



VOLUME 19, NUMBER 8

AUGUST 2007

JULY MEETING NOTES

reported by Beth Debenport

Vice-President Chuck Duplant called the July 14 meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. There were fifteen volunteers and tree staff members present.

Ken Debenport brought the **Treasurer's Report** for the month of June 2007. (See Financial report for complete information.) The budget report was projected on the screen and discussed.

The following **budget requests** were presented and approved:

- ◆ Steve Killian requested that the pole saw that he has already purchased be taken out of volunteer money instead of his account.
- ◆ Bryan Leach requested that a pole saw be purchased for our maintenance crew to use.
- ◆ David Heinicke requested money to purchase a Frigidaire air conditioner and heater for the naturalist office. The air conditioner that is presently in the office came from the old fee booth at headquarters when the park was just opened.
- ◆ David Heinicke requested money to purchase 40 florescent bulbs for the nature center to replace old bulbs.
- ◆ Steve Killian requested money to purchase 5 gallons of "Remedy" Herbicide to spray the prairie.
- ◆ Steve Killian requested money for a 32" flat panel television to be mounted on the wall at headquarters. Each week a new CD would show visitors what was happening in the park that week.

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Gift Shop Report - Beth Debenport reported that the gift shop was in a slow part of the year. Thanks to everybody who has been volunteering in the shop.

Judy Strauss gave a report on **Willie Anderson**. She encouraged everybody to keep sending cards. He has been moved to a rehab hospital.

Old Business

Glen Kilgore will be the chairman for the **nominating committee** to find a slate of officers for year beginning October 1, 2007

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



At this time of year, the BBSP Volunteer Organization (VO) focuses on nominating and electing officers to handle the everyday business of the VO. Since I have announced that I will not seek reelection this year, that puts the nomination process into a more important role than the typical off election year. However, leadership in our VO is not limited to the elected officers.

In addition to the several standing committee chairpersons, we rely on having an expanding group of volunteers who take on extra responsibilities wherever they find them. We have been very fortunate over the years to have such people in our organization. A significant number of the newer volunteers have quietly accepted these responsibilities as well. They outnumber the elected officers by two or three to one, and possibly more.

I suggest that you seek out a few of your friends in the VO who are practicing this type of commitment and tell them "Thank you." Look for opportunities to let your star shine, as well. Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time and talents this year to making the BBSPVO the great organization we all know it to be: an opportunity to serve the park and the visiting public as well as enjoy the natural setting in the company of like minded good friends.

Bruce Williamson



STAFF REPORTS

STEVE KILLIAN

Steve Killian reported that he and Dennis Jones had spent a lot of their time watching the Brazos River for **flooding**. We did not get as much water in the park as in 2004. At a meeting Steve Killian attended, he was told that the Corps of Engineers had made a diversion channel to help with run off that usually goes into Big Creek. Sharon Hanzik stated that the slough had been full at the time of the 2004 flood. This time it was low and could take a lot of water. The maintenance crew is continuing work on the lakes and prairies to try to keep them under control.



DAVID HEINICKE

David Heinicke reported that the plexiglass top to the **new alligator display** is ready to be picked up. He will continue work on it after his vacation. He will be gone the last of July and first two weeks in August.



David and Sharon are proposing that we keep **Creekfield Hike** at 10:00 a.m. all year round instead of going back to 11:00 a.m. for the fall and winter months. This will be voted on at the August meeting.

SHARON HANZIK



Sharon Hanzik reported that the next VIT training sessions will be September 8, 15, and 21. She is beginning to interview applicants. October 13 will be the picnic. Diane Carpenter has been contacting local convention, visitor bureau, and chambers of commerce about the change in our web page address. Some of the publications had recently gone to press with the old address. We may have to retain our old address for another year to give them time to put out our new web address.

JUNIOR VOLUNTEER TRAINING

by Staci Hobbet

Our volunteer corps now has five junior VIT's working toward accreditation after a single, all-day training class on August 4, BBSP's first such for kids. Anna Dell Williamson interviewed applicants for a small, personalized class, and admitted five children from two families: **James** (12), **Joseph** (11), and **Molly** (8) Watson; and **Mallory** and **Madeline** Warren, who are ten-year old twins. The Warren girls were accompanied by their mom, **Lisa Warren**, and the Watson kids by both parents, **Rachelle** and **Brian Watson**. Mr. And Mrs. Watson and their oldest son, James, will also go through the adult training class in September.

