



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 12

DECEMBER 2009

T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS AT BRAZOS BEND

By David Heinicke

T'was the night before Christmas at Brazos Bend Park,
all the creatures were stirring, soon after dark.
The Gators were nestled, all snug in their dens,
to avoid foul weather and December's cold winds,
With the fire getting low and just about out,
I slid into my bag, and quickly passed out.
When up from the creek there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my tent to see what was the matter.



Off toward the creek, I started to hike,
Through the bushes and briars and brambles like.
By the light of the moon, I could see where to go,
It lit up an object, in the creek down below,
I saw what it was with a lump in my throat,
It was eight alligators, pulling a flat bottom boat,
With a jolly fat man in red overalls,
I knew in an instant it was old Santa Claus.

More rapid than otters, his gators they came,
And he whistled and hollered and called them by name,
"Now Stimpie, Now Stumpie, Now Bumpie, and Cruiser,
On Tanker, On Tonka, On Bonker, and Bruiser,
To the edge of the creek and on up the draw,
Pull it up, Pull it up, Pull it up, Ye Haw!!".
So up to the campsite, making all sorts of noise,
Came old Santa Claus, with a boat full of toys.



He was dressed all in red, with a big cowboy hat,
 and mud on his pants that had splattered and splat,
 The beard on his chin was as white as a goose,
 And his tummy so fat, t'was bout to bust loose.
 He set out the toys by the light of the moon,
 Why, I think he even had toys for the coons,
 He put out some toys in each campsite,
 Then off to the next one, in the dark of night.



He finished most quickly, all 90 campsites,
 By the time he returned, his bag was quite light.
 He jumped in his boat and called to his gators,
 Smiled back at me and yelled, "See ya'll later,
 I've got a busy night, with many stops to make,
 So I better keep moving, cross river and lake",
 But I heard him holler as he floated away,
 "Merry Christmas to all, and enjoy your stay".

NOVEMBER MEETING NOTES

President **Carrie Sample** called the meeting to order November 14, 2009. There were 11 Volunteers, 4 VIT's, 3 Junior Volunteers, and 2 staff members present. Minutes were approved as posted.

Steve Killian and Sharon Hanzik brought their reports. See elsewhere in the newsletter.

BUDGET: **Dave Armstrong** brought the budget report. The sundial finished under budget

Budget Requests: The following budget requests were approved.

Steve Killian requested funds for herbicides for the prairies and lakes for resource management.

Sharon Hanzik requested an event banner for Simple Christmas. The banner will be reuseable, with no specific date on it, just "First Saturday in December".

David Heinicke requested a new 3 ft. x 5 ft. commercial grade entrance mat for the Nature Center. The old one is at least 10 years old and a new one is really needed.

Gift Shop: **Beth Debenport** that we had good sales today. We're ordering items and restocking as needed. Inventory will be during the hunt in December.

Maintenance Report: **Bruce Williamson** reported that the vehicles are getting the proper maintenance: When the odometer registers 50 hours, take the vehicle to maintenance, write service needed on paper, stick the key into the paper and put the key in the ignition. This is a very good arrangement to get things done.

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Outreach: Judy Strauss reported that the Texian Market days had 2,740 people on Friday from 10-2 PM and 1,740 general public on Saturday 8:30-5 PM. She thanked all those who helped. Next March we have the Brazoria Heritage event.

Wood Yard: Chuck Duplant reported that wood sales have an 88% return which isn't bad. We've bundled 5 cords and split 7 cords. Hopefully sales will increase. Five cords of wood is on hold to purchase. We bought several tarps to cover wood.

Volunteer in Training

Anna Dell Williamson reported that everyone is almost finished with Phase I. Four of the six VIT's are here at the meeting.

Memorial for Fletcher Morgan: A memorial fund has been set up for Fletcher. Turn in your contributions to Dave Armstrong. There was discussion for ideas for the memorial.. An international flag display was discussed. This will be turned over to the memorial chairperson, Cindy Peterson. Contact her with suggestions.

