

Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization

Newsletter January 2018



Real funny breaking in the new interpreter with her first First Day Hike on the coldest day of 2018, well, at this point, second or third coldest. It was the first time I have ever had to wear my long underwear and my watchman's cap for a hike in the park! Brrrrr... The Texas Outdoor Family guys, John (taking the selfie) and Tito (in the back) stepped in to help. We had so much fun! In the picture you can see the young man with a hiking stick. Tristan spent his birthday with us on our first day hike. He wants to be a paleontologist when he grows up. What a sharp kiddo, too!

I encourage you all to look into Texas Outdoor Family and learn more about how they are introducing camping to underserved audiences. You will often see these folks in our programs and on our hikes with us. They will be among us nearly every weekend camping out at Hale Lake through the end of June. Kim Sorensen is the lead. If you want to get involved or learn more, I will put you in touch with her.

This past Thursday a pipe burst in the wall behind the gift shop closet at the nature center. Gallons upon gallons flowed in. It took two days to clean up and we are still trying to dry out. My deepest thanks to everyone who stepped in to help. I could not ask for a better group of passionate volunteers.

That being said, I miss you! Fill in that Nature Center calendar! Start looking at the Special Events calendar weekly. Let me know when I can expect you. Our VITs are coming through pipeline in February and they are counting on you to train them. Brush up on your knowledge, ask David or I questions. That is what we are here for. If you see Barb, Lonnie, Paul, Marianne, Rebecca S, or Wayne, help me thank them because they are working out all the details necessary to train the next class of volunteers.

Volunteer Picnic

Due to the epic flooding caused by Harvey the annual volunteer get together was held on January 6th. in the newly renovated Dinning Hall. BBSP volunteers gathered together for the group picture and the handing out of Service Awards. The attendees were thrilled to visit with Sharon Hanzik and Beth Debenport.

It turns out that the hours put in by all volunteers during the past year are equal to about 7 full time employees. Thanks to all including Anne Shelton, our Webmaster, who put in 721 hours this past year, Barb Tucker with 505 hours and is instrumental in the VIT training, and Ron Morrison with 622 hours who also started a meet up group for the Prairie Restoration.

Brazos Bend Volunteer Organization 2017 - 2018



Service Awards



5 year

Bob Schwartz, Art Olson,
Cole Ledman, Krista Ledman, Joe
Southern, Colton Southern, Robert
Zurawski,

Not Pictured:

Zachary Guess, Latoya Mckelvey,
Mike Fisher, Beverly Lannou

10 Year

Molly Watson, Brain Watson,
Maureen Good, Teresa Jones, Doris
Dahse,

Not Pictured: Carrie Sample, Doris
Dashe



15 year

Curtis Parent

Not pictured: Carol

Ramsayer



25 Years
Judy Strauss



30 Years
Chuck Duplant



We would like to recognize all who have contributed so many hours volunteering for the park!



Each one of us remembers the volunteers that helped us get through the training process. The next class of VITs needs your help. Starting February 11th they will be signing up on the volunteer calendar but cannot do so unless a BBSP volunteer has already put their name down first. Please make a commitment in advance to fill up the calendar so they can fulfill their training requirements. VITs will be wearing buttons to indicate what phase they are in.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING SCHEDULE

