



# BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Dogwood Blossoms  
*Photo Courtesy of Murry's Photos*

Attendance records were broken during Spring Break. Thanks to everyone who helped during the week. A big thanks to **Anna Dell Williamson** and **Beth Debenport** for managing the Gift Shop for the entire week. As **Steve Killian** said, "We couldn't have done it without you!" I hope you enjoyed talking with the visitors as much as I did.

Be sure to include some of your volunteer time out on the trails. The Red Buckeye Trail is fantastic with all the red blooms, and various trees have white blooms. Have you noticed how our wading birds have got their best colors on? The yellow-crowned night herons are actually showing their yellow crowns! The ibises have brilliant orange bills and legs. A visitor noted how the pied-bill grebes are dressy. The yellow flowers along our roadways make a bright welcome to park visitors.

We are once again planning to build a new Visitor's Center. Superintendent **Steve Killian** agreed that if we want one, we will have to do it. The park personnel will support us in any way they can. The first planning meeting was held March 27th. If you didn't attend, there will be many opportunities for you to help. Fund-raising will be our biggest concern. If you have any leads on possible grants or other ways to raise money, contact **Chuck DuPlant**, **David Heinicke**, **Sharon Hanzik**, or myself.

**Pam Tatge** has been busy getting our garden around the nature center in shape. Her goal is to have all native plants which support our wildlife.

Our new group of VITs are doing a fantastic job in their final phases of training. What a great feeling to be around happy people with smiling faces! Thanks to all of the volunteers who so cheerfully perform their duties to make Brazos Bend a truly great place. — *Carrie Sample*

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# MARCH MEETING NOTES

Contributed by Anna Dell Williamson



President **Carrie Sample** called the meeting to order. There were 10 Volunteers, 3 staff members and 4 VITs present. The minutes of the February meeting were approved as posted.

**David Heinicke**, **Steve Killian** and **Chris Bishop** brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in this newsletter.

BUDGET REPORT: **Rachelle Watson** is standing in for **Dave Armstrong**. She went over the February financials, which are filed with the minutes and are available in the lounge.

The following requests for purchases were approved:

**David Heinicke** requested two wooden stools for the Nature Center, one for beside the alligator tank and one for the classroom. This will come out of Nature Center General Maintenance and Support. David also requested three light fixtures for the Nature Center sidewalk and parking lot. These are low lights that will not interfere with the Observatory visibility. Funds will come from the Park Structural Fund.

**Bruce Williamson** requested a wireless network range extender, HREN 1, with no data cable needed to connect it to the network. This will extend the Nature Center wireless internet to the volunteer lounge and classroom upstairs.

**Pam Tatge** requested the book, *Take a Tree Walk*, from Acorn Naturalist, for \$20.00, to place in the library. This will be used for information talks for Creekfield Forest Trail and activities for children. Funds will come from the Library Fund. Pam further requested native plants for the Nature Center garden from the Mercer Arboretum March annual plant sale. Funding for the garden will be put back in the budget next year.

**Sharon Hanzik** requested waste baskets for offices, Nature Center, classroom, and Gift Shop.

**Richard Taylor** requested a DVD player, TV and outdoor antenna. Rangers will use these as tools for information, technology, local weather news, emergency, storm watch, etc. It will be housed in the Ranger Hut. Funds will come out of Special Projects, Park Structural Improvements fund.

OUTREACH REPORT: **Judy Strauss** reported on the outreach for the Brazoria Heritage Day on March 6. We had 1,012 visitors, including Bill White, former mayor of Houston and candidate for Governor of Texas. The BBSP volunteer crew consisted of **Jim North**, **Nancy** and **Bear Dobbs**, **Cynthia Morales** and **Elizabeth Villanueva**, and **Jerry Carpenter**. There were lots of activities, and our new banner could be seen from the road. Upcoming events: March 27 will be Children's Day at the Ft. Bend Museum, 11 AM - 4PM. April 10 will be the Katy Folk Festival. April 17 is the Greatwood Spring Fling, and April 24 is the Rosenberg Railroad Museum Hobo Day. Sign up for these programs on the events calendar and contact **Judy Strauss** with questions.

GIFT SHOP REPORT: **Beth Debenport** reported that sales have been up all week. We have had great help in the Gift Shop.

FIREWOOD: **Chuck DuPlant** reported that firewood sales were spectacular during Spring Break week. Many people have been helping with bundling wood and stocking the kiosks. Thanks to all who bundled. We couldn't have done it without the help.

TRAINING REPORT: **Anna Dell Williamson** introduced the VIT's present - **Pete Flores**, **Carl Franke**, **Nancy Lynn Jones** and **Ric Rincon**.

**BUTTERFLY GARDEN:** **Pam Tatge** reported on the flower garden by the Nature Center. We are looking for native host plants. More green things survived the cold weather than expected.

