



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 3

MARCH 2011

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



February 12 was a great day at Brazos Bend State Park. The weather was wonderful and we had 17 enthusiastic Volunteers to be start their training and required hours to join the BBSPVO. Please extend these VITs a welcome and aid them in their desire to maintain and improve BBSP.

Another great thing on February 12, as well as the 11th and 13th, was The Bird Lady again visited BBSP with her friends, a great horned owl, a screech owl, an American kestrel, and a Caracara, the national bird of Mexico. It is great to see these birds up close that have been injured cared for and given the chance to be shown to park visitors. The Bird Lady, who is in her eighties, has been traveling with her friends for many years to parks in the United States.

The Texas Parks and Recreation Society is an organization for city and county park staff. They share knowledge and work toward common goals. Several weeks ago they met in Austin to walk the halls of the Legislature supporting the TPWD budget allocations that were set by the 80th session. We were invited to join them in the walk. They had a hand out, and we divided into small groups to call on our Legislators. We need to express our concern about funding for parks in Texas to our representatives.

I visited the National Environmental Education Foundation website recently and found that recipients of the Every Day grant that we recently applied for will be announced in mid to late April. They confirmed that they had received our application, along with 350 others.

Our next general meeting is April 9. Please place that on your calendar and help direct our organization. Your input is very important.

Offie Walker

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FEBRUARY MEETING NOTES

submitted by Anna Dell Williamson

Offie Walker called the General Meeting to order on February 12, 2011. There were sixteen volunteers, three staff members, seven VITs and one guest present. Thanks to the folks who brought items for the Orientation lunch. The leftovers were enjoyed for the meeting night supper. The minutes of the January meeting were approved as posted.

Staff members brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in the newsletter.

Treasurer Dave Armstrong brought the monthly financial report.

We received donations from the **Sugarland Garden Club** through Carrie Sample, from **Exxon** through Carol Ramsayer, and from the **Kroger** and **Randalls** grocery programs, He went over the expenditures, and the report was accepted as presented.

The following budget requests were approved:

Solenoid valve for the cold water fountain outside the Nature Center. It was damaged in the freeze.

Funds to repair the roof at the Nature Center to stop leaks.

Paint and general paint supplies, to repaint areas in the camping loops.

Software for maintaining the website.

Members were reminded that requests for purchase should be filled out and approved before money is spent. The request should be for the total amount for the project, including shipping.

Beth Debenport reported that the Gift Shop has purchased a new t-shirt with an alligator with its mouth open. All our shirts have a BBSP logo on the right sleeve. We also have some new toys for children.

Judy Strauss reported that there are two outreach events in March. Sea Center Texas, in Lake Jackson, is March 5, and the Children's Museum in Richmond is March 25. April 2 will be the Katy Fest and May 7 we will participate in a new event in Sweeney, TX. Sign up on the Events Calendar. VIT's are welcome.

Offie reminded the group that our Bylaws state that any new business must be presented to the Executive Committee before it is brought up at a meeting.

A grant application has been submitted to Every Day Grants, to be used for fund-raising training for the Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center (BBEEC). This grant is funded by Toyota,

BBSP received an invitation from the Parks and Recreation Society to send someone to Austin to speak to legislators. Offie Walker attended. He received a package to carry to legislators, asking them to hold TPWD funding at the same level as the 80th Session. He and a representative from Houston Wilderness went to 12 offices and spoke with one representative or staff for others.

MIGRATION CELEBRATION

San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge will host the 17th Annual Migration Celebration April 15-17. All events are free and there are activities for the whole family. Check last month's BBSP newsletter for details.

STAFF REPORTS

TED STEVENS

Management Trainee Ted Stevens brought his report in the absence of Steve Killian, who was at another event for BBSP. He thanked the VITs for deciding to become BBSP volunteers. He reported that at a recent TPWD manager training course, he was proud to be from BBSP. Half of the volunteer hours reported in the state were from BBSP. Volunteers have a big impact on visitors who come to the park. He quoted from *Last Child in the Woods*, which reported that a child is six times more likely to play a video game than to ride a bike.



