

BIG THICKET Reporter

July-August-September 2013
Issue #119

Grants Received For Thicket of Diversity

When the Thicket of Diversity, All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory organized in 2006, the first two foundations to support the project were the Brown Foundation and the TLL Temple Foundation. From then until 2013, they have faithfully responded to requests for additional funding—the latest received in 2013. In addition, both foundations contributed generously to the BTNP Visitor Center construction project. That kind of generosity imposes not only a debt of gratitude, but also a commitment to earn that trust.

Other foundations have often granted support, including the Meadows, Temple-Inland, Stark, and Magnolia Trust Foundations. The ToD project has received matching grants from NPS Centennial Challenge and Park Partnership programs. The Western National Park Association has funded specific TWIG projects, and recently a Supplemental Environmental Project grant (TCEQ - Lone Star Sierra) authorized water-related research. All of these entities have earned a Big Thicket-sized – **THANK YOU!**

B.T.A. NEWS

Board Meeting & Neches River Adventure

Before the July 13 BTA board meeting, the directors and staff boarded the Cardinal for a Neches River Adventure on Ten-Mile Bayou in

Orange County. Following the trip, the quarterly meeting was held in the Entergy Building. Among items on the agenda were reports from the President Jan Ruppel, Big Thicket National Preserve Supt.

Douglas Neighbor, Thicket of Diversity manager, Mona Halvorsen. There were BTA Committee reports by Nominating, Awards, and Audit Committees. A breakout session for Strategic Plan Committees was held, and Dale Parish briefed the board on use of a “Huddle” program.



Supt. Douglas Neighbor reviews BTNP management of resources.

Big Thicket Day Oct. 12

Our annual Big Thicket Day will be Saturday, Oct. 12, in Saratoga at the BTNP Field Research Station. Arrive around 9:00 AM for coffee and cookies. Meet and greet old friends, then attend the general membership and board of directors meeting at 9:30.

Dr. Ken Kramer is our speaker for the 49th Annual Big Thicket Day. Kramer recently retired as Chapter

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Conservation Outlook

Moths of Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge

By Stuart J. Marcus, Refuge Manager

If you build it, they will come. All of you have heard this, and I can really attest to its merits when it comes to moths. It all started in April 2012. Trinity River NWR (Liberty County, TX) staff had just moved into a new headquarters building built on one of only a few high places within this frequently flooded bottomland hardwood forest habitat.

One morning I noticed an interesting moth on the new building, so I snapped a few photos and checked out our insect books and then went online. With some 11,000 species found in the U.S. and over 3,000 species in Texas alone, I didn't even know where to begin. Being an avid "butterflyer," I knew some folks that were also into moths, so I sent one of them the photo. Turns out this person would also like to do a moth

survey for the refuge but has not been able to find the time.

A few days later he sent back the moth's name. The next week I sent him a few more and then a few dozen more. Now he is really interested, and he does not even have to come to the refuge. Most Refuge Managers who have been around for many years (OK, I'm older) do not get to do anything remotely related to field biology anymore. What a stress reliever this has become!

Okay, back to moths.... I also spend time checking out the three major websites dedicated to moths (Butterflies and Moths of North America, Bug Guide, and Moth Photographers Group) to aid in identification. Found out that only about a dozen species had been listed for Liberty County while Hildago County in southern Texas had the most in the state with over 170 species. This gave the refuge something to

shoot for. Our new headquarters has exterior white lights that stay on all night for security. Those are the main areas we have been checking for moths. There are also numerous moths that are day fliers and ones that are only found on other refuge tracts.

From that simple beginning in April 2012 and counting through July 2013, this refuge has photographed and documented over 315 species from 31 families. A "real" survey in the bottomland hardwoods should easily add a few hundred more. A few of the moths documented on the refuge have not been listed anywhere in Texas, until now. Liberty County will now rank #1 in Texas for species of moths according to those websites although some private collectors may have documented more species. Our next goal is to exceed the county in Florida that has documented nearly 400 species. You probably were not thinking of an office building having so much diversity, with moths that is!!

Davis Hill State Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. (TPWD) hosted an open house in which agency staff provided a guided tour of this property on May 9, 9:00 AM-3:00 PM. The Department used this as an opportunity to open a dialog to consider special use permits and the development of a public use plan.

An ad hoc advisory committee should be considered to develop a limited access program. Davis Hill itself is a sensitive area and together



TPWD hosted an open house at Davis Hill State Park in May.

