



# BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 9

SEPTEMBER 2011

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Sharon Hanzik with Peter Holt and Carter Smith

On August 25, 2011, Sharon Hanzik was recognized for her 25 years with Texas Parks and Wildlife. All of her years have been at wonderful Brazos Bend State Park. TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith reviewed Sharon's service, and then The Honorable Peter M. Holt, outgoing Commission Chairman, presented her award. Next time

you see Sharon, please give her your congratulations for these years of service, relationship with our organization, and her love of nature.



Sharon Hanzik with Laird Fowler



Peter Holt, Bill McDonald, Carter Smith

In addition to Sharon, two other TPWD Staff members were recognized that have a connection to BBSP. Bill McDonald of the TPWD Infrastructure Department was recognized for 35 years of service. Bill designed the Elm Lake viewing platform. Laird Fowler, who opened BBSP and hired Sharon, was recognized for 30 plus years of service in many different locations in the TPWD system of parks. Because of these folks, BBSP was mentioned a number of times during this event.

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Training started September 10 for a new group of volunteers. Be sure to give these folks a warm welcome and assistance as they join us.

Our annual picnic is on October 15. Our group picture is scheduled for 5:30 PM with social time before we have our meal shortly after 6:00 PM. We will have barbeque in addition to the pot luck dishes you bring. Do not let the barbeque keep you from bringing a meat casserole or veggies & **DESSERTS**.

Please join us for our general meetings on the second Saturday of each month at 5:00 PM. You will be able to enjoy some food before the meeting and then help in the direction of our organization. There will be no October meeting other than the picnic. The November meeting will be November 12.

*Offie Walker*

## **AUGUST MEETING NOTES**

Offie Walker called the meeting to order on August 13, 2011. There were 16 volunteers, 5 VITs, and 3 staff members present. The minutes of the July meeting were approved as posted. Motion carried.

Staff members Steve Killian, Chris Bishop and Sharon Hanzik brought their reports, which are published elsewhere in the newsletter.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Dave Armstrong gave the monthly financial reports for July, which were accepted as presented.

The following requests for expenditures were presented and approved:

Training: File cabinet for lounge, out of funds available.

Gift Shop: A new computer and hardware/software, to come out of Glen Kilgore's Exxon Mobile Account. It will work with the current software until we get a new software system.

It is time to renew our CD's. The Budget Committee looked at several possibilities for renewal, and recommended we renew all 3 CDs at risk free 9-mo term, The recommendation was accepted. We are putting additional funds in the building fund cash account for upcoming expenses.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**WOOD SALES:** Chuck Duplant reported that wood sales are very slow, between the heat and the burn ban. We expect to go to pre-bundled wood In September.

**GIFT SHOP:** Beth Debenport is on vacation. Diane Carpenter reported that we are restocking t-shirts and sales are up. Our busy season will start again about Labor Day.

**BUILDING COMMITTEE:** Chuck Duplant reported on the Building Committee meeting. The project has been put on hold by TPWD. The committee is gearing up towards approval. We are working on a master plan and specific jobs we will need help with. We are considering classes for grant writing. If interested, let Chuck know. More details will be available next month.

**MAINTENANCE:** Bruce Williamson reported that the crew has been working on bridges and trails.

NATURE CENTER: Teresa Jones reported that we are receiving compliments on the new crocodilian map and the new Plexiglas on the alligator diorama..

MEETING MEAL: Judy Strauss thanked Chris Bishop, Cindy Peterson, Offie Walker and Rachelle Watson for the dinner tonight. The September dinner is covered, and the October meeting will be the picnic. Sign up on the regular volunteer calendar for November and December meetings.

OUTREACH: Judy Strauss reported that she and Dave Armstrong had 110 visitors at the Missouri City Library program. Texian Market Days is our next big event, October 21 and 22. Friday is for school kids, and Saturday is for the general public.. Set up will be Thursday night and take down on Saturday. We are already booked for the Ft. Bend Museum Children's Festival in March.

TRAINING: Anna Dell Williamson reported that she appreciates the number of volunteers who are willing to help with training. There has been a good response to the requests for assistance.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Dave Armstrong brought the Nominating Committee report. The following individuals have been nominated for offices for 2011-2012.

