

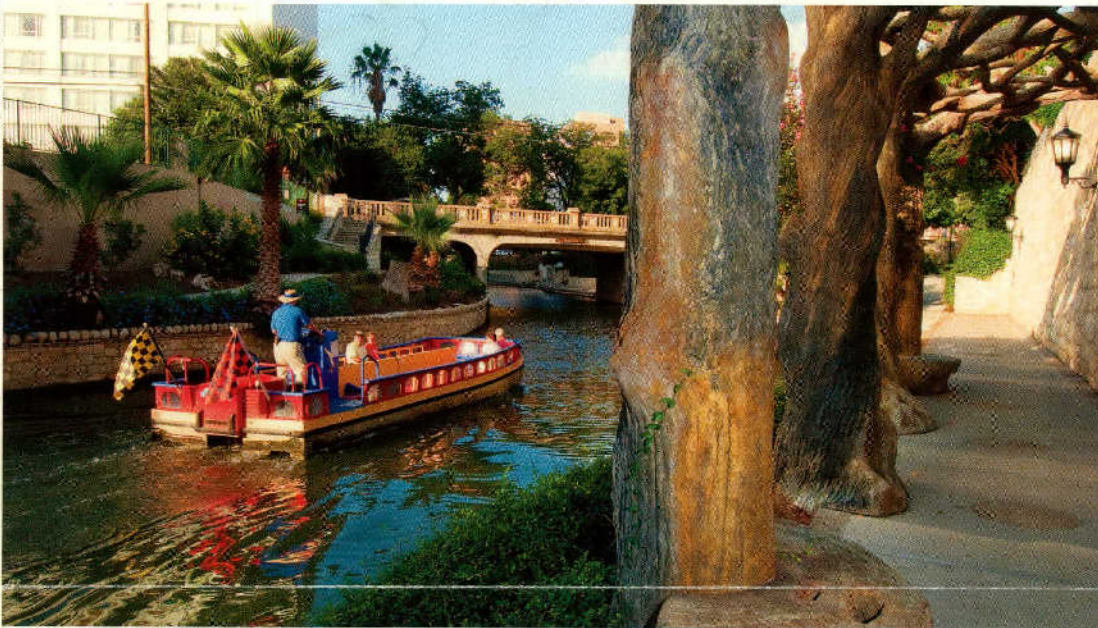
★ TEXAS

TRAVEL LOG

INSIDE:

- ★ Management change for legendary bison herd could mean increased visibility, more roaming grounds
- ★ Frisco's RoughRiders outpace other Double-A baseball teams with top attendance records
- ★ TACVB gives Idea Fair awards during conference in Lubbock

PHOTO: RANDALL MAXWELL



San Antonio's new hike-and-bike maps direct visitors through scenic treks including historic missions and the River Walk's new extension.

TRAVEL NEWS

TO MAKE IT easier to explore San Antonio's natural beauty and historic and cultural attractions, the city now offers **hike-and-bike maps** and an accompanying **website** with photos, bike rack locations and attractions along the way.

With miles of on-road and off-road amenities, bikers are guided to places like Mission Trail, which runs alongside San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, the largest concentration of Spanish colonial missions in North America.

Pedestrians are guided to places like the Museum Reach, the River Walk's new extension. This scenic trek is brimming with public art and leads to the Pearl Brewery, a 127-year-old facility that has been redeveloped into an eco-friendly eat-live-work hotspot.

There are many more trails to choose from through historic districts, cultural corridors and urban segments.

For more information, call (800) ALAMO-07 or visit www.visitsanantonio.com.

MORE THAN 80,000 people come each year to see **The Trains at NorthPark Center** in Dallas, but this season (Nov. 20–Jan. 2), the elaborate toy train exhibit will be bigger and better with a **redesign by TrainWorx**, a nationally known firm specializing in designing these exhibits. This exhibit is hosted by, and will benefit, the Ronald McDonald House of Dallas.

Set on 1,600 feet of track, the trains roll on a miniature journey across America past scenes of downtown Dallas, the Cotton Bowl and the State Fair of Texas, New York City, Washington, D.C., New England, the Grand Canyon, Route 66, Santa's North Pole, San Francisco and other highlights.

The exhibit encompasses more than 4,000 square feet of train-themed environments, with all the trimmings of the holiday train travel experience — steam engine and coach cars, water towers and baggage carts, ticket booth and train station.

Trains at NorthPark exhibit takes visitors on a miniature journey.

Admission is \$6 for adults and \$3 for children ages 2 to 12 and senior citizens ages 65 and older.

