



The Eddie V. Gray
Wetlands Education
and Recreation Center

Baytown Nature
Center

Highlights:

- **WERC celebrates 20 years!**
- **Full Moon Hike summer schedule**
- **Nurture Nature Series summer topics**
- **Summer Gator Tales returns to WERC**
- **Summer Science Camp**

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Marsh Matters



Volume 20, Issue 2

Summer

Nurture Nature Festival a Success, Despite the Weather

On Saturday, April 14, the Nurture Nature Festival welcomed close to 2,000 visitors to its ninth annual event. Impending cold, rainy weather prompted festival organizers to move the festival to the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education Center, the Baytown Nature Center's sister site, to take advantage of its parking lot and indoor space. Visitors to the festival enjoyed a day full of free activities, entertainment, and education as they learned about wildlife, fishing, birding and kayaking. Crocodile Encounter, Texas Snakes and More, and Friends of Brazoria Refuge were on stage with their educational programs about crocodiles, alligators, turtles, snakes, and



birds of prey. Local businesses and environmental educators were on hand to share some of their wildlife and outdoor knowledge, and Lee College hosted a STEM Zone with lots of activities for kids to enjoy. A rock wall and two outstanding inflatables helped visitors burn off energy, as they made their way to the catfish pond where visitors caught 2-3 lb. catfish. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had game wardens, inland and coastal fisheries, archery and angler education on hand to teach visitors about outdoor opportunities in Texas, and the Watering Hole Golf game taught visitors about the water cycle as they followed their golf ball "water drop" through nine holes, each representing a stop along the water cycle.



The Nurture Nature Festival will return to the Baytown Nature Center next year. Mark your calendars now for April 13, 2019, to enjoy our 10th annual event!

Marsh Minutes



From Tracey Prothro,
Superintendent of Natural Resource Programs

Resiliency. Spirit. Passion. Grit. Each of these words has been mentioned over the past month during events the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education Center and Baytown Nature Center have attended or hosted. Normally at this time of year the weather is warming and we are starting to experience our first taste of the summer heat that will soon arrive. But THIS year, we have battled cold, wind and rain at our spring events. Yet they have all been successful and well attended because it's hard to keep a nature nerd down!

The Texas Parks and Wildlife *Becoming An Outdoor Woman* Conference was held in early April in Granbury. The conference started off warm, but a storm came through Friday evening and left Saturday and Sunday with very cold, very windy weather. Remember the title of the conference... Becoming an OUTDOOR Woman! The cold, wind and rain didn't stop those tough women, who still showed up to my outdoor art class for three and a half hours and for my science of water class, where they were brave enough to sample the waters of the Brazos River in 40° weather.

The following weekend was slated for our annual Nurture Nature Festival at the Baytown Nature Center. However, Mother Nature definitely has a sense of humor, and decided to bless the weekend with more cold, wind and rain. So two days before the event, we decided to move the entire festival to the Wetlands Education Center, where we at least had concrete exhibit space and some indoor facilities. While we didn't have the

attendance we normally have, we still welcomed 52 exhibitors and close to 2,000 visitors who braved the crazy weather to learn about and experience nature education, bird and reptile shows, TPWD activities, Lee College STEM Zone, outdoor recreation and kid games.

The very next weekend the Wetlands Education Center and Baytown Nature Center participated in four outdoor events, including *Fiesta de los Ninos* in San Antonio. Again, Mother Nature decided the weekend was a great time to give us some more unseasonably cold and windy weather. And again, the folks who wanted to get their kids outside didn't let the weather stop them, as they fished in our catfish tank, rode the carnival rides, and danced to fantastic fiesta music in the cold and rain.

Now, I know "cold" in Texas doesn't mean the same as "cold" in states north of us. But for us, wind chills of 35° in late April are unheard of, and definitely not what we are prepared for in this part of the country. And the intent with these paragraphs is not to be whiney or complaining. It's to compliment and admire the tenacity of those folks who were determined not to let cold, wind, or rain stop them from their enjoyment of the great outdoors. Knowing there are so many people out there still interested in learning and enjoying the gifts of nature makes my job, and the Wetlands Center and Nature Center's missions satisfying and worthwhile. I am so glad to be one of the lucky ones who gets to enjoy what they do for a living!

