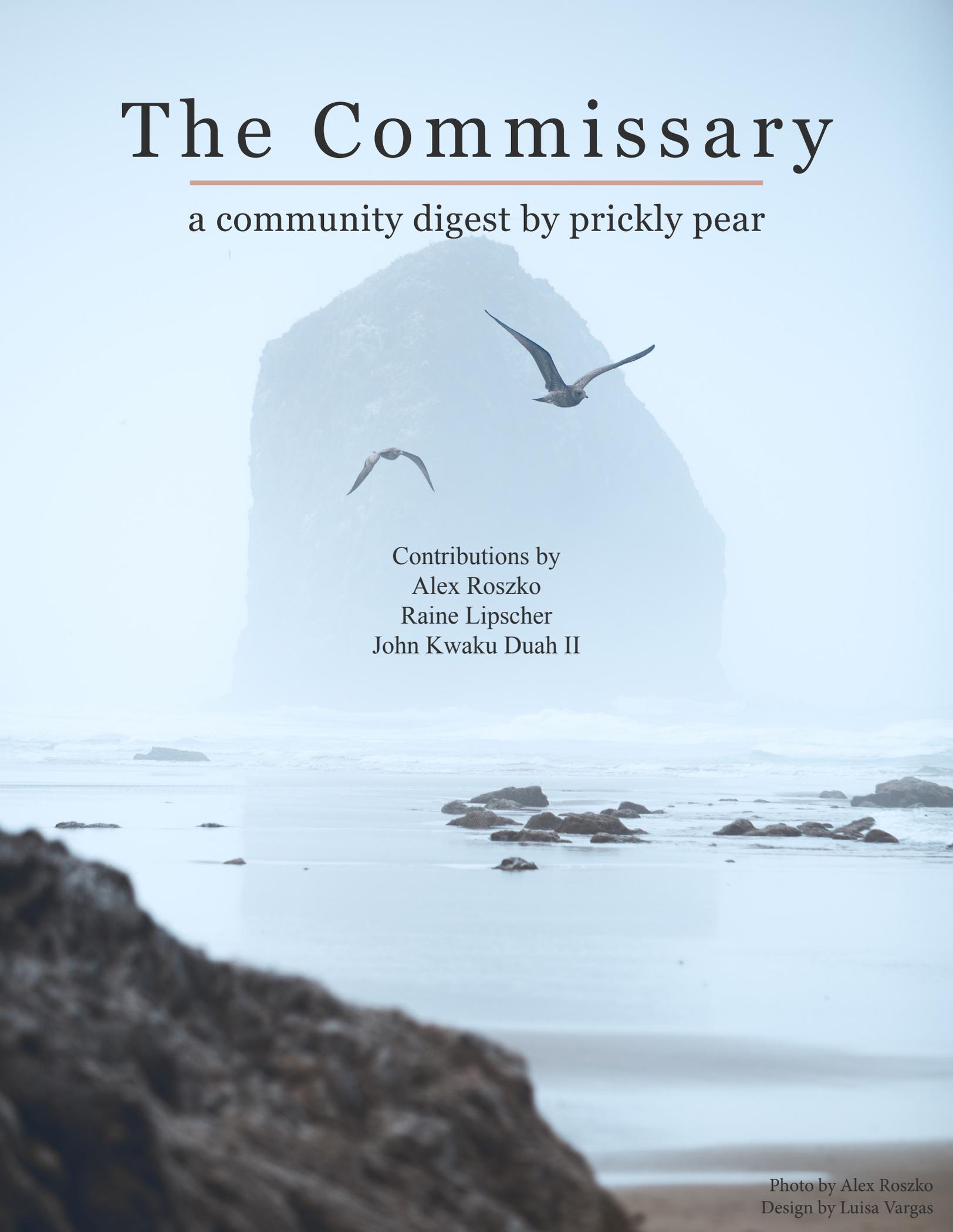


# The Commissary

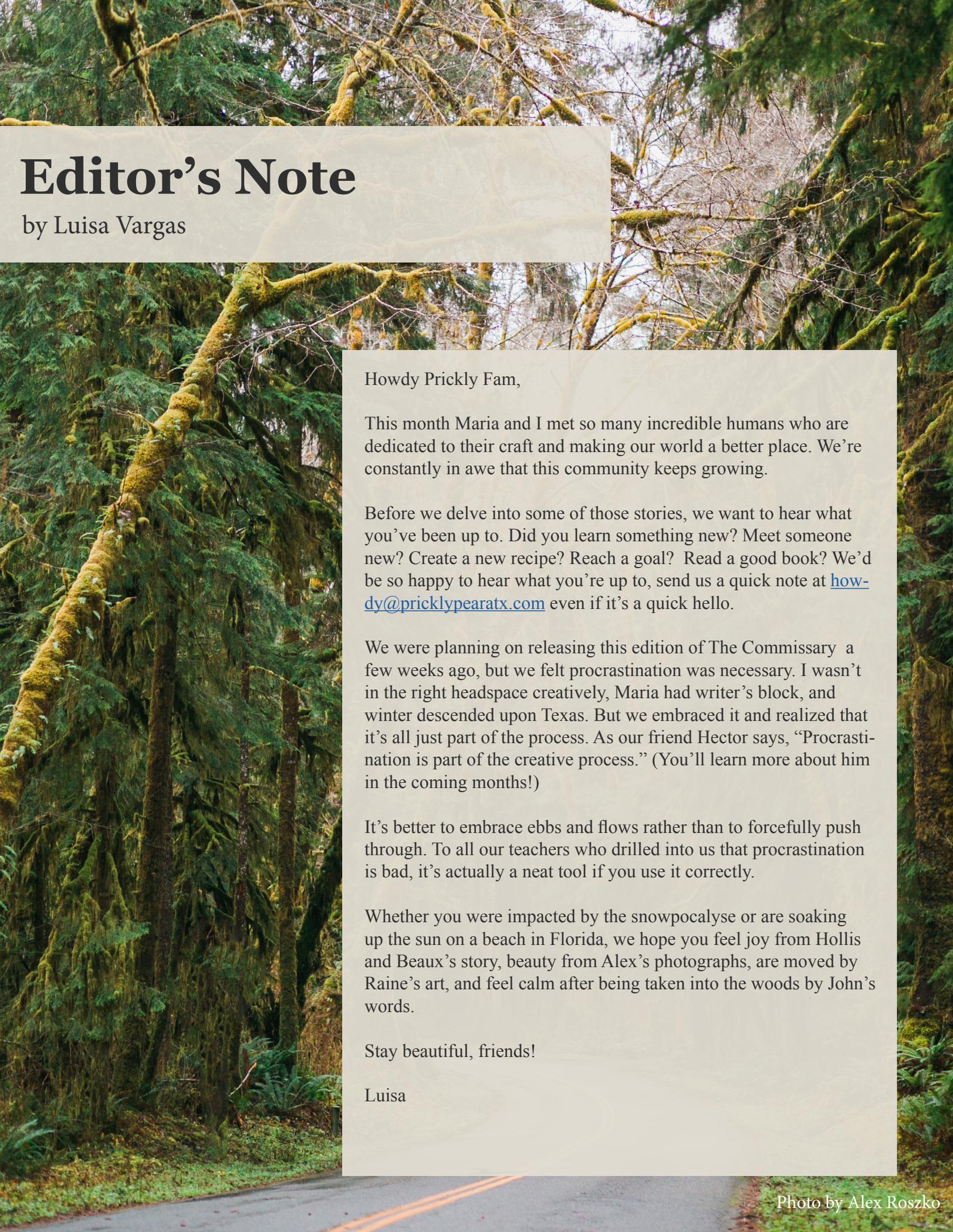
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a community digest by prickly pear



Contributions by  
Alex Roszko  
Raine Lipscher  
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Photo by Alex Roszko  
Design by Luisa Vargas



# Editor's Note

by Luisa Vargas

Howdy Prickly Fam,

This month Maria and I met so many incredible humans who are dedicated to their craft and making our world a better place. We're constantly in awe that this community keeps growing.

Before we delve into some of those stories, we want to hear what you've been up to. Did you learn something new? Meet someone new? Create a new recipe? Reach a goal? Read a good book? We'd be so happy to hear what you're up to, send us a quick note at [howdy@pricklypearatx.com](mailto:howdy@pricklypearatx.com) even if it's a quick hello.

We were planning on releasing this edition of The Commissary a few weeks ago, but we felt procrastination was necessary. I wasn't in the right headspace creatively, Maria had writer's block, and winter descended upon Texas. But we embraced it and realized that it's all just part of the process. As our friend Hector says, "Procrastination is part of the creative process." (You'll learn more about him in the coming months!)