February 2018

Saturday, February 3, 2018

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM -

ORIENTATION

- 9:00 - 9:15 Welcome, Introduction to Training: **Training Leadership Team (TLT)**
- 9:15 - 10:15 Introduction to State Parks, BBSP, and BBSP Resources: **TPWD Park Superintendent - Chris Bishop**
- 10:15 - 10:30 Break
- 10:30 - 10:45 Introduction to the BBSPVO and CORE Requirements: **BBSPVO-Michael Sanderson**
BBSPVO Officers
- President: Michael Sanderson:**
Vice President: Wayne Wiegand
Secretary: Marianne Feeney
Treasurer: Pam Trimble:
Member-At-Large: Angela Elder:
Member-At-Large: John Bradford:
- 10:45 - 11:30 Park History and Ecology: **TPWD-David Heinicke:**
- 11:30 - 12:00 Introduction and Overview of Training Folder: **TLT-Barb**
Explanation of Scheduled Programs** after lunch: **TLT-Wayne**
Explanation of Road Tour: **TPWD/TLT-Monica Stewart**
Announcements: **TLT**
- 12:00 - 12:50 Lunch: VITs meet Newest Members: **Maria Lowry:** others
- 1:00 - 1:20 Scheduled Program**: **ALLIGATOR- Dana Hawkins:**
- 1:30 - 2:20 Tour of Park - **TPWD/TLT-Monica**
- 2:30 - 3:00 Scheduled Program**: **SNAKE - Mike Emmons:**
- 3:00 - 3:15 Break
- 3:15 - 4:00 Parks Rules and Regulations, Safety, Radio Use, Emergencies: **BBSP Police Officer**
- 4:00 - 5:00 Explanation of brazosbend.org: **TLT/Webmaster-Anne**
Questions and Answers: **TLT**



Saturday, February 10, 2018

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

9:00 - 9:45 What is Interpretation and how we do it through Demonstrations, Programs and Hikes:
TPWD/TLT-Monica

9:45 - 10:00 Introduction of Creekfield Hike*: **TLT-Paul/Break**

10:00-11:30 Creekfield Hike*
Leader 1: **TLT-Wayne** Leader 2: **Mike Fisher:**

11:30-11:45 Break

11:45-12:15 Model Interpretative Program: **TPWD/TLT-Monica**

12:15 - 1:15 **Lunch with Volunteers: TLT-Anne**

1:15 - 3:15 **BBSP Volunteer Opportunities:** overview presentations. If time permits: **Q & A**

1:15 Gift Shop*: **Diane Carpenter, Holly Haynes**

1:30 Nature Center*: **TLT - Rebecca, Charlie Pehl**

1:45 Scheduled Programs**: hikes (Creekfield*, school groups, night, bird), talks, tables, demonstrations, classes, camps, and wildlife scoping : **TLT-Marianne, Vic Hay**

2:00 Firewood Processing*: **John Ragusa, Peter Ragusa:**

2:15 Roving Interpretation (walking, cycling, UTV): **TPWD/TLT-Monica, TLT-**

Paul

2:30 Wood Yard/Trail Trimming /Thursday Crew: **Pete Hart, Alan Gradet**

2:45 OutReach: **TLT-Wayne, Jaci Elliott**

3:00 - 3:15 Break

3:15 - 4:00 Live Animal Use and Handling: **TPWD-David**

4:00 - 5:00 Wrap-up: Phase 1, Calendar Sign-up, Announcements : **TLT-Lonnie, Anne, Barb**
**1 of 4 current CORE Requirement options: Nature Center, Gift Shop, Creekfield Hike, and Firewood Processing. **Scheduled Programs are being considered by the BBSPVO as an additional Core option.*

Join the VITs for lunch on February 10th. Please sign up on the special events calendar .

Also remember that all volunteers are invited to sit in on any or all of the training.

Christmas Bird Count

Excerpt from The History of the Christmas Bird Count by Geoff LeBaron, CBC Director for The

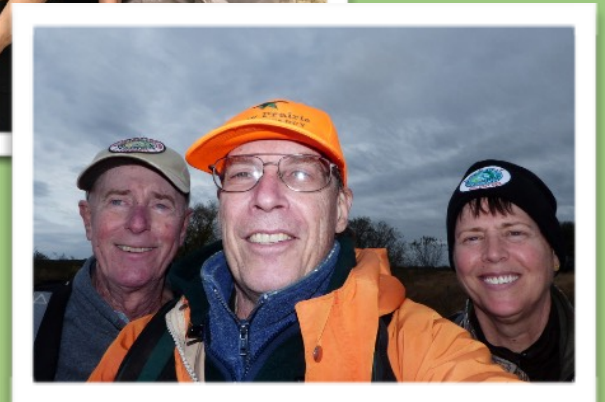
Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.

Each November, birders interesting in participating in the CBC can sign up and join in through the Audubon website. From December 14 through January 5 each year tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, or rain, and take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation action. The annual bird survey is one of the largest, longest-running citizen science efforts in the world.

