

The Watering Hole

The Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy Quarterly Newsletter



IN THIS ISSUE

New grants - 2

2022-23 Board- 3

MusicFest activities- 7

Conservation - 10

Growing our community

We are pleased to announce that the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy has received grant funds from the Wortham and Fondren Foundations.

The funds will further capital project improvements and make the greenspace a destination for our neighbors and residents from throughout the Houston area.

And, don't forget to invite friends and family to MusicFest on October 29, 2022 (rain date: October 30)!

Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy receives grants from The Wortham and Fondren Foundations

Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy (WWGC) received a \$500,000 grant from Wortham Foundation on August 23, 2022, and The Fondren Foundation awarded the Conservancy a \$350,000 grant on September 9, 2022.

As part of a \$12 million capital campaign to improve the 291-acre greenway, the Conservancy has now raised \$10 million from public and private funders.

Willow Waterhole was originally constructed to protect the area from Houston’s flooding. The six lakes (established as detention basins) and large greenspace areas are overseen by the Harris County Flood Control District, Houston Parks & Recreation Department, Brays Oak Management District and Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.

WWGC was established because of the perseverance of local residents to protect the area, and it has been successful due to multiple public and private partnerships. Because of extensive public-private partnerships, improvements have been made to the area since 2003; however, this project will completely transform the area and make it a destination for all Houstonians and visitors to our city.

“We are incredibly grateful to Wortham Foundation and Fondren Foundation trustees for these monumental gifts. The Greenway is a refuge for all Houstonians and their support will help transform the greenspace,” said Bill Burhans, the Conservancy’s president.

For more information, please visit www.willowwaterhole.org or contact Bill Burhans at 713-906-3254.

Funds will primarily help build new trails



Meet the 2022-2023 Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy Board

We want to give a warm welcome to the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy (WWGC) board members who assumed office on August 1, 2022 for the annual term.

President	Bill Burhans
Vice President	Bill King
Treasurer	Valerie Runge
Recording Secretary	Barbara Richards
Corresponding Secretary and Membership Committee	Tony and Donna Robert
Past President and Events Committee Chair	Howard Sacks
Emeritus and Native Prairie Preserve Committee Chair	Russell Schexnayder
Conservation Committee Chair	Brett Byers
Education Committee Chair	Trudy Holmes
Water Resources Committee Chair	Richard and Sarah Ball
Website Committee Chair	Gayle Nesom
Finance Committee Chair	David Naff
Insurance Committee Chair	Becky Edmondson
Westbury Civic Club Representative	Cindy Chapman

Meet the 2022-2023 Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy Advisory Board

We want to give a warm welcome to the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy (WWGC) advisory board members.

Houston Audubon Society	Mary Ann Beauchemin
Westbury High School	Andrew Blanks
Houston District K Council Member Office	DiDi Chavis
Retiree Hermann Park Conservancy	Noreen Hoard
Harris County Flood Control District	Shane Hrobar
WWGC Past President and SW Houston 2000 Board Chairman	Bruce Krewinghaus
Local Graphic Arts Business Owner	Samantha Lona
Precinct 287 Civic Association	Edith Napoleon
Houston Parks Board	Matt Nielsen
Harris County Precinct One	Edidiong Chrys Obot
Levitt Pavilion Houston and Brays Bayou Association	Jeff Peters
Native Prairies Association of Texas	Hazel Potvin
WWGC Past President and Brays Oak Management District	Ralph Rieger
Texas Wildlife Rescue Center	Mary Warwick

Board member profile: Brett Byers

We interviewed Brett for our latest board member profile. Brett shared, “I am a local product, born and raised in southwest Houston, a Boy Scout and a graduate of Trafton Academy.”

He has always enjoyed his time outdoors in the Texas countryside and especially on his grandparent’s ranch near Washington-on-the-Brazos where, as he said, “cattle and grandkids were the priority and where there were always trails to create, signs to mend and wildlife to watch.”

He added, “The Waterhole is a treasure, but its biggest asset is the people behind it who have done an amazing job bringing the park to life and making it truly shine. It is my honor to be a small part of this amazing group of friends.”

Brett and his wife, who graduated from nearby Sharpstown High School, moved to Westbury from inside the Loop about twenty years ago.



Brett Byers

While biking the neighborhood, he discovered a “muddy stretch of land and a bit of a hill” along South Main, which began to transform over his visits there.

He recalled, “One fine day I ran into Mr Bill Burhans and asked him if he’d like some help. Cheerfully telling me that my offer would likely be exploited, we reached an accord and have been happily working together ever since.”

