



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 2

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Saturday, January 15, there were 2000 fresh water trout released in New Horse Lake and then Sunday, January 16, there were 300 serious runners on the trails in the park. There were four different runs, a 5K, a half marathon, a marathon, and a 50K. The temperature was perfect; however, it was a little on the wet side. Only a few of the runners came in the Nature Center and with the distances these folks were running it is understandable that they might not come in for a visit. Those that did, displayed the mud that was kicked up on the back of their legs. None of the trout visited the Nature Center; sure hope our fishing visitors went home with their limit.

Eighteen VITs will start their training on February 12. When you meet these folks give them a warm welcome as they start training.

Five potential contractors submitted bids for the Elm Lake viewing platform. The bids are being reviewed by the individuals on the selection committee, and a group meeting is set for the week of January 24 to make a decision. TPWD has moved this project along, and we will have a viewing platform before mid-year.

Our next Volunteer meeting is February 12. We need your inputs to the Executive Committee on projects and programs. You also need to be at these meetings so you will know the financial condition of the organization and have a voice in our future plans.

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Reminder From Our By-Laws

The purpose of this organization shall be:

1. To assist and educate the visitors of Brazos Bend State Park through information and interpretive programs; and
2. To assist in the care and conservation of the Park.

Offie Walker

JANUARY MEETING NOTES

President Offie Walker called the January 8, 2011, General Meeting to order. There were 16 volunteers, 4 staff members, and 1 guest present. The minutes were approved as posted. Staff members brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in this newsletter.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Dave Armstrong brought the budget report. The following budget requests were presented by the Budget Committee and approved:

- Diane Carpenter requested 1000 volunteer brochures, to be paid from the McGovern fund.
- Diane Carpenter requested a 5-drawer file cabinet for the Volunteer Organization files, to be kept in the lounge. Monies will come from the McGovern fund.
- Diane Carpenter requested a fax/copier/printer for the Naturalists' office from the McGovern fund.

Dave Armstrong presented the proposed Budget for 2011, which was approved.

Offie Walker announced the **appointed committee chairpersons** for 2011:

Comptroller: Rachelle Watson
Building Program: Chuck Duplant
Interpretation/Education: Carrie Sample
Maintenance Representative: Bruce Williamson (interim)
Nature Center: Teresa Jones
Newsletter: Anna Dell Williamson

Gift Shop: Beth Debenport
Wood yard - Chuck Duplant
Memorials: Cindy Peterson
Librarian: Marilyn Vossler
Outreach: Judy Strauss

Reports:

- **Gift Shop: Beth Debenport** reported that we have ordered new items for inventory. Our annual inventory results were good. We were short less than 1% of sales, which means we had very little loss.
- **Wood yard: Chuck Duplant** reported that Jim North helped bundle today and others have helped a lot recently. Between Christmas and New Years we went through lots of wood. We will soon be changing to buying pre-bundled wood. We will continue to split and bundle wood for a new kiosk at the Overflow site to compensate for theft from the camping loops.
- **Interpretation/Education: Carrie Sample** reported that she is starting to plan the Eco-Explorers program for next summer
- **Maintenance Representative: Bruce Williamson** reported that we are looking for someone from the maintenance crew to act as representative and report to the meetings. There will be a report in the newsletter of maintenance activities.
- **Librarian: Marilyn Vossler** sent a report that we have a new book, *Goodbye to a River*.
- **Nature Center: Teresa Jones** is working on some ideas about changing the plexiglass in front of the alligator wall.
- **Outreach: Judy Strauss** reported that we already have three events in the spring:
 - Sea Center March 5
 - Katy Fest, April 2
 - Sweeney event in May 7 (new)These events will be on the events calendar for volunteers to sign up. We have also been invited to participate in the Brazoria Heritage Festival, but there is a date conflict, and we cannot accept.
- **Newsletter: Anna Dell Williamson** reported that those who wish to be notified of the deadline for each month's edition should contact her to get on the mailing list.

The meeting was adjourned.

STAFF REPORTS

STEVE KILLIAN

Steve Killian, Park Superintendent, reported that we had a great holiday with lots of work. December was a record month, and we expect the same for January. Today, there were cars down to the bottom of the hill from 11-4:30. Press releases and word of mouth are working to increase visitation.



