

City of Austin BCP Projects  
BCCP Coordinating Committee Meeting  
February 1, 2012-May 15, 2012

**Program Administration**

**Personnel**

- Sherri Kuhl is the new BCP Program Manager and began May 7, 2012.
- Kelly Nesvacil resigned as BCP biologist in January; awaiting approvals to fill this position.
- Dolph Scott resigned as GIS Coordinator in May 2012; awaiting approvals to fill this position.

**Biological Monitoring**

**Golden-Cheeked Warbler (GCWA)**

- Interlocal Agreement with the US Forest Service (Dr. Frank Thompson, Jennifer Reidy) to provide GCWA Population Viability and Habitat Suitability modeling within the BCP
  - 5-year study, focuses on four primary questions:
    - What is the absolute abundance of the GCWA on the BCP and on individual macrosites?
    - How do demographics (e.g. density, productivity, survival) vary with landscape and habitat factors?
    - How viable are these populations?
    - How do various management scenarios influence population viability?
  - Meeting with USFS researchers and BCP partners held March 2, 2012, to review 2011 field season data and preliminary data analyses. Preliminary findings from the first year of survey data include:
    - GCWA is a forest-interior species and sensitive to habitat fragmentation/edge
    - GCWA densities increase with large diameter Ashe junipers and shrub understory
    - Bull Creek and Cypress Creek watersheds support the highest GCWA densities in the BCP
  - Currently collecting the second year of data, in collaboration with BCP partners (Audubon, TC, Wild Basin) and 25 volunteers. To date, we have collectively:
    - Color-banded 99 GCWAs on 18 study plots in a variety of habitats
    - Monitored over 130 GCWA nests
    - Resighted over 50% of 170 GCWAs banded in 2011
    - Documented high site fidelity, especially older adults, as well as dispersal among study sites.
    - Conducting point counts and habitat monitoring across the BCP
  - These GCWA monitoring data will be correlated with habitat and landscape data, including Baylor University's woodland stand age analysis, species composition change, and fire history research on the BCP

**Black-capped Vireo (BCVI)**

- Currently two BCVIs documented on Forest Ridge tract (one banded as a second-year male in 2009), and one transitory BCVI on Cortana.
- St. Edwards/Wild Basin is monitoring ant community assemblages to determine effects of mulch and biochar treatments to stabilize slopes, restore soils, and promote regeneration of native woody plants on degraded areas that are currently not habitat for either the GCWA or BCVI.

**Karst**

- Conducting cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts.
- Monitoring cave conditions, removing trash, and treating for red-imported fire ants.
- A security cave gate was installed near the entrance of Airman's Cave on January 12, 2012. Airman's Cave is one the 62 BCP permit caves, and since the cave entrance is located on the Barton Creek greenbelt, the cave has experienced a dramatic increase in traffic thus posing a serious safety risk to untrained individuals that are accessing the cave as well as threatening the cave and cave fauna. Unfortunately the gate was vandalized; however, staff and volunteers repaired the gate on January 29, 2012. Since then, staff has trained 5 volunteers to monitor Airman's Cave 5 days a week.
- Zara Environmental is conducting hydrological studies on Goat cave, Maple Run cave, and Blowing sink as part of a study to help determine potential negative impacts from the proposed Davis Lane expansion. This work is being done under the direct supervision of Watershed Protection staff.

**Bracted Twistflower**

- Conducted annual Bracted Twistflower surveys at Mount Bonnell (April 19), Barton Creek (April 26), and Ullrich (May 3).

- Continuing to monitor and care for Bracted Twistflowers planted at Vireo Preserve on December 21, 2011.

### **Jollyville Plateau Salamander**

- COA BCP staff assisted Watershed Protection with JPS surveys in March 2012.

## **Preserve Management**

### **Invasive Species**

#### **• Raspberry Crazy Ants**

- In December 2011, City of Austin and Travis County BCP staff became aware of a population of Raspberry crazy ants in the community of Briarcliff near Pace Bend Park. The Raspberry crazy ant is a new exotic invasive ant species discovered in the Houston area in 2002. Populations were discovered in Travis County in November 2011, and in Williamson County in October 2011. The population in Travis County is larger than previously thought and along the Colorado River, with potential for expansion to a broader area.
- In accordance with the SAC resolution, BCP staff has formed a subcommittee to establish a monitoring program to detect and eliminate invasions of the Raspberry crazy ant. Subcommittee members currently include representatives from USFWS, COA (AWU, PARD, Watershed), TC, St. Edwards/Wild Basin, University of Texas, and Agrilife Extension.
- The Raspberry Crazy Ant subcommittee will meet in June to discuss the monitoring program, with plans for implementation in late summer/early fall 2012.

