

# BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 25

NUMBER 8

## AUGUST MEETING NOTES

*reported by Anna Dell Williamson*

**President Mary Lockwood** called the August meeting to order on August 10, 2013. There were 18 members, 4 VITs and 3 staff members present. Mary thanked **Pete Hart, Cindy Peterson, Anna Dell Williamson** and **Mary Lockwood** for bringing items for the meeting dinner. **VITs Dawn, Cristinee, Trinity, and Donovan Smith** completed their training requirements today. The minutes of the June meeting were approved as posted.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

#### Treasurer, **Bob Kowalewski**:

The following requests for expenditures were presented and approved.

1. David: Atrix back-pack vacuum for the Nature Center
2. David: Canon Power-shot A 2300 digital camera for law enforcement and interpretation.
3. Jeff Orsak: Lawn mower parts.
4. Steve Killian: funds to repair park entrance sign. We will also put some type of deterrent to discourage visitors from climbing on the sign and damaging it.

The financial report for July was presented.

Bob asked for people interested in serving as Treasurer. He cannot run again due to term limitations and will be happy to talk to interested volunteer with some accounting knowledge.

**Nominating Committee: Bob Kowalewski, chairperson; Carrie Sample, and Bruce Williamson.**

The committee presented the following nominees:

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President: Mary Lockwood  
Vice-president: Glen Kilgore  
Treasurer: open  
Secretary: Melanie Jahn  
Members-at-Large: Mike Sanderson, Diane Welty

The floor was opened for further Nominations.  
Belinda DiMarcello was nominated for Member-at-Large.  
Nominations were closed.

The final slate will be presented to the membership before the September meeting. If there are contested positions, the election will be by ballot. There was discussion of how to handle the paper ballot - It can be emailed to the membership and be returned by mail or email.

**Maintenance Crew, Pete Hart:**

The crew reported 145 hours for July. Ron Morrison had surgery and is doing well. There is space available for more help. Several hogs were relocated.

**Wood Sales, Chuck Duplant:**

Wood sales have been slow, with fewer campers in the summer. We had an 86% return for July, and the splitting and bundling are going well.

**Memorials, Cindy Peterson:**

We have had many donations to the Candice Kanak Memorial fund.

**Training, Anna Dell Williamson:**

As always, we need help. Belinda DiMarcello is assisting with training this year, and we will be sending out emails of the needs we have. There are 16 VITs on the roster. Dates are September 14, 21, and 28.

**Outreach, Judy Strauss:**

Our Missouri City Library outreach rendered good service for the park. The next outreach will be in October.

**Blood Drive, Chuck Duplant:**

The next blood drive is scheduled for November 2.

**BBEEC, David Heinicke:**

David presented some architect preliminary rendering drawings that we can use for fund-raising. The drawings do not dictate what the final building will look like but will be used to solicit donors. We looked at the drawings offered, and we will be selecting 12 drawings on poster board with electronic versions.



The survey has not been completed yet, which will better orient where the trees are in relationship to the building, to try to approximate what things will look like. This first round is not exact, and we will need more input. As we go forward and have more site-work done, pictures will be more accurate.

We discussed possible mottos or slogans and use of a progress thermometer. Send motto suggestions to David. The goal of the motto is to promote the Environmental Education Center. Think of a motto, possibly with BBSP in title.

**Announcement:** Woody Scott is a great grandfather. Great grandson's name is Ashton.

# AUGUST STAFF REPORTS

## STEVE KILLIAN, PARK SUPERINTENDENT



- We had a record July, thanks to the volunteers. Visitation is increasing, and we've had well over 1/4 million visitors this fiscal year.
- The Perseid meteor shower occurs tonight.
- The Nature Center roof is almost finished, with a few minor corrections to come. We will see major energy savings from this addition!
- Trail work is ongoing.
- There is a new Headquarters Gift Shop storage building, and revenue from both Gift Shops continues to increase.
- We are planning with the TPWD Resource Specialist Andy Siipocz, for trails, proposed new additions, and resource management projects. The cornerstone of the park is its Natural Resource Management.
- Last weekend, the *Houston Chronicle* did a writeup on the Pilant Slough structure.
- We will aerial spray Green Tree Reservoir to kill Chinese tallow along the Mile Stretch, and replant the swamp with native oaks and other tree species. Any collateral damage to black willows will recoup rapidly. Plans are for this fall.

## SHARON HANZIK, NATURALIST AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR



- The Fall training class, September 14, 21, and 28, has 16 trainees.
- Labor Day Weekend, August 31-Sept 2. Please sign up for middle of day before filling up other shifts.
- Volunteer Picnic will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October (the 19<sup>th</sup>) with the photo at 5:30 and dinner at 6:00 PM.
- Fiscal year ends August 31. Report all hours by August 31.
- The September August TPWD featured event was swimming. The September event is Geocaching. Carl Franke is leading classes all month
- TPWD Arts in Parks - program or project for park.
- Kids Out and About Houston had a contest to list the top 20 things to do in the Houston Area. BBSP is #6, and they have an item in their NL about BBSP.
- Thanks for coverage during summer. Start again Labor Day.

