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

Q1 Report
October - December 2020

McGregor Preserve

Plateau Land and Wildlife Management conducted a white-tailed deer survey of the preserve that revealed the density of white-tailed deer to be approximately 9.94 acres/deer, with a maintenance harvest of 5 to 6 deer per year recommended. Based on these findings, LCRA may concentrate its harvesting efforts this season on other LCRA properties with higher densities and easier access.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

Three workdays were held in October 2020, during which volunteers weeded butterfly gardens, worked on existing trails, and trimmed brush in the parking lot areas. In addition, invasive woody species were removed and treated as part of prairie restoration efforts.

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail work, bird blind maintenance, and supplemental watering for butterfly gardens.

Research consisted of the following:

1. Ongoing, monthly Pond (Dragonfly) Watch (Xerxes Society-Citizen Scientist program) surveys were conducted by a core group of volunteers.
2. Monthly water sampling was conducted to check water quality at the Grotto and at Hammetts Crossing. Results were reported to LCRA.
3. FeederWatch (Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen science program) began in November 2020 and consists of bi-weekly bird surveys conducted by a core group of volunteers.

Westcave held multiple programs during this quarter consisting of two fall bird hikes, a native grass hike, Christmas Bird Count (CBC), and Hamilton Pool Road litter pick up.

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

Q2 Report
January - March 2021

McGregor Preserve

No activity was conducted on the McGregor Preserve during the quarter.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

One workday was held in March 2021, during which volunteers weeded butterfly gardens.

Phase II of an ADA-friendly trail extension was completed to the old cabin in the upland part of the preserve.

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail work, bird blind maintenance, supplemental watering for butterfly gardens, and clearing around the viewing shed.

Research consisted of the following:

1. Ongoing bi-weekly Pond (Dragonfly) Watch (Xerxes Society-Citizen Scientist program) surveys were conducted by a core group of volunteers.
2. Weekly FrogWatch (USA Association of Zoos and Aquarium) surveys began in March 2021.
3. Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) surveys/resighting began in March 2021. The first GCWA of the season was seen on March 5, 2021.
4. Monthly water sampling was conducted to check water quality at the Grotto and at Hammetts Crossing. Results were reported to LCRA.
5. Ongoing FeederWatch (Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen science program) surveys, which began in November 2020 and will continue into April 2021. These bi-weekly surveys are conducted by a core group of volunteers.

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

Q3 Report
April - June 2021

McGregor Preserve

LCRA's McGregor Good Neighbor Program permits expired on May 12, 2021. These permits allow trained residents of the neighboring Comanche Trail Community Association (CTCA) to hike the preserve on designated trails. In April 2021, LCRA updated the language of the required permits and reached out to the CTCA about training. Unfortunately, CTCA was not ready to meet in May as requested. However, LCRA is continuing to work with CTCA to find a date by late summer/early fall to offer the training and issue new permits.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

In 2019, Westcave collaborated with Travis County Natural Resources to conduct the first cave faunal survey since the late 1960's. During the survey certain specimens were collected for identification. In April 2021, the endangered, Bee Creek Cave Harvestman (*Texella reddelli)* was identified from the 2019 collection. A second cave faunal survey was conducted in June of 2021. Westcave erected barricades to lessen the impacts from public tours near the cave. Future protection plans include habitat restoration, research, and monitoring.

Two workdays were held during this quarter. Volunteers weeded butterfly gardens, worked on trails, and trimmed vegetation in parking lot areas.

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail work, bird blind maintenance, boundary inspections, and boundary maintenance.

Research consisted of the following:

1. Ongoing, monthly Pond (Dragonfly) Watch (Xerxes Society-Citizen Scientist program) surveys were conducted by a core group of volunteers.
2. Monthly water sampling was conducted to check water quality at the Grotto and at Hammetts Crossing. Results were reported to LCRA.
3. FeederWatch (Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen science program) began in November 2020 and consists of bi-weekly bird surveys conducted by a core group of volunteers.
4. Nestwatch (Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Citizen science program) weekly surveys conducted by staff conservation employees began in March and ended in late June.
5. Frogwatch (Association of Zoos & Aquariums) which began in April, consists of weekly, ongoing surveys conducted by staff conservation employees and willing volunteers.
6. Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) surveys concluded on June 15. One male GCWA was banded and two banded males from previous seasons returned. Three territories were identified and two of the territories had successful fledglings.
7. Cave faunal surveys were conducted in collaboration with Travis County Natural Resources as mentioned above.

Westcave held multiple programs during this quarter consisting of two plant walks, two bird hikes, and one photography workshop.

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

Q4 Report
July – September 2021

McGregor Preserve

Plateau Land and Wildlife Management conducted white-tailed deer surveys at McGregor to help determine if deer harvesting is needed this hunting season.

LCRA continues to work with the Comanche Trail Community Association (CTCA) to provide training for the McGregor Good Neighbor Program. Once residents interested in hiking the trails are trained, LCRA can issue new and renewed permits.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

One workday was held during this quarter. Volunteers from Concordia University weeded butterfly gardens, and wheel-chair friendly trails. A bird hike was also offered.

Preserve maintenance is on-going and includes trail inspections, trail work, bird blind maintenance, boundary inspections, and boundary maintenance. Leif's Bird Blind pollinator garden is being prepped for planting in the fall.

Research consisted of the following:

1. Ongoing, monthly Pond (Dragonfly) Watch (Xerxes Society-Citizen Scientist program) surveys were conducted by a core group of volunteers.
2. Volunteers conducted a survey of the Chimney Swift tower as part of the Chimney Swift Conservation Association, "A Swift Night Out"
3. Monthly water sampling was conducted to check water quality at the Grotto and at Hammett's Crossing. Results were reported to LCRA.
4. Funds for the MOTUS wildlife tracking station were secured and the location ground-truthed. The tower was attached to the Westcave Headquarters office. The MOTUS Wildlife Tracking System uses "automated telemetry to simultaneously track hundreds of individuals of numerous species of birds, bats and insects." (Source: https://motus.org)
5. Photos were taken throughout the prairie restoration area. Staff established a third 10 square meter 'node' within the prairie to super-seed with native grasses and flowering forbs.

LCRA Transmission Services Corporation (LCRA TSC) Activities

LCRA TSC is planning to storm harden the existing (Marshall Ford to Spicewood to McNeil) 138-kV electric transmission lines in the fall of 2022. These transmission lines run through several BCPs. Geotechnical investigations (soil borings) began in mid-September 2021 in the BCPs after receiving the BCCP Infrastructure Habitat Mitigation Determination and Construction Approval Letter to cover incidental take of endangered species habitat, particularly Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat and karst habitat. LCRA hired an environmental consultant to conduct down-hole camera surveys and presence/absence surveys for endangered karst invertebrates where habitat is found for all borings in karst habitat. Voids are being encountered in the Edward's layer. LCRA TSC worked with Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff and biologists to ensure karst survey requirements and recommendations for drilling in karst habitat are being met. Drilling will continue into late October 2021.