



VOLUME 23, NUMBER 5

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



The Nature Center now has an outstanding display on the CROCODILIANS OF THE WORLD. Funding was provided by the KEN DEBENPORT MEMORIAL FUND and the BBSPVO. David Heinicke was lead on this project and received assistance from Adam Britton of crocodillian.com. Please say thanks to Beth Debenport

and David Heinicke for this excellent addition to the Nature Center.

The Building Committee under the direction of Chuck Duplant has produced a plan to work toward a new Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center. Each person that has been a part of this effort should be proud of the product and excited about what will happen in the future when this Center becomes a reality. The plan was presented to TPWD Austin, and they were impressed with the results of our effort and understand the very real need that we have to be able to better educate our park visitors and handle the increasing number of visitors to Brazos Bend State Park. TPWD Austin has asked that we delay our project because they have two fund raising programming going at this time to support the new Game Warden Training Facility and the joint TPWD and Audubon Society Shelton Lake State Park Audubon Center. We should use the delay to fine tune our requirements, develop skills and targets for fund raising, and a business plan for the Center. We will not do anything in the public arena but will be ready to take that step when TPWD Austin gives us permission and support to proceed.

Brazos Bend State Park has experienced record attendance during the last few months. We have had very large groups for our programs. One of the most popular programs is the Creekfield Nature Hike. It would be ideal to have at least three Volunteers signed up to lead the Creekfield Nature Hike each weekend while we have this wonderful spring weather. If you sign up and we do not have enough visitors for three hikes, you will still receive credit for leading a hike.

MAY 2011

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Our next General Meeting is May 14 at 5:30 PM. There is an Executive Committee meeting at 3:30 PM which is open to all active members. If you have a project or suggestion for our organization, you are invited to present that idea to the Executive Committee. Please join us and learn more about BBSPVO.

Offie Walker

APRIL MEETING NOTES

submitted by Anna Dell Williamson

Vice President Mary Lockwood called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM. Thanks to Judy Strauss and Linda Heinicke for dinner. The minutes of the March meeting were approved as posted.

Staff members brought their reports, which are printed elsewhere in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report: Diane Carpenter brought the financial reports in the absence of Treasurer Dave Armstrong.

March was a great month and we had very good donations. Gift Shop sales were up, and we have already paid for the new beverage cooler in increased sales. Water Station costs are up because we are using more cups. We were able to place money in the Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center fund, which we need to expand to meet architectural and other planning costs.

Budget Requests: The following requests were approved:

- Ron Morrison: four bags of fire ant chemicals so we can start spreading them to be prepared before the Easter crowd.
- Steve Killian: Replace the old battery on the park backhoe. This will come from the Equipment Repair Fund.

Funds for a special Cinco de Mayo event on May 7. The money will be used to purchase a banner, prizes for Mexican Bingo, and other supplies. Funding comes from Holiday program funds.

Items to furnish the new break area in HQ.: 4.4 ft. refrig., 1100 watt, MW, 2.5 gal point of use water heater, total \$466.99, Supervisor Acct, \$1200. Park Structural Improvements.

David Heinicke: Funds to make the windmill operational by replacing the plastic liner that holds water. This will come out of the General Park Maintenance Fund.

Committee Reports:

Gift Shop: Beth Debenport reported that we had a fantastic March, and we appreciate help from volunteers donating time to help in the Gift Shop. We are trying to keep up with the demand for bottled water and other inventory. We used 10 cases of drinks in 2 weeks, and are stocking more than usual. New Committee Members are helping with the Sam's purchases also.

Wood Sales: Diane Carpenter noted that sales are good, but sometimes the percentage of wood paid for is not good. There is a substantial differences in paid sales between the two loops. Lighting has been repaired at the 200 loop.

Maintenance: There was no Maintenance report, but the crew has been working on fixing gates on the spillway trail, and shingles on the Elm Lake Gazebo Water Station.

