Texas Pride

Celebrating and Protecting
Our National Parks in the Lone Star State

National Parks Conservation Association®
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

www.npca.org

About NPCA

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come. NPCA has more than 340,000 members nationwide and a constituency that includes the National Park Service, gateway communities, and millions of park visitors. NPCA works closely with National Park Service staff at both the local and national levels to help the agency gain the necessary financial and policy resources to enhance and protect America's national parks, as well as provide a quality visitor experience for the system's nearly 280 million annual visitors.

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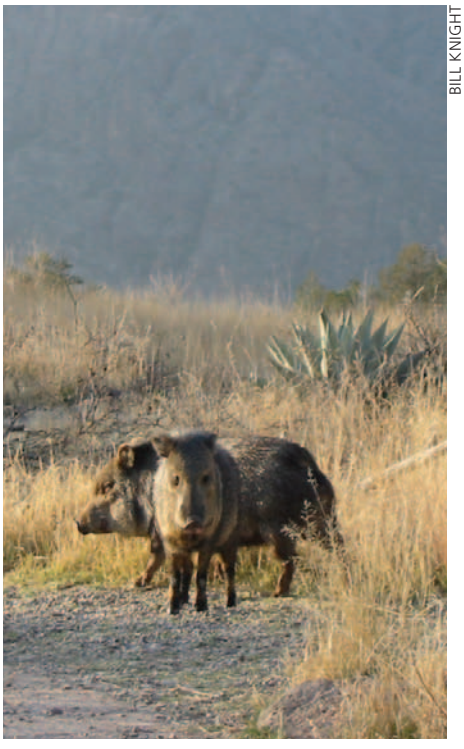


BILL KNIGHT

Wildlife abounds at Big Bend National Park. Visitors might see javelinas, which are also called collared peccaries.

Driving through Big Bend National Park recently, my friend saw what she thought was a mountain lion in the bushes on the side of the road. We pulled over, (unwisely) got out of the car, and indeed, it was a mountain lion. We watched from a safe distance for five minutes, then turned around to get back into the car, and spotted a black bear crossing the road only 25 feet behind us. Later we saw a road runner, innumerable tarantulas and jack rabbits, javelinas, and a western coach whip.

It was a breathtaking experience that reminded me that our national parks are refuges for wildlife, but also the source of lasting memories made with family and friends.

Thankfully, our national parks were born of a great vision to protect majestic landscapes like those at Big Bend, preserve our natural and cultural treasures, and tell the stories of our country. They are our legacy to our children and grandchildren, and are deserving of our care and attention.

This report profiles the 13 national park sites here in Texas, visited annually by nearly 5.5 million people. They are the pride of our state and economic boons to local communities, with national park tourism providing nearly 5,000 jobs and $308 million annually for state and local economies.

Consider Fort Davis National Historic Site, which is one of the best surviving examples of a frontier military post in the Southwest and, for a time, was home to each of the four all-black regiments of U.S. Army regulars more commonly known as the Buffalo Soldiers. Perhaps you've brought your family to the biological crossroads of America, Big Thicket National Preserve, to explore the wonderland of animal and plant life in East Texas, or explored the quiet ruins at San Antonio Missions National Historic Site.

These parks are sources of wonder and inspiration. And yet, like many national parks nationwide, the national parks of Texas need our help. Threats ranging from insufficient federal funding, pollution, and incompatible development imperil these treasures.

Since 1919, the nonpartisan, nonprofit National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. Here in Texas, our 15,000 members work alongside longstanding advocates, including the Big Thicket Association, Friends of Big Bend, Los Compadres, and Friends of Fort Davis to care for our national parks. We partner with members of Congress and groups as diverse as garden clubs and chambers of commerce to safeguard our national parks' scenic beauty, wildlife, and historic and cultural treasures for future generations.

And today, we need your help.

The centennial of our National Park System in 2016 is fast approaching. The American people are uniting behind the idea of fully meeting the needs of the National Park System, and we hope you'll join us. We intend to educate and inspire the citizens of Texas and the nation, and encourage the enjoyment, support, and protection of our national parks. Each of us can roll up our sleeves and volunteer in a park. We can contact and encourage our members of Congress to protect and fully fund our national parks. We can become members of NPCA and local friends groups. We can make a difference.

Join me. Together, we can preserve our heritage for our children and grandchildren.

—Suzanne Dixon
Regional Director
Dallas, Texas

CATHERINE NORRIS

Texas, It's Almost 2016.

Do You Know Where Your National Parks Are?

Based on a 2008 survey of Texas residents by Zogby International, 36 percent are aware that there are 13 sites in Texas that are part of the National Park System.

Texas is huge in both territory and history, and it's fitting that it should be home to some of America's finest national parks. As the National Park Service moves into its second century of existence beginning 2016, Texans are focused on celebrating the 13 spectacular national parks of the Lone Star State.

The national parks of Texas welcome 5.5 million visitors each year. Texans and other visitors come to learn about the proud history of their state and experience the amazing wildlife, cultural treasures, and natural beauty the parks protect. Here's a quick tour of the 13 national park sites in Texas, and inspiration for each of us to help protect our heritage for our children and grandchildren.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Ancient peoples harvested flint from many of the hilltops overlooking the Canadian River. Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument includes more than 700 such quarry pits.

Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument protects an ancient quarry where early American Indians found the raw material for a society based on stone tools and natural resources. The only national monument in the state of Texas, Alibates Flint Quarries was established to allow the preservation, protection, interpretation, and scientific study of Alibates flint deposits and quarries, and associated cultural and natural resources. Authorized as Alibates Flint Quarries and Texas Panhandle Pueblo Culture National Monument on August 21, 1965, and renamed on November 10, 1978, the 1,371-acre monument is comprised of 1,079 federal acres and 292 nonfederal acres.

