

Reporter

July–September 2011
Issue #111

Neighbors Named Preserve Superintendent

Douglas Neighbors, a 21-year veteran of the National Park Service, has been named Superintendent of the Big Thicket National Preserve. He replaces Supt. Todd Brindle, who now is superintendent at Glen Canyon NRA, Arizona.



Supt. Neighbors (at podium) welcomes Senator Hutchison during her August visit to BTNP. Also pictured, at right, are Andy Jones, Texas Director, The Conservation Fund, and BTA President Cathy Johnston. [photo by Michael Black]

For the past 5 years, Neighbors has been the superintendent of the 738,000-acre Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in south-central Idaho. His NPS career includes Big Bend National Park, Crater Lake National Park and Bryce Canyon National Park and the National Park of American Samoa. In 1989, Neighbors earned a Bachelor of Science degree in wildlife and fisheries discipline from Texas A&M University.

Neighbors is no stranger to Big Thicket, having served as its chief of resources management from 2000-2003. "I am eager to be heading back to the Big Thicket region of Texas and excited to work with the dedicated staff," Neighbors said. "I am looking forward to finalizing the preserve's 20-year management plan and working with the many communities surrounding the preserve to help as the plan is implemented.

SEN. HUTCHISON RECEIVES JACKSON CONSERVATION AWARD

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and her aides visited Big Thicket August 11, accompanied by eight children. New Supt. Douglas Neighbors and Staff welcomed the group.

The visit and schedule were arranged by Andy Jones, Texas Director, The Conservation Fund. Leslie DuBey, Chief, Education and Interpretation, arranged a brief tour for the children and made them Junior Rangers. BTA used the opportunity to present the R.E. Jackson Conservation Award to

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BONNEY GUIDEBOOK PUBLISHED

On Big Thicket Day, the University of North Texas Press plans to release *The Big Thicket Guidebook: Exploring the Backroads and History of Southeast Texas*, by Lorraine Bonney. The title is No. 6 in the "Temple Big Thicket Series," made possible by the generosity of the T.L.L. Temple Foundation. (See insert)

The book (with 800+ pages) retails for \$29.95 (plus tax) and will be available to BTA members at a 20 percent discount. The author will be present Big Thicket Day, October 8, for autographs.

Author Lorraine Bonney and her husband the late Orrin Bonney co-authored guidebooks on the Grand Tetons, Yellowstone, and Wyoming mountains. They were founders of the Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club, and Orrin was an early Chair of LSC.

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BIG THICKET DAY

October 8th
9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Field Research Station
Saratoga, Texas
(see details, page 4)



BONNEY GUIDEBOOK
available for purchase

Advertisement for Big Thicket Day, featuring the date, time, location, and information about the Bonney Guidebook.

Conservation Outlook

The Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline

by Bruce R. Drury

The proposed Keystone XL pipeline still awaits the decision by President Obama concerning a permit to cross the border from Canada to the United States. Because the project is international, the lead agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review is the Department of State, which will ultimately advise the president. State issued a draft Environmental Impact Study in 2009, but because of the widespread and loud opposition to the proposal, a supplemental draft EIS was promulgated in April of 2011. Even though State required some changes in the specs of the project and TransCanada, the owner and builder of the pipeline, made several voluntary changes said to improve the safety of the line, the criticism continues. A third EIS issued on August 26 followed the same line as those previous. The State Department has issued a thousand-page report on the proposed \$7 billion pipeline and states that the pipeline "is not likely to cause significant environmental problems during construction or operation," so it seems that State

will recommend approval to the president unless there is a huge outpouring of opposition.

Keystone XL, which will go from northern Alberta, through Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas to Port Arthur and Houston, has received criticism from landowners and environmentalists, primarily because of its perceived threat to the environment. The tar sands oil that would go through the pipeline contains natural gas condensate and residual sand and heavy metals. It is also heated and under greater pressure than crude oil in regular pipelines. It would cross dozens of rivers and creeks and the extremely important Ogallala and Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifers. Existing tar sand pipelines have experienced on average more than one spill per month, and one break in southern Michigan spewed 840,000 gallons of tar sand oil into the Kalamazoo River before it was stopped. In a letter to Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick, a TransCanada official acknowledged the spills, but blamed them on above ground valve and flange problems that could be prevented with proper tightening of the bolts. Pic-

tures of the Kalamazoo spill clearly show a large pipeline rupture, so torquing the flanges would not have prevented the spill. A scholarly paper written by University of Nebraska engineering professor John Stansbury charges that TransCanada very severely underplayed the dangers to health and environmental concerns in the "worst case" discussion in the EIS.

