



Bexar Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Its primary goals are to promote species and habitat conservation and environmental education in the community.

For the latest news & updates, see <http://www.bexaraudubon.org> & <http://www.sa-naturecenter.org>

Thursday, September 11 • 6:30PM gathering; 6:45 announcements; 7:00 program
Trinity University Cowles Life Sciences Building, Room 149 (see map, p. 4) • Free; open to the public

Where Did the Bluebonnets Go?

Somebody Messed with Texas's Wildflowers! A Discussion of Invasive Exotic Species

Due to the mobility and innovation of humans, species are moved around the planet at a rate unprecedented in the history of Earth. As novel species, some become invasive, altering natural and managed ecosystems and homogenizing landscapes. Texans are proud of their natural heritage, as embodied in the legacy of Lady Bird Johnson; however, the coveted wildflower displays that once graced our roadsides and ranches are in decline. A number of factors have been identified to explain this decline, but one of the primary culprits is the widespread seeding and management of the non-indigenous, invasive grass, King Ranch (KR) Bluestem (*Bothriochloa ischaemum*).

The research of Kelly Lyons is focused on assessing why invasive grasses are successful, why and how they displace native species, and how to restore native species to grassland ecosystems. In this talk, Dr. Lyons will discuss her research on the control of KR Bluestem through active-season



burning and the reintroduction of native species, such as the Texas bluebonnet, among other approaches.

A native Texan, Dr. Lyons is Assistant Professor of Biology at Trinity University. She left the state to earn a bachelor's degree from American University in Washington, D.C., in International Relations, U.S.–Latin American Affairs. After receiving her Masters' and doctoral degrees from the University of California at Davis in Plant Physiology and Plant Ecology, she conducted post-doctoral studies in Sonora, Mexico.

"Returning to Texas after a 20-year absence was a bit shocking as a Texan and a botanist," she says of the increase in invasive weeds. "As a result of these introductions, Texans have lost and continue to lose major components of their natural heritage. Fortunately, local land owners are now getting involved in native prairie restoration." Through her teaching and research, Dr. Lyons is working to help remedy this loss.

Saturday, September 13, Crownridge Natural Area, 9–11:30 a.m.

Grass Identification Walk

Join us for a leisurely walk to learn the native grasses of this Hill Country park in northwest San Antonio. We'll encounter the many native grass species, along with the non-native KR Bluestem. Some fall-blooming wildflowers will also be out. Bring binoculars if you want to

check out the birds. Dr. Floyd Waller will be our guide. Floyd has a Ph.D. in grass systematics from Texas A&M. Call Patty Leslie Pasztor for reservations and directions at 210-824-1235.

San Antonio Environmental Network Public Issues Forum – Vegetated Roofs
Thursday, October 9 – Time and location as above – See page 2 for details

Chapter Program Meeting – Thursday, November 13 – Falconry & Conservation
John Karger of Last Chance Forever Bird of Prey Conservancy – Time and location as above

Vegetated Roofs — October 9 Program

A vegetated-roof is just what the name implies, a roof covered largely or entirely with plants. Such rooftops are one of the most promising trends in urban conservation, for residential, commercial, and public buildings.

Buildings with such roofs incur lower heating/cooling costs. We all benefit from the resulting reduced demand for energy, reduced heat-island effect on urban weather, cleaner air, and expanded habitat for birds and beneficial insects.

Additional potential benefits for business include increased customer traffic; more usable business space (rooftop break areas, snack bars, and boutiques); even tourism (think about the famous “Hanging Gardens of Babylon”).

At the October 9 meeting, San Antonio City Arborist Debbie Reid will briefly present the design, history, and

benefits of vegetated roofs. Then she and other members of our panel of experts will discuss how vegetated roofs are built and the advantages they confer. The panel will then answer questions from the audience.

The panel was not fully identified at press time. Additional information will be posted on the Bexar Audubon website at <www.bexaraudubon.org/calendar.html> and may be available by the time you receive this newsletter.

To foster this emerging trend, Bexar Audubon is offering a cash prize for “Best Vegetated Roof” finished in the year ending April 18, 2009. First prize: \$2,000 for the building owner or renter who finances construction and \$500 for the primary creator. Second prize: \$1,000 and \$250. (For more details, visit <www.bexaraudubon.org/prize.html>.)

The Unexpected President

On a recent Saturday, my wife Maria and I staffed a booth at a Government Canyon State Natural Area Family Day, representing Bexar Audubon, San Antonio Audubon, and Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, spelled in late afternoon by Georgina Schwartz.

The three organizations cooperate a lot. At the same time, there is something amiss when three people must represent three organizations in one booth for a whole day.

It happened because everyone else was tied up, mostly in other conservation-related activities. There is a mismatch between our region’s conservation needs and its conservation manpower. Overworked people put on so many wonderful activities to meet the overwhelming needs...only to overstretch themselves.

I often joke that San Antonio has 200 conservation groups and only 100 conservation activists, so we attend each other’s meetings and take turns being president of each other’s groups. And indeed we always see the same small group of friends at meetings and special events.

Now, there is satisfaction in being part of a small band of “merrie men” defending Bexarwood Forest against the Sheriff of Developerham. There is insight in Shakespeare’s words: “...we happy few, we band of brothers...”

But dadgummit folks, unlike Henry V, we usually don’t win our Battles of Agincourt. Recently a damaging rezoning was approved by City Council, which papered over the harm with a “compromise” that cut impervious cover (on vulnerable recharge land) from 45 percent to...42 percent! One problem: not enough people showed up to oppose the short-notice action.

Yes, it should be obvious that if the aquifer goes belly-up, our economy will,

too. But it seems our local leaders need to keep hearing that from “we the people.”

