



# BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2012

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



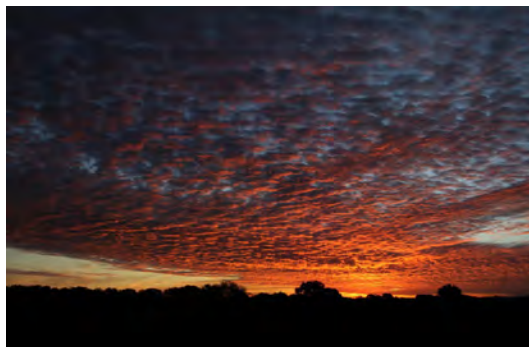
Last year was a record for Brazos Bend State Park and we can expect another new record in 2012. These records are set because of the uniqueness of the park and the location. Our Organization's interface with park visitors is very positive for those folks, in addition to being a lot of fun for us. Please keep in mind that we are going to need more volunteers as time goes by.

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, fifteen volunteers-to-be started their training to join us. Be sure and give these folks a warm welcome and all the help they need.

At our January General Meeting we had a special presentation by Dave Armstrong and Mike Manley on the planning and organization that is needed for the new Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center to become a reality. There is additional information in this newsletter which will assist you in deciding how you can be a part of the long term team effort.

At our General Meeting on February 11, we approved our 2012 budget. Our next meeting is March 10, and we need your attendance and help.

### Offie Walker



### What a great sunrise!

Photo by Chuck Duplant, January 15, 2012  
on the prairie trail past the platform.

#### *In this issue:*

President's Report. . . . .	1
January Meeting Notes. . . . .	2
Staff Reports. . . . .	3
Steering Committee. . . . .	4
Congratulations. . . . .	4
Thank you. . . . .	5
Nature Center Report. . . . .	6
Maintenance Report. . . . .	7
Gift Shop remodeling. . . . .	7
Wind in Water. . . . .	8
New Assistant Manager. . . . .	8
Gator Greeting. . . . .	8
Passing of our Kestrel. . . . .	9
What Do You See? . . . . .	9
Journeys with Jaci. . . . .	9
My New Favorite Place. . . . .	11
Hawk and Rat Snake. . . . .	11
Wildflower Seeding. . . . .	12
Nuisance Alligator Permit. . . . .	12
A Garden of our Own. . . . .	13
TPWD Foundation Grant. . . . .	13
2001 in Review. . . . .	14
Upcoming Events. . . . .	15

# JANUARY MEETING NOTES

*submitted by Belinda DiMarcello*

The meeting was called to order by President Offie Walker at 2:37 PM on January 14, 2012, in the Dining Hall. There were 42 volunteers and 3 staff members present. The minutes of the December meeting were approved as posted.

**Budget Report:** Treasurer **Bob Kowalewsky** brought the Financial Overview. The report is available to members who would like to see it.

Dave Armstrong is recommending not renewing a CD so that we can use it for new BBEEC expenditures.

We discussed the possibility of moving the CDs to a credit union for better returns. Bob K. will do some research on interest rates. To discuss more at Feb. meeting.

Carrie Sample would like to have voice in how donation from the Sugarland Garden Club is used. She'd like to use it to plant some trees.

Several line items have been completed and should be closed, such as flower beds, chainsaws, herbicides for prairie, lights for NC sidewalk. Software for Gift shop has not been purchased yet. Bob K. will ask Steve Killian if he is planning to purchase more herbicide for the prairie.

December financials were approved as presented.

The following purchase requests were approved:

- Two removable windshields for the old John Deere Gators
- Black mulch to use around the new entrance sign.

## **Environmental Education Center Building Presentation by Dave Armstrong**

- Dave honored **Chuck Duplant** for all of the tireless work he has done on this project.
- Purpose today – to approve a plan and methodology to align volunteers, staff, and TPWD energies towards financing and constructing the new Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center (BBEEC), and to guide how we fulfill BBSP's mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- We will have to have some changes in the way we've done things. The future of the park holds the following:
  - Population Growth – increasing visitor numbers, growing pressure on ecosystems from development, habitat fragmentation, pollution.
  - Global change – climate changes
  - Political & Economic Change
- Future goal: to be the pre-eminent site in Texas for high-quality, nature-friendly outdoor recreation, because of our location, size, biodiversity, accomplishments and reputation, and the volunteer organization.
- 4 strategic goals – enhance outdoor experience for our guests, develop the leading outdoor/nature education program in Texas, deepen and broaden ecosystem conservation activities, and develop partnerships for financial and political support
- BBSPVO'S role – to help achieve these goals, we need a new, broadened organizational structure, with specific task groups and responsibilities.
- Review of the organization structure – TPWD – BBSP management.- BBSPVO – Executive Committee – Steering Committee and three task forces: Partnerships Task Force, BBEEC Building Task Force, and Program Development Task Force. All of these elements overlap and contribute to each other.
  - Steering Committee** – Overall coordination and management of the project. Consists of the task group Champions, plus two other members, reports to Executive Committee
  - Program Development Task Force** – Visitor Experience Group, Education Group, Conservation Group
  - BBEEC Building Task Force** – Design, Coordinate with TPWD, and Operations
  - Partnership Task Force** - Coordinate fund raising efforts with various entities.

