



BIG THICKET BULLETIN

ISSUE 155

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2022

JULY
AUGUST
SEPTEMBER

3

A Message from the President »



4

A Message from the Executive Director »



5

Join us for Big Thicket Day on the Neches »



6

Summer in the Big Thicket »



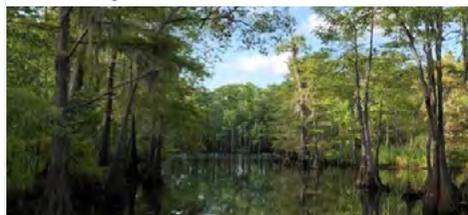
7

Monarch Butterfly Garden at FRSLC Saratoga »



9

Photo Contest: Fall Theme: Waterways of the Big Thicket »



10

2022 Big Thicket Association Awards »



12

Balloon Releases Cause Harm »



13

Scott Solomon, PH.D. to speak at Big Thicket Day on The Neches »



14

What's been happening in the Thicket »



16

Prothonotary Warbler »



17

"We went to Saratoga, where we met Lance" »



18

Save the Dates »



A Message from the President

John Stafford, BTA director and board president

Greetings to Members and Friends of BTA!

As you may have heard, we have a new Executive Director, Ms. Diane Thompson, who has returned for her "dream job" back in her hometown of Beaumont. Welcome! During her transition into the new job, Diane and Bruce Walker have made a formidable team obtaining new sponsorships for our events, working with past sponsors and engaging with local organizations and community groups. Congratulations to them.

This past quarter has been very busy planning two great events. Thanks to Neches River Rally chair Tracy Benson and Big Thicket Day co-chairs Katy Hambright and Charles Smith who are leading great organizing committees. My personal thanks go out to all committee members.

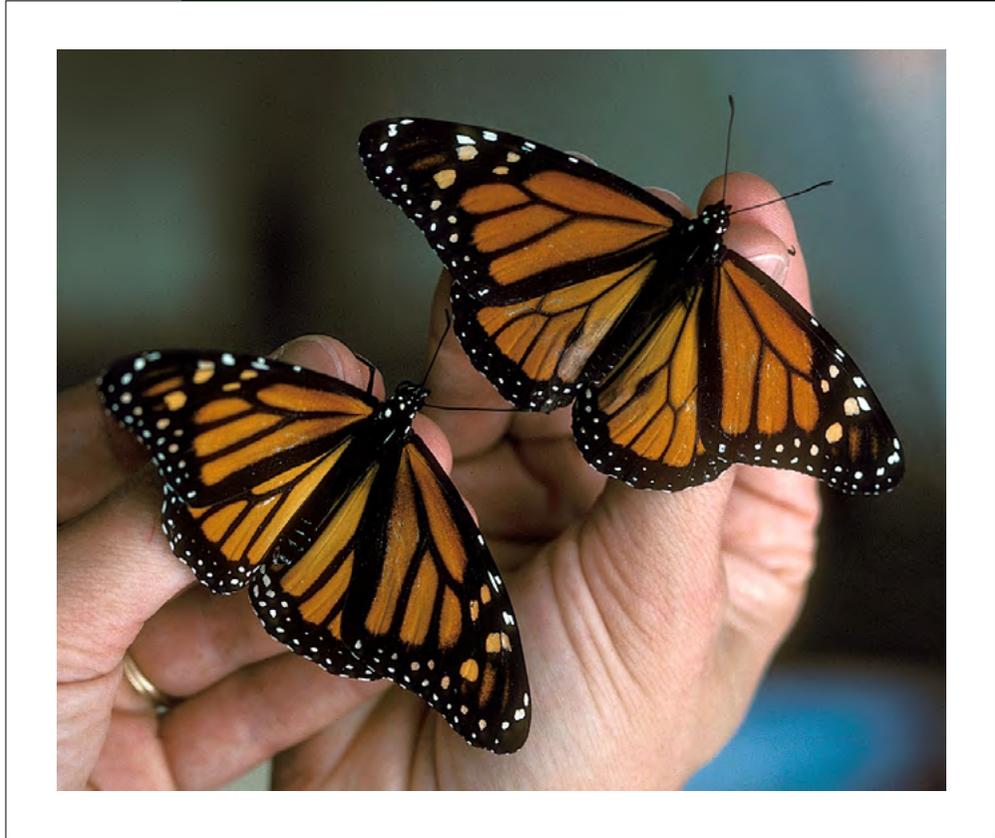
By publication date, the 9th Neches River Rally will be history for another year. Big Thicket Day is coming shortly, on Saturday, October 8 at Collier's Ferry Park, free and open to the public, thanks to our many sponsors.