In short, being an environmentalist or conservationist in this area is an experience filled with rich personal relationships. It is fun, but it is not robust enough, and it is not getting the mission done. We need to build institutions that can get more done, without the turnover and burnout associated with today’s personality-based activism.

Pursuing Other Options

One approach is to develop more productive, less stressful strategies that can be executed with less labor and mental bloodshed. Bexar Audubon’s board is trying to work smarter, to get more “bang for the buck,” with win-win solutions that involve allying with business instead of fighting it.

This may entail abandoning some traditional battlefields altogether, in order to work in “growing fields.” It is not wrong to fight battles. But if you keep losing them, it is foolish not to consider other options.

We’re pragmatists. We want better conservation results on the ground, not more ideological purity in conservation heaven.

For example, maybe we can expand tree canopy more by allying with business to plant a thousand trees in a protected natural area, than we can by fighting 50 rezonings to save 800 trees on private property, winning half the time (if only we had such a batting average!), saving maybe 400 trees...and then facing 50 more rezonings when we are too tired to fight at all. (This vignette refers to no specific issue. It is just an illustration of a pragmatic strategy.)

But in the end, folks, we cannot institutionalize this process or safeguard our families’ physical and mental health, or protect our real long-

term property values and the local economy without MORE PEOPLE.

Bexar Audubon has about 1,200 members. I estimate less than two dozen ever attend meetings and only about a dozen (1 percent) are involved in chapter administration or actions. We get occasional feedback indicating that other members do read the newsletter and perhaps express opinions to their congressmen, etc. But folks, we desperately need local manpower.

Things YOU Can Do

If even a few more of you turned out, it could make an amazing difference. If you don’t want to hold office or sit in booths, there are other ways to help, things we aren’t doing now due to lack of people—educational programs at schools and civic clubs, attending local-government meetings and speaking up, writing more letters to elected leaders, the media, etc.

In the end, this chapter can only be as effective as you, its members, want it to be. We earnestly solicit your support.

— Harry Noyes

P.S. Let me briefly report my dismay at the last-minute cancellation of this year’s WildFest San Antonio, once scheduled for the first weekend in May. This was a prime example of a win-win collaboration between business and the conservation community, and its cancellation was heart-breaking. The good news: there has been a follow-up meeting in which a consensus was reached on trying again next year with a stronger leadership structure. Be assured Bexar Audubon is involved and will do everything it can to keep WildFest on track and to strengthen the already world-class offerings.

Notes & News

At a recent Environmental Network workshop, City Arborist Debbie Reid offered the following tidbits on vegetated roofs:

(1) California adopted Title 24 in 2005, apparently requiring cool roofs. Since then the state has had no black-outs or brownouts.

(2) Because of the heat here, it takes only 2.75 years of reduced A/C use for an owner to recapture the cost of a cool roof in SA.

(3) In SA, most cool roofs are reflective. Reflective roofs need periodic cleaning for best efficiency, but few owners do that. It is now far cheaper to install a cool roof than a conventional one, when electricity and maintenance savings are counted. However, only a few contractors do cool roofs.

(4) Vegetated roofs are complex, and there's still a lot to learn about which plants and media work best here. Some existing roofs aren't built for heavy loads; fortunately there are some very light artificial planting media. Water is not a hindrance. A/C condensate provides huge amounts. (The SA central library generates about 40,000 gallons a week; Debbie said they should have installed a wetlands at the library instead of a xeriscape garden!) Vegetated roofs demand careful waterproofing, but methods are well-known and proven.

(5) Vegetated roofs actually last far longer than conventional ones. The roof of a London department store, built 1938, is still going strong. Also, a vegetated roof next to a neighboring high-rise offends no one. Reflective cool roofs in such locations can mean war. Finally, of course, vegetated roofs can be USED by people, as safe oases for walking, resting, etc.

NOTE: Green Roofs for Healthy Cities is sponsoring an "Accredited Green Roof Professional Designation" course (Design 101) in San Antonio on Tuesday, July 22, 8-4. Tuition \$399. Visit www.greenroofs.org to register or for more information.

2008 Birdathon Results!

Editor's note: Much to our dismay, Marge Lumpe moved to Missouri last year, but she is still supporting Mitchell Lake with her Birdathon. And our good friend Susan Rust got in on the act, too! Here's her report.

You may be surprised to hear from me again this year, but I simply could not quit doing Birdathon. *Audubon Adventures* for our local schools will be supported by Missouri Department of Conservation at least this year, so I

decided I could continue to raise funds for the schools in the San Antonio area, as long as you are willing to support me. If you have not already contributed to Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, please consider this request to continue funding *Audubon Adventures* and other environmental education for your area.

Last spring when Ron and I were in Missouri, the weather was so gorgeous and the birds so plentiful, I decided to do my Birdathon as close to that time as possible: May 10. I was delighted to have with me for the Birdathon in the Cole Camp area my sister, Jan Neale, and my long-time friend, Susan Rust, who was visiting from Ashland, OR.

After spotting a Brown Thrasher in our back yard, I suggested we start our Birdathon early, because it was likely we would not see the thrasher again the next day. They are somewhat secretive. We counted a few minutes back and settled on our 24-hour period beginning at 5:45pm on May 9.

Other yard birds were American Goldfinch, Baltimore Oriole, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, American Crow (flying over), Northern Cardinal, Carolina Wren, Blue Jay, Gray Catbird, and Chimney Swift (also flying over). As we made our way to dinner at Charley's Buffet (voted the best home cooking in Missouri), we continued to bird. We saw or heard Eastern Meadowlark, Mourning Dove, Eastern Bluebird, Red-winged Blackbird, European Starling, Common Grackle, American Robin, Canada Goose, Barn Swallow, Killdeer, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Great-crested Flycatcher, Great Blue Heron, Summer Tanager, and Chipping Sparrow.