## DAVID HEINICKE, NATURALIST AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER



- We are incubating alligator eggs in the garage. There is no nest inventory this year. Nesting is late and down because of the draught. We took 33 eggs from a nest at 40-Acre Lake, with no response from the mother. If we can, we'll notify volunteers to come help with the hatching.
- The new room insulation is helping with the keeping the building cool. Contractors may come in and do some guttering along the roof, to collect water for watering flower beds.
- David will be on vacation soon.
- We are looking for new snake cages for the venomous snakes. We need 4 cages.
- Friday bird hikes will start in September. David will be leading, Jerry Carpenter and Bob Schwartz will be helping. We can use more help leading or participating. The schedule is posted on the web site.
- We are developing a phenology project to study the influence of climate on the recurrence of such

annual phenomena of animal and plant life as budding and bird migrations. We will use school groups to carry out the projects; teachers can come on a field trip and can do science- or math-based activities on their own.

- The BBEEC building plans will be presented under committee reports.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

### RAE BASSETT

*by Diane Welty*



One of the recently fledged Volunteers from the 2013 February class is RAE BASSETT. I met Rae on the first day of training. She seemed like she was going to be a great asset to the BBSP Volunteers. I was right!

She is among the first to fulfill her initial requirements. You can often find her at work at the Nature Center on the weekends. She lives close to the park in Richmond. She has worked with people and animals her entire life. This made BBSP the first spot she looked to volunteer her time and talents.

Rae is originally from the state of Washington, where she grew up on a farm. She thought she always wanted to be a Forest Ranger. As many of us, she moved around a couple times. As a teenager, she ended up in Texas where she has stayed. Living close to the park, she often brought her three kids (2 boys and a girl) to the BBSP for parties and gatherings. FYI, she has FIVE grandchildren (including a set of twins) and a great grandson. One would think this would keep her busy enough, but no.

She spent 26 years as an adult probation officer. She enjoyed this position, as well as held her assignees accountable. She has also been a substitute teacher in the Lamar Consolidated School System for several years. She has also functioned as a Deputy Sherriff and as an EMT for a few years.

She enjoys talking with people. Having grown up with horses, dogs, cats and other animals she is a natural with animals. She is becoming a birder. She has been introduced to Round Dancing by a fellow BBSP Volunteer.

I inquired if there was any aspect of our organization that she has not yet become involved AND would like to. She surprised me with a quick answer. She wants to work in the wood yard and also go out and assist with the trimming of the trees along the trails. We have a good long-lasting volunteer in Rae Bassett.

## CONGRATULATIONS

We welcome the Smith Family, Dawn, Cristinee, Trinity and Donovan, and Christian Vodnik as new members of the BBSPVO. Give them a friendly welcome to the group.



Dawn



Cristinee



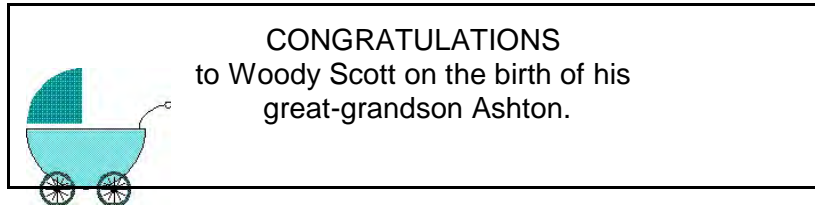
Trinity



Donovan



Christian



### SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- Gary Bialas (Staff)
- Jim Calvert
- Ron Dearman
- Allen Elster (Staff)
- Barry Eversole (Staff)
- Frank Gregg (Emeritus)
- Holly Haynes
- Linda Oden Heinicke
- Tina Ibarra (Staff)
- Mike Manley
- Sammie Miller
- Paige Norwood

### SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- Dave (Emeritus) and Gay Armstrong (1967)
- Jaci Elliott
- Kent and Debbie Fewell
- Eddy and Sam Grizzaffi
- Jim and Patricia Hiatt
- Don and Marilyn Vossler (1966)

### OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- Debbie Fewell
- Buddy Franklin (Emeritus)
- Mozelle Franklin (Emeritus)
- Pete Hart
- Tom Kanak
- Nicole Olson
- Bob Schwartz

### OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

- Justin and Kate Bower
- Diane and Jerry Carpenter

## GEOCACHING VIDEO AND CURRICULUM

*from Sharon Hanzik*

Interested in geocaching but cannot make it to a Geocaching 101 program? Ryan Spencer, Outdoor Education Specialist, Texas Outdoor Family, has created a video to help staff and volunteers during upcoming Geocaching 101 workshops. The link below will take you to TPWD personal how to video. Should you have any questions regarding geocaching workshops, please feel free to send Ryan an email. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqa9\\_f4sPhA&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqa9_f4sPhA&feature=youtu.be)

This information was emailed by Sharon, along with the Geocaching Curriculum used by the Texas Outdoor Family staff. For more information about BBSP Geocaching, contact Carl Franke or Sharon.