Anna Dell kept the class informal by way of a round-table discussion. She was joined by several BBSP volunteers and staff members who helped her introduce the kids to the basics: **Jeff Orsak, Sharon Hanzik, Ron Morrison, Ken and Beth Debenport, James Blankenship, Glen Kilgore, and Staci Hobbet**. Topics included: Why we have state parks; rules and regulations; what volunteers do, and how they dress and behave. The kids also heard – and participated in – short discussions of wood yard work, maintenance jobs, trail interpretation, and programs. After a lunch break, they and their parents walked around Creekfield Lake to get some specific pointers on trail interpretation with **Anna Dell, Staci, Glen, and Ron**. A road tour of the park was next on the agenda, led by **Anna Dell, James, and Ken**, and then the trainees got to sit in on **Tom Prentiss'** alligator program in the Nature Center.

To wrap up the day, **Sharon Hanzik** briefed the group on hands-on training requirements. As in the adult training course, the kids must spend a certain number of hours performing set tasks at the park. An additional requirement for them is that they must always be accompanied by an adult.

Anna Dell has put together a list of volunteers willing to act as **resources** for our JR VIT'S as they work toward earning their caps. If you're not on that list but would like to be, contact Anna Dell at awilliamson4@comcast.net.



CREEKFIELD HIKE PROPOSED TIME CHANGE

We are considering keeping the Creekfield Hike at 10:00 year round for several reasons: There are plenty of visitors up and moving about by 10:00, wildlife is more active, and it does not cut into lunch time for anyone, visitors or staff. A vote will be taken at the August meeting

NATURE CENTER REPORT JULY, 2007

Here is a breakdown of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for July 1-31 Hot weather, lots of rain and lower visitation are reflected in the numbers. Numbers come from the calendar in the Nature Center and may not reflect all activities. Be sure to report Nature Center visitation on the calendar, and attendance for all programs and hikes on the form on the clipboard next to the calendar behind the front desk. The form asks for the date, name of program, presenter, type of program, and total number of visitors, plus a breakdown of the approximate number of adults and of children at the program.

	PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER Total for July 2007: 2825 Total for July 2006: 3339	SATURDAYS (4)	1040 - High, 299, 7/7
	SUNDAYS (5)	746 - High, 199, 7/8
	WEEKDAYS (22)	1039 - High, 234, 7/3
	CREEKFIELD HIKES (5 days)	52 - High, 21, 7/7
	ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (4)	79
	BBSP PROGRAMS (2)	24
	SNAKE/REPTILE PROGRAMS (2)	81
	CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (4)	44
	OTHER PROGRAMS (8) includes pond life, photo, bird, puppet, and turtle programs	67

JUST FOR GRINS



How is it one careless match can start a forest fire, but it takes a whole box to start a campfire?

Garden Rule: When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.



JULY MAINTENANCE REPORT

by Bryan Leach

Wood Yard:

Hauled a Kubota load of cut wood to the wood yard, split wood, tied wood, delivered tied wood to the wood racks in both camping loops
Cleaned up the wood yard

Mowing and Landscaping:

Worked in the flower beds around the Nature Center
Cut down, removed and treated several Chinese Tallow trees on the roadway by the wood yard, across from the restroom for the 100 camping loop, at Hale Lake from the fishing pier westward and treated around 200 Tallow Trees, using Tordon 22K, from the wood yard to the creek and bordering the power line easement
Cleaned up many downed limbs around the Primitive Equestrian Campground
Assisted Park Staff with a downed tree off the side of the road by 40 Acre Lake
Removed overhanging limbs and vines off the Amphitheater viewing screen
Cut up and removed a downed limb at the Hale Lake picnic area
Removed hanging limbs and vines at a handicap parking spot at the Nature Center parking lot
Assisted Park Staff in the removal of a large downed Oak Tree across the trail by the Horseshoes

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Started and finished trimming the 1.8 mile Riverview Trail and started trimming the Bluestem Trail
Removed downed trees off the Red Buckeye Trail and off the Creekfield ADA Trail
Removed limbs and sticks off the Creekfield ADA Trail

Equipment Maintenance:

