



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 7

JULY 2008

JUNE MEETING NOTES

by Diane Carpenter

The meeting was called to order by Vice-President **Anna Dell Williamson**. President **James Blankenship** and Secretary **Nicole Olsen** were not present. **Diane Carpenter** took the minutes of the meeting. There were thirteen members, two staff members, and one inactive member present. The May 2008 meeting minutes were approved as published.

OFFICER REPORTS:

Treasurer's Report:

Diane Carpenter brought the financial report for the month of May 2008 (the printed report is in the volunteer lounge).

The budget report was projected on the screen and discussed.

The following budget requests were submitted by the Budget Committee:

- **Noel Duncan** submitted a request to purchase six loppers. These will be kept in the Nature Center garage for use by volunteers in trail trimming. The request was approved.
- **Steve Killian** submitted a request to purchase a fiberglass sign, including supports, light and plaque, using the Exxon mobile/Glen Kilgore account. After discussion, the request was tabled pending satisfactory resolution of the design/artwork.

TABLE OF CONTENTS					
June Meeting Notes	1	Anniversaries & Birthdays	5	Identification Quiz - Butterflies	8
Staff Reports		Thank-You's	6	What is "Value"?	9
<i>Superintendent's Report</i>	3	Attitude	6	Nature News	9
<i>Interpretive Staff Report</i>	3	Outreach Report "Eco-Explorers"	6	Nash Prairie Field Trip	10
Nature Center Report	4	Spring Meanderings	7	What's in the Garden?	11
Maintenance Report	4	Photo Walks	8	Calendar of Events	11
Volunteer News & Notes	5	Loss at Sea Center Texas	8		

- **Steve Killian** requested moving funds from the herbicide budget to purchase fuel. The fuel would be used to pump water between lakes and for vehicles used in resource management. There are 2½ months left in TPWD's fiscal year. This request was not approved by the Budget Committee. The organization voted to affirm the recommendation of the Budget committee.

The Budget Committee did not vote on a request from Steve Killian for a donation to TPWD to rent a dump truck to move road-based fill material from TX-762 to use in the 40-Acre/Elm Lake trail system. The committee needed more information before considering this request.

Gift Shop Report:

Ken Debenport reported that Beth is recovering well from surgery. Ken advised that **Glen Kilgore** is willing to work on a new version of our Gift Shop software.

Newsletter:

Anna Dell Williamson indicated that Jenn Mantei is doing the layout of the newsletter now. She is doing a great job.

Maintenance Report:

Noel Duncan prepared the June Maintenance Report, which is published elsewhere in the newsletter. Noel brought up some ongoing maintenance concerns: We have a Kubota with CV joint issues. One Gator is down with potential coil issues—a replacement part is on back order. These issues are of real concern in view of the upcoming trail project.

OLD BUSINESS:

Chuck Duplant advised that the Building Committee developed the list of needs and wants for the classroom phase. **James Blankenship** signed the letter, and it will be given to David and Steve. Once they approve, it will go to TPWD with a request for permission to proceed with plans, including architectural drawings.

NEW BUSINESS:

Anna Dell read **Jeff McMullen's** proposal for the Bryan Leach memorial. The vision is to restore the Riverview water well, set up a concrete trough and install a shelter, hitching post and interpretive sign that describes the Hale Ranch operations before BBSP existed. The shelter would be designed to look like a livestock shelter used on the ranch and would be accessible to horseback riders as well as other park visitors. Noel advised that a survey needs to be done of the well. It was moved, seconded and passed that we approach TPWD and Jean Leach about Jeff's idea for Bryan's memorial.

We have a blog on chron.com. We'd like to have people post comments, current sightings, photographs, etc. We'll try to get more information on how to do this; otherwise just ask a young member of your family who is sure to know how!

George Butler, former volunteer, is working at Gordon Ranch. **John Bradford**, on inactive status, visited the meeting.

Thanks to **Nelda Gay** for supper. Anyone willing to bring supper should sign up on the volunteer calendar.

