



VOLUME 18, NUMBER 4

APRIL 2006

APRIL MEETING NOTES

submitted by Bruce Williamson

Judy Strauss called the April 8 meeting to order. There were 19 volunteers and 1 staff member present. The minutes of the March meeting were approved as posted. **David Heinicke** sent his report, and **Steve Killian** presented his report, which are published elsewhere in the newsletter.

Beth Debenport reported that the **Gift Shop** had a fabulous March. T-shirts will be ordered after Easter. We always need workers to sign up. **Bryan Leach** brought the **Maintenance report**, which is published elsewhere in the newsletter.

Announcements: Outreach is still looking for a coordinator. **Vice President Anna Dell Williamson** announced that the May meeting will start at 5:15 PM (while we are eating). It will begin with a 30 minute Continuing Education presentation on State Park funding. The program will be organized by Steve Killian and Dennis Jones. The **2006 Volunteer Roster** is available in a box in the volunteer lounge.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer John Bradford reported that the BBSPVO received donations from the Tina Blair Memorial for use in lake habitat recovery and from the Williamson's for the purchase of a mobility scooter for use by volunteers with mobility limitations while they are engaged in volunteer business. He also reported that the price of firewood will be a flat \$3.00 per bundle from now on. There will no longer be a discount for the purchase of two bundles.

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Committee Reports: The Outreach Committee supported the Migration Celebration at the Houston Zoo.

Old Business:

The new **garage door** at the Nature Center has been installed, but not the opener.

The owner's manual and the operator's manual for the **electric mobility scooter** have been delivered to Sharon to place in the file cabinet. There is a copy of the operator's manual and a short summary of safety rules and operations items in the basket underneath the seat of the scooter.

The **Standard Operations Procedure (SOP) for the electric mobility scooter** .was presented at the March meeting and was published in the April newsletter. After a brief discussion, Ken Debenport moved to approve the SOP. John Bradford seconded the motion. It was approved with one abstention.

There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned. ♦



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Yet another holiday come and gone! I sincerely hope that you each enjoyed the holidays and had a wonderful Easter. I was extra lucky because even tho' I had to work at my "real" job on Good Friday and couldn't make it to the park, I was able to be at the park all day Saturday and for a few hours on Sunday to spend time with my Park Family, then slip away and enjoy the rest of Easter with my "other" family and friends and watch my five grandchildren play and hunt for Easter Eggs! I couldn't have wished for anything more. I hope that yours was just as wonderful .



In talking with Steve Killian a few weeks ago, Steve voiced a desire for the volunteers to alternate and camp out at the equestrian campsites. So, the weekend of May 19, 20, and 21, we will have a volunteer camp out with the volunteer campsite being out at the equestrian sites. At present, I have two pads, but am pretty sure that it would not be a problem if we needed more. Tents, pop-ups, RV's, or just a cot (if you really want to be brave!); just keep in mind that there is no electricity or water, but that there is a porta-potty!

We really hope that you can join us; just let me know by Wednesday, May 17th, and I can give you all the necessary details. You can reach me best at work at 281-980-4104. Please don't rely on my e-mail (as I don't check it every evening) unless you write several days in advance. As the time gets closer, I will try to check it more often. Hope to see you all there !

Until next time, stay healthy and happy!

Judy Strauss ♦

VOLUNTEER MEETING MAY 13
SUPPER AT 5:00 PM

CONTINUING EDUCATION 5:15 - 5:45 PM

Steve Killian and Dennis Jones
present information on park funding

STAFF REPORTS

STEVE KILLIAN

Superintendent Steve Killian reported that New Horseshoe Lake is open for fishing and wildlife viewing. The damaged levee on New Horseshoe is almost repaired with concrete and dirt spoilage and will be completed by the next contractor. We will open a new trail on the back side of New Horseshoe when this work is completed.



This past month we have sprayed 40-Acre, Creekfield and Old Horseshoe Lakes with approved aquatic herbicides. Barry Eversol (Fort Bend Game Warden) provided a Law Enforcement air boat from Galveston to spray 40-Acre and Elm. We will be continuously spraying in those lakes to control unwanted vegetation for improving wildlife habitat, wildlife viewing and recreational activities. Our lakes will once again have open water (When it rains).

Elm Lake management involved the removal of Chinese Tallows and dead willows in interior areas and selected basking islands. We are finding some pigs in the lakes and are not catching many in the park.

March 1 we began spot spraying the prairies with herbicide. We missed the burn window this past winter. We have three rangers certified to conduct burns and four others to be trained. If there is no burn ban, we will start burning in the fall.

