

## Guadalupe Blanco River Trust Newsletter | Fall/Winter 2021



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Did you know that we went through a rigorous process to ensure we are operating at the highest possible conservation standards? The Land Trust Accreditation Commission has awarded us accreditation! We have proven that we have sound finances, practice ethical conduct and responsible governance and can ensure lasting stewardship. We are proud to work with the Guadalupe River watershed to protect the places we love.

### TALES FROM THE TRUSTEES **Wilfred Korth**



I always wanted to be a Park Ranger and had the opportunity to go to Texas A&M and earn a degree in Park and Recreation Administration. After graduation I was one of the first hires for the “new” Coletto Creek Park and Reservoir being built in Goliad County. After A&M and several years as a seasonal ranger with TPWD I felt I was ready to handle any and all ranger duties. That was before I started tackling invasive species attacking the park and reservoir. On Nature Hikes I often ask kids who has the greatest impact on our natural environments. And then talk about why “humans” are the answer to that question. Which today has led to the many invasive species we have to deal with.

At Coletto and on my ranch, my goal has been to maintain an ecologically balanced diverse plant and animal community. Invasives can quickly upset the balance, and once established are extremely hard to regain that balance. At Coletto the first invasives we worked to control were hydrilla and water hyacinths. Left unchecked, invasive aquatic plants can spread quickly, push out all the native plants, and greatly impact the recreational enjoyment of a water body and the natural habitat needed by the native fish species. So many Texas Reservoirs were being impacted by these invasives with no concerted coordinated efforts to control, I joined a group of managers and helped create the Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society. Through this professional network, aquatic plant managers on both public and private waters were able to quickly learn about the most up to date, effective means of aquatic plant control; and what not to do.

Luckily today there are many agencies which offer FREE assistance to help us manage invasives on the lands we want to preserve. First, we have our local Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Agent <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu> in each county that can help you identify your problem, make recommendations on control methods, and often have field days showing the real world effectiveness of control methods. Next there is the Natural Resource and Conservation Service, <https://>

[offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs](https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs), which can provide similar assistance plus help you find funding for management projects. And we have our local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/swcnds>, which offer educational programs and assistance to private landowners to assist with conservation efforts. Plus, a variety of other online sources as “Invasive Species” has become a major issue around the world.

As stated by the National Land Trust “Lands protected from development are not truly conserved if diverse natural communities degrade over time as a result of invasion of a relatively small number of aggressive species.”

As I have often heard in my years of attacking invasive species, when deciding how to attack your problem, no action is not a sustainable solution. In order to “Conserve Natural Lands” we have to act today to insure our kids and grandkids, and our abundant wildlife have the natural ecosystems we all grew up in.

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“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.” ~ JANE GOODALL

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- ◆ Stephen Risinger - Conservation & Stewardship Manager



GBRT is pleased to announce the fifth year of the *Reliant EcoShare<sup>SM</sup>*, a way that Texans can support GBRT and offset their own carbon production at the same time. Reliant and EarthShare of Texas have launched a program that allows Reliant customers to help reduce their carbon footprints through the purchase of carbon offsets. And for each customer-purchased offset, Reliant will make a contribution to EarthShare of Texas and its participating organizations. As and EarthShare of Texas participating organization, GBRT will benefit from this program. For more information, click the image to the right to access the EarthShare of Texas website or go directly to [Reliant EcoShare](http://ReliantEcoShare).

**A WORD FROM THE GBRT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
 TYLER SANDERSON**

Exciting things have been in the works since our Summer edition newsletter and we are proud of the opportunity to provide updates. You may have noticed that we did not get a full Fall issue out this year. Our staff have been busy coordinating several exciting projects and programs. The master planning committee for our Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve has completed the initial meetings and GBRT staff and consultants are working up a first draft. As mentioned on the next page, our Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership with the NRCS, Ducks Unlimited and Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program is moving along wonderfully. We have several great properties interested in conserving through the program, and the first application deadline is coming up. We completed our second annual volunteer reforestation effort in November, and have been notified that we will be receiving funding from the Caterpillar Foundation to expand our Re-Leaf effort to prairie restoration and reforestation on 35-acres over 3 years. We received a generous grant from the Land Trust Alliance to improve our remote monitoring capabilities and ensure the best stewardship of our 11,000+ acres of conservation lands. Certainly our most exciting milestone this year was receiving national recognition as an accredited land trust, putting ourselves in a group of 450 nonprofits who demonstrate professional excellence.



