



VOLUME 20, NUMBER 12

DECEMBER 2008

NOVEMBER MEETING NOTES

submitted by Eddy Grizzaffi

President Carrie Sample called the meeting to order on November 8, 2008. There were 17 volunteers, 1 guest and 2 staff members present. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report:

Rachelle Watson has accepted the position of Comptroller for the remainder of 2008 and for 2009. She has been going through the accounting records to see what has been done and how. The 2009 Budget will be based on the previous year budget and on additional requests from Steve Killian.

Treasurer Diane Carpenter brought the Budget Report.

Three budget requests were presented and approved:

Judy Strauss: a **rechargeable hand vacuum** for use for quick cleanups in the NC and GS. We discussed several options and decided on one that can be used as a floor cleaner as well.

Sharon Hanzik: a **separate sign-up web calendar** for special events.

Ron Morrison: a **parts washer** with solution and brushes for use in maintenance by staff and volunteers.

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Staff Reports:

David Heinicke, standing in for Steve Killian, and Sharon Hanzik brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in the newsletter.

Reports:

Carrie Sample announced that the following committee chairs have agreed to serve for 2009:

Comptroller, Rachelle Watson
Gift Shop Coordinator, Beth Debenport
Maintenance Coordinator, Bruce Williamson
Outreach Coordinator, Judy Strauss
Memorials Coordinator, Cindy Peterson
Newsletter Editor, Anna Dell Williamson
Membership Coordinator, Suzie Gann
Wood Yard Coordinator, Chuck Duplant

There are a few other committee leaders to be selected: **Interpretive/Education, Social, and Building Coordinators.**

Bruce Williamson brought the Maintenance report, which is published in the newsletter.

Anna Dell Williamson reported that the Gift Shop is using the new program and scanner. We have purchased more of the Texas t-shirts. We appreciate the extra help in the GS.

Judy Strauss reported that Texian Market Days was a success, with 975 visitors on Friday and 1301 on Saturday. There was lots of good help. Ron Dearman is taking the two broken awning poles in for repair.

Chuck Duplant has accepted the position as Wood Yard Coordinator. He is working on developing a sign system instructing volunteers on what needs bundling, what is ready for sale, etc. The motion sensor light on the 100 Loop kiosk is not working. Any help with bundling will be appreciated.

Joan Jackson announced that the volunteer t-shirts will be in soon.

Noel Duncan has been granted inactive status for a year.

The meeting was adjourned.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

TRAIL ANGELS

A visitor at the park recently told me that he called us (the volunteers) **Trail Angels**. He went on to say he considered Brazos Bend State Park to be the best state park and that he had been to quite a few of the parks. The reason he gave as to why the park was so great was because of all the 'trail angels'. There are always volunteers to help visitors and to give them interesting information. I wonder how we order our wings!



A big thanks to all the volunteers who recently agreed to be chairmen of various committees:

Comptroller - Rachelle Watson
Gift Shop - Beth Debenport
Interpretive/Education - Dave Armstrong
Maintenance - Bruce Williamson

Outreach - Judy Strauss
Memorials - Cindy Peterson
Newsletter - Anna Dell Williamson
Librarian - Marilyn Vossler
Woodyard - Chuck DuPlant
Joan Jackson - T-Shirts
Nature Center Manager - Teresa Jones
Socials - Open

If you have been on the trails lately, you have probably heard chirping and chattering (more like fussing). The short chirps are from the Yellow-rumped Warblers. There is a little yellow under their wings, but when they open their wings you can certainly see their yellow rumps!



The chattering sound is coming from tiny birds that are flittering around the tree branches - they are Ruby-crowned Kinglets. When the sun hits their heads just right, you can see their red crowns. They are grayish with a white eye ring. (Photos by Greg Lavaty)

Just a reminder - when you are out walking for 15 minutes or even a few hours, please pack along a sack to pick up litter along the way.

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving and may you enjoy your Christmas Holidays.

Carrie Sample

STAFF REPORTS

DAVID HEINICKE



David Heinicke reported for Steve Killian. Park staff, volunteers, hosts and special staff from the Valley put in about 2000 hours on Hurricane Ike cleanup. We have applied to FEMA for reimbursement for some of the added expenses. The deer hunt was held November 3-6, and 31 deer and 7 hogs were taken.

Our new lead ranger, replacing Carlos Torres, who retired recently, is **Richard Taylor**. He was previously the Assistant Maintenance Specialist for Regional. We will be getting a new position, Park Operations Trainee, who will learn about being a park supervisor. This person will work at Headquarters two days a week, Maintenance two days a week, and Nature Center one day a week.

