



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 6

JUNE, 2010

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Fellow Volunteers,

We will be making decisions in the coming months that are important to our volunteer organization. We have begun a quest for a new natureMaynter at the same time that the State of Texas is tightening the budgets for the State Parks as well as other state agencies.

The park asked for \$4000 for a new tractor last month. Our organization turned that request down. This month they are asking for \$4000 to pump water into Elm Lake.

Quoting from the BBSP By-Laws:

ARTICLE II-PURPOSE

The purpose of this organization shall be:

1. To assist and educate the visitors of Brazos Bend State Park through information and interpretive programs; and
2. To assist in the care and conservation of the Park.

Our new education building fits into number #1 and the requests the park has made fit into #2.

I believe the future direction of our monies should be left up to more than the 12 or 14 who regularly attend our monthly meetings. If you would like to voice your opinions on our future directions please attend the next meeting at 5:30 pm on Saturday, June 12.

***Supper is served at 5:00 (for a small fee of usually \$3-\$4). If you plan to attend the supper, please let Sharon know so that there will be enough for all.

Thanks,

Carrie Sample

In This Issue:

From the President's Desk..	1
<i>By Carrie Sample</i>	
May Meeting Notes.....	2
State Park Funding.....	2
Nature Center Report.....	3
Bobcat Display.	3
Volunteer News & Notes. . .	4
Thanks	
Birthdays & Anniversaries	
Fletcher Morgan Memorial	
Elm Lake Viewing Platform	
Bread & Butter	5
Outreach Events	5
Volunteer Recruitment	5
June Paddling Trip	6
Volunteer Ethics	6
Leucism	7
Geocaching in State Parks	7
Year Round Birding	8
Something Interesting	8
Calendar of Events.....	9

MAY MEETING NOTES

submitted by Beth Debenport

President Carrie Sample called the meeting to order. The April minutes were approved as posted. Diane and Jerry Carpenter, Nancy Lynn Jones and Rachele Watson were thanked for the dinner, desserts and snacks.

Chris Bishop, David Heinicke and Sharon Hanzik brought their reports.

Budget Report: Treasurer Dave Armstrong gave the financial report, which was accepted.

Chris Bishop brought a request for a Husquavarna Z-turn 12 5223 mower to the general meeting. Dave Armstrong explained that the budget committee did not approve the expenditure. A motion was made to approve the purchase of the mower. After much discussion the motion did not pass.

Wood sales: Chuck Duplant reported that wood splitting was being done and thanked everybody for bundling the wood. We have been selling about one cord a week-end. There are plans for buying more wood.

Building Committee: Chuck Duplant reported that the committee met this afternoon. The location chosen for now is across the street. The next meeting will be on June 12 where we will discuss the size of the building.

Outreach: Judy Strauss reported that there are no more outreach events until October. The May Creekside Hunting and Fishing Expo was held on May 1 with 384 people by our booth. Duck Unlimited Event was held on May 2 with 132 people by our booth.

Gift Shop: Beth Debenport reported that we are busy keeping inventory current. A big thank you to the volunteers that take a shift in the gift shop.

Memorial: The memorial for Fletcher Morgan will be mentioned in the newsletter so that we can get some input on what the organization wants to do.

We need to start planning for ground breaking and dedication ceremonies for the **Elm Lake Platform**. Suggestions should be given to Carrie Sample.

The meeting was adjourned.

STATE PARK FUNDING

by Anna Dell Williamson

Funding for State Parks is being cut throughout the State. It is very likely that a reduction will occur in Fiscal Year-2012 (September of 2011). All TPW Divisions have been asked by TPW leadership to look at their respective divisions and identify scenarios of how to accomplish a 10 - 15% reduction in operations.

As private citizens, members of the BBSPVO can contact their local legislators to make them aware of the importance of BBSP and how their support of BBSP is going to be absolutely critical. Our city and county officials also must understand the economic benefit of BBSP and the importance of keeping it well-maintained and operated to bring visitors to the area.

