On July 1, 2016, I took over the helm of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge following Suzanne Tuttle’s retirement. Six days later, I celebrated 19 years of working at the Nature Center. That time should help make me familiar to Nature Center supporters in this, my first Bluestem News article as Nature Center manager. Over the years, I have written articles for this newsletter under many titles, including park naturalist (1997-2000), Nature Center supervisor (2001-2005), natural resource manager (2006-2016), and, now, Nature Center manager. I even carried the title of Bluestem News editor from 1998-2010.

Beyond the job titles, I’ve worn many hats for the Nature Center during those 19 years. I’ve worked for, and with, two dedicated managers. I have been mentored by those who have come before me, and I have mentored those who follow in my footsteps. Nineteen years have taken me from being the youngest naturalist on staff to the oldest.

I mention this solely to explain how I answer the most frequently asked question I hear these days: “How are you handling the changes of the new position?”

Nature is dynamic, constantly adapting and evolving to meet new challenges. The Nature Center, being a facility guided by nature, is also dynamic and must respond to changes in visitation, weather, budget, politics, and the vagaries of public opinion through adaptation and evolution. To be successful, every FWNC&R staff member must exhibit these traits of nature by being willing and able to adapt and evolve. Learning at all levels of professional naturalism allows me to respond to the aforementioned question with, “There hasn’t really been much change.”

From the outside looking in, it may appear that Nic Martinez, natural resource technician, has a completely different job from, say, Naturalist/Volunteer Coordinator Laura Veloz or that Natural Resource Specialist Michelle Villafranca and Office Manager Anne Hamman share no responsibilities, but the reality is that all positions are designed to meet two primary objectives: wisely manage the natural resources of the Nature Center and provide educational and recreational experiences for the public. Each individual on staff has certain specific areas of responsibility, but each and every person strives to achieve the same overarching objectives, regardless of position or title.

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~ FONC MISSION STATEMENT ~
“To preserve, protect, and conserve in perpetuity the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge.”
**LOCATION:**
Four miles west of loop I-820 on Jacksboro Highway (Texas 199).

**HOURS:**
HARDWICKE INTERPRETIVE CENTER: Daily: 9 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

**REFUGE:**
Refuge hours
October 1—April 30
8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. daily
May 1—September 30
Mon.—Fri. 7:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Sat.—Sun. 7:00 a.m.—7:00 p.m.
Please call 817-392-7410 with any additional questions.

**GATE FEES:**
Non-members:
Adults (13-64) - $5
Seniors (65+) - $3
Children (3-12 yrs) - $2
Under 3 years—Free
Active/retired military with valid ID and their families—$1 discount per person.

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**FONC BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**
Chris Smith, President
Lynda Gearheart, VP/President-Elect
Marty Leonard, Past President
Mark Jones, CPA, Treasurer
Michelle Schneider, Recording Secretary
Dagmar Higgins, Corresponding Secretary

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Denis Benjamin
George Bristol
Lon Burnam
Linda Christie
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Sally McCoy
Cathy Mueller
Bob O’Kennon
Katherine Owens
Elaine Petrus
William Rodgers
Rick Shepherd

**Staff:**
Laura Wood, Executive Director
Lucinda Lewis, Bookkeeper

**P & R Advisory Board Rep.:**
Jeffrey Davis, ex officio

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**BLUESTEM NEWS:**
Sharon McKone Editor-in-Chief
Rosemarie Hayward Layout & Graphics

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Rob Denkhaus FWNC&R Manager

**HARDWICKE INTERPRETIVE CENTER**
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Elizabeth Bittner Naturalist/Education Programming
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Troy Mullens Weekend Naturalist
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Susie Harrison DeeAnn McGinnis
Banjo Moore

**FORT WORTH NATURE CENTER:**
www.fwnaturecenter.org

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October—December 2016
4th Quarter Edition
Marty Leonard, whose exceptional term as president from 2014 to 2016 witnessed significant fund-raising progress, recently transitioned to past-president and passed on the ceremonial chirping painted bunting replica used to open board meetings to Chris Smith. Chris, as VP/president-elect, assumes the office of president for the 2016 to 2018 term. Completing a two-year director term, Lynda Gearheart has been elected to the office of VP/president-elect. Rick Shepherd vacates the office of past-president and has been elected to a two-year director term.

