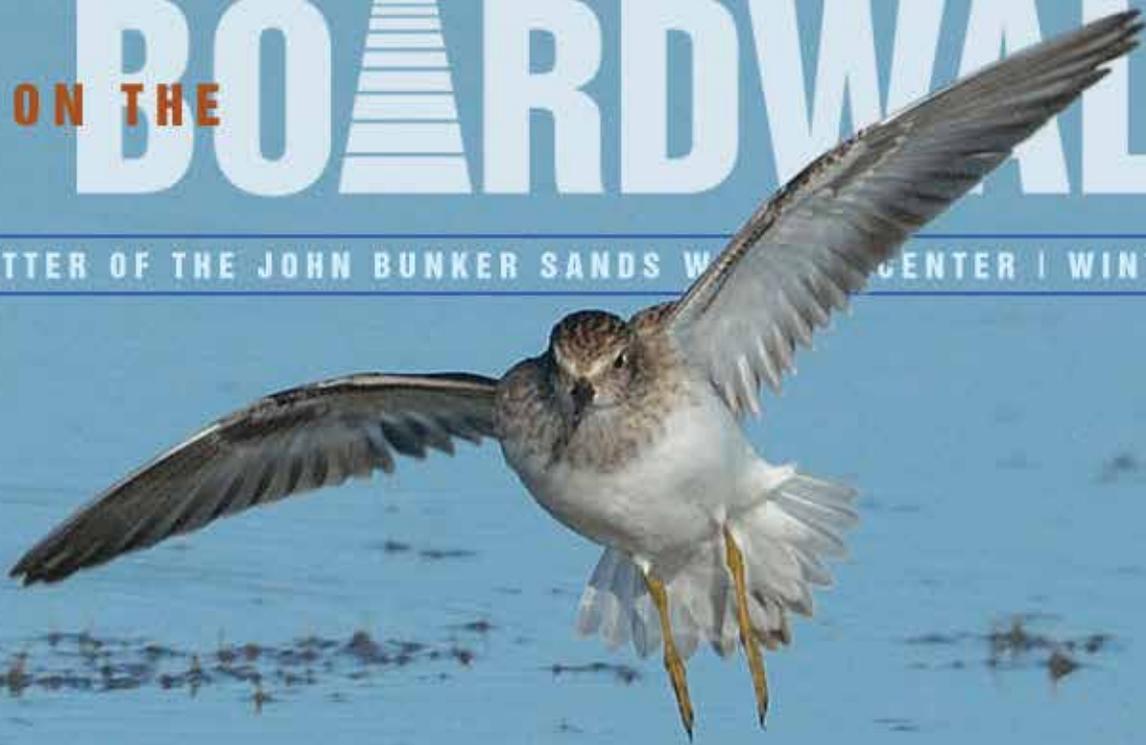


OUT ON THE BOARDWALK

NEWSLETTER OF THE JOHN BUNKER SANDS WILDLIFE CENTER | WINTER 2016



Saturday, Feb. 4, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

We need your help! Free lunch!

Saturday, March 18, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Wildlife in the City

Come and learn about wildlife in urban areas, what to do and whom to contact.
Free with entry fee.

From the Director

By John DeFillipo

Inspiration at the Wetland Center becomes evident in the least likely places but most often with our personal interactions. I visited with a new volunteer recently, and he was excited and passionate about the possibility of volunteering at such an amazing place. "Ducks, sunsets and views forever," he said.

We sat in the rocking chairs on the back porch and discussed what he would like to do and how the wetland project works. Then it dawned on me: He didn't come here to listen to me rattle on – he wanted to explore, experience wildlife and soak in the

surroundings. We finished our conversation as the sun began to sink low into the western horizon, so I sent him out with binoculars in hand to catch the last of the light.

As this young man explored the wetland that evening, it inspired me to rekindle the flame of how deeply this organization has touched my spirit over the years. To see the excitement and the light come on in someone's eyes is powerful motivation to focus on the new horizons at the Wetland Center for years to come.

All the best to you and yours in this holiday season and over the year to come.



*Merry & Happy Christmas
& Holidays.*



ON THE EDUCATION FRONT

By Linda Dunn

We had a busy fall with almost every school day booked! As we plan for the future, we've been looking at the past to help us see which direction we should head. I thought I would share some of our key findings with you:

1. Over the course of five years, 39 independent school districts have had one or more schools visit the Wetland Center. These districts are spread across nine counties, the farthest being Van Zandt.
2. Our Saturday fall visitation in 2016 increased 37 percent compared with the same period the year before. Our increasingly varied offerings are drawing more and more first-timers to visit and become Saturday regulars.

3. We will soon begin the third year of our successful partnership with the Dallas Zoo in hosting the Born & Bred in Texas summer camp. This sleepover expedition gives kids a real chance to immerse themselves in nature and enjoy the fun and responsibility of preparing their own meals.