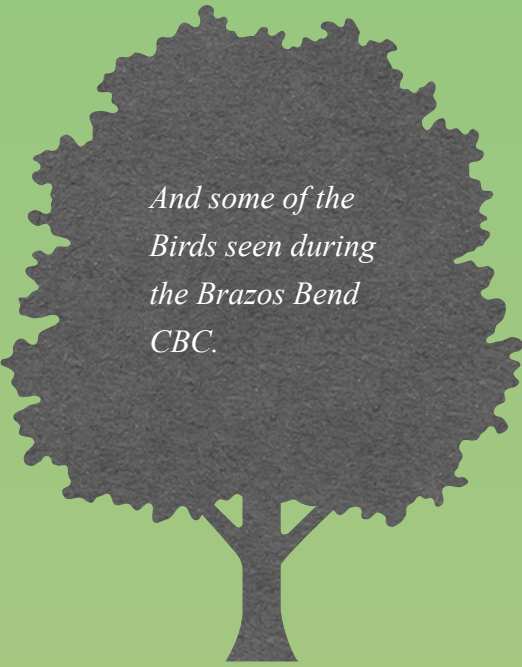




On December 16th, 2017 BBSP hosted the annual Brazos Bend Christmas Bird Count. More than 70 individuals, from beginners to expert birders, scattered out at sights inside and outside the park and located more than 144 species of birds. Participants were treated to a catered BBQ compliments of NRG and the W.A. Parrish Power Plant afterwards. Many thanks to Chuck Duplant and his helpers, who organized the serving of food at this event. Every year David Heinicke hands out the prestigious Big Bird Award to the team that finds the most unusual bird. This year's Big Bird Award was presented to the team that located a Wood Stork near Elm Lake. Join in the fun next year, no experience necessary.



Some of the Birders who participated in The BBSP Christmas Bird Count.



*And some of the
Birds seen during
the Brazos Bend
CBC.*



Hi, folks.

Happy New Year to everyone, and best wishes for all.
So...last weekend.

01/07/2018. One of those days, at Brazos Bend State Park. On Saturday, January 6, volunteer Chuck Duplant showed me that he'd gotten some great pictures of a juvenile Bald Eagle at 40 Acre Lake. On Sunday morning the next day (01\07) , I was out at 40 Acre Lake (where I usually start anyway). I was near the Observation Tower, and watching the sky, and also looking and listening for signs of disturbance from the many wading birds and waterfowl in the area. That's because the birds often give an alarm when an eagle flies over. American Coots occasionally bickered out in the water and chased each other. Once, the coots sounded a bit different, so I looked to my left (North) until I saw movement in the water near the coots. I wasted a second or two as I went through what normally moves out there. Anhinga? No. Cormorant? No. Diving Coot? No. Grebe? No. Otter!? YES!! It was an OTTER!! I quickly brought the camera up and started shooting video. I tried not to move as the otter came closer. It swam to the edge of the floating hyacinth, then it dove. It was about 10 yards from me when it went under. The attached pictures are frame grabs from the video. And the video is here: <http://www.rickubis.com/rick/>



It seemed to me that it might want to cross the trail (probably close to the concrete around the floodgates). So, following my own advice, I backed away from the tower about ten steps. This was to allow room for the otter to cross. And...nothing else happened. I looked all around for a sign that the otter was moving. I looked behind me in case the otter had passed me. I looked down and to the right (South) in case the otter had crossed and gone into the lake leaving a wake. I spent a few more minutes looking back and forth. I didn't see the otter again. It might have crossed in front of me after that. But I could have missed it then; because I was distracted by something else.

So...when I was looking for a sign of the otter I happened to look right again (South), but this time I looked *up*....