- Next Steps:
  - Executive Committee approval (Steve, David and Sharon have already reviewed and bought into plan)
  - Reserve funds in FY 2012 for development
  - Fill Key positions: Steering Committee and 3 task force champions
  - Kick off at January meeting
  - Fill working groups and establish timelines
  
- Final Thoughts-
  - Plan Execution – especially fundraising – will require considerable energy and commitment from volunteers and staff
  - Task Forces must accept responsibility for results within timelines
  - Enhancements to services, programs, conservation efforts should begin as soon as possible – including improvements to NC. Much can be done before the new BBEEC is constructed.
  - Demonstrated accomplishments will facilitate fundraising
- It will be about a year before we can approach anyone for money. We must do planning and research first!

The proposal was accepted by the membership and the meeting was adjourned.

## STAFF REPORTS



### **STEVE KILLIAN PARK SUPERINTENDENT**

Steve Killian reported that 420 acres of prairie were burned in a prescribed burn recently. Live Oak trail will be finished soon and will be open most of the year, and wood ducks will be visible from it. The Lobby and Gift Shop storage at Headquarters is being expanded. We are making the arrangements to have prison trustees coming to the park to do manual labor tasks. The new entrance sign dedication was held this morning. Trout fishing started today. The water level in 40-Acre lake and in Elm lake will be brought up.

### **SHARON HANZIK INTERPRETIVE RANGER AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR**

Sharon Hanzik presented the Membership Report for 2011: There are currently 118 members, 104 of whom are active. There are 7 inactive emeritus members. There were 8 losses in membership, 3 of whom are deceased. There are also 5 maintenance volunteers and one interpretive volunteer who are not members of the organization and are not included in the 118 membership total. We gained 18 new members, with 6 currently in training. Most are finished or nearly so.



## ANNUAL REPORT OF HOURS CONTRIBUTED

48 - 99 hours - 66 members  
100 -199 hours - 23 members  
200 -299 hours - 12 members  
300 -399 hours - 3 members : Jerry Carpenter, Teresa Jones, Tom Prentiss  
400 - 499 hours - 3 members: Diane Carpenter, Dave Armstrong, Judy Strauss  
500 - 599 hours - 2 members: Beth Debenport, Ron Morrison  
600 - 699 hours - 1 member: Carl Franke  
700 - 799 hours - 1 member: Chuck Duplant  
800 - 899 hours - 1 member: Anna Dell Williamson  
over 1000 hours - 1 member: Anne Shelton

It takes all 118 members doing what each one can to make this organization work. All volunteers, from the ones who put in the minimum hours to those who are able to put in more, are important, and every hour contributed makes a difference in what is accomplished in the Park. Thanks to all of you for your help in making BBSP the greatest.

## BBEEC STEERING GROUP

*by Dave Armstrong*

Great news! The BBSPVO at the January 14, 2012 meeting approved the strategic business plan that will guide the planning, funding, and construction of the BBEEC. The strategic plan envisions dividing the project among three task forces, each championed by a volunteer who will lead the group through a year long planning and training process. The three groupings include the BBEEC Building Task Force championed by Chuck Duplant, The Program Development Task Force championed by Hannah Meddough, and the Partnership Task Force championed by Nelda Gay.

As is our custom and culture, volunteers were given the opportunity to sign up and many enthusiastically signed up, some for more than one task force. There is an interesting job for every volunteer, and I am confident that soon all the active volunteers will be engaged in the planning process as our organization embarks on a mission to build a state of the art , 10,000 square feet environmental and education center that will be the premier nature center in the TPWD.

I encourage you to get on board with your colleagues by finding your niche with one of the Taskforces and together we will build the BBEEC for the benefit of generations to come.

We can do this! The "WE" includes you.



Congratulations to  
Jenny Tompkins, and Randi and Joe Sosa,  
who have completed their VIT requirements.  
Give them a friendly welcome to the  
Organization.





