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NEW PRESERVE WILL PROTECT RARE EAST TEXAS WILDFLOWER

NAPA has purchased one of the few sites which is home for a rare wildflower. The wildflower is Neches River rose-mallow, a white hibiscus which is one of the rarest species in Texas. One of the few plants native only to East Texas, the hibiscus is limited in its natural range. It has also been picked and transplanted by trespassers.

The hibiscus is known to occur at fewer than ten locations in the wild. Fortunately, efforts to grow the hibiscus at East Texas universities have been successful, so extinction is unlikely. But maintaining a wild population is crucial for the survival of the genetic diversity of the species.

The Houston Endowment, a private foundation which is one of the principal supporters of land and wildlife conservation in Texas, awarded NAPA a \$32,000 grant to purchase the tract. The seller, Ms. Jane Whitehead, sold the property at a reasonable price, allowing the remainder of the grant to pay for fencing the tract.

NAPA plans to make the property available for researchers who are growing the plant to increase its numbers and reintroduce it at other places in East Texas.

NAPA hopes to continue to acquire habitat to conserve rare and threatened species. While animals often use large areas, making it difficult for land trust organizations to acquire sufficient habitat to support them, plants can be more easily conserved with small tracts. Other rare plants on NAPA preserves include the Texas meadow-rue, which grows at Gail Allen's Morningside Preserve and only a few other locations in the world. Another rare plant that NAPA protects is the Texas trillium,



Neches River rose-mallow.

which grows only in undisturbed East Texas forests like NAPA's Grass Lake Preserve.

The hibiscus is also a "poster child" species that illustrates the importance of conserving East Texas bottomland habitats, especially along the Neches River which gives the plant its name. The Neches is one of the last rivers in Texas that is mostly undeveloped and undammed, and includes some of the state's best hardwood bottomland forests. The Conservation Fund, a national land trust, and the Texas Committee on Natural Resources are taking the lead in protecting this scenic river.



The Neches River rose-mallow grows only around swales or wetlands in open areas such as this bottomland pasture.



Larry and Sami Germer's Sandyland Ranch conserves a mile of the Pedernales River.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONATED
PROTECTING PEDERNALES RIVER**

A new conservation easement has been donated to NAPA on the Sandyland Ranch, owned by Larry and Sami Germer. The ranch fronts on a mile-long stretch of the Pedernales River, one of the most scenic rivers of central Texas. Both the river and the ranch are mostly unaltered and natural.

Mr. Germer, an attorney in Beaumont, bought the ranch in 2000 for recreational use and enjoyment. The Germers are building a house at one corner of the property and leaving the rest of the ranch in natural condition. The house and ranch feature views of the Pedernales and its largest tributary, Grape Creek.

The unique features of the ranch include unusual geology — the area is dolomitic limestone and is located on the edge of the granite Llano

Uplift and the rolling limestone hills of the Hill Country. Many native species of plants and wildlife typical of the Hill Country are present. Mr. Germer has cleared Ashe juniper (cedar) from upland areas to improve the views and the condition of native grasslands.

Sandyland Ranch is one of several conservation easements and parks along the Pedernales, including two easements held by NAPA. It is located downstream from the Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and upstream from Pedernales Falls State Park. The area is mostly still rural and natural.

The Germers' easement allows one additional residence to be built on the property but ensures that the area outside of the home sites will remain in natural vegetation. While grazing is not prohibited as a management tool, it is limited by the easement to the recommended density for Hill Country rangeland. This is an example of how conservation easements can allow landowners flexibility in enjoying their land while benefiting wildlife and maintaining the rural and scenic character of the land.

**RUSSELL FAMILY ADDS EASEMENTS
ON LAKE LIVINGSTON**

Marjorie and Kenneth Russell continue to add to the conservation easements they have donated to NAPA on Lake Livingston in East Texas. Their land is located in Waterwood, a lakefront development, and had not been logged for several years before the Russells purchased it. The easement areas are undeveloped forest with no improvements except logging roads. Just lots of trees — pines, hickories, oaks, maples, elms and other species, including many survivors of past logging operations.

