



# BIG THICKET BULLETIN

ISSUE 139

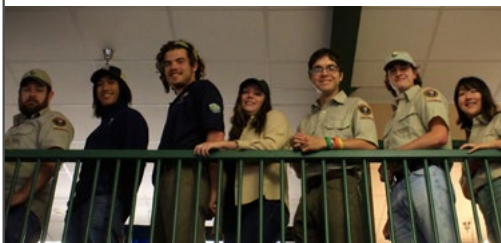


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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Kathy Smartt, Big Thicket Association President

We covered a number of BTA organizational news with the Board and Members on July 14 at the quarterly meeting.

Maybe top on the list is the announced retirement of Bruce Walker as BTA Executive Director. He'll be a hard person to replace; people don't realize how much work he does. A search committee to find a replacement is focusing regionally, and we already started advertising.

It will be a loss in grant management; Bruce does more than people give him credit for helping the association to prosper.

Regarding the Executive Board, we will have three open positions. Anybody interested, please step up, we need you.

Financially, the news is good with our audit reporting things in great order. Our CPA stated our books are in great shape and in compliance with the IRS regulations.

Earlier this spring, the Board decided to reevaluate the Thicket of Diversity program, voting to place program operations within the BTA committee structure.

TOD will continue to "guide, support, and assist in the development and implementation of thorough inventory of the biodiversity and ecology of life forms in the Big Thicket region."

The change clarifies the TOD charter under BTA's 501(c)3 management.



## Please read the charter for the full text of the changes:

**THE CHARTER FOR THE THICKET OF DIVERSITY** *Revised June 11, 2018*

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

On March 11, 2006 the Big Thicket Association (BTA) established the Thicket of Diversity (ToD) program for conducting an All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory of the Big Thicket National Preserve (BTNP) and ecological significant lands and waters in the Big Thicket region. An Executive Council with sub-committees was established to manage this program. For many years the program functioned with finance, education and outreach, technology and science committees to build the program and accomplish results.

This initial charter was created on October 10, 2008. Revisions of this document were completed in October 2013 and on April 19, 2016.

In January 17, 2016 the BTA signed a Work Plan under a Friend's Agreement with the Big Thicket National Preserve identifying projects, roles, and a schedule to be undertaken by the organization. The Work Plan is revised annually. The Work Plan includes goals and deliverables for the ToD program. The Big Thicket Association supports the goals and objectives of this Work Plan to achieve successful implementation in a timely manner.

In 2018, the Board of Directors re-evaluated the ToD program, management needs and commitment to fulfill the National Park Service Work Plan. On April 14, 2018, the BTA Board voted to disband the Executive Council of ToD and manage the project as a separate Committee as one of the many committees of the BTA.

The ToD Committee will guide, support, and assist in the development and implementation of a thorough inventory of the biodiversity and ecology of life forms in the Big Thicket region.

### ARTICLE 1: AUTHORITY

**Section A:** The Big Thicket, an area of unique biodiversity and a major corridor for international avian migration, is under increasing threat from natural disasters, population increase accompanied by urban sprawl, changes in land ownership, and increasing numbers of invasive and exotic flora and fauna. These critical circumstances require better knowledge of the many life forms existing in the Big Thicket.

**Section B:** The Thicket of Diversity Committee is charged with providing recommendations and implementing the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, which is a comprehensive inventory of species, in the Big Thicket area.

**Section C:** The ToD Committee shall have the authority to solicit funds and create such subcommittees as deemed necessary. All policy and financial recommendations shall be submitted to the Big Thicket Association Board of Directors for approval. All funds to support ToD shall be held in the custody of the Association.

**Section D:** ToD Committee members are strongly encouraged to be members in good standing of BTA but membership is not mandatory.

### ARTICLE 2: TOD COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Thicket of Diversity Committee shall be composed of:

- 1) Committee Chair- to be appointed by the BTA President
- 2) Committee Secretary- to be appointed by the BTA President

- 3) BTA President (ex-officio)
- 4) BTA Executive Director
- 5) Two Members of the BTA Board-appointed by the BTA President
- 6) Two Distinguished Scientists- invited by the BTA President
- 7) Two Members of the BTNP staff, designated by the BTNP Superintendent, as advisory members
- 8) Additional Members may be appointed by the Chair of the ToD Committee with BTA Board approval

The ToD committee will be supported by a staff associate of Thicket of Diversity who will be a paid BTA employee reporting to the BTA Executive Director. The staff position duties will be detailed in a job description. The ToD Committee will report directly to the BTA President, Officers and members of the BTA board. Not all committee members are required to be members of the BTA board.