...And the juvenile Bald Eagle was circling in the air above the lake! I caught some video of the eagle as it circled around (it was near the Southeast corner of the lake) and it made an aborted talon-strike above surface of the water, then landed in a tree. While I was watching that, the otter could have crossed to the East. What a choice! Should I watch for the otter to reappear...or for the eagle to move? I watched the eagle, and it took off again, but moved away from me, then looped around and went West. The attached images are frame grabs from the video. The video does look a bit better. And that video is here: http://www.rickubis.com/rick/eagle_010718.wmv

Those of us who have seen otters are often confounded by their ability to move quickly and with stealth. I found some information in this document:

North American River Otter Husbandry Notebook, 3rd Edition

Edited by Janice Reed-Smith 2008

link is here: http://www.otterspecialistgroup.org/Library/TaskForces/OCT/North_American_River_Otter_Husbandry_Manual_3rd_edition.pdf

The aerobic dive limit for an otter (how long it can stay under holding its breath) is 50 seconds. (Page 27) But average dive time is 21 seconds (page 28).

Top speed of an otter in water is 7 miles per hour. (That's about 10 feet per second) (page 28).

If we cut that in half (considering we usually see otters relatively at ease) that's 5 feet per second.

In a 21 second dive, at 5 feet per second, an otter could move 105 feet (35 yards) or maybe as far as 210 feet (70 yards) if it's in a hurry.

There are some good online sources for collected information about otters. Some day I'll be able to examine all that's there. Here are two:

river otter alliance: <http://www.otternet.com/ROA/index.htm>

otter specialist group: <http://www.otterspecialistgroup.org/>

About the young eagle-- Sources on the TPWD website say that Bald Eagles lay eggs in December, and eggs incubate about 35 days, to hatch sometime in January. The chicks leave the nest in about 12 weeks, but the parents still feed the young for another 4 to 6 weeks while they learn to hunt. So eagles hatched this season should still be in the nest (not flying around). The feather markings change as the young eagle ages, with the prominent white head and tail and dark body appearing only in mature adults (about 5 years old). This one might be close to 2 years old. I'm guessing by comparing with my Sibley's field guide and my National Geographic field guide--which show more white patches on the wings during 2nd year. I'm sure the birders out there can clarify this.



Rick Dashnau

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Yoga at Brazos Bend Park



One of our responsibilities in managing Brazos Bend State Park is to guide and adapt the uses of the park as the needs of the public change. One recent example is the addition of public yoga classes to Brazos Bend’s program schedule.

Yoga as a fitness activity is on the rise through most of the developed world. My personal experience and opinion is that yoga can be a powerful and transformative practice. While not a traditional state park recreational opportunity, yoga is appropriate

with state park use and compatible with a quality state park experience. My sense is that by offering yoga in a public park, we can (1) introduce traditional state parks users to a new way to enjoy their park, and (2) attract yoga enthusiasts to state park use.

Yoga is a diverse activity, with many different styles. We are offering vinyasa yoga classes at Brazos Bend. “Vinyasa” is simply a flowing sequence of poses, synchronized with breath and linked together with a common set of transitional poses between new sets. The practice we are offering begins with centering period to allow yogis to settle into the practice, a warm-up period, the prescribed sequence of poses, a cool-down period and a period of silent meditation and quiet time.

We are describing the classes as “all-levels.” This simply means that the teacher leading the class will offer modifications and encourage the use of props to make poses more accessible for some bodies, while also offering some ways to make the poses and sequences more physically challenging for other bodies. We think that bodies of many different types and fitness levels will find work in these classes.

Initially, we will be offering these classes once a week from the beginning of January through the end of February. We will likely decrease the frequency as our spring season begins to unfold, but we intend to continue to offer public yoga classes through the end of June. Depending on the public response and attendance, the park may seek to find teachers to continue to offer this opportunity as a regular part of our scheduled programming.

Chris Bishop,

TPWD Park Superintendent

Chris’s training was a 200 hour Registered Yoga Teacher Training course with Yoga Alliance.

