

Albert & Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area
2016
The Fourth Year

A History of James Rice, 1st ABK-SNA Superintendent,
&
His All Volunteer Army

By
Desiree E. D'Orsogna, Historian

Introduction

Twenty six proved to be another busy and productive year for James Rice and his all Volunteer Army. The number of troops swelled to 170, predominantly due to word of mouth spread about this rugged and beautiful State Natural Area and all the activities undertaken here by some *nineteen* teams of volunteers. Fun and fattening appreciation/recruitment parties didn't hurt either!

From top to bottom and left to right the Team Leaders are:

Anne Adams, Plant Surveys

Desi D'Orsogna, Historian

Ken Weber, Deer Management

Kathy Ward, Geology and Fossils

Rheda Boardman, Butterfly Counts and Monarch Larva Monitoring

Nancye Drukker, Herpetology

Ann Dietert, Nest Watch (Bluebird Boxes)

Tom Denyer , representing Streams & Canyons Surveys

Carla Brady, Friends Group President, Newsletter editor, & Volunteers Administrator

Cay Russ, Information technology

James Rice, Superintendent

Tara Randle, Bird Surveys including Golden-cheeked Warblers

Tom Harrigan, Reports Compiler for 2017

Not shown: Ray Dunton and Lisa Barrett, co-team leaders of the Entomology Team; Tim Brady, Safety; Donna Taylor, ArcGIS and Maple Tree Surveys; Stan Walden, Aquatics Biology; Stephen Bishop, Archeology; Craig Childs, Hog Management for 2017, Tom Riordan, Projects Coordinator, and Randy Randle, Streams and Canyons.



Two ABK Volunteers Acknowledged for 4,000 Hours of Volunteer Service

Tom Riordan, Projects Coordinator

Tom has been a volunteer at ABK practically since the green gate opened. When he's not in the office checking emails on abkvolunteer@gmail.com one might find him assisting on a bee survey, gleaning milkweed seeds, insulating our office, or preparing for the next recruitment party. Tom helps keep the deer feeders stocked and provides transportation for volunteers conducting their research in the field. His achievements are "TNTC" – Too Numerous to Count!



Cay Russ & Tom

Stephen Bishop, Archeology Team Leader etc.

In April, Stephen got appointed to the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network. In 2016 he made at least 2 trips out into the field with Robin Barnes' team from TPWD which discovered several new archeological sites. He probably keeps an eye out for artifacts even while fossil-surveying with Kathy Ward's Geology Team or managing motion-detecting cameras at 11 stations. He and a team of 6 volunteers recently analyzed over 900 game camera videos as part of the Deer Management Team's deer population study. Finally, he assists the Aquatics Biology Team by regularly sampling water quality in our beloved Bessie's Pond.



Stephen, Luis Alvarado & archeology team



Ann Schneider, Stephen

Old Business

Team Leaders continued meeting monthly with the Superintendent at his residence. Agendas were formulated, typed, and printed ahead of the meeting, and Minutes were recorded during the 2 hour sessions by the Historian.

The majority of the teams continued collecting data about the natural resources at ABK-SNA, some teams for the 4th straight year. Ongoing surveys included Bird & Golden-cheeked Warbler, Butterfly Counts & Monarch Larva Monitoring, Plants, Fossils & Geology, Streams & Canyons, White-tailed Deer, Nest Boxes, & Entomology/Pollinators.



New Business

Aquatics Biology team held their first Fishing for Science survey. And the Herpetology team conducted their first official “Herps” survey, largely by flashlight. The Team Leaders attended safety training (First Aid course, CPR, and use of the AED). [See pictures below.](#)

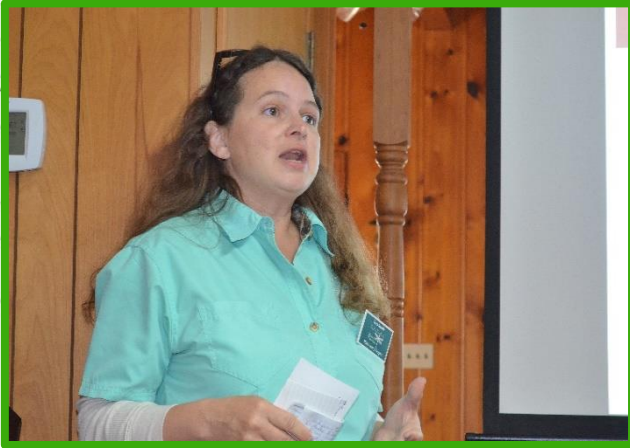
The Maples Survey team lead by Donna Taylor published the first scientific paper by ABK Volunteers. Published in *Phytologia* on July 6, 2016, it was entitled “Diameter growth of *Acer grandidentatum* (Bigtooth maple) in isolated central Texas populations.” Drs. O.W. Van Auken and Chenchen Shen collaborated.

