

City of Austin's BCCP Activities Update: 1 July – 30 September 2017

BCCP Administration	
Infrastructure Projects	Five Infrastructure Habitat Assessment Applications were processed and Determination Letters were issued from January – March 2017. Application submittals are increasing due to the end of the nesting season.
Land Acquisition	No new parcels were acquired in this time period.
Reports and Events	
Personnel	Wildlands Conservation Division hired Audrey Stewart as the Volunteer Coordinator.
Rare and Endangered Resources Management	
Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo	Black-capped Vireo surveys continued into July. Avian data entry and quality control are still in progress. Annual report writing will begin when all data is entered and reviewed.
	On September 11, 2017, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service filed a motion to dismiss the General Land Office's lawsuit over the listing of the Golden-cheeked Warbler as endangered and not designating critical habitat for this species on the basis of subject matter jurisdiction, statute of limitations, and exemptions from NEPA requirements.
Jollyville Plateau Salamander	Survey protocols for in-cave "capture-recapture" surveys of Jollyville Plateau Salamanders were defined. Summer survey was completed in August. Staff initiated work on restoration of Moss gulley spring. BCP initiated location, flow measurement, aquatic life surveys, and water-quality sampling of springs across the BCP on a periodic basis in hopes of locating new salamander locations.
Bracted Twistflower	Bracted Twistflower data from the spring surveys was compiled and submitted to the Texas Natural Diversity Database.
Karst invertebrates/ karst work	<p>Conducted cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts (ongoing). Staff have started compiling cave faunal survey data.</p> <p>City of Austin staff met with USFWS regarding current status of the listed <i>Texella reyesi</i>, staff will continue to work with USFWS staff to provide relevant information regarding monitoring, management, and to try to find answers via future research projects to better determine future needs of this species.</p> <p>Conducted cave excavation and restoration work at several sites.</p> <p>Completed steps into Wade Cave in Goat Cave karst preserve.</p> <p>Installed air monitoring stations in three caves: Grassy Cove, Whirlpool, and Irelands cave to better understand cave ecosystems and potential public safety on cave tours.</p> <p>Drafted new cave maps for Little Bee Creek cave and Seibert Sink.</p> <p>Flint Ridge hydro study: staff from AW and WP collected water samples for multiple water quality analysis, for the purposes of continued monitoring and to establish the representativeness of samples collected with automatic samplers during storms.</p>

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Plant and Animal Control	
Feral hogs	11 hogs were removed during this quarter: six from 3M and five from Lanier.
Red-imported fire ants and Tawny crazy ants	Tawny Crazy Ants: Staff from the University of Texas at Austin, Travis County, and City BCP completed work on the Section 6 tawny crazy ant research and submitted results to TPWD. The study determined how to control TCA's (via introducing microsporidium) and determined that poison baits (boric acid) that excluded non-target species, actually impacted cave fauna indirectly via species feeding on dead ants.
Soft ticks/ Relapsing Fever	City of Austin BCP staff met with Travis county/ COA Health, Tx State, and Baylor School of Medicine staff regarding current understanding of TBRF and to look at future research needs.
Invasive Plants	BCP staff and volunteers are continuing efforts to remove non-native plants on COA BCP tracts.
Oak Wilt	BCP staff inspected several known oak wilt centers this quarter.
Land Stewardship	
Habitat Restoration	City of Austin BCP staff, in collaboration with faculty at St. Edwards University, hosted two international researchers to identify key fungal communities (mycorrhizae) associated with the BCP's Ashe juniper-oak forests through DNA analyses and investigate how these communities vary across different habitats and disturbance regimes. This research will contribute to a growing body of information on the role of fungal networks in promoting forest health and resilience to impacts such as drought, pathogens, and climate change.
	Staff and volunteers are continuing to implement demonstration projects at the Vireo Preserve to promote slope stabilization, soil restoration, and regeneration of native plants on degraded areas that are currently not habitat for either the GCWA or BCVI. Since Vireo Preserve supports many of the habitat types observed throughout the BCP, lessons learned from restoration work at this site should be applicable to other areas within the BCP.
Fencing	No fencing installed this quarter.
Wildfire Preparedness	There was no fuels management work completed during this quarter because of the nesting season. WCD staff is planning potential shaded fuel break projects for the fall and winter.

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Law Enforcement	
Trespass and Criminal Mischief	<p>On Aug. 23, 2017, biologists monitoring an oak wilt infection center found extensive shallow excavations on the Barton Creek Wilderness near Loop 360. PARD staff, assisted by BCP staff, placed game cameras at the site. While retrieving memory cards from cameras on Sept. 19, PARD Rangers encountered and evicted the digger, who claimed to be searching for geodes.</p> <p>BCP staff informed PARD staff of encroachments from a neighborhood adjacent to Barton Creek Wilderness that will complicate an Austin Fire Dept. project to implement a shaded fuel break this fall. PARD staff began contacting neighbors to remove the obstacles.</p>
Outreach/Volunteers	
<p><i>See BCP Partners Education Summary July - September 2017</i></p>	