

## It's a Wrap – 100-year Anniversary Celebrations of Texas State Parks

Article & photos by Anita Westervelt, South Texas Border Chapter

Estero Llano Grande State Park in November wrapped up the Rio Grande Valley's State Parks' 100-year anniversary celebrations with an Outdoor Family Fiesta.

Texas Park Rangers from all over South Texas, State Park Police, Friends of Estero Llano Grande State Park Volunteers and Texas Master Naturalists from South Texas Border Chapter and Rio Grande Valley Chapter were on hand to welcome visitors and talk about local wildlife.



Park Ranger/Interpretive Guide John Yochum readies visitors for a birding walk.



Tables displaying mammal skins and skulls; birds, bills, bones and feathers; insects; reptiles, snake skins and turtles; and a table with plaster casts of animal tracks for painting were set up in an area that fortuitously displayed fresh javelina and raccoon tracks, thanks to recent rains.

*(Left)* Lorie Archambault, South Texas Border Chapter, sets up a birds and feathers display; at far right, John McKee, STBC, mans the insect booth.

*(Right)* Eileen Mattei, Rio Grande Valley Chapter, explains the ringtail to a young visitor, while Robert Hernandez, STBC stands by.



A live bobcat made an appearance on a trail near the visitor center while park staff got ready to welcome guests. Rain also benefited the ponds for visitors joining guided nature walks and birding opportunities. Further afield, archery instruction and demonstrations were offered, and the day's special activities ended with an afternoon bike tour.

The year of celebrations provided a great opportunity not only for the public, but for those who volunteered during the individual events. With so many park rangers on hand at each event,



many Texas Master Naturalists took advantage of the rangers' collective expertise and individual specialties, getting in-depth answers to questions about animal tracks, scat, feathers, plants, birds and other Texas wildlife.

A roving volunteer, driving a park 4-wheeler at the November 18 event, distributed commemorative cans of the Austin-based company's Rambler Sparkling Water that were donated by H-E-B.

H-E-B, one of the nation's largest independently owned food retailers, is the presenting sponsor of the Centennial Celebration and donated \$1 million to help Texas State Parks "engage all Texans in discovering and exploring their parks."

Commemorative cans of Rambler Sparkling Water made a refreshing souvenir.

The yearlong celebrations began January first with First Day hikes at various state parks and continued throughout the year with special events at all 89 Texas state parks.

Events don't end as the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary happenings come to a close. If you have friends and relatives visiting for the holidays, and as you look for activities in the coming year for your own pleasure, check out the websites for our local Texas State Parks:

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/bentsen-rio-grande-valley>

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/estero-llano-grande>

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/falcon>

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/goose-island>

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/resaca-de-la-palma>

Read about the history of Texas State Parks: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/100years/history/>

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