



Pines and Prairies

Bastrop, Caldwell, Fayette and Lee Counties of Texas

Newsletter of the Pines and Prairies Land Trust Vol. 8, No. 1. July 2010

The Colorado River Refuge is Looking For Friends

We acquired the dump ground/off-road vehicle playground in the floodplain of the Colorado River in 2005 and started the transformation to wheelchair-accessible wooded hiking trails along the river. Last year we began developing trails into the “Lost Lake” area, dramatically increasing the length and variety of hiking opportunities in this pristine 60 acre wildlife sanctuary.

Dale Morrison continues to be the Trail Master, generously and patiently sharing the knowledge he’s acquired building trails all over the United States. He’s guided the development of the adjacent Lost Pines Trails to blend seamlessly with the CRR to create a magnificent riverside park.

The Lost Lake trails are located on the upstream end of the CRR. The trailhead is on Riverside Dr. just east of Lovers Lane. Hikers have a choice of the Cliffhanger Trail which runs along the high bank of the river or the Dragonfly Trail which runs north from the Riverside Drive trailhead to Lamaloe Lane. The Dragonfly Trail offers a very different experience than the Cliffhanger Trail. On this trail, hikers will walk along a large creek through fields of wildflowers and into a woodland before coming out on Lamaloe Lane.

Two recent graduates of the Lost Pines Master Naturalists program have agreed to keep the trails clear of weeds and poison ivy throughout 2010! Jim Estes and J.J. “Nick” Nichols have been among those helping Dale create the new trails in the Lost Lake section.

Friends of the Colorado River Refuge

Now, two Advisory Board members have volunteered to create a “Friends of the CRR” group to relieve the PPLT board of ongoing maintenance activities and provide a source of

volunteers for educational and other events. Robert Vaughn and Marianna Hobbs will convene a planning group to determine how best to proceed.

The Friends will be a semi-autonomous volunteer group that will help PPLT make sure the Refuge continues to provide an excellent outdoor recreation experience for our community. Robert worked with the U.S. Forest Service in Utah to coordinate an “adopt a trail” program in a wilderness area in the Wasatch Mountains.

“A key to maintaining volunteer involvement is to make the work both meaningful and fun,” according to Robert.

Marianna, a Master Naturalist, through her work with the LCRA has provided education on how to protect the Colorado River ecosystem. She lives in nearby Tahitian Village, the subdivision adjacent to the Refuge. “I’d like my community to work more closely with PPLT and Bastrop County to clean up and prevent illegal dumping at CRR.”

Marianna has also been one of the regular teachers in the popular series of Nature Classes Joan Russell initiated two years ago at the Refuge. Many children have had their introduction to the wonders and needs of our natural surroundings with the guidance of these special teachers in this special setting.

Robert and Marianna are determined to find ways to introduce more folks to the joys of enjoying this riverside wonderland while enhancing its viability and accessibility.

Please contact one of them and ask how you can participate. Robert can be reached at 512/448-1640 or Miriam.vaughn@sbcglobal.net , Marianna at 828-6941 or mhobbs5@austin.rr.com.



The first Yegua Knobbs trail riders embark on their pleasant several mile ride through the woods

Yegua Knobbs Spring Field Day

Master Naturalist Louise Ridlon led the enthusiastic group of birders, including several Bastrop County Audubon Society members, on their appointed rounds during the May 1st field day at the YKP. It was a beautiful day for walking the numerous trails through the woods, up and down the storied "Knobbs" and along the edges of the spring-fed bog. Robert and Miriam Vaughn, Alan Jaeger, Travis Brown and Jeremiah Jarvis had previously carved out a new trail, meandering through the woods from the "county road" trail across to the east boundary line, leading to an old camping area with charred old hand-made bricks and broken bits of pottery scattered about.

Regular attendees Torgy and Rita Thorp of Lexington, took their usual extended hike, exploring favorite places and discovering new ones.

And, as usual, a few new folks came out for the first time, poked around the hills and woods and came back as enamored of this enchanting place as the rest of us.

David Condron reported no wild hog activity was evident and his traps are still waiting patiently for a visitor.

Clearing the Bogs and Springs

A team of determined young people with chain saws, members of the **EnviroCorps of the American YouthWorks**, camped out at YKP and cleared out a huge amount of brush and invasive wax myrtle from the bog area in preparation for a prescribed burn this Fall.