Monthly Bird Surveys and Annual Golden-Cheeked Warbler Point Surveys



Photo by Tara Randle

The ever-important GCWA Surveys including both classroom and field training continued for the 3rd straight year. Tara compiled a formal Annual Monitoring Report which James has submitted to TPWD headquarters. She and Desi attended the 2016 GCWA and Black-capped vireo Symposium in Austin.

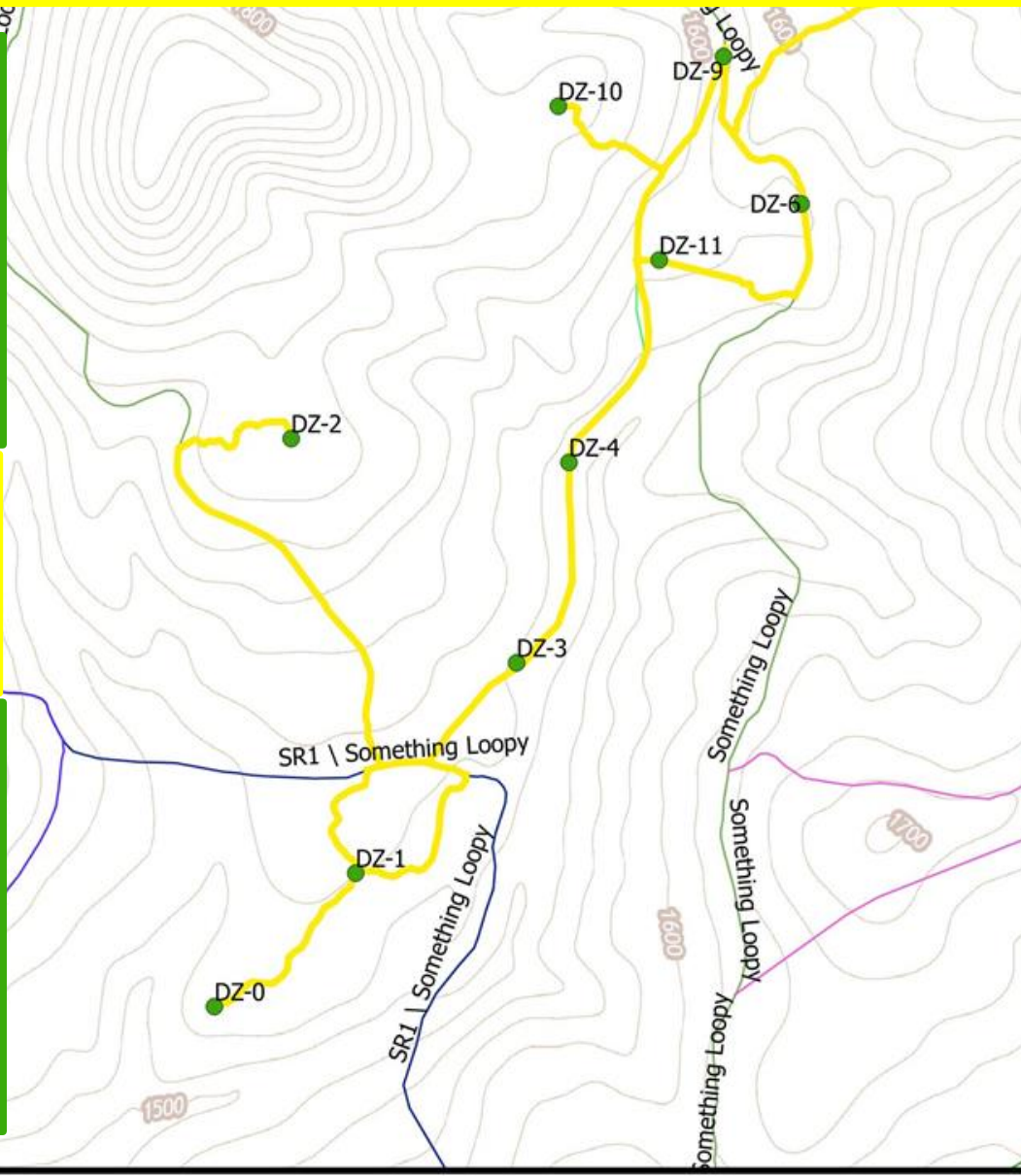


Tara Randle

Tara Randle and her team conducted monthly Bird Surveys for the 4th straight year, compiling a list of 129 species to date including 3 new species in 2016. She photographed a Hutton's vireo (above). A Common snipe is shown below.