He reported on several projects:

- Headquarters renovation and expansion is coming along. There will eventually be more office space, a break room and more Gift Shop space.
- This summer there will be an Americorps group of eight to twelve members to install three miles of water pipe from Hale Lake to the Equestrian Center, with four watering stations along the way and potable water at the equestrian center. They will also clear the front entrance area and do trail maintenance. Americorps is similar to the CCC and provides opportunities for youth, ages 18-21, to work on projects in communities to help out for the greater good.
- We are applying for an SCA (Student Conservation Association) project to have a group of 8 youths ages 18-21 come out and work on clearing out trails.
- Barry Eversol (Game Warden) has been going out into the lakes with the airboat to clean out the duck boxes.
- Fort Bend Green and BBSP is working on plans with Sienna Plantation to establish a kayak/canoe launch for people who would come down the Brazos River and take out at our Yellowstone Landing.

Staff has been working hard to stay on top of the water situation with the cold weather. They have been actively involved in protecting the water supply and outlets from the freeze. **Kudos to staff** for all their work.

Chris Bishop, Assistant Superintendent, is in Bastrop at the TPWD police academy. He will return to full time on March 11 as an additional Law Enforcement Officer.

Visitation for January 2011 is up 13% over last year. The work of the volunteers is reflected in the growth in visitation numbers.

We will be relocating the **Joe Carmichael Order of the Purple Heart bench**, which has sunk under the ground during recent flooding. We have worked with the TPWD archaeologist for approval to have a Scout troop dig out the bench. Gary Bialis will be the staff support for this project.

The **Brazos Bend Ultra Race** held January 16 resulted in a nice donation to BBSPVO.

Restrooms in the camping loops should be finished soon. Headquarter bathrooms have extensive damage, and it may be three or four more months before they are completed. We are trying to get the RV portable restrooms moved to that area.

Ted addressed the **TPWD Budget** situation. Volunteers can write their legislators as individuals and emphasize the importance of State Parks as outdoor opportunities for all Texans.

Ruth Matthews, TPWD archaeologist, will do cultural resource training at BBSP in March. She will discuss how TPWD can protect the archaeological sites in the park. A team has done research on 45 sites, looking for artifacts. This is the cultural heritage of the park.

Healthy Park, Healthy People is a project to build a new fitness trail at Hale Lake for folks to utilize the park for their workout routines. **Chris Bishop** is heading up this project. He and Steve are working with folks in Austin to put together a proposal for Academy Sports retailer to donate funds to develop the trail.

We have acquired a new **diesel grasshopper mower** and a new **John Deere Gator** for Maintenance.

SHARON HANZIK



There are seven VITs here tonight, fulfilling their training requirement to attend a volunteer meeting. Those present tonight are **Rosemary Kennedy, Cathy Novetti, Michael Sanderson, Ethan Hoover, Patty Henry**, and **Lara and Leah Malone**. Seventeen VIT's started training today.

Several **school groups** have been booked for March through May. Let Sharon know if you want to continue as a leader or learn to lead. The dates are listed on the volunteer events calendar.

Spring Break is scheduled for March 13-18, and that week and both weekends before and after will be very busy. Sharon has sent an email about programming during that week. The Nature Center will be open 9:00 to 5:00 throughout week. VITs may count Spring Break days as weekend time for Phase 1 training requirements.

Next week Sharon and David will both be gone February 16 to 18.

The **Stephen F. Austin volunteer field trip** will be February 24. There is no limit as to who may go,

We have good relationships with our neighbors near the park. **Polly Shouse** participated in the Xmas Bird Count and other hikes. In the past she has donated seed money for the Junior Naturalist Patch program and recently made another **donation in honor of Bill and Diana Godley**.

DAVID HEINICKE

Doris Mager has been here this weekend with her birds of prey program. Attendance has been very good.



The meeting in Austin regarding the **new nature center** was postponed because of the budget matters. It has been rescheduled for March 8 to get their blessing on starting fundraising for the new Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center.

The contractor for the **Elm Lake Observation Platform** has been selected. He came in under bid. We have worked with him before and expect to start on the project in late March or early April.

The **Brazos Bend Ultra Race** was a big thing for the park. It went off without major hitches, and we have received great feedback. Volunteers helped with it, and one volunteer completed the half marathon. There were 286 runners in the race.