# JULY MAINTENANCE REPORT

The Maintenance Crew reported 145 hours for July, including the following areas:

## **Wood Yard:**

split and bundle wood  
cut dead pine tree, clear blowdowns

## **Mowing and Landscaping:**

collect wild ryeseeds

## **Special Projects:**

Relocate buffalo

## **Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:**

trail maintenance and patrol  
clear blowdown tree  
fill potholes with rock

## **Pest Control:**

Treat Chinese tallow trees  
set and check hog traps

# ALLIGATOR EGGS AND BABIES

*by Sharon Hanzik*

**August 10:** Thirty-three eggs were collected from a nest in 40-Acre Lake in early August. All were collected, as there was no water in the area and chances of abandonment or predation are high. These eggs are not for public viewing nor should volunteers handle the eggs. The incubation set-up is simple. Nesting material is collected along with the eggs and placed in a large plastic container in the NC garage. It is warm enough for the eggs. We expect a late hatching due to late nesting, approximately the first week in September - but don't hold us to that.

They will be checked on daily and if it appears that hatching will take place, we will send an email to all as early as possible. If you are interested and available, keep an eye on your email. There is a chance that a few hatch early and others hatch days or even a full week later. It's happened before.

**August 27:** 4 healthy gators hatched, two weak ones were in quarantine, and 10 eggs were duds - no embryos. Only time will tell what will happen with the rest of the 33 eggs.

**September 3:** We have 20 live babies from 33 eggs. Two underdeveloped babies died and the rest of the eggs contained no embryos. The eggs began hatching at random starting Tuesday, August 27th through Tuesday, September 3rd.



# THANK YOU

- ☺ to **Jerry and Diane Carpenter** for the replacement microwave for the volunteer lounge.
- ☺ to **Pete Hart, Cindy Peterson, Anna Dell Williamson and Mary Lockwood** for bringing items for the August meeting dinner.
- ☺ to **everyone** who has helped with the planning for September VIT training, and who signed up to assist in the actual training process September 14, 21 and 28. This is a community project - it takes the whole organization to properly train new volunteers. Your help is greatly appreciated.
- ☺ to the **volunteers** who gave up some of your Labor Day holiday weekend to serve at Brazos Bend. It is greatly appreciated!
- ☺ to Mary Lockwood for cleaning the lounge/kitchen! It's a dirty job and nobody wants to do it!!!

## THANKS, BBSPVO

*by John Hite, former volunteer*

In late August, I went bow-fishing for gar with my dad on Armand Bayou, about a half-mile upstream from the Armand Bayou Nature Center in Clear Lake. In order to do this, we were slowly trolling along the shore about 8 to 10 feet off the bank in calm water. The boat we were in was only about 10 feet long, just under 3 feet wide, and not exceptionally stable, especially with two grown men standing up in it.

After we had been on the water for a few hours and were pretty far from where we had started out, we heard a loud splash in front of us. I assumed it was either a large gar too far away to catch or an alligator. I had seen alligators just about every time I had been out on the bayou. I never bothered them, they never bothered me, and we never had any problems. Besides, I had practically grown up at Brazos Bend State Park. My grandparents had been volunteers there my entire life, all our family get-togethers had been there, and I had even been a volunteer myself for a few years in high school. Alligators were nothing new, so I thought little of seeing them out there.

However, a few seconds after the splash, I heard a familiar chirping coming from the bank very near to us. Not a bird, nor a frog; no, that was something else. I knew that sound. That was a nest of baby alligators calling for mother. I was manning the tiller and immediately cranked the little electric motor up as fast as it would go.

I looked on the bank and sure enough, there was an alligator's nest with about 8 or 10 freshly hatched alligators, only about 6 inches long, chirping away. Noticeably missing from the bank, though, was the mother. Uh oh! The splash we had heard. Sure enough, at that moment she surfaced just off to port (that's left for all you non-nautical people), roiling the water and generally flexing with all the might that an angry mother alligator can muster.

Well, that was our one warning, and it was all we needed. After we were away from that spot, my dad and I looked at each other and decided we really needed to thank the volunteers and staff at Brazos Bend profusely. I'm certain I would have not recognized the noise or the extent of the danger of that situation if I had not spent so much time there as a kid. I cannot really speak to specifics, but I suspect the situation might have unfolded something along the lines of, "Hey look, baby alligators," followed by the potentially disastrous, "How cool, let's get a closer look!"

