

**City of Austin's BCCP Activities  
Quarter 2 Update: 1 January – 31 March 2021**

<b>BCCP Administration</b>	
Infrastructure Projects	Seven Infrastructure Habitat Assessment Applications were processed, and Determination Letters were issued from January through March 2021.
Land Acquisition /Management Agreements	<p>Austin Water (AW) BCP is anticipating acquisition of Bright Leaf Preserves around July 2021. AW BCP attended a neighborhood Association meeting of the adjacent Highland Park West Neighborhood Association with representatives of Austin Fire Department, primarily to address wildfire concerns.</p> <p>Staff continue to work with representatives of a proposed development at the east end of Milky Way in River Place on a 10-acre donation of creek adjacent to existing Park West Preserve.</p> <p>BCP (AW &amp; Travis County) staff evaluated a Karen Mountain tract along Bull Creek for potential acquisition, received an appraisal. AW BCP is seeking funding source for future acquisition.</p> <p>AW BCP worked with West Lake Hills neighbors of the 18-acre AW BCP Little Bee Creek Preserve to examine potential for expanding the preserve to a larger size with additional caves. This preserve currently contains only 1 of 4 caves in a designated protected preserve known to contain the endangered Bee Creek Cave harvestman (<i>Texella reddelli</i>) that is restricted only to this portion of Austin and increasing rare bracted twistflower. Preservation of this creek also supports high water quality for the adjacent Ullrich WTP. Residents allowed BCP staff access to private lots to view caves which have become rare in this area. Currently no funding sources have been identified for additional acquisition.</p>
Reports and Events	Submitted annual BCCP report to USFWS <a href="https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/tnr/nr/2020-annual-report">https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/tnr/nr/2020-annual-report</a>
Personnel	Hired Jim O'Donnell as Forest Ecosystem Biologist and Colin Strickland as Cave Biologist.
<b>Rare and Endangered Resources Management</b>	
Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) and Black-capped Vireo (BCVI)	Initiated BCVI and GCWA surveys and color-banding in March. COVID restrictions precluded an in-person event to train volunteers to search for banded GCWAs outside the study plots, so staff limited participation to experienced volunteers. Fortunately, enthusiastic response from 60 of these volunteers allowed almost all search areas to be covered, as in previous years.
	Continuing to collect DNA samples to assess genetic structure of GCWA populations across its breeding range in collaboration with Dr. Giri Athrey/Texas A&M University.
Jollyville Plateau Salamander	<p>BCP continues to conduct aquatic life surveys of springs across the BCP on a periodic basis in hopes of locating new salamander locations and other rare stygobitic life. Watershed Protection Biologist initiated a new JPS occupancy survey for Kent Butler (West Bull Creek).</p> <p>BCP staff conducted the twice yearly JP salamander survey in testudo tube, all salamanders captured were photographed for future population analysis.</p>
Karst invertebrates/ karst work	AW BCP staff are collecting data for preparation of karst completion status analysis and report expected in FY21 with TC BCP.
	AW BCP staff assisted USFWS genetic study by collecting eyeless Batrisodes in Travis and Williamson counties.

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	<p>Currently hydrogeological studies continue in the FM 2222 and RM 620 area. In late February 2021, contractor Rich Zarría and his crew dug 18 feet deep through ranch fill containing cattle ribs to make an unprecedented discovery of a new 600 feet plus long cave system, named Persephone Cave, on the AW BCP Stovepipe Karst Preserve. Faunal surveys, cave cricket exit counts, and continuous temperature/humidity monitoring was immediately conducted in Persephone Cave to document changes to the cave ecosystem following restoration. In the future we expect this cave may connect to Stovepipe Cave, which is already outstanding for its diversity of endangered cave invertebrates. This project was possible through mitigation funding provided by the Texas Department of Transportation.</p> <p>Conducted cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts on all other assigned caves (ongoing).</p> <p>A hydrogeological study report of Pipeline Cave permit cave along Slaughter Lane in Circle C was completed February 8, 2021 by Zara Environmental LLC funded primarily by Mobility Corridor Project of COA Public Works with support from AW BCP. The study also included hydrogeological data on Midnight, Slaughter Creek, Arrow, and Get Down federal permit caves.</p> <p>AW BCP is compiling data on Airmen's Cave for a hydrogeological study, partially to fully assess any potential impacts from proposed redevelopment of Brodie Oaks Mall, as requested by representatives of the developers and Watershed Protection Dept. A remapping of the cave and assessment of drips is underway.</p>
<b>Plant and Animal Control</b>	
Mammals	10 hogs and 7 deer were removed by contractors and City staff this quarter.
Red-imported fire ants and Tawny crazy ants	Staff developed and produced temporary signage for public education about Tawny Crazy Ants. Signs were shared with PARD for installation.
Invasive Plants	BCP staff continue to remove non-native plants on COA BCP tracts. A long-standing infestation of Chinese Privet on the Long Canyon tract continues to be a focus of work by staff and volunteers. New areas addressed by staff this quarter included a large invasive plant infestation on the Vaught Ranch tract, and others in canyons in the center of the Cortaña tract.
<b>Land Stewardship</b>	
Habitat Restoration	Due to Covid-19, a limited number of staff and volunteers maintained restoration projects on the JJ&T and Vireo Preserve tracts to promote water retention, slope stabilization, soil restoration, and reforestation on degraded sites to promote future habitat for GCWA and BCVI.
Fencing	Some unfinished sections of fence were completed along Park West/Long Canyon. A portion of the Carol Lee Preserve along FM 2222 was fenced. Work was initiated on Forest Ridge to install a perimeter fence along the boundary in an area that had been previously fenced but with a major setback deep into the property.
Roads	The unprecedented winter storm that downed trees across much of central Texas fortunately spared most Preserve roads, but staff devoted several hours to re-opening a road on the Lime Creek tract. Staff will collect tree slices for tree ring analyses (fire scars, age) from downed trees in fall 2021.

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Oak Wilt	A contractor installed two trenches to contain oak wilt infection: one within Emma Long Park and another straddling the boundary between the Cortaño tract and a Steiner Ranch tract managed for the BCP by Travis County.
Wildfire Preparedness	AFD constructed a shaded fuel break on the Jester Estates Karst Preserve which borders 18 homes in the Jester Estates Neighborhood.
<b>Law Enforcement</b>	
Trespass and Criminal Mischief	We continue to work on fencing, patrolling and education to avoid preserve damage.
	Staff and volunteers located several new, unauthorized trails in the Barton Creek Wilderness, apparently constructed to be used by mountain-bikers. Reported to PARD Rangers, who closed some of the trails with signs and some obstacles.
	Continued patrols of Preserve boundaries.
<b>Outreach/Volunteers</b>	
<p>June 6 is Austin Cave Day</p> <p>AW BCP is sponsoring the National Karst and Cave Management Symposium in San Marcos Nov 1-7 2021: <a href="https://symposium2021.nckms.org/">https://symposium2021.nckms.org/</a>. The symposium wants to offer the BCP Coordinating Committee free admittance to attend.</p> <p>See <i>BCP Partners Education Summary January–March 2021</i>.</p>	