



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH  
BUGLE

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 11

NOVEMBER 2006

## ANNUAL PICNIC AND AWARDS CEREMONY

The Volunteer Organization, volunteer hosts, and park staff enjoyed the annual volunteer picnic on Saturday, October 14. Before the picnic, a group picture of all the volunteers present was taken. This may become an annual event. Look for the picture in the Nature Center by the visitor register book. After a fine feast, park staff presented awards to volunteers.

### *CONGRATULATIONS*

**Service awards** were given to members with 5, 10 and 15 years of service:

#### **5 YEAR AWARDS**

Rick Dashnau  
Dennis Keptra

Jeff McMullan  
Barb Tucker

#### **10 YEAR AWARDS**

Bill Godley  
Sid Jones

Glen Kilgore

#### **15 YEAR AWARDS**

Joan Jackson  
Warren Jackson

Laszlo Perlaky

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**Special recognition awards** were given in the areas of **Teamwork, Education, Customer Service, Leadership, Excellence, and Special Achievement.**

The **Teamwork Award** was given to the Maintenance Crew for their outstanding contributions:

Willie Anderson  
Tom Draper  
Noel Duncan  
Bob Haynes

Jim Heitt  
Dennis Keppta  
Bryan Leach  
Jeff McMullan

Ron Morrison  
Clarence Neimann  
Don Nelson

**Individual awards** were given in the following areas:

**Education:** Rick Dashnau

**Customer Service:** Nancy Partlow

**Leadership:** Judy Strauss

**Excellence:** James and Joyce Blankenship

The **Special Achievement Award** went to the outgoing organization officers:

Judy Strauss

Anna Dell Williamson

John Bradford

Bruce Williamson



# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Visiting and volunteering at BBSP is on the annual Autumn upswing. The obvious reason is that it is just plain fun to be at the park at this time of year. I am truly impressed by the cross section of the Volunteer Organization (VO) that are supporting the park. Old timers, recent graduates of the VO training, and this year's crop of VITs are all well represented. The current VIT class is making excellent progress on their post classroom training. I fully expect the membership of the VO to increase by 20% as the current VITs graduate into full membership. This is a sign of the health of our organization. I look forward to working with all the volunteers, hosts, and staff to maintain the momentum of our group and the impact of BBSP on the citizens of this area.



*Bruce Williamson*



## FALL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### THANKSGIVING AT THE NATURE CENTER



Buddy and Mozelle Franklin have again volunteered to keep the center open Thanksgiving Day. We do not ask anyone to give up their holiday, but they will be hosting and have volunteered to do so.

Friday, however, is another story. Our campsites are normally booked Wednesday through the weekend, and Friday is a very busy day. So if you need some exercise after all that food or just need to get out of a crowded house, consider coming out and staffing the center/gift shop or keeping an eye on the trails.



### SIMPLE CHRISTMAS



Our annual Simple Christmas event will be held Saturday, December 2, from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM. This annual event includes hay rides, piñatas, face painting, "Southern Santa", live music from the Brazos River Pickers (6:00 PM), and refreshments. We will need volunteers to prepare and serve refreshments, drive the truck for the hay rides, ride along on the hay rides, swing the piñatas, and decorate for the event in the morning. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board. See Sharon Hanzik for more details.



# CONGRATULATIONS

## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Nelda Gay  
David Heinicke  
Linda Hite (VIT)  
Steve Killian  
Patricia Marshall (VIT)  
Curtis Parent  
Terry Williamson



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Beth Debenport  
Angie Gruber  
Kay Lewis  
Frank Willett

## NEW IN THE NATURE CENTER

In mid-October, the rangers asked Sharon and David about an eel-like creature that they noticed in the out-flow from Creekfield. Sharon reports: "We got excited as we have been wanting one of these eel-like creatures for the pond-life tank. We were successful in catching two **lesser-sirens** about 16" long. We put one in the tank and David is saving one for the master naturalist training Thursday. We also found many newts, minnows, diving beetles, water scorpions, tadpoles and other larvae. The tank is alive again!!

To learn more about sirens, check this link. <http://yahooligans.yahoo.com/content/animals/species/4417.html>

In late October, we received a **screech owl** whose optic nerve has been damaged, possibly in a collision with something. It will never be able to hunt for food in the wild. David and others are working with the owl to get it accustomed to being handled, and it is making good progress.