The pre-bid meeting for construction of the Wildlife Viewing platform was held and several contractors came. Representatives from TPWD Infrastructure went over the bid packet and handed out documents. Bids are due by January 13. Contractors are ranked on various items, not just the lowest bid. If all bids come back higher than our funding, there will be negotiations with the contractor with the closest bid to see what can be done. Decisions are usually made within a couple of weeks. There was lots of interest and the meeting and several good contractors attended. The piling is the key - they will be 18 feet below water.

We have started the Live-Oak Trail Grant project which David developed. We will finish the project in this fiscal year. We started December 21 on the Pilant Slough side of the trail with gravel from volunteer funds (matched by the grant). We are building some bridges in the lowland area, which has to be closed when it's too wet. Comments: Can we have signs for Pilant Slough at the fork, and maybe add the Nature Center and Elm Lake signs. Can the signage be color-coded to match the map?

We have started the Headquarters expansion project. We have additional staff and need more room. We have been purchasing materials when possible, poured additional foundation, and have started construction. Melissa and Suzie are in temporary offices which will ultimately become a break room. We will expand offices on the other side for Suzie and Melissa and expand the larger portion of Headquarters.

The 100-Loop restroom renovation will be completed sometime in February. The restrooms at Headquarters have a problem with rotted wood, and it may be May or June before they are finished. The 100-Loop portable restroom trailer will be moved to Headquarters.

The deer hunt held in November and December removed 67 white tails and three feral hogs. The hogs were not attracted to corn set out as bait. We are maintaining the population and controlling the level of damage.

Next week we will be interviewing for Park Ranger V, Utility Plant Operator. The state budget has been cut by 2 ½ - 3 %, and there is no hiring from applicants outside TPWD.

BBSP is a top moneymaker with top visitation, and hopefully we'll weather the financial storm well. Remember to contact your legislators regarding park funding. Half our money comes from sporting goods tax, and the rest comes from what we make through fees and sales. We are not drawing on any other funds dedicated to other areas.

Chris Bishop commented that BBSP is a good investment. It produces revenue for the state. Funds appropriated for State Parks do not come out of some other area that other government agencies will need. Our parks are the only green space for many local residents.

BBSPVO representatives will present the BBEEC plans to TPWD on February 1 in Austin.

The rainbow trout family fishing event will be Saturday, January 15, 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Funds through the volunteer organization will allow stocking of 2000 trout. Fishing brings out families to the park. Dennis Jones

will be providing staff support for event, to be held at New Horseshoe Lake.

January 16, Pilates Powerhouse of Pearland is sponsoring a trail race at BBSP. The race will consist of a half marathon, marathon and 50K ultra running event. Volunteers will be helping, and this activity will bring in a different type audience. The event is good publicity for the park and the proceeds will come to the Volunteer Organization. One volunteer is participating in the race. Several staff members have volunteered to come in early for the beginning of the race.

Chris Bishop added that we are seeking alternative funding and sending a template to different sponsors for different activities. We may be able to use this funding to provide quality public service, recreation, education, interpretation projects, and resource management projects. We are putting together a proposal to Academy. The focus is health, and using trails and equipment to improve health.

SHARON HANZIK

Interpretive Ranger Sharon Hanzik read some of the comment cards that the public has left in the Nature Center. She reported that volunteer hours in the state were 50,000 in the last fiscal year. BBSPVO provides 18,000 hours per year. Combined with host hours, it equals almost 25,000 hours per year.



The Moody Gardens field trip on January 18 is almost full. It has been opened to park hosts, and 3 spaces are left. Sign up on the events calendar. The next field trip will be to Stephen F Austin State Park on February 24. There is no limit to the number attending. Ben Horstman has converted a pavilion into a Nature Center, which we will see. We will also tour other historic sites on the highway. Sign up on the events calendar.

We have 18 trainees for new volunteer training. Requests have gone out for mentors and other help. We have parent/child groups, a couple, 2 teens and several individuals.

Sharon recognized volunteers for their service hours reported. Those who had served more than 200 hours during 2010 are listed elsewhere in the newsletter.



DAVID HEINICKE

Interpretive Ranger David Heinicke reported that the bids for the Elm Lake Platform are out, and we should have an answer this week.

