historical costumed interpreters for park visitors. We have also assembled picnic tables, delivered toilet paper to rustic outhouses, helped develop educational programs, baked homemade bread in the oven of an iron cook stove and made a homemade stew in a dutch oven on an open campfire. Other friends we have met make signs, clear trails, conduct hikes and give geological talks in some very pretty sites. In fact, we are writing this at Amistad NRA from a campsite overlooking the lake. Deer walk by every morning, yucca plants are just starting to bloom and the desert is slowly coming alive as it does only after a rain.

The national parks have a program that lets a volunteer park at an RV campsite, with electric, sewer and water, and the beautiful scenery in return for the volunteer’s service. The rangers tell us about other places of interest in the area that most casual visitors miss. The volunteers have pot luck dinners and use off-hours to socialize. We make many lasting friendships.

If you are interested in volunteering, ask for the pamphlet “VIP Volunteers in Parks” or go to the web site www.nps.gov/volunteer Another site www.volunteer.gov is for all government agencies.

Volunteering In Parks

Volunteering at Amistad

Interested in volunteering at Amistad National Recreation Area? Fill out an application and send it to: Amistad National Recreation Area, HCR 3 Box 5J, Del Rio, TX 78840 ATTN: Volunteer Coordinator or email to: Amis_interpretation@nps.gov

Amistad NRA Fees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Park User Fees</th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Golden Age/Access</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrance Fee</td>
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<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Boat Use</td>
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<td>(24 hours)</td>
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<td>3 Day Boat Use</td>
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<td>Per Calendar Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camping Spur 406</td>
<td>$4.00/night/site</td>
<td>$2.00/night/site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camping San Pedro</td>
<td>$4.00/night/site</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping Governors Landing</td>
<td>$8.00/night/site</td>
<td>$4.00/night/site</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Camping 277 North</td>
<td>$4.00/night/site</td>
<td>$2.00/night/site</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Camp Sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Pedro, 277 North, Rock Quarry</td>
<td>$2/person/night</td>
<td>$1/person/night</td>
<td>15 person minimum 15 person minimum</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The National Parks Passport is a real bargain for the frequent visitor to National Park Service units. The pass is only $10 and provides free entrance to its holder and everyone in the vehicle for one full year from the date of purchase. Not all parks have an entrance fee, but most of them do, including some entrance fees up to $20. The pass is only good for entrance and does not include any user fees such as parking, camping, launching, etc.

A handy booklet on the National Park areas is included with the purchase of a National Parks Pass.

Anyone may purchase a National Parks Pass; however, it may not be used for commercial purposes. See the individual park for commercial vehicle entrance fees.

A GOLDEN EAGLE UPGRADE can be purchased for $35 to cover entrance into other federal fee areas, such as National Forests, and Corps of Engineers lands.

PARK SPECIFIC PASS

Some parks may have an individual annual pass for entrance to that park only. This is great if you live near a National Park and enjoy visiting it often. The cost is less than a National Parks Pass, but it is only to be used at the park in which you purchased it.

GOLDEN ACCESS PASS

The Golden Access Passport is free of charge to U.S. citizens who are permanently physically disabled or blind. A Golden Access Passport admits its holder into all National Park Service units and many other federal fee areas for the lifetime of the holder. Other federal fee areas include those managed by the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Entrance is also permitted to everyone in the pass holder’s vehicle. The pass holder may also be entitled to 50% off all user fees such as camping, launching, and parking. Where there is an individual fee, such as a cave tour, then only the pass holder is entitled to 50% off. Everyone with him/her must pay full price. The passport must be obtained in person along with proof of disability, and it is nontransferable.

GOLDEN AGE PASS

The Golden Age Passport is a lifetime entrance permit for U.S. citizens 62 years of age and older. This pass allows its holder the same benefits as the Golden Access. The Golden Age Passport must be obtained in person with proof of age. There is a one-time fee of $10 for this pass to cover administrative costs. It is nontransferable.

Winter 2003 - 2004  The High Bridge Tribune 3
Amistad National Recreation Area offers water-based recreation and protects our natural and cultural heritage. Amistad (Spanish for friendship) Dam, built by the United States and Mexico in 1969, forms International Amistad Reservoir on the Rio Grande, Pecos, and Devils rivers. Buoyos mark the US/Mexico border along the Rio Grande arm of the lake. Enjoy your visit to Amistad NRA!