Be sure to check out these two exciting additions to our displays.

## QUARTERLY HOURS REMINDER

November is the second month of the last quarter for the year 2006. Remember that you must have a total of 48 hours by the end of the year, and that 6 of them each quarter must be in the "required" areas: Nature Center, Gift Shop, Creekfield Hke, Wood Yard or Water Station. Be sure to report all of your hours, including meetings and travel time, in the volunteer logbook in the lounge.

# NATURE CENTER REPORT - OCTOBER

by Anna Dell Williamson

Here is a breakdown of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for October 1-29. This month included a lot of hot weather and some rainy days. Numbers come from the calendar in the Nature Center and may not reflect all activities. Be sure to report program attendance for all programs and hikes and be sure it gets on the calendar behind the desk.

|  | 2006                   | OCTOBER                 |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|
| NATURE CENTER<br>Total for October, 5258 | SATURDAYS (4)          | 2917<br>High 963, 10/28 |
|  | SUNDAYS (5)            | 1539<br>High, 507, 10/8 |
|  | WEEKDAYS (20)          | 802<br>High 124, 10/24  |
|  | CREEKFIELD HIKES (6 )  | 412                     |
|  | ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS( 1) | 22                      |
|  | BIRD PROGRAMS, HIKES   | 205                     |
|  | STORY TIME (2 )        | 23                      |
|  | SNAKE PROGRAMS ( 4)    | 141                     |
|  | OTHER PROGRAMS         | 114                     |

- ☺ to **John Bradford** for cooking the meat for the annual picnic
- ☺ to **Chuck Duplant** for taking the group picture and for other pictures in the newsletter
- ☺ **everyone** who helped with the picnic
- ☺ **everyone** who attended and helped with Texian Market Days (see Judy's article for details)

# TEXIAN MARKET DAYS AT THE GEORGE RANCH

*by Judy Strauss*

The outreach event for **Texian Market Days** at the George Ranch on October 28 and 29 was very exciting again this year. Although overall attendance was down compared to previous years, we reached a lot of visitors, which is our main purpose. We visited with 867 people on Saturday, and 936 on Sunday. Some visitors said that they go to BBSP on a regular basis; some said that they hadn't been there in several years; some said that they had never been to BBSP, but that, after talking with us, couldn't wait to go and visit our Park.

Having worked and lived on the George Ranch, I always enjoy seeing old faces and experiencing new happenings. There were, as always, several alligators around the bridge, and a very large water snake had found himself a place to sun between the bridge and our booth, which allowed our outreach program to "reach out" a bit further than just our tent. And the corn snake put on a fantastic show on Sunday by shedding his skin, almost as I was holding it. I was so excited, as I had never seen this before (ask Tom Kanak - there was a time or two that I got so excited, I think he actually thought that I was having a seizure). It was not only a treat for me, but several visitors also got to experience the production.

All in all, it was a very rewarding weekend, but it could not have "happened" without the help of fellow Volunteers and VIT's. A big THANK YOU to **David Heinicke, John Bradford** and **Tom Kanak** for helping with the tent set-up on Friday evening, and again to **Tom** for helping me get things "out and ready" early Saturday morning before going to the Park. Thank You to VIT's **Patricia Marshall, Eddy Grizzaffi,** and **Tom Kanak,** and to Volunteers **Allen Bartram, Ron Dearman, Jane Minard, Carol Ramsayer, Chuck Duplant, Anna Dell Williamson, Bruce Williamson, Tom Prentiss, Noel Duncan,** and "Future Volunteer" **Tyler Teague** (my grandson, for those of you that don't know him) for helping me run the BBSPVO booth on Saturday or Sunday. And thank you, **Chuck** and **David,** for helping me get the things back to the Park and put away, and still make it home by dark!

It is a lot of work, but also a lot of fun and an extremely rewarding experience! And the first time I can ever remember that the weather was picture perfect two days in a row! Thanks, again, to everyone who helped. The event could not have happened without you! Hope to see you again next year!



