



Pines and Prairies

Bastrop Caldwell Fayette Lee Counties of Texas

2008: A Year of Changes And a Year of Possibilities

The tumultuous changes that have rocked our country and our planet this year have had uneven effects on your faithful land trust. We've had the same sort of economic disappointments as everyone else, but we've also seen an increase in awareness of the importance of protecting our natural resources. More people are aware of the need to insure our supply of clean air and water with the concomitant need to nurture and care for wildlife habitat, fertile farm and ranch lands and the fragile riparian areas in Central Texas and the rest of the world.

We've received more inquiries about conservation easements and more general questions regarding how to deal with encroaching fragmentation and development of surrounding open spaces. We're in the process of taking responsibility for protecting another beautiful ranch in Fayette County and a chunk of Colorado River frontage in Bastrop County.

On the national stage, the recent elections brought more environmentally aware candidates into office with commitments to have government play a more active role in combating climate change and protecting natural resources. The tax incentives currently in place that encourage land conservation are likely to be joined by other measures to urge businesses to "go green."

In a conversation with a landowner while we did our annual conservation easement monitoring visit, we talked about several neighbors who were taking measures to see that their children were committed to keeping their land intact and productive. He said, "If everyone felt about the environment like she does, we wouldn't need to have land trusts!"

Unfortunately, conscientious land stewards are still clearly in the minority and the predominant ideology remains one of holding land as a financial investment to be eventually disposed of for the highest possible monetary profit. That's why we exist now and are set up for an indefinite run into

the future with the commitment to maintain as much productive, life-sustaining and natural lands and waterways as we can.

A major aspect of our challenge is maintaining biodiversity. Tom Friedman, in his latest book *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, quotes an environmental scientist: "The biodiversity of the planet is a unique and uniquely valuable library that we have been steadily burning down—one wing at a time—before we have even cataloged all the books, let alone read them all."

The struggle to save wildlife habitat is our part in the effort to maintain biodiversity. At the Yegua Knobbs Preserve we've worked to maintain its natural state and, with Wildlife Rescue, Inc. of Austin, we've added owls, hawks, squirrels, deer and even skunks to the population of that 300 acre community.

Yes. Well. Skunks are God's creatures, too.

We appreciate your participation and urge you to become even more engaged. In January we'll have an organizational meeting of folks who want to form an advisory board to assist us in our various projects to carry out our mission.

Thirtyfive citizens from each of our four counties came to an initial meeting in November to hear more about us and to consider participation with us in an advisory capacity. We decided to meet again in January to formalize the group and determine how we can best work together to accomplish projects and carry out the objectives of our stated mission.

If you want to find out more about this and make your own suggestions about how we can do our work better and more efficiently and effectively, please join us on Jan. 17, 2009 at 2:00 PM at the Bastrop Library.

We're all in this together and we can keep our shared environment healthy and safe for generations to come.

Yes we can.

Yegua Knobbs Preserve



Wildlife Rescue Releases Deer at YKP

On October 19, Preston Doughty of Wildlife Rescue, Inc. released 21 deer and four skunks he and his wife, Sandy had cared for at their country home near McDade until they were ready to be on their own out in the wild.

PPLT board member Alan Jaeger was on hand to take pictures and enjoy the spectacle of this large group of animals entering a new chapter in their lives on the 310 acres of woods and fields and spring-fed ponds amid the oddly shaped ironstone Knobbs of Lee County.

Mr. Doughty and Sallie Delahoussaye had previously released barn owls and red shouldered hawks, along with a pair of cute young skunks, earlier this summer.

Some new folks discovered the delightful experience of exploring the hills and woods and wetlands of the YKP on our Fall Field Day on October 11. A census of the bird population was taken by a group from the Bastrop County Audubon Society, again led by the intrepid Dr. Stan Wellso and Master Naturalist Mark McClelland.



Hayley McCardle carefully herds skunks

Colorado River Refuge



Children and Llamas at the CRR

The nature lesson/walks with Bastrop County homeschooled children at the Colorado River Refuge had two very different themes for the month of November, wildflowers and llamas.

November is the time that fall wildflower seeds are ripening and ready to fall off to be eaten by birds, scattered by wind, grow into wildflowers for next year— or they can be collected by children and made into wildflower seed balls to be placed in a new field for growing.

On November 4, forming wildflower seed balls kept the kids playing in mud with a purpose. Seeds were examined and collected from a variety of wildflowers on the Great Green Lawn next to the main parking lot. These seeds were then mixed with $\frac{1}{2}$ clay soil, $\frac{1}{2}$ compost and a little water for just the right stickiness. Dozens of meatball-sized seedballs were formed by each child. Parents helped also.

The 7 children took these seedy mudballs home with them to place in fields and wait for the fall rains to melt the mud and allow the seeds to germinate and grow for next year's wildflower crop.

