

2010

**VILLAGE CREEK PADDLING TRAIL OPENED**

On May 11 officials gathered to cut ribbons to open TP&W's 19th Texas Paddling Trail. The trail begins at FM 418 and ends at Village Creek State Park--21 miles. Carter Smith, Executive Director, and Mike "Tuffy" Hamilton were joined by local and state officials at the trail launch.



Community partners include Big Thicket National Preserve, Nature Conservancy, as well as Kountze, Lumberton and Silsbee chambers of commerce. Village Creek Corridor is a unit of the National Preserve.

According to the Economic Development and Tourism Office, in 2008 visitors to Hardin County spent \$676 million. Director Smith says, "In terms of popularity, paddling may very well become the birding of the 21st century.

Jerry Rashall, Park Manager, reports that ownership of the 1,417 acres of the Hancock Tract has been transferred from The Conservation Fund to TP&WD and added to Village Creek State Park. The addition more than doubles in size from 1,090 acres to 2,507 acres.

### **Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Program [TRT]**

The TRT program is off and running with excellent support from area industries. Mead-Westvaco recently presented a check for \$5,000 in support the Preserve's TRT program.

Entergy Grants: April 1 Mic Cowart of Entergy presented checks to BTA. One check for \$1500

covers a contribution for BTNP's Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program. The second check for \$500 is earmarked for Marysee Prairie to purchase a storage unit to house equipment.



Leslie DuBey reports that the summer programs and kid's camp will be in good hands with the TRT's: Will Watkins, Kountze Intermediate School; Candace Doer, Tucson, Arizona; Mary Jacob, Silsbee High School; Keith Glazner, Klein High School; Cindy Parish, Westbrook High School; Becky Begay, student intern, SUNY; Ming Xiu, International Volunteer, TAMU.

Cindy Parish will work mainly on a National Park Foundation "Park Stewards" grant that will incorporate Service Learning with AP Geology and Biology students. Her students will create four EarthCaches in the preserve and present them to other students. The EarthCaches will be posted on-line for the public at [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com). Becky Begay, student intern, SUNY, will be working on the Wayside Interpretive plan as well as helping with the VC and programs. Ming Xiu, International Volunteer, Texas A&M, will be auditing the Landscape Plan for the HQ/VC area and working with the TRT's.

## **MEDIA COVERAGE**

*Texas Monthly* features Neches River! The May print issue of *Texas Monthly* features 20 rivers. You'll find the Neches on Page 114! You can also find a 7-minute video on the *Texas Monthly*

website featuring conservationists' efforts to protect the River!

The video takes you canoeing on the Neches with Richard Donovan, author of *Paddling the Wild Neches*. You'll hear Andy Sansom of the River Systems Institute, Gina Donovan of Houston Audubon, and Michael Banks of Texas Conservation Alliance and Friends of the Neches River talk about the importance of this special river ecosystem.

*Texas Parks and Wildlife* features Big Thicket! The May issue contains an article by Kathryn Hunter entitled "In the Thick of It." In addition to Preserve trails, the article focuses on Ghost Road Scenic Drive!

KDFM, Channel 6: Tom Wright aired two stories on Big Thicket National Preserve on May 10-11. You can view the videos on website <http://www.kfdm.com/sections/local-news> (click the "Experience the Big Thicket" button). The first segment visited the Canyonlands with D.W. Ivans. The second segment highlighted the Ten-Mile Creek area recently added to the Preserve with Johnny Stafford and Liza Kent.

## **CONSERVATION OUTLOOK**

### *BIOMASS PLANT*

Tyler County Booster recently contained a proposed air quality permit application for a biomass plant near Woodville. That was followed by an effort to generate opposition to the plant stating that pollutants could cause cancer, lung diseases, and other illnesses.

According to the proposed air quality permit application #91823, "The facility will emit the following contaminants: organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, ammonia and particulate matter including particulate matter with diameters of 10 microns or less and 2.5 microns or less. This application was submitted to the TCEQ on February 5, 2010."

Scott Lawrence reported on KFDM, Nov. 19, 2009: "East Texas Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ETEC) announced today that it will receive \$65 million in Clean Renewable Energy Bonds (CREBs) to help fund construction of the Lake Livingston Hydroelectric Project, and to assist in the construction of a biomass plant ... \$40 million in approved funds will be used by ETEC toward the construction of a biomass plant near Woodville Texas which will generate 50 megawatts of power and will be fueled by wood by-products... Completion of the Lake Livingston project is anticipated to be 2013. The Woodville biomass plant should be online and

providing power by early 2014."

Stay tuned.

