



VOLUME 22, NUMBER 8

AUGUST 2010

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

What a busy summer this has been at the park. I want to pay special tribute to the maintenance volunteers who work outside on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and still have time to offer help with the Eco-Explorers Program. My hat is off to all of you guys!

Speaking of Eco-Explorers, we just finished that program. Thanks to the following volunteers who helped: **Suzie Gann, Kylie Kramr, Connie Waltrip, Mary Lockwood, Barb Tucker, Jaci Elliot, Marilyn Vossler, Patricia Marshall, Diane and Jerry Carpenter, Katie Childs, Sharon Hanzik and David Heinicke.** One of the special qualities of that program is that the parents get just as involved as the students!

A special thanks to **Diane Carpenter** for getting the information about Kroger's and Randall's contributions to the park. Please take the time to have the barcode put onto your courtesy cards. I don't know the exact amount, but the amount we received from Kroger was worth the effort!

Be sure to put October 9 on your calendars for our Annual Volunteer Picnic. At the picnic, I will officially be the Ex-President. I have enjoyed being your President and hope that I have led you well. I actually did not do much, because this organization is a fine-tuned operation. I believe the volunteers have achieved much the past two years. We have re-vamped the Sundial, raised funds to start the Elm Lake Viewing Platform, and have started the wheels moving once again for our much-needed new Nature Center.

Cynthia Morales is putting together a "Friends of Brazos Bend State Park" program. More details to come. Thank you Cynthia for seeing the need for this and putting it together.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for the time and talent each of you contributes to the park. Just read our guest book to see how much you are truly appreciated! Each time I drive out of the park, I have a feeling of awe at how special the park and its volunteers are to me!

Carrie Sample

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JULY MEETING NOTES

Contributed by Beth Debenport, Acting Secretary

President **Carrie Sample** called the meeting to order on July 10, 2010. There were eleven members and two staff present. The June meeting minutes were approved as posted.

Assistant Superintendent **Chris Bishop** reported that the Volunteer Organization has not been following Texas Parks rules on using gasoline-powered equipment. All such equipment needs to be put in the park inventory. The equipment that needs to be changed are the two John Deere Gators, the Kubota, the chipper, the tractor, and the wood splitter. This equipment will be taken off the volunteer inventory but will still be used by volunteers with benefits from the state that cover using state equipment. It was moved and passed that we comply with the state requirements. The rest of his report and **David Heinicke's** report are elsewhere in the newsletter.

Treasurer **Dave Armstrong** presented the monthly budget report and monies available report. The reports were accepted as presented.

The following budget requests were submitted and approved:

- A request from the park for money for signs in the Yellowstone area, which is on the Brazos River where the canoes are put in the river.
- A request from the park for money for materials to build a gate for the entrance to the equestrian area on Sawmill Road. The funds will come from the equestrian special fund.

Beth Debenport brought the Gift Shop report. The committee is looking at new software for the computer. We have three new t-shirt styles, so be sure to check them out.

There will be about nineteen people in the new training class.

Eco Explorers is going well this year. The pre-registration has worked out very well. There are about twenty-five or thirty children attending with parents and siblings.

The Nominating Committee this year will be **Glen Kilgore** and **Diane Carpenter**.

Our beloved **Elmer Aden** has passed away. Memories were shared. A moment of silence was held for him.

Ric Rincon suggested looking at the budget for one year, three years, and five years in the future, like the businesses do. He suggested meeting with the park staff to discuss the most beneficial ways the volunteers can help financially.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

STAFF REPORTS



CHRIS BISHOP, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

The park received a lawn mower from the regional office.

This month a team from Texas Parks should be bringing in a trailer with bathroom facilities to be used while they are revamping the bathroom at headquarters and in both camping loops. The Nature Center bathroom is not going to be remodeled.

I will be going to police academy August 16. Management Trainee **Ted Stevens** will be acting Assistant Superintendent.

The electrical upgrade to 50 amperage will not be started until next year.

The Volunteer Organization has not been following Texas Parks rules on using gasoline-powered equipment. All such equipment needs to be put in the park inventory. The equipment that needs to be changed are the two John Deer Gators, the Kubota, the chipper, the tractor, and the wood splitter. This equipment will be taken off the volunteer inventory but will still be used by volunteers with benefits from the state that cover using state equipment.



DAVID HEINICKE, PARK NATURALIST AND LAW OFFICER

Starting in August and continuing for the next two years an archaeological study will be made of Brazos Bend State Park.

The final drawing for the Elm Lake Platform has been completed. There are three options staff are looking at to do the project — the state doing it in total, Region doing it, or the volunteers doing it. Region looks like the best option right now.