### ARTICLE 3: CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

Members of the ToD Committee will declare and avoid possible conflicts of interest by abstaining on decisions involving funds that might be received directly or indirectly by that member. The Committee will maintain written records of any member recusing themselves on a vote.

### ARTICLE 4: COMMITTEE DUTIES

The ToD Committee is charged with the following duties:

- 1) Identify program vision, goals, objectives and future needs
- 2) Develop policies and procedures for ToD program

- 3) Identify and seek funding opportunities (including but not limited to grants, contributions, donation of goods and services) to support program staffing, operations and activities
- 4) Maintain timely and accurate records on all aspects of the program operation
- 5) Assure that the products of ToD are duly reported and recorded in a usable database with the NPS and natural resource databases of local, state, national and world importance.
- 6) Recruit and engage academic interests, resource professionals, and knowledgeable resource individuals and groups
- 7) Recruit, train and engage citizen scientists, and volunteers
- 8) Promote environmental education/nature interpretation with students and the public
- 9) In cooperation with the BTNP, develop procedures and guidelines for the operation of the Field Research Station located in Saratoga Texas
- 10) In cooperation with BTNP and other landowners, establish procedures and guidelines for field science investigations and emergency preparedness

### ARTICLE 5: SUBCOMMITTEES

The ToD standing subcommittees are:

- a) Science
- b) Data Management/Technology
- c) Funding
- d) Education/Outreach

Other subcommittees may be created as needed.



## BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE NEWS

Summer 2018 Interns: (from left to right) Volunteer Derek Goins, SCA Derek Tran, CVA Nate Zantzing, GIP Hailey Loken, Volunteer Christopher Bru, Volunteer Raymond Begnaud, and Media Intern Sons Bang.

### PARK INTERNS SERVE THE PUBLIC IN VOLUNTEER EFFORT

By Jason A. Ginder, Chief of Interpretation & Education

In the summer of 2018, Big Thicket National Preserve saw an unprecedented influx of young people onto our team.

A record-setting seven interns contributed their time and efforts toward projects in the park this year. Some volunteer their time, receiving only free park housing as compensation for their work.

Each year, the park staff welcomes interns and volunteers, who work on projects that advance park goals, in exchange for valuable experience and marketable skills for their future careers.

While others have been recruited from special agency programs associated with AmeriCorps – these interns come from a variety of other sponsored programs.

For the third consecutive year, the Resource Management division recruited a Geologist in the Parks (GIS) intern. This

summer, Hailey Loken, of Utah, completed a number of GIS mapping projects and compiled archaeology data.

Biological Science Technician Thomas Avery worked closely with three other interns all from the local Southeast Texas community. Christopher Bru, Derek Goins, and Raymond Begnaud completed a number of field observations and other resource projects under Thomas' supervision.

In June, the Interpretation and Education division saw the departure of Derek Tran, a 10-month-long Student Conservation Association intern from Maryland. He coordinated the preserve's Every Kid in the Park program, designed to facilitate field trips for Title 1 fourth grade students in the region.

Also in June, Sona Bang, of North Carolina, began as the park's summer media intern. Her work focused on developing social media content, photographing field

research events, and creating a rack card to be used in visitor facilities and tourism information spots across the region.

As part of the park's ongoing efforts to enhance our volunteer program and community outreach efforts, we were awarded a special Community Volunteer Ambassador position by the NPS Washington Office.

In February, Nate Zantzing from Pennsylvania joined the team for an 11-month-long appointment focused on enhancing volunteer opportunities at the park.

The next time you visit the national preserve, we invite you to ask these young people about the work they're doing and thank them for their time. Thanks to their hard work, we're reaching more people, engaging more students, and more successfully managing the valuable resources found in the preserve.



Summer 2018 Interns: (left to right, front to back) Media Intern Sons Bang, GIP Hailey Loken, Volunteer Christopher Bru (backrow) CVA Nate Zantzing, SCA Derek Tran, Volunteer Derek Goins and Volunteer Raymond Begnaud.

## NATURE CONSERVANCY NEWS

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

There is a newly revised bird checklist for the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary. The checklist of 165 species includes observations of Bald Eagle, Mississippi Kite, and Bachman's Sparrow. The Preserve is Site #17 on the Upper Coast Loop of the Great Texas Birding Trail.

