

Pines and Prairies

Bastrop Caldwell Fayette Lee Counties of Texas

Newsletter of the Pines & Prairies Land Trust Vol. 4, No. 4 Winter 2007

Meanwhile, Back at the Yegua Knobbs Preserve...

Biologists, Botanists and Bryologist

Amidst the hubbub and excitement about the Colorado River Refuge, the Yegua Knobbs Preserve has quietly been attracting the attention of botanists, biologists, hydrologists and even a bryologist (a person who studies mosses).

The major area of interest is the bog from which the springs that feed the beaver pond emerge. Bill Carr, the Nature Conservancy botanist is also very interested in the scrubby, almost bare areas he calls "sandhill communities." He and Jason Singhurst, a botanist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, have taken a serious interest in the wetlands area and have been advising us on how to keep the bog healthy and vigorous.

Dr. Carr also brought the bryologist, Dr. Bob Fulginiti, to examine the mosses that grow in some unlikely places in the Knobbs' various ecosystems.

Mike Lyday, a biologist with the City of Austin, brought his "favorite teacher," to assess the bog as a site to teach a wetland plant identification class. Dr. Bob Mohlenbrock is a legendary figure in the world of wetland plant taxonomy. He has written most of the guides for the NRCS and EPA regions of the country.

Beavers

The beavers, meanwhile, have been busy as, hmmm, very busy. They've extended the dam, raising the level of the pond and the wetlands beside and above it several inches.

In their spare time they also managed to produce some beaver babies. At dusk the adults swim gracefully around the pond checking for possible predators, then when it's determined to be safe, the little ones get to come out to play in the water.

Barn Owls

Sallie Delahoussaye of Wildlife Rescue released two young female barn owls at YKP on March 3rd. She lovingly placed them one by one into a big nesting box we'd built for

them and placed 18 feet up on the trunk of a large pine tree. Spread beneath them is a grid of pocket gopher mounds, ready for their dining and dancing pleasure.

She has a couple of red-tailed hawks she thinks will adapt nicely and may bring them out this spring.

There's much to be enjoyed and much work to be done. The beavers have caused several parts of the trails around the pond and to the bog to be submerged and almost impassable. Big limbs and a few trees have been blown down, obscuring other trails.

Begging

We need to do a better job of taking censuses of birds and deer and other significant wildlife. We need your participation in keeping this magnificent 300 acre adventure a wildlife haven accessible to curious, interested people.

You. You are who we need to help us make this an even more hospitable habitat for the species already there and to create inviting spaces for an even greater diversity of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and native plants.

You are also needed to help find additional camping areas, good fishing spots and interesting trails for hiking and riding horses.

We will form a Friends of the Yegua Knobbs or some similarly named group to assist Jeremiah Jarvis, the board member "in charge of" the YKP, to see to it that an appropriate amount of fun and good times accompany any and all expenditures of energy spent working.

If you're interested in forming a more intimate, personal relationship with its hills, woods and wetlands, please call Jeremiah, 512/281-2762, or email, jjfrog@flash.net. With a commitment of time and/or money you can become a part of the group of people who keep this magnificent chunk of open, wild and beautiful countryside available for all, forever.

The Barn Owl Sisters Settle in at Yegua Knobbs Preserve

Sallie Delahoussaye delivered two barn owls into the nesting box high up on the trunk of a giant pine tree with a small group of folks cheering and applauding below. She had left their other sister on a ranch south of Elgin a little while earlier. Sallie has been taking in, caring for and eventually releasing into welcoming habitats all manner of wild creatures as a volunteer with Wildlife Rescue, Inc.

This is Wildlife Rescue's 30th anniversary and Sallie's been with them for 27 of those years!

They take in native orphaned, injured or ill wildlife of every kind. Birds, snakes turtles, and all shapes and sizes of mammals.

Sallie had been preparing them for their return to natural living during the last three weeks with a special feeding method that requires them to catch their supper on the run. Kind of a natural "fast food."


We hope Sallie will bring out two red-tailed hawks this spring to join the owls having the pocket gophers over for dinner. We will continue to make the Knobbs a welcoming haven for native flora and fauna...and for the scientists and interested regular folks to observe, study and enjoy them.

With a donation of money and/or work you can be a member of the Friends of Yegua Knobbs Preserve. The work ranges from precise scientific observation and study to wielding a chainsaw to clear a trail and all manner of interesting things in between.

The advantages of being a direct supporter of YKP include camping, hunting, fishing, hiking and just hanging out when you want to.

Call Jeremiah at 512/281-2762 or email jjfrog@flash.net and talk to him about becoming a member of the Yegua Knobbs Preserve community of friends. The Barn Owl Sisters will be delighted to share their dinner with you.

(terrific photo by Jon Leatherwood)



Wildlife Rescue, Inc.
P.O. Box 806
Austin, TX 78767
512/472-WILD

Wildlife Rescue
is a 501(c)(3) non-
profit organization.

President's Message

This issue I would like to acknowledge the powerful efforts that are converging on our beautiful counties. Many passionate, talented and generous people are thinking about and acting upon a shared vision to protect our rural lifestyle, water and wildlife.

Bastrop County has initiated a county-wide planning effort to gain citizen feedback about how our county should grow. Please call Judge McDonald or check online for the **Opportunity Bastrop Plan**. Protecting our mighty Colorado River and our precious water, both surface and groundwater, rate highly in this document. **Envision Central Texas**, a regional planning effort covering **Bastrop and Caldwell Counties**, is in the process of developing a science-based mapping system, called Greenprinting, that will allow all five ECT counties to understand where and what to protect for clean and plentiful water, ranch and farm land and wildlife habitat.

City of Smithville has a city-wide planning effort underway right now and citizen input is encouraged. The city is considering how to best emphasize and use the Colorado River that runs through town. **The Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership** is about to release its "Discovering the Colorado" report, which will further explain and underscore the incredible treasure our river is for ecotourism, wildlife habitat and water availability.

Citizens of **Caldwell County** are working to protect their groundwater by starting a Groundwater Conservation District or joining an existing one. **Fayette County** has also created a groundwater conservation district to protect their water resources. The citizens of **Bastrop and Lee County** banded together to create a groundwater conservation district to protect one of the richest aquifers in Central Texas, the Carrizo-Wilcox.

Phoenix Rising Adventures, City of Bastrop and others are well on the way to have the section of the Colorado River between downtown Fisherman's Park and PPLT's Colorado River Refuge designated a TX. Parks and Wildlife Paddling Trail. It will be only the second inland trail to have this distinction.

The **City of Elgin** is also in the midst of planning and implementing a growth plan that encourages protecting our water and wildlife habitat. Even the **school districts** plan to use the natural ecosystem on their campuses as outdoor classrooms to teach everything from biology to physics. And I am certain that I have not covered other like-minded projects!

Of course, **Pines and Prairies Land Trust** has been working to protect the Colorado River as well, with our Colorado River Refuge and other educational efforts about the value of land and water conservation. We would like to extend our protection of the river, and we are actively looking for river property to protect with Conservation Easements and other partnerships.

I am so gratified to be a part of several of these initiatives, and to support them all. Please join me in supporting these worthy efforts with time and money. Remember, land conservation is for all, forever.

Carrie F. Knox, President of 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.

The 11th annual **Wildlife Activities and Practices workshop** will be held at **LCRA's Cooper Farm** on April 17. This workshop is designed to educate both tax appraisers and landowners about using wildlife to qualify property for ag use valuation. For more information or to register, **contact Lee Fritsch at 1-800-776-5272, ext. 8140.**

Thank You So Very Much!

To Margie Crisp for designing and permitting the use of the fabulous Great blue Heron as the logo for the Colorado River Refuge.
To Mark Sheffield and Roscoe State Bank for sponsoring the reception for contributors and donors celebrating the Colorado River Refuge.