**ECO-EXPLORERS REPORT:** **Carrie Sample** reported that the Eco-Explorers sessions next summer will be divided into two age groups. Children from 7 to 12 years will meet every Thursday. There will be a limit of 30 children by pre-paid reservation only. We are adding a younger group (ages 2-6) every other Tuesday, no reservation required. We will need 4-5 people to help, especially on Thursday. The Houston Arboretum, the Angler Master Naturalist group and Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists will be helping. Publicity on the program and how to pre-register will go out in about three weeks. Former participants will be e-mailed, and information will be put on our website. The registration fee will be called a donation.

**MEMORIAL:** We discussed plans for the Fletcher Morgan memorial. Two suggestions were made. One was to have a display of the flags of the countries that have visited BBSP. The other was to remodel the Nature Center desk. Members will be notified of the plans so they may make donations. There was discussion regarding ideas to remodel the Nature Center desk. **Bruce Williamson** moved to remodel the Nature Center desk for the Memorial. **Judy Strauss** seconded the motion, which passed.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Chuck DuPlant** announced that the Building Committee will have a preliminary meeting on Saturday, March 27 at 10:00 AM. Since funds for the new building were not approved by the Legislature, we need to meet to discuss moving forward. We hope to get the ball rolling again. **Steve** and **Chris** are invited to the meeting. Park will take care of infrastructure and bureaucracy, and we have the concept and ideas for the center. The plan has to be feasible, and mesh with the park mission and park structures.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Jerry Zona had to go back to the hospital Tuesday, and now the infection is cleared and he is at home, doing better. The Executive Committee approved his request for a leave of absence.

THANKS to **Judy Strauss** for providing the meeting supper.

The meeting was adjourned.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### **STEVE KILLIAN, SUPERINTENDENT**



Sunday, March 14, was the biggest day ever at the park.

KHOU-11 did a story on the park and how budget cuts may affect the Parks Division and BBSP. We don't know when the story will run. The cameramen went through the entire park, and interviewed **David Heinicke**, **Steve Killian**, and **Chris Bishop**.

The equestrian water well is fully operational, but not with a traditional pump. A compressor was purchased out of Park Operations.

Rangers and weekday volunteers removed dead tree limbs. Rangers and hosts began mowing, and this will continue until October or early November. We are not mowing roadsides yet, to maintain the wildflowers as long as we can. When they pass their peak, then we will mow.

**Chris Bishop** and **Steve Killian** worked the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, used our banner and digital frame in their presentation of the park. There were many contacts over two full days. The purpose was to publicize our own park and other Texas state parks.

Maintenance has completed multiple shop projects, insulated the carpentry shop, removed the motor from the Argo, and will move the motor to the red Mule, which it fits. The air boat and the Mudbuddy take the Argo's place.

Resource management continues, although it was at a low level for five weeks due to freezes. There has been trail spraying and spraying around signs.

Ducks Unlimited is paying for a project to enhance Pilant Lake. We are using the water control structure in Green Tree reservoir to maintain the water level. The money will be used for herbicides to reclaim Pilant Lake to the same level as the other reclaimed lakes.

**Chris Bishop** and **Steve Killian** attended the Houston Wilderness Event, and met with Carter Smith and other conservation leaders.

Texas Outdoor Family will be April 10. In addition, we will host the Student Conservation Association, which consists of high school and early college students who will work on trails in the park for 1½ days. They will camp in the park.

The Park Operations trainee position has been posted. This is not a permanent position, but provides training for a recent graduate for a limited time. The trainee should be on board by May 1 or 15, and will stay in the FEMA trailer by maintenance.



## **CHRIS BISHOP, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT**

In times of greatest need, we most notice what friends do for us. Last Thursday (during Spring Break) I came to the Nature Center, and saw it full, with members of the Volunteer Organization helping by providing information, interpretation, and education. THANKS!

I had some house guests who visited the Nature Center and had a great experience. They had great things to say about Tom's snake program.



## **DAVID HEINICKE, INTERPRETIVE RANGER**

Spring Break was hugely successful. We had 1,307 visitors last Saturday, which made it a record Saturday. For the last seven days (March 13-20), we had 6,497 visitors in the Nature Center. We had four days with over 1,000 in attendance.

Upcoming events include the following:

April 2, 4, Good Friday, Easter. Easter is our busiest day in the park if we have nice weather.

April 10: Bird Migration and Introduction to Family Camping.

May 8, Outdoor Skills Workshop. There will be in-depth programming on outdoor skills, including birding, fishing, camping, cooking, starting fires, and geocaching.

Elm Lake Wildlife Viewing Platform: Infrastructure costs will be paid by Regional Office. We expect to get soil samples from land and lake soon. After the reports are in, we will do the final drawings, and get started on the footings. There will be more discussion on how it will be bid.