CONGRATULATIONS



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Willie Anderson (Emeritus)
Rita Cooper (Emeritus)
Joan Jackson (Emeritus)
Herb Mann (Emeritus)
Jennifer Parent
Ted Stevens (Staff)

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Peter Guzman (VIT)
Rosemary (VIT) and Bobby Kennedy
Glen and Maureen Kilgore
Lara Malone (VIT)
Dawn and Oscar Tejero

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Leah Malone (VIT)
Richard Taylor (Staff)

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

Virginia and Charlie Harrison
Jim and Jacqueline North

NEW VOLUNTEERS



Congratulations to **Paige O'Neal** and **Holly Haynes**, who have completed their training and joined the ranks of full volunteer. Welcome them to the Organization. Of the eight VIT's who attended the classroom training in September 2010, six have become full volunteers.

OUTREACH REMINDER

There are several Outreach opportunities coming up. Be sure and check the "events calendar" on our website for each event, dates, times and location. If you ever have any question about any event, please feel free to contact Outreach coordinator Judy Strauss at 281-980-4104 (work) or 979-793-7392 (home).

We just had a successful Sea Center Texas event on March 5, and the next event is the Richmond Children's Museum, March 26. Other spring events include the Katy Folk Life Festival on April 2, and the Sweeney Event on May 7.

NATURE CENTER REPORT FEBRUARY 2011

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for February 1-28, 2011. It is interesting to note that the weather was very changeable during the month, and for 3 consecutive weekends, Sunday attendance was greater than Saturday attendance, and the total Sunday attendance was larger than Saturday. Weekday attendance was quite good, also, and the Monday holiday had good visitation. We are told that all camping facilities were filled to capacity several nights. Photo of Kent Fewell and friend at the SOAR Birds of Prey Program February 11-13 taken by Jo Ann Davis.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE February 2011 - 5340 February 2010 - 4,320 February 2009 - 5,950 February 2008 - 4,827 February 2007 - 2,247	Saturdays (4) - 2219 High, 855 (2/26) Average: 555
	Sundays (4) - 2292 High, 880 (2/20) Average: 523
	Weekdays (20) - 829 High, 247 (2/21 - MLK Day) Average: 41
CREEKFIELD HIKES (12)	186
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (1)	44
SNAKE PROGRAMS (3)	127
CHILDREN'S STORYTIME (4)	109
POND LIFE (1)	140
SPECIAL BIRDS OF PREY PROGRAM (4)	380
OTHER PROGRAMS (4) include bird hikes, photo walk, BBSP video, owls	87
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND ONSITE PROGRAMS	1040
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS IN NC AND PROGRAMS	907



*Kent Fewell,
Birds of Prey Program*



*Suzie Gann, Dawn Tejero
NC Desk*

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Former volunteer Dylan Lawrence and family visited the park recently. The Lawrence family still resides in Boise, Idaho.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Cleaned mud off Red buckeye Trail
Removed dead trees from Red Buckeye Trail
Remove guardrail from Red Buckeye Bridge
Purchase, deliver and install guardrail for Red Buckeye Bridge
Clean Hoots Hollow Bridge

Wood Yard:

Process firewood

Mowing and Landscaping:

Plant, mulch and water 16 trees on Creekfield Stake trees on Creekfield Forest Trail

Construction Projects

Installed bench on Creekfield Forest Trail

Thanks

...to **Mary Lockwood, Nancy Partlow, Diane Carpenter, Jane Minard, Beth Debenport, and Suzie Gann** for completing the new volunteer training manuals and name tags

...to **Mary Lockwood** for organizing the lunch and refreshments for volunteer training

...to **everyone** who helped with the training orientation luncheon by bringing food, and helping with setup and cleanup. The attendees at the meeting that evening enjoyed the leftovers.

...to **all the volunteers** who attended the Orientation luncheon and introduced themselves to the new VITs.

...to **Dave Armstrong, Jo Ann Davis, Jaci Elliott, Kent and Debbie Fewell, Glen Kilgore, Mike Manley, Carrie Sample and Bruce Williamson** for assisting with the park road tour for the VITs.