Our Membership Committee under leadership of Randy Beehn is working to increase our membership through various events, public outreach and 'goodies' for members. Look for more from them soon.

Our free Environmental Education programs have been highly successful again with hundreds of students and many new schools represented due to efforts of Dir. Jennie Knapp. Thanks to our volunteers and staff.

Our Ivory Bill crew has been very busy with school groups, public tours and private charters. Volunteers have performed engine maintenance, painted, cleaned and generally spruced up our lovely vessel. It looks GREAT. Public tours continue through early November and are enjoyed by all as they visit the Preserve and enjoy beautiful scenery.

The Field Research Station and Learning Center has been really busy with researchers and several groups using the FRS dorms and Brammer house while working in and around the Preserve. Funds are still available for new research projects through grants from TCEQ. *Look for a new Monarch butterfly garden there in the fall.*

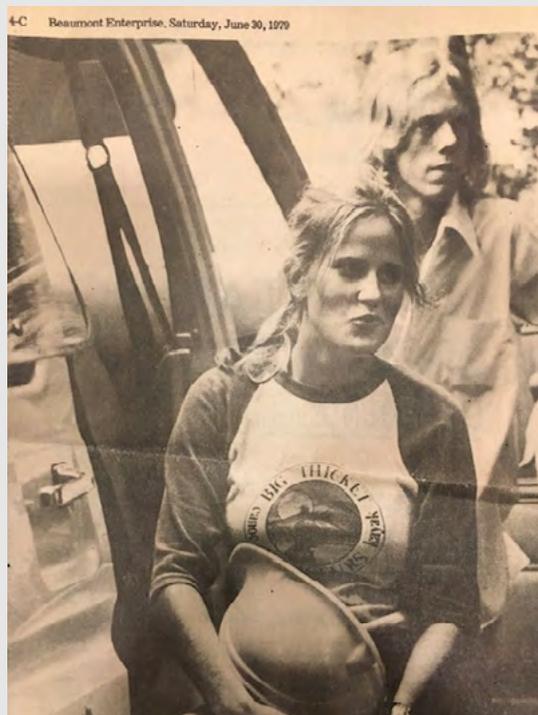


Monarch butterflies - Texas Parks and Wildlife, Education Resources

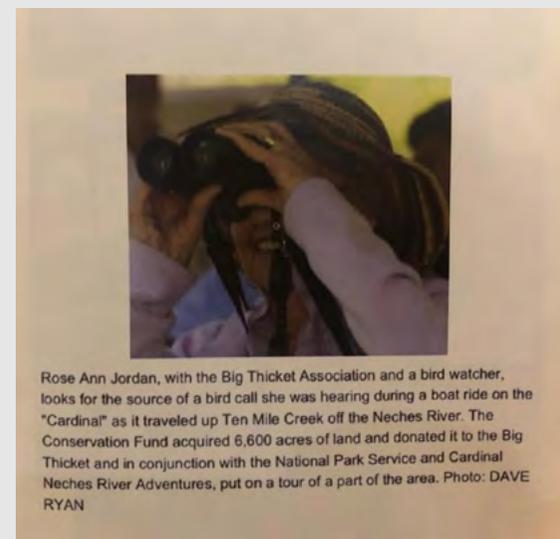
A Message from the Executive Director

Diane Thompson, BTA Executive Director

A warm hello to all our Members. I'm thrilled to be back at my roots where it all started and working with Big Thicket Association. Growing up in this area, our family hiked, canoed, and kayaked throughout the Big Thicket and on Village Creek and the Neches River. My love for the Big Thicket National Preserve was so great I wanted to work there as a youth. Eventually I did work for the National Park Service and the Youth Conservation Corps there. It was the BEST summer of my life. I loved being in the forest every day—the shade of the canopy, forging new trails, jumping in the creek to saw through fallen trees for canoe trails, the earthy smells especially after a rain, and the PEACE it brought me. Photography was a hobby and many pictures were taken of the unique flora and fauna of the Big Thicket. My friends were brought on many hikes and canoe trips. Preservation of this beautiful resource was taught on our many adventures by my mother, Rose Ann Jordan, who was on the Big Thicket Association board for many years and a volunteer for the Big Thicket National Preserve. Recently I was able to recreate a picture of my mother while she was riding on the "Cardinal," before it was the Ivory Bill. She had been up Ten Mile Bayou and was birding as usual. In my picture I was on the same boat, same place, and wearing her same hat. It has been amazing for me to have the privilege to follow her passion and mine in preservation and conservation of the Big Thicket Region of Texas. I look forward to seeing you all at our Neches River Rally, September 10, and Big Thicket Day, October 8. Please come by and say hello to me!