Outreach: Judy Strauss reported that outreach activities have been very good. On March 26, at Children's Day, there were 545 visitors and lots of volunteer help. At the Katy Folklife Festival on April 2, 3128 visitors came by our at booth between 9:00 and 5:00. We had an average of 10-12 workers and couldn't keep up, beautiful weather. Future events include the May 1, Ducks Unlimited event at Dewberry Farms. This is a small event that we like to support. This group has done a lot for us at the park. There is a new event on May 7 at Sweeney; we expect that to be busy. The new tent we purchased is very good, easy to set up, and holds up well in the wind. Thanks to all VIT's and volunteers, for all the help.

Sharon reminded us that we need lots of volunteers to lead Creekfield hikes on spring weekends. We will be getting the word out about that need.

We expressed thanks to Judy Strauss for leading Outreach and for coordinating the meeting night suppers. Her work is appreciated.

The meeting was adjourned.

STAFF REPORTS

PARK SUPERINTENDENT STEVE KILLIAN

Steve brought us an update on our new Nature Center prospects. This is a hard time for TPWD regarding budgeting, and Justin Rhodes and the Executive Team haven't been able to approve us yet. That doesn't mean a negative response. The Agency is facing an unusual time, having to plan for a 30% cut in budget.

Offie Walker asked how we can get on the TPWD priority list of projects that get special attention, with TPWD doing presentations to possible benefactors. David suggested we get with Parks and Wildlife Foundation, get our Commissioners involved, and work thru Justin Rhodes.

March has been a record month, the biggest month ever at BBSP! This park keeps going forward in all economic times, thanks to volunteers and staff working as a team. That is a very significant part of our success. Both the Gift Shop at Headquarters and the Volunteer Gift Shop had fantastic sales last month.

Steve invite us all to stop by Headquarters and see the expansion. Remodeling is almost complete, and the facility is very nice. There is a new tile floor (from Region), new paint, more space, more efficient. Everyone has his or her own work space and is no longer sharing the same desk.

The camping loop bathrooms are almost complete. Our rangers have fixed many problems, cleaned out drains, etc.

The Park received crushed limestone last week for the Live Oak Trail project, and there is some money left for fuel, bridging materials, and repairing equipment associated with the project. Some gravel that the volunteers purchased has been used also. We are able to match hours and money. There is a 700 foot section that can't be graveled. It will have to be bridged.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT CHRIS BISHOP

Chris commented that March was a record-breaking revenue month which saw camping, hiking, programs, and projects to improve efficiency in the office. The new restrooms have given us some challenges. He is impressed by the professionalism of staff, the volunteer organization and the hosts. It is amazing what a



difference we make in people's lives. The Executive Committee at TPWD has dire circumstances right now, and our BBEEC requires vision and courage to move forward. Chris referred to the characters for the word "Crisis" in Chinese: danger plus opportunity.

NATURALIST AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR SHARON HANZIK



We have started our spring school field trips. Dates are on the Events Calendar. We have had several requests for the same days.

If you have questions about the new volunteer signup calendar, contact Anne Shelton,

Nelda Gay said she will be back at the park soon. A memorial fund is being set up in Marty's honor.

Carrie Sample sent word that the Eco-Explorers classes and calendar are set and will soon be on the website. Older children will meet on Thursdays, while Tuesdays are for the younger group, the Tadpoles.

Sharon reported that her new computer is great

She reminded us about the volunteer field trip on April 20. There is no limitation on the number of volunteers who attend.

Thanks for everything. We had 963 visitors through the NC today.

NATURALIST AND PARK LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER DAVID HEINICKE



The new crocodilian panel was hung this week. Thank you to Beth Debenport for dedicating Ken's memorial fund to it. A press release has been prepared for local newspapers.

The Elm Lake Wildlife Viewing Pavilion Project is underway. Contractors will start driving posts on Monday, and construction is estimated to take about 6 weeks. We may be able to dedicate it on June 5, National Trails Day. The dedication panel is started, and we are looking for ideas. It will be finalized next month.

