

RANGER REFLECTIONS

CITY OF AUSTIN PARK RANGERS NEWSLETTER

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Reaching New Heights

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This June, Park Rangers Jeff White and Matthew Roberts led teenagers from the Hancock and Camacho Recreation Centers on several rock climbing excursions. Many of the teenagers had never been rock climbing before so the chance to climb in the Barton Creek Greenbelt was an exciting new challenge. As part of the activity, the Park Rangers helped kids get set up with proper equipment and safety tips before starting. The participants then had a chance to learn how to belay, rappel, and climb. The grade of the climbs ranged from 5.6 to 5.8.



Bring on the Bats!



As some of you may know, Austin is home to one of the largest urban bat colonies in the world. To help Austinites and visitors understand the importance of these special mammals, Park Rangers Mark Cusimano and John Nelsen have been reaching out to visitors of the Congress Bridge in the evenings. Bats are an integral part of our local landscape, and there are many interesting facts to consider, including:

- Bats are the only flying mammal in the world and migrate as a group
- Pregnant bats can eat their weight in insects each night
- About 3/4 of the bats in the colony are female
- Females can time their pregnancies so that they all give birth around the same time, which makes it easier to migrate together
- Bats make up over 1/5 of all mammalian species in the world

Park Ranger Intern Program



While most kids spend their summer break enjoying a little freedom from their studies, a very special group is spending time with the Park Rangers learning how to be job-ready candidates.

A group of six students applied and were chosen

for positions as interns through the Travis County Health and Human Services Department Summer Work Study program. These paid positions exist throughout the city each summer, but Ranger spots are especially exciting because of the variety of projects and experiences for students with an interest in the outdoors.

As their main project this summer, Park Ranger Interns have participated in the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department's invasive plant monitoring study. Travelling to different areas all over the city, these students have ventured into wild places to learn all about the rich variety of native and invasive



plant species found in our parks. They have learned about the impact of twenty four invasive species in particular, and how our community works together to actively restore native habitat in these areas. They made us proud with their dedicated work ethic in the field and gained the respect of local master naturalists as well with their newly acquired ability to quickly identify many types of grasses, shrubs, and trees. Working alongside employees from both the Parks and Recreation Department's Park Rangers and the Watershed Protection Department, these students have gotten an up close look at several exciting career pathways in the natural sciences.



If you have a child who may be interested next year, find more information at: http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health_human_services/youth_employment_program.asp

-Park Ranger Nick Hirsch

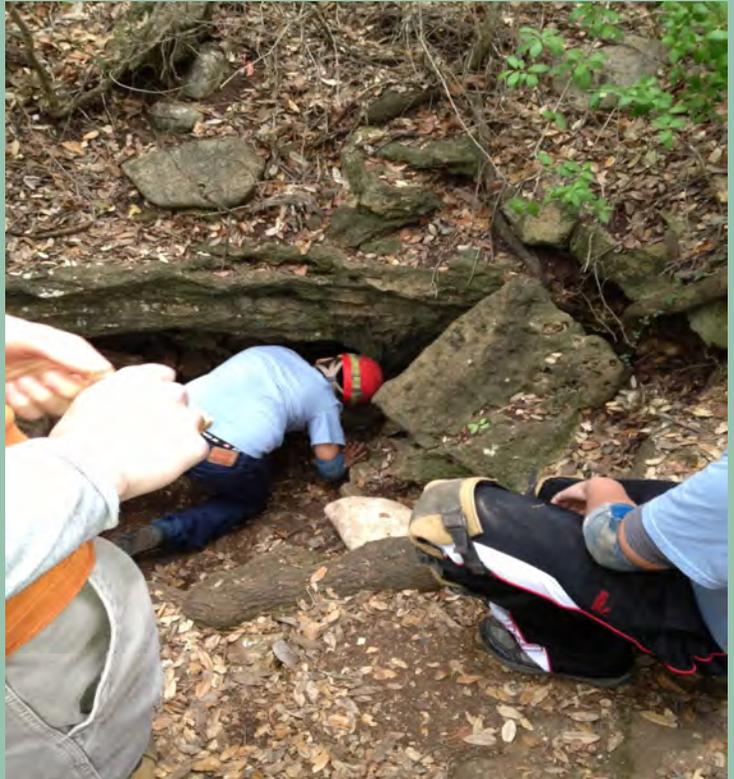
Park of the Month: Pease Park

Pease Park as we know it today was not always a place to enjoy a picnic or the splash pad. Back in 1875 the Governor of Austin granted the land to the citizens. For almost 50 years Pease Park was in a state of decline and often used as a dumping site. Around 1925 a group of volunteers came together to clean up the park and make it what it is today. Other notable Austinites such as Edwin Waller, Senator Yarborough, and Janet Long Fish (daughter of Walter E. Long) all did their part to revitalize Pease Park. Thanks to the efforts of these local historic figures as well as many other concerned citizens, this 42 acre park now has barbeque pits, basketball courts, picnic areas and a splash pad. I hope you all find some time this summer to go out and enjoy



Austin Cave Program

The City of Austin's Park Rangers have been working hard to develop a caving program to help Austinites learn about and explore some of the area's caves. They have trained in proper horizontal and vertical cave entry techniques with experts in hydrogeology and recreational caving. Until an independent Ranger caving program is up and running, Rangers will be available to assist with current caving programs offered through the Austin Nature and Science Center. If you are interested in caving, introductory family-oriented cave tours are periodically offered through the Austin Nature and Science Center (<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/austin-nature-and-science-center>) and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (<http://www.wildflower.org/>). The Underground Texas Grotto also offers opportunities for caving training, participation in volunteer workdays, and cave trips (<http://www.utgrotto.org/>).



Regardless of where or with whom you go caving, safety comes first! Here are a few things to keep in mind when you go on a caving adventure:

- *Never enter a cave when there is a risk of flooding.
- *Wear thick clothes (gloves and knee/elbow pads are a plus!) and a helmet to prevent scrapes and other injuries- karst can be sharp!
- *Don't enter a cave alone. Make sure that someone above ground knows where you are and when to expect you to return from your cave trip, in case of an underground emergency.
- *Don't enter a cave that's beyond your level of training, and don't enter any cave without permission. Many caves are important habitat for rare and endangered species, and are therefore closed to the public.
- *Make sure you have a reliable light source (preferably a headlamp to keep your hands free), and at least one back-up source of light.

-Park Ranger Julie Webber

“Like” [Austin Parks and Recreation](#) on Facebook and look for the Park Ranger posts!



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require assistance for participation in our programs or use of our facilities, please call (512) 974-6700.

Scoop the Poop

Just imagine: you are in the park with your loved ones, or your four-legged friend taking a nice stroll along the shimmering edge of Lady Bird Lake enjoying a quiet sunset when you step in something squishy—it's smelly, it's unsightly, it's dog waste! We know that this is all a part of having a dog but from an environmental and health impact there's more to dog waste than meets the eye...and nose.

Let's talk numbers: the good news is Austin's canine population is booming at over 215,000 best friends! This makes Austin one of the most pet friendly cities in the world. However, when they all "do their business" it adds up to over 100,000 pounds of waste a day! This is enough waste to fill just over 5 dump trucks. When this pet waste isn't disposed of properly it can cause a multitude of problems for humans and the environment.

Improperly disposed dog waste can cause health concerns for people and animals alike.

When not disposed of, disease causing elements such as Giardia, Roundworms and Salmonella increase. These concerns can cause us and our four-legged friends to get very sick and can sometimes even lead to death.

If left on the ground, dog waste can also end up in our waterways decreasing environmental health for our aquatic life by promoting algae, aquatic weeds, decreasing oxygen for fish, and generally creating unsafe recreational areas.



The good part is we can all do something about this problem and it's as easy as 1,2,3:

1. Bring several waste bags when you walk your dog
2. Pick up dog's waste
3. Throw it out in the proper waste receptacle



With just a little responsible pet ownership we can all improve Austin's parks and waterways for everyone and all our furry friends to enjoy!

Park Ranger Supervisor Leann Ishcomer