

Big Thicket Advocates Deceased

The Big Thicket lost two leaders who worked effectively and with total commitment to promote and to preserve the Big Thicket and its biodiversity – Geraldine Watson and Howard Peacock.

Texas Parks and Wildlife published an article about Geraldine by Ron Kabele in its April issue entitled, “Unconquerable Soul.” TP&WD also produced a disc about the Watson Rare Plant Preserve (2008) entitled “Epitaph.” The Texas Highways article on Howard Peacock, “East Texas Original” by Randy Mallory, appears in the July issue. Howard contributed more than 100 stories to the magazine, many of them about the Big Thicket.

HOWARD PEACOCK, 1925-2012



by Robert L. Schaadt, Texas Historian and Archivist

A Beaumont native and graduate of Beaumont High School, Peacock served in World War II in the US Navy in the Philippines. He then worked for the *Beaumont Journal* as a sports and feature writer. He married Kitty Galiano.

Peacock moved to Houston in 1951 and worked for the Chamber of Commerce, edited the Southern Pacific Railroad magazine, served the United Fund, was a director

GERALDINE WATSON, 1925-2012



Growing up in Colmesneil, Geraldine Watson roamed the forests and boated the Neches River with her father, and throughout her life, she listened to tales of pioneers and explored with old-timers.

When the BTA formed in 1964, Watson was one of the founding directors. Through the years, she worked with outstanding scholar-scientists like Dr. Donovan Correll and Dr. Marshall Johnston (authors of *Manual of Vascular*

Conservation Outlook

Upper Neches Wild and Scenic River

by Janice Bezanson (TCA)

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) introduced a bill in the U.S. Senate, S. 2324, the Upper Neches Wild and Scenic River Study Act. If passed, the bill would authorize a formal study of the eligibility of a specific section of East Texas' Neches River for designation as a National Wild and Scenic River. The National Park Service or the U.S. Forest Service would study this 225-mile section of the Neches River from the Lake Palestine dam in Anderson and Cherokee Counties to B.A. Steinhagen Lake in Jasper and Tyler Counties.

"The Neches River is one of Texas' most beautiful, free-flowing rivers and provides a vital habitat for fish and other aquatic animals," said Sen. Hutchison. "Its location in the heart of the Central Flyway makes it a crucial path for migrating ducks, geese, and songbirds. A Wild and Scenic River designation would help preserve all these attributes."

Senator Hutchison's bill would amend the original Act of 1968, authorizing the study and providing protections for landowners along this segment of the river. Should the study result in a recommendation that this section of the Neches River be named a National Wild and Scenic River, it would require another bill by Congress for the segment to be designated.

The Neches River runs through the heart of East Texas. Within the 225-mile segment proposed in this study, the river flows through the recently-established Neches River National Wildlife Refuge and borders the Davy Crockett National Forest and the Angelina National Forest.

"This is a major step for the protection of private property and our natural resources in the East Texas region," said Dr. Michael Banks of Friends of the Neches River. "The bill would not allow

the use of eminent domain to condemn private property in association with the study or designation of this section our outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing."

Conservation Fund Saves Bobcat Ridge

Once again our TCF friends have taken giant steps in preservation. In 2011 they tapped their New Forest Fund to purchase 7000 acres on Bobcat Ridge in East Texas. Part of the tract will be added to the Neches River NWR. TCF purchases and works with landowners to maintain sustainable forests through voluntary conservation agreements.

Keystone XL Pipeline Status

Beaumont Enterprise (July 28) reports that TransCanada has received three US Corps of Engineers permits (Fort Worth, Galveston, and Tulsa) to construct a 485-mile leg of the Keystone XL pipeline from Cushing, Okla. To the Gulf Coast with a 47-mile extension to Houston Approval of the northern route is still pending. If approved in 2012, the pipeline could be operational in late 2014 or early 2015.