NATURE CENTER REPORT

MAY 2010

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for May 1-31, 2010. Beautiful weather helped bring out the crowds, and Memorial Day weekend filled the park.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE May 2010 - 8,979 (high 907, 5/1) May 2009 - 8,578 May 2008 - 7,060 May 2007 - 5,633	Saturdays (5) 3074 High, 907, 5/1 Average: 615
	Sundays (5) – 2582 High, 809, 5/30 Average: 516
	Weekdays (21) – 3323 High, 263, 5/18 Average, 158
CREEKFIELD HIKES (10 days)	261– High, 73 - 5/8
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (6)	116 - High, 42 - 5/1
SNAKE PROGRAMS (4)	180 – High, 57 - 5/29
CHILDREN’S STORY TIME (4)	109– High, 45 - 5/23
OUTREACH (2)	355
BIRD PROGRAMS (4)	60
SPOTTING SCOPE (1)	100
OTHER PROGRAMS (7) includes Ask the Ranger, photo hike, Pondlife, video, crawdads, skulls, owls and mammals	215
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS	1396
VOLUNTEER HOURS	Total in all areas: 1659 Total in NC and programs: 760

SPECIAL NOTE: In the last 12 months we have had over 60,000 people come through our Nature Center. A new record!

BOBCAT DISPLAY

The new stuffed bobcat has been placed inside the prairie display. The hawk is now hanging outside the display just above the bird calls. Check out the display and brush up on your bobcat facts to answer visitors’ questions.

VOLUNTEER NEWS & NOTES



...to **Diane** and **Jerry Carpenter** for preparing dinner for the meeting

...to **Nancy Lynn Jones** for the brownies for the meeting dinner

...to **Rachelle Watson** for the cake balls for snacks on meeting day

...to **Jennifer Parent** for the brownies whenever they come out to work in the wood yard

...to **Jerry Zona, Bill Godley** and **Rick Dashnau** for their articles for the newsletter

...to the **maintenance crew** for splitting the wood in the woodyard. It was greatly appreciated.

FLETCHER MORGAN MEMORIAL

At the March meeting, it was decided to remodel the Nature Center information counter to be more visitor friendly and to improve storage space for items kept behind the desk. Fletcher worked at the counter regularly as a volunteer, even after he received emeritus status. He was very faithful in his commitment to serving the visitors. It was thought fitting to dedicate the remodeling in his memory.

Volunteers are invited to make contributions to the Fletcher Morgan Memorial Fund through Treasurer Dave Armstrong. You are also asked for your ideas on how to make the counter area more attractive and useful for volunteers and visitors alike.

ELM LAKE VIEWING PLATFORM

The Volunteer Organization has received funding for the Elm Lake Viewing Platform, which will be on the picnic side of Elm Lake. It will be accessible to all visitors and can be used for viewing wildlife over the water. This project is close to beginning construction. We need to start planning for both ground breaking and dedication ceremonies. Give your suggestions to Carrie Sample as soon as possible.



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Glen Kilgore
Jacob Ramirez
Rebecca Sykes (VIT)
Anna Dell Williamson

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Debra Baker
Diane Carpenter
Jo Ann Davis (VIT)
Jaci Elliott
Martin Gay (Emeritus)
Joan Hebert
Cynthia Morales
Susie Taylor (Staff)
Barb Tucker
Elizabeth Villanueva



JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

Joe and Sue Carmichael (1953) (Emeritus)
Nelda and Martin Gay (Emeritus)
Joyce and Darrell Giese
Joan and Warren Jackson (Emeritus)

BREAD AND BUTTER

Gift Shop Committee

What's an article on bread and butter doing in our newsletter? No, we're not starting a food column. If we were, we'd be talking brownies – specifically, those wonderful ones Jennifer and Curtis Parent bring whenever they work in the park. Or the great meals that volunteers bring on meeting night.

What we're talking about here is the bread and butter of the organization—the sustaining elements that support the organization. Of course, the number one element is the volunteers themselves. Their interpretation, education and park maintenance efforts serve the organization's mission. But these goals take financial bread and butter. Gift shop earnings are the main means of support for budgeted expenses for the Nature Center, education, and equipment maintenance. The income it generates allows BBSPVO to use unplanned donations for major projects to enhance Brazos Bend State Park.