October revenue was higher in 2008 than last year, in spite of being closed for 9 days in October due to Hurricane Ike.

There was discussion about planting willow trees in late winter.

Bruce Williamson asked about the park paying for the monthly fees for high speed Internet if the volunteer organization pays for installation. David will discuss that with Steve Killian.

SHARON HANZIK

Sharon Hanzik brought her report. The Family Camping program for new campers is being held this weekend at BBSP. Joan Hebert and Dawn Tejero have been assisting with the program, and Maureen Goode and Dave Armstrong led Creekfield hikes.



We will have a school group coming on November 19. You can sign up for special events on the new Volunteer Events calendar on the web site.

The NC will be open normal hours during the week of Thanksgiving and programs will be presented. When you sign up on the web calendar, make sure the 11-1 and 1-3 shifts are covered first.

New volunteer training will be held in February. Eight of those who started training in September will complete the training that was interrupted by Hurricane Ike. There are a few new applicants who will join that class. Applicants are accepted until November 30.

We are advertising for park volunteers (not members of the organization) for the maintenance program. They will be assisting only with maintenance, and if the maintenance volunteers want to participate in other volunteer activities, they must take the regular volunteer training.

MEETING NIGHT SUPPERS

Just a reminder that we need volunteers to sign up for the meeting night suppers. You will prepare food for about 20 people, and you will be reimbursed for your expenses. One person or several people may work on this. Sign up on the web calendar. Paper goods, plastic ware, tea and ice are provided. The supper is a good chance to visit with volunteers you might not see often. We need your support to continue having the suppers.

FOR THE BIRDS (OR BIRDERS)

BALD EAGLE AT BBSP

by Sharon Hanzik

November 3, 2008. MY first bald eagle sighting of the season was this morning - all for me. As I was getting out of my car at the NC parking lot I heard CROWS! I looked at the top of the oak in the deck and saw them chasing the eagle from the tree tops, then across the lawn to Creekfield. As soon as the great bird was in view of the marsh birds, I could hear them all squawk and scatter. What a way to start the day! (for me anyway, not the eagle or the marsh birds)



BIRD LIST ON THE WEB PAGE

Bill Godley's bi-weekly list of bird sightings can now be found on the web page. Click on the hike schedule under "coming programs" and you will find a link. We will continue to post the list on the bulletins boards at the Nature Center and 40-Acre lake.

24th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Remember that the 24th Christmas Bird Count will take place Saturday, December 20, in and around Brazos Bend State Park. Everyone is invited to participate, regardless of skill level. Notify Bill Godley, <fribbish@msn.com>, if you are interested in participating. See the CBC flyer available from our website home page (www.brazosbend.org) for additional information.

PUBLIC HIKES

BIRD WATCHING HIKES

Volunteer **Bill Godley** and Park Naturalist **David Heinicke** lead scheduled bird hikes during the year. Beginners and advanced birders are invited to participate. These free hikes will normally be 1-2 hours in duration. Hike dates and times are subject to change. See the Calendar of Events in the newsletter for the current schedule or refer to the BBSP web site for the calendar for the year.

Friday and Sunday hikes begin at 8:00 a.m. from 40 Acre Lake Restrooms. Saturday "Sunset at the Tower" meets at 5:00 p.m. at the Observation Tower. Saturday "Beginning Birder" will be added during the year.

FRIDAY NIGHT HIKES

Assistant Park Manager **Dennis Jones** is leading night hikes for the general public, Scout groups and church groups every Friday night until March 27. The purpose of the hikes is to learn about the night time at BBSP, to discover how the darkness is utilized by the park's wildlife, to understand how animals, including ourselves, use senses other than sight, and to have fun!

The hikes begin at 7:00 PM and last approximately two hours. Hikers will meet at Park Headquarters at 6:30 PM and car pool to the actual hike location. The hike will be approximately one-half to one mile along darkened trails. It is recommended that visitors wear appropriate clothing, including closed-toed shoes (rubber boots if trails are muddy), long pants, coats, jackets as needed. Flashlights should have the lenses covered with red cellophane or red cloth. Minimum group size is 5, with a maximum of 15 participants per hike.

Advance reservations are required and must be made at park headquarters (979-553-5101) no later than 12:00 noon the day of the hike. The fee is \$5.00 per person 7 - 12 years old, and \$10.00 per person 13 years old and up (includes park entrance fee). This hike is not suitable for children under 6 years of age.

GIFT SHOP INFORMATION

Thanks to **Glen Kilgore**, we have a new cash register program for the Gift Shop, including the capability to use a scanner to enter prices. The system is easy to use, and we invite all of you to sign up for a shift and get your training soon.