I really think that my time at Brazos Bend saved me a good deal of trouble that weekend, so thank you to each one of you there who educates everyone who comes through and visits about the amazing and oft misrepresented creatures known as alligators. *(Note: Proud grandparents are Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson.)*

# NATURE CENTER REPORT

## JULY 2013

*Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for July 1-31, 2013. July 4 was Independence Day, with programs and hikes offered. Weekday attendance was very good - average over 100. Volunteers and staff presented 26 programs and hikes. For the first time ever we had over 80 thousand visitors through the nature center in one fiscal year (80,504 to be exact, about 3,000 more than last year). Fiscal year is September 1, 2012 - August 31, 2013.*

PROGRAMS	TOTALS JULY
<b>NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE</b>	Saturdays (4) - 1,859 High, 518 (7/6) Average: 465
July 2013 - 5,751 July 2012 - 4,771 July 2011 - 5,469 July 2010 - 4,683 July 2009 - 4,298 July 2008 - 4,484 July 2007 - 2,825 July 2006 - 3,339 July 2005 - 3,339	Sundays (4) - 1,068 High, 348 (7/28) Average: 267
	Weekdays (23) - 2,824 High, 335 (7/4) Average: 122
<b>CREEKFIELD HIKES (7)</b>	63, Average: 9
<b>SNAKE PROGRAM (5)</b>	155, Average: 31
<b>CHILDREN'S STORYTIME(8)</b>	95, Average: 12
<b>ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS(5)</b>	100, Average: 20
<b>GEOCACHING (1)</b>	42
<b>OUTREACH (3)</b>	178, Average: 59
<b>PONDLIFE (1)</b>	25
<b>OWLS (2)</b>	28, Average: 14
<b>OTHER PROGRAMS (5):</b> Birds (1), Wildlife Viewing (1), Photo Walk (1), Videos (2)	61, Average: 12
<b>TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS</b>	747
<b>VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>	Interpretation = 511 Maintenance/ Other = 145 TOTAL = 656
<b>PARK ATTENDANCE</b> , July 2013 (Percentage reflects the percentage of total visitors in each category.) <b>2013 TO 7/31</b>	Total 16,716 Day use (81%) 13,592 Overnight (19%) 3,124 NC (36%) 6,012
NC 45,733 Park 157,618 <b>FISCAL YEAR 2012-2013</b> Park 239,052	<b>FISCAL YEAR 2012-2013</b> NC 80,504

### BLOOD DRIVE

Our next blood drive will be Saturday Nov. 2, 2013 in the NC parking lot. Thanks to all who worked or donated at the last drive. If you know you can donate that day, contact Chuck Duplant at [cduplant@msn.com](mailto:cduplant@msn.com).

### TRAINING REMINDER

VIT Training begins with Orientation on Saturday September 14. There are 15 VITs. Sign up to bring sandwich makings or to offer to help with set up or clean up. Come to lunch prepared to introduce yourself to the VITs and tell them why you volunteer and what you enjoy most. This is the one chance the VITs get to see many of the volunteers in one place, so please try to attend. If you can assist with set up or clean up, sign up on the special events calendar.

Following lunch there is a Nature Center Scavenger Hunt and a Road Tour. We could use one or two more drivers to take 2 VITs around the park. Contact Anna Dell Williamson at [awilliamson4@comcast.net](mailto:awilliamson4@comcast.net).

### JUST FOR GRINS

From George Burns, *Wisdom of the 90s*,  
Written with Hal Goldman, Published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, Copyright 1991.

Dumbest Dumb Animals:

**Hummingbird:** It's about time he learned the lyrics.

**Frog:** When's the last time you heard of one knowing how to turn back into a prince?



# BRAZOS BEND BUTTERFLY COUNT

by Rich Jespersen



The 18th Annual Brazos Bend Butterfly Count will be held on Sunday, October 6, 2013. We would love to have you join us. Meet at the 40-acre Lake parking lot at 9:00 AM. Everyone is invited and no experience is required. Beginners will be paired with experienced counters. The extra eyes are very helpful and it is a fun way to learn to identify our local butterflies.

This citizen science project is one of several annual butterfly counts in the Houston area (and many more nationwide). Participants divide into small groups and patrol areas within BBSP and vicinity counting all species and individual butterflies they see. We gather at the Elm Lake picnic ground at 12:30 to tally our preliminary results and eat our sack lunches. Those who wish to count in the afternoon, patrol other areas inside and outside the park within the official 15-mile count circle and email their results to us.

Bring lunch, drinking water, mosquito repellent, sun protection, and (if you have them) butterfly field guides and close-focusing binoculars. Cameras are also helpful to assist in identification. There is a \$3.00 per person North American Butterfly Association fee to participate. The Park entry fee will be waived for participants who stop at headquarters and identify themselves as participants in the count.