David will be out all next week. **Sharon Hanzik's** Dad is better, and the biopsy report was negative. She will return to work tomorrow.



## RICHARD TAYLOR, LEAD RANGER

After what seems like a long drawn out winter, spring has finally arrived. Overall I would say we had a successful visitation during Spring Break, with only a few interruptions by the weather. All the Staff, Hosts, and Volunteers deserve a big round of applause. I guess we need to give a round of applause to our resident Gators too, because they were definitely putting on a show for our visitors. Most all the trails and islands at 40 Acre and Elm Lake presented the American Alligator in their best form, basking away trying to soak up the sun.

I would like to thank the Rangers for switching over to customer service mode during the week and still maintaining the park at its best. Everyone pitched in to greet visitors lined up at the gate, assist at HQ and greet visitors on the trails and in day use areas. Job well done to all.

I would like to introduce our new Ranger II, Mr. **Alan Elster**. Alan started with us on March 15th. He comes to us with a good background in maintenance, equipment, and electrical. Please welcome Alan into the BBSP family.

Work continues on our many projects that have been plagued by weather. We finally got the concrete poured at HQ for the Administration building expansion. All the underground is in for the new Host sites and residence at the maintenance area. We're hoping to get these projects completed soon.

A big thank you to our Resource Specialist, **Dennis Jones**, for his morning briefings on Alligator Etiquette and other animal knowledge lessons for the Rangers and Host staff. It really paid off during Spring Break, being able to patrol and recognize the needs of the park and of our visitors.

During Spring Break and Easter our dumpsters and trash cans were overburdened with heaps of trash and Rocky Raccoon found his supermarket. Encourage all of our visitors to pick up their trash and dispose of it in the dumpsters. Next, the trails are starting to dry up some but a lot of puddles remain. If at all possible please go around the puddles when bike riding or using ATV's. This will aid in preventing ruts when the water dries up.

BBSP/TPWD is now on Facebook. I encourage all to join our fan club. Post your pictures and get involved in our discussions. A picture is worth a whole lot more than words. Let's show the world what Brazos Bend State Park is all about.

In closing, I would like to thank all the visitors that have come to BBSP. During Spring Break I met people from all over the world. More times than I can count when I asked them what brought them to the park, they replied the OUTDOORS! That's what it's all about, enjoying Mother Nature in her best form.

## WILDFLOWERS STARTING TO POP UP ACROSS TEXAS

*News Release March 23, 2010, Media Contact: Rob McCorkle, 830-866-3533, robert.mccorkle@tpwd.state.tx.us*

AUSTIN — Someone forgot to give Texas wildflowers a wakeup call, but they are slowly rising from their winter slumber and promise a dazzling display in coming weeks. In most parts of the state, a colder-than-average winter has gotten the wildflower season off to a slow start, but Texas Parks and Wildlife Department botanists predict a great year.

While wildflower worshippers can find 700,000 acres along Texas highways and by-ways to indulge their passion, they can stop safely to view, photograph and smell the flowers at more than 90 Texas state parks. For updated statewide wildflower reports, visit the Texas Department of Transportation's Web site or call 1-800-452-9292 that details where noteworthy stands of wildflowers have been sighted along the state's highways. Also check the following websites:

<http://www.brenhamtexas.com/wildflowerwatch.htm> and [http://www.txdot.gov/travel/flora\\_conditions.htm](http://www.txdot.gov/travel/flora_conditions.htm)



# NATURE CENTER REPORT

## March 2010

*Contributed by Anna Dell Williamson*

*Below are the totals for the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for March 1-31, 2010. In spite of a few cold, wet days, we had record park attendance and record Nature Center attendance during Spring Break.*

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
<b>NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE</b> March 2010 - 11,816 (high 1307, 3/13) March 2009 - 9,669 March 2008 - 10,684 March 2007 - 6,835	<b>Saturdays (4) 3441</b> <b>High, 1307, 3/13</b> <b>Average: 860</b>
	<b>Sundays (4) – 2445</b> <b>High, 1004, 3/14</b> <b>Average: 611</b>
	<b>Weekdays (23) – 5920</b> <b>High, 1260, 3/18</b> <b>Average, 257</b>
<b>CREEKFIELD HIKES (9 days)</b>	<b>219– High, 89 - 3/6</b>
<b>ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (6)</b>	<b>236 - High, 63 - 3/6</b>
<b>ASK THE RANGER (3)</b>	<b>97- High, 47 - 3/13</b>
<b>SNAKE PROGRAMS (3)</b>	<b>370 – High, 125 - 3/27</b>
<b>CHILDREN’S STORY TIME (5)</b>	<b>85– High, 41 - 3/20</b>
<b>OUTREACH (5)</b>	<b>1425</b>
<b>POND LIFE</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>OTHER PROGRAMS (7)</b> includes bird hikes, bobcats, armadillo, owls, bees, wildlife trivia and photo hike	<b>281</b>
<b>TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS</b>	<b>2686</b>
<b>VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>	<b>757</b>
<b>TOTAL PARK VISITATION</b>	<b>25,000</b>