Conservation (cont'd.)

with bottomland hardwoods, the park offers a remarkably diverse area.

Village Creek State Park

VCSP's Volunteer Association is sponsoring their annual photography contest. Entries must be submitted by August 7. Photos will be displayed in the Nature Center, Aug. 10 with a reception scheduled from 2:00-4:00 PM. Best in Show will merit a \$25 award. Ribbons will recognize first, second, third and honorable mention. Rules and entry forms may be accessed either at the Park or on the Park's Facebook page.

Debate on Environment Grows as Drought Tests Texas Rivers

by Kate Galbraith (excerpts from *The Texas Tribune* and *The New York Times*)

"You see all those dead trees?" said Kirk Winemiller, who runs an aquatic ecology laboratory at Texas A&M University, pointing from a boat toward bald cypress trees that rose like ghosts along the bank. "They weren't dead when we came out in 2011." ...

Like the Neches, other rivers across Texas have been severely tested by the long-running drought, which still blankets most of the state and comes on top of increasing demands for water from a growing population and industrial base. Average stream-flow measurements are well below normal, especially in western regions, prompting worries about increased salinity and the health of fish and plants...

... Myron Hess, who manages the Texas Water Program for the

National Wildlife Federation [says] "In my mind, it's not acceptable to just say we're not going to worry about what's going to happen to the environment," he said, noting that rivers offer economy-boosting activities like fishing, tourism and recreation...

The agency [TCEQ] has already issued flow standards for a number of rivers... Dr. Winemiller and Ms. Kelly (who serves on a science advisory committee in the flows process) say that the commission's recommendations have often fallen short of scientific recommendations. So the ecological standards for rivers like the Neches, the Trinity and the Guadalupe are not as high as scientists (and even some stakeholders) think they should be...

When the river turned black two years ago, saltwater was a key factor — some of it left over from Hurricane Ike in 2008, according to Scott Hall, general manager of the Lower Neches Valley Authority, which manages the river and sells its water...

PIPELINE POSES PROBLEMS

Carolyn Stonecipher, *Letter to the Editor, Beaumont Enterprise, July 21*
Diluted bitumen (dilbit) that would come through the Keystone XL pipeline has a solid high sulfur component called petroleum coke. Petcoke makes up 15 to 30 percent of a barrel of diluted bitumen (dilbit) and is removed in the refining process.

What happens to this dirtier-than-coal byproduct? Is it shipped overseas so some other country can sicken its children and pollute its air

(and eventually ours) or is it quietly burned in coal-fired power plants in the United States? Or is it just dumped somewhere in Southeast Texas?

The fate of the diluent required to reduce the viscosity of the bitumen as well as its chemical makeup is not publicly known. The amount, though, is known and is actually quite large: One barrel of bitumen requires 0.42 barrel of diluent to get it through a pipeline.

Is a plan in place to recycle this diluent material back to Canada? Or is it somehow absorbed in the refinery operation? Or is it or some part of it pumped underground and disposed of here? Texans need answers.

TEXAS CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

Perhaps you already know that our friend Janice Bezanson, Executive Director of TCA, was one of 15 Texas women leaders honored on Dec. 7, 2012 in an exhibit of "Women Shaping Texas" at the Bob Bullock State History Museum in Austin. Janice has spent a lot of years working for parks, national forest wilderness areas, and national wildlife refuges, plus a host of conservation issues.

TCA is an affiliate of National Wildlife Federation, and BTA is a member of the Alliance. TCA will hold its annual meeting Saturday, September 21, 1:30 – 4:00 pm at John Bunker Sands Wetland Center at Seagoville near Dallas.

Preserve Overview by Ann Roberts

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 10

Hardin County Museum ribbon-cutting at 10:30 AM

August 10

Village Creek State Park Nature Center, Photography Contest, Reception 1:00-4:00 PM

August 17

Neches Paddle, 7:30 PM, Collier's Ferry, Beaumont. See details next page.

September 21

TCA annual meeting Saturday, September 21, 1:30 – 4:00 pm at John Bunker Sands Wetland Center at Seagoville near Dallas

September 28

BTA workday at the Field Research Station; bring outdoors tools and contact Bruce Walker at 409-782-3486 or email director@bigthicket.org

September 28

Ghosts of Texas Past at Heritage Village, Woodville

October 3

START meeting, Heritage Village, Woodville

October 12

Big Thicket Day, 9:00-3:30

October 18

Harvest Festival at Heritage Village, Woodville

October 19

BioBlitz, Thicket of Diversity

Supt. Douglas Neighbor reported on Preserve activities at the recent BTA board meeting.