He introduced guest Jacob Demit, a new park police officer from Lake Texana who is doing some training here.

The Crocodilian panel has been sent to the regional office in Houston. It will take about a month for production, and we hope to have it installed about Spring Break.

We are looking for ideas the remodeling the Nature Center front desk. We need a nice counter and top, a good height for display and touch items, adequate storage, etc. David plans to develop another alligator display panel after the new front desk project is well under way. This panel will focus on specific questions we are frequently asked about alligators at Brazos Bend with changeable photographs of alligators taken at BBSP.

A group of Sea Center Texas volunteers will come to check out Brazos Bend on February 7. They will tour

the Nature Center, hike around Creekfield and visit the Observatory.

Doris Mager and her Birds of Prey program will be at BBSP February 11-13.

The Christmas Bird Count noted 159-160 species. The old record is 154 species. Many birdwatchers use the numbers to plan their winter trips.

In mid-February, Steve Killian and David will attend the Big Bend mountain biking tours.

The committee for the BBEEC is preparing a booklet to take to Austin on February 1, to pitch the BBEEC to TPWD. This is a big step in a positive direction. Steve Killian, David Heinicke, Offie Walker, Dave Armstrong, and Chuck Duplant will attend and talk about the new building, the park needs, the Volunteer Organization, and visitor service. Later, we will establish a memorandum of agreement, with guidelines, expectations, design criteria, energy efficiency, etc.

Carter Smith at a Town Hall meeting, mentioned BBSPVO as one of the things that will help in the future with budget crunches.

CONGRATULATIONS

to **Kent** and **Debbie Fewell** who have completed all of their volunteer training requirements and are full members of the Volunteer Organization. Give them a hearty welcome.

to **Kevin Brantley**, who plays football on the Pearland High School state championship football team.

to **Jose Velasquez**, who was the only person to catch a trout during the rainbow trout family fishing event on January 15. Photo by Teresa Jones.



WAY TO GO, TOM!!!



Do you remember what you were doing at 7:00 AM on the morning of Sunday, January 15? With the temperature hovering in the 40s and a steady rain outside, chances are you were asleep, or at least inside enjoying a warm cup of coffee. Well, at Elm Lake, 300 trail runners were preparing to set off on the Brazos Bend "Keep on Truckin'" trail race, sponsored by Powerhouse Pilates in Pearland.

Among them was our very own Tom Prentiss, representing BBSPVO in the half marathon event. He braved the elements and the mud to walk the entire 13 miles, which included the Elm Lake, 40-Acre Lake, White Oak and Equestrian Trails.

After completing the race, he came by the Nature Center where he was greeted by several admiring fellow volunteers – all of whom were most impressed by his accomplishment – and by the very snappy medal he had earned! They eagerly listened to his rundown of the race. And his time? Three hours and thirty-two minutes. Way to go, Tom! You're an inspiration to us all!

SERVICE HOURS REPORT FOR 2010

Below is a list of the service hours reported by members of the BBSPVO in 2010. There are 90 active members. Congratulations and thank you to all the volunteers.

48-100 hours - 50 volunteers

201-300 hours - 8 volunteers (from lowest to highest):

Mary Lockwood
Teresa Jones
Carrie Sample
Ron Morrison

Bob Haynes (Emeritus)
Jim Calvert
Suzie Gann
Rick Dashnau



301-400 hours - 6 volunteers:

Bruce Williamson (Emeritus)
Carl Franke
Jim Hiett

Tom Prentiss
Pam Tatge
Judy Strauss

401-500 hours - 2 volunteers: Jerry Carpenter and Diane Carpenter

501-600 - 2 volunteers: Dave Armstrong and Beth Debenport

Over 800 - 2 volunteers: Anna Dell Williamson and Chuck Duplant. Congratulations, Chuck, on donating the most hours.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jerry Carpenter
Noel Duncan
Devin Elester (Staff)
Carl Franke
Bill Godley

Sid Jones
Cindy Peterson
Judy Strauss
Pam Tatge
Lisa Wells (Staff)

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Willie Anderson (Emeritus)
Rita Cooper (Emeritus)
Joan Jackson (Emeritus)
Herb Mann (Emeritus)
Jennifer Parent
Ted Stevens (Staff)

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Robert and Shannon Aaron
Suzie and Rick Gann
Pete and Carol Hart
Tom and Candice Kanak

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Glen and Maureen Kilgore
Dawn and Oscar Tejero



OUTREACH REPORT

by Judy Strauss

Outreach season is now approaching, so please be sure and check the "events calendar" on our site for each event, dates, times and location. If you ever have any question about any event, please feel free to contact me.