The Forest Program said farewell to Zach Breitenstein, Technician. Zach and his new wife are headed to Vancouver Washington for her new job opportunity. Zach was instrumental in maintaining equipment, assisting on fire management operations and completed major renovations to the cabin at Wier Woods Preserve.

Local, state science staff and summer interns measured 66 forest monitoring plants, conducted Chapman's orchid surveys and completed a freshwater mussel survey on the 8.5 mile stretch of Village Creek that traverses the Sandyland Preserve. Initial findings of the forest plots indicate that longleaf pine regeneration was impacted at 10-25 percent from the inundation of the entire preserve from Harvey floodwaters, but overall the forest stands structure and composition fared well.

Wendy Ledbetter, Forest Program Manager, presented an evening program for the Golden Triangle Chapter of the Audubon Society. Volunteers from the group recently assisted staff on a one- day birding challenge for Conservancy preserves across the country.

TNC staff visited sixty-six bird points post-Harvey to assess avian response to the Harvey event. The bird plots did not show a significant decrease in species (7 to 6), and the foraging guilds did not change significantly. A more detailed report is being prepared on the avian and forest monitoring.



Nature Conservancy staff and interns conducting freshwater mussel surveys of Village Creek.  
Photo credit Jacqueline Ferrato.





## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**SEPTEMBER 22, 2018**

25th Annual Public Lands Day, also in the Big Thicket National Preserve. Call the Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor Center for times and places 409-951-6700.

**OCTOBER 6, 2018**

Paddling Clinic, 10 am to 2 pm, with basic canoeing clinic with park rangers. Meet at Baby Galvez, off Lindsey Road in Silsbee. Canoes, PFD, and paddles provided. No registration required.

**OCTOBER 13, 2018**

Big Thicket Day. At the Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor Center, 10 am. Join the annual celebration with neighbors and friends at 6102 FM 620, in Kountze or call 409-951-6700.

**OCTOBER 21, 2018**

Photo Hike. Hone your photography skill and learn about the Big Thicket National Preserve. Learn on this ranger-led hike. Meet at the visitor center at 4 pm. Free.

**OCTOBER 24, 2018**

Full Moon Night Hike at 8:30 pm, Hike the nighttime world of the Big Thicket under a full moon. Engage your senses and learn about the Big Thicket. Locations vary and space is limited, call our visitor center at 409-951-6700 to register. Free.

**NOVEMBER 3, 2018**

Paddle the Big Thicket, 10 am, with park rangers on the waters of the preserve, casual and novice paddlers: canoes, PFDs, and paddles will be provided. Space is limited, call our visitor center at 409-951-6700 to register. Free.

**NOVEMBER 10, 2018**

Mill Creek Hike, 10 am, Explore the watershed along the Village Creek Corridor on an off-trail hike. Two-mile hike, walkers should bring water, insect repellent, and sunscreen. Call the visitor center at 409-951-6700 for details. Free.

**NOVEMBER 23, 2018**

Turkey Creek Trail, Opt Outside Friday, 10 am, avoid the Black Friday craziness! Go for a peaceful walk in the woods. From the upland longleaf pine savannah to deciduous forests. Six-mile round trip hike. Space is limited, call our visitor center at 409-951-6700 for details.



## BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE NAMED NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY SIGNATURE SITE

The Big Thicket National Preserve in Southeast Texas has been named the Signature Site for National Public Lands Day (NPLD) 2018.

This year marks the 25th Annual National Public Lands Day, on September 22, 2018.

One of 47 sites in the United States to be included on UNESCO's list of International Biosphere Reserves, Big Thicket has been described as the "biological crossroads of North America."

The preserve was significantly impacted by major storm events in 2017, and is an excellent example of this year's NPLD theme of restoration and resilience.

The volunteer work that has been taking place at the park demonstrates the power of restoration projects during NPLD and beyond.

The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) support of the Big Thicket is not limited to National Public Lands Day.

The Big Thicket was also the recipient of one of NEEF's Centennial and Beyond Grants in 2016.

NEEF's Centennial and Beyond Grants provided financial support to partnering "friends" groups of National Park Service units. See the BTA News for more information.

Made possible by The Kendeda Fund, the funds support projects that build the capacity of these organizations to strengthen organizational infrastructure, leadership, and ties with the surrounding community.

## NEWS OF THE BIG THICKET DAY ON OCTOBER 13

### 2018 BIG THICKET DAY KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Rick J. Lewandowski, Director of Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center**



Rick J. Lewandowski will be the keynote speaker on Saturday, Oct. 13, for the 53rd Annual Big Thicket Day at the Visitor Center of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

Rick has been in the public garden and horticultural field for more than 30 years before coming to Shangri La.