Alibates flint is a distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties. These characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools critical to survival: projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, and awls. Due to its particular aesthetic and practical properties, Alibates flint was highly prized and traded throughout much of North America.

The park has more than 700 mostly unexcavated quarry pits within its boundaries, demonstrating at least 12,000 years of continuous extraction and use. Alibates flint projectile points have been found with the remains of ancient mammoths and giant bison—Ice Age animals that once roamed the High Plains. Archaeologists have found tools made from Alibates flint among the remains of a variety of cultures that include Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples. Alibates Ruin and the nearby Antelope Creek Site together include architectural remains, petroglyphs, and more than 1.5 million collected objects.

Visits to the quarries are by ranger-led tours only; advance reservations are required. The one-mile roundtrip hike takes about two hours to complete, with frequent stops along the way to view natural and geologic formations.

I'm pleased our communities show their support for protecting our national parks. I am fortunate to represent more that half of Texas's national parks and have been fortunate to visit every single one of those in my district. Our parks help to preserve our heritage, stimulate the local economy through tourism, and also serve to bring people and families together to celebrate this heritage. In Texas, we pride ourselves on our history and culture; our park system helps us preserve and celebrate what really makes Texas great!

—Rep. Ciro D. Rodriguez (D-TX)

Conservation and good business go hand-in-hand. If we take care of our natural treasures, like Texas's national parks, we can ensure a healthy economy and healthy environment for our children and grandchildren. With each visit, our family benefits from the serenity that Texas's natural beauty provides. We are reminded of the value of stewardship.

—Trammell S. Crow
Investor
Dallas

Amistad National Recreation Area, near Del Rio on the U.S.-Mexico border, showcases a large water reservoir famous for fishing, swimming, and water-skiing. Congress authorized Amistad National Recreation Area on November 28, 1990. The Park Service administers all lands and surface waters of Amistad Reservoir, totaling 57,292 acres.

The park was created under the provisions of the Water Treaty of 1944 between the United States and the Republic of Mexico, because the reservoir straddles the Rio Grande, which serves as the international boundary between the two countries. Engineers completed construction of the Amistad Dam in 1968, and the reservoir began to fill in 1969. Amistad's 28 mid-channel buoys, maintained by the International Boundary and Water Commission, visually mark the boundary between the United States and Mexico.

Amistad National Recreation Area offers a variety of recreational activities, including fishing by boat or from shore; swimming; scuba diving; backcountry camping by boat along the Pecos and Devils Rivers; front-country camping in four developed campgrounds; bow hunting for white-tailed deer, javelina, and turkey; picnicking; birdwatching; canoeing; kayaking; and hiking.

Amistad Reservoir is renowned as one of the outstanding largemouth black bass fishing reservoirs in the United States and hosts more than 180 bass tournaments each year. The larger tournaments involve more than 250 boats and are filmed and broadcasted nationwide on television.

Amistad National Recreation Area and the surrounding region are home to one of the most extensive concentrations of rock art and archaeological sites in North America, providing visitors with the opportunity to learn about nearly 12,000 years of human history and prehistory.

The majority of Amistad National Recreation Area and its 540 miles of shoreline (on the U.S. side of the border) are accessible to the public only by boat. Private ranches occupy most the surrounding land, though the park has witnessed an increase in housing developments adjacent to the park boundary over the past ten years.

GREG GARETZ/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Amistad National Recreation Area includes a portion of the Devils River, shown here. The park offers many recreational opportunities, such as hiking, fishing, and camping.

SUZANNE DIXON

Spectacular sunsets and other breathtaking vistas await visitors to Big Bend National Park.

Big Bend National Park is a land of borders. Situated along the Rio Grande, on the border between the United States and Mexico, Big Bend is a meeting place of countries and cultures. The park also brings together a diverse set of natural environments. It covers more than 801,000 acres in the elbow of west Texas, where the Rio Grande makes a sharp turn—the Big Bend. This vast region protects a wealth of natural areas, including creeks, natural springs, desert, and the jagged Chisos Mountains. It is a land of extremes—hot and cold, wet and dry, high and low. To wander the shimmering desert flats, to ascend the rim rocks of the desert mountains, to float the canyons of the Rio Grande, to be "on the border," is to experience sights and sounds and solitude unmatched anywhere else.

If the Chisos Mountains are the heart of Big Bend, then the desert floor is its soul. Like the park that protects it, the desert is a land of contrasts—a place where you can touch 400 million year-old rocks with one hand and a day-old flower with the other, where temperatures can vary by 50 degrees between dawn and mid-day. Water is truly the "architect" of the desert, as its presence or absence determines plant and animal life and human use of the desert's resources through time. It is this cycle of wet and dry, so unfamiliar to those from wetter climates, that allows Big Bend its spectacular displays of bluebonnets, yucca blossoms, and other vibrant wildflowers. The water, although meager to some, is sufficient for the desert. Any more, and Big Bend would be a very different place.

The one location where you can count on seeing water in Big Bend National Park is along the Rio Grande. Although it appears as a solid line on maps of the area, the river is constantly changing, constantly adapting to circumstances. During 2003, part of the river actually ceased to flow for lack of water due to drought and agricultural and industrial diversions. But the river's existence as the "lifeblood" of the park is a key part of why

We are fortunate in Texas to have many national parks to enjoy. Among them are two incredibly diverse and biologically unique systems—Big Thicket National Preserve and Big Bend National Park. Not only do these parks provide abundant recreational opportunities, they also provide an outdoor classroom where we can teach both this generation and the generations to come the importance of these ecosystems to our environment.

I have stood in awe of the majestic pines in the Big Thicket and been amazed at its rebirth as it recovers from the devastation of Hurricane Rita. I have watched red sunsets through The Window at Big Bend and experienced the awesomeness of the Chisos Mountains and the valley below while sitting on the South Rim. I have shared these experiences with all three of my children. With the continued care and support of our parks systems, I hope to be able to share these same experiences with my grandchildren.