**CAMPING**
The National Park Service operates four campgrounds. All sites are primitive with no hook-ups, and feature grills, vault toilets, and covered picnic tables. Only Governors Landing has potable water. All sites are first-come, first-served. Reservations are not available except for Group Campsites. A dump station is located at Diablo East.

**SAN PEDRO**
Open all year
35 Sites with long, flat spaces, suitable for RVs or tents. Also, 5 tent-only sites.
Camp Hosts on-site in the winter months.

**GOVERNORS LANDING**
Open all year
15 Sites, suitable for RV’s less than 28 feet or tents. Camp Hosts on-site in the winter months.

**SPUR 406**
Open all year
8 Sites, for RV’s or tents, shoreline camping available.

**GROUP CAMPSITES**
Located at San Pedro, 277 North and Rock Quarry. All are primitive group sites and have covered picnic tables and fire ring. Sites may be reserved up to 3 months in advance.

Privately owned campgrounds and RV parks with hookups are also available in the Del Rio area.

**FISHING**
The beautiful blue water of Lake Amistad provides excellent fishing and attracts many anglers to Amistad NRA.

**BANK FISHING**
You can fish from the shoreline anywhere outside of harbors and designated swim areas. Courtesy fishing docks are located at Governors Landing, Rough Canyon, and at the end of Spur 454.

**WHAT TO FISH FOR**
Some of the “favorite” catches at Lake Amistad are Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, Striped Bass, Channel Catfish, and Black Crappie.

**LICENSE REQUIREMENTS**
Texas fishing license requirements apply when fishing on the U.S. side of Lake Amistad. When in Mexican waters, you must adhere to Mexican fishing regulations, which differ considerably from Texas regulations in terms of size and catch limits. The Mexican border is indicated by numbered buoys running along the main channel of the Rio Grande.

**NOTE:** Amistad Marina on Hwy 90W is now selling Mexican fishing licenses and boat permits. 830-775-0878. Mexican fishing licenses and boat permits are also available from the SAGARPA office in Ciudad Acuña at 380 Zapata, two blocks east of Blvd Guerrero (turn at the Chery dealer). Office hours are 8-3 Monday- Friday. The phone number in Acuña is 877-2-5814 and 877-2-62-38.

**NOTE:** Mexican law strictly prohibits possession of guns, ammunition, and illegal drugs. Anyone caught in Mexican waters with contraband will receive a mandatory prison sentence and a substantial fine.

**HUNTING**
Unlike many National Park Service areas, Amistad’s enabling legislation allows limited hunting. Archery and small-game shotgun hunting is permitted on about 1,200 acres of federal land in five hunt areas. Texas hunting regulations and seasons along with Amistad’s regulations are used to manage hunting.

Free permits are available IN PERSON only at the visitor information center with the following documentation:
- Texas Hunting License
- Drivers License
- Hunter Education Card (if born after September 1, 1971).

While hunting, hunters must have the permit in their possession, must fill in the Hunter Data Sheet daily, and return the form by March 15, 2004. Failure to comply will result in loss of future hunting privileges. More information and maps are available at the visitor information center and on our web site: www.nps.gov/amis.

**PICNICKING**
Relax and enjoy lake side views at any of Amistad NRA’s eight picnic areas. Each area is equipped with covered picnic tables, grills, and vault toilets. Group picnic shelters are available by reservation only.

**MARINAS**
Boat Rentals
Lake Amistad Resort & Marina
830-774-4577
Rough Canyon Marina & Store
830-775-8779
Air Force (Southwinds) Marina
830-775-5971
Authorized Fishing Guides
Herschel Black
(830) 773-5639
Jerry Black
(432) 292-4270
Don “Ray” Hanselman
(830) 774-1857
“Mike” Fambro
(432) 292-4658
Charlie Rumfield
(830) 774-3484

**COWBOY COFFEE**
An informal talk with an NPS ranger or other guest is held every Thursday morning at 10 AM from January through March. The programs are rotate among 3 of Amistad NRA’s campgrounds, Governors Landing, San Pedro and 277 North, and are held at the Campground Host’s site. Cowboy Coffee talks are open to the public and free of charge. Bring your favorite mug, a comfortable chair, and lots of questions!