Administration: A sequestration cut of \$155,000 is leaving positions vacant. Currently, the staff is frozen at 22 permanent employees; five are fire personnel (but that too may be reduced in coming years). That compares to some 35+ employees in the 1980s. Only two persons are currently in the Interpretation / Education Division.

Chris Suter was employed as the Administrative Technician in April. A temporary position to fill a vacancy in Facility Management was filled by Jeremy Williams.

Planning: The General Management Plan should be completed by the end of 2013. Phase II of the Foundation Plan was completed; that plan is required to compete for internal funding projects. The Fire Management Plan EA is being reviewed and should be completed this year. After three public scoping meetings, the Hog Management Plan is being drafted. Also completed was the NEPA process for lowering an exposed Tennessee Gas Pipeline in the Big Sandy Creek Unit.

Facility Managers launched trail maintenance and boardwalk replacement projects in order to meet the requirements of the American Disabilities Act and other safety standards. Day Use areas are being managed for sustainability, including vault toilets, picnic tables, etc.

Fire management personnel treated about 1,500 acres – primarily in Big Sandy, Hickory Creek, and Turkey Creek units.

The **Interpretation/Education/Partnership** personnel developed a Social Media Plan and a Geocaching Plan. In a Turkey Creek wildfire scar, volunteers planted 347 plants from Kountze High School Native Plant Nursery. I & E staff participated in the JASON program, introducing 13,000 school children to NPS in a two-week course, and they also hosted a Woodland Expo Event with the Natural Resource Conservation Service with 300+ students participating.

Resource Management staff coordinated use of funds provided for the Nolan Transport spill in Big Sandy Creek Unit. Restore Act funding requests were submitted for wetlands, oil and gas projects. Projects have been developed for restoration funding from the National Park Foundation. A pipeline fire scar was treated to kill a forest of Chinese tallow to be followed by replanting.

Hunter registration permits began July 8 and continues at the Preserve Visitor Center daily from 9:00-5:00. Hunters may take white-tailed deer, squirrel, rabbit, feral hog, and waterfowl. Permits issued per unit are: Beaumont 200; Beech Creek 150; Big Sandy Creek 400; Neches Bottom 150 and Jack Gore Baygall 400; and Lance Rosier 900.

We remember ...

Rose Ann Jordan, 1940-2013

Rose Ann Jordan of Beaumont, passed away on May 15, 2013. She is survived by her husband, Harrison Jordan; son, David Adrian; daughters, Diane Adrian and Kathy Smartt; stepsons, Harrison W. Jordan, Hein and Marc Jordan, and their families.

Rose Ann graduated from Lamar University with her BA in Education and her MA in Guidance and Counseling. After spending many years as a classroom teacher, she retired, then she and her husband, Harrison Jordan, enjoyed many years traveling to forty-nine of the fifty states while birding, hiking, canoeing, and backpacking.

Rose Ann also volunteered for several organizations especially The Big Thicket National Preserve, serving as Volunteer Coordinator for fourteen years. She also served on the Big Thicket Association Board for fifteen years, and among many other services chaired the Awards Committee. Rose Ann and Harrison often volunteered on National Audubon Society Christmas bird counts.

Flora Richardson Wilhite, 1930-2013

Flora Richardson Wilhite died Sunday, April 28, 2013. She was born September 29, 1930 in Port Arthur, Texas. Both Flora and her deceased husband Ross, were dedicated life members of BTA.

Flora held a degree in Library Science from the University of North Texas at Denton. She served as Engineering Librarian at Lamar University, and then she joined the U.S. Special Services managing libraries in Manheim, Heidelberg, and Berlin Germany. Upon returning to "The States" she became head librarian

for the city of Orange. She served as Director of Sterling Municipal Library in Baytown for 35 years.

Bob Bowman, 1936-2013

A memorial service for Bob Bowman of Lufkin was held at Calvary Baptist Church on July 18. Bowman is survived by his wife Doris, two sons -- Neil of Pearland and Jimmy of Lufkin.

