

BIG THICKET BULLETIN



July · August · September 2015
Issue #127

NECHES RIVER RALLY SET FOR SEPTEMBER 12TH



The Big Thicket Association will host the 2nd Annual Neches River Rally Saturday, September 12th at the LNVA Saltwater Barrier boat launch on Bigner Road in Beaumont, Texas. Entry fees start at \$35 for single paddlers and include lunch, official event T-shirt, goodies and local entertainment.

This canoe and kayak rally takes paddlers on one of the most popular paddling trails in Southeast Texas - The Cooks Lake to Scatterman trail is designated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as an Official Texas Paddling Trail. It follows Pine Island Bayou, Cooks Lake, Scatterman Lake, and the Neches River. The trail features the famous Madonna Tree with a paddle through a cypress-tupelo forest in the Big Thicket National Preserve.

This unique looped style trail eliminates shuttling issues since there is only one access point in and out of the river. Both private and rental canoes and kayaks are allowed. However rental pre-arrangements with outfitters must be made prior to event date. There will be no on site rental availability day of event.

The Neches River Rally, a family friendly event. Entry fees and sponsorships help support the Big Thicket Association's mission of promoting conservation, environmental education classes, and scientific research in the Big Thicket National Preserve. The Neches River Rally appreciates the generous support of its partners: Bernsen Law Firm, Lower Neches Valley Authority, JK Subaru, Port of Beaumont, TOTAL, WestRock, Beaumont Convention and Visitors Bureau, and members of Big Thicket Association.



For more information or to register for the Neches River Rally, log-on to www.bigthicket.org, or call the Neches River Rally office at +1.409.790.5399, or follow us on Facebook at Neches River Rally.

SHARE YOUR THICKET – CENTENNIAL PHOTO CONTEST

Share Your Thicket – Centennial Photo Contest

As part of the National Park Service's Centennial celebration, Big Thicket National Preserve invites visitors to explore the preserve and share their photos in a year-long photo contest. Beginning in August of 2015, park visitors will be invited to submit photos via Instagram for entry into the contest using the hashtag #BigThicketPhotoContest. Monthly winners will be chosen in three categories and displayed in our park visitor center. An overall winner will be chosen in the fall of 2016 and displayed in the visitor center for one year.

Each month photos of visitors exploring the preserve and images that capture its beauty will be highlighted. Winners will be chosen monthly by a panel of Big Thicket National Preserve staff and volunteers. All ages are welcomed and encouraged to have fun while photographing the preserve.

Additional information about this photo contest and how to participate can be found on the preserve website at www.nps.gov/bith.

During this centennial year, Big Thicket National Preserve will be encouraging our neighbors and visitors to explore, support, and connect with the preserve by participating in a number of special centennial programs. Learn more about how you can get involved in this year-long celebration on our website.

The National Park Service will celebrate its centennial in 2016 and is using this opportunity to invite a new generation of Americans, and those who already know and love the parks, to discover what national parks and other public lands mean to them through the Find Your Park campaign. To learn more or get involved, visit FindYourPark.com.

Texas Conservation Alliance builds support for Water Recycling in State Legislature

Dallas Representative Yvonne Davis' House Concurrent Resolution 74 on municipal water recycling has generated an amazing broad-base of support in the Texas Legislature. After securing passage in the House, time ran out for the resolution in the Senate. Even without final passage, HCR 74 laid the groundwork for future legislation in water recycling.

Our most enthusiastic thanks to the many people who made calls to legislators and helped in other ways to get HCR 74 through the House. Special kudos to David Marquis, TCA's Communications Consultant on water, who coordinated support for the resolution across the state.

Uncertain water resources stress the need for Water Recycling – This year, people are breathing a sigh of relief as lakes and rivers are full and the ground remains saturated from record-breaking spring rains. Does this mean we can stop worrying about water supply? Not at all.

