

Ecological Restoration Brief

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A Hidden Gem: Warbler Woods

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Tucked away neatly away on the northwest side of San Antonio, Warbler Woods is a quiet oasis amidst an urban center. With identified bird species nearing 300, this gem of a property is privately owned, but open to the public with owner permission. Covering 124 acres of varied habitat with gentle rolling topography, Warbler Woods lies at the convergence of two EcoRegions: Blackland Prairie and Edwards Plateau with South Texas Plains nearby. Owners Don and Susan Schaezler have been engaged in various restoration projects since 1997 when they moved to the property permanently.

In 2005, a wet area deemed "Warbler Pond" was constructed after experimenting with various other water systems. Warbler Pond is the hot spot for bird watching but there are also several trails and a small prairie to explore. The construction of this pond was the first active restoration effort on the property; and today is a very active birding area. It is not altogether unusual to see a rare species on your visit. Bird species including Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*), Connecticut warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) and MacGilivay's warbler (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) have been documented at this property, although they are rare visitors to this area. Other notable species include Cape May warbler (*Setophaga tigrina*), Townsend's warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*), Palm warbler (*Setophaga palmarum*) and Blackpoll warbler (*Setophaga striata*).



Golden Cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*)
Photo credit: Environmental Defense Fund Blog

In conjunction to the many warbler species found, there is a deluge of various other bird species, several mammals, more than a dozen reptile and amphibian species and over 60

butterfly species, including Zebra Heliconian (*Heliconius charithonia*). The flora that support these species numbers is well over 200. Exotic plant species are a major focus of the restoration effort at Warbler Woods, eliminating non-native species when possible. Several volunteer groups are routinely involved in vegetation control including scout groups and student groups from local universities.



Summer Tanager (*Piranga rebra*)
Photo credit: New Jersey Audubon

Warbler Woods was the recipient of the Lone Star Land Steward Award in 2011. This award, given by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, recognizes and honors private landowners in Texas for their contributions to natural resource conservation and management. Since this award, the Schaezlers have had a distinct focus on prairie restoration. Using traditional restoration techniques, many wildflower and grass species have been established. Additionally, there has been some juniper clearing (*Juniper ashei*) to promote the population of Golden Cheeked Warblers (*Setophaga chrysoparia*) that have been seen.

Ecological restoration is a fundamental unit of conservation. The Schaezlers have begun active restoration and are starting to experience success. Warbler Woods is a fantastic outdoor experience for an

expert, a budding naturalist or a family looking to explore. For more information, go to <http://www.warblerwoods.org>

The Society for Ecological Restoration, Texas Chapter promotes ecological restoration as a means of sustaining the diversity of life on Earth and re-establishing an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture.

For more information on TXSER visit: www.txser.org