As we complete our spring outreach season with *Mayfest* in Fort Worth, we look forward to moving into our *Wade Into Wetlands Summer Science Camp* season, sponsored for the 20th year by Chevron Phillips. We always say the best two days of our entire year are the first day of camp and the last day of camp! We truly enjoy our

10 weeks of teaching kids about nature though, and look forward to meeting new friends and becoming reacquainted with some of our veteran campers.

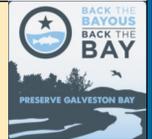
Resilience. Spirit. Passion. Grit. Twenty years of introducing kids and adults alike to the gifts of Mother Nature, in all weather, in all seasons of the year. I look forward to seeing what the next twenty years will hold for our centers!

See you outside (hopefully in warm clear weather!)....

Tracey

"People don't notice whether it's winter or summer when they're happy!" ~ Anton Chekhov

Check out these videos for ways to Back the Bay...



Videos

<https://backthebay.org/videos/>

♦ Colorful Sights

Our bayous and bay are full of colorful sights, trash shouldn't be one of them.

♦ Don't Trash a Good Thing

Runoff of from our bayous flows directly into Galveston Bay. What happens in Houston... ends up in Galveston Bay.

♦ The Big Catch

This catch should be in a trash can, not on your wall. What happens in Houston... ends up in Galveston Bay.

♦ You're more connected to Galveston Bay than you think

For more tips on Galveston Bay, click here.
<https://backthebay.org/tips/>

Wish List

The items on this list will assist with operations or environmental education.*

• Gift certificates to:

- Academy
- Amazon.com
- Hobby Lobby
- Home Depot
- Lowe's
- Office Depot
- Pet Stores
- Wal-Mart

- Aquariums with sliding lids
- Art Supplies
- Cast nets
- Chest waders
- Electric power washer
- Fresh fruits and vegetables (for animals)
- Laser level
- LEGO Building Blocks
- Old costume jewelry/beads

- "Squiggles" (soft plastic bait)
- Stools for Science Lab
- Pelts, skulls, bones and taxidermy mounts
- Work bench
- Camping supplies (Coleman cooking utensils)

* Please contact the Wetlands Center at 281-420-7128 for specific information on donating items from the Wish List.



We thank you for your help.

Thanks to...

Ani-Lati Chapter of the Order of the Arrow...
for your hard work during the Ordeal at **BNC**

Les Bass...
for the donation of a Coleman camping stove to **WERC**

Baytown Parks and Recreation and Baytown Police...
for help at Nurture Nature Festival

Baytown Photo Club members David Cornell and Janet Albright...
for taking photos during River, Lakes, Bays 'N Bayous Trash Bash®

ExxonMobil...
for a \$12,500 donation to **WERC** for the Wetlands Ecology program and \$12,500 to **BNC**

ExxonMobil Volunteers...
for help at Nurture Nature Festival

Harris County Transit Authority...
for shuttle bus service during Nurture Nature Festival

Timothy Nagle...
for the donation of a bearded dragon, terrarium, bowls, food and heat lamp to **WERC**.

Nurture Nature Festival volunteers...
for your invaluable help

Raven Chapter of the Order of the Arrow...
for your hard work during the Ordeal at **BNC**

Daniel Raymundo and students...
for cooking lunch at Trash Bash and Nurture Nature Festival @**BNC**

BNC=Baytown Nature Center
WERC= The Wetlands Center



Calendar of Events



June

- 2 National Trail Day
- 2 Nurture Nature Series, "Guided Hike" 10:00 am, **BNC** (pg 6)
- 4 Summer Science Camps begin, **WERC/BNC**
- 6 Gator Tales begins, 10:00 am, **WERC**
- 30 Full Moon Hike, 8:00 pm, **BNC** (pg 7)

July

- 4 4th of July holiday, **WERC** closed
- 7 Nurture Nature Series, "Kayaking" 10:00 am, **BNC** (pg 6)
- 14 Galveston Bay Foundation Rain Barrel Workshop, **WERC**
- 28 Full Moon Hike, 8:30 pm, **BNC** (pg 7)

August

- 4 Nurture Nature Series, "Bike Rodeo" 10:00 am, **BNC** (pg 6)
- 17 Summer Science Camps end
- 25 Full Moon Hike, 7:30 pm, **BNC** (pg 7)
- 25 20th Anniversary Open House **WERC**, Noon-4 pm **
- 29 Gator Tales ends, 10:00 am, **WERC**

**This event has been changed from May 19



Wetlands Center Happenings

News From the Education Department

by Jina Faith-McAnally, Education Coordinator



Mission Statement:

The Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education and Recreation Center is dedicated to increasing awareness, understanding and appreciation of wetlands, the environment, and cultural history through environmental education and environmental recreation.



