



# BIG THICKET BULLETIN

ISSUE 140



PARTNER IN PRESERVATION

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# NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY AT THE BIG THICKET

The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) named the Big Thicket National Preserve as the Signature Site for the 25th Annual National Public Lands Day.

Representatives from the foundation along with National Park personnel and volunteers from around the region gathered on Saturday, Sept. 22, to participate in a major debris clean-up effort along the Pine Island Bayou in areas impacted by Hurricane Harvey.

The foundation “joined National Parks Service staff and more than 80 volunteers before the weather deteriorated,” according to Amy Skalmusky, NEEF Communications. Saturday’s was a washout forcing the entire gathering to retreat to the Preserve’s Visitor Center in Kountze.

Ceremonies at the Preserve included the presentation of a \$20,000 grant to Ellen Buchanan, of the Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust for continued cleanup in the bayou.

“National Public Lands Day is a great day to bring our team members together and do some very positive things, but these grants support continued improvement, which matches Toyota’s philosophy: we always want to improve,” said

Kevin Butt, Toyota Motor North America’s general manager of environmental sustainability. “By supporting long-term recovery, we aim to build the resiliency of these lands over time.”

State Representative James White, Dist. 19, congratulated the group for their willingness to pitch and help the communities of Southeast Texas after Harvey.

“When we have partners like Toyota donating a great amount of money like this, we can target and raise volunteers to clean out these waterways,” Rep. White said.

Grant recipient, Ellen Buchanan, said: “the money will be used to clean 6.7 miles of Pine Island Bayou get back to nature” by clearing away flood deposited trash.

The National Environmental Education Foundation is located in all 50 states, leveraging the support of their corporate sponsor Toyota to help people to restore lands impacted by disaster.

Also, present for the park clean-up day were the Texas representatives of the National Parks Conservation Association.

The association organizes volunteers for the long-leaf pine restoration planting in the Preserve on Martin Luther King Day in January.





Photo Credit: Randy Tate

## NATURE CONSERVANCY NEWS

By Wendy J. Ledbetter, The Nature Conservancy Forest Program Manager

The Nature Conservancy was chosen as the recipient of the Non-Profit Conservation Partner Award at the 2018 Longleaf Alliance conference.

The ceremony occurred in Alexandria, La., at a conference of more than 300 natural resource professionals, landowners, and fans of this iconic southern forest system. Pictured are The Nature Conservancy employees in attendance at the conference, accepting in behalf of the organization was Allison McGee of the Georgia chapter.

Robert Abernethy, President of the Longleaf Alliance, offered these words: “The Non-Profit Conservation

Partner Award: recognizes an organization that has significantly improved, protected and conserved the longleaf ecosystem,” he said.

The Nature Conservancy is a leader in longleaf pine conservation and restoration across the range of longleaf pine from the Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve, in La., to the Piney Grove Preserve, in Va., and many places in between.

The Nature Conservancy is a leader in conservation of longleaf pine and an advocate for professional prescribed fire management.

Restoration research and efforts at places like Moody Forest Natural Area, the Apalachicola Bluffs, the Ravines Preserve, and the Bibb County Glades help in longleaf restoration.

As a leader in cultivating partnerships and coordination, The Nature Conservancy is proud to team up with local longleaf conservation and restoration groups. The Nature Conservancy is a deserving organization to be the first recipient of our Non-profit Conservation Partner Award.



# CONGRATS

## RANGER MAX HARPER EARNS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

Max Harper, Kountze High School graduate and National Park Service, Big Thicket National Preserve ranger was awarded with the Big Thicket Association's Thomas Lubbert Superior Achievement Award on Oct. 13. Named for Thomas Lubbert, the preserve's first superintendent from 1974-1986, the award honors preserve employees for outstanding performance and significant contributions to the Preserve. Max works as an interpreter and guides hiking and kayak/ canoe trips having developed the kayak and canoe recreation program at the preserve. Max has matured into an outstanding role model and an inspiring naturalist.