High school student Diane, working in the Big Thicket - Beaumont Enterprise



Rose Ann Jordan, with the Big Thicket Association and a bird watcher, looks for the source of a bird call she was hearing during a boat ride on the "Cardinal" as it traveled up Ten Mile Creek off the Neches River. The Conservation Fund acquired 6,600 acres of land and donated it to the Big Thicket and in conjunction with the National Park Service and Cardinal Neches River Adventures, put on a tour of a part of the area. Photo: DAVE RYAN

Diane's mother Rose Ann Jordan aboard the Cardinal - Dave Ryan



Diane aboard the Ivory Bill, formerly the Cardinal - John Rollins, Director, Public Relations and Community Impact at United Way of Beaumont

Join us for Big Thicket Day on the Neches:

Saturday, October 8, 2022 From 10am to 3pm

Open to the public – No admission fees



Collier's Ferry Park

5390 Pine St.
Beaumont, TX 77703

Big Thicket Day on the Neches is a **FREE EVENT** that is open to the public. Activities in the park begin with our annual membership gathering at 10:00am. Beginning at 11:30am enjoy a complimentary picnic lunch – including hamburgers, hot links and kona ice – live entertainment, free boat tours aboard the Ivory Bill, and other activities for the entire family.



Summer in the Big Thicket

Megan Urban, Chief of Interpretation and Education, Big Thicket National Preserve

Big Thicket interpretation staff have been busy this summer, between public programming, community outreach events, and working to get the fall program schedule ready to go. Hiking, paddle trips and fishing programs have been very popular. Staff also worked alongside the all-deaf CorpsTHAT crew on resource management projects. Ranger-led hikes and paddles this fall will focus on some of the lesser-visited areas, including Canyonlands, Beech Creek, and others.

Although the 50th anniversary of the Big Thicket preserve isn't until October 11, 2024, staff has started planning and talking about what the year of celebration might look like. Input from community organizations and other partner groups, like Big Thicket Association, will be sought, so we all can make the anniversary one we won't forget!

National Public Lands Day is Saturday, September 24th; Big Thicket is hosting three events for the public to volunteer. All three events will run at the same time in different parts of the preserve. 1) Field Research Station in Saratoga, working alongside resource management to prepare and plant a new pollinator garden. 2) Trash clean up of the very popular sandbar along Village Creek off Hwy 96 between Lumberton and Silsbee. 3) Trail beautification of the Turkey Creek Trailhead starting from Gore Store Road. Registration for the events is encouraged but not required; for more information, please call our volunteer program manager, Heidi Dietze at 409-951-6725.

Keep an eye on our social media and webpage for more opportunities this fall. **We look forward to seeing everyone out on the trail!**



VIP Jeremy with youth visitor at fishing day - NPS/Sharaga



Whitny Howeth with CorpsTHAT crew, clearing invasive bamboo plants - NPS/Rocha



Early planting efforts

Monarch Butterfly Garden at FRSLC Saratoga

Mary Bernard, Big Thicket Biosphere Reserve Coordinator

It has been said that “in all things of nature there is something of the marvelous” (Aristotle). One of nature’s marvels is the monarch butterfly, *Danaus plexippus*, which unfortunately faces an uncertain future with the decline of its migratory populations, restricted range, and reduced habitat quality. Monarchs travel 2,000 miles annually from central Mexico to the US-Canada border, frequenting southeast Texas twice in migration, coming and going. Once prolific in number, monarch populations have declined in recent years, leaving them in danger of extinction.

The **Big Thicket Biosphere Reserve** is working to remedy some of the habitat loss in the region. To that end, the Biosphere recently received two grants to establish startup butterfly gardens in several locations, including one at the Big Thicket National Preserve’s Field Research Station (FRSLC). The Biosphere is working with the **Texas Native Plant Society** and the **Big Thicket National Preserve** to develop the appropriate plants for propagation. The Biosphere received a Texan by Nature Conservation Certification for the project.