We all live on this planet together with people and animals. We have the power to make good

decisions for ourselves and our home, planet Earth.

Learn the Issues!

There are numerous threats impacting the planet. Many people are unaware that balloon pollution is a growing problem with deadly consequences. This litter is totally preventable yet millions of balloons are intentionally released every year. What happens to these balloons once they are released, and where do they go?

Learn the issues here:
<https://balloonsblow.org/education/>

Also visit their new site:
PlasticBites.org



The education staff celebrated the beginning of spring with our week long *Spring Into Nature Spring Break Camp: Green Planet*. Campers visited the Waste Management Recycling Center, Green Building Resource Center, Seeding Galveston Community Garden, and WaterWorks Education Center as they explored topics such as recycling, renewable energy, sustainable harvesting, and water quality. When we weren't learning about ways to help keep our planet Green, we spent our time outside enjoying nature. Campers visited parks like Discovery Green,



Spring Break campers doing their "seining" dance at BNC



Campers feeding a goat at the Seeding Galveston Community Garden

Tom Bass Park, Buffalo Bayou Park, and of course the Baytown Nature Center. Our camps wouldn't be complete without animal encounters, especially the American Alligator. We had so much fun we can't wait for summer camp to start!

As the school year comes to a close, field trips to the Wetlands Center become more popular. In addition to our Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District (GCCISD) field trips, we have had students from schools in Houston, Barbers Hill and Liberty. It has been exciting teaching our future stewards as they participate in hands-on field activities.

Speaking of field activities, the Wetlands Education Center and Baytown Nature Center are future testing sites for Texas Stream Team, organized by HGAC and Galveston Bay Foundation. Naturalist, Crissy Butcher and Education Specialist, Jina Faith will conduct monthly water quality tests to help monitor the health of our wetlands ecosystem.

Our Newest Wetlands Ambassador!

It is with big smiles and happy hearts that we congratulate Education Intern Berenice Rodriguez on the birth of her son Santiago Espinoza on March 15, 2018. He weighed in at 9lbs 0oz and measured 21 inches long. We can't wait to spoil him and teach him everything we know!



More Happenings

Wetlands Wagon Outreach Programs

Spring outreach events always take us on a wild ride and this year did not disappoint. It has been rewarding promoting wetlands conservation as we travel around Baytown and other parts of the state. We love supporting local schools, organizations and Texas Parks and Wildlife during outreaches to get our message heard. Here is a list of where we've been:

- **Family Science Nights** at eight elementary schools, plus *Career Night* at GCCISD
- **Wetlands Wagon Outreach Programs** at seven elementary schools, a *Texas Cultural Day*, *Area 5 Mini-CAST Conference* and *STEM Day* and *Career Madness* at Lee College
- **Festivals/events** at 13 locations, including the *HERPS Reptile Show* in Conroe, *Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo*, *Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center's Nature Fest*, *Trash Bash* and *Nurture Nature Festival* at BNC, *Woodland and Wildlife Festival* at Lone Star College, *Fiesta de Los Ninos* in San Antonio, *Mont Belvieu's Spring Celebration*, *Harris County's Earth Day*, *Galveston Bay Foundation's Bay Day*, *Mayfest* in Ft. Worth, *Baytown Rotary's Shrimp and Catfish Festival* and the *WaterWorks Festival* in Houston.



Coming This Summer

Wade into Wetlands Summer Science Camp is just around the corner. The Wetlands Center education staff is working hard to bring new, exciting experiences to your kids during the 10 weeks of camp. All Wetlands Center camps are Monday-Friday from 8am-4pm and cost \$150. Registration began February 28, 2018 and camps are filling fast. New to the Wetlands Center camp roster are: "Music Makers" and "Egg-straordinary" for 1st-3rd graders, and "Do You Believe in Magic?" for 4th-6th graders. Be sure to check out the half day and evening camps offered at the Baytown Nature Center, too (page 7).

Summer Gator Tales

for pre-school children and parents

Wednesdays 10:00—11:00 am

The Wetlands Education Center

1724 Market Street

Baytown, TX 77520

281-420-7128

Water, Water Everywhere

June 6: What is Water?