Bob Bowman (Bowman & Associates, Inc., a public relations agency), was also one of Texas' leading historians and a long-time community leader in Lufkin and East Texas. Bowman's professional career included service in the newspaper field, the forest products industry, and the oil and gas industry. Bowman also wrote a weekly history column for about 80 East Texas newspapers.

He and his wife Doris were the authors of more than 45 books about East Texas, covering East Texas community and county histories, folklore, travel, restaurants and country cafes, East Texas expressions and idioms, hangings and lynchings, home remedies, East Texas rivers, ghost towns, historic murders, biographies, business histories, and the Indians of East Texas. Among them was *They Left No Monuments* with its tribute to Lance Rosier. Their books often had intriguing titles like *If I Tell You a Hen Dips Snuff*.

Bowman served as a member of the Texas Historical Commission, president of the East Texas Historical Association, a member of the Texas Sesquicentennial Commission, and member of the Texas Capital Centennial Commission in 1988.

MORE EVENTS ...

Discovering the Outdoors



This year a summer night paddle is planned through Lake Bayou off the Neches River. Meet at Colliers Ferry in Beaumont at 7:30 PM on August 17 at 7:30 PM.

The two mile paddle up the Bayou to the Lake should arrive at the lake at sundown, returning under a full moon. The park closes at midnight. Be prepared with the legal lighting required for night paddling and all of the required safety equipment. Check the Texas Web site for light requirements.

Watson Preserve

On Saturday, July 27, 2013, at 10:00 AM, Texas native orchid expert Joe Liggio led a wildflower walk at Watson Rare Native Plant Preserve. The rare Chapman's orchid was blooming.

Scheduled field trips for 2014 include April 12, May 24, June 21 and July 26.

Neches River Adventure

Cruise boat tours each Saturday, March-November. Reservations required – call 409-651-5326.



Diversity Dispatch

Thicket of Diversity Executive Council Meeting

The ToD Executive Council meeting convened at the BTNP Headquarters on July 10 at 1:30.

Neil Ford will begin a mussel survey on the Upper Neches River Corridor. Funding was approved for study of macrofungi by Bart Buyck.

The latest Taxa Tally reports 12 species new to science with another 30 potential additions. Also reported are 267 species new to the Preserve and 133 new to the State (pending 13). Ants, grasshoppers and Trematoda have been added to the current Taxa Tally. Odonata and Gyrinidae data are being added to the national NPS database.

Paul Tinerella and Katie Winsett were added to the Science Committee and Dale Parish was added to the Data Management Committee.

A BioBlitz is schedule for Oct. 19 featuring Scott Solomon (Rice University).

Alex Dye, ToD Intern

Alex Dye of Indianapolis, Indiana was selected as the 2013 intern for the Thicket of Diversity Project, and his internship continues until October 2013. Funds for the internship were provided by funding from a Park Partnership grant acquired through the US National Park Service and were matched by the BTA.

Hired through the Chicago Botanic Garden, Alex is a 2011 graduate of Purdue University and earned his Masters in Geography at the University of Tennessee. Alex served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, a Guest Lecturer, and as a Science Learning Community Mentor. Through Purdue University and in partnership with Arsenal Techni-

cal High School, Alex worked with a team of undergraduates to design and implement a science education program with laboratory experiments and demonstrations.

Dye assists Mona Halvorsen, Director of the Thicket of Diversity Project. Skilled in ArcGIS Mapping, he is currently applying mapping and geospatial analytics to current species collection records for the Thicket of Diversity All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory.

Alex worked with West Hardin CCISD science teacher, Mr. David Pickett, with eighty 6th and 7th grade science students on a field trip of exploration and learning in May, and more recently participated in Nematode ATBI field collections with Matt Lodema from University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

East Texas Miscellany

START: The Southeast Texas Area Recreation and Tourism group met in Orange on July 11, 2013 at the Orange Travel Information Center to share information about upcoming events. The next meeting will be held at Heritage Village Museum in Woodville on October 3.

HARDIN COUNTY MUSEUM: The Ribbon Cutting for the Hardin County Museum is set for Saturday, August 10th at 10:30 am. The Hardin County Historical Commission,

chaired by J.A. McKim, has acquired and renovated an old bank building and installed exhibits. There is also a meeting room on the second floor. The BTA has transferred some of the remaining stored artifacts from the former Big Thicket Museum to the new Museum.

