

City of Austin's BCCP Activities
Quarter 3 Update: 1 April – 30 June 2020

BCCP Administration	
Infrastructure Projects	Four Infrastructure Habitat Assessment Application was processed, and Determination Letter was issued from April – June 2020.
Land Acquisition /Management Agreements	AW BCP is still working toward acquisition of Carol Lee Preserve and Bright Leaf Preserves. AW BCP was approached about, and agreed to accept, acquisition of tract adjacent to Park West Preserve by proposed development off Milky Way.
Reports and Events	A report is being prepared on the history of wildfire occurrences on and near the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve from April 1961 – April 2020
Personnel	No new changes.
Rare and Endangered Resources Management	
	Due to the COVID-19 quarantine, field activities were reduced for staff and suspended for volunteers on March 26. Staff were permitted to resume monitoring in mid-May, and limited volunteers on May 18, with social distancing mandated. Though precise comparisons with past years will not be possible – due to lack of data from the middle of the Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) breeding season – the birds appeared to have greater breeding success, at least in areas normally accessible to the public.
	Data compilation and analysis of GCWA and Black-capped Vireo (BCVI) breeding season is ongoing. However, anecdotally, BCVIs appear to have been more numerous and to have had greater breeding success this year than in the recent past. In particular, staff documented first occurrence in Barton Creek Wilderness, and first confirmed breeding in the mid-Cortaña habitat restoration area.
	From March through May 2020, we collaborated with A&M University to employ two field technicians to assist with the collection of DNA samples across the Golden-cheeked Warbler breeding range. Despite the restrictions of COVID-19, we were able to collect 100 additional DNA samples from Government Canyon State Natural Area, Guadalupe River State Park, Garner State Park, Shield Ranch at Camp Wood, Kickapoo Cavern State Park, Colorado Bend State Park, Meridian State Park, and Palo Pinto State Park. These samples have been transferred to our collaborator, Dr. Giri Athrey, at Texas A&M University for DNA extraction and sequencing. Although 2020 was supposed to be the final season of sample collection, we will now extend this to an additional field season in 2021 to collect the remaining samples from locations that were restricted due to COVID-19. These remaining locations are Camp Bullis, Fort Hood, Love Creek Preserve, Dobbs Run Ranch, and Mo Ranch. We now have a total of 180 GCWA DNA samples.
Jollyville Plateau Salamander	BCP continues to locate and conduct 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 and other rare stygobitic life.

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Karst invertebrates/ karst work	Staff conducted cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts in May. Staff continued to conduct assessments of City properties for previously unknown caves and karst features with the goal of finding potential substitution and or supplementing existing BCP permit caves, and to aid in current hydrological studies, currently focusing on areas adjacent to proposed Corridor Mobility department and TxDOT roadway projects with funding support from both entities. Significant discoveries were made in Circle C Ranch at Slaughter Creek park. Field work was limited by Covid-19 virus pandemic to solo/small group assignments related to critical infrastructure support and protection.
	Conducted cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts (ongoing).
Plant and Animal Control	
Mammals	20 hogs were removed by contractors and City staff this quarter.
Red-imported fire ants and Tawny crazy ants	Tawny crazy ants continue to be monitored by University of Texas Brackenridge Field Laboratory. UT reported new infestations in East Walnut Creek and Guerrero Park.
Soft ticks/ Relapsing Fever	AW BCP staff continue to monitor caves in the Austin area for soft ticks to improve public safety and study means for discouraging their habitation of caves. AW BCP staff continue to work with Texas State University, Baylor College of Medicine, Austin Health Department, and Center for Disease Control to study factors influencing habitat preference of soft ticks in the Austin area. AW BCP staff continue to monitor Bullet Cave on the Barton Creek greenbelt and Live Oak Cave in the Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve and Watershed Management Area to make certain that the warning signs and gate (on Live Oak Cave) are still in place. Most recent surveys have found few to no soft ticks in Live Oak Cave.
Invasive Plants	BCP staff are continuing efforts to remove non-native plants on COA BCP tracts.
Land Stewardship	
Habitat Restoration	Staff and volunteers continue to implement demonstration projects at the Vireo Preserve to promote water retention, 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 are applicable to other areas within the BCP. Staff are also now expanding these efforts to other BCP preserves.
	Spot-checking of Shin Oak (<i>Quercus sinuata</i>) acorns planted in Black-capped Vireo habitat restoration areas on the Cortaño tract in autumn 2019 showed germination rates of 50-70%, the best rate yet obtained.
	Staff continued a study comparing emergence and growth of three species of plants (sideoats grama, little bluestem, tomatoes) in potting soil and soil collected from under Ashe junipers. Results appear to be comparable for both soil media.
Fencing	No fencing projects during this quarter.

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Wildfire Preparedness	Created a plan and got a project bid for a 6,000LF shaded fuel break at JJ&T. Working on utility asset risk assessment for Austin Water assets on the BCP.
Law Enforcement	
Trespass and Criminal Mischief	In March, staff reported to PARD Rangers a bicycle jump, constructed primarily of juniper staves, in the upper part of a tributary of Barton Creek near Moon Shadow Drive. A Ranger dismantled the structure the next week. BCP staff, finding the jump re-constructed on April 8, partially dismantled it again. A Ranger dispatched to finish dismantling it found all materials had been removed.
	Staff observed multiple fence cuts adjacent private lots on Kent Butler and illegal trespassing into the preserve.
Outreach/Volunteers	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>See BCP Partners Education Summary April – June 2020.</i></p> <p>Staff have helped create educational webinars for our Wildlands Neighbors Group, BCP Forest Restoration Training, and AFD Wildfire Division.</p>	