

The Watering Hole

The Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy Quarterly Newsletter



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Pausing to appreciate the good

It might appear that all is quiet at Willow Waterhole lately. However, plenty of good is going on—more trails, a sturdy pier, willing volunteers, a family of new ducks (who joined Click-click), and ongoing trash removal.

Plus, if you look carefully, you can see the bluebonnet seedlings getting ready to bloom soon. It may require you to pause and look around you, but good is happening in big and small ways every day at the Waterhole.

Board member profile: Trudy Holmes

Volunteering at Willow Waterhole has been part of Trudy Holmes life for many years before she joined the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy board as the education chair.

As the seventh grade life science teacher at Trafton Academy for 22 years, she would bring her students to volunteer. It was always a toss up as to who enjoyed the outdoor activities the most—the students or Trudy.

Shortly after leaving the school, she received a call from Bill Burhans asking if she would consider joining the board. After thinking about it very briefly, the answer was an enthusiastic “yes,” and the decision has been a blessing in countless ways.

She grew up in Michigan, Virginia, and Pennsylvania before landing in Houston. Trudy finished her college degree in environmental science from the University of Houston.

After working for Brown and Root and in the oil and gas industry, it was time to pause working and raise a family. While in the oil and gas field, she had an early focus on environmental programs.

Mike and Trudy have two children, Daniel and Becky (who lovingly helps with the Willow Waterhole newsletter!)

Aside from the Willow Waterhole activities, Trudy is active with her church (Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist), a private school board (The Branch School), and Houston Cares Animal Rescue.



Trudy and her pups

She loves to exercise and is currently a Jazzercise enthusiast at the Bellaire Rec Center. Although her days seem full, she always makes time to walk their three pups several times a day, rain or shine.

She has been very grateful to be a part of the growth of Willow Waterhole and help to share it with the community.



Trudy and family

Prairie flower gardens: Dormant for the winter yet full of life and ready for the spring

Article by guest writer Hazel Potvin



If you look at the soil real closely, you will see that it is teeming with tiny seedlings. The one that is most recognizable is the palmate (hand-shaped) five leaflet leaf of the state flower of Texas, the bluebonnet.

Despite the deep freeze in December, these plants were untouched by three days of below freezing temperatures. They will stay low to the ground until the weather warms in February, and then they will grow into mounds and produce the lovely blue flowers.

No, a dormant garden is not dead. A lot is going on in the soil with annual seeds sprouting and perennial plants showing a clump of fresh green where their dry dead stems are still standing.

I'll admit--it is hard to visit a garden that is brown and lifeless. It seems dead. What can be found there in January?

Plants have been cut down or dug out. Some plants are still standing but brown. Big clumps of grass remain, and their seeds provide food and shelter. We have seen a bunny ducking into a mass of grass and hoping we won't disturb it further.

I did visit on a warm day and was surprised to see lots of tiny bees. These are native solitary bees, which you would hardly notice. They do not sting. There were some flowers for nectar but I suspect the bees were looking for a tube, like a cut off hollow grass tube, to lay their eggs.

It won't be long before we will be able to delight in flowers blanketing the gardens starting in mid February bringing us to the most wonderful time of the year in Houston.



Bluebonnet seedlings

Considering becoming a member? New membership levels as of January 2023

The Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy just completed a very successful year in both membership growth and fundraising. A record number of 201 individuals made contributions, which were allocated to memberships.

After careful study, we have decided to upgrade the membership levels for 2023. There will be a place for everyone to support the goals for which we are striving.

On January 1, 2023, the Conservancy introduced a new membership category for annual gifts of \$1,000 or more. These members will be considered Patrons. In addition, regular memberships will change from three to four levels.

See the chart below for the new levels.

Recognition of these members and patrons will appear in the quarterly newsletter, The Watering Hole.

You may increase your membership level during the year with multiple donations and thereby be entitled to special benefits where appropriate. These benefits are also included with donations designated for conservation and maintenance, capital improvements or other special projects.

Details for these membership levels are available on our website at www.willowwaterhole.org/support.

We greatly appreciate your support in helping us continue to grow.

New membership levels Based on total annual contributions

Individual Membership	\$50-\$99 (Veteran \$40)
Family Membership	\$100-\$249
Supporting Membership	\$250-\$499
Sustaining Membership	\$500-\$999

New patron designations

Greenway Patron	\$1,000-\$2,499
Conservancy Patron	\$2,500 and greater

Anyone up for some “plogging?”

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines plogging as the act of picking up litter while jogging. First started in Sweden in 2016, the word is a combination of the Swedish term “plocka upp” which means to pick up and “jogga,” to jog.

We have two “plalkers” (walkers) at Willow Waterhole who spend time each week cleaning up their favorite outdoor space. You might have seen Barbara Richards and Trudy Holmes (who we introduced earlier in the newsletter) out early in the morning loading up bags with trash.

This activity is good for your body and the environment around you. The main exercise is aerobic, but there is an anaerobic component in leg bends, squats, lunges, and twists to pick up litter. Additionally, carrying and lifting a loaded bag can build muscles.