Texas' economy is booming and the population is expected to double in fifty years. Given the demand for a predictable supply of drinking water and the unpredictability of changing global weather patterns – as evidenced by recent intense floods preceded by a multiyear drought – a reliable state water supply is a top priority. Texas Conservation Alliance is looking ahead to the 2017 State Legislature, and the opportunity to build on the success of this session's water resolution. Until then, we will continue our water recycling education and outreach program because water recycling is "the wave of the future." Please share this message with your civic group – go to TCA's water recycling page at www.tcatexas.org/alliance-connections/water-recycling/.

Book Signing by Phoebe Hambright Dishman at the Clifton Steamboat Museum

The Clifton Steamboat Museum (8727 Fannett Road, Beaumont, TX 77705) is hosting book reading and signing of *Evangeline and the Mysterious Strangers*, a new book by Phoebe Hambright Dishman, on Thursday, September 10, 2015 from 6-8 p.m., in the Audubon Gallery of the Clifton Steamboat Museum. *Evangeline and the Mysterious Strangers* will be available for purchase at this event.

About the Author

Phoebe Hambright Dishman of Beaumont, Texas, is an avid birder and observer of natural life. She is also an essayist, poet, and certified lay speaker in the United Methodist Church. The cover of the book features a red-shouldered hawk, a photograph she took on Christmas Day, 2009.

About the Book

Who are the mysterious strangers that regularly visit this quiet and unassuming street in Southeast Texas? Careful now. Things may not be as they appear. And the world you live in may be more mysterious than you think. In this collection of essays, the author expresses her amusement and enchantment with the enigmatic creatures in her own back yard on *Evangeline Lane*. For more information contact: Sarah Wells at Sarah@cliftonsteamboatmuseum.com or +1.409.842.3162.

51ST BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 10, 2015 9:00 – 11:30 a.m.,
BEAUMONT COUNTRY CLUB
5355 Pine Street BEAUMONT, TEXAS

BOARD MEETING AGENDA

9:00 Coffee
9:30 Board of Directors Business Meeting, Jan Ruppel, President
Approval of Minutes
Reports

MEMBERSHIP MEETING AGENDA

Welcome – Jan Ruppel, President

Award Ceremony

Speaker: Jim Blackburn

Lunch at Collier's Ferry Park

2015 BIG THICKET DAY EVENTS

Come join us for a day of fall fun at
COLLIER'S FERRY PARK LOCATION

Adjacent to Country Club from 11:30 a.m.
to 3:00 p.m.

KICK-OFF FOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
2016 CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Activities available for the day:

IVORY BILL will be moored at the dock for rides down the Neches, cost is \$5 per person, children 3 and under free

BOAT RENTALS will be available for a tour through the Preserve's Beaumont Unit

Booths will offer a hands-on activities for children, as well as information about their organization

Entertainment will be provided

Free parking and entry into park

The Neches River will be the site of our celebration this year. Join us in commemorating 51 years of emphasis on conservation, preservation and promotion of the Big Thicket National Preserve.



BIG THICKET ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING SPEAKER

Jim Blackburn, our speaker, is a professor in the practice of environmental engineering in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department at Rice University, teaching courses in sustainable development and environmental law. He is also a practicing environmental lawyer with the BlackburnCarter law firm in Houston and a Rice faculty scholar at the Baker Institute. At Rice, he serves as the co-director of the Severe Storms Prevention, Education and Evacuation from Disaster (SSPEED) Center and as director of the undergraduate minor in energy and

water sustainability. At the SSPEED Center, Blackburn has been responsible for the development of landscape-scale green space solutions for surge damage mitigation, including the Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area and a Web-based ecological services exchange as well as structural alternatives. He is the author of "The Book of Texas Bays" (Texas A&M University Press, 2004), which focuses on the environmental health of bays in Texas and the efforts undertaken to protect them. He has received various public service awards, including the Barbara C. Jordan Community Advocate Award from Texas Southern University in 2007, the National Conservation Achievement Award from the National Wildlife Federation in 2001 and the Bob Eckhardt Lifetime Achievement Award for coastal preservation efforts from the Texas General Land Office in 1998. In 2003, he was awarded an honorary membership by the American Institute of Architects for legal work associated with urban quality of life issues in Houston. Blackburn received a B.A. in history and a J.D. from The University of Texas at Austin and an M.S. in environmental science from Rice University.