Opponents of the Keystone pipeline have suggested that the tar sand oil could be refined in Canada and marketed as end products, such as gasoline and diesel, to the US and abroad. Already under consideration is an alternative pipeline that would run from central Alberta to the port of Kitimat, British Columbia. Actually, the Enbridge Northern Gateway plan is for two pipes—a 36 inch line for tar sand oil going west and a 20 inch line for natural gas condensate going east. Both the Canadian Energy Assessment Agency and the National Energy Board are confronted by the 1972 informal moratorium on tanker traffic in the confines of Queen Charlotte Sound. Some Canadians believe the environment is more important than oil and profits.

The environmental opponents of the Keystone pipeline who demonstrated in front of the White House unfortunately had no visible effect on the State Department. The Obama administration has promised to have a decision on the pipeline license by the end of the year, so we have only two opportunities to affect the decision. First, you can attend a State Department hearing on the pipeline's national interest. Our local hearing will be held from 4:30 to 10

Keystone Pipeline — State Department Hearings

Local

Monday, September 26, 4:30 to 10 PM
Bob Bowers Civic Center, 3401 Cultural Drive, Port Arthur

State

Wednesday, September 28, noon-3:30, 4-8 PM
University of Texas
Lady Bird Johnson Auditorium, 2313 Red River Street, Austin

Please plan to attend a hearing!

Conservation Outlook

PM on Monday, Sept. 26 in the Bob Bowers Civic Center, 3401 Cultural Drive, Port Arthur. The Texas state hearing will be noon-3:30, 4-8 PM on Wednesday, Sept. 28 in the University of Texas Lady Bird Johnson Auditorium, 2313 Red River Street, Austin. Second, you can send letters and emails to the president, asking him to honor his promise to protect the environment.

The Keystone XL pipeline, as currently proposed, has limited safety features and thus a spill could be devastating to the Big Thicket. Please speak your mind.

NPS and Garden Club of America Partnership

The National Park Service and the Garden Club of America recently renewed a formal partnership based on conservation and management of native plants.

National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis said, "The Garden Club of America has supported national parks and the National Park Service since before there was a National Park Service and the formal renewal of this partnership will serve us well into the future."

The Garden Club of America goes back to 1913 and members were supportive in not only creating national parks but in creation of the National Park Service in 1916. The Club continues support in conservation and plant management in the partnership to inventory, map, monitor, propagate, and transplant threatened or endangered plants; pull invasive plants; and conduct valuable research projects.

GCA actively supported the establishment of the Big Thicket National Preserve in the 1970s and has continued that involvement through

the years. Currently they participate in restoration of Texas trailing phlox (*Phlox nivalis ssp texensis*) in Big Thicket National Preserve.

Trinity River Refuge Proposed Paving Project

Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge is seeking funds for a project that may be completed altogether or in two phases, depending on the funding requested from the Federal Highways Administration. If funds are secured, they would be used to pave 1.1 mile of a Refuge gravel road (starting at the end of the paved CR 417), pave current gravel parking areas, add water, electricity, sanitary facilities, and correct drainage problems along the road with new culverts. This increasingly popular public use area has two public boat ramps, levee trail, butterfly garden, and fishing pier which attracts over 22,000 yearly visitors.

Senator Hutchison

continued from page 1

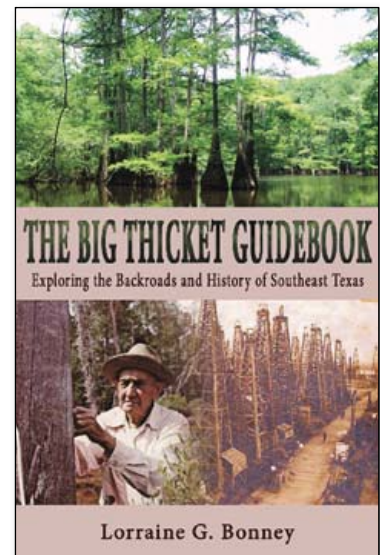
her. In presenting the Award, Pres. Cathy Johnston remarked: "You have worked effectively to provide funding for the 1993 Big Thicket National Preserve Addition Act, adding 10,766 acres to the Preserve. You have also supported successfully other legislation that benefited the Preserve, including acquisition and funding for the site and construction of this Visitor Center. The Big Thicket Association recognizes further your willingness to work with former Rep. Charles Wilson, former Rep. Jim Turner and Rep. Kevin Brady for the Preserve's benefit."

