

150<sup>th</sup>  
ISSUE

# BIG THICKET BULLETIN



PARTNER IN PRESERVATION

START >

# INSIDE THIS ISSUE

## 2021

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

3

A Message from the Executive Director »



4

Big Thicket Association's Wish List »



5

BTA Membership Committee Re-activated »



6

BITH Happenings »



7

Meet the Captain: Timothy Wynkoop »



8

Recovering America's Wildlife Act H.R. 2773 Use Your Voice for the Wildlife of Texas »



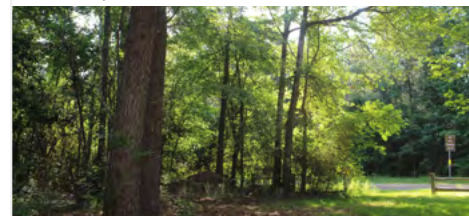
9

May 2021 Flood »



10

Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust Update »



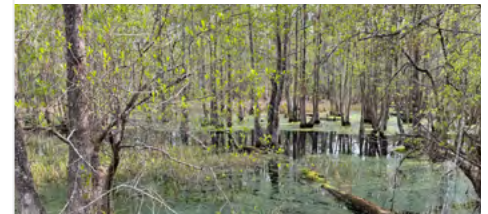
11

Worm-eating Warbler »



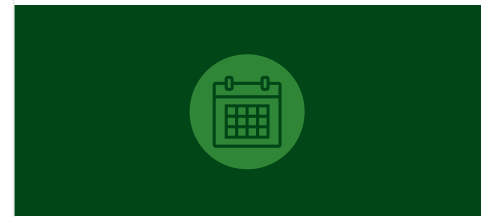
12

Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary »



13

Save the Dates »



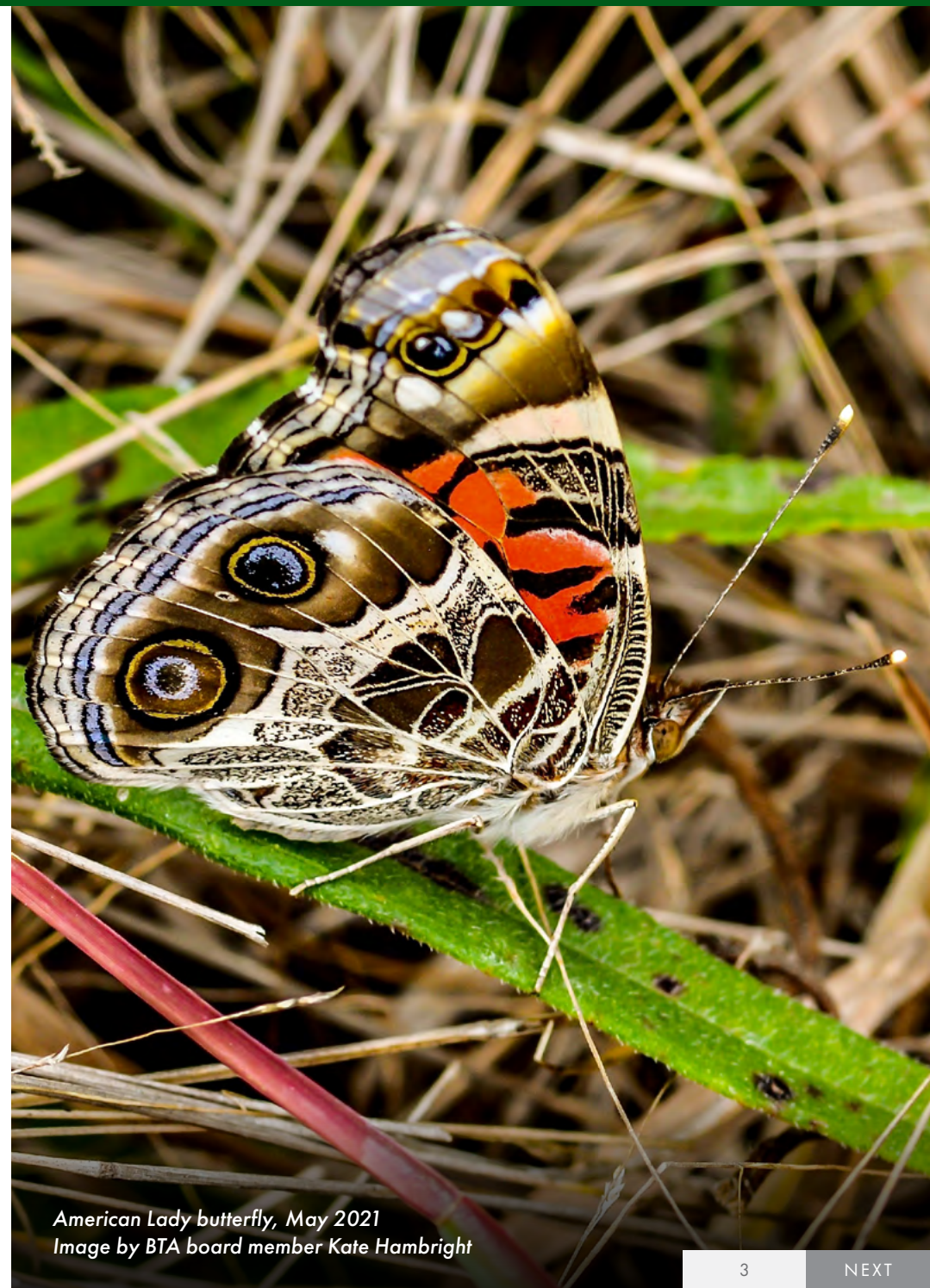
## A Message from the Executive Director