The board says farewell to Laura Harrison, who has given three selfless years of service as treasurer, having initially been elected to fill an unexpired term, followed by completion of a standard two-year term in 2016. The board expresses its sincere appreciation for a job well done.

Being unquestionably one of the most demanding leadership offices the board must fill, the position of treasurer has been ably filled by Mark Jones. Mark has more than 30 years in practice as a CPA, including six years as a partner in one of the largest regional accounting firms in the Southwest. In 2003, he established Mark M. Jones & Associates, P.C. – Consultants and Certified Public Accountants.

Newly elected directors are Linda Christie, Wes Culwell and Katherine Owens.

Linda Christie is very familiar with the Nature Center, having served on the Parks and Community Services Advisory Board, including time as its District 7 representative, which includes the Fort Worth Nature Center. Since 2005, Linda has been employed by the Tarrant Regional Water District as director of Community and Government Relations. A very talented and engaged person, Linda brings another strong work ethic to the Friends’ board.

Wes Culwell is a board-certified master arborist. He played a significant role in the Lake Worth Centennial 2014 celebration by personally conducting a comprehensive survey of all the trees on islands in and surrounding Lake Worth in search of trees that would achieve centennial stature. Some even proved to be of champion size. Wes authored the exceptional illustrated book The Trees of Our Lake [Centennial Edition] in collaboration with professional photographer Chuck Garrett. Several of the exceptional trees are located at the Nature Center. He has also authored a book on CCC Company 1816 and its construction contributions at what is now the Nature Center. He currently serves on the Tarrant County Historical Commission and is its chairman-elect.

Katherine Owens has agreed to chair the Buffalo Boogie 2017 Planning Committee after her predecessor moved on short notice to Austin. An attorney, Katie is described as an eager, hardworking young professional with proven leadership abilities, and she stepped in swiftly to assume the responsibility. She has been elected to the board as of August 11 to fill the new director vacancy afforded by the bylaws’ “urgent interim consideration” amendment [Art. V, § 5.05].

Two directors, Tom Armstrong and George Bristol, were each completing the last year of unexpired two-year terms and have been elected to fill new two-year terms.

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Texas Legislature Park Funding Increase Benefits Nature Center

It is often overlooked, but the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) plays an important role in the life and well-being of our local parks, including the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. A healthy portion of the funds generated by the sporting goods sales tax goes to fund local park projects across the state...if the Texas legislature chooses to appropriate all the funds intended to flow to state and local parks.

Unfortunately, over the past two decades, this has not always been the case. The truth is that prior legislatures have been all over the map when it came to appropriations. Some years were good, some were so-so, and some were near nothing. This was not only a misuse of funds intended for our parks, it led to budgeting nightmares for proper and long-range planning. From year to year, no one could predict the outcome of the legislature’s appropriation decisions.

In 2007, that began to change, but there were still holes in the process that allowed the legislature to appropriate all, part, or none of the revenues generated from the sporting goods tax to pay for attractive and inviting parks. Some years, the local park grant program all but did without. In 2015, the Texas legislature finally came to the realization that what those of us who had set about educating and advocating for better parks with more substantial and sustainable funding had said was true, made good sense, and was economically beneficial to communities and citizens alike. With the passage of HB158 in 2015, the legislature directed that all funds generated from revenues of the sporting goods sales tax should go to our parks...the original intent of the act passed in 1993. From 2016 on, our state parks and local park grant programs will be fully funded to meet the needs of a population that will double by 2040.

For this biennium of 2016 and 2017, the local parks grant-making account will have $32,000,000. That is a vast improvement over the near-zero amount appropriated in 2013. Several projects in and around the DFW area have already been funded, including Fort Worth’s Northwest Community Park and Alliance Park.