Trail Ride at the Knobbs

Ten horses and riders traversed several miles of the hilly, wooded trails on the YKP on a fine spring day in May. They all, even the horses, had a delightful time and PPLT made enough money to pay most of the annual taxes on the property.



A few of the riders had never been there before nor even heard of PPLT and came away enthused about what we're doing to preserve the open spaces of central Texas.



Terri Moore, Trisha Clements and Carrie Knox determined the route for this first ride and Terri and Trisha worked very hard clearing brush and fallen trees to insure a pleasant ride.

Nature Classes at the CRR

We completed our third year of offering Nature Classes for predominantly home schooled children and their parents at the CRR. Joan Russell and her enthusiastic group of teachers created and presented 16 programs during the fall and spring.

Students ranged in age from 5 or 6 to mid-teens and 308 of them, along with 128 adults, enjoyed the natural classroom by (and sometimes in) the Colorado River. All 5 of the classes last fall were on various aspects of trees in our region. The 11 spring classes covered a wide variety of subjects, all guiding the students to a greater understanding and appreciation of the processes of nature. Thanks to Joan for making it all happen and recruiting a stellar faculty, each bringing years of experience—in classrooms and out in the field—to the enterprise. They include Bill Brooks, Louise Ridlon, Susan Crone, Marianna Hobbs and Carol Reidy.

Thank you all for bringing the intricacies and wonders of the natural world to an eager group of children and developing in them a hunger for more knowledge about our shared environment.



Whether in the river or on its banks, the students enjoyed the environment of the CRR and developed a richer and more complex and lasting appreciation of our shared environment.

Thank You, Thank You!

Here's a special thanks to several volunteers whose recent help has furthered the work of your land trust.

PPLT is getting a new brochure and trail map of the CRR thanks to volunteer **Ruben Soriano**, a local graphic artist and supporter. We look forward to the new brochures very soon.

We could not have conducted our first trail ride fundraiser at the YKP without the able help of **Terri Moore** and **Trisha Clements**, who helped us clear and improve several miles of trails.

Seth Vanhorn, Erin Allen and Savannah Harte of American YouthWorks led students from Service Learning Academy H.S. in clearing brush from the bog. Thanks to **Chris Sheffield** for their involvement with PPLT.

We also have to "keep the home fires going" here at the office and on the web. Organizer extraordinaire, **Martha Barras**, has committed to helping at the office and with the very important task of attaining national Land Trust Alliance Accreditation. The PPLT web presence has been greatly improved by Advisory Board member **Jarle Lillemoen**, who has updated and enhanced the web site for ease and timeliness. We are excited with his plans for the future of the web site too. Check out www.pplt.org and see for yourself.

We particularly want to thank the folks at Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative for their consistent help and encouragement. They are the first utility company in Texas to implement the new Smart Grid technology which will help us all leave a smaller footprint on our shared environment.

Board of Directors

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President's Column

The PPLT Board of Directors will have a planning session at the LCRA Riverside Conference Center in Bastrop on August 24. We'll meet in the morning to discuss plans for the future and devise a list of goals and projects to help us realize those plans. Advisory Board members will join us for lunch and an afternoon session of refining and prioritizing and determining how to work together more efficiently and effectively.

Two of our Advisory Board members have volunteered to create a Friends of the Colorado River Refuge group to take responsibility for keeping the CRR a clean, pleasant, delightful experience for all who want to enjoy it. Robert Vaughn and Marianna Hobbs have been active Advisory Board members since its inception.

Robert has worked on the trails at CRR and, with his wife Miriam, helped create a new trail at the Yegua Knobbs Preserve. Marianna is a Master Naturalist who has been one of the teachers of our Nature Classes. She and Robert and several other Master Naturalists and volunteers helped Dale Morrison create the CRR's new "Lost Lake" trails. Alan Jaeger has volunteered to be the board liaison.

There are many ways you can help us save more of the farm and ranch land and natural wildlife habitat in our central Texas environment that don't involve clearing brush to reveal interesting trails. For example, Jarle Lillemoen, an Advisory Board member from Caldwell County, has relieved Alan Jaeger of the job of webmaster for our website.

There's a task or project waiting for you to take on or to instigate when you're ready.

If you want to join us for lunch and participate in the planning session afterward, call the office (512/308-1911) so we can know how many to plan to feed.

Together we can save our portion of the planet.

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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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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