For 13 years, Rick served as Director of the Mount Cuba Center where he oversaw the transition of this premier native plant garden from the DuPont private estate to a non-profit organization.

He established collections-based programs, extensive plant exploration efforts, and an innovative plant evaluation program.

Rick also launched lifelong learning programming and created a comprehensive initiative.

He is an experience environmental horticulturalist, plant explorer, and plantsman. He has lectured nationally and published widely in the field of horticulture.

Rick is a passionate advocate for the conservation of natural habitats and supports the use of native plants in sustainable and attractive habitats landscapes.

### 2018 BIG THICKET DAY ENTERTAINMENT

**Ray Ward and Mike Magnuson**



Ray Ward and Mike Magnuson will provide some fun entertainment for the next Big Thicket Day on Oct. 13, 2018.

Ray Ward has played music in Beaumont and the surrounding area for over 40 years. He has played in bands, duos, and other musical organizations, including two stints with the Symphony of Southeast Texas as a cellist. Ray plays a variety of musical genres: rock, blues, country, and easy listening to name a few.

Ray played with Ward, Bowen, and Steinman for 28 years, which included traveling through Belgium and France for country music festivals.

Mike Magnuson is a Southeast Texas singer/songwriter who's love of music began as a teenager.

Mike has played in the 70's rock bands, but his love of country music soon won out. He has performed on stages across Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana for more than 40 years.

Mike has opened for many well-know country music artists, played in efforts to support Wounded Warriors, and performed in support of the National Association for Suicide Prevention.

## BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION 2018 AWARDS

The annual Big Thicket Day of the Big Thicket Association will be on Oct. 13 at the Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor Center, in Kountze.

Awards will be presented at 10 am in the auditorium. The public is invited to attend the annual Big Thicket Day that offers numerous events including speakers, exhibits, and opportunities to meet authors available to sign books.

For 2018 the Big Thicket Association Board of Directors selected recipients for three awards honoring outstanding leaders in local preservation and heritage.

### R.E. JACKSON CONSERVATION AWARD

The R. E. Jackson Conservation Award honors Dr. Thad Sitton, who has established an outstanding record for recording East Texas history. "He epitomizes the scholar-practitioner oral historian," cites the Baylor University, Texas Oral History Association website. Two of his books earned Texas Historical Commission's T. R. French Award. Other awards include the Texas Oral History Association's Lifetime Achievement Award and East Texas Historical Association's Otis Locke Award.

His books on the Big Thicket include Backwoodsmen: Stockmen and Hunters Along a Big Thicket River Valley; Nameless Towns; Texas Sawmill Communities, 1880-1942, and Big Thicket People: Larry Jene Fisher's Photographs of the Last Southern Frontier. Sitton's recent work with Charles Kruvad photographic volume called Riverwoods.

The Jackson Award is named for R.E. Jackson of Silsbee, who was president of the former East Texas Big Thicket Association (ETBTA), active in the 1930s-1940s.

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes Keith Marshall Stephens. Stephens worked at Temple-Inland from 1977 to 2007 as a surveyor and land manager, continuing on Crown Pine/ Campbell Global from 2007 to 2018 as a land manager. He retired after 41 years of service on June 29, 2018.

Stephens wears many hats. Among them are President, Friends of the Park at Martin Dies Jr. State Park.; President, the Jasper Historical Museum; Past President of the Deep East Texas Archeological Society; Past President and Steering Committee member of the Longleaf Ridge Master Naturalist chapter.

Stephens also participates in Bevil's Rangers, a living history and reenactment group. The website for the Rangers is headlined, "Keeping History Alive in East Texas."

### THOMAS LUBBERT SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Thomas Lubbert Superior Achievement Award recognizes Max Harper, Interpretive Park Ranger. Harper has been with the Preserve nine years, during that time he developed several interpretive programs and has lead hundreds of children on hikes in the Preserve.

Harper also developed the kayak and canoe recreation program providing both guided trips and giving training sessions for safe boating in the Preserve.

This Award is named for Thomas Lubbert, the first Preserve superintendent from 1974-1986. The award honors Preserve employees for outstanding performance and significant contributions to the Preserve and whose work exemplifies exceptional dedication over a sustained period.

