



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2010

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Hope everyone has gotten 2010 off to a good start! New Year's resolutions are made to make us better people. I would like to know if there are any changes we need to do to make our volunteer organization better. Is there anything the Executive Committee or Board could do to make a difference? As an organization, are we going in the right direction? Do you feel we are meeting the goals set up by our organization? If anyone has any thoughts on the above questions, please let any board member (**Suzie Gann, Eddy Grizzaffi, Dave Armstrong, Bruce Williamson** or myself) or **David Heinicke** or **Sharon Hanzik** know.

Williamson or myself) or **David Heinicke** or **Sharon Hanzik** know.

I hope everyone is excited about getting the platform project at Elm Lake started.

Next month we are planning to discuss an educational building. I know this has been kicked around for years, but it looks like if we want one, we will have to seriously do it. **Dave Armstrong** has several ideas on raising funds - how does a gala sound?

If you did not get to see Creekfield Lake frozen, you missed a treat. It was so clear you could see the bottom of the lake. Sadly, one of our baby Least Grebes got caught under the ice and did not make it. I have enjoyed watching these Grebes on the lake.

Hope everyone can take time to enjoy our great park!

Carrie Sample



In This Issue:

From the President's Desk . . .	1
<i>By Carrie Sample</i>	
January Meeting Notes	2
Staff Reports	2
Great TX Birding Classic . . .	4
<i>By Bill Godley</i>	
Nature Center Report	5
Volunteer News & Notes . . .	6
Volunteer Training	7
Electronic Timesheets	8
Brazos Bend Visitors	8
<i>By Carrie Sample</i>	
Spring Break Opps	9
Youth in Philanthropy	9
<i>By David Heinicke</i>	
Unwelcome Residents	10
<i>By Sharon Hanzik</i>	
Moody Gardens Trip	10
Not-So-Evergreen	
Live Oak	11
<i>By Pam Tatge</i>	
Volunteer Sightings	13
<i>By Rick Dashnau</i>	
Upcoming Events	13

JANUARY MEETING NOTES

Contributed by Eddy Grizzaffi

Carrie Sample called the January 9 meeting to order. There were 12 volunteers, 4 staff members and 1 visitor present. The minutes of the December meeting were approved as posted.

Steve Killian, Sharon Hanzik and **David Heinicke** brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in this edition.

Dave Armstrong requested another month to complete the budget presentation, which will be at the February meeting. Next year he will start the budget process in November and have the budget decision at the December meeting. Dave presented the budget report for December and for 2009. Copies are available in the volunteer lounge.

Beth Debenport brought the Gift Shop report. She thanked those who helped with inventory in December. It was completed in one day, thanks to special help from **Don Nelson** and **Willie Anderson**.

Chuck Duplant reported that we had good wood sales in December. Lots of volunteers have helped with bundling. We had excellent sales between Christmas and New Years. Today, we had a big crew of ten volunteers to unload three cords of wood.

Suzie Gann requested help with the lunch on February 13 for New Volunteer Orientation meeting.

Old Business:

There has been no decision on the memorial for **Fletcher Morgan**. One suggestion is to rebuild the front desk in the Nature Center to make it more user friendly.

Sarah Bishop, Chris's wife, was introduced as a visitor.

The bird watching hike at 8:00 a.m., Sunday, January 2, was the coldest in history.

The meeting was adjourned.

STAFF REPORTS STEVE KILLIAN, SUPERINTENDENT



Steve Killian reported that we are getting several new positions on our staff, which will bring us to full staff for the first time in a long time. New positions include office staff, a Ranger 1 position and a Ranger 3 position. We are planning to expand the Headquarters building by adding office space out to the drip line of the roof. It will double the size of the office area.



We are getting ready for an outstanding 2010, the best year ever.

Steve introduced **Chris Bishop**, our new Assistant Superintendent. Chris thanked the membership for the warm welcome he has received. He is busy learning the ropes. He will be attending a TPWD workshop on managing park operations the last two weeks of January.

SHARON HANZIK, INTERPRETIVE RANGER

We have approved 15 trainees for our new volunteer training the last three Saturdays in February. You will be receiving requests for help from **Anna Dell Williamson** and **Suzie Gann**.

