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**The Birds of Lady Bird Lake**

**Wood ducks on Waller Creek at the confluence with Lady Bird Lake. Photo & article by Jane Tillman, Travis Audubon Society.**

You are not imagining it if you think there are more ducks and other waterbirds on the lake during the winter. Texas is the winter home for ducks, geese, shorebirds and songbirds that we get to enjoy only for a short period every year. Many ducks like the **Gadwall** and **Lesser Scaup**, which are plentiful now, will be leaving by the end of March to spend the spring and summer up north. Less visible to the casual observer, but occurring on the lake in smaller numbers are ducks like the black and white tiny **Bufflehead** and the aptly named **Redhead**. You can often find them in the quieter waters of Red Bud Isle, although a flock of Bufflehead often cruises Cormorant Alley west of Lou Neff Point. The abundant **Double-crested Cormorant**, an interesting waterbird with a snakelike neck, will also be heading north for the summer. Luckily for us, the striking **Wood Ducks** are permanent residents. The males are now sporting their eye-dazzling breeding plumage and can be seen fairly reliably at Lou Neff Point, Waller Creek and Red Bud Isle. If you have not noticed our wintering **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** on your morning walk, check out **All About Birds**, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website, so that you can get tuned to their call notes before they leave in March. These small birds are all along the Trail, moving through the trees, sometimes at eye level. Watch for the flash of the yellow rump (sometimes called butter butt) on the warbler, and listen for the rapid machine gun fire sound of the active Ruby-crowned Kinglet.
If you would like to learn more about the rich bird life of Lady Bird Lake, you are invited to attend a free talk given by Travis Audubon Society as part of the annual Parks and Recreation Department Celebrate Urban Birds event. Following the talk, participants can go outdoors and conduct a 10 minute bird count.

Saturday, Feb. 16 2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
The Birds of Lady Bird Lake, Cindy Sperry
Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) Black Box Theatre, 600 River Street, 78701

Tribute to a Trail Friend

We were saddened to learn former TTF Board member and longtime Trail lover, William (Bill) Curra passed away this month. Bill was an early and hard-working member of The Trail Foundation board and was instrumental in our preliminary work developing the Boardwalk project. As an engineer, he had uniquely constructive insights into the Trail's issues and how TTF could enhance the Trail. Bill's guidance and professional expertise were also key in several additional Trail projects including the pilot trip-and-fall lights and the Lou Neff Point restoration. Bill was always willing to roll up his sleeves and help the Trail. He was a true friend of the Trail and will be missed by many.

Volunteers Give our Trail some TLC
Asim Dhital (behind tree), Susan Rankin and Laura Hood working in the Q1 Media/Ad Excite adopted garden.

In addition to being a major donor to our Campaign for the Trail, the team from Q1 Media / Ad Excite has lovingly adopted a garden along the Butler Trail. In January, they added compost to their garden in preparation for spring planting.

Esha is on the left with safety glasses and Uma is on the far right. Happy Birthday, girls!

Maulik and Simali Suthar’s twin daughters, Esha and Uma, had a wonderful time mulching at Festival Beach Park. Simali wanted to do a service-oriented birthday party in order to give back to the community in some way. Eighty adults and kids spread 30 cubic yards of mulch. We applaud the creative way this group decided to celebrate and give back at the same time. We hope there was plenty of cake and ice cream after this work day - it was certainly earned!

Building the Boardwalk
Boardwalk construction is underway on both overland and overwater sections according to the City's Project Manager. Over 20 piers have been drilled and poured east of I-35. On land, just east of I-35, stone walls are nearly complete and foundation piers are rising for the access trailhead bridges. Work has also started in the rest area under the east frontage road. Boardwalk project completion is expected in late spring of 2014.

Gotta Go?

As you can see under MoPac, the Johnson Creek Trailhead restroom is taking shape. Peek through the fence and see the plumbing, foundation, and form work for the cast-in-place walls. When the concrete is poured, you will see the
wood grain texture in the cast concrete surface. Studio 8 Architects design includes artisanal concrete created through use of small, tightly spaced boards resulting in an organic layering while maintaining a monolithic appearance....much like the exposed limestone along the creek bed. In other words, the walls will be darn good-looking.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, February 17: Livestrong Marathon and Half Marathon. This is the final hurdle for those entered in the Austin Fit Magazine Distance Challenge. We look forward to celebrating with you at the awards party...good luck everyone!

Saturday, March 2: Join TTF for It's My Park Day from 9 a.m. to noon! We need 50 volunteers to help mulch trees along Longhorn Shores on the east side of the Butler Trail. Please e-mail us if you are interested in volunteering.

Mid-February: Trail Memories; Trail User Input coming just west of Lamar....

Monday/Tuesday, March 4-5: Amplify Austin!

Thursday, June 13: 9th Annual Maudie's Moonlight Margarita Run & Gala! This is one of Austin's hottest parties...literally! Save the date because you won't want to miss out on the race, the music, the margaritas or the fun! Details to come - please e-mail us if you are interested in becoming a sponsor of this Austin tradition. All proceeds benefit TTF.

Amplify Austin!

Amplify Austin is a community-wide day of online philanthropy with the goal of raising $1 million in 24 hours. Beginning at 7 p.m. on March 4 and continuing until 7 p.m. on March 5, Central Texans will be encouraged to hop on www.AmplifyATX.org to make a gift. Details on how to give to TTF will be included in the February e-newsletter.