As a member of the Garden Club of America, one of our missions is to restore, improve, and protect the quality of our environment through education and conservation. This is a mission statement we all should adopt. The support and care of both Big Thicket National Preserve and Big Bend National Park should be a priority.

—Vicki Lange
Former President
River Oaks Garden Club, Houston

Big Bend National Park is a gift from the citizens of Texas to our nation and the world. Throughout the Great Depression various benefactors and legislators worked to piece together the land that would one day become Big Bend National Park and the deed was delivered to the federal government in the fall of 1943. Today the park has over 800,000 acres of wilderness, including parts of the Chihuahuan Desert, mountains, and river habitat. The park hosts more than 350,000 visitors annually to one of the most remote parks in the entire National Park System.

In its 11 years as a fundraising partner for the park, Friends of Big Bend National Park has contributed over $725,000 to the park through major campaigns as well as license plate sales. Our support has been for both small projects, like the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program, and for large, like the exhibits at Panther Junction Visitor Center. Friends of Big Bend is proud to work side by side with park staff as stewards of this national treasure along the banks of the Rio Grande, meeting the needs of the park that government funding cannot, continuing to preserve and protect this unique gift for our future.

—Courtney Lyons-Garcia
Executive Director
Friends of Big Bend National Park

Big Bend has documented more than 450 species of resident and migratory birds—more than any other national park in the United States. Big Bend also has 40 species of fish, 11 species of amphibians, 56 species of reptiles, 75 species of mammals, and 19 species of bats. They are joined by 1,200 species of plants and 3,600 species of insects.

The park's 118-mile stretch along the Rio Grande offers fantastic river trip possibilities and quiet hikes along its banks. Three deep canyons—the Boquillas, Mariscal, and Santa Elena—serve as the backdrop for recreationists on river trips. In the vast expanse of the Chihuahuan Desert protected within Big Bend, visitors enjoy hiking, car-based sightseeing, and four-wheel-drive adventures on remote graveled backroads. Visitor can camp, watch wildlife, and visit the ruins of homesteads of families who lived here a century ago. All times of the year are great for visiting the park. Wintertime temperatures normally are warm and pleasant along the river's low country, while summertime temperatures in the Chisos Mountains rarely reach beyond the mid-80s. Springtime visits are especially popular because of the bloom of desert wildflowers and cactus. The park is a treasure trove of diversity, history, and human cultures.

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River is managed as part of Big Bend National Park. Activities and adventures along the river include camping, horseback riding, fishing, hiking, biking, boating, whitewater rafting, and wildlife viewing.

IAN SHIVE

The Rio Grande flows through Big Bend National Park. Part of it has been designated a wild and scenic river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.

I first came to Big Bend National Park in 1975, at age 22. It was my intention to move out of Texas in search of a more mountainous environment. As a kid, my family spent at least a month of every year camping, and drove all over the country and visited numerous national and state parks. I decided that before I left Texas for good, I had to visit Big Bend National Park, because once I moved to Montana or wherever, I would probably never take the chance to return.

Well, that was 33 years ago, and I spent over 25 years of that as a river guide and outfitter in Big Bend National Park. Now my work involves promoting the area for tourism. Big Bend National Park is the crown jewel of Texas outdoors, and it is a shame that so many people in Texas do not realize the natural beauty that awaits them in west Texas, and the opportunities for personal challenge and discovery along with what can be a very relaxing and fulfilling vacation. Why, you can hardly call yourself a Texan if you haven't seen Santa Elena Canyon, or stayed overnight in the Chisos Mountains.

The park is a very important factor in the economy of Brewster County. The park itself is one of the largest employers in our vast, but lightly populated county. The visitors that come to the national park and the surrounding area provide a sustainable source of income for hundreds of individuals and small businesses that cater to the needs of tourists. In the past, local economies in this area were dependent on the uncertainty of markets for commodities and raw materials from mining and ranching industries. Small towns grew up, flourished for short periods, and then were abandoned. Tourism provides a basis for a more dependable livelihood for many persons who have settled down in these remote locales. Most of these people are deeply attached to the preservation of local resources and wild lands that they are so fortunate to live close to, and Big Bend National Park is the main attraction. When people visit the park, the money they leave behind makes it possible for many dedicated local stewards to survive and help the professionals guard these precious natural treasures. So a visit to Big Bend not only fulfills the human need to enjoy wide open spaces, spectacular vistas, and tranquility far beyond the routine of daily life, but also supports the continued protection of rare natural areas and the viability of local communities.

—Mike Davidson
Executive Director
Brewster County Tourism

ROBIN MARTIN

Big Bend National Park draws tourists to west Texas, helping to support local communities.

Big Thicket National Preserve is one of the natural gems in our own backyard in southeast Texas. Where else can you find upland pine savannahs, cypress swamps, bayous, floodplains, creeks, southwest deserts, and mixed forests all in one preserve? The preserve attracts thousands of visitors every year from all over the country. Our garden club members are committed to doing what we can to help this amazing treasure thrive in this time of constant threats from development. For example, the Magnolia Garden Club has participated in planting the endangered Texas trailing phlox (*Phlox nivalis*) into the Big Thicket. The preserve is also a major birding area and children love finding the carnivorous plants!

—Vivian Todd
President
Magnolia Garden Club, Beaumont

Big Thicket National Preserve, often called the biological crossroads of America, is a wonderland of animal and plant life in east Texas. In the Big Thicket, eastern bluebirds native to Atlantic coast forests meet roadrunners from the southwestern desert. Alligators that would be at home in Florida's swamps meet armadillos adapted to the plains of eastern Kansas.