It's better to embrace ebbs and flows rather than to forcefully push through. To all our teachers who drilled into us that procrastination is bad, it's actually a neat tool if you use it correctly.

Whether you were impacted by the snowpocalypse or are soaking up the sun on a beach in Florida, we hope you feel joy from Hollis and Beaux's story, beauty from Alex's photographs, are moved by Raine's art, and feel calm after being taken into the woods by John's words.

Stay beautiful, friends!

Luisa

# A Camping Renaissance

by Maria Vargas

*We'll preface this article by saying the words here don't do Hollis and Beaux's story justice. Back in November, we spent 3 hours in deep conversation with them, listening to their tales until the sun vanished and the stars appeared. Let's just say we struggled to figure out how to capture bits of everything they shared. Their stories are too dimensional so we encourage you to visit them and see what we mean. What's special isn't just the place they've built over 40 years, but their attitudes toward life and courage to make their own path, even if it means braving the thorns and untamed brush (literally and figuratively). If there's anyone who embodies the Prickly Pear motto, "It's your world," it's Hollis and Beaux. PS: As a soundtrack when you read this click [here](#) to play Hollis's music as your companion while you read.*



## What is Happy Horse Hotel?

About 40 bike miles east of Austin (25 by car) is a mystical land where the notion of time seems to fade away. Happy Horse Hotel is synonymous with a grand ol' time. Rather than "disconnecting" from the hustle of daily life, campers go there to reconnect with themselves, with nature, and with friends. Whether you arrive by bike, horse, or car, there to greet you (at a safe distance) from their golf carts are Hollis Wayne, Beaux Graham, and their dog Butch.

Many moons ago, Happy Horse was only a camp for those traveling with horses who came to ride the nearby trails of McKinney Roughs Nature Park. Now, it's a thoughtfully designed camp for horse travelers but also those arriving by bicycle steeds and motorized stallions. There are tent and RV spots, horse pens and stalls, artsy outhouses, and even cozy climate-controlled hand-built cabins, and outdoor hot showers.

Our curiosity opened Pandora's box of history about how Hollis's past life as a theater and history major led her to become a Renaissance Faire production artist and later implement all her skills into the creation of Happy Horse Hotel.

Every inch is carefully thought out. From the traffic flow of the gravel rotunda (born from mapping out Renaissance Faires,) to the hand-built cabins, and the hand-cleared trails which host large quantities of gnomes, fairies, and other folklore creatures (just ask Beaux about the scavenger hunt).

Even the octagonal wooden pavilion lying at the heart of it all stands to this day patiently waiting for music to make a safe return so it can go back to hosting the knights, nobles, and musicians singing and playing harmonicas until the late hours of the night.

The 22-acre land of enchantment hosts cabins adorned with Hollis's art and Beaux's photography and ironwork. Even the outhouses themselves are decorated with photos of steeds and more glimpses of the Happy Horse story from old newspaper clippings. The land has been tamed just enough to make space for cozy shelters, star-gazing, and moon-watching around the campfire.

Hollis and Beaux love hosting bikepackers, the adventurous souls who load all their camping gear on bikes and slow-roll their way over to Happy Horse. Russell Pickavance and his Cycleast bike shop in Austin introduced the local cycling scene to this special camping experience a few years ago and it's now a favorite of every Austinite bikepacker. It's close enough yet far away enough to make for an excellent bike over-nighter for the amateur or seasoned bikepacker.

### Hollis Wayne

It starts with Hollis. Hollis is an artist, musician, painter, and creative. She grew up riding horses in the midwest, and it became just about the only thing she wanted to do. College came around and she chose History as her major, intending to become a teacher and inspire students with curiosity about the world. To put herself through school, she signed up for a work-study program and got a job in the theater workshop creating costumes, scenery, and props. "I learned how to make things in college, and eventually people just started paying me to make stuff for them, outside the theater," she told us. "Halloween costumes, bookshelves, a prom dress, groovy trunks to keep stuff in ..."

It's one of those full-circle moments in life where nothing makes sense yet if you follow your heart, it will inevitably lead you on the path that's meant for you. It was the theater class in college that ignited Hollis's soul in the way nothing else had (well, maybe besides horses). She soon discovered hours inside four walls and fluorescent lights looking out the window wasn't what made her happy. Instead, she was courageous enough to take the reins and craft the life that made her happy. A life that embraced her lifelong nocturnal habits and growing creative spirit.