Bonney Guidebook

continued from page 1

Lorraine spends summers in the Grand Tetons and winters at "Happy Oaks" in Spring, Texas.

This Big Thicket book spans research and travel over a 25-year period. Using the WPA Writer's Project's *Texas: a Guide to the Lone Star State* (1st ed. 1940) as a model, the book is divided into three parts: 1- History; 2- Towns; 3- Roadside history (in 15 tours plus side tours). Readers learn about early explorers and missions, pioneers, geology, timbering, biodiversity and recreation, plus meeting fascinating people who influenced and fashioned Big Thicket.



Preserve Overview

Ann Roberts | BTA Administrative Asst.

New Superintendent

The “Big News” for the Preserve is the appointment of **Douglas Neighbors** as Superintendent, former Resource Management Chief at BTNP 2000-2003. (See front page) Doug has challenges ahead — replacing three division heads, coping with budgets, managing the ever-present need to protect and restore resources, and completing the General Management Plan.

Village Creek Cleanup

Mary Kay Manning, Interpretation and Education Ranger, plans a Village Creek Cleanup on September 17 beginning at 8:30AM as part of the official Hardin County Cleanup Day. Volunteers will canoe and collect trash from SH327 to Baby Galvez. Simultaneously, a Texas Parks & Wildlife team will collect trash from US 96 to Village Creek State Park. Contact Manning at Mary_Kay_Manning@nps.gov.



BTA NEWS

Election

Ballots to elect officers and board of directors for terms expiring are in the mail. Fred Allen, Treasurer, and Elaine Allums, Secretary, have agreed to continue as well as several board members. New to the lineup are Dr. Jerry Cook (Sam Houston SU), Mike Hoke (Shangri-La), and Charles Smith (Volunteer Extraordinaire). Dr. Pete Gunter whose services are well-known and mind-boggling, will again accept election as a director.

Missing from the line-up are Judy Allen, James Caccioppo, Marion Holt, and Joe Liggio. The Association is profoundly grateful for their many years of service.

Funding

BTA resources have declined considerably, and several grant requests are pending to maintain programs and projects. The generosity of member gifts have kept the organization afloat. The Pyramid Magnolia preservation project is also at a standstill.

Membership

As always, BTA needs more members. The battles on issues are not over, and we have new challenges ahead. We are still sending newsletters to 104 delinquent members. Of the current members, 34 percent are life members.

BIG THICKET DAY, OCTOBER 8

BTA President Mary Catherine Johnston reports that the annual Big Thicket Day and general membership business meeting will be held Saturday, October 8, at the Field Research Station in Saratoga from 9:30-3:00. Lunch will be available for a nominal fee.

The program will be presented by Dr. Carl Knight and his students from Eastfield College. Dr. Knight, a BTA board member, administers a grant from the National Science Foundation to encourage youth and especially minorities to plan science careers. The students have been active participants in the Thicket of Diversity (All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory) program.

Pres. Johnston reports that Curtis McGee and Friends will furnish entertainment in the afternoon—country and gospel music. The group includes seven performers who come from Woodville, Warren, Silsbee, Colmesneil, and Kountze.

COME TO SARATOGA!

**Big Thicket
National Preserve**

Field Research Station

Saturday, October 8

**Purchase an
autographed copy of
Bonney's Guidebook!**

Thicket Of Diversity News

Science Cafes

On Thursday, July 28th, Dr. Chad Hargrave, Department of Biological Sciences at Sam Houston State University, presented *Ecology of the Neches River*, at the Logon Café, Beaumont. The meeting attracted 25-30 folks. On Thursday, September 1st, Bob Boensch of The Nature Conservancy presented research on *Freshwater Mussels* at Logon Café.

Executive Council Meeting

With President Wendy Ledbetter presiding, the Thicket of Diversity Executive Council met July 8 at BTNP headquarters.

The Science Committee chair vacancy was filled with the appointment of Brian Lockwood, Acting Chief of Resource Management. Lockwood reported the following activity in June:

- ◆ Paul Tinerella and Katie Winsett collected specimens from all units of the Preserve;
- ◆ Steven Hatch and his crew collected in the Canyonlands;

- ◆ Bob Boensch and students associated with Houston Zoo collected fresh water mussels; and
- ◆ Robert Egan collected lichens..
- ◆ In May, Joe Liggio led an orchid walk but results were meager because of the drought.