Photo by Ken Butler



Map by Tara Randle

Proposed Development Zone Trail for 2016 GCWA Surveys



Butterfly Counts and Monarch Larva Monitoring



Core team members included Team Leader Rheda Boardman, Tara Randle, & Nancye Drukker, Cecilia Fuentes, Brenda Fest, Gary Fest, and new volunteer and photographer, Ken Butler. The team was occasionally joined by Kathy Ward and Desi as well as Claire Mitchell, Linda Plevak, Nancy Scoggins, Lisa Barrett, Tom Harrigan, John Walker, Coco Brennan, Ruth McArthur, and Donna Taylor.



This photo and background by Tara Randle



Plant Surveys Team

Anne Adams, Team Leader, wrote in the Winter issue of *The Warbler* (Editor - Carla Brady): "This is a summary of what the plant survey team has done this year. We have two main projects. The first is to document new plant species found at ABK. Thanks to sharp eyes and detailed photos from several volunteers, almost **50 new species** have been added to the plant list compiled by Bill Carr and others in December 2014. Documentation of new species with photos, collections, and GPS locations is ongoing.

The second project is to document surveys of plant cover in several old agricultural fields. Information from these surveys will be used to guide future restoration of the fields for pollinators. This project was started in Fall of 2015 with three fields, and a fourth field was added in Spring of 2016. All four fields were surveyed in May and June of 2016 by a team of 11 dedicated volunteers. Compared with the Fall of 2015, many more plant species were recorded in 2016. However, KR Bluestem, an exotic invasive grass, is the overwhelming dominant species in most of the surveyed areas. The goal of restoration will be to reduce the amount of KR Bluestem in favor of native grasses and forbs that promote pollinator habitat."

Photos to the left by Anne show members of the Spring of 2016 ag field survey team, including Veronica Hawk, Ron Scoggins, Kathy Ward, and Carolyn Walden setting a transect marker, placing the sampling frame, and pondering the percent cover of plants within the frame.

By September of 2016, Anne reported that **395 species of plants** to date had been identified at ABK, at least 11 of which are on the SGCN (Species of Greatest Conservation Need) list. Modest by nature, Anne neglected to say that her herbarium collections received accolades from Bill Carr. She also forgot to mention that she *trained* all the volunteers on her team. She was among the first Team Leaders to enter her data into ArcGIS.



Sycamore Leaf Snowbell by Nancye Drukker



Spring Coral Root by Nancye Drukker



Boerne Bean by Nancye Drukker

Geology and Fossils Survey Team



First ABK Geology Workshop
Speaker: Kathy Ward
No. of attendees: 32

Geology Walk with NE Lakeview College Students.
Volunteers: Stephen Bishop, Tom Harrigan,
Ann Schneider, Kathy Ward



Geologic formation photographed by
Nancye Drukker

In 2016, Kathy Ward and her team conducted Talks & Walks. "Fossil Fridays" continued. In addition, the team sponsored educational hikes for college students and for participants at the first ABK Geology Workshop.



Stephen Bishop and Ann Schneider

Geology Walk with NE Lakeview College
Archeology/Anthropology Students.
ABK Volunteers present: Stephen Bishop,
Ann Schneider, & Kathy Ward

