



# BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

**VOLUME 24, NUMBER 12**

**DECEMBER 2012**



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*DID ANYONE REMEMBER TO SET THE  
SUNDIAL BACK ONE HOUR???*

November is the month in which we follow the tradition of setting our clocks back one hour. It wasn't always so. Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century each city or town kept its own local time by using a sundial. Noon was often marked by the sound of bells or a cannon going off.

But when the railroads began transporting people from city to city it became evident that some form of 'time regulation' was needed. Fatal collisions occurred when two trains tried to occupy the same track at the same time. "Standardized time zones" were the result, followed shortly thereafter by the discovery that the Sun itself had to be figured into the equation. This was done through the Interstate Commerce Commission and the U S Naval Observatory. Even though time zones were used during WWI, it wasn't until 1966 that the Uniform Time Act was signed into law.

It's a good thing, too! It looks like December is going to be a busy month!

Merry Christmas and may you have many happy moments!  
Oh wait!...Isn't the world going to end on December 21<sup>st</sup>?

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A surprised Steve Killian poses with his family at his birthday party on November 19.

# T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS AT BRAZOS BEND

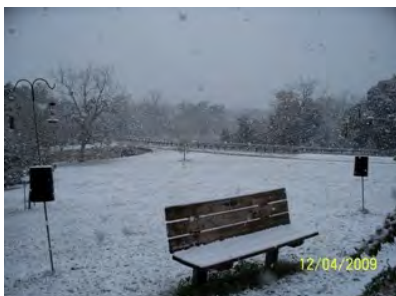
By David Heinicke

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



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

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



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

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



40-Acre Lake, Brazos Bend S.P.  
October 18, 2010  
Matthew Sabo, Flagstaff AZ

# NOVEMBER MEETING NOTES

*reported by Anna Dell Williamson*

**President Mary Lockwood** called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM on November 10, 2012. There were 15 members, 3 VITs and 3 staff members present. **Steve Killian** and **Sharon Hanzik** brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in the newsletter. The minutes from the October meeting were approved as posted.

## **Reports:**

### **Treasurer's Report, Bob Kowalewski:**

The following requests for purchase were presented and approved:

**Deer corn** for the deer hunt, coming out of deer hunt donations.

**Binoculars** to kids to use on bird hikes, from the Hobbitt Chevron fund.

**Upgrades to the day-use camping areas**, from the Park Supervisor's fund.

**Corporate membership in Texans for State Parks.** Offie Walker will be our Representative. He reported that volunteers can belong as individuals. They have an interesting website. Our membership will indicate that we are interested in more than just BBSP.

Steve was asked about driving park visitors on tours in the ATVs. The ATVs are covered under Parks and Wildlife insurance. Non staff cannot operate the vehicles, but volunteers and staff can take visitors in the vehicles.

Thanks to the Naegeli Transportation Company, who sponsored the Gator Run and donated funds for trail materials.

**Wood Yard, Chuck Duplant:** Wood sales are at 85%, which is a good profit. Sales are doing well. Pete Hart reported that the bundling system works well. Every rack is bundled by the work crew. Firewood is now sold as a donation, not a sale item.

**Building Committee, Chuck Duplant:** Chuck reported on the increase in space in the proposed BBEEC. The NC will go from 1200 square feet to 4000, the GS will be bigger, there will be an outdoor classroom, and the two classrooms upstairs can be combined to seat 230 people. There will be a lounge, offices, an open office area, a library, and a full kitchen in the lounge. The open area of the building will be good for special events out of the weather, where vendors, exhibits, etc., can be under the roof. There will be a ramp, stairs, and elevator to access the second floor. It will take twice as many volunteers to operate the BBEEC as the current Nature Center takes. We will be able to do so much more, and reach many more people. David and Chuck will meet with the architect from TPWD on November 28.

A picture of the proposed building will be put in the lounge with lists of where help is needed on the various task forces. While we are waiting for approval on fund raising, we are working on brochures, making contacts, feeling out different types of possible projects, and creating a donors group. We can't openly solicit donations for the building until we receive approval from Austin. Projected cost is between \$6 million and \$10 million.

**Maintenance, Pete Hart:** Maintenance volunteers put in 195 hours last month, planted 30 trees, split wood, moved wood for rangers, and cut wood. The maintenance crew thanks park staff for mechanical work done on the Gators to get them back in service quickly.

The crew built a new bridge on Pilant Slough, which Ron Morrison engineered. Bob Haynes, 88, has worked with the Maintenance Crew for a long time, and now has to stop for medical problems. The group would like to put a plaque on the bridge dedicating it to Bob Haynes. The new 4-seater Gator we

purchased is in Houston. It needs approval from Austin, then we can use it. It has a small dump bed, and will provide us with a vehicle with more seats to get crew members to work sites. There are openings on the Maintenance Crew for anyone willing to work hard.

**Training, Anna Dell Williamson:** We welcomed VIT's **Diane Welty**, and **Joe** and **Colton Southern** who attended the meeting tonight.

**Gift Shop, Beth Debenport:** Sales have been excellent recently, and cash sales and credit sales are about equal. It is obvious that accepting charge cards is helping increase revenue. The committee is working on ordering new items for Christmas and Spring Break.

**Toyota grants, Offie Walker:** We have applied for the grant "to sustain or improve the organization" and they have requested more information. We won't hear about acceptance until late November or early 2013. The funding may be used to provide some courses for training in grant writing and fund raising.

Thanks to **Lindsey Kahn** (sloppy joes), **Cindy Peterson** (macaroni), and **Joe Southern** (dessert) for the meeting dinner. The meeting was adjourned at 6:35.

## STAFF REPORTS

### STEVE KILLIAN, PARK SUPERINTENDENT



Steve showed us a picture of the **new team at Headquarters**, taken with the new I-pad. It was an outstanding October, although not a record, with lots of happy visitors and good revenue. We are continuing to move forward because of the team – volunteers, hosts and staff.

Since the last report, staff has finished surfacing the **prairie trail**. This is an outstanding addition to the trail system, which will immerse visitors in the prairie. Work was done by staff, BBSPVO Maintenance Crew, hosts, and TCJ workers. Parking will be at 40-Acre. We are getting some signs from

Bastrop, with painting done by Park Hosts. There are **visitor orientation panels** with a map on metal scattered throughout the trail system and containing safety and interpretive information.

**Sign shop** preparation continues. Ron Morrison is funding the project through the volunteers, and it should be ready by the first of the year. Volunteers, hosts and Scouts are building multiple **benches**, and staff members are setting the benches. The **deer hunt** begins Tuesday, with the draw for standby at noon.

**Ongoing activities** include removal of trees killed by the drought, spraying lakes for invasive species, trail trimming, and herbicide spraying.

Our newest clerk at Headquarters is **Gizelle Ramirez**. We are in the process of hiring a new Park Operations Trainee, with a projected start date of December 1 or 15. This person will take Ted Stevens' position. Ted is doing well in police academy.

**Astronomy Day** was a great success, thanks to volunteers.

The Volunteer Organization is getting some competition from the hosts. We now have nine sets of park hosts, and their service hours is going up to around 15,000 hours. This is the most hosts we've ever had, and they are doing tremendous work already. Many new ones arrived November 1. We have



rearranged the Ranger Hut to accommodate more people at meetings and completed upgrading the park host site at Hale Lake to make 10 sites, with two at Maintenance, three at the overflow camp, and four at the camping loops. Staff will let hosts know not to use Gators on Tuesday, Thursday, and weekends. We need them for the new trainee gator tours and regular activities. Remember when using the Gators to be aware of what's around you and to wear seatbelts.

There is a project for developing a recreational master plan for Ft Bend County, in the corridor around Brazos River. You can go to [www.Fortbendgreen.org](http://www.Fortbendgreen.org) to take a survey. The purpose is to expose people to the Brazos River and the area around it.

## SHARON HANZIK, INTERPRETIVE RANGER AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

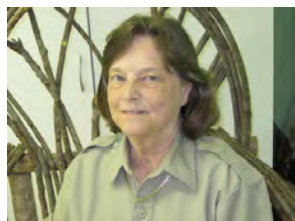


Emails have been sent out requesting help for Thanksgiving Week, especially for the 11:00-3:00 shifts. We would like to be open from 9:00-5:00, with three programs each day, including Creekfield Hike. Sign up on the regular calendar to work that week.

Simple Christmas will be Saturday, Dec 1. Sign up on the special events calendar. December 1 and 8 will be the Outdoor Family Campout.

The deadline for application for volunteer training is November 30. Application forms are submitted online. We have already had one interview.

## CONGRATULATIONS



to Diane Welty and Dennis Akkola for completing their training. Diane is the first member of the September class to finish, and Dennis wasn't far behind. Be sure to welcome our new members to the organization.



### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Robert Aaron  
Katy Childs  
Beth Debenport  
Jeff Orsak (Staff)  
Kathy Nevotti  
Colton Southern (VIT)  
Reyes Torres

### DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Troy and Patty Henry  
Dennis (Emeritus) and Dorothy Keptra  
Joe (VIT) and Sandy Southern



### JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Dennis Akkola  
Dave Armstrong  
Justin Bowers  
Joe Carmichael (Emeritus)  
Sherida Carpenter  
Nancy Dobbs  
Sharon Hanzik (Staff)  
Jim Hiett  
Nancy Lynn Jones  
Rosemary Kennedy  
Jane Minard  
Ron Morrison  
Jim North  
Laszlo Perlaky (Emeritus)  
Marilyn Vossler  
Diane Welty  
Bruce Williamson (Emeritus)



☺ to **ALL** from Sharon: I know, I nag, nag, nag. That's just part of my job! Volunteers have made many different statements about my job as a volunteer coordinator - "It must be a pain trying to keep us all together", "I bet you get frustrated with us". I'll admit, it has its challenges. HOWEVER - I cannot, do not, want to imagine what our park and it's services, and my job would be like without you! The benefits of having the BBSPVO far outweigh the little "challenges" involved with keeping it running. YOU MAKE LIFE BETTER OUTSIDE AT BBSP, and I am extremely thankful for that!  
Regardless of how you spent it, I hope you all enjoyed your Thanksgiving holiday.

- ☺ to **Naegeli Transportation**, sponsor of the Gator Run, who donated funds for trail materials.
- ☺ to **Lindsey Kahn** (sloppy joes), **Cindy Peterson** (macaroni), and **Joe Southern** (dessert) for the November meeting dinner.
- ☺ to **Rick Dashnau**, **Bill Godley** and **Barbara Keller-Willy** for articles for the newsletter.
- ☺ to **Barbara Keller-Willy** for the bison in the prairie
- ☺ to **Stacy Hobbitt** for using her Chevron fund for the purchase of binoculars
- ☺ to **Joanne Davis** for the alligator Christmas decorations
- ☺ to **everyone who helps out in the Gift Shop** weekends and weekdays. We had record sales in November, and we couldn't do it without everyone helping.

## NEW BINOCULARS FOR HIKE USE

Fifteen binoculars were purchased mainly for use during bird watching and other hikes with no more than 15 participants, "Bird Blizzard", or any other wildlife observation programs. The following procedures for using the binoculars should be followed:

Please check cleanliness and function before each use.

Always store in cases.

Take only one cleaning cloth and keep up with it.

Volunteers may use binoculars for trail interpretation, etc., as long as it does not interfere with a scheduled program when binoculars may be needed.

This purchase was made possible from the Hobbitt/Chevron fund, thanks to former volunteer Stacy Hobbitt. Binoculars are located in a labeled box atop the spotting scopes/tripods inside the office.

## MAINTENANCE REPORT

**The Volunteer Maintenance Crew reported 195 hours on the projects listed below.**

### **Wood Yard:**

Split and bundled wood

### **Mowing and Landscaping:**

Collect seeds at Nash Prairie

Collect and plant Inland Sea Oats

Mowing

### **Pest Control:**

Treat fire ant mounds

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

Creekfield Forest Trail maintenance

Cut a downed cedar oak on Live Oak Trail

### **Equipment Maintenance:**

Repair equipment

Miscellaneous maintenance

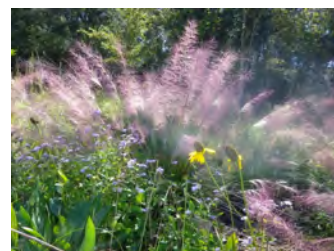
### **Special Projects:**

Lay trail material at Prairie Trail

# NATURE CENTER REPORT NOVEMBER 2012

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for November 1-30, 2012. The park was closed 3 days for the deer hunt, and Thanksgiving Day. The week of Thanksgiving was busy.

| PROGRAMS   | TOTALS NOVEMBER  |
|--|--|
| <b>NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE</b><br><br>Nov. 2012 - 6,332<br>Nov. 2011 - 6,091<br>Nov. 2010 - 5,338<br>Nov. 2009 - 7,488<br>Nov. 2008 - 6,312<br>Nov. 2007- 4,577<br>Nov. 2006 - 4,286<br>Nov. 2005 - 4,306 | Saturdays (4) - 2856<br>High, (11/10) - 948<br>Average: 714                              |
|  | Sundays (4) - 1430<br>High, (11/25) - 425<br>Average: 358                                |
|  | Weekdays (18) - 2046<br>High, (11/23) - 503<br>Average: 114                              |
| <b>CREEKFIELD HIKES (12)</b>   | 206  |
| <b>CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (6)</b>   | 92   |
| <b>SNAKE PROGRAM(7)</b>  | 157  |
| <b>ALLIGATOR (5)</b>   | 105  |
| <b>WILDLIFE VIEWING</b> (Scope, Alligator, Ranger led programs)  | 199  |
| <b>OUTREACH (1)</b>  | 186  |
| <b>BIRDS (4)</b>   | 66   |
| <b>OTHER PROGRAMS (7):</b> prairie (2), butterflies, Geocaching 101 (3), Poison Ivy, Creatures of the Night, Owls, and special program for Scouts.   | 124  |
| <b>TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS</b>   | 1138   |
| <b>VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>   | TOTAL = 1680   |
| <b>PARK ATTENDANCE</b><br>(Percentage reflects the percentage of total visitors in each category.)   | Total 20,857<br>Day use 13,996 (67%)<br>Overnight 6,861 (33%)<br>NC Visitors 6,332 (30%) |



Photos: Creekfield pocket prairie photos by Ron Morrison, November 2012  
Linda Heinicke, Carrie Sample, Bill Godley and Connie Waltrip with a Nature Center Visitor 9/15/12  
Doug DeVries, Gift Shop weekday worker. 11/19/12

# BABY PARADE

by Barbara Keller-Willy

*(Ed. Note: It would be interesting to have some articles highlighting various visitors to the Park and to the Nature Center. But one person can't always be present to notice these special groups or individuals. So I am asking each volunteer who sees something special about our visitors to talk to them about the park and their impressions, and then to report on the visitor or group and its activities for the newsletter. A picture is nice if available. Barbara suggested, "As we go forward, highlighting a partner group visiting the park is a way to get their message across and also for BBSP to show our role as an important site to not only our individual visitors but to other organizations as well.")*



One recent Wednesday a baby play group came to the park. From the door of the Nature Center, it looked like a baby parade. Babies and strollers filled the Nature Center. Mike Manley observed that, "Most of this group's time is spent preparing to move." Anyway I took a requested picture of the mommies/babies with one of our babies, and they sent it in for the newsletter. These babies qualify as some of our youngest Creekfield hikers, and we hope to see them again and again as they grow.

Here is the letter they sent to Barbara with the picture:

"We had so much fun on our field trip! Here is the picture from today. Names from left to right (mom's name followed by baby's): Kristin with Rebecca - 8 months, Allison with Makenna - 4 months, Jill with Ella and Sadie - 3 months, Lakisha with Kennedy - 11 months. Thanks for having us!" Kristin

# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



Calling all Volunteers to join the flock! It's that time of year again! The 28th annual Brazos Bend Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 15th. Many of you are already well aware of our participation in the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. This international event will mark its 113th year in 2012. Our local CBC has grown by leaps and bounds in past years, in great part due to the fantastic efforts and contributions of the Volunteer Organization. Last year our participants found 157 bird species, putting us within the top 5% of Counts around the globe. If you haven't made it out in recent years, come see what you're missing! This year it's even easier to participate because Audubon is waiving its usual \$5 fees. Please visit our new website at [www.brazosbendcbc.com](http://www.brazosbendcbc.com) to sign up or get more information.

In addition to Brazos Bend State Park itself, our Count Circle embraces a diverse habit including Smithers Lake, a nice slice of Brazoria County and some remarkable ranches and unusual areas west of the park. All levels of skills are welcome, and strong leadership is provided. New volunteers can learn a lot about the Park's birds at this event. Our event includes our renowned Count Dinner sponsored by NRG Energy, featuring BBQ from the famous Swinging Door restaurant. No one leaves hungry, and everyone gets home early after a full day of fun. The night will culminate with the much-coveted Big Bird award!

To sign up for the Brazos Bend CBC, please visit our website or contact Justin Bower at [justinbower@gmail.com](mailto:justinbower@gmail.com) or 832-746-2140. If you decide to join us at the last minute, that's fine, but you must be at the Brazos Bend State Park Nature Center by 6:45 a.m. on the 15th so we can assign you to a group. Remember to check our Brazos Bend State Park Volunteers website for upcoming "Guided Bird Hikes" and "Current Bird Sightings". We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you again. Let's show the other Counts what a group of superbly motivated volunteers can do! *(Photo by Jerry Zona)*

Justin Bower, Compiler

Bill Godley, Co-Compiler



# KEEP ON TRUCKIN' TRAIL RACES

Sponsored by PILATES POWERHOUSE RACE SERIES at Brazos Bend State Park

Half Marathon

Marathon

50K Ultra Courses

January 27th, 2013, starting at 7:15 AM; No race fees! No t-shirts! No awards! No official timing!  
Just a beautiful run in the park and an awesome after party! There will be a \$7 park entry fee unless you are a park pass holder!

This race is to raise awareness for Brazos Bend State Park. Donations for the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization will be accepted on race day. There will be an awesome after party, and we welcome you and your family to join us! Bring your coolers and a change of clothes. There are showers at the park!

There will only be two aid stations on the course which will provide water and gatorade. You must bring your own hydration carrier to be able to race. The loops are 13-17 miles, depending on your race distance, and the course will be WELL marked, same as last year. For a copy of the course map, email [mattney@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mattney@sbcglobal.net), or for more information, call Bonnie J. Ney 832-434-1156 or Matt J. Ney 832-474-1663.

## Brazos Bend Volunteer Organization

Volunteers have been a vital part of Brazos Bend State Park since its opening in 1984. The volunteers organized in 1989 by electing officers and adopting by-laws. The organization operates as an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. The Brazos Bend volunteers have been recognized for the highest number of volunteer hours, 15,821, for any park in Texas. The volunteers have demonstrated teamwork and quality of hours in support of Brazos Bend State Park.

