

## N.P.S. INDUCTS NEIGHBOR AS SUPERINTENDENT



**ON** Tuesday, February 28, 2012, Colin Campbell (third from left in photo), Deputy Director of the Inter-mountain Region of NPS visited Big Thicket National Preserve and officially “inducted” Douglas Neighbor (fourth from right in photo) as BTNP Superin-

tendent. Neighbor is a 21-year NPS veteran who returned to Big Thicket, having served as Chief of Resource Management in 2002-2003.

The event was held as part of a BTNP employees meeting. There was little pomp and circumstance at the meeting,

which included updates on regional and national subjects. After the meeting, refreshments provided a venue for meeting and greeting. Then Neighbor took Campbell on a Preserve tour.

## WALKER IS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Halvorsen is named Thicket of Diversity Director



BTA’s new Executive Director is **Bruce Walker**, a graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University with a B.S. Degree in Business & Economics. He retired as General

Manager of Time Warner Cable Media (Beaumont) in 2011.

Bruce has served as Executive Committee Chair of the Golden Triangle Group Sierra Club. He currently serves on the boards of the Texas Conserva-

tion Alliance and the Sabine Neches Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist. He is Co-Founder of Citizens Protecting the Neches River, a coalition of sportsmen, businessmen, conservationists, and other Southeast Texas leaders who support a feasibility study to establish a Neches River Wild and Scenic River.

**Database Manager Mona Halvorsen Promoted:** Duties, hours and position title changed for **Mona Halvorsen** who is now full time. Halvorsen’s duties now include functions of record keeping for

accounting, memberships, technical support and management of the website. Her new title is Director of Thicket of Diversity and is a *Myxomycetes* Citizen Scientist.

Halvorsen has a B.S. from Lamar University and is a certified Technical Writer. She served as the President of Kappa Phi Honor Society. She works closely with Taxa Working Group leaders in the Thicket of Diversity ATBI.

Thanks to the recent grants from TLL Temple and Brown Foundations, the outlook for 2012 is promising.

# Conservation Outlook

## Kramer Retires

The Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club will honor **Dr. Ken Kramer, Chapter Director** for many years, with a retirement party April 27, 2012, in Austin, on the UT Campus. Kramer has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Rice University, and he has 25 years experience working on water and other environmental issues as an academic, an environmental group leader, and public policy specialist. He has been appointed to numerous task forces and advisory committees by Texas state officials, including the Governor of Texas and the Speaker of the Texas House.

While we regret the loss of his exemplary leadership, the good news is that Ken continues volunteer service as Water Resources Chair for the Chapter.

## Marysee Prairie

Marysee Prairie in Liberty County became a protected area in 1973 and is now owned by Texas Land Conservancy, a Stewardship Committee chaired by Tom Maddox. Workdays are held the first Saturdays of October-June. A committed group of folks from BTA and the Sierra Club have worked for many years to maintain the Prai-

rie. Work includes removal of invading exotics, occasional mowing and periodic prescribed burns.

Daniel Dietz, Land Steward of TLC, and Cathy and Leigh Stuemke joined the "regulars" for a prescribed burn on March 3rd. Because of recent rains, the burn was "patchy" but successful.

## Houston Zoo Volunteers

Twelve volunteers from the Houston Zoo worked for the Preserve during their spring break. Their daily schedule follows.

- ◆ **Monday** — Canyonlands: Cleared a road used as a foot trail during an ATBI-ToD bioblitz in 2007 with D.W. Ivans and Deanna Boensch
- ◆ **Tuesday** — Marysee Prairie: Helped remove exotics with Eric Worsham and Paula Rivers, then picked up trash on Gore Store Road
- ◆ **Wednesday** — Beech Creek Unit: Stephanie Burgess and Brian Lockwood led a mini-bioblitz
- ◆ **Thursday** — Watson Pineland Preserve: Helped repair a portion of board walk with Pauline Singleton
- ◆ **Friday** — Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary: Cleared a play area for children with Bob Boensch.

## The Texas Conservation and Recreation, Forum Region 8,

met February 28, 2012 at the Ellen Trout Zoo, Lufkin. Among those attending the meeting were TCA members Janice Bezanson, Richard Donovan, Richard LeTourneau; NPS-BTNP, Brian Lockwood; VSCP, Amanda Adair; Sierra Club, Evelyn Merz, Brandt Mannchen; and numerous TPWD and USFWS officials. Notes for the meeting may be consulted at [http://www.texaswildlifeunlimited.com/texas\\_outdoor\\_partners/2009/03/notes-from-texas](http://www.texaswildlifeunlimited.com/texas_outdoor_partners/2009/03/notes-from-texas)

## THOREAU AND CLIMATE CHANGE

From *Bioscience*, February 2012

Henry David Thoreau's work may have been on your high school English reading list, but future generations of students may also be studying the American transcendentalist's work during third-period Science.

