

Bright Leaf T-Shirts, Caps, & Patches in Vibrant Colors



Caps \$20



Friends of Bright Leaf
Patches \$5



T-Shirts \$15

To order, contact Sally Scott at 453-2289

Calendar of Events

October Event

Saturday, October 15th, 9:00am - 1:00 pm
Fall Open House and Annual Membership Meeting
for Election of Directors and Officers and
Articles of Incorporation and By-laws changes

November Board Meeting

Tuesday, November 8th, 6:30 pm

December Event - Donor & Volunteer Appreciation Party

Tuesday, December 13th, 7:00pm

January Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 10, 6:30 pm

Monthly Interpretive Hikes

Interpretive Hikes are scheduled for the first Satur-
day and first Sunday of every month. Meet at the
parking lot at the north entrance to the park.

October Interpretive Hikes

Saturday, October 8, 8:30 - 10:30 am
Sunday, October 9, 8:30 - 10:30 am

November Interpretive Hikes

Saturday, November 12, 9:00 - 11:00 am
Sunday, November 13, 9:00 - 11:00 am

December Interpretive Hikes

Saturday, December 10, 9:00 - 11:00 am
Sunday, December 11, 9:00 - 11:00 am

January Interpretive Hikes

Sunday, January 8, 9:00 - 11:00 am
Saturday, January 14, 9:00 - 11:00 am

Thanks to our 2005 Sponsors



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Friends of Bright Leaf SNA
P.O. Box 27921
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Friends of Bright Leaf State Natural Area



Friends of Bright Leaf

Fall 2005

Change in Management at Bright Leaf

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission voted to turn Bright Leaf over to the Austin Community Foundation. The Austin Community Foundation is committed to upholding the will of Georgia Lucas. They will be working with the Friends of Bright Leaf so that we may continue our volunteer work at the park. We anticipate that hikes, workdays, open house events, etc. will take place without interruption as we make the transition.

This change will require changes to the Articles of Incorporation and the By-laws of the Friends group. Please come vote on the changes at the Open House on October 15th.

Check out www.austincommunityfoundation.org.

GEOLOGY AND PALEONTOLOGY OF BRIGHT LEAF

By Rosemary Barker*

The land, rocks, and fossils of our jewel of a State Natural Area are typical of west Austin and beyond. From the Hill Country south to San Antonio and west to the Pecos River, the huge expanse of limestone topography is named the Edwards Plateau. This terrain contrasts sharply with the loamy, dark soils in downtown Austin and eastward in the flat farmland called Blackland Prairie. These two areas have distinct ecologies, especially in plant communities. They are demarcated by the Balcones Escarpment, the north-south line of cliffs just west of and parallel to Mo-Pac in Austin.

The Hill Country and Edwards Plateau, including Bright Leaf, have features recalling their ancient past as part of a shallow sea. During the geologic time known as the Cretaceous Period, 138 to 65 million years ago, dinosaurs and other reptiles (and even protomammals) roamed the tidal flats of most of the central U.S., and modest creatures like mollusks lived in deeper parts of that inland sea. After the sea retreated and the Rockies were uplifted, the eastern half of Texas sloped toward the Gulf of Mexico. Central Texas was left with its high plateau, and our early Colorado River, along with its tributaries, cut into it. Thanks to that eroded topography, we've got our lovely hills, ridges and valleys.

Unlike famous sites west of Austin, no dinosaur bones are known in Bright Leaf. Yet the ancient sediments here represent tens of millions of years (around 100 m.y. ago), from its lower and middle, uneven stair-step layers of limestone of the Glen Rose Formation to its upper, more flat-lying marls of the Walnut Formation (J. Beach, BL Friend). Could Dry Creek, like Barton Creek in Zilker Park, have eroded out its bed just right to expose dino tracks? "Quite possibly," a UT vertebrate paleontologist surmises (W. Langston, 6/05).

Bright Leaf's geology of today is noteworthy in and of itself. In fact, its geology attracted human industry in the last century.

Dry Creek, contrary to its name, normally holds water even in drier weather, thanks to road and yard run-off that supplements the seeps and springs of wet weather. Trail loop #1 crosses the creek by a sizeable plunge pool. Eroded furrows of limestone jointing show up in the streambed above the drop-off and elsewhere. (When one of these furrows is eroded out in a weird

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Open House

Saturday October 15th from
9:00 am until 1:00 pm

Board and Officer Nominations:

Nancy Woolley, President

Steve Gerson, Vice President

Philip Russell, Secretary

Beck Runte, Treasurer

Bonnie K. Mills

Sally Scott

Marshall Johnston, retired botanist & biologist

Joseph Beach, geology enthusiast & trail maintenance expert

Kurt Hill, REI Outreach Coordinator

Letter From the Park Manager

Friends,

As many of you have may or may not heard, Bright Leaf is due to be transferred from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to the Austin Community Foundation. Therefore this will probably be my last address in the newsletter.

