



VOLUME 22, NUMBER 11

NOVEMBER 2010

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Prairie Heritage Day was November 6 with a clear blue sky, full sun, and ideal temperature. To go with the blue sky there were 20 plus blue and white shade shelters set up for exhibits from various organizations with avid interest in all aspects of an environment that we share with many interesting creatures and plants. The folks from those organizations had enthusiasm and shared that with the visitors. Many of the exhibits had special ways to show the younger visitors the importance of our environment and the importance of respecting nature. During the day there were several hikes and speakers at the Speakers Tent and the Amphitheater. Many topics were included, such as: "Prairies in the Past", "Prairies – The Original Garden of Eating", "Owls", and "Snakes". There were in excess of 225 younger visitors and 175 parents or senior visitors. At 3:15 PM 387 folks had visited the Nature Center. The final count was over 600.



December 4, 2010 is the date for our "Simple Christmas Event". You are needed at Brazos Bend State Park on that day to help with the numerous activities that have always been so much fun for families during the start of a special time of the year.

Please reach out to your friends and neighbors to encourage them to consider volunteering at Brazos Bend State Park. Sharon Hanzik has one page flyers that could be posted to attract interested parties.

Our next meeting is November 13, 2010. Please join us on that date.

*Offie Walker*

***In This Issue:***

- From the President's Desk..... 1
- Staff Reports. .... 2
- Volunteer Hours Report ..... 2
- Congratulations ..... 3
- Thanks ..... 3
- Building Committee ..... 3
- Nature Center Report ..... 4
- An Evening of Music..... 4
- Maintenance Report ..... 5
- Wood sales. .... 5
- Calendar of Events..... 5
- State Park Survey..... 6
- Bird Report. .... 8
- Monarch Butterfly. .... 8
- Did You Know That???. .... 8
- The Buck Stopped Here. .... 9



# LEAD RANGER'S REPORT

*Richard Taylor*



After a long hot summer our mowing season has come to a close and now we start on much needed maintenance projects. I would like to let all know that we recently acquired two used park trucks. One we received from Bastrop State Park area that is a blue 1 ton dually flat bed. We have been looking for something like this for our fire rig. We have mounted the water tank and pump rig on it, and it will serve us well as our new fire truck. We also acquired a used green Game Warden truck with 4 wheel drive. It is now serving as our Park Resource truck and will be use to pull the boats

around and serve us for other tasks.

The Park Hosts and Rangers have started repainting the park facilities. We recently completed the Dining Hall and all of the shelters. Our goal is to work toward getting each building painted as funding is available. As soon as construction ends with the 100 and 200 Loop Restrooms, we will paint them, followed by the Nature Center.

I am hoping to get started on the addition to Headquarters this month. I know this may sound like a broken record, but we all know, Park needs come first. The reconstruction of the restrooms is moving forward. We have had some delays with minor things, but the project is moving along, and we are hoping it will end as scheduled. I think all will be pleased with the final product.

Right now the Rangers are busy getting things ready for the yearly Deer Hunt. A lot of care and thought has been given towards hunters' safety and managing the hunt. This year's Hunt Boss will be JT Kalina with Jeff Orsak assisting. All of the Rangers and a lot of the Park Hosts will assist in the hunt. Our first hunt will be November 16, 17, and 18, and the second one December 14, 15, and 16

TX DOT has reworked the washed out culvert area going down into the campground. They are now waiting on some good rains to pack in the area before installing new guard railing. Please use caution when using the trail next to the work site.

After two years as the ADSO (Appointed Duty Safety Officer) for the Park, I have passed the torch to Ranger Allen Elster. He will now be BBSP's Safety Rep. Please feel free to contact Allen or myself with safety concerns. We recently had our annual fire extinguisher inspection. Everything is good for another year. Please remember if an extinguisher is used notify me and bring the extinguisher to the shop. This way we can get it refilled or replaced immediately.

Happy Holidays



## VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR FY 2010

*Sharon Hanzik*

I am pleased to announce that the BBSPVO has consecutively contributed the most hours of any state park volunteer group. According to the fiscal year report (Sept 2009 through Aug 2010) the BBSVPO donated 17,523 hours with 96 active members.

