



# THE PRAIRIE PERIODICAL

FALL 2016

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## HEADLINER



**THE CHRIS DUARTE GROUP**

# BANDS FOR LANDS 2016

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Our first annual Bands for Lands was a success, especially considering the community was in the throws of another wildfire. It featured local talent, including Mark Jungers Band and Chubby Knuckle Choir, as well as Austin based Carolyn Wonderland as headliner. This year, we have twice the line up and another silent auction; but this is also a party: our 15 year anniversary and we're inviting you all out to enjoy the music for free! VIP tickets are for sale at Eventbrite.com for \$100 each, which includes special seating on the lawn near the stage, food, two drinks and other goodies. Our venue and sponsor, Neighbor's Kitchen & Yard is donating a portion of their food and drink sales to us. Buy a hat or a t-shirt and our signature Prairie Tea cocktail—available the entire month of October, with \$1 from each sale going to PPLT. And it's not too late to make a silent auction donation or take advantage of the many advertising benefits of being a Bands for Lands Sponsor, including sponsoring one of the bands and introducing them on stage.

You'll have to come early to hear Chubby Knuckle Choir, kicking us off at 3:30 p.m. and what a way to open a show! Together since 2009, this eclectic band of Bastrop locals is already becoming legendary for their high energy live sets.

"In life and in art, Mark Jungers is a...trailblazing Americana singer, songwriter and musician. Jungers uses a mixture of country, folk, rock and more to get that reality across with soul, conviction and a solid backbeat." says Jim Beal, Jr. and he's an expert when it comes to original Texas music. World renowned and prolific, we are honored to feature this local legend for the second year in a row.

We are also proud to feature a young musician, teen blues sensation Shelby Cheyenne, sponsored by the Lockhart Area Music Association ([www.lockhartmusic.org](http://www.lockhartmusic.org)). Shelby is an impressive multi-instrumentalist but lately has been honing her soulful blues guitar chops. Shelby's sound is not labored, it is timeless and seems to flow naturally. She will amaze you!

Lending eclectic sounds and vast experience to the regional reggae, Latin and world music undercurrents, Don Chani has graced the stage with The Wailers, Ziggy Marley, Sierra Leone Refugee Allstars, Culture, Pepper, The Expendables, and many more. Their new CD is due out soon and we're hoping to get a sneak peak. One band member is a native Bastropian and he challenges you to come out and guess which one he is!

The Peterson Brothers, also Bastrop hometown heroes, possess a uniquely modern blend of blues, soul, and funk. Alex, 17 and Glenn Jr., 19, have grown up playing together. Having opened for greats such as Gary Clark Jr., Los Lonely Boys, B.B. King, Willie Nelson, Buddy Guy and more, the Peterson Brothers now hold their own with a standing room only weekly residency at Austin's famed Continental Club.

We landed The Chris Duarte Group as our 2016 headliner, another Austin favorite blues/rock band. Even while on his 8-week summer tour, Chris took the time to talk with us about the event and express his gratitude for being included. Chris has toured all over the US and internationally for over 20 years and is described by his record label as having "emerged on the scene out of Austin in the early 90's and gained notoriety after wowing a packed room of industry insiders at the South X Southwest convention." His music "aptly showcases many sides of this brilliant artist in the context of high energy blues rock with moments that bring to mind legendary artists as diverse as Stevie Ray Vaughan, Robin Trower, Jimi Hendrix and Eric Johnson." His set closes Bands for Lands 2016, starting around 9:30 p.m.

This is also our call for assistance—sponsor the event or one of the bands, donate a silent auction item, make connections for us with sponsors you know, or volunteer at the event or at one of our preserves another time during the year. Most of all, come out and enjoy yourself—get to know PPLT and the work we do in our communities. Enjoy some amazing music and food and come back for more! (*Diane Causey*)

## WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS

By Larry Gfeller

From May 26-27<sup>th</sup> over thirty homes in Tahitian Village flooded. The Bastrop area received as much as 9½ inches of rain in those two days. Water forced the closing of Riverside Drive adjacent to the Colorado River Refuge (CRR) shortly thereafter, as three flood gates at Mansfield Dam remained open for days. Given that Tahitian Village is in a 500-year flood plain, this was clearly an unusual event. Parts of the Colorado River Refuge have been ravaged, not only by the May 2016 flood, but also by three others that all occurred within the space of a year's time. All trails on the property were once interconnected; no more. Serious erosion has truncated them all, one from the other. Baja Cliff-hanger Trail has all but dropped into the Colorado and Across the Creek Trail has been reclaimed by Mother Nature. Raging waters on Dragonfly Trail have moved one foot-bridge completely off its concrete moorings. The pathway which runs by the riverbank along Two Bridges Trail is completely compromised by erosion.