Wendy Jo Ledbetter, BTA Executive Director

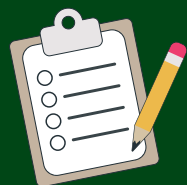
What a great spring it has been with renewal of the spirit in the woods and on the waters of the Big Thicket. More folks are venturing out into the world again with a renewed sense of interest and desire to visit friends, family and have experiences in the natural world. BTA is thankful to once again be hosting undergraduate college classes, school groups and the public on the Ivory Bill to share the resources of the Big Thicket. Planning committees are preparing for the Neches River Rally and Big Thicket Day in the fall and BTA will be assisting Big Thicket National Preserve with their three planting days in December, January, and February. More details to follow.

For the last several months we have improved the daily functions and operation of the organization. Now it is time to take a wider view. With our next board meeting set for July 10th we will be revising and refreshing BTA's Strategic Plan. This meeting will be an important time for the membership and board to chart the direction and focus of the BTA for the next several years. With over a 50-year history of advocacy and action for conservation of the resources of the Big Thicket, BTA is now at an important junction. The core work of the organization has evolved from grassroots advocacy to establish the national preserve, to today, where the work has focused on education, outreach, supporting science, and advocacy. This is a critical time for our organization to examine our role in the conservation community, evaluate programs, seek to increase membership, and develop sustainable funding under the governance of our organization. I invite you all to engage in this conversation to chart the future for the Big Thicket Association. Your passion and participation are needed and appreciated! I welcome your thoughts and discussion—feel free to contact me directly by phone or email. Phone (409) 658-4300 and email: [director@bigthicket.org](mailto:director@bigthicket.org)

Yours in conservation,  
Wendy Jo Ledbetter



*American Lady butterfly, May 2021  
Image by BTA board member Kate Hambricht*



# Wish list

*Partners in Preservation.*

The Big Thicket Association is accepting donations of the following items for our operations. Your support would be acknowledged with a letter to document your charitable gift and a very big Thank You from our staff!

For your consideration, donated items range in value. Cash donations are an easy option with our online payment link. If you prefer not to be out shopping, gift cards for businesses such as Amazon, Target, and Home Depot would be great! Gift cards would simplify and expedite ordering on our end. We are working to improve our facilities and your support is sincerely appreciated.

Questions? Contact Wendy Jo Ledbetter, Executive Director at [director@bigthicket.org](mailto:director@bigthicket.org) or 409-658-4300 mobile.

