



Invasive Brush Removal and Tree Planting Improve Delta Habitats

The Nueces Delta Preserve now has 300 more trees, and an enhanced grassland habitat.

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partnered in a two-part habitat restoration project. The project included a riparian tree planting and treatment of brush that was encroaching grassland habitat. The project developed after observing landscapes that remained untouched by development and had been out of agricultural operations for at least five years.



A truckload of sugar hackberry and anaqua trees await planting.

Those observations revealed a lack of sugar hackberry and anaqua trees from the riparian area along the Nueces River, and an encroachment of mesquite and huisache into the Preserve's grasslands.

"The goal was to reclaim historic grassland habitat as grassland," said Jake Herring, CBBEP's land manager who supervised the project.

In December 2010, crews treated brush throughout 400 acres by mechanically removing the bursh and treating stumps. Then, in a seperate 15-acre riparian zone, 100 hackberry and 200 anaqua trees were planted. The trees, about 1 to 2 years old, will receive some watering and monitoring and should provide substantial nesting and forage habitat in five to seven years, Herring said.

Enhancing grasslands and riparian zones at the Nueces Delta Preserve leads to habitat diversity, one of the key reasons this property was selected by CBBEP for conservation. With habitat diversity comes wildlife diversity.

The grassland provides habitat to birds, like the Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows, reptiles and rodents.

The trees enhance the riparian zone, or the area long the river and Rincon Bayou, as a foraging, nesting, and resting site for wildlife.

"These are all just positive things to do to try to return the habitat of the delta to a more natural state," said Chad Stinson, field coordinator for partners with USFW.

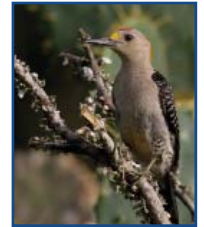
Both CBBEP and USFW enjoy partnership projects, with the cost-sharing, work-sharing and benefit-sharing, Herring and Stinson said.

Future partnerships include a prairie wetland restoration with USFW and Natural Resources Conservation Service, a division of the US Department of Agriculture.

The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring bays and estuaries in the 12-county region of the Texas Coastal Bend. CBBEP is partially funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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Photos: CBBEP/Spiekerman

Birds such as the golden fronted woodpecker, seen above, and the green jay, seen below, will benefit from recent habitat enhancements.



Little trees will soon take root in these holes along the riparian zone.