National Resource Defense Council reports: "According to the U.S. State Department the pipeline would create at most 6,500 temporary construction jobs, and would leave only "hundreds" of permanent jobs." A Cornell University study concludes the pipeline would kill more jobs than it would create, by reducing investment in the clean energy economy. Furthermore, NDRC says that "Keystone XL would have diverted Canadian oil from refineries in the Midwest to the Gulf Coast where it could be refined and exported. Many of these refineries are in Foreign Trade Zones where oil may be exported to international buyers without paying U.S. taxes."

NDRC has called the pipeline a "Highway to Hell." If you've looked at those aeriels of Canada that have been

exploited to extract tar sands, the title "Highway From Hell" might also be appropriate.

Repealing the Wilderness Act

by Brandt Mannchen

HR4089 (which passed the U.S. House of Representatives) the Sportsmen's Heritage Act is not about sportsmen; it is about dismantling The Wilderness Act of 1964... The Senate companion bill is S2066.

These bills allow the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), road construction, logging and other actions which destroy the physical, recreational, biological, ecological, cultural, and spiritual values of wilderness under the guise of protecting and enhancing recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting. Yet the Wilderness Act states in the definition of Wilderness that Wilderness is "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man ... retaining its primeval character and influence ... which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions." ...

This bill is worded so broadly that nearly anything can be done in wilderness as long as the excuse of wildlife management or hunting, fishing, and shooting is used. ... In addition, this bill removes the requirement that any proposed activity in wilderness must undergo public review, comment, and participation via the National Environmental Policy Act. [Note: Check the current status on the web and write letters to express your opinion.]

Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) recently sought public comment on a draft of the 2012 Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan. TORP identifies outdoor recreation issues of statewide importance, and acts as a guide on how to best administer Texas' apportionment of the federal Land and Water Conservation Funds.

Conservation Outlook

This plan is required in order to maintain state eligibility to continue receiving funds through the LWCF State and Local Assistance Program; the only federal source of funds partnering with states and local governments that is solely dedicated to protecting conservation and recreation lands for future generations of Americans.

Shangri La Gardens Receives T.C.E.Q. Award

On May 2, 2012, Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center received the 20th Annual Environmental Excellence Award in Austin. The TCEQ award recognizes efforts to protect Texas' natural resources while ensuring clean air, clean water and safe management of waste.

If you haven't visited Shangri La, you're missing a great experience. The Nature Center and Gardens are open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m. For more information

visit www.shangrilagardens.org.

Trinity River N.W.R. News

Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge's new paved road is now open for public use at CR417 off FM 1409. There is new striping, signage and a speed bump along with the butterfly garden parking area being paved. An electric gate that will automatically close at sundown and re-open at sunrise is planned for the near future. The Champion Lake Public Use Area is free and open to fishing, hiking, butterfly and bird watching, waterfowl hunting with a refuge permit, and limited boating. It is open 7 days a week during daylight hours only.

A "Family Fishing Day" was held June 2. The Refuge provided fishing poles and bait and offered help by experienced fishermen.

Ken Kramer Leaves Texas A Conservation Legacy

Ken Kramer has served the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club for over

30 years, and July 31 he retires with a remarkable record. He was first employed as a contract lobbyist, and then in 1989 became the first Director of LSC. The good news is that he will continue to volunteer as Water Resources Chair.

Over 200 friends and colleagues showed up to give "Kudos for Ken" on April 27 at the Etter-Harbin Alumni Center, University of Texas. There were many tributes and reminiscences for the man whose years of service have made an enormous impact for conservation advances in Texas.

Earlier on the 27th, another outstanding "Water for People and the Environment," was held at the AT&T Conference Center. The keynote speaker was Brian Richter, Director, Global Freshwater Program, The Nature Conservancy. Other speakers addressed Texas droughts, innovative conservation, and water reuse.



Ken Kramer (pictured with his wife Diane and daughter Kate) retired as Director of the Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter on July 31. His retirement party, held at the University of Texas on April 27, was attended by over 200 friends and colleagues.

Deceased ... continued from page 1

Howard Peacock (cont'd...)

of the Texas Bill of Rights Foundation 1963-1970 that produced television shows, "Ideas in Focus" ... directed programs for the Houston Museum for Natural Science ... and served as administrator for the University of Houston Law School.