## REPORT ON MEMBERS

**Jerry Zona** is home and progressing well at last report.

**Rose** and **Elmer Aden** are together at the Courtyards at Pasadena. **Bruce** and **Anna Dell Williamson** visited them April 5. They had a very nice visit, and both Rose and Elmer indicated how much they miss the park. They would love visitors. The plans are for them to move to San Angelo to be with their daughter, but the time was not set when we visited.



# OUTREACH REPORT

Contributed by Judy Strauss

## BRAZORIA HERITAGE DAY

The City of Brazoria held their annual Brazoria Heritage Day Celebration on Saturday, March 6 from 9-4. I would like to thank **Jim North** for arriving early to help me with the set-up. We sported our new banner on our tent, and it was said that it could be seen from the streets, over 100 yards away! This is really great!

We had over 1,000 visitors come by our booth; one special visitor was the former Mayor of Houston, Bill White. (Don't think he was too fond of my companion, tho! I had a permanent indentation in my shoulder where he was holding on to make sure that I didn't make any sudden moves!) This was a great crowd of people, all very interested in preservation, and lovers of the outdoors. In addition to our booth and many others, there was a parade down Hwy 36, which included a cattle drive on horseback, a "buffalo" drive by wranglers on foot, antique cars, antique tractors, fire trucks with horns and sirens blaring, floats and a trail ride with horses and wagons. It was really a sight to see!



**Former Houston Mayor Bill White and volunteers at Brazoria Heritage Day**

"Thank You's" to **Nancy Dobbs & Bear, Cynthia Morales, Elizabeth Villanueva, Jerry Carpenter** and **Jim North** for all of their help and time with this event (one of my favorites!). I really appreciated you all!

## FORT BEND MUSEUM CHILDREN'S DAY



**Judy Strauss with Tyler and Riley Teague**

The Children's Day Outreach at the Fort Bend Museum was held Saturday, March 27, from 12-5. My grandson **Tyler**, a Junior Volunteer, came early with me to help set up the tent and our table displays. He did a really nice job with everything – couldn't have done it without him! **Nancy Dobbs & Bear, Susie Gann, and Tyler Teague (Jr.)** were there to start off the event, and we were joined a little later by "future volunteer" **Riley Teague** (Riley had a baseball game, so had to come a little late).

The afternoon shift consisted of **Tyler and Riley Teague** and **Diane and Jerry Carpenter**. We had a total of 412 visitors. Many had been to our booth in previous years, but there were some who had never been to BBSP but seemed very interested in visiting the park after talking with us. Great turnout, beautiful weather, and a great staff! You just couldn't ask for more! Thank you again to everyone who helped with this event. Don't forget to count your hours!

I still need help on our upcoming events for April. They are all listed on the events calendar and are open to all volunteers and VITs. It would be great experience for our new VITs and, remember, the hours behind the booth DO count towards you yearly requirements. Travel time to and from the events also counts. If you have any question, please don't hesitate to call me at 281-980-4104 during the day, or 979-793-7392 in the evenings. Thank you, again, to all of you who have helped me in the past and to all of you who will be helping me in the future!

# VOLUNTEER NEWS & NOTES



... to **Suzie Gann** for recovering and repainting one of the bar stools in the Nature Center.

... to **Judy Strauss** for the March meeting supper.

... to everyone who has helped with firewood splitting and bundling.

... to **Chuck DuPlant** for coordinating the firewood program.

... to **Ron Morrison** and his crew for all the trail maintenance work and developing the Creekfield Forest Trail.



... to **Ric Rincon** and **Carl Franke** on completing their volunteer membership requirements. Ric is active in spite of moving out of the area, and Carl is the first VIT from the February class to finish. Give them both a warm welcome to the organization.

... to volunteers **Tom Kanak** and **Candice Kenyon**, who were recently married.

... to **Bill Godley** and **Diana Morrison** on their engagement.



## April Birthdays

Pete Flores, VIT  
Joyce Giese  
Richard Taylor (Staff)

## May Birthdays

Rose Aden (Emeritus)  
Kevin Brantley (VIT)  
Suzie Gann  
Virginia Harrison  
JT Kalina (Staff)  
Dennis Keprta (Emeritus)  
Mikki Kilgore, VIT  
Carrie Sample  
Dawn Tejero



## April Anniversaries

Virginia and Charlie Harrison  
Jim and Jacqueline North

## May Anniversaries

Rose and Elmer Aden (Emeritus)  
Jo Ann (VIT) and Chuck Davis  
Linda and David Heinicke  
Patricia and Steve Marshall  
Ed and Cathy Waley



# WATER STATION POLICY



It's time to review the Water Station procedures. We began the spring/summer water delivery on April 2, and we will deliver water on weekends and holidays until Labor Day. If you haven't done so in a while, please review the Water Station Policy posted on the Chaseway door before you go out on your first run of the season.