The exhibit is on the second level of NorthPark Center, North Central Expressway at Northwest Highway.

Ronald McDonald House of Dallas is a home-away-from-home for families of seriously ill or injured children who have traveled to Dallas and are hospitalized or receiving medical treatment in an area hospital.

For additional information, call

(214) 631-7354 or visit www.rmh.dallas.org.

SHELDON LAKE State Park will soon have a **new 75-foot observation deck** that will give visitors a bird's-eye view of the waterfowl-rich wetlands and 250 acres of coastal tallgrass prairie.

The \$1.3 million observation tower, which will be erected in the park's 40-acre Environmental Learning Center unit, is expected to be complete early next year.

Park Superintendent Robert Comstock says interpretive panels about the park's history and its role as an outdoor classroom and nature preserve will be on the tower's base and at the 30- and 60-foot observation deck levels.

"We'll have enough solar arrays attached to the tower to generate more than enough energy so that it won't cost any additional money to run it," Comstock says. "You'll be up there with the hawks and other raptors and be able to look down onto the prairie and see things not easily seen at ground level."

Comstock says the tower is part of the park's master plan, written years ago. "The idea behind the tower," he says, "is to get people up in the air to bridge views between the lake and the prairie that's being restored."

The park provides one of the few



COURTESY OF RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE OF DALLAS

COURTESY TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

inland, freshwater marshes along the upper Texas coast. It is home to 250 species of nesting and migratory waterfowl and other birds, with more than 20 wooded islands in the 1,200-acre reservoir providing nesting sites for heron and egret rookeries.

The park's Environmental Learning Center plays a vital role of introducing non-traditional users — many of them inner city youth and from suburban schools — to the outdoors, where they learn the importance of preserving natural resources, conserving energy and appreciating wildlife. Approximately 4,000 students a year, from second graders to high school students, visit the park to learn how to fish, observe nature and attend half-day programs on pond ecology, conservation, nature study, composting and recycling.

The new observation tower will have enough room to accommodate a class of 25 students along the railing of the two decks at one time.

For more information, call (281) 456-2800 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/sheldon_lake.

MANAGEMENT of the **Caprock Canyon State Park bison herd** — the official Texas State Bison Herd — has shifted from the **Texas Parks and Wildlife's Wildlife Division to its State Parks Division**, a move that could help increase viewing opportunities for visitors.

"One of the major requests we've had from visitors is they'd like to be able to see the bison better and get closer to them," says park Superintendent Donald Beard. "We worked with the Wildlife Division to devise a way to do that and still keep the herd 'wild' and well-managed from a natural resource perspective."

To enable better public viewing, the bison will be placed behind a new fence that will encompass the prairie around the Visitors Center and the southern portion of Lake Theo.

"The new enclosure will more than double the rangeland for the herd," Beard says. "We hope to continue to expand the range over much of the park as time and funds allow."

That means once visitors come through the main entrance, they would, in effect, be inside the bison enclosure. Interior fences will be erected to protect historic sites, day-use sites, the northern portion of



Expanded grounds for Caprock Canyon State Park's legendary bison herd could mean greater visibility for visitors.

Lake Theo and the more ecologically sensitive areas of the 15,300-acre park.

The Caprock Canyons bison are descendants of the historic bison herd that Panhandle ranchers Charles and Mary Goodnight saved from extinction. Before the 1870s, the bison were estimated to number between 30 million to 60 million head. In 1876, Goodnight captured some of the last of the great southern plains bison herd and placed them on his JA Ranch. In 1997, JA Ranch owners Monte Ritchie and Ninia Bivins donated the bison to the state, and they were moved to Caprock Canyons in 1998.

The Goodnight Herd, genetically tested to be the only remaining of the southern plains subspecies, was one of the five foundation herds that supplied stock to save American bison from extinction.

The herd, which currently numbers 78, will remain under the care of herdsman C. L. Hawkins, who transferred to the Wildlife Division when the herd came to the park in 1998 and has managed the herd ever since.

In addition to relocating the bison so they can be more readily viewed, park staff will increase educational signage, distribute informational brochures and present interpretive programs about the herd's history, its impact on the prairie ecosystem and how to interact safely with the animals.

Caprock Canyons State Park is about 50 miles northeast of Plainview on FM 1065, approximately 4 miles north of State Highway 86. For more information, call (806) 455-1492 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/caprock_canyons.

AMUSEMENT NEWS

SIX FLAGS Over Texas has unveiled the new logo for the Texas Giant coaster, and the theme park is putting the legendary attraction through extensive renovations to make it a world-class ride. It is expected to be complete in time for its 50th anniversary in 2011.

