



# RIO BOSQUE NEWS

*A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park*

Center for Environmental Resource Management  
University of Texas at El Paso



No. 31

April 2009

Long-time Rio Bosque enthusiasts remember a time when saltcedar dominated the park landscape. Not any more. When the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission built the wetland project at Rio Bosque in 1997, it cleared away large stands of this non-native tree. With the help of many volunteers, we've continued removing saltcedar ever since.

In recent months, many saltcedars have disappeared. Contributors to this effort included students from El Dorado High School, students from Arizona who visited El Paso as part of the Thanksgiving Alive program, Boy Scouts from Troop 192, staff from Magnolia Coca-Cola Bottling Company, and students in the University of Maryland Alternative Spring Break program. Thanks to all!

Of course, the disappearance of saltcedar is not the whole story. The real story is the way tornillo, or screwbean mesquite, is replacing saltcedar as the dominant tree at the park.

The exceptional summer rains in 2006 helped this process along. We were amazed back then to see tornillos germinating in formerly barren areas. So amazed, in fact, that until last fall we missed the bigger picture: Tornillos had germinated in many

well-vegetated areas, too! For 2 years, those young trees stayed below the radar, until they grew large enough to emerge above the surrounding vegetation.

The shift from a landscape dominated by saltcedar to one dominated by tornillo is also changing patterns of wildlife use in the park. For example, there was a time when Harris's Hawks typically nested in saltcedar at Rio Bosque. Although there are still plenty of mature saltcedars available, both Harris's Hawk nests this year are in tornillos. Also, for the first time, we now have a pair of White-tailed Kites nesting at Rio Bosque – in a tornillo, of course! ✂

## Friends of the Rio Bosque Membership Application

Name: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Bosque Buddy (12 and under)     \$6 <input type="checkbox"/> Student or <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (62+)     \$10 <input type="checkbox"/> Individual     \$15
Address: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Family     \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> Bosque Booster     \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> Cottonwood Commando     \$75-\$249 <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration Patron     \$250-\$499
E-mail: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands Society     \$500+ <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member     \$1,000

## **WATER UPDATE**

Water deliveries to Rio Bosque ended March 1, and we immediately began making final preparations to put the new water-supply well at the park's inlet into operation. There have been some final challenges, but thanks to help from Western Dewatering, High Desert Native Plants, and Environmental & Safety Solutions, we are nearly ready. Keep an eye on the park's water-delivery channel this summer. At least intermittently, it should be wet. ✂

## **WALLED OFF / FENCED IN**

Work on the Border Wall next to Rio Bosque Wetlands Park was completed at the end of January. To see what it looks like, visit the [border-fence page](#) on our website. Still to come: 21 miles of lights along the river between the old Riverside Dam site and the Fabens Port of Entry, including next to Rio Bosque. At this writing in early April, work on the Wall continues downriver from El Paso. ✂

## **PARK ACCESS IMPROVED**

El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 allows access to Rio Bosque via its road along the Riverside Canal, on the east boundary of the park.