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# EDWARDS PLATEAU VOLUNTEERS & FRIENDS

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## Western Rivers

### Conservancy opens office in Uvalde

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In July 2002, Jim and Bea Harrison opened the new Edwards Plateau Western Rivers office. Of course, for now, the office, is located in the spare bedroom of their new home in Uvalde. The Nature Conservancy is almost finished with its ecoregional plan for the Edwards Plateau, one of eleven major ecoregions contained or partly contained in Texas. This new plan will drive our future conservation efforts in the Edwards Plateau.

Under a new organizational structure, Jim will be one of two Edwards Plateau project directors. Paul Barwick will be moving from San Antonio to Medina to be the other. Bea will be the Edwards Plateau program coordinator.

Uvalde was chosen for an office site because it is centrally located. With Jim and Bea moving away from Dolan Falls, the preserve is presently being manned by Don Bono, a volunteer from Colorado.

What does all this mean to you? Well, along with the news from Dolan Falls, Bea will be sending you more information about our other preserves, projects and more volunteer opportunities in the Hill Country as she consolidates communications to reflect this reorganization. This is a challenging time, as The Nature Conservancy takes a bigger role in the conservation of this very special part of Texas.



**Barton Creek Habitat Preserve:** A new plan will create education partnerships with neighboring conservation groups.

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## Barton Creek Education

Barton Creek Habitat Preserve, under the direction of Education Coordinator and Preserve Manager Nurani Hogue, has launched a new education directive. The Nature Conservancy will form partnerships with conservation-education organizations and will provide preserve facilities for educational programming. The preserve is located on the west side of Austin.

Organizations such as Wild Basin Wilderness, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and many others will have a chance to use this large contiguous tract of land to conduct classes.

The Nature Conservancy also is offering several unpaid college-level internships at Barton Creek preserve in order to offer experience for students in habitat restoration and preserve stewardship and at the same time fulfill stewardship needs at Barton Creek. To learn more about this opportunity, contact Nurani at [nhogue@tnc.org](mailto:nhogue@tnc.org) or (512) 263-8878.

## Bird Banding Successful

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Nearly 250 birds of 30 different species were banded at Dolan Falls in June. The mist-netting and banding was led by Dr. Ross Dawkins of San Angelo State University and Dr. Brent Ortego of Texas Parks and Wildlife. This is the fourth year for the summer banding study at Dolan. Studies such as this can determine species and individual site fidelity and population changes.

Helping with the mist netting and banding this year were David Larson and Gavin Emmons, of the National Park Service, and Craig Zalk, Gardner Campbell and Jerry Gips.

The most unusual bird caught had to be the ringed kingfisher, as Dolan Falls Preserve is at the edge of the species' northern and western range. It is the largest kingfisher in the Western Hemisphere.

Other interesting species banded were olive sparrow, black phoebe, tropical parula, black-chinned hummingbird and painted bunting. The most numerous caught were yellow-breasted chat, Carolina wren, white-eyed vireo, olive sparrow, summer tanager, northern cardinal and green kingfisher.



Ross Dawkins photographs a ringed kingfisher held by Brent Ortego. This is thought to be only the second of this species to be banded in the United States.

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One of the birds banded in June was this male summer tanager.

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## Centex dedication

### Plaque to be unveiled

Centex Homes is planning an official dedication ceremony at what will now be called Centex Homes Dolan Falls Preserve on December 18. Centex executives and The Nature Conservancy's South Central Division Vice President Robert Potts and other staff members will be on hand for the unveiling of a plaque for the occasion. Elected officials and members of the media also are expected.

One of the nation's leading residential homebuilders, Centex has made a commitment to donate \$2.25 million to The Nature Conservancy. One million dollars of this three-year pledge will go to retire Dolan Falls Preserve's land-acquisition debt.

A work day is planned at Barton Creek Habitat Preserve on October 12 from 9 a.m. to noon. Brush clearing and building repairs are planned. Contact Nurani Hogue at [nhogue@tnc.org](mailto:nhogue@tnc.org) or (512) 263-8878.



## Season Winding Down

Eckert James Bat Cave

By Anne Casselman  
Bat Cave Steward

During the bat season, millions of Mexican free-tailed bats will take to the skies from the Eckert James River Bat Cave.

Around mid-May, the mother bats arrive from Mexico pregnant and starving for food. So begins their dedicated foray into motherhood. With their collective birthdays landing in mid-June, the bat pups are the quintessential labor of love; it is suspected that the mother's consume up to their own body weight in bugs each night to produce enough milk for their young.

No wonder that once the young are weaned in August, many of the exhausted mothers will jump-start their southern migration. But by and large most Mexican free-tailed bats wait until mid-October to migrate back to Mexico. That way they get an added boost with the first cold fronts giving them strong tail winds.

If you haven't seen the bats so far, there may be time yet. Cross your fingers and call Anne Casselman, the bat cave steward, for a bat forecast, (915) 347-5970. Otherwise, don't be forlorn. If one thing is certain, it's that the bats will be back next year, hungry as ever.

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## Cactus search to be held

By Jackie Poole  
Contributing Writer

A search for rare cactus, including Tobusch fishhook cactus (*Ancistrocactus tobuschii*) will be held at Centex Homes Dolan Falls Preserve on February 15. Jackie Poole of Texas Parks and Wildlife will lead this event. Jackie has been monitoring Tobusch cacti at Devils River State Natural Area and other sites, but none has ever been confirmed at Dolan Falls.

Volunteers from the Friends of Dolan Falls may sign up to help by e-mailing or calling Bea Harrison: [bharrison@tnc.org](mailto:bharrison@tnc.org) or (830) 278-3945.

*Ancistrocactus tobuschii* is endemic to the Edwards Plateau of central Texas. It occurs in Bandera, Edwards, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Real, Uvalde and Val Verde counties. As of May 2000, more than 60 naturally occurring populations had been verified within the last ten years. Five populations are thought to be extirpated due to flooding, highway realignment, uprooting by animals or unknown causes. In Kinney and Val Verde counties, another species of fishhook cactus (*A. breviham-*



*atus*) occurs with, or has been mis-identified as, *A. tobuschii*. This cactus exhibits a slow growth rate with relatively long generation times, limited distance dispersal and a non-substantial soil seed reserve. In cultivation, plants have been known to flower within three years of germination. Flowering can begin as early as mid-January in the southernmost populations, with populations throughout the range in full flower in February. Flowering ends by late March.

# Be a FRIEND

Yes! I would like to be a Friend of Centex Homes Dolan Falls Preserve.

Enclosed is my check for \$25, payable to **The Nature Conservancy of Texas**.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Your \$25 contribution will be used solely for the Dolan Falls Preserve. Memberships of \$100 secure a Nature Conservancy membership and all of its benefits as well. Clip this form and mail with your check to :

***Centex Homes Dolan Falls Preserve  
The Nature Conservancy of Texas  
P.O. Box 1630  
Uvalde, Texas 78802  
(830) 278-3945***



Hilltop view of Dolan Falls



Dolan Falls is an important roosting area for monarch butterflies in October as they make their way back to their winter hibernation areas in Mexico.

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