On the surface, the gift shop seems like a simple thing (although some volunteers would argue that point when they use the computer). But, the gift shop committee puts in a lot of time to make it work. Their goal is to offer something for everyone: snacks and drinks, educational and reference books, fun items for the kids, souvenir t-shirts and those little convenience items that campers forget. How do those things get there? The gift shop committee members order t-shirts, books and other items through various sources, travel far and wide to discount sources and make weekly visits to the wholesale club to get all the snacks and drinks.

The volunteers who have been signing up in the gift shop are greatly appreciated. For weekday volunteers it means making a commitment when there might only be ten visitors or many. Without them, the gift shop stays closed. On the weekends we are committed to having the gift shop open eight hours each day and a committee member covers the open shifts when no one else is on the schedule. A committee member also stays in the Nature Center in case volunteers have a problem while working in the gift shop.

Beautiful weather brings a lot of park visitors, and like them, we volunteers love to be out in the park. But those visitors are also seeing what we offer in the Nature Center and, yes, the gift shop. When the Nature Center is busy and the gift shop isn't, many visitors seek information from the volunteer in the gift shop. (Our books and guides for sale are great sources for answering visitors' questions.)

We ask that when you need to fill your core hours to please consider a gift shop shift. The Nature Center's snakes and baby alligators appreciate the bread and butter (well actually, frozen mice).

OUTREACH REPORT

May Outreach events included the Creekside Hunting and Fishing Expo on May 1, and Ducks Unlimited event on May 2. We had 384 people come by our booth at Creekside, and 132 people at Duck Unlimited.



Mary Lockwood, Jerry Zona, Carol Ramsayer, and Judy Strauss at the Creekside Hunting and Fishing Expo



"I TOUCHED AN ALLIGATOR!"
It's not just the children who are thrilled at a personal encounter with a wild animal.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

NATURE CENTER CORNER: Have you taken a minute to notice the new layout and pictures on the wall near the snake-touching area in the Nature Center? Sharon has reorganized the photos with pictures of volunteers in action and information specific to becoming a volunteer at BBSP. If you speak to a visitor interested in becoming a volunteer, direct their attention to that corner for information.

RECRUITMENT BUTTONS: Also available are "Ask me about being a volunteer" buttons which you can wear around the park. We need to recruit more volunteers to help fill the areas we are committed to covering.

WEB SITE RECRUITMENT (by Sharon Hanzik): I would like to post photos on our web site of volunteers in action. I hope that this will encourage more applications. The photos plus a description of the activities would be added to the "become a volunteer" tab. No names will be added. If you would not like your picture to be on the web, please let me know.

PERSONAL CONTACT: The best recruitment is by word of mouth. Talk to your family, friends and acquaintances about the wonderful opportunities to volunteer and have fun at the same time.

JUNE PADDLING TRIP

by David Heinicke

On Wednesday, June 16, at 9:30 AM, we will meet at Bay Area Park and paddle on Armand Bayou. Bring your canoe or kayak, PFD, water, snacks or lunch and anything else you might need. We'll paddle for a few hours, take a break at Bay Area Park and all that are interested can head out again. For TPWD paddling information about Armand Bayou, go to http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails/coastal/armand_bayou/. Note that we are meeting at the canoe/kayak launch at Bay Area Park (7500 Bay Area Boulevard), not Armand Bayou Nature Center. If you need to rent a kayak you can contact - <http://www.gulfcoastkayakadventures.com/>

Please feel free to pass this invitation on to anyone that might be interested. All canoes and kayaks are welcome! If you have any questions feel free to contact me via email or cell phone 979-292-4236.

Life's better outside!

VOLUNTEER ETHICS

The BBSPVO members must comply with the rules and regulations as stated in the Volunteer Manual of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The Manual can be found on the BBSPVO website, under "Members". One of the clauses has to do with maintaining appropriate ethical standards:

Volunteers will not accept or solicit any compensation, gifts, favors, or promises from any person or organization in exchange for any service rendered.