2015 AWARD WINNERS

The awards committee selected an outstanding field of recipients for 2015.

Thomas E. Lubbert Superior Achievement Award: Mike Hughes

Mike Hughes is a Law Enforcement Ranger who began his employment at BITH in 2001. As the DOI-MOCC - Motor Boat Operator Certified Instructor, he trains all staff, and works cooperatively with USFWS, USCG and other state and local agencies. Mike also teaches State Hunting Education, which has impacted many youths and adults over the years. He is a 25 year veteran of Law Enforcement and over the past 15 years he has proven to be a valuable asset to BITH.

R.E. Jackson Conservation Award: Janice Bezanson.

Janice Bezanson is the executive director of Texas Conservation Alliance (TCA). She has 30 years of experience protecting rivers, forests, and water resources. Her efforts have led to public protection of more than 100,000 acres. She has successfully campaigned for creating and protecting wildlife refuges and other natural areas, supplying water from existing reservoirs rather than building new dams that inundate wildlife habitat, and improving forest management on public lands. She advises citizens dealing with local environmental problems and connects them to the broader conservation picture.

Maxine Johnston Distinguished Service Award: Ken Kramer

Ken Kramer is the volunteer Water Resources Chair and Legislative Advisor for the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. Dr. Kramer retired in July 2012 after over 23 years as the first Director of the Lone Star Chapter and a previous seven years as the Chapter's contract lobbyist, representing the Sierra Club at the Texas Legislature and Texas state agencies. Dr. Kramer currently serves on the state's Water Conservation Advisory Council, the Trinity and San Jacinto Rivers and Galveston Bay Environmental Flows Stakeholder Committee, the board of the Texas Water Foundation, and the Advisory Council for the Environmental Science Institute at The University of Texas at Austin.



A REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED



Arthur "Buddy" Temple, III

Angelina County on Tuesday lost business and conservationist Arthur "Buddy" Temple, III. He was 73. Temple passed away on Tuesday, April 14, 2015, at his home in Lufkin with family members and close friends by his side.

Mr. Temple was born in Texarkana, Arkansas, to Mary Denman and Arthur Temple, Jr. on Feb. 26, 1942.

He was raised in Lufkin and attended Lufkin Public Schools and St. Stephens Episcopal School in Austin. He was graduated from the Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville, New Jersey and attended The University of Texas at Austin before enlisting in the U.S. Army in 1961. He served in the First Cavalry Unit of the First Armored Division as a crew chief and copilot for helicopters, since he had earned his pilot's license at the age of 15. He then worked for various businesses including the family owned Temple Industries.

Mr. Temple started his political service on the Diboll School Board in 1966 when he helped marshal the integration of

the Diboll Schools. He went on to serve four terms as State Representative from his district in East Texas. He was elected to the Texas Railroad Commission in 1980 and served as chairman from 1985-1986. Mr. Temple was a long serving member of the board of directors of Temple-Inland, Inc. and also served as chairman of the board of directors of First Bank & Trust of East Texas. He served as chairman of the T.L.L. Temple Foundation. He was a past chairman of the advisory board of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute in Kingsville.

Buddy and Ellen have won many awards for conservation in Texas, including the Lifetime Achievement Award for Conservation given by the Texas Conservation Alliance, the Aldo Leopold Award, and the Big Thicket 50th anniversary award.

Survivors: wife, Ellen Clarke Temple, of almost 45 years and four children: Whitney Sage Temple; Susan Helen Temple and her husband Rob Feagin; Hannah Lea Temple and her husband Christopher Sanders; and John Clark Hurst, Jr.; by his sister Charlotte "Chotsy" Temple; by his mother Mary Denman. Of all of his roles in life, he enjoyed most being a grandfather to Lillian Katherine Duquette, Walter Temple Duquette, Helen Terrell Feagin, Margaret April Grace, Mary Ellen Sanders and Robert Abney Sanders.



