



# Canyonlands Crier

Fall 2011

## Refuge News

Hot and dry describe the weather this year. We have had seven inches of rain since January 1 and the 30-year average is between 30-32 inches. We might just tie the drought of record from the 1950s and hottest summer since the 1920s. Tanks or ponds on the refuge are dry with the exception of two at headquarters and one at Doeskin. Doeskin Branch and Post Oak Creek both have water albeit below average. The effects on the habitat are dramatic, with numerous Ashe Juniper dying and even oak trees losing their leaves.

Wildlife is also feeling the effects. Nesting birds found it difficult to find enough plump juicy bugs to feed their nestlings this year. Nestlings receive water in the bugs they are fed. If the parents find more beetle-type insects with less water, the young will suffer. Our deer herd is probably also suffering with fewer fawns surviving. However, our hog trapping efforts are capturing many more hogs than normal, probably due to a lack of food for them too. To date we have trapped over 70 hogs. A drop in the bucket, but many more pigs than we usually trap in a year. Dry weather also damages our roads, as the fines or dust separate from the gravel. Then when it rains, the fines wash away and nothing is there to hold the gravel or aggregate together. We planted native vegetation at headquarters to screen the photo blind from our shop area. Native plants handle drought and heat better than non-natives, but newly transplanted natives need watering. Thankfully Dub and Ruth Lyon have been watering our landscape plants and keeping them alive.

About 350 acres of habitat on the northwest side of refuge were purchased this summer on July 1, from 3 Creeks Ranch for \$1.5 million. This spring we saw and heard both Golden-cheeked Warblers and even saw a Black-capped Vireo on the property. We had planned to purchase a second piece to improve our access to the property with the \$2 million from the LWCF appropriation, but \$1.5 million was cut from our acquisition budget this spring. So we will have to wait until next year.

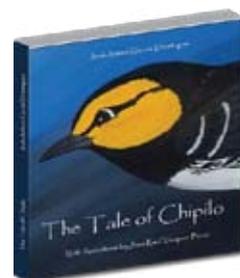
Balcones has some new faces. Nancy Brown is the new Public Outreach Specialist for Texas Refuges. She is a Regional Office employee and will be working on Visitor Services and Outreach efforts for the 21 refuges in Texas. Lucky for us she is based out of the Balcones Canyonlands NWR and loves working with Friends groups and volunteers. Previously she was stationed at the Lower Rio Grande NWR in South Texas. She also worked at Chenier Plains NWR System Complex and the Houston Chamber of Commerce. Jeremy Reichl, our Engineering Equipment Operator, arrived on July 3 from Ohio where he worked for the National Park Service. Jeremy and his family plan to live in refuge housing. Luke Ball, our Engine Boss and Fire Fighter, is resigning in September to take a job with the City of Austin as their Fire Management Officer for their Preserves and Water Quality Protection Lands. Luke was a valued member of our staff for over 10 years. We will miss Luke, but look forward to working with him as a fire cooperater.

Deborah Holle, *Refuge Manager*

## THE TALE OF CHIPILO

*The Tale of Chipilo* is the result of the enthusiasm and initiative of José Arturo García Domínguez and José Raúl Vázquez Pérez. They began developing the story while working on a study of the winter ecology of the Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*) in the Mexican state of Chiapas. With permission from the two authors, the Spanish version of the story has been adapted for English translation by Rebecca Peak and the English translation was donated by Manuela Cerruti, CT.

This story describes the world of migratory birds from a bird's perspective, focusing on the natural history of the Golden-cheeked Warbler. The tale begins when the parents of the main character, Chipilo, meet in Mexico while migrating southward toward their winter homes. They reunite the following spring in the juniper-oak woodlands of Central Texas. Although their first nesting attempt is not successful, Chipilo's parents still have time to build another nest, lay more eggs, and raise young. Chipilo makes lots of friends that summer and has many adventures with them. As autumn approaches, Chipilo and his friends begin their first southbound migration. They explore many stopover areas along the way and learn firsthand about the challenges songbirds face during migration. Once Chipilo reaches his winter home, Coapilla, he meets some resident birds, such as the Resplendent Quetzal, which face the same threats to their existence as Golden-cheeked Warblers. Chipilo has many more exciting adventures during his stay at Coapilla, which includes meeting Dorita, a pretty Golden-cheeked Warbler. "But that my friends, is another story..."



