



# BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

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JULY, 2010

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

It has been so cool lately. Joan Hebert and I have been wearing a jacket. No, we are not by the Bend ..we are traveling on the Rhine River through France, Germany. etc. It is a different world here - I am amazed at the identical flowers and plants. There is a coot, but he has a white crown similar to the moorhen!

Before the last meeting, I had been contemplating allowing voting by proxy for members unable to attend meetings, but after our last meeting, I was convinced that it was not a good idea. Only by being at the meeting can you hear the complete explanation of the current topic. My mind was changed due to our dialogue (and believe me, we thoroughly discussed the topics!) Thanks to all who came to the meeting and asked the right questions!

My term as president is coming to an end...that means we need another slate of officers. I will be choosing a nominating committee when I get back home. If you would like to serve in some way, please send me an e-mail.

Thanks for all that each of you do to contribute to the park.

*Carrie*

## BRAZOS BEND IN THE NEWS: BEST 10 WALKS IN TEXAS

The *Fort Worth Star Telegram* put out a list of the best 10 walks in Texas. 40-Acre Trail at BBSP made that list. For the full list and the details on BBSP, go to the link below and check it out.

[http://www.star-telegram.com/2010/06/09/2252229\\_p3/the-10-best-walks-in-texas.html#tvq](http://www.star-telegram.com/2010/06/09/2252229_p3/the-10-best-walks-in-texas.html#tvq)

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# JUNE MEETING NOTES

*submitted by Eddy Grizzaffi*

The June 12, 2010 meeting was called to order by **Carrie Sample**, President. There were 2 staff and 18 volunteers present. Minutes were approved as posted. Thanks to **Cindy Peterson** for supper. **Bruce Williamson** brought cake and the **Carpenters** brought the ice cream. Glad to see you all again.

**Steve Killian** and **Sharon Hanzik** brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in the newsletter.

**Budget Report:** **Rachelle Watson** presented the budget report in Dave Armstrong's absence.

**Krogers Cards:** We received a significant increase in the donation from the Kroger card program over last year. Each June donors have to renew their donation on their Kroger's card. You can get the barcode you need to designate BBSP to receive your contribution by going on our website, or by picking up a letter with the barcode from the display rack in the Nature Center. Don't forget to renew for this year and to remind visitors about this opportunity to assist the park.

**Requests for funds:** The following requests were presented and approved:

**Repairs** to the John Deere front end loader **tractor**.

**Color-coded trail maps**, 75,000, for visitors to the park. This amount should last us one year. There will be information about the rebate programs with Krogers and Randalls on the back.

**Herbicide** for prairie management purposes

**Vacuum assist water pump** to maintain lake levels

**Diesel fuel** for pump operation

**New Nature Center Report:** **Chuck Duplant** reported on the meeting held today. Anna Dell Williamson was appointed secretary. All meetings are open to the membership and the next meeting will be August 10, 2010. Chuck went over the Building Committee Guidelines, which were approved by the organization.

Chuck reported on proposed space allowances for the new buildings. The Nature Center areas include the Nature Center display area (4000 sq. ft.), Naturalists' office and storage (500 sq. ft.), volunteer office, (375 sq. ft.), Gift Shop office and storage (1000 sq. ft.), volunteer lounge (500 sq. ft.), additional storage (400 sq. ft.), restrooms (625 sq. ft.). The classroom building will have 2 classrooms for 50 and 75 participants, which may be combined into one large room for special events. It will contain sinks and storage.

Committee members will be visiting other centers to get ideas. Suggested parks include Shangra La, state parks in the Harlingen area, and Palo Duro State Park. The committee may contact infrastructure for ideas, construction information and architects.

**Gift Shop:** **Beth Debenport** reported that May was a good month. We appreciate help in the Gift Shop and would love more help.

**Wood sales:** **Chuck** thanked volunteers for help with bundling firewood. Sales have dropped off for the summer. Chuck will be out of the park some in July, and Diane Carpenter and Ric Rincon will be collecting money and restocking.

**Ice sales:** **Diane Carpenter** reported that the profit in ice sales reflects using ice from the maintenance yard for water stations, which saves us lots of money. We appreciate the use of maintenance ice. We are going through a large number of cups, so we have more cost there.

**Outreach:** **Judy Strauss** reported that outreach is inactive for now and will start up again in October.

**Eco-explorers** started last week. The program has been full since early May. There are lots of people helping.

**New Business:**

**Cynthia Morales** commented that there are many visitors who come to the park and would be interested in helping the park in various ways financially. She suggested that we consider forming a subgroup at a different level, like a Friends group, that would raise money for our activities. Cynthia will work up a presentation for the organization to consider.