The *Guardian* reports that Boston University biology professor Richard Primack and fellow researcher Abraham Miller-Rushing used the writer's unpublished records to study how flowering dates of certain plants had evolved since the author's death in 1862, helping the pair track the impact of climate change in Massachusetts.

Though Thoreau is best remembered for such works as *Walden*... he was also a naturalist who tracked the blooming dates for over 500 species of wildflowers, recording their blooming dates between 1851 and 1858... Over 155 years later, the scientists compared those dates to those of many of the same flowers... the plants, on average, flower 10 days earlier than back in Thoreau's time. From other research by another amateur naturalist who recorded temperatures on her Massachusetts farm, the researchers estimate that the average temperature has increased by 3.64 degrees Fahrenheit.



Volunteers from the Houston Zoo worked at Marysee Prairie during spring break.

# East Texas Miscellany

**A Hike and Bike Trail** was the topic of TxDoT's open house public meeting on March 8 at the Kountze Intermediate School. The trail would connect the city of Kountze with the Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor Center.

President Johnston submitted approximately 100 signatures from Kountze High School students in support of the trail. Kountze Mayor Pro Tem Elaine Allums and BTA's Executive Director, Bruce Walker, were also on hand to support the trail.

**Big Thicket Bike Ride:** The Southeast Texas Hike and Bike Coalition sponsored a biking event on Saturday, March 17. Six routes were mapped of 14, 36, 46, 66, 77, and 100 miles. Rides began at the BTNP Visitor Center north of Kountze.

**Leadership Southeast Texas**, a nine-county regional executive leadership non-profit includes participants from business, manufacturing, non-profits, education and government. BTA Pres. Mary Catherine Johnston and BTNP Supt. Douglas Neighbor are in the current class. Bruce Walker, Wendy Ledbetter, Ellen Buchannan and Elaine Allums are LSET alumni.

An Extreme Makeover Service project is a requirement for the Class of 2012 with groups organized by county. Boys and Girls Club of Hardin County is the target for the makeover. Pres. Johnston also serves as mentor for Youth Leadership Southeast Texas and assists two students from West Hardin High School in Saratoga who chose to help House of Destiny in Votaw, a residential facility for women recuperating from addictions. Books on nature or Big Thicket are being collected at the FRS for both projects.

**Texas Parks and Wildlife's** April issue has a story on Geraldine Watson, who is now recuperating with her children in Austin.

**Woodville's Heritage Village** held its annual Festival of the Arts weekend March 23-26, which is the opening of Tyler County Dogwood Festival events..

The 69<sup>th</sup> annual **Tyler County Dogwood Festival** schedule includes Western Weekend with a parade, rodeo, and dance on March 31. Dogwood Weekend is April 7 and includes a historical pageant and crowning of the Festival Queen as well as parades, trail rides, dances, and an arts and crafts show.

**Wildwood Garden Club**, Sandra Shaddock, President (and BTA member) met March 7 in Wildwood for a talk about East Texas / Big Thicket books, by Maxine Johnston.

**Liberty's Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center** held an open house to welcome **Alana Inman** as its new manager. Inman brings to the position two Bachelor's degrees in history and psychology as well as a Master's in Library Science from Missouri universities. Her experience includes seven years with Missouri State Archives.

**Michael Hoke**, Director of Shangri La Botanical Gardens in Orange, was guest speaker for the Kountze Chamber of Commerce banquet at Stone Creek Lodge on March 8. The Kountze High School choir performed, and the Chamber also presented annual awards.

**On April 21, Shangri La hosts Eco Fest** from 9:00-4:00: It's a family event designed to combine learning and

fun for children of all ages. On April 22 there will be a butterfly release at 2:00 PM. Visit the Shangri La website for a full schedule of Earth Week activities.

**Stark Museum of Art Award** — The Stark Museum of Art, in Orange, Texas, was named the Outstanding Arts and Humanities Organization for 2011 by the Southeast Texas Arts Council. In the awards presentation, the Council cited the Museum's outstanding collection and noted that the Museum has been renovated with new state-of-the-art lighting, Recognition included "For the Stark Museum's efforts to keep pace with current technological trends within its industry."

## MEMORIAL

### Walter Crawford, Jr., 1937-2012

Walter Crawford, Jr. was a third-generation Crawford in Beaumont, a member of the Sons of the Republic of Texas, and the great-great-great grandson of Susanna Dickenson of Alamo fame. He practiced law in Beaumont joining the Wells, Payton, Duncan, Beard, Greenberg Hunt and Crawford firm in 1970.

His parents Walter Sr. and Mary Crawford became patron members of the Big Thicket Association in the 1960s and joined in an effort to help the Association purchase the school plant in Saratoga, beginning a Crawford family history of benefitting Big Thicket causes.