The next morning at 5:45 we went out on our deck to hear and/or see the Eastern Towhee, Eastern Phoebe (nesting under the deck), Tufted Titmouse, and Northern Bobwhite. As we drove down our lane, we heard the Grasshopper Sparrow with its click-click-buzz and saw the Brown-headed Cowbird. We turned left down Hwy 52 and left again on Klink Ave. near the Hi Lonesome Conservation Area. We heard the Dickcissels and got a stunning look at two Horned Larks in the road. We listened and watched in the parking lot and heard the Bell's Vireo and Common Yellowthroat.

Driving around the Hi Lonesome CA we saw Eastern Kingbirds, Henslow's

Sparrow (calling from a perch—a rare sight), White-crowned Sparrows, Northern Mockingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, American Kestrel, and Orchard Oriole. Looking down in a narrow stream that went under the road, Jan spotted a Sora! It was quite a surprise to find one there. We also got a Field Sparrow, with its ping-pong-ball-like song.

Proceeding on to another birdy area, we got an Indigo Bunting, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Wood Pewee, House Wren, and Great-tailed Grackle.

It was time for a coffee/cocoa stop in Cole Camp, and while there we got Purple Martin, House Sparrow, and Eurasian Collared Dove. Driving south of town we heard/saw a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wild Turkey, and White-eyed Vireo. On a lovely wooded property, we got Yellow Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Ovenbird, Cedar Waxwings, Northern Parula, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Tree Swallow, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

Trying another route out of Cole Camp, toward Lincoln and Warsaw, we saw Cliff Swallows under a bridge, Black-and-White Warbler (winding its way around a tree trunk), Kentucky Warbler, and Magnolia Warbler.

We hoped for some shore-type birds at Warsaw and were not disappointed: Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, and Ring-billed Gull. We were, however, caught in a thunder storm, which was not conducive to further birding. We were glad we began the prior evening.

We went back to Cole Camp to see if we could get a House Finch, as we had seen one earlier in the week. Susan remembered the spot, and sure enough it was there again.

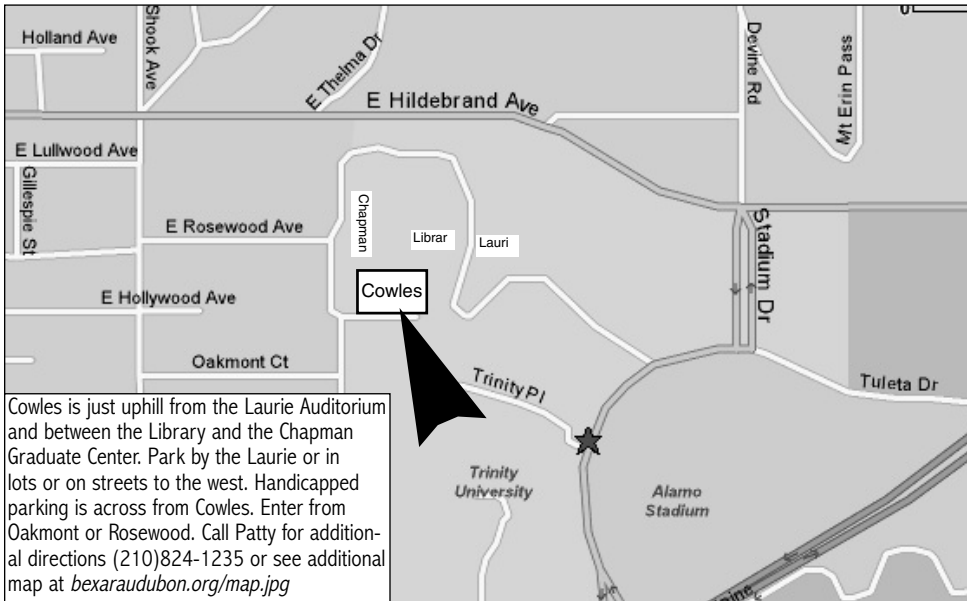
As we tallied our list, I noted we did not have an Upland Sandpiper—a species I was really counting on. It was 5:30, so we had 15 minutes. Just as I was making a U-turn to return home, an Upland was spotted up the fence post right at 5:45. What a stroke of luck, and what a wonderful day!!

P.S. We saw three Bobolinks the previous Tuesday but could not find any on Saturday. Look it up. It is beautiful.

It's not too late to contribute. Just mail your tax-deductible check marked "Marge's Birdathon" to Mitchell Lake Audubon Ctr, 10750 Pleasanton Rd, SATx 78221. After all, if Marge can support MLAC with a 24-hour effort in Missouri, we can write checks from here.



Map to Cowles Life Sciences Building, Trinity University, west of Highway 281



Who's What? and how to contact them

- President & Webmaster, Harry Noyes** — 210-490-3124 — harrynoyes@satx.rr.com
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- Editor, Michele Wood** — 210-492-4684 — editor@bexaraudubon.org
- Programs/Outings, Patty Pasztor**—210-824-1235 — pasztor@ix.netcom.com

Earth Share of Texas raises money for environmental and conservation organizations through workplace giving. If your employer participates in such programs, please ask them (if they don't already) to add Earth Share to your giving options. By designating the Audubon Foundation of Texas (AFT), Bexar Audubon Society can benefit. BAS receives credit for our support — getting the word out and promoting participation. Then BAS receives funding annually from AFT. Want more info? 1-800-GREENTX, ESTX@earthshare-texas.org, or

San Antonio Audubon Beginners Birdwalk — Each Second Saturday of the month at 8:30am in August and 8:00am September and October. Begins at the Judson Nature Trails House on Viesca St. From the 5900 block of Broadway, turn west on Ogden St., go to the stop sign at Greeley St., turn left and then right at the next corner, to the small parking lot on the left before the swimming pool. 210-342-2073. Binoculars available to lend. Report bird sightings to SA Audubon Society's Birdline: 210-308-6788. www.saaudubon.org

We're proud of you, Jill!

