Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP)
Updates for McGregor and Westcave Preserves

Biannual Report
October 2024 – March 2025

McGregor Preserve

LCRA hired a contractor to maintain the approximately 11 acres of fuel breaks at McGregor Preserve. Vegetation management included hand cutting and/or mulching of understory vegetation approximately 30 feet wide from perimeter and roads, while preserving the over story canopy. Cut debris was left and mulched on-site. Re-sprout species such as mesquite was treated with an approved herbicide using cut-stump treatment method. This work was conducted in January through February 2025.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail maintenance, bird blind maintenance, boundary inspections, boundary maintenance, drainage repairs along fence lines to prevent water backup on property, butterfly garden upkeep, and building maintenance.

Heinz Branch and Pedernales River watershed cleanup activities were conducted along roadsides near the preserve.

Westcave Preserve staff is still collecting data for Night Sky Quality readings. The application for Westcave Preserve to become an Urban Night Sky place has not been submitted.

Research consisted of the following:

1) Monthly water quality sampling was conducted at Heinz Branch. Results continue to be within a normal range and are reported to LCRA.
2) A biannual karst invertebrate survey was conducted in Hammetts cave. All species are recorded and monitored by Travis County Natural Resources.
3) Golden-cheeked Warbler weekly surveys started in March 2025.
4) Volunteers conducted a bi-weekly Dragonfly watch as part of the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership Citizen Science Program.
5) Weekly to biweekly nest checks were made by Westcave Preserve staff and interns as part of the Cornell Lab Ornithology Citizen Science Program called NestWatch.
6) Westcave Preserve staff and volunteers monitored each bat house at Westcave as part of a Bat Emergence Count. Emergence counts have been a weekly effort with the most individuals counted being close to 600 in the mega bat house. The Mexican free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) has been recorded at each bat house. This data is reported to Merlin Tuttle Bat Conservation International.
7) Weekly bird counts are conducted at Leif's Bird Blind and data is submitted to the Feederwatch program through Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP)
Updates for McGregor and Westcave Preserves

Biannual Report
April 2025 – September 2025

McGregor Preserve

On July 9, 2025 at The Oasis on Lake Travis, LCRA provided McGregor Good Neighbors Program training to the residents of Commanche Trail Neighborhood located adjacent to McGregor Preserve. Approximately 45 residents attended with two thirds being new permittees. The training consisted of a PowerPoint presentation discussing the Endangered Species Act, BCCP, BCCP versus BCP, McGregor Preserve, a video by Travis County that introduces the BCP, the Golden-cheeked Warbler, Oak Wilt prevention, and a review of the LCRA permit required to enter and hike on the preserve. The owner of The Oasis also attended and spoke on his involvement and contribution to the BCP system.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail maintenance, bird blind maintenance, boundary inspections, boundary maintenance, drainage repairs along fence lines to prevent water backup on property, butterfly garden upkeep, and building maintenance.

Night sky application was submitted, and we are awaiting the designation (or denial). We collect the night sky data and submit it to the Globe at Night program and with DarkSky Texas and International Dark Skies division. It is voluntary, not a requirement for the application or designation.

Research consisted of the following:

1) Monthly water quality sampling was conducted at Heinz Branch. Results continue to be within a normal range and are reported to LCRA.
2) A biannual karst invertebrate survey was conducted in Hammetts cave. All species are recorded and monitored by Travis County Natural Resources.
3) Golden-cheeked Warbler weekly surveys were completed in June 2025. This season yielded three territories with one being successful with 4 babies fledged. Three of the males were banded by City of Austin only one of which was re-sighted. In addition, 17 brown-headed cowbirds (5 females and 12 males) were dispatched.
4) Volunteers conducted a bi-weekly Dragonfly watch as part of the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership Citizen Science Program.
5) Weekly to biweekly nest checks were made by Westcave Preserve staff and interns as part of the Cornell Lab Ornithology Citizen Science Program called NestWatch.
6) Westcave Preserve staff and volunteers monitored each bat house at Westcave as part of a Bat Emergence Count. Emergence counts have been a weekly effort with most individuals counted being close to 600 in the mega bat house. The Mexican free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) has been recorded at each bat house. This data is reported to Merlin Tuttle Bat Conservation International.
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