



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 6

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The Task Forces working under the BBEEC Steering Committee are very active. The Program Development Task Force is looking at a water quality study that will be a here and now project. They are also considering the exhibit design question for our future new EEC building. The Partnership Task Force has several preliminary designs for a logo for our organization and are looking at potential contacts for funding.

Additional help is always welcome in making BBSP a better experience for our visitors and a contributor to answers about nature and our environment.

Our annual Independence Celebration will be Saturday, June 30, 4 days in advance of July 4. Volunteers will have the opportunity to assist at 6:00 pm in the decoration of bicycles with material and flags furnished by BBSP. You could also bring your bike and be a part of the parade at 6:30 pm. Refreshments will include lemonade, popsicles, and watermelon. If you baked a batch of cookies for this event it would be quite a surprise if you had to carry any home. This celebration at BBSP of an important event in the history of the USA is very enjoyable for our park visitors and the Volunteers who help make it happen. If you have not yet been a part of this celebration, this is the year to join in the event.

In August we will have an afternoon General Meeting in the Dining Hall. At 2:00 pm we will enjoy deserts followed by the meeting at 2:30 pm. We will need seven volunteers to bring a dessert which would feed at least eight. Please sign up on the events calendar. Coffee and tea will be furnished. Before the general meeting we will have a budget meeting at 12:30 pm and then the executive meeting. These two meeting are open to all members, and we need you there to help establish projects and direction.

In this issue:

| | |
|---|----|
| President's Report..... | 1 |
| May Meeting Notes..... | 2 |
| BBSP Gets Trail Grant | 3 |
| Staff Reports..... | 4 |
| Sharon Out for Foot Surgery | 4 |
| Congratulations..... | 5 |
| Thank You. | 6 |
| Special Thanks from a School Group | 6 |
| Nature Center Report | 7 |
| Maintenance Reports. | 8 |
| Bird Migration Hikes at BBSP and Quintana. | 9 |
| Birds of a Feather. | 9 |
| Did You Know..... | 10 |
| Tag . . . You're It. | 11 |
| Get Well Wishes..... | 12 |
| Have You Seen This Tree?..... | 13 |
| New Garage Door Opener..... | 13 |
| Volunteer Help Needed Year Round | 13 |
| Correction | 13 |
| Eco-Explorers and Tadpole Classes | 14 |
| Beware of the Bees | 14 |
| Swamp Things! | 15 |
| Gift Shop News | 15 |
| A Busy Summer | 16 |
| TPWD Receives Funds | 16 |
| Known Around the World | 16 |
| Upcoming Events | 17 |
| Solution to Have You Seen this Tree? | 17 |
| Quetzal! | 17 |

We are still ready to welcome you and your suggestions at our next group of meetings on June 9, starting with the Budget/Executive Meetings at 3:00 pm and the General Meeting at 5:30 pm.

Offie Walker

MAY MEETING NOTES

reported by Anna Dell Williamson

Mary Lockwood, Vice-President, called the May 12, 2012, meeting to order. There were 11 volunteers, 1 VIT and 1 staff person attending. Mary thanked Woody Scott, Judy Strauss and Barbara Lilly for dinner, sides and dessert.

The minutes of the April meeting were approved as posted.

Treasurer Bob Kowalewski brought the budget report. The following budget requests were presented and approved by the membership:

- New software for the Gift Shop. This is a Quickbooks Point of Sale version, which will improve inventory tracking, provide equipment to allow us to accept credit cards and print receipts if needed, allow us to develop gift cards and offer discounts (to donors, etc.), and provide several other features. It will provide a daily report of cash sales, credit card sales, merchant processing, transaction fees, etc. We want to use the system seven days a week, and train all volunteers who work in the GS on the system. We are losing sales because we don't take credit cards. We are working with the UH Small Business division, which provides us with a free Quickbooks consultant to set up the software and train us in the system, and a retail business advisor to look at our pricing strategy, set up, etc. The funds will come from the Kilgore and Ramsayer grant funds, plus remodeling funds that have not been used to improve the GS after we see the consultant.
- Forty-gallon skid sprayer for resource management to spray trails. Funds will come from the Park Supervisor's fund for resource management.
- Automatic garage door openers, for NC garage. We will have the opener installed. It will help security and make the garage more accessible for volunteers.

Bob brought the Profit and Loss reports. Income is slightly down from March, which had added revenue due to Spring Break. Expenses were also down.

There was a brief discussion on formal fund-raising events.

Committee reports:

Bob Kowalewski is working on the Annual Report for the park, which is due in May.

Gift Shop: Beth Debenport reported that we have several new merchandise items, including Bobblehead Alligators, keychains, magnets and picture frames. We discussed having our own design for a t-shirt, perhaps based on a logo suggestion at the Partnership Meeting earlier today. The GS Committee members are trying to keep up on keeping merchandise in stock. It will take a lot more work when sales increase, and we will need more help in the GS. Thanks to all who work the GS shifts.

Maintenance crew: Woody Scott reported that the maintenance crew has been doing lots of wood bundling, keeping up with the demand. There have been lots of blow downs to clean up. The hog traps have not caught anything recently. Trail trimming is ongoing, and has included the Observatory trail, Creekfield trail, and roadside. There followed a brief discussion of trail trimming activities and equipment.

There was an electrical power outage in the NC this morning due to the storms.