4. We are also expanding our educational reach to adults. The Center has become one of the main sites for wetland ecology training for the surrounding area Master Naturalist chapters, and the number of colleges booking classes has increased as well.

It's so exciting to look back and see how much we've accomplished since we opened our doors. We're looking forward to a new year and more amazing experiences and growth!



EAGLES ROOST

By John DeFillipo

As cooler weather settled in over North Texas, the nesting behavior of our eagles increased. The walls of the nest have been strengthened, while the center has been lined with soft grasses and feathers. Most of the feathers in the accompanying photo are from recent kill brought back to the nest. If you look closely, you can see remnants of a coot that had been captured and deboned for a meal.

When we observe animals closely, we tend to personify their behavior. In October, for example, we witnessed a small, bleached turtle shell that the female eagle would frequently tuck under her body. Did she consider it a surrogate egg? We don't know, and she's not saying.

Volunteer Tom Fleming recently shared the following insight when he viewed both eagles actively building the nest. "Mom is very territorial about it. Dad can bring sticks to the nest, but watch out if he tries to arrange them or the bedding. It usually guarantees a warning peck to leave it alone. So then the poor guy sits around with his hands in his pockets feeling pretty useless. He usually heads out a couple of minutes after that." A funny observation like Tom's can provide us with unique insights into the eagles' nesting behavior.

If you notice any unique or unusual behavior while you view the Wetland eagles this season, please share the details with us. We would love to hear your insights and to learn more about our eagles.

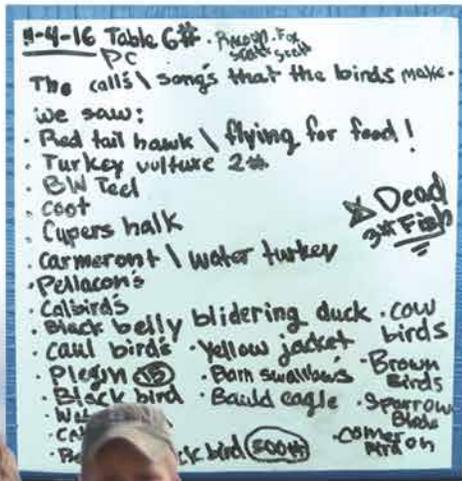
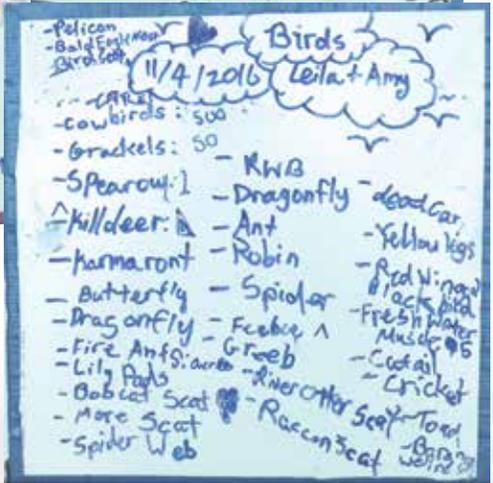
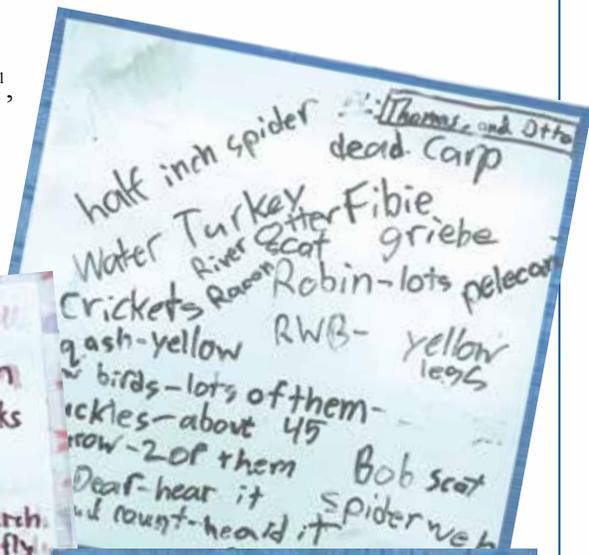


NOTES from the field

By Shannon Love of 4th Graders

encounter a black belly bliding duck¹, a fibie² and a pickle bird³. And here's hoping our birds stay safe from the prowling bob scat⁴.

Enthusiastic young naturalists recently recorded all the sights, sounds and smells they experienced during their wetland exploration. Here is evidence of their sharp observational powers and creative note-taking. Hopefully, on your next visit to JBS, you too will



What we think they meant:

- ¹ Black-bellied whistling duck.
- ² Eastern phoebe.
- ³ A mystery bird.
- ⁴ Bobcat scat.





