

BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 27, NUMBER 1
JAN-MAR 2015

Upcoming Events/Notices:

- Sat May 9-3:00PM-Budget meeting; 4:00PM-Executive Meeting; 5:30PM-General Meeting
- Month of June—BBSPVO plans to hopefully offer interpretive programs during the weekdays in summer. Please sign up if you can present
- Ice is now being sold at Headquarters

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

BY GLEN KILGORE

April 11, 2015

We have had a very good training class this spring. Many thanks to Anna Dell and everyone who helped with the class. It looks like this is going to be one of the best groups ever to come through the training.

We had 17 start the classroom training, and all 17 completed it and have gone on to the hands-on training. Although we haven't been able to schedule water station or ATV tours for everyone due to weather and trail conditions, no fewer than 6 of our trainees have already progressed to phase II and some are very close to winding that up. Congratulations to those, and I look forward to welcoming all of our class into full membership.

I attended the Earth Quest birds of prey program a few weeks ago. What a treat that was! I love all birds, even vultures, but I have to admit that the peregrine falcon took my breath away. Watching that bird swoop and dive at the lure was more exciting than watching the Blue Angels at an air show. If

you missed it, shame on you, and please try to catch them next time they are in the park.

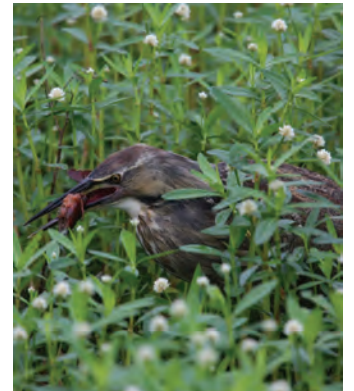


On a sadder note, we have to say good-bye to Kent and Debbie Fewell. They are moving to Amarillo and will no longer be able to come to the park. Thanks to Kent and Debbie for all they have done here, and best of luck to them in their new home.

I've got two Pond Life programs scheduled. One was my regular program on April 18. The other will be a special program that I'm putting on for the St. Catherine Montessori School on May 1. Thanks to all the volunteers and trainees that have signed up to help with these programs. It's a big undertaking and can't be successful without a lot of help.



Prakiti Baregala on snake duty at the NC. Photo courtesy Chris Bishop



American Bittern. Photo courtesy Jerry Zona

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DON'T WORRY. OWLS USUALLY HUNT AT NIGHT

BY RICK DASHNAU

Sunday, March 29, 2015

The Great Horned Owl had been in the nest (which it had taken from a family of Hawks) for some weeks, but the Owlet was first seen March 7th. Today I got my *best* view of the 3-week-old



Great Horned Owl—All photos this page courtesy Rick Dashnau

baby. What a fuzzy critter! It almost looks like a little-beaked bird is peeking out of a white, furry sack. I've heard some people refer to the chick as an "owlet". Why isn't this pronounced "ow-LAY"--to rhyme with chalet, fillet, or valet? Maybe some day it will be. According to the Audubon Field Guide website (<http://www.audubon.org/field-guide>), young Great Horned owls may learn to fly at 9-10 weeks old.

As cute as the young one seems to be, the adult Owl showed it's predatory nature. I'd heard that it had carried prey up to the nesting site, but I didn't



think it would still have it by the time I got back. But, when I arrived, the Owl was still working at its catch. I quickly shot some pictures and a short

video clip before the Owl finished. I decided to hurry and set up my tripod and spotting scope to share the sight with the park visitors who were nearby--so I didn't get much video. The images here are still photos, and a few frame grabs from the very shaky video. Still, even the short bit I caught was a interesting.

The Common Gallinule, or Moorhen, or *Gallinula chloropus*--according to my Sibley Guide to Birds 1st Edition--has "long greenish legs" and long, bare toes. The Purple Gallinule, *Porphyrio martinica*, (which probably aren't here yet) have similar toes, but "bright yellow" legs. And the American Coot, *Fulica americana*, has lobed toes. Since the feathers appear to be black, and the legs green with long toes, I think the carcass was a Moorhen. There have been some observations by some of the folks with big lenses regarding either parasites (mites?) and/or redness on the eyelids. I could even see it on a few frames of the video clip. Has anyone made a determination on this condition? The adult didn't seem to be impaired during the brief time that I watched it.

While all the excitement with the Owls and the visitors was occurring, one of the park visitors (a first-timer) asked me if I could hear a woodpecker working.



