

Guadalupe Blanco River Trust Newsletter | Summer 2021

THANK YOU

GBRT would like to recognize **Tommy Mathews** for his 9 years of service as a Board Trustee. He made outstanding contributions as a member of our team and will truly be missed. We wish him the best of luck.

We would also like to take this opportunity to recognize our partners at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority. GBRA has been a major supporter of GBRT since our founding in 2001. The continued support and partnership has been a vital part of how we can and have continued to fulfil our mission. GBRA staff have assisted us with grant writing, special projects, land-owner relations, bookkeeping, human resources, and general office morale. We are proud to call our offices at GBRA home. Thank you, GBRA, for your continued partnership.



TALES FROM THE TRUSTEES

Tommy Mathews

Time is a funny thing; at times it goes by so quickly and at times it goes by so painfully slow, at times we can't wait for tomorrow and at times we yearn for yesterday, at times we can see the immediate results of our labors and at other times we have to trust that our efforts have planted or cultivated the seeds for a bountiful future harvest.



It was a quick nine years ago that I joined the Trust Board. Reflecting back on these times, what a tremendous journey it has been. Times full of great memories, challenges, growth, reorganization, planting of seeds and cultivation. I've always seen farming as a parallel to the call of a land trust; one plants, cultivates, and nurtures until those efforts bear forth a very unique "harvest". That harvest being the identification, protection, and perpetual management of our most ecologically sensitive and environmentally essential lands. In an ever-growing state, with an expanding appetite for resources, water, and land development it is more critical than ever to have conservation groups and land trusts, such as the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust, answer this essential call, plant the seeds, and cultivate the benefits of land conservation.

Back in my yonder years of college I read a quote that stirs my heart to this day. It was from the Suquamish Chief Seattle (Seathl) from the Pacific NW where he said,

"This we know; the earth does not belong to man – man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites one's family. All things are connected."

Whether we will acknowledge it or not we are inexorably connected to the earth, to the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the wide-open spaces that soothe our soul. So, I ask you, "How do you see your connection to the earth? How do you commune with and be a part of nature? Where do you give of yourself; your time, your talents, your treasures, to protect critical and essential lands?" Answer these questions, and as Chief Seattle said above and as Shakespeare says in the quote below, you will best embrace a living bond with the earth. Your life and the world will be richer for it.



"One touch of nature...makes all the world kin." ~ William Shakespeare

2021 GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Bios available at www.GBRTX.org

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- ◆ Tyler Sanderson - Executive Director
- ◆ Stephen Risinger - Conservation & Stewardship Manager



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Click the Reliant logo above to learn more about the Reliant EcoShare program.

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

What a wild and wonderful spring it has been. With the recent rains, the Guadalupe River watershed is wetter than it has been for some time now. The consistency of the rainfall, with only patchy severe rain and flood, has kept the rivers and streams flowing at a fairly consistent discharge. Even the lower basin, after experiencing extremely long drought, benefited from the weather.



It is conservation easement monitoring season for GBRT and we have thoroughly enjoyed the lush grasses and vibrant wildflowers that have thrived this spring. The ponds and wetlands at our Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve in Lockhart are full and the trees planted during November’s ReLeaf event are happy little seedlings. You can learn more in our Conservation Conversation on the next page. GBRT staff and the preserve’s master planning committee are getting set for the early stages of a Plum Creek Wetlands Preserve Master Plan. Our goal is to have a master development plan in place by 2022 thanks to a generous grant from our partners at the Land Trust Alliance.

A major accomplishment that GBRT is particularly proud of this spring is receiving funding from the NRCS for a regional conservation program in the Texas Mid-Coast. In collaboration with Ducks Unlimited and Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, we have been approved for a Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership. More information about that is on pages 4 and 5.