A team at the Army Institute of Surgical Research (BAMC burn center) has won one of the Army's "10 Great Inventions Awards" for the year 2007. One of the team members is Dr. Jill Sondeen, a former Bexar Audubon board member and *Bexar Tracks* editor.

Nominations for the program were submitted from the Army's laboratory community. The ten winning programs were selected based on their impact on Army capabilities, inventiveness, and potential benefit outside the Army.

The team's project was: "Damage Control Resuscitation of Severely Injured Soldiers." Since its fielding in January 2007, this new standard of care for the most severely injured soldiers requiring massive transfusions, has dramatically improved survivability. By limiting fluid resuscitation, the patient's blood pressure is stabilized to minimize renewed bleeding from recently formed blood clots. Also, adding plasma which has clotting factors, in addition to normally administered red blood cells, makes a difference in these massively-transfused patients. This technique has drastically cut mortality in the worst cases. Civilian trauma centers are finding out that when they implement "Damage Control Resuscitation" methods they save lives, too.

Jill's and her team's work has already helped save many lives, and in coming decades will help save thousands, maybe millions, more. As stated in the award program, "The magnitude of the improvement has been likened to the improvement after the introduction of antibiotics to medical care."



Jill remarked, "The best thing was that it was a committee of soldiers who selected the projects that were submitted. We made a difference to THEM."

This is just one more example of the important role military facilities in San Antonio and the talented people who work there play locally and globally.

Thank you to Jill and her team!

Opinion: Proposed Border Barrier Threatens Sabal Palm Sanctuary & Audubon Center

In the November-December 2007 issue of *Bexar Tracks*, an article advised you about the border barrier proposed for the Rio Grande Valley and that plans were for it to isolate Sabal Palm Audubon Center on the “other” side, between the fence and the river. It was anticipated that input would be solicited from affected parties and given due consideration. Today, however, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appears to be moving forward with little regard for stakeholder interests or input.

In June I was invited to speak on a panel on this topic for the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists. As I prepared my remarks, I became angry at the enormous damage planned for the Rio Grande Valley and the people and wildlife who live there. If this barrier is built as planned, successful efforts of the past decades to rebuild the region’s habitat—once 95 percent lost to agriculture and development—will have been so thoroughly compromised, I doubt it could be recovered in my lifetime.

A Unique Functional Ecosystem

Over three decades, \$100 million was patchworked together to create the 90,000 acre Lower Rio Grande National Wildlife Refuge and the Santa Ana NWR and to create a wildlife corridor that encompasses more than 100,000 acres—a unique functional ecosystem for wildlife. It’s plenty hard to gather together \$100 million for habitat—even over 30 years. In contrast, it seems easy enough to come up with much more than a billion to begin building a fence to slice it back up.

Sabal Palm Audubon Center

Sabal Palm Sanctuary was established in 1971. Today, it provides youth education, world-class nature viewing, and protection for 557 acres of unique habitat. A forest of Sabal Palms once dominated the Rio Grande delta. Almost lost, Audubon and our partners, such as the Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and countless volunteers, have been carefully restoring this palm forest. Walking the trails and hearing the Gulf breezes rustling the palm fronds is something one never forgets—it’s truly magical.

Each year 3,000 school-age children pass through Sabal Palm Center, experiencing this amazing spot and learning about its importance with our knowledgeable Audubon staff demonstrating

their own love for this place and the results of dedicated, thoughtful stewardship. It’s education about their own local natural community first-hand.

There are plans to expand visitor and education facilities at the historic (c1876) Rabb Plantation House on the property, helped by an economic development grant from the Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation.

200,000 Visitors Every Year

Besides education for children, Sabal Palm is part of the draw for 200,000 visitors each year, who come from all over the U.S. and the world to see the unique wildlife of the Rio Grande Valley. Sabal Palm is a Global Important Bird Area designated by BirdLife International and a Texas Parks & Wildlife Tier I High-Priority Ecoregion. Visitors spend \$150 million annually on items such as meals and lodging, creating a huge economic impact on a community where the average income is only \$15,000 a year. Sabal Palm itself contribute \$6.9 million annually to the local economy.

Forget the Laws

The citizens of the Rio Grande Valley have received considerable benefit from the environmental laws and regulations that have protected some of the wildlife these visitors come to see. They are among thirty or so now being waived by DHS in order to build this border barrier without requisite review and oversight! The Supreme Court in June declined a request by conservation and Congressional allies to review the legality of measures granting those exemptions.

One restriction that has come into play in Texas is a provision of the International Boundary Waters Commission and our treaty with Mexico. This prohibits the building of barriers within the Rio Grande flood plain that would increase Mexico’s risk of flood. For that reason, and that federal ownership of the property reduces the need to negotiate with private landowners in Texas, the barrier is planned to run along the tops of the Rio Grande’s levees. Sometimes these are as much as a mile inside the U.S. border, officially at the centerline of the Rio Grande.

Of course, Audubon doesn’t hear much about any of this first hand. DHS doesn’t seem to have to pay much attention to Sabal Palm because the proposed fence doesn’t actually cross

Audubon’s property. All 557 acres are on the “Mexican side.” So, they’re not required to provide Audubon with notice or other communications about what’s happening or what’s proposed.