We have plans to redesign the front desk of the Nature Center and we are looking for ideas and a finish carpenter.

Easter weekend, Good Friday through Sunday, will be a very busy time. Plan to come early, stay late, and have lots of fun.

New fawns have been born. If one is seen on the ground, leave it alone, because the mother left it there and will return. If fire ants are nearby, notify staff.

We are starting to experience warmer weather. Be on the lookout for heat problems. Watch each other and visitors for sweating or red faces. Call on the radio for staff help. Heat problems can come on fast, so don't delay.

Get ready for another exciting month.

CONGRATULATION



MAY BIRTHDAYS

Mikki Kilgore Rose Aden (Emeritus) Kevin Brantley Dennis Keprta (Emeritus) Suzie Gann Virginia Harrison Dawn Tejero Carrie Sample JT Kalina (Staff) Ethan Hoover VIT Kathleen Hosek VIT



MAY ANNIVERSARIES

Linda and David Heinicke Patricia and Steve Marshall Jo Ann and Chuck Davis

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Anna Dell Williamson Glen Kilgore Rebecca Sykes Linda Keltner Kent Fewell Peter Guzman (VIT) Michael Sanderson (VIT)

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

Joe and Sue Carmichael (1953) (Emeritus) Linda and Don Keltner

CONGRATULATIONS to new grandpa **Jerry Zona**, shown here with his granddaughter, **Charlie Rae Zona**.



SYMPATHY

Our sincere sympathy goes out to **Joan Jackson** and family on the death of **Warren** on April 22. Warren was a member of BBSPVO for 20 years, and his handiwork is evident in many places throughout the Nature Center and park.



to **Cynthia Morales** for helping with the layout of the newsletter

to Judy Strauss and Linda Heinicke for the April meeting night supper.

to Judy Strauss for leading Outreach and for coordinating the meeting night suppers.

to **Beth Debenport**, **Diane Carpenter**, **Debbie and Kent Fewell**, **Nancy Lynn Jones**, **Linda Keltner**, **Judy Strauss** and **Anna Dell Williamson** for their work in the Gift Shop. As revenue increases, so does the work load.

to **Teri and Marissa Matthews**, **Beth Debenport's** daughter and granddaughter, for bringing lunch to the volunteers on Saturday, April 30, to remember **Ken's** birthday on Friday.

WE GET MAIL

SCHOOL GROUP:

Sharon,

Please receive a big thanks from our teachers and parents for your help organizing our 2nd graders field trip. We all had a good time and learned interesting facts of nature. Please extend our appreciation to Ms. Dobbs and Ms. Gann, they both were full of information that kept the kids excited.

Sincerely,

Nadezhda Gerdes Calvary Episcopal, 2nd grade

KATY FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL:

Hi Judy, Thanks to you and your group for providing the really interesting and educational exhibit, the visitors really enjoyed it. We did come up with an approximate count, 3415. Will see you next year......thanks again.......Ray

Ray Wolman, Instructional Officer Outdoor Learning Center

(Ed. note: The Katy Folklife Festival was one of the recent outreach events where BBSPVO had a booth. We had 3128 of those visitors come by our booth.)



NATURE CENTER REPORT APRIL 2011

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for April 1-30, 2011. April included Easter weekend (3 days) and outstanding attendance during weekends and weekdays.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE April 2011 - 9,206 April 2010 - 8,300	Saturdays (5) - 4464 High, 1072 (4/2) Average: 893
April 2009 - 5,739 April 2008 - 6,387 April 2007 - 7,399 April 2006 - 7,168 April 2005 - 7,027	Sundays (4) – 2047 High, 577 (4/24, Easter) Average: 512
April 2003 - 7,027	Weekdays (21) - 2695 High, 513 (4/22, Good Friday) Average: 128
CREEKFIELD HIKES (14)	409
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (3)	181
SNAKE PROGRAMS (5)	200
CHILDREN'S STORYTIME (5)	75
OUTREACH (2)	3143
SPOTTING SCOPE (1)	90
BIRD PROGRAMS (6)	75
OTHER PROGRAMS (6) include sundial, owls, mammals, photo walk, reptiles, Brazos Pickers	182
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND ONSITE PROGRAMS	4355

Have you noticed the new crocodilian exhibit? This exhibit in the Nature Center was made possible by donations from the **Ken Debenport** Memorial Fund and the BBSP Volunteer Organization. Here are "before" and "after" pictures of the NC wall over the alligator skeleton exhibit.