Carol Ramsayer is moving to Vermont later this year. She will be looking for her replacement for cleaning the alligator tank. Carol also puts together the training packets for new volunteers.

The meeting was adjourned.

STAFF REPORTS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

STEVE KILLIAN



Dennis Jones, filling in for Steve Killian, brought the Superintendent's Report. He reported that we want to get a dump truck to move road material on TX-762 for the Elm Lake/40-Acre lake trail project but do not have details on the status of project.

We want to thank the organization for the wood chipper. This has made the process of trimming trails much more efficient and has saved many man hours.

There is an article in *Latitude* magazine about "Clearcast" herbicide, which targets enzymes in plants, not animals, to clear lakes. This herbicide can be sprayed aurally over lakes and will target Chinese Tallow, but not willows, elms, oaks, and other native trees. We want to keep lake levels up and would like assistance from the organization for diesel fuel for this effort.

Please stop at headquarters to be counted when entering the park. The State mandates that everyone be counted coming into the park. Park staff understands there are delays getting in sometimes. We are trying to address the issue while still following state requirements. One solution may be an entrance fee sign before the gate so people can be prepared to pay at the window. Entrance fees have gone up for the first time since 1990's. Sales of annual passes are up.

We are looking for approval of the information sign to be posted outside headquarters. During discussion, membership expressed concerns that there isn't a picture of the nature center or tent camping.

Dennis will be doing an "Introduction to Ornithology" class later this summer covering anatomy, physiology, taxonomy, etc. Volunteers will be welcome to attend.

INTERPRETIVE STAFF REPORT

SHARON HANZIK



Thank you to folks here keeping programs going and the Nature Center and gift shop staffed. Appreciate those putting in extra hours above what you've signed up for.

We have an Eco-Explorer children's program every Thursday. There is a \$2.00 charge. Thirty-one children participated in the first program. Anyone interested in helping on Thursdays, please contact **Carrie Sample**. We are getting more visitors in the Nature Center during the week. If you are willing to do a weekday program during the summer, please contact Sharon.

I am starting volunteer interviews. We have 12 applications. Training starts in September. If you know of anyone else who is interested, please let them know that applications are due by June 30.

We've had issues with the ice box not working and difficulty getting a good one. Our ice delivery man is bringing a new box Monday. Hopefully we'll have ice for sale again.

We've had reports of alligator nests; so far one on 40-acre lake and the east end of Elm Lake. There is possibly one at the Horseshoe end of Elm Lake. Please stay on the lookout for nests.

NATURE CENTER REPORT

June 2008

by Anna Dell Williamson

Here is a breakdown of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for June 1 - 30, 2008. Numbers come from the calendar in the Nature Center and may not reflect all activities. Be sure to report Nature Center visitation on the calendar, and attendance for all programs and hikes on the form behind the front desk.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE	June 2008, 5109 June 2007, 4025
CREEKFIELD HIKES (10)	128
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS/HIKES (9)	227
OUTREACH (6)	436
SNAKE (4)	191
CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (8)	102
BIRD PROGRAMS/HIKES (7)	120
HIKES ON VARIOUS TOPICS (6)	79
ECO EXPLORERS (3)	60
OTHER PROGRAMS (11) includes spotting scope (2), photo walk, pond life, insects, otter	171 + 120 scouts

JUNE MAINTENANCE REPORT

by Ron Morrison and Noel Duncan

Wood Yard:

Cleared, hauled and split several cords of wood
Replaced bulb in 100 loop wood rack light

Mowing and Landscaping:

Cleaned around the spider oak tree, mousetrap and windmill
Removed and reset benches on Hale, Elm and Horseshoe lakes and on the Creekfield Forest trail
Mowed and trimmed sites at the windmill, mousetrap and spider tree along Riverview Trail
Finished prairie platform bench