## **KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE - CANADA TO TEXAS**

The State Capital Report of the Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club, May 13, focuses on a proposed pipeline from Hardisty, Alberta, Canada to Nederland Texas, replacing 900,000 barrels per day of conventional oil with tar sands oil. The result is approximately 38 million metric tons of additional greenhouse gas emissions per year. Over its life cycle, synthetic crude oil from tar sands emits 20% more global warming pollution than conventional oil.

The Keystone XL project would extend 1,380 miles through Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. The pipeline would cross 554 wetlands and 91 streams (32 of which are streams in Texas). The Dept. of State's draft EIS estimates impacts to 11,533 acres of grassland, more than 2,500 acres of forest land -- a loss of 22,400 acres of wildlife habitat.

The pipeline crosses Polk and Liberty counties and a corner of Hardin County then split with offshoots to Port Arthur and Houston [no public comment meetings were scheduled for Houston]. In Polk County it impacts the Menard Creek Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

Approximately 50 people gathered in Beaumont, May 17 to comment on the EIS.

Environmental and safety issues were raised as well as need for green energy sources. Many of the statements included references to the BP oil spill in the Gulf. There were 15 statements of which 10 opposed the pipeline, including Clean Air and Water, Inc., Sierra Club, Big Thicket Association, and Public Citizen. Liberty, May 18; Livingston, May 19, and Tyler, May 20. Check the web site for the complete text of the report, and check the Keystone website for maps.

A comment form is online at [www.keystonepipeline-XL.state.gov](http://www.keystonepipeline-XL.state.gov). Deadline for filing is June 16. For more information check websites for [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org), [www.citizen.org/texas](http://www.citizen.org/texas) and [www.dirtyoilsands.org](http://www.dirtyoilsands.org)

## **CONSERVATION EVENTS**

Wilderness Pow Wow: TCA's annual Pow Wow was held May 1 at Tyler State Park. Throughout

the day, participants canoed, hiked, and visited with old and new friends. Marya Fowler of the National Wildlife Federation and member groups of the Alliance were recognized.

Heinz Gaylord and Dave Lewis led the usual Flora and Fungi walk. Dr. Neil Ford (UTX@Tyler) exhibited specimens of reptiles and amphibians.

Scot McClure of the Dallas Ecological Foundation and Dallas Safari Club discussed their program to involve young people in wildlife and habitat in traditional, public school settings. McClure emphasized the tremendous benefits that outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, camping and hiking can provide to both people and the environment. The Foundation and Club offer two education curricula to secondary schools. The first, Outdoor Adventures Education, is a physical education curriculum. The second, The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, is a social studies curriculum distributed to over 1,300 Texas high schools this fall.

Larry Shelton presided at the afternoon program Adrian Van Dellen was recognized as a Conservation Hero for his photographic work in support of the Neches Wild and Scenic River.



East Texas Black Bear Task Force met April 14 at the Ellen Trout Zoo in Lufkin. The agenda covered conservation updates by Aron Flanders, and East Texas Forest Conservation, Nathan Garner; GIS models and applications, Hardwood Habitat Cooperative, and Wetlands Reserve

Program Update, by Kim Wright. Ricky Maxey updated information on sightings, and Rachel Rommel (Houston Zoo) reported on the Information / Education Outreach workshop.

Big Thicket Science Conference planners participated in a conference call May 7. The date for the conference was set at April 8-9, 2011 to be held on the Stephen F. Austin State University campus.

5th Regional Native Plant Conference convenes at Stephen F. Austin SU in Nacogdoches June 3-5. Field trips are scheduled Thursday, lectures on Friday, and workshops, tours and lectures on Saturday. Early registration ends May 17. For more details check <http://arboretum.sfasu.edu>

Nature Conservancy Burns Preserves: TNC staff and volunteers from around the state came to East Texas to burn approximately 1,000 acres at Big Thicket Bogs and Pinelands, Timber Lake and the Sandyland Preserves. The burn team also completed a fire operation on a portion of the wet longleaf savanna community on the conservation easement cooperatively managed with the Campbell Group.

Sierra Awards: Among the awards presented at the LSC Sierra's awards dinner on April 10 in Austin, were Environmental Reporting, Greg Harman, San Antonio Current; Chapter Service, Tolbert Greenwood (Ft. Worth); Conservation, Loretta Van Coppennolle (San Antonio), Brewer Award for Outings, Phillip Russell (Austin); Edens Award for River Protection, Michael Banks, Friends of the Neches River; Orrin Bonney Award, Maxine Johnston.