Certificates were presented to the members who had put in 150 hours or more during 2009. All hours count and are appreciated. Those recognized are listed in the "Congratulations" item elsewhere in this edition. All hours are important, and the volunteers do a great job.

DAVID HEINICKE, INTERPRETIVE RANGER

Steve Killian, Richard Taylor, Chris Bishop, and myself will be meeting with TPWD Infrastructure regarding the Elm Lake Viewing Platform: the time line, procedure, etc. I will have more information next month.

The Youth In Philanthropy program will be January 30. There will be 150-180 high school students participating, and we have received \$2800 for supplies and materials. Assignments will be made about a week before the event. This is funded by the George Foundation and projects will include roadside trimming, picnic area trimming, cleaning and refurbishing the maintenance area, landscaping at Headquarters, etc. We will rent chippers, and we have bought loppers, goggles, and gloves for students to use. Thanks for all the volunteers do.

This morning, Creekfield Lake was frozen over, and the moor hens were walking on ice. One least grebe dove and couldn't come back up. We salvaged the body.



RICHARD TAYLOR, LEAD RANGER

Winter projects are slowly progressing. The Rangers and Park Hosts have been hard at work trying to get as much done as possible between rains. Just about the time the grounds dry out enough to get in there, it rains again. The good thing about the rain is that our lakes are getting plenty of water. I know many have probably noticed the hog rootings that are occurring mostly at Elm Lake. The ground is very soft and the old saying, "An old hog finds a nut every now and then," is definitely true at BBSP. Please encourage all to stay on the pavement with the vehicles and no ATV's on the trails with wet conditions. Lately, we are being barraged with ruts on the road shoulders. Many visitors don't realize just how soft the ground is until they get off the pavement, and then the Rangers have to go back and fill in those ruts. We want to keep our park looking nice, and ruts on the shoulders don't look nice.

We had a few days of freezing weather that nipped us pretty good. Everyone did an outstanding job setting things up for freeze protection. Many thanks to Ranger **Jim Gilliam** who came out on his weekend to insure our water and sewer were working properly. Thanks also to Ranger **Devin Elster** for keeping an eagle eye out for leaks during the thaw. We have a new truck in our fleet for our new Assistant Manager/PPO. We will be returning the Jeep to the Park Hosts for their patrols.

As stated above, we are into several major projects. Work continues at Headquarters expanding the Administration offices. Park Host **Leo Arial** has put in numerous hours digging out the flower beds and getting the new foundation prepped for concrete, and soon the concrete will be poured. Park hosts **Capt. Gene Schwantes** and **George Hanks** are working at Hale Lake restroom changing out the rotten wood along the bottom of the columns and restroom entrance modesty walls. Host **Ben Degarmo** is back again this year pulling down signs and repainting them and changing out rotten signs

with new ones. Host **Jim Cassidy** has been busy in the shop assisting Jeff with servicing all the equipment. The Rangers have been fighting the mud around the maintenance facility but managed to set five power poles to supply electricity to the new residence and host sites near the maintenance



Grinding Stumps Below Ground
Photo by Richard Taylor

entrance. Park hosts **Terry and Kim Dankert** have finished up at the Dining Hall, repainting the white inside the kitchen, restroom, closets, and dining room trim. Capt. Gene installed a new vent fan in the restroom and the Rangers installed three new ceiling fans in the dining area. Crushed limestone was added by the fire ring to cut down on the mud being tracked in. We received the regional stump grinder that has been floating around the region since the hurricane. The Rangers are grinding up stumps left after Hurricane Ike and other causes. This will aid us tremendously come mowing season.

A deposit is now required to rent the dining hall, with an inspection before and after use. Our dining hall has been getting trashed, and the tables and chairs have been taken outside and left muddy. Our park hosts and the Rangers are the ones that have to clean up. When the hall is rented, it should be left clean. Please pass the word that leaving all our facilities clean is a must. We want our visitors to come in and relax and have a clean place to camp and enjoy themselves.

TX DOT is engineering a plan to help us out with repairs to the washout at the culverts near the wood yard. They are also looking at refurbishing the employee access road to the back of the Observatory.