On May 3, Nature Center board members and staff, city park officials, and representatives of TPWD met to explore the potential grant programs that may be available now and in the future. These grants range from $1,000,000, 50%-50% matching programs for large projects, such as the Nature Center’s Broadview restoration, to smaller grants for trails, which are capped at $300,000 with an 80%-20% match. An outreach program also exists that would help us attract different and diverse groups who may not even know of the Nature Center. Whatever the size, we have a need. We will simply have to evaluate each project, see if it fits into the city’s park plan, measure whether matching private funds are available on our end, and then make our case to the city and state.

After a review of the projects and opportunities in play at present and those on the horizon, I am confident the Nature Center will be eligible and successful at all levels of these grants as well as create the necessary atmosphere for meaningful private/public partnerships to make the Nature Center one of the premier urban nature centers in the country.

George Bristol
FONC Board Director
No Introduction Needed...continued from page 1

My 19 years and variety of positions at the Nature Center have not been a series of disparate steps but rather an evolutionary ramp leading to a properly managed refuge and a conservation-minded public. That’s the same ramp everyone who works at, or supports, the Nature Center is climbing. So, yes, there have been and will continue to be changes, but it is only in the details and not in the direction.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped me climb that ramp and encourage you to join us on our journey toward achieving the Nature Center’s mission: To enhance the quality of life by enrolling and educating our community in the preservation and protection of natural areas while standing as an example of these same principles and values in North Central Texas.

Note: The one real difference I have noticed since becoming Nature Center manager is that I have to sign a lot more paperwork, which effectively extinguishes my dream of ever being able to sell my autograph on eBay.

Rob Denkhaus
Nature Center Manager
Ding Dong, Knock Knock, Trails & Treats is at the Door

Walking through the local stores, you can’t avoid seeing aisles filled with candy, stuffed animals singing “Monster Mash,” costumes, and decorations for Halloween. Soon, a legion of superheroes, princesses, Disney characters, and more will descend on your neighborhoods with a resounding and uniform phrase, “Trick or Treat!” Social protocol dictates giving these children in disguise a treat in order to avoid any tricks. Perhaps you are the chaperone to a team of candy seekers and responsible for taking them to acquire their loot. Are you ready for this invasion of the walking sweet teeth? Are your feet ready for the walking? You can get prepared by attending Trails & Treats at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge.

Trails & Treats is a FREE family-friendly event designed to attract families to the Nature Center by offering fun activities and sharing the programming and amenities we offer. Throughout the years, we have offered Trails & Treats as an opportunity to educate kids about both misunderstood and nocturnal wildlife and introduce the public to trails. This unique aspect of Trails & Treats separates us from other Halloween-themed events in the area. In addition to learning about local wildlife, we provide face painting, crafts, games, and a trail kids can hike for treats. This year will be no different, and we look forward to seeing the different costumes.

Mark your calendar for Thursday, October 27, 2016, at 5-7 PM for another night of exploration and fun. Bring your kids and grandkids and get a head start escorting them along the trail searching for treats. If you do not have any kids to bring, come anyway and volunteer. Your smiles, costumes, and hospitality will make an already special event that much more special. Share with your friends about this FREE event. Whether you are interested in volunteering or have questions about Trails & Treats, please call us at 817-392-7410.

Michael Perez
Natural Scientist Supervisor

Nature Center Winter Hours Begin October 1st
Saturday, October 1st, the Nature Center will switch to winter hours. The Refuge will be open daily – 8 a.m.-5 p.m. The Hardwicke Interpretive Center hours remain 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily.

Other holiday closures for the Refuge:
Thursday, November 24th – Thanksgiving  Sunday, December 25th – Christmas

The Nature Center will be open all other days around the holidays, including January 1, 2017, New Year’s Day. For more information, you may call the Nature Center at 817-392-7410 or visit the website for a current listing of holiday closures: www.fwnaturecenter.org.
From the board….. continued from page 3

Lon Burnam completed his second two-year term, and, in keeping with the Burnam family’s longstanding interest and support, has been re-elected to a third term as provided by the bylaws. His passion for the Nature Center is deep-seated. During Lon’s formative years, his environmentalist parents personally funded creation of the Burnam Environmental Learning Circle and Scholarship Fund. The sylvan site was dedicated in 2005 and is located just to the northwest of the Hardwicke Interpretive Center’s entrance. Sally McCoy has been re-elected to another two-year term and remains manager of the Friends’ Gift Shop as chair of the Gift Shop Committee.