# CONGRATULATIONS

## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Ray Anderson  
Nelda Gay (Emeritus)  
David Heinicke (Staff)  
Steve Killian (Staff)  
Patricia Marshall  
Curtis Parent



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Robert Aaron  
Katy Childs  
Beth Debenport  
Melissa Moody (Staff)  
Jeff Orsak (Staff)

## NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Holly (VIT) and Gene Haynes  
Mike (VIT) & Paige Manley



## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Dennis (Emeritus) and Dorothy Keppta

*Thanks*

\*\*\*to all who helped with the New Volunteer Open House on October 24: Jo Ann Davis, Rick Dashnau, Beth Debenport, Eddy Grizzaffi, Holly Haynes, Linda Keltner, Sammie Miller, Paige O'Neal, Anna Dell Williamson

\*\*\*to the Maintenance Crew for clearing the trail sides on the Creekfield Interpretive Trail

\*\*\*to all who helped with Prairie Heritage Days on November 6. Volunteers and staff presented programs, assisted the exhibitors, and worked in the Nature Center to make it a very interesting day for the visitors. Those presenting or assisting included Bill Godley, Sharon Hanzik, David Heinicke, Dennis Jones, Glen Kilgore, and Tom Prentiss. People who worked in the Nature Center or Gift Shop were Kevin Brantley, Beth Debenport, Carl Franke, Christine Kovach, Nancy Partlow, Carol Ramsayer, Carrie Sample, Offie Walker, Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson and others. Several chapters of the Texas Master Naturalists sponsored the day and had their own exhibit booths, along with invited exhibitors and speakers.

## BUILDING COMMITTEE MEETING

The Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center (BBEEC) Committee meets on second Saturdays at 1:00 PM in the Volunteer Lounge. All meetings are open to the membership. At the picnic on October 9, the membership accepted the proposal from the committee to be presented to TPWD for approval.

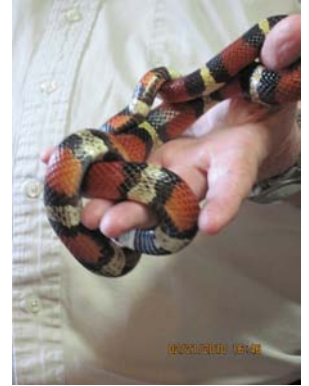
The next meeting will be Saturday, November 13, at 1:00 PM in the Nature Center Lounge. Contact Chairperson Chuck Duplant for more information.



# NATURE CENTER REPORT OCTOBER 2010

*Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for October 1-31, 2010.*

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
<b>NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE</b> October 2010 - 7855 October 2009 - 6258 October 2008 -3759 (21 days, closed for Ike cleanup) October 2007 - 4809 October 2006 - 5258	<b>Saturdays (5) - 3830</b> High, 1039 (11/2) Average: 207
	<b>Sundays (5) – 2560</b> High, 718 (11/10) Average: 512
	<b>Weekdays (21) – 1461</b> High, 267 Average: 70
<b>CREEKFIELD HIKES (15)</b>	421
<b>ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (4)</b>	172
<b>SNAKE PROGRAMS (5)</b>	140
<b>CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (3)</b>	55
<b>OUTREACH (Texian Market Days)</b>	3641
<b>OTHER PROGRAMS (4)</b> includes alligator, photo hike, bird hikes, Ask the Ranger, video programs, creatures of the night and armadillos	312
<b>TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND ONSITE PROGRAMS</b>	1100
<b>VOLUNTEER HOURS IN NC, PROGRAMS AND OUTREACH</b>	1076



Ron Dearman with milk snake

## AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND DANCING

### ***BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK HOSTS JEFF WOOLSEY AND THE DANCEHALL KINGS FOR A NIGHT OF TRADITIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC AND TWO STEPPING***

Grab your cowboy boots and come on out to the Amphitheater for a night of country music and two stepping with Jeff Woolsey and the Dancehall Kings. On November 13, 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM, you can grab your best dancing partner and enjoy the classic country honky-tonk tunes being played by one of Houston's premiere country bands. The fun, music and dancing is for people of all ages and would make a great evening for you and your family. Bring seat cushions or lawn chairs and a picnic supper.