**Reports on members:** **Jerry Zona** is doing better. He has been approved for some treatments and hopes to be back to the park soon. His mother had mini-stroke recently.

The meeting was adjourned.

## STAFF REPORTS

### STEVE KILLIAN

**Steve Killian**, Park Superintendent, presented "BBSP: Sharing the Vision for a Better Tomorrow," a presentation adapted from a template given to parks by Walt Dabney, retiring Parks Director. The PowerPoint presentation will be used to educate public leaders, Legislators, etc., about individual parks. It shows that we're an economic power house, not a drain on the state budget. We make Houston a better place for kids and grandkids.



In Texas there are 94 State parks, state natural areas, and historic sites. These sites, covering over 600,000 acres, drew about 7.4 million visitors in fiscal year 2009. BBSP is a representation of the 3 R's: Rest, Relax and Recharge. We draw between 50,000 and 60,000 visitors a year. We offer superlative wildlife viewing and bird watching, and through our school groups and volunteers we reach thousands of inner city kids a year. We affect the economy of the entire Ft..Bend County area, not just the park, by providing jobs, sales and personal income.

Steve stated that the Park will go into a higher tier next year. We anticipate increasing revenue, improving the camping loop bathhouses and the restroom at HQ, and updating electrical service in the campground. Long-term plans include a new water/electric campground, a new Nature Center with classrooms, a conference center complex, new trail development and new experiences (equestrian, canoeing and kayaking, family camping, etc.) We anticipate these added features will increase visitation even more.

**Volunteer help is needed** to show the State the importance of state parks. Volunteers, working as private citizens, can contact local officials, politicians and other leaders to provide for increased funding in the future. We had a modest increase in funding over the past 2 years, but now we are being asked to cut back again. Contact your local representatives and leadership in Ft. Bend, Harris and Brazoria counties.

Our new management trainee, **Ted Stevens**, will be assigned to the Nature Center for 3 hours on Sundays due to the number of volunteers needed at this time.

Blue Jay  
by Jerry Zona



## SHARON HANZIK



**Sharon Hanzik**, Interpretive Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator, reported that we have 10 applicants interviewed for the training class starting in September. There is a family group of 4, and 11-year-old, a 17-year-old, a mother and son, age 10, individual retirees, a brother and sister pair, and other interviews have been scheduled. There are "Ask Me about Volunteering" buttons on the desk in the office for us to wear.

Sharon reported that a group of **Emeritus** and other former members had a luncheon in order to visit together. There was a good attendance.

Sharon shared with us a very special **thank you booklet** made by a group of students who attended BBSP. Jerry Carpenter and Tom Prentiss also received thank you booklets from the group.

She has sent **photos** to Marty Gay about activities of volunteers, such as working in the Nature Center and Gift shop and other services, for the web site page on volunteering. Refer visitors interested in the volunteer program to the website.

We are busy with summer groups and Eco-explorers on weekdays.

## CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS

Below are some "Talking Points" for Brazos Bend State Park for the upcoming 82nd Legislative Session. Volunteers, speaking as private citizens, can begin the process of making the case that State Parks and Brazos Bend SP are great investments for the future of the State of Texas. Research shows State Parks generate jobs and revenue while improving the "Quality of Life for our Citizens" and protecting Texas' precious natural resources. The key is contacting Senators and Representatives, Lt. Governor and Governor and making the case. We are managing State Parks for Present and Future Generations of Texans.

1. State parks as a group and Brazos Bend State Park specifically are great investments and more than pay for themselves each year. State parks are economic engines for tourism dollars in their respective communities.
2. An economic study completed in 2005 by Texas A & M University concluded that Texas State Parks (2004) generated \$863 million in sales, \$469 million in personal income and created almost 13,000 jobs in Texas annually. This numbers should be significantly higher due to the increased park revenue and visitation since 2004.
3. An economic study completed in 2005 by Texas A & M University concluded that Brazos Bend State Park (2004) generated \$2.9 million in sales, \$1.6 million in personal income and created 62 jobs in Fort Bend County (specifically) annually. This numbers should be significantly higher due to the increased park revenue and visitation since 2004.
4. Over the past five years (2004 – 2009), Brazos Bend State Park has doubled its revenue to over \$1 million per year.
5. Brazos Bend State Park generates revenue for the state over and above the park's operating costs.
6. Over the past five years, overall state park revenue has increased by 37%. The 2009 revenue generated by Texas State Parks was nearly \$38.5 million.
7. Brazos Bend State Park has been innovative in making the most of its appropriated dollars by leveraging its budget with grant monies and partnerships with local community and conservation organizations. The park has a cooperative relationship with the largest State Park volunteer organization in the state. The number of hours of labor contributed by volunteers each year is nearly equal to the hours worked by the park's paid staff. This allows Brazos Bend State Park to be a leader in partnerships and leveraging limited State of Texas resources.