Changed the engine oil and filter, transmission fluid and both filters, greased and replaced the air filter on the K2 Kubota
Changed the engine oil and greased the 07 Gator, twice, and changed the engine oil and greased the 06 Gator
Rebuilt and installed the front drive shaft cover on the Tractor front wheel drive unit

General Maintenance:

Removed and installed an air conditioner in the office at the Nature Center

Pest Control:

Treated the Creekfield ADA Trail, around Headquarters, the Overflow Camping area, Elm Lake Trail and the two Residences with Fire Ant bait

Thanks

- ☺ to **Beth Debenport** for taking the minutes for the July meeting.
- ☺ to, **Sharon Hanzik, David Heinicke, Staci Hobbet, Dennis Jones, Bryan Leach, Ron Morrison and Jerry Zona** for articles and/or pictures for the newsletter
- ☺ to **James Blankenship, Beth and Ken Debenport, Sharon Hanzik, Staci Hobbet, Glen Kilgore, Ron Morrison, Jeff Orsak, and Tom Prentiss** for help with the Junior Volunteer training.



BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Tom Draper Frank Seay
Eddy Grizzaffi Rob Thacker

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

Ray and Dana Anderson
Jim and Lorna Calvert
Ken and Beth Debenport
Ron Morrison
Laszlo and Lexi Perlaky
Frank and Stacey Seay
Ronn and Mona Washington
Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Jim Calvert
Ron Dearman
Frank Gregg
Linda Oden Heinicke

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

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

VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

There are a lot of events coming up where you will have an opportunity to volunteer and make a difference. Please contact the person in charge if you will be available to help.

Water-Wise Kids

Saturday, August 11

9:00 - 11:00 - Walk Through the Water Cycle (game, outdoors) (Mallory and volunteers)
11:30 - 12:15 - Wetland Metaphors / Conservation Demonstration (indoors, Sharon)
1:00 - 3:00 - Pond Life Demonstration - (Glen Kilgore and volunteers, indoors)
The event will take the place of regularly scheduled programs.

Girl Scout Troop Leader Park Orientation

Saturday, August 25

9:00 - 10:30 - Intro to Park: activities and facilities, including nature center tour.
10:30 - 12:00 - Hike around 40-Acre Lake.
If you would like to assist, please contact volunteer Carrie Sample.

Fall Training

Saturdays, September 8, 15, 22

We have 14 potential volunteers for fall training. We need volunteers to serve as mentors for the VIT's and to assist with hands-on training. If you are willing to be a mentor or a resource person for VIT's or to assist with training in any way, please contact Anna Dell Williamson. If your name is already on the resource list, it will stay there unless you ask for it to be removed. Thank you for your support of our training program.

Fort Bend Museum's Fiestas Patrias Event

Saturday, September 15

In Richmond

Sharon will be off the weekend of **September 29 and 30**. Help with programs will be greatly appreciated.

Brazos River Pickers: They're back the **first Saturday** of the month, October through April.

TPWD Wildlife Expo in Austin

Saturday and Sunday, October 6 and 7

For the 16th year TPWD will hosts its outdoor expo on the headquarters grounds in Austin. **Sharon** will be making the journey this year. We are combined with other parks in our region under a portion of a very large tent. Sharon will travel there on Friday, October 5, for unloading and minor set up. The event is scheduled from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM both Saturday and Sunday and she will need help. If you would like to help please let her know. No overnight stay is necessary; however, we can get you a state rate at certain hotels or you can camp at a nearby park.

If there is enough help, everyone gets a chance to take a break from the booth and enjoy the event. Sunday morning is the slowest time. Saturday is the busiest. Work two shifts or as long as you like. We are always very popular, so three people at a time is ideal. Sharon will need to know as soon as possible as t-shirts are provided and need to be ordered. It's just like any other outreach event: snakes, gators, touchables and simple interactive activities and informing thousands of people about our park. A free banquet dinner is provided on site Saturday evening. Hope you can make it! For details visit tpwd.state.tx.us

VOLUNTEER PICNIC

Saturday, October 13

At the Dining Hall. Pot Luck.

Would you like to honor one or more of your fellow volunteers? Now's the time. Gag-awards are always fun, or you can keep it formal. Speeches and comments from the floor are always welcome.

Astronomy Day at the George Observatory

Saturday, October 20

Event starts in the early afternoon.