I told him I had, and I had been looking around for it. The tapping seemed to be coming from a dead tree about 15 feet away, and I began searching more intently for the woodpecker. I slowly walked around the tree, and judging from what I heard, I should have been looking right AT the bird. So...the woodpecker was invisible....or..."It must be making a nest! The woodpecker must be *inside* the tree!", I told the visitor. And, just a few minutes later, the bird was found--working at a hole in the tree. I shot a quick video of the woodpecker--this appears to be a Downy Woodpecker, before trying to show visitors *this* one as well. The attached four images of the woodpecker show it going into the hole. ([Cont page 7](#))

VOLUNTEERS IN TRAINING, FEBRUARY 2015 CLASS!

BY ANNA DELL WILLIAMSON

Seventeen VITs have completed their classroom training and are busily working on their Phase I and Phase II requirements. Please be ready to give them all the help they need to complete their requirements. Help them to feel welcome when they come to work.

Thanks to the many people who helped with training, from behind the scenes preparation of the training materials and refreshments to leading hikes and presenting programs. It takes the entire organization to have a successful training event, and I'm very grateful that this organization gives so much support to training. It pays off in having good volunteers to carry on the responsibilities of the volunteer organization.

You might recognize a couple of the faces. John Bradford and Mark Garbutt are both returning volunteers after a few years of being away. We're happy to have them back. Pam Tatge refreshed her training and Park Host Bill Ench attended some of the classes to become better acquainted with the park for his hosting responsibilities.

We're looking forward to seeing this group complete training and join us as we work to fulfill our mission for BBSP.

Congratulations also to the Sept 2014 class graduates: Lonnie Hoffmann, Max Langley, Kevin Ostrowski, Alex Pedersen, Catalina Ayala-Nelson, Jenny Carns, Nancy Stockwell



Photo courtesy Chuck DuPlant

VOLUNTEER PUBLISHES BOOK ON HUMMINGBIRD BANDING

What a volunteer's interest had led to:

Barb Tucker has published a book for use at the park to help explain and illustrate the annual hummingbird banding that takes place in September.

From Barb,

"The purpose of the book project is to provide an educational tool at the front desk in the Nature Center for volunteers to use when talking about the

hummingbird nest and hummingbird banding at the park. The book provides information about the bird banding process and hummingbirds, especially the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, through pictures and words. A copy will soon be available for use and check-out in our library. It has been a two year project. I had help from others at the park and I am most grateful to be surrounded by such great talent! I hope the book can be used to enhance the experience of visitors by providing

volunteers with an additional interpretive resource."



False Garlic photo courtesy Jerry Carpenter

LET'S DO THE NUMBERS....



Spring Break: 5,456 NC visitors; 1,168 attendees to 59 programs

March: 8,639 visitors; 1,904 attendees to 63 programs; 1,157 attendees to 5 special events

February: 5,532 NC visitors; 1,042 attendees to 32 programs; 440 attendees to 1 special event

January: 4,985 NC visitors; 869 attendees to 37 program; 548 attendees to 3 special events



Alligator Bellowing
Photo courtesy Jerry Zona

Pond Life Program on April 18 by Glen Kilgore

On Saturday, April, 18, several volunteers put on a Pond Life program at the park. Although we were afraid that the weather would impact us, the program was an unqualified success.

We collected a large number of insect larvae, arachnids and tiny crustaceans, and even a few non-aquatic interlopers, millipedes who became aquatic when Creeffield Lake rose up over its banks. When we set up our microscopes and magnifying viewers and opened the doors, 68 people came through to view them. Most of the chil-

dren and even some of the adults left the program with pond life stickers on their shirts to show that they had completed the Mystery Table. It was a wonderful educational experience for all of us, the visitors and the volunteers who participated.

Among the creatures that we showcased were a predaceous diving beetle larva or water tiger, seed shrimp, scud, water mites, an enormous diving spider, creeping water bugs, pigmy backswimmers, dragonfly, damselfly,

soldierfly and mayfly larvae and two fat leeches.

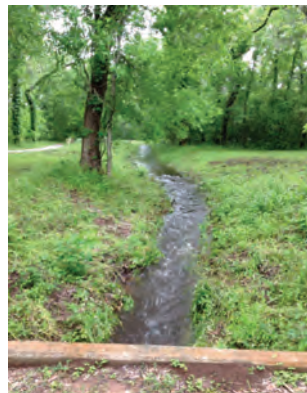
A pond life program is a major undertaking requiring a full day of work and a lot of helpers. I could not have done this without the wonderful assistance of LaToya McKelvey, Marianne Feeney, Jerry Zona, Charlie Pehl and Wayne Wiegand.



Pond Life Program
Photo courtesy Glen Kilgore

HALE LAKE ON THE RISE! BY CHRIS BISHOP

The drainage ditch cleared by the TDJC workers last fall has helped the rains fill Hale Lake to its highest level in years.