# MAINTENANCE REPORT, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER

**Wood Yard:** Acquired, split and bundled wood firewood

**Mowing and Landscaping:** Mowed around woodyard, Creekfield Forest trail

**Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:** Trimmed Creekfield Lake Trail; conducted trail trimming class; watered trees around Creekfield Forest Trail; and trimmed and mulched trees on Creekfield Lake Trail

**Equipment Maintenance:** Put new tire on 06 Gator; repaired chain saw and pole saw; picked up and delivered Kubota and chain saw supplies; changed oil in Splitter

**General Maintenance:** Repaired benches, general cleaning; surveyed benches; mapped and numbered benches; installed bench on Creekfield Forest Trail; painted and replaced locks on water stations; winterized stations

**Pest Control:** Treated for fire ants for Nature Center, Lake Trail, Elm Picnic area, 100 loop, 200 loop, 40-Acre Trail and picnic area, Hale Lake picnic area, Headquarters, residences and amphitheater; treated for Chinese Tallow on islands

**Special Projects:** Collected Red Buckeye and Osage Orange seeds for planting; started constructing natural wood benches

## WOOD SALES

*Chuck Duplant*

Wood sales are on the rise. In September we sold 175 bundles, in October we sold 715 bundles. November is starting out cooler, so wood sales will go up as well. The week of Thanksgiving, park campsites will be full. Your help in bundling is needed. Wood can be bundled from racks 17 and 16 and stacked in racks 14 and 15. Once those are bundled, wood can be bundled from racks 2 and 6 and stacked in racks 11 and 12. Thanks for your help.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| November 12     | Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms   |
| November 13     | BBEEC (New Building) Committee, 1:00 PM, open to all interested<br>Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM<br>Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM) |
| November 22-26  | Thanksgiving Week, lots of visitors<br>Nature Center closed Thanksgiving Day   |
| December 3      | Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms   |
| December 4      | Simple Christmas   |
| December 4      | "Bird Blizzard at Sunset" program, 5:00 PM, Observation Tower  |
| December 11     | Photo Walk: Landscape photography #3, 3 PM<br>Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM<br>Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)                      |
| December 12     | Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms   |
| December 20-31  | Christmas Break, lots of visitors, Nature Center closed Christmas Day  |
| December 24     | "Bird Blizzard at Sunset" program, 5:00 PM, Observation Tower  |
| January 7, 2011 | Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms   |
| January 8       | Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM<br>Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)  |





# STATE PARK ON-SITE VISITOR SURVEY

Statewide Results, 2002 - 2007

Survey Purpose: From 2002 to 2007, TPWD conducted a visitor survey of State Parks to gain understanding of state park visitors to help plan for future statewide and regional marketing strategies and park business plans. This was the first comprehensive survey of state park visitors on a site-specific and statewide basis. Previous research had been done only during a specific season, at limited parks and with sample sizes too small to analyze visitor information for each park. The current survey was conducted on-site at 70 state parks. Following are some of the results of the survey. The overall response rate of 24% represented 26,825 returns out of 112,486 distributed. Following are some of the results of this survey.

## Who are our park visitors?

- Park visitors are older (average age 47) than average Texan (43)
- Overnight visitors (51.4) are older than day visitors (47.2)
- More overnight visitors are 55 + (44%) than day visitors (32%)
- Park visitors earn higher median household incomes than average Texan
- Vast majority of resident Texan park visitors are white/non-Hispanic, compared to about half of Texans
- The majority of visitors are Texas residents (88%); 12% came from out of state
- Out of state visitors come to parks most during winter
- Park visitors are slightly more likely to be from rural areas compared to the average Texan.