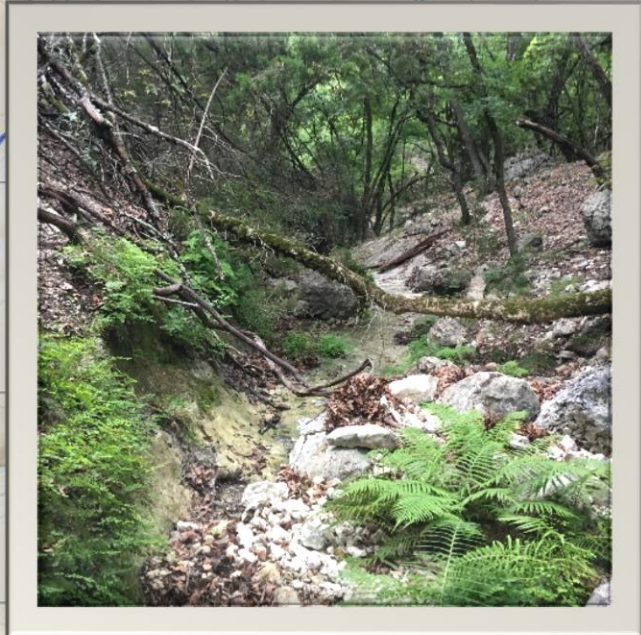


Photo: Stephen Bishop



Photo: Rheda Boardman

Streams and Canyons Survey Team



Photos by

Lance Pritchard

The core of this team consists of Randy Randle, Tom Denyer, and Lance Pritchard. In 2016 they were joined by Stephen Beach, Jordan Krantz, and Lee Burton. The team geotagged the top of Nedry Creek and all its tributaries and run-offs after finishing Riordan Creek and its tributaries.



Map by Randy Randle

Deer Management & Game Cameras Teams

Management of the White-tailed deer population at ABK first began in 2014 with organized Public Hunts. The next year, graduate student, **Victoria Makar**, organized the first Stand Count survey which required deer feeders, blinds, and many volunteers (see tables below). In 2016, Stephen Bishop headed up a team of 6 volunteers to review hundreds of motion-detecting game camera videos recorded from September 20 to October 20. Ultimately, Victoria's data was used to validate game cameras as the method of choice for assessing the deer population at ABK and therefore the number of deer that may be harvested in order to protect desirable and/or endangered plant species.

In 2016, public hunts were held October 28-30 (1st deer killed on a Public Youth Hunt); November 4-6 (Adult hunt with 2 deer killed); and December 2-4 (Adult hunt with 3 deer and 6 feral hogs killed). Two additional youth hunts were later conducted by the Texas Wildlife Association. ABK was the 1st State property to host these two hunts.

		DATE			
		Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		25 FEB	26 FEB	27 FEB	28 FEB
AM		/	Steve Beach	Laney Redus	Laney Redus
		/	Brenda Fest	Brenda Fest	Lance Pritchard
		/	Gary Fest	Jordan Krantz	Tom Denyer
		/	Ken Webber	Mike Makar	Brenda Fest
		/	Tom Riordan	V Makar	Gary Fest
		/	Matt Carley		Mike Makar
		/	V Makar		V Makar
		/			Andrea Rodriguez
		/			
		/			
Drivers		VM, TR & KW	VM & TR	VM & TR	
Office Duty		James Rice	Tom Riordan	Tom Riordan	

		Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		25 FEB	26 FEB	27 FEB	28 FEB
PM		Ron Pena?	Ron Pena?	Ann Diertert	/
		Steve Beach	Cay Russ	Mike Makar	/
		David Black	Ken Webber	V Makar	/
		V Makar	V Makar		/
					/
					/
					/
					/
					/
					/
Drivers		VM & RP?	VM, TR & KW	VM & TR	
Office Duty		James Rice	James Rice	Tom Riordan	

		DATE			
		Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		3 March	4 March	5 March	6 March
AM		/	Ron Pena?	Laney Redus	Laney Redus
		/	Brenda Fest	Brenda Fest	Lance Pritchard
		/	Gary Fest	Gary Fest	Tom Denyer
		/	Tom Riordan	Mike Makar	V Makar
		/	V Makar	V Makar	Andrea Rodriguez?
		/		Ryan Turner	
		/		Kyle Krebs	
		/			
		/			
		/			
Drivers		VM & TR	VM & TR	VM & TR	
Office Duty		James Rice	Tom Riordan	Tom Riordan	

		Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		3 March	4 March	5 March	6 March
PM		David Black	Ron Pena?	Ann Diertert	/
		Kathy Ward	Kathy Ward	Kathy Ward	/
		Desi Dorsogna	Tom Riordan	V Makar	/
		V Makar	V Makar	Steve McCoy	/
		Tom Riordan	A Moore?		/
					/
					/
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					/
					/
Drivers		VM & RP?	VM, TR & KW	VM & TR	
Office Duty		James Rice	James Rice	Tom Riordan	



Craig, Ken, and Stephen D.