FROM THE STATE PARKS DIVISION DIRECTOR

Who are we? What do we aspire to be as an organization? I hope this is something you instantly know, and if asked, can describe to anyone that may not be sure. Like most organizations, we have a stated mission. We even have an established philosophy. I've placed them both below along with our agencies core values in case you would like to review.

Mission: *To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations*

Philosophy: In fulfilling our mission, we will:

- *Be a recognized national leader in implementing effective natural resources conservation and outdoor recreational programs;*
- *Serve the state of Texas, its citizens, and our employees with the highest standards of service, professionalism, fairness, courtesy, and respect;*
- *Rely on the best available science to guide our conservation decisions;*
- *Responsibly manage agency finances and appropriations to ensure the most efficient and effective use of tax-payer and user fee resources; Attract and retain the best, brightest, and most talented workforce to successfully execute our mission.*

Core Values:

- *Stewardship*
- *Integrity*
- *Teamwork*
- *Excellence*
- *Service*

It's important to periodically remind ourselves of who we are and where we are going. Prospective employees need to know this so they can make informed decisions about whether or not to join us in our work. In my mind, these philosophies and values identify TPW as an organization which eagerly welcomes all people into our workforce and serve all people of our citizenry. We all need to know these things so we can remain focused,

We all have a responsibility to contribute in ways that establish a culture that reflects these philosophies and values, and to the extent we don't, then we must change.

accountable and contributing to the team to make it a reality. These words represent the character of the organization. They are tenets, principles.....they are foundational. We must be intentional and resolute in the way we stick to them with our actions.

As recruiters and promoters of the mission, let's make a commitment to share these descriptors of TPW with others, and even more importantly, personally contribute in ways to make them ring true. Many would agree that we all have an opportunity to contribute to the culture and work environment at TPW. I believe it goes further than that..... we all have a responsibility to contribute in ways that establish a culture that reflects these philosophies and values, and to the extent we don't, then we must change.

Yours and my work to protect the workplace and the environment in which we all work is essential. You have my commitment that examples involving all forms of discrimination, sexual harassment, fraud, and other similar serious behaviors which run counter to our philosophy and core values, will be swiftly and decidedly handled. On those occasions when our workplace is threatened with things that do not represent what we all describe, I encourage you to have confidence to come forward and say so to your supervisor who I also expect to act accordingly. Doing so is an act of *guardianship*.....an idea and commitment we are very accustomed to as we protect the natural and cultural wonders of this state.

Have a great week and enjoy the beautiful spring weather. The outdoors awaits.

Brent Leisure
State Parks Division Director
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Brent.leisure@tpwd.texas.gov

JAN/FEB STAFF REPORTS

-SUPERINTENDENT CHRIS BISHOP



JANUARY REPORT

November and December 2014 visitation and revenue surpassed November and December 2013 by a significant margin - revenue increases were at 7% for November and 9% increase for December. Visitation was 23,611 for November and 14,041 for December 2014. The 100 mile run in December brought in record revenue.

New personnel at HQ:

Customer Service Representatives: Chris Thurston (goes by Jacq), Rene Jennings, and Vikki Davis (Park Store)

Custodian: Jason Nickelson (starts 1/15)

Interviews will be held soon for another Customer Service Representative

Green Tree Reservoir: Twelve to fifteen acres have been reforested with overcup oak, green ash, and persimmon.

First Aid training will be held next week for staff and volunteers. The class is full.

January 27-28, Barbara Willy, Offie Walker, David Heinicke and Chris will visit Audubon Society Nature Centers in the Dallas area.

Staff meetings are including a focus on healthy lifestyles. There has been a potluck meal promoting good health and a yoga presentation on stress management. A Fit Club will be meeting Monday through Thursday at 5:00 PM to walk, bike, or use DVD exercise programs in inclement weather. Volunteers are invited to join staff in this activity.

Thank you to volunteers and staff for Simple Christmas and the 100-Mile run. Sharon facilitated Simple Christ-

mas with volunteers providing good staffing. Visitors seemed to be having good time. Besides generating the best revenue for a December Saturday, David and the volunteers provided excellent staffing and leadership for this activity. The runners' organization gave a generous donation to the volunteers and several runners have been back to visit the park.

Law Enforcement moment:

Scenario: You are working in the park when you hear about a vehicle "doing donuts" in the Nature Center parking lot. Officer Heinicke is away working at a special event at Battleship Texas. Officer Dement is home sick with pneumonia. Officer Bishop is on a day off. Bishop said that he should be available for most of the day, but you have been unable to reach him by radio, cell phone or a landline call to the park residence. What would you do?

