

## 50-40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS SCHEDULED OCT. 11



Pres. Jan Ruppel has held committee meetings and led discussions to plan for celebration of BTA's 50 years of work and service for Big Thicket causes as well as BTNP's 40<sup>th</sup> year record of achievement. Activity gets underway on Oct. 11 at 9:00 AM with the membership's annual business meeting. The President, Treasurer and committees will report—maybe pass a few resolutions.

The Program (draft inserted) begins at 9:30 AM with recognition of guests and presentations of awards.

Speakers include The Hon. Jim Turner former district Representative; Andy Jones, Texas Office Director, The Conservation Fund; Dr. Pete Gunter, former BTA President/Author/Professor; and. Colin Campbell, Deputy Regional Director NPS/IMR (not confirmed).



Hon. Jim Turner

Keynote speaker is Keith Carter,

Wallis Chair of Art, Lamar University.

After lunch, visitors will enjoy the Alabama-Coushatta Tribal Dancers. At BTA's first annual "Get Together" January 9, 1965, a highlight of that program included the Indian dancers, and they have performed at most of our subsequent anniversary programs, becoming a tradition.

At 1:45 members and visitors may choose between numerous activities. Big Thicket authors will autograph books sold in the Preserve Visitor Center. Dr. Pete Gunter, Dr. F.E. Abernethy, Adrian Van Dellen, Renee Hart, Hon. Ken Pelt, and Wanda Landrey have confirmed attendance; others are pending.

Concurrently, four presentations begin in the Visitor Center Auditorium with Ellen Buchanan, BTNHT president, presiding. Jerry Rashall, Village Creek State Park Supt., will report on the Park's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Mona Halvorsen, Thicket of Diversity Director, will



*The Alabama-Coushatta Tribal Dancers will perform at the Oct. 11 anniversary celebrations.*

report on that project. Michael Hoke, BTA Board Member, will talk about plans for the Neches Adventure aboard the "Ivorybill"! Adrian Van Dellen, author of *Let the River Run Wild; Saving the Neches*, will discuss proposals for a Neches Wild and Scenic River.

There will be conservation group exhibits, including the East Texas Black Bear Task Force. Among the attractions are: Kids Crafts (provided by Shangri La), Earth Caching, Hiking, and Walking History with the Cowboys.

(continued, page 3)

# CONSERVATION OUTLOOK

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## **Longleaf Ridge Conservation Easement Purchased** **By Janice Bezanson (TCA)**

Longleaf Ridge ... is a large block of mostly undeveloped forestland, recognized by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and other public and private organizations for its natural diversity and scenery...

The Longleaf Ridge easement was purchased with funding from the federal Forest Legacy Program, administered by the U.S. Forest Service, as well as funding from The Nature Conservancy. The Forest Legacy Program prevents lands that are important for timber production and unique environmental importance from being converted to non-forest uses...

The land under easement is managed by Campbell Global (formerly The Campbell Group), that manages large forestland holdings in Longleaf Ridge. The easement will allow existing land uses such as timber harvest and hunting to continue, but prohibits all future subdivision and development. Texas Forest Service will enforce the easement...

The Longleaf Ridge area contains other scenic attributes – more than a dozen pristine watersheds, waterfalls, and hilltop views. Unique features protected by the easement include a clear sand-bottom creek, rock outcrops, beech forests, and bogs which are home to wild orchids and insect-eating pitcher plants...

The land protected by the new easement was long managed by Temple-Inland, Inc. About one-fourth of the easement is in natural or planted longleaf pine. Campbell Global has ongoing partnership agreements with Texas Parks and

Wildlife Department and the National Wild Turkey Federation to restore more acreage in Longleaf Ridge. Campbell Global and The Nature Conservancy hope to jointly seek funding for additional conservation easements in the area.

## **Golden Triangle Sierra Group Hosts Environmental Attorney**

Jim Blackburn, environmental attorney and co-founder of Galveston Bay Foundation, will speak at the Golden Triangle Sierra Group meeting on Thursday, September 11, at 7:00 PM. His topic is “Landscape-Scale Green Space Solutions for Hurricane Surge Damage Reduction.” A reception begins at 6:00 PM at the Unity Church, 1555 S. 23<sup>rd</sup>, Beaumont.

The talk covers two landscape-scale projects developed at the SPEED Center at Rice University. The first project is the Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area (LSCNRA) that would create a unit of the NPS by connecting existing preserved areas along the upper Texas coast in Chambers, Galveston, Brazoria and Matagorda counties.

The second project proposes a Texas Coastal exchange to create a system for buying and selling ecological services from restored coastal prairies, bottomlands, marshes and oyster reefs in these counties.

## **Neches River Rally & Paddling Trail**

On Sept. 6 BTA will host the Neches River Rally. The TP&WD will designate an Official Paddling Trail – a loop trail from the Neches River through Cooks Lake and Scatterman Lake within the National Preserve’s Beaumont Unit. Community Partners are Big Thicket National

Preserve, Big Thicket Association, Beaumont Convention & Visitor’s Bureau, and LNVA.

Cook’s Lake to Scatterman Paddling Trail provides an opportunity to experience the biological diversity of the Big Thicket National Preserve. These two oxbow lakes are abandoned river channels. Paddlers experience a beautiful moss-draped bald cypress and water tupelo forest that will make them feel like early explorers without actually paddling too far from civilization.

Entry fees and sponsorships will support BTA’s mission of promoting conservation, environmental education classes, and scientific research in the Big Thicket National Preserve. Additional information and on-line registration is on the web-site [www.bigthicket.org](http://www.bigthicket.org). The registration fee includes a T-shirt and lunch. Call 409-790-5399 for other information.

## **Workshop November 15**

A Neches River Workshop will be held on November 15 from 10:00 AM-4:00 PM organized by the Neches River Watershed Sentinels [501(c)(3)].

The meeting will be held inside the Group Dining Hall in the Walnut Ridge Unit of Martin Dies, Jr. State Park, north of US 190. Coffee and lunch will be provided. An alert in October will request RSVPs. The Workshop will focus on the Steinhagen Lake issue, including threats, opportunities and solutions.

## **East Texas Black Bear Task Force Meeting, August 27**

Nathan Garner, Interim Chairman, reported that the Task Force met August 27 at Saratoga from 10:00 AM- 3:00 PM at the Big Thicket Field Research Station. Speakers

## CONSERVATION OUTLOOK (continued from page 2)

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included Bruce Walker (BTA); Mona Halvorsen (ATBI-ToD); Dave Holdermann (TP&W); Gary Calkins (TP&W); Stuart Marcus (Trinity River NWR); Dr. Chris Comer (SFASU); Gilbert Adams (Bear Trust International).

Topics covered included East Texas black bear conservation, research and management activities and other wildlife conservation issues. Updates were provided on East Texas Black Bear Task Force activities since the last meeting.

### Trinity River NWR Events

On July 19 Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge held its second annual Moth Night Out at the Refuge headquarters in Liberty. The Refuge has documented over 500 species of moths around their building.

Three activities are scheduled for coming months: (1) On Sept. 27 the Refuge and its Friends group will host a trash cleanup day at the SH 105 bridge on Saturday as a part of National Public Lands Day events. (2) On Sunday, Oct. 12, participants

may join in the “Big Sit” – a 17-foot diameter circle – and identify all the birds they see and hear. (3) Oct. 25 during National Wildlife Week, the Refuge volunteers will count butterflies in the Tarkington Prairie and Gaylor Lake area, meeting at 9:00 AM at the Valero Gas station at SH105 and Hwy 321 south of Cleveland. For more information, please call Stuart Marcus at 936-336-9786.

## 50–40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS (continued from page 1)

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*Buddy and Ellen Temple are the recipients of the 2014 R.E. Jackson Conservation Award.*

### Jackson Award

The R.E. Jackson Conservation Award for 2014 honors Buddy and Ellen Temple of Lufkin. The Temples have a long and exceptional record for preservation of our natural heritage in East Texas and beyond for over 50 years – as individuals, through corporate initiatives, and through foundations.

From 2006 to the present, the T. L. L. Temple Foundation has contributed generously to the BTA/BTNP partnership for an All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory—Thicket of Diversity. That support has enabled the identification of new species to the Preserve, to Texas, and to science. That’s only ONE example of a long and remarkable record.

The catalog of their preservation work is too extensive to chronicle here, but we will make an attempt to cover the highlights on Oct. 11.

### Lubbert Award

The Thomas E. Lubbert Superior Achievement Award for 2014 recognizes Fulton Jeansonne for his outstanding services to the Big Thicket National Preserve. Under his direction fire has been used as a management tool to maintain native plant communities and to control non-native species. His work has contributed to restoration of longleaf pine uplands in Hickory Creek Savannah and Turkey Creek Units. Jeansonne worked with architects to plan a fire office in Woodville. The building was dedicated in 2008.

In addition to Preserve duties, Jeansonne has been assigned by NPS to fight fires in numerous wildfires nationwide.

**S**upt. Douglas Neighbor has returned to Big Thicket after serving as interim superintendent at Carlsbad Caverns while NPS-IMR searched for a new superintendent there. Here are the highlights of a report Neighbor provided at the BTA meeting on July 12.

During the last couple of months, 3 tracts totaling approximately 719.5 acres were added to the Big Sandy Creek Corridor Unit. The acquisition project has also begun for three of the tracts owned by the Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust near Canyonlands Unit, Turkey Creek Corridor Unit, and Menard Creek Corridor Unit.

### **Administration**

For FY14, the Preserve received an additional \$132,000. Kenneth Hyde arrived to serve as Chief of Resources Management in July, having previously served as Chief of Resources in three other NPS units. The search for Chief of Interpretation should be complete soon. Summer seasonals were assigned to Interpretation, Maintenance, Resource Management, Fire Management, and Administration.

### **Facilities Management**

Seasonals are working on boardwalks, installing new pavilions at the Visitor Center, and completing concrete work around 12 new vault toilets. Bicycle racks will be installed to anticipate the completion of the new Bicycle Path from Kountze. Landscape restoration has been completed on the Kirby Nature Trail; ADA accessible sidewalks for comfort stations are complete.

### **Fire Management**

Prescribed burns have been completed at Hickory Creek, Solo Tract, North Turkey Creek, and at the Ranch House. Staff assisted Texas Forest Service in teaching Beaumont Fire Department's firefighting class. A fire crew is preparing a prescribed burn for Big Sandy Creek Unit.

### **Interpretation, Education, and Partnerships**

Mary Kay Manning attended a science teachers' convention in Port Arthur contacting 125 teachers, as well as a number of high school students and vendors who were interested in the Preserve. Three Teacher-Ranger-Teachers have been hired with 2 from Kountze and 1 from Beaumont. Christi Knapp, SCA intern, has made high-quality maps of the Kirby Nature Trail, Turkey Creek Nature Trail, and the Sandhill Loop Trail. The e-Bird Kiosk has been installed. Mary Kay Manning and Deanna Boensch are developing new wayside exhibits to replace the two at the north end of the Turkey Creek Trail. A new panel will replace the existing wayside panel on the inner loop of the Sundew Trail.

### **Resources Management**

The IMR agreed to provide funding to complete a Finding of no Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Fire

Environmental Assessment. Feral Hog Management Plan FONSI has been completed; we can now begin addressing hog damage problem with a hog removal program. The Preserve works with Stephen F. Austin University to conduct archeological inventories for the Preserve; close to 7,000 museum catalog records entered into ICMS. Volunteers from Houston Zoo Alternative Spring Break group planted seeds purchased for Native Plant Nursery Project at Kountze High School. DESCO, a Company doing work for NEPA and other environmental projects, completed tallow treatment in Beaumont Unit. The Exotic Plant Management Team contractors worked on tallow treatments in Lance Rosier Unit.

### **BTNP Prohibits the Use of Unmanned Aircraft**

In June Acting Supt. Merrick Moody announced that Big Thicket National Preserve the Preserve will prohibit the launching, operation, and landing of unmanned aircraft from or on lands and waters administered by the National Park Service within the boundaries of the Big Thicket National Preserve except as approved in writing by the Superintendent.

# EAST TEXAS MISCELLANY

## Hardin County Hike and Bike Trail

By Brandi Haskett (Excerpt from *Beaumont Examiner* August 7, 2014)

When walking along what will be the new hike and bike trail in Kountze, one can't help but be mesmerized by colorful flowers and aromatic pines, along with the smell of sweet honey-suckle. The new hike and bike trail will be the perfect outdoor place for the residents of Kountze as well as

cyclists from across the area. Eager locals will be excited to know that the completion of the new trail, which runs parallel with North Highway 69, is nearing completion. The paved path starts near Kountze Trade Days and cuts through the wooded area along the Big Thicket for nearly seven miles.

According to Sarah Dupre, public information officer for Texas Department of Transportation, the project, which broke ground Jan. 13, 2014, and will cost approximately \$2.7 million, is due to be completed at the end of this summer....

## 19<sup>TH</sup> Teaching Environmental Science Summer Institute

For the 19<sup>th</sup> year Lamar University's Dept. of Earth & Space Sciences held its 10-day institute for 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in conjunction with Region 5 Science Collaborative, local industries and environmental organizations.

Prof. James Westgate organizes the program, and each institute includes field trips into the Big Thicket National Preserve. On July 19 the group toured the Neches River, Pine Island Bayou and Cooks Lake. Teachers use water

testing kits and learn how to use them on-site to analyze stream quality. Participants also explored Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center in Orange.

## PROMISE TO GERALDINE



I made a promise to Geraldine Watson, and I need help to keep it.

After the Big Thicket National Preserve became a reality, Geraldine Watson began to work for the Preserve, charged with identifying plants in all of its disjunct units and to interpret and record relevant data. Her mission was not limited to nature. One outstanding example was the validation of an Old Wagon Road through Jack Gore Baygall. With the help of pioneers – the Ards, Son Gordon, I.C. Eason, Ernest Spell and others, she flagged the route, and recorded its history in her *Reflections on the Neches*.

NPS requires that all development be established and approved in General Management Plans. The 1980 plan included a loop trail to the Blue Springs, and half of the trail was subsequently developed with bridges over streamlets – but never opened to the public. Several updated GMPs

were begun but not completed, and in each BTA recommended the restoration and maintenance of the historic Road. The pending GMP includes the Old Wagon Road.

As Geraldine's health deteriorated, she confessed that she thought the trail would be lost as pioneers perished and Preserve personnel moved to other parks. I promised to keep it flagged.

As a former Field Trip Committee chair for the BTA, I have led numerous groups down that trail and held frequent "workdays" to maintain it – usually with BTA and Houston Sierra Club group volunteers. Occasionally, BTNP volunteers joined us, who supplied paint to mark trees with blue rectangles. On one occasion, a resource specialist joined us to clear logs and silt from the Blue Springs (there were three; now there are two). The Springs provided water for horses on the Wagon Road and also water to wash clothing for nearby homes. [We once found a metal washtub and draped it over a stump.] Unfortunately, we concentrated on

the southern section, and the Road from Youngblood Road (formerly ZigZagRoad) to Timber Slough Road may not be recovered.

After Hurricane Rita, the Preserve Maintenance personnel with seasonal workers tried to find the trail, and they called for help. The Jack Gore Baygall Unit southern area had been devastated by the hurricane. We located a felled tree with a blue rectangle and for several weeks worked ahead of the crew, reflagging the route. Having lost forest cover, shrubs soon began to reclaim the trail, and BTNP and local people have attempted to keep the trail open.

However, the last half of the trail from the top of the Neches bluff line to Youngblood Road needs a lot of work. Please join me on September 20 in an effort to reclaim this section. Bring water, lunch, repellent, and wear appropriate clothing. Let me know if you can join us on Youngblood Road at FM 2937 at 9:00 AM.

–Maxine Johnston, Editor  
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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)

Gulf States Mycological Society  
[www.gsmysoc.org](http://www.gsmysoc.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)

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **September 6**

Neches River Rally / TPWD designates Official Paddling Trail: on-line registration at website [www.bigthicket.org](http://www.bigthicket.org). The registration fee includes a T-shirt and lunch. Call 409-790-5399

### **September 11**

6:00 PM: GT Sierra Club presents James Blackburn, environmental attorney, at the Unity Church, Beaumont

### **September 20**

BTA volunteer workday on Jack Gore Baygall's Old Wagon Road Trail; contact [maxine@mxjohnston.com](mailto:maxine@mxjohnston.com)

### **September 27**

National Public Lands Day, 9:00-11:00 AM, Trash cleanup at Trinity River Bridge on 105, Trinity River NWR. Contact Stuart Marcus, 936-336-9786

### **October 5 (Sunday)**

10:AM: Michael Eckenfels will lead a tour of Watson Rare Native Plant Preserve and talk about native bees. Contact Pauline Singleton ([pollytx1@gmail.com](mailto:pollytx1@gmail.com))

### **October 11**

50<sup>th</sup> – 40<sup>th</sup> anniversaries BTA and Big Thicket National Preserve

### **October 12 (Sunday)**

“Big Sit” National Wildlife Refuge Week: Identify birds.

### **October 25**

Butterfly Count, 9:00 AM – Trinity River NWR. Meet at the Valero gas station at SH105 and Hwy 321 south of Cleveland.