This lively conjunction of wildlife plays out in a thicket of vegetation that includes 85 tree species, 60 shrubs, and another 1,000 flowering plant species, including 20 orchids and four of the five North American species of insect-eating plants. All of this and more is within an easy drive of the major cities of Texas.

Big Thicket also tells the story of America. Big Thicket is the story of early American Indian communities who hunted along its edges and fished its rivers; of early timber families who found a living in the wealth of the forest; of outlaws who found a place to hide in the darkness of the forest; and of escapees from slavery who found a place to transform their lives in a more positive direction.

Big Thicket National Preserve is composed of nine land units and six river and stream corridors that total almost 100,000 acres. These units and corridors are distributed over seven counties and almost 1,900 square miles of southeastern Texas, near Beaumont and just 90 miles from Houston. Big Thicket was the first national preserve to be included in the National Park System. It was established to protect the remnants of a vast and unique landscape of incredible biological diversity that once covered more than 3.5 million acres of east Texas. More recently, large sections of this original forest have been developed into human communities with roads and highways, threatening to transform Big Thicket National Preserve into a series of disconnected urban parks.

More than 250 miles of rivers, streams, creeks, and other waterways are at the heart of Big Thicket's web of life. The Neches River flows for 85 miles through several preserve units, and much of Little Pine Island Bayou is part of the preserve, as are parts of Turkey, Village, Menard, Beech, Little Beech, and Big Sandy Creeks. These waters are critically important to the health of the preserve's wildlife and habitats.

The Big Thicket region is home to an impressive array of approximately 1,300 species of trees, shrubs, vines, and grasses. By virtue of its diverse habitats, which range from sandhill pine forests and wetland savannahs to swamp cypress tupelo forests and baygall shrub thickets, Big Thicket also hosts a wide array of wildlife. About 60 mammal species are found in the park, in addition to almost 90 reptile and amphibian species, more than 1,800 invertebrate species, almost 100 fish species, and 175 bird species. Birdwatching is a popular activity at Big Thicket, drawing thousands to the preserve each year to spot migrants and local favorites such as Bachman's sparrow.

Big Thicket's varied landscape provides endless opportunities for natural history and environmental education. The park offers naturalist programs, workshops, seminars, and nature walks that teach visitors about everything from insects to wildflowers to the human history of the preserve.

Big Thicket National Preserve harbors about 1,300 species of plants, including Texas trailing phlox (show below), a federally listed endangered species.

CHUCK HUNT / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

CHUCK HUNT / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Big Thicket National Preserve's diverse habitats, which host wildlife and offer recreational opportunities for visitors, must be protected for the future.

The struggle to save and conserve this Big Thicket national treasure has consumed almost 80 years, beginning with an effort in the 1930s to protect 435,000 acres (derailed by the Great Depression, establishment of national forests, and World War II). This was long before "biodiversity" became a buzzword and a generally understood concept.

Indeed, Big Thicket National Preserve, established in 1974, may have been not only the first National Park System "preserve," but also the first park to be established BECAUSE of its biodiversity. Further, at one of the congressional hearings, William Liensch (then NPCA official) testified that Big Thicket "pioneered" application of the concept of corridors. As the late Dr. Donovan Correll testified in 1970, Big Thicket is "not only an aesthetic region of great recreational value, but also an out-of-doors biological laboratory for the biologist and naturalist."

There are challenging problems today (urban sprawl, water projects, highway expansion, oil exploration, invasion of exotics, inadequate operating budgets), but there are also promising opportunities. The divestiture of timberlands that once buffered the fragmented park could be acquired from willing sellers to expand, connect, and protect Big Thicket National Preserve—this mecca for nature lovers, birders, canoers, hikers, teachers, and scientists.

—Big Thicket Association

National parks and eco-tourism are becoming fast-growing segments of the travel industry, with outdoor recreation ranking the third most popular travel activity for Americans. The Big Thicket National Preserve in particular is renowned as an ecological treasure, and with the right vision and support it can be even more.

—Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX)

ROBIN MARTIN

Maxine Johnston

In Her Words

"I think having grown up on a farm, one almost inevitably becomes aware of that nature, the seasons that change, the rainfall and its influence on everything, the animals and the growth of vegetation in those woods. You grow up with it. It becomes a part of you," Maxine Johnston once told the Conservation History Association of Texas.

That farm may have grown Maxine into one of the nation's leading conservationists.

She has twice served as president of the Big Thicket Association, as chair of the legislative committee on and off for 15-20 years, and other positions, always fighting just one more battle with developers or in the halls of Congress to protect the Thicket she loves. The multitudes of awards and recognitions of Maxine's accomplishments for this national treasure include a Special Service Award from the Sierra Club; "Maxine Johnston Day," from the Hardin County, Texas, Commissioners; Margery Stoneman Douglas Citizen Conservationist of the Year from the National Parks Conservation Association; Kodak American Greenways Award; Charles Leonard Weddle Award from the Native Plant Society of Texas; the Ned & Genie Fritz Award from the Texas Conservation Alliance; and most recently, the national Jefferson Award in 2008 for extraordinary public service.

TUCKER CONLEY COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE EAST TEXAS TOURISM ASSOCIATION

Maxine Johnston has fought to protect the Big Thicket of Texas for more than four decades.

"After I had followed Lance Rosier ("Mr. Big Thicket") around on numerous field trips in the 1960s, I was "hooked." Lance was somewhat charismatic when he talked about the Thicket and described its wildflowers, wildlife, and forests, and that enthusiasm and conviction was communicated to hundreds of his disciples who helped to make this [Big Thicket National] Preserve a reality.

Big Thicket doesn't have geysers, waterfalls, and majestic mountains, but if you readjust your perceptions and expand your vision, the Thicket offers spectacular scenery, remarkable biodiversity, and a window to understand our natural heritage.

One never finishes the job of advocating. First you need [congressional] appropriations to buy authorized land and for operating budgets. Then you need to defend the fledgling from onslaughts of urban sprawl, water and highway projects... Meanwhile, you participate and support programs that benefit the park.