In early August, Biosphere Coordinator Mary Bernard met with Big Thicket Preserve Chief of Resources, Whitney Howeth, and Biologist Andrew Bennett, to plan next steps to develop the FRSLC butterfly garden. At this writing, the grassy knoll once known as the 'gymnasium' is the projected location. As partners, the Preserve and Biosphere have been cultivating pollinator plants and native grasses in the greenhouse at the headquarters since April. Some of these plants are ready to be put in the ground. Among the plants in the greenhouse are butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), green milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*), rough coneflower (*Rudbeckia grandiflora*), shiny coneflower (*Rudbeckia texana*), slender blazing-star (*Liatris acidota*), lanceleaf coreopsis, (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), and frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*).

In preparation for planting, the Preserve will remove existing grasses on the knoll and prep that portion of the site. They will be producing a map of the site for further cultivation.

Our goal is a partial planting on **Public Lands Day, Saturday, September 24**, using the greenhouse pollinator plants and native grasses. Our hope is to have volunteers to complete this first effort. Look for further information on websites, Facebook and Instagram as the project continues and planting day nears. This is long term-project. If you cannot participate in this planting, be patient. There is more to come.



Butterfly milkweed



FRS landscape

PHOTO CONTEST

Fall Theme: Waterways of the Big Thicket

Attention BTA members! The BTA is inaugurating its first quarterly photo contest focused on Scenes from the Big Thicket. Our fall theme will be the waterways that wind their way through and along the mighty forests of our region. Let your creative energy flow! The winner of this competition will receive four free passes aboard the Ivory Bill. The winning photo will also be published in our quarterly newsletter and posted on our social media pages. Deadline for submissions is November 1. Contest open to all BTA members 18 years of age or older. Limit one photo submission per member. Please submit all entries to www.bigthicket.org or use this QR code:



Photo courtesy Diane Adrian Thompson



2022 BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION AWARDS

Mary Catherine Johnston, BTA board member, Awards Committee Chairman

The BTA wishes to explore and recognize the accomplishments of exceptional individuals who have demonstrated dedication and service to the Big Thicket and its preservation. The following have been selected for the 2022 BTA Awards.



Thomas E. Lubbert Achievement Award, in recognition of outstanding service to the Preserve and whose work exemplifies exceptional dedication over a sustained period:

Andrew Bennett, biologist for Big Thicket National Preserve since January 2017. He previously worked as a botanist for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in New Orleans, Louisiana and earned his Bachelor of Science in plant biology from the University of Texas at Austin and Master of Science in wildlife management from Stephen F. Austin State University. He serves as the Big Thicket Association's liaison with the Thicket of Diversity and approves the submission of data for species inventory work. As a member of the Preserve's resource management division, Andrew is heavily involved in restoration projects in the Longleaf pine savannah ecosystem that utilize prescribed fire, mastication, herbicide, and planting of Longleaf pine and native groundcover plants. Andrew also develops new project ideas in research and restoration, and has successfully secured funding for a variety of studies in wildlife and floristics, restoration work, internships, and youth corps crews.

Photo: Andrew Bennett - NPS



Distinguished Service Award, in recognition of achievement in preservation of natural, cultural, and academic resources:

Wanda A. Landrey, local historian, descended from East Texas pioneers and a storytelling family. Born and raised in Beaumont, she taught World History at Westbrook High School. Wanda returned to Lamar University and earned her Masters degree in History. Her thesis “Lawlessness in the Big Thicket” became the basis for her first book, *Outlaws in the Big Thicket*. Subsequent books include *Boardin’ in the Big Thicket: Reminiscences and Recipes of the Early Big Thicket Boarding Houses, 1990*; *Lost in the Big Thicket: A Mystery and Adventure in the Big Thicket of Texas, 1997*; *The Historic Belle-Jim Hotel, Jasper, Texas: Remembrances and Recipes of those Who Knew It Best, 1999*; *The Ghosts of Spindletop Hill, 2000*; and *Betting, Booze, and Brothels: Vice, Corruption, and Justice in Jefferson County, Texas, 2006*. The many oral histories Wanda conducted as part of her research make her work unique. Wanda’s collection is now part of Lamar University Historical Archives.

Photo: Wanda Landrey, photo by Mary Catherine Johnston



R.E. Jackson Conservation Award:

Geese Bullock and the Alabama-Coushatta Wildland Fire Management Team. From building homes and weaving baskets to serving important medicinal purposes, the longleaf pine has stood as a pillar of the Alabama-Coushatta’s way of life, shaping their culture and customs. Longleaf pines are fire-resistant. At the same time, they need fire to survive and thrive. Traditionally, the Tribe has used controlled burns to manage their woodlands. In 2012, the Tribe planted over 200 acres of longleaf seedlings. Now mostly mature, these pines are stewarded with prescribed fire by the Tribe's Wildland Fire Management crew. Headed by Gesse Bullock, the team is working hard to remove competing vegetation, create healthier stands through thinning, and put nutrients back into the soil. Ultimately, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas hopes to restore and preserve nearly 400 acres of longleaf pine forest on tribal lands, with prescribed fire playing a leading role in this endeavor.