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2021 Monitoring Season Update



I don't know what's wrong with this thing," I said to Tyler, as we baked in the sun waiting for me to find a decent spot to land the drone. I guess the middle of a field of thigh-high little bluestem wasn't an *ideal* landing spot. After obtaining my Unmanned Aerial Systems Pilot License from the FAA back in April, we have been able to use the drone on every monitoring visit since, although, it has taken some time to perfect my piloting abilities. Despite the difficulties of finding the perfect landing spot, and getting it stuck in a tree once... the drone has helped us tremendously this monitoring season. With the help of our handy aerial drone, we have been able to successfully monitor the properties we've visited in under 3 hours in most cases, while also having the ability to reach places otherwise inaccessible by foot or vehicle.

So far, Tyler and I have been able to visit over half of GBRT's conservation easements and are looking forward to the rest. Being such a large watershed, we are privileged to have the ability to explore the Texas hill country down to the coastal plains of the Gulf.

With each visit, we are getting to know more of our dear property owners, who recognize the benefit and the need for perpetual land conservation. Our relationship with the landowners is very important to us and we have had a great time meeting them so far during 2021's monitoring season. The time these landowners set aside to meet and spend time with us helps us greatly in adhering to the standards and practices that are required to ensure the perpetual conservation of GBRT's conservation lands.

CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

STEPHEN RISINGER

Our staff decided to visit GBRT's preserve at the Plum Creek Wetlands in Lockhart, TX, to view the property following the more than 12 inches of rain the area received during May. We were happy to see that all of the 29 ponds and pools on the property were holding water. Skirting the riparian area beside the ponds, Tyler and I observed a diverse array of wildlife that call the preserve home, including two large blue herons gliding noiselessly above the creek. When full, the many ponds that are within the preserve create prime habitat for several bird and waterfowl species, including blue heron, egret, northern pintail, and whistling duck.



Not only did the rains from May do well for our waterfowl habitat, it also forced the feral hogs that trespass on the preserve, out of their usual low laying wallows to seek higher ground out of the flood plain and off of the property, for the most part. Periods of drought that are well known in Texas, are damaging to wetlands like the Plum Creek Preserve. To see the wetlands full of water and full of life is pleasing to us in the world of conservation.

Texas Mid-Coast Initiative

A collaboration of the NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust, and Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program

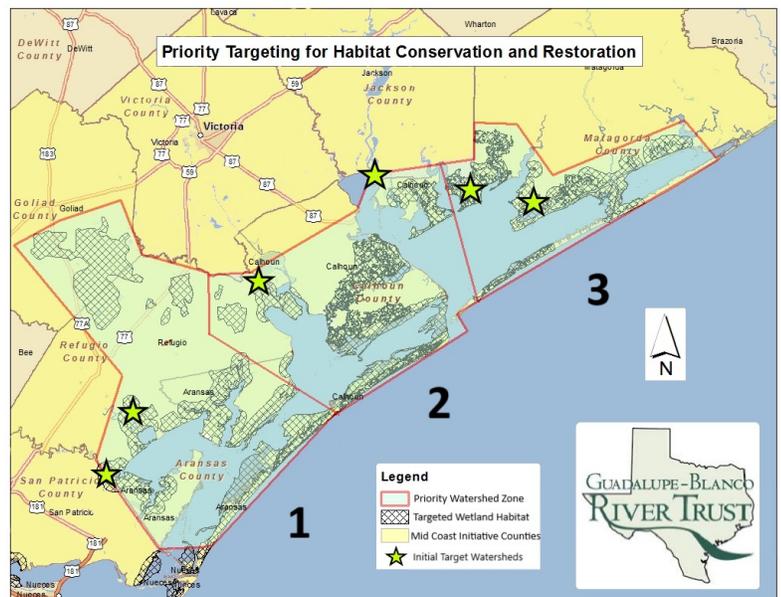


The program works collaboratively with national, regional and local partners, and private landowners to implement an 8-County regional conservation program. The Texas Mid-Coast Initiative targets critical habitat for threatened and endangered species in the project range. These priority watersheds are among the most diverse in Texas and include a mosaic of freshwater wetlands, coastal prairies, river deltas, and estuaries.