Close the Doors

But, whatever DHS thinks, the fact is that Sabal Palm *will* be affected. In fact, unless drastic changes are made or plans for the fence are blocked, it’s likely the actions of DHS will not only thwart Sabal Palm’s programs and its development plans, but *they will force Audubon to close the center.*

The children and families of this community—as well as visitors from every corner of the globe—may forever be denied unique wildlife experiences, if Sabal Palm is closed forever and the integrity of the refuges is lost. And it won’t be good for the wildlife, either.

Go Thirsty

A fence at Sabal Palm—or anywhere else—won’t stop illegal crossings. (To Audubon’s knowledge there are relatively few illegal crossings each month at Sabal Palm itself.) But a wall or a fence *will* inhibit terrestrial wildlife, like ocelots, indigo snakes, Texas tortoises, birds such as the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, and even butterflies. And it could deny them their only reliable source of water. Just imagine that!

Property Rights and Takings

Homeland Security doesn’t plan to provide any compensation to landowners for the taking of property on the Mexican side of the barrier. This includes Audubon, which must also repay its economic development grant in the event of the center’s closing.

If your land were on the “other side,” you might wonder what it would be worth, even if it had been in your family since the Spanish land grants.

In the mid-’90s, property rights and takings were in the headlines, as central Texas land prime for development was being considered for critical habitat designation for the Golden-cheeked Warbler. Opponents cried “take back Texas!” Today no one seems to defend the property rights of many poor citizens along the Texas-Mexico border.

A Campus Divided

On July 1, UT Brownsville and DHS were ordered by a federal judge to seek an alternative to the current fence plan,

which would cut through the university campus, snubbing its mission of binational education. UT Brownsville president Juliet Garcia said, "Of course, we believe in protecting our borders. Of course, we believe in strong immigration policy. But we also understand that a fence, no matter how high or how wide, is no substitute for either." A report to the judge is due July 31.

While the entire UT Brownsville golf course would fall on the Mexican side of the fence, the nearby private River Bend Resort and golf course falls at a break in the barrier. So does selected other private property on the border.

Chad Foster, mayor of Eagle Pass and chair of the Texas Border Coalition, has sought answers to such questions as how and why the fence route was chosen, but he claims to have received no logical answers from DHS.

An Expensive Band-Aid®

A January 2007 story from the Associated Press reported the Congressional Budget Office's cost estimate of \$3 million per mile, while "the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimated a double-layer fence would cost a little over \$1 million a mile, not including buying the land on which it would be built, according to the Congressional Research Service. In addition, maintenance could run from \$16.4 million to \$70 million a mile over 25 years, the Corps said." According to *National Defense* magazine, the life-cycle cost for the entire proposed fence (California to Texas) could be as high as \$47 billion.

In Texas, 153 miles of fencing were planned to be built before the end of 2008. That expanse alone would cost somewhere between \$2.7 and \$11.2 billion over its proposed 25-year lifespan.

For an environmental yardstick, \$20 billion is the projected cost to rehabilitate the Everglades. Then there'd even be \$27 billion left over for maintenance.

Does the fence actually *solve* a problem or just throw money at a symptom?

Where To Put Your Money

Think about the results of a few billion dollars of economic development in Texas border communities: schools and day care, health programs, job training, infrastructure improvements.

And, as Mayor Foster suggests, use funds to eradicate—or at least control—invasive salt cedar (tamarisk) and Carrizo cane on the Rio Grande's banks, reducing cover and hiding places for those attempting to enter illegally by crossing the river. This has the

added environmental benefit of reducing transpiration and improving habitat.

Other technological and engineering controls should also be tried. Initial problems shouldn't terminate these efforts.

The Mexican government has interests, too, in stemming the flow of \$10 billion in drug money and a substantial number of high-powered firearms that move south every year from the U.S. It believes its efficiencies could be improved if Mexican border technology were comparable to that on the U.S. side. "The Bush administration has responded with a proposed \$500 million aid package to assist Mexican law enforcement in its fight against the drug cartels," according to *National Defense*.

Questions

- If Sabal Palm Center remained open on "the other" side of the fence, how could you go to visit? Would you need a passport to enter or return?
- How could Audubon maintain staff on the property? Who would mind the gate? Who would have security codes? If preserve managers had keys or codes, would that put them in danger?
- What happens in the case of fire? Wild fires are not uncommon there. Where's the emergency access?
- What's to be done about the inevitable soil erosion on the flood plain?
- How could school children enjoy field trips and gain environmental education?
- Why would donors choose Sabal Palm for their support?
- Does the area between the barrier and the river become, in fact, a "no-man's-land"? A militarized zone? Mexico?
- If we follow the money, who stands to gain? At the least—or most—consultants and contractors tasked with construction and maintenance.

Mexico & Texas Are Neighbors

In May 2007, a binational technical-scientific workshop was convened on the potential environmental impacts of the border fence. Adrián Fernández Bermauntz, president of Mexico's National Institute of Ecology, wrote in his introduction to the proceedings, *A Barrier to Our Shared Environment*: "The relationship between the United States and Mexico has lived through complex situations over the course of history; nevertheless, most of the differences have been resolved through constructive and respectful dialogue. At the National Institute of Ecology, we believe that the issue of the border fence should not be the exception. Let us give our experts and our institutions the chance to

work together, to find solutions that make us proud, that bring our people closer together, and that serve as an example for other borders in the world that face similar problems."

Solutions

First: stop construction of the barrier now. Second: reject one-size-fits-all thinking. Third: find a real solution that suits Texas and protects Texas wildlife.

—Susan Hughes

Sources

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- del Bosque, Melissa. "Holes in the wall." *Texas Observer*, February 22, 2008.
- "Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Texas" fact sheet. Defenders of Wildlife, 2008.
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- Martin, Gary. "Border fence gets tacit approval." *San Antonio Express-News*, June 24, 2008.
- Nijhuis, Michelle. "The border: no man's land." *Audubon*, May-June 2008.
- "Texas border mayors: border fence won't go up." Associated Press, January 17, 2007.

Presentation of the preceding opinion piece is sponsored by Save the Laja, Inc., a Texas 501(c)(3), formed for the purpose of fostering watershed and habitat protection in the Texas-Central Mexico corridor.

The views expressed are those of the author, and not necessarily of Bexar Audubon Society or Save the Laja.

Save the Laja has joined forces with Bexar Audubon to increase knowledge and understanding of corridor and border issues. Contact Save the Laja at 825 E. Guenther St., San Antonio, TX 78210-1237. Contributions are tax-deductible and welcomed.

Events & News

First Saturday Walks, 9-11am

The first Saturday of each month, the San Antonio Natural Areas Program of the San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department holds a natural and cultural history interpretive walk at one of the Natural Areas. Contact 210-564-6400 for the schedule, locations, and reservations. \$2 per person donation suggested. Limited to 15 persons per hike.

Second Saturday programs are co-sponsored by SA Parks and Recreation Natural Areas Program and Bexar Audubon. Reservations required; details occasionally change. Call 210-564-6400. \$3 each or \$5 per family donation suggested. www.sanaturalareas.org

For future schedules, please call 210-564-6400.

Wild! Wednesdays

Extraordinary Experiences in Nature! A family-oriented program targeting ages 7-11. \$3/class, maximum \$6/family/class.

Friedrich Wilderness Park—21395 Milsa. Contact Peggy Spring, 210-564-6402, or e-mail <pspring@sanantonio.gov> for more information or reservations—<www.sanaturalareas.org> .

July 16 & 23—Mammal series by Richard Heilbrun, TPWD biologist.

July 30—Tough plants and making paper.

August 6 & 13—Bugs, bugs, bugs.

August 20—Thorns and stickers: How plants protect themselves and spread their seeds.

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

10750 Pleasanton Road, San Antonio, TX 78221, 210-628-1639; mlac@audubon.org www.mitchelllakeaudubon.org.

Birding Tours — Every 2nd Tuesday at 8am; every Wednesday from 4:30pm until dusk; every 2nd Sunday at 8am; every 3rd Sunday at 8am; every 4th Saturday at 8am. \$5 for non-members; \$3 for members. No reservation necessary, however, please call to confirm since times may vary by season.

The following programs are free, but

reservations are required:

August 9—Welcome to My Web: Spiders of Mitchell Lake — 7-9pm

September 6—Good Bugs, Bad Bugs—Pesticide-free Garden Care by Molly Keck — 9-11am.

September 13—Kid's Birding 101 — 9-11am.

September 13—Drip Irrigation Made Easy by Tom Harris — 1:30-4pm.

September 27—Monarchs, Milkweed, & More! Part Two — 1-4pm.

October 25—Fall Wildlife Festival and Plant Sale — 9am-4pm.

August 8-9—Panhandle Wind and Wildlife Conference, Amarillo. Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Parks & Wildlife, and Texas Wildlife Association.

Texas leads the nation in wind power development according to the American Wind Energy Association. With four of the five largest U.S. wind farms now located in Texas, it is necessary to study the impact on wildlife, particularly:

- bat populations and movements;
- waterfowl movements and survival through the Central Flyway; and
- wildlife survival and reproduction in both the installation phase and long term.

Land fragmentation is also an issue for wildlife.

Fee is \$60 by July 15 or \$75 thereafter. Contact Kassi Scheffer at 800-839-9453.



image by TPWD

Cibolo Nature Center — 830-249-4616.

July 19—Rainwater Harvesting Class, 9am-noon. Pre-registration required. Call for fees (non-members \$30).

July 26—Songs and Stories Concert: Nobuko, 7pm. Cibolo Nature Center. \$7.50 CNC members, \$10 non-members, \$5 seniors.

August 9—Rainwater Harvesting (see above).

August 9—Songs and Stories Concert: Mark's Brothers band. 7pm. See above for series fees.

August 23—Songs and Stories Concert: Lost Mule Band, 7pm. See above.

September 8—Science in Nature, 10am-noon. Pre-registration recommended. Fees. Science for families and children 7 and up. Monarchs in Motion, Seedy Business, SKULLS, Snakes Lizards and Frogs, Birding for Kids, Pond Life, and more.

September 13—Rainwater Harvesting Class. See above.

September 13—Songs and Stories Concert: One Minute to Midnight. 8pm.

September 17—Upper Cibolo Creek Workshop I: "What makes a healthy creek?" 9am-12:30pm. Non-members \$20. Registration recommended; class size limited.

September 30—Upper Cibolo Creek Workshop II: "Is the water clean?" 9am-12:30pm. See above.

San Antonio Audubon Society

August 7—The San Antonio Zoo's Whooping Crane Conservation Program by Josef San Miguel, Curator of Birds at the San Antonio Zoo, 7pm. Lion's Field, 2809 Broadway (Broadway at Mulberry)

September 4—Wildlife in South Texas into the Future by Mark Klym, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 7pm, Lion's Field.

October 2—SAAS Annual Dinner with speaker Winnie Burkett, Sanctuary Manager, Houston Audubon Society, 6:30pm, LaFonda Oak Hills, 350 North-haven Dr. off Fredericksburg Rd.