Classic Comedy Halloween

Saturday, October 27

Third Annual movie night at the amphitheater - "Arsenic and Old Lace" - a Cary Grant classic.

A Simple Christmas

Saturday, December 1

Annual event the **first Saturday in December**.

VISITOR COMMENTS

What keeps you coming back?

- "The Awesomeness!"
- "The alligators and all the cool stuff you can learn."
- "The animals you can touch."
- "Animals, staff, beautifully kept park, deer, friendly folk"
- "beautiful park, great info, love the gators"
- "volunteers, trails, clean sites"
- "It's fun."
- "The great adventure that I had."
- "The camping and the artifacts."

Comments

- "This place is awesome. Bogigidy Dawg this place is gnarly!"
- "I love this place. Maybe when I get older I might work here."
- "I think this was the best field trip ever."
- "This has been the best activity we've done since moving to TX. Thanks for your hard work!!!"
- Your volunteers are amazing!!! The washrooms/showers need help."
- "A lot of people were friendly and I enjoyed it a lot."
- "Great place for kids to learn."
- "It is a great program."

WE GET LETTERS

Dear Naturalists,



We visited the park today and were totally surprised at how wonderful it looked. Granted there has been a boat load of rain in the last few months, but the difference in the open passages for the water was incredible. We have been visiting the park at least once a year for the past 15 years and have seen it's sad decline and overgrowth.

Today we saw openness that had been closed off with flora choking the waterways before. On the tower off of our favorite trail... we saw beautiful ponds/lakes with water flowers and grasses that now stand out and invite the eyes to marvel at their impact on the surrounding area.

We talked with a volunteer on one path and he told of us of the new direction that the park is taking. Well, that direction is working. "The proof is in the pudding." Perhaps even all of those alligators that we saw today would agree that the change is for the better for them and the environment!

Keep up to wonderful work!!! It was a great pleasure to see and experience the refreshing change in "atmosphere" in the park.

Sincerely, R. Fortier
Houston, TX *(submitted by e-mail on July 8, 2007)*

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

by Sharon Hanzik

We need help! To those of you who have been able to help us out - THANK YOU! Yes, I know summer is slow but we're still open and **we still have visitors**. It's a time when you can actually have a chance to spend a little more time with each visitor, hear their questions and your answers.

Water at the stations is even more critical during the summer months, and someone patrolling the trails is very necessary. People still come for **Creekfield Hikes**, and you'll have a nice little group instead of an unruly mob - and you really only need to spend an hour this time of year - 10:00. Some campers still want a **campfire**, believe it or not!

It's a long day for anyone who must work every shift in the gift shop and nature center. Please sign up for something if you can. We cannot support the program without your help. Anything you can do is greatly appreciated!

VOLUNTEER TIME SHEETS

by Sharon Hanzik

- PLEASE TOTAL YOUR TIME SHEETS. More and more volunteers are not doing so and each month it is taking me longer to finish the report.
- Please do not write anything but numbers. Descriptions are not necessary.
- All firewood hours should be recorded as such, not maintenance. This includes all phases of firewood production and distribution.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

BIRD HIKE INFORMATION

sent by Bill Godley

Bill Godley and **David Heinicke** will be leading bird hikes for the public every month on Fridays and Sundays at 8:00 AM. They have been doing this for many years and are looking for others to share in the pleasure. If you are interested in birding, meet with them at the 40-Acre restroom building and attend a couple of their hikes to pick up ideas on how to lead a hike. Then volunteer to cover when they have to be absent. The tentative dates, to be confirmed this month, follow.

Oct. 26
Nov. 16 and 18
Dec. 7 and 9
Jan. 11 and 13
Feb. 8 and 10

Mar. 14 and 16
Apr. 4 and 6
May 9 and 11
June 6

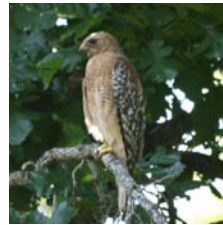
Saturday evening hikes to the Observation Tower will be held December 8, 29 and January 19 at 5:00 PM.



Black-necked Stilt
Jerry Zona



Anhinga, J. Zona



Hawk, J. Zona



Yellow-crowned
Night Heron
B. Leach

HUMMINGBIRD NEST

by David Heinicke

You just never know what the day will bring.....