The board regrets the loss of Director Kari Landry after the first year of her second term. Kari was an exceptional director, and the board wishes her well. Directors Denis Benjamin, Lynn Fortenberry, Joe Gearheart, Cathy Mueller, Bob O’Kennon, Elaine Petrus, Bill Richerson, and Will Rodgers each have another year of service before completing their current terms.

For the board,
Rick Shepherd

End-of-Year Campaign Announced

This year’s North Texas Giving Day on September 22 and our year-end appeal following in November will be focused on the exciting leveraging opportunities toward the grants mentioned in this newsletter. Don’t forget to Get Up and Give on September 22!
Chisholm Trail Park: The Prairie Park

In October 2014, Rob Denkhaus and I met with Tom Alves (Senior Landscape Architect with the Fort Worth Park & Recreation Department) at Chisholm Trail Park to offer recommendations on infrastructure placement to allow for optimal preservation of relict Fort Worth Prairie habitat onsite. This narrow prairie strip runs north to south along I-35 from the Red River to the Brazos River and is couched between the Eastern and Western Cross Timbers. It is defined by limestone soils, topographic benches, seeps, and endemic prairie plants found only in North Central Texas.

Tom has an eye for recognizing special natural areas, and he designed all of the active-use facilities (soccer fields, skate park, parking) adjacent to the existing Chisholm Trail Recreation Center in such a way as to preserve as much of the prairie as possible. The remainder of the prairie is saved as a passive-use area, with a loop trail to lead visitors through the wildflowers.

As an innovative approach, Tom arranged for Nature Center staff Nic Martinez and Nicholas Griffin to mow and bale hay in the construction footprint to be returned post-construction to stabilize and mulch the soil and act as a seed source. Harvesting native hay, collecting seed, and salvaging plants onsite at Chisholm Trail Park are important steps to helping ensure the intrinsic biological value of the ecosystem the park represents.

In June 2015, I organized several plant salvages with volunteers from the Nature Center and Native Prairies Association of Texas. The plants were transported to the Conservation Greenhouse at Fort Worth Botanic Garden for nurturing until the summer ended. They were then brought to the Nature Center where Restoration Greenhouse volunteers divided and established additional plants. In Spring 2016, Tom arranged to move a windmill from its original location in the park and place it in a prominent traffic circle that is the gateway to the prairie. Volunteers returned the salvaged plants to the park, planting them as a native landscaping demonstration below the windmill. With a little luck, some planning, and nature’s abundant rainfall, the prairie plants should flourish below the windmill that sings the wind’s prairie song.

Special thanks to these volunteers: Bill Collins, Kim and Ray Conrow, Kay Dansby, Jana Hill, Cat Hutzler, Bren Ledbetter, Marz Lotzska, Gary McBryde, Kate Morgan, Laura Penn, Paula Perry, Sam Scarborough, Katie Smith, Anita Snider, John Snowden, Anne Stine, Dave Vestal, Bonnie Weyandta (and Trip Smith of Botanic Garden).

Michelle Villafranca
Natural Resource Specialist
Warren Pulich Memorial Whooping Crane Trip

January 6-8, 2017

Travel with a group of fellow birders to the Texas Gulf Coast and see where the endangered whooping cranes spend the winter! We are privileged to have legendary birder Warren Pulich’s son, Warren Jr., serve as our birding guide while on the coast.

Price includes:
- Bus Transportation
- Rooming at Double Occupancy Rate
- Breakfast
- Boat Fare
- Naturalist Guide
- Entrance Fees to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and a Local City Park
- Single Occupancy Is Available at an Additional $130

Price is $595 for Friends members and $695 for non-members and includes a one-year family membership to the Friends, with all the benefits that entails.

To register and pay, go to www.naturecenterfriends.org, click the Events tab, then Whooping Crane Trip. At the bottom of the page, click “Here” to go to the online registration form. Or mail your payment and contact information to FONC, 9601 Fossil Ridge Rd, Fort Worth, TX 76135.