Outreach: Judy Strauss reported on the Sweeney Pride Day May 5; attendance was down a lot from last year. Nothing is coming up soon. The City of Rosenberg Night Out is on the third Saturdays in July and August. Old Town Night Out flyers will be given out here.

Newsletter: Anna Dell Williamson reported that Cynthia Morales did the complete layout this month.

Bylaws/SOP revisions: Mary Lockwood reported that the committee will be meeting soon to modify and update the SOPs and Bylaws.

Training: We have 6 members in training, and 3 have graduated: Gracie and Saerah Miller and Diana Platsek. We lost a few along the way. Barbara Willy is back and at the meeting and brought dessert for dinner.

The meeting was adjourned.

BBSP GETS TRAIL GRANT

May 24, 2012

\$3 Million in Trail Grants Awarded Across Texas

AUSTIN — The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission today approved \$3,014,992 million in federal funding for 26 National Recreational Trail Grant projects in communities across the state. The total includes \$485,000 in re-allocated trail funds for trail improvements in seven state parks.

The seven state parks to receive trails funding are Bastrop, Brazos Bend, Cooper Lake, Eisenhower, Government Canyon, Lake Brownwood and Martin Dies Jr. The money will go toward renovating existing trails, making trails more accessible, and helping with layout, design and other improvements. The 10-member Texas Statewide Trails Advisory Board developed a list of recommended projects for funding based on the quality of the project, its cost effectiveness, its impact on recreational trail opportunities and geographic distribution of funds.

The National Recreational Trails Fund comes from a portion of the federal gas tax generated by the sale of gasoline for use in off-road recreational vehicles such as dirt bikes and All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). Money from the trail fund goes toward the creation and maintenance of motorized and non-motorized recreational trails. The Federal Highway Administration manages the fund and distributes portions of it to states based on a formula that takes into account the state's population and fuel sales for off-road vehicles. The program provides 80-20 matching grants, so that in each case the grant recipient must pay for 20 percent of the total project cost.

STAFF REPORTS



SHARON HANZIK INTERPRETIVE RANGER AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Parks and Wildlife is promoting "Take Mom to a State Park for Mothers' Day", with a YouTube video that was filmed at BBSP with a homeschool group.

We've been bombarded with school groups this past week and expect more.

National Trails Days June 2, is another Statewide promotion. We have not been meeting revenue goals in State Parks since the drought and flooding of the past year or so.

EcoExplorers is full and closed to registration. It will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays in June and July. See Carrie Sample if you need more information. Sign up is on the Special Events calendar.

The Independence Day Bike Parade will be held on June 30.

Summer groups are on the calendar. We will be having some schools coming during the summer, along with day care centers, and some offsite outreach programs on weekdays.

TPWD will be doing background checks on all volunteers. Please fill out a form and return it to Sharon by May 25.

Sharon is having foot surgery on June 1, and will be out all of June and much of July. She is relying on volunteers to keep things going. We all wish Sharon the best of luck with this surgery.

SHARON OUT FOR FOOT SURGERY

Dear Volunteers,

I will be having major foot surgery on June 1. I have two large bone spurs that have grown into the Achilles tendon on my right foot. The surgery will involve removing the tendon from the heel in order to remove the spurs. I will definitely be gone for the entire month of June and most likely the first half or all of July. It takes 4-6 six weeks off the foot completely and then rehab. I may not be back until August. All depends on my ability to drive.

I have received many generous offer from volunteers wishing to help me through this and those offers are greatly appreciated. I do have many family members in and around Needville to assist me. After the first few weeks, I may be begging for some additional company!

I have also been asked for my mailing address which is PO Box 1484, Needville, 77461. Family will check it for me.

I have been lining up a few volunteers to take over certain duties at the nature center while I am gone. If you are at the park on a regular basis and think that you may be able to cover something for me, that is where I will need the help the most.

I hope I get to see all of you at least once by May 29th or 30th which will be my last day of work - all depends on if I have everything ready to leave in your capable hands.

While I am gone, please contact David or any veteran volunteer for assistance.

Sharon Hanzik

CONGRATULATIONS



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Kent Fewell
Peter Guzman
Linda Keltner
Glen Kilgore
Michael Sanderson
Rebecca Sykes
Anna Dell Williamson

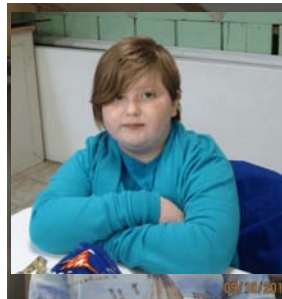
JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

Joe and Sue Carmichael (1953) (Emeritus)
Linda & Don Keltner

JULY BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Debra Baker | Drake Hacker |
| Diane Carpenter | Cynthia Morales |
| Jo Ann Davis | Susie Taylor (Staff) |
| Jacob Dement (Staff) | Barb Tucker |
| Jaci Elliott | Elizabeth Villanueva |
| Denise Wilks (Staff) | |

Congratulations to Diana Platzek, Saerah Miller and Gracie Miller for completing all of their VIT requirements and becoming full members of the organization.
Give them a hearty welcome.



