

RIO BOSQUE NEWS

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

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



No. 62

October 2017

WET LANDS

Just a few years ago, Rio Bosque Wetlands Park consistently lacked water during the growing season. Now, we are in our 4th year with water from 2 electric-powered wells and 2 windmills, our 3rd year with water from a pipeline from the Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant, and our 1st year with deliveries of Rio Grande Project irrigation water. Thanks go to our partners, especially El Paso Water and El Paso County Water Improvement District #1, for making this transformation possible.

This year has been eventful. Wetland and riparian habitats continue to develop. Above-average rainfall, including 4.81" in August, promoted vigorous plant growth in the park's uplands. A few of this year's surprises: In early May, **subtropical tamarisk beetles** (*Diorhabda sublineata*) began defoliating saltcedars 2 months earlier than in prior years. For the 4th year in the last 9, **White-tailed Kites** nested successfully, with a single young fledging in mid-September. And **bobcats** bred successfully. Now, as we begin to flood larger areas for fall/winter, what surprises will the rest of 2017 bring? ✂



The availability of water during the growing season continues to change the face of Rio Bosque Park.
Photo: July 8, 2017.

SPACE INVADERS

The water now available during the growing season

is of great benefit to Rio Bosque, but it also brings new challenges. Our goal at the park is to establish a mosaic of wetland, riparian and other habitats approximating those found in the river valley prior to European settlement. We've been working towards this goal for 20 years, with gratifying progress. Today, much of Rio Bosque offers visitors a glimpse of the historic river-valley environment.

But look closer in many areas, and you'll see there is still much work to do. Exotic plants not native to our region are prominent. Many are invasive: they tend to spread rapidly, displace native

Friends of the Rio Bosque Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

- Bosque Buddy (12 and under) \$6
- Student or Senior (62+).....\$10
- Individual.....\$15
- Family\$20
- Bosque Booster\$50
- Cottonwood Commando \$75-\$249
- Restoration Patron \$250-\$499
- Wetlands Society \$500-\$999
- Life Member..... \$1,000

Please make checks payable to *Friends of the Rio Bosque* and mail to: Friends of the Rio Bosque, CERM-UTEP, 500 W. University Ave., El Paso, TX 79968-0684.



Next Meetings

Thurs., Oct 26
Thurs., Nov 30
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
206 Kelly Hall
UTEP

Info: 915-747-8663

species, disrupt ecosystems and reduce biodiversity. In addition to supporting native plants, the water we now receive during the growing season has also given a large boost to several invasive exotics, especially kochia (*Kochia scoparia*) and Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*). Both were relatively limited at the park during the years without water in spring and summer. Not now.

Kochia, a tall, rangy annual native to Asia and introduced to North America from Europe, used to be limited mainly to a few areas along the Riverside Drain on the west side of the park. Now, it is appearing in dense stands at multiple locations around Wetland Cell 2. Johnsongrass, a perennial species introduced to North America from the

Mediterranean region, has moved quickly into wet areas throughout the park. In the wetland cells, we would like to maintain a 50:50 mix of open water and stands of emergent vegetation. In many places, Johnsongrass is filling in areas of open water and thwarting that objective.

Much of our work at the park involves control of invasive exotic plants. Thanks to intensive work by Friends of the Rio Bosque volunteers and others, we have made decent progress controlling such plants along the old channel of the Rio Grande that winds through the park. But the larger areas now being flooded during spring and summer in the wetland cells present a much greater challenge. Never a dull moment at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park! ✂



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Return Service Requested

RIO BOSQUE CALENDAR

Join us at Rio Bosque for a free walking tour or to help with habitat management or park maintenance. Coming up:

OCTOBER			NOVEMBER			DECEMBER		
21 (Sat.)	Workday	9 a.m.	11 (Sat.)	Introductory Tour	9 a.m.	3 (Sun.)	Introductory Tour	3 p.m.
22 (Sun.)	Birding Tour	4 p.m.	18 (Sat.)	Workday	9 a.m.	9 (Sat.)	Birding Tour	8 a.m.
28 (Sat.)	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.	19 (Sun.)	Birding Tour	3 p.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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.riobosque.org

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