



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Confession time - I am a heat wimp! Just can't take this hot weather. **Ron Dearman** has gone to Colorado for the next few hot months. Unfortunately, I'm not so lucky. The only bright point is that the Nature Center is air conditioned!!!!!! I have noticed quite a few 'put your name here' spaces in our weekend volunteer calendar. If you have some free time, add your name in those spaces and come on out!

Our Eco-Explorer program (each Thursday from 9:30-11:30) has been a great success for our area children. Sharon and David have been busy giving programs to various groups during the day. Friday, June 26, the nature center had approximately 200 students come thru from HISD.

Yes, it is hot outside, but the park has continued to be very busy. The programs and learning opportunities are made possible because of each of you give your time to assist the park in some way. I should give a special hats off to our maintenance crew workers who are all out in this heat.

Carrie Sample

THE SECRET IS OUT!



Remember the "Silver Alligator" plaque that was presented to **Steve Killian** for the BBSP 25th anniversary in April? That casting was crafted by our own **Jim North**, who used one of the plastic alligators we sell in the gift shop as the model. It's time we gave credit where credit is due. Many thanks to Jim for giving us a great symbol of our anniversary.

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JUNE MEETING NOTES

Contributed by Anna Dell Williamson

President **Carrie Sample** called the meeting to order on June 13, 2009 at 5:30 PM. There were 14 volunteers, 2 VIT's, 1 inactive member, and 1 staff member present.

John Bradford donated a check for meat for the annual picnic in October.

The first session of the **Eco-Explorers** on Thursday, June 10, had 82 children attending. We were expecting 30. Program leaders were Master Naturalists Don and Penny Johnson and Val Fogelman, and our own Pam Tatge.

Nominating Committee: Glen Kilgore has agreed to be the chairperson of the Nominating Committee. (See By-Laws regarding Elections elsewhere in this issue.) The report will be presented at the August meeting and the election will be in September. All positions are open, but Treasurer Diane Carpenter is not eligible to run again due to the two-term limit. The current President, Vice-President and Secretary are eligible to run again.

Thanks to **Joan Jackson** for the time she has committed to taking orders for volunteer t-shirts and working in the flower garden at the Nature Center for so many years. She has asked to be relieved of these responsibilities. **Cindy Peterson** is taking over the t-shirt ordering, and **Pam Tatge** has taken over maintenance of the flower garden. Thanks to these two for stepping up and filling in these positions.

Thanks to **Carol Ramsayer** for chili and cornbread for supper. Thanks to **Diane Carpenter** for cake and strawberries, and **Judy Strauss** for brownies.

Treasurer's Report: **Diane Carpenter** brought the Budget Report. A copy of the report is in the binder in the Lounge.

Budget requests:

The following budget items were requested and approved:

Steve Killian requested funds for chemicals to treat southern wild rice.

Ron Morrison requested a chain saw replacement.

David Heinicke requested replacement pads for the defibrillators in the Nature Center and Headquarters. There was brief discussion on getting volunteers trained to use the ADE. All park staff is certified. Volunteer **Judy Strauss** is also certified.

Dave Armstrong requested additional funding for the Sun Dial Renovation. We have already approved funds for bricks, which are ready, and will be picked up next week.

There was discussion on whether the organization would provide the manpower to install the sun dial or we would contract out the work. The motion to contract out the work passed. A TPWD Archeological lead person will be doing a two-day class for staff members concerning procedures to determine archeological status before construction of structures in state parks. The class will be at BBSP and there are plans to dig where we plan to put the sun dial, as part of the class. David is also certified to supervise a dig. Volunteers may be able to assist in the digging.

Elm Lake Viewing Platform

We are proceeding with trying to get money for the platform. George Foundation denied our first request. We have already allocated some funds to the project and need additional funding. The plan is to give the platform as a gift to the park.

The following proposal was presented to the meeting for funding of the project:

Dedicate donations from the Nature Center donation box to the project. We will post a sign letting the visitors know how their donations will be used.

Dedicate the interest earned from CD's we have at the bank.

Move excess funds from the funds available each month when there are sufficient funds. (Details of the proposal can be found in the binder in the lounge.)

Continue seeking other grants or donations. Dave Armstrong has a list of suggested sources, including the Meadows Foundation, which funds projects for 503b organizations.