## Ivory Bill Eco-Touring Pontoon Boat

- **Garmin GPS Unit for Navigation**  
Garmin ECHOMAP UHD 74Cv, 7" Keyed-Assist Touchscreen Chartplotter with U.S. BlueChart G3 and GT24UHD-TM Transducer  
[Amazon.com: Garmin ECHOMAP UHD 74Cv, 7" Keyed-Assist Touchscreen Chartplotter with U.S. BlueChart G3 and GT24UHD-TM Transducer](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B078333333)  
Cost: \$749.99
- **Water Quality Monitoring Testing Kits (Outdoor Learning Classes)**  
15 kits to allow 1 per 3 students  
Earth Force Low Cost Water Monitoring Kits  
<https://www.lamotte.com/en/education/water-monitoring/3-5886.html>  
Cost: \$43.75 x 15= \$ 656.25

## Brammer House Overnight Facility, Saratoga

- Mixing bowl set
- Knife set
- Tea kettle
- Area rug-kitchen 5 by 8
- Non-stick baking set
- Metal burning pans or Foil inserts (2 large, 2 small)
- 16-piece dish set (non-plastic) (microwaveable)
- Storage baskets for kitchen supplies (2)
- Cotton blankets, single beds (4) (New)
- Table/bedside lamp
- Non-slip mat for tub
- Over door hook racks (3)
- Clothes drying rack
- Cleaning supplies (eco-friendly)
- Washer & dryer supplies
- Folding Camp Chairs (2) - for front porch use



## BTA Membership Committee Re-activated

### *A Message from BTA President John Stafford*

With the reopening of many of our programs and a reduced COVID concern, the membership committee has been reactivated under leadership of co-chairs Randy Beehn and Wendy Ledbetter. Enthusiastic and committed members this year include Paul Bertrand, Penny Clark, Charles Smith, Dale Parish, Katy Hambright and Aimee Lieby as well as Pres. John Stafford as an ex-officio member. The goals are 1) to increase membership and 2) to better engage current members by offering more benefits and opportunities to help achieve our mission.

The committee has now met in-person (and socially distanced) several times starting with a brain-storming session in early March that generated over 25 ideas for increasing numbers and enhancing member benefits. The committee is working on ideas for more benefits for members and to increase their involvement in all our activities.

Ideas are being prioritized to get higher visibility in the community, more member involvement as well as working to increase our numbers. Several ideas being considered are to sponsor a Road Rally to several of the units of the Big Thicket National Preserve, similar to a motorcycle poker run; to have an incentivized membership drive by board members; and perhaps have members-only tours on the Ivory Bill. Also BTA plans to be 'tabling' again this season at Beaumont Farmer's Market. You will be hearing more about these ideas and others in the coming weeks.

If you wish to participate or have comments for the Membership Committee, please feel free to contact one of the co-chairs. (Use the contact form on our website.)



*Chapman's fringed orchid, a rare Texas native;  
image by Jason Singhurst TPWD*

# BITH Happenings

By: Megan Urban, NPS, Chief of Interpretation and Education

We are gearing up for a busy summer and are excited to welcome back visitors to paddle programs and interpretation walks throughout the summer. We will be starting in June to offer those programs to a smaller number of visitors to keep both visitors and staff safe. Visitors will be required to sign up in advance for these programs. The schedule will be posted on our website ([www.nps.gov/bith](http://www.nps.gov/bith)) and on our social media accounts in the next couple of weeks. You can sign up for a walk or paddle program by calling our visitor center at 409-951-6700.

Our visitor center is also returning to normal, with the WNPA store getting back to normal and the stations coming down around the exhibits. Our discovery room has also re-opened and this summer we are excited to showcase the annual art show from the International Fiber Council. This year's theme for the art show is "Find your Adventure" and the art shows all the ways you can find adventure in the Big Thicket.

If you come see us this summer, you might see a lot of new faces! This summer, we have 3 seasonal rangers who are working on field trip curriculum and doing work for the social media about the paddling opportunities around Big Thicket. We have also hired 2 new permanent ranger positions, positions that are either vacant due to promotions or retirements. The new Community Outreach and Volunteer Program Manager will start in July and the new Interpretation ranger will start in August. Megan Urban has been selected as the Chief of Interpretation and Education.



top image: "Find Your Adventure" art show, NPS image  
bottom image: BITH WNPA store, NPS image

## Meet the Captain: Timothy Wynkoop

By: Bruce Walker, BTA Board Member

Tim Wynkoop has been serving as a deckhand since September 2018. He received his reinstated United States Coast Guard Master's License after attending the Maritime School at Lamar State College Orange.

Tim was born and raised in Beaumont. After high school, he moved to Austin and began a career in construction. Later he managed, then owned, a hearing aid business in Abilene. After several years, he sold the business and went to work as a traveling claims adjuster, handling business and homeowner claims.