Thank you!

to Mary Lockwood for conducting the May meeting

to Woody Scott, Judy Strauss and Barbara Lilly for the meeting dinner - enchiladas, beans, rice, cinnamon bread.

to Jaci Elliott, Hannah Meddaugh, Diane Carpenter, Bill Godley, Beth Debenport, Edgar Ladd and Greg Lavaty for articles and pictures for the newsletter.

to Holly Haynes, Jim North, Woody Scott, and Judy Strauss for their help with Sweeny Pride Day outreach program May 5.

to Cynthia Morales for doing the complete newsletter layout this month.

to Linda Keltner for organizing the purchase and presentation of the baby gift to Jacob Dement and

to Sylvia Carrillo, David Heinicke and Sharon Hanzik for providing attendance and program statistics for the Nature Center reports in the newsletter

to Diane Carpenter for researching, planning, purchasing and organizing the installation of the new Gift Shop software.

to Diane Carpenter, Beth Debenport, Kent Fewell, Bob Kowalewski, Leigh Allen, Linda Keltner and Anna Dell Williamson for completing inventory and helping with the implementation of the new Gift Shop software.

to all who donated to Jacob and Angie Dement's baby gift. We found out that Jacob and Angie buy all the baby stuff (diapers, formula, clothes) through Amazon.com, so we purchased an Amazon gift card for them. We also presented a crocheted blanket for the baby, and a doll for big sister. All was delivered on Tuesday, May 22.

Special Thanks from a School Group!

Ms. Hanzik,

I just wanted to take the time to thank you all for opening the Nature Center early on Thursday to accommodate our Thomas Tigers. Our students were so excited to make the trip out to the park and the icing on the cake was the chance to tour the Nature Center. Your employees and volunteers were so helpful and patient with our students. In short, our field trip was AMAZING and it wouldn't have been so without your team effort.

Thanks, again, for sharing your time and talents with us. We look forward to our yearly visit next year!

Sincerely,

Pam Clayton
5th grade Science
Thomas Elementary

NATURE CENTER REPORT

APRIL/MAY 2012

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for April 1-30, and May 1-31, 2012. April continued our busy spring visitation, starting with Easter weekend. May saw several large school groups on weekdays. (Ed. Note: Due to a vacation trip that prevented me from getting the attendance information until after the first of the month, the April and May Nature Center reports are combined. The same thing will happen with the June and July reports.)

| PROGRAMS | TOTALS APRIL | TOTALS MAY |
|---|--|--|
| NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE April 2012- 9,994 May 2012- 8,366 April 2011- 9,206 May 2011- 8,131 April 2010- 8,300 May 2010- 8,979 April 2009- 5,739 May 2009- 8,578 April 2008- 6,387 May 2008- 7,060 April 2007- 7,399 May 2007- 5,633 | Saturdays (4) -3,773 High,1220 (4/7) Easter Sat Average: 943 | Saturdays (4) -2,186 High,643 (5/19) Average: 546 |
| | Sundays (4) – 3,062 High, 669 (4/29) Average: 765 | Sundays (4) – 2,094 High, 652 (5/27) Average: 523 |
| | Weekdays (21) - 3,159 High,782 (4/6) Good Fri. Average: 150 | Weekdays (22) - 4,086 High,776 (5/10) Average: 186 |
| CREEKFIELD HIKES (9, 8) | 220 | 113 |
| CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (6, 5) | 97 | 79 |
| WILDLIFE VIEWING (2) | 118 | |
| SNAKE(4, 4) | 156 | 192 |
| ALLIGATOR (5, 6) | 172 | 130 |
| BIRDS (6, 4) | 76 | 66 |
| OUTREACH (6, 6) | 693 | 729 |
| POND LIFE (2, 1) | 124 | 30 |
| OTHER PROGRAMS (9): Owls, photo walk, armadillo, sundial and tracks | 27 | 61 |
| TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS | 1,683 | 1,400 |
| VOLUNTEER HOURS | INTERPRETATION = n/a MAINTENANCE = 199.5 TOTAL HOURS = n/a | INTERPRETATION = 730 MAINTENANCE = 195.5 TOTAL HOURS = 925.5 |
| PARK ATTENDANCE | Total 73,206 Day use 62,959 (86%) Overnight 10,247 (14%) NC Visitors 9994 (13.5%) | Total 22,505 Day use 18,560 (82.5%) Overnight 3,945 (17.5%) NC Visitors 8,366 (37%) |

MAINTENANCE REPORTS

APRIL AND MAY

(Ed. Note: Due to a vacation trip that prevented me from getting the maintenance reports until way after the first of the month, the April and May maintenance reports are combined. The same thing will happen with the June and July reports.)

APRIL Total hours, 199.5 MAY Total hours, 195.5



Wood Yard:

Split, bundled and delivered wood to 100 and 200 wood kiosks

Mowing and Landscaping:

Cleaned up downed trees from Power Company

Cleared downed trees near Steve's yard and on Live Oak Trail

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Cleared blowdown and trimmed Creekfield Forest Trail

Trimmed entrance to Creekfield Lake Trail, Creekfield Lake Trail, trail to Observatory, trail to Woodyard, 40-Acre Trail

Rescued and staked the downed Sycamore tree on Creekfield Lake Trail and removed vines from bushes and some trees on the trail

Other general trail trimming



Equipment Maintenance:

Removed Gator windshields and stored them at maintenance

Moved "slow moving vehicle" triangle so driver can see when backing up

Installed chain saw blade sharpener

Wired new Gators for fire ant spreader

Collected tools

Construction Projects:

Built brackets to store Gator windshield

Installed pegs to hang sharpened chain saw blades



Pest Control:

Treated for fire ants at the Nature Center, Creekfield Lake Trail, Headquarters, Overflow Camping Area, Entrance, Steve's house, Maintenance, 100 and 200 Loop and shelter roadways and around restroom areas, Elm Lake Trail, 40-Acre Lake Trail, 100 and 200 Camping Loops

Relocated 2 feral pig traps; trapped sow and 6 piglets; set and checked feral pig traps

Treated Chinese tallow



General Maintenance:

Removed all material, tools, equipment and metal shelving from outside wood yard shed so rangers could power wash and paint the shed.