...to **Dave Armstrong, Diane Carpenter, Nancy and Bear Dobbs, Debbie Fewell, Kent Fewell, Suzie Gann, Glen Kilgore, Mary Lockwood, Mike Manley, Cindy Peterson, Tom Prentiss, Carrie Sample, Anne Shelton, and Judy Strauss** for serving as mentors for the new VITs.

...to staff members **Sharon Hanzik, David Heinicke, Steve Killian, Dennis Jones, and Richard Taylor** for leading presentations or hikes for new volunteer training.

...to volunteers **Nancy and Bear Dobbs, Noel Duncan, Kent and Debbie Fewell, Glen Kilgore, Ron Morrison, Tom Prentiss, Judy Strauss, and Offie Walker** for leading presentations or hikes for new volunteer training.



Glen Kilgore



Pete Hart and Ron Morrison



Tom Prentiss

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

The February VITs are working hard on their Phase 1 requirements. You will see VITs Peter and Christian Guzman, Lisa and Drake Hacker, Patty Henry, Ethan Hoover, Kathleen Hosek, Lindsay Kahn, Rosemary Kennedy, Lara and Leah Malone, Tori Matta, Cathy Nevotti, Michael Sanderson, Sherri Sherbo, and Reyes Torres Jr. signed up for various training activities in the Nature Center and Gift Shop. You might get a request to take one on an ATV tour of the park or to train them for the water station. Please be ready to help these folks complete their Phase I training.

Some of them are moving very fast and will soon be in Phase 2. Then we'll need your help for trail trimming and trail interpretation. The VITs will also be following your hikes and attending your programs, so be sure to make them feel welcome.



Lindsay, Leah, Lara, Cathy



Drake, Lisa, Mike



Mike, Peter, Christian



Ethan, Tori, Rosemary



Sherri, Patty



Reyes, Kathleen

PHOTO WALKS

Volunteer **Lazlo Perlaky** leads photo walks for volunteers and visitors on the first Saturday of every month. Below is the schedule for upcoming events. The walks start at the Nature Center.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| April 2, 5 P.M. | Plant photography Photo-walk. |
| May 7, 5 P.M. | Bird photography Photo-walk #2. |
| June 4, 5 P.M. | Close-up photography Photo-walk #1. |
| July 2, 5 P.M. | Close-up photography Photo-walk #2. |
| August | Summer break, NO Photo-walk. |
| September 3, 5 P.M. | Amphibian and reptile photography Photo-walk. |
| October 1, 5 P.M. | Bird photography Photo-walk #3. |
| November 5, 3 P.M. | Landscape photography Photo-walk #2. |
| December 3, 3 P.M. | Landscape photography Photo-walk #3. |

PURPLE HEART BENCH RECOVERED

Joe Carmichael, Purple Heart Veteran from World War II Battle of the Bulge and BBSPVO Volunteer, provided a bench to honor Purple Heart recipients and to remember those who risked so much for this nation. The bench was placed on the Red Buckeye trail where Big Creek flows into the Brazos River.

Over the years, the bench began to sink in the soft soil, and after flooding during Hurricane Ike, it disappeared completely. Volunteer **Don Nelson** worked to find a Boy Scout Troop that would be willing to dig up the bench so it could be restored. After completion of the necessary archeological evaluation of the excavation location, we received the go-ahead from TPWD to proceed with the digging and removal of the bench. **Gary Bialas**, Park Ranger and Cultural Resources Trained Monitor, was assigned as the lead on this project.

On Saturday, February 19, **Boy Scout Troop 487**, Alvin, TX, dug up "Joe's Bench". Chartered Organization Representative John Gillman sent us some pictures of the Scouts digging it up. He noted that it takes a lot of digging to get a bench out of the ground when it is buried under all that sand! It turned into an all day project for the 21 boys who worked on this effort. "It definitely took longer than I expected, but it was a great project for the boys," wrote Mr. Gillman. He also volunteered the troop to come back and place the bench when that time comes. The bench is currently at Maintenance, awaiting a good cleaning and refurbishing, before it is replaced in an appropriate site which is to be determined.