Itinerary:
- **Friday, January 6**, 6:30 AM: Arrive at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden parking lot. Leave at 7:00 AM. Breakfast stop at McDonald’s in Waco. Eat a sack lunch, then birding at Monument Hill State Park in La Grange. Stop at Goose Island State Park at the Big Tree for birding at the tree and along the bay shore. Arrive at La Quinta Inn in Rockport. Dinner in Rockport.
- **Saturday, January 7**, 7:00 AM: Leave for the boat in Rockport Harbor. Lunch in town at noon. Drive Shore Line Road, stopping at various birding spots. Stop in Port Aransas if time allows. Dinner in town.
- **Sunday, January 8**, 7:00 AM: Leave for Aransas Wildlife Refuge and bird around the visitor center. Drive to the tower for birding. Drive to Victoria through Refugio, looking for buteos along the way. Lunch at noon. Leave for Fort Worth, with one stop on the way.

Transportation will be provided by Cowtown Bus. The bus will leave from and return to the Fort Worth Botanic Garden parking lot. Arrangements have been made with the Botanic Garden for overnight parking.

Your registration will assist the Friends in its support of the Nature Center. La Quinta Inn supports the Texas Parks Foundation.

**Space is limited, so register now!**

For more information, contact: Bill Richerson at 817-235-6524 or wrich@sbcglobal.net.
A s a fundraiser and board development consultant, I believe all facets of improving an organization should be fun, and I always encourage planning sessions to be in retreat form. This provides more focus and fewer distractions. The Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge Board of Trustees recently gathered at Marty Leonard’s Starr Hollow Ranch for a day of fun, food, bird watching, golf…and, of course, planning.

With city and state budgets getting leaner, the scale by which the Friends supports the Nature Center’s programs and infrastructure is vital to its growth and sustainability. At the Nature Center, more than 50,000 kids and families can get outdoors, and students are able to study in an outdoor laboratory that boasts some of the most diverse landscapes in one place. All of this makes our commitment to having a thoughtful, purposeful, and measurable five-year plan paramount.

Our day began by digging into carefully identified public grant opportunities, both state and local, that will allow us to expand on programs for our youngsters as well as much-needed capital improvements. Working in concert with our city’s bond election planning process, four major projects were selected to pursue. Regardless of the bond outcome, however, the board is committed to fully funding all four projects.

Over the next five years, you can look forward to updates on revamping the Hardwicke Center and restoring Broadview Park to its former glory with modern amenities that leave little footprint but greatly enhance your experience. In addition, we’re committed to finishing restoration of our stunning boardwalk (already underway) and increasing capacity at our signature trailheads such as Greer Island—with more parking, picnic areas, and, most importantly, toilets! Finally, we will soon be announcing a local school or children’s organization with which to partner, expanding its curriculum through education about our natural resources.

As a member, what does this mean for you? You have an important part to play! Public grants require private matching funds. With every dollar you give to the Friends, we will leverage that money into even more funding, preserving, protecting, and conserving the Nature Center for the health, recreation, and education of our youth for generations to come.

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Ways to Give:
Can’t write a large check? No problem! If you love the Nature Center, you can give to the Friends in many other ways:

- Becoming a member sustains much of our operations: funding for the bison herd, education staff, and care and feeding for our ambassador animals.
- A membership to the Friends makes an awesome gift!
- Visit our gift shop. A walking stick makes a fun gift for the outdoor enthusiast. From gorgeous coffee table books to rocks and stuffed animals, you can always find something fabulous.
- Buffalo Boogie – run, sponsor, promote! This year will be our boogie’s 25th anniversary!
- Shop on Amazon? Sign up (for free) for Amazon Smile, and a portion of every purchase will go to the Friends. Buying groceries? Link your Kroger Plus card to us, and, like Amazon, a portion of your purchase will go to the Friends.
- Post much? Like, share, and re-post when you see us on social media. It makes a difference!
- Volunteers are our life-blood. The Friends employs only two part-time staffers. Everything else happens through dedicated volunteers. Assist us with your special skills, whether it’s creative, financial, legal, or physical (get out and keep the trails beautiful!).

