

(Green Team, cont.)

Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek Area

The group met at Guadalupe River State Park and was led to the Honey Creek Area and given an informational tour by Park Ranger Craig Hensley. The Honey Creek Area can only be toured with a guide.



The only area to be toured by the group was an historical farm and home with original ownership dating back to 1866. The original owners/settlers were the Doeppenschmidt family (from Bavaria) who were part of the group accompanying Prince Carl Von Solms-Braunfels to the central Texas area. The land was sold by the Doeppenschmidts to the Weidner and Rust families, who later sold the property to W.O. Bartle Jr, from Houston. The property was acquired through a deed from the Texas Nature Conservancy. It was opened for limited access in 1985.

The group toured the home and surrounding grounds. Artifacts, arrowheads, and chipped stone tools were on display.

Although the group was not allowed to continue to the creek, Ranger Hensley described it in vivid detail. At one end of the creek is the Honey Creek Cave. The cave is not located on the property but is close enough to touch. The cave system is 32 kilometers and extends under Comal and Kendall Counties, beginning at Honey Creek and ending at Boerne. It is said that if it rains in Boerne, two days later the water will come through the mouth of the cave and flow into the creek. It is the longest cave system in Texas and is still being actively explored.

The Honey Creek is only approximately 1 1/2 miles long. Although it is not known for its vast size, it yields a great quantity of beauty and splendor. It is surrounded by magnificent flora and fauna. As invasive plants are being removed, native grasses are once again increasing. Indian grass, little bluestem, and switch grass are re-asserting their dominance. Down along the creek, one can see beautiful cypress and sycamore. The waters and surrounding area contain Cagles Map Turtles, Guadalupe Bass, Four Lined Skinks, Green Kingfisher, Texas Salamanders, Honey Creek Salamanders, and have provided a nesting place for the Golden Cheeked Warbler. It is because this area has been protected that these Texas native plants and animals have once again been able to make a comeback.

After leaving the Honey Creek Area, the group traveled on to Guadalupe River Area. Ranger Hensley took the group on a tour of one of his most prized accomplishments at the park, the Discovery Center.

In the early days, the park had a store located on the property. The facility was flooded twice from the flowing waters of the Guadalupe. It was first abandoned and then after a while was designated as an interpretative center. There was a period of time when it was an interpretative center in name only. It really had no function. Ranger Hensley began a campaign to turn the facility into something more. Today, the facility is an amazing and beautiful, hands on, learning area for adults and children alike.

The group touched, played, and listened to the interactive learning tools. Ranger Hensley is now working to incorporate the surrounding schools' use of the facility for class field trips and enrichment programs. The facility has already scheduled field trips for this spring and is in need of volunteers who have had a background in working with children to help on this special project.



Craig Hensley introduces the group to the Discovery Center

Trails Being Cleared for Birders at Bracken Cave Preserve

Bat Conservation International (BCI) plans to open the Bracken Cave Preserve to birders this spring. To accomplish this trails need to be cleared.

Lindheimer Chapter work days were held on Feb. 1 and March 1 and 13. They worked on three trails. The Meadow Loop, a trail that will allow birders to make their way from the cave parking area to a meadow where birds and raptors can be observed was the first. They also worked on a connecting trail from the parking area to the Meadow Loop and on new Golden Cheeked Warbler Trail. This trail leads through dense ashe juniper and oak into an area where Golden Cheeked Warblers have been sighted. A lot of clearing has been done by Don and Edith Bergquist, Coco Brennan, Katie McLean and Michael Caldwell.

A group of Boy Scouts and a church teen group are scheduled to work on April 26. They will spread mulch and try to complete the rest of the GCW trail. Watch for future Lindheimer Chapter workdays to be announced and get out there in the fresh air and help make this area accessible for birding enthusiasts.

Information & pictures submitted by Edith Bergquist



MEADOW LOOP, the first trail to be worked on at the Preserve.

Susan Bogle Receives 5,000 Hour Award Pin



Congratulations to Susan Bogle for having received her pin for 5,000 hours of volunteer service. Susan seems to do it all - archeological sifting, bird banding, butterfly surveys, the Gorge, clearing trails, the bat cave, and just about any project we have.



FEB. 1 WORKDAY GROUP—(l to r) Edith Bergquist, Katie McLean, Don Bergquist and Coco Brennan.

A Love Affair with Purple Martins

By Melissa Shadik

We moved to New Braunfels, TX from Santa Fe, NM in October of 2003. Everyone talked about Purple Martins. We had no idea of what a Purple Martin was as they do not nest in the central part of New Mexico. Our neighbor down the street had a metal bird house with six or eight sections to it and, to our surprise, it was a house dedicated specifically to Purple Martins. A swarm of bees took over their house which resulted in the owner calling a beekeeper. The bees and the Purple Martin house disappeared as did the owner. My husband and I decided to put up a metal Purple Martin house several weeks later, hoping maybe we would also have Purple Martins. We had 6 birds that first year and suspect that we ended up with the birds from the house down the street. So began our Love Affair with Purple Martins.



Our First Martin House

We now have two gourd racks with a total of fourteen gourds. We traded the metal house for plastic gourds for several reasons. The half round gourd entrances are just wide enough for Purple Martin shoulders, but too narrow for Starlings which keeps them out. The gourds have a screw off lid which makes it easy to count eggs and babies and to clean out the gourds during and after nesting season. We still battle with the House Sparrows trying to take over. A House Sparrow can build a nest in one day in the gourds, so we remove their nest every night until they give up. Two years ago a frustrated pair of House Sparrows was so determined to build a nest that they built it on top of the gourd rack. It was comical to watch them try to build a round weaver finch-nest on a flat surface without any walls. After the Martins have headed South for the winter,

we take the gourds down, clean them out and store them. This keeps the sparrows from building nests in the fall and occupying the gourds all winter. The gourd racks are easy to get up and down with a pulley system.

At the end of January we put the gourds back up on the poles with both holes closed up. When the Martins Scouts appear and start checking out the gourds, we remove the half-round hole stoppers on a few of the gourds so they can go inside, especially if the weather is cold or rainy. We place a couple handfuls of pine needles or pine mulch in the cleaned out gourds to give the Purple Martins a floor to build their nests on and sprinkle a half teaspoon of Sevin Dust in underneath the needles to kill mites. Mites will stay under the

nest, crawl up to feed off the babies and adults, and go back down again. This Sevin Dust kills the mites so they don't suck the life out of the babies before they fledge. I think most of the mite problems come from sparrows getting into the gourds to investigate and then leaving the vermin behind. We noticed through the years that the Purple Martins seem to avoid building nests on the Southwest and West facing gourds. These sides are favored by House Sparrows which seem to like the hotter temperatures. We kept the gourds facing these directions closed during nesting this year and had much less hassle with sparrows trying to build.



Gourd Racks

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