

Headwaters Coalition News

Volume 1

October

2007

Message from the Director

Greetings, Friends. Since assuming the role of Executive Director in mid-August, I have met many wonderful, dedicated Friends of the Headwaters, and learned about the great accomplishments that have already been made. Now I am working with our Core Committee (p. 4) and other supporters to plan our next steps. This year we will focus on four key areas: continuing to integrate the Headwaters land and values into the fabric of the Congregation and the University, reaching out to the local community to share the message and experience of the project and the place, creating a master plan that guides ecological restoration and human use of Headwaters land, and developing a long-term strategic plan.

We have much to do, and we welcome your input and your help. Our bi-monthly newsletters will contain opportunities for Friends of the Headwaters to assist with restoration work, help shape the master plan, and more.

Sincerely,

Lacey Halstead

News: Workdays Begin

One of our first projects this year is to enhance and connect the three gateways to the Headwaters land: Blue Hole, the trail beside St Brigid's Oak (by the Avoca Apartments), and the trail around the practice soccer fields.

We will host volunteer workdays over the next several months, starting October 26. Volunteers will remove invasive, non-native plants and debris, improve the appearance of

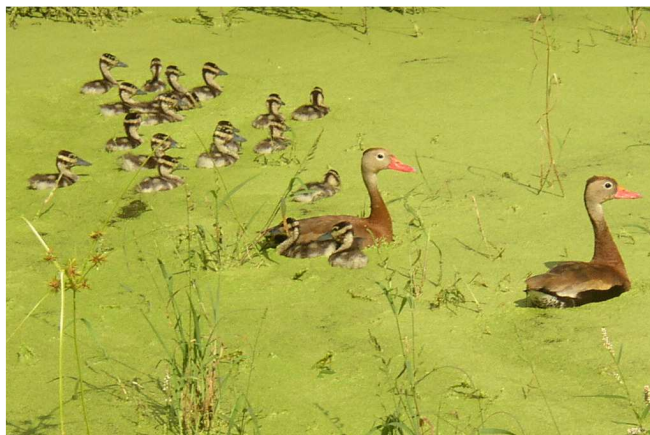


Photo by Paul Barwick

Black-bellied whistling ducks near the Blue Hole

these areas, and begin to delineate property boundaries at the campus interface. We will rely on student labor for the first workdays, along with help from the University Facilities Maintenance Department. Staff from Facilities Maintenance will also make trail improvements around the soccer field that should ensure trails are passable in wet weather.

For those who like to sweat, public workdays will be announced in future newsletters.

Nature Notes: What's Wrong with Non-Native Plants?

In some cases, and some places, nothing. However, certain non-native plants have growth strategies that allow them to out-compete natives, creating a chain of events that decreases the abundance and diversity of plant and animal species. We call these *invasive* non-natives. Invasive non-native plants, like ligustrum, chinaberry, and Chinese tallow can really take over an area. While these trees do provide food for some birds and other animals, they displace native trees that support a

broader array of wildlife, creating a downward spiral in the forest. For example, insect diversity and abundance has been shown to be lower in groves dominated by Chinese tallow than in areas where native tree species are dominant. When insects decline, so do the birds, mammals, and reptiles that eat them.



Ligustrum (*Ligustrum sp.*)

Getting rid of invasive, non-native plants is extremely difficult and expensive. In urban natural areas that receive a constant influx of new seeds, eradication is usually impossible, and ongoing control efforts that minimize pest plants are the best we can do.

You can help. Use native plants or non-invasive non-natives in your garden. For more information on invasive plants and native alternatives, visit www.texasinvasives.org.

There are invasive, non-native critters, too. Next time: armoured catfish.

Headwaters Heritage: The Coahuiltecan

Coahuiltecan is a collective name given to many different Native American tribes who inhabited South Texas and northeastern Mexico before the arrival of European explorers. The Payaya tribe is one group that may have lived around San Antonio, at least seasonally. The Coahuiltecan were a diverse group of peoples, with many different customs and languages; unfortunately, we know little about them today.

These people lived in a highly variable land, where food was not always plentiful. Diets changed seasonally and differed based on a tribe's geographic location. Across the large area inhabited by these peoples, staples included the fruit and pads of prickly pear cactus, mesquite bean flour, pecans, deer, bison, and reptiles.

As with many Native Americans, Spanish settlement contributed to the almost total loss of Coahuiltecan culture. By the 1700s, disease, food scarcity, and warring tribes from the Plains forced many Native Americans in South Texas to move into the Spanish missions, or into Mexican communities nearby, where they were largely assimilated. Modern descendants can be found today, but because they do not have a written language, they are not currently recognized by the U.S. government.

Spiritual Reflections: Student Observations in the Headwaters Land

First year students in Sister Martha Ann Kirk's Prayer and Spirituality class at the



Chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*)

University of the Incarnate Word have started writings and prayers about nature, using the Headwaters land as their inspiration. Here are a few excerpts. Perhaps they will inspire you to head outside and make your own reflections!

"...As we walked, we saw the towering forest of trees, the crystal clear river, and a gorgeous clear, blue sky. As our journey began, we heard the voices and sounds from those around us, but as we got further into our walk, we began to hear the beauty of nature...We heard the crickets chirp, the birds sing, and the water ripple. We sat there and were able to listen to and watch the soft, gentle, and soothing flow of the San Antonio River as it became one with the community, and as we became one with God's divine plan. It felt as if God was talking to us..."
- Alyssa Lozano, Casey Hopper, Ryan Smith.

"Immerse yourself in nature, the trees and the grass...The Earth is our home, our responsibility. We are its guardians; it is our duty to protect it and harvest it. Take this time to reflect: what kind of guardian are you? Do you care for the Earth? Lord give us the strength and the wisdom to preserve the beautiful things you have rewarded us with: the trees, the flowers, the water, the sky, the mountains, and the hills." - *Alejandro Balandran*

Friends of the Headwaters

If you received this newsletter directly, we already count you a Friend of the Headwaters Coalition. Friends are interested in the project and may want to actively support the Coalition with their time, professional expertise, or other resources. If you or someone you know would like to be a Friend of the Headwaters Coalition, email lacey.halstead@amormeus.org.

Wish List

There will be much manual labor going on this year, as we enhance the nature sanctuary. We need tools to help remove invasive plants, plant natives, and build trails. If you would like to help with our wish list, please contact Lacey Halstead at 822-5358, or lacey.halstead@amormeus.org.

10 large tree pruners

5 hand pruners

10 hand saws

30 pair work gloves

2 wheelbarrows

2, 100 ft fiberglass measuring tapes

Trail materials (various)

Headwaters Core Committee

Dr. Bob Connelly, Asst. Vice Pres. for Academic Affairs & Director of Assessment, UIW

Adela Gott, Multimedia Specialist, UIW

Troy Knickerbocker, Web Manager, UIW

Dr. Bonnie McCormick, Associate Professor, Biology, UIW

Ben McPherson, Instructor, Biology, UIW

Margaret Mitchell, Professor, Theater Arts, UIW

Sister Helena Monahan, Congregational Coordinator, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word

Dr. Eloise Stoker, Professor Emerita, Art, UIW

Dr. Sally Said, Associate Professor, Foreign Language, UIW

Board of Directors

Dr. Louis Agnese, President, University of the Incarnate Word

Debbie Brient, Associate Director of Philanthropy, The Nature Conservancy

Dr. Bob Connelly, Asst. Vice Pres. for Academic Affairs & Director of Assessment, UIW

Sister Helena Monahan, Congregational Coordinator, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word

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Headwaters Coalition is a sponsored ministry of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas