



VOLUME 19, NUMBER 7

JULY 2007

## JUNE MEETING NOTES

*reported by Nicole Olson*

President **Bruce Williamson** called the meeting to order on June 9, 2007. There were 16 volunteers, 1 new intern and 2 staff members present. The minutes of the May meeting were approved as posted.

**Ken Debenport** brought the Treasurer's Report. The complete financial report may be read in the volunteer lounge. The following requests for budget items were presented and approved:

1. Sharon Hanzik requested animal pelts such as gray fox, raccoon, skunk, and bobcat to display.
2. Bryan Leach requested a combination weed eater/edger for maintenance use around the Nature Center. It will be kept in the wood yard.
3. David Heinicke requested funds to build an exhibit for the crocodile/alligator skulls. It will be placed behind the small alligator aquarium. It will be an interactive exhibit and motorized so visitors can see the jaws open and close. The project will be funded from the Richard Board memorial fund, Bob Haynes Shell grant, Margaret Eckels funds, and George Ramsayer Exxon/Mobil grants.

**Gift Shop:** **Beth Debenport** reported that sales have been good and that June is looking like a good month. We appreciate all the support and volunteer help!

**Training:** **Anna Dell Williamson** spoke about starting the Junior Volunteer training program. Help is needed to provide leadership and to allow Junior Volunteers to assist in programs. A parent or guardian must be with them. We are giving young people an opportunity to do things; it's like planting a seed. A handout will be passed around so people can sign

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

June Meeting Notes, p. 1-2  
President's Corner, p. 2  
Staff Reports, p. 2-3  
What More Can I Say?, p. 3-4  
Water-Wise Kids, p. 4  
JR VIT /Adult training, p. 4-5  
Live Animal Policy, p. 5-6

Get Well Wishes, p. 6  
Vol. Service Awards, p. 6  
Creekfield Time Change?, p. 6  
Remember When, p. 7  
Nature Center Report, p. 7  
Maintenance News, p. 8-9  
Fish Story, p. 9

Poison Ivy, p. 9-10  
Raccoons Steal Fajitas, p. 10  
Prairie Thoughts, p. 10-11  
Hognose Snake, p. 11  
The Oddest Otter p. 12  
Birthdays, Thanks, p. 11, 13  
Flood Pix and Calendar, p. 13

up and assist. A good example is John Malone, who started at the park when he was in high school. He is now defending his dissertation for his degree. His future plans are to work for the Institute of Health as a biologist.

**Maintenance:** **Bryan Leach** reported that last Thursday the work crew finished the cover at Pier 7 on Elm Lake. We are thinking of doing another one but in the fall. David Heinicke did a program at one of the covered piers. The public is getting a lot of value from the covered piers.

**Outreach:** **Rick Dashnau** took his alligator show to Russ Pittman Park in Bellaire. **Ken** and **Beth Debenport** were in attendance. There were a lot of young kids and everybody had a good time. Rick had a good program with show and tell, touching the alligator skull and a nice slide presentation.

**Old Business:** The Bylaws and SOPs state that the Nominating Committee will be appointed in July. Nominations are announced at the August meeting, and the election takes place at the September meeting. Think of what office you want to run for. . The president will not run again for office.

**Announcements**

Diane Carpenter mentioned that BBSP was featured in an article about nature photography in the *Houston Chronicle* . The president and vice president will miss the July meeting  
Thanks to Diane and Jerry Carpenter for the dinner!  
The meeting was adjourned.

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



I remember when: The "I Remember When" article (elsewhere in this newsletter) was current!

But I can also remember when:

The Brazos Bend State Park did not have a volunteer organization.

The BBSP volunteer organization did not have a name, or elected officers, or any funds, or By-Laws, or Standard Operating Procedures, or a Gift Shop.

But I can also remember when we changed all of those things, and then changed them again. We have an election of officers every year and follow the procedures written down in the By-Laws and the SOPs. We have two written agreements with TPWD (the Memorandum of Agreement and the Concessionaire Agreement) and TPWD has a Volunteer Handbook. We routinely vote on the expenditure of funds ranging from several hundred to many thousands of dollars to promote the goals of the park, and we pay as we go (no debt). We have many talented people to help in many different areas of our service to the park. Part of that help takes the form of discovering new ways to serve, building new programs, and training other volunteers in how to carry out those programs. We've come a loooooong way, baby!