Yoga Schedule at BBSP (no fee)

January 20, 10 a.m., George Observatory Rooftop
January 27, 10 a.m., George Observatory Rooftop
January 30, 6 p.m., Elm Lake Picnic Pavilion
February 6, 6 p.m., Elm Lake Picnic Pavilion
February 17, 10 a.m., George Observatory Rooftop
February 24, 10 a.m. George Observatory Rooftop

The B.A.R.K Ranger Program- Coming to Brazos Bend State Park

The original tail-wagging B.A.R.K. Ranger was found at Glacier National Park, enlisted to herd feral sheep and goats away from high traffic areas, and to protect wildlife and humans from potentially dangerous close encounters. Since then, more national and state parks have adopted a B.A.R.K. program in their parks. No, we do not need a B.A.R.K. ranger to herd the alligators! What we would like to do is teach our four legged visitors and their human counterparts to be good trail stewards. Good trail etiquette is a must at a 'Tier 5' park with an average annual visitation of 250,000 visitors, and where a beautiful day can pack the trails of people, pets and gators.

So what is a B.A.R.K. ranger? Well, it has a meaning in itself. B- Bag your poop, A- Always be on a leash, R- Respect the wildlife and K-Know where to go. We would like to invite you and your fur buddies out for a guided hike. Not only for the exercise you and your pup will get, but to enjoy being out in a great natural setting like Brazos Bend State Park. Not only will we talk about our 4 basic goals of a B.A.R.K. ranger, we will also talk about other dog health and safety tips while hiking and camping with them.

Along with this we are working with local animal shelters to do adopt-a-dog hikes. Also, we hope to have some demonstrations from dog trainers and share important health information from area veterinarians. Please check us out on our brazosbend.org website and Facebook page to get information and scheduling about this program and others.

Sherri Meador

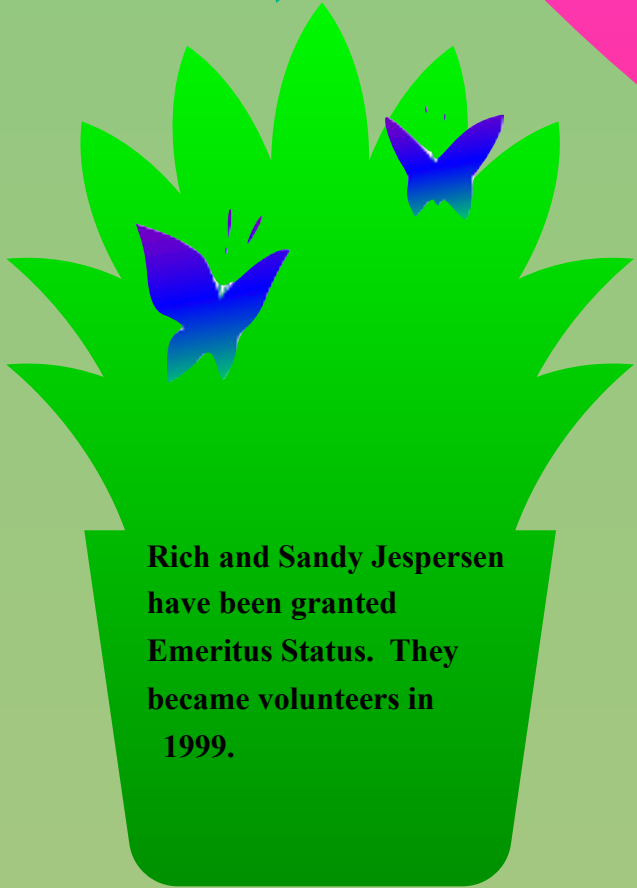
B.A.R.K. Rangers Luke (Border Collie) and Darwin (Heeler) training to patrol the trails at BBSP.



Outreach Opportunities are available on the Special Events Calendar

April 14th 2-7 Sugarland Earth Day and April 21st 9-12 Sienna Plantation Earth Day

Valentine's Day is next month and love will be in the air. What do you love about volunteering at the park? Volunteering with the same group of people at the Nature Center? Leading a Hike? Outreach? Interpreting the snakes? Let us know by sending a selfie/picture of what you love about BBSP along with your name and description by February 9th to newsletter@brazosbend.org.



Rich and Sandy Jespersen have been granted Emeritus Status. They became volunteers in 1999.



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Brazos Bend State Park - Texas Parks and Wildlife

Looking Ahead.