# OCTOBER 2006 MAINTENANCE REPORT

*by Bryan Leach*

## Wood Yard:

Tied wood, split wood and delivered tied wood to the wood racks in both camping loops  
Hauled 2 Kubota loads of crushed blacktop to the wood yard from a stock pile by Headquarters

## Mowing and Landscaping:

Removed landscape timbers and railroad ties from around the Nature Center to the wood yard  
Worked in the flower beds around the Nature Center  
Did some clean up around the Headquarters ground  
Trimmed 5 trees around the Headquarters building and the Spider tree

## Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Removed downed trees on the Bluestem Trail and the trail north of the wood yard  
Started topping the Creekfield Forest Trail at both ends and installed 2 twelve inch culverts at the head of the south end of that trail  
Worked on leveling part of the east side of 40 Acre Lake Trail  
Removed a blown down limb off the Elm Lake Trail  
Did some lopping on the Creekfield Forest Trail

## Equipment Maintenance:

Adjusted the brakes and the shift lever on the 01 Gator  
Installed a new fuel door on the tractor  
Built a new drag for working on the trails

## General Maintenance:

Cleaned out and straightened up the inside of the maintenance shed  
Cleaned off the deck at the Nature Center  
Assembled 10 picnic tables for the ADA picnic areas  
Cleaned off the JD Memorial pad at the Nature Center  
Removed and replaced a right front fixed flat on the tractor

## Pest Control:

Treated the following areas for fire ants:  
The 40 Acre Lake picnic grounds and playground  
Hale Lake picnic grounds and playground  
The 40 Acre Lake Trail  
The Elm Lake Trail  
The Elm Lake picnic grounds  
The Creekfield ADA Trail  
Around the Nature Center

# MEETING NIGHT SUPPERS

*by Anna Dell Williamson*

Thanks to **the membership** for bringing such good food to the October picnic. We will resume meeting night suppers with the November meeting. Carol Ramsayer will bring soup. Supper is at 5:00 PM, right before the meeting. We collect a small amount per person to cover costs (\$3.00 or less). Give your receipts to Anna Dell to be reimbursed. If you are willing to prepare a meal for a future meeting, please sign up in the lounge entry, or contact Anna Dell by email (<awilliamson4 @houston.rr.com>) or by phone (281-485-2843). Thank you to all those who have already brought a meal. ♦

# PRAIRIE VIEW

by Al Childs

Hello prairie enthusiasts and volunteers.

Welcome again to Prairie View. The October survey of Prairie #1, near the entrance of the park, was a bit of a challenge this month. Due to the tall grass and all the rain, we did have a little difficulty locating some of the transect poles. We also encountered some standing water on all three transects, so most of us wore rubber boots. I believe this is unusual for this particular section of prairie, since I have never seen any of the wetland indicator plants growing there. To see what I am talking about, one only has to hike to the wetland platform, across the street from the 40-Acre parking lot. There you will see two types of wetland indicators; Maiden Cane and Thalia.

Maiden Cane (*Panicum hemitomon*) is a common native aquatic that can form large stands in moist or wet areas. As a grass, it has an extensive root system known as rhizomes and provides food, protection and nesting material for wildlife. Leaf blades are flat or folded, approximately 1 inch wide, and up to 12 inches in length. During the dry season it appears to die back but quickly comes alive with rain. Maiden Cane is located all around the wetland platform. *Thalia geniculata*, also called Fire flag and Alligator flag, is a large plant that also grows from a thick rhizome root system in ponds, swamps, marshes, and along stream banks. It is characterized by large broad leaves that can be up to eight inches wide and more than 2 ½ feet long. Flowers are paired and emerge on top of a tall flower stalk. Multiple small purple flowers hang from bracts. A bract is a leaflike or scalelike part of the plant, usually small and sometimes showy or brightly colored and located just below a flower on top of a tall flower stalk. Thalia is located to your left as you stand of the wetland platform. It is easy to find since it differs greatly from the surrounding Maiden Cane. By the way, since we have had a lot of rain recently, any excursion into the prairie should include rubber boots and lots of insect repellent. Until next month, have fun and be safe.

