It’s Texas Archeology Month – Take A Hike!

Next time you visit your local park, take this scavenger hunt and guide with you and imagine life as a prehistoric Texan.

Imagine that you lived here in a time before cars, electricity, or shops to buy food and tools. What do you see in the natural world around you that you could use to survive?

Find five things that you could eat:

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Name five types of tools you would need to prepare those foods:

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Find five things that you could use to make tools:

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What would you use as a shelter?

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Find five more things that would make this a good spot to live:

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For at least 30,000 years of Texas' history, prehistoric people used what they could find in nature to survive and thrive in all the different ecosystems of Texas. They used a wide variety of adaptive strategies to make the most of their environments. Here are some ideas of what they used that you might see in your local natural areas.

**Food:**

People ate many wild animals large and small (deer, rabbits, birds, rodents), fish and shellfish, snakes and lizards. Many wild plants have edible parts including mesquite, prickly pear, agaves, oak trees (acorns) and other wild nuts, berries, and roots.

**Food processing tools:**

Prehistoric Texans made many hunting tools (darts, arrows, throwing sticks, snares), tools for processing hunted animals (hide scrapers, knives) and tools for gathering and processing plant foods (digging tools, bark scrapers, pounding and grinding stones). Many foods also need to be cooked, meaning that fire and some type of cooking setup (hearth, vessels) were essential tools too!

**Making tools:**

The tools that preserve best in the archaeological record are mostly made of stone, shell, clay (pottery), bone, or antler. Sometimes wood, fibers (baskets, sandals), and other organic artifacts (like sinews, used to hold stone projectile points onto wooden shafts) preserve too, especially in dry environments. Other items like hides, feathers, or bark were used but are very rare for archaeologists to find.

**Finding shelter:**

Some parts of Texas have many natural caves and rock overhangs (rockshelters), which are excellent ready-made shelters. Elsewhere, prehistoric Texans made their homes out of wood, grasses, hides, or adobe bricks. Different locations have advantages or disadvantages for a shelter: it may be more important to be near water, or up on a high spot so you can see others approaching. Proximity to a wide variety of foods is always important, and protection from weather is crucial as well.

**Other considerations:**

Everyone needs fresh water to drink! People generally also want to wear clothes, and sometimes like to make cool ornaments to wear. Communication with other people is often very important, and proximity to others can help keep everyone safe. People also usually love making music, and prehistoric Texans made many different types of drums, flutes, rattles, and bells.

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