



VOLUME 18, NUMBER 7

JULY 2006

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## JUNE MEETING NOTES

*submitted by Bruce Williamson*

**President Judy Strauss** called the meeting to order on June 10. There were nineteen members and one staff member present. The minutes of the May meeting were approved as posted. David Heinicke brought his Interpretive Report, which is printed elsewhere in the newsletter.

### Committee Reports:

**Outreach Report:** **Anna Dell Williamson** reported that she and **Johnny Hite** had taken a snake and baby alligator from the park and conducted two programs. The first program was at the Pearland Library, and the second program was at the Pearland YMCA. Both programs were well received.

**Gift Shop:** **Beth Debenport** reported that the Gift Shop had good sales today and that in May, they sold 38 walking sticks. She believes the walking sticks are made from Sassafras wood. The Gift Shop is also selling Spider and Frog books in the visible body series.

**Maintenance report:** **Bryan Leach** brought the May maintenance report, which was in the June Newsletter.

**Training:** **Vice-president Anna Dell Williamson** announced the Fall volunteer training. Details are reported elsewhere in the newsletter.

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**Treasurer's Report: Treasurer John Bradford** reported the following requests for purchase:

(1) **Steve Killian** requested funding for a four-inch well to be used to supply water to Creekfield Lake. This includes the electricity extension to the well and pipe to direct the water flow to the lake. Funds will come from various Exxon-Mobile grant accounts, with the rest to come from a budget account. The motion passed.

(2) **Al Childs** requested funds to purchase prairie grass seed and other supplies to replant natural grasses in the BBSP prairies. Approval is subject to approval of the project by Superintendent Steve Killian. The motion carried.

**Announcements:**

- (1) Volunteer rosters are available.
- (2) No one had an update on Richard Board's status.

The meeting was adjourned. ♦

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Ever experience that ever-so-special happening out at the Park, and just couldn't wait to get back to tell everyone about it? You rush back to the Nature Center, excited and out of breath, and tell everyone of your fantastic experience.....only to find out that there is someone there who can "do one better"! I know how frustrating that can be, but don't get discouraged. You know that your experience was real, and by now, everyone else is aware of the "tall" stories that can be told by some. So, please don't hesitate to share your experiences-we all enjoy hearing about them! And by now, most of us can tell the real from the fabricated. Experience the excitement, enjoy the experience, and share your enjoyment!



"Family" has kept me away from the Park this month, but hopefully I will be able to get back to my regular routine in July. Sure hope so, anyway, because I miss all the "goings on" around there, and I miss seeing all of you! Hope your summer has been less hectic than mine, but that it has been just as enjoyable as mine has been so far. And there is more yet to come!

See y'all in July.

*Judy Strauss* ♦

## DEER CROSSING

A homeowner phoned the local police department and asked them if they could take down the deer crossing sign on the road in front of his house. He explained that too many motorists hit deer there, and it was just not a good crossing for them.



# STAFF REPORTS

## DAVID HEINICKE



David Heinicke reported that alligator nesting season has started and asked the volunteers to report any nests they observe to David, Sharon, Steve, or Dennis. The annual Independence Day bicycle parade will be held the Saturday before Independence Day, July 1. Sharon will be off that day, so volunteer help will be greatly appreciated. John Bradford volunteered to drive again, and David needs about half a dozen more volunteers.

David asked that volunteers keep a close eye on people for heat problems. There are ice packs at the Nature Center. David also mentioned that Regional Director Jerry Hopkins was visiting with superintendent Steve Killian at the park at the time of the meeting. This is why Steve was not at the meeting.

# CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to **Tom Draper**, our newest volunteer member from the Fall 2006 class. He has completed his training requirements. Give him a hearty "Welcome!" to the volunteer organization.



## BEST WISHES

### JULY BIRTHDAYS

Diane Carpenter  
Martin Gay  
Frank Smith  
Susie Taylor  
Carlos Torres  
Barb Tucker  
Susan Walther



### AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Rob Thacker  
Jim Gilliam  
Tom Draper

### AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

Ben Lohmer  
Ken and Beth Debenport  
Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson  
Lynne and Bill Ray  
Laszlo and Lexi Perlaky  
Ray and Dana Anderson  
Ron Morrison

### JULY ANNIVERSARIES

James and Joyce Blankenship





☺ to **Judy Strauss** for the June meeting night supper

☺ to Bruce Williamson for the picture of Priscilla

☺ to Jane Minard for articles for the "Articles of Interest" notebook in the lounge.