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Cleared Chinese tallow trees endangering the 100 loop campsites
Trimmed Elm Lake trail by the picnic grounds
Cut blowdown tree and grass on Hoots Hollow trail
Cleared blowdowns on Bluestem, Red Buckeye and Creekfield Forest trails
Cleared a log jam at 40-Acre Lake foot bridge

Equipment Maintenance:

Greased and oiled the Gators and bush hog
Made needed repairs to water stations

Pest Control:

Treated Chinese tallow trees on the Pilant Slough trail, behind Observatory and in the Creekfield Forest area
Treated water stations for wasps

New Projects:

Installed colored trail markers
Checked out windmill and barn for future work

VOLUNTEER NEWS and NOTES

Congratulations!

... to new Junior Volunteers
Vicki Velasquez & Jared Bannister

... to **Cindy Peterson**, who recently completed her regular Volunteer training

Birthdays

July Birthdays:

Debra Baker
Diane Carpenter
Jaci Elliott
Martin Gay
Susie Taylor
Barb Tucker
Carlos Torres
Ronn Washington
Joan Hebert (VIT)

August Birthdays:

Tom Draper
Eddy Grizzaffi
Frank Seay
Rob Thacker

Anniversaries

July Anniversaries:

James and Joyce Blankenship

August Anniversaries:

Ray and Dana Anderson
Jim and Lorena Calvert
Ken and Beth Debenport
Ron Morrison
Laszlo and Lexi Perlaky
Frank and Stacey Seay
Ronn and Mona Washington
Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson



Meeting Night Suppers

You may now sign up for meeting night suppers on the volunteer calendar. If you must cancel, please notify **Judy Strauss** or **Anna Dell Williamson**. Remember that you will be reimbursed for your expenses (try to keep it between \$35 and \$50) when you present your receipts. We charge members \$2 to \$3 for the supper. Attendance usually runs between 15 and 20. Plates, bowls, plastic ware, napkins, glasses, and tea and coffee are provided. There are crock pots and a microwave available for use. Contact Judy Strauss if you have any questions.

Thank You

. . . to **Jennifer and Curtis Parent** for the hot dogs and brownies on National Trails Day.

. . . to **Nelda Gay** for the June meeting night supper.

. . . to **Carrie Sample, Jean Northington, Joan Jackson** and **Dennis Jones** for the newsletter articles and pictures.

. . . to **Rick Dashnau** for clearing a log jam at 40-Acre Lake foot bridge.

. . . to **Chuck Duplant** for completing the prairie platform bench.

. . . to **Jim Calvert** as he continues his assault on the park's tallow trees. He has committed four to five days weekly to this task!

. . . to the maintenance and trail trimming crews for their continued service and support.

Attitude

Anonymous

"The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude...I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our Attitudes." -- Charles Swindoll

Eco-Explorers

by Carrie Sample

This new Thursday morning program for children 4-11 is designed to get students away from the television and into nature during the summer. Our goal is to get outside for a while with an activity, play a game, and then cool off inside with snacks and a drink. Craft projects will be made for each topic. We are charging \$2 a child to help pay for the snacks and craft materials. The first Thursday we had 30 children and 16 adults in attendance. We heard great comments from those involved! We will give Brazos Bend Frisbees to any child who attends at least 6 of our 10 Thursdays!

Pam Tatge, Eddy Grizzaffi, Bill Godley, Jim Calvert, Tom Prentiss, Diane and Jerry Carpenter, Ken Debenport, and myself have been involved so far. If any other volunteer would like to lend a hand, come on out. If you have something you feel could contribute to one of our topics, let me know. Different people leading the learning portion of each topic is beneficial to the children.

Our remaining topics include, spiders, insects, plants, alligators, mammals, armadillos, food chain, and finally snakes and turtles.

Spring Meanderings

Story & Photos by Carrie Sample

With doing the 'water run' and my new foldable bicycle, I have seen a fascinating spring at BB. By the nature center, a crow had a stinkpot turtle on its back, fixing to have lunch. Sorry, the crow is not very high on my list, so I relocated that turtle! On the same day, a box turtle was crossing our path on the Red Buckeye Trail.