DEDICATED TO MILITARY ORDER
PURPLE HEART BY JOE
CARMICHAEL



PURPLE HEART BENCH
MAINTENANCE YARD
"JOE'S BENCH"



BOY SCOUT TROOP 487
ALVIN, TEXAS

SPRING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

by Sharon Hanzik

- 1) Weekend **Creekfield Hike** attendance will definitely pick up on Saturdays through early June. We can use as many as 3-5 leaders each Saturday (unless it rains). If you are signed up but not needed you still record 2 hours for making the commitment. First choice for leading goes to the first person signed up and so on.
- 2) During Spring Break, we need volunteers to staff the NC and GS from 9 to 5 every day and both weekends.
- 3) VITS are ready to go and on the calendar. They need trainers, so please sign up to help them, and respond to their email requests for help for those areas not on the calendar. Mentors - please keep in touch with your VIT.
- 4) My regular days off for March - May will be Thursday and Friday.
Thank you!

GIFT SHOP COMMITTEE EXPANDS

The Gift Shop Committee is a group of volunteers who focus on keeping the Gift Shop open and stocked. They purchase items for resale, keep financial records, set up displays, and assist the other volunteers who work as cashiers. Gift Shop Committee members have made a commitment to be at the park on weekends, holidays and some weekdays to assist anyone working in the GS with opening, closing, and computer and procedure questions. They are not expected to work in the GS all the time, but they will be available to assist others. They will also be taking inventory, preparing items for sale (like folding and packaging t-shirts, wrapping books in plastic wrap), entering new inventory in the computer, ordering items, giving cashiers a break, filling in when needed, etc. We still need regular volunteers signed up to work as cashiers and to help with other tasks so committee members can work on other responsibilities and occasionally have a chance to get out of the GS. If you have ever spent two or more consecutive shifts in the GS on a busy day without relief, you will understand their need to get away once in a while.

Beth Debenport (GS Chairperson), **Diane Carpenter**, **Judy Strauss** and **Anna Dell Williamson** have been serving in this capacity. Recently we added four new members to the Gift Shop Committee. They are **Debbie** and **Kent Fewell**, **Linda Keltner** and **Nancy Lynn Jones**. We welcome these new members to the Committee. They are ready to help you learn to cashier and to troubleshoot your questions. These members usually commit to half day shifts (except Beth, who works six hours every weekend day). Sometimes there may be more than one committee member at the park at a given time, but they often have other responsibilities that day, which may or may not include the Gift Shop. There will always be one available to assist other GS volunteers.

If you are interested in serving as a member of the Committee, let Beth Debenport know. Or if you would like to be a cashier but aren't sure if you remember your training, sign up for a weekend shift, and a Committee member will be there to give you a refresher course. We have already noticed an upswing in visitation at the NC and in sales in the GS, and we will be very busy from now through Memorial Day.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 14-19	Spring Break for many local school districts, very busy week and 2 weekends
April 1	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake Restrooms
April 2	Outreach: Katy Folklife Festival. Check events calendar for times and to sign up Plant photography Photo-walk, 5 PM, Nature Center.
April 8	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake Restrooms, then Migration Madness, Quintana (optional)
April 9	BBEEC (New Building) Committee, 1:00 PM, open to all interested Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
April 15	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake Restrooms, then Migration Madness, Quintana (optional)
April 17	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake Restrooms
April 22	Good Friday, very busy weekend Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake Restrooms, then Migration Madness, Quintana (optional)
April 24	Easter Sunday, busiest day of year
April 29	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake Restrooms, then Migration Madness, Quintana (optional)

NEW BIRD VIDEO FOR NC

by Rick Dashnau

I've put together a new DVD program that I thought might go well in the VC. Over the last couple years, I've collected a large amount of slow-motion video footage featuring birds. I've sent some of the more interesting ones along in group emails--but I haven't shared them all. So, some of the clips will be familiar to you, but many of them will not be.

This is the first time I've made an effort to put this on a DVD that will show clearly on a TV screen. The original video is not full-screen resolution (due to the constraints of the camera), but I've figured out how to "mat" the video so that it stays sharp on the screen--similar to the "letterboxing" technique for wide-screen movies shown on square TV sets.

The video is a little under an hour long. It features 29 species of birds--all in slow motion, and edited together with a track composed of licensed music. My slow-motion (or high-framerate video) camera does NOT shoot sound. Perchers appear first, then Waders, then Divers and finally, Raptors. I've posted the name of the bird and the date I shot the clip at the beginning of each segment.