Big Creek was flowing last week due to some heavy rain in the vicinity.

There will be a meeting next week on State Park funding. There is no news yet.

April 17 the contractors will move in to do all the roads, campgrounds and parking lots. Camping areas will be closed Monday through Friday, open Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. There are 105 working days to complete the project. Plans include cement ADA trails in the day use areas, adding ADA sites in Elm Lake, Hale Lake, Forty-acre Lake, the shelter area (#3 and #13) and the playground area. ADA campsites may be reserved in advanced.

The Pilant Slough Structure will be finished in May. There is a lot happening in the next few months. We now have an operating alarm system at Headquarters and the pipe fence is waiting on the donated pipe.

DAVID HEINICKE

David was leading a hike and sent his report via Judy. He thanked the group for help on Earth Day, which went very well. He also thanked those who helped with the preparation on Friday and the cleanup on Saturday after the event.



Next Sunday is Easter and will be very busy. There will be no Creekfield or programs because we need volunteers on the trails and in the Nature Center. Good Friday will also be very busy. The Nature Center will be open all day. Volunteers need to sign up to help.

NATURE CENTER ACTIVITY REPORT

by Anna Dell Williamson

Here is a breakdown of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for April 1-30. This month included Earth Day and Easter, plus several school groups during the week. Numbers come from the calendar in the Nature Center and may not reflect all activities.

	2006	APRIL
NATURE CENTER	SATURDAYS (5)	2920 High, 964, 4/1 Earth Day
	SUNDAYS (5)	2242 High, 744, 4/16 Easter
	WEEKDAYS (19)	2006 High, 469, 4/14 Good Friday
CREEKFIELD HIKES (8)		203 High, 48, 4/1 Earth Day
BIRD PROGRAMS AND HIKES (7)		93
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS AND HIKES (6)		324
OTHER REPTILE PROGRAMS (2)		52
FISHING PROGRAMS (3)		43
OTHER PROGRAMS (4)		59
OUTREACH (1)		641

Total Nature Center attendance for April 2006 was 7168. April 2005 was close, with 7027.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to **Frank Smith** from the Fall 2005 VIT class and **Jerry Zona** from the Spring 2006 VIT class, who have finished their training and are now full volunteers. **Nancy Partlow**, Spring 2006 class, is scheduled to finish May 6. Give them a hearty "Welcome!" to the volunteer organization.



BEST WISHES

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Rose Aden
Chris Hartman, (VIT)
Dennis Keppta



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Judy Huber
Glen Kilgore
Jacob Ramirez
Anna Dell Williamson

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

Rose and Elmer Aden
Linda and David Heinicke
Susan and Rodney Walther



JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

Joe and Sue Carmichael
Nelda and Martin Gay
Joan and Warren Jackson

NEW AT THE NATURE CENTER

by Sharon Hanzik



On Tuesday, April 25, park rangers found THE LARGEST BLACK WIDOW I HAVE EVER SEEN while helping park hosts switch campsites. I assumed she was ready to lay eggs, and on Wednesday morning I found her working on her egg sac. She must have laid them, as she is somewhat smaller, but still a large spider. She is now on display at the front desk. This display is NOT to be handled by park visitors, viewing only.

BBSP IN THE NEWS

Doug Pike of the *Houston Chronicle* listed the park in his Outdoors/Etc. column on April 4. He titled it "reptile farm", but did not describe us that way, did a nice job.

BRAZOS RIVER PICKERS LAST PERFORMANCE OF THE SEASON

The Pickers played their last performance of the season at the amphitheater on Saturday, May 6. During the 30-minute intermission volunteer Glen Kilgore spun one of his yarns telling anything from ghost stories to wild west legends. The band will return in October to play on the first Saturday of the month. They play blue-grass and old-time music. You can also find them at various venues in the Fort Bend County area. Their web site link is on our web site. www.brazosriverpickers.com

Thanks

- ☺ to **Sandy and Rich Jespersen** and **Carol Ramsayer** for covering the Migration Celebration at the Houston Zoo for us
- ☺ to **Willie Anderson** for getting the materials and parts for trail work for the maintenance crew
- ☺ to **everyone** who helped with **Earth Day, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.**
- ☺ to **Steve Williamson** for arranging the donation of a laptop computer from Hewlett Packard to be used for Interpretive Programs
- ☺ to **Jane Minard** for articles for the Volunteer Information binder in the lounge
- ☺ to **Sandy Jespersen** for the Outreach report.