I noticed an alligator moving at a pretty good speed on Elm Lake. Figured something had to be going on! Sure enough, that rascal grabbed a turtle that was climbing on the bank. The poor guy was sticking his neck and legs out of his shell, but that alligator had a good hold of him. The alligator threw back his head to flip the turtle on its back. With a loud cracking sound, he crunched the turtle and swallowed him whole.



Around the next bend at Elm Lake, I saw a turtle laying eggs - so life ends and life begins. Unfortunately, the very next day, some raccoon had evidently dug up the eggs and eaten them. I would like to think that he didn't get some of the eggs at the bottom of the hole.

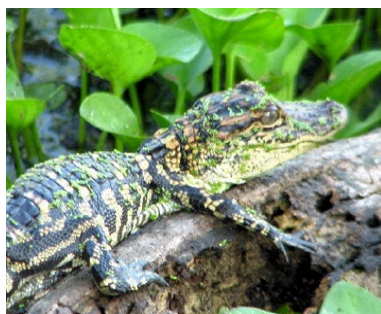
Also at Elm Lake, there has been a juvenile Little Blue heron who is in the process of turning blue (as juveniles, Little Blue herons are white). He had a blue strip on his back and on his head the first time I saw him. Naturally, I have never had my camera when I have come across him.

By the way, just how many crayfish are in our lakes? I have seen alligators eat them and now I see herons snacking on them every time I get near a lake. For the first time at Creekfield Lake I got to watch a juvenile heron eat a frog!

Being a birder, I always went to 40 Acre Lake. Never thought much of Creekfield Lake, until now. The lake has been a nursery for all kinds of birds - night herons, Common Moorhens, and Pied-bill Grebes. There is a Yellow Crowned Night heron there that doesn't mind getting very close to you. A raccoon has made an appearance close to the bridge for three mornings, now. I am a little worried about that 2-3 foot alligator that was hanging out on a log as you first get to Creekfield Lake; I haven't seen him in a while. Let me know if you come across him. He always looked so contented and relaxed on his log.



The baby Black Bellied Whistling ducks are spectacular in their yellow and brown stripes across from the water station at Elm Lake. Purple Gallinules seem to be quite numerous this year. There is an Anhinga at 40 Acre Lake who seems to like to strut his outstretched wings near people. Mom alligator must be building another nest at 40 Acre Lake. I saw 2 of her youngsters, but I'm sure the rest were somewhere else. A couple of months ago, I counted 18 of her young.



I will end my tale with a quote from Jerry Zona: "Ain't nature great!"

Our sincere sympathies go out to Dave Armstrong, VIT, on the recent passing of his mother.

Loss at Sea Center Texas

Gordon, the 23-year-old, 327-pound Queensland grouper, was for a dozen years the star attraction at Sea Center Texas, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department hatchery and research center on the upper Texas coast. He was loved and doted on like a family pet.

He became ill last October, and several measures were taken to treat him, including CPR, but to no avail. On June 22, after heroic efforts on the part of several veterinarians, including a team from the Georgia Aquarium, which has nine Queensland groupers on display, Gordon died.

Photo Walks

The free Photo walks at Brazos Bend State Park were on April 5, 2008 for Spider Lilies of the swampy area of the prairie, then on May 10, 2008 for wading birds of Elm Lake and Pilant Slough, and then on June 21, 2008 for plant close-ups. The weather was very hot, but we still found a few interesting small things to photograph and enjoyed the outing.

On July 5, 2008 Laszlo Perlaky will be at the Nature Center to guide the visitors from 3-5 PM and after that, as a second part of the close-up walk, we will look for Passion Flowers, probably near the Prairie, back side of the overflow camping area. We may get some nice sunset shots, too, and will return to the parking area at dusk. Please bring your macro-, wide angle-, or telephoto lenses with extension tubes and a solid tripod.