BIRDING MIGRATION HIKES AT BBSP AND QUINTANA

by Bill Godley

As a part of our regular "Guided Birding Hikes," we have led "thirsty" birders on back to back hikes around the park and then to the Texas coast. The hikes have taken place on consecutive Fridays in April and May during which period the migrating birds pass through (or reside for summer) in our area. Weather and other factors dictate the success of these hikes to some degree but not one complains. Beginners who are able to do the entire journey are rewarded by an "cram" course in local birds as well as gulls, terns and an assortment of shorebird species and migrants at the coast.



Bay-Breasted Warbler



Cape May Warbler

This year there were four days in the six week period during which large numbers of migrants and other birds could be seen. Sadly, we missed all four of those days, each of which featured some storms before or during the hike period. Birds don't like to fly in lousy weather and choose to grab the first place of rest as they cross the coast on their journey north. No matter, we still

exceeded 60 species on all hikes and spotted over 85 species on several occasions. Not bad!

The hikes all have the same pattern. Meet at the 40-Acre Lake restrooms at 8 a.m., tour 40-Acre Lake for a couple of hours, sort out those who wish to continue to the coast, drive in car pools or individually to Quintana (an hour to the south). Drive south on highway 36, stopping in West Columbia for a quiet rest stop prior to the remaining short journey. Once arriving at Quintana (about noon), we check out all the local "migrant traps", the beach, jetty and other spots before heading home between 3 and 5 p.m.



One of the bonuses at Quintana is the presence of some top birders and photographers who are happy to assist us with their latest finds in the area.....very efficient compared to birding alone! In addition, the area is normally not crowded and very user friendly, as the tallest trees are generally under 15 feet tall, which makes viewing ideal.

Sounds like a "forced march," doesn't it? Not really! Once you too are able to view either a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Painted Bunting or Prairie Warbler, you will be thirsty for more.....I guarantee it! Astonishingly, most, but not all, of our participants are not BBSP volunteers! It's loads of fun. Think about it for next year. We would love to see you there.

Thanks to Greg Lavaty, photographer, for the pictures included with this article.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER...

by Diane Carpenter
Photos by Jerry Carpenter

Let me start by saying, I am not a birder. My native Texan husband, Jerry, can identify a bird a quarter mile away while he is driving. I'm from St. Louis; I know a Cardinal when I see one.

After we trained as BBSP volunteers, I became comfortable handling the alligator, then the snake and eventually the board that the tarantula rests on. But when it comes to birds, the most I can do is identify the herons, egrets, moorhens and whistling ducks to visitors while doing trail interpretation. Fortunately, visitors never ask about the little birds I can't find up in the trees. If someone asks about a bird during a visit to the Nature Center, I direct them to a ranger or volunteer who can help. I panicked one weekday

when a man from Rosenberg called the Nature Center to get help identifying a bird that flew over his house. Fortunately he described a big pink bird and I figured it was safe to say it was a Roseate Spoonbill.



Carrie Sample, Jane Bingham, Beth Debenport, Jerry Carpenter, Diane Carpenter with guides and photographer. Guide Ernesto (on right), Driver Moises (on left).

So I'm not sure why I jumped at volunteer Carrie Sample's suggestion of a birding trip to Costa Rica. It had something to do with seeing a beautiful place with other volunteers who love nature too. In April Carrie, Jerry, Beth Debenport and her sister-in-law, Jane Bingham, and I flew to San Jose and were driven several hours on crazy roads up to a mountain lodge. It was cold and rainy by the time we reached our destination. The guide, Ernesto, hoped it would be better at 5:45 AM when we met for our first birding of the trip. I know the early bird catches the worm, but does the birder have to? Ernesto bribed us with promises of great coffee from his family's coffee farm.

Birding before breakfast was great. Walking from our rooms to the main lodge was a birding feast. We sat on the patio and watched six different kinds of hummingbirds come to the plants and feeders. I did my best to see all the colors they flashed--these definitely weren't our ruby-throated variety. This was my kind of birding. After breakfast we rode to an area where the Resplendent Quetzal can be found. No visit to this area of the Talamanca Mountains would be complete without seeing this magnificent bird. Then we drove up to an elevation of 11,000 feet to find the Volcano Junco. But the weather turned foggy so there was no way to see the Junco unless he walked out in front of our feet. I was back to asking why I was doing this.

We hiked around in cold damp weather looking for birds on the ground and in the trees. Someone would spot one and do their best to help me see it. If Ernesto had the bird spotted in his scope, I was relieved to see it without trying to find it in my binoculars. On the second day I was determined to find the American Dipper that he said should be somewhere on the rocks in the stream. I yelled out to everyone that I had spotted it. I started thinking I could get the hang of this. Unfortunately when they asked where, I said, "on the gray rock." In a stream of a hundred gray and brown rocks, that wasn't very helpful. But everyone congratulated me on my accomplishment.