BRAZOS BEND'S EASTER BUNNIES

by Sharon Hanzik

Easter Sunday at the park, a day a some of us dread and some of us just deal with. It was a new experience for some staff members who stepped right up and stepped right in it! The past couple of years cold fronts and rain kept visitation light. However, this year we were back in full swing. We never had to close the park, but we were very near maximum parking capacity. All staff members were on duty that day, some started at 6:30 and some went home after 8:00.



Since most Easter picnickers do not stray far from their group our Nature Center visitation is normally light. Not this year. We more than doubled it with a whopping 744 visitors! (We do not schedule interpretive programs as we have so much to contend with.) We sold a whole lot of campsites, as we always run out of tables and parking in the picnic areas. The visiting public was a nice crowd and was on their best behavior, no noteworthy incidents. We did have mountains of trash that filled every dumpster and a flatbed trailer.

It doesn't just take all of the staff to make up a successful Easter team. It takes a boat-load of volunteers as well.

THANK YOU

Beth & Ken Debenport
Bruce & Anna Dell Williamson
James & Joyce Blankenship
Rose & Elmer Aden
John Bradford

Judy Strauss
Peggy Farley
Anne Shelton
Rich Jespersen
Tom Prentiss

Chuck Duplant
Rick Dashnau
Jim and Irene Cassidy (hosts)
Tom Brooks (host)

If I missed anyone, I apologize. It was a blur of faces. I must not forget our friendly neighborhood Game Warden, **Barry Eversole**, who helps us out every year with law enforcement, road blocks and trash and even cooks for the gang. Thanks Barry!

Great job done by the staff: **Steve, Dennis, Susie, Karen, Tina, Lancey, Carlos, Blake, Jeff, Jim, JT, Mike, Gary, David and Sharon**

VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

NEW LAPTOP FOR PROGRAM USE

All of the slide shows to date that David and I have created are now in the new computer. The computer will also play DVD's. If you would like to learn to set up the computer and projector for presenting slide shows please let us know. You can also create them using this computer. Power Point is very easy to learn, and we have a few volunteers who can teach it. Once we get a group together we can train all at once. The computer and projector are kept in the safe. Sharon, David or Ken Debenport can get it for you. The volunteer log-in for the laptop is the same as the log-in for the web calendar.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS POLICY

Adopted - December 14, 2005

Volunteer service awards will be presented to members of the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization who have completed the appropriate number of years of active volunteer service at Brazos Bend. Volunteer service awards will be paid for by TPWD, presented by park staff and will be in increments of five years. If a volunteer has been on inactive status for a period of six consecutive months to one consecutive year this time will not count towards years of active volunteer service. If a volunteer spends less than six consecutive months on inactive status, the years of volunteer service will not be negatively effected. The By-laws of the BBSPVO does not allow for inactive status for greater than one consecutive year.

Awards will be presented each year at the volunteer picnic. In an attempt to avoid errors, oversights and mistakes, park staff will notify all volunteers scheduled to receive a service award prior to the volunteer picnic. If a volunteer feels that he/she should be receiving a service award and have not been notified please contact the volunteer coordinator prior to the volunteer picnic so the situation can be discussed.

Additional awards or certificates may be presented to volunteers at the discretion of the volunteer coordinator or his/her designee.

GEORGE OBSERVATORY FAMILY SPACE DAY 2006

Saturday, May 6 is Family Space Day at the George Observatory. Activities will include mini-Challenger missions, portable planetarium shows, children's space activities and NASA surprises, including NASA Astronauts, Mars Rovers, and Balloon Rockets. The fun will start at 9:30 AM and last until 3:00 PM. BBSP will have a booth inside the Observatory during those hours.



WHERE IS BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK?

by Sandy Jespersen

On Sunday, April 9, Carol Ramsayer, Rich and I were reminded how important it is for volunteers to participate in the Outreach Program. Approximately 80% of the adults that we met at the Migration Celebration at the Houston Zoo either had not heard of Brazos Bend State Park or didn't know where it is located. We happily supplied them with information and directions to our favorite park.

Carol entertained and educated children as she helped them discover the secrets in owl pellets.

Many people who saw the study skin of the purple gallinule were delighted with its beauty and surprised that such an exotic looking bird lives nearby.

About 640 children and adults stopped by our display. Where is BBSP? A few more people now know, and we hope they will soon come and enjoy all the wonders in the Park.



INTERPRETATION WORKSHOP/TRAINING

by Sharon Hanzik

Tuesday, July 18th 9:00 am - 4:00 pm, 1 hour lunch

What is interpretation? Where did it originate? Why do we do it? How do we do it? Learn the answers to these questions and how to develop an interpretive program or hike. Participants will be asked to develop and present a program within 1 month. That is the challenge. Registration is required. Six staff members will be attending. Space available for 4 volunteers.