Photo: Gesse Bullock gathers the Fire Management crew for a briefing - Clair Everett/TNC



Balloon Releases Cause Harm

Letter to the editor of the Beaumont Enterprise, by Dale M. Parish, BTA board member, in response to a photograph published in the August 8, 2022 Enterprise

It was irresponsible of the Beaumont Enterprise to run a photo on page 4A Monday as a “celebration” which causes harm to wildlife. I refer to the releasing of balloons where they are not contained such that they fall to the ground in open areas and are mistaken for food by wildlife, in addition to contributing to the litter of our open areas. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department both have publicized this problem and it is hard to conceive that the Beaumont Enterprise is not aware of this problem and would picture celebrations of this sort. Texas Master Naturalists conducting beach cleanups at Sea Rim State Park continually pick up many, many balloons that have drifted over the Gulf of Mexico and then wash up on our beaches. I find them in my pastures and know that they are a problem outside of cities where wildlife is sparse and public awareness of this problem isn’t common. Please remind your readers that this is NOT an appropriate “celebration” – it is littering and detrimental to the wildlife we have remaining. Please don’t glorify a problem with your newspaper.

Scott Solomon, PH.D. to speak at Big Thicket Day on The Neches

Bruce Walker, BTA board member, Big Thicket Day committee



We are pleased to have Dr. Scott Solomon as the keynote speaker for our Big Thicket Day on the Neches annual event. Dr. Solomon is a biologist, professor, and science communicator. He teaches ecology, evolutionary biology, and scientific communication as an Associative Teaching Professor at Rice University. Dr. Solomon is also a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History. He has a Ph.D. in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior from the University of Texas at Austin where his research examined the evolutionary basis of biological diversity in the Amazon Basin. He has taught field biology at Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Gothic, Colorado and in the rainforest and reefs of Belize. He developed two complete digital lecture series with The Great Courses called *Why Insects Matter: Earth's Most Essential Species* and *What Darwin Didn't Know: The Modern Science of Evolution*. Before coming to Rice, he worked as a visiting researcher with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC and Sao Paulo State University in Rio Claro, Brazil. Dr. Solomon often speaks and writes about science at schools, museums, churches, science cafés, TEDx events and other venues. Despite what the Internet may say, Dr. Solomon hasn't (yet) played in the NFL.

Dr. Scott Solomon - photo and content from Rice University:
<http://solomon.rice.edu/>



Cathy Johnston entertaining during lunch break at BTA Board of Directors meeting, July 9, Field Research Station, Saratoga. Who knew we had such talent in our midst?



Susan Jones, BTA Advisory Director, and Bruce Walker, BTA Ivory Bill Committee Chairman, at the Beaumont Farmers Market, promoting the Neches River Rally, Neches River Adventures, and BTA memberships. Of the 80 guesses as to the number of frogs in our fishbowl, Janice Gonzalez of Sour Lake came closest, winning 2 free passes aboard the Ivory Bill!



Jennie Knapp, BTA's Environmental Educator, set up a benthic demonstration at Mike Hoke Outdoor Appreciation Day, in August. Assisting her are Cameron and Vivian Knapp. Photo by Nancy Angell



Our June Eco-Art Boat on photography, featuring Keith Carter. Shown are Keith Carter, Captain Tim Wynkoop, and Cathy Spence. Photo by Bruce Walker