Over the nine days, we worked our way down to the coast. I enjoyed the hiking, the scenery, the birds, the mammals and reptiles we saw along the way. But I really learned to focus on the birds. I started remembering the names of birds I could more easily recognize. The Blue-Gray Tanager was easy. I remembered the Passerini's Tanager by calling him the Dan Pastorini bird, even though the bird is black with red, not Luv Ya Blue. I learned that the "junk" I spotted up in a tree was actually a bird's nest built close to a wasp nest for protection from predators. And eventually I was better at seeing a bird in my binoculars based on someone's description of its location.



Green-Breasted Mango Hummingbird

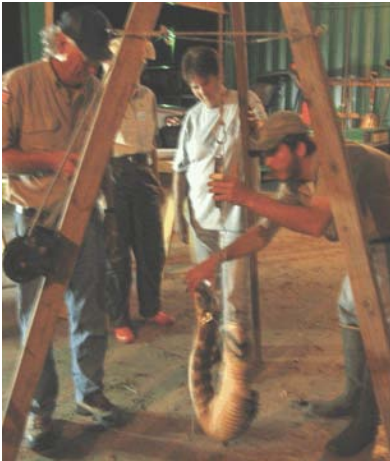
I never thought that becoming a BBSP volunteer would lead me to the cool mountains and hot Pacific coast of Costa Rica to see almost 300 species of birds. But that's what happens when birds of a feather flock together. With the help and patience of our guide and my friends and husband, I might qualify as a novice birder now. Or at least I am enough of a bird enthusiast to start looking more closely for the small birds up in the trees at Brazos Bend.

DID YOU KNOW?

Texas has over 630 species of birds, more than any other state. BBSP has 305 documented species.

TAG...YOU'RE IT!

by Jaci Elliott



Woody, Dawn, Judy, Cord tagging gator

If tagging gators by boat at night sounds like your idea of fun on a Saturday night (even into a bit of a Sunday morning), then you'd have company. Just such a company, including BBSP volunteers Judy Strauss, Woody Scott, Dawn Tejero, Mike and Mark Ostrowski, Jaci Elliott and husband Doug, and VIT member Lindsay Kahn gathered at the maintenance lot at the park following the BBVO April 14 monthly meeting to get in on the action. They hoped to assist Cord Eversole, a graduate student at Texas A&M University in Kingsville, with his research project on the American alligator populations in three regions of Texas: Welder Wildlife Refuge in Welder, Texas; Armand Bayou in the Clear Lake area and here at Brazos Bend State Park. Since February of this year, Cord has been catching, tagging and recording data on the gators to try to learn more about their range, their growth and even which tagging methods are most effective. Cord's partner in the field (or, to be more accurate, on the lake) is both his airboat pilot and his father, TPWD Game Warden Barry Eversole.

At dusk Cord and Barry maneuvered the airboat into Elm Lake, by first deftly rocking, then sliding it off the boat trailer, then gunning the fan so that the craft floated out onto the water. We were instructed to insert earplugs and don svelte camouflage life vests before boarding, and, as the boat was limited to carrying five people at a time, three of the eight volunteers (the other five showing much patience as they waited ashore) departed with Cord and Barry to start the first collection.

Equipped with three noose poles (designed to catch land mammals), two spotlights, and one 6-inch pincher, the crew skimmed across the aquatic plant life, through rattle bean bushes and over bobbing logs with ease—think an incredibly loud and large air hockey puck. Even so, you could discern the cacophonous chorus of amphibious life over the roar of the motor, and when seen, the bullfrogs and green treefrogs looked Gift Shop toy-like as they rode upon their lily pad rafts. The light beams cut back and forth, not unlike Hollywood Klieg lights, over the black of the open water and revealing the green of the duck weed until someone would spy the tell-tale red reflective eyes of a gator; then the boat would turn and slow for the approach.

Cord perched on the bow of the boat and held the thick tow rope in one hand and either the pincher or the noose pole in the other hand, signaling back for which instrument was needed based on the size of the gator (the noose pole was for the larger lizards). Then he would crouch down and either quickly snare his prey and heft it to the bow or else hang on while the creature's instinctive twisting behavior took over, whereby Cord would then ease the animal up against to the side of the boat and leverage it into relative stillness.

The trick was then to secure the gator's jaws. A master at work, Cord approached the gator, holding up one hand to the front of the nose (never to the side, as a gator can turn in a blink) and calmly pinched the snout down to the lower jaw. This is when a volunteer would excitedly bind the gator's jaws together with black electrical tape. Once the jaws were secure, the gator's eyes were bound with the tape (like a frog's, they protrude and then retract when pushed down). This temporary blindness to its captors' movements oftentimes simultaneously slowed the action down for all parties involved. Then the wrestled reptile, whose limbs are surprisingly flexible, was hog-tied; first pulling the front pair of legs behind its back and taping them together, then doing the same with the back pair. A dented galvanized water trough served as the holding tank for the first five alligators (ranging in length from 2 to about 5 ½ feet) caught that evening. With one leg up on the bow and eyes set into the distance, "Captain" Cord looked all the part of Washington crossing the Delaware as we headed back to the launch site across the lake, our carnivorous cargo safely stowed.