- President – Offie Walker
- Vice President – Mary Lockwood
- Secretary – Belinda DiMarcello
- Treasurer – Bob Kowalewski
- Past President – Carrie Sample

There were no nominations from the floor. The election will be at the September meeting. There will be no ballots because there are no contested offices.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Offie reported that the dedication for the Elm Lake Viewing Platform was well attended, although none of the invited politicians came. Offie also reported that on July 28, he and Dave Armstrong met with the Precinct 1 County Commissioner, Richard Morrison, They told him about the organization, what volunteers do and what our needs are. Hopefully he will be on our side when we get the go ahead to pursue the building project. He has committed to sign a support letter for us

We are planning to send out a one-page status report on our activities to county commissioners and others community figures for public awareness.

The Annual Volunteer Picnic will be October 15 (NOT the second Saturday). A group picture will be taken at 5:30, and dinner will begin at 6. BBQ will be provided. Volunteers should bring a side dish or dessert to share.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Judy Strauss requested twist ties for the ice bags for the water station..

Rachelle Watson invited the organization to James's high school graduation. He will be attending UT Arlington this fall.

Offie thanked everyone for being here, and encouraged members to come to meetings regularly.

The meeting was adjourned.

# STAFF REPORTS



## **PARK SUPERINTENDENT STEVE KILLIAN**

Chris Bishop brought the meat for dinner tonight. Thanks to the volunteers for making BBSP the best. July was a record month, hot and dry, and revenue and visitation made it a record July. We have increased visitation and revenue, and state support continues to decrease. It is hard to stay on top without the volunteers.

BBSP has been recognized by international media as one of top 10 camping spots in world. Parks in India and Australia were included, as well as Yellowstone in the US.

Budget cuts: We lost Dennis Jones, Resource Management Specialist. The Department lost 100 slots. We have to do more with less. JT Kalina, Resource Ranger will be carrying on the job with help from Cord Eversol, summer intern and Jim Gilliam.

Park Staff laid 2.07 miles of water line toward equestrian center. There are 3.2 miles to complete.

Headquarters restroom is open after a year, with new tile and fixtures, and Phase 1 of the camping loop bathhouses is complete. Phase 2 will bring new heating, lighting, and ADA showers.

All counter tops and faucets were replaced in all the restrooms that weren't part of the bathhouse remodeling project. Staff did a lot of the work. The Rangers take their work seriously, and are happy with the results. Our thanks to the staff.

The Dedication of the Elm Lake Wildlife Viewing Platform was tremendous.

We are having a new entrance sign for the gate at FM 762 built. It should be delivered by Aug. 31. The design is new and innovative, based on our alligator bookmark, and will be a photo op for many years to come.

Prairie management work is ongoing. JT and Cord are taking out trees as needed. There is also continuing work in progress on the lakes.

BBSP has been receiving media attention as a result of the drought. CNN had a report; Channels 11 and 13 took pictures; and Channels 2 and 39 did onsite interviews. These last two came at the same time, so Sharon did one interview and Steve did the other.

We are still working with the Derringer Prison Unit to get trustees working with us on projects. We provide a ranger to direct the work. They will be developing 3 new trails: the Prairie Loop from Live Oak Trail, and the Creekwood Lake Trail, short loop and long loop.

The Maintenance Crew is building bridges and has completed two. The Live Oak Trail is not completed yet; we need the approach graveled and have approval to complete the trail gravel.

We are building additional parking beside Site 234 by extending the pad out to add spaces for 8 cars. This will serve for the premium primitive camping area which currently has no available parking on weekends,

JT Kalina has Resource Management plans to reduce the amount of shredding we do for deer hunt, and to develop shooting lanes to allow the areas to reforest. We continue to try to kill Chinese tallows.

TPWD is doing a TV story on mountain bikes, including biking at Brazos Bend.

The Perseid Meteor showers occur tonight, and Suzie and Chris will keep Headquarters open until 2 AM. The gates will be open all night. Volunteers will keep the Nature Center and Gift Shop open until 8 PM.