Submitted by: Mary C. Johnston, KHS ISD





## TEXAS CONSERVATION CORPS NEWS

### *Youth Crews Cleanup The Big Thicket Preserve*

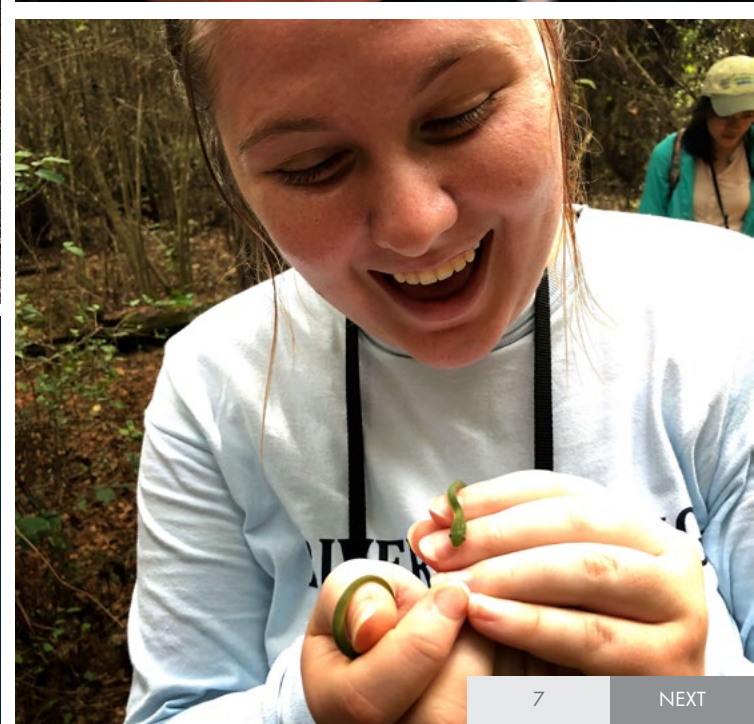
By Jason A. Ginder, Chief of Interpretation and Education

At the end of July 2018, three Texas Conservation Corps (TXCC) youth crews gathered at the Big Thicket National Preserve. They came to wrap up their summer experience contributing to the stewardship at the preserve. Eighteen young adults spent a week in tackling much-needed trail maintenance projects.

Later, in October, the park hosted a five-person Student Conservation Association (SCA) youth crew for three weeks. This SCA Leaders Team was a group of highly-skilled folks who had spent months leading youth crews in other parts of the country working on trail projects and conservation management needs. In the preserve, the Resource Management staff led them in clearing the pitcher plant bog, removing vegetation from the trailing phlox reintroduction plots, and maintaining the 5.5-mile Woodlands Trail.

Youth work crews like these play an important role in our stewardship of the public lands, but they don't come free. The student crews receive a stipend from TXCC and SCA, although students enrolled in AmeriCorps also receive education awards. Work crews have a variety of expenses like travel, lodging, food, tools, vehicle rentals, and much more. The NPS staff works closely with TXCC and SCA partners to secure grants and other funding to support these important programs.

Along with dedicating more than 1,000 hours of work to the park, students had the opportunity to explore the preserve. They went paddling and hiking during their downtime, creating valuable experiences and memories here in the park.