In speaking to the transfer, I want you to know that it is the result of circumstances that are far beyond our control. The transfer is primarily the result of continued budget cuts mandated to Texas Parks and Wildlife by the Texas legislature as well as a few other internal considerations by Texas Parks and Wildlife. I must also tell you that this has been considered for some time. The official transfer is not scheduled at this time and the time of the actual transfer is our biggest operational question. I will do my best to notify you as a time line develops but I can say that the window for transfer will be sometime between October 1st and next January. Currently, the staff driven operation of Bright Leaf will focus on the transition of ownership to Austin Community Foundation.

Fortunately I am leaving many of the important programs at Bright Leaf in the best possible care: the dedicated and caring hands of the Friends of Bright Leaf. The friends group has been instrumental in the development and orchestration of most all of the truly beneficial programs at Bright Leaf and I think that under the Austin Community Foundation those programs will grow and prosper.

Over the years, the greatest enjoyment I have had at Bright Leaf has come from working with you, the outstanding volunteers who have done so much at Bright Leaf. Since the beginning I have come to you and asked you do some very hard and difficult tasks and you have performed them admirably. The number of people who have volunteered at Bright Leaf is probably in the thousands and you come from far and wide. There are many individuals and organizations that have been here from the beginning and have come back time and time again. The groups and individuals are too many to name here but you know who you are and you have my greatest appreciation. I want all the volunteers to know that your efforts are not wasted with this transfer and I want you to continue to help move the site in the direction we have been trying to take it. The Foundation will need your help and expertise.

In terms of the future operation of bright Leaf, I can foresee good things under the management of the Austin Community Foundation. Bright Leaf is escaping many bureaucratic restraints and I think the site will receive personalized and focused attention in many badly needed areas. I strongly encourage you to be patient with the Austin Community Foundation. The management of Bright Leaf is not an undertaking that fits easily into the Foundation's mission and objectives. This is not the sort of thing that foundations do. There will be a learning curve on the part of the Foundation and the Foundation will have different objectives in terms of site development. Do not be surprised when you see progress and development in directions different from those that we were trying to take the park. Rest assured the Foundation will be working to make this site available and accessible to the public as the wishes of Georgia Lucas dictated.

Many of you have adamantly expressed concern over my future and employment. I can't thank you enough for your support. I will be transferring to McKinney Falls and will be involved with interpretation, outreach and volunteer coordination. These are areas that McKinney Falls has room to improve and I am looking forward to the assign-

Letter from the Board President

Dear Friends,

A quick recap of the summer here at Bright Leaf. We kicked things off with National Trails Day. Thank you to everyone who helped make that day a success, especially the Central Texas Trail Tamers and REI. Over the summer we had quite a few hikers at our monthly hikes and we had several visits from Austin Nature Center summer camp kids. We held workdays in June and September along the Ridge Oak reservoir cutting out invasive plants. The Highland Park West Balcones Area Neighborhood Association, the City of Austin Water Department, and Keep Austin Beautiful groups worked with the Friends of Bright Leaf on this project. I also had the opportunity to train eight new docents in June. The Friends group is nothing without its volunteers. Thank you to all of our volunteers for giving their time, effort and knowledge.

Now, on to matters many of you may have heard about. In August, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department commission met to make many important decisions. One of those decisions was to turn Bright Leaf over to the Austin Community Foundation. Although the Friends group is saddened to be leaving TPWD, we are reassured that the Austin Community Foundation will follow Georgia Lucas's will. Anyone wishing to learn more about this foundation can go to their website at www.AustinCommunityFoundation.org. Their executive director, Richard Slaughter, assured us that they want the Friends group to continue with its work to support Bright Leaf. All organizations hope to make this transition as smooth as possible. The Friends group will need to make slight changes to such paperwork as by-laws, our mission statement, and other documents. Our membership is invited to the October open house to discuss and vote on any such changes and to vote for three board positions. **Be assured, Bright Leaf will stay a natural area as Georgia Lucas intended.** The Friends group is looking forward to working with the Austin Community Foundation to continue offering hikes, events and workdays.