I recently had an unexpected visit from the TPWD Safety Representative, **Mike Mendiola**. This was the first time that I had met Mike. When we toured the park to look at various things, Mike was very impressed with the overall appearance of the park. In our roaming around over the whole park, there were only three pieces of trash that we picked up. I just want to say thanks to all for the effort. This was Mike's first official visit checking our records, inspections, facilities, etc. We haven't received the official report back yet, but I asked him before he left what he thought. All he said was "ABOVE AVERAGE". What a relief! I have to again thank my staff and all who work at BBSP for that. As the BBSP's Safety Representative, it means a lot to me that we strive to stay safe and follow the rules. Like the Rangers told me, "Did you have any doubt?" All I can say is pat yourselves on the back for a job well done. Thanks.

GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC

Contributed by Bill Godley

You're invited to come join the biggest, longest, wildest birdwatching tournament in the United States!

Who: Birders of all ages and abilities



American Robin
Photo by Jerry Zona

What: The 14th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic

When: Various tournaments for all ages, abilities and Texas coastal regions from April 24 – May 2, 2010 (during the spring migration!)

Why: To have fun outside with friends and family and to support habitat conservation on the Texas coast. Winning teams get to select which projects are funded. To date, this event has donated \$686,000 directly to on-the-ground habitat conservation projects. Be the first team to register and win a prize (registration book available online). Learn more at www.birdingclassic.org.

NATURE CENTER REPORT

January 2010

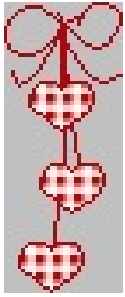
Contributed by Anna Dell Williamson

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for January 1-31, 2010. We had lots of very cold, rainy weekends.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE January 2010 -4710 (high 820, 1/2) January 2009 - 5143	Saturdays (5) 2065 High, 820, 1/2 Average: 413
	Sundays (5) – 1529 High, 485, 1/24 Average: 306
	Weekdays (21)– 1116 High, 497. 1/1 Average, 53
CREEKFIELD HIKES (7 days)	90– High, 39 - 1/23
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (6)	202 - High, 75 - 1/24
BIRD PROGRAMS/HIKES (2)	47- High, 31 - 1/16
SNAKE PROGRAMS (5)	132 – High, 41 - 1/2
CHILDREN’S STORY TIME (5)	75– High, 30 - 1/16
OUTREACH (3)	328
OTHER PROGRAMS (3) includes Raccoon, Animal Tracks and Owl	56
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS	930



VOLUNTEER NEWS & NOTES



Thank You!

... to those who helped with the Gift Shop Inventory: **Diane Carpenter, Beth Debenport, Willie Anderson, Don Nelson, Anna Dell Williamson.**

... to **Tom Kanak, Candace Kenyan, Judy Strauss, Jaci Elliot, and Jennifer and Curtis Parent** for help with firewood bundling.

... to **Joan Hebert and Dawn Tejero**, who spent Christmas Day scrubbing the Nature Center. They even cleaned the snake room.

... to **Rich Jespersen, Bill Godley, Dawn Tejero, Jaci Elliott, Jerry Carpenter, Justin M. Bower, Ron Morrison, Janet Clemenson, Belinda DiMarcello, Mary Lockwood, and Virginia Harrison** for braving the cold to help with the Youth in Philanthropy program.

... to **Sharon Hanzik** for organizing the field trip to Moody Gardens Aquarium.



February Birthdays

**Jerry Carpenter
Noel Duncan
Devin Elester (Staff)
Blake Flessner (Staff)
Bill Godley
Johnny Hite
Mandy Hite
Sid Jones
Jenn (Mantei) Jontry
Cindy Peterson
Judy Strauss
Pam Tatge (VIT)
Veronica Telthorster**



February Anniversaries

**Robert and Shannon Aaron
Suzie and Rick Gann
Linda and Rod Hite**

March Anniversaries

**Glen and Maureen Kilgore
Dawn and Oscar Tejero**

March Birthdays

**Elmer Aden (Emeritus)
Willie Anderson (Emeritus)
Rita Cooper (Emeritus)
Joan Jackson (Emeritus)
Herb Mann (Emeritus)
Jennifer Parent**



. . . to the following volunteers, who recorded more than 150 volunteer hours during 2009. The hours of all volunteers count and are appreciated!