8. Brazos Bend State Park partners with the Houston Museum of Natural Science to offer the services of the George Observatory to visitors and neighbors.
9. Brazos Bend State Park receives visits of over 8,000 school children per year on educational field trips or BBSP-provided environmental educational programming.
10. Brazos Bend State Park's infrastructure is aging (over 25 years old) and in need of replacement. The key park improvements most essential to continuing to improve the quality of public use are capital projects, which must be funded with appropriated dollars specifically designated for capital improvements.
11. Brazos Bend State Park enhances the quality of life for residents of the Houston Metro Region. The park is a significant selling point for nearby master planned communities. Brazos Bend State Park has received local, national and international attention as a tourism destination, wildlife refuge and recreation area.
12. Brazos Bend State Parks hosts over 200,000 visitors and over 50,000 campers each year. The park attracts visitors from throughout Texas and from across the globe. Brazos Bend State Park provides some of the most accessible wildlife viewing opportunities available. The park provides habitat for over 300 adult alligators and thousands of younger animals, over 300 species of birds and both large and small mammals.
13. Brazos Bend State Park offers abundant high quality outdoor recreation opportunities within an hour's drive of downtown Houston. The park has a system of over 35 miles of trails for walking, hiking, trail running and bicycling. Over a third of that trail mileage is also available for horseback riding. Brazos Bend State Park also offers opportunities for camping, angling, stargazing, wildlife viewing, geocaching, and resting, recreating and relaxing.

**Texas Elected Officials Contact Websites**

Governor's Office – <http://governor.state.tx.us/about/>  
 Lt. Governor's Office - <http://www.ltgov.state.tx.us/contact.php>  
 State House - <http://www.house.state.tx.us/members/welcome.php>  
 State Senate - <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/Senate/Members.htm>

**Elected Officials Contacts for Brazos Bend State Park**

**Texas House of Representatives**

Outgoing Representative Dora Olivo  
 P.O. Box 2130, Missouri City, TX 77459, (281) 208-8806, (281) 208-8826 Fax

Representative-elect Ron Reynolds  
 6565 West Loop South, Suite 115 Bellaire, Texas 77401, (713) 334-2667 (office), (713) 334-6768 (fax)

**Texas Senate**

Senator Joan Huffman  
 129 Circle Way, Suite 101, Lake Jackson, Texas 77566, (979) 480-0994, (979) 480-9122 (Fax)

**Fort Bend County Judge**

Robert Hebert  
 Fort Bend County, 301 Jackson Street, Richmond, TX 77469, (281) 342-3411

Check the websites above for addresses for your Brazoria County and Harris County Legislators and Judges as well.



Fox squirrel  
 by Jerry Zona

# NATURE CENTER REPORT

## JUNE 2010

*Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for June 1-30, 2010. The hot weather is not keeping visitors away as much as in the past.*

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
<b>NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE</b> June 2010 - 6070 (high, 6/25) - 978 June 2009 - 6068 June 2008 - 5109 June 2007 - 4025	<b>Saturdays (4) 1983</b> High, 597, 6/5 Average: 495
	<b>Sundays (4) – 1385</b> High, 482, 6/6 Average: 346
	<b>Weekdays (22) – 2702</b> High, 978, 6/25 Average, 123
<b>CREEKFIELD HIKES (7 days)</b>	<b>83– High, 30 - 6/27</b>
<b>ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (5)</b>	<b>154 - High, 39 - 6/26</b>
<b>SNAKE PROGRAMS (5)</b>	<b>184 – High, 54 - 6/5</b>
<b>CHILDREN’S STORY TIME (4)</b>	<b>85– High, 36 - 6/5</b>
<b>BIRD PROGRAMS (3)</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>OTHER PROGRAMS (7)</b> includes skull, outdoor safety, photo hike, bug hike, video, armadillo, creatures of the night, bike hike and mammals	<b>113</b>
<b>TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS</b>	<b>723</b>
<b>VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>	<b>Total in all areas: 1784</b> <b>Total in NC and programs:1213</b>



Pam Tatge and Kestrel

**SPECIAL NOTE:** May total park visitation was 18,210 day visitors and 3,739 overnight visitors. June 1 – 27 total park visitation was 10,124 day visitors and 3,209 overnight visitors.