Core members of the Deer Management Team included **Leader Ken Weber** and Volunteers Marshall Smith, Stephen Dodwell, Stephen Bishop, and Craig Childs. With the help of Projects Manager, Tom Riordan, and Ken's exemplary organizational skills, the team worked tirelessly to install raccoon-resistant feeders and to keep them well maintained and stocked during the stand counts, camera counts, and hunts.

During the hunts, **Craig Childs** & Brenda Fest procured lymph nodes for study of CWD at ABK. Craig also sampled at Tarpley check station. He will be heading up a Hog Management Team to eliminate another source of habitat and flora destruction in 2017.



Photo by J. Rice

Team Leaders...& Team Players

Nest Watch Team Leader



Ann Dietert

Accomplishments

- ❖ Monitored/recorded 56 fledglings in 2016.
- ❖ Installed boxes in field centers with assistance of Dale Bransford.
- ❖ Geotagged nest boxes and entered 3 years' data into ArcGIS with Tara's and Des' assistance.

Entomology Team Co-Leaders



Accomplishments

- ❖ Ray Dunton has captured 3,000 bees and identified 84 species including 2 found on Species of Greatest Conservation Need list.
- ❖ Lisa Barrett is responsible for the pinning of insects in archival collections.

Tom Denyer

Accomplishments

- ❖ Core of Streams & Canyons team along with Lance & Randy
- ❖ Chain-saw work
- ❖ Helped to insulate Volunteers' Office
- ❖ Handy at the grill!
- ❖ Running hog snares



Maintenance & Safety



Matt Carley,
Fence repair

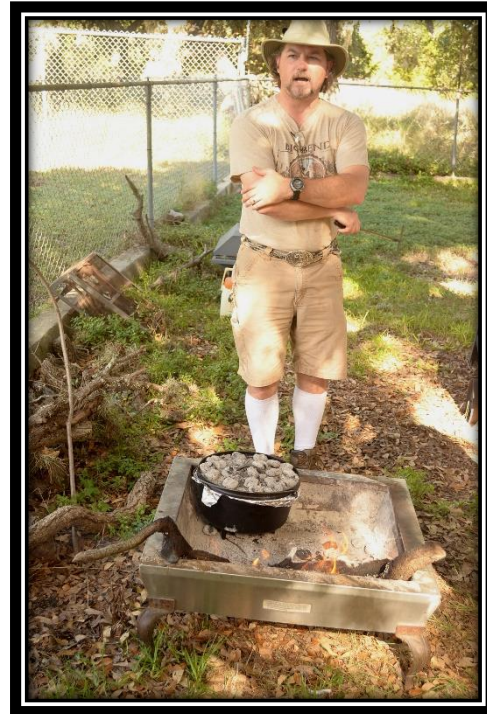
Stephen Dodwell, groundskeeper,
& Tim Brady, Safety Committee
Team Leader



ArcGIS Team



Nancye Drukker:
Herpetology Surveys



Randy Randle:
Administrator,
ArcGIS; Streams and
Canyons



Donna Taylor:
Administrator, ArcGIS;
Maple Tree Surveys



Tara Randle: Golden-
cheeked Warbler Surveys



Kathy Ward:
Geology and Fossils



Anne Adams: Plant
Surveys and Plant
Inventory

Ray Dunton:
Entomology



The Friends Group and the ArcGIS Project

Inception of the ArcGIS Project remains a mystery to me. Donna Taylor and Stephen Bishop probably conceived of the idea of bringing this powerful data management cloud-based computer program to ABK. Certainly, the cost of the license would have been prohibitively expensive had James not pushed for the creation of the ABK Friends Group (President: Carla Brady; Vice President & Secretary: Pam McKinley; and Treasurer: Cay Russ). Donna Taylor wrote the grant proposal to ESRI on behalf of the Friends to procure the license for ArcGIS. Later Pam and the other officers wrote the grant proposal to the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation which enabled the Friends to buy a laptop and plotter (shown below) as well as a tablet. These necessary items will facilitate data entry directly from the field, long-term preservation and back-up of the data, as well as map-making.

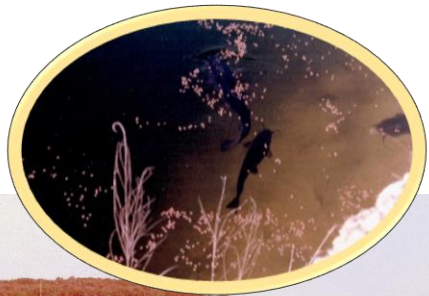
I initiated and facilitated at the ArcGIS Task Force meetings, held on three occasions. During these meetings, Donna demonstrated the capabilities of ArcGIS. The 5 USERS were selected based on their past history of data collection volume. And the equipment specifications were discussed and agreed upon at the final meeting.