We are looking into the cost of obtaining a display for the Nature Center of pictures of all the crocodiles in the world.

The Fourth of July bike parade had thirty-eight bikes. Attendance was less this year because of the weather.

JUST FOR GRINS: THOUGHTS ON SUMMER

From an email from Revels Houston, July 2010

“Summer is the topsy-turvy season when the goldfish have to be boarded out while the family goes on a fishing trip.” – Unknown

“A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken.” – James Dent



NATURE CENTER REPORT

July 2010

Contributed by Anna Dell Williamson



Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for July 1-31, 2010. The hot weather is not keeping visitors away as much as in the past.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE July 2010 - 4683 (high, 7/31) - 532 July 2009 - 4298 July 2008 - 4484 July 2007 - 2825 July 2006 - 3339	Saturdays (5) 1819 High, 532, 7/31 Average: 364
	Sundays (4) – 909 High, 255, 7/25 Average: 227
	Weekdays (22) – 1966 High, 432, 7/4 Average: 89
CREEKFIELD HIKES (8)	83 – High, 25 - 7/31
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (5)	119 – High, 36 - 7/17
SNAKE PROGRAMS (10)	263 – High, 42 - 7/6, 7/31
CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (4)	46 – High, 17 - 7/3, 7/17
TREES (2)	79
OUTREACH (2)	80
ECO-EXPLORERS/TADPOLES	111
OTHER PROGRAMS (9) includes birds, photo hike, videos, pond life, creatures of the night, bike parade, poison ivy, owls, and toads	113
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS	1050
VOLUNTEER HOURS	Total in all areas: 1354 Total in NC and programs: 622
TOTAL PARK VISITATION, JULY	13,039

VOLUNTEER NEWS & NOTES



. . . to the Tuesday/Thursday maintenance crew: **Suzie Gann, Kylie Kramr, Connie Waltrip, Mary Lockwood, Barb Tucker, Jaci Elliot, Marilyn Vossler, Patricia Marshall, Diane and Jerry Carpenter, Katie Childs, Sharon Hanzik, and David Heinicke** for their help with Eco-Explorers.

. . . to **Diane Carpenter** for getting information about the Kroger and Randall's rebate programs.

. . . to **Cynthia Morales** seeing the need and putting together a proposal for a "Friends of Brazos Bend State Park" program.

. . . to all who send articles and pictures for the newsletter.



. . . to **Jo Ann Davis** and **Katelyn Childs**, who have completed their training and are now full volunteers. Give them both a hearty welcome to the group!



It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of our dear friend and fellow volunteer **Elmer Aden** on July 2, 2010. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Rose and the other family members.



August Birthdays

Rob Thacker
Tom Draper
Eddy Grizzaffi
Frank Seay
Sylvia Carrillo (Staff)
Jim Gilliam (Staff)

September Birthdays

Gary Bialas (Staff)
Jim Calvert
Ron Dearman
Barry Eversole (Staff)
Frank Gregg (Emeritus)
Linda Oden Heinicke
Tina Ibarra (Staff)
Ed Waley

August Anniversaries

Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson
Laszlo and Lexi Perlaky
Ray and Dana Anderson
Ron and Margaret Morrison
Jim and Lorena Calvert
Frank and Stacey Seay



September Anniversaries

Dave and Gay Armstrong
Jaci Elliott
Eddy and Sam Grizzaffi
Jim and Patricia Hiatt
Don and Marilyn Vossler

GROCERY REBATE PROGRAMS

Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization has been approved for the Neighbor to Neighbor program which runs from July 2010 through April 2011. In order for our organization to benefit, you will need to print the flyer at the following link and ask the cashier to scan the barcode once with your Signature Card. Please send this information to your family and friends who are interested in helping BBSPVO receive these funds from Kroger.



<http://krogerneighbortoneighbor.com/pdf/10000081267.pdf>

At Randall's, shoppers can link BBSPVO (Org #3163) to their Remarkable Card for us to receive a percentage of sales. The Randall's program allows shoppers to link as many as three charitable organizations to a Remarkable Card.

MYTH OR REALITY?

Contributed by Sharon Hanzik

Myth or Reality? *A mother alligator doesn't eat while she's guarding the nest.*

MYTH. She will eat. She may even stray from the nest to find food. If she has to, she will go without.

Myth or Reality? *Spanish Moss harms the tree because it creates too much shade for the roots of the host tree.*

MYTH. Spanish Moss is an epiphyte. It only uses the tree for support. In very wet conditions, the water content in the moss may bring down a perfectly healthy branch/limb. Sometimes much of it may fall on understory plants that cannot support it, and it may be a heavy burden.