After college, she made her way down to Dallas to work in a craft emporium where she eventually heard whispers of a place where the weather is always warm, where musicians and artists are a beating heart, and where there's a permanent whiff of weirdness. Austin.

### **When you want something, get after it.**

That's what Hollis did. Hollis took herself, her harmonica, and her sewing machine and hitchhiked down I-35 all the way to Austin in January of '75. She set down roots in a \$120/month room near the University of Texas and began selling colorful summer clothing. Sundresses and string bikinis.

One day she set up next to a vendor selling painted t-shirts. She had never seen such colors and was intrigued, so she introduced herself and then asked him how he did it. Tommy told her all about the marvels of an airbrush. Soon she was painting shirts with unicorns, dragons, and pegasus. Business boomed, as this was the cusp of the moment when the basic white cotton t-shirt was transitioning from 'underwear' to 'outerwear' – thanks to the hippie movement and the Texas heat.

Had she never had the curiosity and courage to question her neighbor-vendor, she'd never have stumbled across making shirts in a new way. "Lots of people asked me how I made the shirts, but Hollis is the only one who DID something with the knowledge I passed on to her," Tommy often tells people.

It happened again. A highschool kid doing an art class project caught Hollis's attention with his black on white t-shirt designs. Again, Hollis's curiosity and courage to ask gifted her a new friend and a new approach: the art of the silkscreen. Thanks to Marty, Hollis discovered an entirely new way to put her graphic ink drawings onto fabric. She mixed silkscreen with airbrush in a completely innovative way. She later hired the kid and he helped her work the Renaissance Faires she was doing, and later in life, Marty became a silkscreen t-shirt tycoon in Austin.

"There is a radar you have to develop for recognizing when an opportunity crosses your path," Hollis told us. "Opportunism is the ability to recognize something that feels right, even if you're not sure why. Looking back now, there are moments I can pinpoint something that I did that led to something else, and from there a whole new and previously unimaginable world was made."

The '80s came around the corner and with the city of Austin growing like crazy, it became difficult for Hollis to focus on her art. That year's holiday season was the best, so she saved up and bought a patch of land east of the city near Bastrop, TX. A place where she could roam with her horses and be free in the open air again. So she bought those 9 acres in 1981 and moved out east to Heaven.

### **Renaissance Nomads**

"I've had a couple of near-death experiences," Hollis told us. "Moments when your life flashes before your eyes. Those memorable moments made me want to live my life with no regrets. It's why I decided to quit the indoor life, the fluorescent lights, and the keeping of regular hours. I knew I wanted to work outside all day and most of the night and go sell my work when and where I pleased."



During the 1983 Armadillo Bazaar, she sold some t-shirts to a regular who always bought last-minute Christmas gifts. He mentioned he was a photojournalism student and offered to do some photography work for her portfolio. Hollis gave Beaux the directions to Heaven.

After 4 years of making himself useful at Faires and riding horses together, Beaux and Hollis got married in '87 in the country studio. The next weekend they got to work and hit the road on their nomadic Renaissance Faire excursions.

So Hollis and Beaux began traveling the country bringing back to life an era of medieval enchantment. They spent their days building colorful sets with spectacular art surrounded by the magic of castles, knights, musicians, and great food.

After more than a decade on the road, they decided to slow it down and head back to their magical plot of land and bring it to life as their studio.

An opportunity was created, again through persistence, and Hollis managed to wheedle the neighboring 9 acres of scrubby mesquite and poison ivy away from a home builder who wanted to build 9 houses on an acre each. "NO WAY!" thought Hollis, and she finally persuaded him to make her an offer. The patch of land grew to 18 acres.

### **Full Circle of Horses, Fairs, and Camping**

Coincidentally in 1977, the LCRA opened a park now known as McKinney Roughs, full of trails for hikers and horseback riders just 2 miles from the art studio.

Hollis and Beaux encountered other horse people, who complained of no place to camp with their horses and having to haul the weary steeds right back to Houston, or San Antonio.



Like their Faire days, Hollis came up with the ideas and Beaux enabled them. "We'll build a horse hotel for these folks," Hollis decided in 2001.

