



TAP

By Robert J. Mallouf

It was late in the morning on a hot summer day in 1988. J. Charles Kelley and I were sitting under a makeshift shade on an archaeological site high on a ridge overlooking the Rio Grande near Redford, Texas. I had invited J. Charles and his wife Ellen down from Ft. Davis to visit our scientific excavation at the site. For some time he had been sitting quietly, gazing intently across the river valley.

J. Charles never let his mind rest, and I figured that

he was busy remembering his own archaeological expedition to this area of the Rio Grande—called La Junta de los Rios—over 50 years earlier in the 1930s. His pioneering work at La Junta had launched an impressive career in North American archaeology that would take him to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and would lead ultimately to his international recognition as an expert in the prehistory of northern and western Mexico.

You could always tell when J. Charles was going to share some insights with you. I recognized his serious, contemplative look that morning, and waited for him to begin. It went something like this—“I’m delighted to see you working in the Big Bend and expressing such a strong interest in this part of the Trans-Pecos region. That there has been so little interest in the prehistory of this region during the past 40 years is a travesty. This area has so much to offer in terms of research, and is so important for

into the Big Bend

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TAP: Staff Highlight

CBBS Project Archaeologist John Seebach is conducting his doctoral dissertation research for Southern Methodist University on the topic of Trans-Pecos Paleoindians. The work compares Paleoindian isolates and artifact assemblages from the Trans-Pecos, focusing on three sites: Shirey Flats in Ward County, Chispa Creek in Culberson County, and Fillmore Pass in El Paso County. John's topic directly complements and augments one of the research avenues addressed by the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program (TAP), which is "The Search for Early Paleoindians in the Big Bend."

While definitive sites dating to this earliest period in North American prehistory are still lacking from the Eastern Trans-Pecos, the CBBS has been active in producing much-needed data pertaining to these early inhabitants of the area. John recently took a research visit to El Paso to gather data on Paleoindian projectiles recovered from the Fort Bliss Army Installation and related fringe ranges. One hundred and six specimens were recorded during this visit. Analyses are being conducted that will undoubtedly enhance our understanding of these ancient peoples.

In addition to enhancing TAP's coverage of Paleoindians, John produces research articles for publication that draw attention to the topic in regions outside of the Trans-Pecos. John's recent paper, "Drought or Development? Patterns of Paleoindian Site Discovery on the Great Plains of North America" will be published in the next issue of *Plains Anthropologist*, Volume 51, Number 197.

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reconstructing the past in the rest of Texas and the Southwest. I will never understand why it has been virtually ignored by Texas archaeologists since the 1940s." Many others have expressed the same sentiments to me through the years.

Compilations of existing archaeological data for the eastern Trans-Pecos made by the Office of the State Archeologist, Texas Historical Commission in the 1980s, followed by similar efforts on the part of the Center for Big Bend Studies (CBBS) at Sul Ross State University during the 1990s, revealed serious deficiencies in our understanding of this region's human past—especially when compared with most other regions of Texas and the greater Southwest. The scientific concerns generated by these studies led to the initiation of the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program (TAP) by the CBBS in 2004, an intensive five-year program of research that will bring the eastern Trans-Pecos/Big Bend region back into the mainstream of international archaeological inquiry—a status it richly deserves.

TAP therefore has its roots in the history of archaeological investigation in Texas as well as in modern inferred research needs. This area was included during the 1920s and 1930s in large-scale Southwestern research projects sponsored by major entities such as Harvard University, the Heye Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, and Gila Pueblo. With the advent of World War II, most archaeological research came to an abrupt end across this and much of the Southwest. Unlike other areas, however, the research programs were never reinstated in the eastern Trans-Pecos and Big Bend at the end of the war. During the 40-year period between 1940 and 1980, both scientific interest in the region and funding for research actually declined. Archaeological attention to the region was rekindled for brief periods in the 1960s by a survey project in Big Bend National Park and by surveys in Guadalupe Mountains National Park and along the Rio Grande during the 1970s, but work continued to be sporadic well into the 1980s.

Complicating the problem is the fact that the major repositories of archaeological data in the Big Bend are the numerous rockshelters having dry deposits and perishable artifacts. Rockshelters are, of course, the main target of relic hunters, and it is a rare occasion these days when an archaeologist finds one that has not been damaged or destroyed. It is imperative that careful, controlled sampling be carried out in rockshelters across the region in the near future.

TAP involves the development and scientific exploration of at least six thematic avenues of investigation that have demonstrable shortcomings in the existing database. CBBS staff are developing detailed overviews of each of the six research avenues, and new TAP field and laboratory data are already forthcoming for each one.

TAP Research Avenues:

1. Paleoindians in the Trans-Pecos and Big Bend (9500-6500 B.C.)
2. Human adaptations during the Archaic Stage (6500 B.C.-800 A.D.)
3. The Livermore Phase and aspects of ritualism in late prehistory (800-1300 A.D.)
4. Nomads and farmers at La Junta de los Rios (1200-1800 A.D.)
5. Spanish exploration and missionization of Native Americans in the Trans-Pecos (1535-1825 A.D.)
6. Trans-Pecos rock art research

B.C.

A.D.

