

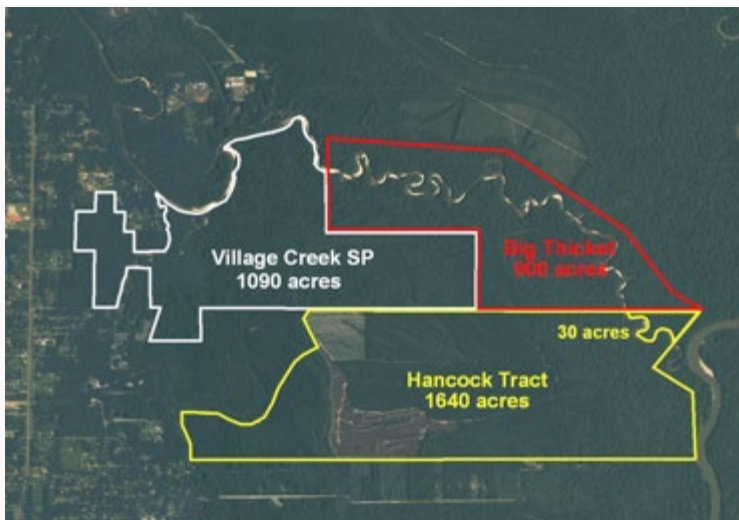
Big Thicket Reporter - #102

Nov-Dec 2009

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VILLAGE CREEK BONANZA

The Conservation Fund has scored again -- in acres. TCF will sell 1500 acres to TP&WD for \$650,000 -- a bargain bonanza! Commissioners agreed Nov. 5 to purchase the tract that will more than double the size of Village Creek State Park. The expansion provides more recreational opportunities and protects diverse habitat. VCSP may enter an agreement with NPS allowing access to several miles of the creek.



As indicated on the map, a 900-acre tract will become part of the Big Thicket National Preserve that's within their authorized administrative boundary.

BIG THICKET DAY -- ANNIVERSARIES / HEADQUARTERS

A crowd exceeding 350 gathered Oct. 10 to celebrate 35th-45th anniversaries of the Preserve and BTA and to dedicate administrative headquarters facilities. Supt. Todd Brindle presided at the event, introducing Cong. Kevin Brady and Asso. Regional Director John Wessels (IMR-NPS). Other speakers included Dr. Pete Gunter, Dr. Carl Knight, Dale Kruse, and Andy Jones. Invocation and benediction were given by Judge Billy Caraway and Battise McClamroch.



Cong. Kevin Brady visits with Tribal Council Chief Carlos Bullock and Treasurer Battise McClamroch.



Tyler County Judge Jacques Blanchette, Maxine Johnston, and Associate Regional Director John Wessels (NPS-IMR) pose with dancers.

BTA Pres. Bruce Drury presented awards: Thomas Lubbert Superior Achievement to Lamar Funderburk, R. E. Jackson Conservation Award to Brandt Mannchen, and Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Richard Harrel. (See last issue for details.)

Attendees enjoyed a Courville catfish dinner, Alabama-Coushatta Tribal dancers, and the Sabine Bluegrass performers.



TP&W's Nathan Garner joins the crowd touring the new administrative headquarters

PYRAMID MAGNOLIA PROJECT

On a BTA field trip last May in Newton County participants visited a 296-acre tract with populations of the rare Magnolia pyramidata. Those participating represented several groups who felt strongly that the area should be protected.

A campaign has been launched to purchase (or obtain a conservation easement) on the site.

Those involved to date are the BTA, Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust, Magnolia Garden Club, the Beaumont group of Native Plant Society of Texas, Nature Conservancy, and Outdoor Nature Club. Several college student groups are participating. The goal is \$250,000. At the BTA general membership business meeting on Oct. 10, the BTA authorized contributing \$10,000 for the project.

Flora of North America states that the magnolia is "very local and nowhere abundant." The Center for Plant Conservation indicates that the tree is threatened but that there is no formal management plan. Consider making a generous gift for the project. Not only will it save some threatened trees -- It's tax deductible!

CONSERVATION OUTLOOK

NEWS FROM NPS-BTNP

Appropriations: Congress has appropriated \$5,000,000 for land acquisition in FY2010, which should complete the 1993 Addition Act.

NPS Director Appointed: The new NPS Director is Jonathan Jarvis, a 33-year veteran, formerly Pacific West Regional Director, whose experience includes parks in Alaska, Idaho, Washington state, and California. Jarvis will now be responsible for 58 national parks and 333 monuments, preserves, historical sites, seashores, etc. He will be dealing with "a formidable list of challenges," according to Jonathan Hiskes in Grist, including effects of climate change (wildfires, receding glaciers, rainfall changes and flooding. His goals include connecting all Americans to their national parks and addressing a staggering maintenance backlog.