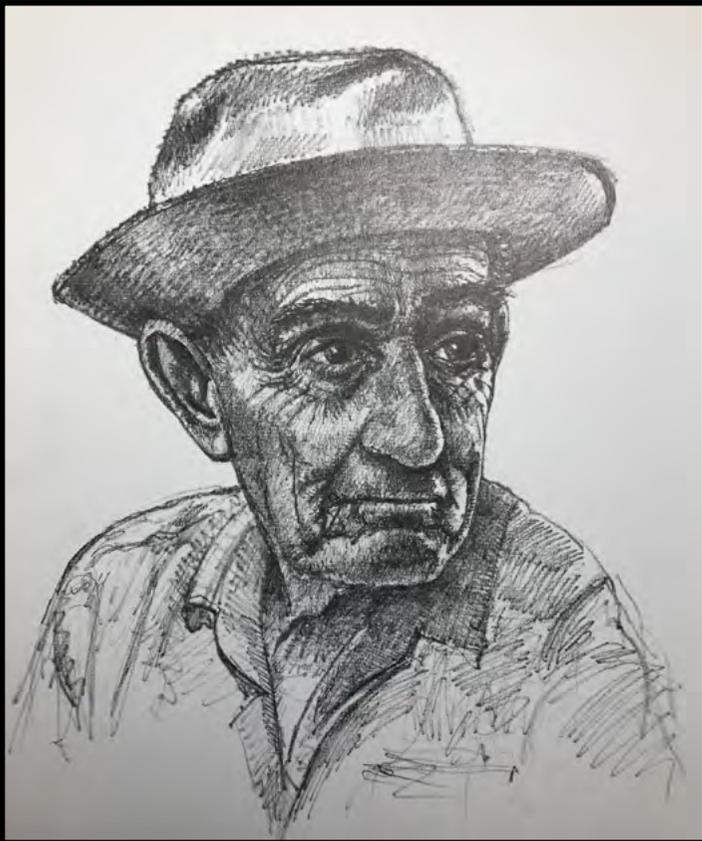


Painting by Isabelle Scurry Chapman

Prothonotary Warbler

Phoebe H. Dishman, BTA director, Bulletin editor

Where tranquil Neches meets the brush
 a might outcry breaks the hush!
 Flash of yellow gives a clue—
 oh little warbler, is that you?
 For a moment on a tree
 his sunshine glory blesses me
 then off he streaks into the gloam
 still giving thanks for this, his home—
 reverberating, radiant heat
 like someone shouting "tsweet tsweet tsweet!"
 Full of cheer, as if to say,
 "Life is going just my way!
 I've found some tasty beetle treats
 for my wife and me to eat!
 I've found some holes within some trees—
 good real estate for her and me!
 I like them all, I do, yes sir,
 moss-lined the best, then bowed to her,
 to make the choice, the perfect one
 where we can nest and raise our young!
 Prothonotary, that's my name
 Jubilation, that's my game!"
 Thank you, Mr. Excellent P
 For the jolt of joy you brought to me.



Drawing of Lance Rosier, by Michael Frary

“We went to Saratoga, where we met Lance” Michael Frary (1918-2005)

Excerpt from *Impressions of the Big Thicket*, University of Texas Press, 1973:

We went to Saratoga where we met Lance. All he did to prepare for the four-day camping trip was to put on his old brown hat and say, “Let’s go.” He directed us to an isolated spot on Menard Creek near Whoop and Holler. After helping to set up camp, which consisted of one small tent and folding cots for everyone, I went off some distance and started two water colors. When I returned it was practically dark and everyone was sitting by the fire. Lance was explaining the sounds of the approaching night. He related each sound to a specific insect or animal and told something of interest about each one. As he did this, I began to “see” into the forest even though it was dark. The Thicket began to open up and take on a life of its own. Later on Lance identified smells and tastes in the same manner. He loved the Thicket with all of his senses.



SAVE THE DATES

Neches River Adventures: Public Tours from March - November 2022

10am to 12pm
Collier's Ferry Park, 5390 Pine Street, Beaumont, TX 77703

2 Hour: Eco-History Tours every Saturday from March 26th to November 5th. Leaving Collier's Ferry Park at 10am. Tour the Neches River's backwater channels into the Big Thicket National Preserve and the Port of Beaumont. Check our online scheduling for departure details and schedule changes for certain dates. Reserve your space aboard the Ivory Bill. Fees apply.