Thank you for your continued love and support of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge – where we love to get wild and make our community special!

Laura Wood
FONC Executive Director

Buffalo Boogie
2017

Save The Date

NORTH TEXAS FOLKS AND PUPS
RACE FOR THE NATURE CENTER’s

25TH ANNUAL
BUFFALO BOOGIE
Saturday, May 13, 2017
8:00 a.m.

Artist: Georgia J. Clarke
Annual Membership Meeting Held July 9

The Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center held its annual membership meeting July 9. In case you missed it, here are some highlights:

- **Feastivities** catered a fantastic lunch, the kids had fun with free activities, and a celebration allowed us to say hello’s and goodbye’s.
- We sent off our retiring board members with a certificate of sincere thanks and a lifetime membership to the Nature Center. Many thanks to Kari Landry and Laura Harrison; you will be missed!
- We welcomed new board members Wes Culwell, Linda Christie, and Mark Jones. From an acclaimed artist to the Tarrant Regional Water District’s director of Community & Government Relations and an accomplished CPA willing to take on treasurer’s responsibilities immediately, we couldn’t have asked for a better group of new board trustees!
- Our official gavel is a stuffed squeaky painted bunting. After we said farewell to our retiring board members and welcomed our new ones, the painted bunting gavel was chirpily passed from Marty Leonard to incoming President Chris Smith. Many thanks for Marty’s leadership and generosity as president for the past two years!
- Chris facilitated a brief “year in review,” including our financials and an update on our goals for the coming year. Details will be forthcoming in a brief annual report to be completed this fall.
- Probably the most significant, or at least tear-jerking, farewell was extended to Suzanne Tuttle. We presented her with a plaque and the e-card many of you signed. Her parting words said it all, “How can you call it work when you love your job this much?” Thank you, Suzanne, for more than 20 years of superb leadership and for loving the special place we call the Nature Center.
- A big hello and welcome was extended to Rob Denkhaus, the Nature Center’s new general manager. During his presentation, Rob highlighted the continued increase in visitation in addition to reviewing the Nature Center’s mission statement. He also illuminated the need for creating unique, creative, and relevant experiences and programs for our members and visitors. He laid out his desire and plans to better educate the community, whether it’s school groups, master naturalists, or the general population.
- Finally, members were given an overview of some large grants the Friends will be pursuing this fall to take the Nature Center to the next level. Right off the bat, you will have the opportunity to contribute during North Texas Giving Day toward a $300,000 trails grant from Texas Parks & Wildlife that will greatly enhance the infrastructure and experience at Greer Island. More to come!

Laura Wood
FONC Executive Director
Summer Natural History Adventures a Success!

Nature-loving children entering kindergarten through sixth grade once again spent the summer learning just what makes the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge unique. A new scheduling structure was introduced that allowed most campers to attend camp for several consecutive days instead of just one day a week. This meant that the naturalists leading the programs could build on concepts from one day to the next, and it also gave the kids time to acclimate and build new friendships during their explorations.

Despite the heat, most campers were eager to challenge themselves by going outdoors. In many cases, two or three miles of trails were covered in a single day while searching for signs of animal life.

First through fourth graders beat their way through the bushes to the beaver works on the Riverbottom Trail, while fifth and sixth graders looked for beaver signs while learning how to paddle a canoe.

Naturalists emphasize with all campers that everything at the Nature Center is connected, often through the food web. Each group of adventurers experienced this firsthand by collecting grasshoppers, observing their different features and then offering them to the various insect-eating education animals at the Hardwicke Interpretive Center. Even grasshopper waste was examined. What did campers discover? That grasshoppers, like bison, leave behind partially digested plant matter that becomes fertilizer for prairie plants.

Finally, campers participated in the behind-the-scenes work of maintaining the habitats and amenities of the Nature Center. Several classes assisted with splitting and potting plugs of little bluestem at the greenhouse for later transplant. Fifth- and sixth-grade campers trimmed brush on trails, and all campers were encouraged to remove litter. Third and fourth graders participating in the “Conservation Challenge” discovered one way that litter ends up at the Nature Center by drawing their own cities then connecting them via an imaginary waterway. Trash and other pollutants can easily end up in natural areas when they are carelessly dumped into culverts, rivers, and storm drains in urban areas. This is just a sampling of how summer natural history adventures at the Nature Center instill a love and understanding of nature and also teach skills for helping nature thrive.

