



The Warbler

Newsletter of the Pineywoods Sierra Group

August 2006

Pineywoods Sierra Group will meet on Tuesday, August 1 at 7 p.m. at Austin Height Baptist Church, 2806 Appleby Sand Road, Nacogdoches.

This month's program is presented by Dian Avriett, chairwoman of our Pineywoods Sierra Group.

The first part of this month's two-fold program will concern the harvest of freshwater turtles, which has increased dramatically over the past five years. The harvest is driven mainly by the increasing popularity of turtle meat in China. Southeast Asian turtle populations have been decimated by the Chinese turtle meat market. While it is legal to export turtles in the U.S., many biologists feel that turtle populations may not be capable of withstanding high levels of harvest, and localized extinctions may result.

For more information,
<http://www.scwf.org/articles/index.php?view=201>

Also to be discussed is the challenge by Earthjustice and Sierra Club against dangerously weak emissions standards for Plywood and Composite Wood plants at the following facilities: Bon Weir Louisiana-Pacific, Camden Champion International, Corrigan Champion International, Diboll Temple-Inland, New Waverly Louisiana-Pacific, Pine land Temple-Inland.

August Outing

Join Kerry & *Phoebe* on Saturday, July 29th for a not-too-strenuous hike on the Boykin trail from Boykin Springs to a swimming hole on the Neches, and then to Old Aldridge to look for bats.

Meet at the Boykin Springs Recreation area at 9:00 am. Bring a lunch and a swimsuit if you wish to cool off in the Neches.

Directions: Take Hwy 69 to Zavalla, then Hwy 63 east. You will see a sign to the Boykin Springs Recreational Area. Turn south to the recreational area, and meet in the parking area. There will be a small day

use fee. Swimming is also available at Boykin Springs. Call Dian 903-822-3344

for more information. **Please RSVP with Kerry or Dian by Wednesday, July 26th if you plan to attend this outing.**

Paddling The Wild Neches

by Richard Donovan

Book signings

Saturday, August 5th
3:00–6:00 p.m. at Hastings Book Store
4501 North Street, Nacogdoches, Texas
Phone: 936-569-8384

Saturday, August 12
11:00 a.m.
Barnes & Noble Booksellers
4916 South Broadway
Tyler, Texas

If you don't have a copy of Richard's book yet, here's your chance! In this intimate account of his 235 mile journey down the Neches, Donovan interweaves his extensive knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Neches river bottoms with his profound love for this unique and fragile place. Written in an engaging storytelling style and illustrated with beautiful photographs, *Paddling the Wild Neches* is not only the chronicle of one man's river journey, but is an impassioned appeal for preserving the Neches as a Scenic River.

If you can't make the book signing, order a copy from TCONR (www.tconr.org) or direct from Texas A&M University Press. Call 1-800-826-8911 to order, or visit <http://www.tamu.edu/upress/BOOKS/2006/donovan.htm>

Royalties earned from the sale of this book will be donated to The Conservation Fund for the protection of forestland along the Neches River.

**A letter from Michael Banks, Co-Chair,
Friends of the Neches River**

Dear Friends of the Neches River,

What a monumental task you have accomplished!!!!!!
The creation of the Neches River National Wildlife
Refuge has certainly been the talk of Texas this week!
You did a wonderful job of encouraging the signing of
the proposal by Director Dale Hall of the US Fish and
Wildlife Service.

Every letter, email, fax, signature, petition, and
conversation by you and others proved the people of
our great USA and State do have a voice in
determining the outcome of circumstances around us.
This project is an encouragement to others who have
belief in their heart that they do count and can make a
contribution to society.

Our task is not over. We must guard the signed
proposal to make sure the Refuge will be implemented
properly. The most important aspect is to make sure
the US Congress allocates the proper funding to the US
Fish and Wildlife so the Refuge will be created. Your
strength to oversee this happens is very important. Do
not be alarmed, just stay alert.

Our most immediate task is to thank those who listened
to us and helped effect this decision. Please write
another letter. I have been reminded of the parable of
the one leper who came back to give thanks for his
healing. Please call, write, fax, email, or go see and
give thanks for their support to Director Dale Hall,
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, Senator John Cornyn,
Congressman Jeb Hensarling, Congressman Kevin
Brady, Congressman Louie Gohmert, State Senator
Elect Robert Nichols, State Representative Chuck
Hopson, Texas Parks and Wildlife Commissioner John
Parker ,and your local elected officials. This does
nothing but to encourage them to support you on your
next endeavor.

The Refuge was endorsed by the Nacogdoches Daily
Sentinel. Congressman Hensarling wrote to Director
Hall to encourage the acquisition of land for the
Refuge. And there will be others. Landowners in the
Fastrill footprint have expressed personal thanks to the
Friends of the Neches River for your efforts to make
this happen.

