



# *Pines and Prairies*

*Bastrop Caldwell Fayette Lee Counties of Texas*

*Newsletter of the Pines & Prairies Land Trust Vol. 7, No. 1 Spring 2009*

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## **A Peaceful Two Mile Stroll Along The Colorado River**

The Colorado River Refuge was officially presented to the public on Earth Day last year, with Congressman Lloyd Doggett joining the celebration. We proudly showcased the riverside trail that allows a casual hike along the Colorado River shaded by magnificent cottonwoods, sturdy oaks and the occasional pecan tree.

Earth Day this year, the Lost Pines Nature Trails, which adjoins the CRR at the downstream end, had its official opening. The LPNT features a canoe/kayak takeout point, picnic tables and trails that connect with the CRR, adding to the mile and a half of riverfront property already available for public enjoyment.

Mr. Dale Morrison, Master Trailblazer, has taken it upon himself to see that these trails allow access to the most interesting, visually pleasing aspects of this enchanting environment. He has seen to it that the new trails live up to the expectations created by the original CRR trail. Currently, Master Morrison is working on a more accessible path under the railroad trestle and up to the Cliffside trail on the upstream end of the CRR.

Now you can enjoy a picnic at the Lost Pines Nature Trails and then walk for several miles along the Colorado River, shaded by giant trees, serenaded by countless songbirds and lulled by the occasional gentle sounds of water tumbling over and around large rocks along the bank.

Dale has seen to it that there are benches strategically placed along the way for you to sit and contemplate the natural beauty surrounding you.

With Rep. Doggett's help, Steve Box and Denise Rodgers have secured additional grant money that will be used to pay for a waterless toilet

facility to be installed near the juncture of the LPNT and CRR. They are working with local businesses to keep the money in the community. Of course, this last year Joan Russell and Louise Ridlon brought the wonders of nature along the river to more than a hundred children with help from Bill Brooks, Daniel Lewis, Nick Cowie, Steve Simmons, Steve Box and the Bramblets with their llamas.

Joan has expanded the range of her classroom to include the Lost Pines Nature Trails, as well.

These two properties were salvaged from their former status as refuse dumps, target ranges and truck and off-road vehicle trashing grounds, by dedicated volunteers determined to reclaim the beauty and dignity of their natural state.

Now this two mile segment of the Colorado River is readily accessible to Central Texans and visitors from everywhere else in the world to enjoy and appreciate.

This is just one example of how your support of the Pines and Prairies Land Trust has contributed to the enhancement of our shared natural environment and to the education of our nature-deprived children.

With Spring giving way far too soon and too easily to the oppressive heat of Summer, the delights of the river beckon more urgently.

You're herewith invited to bring friends or family to partake of the joys of nature-on-the-riverside. Come by car or by boat or by foot. If you give it a little thought, I'm sure you can find an excuse to take off your shoes and socks and dip your toes into the cool refreshing water.

Actually, it's even OK to just come all by yourself to enjoy the peaceful solitude. Be sure to leave your troubles behind, but not your trash.

## Whippoorwill Hill Ranch

**We are on the verge of signing our sixth Conservation Easement on 293 acres in Fayette County. Here's Tom Dureka's narrative describing his adventures throughout the process.**

I got to explore Joseph F. Meyer III's "Whippoorwill Hill Ranch" near Round Top in Nov. '08 and May '09 with Master Naturalist Chapter President Dave Redden and Director Cecil Rives (Gideon Lyncecum Chapter-Fayette/Austin Counties), Elgin herpetologist Bill Montgomery, and PPLT Directors Travis Brown, Kay Rogers, Carrie Knox (a Lost Pines Master Naturalist herself), President Jeremiah Jarvis and a close-by easement donor to PPLT, Albert Pecore.

Joseph's son Kenny and his wife Debbie run a small herd on the ranch and graze the land with great care.



**Travis, Kenny, Carrie and Dave at the pre-historic site**

All of us doing the Baseline Surveys enjoyed discovering and recording biodiversity and archeology on these 293 acres. Majestic hardwood forests claim the streamsides climbing up from the confluence of Cummins Creek and Jacks Creek. The tract boasts a balanced mix of grassland and forest. Kenny showed us three Great Blue Heron nests, where we witnessed two heron teenagers being told to hit the road! We wish them well.

We found a bee tree on the west bank of Jacks Creek—one BIG OL' bois d'arc (82" circumference) with an Eastern red-cedar growing out of its' middle. Carrie and Kenny wrapped a tape around the bois d'arc at 4-1/2' above ground level (also called Diameter at Breast Height, or DBH,) to get a critical measurement. No one got stung, thankfully.

The tree is not a State Champion, but it's an amazing feature. Then, we all discovered chiggers and ticks and poison ivy (oh my) in abundance. We shared remedies and preventative strategies online, too late of course, but some may find their way to our website. Your stories are welcome!

## Yegua Knobbs Spring Bird Census

Master Naturalist Mark McClelland did his usual stellar job leading a knowledgeable band of birders, on the annual Spring bird census at the YKP. All involved enjoyed the beautiful day on this lovely, sprawling property.

**Thanks very much, Mark and the birders!**

## Joan Russell's Nature Classes

On May 7, at 9:00 am, 32 very excited children from ages 3 to 13 gathered on the back deck of the Bastrop County Water Control and Improvement District # 2 for a talk about snakes and turtles. Bill Brooks, lifelong herpetologist, brought four snakes and one snapping turtle from his personal collection of live animals for the children to look at, touch and even to hold.

These children are homeschooled in Bastrop. Fourteen moms and one dad came along for the lesson on reptiles. Mr. Brooks brought four non-venomous snakes in large fabric sacks with a knot tied into the top. He told the class this is a good way to transport active snakes because they can't get hurt and they can't get out.