Last year we changed the procedure for getting ice for the stations. This is just a reminder that we no longer use ice that the Gift Shop has purchased for sale to campers. The Park now has an ice machine located in the staff building in the maintenance yard (the building directly across the yard in front of the main gates). This machine is now being used to obtain the ice for the water stations.

After filling the water jugs and getting all the supplies needed for the water run (ice chest, trash grabber, bucket for trash, large trash bags, cups, radio, etc.), please get two to four ice bags from the upstairs area near where the paper cups are kept. After loading the gator, proceed to the maintenance yard to get the ice. There are ties on top of the bags if you need them, but 4 bags will stack upright nicely in the ice cooler. Using park ice will save the gift shop substantial funds that before were given up to ice for the water stations. Please remember that the bags were purchased strictly for the water run. Although the park ice is available to volunteers for personal use, the bags ARE NOT to be used for any purpose other than the water stations.

If you have any questions about the water station procedure, please contact David or Sharon.

Thanks for your support.

# LIVE ANIMAL HANDLING POLICY

It's time again to remind volunteers about our display animal handling policy. Handling the display animals is a privilege and not a right. TPWD has allowed us this privilege, and we do our best to ensure that safety comes first so that we can continue to offer this experience to our visitors. The policy must be adhered to in order to protect the public, the volunteer and the animal. This privilege can be revoked from a volunteer at the staff's discretion. The MOST important thing for you to remember is that visitors are NEVER allowed to hold the animal. Please review some highlights of this policy below. The complete policy can be found in the "Members" section of the BBSPVO website.



## BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK POLICY ON DISPLAY AND USE OF LIVE ANIMALS

This policy applies to live animals being displayed or used for educational and interpretive programs. It applies primarily to reptiles, amphibians, insects, spiders, birds and small mammals. This policy is not intended to deal with domestic or "stock" animals.

The purpose of this policy:

- To insure that all live animals are properly cared for.
- To insure that live animals are treated with respect and dignity.
- To insure the safety of the visitor, the interpreter and the animal.

#### Display of live animals:

Animals should not be given “pet” names or personified; it should be taught that they are wild animals and not pets.

#### Handling of live animals by the interpreter:

No dangerous animals (i.e. venomous snakes) should be handled.

The animals should always be treated humanely while being handled; any inhumane treatment will not be tolerated.

The animals should not be teased or prodded to perform or react.

Animals that are showing signs of stress or restlessness should not be handled.

The visitor should never be allowed to hold the animals.

The animals should never be placed in “cute” or “funny” positions. Don’t put the animals on your head, around your neck, etc....

The interpreter should not “up stage” the animal. This is not a time for egos or to act tough.

Hold the animal securely without causing undue stress.

Never startle, surprise or scare visitors with the animal. This is counterproductive to our mission.

If practicable, inform visitors why this animal is in captivity (injury, rescue, display, education, rehabilitation) and whether or not it will eventually end up being released back into the wild.

Explain to visitors that wild animals don’t make good pets and that some are illegal to keep.

#### Touching of the live animals by the visitor:

Use the word “touch” instead of the word “pet”.

Only animals that have a calm disposition should be touched.

Urge visitors to use one or two fingers only. No thumbs!

Touch the animal gently. Watch out for people “poking” or “slapping” at the animal.

Do not allow visitors to touch the animal on the head or around the mouth.

Visitors should never be pressured by the interpreter or others to touch an animal if they are reluctant to do so.

Do not approach the visitor when holding an animal; let the visitor approach you to avoid startling the visitor.

Encourage visitors to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after they have touched an animal.

Always keep an eye on the animal; never assume visitors are touching it gently when you are not watching.

Position the head away from visitors when holding the animal to be touched.

Do not allow more than one person at a time to touch the animal.

Using live animals or displaying them is a privilege that comes with a responsibility, a responsibility to the animal, to the visitor and to the educator. All should be treated with the respect and admiration that they deserve. Each new employee or volunteer that will be involved with interpretation or education should be made aware of this policy and should adhere to it.