These plans will not impact our normal working budget.

It was moved, seconded and passed that we add Paypal donations to the plan and approve the other funding until September. At that time we will revisit the proposal and consider raising the monthly allocation. (Details of the proposal can be found in the binder in the lounge.)

David Heinicke brought his report, which is published elsewhere in this issue.

Gift Shop: **Beth Debenport** reported we have a new book rack from Dover and all the small books are now on display by subject. It is much easier for a visitor to find a book, and the rack keeps the books sorted. There are new beaded bookmarks made by a host. They are of ribbon, with glass beads in the shape of alligators, bunnies, dragonflies, butterflies, fish, dog, etc. We always need help in the Gift Shop and we are doing well financially.

Maintenance Report: **Bruce Williamson** reported that more volunteers have been showing up lately for the weekday work crew. They can use more help.

Carrie Sample announced that next Saturday, June 20, we will train 4 **junior volunteers**.. JRs must have a volunteer sponsor with them. The new class will have 1 neighbor, 2 grandchildren, and 1 son. Be sure to welcome them as they work on their requirements.

Chuck Duplant reported that a lot of volunteers came out and bundled wood. It is still selling, in spite of the warmer weather. Be careful working in the wood yard this time of year. Be sure to take water, and use the box fan. There is an ice machine at Maintenance in the Ranger Shed if you need ice.

Announcements: Ron Dearman will be in Colorado until October.
The meeting was adjourned.

INTERPRETIVE STAFF REPORTS

DAVID HEINICKE

It has been a busy summer so far, campgrounds are full, and the staff is shorthanded right now. Manager Trainee **Stuart Chapman** and Ranger **Kyle Petkus** have left. **Dennis Jones** may be out for a month or so. I'll be doing more work at Headquarters, and we will need more volunteer help in all areas.

National Trails Day was Saturday, June 6. It was a big success, with lots of programs all day, and good feedback from the visitors.

This is the time of year to watch for heat problems. Keep an eye on volunteers and visitors, alike. When you are out working, work with someone, take water and a radio or cell phone. It is very easy to get overheated.

Mozelle Franklin had stroke Monday, June 8, while working at the Nature Center. Fortunately **Doug DeVries** was there and got help. She was Life-flighted to Memorial Hermann. At last report, she was doing well and they expect a full recovery.

This is alligator nesting season. Let staff know if you see anything that might be a nest.

Several months ago we allocated funds from the El Paso grant for permanent trail head maps to replace the old ones that are in bad shape. TPWD picked up the cost of the trail head maps, and all we need to do is use the funds for building stands and framing the maps. Thirteen trail head maps came this week and will be posted throughout the park. They are made of long-lasting fiberglass and show the entire park, with an enlarged "You Are Here" section for each specific location. They are color coded to the new hiking trail maps and emphasize points of interest and safety. Some are free standing, and some will be attached to buildings. There is also a new one for the Nature Center counter.

At New Horseshoe Lake there is a new levee at Big Creek. Ft. Bend Road and Bridge helped out. The area was dug out, pledger clay was packed in, the berm was rebuilt, and re-seeded with grass. It will help maintain New Horseshoe Lake.

The new colored hiking trail maps are almost gone. The volunteer organization paid for one printing, and now the park is looking for a sponsor for the printing. 10,000 maps costs over \$900.

The Independence Day bike parade will be Saturday, July 4. This is our eleventh year. There will be supplies to decorate bikes at 6:00 PM, then the parade around the campgrounds at 6:30, followed by refreshments: watermelon, lemonade, and popsicles. The Special Events fund is paying for the refreshments and for supplies to decorate the bikes.

Volunteers have a great impact on visitors, and this can be see in the responses to the donation box.

JUNE MAINTENANCE REPORT

Contributed by Ron Morrison

Wood Yard:

- Split, tied and bundled wood. Delivered wood to racks in camping loops.

Mowing and Landscaping:

- Watered the donated trees on 40 Acre and Elm Lake trails several times. A good number of them did not survive the drought.
- Mulched, watered and applied root starter to the purchased trees planted on Creekfield Forest trail.
- Built an additional watering barrel. We now have two water barrels to service the Creekfield Forest trail.
- Cleared around the spider tree near the entrance to the park.