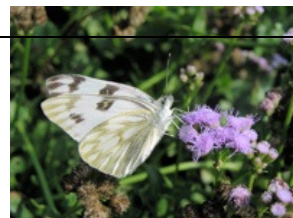
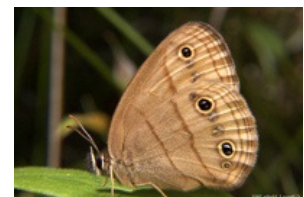
More info about Photowalks at Brazos Bend State Park is on the web site: <http://www.brazosbend.org/calendar/photowalk1.htm>

Can You Identify These.....

BUTTERFLIES?



Photo by Jerry Zona



Answers are on page 10.

What is “Value”?

by Dennis Jones

What is value? How is it measured? Is one person’s trash really another’s treasure? I’ve been thinking lately about how strange the concept of value is and I’m stumped to some extent.

Take for example, going out to eat. How much is the meal worth? The food prepared at home would not cost nearly what it would be at a restaurant. But you are also paying for the ambiance and the service as well; I suppose sometimes it’s not even about the food.

Compare that to the cost of a widget. You are walking through a store and price a widget. You quickly put it back on the shelf saying to yourself, “I’m not paying \$25.00 for a widget!” The widget may provide you with years of service but in some twisted reality it’s not worth the price of a meal at a restaurant? I’ve found myself in that dilemma, and I suspect you have as well. So here again what is value? Is the imported widget of more or less value than the locally made, more expensive widget? Are the name brand label products really better than the generic equivalents? I’m beginning to believe value is subjective.

If value is subjective then what value do we place on a park? Some people get very upset to learn that we have an entrance fee. Some people say we don’t charge enough. Obviously, a trip to a park falls into the category of intangible or transient value like a meal at a restaurant as opposed to buying something solid. (Like a widget....I love that word! **Widget!** **Widget!** *Widget!*)

But here is the difference as I see it. When you pay an entrance fee to a park, you add value, and the value does not return to some merchant but rather to yourself and future generations. You get the ambiance, experience and service, and at the same time you are investing in something more. Staff and volunteers add value to our park visitor’s experience, and the more they value, the more it is likely to survive for those future generations.

So the next time you see a park visitor; engage them. Make that “coming to the park” experience something they can find no where else. Help them feel welcome, teach them, show them, and see how they add value to your spirit as well. What is value? How is it measured? Take Care.

Nature News

When a Wimpy Bird Becomes a Stud

from CNN.com & Fox News

A recent article on CNN.com relates how female barn swallows choose their mates. They tend to choose mates with the darkest breast feathers. Rebecca Safran, an evolutionary biologist from the University of Colorado, discovered this trend about eight years ago. She decided to test the theory by coloring birds with light-colored feathers darker, using a permanent marker. In addition to making these males more popular for breeding, the scientists discovered that the males also tended to lose weight and increase their testosterone levels. Safran isn’t quite sure why these changes occur, but it makes an interesting story. Now we’ll all have to observe the barn swallows that nest at the Nature Center and see if they have dark breast feathers.



Nash Prairie Field Trip

by Jean Northington

One of the largest and best examples of native coastal prairies in the upper Texas coast is the Nash Prairie, located just a few miles south of Brazes Bend State Park. In May 2008, the Native Prairies Association of Texas offered a morning hike through the privately owned 300-acre prairie led by U. S Fish and Wildlife botanist, Dr. David Rosen. Since 2003, Dr. Rosen has cataloged 270 species of native prairie plants, 10 that are believed to be rare. The buttonbush flat-sedge, for example, has only been seen in Texas three times in the last 150 years, according to Dr. Rosen.



Rare buttonbush flat sedge close-up at Nash Prairie

The Gulf Coast prairies once stretched from south of Corpus Christi east to Lafayette, Louisiana. Formerly totaling nine million acres, less than 100,000 (one percent) remain. Agriculture, energy development, industrial uses and housing have eliminated much of the coastal prairie.