Big Thicket had its quota of naysayers and scaremongers, but 30+ years have reversed most of the negativism, and many local residents have publicly regretted their former opposition. The conservation community appreciates and supports the Preserve, as well as many other stakeholders; however, several former superintendents and U.S. Congressman Kevin Brady still say Big Thicket is "the best kept secret in Texas."

Local tourism agencies have been slow to recognize recreational and educational opportunities for visitors, and the Preserve needs greater visibility. Fortunately, there are several initiatives in progress that should improve the outlook: the National Park Centennial Challenge, now pending in Congress; the Thicket of Diversity (All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory); an updated General Management Plan; the Pineywoods Experience project, and most of all, pending legislation that proposes to add acreage to buffer and to connect units, as well as to increase visitor attractions."

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Chamizal National Memorial features this mural, "Nuestra Herencia" or "Our Heritage," which depicts elements of both American and Mexican cultures.

A 2008 online survey of Texas residents by Zogby International found that 80 percent of respondents feel it is important for the U.S. Congress and the administration to protect and support U.S. national parks.

In far west Texas, near El Paso, **Chamizal National Memorial** is dedicated to the Chamizal Convention of 1963, a treaty signed by President John F. Kennedy and Mexican President Adolfo Lopez Mateos. That treaty peacefully resolved a boundary issue that had been a sore point between the two nations for more than 100 years. Because the Rio Grande had changed course, as rivers do, the two countries could not agree on the exact international boundary. The 1963 treaty equitably divided 600 acres between the two countries. Chamizal is one of two national park sites in America that commemorates a peaceful solution to an international boundary dispute. (The other is San Juan Island National Historical Park in Washington state.)

Today the memorial serves as a cultural center for the borderland community by welcoming people from all cultures to come together and enjoy common interests such as the visual and performing arts, educational and interpretive programming, and shared history. Chamizal National Memorial stands as an example of what diplomacy and cooperation can achieve. The park regularly brings in music and dance performances to celebrate culture and peace on their outdoor stage, giving Chamizal a reputation as a place of peace where visitors can also enjoy great music.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The park offers art exhibits, theater performances, Junior Ranger activities for children, and a host of special events throughout the year.

Although Fort Davis, Texas, is a very small town with a population of only 1,200 people, our mile-high altitude and cool temperatures have made the town a popular destination for summer visitors since the early 1900s. For the past 45 years, Fort Davis National Historic Site—the military post that the town grew up around—has been the crown jewel among the attractions that bring visitors here. It the best-preserved 19th-century military post in the Southwest, and its dramatic setting below volcanic cliffs enhances the beauty of its old stone and adobe buildings. However, since Fort Davis is an unincorporated town and rural Texas counties have no zoning authority, the historic landscape surrounding the fort is threatened by development fueled by the very tourism that sustains our community. Recently local citizens banded together with The Conservation Fund to purchase a 38-acre tract overlooking the fort on which a housing subdivision was planned, and legislation is now pending in Congress to add that tract to the national historic site. Local people are aware of the fragility of our historic environment, but we worry about our ability to preserve it in the face of powerful economic forces originating outside the community.

—Lonn Taylor
Fort Davis, Texas
Former Historian
National Museum of American
History, Smithsonian Institution

Fort Davis National Historic Site, located in the Davis Mountains of west Texas, is one of the best surviving examples of an Indian Wars frontier post. Between 1854 and 1891, Fort Davis protected colonists, mail coaches, and freight wagons on the road between San Antonio and El Paso, and on the Chihuahua Trail going north and south between Mexico and Santa Fe. In addition, the fort controlled activities on parts of the Great Comanche War Trail and Mescalero Apache War Trail.

Fort Davis plays a leading role in helping Americans understand that the West was far more racially complex than we have been led to believe. The fact that, from 1867 to 1881, the majority of the soldiers at the post were black supports the little-known truth that one-fifth of cavalrymen after the Civil War were black. The military aspect of their story has an equally compelling Civil Rights component. Many of these soldiers were formerly enslaved African Americans whose first gainful employment as "Freemen" came with service in the military on the western frontier. In that regard, the pathway to American citizenship for many of these 19th-century veterans ran directly through Fort Davis.

More than half (57 percent) of the Texas residents who participated in a 2008 online survey by Zogby International agree that Congress and the administration should buy private land within and adjacent to the parks as it comes onto the market to prevent it from being sold to developers.

Fort Davis also played a role in convincing the U.S. Army that for desert transport, camels are far superior to mules. Before the Civil War, the U.S. Army sent a group of men accompanied by 74 camels to Camp Verde, north of San Antonio, to map out a route from San Antonio to Fort Davis. A few years later, some of those same camels saved the lives of several dozen men when they were forced to travel through the western Texas desert for five days without finding water. The 25 camels that accompanied the party carried all the water for the two-dozen men and 20 mules—though the camels themselves drank none of the water. The camels carried the expedition to safety at Fort Davis. The acting department commander, U.S. Army Colonel Robert E. Lee, wrote that without the camels, the mission would have failed.

Today, 24 roofed buildings and more than 100 ruins and foundations are part of Fort Davis National Historic Site, established in 1961. The park encompasses about 474 acres. Five of the historic buildings have been refurnished to their 1880s appearance, making it easy for visitors to envision themselves at the fort during the height of its development. Visitors can take a self-guided tour or enjoy activities such as living history demonstrations and hiking.

ROBIN MARTIN

These 19th-century officers' quarters still stand at Fort Davis National Historic Site, evoking the frontier character of this former military post.