# CONGRATULATIONS



## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jerry Carpenter	Cindy Peterson
Noel Duncan	Sherri Sherbo
Devin Elester (Staff)	Judy Strauss
Carl Franke	Pam Tatge
Bill Godley	Lisa Wells (Staff)
Sid Jones	

## FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Robert and Shannon Aaron
Suzie and Rick Gann
Pete and Carol Hart
Tom and Candice Kanak

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Willie Anderson (Emeritus)
Rita Cooper (Emeritus)
Joan Jackson (Emeritus)
Herb Mann (Emeritus)
Jennifer Parent
Ted Stevens (Staff)

## MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Peter Guzman (VIT)
Rosemary and Bobby Kennedy
Glen and Maureen Kilgore
Lara Malone
Dawn and Oscar Tejero

## *Thank you!*

to Jim Calvert, Pete Hart, Jim Hiatt, Dennis Keppta, Ron Morrison, Akiko Noma, Duncan Shaw and Scot Stahlings for help with the remodeling of the Gift Shop and storage area - taking out the old shelves, building a support for the new candy shelves and installing shelves in the storage area

to Gift Shop committee members Diane Carpenter, Beth Debenport, Debbie and Kent Fewell, Nancy Lynn Jones, Judy Strauss, and Anna Dell Williamson, along with Rosemary Kennedy, for planning, shopping, and facilitating the remodeling of the Gift Shop

to Robert Aaron for building the Gift Shop desk as a donation to the organization

to Offie Walker, Steve Killian, Mary Lockwood, mentors, and road tour drivers who helped with training Orientation on February 4

to all members who brought food for the Orientation lunch and introduced themselves to the VITs

to Nancy Bailey, who donated the printing for the training manuals

to everyone who volunteered to be on the BBEEC task forces and work groups

### **SPECIAL THANKS from Tom Prentiss**

I received many calls, emails and get well cards from fellow volunteers and staff during my recent recovery from "elective surgery". I was very pleased to hear from all of you, it really helped to lift my spirits and make me want to get rolling again!

# NATURE CENTER REPORT

## JANUARY 2012

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for January 1-31, 2012. There were two Monday holidays in January, the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup>.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
<b>NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE</b>	Saturdays (4) - 2,563 High,693 (1/14) Average: 641
January, 2012 -5,919 January 2011 - 4,078 January 2010 - 4,710 January 2009 - 5,143 January 2008 - 4,197 January 2007 - 4,577	Sundays (5) – 1916 High, 508 (1/1) Average: 383
	Weekdays (22) - 1440 High,421 (1/16) Average: 65
<b>CREEKFIELD HIKES (11)</b>	162
<b>ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (5)</b>	96
<b>WILDLIFE VIEWING (3)</b>	157
<b>CHILDREN'S STORYTIME (4)</b>	75
<b>BIRD PROGRAMS/HIKES (7)</b>	91
<b>OUTREACH (2)</b>	178
<b>OTHER PROGRAMS (9):</b> snake (2), special hikes(1), photo, geocaching, video, sundial, skulls, owls and tracks	248
<b>TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS</b>	1006
<b>VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>	INTERPRETATION = 657 MAINTENANCE = 183.5 TOTAL HOURS = 1520
<b>PARK ATTENDANCE</b> JANUARY 2012	<b>TOTAL</b> 19,514 Day use 15,145 (78%) Overnight 4,369 (22%) NC Visitors 5,919 (30%)

# MAINTENANCE REPORT

The Maintenance Crew put in 183.5 hours in the following projects.

## **Wood Yard:**

Split, bundled and delivered wood on several occasions

## **Mowing and Landscaping:**

Remove downed trees from Maintenance and both camping loops

## **Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:**

Cleared vines from Creekfield Forest Trail

Performed maintenance on Creekfield Forest Trail and Entrance

## **Special Projects:**

Removed shelving from Gift Shop and installed new shelving in workroom

# GIFT SHOP REMODELING

*by Diane Carpenter*

A couple of months ago the Gift Shop committee asked for approval to spend funds to renovate the gift shop. The goal was to better organize the shop and hopefully make it more accessible for customers and for the volunteers who work there. The timing was based on taking advantage of the Container Store's annual sale for shelving material. Beth Debenport and Anna Dell Williamson made many trips to the store to have plans drawn and distributed to committee members for review and comments.