We will continue to add to our list who want to support
the Neches River. So let me know of anyone who
would like to receive our information.

While I am at it, we have some financial debt for our
efforts. If you would make a tax deductible
contribution, make it to Texas Committee on Natural
Resources, and send to Friends of the Neches River,
P.O. Box 6295, Tyler, Texas 75701.

Lufkin Paper Mill Permitting Issues

By Walt West

Prior to the last years annual meeting of the ANRA /
Clean Rivers Program

Steering Committee meeting I submitted written
material that included a recommendation for
installation of a continuous monitoring system (DO,
Ph, Conductivity) downstream of Paper Mill Creek in
Rayburn headwaters. The written material included
data and references that justifies the recommendation.
After a brief discussion during the meeting, I was left
with the impression that the recommendation was not
well received and would not be given serious
consideration - based on the limited discussion that
took place during the meeting and the lack of response
to written queries that were addressed to each steering
committee member prior to the meeting date.

The agenda that was recently distributed for this years
steering committee meeting includes a discussion of
continuous monitoring system on the upper reaches of
Rayburn. Today, during a discussion with Matt Romig
(ANRA Clean Rivers Program Coordinator), I was
pleased to learn that TCEQ has given the
recommendation favorable consideration and it is now
included on a short list being considered for approval /
implementation by TCEQ. Even though the Paper Mill
is not in operation the implementation would provide
valuable information and serve to establish a base-line
(or control data set) that will resolve questions
pertaining to the effect of Paper Mill discharges
(should they resume operations) and other upstream
sources of pollution. A discussion of the proposed
monitoring system is included in the agenda for the
7/19/06 meeting of the ANRA steering committee.
You may recall that last year I also made a
recommendation that Abitibi be required to perform
Toxicity Tests at any time their Lufkin Paper Mill
discharges approached permit limits. I believe this
recommendation must also be implemented in order to
protect the Designated Uses of Sam Rayburn reservoir
segments 615 and 610 and their associated recreational
value.

‘It is fortunate, perhaps, that no matter how intently
one studies the hundred little dramas of the woods and
meadows, one can never learn all the salient facts
about any one of them.’ –Aldo Leopold

Texas Lawsuit Includes a Mix of Race and Water by Ralph Blumenthal

New York Times article addresses the issues faced by residents of DeBerry, TX. This article also ran in the Nacogdoches Daily Sentinel.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/09/us/09deberry.html?oref=slogin>

Volunteer Opportunity!

The US Forest Service is tentatively planning a National Public Lands Day at the experimental forest on Saturday Sept. 30th. The work day will include things like maintenance along trails and control of Chinese Tallow and other invasive species.

If you'd like more information about this public volunteer day, please see www.publiclandsday.org.

To volunteer, contact
Ron Thill, Team Leader SRS-4251
U.S. Forest Service, Southern Research Station
Wildlife Habitat & Silviculture Lab
506 Hayter St.
Nacogdoches, TX 75965-3556
Phone: 936-569-7981

BOTTLED WATER: Pouring Resources Down the Drain

By Emily Arnold and Janet Larsen

The global consumption of bottled water reached 154 billion liters (41 billion gallons) in 2004, up 57 percent from the 98 billion liters consumed five years earlier. Even in areas where tap water is safe to drink, demand for bottled water is increasing—producing unnecessary garbage and consuming vast quantities of energy. Although in the industrial world bottled water is often no healthier than tap water, it can cost up to 10,000 times more. At as much as \$2.50 per liter (\$10 per gallon), bottled water costs more than gasoline. See data:

www.earthpolicy.org/Updates/2006/Update51.htm

Italians drink the most bottled water per person, at nearly 184 liters in 2004—more than two glasses a day. Mexico and the United Arab Emirates consume 169 and 164 liters per person. Belgium and France follow close behind, with per capita consumption near 145 liters annually. Spain ranks sixth, at 137 liters each year.

Some of the largest increases in bottled water consumption have occurred in developing countries. Of the top 15 per capita consumers of bottled water,

Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Mexico have the fastest growth rates, with consumption per person increasing by 44–50 percent between 1999 and 2004. While per capita rates in India and China are not as high, total consumption in these populous countries has risen swiftly—tripling in India and more than doubling in China in that five-year period. And there is great potential for further growth. If everyone in China drank 100 8-ounce glasses of bottled water a year (slightly more than one fourth the amount consumed by the average American in 2004), China would go through some 31 billion liters of bottled water, quickly becoming the world's leading consumer.