In 1976 Howard Peacock ... moved to Woodville in Tyler County... to spend his time working for Big Thicket conservation and education. When Howard was interviewed by the Texas Legacy Project of the Conservation History Association in 2000, he told Christopher Cook: "I met some people in the movement that were just my soul buddies" ... He served one term 1975-1976 as President of the Big Thicket Association, but he was active in every aspect of its work until his death...

Peacock wrote about the Big Thicket, Southeast Texas history ... hundreds of articles for magazines ... His books included: *The Big Thicket of Texas: America's Ecological Wonder* ... *The Nature of Texas: A Feast of Native Beauty from Texas Highways Magazine*, and *Nature Lover's Guide to the Big Thicket*....

He relocated to San Antonio after his wife's death and had lived there a number of years. One of Peacock's last public appearances was in 2008 as a keynote speaker at the Hardin County Sesquicentennial History Program in Kountze and at the 2008 Big Thicket Association's Annual Meeting.

Geraldine Watson (cont'd...)

Plants in Texas and the Southwest), learned from them, and collected specimens for their herbarium.

Before "biodiversity" became a "buzzword," she defined Big Thicket ecosystems and described their rich diversity. Her *Big Thicket Plant Ecology* became a "bible" for conservation groups. She conducted field trips for NPS study teams, and she led expeditions for government leaders, their aides, and candidates for office, including senatorial candidate George H.W. Bush. Her talks and slide shows interpreted Big Thicket for hundreds of groups. She testified at several Congressional hearings.

Watson worked for the Preserve conducting plant surveys and writing reports. The first superintendent, Tom Lubbert, said: "Geraldine's assistance during the first years of the National Preserve was invaluable. She was knowledgeable about the resource, generous with her time, and diligently worked to ensure that plans protected the resource she loved."

She acquired properties at Hyatt near Warren for her Watson Rare Plant Preserve. There she built a studio to paint not only nature scenes, but also a series called "The Good Ol' Days" that recreates another era. Her book, *Reflections on the Neches*, records a vanishing folk culture.



BTA New Members!

To offset the gloom of all these losses, let's celebrate two new young members! Annie Spurgin (age 3) and Jack Spurgin (age 6) joined the Big Thicket Association in June as a Father's Day gift to their Granddad. The proud granddad just happens to be our new Executive Director, Bruce Walker.

Others we remember...

Earlier this year we reported the deaths of Big Thicket friends John Parker, Buddy Hollis and a revered patron, Walter Crawford, Jr. In this issue we sorrowfully report the loss of Helen Barefield, Tom Bean, Naomi Grubbs and Darrell Shine.

Helen Curtis Barefield, 1923-2012

Helen Curtis Barefield, 89, died June 30, 2012. She was born in Youngstown, Ohio. Helen worked at their family business. She attended college at Ohio State, Penn State, Univ. of Michigan and UCLA. She met and married Emmett Monroe Barefield, Jr.

She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Silsbee, was a past president of the Silsbee Garden Club and was involved in conservation efforts and other civic, social and benevolent organizations.

Helen was the owner of the Pinewood Inn and Suites since 1961. The Inn has been the hub of commercial and industrial lodging, and she was active in the tourism industry serving as a "Big Thicket Ambassador." She was a life member of the Big Thicket Association and helped fund members to testify at Congressional hearings.

Tom Bean, 1942-2012

Tom Bean was born in Kountze, a lifelong resident. Tom married Ellen Bean and is survived by his wife, two sons and three daughters. He was a member of the First Baptist Church. He retired from Mead WestVaco.

Tom's father, Willie Bean, was a founding director of the BTA. A trip through old BTA scrapbooks shows that he was active with a camera, recording programs and activities. His mother Eloise and daughter Cheryl have been reporters for local newspapers.

Naomi Grubbs

Naomi Grubbs, wife of the late Paul Grubbs, died recently in Lake Jackson. Conservationists and nature lovers have benefited enormously from their largesse.

Back in the 1970s, the Grubbs donated their home and 134 acres in Jasper County to the Nature Conservancy – the Little Rocky Preserve. BTA has conducted several field trips through beech and longleaf forests and a picturesque Rocky Creek to a hanging pitcher plant wetland savannah.