He decided to get his first merchant captain license and moved back to Beaumont in order to run a local fishing guide service with his own boat.

After being offered a job giving airboat tours in Blue Elbow Swamp in Orange County and across the Sabine River in the southwest Louisiana marsh, he decided that he was having too much fun driving the airboats, and discontinued his fishing guide service.

Tim continued the dual occupation of boat captain and claims adjuster for several years. He captained for Associated Marine in Groves, which would take supplies to tanker crews while docked at the refineries along the Neches River using a barge and push boat. They also transported crewmembers and pilots on launch boats between ships at anchorage and shore. His last stint as a captain was with another swamp tour business in Orange that toured the same area as the airboats, however with a quiet wildlife-friendly outboard as opposed to the noisy airboats. After the birth of his daughter, Tim decided that he needed a steadier line of work and obtained a Commercial Driver's License in order to drive for a local freight company. Tim took early retirement following treatment for cancer and later joined the Texas Master Naturalist Sabine Neches Chapter. His volunteer work as a Master Naturalist introduced him to BTA.

Tim says, "I am proud to be a member of BTA and share its commitment to preserving and educating the public about the value of conservation and the Big Thicket."



Images by Bruce Walker



## Recovering America's Wildlife Act H.R. 2773 Use Your Voice for the Wildlife of Texas

By: Wendy J. Ledbetter

With as many as one-third of America's fish and wildlife species on the brink of becoming threatened or endangered, a bipartisan bill recently reintroduced in Congress seeks to reverse this trend, while creating thousands of new jobs and investing in the outdoor recreation economy. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act, H.R.2773, would provide \$1.4 billion to state and tribal wildlife conservation initiatives to support at-risk wildlife populations and their habitats. The funding would come from existing revenues and would not require any new taxes. Texas would receive more than \$50 million per year for projects to conserve vulnerable wildlife like many at-risk songbirds, pollinators, and freshwater species.

*Prothonotary warbler, image courtesy of Rachel Rommel-Crump, Texas Conservation Alliance*

Our state is home to more than 1,300 of the 12,000 species identified nationwide as Species of Greatest Conservation Need—several of which make the Big Thicket home such as the Red-headed woodpeckers, Prothonotary warblers, and Alligator snapping turtles. H.R.2773 represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the course of history for declining wildlife and help prevent them from becoming endangered. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That is the principle behind this bill.

If passed, state wildlife agencies will distribute funding through a competitive grant program. Conservation organizations, land trusts, researchers, zoos, nature centers and others will be able to apply for grants that help vulnerable wildlife and their habitats and connect more Texans to nature. Of importance to a private lands state like Texas, this legislation would also expand technical assistance and cost-share programs to private landowners for voluntary wildlife habitat management activities. By making investments in natural infrastructure—tree planting, grassland restoration, brush control, outdoor recreation projects, and wildlife management—H.R.2773 is estimated to create tens of thousands of new national jobs and reap benefits tenfold.

This bill is a reminder that when we work together, we can still accomplish great things. **Every citizen can help, by urging their U.S. House Representative to cosponsor the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, H.R.2773.** Get draft letters and other resources from [this online Action Toolkit](#).





### May 2021 Flood

The 2021 May flood shut down BTA's Neches River Adventures for a couple of weeks. School trips, public tours, and private charters had to be cancelled or rescheduled. Photos, by Bruce Walker, show the Ivory Bill floating above the flooded docks at the Beaumont Marina and Collier's Ferry Park with the Neches covering the boat ramps, docks, and parking lot.

# Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust Update

By: Ellen Buchanan and Mary C. Johnston

The Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust continues to help grow and protect the Big Thicket National Preserve and conservation lands across Southeast Texas. In these difficult times, the natural world continues to bring solace.

The Trust purchased a small land parcel directly in front of the Kirby Nature Trail entrance. Developers purchased the 500-acre property adjacent to FM 420 and the Turkey Creek Unit and are selling parcels. The purchase will at least protect a portion of the view shed. This completes a land acquisition project with funds acquired from a TLL Temple grant.