New fees will go into effect September 1. Primitive sites will cost \$12, and the entrance fees will be \$7 day. The enclosed cabin rents for \$65. Camping fees will include a day use fee of \$5 per day.

Thanks to Chris and David, Law Enforcement Officers, we have a safe park. Chris will serve as Interim Superintendent at Huntsville State Park in September and October, then will return to BBSP. Ted Bishop will be Acting Assistant, but he is not a law officer. David will be the only law officer.



**CHRIS BISHOP**  
**ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT**

Chris reported that he is working with the Igloo Corporation in Katy. They are having a family camping outing for employees on October 1 at BBSP. There will be between 500 and 700 employees during the day and 200 overnight, They have reserved all three primitive areas, 32 water-electricity sites, the dining hall and both pavilions.



**SHARON HANZIK**  
**INTERPRETIVE RANGER AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR**

Sharon welcomed VITs Tori Matta, Peter and Christian Guzman, Kat Hosek, and Reyes Torres, who were attending the meeting tonight. We have 18 trainees for September Training.

The new counter in the Nature Center will be installed after Aug 20.

So far, we have no baby gators and have lost two eggs. Please don't take visitors to look at the eggs. We also have nine rat snake eggs collected July 31. They require 60 days to incubate.

Carrie Sample and the Eco-Explorer helpers did a great job and had lots of fun along with the participating children.

Austin Hager (Jennifer Killian's son) is helping out in the Nature Center and doing a great job.

**BIG TRAILSIDE GATORS**

Haiku by Chris Bishop  
Photo by Chris Bishop



big trailside 'gators  
take my very breath away  
each time I run by

# CONGRATULATIONS



## SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Gary Bialas (Staff)  
Jim Calvert  
Ron Dearman  
Allen Elster (Staff)  
Barry Eversole (Staff)  
Frank Gregg (Emeritus)  
Christian Guzman  
Holly Haynes  
Patty Henry  
Linda Oden Heinicke  
Tina Ibarra (Staff)  
Mike Manley  
Sammie Miller  
Paige O'Neal

## SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Dave and Gay Armstrong (1967)  
Jaci Elliott  
Kent and Debbie Fewell  
Eddy and Sam Grizzaffi  
Lisa Hacker VIT  
Jim and Patricia Hiatt  
Don and Marilyn Vossler (1966)

## OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Nicole Olson  
Mozelle Franklin (Emeritus)  
Veronique Toussaint-Sweerts  
Buddy Franklin (Emeritus)  
Tom Kanak  
Pete Hart  
Debbie Fewell  
Lisa Hacker VIT

## OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

Diane and Jerry Carpenter  
Justin and Kate Bower

VITs Lara and Leah Malone and Cathy Nevotti recently completed their training. Please give these new members a warm welcome to the organization.

# Thank you!

to Chris Bishop, Cindy Peterson, Rachelle Watson and Offie Walker for the meeting night supper.

to staff for installing new counters and faucets in the NC and picnic area restrooms.

to Carrie Sample and the Eco-Explorer helpers for another great job.

to the outgoing officers and the leadership they have given us in the past year - Secretary Linda Heinicke, Treasurer Dave Armstrong.

to Carl Franke for helping tear out the old NC counter to get ready for the new one.

to Carrie Sample, Jaci Elliot, and Paige O'Neale for their articles for the newsletter.

## NEW VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Remember that the new volunteer training starts September 10. The Orientation meeting includes a lunch from 11:45 - 1:15, where current volunteers have a chance to introduce themselves to the VITs and tell what they like about volunteering. Please plan to bring sandwich makings and come to the lunch.

Training continues September 17 and 24, and then the VITs will be working on their requirements for Phase 1. We will need lots of volunteers to assist them as they learn by doing in the Nature Center, Gift Shop, and on the trails. In Phase 2 they will work more independently, but they still need encouragement and assistance from more experienced volunteers. Please support them in every phase of their training.

Thank you for all of the help you have give the VITs.

## BBSP FEE CHANGES

BBSP entrance and camping fees have changed as of September 1, 2011.

