

# Pines and Prairies

*Bastrop Caldwell Fayette Lee Counties*

*Newsletter of the Pines & Prairies Land Trust Vol. 4, No. 1 Winter 2006*

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## ***South Shore Woods, Our Latest Acquisition***

Pines and Prairies Land Trust purchased in January a 210 acre property on South Shore Road, about half a mile from the recreation area on the south shore of Lake Bastrop.

It is a densely wooded wildscape with dramatic deep ravines cutting through it. One of the ravines, with a seep still flowing despite our extended drought, has been dammed to form a lovely pond (pictured above) surrounded by tall pines, oak and juniper trees.

This is our second land acquisition purchased with Alcoa settlement funds from the civil suit against the aluminum producer for emissions violations. As a result of the lawsuit instigated by the citizens' group Neighbors for Neighbors the federal court decreed that some of the funds be used to protect air quality and extend existing Houston toad habitat of the Lost Pines and Post Oak Savanna areas of Bastrop and Lee Counties.

"This land adds a significant amount of protected wildlife and endangered species habitat virtually in the city limits of Bastrop and less than a half-mile from Lake Bastrop," Carrie Knox commented in the

announcement to the press. "Keeping such a large tract open will also help improve the water quality of Lake Bastrop and, ultimately, the Colorado River."

Soon we will begin creating walking trails that will allow access to the pond and some of the more spectacular ravines, as well as to the several open spaces not thick with trees and tangles of underbrush.

We hope to find a conservation-minded person to buy all or part of the property with a mutually agreed upon conservation easement on it to maintain its natural beauty.

With this purchase PPLT is now protecting almost 1500 acres of pristine natural areas as well as productive farm and ranch land in our four county area of Central Texas.

Bill McPherson is the board member who will be responsible for overseeing this new PPLT property. Joan Russell serves that function for the Colorado River Refuge and Jeremiah Jarvis has responsibility for the Yegua Knobbs Preserve. Contact these folks if you'd like to help in the management of these properties.

## Colorado River Refuge Notes

Since the first meeting in October 2005 for people interested in being involved with the Colorado River Refuge, a number of things have happened.

Bluebonnet Electric and LCRA awarded PPLT a \$25,000 grant to build 400 additional feet of trail for disabled visitors to the Refuge, with a concrete ramp at the trailhead, to rehabilitate the old gravel pit on Riverside Drive, and to build a terraced trail down the incline at this central trailhead.

The National Park Service awarded PPLT a \$30,000 grant for fencing off motorized vehicles from the refuge, erosion control and for building a kiosk at the major trailhead.

The American YouthWorks has pledged up to \$4,250 worth of labor for trail building.

Loomis Austin, the environmental engineering firm that did the surveying, is designing two parking lots. One central lot will be located where the old gravel pit is on Riverside drive and the other will be located at the trailhead for disabled visitors. We are very grateful to Loomis Austin for donating a major portion of their work.

A group of students from Bastrop High School, along with some adult volunteers, came on January 21 to clean up new trash dump sites. Eight cubic yards were picked up and hauled off. These students, lead by Dani Schumacher, will be back on an "as needed" basis. It's one of the ways they provide service to their community.



We hope volunteers can begin trail building and maintenance by Spring of this year. We have grant money from Tom's of Maine for buying the needed tools.

However, Texas Parks and wildlife, from which we received a \$67,000 grant, will require an archeological survey *before* any work can begin on the trails.

In the meantime, please feel free to visit the Refuge often and enjoy walking by the river under the canopy of the magnificent trees.

There's no telling what interesting birds you may see or hear. On the Christmas bird count a variety of species were spotted in the trees along the river.

Please report any illegal activity such as dumping, camping or shooting guns, to the Sheriff's Department (303-1080) or to the PPLT office, 308-1991.

*Joan Russell*



### *Up on the Knobbs*



We've changed the name of the Lily Pond on the south border of the Yegua Knobbs Preserve. It's now called the Beaver Pond.

When they came and how many there are we don't yet know, but they've got a small lodge built and a leaky dam slightly slowing the flow on the west side of the dam that forms the pond.

Water flows from a cluster of seeps that reach the surface in a number of places spread across the area north of the pond.

We have been clearing trails through the dense thicket of greenbriar, yaupon, farkleberry and sundry other vines and sticky undergrowth to better locate and observe the seeps and accompanying wetlands.

The beavers have not shown themselves during these forays with chainsaw and machete, but the loud thunk! of the tail on the water just after dusk identifies them as well as the footprints around the bank shown in the picture above.



Another, not so welcome newcomer to the Yegua Knobbs Preserve is a gang of unruly wild pigs that have created a kind of porky spa wallow in one of the seep areas northwest of the Beaver Pond.

As many as twenty of them have been seen porking along in single file moving from the woods, across a clearing, into another wooded area.

We're considering having a hog hunt and barbeque as a fundraiser to help pay the taxes and improve the road access to YKP.

More welcome are the many white tail deer seen periodically in all areas of the more than 300 acre preserve. A few squirrels and an occasional large armadillo are usually seen or heard, as well.

We'll be clearing more equestrian trails for long, pleasant rides, and it's going to be camping weather soon.

Be ready.

*Jeremiah Jarvis*

### *New Board Members!*

We welcome two new board members from Caldwell County. Dennis and EvaJean Kestner last year donated a conservation easement to PPLT on their 214 acre Double D Ranch near the Delhi community.

**Dennis Kestner** is a retired accountant and real estate investor who graduated from the University of Minnesota.

**EvaJean Kestner** was a church secretary before she retired. She attended the University of Oklahoma.

Our board meets from 2 to 4 PM on the second Wednesday of each month at the BCWCID#2 building at 106 Conference Drive in Bastrop. You are welcome to come to our meetings to find out more about us and to discover ways you can become more involved.

## Conservation Corner

Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, nor for us to reap from it the esthetic harvest it is capable, under science, of contributing to culture.

That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten.

Nothing could be more salutary at this stage than a little healthy contempt for a plethora of material blessings.

Perhaps such a shift of values can be achieved by reappraising things unnatural, tame, and confined in terms of things natural, wild, and free.

### Aldo Leopold

(From the forward to *Sand County Almanac*, 1948)

Thank You Alan Jaeger  
For creating and managing  
Our Website

### Board of Directors

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## President's Message

It is winter in Texas, but you could fool me - and many of our plants are fooled as well. Roses blooming and trees budding! When it is this hot in February, what will August be like? This summer I know that I will be searching for some green, cool, damp and wild place to escape the heat; and many others will be searching as well.

Where will we go? Pines and Prairies Land Trust is dedicated to preserving some of that special farmland, rangeland and wildlife habitat just so that we all have a place to go. Whether it is to escape the heat or the noise or the crowd, we all need somewhere to rest our bodies and our minds.

PPLT is well on the way to ensuring that there will be those special places. Every month more people are joining in, with time money and expertise, to do their part to make sure that some of these special places are preserved forever.

If you are concerned about protecting these special places, if you would like to do your part, if you want to be sure you do not have to search for a restful place too hard, then I invite you to join me in supporting PPLT as a volunteer, with donations of cash and services and by spreading the word about land conservation.

Together we can make sure that these special places remain open for all, forever.

Carrie Knox, president PPLT

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*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.*

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