Response: Call 911. Ft Bend County will come out. When you call 911, be sure to coordinate with Headquarters and also leave voice mails for Chris, Jacob and David, so they will know what happened.

FEBRUARY REPORT

State Parks rewards program provided certificates of merit for the following BBSP staff and volunteers:

Sharon Hanzik – Partnerships and Outreach award

BBSPVO – 24000 hrs. Volunteer Award

Diane Carpenter – Volunteer Award

Ron Morrison – 570 hrs, funding equipment, Volunteer Award

Revenue for January 2015 was lower due to bad weather.

Trail Maintenance: Pilant Slough trail closed because the bridge is washed out. Justin Rhodes has examined the bridge, and will use mi-

nor repair funding to get a contractor to do the work, starting in early April.

Hale Lake Fishing Pier has been closed for 10 months. We will use minor repair funding for that, and work will be done by paid staff and volunteers.

There will be minor repair funding money left over for tree trimming, water plant, and electrical work (3rd booth, have to bury electrical cords). Today we had all 3 lanes open, had host directing traffic.

The recent property audit by an external auditor from TPWD went well.

Paperwork has been submitted for new entrance gate, and this project will be moving forward in next few months.

A prairie burn is planned for Thursday, 2/19. Standing water may be a problem.



Carol Bell shows a baby alligator.
Photo courtesy Chris Bishop

JAN/FEB STAFF REPORTS

-SHARON HANZIK, INTERPRETIVE RANGER AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Reports of volunteer hours are still coming in, so the report for 2014 is not finished yet.

We have 17 trainees firmed up for the February training class. Members will begin getting requests for help soon.

FEBRUARY 2015

Training is off to a good start. Eleven of the eighteen VITs are attending this meeting.

School groups are booking now and are listed on the special events calendar. Sign up there if you want to lead or observe.



Dewberry, photo courtesy Jerry Zona

JAN/FEB STAFF REPORTS

-DAVID HEINICKE, NATURALIST AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

JANUARY 2015 REPORT

100-mile race in December: 830 runners registered and 700 came out. It was the biggest run in Texas. The donation from the runners will go toward maintaining trails.

Fifty-mile run will be here on April 25.

First day hikes were held on January 1 all over the United States. State parks are promoting the idea of getting outside and getting active, to start a healthy New

Year. In spite of the cold wet weather, 20 hikers showed up for the 40-Acre hike in the morning, one made it for the bike hike with David in the afternoon, and no hikers showed up for Sharon's night hike.

Arts in the Parks is a program to promote being creative in parks. The Interpretive Services branch in Austin has contracted with VSA, the state organization on arts and disability, to present workshops taught by disabled artists. BBSP's activity will be

Voice Lessons on January 18, February 1 and 22, at the Hale Lake Pavilion, 2:00-4:00 PM.

On December 20, 2014, we participated in the Christmas Bird count. We counted 154 species, in the top 5% of all Christmas bird counts in the US.

SNAKES AND GATORS!, CONT FROM PAGE 2.

I've also attached 2 photos from March 15th. One shows an alligator crossing the trail, with and a family of park visitors watching excitedly in the background, and the Observation Tower behind them. For the other, I was on the Spillway Trail, when I looked back towards the bridge, at least 25 yards away. There was a line of Snowy Egrets, an Ibis, and a Little Blue heron on the North rail when a couple of park visitors rode up. I wanted to catch the moment when they rode onto the bridge and the birds flew off. To my surprise, the birds didn't move when the couple got on the bridge. So instead I caught the image of the birds and the people apparently watching something very fascinating off to the North.

And this is just one example how Springtime at Brazos Bend State Park can be.



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Brazos Bend State Park

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Saturday, May 9: 5:30 PM

Saturday, June 13: 5:30PM



REGULAR VOLUNTEER EVENTS

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

BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

President: Glen Kilgore
Vice-President: Mike Sanderson
Secretary: Melanie Jahn
Treasurer: Woody Scott
Past-President: Mary Lockwood
Member-at-Large: Hannah Meddaugh
Member at-Large: Offie Walker
Comptroller: Bob Kowalewski

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editors: Anna Dell Williamson & Hannah Meddaugh
Editorial Assistant: Nelda Gay
Distribution: Carol Ramsayer
Web Master: Anne Shelton

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

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the opinions of the author of the article and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization nor of BBSP administration.



**In the end, we will conserve only what we love,
we will love only what we understand,
we will understand only what we are taught.**

**Baba Dioum, Senegal
African Conservationist**