**EVENING PROGRAMS**
From December to March, evening programs are offered on various Saturday evenings at 7:30 PM at locations throughout Del Rio and Val Verde County. Topics cover a variety of subjects and are presented by experts in their respective field. Contact the park for a schedule. Evening programs are free of charge. Dress warm and bring a flashlight.

**BIRD WALKS**
A guided bird walk is offered every third Saturday of the month from September to May. We meet at Amistad NRA Visitor Information Center on Hwy 90 W at 8am. From there we carpool to the Rio Grande below Amistad Dam. Bring binoculars, birding books, checklists, drinking water, snacks, and wear sturdy shoes. Bird walks are free.

**SUGGESTED BIRDING/ WILDLIFE VIEWING LOCATIONS**
**AMISTAD NRA**
Spur 454: San Pedro Campground - Good for desert birds; very good for migrating and wintering sparrows. Good for butterflies in season.

Spur 406: Good for desert birds; in summer use spotting scope for interior least terns over Lake Amistad. Good for butterflies in season.

**RIO GRANDE BELOW AMISTAD DAM:**
Very good for riparian birds. Open by guided tour only. See bird walk schedule above.
BIRDWATCHING (cont.)

DEL RIO

Duck Ponds - Cienegas Rd: Good for aquatic birds.

River Road: (follow Vega Verde Road past gravel pits to dead end) Good for riparian birds.

Laguna de Plata: (on Garza Lane) Good for wintering waterfowl and winter grassland sparrows.

San Felipe Creek: Good for riparian birds, and green and ringed kingfisher.

South Del Rio near Winery: (Valenti St. and River St. off Nicholson, and Guyer Lane off Qualia Drive) Good for migrating warblers.

TRAILS & RAILS PROGRAM

The National Park Service has teamed up with Amtrak to provide educational programs onboard the Amtrak passenger train. Park staff and volunteers explain the fascinating natural and cultural history along the rail route through southwest Texas. They bring alive historical figures such as Judge Roy Bean and talk about the construction of the second transcontinental railroad. Amistad’s Trails & Rails program is offered on the westbound Sunset Limited Amtrak most Tuesdays and Saturdays. The program highly depends on the time the train arrives into Del Rio.

NOTE: The National Park Service will accommodate groups with advance notice. Given advance notice, the Trails & Rails volunteers will board the train regardless of arrival time into Del Rio.

Reservations:
To make a reservation on Amtrak, call 1-800-USA-RAIL (1-800-872-7245). You will make your reservation for the Sunset Limited and you do not have to mention the Trails & Rails program. Our program is presented onboard regularly scheduled Amtrak passenger trains. The National Park Service is not involved with Amtrak prices, reservations, etc.

TRIPS:
Del Rio to Sanderson trip: You will need to have someone shuttle you/your group back to Del Rio from Sanderson. On your way back you can visit the Terrell County Museum in Sanderson, stop by the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry, also sure to check out Seminole Canyon State Historical Park!

Del Rio to Alpine trip: If you choose to go all the way to Alpine and take the eastbound Sunset Limited back that night, plan on an extended layover in Alpine. Depending on the timing of the trains (westbound and eastbound), you may have from 5-10 hours in the Alpine area. If that is the case, you may want to rent a car and drive to Fort Davis, McDonald Observatory, to Marfa or to Big Bend National Park. Just be back in time for the eastbound train. To check on the train’s arrival status into Alpine, call 1-800-USA-RAIL (1-800-872-7245).

We welcome you to join us for an interesting and educational description of the world outside the train windows. For more information call 830-775-7491 ext. 223.

INFORMATION

Amistad NRA’s new visitor information center is located 10 miles west of Del Rio on Hwy 90 West, and, as of January, 2004, will be open 7 days a week, 8 am - 5 pm, closed Thanksgiving Day, December 25 and January 1. The center has various interactive displays, a theater to watch a short film on the recreation area, an information desk, and a full book store and lounge area.

The book store is stocked by Big Bend Natural History Association and has many great titles and fun things for sale. You can purchase field guides, books on Texas history, rock art, Texas Indians, borderland history, maps, star charts, wildlife posters and puzzles, childrens books and much, much more!