Art by: José Raúl Vázquez Pérez

This spring Pat Merkord (Bluestem Environmental Consultants), Mary Kay Sexton (St. Andrew's Episcopal School), and Rebecca Peak (U.S. Army Garrison-Fort Hood) received a grant administered cooperatively between Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Endangered Species Program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a curriculum to accompany the English version of the story. The curriculum will provide educators in the state of Texas with innovative, relevant, and creative instructional resources to teach required concepts and skills as outlined in "Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for elementary grade levels". Additionally, it will further public awareness about issues involving the protection and conservation of endangered species and their habitats.

Rebecca Peak (*U.S. Army Garrison-Fort Hood*)



# Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge



## Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week!

Saturday October 8, 2011 - 8:30am to 4pm

FREE, fun programs, workshops & nature walks

Edible Native Plants (9-11am) ~ Birding by Ear (8:30-10am)

Walking Stick Walk (11am-12:15 & 2:30-4pm) ~ Nature Walk (2:30-4pm)

Nature Photography Workshop (8:30-10am)

Birds & Butterflies (9-10:30am) ~ Snakes Alive! (12:15-1pm)

Discovering Diversity Hike (9am-noon)

Water Wonders Walk (9-10:30am)

The Spider Walk (11-12:15pm & 2:30-3:45pm)

And more! Look for bizarre water creatures, catch and tag Monarchs (if they are here), watch for migrating hawks and enter the butterfly tent

### For more information

contact Rob Iski at (512)339-9432 x 70 or [rob\\_iski@fws.gov](mailto:rob_iski@fws.gov)

*Large groups are encouraged to pre-register*

*\* Comfortable hiking shoes, water, binoculars and cameras are encouraged*

*\*\* Times & activities subject to change*

**All events are at the Doeskin Ranch.** Directions: From FM 1431 (connecting Marble Falls and Lago Vista), go north on RR 1174 for approximately 5 miles. From Hwy. 29 (connecting Liberty Hill and Burnet), go south on RR 1174 for about 10 miles. Doeskin Ranch is on the east side of the road.

### *The Big Sit! Sunday, October 9th, 2011*

There's no birding event like it. Compete with teams throughout the country to see how many species you can count in a 17-foot diameter circle of your choosing within a 24-hour period – while sitting and relaxing!

The official Balcones Canyonlands NWR circle will be during daylight hours at Doeskin Ranch on October 9th, so drop by and join us when you can for the biggest tailgate party in birding. The simplicity of the concept makes The Big Sit! so appealing. Find a spot, sit in it, have fun.



Laurie Foss at last year's Big Sit!

Visit the *Bird Watcher's Digest* website to see a video about the event and read more about it. The Big Sit!- the most sedentary event in birding. Don't miss it!

### *2011 – The 20<sup>th</sup> Balcones Canyonlands NWR Christmas Bird Count*

Join us on Monday, December 19th, for the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Balcones Christmas Bird Count. The Balcones CBC is a great opportunity for birders to bird areas of the refuge that are not normally open to the public while participating in an international citizen science program that has been going on for 112 years. Everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it for the love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition – and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation. So, if you've participated before, join us again this year. If you haven't participated before, make 2011 the year that you start your Balcones CBC birding tradition. For more information on Christmas Bird Counts in general, go to [www.birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count](http://www.birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count). For more information on the Balcones CBC, go to [balconescbc.org](http://balconescbc.org) or email [balconescbc@gmail.com](mailto:balconescbc@gmail.com).

# 2011-2012 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN TO HELP FUND TWO NEW PROJECTS

## Children's Book and New Kiosk at the Refuge to Benefit from this Year's Donations

Friends of Balcones is pleased to announce its 2011-2012 annual fund raising campaign. The campaign funds the primary mission of the Friends group, namely education and recreation opportunities at the refuge. This year, the campaign will also help fund two exciting, new projects. Friends of Balcones has entered into a collaboration with Bluestem Environmental Consultants and Texas Parks and Wildlife to support the printing and marketing of a children's book about the natural history of the Golden-cheeked Warbler. The primary book audience is elementary school students, with a companion publication offering classroom lessons for teachers to integrate endangered species and related environmental issues into the curriculum, within the objectives outlined in TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) for elementary grade levels. Friends of Balcones is pleased to be part of this partnership to provide teachers with innovative, relevant, and creative instructional resources involving the protection and conservation of endangered species and their habitats. Your gift to this year's campaign will help support this important initiative.