I think even seasoned birders will find a few surprises in here. My intent was to show the birds at Brazos Bend in a perspective different than most people can attain. I can see the video being used in a live program also--since it shows some interesting bird behaviors. And you'll probably notice I like Anhingas. :-). And let me know if that's NOT a Neotropic Cormorant (or any other corrections)

I've posted a differently encoded full-length version of this movie (smaller video file size) online--but it is a large file and it is about an hour long. However, it's there if you'd like to see it. Here's the link:
http://rickubis.20m.com/birds_slowed_in_time.wmv

And that's it. And yes, it took a lot of work to put together.

FROST WEED

(*Verbesina virginica*)

by Barb Tucker

I had seen Frostweed in the park before, just once, but I did not find it. I was on a birding hike and Bill pointed it out. I was amazed and intrigued. In researching frostweed, my reference book, *Wildflowers of Texas* by Geyata Ajilvsgi states that it is in the aster family and can be found in dense colonies along stream banks and open woodlands. It thrives in a variety of soils but likes nestling in the shade provided by trees. In a hard freeze situation, the stem of the plant splits and exudes a sap. The sap expands and then freezes into frothy "ice".



So, on a frosty, cold, morning in February, I knew conditions were right to spot it. I was in the right place and the weather was perfect. I started to walk around 40-Acre Lake and discovered it *for myself!* I accessed the trail around the lake using the little prairie spur. This path connects with the lake trail just before Hoots Hollow Trail takes off from the lake trail to the left. It was about 10 am on Friday, February 4, 2011. Using my phone camera, I took several pictures.

What a personal find! As volunteers, we know the park is filled with wonders. Group explorations can guide us to personal discoveries. Personal discoveries are priceless!

AMAZING HUNGRY GATOR

by Rick Dashnau

Everyone is probably aware of the recent bout of cold weather we've had. Starting sometime Thursday, February 3, the temperature dropped from around 69 degrees F to somewhere in the 20's--and stayed there through Saturday night. Sunday morning still had temperatures in the 40's, although by afternoon it got up to 70 degrees. Sunday morning, while it was still cold, I saw an alligator at the Spillway. The alligator had a nutria in its mouth.

I've read that alligators can't digest if their core temperature falls below 70 degrees F. As I mentioned above, air temperature was well below that for about 3 full days and nights. It's hard for me to believe that the water temperature anywhere was much higher than that, even in the deepest spots. So, the alligator must have been cold.

This is also the extremely thin alligator that's been in that area for some months. And the alligator is blind in both eyes! How did it catch the nutria in the first place? I thought this was an interesting mystery.

On a related note, I found these two studies about alligator thermoregulation. There are a lot of factors that influence the internal temperature of an alligator. Besides the general weather factors (sunlight, temperature) there is the alligator's external behavior (moving in and out of the water, turning towards the sun, gaping) and internal behavior (circulation, respiration, and metabolic movement) and various other factors. Temperature exchange happens faster in water (since it conducts heat better than air), but it is a more stable thermal environment than air, and is slower to change condition. So, alligators use water as a temperature buffer. An alligator heats up faster than it cools off (at least larger ones do--small ones heat and cool at the same rate). Alligators are efficient heat pumps.

This still doesn't explain what the alligator was doing with the nutria last weekend, and HOW it got it in the first place.

The links to the articles on thermoregulation:

http://jutwynne.com/ENV326/PDF/Spotila_etal1972.pdf

<http://icb.oxfordjournals.org/content/19/1/239.full.pdf>



THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF MEAN BITTERNs

by Rick Dashnau

Around noon on February 7, I was near the Observation Tower at 40-Acre Lake, watching a White-Faced Ibis and some Bitterns. I was trying to shoot some interesting slow-motion video clips. I started watching a Bittern as it moved through the undergrowth about 10 yards from me. I was waiting for it to get to a clear spot so I could film it. The Bittern made its slow, stealthy progress through the plants, occasionally swaying, and sometimes thrusting down into the wetness underfoot. We've all seen Bitterns hunting this way.