Barbara & Trudy

Another incentive aside from it being a good workout, you are keeping your landscape healthy, and you might make people smile when they notice the absence of litter.

So, if you are a plogger, plalker, or pliker (hiker or biker) at the Waterhole, we are very grateful for the love and attention you give to our greenspace.

New name: Dog Lake is now Heron Lake

During the October board meeting for the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy, a motion was made to rename Dog Lake to a bird name to recognize the popularity of birding at the Greenway.

A motion was made at the November meeting to rename to Heron Lake.

Contact us with other creative ideas for the Waterhole!



Blue heron

Support of the Scouts: Eagle Scouts completing projects and Girl Scouts seeding bluebonnets

Last quarter, we were grateful for the support of several Eagle Scouts and a Girl Scout troop.

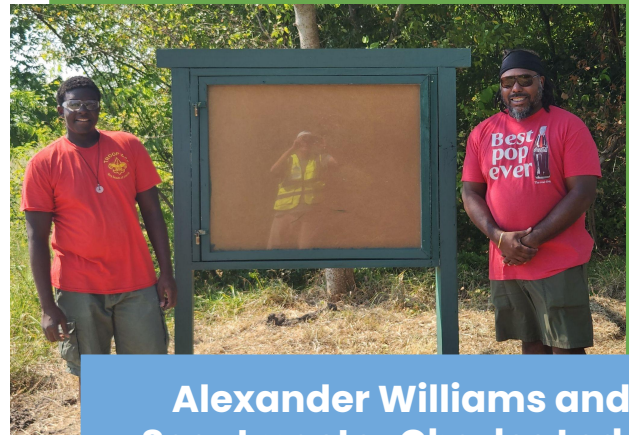
The Eagle Scout projects often include assistance from troop members, friends, and families. See photos they shared.

- **Ethan Lord + Troop 242 at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church:** Built and installed a park sign on Ricecrest.
- **Alexander Williams + Troop 601 at New Faith Bible Church:** Installed an information kiosk at Prairie Lake.
- **Lucas Lopez + Troop 99 at St Thomas More Catholic Church:** Built and installed two photography stands at Triangle Lake.
- **West U Girl Scout Troop 146153:** Distributed bluebonnet seeds at Triangle Lake.

THANK YOU
TO ALL
OUR SCOUT
VOLUNTEERS!



Lucas and Nick Lopez



Alexander Williams and Scoutmaster Charles Ledet



Ethan and Edward Lord

Thanks to our newest Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy members and continuing donors

Thank you to our local community members whose yearly contributions keep Willow Waterhole a beautiful urban greenspace. The list below reflects new members and donors from October 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022.

Individual Members

- Page Hoffer
- Aurora Mancillo
- Michael Holderfield
(Veteran member)

Supporting Members

- Everett Gorel
- Ross and Katy Grogan
- Francisca Leal
- Jonathan and Wendy Magid
- Sharon Neider
- Ben and Susan Perdue
- Frank Rynd
- Shelly Sleep

Conservation updates

October 2022

- **Cross Country events:** The Yes Prep Invitational and Texas Charter School Regional events were held.
- **Beth Yeshuran:** Volunteers planted and performed maintenance on the Arboretum Trail.

November 2022

- **Pier:** Survey was completed, and helical pilings for the lake arrived and were installed.

December 2022

- **Pier:** PermaTrack beams and treads arrived and installation began.
- **Ann Lee owl:** The statue was sanded and protective oil applied.

Blue heron (again!)



Texpedition 2022—Racing around the Waterhole by bike, kayak and foot

On Sunday, December 11, an adventurous group from the Texpedition Society met at Willow Waterhole to take a challenge. This meant racing around the greenspace by bike, kayak, and foot.

The teams consisted of children and adults, and these individuals were determined to win. On the course, they were required to collect information at checkpoints and complete special tasks.

After the rain the prior day, mud was a definite challenge, but nothing stopped these adventurers.

Prizes were awarded to the finishers; however, the thrill of the competition was the best reward. Hopefully, this courageous group will compete here again next year. Thanks for selecting our greenspace for your fun outing.



Adventurers with the Texpedition Society

Thanks to our members whose donations enable groups like Texpedition to enjoy the Waterhole



Getting to know the trees of Willow Waterhole: Wax myrtle (bayberry)

As you are walking along the paths, you have probably noticed the colorful berries on many trees.