Dragonfly Trail has remained open, although parts are marked with caution tape. Austin Greenwell, completing his



Riverside Drive is now open.

Eagle Scout Project as a member of Troop 188 assembled a work crew to reopen the paved All Access Trail. "This is the only paved trail available to handicapped visitors," Austin says. "This trail is a beautiful sight and



Scout Austin, hard at work.

scouting buddies, members of a community honor choir, Tahitian Village residents and volunteer firemen from the Bastrop Volunteer Fire Department. The group removed muddy debris from the trail and three downed trees.

Two additional Eagle Scout projects are in the works to repair the damaged bridges on Dragonfly Trail. PPLT has also applied for technical guidance from the National Park Service through their Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. If granted, they will help us determine trail reroutes and repairs as well as prepare for future impacts with the ability to bounce back efficiently and avoid the level of destruction we've recently experienced.

So while it doesn't seem PPLT is doing much to open up damaged trails at the CRR, we are doing the best we can with the limited staff, volunteers and financial resources we have. That we can guarantee! Visit [www.pplt.org](http://www.pplt.org) for up to date trail info.



Washout in progress at CRR.

*The mission of Pines and Prairies Land Trust is to protect natural and cultural resources and promote sustainable agriculture through education and preservation of open space in Central Texas.*



Some fruitlessly strive for recognition; others let it find them. In 2007, Albert and Wilda Pecore protected their property with a conservation easement administered by Pines and Prairies Land Trust. On May 19, 2016 they won the TPWD Lone Star Land Steward Award for the Post Oaks region. This is the most prestigious private land conservation award in Texas. The award is a tribute to excellence. Bert admits his motivation for farming was like most others in the beginning. Sixteen years ago, Albert & Wilda Pecore saw cattle as the object and land as the tool. Today, it's the other way around.

The 196 acre property contains natural riparian habitat, mixed grass prairies and 38 full acres of native little bluestem, interspersed with oak and pecan trees. You might say this all happened by accident. As a retired architect from Houston, Bert's insatiable curiosity led him on a journey of study and experimentation. He and Wilda made a solid team, working to improve the land together. For centuries the land had sustained itself while providing for the needs of humans. The Pecores set out to restore that healthy natural state. It took time, patience and effort to turn the tide. Today, without the beneficial grazing of bison, the Pecores run a small herd of cattle on sixteen separate pastures, carefully rotating the stock to stimulate the

growth of varied species of native grasses.

Working the land is a full time effort for the couple who rely on minimal outside help. Over the years, Bert has become something of an expert on native grasses, keeping his eyes open along roadways and ditches for healthy remnants. He even maintains a small nursery where new transplanted species are nurtured. With the help and expertise of the Wildlife Habitat Federation a blend of native grass seeds has been drilled into pastures that need rejuvenation. This husband/wife team actively plants annual cool season rye and legumes in unrestored pastures to prepare them for conversion. Besides their bluestem meadows, the Pecores have successfully introduced switchgrass, Indiangrass, plains bristlegrass, prairie wildrye, eastern gammagrass and even big bluestem.

In the business of land conservation there are no Emmys or Oscars; the Lone Star Land Steward Awards come pretty close though. Pines and Prairies Land Trust is quite honored to work with this inspirational couple!

By Larry Gfeller



Bert and Wilda, the year their conservation easement was signed.

## Volunteer Appreciation!



Pines and Prairies treated volunteer friends to a soiree at Neighbors Kitchen & Yard in Bastrop in May. Raising a glass to volunteers was our purpose, but we were also celebrating PPLT's 15th year. The gathering was at once eclectic and familiar, old friends from different walks of life swapping stories and opinions with initiates. Past board members, rich in history and experience, provided perspective: Joan Russell, Priscilla Jarvis and Smitty Covey moved easily through the crowd.

Like most adolescents, PPLT has experienced many changes in 15 years. We no longer operate from basements & closets, the organization's portfolio of properties represent a significant responsibility to local communities and, of course, we have a viable network of volunteers to help us achieve our objectives. There is no question, we've come a long way. As the setting sun slowly melts into a puddle of liquid gold, what can be better than hanging out at the river, celebrating a birthday with friends?

