

Big Thicket Reporter - #107 Sept-Oct 2010

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BIG THICKET DAY – OCTOBER 9

Pres. Bruce Drury will call the membership business meeting to order Oct. 9 at 9:30 AM at the Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor Center north of Kountze at FM 420. The agenda includes minutes, treasurer's report and committee reports, plus new business.

The program begins at 10:15 with the President's report, presentation of awards and life membership certificates. Supt. Todd Brindle will update and preview the General Management Plan, and Wendy Ledbetter will report on the Thicket of Diversity. Other speakers have been invited but not yet confirmed.

Lunch is at 12:00 Noon Tickets will be available based on costs.

THICKET STOMPIN'

Pres. Drury would like to get members out into the woods to enjoy what BTA has worked 46 years to preserve and protect. Trips will be lead by Preserve staff and include:

- Canyonlands Unit Hike, 1:30-4:30 A moderately strenuous hike in the Canyonlands unit of the Preserve
- Village Creek Canoe Trip, 1:30-4:30
- Cardinal Adventure, 2:00-4:30 From Colliers Ferry Park in Beaumont take a trip up the Neches and into Ten Mile Creek
- Driving Tour, 1:30 -4:00 Those who are less ambulatory can enjoy a reminder of the natural and cultural history of the Lance Rosier Unit from the comfort of a chauffeured van.

Mark you calendars and check the website for updates. Register for field trips online or by e-mail director@bigthicket.org

DAVID LEWIS EARNS R.E. JACKSON CONSERVATION AWARD



David Lewis, Texas, Gulf Coast mushroom expert extraordinaire, will be honored with the R. E. Jackson Conservation Award at Big Thicket Day, October 9.

David Lewis is a retired chemist and avid mycologist. He has a B.S. and M. S. from Lamar University, Beaumont, TX, where his master's thesis was based on a study of East Texas mushrooms. Lewis worked for Temple Inland as a chemist for 20 years and retired in 2004.

He is a Research Associate with the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, IL, where 5000

specimens of his fungi are deposited. He is an honorary staff member associated with the Tracy Herbarium at Texas A&M University. Since 2006, he has been the Fungal TWIG (co-ordinator for mycologists) for the Big Thicket National Preserve All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory.

He is president of the Gulf States Mycological Society, has authored several papers related to mycology, and discovered new species of mushrooms; three species are named for him--*Cortinarius lewisii*, *Pulveroboletus lewisii* and *Russula lewisii*.

In 2009 Lewis received The North American Mycological Association's award for Contributions to Amateur Mycology.

He and his wife Patricia live on 65 heavily wooded acres in Newton County, Texas where they study plants, fungi and wildlife.

DIVERSITY DISPATCH

The Thicket of Diversity (ToD) Executive Council met July 9th. A new database storage and server will be housed in a hurricane proof space at the BTNP headquarters, providing improved reporting and consistent data inventory collected by researchers. The Science Committee chair reported that 15 TWiGs were active in the field during the past three months. In addition the committee is actively seeking new TWiGs. The Council's next meeting is October 8, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. at the FRS.

Thicket of Diversity received approval for the 2010 Park Partnership Program grant of \$60,000, with a BTA match for the fiscal year.

Education/Outreach events:

- September 20—Science Café at Sugars Restaurant in Beaumont, 6:30 p.m. Tom Bell (Sierra Club) will talk about “Neches River- Science & Environmental Significance”.
- September 25—National Public Lands Day. Big Thicket NP, the BTA, and Village Creek State Park are partnering to sponsor a clean-up of Village Creek. Contact Mary Kay Manning for more details at (409) 951-6720.

Visit our website for more event details and updates: <http://www.thicketofdiversity.org/>

Become a fan of Big Thicket Research Facebook at <http://tiny.cc/TODFacebook>

CONSERVATION OUTLOOK

CONSERVATION FUND ACQUIRES LAND FOR PRESERVE

Excerpts from TCF's Quarterly Report, Summer 2010

It's time to get a new map for Big Thicket National Preserve, which recently added another 3,600 acres in Hardin and Polk counties. TCF acquired the property from Hancock Timber Management for the Preserve. The acreage includes important river corridors, productive wetlands, tall forests, open plains, pine savannas and dry sandhills, according to the Park Service. The addition also provides more opportunities for hiking, canoeing, kayaking, and wildlife viewing, the agency said.

This purchase establishes a continuous conservation corridor along Village Creek that provides habitat for migratory waterfowl and songbirds and serves as a floodplain that will benefit the communities along Village Creek and the Neches River. "The Conservation Fund has been working with the National Park Service to expand Big Thicket National Preserve and restore the Big Thicket area to its former glory for more than eight years, and we're thrilled to see this significant addition completed," said Andy Jones, director of The Conservation Fund's Texas office.

The Conservation Fund has helped preserve nearly 137,000 acres in Texas, including 32,000 acres at Big Thicket National Preserve. In addition, the Fund launched the Texas Pineywoods Experience, an ecotourism and economic development program for the region, and established Texas' largest wetlands mitigation bank, the Pineywoods Mitigation Bank.

SCIENCE CONFERENCE 2011

Daniel Saenz, Chair of the Planning Committee for the West Gulf Coastal Plain and Big Thicket Science Conference, held a teleconference Aug. 31 to review progress and confirm assignments. The Conference will be held April 8-10, 2011.

Committee chairs include: Logistics Committee, Clifford and Julie Shackelford (TP&WD and TCF); Program, Chris Comer and Warren Conway (SFASU); Publications, Jerry Cook (SHSU); Field Trips, Will Godwin (SFASU) and Jason Singhurst (TP&WD); PR/Vendor Services,

Suzanne Walker. BTA is conference treasurer; registration and the website will be managed by Linda Brindle, Maxine Johnston and Mona Halvorsen. For current information and registration form: <http://www.bigthicket.org/science-conference-2011>

B.P. GULF OIL SPILL

When disasters occur, the Interior Dept. often lends employees to other jurisdictions to help cope with problems. Trinity River National Wildlife assigned Laurie Lomas. Big Thicket National Preserve employees include Jaylynn Cummings, Eric Worsham, Pollard Mobley, Leta Parker and Lee LeJeune.



Left to right: Alex Garcia, Laurie Lomas, and Tony Arampatzis

By Laurie Lomas, Wildlife Biologist. Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge: I was deployed to Dennis Pass, Louisiana, where the Mississippi meets the Gulf of Mexico, to capture live oiled birds, recover dead birds, and to scour the beaches for new deposits of oil. If we found new oil on the ground, we reported it to the U.S. Coast Guard who sent teams to clean the beaches. Crew members scooped up the layers of oil deposited and removed all oil-soaked

vegetation and debris from the beach, including trash, sticks, fish, and crabs.

Dead or sick/injured birds were reported to us for pick-up. They were retrieved by boat and all-terrain vehicles. Unfortunately, we were often too late and the bird had died, probably from ingesting oil. If birds were not ingesting the oil directly, it could have come through the food chain – from fish and crabs found dead on the shores, from oil-soaked vegetation, or from the water they drank.

By Pollard Mobley, Contract Specialist, BTNP. I was deployed to Daphne, AL to purchase supplies and equipment for NPS projects designated as "Sensitive Lands" and USF&WS designated "Wildlife." We purchased office supplies for the Sensitive Lands Group in Mobile, AL, and NPS Finance Office. Other purchases included binoculars, coolers, space pens, GPS units, backpacks, camelbacks, polo shirts for the field workers and volunteers, and computer supplies, thumbdrives, etc. In addition we contracted for hotel rooms, meeting rooms, and rental cars.

We visited the highly secured BP building in Mobile, AL with the Deputy Incident Commander. The building housed a high population of busy officials from the NPS-Sensitive Lands, Coast Guard, Fish and Wildlife, USArmy, Navy, Marines, State DPS, Local Police Dept, etc.

Since all purchasing must be completed by 9/26/2010 for all government agencies, I returned to Texas but continue to serve the incident team as Purchasing Agent from my office in Kountze.

Two other BTNP employees are currently deployed in Daphne, AL Lee Lejeune, Administrative Officer, serves as Personnel Time Recorder and Purchasing Agent. Leta Parker, Program Assistant, is working as Personnel Time Recorder.

MEDIA

Beaumont Enterprise front-paged a story by Sarah Moore on August 13 that covered the freshwater mussel survey conducted by Nature Conservancy's staff and BTNP seasonal staff. The group covered from the Hwy 327 bridge to Baby Galvez. Mussels will be identified and confirmed by Marsha May of TPWD. Moore states that "Of some 35 species of mussels known to inhabit Village Creek, Friday's survey revealed nine, including the Louisiana fatmucket, the Western pimpleback and even an unusual spectaclecase. The largest number of mollusks found was Asian clams, an invasive species possibly brought to American waterways by ocean-going vessels and one that can be found in most Texas counties.

According to the article, in the larval stage, the organism attaches itself to fish gills, and when larger, leaves the fish and becomes known as "glochidia."

The ***Alabama Review*** reported a new book: *Journey to the West: The Alabama and Coushatta Indians*. By Sheri Marie Schuck-Hall. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008, xiii, 278pp. Pete Gunter sends information that "It is a thorough exploration of the ways the Alabamas managed to keep their identity as they moved west, dealing with one group after another in the process. It was reviewed in the *Alabama Review*, Vol.63, No. 2, April, 2010,149-151. I think it is the first really satisfactory history of the tribe: detailed, objective."

PRESERVE OVERVIEW

by Ann Roberts

The National Parks: America's Best Idea was awarded the 2010 Emmy for Outstanding Nonfiction Series. In addition, Dayton Duncan received the Emmy for Outstanding Writing for Nonfiction Programming.

WESSELS NAMED NPS INTERMOUNTAIN REGIONAL DIRECTOR

(excerpts from News Release)



WASHINGTON – National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis has named John A. Wessels as the Service’s Intermountain regional director, responsible for leading 5,000 employees and 92 national parks visited by more than 42 million people annually. Wessels assumed his new position in Denver in August.

“John has an incredible track record of tackling tough issues and finding innovative solutions,” Jarvis said... As the National Park Service looks toward its second century, he will be a valuable member of our national senior management team.”

“Serving as the Intermountain regional director is a tremendous honor,” Wessels said. “The region is home to some of this country’s most spectacular landscapes and most compelling stories, places that have been entrusted to the National Park Service by the American people for nearly 100 years...”

As the regional associate director for administration, business and technology since 2004, Wessels managed a regional annual operating budget of \$500 million and the largest concessions contracting operation in the National Park Service, more than 200 contracts that gross over \$425 million annually. Over the last 18 months, he has also led the investment of \$200 million in American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funds in priority park projects across the region...

During his career he has served as acting deputy superintendent at Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco, acting deputy Intermountain regional director, acting associate director for business services at the National Park Service headquarters in Washington, D.C., and most recently as acting superintendent of Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway in Wyoming...

Wessels earned bachelor and master of science degrees in public finance and policy analysis from Carnegie-Mellon University and a second master of science degree in computer information systems from Regis University, where he has served as an adjunct professor of business and information systems in the College of Professional Studies since 1998.

EAST TEXAS MISCELLANY

Darby-Holcomb Homestead, by Bill Tetley



The Texas Department of Agriculture's Family Land Heritage Program Awards held in Austin June 3rd recognized farms and ranches that have been in continuous agricultural production by the same family for 100 or 150 years. Ten 150-year awards honored farms/ranches this year and an additional 81 were honored for 100 years.

The Darby-Holcomb Homestead in Polk County received an award for its 150 years. The Homestead, has earned both the 100 year and 150 year awards. (R.C. Holcomb, the last descendent of Alice Darby Holcomb to own and live in the log home, received the 100 year award circa 1980.)

The awards ceremony was held in the Texas Senate chamber at 1:30. Approximately 600 attended the presentations by Todd Staples, commissioner of TDA. Each of the 150 year honorees received a certificate. After the awards were distributed, Texas poet laureate, singer and composer, Red Steagall, provided entertainment.

MEMBERS / FRIENDS: Memberships are for the calendar year, Send dues to BTA at PO Box 198, Saratoga TX 77585. New members are needed. Why not join for one of your friends? Active \$15; Supporting \$25; Seniors/ Students \$10.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Cancelled: Sept. 18 - BTNP, Rosier Unit, Driving Tour (Tour available Big Thicket Day Oct. 9)

Sept. 25 - National Public Lands Day

- Trinity River NWR, cleanup at SH 105 bridge (call 936-336-9786)
- Big Thicket National Preserve, cleanup on Village Creek (call 409-951-6700)

Oct. 2 - Sabine Woods workday, Sabine Pass

Oct. 2 - GT Sierra, Trail between the Lakes Workday, contact Bill Tetley @ 409-722

Oct. 8 - Thicket of Diversity Executive Council, Field Research Station, Saratoga, 10:00 AM

Oct. 9 - Big Thicket Day, Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor Center north of Kountze;

Field Trips afternoon: Hike in Canyonlands; Canoe Village Creek; Cardinal Adventure boat trip on Lower Neches; Driving Tour of Rosier Unit

Oct. 16 - Davis Hill State Park (tentative), call 936-262-8522 (or e-mail editor)

Nov. 13 - BTNP, Big Sandy Creek Unit, Woodlands Trail Hike. Meet at parking area on FM 1276

Marysee Prairie Workdays - First Saturdays, Oct. 2 and Nov. 6

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

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.TCAatexas.org

Village Creek State Park

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/>