

Brazos River Cleanup and Campout 2024

Ahoy, River Rats! Here is the schedule, training topics and speakers, and important information about the river cleanup May 17-20, 2024, at Little L Ranch. Be ready for a fun weekend of river cleanup, learning, tasty food, visiting with old friends and making new ones, and did we say FUN??!!

Schedule

Friday, May 17 – Arrival Day

- Crews will be available to assist arriving campers with sign-in, parking spots, RV sites, and tent set-up. Bring your lunch and plan to meet your fellow campers and conservationists. There will be time to explore, network, and document discoveries in iNaturalist until dinner.
- Dinner at 6 pm will be the first official event and will be hosted by the Rio Brazos Chapter and Little L Ranch. Since this is a group effort, please help by bringing your favorite appetizer, hors d'oeuvres, salad, desert, or drink to share with the group during the three evening meals. Meat will be provided.
- After dinner there may be an outdoor movie, but if not, there will be time to stargaze or just get away and listen to the night sounds prior to turning in early for the next day, river day.

Saturday, May 18 – River Cleanup Day

- If you are staying in Glen Rose, plan to meet at the high school parking lot at 8 AM so sign in with the Friends of the Brazos (FBR) group. Nick Dornak (president of FBR) will be your lead. As a bonus, he normally has breakfast tacos available. For those staying at Little L Ranch, there will be a shuttle from the ranch to the Glen Rose launch site.
- If you are staying at Little L Ranch we will meet at the "Red Neck Kitchen" at 7:30 for coffee and a light breakfast. From there you will be assigned a river section. You will either launch at Little L Ranch and clean the sand bar there or load up and caravan to another launch point. Bring your own lunch and plan to stop at a scenic location for a short break.
- After the cleanup we will all gather at the ranch for a little free time prior to the evening meal hosted by Friends of the Brazos. They serve a complete meal; however, we may pull some hors d'oeuvres out while we play some games and wait for the meal.
- After dinner, Sam Kieschnick, Texas Parks and Wildlife Urban Wildlife Biologist, will bring out his big-rig moth-ing gear and entertain us into the night. For anyone who doesn't know Sam: He holds a master's degree from Tarleton State University and previously worked as a nature educator for the City of Mansfield and instructor for Weatherford College. He serves as a naturalist at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge, a science interpreter with the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, and an herbarium assistant with the Botanical Research Institute of Texas.

Sunday, May 19 – Advanced Training Day

- A preliminary list of speakers/leaders and topics follows below.
- The planning meeting for finalizing speakers/and leaders will be Saturday, April 13, in Granbury. We realize this is probably out of driving range for many participants, but if you would like to join us in the planning fun, please let us know by sending an email message to bob@riobrazosmn.org.

- Advanced Training Day will start with the traditional Mountain Man Breakfast (a real treat!), prepared by Dave Moore and Rich Grayson.
- A full day of classes will follow breakfast. There will be a lunch buffet of sandwiches and assorted sides and treats.

Monday, May 20 – Bird Walk, Brunch, Pack Up, Clean Up, Depart

- Grab a quick coffee and donut and get ready for the big bird walk led by Dave and Wendy Moore. This will last for a couple of hours and will be followed by brunch prepared on the griddle. Then – clean up, pack up, and say our goodbyes. That is, until we meet again on another one of those TMN missions to save the world!

Training topics and speakers/leaders (as of March 28)

- **Andrew Brinker, Texas Parks and Wildlife Angler Educator – *Fish Identification, Collecting, Fishing Techniques, and Aquatic Ecology.***

This session will be held on the Brazos River. Activities will include seine netting, dip netting, cast netting, and rod and reel fishing. All fish collected will be measured, identified, uploaded to iNaturalist and released. Macroinvertebrates, mollusks, and other organisms will also be collected for identification and their roles in the ecology of the Brazos River. All participants that would like to participate in the capture, measuring, and handling of fish are required to have a fishing license.

- **Bob Ritchie, Certified Texas Master Naturalist™ -- *Plant Walk: Edible, Medicinal and Useful Plants.***

On this walk, Bob will share his passion for foraging native edible and medicinal plants. He'll start with a quick botany lesson on how to positively identify the plants we are seeking. That will lead to searching out and trying some of the fresh and tasty offerings that grow naturally in our area. He also will lead the class in discussion of useful and medicinal plants that can be found in the area.

Bob is a Dallas native who raises bees, chickens, rabbits, cats, and dogs. He likes birds, plants, bugs, fish, herps, fungi, kayaking, fly fishing, anthropology, archaeology, and more. An amateur naturalist since an early age, he has spent much of his life outdoors. When he's not spending time outdoors, Bob works for an architectural firm in Deep Ellum. He is the owner of The Custom Coop Company which designs and builds custom chicken coops in the Dallas area. Bob is also a certified Texas Master Naturalist and the past president of The Trinity Valley Beekeepers Association, Dallas's local honeybee club. He is an avid bicycle rider and a registered yoga instructor.

- **Aaron Lincoln, Certified Texas Master Naturalist™, Heart of Texas Chapter – *Native Plant Walk.***

An expert on local plants, Aaron will give a presentation and lead a plant walk discussing native plants in the area. Aaron has also set up a four-day bio-blitz that encompasses the ranch perimeter.