The Big Thicket Association was established in 1964 and is committed to protecting the natural and cultural legacy of the Big Thicket region. Membership is open and encouraged. For additional information: [www.bigthicket.org](http://www.bigthicket.org).



# NEWS FROM THE BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION

By Bruce Walker, Executive Director

The National Environment Education Foundation (NEEF) chose BTA's Neches River Adventures Environmental Education program to be featured among Centennial and Beyond grant recipients from various National Park partnerships. The video was an unexpected bonus to NEEF's \$17,000 grant to BTA.



First row, left to right: BTA Volunteer Floyd Brussard leads students in a Migration Hopscotch demonstration for the NEEF video shoot.

Students aboard the Ivory Bill during a water testing demonstration conducted by Dr. Terrie Looney, Lead Environmental Educator.

Texas Master Naturalist, BTA Volunteer, Carolyn Worsham leads students on a nature walk along the Neches River.



Second row, left to right: Texas Master Naturalist, BTA Volunteer, Leila Melancon with students during a Trash & Treasures demonstration at Colliers Ferry Park.

Dr. Terrie Looney, Lead Environmental Educator, conducts a water testing demonstration with students aboard the Ivory Bill.

Robert Fong, of Robert Fong Productions, commissioned by NEEF to video BTA's Neches River Adventures Education Program.



## Robert Allan Neyland

1928 – 2018

Robert Neyland passed away June 21, 2018. He was born in Silsbee on May 19, 1928. He graduated from Silsbee High School and the University of Texas at Austin. He served in the army during the Korean War. He married Yvonne Wilson; they had two children, Susan and Wilson.

He founded Hardin County Savings and Loan in 1955. Among his many contributions were services on the School Board, helping build the Silsbee Doctors Hospital, and he taught Sunday School at the United Methodist Church.

Neyland was a founding director of the Big Thicket Association in 1964. He returned to the board of directors for a term as Treasurer in 1994.

A few years before his death, we met briefly at the McDonald's in Silsbee. He said: **"Tell BTA to keep up the good work!"**

Let's do it! Not only for Neyland, but also for all the other founding directors!

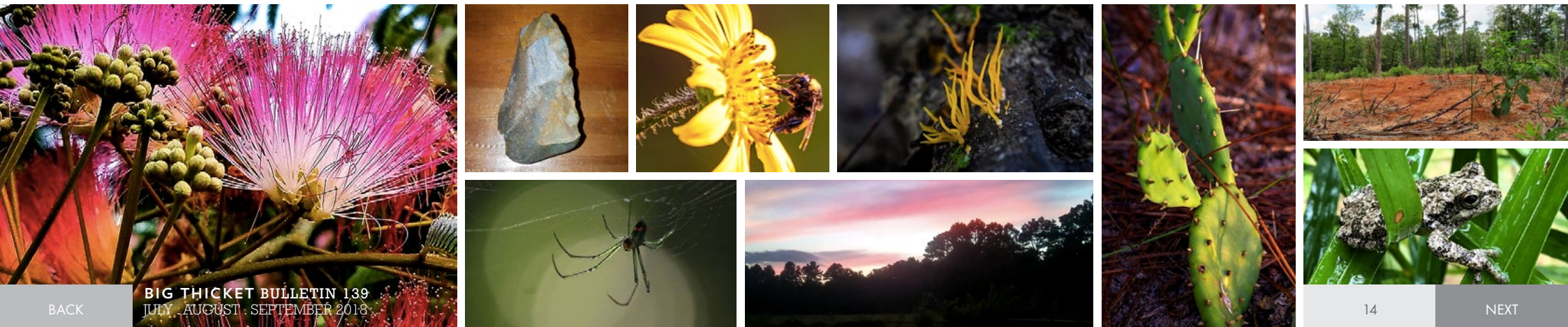
– Maxine Johnston



# 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.nps.gov/bthi](http://www.nps.gov/bthi)

East Texas Black Bear Task Force  
[www.bttf.org](http://www.bttf.org)

Conservation Fund  
[www.conserva.org](http://www.conserva.org)

Gulf States Mycological Society  
[www.gsmso.org](http://www.gsmso.org)

National Audubon Society  
[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org)  
[www.houstonaudubon.org](http://www.houstonaudubon.org)

National Parks Conservation Association  
[www.npsca.org](http://www.npsca.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/goldentriangle](http://www.texas.sierraclub.org/goldentriangle)

Texas Conservation Alliance  
[www.texascons.org](http://www.texascons.org)

Village Creek State Park  
[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park](http://www.tpwd.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