As one can imagine, the initiation of such a large-scale effort requires substantive and sustained funding, expansion of experienced personnel, the re-design of existing programs, and a great deal of planning—both archaeological and logistical. A proposal detailing the objectives of TAP over an initial five-year period was developed in 2004 and continues to be used in our fundraising efforts. We have generally had excellent responses to our proposal, and several foundations have stepped forward in support of the program. A particularly significant grant extending over the first five years of TAP has been forthcoming from the Brown Foundation, Inc., and substantial grants have been received from the Houston Endowment, Lykes Foundation, San Antonio Area Foundation, Riata Energy, and others. A number of individuals have also made substantial and continuing contributions to the program, and we greatly appreciate their involvement and support.

We have increased staff time in the field and laboratory tremendously during this past year, and a number of TAP-related manuscripts are now completed and in the editing process for publication. We are initiating a new technical publication series entitled *Papers of the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program* that includes both compilations of articles by multiple authors and individual monographs. The CBBS staff is also contributing to national scientific journals and other publication outlets.

The implementation of TAP-related fieldwork, including archaeological surveys and excavations, is proceeding on schedule—primarily in cooperation with private landowners. Current fieldwork is concentrated in the Sierra Vieja breaks, the middle and upper reaches of Terlingua Creek, and foothill areas of the Davis Mountains. The Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program, thanks to the support of numerous individuals and foundations, is now a reality. Exciting new discoveries have already been made that are changing our long-standing perceptions of eastern Trans-Pecos prehistory.

J. Charles has passed on now, but he would undoubtedly be pleased to know that a sustained archaeological research program has finally been launched in the eastern Trans-Pecos and Big Bend region. The program is further enhanced by the fact that it is based within the region of study, at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas.

TAP at Work:

A
painted
pebble
from the
Fulcher Site.

The Fulcher Site

by David Keller

As part of the TAP investigations on Late Prehistory in the Big Bend, CBBS has initiated a project on the Fulcher Ranch in south Brewster County. Located along lower Terlingua Creek, the site is a multicomponent late prehistoric open campsite and early historic limekiln and homestead. It was first visited in 1990, confirming reports of possible Indian corn eroding out of a cutbank. Samples of these charred corncocks were sent for radiocarbon analysis that yielded a date of approximately 1660 A.D.

CBBS crews have since revisited the site, including two separate week-long field sessions. During the first session in February of 2005, a surface survey recovered a wide variety of artifact types spanning the Late Prehistoric period up through early historic times. Meanwhile, excavation of an unidentified mortared stone feature revealed it to be an historic limekiln, the first to be scientifically excavated in the region. In April 2006, a CBBS crew returned to conduct test excavations that exposed a layer of abundant charcoal and intermittent cultural deposits, along with one of the rarest artifacts to be found in the Big Bend: a painted pebble! Discovered at more than a meter below the surface, and in contact with woody charcoal, the pebble represents not only a rare find, but also one associated with a deposit that provided a radiocarbon date of A.D. 630–710.

Research at the site continues and a report of investigations will be published later this year. Because of the rich and diverse artifact assemblage, the significant presence of possible Indian corn, and the fact that the site includes a rare, early historic Indian component, the Fulcher site could provide a much needed window into little known aspects of the culture history of the Big Bend.

Big Bend National Park survey

By David Keller

A point from the Park.



In the fall of 1995, the CBBS began an ambitious project in Big Bend National Park designed to sample archaeological resources in each major environmental zone within the park boundary. The project ran successfully for four years until federal funding was unexpectedly terminated. Beginning in 2005, following a six-year hiatus, funding was reinstated and the project resumed. Rather than sampling archaeological resources in each environmental zone, however, in the interest of time and resources, it was decided that the survey should focus on the largest zone, consisting of the lowland shrub-desert portions of the park. In the spring of 2005, CBBS personnel completed three field sessions totaling 28 days in the McKinney Hills in the northeast portion of the park. Nearly 6,000 acres were surveyed

and 79 archaeological sites recorded, including one site that may contain a Paleoindian component.

In the fall of 2005 and spring of 2006, work shifted to two blocks just west of Mariscal Mountain in the southernmost tip of the park. Over the course of six sessions totaling 49 days, 5,200 acres were surveyed and 125 sites recorded. Several of these sites contain ceramics—until now one of the rarest artifact categories found in the park, and one that suggests the presence of agricultural groups far beyond the well-known La Junta district centered around present Presidio, Texas. The Big Bend National Park project will continue through 2010 with a target of 35,000 additional acres to be covered (out of a total of around 66,000 acres) in what will be one of the largest intensive archaeological surveys ever conducted in the eastern Trans-Pecos region, if not the state.

In the Field

A sampling of CBBS projects

What's cooking at the Paradise Site

By Andrea J. Ohl

The Paradise Site is located on a side arroyo of a tributary of Terlingua Creek which drains Paradise Draw. The importance of this site to archeology cannot be overstated. It is that true rarity of sites, containing the uncontaminated remnants left by members of a prehistoric group of people. Everything within the buried cultural stratum can be assumed to reflect the lifeways of this hunter-gatherer group utilizing the resources of Paradise Draw 4,000 years ago.