I noticed movement a few feet to the right of the Bittern, at about 18 inches high. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was flitting at the top of a plant. The Bittern worked its way in the direction of the Gnatcatcher, stalking and looking down. The Gnatcatcher flitted to the top of another plant, nearer the Bittern. Suddenly the Bittern looked up, took two steps towards the Gnatcatcher (cocking back its head as it stepped), and STABBED THE GNATCATCHER! I was totally surprised, and immediately started filming--even though the Bittern was still among the weeds.

As I watched, the Bittern stalked through the weeds, still holding the Gnatcatcher, then bent down and...most of what transpired then was obscured by the plants. But...it looked like the Bittern swallowed the entire Gnatcatcher. At this time, the day was threatening to be overcast--and right at that time a cloud obscured the sun, darkening the video and hiding what happened from the camera, too.

I think that most of us understand that Raptors occasionally prey on birds in the park. Some of us have seen various Hawks or Eagles take the occasional Moorhen or Coot. For many of us this is a breathtaking sight, and one to look forward to. We all understand how harsh the natural world of eat and/or be eaten can seem.

But this...

...this was like an assassin's dagger in the back. A total surprise attack. An act of quick violence. An act of BURDER...most fowl.

I don't have any pictures, but here is the clip that I shot. I did my best to enhance it.

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

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

(Ed. note: On February 24, several volunteers went to Stephen F. Austin State Park to visit the new interpretive center and the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site to learn about the history of that area. The following are reports sent to the newsletter to share the experiences of those who went. Photos of group and flag by Dave Armstrong, and of beaver cuttings by Anna Dell Williamson.)

SHARON HANZIK:

On Thursday, February 24, nine volunteers and I visited Stephen F. Austin State Park (TPWD) and the San Felipe De Austin State Historic Site (THC) near San Felipe just east of Sealy. We had an opportunity to explore park roads and trails and do a little wildlife watching before we were met at the park's nature center by park interpreter Ben Horstmann. Ben showed us his newly opened nature center and explained about the park's grassroots effort to convert an existing picnic pavilion into the nature center. He also gave us some park history and explained SFA's visitation trends, interpretive programming and volunteer participation. After Ben's talk, he escorted us on a short hike down to the Brazos River and interpreted the park's flood plain landscape and turned our attention to the signs of an active beaver population along the upper river bank.



Afterward, we enjoyed a picnic lunch and traveled a short distance outside of the park to the historic site where Texas Historical Commission Staff Educator Amanda McVay interpreted the history of San Felipe de Austin. We toured the grounds, which included the Josey Store building, a dog-run cabin replica, an old well and a statue of Mr. Austin. Cold rain began to fall just as we wrapped up, but a well-rounded natural and cultural educational experience was had by all.

JUDY STRAUSS

It was a fun trip! I would just like to say that I don't often get to go on these Field trips because of work, but I was able to work it out this time. It was really fun being with everyone "away" from the Park, yet still enjoying the "family" love and interaction! It has been about 35 years since I have been up to Stephen F. Austin State Park, so I really enjoyed re-visiting the park. Thank you, Sharon !

DAVE ARMSTRONG

On February 24, 2011, Sharon Hanzik arranged a volunteer field trip to Stephen F. Austin State Park. About 12 volunteers met at the SFASP nature center for a presentation by Senior Interpretive Ranger Ben Horstmann. Ben explained the history of the park, dating back to the 1940's, which makes it almost as old as many of the volunteers present, and also the nuances of meaningful interpretation to the community given the limitation of the park and available resources.

We then took a tour of one of the trails that curved through new and older forests dating back to the mid-twentieth century to the Brazos River. The park claims to have about 400 acres and 6 miles of trails for hiking and mountain biking. Ben boasts of one steep hill that presents some challenge to the more elderly bikers.



Even a small acreage park offers new learning opportunities, and we found the discussion of the antics, especially the sex life, of the leaf-cutter ants to be awesome and spent some of our time trying to see some of the critters. We also observed what happens when poison ivy and 5-6 varieties of wild grape vines are allowed to grow unchecked on soft wood trees like cotton woods, (*Populus fremontii*) We observed with great excitement the decomposed remains of the trees that had been felled from the combined weight of the omnipresent vines. Our Creekfield hike will never be the same.