Please contact David or Monica to schedule a program, especially for 1/11 and 1/24. Programs at George Observatory are run by The Houston Museum of Natural Science. School group sign up to lead or observe are on Special Event Calendar. Programs may change, consult sheet at Nature Center desk or David/Monica for most current schedule. Do you have something to add to future calendars please send to newsletter@brazosbend.org

February

2018

January						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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28	29	30	31			

March						
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31						

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28 January 1/20 10 am All Level Vinyasa Yoga, George Observatory Rooftop 1/27 10 am All Level Vinyasa Yoga, George Observatory Rooftop	29 January 1/27 George Observatory Family Space Day, (281) 242-3055	30 January 1/30 6:00 pm All -Levels Vinyasa Yoga, Elm Lake Picnic Pavillion	31	1 8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	2	3 9-5 New Volunteer Training 10 am Creekfield Hike 11 am Storytime 1:00 pm Alligator Program 2 :30 pm Snake program 3-10 George Observatory, Operated by The Houston Museum of Natural Science
4 8 am Bird Hike meet at 40-acre Lake 10 am Creekfield Hike	5 8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	6 6 pm All Level Vinyasa Yoga, Elm Lake Picnic Pavillion	7	8 8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	9	10 9-5 New Volunteer Training 10 am Creekfield Hike 11 am Storytime 12:15-1:15 Lunch with VITs 3-10 George Observatory 3 pm Executive Meeting 4 pm General Meeting
11 10 am Creekfield Hike	12 8 am Tail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	13	14 8am Bird Hike meet at 40-acre Lake	15 8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	16 5 pm New Moon Hike, 40-Acre Lake	17 8 am Bird Hike Meet at 40-acre Lake parking lot 10 am Creekfield Hike 10 am All Level Vinyasa Yoga, George Observatory Rooftop 11 am Storytime 1 pm Walk with a B.A.R.K. Ranger @ Elm Lake 2 pm Bike Hike, Hale Lake Restrooms 3-10 George Observatory 5:30 Campfire Tales, Meet at Amphitheater
18 10 am Creekfield Hike 11:30 am Snakes Alive 1 pm Orienteering for Beginners,NC	19 8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	20	21	22 8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	23	24 10 am Creekfield Hike 10 am All Level Vinyasa Yoga, George Observatory Rooftop 11 am Storytime 1 pm Orienteering for Beginners, NC 3-10 George Observatory
25 10 am Creekfield Hike	26	27 8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	28 8 am Bird Hike meet at 40-acre Lake	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

March

2018

February

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April

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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
25	26	27	28	1	2	3
				8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center 9:30 Hubenak Elementary 40 acre Lake 9:30 Aquatic Inverts. NC	9:30 Hubenak Elementary 40 acre Lake, sign up special event calendar 5:30 pm Full Moon Night Hike, 40 acre Lake	10 am Creekfield Hike 11 am Storytime George Observatory, Operated by Houston Museum of Natural Science, Family Space Day, starts at 3pm 281-242-3055
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8 am Bird Hike Meet at 40-acre Lake parking lot 10 am Creekfield Hike 9-5 Plant Propagation Workshop, Dinning Hall, contact Monica		8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center		8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center		8 am Bird Hike Meet at 40-acre Lake parking lot 10 am Creekfield Hike 11 am Storytime 3 pm Executive Meeting 4 pm General Meeting 5 pm Brazos Bend Pickers Basic Anglers Class 3-10 George Observatory
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
10 am Creekfield Hike 1 pm All About Alligators Hike @ Elm Lake		8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	8 am Bird Hike Meet at 40-acre Lake parking lot	8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center		10 am Creekfield Hike 11 am Storytime 11 and 3 Birds of Prey 3-10 George Observatory
18	13	20	21	22	23	24
10 am Creekfield Hike		8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center		8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center	10 -1 Pershing Middle School 40 acre Lake	10 am Creekfield Hike 11 am Storytime Blood Drive 6 pm Campfire Tales 3-10 George Observatory
25	14	27	28	29	30	31
10 am Creekfield Hike		8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center 9:30-11:30 Holy Episcopal School		8 am Trail Maintenance meet at Nature Center		10 am Creekfield Hike 11 am Storytime 3-10 George Observatory
1	15	3	4	5	6	7