Darrell Shine, 1931-2012

Darrell Shine was a surveyor and historian extraordinaire, working full time until his death at Shine & Associates in Silsbee. The Texas Surveyors Association in 1984 named him "Surveyor of the Year." He served on the Texas Board of Land Surveying from 1981-87 and wrote a book for Texas A&M on Inland and Coastal Waters of Texas and Their Boundaries. He was one of the surveyors who worked on land acquisition for the Big Thicket National Preserve.

In addition to serving four years as Mayor of Silsbee, he also served nine years on the Silsbee ISD school board. He was in demand as a speaker, including BTA and Hardin County Historical Commission events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 4: Neches River Wilderness Canoe Race

22nd annual event, sponsored by Neches River Runners organization. For more information about the race, call Zemer at 903-245-9450 or Chaffins at 903-393-1974.

August 26: Big Sandy Creek Unit at Woodlands Trail

Hike and picnic along three loop trails. Outing Leader: Kathryn Walker, 409-554-0203 or ktwalker@gt.rr.com

September 22: Brandt Mannchen 60/40 Roast and Potluck Dinner

12:00-4:00 PM @ St. Paul's Methodist Church, Houston. RSVP to: brandtshnfbt@juno.com

September 29: Texas Conservation Alliance in Lufkin

Buddy & Ellen Temple will be honored. Thad Sitton is speaker.

October 13 — Big Thicket Day

Preserve Overview ... by Ann Roberts

Brian Lockwood, Resource Management Specialist, and wife **Diane Lockwood**, Lead Fire Effects Monitor, left Big Thicket for positions in Shenandoah National Park on June 1st. The staff said “farewell” and “happy trails” on May 19 at the Major League Grill in Beaumont.

Jalyn Cummings, Regional hydrologist, duty stationed at Big Thicket was Acting Resource Management Chief until June 17. Previously Stephanie Burgess and Brian Lockwood have had stints as Acting Chief.

Big Thicket Fire Office burned about 98 acres in March at the Solo Tract in Turkey Creek Unit. In addition the Big Thicket Fire Office supported a group of Pro Rangers and put them through fire training.

The Preserve received a second year of funding

(\$20,000) for continuing the native plant nursery at Kountze High School; the school grows native plants for the Preserve for restoration projects.

Audrey Funderburk’s mom, Barbara Jean Gum, passed away on July 17 in Amarillo, Texas.

The **Interpretation/Education** rangers with their **Teacher-Ranger-Teachers** had a busy summer with activities for all. Visitors could explore the Thicket on early-morning hikes or by moonlight; canoe or kayak Village Creek; learn to navigate by map, compass, and GPS; and learn about the wildlife. The Kid’s Camp theme was “Wings Over the Thicket”; activities included games, crafts, and getting acquainted with birds, bats and bugs.

Chapman Orchids at Watson Rare Plant Preserve



Joe Liggio, author and orchid expert, led a field trip July 28 at the Watson Rare Plant Preserve at Hyatt, arranged by Pauline Singleton, Preserve official. A blue-ribbon crowd showed up to enjoy the gorgeous views of the rare Chapman Orchids as well as numerous other rare species. There must have been 50-60 folks to challenge Liggio’s skills as a trip leader. We spotted TP&W folks, foresters, Sierrans, assorted PhDs, and several BTA members.



The BTA Board of Directors met July 14 at the BTNP Visitor Center. There were break-out sessions for committees and updates for the Preserve, state parks, and Thicket of Diversity.

Plans are underway for our annual Big Thicket Day. The Nominating Committee will mail ballots early in September, and the Awards Committee selections will be announced.

President Cathy Johnston reports that a Celestron Telescope was donated by Mitch and Janice Watkins for use at the FRS. Plans are in the works for a Star Party.

She also reports that Matt Grundy is on staff as a summer intern to work with All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) biologists. These internships will result in more activity in the Preserve yielding more discoveries, more species, and greater information on species distribution with more hands-on learning for citizen scientists. Grundy comes to us from Lamar University as a result of Park Partnership funding.