Aaron Lincoln resides in Clifton, Bosque County. He has a degree in Field and Organismal Biology from LSU in Shreveport and runs the lab and a biodiversity project at the Lhoist chemical lime plant and quarry in Clifton. He'll lead a plant walk to look at the flora of the Little L Ranch with an emphasis on native/endemic species and the relationship between plant communities and geology.

- **Dr. Karen McGraw, Lead Outreach Coordinator for DarkSky Texas – *Protecting Dark Skies for Humans and Wildlife.***

Almost every living thing on our planet uses the cycle of light and dark to trigger life processes. Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) and light pollution interrupts this cycle. This program helps us understand the effects of light pollution on living things, including ourselves, and how we can protect dark skies for humans and wildlife. Participants will take home a new awareness about lighting practices, which allow us to have the light we need for nighttime activities while minimizing the negative effects of ALAN. You will learn things you can do to reduce light pollution (glare, light trespass, skyglow), increase safety, limit the negative consequences on wildlife, and create a more aesthetically pleasing nocturnal environment.

Dr. McGraw is a Texas Master Naturalist™, Elm Fork Chapter, and a Texas Stream Team citizen scientist. Karen is passionate about the reduction of light pollution to conserve dark skies for humans and wildlife. Since 2016, she has been involved in dark skies outreach and education for community, region, and state-wide events. She enjoys educating people and changing mindsets about conservation of the night.

- **Mei Ling Liu, Community Conservation Director with the Texas Conservation Alliance (TCA, one of our sponsors) – *Lights Out, Texas! A Statewide campaign to provide safe passage for migratory birds.***

Texas Conservation Alliance is one of the founding partners for Lights Out, Texas!, a statewide campaign dedicated to education, awareness, and action aimed at safeguarding the billions of migratory birds passing through Texas. Since its launch in fall 2020, TCA has spearheaded bird-window collision surveys in Downtown Dallas, with a primary goal of gathering crucial data to evaluate collision rates and increase awareness of light pollution's impact. As of 2023, TCA has expanded its efforts to lead campaigns in Fort Worth and College Station. This presentation will offer an in-depth exploration of TCA's Lights Out, Texas! program, providing comprehensive updates and insights into its ongoing initiatives and progress.

Important Details

- The Extravaganza four-day weekend is Friday, May 17, to Monday, May 20. Of course you don't have to stay the entire four days, and you can come and go as you please. If you are bringing an RV or are camping, the recommended setup time is early Friday afternoon. You are welcome to come a day early, but bring your own food and realize that we may put you to work. Let Robert Walker bob@riobrazosmn.org know if you plan to arrive prior to Friday.
- Since most of you are Texas Master Naturalists, you probably are familiar with the necessities of a campout: Water, hat, sunscreen, lip balm, insect spray, flashlight, batteries, hand sanitizer, camera, sunglasses... you know the drill. The closest grocery store is thirty minutes away.
- Additionally, for those that will be braving the sharks and alligators (just kidding – there are no alligators in this part of the Brazos River), here are some recommendations:
 - **Do not** wear unsecured sandals or flip-flops on the river. The muck will suck them right off your feet. I personally like old tennis shoes and socks, but water shoes will also work.
 - Bring gloves for digging in the sand.
 - Wear quick-dry clothes. You might need a light jacket if we have a cool morning. Cell service is spotty on the river, but if you want to take pictures, I suggest using a waterproof pouch.
 - Bring a small hand tool or foldable army style shovel.

- Bring toilet paper, just in case...
 - Bring water, energy bars, etc., and/or your lunch. We will have light breakfast items that morning.
 - We have a few life jackets, but if you have a couple of extras, please bring them. Also, bring extra paddles if you have them.
- Time on the river can be between two and five hours, with another hour of unloading tires and trash and loading the canoes back on trailers. Let us know if you aren't adept handling a canoe or kayak, and we will pair you with someone who is experienced.
 - If you are wanting to fish, seine, or handle the fish in Andrew Brinker's class Sunday morning, you are required to have a fishing license. Purchase at Walmart, HEB, sporting stores, or online.
 - If you are staying in a hotel or B&B, you can do an online search in Glen Rose and Cleburne. Each is about an equal distance to Little L Ranch (approximately 30 minutes). My sources tell me that the La Quinta and Baymont are the best in Glen Rose and the Quality Inn is terrible. The Casa De Milagros is a nice B&B on the river and may be one of our launch points. Next year, we will aim to have a recommendation list.
 - Facilities at the ranch: We will have porta-potties placed at appropriate spots, there is also a toilet, sink, and shower at a nearby barn. There will be 3-4 miles of gravel roads once you depart the hard top road. Normally the County road (3 miles) is fair, and the ranch road (1 mile) is good, however I don't recommend you bring your Grand Prix Ferrari.
 - Food for this event is basically a pot-luck weekend. If there is a chapter that would like to step up and help Texas Conservation Alliance sponsor the Sunday night meal, we won't turn you down. Breakfast Sunday will be (we hope) a repeat of last year's "Mountain Man Breakfast" led by Dave Moore and Rich Grayson. Sunday lunch will probably be sandwiches. Monday will be brunch right after the early morning bird walk and prior to our final goodbyes. We have 3 refrigerators and a freezer so pack up your favorite meal accessory.
 - CONTINGENCIES: Yes, we do have those, and I won't bore you with all the details. But for anything short of a total washout, we will adapt and use the barn and storage building to keep the show going as best we can.

Regards, Robert Walker and the Rio Brazos Chapter Exemplary Crew