

City of Austin BCP Projects
BCCP Coordinating Committee Meeting
February 29, 2012

Program Administration

Personnel

- The BCP Program Manager position has been re-advertised and closes on February 22.
- The BCP biologist (Kelly Nesvacil) who was Acting BCP Program Manager resigned in January. We are awaiting approvals to fill the BCP biologist position. Dolph Scott is currently the Acting BCP Program Manager.
- Five temporary biologists were hired January 30 to assist with endangered species monitoring and land management activities.

Annual Permit Reports

- BCP annual reports (avian, karst, outreach, infrastructure) were submitted to Travis County in late December 2011 for compilation and submission to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Annual scientific permit reports were submitted to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Preserve Management and Monitoring

Outreach

- Hike and Lecture series ongoing
 - November 11th Bill Carr hosted a guided hike for native plant identification at Concordia University. Over 50 people attended the lecture and talk.
 - December 10th St. Edward's University hosted the Streams and Salamanders Lecture by City of Austin Watershed Protection staff.
- 10 new hike guides were trained in the fall of 2011.
- December 3: We held the annual volunteer appreciation dinner and honored our volunteers of the year: the fuel moisture monitors.
- January 7: Riverplace workday. BCP staff partnered with the Riverplace Firewise committee to conduct a boundary clean-up. It was an opportunity to work with neighbors of a Firewise community and to talk with people reducing dumping along the shared boundary.
- January 21: Emma Long motocross workday
- We have trained new property monitors to help assist with cave monitoring at Airman's Cave. Additionally, we have volunteers prepared to help with fence line monitoring on other BCP sites.
- We are preparing to train new and returning volunteers in cowbird monitoring, bird banding assistance, and bird re-sighting.
- BCP staff gave presentations to the Highland Lakes Birding & Wildflower Society on December 1 and to the Lakeway Friends of the Parks on January 26.
- BCP staff worked with Lake Travis Fire and Rescue to provide a Firewise presentation to The Preserve at Lakeway neighborhood.

Golden-Cheeked Warbler

- Collection Agreement with the US Forest Service to provide GCWA Population Viability and Habitat Suitability modeling within the BCP has been finalized.
 - Meeting with USFS researchers and BCP partners scheduled for March 2, 2012, to review 2011 field season data and preliminary data analyses. A second meeting is scheduled for March 7 to review data collection protocols to prepare for the 2012 field season.
- WCD staff worked with PARD and motorbike users to host a volunteer trail restoration day at the Emma Long Motocross Park on January 21, 2012. Trail restoration included posting signs to keep users on authorized trails and blocking off unauthorized trails.

Black-capped Vireo

- Fuel reduction and mulch sock creation work completed on habitat restoration areas at the Vireo Preserve. COA BCP staff is working with Travis County, St. Edwards University, Wild Basin, and volunteers to design and implement a research project to stabilize slopes, restore soils, and promote regeneration of native woody plants on degraded areas of the Wild Basin/Vireo Preserve that are currently not habitat for either the warbler

or the vireo. The research project will utilize the mulch socks in combination with mulch and biochar, and should be implemented in early 2012.

- BCP staff will continue setting up adaptive management and research plans to look at best practices for hardwood regeneration on degraded sites as well as to assess soil and community health. Since Wild Basin/Vireo Preserve supports many of the habitat types observed throughout the BCP, lessons learned at this site should be applicable to other areas within the BCP.

Karst

- Gating of Airman's Cave on Barton Creek Greenbelt
 - A security cave gate was installed near the entrance of Airman's Cave on January 12, 2012. Airman's Cave is one the 62 BCP permit caves, and since the cave entrance is located on the Barton Creek greenbelt, the cave has experienced a dramatic increase in traffic thus posing a serious safety risk to untrained individuals that are accessing the cave as well as threatening the cave and cave fauna. Unfortunately the gate was vandalized; however, staff and volunteers repaired the gate on January 29, 2012 (see Law Enforcement).
- As part of the new karst faunal monitoring protocol, BCP staff have conducted 10 cave faunal surveys as well as 10 cave cricket exit counts for the winter season.
- Zara Environmental is conducting hydrological studies on Goat cave, Maple Run cave, and Blowing sink as part of a study to help determine potential negative impacts from the proposed Davis Lane expansion. This work is being done under the direct supervision of Watershed Protection staff.

Bracted Twist-flower

- On December 21, 2011, COA BCP, Wild Basin, St. Edwards University, and volunteers planted 39 bracted twist flower seedlings at the Vireo Preserve. The seedlings were of Travis County origin from seed given to Walter Stewart by Dr. Norma Fowler, University of Texas at Austin, and were planted in 8 exclosures from a 2009 experiment conducted by Dr. Fowler. During the planting, the work crew discovered that two of the eight exclosures had seedlings from the plants that were planted in 2009.

Jollyville Plateau Salamander

- COA BCP staff assisted Watershed Protection with a JPS surveys at Lanier Spring, Ribelin Spring, Hanks tract (tribs 5 and 6), and Wheless Spring (spring was dry) in early January 2012.

Animal Control

- WCD staff continues to manage hog populations on BCP.
- WCD staff has removed 45 white-tailed deer this season.

Oak Wilt

- Trenching at JJ&T has been completed, and restoration efforts are being implemented along the trench to prevent erosion.
- The oak wilt trench at Emma Long Metropolitan Park was completed in January 2012.

Fencing Projects

- Fence construction on the RM 2222 frontage of Kent Butler Ecological Reserve and City Park Road frontage of Long Canyon is nearing completion.
- Fencing along two short segments of the Cortaña and along the boundaries of the Gass and Kent Butler tracts has been authorized and will begin shortly.

Law Enforcement

- Airmen's security cave gate -- on January 25, vandals broke the no trespass sign and dug around the security gate to get into the cave and mark up the walls. A police report was filed, and BCP staff and volunteers reinforced the gate on January 29, 2012.
- Little Bee Creek Cave security gate -- on November 30, 2011, BCP staff noticed that the bars on the cave gate had been cut. A police report was filed, and the gate was repaired on January 13.

Raspberry Crazy Ants

- In December 2011, City of Austin and Travis County BCP staff became aware of a population of Raspberry crazy ants in the community of Briarcliff near Pace Bend Park. The Raspberry crazy ant is a new exotic invasive ant species discovered in the Houston area in 2002. Populations were discovered in Travis County in November 2011, and in Williamson County in October 2011.

- Because of the threat of this new invasive ant, Travis County BCP staff contacted Agrilife Research & Extension, and an information meeting was held January 18, 2012. Topics included identification, biology, possible sources of the Travis County and Williamson County infestations (garbage, nursery stock), monitoring strategies, and methods of eradication.

Wildfire Management

- On November 28, Austin YouthWorks touched up the shaded fuel break that was created in 2009 along the boundary between a River Place neighborhood and the Cortaña tract. They removed new growth of ladder fuels and dead/downed wood. On January 7, COA BCP staff coordinated a neighborhood clean-up along this same boundary, removing trash and trimming back herbaceous vegetation.
- On January 30 and 31 BCP staff participated in an annual wildland fire refresher course and work capacity testing to maintain currency to National Wildfire Coordinating Group training standards.
- BCP staff has contributed information on land management goals and species concerns for inclusion in a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Travis County.