Friends of Balcones is also pleased to announce plans to build a Visitor's Center Kiosk at the refuge headquarters. The kiosk will include a permanent, large map of the public access areas at the refuge, and will allow for dissemination of educational materials, as well as enable the refuge an opportunity to collect visitor information. The Friends group is currently soliciting corporate and foundation partners to help build the kiosk, with plans to have it completed in 2012. Donors who make a gift of \$100 or more to the 2011-2012 Annual Campaign will be listed on a plaque at the kiosk during its inaugural year. An Annual Campaign is the most cost-effective way to raise money for the refuge because there are virtually little to no administrative costs. Members and volunteers will be sending letters, emails, and making phone calls to other friends, members, and volunteers in an effort to raise \$10,000 by December 31, 2011. Make your gift now and support these great, new initiatives. Your gift will not only fund the book project and new kiosk, but ultimately help protect the Golden-cheeked Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo, and restore and preserve their habitat for years to come.

### Make your gift today!

Visit this our website to download a gift form to mail in: [www.balconessongbirdfestival.org/Content/Documents/Document.ashx?DocId=68505](http://www.balconessongbirdfestival.org/Content/Documents/Document.ashx?DocId=68505). For further information, or to discuss your gift, please contact Shelia Hargis, Fundraising Committee Chairperson, Friends of Balcones Canyonlands NWR at 512-294-0272, or email [shelia@friendsofbalcones.org](mailto:shelia@friendsofbalcones.org).



**Liberty Hill 5th Graders** (all 240 of 'em) enjoy a day hiking. The Friends of Balcones support all efforts to include our next generation of birders in becoming nature conservationists.

Photo credit:  
David Maple

# Join Us!

## FRIENDS WANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU!

Social media for nonprofits, ain't optional anymore. They are an integral part of outreach, advocacy, and fundraising, and likely to become more so as technology advances. It's easier than ever to know what's going on within the organization and the Refuge!

### THE QR

A **QR code** (abbreviated from **Quick Response code**) is a specific matrix barcode that is readable by smartphones, and, to a less common extent, computers with webcams. The information encoded in our QR contain links to all our social media presence. You will find this on our printed material.

Now you can choose which media notifies you of upcoming events and news.

**FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGE** – [www.facebook.com/FOBCNWR](http://www.facebook.com/FOBCNWR) - Click the LIKE button and FRIENDS posts will be delivered to your wall.

**TWITTER** – [www.twitter.com/FOBCNWR](http://www.twitter.com/FOBCNWR)  
Follow us! All posts to FB also post to twitter.

**LINKEDIN** – [www.linkedin.com/company/friends-of-balcones-canyonlands-national-wildlife-refuge](http://www.linkedin.com/company/friends-of-balcones-canyonlands-national-wildlife-refuge) - We just started this page so help us build followers!

**RSS** – [www.friendsofbalcones.org](http://www.friendsofbalcones.org)  
You can find RSS badges on our event, news, and blogs pages.

**EMAIL** – [www.friendsofbalcones.org](http://www.friendsofbalcones.org)  
Subscribe to our eblasts on our website too!

**WHY NOT MEMBERSHIP?** – [www.friendsofbalcones.org/joinus](http://www.friendsofbalcones.org/joinus)  
Now that you have decided to be in the know about us and the Refuge, why not join as a member? With all the contacts we currently have, only 107 are memberships. While material benefits of membership are nominal, your contribution is not.

- YOU promote habitat conservation
- YOU support Environmental Education
- YOU create eco-tourism opportunities
- YOU reduce your carbon footprint

Members do have website access to exclusive pages where comments on news, events and blogs are allowed and even own a personal page where you can share photos of your visits to the Refuge. SPARROWFEST offers a reduced rate for members and the membership committee is planning other exclusive opportunities as we grow. You're input to this program would be appreciated! Wanna join a committee? WE NEED YOU and your dues!

## MINUTEMAN PRESS

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*A shout-out to Tess Sherman, Editor - for making it all work in The Canyonlands Crier!*

## For Members and Volunteers Only

### 2nd Annual Nature Day & 2011 Annual Meeting October 23

If you are a Friends member and/or a refuge volunteer, join us on October 23 for a fun-filled day on the refuge. In the morning, you'll be able to participate in either a bird walk, a plant walk, or a hike. Or, if you'd prefer to stay inside where it is cool, you can attend a presentation about the history of the refuge. At lunch time, we'll convene at the Flying X for lunch provided by the

Friends, our annual meeting which will include our Board member election, recognition of refuge volunteers, and an opportunity to mingle and make new friends. Check our website, [www.friendsofbalcones.org](http://www.friendsofbalcones.org), for more details and to register.

Also information on the slate of Board members that you will be voting on is available on our website. And, if you aren't a member yet, it is not too late to join. Join online and then join us on October 23!

**Refuge Week Celebration - October 8**  
**Annual Business Meeting - October 23**



**SparrowFest - January 28, 2012**

**Balcones Songbird Festival - April 27-30, 2012**

*Photo by Jim Baines*



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