ROBIN MARTIN

Also in west Texas is **Guadalupe Mountains National Park**, which surrounds one of the world's best examples of an ancient, marine fossil reef. A huge tropical ocean reached from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to west Texas 250 million years ago, allowing sponges, algae, and other marine organisms to build up a reef that paralleled the shoreline for 400 miles. After the ocean receded, the reef was buried in thick layers of sediment and was entombed for millions of years until geological uplift exposed it in the middle of dry west Texas.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park preserves the unique and globally significant exposed Permian Fossil Reef. In addition, Guadalupe Mountains National Park preserves outstanding scenic, cultural, and other natural values in a place of untrammeled wilderness. The park's boundary encompasses about 86,416 acres.

Each year, tens of thousands of hikers, equestrian users, and backpackers visit Guadalupe to experience the vast rugged wilderness of this isolated park. The park allows these visitors outstanding opportunities for solitude, challenge, self-reliance, and reflection.

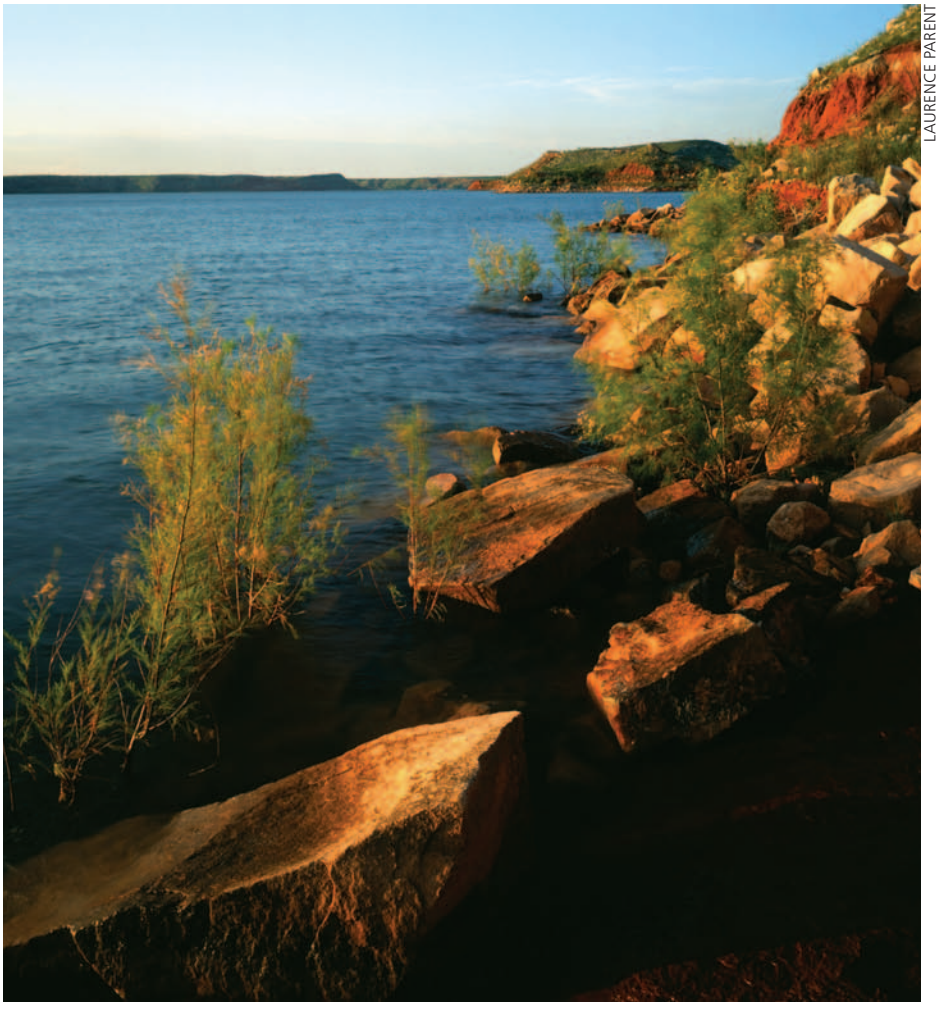
Mountains, canyons, and desert, vast and majestic vistas, brilliant fall colors set against muted desert hues, sparkling white dunes, and the grandeur of pristine night skies all combine to make Guadalupe the truly diverse "sky island" that it is.

The park includes Guadalupe Peak, at 8,749 feet, the highest peak in Texas. Rapid and dramatic elevation gains allow for incredible plant diversity. Ecological communities such as montane forest, desert, southern plains, and riparian canyon overlap here. The park preserves remnants from thousands of years of human occupation and activities, including American Indian, Spanish, and Anglo-American exploration, settlement, transportation, and trade. Scientific research and oral traditions document diverse livelihoods, stewardship practices, adaptations, and spiritual connections to the environment.

For more than 10,000 years, the Guadalupe Mountains have hosted different groups of people. Today's visitors to Guadalupe Mountains National Park can learn about the area's human history and cultural significance while enjoying the park's vast landscapes and diverse ecosystems.

Texas has very little public land. Without the national parks in Texas, our outdoor escapes would be very limited and we would have few opportunities to experience wilderness.

—Laurence Parent
Photographer
Wimberley



LAURENCE PARENT

Lake Meredith is the largest body of water within a 250-mile radius, and it supplies water to half a million people. It also provides extensive recreational opportunities.

In the Texas Panhandle, **Lake Meredith National Recreation Area** combines the inspiring sight of soaring canyons carved by the Canadian River with recreational opportunities provided by a 10,000-acre reservoir used for boating and fishing.

Lake Meredith National Recreation Area provides for the preservation, protection, safe recreational use, interpretation, and scientific study of its diverse natural and cultural resources for the enrichment and enjoyment of all. The park is composed of 44,978 acres, all federally owned.

Created in 1965 by the impoundment of the Canadian River, Lake Meredith supplies water for half a million people in 11 Texas Panhandle cities. Its aqueduct system includes 322 miles of pipeline, ten pumping plants, three regulating reservoirs, and four chlorination facilities.