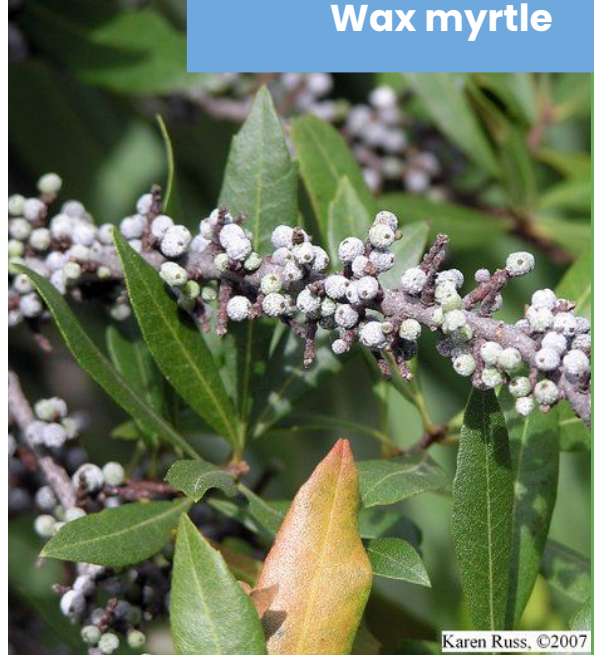
The wax myrtle is a small tree that can grow to 22 feet tall. The leaves are evergreen, simple, alternate, blade narrow, elliptic, one to five inches long, usually less than one-fourth inch wide, and have a bayberry aroma.

It has hard round fruits one-eighth inch in diameter, coated with white wax and are a favorite food of several bird species.

The leaves are used as a spice, similar to bay leaves. The wax of the fruit may be used to make bayberry candles.

Source: *Wildflowers, Trees and Shrubs*, published by Taylor Trade Publishing, p.256

Wax myrtle



Girl Scouts seeding bluebonnets



Birding update: Orange-crowned warbler

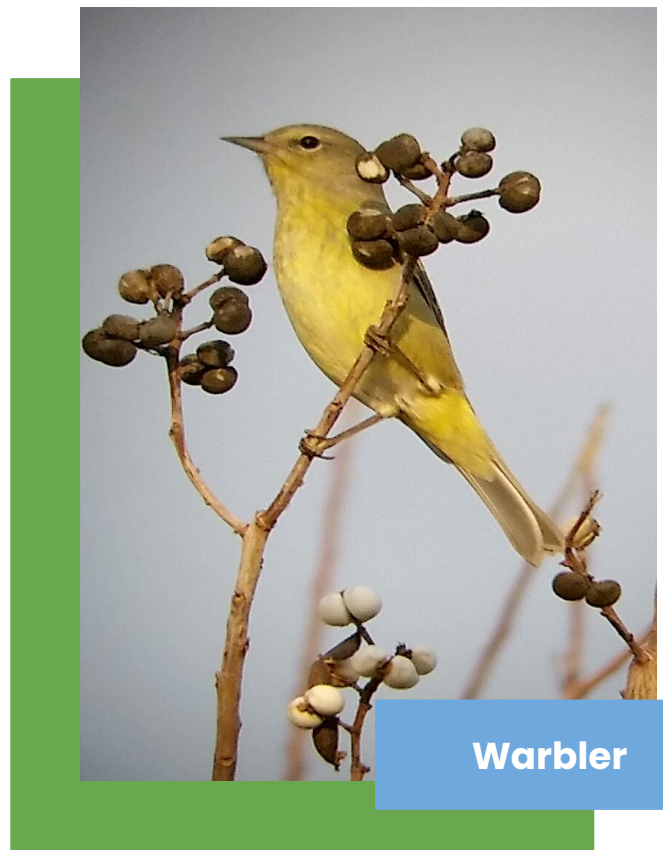
Orange-crowned warbler is a resident at Willow Waterhole during the cooler months from October through March.

They belong to a family of wood-warblers known as Paruliciae whose diet consists of insects, fruit, berries, seeds and are common visitors at the sapwells drilled by sapsuckers and some other woodpeckers. They often give a high, faint contact call while foraging.

The bird has a noticeably thin, sharply pointed bill. It has a thin, faint, dark eye line, a bright yellow eyebrow and a broken eye ring. The undertail feathers are bright yellow and are often the brightest part of the plumage.

Keep your eyes out as it is well camouflaged and usually forages silently and alone.

Source: Houston Audubon Society, [Bird Gallery](#)



BIRD WATCHING REPORT

Join the group at 8:00 a.m. on the 3rd Saturday of each month from November to April and at 7:00 a.m. from May to October in the parking lot of the Gathering Place, 5310 South Willow Drive, 77035.

OCTOBER: Wonderful month of sightings, beginning with a Peregrine Falcon flying overhead.

NOVEMBER: Canceled due to heavy rain.

DECEMBER: No event due to assisting with the Houston Audubon Society coordinating the Houston area bird counts.

Snapshot: Board gathering for pizza and fun

The Willow Waterhole Conservancy Board holds monthly meetings by Zoom, but in December we like to gather at the greenspace in person. This meeting is strictly for fun! We invite family and friends to enjoy pizza, treats, and plenty of good conversation and laughter. All the board members wish the community a happy new year and lots of joy and good times at our favorite waterhole. We look forward to seeing you around soon.



A final word: Send us your photos!



We'd love to feature your photos in The Watering Hole newsletter. Clear, simple snapshots of landscapes, wildlife, and the lakes are ideal. Email photos to volunteer@willowwaterhole.org or tag us on Facebook.

Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy

Park Address:
5300 Dryad Drive, Houston, TX 77035
Email: info@willowwaterhole.org
www.willowwaterhole.org

