



October 2019

## 2nd Annual Packery Flats Clean Up Removes Over 2,600 Pounds of Trash!

by Kathryn Tunnell

The 2nd Annual Packery Flats Clean Up was a huge success, removing trash and harmful debris from intertidal and marsh areas, as well as along 2 miles of Highway 361. The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) and the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation (CBBF) hosted the event to celebrate National Estuaries Week, a nationwide celebration of our bays and estuaries and the many benefits they provide to local communities. The event held September 21 attracted 142 volunteers who contributed 426 hours of time to remove approximately 2,686 pounds of trash!



**Volunteers carry bags of trash out of the intertidal areas of Packery Flats.**

Packery Flats is well known for its recreational access to Packery Channel and our intertidal and estuarine habitats, but unfortunately as use increases, so does the trash. Top offenders at the clean up were plastic bottles, beverage cans, and plastic bags.

"This year we had twice the amount of volunteers and collected more trash than in previous years," said Jake Herring, Director of Land Conservation at CBBEP. "It's great to see the event growing, and more folks recognizing the importance of this area. Their efforts will go a long way in making sure these critical habitats remain healthy for not only the fish and wildlife, but for everyone to enjoy."

Typically at the end of clean up events, volunteers gather to share interesting finds, which historically has included everything from money to mattresses and baby doll parts. As it turned out this year, one of the most interesting finds was not trash at all. While wading among the Black Mangroves removing trash, volunteers found a big (for the Coastal Bend) Red mangrove! It is common to find Black mangroves mixed in Spartina marsh in the Coastal Bend, but the Red mangrove is more common in the lower latitudes. This was quite a treat to find for our volunteers, and led to all sorts of good discussion - we will definitely be keeping an eye on this one!



Coastal Bend Bays Foundation



If you've never visited Packery Flats Coastal Habitat, you've got to check it out! You will get a taste of almost every coastal barrier island habitat type, from uplands and high marsh, down through the mangroves and *Spartina alterniflora* marsh, and into the tidal flats and submerged seagrass meadows. These areas are used extensively by a variety of shorebirds, wading birds, and other species, as well as their prey, and the productivity has not gone unnoticed. In 1996 the area was originally preserved in honor of the late Mollie Beattie, the first woman director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and in 2001 it was included in the area federally designated by USFWS as critical habitat for the Piping Plover.

**Volunteer cleaning trash from among mangroves.**

Packery Flats Coastal Habitat is managed by the General Land Office with the assistance of several other agencies and non-profit groups, including the CBBEP and the CBBF, USFWS, and Texas Parks and Wildlife. You can join the effort to preserve the Packery Flats Coastal Habitat by leaving only footprints and respecting the surrounding habitat and wildlife. Thanks to the Packery Flats Clean Up, a cleaner, safer Packery Flats is waiting for you!

Funding for this event was made possible by a grant from the CITGO Caring for our Coast initiative. To learn more about the efforts of the CBBEP visit [www.cbbep.org](http://www.cbbep.org).

The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring bays and estuaries in the 12-county region of the Texas Coastal Bend. For more information about the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, contact Kathryn Tunnell at (361)336-0311 or [ktunnell@cbbep.org](mailto:ktunnell@cbbep.org). This report published in October 2019.

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