

Program Administration

Acquisition

- The 10-acre Lucas tract was purchased for addition to the City BCP.

Personnel

- Willy Conrad retired from his position as Division Manager of the Wildland Conservation Division on August 31, 2015. Sherri Kuhl is acting BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary and Kevin Thuesen is acting Wildlands Division Manager. Two positions will be filled and the BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary will be jointly funded by the City of Austin and Travis County.

BCCP Infrastructure Training Workshop

- Scheduled for October 8, 2015, at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Biological Monitoring

Karst

- Tawny crazy ants (TCAs) were first observed negatively impacting cave fauna in Whirlpool Cave in June 2013, and on November 20, 2014, TCA's were discovered in No Rent Cave. In an effort to monitor impacts, City and Travis County staff continues to monitor Whirlpool Cave as well as No Rent and Weldon Cave (in close proximity to TCA's). We still anticipate that this new invader will have a major negative effect on cave fauna. The section 6 grant proposal (investigate possible methods of treating TCAs within the cave cricket foraging area) was awarded, with a start date of October 2015.
- BCCP Cave Substitution Policy was officially adopted by the BCCP Coordinating Committee on August 21, 2015. This new policy provides the groundwork for possible future substitutions for BCCP permit caves.
- Conducted cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts (ongoing).
- Monitored cave conditions, removing trash, and treating for red-imported fire ants (ongoing).
- BCP Staff is continuing to assist Nico Hauwert and the Watershed Protection Department with the Blowing Sink critical environmental feature (CEF) stabilization CIP project. Several major recharge features/caves are unstable, leading to large amounts of sediment washing into the aquifer. The project will stabilize these features, thus improving water quality to Barton Springs. This project is nearing completion.
- In an effort to educate the public about the importance of caves and cave fauna, Nico Hauwert initiated an effort to find local non-BCP caves that would be appropriate for educational purposes. Staff and volunteers are currently excavating several karst features. Several significant caves have been opened including grassy cove cave which was recently gated. (ongoing)
- Cave public access: A cave collaboration group of City and County staff and volunteers met regarding guidelines for future public access to local caves including some BCP permit caves. The goal is to try to determine which caves are appropriate for public access, determine the appropriate number allowed per cave, and come up with a permitting system that would determine qualifications needed for leading cave tours (ongoing).
- Restoration and monitoring efforts have begun at 2 endangered species caves located in the courtyard at McNeil High. Nico Hauwert and McNeil High School science teacher Tina Vick are leading the restoration effort along with help from FWS, City and Travis County BCP staff. Travis County and City BCP staffs are currently conducting cave faunal surveys and cricket exit counts with the goal of including student participation for long term monitoring and potential research projects that will benefit the listed species. Travis County and City BCP staff has also held 2

volunteer clean up dates, removing large volumes of trash. City staff has provided plants for this project, planting 86 trees and shrubs, many of which provide forage for cave crickets (ongoing).

Golden-Cheeked Warbler (GCWA)

- **USFS Project:** Interlocal Agreement with the US Forest Service (Dr. Frank Thompson, Jennifer Reidy) to provide GCWA Population Viability and Habitat Suitability modeling within the BCP.
 - 5-year study, focuses on four primary questions:
 - What is the absolute abundance of the GCWA on the BCP and on individual macrosites?
 - How do demographics (e.g. density, productivity, survival) vary with landscape and habitat factors?
 - How viable are these populations?
 - How do various management scenarios influence population viability?
 - Fifth year of data have been sent to USFS; work on the models is in progress.
- The following 3 publications are now available online:
 - Reidy, J., F. Thompson, C. Amundson, and L. O'Donnell. 2015. Landscape and local effects on occupancy and densities of an endangered wood-warbler in an urbanizing landscape. *Landscape Ecology*; DOI: 10.1007/s10980-015-0250-0.
 - Reidy, J., L. O'Donnell, and F. Thompson. 2015. Evaluation of a reproductive index for estimating songbird productivity: case study of the Golden-cheeked Warbler. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*; DOI: 10.1002/wsb.576.
 - O'Donnell, L., C. Farquhar, J. Hunt, K. Nesvacil, J. Reidy, W. Reiner, J. Scalise, and C. Warren. 2015. Density influences accuracy of model-based estimates for a forest songbird. *Journal of Field Ornithology*; DOI: 10.1111/jof.12116.

Black-capped Vireo (BCVI)

- COA BCP staff and volunteers are continuing to implement demonstration projects at the Vireo Preserve to promote slope stabilization, soil restoration, and regeneration of native plants on degraded areas that are currently not habitat for either the GCWA or BCVI. Since Vireo Preserve supports many of the habitat types observed throughout the BCP, lessons learned from restoration work at this site should be applicable to other areas within the BCP.

Jollyville Plateau Salamander (JPS)

- COA BCP staff assisted the Watershed Protection Department with several JPS surveys; most surveys were postponed due to recent floods. (ongoing)
- BCP staff conducted a salamander survey in Testudo Tube, the survey area is a 100 meter transect, all salamanders were captured, measured and photographed with the goal of identifying individuals via this set of photos since each individual salamander has distinct markings on the dorsal side of head. The ability to identify individual salamanders will allow for a better understanding of the salamanders life history and future trends.

Bracted Twistflower

- Plans for fence to protect Bracted Twistflower at Mount Bonnell: see Dual-Managed Lands, below.

Preserve Management

Dual-Managed Lands

- AWU and PARD are working to close and restore trails within the Connors Creek critical water quality protection zone in Emma Long Motocross Park. Additional signs are scheduled for installation. Staff is developing a stream assessment, restoration and monitoring plan with assistance from staff in the Watershed Protection Department.

- The proposed Mount Bonnell fence to protect bracted twistflower habitat and keep people off the bluff has been designed and construction will begin in the fall.
- PARD and BCP staffs worked with the Hill Country Conservancy on the installation of 911/mile markers in the Barton Creek Greenbelt.
- Barton Creek homeless camps: see Law Enforcement below.

Infrastructure Management

- LCRA successfully completed their upgrade of the T-160 line which runs through the Bull Creek macrosite and received construction approval from BCCP. LCRA worked closely with BCP and WPD staff to avoid impacts to endangered/threatened species and habitats. LCRA staff is currently addressing some erosion issues with guidance from BCP staff.
- BCP is currently working with the West Travis County PUA (WTCPUA) on construction of a new water service line which includes drilling underneath Barton Creek. (ongoing)

Law Enforcement

- Homeless camps are an ongoing management challenge in the Barton Creek Greenbelt. City Wildland Conservation and PARD staffs continue to monitor these sites and remove camps as they are continue to break into the Lanier house and that structure is scheduled for demolition this fall.

Invasive Species/Animal Management

- See Tawny Crazy Ants, above.
- BCP staff is continuing efforts to remove non-native plants on COA BCP tracts.
- BCP staff is actively removing feral hogs.

Oak Wilt

- BCP staff continued to monitor movement of the fungus in known oak wilt centers and success of control trenches.

Fencing Projects

- Bids for fence installation on the Jester and Cortaña tracts have been received and work is close to completion on the Jester game fence.
- Currently scoping surveys to fence the newly acquired Lucas tract, a portion of the Forest Ridge tract, Long Canyon, and Park West.

Fire Management

- Wildland Conservation Division (WCD) staffs have created a final draft of Wildfire Contingency Plan Maps for all WCD properties. These maps are intended to facilitate wildfire suppression on WCD property by illustrating access points, roads, structures, vegetation, and fire potential.
- WCD staff is currently planning additional potential shaded fuel break projects for the fall and winter.