Daily Entrance Fee: \$7.00 for adults 13-64. Senior rate for 65+ is \$4.00. D

Daily Fee with camping: \$5.00 for adults, \$3.00 for seniors plus camp site fees.

Children 12 and under are free.

The State Park Annual Permit is \$70 per individual and \$15 for an additional pass. This permit gives the holder and all in the vehicle free entrance to all Texas State Parks for one year.

### CAMPING SITES:

WATER & ELECTRICITY – 73 Campsites \$20 per site per night

CABINS – 1 Mini Cabin \$65 per night

SHELTERS - 13 Screened Shelters \$25 per site per night

PRIMITIVE CAMPING \$12 per site per night

OVERFLOW CAMPING - \$7 primitive overflow per site per night

\$15 water / electric overflow per site per night

YOUTH GROUP PRIMITIVE CAMPING AREA at HALE LAKE for organized groups only

Camp Area #1- \$25 per night (16 max people)

Camp Area #2 & #3 \$40 per night (32 max people per area)

### DAY USE GROUP FACILITIES

Dining Hall - \$125 per day and \$25 deposit required - maximum capacity 100 people

Group Picnic Areas - \$50 per day- Elm Lake GPA #1 and Hale Lake GPA #2

For more information, see printout from HQ at the NC desk.

# BRAZILIAN VISITORS

by Carrie Sample

For many years now, I have enjoyed providing homes to Martins. They arrive in late January or February, raise their young, and leave in July or August. I delight in their cheerful twittering while they are here. In the evenings, one bird seems to stay on top of their house, until all birds return and then the one bird goes in also. When their young are raised, they go off during the day, but come around early in the morning or late in the evenings. Where they go in the middle of the day has always been a mystery to me.

On occasion, I have had to climb up to their house and put one of their young back in their nests. When they leave, I lower their house and clean out the compartments. I have often found a dead baby left inside. I recently read that Martins often have a second brood, but if they are not fledged by the time to leave, their parents urge to migrate is stronger than their urge to raise their young. Thus, the young birds are deserted.



The martins go through a “staging” before they actually migrate. This is when they gather in large flocks before they go. The Fountains Shopping Center off of 59 was their location for staging this year. Behind the strip center was a retaining tank and power lines. At approximately 6:30 p.m., thousands, maybe millions, of Martins would gather on the lines and dip into the water for a drink or



perhaps to cool off with the water. When darkness came, they would flock over to the trees in the parking lot at The Fountains to roost for the night. The small trees were very weighted down as all of the Martins would congregate together.

I observed this sight twice in the early part of August. Would really like to go there tonight, to see if they are still there or if they have left, but with the price of gasoline, I probably won't...

Time to lower their house and clean out the compartments - hope I find no deserted babies this year.

## DEMONSTRATION STATIONS

by Sharon Hanzik

Many of you say that you aren't comfortable with presenting formal programs. How about doing the demonstration stations instead? They need to last at least an hour but can go longer. They don't interfere with any other programs, and they can be done inside the prairie room of the Nature Center until we cool off and then they can be done trailside or outside the Nature Center.

Subjects that we have props for:

- owls
- birds (beaks and feet)
- turtles
- snakes
- alligators
- all reptiles
- mammals (skins, skulls, tracks - all together or separately)
- insects
- spiders

There may be others but that is all I can think of for now.

If you would like to do this but aren't quite ready to go it alone, just jump in with one when you see them on the schedule. Anyone is welcome. When you're ready to lead one, just give us at least a week's notice so we can put you on the schedule.



# NATURE CENTER REPORT

## AUGUST 2011

Below are the totals of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for August 1-31, 2011. August continued with lots of hot, dry weather and declining visitation.