While Brooks was talking to the group about snakes, what they eat, how they move, capture and kill their prey, it was hard for the children to concentrate on what he was saying because the sacks were actively moving around on the table behind him.

Finally, after about 15 minutes of an interesting talk on the value of snakes in nature, how to identify a couple of local venomous snake species and how to avoid being bitten when encountering a venomous snake in the wild, it was time to introduce the star attractions.



One at a time, Bill untied the sacks and brought out a beautiful corn snake and a great plains rat snake. He displayed the features and markings of these snakes and held them for the children to see. He told them that they could touch the snakes, carefully avoiding the head. They were used often for teaching and were used to being handled. Mr. Brooks then showed off a fat and irritable snapping turtle and explained how they are protected by a hard shell but still vulnerable to predators.

The absolute highlight of the class was a 35 pound boa constrictor that we were assured had been fed the night before. The female boa constrictor was so accustomed to being handled that Mr. Brooks draped the heavy snake over the shoulders of any child who wanted this experience. The children lined up. Some only weighed 5 or 10 pounds more than the snake. The snake was long enough to drape around the shoulders of 4 children side by side.

The sight of their child with a large snake wrapped halfway around his or her neck was startling for some of the mothers but they adjusted quickly. After the class there was a nature hike along the trails at the Colorado River Refuge.

## Events of Interest

### June

- 13** 1st of Bastrop State Park Family Fishing Classes 9AM to Noon alternate Saturdays  
Bill Brooks 512/581-0337 (all ages)
- 15** Lost Pines Master Naturalists Mtng 6:30PM  
Refectory Bastrop SP Mark McClelland 512/281-5516
- 16** Bastrop Co. Audubon Soc. Mtng 7:30PM  
1st Natl Bank, hwy 71, Bastrop Priscilla Jarvis 512/281-2762
- 18** Friends of Lost Pines State Parks Mtg. 7PM  
Refectory John Cobb *cobbfarm@airmail.net*
- 26** Alum Creek Wildlife Mngmnt Assoc. 7PM  
Bluebonnet Electric Bldg. Hwy 21  
*alumcreekwma@gmail.com*

### July

- 8** PPLT board meeting 2PM to 4PM Tom Dureka 512/308-1911
- 10** Range, Water and Wildlife Wrkshop 8:30AM to 3PM Mentz Hall, Columbus TPWD 979/968-9942
- 20** Lost Pines Master Naturalists Mtng 6:30PM  
Red Rock Community Cntr "fire ant control"  
Mark McClelland 512/281-5516

### Bob Long Receives TPWD Award

Rev. Bob Long of Bastrop received the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. **Lone Star Land Steward Award** in May for his efforts in Houston toad habitat management and wildlife conservation on the Long's Round Bottom Ranch.

The Longs are PPLT supporters and are active in many areas of community service. **Congratulations to Bob and Sue Long.**

## President's Message

Sustainability may be the best single word to describe the purpose of Pines and Prairies Land Trust. We hope to be a factor in saving and preserving enough of the food and fiber producing agricultural lands, the oxygen-enhancing forests and the groundwater, creeks and rivers providing the water we must have to survive.

Our history, particularly here in Texas, describes life lived as though we will never run out of land or water or game and the environment can absorb any refuse we decide to discard.

The old habits are very hard for many to recognize as hazardous and unsustainable and even harder to give up. Pogo nailed it more than 50 years ago in the famous line: "We have seen the enemy and they are us."

There are still those among us who refuse to acknowledge it. Some are just lazy and/or ignorant, others are simply distracted by the glitzy technology and don't notice and the worst are those who are profiting from the destruction and actively denying or ridiculing the "alarmist tree-huggers."

So, those of you who have noticed and are concerned—those of you already diminishing your carbon footprint, recycling, eating locally grown food, driving less and in a fuel-efficient vehicle—you are on the front lines.

PPLT is an element in a system designed to concentrate population growth in clusters compatible with an environment that can sustain a healthy lifestyle for all of us. We exist to protect the life-sustaining environment while accommodating an ever-increasing population.

My prime interest is in promoting sustainable agriculture. Our four counties have thousands of acres of fertile soils suitable for pastures and crops that are under imminent threat of being chopped up or paved over.

Many more thousands of acres of good soils are being damaged by chemical fertilizers and pesticides and other non-sustainable practices used by folks desperate to make a living from the land.

Your support for us, your work with us, your efforts on behalf of our shared environment in whatever form, will be a crucial part of the solution. Of course, what I'm after here is for you to send us some money or call or email to offer your help with some project we're engaged in or even suggest a compatible project we should take up, with your help.

We are all in this together.

Jeremiah Jarvis

## If Only We Had a..

Golf cart or "Mule" to allow mobility impaired people to experience the joys of the Yegua Knobbs Preserve.

### Board of Directors

Jeremiah Jarvis *President*  
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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.

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We have reprinted our popular Tree Planting Guide originally funded in 2005 by the Texas Forest Service. The slightly revised 2009 version was printed because all the originals were given away and the need for it clearly still exists.

We would not have been able to afford to reprint this useful guide for anyone who wants to improve their personal environment with just the right tree or group of trees without the generous financial support of the following businesses, organizations and individuals:

**Aqua Water Supply Corporation**  
**Lost Pines Chapter of the National**  
**Wild Turkey Federation**  
**Tahitian Village Property Owners Assoc.**  
**Wal-Mart, Inc., Bastrop**

**Bastrop Tree Service**  
**Bastrop County Environmental Network**  
**First National Bank in Bastrop**  
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**Dennis and EvaJean Kestner**  
**Priscilla and Jeremiah Jarvis**  
**Roscoe State Bank**