After a crash course in alligator capture, the full-time high school science teacher and part-time thrill seeker, my husband Doug, was handed over the reins, so to say, and Cord, Judy, Woody, Dawn and I, traveled back to the maintenance barn to help Cord collect and record his data.



Cord Eversole tagging

The tagging came first: volunteers worked together to clamp one yellow tail tag (with an easily identifiable number) to the rear end of the tail; then Cord inserted one red pin tag behind the animal's head (gator ID for when just its head is above water); a one-inch long metal toe tag was clamped between the webbing of the right rear leg (a larger scale version of what the baby gators in the Nature Center wear); and finally, a pit tag (an electronic monitor the size of a large grain of rice and which can be scanned when the gator is recaptured) was injected into the upper right side of the tail.

Then came the measuring, metrically, of course (once again reminding me, by my own conversion inadequacies, of another unfortunate divide between our society and our science): length from eye to nare (nostril); length of head (back of the skull to tip of snout); tail girth; snout to vent; total length; and weight.

Next the gator lost a bit of its body mass with a small extraction (not much bigger than the letter "O" in this article) of flesh between the webbing of its right back foot to be used as a tissue sample for DNA identification later on in the study. Cord wants to see perhaps where the currently tagged alligators in BBSP move within and outside of the park.

Spoiler Alert: this next bit of information is rated PG (as in Probing Gator). Cord offered to let volunteers learn how to determine the sex of the alligator via a cloacal examination (inserting one's pinky finger into the animal's vent and feeling for the existence of a rigid appendage, thumb tack in size, the hemi-penis: if found, male/if not, female).

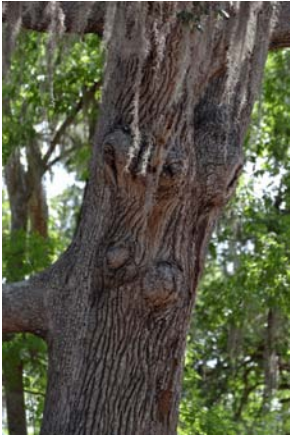
The whole information gathering process for one alligator took about 15 minutes. So with eight volunteers, one boat and two experts, the idea was to set up a rotation: some volunteers collecting gators with Barry driving and some volunteers collecting data with Cord measuring.

When one group of us returned with the gators who had been thoroughly (pardon me) *interrogated*—apprehended, bound, blindfolded, poked, prodded, chained (just for a few seconds so as to hang from the scale), or otherwise humiliated, and all for some plastic and metal "bling" and a new tracking device—the next group of gators was trucked over for the same treatment. The bright side of this police work was that all of the captives were released the same evening and with the intention that their short-term experience would lead to better knowledge about their long-term survival and success.

There is a real skill to successfully landing an alligator. With his slight frame and easy conversation, not to mention his lizard lassoing talent, Cord certainly conjures up a Will Rogers comparison here. Sadly, out of several attempts (let's say more than ten, less than twenty) to snare a gator, all I managed to temporarily loop was a few teeth. Judy had just a few tries at a gator but hung on to a rather large one (seven feet, perhaps—the limit that we could haul onto the boat) for several exciting seconds. Yes, I experienced a bit of gator guilt having so little to show for the superior scouting work of Barry, and the copious patience of my fellow boat mates: Dawn, Judy and Woody. I promise to make it up to you all, somehow. My husband's collection efforts resulted in four gators for the evening. And being the gentleman he is, on our drive back home around midnight, he didn't gloat (well...not too much).

GET WELL WISHES

Get well wishes go out to Sharon Hanzik and Ron Morrison, who both had surgery recently. We wish them both a speedy recovery. You two will be missed while you are out of the park.



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS TREE?

This picture was taken by Edgar Ladd and sent to Steve Killian. It is shared with our readers with permission from Mr. Ladd. He calls it "The Alligator Spirit in the Tree". Look carefully and identify what you see.

Do you know where this tree is? It is in a very well-traveled place near the front of the park on a public trail. Seeing it "in person" is even more striking. The answer to where the tree is can be found on page 17 of this newsletter.

NEW GARAGE DOOR OPENER

by Sharon Hanzik

We now have an automatic door opener on the NC garage door, so you can easily come and go for the water station supplies. There is a key pad outside next to the door that opens with the regular park locks combination. The button to open it from the inside is just above the light switch above the freezer in the garage.

Thank you, Nancy Partlow, for suggesting it, and the volunteer organization for funding it!

VOLUNTEER HELP NEEDED YEAR ROUND

by Sharon Hanzik

Please do not read anything into the message, except a desperate plea for help. This plea is not just for a day or for the upcoming weekend. It's for all year long. We have been experiencing very low volunteer turnout for about a month and are struggling to fill the needs and services of our visitors. Please step up to the plate and put in a couple hours here and there. One weekend day recently, we canceled programs in order to operate the front desk. If not for a few regular members, we'd shut the doors completely. Thank you very much to those members.

Let's live up to the claim of TPWD's #1 service organization. Please pitch in. Sign up in advance, even if it's midnight the night before. We need to know what to expect and how to juggle if no one signs up. Walk-ins are appreciated but signing up saves us worry and planning time.