With the help of generous donors and utilizing a Federal Highway Administration National Recreational Trails Fund grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Trust closed on a 39-acre property just east of Woodville that contains the Dogwood Trail. The trail is located in a beautiful wooded tract that has not been logged in over 100 years. The former timber company property will be donated to the Texas Forest Service. They will rehabilitate the trail, manage the forest resources and provide educational programs. The Trust appreciates the additional support acquired from The Edaren Foundation, The Damuth Foundation, The Pineywoods Foundation, Ms. Maxine Johnston, Texas A&M Forest Service, The Conservation Fund, the Texas Conservation Alliance, and individual donors.

In partnership with the National Environmental Education Foundation, the Trust completed the removal of hurricane debris from 6.75 miles of Pine Island Bayou.



*Image by BTA board member Mary C. Johnston*

On Martin Luther King Day 2020, the Trust co-sponsored the 10th Anniversary of the National Parks Conservation Association's longleaf tree planting. The non-profit fed pizza to 150 volunteers who planted 12,000 seedlings. In 2021 President Ellen Buchanan participated in a virtual conference to educate about longleaf stewardship practices.

Under the leadership of President Buchanan, the Trust continues to participate in advocacy. The organization works with counties to review land conservation and natural infrastructure to ensure communities receive the best tools to address flooding following natural disasters. Counties are urged to consider donating buyout properties to the National Park Service where feasible and appropriate.

To enhance the Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust's presence in the social media world, the webpage was redesigned: <https://bigthickettrust.org>.

Trust members are passionate about protecting and preserving the lands, waters, plants and wildlife of the Big Thicket area. For ways to support the non-profit's Big Thicket land conservation efforts, join the Trust on Facebook or email [bigthickettrust@gmail.com](mailto:bigthickettrust@gmail.com).

## Worm-eating Warbler

By: Phoebe H. Dishman, BTA board member

Away from my hearth and into the woods  
 my friends persuaded me,  
 to breathe the April air  
 and perhaps a warbler to see.  
 First we hit the island  
 where many birds assembled:  
 Cormorants, spoonbills, egrets—  
 and how those aigrettes trembled!  
 The April air enchanted,  
 the rookery wove its magic,  
 but perhaps a warbler was waiting for us—  
 to miss it would be tragic.  
 So off we motored to the grove  
 of Carrie Herring Hooks—  
 a sanctuary endowed  
 with trails and wooded nooks.  
 At such a nook we paused,  
 on benches we arrayed,  
 while in the shadows water dripped  
 and winged creatures played:  
 Thrasher hogged the basin  
 for a long and vigorous bath.  
 Cardinal pointedly checked his watch—  
 it's a simple matter of math.  
 Catbird broke from cover,  
 to the splashing added his part,

and then, oh then, what we'd hoped to see,  
 a bird from the warbler chart!  
 He wasn't as striking as some  
 but oh he was nimble and spry,  
 his plumage was not very flashy  
 but on his head we spied  
 the dapper stripes that told the tale  
 of exactly which warbler he was,  
 over and over he dashed to the drip,  
 and oh our hearts were abuzz  
 at seeing a warbler we'd studied  
 because we knew we ought,  
 and now in the field we're able  
 because we'd been carefully taught.  
 "Worm-eating Warbler, that's my name,  
 which I don't need, but you might.  
 The church of the earth is hoping  
 that humans will get it right!"



Worm-eating warbler, doing what its name suggests;  
 image by Michael Cooper

## Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary

By: Aimee Lieby, BTA board member

The flowers are in bloom, the temperatures are favorable – it's the best time to get out and explore the southeast Texas region! One hidden gem that you may be missing out on is the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary, tucked quietly into the heart of Hardin County.