On Tuesday, January 31, the BBSP work crew dismantled all of the shelving in the Gift Shop to make way for new display shelving to be installed on February 2. They did a great job getting everything out and transporting wood, etc., to the equestrian center shed for storage. (David Heinicke went into the gift shop on Wednesday to get a soda and thought we had been robbed!) I didn't find as much lost inventory behind the shelves as I had expected: a few wooden snakes next to the refrigerator, a Now N Later, and a gold alligator necklace (a kind we don't carry anymore) was about it. Without all the shelving it was a good opportunity to sweep the walls and really mop the floors.

The Container Store installers came in right on schedule that Thursday. They worked in one area while the BBSP work crew installed the needed support for the "window" wall. They used some plexiglass that was on hand to create an actual window that allows visitors to see that we have food items available in the gift shop. Beth and Anna Dell tackled the hard part of putting things back out so that we could open again on Friday. Arranging merchandise will continue as we determine what works best.

Plans are now underway to replace the cashier desk with a new one with shelves and drawers for supplies and, most importantly, more space for the cashier! Robert Aaron has volunteered to build the desk. We are also planning some changes in the store room to give us better arranged storage space for beverages, food and other inventory.

We anticipate that these changes will make the merchandise more accessible and more appealing so we can increase sales. The new refrigerator nearly doubled beverage sales in one year, and we hope the better arrangement of other merchandise will affect sales in a similar way. Keep visiting the Gift Shop to see the changes as they unfold.

# WIND IN THE WATER

by Jaci Elliott

This picture was taken in September, and it went on to win in the photo contest that was sponsored by the DeWalt Heritage Center here in Missouri City. All photos had to be in Fort Bend county. It is titled "Wind in the Water" and is of the windmill on the north side of the park--you can imagine how surprised I was to find such a tranquil and refreshing pool of water after and still during the drought.



## NEW ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT ANNOUNCED

from Steve Killian

Brazos Bend Volunteers:

I am happy to announce that the Brazos Bend State Park Selection Committee, after a long and thorough process, has selected **Jacob Dement** as our new Assistant Superintendent. Jacob is currently the Assistant Superintendent / Park Police Officer at Lake Texana SP. His actual start date has yet to be finalized but it should be sometime after March 1st. As soon as I have a firm date, I will pass it on.

I want to extend special thanks to Ted Stevens for the help in "holding down the fort" since Chris moved on. We have an awesome team, and I believe that Jacob will make us even better! Thank you for your continued passion and commitment and as a result making Brazos Bend SP the BEST!!!

## GATOR GREETING



Travelers coming in from FM 762 to visit Brazos Bend State Park now have a new view of what has become a favorite destination for many. Standing sentry at the park's main gate is a colorful, new, hand-made, 15-foot entrance sign, which features a life-sized 3-D image of the park's most popular resident: the American Alligator.

The new sign, which replaced the park's original marker that had been in place since the park opened in 1984, took more than two years to develop and acquire necessary funds. It was created by area artist Thor Holder of Signs by Tomorrow, who also donated much of his time for the project in order to keep costs low for the park system.

Pictured here (L to R) during the recent ribbon cutting of the new sign are: Steve Killian, superintendent of Brazos Bend State Park; Justin Rhodes, State Parks regional director; Walt Bailey, State Parks regional interpretive specialist; Richard Taylor, lead maintenance ranger at Brazos Bend State Park; Thor Holder, sign designer and artist of Signs By Tomorrow; and Offie Walker, president of the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization. (TPWD photo by Bryan Frazier, old sign photo by Steve Killian)





# THE PASSING OF OUR KESTREL

by Sharon Hanzik

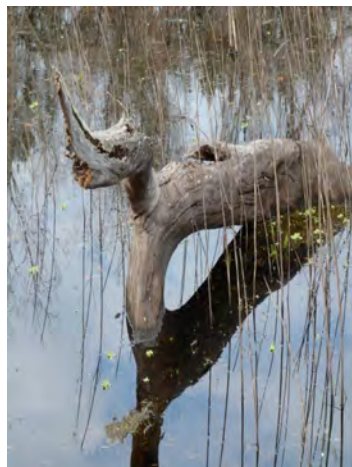
She died on Friday, December 30, 2011 of old age. We received her a few years ago with the knowledge that she was an older bird. Life span is somewhere in the range of 6-8 years. We do hope to replace her with either another rehab kestrel or eastern screech owl.

The photo was taken by Mike Sanderson on September 18, when Pam Tatge was taking her out for interpretation.



## WHAT DO YOU SEE?

by Carrie Sample



Thanks for all the replies to the last picture - everyone agreed on an alligator, but the winning reply was by Justin Rhodes, our Region 4 Park Director. He labeled it a 'Dancing Alligator'.