## NOTES FROM THE PRESERVES

### COLORADO RIVER REFUGE

- ◆ **TRAIL CLOSURES:** Most of the trails at the CRR have been damaged from flooding (see article, page 3), however Dragonfly Trail is open as well as the All Access Trail. We will continue to work on opening remaining trails and will post it on our website.
- ◆ **NATURE CLASSES:** Thanks to our newest Board Member and resident herpetologist, Bill Brooks, the Spring Nature Class got a special treat in April when they took a field trip to the Texas Reptile Zoo. Everyone enjoyed learning about native and exotic reptiles and their different habitats. The trip was especially entertaining because we went at lunchtime...that is lunchtime for the snakes and giant monitor lizards! We also learned about how some of the animals hunt and about how the animals can suffer from nutritional deficiencies if they're not properly cared for in captivity. TRZ has many animals that were rescued and rehabilitated and they are all now thriving at the zoo. We look forward to returning again next year. [www.texasreptilezoo.com](http://www.texasreptilezoo.com)
- ◆ **Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 Nature Classes:** After much thought, PPLT and the nature teachers decided to replace the fall 2016 nature classes with a field day and bio-blitz at Yegua Knobbs Preserve (date to be determined). Low turnout and no-shows drove the decision, with the idea to regroup, engage more community groups and devise an online system for scheduling and confirming attendees. "Our teachers provide stellar programs that take preparation and time—which they are giving to us because they believe in educating youth about nature and the outdoors. To expect our teachers to continue to provide this caliber of program and then have no one show up to participate just isn't fair to anyone. We simply need to take a step back and regroup," explains Melanie Pavlas, PPLT Executive Director. Look for a survey near the end of the year to provide feedback on upcoming changes.
- ◆ **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PROJECT:** PPLT was chosen as a recipient of the NPS' Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program for 2016-2017. We will be getting assistance with trail repairs, rerouting, and formulating a plan for long term maintenance and expanding our programs. Evaluation of needed trail repairs and rerouting will start in November.



### YEGUA KNOBBS PRESERVE

- ◆ **YKP SPRING FIELD DAY:** In early May, PPLT opened up YKP to the public. Over the course of the day, interested plant specialists, several wildlife photographers, and sundry master naturalists and PPLT board members enjoyed the beautiful scenery and weather. Stay tuned for information on the Fall 2016 field day and bio-blitz!

- ◆ **WILDLIFE RELEASE:** (by Diane Causey) On the banks of the frog pond at dusk gathered volunteers from PPLT, Wildlife Rescue, Inc. and various other invested individuals as well as the native wildlife waiting for release. These animals were carefully stewarded on the final leg of their journey, just as they had been from the day they were rescued and cared for by a network of loving individuals. PPLT regularly partners with

Wildlife Rescue, Inc to provide a forever home for these rescued animals.

[www.austinwildliferescue.org](http://www.austinwildliferescue.org)



## YEGUA KNOBBS, CON'T

- ◆ **YKP Loo:** PPLT received a grant from the Trull Foundation to purchase and install an E-loo on the preserve (a composting toilet). Work on the project will start this fall. Special thanks to the Trull Foundation as well as George Witta (SWSLoo, Inc. in Elgin), for offering a discount!  
[www.trullfoundation.org](http://www.trullfoundation.org) [www.swsloo.com](http://www.swsloo.com)
- ◆ **PUBLIC HUNT:** Both YKP and Billig are included in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Public Hunt Program this year. Dove and feral hog hunting are allowed during the first split of dove season (through November 6th) for hunters with youth only. PPLT feels it's important to offer a range of outdoor access activities to the public, especially for Texas youth.
- ◆ **TSU STUDY:** A Master's student from Texas State University is conducting a comprehensive plant survey at YKP this year. We will share the final list when we get it.
- ◆ **ORIENTEERING, METEOR SHOWERS AND OTHERS:** Cristin Embree, PPLT board member and professional archaeologist has been busy at YKP hosting a Boy Scout orienteering class, a meteor shower watching event and will soon host cultural resources training for area teachers. Stay tuned for other outdoor opportunities at YKP!