At this time, I have three events listed, but I can promise you that there will be more! We have the Sea Center Texas event on March 5th, the Katy Folk Life Festival on April 2nd, and the Sweeney Event on May 7th. The Sweeney event is a new event, so I do not yet have the correct name for the event.

For anyone not familiar with what our Outreach Events are, it is much like working in the Nature Center. We take a couple of snakes, a couple of alligators, many "touch" items, and information about our Park. Our main goal is to educate the public as to our Parks' existence, its location, and what BBSP has to offer, as well as giving them a little taste of nature with the items that we bring. We wear our Volunteer uniform and name tag, and conduct ourselves as we would at the Park.

Some events are outdoors, and some are indoors. Some furnish/provide lunch for the volunteers, and I will always try to let those who are signed up know if you need to bring a lunch or not. I usually provide water and snacks.

Again, please feel free to call me if you have any questions: Judy Strauss, Outreach Coordinator, 281-980-4104wk, 979-793-7392hm.

AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATOR

There is an AED device that hangs on the wall behind the front desk. Since we are not able to have everyone certified in its use, we thought it would be a good idea for you to at least be familiar with this unit. We need everyone to view the link below.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHM915eUXUU>

MIGRATION CELEBRATION

San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge will host the 17th Annual Migration Celebration April 15-17. All events are free and there are activities for the whole family.

Below is the calendar of events:

Friday, April 15:	Fund-raising Dinner at Freeport River Place Nature Photography Presentation	Photo Contest Awards Silent Auction
Saturday, April 16:	Bird Banding Children's Events Nature Presentations and Demonstrations	Refuge Tours Birds of Prey Show
Sunday, April 17:	Amazing Adventures Tours , Birds of prey shows	Bird banding Children's events

For more information, visit <http://migrationcelebration.org> or call 866-403-5829. There are flyers in the Nature Center as well.

NATURE CENTER REPORT JANUARY 2011

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for January 1-30, 2011. The chart below this table shows the NC attendance since April 2005. If you have any of the missing statistics, please contact the editor. Photo of Anhinga by Carrie Sample, December 2010.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE January 2011 - 4078 January 2010 - 4710 January 2009 - 5950 January 2008 - 4197 January 2007 - 4577	Saturdays (5) - 2473 High, 554 (1/8) Average: 650
	Sundays (5) - 965 High, 440 (1/2) Average: 193
	Weekdays (20) - 640 High, 143 (1/3) Average: 32
CREEKFIELD HIKES (7)	100
SNAKE PROGRAMS (5)	158
CHILDREN'S STORYTIME (5)	66
OUTREACH (3)	318
REPTILES (1)	71
OTHER PROGRAMS (5) include bird hikes, creatures of the night, BBSP video, owls and hike, pondlife (2), alligator (2)	129
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND ONSITE PROGRAMS	852



NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE RECORDS

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
JAN			4,577	4,197	5,143	4,710
FEB			2,247	4,827	5,950	4,320
MAR			6,835	10,684	9,669	11,816
APR	7,027	7,168	7,399	6,387	5,739	8,300
MAY	5,443	5,387	5,633	7,060	8,578	8,979
JUN			4,025	5,109	6,068	6,070
JUL	3,339	3,339	2,825	4,484	4,298	4,683
AUG		2,415	2,788	3,985	4,542	3,243
SEP		4,286	5,142	1,386	4,535	4,112
OCT	4,878	5,258	4,809	3,759	6,258	7,855
NOV	4,306	4,286	4,577	6,312	7,488	5,338
DEC	2,410	4,286	4,285	3,600	2,999	4,841
TOTALS	27,403	36,425	55,142	61,790	71,267	74,267

WE HAVE VISITORS

Carrie Sample has been keeping tabs on the visitors who sign the Guest Register in the Nature Center. Don't forget to ask our visitors to tell us where they are from. We only get a small percentage to sign the guest book, but it is amazing to see the distances they come. For some, Brazos Bend State Park is the destination of their trip, not just a side trip. They learn about us through their friends who have visited us.