In recent years the Crawford Trust generously helped to renovate a building for use as a BTNP Field Research Station as well as supporting restoration of Marysee Prairie.

**Spring in East Texas** brings another spectacular Big Thicket season. Driving along roads, the view offers first yellow jessamine, then mayhaw and redbud, followed by fringe trees, dogwood, and a ripple of green shades from yellow to dark. Hiking is even better! If you haven't experienced this, you are seriously deprived! —MJ, ed.

# Preserve Overview . . . by Ann Roberts

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**Staff:** The Preserve welcomes **Edward Comeau**, new Facility Manager, coming to us from Everglades National Park.

Vacant positions posted for applications include Administrative Officer, Chief of Resource Management, and a Maintenance position. One employee commented that the Superintendent might get a day off when all the positions are filled.

**Village Creek Trash Clean-Up:** Volunteers are needed to help remove trash on the section of creek from Hwy 327 to Baby Galvez April 14. Boats can be provided to those who don't have them. Participants MUST register. Contact Mary Kay Manning at 409-951-6720.

**Hunter harvest reports:** The deadline for the return of the 2011-12 hunter harvest report cards is April 8, 2012. This year there will be no grace period, Big Thicket National Preserve Superintendent Douglas Neighbor announced today. In addition, hunters who fail to

return their harvest cards by the deadline will not be eligible to hunt in Big Thicket National Preserve. Hunters are urged to return their harvest report cards as soon as possible to avoid missing the deadline; cards post-marked by April 8 will be accepted. Wildlife managers use the harvest cards to monitor long-term trends and for hunting program management decisions. For more information, call Big Thicket National Preserve at (409) 951-6700 or (409) 951-6831.

**Seasonals:** Each year the Preserve benefits from the work of seasonal employees. The following groups will be on board through the end of the fiscal year. In **Maintenance:** Ronnie Abbey, Mark Atkinson, Barry Ferguson; In **Fire:** Randy Throop, Robbie Lundeen, Timothy McClung, Brian Swager, Jesse Goodwin, Tommy Mills; In **Interpretation:** Volunteer in Park, Anna Tong, Teacher-Ranger Teachers, Elizabeth Sharp, Melinda Peirce, Will Watkins and Priscilla Braun.

## BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE EVENTS

**April 7, 10:00 AM** - Pontoon Cruise on Cardinal Adventure; meet at Colliers Ferry Park, fee required, 409- 651-5326 or <http://NechesRiverAdventures.org>.

**April 11, 10:30 AM** - Kids library program, Willard Library, Beaumont

**April 14, 8:30 AM** - Village Creek Clean-Up, call 409-951-6720

**May 5, 10 AM** - Pontoon Cruise on Cardinal Adventure, meet at Colliers Ferry Park, fee required, 409-651-5326 or <http://NechesRiverAdventures.org>.

**May 9, 10:30 AM** - Kids library program, Willard Library, Beaumont

**June 2, 10 AM** - Pontoon Cruise on Cardinal Adventure, meet at Colliers Ferry Park, fee required, 409-651-5326 or <http://NechesRiverAdventures.org>.

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## Thicket of Diversity

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### SCIENCE CAFÉS

**Bears:** On Feb. 24, **Mary Kay Manning**, Park Ranger (Interpretation) presented a report on black bears at a "Science Café" at the Logon Café in Beaumont. Manning discussed experiences with black bears in Big Bend National Park and their migration into Texas from Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma.

**Mushroom Talk and Walk:** David Lewis will present a Mushroom Science Café on June 8 at the Logon Café. On June 9 there will be a mushroom walk into Lance Rosier Unit; meet at the Field Research Station at 10:00 AM.

### KRUSE AND DAVISON REPORT ON BRYOPHYTES

Dale A. Kruse, Curator of the S.M. Tracy Herbarium at Texas A & M University,

and Paul G. Davison at the University of North Alabama, served as Taxonomic Working Group (TWiG) leaders for bryophytes in the Thicket of Diversity-All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory. Kruse and Davison were awarded grants by the Big Thicket Association and the Western National Parks Association to inventory units within the Big Thicket National Preserve. In collaboration with Paul V. Roling of Spring, Texas, the team collected, identified, and vouchered specimens. The final report summary was submitted in early 2012.

From January 2007 to September 2011 the team accumulated approximately 693 vouchers from the Preserve. In addition, historical data from various herbaria in Texas were compiled and analyzed. The inventory resulted in an

updated checklist of 170 species of mosses, liverworts, and hornworts, in 98 genera and 54 families. Thirteen potentially new state records, twelve liverworts and one moss were reported. The total number of species in this inventory represented a 57% increase in reported taxa reported in historic data before the survey began.

