



Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust

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Preservation Matters

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Whooping Crane Population on the Rise!

by Carrie Kasnicka



After a record hatch in Canada, more than 400 endangered whooping cranes are making their 2,100-mile flight toward the marshes of and around the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

This year's estimated total for the world's only wild migratory flock of whooping cranes is 431. Whooper fans are celebrating this estimate as a huge boost in the population compared to the previous tally of about 330.

Captain Tommy Moore and biologist Liz Smith, senior whooping crane scientist with the International Crane Foundation, said marsh conditions appear to be healthy, despite enduring a thrashing from Hurricane Harvey. The last time heavy rainfall inundated the birds' wintering habitat the explosions of crabs and shrimp created a boon for whoopers and other wildlife. The cranes' diet consists mainly of blue crabs and wolf berries, which grow naturally in the marshes fringing Aransas and San Antonio bays.

Adult cranes typically stand 5-feet tall with a 7-foot wingspan and have a bright red crown. Its piercing call resembles the sound of a French horn.

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Former GBRA Chief Ranger Wilfred Korth Joins GBR Trust Board

by Carrie Kasnicka

Former Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) chief ranger Wilfred Korth began service as a new trustee for the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBR Trust) in September 2017. Korth brings a wealth of experience and commitment to conservation to his position as a trustee.

"I welcome the opportunity to help others nurture a commitment to preserving some of the pristine areas found in the Guadalupe River Basin" said Korth.

A graduate of Texas A&M University with a bachelors degree in park administration, Korth started his park service career at Lake Somerville State Park. He also worked at Lost Maples State Park before spending more than 37 years developing and running GBRA's Coletto Creek Park. "I was resource manager for more than 4,000 acres of land and the 3,100-acre reservoir," he explained.

His experience also includes being a certified leisure professional through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and Texas Recreation and Parks Society (TRAPS); a certified park operator through the Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC), and a certified Texas master naturalist.

Korth said he is an active volunteer in Goliad County serving on the Goliad County Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee, current chair of Canoe Trail Goliad, director on Goliad County Groundwater Conservation District, the Goliad representative on the San Antonio River Authority's Environmental Advisory Committee, and the Goliad representative on the Texas Coastal Bend Regional Tourism Council. "Helping my wife manage and operate the Eco-Tourism Business on our ranch, Barnhart Q5 Ranch and Nature Retreat, just outside of Berclair, Texas, is my full-time job," he said.

Fast Facts about Korth:

- ♦ Favorite Bird - roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*)
- ♦ Favorite Texas park or natural area - each park I have visited is a favorite.
- ♦ Favorite recreational activities - canoeing and kayaking, fishing, hiking, photography, exploring nature, and gardening.



Plum Creek Wetlands Planning Committee Meets

The Plum Creek Wetland Preserve (PCWP) is a 265-acre wetland mitigation property owned by the GBR Trust and located in Lockhart, Texas. It plays a vital role in water quality and wildlife habitat. With a conservation easement agreement in place protecting the ecological values, the PCWP has great potential for research, educational and recreational activities.

The Planning Committee, comprised of representatives from Texas Department of Transportation, Plum Creek Watershed Partnership, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Ducks Unlimited, City of Lockhart, GBRA and GBR Trust, met in October to plan and prepare this special property for future controlled public access.





Hays County Conservation Easement

by Carrie Kasnicka

Dreamcatcher Ranch is a 211-acre working cattle ranch in Hays County that the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust recently acquired as a conservation easement, bringing the GBR Trust closer to 15,000 acres of protected wildlife habitat, open landscapes and working ranches in the State of Texas.

“The GBR Trust is proud to complete its 18th conservation easement,” Carrie Kasnicka, GBR Trust executive director, said. Located within the Balcones Escarpment, Dreamcatcher Ranch is the first property above the San Marcos Springs that is not protected from development by flood plains and flood ways. It is the sole buffer and offers inflow to the critically sensitive Sink Lake and the San Marcos Springs. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has designated San Marcos Springs and San Marcos River as critical habitat for eight endangered aquatic species.

Water flow through the ranch affects all threatened and endangered species in Spring Lake, the springs and the San Marcos River including Texas Wild Rice, the Blind and San Marcos Salamanders and numerous fish and insects.

Texas leads the nation in conversion of agricultural lands and Hays County is facing significant development pressure. The perpetual protection of the Dreamcatcher Ranch will allow it to remain as a working cattle ranch utilizing best agricultural management practices and provides a protected source of clean fresh water and vital wildlife habitat for numerous invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, birds and small mammals.



Photo by Ryan Hagerty USFWS

Texas blind salamanders live in total darkness. Although they have eyes, they are located under their skin, leaving them totally blind. This feature allows them to live mainly underwater. The salamander will occasionally be pushed to the surface by the springs, but doesn't stay there long! They are only found in Edwards Aquifer. The aquifer provides a cool and oxygen-rich habitat for the the salamander. Specifically, the salamander can be found in the San Marcos area of the Aquifer. (<https://www.fws.gov>)

Intern Assists with GBR Trust Activities

By Bethany Hamson

Water sampling, facility tours, and species assessments are just a few of the things in which Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) and Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (GBR Trust) interns may participate while working in a unique summer internship program.