## KROGER’S NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR PROGRAM

Thanks to all of you who participate in Kroger's Neighbor to Neighbor program and have designated Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization as your receiving organization. BBSPVO received a nice donation from the program for 2009-10. Kroger's policy is that organizations and individuals have to re-enroll every year. The new year begins July 1 and runs through April 30, 2011. For individuals to re-enroll, pick up a letter from the display in the Nature Center or print out the one on the BBSP website and take it to Kroger. The letter has the barcode for BBSPVO that will link your Kroger Plus card to us for the upcoming year. Once the letter is scanned one time, you only have to use your Kroger Plus Card as you normally do. Then purchases made after July 1 will be eligible. Remember to inform visitors about this program.

# VOLUNTEER NEWS & NOTES



...to Marty Gay for designing and posting the new Volunteer In Action section of the web site

...to Cindy Peterson, Bruce Williamson and Jerry and Diane Carpenter for the meeting night supper for June

...to all the contributors of articles and photos for the newsletter

...to all who are helping with Eco-Explorers: Organizer Carrie Sample and helpers Jerry and Diane Carpenter, Jaci Elliott, Suzie Gann, Sharon Hanzik, Mary Lockwood, Pam Tatge, Barb Tucker, Marilyn Vossler, Anna Dell Williamson and others.

...to Ric Rincon for organizing a trail trimming group.

...to Dawn Tejero, Joan Hebert, and Curtis and Jennifer Parent for help with bundling firewood.

...to Justin Bower, Pam Tatge, and Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson for assisting with a very large (800) school group on Friday, June 25

## CONGRATULATIONS

Debra Baker is a new grandma. The baby is a boy, Grady Ray Seelbach, 7 lbs. 3 oz. born May 30. to her daughter, Casi and her husband, Jesse Seelbach of Dickinson, TX. Says Debra, "He's my first grandbaby and I am going to love spoiling him!" The proud grandma provided us with a picture of the new addition.



### JULY BIRTHDAYS

Barb Tucker  
Susie Taylor (Staff)  
Martin Gay (Emeritus)  
Diane Carpenter  
Debra Baker  
Joan Hebert  
Jaci Elliott  
Elizabeth Villanueva (VIT)  
Cynthia Morales  
Jo Ann Davis (VIT)

### AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

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



### 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

## WANTED FOR THE GARDEN

The Pipevine in the Nature Center garden did not survive our harsh winter. Unfortunately, none of its seeds germinated, either. If you can donate one, your generosity would be appreciated by Pipevine Swallowtails and their caterpillars! Contact Pam Tatge to donate.

# **BRAZOS BEND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER**

## **Building Committee Operating Guidelines**

*Adopted June 12, 2010*

**Purpose** – To assist with planning, design, site location and construction of the Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center.

**Goal** – To raise the funds and see the project through to the completion and opening

### **General Rules**

Any voting member of the BBSPVO is eligible to serve on the building committee. Anyone wishing to serve should contact the Building Committee chairperson.

A secretary position selected by the Building Committee will be responsible for keeping meeting minutes at all building committee meetings. (not sub committee meetings)

All monetary expenditures must be approved by the BBSPVO in accordance with the BBSPVO by-laws and SOPs of BBSPVO.

TPWD staff will not be voting members of the building committee or any subcommittee.

Park staff will serve as contributors, advisors and liaisons with TPWD.

All decisions and expenditures are subject to approval of the Park manager and TPWD.

No committee members or volunteers will be compensated for their service on the Building Committee.

### **Building Committee Meetings**

All meetings are open to all members of the BBSPVO.

All decisions of the building committee must be approved by a majority of the vote of that committee in attendance.

Only voting members of the BBSPVO are eligible to vote.

### **Building Committee Chairperson**

The Chairperson is selected by the majority vote of the building committee.

The Chairperson will serve until he/she resigns or is replaced by a majority vote of that committee.

### **Duties of the Chairperson**

Call and conduct Building Committee meetings.

Coordinate all Building Committee activities.

Communicate with subcommittee coordinators.

Set a timeline for completion of steps in the planning and implementation of the project.

Update project timeline as needed.

Report progress to BBSPVO membership, park staff and TPWD.

### **Building Subcommittees**

All members of subcommittees are members of the Building Committee.

Other subcommittees may be appointed and coordinators selected by the Building Committee as needs arise.

Fundraising subcommittee duties will consist of grants, advertising and special events. Each will have a coordinator and each special event may require a coordinator.

Grants consisting of writing, publishing and searching out prospective donors.

Advertising consisting of researching options for advertising including local media, publications and paid advertising.

Special events consisting of large fundraising activities such as galas.



# EMERITUS LUNCH

*by Sharon Hanzik*

The volunteer emeritus members decided to have a small get-together recently at the dining hall. Although not all emeritus members were able to attend, nine had a nice visit with each other. The picture shows Chris Bishop (Assistant Park Manager), Marty and Nelda Gay (Emeritus), Beth Debenport, Frank Gregg (Emeritus), Norma Barnes (former volunteer and special guest), Herb Mann (Emeritus), Buddy Franklin (Emeritus), Willie Anderson (Emeritus), Don Nelson (Emeritus), Joan and Warren Jackson (Emeritus), Sharon Hanzik. A special thank you to Beth Debenport, Charlie Mann and Mike Franklin who made it possible for Frank, Norma, Herb and Buddy to attend.