The information center has all National Park Passports for sale, and annual or daily boat permits (see page 3 for info on passports and permits).
Visiting Lower Pecos Rock Art Sites: Know Before You Go

The Lower Pecos River Archeological region encompasses a 30-square-mile area nestled along the Texas/Mexico border in southwestern Texas. Even though this prehistoric cultural region is fairly small, it represents over 10,000 prehistoric archeological sites that have been recorded, ranging in age from the late 10th century to more than 10,000 years old. With over 52 documents containing pictograph sites, the region contains some of the finest rock art sites in North America. These pictographs range in size from isolated motifs just a few inches tall to sites with huge panels stretching more than 100 feet along the back of rockshelter walls. Readers unfamiliar with the region, or seeking in-depth information about archeological and historical sites throughout Texas, should visit the following web site: www.texashistory.net.

Unlike most other remote regions in the western U.S., the vast majority of pictograph sites in the Lower Pecos River Region are situated on private property and are therefore not open to the public. Over the years, many well-intentioned (and some not so) visitors have deliberately trespassed on private land to view specific rock art sites they saw on television or illustrated in books and articles. As a result, many ranchers are quick to file charges against anyone caught on their land. Fortunately, there are legal ways to see the region’s world-class prehistoric pictographs.

Seminole Canyon State Historical Park offers rock art connoisseurs the most complete venue in the region and features a bookstore, campground, interpretive center, and guided tours to sites. Located 42 miles west of Del Rio on U.S. Highway 90, the park has 31 campsites (28 sites with full hookups) and collects a $2.00 per person (over age of 12) entrance fee. At 10:00am and 3:00pm, Wednesday through Sunday, the park offers guided tours to several large pictograph sites in Seminole Canyon for a $5.00 tour fee (plus the standard $2.00 park entrance fee). Additional guided tours to remote sites in the park are offered on an irregular basis as part of the registration and a nominal fee. These tours include the Presa Canyon tour, which requires about 8 hours of very strenuous hiking and climbing but offers the rare opportunity of visiting seven of the park’s pictograph sites normally closed to the public. Another is the Upper Canyon tour, which takes about two hours of moderate hiking, and includes stops at two pictograph sites and several 19th century railroad sites. Those planning a trip to Seminole Canyon State Historical Park should check out their web site at: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/seminole.

The National Park Service manages over 50,000 acres of land and water on the 30-mile stretch of the United States side of the international reservoir. Amistad National Recreation Area has developed two major rock art sites for public visita-

ation, Parida Cave and Panther Cave (the latter of which is jointly managed by both the State and National Parks). Both sites were developed years ago and are intended to provide boaters with recreational opportunities that complement the state park’s land-based activities. In recent years however, a prolonged regional drought has lowered lake levels by nearly 50 vertical feet. As a result, there are times when both Parida and Panther Caves have been closed to boaters because of dangerous river conditions on the upper part of the reservoir. For current lake conditions contact Amistad National Recreation Area or visit our web site: www.nps.gov/amis.

Panther Cave is the region’s most famous pictograph site. The rear wall of the shelter is literally covered, from floor to ceiling, with hundreds of individual motifs collectively forming an uninterupted panel more than 80 feet in length. The site’s namesake, a giant red painted mountain lion or panther, is almost 9 feet long from nose to the tip of the tail. Visitors to Panther Cave climb a 60-foot steel staircase up to the rockshelter which is protected by a tall metal fence. Adjacent to the protective fence is an elevated catwalk that limits where visitors can go, thus reducing potential damage to vegetation. The steel fence and other major improvements were completed in 1996 by the NPS and were designed in such a way as to maximize photographic vantage points. Unobstructive interpretive panels with information about the pictographs, the prehistoric cultures that once lived in the reservoir basin, and they explain the need to protect and preserve Panther Cave as well as the many other sites in the region. Depending on lake levels, Panther Cave can be reached by boat from either the Box Canyon or Diablo East boat ramps. Current conditions limit access, but check with the National Park Service for up-to-date information.

In addition to the state and national parks in the region, there are two private foundations that offer opportunities for visiting additional sites in the region which are not on public lands. Membership in either of these organizations also provides opportunities for a wide range of educational activities, as well as field trips that can be found nowhere else in the region.

The Rock Art Foundation (RAF) was established by renowned photographer J.R. Zingraff and sponsors numerous activities for its members, including field schools, conservation and research projects, and an annual rendezvous in the grounds of Galloway White Shaman Preserve, adjacent to the Pecos River near Seminole Canyon State Historical Park, and also offers regular field trips to some of the region’s most famous rock art sites. The RAF recently produced a CD-ROM featuring Lower Pecos Region pictographs. The RAF website is among the best pictorial presentations on regional rock art available anywhere on the Internet. Visit their web site at www.rockart.org.