Here is the second picture to use your imagination as to what it is! Since the last one was all deemed an alligator, the rule for this one is - it can't be an alligator!!!! The location of this one is the new pier on the Forest Trail. Please send your replies to Carrie at <[csample0@comcast.net](mailto:csample0@comcast.net)>.

## JOURNEYS WITH JACI BRAZOS BEND BY MOONLIGHT

by Jaci M. Elliott

On a chilly Friday in November, as I tried to unsuccessfully leave my school before five, I ran over the camping supply list in my head one last time and drove to Brazos Bend State Park by way of Highway 59 and past the Greatwood Subdivision. I suppose I could have stopped in at the Buc-see's store along the route and picked up some fast-food camp chow for dinner, but I wanted to make good time. The plan was to set up my two-man tent before dark. After all, I did have my thermos filled with hot water and the hot chocolate mix stowed among my food supplies, which would be important once the temperature dipped into the promised low 40's.

Well, I didn't get myself set up before the daylight disappeared; however, fellow volunteer and cold-weather camper, Pete Hart, welcomed me to pitch my tent on his family's campsite, as we had discussed earlier in the week. I found a spot near the tree line and behind his trailer. There was a cozy campfire chattering away in the fire ring, and I would take Pete up on his offer to join the camp fire tenders, but later, after first exploring part of the park by bike.

Not wanting to park my CRV off the pavement allotted to our shared campsite, I left it near the closest camp restroom, and hauled out my trail bike. Swathed in fleece wear, gloves, ski hat and helmet, I enlisted the illuminating help of my headlamp and taillight, more for safety's sake (sharing the road) than necessity's; you see, the park byways were easy to navigate, immersed as they were by a shadow-casting full moon.

I peddled from the campground area to the entrance of Creekfield Trail, hid my bike out of sight, and hiked around the lake sans LED light. My concerns about encountering creatures reptilian were nil due to the cold; yet vultures rustling in the large live oak near the long pier and the intermittent eruptions from a few water fowl did send a shiver up my spine. A glance across at Creekfield Lake (in November a patchwork of reflective puddles) revealed the moon doubled, above and below the horizon.

Returning to my undisclosed bike location, it was now on to the Hale Lake picnic area. I went by way of Big Creek Bridge, and, instead of ditching the cycle, I decided to circle the loop several times. With no other vehicles in view, I cranked it up to full speed and the circuit became my private velodrome of sorts. When I startled a family of feral pigs on my first go-round, I found myself porcine panicked. No matter that, on the bike, I'm at an advantage (sitting higher up and with a means for a quicker get away) I'm always a bit suspicious when I first spy several wild hogs—call it a long association with that chilling chapter from “Old Yeller.”

Warmed from my solitary racing, I decided next to visit Elm and Forty-Acre Lakes via a figure-eight route around them both. I peddled back across the Big Creek Bridge. Meeting minimal motor traffic during this evening ride let me pay more attention to the armadillos that came out to dig at roadside. They were not unlike those hard hat guys I saw a few weeks ago trenching a pipeline under the road outside the park. Neither one paid me any mind; lost as they both seemed to be in their work.

On the graveled trails, shadows from branches above tick by like passing lane dashes on a highway. And when I disembark from my bike to walk Hoot's Hollow, it seems as if I am exploring a cave; the Spanish moss stalactites droop down from either side of the path and the root tendrils try their best to trip me when I glance elsewhere. And always, that Cyclops— sometimes cloudy, sometimes clear, always with cataracts and craters—that sky's eye, the Moon, seems to follow me everywhere I go.

On my second pass near the observation tower I stop and climb to the top. I try an old trick: to focus the sounds around me, I cup both hands, one behind each ear, and yawn wide. Hey, no one can see me at this point, and it's supposed to work in much the same way that an owl's dish-shaped face, or a bat's big ears, aid in hearing. Success! A great horned owl hoots from down near the spillway. Only minutes later, when I am crossing that very spillway on my bike, am I treated to a hushed flyover by said owl.

Weary in the knees and numb in the fingers and nose, I head back to the campsite. By this time, Mr. Pete's daughter (another school teacher!) and son-in-law are enjoying the warmth of the fire and I join them, sinking into my folding chair. As our beverages warm us from the inside-out over the next several minutes, my tent suddenly becomes the main attraction for a crew of raccoons. I realize I have just a bit of dark chocolate packed away in there. Now surely those rascals can't have the cat-burglar skills to unzip a tent door *and* a back pack *and* pop open a cookie tin? But of course, they must (I can see Sharon Hanzik's picture looking at me from the cover of her children's book on raccoons and hear her laughing...but no, it's my fire ring friends), and before the would-be bandits all climb into my tent, I give up on trying to shoo them away and just take the tin back to the safety of the Honda.