In contrast to tap water, which is distributed through an energy-efficient infrastructure, transporting bottled water long distances involves burning massive quantities of fossil fuels. Nearly a quarter of all bottled water crosses national borders to reach consumers, transported by boat, train, and truck. In 2004, for example, Nord Water of Finland bottled and shipped 1.4 million bottles of Finnish tap water 4,300 kilometers (2,700 miles) from its bottling plant in Helsinki to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia can afford to import the water it needs, but bottled water is not just sold to water-scarce countries. While some 94 percent of the bottled water sold in the United States is produced domestically, Americans also import water shipped some 9,000 kilometers from Fiji and other faraway places to satisfy the demand for chic and exotic bottled water.

Fossil fuels are also used in the packaging of water. The most commonly used plastic for making water bottles is polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is derived from crude oil. Making bottles to meet Americans' demand for bottled water requires more than 1.5 million barrels of oil annually, enough to fuel some 100,000 U.S. cars for a year. Worldwide, some 2.7 million tons of plastic are used to bottle water each year.

After the water has been consumed, the plastic bottle must be disposed of. According to the Container Recycling Institute, 86 percent of plastic water bottles used in the United States become garbage or litter. Incinerating used bottles produces toxic byproducts such as chlorine gas and ash containing heavy metals. Buried water bottles can take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade. Almost 40 percent of the PET bottles that were deposited for recycling in the United States in 2004 were actually exported, sometimes to as far away as China—adding to the resources used by this product.

In addition to the strains bottled water puts on our ecosystem through its production and transport, the rapid growth in this industry means that water extraction is concentrated in communities where bottling plants are located. For example, water shortages near beverage bottling plants have been reported in Texas and in the Great Lakes region of North America. Farmers, fishers, and others who depend on water for their livelihoods suffer from the concentrated water extraction when water tables drop quickly.

Studies show that consumers associate bottled water with healthy living. But bottled water is not guaranteed to be any healthier than tap water. In fact, roughly 40 percent of bottled water begins as tap water; often the only difference is added minerals that have no marked health benefit. The French Senate even advises people who drink bottled mineral water to change brands frequently because the added minerals are helpful in small amounts but may be dangerous in higher doses.

The French Senate also noted that small, localized problems with tap water can cause a widespread loss of confidence in municipal supplies. In fact, in a number of places, including Europe and the United States, there are more regulations governing the quality of tap water than bottled water. U.S. water quality standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency for tap water, for instance, are more stringent than the Food and Drug Administration's standards for bottled water.

There is no question that clean, affordable drinking water is essential to the health of our global community. But bottled water is not the answer in the developed world, nor does it solve problems for the 1.1 billion people who lack a secure water supply. Improving and expanding existing water treatment and sanitation systems is more likely to provide safe and sustainable sources of water over the long term. In villages, rainwater harvesting and digging new wells can create more affordable sources of water.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goal for environmental sustainability calls for halving the proportion of people lacking sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015. Meeting this goal would require doubling the \$15 billion a year that the world currently spends on water supply and sanitation. While this amount may seem large, it pales in comparison to the estimated \$100 billion spent each year on bottled water.

SAVE STAMPS! If you prefer to receive your Warbler via email, email Vicki at Baggett@awesomenet.net

Global Dimming

By Buckley McInerney

More bad news related to global warming. This was on CNN last month. For many years climatologists have not been able to explain the lack of rainfall in Northern Africa. Well, now we know. It turns out that pollution particles attract water particles which reflect sunlight. This is very disturbing news because nobody had even thought to monitor the amount of sunlight reaching the surface. We are spending huge amounts of money to monitor temperatures and the composition of the atmosphere with satellites and other fancy devices and yet all you have to do to monitor the amount of sunlight reaching the surface is to measure the amount of evaporation over a period of time with a pan of water. It turns out the amount of sunlight reaching the surface varies, but is less than what it used to be. Global dimming, by reflecting sunlight, has dramatically slowed the rate of global warming. They estimated that global warming due to greenhouse gases would have increased the temperature of the planet by 2 1/2 degrees instead of 1 degree. This is not good news because as we reduce our production of greenhouse gases we will also reduce our pollution which will reduce global dimming and we will experience the consequences of the CO2 already in the atmosphere.

Millions of people in Northern Africa are starving to death as a direct consequence of the pollution coming from this country as it passes over the Atlantic preventing evaporation which results in severe droughts. Does this also mean that we are only getting half the vitamin D from the sun that we need?

Editor's note: For more information on global dimming, look at the BBC summary:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/dimming_prog_summary.shtml

New Nuclear Plants Too Risky to Build and Too Costly to Operate

AUSTIN – Environmental groups today decried NRG Energy Inc.'s plans to build two new reactors at its South Texas nuclear plant site. The costs for the reactors are expected to reach \$5 billion and will expose Texans to the risks and radioactive wastes of nuclear power.

