Annual Report for Barton Creek Habitat Preserve 2023
The Nature Conservancy of Texas
October 1st 2022-September 31st 2023

Science / Stewardship

Annual surveys (point count) were completed for the golden-cheeked warblers (GCWA) to determine population densities. The GCWA population remains stable. Black-capped vireo (BCVI) surveys were not completed but three BCVI males were observed on the property during the 2023 season during field work or other surveys. Brown-headed cowbirds were removed from the property by shooting.

A February ice storm caused major damage to trees on the preserve. Roads, fire lines and contingency lines were littered with broken trees. Scheduled burn units were postponed in order to re-establish fire lines. No prescribed fires were conducted during the reporting period.

Preserve staff and TPWD public lands lottery hunters are helping to control the population of white-tailed deer in an effort to reduce browse and increase recruitment of Texas Oaks. Population is estimated through camera surveys and stand counts. Ten deer were harvested by 39 hunters.

Ongoing research projects included “KR Bluestem Effects on Grasslands” (The Nature Conservancy / Global Impact Invader Network – GIIN); “Golden-cheeked Warbler Population Viability and Habitat Suitability within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve” (City of Austin and Balcones Canyonlands Preserve); Community Structure and Composition of Lizards in Texas (University of TX at Arlington); Herpetological Community Assemblages of the Greater Austin Area (St. Edwards University); Using Community Assembly Filters to Guide Invasive Species Management and Grassland Restoration (The Nature Conservancy / University of TX); Demography of Reintroduced Plants at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (University of TX); Deploying a Sensing Network at the Barton Creek Habitat Preserve: A Preliminary Proposal for Field Testing (University of TX); and Detecting Enigmatic Karst Salamander Species of the Genus Eurycea from Central TX using eDNA (University of TX).

Education/Outreach/Volunteers

The preserve hosted approximately 737 visitors, 210 volunteers totaling 1116 hours of work, and 171 used the property for educational purposes. Groups included the Boy Scouts of America Troop 25, Troop 52, Troop 72, Troop 441, Troop 1010, Cub Pack 70, Cub Pack 91, Johnson City High School, Elite University Summer Camp, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Capital Area Master Naturalists, Balcones Master Naturalists, Audubon Society, St. Edwards University, University of TX, and Austin Youth River Watch.

Volunteer projects included removing old fencing, invasive species removal (Johnson grass – *Sorhum halepense*, Malta star-thistle – *Centaurea melitensis,* Chinaberry Tree – *Melia azedarach*, and *Ligustrum sp.*), trash pickup, trail maintenance, fire-line preparation, juniper removal, deer surveys, bird surveys, boundary monitoring, infrastructure repair, and two Eagle Scout projects.

Expense Summary

FY 2023 operations (including salaries) and maintenance budget for the Preserve was $206,785.