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# Good Water RIPPLES

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## Garey Park By Jim Hailey

The first GWMN workday on the new Garey Park was held on October 16. Since then we have had other opportunities to work on a trash clean up and juniper removal along the riverfront.

The first effort was hindered by chainsaws that did not perform well but the group made a significant dent in the program. The second workday produced better results. The Georgetown Park Department provided chain saws that worked and the group did a great deal of juniper removal. In addition, Paul and William (city employees) were a great help. On this second effort the GWMN volunteers also planted 41 water elm trees, which the parks department wanted, planted along the river. Paul, besides helping with the juniper removal, also helped me provide water to use in the planting process.

We worked again on December 9. Hopefully we will avoid the juniper pollen season on this workday. I have heard from the city staff that they are pleased with our efforts, so we are off to a good start with the Parks Department and should have many more volunteer opportunities. Please look for future opportunities to volunteer at Garey Park—Jim Hailey, Garey Park Co-coordinator.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

01/04	NPSOT
<b>01/22</b>	<b>Austin Butterfly Forum</b>
01/25	GWMN
02/1	NPSOT
<b>02/12</b>	<b>WAG</b>
02/23	GWMN
02/26	Austin Butterfly Forum

GWMN Good Water Master Naturalist  
 NPSOT Native Plant Society of Texas  
 WAG Williamson Audubon Group

Check the website for additional events including volunteer and training opportunities. The many events are way too numerous to even think about posting all here!

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## Planting Seeds by Amy Flinn



A strange thing happened after the hikes with Cub Scout Pack 304.

Some background – Good Water Chapter was asked to lead an interpretive hike at Berry Springs Park where the Cubs were going to be camping over the last weekend in October. We (Robin English, Mike Finn and I) divided the group in half so that we would have a better opportunity to reach the boys (there were 40+ Cubs and assorted parents, leaders and siblings at the campout). We walked the trails from homestead to pecan orchard to millstone and then around the pond, along the boardwalk, past the dam, across the footbridges and back to the campground.

It's only about 1.5 miles, but there seemed to be something to see along the way in spite of

the frigid weather on Saturday. We talked about the history of the place and the people who used and lived on the land and observed hawks, herons, grackles, white-tailed deer and doves.

One observation was a clump of Bushy Bluestem we saw on the bank of the pond about 20 feet from the millstone. I love this grass because it is easy to identify, it is beautiful, and it has a message to tell, only growing in or near moist soil. So I made a big fuss about the grass to the Cub Scouts. Upon returning home I used Robin's photo to record an observation in iNaturalist.



A group of Master Naturalists worked regularly during the hot summer months removing mesquite and ash juniper from the prairie at River Ranch County Park. Here are some edited journal entries from their labors.

September 5-8, 2017. I am proud to report that the brush-whackers volunteered a total of 45.5 hours to the RRCP prairie restoration project. It is estimated that we felled about a hundred mesquites and Ashe Junipers, plus we sprayed numerous small mesquites that will never make it to mature tree-hood. The total acreage cleared to date is about 17 acres which leaves a mere 63 to go.



Laboring on hot humid mornings, sweating and groaning, lopping off branches, leveling trees, spraying the young'uns, tripping over fallen branches, watching for snakes, downing gallons of water, while wiping sweat from our brows—the Brush-whackers accomplished the above statistics. Racking up astonishing statistics is not our primary goal, but we are proud of our accomplishments and our close working relationship with Mr. Gomez and his staff. Our primary goal is to transform a former farm field into a pristine early 1800's native prairie for the awe and enjoyment of visitors for years to come. The work is back breaking hard, but the pain is worth the gain; and we are all proud to pay the price. So far, we are

accident free, even though I did side-step into a prickly pear cactus patch which attacked me with vicious vigor drawing blood and rendering of no further value a pair of socks and a pair of pants; it was a prickly drive home.

Thanks to the vivacious park staff and intrepid Brush-whackers who give and give and keep on giving.

August 30, 2017 Starting at 8:00 am, a quintessential quartet gathered at the ranch headquarters full of oomph and vitality, ready to take on the damaging juniper and mesquite trees, whose very presence does injury to acreage destined to become a luscious native prairie. We geared up, journeyed to the battle area, and prepared to fight at least until lunch. Two worked on the Juniper, while two conducted chemical warfare against young mesquite trees. While we did not clear more acreage, we did improve the acreage already cleared and laid the groundwork for more efficient clearing of large juniper. By noon our oomph and vitality was gone but we were pleased with the progress purchased with our sweat and sore muscles.





August 22, 2017. The weather was a nuisance and so humid that we consumed a significant amount of day-old water to replace the quarts of water we sweated out. Water is water and any water will do when bare-bone thirsty. We almost drank the barrel dry.

If you have never grabbed a mesquite branch to pull it to the holding pile, you should be

aware that mesquites sport steel-like spines strong enough to penetrate any glove made in this country. Even with the threatening steel spines, we cleared 6 large cedars and 17 mesquite trees ranging from mature to juvenile. You should have seen the size of the holding pile it was moved to the burn pile. One of these days we are going to have a bon fire that will make the Aggies' bon fire look like a wiener roast.

Safety is our major concern when we are horsing around with mesquite, spiny cactus, gopher holes, falling tree branches, and growling chainsaws. So far, no one on the Brush-Whackers team has earned a Purple Heart or lost anything other than a few pounds. We are proud of our safety record and intend to keep it injury-free. Heat stroke doesn't count.

The vision of a healthy native prairie edges closer to reality one tree at a time. It is a distinct pleasure to work with Mr. Gomez, and we are appreciative of Jay for letting the GWMN folks join his professional team. Under Jay's competent leadership, RRCP will become a showcase park where the restored prairie will amaze and awe people for generations to come. I believe that the on-going effort of the GWMN volunteers at RRCP is in the highest traditions of the Texas Master Naturalist Manifesto. The Chapter is making a difference.

## 2017 Fall Class Graduation



On December 6<sup>th</sup> our Fall Training Class held its final training session and concluded with a graduation celebration. 17 members graduated. They have already begun their volunteer service. We are proud to welcome them as members of our chapter.



**Registration for the Spring Training Class is now open!**

For information about the Good Water Chapter  
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