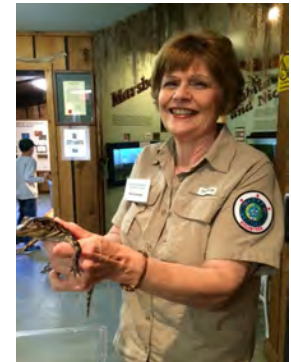


VOLUME 26, NUMBER 6

DECEMBER 2014



Volunteer Patti Alexander—
Photo courtesy Diane Welty

Upcoming Events:

- Fri Feb 6-Deadline for January (Vol 27 No 2) newsletter items
- Sat Feb 7—Brazos River Pickers, 5:00-7:00PM.
- Sat Feb 14—3:00PM– Budget meeting; 4:00PM—Executive Meeting; 5:30PM-General Meeting
- Fri Feb 27-Sat Feb 28– Doris Mager’s Live Birds of Prey. Time TBD
- Sat. Mar 7—Brazos River Pickers, 5:00-7:00PM
- Mon Mar 9-Fri Mar 13—Five area districts Spring Break. Help needed!
- Sat Mar 14—3:00PM– Budget meeting; 4:00PM—Executive Meeting; 5:30PM-General Meeting
- Mon Mar 16-Fri Mar 20—HISD/Alvin Spring Break. Help needed!

NEWS: 30TH BRAZOS BEND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT results now [online at http://brazosbendcbc.blogspot.com/](http://brazosbendcbc.blogspot.com/)

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

BY GLEN KILGORE

2014 is now officially behind us, and it is time to look forward to 2015. But to recap what a great year 2014 was for the park, I asked David and Chris to give me some numbers.



I don’t have the comparison figures to show how 2014 was better than 2013 but the numbers are pretty impressive by themselves:

- Total Revenue for the park for

2014 was \$1,531,252.31.

- Park Visitation was 203,045 day-use visitors and 57,112 overnight campers.
- 74,633 people visited the nature center and 10,865 attended week-end programs.

Our Fall deer hunts removed 66 deer and 6 hogs from the park. In addition, approximately 90 hogs were eliminated by park staff and volunteers.

Continued on page 4



Alligator babies from the nest near the spillway, late Nov. Photo courtesy Rick Dashnau

Inside this issue:

- “Snakes & Gators” [2](#)
- Going Green, New t-shirt ordering process [3](#)
- Pres Corner cont, BBEC update, Stars in our parks cont [4](#)
- First Aid Training, [5](#)
- Staff Reports [6](#)
- “Snakes & Gators” cont. [7](#)
- December Meeting [8](#)

NOVEMBER NATURE CENTER

- **6,408 NC visitors**
- 53 programs with 1,252 attendees
- 9 schools groups (1 offsite) with 619 attendees
- 2 special events with 1,199 attendees
- 665 Volunteer and 276 Staff Hours

STARS IN OUR PARK!

BBSP has lots of high performing people.



Congratulations to those who received awards through the 2014 TPWD Stars in the Parks Award program:

(continued on page 4)

NOT THE GAME "SNAKES AND LADDERS". AT BBSP IT'S *SNAKES AND GATORS!*

On 12/14/2014, I spent a few hours by the mother alligator and her babies, using the spotting scope with whoever walked by.

Clouds began covering the sky about 12, so I packed up my scope and moved to 40 Acre Lake.



Gator babies:
Photo courtesy Rick Dashnau

Near the South end of the East part of the trail, an alligator was up on the bank. I stayed near it for a while, to talk about the alligator to any park visitors that came by. I saw a group of people moving towards me, so I moved to the side of the trail across from the alligator.

While I was moving off the trail, I looked down at the leaves...and noticed black scales glistening in the shadows. I carefully brushed some of the leaves away, and revealed a beautiful Mud Snake.



Since the snake was just off the trail, and directly across from the alligator, I stood very close to it, so no one who was avoiding the alligator would

accidentally step on the snake.

This group was interested in the alligator, but when I pointed out the snake hidden the grass near me (it was about 3 feet long) they decided it was time to move on. So...8-foot gator on the trail-no problem; 3' snake on the trail-oops! gotta go!

When the group left, I decided I'd better move the snake a little further off the trail, so no one would step on it. I gently picked it up, and used the opportunity to take some pictures of it. Isn't it beautiful? The snake was very calm and cooperative. The shiny, "black" scales at the top, and the bright red underside are easy identifiers for the Mud Snake. After a few pictures, I placed it closer to the Pilant Slough swamp, and moved back a few steps to give it space to crawl away.

When I stopped moving, I looked back and down and noticed--curled up a couple feet from the water--another snake.

This one was a Cottonmouth. It didn't move while I watched it, and I took some pictures of the Cottonmouth.