## BOBCAT



**Jimmy and Mary Louise Sparks** from Sparks Taxidermy in Rosenberg, Texas, donated a mounted bobcat to BBSP. You can see it upstairs in the classroom right now, but it will soon be added to our public display in the Nature Center. **Chuck and Jo Ann Davis** (VIT) contributed to the work on it, also. A big “thank you” to the Sparks’ and to the Davis’ for this beautiful addition to our exhibits

# SPRING BREAK THANKS

*Contributed by Anna Dell Williamson*

Thanks to more than 43 members and 7 VITs who covered all the bases for 9 days' worth of Spring Break crowds. See the attendance numbers elsewhere. These are the names of volunteers who were signed up on the web calendar or whom I remember seeing. If I missed you, please let me know. I don't have the names of all of those who bundled wood or worked maintenance and trails, but I know there were several. Whether you served one shift or several, your help is greatly appreciated.

**Ray Anderson, Dave Armstrong, Jim Calvert, Diane Carpenter, Rick Dashnau, Ron Dearman, Beth Debenport, Belinda DiMarcello, Nancy and Bear Dobbs, Noel Duncan, Chuck DuPlant, Jaci M. Elliott, Suzie Gann, Marty and Nelda Gay, Virginia Harrison, Joan Hebert, Nancy Lynn Jones, Tom and Candice Kanak, Shanay Kapadia, Diane Kerr, Glen Kilgore, Christine Kovach, Mary Lockwood, Cynthia Morales, Ron Morrison, Jennifer and Curtis Parent, Tom Prentiss, Jacob Ramirez, Carrie Sample, Judy Strauss, Pam Tatge, Dawn Tejero, Tyler Teague, Barb Tucker, Elizabeth Villanueva, Marilyn Vossler, Ed Waley, Offie Walker, Connie Waltrip, and Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson.**

VITs who came out to help were: **Kevin Brantley, Sherida Carpenter, Katelyn Childs, Jo Ann Davis, Carl Franke, Pete Hart, and Véronique Toussaint-Sweerts.**

# SPRING BREAK REPORTS

*Contributed by Sharon Hanzik*

WOW – It really was madness wasn't it?! We advertised our “Marsh Madness Spring Break” for March 13-22. Nature Center visitation was at an all-time high with a new daily record of 1,307 on Saturday, March 13. Other attendance numbers: Sunday, 1,004; Monday, 678; Tuesday, 256 (rain); Wednesday, 894; Thursday, 1,260; Friday, 1,098, Saturday, 256 (rain and cold), Sunday, 284 (cold and blustery). Total visitation, 7,037.

Interpretive programs were well received. 718 visitors attended 29 programs and hikes. Volunteers conducted 16 of these, including two of mine that would have been canceled if not for volunteers. Gift shop sales for this period were excellent, and the shop was kept open a full eight hours every day. Firewood sales were great, thanks to all who kept up with bundling and restocking.

I am told that the park collected its highest revenue for one month in history. Please see below for the message from our assistant manager.

THANK YOU ALL!!

**FROM CHRIS BISHOP:** I was just thinking about our spring break, and I have a few thoughts that I wanted to share. By any barometer, this was a busy period of time for us.

We provided opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreational experiences; we provided exemplary public service; we served as responsible stewards of natural and cultural resources; we made forward progress on projects; and we negotiated unexpected challenges adeptly. It is amazing to me how adversity can bring out the best in people. I saw much in your work over the past couple of weeks that I really admire. I saw people maintaining a sense of humor in challenging situations. I saw people using creativity that lent itself to a higher level of service. I saw folks working across administrative boundaries to make things work and to make work-life easier for each other. I also saw people making the effort to conduct our work safely. I was not surprised, but I was impressed.

I also had some opportunities to see how much our partners help us. Last Thursday, I had an opportunity to visit the Nature Center and see what the Nature Center looks like when it is full of happy visitors. I saw members of the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization providing excellent hosting skills and interpretive prowess. Our park hosts were amazing! I am continually impressed with the experience, professionalism and commitment that they bring to the table.

When I see things like this – the recent work of both our paid and volunteer staff – I feel very confident about the quality of the service that we provide to the people of Texas and the stewardship of our resources. Thank you! I am very proud of the work that we have done together.

## SEA CENTER NATURE DAY THANK YOU

Dear Brazos Bend State Park Volunteers,

Thank you for participating in Nature Day and providing an educational opportunity for our visitors. Your exhibit was wonderful and the event was a huge success. We had a total of 669 registered guests. I have attached some photos from the event. Please let me know if you need any other information or if I can help in any other way. Have a great weekend,

Sincerely, Connie Stolte  
Visitor Center Manager  
Sea Center Texas  
Lake Jackson, Texas 77566



## ECO-EXPLORERS, SUMMER 2010

*Contributed by Carrie Sample*

Eco-Explorers will once again be held at the park on Thursdays from June 5 to July 29. We are adding a Tadpole Explorers on every other Tuesday from June 1 thru July 27. The Tadpole Explorers will be aimed at children from 2½ to 6 years of age and the Eco-Explorers from 7 to 12 years of age (although all ages are welcomed at each session).