The outhouse, horse corrals, and camp spots came first. Then a cabin with electric service, a well for water, and an outdoor shower. As a way to brighten up spirits in the quiet campfires, Hollis honed in on her musician skills and wrote her Happy Horse Camp Song. She got a group together of local musicians who'd play guitar while she sang. Hollis picked up the harmonica and eventually Saturday nights at Happy Horse became quite the spectacle with the Happy Horse Band coming together under the pavilion singing about the joys of riding.

### **Making Lemonade Out Of Lemons**

With heavy rainfall causing McKinney Roughs to close for a while, Hollis and Beaux knew they needed different clients. That's when they put up the cabins on Airbnb and campsites through Hipcamp.

In 2016 Beaux and Hollis started adding campsites for non-horse travelers with tents, and then Cycleast showed up and they realized they could host far more people if they showed up on bikes instead of in rigs or RVs.

The Cycleast camp crew treks to Happy Horse are now infamous. They come for the hammock trees, the band's kick-ass music shows, the stars, the moon, and the camaraderie of the campfire. Bikepackers, arriving on their wheeled stallions, can relate to Hollis's lyrical masterpieces about the joys of riding.

### **What comes next?**

We all know what comes next: COVID-19. It came rolling in right along with the first heatwave of the Texas summer. SXSW shut down and AirBnb business fell off the cliff.

But the isolated primitive campsites buried in the greenery of the Happy Horse forest attracted the attention of city dwellers who wanted to get the heck out of their apartments and find a safe escape in Mother Nature. Happy Horse's tent campsites & RV spots experienced a renaissance of their own, starting March 2020.

With modified precautions and procedures, Hollis and Beaux continue to nurture their beloved Happy Horse Hotel and make it a wonderful and safe experience for all visitors.

Even the music is alive with Hollis playing the baritone ukulele and performing solo on her golf cart stage at a proper social distance. You can request one of her A La Cart Concerts for your campfire and she'll play when the stars come out.

So whether you're a gl camper and prefer the comforts of cozy artsy cabins, a city escapee with a tent, or an adventurous bikepacker who pedals your way to bliss, a good time at Happy Horse is guaranteed. Your soul will be recharged thanks to the light that Hollis and Beaux shine so brightly through their personalities, music, stories, and land.

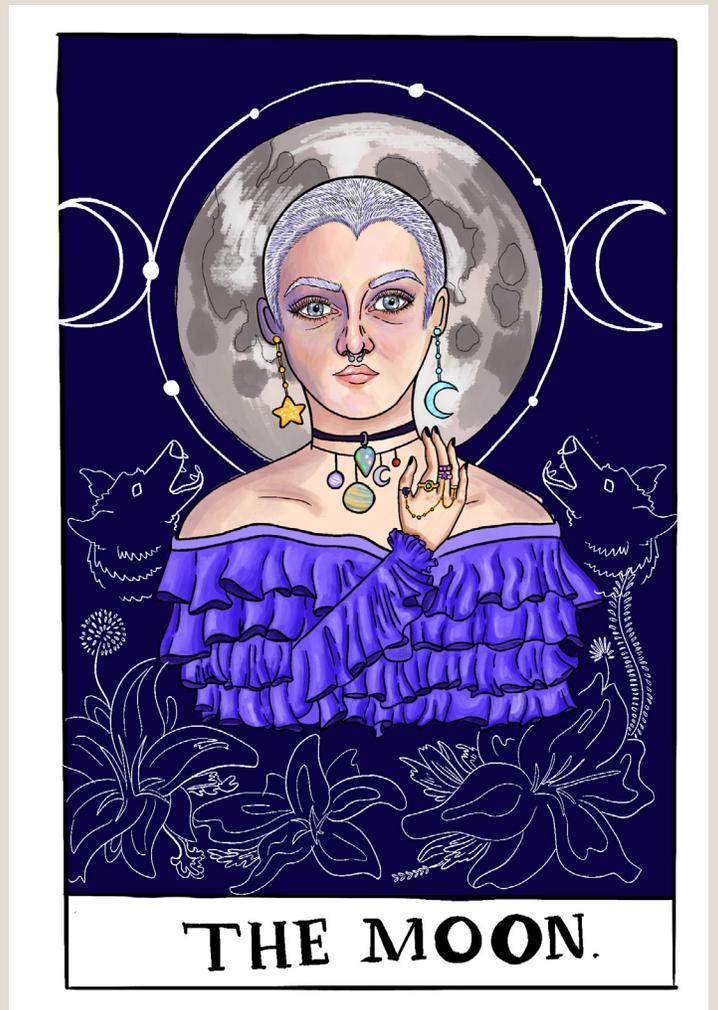
Book through [Hipcamp](#)  
Hollis's [SoundCloud](#)