Our first count in 1995 tallied 392 butterflies of 30 species. The record count of 2001 found 5340 butterflies of 57 species. Last year, Clouded Sulphurs and a Great Purple Hairstreak, unusual for the count, and Zebra Heliconians, seen for the first time, were among the 372 individuals of 35 species reported.

For additional information contact count compiler Rich Jespersen at [richj@consolidated.net](mailto:richj@consolidated.net).

Photo of White-striped Longtail by Sandy Jespersen.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION VENOMOUS SNAKE BITE INFORMATION

### Precautions and Prevention

1. Learn to recognize the snakes that are likely to occur in the area in which you are or will be. This is important should treatment be necessary, and may prevent the killing of harmless snakes.
2. Minimize the chance of an unfortunate encounter with a venomous snake by learning about snakes' habits, when and where they are likely to be active and under what conditions they are likely to strike.
3. Be sensible. Don't walk around after dark in snake country collecting firewood or engaging in other activities without a light. Don't put your hands and feet where you can't see them. Use caution when disturbing areas such as piles of materials, brush, etc.
4. Dress appropriately, wearing suitable boots, shoes and long pants or other protective clothing where encounters are likely to occur.
5. Do not play around with live or dead venomous snakes; some snakes thought to have been dead have been known to bite and inject venom.
6. Be prepared. Know what to do and what not to do when first aid is required.

Much controversy exists about proper first aid procedures. These are considered to be the easiest and most important steps to remember.

### First Aid – Sensible measures

1. Assume venom has been injected, (there is the occasional dry bite), especially if the following symptoms are present:

### **Pit Viper Bites**

- a. Fang puncture marks (usually two, but in some cases, only one)
- b. Immediate burning pain at the bite site
- c. Immediate and usually progressive local swelling within five minutes
- d. Local discoloration of the skin due to the destruction of blood vessels and red blood cells.

### **Coral Snake Bites**

- a. Tremors
  - b. Slurred speech
  - c. Blurred and double vision
  - d. Drowsiness or euphoria
  - e. A marked increase in salivation within four hours (life threatening effects from coral snake envenomation may not be evident for 24 hours or longer)
2. If at all possible, identify the snake that inflicted the bite and inform medical personnel. This will aid in treatment but is not absolutely necessary.
  3. Keep the victim and any bystanders as calm as possible. This helps reduce the spread of venom and the onset of shock to the victim. Know and be alert for the symptoms of shock and institute the proper treatment should it ensue. Difficulty in breathing and/or kidney failure are frequent symptoms of envenomation.
  4. Wash/disinfect the bite area if possible.
  5. Remove jewelry, such as rings and watches, as well as tight-fitting clothes, before the onset of swelling.
  6. Reduce or prevent movement of a bitten extremity, which helps decrease the spread of venom. For the same reason, position the extremity below the level of the heart.
  7. Get victim to a medical facility where most likely (after insurance forms are filled out) victim will be monitored and given fluids and if nothing out of the ordinary occurs after a few hours, victim will be given antibiotics and pain medications and sent home. (This is for cases of pit viper bites of low or tolerant venom injections.) Many hospitals in the U.S. do not carry anti-venim as it is only used in life-threatening cases, which are rare.)

The following should be AVOIDED:

1. **DO NOT MAKE INCISIONS OVER THE BITE MARKS.**  
This can increase the chance of infection as well as enhance bleeding to anti-coagulated blood.
2. **DO NOT USE A TOURNIQUET.**  
Since we have removed constricting items due to swelling, this only contradicts first aid measures and can stop blood flow to extremities, causing possible loss thereof.
3. **DO NOT ICE.**  
This causes additional trauma to already damaged tissue.
4. **AVOID USING ELECTROSHOCK THERAPY.**  
There is not yet enough clinical evidence to support positive results (American Medical Association).
5. **DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL OR TAKE BLOOD THINNING PAIN RELIEVERS, SUCH AS ASPIRIN**  
They are blood thinners and will only increase the circulation of venom.

## **WATERMELON, ANYONE?**

*by Jaci Eliot*



I wanted to send you this picture from the park from last month. When I first walked by I had to do a double-take to ensure there weren't striped watermelons growing in the lotus plants at 40-Acre Lake!

See what you think.

# BRAZOS BEND RANKS #6

from Sharon Hanzik

KidsOutAndAbout asked readers to rank the top 20 places to take kids in the Houston area. Brazos Bend State Park didn't win it all, but we did rank #6! What is impressive is who we BEAT! Thanks for the votes! See the results below.