June 13: Water Flow

June 20: Evaporation and Absorption

June 27: Sink or Float

Wetland Animals

July 4: NO Gator Tales

July 11: Blue Crabs

July 18: Alligators

July 25: SSSSnakes

August 1: Turtles and Frogs

Wonderful World of Insects

August 8: From Caterpillar to Butterfly

August 15: Insect Communication

August 22: Investigating Ants

August 29: Is a Spider an Insect?



Naturally Speaking

by Christina Butcher, Naturalist

Spring is a busy time at the nature center. We finished another successful school year of the *Back to the Bay Field Biology Program*. Over 500 Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District students participated to study our brackish bay ecosystem. They learned to assess a habitat, collect and identify marine organisms and observe human impact on the environment.

This spring Chevron Phillips and Covestro sponsored the Baytown Nature Center site for the 25th annual River, Lakes, Bays 'N Bayous Trash Bash®. Even though the weather was gloomy, over 90 volunteers attended to clean up marine debris that had washed up along the shore line. Throughout the 14 area-wide sites 52 TONS of debris were collected, with 1.5 tons of that being recycled!

Nurture Nature Festival was a little different this year. In spite of the gusty winds and light rain, we held the festival at the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education Center. Guests had a great time with the Lee College STEM Zone, Texas Parks and Wildlife *Life is Better Outside* experience, and many other exhibitors. Participants painted rain barrels, learned about Wood Apes, and played with recyclable materials. Crocodile Encounter, Texas Snakes and More, and Birds of Prey entertained audiences with their educational stage shows.

Another semester of *Tyke Hike* is over. Tykes had fun learning about snakes, butterflies, recycling and fish. More nature fun awaits pre-schoolers at *Gator Tales* on Wednesday mornings this summer beginning June 6 at the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education Center. See page five for details.

This spring staff was busy with scout workshops helping several troops and packs earn badges for Hiking, Habitats, and Insects. Did you know we also teach American Heritage Girls workshops? We love scouting in all forms at BNC and would love to help your scouts!



Coming This Summer

The carefree days of summer are nearly here.

Crawfish boils, BBQ, picnic lunches, swimming and ice cream; however you spend your free time be sure to do it outside! We have many opportunities for you to unwind and enjoy nature:

◆ Nurture Nature Series

The popular program is from 10 am-12noon on the first Saturday of each month, except April, when the nature center hosts its Nurture Nature Festival. The family-friendly offerings with hands-on-topics are free with regular admission. Enjoy a fun, educational morning; then stay to picnic, bird, hike, fish or just relax - a great way to spend a morning.

Summer topics:

- Saturday, June 2: "Guided Hike"
Learn about the nature center's history and its current inhabitants.
- Saturday, July 7: "Kayaking"
Do you want to kayak, but don't know how or what equipment you need? Join us and Southwest Paddle Sports for a nice morning on the water.
- Saturday, August 4: "Bicycle Rodeo"
Bring the kids and their bikes to go through different stations learning about bicycle safety, maintenance, and even ride through an obstacle course!

◆ Full Moon Hike



Join us each month on the Saturday closest to the full moon to explore a different section of the nature center in hopes of seeing nocturnal animals. All sorts of things have been spotted - no lions, tigers, or bears, but definitely raccoons, opossums, coyotes, owls, fireflies and even flying squirrels!

The monthly 90 minute hikes begin just after sunset. Hikers are asked to wear comfortable clothing. **Small children should not attend since hikers have a better chance of viewing nocturnal animals in a relatively quiet at-**

Audubon Bird Survey



What: Houston Audubon Bird Survey
When: Third Thursday, September - May; 8 am
Where: Meet at BNC Visitors Center
Leaders: Jan & David Hanson



No bird surveys during the months of June-August



Scout Corner



Ani-Lati Order of the Arrow Ordeal
Raven Chapter Order of the Arrow Ordeal
Pack 64 Webelos earned the Webelos into the Wild badge.
Pack 105 Cub Scouts went on a guided hike.
Pack 64 Bears earned Fur, Feathers, and Ferns badge.

Contact Crissy Butcher at 281-420-7130 or Christina.Butcher@baytown.org for more information on badge workshops and rank advancements.

mosphere. Routes and start times vary monthly. Meet at the Visitor's Center unless otherwise stated. Hikes are weather permitting and free with general admission to the nature center.

Summer hikes:

- Saturday, June 30, 8:00 pm
- Saturday, July 28, 8:30 pm
- Saturday, August 25, 7:30 pm

♦ **Geocaching**

Using GPS coordinates posted on a website, embark on an exciting treasure hunt. Many geocaches are hidden throughout the nature center, so get searching with this great family adventure!