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

- Partially cleared the honeysuckle vines from Creekfield Forest trail.
- Cleared a large oak tree that had fallen in the mowed area behind the Observatory.
- Installed trail topping in pot holes on Pilant Slough and Bayou trails.

Equipment Maintenance:

- Installed "Next Service Due" tags on BSPVO equipment with hour meters. Operators of this equipment can now ensure that equipment that they operate has been serviced by comparing the hour meter with this tag.
- Installed stickers on all chainsaws to resolve problems with "High Tech" oil and gas caps that were error prone.
- Sharpened 8 chain saw blades.

General Maintenance:

- Repaired, sanded and sealed park benches.
- Sanded and varnished areas in the Gift Shop that were giving problems with splinters. This will take several coats of varnish because the wood is so dry the varnish soaks right in.

Pest Control:

- Treated Chinese tallow trees around 40 Acre Lake, Hoots Hollow and Pilant Slough areas. Began treating the Old Horseshoe Lake area.

HOT WEATHER PRECAUTIONS

Just a reminder to keep an eye on visitors, staff, fellow volunteers and yourself for heat-related problems. It isn't getting any cooler, and we need to be very careful to stay cool and drink plenty of water when out on the trails and working in the park.

Remember to keep the water station coolers full, carry extra water when you patrol the trails and contact staff by phone or radio if you have a heat emergency.

ECO-EXPLORERS

Our Eco-Explorer program on Thursday mornings has been a big hit. For the past 3 Thursdays, we have had a total of 137 children. We have averaged 77 on each Thursday. (I just hope they don't decide to all come on the same Thursday...)

The success of this program has been a collaborative effort. June 24 we had the Gulf Coast Master Naturalists give their Junior Angler Program. Members of the Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists assisted as well as BBSP Volunteers. Our park headquarters was even involved in getting nine fishing rods and reels ready for the children to use.

Next week **Barbara Wilson**, Director of the Observatory, will open her doors to our program. Volunteer **Mary Woodward** will assist Barbara, as she is a volunteer at the observatory also. Last week, **Mary Ann Weber**, from the Houston Audubon Society, gave the program. Sea Center Texas will also be coming on a future Thursday.

A big thanks go out to the BBSP Volunteers who have helped: **Eddy Grizzaffi** (our registrar), **Pam Tatge** (designing several programs), **Jaci Elliott** (spicing up our program with children's songs), **Carol Ramsayer**, **Suzie Gann**, **Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson**, **Connie Waltrip**, **Mary Lockwood**, **Marilyn Vossler**, **Bill Godley** (in the Gift Shop) and **Larry Sample**. (Bruce, Anna Dell and Marilyn got drafted when they brought their grandchildren).

As I am writing this, we are only 1/3 of the way into the program. If you have a free Thursday morning, come join us.

ADDITIONAL NOTE from Sharon Hanzik: If visitors ask about the Eco-Explorer class, please inform them that we cannot accept any more children. The class is full (80!). We have pulled all fliers from the park and will place a "class full" notice on the web.

NATURE CENTER REPORT — JUNE 2009

Contributed by Anna Dell Williamson

Here are the totals for the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for June 1-30, 2009. National Trails Day was June 6. Attendance has been high for summer.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE June 2009 - 6068 (high 723, 6/6) June 2008 - 5109	Saturdays (5) 2327 High, 723, 6/6 Average: 465
	Sundays (5) – 1423 High, 403, 6/21 Average: 285
	Weekdays (21)– 2318 High, 291, 6/25 Average, 105
CREEKFIELD HIKES (7)	50– High, 6/19 - 14
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (5)	123 - High, 6/12 - 42
BIRD PROGRAMS/HIKES (2)	36 High, 6/6 -26
SNAKE PROGRAMS (5)	162 – High, 6/20-65
CHILDREN’S STORY TIME (6)	69– High, 6/6-38
ECO-EXPLORERS (3)	334 - High, 6/24-115
OTHER PROGRAMS (10) includes pond life, photo, safety, Hoot’s Hollow hike, bike, scope, mammals, insect hike and tree hike	207
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS	861
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS IN INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS	504

FOURTH OF JULY BICYCLE PARADE

The Independence Day Bicycle Parade was held July 4 at 6:00 PM at the Nature Center. Bikes were decorated, the parade through the camping loops was accompanied by patriotic music, and water melon, lemonade and popsicles were consumed. There were 45 adults, 43 children and 4 dogs participating.

