City of Austin
2006 Outreach Program

Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2005-06

City of Austin Water Utility
Wildland Conservation Division
Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Program

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The City of Austin provides outreach to the community for the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve through educational and volunteer activities which, in turn, support management of the lands directly and indirectly. Volunteers provide labor that shortens task time and expertise that enhances staff projects. During their participation, volunteers develop a richer understanding of the BCP and a personal connection to its ongoing management and success. Educational presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations, informational displays at community events and guided hikes for the public are opportunities to provide information to and field questions from citizens. It is believed that better informed recreationists, neighbors, and citizen advocates will respect property boundaries, access rules, and strategies for property management. Though many outreach activities occur on specific tracts and have been mentioned previously in this report, others are conducted offsite or preserve-wide.

Volunteer Activities

The City of Austin BCP program benefited this year from volunteer projects involving 99 individuals and resulting in 1,658 hours of support (see Table 1 below). These projects ranged widely in the amount of expertise and staff involvement that were required. For some projects, staff led large numbers of volunteers in a relatively low skill activity such as removing the invasive tree of heaven at the Emma Long tract. In other projects, staff trained volunteers who then accomplished the tasks independently, such as with the golden-cheeked warbler enumerations that occurred on a number of tracts. In general, projects addressed the needs of the conservation targets by removing threats, restoring habitat, or monitoring their condition, although some projects addressed recreational infrastructure and education. All volunteer efforts increased Austin BCP capacity. The expertise and effort supplied by the volunteers allowed the BCP program to initiate more projects than staff could have done on their own.

Threats removed included both invasive plants and animals. In addition to the tree of heaven project mentioned above, volunteers erected a wild hog exclusion fence to protect an important spring, and built and maintained cowbird traps.

Restoration efforts were also enhanced by volunteer involvement. In addition to shin oak planting and seed collecting, volunteers rehabilitated a decrepit greenhouse on BCP property. This greenhouse is now growing woody plant seedlings that will be used in restoration and education efforts.

Volunteers spent many hours maintaining our public infrastructure and contributing to public education. Over 200 hours were contributed during the trail work days organized by the Bull Creek Foundation. Other volunteers mapped the trails at Bull Creek, providing city staff with the information needed to create a kiosk map.

Monitoring efforts centered on enumerations for the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo, but karst species and plants were also inventoried and monitored. Local cavers have spent a substantial amount of time and effort in stabilizing Blowing Sink cave, contributing 288 hours to that cause.

Table 1: Volunteer Activities

Macrosite	Activity	Date
Lower Bull Creek	Cave Cricket Population Survey	Dec 05
	Erected Feral Hog exclusion fence	Oct 05
	GPS Trails at Bull Creek Preserve	Nov- Dec 05
	Trail Construction and Maintenance	Nov 05 - March 06, Aug-Sept 06
	Removal of Trash	Jan 06
North Lake Austin	Construction of Cowbird Trap(s)	March 06
	Invasive Species Removal	August 06
	Planting of Shin Oak seedlings	Oct 05
South Lake Austin	Erecting Fence to Protect Yucca Flowers from Deer Predation	June 06
	Construction of Cowbird Traps	March 06
	Research Project Involving Deer Predation on Yucca Flowers	March-May 06
Multiple	Monitored for Presence of Golden-cheeked warbler and Black-capped Vireo	March-April 06
	Blowing Sink Cave Stabilization and Monitoring	Throughout year
	Monitored Cowbird Traps	May - June 06
	Construction and Operation of Greenhouse for Growing Restoration Materials	Throughout year
	Inventory and Monitoring of Rare Plants	Feb - March 06
	Inventory and Monitoring of Salamanders	Oct 05

Education

Overall, 1,975 individuals attended activities and learned about the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve program. In addition to several public events, this number includes events for specific audiences such as those that earned an Entry Permit for the Bull Creek Preserve during the golden-cheeked warbler breeding season, fellow City employees and those of local utilities that gain access to BCP lands for infrastructure work, and local partner organizations that support management through volunteering.

Table 2: Education Activities

Macrosite	Audience	Activity	Date
North Lake Austin	Long Canyon residents	Guided hike	Nov 05
Bull Creek	Public	Guided hikes for Bull Creek Preserve Entry Permits during GCWA breeding season	Feb 06
South Lake Austin	Hill Country	Guided hike on Bohls	Feb 06

	Outdoors group		
Offsite	Public	Austin Cave Festival at Western Oaks Karst Preserve	Oct 05
	Save Barton Creek Association and Native Plant Society of Texas – Austin Chapter	Presentations and request for grant partnership to protect population of *Streptanthus bracteatus*	Jan 06, Aug 06
	E-Corps members	Provide orientation to group that will be working on BCP	Jan 06
	Capital Area Master Naturalists	Presentation to training group on urban endangered species	Feb 06
	Capital Area Master Naturalists	Presentation on karst management	Feb 06
	Austin Water Utility employees	Presentation at Informational meetings on City wildlands	Mar/Apr 06
	Public	Display and information at Wildfire Awareness Week	Apr 06
	Public (students)	Model demonstration and information on City wildlands	Apr 06
	Kiwanis Club	Presentation about BCP	Aug 06
	Employees of water and energy utilities	Workshop for infrastructure workers about BCP, oak wilt, and project approval process	Sep 06