That means that as volunteers, we are not allowed to accept any kind of pay for the work we do. However, it sometimes happens that a visitor will offer us a monetary reward for going above and beyond the call of duty - helping with a car problem (dead battery, flat tire, etc.), delivering a lost item to the owner on your way home from the park, or giving a program to a school or other group.

If you are offered compensation for something you do as a volunteer, you must refuse. However, you can say, "Thank you. I cannot personally accept this, but I can put it in the volunteer donation box. Please give me your name and address, and we will send you an acknowledgment of your donation." Then turn in the donation to the Treasurer, and the donor will receive a letter of thanks.

LEUCISM

by Jerry Zona

A while ago, a friend emailed me some photos from National Geographic. As usual the photos were great. One caught my eye though, a white hummingbird? The picture of the hummingbird was taken by Chris Mayne. He has other great pictures of the bird at his website: chrismayne.net. I've never heard of such a hummingbird, so I googled "white hummingbird" and found out that the bird was leucistic.



Leucism, from Wikipedia: **Leucism** is a condition characterized by reduced pigmentation in animals and humans. Unlike albinism it is caused by a reduction in all types of skin pigment, not just melanin. I would add that the reduction of pigment in a leucistic animal is not complete. In particular for birds, the beak, eyes and feet are usually the normal color.

There have been other sightings of leucistic hummingbirds, some in Houston. Some of the birds have been banded, but none has been caught a second time. Lacking the normal colors is a disadvantage in nature; it's harder for them to survive. Also in Houston, we have "Lou", the leucistic red-tailed hawk, who has been sighted on numerous occasions.

Lo and behold, several weeks ago while I was sitting on my back porch, a white bird shows up. With my new knowledge, I say "that's a leucistic common grackle". Of course I was armed and got a few pictures. Over a period of a week the bird showed up several more times, and I got more pictures.



Ain't Nature Great!



GEOCACHING COMING TO A TEXAS STATE PARK NEAR YOU

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is sponsoring two brand new geocache (pronounced geo-cashing) challenges this summer. Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth area parks will have 23 brand new caches hidden to test your determination and scavenger-hunting skills in the outdoors for the next four months. Geocaching is seeking out a hidden treasure using coordinates that mark its specific location on the globe. Weatherproof boxes are hidden in specific parks and their locations marked. Individuals use their own personal handheld GPS (global positioning system) devices and the provided coordinates to seek out what's been hidden.

Participating parks in Houston include: Sheldon Lake, Huntsville, San Jacinto Battleground SHS, Galveston Island, **Brazos Bend**, Lake Texana, Lake Livingston, Village Creek, Martin Dies Jr. and Stephen F Austin. For information on the separate Dallas/Fort Worth challenge, visit our website at: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/geocaching/>.

Participants can download a Texas Geocache Passport, as well as the coordinates of each of the caches, from the TPWD Web site. In each of the participating state parks a hidden box will contain collectible wildlife-themed trading cards, information about the park, a logbook for cachers to record their visit and a paper punch unique to the park. Geocachers can use their GPS units to find the containers and then use the punch to mark their passports to verify their visit. When they have completed all caches in that region, they can mail the passport to

TPWD, and receive Texas Geocache Challenge stickers, a certificate of completion, and be entered to win additional geocoins drawn at random. To go deeper and learn more about geocaching, visit <http://www.geocaching.com/>.

YEAR ROUND BIRDING

by Bill Godley

Bird Watching at Brazos Bend State Park never ceases to be without interest to bird enthusiasts. Throughout the year we see a transition of the species who enjoy the park's wonderful habitat and surrounding. In our quarter century as a park, over 300 species have been seen and it is rare when we have a hike that is without an unusual sighting.

But, in terms of different species, when is our peak? Well, officially, it is during the one day Christmas Bird Count in mid-December when we may see more than 150 different types of birds. Bear in mind that the CBC is one 24 hour period, usually has more than 50 participants, and covers a circle of 175 square miles.....far more area than the park itself. If you ignore that one day, however, the real peak for enthusiasts is likely mid-January. In fact, the number of species seen in a given day by the casual observer is double that seen in the summer months, perhaps over 100!