Through a three-way partnership between the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, The University of the South (Sewanee), and GBRA, students like Bethany Hamson are immersed in hands-on environmental learning experiences.

Hamson, who is majoring in natural resources, plans to graduate with her bachelor's degree from Sewanee in Spring 2018. “I'm so excited and looking forward to using the knowledge I've gained from my internship work with GBRA and the Trust,” she said.

Mentoring Hamson through her internship were GBR Trust Executive Director Carrie Kasnicka and GBRA Executive Manager of Resource Policy and Stewardship Todd Votteler, Ph.D., who helped develop the program with the Episcopal Diocese.

“Over the summer, Hamson really was invaluable in assisting us with inspecting conservation easements for compliance and



communicating with landowners,” Kasnicka said. “This program allows the interns to get a lot of one-on-one experience and to see up-close the workings of real policy issues.”

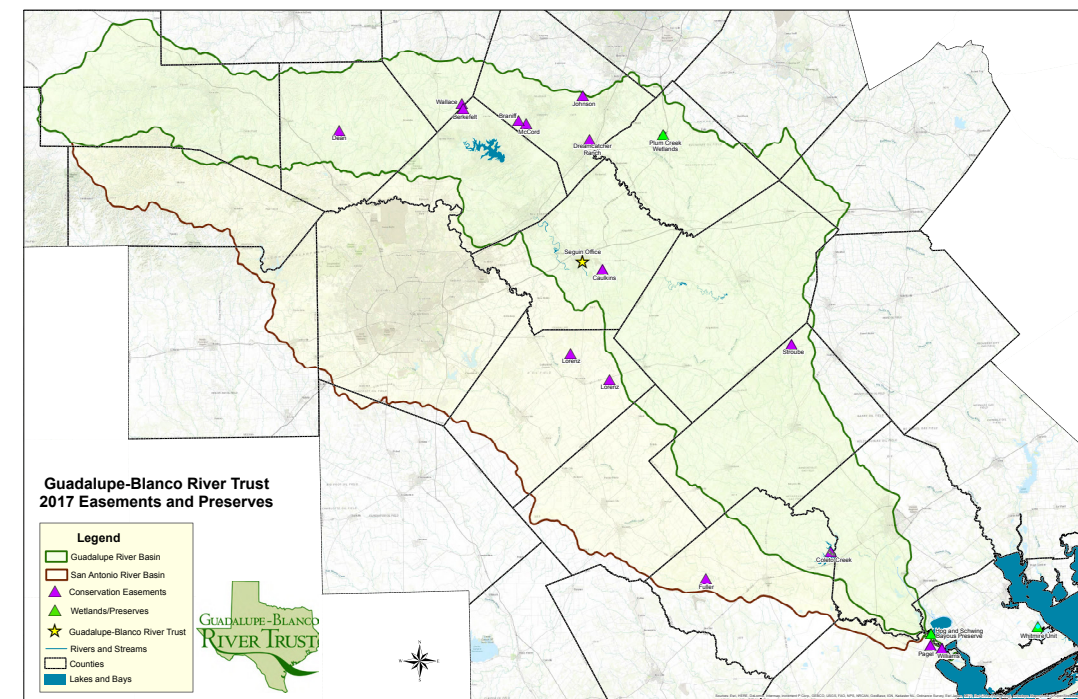
Votteler explained that in developing the internship experience at GBRA, he wanted to ensure students would be exposed to more than office and clerical work. “I wanted her to attend and understand what was going on in important meetings where we might be deciding critical water policy issues or making decisions that affect aquatic species.”

Hamson said she was able to join GBRA laboratory technicians in the field taking samples from rivers and streams in the Guadalupe River Basin, toured the Canyon Lake Gorge, and even viewed the San Marcos Springs from a glass-bottom boat at the Meadows Center.

“I can't say enough about how beneficial this program was and how much I appreciate

both the Episocal Diocese of West Texas, GBRA and the GBR Trust for affording me this opportunity,” she said, adding that she would encourage other Sewanee students studying in natural resource disciplines to apply.

GBR Trust Supports Its Communities



The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust values education and community outreach. The list below represents the many entities the GBR Trust has supported throughout 2017:

- New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce
- EarthShare of Texas
- Kerrville Conservation Easement Workshop
- Advocacy Day at the State Capitol
- Texas Land Trust Commission Annual Conference
- Coletto Creek Nature Fest
- Luling Foundation Field Day
- Upper Guadalupe River Authority
- Rotary Club of Kerrville
- Lockhart City Council
- GBRA Better Basin Day
- San Antonio Bay Foundation Crab Trap Removal Event