East Texas Black Bear Task Force (ETBBTF) meets at the BTNP Field Research Station on August 14, 10:00 AM–3:00 PM with Chris Comer (SFASU) presiding. In addition to

Comer's BBCC update, Raymon Hedges (USACE) will address conservation priorities, Doyle Shook (LMVJV) will report on the NE Texas Conservation Delivery Network, and Comer will cover new habitat modeling efforts. After lunch Donna Work (TFS) gives an update on education/outreach activities, and Nathan Garner will review the "Next Steps."

B.T.A. News (continued from page 1)

Director of the Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club. Kramer continues to volunteer as Chair of the Water Conservation Committee and Legislature Advisor for the Chapter Executive Committee. Ken has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Rice University and his special area of interest during his academic career teaching and conducting research at Texas state universities was environmental policy and administration. He has 25 years of experience working on water and other environmental issues as an academic, an environmental group leader, and public policy specialist. He has been appointed to numerous task forces and advisory committees by Texas state officials, including the Governor and by the Speaker of the Legislature.

Dr. James Westgate Honored with R.E. Jackson Conservation Award



Professor James Westgate (PhD, University of Texas, 1988) university professor of earth and space sciences, has accrued 24 years (1989-

2013) of outstanding services to Lamar University in Beaumont. His work has also benefited the scientific community and public education. BTA has benefited from his active participation and commitment as a member of our board of directors since 2009.

The Big Thicket region and its National Preserve were venues for his field trips and research. His leadership in projects like the JASON Alliance of Southeast Texas attracts an average of 8,000 fourth- through eighth-graders and 200 science teachers to the Lamar campus annually. For 18 years Westgate has served as science advisor for "Teaching Environmental Science in the Three Rivers Watershed's & Wetlands K-12 Teacher Institute" – always including field trips on the Neches River and Village Creek. Recently, he hosted a group from Bonn University.

In 2011 he received the prestigious Minnie Stevens Piper Professor Award. Westgate has served as president of the Texas Academy of Sciences in 1999-2000, and he received their outstanding services award in 2008. He has received over 45 grants, written two books, four book chapters, and published 31 research articles plus 84 peer-reviewed articles.

Neches River Adventure

by Bruce Walker, Exec. Director

The 2013 season for BTA Neches River Adventures has been underway since April 1st with BTA's full participation beginning June 1st. The transition from Dr. Bothel's Environmental Learning & Research Center to the Big Thicket Association has been relatively seamless.

BTA profoundly thanks two corporate sponsors for the boat: Mobiloil Federal Credit Union and Mead-Westvaco. Michael Hoke is writing outdoor classroom curricula for the

Big Thicket environmental learning classes and securing equipment with grant funds from The Stark Foundation. Kathryn Walker handles the public, private, and school reservations as well as booking the captains, 1st mates, and BTA volunteers & guides. The Big Thicket National Preserve has provided NPS staff on the boat for the public tours and outdoor classrooms.

To date 890 passengers have participated (5 schools with 359 students, 12 public tours, and 9 private charters). Tour passengers and students are learning about the history, culture, and significance of Big Thicket National Preserve and Neches River. They also are becoming more informed about the Big Thicket Association, Thicket of Diversity, the Field Research Station, and the Temple Big Thicket Series.

Election

In September members will receive ballots for the election of officers and directors, and results will be confirmed in the annual business membership meeting October 12. You may vote for the slate selected by the Nominating Committee or write-in candidates. On the ballot for 2014-2015 terms are Secretary, Betty Grimes; Treasurer, Dr. James Westgate; Directors, Fred Allen, Elaine Allums, Judy Aronow, Ellen Buchanan, Leslie Dubey, Idolina Gonzalez, Lane Harrison, Dr. Dale Kruse, Dale Parish, Ann Roberts and John Stafford.



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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

Gulf States Mycological Society
www.gsmyco.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

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BTA Dues

- \$ 15.00 Active
- \$ 25.00 Supporting
- \$ 10.00 Senior / Student
- \$ 25.00 Institution, Organization, Business
- \$500.00 Life Membership

Designated contributions (Checks payable to BTA)

- Land Fund
- Legacy Fund

THICKET OF DIVERSITY - ATBI

Make checks payable to Big Thicket Association -ATBI

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|------------------------|--------------------------|
| \$ 25.00 Species level | \$ 500.00 Class level |
| \$ 50.00 Genus level | \$1,000.00 Phylum level |
| \$ 100.00 Family level | \$5,000.00 Kingdom level |
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