Foreign visitors, 2010: We had 936 visitors from 60 countries sign the guest register. The top twelve countries are listed below:

Poland, 15	Australia, 22	Germany, 84
Ireland, 26	Scotland, 38	Norway, 101
Denmark, 17	France, 55	England, 147
Russia, 20	Holland, 83	Canada, 153

United States visitors, 2010: We had 3952 visitors from 47 states sign the register. The top twelve states are below:

Utah, 28	Washington, 31	Wisconsin, 47
Michigan, 30	Colorado, 35	California, 61
Oklahoma, 31	Indiana, 37	Minnesota, 61
West Virginia, 31	Ohio, 47	Texas, 3075

A stylized, purple, cursive word "Thanks" with a decorative, flowing font.

to **Nancy Lynn Jones** for the wonderful dinner that she provided for the January meeting. It was delicious and enjoyed by everyone!

to **Dave Armstrong**, Treasurer, and **Rachelle Watson**, Comptroller, for all the work on the 2011 budget.

to **Carrie Sample**, **Christine Kovach**, **Carol Ramsayer**, **Teresa Jones**, **Linda Keltner**, **Offie Walker**, and **Judy Strauss** for articles and pictures for the Newsletter.

to **Carrie Sample** for keeping the NC visitor register records

to **Mary Lockwood** and her team for putting together the training manuals for the February class.

to **Nancy Bailey** for printing the training manuals for February

to **everyone** who helped with the planning of Volunteer Training and to all who agreed to assist with a session

to **Debbie** and **Kent Fewell**, **Linda Keltner** and **Nancy Lynn Jones**, who have joined the Gift Shop Committee. We welcome their help.

to the **Maintenance Crew** for all of their work. They keep everything working and make us look good.

TPWD BUDGET

(Ed. note: We have received communications regarding the proposed state budget cuts and how they will affect the TPWD budget. Below are some of these comments. We as volunteers can write our Legislators regarding the impact of these proposed cuts. See the link to the "Talking Points" at the end of the article. This budget crisis is our opportunity to contact our legislators and ask for adequate funding for state parks.

On January 31, 2011, Carter Smith, TPWD Executive Director, held a Town Hall meeting focusing on budget issues. Smith reviewed the department's budget situation as laid out in the House and Senate budget bills. The two documents, while only the starting point in a process that will continue through May, call for a \$162 million budget cut for TPWD. That's a 25 % decrease from the department's current budget and as now written would bring about a reduction of 304 full time employees in fiscal 2012. (Roughly 70 of those positions would be restored in fiscal 2013.)

In both bills, operational funding is proposed to be reduced and positions are proposed to be eliminated in all divisions, as are grant funds for outside partners, funding for capital equipment and major repairs, and monies for land acquisition, invasive species control, shrimp license buy back efforts, and wildlife research, among other things. In addition, the bills call for some parks to be transferred to local communities, for outreach/education, parks minor repairs, and public hunting programs to be deferred for up to six months, and for administrative functions of all divisions to be reduced by 15 %. Though it is still early in the budget process , Smith said the hard reality is that the department needs to brace for having fewer resources and fewer employees during the next biennium.

Smith offered some ways the department can prepare for these circumstances.

1. Do everything possible during the session to maintain the agency's core programs and to take care of the well being of the colleagues we represent;
2. Advocate for as much flexibility as we can for the agency in order to meet the new budgetary mandates in FY12-13;
3. Invest time now to comprehensively examine and plan for how we will carry out our mission and conduct/adjust our core business operations in the times ahead;
4. Realign spending priorities as allowable in the current fiscal year to account for the fiscal realities ahead, such as restricted or nonexistent funds for capital equipment in FY12-13;
5. Ensure and facilitate open and honest communication from all supervisors with all employees about the upcoming budget situation; and
6. Stay rigidly focused on our mission and the services we provide to the state and to our constituents.

Smith ended the meeting asking two things of department employees: Be sure and get a copy of the department's talking points on budget issues (available on WILDnet) and to continue "focusing on what we do best: carrying out our agency's mission."

The audio feed of this meeting has been posted at:

https://wildnet/publications/multimedia/media/town_meetings/20110131_town_meeting.mp3

In addition, a transcript will be posted soon.