On November 18, Sharon and Claude Bramblett who raise llamas on a farm near Webberville brought two lovely llamas to the Refuge. General MacArthur and Majic patiently allowed the children who came to feed them grass, pet them on their necks and backs and even to lead them down the trails of the Refuge.

The Bramblett's pointed out special features of the llamas who originate in a very different climate and landscape from what we have here in Bastrop County. The llamas have two large toes on padded feet. They also make a very musical soft humming sound.

These beautiful, dignified animals were examined, admired and walked for two hours on a beautiful fall day at the Refuge by 21 children and 14 adults.

-Joan Russell

Events of Interest

December

- 2** Lost Pines Native Plant Society of Texas 7 PM
Bill Brooks 512/581-0377
- 10** PPLT board meeting
2-4 PM Tom Dureka
512/308-1911
- 14** Holiday in the Park
1-6 PM Friends of the
Lost Pines State Parks
John Cobb 512/332-0371
- 16** Bastrop Co. Audubon Society potluck party
6 PM Priscilla Jarvis
512/281-2762

January

- 6** Lost Pines Native Plant Society of Texas 7 PM
Bill Brooks 512/581-0377
- 14** PPLT board meeting
2-4 PM Tom Dureka
512/308-1911
- 17** PPLT Advisory Board organization meeting
2-4 PM Jeremiah Jarvis
512/281-2762
- 20** Bastrop Co. Audubon Society meeting 7 PM
Priscilla Jarvis
512/281-2762

President's Message

In February PPLT will be eight years old. I joined the board at the beginning of the second year. All I knew about it at first was that Tom Dureka was really enthused about it and Joan Russell was unwilling to be involved in whatever it was I was trying to get her to join me in because she was "devoting all her spare energy to the land trust."

Much of my first year I was confused about the various terms and unsure what it was we were doing, but right away I got to go out walking on a ranch that had the Colorado River as one of its borders. On another occasion I trailed along behind a proud landowner as he explained what his grandfather had done with the boards he crafted from the giant stump that used to be a big post oak.

Since that first year I've had the honor and pleasure of wandering many acres of woods and fields, crossed creeks and skirted rivers and skipped rocks on ponds with people on special, cherished pieces of land. In a lifetime filled with lucky breaks and semi-privilege I think being an integral part of this organization is up at the top of the list of good things that have somehow happened to me.

Central Texas has everything you need to live a satisfying life and truly appreciate and feel a part of the environment that nourishes and sustains you: fertile soils, rolling hills, deep woods, ephemeral and robust creeks, and the Colorado River topping it all off.

Here we are, right in the heart of it and our job, our privilege, is to keep as much of it as we can ginning right along as it always has. What a deal.

It's sometimes embarrassing to be so proud to be a Texan. But being involved with the land trust has given a focus to that pride, given me a reason to feel the pride is somehow justified. Being a part of a mechanism that is designed to maintain the natural environment of this fascinating region, to protect and sustain the historical, cultural, agricultural and natural elements that have attracted people and creatures here for thousands of years, allows me to feel I'm earning a little of that pride.

There are hundreds of thousands of acres of elegant, scruffy, majestic...incredible expanses of incredibly varied landscapes, of which we have a scant couple of thousand safely protected. There are more fascinating bunches of acres to meander through and marvel at than any of us will ever manage to see. We lucky ones will experience a lot more of them than most folks.

I urge you to join us, to become more actively involved in this delightful, rewarding adventure. I guarantee your only regret will be that you didn't start sooner.

Jeremiah Jarvis, President

Board of Directors

Jeremiah Jarvis *President*
 Joan Russell *Vice-Pres.*
 Dennis Kestner *Treasurer*
 EvaJean Kestner *Secretary*
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 Alan Jaeger
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 Carrie Knox
 Kay Rogers
 David Vogel

Tom Dureka *Exec. Director*

Please help us maintain our region's quality of life. Your tax deductible donation will support our education programs, distribution of information and direct land preservation.

___ \$25 Individual	___ \$35 Family
___ \$50 Business	___ \$100 Steward
___ \$500 Sponsor	___ \$1000 Champion

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Thanks to Margie Crisp for donating her carefully crafted images and to the Bastrop County Audubon Society for funding the construction and installation of the sign displaying them at the Colorado River Refuge on the hiking trail.



TUFTED TITMOUSE
L 6.5", WS 9.5"



CAROLINA WREN
L 5.5", WS 7.5"



NORTHERN CARDINAL
L 8.75", WS 12"



CAROLINA CHICADEE
L 4.75", WS 7.5"



GREAT BLUE HERON
L 46", WS 72"



TURKEY VULTURE
L 26", WS 67"



RED-TAILED HAWK
L 19", WS 49"



RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER
L 9.25", WS 16"

The mission of PPLT 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 education and by owning and protecting conservation easements and land.