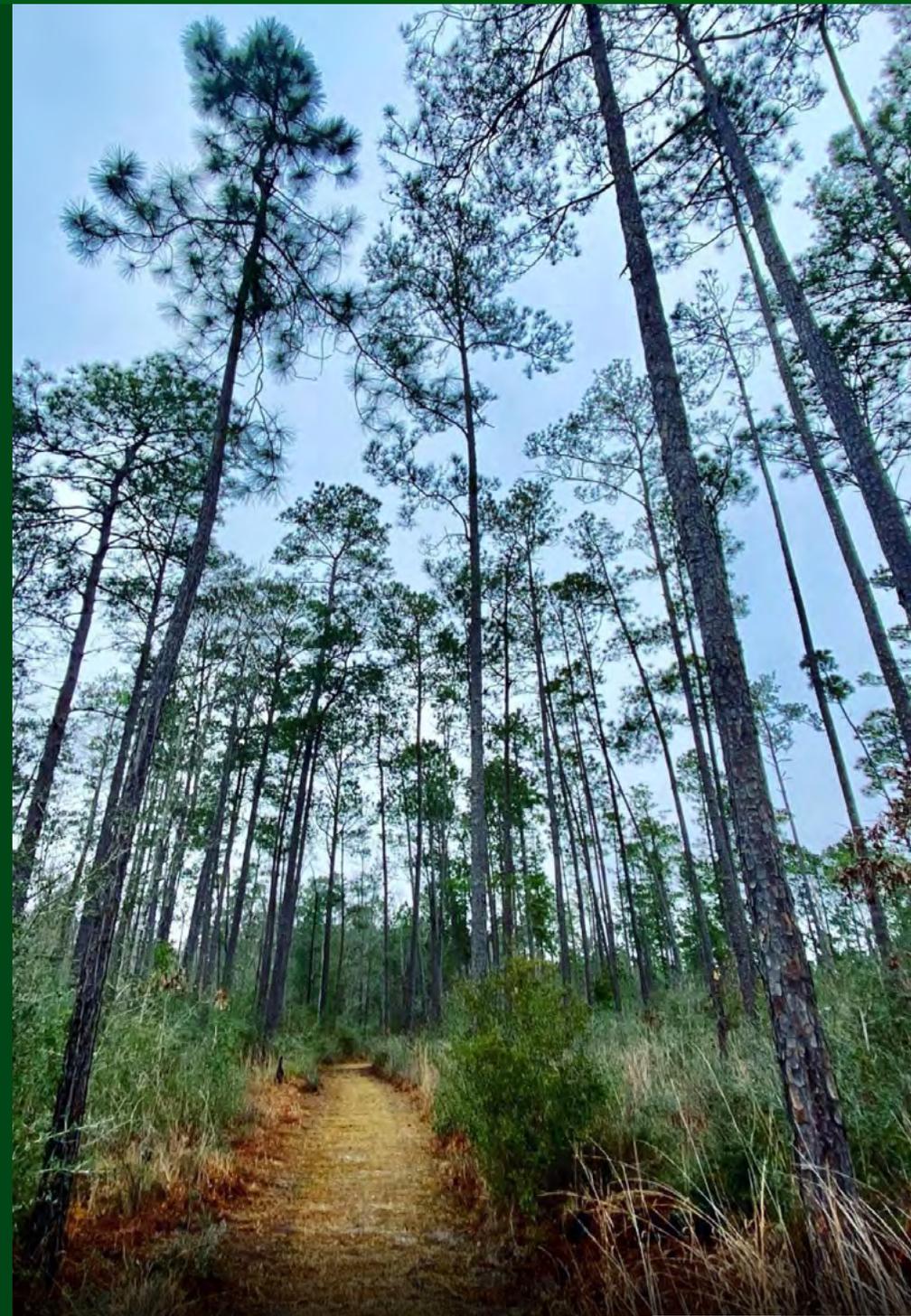
National Public Lands Day: Saturday, September 24th

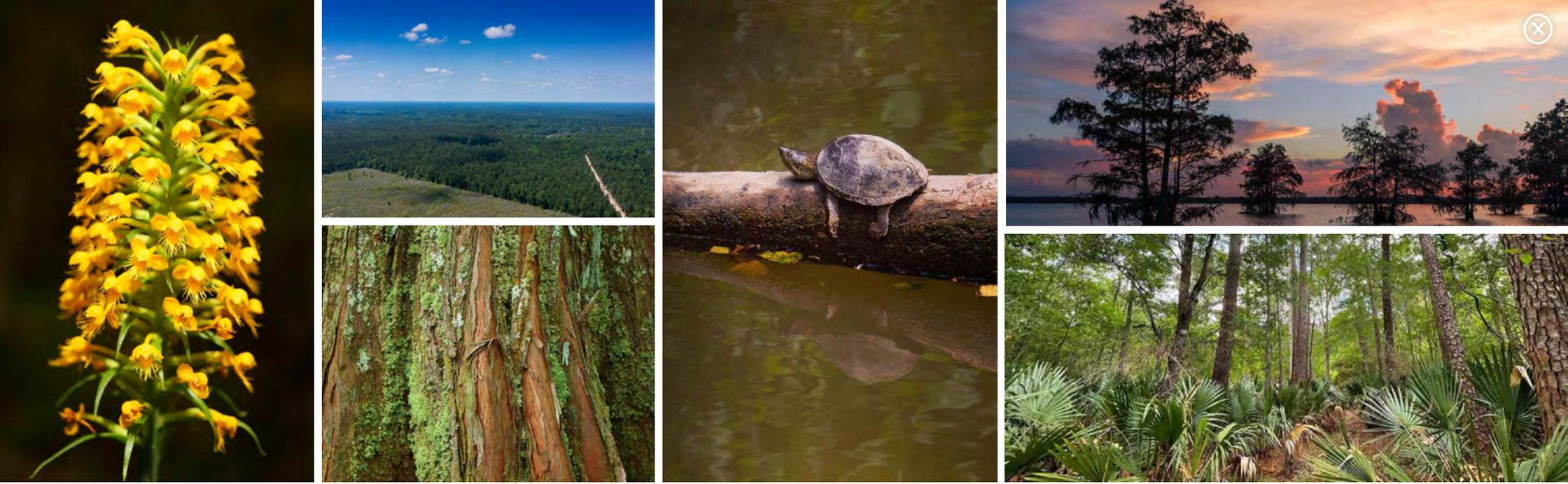
Volunteer opportunities: 1) Field Research Station in Saratoga, working with resource management to prepare and plant a new pollinator garden. 2) Trash clean up of the sandbar along Village Creek off Hwy 96 between Lumberton and Silsbee. 3) Trail beautification of the Turkey Creek Trailhead starting from Gore Store Road. Registration for the events is encouraged but not required; for more information, please call Heidi Dietze at 409-951-6725.