We discovered that what was visible eroding out of an arroyo wall was not just an ephemeral remnant but represented substantial cultural remains. Clusters of burned rock began to emerge, and gradually was defined as three burned rock features. An associated living surface was also identified. The single dart point recovered from this site was found in situ on this living surface.

We were able to delineate two activity areas—one used for food processing that contained three burned rock features, and a lithic reduction area to the northeast. It appears that this area of the site primarily functioned as a plant processing location.

Middle Archaic peoples are known to have baked desert succulents (usually sotol, lechuguilla, or agave [century plant]) in baking pits. The location of the site so close to the slopes of Cartwright Mesa suggests they were harvesting sotol from these slopes. The baking of sotol bulbs requires that they be buried and baked for two days before the starches are broken down and they can be pounded into flour. Because sotol harvesting is very labor intensive, this site was probably occupied by an expanded gathering of several family units.

Analysis of the wood and soil samples is ongoing. Examination of the soil samples for both micro- and macro-biological evidence will help us understand the environment of 4,000 years ago and the diet of these people, and the wood samples will tell us what wood species they were collecting for fuel. In the ensuing months we should learn much more about lifeways of the inhabitants of the site and, by extrapolation, the other Middle Archaic groups who roamed the Big Bend between 2500–1000 B.C.



Staff members excavate units at the Paradise site.

Puertacitas and Double House structures

By William A. Cloud

At times nomadic prehistoric peoples of the Trans-Pecos region sought protections from the elements, evidenced by cultural deposits associated with rockshelters, caves, and boulder shelters. Archaeologists presume that when these natural shelters were not at hand that the inhabitants constructed various dwellings that would provide similar protection. Currently, only structures of a single group, the Cielo complex, have been archaeologically documented. These hunter-gatherers were present in the area from ca. A.D. 1250–1680, and built above ground, circular or ovoid stacked stone wickiup foundations with narrow entranceways. Patterned arrangements of stone thought to represent structural remnants have been observed at a number of other sites in the region, but few have been excavated to identify Archaic or Late Prehistoric structure types. While the CBBS' recent investigations of the Puertacitas and Double House sites did not identify living floors, crews did document distinct structure remnants that potentially contain intact living surfaces. Such floors, and the materials they contain, may allow identification of one or more prehistoric groups currently known only by the dart or arrow point types that they used.



Cultural transitions in Presidio

By La Vista Staff

The Millington site may help explain transition of the ancient peoples of the Trans-Pecos from hunter-gatherers to agricultural societies. Located in Presidio, Texas, the site was visited by the CBBS in 2003, when a Presidio maintenance crew discovered a burial while digging a backhoe trench for a new water line. The CBBS sent a crew out to document the disturbance, and identified at least three damaged human burials. This was followed with a 23-day excavation and survey in winter 2006, focusing on the TAP research avenue of “Nomads and farmers at La Junta de los Rios”.

J. Charles Kelley and Donald Lehmer, who excavated 22 house structures and identified nine more in trenches, investigated the site in 1938 and 1939—the last excavation until the CBBS returned this year. The site was known as Santiago during the late 1500s, and San Cristobal by 1747. Cholomes Indians occupied it in the earlier period, and Poxalmas during the latter. A Spanish mission was established on the site in 1684.

During 2006, CBBS crews documented three structures: two pit structures and a rock structure that does not fit easily into any known category. Five burials were also recovered, and data suggests these people lived somewhat sedentary lives. Dental pathologies indicate diets that were supplemented with agricultural and horticultural foods. Non-specific infections were identified that are more prevalent in sedentary village populations than in hunter-gatherer groups. Osteoarthritis was documented in the backs and feet in adults who had reached early middle age, indicating strenuous, repetitive activity throughout their lives. The work at Millington is ongoing.

Uncommon Art

By Reeda Peel

“Watch it! Don’t step on the rock art!” This warning, heard often during the week that the CBBS joined forces with the Texas Archeological Society Rock Art Task Force, sums up the challenges of documenting the Graef Petroglyph Site near Balmorhea, Texas. The project is part of the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program (TAP) at the CBBS, with a goal of enriching our understanding of rock art in the Big Bend region.

At least six different clusters of art have been identified at the site. Most of it consists of long meandering lines, some several meters long, combined with curvilinear designs. There are also several long, narrow panels consisting of closely intertwined curvilinear lines. There are a few recognizable elements, such as a spoked circle, concentric circles, and two anthropomorphic (humanlike) figures. The art was produced by pecking, abrading, and lightly scratching the rocks.

This style is known as the Pecked Abstract Tradition, which is found in Trans-Pecos Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado. The artists were likely members of small, egalitarian bands of hunter-gatherers who inhabited the Trans-Pecos in the Archaic through the Early Prehistoric periods.

The photographs, drawings, and information generated by these work sessions are archived at the CBBS, and will be entered into the Texas Rock Art Database. The Trans-Pecos has been added to the database as a special pilot project, supported and funded by TAP. In addition to identifying and documenting new rock art sites, the database project will retrieve information on previously recorded rock art sites from more than 65,000 general archaeological site records in the state archives and from other state files. It will ultimately allow researchers to easily access critical information on Texas rock art.