## KidsOutAndAbout Readers' Choice 2013: **The 2013 Top 20 Places to Take Kids in the Houston Area**

- |                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Children's Museum of Houston | 3. 7-Acre Wood            |
| 2. Houston Zoo                  | 4. Oil Ranch              |
|                                 | 5. P-6 Farms - Montgomery |

6. **Brazos Bend State Park:** 5,000-acre gem 40 miles from downtown Houston, offers a variety of activities for every age: biking, fishing, hiking, birding, camping, star-gazing, and opportunities to learn about Texas' bountiful natural history via free programs and guided hikes.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 7. Great Play                                      | 14. The Woodlands Children's Museum       |
| 8. Crocodile Encounter                             | 15. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft |
| 9. Houston Museum of Natural Science               | 16. Downtown Aquarium                     |
| 10. My Gym   | 17. Sugar Land Skeeters Baseball          |
| 11. Madam Newton Einstein Science Academy for Kids | 18. Kemah Boardwalk                       |
| 12. The Little Gym                                 | 19. Moody Gardens                         |
| 13. UpStage Theatre                                | 20. Discovery Green                       |

## MORE QUESTIONS FROM THE CURIOUS

by Nelda Gay

*In our last Newsletter, we included a few questions from our park visitors. These questions offer us insights to their interests and also serve to keep us up with handy information. Here are a few more.*

### **Q - Did dinosaurs live here?**

**A -** No. This area was under water when the dinosaurs were around, but giant armadillos, sloths, and extinct species of horses, camels, and bison roamed.

### **Q - Where can I find a pay phone?**

**A -** Huh? There are pay phones at park headquarters and the dining hall.

### **Q - How long can alligators hold their breath?**

**A -** This is up for debate, but probably for about 15-20 minutes when the weather is warm and up to 8 - 10 hours when it is very cold.

### **Q - Do you feed the animals? (Or, what do you feed the animals?)**

**A -** No. The animals feed themselves. Some of our "people" food not only is unhealthy for us, but it can be quite harmful for the animals, and plastic wrappings can be deadly for them. Feeding the animals can cause problems for them and us. (Volunteers can provide examples.)

### **Q - What is the most dangerous animal in the park?**

**A -** Man

### *Overheard in the Gift Shop:*

**Q -** Are these things to look at or can we buy them?

**Q -** Is anything in here for free?

Now you can write the answers:

Q - What do volunteers do?

Q - Where are the alligators? Where are the animals? (or deer?)

Q - When was the baby alligator born? A - (Not born, hatched)

Q - What is the gestation period for an alligator?

Q - Did you do an autopsy on him (the alligator skeleton)?

Q - Is there a petting zoo here?

## ALLIGATOR DENS

by Rick Dashnau

As the water levels throughout the park get lower, more of the aquatic environment becomes visible. I'd prefer having the water, but we can make use of the drought, too. Alligator dens and alligator holes become visible as the water level drops.

In my mind, an alligator "hole" is where a gator has deepened a wider area at the bottom of some body of water. It's at least a few feet across and is like a pit. While in the water in hip waders, one can step into a submerged gator hole and suddenly fill one's waders. When the lake or pond evaporates, the gator hole remains as a puddle.

An alligator den, on the other hand, is more like a tunnel or cave. It can be a few feet across, but is dug at a slant or even horizontally (if the bank is steep) under the water. I have had a very difficult time finding much information on the size and shape of alligator dens, or what they're used for. Just recently, I've found these two links, which give some good information. They are from a survey of alligator dens done on some islands off of Georgia.

<http://www.georgialifetraces.com/tag/alligator-den/>

<http://www.georgialifetraces.com/2012/03/15/into-the-dragons-lair-alligator-burrows-as-traces/>

Humans build the things they build (houses, etc.) to produce an environment around them that is optimal. We want to keep it warm if the weather is cold, and vice versa. We want to keep dry if it is wet outside. We keep other threats from bothering us when we are vulnerable--at least that's the purpose. (Over time, certain animals have come to exploit this human environment for their own ends. Roaches and rats are two examples. Bedbugs and certain spider species probably wouldn't be as widespread if not for human environments. Such animals are called "synanthropes"--but that's another story.)

Alligators make dens and holes for the same purpose--they produce an stable environment directly around them. The close environment can be a temperature buffer, a protected area, and retain moisture in times of dryness. According to info from one of the links above, Chinese alligators show the same digging behavior, and other crocodilians do not. This may be one reason why alligators can live in cooler environments than their cousins.

Other animals take advantage of the alligator-created environments, and happily exploit them. Some of those "freeloaders" might be pests, like we have pests. But, unlike ours, some of the alligators' freeloaders (or maybe pests) can be alligator food. I suppose some of our pests could be food, too, but it takes a lot of mice to make a stew. Don't look at me like that. That's what I hear, I've never tried it as far as you know.



The pictures were taken Sunday, 8/11/13. One picture (above right) was taken of the den early, about 8:00 AM, and then the one with the vultures (below, left) were taken of the same den around 12:30 PM. The vultures were prospecting about in the mud, and actually picking at some of the rotten wood. The alligator just watched them. I didn't expect the alligator to attack them, although I thought it might chase them away. Nothing happened while I was there.