P. S. But what hasn't changed is our respect for each other, park staff and the park.

*Bruce Williamson*



## STAFF REPORTS

**DAVID HEINICKE**



We are starting to see alligator nests popping up, so keep your eyes open! Let David or Sharon know so we can fence off the nests. National Trails Days was June 2. Thanks to all the folks who participated!

Our new intern, Mallory Curl, will be with us until August. She is working on projects and developing programs. Welcome!

David will be gone three weekends for vacation after Sharon comes back. Any help on programs is greatly appreciated.

A new tarantula was found at 40 Acre Lake men's restroom. Another tarantula was found outside the women's restroom at 40-Acre. During the next few months, the Nature Center exhibits will be changing. Your input and ideas are welcome.

Check out the 40 Acre Lake fishing pier. It looks fantastic. NRG (employees at the WA Parish generating section that runs the power plant) performed a volunteer project and redid the fishing pier. Everything was redone except the understructure of the pier.

The Interpretive Master Plan is still going forward slowly. Drafts will be made of the document for input. We need to start watching visitors and each other for any heat problems that may arise. Contact staff if you encounter any problems. Thanks for all your help!

## JERRY BARTEL

**Interim Regional Director's Report:** Jerry Bartel, who oversees 12 state parks, stopped by BBSP for two things:

1. Varner Hogg needs some volunteer help for the living history program coming up. It will be a lot of fun with the children.
2. New Budget report

Jerry discussed the amounts approved in the budget. Details of the proposal were published in last month's newsletter. Bruce Williamson asked if the money will help to get us a new Interpretive Center. That is remote for this biennium. Diane Carpenter asked if they decide on a budget for the parks every two years. Jerry replied yes, and that we would not have a cap on the budget. We hope to see a healthy budget but you never know. The fiscal year starts September 1, 2007, so we hope to see something come our way then.

David Heinicke asked about the deadline for transfer of historical parks? The deadline is January 1, 2008 for transfer of historical parks to the new division, Texas Historical Commission. Varner Hogg, San Felipe Historical Site, Levi Jordan, and Sabine Pass Battleground are the four parks to be transferred.

Money for drydock of Battleship Texas still needs to be voted on. It is approximately \$25 million for bond issue. The railroad is leaving the park system and will be placed with state government. Interviews for new Regional Director will be done near the end of June.

Jerry said it was good seeing everybody! Keep it up!

## WHAT MORE CAN I SAY?

*by Mallory Curl*

The other day I saw an alligator's throat from about 5 feet away. I witnessed the deep bellowing of a male alligator showing off for his nearby lady friend. I watched as a Great Blue Heron broke the neck of a siren and swallowed it whole. I saw the brightest yellow I had ever seen... on a bird! And for the first time in all of my 23 years, I visited Brazos Bend State Park.

I have lived in Brazoria County for most of my life, and I am ashamed to say that my first visit to the park was on May 19, 2007. I had no idea that right near my backyard was about 5,000 acres of marshes, swamps, lakes, prairies, forests, and trails just waiting for me to dive into (not literally of course, seeing as how I do not wish to become part of the alligator food chain). Although, I am a little surprised (growing up with six rowdy brothers and sisters and all) that my mother never had the urge to drop us off to "play" with the snakes and alligators every once in a while. But alas, my first visit to the park was when I drove up to talk to Steve about an internship.

I knew I would love it here when I got out of my car and was welcomed, not only by the familiar sound of cicadas all around me, but by the enthusiasm of every park volunteer and employee. Never have I had a job where everyone had heard about me and knew me by name on my



second day of work. As soon as everyone heard of my being here, they were ready and willing to teach me every aspect of the park, from how it is operated to why the White Ibis has black-tipped wings. I was so impressed and felt right at home.