The snake was well off the trail, and close to the water, so

it was well out of trouble. Then the Mud Snake started to move, and while I was watching the Mud Snake, I heard the peep/splash of a frog hitting the water.

When I looked that way, I saw the Cottonmouth slowly moving towards the water and moving under the leaf cover. Soon, I was alone with the alligator again, so I moved on down the trail. With the weather cooling that afternoon, I was probably watching two methods of snakes thermoregulating.

In the book "How Snakes Work" by Harvey B. Lilly-

(continued on page 7)

GOING GREEN

In an effort to conserve energy and reduce pollution many of us are going "Green" to some extent or another. I've always known that patrolling on a bicycle was "Green" but today I received an endorsement and confirmation from the ultimate authority on "Green".

While patrolling on my bike on the Spillway trail today I stopped to visit with Rick Dashnau. Once I stopped I noticed a Rough Green Snake about 6 feet away. The snake was slowly heading in our direction sniffing the air as it came closer. It didn't seem to notice or care about us and continued in our direction.

It eventually reached the rear tire of my patrol bike, took a sniff with its tongue and started to climb up the wheel. It slithered over the tire, twisted around the spokes, draped its body over the chain and seemed to check out the "police" decals on the frame.

After a thorough examination of the wheel

it slithered down the rear derailleur, over the tire and back on the trail.

I of course realize that the Green Snake never knew we were there or cared about the bike.



Photo courtesy Rick Dashnau

But I'll still take it as a sign of approval for "Green" transportation from the ultimate authority on green.

Keep it green! *-David Heincke*

VOLUNTEER T-SHIRT ORDERING-NEW PROCEDURE

Orders for t-shirts/sweatshirts will be accumulated once each quarter.

Orders for youth t-shirts will now be completed on the same envelope form as adults. (It is recommended that youth, depending on their body type, consider ordering a small adult size.)

Complete an order envelope and enclose your payment –

cash or check. The order envelope has complete ordering instructions.

Submit your order envelope to one of the following BBSP Volunteers:

- Carol Pawelek
- Beth Debenport
- Anna Dell Williamson
- Judy Strauss
- Diane Carpenter
- Woody Scott

If none of the volunteers named above are available, submit your order envelope to Sharon Hanzik or David Heinicke.

- Carol Pawelek



BBSP STARS IN OUR PARKS, CONT.

(Continued from page 1)

- **Susan Taylor**-Innovation
- **Chris Bishop, Jacob Dement, David Heinicke and Sharon Hanzik**—Customer Service
- **Jacob Dement**—Innovation
- **Richard Taylor**—Leadership
- **Gary Bialis**—Maintenance and Operations
- **John Towers** –Maintenance ad Operations
- **David Heinicke** –Open
- **Sharon Hanzik** –Partnerships and Outreach
- **Barry Eversole** –Service to State Parks
- **BBSP Volunteer Organization** –Volunteers
- **Diane Carpenter** –Volunteers
- **Ron Morrison** –Volunteers
- **Charon Teague** – Volunteers (host)
- **Gene Schwantes** –Volunteers (host)

BRAZOS BEND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER UPDATE

The third week of December, Barbara Willy, Offie Walker, David Heinicke, and Chris Bishop visited Austin to speak with TPWD leaders and TPW Foundation.

There was discussion regarding raising funds, handling donations, and paying expenses.

Concerns were raised about how to allocate space in the building.

Staff will work with donors in the Houston area, and approach fund-raising from a programming point of view.

BBSPVO representatives will go to Dallas

to visit Audubon Environmental sites.



Gator on trail. Photo courtesy Rick Dashnau

Loss of Emeritus Volunteer Buddy Franklin

This December we were saddened to learn of the passing of Emeritus Buddy Franklin.

Buddy and his wife Mozelle were the park's first volunteers and park hosts. Buddy was known especially as "the old man and the mongoose" for his tricks with a spring-loaded toy.

Buddy will be greatly missed.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

(Continued from page 1)

Our park peace officers were busy keeping the park safe for our visitors. They issued 2,788 verbal warnings, 29 written warnings and 73 citations.

The year ended on a positive note for the new Environmental Education Center.

David and some of our volunteers met with representatives of the TPWD **Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation** and they have agreed to assist us with fund raising for the project.

Let's hope that by this time next year, we will start to see the hard work that our

volunteers have put into this project start to pay some real dividends.

I hope that all of you have had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

- Glen Kilgore

FIRST AID / CPR / AED TRAINING INFO

All Volunteers, Current and Future Trainees,

Although there is no "duty to respond" we'd like to make sure you are at least trained and ready should the need arise along with your will to give aid. All volunteer training classes have introduced or will introduce you to the protocol for any emergency. At the park, at home, in public - you never know when you might need it.

Notify park headquarters immediately via two-way radio or phone.