The Committee approved a new Taxa Working Group for Insects requested by JarVon Hill of Mississippi State University for a 2011-2013 grant to collect ants, grasshoppers and related insects

Data Management Committee report from Mona Halvorsen indicated that nine data sets were sent to Whitney Granger to be recorded in NR Info (formerly NP Species). The data sets include the following: Aquatic Truebugs; Odonates; Tardigrades; Mordellidae; Aquatic Ectoparasites; Myxomycetes; Herpetofauna – Amphibians, Reptiles; and Freshwater Fishes. Data for vascular plants, macrofungi and some slime molds will be sent later.

Entergy Grant to The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Your editors missed including a BIG story in the last issue. On May 10, the Entergy Charitable Foundation awarded The Nature Conservancy of Texas \$100,000 to protect important natural areas that benefit freshwater in Texas's Big Thicket. Later the group toured the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary in Silsbee.

Among those present were David Bezanson, protection and easements manager for The Nature Conservancy in Texas, Wendy Ledbetter, forest program manager for The Nature Conservancy in Texas, and from Entergy Texas, Inc., Vernon Pierce, director of customer service and Brent Dorsey, director of corporate environmental programs.

The Big Thicket funding is part of a larger initiative funding freshwater conservation work in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas and Texas. In total, Entergy granted TNC \$550,000. Vernon Pierce noted that "Entergy was the first utility to make—and fulfill—a commitment to scale back the amount of greenhouse gases its electricity generators emit into the atmosphere.



← A few of the 20 people that hiked and participated in "The Longest Day Hike." The hike, held on June 25 — the Saturday following the summer solstice — was sponsored by the Golden Triangle Sierra group. See story on page 6. [photo by Bruce Walker]

East Texas Miscellany

Temple-Inland Rejects Bid

Recently, Temple-Inland received an unsolicited bid from International Paper to acquire all outstanding common shares at a price of \$30.60 per share in cash. The board of directors unanimously rejected the offer.

The “new” Temple-Inland launched in 2008 delivers corrugated packaging and building products for home construction, commercial markets, etc. The corporation is the third largest producer of corrugated packaging that controls about 12 percent of the North American market.

Hardin County Historical Commission

HCHC held a reception on June 23 for the opening of a new “home” and proposed museum. Floyd Boyett provided an update and tour of the former bank building.

Renee Hart is working for HCHC to prepare an application for a historical marker for Saratoga’s Oil Field (Jordan) Cemetery.

Library Archivist in Paris

In June Lamar University Library Archivist Penny Clark traveled to Paris where she viewed mushrooms from the Big Thicket. The fungi are part of the collections of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris which were collected by David Lewis, dried, and mailed to France for study and preservation.

The fungi project is administered by Dr. Bart Buyck who has published scientific papers with David and traveled from Paris to Newton, Texas five times to meet with him and collect Big Thicket fungi. Clark was especially intrigued by seeing David’s specimens in Paris, since David has donated over 30,000 photographic slides to Lamar which document many aspects of the Big Thicket including its fungi.

GT Sierra’s Longest Day Hike

by Bruce Walker, Chair
On June 25 the Golden Triangle Sierra group held “The Longest Day

Hike” — the Saturday following the summer solstice. We had 20 people that hiked and participated. Hikers chose to hike 3 miles, 6 miles, or 9 miles of the trail. Approximately 10 hikers finished the 9 mile portion between the Warren trail head and Gore Store Road. The summer heat was brutal, but the hikers took their time and enjoyed the shaded trail.

From Gore Store Road we shuttled to the trail head on FM 1943 near Warren. We stopped for lunch at CR 4825 (Hester Bridge Road) and the Golden Triangle Sierra group offered everyone a light lunch, cold drinks, and a place to relax and rest.

At Gore Store Road, where the vehicles were parked, hikers opted not to hike the lower section of the trail with parts closed due to damage from forest fires. Ranger Deanna Boensch, Fire Ecologist BTNP accompanied participants on the hike and discussed the role of fire in the forest and described how the fires impacted the park.

START Meeting

The Southeast Texas Area Recreation and Tourism group met July 14 at the Marriott Courtyard, hosted by Ms. Beverly Brantley and staff. The group shares news on projects, programs and events. The next meeting will be Thursday, October 13, at 9:30 am at the BTNP Visitor Center, located 7 miles north of Kountze on FM 420. An optional ranger-led walk on the inner loop of the Sundew Trail is scheduled after the meeting. This easy ¼-mile walk leads through magnificent longleaf pines and open savannah.



The Hardin County Historical Commission hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 23 for the opening of a new “home” and proposed museum.