## Park Visitation Patterns

- 42% of visitors came to park for the first-time (58% repeat visits)
- The majority of visitors paid the per-person price, while nearly one-third used the State Parks Pass

## Number of Nights/Days Spent at Park

- Day visitors average 3.1 days per year; over one-half visited for only one day
- Overnight visitors average 3.6 nights per year; one-half of overnight visitors spent 3 or more nights

## Length of Current Park Visit for Overnight Visitors

- Two-thirds of visitors stayed 2 nights or fewer for their current visit
- Over one-third stayed at the park 3 or more nights

## Visits to Other State Parks or Historic Sites

- In addition to the park currently visited, the majority (61%) visited another state park or historic site in the last year
- More overnight than day visitors visited other parks

## Travel time to the park

- One-half of day visitors traveled one hour or less
- More than half (62%) of overnight visitors traveled 2 hours or more
- Most visitors to park are non-local (live 50 or more miles from the park)
- Overnight visitors are more likely to be non-local than day visitors

## How do park visitors contribute to local economy?

- Primary Destination of Trip:
  - For most visitors (66%) the park is the primary destination of their trip
  - Overnight more likely to name park as primary destination
  - One-third of day visitors stay overnight in the local area

Visits to Local Area Attractions  
 One-third visited attractions in the local area  
 More overnight users visited local attractions

Who do visitors come to the park with?  
 Most visitors came to the park with family/spouse  
 More overnight visitors came with family/spouse  
 Two-thirds of visitors came to park with adults only (no children in party)  
 Average party size 2.5; 60% with parties of 2 or less people

What influences visitors to come to state parks?  
 Word of mouth and previous visit most common sources of influence  
 One-quarter of visitors were influenced by TPWD communication efforts (Website, SP Guide, Magazine, PBS show); Website and State Park Guide very important for overnight visitors

Sources that Influence the Park Visit First-Time vs. Repeat Visitors  
 Word of mouth, website and state park guide more important for first time visitors.

Reason for Visit and Recreation Activity Participation  
 Overnight Visitors: Camp; Relax/get away  
 Day Visitors: Sightseeing/scenery; Hike/walk trails

Recreation Activity Participation  
 Hiking was the top activity for all  
 Day visitors more likely to sightsee and picnic

Amenities Used at the Park  
 Trails were used the most  
 Trails and picnic areas used more by day visitors

Park Improvements Most Desired  
 Day visitors: Trail improvements, more interpretive programs  
 Overnight visitors: Campsite and restroom/shower improvements; more interpretive programs.

Are park visitors satisfied?  
 Overwhelming majority satisfied with park visit (94%)  
 However, only 2/3 "very satisfied".  
 Visitor Satisfaction and Likelihood to Return to the Park  
 The degree of satisfaction has an important impact on repeat visitation.  
 92% "very satisfied" visitors are likely to return  
 80% "Satisfied" visitors likely to return  
 25% "somewhat satisfied/dissatisfied" likely to return

Reasons for Dissatisfaction

Top reasons for dissatisfaction	Day	Overnight
Shower/Restroom Improvements	14%	21%
Campsite Improvements	8%	14%
Trail Improvements (more trails, signage/maps)	9%	5%
General site maintenance	8%	8%
Issues related to fees	3%	3%

# BIRD REPORT

*Bill Godley*

On Saturday, October 16, the departure of several hundred Wood Storks brought lots of birding enthusiasts to the park Sunday. The storks were long gone, but they were replaced by at least two Vermilion Flycatchers on the North (picnic area) and Northwest sides of Elm Lake. In addition, a half dozen Wood Ducks sat in the middle of Creekfield Lake. The best chance to see them is early in the morning before they head to the west end of the marsh or elsewhere.

The following pictures of the Wood Storks were taken by Jerry Zona on Elm Lake. He said there must have been over 300 of them. Around 10:30 in the morning they started to kettle and then flew south.



## ANNUAL MONARCH BUTTERFLY MIGRATION

*from TPWD news release*



Tiny blazes of color, tens of thousands of monarch butterflies are migrating across Texas on their annual journey to Mexico. The first sightings were reported Oct. 3 and the flights have continued in periodic waves since then. Nearly all of the monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains travel south through Texas each fall to spend the winter in one spot in the Mexican mountains. Monarchs tend to fly in masses and migrate up to 3,000 miles from northeast North America to central Mexico and half way back the following spring. They are the only butterflies to make such a long, two-way migration every year. Adult monarch butterflies are orange with black veins and white spotted wing borders. Males have a black scent patch on a vein across the middle of the hind wing. Additional information may be found on the TPWD Web site.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT????