Second tentative date: Saturday, August 26th from 9:00 - 4:00, at the Observatory classroom.

REMINDER

Creekfield Hikes will start at 10:00 effective June 3 through the end of September.

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS IN THE NATURE CENTER

by Sharon Hanzik

VOLUNTEER CANCELLATIONS/LATE ARRIVALS

When you cancel a weekend commitment less than 24 hours in advance or on same day during business hours, please call the Nature Center front desk at 979-553-5122. Emails and phone messages to Sharon and David may not be checked in time. The same goes for when you are running late. Please also remember that you get credit only for what you work.

A REASON FOR THE RULES

The interpretive staff sets many of the rules for the operation of the Nature Center, especially when it comes to handling animals. All guidelines are posted at the alligator and snake tanks and it is each volunteer's responsibility to abide by them. They keep you and the public safe and provide for a more user-friendly environment inside the center. We understand that in the thick of things sometimes we forget. If the staff or a volunteer gently reminds you of these guidelines please adhere to them in a professional manner. Remember that animal handling is a privilege we offer volunteers that could be revoked from certain individuals at any time.

"INTERPRETIPS"

Here are a few tidbits to help you become a better interpreter.

There are no "bad" snakes. All snakes are good and equally important to the ecosystems in which they live. Some are just more dangerous than others. (Coral snake bite can be treated, so it is not necessarily deadly.)

We conduct "programs", not "shows". "Show" implies more of a theatrical performance for entertainment purposes. We are, of course, entertaining; however, we are also educating.

When asking visitors if they would like to "pet" a snake or baby gator, please use the word "touch" instead. We pet our pets. These are wild animals.

Other ways of saying "no" in response to questions: "Close, but not quite", or redirect the question. For example: You are asking visitors to identify the raccoon tracks in the bricks on the Creekfield Trail. They point at the skunk tracks. Instead of "no, wrong one", or "that's not it", describe raccoon paws a little more clearly and use more hints until you lead them to the answer. Sometimes you must lead them all the way, sometimes you won't have to. Make the visitor, no matter what age, feel good about trying, not feel bad about giving the wrong answer.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 5	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, Forty-Acre restroom building
May 7	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, Forty-Acre restroom building
May 13	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM Bird photography Photo-walk #2, 5:00 PM
May 29	Memorial Day, NC 9:00-5:00
June 2	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, Forty-Acre restroom building



THE MARCH 2006 MAINTENANCE REPORT

by Bryan Leach

Repaired two benches on the Elm Lake Trail
Cut up three downed trees off the Pilant Slough Trail
Unloaded 8 cords of wood, split, tied and stacked fire wood and hauled tied wood to the wood racks
Completed the electrical installation in the pole barn
Removed a blown down tree off the Red Buckeye Trail
Replaced the hydraulic control valve on the splitter
Worked on the burglar alarm system at Headquarters
Put two new tires on the K1 Kubota
Used the gas blower to blow leaves and twigs from around the Nature Center and off the Creekfield Trail on two different occasions
Treated fire ants around the Nature Center and Amphitheater
Mounted two cup holders on each water station box
Put back braces on 38 benches around the park
Cleaned up the wood yard
Hauled the roller to the shop for repairs
Treated fire ants around the Hale Lake Area
Changed the engine oil and filter and the transmission fluid and both filters on the K1 Kubota and also greased it
Cut overhanging limbs, stump stubble and removed tree limbs and stumps around the Prairie Boardwalk and Platform
Put supports under the center of the wood rack on the 100 camping loop
Opened up a window to Big Creek in front of a bench and cut yaupons around a big oak tree, off the trail between Creekfield Lake and the Big Creek Bridge
Started and finished clearing trees and brush from in and around the lake and Windmill area at the intersection of the Bluestem and Riverview Trails
Started and finished rebuilding the Boardwalk on the Prairie
Started and finished topping the Prairie Trail