# THINK YOU KNOW ANIMALS?

*Our park has a vast assortment of creatures and critters that offer fascinating opportunities to share their world with park visitors, as well as enrich our own experiences as volunteers. **Think You Know Animals?** is a question/answer game book by Diana Oliver, copyright 2012. The author has given permission to quote and use some of the information from the book, which is also on sale in the BBSPVO Gift Shop. Thanks to Nelda Gay for choosing the selections.*

Raccoons: (P. 25-26)

Q: Raccoons eat...

- A. anything they can find in a stream or pond.
- B. Fruit, corn and other vegetation.
- C. Just about anything that's edible.

Raccoons are omnivores. They have a varied diet, much like humans do. They can eat a variety of food, as we do. Most of the raccoon's diet, about 67% of it, is animal life including insects, grubs, crayfish, frogs, and just about anything small enough to catch. The remaining 33% is made of berries, acorns, the corn we grow, and other plant matter. They also like to get into garbage and pet food. *[Note: We encourage visitors to prevent this at their campsites.]*

C. Just about anything that's edible. (P. 25-26)

## AN ALLIGATOR BATTLE

*August 11, 2013, as reported by volunteers **Carl Franke, Rick Dashnau and Veronika Vaneckova.***

**WARNING:** *The story and photos are pretty graphic, so if you think they might bother you, pass this story up.*

**CARL FRANKE:**

I was walking down the Spillway Trail to 40-Acre Lake on Sunday morning when I spotted a stroller on the trail. I had never seen a stroller all by itself before at the park. When I got close, I noticed a lady taking pictures of a big gator in a pool of water. That gator was by some fallen trees, maybe 40 feet from the trail. That pool of water was about 40 feet wide and went from near the trail to the woods.

She said that the big gator had another gator in its mouth. Then I saw the second gator's head; its body was submerged. The big gator looked close to 12 feet long, and the smaller gator looked between 8 and 9 feet. The pictures tell the story of what happened next. This event took about 2 hours. At the far end of the pool, another gator was staying as far away as possible, mostly submerged in the water. This one was probably 5 to 6 feet long.

**VERONIKA VANECKOVA:**

I would like to share our awesome experience and photos from today's alligator fight. We met Carl Franke at the Observation Tower, and he told us about the fight of big gators maybe more than 10 feet long. We went quickly along the Spillway and stopped by the folks already watching these gators. When we came it was already after the smaller gator was unable to defend himself - we could only watch the many attacks from the bigger gator while the smaller one was just lying there limply. This poor guy showed almost no signs of life, seemed like dead, but from time to time he did some desperate movement of its tail.

The giant gator usually bit the smaller one to his neck, head, body, tail or limbs and did a death roll. Then it took a rest for several minutes and repeated this destructive action. I always thought the smaller gator couldn't survive it. But he did and was struggling for life probably many hours today. We were watching this for almost two hours, and before we left the smaller gator was obviously seriously damaged with twisted legs, fresh meat hanging from him and no more movement after all.

This gator fight was probably territorial, as explained by Rick Dashnau, who joined us later. It is very dry these days, making less water and less living space for each alligator, and the fight could probably solve this issue. The truth is that we saw many gators in this small water area.

The big gator was also chasing another smaller gator in the meantime. This smaller one tried constantly to enter the water but always went out when the big gator swam toward him. This big one was a king today in this area.

It was probably the most breathtaking experience we have had in Brazos Bend ever!  
Thanks to Carl for telling us about the fight, and to Rick Dashnau for excellent explanations as always.



Limb bite



Death roll with tail bite



Gator struggling

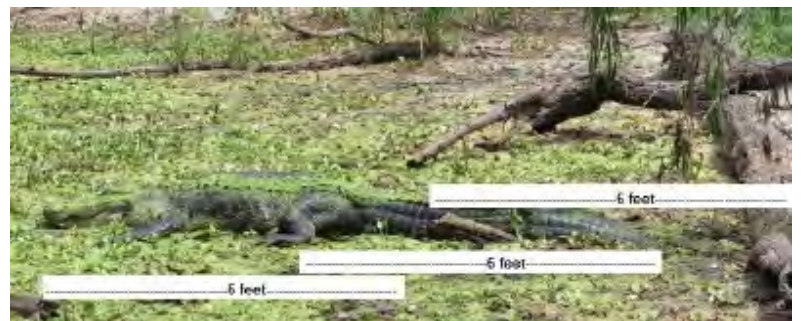
### RICK DASHNAU

Just so you know, after all of that, the wounded alligator remained on the mud flat where it probably was when everyone left. I stayed a bit longer. The big alligator moved around the shallow puddle where the drama had transpired. It appeared to watch the wounded alligator from time to time. And then, it moved purposefully towards the wounded (and probably dying) alligator--and went right past it. That is, it walked out of the water, and moved west (towards the alligator nesting plaque).