All these exciting projects create greater operating expenses, and a need to supplement that. With the help of special donors like you, we can continue to expand our ever growing reach throughout the watershed. When planning for any end-of-year giving this December, please consider visiting the donation page of our website ([gbrtx.org/ways-to-help](http://gbrtx.org/ways-to-help)) and make a contribution. We thank you for your support.

**AN EASY AND AFFORDABLE WAY TO SUPPORT A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT.**

**Enroll in the Reliant EcoShare<sup>SM</sup> Program to support EarthShare of Texas<sup>®</sup>.**

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# Conservation Conversation

Stephen Risinger



In honor of deer season, I figured I would dedicate this issue of GBRT's Conservation Conversation to our friend, the White Tail Deer. Did you know that Texas is home to more than 4 million whitetail deer? Another interesting fact about whitetail deer is that they do not migrate and tend to stay in an area of 7 city blocks throughout their lives. This is an important concern when considering the overpopulation of deer. The tendency of white-tail to stay close to a food source can spell disaster for species that compete for forage of tender new growth of plants. Areas with too many deer can experience over-browsing of vegetation that can lead to starvation of other species that depend on the same food source. Over browsing of vegetation is one of the many reasons that sound management and stewardship of Texas' whitetail deer population are so important.

What is the best way to manage deer populations you ask? Hunting. Numerous studies have shown that hunting is the most cost-effective and humane way to steward deer populations in Texas. The hunting of whitetail deer in Texas generates about 1.2 billion in revenue for the Texas economy. Texas sold over \$170 million in hunting/fishing combo licenses in 2019. Much of the money that boosts the economy also comes from the costs of gas, hotels, and restaurants. Since the hunting takes place in rural areas, a significant portion of that money goes to local small businesses. So, this deer season rather than focusing on purely the hunt, think back to why sound management of white-tail is important to our unique Texas ecosystem.

GBRT's Texas Mid-Coast Initiative Program (WREP) is in full swing as of December 2021. WREP is a component of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Enhancement program through which NRCS enters into agreements with eligible partners to target and leverage resources to address high priority wetland protection, restoration, and enhancement activities and improve wildlife habitat on eligible lands.

Over the past several months, GBRT staff and partner organizations have made numerous site visits to talk with landowners in the mid-coast area that are interested in restoring wetlands on their properties. One highlight of our outreach effort was our attendance of the Annual South Texas Farm and Ranch Show, a non-profit, volunteer-managed event organized by the South Texas Farm & Ranch Show Committee and Texas A&M Agrilife Extension – Victoria County. The show offered GBRT and our partners the opportunity to communicate the goals of our project with farmers, ranchers, agribusiness, the general public, and exhibitors. GBRT and our partners made valuable contacts in the area and received a number of positive leads from interested landowners. This year's show hosted between 1000 and 1500 individuals.



As the application deadline of December 17th draws closer, GBRT staff and partners are seeking to schedule any last-minute site visits with area landowners to discuss the goals of WREP. If you are a landowner in Aransas, Calhoun, Goliad, Jackson, Matagorda, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria counties wanting to enroll wetlands into a conservation easement program, please reach out to us by December 17th to enroll!

# Plum Creek Re-Leaf

The 2nd Annual Plum Creek Wetlands Re-Leaf reforestation event held on November 5th & 6th was a great success with the help of our community volunteers! Over the 2 days of the event, volunteers from Lockhart

Independent School District, GBRA, Texas Forest Service, Plum Creek Watershed Partnership, Guadalupe & Lost Pines Master Naturalists, Caldwell-Travis Soil & Water Conservation District, and Texas State University planted over 750 trees in 2 acres of road frontage at GBRT's Plum Creek Wetland Preserve (PCWP) north of Lockhart.

This event is GBRT's premier opportunity to share the natural beauty of the PCWP with the general public, and this year we were very thankful for the reception that we received. The excitement and eagerness expressed by our younger attendees to do their part were palpable and we look forward to growing the event with support from such a great community. Moving forward, GBRT plan to expand Re-Leaf by incorporating an annual spring prairie restoration into the event's fall reforestation.

We looking forward to growing this event and covering more ground, and we hope you do too.