Lake Meredith is the largest body of water within a 250-mile radius. The lake and associated public lands provide numerous and diverse recreational opportunities for the five-state region of the Panhandle Plains, including sport fishing, hunting, boating, horseback riding, hiking, scuba diving, birdwatching, and camping.

The recreation area protects one of the largest grasslands in the National Park System. As an ecological transition zone, the Canadian River breaks are part of the Rolling Plains province, which lies to the east of the park. The lake, wetlands, and High Plains prairie provide premier habitat for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and other wildlife, as well as unique vegetative communities.

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, located in south-central Texas, provides a complete picture of the 36th president of the United States, from his ancestors to the Texas White House to LBJ's gravesite in the Texas Hill Country.

Congress established Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Site in 1969 "to preserve in public ownership historically significant properties associated with the life of Lyndon B. Johnson." Renamed Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park on December 28, 1980, the park grew from the original site, which included President Johnson's boyhood home and birthplace, to an area of 674 acres encompassed within two distinct park units—the Johnson City District and, 14 miles west, the LBJ Ranch District.

The Johnson City District includes the park visitor center and headquarters, the boyhood home where Lyndon Johnson lived during this formative years, and the Johnson settlement area, which Johnson's grandfather used as headquarters for his open-range cattle business from 1867 to 1872. The original log cabin in the settlement area still stands, as do several stone buildings built by later owners. The frontier heritage and connections to family and community all had a real influence on Lyndon Johnson's development.

The LBJ Ranch District includes fields and pastures, a show barn, cattle pens, and registered Hereford cattle. The Texas White House, where President Johnson resided while visiting his home state, is also part of this district, as are structures built for communications, transportation, and security. The district also incorporates the LBJ Birthplace, Junction School (which Johnson attended briefly in 1912), and the Johnson Family Cemetery, where family members from Johnson's great-grandmother to the ex-president himself are buried.

Lyndon B. Johnson's life had a tremendous impact on the United States and the world. The historic resources of the national historical park document the full story of his life beginning with his grandparents' first settlement in this area, to his birth and boyhood years, to the years when the LBJ Ranch served as the Texas White House, and finally the retirement years and burial at the Johnson Family Cemetery. Here, as in few other historical parks, visitors can see the lands and structures that represent the origins, ancestry, and full life cycle of a U.S. president.

The original 1860s log cabin where Johnson's grandparents lived still stands in Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

When visiting Texas, President Johnson lived at the Texas White House. Mrs. Johnson continued to spend time at the LBJ Ranch until her death in 2007.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Padre Island National Seashore, located on North Padre Island, southeast of Corpus Christi, protects the longest remaining undeveloped stretch of barrier island in the world. The 130,454-acre park was established on September 28, 1962, to save and preserve for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped.

The seashore's landscape includes a mixture of upland grasslands, vegetated dunes, and extensive wetland environments. More than 60 percent of the park consists of wetlands comprising marshes, inland waters, wind-tidal flats, and seagrass beds. Marine environments include the Gulf of Mexico that stretches along the length of the park to a depth of two fathoms and the hypersaline estuary of the Laguna Madre.

The park's relatively natural setting provides opportunities for birdwatching, fishing, camping, boating, windsurfing, nature study, beach driving and walking, swimming, and shelling. It also provides visitors an opportunity to experience quiet and solitude where the beauty of a night sky is undiminished by ambient light from nearby urban centers. Each year, about 765,000 visitors make their way to the park, but most experience only a small portion of the island due to the challenging terrain and time commitment required to traverse the length of this 65.5-mile stretch of barrier island.

Padre Island and the surrounding waters provide important habitat for marine and terrestrial plants and animals, including more than 20 threatened and endangered species. For example, the island provides nesting sites for five of the world's seven species of sea turtles and is one of the few places where the public can witness sea turtle nesting. Padre Island National Seashore is involved in a major international research and recovery effort to save the most endangered of all sea turtles, the Kemp's ridley.

Situated along the Central Flyway, Padre Island National Seashore is a globally important area for more than 350 migratory, over-wintering, and resident bird species. The park was designated as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site and included as a member of the existing binational Laguna Madre Site of International Importance to shorebirds. The designation is based on the presence of more than 100,000 shorebirds annually and nearly 20 percent of the world's population of piping plovers.

The cultural resources of Padre Island National Seashore include archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, and historic structures. Prehistoric sites show that Karankawa Indians inhabited the island prior to the arrival of the first Europeans, using the barrier island and gulf waters for hunting, gathering, and fishing. The park also protects remnants of historic ranching structures, a campsite dating from the Mexican-American War, and shipwrecks from the days of the 18th-century Spanish fleet.

Based on a 2008 online survey of Texas residents by Zogby International, a majority of respondents agree with preserving and protecting animal and plant life within national parks such as Big Thicket and Padre Island, so that they survive for future generations.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Staff at Padre Island National Seashore go to great lengths to foster the survival of endangered sea turtles that nest at the park, collecting and incubating eggs until hatchlings emerge. Visitors to the seashore have opportunities to watch park staff release the hatchlings. Details can be found on the park's website: www.nps.gov/pais.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

A trip to Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site may begin with a tour of the park's visitor center, which offers an orientation video and exhibits about the battle at Palo Alto and the U.S.-Mexican War.

Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, situated at the very southern tip of Texas, commemorates an 1846 battle between the United States and Mexico, and protects large ecosystems of acacia and mesquite trees, yuccas, and cactus.

On May 8, 1846, troops from the United States and Mexico clashed on the prairie of Palo Alto. About 2,300 U.S. Army troops led by Brig. General Zachary Taylor faced 3,200 Mexican troops commanded by Maj. General Mariano Arista. The ensuing battle was the first in a two-year conflict that changed the map of North America. Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site preserves the site of this notable battle and provides an understanding of the causes, events, and consequences of the first war between the independent republics of the United States and Mexico.