PROGRAMS	TOTALS
<b>NATURE CENTER ATTENDANCE</b> August 2011 - 3000 August 2010 - 3,243 August 2009 - 4,542 August 2008 - 3,985 August 2007 - 2,788 August 2006 - 2,415	<b>Saturdays (4) - 1166</b> <b>High, 412 (8/13)</b> <b>Average: 291</b>
	<b>Sundays (4) - 856</b> <b>High, 291 (8/7)</b> <b>Average: 214</b>
	<b>Weekdays (23) - 978</b> <b>High, 123 (8/3)</b> <b>Average: 42</b>
CREEKFIELD HIKES (5)	44
ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (4)	119
SNAKE PROGRAMS (4)	81
CHILDREN'S STORYTIME (4)	64
OUTREACH (1)	110
WILDLIFE OBSERVATION (2)	50
OTHER PROGRAMS (9) include birds, raccoons, designs for defense, Geocaching, and turtles.	34
TOTAL VISITORS SERVED IN HIKES AND PROGRAMS	553
TOTAL REPORTED VOLUNTEER INTERPRETIVE HOURS	601

## TALLOW TREE CONTROL - WEEKDAYS

by Sharon Hanzik

Steve has asked that I find 2-3 volunteers who would be available on weekdays and able to work directly with resource management ranger JT Kalina in targeting some specific areas in the park. This would involve simply cutting into the bark of each tree with a quick hit from a machete and then a squirt of herbicide on the exposed bark. This is likely to take place starting in September/October. Please contact me directly if you would be interested.

## SHARON'S 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

As mentioned in Offie Walker's President's Notes, Sharon Hanzik was recognized for 25 years of service at TPWD on August 25, 2011. A group of BBSP staff, volunteers, family and friends joined her to see the presentation at the TPWD Headquarters in Austin. Her well-wishers included: back row: Sarah Bishop, Offie Walker, Jerry Carpenter, Carrie Sample, Bruce Williamson, Diane Carpenter, Steve Killian. Front Row: Suzie Taylor, Melissa Moody, Sharon Hanzik, Anna Dell Williamson, David Heinicke.



Sharon Hanzik with well-wishers. Photo by Jerry Carpenter.

Her parents also attended the ceremony.



Sharon Hanzik with her parents. Photo by Offie Walker

## BUTTERFLY COUNT

by Rich Jespersen



The 16th Annual Brazos Bend Butterfly Count will be held on Sunday, October 9, 2011. Meet at the 40-acre Lake parking lot at 9:00 am. Everyone is invited and no experience is required. Beginners will be paired with experienced counters. The extra eyes are very helpful, and it is a fun way to learn to identify our local butterflies.

This citizen science project is one of several annual butterfly counts in the Houston area (and many more nationwide). Participants divide into small groups and patrol areas within BBSP and vicinity, counting all species and individual butterflies they see. We gather at the Elm Lake picnic ground at 12:30 to tally our preliminary results and eat our sack

lunches. Those who wish to count in the afternoon, patrol other areas outside the park within the official 15-mile count circle and email their results to us.

Bring lunch, drinking water, mosquito repellent, sun protection, and (if you have them) butterfly field guides and close-focusing binoculars. Cameras are also helpful to assist in identification. There is a \$3.00 per person North American Butterfly Association fee to participate. The Park entry fee will be waived for participants who stop at headquarters and identify themselves as participants in the count.

Our first count in 1995 tallied 392 butterflies of 30 species. The record count of 2001 found 5340 butterflies of 57 species. Last year we saw 796 individuals of 44 species, including record numbers of Monarchs, Northern Cloudyings and Little Wood-Satyr.

For additional information contact count compilers Rich and Sandy Jespersen at [richj@consolidated.net](mailto:richj@consolidated.net), or phone 979-553-3575, cell phone during count 832-454-2127.

# AUGUST MAINTENANCE REPORT

**August hours, 72**

**Wood Yard:**

Split firewood

**Mowing and Landscaping:**

Water Creekfield Forest Trail trees

**Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:**

Build floor joists and approach for Live Oak Trail Bridge

Install Planks on Live Oak Trail Bridge

**Equipment Maintenance:**

Repair Gator tire

**Pest Control:**

Treat Chinese tallow

## VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

### NATURE CENTER HAPPENINGS - ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW

New things are happening around the Nature Center.

First, we have new baby alligators, who debuted August 27. The growth of the babies is really noticeable when you handle a year-old baby one weekend and a newly-hatched one the next.