Raine Lipscher

Artist//Illustrator



# River Place

by John Kwaku Duah II

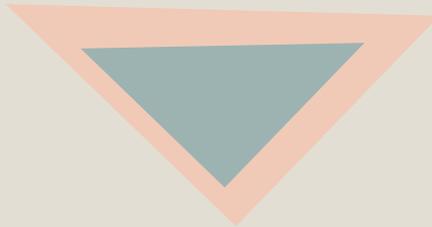
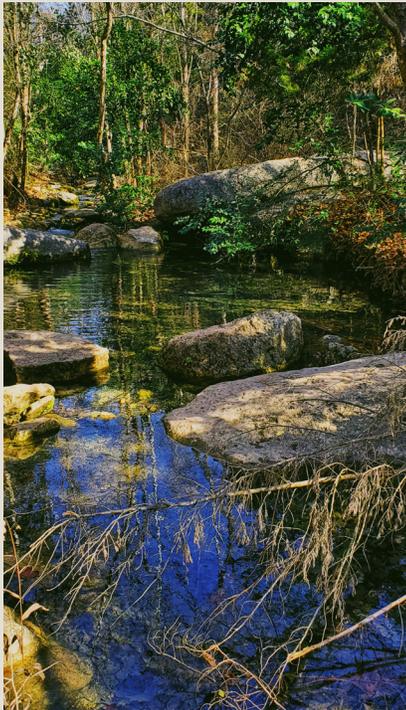
In mid-2019, residents of Austin got together with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to investigate the \$10 per person fee to hike River Place Trail.

An arduous and switchback elevation adventure, we ran into Art, who was sweeping the trail and checking recent upgrades to the grounds - quite a few more stairs essentially. While the Little Fern and Panther Hollow entrances have no fees, the River Place entrance (aka the one with the best parking) will still charge a fee, unless you can get there before say 9 as we did.

Residents on the trail regularly voiced frustrations on the path as they passed, and for good reason - the district was given half a million dollars but the TPWD over a decade ago to build the areas trails and facilities, but still collects higher-than-normal fees to use the trail.

While the most expensive trail in the area, the difficulty is also high if you are in need for a next level Stairmaster workout with fresh air and sunshine. Mask up and get there early to avoid the (still relatively smaller than normal) crowd.

Find more information on this battle at <https://www.riverplaceatx.org/> - click on the River Place Trail link up top!



# Contributors



## ALEX ROSZKO

I'm a very active person, both of mind and body. I'm drawn to things that make me tired, that satisfy my need for physical exhaustion. It's not difficult to achieve in an active city like Austin where I've lived for nine years. A successful week is often defined by how many miles I spend on the bike, aiming for 120mi. So, it's a wonder that I'm drawn to Photography which has the perception of being a passive, meditative pastime – sometimes it is – but to me, it is an active and thrilling pursuit. A pretty image is nice, but I seek to capture a feeling, a smell, a texture.

[@roszko](#)



## JOHN KWAKU DUAH II

I'm a photojournalist from Southern California now residing in Austin - origins in concert photography in 2009 as a necessity while writing for a music blog after my hired guns kept flaking last minute.

I fell in love with the art since then and have travelled the world to tell stories with words and photos, and added several forms of photography to my catalog including aerial, portrait, landscape, nature, fine art, commercial and underwater photography.

Professionally I'm a technologist, so the ability to use techniques both modern and classic to create art make for quite the hobby.

[@duahphoto](#)



## RAINE LIPSCHER

I'm a native Austinite who loves all things artsy! I work with digital art, colored pencil, painting and markers mainly but I am always up to trying something new and fun. If I am not drawing you can catch me obsessively doing paint-by-numbers, listening to true crime podcasts, working at Tarrytown Pharmacy or getting buzzed from iced coffee. I wanted to join the prickly pear community because of my love for the outdoors and my want to be more physically active and sustainable! I am part of the slow runners club usually tracking a steady 12 minute pace and love working out in parks whilst blasting nicki minaj or princess nokia.

[@rainelaurenart](#)