

**Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP)
Updates for McGregor and Westcave Preserves**

**Biannual Report
April 2023 – September 2023**

McGregor Preserve

No physical work was conducted in the preserve. However, planning for fire breaks and deer harvesting is in progress for fall 2023 and winter 2024.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

Westcave Preserve staff and volunteer continue to water and fertilize planted trees and butterfly gardens.

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail maintenance, bird blind maintenance, boundary inspections, boundary maintenance, water gap repairs, butterfly garden upkeep, and building maintenance.

Westcave Preserve staff is still collecting data for Night Sky Quality readings. The application for Westcave to become a Dark Sky Park has not been submitted.

An injured Mexican Free-tailed bat was found and taken to the Austin Bat Refuge. The bat tested positive for rabies.

LCRA installed a turbidity/temperature antenna on the tower that houses the Motus Wildlife Tracking System antennas above staff offices at Westcave to measure the Pedernales River. The antenna receives a signal from a device at the bridge of the river on the side closest to the preserve.

Research consisted of the following:

- 1) Monthly water sampling was conducted to check water quality at Heinz Branch. Results continue to be within a normal range and are reported to LCRA.
- 2) A biannual karst invertebrate survey was conducted in Hammetts cave. All species are recorded and monitored by Travis County.
- 3) Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) surveys were conducted from March through June 2023. Three unique territories were identified, two of which were successful. A male that was banded in 2022 named Fluff with a band combination of (White/Black:Blue/Silver) returned for the season. Three Brown-headed cowbirds were dispatched during the GCWA season.
- 4) Volunteers conducted bi-weekly Dragonfly watch as part of the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership Citizen Science Program.
- 5) Weekly to biweekly nest checks were made by Westcave Preserve staff and interns as part of the Cornell Lab Ornithology Citizen Science Program called NestWatch.
- 6) Westcave Preserve staff and volunteers monitored each bat house at Westcave as part of a Bat Emergence Count. Emergence counts have been a weekly effort with the most individuals being 200 in the mega bat house. The Mexican Free-Tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) has been recorded at each bat house. This data is reported to Merlin Tuttle Bat Conservation International.
- 7) During the month of September, Chimney Swift data was collected. Fifteen were recorded returning to the Chimney Swift tower and the data submitted to eBird.