The Shumla School is the region’s newest organization and is dedicated to providing high quality educational opportunities for both the novice and the professional. The school, under the direction of anthropologist Dr. Carolyn Boyd, manages more than 1,500 acres of land adjacent to the Pecos River on the Harrington Ranch and is affiliated with the Department of Anthropology at Texas A&M University. Dr. Boyd has published extensively on the interpretation of regional pictograph styles and has recently completed a long-awaited book on rock art. Recently, the Shumla School began construction on a 2400 square foot Education Center; a second phase of development will provide accommodations for onsite educational activities, symposia, and professional development workshops and seminars. Detailed information on the Shumla School and its activities can be found at their web site: www.shumla.org.

“How Know Before You Go” is your watchword when visiting Lower Pecos pictographs. Seminole Canyon State Historic Park is a sure bet if you have little time or are just passing through. For heartier folkies, Parida Cave and the Presa Canyon tours offer the experience of a lifetime (and free souvenir blisters). If conditions are right and you have a boat, the Panther Cave trip provides the best of both worlds. The region has to offer. Or, you can join one of the regional rock art organization to make annual treks to sponsor activities for many years to come. No matter what you choose to do, be sure to check local web sites first and “Know Before You Go.”

- Joe Labadie
Cultural Resources Program Manager
Del Rio National Recreation Area

The taking of any artifacts or deliberate destruction of any cultural or natural resource on federal or state lands is against the law and punishable by fine and/or imprisonment.
Most Common Culprits Are Stinging Insects

**Bees and Wasps**

Tarantulas can be deadly, can be fatal. They are known to cause anaphylactic shock in some individuals and, if not treated immediately, can be fatal.

The other common culprits are ants. Ants are very abundant in the world, and there are many different species. In the southwestern U.S. there are three types of venomous ants. Fire ants are 1/6 to 1/4 in size, yellow, red or black in color, have long legs, and fine hairs on their head and abdomen. They are found mostly in open areas with dry to moist soil. Harvester ants are reddish-brown and 1/4-1/2" long. They live in fields, bare areas, and sand. Field ants can be black, red, brown or black and red, and are 1/6-1/4" long. These are common both in the desert and in urban areas.

The giant desert centipede is about 8-12" long, and its body is light orange to yellowish in color. Both head and tail are darker. The body has an average of twenty segments, each containing one pair of legs. Centipedes live mainly outdoors in damp, dark places (like under rocks, boards, or debris), but they can also be found indoors in basements, garages and closets of houses built in or near the desert. Desert centipedes feed on insects and other small creatures, and they are active year-round. Don’t touch! This fellow has large, pincer-like jaws and can inflict nasty pain, but the bite is not a serious injury. You can best avoid these creatures if you are careful where you put your hands and feet.

**Rattlesnakes**

Rattlesnakes are common throughout the desert southwest. It is unlikely you will encounter a rattlesnake during the daytime in the hot summer months, but it is a good idea to carry a flashlight with you if walking around the desert at night, since this is when they are most active. If you encounter a rattlesnake, give it a wide berth and allow it to move before attempting to walk past it. They do not want to harm you any more than you want to bother them. Do not kill it! All snakes are an important part of the ecosystem. They help keep nature in balance. Many harmless snakes look like and, at times, even mimic rattlesnakes. The gopher snake is a good example. It will shake its tail in the leaves, and even hiss at you. A rattlesnake can be identified by its flattened, triangular-shaped head, and it usually has some sort of rattle. It will also have elliptical pupils (cat’s eyes).

**Arachnids**

There are numerous types of arachnids in the desert. One, in particular, that is commonly associated with southwest deserts is the scorpion. There are many species of scorpions in the U.S., most of which are found in Arizona. Unfortunately, scorpions have a reputation for being among the deadliest of the desert inhabitants of our region. This is not true, especially when the only scorpion regarded as life threatening to humans is found solely in some lower, riparian areas of Arizona. This species does not reside in Texas. Scorpion stings are painful, but not very harmful to most human beings.