CORRECTION: CREDITS FOR PICTURES IN MAY NEWSLETTER

The photographers of the pictures in the May newsletter on pages 11 and 13 were inadvertently left off. Please accept our apologies

Page 11:
Spider lily, Bruce Williamson

Page 13:
Red-Winged Blackbird, Jerry Zona
Violet Wood Sorrel, Jerry Zona
Ring-necked Duck, Gaio Nguyen
Speckled King Snake, Jerry Zona

ECO-EXPLORER AND TADPOLE CLASSES

Our popular summer program of Eco-Explorers and Tadpoles is in it's fifth year. Registration was already closed by mid May. There are about 35 children signed up for both the Tuesday (9:30 - 11: AM) and Thursday (9:30 - 11:30) sessions. Help is needed in many areas.

On most Tuesdays (Tadpoles) we will need to split into smaller groups, so we will need an adult with each group. Other help is needed, also. Please sign up to help on the Special Events Calendar. The dates and titles are listed below. If you have any questions about the programs, please call Carrie Sample at 281-937-7075, or email her at csample0@comcast.net. Thanks in advance for your continued support of this program.

Eco-Explorers Tadpoles (ages 3-7) will meet most Tuesdays, starting June 5 through July 31, from 9:30 – 11:00 am.

June 5 – Working Together – Explore what makes up an ecosystem. Make a picture of an ecosystem using natural materials.

June 12 – Billions of Bugs – Bugs are everywhere! How many different insects can we find? Make an insect with clay.

June 19 – Seed Search – Find seeds on a nature hike. Make a picture using seeds. Take home a planted seed.

July 10 – To Eat and Be Eaten – Everything has to eat. Explore a food chain in the forest.

July 24 – Wetland Wonders – Use microscopes to look at life under water. Make frog puppets and dragonflies.

July 31 – Our Feathered Friends – Special guest Mary Ann Weber of the Houston Audubon Society will bring her rescued birds.

Eco-Explorers (7 – 14) will meet each Thursday starting June 14 through July 26, from 9:30-11:30. Both programs will include explorations of a specific topic with indoor and outdoor activities, including games, crafts, songs, and snacks.

June 14 – High-Tech Scavenger Hunt – Learn to use a GPS and how to find geocaches.

June 21 – Mysteries of Water – Water changes everything. Find out how the one thing we all need to live serves our planet in so many ways.

June 28 – Micro-Monsters – Discover what lurks beneath the surface of a quiet pond.

July 12 – Reptile Relatives – What makes a reptile a reptile? Find out what snakes, crocodilians, lizards and turtles all have in common.

July 19 – Flying Wild – Special guest Mary Ann Weber of the Houston Audubon Society will conduct games and activities designed to teach us about bird life.

July 26 – Mammal Match – Match the skull with the pelt and tracks of mammals native to SE Texas. Create a food chain.

BEWARE OF THE BEES

sent by Sharon Hanzik

The Equestrian area is temporarily closed due to a large bee hive in one of the trees. Staff has been in contact with Beekeeper Herman Hoot about the problem. He has disturbed the hive enough to make the bees move out, but the area will remain closed until staff determines that the bees are gone.

Volunteers need to be aware of this situation for their own as well as visitor safety. Please notify all who go down there that the area is roped off for a reason and to stay out of there. Herman also noted that bees are attracted to dark colored clothing verses white or light colored clothing. Aggressive bees are also known to be attracted or hit on noisy equipment such as engine noise or possibly generators.

SWAMP THINGS!

Story and photos by Hannah Meddaugh

Unbeknownst to many, below the placid surface of any BBSP pond dwells bizarre, alien-looking creatures, in an amazing world filled with life, death, action and drama. We humans naturally pay most attention to the bigger critters-those on our own size scale. Birds, turtles, and alligators get most of the limelight. But a single bucket of water reveals a riot of life on a miniature scale.

On Saturday, April 28th, Glen Kilgore organized his regular pond life exhibit to give visitors a peek into this amazing world. Two buckets of water from a foot or two offshore of Creekfield Lake provided all the material needed. Yes, Creekfield Lake, the very lake that you could walk across this past summer, when it almost dried up completely, is chock-full of life already.



The buckets' contents were sorted on tables set up by the Nature Center, so kids and parents could stop by, look, and ask questions. Volunteers spent five hours searching through the buckets, separating algae from animals. In those two buckets of water, volunteers located about two dozen unique species, many represented by several individuals, as well as one odd creature that defied identification (possibly a flatworm or fly larvae). Finds included the strangely beautiful dragonfly larvae (looking like something from the movie *Alien*), tiny, energetic, corpuscular seed shrimp, your friendly neighborhood leech, predaceous diving beetle, and a juvenile lesser western siren, among other things.

Later, the group set up microscopes and viewing stations with labels identifying most critters, and a mystery station for visitors who wanted to try their luck at guessing a critter's identity. Dozens of visitors stopped by to get a look into a world rarely seen. Exclamations of "Weird!" and "Cool!" filled the air, and a few kids proclaimed their desire to become biologists one day. Many left with a better appreciation of the beauty and diversity of life.



At the end of the day, the critters went into the siren tank to allow further viewing. Back at Creekfield, the pond's surface quietly darkened with the evening sun, keeping its secrets hidden until the next pond life day.