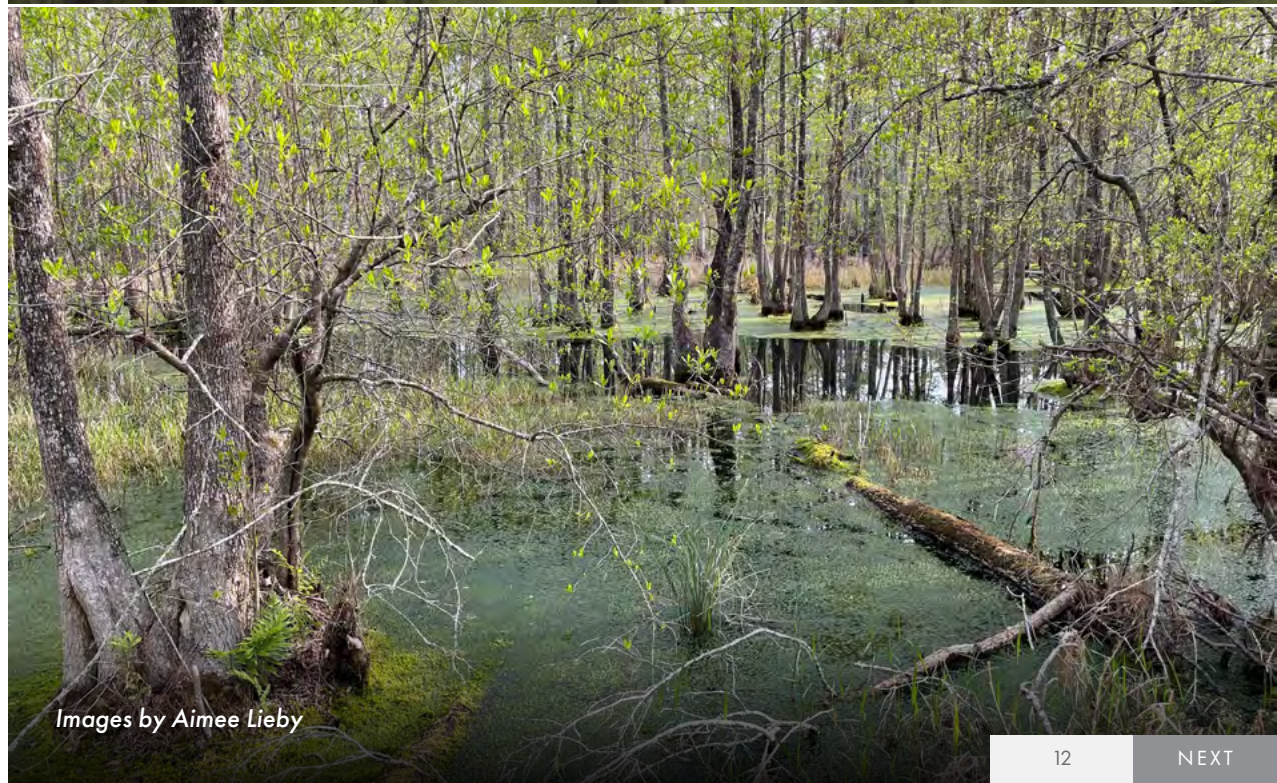
Sandyland Sanctuary preserves over 5000 acres of longleaf pine, an East Texas icon that is rapidly disappearing. This property, maintained by the Nature Conservancy, also features a lovely variety of wildflowers, ferns, pines, and prickly pear cactus. You can also expect to enjoy songbirds, roadrunners, turtles, deer, and other wildlife who migrate through the area. One unique and fun feature of Sandyland is that it allows beautiful vistas of and occasional access to Village Creek! Take the 2-mile Floodplain Trail to walk alongside the creek and wind through a bottomland hardwood forest. This trail floods occasionally, so monitor creek levels and plan accordingly! The 4-mile Upland Trail takes you deeper into the Sanctuary to explore a variety of plant communities. For the casual adventurer, the 0.8 mile Longleaf Pine Loop Trail offers a self-guided tour of the area's natural history. There is something for everyone!

In addition to hiking, Sandyland Sanctuary is a beautiful setting for photography and offers a covered pavilion with benches for reserved use. The Sanctuary is open daily from sunrise to sunset and there is no entrance fee. Some trails may include deep sand, which can make wheelchair accessibility difficult. There are no water fountains or restroom facilities at the Sanctuary.

A few tips before you venture out to explore the Sandyland Sanctuary: never hike alone, always share your plans with a friend or family member before you leave, have an emergency plan and carry emergency supplies, carry plenty of hydration and nutrition, protect yourself from exposure to the elements, stick to designated trails, leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but pictures, and of course have fun!

Check out the Sanctuary's website for more information and trail maps:

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/roy-e-larsen-sandyland-sanctuary/>



Images by Aimee Lieby



# SAVE THE DATES

## Every Saturday, Ivory Bill Tours

Neches River Adventures public tours every Saturday at 10am through November 6th. Private charters are available all year. Free school field trips are available to qualifying schools.