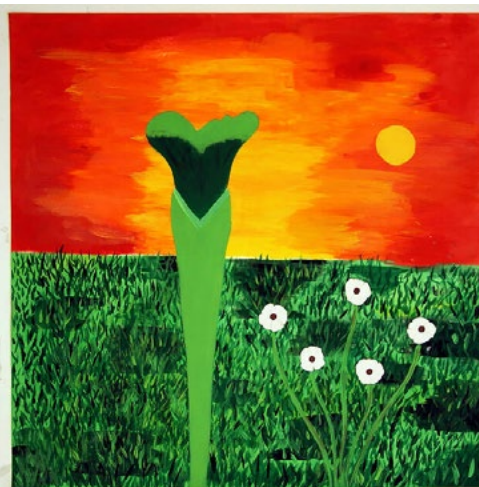


## RESEARCH IN THE BIG THICKET

Dr. Scott Solomon reported a great two-day research excursion housed at Big Thicket National Preserve Field Research Station in the Turkey Creek Unit last October. Solomon is an Associate Teaching Professor at Rice University and Thicket of Diversity scholar.

## BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE NEWS

The Big Thicket National Preserve proudly presents a new temporary art exhibit at the Park Visitor Center entitled “At Home in the Big Thicket.” The art display partners the Park Service, the International Fiber Collaborative, and Texas students to create more than 70 pieces highlighting the vast array of plants and animals in the Big Thicket. More than 485 students from 14 different schools, including Warren High School, Conroe High School, Newton Middle School, Nederland High School, and Rice Elementary School, in Conroe, contributed to the art exhibit. The exhibition will be on display through the month of April.





## FIFTH ANNUAL NECHES RIVER RALLY

### *Dedication of the Lake Bayou Paddling Trail*

Paddlers and canoeists from across Southeast Texas came to the Big Thicket National Preserve on Sept. 8, 2018, for the Fifth Annual Neches River Rally and Dedication of the Lake Bayou Paddling Trail.

Sponsored by the Big Thicket Association, the rally featured a first-time excursion on the newly opened Texas Paddling Trail the Lake Bayou Trail.

“Welcome to the dedication of the seven-mile-long Lake Bayou Paddling Trail through the Big Thicket National Preserve and the Fifth Annual Neches River Rally,” Bruce Walker, BTA Director said. Walker recalled that last year’s rally was canceled due to Harvey and along with the opening of a new trail, makes the 2018 rally even more memorable. The rally and paddling trails promote conservation explained Walker, providing community educational outreach. “The main thing we do is to get people onto the Ivory Bill and into the Big Thicket for public education and charter tours,” he said. The Ivory Bill is a floating classroom, according to the director.