To control the number of participants, we will have a pre-registration which will be announced in the papers soon. The cost will still be \$2 per child. Volunteers will be needed to work with small groups for the different activities. The schedule for the topics will be out shortly.

## STATE PARKS STUDY

From News Release dated February 19, 2010

Media Contact: Rob McCorkle, 830-866-3533, <[robert.mccorkle@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:robert.mccorkle@tpwd.state.tx.us)>

The typical visitor to a Texas state park is a middle-aged, white non-Hispanic from out of town traveling with a spouse or other family member, but no children, to camp, hike, relax or just enjoy the scenery. Those are just some of the results from a comprehensive statewide visitor survey conducted between 2002 and 2007 at 70 state parks, and whose results were recently compiled and analyzed by Sam Houston University.

The visitor survey of 27,000 customers showed, too, that the vast majority of state park visitors are satisfied with their park experience and that Texas state parks are a major tourism draw to the local area. Respondents were asked such questions as what was their primary reason for visiting a state park, what activities they participated in and what park improvements they would most like to see. Primary reason for visiting a state park:

Overnight visitors: camp out, 22%, relax/ get away/vacation, 14%; sightsee, 8%

Day visitors: sightsee/enjoy scenery, 15%; hike park trails, 13%

Satisfaction: Very satisfied, 65%; satisfied, 29%

Participation in recreation activities: Hiking top activity for overnight and day use visitors

Improvements: interpretive programs, 11% campers, 12% day use;

campsite improvements

more trails, signage and maps

improvements in restrooms and showers

As part of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's ongoing "Getting Better All The Time" initiative, these areas are being addressed.

Research indicated that only 11 percent of state park visitors are Hispanic, although Hispanics make up 37 percent of the Texas population. With the exception of a handful of parks, park visitation by Hispanics is very low. TPWD has begun planning to develop strategies to more effectively communicate with and meet the needs of this demographic group.

Another finding of significant concern to Texas Parks and Wildlife is the fact that only 1/3 of state park visitors came with children; even during the summer season only 43% of visitors were families with children. "This does not bode well for the future of conservation in Texas" said Walt Dabney, Texas State Parks Director. "If children aren't exposed to nature at an early age, they are unlikely to participate in nature-based activities as adults or become stewards of these natural places. State parks offer a safe and accessible way for today's urban youth to experience the natural world and we must do all we can to let Texas parents know that these are their public places to enjoy."

In recent years, TPWD has launched several initiatives, including the Texas Outdoor Family program, the Texas Geocaching Challenge and Free Fishing in State Parks to attract more families and others to Texas state parks. A new Texas state park Web site will launch in March, with videos of the parks, virtual tours for many of the parks and their facilities and Twitter updates and a Facebook fan page. The Web site, <http://www.texasstateparks.org/>, will provide current and potential park visitors with useful information and mapping to help them research and plan a day trip, a weekend getaway or a vacation to a state park.

## **WILDLIFE PHOTOS and VIDEOS**

*Contributed by Rick Dashnau*

Great Blue Heron with Siren: Here is some slow-motion footage I shot on February 7 of a Great Blue Heron. It's doing the kinds of things that some of us have already seen and photographed, but I'm hoping that most folks haven't seen it this way. <http://rickubis.20m.com/heronwithsiren020710.wmv>

I hadn't considered that the Herons might be trying for a "neck break" effect while shaking long prey around. I'd figured more on disorientation and maybe strangulation (if the beak can close with enough force), but viewed slowly, it looks like a possibility. Also, the feathers standing up on landing is something I've seen before. Is that from air turbulence lifting the feathers? Or, are the feathers being purposely elevated to increase drag and slow the bird down? Would that be possible?

How Big a Fish Can a Cormorant Eat? The answer is... a surprisingly big one. At least it was surprising to me. Recently I was watching some Cormorants diving for food. I think they are Double-Crested Cormorants, but I don't mind being corrected. I'd been trying to film one taking off. I got a lot of video footage of them diving. And then, I got a clip of a Cormorant with a pretty good pan-sized fish (a Bluegill? It's got the right shape, and looks like it has orange on its belly). The bird wasn't really close, but it was close enough to see what was going on. The clip is edited for length, but it is slow-motion.

So, it is 7 times slower than actual time. It's quite difficult eating sushi when it's bigger than your head.  
<http://rickubis.20m.com/doublecrestedcormorantfish.wmv>

**COLD ALLIGATORS:** Sunday, March 21, 2010. The temperature was 40 degrees when I got to the park at about 8:30 a.m. I hurried down the 40 Acre Lake Trail for two reasons: (1) to see if a Bald Eagle would fly over or hunt; and (2) I was very curious about what the baby alligators that have been seen there would be doing during this cold weather. I easily found the female that had been with the babies. She was lying in the water with just the top of her head and her nostrils above the surface. The water was very clear, and I was hoping to see the baby alligators near her in the water, lying on the bottom. I've seen the babies in the aquarium in the NC lying on the bottom when it gets chilly, and thought they'd do something similar outside. No such luck though. However, after careful searching I found three baby alligators hidden among the weeds.