Lastly, I want to say how very much we have all appreciated working with the TPWD Park Manager, Jeff Hershey. He will be at the park probably through the end of the year, helping us to make this transition. In the future, you may see him at McKinney Falls State Park. We will miss him here at Bright Leaf.

Sincerely,

Nancy Woolley

ment. John Mahan will be staying on site and will continue his duties in the employment of the Foundation.

My experience here at Bright Leaf has been outstanding and will probably be the most memorable of my career and it is due exclusively to your efforts. I have been through some difficult times here at the park and your support has been elemental in keeping things going. Recently, as the prospect of the transfer has come to be realized, the joy I get from working with you has kept me here and working for the health of the site and it's programs. Again, I believe that the transfer of Bright Leaf presents some great opportunities for the site and its programs. Do not give up hope for the site and the objective of making it available to the public. Keep up the good work and thank you for all you do.

Jeffrey Hershey

Membership Application

New Member Renewal

Annual memberships to **Friends of Bright Leaf** provide funds to help preserve, protect and make accessible this treasure. Become a member and help assure that Georgia Lucas' dream will last many lifetimes.

Individual \$25 Family \$35 Supporter \$50+ Sponsor \$100+
Patron \$250+ Benefactor \$500+ Life Member \$1,000+

I would like to help with the following activities: [Please circle all that apply].

Trail/Brush Work Clean ups Lead Hikes Train Docents
Membership Recruitment Bookkeeping Publicity Event Planning
Fund-Raising Desktop Publishing Educate Children Educate Adults
Educate on Plants Educate on Birds Educate on Geology Scientific Studies
Other: _____

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ WORK PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____ (for reminders of hikes and other events)

CHECK #: _____

As a member of the Friends of Bright Leaf, I will support the decisions of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and its management of the park. My signature releases Friends of Bright Leaf State Natural Area and its members from any responsibility for accidents or death as a result of use of the Bright Leaf property. I understand that the Friends of Bright Leaf will not sell or loan my membership information to any other entity.

SIGNATURE: _____ Date _____

Friends of Bright Leaf SNA
P.O. Box 27921
Austin, Texas 78755-7921
(512) 459-7269



MARINE FOSSILS - Flat, half-shell oysters: *Ceratostreon texanum* and a *Lopha species*; smaller curved oysters: *Texigryphaea mucronata*; spiral-shelled snails: *Tylostoma sp.* (Average size of flat shells: 2 in.) . [photo/ID: A. Molineux]

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enough way, incidentally, it can really look like a dino footprint!) A short distance down from the pool, Dry Creek carved out a limestone cliff over a long period of time. From the top of this cliff, off this same loop trail, we can look down into the creek "valley". This is the lowest part of the whole area, and has the geologically oldest rocks.

Whereas most of Bright Leaf is composed of limestone, clay, and a marly mix of both, there are a few exceptions. Above the west fork of #3 from Loop 1, there is a cobbly, orange stretch underfoot. This patch is a rock conglomerate, most likely rubble cemented by the outflow of a former spring (E. McBride, UT geologist).

On the east fork of Trail 3, the larger of two pre-WWII quarrying operations in the preserve has left a long, evenly cut ledge and loose boulder piles. The principal material sought at this site was limestone, probably for road bedding. But along with it is a harder, closely related rock called dolomite which, thanks to the simple [but scientifically puzzling] addition of sea-water magnesium, yields a more durable material than limestone that could be used in building foundations.

In this carved ledge, you can see built-up deposits of a rough, pasty-thick limestone called travertine, made from calcite left by seeping water and held in place by algae. (More travertine is visible along 2222 and 360 roadcuts.) It doesn't look like much around here, but colorful travertine from Italy is sold all over the world for building décor.

If you examine the left-over blocks in this quarry area, you might distinguish dolomite in a few of them by its signature rills, or rounded furrows, left by weathering. Or look for these rills in some of the boulders forming rough rows near Dry Creek by Loop 1. (These blocks were apparently hauled down from the quarry in an early effort at flood control.)

Farther up #3 from this distinctive quarry is a wide, shallow one, about half a mile from the level, rather open part of the trail's highest segment. This quarry may have provided low-

grade, road-metal limestone, but doesn't offer much to see nowadays.

In contrast to any signs of bigger critters, those of marine invertebrates, like clams and oysters, are easy to find in Bright Leaf. Indeed, these little animals have left remarkable fossils all over Central Texas, attracting specialists from all over the world.