Slow, warm and rainy was the best way to describe Sunday, July 1, but these are the days that seem to reward those who venture out to the park. Early in the afternoon a camper in site 201 stopped Ken and James to report a Hummingbird nest in her site. Ken and James checked it out, and the word began to spread. It appears to be a female Ruby-Throated Hummingbird sitting on eggs. She spent most of her time on the nest and since there were no chicks to be seen we assume that she is incubating eggs.

By 5:30 that afternoon, Greg Lavity had arrived at the site (he seems to have a radar for these "photographable" events) and captured the picture below. In the coming weeks we can set up the spotting scope down there (careful not to invade the privacy of the guests in site 201) and watch the hummingbird family grow (hopefully). When we spot chicks in the nest we are going to set up a large ladder in an area that will allow Greg Lavity to photograph the activity without bothering the birds.

Hummingbirds normally lay 2 eggs, Incubation time is about 2 weeks and another 3 weeks before the little guys are ready to fly. No doubt they'll be more updates to come. Enjoy. Thanks for the pictures Greg!



GATHERING ALLIGATOR EGGS

by Sharon Hanzik

Ranger **Jeff Orsak**, Intern **Mallory Curl** and I went out on Elm Lake August 1 and collected 32 eggs from a nest on an island on the west end, not visible from the trail. Two eggs were already destroyed, so we are incubating 30 in the garage at the nature center. The eggs look fully developed (all white) so it could be just a matter of weeks (hope so!) Mom didn't give us much trouble. Jeff kept the motor running and this deterred her. Good thing, as she was about seven or eight feet long. The nest was full of fire ants so the babies would not have hatched and lived.

RAIN, RAIN, RAIN

by Staci Hobbet

As July came to a close, the National Weather Service ranked it as the ninth rainiest July in the Houston-Galveston area since 1889, when the first full year of data was collected. The region has been wet since last October, when heavy rains brought an instant autumn to the Upper Texas Coast. What has it meant for the wildlife of the coastal prairie?

David Heinicke sees good and bad effects, and the best and the worst both have to do with invasive species.

The best? "A lot of young Chinese tallow trees are drowning," he says, smiling.

The worst? His smile fades. "Rain helps fire ants spread."

It's ark-building the quick way: The ants pile together in a raft and float safely away to higher ground. This remarkable adaptation has allowed fire ants to travel far and fast in the United States since their accidental introduction in the early years of the last century. It's thought that they arrived from South America in soil used as ships' ballast. At BBSP, they often quickly re-colonize areas that have been carefully, methodically cleared by the park's volunteer fire-ant team, manned largely by Ron Morrison and Jim Calvert. And woe to the flood victim swimming for his life, says David, if he happens upon one of these ant arks in the water. They climb aboard and swarm.

Al Childs, who headed a BBSP Volunteer research team, monitors some of the fragments of coastal prairie at the park. As he prepared for a regular check in late June, he expected to find his transects flooded. Instead, "...conditions were so dry that I was actually able to drive a Gator up to both of the transect poles without getting wet or stuck in mud," he says. "While I was in the process of removing the transect poles, I noticed that even though the surface of the ground appeared to be very dry, in many places it was extremely wet just a few inches below the surface."

For Childs, this was an illustration in microcosm of the way that the historical prairie worked as a vast sponge to protect our area from major flooding. "...the grass roots hold the soil and water together and release the water very slowly," he says.

Giving weight to the old complaint that this is good weather for a duck, David Lobpries, a Natural Resource Specialist for TPWD in Rosenberg, reports that the Texas coast's three nesting ducks are doing well this season. The Black-bellied Whistling duck, Mottled duck, and Fulvous Whistling Duck have found lots of water and cover for their nests. Blue-winged Teal are also nesting in the coastal prairie this summer. "They usually go farther north to nest," he says, but the damp conditions this year have kept them local.