*Keep Pearland Beautiful Beautiflier, Fall, 2010*

Recycling one aluminum beverage can save enough energy to run a 100-watt bulb for 20 hours, a computer for 3 hours

Glass Facts: Glass never wears out - it can be recycled forever. Recycling glass saves 25-32% of the energy used to make glass from raw materials.



# THE BUCK STOPPED HERE

by Rick Dashnau

On Sunday, October 10, 2010, at about 8:30 AM, I noticed two alligators with a carcass in Pilant Lake between the Spillway Bridge and the Observation Tower. One alligator was about 8 feet long and had control of the carcass, while a 6-foot alligator tried to take pieces from it. While I was watching, I realized that the carcass was the forequarters of a good-sized buck. This became obvious when I realized that I was not looking at branches behind the carcass; but antlers on the carcass. The remains appeared to be quite old. I couldn't smell the carcass, but the meat appeared bleached and bloodless, and the skin appeared to have begun shedding fur.

The large gator finally swam away with the buck, going past the Spillway Bridge towards Elm Lake. It stopped past the Spillway to continue trying to process the carcass by crushing it with its jaws. The 6-foot gator followed and continued trying to get pieces from the carcass. The smaller alligator was quite persistent--even crawling on top of the larger alligator to bite on the carcass. However, through this entire situation neither alligator exhibited any really aggressive behavior towards the other. While the large alligator was holding the carcass firmly in its jaws, the smaller one could pull on it, and even roll to pull off pieces of flesh. I only saw the large alligator try to spin the carcass once--with pretty spectacular results. Since nothing was holding the carcass stationary for the larger alligator, everything moved with the alligator.



After some time (at about 10:00 AM) the smaller alligator finally pulled off a leg. When this happened the large alligator became a bit agitated and tried to take the leg back, but only for a few minutes. The smaller alligator swam off towards Elm Lake with the severed leg. The large alligator stayed with buck. It moved towards one of the small islands, and seemed to rest, so I left to visit Elm Lake.

When I came back about 30 minutes later, the large gator had cleared logs from the area. It was pushing on one of the longer ones as I watched. Soon after, the smaller alligator returned (about 11:15 AM). and went right for the larger alligator. Not only did it approach the larger alligator, but it approached quickly, and immediately went to the front of the larger alligator's head. It seemed to be looking for the buck in the place where it had last found it. (It appears that even an alligator can accidentally "food habituate" another alligator.) Since the carcass wasn't there, the small alligator went looking for it. This caused the large alligator to become agitated, and it began trying to shove and herd the smaller one away. However, the smaller gator finally found the carcass, and swam towards Elm Lake with it--somehow avoiding the notice of the large alligator.

I followed the smaller alligator which had the buck, and when it got about 20 yards away, the large alligator started bellowing. It bellowed about 5 times, and then stopped. It did not pursue the smaller alligator. The smaller alligator took its prize, and eventually pulled it past one of the islands and into Pilant Lake and out of view (about 12pm).



We don't see this kind of thing at Brazos Bend State Park very often--not with a deer, and not one this large. One of our visitors shot photos of a deer being eaten on the Pilant Slough side of the Spillway bridge in June of 2009. It does happen and sometimes we get to see it. It's usually unknown how an alligator would get a deer in the first place. In this case, it seems likely that the deer was killed or wounded by a human hunter and the alligators just found it.

Here is the link to the online video--at about 100mb in size.  
[http://rickubis.20m.com/alligators\\_w\\_buck101010.wmv](http://rickubis.20m.com/alligators_w_buck101010.wmv)

## Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville, TX 77461

**NEXT MEETING**  
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2010**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**



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### 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

## BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

### VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

President:	Offie Walker
Vice-President:	Mary Lockwood
Secretary	Linda Heinicke
Treasurer:	Dave Armstrong

### NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editor	Anna Dell Williamson
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Web Master	Martin Gay

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](mailto:awilliamson4@comcast.net)). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.

**IN THE END, WE WILL CONSERVE ONLY WHAT WE LOVE,  
WE WILL LOVE ONLY WHAT WE UNDERSTAND,  
WE WILL UNDERSTAND ONLY WHAT WE ARE TAUGHT.**

**BABA DIOUM, SENEGAL  
AFRICAN CONSERVATIONIST**