Bryophytes provide a number of important ecological benefits such as soil stabilization and nitrogen fixation. They also serve as bio-indicators of air and water pollution. Because of their sensitivity to changes in environmental conditions, bryophytes are increasingly being used as potential indicators of climate change in many parts of the world.

# BTA News

**The quarterly Board Meeting** will be held April 14, 2012, at the Entergy Building, 350 Pine Street in Beaumont. The meeting convenes 9:30-11:30 AM.

**Go Green:** After the meeting, we will join the Crockett Street activities which include the "Go Green SETX" Hybrid & Electric Car Show. Go Green is the theme of a Sierra Club event to be hosted April 14<sup>th</sup> on Crockett Street from 9:00 AM–2:00 PM. The Big Thicket Association will provide an exhibit "Save Gas—Vacation in your backyard!"

Plan to spend the afternoon learning about other energy efficient products and visit with leaders of other green organizations. At 1:00 PM, participants can enjoy a walk through Downtown

Beaumont led by Beaumont Main Street.

**Jefferson County Hotel Occupancy Tax Grant:** The BTA received a grant to develop an auto tour, "Geology, Biology and Human Impact." Other tours developed by the BTA include Ghost Road, Lance Rosier Unit Driving Tour and 7 Days in the Big Thicket.

Our newest Temple Series publication, ***The Big Thicket Guidebook, Exploring the Backroads and History of Southeast Texas*** by Lorraine Bonney outlines 15 tours with corresponding maps and is a treasure trove of historical detail. An exhibit featuring the book and the auto guides will be part of GoGreen SETX events April 14.

**B.T.A. STAFF CHANGES:** Ann Roberts retired at the end of 2011 as Administrative Asst., having served five years in that position. BTA misses her extensive background knowledge and know-how. Roberts has long years of volunteer service for both BTNP and BTA. She continues to serve as co-editor of the **Reporter** and was elected to serve on the Board of Directors.

Since the Executive Director position was also vacant, Pres. Mary Catherine Johnston appointed a Search Committee that included Jan Ruppel, Lee LeJeune, Wendy Ledbetter, Fred Allen, Elaine Allums, and Bruce Drury. The Search Committee recruited candidates and revised position descriptions. [See Story, page 1.]

## UPCOMING EVENTS

First Saturday of every month — Marysee Prairie Workday

**April 14 9:00 AM–11:30 AM. BTA Directors** meeting at Entergy Building (Beaumont)

**April 14 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. Go Green SETX** – Hybrid and Electric Car Show, Crockett Street, Beaumont. Includes walking tour, exhibits.

**April 14 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM. Hardin County Clean-Up Day;** all towns participating, sponsored by Teamwork Hardin County.

**April 14 Village Creek Trash Clean-Up,** Contact Mary Kay Manning 409-951-6720.

**April 21 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Eco Fest at Shangri La,** Earth Day event designed to combine learning and fun for children of all ages. There will be a butterfly release on Sunday, April 22, at 2:00 PM.

**April 21 Village Creek Festival**

**April 21 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM. Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge,** Earth Day at Champion Lake, South of Dayton two miles east of FM1409; boating/walking tours, netting/fishing, etc.

**May 3-4-5 Annual Trail Between the Lakes Hike,** Golden Triangle Group, Sierra Club; 1, 2, or 3 days of hiking on this trail in the Sabine National Forest. Camp, backpack, or stay at the lodge. Call Gerald Langham or Bruce Walker at 409-782-3486.

**May 8 4:30-6:30 PM. Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge** Open House at the new headquarters on FM 1011. The Friends group board meeting follows.

**May 19 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM. Hazardous Waste and Scrap Tire Collection,** Ford Park Pavilion Parking Lot

**May 24-25 Woodland Expo,** Conroe

**June 8 Mushrooms,** Presenter is David Lewis; Science Café at the Logon, Beaumont

**June 9 10:00 AM. Mushroom Walk** with David Lewis. Meet at Field Research Station,

**June 16 10:00 AM. Nature Walk** in search of mushrooms and Texas bluebells, Outdoor Nature Club's Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary. David & Pat Lewis will join us to help find and ID mushrooms.



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## WEB SITES

**Big Thicket Association**

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

**Big Thicket National Preserve**

[www.nps.gov/bith](http://www.nps.gov/bith)

**East Texas Black Bear Task Force**

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

**Conservation Fund**

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

**National Audubon Society**

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

**National Parks Conserv. Assoc.**

[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 Conservation Alliance**

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

**Village Creek State Park**

[www.tpwd.state.tx.us.park](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us.park)

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

**Have you renewed your membership for 2012?**

If not, we attach an envelope for your convenience. If you have already renewed your membership, how about recruiting a new member?

BTA has many projects and issues on the agenda. Your support and active participation is needed. Serve on a committee? Become a "Citizen Scientist" for the Thicket of Diversity? Write letters to public officials about issues?