We were happy to see **Carol Ramsayer** at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

STAFF REPORTS

STEVE KILLIAN

Justin Rhodes and Steve Killian have written letters to Texas Parks and Wildlife concerning the Elm Lake viewing platform, saying that all are committed and will move forward. The regional office has donated funds for the site survey and infrastructure, and the start date should be within 6 months to a year. Natural Resources have granted their approval, so there are no major roadblocks.

The Deer Hunt is scheduled for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, November 17-19, for thirty-five deer, then an additional thirty-five deer in December.

The lake and prairie spraying goes on and can never end here.

There have been some staff changes recently. Melissa Moody is the new Assistant Office Manager at Headquarters, and a new hourly clerk for 3-days a week starts in January. Chris Bishop, new Assistant Manager, will arrive here in late November. His start date is December 1. He will start law-enforcement school next fall. He has a strong background in interpretation and resource management.

Host Bobby Moore has made a new bench for Headquarters out of the leaning tree, which was saved by Bob Singleton. The Clevis-Multrum toilet seat is almost fixed. The Yellowstone landing trail signage has been completed and shipped. It has both a safety and a historical component. A portion of the Horseshoe levee has been covered with jute, and help is needed to complete covering the rest of the back side of the levee.

We were reminded to wear good shoes, no sandals, when in the park. A host wearing flipflops, was bitten by a copperhead at the campsite.. She is doing fine now. Out of over 6,000,000 visitors, we have had only 25-50 snake bites.

The Maintenance staff is working closely with the volunteers and developing good relationships.

SHARON HANZIK

Welcome to VIT's: Ric Rincon, Nancy Lynn Jones, Cynthia Morales and Elizabeth Villanueva.. The park entry passes are ready to pick up in the lounge for those who gave Sharon their car license numbers.. Those who haven't already submitted their license plate numbers will need to contact Headquarters now.

The San Jacinto Monument trip was very informative. Eight members attended. There is a hard-hat tour scheduled soon that should be interesting.

In January 2010 we will go to Moody Gardens for a tour behind the scenes.

Prairie Heritage Day, sponsored by the Master Naturalists, was a big success. The Nature Center and the outside booth count were 2,156 total.

The Johnston Middle School field trip is December 1, and we need help. Fridays and Saturdays are crazy in the Nature Center this time of year. We are not open Thanksgiving Day but the Wednesday before and the Friday after, we'll be open 9-5. We expect a very busy Saturday. David and Sharon are helping at Headquarters in the mornings until the new Assistant is on board, and won't be in the Nature Center early.

Simple Christmas is on the Event Calendar. The annual Christmas bird count is December 19. Our contact person is Bill Godley. The volunteer application is on the web. The deadline is November 30.

Thank you so very much, we can't do without you!

MAINTENANCE REPORT

by Ron Morrison

Wood Yard:

Split 3 cord wood and did some cleanup work around the wood yard

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Cleared 8 blow downs limbs from the Creekfield Forest, Red Buckeye and Live Oak trails

Trimmed a portion of the Creekfield Lake Trail

Added trail material to the bridge edges on 40 Acre Lake, Elm Lake & Pilate slough trails

Equipment Maintenance:

Replaced the broken battery on the 06 Gator with a new one

Repaired the tailgate on the Gator

Repaired a broken sprocket, bar adjuster and lost screw on the Stihl 044 Chain Saw

Took the 06 Gator, Stihl MS260 Chain Saw, and the Wood Splitter to maintenance for service

Changed the oil in the 07 Gator

Took the dump bed off of the Kubota so it could be straightened out and reinforced with angle iron

Sharpened 8 chain saw blades

General Maintenance

Rebuilt and installed a bench on Hoots Hollow Trail

Repaired the "Doggie Water Station" at 40 Acre Lake Observation Tower

Repaired the gate at the wood yard

Pest Control:

Treated the Nature Center, 100 Loop, 200 Loop, Shelters, 40 Acre & Hale Lake Picnic grounds, Wood Yard, Maintenance, Residences, Creekfield Lake, Elm Lake and 40 Acre Lake trails for fire ants

VOLUNTEER NEWS & NOTES

Thank You!

to volunteers who participated with the outdoor booth and those who covered the Nature Center on **Prairie Heritage Day**, November 7, and to **Jennifer** and **Curtis Parent** for patrolling the trails.

to all who helped with **Simple Christmas**, December 5:

James and **Karla Eilbeck** for Dutch oven cooking demonstrations; **Dennis Jones** for first person interpretation; **Lawrence Folsie** for Santa Claus

Many of you volunteered in more than one area and I could not keep up with you!