Invertebrate "trace" fossils show up best at lower levels of our preserve. On the steep, trailhead descent to Dry Creek, the outcrop you climb over shows the pits, holes, and irregular cavities left by cavernous weathering. Percolating water eroded out finer-grained layers in this limestone, here more likely left by ancient storm deposits than tiny animal burrows. (This kind of weathering can produce impressive caves—is there some underground cave at Bright Leaf, yet to be discovered?) However, not far above where Trail 3 branches off to the east are loose rocks with more dramatic,

penetrating holes, their erosion augmented by ancient tunnels made by shrimps or bivalves.

Actual shell fossils show up best on the raised side of the top, flat stretch of #3. These include casts and molds formed by lithified sediment inside or outside the animals, as well as the shells themselves. Typical Lower (Early) Cretaceous mollusks are here, affirms Ann Molineux, curator of the Non-Vertebrate Paleontology Lab. These include "Texas Toenail" (*Texigryphaea mucronata*), other oysters and clams, and snails [see photo]. Local representatives are displayed in our parking lot kiosk (except the largest shell there is from another period and place).

Above this yellow-stained slope or cliff east of this high point in our trail system, where huge ligustrums hide the boundary of Bright Leaf, is a limestone ridge of the Edwards Formation (J. Beach). This has the youngest rock in the preserve. It supports not only a city reservoir and relay tower but also a very nice, well-established, suburban neighborhood.

[The content of this article was checked by Ro's hubby and other UT Geology faculty.]

Bright Leaf Breaking News: Texas Parks and Wildlife has informed the Friends group that the money donated to the Lone Star Legacy Endowment Fund specifically for Bright Leaf will be turned over to the Austin Community Foundation. ACF will hold the money and invest it until it grows to over \$25,000. At that time, Bright Leaf will begin to receive any income generated by the endowment. As this money grows over the years, this will be an excellent source of funding for the park. We are happy that TPWD understood that this money belongs where the donors intended. Please consider donating to this endowment fund for the long term benefit of the park or to the Friends of Bright Leaf for the more immediate improvement of the area. Both the Austin Community Foundation and the Friends of Bright Leaf are 501 (c) (3) non-profits and donations are tax deductible.

October Event

Official Notice: Elections and Legal Changes and Fall Open House Saturday October 15th from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm.

Our annual Fall Open House gives you the opportunity to get reacquainted with the Bright Leaf after the heat of summer has passed. Join us as we:

- Elect new officers and board members to Friends of Bright Leaf
- Discuss the changes in the park with the exit of Texas Parks and Wildlife and consider changes to the Articles of Incorporation & By-laws necessitated by the change in park management.
- Visit with others who enjoy Bright Leaf as much as you do.

What to Bring: Wear clothes suitable for the weather and wear tennis shoes or hiking boots. Bring a water bottle. **Sorry, no dogs or bikes allowed.**

Directions: Take RR2222 west from Mopac. Go one block west of the traffic light at Mesa. Go left (south) onto Creek Mountain. When it dead-ends in two short blocks, turn right onto Old Bull Creek. The parking lot is on the left.

Friends of Bright Leaf

2004-2005 Board of Directors

Nancy Woolley	President	323-0544
Dave Preister	Vice President	452-3211
Philip Russell	Secretary	458-4518
Beck Runte	Treasurer	894-0182
Barbara Ruud		453-4567
Tom Delaney		266-6490
Steve Gerson		452-9887
Sally Scott		453-2289
Bonnie K. Mills		453-6259

Park Managers

Jeff Hershey John Mahan

Newsletter Editors

Steve Gerson Beck Runte

Life Members

(\$1000 or more)

Greg & Mary Crouch
Ben & Joan Bentzin
Kent Hickson
Laurel Foundation
anonymous
Jane Smoot
Barbara Ruud
HEB (\$500 cash & \$500 in-kind)
Ralph & Patricia Ladd

Contributions

Benefactors (\$500 to \$1000)

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Supporter (\$50 to \$100)

Nancy Woolley
Cleigh Nease
Mary Thorpe Parker
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Special Thanks to:

- The docents who lead hikes for the public every month.
- Contributors and Sponsors of **Friends of Bright Leaf**

The mission of the **Friends of Bright Leaf State Natural Area** is to support the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in conserving and enhancing Bright Leaf and promoting the public's enjoyment and appreciation of this urban jewel. The Friends have no legal authority or responsibility for acts or accidents in this state-owned property.

Our budget is posted on the Friends of Bright Leaf e-group web site -- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fobl/>.