The Nash Prairie is part of a larger ranch jointly owned by St. Mary's Episcopal Church and the West Columbia Hospital District. Several conservation groups are trying to raise money to buy easements that would protect it from development, but for now, the future of this last remaining pristine Texas coastal prairie is uncertain.



Milkweed plant at Nash Prairie

The prairie is not open to the public and there are no signs to identify it. From BBSP, take 762 south to 1462 and turn left. Turn right on CR 25 (Cow Creek Road) drive south for about 6 miles and it is on the right.

Sources:

Cohn, Jeffery, "Jewel in the Rough: Pristine Prairie on a Working Ranch," *BioScience*, January 2006, Vol 56, No. 1.

www.biosciencemag.org

Smith, Michael, "Nash Prairie offers glimpse of ancient plain," *The Facts*, July 17, 2005



Answers to Butterfly Identification Quiz (from Page 8)

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| A. Gulf fritillary | B. Giant swallowtail |
| C. Monarch | D. Little wood satyr |
| E. Checkered white | |

What's In the Garden?

by Anna Dell Williamson with Joan Jackson

Have you ever been asked, "What's that purple flower in the garden outside the Nature Center?" Did you know the answer? **Joan Jackson** keeps the flower garden at the Nature Center full of flowers and free of weeds. She has given us information on some of the flowers growing there in the hopes that we will be better able to answer visitors' questions. Each newsletter we will try to feature one flower, with pictures if available, so you can get an idea of what's out there. Here's this month's feature.



Yarrow (Yarrow)

Achillea millefolium

Achillea species ("Colorado mix")

There are two yarrows in our garden. The white (*millefolium*) and the light pink were grown from seeds named "Colorado mix". Both plants have the same cultural requirements. Yarrow is a drought tolerant perennial, which tolerates shade in hot climates but will grow in full sun. It can endure dry, impoverished soil and survive with little maintenance.

Flowers are in flat clusters atop stems about one to three feet tall. The plant's foliage is fine and feathery, resembling fern. It usually blooms in late spring to summer. It propagates by underground runners or seeds. The white variety can be mowed to form a highly competitive ground cover to control soil erosion.

Plants in our garden are located in the bed next to the air conditioner on the side of the Nature Center.

More information about yarrow, including its medicinal and skin care properties, can be found online at: www.gardenguides.com/plants/info/herbs/yarrow.asp

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2008

July 12	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
August 9	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
September 6	New Volunteer Orientation, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
September 13	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM (election of new officers) New Volunteer Training, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
September 20	New Volunteer Training, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
October 11	Volunteer Annual Picnic, 5:30 PM
October 25	Texian Market Day, George Ranch

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←
SATURDAY, July 12, 2008, 5:30 PM



REGULAR VOLUNTEER EVENTS

Creekfield Hikes	Every Saturday and Sunday at 10:00 AM, led by volunteers
Photo Hikes	First Saturday of each month
Volunteer meeting	Second Saturday of each month at 5:30 PM
Bird Hikes	See schedule in calendar

BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

President:	James Blankenship
Vice-President:	Anna Dell Williamson
Secretary:	Nicole Olson
Treasurer:	Diane Carpenter

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editor:	Anna Dell Williamson
Layout:	Jenn Mantei
Production Assistants:	Bruce Williamson Terry Williamson

The **Brazos Bend Bunch Bugle** is the newsletter of the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization, A.K.A. The Brazos Bend Bunch. It is distributed monthly to volunteers through the BBSPVO web site. For further information on this newsletter or the volunteer program, contact David Heinicke or Sharon Hanzik at Brazos Bend State Park, phone 979-553-5101.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the opinions of the author of the article and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization nor of BBSP administration. The deadline for Newsletter contributions is the Saturday following the monthly meeting, if mailed to Anna Dell Williamson, or at the meeting if delivered to the park. (E-mail address: awilliamson4@comcast.net). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.