Some hours later, after finally climbing into my welcome sleeping bag, I gaze up through the mesh roof of the tent—no rain fly needed. Throughout the night and into the morning I watch the moon lazily arc across the star-speckled sky, now that I am the one of us who is seemingly stationary.

# MY NEW FAVORITE PLACE

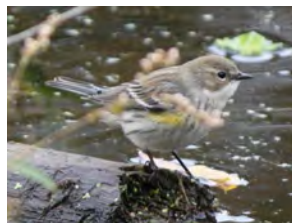
*by Carrie Sample*



If you haven't been down the Creekfield Forest Trail lately, you are in for a treat. Our maintenance guys have constructed a new pier there. When I first saw it, there was no water around it. But now, there is water and plenty of action!!!

The smaller birds at the park are my favorite. Sitting on the pier, I took these pictures of this Orange Crowned Kinglet, Yellow Rumped Warbler, Wilson's Warbler and Winter Wren while they were hopping around the reeds in the water. I also got a picture of Wood Ducks flying away. There were Shovelers, Blue Winged Teals, Coots, and Whistling Ducks. From the pier, you can see people crossing over the little bridge at Creekfield.

My grandsons and I went there one night and the stars were magnificent from this viewpoint. So, what are you waiting for? Go see if for yourself.



# HAWK AND RAT SNAKE

*by Sharon Hanzik*

Friday 12/30 - Suzie Gann and I did a little cross-country walk down the powerline easement on our way back from the shelters to the nature center. We followed the powerline easement to a gully that drains into Big Creek. As we crossed the gully, I heard some movement close by. I looked in the direction of the sound but did not notice anything until I saw what appeared to be a hawk rolling down the opposite bank.

Naturally, we went to investigate. We found an immature red-tailed hawk entangled with a 3 foot Texas rat snake, too large to dispatch easily. When it comes to predator/prey relationship, my philosophy is "let nature do what it does - do not interfere". But as we watched, we noticed that this would not end well for either one if we did not intervene.

However, the more I tried the tighter the snake twisted around the hawk's neck, and then I realized that the hind talon of the hawk was embedded in the lower jaw of the snake. They would both die. I did manage to remove the talon from the snake - with a stick - and hoped that this would free the snake to go on its way. Unfortunately we could not stick around to find out what happened, as Suzie would be late for her night hike. I went back the next morning and found no trace of either animal.



# WILDFLOWER SEEDING

*by Chuck Duplant*

Wildflowers are more than something beautiful to admire and photograph. They are a food source for native bees, butterflies and a host of other insects. Native bee populations are in decline, and promoting native wildflower growth can help sustain the bee population.

Along with wildflowers, nesting sites are needed to aid in sustaining bee populations. Most native bees are solitary and less aggressive than bees and wasps that form nesting colonies. They nest in logs with beetle holes and holes in bare ground.

On January 31, Jackie Elliot, Mike Sanderson, Sandy and Rich Jespersen, Brett, Grant and Pam Tatge and myself seeded the fields adjacent to the Observatory access road. The recent rain should drastically improve the odds of getting the wildflowers to grow. Future plans are to create nesting sites and continue with seeding. As we seed each year with a variety of native wildflower species these fields will bloom with beautiful flowers and buzz with life from native bees.



## TPWD AMENDS NUISANCE ALLIGATOR PERMIT PROCESS

*from TPWD website*

Over the past 20 years, the once-imperiled alligator population in Texas has rebounded spectacularly. Increased suburban, exurban, and industrial development in and adjacent to coastal counties, particularly along the mid- and upper coast, has resulted in increasing number of nuisance alligator complaints, especially in areas biologically characterized by diminishing or little to no habitat.

The new protocol will authorize a permitted control hunter to contract directly with landowner or landowner's agent (including a political subdivision, governmental entity, or property owner's association) for a fee or other compensation for the removal of nuisance alligators. The new protocol requires that each nuisance control hunter complete a certification process that includes an application to TPWD, a department administered course and a test on nuisance control. Reporting requirements will ensure that only bona fide nuisance alligators are taken by permitted control hunters. An annual permit fee is also required.

Prior to the new rules, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had contracted with qualified individuals for the removal of nuisance alligators. Each hunter bid for the privilege to conduct nuisance control activities in a specific territory, agreeing to pay a per foot price to the department for every alligator removed. In return, the control hunter was allowed to keep the alligator and could sell the skin and meat. All removals were authorized on a case by case basis by the department.

