CITY OF AUSTIN
PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM

BALCONES CANYONLANDS PRESERVE ANNUAL REPORT
Fiscal Year 2001–02

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

Prepared by

Melody Lytle M.A., Biologist

Donald L. Koehler, Ph.D., BCP Program Manager

December, 2002

INTRODUCTION

Balcones Canyonlands Preserve staff makes every possible effort to reach the public, the land management community and the educational community in as many forms of outreach as time permits. These activities are considered to be one of the most important obligations to the general public and to the professional community.

OUTREACH TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Volunteer Revegetation and Trail Improvement Efforts

Volunteer projects to restore native vegetation:

- On three Saturdays (11/10/01, 12/1/01, 12/15/01), ninety high-school students, enrolled in the Peer Assistance in Leadership (PAL), planted seedlings at the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve's Franklin tract. These students planted approximately 160 native seedlings (walnuts, oaks, Texas persimmons) and caged them against deer browse. Thank you letters were sent to the principals of the ten participating PAL high-schools. (Project manager: Jackie Davis)

- An Eagle Scout group spent two Saturdays (5/17/02, 5/25/02) caging 660 twist-leaf yuccas. The scout in charge spent several weekends in advance of the workdays to locate and mark twisted-leaf yuccas on two BCP tracts (3M and Reicher Ranch). This project protected the blooms from deer browse in an effort to reinstate its pollinator, the yucca moth. (Project manager: Jackie Davis)

- An Eagle Scout project improved trails and repaired water bars on the Bull Creek Preserve. An eagle scout candidate supervised a crew of ten which repaired 37 water bars. The work project was followed by a staff presentation on the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Program. (Project manager: Mark Sanders)

- Eight volunteers on October 6, 2001, caged young hardwoods on the Coldwater tract to protect the plants from white-tailed deer browse. (Project manager: Carlo Abbruzzese)

Public Hikes Through the Preserve

- May 11, 2002 – BCP staff led a golden-cheek warbler birding trip into the Jester tract. This event was publicized on the City and BCP Announcements web page and in several community calendars and newsletters.

Direct Communication with the Public

- Staff is always available to answer questions about local endangered species, area ecology and the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Program. These questions are answered by phone, by email or in person while in the field.

- The Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo—October 6, 2002 (Carlo Abbruzzese and Willy Conrad)

- The Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve—March 23, 2002 (Mark Sanders)
- The River Place Homeowners Association presentation on "Your Neighbor the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve"— February 2002 (Don Koehler)
- The River Place Garden Club presentation on "Native Plants for Backyards"—March 2002 (Don Koehler)
- The Davenport Homeowner's Association discussion on illegal access to Vireo Preserve, fire hazard plus illegal partying and drinking at the end of Far Gallant Drive—April 2, 2002 (Don Koehler)
- The Jester Estates Homeowner Association discussion concerning Dodgeway vandalism, cooperation and monitoring—May 2, 2002 (Don Koehler)
- Signage is updated continuously. This year, staff continued to replace old telephone numbers with current numbers and placed several new 'No Trespassing' signs.

- **Austin American Statesman Articles**

During this fiscal year, AAS articles have included:

- September 14, 2002— 'Balcones plan gets $10 million lift' This article provided information concerning a federal land acquisition grant
- Corrected information on the BCP was provided to the Austin American Statesman for "The Guide" section.

- **Other Press Releases**
  - BCP staff provided information concerning the move into the Water and Wastewater Utility to Signal Smoke, the Travis Audubon Society newsletter and City of Austin's in-house publications.
  - BCP staff sent a series of press releases to neighborhood newsletters concerning the Bull Creek Preserve Permit class.
- **Television Interviews**
  - January 5, 2002—Melody Lytle was interviewed on local television, KEYE. This interview publicized the Bull Creek Preserve Entry Permit class and the Preserve.
  - January 12, 2002—Melody Lytle was interviewed on local television, KXAN. This interview publicized the Bull Creek Preserve Entry Permit class and the Preserve.
  - May 31, 2002—Local television station KXAN interviewed Don Koehler on the dodgeway vandalism at Jester.
  - August 8, 2002—Local television station KXAN interviewed Don Koehler and Carlo Abbruzzese on West Nile Virus.
  - August 21, 2002—Fox news interviewed Willy Conrad on the transfer into the Water and Wastewater Utility.

