

Rio Bosque News

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

SEPTEMBER 2025

Center for Environmental Resource Management
The University of Texas at El Paso

Water Notes: Flowing Through the Season

Water is essential at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park and every season brings a new story about how it moves, where it comes from, and how it shapes the land. This year, we've had a mix of treated wastewater, irrigation water, and groundwater helping us keep the old river channel and small areas of wetland cells 1 and 2 flooded.

Treated wastewater from the Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant began flowing at 4.25 million gallons per day on April 27. Irrigation water, delivered via the Riverside Canal, was a welcome addition to our water allotment. This year our irrigation season started on June 09 and ended on August 15. Many thanks to the El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 for another successful irrigation season.

As you may know, the park relies heavily on two electric groundwater wells to keep water flowing throughout the old river channel. The park's upstream pump is currently producing ~530 gallons per minute (GPM). Comparatively, the downstream pump located near the visitor center was underperforming with a flow rate of only ~122 GPM in recent months. In response, park staff reached out to our partners at El Paso Water, who promptly sent out a team to assist with the issue. We'd like to extend a big thank you to El Paso Water for their full support. A crew has been actively working on restoring the well over the past month, and we're hopeful the pump will be fully operational again in the coming weeks bringing improved water flow downstream in the old river channel.



Beaver Update



As many of you know, Rio Bosque has had an on-and-off beaver resident for several years. The first sign of our current beaver was documented on January 10, 2019, followed by its first photo caught by a trail camera on January 22. That image included a young Goodding's willow with its lower limbs chewed, clear evidence of beaver activity. This beaver was the first to appear at Rio Bosque since 2010.

We're thrilled to share that the beaver is still present. This summer it has been especially active building and maintaining its most recent dam. The image above, showing the beaver carrying a tree limb, was captured on July 17, 2025, with help from Lois Balin, Urban Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

We look forward to seeing how this industrious resident continues to shape Rio Bosque Wetlands Park!

On the Wing

For many nesting bird species at Rio Bosque, this year has not been kind. Hopes were high in May when both **White-tailed Kites** and **Cooper's Hawks** had active nests at the park. Then, as the weather warmed in June, the birds abandoned both nests. Our hopes were dashed.

The hawks were not alone. **Burrowing Owl** nesting success at the park was again down, as were **Painted Bunting** numbers.

Perhaps most troubling was the absence of **Yellow-billed Cuckoos**, a federally listed threatened species in the West. For 6 years between 2018 and 2023, cuckoos were consistently present at Rio Bosque in summer. Last year, they were detected only briefly in May. This year, they have not been detected at all. That pattern has not been limited to Rio Bosque: There have been no reports of cuckoos submitted to eBird for El Paso County, Texas since 11 June 2024 and no reports for Hudspeth County since 2 June 2024.



Our Summer Intern



We'd like to thank our UTEP IMAGEN intern, **Brenna April**, for her hard work this summer at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park! Over the past few months, Brenna assisted with interpretive park tours, data collection, monthly bird surveys, removal of exotic and invasive plant species, beaver dam management, and trail system maintenance.

In addition, she worked diligently on a project examining the factors that affect pole planting success, presented her research poster at UTEP's COURI Symposium, and won Best Poster Presentation in her category. Thank you for all your hard work, Brenna!

Meet the Staff



Rocio Ronquillo
Groundskeeper II

We're excited to welcome Rocio to the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park team as the new Groundskeeper. Born and raised in the El Paso–Juárez region, Rocio holds a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science from UTEP and brings experience from aquatic ecology research in Alaska to trail work and volunteer coordination with the Student Conservation Association, U.S. Forest Service, and The Frontera Land Alliance.

Here, she continues her commitment to caring for land, water, and wildlife. When she's not rolling around in the mud on the trails, you'll often find her camping, hiking, capturing photos, or even crocheting!





Sergio D. Samaniego
Park Manager

Sergio has been with the Center for Environmental Resource Management at the University of Texas at El Paso since 2020 and serves as the Park Manager at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park. As part of his professional service, Sergio is a member of the Society of Wetland Scientists Human Diversity Committee, acts as the West Texas representative for the Texas Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration, and serves in The Frontera Land Alliance Lands, Water, and Stewardship committee.

His training is in Environmental Science with a concentration in freshwater ecosystems and his interests include deserts, restoration ecology, rotifers, and birds.

Bosque Bulletin Board



Want to help support Rio Bosque?

Make a tax-deductible contribution to the
[Rio Bosque Wetlands Park Gift Fund](#)

Photo Submission Spotlight

If you want your Rio Bosque photo featured in the next issue of our newsletter, please submit it to **Rocio Ronquillo** at rcronquillo2@utep.edu

This issue's cover photo was by **Chuck Johnston**.

Thank you!

New to the Bosque!

When you are at the park, be on the look-out for the Rio Bosque visitor feedback form.

Help us protect the wetlands and improve your experience. Take our quick 2 minute survey during your visit. Your feedback matters!



Rio Bosque September Events Calendar

Sat. 13 Sep. 8 a.m. Birding tour

Sun. 14 Sep. 9 a.m. Cyanotype Workshop
(RSVP Required)

Sat. 20 Sep. 8 a.m. Community Workday

Sun. 21 Sep. 8 a.m. Introductory tour

Wed. 24 Sep. 6:30 p.m. Friends of the Rio Bosque meeting

Sat. 27 Sep. 8:30 a.m. Water's Journey from The Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant to Rio Bosque Wetlands Park **(RSVP Required)**

For More Information

Reach out to Rocio Ronquillo at
915-731-0063 or
rcronquillo2@utep.edu