Project Objectives:

- 1) Conserve priority wetland habitats for migratory birds and other State and federally listed species.
- 2) through restoration and enhancement, improve habitat conditions for fish and wildlife and improve overall health of freshwater flows of streams and riparian areas into the coastal bays and estuaries.

Land protection through wetland conservation easements and subsequent restoration activities will ensure habitat needs are met for critical wildlife species and that these systems will function as intended and improve water quality and quantity over the landscape.



Prioritization will be placed on habitat adjacent to, or in the immediate vicinity of existing conservation easements, or otherwise protected lands, creating larger habitat blocks and migration corridors. In an area subjected to land fragmentation, invasive species, widespread flood-control practices, stream dredging and straightening, streambank stabilization, and habitat loss, there is no more critical time than now to protect our natural ecosystem on our wonderful Texas Coast.



Contact:

Tyler Sanderson, Executive Director
 Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust
 830.305.6873



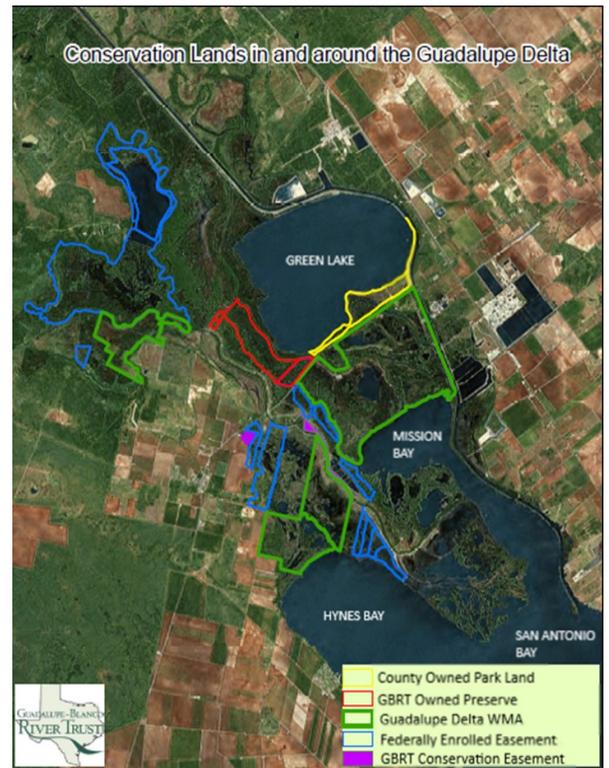
The Texas Mid-Coast Initiative seeks to enroll interested priority habitat landowners into this voluntary conservation program.

Project activities will follow these steps:

- Landowner outreach
- Parcel prioritization ranking
- Contract development
- Conservation easement acquisition
- Wetland and coastal habitat restoration and enhancement

Restoration activities will take place on former wetlands with effectively drained hydric soils, filled areas with no development, impounded areas, excavated areas, or farmed wetlands, as well as degraded wetlands that are partially drained, impounded, excavated, farmed or contain tidal restrictions.

Historically, these former wetland, riparian and floodplain locations provided migrating, wintering, and nesting habitat for many migratory species including the monarch butterfly and whooping crane. Studies have shown that 237 species of birds, totaling at least 29 million individuals, migrate through this region every year.



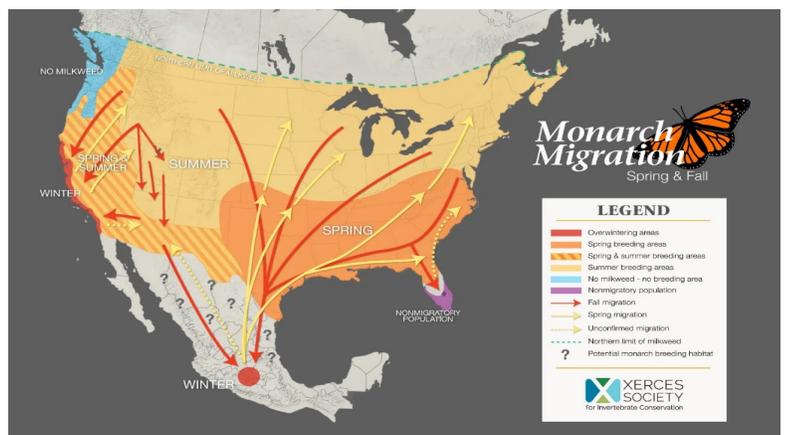
Conserved lands in the Guadalupe Delta, illustrating the goal of connecting habitat corridors.

