

**Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP)  
Updates for McGregor and Westcave Preserves**

**Q1 Report  
October – December 2019**

**McGregor Preserve**

No activities were conducted at McGregor Preserve during the quarter.

**Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities**

The official grand opening of Leif's Bird Blind occurred on November 2, 2019. There were five volunteer workdays and thirty-eight volunteers, who worked on the new bird blind, and helped with planting nectar plants and grasses in Ahrns Grove, weeding, trimming, gate building, mulching, weed whacking, cutting invasives on the prairie, and establishing seed nodes on the prairie. Texas County Parks and other agencies conducted a prescribed burn of the prairie restoration area (10 acres) on October 2, 2019. In addition, there is ongoing prairie restoration, which includes seed harvesting by volunteers and staff/interns off and onsite to help establish two, 100-meter native seed plots. The plots are intended for intensive seed reservoirs for reestablishment of native grasses and forbs. General maintenance is ongoing and includes: trail inspections, trail work, tree trimming, bird blind maintenance and supplemental watering for butterfly gardens.

Research consisted of:

- (1) FeederWatch (Cornell Lab of Ornithology Citizen Scientist program), which started in November 2019 and will end in April 2020. This includes bi-weekly monitoring by volunteers and staff of birds on the feeders at Leif's Bird Blind. (
- 2) Pond Watch (Xerxes Society Citizen Scientist program), which consists of monthly dragonfly surveys conducted by a core group of volunteers. During the monthly surveys, variegated meadow hawk (target migratory species) and roseate skimmer (not a target species) were observed.
- (3) Monthly water quality sample testing was conducted at the grotto and at Hammetts crossing were submitted to LCRA Colorado River Watch Network (CRWN) and all results were within normal ranges.
- (4) Seasonal dung beetle research continues by Texas State University PhD candidate, Andy Pinon and current Westcave conservation interns.
- (5) Grotto water flow monitoring was conducted by City of Austin (COA) biologists. They measured and trained staff on flow rate measurements.
- (6) Staff and interns measured the waterfall height from the edge to the surface of the pool and found that the average height is 37 feet.

Fall programming this quarter included a native grass hike (8 attendees), multiple bird hikes (31 total attendees), birds and brew program (30 attendees), and a roundtable social which included a horned lizard presentation (27 attendees).

**Other Information**

LCRA conducted routine reshredding, hydro mulching, and tree trimming within the existing T142 (HiCross to Marshall Ford) transmission line corridor within the COA Barton Creek, Friesenhahn, and Barton Creek Wilderness preserves, which are part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) system. Reshredding, hydro mulching, and tree trimming included a crew using a hydro axe tractor with an attached mower/shredder to shred and mulch and a crew using a bucket truck to

trim back regrowth along the existing 20-foot cleared path. Reshredding and hydro mulching occurred next to gates (to ensure they could be opened) and around existing structures (20 to 50 feet). The only vegetation trimmed was woody vegetation that had re-grown in the space around the structures, near gates, and along the existing access roads. The existing access roads were cleared to have a 20 by 20 foot clearance. The width and height varied to ensure proper pruning cuts were conducted and mature trees not removed. This work was approved on September 18, 2019 by the tract manager and communicated to the Austin Parks and Recreation Division.