## BILLIG RANCH

- ◆ **ALUM CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (ACWMA):** (Larry Gfeller) Education and outreach is part of our purpose. Engaging private landowners in practicing conservation on their own property is a force multiplier. This past May, Pines and Prairies Land Trust addressed members of ACWMA, a local TPWD-organized group dedicated to preserving privately owned Houston toad habitat around Bastrop County. Seems they were hungry to learn more about native grasses and how to improve the health and vitality of their own land. Of course, native bunch grasses, along with ponds and pine forests, are preferred habitat for the endangered amphibian. They not only wanted to learn but they wanted to see a restoration project in progress. . . a perfect opportunity to show off our Billig Ranch restoration project. The day was full of promise, with a morning seminar given by representatives of Wildlife Habitat Federation, TPWD and PPLT (all partners with PPLT on the Billig restoration efforts), and an afternoon tour of the Ranch. Overall, meaningful connections were made that day—potentially important connections that raise the visibility of PPLT & WHF in the minds of ACWMA members. We have plans this fall to plant additional native forb seed and milkweed seedlings with this group.
- ◆ **FERAL HOG TRAPPING:** PPLT will begin trapping and removing exotic, feral hogs at Billig this fall.
- ◆ **RESEARCH:** Staff and students from the University of Texas—San Antonio are conducting a study on Monarch butterfly eggs, larvae and milkweed species. Phase 2 of the study will gather data on impacts to habitat by certain disturbances, starting this fall. A Sam Houston State University professor and students completed a study on two parasitoid wasp species at Billig this summer. A list of observed insects will be shared soon.



## **WELCOME ABOARD!**

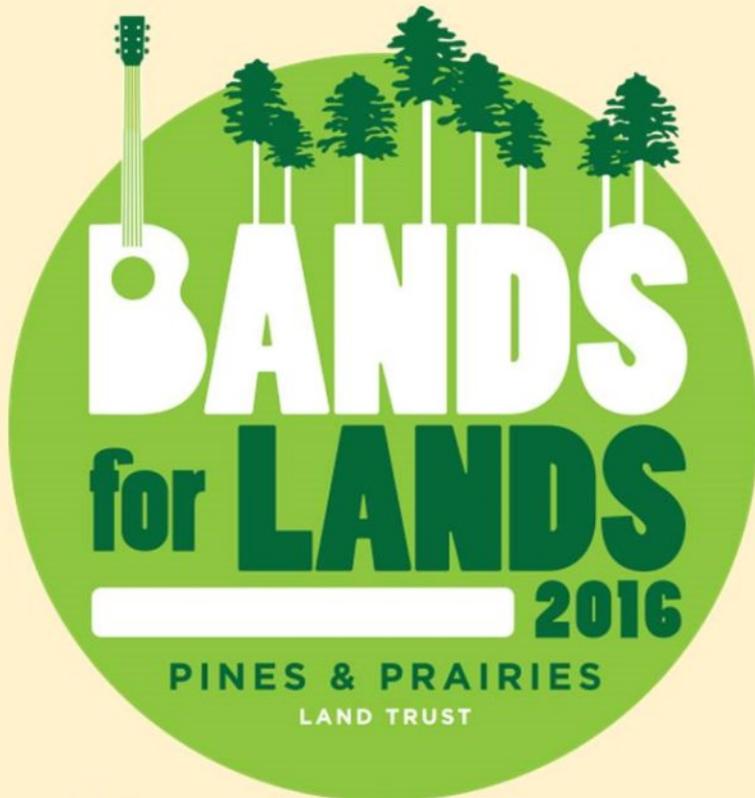
**Jeanne McConnell, Bastrop County.** Jeanne is retired from the environmental field and currently works part-time as a personal assistant for an Austin Physicist. She is also a Master Naturalist. She has served on several local boards and recently stepped down as treasurer from one. In her spare time she loves to nurture and watch nature, hike and hang out on her Catio. In October 2015, she completed a 500 mile hike/pilgrimage between France and Spain. She's proud of her grandson who just became a US Marine.



**Bill Brooks, Bastrop County.** After 26 years, Bill retired from the staff of the University of Texas in the Biopsychology Dept. Bill is a life-long biologist and has served on the board of the Bastrop County Audubon Society, The Lost Pines Master Naturalists and the Horned Lizard Conservation Society. Bill currently works as a Naturalist for McKinney Roughs LCRA Park, is a fishing instructor for Buescher State Park, and teaches Nature Classes for PPLT.

**Diane Causey, Eastern Travis County, Outreach & Preserve Coordinator.** Diane lives in Austin and her husband's family are landowners in Bastrop County. Diane has a background as a healthcare provider (ask her why you should floss) and currently works as a lab technician at Austin Community College in the historic Rio Grande Campus (don't ask her how the renovation is going). Diane is passionate about science education and land conservation. When she's not working, she enjoys hiking and kayaking with her dog, Fibi, and husband, Mike.





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