Elizabeth Bittner
Program Naturalist
Every year, the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge provides internships for college students whose courses of study encompass the natural world. Michelle Luster and Katie Smith are two of the most recent students to complete internships at the Nature Center. The following personal accounts describe their adventures this summer.

I hop into the bed of the truck and sit on top of the toolbox. This has quickly become one of my favorite seats, not only because it maximizes the amount of breeze one receives, but because from this angle, I can look back on the property and see the impact I’ve had on it. The Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge is 3,600 acres that I have come to know and love. To the right is the treefall we cleaned on Wednesday, the one where I learned how to use a chainsaw. Funnily enough, it is also the tree where I learned the importance of checking for wasp nests before performing any action. On the left is the pasture where just the month before I got the opportunity to usher bison across the road. My hand reaches up to wipe the sweat off my brow. It seems like the millionth time I have done that, for the summer sun has no mercy. Yet I would not trade a single day of working outside for one of comfortable air conditioning.

This internship has been incredible. Every day is an adventure, so unpredictable but always rewarding. I have learned so much in my time here. Before, I had never really given plants a second thought, despite both sets of grandparents being avid gardeners. However, in my time at the Nature Center, I was shown exactly why plants are worth knowing, and, thanks to an enthusiastic and patient staff, I can now identify a large number of the plants on the property. I have learned about animal behavior, from pigs and bison to frogs and alligators. I have been trained to notice and appreciate the smaller parts of nature, such as damselflies and pasture heliotrope, for they are just as beautiful and important as the larger, more charismatic pieces. I have gotten to watch a full and complete ecosystem operate, witnessing the importance of each species, all of which are like small gears in a giant machine. Remove one and the whole piece of equipment is compromised. Similarly, the addition of more gears, or invasive species, can be detrimental to the system. I never fully understood the impact a foreign plant or animal could have until coming here or how difficult it is to remove said species once it has established itself (cue my newfound hatred for privet). The Nature Center has taught me how to properly work and handle heavy machinery, such as tractors and skid steers. This is a huge accomplishment for a girl who had previously thought the word “clutch” referred to a handbag. This internship has also exposed me to the daily life of a wildlife and land manager, the systems in which they must operate, and the political chessboard they must navigate. One of the most impactful things I have learned is the role humans play. I have seen how negative connotations and associations that humans have on a species can affect its ability to survive and how high public interest often leads to action. Most importantly, I have learned that the only way we are going to save nature is if we convince the public it is worthy of being saved.

My summer spent at the Nature Center has helped define who I am as a young professional. It has helped shape and mold my morals, allowing me to understand the realities of the world in which we live and how I can most effectively set out to change it. I have grown in confidence, in both my capabilities and myself. I have experienced more in the past couple of months than I ever could have imagined, and for that, I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity and for the people with which I have gotten to experience it.

Katie Smith
Summer Intern 2016
Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge

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As a student with a six-year background in biotechnology, I came into this internship knowing virtually nothing about wildlife management. Rob was completely transparent during my interview that this would be a lot of hard work in addition to the special projects, but I was still unsure of what I was getting into and whether or not I’d be cut out for it. I was travelling into territory uncharted in my mind, and that was incredibly daunting.

It has easily been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I’ve learned so much that I never could have in a classroom – about tools, people, ecosystems, and, perhaps most importantly, myself. I don’t know that I could have operated a piece of heavy machinery with any confidence three months ago, but I now know that I could happily jump in with confidence in my ability to learn. This internship has pushed my limitations, and I am an infinitely more confident person because of it.

