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

Biannual Report
October 2022 - March 2023

McGregor Preserve

Multiple site visits were conducted on the McGregor tract after the ice storm in early February 2023 to assess the trails, roads, and fuel breaks. LCRA staff found downed limbs and the need for minor gate repairs. Clean up is beyond what the Natural Resource Conservation (NRC) staff can complete before the breeding season. NRC plans to wait until after the breeding season to clean up the preserve.

Plateau Land and Wildlife Management conducted a deer survey at McGregor Preserve in September 2022. The final report recommended harvesting two to three deer. The estimated density at McGregor is 13.25 acres per deer for an estimated total of 27 deer. LCRA did not attempt to harvest deer at McGregor this past season and instead concentrated efforts on properties with greater densities.

The President of Travis County ESD No. 14/Volente Fire Department discovered a 'homemade' sign with an address number of 13301 on Bullick Hollow Road leading to the McGregor Preserve (see photos below). This address is designated for one of the McGregor tract entrances (also utilized by Travis County) but also is being used to designate a group of three tracts belonging to George Magoon. Travis County Appraisal District (TCAD) shows this address for the Magoon's tract. Travis County ESD suggested a new address assignment for this McGregor tract entrance. Travis County ESD worked with LCRA and the Austin Address Management Office to resolve this issue. After months of research, it was determined that the Magoon's Tract is 13301 Bullick Hollow Road. This LCRA McGregor entrance was assigned with the address of 13301 #2 Bullick Hollow Road as pictured below.









Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

Westcave Preserve staff and volunteer efforts continued to water and fertilize planted trees and gardens throughout the Fall, Winter, and Spring.

The Summer 2022 prescribed burn was completed in our prairie restoration area on October 3, 2022. The fire plan was written by Travis County Parks with the help of several other agencies.

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail maintenance, bird blind maintenance, boundary inspections, boundary maintenance, butterfly garden upkeep, and building maintenance.

Westcave Preserve staff is still collecting data for Night Sky Quality readings. The application for Westcave to become a Dark Sky Park is nearly complete, with only a couple of items missing including data.

Game cameras were installed in the canyon, off trail, to detect the presence/absence of non-native animals. At least ten Sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) were detected.

An aerial feeding station at Leif's Bird Blind was installed. Upgrades were also made to the bird bath systems at each bird blind.

The Bigroot Springparsley (*Cymopterus macrorhizus*) was recently discovered in one area of Westcave's Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) tract by Westcave conservation staff and added to Westcave's flora and fauna database.

Research consisted of the following:

1) Monthly water sampling was conducted to check water quality at Heinz Branch. Results were reported to LCRA.
2) Feederwatch (Cornell Lab or Ornithology Citizen Science Program) has been ongoing since November 2022 for this season. Weekly surveys are conducted by a core group of volunteers.
3) A biannual karst invertebrate survey was conducted in the Heinz cave in partnership with Travis County. All species were recorded and monitored. Target species include the *Texella* and *Tayshaneta* genus species. Of those two target species, nine *Texella* and twelve *Tayshaneta* were recorded. In addition, thirteen other karst invertebrate species were recorded during this survey.
4) Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) surveys are being conducted by Westcave Preserve staff. Preparations such as survey trail trimming and flagging were made prior to the start of the GCWA survey season. The first GCWA heard on property was March 9, 2023. To date, three confirmed individuals were detected on property with one being previously banded named Fluffy with a band combination of (White/Black:Blue/Silver).
5) Volunteers conducted bi-weekly Dragonfly watch as part of the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership Citizen Science Program.
6) Westcave Preserve staff collected population data and trends with Harvester Ants on the preserve on warm days.
7) Weekly to biweekly nest checks were made by Westcave Preserve staff and interns starting in February 2023 as part of the Cornell Lab or Ornithology Citizen Science Program called NestWatch.
8) 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 being 186 in one bat house. The Mexican Free-Tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) has been recorded at each bat house.

Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP)
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Biannual Report
April 2023 – September 2023

McGregor Preserve

No physical work was conducted in the preserve. However, planning for fire breaks and deer harvesting is in progress for fall 2023 and winter 2024.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

Westcave Preserve staff and volunteer continue to water and fertilize planted trees and butterfly gardens.

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail maintenance, bird blind maintenance, boundary inspections, boundary maintenance, water gap repairs, butterfly garden upkeep, and building maintenance.

Westcave Preserve staff is still collecting data for Night Sky Quality readings. The application for Westcave to become a Dark Sky Park has not been submitted.

An injured Mexican Free-tailed bat was found and taken to the Austin Bat Refuge. The bat tested positive for rabies.

LCRA installed a turbidity/temperature antenna on the tower that houses the Motus Wildlife Tracking System antennas above staff offices at Westcave to measure the Pedernales River. The antenna receives a signal from a device at the bridge of the river on the side closest to the preserve.

Research consisted of the following:

1) Monthly water sampling was conducted to check water quality 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.
3) Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) surveys were conducted from March through June 2023. Three unique territories were identified, two of which were successful. A male that was banded in 2022 named Fluff with a band combination of (White/Black:Blue/Silver) returned for the season. Three Brown-headed cowbirds were dispatched during the GCWA season.
4) Volunteers conducted 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 being 200 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) During the month of September, Chimney Swift data was collected. Fifteen were recorded returning to the Chimney Swift tower and the data submitted to eBird.