We traversed through three zones of river succession, noting the variety of flora unique to each zone as well as growth along the extant river bank. Ben pointed out the evidence of beaver activity, noting that the beavers are either invisible or nocturnal, because he has yet to see a live one. We were treated to an ephemeral glance at two small deer.

Exhausted after the strenuous climb up from the river, we gathered around picnic tables and tucked into our brown bag cuisine. Our tummies bulging over our belts and around our suspenders, we convoyed a short distance to the historic and re-built township of San Felipe, which has never been the same since it was burned to the ground to keep Santa Ana from using the privies on his way to defeat at San Jacinto. The historic little burg awaits it's phoenix rebirth from ashes. There we were happily greeted by two ladies who escorted us into the only modern building on the acreage. The building had both the look, feel, and smell of an old country store. We filled up the available folding chairs and engaged ourselves in a question and answer session about Moses and Esteban Austin, learned of a new battle flag which saw duty during the glorious victory at San Jacinto, and added a bit of early Texas trivia to our knowledge. After a brief tour of the grounds, we headed back towards Houston hoping to beat both the traffic and the rain.



In summary, we learned that the millipedes (*Archispirostreptus gigas*) sport about 300 legs and leave a purple dye spot on your hand if you pick them up; that poison Ivy is more interesting when in fall foliage; that beavers need to be trained by our trail trimming staff because they leave sharp points on the trees they gnaw down which are dangerous to hikers and bicycle tires; that it's almost impossible to identify

multiple varieties of grape vines when they are naked; and that every state park needs a great volunteer group like the BBSPVO. Until our next field trip, have fun at the park and turn in your monthly hours promptly on the last day of the month.

Respectively submitted by Sam L. Clemens, moniker for Dave Armstrong.

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULED

The next field trip will be a visit to a Texas Historical Commission site in Brazoria County. The Levi Jordan (pronounced Jurdan) Plantation visit, is scheduled for Wednesday, April 20. This site is not open to the public and with the current state of affairs, it may not be for some time. There will most likely be a visit to another natural or cultural site nearby - TBA.

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE, 175 YEARS

Did you know that 2011 marks the 175th year of Texas Independence? The Texas Historical Commission and corresponding TPWD sites will be celebrating. You can pick up a passport at either site and have it stamped as you visit select sites and receive a commemorative item in return.

TPWD NEWS RELEASE, SEPTEMBER 29, 2010

Texas Parks & Wildlife wages war on invading zebra mussels

Media Contact: Mike Cox, mike.cox@tpwd.state.tx.us

AUSTIN - Texas Parks & Wildlife Inland Fisheries Division personnel have been waging environmentally safe chemical warfare in North Texas against a formidable invader - zebra mussels. First discovered in Lake Texoma in April 2009, the fingernail-sized bivalves propagate rapidly and play havoc with their surrounding environment, clogging pipes, covering boat bottoms and ultimately threatening other aquatic life, including game fish.



An unprecedented week-long effort took place in late September, 2010. The operation focused on killing what is believed a relatively small population of zebra mussels along the 30-mile Sister Grove Creek, which carries water piped from Lake Texoma. "If we don't stop them before they get to Lake Lavon, the whole Trinity River basin is at risk," Regional Fisheries Director Van Zee said. Some 423 bags of potassium chloride -- 21,150 pounds -- went into Sister Grove Creek one plastic coffee can full at a time on an around-the-clock basis to maintain a dosage level that while hopefully fatal to zebra mussels would not be injurious to other species.

"We're waiting on more data, but we have already found some [zebra mussel] mortality at a couple of points along the creek," Van Zee says. "Right now I'm cautiously optimistic."

Texas boaters who operate their craft on Lake Texoma can do their part from keeping this harmful species from spreading by

- 1) cleaning any mussels, vegetation or foreign objects from the bottom of their boats;
- 2) draining all water from the boat, motor, livewells and bait buckets; and
- 3) drying the boat and trailer for at least a week before launching in another water body.

For more information on zebra mussels and other invasive species see the texasinvasives.org website.

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville, TX 77461

NEXT MEETING
SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2011

FIRST CLASS MAIL



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
Past-President:	Carrie Sample

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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> or <newsletter@brazosbend.org>). 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**