Special thanks to Mead Westvaco and Penny Sullivan for a grant to compile a digital history of the BTA from records of members. This information will be stored on the Executive Director's new Dell laptop and on individual thumb drives. Johnston says, "This will preserve and promote the BTA and strengthen the BTA's leadership team as Thicket ambassadors."

Pyramid Magnolias

Did you see Bruce Drury and Bruce Walker on TV? They visited and filmed pyramid magnolias in the only Texas sites in Newton and Jasper counties. A few other sites exist in Southern

states, but Texas probably has the best remaining populations.

Other trees are being harvested surround them, so the Big Thicket Association is trying to preserve them by raising funds to buy land or a conservation easement.

Other partners in the project include Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust, Magnolia Garden Club, Native Plant Society of Texas - Beaumont Chapter, Nature Conservancy, Newton Garden Club, Outdoor Nature Club, Texas Conservation Alliance. Check the BTA website for more information and join our effort to protect the pyramids.

Hardin-Simmons Visit

Hardin-Simmons University students came to Big Thicket in May led by Dr. Rick Hammer, Dept. of Biology. The nine young adults spent two days with Bob Boensch (Larsen Sanctuary -TNC) and an afternoon with Dale Kruse (Curator of the S.M. Tracy Herbarium, TAMU College of Agriculture

and Life Science). Boensch led a hike along the floodplain trail to look for ash trees, gather data for quail preservation and perform a freshwater mussel survey. Professor Kruse, an expert on Bryophytes, took the class into the Lance Rosier Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve to study Bryophyte diversity and identification. Matt Grundy, an environmental science major at Lamar University, and the Big Thicket Association's summer intern accompanied the group.

Oral Histories Provide Unique Peek into Saratoga History

On July 5 BTA and BTNP welcomed the West Hardin ISD Class of 1962 to conduct oral histories. Participants included Delores Hinklin, Homer Loflin, Edmon Marcontell, Gary Morse, David Payne, Linda Williams and her husband, Hub. Most had family ties to W.F. Cotten, Bragg Hotel's Margaret Ayres, Fount Simmons, and Lance Rosier. BTNP Teacher-Ranger Elizabeth Sharp conducted the interviews and Mindy Peirce operated the video camera.

There were memories of Dr. Roark, medicinal cures, chasing hogs, hunting, band classes, football games, and black gold.

David Payne was unable to come to the FRS so the camera came to him in his Sour Lake barbershop. He described early days of Saratoga and Sour Lake and the medicinal springs.

Elizabeth Sharp, a Dallas history teacher working with the Preserve for the summer, commented that conducting the oral histories was her best experience to date. She said that all described a life that was hard but no one complained about it.



Students from Hardin-Simmons University visited the Big Thicket in May.



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WEB SITES

Big Thicket Association

www.bigthicket.org

Big Thicket National Preserve

www.nps.gov/bith

East Texas Black Bear Task Force

www.bbcc.org

Conservation Fund

www.conservationfund.org

National Audubon Society

www.goldentriangleaudubon.org
www.houstonaudubon.org

National Parks Conserv. Assoc.

www.npca.org

Native Plant Society of Texas

www.npsot.org

Nature Conservancy

www.nature.org/texas

Outdoor Nature Club, Houston

www.outdoornatureclub.org

Sierra Club Golden Triangle Group

www.texas.sierraclub.org/triangle

Texas Conservation Alliance

www.TCAtexas.org

Village Creek State Park

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park



Diversity Dispatch

MUSHROOM / FUNGI SCIENCE CAFÉ – MUSHROOM WALK

David Lewis presented a program on “Mushrooms and Fungi,” Friday June 8, 6:00-7:00 PM at the Log On Cafe in Beaumont. The following day, Lewis led a Mushroom Walk. Participants met at the BTNP Field Research Station in Saratoga

and forayed into the Lance Rosier Unit of the Preserve to collect and record species. After collecting, participants gathered at the FRS to discuss the collected specimens. Jay Justice, a well-known Arkansas mycologist, participated.