### **Animal Management**

- Staff continues to manage hog populations on BCP.
- White-tailed deer control has ended on COA BCP lands (45 deer harvested).
- Brown-headed Cowbird control in progress, operates from March-early June.

### **Oak Wilt**

- Oak wilt surveys will begin in summer 2012. Working on priorities for the remainder of this FY and FY 2013.

### **Fencing Projects**

- Working on priorities for FY2013.

## **Wildfire Management**

- In April, representatives from US Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., COA Wildlands Conservation, Travis County BCP, and the Texas Forest Service, contributed to the field review of proposed best management practices for wildfire fuels in GCWA habitat near urban interface areas. The document has been presented to USFWS Ecological Services office for review.
- The BCP seasonal field biologists have completed the classroom portions of the basic wildland firefighter training. The employees will have the opportunity to complete the field course work in June and participate in prescribed burning with the WCD and our partners this summer.
- Three field tours with Austin Fire Department battalion Chiefs will begin May 15<sup>th</sup> in order to assess the best strategies for preparation and management of a wildfire occurring on WCD property. Officials will view representative areas on South Lake Austin management unit.
- WCD staff are continuing to participate in the development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Travis County. This document is being produced by the combined Austin/Travis County strategic wildfire committee and will help guide wildfire prevention, mitigation and response strategies that address public safety and ecological needs.
- City staff worked with the County-City Wildfire Taskforce to create and print 10,000 copies of Ready, Set, Go. A firewise publication that helps homeowners understand their wildfire risk and explains actions they can complete on their own property to protect their home. These copies have been distributed at local fire stations and through city and county staff.

## **Outreach, Education, and Volunteer Activities**

- Kent Butler Ecological Reserve boulder was installed on May 11. The boulder includes a logo designed by Dr. Butler's daughter and stands at the entrance to the preserve.
- The City of Austin and the University of Texas are partnering together to sponsor a Kent Butler Internship during the summer of 2012.

- Four public hikes occurred this spring. These hikes all focused on the topic of endangered species and offered opportunities to view golden-cheeked warblers.
  - 3/24/2012 Sam Hamilton
  - 4/22/2012 Sam Hamilton
  - 5/5/2012 Reicher Ranch Hike
  - 5/6/2012 Sam Hamilton Warbler Hike
- Volunteer appreciation hike was held on 4/15/2012.
- Volunteer Dates and Trainings completed in the last quarter include:
  - 2/11 – Trail Work at Forest Ridge (14 volunteers)
  - 2/18 – Volunteer Day at Vireo Preserve (17 volunteers)
  - 2/25 – Bird Banding Assistant Training (6 volunteers)
  - 2/26 – GCWA Resighting Training (19 volunteers)
  - 2/26 – Fenceline Monitor Training (4 volunteers)
  - 2/29 – Cowbird Trap Volunteer Training (4 volunteers)
- Ongoing Volunteer Activities Include:
  - 25 Volunteers actively resighting banded/unbanded GCWAs at 27 different locations across the BCP.
  - 3 Volunteers monitor cowbird traps at two locations every other day.
  - 5 Volunteers monitor Airman’s Cave 5 days each week.
  - 4 Volunteers assist with Bird Banding at Baker Sanctuary
  - 4 Volunteers monitoring fencelines on 2 BCP properties
  - 4 Volunteers monitor fuel moisture levels bi-monthly
- Looking Ahead Volunteer Trainings:
  - Invasive Species Corps Training
  - Land Stewardship Training
- 80 permits were issued to individuals to hike BCP’s Forest Ridge. This was a full permit class.
- BCP partnered with City of Austin Earth Camp staff so that BCP information could be included in Earth Camp field trips. Earth Camp provide field trips to 4, 000 students each year to a variety of locations. BCP’s St. Edwards Park is one of the field trip locations.