The hybrid design mixes wood supports with the world's first steel Iron

Horse Coaster track in the world. The Iron Horse Coaster track features a rail system made entirely of steel and engineered for long-term durability. In addition, the coaster — now about 40 percent complete — will feature fast-changing drops with highly banked smooth turns, the steepest drop in the world (79 degrees), and the steepest bank of any wooden-support coaster (more than 95 degrees).

Progress on the Texas Giant can be seen in time-lapse images at www.sixflags.com/overTexas/rides/TexasGiant.aspx.

Six Flags Over Texas is the anchor of the Arlington Entertainment District, which also includes Hurricane Harbor, Texas Rangers Ballpark, Legends of the Game Museum, Dallas Cowboys New Stadium, International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame, and the Arlington Convention Center.

SPORTS TOURISM

THE FRISCO RoughRiders Double-A baseball team is reveling in another successful year of attendance — the highest of all Double-A teams.

The 2010 season, its eighth year of the franchise in Frisco, also marked the sixth season in which it outpaced all other Double-A teams in attendance.

A total of 562,418 fans watched baseball at the Dr Pepper Ballpark this season, with an average of 8,034 fans per night. In its eight seasons in Frisco, the RoughRiders have drawn more than 4.7 millions fans.

"We're very blessed to have such terrific fan support," says RoughRiders' President/General Manager Scott Sonju. "We strive to provide our fans with family-friendly entertainment at an affordable price, in one of the most unique and beautiful venues in all of baseball."

The RoughRiders recorded 30 sellout crowds in 2010, with additional credit going to marquee entertainers such as the ZOOperstars!, The Famous San Diego Chicken and the Junior Diamond Dancers.

The club also was honored this year by the Frisco Neighbors Go readers' poll as the "Best Place to Entertain the Family" and the "Best Date Spot."

The 'Riders open up the 2011 season on April 7 at Dr Pepper Ballpark.

For more information, visit www.ridersbaseball.com.

TACVB AWARDS

SEVERAL TEXAS convention and visitors bureaus were honored recently at the Texas Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus Idea Fair at the organization's annual conference in Lubbock. The Beaumont CVB took the lead in overall wins.

The TACVB conference allows employees from convention and visitors bureaus throughout the state to come together and take part in an "Idea Fair" competition where each city presents idea boards displaying the different programs and campaigns they have created during the past year to promote their city to leisure travelers and meeting planners.

Members then vote on a winning entry for each of the eight categories, including advertising, convention promotion, website, local awareness campaigns, cooperative marketing, DVD, tourism promotion and sports marketing.

For budgets of \$1 million or more, Beaumont took the lead with eight first place wins for convention promotion, cooperative marketing, DVD, local awareness, online marketing, sports marketing, tourism promotion and website.

"This is a tremendous accomplishment for our team," says Beaumont CVB Director of Marketing Stephanie Molina. "It's such an honor for Beaumont to be recognized and voted as No. 1 in Texas for our ideas, creativity, and for the execution and originality of our promotional campaigns."

Lubbock snagged five second place wins for advertising, cooperative marketing, DVD, sports marketing and tourism promotion.

Abilene was honored with second place wins in convention promotion, local awareness, online marketing and website.

Closing out the awards in this budget range were Waco with two second place ties for DVD and online marketing, and Fredericksburg's second place win for advertising.

For budgets of \$350,000–\$999,999, Nacogdoches led with first place wins for green marketing and local awareness and second for convention promotion and online marketing.

Victoria won first place for advertising and tourism promotion and second place for website.

Port Aransas took home first

ON DISPLAY



Anonymous (Mexico), *The Holy Trinity*, 19th century oil on tin.

THE HOLY TRINITY/*La Santísima Trinidad* exhibit, an exploration of the Holy Trinity from 18th- and 19th-century Mexico, opens Oct. 17 as part of the El Paso Museum of Art's ongoing rotation of the *retablos* in its collection.

The Holy Trinity — the union of Father, Son and Holy Spirit — has been central to Christian theology since the fourth century B.C.E. Variations of iconography and the composition were reflections of the artist's abilities, the patron's taste and/or the requirements of church doctrine. This series of 10

reveals the ongoing development and understanding of the subject "three persons, one substance" that some scholars believe is foreshadowed in the Old Testament of the Bible.

The free exhibit will be showcased in the Dorrance and Olga Roderick Gallery at the EPMA. Museum entrance is free, but other current exhibits, such as *Earth Water Air Fire: The Work of Carol Feuerman*, have an admission price.