I can honestly say that I have not been more fascinated with nature than I am here at Brazos Bend, when I go on hikes with volunteers and learn first-hand the fishing techniques of a great blue heron, listen to the deep bellows of the male alligator, watch as a mother turtle prepares her nest, or learn to recognize the "sweet and syrupy" calls of the cardinal (as Bill would say).

What more can I say than how excited I am to have finally made it to Brazos Bend, and not only as a guest but as a volunteer! I couldn't have picked a better park to finish off my college career. (Prothonotary Warbler photo by Jerry Zona.)

## **WATER-WISE KIDS**

### **Saturday, Aug 11th**

9:00 - 11:00 - Walk Through the Water Cycle (game, outdoors) (Mallory and volunteers)

11:30 - 12:15 - Wetland Metaphors / Conservation Demonstration (indoors, Sharon)

12:15 - 1:00 - Lunch (on your own)

1:00 - 3:00 - Pond Life Demonstration - (Glen Kilgore and volunteers, indoors)

Volunteers needed:

Game - Mallory will need the assistance of 2 volunteers who will need to learn the game in advance.

Pond Life - Glen will need at least 2 - 3 volunteers.

The event will take the place of regularly scheduled programs.



Water Lilies  
Photo by Jerry Zona

## **JUNIOR VOLUNTEER TRAINING**

The SOP's of BBSPVO allow for the acceptance of Junior Volunteers under the age of 14. We have not had a formal training program for these young people, and we are planning our first training for August 4, 2007. We have 4 young applicants who will be screened for the program. The one-day training will consist of the following activities:

Orientation

A round-table discussion with volunteers on the purpose of state parks and volunteers, the work we do, volunteer conduct, etc.

Discussion and demonstrations of junior volunteer activities: Nature Center, trail interpretation, special programs

A hike around Creekfield to demonstrate trail interpretation

A road tour of the park

Attendance at a public program

Hands-on training will consist of observation and assistance in the Nature Center, observation of various programs, wood tying, and trail interpretation. These are the major activities the JR will assist in as a volunteer. When the JR reaches age 14, he/she has the option to complete the regular training and become a full volunteer.

JR VIT's and JR Volunteers under 14 must be accompanied by a parent or designated adult at all times in the park and at programs outside the park. They will also need a volunteer to work with them on most projects at the park. They will be allowed to interpret in the Nature Center, handle and interpret live animals (with proper training), do trail interpretation, assist with wood tying and appropriate maintenance, and assist with hikes and programs for the public.

Volunteers will be asked to allow a JR VIT or JR Volunteer to assist with public programs. JR VIT's and JR volunteers will need to arrange in advance what programs they will assist with and exactly what their role will be. The volunteer or staff in charge of the program has full say in what the Junior will do and how he/she will help. Volunteers who are willing

to allow these young people to assist them interpretation in the Nature Center and with hikes and/or programs should contact Anna Dell Williamson immediately to get your name on the resource list. Also contact Anna Dell if you are willing to assist with training or have any questions regarding the program.

## FALL VIT TRAINING

Fall training for new VIT's will be held September 8, 15, and 22. We need volunteers to serve as mentors for the VIT's and to assist with hands-on training. If you are willing to be a mentor or a resource person for VIT's or to assist with training in any way, please contact Anna Dell Williamson. If your name is already on the resource list, it will stay there unless you ask for it to be removed. Thank you for your support of our training program.

## LIVE ANIMAL HANDLING POLICY

*(Ed. Note: Below is a **summary** of the BBSP policy on display and use of live animals. To see the complete policy, refer to a VIT training manual or ask David Heinicke for a copy.)*

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.

★ **The purpose of this policy**

- To insure the 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**

- Only species that are native to the area should be displayed unless there is a specific reason that a non-native species should be displayed.
- 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 visitor should never be allowed to hold the animals.
- Hold the animal securely without causing undue stress.
- Never startle, surprise or scare visitors with the animal. This is counterproductive to our mission.
- If practical, 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".
- 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.

# GET WELL WISHES

Willie Anderson has been ill with a serious infection. He is now out of ICU and in rehab. Our sincere wishes for a speedy recovery and return to BBSP go out to Willie.

## VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS POLICY

(Adopted - December 14, 2005) Volunteer service awards will be presented to members of the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization that have completed the appropriate number of years of active volunteer service at Brazos Bend. Volunteer service awards will be paid for by TPWD, presented by park staff and will be in increments of five years. If a volunteer has been on inactive status for a period of six consecutive months to one consecutive year this time will not count towards years of active volunteer service. If a volunteer spends less than six consecutive months on inactive status, the years of volunteer service will not be negatively effected. The By-laws of the BBSPVO does not allow for inactive status for greater than one consecutive year.

Awards will be presented each year at the volunteer picnic. In an attempt to avoid errors, oversights and mistakes, park staff will notify all volunteers scheduled to receive a service award prior to the volunteer picnic. If a volunteer feels that he/she should be receiving a service award and have not been notified please contact the volunteer coordinator prior to the volunteer picnic so the situation can be discussed. Additional awards or certificates may be presented to volunteers at the discretion of the volunteer coordinator or his/her designee.

## INPUT SOUGHT Creekfield Hike Permanent Time Change

We are considering keeping the Creekfield Hike at 10:00 year round.

Reasons: 1) There are plenty of visitors up and moving about by 10:00  
2) Wildlife is more active  
3) It does not cut into lunch time for anyone, visitors or staff.

Please let us know what you think. (We would normally switch back to 11:00 the first weekend in October.)

## I REMEMBER WHEN...

(from a picnic many years ago)

The Visitor Center stayed closed unless nice campers like Buddy and Mozelle Franklin offered to open it for a few hours.  
The old bridge and the wonderful noise it made  
Creekfield Lake had water and waterfowl!  
Hale Lake used to be closed in the winter  
There were so many fewer people than visit now.  
There were rattlesnakes in the Elm Lake picnic grounds  
Dennis Jones was a seasonal/part time ranger - usually on a bicycle.  
Sharon wasn't the only Hanzik on the park staff.  
Chris wasn't the only Hofferber in the BBSPVO.  
Bruce and Anna Dell, ancient volunteers, had no grandchildren to brag on.  
The first volunteer training class!  
Susie Taylor and Anne Day came to work at the park.  
There was no observatory – no, I wasn't too young then to notice that it wasn't there -  
When there was always water over the spillway!  
When the skies were dark in the park - no shopping center at Hwy 6!

# NATURE CENTER REPORT

## JUNE, 2007

*Here is a breakdown of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for June 1-30. Hot weather and lower visitation are reflected in the numbers. Numbers come from the calendar in the Nature Center and may not reflect all activities. Be sure to report Nature Center visitation on the calendar, and attendance for all programs and hikes on the form on the clipboard next to the calendar behind the front desk. The form asks for the date, name of program, presenter, type of program, and total number of visitors, plus a breakdown of the approximate number of adults and of children at the program.*

	PROGRAMS	TOTALS
<b>NATURE CENTER Total for June 4025</b>	<b>SATURDAYS (5)</b>	<b>1567</b> - High, 471, 6/9
	<b>SUNDAYS (4)</b>	<b>1000</b> - High, 319, 6/10
	<b>WEEKDAYS (23)</b>	<b>1458</b> - High, 265, 6/19
	<b>CREEKFIELD HIKES (7 days)</b>	<b>62</b> - High, 21, 6/9
	<b>ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (6)</b>	<b>112</b>
	<b>BIRD PROGRAMS/HIKES (4)</b>	<b>55</b>
	<b>SNAKE/REPTILE PROGRAMS (2)</b>	<b>75</b>
	<b>CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (4)</b>	<b>48</b>
	<b>OTHER PROGRAMS (8)</b> includes pond life, photo, orienteering, outreach, butterfly/dragonfly programs	<b>116</b>

## JUNE MAINTENANCE REPORT

*by Bryan Leach*

**Wood Yard:**

Hauled wood to the wood yard, split and tied wood, delivered tied wood to the racks in both camping loops

**Mowing and Landscaping:** Mowed around the Oak trees, along the road to Elm Lake and around the Big Oak on the Riverview Trail

Worked in the flowers around the Nature Center on 2 different occasions

Cut down several Chinese Tallow trees around the wood yard Finished cutting the small trees under the Big Oak along the Riverview Trail

**Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:**

Hauled 12 Kubota loads of trail topping to the Bluestem Trail

**Equipment Maintenance:**

Changed the engine oil and filter on the K1 Kubota; changed the engine oil and greased the 06 Gator

Replaced the fan belt on the K2 Kubota

Changed the Transmission fluid and filters on the K1 Kubota and installed a new fan belt

Adjusted the intake and exhaust valves on the engine of the K1 Kubota

Changed the engine oil on the splitter

Cleaned the outside of the radiator on the K1 Kubota two different times

Removed the drive shaft on the Tractor front wheel drive unit

### General Maintenance:

Washed all the benches around the Creekfield ADA Trail  
Put up 3 bulletin boards at the Nature Center  
Made a mounting device for storing the fire ant spreader  
Built and installed a bracket for storing the new weed eater/edger

### Pest Control:

Mounted a receiver on the 07 Gator to install the new Herd Fire Ant Spreader, worked on running the wiring and controls for the new spreader and did calibration runs with the new spreader making it ready to use  
Treated the Nature Center, Forty Acre Lake Picnic Grounds, and Forty Acre Lake Trail with Fire Ant Bait  
Picked up 4 bags of Extinguish Plus, Fire Ant Bait at a supplier on I 45 North

### New Projects

Finished the cover over Pier #7 at Elm Lake

## FIRE ANT TREATMENTS

*summarized from a letter by Ron Morrison*

On Monday, February 26, 2007, Ron Morrison attended a seminar sponsored by the Texas Cooperative Extension on the "Impact of the Imported Red Fire Ant on Native Wildlife" by Dr. Paul Nester. During the presentation Dr. Nester said that broadcast spreading was far more effective than the mound treatment that we were currently using. Dr. Nester recommended using the "Herd GT-77 spreader" which is specifically designed for fire ant treatment. The membership approved purchase of this equipment, which has been installed on our newest 2007 John Deere 2X4 Gator ATV.

The maintenance crew mounted a receiver on the 07 Gator to install the new Herd Fire Ant Spreader, worked on running the wiring and controls for the new spreader and did calibration runs with the new spreader making it ready to use. On June 13 they completed calibration tests of the machine and started application. Ron sent a detailed report and photos describing the calibration methods, results and data collected while applying the first treatment. They had to determine the speed of the vehicle, develop recommended speeds for spreading the bait evenly on different terrains, and recalculate the spread width because the manufacture tests were on a higher vehicle than ours.



To determine the spread width, they laid tarps on the ground, and ran the spreader until enough bait was clearly visible. They then folded the tarp to bring the bait to the center of the tarp so they could more easily see the coverage as a pile of material in a straight line. We then estimated when the material dropped to 95% of the maximum in the center and measured that distance.

As you can see, being a volunteer work crew member not only requires the ability and stamina to work outside, but the knowledge to adapt equipment to fit our resources and to figure out complicated formulas to determine the best way to use new equipment

## A FISH STORY

*by Rick Dashnau*

*One of those "did my eyes just see what my brain says they saw?" moments at BBSP. June 10, 2007.*

I was on the trail between New Horseshoe Lake and Elm lake, talking to some people fishing there. They were talking about an alligator that was watching them fish, and I had just reminded them about some aspects of "alligator etiquette".

I had just warned them about keeping fish on a stringer. The woman in the group, who was near the water, said "oh". Then she reached down and pulled a stringer which had two small fish on it (which I hadn't seen) out of the water. This caused the alligator to swim closer. I warned them that they should keep all fish they catch--and bait--away from the water in some kind of container.

Anyway, it was while I was talking to them that I noticed a man on a bicycle pass us heading towards the parking area from Old Horseshoe Lake. I subconsciously noted the 3 or more fishing poles across the handlebars... And the sedate cycling speed... And the sort of greyish fin just in front of the rear tire, under the bike seat... And---WHAT?! WHAT WAS THAT?