Out and about: New park ranger on duty

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD) initiated regular patrols of the Greenway by park rangers in August 2022 in trucks and on bikes.

This is an important step in the Greenway's evolution to become a HPARD Signature Park. We appreciate the presence of park rangers, Harris County Constables, and the Houston Police Department. We work with all three to improve safety. If you see them, please thank them!



Thank you!

Meet Gerrie and Susan: Walkers extraordinaire around the Willow Waterhole

Many of us love to walk the trails at Willow Waterhole, but it's difficult to find any that enjoy the greenspace for walking as much as Gerrie and Susan.

These two intrepid walkers have been on the trails six days a week since 2018. At first, it might have been a desire to do some bird watching. Then, it met a need to find a place to walk outside their neighborhoods.

Their reason for trekking is common to most of us—"It's peaceful," they said. These ladies love meeting new people and especially their dogs, adding, "We always remember the dog's names."

Foul weather is not a deterrent. There are days they go home a little wet and chilly. Many of their friends think these adventurers are crazy, but Gerrie and Susan love every morning at the Waterhole.

Their joy is infectious.

Since beginning the walks, Susan has rescued a black kitten, now Oreo, that started following them and Gerrie recently adopted Maddy.

Many WW visitors probably saw this cute pup back in July hanging out at Triangle Lake. It took several weeks to catch her, but the pup now sleeps peacefully in the bed of her new mom.

Recently, the turtles at Westbury Lake are the latest interest of these animal lovers. It's difficult to see if a turtle can smile, but when Gerrie and Susan arrive with watermelon and other tasty red fruits, there is always a crowd of grateful recipients.

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Susan, Gerrie, Allison (Gerrie's daughter), and Ozzie



Calling all kids! Join us for new games and activities at MusicFest this October

A special note for our youngest Willow Waterhole supporters:

Dear kids,

Please bring your family and friends to MusicFest at WillowWaterhole on October 29! You can stay from 11:00 am in the morning until 7:00 pm that night.

You can play games and win prizes at each one. There will be Go Fish, golf, bean bag and ring toss, basketball and football throw, pumpkin bowling and so many others.

Wear your costume and join the parade, and you can also play in the haunted bouncy house. Best of all, it is free!

So, ask your favorite adult to bring some chairs and enjoy the music and food trucks, and you can have fun while they listen to their favorite tunes and musicians.

We can't wait to see you there!



**FUN. FREE. COSTUMES.
GAMES. FOOD TRUCKS.
LIVE MUSIC**

MusicFest 2022
October 29, 2022
11:00-7:00 pm



**Spooky football
toss**

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 July 1, 2022 to September 30, 2022

Individual Members	Supporting Members	Sustaining Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cynthia Edmondson• Marsales Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faith Boyce• Cindy Douglas• Betty Espinosa• Donna and Robert Merklein• Matthew Nielson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neely Atkinson• Kelly and Rich Koehler• Martijn Van Aarsen• Nagaraja & Vanaja Shamsundar

Cross country events

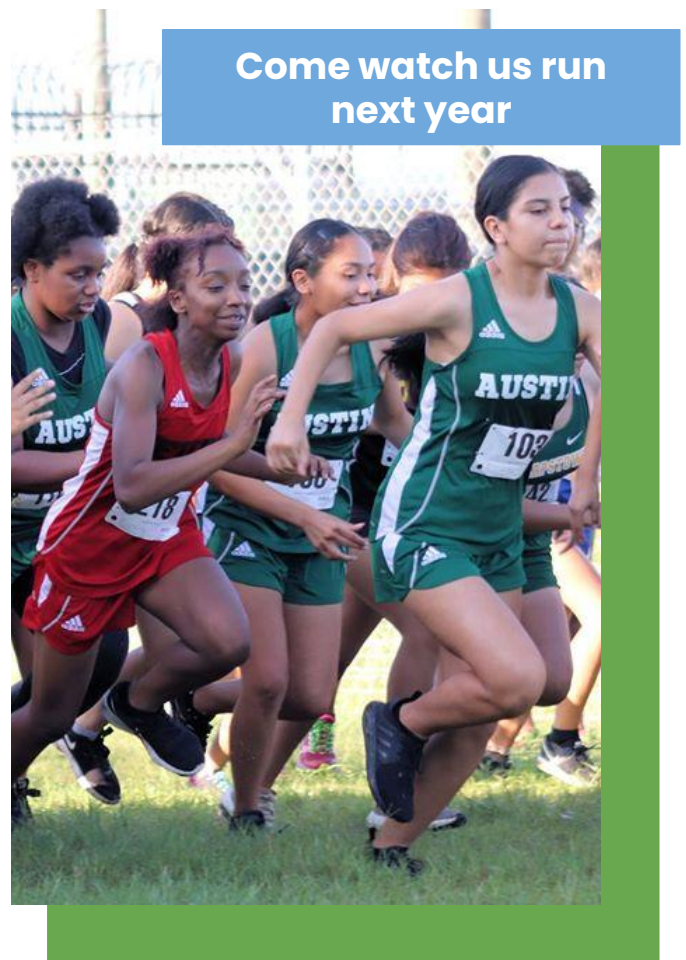
Your membership and donations help fund trail maintenance for Willow Waterhole, which allows us to host cross country meets during the school year.

