

Biology 2106: Environmental Biology

LAB 6: Wild Basin

Time to Complete: Part A: (allow 2-3 hours for the self tour or guided tour)
Part B: (2-3 for the trail maintenance participation)

Introduction

There are many wonderful parks and nature trails in Austin. Wild Basin is one of the best. The mission of the site is to allow citizens (both young and old) to explore and enjoy the natural beauty of the Hill Country and learn about natural history and the animals and plants of the Hill Country. Wild Basin has many different types of programs- from school children (no- not you) to senior citizens. They even have a Halloween event that is fun for the whole family!

There are two parts to this lab. In **Part A** you will either take a guided or self guided tour of the basin and write a 1 page paper based upon the tour (see below).

In **Part B** you will learn more about how humans affect their recreational areas by taking part in a Trail Maintenance work session. Here you will learn about the affects of human erosion on a system of trails and help out the Basin at the same time. Parts A and B do not have to be done on the same day- but can be selected by you to fit in with your schedule.

You will wish to visit their web site at <http://www.wildbasin.org>. This will have all the information you will need in terms of their specific calendar of events. Please make sure you familiarize your self with the dates available for Trail Maintenance and the guided tours - times are somewhat limited and you must complete the activities by May 11th.

Location

Wild Basin is located just east of 360 (805N. Capitol of TX Highway). The entrance is 1 mile No. of Bee Caves Rd or 3 miles So. Of the Loop 360 bridge over Lake Austin. Their hours are M-F 9-4:30 pm, and Sat-Sun 8am-3pm. Their phone number is (512) 327-7622.

Part A. Guided Tour

Wild Basin has a series of guided tours that will teach you about the natural history, flora and fauna of the area. These tours generally take 2-3 hours. There are various tours that are appropriate for this class, and they run these tours throughout the semester. A specific list of all the tour times and dates can be found at their web site under the calendar section. Tours that would be appropriate for our class include:

Native Plants, Moonlighting, Wild Basin Walk, and Wild Basin Walk at Dust., and any Spring Tours

The only limitation to these guided tours is 1) they are typically held on the weekend, and 2) you need to call or email to make a reservation in advance. I strongly urge you to take one of these tours if you can- they are well worth the experience. Please visit the website and look at the available dates. If you cannot make any of these dates, please skip down to the **self-guided** section of Part A.

Each tour cost \$3.00 per adult and \$1.00 for a child (under 5 are free). The number for a reservation is (512) 327-7622 or you can email them at hike@wildbasin.org. You will want to go to the web site, pick the tour that interests you and fits with your schedule and make your reservation.

After you go on your tour (please staple your basin receipt to your homework), you will write a 1 page paper describing what you learned. This will vary depending upon your tour- ex. In Autumn in the Basin, done in the fall you learn how animals adapt to winter, while the Moonlight Tour discusses the natural history of the area. You may wish to take notes as you go along. If they give out a brochure on the tour please staple it to your homework as part of the lab.

Self-Guided Tour

If you could not make the guided tour, you may go to the preserve and take the 1.5 mile self guided tour. You can pick up a brochure at the visitor center. This self-guided tour will loop out to the falls and follow the creek-bed. There are ten stops along the way. Please write a one page paper describing what you observed about the tour and the trails. Are the trails in good shape or do you see signs of erosion? What did you learn about native plants and animals along the way? What natural history information did you learn about the falls? Please attach your tour pamphlet to the homework as part of the assignment.

Part B. Trail Maintenance at the Preserve

There are several reasons why I want you to participate in one of the Trail Maintenance work sessions. First of all, visitors are usually unaware of the damage that can be done through simple erosion. When visitors stray off of trails, when kids climb up fragile embankments, or pick flowers etc, the affects accumulate over time. What was once a nice trail with pristine views can quickly evolve into a dusty, barren path with introduced pest species such as tickweed, and beggar's lice. Some of the state parks are now grazed by cows. If you go to these parks (such as McKinney Falls State Park) you will be amazed by the amount of damage (and cow dung) in the park. This is why it is so damaging is when we bring in our pets into natural areas. It not your dog per se- but the 1000's of dogs over time. By working on one of the trails and combating the erosion caused by visitors, it will give you an appreciation for the fragility of the ecosystem and the need to be responsible. Second, you will hopefully learn a little about the actual process of erosion and how to repair erosions to stream, hills or walkways. Finally, part of being a good citizen in the community, means giving back to the world in which you live. By working on the trail I hope you appreciate the types of natural resources we have available to us here in Austin.

For this part of the assignment, you will need to get on the Wild Basin Web site and find a trail maintenance time that works best for you. Sign up for the time (see the web site for instructions). Once you have completed the trail maintenance day you will turn in the following:

- a) verification that you attended the session
- b) a one page description about erosion and how you can prevent it. Use your own work as your example. For instance, if you worked on erosion along the creek, how did that part of the trail become eroded and what were the actual steps your group followed to fix the problem
- c) a map of the wild basin indicating which part of the trail your group worked on .

I hope you enjoy this lab- both the tours and the maintenance. Wild Basin has always been a favorite of our family.