♦ **Fishing**

Looking for a good fishing spot? It's easy at the nature center with four piers and numerous bank spots. Just ask some of the regular fishermen. It's also a great way to hear some of the best fishing stories.

♦ **Summer Science Camp**

Do you have kids who may not be ready for all day camp or prefer evening activities? Check out our summer camps! The nature center is hosting half-day morning camps from 8 am-noon and evening camps 6-10 pm. Spaces are still available for each camp. The cost is only \$75 a week.

Grades 1-3 (in the fall) Morning camp

- **June 11-15 Get Buggy**
Campers explore the wonderful world of insects. Spend the week collecting and identifying the nature center's smallest inhabitants.
- **June 25-29 Young Naturalists**
Campers get an inside view of what a naturalist does. They learn to identify insects, birds, fish and plants while learning about our environment.
- **July 16-20 I Spy**
Campers have a fun filled week of treasure hunting and scavenger hunts with an environmental twist!

Grades 4-6 (in the fall) Evening camp

- **June 18-22 Wilderness Survival**
Campers learn basic first aid, how to safely build a fire, reclaim drinking water and build a shelter.

Grades 7-10 (in the fall) Evening camp

- **June 4-8 The Amazing Race**
Campers race around the nature center completing fun challenges while learning about environmental issues facing our world. Hopefully there won't be too many detours or road blocks!

Flyers and registration forms may be picked up at the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education Center.



 Find us on
Facebook
[The Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education and Recreation Center](#)
[The Baytown Nature Center](#)

Baytown Nature Center
 6213 Bayway Drive
 281-424-9198



Hours:

Open - 30 minutes before sunrise
 Close - 30 minutes after sunset
 Daily except Thanksgiving & Christmas Day

Admission:

Daily Pass: Adults (13+) - \$4
 Children (5-12) & Seniors (65+) - \$1
 Annual Pass: Individual - \$30
 Family - \$65 (up to 6 people)

Staff:

Superintendent of Natural Resource Programs:
 Tracey Prothro
 Naturalist: Christina Butcher
 Interns: Holly Hollingshead, Jaden Houseman, Mike Jaschek, Emily Kinney
 Gate Attendants: Virginia Compton, Luz Delgado, Josefina Gracian, Merce Saldana and Rachel Turner

Friends of the Baytown Nature Center

Membership Dues for the Year 2018: Date: _____

Individual: \$30 ___ Family: \$65 ___ Sponsor: \$100 ___

Name: _____ New Member: _____

Address: _____ or Renewal: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-Mail: _____

I prefer to make a tax deductible contribution to support your work: \$ _____

Please email Friends meeting notices/minutes. Yes/No (circle)

Make checks to: **Friends of the Baytown Nature Center**
 P.O. Box 8177
 Baytown, TX 77522

Your membership dues and contributions are tax deductible.

**THE EDDIE V. GRAY
WETLANDS EDUCATION
AND RECREATION
CENTER**

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We're on the web!
www.baytown.org

Marsh Matters

Marsh Matters is a quarterly publication of the Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Education and Recreation Center and the Baytown Nature Center in Baytown, Texas. The goal of this newsletter is to educate local residents and visitors about the importance of wetlands and to inform citizens of upcoming activities and events. Another purpose is to remind Baytown residents of their rich environmental heritage. The town is flanked by six bays, and is within easy reach of many more. It is also home to several bayous and creeks. The Wetlands Center and Nature Center aim to encourage citizens to get out and learn more about the world at their doorstep.

1724 Market Street
Baytown, TX 77520

**Prsrt Std
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 184
Webster, TX**

Join "Friends of the Wetlands Center"

Enclosed is my membership fee.

\$10 Junior \$50 Family \$25 Individual \$100 Friend

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

My employer, _____ provides matching gifts.

I have enclosed a matching gift form. I need assistance with form.

(ExxonMobil employees or retirees need to contact the Wetlands Center for further information regarding a matching gift.)

Also enclosed is an additional donation of \$____. Please sign me up as a:

Supporter (\$1-\$99) Associate (\$100-\$499) Patron (\$500-\$999) Benefactor (\$1,000+)

May we list your name in our next issue of *Marsh Matters*? Yes No

I am interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities.

Membership dues and donations are tax-deductible. Make checks payable to "Friends of the Wetlands Center" and mail to: The Wetlands Center, 1724 Market St. Baytown, TX 77520

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