

# Improvements Galore

*Daniel Price, Natural Resource Manager*

As the natural resource manager, I expect the ever-changing features at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge to evolve and adapt, just as many wildlife species do. Having that understanding helps me realize that we, as humans, must also adapt and evolve. In many cases, we adapt due to technology, new ideas, or newly available materials.

Many of you may have noticed changes to our infrastructure—both large and small—throughout the property. It is our goal to build on existing ideas and concepts, making them stronger and, in some cases, bigger and better. For many, the first change that comes to mind is the recently reconstructed boardwalk. That project has certainly been a great improvement over the previous structure and a perfect example of making an existing concept bigger and better. The previous boardwalk had been built primarily of wooden poles sunk into the marsh, assorted framing, and wooden decking.

After continual exposure to the elements, the boardwalk had seen better days. With a different approach in design and the use of new technologies, the “new” boardwalk should last much longer. The boardwalk is now constructed with a metal frame placed on concrete piers, topped with lumber that should better handle the adverse weather conditions to which it will be exposed.



*Garrett Fannin (left) and CJ Aitken attach deck boards to the first Canyon Ridge Trail bridge. FWNC&R Photo.*



*The third—and final—bridge completed. FWNC&R Photo.*

We are using this same concept throughout the rest of the property, but on a smaller scale. When we plan in-house infrastructure repairs, replacement, or installation, we try to think about longevity and future maintenance needs. Much of the infrastructure throughout the property, from bridges and benches to signage, is experiencing the same degradation as the old boardwalk. We are assessing

and prioritizing some of the smaller infrastructure projects and are slowly transitioning from a wooden to a metal framework standard. Many of the existing structures that were built of wood have lasted a very long time, some upwards of 20 to 30 years, but we anticipate that by upgrading to metal, these structures will last another 50 years.

Thanks to the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center and a grant from REI, we recently replaced three bridges located on Canyon Ridge Trail with new and improved metal framework bridges. The previous wooden bridges were becoming unsafe for visitors. Although the new design required specialized skills such as welding, our staff has been trained and equipped with the tools needed to get the job done. The concept and design for the new and improved bridges were fairly simple. Driving metal pipe into the ground for a solid foundation, we constructed trusses with angle iron and rebar, which were placed on top of braces attached to the pipe. The final step was to attach the wood deck to the metal frame.

Over the past three years, construction has been completed on four Canyon Ridge Trail bridges (including the three mentioned above) and the 200-foot slough bridge on Riverbottom Trail. We have also installed new benches at several locations throughout the trail system and added an interpretive sign along the Oak Motte Trail. Other new features have included “trail closed” gates and trail counters at several trailheads. All utilized metal frames or were completely constructed of metal. We ask for your patience as we proceed with projects located throughout the entire 20-plus-mile trail system. We hope these projects will improve your experience at the Nature Center.



Dedicating the Oak Motte pollinator sign with Joann Karges.  
FWNC&R Staff Photo.



Working on Riverbottom's Slough Bridge with the  
Natural Guard and Nic Martinez. FWNC&R Staff  
Photo.



Constructing a new trail next to the Hardwicke Interpretive Center with the  
Marine Creek Land Scholars. FWNC&R Staff Photo.