--Any park staff on duty that day should hear the radio call and respond to the situation.

--If you use a phone to call headquarter, they will notify park staff.

--"Volunteer to park headquarters I have an emergency."

--979-553-5101 and dial 0 as soon as you hear the recording. Good idea to keep this number in your phone.

****If you feel you need to dial 911 immediately do not hesitate to do so and then immediately notify headquarters.**** If a visitor has already called 911, you still need to notify headquarters.

If you feel you need to dial 911 immediately do not hesitate to do so and then immediately notify headquarters (979-553-5101).

If a visitor has already called 911 still notify headquarters.

The following link is for current First Aid and CPR guidelines:

<http://www.ecprcertification.com/>

New department rules on administering medications: **No DOSAGE medications can be administered. This includes any oral or injected medications.** We can administer topical medications such antibiotic ointment and sting ease which will be made available soon at the nature center front desk. If a visitor asks for medication we can of course offer what is for sale in our gift shops - **you cannot give them your own.** If they ask for their own personal medication you can get it for them but **you cannot administer the medications,** they must take it themselves.

This link* is for the use of our brand of AED units found behind the Nature Center and Park Headquarters front desks. CPR should be used until AED arrives. - Sharon Hanzik

* [http://www.bing.com/videos/search?](http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=aed+use+video&FORM=VIRE7#view=detail&mid=D20C70FEDE8D2A0CB7ADD20C70FEDE8D2A0CB7AD)

[q=aed+use+video&FORM=VIRE7#view=detail&mid=D20C70FEDE8D2A0CB7ADD20C70FEDE8D2A0CB7AD](http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=aed+use+video&FORM=VIRE7#view=detail&mid=D20C70FEDE8D2A0CB7ADD20C70FEDE8D2A0CB7AD)



I watched this crawfish wander around the spillway eating and noticed it was carrying what I thought was eggs. Once I enlarged the image on my camera I discovered it was hatchling crawfish.

- Chuck Duplant

DECEMBER STAFF REPORTS

-SUPERINTENDENT CHRIS BISHOP

November 2014 was the best ever November for Park revenue.

Question: A visitor wants to come and camp. They have a pet pig. Can they bring the pig to the park?

Answer: No, pigs are considered livestock and are prohibited from the park by the agriculture code.

We hope to add some more programming by outsiders. One thought is a program involving an introduction to meditation and yoga. The question came up about how this is connected to our mission. Answer: Visitors can use parks for holistic fitness needs.

Police Officer program: TPWD is proposing some big changes involving the police program. At present, park police often combine their peace officer responsibilities with other park responsibilities. The proposal is to hire employees as police officers who will report to a police lieutenant in the districts, instead of the park superintendent. State park police officers will need to relinquish their commissions if they want to become a superintendent.

Communications tower: We are going through the FCC process for the communications. It should be erected by the end of August, but may not be activated. It would also be used by the Ft. Bend County Emergency department and have a cell phone tower.

Automated Gate for the main entrance: CrowdFunding raised some money, and we can do a little more promotion there. We are also seeking funding from Takahashi America which makes lenses for telescopes and cameras. The automated gate would be helpful for early-morning star gazers and birders.

Announcement: FT Bend County is the most culturally diverse county in the US. David Buggs, Chief Diversity Officer is looking to find ambassadors from those communities to provide staff training to increase understanding of different groups.

First Aid Training: January 15 there will be first aid, CPR, and ADA training for staff, hosts and volunteers. Contact Sharon if interested.

The deer hunt will be December 15-18, and the park will close at noon Monday. The last hunt brought 46 deer and 3 feral hogs.

Headquarters is still looking for personnel for customer service and shop manager.

Chuck Hubbard, management intern, will be acting Superintendent at Sea Rim park December through February.

Water Plant #1 is damaged and repair should be completed soon.

Prairie management: There are plans to have controlled burns in 3 units this winter.

The Natural Resource Coordinator finds we need fire more often. There is now a greenhouse in Austin where grasses can be planted to replant acreage after a fire. There is potential for the same thing here.

BBSPVO donated 24,000 volunteer hrs in 2014.



DECEMBER STAFF REPORTS

-INTERPRETIVE RANGER AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR SHARON HANZIK

Six members of the current class of nine VITs are in Phase II. Lonnie Hoffmann and Patti Alexander have completed all requirements and Max Langley will finish tomorrow (December 14).

Training Class of February 2015: Fourteen applicants have been accepted as of Dec 31, 3 are pending background checks, and there are 6 more to interview. Members should expect requests for help to be sent around January 1.

Simple Christmas: We started Sim-

ple Christmas 18 years ago, and this was the best year ever. Visitors enjoyed the atmosphere, and the 2 hayride trailers were the Number One event. Every one who wanted to ride got to. About 300 visitors attended, and we received some nice donations both outside and in the Nature Center. We received good feedback from the visitors.