Second, the new counter has been installed. It has already proven to be kid-friendly, and it's much easier on the volunteers. There is good compartmentalized storage space, including slots for the most commonly used handouts, a shelf for books, a shelf for your water and soda bottles and glasses, and other space for photos, information and personal items. There is knee-space behind the counter and easier access for children for the touch items. You can sit and talk to the children and adults across the counter more easily, and our younger volunteers aren't hidden by the high counter. We are expecting some new chairs as well.



"Old" counter



"New" counter



Interior shelves of new counter

Another big change - the big calendar for recording attendance is no longer on the wall. There is a small calendar on the clipboard where programs are recorded. The last person out of the NC desk should place the NC attendance number for each day on the clipboard calendar. Presenters should be sure to record all programs and attendance on the correct form on the same clipboard. This clipboard will be kept on the shelf closest to the door to the counter area, where it can be reached easily. Please try to note where things are when you take them out, and put them back where you found them.

The NC Procedures Handbook will be updated soon, after we have some time to determine the best places to keep items, etc. If you have input on how things should be arranged, contact David or Sharon.

## GIFT SHOP

If you work in the gift shop, please make note of the following:

**WEEKENDS:** Until we get the new computer set up, please do not turn off the GS computer. The switch sticks and the computer does not stay on. Just turn the monitor on when you start your shift or off when you finish. This problem should be remedied soon by the installation of a new computer. If something happens and the computer is actually turned off when you try to open your shift, press the switch very gently and quickly. Sometimes you can flip it out gently with a paper clip before it cuts off.

**EVERYONE:** Please remember to check that all food cases are securely closed when the GS is closed. The clear plastic lids should be inverted and set completely inside the opening to prevent critters from sneaking in. The white plastic lids should be checked to be sure that all four corners are snapped down. The critters are smart and can use any small opening to get in and destroy the food. We lose quite a bit of money if the foodstuffs are ruined.

### ICE:

In this hot summer, some of the bags of ice have melted, especially ones close to the door. The vendor is responsible for the functioning of the cooler, so please do not remove or discard any bags of ice or water. We will receive a credit for all bags we cannot sell. Be sure that you give the customer a full bag of ice - reach to the back or have the customer select the bag. Leave the damaged ones in the front to protect the good ones from the heat.

## **A SERIES OF TYPICAL EVENTS (OR HAVE YOU EVER SEEN AN ALLIGATOR EAT A SNAKE?)**

by Paige O'Neale

I've had the opportunity to see some very exciting things on the trails in the park, but one particular event sticks out in my head. It was a Saturday last December, and I was with two friends who were experiencing the park for the first time. As I took them around, narrating what we were seeing, I was able to show them the different bird life (blue-wing teals, mallards, black bellied whistlers, anhingas, ibis, and a lone eagle soaring over the rice grasses), several alligators of all sizes, and the beauty of the park itself.

As we came up to the Observation Tower, I happened to look down and notice a 7-8 foot alligator moving in the marshland trough next to the trail intersection looking out toward Pilant Lake. The three of us were interested, so we paused to watch the animal move through the water and eventually stop a little ways away. After a short while, thinking that the show was over, we moved to continue around 40 Acre Lake until I heard



someone behind us say, “It’s got something in its mouth.” All of us did an about face, and, sure enough, we got a glimpse of what looked to be a garden hose in the alligator’s jaws.

As I dug my binoculars out of my backpack and got a closer look though, a beautiful orangey-pink pattern on the snake’s underbelly emerged, and I recognized it as the Western Mud Snake from other deceased specimens I’d seen in the park or in pictures. These guys are incredibly shy, love the marshy area and are prone to be seen more dead (by predator or by human, unfortunately) than alive.

Not even a month later, Pam Tatge and I were upset to hear a report that a Western Mud Snake located on the 40 Acre side of the Observation Tower had been clubbed in the head by a visitor that mistook it for a venomous snake and “thought it should die” (see link): Clubbed Dead. By the time we got there the person responsible was long gone, but I’m just as upset now as I was back then by the lack of respect for nature and lack of etiquette/common sense on state property. As an aside, it was a treat to interact with the very much live Western Mud Snake recently kept in the Nature Center while we attempted to get it to eat before eventually releasing it.