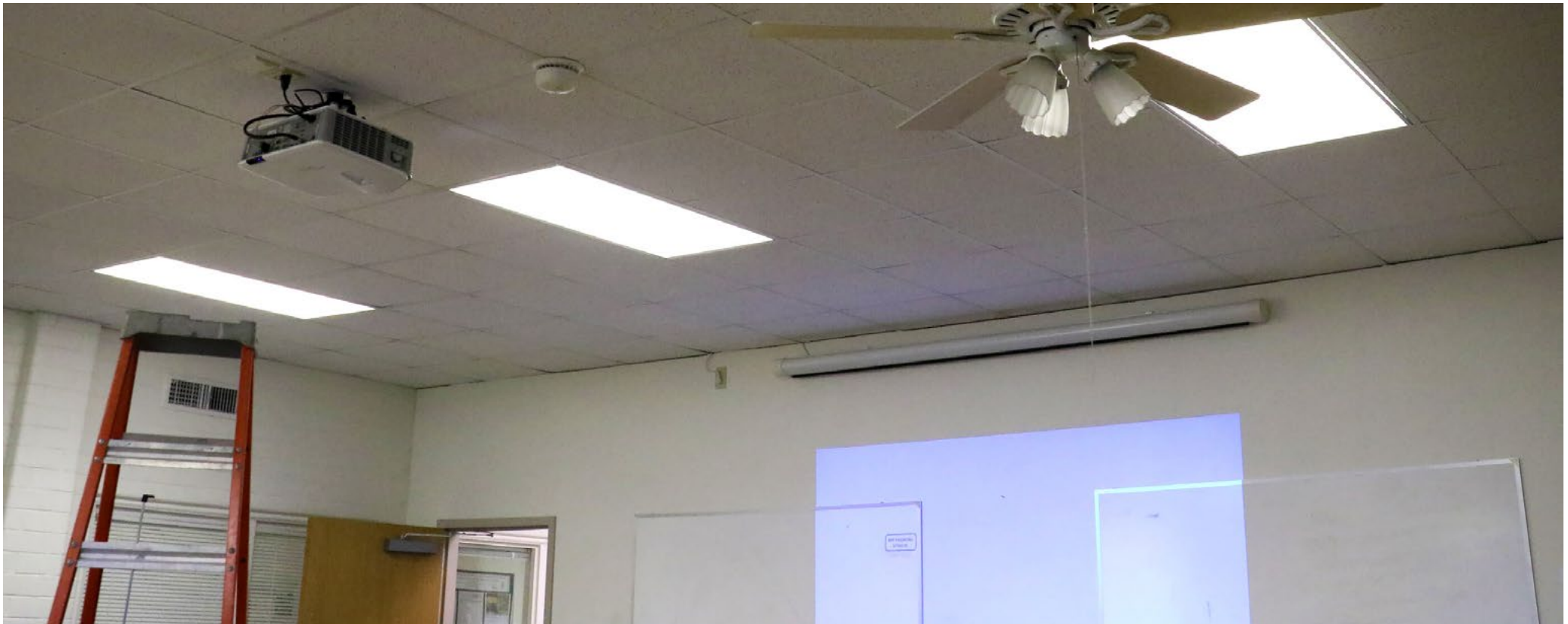
Big Thicket National Preserve Superintendent Wayne Prokopetz welcomed the roughly 120 paddlers to the event. Prokopetz said that the Park Service proudly offers interpretive programs and paddling clinics for the public. The Big Thicket is “rapidly becoming an urban interface park up against the expanding City of Beaumont,” which underscores the need for public education about the significance of the preserve. His words echoed those of Pat Mangan, Chairman of the U. S. National Committee for UNESCO. “The Big Thicket is a World Biosphere Reserve,” he said, “recognized for the unique biological and ecological diversity.” Education he said is essential to connect the people to the landscape as partners in preservation.

The 2018 Neches River Rally sponsors include: LNVA, Westrock, Total, ExxonMobil, Mobil Credit, Port of Beaumont, JK Subaru, American Valve & Hydrant, among others.



## FIELD RESEARCH STATION NEWS

A new classroom tool has been installed in the Field Research Station (FRS). Late 2017, the park purchased a ceiling mounted projector and retractable projection screen for the meeting space at the FRS, but did not have the resources to install it. In January 2018, the park gave the Big Thicket Association (BTA) a list of potential philanthropic needs, including an approximate \$2,000 cost to install electrical wiring and mount this new equipment. Thanks to the ambitious grant writing efforts of the Mary Catherine Johnston, Thicket of Diversity (ToD), who crafted a proposal to Entergy for the equipment installation. The screen and projector were professionally installed just after Thanksgiving, providing a new resource to help both BTA and the National Park Service better achieve their respective missions.