Dr. Francis "Ab" Abernethy

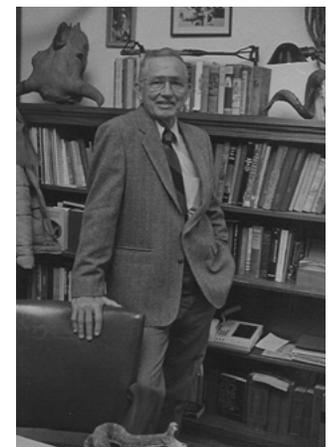
Dr. Abernethy passed away Saturday, March 21, 2015, at his home. Interment will be at Sunset Memorial Park Cemetery next to his beloved wife of 63 years, Hazel Shelton Abernethy.

Dr. Abernethy was born in Altus, Okla., on Dec. 3, 1925, and grew up in the Palestine community. The Abernethy family moved to Nacogdoches when he was a senior in high school. He graduated in 1943 and joined the Navy two weeks later, serving in the South Pacific during World War II. After the war and hitchhiking around the country for several months, Ab obtained his Bachelor of Arts from Steven F. Austin University, and a master's degree and a PhD from Louisiana State University. Dr. Abernethy

began his career at SFA in 1965 where he taught for the next 32 years. He retired in 1997 as a member of the Texas Institute of Letters, distinguished regents professor and professor emeritus.

Ab was a longtime member of the Texas Folklore Society, succeeding such greats as J. Frank Dobie, Wilson Hudson and Mody Boatright as secretary editor of the organization. He was a Master Mason as well as a member of many other organizations. Among Ab's many interests were hunting, fishing, spelunking, traveling, music, history, storytelling and teaching. He was always teaching and sharing his extensive life experiences. Dr. Abernethy was preceded in death by his wife, Hazel (Shelton) Abernethy; and his parents, Talbot and Aileen (Cherry) Abernethy.

Survivors include his children, Luanna (Abernethy) Cole and spouse, Charles, of Nacogdoches, Robert Abernethy and wife, Kim, of Boerne, Sarah "Deedy" Abernethy and spouse, Todd Weidner, of Austin, Margaret "Maggie" Abernethy-Duffin and spouse, John, of Nacogdoches, and Ben T. Abernethy and wife, Penny, of Nacogdoches; grandchildren, Elizabeth Reeves, Edward Cole, Leslie Cole, Patrick Abernethy, Sarah Abernethy and Jack Duffin; as well as four great-grandchildren. In addition to many colleagues and friends, Dr. Abernethy is also survived by his dear friend and "Sweetie," Lola (Lemkowitz) Pogue.





*Jan Ruppel, President,
Big Thicket Association*

As hot, summer days turn cooler, BTA's focus on upcoming fall events heightens.

On Saturday, September 12, the NECHES RIVER RALLY takes place on a scenic 4 to 5 mile journey on the lower Neches River. This scenic loop provides families and friends with an opportunity to experience the biological diversity of the BTNP as you explore the beautiful cypress tupelo swamp and various lakes in the Beaumont Unit. Enjoy this paddling adventure by registering on-line at www.bigthicket.org and look for Neches River Rally information.

At the ANNUAL MEETING, Saturday, October 10, starting at 9:00 a.m. at the Beaumont Country Club, BTA will host two guest speakers, BTNP newly appointed Superintendent, Wayne Prokopetz, and Jim Blackburn, a Houston environmental lawyer and Rice faculty scholar. BIG THICKET DAY celebration, will be held at Collier's Ferry Park, adjacent to the Country Club beginning at 11:30 a.m. Set aside this autumn day and join us down on the Neches River experiencing good times as you wander through booths with children's activities, listening to musical selections, hitching a \$5 ride on the "Ivory Bill", or if you are 3 or under, it's free, as you meander down the Neches into the Preserve, or if you want to go paddling, canoe and kayak rentals will be available.