However, on the December day in question, the Western Mud Snake was on the gator’s menu. By this time, several small groups of folks attracted by the activity gathered around to watch and snap pictures. As we all observed the alligator work the snake in its jaws, then rest, then work some more, rest and finally swallow it down, I was glad I was there to be able to share my knowledge of the reclusive Western Mud Snake (a lesser seen creature of the park), study alligator feeding habits (I’ve seen one chomp down a turtle and heard countless other stories), and in the aftermath, learn more about how the alligator digests its food. I hadn’t considered that, because of the alligator’s jaw mechanics, it could only work for short increments before resting.

So I leave you with this question – have you seen a gator hunt and eat its prey??

## **JOURNEYS WITH JACI BURNING UP BUT NOT BURNED OUT**

By Jaci M. Elliott

What burns you up? Probably the same things that get the rest of us hot under the collar (and the rest of our shirts) this summer—our triple-digit days...one after the other...

And we knew we were off to a tinderbox start this year when BBSP experienced its own 11-acre lightning strike fire back that first week of June.

I remember driving into the park the day after that burn and audibly gasping at the charred earth, in stark contrast to the surrounding green grasses and brown underbrush of our park’s front prairie. Never having seen up close a natural area right after a natural burn, I asked park permission to walk through the place upon my exit from the park that afternoon. Carbonized crunches accompanied my steps, and as I made my way toward the two still smoldering trees at the far end, I came across a small skeletal pile—the remnants of some roasted rodent. A bit more fortunate, if not as well concealed, was a vividly verdant katydid clinging to a blackened branch. I did have to chuckle at the green grass snake who scurried (if snakes can scurry) right by me, then froze, acting as he normally would to blend in with the otherwise olive-colored flora.

Alas, this was not to be my last experience with Texas wildfires, as my husband and I drove through the smoke of the fire near Diboll on the way to and from Illinois the second week of June. (Up in the Land of Lincoln they were dealing with their own weather-related problems, flooding rivers, in particular, and, oh, what we wouldn't give for just a little of that rainfall down here?)

Interesting enough, my aunt, whom we visited on our trip and who is active the conservation of the Gordon Moore Prairie in Alton, Illinois, has also been working with my former middle school biology teacher, conducting yearly controlled burns of the prairie, an adrenaline-charged activity in itself. She recommended to me her copy of Timothy Egan's *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America*, a fascinating read about the 1910 fires that ravaged the drought-damaged national forests of the northwest.

As the title somewhat suggests, fire, in its apparent destructiveness, surprisingly spurs seeds which require extreme heat to germinate to do just that, and it clears out the rubbish, so to speak, to make more room for new plants to grow. Indeed, my last visit to BBSP in early August revealed a front prairie nearly identical to the rest of the terrain which also contained, if anything, more purple blooms and less scrubby clutter.

Confined to the AC many of these dog-day afternoons now, I am committed to do some cleaning out of my own—my clothes closet could certainly use the extra space, and I just might then be able to justify some new, colorful back-to-school purchases.

## WEB CALENDAR SIGN-UP PROCEDURE

*(Note: This is just a reminder for those who might need to review the signup procedure on the new web calendar.)*

1. Go to the Volunteer Website URL, [www.brazosbend.org](http://www.brazosbend.org)
2. In the HOME menu, click "Members".
3. Then click the third item, "Instructions: New volunteer calendar".
4. Print out the instructions and keep for future use.
5. Go back to the main menu and click on the first item in the menu, "New volunteer calendar".
6. The Google calendar will appear. Key in the username and password. (If you don't remember then, contact another member.)
7. Check calendar for availability.
8. Follow instructions you printed out to enter your name under the time slot and duty you want.
8. Replace "put name here" under WHERE with your name, or add your name after someone else's who has signed up (do not type in any other box or replace anyone's name).
9. Click Save

### IMPORTANT NOTES

- a. Do not click on "delete" in the expanded date entry, or you will delete the entire entry. If you need to remove your name, go into the entry as if you were going to enter your name, place the curser at the end of your name and back-space it out.
- b. After you click on "Save" and go back to the agenda view, click on the + icon to close the expanded entry. Once you find your name has been added, that's all you need to do. Close calendar using your printed instructions.