# JULY PADDLING TRIP

*by David Heinicke*

July's paddling trip is planned for Monday, July 19. We will meet at 9:30 am at the boat ramp at the end of F.M. 2918. May and June's paddling trips were a big success so it's time to plan for July's trip. In April we paddled the middle section of the San Bernard River and in July we will paddle the lower end. This trip will start at the boat ramp at the end of F.M. 2918 in southern Brazoria County. F.M. 2918 dead ends into the intracoastal waterway (ICW) near the San Bernard River. We will launch from this boat ramp and paddle about .25 miles north/east on the ICW and then south/west to where they dredged the new mouth for the river in the spring of 2009. We'll stop there for a little while and explore the beach and then paddle on down to where the old mouth of the river was.

Our destination will be a sandy secluded beach about 150 yards wide with the river/lagoon on one side and the Gulf of Mexico on the other side. There is limited access to vehicles on this beach so it is very pristine, except for some trash that floats in. There we'll have lunch, swim in the lagoon or the beach, go beach combing, bird watching, relax or whatever for an hour or so and then head back. It's about a 3 mile trip each way (6 miles total).

This trip will pose a few new challenges for those who are not too experienced at paddling. We will encounter a few motorized pleasure/fishing boats, but it shouldn't be too many on a Monday. We will be paddling down the ICW for about .25 miles so there could be some barge traffic, and wind on the coast can always be a factor. Keep in mind that this will be a very remote area so be prepared to be self sufficient.

Bring plenty of water, lunch and snacks, sunscreen and hat (NO SHADE ANYWHERE), your PFD (and wear it!) and your canoe or kayak and be prepared for a great time on the coast! There are usually lots of great birds out there!

Since we will be in open water a long way from cover we will not head out if the weather looks like it could turn bad. If you have any questions or if the weather is questionable that morning please give me a call. If you need to rent a kayak you can contact - <http://www.gulfcoastkayakadventures.com/>

For directions to the boat ramp visit this website - <http://migrationcelebration.org/>. Click on "Map and directions". The map will show F.M. 2918 just to the east of San Bernard NWR. The boat ramp is at the south end of this road where it dead-ends at the Intracoastal Waterway.

See you on the water. Life's better outside!

# MYTH OR FACT

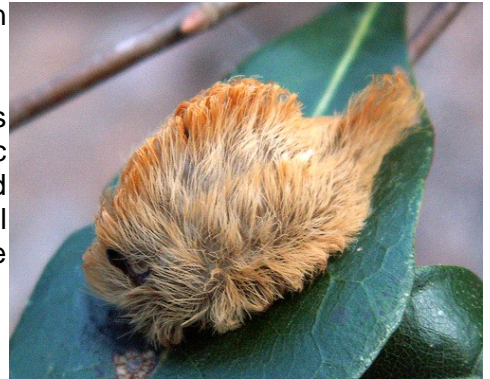
by Sharon Hanzik

*Ed. Note: The purpose of this column is to make sure we have correct information to give to the public. Word gets around. People talk. You hear things. And sometimes we hear something that's not completely correct, and we might repeat it to visitors without verifying the information. Below are comments that were heard in the park and submitted to Sharon and/or David for their confirmation or clarification of information. If you hear something from a volunteer or a visitor that you're not sure of, submit it to Anna Dell, [awilliamson4@comcast.net](mailto:awilliamson4@comcast.net), and we will try to get a clarification for you. It doesn't matter who said it; what matters is finding the accurate answer or response to give our visitors.*

**Cottonmouth Snakes cannot bite under water. FALSE** – Any snake that feeds upon aquatic animals can bite under water. They simply are able to constrict their throats. This is just in order to catch their prey. Swallowing would take place above water.

**Coral snakes have to chew on you to inject venom. FALSE** – “While a coral snake is not able to make the long, lunging strikes of large pitvipers or to inject pressurized venom deeply into muscle tissue, it does not need to, because coral snakes are perfectly capable of pinching out a tiny fold of skin between their exceptionally wide-gaping jaws to bite an arm, leg, or foot. A single quick bite, moreover, one that just penetrates the skin, is all this animal needs to mortally envenomate its reptilian prey, and the same is to some extent also true of a human adversary.” – *Texas Snakes* – Alan Tennant

**All fuzzy caterpillars are asps and will sting. FALSE** – The puss caterpillar (flannel moth) – or “asp” - is considered to be the most toxic caterpillar in the U.S. Look out for them during the late summer and fall. Beware the slug and saddleback species as well. Although not all fuzzy caterpillars are toxic, they may cause some irritation on more delicate areas of skin.



# VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

by Sharon Hanzik

When you are not at the nature center to direct interested parties to the Volunteer display area, you can inform them that photos of volunteers in action are on the web. Some of them are not the best quality, but it's the action in the photo that counts.

The direct link follows and it is found under the "Become a Volunteer" tab.

<http://www.brazosbend.org/organization/VolunteersInAction.pdf>

Thanks to Marty Gay for designing and posting it so quickly. The application deadline for the fall training is June 30.

# VISITOR COMMENTS

shared by Sharon Hanzik from the comment cards in the Nature Center

"The volunteers are awesome!"

"Will be getting an annual pass! Loved the park. Staff is great!! Both my children are studying wildlife. One is herpetology and the other wildlife management. Thanks again."

"Very interesting, Wonderful people to speak with. Very Knowledgeable."

"Beautiful park. Nothing like this in New Jersey."

# TRAIL TRIMMING PLANNED

*by Ric Rincon*

Ric Rincon is planning on coming down to the park next week, Thursday - Sunday (Jul 8 - 11). There are many trails that need some cleaning up. Also, on Thursday wood is planned to be delivered so we will help Chuck with unloading it at the Wood Yard. If anyone is interested in helping with trail maintenance on any of those days please let me know, Ric Rincon, pelusios7@gmail.com or 909.384.2522.

Thanks for volunteering at BBSP!

# IT'S CICADA KILLER SEASON

*by Rick Dashnau*

As some folks at the park may have noticed, our Cicada Killer wasps have been active at the Cistern in the garden again. Although there are many of them there, Cicada Killer wasps are not social wasps. They are solitary, and the females dig a system of tunnels which they provision with food for their eggs. The food is Cicadas, which are paralyzed (not killed--or else they'd rot), brought back, and then carried underground. There, a single egg is laid upon them, usually at the base of one of the legs. The egg hatches, and the larva has enough food to eat until it will pupate. Then it hatches next year, and the cycle starts again. The wasps appear to congregate because what is a good nesting site for one will be a good nesting site for others. So they sort-of share the space.

Usually the males hatch first, and spend a week or so hanging around the hatching area, waiting for the females. They generally act as prowling males often do--buzzing around, challenging each other, and just acting tough. I'm sure you've seen males of other species acting this way. The males cannot sting though, although it looks like they have a stinger. That's actually a growth on the exoskeleton, and doesn't have any venom. The females' stingers are functional, and are retractable. Then the females hatch, and things get a little less hectic--at least for the wasps. Things remain a bit interesting for the Cicadas, though.

Catching a shot of a Cicada Killer is difficult. I focus the camera on something inanimate and try to scan with my peripheral vision by keeping still. If you stand and watch long enough, you'll see the male Cicada Killers buzzing around and landing, and still bumping at each other, etc. But occasionally, one will fly in--from any direction and from any angle--straight like a bullet, and drop into the Cistern. Those are females carrying Cicadas. It happens very quickly, and it took me a while just to see the flash of green Cicada as the wasps came in. I have to be lucky enough to be pointing in the right direction, with the cicada in the field of the camera, close enough to be in focus with whatever I have; and I have to be quick enough to start the camera in time. From what I've seen, the returning females don't follow any routine flight path; and they can return from any direction and any angle.



I've finally caught a video clip of a cicada returning. It's isn't a 100-percent great capture, but it's clear enough to show what's going on. And--even shot at 210 frames per second, it's over quickly. So, here's the link to the video clip (about 5 mb): [http://rickubis.20m.com/killer\\_carries.wmv](http://rickubis.20m.com/killer_carries.wmv). And I've put a link on my slow motion video page, also: [http://67.15.110.101/slowmo\\_01.html](http://67.15.110.101/slowmo_01.html).

# TEXAS STATE PARKS DIRECTOR ENDING 11-YEAR TENURE

*from TPWD Press Release*



Major changes have swept through the Texas State Park system in the past 11 years under the direction of Walt Dabney, who joined Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1999. Dabney has announced he will retire Aug. 31, leaving behind an improved state park system that observers say ranks among the nation's best and most innovative.

A 1969 Texas A&M graduate, Dabney took the reins of TPWD's State Parks Division after 30 years with the National Park Service. At the helm of Texas State Parks, he was instrumental in working with constituent groups and the Legislature to transform a park system suffering from worn out equipment, deteriorating facilities and sagging employee morale into a better funded, more professional, customer-oriented and technologically savvy operation.