At the end of 2003, the Russells donated an easement, the 81.66 Perpetual Forest Sanctuary, and a separate easement on the 69.16-acre Zwicky Creek Wildlife Sanctuary.

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In spite of the different names, the two easements are parts of the same property. The easements donated by the Russells so far contain very different features, typical of the diversity that can occur in East Texas forest habitats. The Zwicky Creek tract, named for a small creek which enters a cove of Lake Livingston, contains a large outcrop of boulders of the Catahoula formation (part of one of the only rock outcrops in East Texas). The Perpetual Forest is adjacent to the Russell-Fritz Westernmost Longleaf Pine Preserve, placed under easement in 2002, and contains similar upland habitat with creeks and some large hardwood trees.

If “Perpetual Forest” sounds like it could be the name of a cemetery, that is intentional. The Russells plan to be buried on their property, and they wrote language into the easement allowing additional “green burials,” a fairly new concept which has gained popularity in recent years. Essentially, a “green burial” is a return to the burial customs of earlier generations of Americans, using only natural and biodegradable materials.

RANCH NEAR WIMBERLEY PROTECTED

The Wimberley area of Hays County is one of the fastest growing parts of the Hill Country. While natural landscapes are still common, ownership of the land is being fragmented by ranchette developments and rural subdivisions. The result is that open space and wildlife habitat are declining in the area.

Don Wood, an Austin attorney, and his wife Jill Bryar Wood have donated a conservation easement to protect part of their ranch between Driftwood and Wimberley. Their goals are to protect the ranch as open space and to prevent further subdivision by any future owner of the property. The easement covers 191 acres which is in natural condition — hills covered with live oaks, junipers and native grass. It’s in an im-



The Bryarwood Ranch owned by Don and Jill Wood conserves the Hill Country north of Wimberley.

portant place: the upper part of the watershed of Lone Man Creek, a tributary of the Blanco River. The lower part of Lone Man Creek runs through scenic bluffs just outside Wimberley which are high-priced real estate and fast being developed.

The ranch, called the Bryarwood Ranch, was acquired by Don and Jill Wood in 1981. The easement includes flat, open woodlands around two wooded canyons with steep bluffs which protect native grasses by limiting access by deer and livestock. Both canyons contain wet-weather creeks which are seasonal but often flood, sending water down into Lone Man Creek.

The easement allows grazing but limits the animal unit density to one animal per 25 acres, which is recommended for Hill Country rangeland. Rotational grazing is allowed for short terms when climatic conditions allow. Rotating livestock is especially desirable during fall and early winter when native grasses go to seed.

Don and Jill have made this contribution to NAPA because of their personal belief in the importance of preserving open space in its natural condition. “We believe this goal simply cannot be achieved if the land is developed for commercial purposes,” says Don Wood. “We hope that others will follow our example.”

**NED FRITZ AWARD DINNER
A BIG SUCCESS**

More than 100 NAPA members and patrons gathered for an evening in April to visit old friends and to inaugurate a new tradition: the Ned Fritz Conservation Award. This award, named for NAPA founder Edward C. (Ned) Fritz, will honor individuals who have contributed to Texas conservation efforts.

Former Congressman John Bryant accepted the first Ned Fritz Conservation Award for his landmark legislation creating the first national wilderness areas in eastern Texas. In presenting the award, Genie Fritz thanked John Bryant for his leadership in introducing the bill, which was designed in part by Ned, that established the wilderness areas (which were not in Bryant's congressional district!). Bryant acknowledged the award and recognized others present, including Congressman Martin Frost, former Judge Barefoot Sanders, pilot Charlie Jamieson, and other longtime conservation advocates.

The award dinner was held at City Place Tower in Dallas and featured the music of Tommy De Salvo. NAPA trustee Anne Norvell shared historical profiles of several NAPA preserves. Executive director David Bezanson presented a "virtual tour" of our preserves, assisted by Don Calloway.



Congressman Bryant accepts the Ned Fritz Conservation Award.



NAPA president Polly Shields introduces Genie Fritz.