Rock art recorded at the Graef Site.



First Lady Tours Archaeological Sites

By La Vista Staff

Robert Mallouf, Carol Peterson, Connie Weeks, and First Lady Anita Perry visit Bee Cave at Chalk Draw Ranch.



Texas's First Lady, Ms. Anita Perry, made a visit to Big Bend archaeological sites in March 2006. Accompanied by friends Connie Weeks of Austin and Carol Peterson of the Gage Hotel in Marathon, Ms. Perry's agenda included a tour led by CBBS director Robert Mallouf of two prehistoric sites on Chalk Draw Ranch in the Santiago Mountains. One of the sites visited by the group was Bee Cave, the largest known rockshelter in the Big Bend and the subject of the earliest large-scale scientific excavation to be conducted in this region.

Seminal work at Bee Cave was carried out by M. R. Harrington and Edwin F. Coffin of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, of New York in 1928 and 1929, and publication of the site followed in 1932. Bee Cave is well known among archaeologists for both excavation findings and for a unique style of rock art that includes the famous "running man" motif.

Mallouf noted that Ms. Perry arrived with "...a strong interest and keen intellectual curiosity about ancient cultures of the Big Bend," and was "...a delight to visit with." The excursion was arranged by Mr. J. P. Bryan, owner of Chalk Draw Ranch and long-time supporter of state-wide historical and archaeological preservation efforts.

In the Community

CBBS staff go above and beyond

CBBS employees sweep SR triathalon

By La Vista Staff

Five Center employees, plus a Center kid, competed in the first ever Sully Sprint Triathlon at Sul Ross State University on March 19th. Caleb Waters and David Hart competed individually, while Becky Hart, Ashley Baker, and Becky and David's daughter, Abby Hart, competed as Team Fat Bottom Girls. Andy Cloud did the cycling leg for a team that also included Stan and Vickie Kelley.

The race consisted of a hilly 5k run, a windy 15 mile bike ride, and a 360m swim. Center employees talked each other into participating, and often trained together. Goaded into a strict training regimen by David Hart, Caleb Waters commented, "Over Spring Break, I didn't use my truck at all. I rode my bike everywhere."

All the hard work paid off, and every participant from the CBBS placed third in their category. Caleb was the top individual Sul Ross student, and David was the first place finisher among all participating faculty and staff.

The Monday after the triathlon, everyone brought their trophies in to the Center, where they remain proudly displayed on the lobby bookshelf.

The sense of teamwork and accomplishment the race fostered is palpable in the CBBS. The event was such a success that everyone who participated plans on competing again next year, and there have already been attempts to rope in more employees as team members and

Left to right: Caleb Waters, Becky Hart, Ashley Baker, David Hart, and Andy Cloud display their triathlon trophies.



Raising the Bar:

Becky Hart presented with prestigious Bar-SR-Bar award

By Steve Lang

Becky Hart, administrative assistant at the Center for Big Bend Studies, recently received the Bar-SR-Bar Award for Employee Excellence at Sul Ross State University.

Sul Ross President R. Vic Morgan presented the award, which includes a cash honorarium and recognizes exemplary employment.

Hart, who has been employed at Sul Ross since 1999, was nominated for the award by John Seebach, a CBBS project archaeologist.

"The Center could not be run as efficiently or in such a friendly manner if it were not for Becky," he wrote. "She consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty in performing all of the tasks asked of her. And, she does it all with a smile."

Seebach praised her for her versatility in managing tasks, her strong relationships with other departments and her organizational skills.

"She is a model Sul Ross employee, and... she is also responsible for the organization of the annual CBBS conference—an event that is a major boon to Sul Ross. Becky's efforts make the conference run that much more smoothly. She ensures that conference attendees have the most pleasant experience possible," Seebach's nomination continued.

Hart commended her co-workers for an enjoyable work environment.

"The most satisfying aspect of my Sul Ross experience is the friendships I have made with other employees," she said. "I work with many wonderful people, not only at the CBBS, but campus-wide. These folks not only make it possible for me to do my job, but they also make it enjoyable."

She also cited the friendships she has made and the learning environment CBBS offers.

"I am very fortunate to know the people who come to Sul Ross to attend the CBBS annual conference, serve on the CBBS Advisory Council and the CBBS Foundation Board of Trustees," she said. "Plus, I get to learn about the history and prehistory of the Big Bend from some very knowledgeable and enthusiastic folks, - the archaeologists at CBBS - and I don't have to write a paper or study for a final."

A native of Borger, she earned a bachelor's degree in education from Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

She and her husband, David, a scientific illustrator for CBBS, have one daughter, Abby, a



Becky Hart received the prestigious Bar-SR-Bar award from Sul Ross President Vic Morgan. CBBS Project Archaeologist John Seebach (far left) and CBBS Director Robert Mallouf (left) attended to show their support.

Sul Ross sophomore who also works for the Office of Alumni Affairs.

In her spare time, she enjoys bicycling, reading, working crossword puzzles, cooking and eating.

A day in the life: Terlingua students learn about Archaeology



While surveying and excavating at the Millington site this past winter (see brief on page 5), CBBS archaeologist Andy Cloud took an afternoon out to teach local students from the Terlingua Elementary School about archaeology. Andy also spoke to a group of Presidio High School student about the site in their backyard and what it's like to be an archaeologist.