☺ to Marty and Nelda and Anna Dell for teaching my German friends so much about the wildlife and for making them feel so welcome last Friday, from Jane Minard

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING DETAILS

Fall volunteer training will be organized a little differently from the past training sessions. The tentative program begins on **Orientation Day, September 9**, from 10 - 2, and will include a presentation by Steve Killian covering the makeup of the State Parks, the Park System, Funding, and the local park staff. This will be followed by lunch, provided by the existing volunteers (sign up, please!). The volunteer mentors will be introduced (sign up, please!). After lunch, Dennis Jones will talk on BBSP natural resources, resource management, and the role of the volunteers in maintaining the park and its resources. We will conclude with small groups of new volunteers (1-3 per vehicle) being given road tours of the park by experienced volunteers (sign up, please!). There seems to be a repeating refrain there.

**Saturday, September 16**, will be a full day, 9-5. There will be presentations on Park history and ecology, park rules and regulations, visitor contact and volunteer conduct and dress code.

In the afternoon there will be an introduction to Interpretation, a Creekfield Hike, a presentation on live animal handling, and a water station demonstration.

**Saturday, September 23**, will also be 9-5. In small groups, the volunteers will be introduced to maintenance, wood yard and trail trimming. There will be presentations on the annual events we have at the park, park places and terminology, and Interpretive training. After the Creekfield practice hike (Jigsaw), we will conclude with an explanation of the two phases of hands-on training, and a prairie ecology hike.

**Hands-on training** has been revised slightly. Phase One will include assisted training in the Nature Center, the Gift Shop, Maintenance, firewood and water station, as well as a 2-hour trail trimming class. Phase Two consists of work in the Nature Center and Gift Shop, attending and leading Creekfield and the Alligator Video program, attending a snake program and bird hike, trail interpretation with another volunteer and on their own, and an ATV tour of park trails with a trained volunteer.

We will need **volunteers to assist** at various aspects of the hand-on training. Besides assistance with the Nature Center, Gift Shop, maintenance, firewood and water station training, we will need volunteers to accompany VITs on trail interpretation and ATV tours. Please sign up with Anna Dell or Sharon for these activities. **Training sessions are open to all interested volunteers.** The final schedule will be posted on the bulletin board in the hallway.



# SUMMER AND HEAT RELATED PROBLEMS

**HOT HOT HOT**

Please be on the lookout for **heat related problems** among volunteers and visitors to the park. Two important indicators are profuse sweating and lack of coordination. If these are evident, please **contact park staff immediately**.

The following information is compiled from three internet sources: [www.MayoClinic.com](http://www.MayoClinic.com), [www.KidsHealth.org](http://www.KidsHealth.org), and [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

Heat-related problems occur when the body is unable to cool itself by sweating. Heat-induced illnesses are heat stress or **heat exhaustion** and the more severe **heat stroke**, which can result in death.

## Factors that lead to heat related problems include

- |                               |                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| High temperature and humidity | Direct sun or heat |
| Limited air movement          | Physical exertion  |
| Poor physical condition       | Some medicines     |

## Signs and Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion:

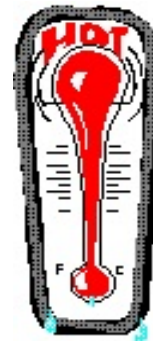
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Severe thirst                                     | Rapid, weak heartbeat                          |
| Fast, shallow breathing                           | Weakness and cool, clammy skin                 |
| Upset stomach or vomiting                         | Increased sweating                             |
| Ashen appearance                                  | Mood changes such as irritability or confusion |
| Headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting |  |

## Signs and Symptoms of Heat Stroke:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Flushed, dry, hot skin with no sweating | Seizures or fits   |
| Severe, throbbing headache              | Weakness, dizziness  |
| Difficulty breathing                    | Rapid heartbeat  |
| Rapid and shallow breathing             | Decreased responsiveness, mental confusion or losing consciousness |

## Preventing heat stress

- Know signs/symptoms of heat-related illnesses; monitor yourself, visitors and other volunteers
- Block out direct sun or other heat sources
- Use cooling fans/air conditioning; rest regularly
- Drink lots of water; about 1 cup every 15 minutes
- Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes
- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks, or heavy meals



### **What to do for heat-related illness**

#### **CONTACT PARK STAFF IMMEDIATELY**

- Move the person to a cool, shaded area
- Loosen or remove heavy clothing
- Provide cool drinking water or a sports drink containing electrolytes
- Fan and cool the person with water
- Lay the person down and elevate the legs and feet slightly

### **Be prepared**

- Always carry water for yourself and an extra for emergencies if possible.
- Carry a park map for visitors and use it as a fan
- Carry a cloth you can moisten to cool down the person.