JUNIOR VOLUNTEER INFORMATION UPDATE

Contributed by Sharon Hanzik

Some of you have not received the word about how Junior Volunteering now works. We only accept children (ages 8-12) who are related to or are friends with an existing adult volunteer who agrees to sponsor them. There are no set training dates.

We just completed one on June 20th. **Bear Dobbs** and **Kylie Kramr**, grandchildren of **Nancy Dobbs** and **Carrie Sample**, have completed their classroom portion of training and are now Junior VITs. Welcome and encourage them as they complete their requirements.

NEW VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Contributed by Sharon Hanzik

We are struggling to find trainees for this coming September. We had plenty of applicants who have withdrawn for various reasons. I have only two prospective volunteers and am waiting to hear back from two others. If we cannot meet our minimum of five, we will forego training this fall.

I have extended the application deadline until July 14th. I cannot accept applications later than that. We have to interview, receive a cleared criminal background check and start training preparations. All three dates in September are mandatory – 12th, 19th and 26th.

If you know of anyone who is interested, please direct them to the website for information and application. Thank you!

BYLAWS ARTICLE V – ELECTIONS

(Ed. Note: Following is the article from the By-laws regarding election of officers. The complete By-Laws and SOP's can be found in the Members' section on the website.)

Section 1. The Nominating Committee shall consist of two or more voting members appointed by the Executive Committee in July.

- Any member wishing to serve on the Nominating Committee must contact a member of the Executive Committee before the July general meeting.
- The membership shall be notified of the appointments prior to the August meeting.

Section 2. The Nominating Committee shall prepare a slate of officers, insuring at least one candidate per office.

- Any qualified member wishing to place his/her name in nomination shall contact any member of the Nominating Committee.
- Each Nominee must give consent of his/her name to be placed on the ballot.

Section 3. Nominations shall be announced at the August meeting and nominations from the floor will also be accepted at that time.

- The membership at large shall be notified of the final list of nominees prior to the September meeting.

Section 4. Elections shall take place at the September meeting. Elections will be by ballot unless there are no contested positions. Absentee ballots shall be mailed in August unless there are no contested offices. A simple majority of the votes cast, including absentee ballots, shall be required for election. Officers-elect shall take office on the first day of October.

Ed. Note: What the above means is that if you want to be on the Nominating Committee, contact an officer before the July meeting. If you want to run for office, contact a member of the Nominating Committee before the August meeting. If someone else nominates you, you must give your consent. If someone from the Nominating Committee approaches you in the next few weeks, DON'T run away. Consider accepting a position in the organization. We can use your help.

MISSION POSSIBLE

Contributed by David Heinicke

This summer, Brazos Bend is participating in a program established by Wilderness Houston. The program is called "Mission Possible" and encourages families to visit parks, nature centers and refuges in and around the Houston area. When the family arrives at the facility, they can pick up their "mission" and complete it. The "mission" is a piece of paper with an activity on it and will be available at the Nature Center during regular operating hours. BBSP missions are located in a box on the wall behind the counter, to the right of the big map. At the end of the summer the families with the most completed missions from different locations will win prizes at an event hosted by Wilderness Houston. If visitors ask about a mission please refer them to the Nature Center. We will have copies of the mission available or folks can download a mission from the Wilderness Houston website.

The mission at Brazos Bend requires visitors to walk around Creekfield Lake and explore it using all of their senses and then answer a few questions. All regular park admission fees and park rules apply to visitors participating in this program.

If you have any questions please let me know. Thanks for your help.