Living and Learning behind

Research at Pinto Canyon information on prehistoric

By John Seebach

The spectacular landscapes and majestic desert beauty of Pinto Canyon rival those of any part of Big Bend Country. At the southern terminus of FM 2810 in Presidio County, the rimrock and treacherous slopes of the Sierra Vieja tower to the north of Pinto Canyon, while the Chinati Mountains stand sentinel to the south. Below it all, the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo snakes along to the west en route towards the Gulf. All told, it is one of the more striking regions of the West Texas basin-and-range, and it probably looked much the same to prehistoric inhabitants of the Big Bend as it does to us today.

In late 2004, personnel from the CBBS and volunteers from the Texas Archeological Society conducted test excavations at three rockshelters found on Pinto Canyon Ranch, one of the most rugged and remote areas of Pinto Canyon. The area is one of the least archaeologically known areas of the entire Trans-Pecos, and therefore, the recent excavations are breaking new ground in Big Bend archaeology, and form a major part of the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program (TAP).

The three rockshelters tested, Tres Metates Shelter, Potsherd Shelter, and Boulder Shelter, are found in an area of towering volcanic scree slopes, deeply incised drainages, and few examples of "friendly" vegetation. Each shelter contained extensive evidence of human occupation during the Late Prehistoric period (700–1535 A.D.).

A plant storage feature from Tres Metates Shelter. This unit was used to store prickly pear tunas, yucca fruit, corn, and beans.



Tres Metates Shelter

With an approximate floor area of 100 square meters and a ceiling height of nearly six meters, Tres Metates is a very large and spacious rockshelter. The talus slope in front of the shelter is littered with cultural debris. Artifacts are also found across the surface of the shelter, which has unfortunately been heavily looted.

Two features were uncovered at Tres Metates: a burned rock hearth and a plant lined storage feature. Charcoal from the burned rock feature returned a date of 750 ± 60 years BP (1180–1310 AD). This feature suggests plant roasting was a major activity carried out at the site.

The other, quite spectacular, feature was a pit lined with grasses, shrub stems, and prickly pear pads. It was used to store plant foods, a suggestion supported by the recovery of a small number of domesticated beans, a corn-cob and a large number of yucca and prickly pear seeds. One of the prickly-pear pads lining the feature dated to 360 ± 40 B.P., or 1440 to 1640 A.D. Thus, this feature dates either to the latest Prehistoric period or within the Protohistoric period. Sherds of El Paso brownware found outside of the feature walls suggest that the earlier date is probably correct.

The Tres Metates storage feature illustrates the shifting nature of foraging adaptations in the eastern Trans-Pecos. Cultigens, as evidenced by corn and beans, were clearly being brought into the Pinto Canyon area, probably from the nearby La Junta de los Rios region (near modern day Presidio/Ojinaga). Never-

aving

nyon yields new storic peoples



Projectile points excavated from Potsherd Shelter and the surrounding landscape.

theless, the yucca and other seeds indicate a continued reliance on wild-gathered plants.

A total of thirteen arrow points and point fragments were recovered from Tres Metates. Five of these are diagnostic, with two attributable to the Toyah type, one similar to Garza or Toyah, one a probable Livermore, and the last most similar to an unfinished Perdiz. These are types manufactured very late in prehistory, ca. 800 to 1500 A.D. for the Perdiz and Livermore types and from 1200 A.D. into the early Protohistoric era for the Toyah and Garza specimens. In addition to the arrow points, two ceramic sherds were recovered. One of the sherds is most similar to El Paso Brownware, though it exhibits manufacturing traits suggesting Casas Grandes origins. The other has been tentatively typed as Carretas Polychrome, another Casas Grandes ware dating to the Medio period at Paquime, Chihuahua ca. 1150–1450 A.D.

Potsherd Shelter

Potsherd Shelter is a small, dome-shaped shelter found approximately 60 m up the very steep slope of an igneous mountainside. Like Tres Metates, Potsherd has also been looted, though not as extensively. The shelter gets its name from a few Chupadero Black-on-White sherds recovered during the original recording of the locale. Chupadero B/W is most often associated with Jornada Mogollon sites of the western Trans-Pecos and adjacent areas of New Mexico.

Based on projectile points and the ceramic remains, Potsherd was occupied solely during the Late Prehistoric period. Five diagnostic arrow points were recovered: two Garza, two Livermore, and a Toyah. These style range in date from ca. 900–1600 A.D.

The two Livermore specimens were found in what appeared to be an intact bonebed. The bones and arrow points were in the same stratigraphic level, with one point found in situ



CBBS staff screen for artifacts at Boulder Shelter.

very near a concentration of ribs and vertebrae. A complete astragalus (an accessory bone of the heel) was sent for radiocarbon analysis with the result coming back as modern! Further analysis of the bones revealed they belonged to a juvenile sheep or goat—domesticated animals that would not have been on the Livermore menu. Clearly, with modern bones being found in seemingly direct association with prehistoric arrow points, the disturbance in the upper centimeters of Potsherd Shelter, most likely from looting, javelinas, transient activity, or a combination of the three, has been much more severe than was visible prior to excavation.

