

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. 31

April 2009

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Long-time Rio Bosque enthusiasts remember a time when saltcedar dominated the park landscape. Not any more. When the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission built the wetland project at Rio Bosque in 1997, it cleared away large stands of this non-native tree. With the help of many volunteers, we've continued removing saltcedar ever since.

In recent months, many saltcedars have disappeared. Contributors to this effort included students from El Dorado High School, students from Arizona who visited El Paso as part of the Thanksgiving Alive program, Boy Scouts from Troop 192, staff from Magnolia Coca-Cola Bottling Company, and students in the University of Maryland Alternative Spring Break program. Thanks to all!

Of course, the disappearance of saltcedar is not the whole story. The real story is the way tornillo, or screwbean mesquite, is replacing saltcedar as the dominant tree at the park.

The exceptional summer rains in 2006 helped this process along. We were amazed back then to see tornillos germinating in formerly barren areas—so amazed, in fact, that until last fall we missed the bigger picture: Tornillos had germinated in many



White-tailed Kites are nesting this year at Rio Bosque.
Photo: Feb 20, 2009.

well-vegetated areas, too! For 2 years, those young trees stayed below the radar, until they grew large enough to emerge above the surrounding vegetation.

The shift from a landscape dominated by saltcedar to one dominated by tornillo is also changing patterns of wildlife use in the park. For example, there was a time when Harris's Hawks typically nested in saltcedar at Rio Bosque. Although there are still plenty of mature saltcedars available, both Harris's Hawk nests this year are in tornillos. Also, for the first time, we now have a pair of White-tailed Kites nesting at Rio Bosque – in a tornillo, of course! ✈



Friends of the Rio Bosque Membership Application

Name: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Bosque Buddy (12 and under) \$6
Address: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Student or <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (62+) \$10
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$20
E-mail: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Bosque Booster \$50
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Cottonwood Commando \$75-\$249
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Restoration Patron \$250-\$499
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands Society \$500+
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 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., Apr 23
Thurs., May 28
Thurs., June 25
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
414 Burges Hall
UTEP
Info: 915-747-8663

WATER UPDATE

Water deliveries to Rio Bosque ended March 1, and we immediately began making final preparations to put the new water-supply well at the park's inlet into operation. There have been some final challenges, but thanks to help from Western Dewatering, High Desert Native Plants, and Environmental & Safety Solutions, we are nearly ready. Keep an eye on the park's water-delivery channel this summer. At least intermittently, it should be wet. ✂

WALLED OFF / FENCED IN

Work on the Border Wall next to Rio Bosque Wetlands Park was completed at the end of January. To see what it looks like, visit the [border-fence page](#) on our website. Still to come: 21 miles of lights along the river between the old Riverside Dam site and the Fabens Port of Entry, including next to Rio Bosque. At this writing in early April, work on the Wall continues downriver from El Paso. ✂

PARK ACCESS IMPROVED

El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 allows access to Rio Bosque via its road along the Riverside Canal, on the east boundary of the park. In the past, this road has been known to get soft and sandy during the dry season and slick and muddy after a good rain. On your next visit, you'll experience a very different road. As part of the agreement giving the Army Corps of Engineers and its contractor Kiewit New Mexico access on this road for Border Wall construction, Kiewit upgraded the road in March with a new gravel surface. ✂

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.riobosque.org>

John Sproul 915-747-8663 jsproul@utep.edu

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

Printing courtesy of Epson El Paso.

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:

APRIL

Sat., Apr 4	Bird Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., Apr 18	Community Workday	8 a.m.
Sat., Apr 25	Faunal Monitoring	8 a.m.
Sun., Apr 26	Wildflower Tour	4 p.m.

MAY

Sun., May 3	Wildflower Tour	4 p.m.
Sat., May 9	Bird Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., May 16	Community Workday	8 a.m.
Sat., May 23	Faunal Monitoring	8 a.m.

JUNE

Sun., Jun 7	Bird Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., Jun 13	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., Jun 20	Community Workday	8 a.m.
Sat., Jun 27	Faunal Monitoring	8 a.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

Center for Environmental
Resource Management
University of Texas at El Paso
500 West University Ave.
El Paso, TX 79968-0684