DAVE'S TOP TEN: REASONS YOU SHOULD TAKE A RADIO WHEN OUT ON THE TRAILS AT BRAZOS BEND

by David Heinicke

10. Cell phones are not always reliable. Depending on who your service provider is and even the time of year (canopy cover) your phone may or may not work.
9. If you have a radio you will hear every broadcast that others make. This is important when there is a lost visitor, severe weather conditions or other emergencies.
8. Everyone else with a radio will hear every broadcast that you make for the same reasons mentioned above. (Remember - anyone standing near a park staff member or volunteer with a radio may hear what you say, so keep it professional and to the point).
7. In the event that you are injured or ill a radio broadcast requires much less coordination and effort then dialing a cell phone.
6. All staff members on duty should be monitoring radios at all times.
5. Park headquarters is constantly monitoring radio traffic and can dispatch aid if needed.
4. If you dial 911 from your cell phone in the park it will likely hit a Brazoria county tower directing you to Brazoria County emergency dispatch. With a radio you can contact park headquarters and Fort Bend County dispatch will be contacted directly saving valuable time and confusion in an emergency.
3. It's much quicker to contact park staff by radio then by cell phone.
2. Radios have NOAA weather radio on them.
1. Talking on the radio looks much cooler then talking on the cell phone **and** has unlimited minutes!

VOLUNTEER NEWS & NOTES

Our sincere sympathy
to **Dave Armstrong** and
his family on the passing
of his father.

Thanks



... to **David Heinicke** for repairing the door to the Gift Shop.

... to **Ron Morrison** for sanding and varnishing the Gift Shop counter and storeroom door frame to help prevent splinters

... to everyone who has helped in the Gift Shop and Nature Center this month

... to everyone who helped with Junior training

... to **Carrie Sample** for organizing Junior training

... to the Creekfield hike leaders

... to those who deliver cold water to our visitors on the trails

... to those who cut, split and tie wood for the campers

... to the Maintenance Crew for all of their hard work

... to **John Bradford** for donation of funds for meat for the volunteer picnic

... to all who are presenting and assisting with the Eco-Explorers programs on Thursdays

... to **Carrie Sample** for organizing and leading the Eco-Explorers programs on Thursdays

... to **Joan Jackson** for taking charge of the volunteer t-shirt orders for so many years, and for maintaining the flower garden at the Nature Center since it was started

... to **Pam Tatge** and **Cindy Peterson** for taking over

the flower garden and the t-shirt orders from Joan

... to **Carol Ramsayer** for chili and cornbread for supper; to **Diane Carpenter** for cake and strawberries; to **Judy Strauss** for brownies; and to **Anna Dell Williamson** for the salad.



JULY BIRTHDAYS

Barb Tucker
Susie Taylor (Staff)
Martin Gay
Diane Carpenter
Debra Baker
Joan Hebert
Jaci Elliott

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Rob Thacker
Tom Draper
Eddy Grizzaffi
Frank Seay
Sylvia Carrillo (Staff)
Jim Gilliam (Staff)



JULY ANNIVERSARIES

James and Joyce Blankenship

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson
Laszlo and Lexi Perlaky
Ray and Dana Anderson
Ron and Margaret Morrison
Jim and Lorena Calvert
Frank and Stacey Seay

WILDSKAPING THE NATURE CENTER GARDEN

Contributed by Pam Tatge

A few evenings ago, a young man came to the door trying to sell me pesticide treatments for my garden. "No thanks," I told him, "I like the bugs in my garden."

"But, look," he pointed near my door. "You have spiders."

"Yeah," I said. "Isn't that great? I like spiders. Would you like to see my pet tarantula?"

He took a step backward but said yes, so I brought out Pompeii, my bluebottle green. He had to admit she was pretty. "But you keep her inside. You obviously like gardening – don't the bugs bother you in your garden?" I sent him away. He needed a paycheck.



Monarch Butterfly

Gardens without insects are sterile, silent, and boring. Spraying inevitably upsets the balance between the beneficial insects and the pests, kills the caterpillars that would bring the butterflies we all love (why do people love to forget that butterflies are insects?), and robs birds of a valuable protein source.

What does this have to do with wildscaping? I used to choose plants for their ornamental value. Years ago at a trip to the nursery, I noticed that almost all the plants on my cart were chosen for their wildlife value – a cassia because it was a host plant for sulphur butterflies, extra butterfly weed because the monarch caterpillars were chomping through the existing plants, coral honeysuckle for hummingbirds, and a yaupon for the birds (sorry, Ron). Okay, there was probably an antique rose just for me, too; my life is wild.