Nancy Lynn Jones (VIT), **Nancy and Jennet Bertmeyer**, **Judy Strauss**, **Terri Lucky** (Judy's daughter who helped with face painting), **Beth Debenport**, **Connie Waltrip**, **Diane Carpenter**, **Jerry Carpenter**, **Glen Kilgore**, **Mary Lockwood**, **Jane Minard**, **Justin Bower** (VIT), **Offie Walker**, **Ric Rincon** (VIT), **Joan Hebert**, **Suzie Gann**, **Diane Kerr**, **Jaci Elliott**, **Dawn Tejero**, **Bruce Williamson**, **Linda Heinicke**, **Ron Dearman**, **Rachelle**, **Brian**, **Joseph**, **Molly** and **James Watson**, **Pam Tatge**, **Eddy Grizzaffi**, **Terry & Kim Dankert** (Park Hosts), **Tom & Jo Anne Budzik** (Park Hosts), **Jeff Orsak** (Ranger - hayride driver), **Chris Bishop** (Assistant Manager - hayride driver)

to those who held down the fort with everyday operations during **Simple Christmas**:

Sid Jones, **Ron Dearman**, **Eddy Grizzaffi**, **Beth Debenport**, **Jerry Carpenter**, **Bruce Williamson**, **Offie Walker**

to all who send photos for the newsletter: **Sharon Hanzik**, **Judy Strauss**, **Steve Killian**, **Joan Hebert**, **Chuck Duplant**, **Rich Dashnau**, **Jerry Zona**, **Justin Bower** and others. It's wonderful to have a good selection of pictures.

To **Jerry** and **Diane Carpenter**, **Beth Debenport**, and **Anna Dell Williamson** for working on the Gift Ship inventory. Special thanks to our surprise helpers, "**Willie Nelson**", who helped move items out of the GS and clean it for restocking. Inventory was finished in just one day, instead of the planned two days.

to **Ric Rincon** for fixing the new gator gate at the 40-Acre pier.

to **Cindy Peterson** and **Carol Ramsayer** for supper and dessert at the November meeting..

to **Sharon Hanzik** for arranging the trip to San Jacinto Monument and the Battleship Texas.

CONGRATULATIONS

Ed Waley has completed his training and is now a full volunteer. Be sure to let Ed know we're glad he's joined us.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Robert Aaron
Beth Debenport
Melissa Moody (Staff)
Jeff Orsak (Staff)
Frank Willett

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Dave Armstrong
Justin Bowers VIT
Joe Carmichael (Emeritus)
Sharon Hanzik (Staff)
Jim Hiatt
Warren Jackson (Emeritus)
Nancy Lynn Jones VIT
Jane Minard
Ron Morrison
Jim North Laszlo Perlaky
Marilyn Vossler
Bruce Williamson

VOLUNTEER CAR PASSES

from Tina Ibarra, Headquarters

Passes have been filled out and laminated for the volunteers who have provided Sharon or Headquarters with their license plate number. If you don't already have your pass, pick it up at HQ the next time you come to the park. If you have not provided your plate number to Sharon or Tina, leave that information at the gate next time you come in, and a pass will be prepared for you. Then you just need to show your pass for entry, and staff does not need to write a Business Pass for you.

VOLUNTEER ROSTER

Remember that we no longer publish a printed copy of the volunteer roster. It is online only, and you have been sent an email giving you a link to access the roster. Contact Sharon or David if you have lost that link. Bookmark the link and/or print out the roster. You cannot find it through the web page. It is password protected the same as the calendars. A few volunteers have chosen not to be included in this list so hopefully you have an older roster with their information or can contact Sharon.

PRAIRIE HERITAGE DAY

Prairie Heritage Day on November 7 was a successful activity presented by multiple chapters of the Texas Master Naturalists. Volunteers participated with an outdoor booth and covered the Nature Center and Gift Shop, while others patrolled the trails. We counted 1047 at the outside booth and 1109 in the Nature Center.