Persons interested in the nuisance alligator control program should contact Amos Cooper at 409-736-3625 (office) or 409-293-2836 (cell). Prospective permittees can also request the information by email at [amos.cooper@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:amos.cooper@tpwd.state.tx.us).

# A GARDEN OF OUR OWN

by Carrie Sample

Move over Longwood Gardens, Brazos Bend has a garden of its own! The Red Buckeye Trail in March has a dazzling display of colors with the Red Buckeye and Flowering Hawthornes blooming. The Red Buckeye actually varies in colors from orange to pink to the red. The white blooming trees are the Hawthorne blossoms. The exact dates of this flowering display depends on weather, so you may want to check with our experts (Sharon or David) to see when the beauty explodes!



## TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION DONATES \$500,000 TO TEXAS STATE PARKS

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation board of trustees voted to donate \$500,000 to Texas State Parks, hoping to encourage more donations to aid the state park system, which is facing a \$4.6 million revenue shortfall caused by heat, drought, wildfires and a drop in park visitation.

“Our intent is to encourage many other donors large and small to step up and help keep our Texas State Parks open,” said Kelly Thompson, TPW Foundation board chairman. “Our mission is to support the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and there has never been a greater need for private support of our parks. We will be aggressively seeking donations for state parks from private individuals, corporate partners, and other foundations to help reach the \$4.6 million goal.”

In addition to the Foundation donation, more than \$460,000 has been raised since Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials appealed for help December 6. That includes online and mailed donations and contributions through the new Texas motor vehicle opt-in donation program.

“We are deeply grateful to the foundation for their generous contribution, and to all those who have donated in recent weeks,” said Carter Smith, TPWD Executive Director. “We have a long way to go yet, but with this gift we have raised close to \$1 million toward our \$4.6 million goal, a remarkable achievement in a short time. This is yet another indication of how much Texans care about their state parks.”

Park officials continue to stress three ways Texans can help keep state parks open:

Go to <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/help/parks> to make a tax-deductible donation.

Make a donation when you renew your motor vehicle registration.

Finally, because visitor fees pay for about half of park system operating costs, visit state parks often with family and friends.

Since 1991, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation has been the official non-profit funding partner for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. By bringing together companies, corporations, communities and individuals, the Foundation has successfully raised more than \$70 million benefiting a wide variety of projects.

# 2011 IN REVIEW

by Anna Dell Williamson

2011 was a year of changes and growth. Below are just a few of the highlights of the year, in no particular order. If I have missed your favorite project, please forgive me:

**New Volunteers** who were awarded their cap and patch in 2011: Leigh Allen, Debbie and Kent Fewell, Pete and Christian Guzman, Lisa and Drake Hacker, Holly Haynes, Patty Henry, Ethan Hoover, Kat Hosek, Linda Keltner, Rosemary Kennedy, Lara and Leah Malone, Mike Manley, Sammie Miller, Cathy Nevotti, Earline Okruhlik, Paige O'Neal, Mike Sanderson, Woody Scott, and Reyes Torres.

## **Nature Center:**

Nature Center front desk remodeled, new stools

*Crocodilians of the World* panel installed in Nature Center, Ken Debenport Memorial

New fax/copier/printer for the Naturalists' office

Replacement of the Lexan glass in the alligator diorama



## **Gift Shop:**

New beverage cooler in Gift Shop

New computer purchased and accordion doors replaced

Planning for major renovation of display and storage areas

## **Park Additions, improvements, and planning:**

Elm Lake Viewing Platform completed

Live-Oak Trail started

Headquarters expansion project completed

Camping restroom renovations completed

NC and picnic area restrooms renovated with new counters and faucets

BBECC plans presented in Austin

Purchase of new John Deere Gators and a log splitter

Headquarters and the Nature Center were painted

New Sundial sign installed.