I quickly turned and looked again. The man had a very large fish roped to his bike. The head was up near the handlebars, and the rest was sort of roped to the bike frame, bent down and up again under his seat. I was too surprised to snap a picture, and I couldn't just walk away from the park visitors, so a few minutes went by afterwards. As soon as I could, I walked to the parking area, where the man had already untied the fish. Rats. What a picture that would have been.



It was a good-sized alligator gar, at least 4 feet long. The fisherman said he'd caught it on half of a mullet while fishing in Big Creek by the Blowout of Pilant Lake. He was quite friendly, and let a number of admirers take a look. I took the chance to describe to them the difference between the alligator gar and other garfish (alligator gars have the wide jaws--hence the Latin name *Lepisosteus Spatula*). I also told them all (including the fisherman) about our mounted gar skull, and showed them some of the alligator gar scales I keep with me. Even the fisherman was impressed by the scales. It was business not quite as usual at BBSP. Here are a few pictures of the fish, so y'all won't think this is just a fish story.

## BREAK FOR SAFETY: POISON IVY/SUMAC

Sharon Hanzik shared this safety memo with us from Federal Services EH&S. Photo from Poison Ivy, Oak and Sumac Information Center, [www.poisonivy.aesir.com](http://www.poisonivy.aesir.com))

- Myth:** Poison Ivy rash is contagious.
- Fact:** Rubbing the rashes won't spread poison ivy to other parts of your body (or to another person). You spread the rash only if urushiol oil -- the sticky, resinlike substance that causes the rash -- has been left on your hands.
- Myth:** You can catch poison ivy simply by being near the plants
- Fact:** Direct contact is needed to release urushiol oil. Stay away from forest fires, direct burning, or anything else that can cause the oil to become airborne, such as a lawnmower, trimmer, etc.
- Myth:** Leaves of three, let them be
- Fact:** Poison sumac has 7 to 13 leaves on a branch, although poison ivy and oak have 3 leaves per cluster.
- Myth:** Do not worry about dead plants
- Fact:** Urushiol oil stays active on any surface, including dead plants, for up to 5 years.
- Myth:** Breaking the blisters releases urushiol oil that can spread
- Fact:** Not true. But your wounds can become infected, and you may make the scarring worse. In very extreme cases, excessive fluid may need to be withdrawn by a doctor.
- Myth:** I've been in poison ivy many times and never broken out. I'm immune.
- Fact:** Not necessarily true. Upwards of 90% of people are allergic to urushiol oil; it's a matter of time and exposure. The more times you are exposed to urushiol, the more likely it is that you will break out with an allergic rash. For the first time sufferer, it generally takes longer for the rash to show up - generally in 7 to 10 days



- ★ Know where risks are on your site and avoid those areas.
- ★ Use products like 'Ivy Block' before potential exposure and always wash immediately after working in areas where these plants are prevalent.
- ★ Never burn brush containing Poison Ivy, Oak or Sumac. Urushiol will spread in the smoke, contaminating anything it lands on.

**What to do** if you come in contact with Poison Ivy, Oak or Sumac or think you have:

- ◆ Wash off with hot water (not so hot that it burns) and strong soap as soon as possible.
- ◆ Wash within the first six hours, before the first symptoms appear, and you have a good chance of avoiding an outbreak, and an even better chance of minimizing the effects if you do have one.
- ◆ If you do start to get a rash there is no anti-toxin available for urushiol. There are products out there that will make you more comfortable, but no specific treatments. Washing in hot water with strong soap within the first 24 hours of exposure, and not scratching can help reduce the length and severity of a reaction.

# RACCOONS DON'T NEED SPOONS TO STEAL YOUR HOT FAJITAS

By Sharon Hanzik

Adapted by Linda Hite...with apologies

Raccoons don't need spoons or knives or forks.  
They have their own tools, they have what works,  
*for stealing your hot fajitas.*

Two little hands like yours and mine  
Hold on to their food whenever they dine  
*on your hot fajitas.*

They'll eat crayfish, minnows, even frogs  
Or worms they find while digging in logs,  
*or even your hot fajitas.*

No matter the place, no matter the meal  
They can hold on, they can even peel,  
*or take your fajitas right off the grill!*