Boulder Shelter

Boulder Shelter is a small alcove eroded into a large boulder. Unfortunately, the deposits within the shelter were not at all sedimentary, but were comprised entirely of goat feces. Furthermore, it rained quite heavily during our excavations at Boulder—as can be imagined, digging in a rockshelter filled with damp goat manure was not a thrilling experience, either for your nose or hands. In any event, it is unlikely the archaeological remains found at Boulder are in primary context; rather, they have been surrounded and encased in the manure layer through the historic era.

The lack of primary contextual information from Boulder does not discount the information that can be learned from the site. Again, the bulk of the evidence from Boulder Shelter pertains to the latest periods of prehistory. Of the 15 projectiles and fragments recovered from Boulder, eight are time-diagnostic. Seven of the diagnostic projectiles are either Garza or Soto points, and especially for the Soto specimens, date well into the Protohistoric period. The remaining diagnostic specimen is a complete Palmillas, dating to the Late Archaic period (1000 B.C.–700 A.D.). No other evidence of a distinct Late Archaic occupation was found, and it is entirely possible later groups brought this point into the shelter.

What it means to Archaeology

The Pinto Canyon area is an ideal laboratory for documenting prehistoric human presence in the Big Bend region. A variety of human behaviors have been recognized through the excavation of these sites. Though all three are rockshelters, each particular shelter was used somewhat differently. Tres Metates appears to have been a long-term occupation base camp where cultigens and wild plants were stored and processed. Potsherd appears to have been used as a hunter's camp where tools were manufactured. Boulder Shelter was used sparingly, most likely as a lookout, where finishing touches were put on tools.

These behaviors are primarily those of mobile hunters and gatherers. But, the presence of cultigens and Casas Grandes and Jornada Mogollon ceramics at these Pinto Canyon sites indicates the prehistoric picture in the area was strongly influenced by the more sedentary groups living along the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo. Whether the peoples accessing the Sierra Vieja breaks were culturally a part of these part-time agricultural groups, or if they were only trade partners with them, is a major question for future research.

The Pinto Canyon region has been understudied archaeologically, yet, it does not stretch the truth to postulate that the distinct behavioral signatures at all three sites suggest more variability in the Late Prehistoric record of the Big Bend than has been previously recognized. Furthermore, our testing of Tres Metates, Potsherd and Boulder Shelters has provided only the barest hint of the rich archaeological record to be found in Pinto Canyon. The evidence from these three sites definitively shows the region was a major occupation zone for foragers making their living in the harsh, yet beautiful, rimrock country.

Ancient corncobs from the Vizcaino Collection.



Inside Pinto Canyon: The Vizcaino collection

By Jason Bush

In addition to data collected from recent excavations conducted by the Center for Big Bend Studies on Pinto Canyon Ranch are 66 artifacts loaned by Jesse Vizcaino to the CBBS for analysis. Mr. Vizcaino owned the Pinto Canyon Ranch from 1965 to 1989, and during his time as a “weekend rancher,” frequently encountered evidence of past human occupation. He granted permission to an acquaintance of his to explore the Tres Metates rockshelter and collect the loaned pieces in the mid-70s.

The Vizcaino collection contains some intriguing pieces that present a rough image of the activities of prehistoric peoples who once inhabited the Pinto Canyon area. A braided sandal in the collection speaks of a time when nomadic peoples roamed throughout the Trans-Pecos and northern Mexico. Our present era of cozy hiking boots pales in comparison to the simplicity of weaving locally available plants like sotol, yucca, and lechuguilla into footwear to hunt and forage amidst immensely rugged terrain in an extreme climate.

The collection contains 13 pieces of bottle gourd (*Lagenaria siceraria*), many of which fit together. Denizens of the desert utilized the gourds for a variety of purposes—perhaps as a container to transport water from a nearby spring, collecting fruits from edible plants such as screwbean mesquite, algerita, and persimmon, or as a utensil. One of the gourd pieces has intact stitching fibers, which were commonly made from yucca, sotol, or lechuguilla. This piece of gourd was probably broken at one time and subsequently repaired to extend its usefulness.

The bottle gourd typically compliments other cultigens. Two pieces of corn cob—found in a different location on the ranch—were included with the collection. Where the corn was grown is unknown, however its presence does confirm the use of agriculture somewhere in the area—perhaps in the Rio Grande valley.

Two fine examples of fireboard are also in the collection. A hafted piece of sotol with blackened conical-shaped holes served as a platform for someone to rapidly rub a stick between their hands, thereby creating intense friction. The resulting heat would quickly

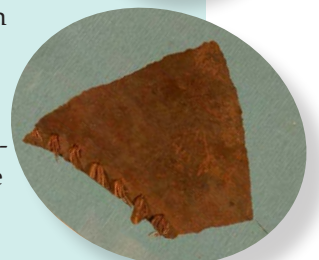
ignite a tiny handful of dried plant material (which would sit at the edge of the hole where the stick makes contact), effectively transforming the smoking material into subtly burning embers. Steady puffs on the embers quickly gave way to a small flame, generating a fire that could be used for many purposes—from cooking to providing warmth.