My advice for future interns? Come into this internship with an open mind and wide eyes. You will come to work and go home exhausted afterwards, but you’ll wake up the next morning excited for what’s to come in the day ahead. From knocking down privet and mesquite to hanging out with bison, maintaining trails, and surveying for alligators, every day has felt like a new adventure for me. You will operate machinery that you may never have known existed, you will realize that even seemingly insignificant creatures have a vital role in the ecosystem, and you will get excited about plants. You will also learn a lot. If you are considering a career in wildlife management, I cannot emphasize how valuable an internship experience at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge would be.

Michelle Luster  
Summer Intern 2016  
Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge

Save the Date

2017 Hands & Hearts  
 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

February 11, 2017  
4-6 PM
Fort Worth City Council Accepts Friends Grant

In 2013, the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center received a $25,000 grant from Wells Fargo (administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation [NFWF]) to be used for the funding of repairs to the Cross Timbers Trail at the Nature Center. As a reimbursement grant, funds could not be issued to the Friends from the NFWF until sufficient expenditures had been incurred. Although this project has experienced delays due to flooding during the past two years, planning has progressed sufficiently to reach that threshold. As such, the City Council accepted the grant on June 28, 2016.

Repairs to the Cross Timbers Trail, which has been closed to the public for more than two years, will allow visitors access to more than 1,000 acres of prime parkland, including an ancient cross timbers forest, which was recognized in 1980 by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a National Natural Landmark.

A $50,000 donation from the Friends to serve as the 2:1 match for this grant was accepted by the City Council in 2014. In addition to the grant, the 2014 Bond Program Proposition 2 allocated $350,000 for the project.
FWNC&R...In the News

The Nature Center was recently featured in several news stories. Check them out here!

North Texas Wild: Fort Worth Nature Center offers window into region’s wild past
GreenSourceDFW

National treasure is home on the range at Fort Worth Nature Center
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

North Texas Wild: 7 best places for long hikes in DFW
GreenSourceDFW
http://www.greensourcedfw.org/articles/north-texas-wild-seven-best-places-long-hikes-dfw

BECOME A DOCENT

Make a difference in how visitors view the natural world by leading interactive educational tours and programs at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. Share your knowledge and enthusiasm about nature by registering for the upcoming fall docent training beginning on October 8th from 10-noon. For more information or to register, please call Laura Veloz, Volunteer Coordinator, at 817.392.7413.
Thank You to Our Generous Donors

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Scorpions in the class Arachnida, which includes mites, spiders, and ticks, are often disliked and strike terror in people. These arthropods with a crablike appearance, eight legs, a pair of pincers, and a long segmented tail that curls up may seem frightening, but they are amazing hunters with astonishing abilities. California and Arizona have the greatest diversity of scorpions, and in Texas, we can boast of having nearly 20 different species.

Most scorpions are nocturnal and solitary, usually staying in the same territory throughout their lives. Seeking shelter from the sun, scorpions may hide in burrows, leaf litter, or beneath rocks to conserve moisture and avoid the heat. Despite having up to 12 eyes, they have poor vision and locate their prey through ground vibrations and scent. Scorpions are known to eat insects, spiders, other scorpions, and even small creatures such as mice and lizards. They can quickly grab prey with their pincers and inject venom with their stinger to paralyze and kill. Their venom can also help defend them from local predators such as centipedes, shrews, bats, and coyotes. An amazing ability of these arachnids is that when food is scarce, they can slow their metabolism to as little as one-third the typical rate for arthropods. This adaptation enables some species to use little oxygen and live on very limited amounts of food.

The most common scorpion in the North Central Texas region is the striped bark scorpion, *Centruroides vittatus*, named for the dark stripes on its tan carapace. The striped bark scorpion may startle us when we see it in our homes seeking shelter, food, or water. Scorpions use their stinger when startled or as self-defense. The sting is not considered life threatening to humans. The most venomous scorpion in the United States is not found in Texas but in Arizona: the bark scorpion. In Hollywood movies, the appearance of a scorpion indicates trouble or danger, but these remarkable arthropods serve to manage the population of unwanted pests plus are part of the food chain benefiting other wildlife.

_Nature Challenge:_ Scorpions glow under ultraviolet light, such as from natural moonlight or under a black light. Can you detect how many scorpions overlap in the picture below?

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**Shy Hunters**

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4th Quarter Edition
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