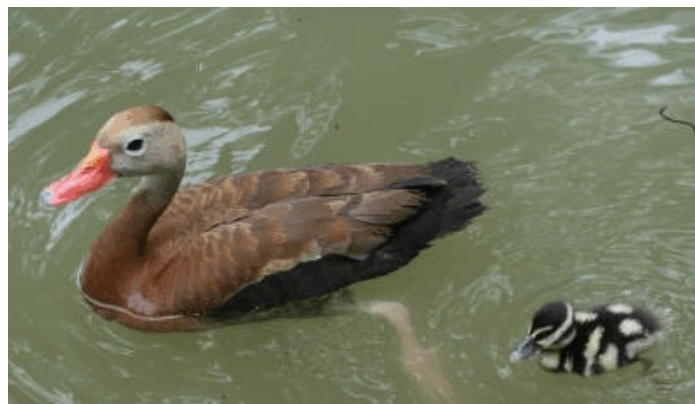
The lush growth of grasses has also benefitted deer, which prefer heavy cover, he says. At the same time, the high water levels in our rivers and creeks are driving some animals out of the drainage areas: raccoons, armadillo -- and deer. It's a temporary situation, Lobpries says, reporting that he'd just received

a call from a woman living near a waterway. She'd just found a young fawn in her yard.

For Bobwhite, the rains are "untimely," he says. This ground-nesting bird, already in serious trouble statewide due to habitat loss and infestations of fire ants, "needs optimum conditions, not too wet and not too dry." Could the rains deeply impact populations? "Locally, yes," he says. "But we hope they'll recover."



Black-bellied Whistling Ducks at BBSP
Randall Hobbet



Whistling duck with Baby
J. Zona

MUD SNAKE COMES WITH MYTHS ATTACHED AND A SPINY TAIL

by Staci Hobbet

Remember that sudden grip of dread you felt as a kid when your feet sank into the ooze at the bottom of a pond or lake? Any second a tentacle was going to twirl around your ankle and down you'd go, kicking and screaming. Few of us ever see what really inhabits the thick cool mud in and around the boggy waterways of the Upper Texas Coast. But one resident surfaced in early July at Brazos Bend State Park: a Mud Snake, *Farancia abacura*.

Park Naturalist David Heinicke was driving to the Nature Center at the heart of the Park when he saw a Camp Host pulled onto the shoulder. The man had accidentally run over a snake. It lay writhing on the pavement. David stopped and eased the conscience of the man -- these things happen. Meanwhile, the snake died.

"I went to flick it off the road so that whatever came along to eat it wouldn't get run over too," David said, "and it zoomed down the road."

He pursued it, grabbed it, and the snake went limp again, as if it had expired once more. No fool twice, David held on. He could see no external damage from the accident, so he took it to the Nature Center and installed it in a terrarium for observation. It isn't a snake he thinks he can keep long. Unlike most of the snakes in the Park, which aren't fussy about dinner, the Mud Snake preys mainly upon sirens and other aquatic salamanders, as well as frogs and toads. It's not likely to be tempted by the dead mice that make up the menu at the Nature Center, although one expert he spoke to suggested that he try rubbing a dead

mouse along the sides of the captive siren at the Nature Center. "It might smell like a siren then."

The Mud Snake averages about three to four feet long in adulthood. A glossy black on its dorsal side, its belly is checkered with coral. It has a notable tail: it bears a slender spine. Its purpose is controversial, largely because there have been so few studies of the snake's natural history. It's just too hard to observe. In American folklore, the spine was thought to be highly venomous, and that the snake was as likely to jab you with its tail as bite you. Another myth, explaining the colloquial name 'hoop snake' imagines the snake rolling onto land like an animate bicycle wheel, its spiny tail inserted into its mouth so it can give chase to human prey. When it's closing in, it transforms itself into a javelin and tosses itself at you, tail first. There was a lot of bad whiskey around in pioneer times.

Modern researchers have their own theories, none of them proven. One is that the spine is used to steady that slippery diet of salamanders for easier swallowing. Another, one David finds plausible, is that the snake probes in the mud with it, hoping to score a meaty siren.

The Mud Snake is thought to be nocturnal, but whether they're active in the day or the night, you're not likely to see them. They're where the food is, burrowing in the mud. David reports that a live Mud Snake is rarely ever seen at the Park. But it's not unusual to find dead ones on the trail or hanging in a tree with an impaling wound. His theory for this singular observation: Mud Snakes don't taste very good. The wound is evidence of predation, but after one bite – or is it the smell? – the heron or egret or owl abandons the meal.

The female Mud Snake lays her eggs in a cavity below ground and near water in the late summer. Unlike almost all other snake species worldwide, she may remain with the eggs while they incubate, a period of about 12 week. The young hatch in the fall.