- **Print Materials Include:**
  - BCP general information brochure gives an overview of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, its administration and it purpose.
  - BCP Access brochures details which activities are allowed within individual City of Austin BCP tracts. Both brochures are available upon request.
  - BCP staff sends factsheets with information about the Bull Creek Preserve and maps to those who request them.
  - BCP staff reprinted and replaced the graphics in the Goat Cave Karst preserve kiosk.
  - BCP staff supplied Travis County BCP staff with brochures and other items to be distributed at Texas Parks and Wildlife's Expo.
  - Some City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department materials include those BCP tracts which are dedicated parklands.

- **Bull Creek Entry Permit Classes**

BCP staff taught seven sessions of the Bull Creek Entry Permit class with field trips. These sessions were co-taught by teams of two. Class materials included a natural history booklet printed in-house, slides from our collection and several props such as a golden-cheeked warbler nest and a karstic rock. A table of books and tapes was available for students to examine.

The class was publicized using a series of press releases, city BCP web pages and an email distribution list of those requesting information.

Eighty permits were issued to students who completed the class and field trip. These permits were created in-house were mailed. Because this year's publicity fell short of last year, the number of permits issued was lower than the previous season's total of 241.

Email feedback from students has been complimentary and BCP staff frequently encounters permitted hikers displaying their permits on the Bull Creek Preserve.

- **The Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Web Pages**

BCP web pages are updated routinely. The pages now reflect the program's placement in the Water Wastewater Utility. This year, staff added useful links to the Links page, several photos to the Photo Gallery page and improved navigability. These pages have proved to be a cost effective means of public outreach. See

http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/preserves/bcp.htm

OUTREACH TO THE RECREATIONAL COMMUNITY

Willy Conrad is continuing discussions with the mountain biking community concerning biking on the BCP.

OUTREACH TO THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

1. **Southwest Texas State University Graduate Students and Classes.**
    a. The Balcones Canyonlands Preserve staff cooperates with graduate students from Southwest Texas State University geography and biology departments.
        - Four graduate students conducted a vegetation monitoring project on the Bohls tract, during the fall of 2001.
        - One graduate student monitored Jollyville Plateau salamanders during the spring of 2002.
        - A graduate student at Southwest Texas State University continued the creation a multi-species data base for the BCP.

    b. Don Koehler co-teaches Conservation Biology during the spring semester at Southwest Texas State University.
2. **Other Academic Efforts**
    - Alan Graber, a graduate student from Bucknell University, Pennsylvania, is conducting a behavioral study of the golden-cheeked warbler on Fort Hood and the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve.
3. **Texas Academy of Science**
    - In February 2002, Dr. Don Koehler gave a presentation entitled "Overview of Endangered Species and Species of Concern Within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve."
    - On March 1, 2002, Carlo Abbruzzese gave a presentation entitled “Use of Human-created Habitat by Endangered Black-capped Vireos.”
4. **The Master Naturalist Program**
    - On November 3, 2001 and April 27, 2002, Carlo Abbruzzese gave a presentation to the Austin chapter of Capital Area Master Naturalist entitled “Balcones Canyonlands Preserve: Conservation Biology in Suburbia.”
    - On May 4, 2002, Mark Sanders gave a power point presentation and talk to the Capital Area Master Naturalist at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Research Center. The topic, “Past and Present Restoration Projects on the BCP” and emphasized the importance of volunteerism and how Master Naturalists can help restore the Preserve. A request for help resulted in 20 potential volunteers. Carlo Abbruzzese assisted.

OUTREACH TO PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

1. Texas Cave Management Association

- On March 7, 2002, Mark Sanders led a tour of BCP cave properties for the Texas Cave Management Association conference. At Goat Cave, Mark discussed cave gating.

2. Other Agencies

- The BCP digital photo archive now contains several hundred photographs. The BCP Program commonly provides imagery for other agencies requesting materials for Power Point presentations and/or print presentations.
- In connection with the BCP Program transfer between departments, BCP staff made several Power Point presentations to the Water and Wastewater Utility.