Myth or Reality? *BBSP was closed for 2 years when it was flooded.*

MYTH. There have been multiple episodes of flooding and temporary closures, but never for more than a few months. The one that impacted the park the most started on December 31, 1990 and lasted through March of 1991. During that time, the park remained closed.

TPWD NEWS

Emergency Pumping Prevents Sinking of Battleship Texas



Battleship Texas
Photo by Judy Strauss

A rag and a backup pump kept the storied battleship Texas from sinking in its mooring at San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site recently, according to state park officials.

"This worrisome incident, which we fortunately succeeded in bringing under control, underscores the importance of moving forward rapidly with plans to place the Texas in a dry-berth," said Carter Smith, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department executive director. "I'm just glad our folks at the park showed a lot of resourcefulness in preventing the situation from getting out of hand."

The 1914-vintage battleship, a veteran of both world wars, is the last of its kind. She's been moored at the San Jacinto Battleground since 1948. Her hull was last repaired in the late 1980s and has since become dangerously weakened from years of exposure to the brackish water of the Houston Ship Channel.

On June 10, a park employee leaving for the day noticed that the ship appeared to be sitting a bit lower in the water than normal. When he returned to work the next morning, the ship was noticeably lower. The ship had sunk some two to three feet overnight. When park staff checked below deck, they discovered a previously unknown leak on the starboard side of the ship, and found water building up in the aft steering compartment of the ship.

A pump in that compartment had burned out, causing the ship to take on more water than normal. That, in turn, pulled a seam separation below the water line, in effect causing another leak. The broken pump was replaced with a backup, and other pumps were employed. By the end of the day June 12, some 105,000 gallons of water had been pumped from the ship, which rose to its normal level. As a temporary fix, a rag was stuffed in the starboard leak, which is now above the waterline.

"Currently, a rag and pumps are keeping her afloat," said Justin Rhodes, regional director of the area that includes the San Jacinto site. "The sooner we get her out of the water, the better."

In 2007, voters approved a bond package that included \$25 million to dry-berth the battleship. The Battleship Texas Foundation will be providing another \$4 million. And last March, the Legislative Budget Board approved the sale of bonds "contingent on the ship being dry berthed in its current location." Plans are in progress to dry-berth the ship. Current plans are to complete the dry-berth by 2014, the centennial of the ship's commissioning.

"Given what happened recently, we are eager to proceed with this project," Carter Smith said. "We're not going to let the passage of time do what two world wars could not do, which is scuttle the Battleship Texas."

TPWD PROJECT WILD WORKSHOPS

TPWD is scheduling several Project WILD and related workshops over the next few months.

In a Project WILD workshop, participants learn how to teach young people about ecology and wildlife using fun, hands-on educational activities. During the six-hour training workshop participants will sample activities and receive a curriculum and activity guide. Activities are adaptable for all grade levels, integrated with core subject curricula and aligned to the TEKS. Teachers, informal educators and youth group leaders may take the training, which has a fee of \$10 and preregistration is required.

Flying WILD, a companion piece to Project WILD, explores bird conservation through classroom activities and stewardship projects. During the six-hour workshop participants will receive an educator's manual, sample activities and explore guidelines on how to implement school bird festivals and conservation projects.

Growing up WILD is for 3-7 year olds and is correlated to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards and the Head Start Domains. Learn how to build on young children's sense of wonder about nature and invite them to explore wildlife and the world around them. During the three-hour training workshop participants will sample activities and receive a curriculum and activity guide.

Facilitator Training: Join the corps of volunteer Facilitators who teach the suite of Project WILD workshops to other adults. By attending this two day workshop, participants will be certified to teach Project WILD, Project WILD Aquatic, Science & Civics, and Growing Up WILD professional development workshops to formal and informal educators in their cities and communities. Must have previously attended a Project WILD or Project WILD Aquatic workshop and be willing to teach one workshop per year. SBEC Continuing

Education Credit available for teachers.

Although only one of these workshops is currently scheduled in the Houston area, watch the TPWD website for future offerings. Our San Antonio area volunteers have several opportunities. There is a registration fee which varies by workshop. To find more details, including time, fee, location and contact person, go to http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/project_wild/ and click on “workshops”.

