

RIO BOSQUE NEWS

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

Center for Environmental Resource Management
University of Texas at El Paso



No. 33

October 2009

SUCCESS!

The White-tailed Kites that began nesting at Rio Bosque in February had a spring and summer filled with failed nesting attempts, but they never gave up. In June, the female began sitting on her third nest. As August moved into September, she was still there. We feared the eggs must be infertile, her efforts in vain. We were wrong. On Sept. 16, 2 downy young birds began poking their heads above the rim of the nest! They are now growing rapidly and should fledge in mid-October. ✎

SUCCESSION

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park offers excellent opportunities to learn about the processes that shape ecosystems. Especially evident is ecological succession, the gradual process through which ecosystems change and develop over time.

As they live, grow and reproduce, organisms interact with and affect the environment in an area, gradually changing it. As the conditions change, the existing species may be displaced by a different set of species better adapted to the new conditions.

In 1997, much of the Rio Bosque landscape was disturbed during construction of the wetland project at the site. Large areas were cleared of vegetation



Looking north from near Rio Bosque's visitor center, July 20, 2009.

and set back to an early stage of succession. First to colonize these disturbed areas were opportunistic plants that grow quickly, produce lots of seeds and are especially adept at colonizing open, bare landscapes. Leading the charge was tumbleweed, or Russian thistle.

One such area extends north from the park's visitor center. Largely barren right after construction, it soon became choked each summer with tumbleweeds ...big tumbleweeds. Just a few years ago, volunteers working in this area were



Friends of the Rio Bosque Membership Application

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

- Bosque Buddy (12 and under)\$6
- Student or Senior (62+).....\$10
- Individual\$15
- Family\$20
- Bosque Booster\$50
- Cottonwood Commando\$75-\$249
- Restoration Patron\$250-\$499
- Wetlands Society\$500-\$999
- Life Member\$1,000

Please make checks payable to *Friends of the Rio Bosque* and mail to: Maria Trunk, Treasurer, Friends of the Rio Bosque, 1100 Kelly Way, El Paso, TX 79902.

Next Meetings

Thurs., Oct 22

Thurs., Dec 3

6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

414 Burges Hall
UTEP

Info: 915-747-8663

known to disappear completely in a tumbleweed forest.

With surprising speed, the plant community in this area is now changing. Each year, tumbleweeds are less prominent. They are now a relatively minor species amidst a mix of seepweed, pepperweed, Coulter horseweed, alkali heliotrope, purslane and other species. Scattered young tornillo and seep-willow jut above the surrounding low growth.

Before our eyes, succession is happening here, and it will continue. What will tomorrow bring? Explore this area today, and you'll discover signs of the likely future – many young western honey mesquites – half hidden in the surrounding vegetation. ✂

WE HAVE WATER!

On September 20, the park began receiving water from the Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant, over a month earlier than last year. This fall and winter should be great for water birds at Rio Bosque. As always, thanks go to El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 and El Paso Water Utilities for cooperating to make these deliveries possible. ✂

BREAK-INS CONTINUE

Unfortunately, two nights later, the park's visitor center was the scene of yet another break-in. Thieves used a sledge hammer or other heavy implement to smash a recently installed deadbolt. Once inside, they took most of our tools. We cover most operating expenses at the park through the **Rio Bosque Gift Fund**, which was seriously depleted by the break-ins last spring. Now, we face even greater

costs. We welcome tax-deductible contributions to the Gift Fund. Checks, payable to "UTEP", can be sent to Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, UTEP – CERM, 500 W. University Ave., El Paso, TX 79968-0684. Many thanks for any support you can provide. ✂

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.riobosque.org>

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Want to help us save postage and paper by receiving this newsletter only via e-mail? Let John know.

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RIO BOSQUE CALENDAR

Join us at the park for a free walking tour or to help with habitat management, park maintenance or faunal monitoring. Coming up:

OCTOBER

Sat., Oct 3	Bird Tour	8 a.m.
Sun., Oct 11	Introductory Tour	9 a.m.
Sat., Oct 17	Community Workday	9 a.m.
Sat., Oct 24	Faunal Monitoring	8 a.m.

NOVEMBER

Sat., Nov 7	Bird Tour	8 a.m.
Sun., Nov 15	Introductory Tour	3 p.m.
Sat., Nov 21	Community Workday	9 a.m.

DECEMBER

Sat., Dec 5	Bird Tour	8 a.m.
Sun., Dec 13	Introductory Tour	3 p.m.

Meeting place for all activities is a bridge crossing the Riverside Canal. From I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Dr., turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles to the bridge. Please be prompt.

Return Service Requested

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