150 - 300:

**Dennis Keppta
Suzie Gann
Eddy Grizzaffi
Maureen Goode
Doris Dahse
Marilyn Vossler
Bob Haynes
Jim Hiatt
Teresa Jones
Glen Kilgore
Jerry Zona**

301-500:

**Carrie Sample
Dave Armstrong
Judy Strauss
Tom Prentiss
Bruce Williamson
Jim Calvert
Pam Tatge**

600 +:

**Ron Morrison
Jerry Carpenter
Beth Debenport
Diane Carpenter
Chuck Duplant
Anna Dell Williamson**



Get well wishes go out to **Elmer Aden, Jerry Zona, Mozelle Franklin** and **Frank Willett**.

If you would like to send a card or note to any of these volunteers, refer to the recent emails from Sharon for addresses and other information.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

New Volunteer Training is February 13, 20 and 27. We have 15 trainees and are planning for an active group of VIT's. Just a reminder that the Orientation Lunch is February 13, 11:45 AM. Sign up on the web calendar to bring sandwich makings, and plan on introducing yourself during lunch and talking briefly about your volunteer experiences. I need a few more drivers for the Road Tour after Orientation. Contact me by phone or email if you are available: 713-813-1393 or <awilliamson4@comcast.net>.

After classroom training, we will need folks to help with the Phase I and Phase II training - work with VITs in the Nature Center and Gift Shop, drive them on ATV tours and hike with them on trail interpretation practice, show them how to do Water Station and trail trimming and wood preparation, make them welcome on your Creekfield Hikes and at your programs, etc. This is a large class, and we will need lots of help in these areas.

ELECTRONIC TIME SHEETS

Contributed by Anna Dell Williamson

By now, all of the volunteers and VITs should have received an e-mail about reporting volunteer time via electronic time sheets. The purpose is to provide a more efficient system of recording and reporting hours.

The file you received has complete instructions. After you follow the initial instructions all you'll need to do is enter your hours. It will total for you. Sharon will send a notice prior to the end of each month for you to send your file as an attachment in an e-mail. You will always have your file so that you may reference your hours at any time, and Sharon will also maintain a copy.

This method should help the volunteers who forget to record their hours before they leave the park or who do volunteer work off site and forget to record those hours. It will eliminate illegible numbers, time sheets tearing and falling out of the log book, and nameless pages. You will always be able to reference your time sheets and know how many hours you have worked and how many you need to maintain your membership requirements.

Volunteers without computers will of course continue to record their hours in the paper log. If your only access to a computer is at work and you are not allowed to store the info, then resume with the paper log. And if you do not have Microsoft Excel then you will not be able to save this time sheet and use it. All others are asked to make their best effort to convert to this format. If you need a tutorial, ask Sharon to give you one the next time you are at the park.

Please read the instructions on the first tab titled "Instructions" and save the form as directed there. For easy access, save to your desktop. Each month you will go to the appropriate month's tab, record your hours and e-mail the document to me at the end of the month. Sharon will send one reminder to all volunteers at the end each month. If you do not have any hours to report or do not use this form, please ignore the reminder.

We will officially start with February's hours, but some volunteers have already turned in their January hours. If you haven't turned in January hours yet, they will be entered at the end of February when Sharon receives your first electronic copy. Sharon indicated that for the January time sheets received, it helped speed things up and was less frustrating!! She added two notes:

- Don't forget your travel time. Even a little adds up at the end of the year.
- In the future if you would please rename your file to lastname,firstname (hanzik,sharon) it will help me keep them in alphabetical order as I enter your time to my TPWD reports.



BRAZOS BEND VISITORS

Contributed by Carrie Sample

Brazos Bend had visitors from 41 states in the United States. The states with the highest number of visitors were California, Ohio, and Minnesota - would have expected neighboring states to have had a higher number!

We had guests from 47 different countries. Canada, England, and the Northern European Countries had the most representatives. The only country that did not send visitors was...Antarctica!

SPRING BREAK OPPORTUNITIES

Contributed by Sharon Hanzik



Steve Killian would like us to put on some type of event each month that we can publicize. Instead of adding to our already busy schedule in March, we have decided to focus on spring break programming. Most school districts will be on break March 15 - 19.