For more information, call (915) 532-1707 or visit www.elpasoartmuseum.org.

place honors for its website and second place awards for advertising and tourism promotion.

San Angelo won a first place award for convention promotion and second for cooperative marketing.

San Marcos was recognized with a first place award in cooperative marketing.

Granbury and Wichita Falls took home the first and second place awards, respectively, for DVD; Stillwater, Okla., was second in local awareness and McKinney was first for online marketing.

Round Rock cornered the sports marketing category.

For budgets less than \$350,000, the People's Choice Idea Fair awards went to Corsicana for cooperative marketing; Texas State Railroad for its DVD; Georgetown for

tourism promotion; and The Colony for its website. Georgetown took second place for website.

In the Judges Choice Awards, Beaumont was recognized for Best Overall in convention promotion, online marketing and website. Victoria was recognized Best Overall for advertising and tourism promotion.

Other Judges Choice recipients included San Marcos CVB for cooperative marketing, Texas State Railroad for DVD, Nacogdoches CVB for green marketing, Abilene CVB for local awareness, and the Round Rock CVB for sports marketing.

"It was a great honor to have tourism professionals from across the state of Texas vote on our TV commercial," says Texas State Railroad Marketing Manager Lori Pennington. "We really enjoyed creating the commercial, and

we were so happy to be able to enter it in the Idea Fair."

INDUSTRY INSIDERS

THE TEXAS NATURE Tourism Council named new leaders during the annual travel Summit held Sept. 19-22 in Galveston.

Natural Bridge Caverns Vice President **Brad Wuest** was named the organization's **new chairman**, and Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau's Vice President of Leisure Travel and Communications **Michelle Horine** was named **vice chairwoman**. Both were selected by the outgoing executive committee and the CEO of the Texas Travel Industry Association to step into these leadership positions.

Horine will serve as vice-chair for one term and move into the chairman position in September 2011.

The Texas Nature Tourism Council, a council of the Texas Travel Industry Association, promotes nature tourism as a major enhancement of the state's economy and quality of life. The council seeks to educate its citizens and its visitors about the state's nature tourism resources, as well as assist, counsel and inform businesses, individuals and other entities that provide nature-based tourism services and facilities to the public.

Corpus Christi CVB CEO Keith Arnold says, "the appointment is an honor and can be attributed to the effectiveness of our nature tourism program and the way that Michelle has managed it." Nature tourism accounts for more than 40 percent of visitor activities in Corpus Christi, including birding, fishing, hunting, wildlife photography, shelling and kayaking.

JOY WARE has been promoted from assistant housing manager to **housing manager for the San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau**.

Ware brings more than 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry, including two years at the CVB as assistant housing manager. Ware will lead the housing team in handling multi-hotel conventions using Passkey, a web-based hotel reservation system. She also will work closely with meeting planners and hotel partners to help facilitate successful lodging experiences.

TEXAS TRIVIA

What eight-acre estate, once a private residence, is now part of the World Birding Center network.

McAllen's Quinta Mazatlan, which includes a Spanish Revival Style mansion that is one of the largest adobe homes in the state, is now home to more than 110 species of birds and 150 different species of exotic trees, flowers and plants among the native thicket. The community purchased and saved the estate from developers who wanted to demolish the home. Today, it is a highlight and part of the history of McAllen. For more information, call (956) 681-3370 or visit www.quintamazatlan.com.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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EDITOR: Lois M. Rodriguez

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of August 31, 2010

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	8,494	-16.54	65,644	-1.93
ANTHONY	5,819	-0.50	59,841	0.00
CAPITOL	7,353	+3.35	60,374	+1.43
DENISON	28,253	-26.86	214,164	-14.37
GAINESVILLE	23,729	-8.76	207,719	-3.67
LANGTRY	3,070	-13.79	39,932	-6.57
LAREDO	8,316	-21.62	71,065	-10.12
ORANGE	33,361	-20.11	278,863	-18.09
TEXARKANA	21,641	-27.44	198,825	-6.39
VALLEY	7,688	+13.26	123,466	+7.46
WASKOM	28,924	-9.56	260,738	-3.37
WICHITA FALLS	15,409	-3.72	105,152	-13.56
CENTER TOTALS	192,057	-15.88	1,685,783	-8.03

*Compared to last year

Dial toll-free (800) 452-9292 for travel assistance from
TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers
(8 a.m.–6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

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TRAVEL INFORMATION DIVISION
P.O. BOX 149249
AUSTIN, TX 78714-9249