The legislative fact sheet containing suggested talking points can be found on this page:

<https://wildnet.tpwd.state.tx.us/insidetrack/divisions/communications/training/legislative-media-training>

COMMENTS FROM THE DIVISION DIRECTOR

(Ed. note: The following information concerning interpretive programs and how many hours volunteers contribute to this endeavor were made by Brent Leisure, State Parks Division Director.)

I came across some statistics that I thought were particularly helpful in revealing a very important aspect of our work in parks. Interpretation and education programs are a vitally important element of our mission. Through effective programming, we have an opportunity to connect park visitors to the resources in ways that make the value and significance of parks very real to them. Ultimately, we provide interpretive and education programs that hopefully transform visitors in some way and inspire them to make a life-long commitment to resource stewardship.

The diversity of programs offered in Texas state parks understandably reflects the diversity of our park system. Whether it's a 'Mission Tour' at Goliad, a 'Birds of Prey' program at Bentsen Rio Grande, a 'Bat Cave Tour' at Devils River, a 'Leave No Trace' program at Bastrop, a discovery of the 'Food Chain' at Lake Texana, a 'Day in the Life' program at Barrington Living History Farm, a 'Rainwater Harvesting' lesson at Government Canyon, a 'Bison Program' at Caprock Canyons, a lesson on 'Night Sounds' at South Llano River, a 'Canoe Tour' at Purtil Creek, a viewing of native rock art at Seminole Canyon, a 'Junior Naturalist' program at Brazos Bend, a guided tour through the Battleship Texas, a 'Crawling Cave' tour at Colorado Bend, a study of 'Songbirds' at Goose Island, a 'Critters of the Creek' program at Village Creek, a 'Children's Survival' program at Palo Duro Canyon, a 'Fly Fishing' lesson at Lost Maples, or a first time camping trip with the Texas Outdoor Family program....you get the point.

Our state parks are truly outdoor classrooms. This list could go on and on. Our staff has embraced the importance of sharing our passion for the great outdoors and our appreciation for the history of this great state. Over 686,000 visitors have attended over 68,000 programs provided at our parks in 2010. More than 50,000 volunteer hours were logged in support of these programs. I thank you for taking on this very important task and all the while, doing it with accuracy, professionalism and passion.

We enter 2011 with a little uncertainty, but with great resolve to our mission and employees. The legislative session lies just around the corner; which will assuredly change the focus of daily work for some. But for the vast majority of us, going about our typical duties to meet the mission of state parks will not change. We will keep you well informed as we move forward.

I encourage you to take just a moment and watch this short 1 minute video. Expand the picture, crank up the volume and be reminded what a great privilege it is to do what we do.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWbX5BhWHpY>

Let's support one another in accomplishing a very cool mission. I thank you.

TEXAS MAKES *THE SMITHSONIAN*

There is a very interesting article by John Morthland, from Austin, titled "A Plague of Pigs," in the January 2011 *Smithsonian* magazine. The topic is the problem of feral hogs, especially in Texas.

ARE YOU MISSING SOMETHING?

There are several food containers or cooking dishes that have been left in the Nature Center from the volunteer picnic, meeting suppers or other events. They have been placed on the counter in the lounge. Please check to see if any of these containers belongs to you.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

DECEMBER/JANUARY

Wood Yard:

Set out wood in kiosks
Prepare wood yard for firewood pallets.
Level ground, install base and planks to store pallets of bundled wood
Move excess planks and rebuild plank storage stacks with spacers so planks won't rot
Move reposition pallet racks
Build new double wood rack
Smooth out and add trail material at woodyard
Split 1.5 cords of wood
Wood delivery

Mowing and Landscaping:

Water trees
Collect mulch for Creekfield Forest trees
Plant 15 trees, mulch and water, on Creekfield Forest
Buy, load, deliver and water trees for Creekfield Forest Nature Trail

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Trim Creekfield Lake Trail
Patrol trails and collect downed wood
Collect mulch for Creekfield Forest trees
Buy, load, deliver plant, mulch and water trees for Creekfield Forest Nature Trail
Survey trees on Creekfield Forest trail, compare to Houston Arboretum plant list.