By August 2016, Randy Randle had installed the desktop version of ArcGIS on the new **laptop** and printed the first maps using the **plotter** which Tom Riordan then laminated. The **tablet** was purchased at a later date and demoed during the ABK Christmas Party by Randy. Randy implemented Survey 1,2,3 as a means of collecting field data without clipboards, pencils or paper.

Randy and Donna share administrative responsibilities which include assisting those USERS who are- let's say, computer challenged- in entering their survey data. More computer-savvy USERS are helping other survey team leaders enter *their* data. In some survey disciplines such as Geology and Golden-cheeked warblers, USERS have entered 3 years' worth of retrospective data.

Donna has gotten the ArcGIS grant renewed for 2017, and Cay and I are drafting the annual report to the Kronkosky Foundation. The Administrators, USERS, and I are grateful to James Rice, the Friends Group, the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation, and ESRI for enabling us volunteers to carry on our studies of the natural resources at the Albert and Bessie Kronkosky SNA.





Aquatics Biology Team: First Fish Survey



On October 8th and 15th Stan Walden conducted a mark/recapture fish population study. He was assisted by wife & volunteer, Carolyn; by Doug Knabe and Christopher Vaughn of the San Antonio River Authority; by Eagle Scout candidate, Peter Mabey, who coordinated logistics; and by a whole host of volunteer anglers. Results: Large mouthed bass population estimate of 125 ± 40 fish and indeterminate numbers of War-mouth and other sunfish ≥ 6 inches. Catfish-generally a nocturnal species-were not caught though given Meckel's pictures, there is reason to believe they are present. (Photos by Desi D'Orsogna unless otherwise specified).



Then ...

...and Now

Bessie's Pond circa 1980s-Photo courtesy of Doug Meckel

Randy Fuentes, angler extraordinaire on October 8th



Herpetology Survey Team



Photo: Rheda Boardman

Accompanied by Gary and Brenda Fest, Nancye Drukker, (center), holds a Rough green snake.



Photos: Nancye

Chris Harrison exposes first Diamondback rattlesnake recorded at ABK

Alligator lizard



Blackneck garter snake



Photos: Nancye Drukker

Wilt Shaw, Veronica Hawk, Chris Harrison, John Walker, and Team Leader Nancye Drukker posing for Gerry Salmon on the evening of the first night herpetology survey. Other accomplishments of Nancye's include monthly daytime herp surveys; geotagging of salamander locations with Tara Randle's assistance; and monitoring the Array.



Bigtooth Maple Tree Survey Team

Dr. Chenchen Shen,
Dr. Van Auken, and
Environmental Research
Scientist, Donna Taylor

Accomplishments

- ❖ Herbivory studies of Bigtooth Maple seedlings in Tin Cup Canyon and above Bessie's Pond
- ❖ Growth rate study leading to publication in *Phytologia*
- ❖ Ongoing transects of Bigtooth Maple tree populations.
- ❖ Collection of species count and basal diameter data in 5 Canyon areas and 3 Uplands to characterize the tree communities.




ABK-SNA Historian

It's often said that we are judged by the company that we keep. If that is true, then I should be nominated for Supreme Court Justice ! I have never encountered a more dedicated, hard-working, and just plain *likeable* group of people than my fellow ABK Volunteers. I've made lasting friendships that have already spilled over into my social life and birding obsession.

For the past 3 years, I have essentially been a Team of One. However, in 2017 a former professor at the Medical School where I trained, Dr. Charlene Moore, will be joining me. She'll be writing an actual *history* of ABK's land and peoples – something I never seemed to get around to doing these past 3 years.

I dedicate this page to my fellow volunteers.





Conclusion:
Volunteers Don't Just Wanna Have Fun...

... or we wouldn't be doing what we do! Some of us have science backgrounds: have written grants, collected data, and published papers. Others of us are Citizen Scientists. But all of us –Texas Master Naturalists and non-master naturalists alike- love what we are a part of here at the Albert and Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area.

American biologist and Pulitzer Prize winner E.O Wilson describes in his 1984 book *Biophilia* research that suggests that humans are genetically wired to be attracted to, and to bond with other living things. Lead by Superintendent Rice, we volunteers shall continue working tirelessly to champion and preserve the natural world.

Because we don't just love what we're doing and have fun doing it.