Nuclear power is extremely costly and relies on taxpayer subsidies, creates radioactive waste with no long-term disposal solution, and poses security and public health risks.

“Thirty years ago, we were promised that nuclear energy would produce energy ‘too cheap to meter,’ but the costs are still mounting,” said Tom “Smitty” Smith, director of Public Citizen’s Texas office. “Nuclear plants are too costly to build, too risky to operate and the wastes are still too hot to handle.”

The existing Texas reactors built at the site more than twenty years ago cost more than six times the projected estimates and had so many critical flaws that construction was halted and parts of the plant were rebuilt to address serious safety concerns.

Nuclear power continues to be dependent on taxpayer handouts for survival. From 1947 to 1999, the nuclear industry was given more than \$115 billion in direct taxpayer subsidies. The management of nuclear waste and the requirements for reactor decommissioning require billions more in additional funds. In comparison, federal government subsidies for wind and solar power totaled only \$5.7 billion over the same period – 25 times less than nuclear subsidies.

“Radioactive waste generated from nuclear power plants is a threat to public health and requires billions of dollars to manage. Nuclear power also brings with it pollution from uranium mining and the danger of reactor accidents with potentially catastrophic results,” said Donna Hoffman of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. “Do we really want to rely on Homer Simpson technology in making our choices about energy production?”

“Nuclear madness has arisen again, risking our health and safety,” said Karen Hadden, executive director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition. “Radioactive waste can be converted to materials to make nuclear weapons. We should lead by example and not fuel the international weapons race by creating more of it.”

The predicted increase in energy demand can be met more safely and effectively by renewable sources and efficiency measures than through building new nuclear plants.

“Renewable energy and energy efficiency are a viable alternative to nuclear power and conventional fuels, and can meet the country’s energy needs without the burdens of carbon emissions or radioactive waste,” said Luke Metzger of Environment Texas.

The flaws of nuclear power include cost, waste, security, safety, and proliferation. To learn more, visit <http://www.citizen.org/documents/FatalFlawsSummary.pdf>

September Meeting

Join us on September 5th for a program by Debbie Stevens of Keep Nacogdoches Beautiful. Ms. Stevens will address Nacogdoches’ recycling program and other aspects of Keep Nacogdoches Beautiful. Program begins at 7 pm at Austin Heights Baptist Church

Go Ahead, Kill Your Lawn!

How to Convert Grass to Beds

Tired of watering that corner of grass that always dies in the summer heat? Sick of endless summer mowing? Convert your turf to a beautiful drought tolerant shrub bed instead.

Now is the time to take advantage of the heat for solarization, or to get ready to plant for the fall. Here's how:

Measure and mark off the size and location of the new bed. Several methods will work to remove the grass.

Mulching: If you have mostly St. Augustine grass, cover the area with newspaper, and then 6-8" of mulch. Remove the grass or weeds that come up. Adding the mulch will naturally improve your soil without tilling and improve naturally occurring worm aeration.

Chemical: Products like Finale, organic vinegar (available at organic nurseries) or other non-selective weed killers will kill all vegetation. Read labels carefully, and note how soon the area can be replanted. All these products work better in warmer temperatures.

Mechanical: Physically remove all grass and weeds. If Bermudagrass is tilled, unless all the roots are pulled, it will just come back up. Mulch heavily to aid in pulling up remaining grass.

Solarization: Solarization is a popular, non-chemical method that uses the heat of the soil and sun to bake the grass and weeds. To solarize an area, water it well, cover the area with clear thick plastic, and seal it as best as possible around the edges. Metal edging works well for this, then you can use it for your new bed.

Inevitably, more weeds and grass will come back up even after you've tried the above methods, so you'll

have to be prepared to repeat the procedure. The longer you can wait to plant, the better you will have removed all the grass and weeds that would ruin your bed later. Put in your edging, plastic, rock or metal, to keep the grass from encroaching back in. Once you are sure everything is dead, till in weed free landscaping soil mix or compost -- if you have weeds remaining, tilling will expose more seeds and cause them to sprout.

Why add compost? Compost adds nutrients and improves the water holding capacity and drainage of the soil. You will need at least 6 inches of soil to make a shrub bed if using one gallon pots, or enough soil depth to match the root balls of the plants used. Ingredients in a landscaping soil mix such as

decomposed granite and compost added to native soil will break up the hard clay.

Now. Sit back and enjoy less watering and mowing!

Courtesy of Austin Water Utility WaterWise Newsletter

Talent Search! We are now booking programs for 2007---if you have a special topic that you would like addressed, if you know a good speaker, or if you would like to present a program, please contact Vicki at baggett@awesomenet.net or 936/564-0179.

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