In addition to its rich cultural history and related artifacts, Palo Alto is notable for its natural features. Drawn around an expanse of more than 3,400 acres of undeveloped land, more than half of them owned by private landowners, the park boundaries contain an abundance of plant and animal life, including species that are unique to the U.S.-Mexico border region.

A trail (1 mile round-trip) leads to an overlook of the battlefield, and a recently opened shorter trail (one-half mile round-trip) along the Mexican line of defense allows visitors to experience firsthand a view of the battlefield from the Mexican vantage point. Future plans include the addition of another trail along the U.S. line of defense and work to control an infestation of honey mesquite trees, a species that is native but can be invasive.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

A marker commemorates a location where U.S. and Mexican troops clashed, ultimately resulting in an important U.S. victory.

Economic development really started at our missions. That was where the "commerce" was and continued on from there—making San Antonio what it is today. The federal, state, county, local, and nonprofit organizations have raised and spent millions of dollars to protect, restore, promote, and enhance our Spanish colonial missions infrastructure and the San Antonio River that runs by and through them. We are so very fortunate to have these wonderful working and active pieces of living history in our backyard!

—Cindy Taylor
President
South San Antonio
Chamber of Commerce

Of the Texas residents who participated in a 2008 online survey by Zogby International, 27 percent of those polled have visited San Antonio Missions National Historical Park and 24 percent have visited Padre Island National Seashore.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

A park ranger shows schoolchildren how to grind corn by hand.

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, located in San Antonio, Texas, preserves the largest concentration of Catholic missions in North America—Missions San Francisco de la Espada (Mission Espada), San José y San Miguel de Aguayo (Mission San José), San Juan Capistrano (Mission San Juan), and Nuestra Señora de la Purísma Concepción de Acuña (Mission Concepción)—as well as Rancho de las Cabras, the only remaining mission ranch. This national park represents and interprets Spanish colonization of the Americas during the 18th century.

The San Antonio River has drawn people to its banks for thousands of years. Numerous groups of tribal peoples hunted game; fished; gathered edible plants, berries, and nuts; and settled around the river long before Europeans came to the area. In the 16th century, the Spanish began exploring parts of what is now Texas and the American Southwest. These early emissaries of the Spanish crown are believed to be the first Europeans to make contact with the diverse groups of native peoples who lived in the region.

Spanish influence eventually changed the area. Catholic missionaries from the Franciscan order and a few soldiers followed the first explorers to the area and established an enduring system of missions and forts. Their goals were to secure areas for the Spanish empire, introduce Christianity to the native peoples, spread Spanish culture, recruit new citizens for the empire, and protect Spanish lands from the French in neighboring Louisiana. The missions were not simply churches; they were large, self-sustaining estates complete with their own agricultural operations and irrigation systems.

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, established in 1978, is charged with preserving the largest intact concentration of Spanish colonial resources existing in the United States today. Dating from 1720, the resources preserved in the park range from exquisite mission churches exemplifying Romanesque, Moorish, and Spanish baroque

design elements to a sophisticated irrigation system incorporating the oldest aqueduct in the country, wier dams, and acequias (irrigation ditches) that span for miles. In addition, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park preserves one of the last known surviving ranches from the mission era, Rancho de las Cabras. The rich ranching history of Texas, as well as the forerunner of the state's icon, the cowboy, can be traced to the mid-18th-century Spanish colonial mission ranches of south Texas.

Each year, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park hosts more than 1.2 million visitors who come to enjoy the missions' stone walls, graceful archways, religious frescos, and hand-carved wooden doors; learn about the history of the Spanish missions and the people who lived within the missions' walls; and observe herons, egrets, wood ducks, owls, and woodpeckers in the park's riparian areas. A popular attraction at Mission San José is the oldest grist mill in Texas. Founded in 1794, the grist mill was restored in 2001 and is once again grinding wheat on its original set of mill stones. What many park visitors don't realize is that this national park represents the collaboration and cooperation of 26 different federal, state, county, and city agencies and organizations and the Archdiocese of San Antonio. All four mission churches (San José, Concepción, San Juan, and Espada) are still active churches owned by the Archdiocese of San Antonio, representing an unbroken chain of continuity from the present day hustle and bustle of the seventh largest city in the country to the time when San Antonio was merely part of the sparsely populated northern frontier of New Spain.

KELLY COURKAMP

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park includes four 18th-century Spanish Missions, including Mission Concepción shown here.

The citizens of San Antonio started working in the 1920s to bring the protection and prestige of the National Park Service to its four southern historic missions. This finally happened in 1978 and the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park opened in 1983. This park manages the largest concentration of Spanish colonial resources in the country through a number of cooperative agreements with the various landowners within the park boundary. It is a complicated and complex management procedure, but a successful one, and one that is a national model for partnerships.

Thanks to the National Park Service, the park is the third most visited site in San Antonio. They have done a stellar job in preserving the historic resources, maintaining and protecting the historic vistas, and offering meaningful interpretive experiences to visitors. Los Compadres, the park's friends group, has raised close to $4 million for rehabilitation, development, and educational projects for which no government funds were available. Together, with the other partners, we have fulfilled the goals of the Organic Act of 1916 by preserving these precious resources and developing them into one of America's premier urban national parks.

—Susan Chandoha
Executive Director
Los Compadres de San Antonio
Missions National Historical Park

CHUCK HUNT/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The national parks of Texas are unique resources that must be protected for our children and grandchildren.

Taken together, the 13 national parks of the Lone Star state create a mosaic of history and nature that benefits our state economically and environmentally, while providing multiple opportunities for education and healthy outdoor recreation. Join with the National Parks Conservation Association in celebrating the magnificent national parks of Texas and protecting them for our children and grandchildren.

National Parks Conservation Association®
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

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