## NEW PROGRAM - NIGHT HIKES

Assistant Superintendent Dennis Jones is starting a new for pay program open to the general public and scout and church groups. Night hikes will be held every Friday evening from 7:00 to approximately 9:00 PM, November 1 to March 31. Participants will meet at Park Headquarters at 6:30 PM and the hike location will be determined. The group will then carpool to the hike location. The hike will be approximately ½ to ¾ mile along darkened trails. Participants should wear close-toed shoes, long pants, and cover their flashlight lenses with red cellophane or red cloth. The purpose of these hikes is to learn about the nighttime at BBSP, to discover how it is utilized by the wildlife, to understand how animals as well as ourselves, use senses other than sight and to have fun

Group size will be limited to a maximum of 15 participants, and a minimum of 5 participants will be required to conduct a hike. Reservations must be made in advance through park headquarters. The hike fee is \$5.00 per person, 7 - 12 years old, and \$9.00 per person 13 years old and up (includes park entrance)



# NATURALPERL NEWS

October 20, 2006, Excerpts

Laszlo of Naturalperl is the photographic art curator of the newly built "Fill Your Cup" Coffee Shop at the Old Brazos River Center, 1410 Highway 90A, Richmond TX. Lexi's colorful portfolio "Drops", containing eleven large, matted, framed prints, is already installed and will be on exhibition from October 21 - December 14, 2006. Tomorrow is the Grand Opening of the Coffee Shop and it will be open on Monday through Thursday, 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM and on Friday and Saturday, 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM. If you are in that area, just stop by, get a tasty coffee and enjoy Lexi's great Portfolio exhibition there.

We had a great Photo walk for birds at Brazos Bend State Park on October 7, 2006. Laszlo was at the Nature center from 3-5 PM, and then the group met there at 5 PM. We drove to the New Horseshoe Lake parking, and then walked to the Lakes to photograph birds in their natural habitat.

## ALLIGATOR INFORMATION

### TOP 15 MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ALLIGATORS

**1. How many alligators live at Brazos Bend State Park?**

We estimate that between 250 - 350 adult (6 feet and over) alligators live at Brazos Bend State Park.

**2. Where can we go to see an alligator?**

This changes depending on season, water levels, etc. You could see an alligator anywhere in the park.

Usually the best place is the back side of Elm Lake (where the observation piers are) and 40 Acre Lake.

**3. Has anyone ever been hurt by an alligator at BBSP?**

NO, we have had over 8 million people visit the park in the last 17 years and no accidents involving alligators. Let's keep it that way.

**4. What's the biggest alligator at BBSP?**

We don't know. There are some that are between 12 and 13 feet long. We're not sure that we have ever seen the largest one.

**5. How big do alligators get?**

Females usually get to 6 - 8 feet long; Males usually don't get bigger than about 12 - 14 feet long. The world record is 19'2" from Louisiana.

**6. What do alligators eat? How often?**

Meat, any kind of meat that they can find. This includes birds, fish, turtles, snakes, raccoons, deer, feral hogs, other alligators and more. Since they are cold-blooded they don't need to eat nearly as often as we do. A full grown alligator might survive on one raccoon a week. Alligators stop eating in the winter (probably November - March). It is thought that a substantial portion of the diet of a large alligator may consists of medium and small alligators.

**7. How fast can alligators run or swim?**

I hear lots figures about how fast they can run or swim. It is safe to say that for the first 30 feet or so they could outrun or outswim the fastest human. Remember, if you get in a race with an alligator, the alligator is the one that says "GO".

**8. Are there crocodiles at BBSP?**

No, there are no native crocodiles in Texas.

**9. What's the difference between alligators and crocodiles?**

Crocodiles have longer more pointed snouts, a brown to olive color and generally get larger and more aggressive than alligators. The closest crocodile to BBSP is the American Crocodile which lives in the southern tip of Florida.

**10. How long can they stay under water?**

This depends on size, temperature and other circumstances. On warm days they can probably stay under water for about an hour, 15 - 20 minutes is typical. During cold weather they may stay under for 10 - 12 hours, some reports of up to 24 hours.

**11. Do we have to hunt or remove alligators to keep them from becoming overpopulated?**

No, we have never had alligator hunting at BBSP. If left alone alligators tend to control their own population, as do most large predators. The population of alligators at BBSP has held relatively steady over the last 17 years that we have been counting alligators.

**12. Can you own alligators as pets?**

Without a permit it is currently illegal to own an alligator. They make really bad pets! Pet shops often sell Spectacled Caimans from South America. They are legal to own but also make lousy pets.

**13. Are alligators aggressive?**

Not really, they do become protective when they have nests or young in the area. An alligator that has been fed by humans quickly becomes very aggressive and loses its fear of humans.