NECHES RIVER ADVENTURES continues its program through November. The Adventures program has two components. The outstanding Environmental Education program Michael Hoke and Kathy Barrios have designed is an exciting and exhilarating program which has served over 2000 students in the region with the aid of our sponsors. The Public and Private Tours Kathryn and Bruce Walker have developed have made us one of the most sought after events for those coming to Beaumont. Please remember in conversations with persons coming to Beaumont to promote this wonderful BTA program. Have them go on line www.bigthicket.org to learn more about what BTA offers as we promote the Big Thicket National Preserve.

ADMINISTRATION – Both NPS and BTA Committee members have worked diligently for 8 months on an agreement. Chief of Resource, Ken Hyde, has written numerous agreements seeking to find language both BTA and the Intermountain Region Office could sanction. I appreciate his steadfast persistence. Fortunately, we had a breakthrough in negotiations at our June meeting. At this time, the agreement is being reviewed by the solicitors.

With the increase in projects over the past 2 years, the staff and the president's workload has intensified. Now that I have experience with both Neches River Rally and the Big Thicket Day Celebration, we formed committees in January of 2015 and timelines were developed for both projects lessening our need for meetings, and allowing us to be more efficient in our use of time. The staff and I have begun meeting several times during the month to increase our understanding and depth of each person's job and responsibilities as well as providing a forum for problem solving.

Since January, John Stafford took over as VP. He has continued his support in technology, and along with Dale Parish is working in setting up SharePoint for efficiency in communication among committees and board members. John has encouraged BTA to purchase more software programs that we predict will make membership documentation and letter campaigns more efficient. John has also taken the responsibility of heading up the Legacy and Membership Committees.

Grab your gear and head to Beaumont for some great times on the Neches this fall.

Jan Ruppel

President, Big Thicket Association





WestRock Supports Neches River Adventures and Environmental Education Classes

Penny Sullivan, Public Relations Manager with WestRock presents a \$10,000 check to Michael Hoke, Big Thicket Association Director of Environmental Education Classes on-board the Ivory Bill. Pictured from left to right are Michael Hoke, Jan Ruppel-BTA President, Penny Sullivan, and Bruce Walker-BTA Executive Director

WestRock was formed after MeadWestvaco and RockTenn recently merged, creating the second-largest packing company in the United States. This generous donation to the Big Thicket Association will be used to fund the Neches River Adventure's Environmental Education Classes, the Neches River Rally, and Big Thicket Day.

"One of our main goals is to support programs that align with our core values. The Big Thicket Association's outreach through education will have an extremely positive outcome on our environment", says Penny Sullivan. "We are proud to be able to support the Big Thicket Association and the communities in which we work and live." WestRock's Evadale facility provides over 700 highly skilled competitive paying jobs to Southeast Texas.

The program is an environmental education program developed by the BTA. Students travel the Neches River on-board the Ivory Bill, a 45 foot pontoon boat. They take part in a variety of experiments that involve a hands-on exploration of aquatic life in the Neches. Funding provided by area businesses, industries, and organizations gives the BTA the opportunity to offer these classes free of charge to schools in the region. Staff on board the Ivory Bill includes a licensed captain, deckhand, and a certified teacher trained in providing aquatic experiences for students. Other donors include LNVA, TOTAL, Port of Beaumont, BASE, City of Beaumont, YMBL, and members of the Big Thicket Association. For more information about Neches River Adventures and the Big Thicket Association follow them on Facebook or log-on to www.bigthicket.org.

Parks and Teachers: The Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Program in Big Thicket National Preserve

For the tenth year in a row, Big Thicket National Preserve participated in the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher (TRT) program. Blanca Jones, a 1st grade teacher at Sam Houston Elementary School in Port Arthur, worked as TRT from late May into early August of 2015. In addition to creating and leading children's programs in the preserve throughout the summer, she also developed a lesson plan based on the Big Thicket to use in her classroom and completed three hours of graduate coursework in place-based education. She took hundreds of photos throughout the preserve in order to share the scenery, plants, animals, fungi, and her experiences here with her students and colleagues, and has already arranged a field trip to bring many of her fellow teachers from the Port Arthur area to the preserve for a ranger-led hike.

"We greatly appreciate all of Ms. Jones' hard work, energy, and creativity this summer. We hope that her experience here will lead to further collaboration between Big Thicket National Preserve, Sam Houston Elementary School, and other schools and families in the area," said Chief of Interpretation and Education Jason Ginder.

Funding for the TRT program was provided by a grant from the Washington Office of the National Park Service. National park sites throughout the country participate in this program, giving hundreds of teachers the opportunity to share their educational skills with parks, and their park experiences with their students.

In the spring of each year, Big Thicket National Preserve and other park units around the country recruit teachers for this dynamic program. For more information, teachers are encouraged to go to the TRT website at www.teacherrangerteacher.org.



Front row: Caitlyn Hudak, Cindy Reed, Blanca Jones, Allison Bishop, and Michael East. Back row: Kane Fashbaugh, Josh Stringer, Tom Avery, and Max Harper.

Thicket National Preserve Announces Centennial Programs

The National Park Service (NPS) is turning 100 years old in August 2016! Throughout the Centennial year ahead, we are proudly celebrating our role in helping Americans make meaningful connections to nature, history, and culture. We encourage people of all ages to explore and discover their public lands in the hope of creating positive connections that will ensure support and enjoyment for generations to come. Our national parks are often referred to as “America’s best idea,” and we invite all Americans to find what the idea of a “park” means to you and celebrate these extraordinary treasures.

Big Thicket National Preserve strives to play a meaningful role in the Centennial to help more Americans make a personal connection to our public lands and launch the National Park Service’s second century. Our main goal is to increase the support and advocacy for the preserve in southeast Texas and beyond. Over the next year Big Thicket National Preserve will attempt to engage new audiences and longtime supporters, with Centennial programs and events which encourage recreation, community involvement, artistic expression, and preservation of our natural resources.

Volunteering is a great way to make a difference and maintain the preserve’s natural beauty for everyone’s enjoyment. It also provides a terrific learning opportunity for groups and individuals - especially kids! Be a part of our Centennial program to “adopt” portions of our hiking trails and most frequently used areas for general cleanliness and maintenance. Park rangers are also seeking community groups and individual volunteers to plant over 100,000 longleaf pine seedlings and create a 300 acre “Centennial Forest” among an existing 100 year old longleaf pine forest damaged by pine beetle infestations and hurricane events.

This Centennial year, we are encouraging outdoor exploration, fitness, recreation, and education in the preserve through unique and interesting opportunities. Come and explore your thicket through our trails or waterways, identified earth caches, back-country traveling, fitness events (running, hiking, paddling), and Ranger-led programs. Record enough distance either on your own or through one of our programs and become a member of our elite “Centennial Club.”

Each unit and season within the preserve offers a beautifully unique opportunity to learn, explore, relax, and discover your artistic expression of nature. Your photos taken while exploring could make you a winner! Our monthly Centennial photo contest provides an opportunity to for visitors to share their photographs in friendly “competition” in three categories – nature and landscape, recreation and selfies, and human history. Park staff will select monthly winners and winning photos will be displayed within the visitor’s center for everyone’s enjoyment.



Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming Events

Now through November 21, 2015

Neches River Adventures – Saturday tours 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Call for reservations +1.409.651.5326

August 27, 2015

ETBBTF meets at the FRS in Saratoga from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

September 2015

Ballots go out – **Members please vote then send into FRS**

September 12, 2015

Neches River Rally – BTA Canoe and Kayaking Fundraiser at the Lnva Saltwater Barrier. Visit www.bigthicket.org to register

October 10, 2015

Annual BTA Meeting at the Beaumont Country Club from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Big Thicket Day Celebration to follow the meeting at Collier’s Ferry Park on the Neches River adjacent to the country club.

August 25, 2016

National Park Service (NPS) turns 100 years-old!

2015-2016

ART WORKS “Imagine Your Parks!”



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WEBSITES

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

Gulf States Mycological Society
www.gsmyco.org

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

National Parks Conservation 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

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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 visit: www.bigthicket.org