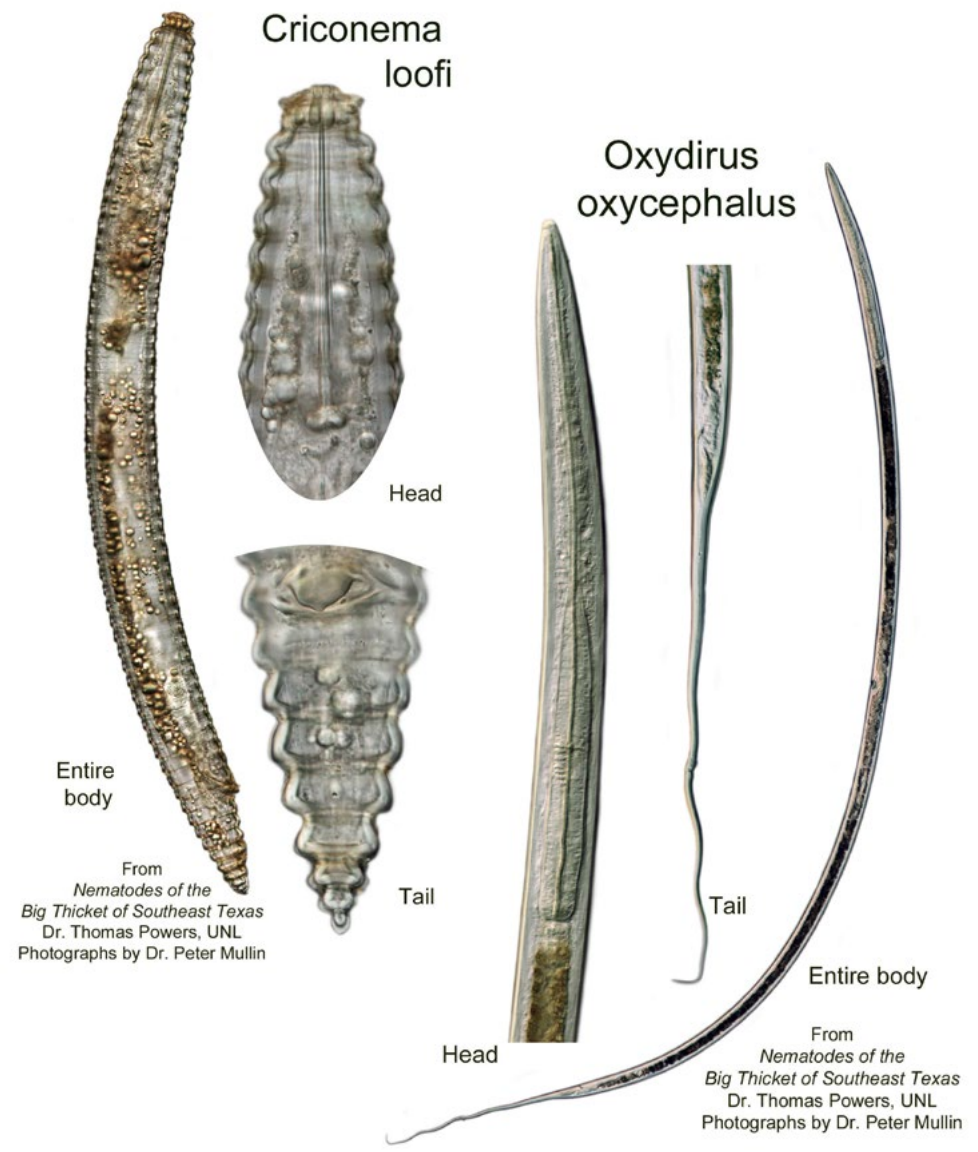
**THE BIG THICKET 2019 CALENDAR IS NOT YET AVAILABLE ONLINE.**  
Please contact the Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor Center at (409) 951-6700.



# THICKET OF DIVERSITY NEWS

## BIG THICKET NEMATODE (WORM) RESEARCH

From 2012-2016, Dr. Thomas Powers, University of Nebraska- Lincoln, and his team made six collection trips to the Big Thicket of Southeast Texas to inventory soil dwelling nematodes (worms). The project was conducted in two phases and received generous support, time, and constructive advice from the Big Thicket Association's Thicket of Diversity and the National Park Service staff at the Big Thicket National Preserve. This research encompassed completely new territory for the Powers Nematology Laboratory, yielding remarkably high levels of soil diversity and new species discoveries. To date 1026 nematodes have been identified of which a smaller group of 614 nematodes have digital images, morphometric measurements and DNA template vouchers. Of note, is that nine species are considered as candidates for new species to science. Power's research is described in further detail in various publications, including *Nematology* and the *Journal of Nematology*. Project funding was made possible with penalty monies from a Texas Commission on Environmental Quality enforcement action. Submitted by Mary Catherine Johnston, Thicket of Diversity