Check out the GS for your Christmas list, including t-shirts, books, toys, and stocking stuffers.



SIMPLE CHRISTMAS, SIMPLY A SUCCESS

by Sharon Hanzik

We had one of our best events ever. As we all know, the weather could not have been better! Every activity from Santa to Story Time was consistently busy. We have no estimate but it's safe to say we had one of our highest attendances. I can remember maybe one other time when we were this busy. Santa heard Christmas wishes for almost 4 hours straight!



HERE'S TO YOU, the park's most valuable resources, our staff and volunteers! Thank you for helping us conduct yet another successful event. While I was helping serve up refreshments, I received many compliments on the event, its structure, activities and fun, relaxing time.

James and Karla Eilbeck, our Dutch-Oven cookers, were able to attend despite the failing health of Karla's father. We send our prayers with them at this difficult time.



VOLUNTEER NEWS & NOTES



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Robert Aaron	Jeff Orsak (Staff)
Beth Debenport	Frank Willett

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Dave Armstrong	Jim North
Joe Carmichael (Emeritus)	Laszlo Perlaky
Sharon Hanzik (Staff)	Marilyn Vossler
Jim Hiett	Warren Jackson
Jane Minard	(Emeritus)
Ron Morrison	Bruce Williamson

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Jenn and Alan Mantei

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Fletcher Morgan (Emeritus)



- ★ to all of you who helped make the **Simple Christmas** event something special. Please thank all of your family members who helped us out of the goodness of their hearts.
- ★ to **Anna Dell Williamson, Cindy Peterson, Joan Jackson** and **Rose Aden** for the November meeting supper and desserts.
- ★ to **Judy Strauss** for the December meeting supper.
- ★ to **Joan Hebert** and **Dawn Tejero** for assistance with the family camping program
- ★ to **Maureen Goode** and **Dave Armstrong** for leading special Creekfield hikes for the family camping program.
- ★ to **all the volunteers** who recently agreed to be chairmen of various committees (see President's Corner for list).
- ★ to **Glen Kilgore** for the new Gift Shop cash register program.
- ★ to **Teresa Jones** for the Christmas lights and poinsettia inside the center. Looks great!

DRESS CODE

Brazos Bend State Park State Park Volunteers

September 2008

by Sharon Hanzik

In keeping with a professional appearance, volunteers are asked to comply with the following code of dress. Staff has the right to dictate or enforce, if necessary, a volunteer uniform code. The top volunteer organization in TPWD should look professional! All clothing should be in good repair, not stained or torn (with the exception of clothing worn for maintenance work.)

Shirts

Button-down, tan khaki shirts of any style may be worn.

1. A tucked-in shirt looks most professional.
2. Please wear the khaki shirt whenever you are conducting a program or leading a hike or when you are working a shift in the nature center or gift shop.

T-shirts (BBSPVO logo only) are ideal for maintenance work. They are not easily recognized when you are walking or biking the trails. (Be sure to wear a hat with the patch affixed. When driving an ATV one must be clearly identified as a volunteer.)

Sweatshirts – same guideline as t-shirts.

Vests – tan khaki vests may be worn with a name tag affixed. You may also attach a patch.

Pants – jeans or any neutral colored pant.

Shorts – same as pants – not too short – preferably covering $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ of thigh.

Head wear

Caps – if you purchase your own, it should be Kelly, dark green or khaki, but preferably green. Same applies to visors.

Straw hats, of neutral color and of any style, may be worn. You may attach a patch.

Name tags – should be Kelly or standard green (no lime), and worn on right side.

Brazos Bend State Park
VOLUNTEER
John Smith

Patches

Khaki shirts – patches are to be attached to the left sleeve of only the khaki shirt 1 inch below the seam. In addition to this placement one may attach another patch to the front of the shirt on the right side or the right sleeve.

Caps – caps supplied by the organization will come with an attached patch. Straw hats should have it attached either permanently or temporary.

Patches are supplied by the Organization. We are currently looking into supplying caps with patches on them. We are also considering a vendor for volunteers to purchase khaki shirts that come with patches.

KUHF PROGRAM ON BBSP

by Chuck Duplant

The KUHF program "Engines of our Ingenuity" mentioned Brazos Bend and the Golden Silk Spider. Their web site, <http://uh.edu/engines/epi2435.htm>, also links to TPWD page of Brazos Bend. Free advertizing and education.