We plan to keep the NATURE CENTER OPEN 9:00 - 5:00 all week. If you can help, the Nature Center needs to be staffed before anyone signs up for the gift shop. Of course we would like to have both open. Remember that we can staff as many as three in the Nature Center (for quarterly credit). We would also need folks on trails but remember, **WE NEED THE NATURE CENTER STAFFED FIRST**. If we don't get enough BBSPVO volunteers for trails, we'll tap camp hosts.

PROGRAMS AND HIKES – **David Heinicke** and myself will focus on presenting programs. Any volunteers who wish to add to that are welcome. **PROGRAM DEADLINE** is MARCH 9 so that they may be posted on the web. We'd like to have three each day including the Creekfield Hike.

WATER STATION – This should also be in operation that week. However, if we do not have enough volunteers to go around, we will not be able to staff it. So, if you would be willing to staff the water station let me know by MARCH 9. It needs to be staffed at 9:00 and 1:00 each day and through the weekend. If we do have it in operation by spring break we will again operate it the last weekend in March and through the rest of the spring and summer.

Of course, this is all weather permitting, but we need to plan as if we're going to have a mild, sunny week. All but the water station is currently posted on the web calendar. I'll add water station if I hear from enough volunteers.

YOUTH IN PHILANTHROPY

Contributed by David Heinicke

The Youth in Philanthropy program on January 30 was a huge success. Several volunteers helped with this project, and you can find their names in the Thank You section of the newsletter. The feedback I received from the kids was very favorable in general. We got a lot of work accomplished, added some tools and equipment to our arsenal, improved our relationship with the George Foundation and introduced some young people to Brazos Bend and volunteerism.

Nearly 150 Lamar Consolidated and Fort Bend ISD students participated in the Youth in Philanthropy Countywide Volunteer Day project, sponsored by the George Foundation and Fort Bend Chamber. The goal is for high school students to learn about the importance of volunteering in their community. Students split into groups to complete refurbishing projects at the park, such as clearing the sides of the roads/trails of broken limbs.



UNWELCOME RESIDENTS



Contributed by Sharon Hanzik

In early January during a meeting in the classroom between David, Chris and myself, we heard a "squeak". Both David and Chris saw me twisting my ink pen and thought it was the source of the squeak. I twisted it for them again, no sound. David says, "That sure sounded like a bat". I agreed. After a few moments of silence, we heard no more and resumed our meeting without another squeak. (This all took place a day or two before the "big freeze".) We heard no more sounds through that weekend and most of the next week.

Almost a week later as I went upstairs I heard a slight squeaking from the heating system and drew the conclusion that it must have been the heater, as I informed David. Later that weekend I was proven wrong, as there was a commotion of squeaking and scratching coming from the north wall of the classroom above the bird specimen storage box. Further evidence were droppings outside the window on the first floor roof, which clued us in to their entry point high up in the apex of the second story roof.

These bats, most likely a colony of Mexican Free-tail Bats, are not welcome to take up residence in our building. Some of you may remember the colony that took temporary residence under the Big Creek bridge a few summers ago. Under the bridge was fine. In our building, not so fine. If you've ever had a whiff of guano, you'd understand why. But how do we get them to leave?

After some research on the internet (one can find anything one wants on the internet), David found a possible solution. He would fasten window screen over the holes in such a way that the bats could fly out, but not back in. On the day that the bat-exclusion devices were to be installed, we heard no sounds coming from the suspect area. It appeared that the warm weather during the week of Jan. 18th may have been enough to warm the bats to waking and moving out. David and Devin installed the screen just in case and will soon seal the holes permanently. As of today (January 27), there has been no indication of bats in the wall. They left soon enough as to not cause an "odiferous" problem. A bat box has been installed on the building, and if they return and inhabit the box, it will then be removed from the building and mounted somewhere nearby.

MOODY GARDENS FIELD TRIP

Fifteen BBSP volunteers were treated to a behind-the scenes tour of Moody Gardens Aquarium on January 13. We saw the aquarium from the top and learned about food preparation and feeding. We also had a penguin encounter which was fascinating. After the morning presentations, we had the afternoon to go through the Aquarium and view the exhibits at our leisure.

As **Jerry Zona** said, "Another great day with great friends". The photos were taken by Jerry, and **Chuck DuPlant** has a video of the penguin trumpeting. Thanks to **Sharon Hanzik** for organizing this event.



