
FRIENDS OF DOLAN FALLS PRESERVE

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Songbird Monitored

Scientists studying black-capped vireos

Two Texas Parks and Wildlife technicians are living at Dolan Falls Preserve this summer monitoring breeding pairs of the endangered black-capped vireo. Casey Richart and Amy Porter – under the direction of Craig Faraquar, Texas Parks & Wildlife ornithologist – are color banding each bird, doing territory mapping, monitoring nests and doing productivity estimates. There are about 30 black-capped vireo territories on the preserve.

Faraquar has been monitoring vireos at Dolan Falls since 1996. Nature Conservancy personnel started studying the birds two years prior to that.

The black-capped vireo is listed as federally endangered. Its decline is thought to be because of habitat loss and parasitism. Monitoring black-capped vireos at Dolan Falls has led to some interesting discoveries, such as an unexpectedly high predation rate. Richart and Porter have found that yet-unknown predators, possibly snakes, have preyed upon 80 percent of the nests. Another problem is parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds, although the parasitism rate is very low here.

Biological surveys were done in May at two other Nature Conservancy sites, the Devils River Ranch and the Oasis Ranch. Fifteen black-capped vireo territories were mapped at the Devils River Ranch, while 14 territories were mapped at the Oasis.

Texas horned lizards, a Texas tortoise, a zone-tailed hawk, and a tropical parula were among the other rare animals discovered during the biological surveys.



Black-capped vireo - photo by Mike Gray,
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

Teacher Group Meets

Fifteen teachers from rural school districts throughout West Texas met at Dolan Falls Preserve the first week of June for training on integrating research into science classrooms. Nicky Hanegan of the Southwest Consortium for the Improvement of Mathematics and Science Teaching organized this program, which focused on the "Interdependence of Life."

Dr. Riley Nelson, adjunct assistant professor at Brigham Young University, helped facilitate the instruction. Nelson has been doing entomology research at Dolan Falls and bringing college students there for many years. He was formerly an instructor at the University of Texas at Austin.

Tagged Monarch Recovered

The University of Kansas' Monarch Watch has notified us that data from one of the monarch butterflies that was tagged at Dolan Falls Preserve last October was recovered in Mexico. Four hundred and fifty monarchs were tagged at the annual monarch tagging event.



What's Bloomin' at Dolan

Rain: Dolan Falls has continued to have a more-than-normal amount of rain, although it has started to dry out lately. We have had 10 inches of rain already this year. An early May flood washed out the road between the Devils River and Dolan Creek again.



Flowers: Flowers have been unbelievable this spring and summer with all of our unexpected rainfall. The lemon beebalm, Texas thistle, huisache daisy, larkspur and Indian blanket were especially pretty on the preserve this year. Pictured is the Indian blanket (*gaillardia*), a widespread North American native.

Birds: The summer breeding birds are here, including the northern cardinal, yellow-breasted chat, white-eyed vireo, Bell's vireo, summer tanager, hooded oriole, house finch, black-throated sparrow, common ground dove, red-shouldered hawk and others.

Schedule: This summer we are looking forward to bird banding in June, a visit by the Dragonfly Society, and a Friends of Dolan Falls meeting and work weekend in July.



Austin Friends Meeting Successful
About 20 people attended the Friends of Dolan Falls Preserve meeting at Barton Creek Habitat Preserve in Austin on May 19. Participants enjoyed swimming, hiking, badminton and horseshoes. Thanks for coming!

Barton Creek - photo by Bea Harrison

July 28-29: Friends Meeting and Volunteer Work Weekend

Sept 22-23: Work Weekend

Sept 29: Landmark Day

Oct 6-7: Chairman's Circle Weekend

Dec 1-2: Work Weekend

Dolan Falls Wish List
Please call Jim or Bea if you can contribute any of these items.
Tractor with front-end loader
Oxy-acetylene cutting torch
Portable cement mixer
Slide projection screen

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