NATURE CENTER REPORT NOVEMBER 2008

by Anna Dell Williamson

Here are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for November 1 -30, 2008. The park was closed four weekdays for the hunt.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE November 2008 - 6312	Saturdays (5) 2499
	Sundays (5) 1865
	Weekdays (16) 1948
CREEKFIELD HIKES (16)	245
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS/HIKES (2)	72
SNAKE (7)	189
CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (7)	128
BIRD PROGRAMS/HIKES (7)	116
ASK THE RANGER (3)	50
BRAZOS RIVER PICKERS (1)	64
OTHER PROGRAMS (3) includes skulls, mammals and outreach	17
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS	881

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 13	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
December 14	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Lake, 8:00 AM
December 19	Night Hike, HQ, Reservation Required, 7:00 PM
December 20	"24th Christmas Bird Count", 6:30 AM
December 26	Night Hike, HQ, Reservation Required, 7:00 PM
December 27	"Sunset at the Tower" Bird Hike, Observation Tower, 5:00 PM

2009

January 2	Night Hike, HQ, Reservation Required, 7:00 PM
January 3	Brazos River Pickers, Amphitheater, 5:00 PM
January 9	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Lake, 8:00 AM
	Night Hike, HQ, Reservation Required, 7:00 PM
January 10	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
January 11	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Lake, 8:00 AM
January 16	Night Hike, HQ, Reservation Required, 7:00 PM
January 17	"Sunset at the Tower" Bird Hike, Observation Tower, 5:00 PM
January 19	Martin Luther King Day Holiday



FROM STACI HOBGET

December, 2008

Dear Brazos Bend Vols,

I'm missing you up here in northern California. It's kind of amazing to me that, though I spent just four years in Houston, I came to feel very much at home there. The vols of BBSP are one big reason why. My sense that I can't replace you or the experience of working (playing) at Brazos Bend has made me slow to even try, though I live within walking distance of another state park – a big one -- Mt. Diablo State Park, and it has an established volunteer group I could join. I don't know -- I'm just not ready. I did contact them, but they didn't sound... Texan.

Those of you who have visited the San Francisco Bay area may know of Mt. Diablo. The summit is just under 4,000 feet, but it's a bulky presence in the rumpled line of coastal mountains here and so is a good landmark all over the Bay. Our house (we moved back into the same place we lived before) lies in the foothills in the East bay town of Walnut Creek, so we're surrounded by grassy savannahs studded with California buckeye and oak trees. Many of the oaks are live oaks. Though a different species from the ones in the Houston area (*Quercus lobata* instead of *Quercus virginiana*), they're just as beautiful. I've noticed that, during my Texas years, the State Park staff here has planted lots of new oaks. The trees had been so heavily browsed by deer that there were virtually no young ones a few years ago. Now, along the mountain's sprawling slopes, you see lots of saplings growing up through yard-high translucent tubes. By the time they poke out the top – looking like somebody struggling up through a tight turtleneck sweater – the deer pass them by: too tough for the salad bar.

Walnut Creek is a good place to be. Due to the proximity of the mountain, there are lots of trails close by. They crisscross the town and shoot north and south along the valley, as well as up into the Park, connecting with trails in other towns and on other mountaintops of the Bay. I hike every day and can get into gorgeous country very quickly. The wildlife watching can't compete with Brazos Bend, especially in the dry months from late spring to early fall, when it doesn't rain at all: the hills dry up and the critters stay mostly out of sight. I hear coyotes and I always keep a wary eye out for mountain lions, since I hike alone. I'd rather see a lion than be struck by lightning but the lightning's more likely, I'd bet.



A view of Mt. Diablo from Lime Ridge, looking southeast. This trail is a 30-minute walk or a five minute drive from my house.

I do see a lot of birds. We were besieged with migrating Western bluebirds and Yellow-rumped warblers in November. There are several noisy colonies of Acorn woodpeckers along my walking routes, and I see big cackling groups of wild turkeys and bustling mobs of California quail every week. California quail are beautiful, but they have this fussy little top knot that bounces like a pin-curl when they run. It's really hard to take them seriously.



California quail (*Callipepla californica*)

Via the newsletter, Jerry Zona's fine weekly photos, and notes from several friends, I've stayed in good touch with the happenings at Brazos Bend, including the tragic ones, Hurricane Ike and Ken Debenport's truly untimely death. Time heals all, supposedly, but those two losses will leave deep scars.

A peaceful holiday season to you all! Think of me if you're heading this way. I'd be delighted to see you and take you on a hike around Mt. Diablo. Maybe I'll even have deigned to join the volunteer group by then...