### **Take care of yourself**

- Drink water frequently
- Stop and rest in the shade
- Pay attention to your body and don't push the limits

## **PRAIRIE VIEW**

*by Al Childs*

Hi, fellow prairie enthusiasts and volunteers. Welcome to the *Prairie View* column. Each month we will discuss current and future activities for Prairie Project '06. PP'06 was started on January 1, 2006, and it's primary goal is to assist park management in restoring our prairies. We will do that by hosting educational prairie activities; collecting prairie data; rescuing endangered prairie grass; performing prairie maintenance, such as invasive weed control; and many other fun and constructive activities. We will also bring in grass experts from time to time to assist us in learning more about prairies and prairie grass.

Past activities include a grass ID class, seedball outreach program on Earth Day, and seed propagation workshops. Current activities for June include our monthly activity of collecting transect data every 4th Sunday, planting rescued Eastern Gamma grass, and a Seed Collection Workshop held at the George Observatory. We survey three prairies four times a year so that we can capture a snap shot of what the prairie is doing throughout the year. This data will prove invaluable when it comes to our restoration efforts.

We also have a lot of things planned for the future, like Seedball Workshops, Seed Propagation Workshops, Grass Identification Workshops, GPS/Transect Workshops and many many more activities. If you are interested in becoming a part of the Prairie Project '06 team or just want to spend some quality time learning about the Brazos Bend State Park prairies, please email me at [beura.a.childs1@jsc.nasa.gov](mailto:beura.a.childs1@jsc.nasa.gov). Watch this column next month for more project information and activities and once again, welcome.

**HOT**  
**JULY**

# WELCOME RAIN AND ALLIGATOR ACTIVITY

by Sharon Hanzik

June 21, 2006. Just wanted to let you all know that the recent rains have shown a marked improvement in the water levels. Creekfield has a nice amount which has brought back frog and bird life. Elm lake is noticeable in that the water level is up to the vegetation line on the islands. The little point that the gators were basking on across from the water station is covered. The pool in the corner of Pilant lake across from Elm Lake water station has a good amount of water in it. 40-Acre looks better but still very low.

Remember that the two gates to Pilant Lake are open and one is slowly flowing into 40-Acre and the other into Pilant Slough. It is still dry along the Pilant Lake side of the spillway trail and will remain so as long as the gates are open. There is more water in Pilant Slough, in certain places. Pilant Lake is being drained for restoration purposes.

Now, the gators! They were in a feeding frenzy this morning. Justin and I were out trimming trails. We saw an 8-foot gator with a river otter off the island near pier #5 at Elm Lake. The otter looked perfect but dead. The gator was holding it at the base of the tail. We had to keep on our way and decided to come back in a little while to see if anything transpired. Thirty minutes later the gator was in the water. No otter.

Ranger Jeff said they scared the gator into the water with the loud Kubota. Jeff said it still had the otter. Later, we did not see any sign of the otter, and the gator was swimming around. Now, a gator that has just eaten an otter would be quite full and basking on the island. The gator swam away.

Just then a 4-foot gator snapped at something. (There was a large family group watching this with us.) We did not know what it had caught. I noticed an orange thing wriggling out of the gator's mouth. Turns out it was a very large broad banded water snake struggling to get free and it was wrapped around the gator's neck! Well, strength prevailed and the gator had his meal but not before attracting the attention of the 8-foot gator that just swam away. It pursued the little gator but gave up. Now does this sound like the behavior of an animal with a full belly? I don't think so. We can only guess that the sneaky river otter was still alive and waiting for a chance to get free. When Ranger Jeff scared the gator into the water, the otter must have gotten free. Thanks Ranger Jeff! We love our river otters!



## HERE COMES THE SUN

This item comes from the *Smithsonian Magazine*, "Wild Things", April, 2006, p. 18.

Yes, birds greet the day with a cacophony of song. But different voices join the "dawn chorus" at different times. How come? According to a study in an Ecuadorian forest by Karl Berg of the University of California at Berkeley, birds that perch highest in trees and have big eyes tend to pipe up earliest because they catch the light first. He says it's no accident birds chirp at daybreak. If they sang in the dark, they would attract predators they couldn't see; and dawn is too dim for finding food. Notice how the chorus fades once the singers go hunting for breakfast.