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"Before"





"After"

NATURE CENTER VISITORS



April was a great month for visitation, including special visitors to the Nature Center. On April 15, a snapping turtle decided to cross the NC lawn, and **Steve Killian** had to come remove it when visiting children got too close.

On Easter Sunday, we had a small gator visit the NC and try to hide from visitors in the Live Oak tree near the door. **David Heinicke** relocated it to Pilant Slough. He used the event as a "teachable moment" for the interested visitors.





Then April 29, a red-eared slider decided to lay her eggs in the path around by the butterfly garden. However, after digging her hole and settling in, she changed her mind and tried to dig a hole in the concrete by the side door. **Jerry Zona** took this picture of her before she moved onto the concrete.

ELM LAKE VIEWING PLATFORM

BBSPVO provided funding for a viewing platform at Elm Lake. Funds came from several sources, including the Bryan Leach Memorial Fund. This platform will be large enough to conduct interpretive programs, will have a covered section, and will be accessible to all BBSP visitors. Offie Walker visited the platform site shortly after construction began, about April 15, and again April 29. You can see the progress that is being made.



GET WELL WISHES

Rose Aden fell recently and broke her femur bone. Her daughter Nan Budewig reported that she had surgery and has started rehab. Our best wishes go out to Rose for a speedy recovery.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Wood Yard: Mowed wood yard Built tool racks in wood yard shed and organized shed Split firewood

Mowing and Landscaping: Mulched and watered trees on Creekfield Forest Trail Mowed and sprayed pecan trees at Red Buckeye Watered Live Oak trees at Nature Center

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance: Trimmed Pilant Slough Trail and Live Oak Trail Removed blow downs from Pilant Slough Trail Repaired gate posts on Spillway Bridge, repaired Hoot's Hollow gate Laid trail material on Live Oak Trail

Equipment Maintenance: Removed windshield of Kubota Moved wood yard chemical sprayer to Maintenance

Building Maintenance Replaced roof on Interpretation Station at Elm Lake

Pest Control: Treated tallow trees Treated fire ants, Nature Center, 100 and 200 Camping Loops, Elm Lake picnic area, Creekfield Lake and Forest trails, Shelter area and 40-Acre picnic ground

Special Projects: Worked on Joe's Bench Spread granite gravel at Nature Center

WALKING MY BABY BACK HOME

During the volunteer meeting on April 9, David Heinicke was called out. After the meeting we looked out the window and saw David escorting a gator along the roadway toward Pilant Slough. Luckily the gator was cooperative, and when David touched its tail with his stick, the gator moved on toward the Slough and finally reached the destination. Again, visitors were fascinated by the opportunity to see an alligator up close.



BIG EARS ON EASTER SUNDAY

by Rick Dashnau

It was another busy Easter at Brazos Bend State Park. However, before the big rush started, I got to hear a chorus of alligator bellows at about 8:30 am. After that, I spent most of the day riding around the lakes and educating park visitors (and keeping them out of trouble). I got word that a fawn was visible from one of the trails. I later heard that Sandy, one of our regular visitors, had found it.

A doe will sometimes leave a new fawn in a protected spot for a while. After Sharon told me where it was, I went to look. This fawn was in a good spot, across the water from the Spillway trail. The day was pretty cloudy. In the greyish light, the colors of the fawn helped it blend well with the background. At that distance, while sleeping, it looked like a pile of leaves. For an hour or so, I rode up and down the trail, and when I saw a large group of people, I'd stay near the fawn. Not far from the fawn, on *our* side of the



Slough, an alligator was in the water, and most of the people watched that.