## A SIMPLE CHRISTMAS

A visit from Santa, face painting, Dutch oven cooking, Victorian Era games, Children's Story Time and making pine-cone bird feeders all added up to a spectacular Simple Christmas celebration. In addition visitors could have their picture taken and purchase an 8 by 10 photograph. Top it all off with hayrides through the park, roasting marshmallows and s'mores, refreshments of cookies, hot cider and hot chocolate, and a couple of hours of bluegrass music laced with Christmas songs, and you have a great combination to please our many visitors. Attendance was estimated at between 500 and 600 visitors, and smiles were seen and positive comments were heard throughout the afternoon.

Thanks to Sharon Hanzik for organizing the event, and to the many, many volunteers who helped make it happen. Families built great memories, thanks to your efforts. If you missed this year's celebration, plan now for next year - the first Saturday in December.



*Photos courtesy of Hannah Meddaugh.*

# BABY GATOR CROSSING

by Rick Dashnau

(Ed. Note: This is condensed from Rick's [web page](#), in case you are interested in more details. All photos are courtesy of Rick Dashnau.)



Several of us have been watching a female alligator with babies at 40-Acre Lake. On the afternoon of November 4, 2012, I saw David and found out that the female alligator had crossed the trail. When David had passed by them on the way to the Observation Tower, the mother and babies were in 40-Acre Lake, but when he came back the other way, they had crossed the trail into Pilant Lake. A handful (about 6 babies) were in Pilant Lake with her. David said the mother alligator was a bit agitated and was circling around. I decided to go out and look.

When I got there, about 3:30, I could see a number of people standing on both sides of the trail taking pictures of the baby alligators and their mother (which was near the wild rice in Pilant Lake), and also of the group of baby alligators in 40-Acre Lake. When the people moved off, I moved about 10 paces west of both groups of alligators. This put me out of a direct path between the groups, and far enough away (I hoped) so the baby alligators wouldn't pay attention to me; the sun was behind me so I wouldn't be looking into it. Then I waited.

After some time, I noticed stirring in the plants at the water's edge of 40-Acre Lake, and I knew at least one baby alligator was coming ashore. But a few people came by, and the movement stopped. David appeared on his bike and moved east (towards the tower) about 10 paces on the other side of the alligators, while I stayed where I was. Time passed, and we tried to keep people from standing near the two groups of babies. We both explained what we were waiting for (baby alligators crossing the trail) but nothing happened. David eventually rode off west, and I stayed and waited. During quiet times without any passing visitors, the mother alligator moved into the rice, then stayed quiet for a while. Then she'd come out, move around, and go back into the rice. When she moved, the babies that were scattered around her in the water would chirp.

Finally, at about 4:18, I was rewarded with more movement in the grass. One tiny alligator appeared near 40-Acre Lake. Then another. We watched as the first few babies moved through the grass and climbed closer to the trail. And then one just started walking and crossed! And another followed close behind. Others started appearing in the grass.



I had to stop shooting to stop park visitors from walking over the baby alligators. But that was fun. As more visitors started coming by, I motioned for them to stop, then motioned them to approach slowly. While stopping the visitors (and keeping them quiet), I whispered about what we were seeing. I tried to communicate how very VERY rare the sight of this "parade" was. The 15 to 25 people who came by were all engrossed by what they saw.

At one point, as I explained how special this was (we were actually seeing something many of the park folks have been wondering about for years!), I explained how the female crossed earlier, and how she defends her young. Yet, I pointed out, as we were watching, any number of park predators could have grabbed one of the babies from 40-Acre Lake --or what would happen if they just got lost? But, in this case at least, they followed their mother into Pilant Lake.

People were coming from both directions, but I was able to stop them with hand signals. It helped that almost everyone behind me was gesturing and whispering to stop as well. They were all spellbound as we watched the tiny alligators crossing the trail. It was kind of funny at one time, when 2 folks on bikes came from behind and the whole crowd quietly waved them to stop. I whispered that alligators were crossing the trail. They looked and couldn't see anything, then looked at us like we were crazy. Then...a couple more little ones came out of the grass. Alligators were crossing, but at about 8 inches each, quite a bit smaller than the 6' or greater ones that usually cross.