Dabney worked with state parks support groups such as the Texas Coalition for Conservation and Texans for State Parks to help articulate park needs and opportunities, including highlighting university research reported in 2005 which showed state spending on parks generated roughly \$800 million in retail sales and accounted for almost 12,000 jobs.

"It is with a mix of sadness and great pride that we wish Walt Dabney well on his departure from the department," said Carter Smith, TPWD executive director. "Walt brought unflagging passion and energy to foster a sense of professionalism and high standards of excellence for Texas State Parks. I particularly appreciate his creation of a comprehensive leadership development and training program for staff, and his emphasis on interpretation to help visitors enjoy and understand their parks. Walt leaves behind a well-prepared team that will continue his work to build and maintain a world-class state parks system."

Dabney admits that in retirement he'll miss most the people with whom he's worked the past 11 years. But he's confident he's leaving behind an organization with enough depth and talent to build upon the park system's growing success. Dabney leaves behind a system of 93 state parks and historic sites comprising more than 600,000 acres and 1,500 employees.

"Texas Parks and Wildlife won't be the same without Walt Dabney, but it will be better because of him," said Scott Boruff, TPWD deputy executive director for operations, who oversees the State Parks Division. "Walt will be remembered for his absolute dedication to providing recreational and educational opportunities for the common man, and for his fierce and compassionate support for his staff and colleagues."

## TPWD NEWS

### "IF YOU SEE AN ALLIGATOR" SAFETY TIPS OFFERED

*TPWD Press Release, May 7, 2010*

Once an endangered species, the American alligator is now common in rivers, creeks, and backwater sloughs of East and South Texas. An ever-expanding human population continues to encroach upon the alligator's domain, driving a trend of increased encounters between alligators and people. Late spring through summer is alligator mating and nesting season, when gators are more active and visible. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department wildlife biologists and game wardens stress

education rather than over-reaction as a first step in dealing with gators and suggest a "live and let live" approach whenever possible.

Most Texans in "gator country" will probably live in close proximity to these native reptiles with no confrontations. However, there are occasions when certain alligators become a nuisance and must be handled by the proper authorities. The TPWD Law Enforcement regional communications center for Southeast Texas in La Porte received 1,111 phone calls about alligators during 2009. A substantial number of these did not involve true problem gators. About one fifth of the calls were handled by giving callers general information about alligators and how to safely co-exist with them. Many of the situations were temporary and with patience from landowners or residents the animals simply moved on.

"We have procedures in place where we try to educate callers that alligators are not normally aggressive, and if you leave them alone they'll leave you alone," said Capt. Albert Lynch, who supervises game wardens that respond to alligator complaints in the Houston area. "When you have an aggressive alligator there's no doubt, but a lot of the calls are from people who just have no idea that there are alligators here and have never seen one before. The mere presence of an alligator is not cause for concern, and during the active months in spring and summer they may be seen in retention ponds, drainage ditches and similar places."

Alligator experts at Murphree WMA report that at least 80 nuisance alligators were relocated from 17 Southeast Texas counties in 2009, mostly from housing subdivisions adjacent to natural habitat. Relocating problem alligators is not always a viable option, and it can create greater problems, as by nature these animals are territorial and moving a problem alligator often creates a problem in a different location.

Authorities say what is needed is a populace better able to recognize the few nuisance alligators and to coexist safely with the majority of alligators that are not nuisances. The current legal definition of a nuisance gator is "an alligator that is depredating [killing livestock or pets] or a threat to human health or safety" under definitions laid out in the Texas Administrative Code. For the public, the practical definition of a nuisance alligator is one that is at least four feet long and has lost its fear of humans so that it is approaching people or otherwise exhibiting aggressive behavior.

The number one cause of nuisance alligators is connected with the cardinal rule for the public: never feed an alligator or allow it access to human or pet food. Once an alligator learns to associate people with a meal, it becomes a permanent nuisance, and often it must be killed, since it will be a problem elsewhere if relocated. Since October 1, 2003, it has been a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$500 for anyone caught feeding an alligator.

In Texas, no fatalities have been documented due to alligators. In the past two decades, there have been 21 incidents involving injuries due to alligators reported to TPWD statewide, none life threatening, including three involving waterfowl hunters.

## **DOs AND DON'Ts FOR LIVING WITH ALLIGATORS**

- \* Don't — kill, harass, molest or attempt to move alligators. State law prohibits such actions, and the potential for being bitten or injured by a provoked alligator is high.

- \* Do — call your TPWD regional office if you encounter a nuisance gator that has lost its fear of people.

- \* Don't — allow small children to play by themselves in or around water.

- \* Do — closely supervise children when playing in or around water.

- \* Don't — swim at night or during dusk or dawn when alligators most actively feed.