Sundogs and Us

photo © Echzell Hessen

By Maureen Nitkowski

I had not noticed the phenomenon called sundogs until this past year during my drive to and from work at JBS. My commute takes 35 minutes and carries me through farms and small towns while avoiding the interstate highways. That allows me to look at pleasant scenery rather than a steady diet of traffic and tail lights.

My view also includes clouds and a setting or rising sun – and occasionally a sundog. Sundogs are produced when sunlight is reflected by ice crystals in the atmosphere, resulting in a halo or a false sun sometimes on either side of the real sun. The reflected light shows red closest to the sun and then green and blue farther away. In my limited experience, most sundogs last only for a few minutes.

As we approach the end of another year, sundogs remind me how quickly events happen and that the briefest moments bring joy if only we can see them. Many students and visitors have

passed through the wetland this year. I can only

Sundog Fast Facts

- *Parhelion*, sundogs' scientific name, means “beside the sun” in Greek.
- Sundogs got their name because they follow the sun like a dog follows its master.
- Most common in January, April, August and October, sundogs can occur anytime there are cirrus clouds.
- Sundogs are fairly accurate rain forecasters.
- Moon dogs also appear alongside the moon and are formed by lunar light passing through ice crystals.

From *Live Science* at livescience.com.

recall some of the occasions that made me smile, not because there were so few of them, but because time has moved me to the next moment. As is our custom here at the Center as we close out the year, the staff will have an opportunity to reflect on the joyous moments we've had together. Smile time is good therapy.

Another reminder brought to me by sundogs is that there are clouds for all of us some of the time. Indeed, the transient beauty of a sundog requires the presence of clouds. We have had a few clouds here in the course of the year, but they did not last nor diminish the positive aspects of our programming and the people who make the Center the fabulous destination it has become.

I wish you all sunshine through your clouds and maybe a sundog or two in 2017.



December

Saturday, Dec. 17

Open 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Bunker's Pond Trail Walk
10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Holiday Hours

Open 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Tuesday - Thursday

December 27th, 28th, 29th

January

Saturday, Jan. 7

Open 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Advanced Bird Tour
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Walk & Talk Bird Tour
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Saturday, Jan. 21

Open 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Bunker's Pond Trail Walk
10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

February

Saturday, Feb. 4

Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Open 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Advanced Bird Tour
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Walk & Talk Bird Tour
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Saturday, Feb. 18

Open 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Bunker's Pond Trail Walk
10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

STEWARD SPOTLIGHT

By Linda Dunn

We would like to welcome Tami Kirk to the Steward family! Tami learned of the Steward program from her son-in-law, who was once a Center Steward. After retiring from over 30 years in the mortgage industry, she now has

time to do what she truly loves – be outdoors!

Tami is assisting our staff with school programming during the week. When you watch her, she will remind you of the Energizer Bunny. She's always on her feet, ready to lend a hand wherever needed.

Thank you, Tami, for coming alongside our staff and helping us achieve outstanding education programming for the students and teachers who visit the Center.



Common Mestra © JimWest
Natives of Mexico and Central America, a not so common visitor to this area, where they have been spotted by several observers this year.



Snippets from the Trinity Environmental Academy

By Linda Dunn

Sixth and seventh graders from the Trinity Environmental Academy visited the Wetland Center in November, and we received some awesome thank-you letters from them. We hope you enjoy a few verbatim excerpts from the TRIEA students as much as we did.

“One thing I learned at the wetland center is that it takes a lot of money to do stuff like that. I didn’t know the motors to the water that be pushed back can be so big. One question I didn’t ask was how much horse power do them motors have?” – *Jayden*

“Thanks for having us for a nice fun fieldtrip My favorite part was when we did an experiment. I learned so much form the experiment we did. Thanks for letting us use your materials for the experiment.” – *TRIEA Scholar*

“First of all you guys have a great building I enjoyed walking on the bridge. I was little scared but I got the hang of it. When I was in class I learned there was a second water cycle.” – *Davian*

“One thing caught my eye the most was when I learned that only 3% of the water on earth is fresh water. When I found this out it made me think more about how we as humans take water for granted when we already have so little of it.” – *Miela*

“While I was walking I saw a small tree frog it was a light green and about the same size as my thumb. I also, saw 3 dead fish they were big. I saw these yellow things that looked like lemons, and I saw red things. I can’t describe what they were.” – *ShaCambria*



Mark Your Calendar! Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup Feb. 4.

By Linda Dunn

From the inception of the Wetland Center, it has been our goal to be involved in the community. To that end, we have partnered with Keep Texas Beautiful in the Adopt-a-Highway program each year. We have scheduled our fifth-annual cleanup for Saturday, Feb. 4, from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

We will need two groups to cover the two miles of FM 1389 that we are in charge of. Our span runs from Martin Lane to U.S. Hwy. 175. We will provide all the materials needed, but we need all the help we can get.

We’ll meet at the Center and leave from there. Come help us support the community that has continuously supported us. We’ll provide lunch afterwards to celebrate you and the cleanup!