Big Thicket National Preserve Activities

Saturday September 3

Cardinal Cruise on the Neches River, 10:00 AM, \$15, under 6 yrs \$5
Join Ranger Mary Kay Manning on the Lamar University pontoon boat. For information call: 409-880-8907

Sunday September 11

Guided Walk on the Kirby Nature Trail, 9:00 AM. with Ranger Paula Rivers. Meet at the Kirby Nature Trail on FM 420.

Wednesday September 14

Campout in the Big Thicket, 10:30 AM; Ranger Mary Kay Manning at the Willard Library in Beaumont, camping for moms and tots.

Saturday September 17

Village Creek Clean Up, 8:30 AM. Join other Hardin County citizens in this effort to beautify Hardin County. Bring or rent your own canoe and paddle Village Creek from FM 326 to Baby Galvez in Silsbee. Call for directions and reservations 409-951-6700.

Sunday September 18

Talk on Alabama-Coushatta Baskets, 1:00-2:00 PM; Park Ranger Elliot Abbey will give a talk on basket making at the Visitor Center on FM 420, seven miles north of Kountze.

Sunday September 25

Guided Walk on the Sundew Trail, 9:00 AM; birding with Ranger Paula Rivers. Meet at Sundew Trail located north of Wildwood in beautiful Tyler County just south of FM 1943.

Saturday October 1

Cardinal Cruise on the Neches River, 10 AM, \$15, under 6 yrs \$5 Join Ranger Mary Kay Manning on the Lamar University pontoon boat. For information call: 409-880-8907.

Sunday October 2

Talk on Alabama-Coushatta Dance Regalia, 1:00-1:30 PM; Park Ranger Elliot Abbey will give a talk on bead work. Meet at the Visitor Center on FM 420, north of Kountze.

Sunday October 9

Canoe Village Creek, 10:00 am-1:00 PM; Bring or rent a canoe and paddle Village Creek from FM 326 to Baby Galvez in Silsbee. Call for reservations 409-951-6700.

Sunday October 16

Talk on Alabama-Coushatta Baskets, 1:00-2:00 PM; Park Ranger Elliot Abbey will give a talk on basket making. Meet at Visitor Center on FM 420, north of Kountze.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 17

Village Creek Cleanup;
TPWD team, US96 to VCSP.
Volunteers contact Mary_Kay_Manning@nps.gov.

October 8

Big Thicket Day and BTA
General Membership Business Meeting, 9:30-3:00

October 13

START Meeting at BTNP Visitor Center, 9:30

October 14-16

Harvest Festival, Heritage Village Museum
(Kids Day, October 14)

October 21-22-23

Kountze Trade Days

Your editors are planning a "garage sale" to benefit Big Thicket at Kountze Trade Days. We are cleaning out attics and storage buildings — and others might want to join us — also we could use volunteers for part of that weekend.

November 19

Mushroom Walk with David Lewis. Meet 10:00 am at the Field Research Station in Saratoga.



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WEB SITES

Big Thicket Association

www.bigthicket.org

Big Thicket National Preserve

www.nps.gov/bith

East Texas Black Bear Task Force

www.bbcc.org

Conservation Fund

www.conservationfund.org

National Audubon Society

www.goldentriangleaudubon.org
www.houstonaudubon.org

National Parks Conserv. Assoc.

www.npca.org

Native Plant Society of Texas

www.npsot.org

Nature Conservancy

www.nature.org/texas

Outdoor Nature Club, Houston

www.outdoornatureclub.org

Sierra Club Golden Triangle Group

www.texas.sierraclub.org/triangle

Texas Conservation Alliance

www.TCAtexas.org

Village Creek State Park

www.tpwd.state.tx.us.park

NPCA asks White House to Commit to Parks

(Excerpts from story by Ashlie Rodriguez, *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 2011)

Using data from a new study the National Park Conservation Association (NPCA) and the Center for Park Research said the health of natural and cultural resources ... is fading, while a "host of new and long-standing threats" is rising, such as declining air quality, polluted waterways and decreased diversity of species... NPCA called on President Obama to sign an executive order that would recommit the federal government to the conservation of national parks using the study's recommended policies. They are also calling on Congress to provide \$600 million for restoring ecosystems and habitats.

Tom Kiernan, president of the NPCA, pointed out that parks are receiving two-thirds of what they need. Funding parks amounts to "one-thirteenth of one percent" of the national budget. Cutting funds or not providing funds is not going to impact the deficit." Kiernan said parks are an economic investment, with a \$4 million return annually. The parks system generates \$13.3 billion in economic activity, according to NPCA...

For the full text of the report, consult:

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/greenspace/2011/06/national-parks-conservation.html>