All the best,

Staci Hobbet

rshobbet1@mac.com

POSSIBLE SIGHTING OF UNDERSIZED ABORIGINAL IN BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK

by Rick Dashnau

If anyone driving on the road to Hale lake has reported seeing a wild pygmy humanoid on one of our trails on October, 12, 2008, the following may help focus any further investigation:

Sunday, October 12, 2008. I was leading the Creekfield hike. A single family composed of 2 adults and 2 children were my "customers". One child was 5 years old, and the other about 3. They were a pleasant family, and seemed really interested in the hike. We had just passed the small bridge, when the 5 year old started complaining, and the parents saw that she'd stepped in a fire ant nest. The youngster was wearing sandals. The parents quickly brushed off the ants, and the child seemed to be ok.

About 10 minutes later, we arrived at the start of the long pier. When I stepped onto the pier, the mother walked down the trail with the two children. The husband seemed to want to continue onto the pier. When I asked what happened, he said that the 5 year old seemed to be swelling from the ant bites, and the mother and children were returning to their campsite. I asked if we should go back to the visitor center to seek treatment, or if he was concerned. He said they'd be ok. I asked him again, and he said they'd be fine. So I continued to the pier platform where I pointed out some birds and a large alligator, etc.

We returned to the trail, and as we walked, I heard a child and a woman laughing. I said, "Well, I guess your wife and kids are ok!"

We got closer, and I could see them near the spigot for the well. When I got even closer, I saw that the 5-year-old was knee-deep in the runoff from the spigot. That alarmed me, and I walked a bit faster. I saw

the mother standing near the well spigot where the water was gushing out. Then, when I could see past the small tree in front of her, I saw their toddler. She was being washed in the spigot. She was totally naked.

I kind of yelled in my mind, but I kept my speaking voice steady, and I told the lady that she really shouldn't do that kind of thing. I also mentioned that her 5-year-old needed to get out of the water right away. And then I reminded her that alligators are attracted to animals splashing in the water; and that they can be stealthy when they stalk prey; and that it's possible (though unlikely) that the first she knew of an alligator stalking her toddler would be a flash of movement right near them. She listened all of this without comment, all the while herding her children back onto the trail. When they got onto dry land, the youngest started to play the "I'm all wet and clean--now chase me!" game.

So, there on the shaded, dark grey trail, amongst the various greens of the leaves and plants in the dimmed light of the overcast day, ran this really, really bright pink, wet, and shiny little person. She was so pink she almost seemed to glow as she ran down the trail. I really had to work hard not to laugh (all of this was really against park etiquette, and I was trying to get this across to the parents) as I watched the spectacle of the mom chasing this little pink critter, and I thought, "That's not something you see out here every day." I had to look away as I waited patiently for her to corral "Littlefoot" (almost like Bigfoot, except a lot smaller...and pink...and hairless....). We (the father and I) finally continued towards the mother and two children. The younger one was dressed and back in the backpack. I looked at the mom in front of me, and then at the 5-year old in front of her. I thought of the ant bites, and looked down at her feet...and then looked up a little higher because something had caught my attention. Her pants were wet but they seemed awful short. Something else didn't quite....

I turned to the Dad beside me, pointed at the 5-year-old, and said, "Where are her pants?"

"Right here!", he said, smiling and holding them up.

I really didn't have anything else to say right then, so I looked away for a minute or two. 'This is serious.' I thought. 'If I laugh they'll think this behavior is ok.'

Then I decided to try to point out a bit more along the trail, but the family decided to head back to their campsite before we got much further. I guess it's a good thing they did. I don't want to imagine what else might have happened.

WHAT'S IN THE GARDEN?

by Joan Jackson

Shrimp Plant

Justicia brandegeana, Beloperone guttata

This Mexican native is one of the host plants of the Texas Crescentspot butterfly. The caterpillar is a night feeder, so you may see the shredded leaves instead of the feeding caterpillars. Shrimp plant will grow leggy and the branches tend to fall over and root along the stems, making it somewhat invasive in your garden. It likes sun but does well in part shade. Not too particular about soil conditions, but the ideal is fertile well-drained soil. Since it is a tropical, it will freeze in winter but resprouts in the spring. The "flowers" are actually bracts and are reddish brown, dark red, or yellow depending on the variety you choose. Inside of the bracts are the true flowers, tubular-shaped, white or light pink, spotted with purple. Blooming occurs in summer and fall.

Hummingbirds are attracted to these plants in your garden. Our red shrimp plants are in the large bed in front of the Nature Center, and the yellow variety is to the left as you exit the back door of the Center.



Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←
SATURDAY, January 10, 5:30 PM



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:	Carrie Sample
Vice-President:	Suzie Gann
Secretary:	Eddy Grizzaffi
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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). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.