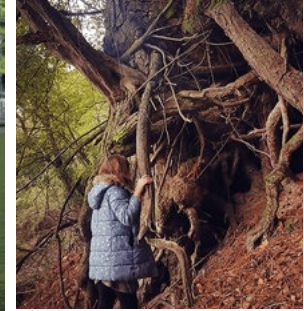


**BIG THICKET DAY CELEBRATION, OCT. 13, 2018**

Special thanks to all volunteers and partners/ sponsors who made the day a success: Big Thicket National Preserve, ExxonMobil's Environmental Awareness Committee, Lower Neches Valley Authority, Port of Beaumont, Rockin'A Cafe, TOTAL USA, Westrock Comapny.

Photo Credits: Bruce Walker and Wendy J. Ledbetter

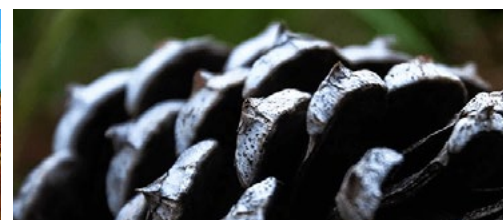
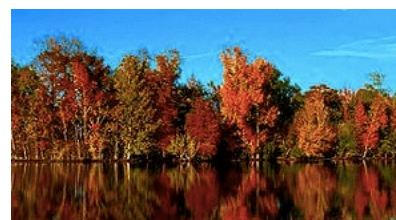
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# BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION

*Partner in Preservation*

#BIGTHICKET





**Big Thicket Association**  
 700 North Street, Suite 79  
 Beaumont, Texas 77701

# BIG THICKET BULLETIN

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## WEB SITES

- Big Thicket Association  
[www.bigthicket.org](http://www.bigthicket.org)
- Big Thicket National Preserve  
[www.bignp.gov](http://www.bignp.gov)
- East Texas Black Bear Task Force  
[www.etbbtf.org](http://www.etbbtf.org)
- Conservation Fund  
[www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org)
- Gulf States Mycological Society  
[www.gsmysoc.org](http://www.gsmysoc.org)
- National Audubon Society  
[www.guldbelttriangleaudubon.org](http://www.guldbelttriangleaudubon.org)  
[www.houstonaudubon.org](http://www.houstonaudubon.org)
- National Parks Conservation Association  
[www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org)
- Native Plant Society of Texas  
[www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org)
- Nature Conservancy  
[www.nature.org/texas](http://www.nature.org/texas)
- Outdoor Nature Club, Houston  
[www.outdoornatureclub.org](http://www.outdoornatureclub.org)
- Sierra Club Golden Triangle Group  
[www.texas.sierraclub.org/gtriangle](http://www.texas.sierraclub.org/gtriangle)
- Texas Conservation Alliance  
[www.TCAtexas.org](http://www.TCAtexas.org)
- Village Creek State Park  
[www.tspb.state.tx.us/park](http://www.tspb.state.tx.us/park)

## BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION MISSION

The purposes for which the Big Thicket Association is organized are

- » To work for the preservation of the flora, fauna and historical culture of the Big Thicket area
- » To promote the conservation of natural resources and natural history of the Big Thicket area, and education for same
- » To maintain and perpetuate, so far as possible, the many species of trees, plants and animals found in the Big Thicket area, and to do whatever else may be done to preserve for posterity the abundance of flora and fauna and natural beauty with which this area has been endowed
- » To promote and to fund research contributing to knowledge of the Big Thicket area
- » To publish or support publication of cultural and scientific Big Thicket literature
- » To promote the welfare of the Big Thicket National Preserve

For more information about the Big Thicket Association and upcoming events, please **click here** to visit us online.

## FOLLOW US

