

Biological Monitoring

Karst

- Tawny crazy ants (TCAs) were first observed negatively impacting cave fauna in Whirlpool Cave in June 2013, and on November 20, 2014, TCA's were discovered in no rent cave. In an effort to monitor impacts, City and Travis County staff continues to monitor Whirlpool Cave as well as no rent and Weldon cave (in close proximity to TCA's). We still anticipate that this new invader will have a major negative effect on cave fauna. The section 6 grant proposal, (investigate possible methods of treating TCAs within the cave cricket foraging area) was awarded, with a start date of October 2015.
- BCCP Karst Substitution Process: Travis County, COA BCP and Watershed Protection Department (WPD), and USFWS staffs are currently working on a document that defines and gives direction to the process for cave substitution for caves on the BCP permit (ongoing).
- Conducted cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts (ongoing).
- Monitored cave conditions, removing trash, and treating for red-imported fire ants (ongoing).
- BCP Staff is continuing to assist Nico Hauwert and the Watershed Protection Department with the Blowing Sink critical environmental feature (CEF) stabilization CIP project. Several major recharge features/caves are unstable, leading to large amounts of sediment washing into the aquifer. The project will stabilize these features, thus improving water quality to Barton Springs. This project is nearing completion. (ongoing)
- In an effort to educate the public about the importance of caves and cave fauna, Nico Hauwert initiated an effort to find local non-BCP caves that would be appropriate for educational purposes. Staff and volunteers are currently excavating several karst features. Several significant caves have been opened and will soon be gated.(ongoing)
- Cave public access: A cave collaboration group of City and County staff and volunteers met regarding guidelines for future public access to local caves including some BCP permit caves. The goal is to try to determine which caves are appropriate for public access, determine the appropriate number allowed per cave, and come up with a permitting system that would determine qualifications needed for leading cave tours (ongoing).
- Restoration and monitoring efforts have begun at 2 endangered species caves located in the courtyard at McNeil High. Nico Hauwert and McNeil High School science teacher Tina Vick are leading the restoration effort along with help from FWS, City and Travis County BCP staff. Travis County and City BCP staffs are currently conducting cave faunal surveys and cricket exit counts with the goal of including student participation for long term monitoring and potential research projects that will benefit the listed species. Travis County and City BCP staff has also held 2 volunteer clean up dates, removing large volumes of trash. City staff has provided plants for this project, planting 86 trees and shrubs, many of which provide forage for cave crickets (ongoing).
- Acting on a request from USFWS, Travis County, City BCP, and WPD staff compiled the BCP Karst Database dataset for the USGS karst invertebrate detectability study.

Golden-Cheeked Warbler (GCWA)

- USFS Project: 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?
- Finished fifth year of data collection in collaboration with BCP partners (Audubon, LCRA, Travis County, and Wild Basin) and 42 volunteers.

Black-capped Vireo (BCVI)

- Forest Ridge: 6-7 BCVI territories, including a male banded by William Simper/Travis County in 2009 (this BCVI male is 7 years old). At least two territories have successfully fledged offspring.
- Kent Butler: 2 BCVI pairs established territories under the Austin Energy and LCRA electric transmission lines, where BCP staff had worked with the utility providers to improve the habitat in 2009. Both pairs built nests within the habitat improvement areas – the first time any nest had been found within the actual work area. (Nests have been constructed at the edges in each of the past two years.) The banded male, who returned from last year, and his mate successfully raised 3 young. The other nest failed, apparently from predation.

Jollyville Plateau Salamander (JPS)

- COA BCP staff assisted the Watershed Protection Department with several JPS surveys; most surveys were postponed due to recent floods. (ongoing)

Bracted Twistflower

- Plans for fence to protect Bracted Twistflower at Mount Bonnell: see Dual-Managed Lands, below.
- 2015 surveys for Bracted Twistflower were completed and data is being compiled.

Preserve Management

Dual-Managed Lands

- AWU and PARD are working to close and restore trails within the Connors Creek critical water quality protection zone in Emma Long Motocross Park. Additional signs are scheduled for installation. Staff is developing a stream assessment, restoration and monitoring plan with assistance from staff in the Watershed Protection Department.
- The proposed Mount Bonnell fence to protect bracted twistflower habitat and keep people off the bluff has been designed and construction will begin in the fall.
- PARD and BCP staffs are working with the Hill Country Conservancy on the installation of 911/mile markers in the Barton Creek Greenbelt
- Barton Creek homeless camps: see Law Enforcement below.
- Forest Ridge/ Bull Creek Greenbelt: PARD and BCP staffs are working on ways to minimize impacts from large crowds abusing that section of Bull Creek, some of which is spilling over into Forest Ridge.

Infrastructure Management

- LCRA successfully completed their upgrade of the T-160 line which runs through the Bull Creek macrosite and received construction approval from BCCP. LCRA worked closely with BCP and WPD staff to avoid impacts to endangered/threatened species and habitats. LCRA staff recently addressed erosion issues and concerns with guidance from BCP staff.
- BCP is currently working with the West Travis County PUA (WTCPUA) on construction of a new water service line which includes drilling underneath Barton Creek. (ongoing)

Law Enforcement

- River Place Nature Trail (MUD trail).

- An inspection of the encroaching section of trail by BCP staff in early July found that the restoration appears to be succeeding – both from plantings by Environmental Survey Consulting and from natural growth.
- The new fence – and opening of a bypass of the encroaching section – appears to be deterring trespass on the former trail section across City BCP property.
- Homeless camps are an ongoing management challenge in the Barton Creek Greenbelt. City Wildland Conservation and PARD staffs continue to monitor these sites and remove camps as they are discovered.
- Vandals broke into the Lanier house and stole the \$1500 security camera.
- Major unauthorized tree clearing occurred on the Jester tract at Bottlebrush Drive. The damage assessment is ongoing. Property owner, under City staff supervision, has removed all cut vegetation from City property.
- A camp was located and reported on the Coldwater tract. BCP staff assisted law enforcement in evicting the illegal camping.

Invasive Species/Animal Management

- See Tawny Crazy Ants, above.
- BCP staff is continuing efforts to remove non-native plants on COA BCP tracts.
- Utilized helicopter oak wilt reconnaissance to identify new exotic plant infestations on multiple tracts.
- BCP staff is actively removing feral hogs.

Oak Wilt

- BCP staff continued to monitor movement of the fungus in known oak wilt centers and success of control trenches.
- Coordinated with APD for our fourth biennial helicopter reconnaissance for oak wilt across the BCP (partners included) in June and July. Found no new oak wilt centers on BCP lands.

Fencing Projects

- We are currently preparing bids for fences for installation in the fall on the Jester, Forest Ridge and Cortana tracts.
- Made several repairs to BCP fences, gates and water gaps, on multiple BCP tracts, that were either damaged by vehicle collisions or flood damage from the Memorial Day Floods.

Trash Removal

- BCP staff worked with Keep Austin Beautiful and held a volunteer workday for picking up trash and recyclables on the Coldwater tract. Over 15 trash bags of material were removed.

Trail work

- BCP staff along with volunteers conducted trail work at Forest Ridge with an emphasis on directing trail users to stay on the designated path.

Fire Management

- Wildland Conservation Division (WCD) staff participated in the creation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Travis County. The final draft is complete and has been rolled out to the public.
- WCD staff is currently planning additional potential shaded fuel break projects for the fall.