VULTURE DETERRENT

by Sharon Hanzik

Staff found a dead vulture and hung it from a tree somewhere in the Creekfield/Observatory area. This is a common practice used to deter other vultures from roosting in the area.

No doubt visitors will report this to the Nature Center so now you are informed of what to tell them.



Photo by Jerry Zona, December 2009

FIREWOOD PROCEDURES

from Chuck Duplant

Kiosk hours

The firewood kiosks (located by host campsites 141 and 200) are opened for purchase of firewood the following hours:

- Monday through Friday, 12:00 PM to 9:00 PM (may be opened earlier if needed)
- Saturday and Sunday, 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM

If you notice that the kiosks need restocking, please follow the procedures below:

Restocking Kiosk

- Check the Information Board and signs on racks to find out which racks to get bundles from. The Information board is mounted inside the splitter storage shed in the wood yard.
- Count the number of bundles restocked and leave a note indicating the amount in the Iron Ranger for each Kiosk. It is important to keep accurate records of bundles stocked and sold, so please help out with this.
- As always, help is needed tying bundles. Check the Information Board and signs on racks to know which racks are ready to bundle.



SIMPLE CHRISTMAS



Although it was cold we had a decent showing from the visitors. The estimate is 250. It was enough to keep everyone busy. Better to have a cold event than a muggy seventy degree event (that just doesn't feel like Christmas).

Thanks to all of you who helped make it happen in one way or another and in some cases all the way around. Same date, same place, same theme next year.

Photo by Steve Killian



Cornhusk Dolls
Photo by Sharon Hanzik



**Dennis Jones,
Reinactor**
Photo by Sharon Hanzik



Santa and Crew
Photo by Sharon Hanzik



Hot Drinks for a cold day
Photo by Sharon Hanzik



David Heinicke and Kestrel
Photo by Judy Strauss

SIGHTINGS

by Rick Dashnau

I'd been hearing about "asps"-those rather nondescript caterpillars that are one of the most toxic insects in the U.S.-being seen around 40 Acre Lake. I know that they like Oak trees, so as I made my way from the 40-Acre parking lot I checked the trees occasionally. I didn't notice any until I got to the Observation Tower. The small tree next to the tower (southwest of the tower and next to the water) had many asps on it. Most of them were that mottled ash-grey color with the reddish dorsal stripe that seems to be the most familiar. But, there were also a few "blonde" ones. The enclosed picture shows one of these caterpillars moving past another. I like it because it shows two color schemes. I have more information on asps (*Megalopyge opercularis*) on one of my older pages here:

<http://67.15.110.101/asp.html>



Some time later, I'd decided to return to my car, when I caught a quick movement out of the corner of my eye. It was a small alligator, which I noticed was chewing on something. When it did a toss, I saw that it had caught a bird. I decided to wait to see if the alligator would come closer to shore (and to me) to swallow the bird. It did, and I shot some bursts of it as it tossed its food. The camera was resetting after the first burst, when the alligator tossed and mostly swallowed the bird in one movement--so the last burst just barely shows the feet passing down the gullet. Anyway, here's a shot that I think is cool.

And that's my story.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 25 Christmas
December 26 Bird Hike, 5:00 PM, Observation Tower

2010

January 8 Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
January 9 Regular Meeting, 5:30 PM
Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, Amphitheater
January 10 Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
January 16 Bird Hike, 5:00 PM, Observation Tower
January 18 Martin Luther King Day Holiday
January 30 Youth Leaders in Philanthropy, 9:00 - 5:00
February 5 Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
February 6 Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, Amphitheater
February 7 Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
February 13 New Volunteer Training, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Volunteer Orientation Potluck Lunch, 11:45 AM
Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
Night Hike, HQ, Reservation Required, 7:00 PM

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville, TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←
SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 2010, 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, supper at 5:00 PM
Bird Hikes	See schedule in calendar

BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

President:	Carrie Sample
Vice-President:	Suzie Gann
Secretary:	Eddy Grizzaffi
Treasurer:	Dave Carpenter

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editor	Anna Dell Williamson
Layout	Jenn Mantei
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.