GIFT SHOP NEWS

The Gift Shop Committee has purchased and installed new Point of Sale software that will allow us to have better control of our inventory records and also to accept credit cards. The new software was implemented Friday, June 1, and has already proven itself to be very useful. The software is easy to learn and use. All of the volunteer cashier's will be given instruction in how to operate the program and accept credit cards. Members of the Gift Shop Committee will be on hand on weekdays as well as on weekends to train everyone in how to use the program.

Diane Carpenter has been the leader in this endeavor, and we appreciate all the planning and time she has put into this project. She has worked daily at the park for two weeks. Beth Debenport, GS chairperson, did a tremendous amount of work getting the inventory information updated so it could be integrated into the new software. Beth, Kent Fewell and Anna Dell Williamson also spent several days at the park helping with the inventory and setup. Gift Shop Committee members who will be available to train cashiers in the future are Leigh Allen, Beth Debenport, Diane Carpenter, Debbie and Kent Fewell, Holly Haynes, Nancy Lynn Jones, Judy Strauss and Anna Dell Williamson.

A BUSY SUMMER

Tadpoles and Eco-Explorers will be meeting at the park most Tuesdays and Thursdays from June 5 through July 31. But that's not the only thing happening. Below is a listing of other summer events so far. Check the special events calendar to sign up to help or to look for additional activities. Even if the event is "covered", you are welcome to come and help.

Wednesday, June 13, 5:30pm - 6:30pm:

Scout Jamboree @ Fort Bend County Fairgrounds - covered

Wednesday, June 20, 10:00am

Westwood Elementary - 102, various grade levels 1/2 at reptile program, 1/2 on Creekfield hike, then swap - covered

Saturday, June 30, 6:00 PM.

Decorate bikes for a parade around the camping loops and enjoy refreshments.

Help needed.

Tuesday, July 10, 1:30pm - 2:30pm

Kids r Kids (Dawn Tejero group) Reptile program - covered

Wednesday, July 18, 1:30pm - 2:30pm

Kids r Kids (Dawn Tejero group) Reptile program - Help needed

TPWD RECEIVES FUNDS

Dallas Safari Club and Whole Earth Provision Co. presented checks to TPWD at the May 24 Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission meeting in Austin.

Dallas Safari Club (DSC) and leaders delivered a \$50,000 check to support Texas Parks and Wildlife Department programs for public hunting, conservation, education, state parks and law enforcement. DSC this year set a record with over \$1 million in grants for conservation, education and hunter advocacy efforts worldwide. Texas Parks and Wildlife is the largest single recipient with 2012 grants totaling \$67,500.

Whole Earth Provision Co. presented a check for \$30,000 to benefit Texas State Parks. The donation came from a month-long in-store promotion as well as proceeds from the Banff Mountain Film Festival, which was held in Austin in mid-April. The in-store donation effort took place for the entire month of April in the company's eight stores in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Austin. Whole Earth purchased \$5 gift cards from Texas State Parks to give to every customer who donated \$20. They actively requested donations from their customers and promoted the effort with signage in stores, post cards, press releases, and through social media.

"The outpouring of support from Texans and Texas businesses has been gratifying," said Brent Leisure, TPWD State Parks Director. Other businesses have also made donations or helped raise funds for Texas state parks, including REI, Toyota, La Quinta Inns and Suites, Geico, and Crestview RV. Thanks to these businesses, and the generous donations of private individuals and foundations, close to \$1.7 million of the \$4.6 million needed to close the gap has already been raised.

KNOWN AROUND THE WORLD BUT NOT IN OUR OWN AREA

Thursday, May 31, we had a gentleman in the Gift Shop on business (not a visitor) who lives in League City and said he had never heard of BBSP. That same day we had a visitor from Europe come to the NC to ask about birding and say that he had heard of BBSP from European friends who had visited here.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- June 9 Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM
Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
- June 30 Independence Day Bike Parade, 6:00 PM
- July 14 Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM
Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
- August 11 Budget and Executive Meetings, 12:30 PM
NOTE CHANGE Regular Business Meeting, 2:30 PM (Desserts at 2:00), Dining Hall
- September 8 Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM
Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
- October 6 Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 PM
- October 7 17th Annual Brazos Bend Butterfly Count
- October 13 Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM
Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
- November 3 Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 PM
- November 10 Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM
Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
- December 1 Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 PM
- December 8 Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM

SOLUTION TO “HAVE YOU SEEN THIS TREE?” (P. 13)

Answer: The tree is located in the 40-Acre Lake picnic area. On the left side of the restroom building there is a single park bench. If you sit on the bench, you can see the tree directly in front of you about 75 feet away. The shape is slightly to the right side of the tree, in a direct line with the branch on the left. Mr. Ladd suggests that the best viewing time is around 9:00 AM. The photo is not touched up in any way.

QUETZAL!

Photo by Beth Debenport (see “Birds of a Feather”, pp. 9–10)



Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville, TX 77461

☆☆☆☆☆☆

NEXT MEETING
SATURDAY, JULY 14, 2012
5:30 PM, NATURE CENTER

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 | Belinda DiMarcello |
| Treasurer: | Bob Kowalewski |
| Past-President: | Carrie Sample |
| Comptroller: | Nancy Lynn Jones |

NEWSLETTER TEAM

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
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| Layout | Cynthia Morales |
| Production Assistant | Bruce Williamson |
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| Web Master | Anne Shelton |

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**