November 6—Birds of Polynesia and Cook Islands by Ron Huffman, 7pm, Lion's Field.

October 24—Generations on the Land: Working for Land Stewardship. TX A&M University. www.generationsontheland.com.

Green Buildings Cut CO₂ Emissions

Promote Green Buildings for Biggest, Easiest Cuts in North American CO₂ Emissions

Buildings responsible for over one-third of continent's CO₂ emissions

Vancouver, 13 March 2008—

Promoting the green design, construction, renovation, and operation of buildings could cut North American greenhouse gas emissions that are fuelling climate change more deeply, quickly, and cheaply than any other available measure, according to a new report issued by the trinational Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). North America's buildings cause the annual release of more than 2,200 megatons of CO₂ into the atmosphere, about 35 percent of the continent's total.

Rapid market uptake of currently available and emerging advanced energy-saving technologies could result in over 1,700 fewer megatons of CO₂ emissions in 2030, compared to projected emissions following a business-as-usual approach—nearly equal the CO₂ emitted by the entire U.S. transportation sector in 2000. More advanced green buildings routinely reduce energy usage by 30 to 50 percent over conventional buildings, with the most efficient performing more than 70 percent better than conventional properties.

Despite proven environmental, economic, and health benefits, green building today accounts for only a small fraction of new home and commercial building construction—just 2 percent of the new non-residential building market, less than half of 1 percent of the residential market in the U.S. and Canada, and even less in Mexico.

The report, *Green Building in North America: Opportunities and Challenges* www.cec.org/pubs_docs/documents/index.cfm?varlan=english&ID=2242, is the result of a two-year study by the CEC Secretariat, prepared with advice from an international advisory group of prominent developers and architects, sustainability and energy experts, real estate appraisers and brokers, and local and national government representatives.

“Improving our built environment is probably the single greatest opportunity

to protect and enhance the natural environment. This report is a blueprint for dramatic environmental progress throughout North America—mostly using the tools and technology we have on hand today,” says CEC Executive Director Adrián Vázquez. “Green building represents some of the ripest ‘low-hanging fruit’ for achieving significant reductions in climate change emissions.”

Even with rapid growth projected in the green building market across all three countries, public and private sectors must embrace substantial changes to the planning, development, and financing of commercial and residential buildings to overcome significant barriers to the widespread adoption of high-performance buildings throughout North America.

Jonathan Westeinde, managing partner of The Windmill Development Group in Ottawa and the CEC's advisory group chair, states, “As a developer, I rely on the fact that green building is a proven concept—with construction costs and market benefits that are rapidly improving. This report shows what is needed to scale up and put green building at the heart of a healthy, energy-secure North America.” The report highlights the importance of green building in urban development. Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, whose city hosted a CEC symposium on green building in May 2007, states, “Green building is a cornerstone for creating strong, sustainable communities. In Seattle, we are convinced that cities that make the commitment and investment in green development now will have a significant advantage in the long run.”

Report authors describe a number of disincentives to green building to be overcome and recommend ways to accelerate the market uptake of green building and make it the standard practice for all new construction and renovation of existing buildings in North America.

The CEC study notes several government and industry initiatives that promote aggressive energy performance improvements in the building sector. One study completed for the report signals the potential of green building to yield tremendous energy improvements

and greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the building sector by 2030, and suggests a path toward zero net-energy and carbon-neutral buildings. The report was produced by the Secretariat of the CEC, prepared under Article 13 of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) and is not intended to reflect the views of the Parties to that agreement. Information for the report came from background reports prepared by independent experts and from two public meetings. The report and associated background reports, along with a portfolio of selected green buildings in Canada, Mexico, and the U.S., are available at www.cec.org/greenbuilding/

The CEC was established by Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. to build cooperation among the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners in implementing NAAEC, the environmental side accord to NAFTA. It addresses environmental issues of continental concern, with particular attention to challenges and opportunities presented by continent-wide free trade.

Editor's note: Stephen Colley of Build San Antonio Green

<www.buildsagreen.org> commented, given that the average age of an American residence is 37 years, the potential for contribution of pollutants by buildings extends over a much longer period than the average car. Transportation efficiency, while certainly important, has the potential to turn around much faster than building efficiency. That's an important reason, not to be ignored, to begin adopting green building initiatives now! — SKH

Welcome Your New Editor!

Michele Wood is the new editor of *Bexar Tracks*, beginning with the November-December issue. She'll bring a new voice, a new perspective, and new energy to your newsletter. Please provide her with feedback, input—and appreciation. Take this opportunity to help her make *Bexar Tracks* your vehicle for news and views.

A hearty thank you, Michele!

I'm not sure how many times I have been your newsletter editor since 1991, but each time has been a pleasure. Thank you for the opportunity.

News & Notes

Texas Crawdads — A NEW Field Guide to this key critter in riparian zones.

<<http://texascrawdads.com>>

Authors: Sterling K. Johnson and Nathan K. Johnson

ISBN 978-0-9801103-0-2; \$24.95.

Learn about the life and habitat of Texas crayfish and how to identify, locate, catch, show, grow, collect, photograph and draw them. The text reviews thirty-seven species and several varieties and gives a synopsis of how the present understanding of them developed.

The book also depicts animals likely to be caught along with crawfish. More than 140 color photos present Texas crayfish in actual size. Species are presented individually and as recognizable groupings. Multiple photos of each species help readers better understand the potential for variation of appearance in an individual species.

Texas's Rivers Need You!

Stakeholders are needed to help set water-flow goals.

How much water do our rivers and bays need to stay healthy? How much water can we use in cities, on fields, and in factories before we do serious harm?