## **BTA NEWS**

### *VILLAGE CREEK MEETING*

BTA directors will meet July 10 at 9:30 AM at the Village Creek State Park Nature Center. There will be updates from the Big Thicket National Preserve, the Thicket of Diversity, Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust, and others.

Nominating and Awards Committees will report. Suggestions for directors / awards are welcomed. The Nominating Committee includes Mary Catherine Johnston, Jan Ruppel, and Wendy Ledbetter. The Awards Committee includes Rose Ann Jordan, Chair; Fred Allen, Don Blanton, and Rosalie Rogers.

The Programs / Field Trips Committee plans an afternoon program of "pickin' and singin'." Shaun Davis and his son Hunter will begin their program at 2:00 PM. Davis is Director of the Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission, and a former aide of the late Cong. Charles Wilson.



The rest of the day will be filled with hikes / swimming / discussions of BTA's future / and a program provided by either Jerry Rashall, Park Manager, or Amanda Adair, Park Interpreter. BTA members and friends may want to book campsite for the weekend.

**Little Rocky / Pyramids Field Trip and Project Progress:**





May field trips to visit pyramid magnolias were cancelled because Susan Karpel (Newton member) gave us a heads-up that the trees were blooming in April! So we combined a Nature Conservancy field trip to Little Rocky Creek Preserve with a visit to the pyramids. Bob Boensch (TNC) was the trip leader. Perfect day with congenial folks and magnificent views! Are you on our field trip alert list?

Partners for Pyramid Magnolia Preservation have reached \$40,000 in the fundraising campaign. New contributions to cover one acre (\$1,000) come from the Native Plant Society of Beaumont, and the Magnolia Garden Club! Thanks, Partners!

## **EVENTS CALENDAR**

May 22-23 - Thicket of Diversity, Frogs & Toads Seminar, followed by Thicket of Diversity, Mixing & Mingling with Myxomycetes Seminar, Field Research Station, Saratoga

June 3-5 - Native Plant Conference, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches

June 11-12 - Thicket of Diversity, Biodiversity Days on Friday and Saturday, June 11-12  
(check website)

June 19 - Cardinal Adventures on Neches River @ Beaumont

July 10 - BTA board meeting and programs at Village Creek State Park

July 14 - East Texas Black Bear Task Force

July 29 - START meeting, Ben Rogers Visitor Center

Oct. 9 - Big Thicket Day annual membership meeting and program

## **PRESERVE OVERVIEW**

*by Ann Roberts*

Supt Todd Brindle reports that the General Management Plan process continues. Preserve staff are developing preliminary alternatives for management. The next public meetings are tentatively planned for September.

Maxine Johnston has been selected as the Intermountain Region's winner of the George and Helen Hartzog Award in the category of Volunteer Enduring Service for 2009. This award recognizes volunteers who have made a sustained, positive impact to the National Park Service over multiple years. Congratulations Maxine!

Staff Report: Sandy Richardson, from Silsbee, has been hired as a Facility Services Assistant to help maintenance with their software programs.

Jalyn Cummings, National Resource Challenge (NRC) Regional Hydrologist with the National Park Service, supports water resources protection and restoration activities in the Intermountain and Midwest regions, including the protection and restoration of water quality, natural flows, aquatic ecosystems, and water rights in National park units. . She has a B.S. in Geology and an MS in watershed management with an emphasis in hydrology—both from the University of Arizona. She has worked in water resources for over 14 years. Through her career she has worked in the development of water quality clean-up planning and monitoring, storm water response in streams and near shores, and groundwater monitoring and protection. While stationed at Big Thicket, Jaylyn lives in Woodville. with her husband and son. She is a welcome addition to the Resource Management team at Big Thicket!

Canyonlands: Dave Lewis (mycologist extraordinaire) reports on a species of Mitrula, more specifically Mitrula lunulatospora, known by its crescent shaped spores. He says, "I am not sure about its distribution, but appears to be common on the eastern seaboard. I do not know of any records for the Gulf Coast ... I have only 3 collections of Mitrula for the past 35 years, so it is not common here, or I have not been in the right habitat to find it ..."

Events: Prof. Jim Westgate (LU) reports that Paula Rivers organized "Energy of the Forest" activities for 7300 4-8th graders who attended the JASON event at Lamar University in January

and February. Several BTNP rangers and Amanda Adair, [VCSP], helped Paula with her interactive program.