Black widow spiders, on the other hand, should be avoided all together. The venom is a neuromuscular toxin and can cause muscle cramping, nausea, vomiting, high blood pressure and weakness. Black widows are known for their red hourglass-shaped marking on their underside. They like dark, damp places like cellars and rock-walls. Brown recluse spider venom can produce pain, swelling, and flu-like symptoms. The enzymes can cause tissue breakdown at the location of the bite. The brown recluse is identified by a violin-shaped marking on the body, right behind the head. These spiders normally live under logs, rocks and debris.

**Helpful Tips....**

- Learn to identify venomous species.
- Learn their habits.
- Never try to catch a snake or other wild animal.
- Shake out clothes, shoes and bedding when camping in the desert.
- Be careful where you put your hands and feet.
- Always bring a first aid kit and antiseptic to wash out a wound.

The Big Bend Natural History Association (BBNHA) bookstore, located at Amistad NRA’s information center, has a good selection of field guides and identification books for desert plants and animals. BBNHA is a non-profit organization. Book sales directly benefit interpretive activities, and educational brochures and publications such as this newspaper.

All wildlife are protected by federal laws. It is illegal to disturb, capture, harm or kill any wildlife within Amistad National Recreation Area boundaries.

Amistad National Recreation Area Inspires Poetry

“*If you have ever driven West on 90 out of Del Rio about 5 in the afternoon with the winter sun slowly descend- ing, then you have seen all the faces of the Prickly Pear shining in the reflection of the sun. These lines of poetry express what I’ve experienced at Amistad NRA.*”

- Kay Tiff, Park Volunteer

Arriving at Amistad

*The full moon is our welcome*

Desert nights as bright as day

A light that makes the desert white.

In the darkness, red and green lights

Is the desert still celebrating Christmas?

Surprise - it is the bridge over Lake Amistad.

The prickly pear

Hold their hand mirrors

To the setting sun.

Back on the border

Tehuano music in every store

Brown skins, Spanish eyes.

Amistad Lake in the morning cold

Misted over in gray

My eyes water from the wind.

A February sunrise

Light rising beneath the clouds

Modeling sunset colors.

Lake Amistad, your figure

Looks like a dragon

You hold ancient secrets.

Six Friends

Meander the streets of Mexico

Visiting and laughing in snatches of time.

At the ramp

A dance

Of trucks, trailers and boats.

Unexpected invitation

Boating on Lake Amistad

The thrill is unexpected too.

Dragon Lake, Beautiful Lady

Six friends on water

Glimping up Rough Canyon, water spraying behind.

Indian Springs

Holds many written secrets

In the hollows of its rock towers.

Joe takes us for a short walk

He talks of ‘olgy

Geology, Geomorphology, Archeology.

This day, This peace

This memory of water...

The eternal YES.

We stand watching the sky

Pink and Navy clouds on display

Lightning, the desert’s pyrotechnics.

The Black Brush is not Black

Amazing Yellow Caterpillar Puffs

Overwhelming sweet scent.
LAKE USE PERMITS
❖ A valid Amistad lake use permit is required for motorized vessels of any length, and for non-motorized vessels 14 feet or longer. Lake use permits can be obtained at machines at Diablo East, Rough Canyon, and the NPS Visitor Information Center on Highway 90 West.
❖ Annual and daily lake use permits are available. If you purchase an annual permit from a machine, you must exchange the receipt and obtain a sticker from the Visitor Information Center, Diablo East Marina, or Rough Canyon Marina. Attach the sticker to the port (left) side of your vessel, near the registration numbers. Annual permits expire on December 31 of the year they were issued.

NOTE: Personal Watercraft use at Amistad NRA is temporarily prohibited (see article on page 2).

REQUIRED SAFETY EQUIPMENT
Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs):
❖ All vessels must have one Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III, or IV wearable PFD for each person on board. Check the labels inside your PFDs if you are not sure what type they are. These PFDs must be in good condition, readily accessible, and the correct size for the people on board.
❖ All children under 15 years of age must wear their PFDs while the vessel is underway.
❖ All vessels over 16 feet in length (except canoes and kayaks), are required to have one Coast Guard approved Type IV throwable PFD on board.

Audible Warning Device:
❖ All vessels must have a functioning horn, whistle, or other adequate sound-producing device on board.