TRINITY RIVER N.W.R. CONSERVATION PLAN: The National Wildlife Refuge has scheduled three public meetings to solicit input for a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). The Plan describes desired future conditions and provides long range management guidelines with a watershed, ecosystem and landscape approach. The meetings begin at 7:00 PM as follows:

Nov. 30 - Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center, Daniel House, Liberty

Dec .1 - Rogers Park Center, 6540 Gladys St., Beaumont

Dec. 2- United Way of Greater Houston, 50 Waugh Drive, Houston

BLACK BEAR CONSERVATION: East Texas Black Bear Task Force members will meet December 15th – 16th in Saratoga at the BTNP Field Research Station. A five-year review of

conservation and management efforts is on the agenda.

An ETBBTF Black Bear Educators Workshop will be held Saturday, February 27, 2010 at the Big Thicket National Preserve Visitors Center and will be taught by Rachel Rommel and Victoria Sokol from the Houston Zoo with help from the National Park Service interpretive staff.

DIVERSITY DISPATCH

TAXA TALLY TO DATE: Over 8200 specimens in 17 different taxonomic groups have been identified; over 35 new species known to the preserve; 57 new species known to the state of Texas; and 5 brand new to science! Seminars and workshops in September and October were well attended and generate a lot of enthusiasm for the Thicket of Diversity: Fishes Seminar, 30+attending; Fish Identification workshop. 20 volunteers participated with training and field work; Pyrenomycetes Fungi workshop, 8 volunteers participated with training and field work

TURKEY CREEK BIRD COUNT. Dec. 19 -- 6:30 am. Meet at the Big Thicket Visitor Center on US69 at FM420. This bird count in Hardin and Tyler Counties includes the Turkey Creek and Hickory Creek Savannah Units of BTNP. Contact: Dave Roemer (Dave_Roemer@nps.gov) at 409-951-6820 or John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com) at 409-722-4193

BEECH CREEK BIRD COUNT, Dec. 22 -- 6:30 am. Meet at the Corps of Engineers Picnic Area on FM92 immediately north of the intersection with FM1746 in Town Bluff. The trip covers places in Tyler and Jasper Counties including Steinhagen Lake, Beech Creek Unit of BTNP and Martin Dies State Park. Contact Dave Roemer (Dave_Roemer@nps.gov) at 409-951-6820 or John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com) at 409-722-4193

MUSHROOM WALK (led by TWIG leader Dave Lewis) is scheduled November 14, 2009, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Field Research Station, 16890 FM 770, Saratoga, TX 77585. Bring lunch, water, basket, waxed or paper bags, knife or spoon to dig specimens, hat, rain gear, and bug spray. Specimens will be discussed and displayed at lunchtime.

NECHES RIVER CANOE TRIP, January 14-17, 2010. Thicket of Diversity, All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI), a "float" trip along the Neches River to explore types of fish and habitats will be led by Dr. Chad Hargrave. Bring camping gear, rain gear, rubber boots. Cost to be determined will cover canoe rentals and shuttle service. RSVP by December 15: director@bigthicket.org

DISCOVER LIFE IN AMERICA: DLIA's annual conference held at the Great Smoky's

Mountains will be December 9 through December 12. Dave Roemer (BITH), Mary Kay Manning (BITH), Dale Kruse (ToD), Dr. Carl Knight (Eastfield College), Melanie Gill-Shaw (Eastfield College), and Linda Brindle will represent the Big Thicket at the conference.

EVENTS

Nov. 30-Dec. 1- Dec.2 Trinity River Comprehensive Preservation Plan Public Meetings in Liberty, Beaumont & Houston

Dec. 15-16 - East Texas Black Bear Conservation Committee at BTNP-FRS, Saratoga

Dec. 19 - Turkey Creek Unit Bird Count: Contact Dave_Roemer@nps.gov) at 409-951-6820

Dec. 22 - Beech Creek Unit Bird Count> Contact Dave_Roemer@nps.gov) at 409-951-6820

Jan. 14-17, 2010 - Neches River Canoe Trip: Contact

Jan.15-18, 2010 - Golden Triangle Sierra, MLK weekend. Camp three nights at Boykin Springs, Angelina National Forest. Contact Gerald Langham @ 409-781-7732 (See story)