Butterfly Weed

The point is, a garden can be both attractive and support wildlife. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department supports a great program called Texas Wildscapes, which teaches people how to garden for wildlife in their backyards, schoolyards, and in corporate parks. The four ingredients of a wildscape garden are food, water, shelter, and space. Ideally, the esthetics of the garden will be somewhat different than many of our clipped-hedge moustache home landscapes; wildlife are more comfortable in flowing, curvilinear gardens it's just not that easy to build a nest or escape from a predator in a tight, clipped shrub). Wildscaping also focuses on the use of native plants, which have co-adapted to meet the needs of local wildlife.

What better way to use a garden in a State Park than to start following principles of wildscaping? And yes, insects are wildlife. I would plant a garden just for them. But, since they're near the bottom of the food chain, their presence provides food for other wildlife. They attract armadillos, who dig up the new plants. And our infant wildscape attracts deer, who chomp off the flower heads that were intended to feed butterflies. (Why? Why? Why? There's all that lovely yaupon across the road – couldn't we enlist them in a trail-trimming course?) But, when you plant a garden to support wildlife, you never know who will show up. Turtles laying eggs in soft soil, raccoons just plain curious about what I'm doing. So, take a walk in the Nature Center garden. You never know who or what you'll see out there.

(If it hasn't rained in awhile, please feel free to water the new plants. Remember, those plant tags say, "drought resistant once established!")

WILDFLOWERS IN JULY

What wildflowers do you see at Brazos Bend State Park? Here's a list of wildflowers that bloom in July. The month after the name is the end of the blooming period. Maybe you can identify some of these flowers:

Baccharis (Sea Myrtle) – Oct	Blue Mist-Flower – Dec
Boneset – Nov	Creeping Spot Flower – Nov
Gayfeather (Liatris) – Oct	Goatweed (Wooly Croton) – Oct
Ironweed – Oct	Scarlet Hibiscus (TX Star) – Sep
Sea Myrtle (Baccharis) – Oct	Sharp Gayfeather – Nov
Shrubby Water Primrose – Oct	Snow-On-The-Prairie – Oct
Texas Star (Scarlet Hibiscus) – Sep	Wooly Croton (Goatweed) – Oct



Ironweed

CICADA KILLERS

Contributed by Rick Dashnau

The large wasps that were hanging around the cistern by the VC in early June are Cicada Killer wasps. There are some good websites detailing their life and habits. This one is really good:

<http://ww2.lafayette.edu/~hollidac/cicadaintro.html>

The wasps that were taking stations around the cistern (on stalks, or particular pilings) and then flying up, "patrolling", and banging into each other last weekend were probably males. Males can't sting because they don't have stingers that work; although they do have "fake" stingers – pointed parts on the tips of their abdomens. The females' stingers DO work, and are retractable. Another visible difference between male and female is that the female has larger "spurs" on her back legs. These are used to help her dig. These are not social wasps, but a good spot to make a burrow for one can attract others to the same good spot. Then they may share burrows, or even steal paralyzed cicadas by laying eggs on them.

On Sunday June 15, I visited the Cicada Killer spot again. As I'd feared, but expected from what I'd read, the activity of the wasps had slowed down quite a bit from the previous weekend. Plus, I had to work inside a couple hours early, so I had to stop watching them until after noon. Still, I got some closeup pictures of the wasps in the morning, plus I experimented a little. I tried in the afternoon to get some video or photos of females returning with cicadas, but although I saw many flying in, they approached and entered the burrows so fast I could barely get the camera on them. Oh, well. Still, there are pictures:

Male Cicada Killer and a quarter: <http://67.15.110.101/cicadkiller01b.jpg>

Male On my hand: <http://67.15.110.101/cicadkiller02b.jpg>

Closer view of a male on my hand: <http://67.15.110.101/cicadkiller03b.jpg>

Closeup of the fake stinger on the male on my hand: <http://67.15.110.101/cicadkiller04b.jpg>

And here's a short video showing it landing on my hand with a few different views:

http://rickubis.20m.com/cicadkiller_rick.wmv The "pulsating" of the abdomen is how they breathe.

No insects were harmed during the shooting of this material – well, no wasps. As I was standing above the nesting burrows and looking through my camera, something large buzzed over and landed on my vest. I was able to move the camera close enough to shoot this. It's a robber fly which has caught a dragonfly. Next to them is one of the zippers on the vest. Both insects are voracious predators. <http://67.15.110.101/robberdragonfly.jpg>

LOVE BUGS?