Equipment Maintenance:

Service DR tripper, Chain saw, pull drive shaft on shredder, repair tailgates on both gators
Get Shredder model serial number, take to repair shop

Special Projects:

Put out activity sheets
Take down Christmas decorations

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 6	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms
February 12	Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
March 4	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms
March 12	BBEEC (New Building) Committee, 1:00 PM, open to all interested Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
March 14-19	Spring Break for many local school districts, very busy week and 2 weekends
April 1	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms
April 8	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms, then Migration Madness, Quintana (optional)
April 9	BBEEC (New Building) Committee, 1:00 PM, open to all interested Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)

VOLUNTEER FIELD TRIP TO MOODY GARDENS AQUARIUM

On January 18, 23 BBSP volunteers and hosts visited Moody Gardens as part of our "exchange program" with them. Thanks to Linda Keltner and Christine Kovach for their reports on the trip and for sharing their pictures with us.

BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR

by Linda Keltner

Once we got past the obvious "It smells fishy!", we were taken into the depths of the kitchen for the large aquarium tank. Unfortunately at the back of the group, we couldn't hear what our guide was saying, so we turned our attention to what the workers and volunteers were doing. They were chopping and thawing shrimp, krill, and other dietary delights for the inhabitants of the large aquarium tank. Moody Gardens aquarium depends upon its volunteers to do many of the mundane jobs, freeing the paid workers to carry out breeding programs and research. "We wouldn't be able to do half of the things that we do without our volunteers!" This sounds like a familiar statement, doesn't it?

Upon leaving the kitchen, we were led to the space above the large tank. Sharks were happy to provide entertainment for us as we listened to the guide explain what we were seeing and how it was cared for. We were then invited to walk the walkway around the tank for a better view of the sharks and other marine life. The view was spectacular, and everyone arrived safely at the other side.

On the other side of the aquarium, we were shown labs where they are propagating coral. All of the coral used in aquariums across the country today is provided by coral growths from aquariums. None is removed from the ocean.

At the end of the behind-the-scenes tour, we were encouraged to walk around the upstairs displays while we waited for our penguin encounter. We were taken to the kitchen where they prepare the food for the birds that are in quarantine, waiting for the Tropical Forest Pyramid to re-open in May, 2011. We didn't have to wait long before Tux arrived to show off for us. Tux is a King penguin. King penguins are the second largest penguin in the world. The largest is the Emperor penguin. We were not allowed to touch Tux, but she was allowed to roam free around the room to check us out. She was very, very interested in the metallic freezer/refrigerator units.

A good time was had by all. We were allowed to roam the Aquarium at our leisure after the tour.

BEHIND THE "AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY" DOORS

by Christina Kovach

23 BBSP volunteers and hosts went on a behind-the-scenes tour of Moody Gardens Aquarium on January 18th. First, we learned that the fish eat better than a lot of us do, since Moody Gardens buys their seafood from the same suppliers that sell to restaurants in the area. I bet that sometimes the volunteers who prepare the food for the animals are tempted to sneak some home for dinner! I'm guessing that not many BBSP volunteers have had the same impulse with the food eaten by our snakes and baby gators...



We got a chance to peer down into the Caribbean exhibit from the top of a walkway that encircled the entire tank. Nobody leaned over the rail after hearing that the “shallow end” was seventeen feet deep!



The last part of the tour was the penguins. After viewing them through the glass and seeing some Chinstrap Penguins feeding their babies, we went into a room where Maggie ushered in “Tux” who is a King Penguin. “Tux” and the other King Penguins on display were part of a third nesting on the South Georgia Islands, located below South America and north of Antarctica. The biologists gathered the eggs from the third nesting since usually the parents do not have enough time in the season to rear the chicks to adulthood. So just like our “borrowed” gator babies, “Tux” and the other penguins who were hatched at Moody Gardens got a better chance at reaching adulthood.

Everyone enjoyed watching “Tux” waddle around and look at herself in the shiny refrigerator doors. (Several people were overheard planning their next birthday party so they could have another Penguin encounter. Sorry to disappoint, but a check of the website revealed that the upper age limit is 12! If you decide to host one for your younger family members, I know some volunteers who would be excellent chaperones!)



