

As recently as mid-March, however, the trail remained open. About two weeks ago, City of Austin officials posted signs closing the portion of the trail in question. Access to the land is inappropriate, especially during mating season for the golden-cheeked warbler, Buchman said.

Jim Casey, president of the River Place MUD board, said trail builders may have mistakenly built the trail on city of Austin property and board members weren't aware of a problem until recently.

"The contractor the MUD hired to create the nature trail extension may have miscalculated when he staked off the area for the trail extension," Casey said.

"It is unfortunate that the City of Austin/Balcones Canyonland Preserve has not marked their land nor is there a fence or improvements so a person could see where their land begins. Their focus appears to be in police action versus education."

Another stretch of the trail that is in Balcones Canyonland Preserve land managed by the River Place MUD will be closed during the golden-cheeked warbler mating season, from March 1 until Aug. 1, Casey said.

River Place has hired the company that built the original trail to remove the part of the trail that extends onto Austin property and restore the land to its original state, Casey said.

The project will cost River Place about \$15,000, Casey said. He was unsure how much it will cost to build a new, re-routed trail.

Construction can't begin until after Aug. 1, after the warblers typically leave the area.

"We definitely want to do what's right, and we do love birds," Casey said. "In the meantime people have the original trail and a portion of the new trail to use. I think there's enough trail to get the endorphins they want."

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BEST OF BLOGS. FIT CITY

## Trail in habitat's territory closed

River Place path will be re-routed away from City of Austin's preserve for endangered bird species

By Pam LeBlanc

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Part of a steep nature trail that winds through canyons and hill-tops in the River Place subdivision has been closed because it encroaches on land set aside as habitat for endangered species including the golden-cheeked warbler.

The City of Austin and River Place Municipal Utility District manage adjoining pieces of land that are part of the Balcones Canyonland Preserve.

Several years ago, River Place officials approached City of Austin officials about building a trail through the land.

"We said we didn't think the trail was a good idea and did not want it built on our property," said Kevin Buchman, public information manager for the Austin Water Utility.

River Place built a trail anyway, which became popular with hikers, dog walkers and trail runners. The mostly shady, hard-packed and hilly 2.75-mile path travels along Panther Hollow Creek and into an adjacent canyon.

Now it turns out that part of that trail apparently extends onto City of Austin-managed property.

When city officials learned last year that about 1,600 feet of the trail encroached between 10 and 100 feet onto their land, they asked River Place officials to close the trail, Buchman said.

"We were assured on numerous occasions the trail would be closed and they would communicate that with residents," Buchman said.