Resource Management Chief Dave Roemer reports that the Preserve hosted a half-day freshwater mussels workshop at the Field Research Station on May 6. The workshop was led by Marsha May with TPWD (also involved in our freshwater mussel ATBI TWiG) and attended by 15 people from BTNP, TNC, USFWS, and private consultants who work with USFWS. On May 7 members of the group conducted a survey on the Neches River from Evadale, north into the Jack Gore Baygall unit, finding approximately 8 species including Texas heelsplitter and sandbank pocketbook, two species that have been listed as threatened in Texas.

## **EAST TEXAS MISCELLANY**

### *BRONZE STATUE OF WILSON PLANNED*

Charlie Wilson always stood “tall as an East Texas Pine...” Friends are planning a statue that will stand tall at the front of the drive-thru for passengers going in and out of the Charles Wilson V.A. Medical Center in Lufkin.

The world renowned artist and sculptor, David Adickes, estimates 3 – 4 months for completion of the statue. Adickes at 83 years had retired from doing full-sized statues but decided to add Charlie to his list of personal heroes. A sampling of his extraordinary work is the 76' statue of Sam Houston on I-45 near Huntsville.

The cost for the statue is \$48,500, and the Temple Foundation matched up to half, so the project leaders need \$24,500. The VA Clinic has dedicated a wall in the clinic for Charlie Memorabilia. Any excess contributions will be applied to the development of this wall area and to the Veterans Fund to help needy veterans in the area.

**Marysee Donors:** The Crawford Donor-Advised Fund of the Foundation for Southeast Texas has awarded a grant of \$2,150 to provide a storage building for equipment on BTA property at Marysee Prairie. This generous gift allows the Stewardship Committee to centralize its equipment, currently stored in member garages in several counties. The Crawford Fund was established by Walter and Mary Crawford, who were patrons of the BTA in early years, helping to purchase the property at Saratoga, and later supporting the renovation of the former Museum for a Field Research Station. Mary Crawford was on the Magnolia Garden Club committee that donated 22 acres to the Preserve. BTA is honored to receive this gift.

Another \$500 for the project was contributed by Entergy. For over 15 years, Marysee Prairie has benefited from the generosity of Entergy. Beginning in 1955, Entergy made it possible to purchase services and tools for volunteers to use in the restoring the overgrown prairie -- loppers, chain saws, mowers. Prescribed burns are conducted periodically, and Entergy supplied the rakes, flappers, torches, helmets.

In 2000 Entergy funds made it possible to survey location and height of 37 pimple mounds (also called mima or mesome mounds). In 2002 funds covered a vegetation survey.

Volunteers hold workdays on the first Saturday of each month. Approximately nine acres are owned by Texas Land Conservancy, and three acres by the BTA. The property is located in Liberty County is on CR 2077 (off SH 105) between Batson and Moss Hill. Visitors are welcome.

**START:** Southeast Texas Area Recreation and Tourism advocates met April 15th at Heritage Village in Woodville. Participants have updates on their programs and shared information on

events scheduled. The meeting was followed by a Pickett House luncheon with the usual yummy cuisine.

*The next meeting is July 29 at the Ben Rogers Visitor Center in Beaumont.*

KIRBY- HILL HOUSE hosted a view into the "good old days" on April 17 with its portrayal of a day in the life of the Kirby and Hill families. The Kirby-Hill actors discussed politics, performing daily activities and relaxing in the sitting room with children playing games.

## **DIVERSITY DISPATCH**

BROWN FOUNDATION continues to generously support the Thicket of Diversity. This year's award is \$35,000. Together with other grants from T.L.L. Temple, Meadows, and Stark Foundations, our active program to conduct an all taxa biodiversity inventory thrives.

## **WORKSHOPS / SEMINARS**

field-trips:

RSVP for the following workshops/

FROGS & TOADS CALLS OF THE BIG THICKET, May 22: Seminar: 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; Field trip to the Lance Rosier unit of the Big Thicket: 8:45 p.m. - 10 p.m. Bring: good flashlight / headlamp, back-up batteries, waterproof boots, raincoat, camera, water. [Space limited; contact [director@bigthicket.org](mailto:director@bigthicket.org) or call 936-274-1181

MIXING & MINGLING WITH MYXOMYCETES (slime molds)! May 22-23: Saturday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m; Sunday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m .Introduction to Myxomycetes: workshop to identify, microscope & lab work, followed by a field trip to collect specimens (<http://slimemold.uark.edu>) BRING: lunch (both days), pocket knife, notebook & pencil, one-layer tackle box, hand lens or magnifying glass, field clothes, rain gear, water, insect repellent, sunscreen. All these items are optional, but will make your experience more enjoyable and productive.

2010 BIODIVERSITY DAY on Friday and Saturday, June 11-12

