

BIG THICKET DAY, OCT. 8

BTA members and friends assembled at Saratoga's Big Thicket Preserve Field Research Station for the annual Big Thicket Day program. President Mary Johnston presided and reported on organization activities.

New Supt. Doug Neighbor gave us an update on the Preserve — progress in filling vacant positions, the General Management Plan, and other challenges. Wendy Ledbetter, President, Executive Council, Thicket of Diversity, followed with a Powerpoint™ report on TWIGs, Science Cafes, etc.

Dr. Carl Knight presented a Powerpoint™ program on activities of Eastfield College students in "Project Pathways," Science Talent Expansion Program, funded by the National Science Foundation. Students in the Big Thicket Summer Research Institute conducted research with field experts in the biodiversity inventory program.

After lunch under the tent, the Charles McKee Band supplied entertainment.



The Charles McKee Band entertained visitors at Big Thicket Day on October 8.

Bonney's Big Thicket Guidebook



Lorraine Bonney visits a Mexican cemetery in Southeast Texas.

Big Thicket Day featured Lorraine G. Bonney's ***The Big Thicket Guidebook; Exploring the Backroads and History of Southeast Texas***, Temple Big Thicket Series, No. 6, University of North Texas Press. BTA ordered 100 advance copies and at the end of the day October 8, there were six copies left.

Dr. Pete Gunter (former president/author/professor of philosophy) recounted the lengthy history of research and field work, as well as attempts to reduce the massive work from 1200 to 800 pages. Bonney was reluctant to cut the text, but finally agreed to editors. Pete Gunter and Maxine Johnston tackled the job. Lorraine has generously given BTA and the UNT Press copyrights.

Thanks to munificent subsidies from the T.L.L. Temple Foundation, the book retails for \$29.95. BTA members will get 20 percent discounts on orders – plus tax and postage.

Conservation Outlook

Say No to the Keystone XL

[<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/03/opinion/say-no-to-the-keystone-xl.html?src=recg>]

Unless good sense intervenes, it looks increasingly likely that the State Department will approve the Keystone XL pipeline, which carries a coarse, acidic crude oil from northern Alberta in Canada to refineries on the Gulf Coast of Texas. That would be a mistake.

In August, the State Department... released its final environmental impact statement on the project. It found that the Keystone XL would have "no significant impact" on land and water resources along its route. We, and many others, are skeptical.

An existing pipeline carrying tar sands oil — owned by TransCanada, the Keystone XL's operator — was forced to shut down for repairs after springing two leaks last May in North Dakota and Kansas... Unfortunately, the State Department appears to be more persuaded by proponents who claim that the pipeline will help reduce America's dependence on oil from politically troubled sources in the Middle East. We are skeptical about that, too.

What pipeline advocates ... fail to mention is that much of the tar sands oil that would be refined on the Gulf Coast is destined for export. Six companies have already contracted for three-quarters of the oil. Five are foreign, and the business model of the one American company — Valero — is geared toward export. [emphasis added]

... TransCanada has said the 2,000-mile line would create 20,000 jobs in the United States. The State Depart-

ment concludes that the real number may be closer to 6,000 jobs...

There is also the larger question of whether this country should keep conducting business as usual — that is, succumbing to the status quo of politics and big oil — or whether it will seriously grapple with the reality of climate change. We again urge Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to say no to the Keystone XL.

TRINITY River N.W.R.

Headquarters Ribbon Cutting: After 18 years in rented space, Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge will have its own headquarters office and maintenance shop on Refuge property. Please save the date of January 4, 2012 at 11:00 am for a ribbon cutting ceremony and tour of the new buildings. The Refuge was created on January 4, 1994. We will soon be located at 601 FM 1011 Liberty, across the street from the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center.

Public Lands Day: Trinity River Refuge staff, Friends of Trinity River Refuge, and volunteers turned out for

the Annual National Public Lands Day clean-up event. About 800 pounds of trash were picked up along the Trinity River at the Hwy 105 bridge for about 2 hours on Sept. 24, 2011 as part of the nationwide event. Ironically, only 3 pounds of aluminum cans were found in all that trash. Would there be less trash there if monetary awards were given for glass and plastic? or if people took their trash home with them?

Temple-Inland Lands Sold: After a standoff that has lasted for months, International Paper announced on Tuesday that it had reached an agreement to acquire Temple-Inland with an increased offer of \$3.7 billion. International Paper said it would also assume \$600 million of Temple-Inland's debt as part of the deal. International Paper, the world's biggest paper and forest products company, clinched the deal after raising its offer by 5 percent, to \$32 a share in cash from \$30.60 in cash. [Excerpts, *The New York Times*, Sept. 6, 2011]

Another timber giant and good neighbor landowner bites the dust.