Why is that? Several reasons but two seem the most obvious. First, several large families of northern summer birds simply love Texas in the winter. Most notable are the geese, ducks, hawks, falcons and sparrows. Toss in robins (right), waxwings and a few others and you see the pattern. In early February, they begin to head out and a few months later, there are few to be seen. Count the American Coots here in the summer and compare that to the masses that enjoy our open water in the winter. Ever see a Blue-winged Teal (below) here in July? If so, let David know at once.



The second reason is more obvious: the birds have far less cover with which to hide themselves. Lake vegetation is diminished and most all the leaves have left their deciduous homes. Even the author can find birds given that much help. So why do we bird in the summer? Certainly not because we love wilting in the heat. Mid-winter lacks one pure joy.....the sight of birds establishing territory, finding a mate, building a nest and fledging little ones in front of us. Thank goodness that the Black-bellied Whistling Ducks like to show off their young. These and other "newbies" never grow stale in our love of the outdoors.

And, often there are some real surprises. Last May Tree Swallows fledged several young opposite the observation tower. This event was the furthest south and west it has ever been seen in North America. It was a photographer's dream. And, on occasion, lightning strikes twice. The species is back this year and may show off for us once again.

Regardless of your own special interests, don't fail to enjoy these wonderful avian delights in our midst all the year.

SOMETHING INTERESTING ON THE WAY TO THE HIKE

by Rick Dashnau

I had signed up to do the Creekfield hike on Sunday, May 24, so I was heading back to the 40 Acre Parking lot on my bike. At about 9:30, I stopped my bike to look for some Yellow-Crowned Night Herons hunting crawfish. I was looking towards 40 Acre Lake when movement behind me (to my right--towards Pilant Slough) caught my attention. I turned, and looked directly into the eyes of a Red-Shouldered Hawk that was about 20 yards from me. It appeared to be awkwardly standing on a branch, and one of its wings was bent at an odd angle. I thought that it might be wounded (partly since it was still so close). Then it moved, and I saw that it had caught a bird.

I thought at first that the prey was a Moorhen. I was still standing astride my bike, so I slowly brought up my camera and shot a few pictures. I knew I had to get back for the hike so I couldn't stay long, but I couldn't pass up this sight. As I watched, the Hawk tried to adjust its position, but seemed to be caught or entangled. Since I didn't want to scare it, I didn't try to look through binoculars.

The Hawk called, and another answered. I kept my eyes on "my" Hawk, and it sounded like the other Hawk passed overhead. I shot some video at high frame rate, hoping to catch the Hawk flying away with the dead bird. As I watched, a couple of park visitors came up behind me on bikes. I slowly motioned for them first to stop; and then for them to come towards me slowly. But they didn't have to. They could also see the Hawk with its prize.

Finally, the Hawk flew off. I missed catching that moment as the camera wrote my previous clip to memory. It didn't go far, but I had to get back for the hike. So, I left it to breakfast. Still...I did get a little video of it wrestling with its prey. In the video, it appears that the prey is a Purple Gallinule (it appears to have a greenish tint across the back). The video also shows a very odd position for the Gallinule's feet--and part of the reason the Hawk had such difficulty.

So, once again, my signing up for the hike has led to this mixed blessing. I say this because even though I had to leave the Hawk to cover the hike I'd signed up for--the *only* reason I saw it was because I was returning to lead the hike. Pretty wonderful sight! I hope you enjoy the video clip.

The video clips are edited and uploaded. Sound isn't captured while filming in high speed. This link should work for the clip: http://rickubis.20m.com/red_shld_hwk_pur_gal052310.wmv



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 12	Building Committee Meeting, 1:00 PM Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
July 3	Fourth of July Parade
July 10	Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
August 14	Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
September	Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
September 11	New Volunteer Orientation
September 18	New Volunteer Training, 9:00 - 5:00
September 25	New Volunteer Training, 9:00 - 5:00
October 9	Annual Volunteer Picnic, 5:30 PM
November 13	Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
December 11	Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville, TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

**NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME
SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 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 Armstrong

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.

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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