## PROBLEMS?

If you have problems using the web calendar at work, your system may not allow it. If you have problems with your personal computer, please contact the web master, volunteer Anne Shelton, at [webmaster@brazosbend.org](mailto:webmaster@brazosbend.org) or through the web site. She is also in your roster.

## CALENDAR CHANGES

If you cancel within 72 hours or will be late, please remove your name from the calendar and notify the staff.

## WEEKEND CANCELLATIONS AND LATE ARRIVALS

If you cancel same day or will be late, please call the NC front desk, 979-553-5122. Staff emails and phone messages do not get checked regularly on weekends. Right now, there is no internet capability at the NC, so emails to Sharon and David will be checked in the early morning or late afternoon.

# HEARTH COOKING CLASS

Press Release

Have you ever been amazed at how cooking was done for thousands of years before our modern conveniences were invented? Did it make you wonder how you would have survived before the late 20<sup>th</sup> century? If so, our interactive cooking class might be for you. Learn old-fashioned skills that your great-great-grandparents would have known. Help to create a feast, with our guidance, that you can partake in as you enjoy the experience.

Our *Hearth Cooking* class will be held at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Site off Highway 105 on FM 1155 between Navasota and Brenham. The hours of operation for this event are from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm on Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011. There is a \$30.10 per person fee, which is non-refundable after November 4<sup>th</sup>. Checks can be made out to Washington State Park. 18 and older please. Space is limited so call soon. For additional details call (936) 878-2214 x 246, and ask for Barb.

Barrington Living History Farm  
P.O. Box 305  
Washington, TX 77880-0305

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 10	BBEEC (New Building) Committee, 1:00 PM, open to all interested Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
October 1	Bird photography Photo-walk #3, 5 PM.
October 9	16 <sup>th</sup> Annual Butterfly Count
October 8	No regular meeting - see October 15
October 15	Annual Volunteer Picnic, 5:30 PM
October 21-22	Texian Market Days Outreach at George Ranch
November 5	Landscape photography Photo-walk #2, 3 PM.
November 12	BBEEC (New Building) Committee, 1:00 PM, open to all interested Budget and Executive Meetings, 3:00 PM Regular Business Meeting, 5:30 PM (Supper, 5:00 PM)
November 21-25	Thanksgiving Week, very busy. NC closed Thanksgiving Day

## Brazos Bend State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
21901 FM 762  
Needville, TX 77461

### NEXT MEETING

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2011  
ANNUAL PICNIC, OCTOBER 15, 2011

## FIRST CLASS MAIL



### REGULAR VOLUNTEER EVENTS

Creekfield Hikes	Every Saturday and Sunday at 10:00 AM, led by volunteers
Photo Hikes	First Saturday of each month
Volunteer meeting	Second Saturday of each month at 5:30 PM, supper at 5:00 PM
Bird Hikes	See schedule in calendar

## BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

### VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

President:	Offie Walker
Vice-President:	Mary Lockwood
Secretary	Linda Heinicke
Treasurer:	Dave Armstrong
Past-President:	Carrie Sample

### NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editor	Anna Dell Williamson
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Distribution	Carol Ramsayer
Web Master	Anne Shelton

The **Brazos Bend Bunch Bugle** is the newsletter of the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization, A.K.A. The Brazos Bend Bunch. It is distributed monthly to volunteers through the BBSPVO web site. For further information on this newsletter or the volunteer program, contact David Heinicke or Sharon Hanzik at Brazos Bend State Park, phone 979-553-5101.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the opinions of the author of the article and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization nor of BBSP administration. The deadline for Newsletter contributions is the Saturday following the monthly meeting, if mailed to Anna Dell Williamson, or at the meeting if delivered to the park. (E-mail address: <a williamson4@comcast.net> or <newsletter@brazosbend.org>). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.

**IN THE END, WE WILL CONSERVE ONLY WHAT WE LOVE,  
WE WILL LOVE ONLY WHAT WE UNDERSTAND,  
WE WILL UNDERSTAND ONLY WHAT WE ARE TAUGHT.**

**BABA DIOUM, SENEGAL  
AFRICAN CONSERVATIONIST**