Everyone cooperated, and as a result, we got to watch 16 alligators cross the trail. As the babies straggled across to Pilant Lake, they began chirping. After a while, the mother alligator would come out of the rice, approach the bank and wait for the babies to swim to her. Then she would move back toward the rice. She did this a number of times--swam out towards the trail, met some babies, moved back to the rice so the babies would follow.

Baby Number 17 chickened out and turned back towards 40-Acre Lake . At this point the sun was going behind clouds, and it was starting to darken, so I walked past the babies and couldn't see any in the grass. But I saw three more still in 40-Acre Lake. I figured I'd leave, and the remaining babies would cross later.

Although I would have gotten more photos and videos if I had kept filming, it was much more rewarding to get all the other park visitors involved. It was a REALLY wonderful thing to see--especially when everyone understood who and where "mom" was, and what went on before, and how alligators defend their young, and much more. That helped put the tiny wanderers into a greater perspective.



Consider this. The babies knew which way to go to follow their mother. They couldn't possibly see her. Mom did vocalize once or twice, a sort of low growl, but that's all. I had assumed that the sound was to keep us away. The babies near her did chirp often. But the babies in 40-Acre Lake came to the point nearest where their mother was across the trail. They gathered there. And then they climbed up through the grass and crossed the trail, then back down the other side--to where they were

met by their mother. They did not spread out in 40-Acre Lake. They did not swim back toward the islands. They moved to where the mother alligator was. How did they know which way to go? Did the chirping do it?

I've noticed some other things baby alligators do--how they will seek each other out in a tank or after travel; and that they will often clump together to sun themselves in the wild, or they just maintain a group in the wild. It sure looks to me like some kind of social activity and more than just automatic "seek out the 'alligator-shape' (whatever that would mean to an alligator) because it's safer to be in a group". I suppose those are distinctions that the animal behavior people could make.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| December 7     | Guided Bird Watching Hikes, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake restrooms   |
| December 8     | Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM<br>Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)<br>"Bird Blizzard at Sunset", Observation Tower |
| December 11-13 | Deer Hunt, park closed to public, volunteers not allowed in park without prior approval   |
| December 15    | 28 <sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count, 6:30 AM to dusk  |
| December 21    | Guided Bird Watching Hikes, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake restrooms   |

### 2013

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| January 4  | Guided Bird Watching Hikes, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake restrooms   |
| January 5  | Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 PM   |
| January 12 | Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM<br>Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)   |
| January 18 | Guided Bird Watching Hikes, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake restrooms   |
| January 19 | "Bird Blizzard at Sunset", Observation Tower  |
| January 27 | Keep on Truckin' Trail Races, 7:15 AM   |
| February 1 | Guided Bird Watching Hikes, 8:00 AM, meet at 40-Acre Lake restrooms   |
| February 2 | Brazos River Pickers, 5:00 PM   |
| February 9 | Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM<br>Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)<br>Volunteer Training Orientation and Luncheon, 9:30 - 3:00, NC |

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year*



## Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville, TX 77461

## FIRST CLASS MAIL

☆☆☆☆☆☆

**NEXT MEETING**  
**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2012**  
**5:30 PM, NATURE CENTER**



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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

|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| President:      | Mary Lockwood      |
| Vice-President: | Glen Kilgore       |
| Secretary       | Belinda DiMarcello |
| Treasurer:      | Bob Kowalewski     |
| Past-President: | Offie Walker       |
| Comptroller:    | Nancy Lynn Jones   |

#### NEWSLETTER TEAM

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Editor               | Anna Dell Williamson |
| 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.

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)> or <[newsletter@brazosbend.org](mailto:newsletter@brazosbend.org)>. Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.

**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**