Click image above to enlarge.

To help us expand this effort, we have received a generous grant from the Caterpillar Foundation for three years of program funding. Funding will assist in site preparation, seeds and plants, and carrying out volunteer events for prairie restoration and reforestation of at least 30 acres of the PCWP. We want to thank the Caterpillar Foundation for their assistance. We are proud to be working with a great organization.



# GUADALUPE RIVER LEAST WANTED

## INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE GUADALUPE RIVER WATERSHED

# HYDRILLA

(*Hydrilla verticillata*)



**Crime:** In this issue of GBRT's Least Wanted, we will be learning about the dreaded super-invader *Hydrilla verticillata*, also known as water thyme. *Hydrilla* is native to East Asia (Sri Lanka, Korea) and was originally sold and transported as an aquarium plant in the 1950s. Some

sources say that after importation in Florida, the plants were deemed unsuitable and dumped into canals near Tampa Bay. By the mid-1970s, *Hydrilla* had spread to Maryland and the Potomac River near Washington D.C. *Hydrilla* has since spread all the way to California and can be found in most states.

**Evidence:** This plant forms dense mats at the surface of the water. It changes pH, removes oxygen, restricts native plant growth, block out nutrients for aquatic animals, hinders irrigation, recreation, and water flow. It is extremely competitive and resilient, surviving freezing or drought because it can break off into portions and sink to safer waters. It is easily spread through boating and fishing activities and by waterfowl. *Hydrilla* is one of the most invasive weeds in the world, and it is capable of clogging waterways, and even public water supplies. It is now illegal to possess or transport this species in Texas and is also listed as a Federal Noxious Weeds. Despite 30 years of research and intensive management efforts, hydrilla is still a major problem where it is successfully established.



**Expungement:** What has allowed this plant to spread is not only its durability but also human interaction. When boating some tend not to clean off or drain their boats. With this plant being able to spread from a single fragment it is easily transported by boating, fishing, and other aquatic activities. **BE SURE TO FULLY CLEAN YOUR BOATS AND HULLS TO PREVENT FURTHER SPREAD!**

Much like our previous issue on Water Hyacinth, *Hydrilla*'s biology makes its management difficult. The best method of removal is herbicide application. It is recommended to use an aquatic-safe herbicide such as glyphosate (When determining your herbicide application plan, make sure to **check with your local county regulations** as some applications are not allowed certain times of year. **ALWAYS READ YOUR LABELS** and make a plan. Mechanical removal using plant harvesting machines has been shown to be effective, but mechanical management will not work alone.

**Native alternative:** Other members of the watermilfoil family. Common elodea (*Elodea canadensis*).

**For more information:**

Contact your local AgriLife Extension office (<https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/>) ([aquaplant.tamu.edu](http://aquaplant.tamu.edu))  
Visit [www.tsusinvasives.org](http://www.tsusinvasives.org)



## HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT GBRT?

A gracious donation can be made to one of our multiple campaigns either by visiting our website, sending a check to our mailing address, or by clicking [here](#): To donate to a specific purpose, make a note of that with your donation.


Click the links below to learn more about each of our ways to contribute.


**[General Operating](#)**— contribution to our general funds can make a difference in supporting GBRT’s mission by helping cover costs that grants and restricted donations can’t.

**[Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve](#)**— This restricted account is designated specifically for the maintenance and improvements of the preserve. As we develop the preserve into a nature center, your contribution will help us build the dream.

**[Texas Mid Coast Initiative](#)**— The purpose of this initiative is to work collaboratively with project partners to target and conserve critical coastal habitats in an 8-County range around the San Antonio Bay. Partners include: NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, USFWS, San Antonio Bay Partnership, International Crane Foundation, Texas Audubon, and many others with this regional interest.

### Other ways to support our mission:

 Perhaps the coolest way to support natural resources across Texas is to support [EarthShare](#). They raise and distribute unrestricted funds for dozens of conservation organizations in Texas. Visit [earthshare-texas.org](http://earthshare-texas.org) to contribute.

 Shopping at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) is a simple and automatic way for you to support GBRT every time you shop. By choosing GBRT as your charity of choice, Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price at no cost to you.



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*In loving memory of*

*Susan Kathryn Hubbert*

*September 4, 1955—November 26, 2021*

*She brightened many lives*