Nothing happened for awhile, except that I talked to a number of park visitors as they passed by. As a couple moved by, headed towards the Observation Tower, a HUGE flock of white ibis flew in front of them, heading out over Pilant Lake.



Breathtaking! So much so that I stood there and gaped instead of snapping a picture. Above and behind them (and almost in the sun) a large bird flew in the same direction. I took a quick look through my binoculars, then dropped them and grabbed my camera. The bird was far from me, but I got one shot at about 10:45. This was the best I could do with the photo. The bird was far off. I tried to walk after it, but as I watched, it seemed to drop out of sight into the rice at Pilant Lake. But I had seen enough to be sure it was a Bald Eagle!

At about 11:40, one of the alligator babies appeared, and a minute or so later, one of the large ones. After that, one baby after another appeared from the same spot in the water in the grass. At 11:47 it started to get crowded. Many of them were appearing from the same direction. Here's a picture of the pile. From then on, they just laid in the sun all day. And then I did babysitter duty. It's amazing how many people would walk right by the babies without seeing them.

From time to time during the day, the mother would back away from the shore a few feet. She'd stay in the slightly deeper water for a little while (I didn't time it) and then move back to her spot near the bank. This seemed like odd behavior. She wasn't hunting. I finally guessed that since the temperature had dropped so quickly, the water would be warmer than the air and the female was actually "warming up" by retreating to slightly deeper water. But, that's just a guess. I stayed with these alligators for most of the day, until I left at about 3.

I'm passing on this story so we can help dispel some of the worry that some of our park visitors have for the baby alligators when the weather turns bad. They sure looked OK to me.



# 2010 KATY PRAIRIE BIOBLITZ

(The Katy Prairie Conservancy is a private non-profit organization dedicated to saving a sustainable portion of the Flat Out Wonderful Katy Prairie located just west of Houston. Katy Prairie Conservancy, 3015 Richmond Ave., Suite 230, Houston, TX 77098-3114, 713.523.6135, [www.katyprairie.org](http://www.katyprairie.org)).

In celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity, expert biologists and amateur naturalists will take to the field to observe and record as many living species of plants, birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, fish, and fungi as they can during a one day period. This exciting day of citizen science will add to our understanding of the rich biodiversity of the Katy Prairie and will also highlight the need to conserve a sustainable part of this irreplaceable habitat. Saturday, May 8, 2010, 6:30 AM - 8:30 PM. Check the website for more detailed information and specific time for activities.

## H.E.B. IN APRIL

Do you shop at HEB? If so, read the message below from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. If you have any questions, please contact ShawnAlis Cusato at the number below. Thank you.

Texas Parks & Wildlife Foundation is pleased to announce that H-E-B and North Texas Central Markets has selected EarthShare of Texas to be the beneficiary of its in-store coupon promotion for April, in recognition of Earth Day. This means that customers can tear off and add check-out coupons worth \$1, \$3, or \$5 to their total bill to support environmental work in the Central Texas, Houston, Gulf Coast, Rio Grande Valley and Border areas. In November, H-E-B's San Antonio region stores will feature EarthShare of Texas -- giving H-E-B's San Antonio customers the opportunity to support environmental work in the San Antonio area.

H-E-B has supported many EarthShare of Texas organizations with corporate grants or in-kind contributions. The April tear-pad promotion enables H-E-B customers to support the environmental program work of more than three dozen EarthShare of Texas organizations. Texas Parks & Wildlife Foundation will benefit, because the contributions will be divided among EarthShare of Texas organizations with program work in Texas.

Look for the EarthShare of Texas display and tear-off coupons at the check-out stands in more than 200 H-E-B and Central Market stores in most areas of Texas in late March through April. And help support Earth Share of Texas and the Texas environment!

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 23	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building, "Migration Madness"
April 24	Outreach, Rosenberg Railroad Hobo Day
April 30	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building, "Migration Madness"
May 7	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
May 8	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
May 16	Bird Hike, 8:00 AM, 40-Acre Lake restroom building
June 12	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM

## **Brazos Bend State Park**

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville, TX 77461

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

**NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME  
SATURDAY, MAY 8, 2010, 5:30 PM**



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### **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**

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Vice-President:	Suzie Gann
Secretary (acting):	Anna Dell Williamson
Treasurer:	Dave 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](mailto:awilliamson4@comcast.net)). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.