There had been a bit of commotion in the wet area near the plaque also, during the large alligator wrestling, but because of all the water plants, the alligators were hard to see. The large alligator walked over the big log, and then rested for a little while (about 10 minutes). Then it walked on towards the other shallow "puddle".

That is one MASSIVE alligator! However, I took the opportunity to put my stick (it is just 1/2 inch short of 6 feet long) where the alligator had been resting. I took a picture for scaling it to the alligator. This shows about 6 feet from the log to that angled stump. As it looks to me, the alligator was close to 10 feet long (since 12 feet would be two of my sticks end-to-end, and not overlapped.) It looks like maybe a third of the stick is overlapped.

I was a bit saddened at the thought that the mangled alligator was still alive, but probably not for long. But as I state in my program... It's Hard to Be an Alligator.



# OVERTIME FOR DEER PARK PRAIRIE!

## *“Prairie-grass-roots” fundraising effort gets reprieve*

Congratulations to the Bayou Land Conservancy, the Native Prairies Association of Texas, Katy Prairie Conservancy and the Houston Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas for their successful fund raising in the most ambitious conservation land fund drive of its kind ever launched in Texas. \$3.2 million dollars was raised from individuals to help save the Deer Park Prairie - in less than one week! Due to the record number of individual donors who came forward, the Deer Park landowner has agreed to extend the deadline from August 20th to September 10th, providing Bayou Land Conservancy with more time to raise the remaining \$800,000 necessary for the \$4 million purchase.

“The turnout of individual donors in such a condensed time period has been nothing less than phenomenal,” said Jennifer Lorenz, Executive Director of Bayou Land Conservancy. In her 20 years of land conservation fundraising experience “there has been no comparison to the donors of this campaign who expressed genuine shock that such an ancient prairie still existed, and that conservation organizations were trying to compete with hot housing market development pressure.”

Should Bayou Land Conservancy be successful with the new extended timeline, the land will be donated directly to the Native Prairies Association of Texas who will manage the health of the prairie and provide guided tours. Bayou Land Conservancy will place a conservation easement over the property to permanently protect the land – which would disallow the 250 houses currently planned for the acreage and any other future development. The City of Deer Park has promised pedestrian access to the site for weekend public enjoyment. Students in the adjacent subdivisions would have pedestrian bridge access through the prairie for their attendance at nearby College Park Elementary, and the Pasadena School District plans to use the prairie to get the students outside to learn biology in the field! Other plans are to use the native plant species as a seed bank to populate prairies all across the Houston region.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 7	Geocaching 101, 10:30 AM, Nature Center Amphibian and reptile photography Photo-walk, 5:00 PM, meet at NC
September 14	New Volunteer Orientation lunch. 1145 - 1:15. Sign up on the Special Events Calendar to bring food. Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
September 20	Bird Watching Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
September 21	New Volunteer Training, 9:00 - 5:00 Geocaching 101, 10:30 AM, Nature Center
September 28	New Volunteer Training, 9:00 - 5:00 Geocaching 101, 10:30 AM, Nature Center
October 5	Landscape photography Photo-walk, 5:00 PM, meet at Nature Center Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, Amphitheater
October 12	Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
October 18	Bird Watching Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
October 19	Volunteer Picnic, Dining Hall. Photo at 5:30, meal at 6:00.
November 2	Blood Drive, NC Parking Lot, time to be announced Bird photography Photo-walk, 3:00 PM, meet at Nature Center Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, Amphitheater
November 8	Bird Watching Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
November 9	Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
November 22	Bird Watching Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
December 7	Photo Walk: Landscape Photography, 3:00 PM, Nature Center Bird Blizzard at Sunset, 5:00 PM, 40-Acre Lake Observation Tower
December 6	Bird Watching Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
December 7	Landscape photography Photo-walk, 3:00 PM, meet at Nature Center A Simple Christmas, 3:00 - 7:00 PM, Nature Center grounds Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, Amphitheater
December 14	Annual Christmas Bird Count Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
December 20	Bird Watching Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
December 21	Bird Blizzard at Sunset, 5:00 PM, 40-Acre Lake Observation Tower

## Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville, TX 77461

☆☆☆☆☆

**NEXT MEETING**  
**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2013**  
**5:30 PM, NATURE CENTER**

**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:	Mary Lockwood
Vice-President:	Glen Kilgore
Secretary	Belinda DiMarcello
Treasurer:	Bob Kowalewski
Past-President:	Offie Walker
Comptroller:	Nancy Lynn Jones

### NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editor	Anna Dell Williamson
Assistant Editor	Joe Southern
Editorial Assistant	Nelda Gay
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Distribution	Carol Ramsayer
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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](mailto:awilliamson4@comcast.net) or [newsletter@brazosbend.org](mailto: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**