After “Tux” got tired of visiting with us, we explored the Aquarium on our own, with a better appreciation for all the work that goes on behind the “authorized personnel only” doors. Thanks to Sharon Hanzik for organizing this event and to Tom Prentiss for acting as the guide for Moody Garden’s savvy Junior Volunteers this past summer!



GETTING CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

by Carrie Sample

It was during the week and the kids were still in school, so I was hoping to get to the park to take bird pictures with my early Christmas present, a new camera. I made a point of charging my batteries, because too many times, I have been out when the battery has gone dead.

When I arrive at 40 Acre Parking lot, I am really excited, only one other car. (Now I know that wouldn't particularly make Steve K. too happy - but for my purpose it is great!).

There are so many birds flying in and out of the trees at the beginning of the lake - I spend 90 minutes and barely move more than 20 feet. The orange crowned kinglet actually showed off his crown for me. A Carolina Wren climbed under the bark of a tree stump and did not come out until he reached the top of the trunk. There was a little green guy hopping around in the mud. Took quite a few pictures of him!

The Pileated woodpecker did a flyover for me. The Common Yellowthroat was actually in a tree. I got some close pictures of ibises as they were in flight. The Coots look so velvety with their black feathers. The cardinals, chickadees, and tufted titmouse are all ready to pose for me. I start visualizing the story I will write for our newsletter.

There are some little birds in a small tree by the water. As I am taking pictures of them a young couple is getting closer. They see me taking pictures, yet they keep walking between me and those birds, and away the birds fly. (Now you see why I want very few people on the trails!)

Finally I make it to the observation tower and talk to a couple on bicycles - they asked the name of the moorhens (black birds with the bright orange beak.) I settle on the observation tower's bench, take out my glasses and get ready to examine all those pictures I have taken. There must be about 300!!!! I push the magic button and the first picture I see has only words: "No memory card." Aaaaauuuhhhhhhh#\$%&!!!!!!

All right...ok...I'm not going to let this ruin a great day... I am outside, the weather is great, the birds have been gorgeous and plentiful. Just not going to let this small problem get me down...I will just have to come another day and try again!

THE SECOND TRY

It has been three days and the weather is still great. Only three cars in the parking lot - that is still ok! But, have you ever tried to relive a great day...it never seems as great. There were a few birds, but not very many. I try to be very patient - just like Bill G. says - "You will see them if you can be patient!" I walk to that little tree by the water - not a single bird. I wait for the wren to go through the loose bark again...

Another photographer has joined me for a while. We take a picture of a Carolina Wren on a stump out in the water. He shows me his picture - the wren fills up his entire screen (his zoom lens is a trillion times as big as mine). I just have to realize, that no matter how big of one you have, someone always has one bigger and better.



Down the trail a ways, I see an aninga with his wings spread out. As I get closer I am taking pictures of the bird. He is close to the shore on a log. When he turns his head, I take a few more steps closer. He looks at me as it to say, "I see what you are doing!" I continue this process until I am a yard away from him. Forget my zoom, he is too close for it now. He looks at me, stretches out his neck and makes a gawking sound as if he is fussing at me. I just stay still and continue taking pictures of him.

He starts to move on that log, not away from me, but towards me! I'm still standing very still... He picks up a stick on the ground - looks at me - tosses it in the air and catches it. He picks up another stick and repeats his performance, walking back on his log tossing and catching it! Holy cow, this bird is showing off for me!!!!



On the way back, I get a few pictures of a Marsh Wren. (That doesn't happen too often for me!) I also see a yellow throat across the water who is willing to cooperate. My zoom may not be the biggest, but it took his picture quite nicely.



No, you can't usually repeat a great day, but you sure can have a different kind of great day!

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville, TX 77461

**NEXT MEETING
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2011**

FIRST CLASS MAIL



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**

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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 11th of the month prior to publication. Articles may be emailed to the editor at any time and will be published as space permits. Send time-sensitive event announcements well in advance of the event. Send articles to <a williamson4@comcast.net> or <newsletter@brazosbend.org>).

**IN THE END, WE WILL CONSERVE ONLY WHAT WE LOVE,
WE WILL LOVE ONLY WHAT WE UNDERSTAND,
WE WILL UNDERSTAND ONLY WHAT WE ARE TAUGHT.**

**BABA DIOUM, SENEGAL
AFRICAN CONSERVATIONIST**