Creekfield Forest Trail platform completed

Purchase of new spotting scope and stool for Elm Lake Platform

NC and picnic area restrooms renovated with new counters and faucets

BBECC committee met with TPWD Planning and Design leadership

New entrance sign at the front of the park

Purchased a Portable PA system for the amphitheater



## **Events and Programs:**

Pilates Powerhouse of Pearland trail run

Doris Mager Birds of Prey program

Outreach programs to Sea Center, Katy Fest, Sweeney Pride event, Ducks Unlimited event at

Dewberry Farms, Texian Market Days, Missouri City Library,

Houston Zoo, nursing homes, schools, Kids Unlimited

Eco-Explorers and Tadpole classes - summer program

Ted Stevens started Geocaching course

National Trails Day, Healthy Parks, Healthy People day,

Sharon Hanzik's 25th anniversary as a TPWD employee

First *Cinco de mayo* celebration



13th annual Fourth of July Bike Parade  
 Volunteer picnic in Oct.  
 Started "demonstration station" programs  
 The 16th Annual Brazos Bend Butterfly Count  
 The Brazos River Pickers continued playing at BBSP  
 Astronomy Day at the George Observatory  
 Prairie Heritage Day  
 A Simple Christmas  
 Annual Brazos Bend Christmas Bird Count

**Projects:**

Archaeological research at BBSP  
 Recovery and relocation of Joe Carmichael Order of the Purple Heart bench  
 Parking lot lights installed  
 Wildlife ponds developed along Riverview Trail  
 BBSPVO approved funds for an alligator research project  
 Began work to replace existing Pilant Slough walkway with a new bridge



**Recognitions:**

*Houston Chronicle* published a full page article on our park  
 BBSP named as one of "10 Best Camp Sites Around the World"

**Events beyond our control:**

State budget cuts for TPWD  
 State-wide drought damage  
 Wildfire damage to many state parks  
 11.3 acre fire from a lightning strike on an oak tree near the front entrance at headquarters

**Losses:**

Deaths of Volunteers Emeritus Warren Jackson, Marty Gay and Rose Aden  
 Assistant Superintendent Chris Bishop left to become Superintendent at Lake Whitney SP.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS, MARCH, APRIL 2012

March 2	Bird hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
March 3	Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM
March 4	Bird hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
March 10	Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
March 30	Bird hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
April 6	Bird hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building, "Migration Madness" - BBSP and Quintana (optional, after lunch)
April 7	Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM
April 13	Bird hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building, "Migration Madness" - BBSP and Quintana (optional, after lunch)
April 14	Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
April 15	Bird hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
April 20	Bird hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building, "Migration Madness" - BBSP and Quintana (optional, after lunch)
April 27	Bird hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building, "Migration Madness" - BBSP and Quintana (optional, after lunch)

## Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville, TX 77461

### NEXT MEETING

**SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2012**  
**5:30 PM, NATURE CENTER CLASSROOM**

☆☆☆☆☆

## FIRST CLASS MAIL



### 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:	Offie Walker
Vice-President:	Mary Lockwood
Secretary	Belinda DiMarcello
Treasurer:	Bob Kowalewski
Past-President:	Carrie Sample
Comptroller:	Rachelle Watson

### NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editor	Anna Dell Williamson
Layout	Cynthia Morales
Production Assistant	Bruce Williamson
Distribution	Carol Ramsayer
Web Master	Anne Shelton

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

Á  
U] q q } • Á c ] ! ^ • • ^ a q Á c @ Á ^ , • | ^ c ! Á s ^ Á c @ Á ] q q } • Á Á c @  
æ c @ ! Á Á c @ Á s c | ^ s q á Á [ Á [ O ^ & ^ • • s q Á ^ Á & o Á c @ Á - Á s q  
] [ • á q } Á Á O ! æ [ • Á O ^ } á Á U c æ Á U s \ Á X [ | ^ } c ^ ! Á U ! \* s á á s q }  
} [ ! Á Á O O U Á s q } q á d s q } É Á V @ Á s ^ s q } ^ Á Á ! Á p ^ , • | ^ c !  
& } d á ~ c q } • Á Á c @ Á U s ! á s Á Á || | , q \* Á c @ Á [ ] c @ Á ^ Á c \* É  
á Á { s q } á Á d Á c } s Á O ^ | Á Y q | s q } • [ ] É Á ! Á s c @ Á Á ^ Á c \* Á s  
á ^ | c ^ ! ^ á Á c [ Á c @ Á ] s \ É Á Á c O É s q } Á s á ! ^ • • K  
L æ , á | | á s { • [ ] | O & [ { & æ • c É } ^ c N Á [ !  
L } ^ , • | ^ c ! O á ! æ [ • á ^ } á É ! \* N O Á Á p [ c á Á c } s Á O ^ | Á c q } F É  
| | | É Á | H D Á , ^ | | Á q Á s q } & Á [ - Á s ^ Á ^ c ^ } c Á Á ^ [ ~ Á , s q  
s } [ ~ } & á Á Á c @ Á ^ , • | ^ c ! É

In the end, we will conserve only what we love,  
we will love only what we understand,  
we will understand only what we are taught.

Baba Dioum, Senegal  
African Conservationist