Big Thicket Day on the Neches: October 8, 2022

10am to 3pm
Collier's Ferry Park, 5390 Pine Street, Beaumont, TX 77703

Big Thicket Day on the Neches is a **FREE EVENT** that is open to the public. Activities in the park begin with our annual membership gathering at 10:00am. Beginning at 11:30am enjoy a complimentary picnic lunch, live entertainment, free boat tours aboard the Ivory Bill, and other activities for the entire family.

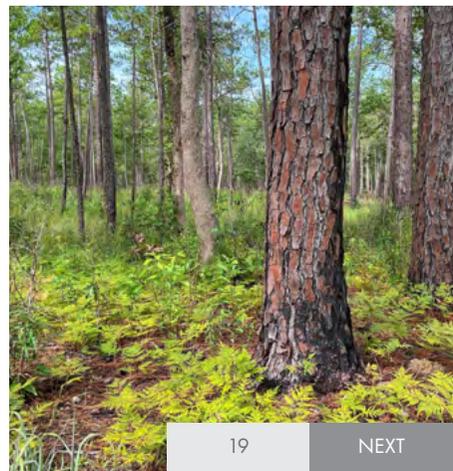
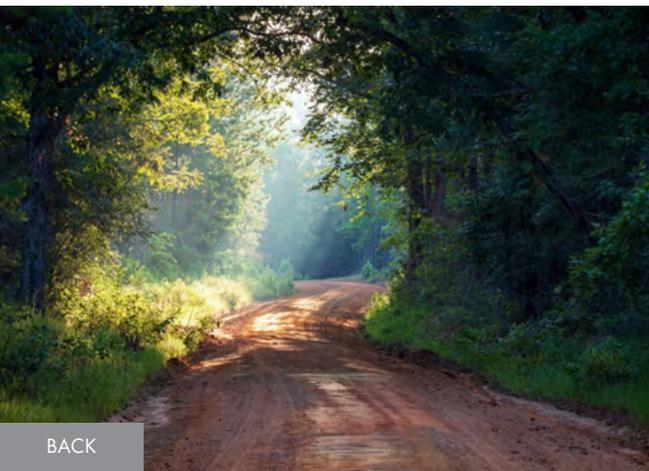




BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION

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

Web Sites

Big Thicket Association
www.bigthicket.org

Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust
www.bigthickettrust.org

Big Thicket National Preserve
www.nps.gov/bith

Conservation Fund
www.conservationfund.org

Gulf States Mycological Society
www.gsmco.org

National Audubon Society
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org
www.houstonaudubon.org

National Parks Conservation Association
www.npca.org

Native Plant Society of Texas
www.npsot.org

Nature Conservancy
www.nature.org/texas

Neches River Flood Planning Group
www.nechesfloodplanning.org

Outdoor Nature Club, Houston
www.outdoornatureclub.org

Sierra Club Golden Triangle Group
www.sierraclub.org/texas/golden-triangle

Texas Black Bear Alliance
texasblackbear.weebly.com

Texas Conservation Alliance
www.TCAtexas.org

Texas Master Naturalist Association,
Sabine Neches Chapter
www.txmn.org/sabine

Village Creek State Park
tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/village-creek

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