Safety Manual: This manual has been sent to all volunteers. All active volunteers must read the manual, print out the form, and turn it in. The manual is also in the volunteer

lounge with forms available to be signed. Please take care of this ASAP. The deadline is now.

Congratulations:

- * Leah Malone as a winner in the TPWD Calendar art contest. Check out September for Leah's original contribution
- * Hannah Meddaugh finished the 50-mile Brazos Bend trail race December 12.



SNAKES AND GATORS!, CONT.

(Continued from page 2)

white, there are examples of different methods used by snakes to keep their Preferred Body Temperature (PBT) at the correct level. Many snakes have a PBT of about 29-34° C. This is 84.2 - 93.2° F. Sometimes a snake can use leaves as insulation. It appeared that the Mud Snake was using the leaves.

Meanwhile, the Cottonmouth was still lying on top of the leaves, trying to get direct solar energy. Gaining or losing heat by movement and use of external heat sources is called "Behavioral Thermoregulation".



©2014 Richard Dashnau

Also interesting is that the preferred body temperature of a snake can vary with the season. That is, if the average daily temperature changes to a different constant, then the snake's PTB could shift with it; so that its body will work most efficiently at the "new" temperature. These changes are produced by the snake altering its chemistry (by adjusting the levels of various enzymes). Also, these changes are reversible! This is called "acclimatization" when it happens in the wild, or "acclimation" when induced in a laboratory.

Why do snakes thermoregulate? According to the book, 2 main reasons are:

- 1) to avoid extreme temperatures that would threaten their lives. For instance, to avoid getting so cold that they cannot move enough to avoid freezing.
- 2) to help their bodies function at peak efficiency. For example, for proper digestion, or for coordinated nerve/muscle function during hunting.

And that's how some days go at Brazos Bend State Park.

- Rick Dashnau



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DECEMBER MEETING NOTES December 13, 2014

GENERAL MEETING

Reported by Anna Dell Williamson

Attendance: 12 volunteers, 2 staff.

Mike Sanderson, Vice-President, called the meeting to order. The minutes of the November meeting were approved as posted.

REPORTS:

Bob Kowalewski, financial report:

November was a good month, and wood sales should be good in December. We can expect some donations this month, such as Krogers and Exxon/Ramsayer.

The BBSPVO bank account has been moved to Amegy Bank for better interest rates and more convenient access.

The following requests for purchase were submitted and approved:

1. New Cypress Trees (3) to replace trees in front of composting toilets on Elm Lake and 3 Treegator Bags (watering devise, reservoir that disperses water gradually. Request by Offie Walker.
2. 20 sacks of corn for deer hunt . Request by Richard Taylor.
3. Parts for JD Gators and JD tractor: drive shafts, cable for JD Gator, headlights, shock-absorbers, seat for JD tractor. Funds will come from the Gator and Maintenance fund, and Tractor fund.

There was discussion of the Equipment Rental Repair Fund, which receives funds monthly until it reaches its cap. We decided to make a one-time transfer to the Equipment Rental Repair Fund to bring it up to the cap, because we have a budget surplus at the end of 2014. We will start making monthly transfers again when the fund goes below its cap.

Beth Debenport, Gift Shop:

Thanks to all for volunteering to do shifts in GS.

Judy Strauss, Outreach:

Dec 13: Kids Unlimited (cancer patients), included a visit from Santa. BBSP had 113 visitors at our booth, many were repeats from last year.

November 24: Needville Nursing Home Needville, 11/24. This is a small, service outreach. Joe Carmichael, resident and Emeritus Vounteer, has made 2 visits to the park recently.

Upcoming, March: Children's Festival, will be on events calendar.

Woody Scott, Maintenance Report:

37 volunteers donated 114.5 hours in November.

New Business: Carol Pawelek reported on volunteer t-shirt orders. She is going to try a new vendor in Rosenberg, who will accept our business with no price increase. They supply almost all products we have on form, except no long-sleeve in serene green. Prices will remain the same, except that youth prices will be the same as adult. There is no minimum purchase.

Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife
21901 FM 762
Needville, TX 77461
<http://www.brazosbend.org/>

FIRST CLASS MAIL

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Saturday, February 14: 5:30 PM

Saturday, March 14, 2015: 5:30PM



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: Glen Kilgore

Vice-President: Mike Sanderson

Secretary: Melanie Jahn

Treasurer: Woody Scott

Past-President: Mary Lockwood

Member-at-Large: Hannah Meddaugh

Member at-Large: Offie Walker

Comptroller: Bob Kowalewski

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editors: Anna Dell Williamson & Hannah Meddaugh

Editorial Assistant: Nelda Gay

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.



**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**