Campers beware! Lock away your food.  
These masked bandits will rob you good,  
*especially of your hot fajitas!*

Zipppers and snaps won't hold them back.  
They are always ready for a sneak attack  
*on your delicious hot fajitas!*

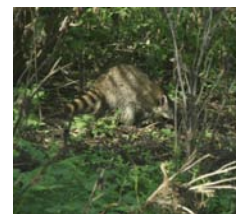
Able, smart, their learning is quick.  
They share with each other every new trick  
*of how to steal your hot fajitas.*

If you feed them, there will be regret.  
No wild animal makes a good pet,  
*especially one that eats your hot fajitas!*

Never invite them into your home.  
They belong in the wild, free to roam,  
*to steal someone else's hot fajitas.*

Raccoons don't need spoons or forks or knives.  
They have everything they need for their clever little  
lives  
*including my hot fajitas. (Sob!)*

*Stay tuned next month, no need for  
gloom,  
for the rest of the story of the  
greedy raccoon  
who stole my hot fajitas.*



## PRAIRIE THOUGHTS

by Dennis Jones

I walked out onto the prairies the other day. I had the place to myself even though the park bustled with visitors and people going places. The wind gently blew the tallgrasses and that made them seem to roll like the waves on the ocean. I could hear the wind rustling through the grasses and was encompassed by the sound of the earth turning. What a wonderful feeling. Prairies are windy places. I looked in one direction, and I saw a barn, a fence line, and the park road. It leads one to imagine what the world will be like when all the prairies are gone. Will anyone even notice?

I recall playing in great fields of tallgrass as a boy growing up on the coastal prairies. Big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian Grass, Switch Grass, I didn't know their names -- it didn't matter, they were my friends. The prairie was my playground, it was my companion, my comforter, and it embraced me as a mother would its child. The grasses towered over my head and even though I was surrounded by the grasses I was set free by the openness as the sky stretched from horizon to horizon. I would climb my mountains, the pimple mounds that dot the seemingly flat prairie, and gaze out across the openness to the edge of the earth.

Sometimes the grass would fold over into loops that formed open spaces in their center, and I would crawl along the prairie earth and pretend I was a pocket gopher or a wily rabbit. I could hear the song of the meadowlark singing everywhere and knew the prairie was his home and mine. The box turtle and even the occasional diamond backed terrapin crossed my path from time to time, but I never tried to keep one as a pet. I wanted them to be free like I was when I was on the prairie. I would sit and watch the red harvester ants for hours coming and going along their roadways and wished they would let me go inside their volcano-like mound and explore their tunnels and chambers. I never did like fire ants though, but there weren't as many of them as there is now. On cold winter days when the grasses were all brown I would sit and shiver with them waiting for the coming of spring.

Little boys grow up, and I found myself occupied by other things that seemed so much more important at the time. But every time I find myself back on the prairies I recall those times of wonder and freedom. I hope you had a place like my

prairies when you were growing up, and I hope you still get to visit them from time to time. If you never had one, it's not too late; I'll share my prairies with you, while they last.

Eighteen thousand years ago when the glaciers from the last major ice age receded and left fertile soils behind, the prairies flourished. 1.4 million square miles! Presently, 96 to 99.9 percent of the prairies that once comprised the area that 65 million years earlier had been a great inland ocean are gone. Gone.



**JULY BIRTHDAYS**

Debra Baker	Susie Taylor
Diane Carpenter	Carlos Torres
Martin Gay	Barb Tucker
Frank Smith	Ronn Washington

**AUGUST BIRTHDAYS**

Tom Draper	Frank Seay
Eddy Grizzaffi	Rob Thacker

**AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES**

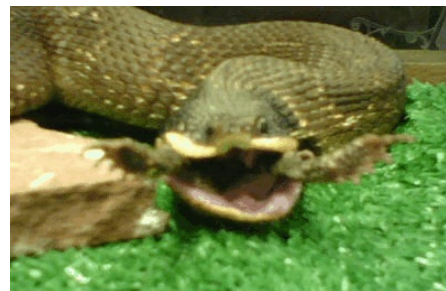
**JULY ANNIVERSARIES**  
James and Joyce Blankenship