Then, when the group moved past, I'd ask them to stop, and look across the Slough. EVERY time, there was a collective "AAAWWWWWW...." when the visitors found the fawn. While I was watching the fawn, the clouds moved away and the sun came out. When it did, it shined through the trees and onto the fawn, making this wonderful image. The group that saw THAT for the first time were stunned...as was I. It was beautiful. The fawn slept peacefully through the day; at least, it seemed to be fine whenever I passed it (and I passed it many times).

Added note: David Heinicke reported on what to do if you find a fawn. Read the staff reports in this edition to find out what he suggested.

VULTURE ADVENTURE

by Carrie Sample

Any time you go walking at Brazos Bend, you can usually find something out of the ordinary or something you have never seen. A year ago, we found a 2 foot alligator with a fish hook in his mouth. Several of us concluded that he must have gotten it out by himself. The creature I saw a few weeks ago could not have been so lucky as to 'get it out himself'.



I like to walk over to Creekfield Lake before I start Nature Center duty; however, since I usually sign up for the 9 a.m. shift, this doesn't happen too often.

My walks around Creekfield usually include going to the observatory to look for birds also. On this morning I discovered the new location all those vultures who usually winter in the trees shading the Creekfield trail - on top of the observatory buildings.



One of those birds looked a little odd in his shape. On closer inspection of this vulture, I discovered that his deformity was due

to an arrow that was struck through him. Evidently, the arrow missed his major organs... The guy could even fly with that arrow protruding through him. Don't usually feel sorry for vultures (they leave a mess and stink every winter on our paved trail), but this is one I would have liked to have helped!

Told David and others at the nature center about this poor vulture. No one has been able to see him since. Sure glad I got pictures of him, they probably would have thought I was just telling another 'vulture tale'.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- May 14 Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM
- Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
- May 15 Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake Restrooms
- June 4 Close-up photography Photo-walk #1, 5 PM.
- June 11 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)

REFRESHER ON ATV COURTESY

by Judy Strauss

With all the things going on around us, sometimes we need to be refreshed on happenings in different areas of our duties as Volunteers at the Park. Let's go over a few rules in the use of our ATV's in respect to the courtesy to our Park visitors:

The person/persons on the trail always have the right of way. The ATV's are equipped to go off the trails if necessary, and we never want to make the person walking to have to get off in the grass so that the ATV user is able to pass. Personally, I try not to drive "between" visitors, but sometimes they "split", and you have no choice. But remember to go very slowly. You never know when a dog, or even a child, may jump in your path.

Always slow down when approaching or passing a hiker/biker on the trails. After passing, if you elect to speed up, please be conscious of dust that you might kick up, especially when we have had the dry weather. It is amazing just how much dust those ATV's can produce.

We do not give visitors rides on our ATV's unless it is absolutely necessary or an emergency. If someone stops you to ask a question or talk about something, it is best to always turn off the ATV. It is very difficult to hear over the noise of the motor.

SPECKLED KING SNAKE RELEASE

BBSP Nature Center has had two speckled king snakes for some time. One was donated a few years ago by Kevin Dees, a friend of Nancy Partlow at Wharton County Junior College. The time came to replace the speckled king donated by Mr. Dees, and he was asked if he wanted it back or if he wanted it released. He decided to release it, and his daughter Mackenzie, almost five years old, helped with the release. Below are a couple of pictures of this event. Thanks to Nancy Partlow for sharing these photos with us.





Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife 21901 FM 762 Needville, TX 77461

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2011 ********

STATE PARK

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: Vice-President: Secretary: Treasurer: Past President: Offie Walker Mary Lockwood Linda Heinicke Dave Armstrong Carrie Sample

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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Anna Dell Williamson Cynthia Morales Bruce Williamson Carol Ramsayer Anne Shelton 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>

or <newsletter@brazosbend.org>). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced

in the newsletter.

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL