



VOLUME 19, NUMBER 11

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SEPTEMBER MEETING NOTES

submitted by Nicole Olson

President Bruce Williamson called the meeting to order on September 8, 2007. There were nineteen volunteers and two staff members present. The August 2007 meeting minutes were approved as posted. **Steve Killian** and **David Heinicke** brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report for the month of August 2007

Chuck Duplant (See Financial Report for complete information)

The budget report was projected on the screen and discussed. If there's a contact for getting firewood, please let Ken Debenport know.

The following **budget requests** were presented and approved.

Steve Killian requested a **35-gallon drum of herbicide** for prairie management and grass control around lakes, sidewalks, trails.

David Heinicke requested **three ceiling fans**, blades 60 inches long, wiring, and tension tubes to help cool the classroom during programs.

Bryan Leach requested funds to build a permanent 10 by 16-foot **pole barn** to be used as cover for chopping wood and for shade and rain protection at the wood yard.

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Chuck Duplant requested materials to build the **raised prairie platform** 4 feet high and approximately 8by12 or minimum 8 by 8 size and to add concrete steps. We have applied for a grant through Fletcher Morgan. The project is also covered by two Exxon grants (thanks to **Glen Kilgore** and **Carol Ramsayer**).

Outreach – Judy Strauss

Texian Market Days are October 26 and 27. Friday will be mostly school groups and Saturday is open to the public. We need volunteers to help protect gators at the bridge from people throwing rocks.

Fort Bend Fair is coming up – check with Sharon Hanzik for information

Gift Shop Report – Beth Debenport

We need help staffing the shop. T-shirts are coming in, so do your Christmas shopping with us.

Maintenance Report – Bryan Leach

There's green wood in the wood yard, and you can do your Christmas shopping with us!

Training – Anna Dell Williamson

There were 14 VITS and 13 volunteers present today for Orientation. There was one parent attending with her son. Over 40 people ate lunch. Carol Ramsayer helped with the brochures, handouts and makes great cakes! Thanks! We have a great group of new volunteers.

Old Business

Nomination of new officers:

President – James Blankenship

Vice President – Anna Dell Williamson

Treasurer – Diane Carpenter

Secretary – Nicole Olson

The 5th position on the Executive Committee is the past President.

There was no contested position.

It was moved, seconded and passed to approve the new officers to take office on October 1.

Thanks to **Judy Strauss** for the dinner!

Bruce Williamson – Thanks for having the confidence in me and thanks to the other officers for helping to keep the organization running smoothly! It's a privilege to serve a group like this! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

IN SYMPATHY

We were all saddened to learn of the passing of

BRYAN LEACH

on Tuesday, November 6.

Our sincere sympathy goes out to his family and friends.
He will be greatly missed.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Welcome to one of the most amazing places in Texas and meet some of the most amazing people in the world. This is indeed the way I feel each and every time I walk into the Nature Center here at Brazos Bend. Over the course of the past two years each of you have made me aware that this is indeed true. It is each of you who makes our humble little Nature Center such a delight for the public. It is you who brings that light of amazement and wonder to the eyes of that child or parent or the visitor from far away, the one who just got what you were sharing with them. You are the one whom that person will remember when they enthusiastically share their wonderful visit to Brazos Bend with their friends and family, their co-worker or perhaps someone who is planning to visit Brazos Bend for the first time. And as such, my hat is off to you, and my heart is light with the thoughts of what you have given to me. It is my personal wish for each of you, that you could touch the heart and mind of every soul who walks through our doors, as you have mine.

James Blankenship



Yellow-crowned night heron

Brian Leach, Sept. 2007

STAFF REPORTS

STEVE KILLIAN

There's a good-looking crop of **new volunteers**. Other things are looking better but we're nowhere where we should be. The rain has held us back – we can't mow very well; the lakes and prairies are hurting for mowing. Hopefully there will be dry weather next month.

Question from **Ken Debenport** – when do state parks get the newly allocated money? For the herbicide buying? (just kidding!). Steve Killian answered that if we don't stay on the resources, it will run away, the prairies will be unrecognizable, so we still have to buy herbicide. The plan is to keep buying herbicides.



For the **Park Specialist / Park Police Officer** position – the person was interviewed. That means we will have 2 armed officers in the park. The **Park Ranger III Resource Manager** was hired. Question from **Beth Debenport** – when do we get a Regional Director? Steve Killian

answered that right now we have **Rob Comstock**, a 25-year veteran, who is acting regional head from Sheldon Lake.

Financial business – In general, financial things regarding parks are being tightened. The park and the park system will get together for state audits. Standards, practices and procedures are to be set up in all parks.

Question from **Diane Carpenter** – I attended an open meeting held recently on the Grand Parkway and there was opposition to the **Grand Parkway** at the meeting. The parkway may be two miles of the park. What is the park doing? Steve Killian answered the parkway may be moved North of Big Creek; it can be manageable with the eco-system. We have a regional resource manager that is watching these kinds of things. The website is www.grandpky.com and comments end September 13, 2007.

The park is prepared in case there's a hurricane in September.

Question from **James Blankenship** – when does the budget get cut loose? Steve Killian answered that the 2008 budget is coming in now with just a little lag.

Anna Dell Williamson thanked Steve Killian for the presentation at the new volunteer training.

DAVID HEINICKE

David Heinicke thanked everybody who participated in the volunteer training and especially Anna Dell Williamson.

There are six to eight **baby gators** in the aquarium, getting big and eating a lot. The **skull exhibit** looks good! We are still looking for comments on the text part of the exhibit.

September 23 is the annual **butterfly count** in its fifteenth year, and we are meeting at 9:00 AM at 40-Acre Lake. If interested, please come out.



The volunteer **website** needs some tightening up and changes. A meeting was held so some changes are coming up.

Future dates:

- The **Angler Education** classes are starting the first Saturday of each month.
- Texas Wildlife Expo**, October 6 and 7. Sharon Hanzik is organizing our participation and the regional exhibit area.
- Volunteer Picnic**, October 13
- Astronomy Day**, October 20. We need help and will set up on Creekfield bridge with a scope. We may keep the Nature Center open later.
- Texian Market Days**, October 26 and 27.
- Girl Scout badge workshop**, November 3 – Carrie Sample and Susie Gann are organizing this event
- Hummingbird banding** starts between 8:00 AM and 9:00 AM on Saturdays and Sundays for the rest of September.



ANNUAL PICNIC AND AWARDS CEREMONY

The Volunteer Organization annual picnic was held October 13 at the Banquet Hall. Over 80 volunteers, park hosts and family members attended. The annual organization photograph was taken before the picnic and is now posted in the Nature Center over the Guest Register. Check it out. After a wonderful meal, Sharon Hanzik presented the service awards and special awards.

CONGRATULATIONS

Service awards were given to members with 5, 10, 15 and 20 years of service:

5 year service awards:	Bryan Leach Curtis Parent	Jennifer Parent Carol Ramsayer
10 year service award:	Jacob Ramirez	
15 year service awards:	Ray Anderson Ron Dearman	Judy Strauss
20 year service awards:	Chuck Duplant Frank Gregg	Kay Lewis (posthumously)
Conservation Award	Ron Morrison and Jim Calvert for spending several days per week treating fire ants and killing Chinese tallow	
Teamwork	Candice Kenyon and Carol Ramsayer , for weekly care and cleaning of the alligator tank in the Nature Center	
Education	Carrie Sample , for consistently conducting weekly children's story times, organizing Girl Scout Troop Leader workshop and Girl Scout badge workshops	
Customer Service	Diane and Jerry Carpenter , for impeccable customer service in the Nature Center, on the trails and assisting with the web page.	
Leadership	Bruce Williamson , for serving as president, 2006-2007	
Emeritus	Willie Anderson Rita Cooper	Don Nelson

NATURE CENTER REPORT OCTOBER, 2007

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 - 31, 2007. Beautiful weather and higher 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
NATURE CENTER TOTAL: OCT. 2007, 4809 TOTAL: OCT. 2006, 5258	SATURDAYS (4)	2670 - High, 801, 10/20
	SUNDAYS (4)	1303 - High, 442, 10/28
	WEEKDAYS (23)	836 - High, 167, 10/26
	CREEKFIELD HIKES (6 days)	242 - High, 106, 10/6
	OUTREACH (TMD), 2 DAYS	2832
	POND LIFE (3)	168
	SNAKE/REPTILE PROGRAMS (3)	106
	CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (3)	95
	OTHER PROGRAMS (7) includes bird hikes, photo hike, alligator video, BB Pickers, Halloween story and movie, forest program	168

VOLUNTEER HIKE

by Jerry Zona

Friday, October 12, a group of between 15 to 20 nature lovers participated in a hike on the Red Buckeye trail, led by David Heinicke. We even saw a blue buckeye plant. Both David and the participants shared their knowledge. As usual I learned a lot, and I'll have to start bringing paper and pencil. I need to write down what is explained to me and to be able to refer to it later. When I get home I can't remember all of the details; it is a bit frustrating. I try not to be asking the same questions over and over again.

Looking forward to the next hike. Ain't nature great?

Passion Flower (l)
Jerry Zona



Mushroom (r)
Jerry Zona



TEXIAN MARKET DAYS

by Judy Strauss

This year **Texian Market Days** at the George Ranch was held on Friday and Saturday, October 26 and 27. This yearly event is one of our largest outreach events, and we could not have asked for more beautiful weather.

Friday was attended by mainly school children, mostly middle and high school age, with some general public mixed in. We counted 1164 visitors stopping by our booth on that day. Saturday brought a mixture of school groups and general public, with 1668 visitors. If you have never tried to count heads when 20-30 are coming in at you in groups and from different directions, you don't know what you are missing (and, honestly, neither did we)!

The most popular items that we bring are the snakes and the baby alligators, and, as usual, they were a big hit with all (well, mostly all) of our visitors. Many questions were asked about the items on the "touch table", as well as what we offer at Brazos Bend State Park. And the large alligator skull that we bring is always a big hit and produces many questions about alligators.

I want to thank each and every one of those who volunteered to help man the booth. This event would not have taken place without your help, and it is such an important event for us to attend. Friday volunteers were **Jerry Zona, Jerry Carpenter, Offie Walker, Carol Ramsayer, Carrie Sample, and Jane Minard. David Heinicke** also helped on Friday and brought out the Kestrel for a while, which was a huge hit with the visitors. Saturday brought out **Jim North, Anna Dell Williamson, Bruce Williamson (be sure to ask Bruce about the toothpicks), Eddy Grizaffi, Dennis Thornblom, Debra Baker, Marty Gay, Nelda Gay, Diane Kerr, Patricia Marshall, Staci Hobbet, Ronn Washington, Chuck Duplant, and Carol Jones.** As you can see, we had enough volunteers helping both days and at all shifts, that we were all able to alternate breaks and enjoy the festivities. A great time was had by everyone!

And a special thank you to **Jerry Zona** and **David Heinicke**, who met me at the Park (and didn't fuss that I was late) early Friday morning to load up my truck, and to **Chuck Duplant** and **Ronn Washington** for meeting me back at the Park on Saturday evening to unload.

You all did a great job and you were all so very important to the success of this Outreach event. Without you it would not have been possible. So, again, thank you all so very much. And speaking for Brazos Bend State Park, I am sure that they would want to thank you also as our event brought a lot of attention to many who were not aware that our park even existed.



Antique tricycle



BBSPVO Booth

OCTOBER MAINTENANCE REPORT

by Bryan Leach

Wood Yard:

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

Mowing and Landscaping:

Worked in the flowers at the Nature Center on two different occasions

Used the weed eater on the south side of the Nature Center

Trimmed and used the weed eater under and around the trees from the spider tree to the 40 Acre Lake parking lot

Removed weeds and tilled the soil and then planted flowers inside the fence at the windmill by the Nature Center

Treated the Chinese Tallow trees in the 100 camping loop and the screened shelter area

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Started and finished trimming the White Oak Trail and the Creekfield Forest Trail

Started trimming the Creekfield ADA Trail

Cut up two downed trees on the Red Buckeye Trail

Equipment Maintenance:

Changed the battery in the K1 Kubota and covered the seat with brown vinyl

Changed the engine oil and greased the 06 Gator and the 07 Gator

Replaced the broken head light on the 07 Gator

General Maintenance:

Removed a small gate from one end of the splitter enclosure

Cleaned up and removed most of a large tree off the Elm Lake loop road

Cut up and removed three downed trees on the back side of the Hale Lake picnic area

Helped park staff cut up and clean up a downed tree on the 200 camping loop

Hammered back loosened nails on the Observation Tower and the Bridge at the tower

Pest Control:

Treated for fire ants in the wood yard and all but the outskirts of the Hale Lake picnic area

New Projects

Finished building and installing the mechanicals for the Alligator/ Crocodile exhibit

Wood yard structure

Now anyone can split wood in the shade



Thanks

- ☺ to **Anna Dell Williamson** for coordinating the volunteer training
- ☺ to **Nancy Bailey** (Richard Board's widow) for doing the printing for training manuals
- ☺ to **all who helped with volunteer training**, including **James and Joyce Blankenship, Ken and Beth Debenport, Chuck Duplant, Sharon Hanzik, David Heinicke, Staci Hobbet, Steve Killian, Glen Kilgore, Bryan Leach, Ron Morrison, Carol Ramsayer**, drivers for road tour, volunteer speakers who shared experiences, and all who have assisted a VIT during their Phase 1 or Phase 2 training. A special thanks to those who filled in at the last minute for Anna Dell on the last day of training.
- ☺ to **Bryan Leach** for help on the alligator/crocodile skull exhibit
- ☺ to **Carrie Sample** and to **Suzie Gann**, for organizing the Girl Scout badge workshop and to all who assisted
- ☺ to **outgoing officers Bruce Williamson and Chuck Duplant** and welcome to new officers, **James Blankenship and Diane Carpenter**.
- ☺ to **Jerry Zona, Jerry Carpenter, Offie Walker, Carol Ramsayer, Carrie Sample, Jane Minard, David Heinicke, Jim North, Anna Dell Williamson, Bruce Williamson, Eddy Grizzaffi, Dennis Thornblom, Debra Baker, Marty Gay, Nelda Gay, Diane Kerr, Patricia Marshall, Staci Hobbet, Ronn Washington, Chuck Duplant, and Carol Jones** for assisting with the booth for Texian Market Days
- ☺ to **Judy Strauss** for organizing our participation in Texian Market Days
- ☺ to **everyone** who contributed articles and pictures for the newsletter

NEW VOLUNTEERS

Congratulations to Joseph and Molly Watson, the organization's first official Junior Volunteers, who completed their Junior training in October. Be sure to welcome these two hard-working young members.

Heron
Jane Minard





BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES



Included below are the October birthdays and anniversaries, which did not get published in the last newsletter. Happy Birthday and Happy Anniversary to all!

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

James Blankenship
Buddy Franklin
Mozelle Franklin
Dennis Jones
Tom Kanak
Diana Kerr
Fletcher Morgan
Nicole Olson

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Ray Anderson
Nelda Gay
David Heinicke
Linda Hite
Steve Killian
Patricia Marshall
Curtis Parent
Terry Williamson

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

Diane and Jerry Carpenter

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Beth Debenport
Angie Gruber
Frank Willett

VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

IMPORTANT DATES

November 22, Thanksgiving Day, the Nature Center will be open only because Buddy and Mozelle Franklin are keeping the center open 9:00 to 5:00. If you so choose to work, please feel free.

November 23, the day after Thanksgiving, is very busy, and we will be open 9:00 to 5:00. There is one host on the schedule and the Williamson's plan to work as well.

December 1, Simple Christmas event, 3:00 to 7:00, much help needed. Email Sharon for updated sign up list or sign up in person in the lounge.

December 10-14, the park will be closed for the deer hunt (only one week this year). The park will reopen Friday, December 14, at noon. The volunteer calendar starts at noon that day. The Debenports will be conducting gift shop inventory on Dec. 10 and 11. If you would like to help, please contact them. Hunting will be going on in the park, but it is safe to drive to the Nature Center. Volunteers are not to go anywhere else. To sign up to help, contact Ken and Beth at debenports@yahoo.com.

JOE'S BENCH

by Staci Hobbet

Taking a rest on Joe's Bench on the Red Buckeye trail is going to have to wait until Mother Nature puts her hydrologic powers in reverse. After the many large rainfalls in these last months, the bench – if it's still there -- is buried six feet deep beneath what is now a sizable bluff along the Brazos River. On a recent hike to the spot with a handful of volunteers, David Heinicke was astonished to see the new topography. He poked the ground with his snake stick on about the spot where the bench should be. The view's better as things are now, but chances are that another set of heavy rains will wash the bluff away again, David said. Human-made structures along the river are temporary at best. Joe's Bench, if it took a sail down-river, might be most accurately described as transient.

PHOTO WALK

by Laszlo Perlaky

The Photo-walk on October 6 at BBSP was held at 40-Acre and Pilant Lakes. Although the main purpose of the hike was to photograph birds, the group also photographed a mama alligator with a few baby alligators immersing into the duckweed-covered shallow water. Several Moorhen families were the object of photographs as well. It was interesting to observe and photograph the dependency and caring behavior between parents and chicks. As time passed, hundreds of grackles arrived to the trees, then left in flocks. Small flocks of white ibises passed from Pilant Slough to Pilant Lake, where the dark tree lines and dark storm clouds with a rainbow, contrasted with bright yellow-green reeds. It was a beautiful landscape, and I really wished to photograph it with my large format camera. However, we planned to photograph birds, so we incorporated the surroundings to our birds in flight pictures. We also focused to show the motion in an artistic way, where the blurry birds were part of the composition. We got nice sunset and pink colored eastern sky... what a great day!

SEARCHING FOR DUNG BEETLES

by Staci Hobbet

On a warm morning in early October, David Heinicke and a small band of volunteers hiked along Red Buckeye trail bearing a load of buckets, water, liquid soap, a shovel and trowel, a set of tiny traps, and a container full to the brim of something truly delectable...if you're a dung beetle, that is.

It was as a volunteer himself that David recruited a few helpers. A professor at the University of New Mexico, Mark Rowland, had asked him to collect some specimens of the only dung beetle known to live in the Park, the Texas Black Phanaeus (*Phanaeus triangularis texensis* Edmonds), the male of which looks like Darth Vader in bug form with a black Wagnerian horn thrown in. The goal was to trap as many dung beetles as possible in a one-time attempt. Rowland had sent David detailed instructions, much of the equipment, and the stuff that would draw the beetles to the traps: intensely odiferous swine feces.

"I kept it in the refrigerator until this morning," David said encouragingly as he asked for one among the group who would volunteer to bait the traps. The competition for the job was not stiff, but Glen Kilgore stepped up readily, and everyone else stepped back as he uncapped the bait.

Several traps were laid in the woods by digging six-inch holes in the ground. Small cups half-full of soapy water were placed in these, with the bait suspended delicately at the rim on a small-diameter platter. As the beetles lumbered eagerly toward what smelled to them like a fine buffet, they fell into the water,

unfed. It was a scene the volunteers would have liked to observe, but once a trap was set, the group made for the next site, returning after a couple of hours to check for victims.

Rowland had told David to expect a big haul of beetles, but only about 35 were recovered. David speculated that the beetles were at the end of their season. Rowland wanted the beetles as part of a study of the male beetle's horn. The theory had been that the males with the larger horns were the main breeders. However, genetic changes now seem to imply that the smaller-horned male beetles are sneaking in along the margins to court the girls successfully. It's that implication that Rowland is now studying.

David's crew included Glen Kilgore, Staci Hobbet, Dennis James, Warren Pruess, and Susan Severance.



TX Black Phanaeus, TPWD
Phanaeus triangularis texensis Edmonds
Family Scarabaeidae, Subfamily carabaeinae, Tribe Coprini
<http://www.texasento.net/triangularis.htm>



Glen Kilgore baits a trap
No, that's not peanut butter

REVENUE AND RESOURCE

by Dennis Jones

Or is it Resource and Revenue? Which should come first? Everyone has an opinion about this, and usually it is a pretty strong one. Some would argue that without the resource there would be no revenue. Others would say that without the revenue, the resource is diminished or non-existent. Who is right? Who is off the mark? As usual with any "argument", there are elements of truth in both positions.

Let's look at each perception a little closer and see what makes them tick. Revenue versus resource: You've got the resource, now what do you do with it? A park needs staff, equipment, and material to sustain its operations and the mandate to serve the public for present and future generations. This takes money. We usually don't have the luxury of just letting it sit there. Parks must generate an adequate amount of funding to just maintain the resource. If you neglect the resource, the people stop coming to see you, stop paying their entrance fees, and the care of the resource continues its downward spiral. How much is too much?

Resource versus revenue: Is the pursuit of the funding required to maintain a park worth altering the intrinsic value of the park? You can generate a lot of revenue with a "Splashville" water park or a golf course, but if it changes what the intent of the park is and it drives away your initial customer base, it could be argued that you are not being a good steward of the land and fulfilling the original mission. How much is too much?

Add to this mix the difference between conservation and preservation. Do you know the difference? In park jargon conservation means to use carefully or sparingly and to protect from loss or depletion. Preservation is defined as to keep or maintain intact and to protect from injury or peril. The former implies public use and the latter does not. We are a primarily a conservation agency as defined by our mission statement: "...to manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources..."

This brings us back to the resource/revenue/resource question. Fundamentally, I think the answer is based on our mission statement. We must manage the resource, control its use, and protect it from loss or depletion, while at the same time making it attractive enough to the general public that they choose to support it with their revenue. In other words I believe:

- we are not a preserve
- the park cannot remain untouched (because we are not a preserve)
- we must make the park a place people want to visit (and often)
- we must appeal to the broadest revenue base we can (serve the most types of outdoor interests
 - without visitation our revenue (support) base dwindles (legislatively and publicly)
 - we must minimize the loss and/or depletion of our resources, but recognize that consumption will take place on various levels, but can be renewed)
 - doing nothing does not stop natural (or exotic) succession
 - without revenue, there is no park
 - revenue generates more parks
 - revenue cannot be the only requirement for a park's existence

Most of the people I know who work at parks (paid and non-paid) did not get into the field to make money (for themselves or the agency); they did it because of their love of the resource and the desire to serve the public. Hard decisions have to be made and weighed against what is good for the park in the long term. Balanced consumption, public support, serving diverse audiences, and many other tasks mean continued revenue and the continuation of the resource. But it is most important to understand what we are and not to try to be something we are not. As for preservation, The Nature Conservancy is the best place I know to set aside wildlife resources that will survive the ever-growing demand for public access and use. That is their mission.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 10	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
November 13	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
November 15	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
November 16	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Restroom, 8:00 AM
November 18	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Restroom, 8:00 AM
November 20	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
November 22	Thanksgiving Day, NC open 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
November 23	Nature Center open 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
November 27	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
November 29	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
December 1	Photo-walk, Landscape #3, 3:00 PM Simple Christmas, 3:00 - 7:00 PM
December 4	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
December 6	Weekday work crew, NC, 8:15 AM
December 7	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Restroom, 8:00 AM
December 8	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM Bird Hike, "Sunset at the Tower" , Observation Tower, 5:00 PM