Ray and Dana Anderson  
Jim and Lorna Calvert  
Ken and Beth Debenport  
Ron Morrison  
Laszlo and Lexi Perlaky  
Frank and Stacey Seay  
Ronn and Mona Washington  
Bruce and Anna Dell Williamson

# HOGNOSE SNAKE

*by Sharon Hanzik*

The larger hognose was not eating. The smaller one wanted to eat everything. David suggested I remove the smaller one and feed the larger one a live toad. I did so Sunday morning, June 24. After about an hour, it ate, after we removed all the wooden obstacles for the toad to hide behind. Photos by Sharon Hanzik.



# THE ODDEST OTTER

by Sharon Hanzik

Otters are happy, they love to play  
Romp and rambling the day away.

A nice long slide down the river bank  
To wrestle, to chase, a good tail yank!

There was one otter that liked to sit still.  
He had no energy; he could not find the will.

A nice enough fellow, this lone, lazy chap  
Found his greatest joy in taking a nap!

A day in the sun when he could snooze  
Is the kind of day he would choose.

Stretched out nicely in the soft green grass  
Away the hours of the day he'd pass.

Chasing and wrestling went on all around  
His brothers and sisters would happily clown.

No one would bother this lazy otter.  
No one would approach him, not even his father!

They just let him be, not because he was boring.  
They wouldn't go near his awful snoring!

Whenever he'd wake with his stomach rumbling  
Down to the river, he'd go tumbling.

He'd manage enough to catch a few fish.  
Then back to his napping, his one true wish!

## TEN FACTS ABOUT RIVER OTTERS

- ◆ River Otters are mammals – this means they have hair or fur, are warm-blooded, give birth to their young and the mother nurses the young with her milk.
- ◆ River Otters live along streams and lake borders.
- ◆ River Otters are aquatic but may travel several miles over land to reach another stream or lake.
- ◆ River Otters have webbed feet and a tail that is thick at the base, and tapers toward the end.
- ◆ River Otters are large and weasel-like – rich brown above, with a silvery sheen below.
- ◆ River Otters are carnivorous – they have 36 teeth and eat fish, frogs, crayfish, and other aquatic invertebrates.
- ◆ River Otters make dens in banks, with the entrance below water, or other suitable places.
- ◆ River Otters are sociable animals and usually travel two or more together.
- ◆ River Otters are born during the months of April and May. They are born blind with dark, brown fur.
- ◆ River Otters are pretty dang cute!!

*Sign spotted in Alvin:*

**DROUGHT ABOUT OVER.**

**YOU CAN START WATERING LAWNS AGAIN SOON**

# Thanks

- ☺ to **all who participated** in National Trails Day June 2
- ☺ to the Thursday work crew for installing a cover on Pier 7 at Elm Lake.
- ☺ to Diane and Jerry Carpenter for the June meeting supper
- ☺ to Mallory Curl, Rick Dashnau, Sharon Hanzik, David Heinicke, Linda Hite, Dennis Jones, Bryan Leach, Ron Morrison and Jerry Zona for articles and/or pictures for the newsletter

## PLENTY OF RAIN

Photos by Bryan Leach, except closeup of Hale Lake Fishing Pier by Jerry Zona



**Gazebo, Hale Lake Point**



**Hale Lake Fishing Pier**



**Hale Lake Fishing Pier  
Close up**



**Gator at Spillway**



**Great Blue**



**Road/trail by Wood Yard**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 10      Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM  
July 12      Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM  
July 14      Regular meeting, 5:30 PM  
July 17      Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM  
July 19      Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM

July 24      Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM  
July 26      Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM  
July 31      Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM  
August 2      Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM  
August 4      Junior Volunteer training, NC, 9- 5

**Brazos Bend State Park**

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville TX 77461

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←  
**SATURDAY, JULY 14, 2007, 5:30 PM**



**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

**BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION**

**VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS**

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

**NEWSLETTER TEAM**

- Editor**                                      **Anna Dell Williamson**
- Production Assistants**                **Bruce Williamson**  
**Terry Williamson**

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

**Yellow crowned night heron**  
**Photo by Jerry Zona**