# SCHOOL HIKES

by Anna Dell Williamson

*Ed. Note: I've had the pleasure of leading several school hikes this past spring. I'm sharing some of my experiences, and I invite others of you to share your interpretive experiences, formal and informal, with the membership. Write, e-mail or phone your experiences to me. Don't worry about grammar or spelling - I can take care of that.*

One thing I do with school groups is to tell them I'm going to teach them some big words, and I talk about Spanish moss (epiphyte), ecosystems, ecotones, etc. At the end I see how many can remember the word "epiphyte". One group of kids remembered it immediately, because someone pronounced it "Apple Fight", and they didn't forget the word. I wonder what image they have in their heads now.

Another group of 4<sup>th</sup> graders gave me a memorable response. I asked the group of eager youngsters what big word I used when I talked about a special type of plant. "Spanish moss", one little girl called out. "Yes," I replied, "but what kind of plant is Spanish moss?" I could see wheels turning in several heads, when one little boy shouted out "Menopause." About that time, thankfully, another child called out "epiphyte", to which I replied, "That's right, epiphyte." I noticed the teachers at the back of the crowd exchanging glances, but no one laughed and the child escaped embarrassment, although the adults had a quiet chuckle at his mistake.

## PHOTOWALK REPORT

by Laszlo Perlaky

I was on duty at the Nature Center at Brazos Bend State Park on June 3, 2006, and then led my free Naturalperl Photo walk for Close-ups. We had six participants. Half an hour prior the Photo walk, a heavy rainstorm hit the Park; however, miraculously the rain stopped at 5:00 PM, making all vegetation shiny and raindrop covered. We cannot wish for a better setup for close-ups.



Finally we walked on the Pilant Slough trail to the Elm Lake. We photographed there several wet spiders in their raindrop covered spider webs, tiny fungi with lichens or raindrops and colorful leaves. We looked for green tree frogs on palmetto leaves after the rain, but we did not find any. We walked around Elm Lake, and we got few nice gold reflecting landscape shots during sunset. I am sure all of the participants got good shots and were happy on the walk. Come again, and enjoy the beauty of Brazos Bend State Park during my Photo walks.



## PRISCILLA RETURNS TO BBSP

We have a new acquisition to the Nature Center exhibits. One of the granddaughters of Herman Hale brought in a bison skull a couple of weeks ago. It is the skull of Priscilla, the only Bison to ever live on the Hale Ranch. It was more of a pet than it was livestock. Priscilla did not end up as the main course for a BBQ; she lived a long life and died of old age. The skull has been in a garage for years and finally made it back to Brazos Bend. The plan is the get a name plaque made for Priscilla and hang the skull in the Nature Center.



# A TEXAS BLESSING

Bless this house, oh Lord, we cry.  
Please keep it cool in mid-July.  
Bless our yard where spiders pass,  
The fire ant castles in the grass.  
Bless the garage, a home to please  
Carpenter beetles, ticks and fleas.

Bless the love bugs, two by two,  
The gnats and mosquitoes that feed on you.  
Millions of creatures that fly or crawl,  
In Texas, Lord, we've got them all.  
But this is home, and here we'll stay,  
So thank you, Lord, for insect spray.

## YOU KNOW YOU'RE A BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK VOLUNTEER WHEN....

*(This is a just-for-fun activity. If you have any contributions, please let Anna Dell know.)*

you find yourself defending alligators to perfect strangers  
you consider George Ranch (762) or the Rosharon traffic light (1462) as "almost there"  
you turn off the radio and open the windows when you turn off of 762  
your body relaxes and you leave your hectic schedule behind as your car reaches the mile stretch  
you feel "at home" with your volunteer family  
you learn something new every day  
you are away from the park for a week and notice how much has changed since you were last there  
you talk about riding a "gator" at the Park, and people look at you strangely.

## YOU KNOW YOU ARE IN TEXAS IN JULY WHEN...

The birds have to use potholders to pull worms out of the ground.  
The trees are whistling for the dogs.  
You learn that a seat belt buckle makes a pretty good branding iron.  
The temperature drops below 95 and you feel a little chilly.  
You discover that in July it only takes 2 fingers to steer your car.  
Your biggest bicycle wreck fear is, "What if I get knocked out and end up lying on the pavement and cook to death?"  
You realize that asphalt has a liquid state.  
The potatoes cook underground, so all you have to do is pull one out and add butter, salt and pepper.  
Farmers are feeding their chickens crushed ice to keep them from laying boiled eggs.  
The cows are giving evaporated milk.

**Brazos Bend State Park**

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville TX 77461

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←  
**SATURDAY, JULY 8, 2006, 5:30 PM**



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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
Bird Hikes	See schedule in calendar

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.

**BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK  
VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION**

**VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS**

President:	Judy Strauss
Vice-President:	Anna Dell Williamson
Secretary:	Bruce Williamson
Treasurer:	John Bradford

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@houston.rr.com). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.

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