Restoration will focus on re-establishing hydrology or hydrologic connections, if necessary, and habitat needs such as setting back plant succession. Planting will incorporate species native to the Blackland prairie and coastal prairies and wetlands ecoregions. These restoration activities will have a trickle down affect, benefiting shorebirds and waterfowl, migratory species, terrestrial wildlife, aquatic flora and fauna, and water quality/quantity benefits such as enhanced freshwater flows and healthier bays and estuaries.

Bird species of benefit include whooping crane, piping plover, northern aplomado falcon, peregrine falcon, wood stork, brown pelican, white-tailed hawk, sooty tern, white-faced ibis, Attwater prairie chicken, Le-Conte's sparrow, mottled ducks, buff-breasted sandpipers, long-billed curlews, stilt sandpipers, and western sandpipers. Other species of benefit include blue crabs, shrimp, oysters, freshwater mussels, bass, red drum, southern flying squirrel, white-tailed deer and many amphibian species, including the black-spotted newt.



Whooping Crane Priority Habitat (USFWS, 2013).



Known Monarch migration routes, (Xerces Society, 2016).

GUADALUPE RIVER LEAST WANTED

INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE GUADALUPE RIVER WATERSHED

WATER HYACINTH

(*Eichhornia crassipes*)

Crime: Inhibits native vegetation by lowering light penetration and dissolved oxygen levels in the water. Reduces fish habitat and alters communities by limiting native vegetative cover and lighting. Is known to impact shorebirds and waterfowl, including the endangered whooping crane, but reducing hunting and fishing. Obstructs boat traffic, takes over irrigation canals, and clogs intake pumps. Water hyacinth will grow in a wide variety of habitats including lakes, ponds, rivers, wetlands and marshes. It is an aquatic plant that grows prolifically in the lower basin of the Guadalupe River, tributaries, and the coastal marsh lands. Grows rapidly.



Evidence: Native to the Amazon River Basin in South America. It is a floating plant that can extend above the water. Roots are dark and feathery and only reach into the soil when flowering. Leaves are thick, shiny, bright green and kidney-shaped. When flowering, conspicuous lavender flowers on stalks in large groups can reach 16 inches. Flowering occurs in late summer and early fall. Reproduces vegetatively via offshoots and root and stem fragments will reproduce. It will also reproduce via seeds when conditions are favorable.



Expungement: The best method of removal is herbicide application. It is recommended to use an aquatic-safe herbicide such as glyphosate (Rodeo or Roundup Custom) or 2,4-D, which has been found to work better than glyphosate in many cases. 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 it is likely that this process will break up seed pods and shoots, leaving opportunity for regrowth. Complete drainage is commonly necessary for large infestations, but may not be feasible in natural or uncontrollable water bodies.

Native alternative: Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), Humped bladderwort (*Utricularia gibba*), American white water-lily (*Nymphaea odorata*), and Yellow pond lily (*Nuphar lutea*).

For more information:

Contact your local AgriLife Extension office (<https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/>) (aquaplant.tamu.edu)
Visit www.texasinvasives.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.

Our targeted project areas include:

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 to contribute.

 Shopping at 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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Hats = \$25

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If you would like any, please email inquiry@gbrtx.org or call 830.560.3981 and leave a message. Please indicate how much and what color you would like and we will get you taken care of. All items come with a free tote bag.

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