- August 9 Flying WILD Workshop, San Antonio Botanical Garden
- August 19 Project WILD Facilitator Training, Blinn Aquatic Education Center-Bryan, Texas
- August 20 Growing up WILD Workshop, Kleb Woods Nature Center, Tomball, Texas
- September 7 Project WILD/Growing Up WILD Combo Workshop, Eisenhower Park, San Antonio
- September 8 Spanish Project WILD/Growing Up WILD Combo Workshop, Eisenhower Park, San Antonio
- September 9 Project WILD/Growing Up WILD Combo Workshop, Eisenhower Park, San Antonio
- October 16 Project WILD Workshop, Witte Museum, San Antonio
- October 30 Growing Up WILD Workshop, Witte Museum, San Antonio

LEUCISTIC GRACKLE

Story & Photo Contributed by Jerry Zona

Recently I've written about a leucistic grackle that I've photographed in my back yard. Once again, it's a



bird that lacks the normal pigmentation of the species. It has been several weeks and she has shown up again, along with a male. Typically a male grackle will help the female build a nest. I observed them for a couple of days. Shortly after I would only see the female grackle. A common practice is that the female may select another nest site and build it on her own. I observed her feeding in my back yard for several days. As I had first watched the bird the behavior was skittish, now it was more aggressive. While foraging, if a blue jay or dove were close by she would chase them off. She would feed and grab larger pieces of food and fly off, always in the same direction. She must have been feeding a clutch of birds that she has raised. I've not seen her for a while, but I feel

she has done what Nature has asked her to do, and that is reproduce.

Since the bird is leucistic, I consulted my genetics textbook from my college days. I found no direct link to genetics such as there is to albinisms. After looking online I found the same. Right or wrong, thank you again, Mrs. L. Grackle, for doing what Nature has asked you to do.

Please come back and visit again. Ain't Nature Great!

YES, VIRGINIA, THERE ARE SOME SANDY CLAWS

Story & Photos Contributed by Rick Dashnau

If you have been walking the trails at Brazos Bend State Park, then you may have noticed crawfish claws (and sometimes legs) lying around the trails. In most cases, just the claws are there. A single pair might not cause much comment, but when there are claws scattered in many places, then it becomes mysterious. After all, where is the rest of the crawfish? Many of us at the park know that the culprits behind the mystery are various wading birds, and mostly Yellow-Crowned Night Herons.



While I'm out on the trails, I like to point out the discarded claws to park visitors, and then let them guess why they're there. And then I usually blame the Night Herons. However, I've never really had a good mental image of how the Herons remove the claws. Over the last few weeks, I shot some high speed video that cleared it up for me. It appears that the Herons use inertia to de-claw the crawfish.

I've edited together and posted the video online. When a Heron captures a crawfish, it immediately twists its head from side to side very quickly. This is not like shaking its head from side-to-side (as if saying "no"), but similar to a motion it might do if it was trying to "drill" with its beak. Centrifugal force causes the limbs (and especially the heavier claws) to straighten from the body (this appears to have the added benefit of preventing the crawfish from grabbing the Heron). Along with repositioning the crawfish for a better leverage against the joints as they spin, the claws sometimes just break off.

An alternate method (in the first part of my video) has the Heron grabbing a claw, the "arm", and twisting while holding that, with the weight of the crawfish working on the joint. Eventually, one claw after another is broken off and discarded. Sometimes groups of the legs are grabbed, and then hyperextended by the weight of the crawfish's body using the same twisting motion. These break off and are also discarded. And so, there's video proof of one of our minor mysteries – solved!



An additional note for those who receive this and are living outside of Texas: crawfish = crayfish. (Po-TAY-to, Po-TAH-to). Also, these are "red swamp crawfish" (*procambarus clarkii*) and YES, they are that big, and can get even bigger. They are pretty amazing animals. I've read that they can reproduce parthenogenically (reproduction involving an unfertilized egg); that they can actually come in different colors (including blue); and that they have become invasive destructive species in some countries, partly because of their burrowing. They can also make thick mud chimneys and dig deep burrows. They are what are served in most restaurants.

Here are a few images. All of these are part of the video clip, which can be seen by following this link: http://rickubis.20m.com/yellow_crowned_w_crawfish.wmv

And that's my story.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| August 14 | Building Committee Meeting, 1:00 PM
Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM
Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper at 5:00 PM) |
| September 6 | Labor Day, NC open 9-5 |
| September 11 | New Volunteer Orientation and Lunch
Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM
Regular Business Meeting, Election, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM) |
| September 18 | New Volunteer Training, 9:00 - 5:00 |
| September 25 | New Volunteer Training, 9:00 - 5:00 |
| October 9 | Annual Volunteer Picnic, 5:30 PM |
| October 24 | New Volunteer Open House, 3:00 - 5:00 PM |



Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville, TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME
SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 2010, 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

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Vice-President:	Suzie Gann
Secretary	Eddy Grizzaffi
Treasurer:	Dave Armstrong

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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.