Required Lights:
❖ All vessels operated between sunset and sunrise, or in periods of low visibility, must display a white light visible from 360 degrees around. In addition, power driven vessels must display red and green navigation lights while underway between sunset and sunrise, or during low visibility.
❖ If you plan to launch your boat before dawn, remember to turn on your lights until sunrise.

Fire Extinguishers:
❖ All vessels with permanently installed fuel tanks are required to carry a functional “B” or “B,C” fire extinguisher on board.
❖ Extinguishers must be charged and in good working condition.
❖ If you are not sure whether you are required to carry a fire extinguisher, play it safe and carry one anyway.

BOATING RULES
Obey Buoyos and Other Markers:
❖ Cut your throttle to idle speed in no-wake zones in harbors. No-wake zones were established to protect docked boats from damage. Remember, you are legally responsible for any damage caused by your wake. These areas are marked by orange and white buoys with a crossed diamond.
❖ Respect closures. Some areas of the lake are closed to protect swimmers, divers, and wildlife. These areas are marked with signs and/or orange and white buoys with a crossed diamond.
❖ Do not attach your vessel to buoys or other navigation aids. Doing so is illegal, as it may cause buoys to move, endangering other boaters.

Watch For Hazards:
❖ The lake level is constantly fluctuating, exposing new rocks and shallow areas. If you are unfamiliar with an area, or water levels have changed since you were last there, slow down and keep an eye out for underwater hazards. It is impossible for the National Park Service to mark every rock and obstacle in the water; you are responsible for operating carefully and avoiding accidents.
❖ Be especially careful beyond buoy #28 on the Rio Grande, and near Indian Springs on the Devils River. Shallow areas and rocks have caused accidents in these areas.
❖ Some hazards are marked by orange or orange and white buoys with a diamond symbol.

Check Weather Reports:
❖ Weather conditions can change rapidly on Lake Amistad. Check weather reports before you leave the dock, and tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return. Get off the water as soon as possible if high winds, large waves, or storms develop.

Follow the “Rules Of The Road:”
❖ When meeting another boat head-on, keep to the right.
❖ When crossing the path of other vessels, yield to vessels ahead and to the right of you.
❖ When passing another vessel from behind, stay clear and pass on the safest side.
❖ Remember that non-motorized vessels always have right-of-way over motorized vessels.

Water Skiing and Wakeboarding
❖ You must have a second person in the boat as observer. A rear view mirror is not sufficient according to federal law.
❖ Persons being towed must wear a Coast Guard approved PFD.
❖ You may not tow a skier or wakeboarder within 500 feet of a harbor, a swimming beach, or a mooring area, or within 100 feet of a person swimming, fishing, or diving. No one may be towed between sunset and sunrise.

Please accept our invitation to become a<br>BIG BEND NATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY<br>Member. Your support helps us continue our<br>interpretation of the past and to interpret<br>the present in the context of the past.<br>The Association’s goal is to educate the public and increase their understanding and appreciation of the Big Bend Region and what it represents in terms of our national, historical and cultural heritage. Only with your support can we continue to do this important work.

Your Benefits as a Member:
❖ A 15% discount on items sold by BBNHA
❖ A 10% discount on most seminars
❖ Current Big Bend calendar
❖ Discounts at many other association bookstores and gift shops in visitor centers at other national parks
❖ Opportunity to support scientific, educational, and historical programs in Big Bend NP and Amistad NRA

Past and present projects include:
❖ Operate book sales booths in Big Bend National Park and Amistad National Recreation Area
❖ Publish trail guides and brochures and assist with the publication of The High Bridge Tribune
❖ Sponsor an on-going Seminar program
❖ Provide annual grants for research projects and administer grants and gifts received for the park
❖ Support the parks’ volunteer and educational outreach programs

Please accept our invitation to become a member of BBNHA

ANNUAL DUES
Individual ($25) &  Associate ($50)
Corporate ($100)
LIFE MEMBERSHIP
Individual or Family ($125)
Corporate ($500)
Benefactor ($1,000)
New Member Renewal
Mr./Ms./Mrs.
Address
City State ZIP
Card No.
Exp. Date
Signature

Make check payable to BBNHA or charge to:
Visa Mastercard Discover Card No.
Exp. Date

DETACH AND MAIL TO:
BBNHA, P.O. Box 196
Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834
Telephone: (915) 477-2236
e-mail: bibe_bbnha@nps.gov

Join Our Family
Please enroll me as a member of BBNHA

Winter 2003-2004