

The Sound Of Texas, KVLFF, November, 2011
Andy Cloud
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TUMBLEWEED SMITH: This is Tumbleweed Smith: Bones in the Big Bend. Details in a moment on the Sound of Texas.

ANDY CLOUD: It's a unique blend of history and archaeology is what our organization is all about and there's not very many other organizations in the United States that really kind of blend those two like we do.

TUMBLEWEED SMITH: Andy Cloud is the Director of the Center for Big Bend Studies, located on the campus of Sul Ross State University in Alpine.

ANDY CLOUD: We try to investigate prehistory and history of the region. That involves a lot of legwork out on the landscape, doing tests and larger-scale excavations. And then eventually publishing our works and disseminating them to the general public and other professionals.

TUMBLEWEED SMITH: He is familiar with the area.

ANDY CLOUD: I spent about a year and a half down at Big Bend National Park working as a Park Ranger/Archaeologist. I also worked for Parks & Wildlife shortly after they got Big Bend Ranch State Park.

TUMBLEWEED SMITH: One site along Terlingua Creek indicates life there 4,000 years ago.

ANDY CLOUD: A little further downstream. We're working at a site that actually goes back about 11,000 years. Our earliest named group of people are the Clovis Culture, and that was about 9,500 to 8,900 B.C. The next group was the Folsom Culture, and they're about 8,900 to 8,200 B.C. And the site we're working at is kind of right in that period, 50 of one or 50 of the other.

TUMBLEWEED SMITH: He says he investigates very cold cases and it takes good detective work to figure out about how the people lived.

ANDY CLOUD: There's a lot of fun in that. When I got into archaeology originally, I was thinking the best part would be the fieldwork. And I still greatly enjoy the fieldwork, but through time the analysis phase and then the writing phase—those parts of it are really fun because you get to start learning parts and pieces of the behavior.

TUMBLEWEED SMITH: His group studies archaeology from Pecos to El Paso.

ANDY CLOUD: We've actually surveyed something like 65,000 acres of Big Bend National Park. By survey, I mean we have literally walked across that landscape trying to find every shred and bit of human presence on that landscape of those 65,000 acres. And while we were doing that, we have recorded 1,550 sites.

Tumbleweed Smith: Andy Cloud of Alpine. The Center has its Annual Conference on November 11 and 12. I'm Tumbleweed Smith with the Sound of Texas.