[www.nechesriveradventures.org](http://www.nechesriveradventures.org)

## September 11, 2021, Neches River Rally

This fundraiser is an annual canoe and kayak event. This year's rally will be held at the LNVA Saltwater Barrier Boat Ramp on the Cooks Lake to Scatterman Texas Paddling Trail. (More details to follow.)

## October 9, 2021, Big Thicket Day on the Neches at Collier's Ferry Park

This is a free event that is open to the public to enjoy activities for the entire family: boat rides aboard the Ivory Bill, a picnic lunch, booths by area conservation groups, live entertainment, and more. (Details to follow.)

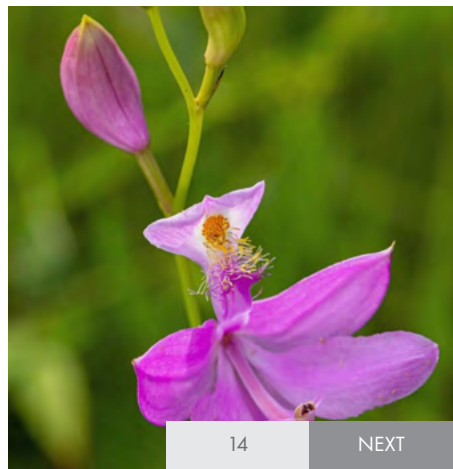
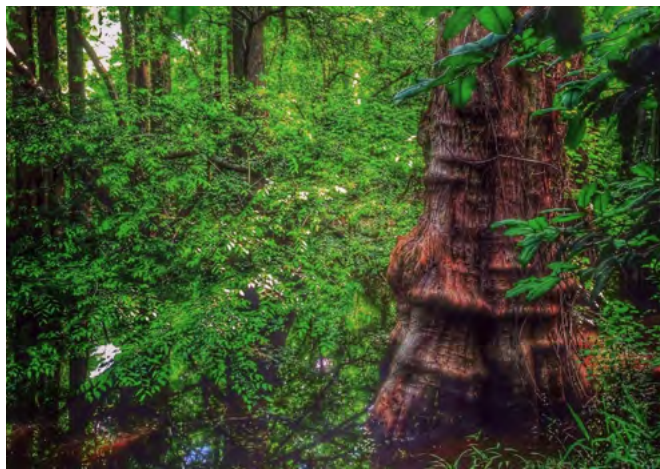
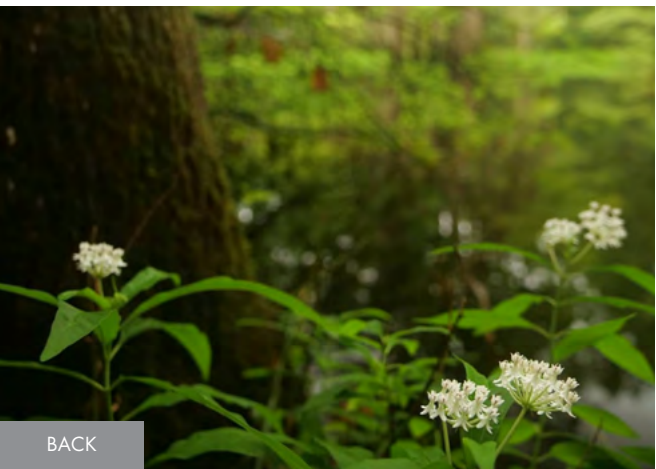




# BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION

PARTNER IN PRESERVATION

#BIGTHICKET





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

# BIG THICKET BULLETIN

*published quarterly by*  
Big Thicket Association  
[www.bigthicket.org](http://www.bigthicket.org)

### Web Sites

Big Thicket Association  
[www.bigthicket.org](http://www.bigthicket.org)

Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust  
[www.bigthickettrust.org](http://www.bigthickettrust.org)

Big Thicket National Preserve  
[www.nps.gov/bith](http://www.nps.gov/bith)

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

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

National Audubon Society  
[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.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/triangle](http://www.texas.sierraclub.org/triangle)

Texas Black Bear Alliance  
[texasblackbear.weebly.com](http://texasblackbear.weebly.com)

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

Texas Master Naturalist Association,  
Sabine Neches Chapter  
[www.txmn.org/sabine](http://www.txmn.org/sabine)

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