Texas is growing faster than any other state in the nation. As human water use increases, many of the state's rivers and estuaries could lack enough fresh water, particularly in drier years.

A new state law creates a stakeholder process to set standards defining how much water needs to remain in our rivers to sustain healthy ecosystems. Strong participation from committed people who care about these two unique watersheds will make a real difference.

1. San Antonio River and San Antonio Bay system—including the Guadalupe and San Marcos Rivers.
2. Colorado River and Bay system—including the Highland Lakes and tributaries such as the Llano.

Learn about the Environmental Flows Allocation Process at www.texaswatermatters.org/flows.htm. Then contact Jennifer Ellis, National Wildlife Federation, 512-476-9805 or ellis@nwf.org.

Deep and Punkin Preserve

A couple of years ago, Bexar Audubon contributed toward the acquisition of Deep and Punkin Preserve by the Texas Cave Management Association. Geary Schindel of the Bexar Grotto did a presentation on the property at a BAS meeting. He recently provided us with a bird list from a brief survey and news that Great-horned Owls were nesting successfully in Punkin cave. In addition, Punkin cave is home to a fern that is very rare for Texas. About 30,000 bats reside there in the summer. These geologically uncommon, very pretty caves also support a cave-adapted scorpion.

This habitat includes Juniper/Oak woodlands where Golden-cheeked Warblers nest, rocky open ground where Common Nighthawks nest, Yucca for Scott's Orioles, tall deciduous trees along dry riverbeds for Summer Tanagers, and caves for Cave Swallows and Great-horned Owls. Walk the dry Juniper areas for sparrows, and visit the creek bed for migrating songbirds spring and fall.

This list was created 4/28/08 by Darcy Stumbaugh and Alfred Nsom, Texas A&M: Wild Turkey, Bewick's Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Golden-cheeked Warbler, Cave Swallow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Common Nighthawk, Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture, Scott's Oriole, Summer Tanager, Nashville Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Tennessee Warbler, Great-horned Owl, Northern Cardinal, White-winged Dove, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Western Scrub-jay, Red-eyed Vireo, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black-crested Titmouse, and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Little Did He Know...

"I didn't know I was a tree hugger until this happened. It's like the land has been raped. I don't even want to live here any more. But I don't think I could sell my house; not with a 250-space parking lot in front of it." — comment from a Fayetteville, NC, homeowner after a local college denuded a much-loved wooded landscape without notice to neighbors and without preserving even a thin line of trees to protect the neighborhood from the glaring lights and ugliness. (Source: Fayetteville, N.C., *Observer*)

Population & National Security— A Different Perspective

- Real investment in family planning will protect the environment and relieve pressure on natural resources.
- Resource scarcity and other population pressures place stress on fragile governments and other social structures.
- Many poor countries struggle to maintain health care, schooling, and urban infrastructure in the face of rapid population growth.
- Countries without the means to adequately feed, house, educate, and employ their citizens risk civil insecurity.
- High fertility rates often lead to disproportionate populations of young people—"youth bulges." As these young people reach their childbearing years, population numbers skyrocket.
- Large numbers of young people without education and employment leave nations ripe for instability and civil conflict.
- Access to family planning services eases such demographic "bumps" and promotes civil security.
- Real investment in family planning will encourage social stability and decrease conflict.
- Pakistan's population has quadrupled from 46 million in 1960 to 164 million today. It is projected to add another 51 million people in the next 15 years.
- The 60+ countries with pronounced "bulges" include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Haiti, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda.
- Forty percent of the populations of Iraq, Yemen, and the Palestinian Territories are under the age of 15.
- Seventeen of the top 20 failing states have high population growth.
- For FY '08 Congress provided \$461 million for USAID and \$40 million for UNFPA, but again the administration has not released the approved funding for UNFPA. Ask your senators and congressman to support *increased* funding for international family planning in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act for 2009 and reverse the historic decline for population programs. ***It's in all our best interests.*** — ***Susan Hughes***



The Economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Environment. — Tim Wirth

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San Antonio, TX 78209-0084

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Bexar Tracks is the official newsletter of the Bexar Audubon Society, a Chapter of the National Audubon Society. The Chapter's primary goals are to promote species and habitat conservation and environmental education in the community.

Your membership includes National Audubon and Bexar Audubon and subscriptions to both *Audubon* and *Bexar Tracks*.

Membership and Support for Your Environmental Voice in Our Community

Bexar Audubon welcomes new members to join Audubon through the chapter. This brings 100 percent of the first-year's dues directly back to support local work. The same applies to gift memberships placed through the chapter. Your additional tax-deductible donation is greatly appreciated. Bexar Audubon receives only a few thousand dollars each year from National Audubon Society as dues share. The rest we must raise ourselves. Your help is needed, and your donations will be put to good use right here in South Central Texas to provide environmental news and education to the community, including the newsletter, programs, San Antonio Environmental Network Issues Forums, Second Saturday programs, and other activities you may or may not hear about.

Individual introductory memberships are \$20; seniors and students join for \$15.
Please provide the following information for each personal subscription or gift:

Name _____

Mailing Address with ZIP code _____

AC & Phone _____ e-mail _____

Do you wish to opt out of other mailings by Audubon or those with whom it shares lists? yes no

Make checks payable to "Bexar Audubon Society" and mail to the address above.

Enclosed: \$ _____ for subscription(s) \$ _____ additional donation

NOTE: If you change address or cancel membership, you do NOT need to contact Bexar Audubon but MUST contact National Audubon (and we will automatically get the change when we download labels). Save time and energy by mailing your change of address information to National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 52529, Boulder CO 80322-2529; phoning 1-800-274-4201; or e-mailing CHADD@audubon.org.