**14. When is alligator breeding season?**

Breeding season starts in April and will continue until the end of May. Nesting starts in June and the eggs hatch in August and early September, depending on temperature.

**15. How fast do alligators grow?**

Normally they grow about 1 foot per year until they reach about 6 feet long. After that their growth rates slow down and they start getting wider, (just like humans in some cases). Like most reptiles they continue to grow as long as they live.

# THE AUTHORITY - RESPONSIBILITY PUZZLE

*a commentary by Dennis Jones*

In my 20 years working for government I've discovered an interesting little puzzle that affects just about everything you and I do. I call it the "Authority – Responsibility Puzzle". It goes like this: at least in practice, *the persons with authority don't have very much direct responsibility over a project, and the ones with the direct responsibility to see the project to completion don't seem to have much authority to really make it all happen.* It's a curious set of circumstances that often seem to be the case. I think I know why this happens, and I think if more of us are aware of it the better we can become at actual accomplishment and progress as it pertains to our mission. I would like to submit for your consideration some points that I think are part of the solution to the puzzle.

## THE NEGATIVES (they always seem to come first)

Complex language, ideas, processes and structures are thought to be better than simple ones

Internal status often comes from talking a lot and being critical of others' ideas

People are evaluated on how smart they sound rather, than on what they do

People who talk a lot gain more stature

Talking a lot is often mistaken for doing a lot

Talk often substitutes for action when no follow-up is done to insure that what was said is actually done

Negative people seem smarter because pessimism seems profound and optimism seems superficial because it's so simple

Planning can become a substitute for action  
 Planning, meetings, and report writing become defined as “action” that is valuable in its own right, even if it has no effect on what people actually do  
 People can forget that merely making a decision doesn’t change anything  
 People sometimes believe because they have said it, it must be true and it must be happening.  
 Fighting each other for “status” is counterproductive  
 Learning is more difficult without doing.

**THE POSITIVES** (ways we can solve the puzzle)

People learn by trying(doing)new things  
 Knowing comes from doing and teaching others how (giving)  
 Simple action is more important than elegant plans and concepts.  
 There is no doing (knowing) without mistakes.  
**Teams work**  
 Learning is grounded in real experience  
 When you care, you give back  
 What leaders do, how they spend their time, and how they allocate their resources matters  
 Its all about the people  
 Do right by all your customers (external AND internal)  
 Customers define quality, not you  
 Seek the best – in people and product

Well, that’s it. Now you have all the pieces. (At least most of them.) It’s up to us to fit them together and solve the puzzle. Are you up to the task? I hope I can be. Let’s work together to prevent the process from overtaking our product. We’ll all be better for it. Good luck. dj

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| November 11      | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| November 13-16   | Deer hunt, park closed Sunday PM to Friday AM |
| November 17      | Bird Hike, 40-Acre restrooms, 8:00 AM         |
| November 23      | Thanksgiving, Nature Center closed            |
| November 26      | Bird Hike, 40-Acre restrooms, 8:00 AM         |
| December 2       | Landscape photography Photo-walk #3, 3:00 PM  |
| December 4-7     | Deer hunt, park closed Sunday PM to Friday AM |
| December 9       | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| January 13, 2007 | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| February 10      | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| March 10         | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| April 7          | Earth Day Celebration                         |
| April 8          | Easter  |
| April 14         | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| May 12           | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| June 9           | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| July 14          | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| August 11        | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| September 8      | Regular meeting, 5:30 PM                      |
| October 13       | Annual Volunteer Picnic, 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, NOVEMBER 11, 2006, 5:30 PM**

☆☆☆☆☆☆



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**REGULAR VOLUNTEER EVENTS**

Creekfield Hikes            Every Saturday and Sunday at  
   11:00 AM, led by volunteers  
Photo Hikes                    First Saturday of each month  
Volunteer meeting         Second Saturday of each month  
   at 5:30 PM  
Bird Hikes                      See schedule in calendar

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.

**BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK  
VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION**

**VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS**

President:                    Bruce Williamson  
Vice-President:            Anna Dell Williamson  
Secretary:                  Nicole Olson  
Treasurer:                  Chuck Duplant

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@houston.rr.com). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.

**NEWSLETTER TEAM**

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   Terry Williamson