Contributed by Dennis Jones

Aside from the obvious, “Love Bug” (*Plecia nearctica*) is an awful name for the insect that causes our car windshields and paint so much misery. I don’t know anyone who loves them. I suspect they are despised almost as much as mosquitoes when they’re swarming. I thought you might like to know a little more about these rascals to help moderate the nuisance they cause.



“Love bugs” are little black flying critters that swarm during their mating seasons and spatter your car with bug parts in what the Texas A&M Extension Service calls “aerial orgies”. They can cover your windshield with bug juice, obscure your vision while driving and even ruin your car’s paint. As with a lot of plants and animals these days, they were accidentally introduced from somewhere else and are not native to this area. In this case they came from South America as early as the 1940’s. Love bugs don’t have any natural enemies because they are not natural here. Their enemies are still in South America. Fire ants are originally from South America too, but (wouldn’t

you know it!) they won’t have anything to do with love bugs.

They are actually members of the “fly” family and not true bugs, even though for most of us *anything* with six legs and antennae are bugs. Their two mating seasons last for a few weeks in April/May and then again in August/September, but they are present all the time to some extent. We just don’t notice them because they’re not swarming or getting in the way of our cars. Adults eat nectar from flowering plants and, of course, mate. They do not bite, sting or transmit diseases. Adults live for 3-4 days and females can lay about 350 eggs in the soil. The larvae hatch and eat decaying plant matter until they transform into adults and start the process all over again.

Here is some practical information that may help you deal with love bugs:

- Love bugs do not fly at night, so if you limit your travel to after dark your car won’t be covered with love bug parts.
- They are NOT repelled by mosquito repellants (Citronella & DEET). Those repellants mask carbon dioxide and they are not attracted by CO₂ like their blood-sucking cousins. You can try and kill them with bug sprays, but you’re really just wasting your time and money.
- A fan works well to keep them away when you are sitting outside.
- If you drive slower, fewer bugs will be smashed on your car. (Duh!)
- You can put grill covers on you car and there are deflectors sold to cause *most* of the swarms to sail over your windshield, not into it.
- Love bug guts don’t damage the paint immediately, they have to bake on; so if you remove them every day or so you won’t need a new paint job. Also, a good coat of wax will keep damage to a minimum. I use a thin coat of a vegetable based cooking spray to keep the bugs from sticking. They still need to be washed off.
- There is evidence that female love bugs are attracted to roadways by auto exhaust because it has ultra violet irradiated aldehydes. They think it is decaying organic matter, the perfect place to lay eggs.
- Heat also attracts love bugs, like the heat radiating from roadways and the hoods of recently driven cars. They also like light colors and fresh paint.

I hope this info helps you cope with them and prevents them from loving you and your car too much. Good luck. You’re gonna need it when in comes to these guys.

We Get Letters..



The following email was received on June 13:

Hello! My family and I visited Brazos bend this morning and had the most wonderful time. The park was beautifully maintained and the wildlife (including alligators!!) was abundant. It was an inspiration for me to begin bird watching as a hobby. The staff in the nature center was so kind, friendly and informative. We will absolutely be back to see the migratory birds in the winter, if not before! Keep up the good work, Brazos Bend.

I took a picture of one of your beautiful dragonflies today that I would like to share with you. The dragonfly picture made me laugh, so I thought that you might enjoy it. Isn't his color just magnificent?

Thanks!
Courtney Little



2009 CALENDER OF EVENTS

July 11	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
August 8	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
September 5	Amphibian and Reptile Photography Photo Walk, 5:00 PM
September 7	Labor Day
September 12	New Volunteer Training, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM Volunteer Orientation Potluck Lunch, 11:45 AM Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
October 3	Photo-walk: Bird photography #3, 5:00 PM
October 10	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
October 12	Columbus Day Holiday
October 31	Halloween
November 14	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
November 26	Thanksgiving
December 5	Simple Christmas
December 12	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
December 25	Christmas

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville TX 77461

FIRST CLASS MAIL

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←
SATURDAY, July 11, 2009 at 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:	Diane Carpenter

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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.