

Pines & Prairies

Vol. 2 Number 1 March 2004

Serving Bastrop, Caldwell, Fayette and Lee Counties

Our First Land Acquisition

Pines & Prairies Land Trust in February acquired a 302 acre property straddling the Lee and Bastrop County border, in the midst of the Yegua Knobs. The seven sandstone-capped hills rise 250 feet above the surrounding terrain between the towns of McDade and Lexington.

Blanketed in post oak and pine forests, the cone-shaped hills are part of the divide between the Colorado and Brazos River valleys. This tract, which includes two of the Knobs, is surrounded by other large private holdings which might eventually be preserved with conservation easements, leaving a magnificent sweep of open country for the benefit of people and wildlife for generations to come.

Scientific research will be a top priority for this unusual property, but it offers wonderful opportunities for low-impact recreational uses as well. Of course, members and supporters of PPLT will be the first to enjoy access to its beauty and solitude, and we will need your suggestions about ways we can use this piece of land to encourage others to keep central Texas a fertile, life-sustaining environment.

There is much to learn from studying the variety of wildlife habitats in the thick woods and open spaces that comprise this beautiful, tranquil spot. We'll need help discovering what kinds of aquatic wildlife live in the two large ponds on the property. It will also be important to ascertain what camping on the top of the Knobs is like during the various seasons.

In the years following the Civil War the Knobs were one of central Texas' most notorious outlaw hideouts. Who knows what interesting hooligan artifacts might be strewn about these mysterious red hills. Later this Spring we'll have an open land party and picnic on the PPLT Yegua Knobs Preserve so you can see for yourself.



Message from the President

As I look back over the last few months and last few issues of our newsletter, I am struck by how much has happened and how quickly it has happened. The biggest news is the purchase of a 302 acre property that spans the Lee and Bastrop county border. This is a major step in our mission to preserve open space, protect wildlife habitat and promote clean air. In the next few months we'll have "open land" parties and invite you to come out to enjoy and experience this beautiful place with us and learn more about Pines and Prairies Land Trust.

Seeing what can happen when people work for what they believe in just increases my desire to work for land conservation. When folks know there is something positive they can do to save their precious places, they do it! Thanks to all who have helped PPLT achieve some mighty goals.

With such great support I am confident that you all will help PPLT with our next goal...winning an over 1 million dollar grant to buy some special habitat and preserve an unusual and exciting piece of Bastrop Co. I am optimistic and excited about this project, and look forward to sharing the details with everyone soon. Until then, let's continue to work together to preserve open space and wildlife habitat.

Carrie F. Knox, President PPLT

Local Matching Funds Needed for Tree Planting Guide

PPLT board member, horticultural expert Joan Russell and Texas Forest Service (TFS) District Forester Daniel Lewis are working on the final draft of the tree planting guide for Bastrop, Caldwell, Fayette and Lee counties. The \$4000.00 grant from TFS requires matching funds to be raised by PPLT. **We need your help to raise an additional \$3000.00!**

The tree guide includes about three dozen different native and non-native species describing such features as size and shape, water, sunlight and soil requirements, the value of each species to wildlife and birds, and the growth rate and life span of each tree species listed.

A unique feature of this guidebook will be the addition of the flammability rating of each tree and instructions on how to keep vegetation and landscape trees from creating a fire hazard around buildings and homes.

The Dwindling Countryside

Between 1930 and 2000 the population of the United States more than doubled, from 122.8 million to 281.4 million. By the year 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts the country's population will top 400 million. This boom has left a heavy footprint on the landscape, as houses and shopping centers have replaced forests, prairies and farms. And the trend is only accelerating. Thirty four million acres, an area roughly the size of Illinois, were lost to development in the lower 48 states between 1982 and 2001; that works out to 2.2 million acres per year, a 50 percent increase over the previous decade.

(Sydney Horton in *Audubon* magazine, March 2004)

Pines & Prairies Land Trust Needs Your Participation

We now own 302 acres of beautiful land in Lee and Bastrop counties. We have responsibility for maintaining and protecting the conservation easement on 670 acres near Paige. In the coming months and years we'll be taking on additional conservation easements and buying other properties in our four county area.

For PPLT to accomplish our mission, we need board members from Caldwell, Fayette and Lee counties. Currently, all of the board members live in Bastrop county. We need your help in finding interested, qualified folks from the three other counties.

If you enjoy open spaces, majestic forests and exotic wetlands, teeming with life, there are opportunities for you even if you don't have time to be an active board member. No matter where you live, you can volunteer with us for a wide range of outdoor activities that will help protect and preserve our vibrant, fertile shared environment.

Please call our executive director, Tom Dureka at 512/308-1911.

“The mission of the Pines and Prairies Land Trust is to protect significant open space and natural, historic, and cultural resources, and to preserve the quality of life for current and future generations, through educational programs and through owning and protecting easements and land.”

Help us maintain our region's quality of life! Your tax-deductible membership and donations support our educational programs, information distribution, and direct land preservation.

_____ \$20 Individual

_____ \$30 Family

_____ \$40 Business

_____ \$Very Generous

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/zip _____ Tel. No. _____

Please make checks payable to Pines & Prairies Land Trust. Thank you!

P. O. Box 1526 Bastrop, Texas 78602

printed on recycled paper



We just completed a 50-foot-diameter breeding pond for the Lost Pines Toad at Woodside Trails, a therapeutic wilderness camp for at-risk teenage urban boys. Two-thirds of the project was funded through the Private Stewardship Grant Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The remaining funding was provided by PPLT, along with low-cost excavation by Dale Cook Backhoe Service (Cedar Creek), and donated services by Bill McPherson, Horace Russell, and Steve Haisler Dozer Service.

Boys and counselors at the camp installed the liner during their Spring Break. The boys smoothed the surface of the pond, clipped sharp roots, maneuvered the 700-lb. roll into position, rolled it out, unfolded it, dug trenches around the boundary to tuck in the edges, spread native grass and wildflower seeds, cleaned up the site, and were done in three hours.

TSU biologist Dr. Michael Forstner recommended the liner due to the sandy soils. PPLT and Woodside Trails signed a 20-year agreement with USFWS to maintain the pond.



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #19
BASTROP TX 78602