David plans to keep the snake around until about mid July, he said, and he may keep it longer if he can persuade it to eat. It's not on display at the Nature Center, but ask David to show it to you if you'd like to set eyes on a snake you may never see otherwise.



Western Mud Snake
J. Zona

Sources: Texas Snakes, Identification, Distribution, and Natural History, by John E., Werler, James R. Dixon, University of Texas Press.

<http://museum.nhm.uga.edu/gawildlife/reptiles/squamata/serpentes/colubridae/fabacura.html>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug. 7	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Sept. 8	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM, Election
Aug. 9	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Sept. 11	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Aug. 11	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM	Sept. 13	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Aug. 14	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Sept. 18	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Aug. 16	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Sept. 20	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Aug. 21	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Sept. 25	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Aug. 23	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Sept.. 27	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Aug. 28	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Oct. 2	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Aug. 30	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Oct. 4	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Sept 1	Photo-walk, Amphibian, Reptile, 5:00 PM	Oct. 6	Photo-walk, Birds #3, 5:00 PM
Sept 4	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Oct. 9	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
Sept. 6	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM	Oct. 11	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM

PLAYING POSSUM

Have you ever been so scared that you couldn't run away?
That's how the little possum feels when danger comes her way.

If there is no tree to climb, no place to run and hide
The possum will defend herself by lying on her side!

She lays there on the ground and stares with open eyes.
She cannot move her body, however hard she tries!

Coyote likes to catch his food. To him it's so much fun!
But now the possum's lying there. She won't get up and run.

He sniffs and pokes to make her move and finish up the chase.
All he gets from possum is the blank stare of her face!

Possum doesn't feel a thing, she cannot even think.
She cannot make a twitch from her little nose so pink!

Coyote doesn't understand, he thinks the possum's dead.
He'd rather have fresh meat to eat and thinks he won't get fed.

Away he goes into the woods to follow another trail.
He soon forgets his hunger and starts to chase his tail!

The possum slowly awakens and has a look around.
She sniffs the air and listens for any danger sound.

The forest is now quiet, the danger has all passed.
The possum stretches out her legs and moves along at last!



Ten Facts about Possums

1. North America's only marsupial
2. Approximately 15-20" long and approximately 9-13 lbs.
3. 50 teeth! More than any land mammal in N.A.
4. Up to 14 babies per litter. Sometimes 2 litters per year.
5. Entire litter can fit in a teaspoon.
6. Gestation in pouch 2 months.
7. Babies don't fall out because they lock on to nipple until large enough to navigate on their own.
8. Only babies can hang from tail. Adults too heavy.
9. Prehensile tail can be substitute for another limb.
10. "Playing possum" is an uncontrolled defense mechanism set off by fear when animal is unable to escape. Comatose state eventually wears off.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

BBSPVO ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS

AT THE SEPTEMBER 8 MEETING

*CONTACT GLEN KILGORE IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN RUNNING FOR OFFICE
NOMINATIONS ANNOUNCED AT THE AUGUST 11 MEETING*

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

→NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME←
SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2007, 5:30 PM



REGULAR VOLUNTEER EVENTS

- Creekfield Hikes Every Saturday and Sunday at 10:00 AM, led by volunteers
- Photo Hikes First Saturday of each month
- Volunteer meeting Second Saturday of each month at 5:30 PM
- Bird Hikes See schedule in calendar or website

**BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK
VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION**

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

- President:** Bruce Williamson
- Vice-President:** Anna Dell Williamson
- Secretary:** Nicole Olson
- Treasurer:** Chuck Duplant

NEWSLETTER TEAM

- Editor** Anna Dell Williamson
- Production Assistants** Bruce Williamson
Terry Williamson

The Brazos Bend Bunch Bugle is the newsletter of the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization, A.K.A. The Brazos Bend Bunch. It is distributed monthly to volunteers through the BBSPVO web site. For further information on this newsletter or the volunteer program, contact David Heinicke or Sharon Hanzik at Brazos Bend State Park, phone 979-553-5101.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the opinions of the author of the article and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization nor of BBSP administration. The deadline for Newsletter contributions is the Saturday following the monthly meeting, if mailed to Anna Dell Williamson, or at the meeting if delivered to the park. (E-mail address: awilliamson4@comcast.net). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.

**BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK
VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION
ANNUAL POT-LUCK PICNIC
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 5:30 PM
BANQUET HALL**