Volunteers participating in National Public Lands Day picked up trash along Trinity River in Liberty County on September 24.

Thicket Of Diversity News

Executive Council Meeting

The Thicket of Diversity Executive Council met at BTNP headquarters Oct. 6 with President Wendy Ledbetter presiding. The Funding Committee reported on the TLL Temple Foundation grant of \$50,000 for 2011-12 and a TCEQ Supplemental Environmental Project Grant to be conducted in Orange County. Brian Lockwood, Acting Resource Management Chief, discussed the Science Plan, and the Science Committee noted approval of a grant to JaVon Hill to inventory insects.

Science Café

A Science Café at Logon Café in Beaumont was held Oct. 7 for 30 participants. Dr. Carl Knight of Eastfield College was the speaker who reviewed "Project Pathways," the NSF funded three-year program to recruit students (especially minorities) for careers in science. The effort to attract minority students yielded participation of 46 percent minorities (29 percent Hispanic).

Foundation Grants for Thicket of Diversity

The **T.L.L. Temple Foundation** of Lufkin has again generously supported the work of the Thicket of Diversity with a gift of \$50,000 for 2011-2012. The foundation continues support that began with the inception of the program in 2007. Other examples of T.L.L. Temple Foundation generosity include contributions to construction of the Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor Center and underwriting the publications in the "Temple Big Thicket Series."

The **Brown Foundation** followed with notice of another generous award of \$50,000 for 2011-12 for the Thicket of Diversity. Indeed, the Brown Foundation was the FIRST to support the project, and we are honored and proud that they continue to support the Diversity project. Brown, too, has a long record of support for renovation of the former Museum for a Field Research Station, as well as purchases of land.

Thanks to these two foundations, the Preserve and BTA can continue the work of an All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory.

East Texas Miscellany

Hardin County Historical Commission

The Commission met Sept. 29 with Chair Jimmy McKim presiding at their new headquarters in the Old Hardin County State Bank Building. Discussions included problems at Olive Cemetery, inventories of historical assets, and replacement of the Hardin-Concord Road marker.

Plans were made for the annual Awards Luncheon to be held Nov. 10th at the Senior Citizens building. The speaker will be Darrell Shine of Silsbee, Surveyor and Historian extraordinaire.

Hardin County Cleanup

Hardin County Team City held a county-wide cleanup Saturday Sept.

17. Towns participating included Silsbee, led by Ludessa Porter; Lumberton, Brenda Erwin; Kountze; Natosha McDonald; Sour Lake, Lions Club and Chamber of Commerce; and Saratoga, Cindy Flowers.

In addition the Big Thicket National Preserve held a canoe trash pick-up on Village Creek from SH 327 to Baby Galvez, and Texas Parks and Wildlife team covered US 96 to Village Creek State Park. Other groups participating included Boy Scout Troop 770 and Eastex Canoes. Trash bags were provided by Richard Bothel, Natosha McDonald donated gloves, Silsbee Garden Club provided water and snacks, and Market Basket of Lumberton sponsored lunch for the volunteers.

Temples Receive Leopold Award

Last issue we goofed – failing to report the 2011 Texas Leopold Conservation Award from the Sand County Foundation and the TPWD Lone Star Land Steward Award program. Buddy and Ellen Temple were recognized for their restoration (transformation!) of an over-hunted, over-grazed South Texas ranch as a "haven for wildlife and a valuable research venue."

Located in Duval County, the 11,300-acre ranch was founded in 1868 by Edward Nixon Gray and his wife. The Temples have owned the property for 19 years.

Preserve Program

Discover the diversity of plants and how to identify migrating birds. Find out more about black bears. Learn about local American Indian crafts and culture. Meet researchers and learn about the work they do in the Big Thicket. All preserve programs are free of charge. Information and schedules are available at local libraries, on the internet at www.nps.gov/bith, and by phone at 409-951-6700.

In partnership with Lamar University, park rangers will also lead explorations of the Neches River and 10-Mile Bayou aboard the Cardinal Cruise pontoon boat on the first Saturday of each month. The boat leaves from Colliers Ferry Park in Beaumont at 10 am. Fees apply for the Cardinal Cruise - \$15 for adults, under 6 years \$5; for more information contact, call 409-880-8907 or visit www.lulearn.net.

Trapping Permit Registration

Supt. Douglas Neighbor announced that Big Thicket National Preserve issued 21 trapping permits for the 2011-12 State of Texas trapping season. Permits were limited to designated trapping areas: Beaumont Unit, 4; Jack Gore Baygall Unit, 7; Lance Rosier Unit, 7; and Neches Bottom Section, 3. Permits were selected by random drawing.

Teacher-Ranger-Teacher (T-R-T)

The Big Thicket Association received Entergy's generous gift for the T-R-T Program in the Big Thicket National Preserve and transferred funding.

Penny Sullivan, Public Relations Manager, **MeadWestvaco Corpora-**



Penny Sullivan, MeadWestvaco, presents Supt. Douglas Neighbor with a donation for the T-R-T program.

tion presented Supt. Douglas Neighbor a donation for the T-R-T program.

Both Entergy and MeadWestvaco have partnered with the Preserve for years to sustain this program that enables Big Thicket National Preserve to be a leader in this successful program that is now being modeled nationwide. Through donations from our community partners, five teachers a year work and study at Big Thicket National Preserve.

The summer programs and kid's camp teachers were Will Watkins, Kountze Intermediate School; Candace Doer, Tucson, Arizona; Mary

Jacob, Silsbee High School; Keith Glazner, Klein High School; Cindy Parish, Westbrook High School; Becky Begay, student intern, SUNY, and Ming Xiu, international volunteer, Texas A&M.

Cindy received the National Park Foundation "Park Stewards" grant, and her students created four Earth-Caches in the Preserve that will be posted online at www.geocaching.com. Becky worked on the Wayside Interpretive plan as well as helping with the Visitor Center and programs. Ming Xiu audited the Landscape Plan for the HQ/VC area and worked with the T-R-Ts.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING THE EASY WAY?

In our last newsletter we included a list of Big Thicket Books available. Use that form OR the online list at www.bigthicket.org for shopping.

Of Anniversaries ... 47th ? 75th ? E.T.B.T.A. + B.T.A.?

Some of us Big Thicket folks consider BTA an extension or reorganization of the East Texas Big Thicket Association (1936-57). Ten people met in May 1936 at the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce and formed the ETBTA with Richard E. Jackson as President and Ray Gill as Secretary. Actually, the organization overlapped its predecessor, including members of the Hardin County Cooperative Pasture and Game Preserve (nominally a hunting club), that leased 18,000 acres in Hardin and Polk Counties.

In cooperation with the Texas Academy of Sciences and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, the ETBTA published a *Biological Survey of the East Texas Big Thicket* in 1938. The Association worked to protect and to preserve 435,000 acres largely in Polk and Hardin Counties, but the depression and a World War frustrated their

efforts. Jackson served as President until his death in 1957.

Lance Rosier ("Mr. Big Thicket") was a bridge between ETBTA to BTA and, probably, Lance never conceded that the ETBTA was discontinued with Jackson's death. In Mary Lasswell's *I'll Take Texas* (1958), he said, "The Big Thicket Association, it's just a handful. The few that cares. They haven't been able to get the land set aside; the 435,000 acres is just a little dab..."

In October 1964 Lance called a meeting in Saratoga, and the group met weekly adding advocates. At the fourth meeting Dempsey Henley became President and attorney Terrell Buchanan volunteered to draft Articles of Incorporation. Once again the membership of BTA included ETBTA members.

Today we have a National Preserve,

four state parks, Trinity River and Upper Neches River National Wildlife Refuges, wilderness areas in national forests, plus several private preserves, including Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary. Of course, we had a lot of expert help — networking with about 40 regional and state conservation groups as well as national organizations. We've sponsored Science Conferences, a Thicket of Diversity—All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, published books, drafted a Strategic Plan for the National Preserve, opposed threats to resources, and encouraged development of tourism — to name a few achievements.

So — being of unsound mind but strong conviction, I hereby declare that BTA is now 75 years old!

—MJ, editor

WE REMEMBER ...

Thomas Eisner (1929-2011)

We heard about Tom Eisner, Cornell professor, when the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article about an American Advancement of Science conference at which Dr. Eisner was handing out buttons and ribbons to "Save the Big Thicket" and signing up scientists for an Ad Hoc Committee to Save the Big Thicket. He toured the Thicket with Harold Nicholas in 1971, wrote an article for *Science* about the Thicket, was instrumental in *The New York Times* coverage and endorsement of the Eckhardt bill, and testified at several hearings. His committee papers are in the Lamar University Library Special Collections.

Once he brought a group from the Chicago Academy of Sciences for tours of Big Thicket, and Alice Cashen had a backyard cookout for the group. As they left, Dr. Eisner saw rhinoceros beetles around a light at the

front gate. He excitedly said that he had never seen the beetle outside an insect guide, and he asked if he could take specimens. Of course! Later he asked me to send one of Frances Arredondo's batiks to him as a gift for his wife.

Eisner was born in Berlin, and later the family moved to Barcelona, Spain, then Montevideo, Uruguay, coming to the US in 1947. He completed degrees at Harvard, and joined the Cornell University faculty in 1957. Beyond biology, his expertise included photography and music. According to Jerrold Meinwald, "He spent his entire independent academic life at one university, never chaired a department, never started a company, and almost never boarded an airplane." His autobiography is entitled *For the Love of Insects*.

Eisner died March 25, 2011 and, according to *Science*, "the world lost one of its most original and influential scientists..." Amen!

Richard Stewart (1948-2011)

Richard Stewart, East Texas journalist, recorded stories of East Texas from the 1970s until his death at 63 years. Colleagues give homage to his ability to spin tales of people and places. According to Dan Wallach (*Beaumont Enterprise*), Stewart "could tickle a good yarn out of something as humdrum as a politician's parade." Don Jacobs (*Enterprise*) recalled, "He had such an easy conversational manner about him, people often didn't realize they were being interviewed."

Your editor had the privilege of accompanying Richard on several Big Thicket stories — stories in which he explored and captured the essence of people, politics, and the Big Thicket landscape.

He is survived by his wife Cindy Carter Stewart and his son Cody Stewart and his family as well as grandchildren. After memorial services at Broussard's in Beaumont, he was interred at Roselawn Memorial Park in Baton Rouge.



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WEB SITES

Big Thicket Association
www.bigthicket.org

Big Thicket National Preserve
www.nps.gov/bith

East Texas Black Bear Task Force
www.bbccc.org

Conservation Fund
www.conservationfund.org

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

National Parks Conserv. Assoc.
www.npca.org

Native Plant Society of Texas
www.npsot.org

Nature Conservancy
www.nature.org/texas

Outdoor Nature Club, Houston
www.outdoornatureclub.org

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

Texas Conservation Alliance
www.TCAtexas.org

Village Creek State Park
www.tpwd.state.tx.us.park

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov. 6, 1:00 PM

Sunday in the Park—Golden Triangle Sierra group meets at The Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larsen Sandy-lands on Hwy 327 in Silsbee for hiking, exploring, and picnicking. Contact K. Walker at 782-3485.

Nov. 10, 11:30

Hardin County Historical Commission - Annual Awards Luncheon at the Senior Citizens building, Kountze. Speaker is Darrell Shine of Silsbee.

Nov. 13

Canoe/Kayak Clear Creek - Provide your own canoe or kayak, life jackets, and paddles. Paddling time: about 4 hours, plus breaks for sightseeing and lunch. Difficulty: Moderate to strenuous. Recommended donation to the Houston Sierra club: \$10. Contact Tom Douglas at baymail@sbcglobal.net or (713) 869-6026.

Nov. 25-26, 7 AM – 7 PM

Kountze Trade Days – BTA members offer attic sales items to benefit BTA.

Contact M. Johnston to volunteer for staffing booth or donating items at maxine@mx-johnston.com

December 3

Canoe /Kayak the Cypress Wonderland— provide your own canoe or kayak, life jackets and paddles. Paddling time: 3-4 hours, plus breaks for sightseeing and lunch. Difficulty: moderate to strenuous. Recommended donation to the Houston Sierra club \$10. Contact Tom Douglas at baymail@sbcglobal.net or (713) 869-6026.

Nov. 5 & Dec. 3, 10:00

Cardinal Cruise with BTNP rangers and Lamar University. Join Preserve rangers to explore Neches River and 10-mile Bayou. Meet at Colliers Ferry Park in Beaumont. Fees are \$15 for adults; \$5 for under 6 years. Contact 409-880-8907 or visit www.lulearn.net

Jan. 4, 2012, 11:00

Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge holds a ribbon-cutting and tour of new headquarters-maintenance facilities located at 601 FM 1011 Liberty, directly across the street from the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center.

Jan. 14, 2012, 9:30

BTA Board Meeting, Saratoga