Moray Eels



King Penguin



400 Lb. Loggerhead Turtle

THE NOT-SO EVERGREEN LIVE OAK (Part 2)

Contributed by Pam Tatge

Last month, I suggested that whether or not a live oak was evergreen might not be the most important piece of information to impart about trees. This month, I'm supplying more information about live oaks and a few other trees around Creekfield Lake so that you'll have additional ideas to pull out of your interpretive bag.

- Let's start with the evergreen question—you might tell visitors that some people consider live oaks to be evergreen, but that live oaks do lose their leaves each year in January or February. By that time, the leaves are no longer very functional; they have stopped or almost completely stopped performing photosynthesis. The new leaves appear soon after the old leaves drop. If you have children in the group, you can talk about the terms deciduous and evergreen, and ask the children what term they think best applies to the tree. No cheating. You might want to suggest that because the live oak does keep its leaves longer than most other trees in the park, a term like semi-evergreen might apply.
- When standing next to one of the large live oaks near the Nature center, point out that visitors can't see one of the most active areas of tree growth—they're standing on it. Look at the circumference of the tree canopy—the root system extends at least one third farther than that.
- Mention that we have 12 different types of oaks in the park. Tell visitors that different types of oaks have not only differing leaf types, but also differing acorns. Bring a burr oak acorn with you and compare it to a live oak acorn. Bring both acorns on the hike. Look for a water oak on the trail and compare its acorn to the others. Point out the water oak's nice, straight trunk that has few lower branches, and mention what a nice street tree it would make compared to the live oaks so many of us are required to plant in front of our houses.
- Point out that water oaks have pear-shaped leaves. The leaves may have a few familiar oak-leaf-shaped points, but if you squint and look up into the tree, the majority of the leaves will have a general pear shape.
- Acorns are food for squirrels, whitetail deer, feral hogs, raccoons, sapsuckers, wild turkeys, mallards, wood ducks, jays, quail, and once upon a time, black bear.
- Acorns have supplied food for humans, too. They are low in protein (8%), but high in fat and fiber. Native Americans are thought to have used live oak acorns to make cooking oil similar to olive oil. Native Americans also ground acorns into flour.
- The Houma Indians used live oak for healing dysentery.
- Native Americans are believed to have made trail markers by staking live oak saplings down and causing them to grow at extreme angles.
- Live oak provides valuable shade and cover for many birds and animal. It provides nest sites for many birds. In Florida, it provides a nest site for the threatened Florida scrub jay. In Southern Texas, live oak provides nest sites for the hooded oriole, ferruginous pygmy-owl, red-billed pigeon, northern beardless tyrannulet, and Couch's kingbird. The tropical parula constructs its nest with the ball moss that grows on live oak.
- Live oak wood is one of the heaviest of our native hardwoods. It weighs 55 pounds per cubic foot when air dried. It's tough and strong. It's used for structural beams, shipbuilding, posts, etc.
- Average mature height of a live oak is 50'. The national champion live oak (Louisiana) was 55''

tall, 11.65' diameter, with a crown spread of 132'.