- \* Do — use ordinary common care. Swim only during daylight hours.

\* Don't — feed or entice alligators. Alligators overcome their natural shyness and become accustomed or attracted to humans when fed. It is now a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500, to intentionally feed an alligator.

\* Do — inform others that feeding alligators creates problems for others who want to use the water for recreational purposes.

\* Don't — throw fish scraps into the water or leave them on shore. Although you are not intentionally feeding alligators, the end result can be the same.

\* Do — dispose of fish scraps in garbage cans at most boat ramps or fish camps.

\* Don't — remove any alligators from their natural habitat or accept one as a pet. It is a violation of state law to do so. Alligators do not become tame in captivity and handling even small ones may result in bites. In particular, never go near baby alligators or pick them up. They may seem cute and harmless, but mama alligator will be nearby, and will protect her clutch for at least two years.

\* Do — enjoy viewing and photographing wild alligators from a safe distance of at least 30 feet or more. Remember that they're an important part of Texas' natural history, as well as an integral component of many wetland ecosystems.

Nuisance alligators may be reported to the TPWD law enforcement communications center for Southeast Texas in La Porte at (281) 842-8100 or in Austin at (512) 389-4848. Information about alligators, including public safety tips, research reports and basic natural history, is on the TPWD Web site. \* <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/species/alligator/safety/index.phtml>

## **ARTIST EXHIBITORS SOUGHT FOR “ART’S BETTER OUTSIDE” EXPO IN ATHENS**

The Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center and Wildlife Forever invite artists to show, sell and demonstrate their art on Saturday, July 17, 2010, at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, 75 miles southeast of Dallas.

The art show and sale will be in conjunction with the Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest national expo, which will be attended by student artists from around the nation. Artists are encouraged to actively demonstrate their craft or offer a hands-on art-related activity for the visiting public.

To learn more about becoming involved in the event, please contact Jim Booker at (903) 670-2266, or e-mail [james.booker@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:james.booker@tpwd.state.tx.us).

## **TEXAS LAUNCHES NEW FRONT IN WAR ON INVASIVE SPECIES**

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recently launched a public awareness campaign titled "Hello Giant Salvinia, Goodbye Texas Lakes", asking people to help control one of the most dangerous invasive aquatic species the state has ever known — giant salvinia.

A native of Brazil, giant salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) is a floating, rootless fern that can double its coverage area in less than a week. The invasive plant, first discovered in a small pond near Houston in 1998, has been reported in 17 Texas lakes, including some of the state's most popular recreational water bodies: Toledo Bend, Sam Rayburn, Caddo Lake, Sheldon Lake, Lake Texana and Lake Conroe.

Left unchecked, giant salvinia can choke off boating and fishing access to an entire lake, clog power plant water intakes, and displace beneficial native plants needed by fish.

"The truth is most invasive species cannot be eradicated; we can only hope to slow their spread or prevent their arrival," said Peter Holt, TPW Commission chairman. With the arrival of the spring outdoor recreation season, TPWD is launching a campaign to educate the public about ways to identify, report and stop giant salvinia, which is usually spread unknowingly by people moving their boats from lake to lake.

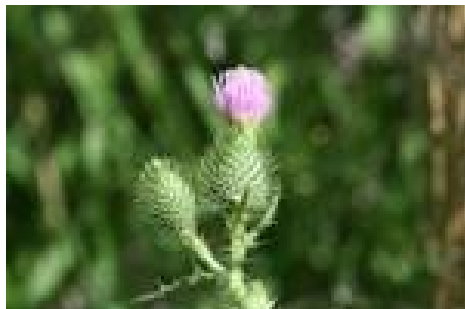
What you can do

- \* Learn to identify and report giant salvinia and other invasive aquatic species.
- \* Clean your boat, trailer and gear and place plant material in a trash can before leaving a boat ramp area.
- \* If you see giant salvinia, report it at [giantosalvinia@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:giantosalvinia@tpwd.state.tx.us) or (409) 384-9965.
- \* Learn more online at <http://www.texasinvasives.org/>
- \* Giant salvinia online video on TPWD's YouTube Channel:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/TexasParksWildlife#p/c/D6860F6B8B22B497/0/-cgiJuoM4Jo>



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 10	Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
August 14	Building Committee Meeting, 1:00 PM Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
September 11	New Volunteer Orientation and Lunch Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 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 and photo, Dining Hall, 5:30 PM



Texas Thistle

Mimosa

*Taken by Jerry Zona,  
June 2010*



**Brazos Bend State Park**

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville, TX 77461

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

**NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME  
SATURDAY, JULY 10, 2010, 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, 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 Grazziffi
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](mailto:awilliamson4@comcast.net)). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.