

HAVE YOU BEEN TO THE GORGE AT CANYON LAKE?

By Frank Dietz

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One of the natural wonders of our Comal County in the Texas Hill Country is the slice through the Earth's surface alongside Canyon Dam. An extreme rainfall event of 30 inches above Canyon Lake and Dam along the Guadalupe watershed in 2002 gave us this phenomenal wonder. In a matter of 6 days a fifty-foot-deep slice of the Earth surface spanning between 50 to 150 feet wide when the lake's spillway had to relieve pressures on the dam, gave us a peek at the historic wonders beneath us. This "pie slice" removed more than 300,000 tons of earthen material. The relatively flat surface with a shallow creek was no more!

The Saturdays of 22 and 29 October from 9:30AM until 12:30 PM, you can join a guided walking tour through the Gorge in an extraordinary 3 hours of discovery. This trek is not for the faint of heart and requires some special hiking shoes and preparation. Check at comalconservation.org for specifics and a route to reserving a place in one of the two groups. Each Saturday is limited to 20 spots. Once those are full, a reserve list for others seeking a chance to make the trip on another date will be developed. Too, for those with more limited stamina or mobility worries, an Overlook Trail has been opened during this last year. It is approximately two miles looping along the northern rim and can be self-directed. Some accompanied opportunities may become possible with informed guides in coming months. Watch the website for those announcements.

In the fall of 2007, I drew a lucky pass for a group guided tour in the early months of the Gorge's limited availability to the public. This old Geology lab assistant from decades earlier awakened to such wonder with a select group of family and friends the day before Thanksgiving. I was fortunate in securing as guide an Historical Geology enthusiast who gave us more information than we could process but opened the secrets uncovered in the Gorge from the exposed 110-million-year-old Cretaceous Glen Rose limestone world. In addition to springs and small waterfalls, fossilized sea urchins quite perfectly preserved along with small and large dinosaur prints were abundant. From macro to micro the fossils and their stories abound! You can even see fossilized ocean ripples preserved in the limestone. Part of my thrill was being joined by young people (above the age of 7) who were in that discovery mode of this wonderful world with secrets now revealed. Come try it on the Saturdays set aside in October or at another time. If you are unable to join the CCCA groups, you can seek another opportunity by contacting the Canyon Lake Gorge website or calling 830-964-5424. The new office and resource site is located off the drive into the Tye Preston Library entrance road and is well signed.

Whenever I have introduced newcomers to the Canyon Lake Gorge our conversations inevitably turn toward building an understanding that the open land cover for these formations are the filters for water available for so many through the Edwards and Trinity Aquifers. That translates into an awakened passion to keep some of our primitive surfaces free of cover by human endeavors. That becomes the mission efforts of our Comal County Conservation Alliance. Check in with us and become a protector of water, land, air, and wildlife! Comalconservation.org.

Just a word of thanks to those who were donors for our efforts during September's BigGive! Every gift helps and appreciation abounds. Hear the wildlife clapping!