- Oak trees are promiscuous. (I learned that from Dr. McEachern.) They hybridize easily, cross-pollinating easily with other oaks. This is why, when looking at oaks in the park, a tree will kinda look like a water oak and kinda look like a willow oak, but not exactly look like either one. It's a "mutt" of a tree.
- Many people have heard about the aspen groves in the Colorado Mountains that are considered to be a single organism because the roots have grown, or "grafted," together. When oaks grow closely together, their roots graft together, too. Central Texas has been hit hard by oak wilt, a fungal disease that is initially spread by insects (mainly the itty bitty nitidulid beetle) on open tree wounds. Disease spreads rapidly from tree to tree, especially when the trees are close enough for the roots to graft together; once one tree is infected, the disease flows from one tree to another through the root system. People can keep their trees healthy by pruning only in January (when associated beetle activity is lowest) and by planting fewer live oaks (so their trees don't graft into a live oak community.)
- The humble hackberry tree, often regarded as little more than a weed, is host to many types of butterfly, including the hackberry emperor, the tawny emperor, the snout, and the question mark. Birds enjoy its berry-like seeds.
- The bark of sycamores is supposed to peel off (by itself, when it's ready—kids aren't supposed to peel it off.) This is called exfoliating bark.
- The cedar elm has leaves that feel like a cat's tongue.
- Soapberries (if any can be seen) are being destroyed by the soapberry borer beetle, which came into Texas on an Asian freighter and nearly took out the soapberry population in a matter of months. Although soapberry trees are commercially insignificant, they are host to the pretty little soapberry hairstreak butterfly. The poisonous berries, when crushed, foam into a soap-like substance.
- The bald cypress is not a true cypress. That's why we write its name as a single word, so that less emphasis is placed upon cypress. (Similarly, the Eastern red cedar it is not a true cedar—it is a cypress.)
- Bald cypress is a deciduous conifer. It is unusual for conifers to be deciduous, and that's why it's called bald. Look closely at the bald cypress' needles—they are actually very small and are attached to twiglets. These needles turn coppery brown in fall. The round cones release seeds in fall; birds eat the seeds. Bald cypress is most familiar growing in wet areas, but it can grow in dry conditions as long as the seed is constantly moist. When grown in dry soil, bald cypress tends to not grow knees.
- Bald cypress typically grows 50'—70'. The largest known bald cypress was 175' tall, 40' in circumference, Tennessee's Big Cypress National Area.

I'm done. If you've called live oaks "evergreen" all your life and can't or won't change, let's just call a truce on this subject. And if you really want me to change my tune, feel free to take up a collection and reimburse me for my invalid education.

VOLUNTEER SIGHTINGS

Contributed by Rick Dashnau

As y'all know, we had really cold weather recently. On Sunday, January 11, I headed to the north tip of Elm Lake (near Horseshoe Lake). An otter had been seen there last week, and I hoped to get lucky. I also wanted to see how much ice there was and how the birds were reacting to it. It was fun watching some of the Moorhens trying to walk on the ice...and breaking through (without harm – they float).

No luck on the otter, but I got to spend some time with the Vermilion Flycatcher. It made a number of appearances and flybys. Of course, that early in the morning, if it went east it was directly in the sun. If it went north, I'd face into the sub-freezing wind and my eyes filled with tears and blinded me. However, I did get this little clip of it working:

http://rickubis.20m.com/vermflycatcher_elm01102010.wmv



A bit later, as I was looking south (towards the water station), I saw the small group of Whistling Ducks take off and fly towards me. None of the other waterfowl took off. When I looked up, a rather large bird was flying towards me, following the trail. It flew directly over me, and as I looked up it looked very odd. The color seemed to be overall dark brown, with lighter dapples in it. I figured it was something uncommon, but also thought it might be an immature version of whatever bird it was (as a non-birder, it just seems that as they grow up they go through some weird color phases. I thought it could possibly be a Bald Eagle.). As I picked up my camera to get a shot, I turned and faced straight up, right into the wind... and my eyes teared up and I was blinded.

However, the bird began circling, and so as it passed in wide circles and went off to the west, I was finally able to snap a couple images. Sorry I couldn't get better images. Can anyone verify what this is? Bill had called in the afternoon and reported an immature Bald Eagle, so there was at least one at the park Sunday. (Ed. note: It has been verified that it was an immature Bald Eagle.)

And it was really sad to hear about one of our Least Grebes. It evidently had gotten lost under the ice while diving, and drowned.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 12-14	Doris Mager Birds of Prey programs. See website for schedule
February 13	New Volunteer Training, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM Volunteer Orientation Potluck Lunch, 11:45 AM Regular meeting, 5:30 PM Night Hike, HQ, Reservation Required, 7:00 PM
February 15	President's Day Holiday
February 20	New Volunteer Training, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
February 27	New Volunteer Training, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
March 5	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
March 6	Outreach, Brazoria Heritage Event Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, Amphitheater
March 13	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
March 13-21	Spring Break for most school districts, 2 busy weekends, NC open weekdays, many programs and Creekfield

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville, TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2010, 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, supper at 5:00 PM
Bird Hikes	See schedule in calendar

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.

**BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK
VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION**

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

President:	Carrie Sample
Vice-President:	Suzie Gann
Secretary:	Eddy Grizzaffi
Treasurer:	Dave Carpenter

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.

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