NAPA wishes to thank the underwriters of the event, including June and Archie Bennett, Fred and Lisa Baron, Bates Container Corp., the Buehring Family Foundation, Genie and Ned Fritz, Polly and Wilma Shields, and Windle Turley. Polly Shields was master of ceremonies. The award dinner was organized by the Gala Committee including Genie, Polly, Eileen McKee, Jean Laughlin, Anne Norvell, Ben Stephens, Leonora Stephens and Michele McCormack, whose many hours of hard work were crucial to the event's success. The event raised more than \$16,000 for NAPA's programs, contributing to the planned hiring of a director of land stewardship who will support our volunteers in maintaining our 70-plus preserves and easements.



Listening to the awards ceremony.



Members socialize before the presentation.



Heroes of Texas conservation: Congressman John Bryant with Genie and Ned Fritz.

NAPA's Annual Members' Meeting will be held on Saturday, November 20, at Ivy's Wildlife Refuge. Ivy's, located in East Texas near Elkhart, is one of NAPA's oldest preserves and contains 460 acres of forest, prairie, creeks with waterfalls, and ironstone hills. The meeting is open to all NAPA members and will include guided nature walks and longer hikes. There is room to camp on the preserve and a covered pavilion in case of weather. Motels and restaurants are available at Palestine ten miles away. Come enjoy fall with us! For directions to Ivy's contact napa@texas.net or 512/804-1981. A map will be posted on our website at www.napa-texas.org.

PRESERVE NEWS

In May, **Mary Brown**, **Susan Roberts** and **Katherine Goodbar** went to Pope Creek Preserve. It was inspiring as usual. Because of the cool spring many flowers were not blooming yet, and it was much drier than expected. Owner **Ken Hammett** found that beavers have built a new dam upstream on Pope Creek. If the preserve gets too dry, Ken may have to "persuade" the beavers to move on.

On the same weekend, **Sally** and **Bruce Evans** went back to the Palmer-Jewert Preserve

(their second visit this year) to see spring wildflowers. They were many and lovely.

LOS RINCONES: Several members of the Kerr County chapter of Master Naturalists organized by **Nancy** and **Don Vaughan** returned to Los Rincones in June for a second session of cedar clearing. A previous workday had focused on building "exclosures" — small fenced areas that white-tailed deer can't get into — with cedar staves stacked around a wire frame. The purpose of the exclosures is to protect seedlings of native hardwood trees, which are becoming rare in the Hill Country because of browsing by unnaturally large numbers of deer. On this revisit, the volunteers filled in gaps in the exclosures and also removed more standing dead cedars (killed by the fire of 2000). After a few hours of work, canyon views were opened up and the exclosure fences had been reinforced.

MCAFEE NATURE PRESERVE: The McAfee Nature Center continues to move forward rapidly with improvements to the preserve owned by NAPA. The organization has also raised money (including a \$10,000 donation from Lower Neches Valley Authority) to buy and renovate the house near the preserve which will house the nature center. The organization has bought another house from **Megan Biesele** and leased it to an gardening and herb growing store, which will help draw tourists to the center. Birding events are ongoing at the preserve on the first Saturday of each month. A circular trail has been added on the preserve and the nature center is seeking grants for signage and a bird observation platform on the preserve. **Christine Sanders** also reports that high school classes at the preserve were very successful last year and Woodville's new superintendent wants to continue and expand them.

PRICHARD PRESERVE: **Natha Taylor** reports that little bluestem and Indiangrass are increasing at the preserve. NAPA volunteers hope to use hay from native prairies in the area to introduce more grasses and wildflowers.

PROTECTING OUR LAND

As more of Texas becomes urbanized and altered, it is ever more important that we continue to preserve the best of Texas' natural landscapes, including forests, wetlands, and prairies.

Please renew your membership now and consider making an added donation to help us meet the challenge of preserving more land for future generations of Texans to enjoy and appreciate.

In addition, NAPA's 69 existing preserves desperately need the time and efforts of members to maintain the land and enhance and restore habitats. Please contact **Katherine Goodbar**, stewardship director, at 214-823-1848 or **David Bezanon** at 512-804-1981 to get involved with NAPA's preserves in your area.

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MEMBERSHIP OR GIFT FORM

To: Natural Area Preservation Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 162481
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