THE APRIL 2006 MAINTENANCE REPORT

Repaired the hot wire to the electric bed lift mechanism on the '01 Gator
Split wood, tied wood, hauled tied wood to the wood racks
Finished mowing the Red Buckeye Trail, the Creekfield Forest Trail and around the outside of the fence at the wood yard
Cut up downed trees on the Red Buckeye Trail, the Hale Lake Loop Trail, the 100 Camping Loop, along the one mile stretch and before the Big Creek Bridge
Put back braces on 23 park benches
Cleaned up the wood yard and cleaned out the block building at the wood yard
Started redecking the Prairie Platform
Sprayed the weeds at the wood yard on two different occasions
Relocated a park bench on Big Creek
Repaired a park bench over by the blow out
Put maps on two map standards
Watered the trees along the road to the Elm Lake area
Painted and mounted the letters for the Gift Shop
Treated the wood yard for fire ants
Mowed and lopped limbs on the Bluestem/Whiteoak Trail
Built 3 shelves in the block building in the wood yard and moved the fire ant chemicals from the Maintenance building to that location
Replaced the high pressure hose on the splitter
Cut down willow and tallow trees along the bank of Big Creek and the Brazos River below Joe's bench
Cleared small trees and brush from in front of a bench facing the Brazos River on the Red Buckeye Trail
Changed the engine oil and filter, transmission fluid and both filters, the hydraulic lift fluid, the power steering fluid, and the fuel filter on the K2 Kubota and put the fan belt back on and repaired the mirror

STATE PARK FUNDING

The *Abilene Reporter News* published an article on a meeting regarding State Park funding by Jason Sheehan, in the March 30, 2006 edition. Here are some excerpts from that article:

Future funding for state parks was the topic of discussion March 29 during a meeting at Buffalo Gap Historic Village hosted by the Texas Forts Trail. John Cobb, director of Texans for State Parks, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials attended the meeting. The TPWD has addressed budget shortfalls by reducing days of operations, laying off staff, closing campgrounds and other facilities, and limiting public access to appointment-only visits.

About 10.5 million people visit Texas' 120 state parks each year, providing a \$1 billion boost to the state's economy, according to Texans for State Parks, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of state parks and historic sites. Cobb said many parks are using old mowers and other equipment for maintenance and do not have the funds to replace or rebuild outdated structures like restrooms. Educating the public and state legislators about the need for additional funding for state parks is the first phase of a three-phase plan. Texans for State Parks will work on funding solutions and follow up with legislators in other phases.

Cobb said Texans for State Parks believes the Sporting Goods Sales Tax should continue to be a dedicated source of funding for operations of state parks and for grants for local parks. The TPWD should receive, as dedicated funding for state and local parks, the full amount of sales taxes generated by the sales tax on sporting goods, he said. The National Sporting Goods Association estimates that Texans pay about \$100 million in sales tax on sporting goods annually. In the mid-1990s, the Legislature capped the amount that the TPWD can access at \$32 million. That cap remains in place. Cobb said the cap should be removed.

MEETING NIGHT SUPPERS

by Anna Dell Williamson

Thanks to **Bryan Leach** for bringing supper for the April meeting. **Beth Debenport** will bring provide the meal for the May meeting. We will collect \$3.00 per person to cover costs. If you are willing to prepare a meal for a future meeting, please contact me by email (<awilliamson4 @houston.rr.com>) or by phone (281-485-2843). No one is signed up after May. Thank you to all those who have already brought a meal. Here is a recipe for the Santa Fe soup that Bryan brought. ♦

SANTA FE SOUP

This recipe is provided by Jean and Bryan Leach after requests at the April meeting supper. Makes 10-12 servings

2 lbs. ground beef	1 onion (chopped)
2 packages ranch dressing	2 packages taco seasoning mix
1 can black beans	1 can kidney beans
1 can pinto beans	1 can diced tomato's with chilies
1 can stewed tomato's	1 can white corn
2 cups water	Sour Cream
Cheddar cheese (shredded)	green onions (diced)
1 package tortilla chips	



Cook ground beef until browned. Add onions and cook for 5 to 10 minutes. Drain fat, if any. Add ranch dressing, taco mix to meat, stir well. Add remaining ingredients undrained and water. Simmer for 2 hours.

Serve with tortilla chips, garnish with sour cream, shredded cheese and green onions.

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←
SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2006, 5:30 PM
CONTINUING EDUCATION AT 5:15 PM



REGULAR VOLUNTEER EVENTS

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Creekfield Hikes | Every Saturday and Sunday at 11:00 AM, led by volunteers (10:00 AM, June thru September) |
| Photo Hikes | First Saturday of each month |
| Volunteer meeting | Second Saturday of each month at 5:30 PM |
| Bird Hikes | See schedule in calendar |

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.

**BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK
VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION**

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| President: | Judy Strauss |
| Vice-President: | Anna Dell Williamson |
| Secretary: | Bruce Williamson |
| Treasurer: | John Bradford |

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@houston.rr.com). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.

NEWSLETTER TEAM

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
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