This fall, we encourage you to attend one of the cross country events at Willow Waterhole. It has become the premier site in Houston for cross country with five annual events and big crowds.

Incarnate Word Academy Invitational, Bellaire High School Invitational, and Westbury High School Invitational were held in August and September.

More than 1,000 runners, coaches, and families attended each event.

YES Prep recently hosted the Houston Charter School Athletic League City Championship on October 8, 2022, and the Texas Charter School Athletic League Regional Championship was held on October 15, 2022.



Getting to know the trees of Willow Waterhole: Mexican sycamore

The Mexican sycamore (*Platanus mexicana*) is a fast growing, drought tolerant tree with smooth white and tan bark and large maple-like leaves with velvety, silver undersides.

The tree typically reaches a mature height of 50 feet in the landscape with a width of about 30 feet. It grows best in full sun.

The lobed leaves are up to 8 inches wide, and olive green, sometimes turning yellow before falling in December. Leaf undersides of mature trees (at least 4 to 6 years old) develop short, dense, whitish hairs which result in a silvery appearance,

Male and female flowers are borne separately on the same plant from December through February and appear as greenish balls hanging from the branches. Aggregate-like fruit about 1 ½ inches in diameter follow in April through August.



Mexican sycamore

Source: University of Florida, IFAS

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Invitation to the Native Plant Prairie Gardens

We invite you to visit the Native Prairie Plant Gardens at 5455 South Willow Drive, Houston 77035 as lots of flowers are making a show.

Yellow is prominent with various goldenrods and the tall Maximilian sunflower. Look for white boneset and white asters. Be sure to find the dainty blue mist flower, usually visited by tiny butterflies.

There are three native grasses: Indian grass, switch grass and little bluestem. You'll see butterflies, bees, and birds in the garden.



Conservation updates

July 2022

- **Annual Conservancy Meeting:** More than 60 people attended the Zoom meeting.

August 2022

- **New bench plate:** Coach Blanks' bench plate was replaced.
- **Flag Pole:** A new base flange was installed.
- **Naturescape area:** The wood sculpture of Buster, the dog, was repaired.

September 2022

- **Water Main on Gasmer:** Main was repaired.
- **Westbury Little League parking lot:** Paul Shaw assisted with repairing potholes.

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Cooper's Hawk

Fall and winter are a wonderful time to see the Cooper's hawk.

Cooper's hawks belong to a family of hawks known as accipiters, whose diet includes amphibians, birds, bugs, fruit, small mammals, and reptiles.

The female is slightly larger and darker than the male with a length of 16.5 inches and a wing span of 28-31 inches.

Annually, four to five eggs are incubated 32-36 days by the female and male. The platform nest is built by the female and the young are fed in the nest 27-34 days by both parents.

Cooper's hawk is named after William Cooper, one of the founders of the New York Academy of Science.

Source: *Birds of Texas Illustrated*, pages 58, 141



Cooper's Hawk

Bird Watching

Join the group at 8 am, the 3rd Saturday of each month, in the parking lot of the Gathering Place, 5310 South Willow Drive, 77035.

Remember to wear sunscreen or protective clothing and you might want to bring some water with you.

Snapshots: Dogs on leash and in strollers

It's difficult to say who loves Willow Waterhole the most, the walkers or the dogs. Our greenspace provides great trails for everyone to enjoy. Please remember to leash your pets. Luna and Rhett love hiking the paths on a leash while Bongo prefers strolling in his carriage. Whatever your preferred mode of transport, on paw or wheels, the rules at WW specify no off-leash walking. Thank you for your cooperation and also for cleaning up after your pet!



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

