



## Big Fun On the Bayou

*Come to hear the story...*

La Cuenca Cuenta is set for October 7 at Mason Park from 12 to 6 p.m. The festivities focus around the dual meaning of the fiesta's name. "La Cuenca Cuenta" means "the watershed counts" or "the watershed tells a story."



The festival will focus on watershed issues including: the community's impact on local water quality and how to improve it, the importance of native habitats within the watershed and how to reduce the community's impact on local habitat.

The message of the fiesta will be told through music, dance and storytelling. There will be activities especially for children, like T-shirt fish printing, a walk through the wetlands exhibit and planting seedlings.

Last year's festivities brought hundreds of families to Mason Park to participate in the activities.

HCFC and Project Brays will be among the organizations present to tell the many benefits and responsibilities of Brays Bayou.

## CWG Breakfast Slated for Halloween

*Save the Date*

Project Brays will hold a Community Work Group Breakfast on October 31 at the Hermann Park Garden Center from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. Be on the lookout for your invitation. Held twice a year, these breakfast meetings provide a great opportunity for community work group members to come together and learn the latest Project Brays updates, talk to the project team and exchange ideas with other community leaders.

## The Life Aquatic...and Terrestrial

Dozens of animal species live and travel along the ever-changing scenery of Brays Bayou. From fish and birds to amphibians and mammals, animal sightings can occur in the waters and along the banks.

Red shiner, western mosquitofish and sailfin molly are among the most common fish swimming in Brays Bayou. Others include sheepshead minnow, bullhead minnow and Rio Grande cichlid. Larger species include spotted gar, yellow bullhead, channel catfish, bluegill, longear sunfish and striped mullet. A few exotic and less welcome species that have been spotted include the grass carp and snowy pleco.

The snowy pleco is originally from South America, but is making its home in the bayous because of its active role in aquarium life. The fish, also known as a "suckerfish" or "armored catfish" is sold as a fish that will clean algae in fish tanks. When owners abandon their hobby, the fish may be dumped in the bayou. In captivity, snowy pleco may be very small, but in the wild they can grow between 18 and 24 inches. These fish may cause future problems for the bayou in that they dig large holes in the clay banks to create nurseries for eggs, which may impact slope stability.



Other entertaining animals spotted in the waters of Brays Bayou include turtles. The most common are red-eared slider, map turtle, softshell and an occasional snapping turtle. Glenn Laird, manager of HCFC's Environmental Services Department, has seen a large eastern spiny softshell turtle swimming upstream in the concrete channel of Brays Bayou between Chimney Rock and Hillcroft. He believes the turtle was on its way to the old Brays channel in the Braeburn Country Club.

Moving from aquatic to terrestrial life, a variety of animals can be seen along the banks of the bayou. Amphibians and reptiles are among the smallest terrestrial animals living among the grasses. Everything from the northern green treefrog to green anole and ground skink can be found in the grasses. There are a couple species of snakes that inhabit the areas around the bayou, but most are reclusive. The most common are the Texas rat snake, diamondback water snake, eastern hog-nosed snake, rough earth snake and Gulf Coast ribbon snake.



The animals that are easiest to spot are probably the birds. There are several species that live along the bayou, including the mourning dove, kill deer, gull, common grackle, American crow, cattle egret, anhinga, rock dove or pigeon, great egret, snowy egret, double-crested cormorant, pied-billed grebe, great blue heron and yellow-crowned night heron.

Some of these birds are still very skittish around humans despite the urbanization that's happened along the bayou, but some are adapting well. As an example, Laird points to the great blue heron, which is rarely seen and tends to be very shy, and its counterpart, the yellow-crowned night heron, which can be seen walking and flying around neighborhoods day and night.

Also to be spotted are eastern fox squirrels, eastern gray squirrels, common raccoons, Virginia opossums and eastern cottontail rabbits. So the next time you visit the bayou, keep a watchful eye for the many natural inhabitants living in and around its flowing water.

## CONSTRUCTION

*Snapshot*



Construction teams continue their work along Brays Bayou. The channel modifications from the mouth to Lawndale continue on Segment 2.

## RUNNING

*for the Bayou...*

The second annual Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy Fun Run and Walk will take place on Oct. 14, beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending with the dedication of the Rafferty Memorial.

There will be an adult 5K run and 5K walk and a family 1K walk. Those interested in participating can find more information or register at [www.wwgc.org](http://www.wwgc.org). First, second and third place awards will be presented for each race.

According to Howard Sacks, president of the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy, funds raised by the events will be used for trees, irrigation systems and landscape at Willow Waterhole Park.

At the conclusion of the run and walks, WWGC will honor Jack Rafferty, who was the first flood control engineer for HCFCD. "He was a great visionary with regards to modern day technology," Sacks said. He added that when Rafferty was actively involved in the 1930s he was already mentioning stormwater detention basins and combining purposes for the bayou. WWGC will present a thank you to his family at the dedication.

This is the second fun run WWGC is hosting. Last year, they had close to 100 participants and raised more than \$8,000 for the park.

"There is no better way to discover this very significant happening than to participate in our fun run," Sacks said.

## Brays, Bray's or Braes?

*"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet."  
– Romeo and Juliet (II, ii, 1-2)*

As Harris County Flood Control District's historian, Gary Garrett is asked many questions regarding the numerous bayous flowing in and out of Harris County, but the most common question regarding Brays Bayou is, "What is the correct spelling of Brays?"

Unfortunately, there is no definite answer. To date no documentation has been found that establishes when the bayou was first christened and states the name and exact spelling to settle the frequently debated topic.

"The name of this bayou has been spelled differently in many documents, but 'Brays' is by far the most common spelling. All three spellings date from at least the 1820s," Garrett said.

The oldest official document the historian cited is the April 1837 Harris County Commissioners Court minutes referring to the bayou as "Brays Bayou." More recent examples include two street maps from 1913 and 1935 that label it the same. Another authoritative source is a U.S. House of Representatives document from 1937 that also spells the bayou's name "Brays."

However, the Houston City Council minutes from August 2005 label it as "Braes." There are also several roads, such as North and South Braeswood, and subdivisions that carry the same spelling.

Very early documentation of the bayou's name comes from journals kept by two brothers, J.C. and Edward Clopper. In January 1828, the brothers wrote about selecting land at the intersection of Brays and Buffalo Bayous. In his first entry, Edward called the bayou "Brays Bayou." In his entry the following day, he labeled it "Braes Bayou." His brother the same day called it "Bray's bayou."

Garrett does caution that spelling in the 19th century was a discretionary point. For example J.C. spelled the town at the junction of the two bayous as "Harrisburg," while Edward labeled it "Harrisburgh."



## SPOTLIGHT on Our Community

Starting September 30, members of the Project Brays team can be spotted at parks along the bayou and are available to answer residents' questions. The teams will be at Arthur Storey Park on Sept. 30 and Oct. 21 from 8:30 a.m. to noon. They will be at La Cuenca Cuenta at Mason Park on Oct. 7 from noon to 6 p.m., and at the Willow Waterhole Fun Run on Oct. 14 from 8 a.m. to noon at Willow Waterhole Park. The teams will be on location to inform residents of the many benefits of flood damage reduction projects.

## Contact Us

We welcome your feedback!

If you have questions, please e-mail us at [info@projectbrays.org](mailto:info@projectbrays.org) or call the Project Brays Hotline at 713-316-4820.

For up-to-date information, you can also visit the Project Brays website at [www.projectbrays.org](http://www.projectbrays.org).