A marine shell, smooth to the touch and with a hole close to one edge, could have functioned as personal adornment—perhaps stitched onto a ceremonial garment or attached to a necklace. There is also a diamond-shaped piece of wood that has notched grooves on all four edges along with two holes in the center, giving it a decorative appearance as well. The wood appears to be soft bark, possibly from a conifer, and may have originated from the cooler highlands further north in the Davis Mountains, or to the south in Mexico. This is yet another artifact that hints at the mobility of the people who used the items, or conceivably even traded them for other objects of interest.

The fact that these artifacts were excavated without scientific methodology greatly limits their interpretive value. Nevertheless, Vizcaino’s collection still represents a small piece of a larger puzzle that can contribute to our knowledge of the Pinto Canyon area. Only a small number of archaeological projects have been conducted in the region in the past 50 years. During this time, efforts have focused more on collecting artifacts than their analysis—which make the need to properly document the area all the more urgent. The recent excavations on Pinto Canyon Ranch—along with extensive reconnaissance by the current ranch owner—are gradually building a more coherent picture of past occupations of the area, which in turn contribute to a better understanding of the past in the Trans-Pecos and northern Mexican regions.



Objects from the Vizcaino collection include a sandal fragment (above), a stone pendant (below), and a piece of stitched gourd (bottom).



Meet New CBBS Staffers

The inception of TAP in 2004 has provided an infusion of projects and funding that has allowed the CBBS to rapidly expand its staff. We've added positions at all levels, from contract archaeologists to an Assistant Director. We're pleased to introduce our new team members, who bring with them an impressive array of ideas, experiences, and accomplishments.

Not pictured are **Dr. Stephen Mbutu** and **Jennifer Piehl**. A native of Kenya, Dr. Mbutu earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology (Archaeology) from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, and was hired in 2005 as Assistant Director of the Center. He assists with grant writing and fundraising efforts. Jennifer is a physical anthropologist involved with the study of mortuary practices in the Big Bend.



Ashley Baker

Ashley has been working for the Center for the last year as a contractual Archaeologist, spending extensive time in the field working on surveys and excavations. When she's in Alpine, Ashley works in the CBBS lab, processing and analyzing artifacts that were found during field excursions. She will be attending this summer's archaeological field school, and will finish her bachelor's degree at Sul Ross in the next year, with a major in Geology and a minor in Anthropology. She is the working mom of two beautiful children, Berkley and Fisher, and always has a warm smile and sound advice for co-workers as well as kids.



Jason Bush

Jason has a BA in Psychology from Sul Ross State University and participated in the 1998 Sul Ross Summer Field School Program. He will be applying to several universities for graduate studies in Anthropology this fall. He has worked at the center as a full-time Staff Archaeologist since the summer of 2004. Since being hired, he has participated on 12 field projects with the CBBS, along with numerous stints as a laboratory assistant. He has served as a volunteer staff member on the Pambamarca Archaeology Project in Ecuador, a collaboration between Columbia University and UCLA. He delivered a presentation at the annual CBBS conference in November 2005 titled, "The Calendar Site, Davenport Draw, Brewster County, Texas," co-authored with Dr. Steven Mbutu.



Erin Caro

Erin was hired this winter as staff Editor, replacing Kelly Garcia, who has recently moved to Corpus Christi. Erin has Bachelor's degrees in International Studies with an emphasis in Latin America and Women's Studies from the College of William and Mary in Virginia, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2003. She has worked as a journalist and associate editor of the Southwest Cycling News in Austin, and has done writing, editing, and graphic design for various non-profits and independent publications over the last eight years. When she's not scouting out great stories for the newsletter, Erin enjoys reading, cooking, and leading the local cycling club, the Big Bend Cyclists.



Robert Gray

Robert is a 2002 graduate of Sul Ross State University with a B.S. in Criminal Justice and a minor in Anthropology, and has recently been hired as a Staff Archaeologist at the CBBS. While at SRSU, Robert was a member of the J. Charles Kelley Anthropology Club and attended the 2001 CBBS Archaeological Field School. In 2005 Robert was hired by the CBBS for field work involving surveying and excavation. He plans on earning a graduate degree in anthropology and becoming a career archaeologist.

Casey Riggs

Casey has been at the Center for the last year as a student worker. He is a sophomore at Sul Ross majoring in Natural Resource Management with an emphasis in Range Management and minoring in Anthropology, and has plans to eventually earn his PhD in Archaeology. He graduated from Fort Stockton High School in 2005, and has won awards for UIL and 4-H. Casey comes from a family ranching background, and enjoys hiking, horseback riding, and roping when he isn't helping at the Center. He's also a talented musician, and his charming baritone has taken him to All State Choir three times. A smooth dancer and snappy dresser, Casey has been an asset to the CBBS this year, and plans to return to work in the fall.



John Seebach

John, a Project Archaeologist with the CBBS since 2004, has an MA (2003, Anthropology, SMU), and is a Ph.D. candidate at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He has conducted professional archaeological research across the Southwest and Great Plains for the last twelve years. His forthcoming doctoral dissertation documents the Paleoindian (11,500 to 8,000 bp) occupation of the Trans-Pecos region of Texas. John has recently led field research teams at three Paleoindian sites in the region for his dissertation. Since coming to the Center, he has spearheaded research on Pinto Canyon Ranch, a large private land holding in western Presidio County, Texas. Six sites have been excavated there under his direction, and a manuscript has been completed and is currently being edited.



Richard Walter

Richard is a Staff Archaeologist, and has completed all of the anthropology/archaeology coursework required for a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology and has attended the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Texas at El Paso, and Texas Tech University. Richard has had archaeological experience in Texas since 1968 and has not only been involved with archaeological investigations in Texas, but also in Kansas, Indiana, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and Ecuador. His experience includes all phases of archaeological investigations in a wide variety of experience from initial phases of data collection to final report preparation. Richard has been senior and co-author of more than 40 archaeological reports.



Caleb Waters

Caleb has been with the CBBS for two years as a student worker, and is currently a rising junior at Sul Ross with a History major. He is "living down his past" as a Mighty Fighting Unicorn from New Braunfels High School, where he graduated in 2004. He has attended both the National and Global Youth Leadership Conferences, and brings with him his personable, easy-going approach to both people and time management. When he isn't making copies or searching for a snack, Caleb enjoys backpacking, fishing, and cycling in the Big Bend. He will return to the CBBS in the fall after lifeguarding for the summer in New Braunfels.



Mary Melissa Williams

Melissa has been hired as a Staff Archaeologist, and will be working primarily on project coordination and report preparation for the Center. She is also currently teaching Anthropology at Sul Ross as an adjunct professor. She got an early start in Archaeology when, at age 12, she researched the Hohokam of central Arizona for a science project. She went on to earn BAs of Anthropology and Religious Studies from Rice University, and MAs in Physical Anthropology from the University of Texas and History from Arizona State University. She spent 15 years working in publishing, advertising, and historical museums, and returned to archaeology in 1991, doing CRM work in Phoenix, Tucson, and San Francisco. She now resides in Marfa, Texas, sharing her easy wit and precise editing skills with the CBBS.



Supporting CBBS efforts



La Vista de la Frontera is the semi-annual newsletter for the Center for Big Bend Studies at Sul Ross State University. Address correspondence to the Editor, Center for Big Bend Studies, Box C-72, Alpine, TX 79832, or ecaro@sulross.edu.

Editing and graphic design by Erin E. Caro.

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Mission

The Center for Big Bend Studies fosters interdisciplinary scholarship of the diverse prehistoric, historic, and modern cultures of the borderlands region of the United States and Mexico, with emphasis on the area encompassed by Trans-Pecos Texas and north-central Mexico. The Center is committed to the recovery, protection, and sharing of this region's rich cultural legacy through dynamic programs involving research, education, public outreach, and publication.

Volume 17, Summer 2006
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The Center for Big Bend Studies is committed to in-depth cultural and historical research of the Trans-Pecos region of Texas and northern Mexico, and makes every effort to share its findings with the public and scientific communities. The daily efforts of the Center's staff and volunteers combine to foster a more complete understanding of this rugged, remote region of Texas. We would like to thank those organizations and individuals who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to assist our efforts. New donors since our last-published list are:

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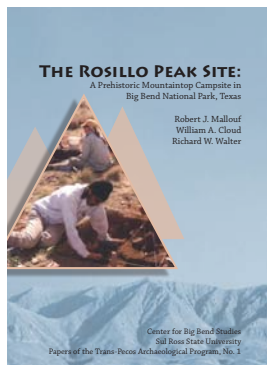
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CBBS Store: books and gear

TAP Publication: The Rosillo Peak Site

Papers of the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program, No. 1



TAP has its own series of books, the first of which will be available for purchase this summer. The Rosillo Peak Site features the findings of a crew of eight archaeologists who worked in Big Bend National Park investigating a small prehistoric campsite on the summit of Rosillo Peak. The site was repeatedly occupied by groups of hunters and gatherers over several thousand years, beginning in the latter half of the Early Archaic period. Reasons behind the repeated occupation are explored, as well as the possibility of a special use for the site, as

evidenced by its spectacular setting and unusual artifact assemblage.

\$20, or \$15 Member Price

Coming Soon—TAP Series No. 2: The Paradise Site

Later this summer, the CBBS will publish *The Paradise Site* by Andrea Ohl, a book that examines changing conditions in the Big Bend thousands of years ago, and the effects it had on plant production and cooking techniques. See the brief on page four for more information.

Occasional Papers Series

Below the Escondido Rim: A history of the 02 Ranch
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Journal 17 for sale

Missed last year's *Journal of Big Bend Studies*? There are still copies available. We have also reprinted some of our more popular journals, listed below.

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The Center for Big Bend Studies would like to invite you to attend its 13th annual conference on the history, culture, and archaeology of the borderlands region of the United States and Mexico, with an emphasis on the Trans-Pecos and north-central Mexico. Please contact the Center to register.

Call for Papers

We are also accepting proposals for 30-minute presentations on relevant topics. Please submit a 200-word abstract by September 29. Accepted papers will be considered for publication in the *Journal of Big Bend Studies*, Vol. 19.

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