

The following report was prepared by:

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Monday 28 April 2008

6:15 pm – 9:30 pm

Temperature: 75-66° F

Upon arriving an assistant and I began looking for signs of snake activity in Buffalo Creek near the Cabana on Hill Forest Drive. The inspection was focused on the eastern boundary of the property due to its proximity to White rock Creek and its affiliated habitat.

While in Buffalo Creek I walked in the stream and along its edges while my assistant walked along the shoreline. The walks were at a slow and deliberate pace to allow investigators the opportunity to encounter any snakes while reducing the amount of factors that could disturb snakes thus preventing them from being detected. This included carefully searching the immediate location above and below the surface of the water before taking a step while taking care to prevent clouding the water with detritus.

Along with the aforementioned locations searches were also conducted inside the drainage culverts, beneath ideal cover material such as loose concrete, rocks, logs and within tree root networks that were exposed near the banks of the creek. Despite the presence of ideal habitat and sufficient and prey items, no snake were found during the search of Buffalo Creek.

The inspection continued to Trail Lake where a perimeter inspection was made along the shore. During this part of the inspection several turtles (Red eared sliders, *Trachemys scripta*), bull frogs (*Rana catesbiana*) and cricket frogs (*Acris crepitans*) were readily spotted from the water's edge. Various birds and fishes that could also serve as significant predators of snakes were also seen. Herons, egrets, bass and catfish were just some of the birds and fishes found that are known to consume baby snakes.

As the evening progressed I ventured down the embankment to White Rock Creek where I slowly walked along the bank and carefully searched for any signs of reptile activity and found none. A later discussion with two residents resulted in my learning of a frequently seen snake and her location. At approximately 9:30 pm I left the property.

Tuesday 29 April 2008

78-83°F

11:30 am – 3:30 pm

I arrived with another assistant and we went directly to the trail lake area. During the warmth of the day we spotted dozens of turtles comprised of the three following species:

Spiny soft-shell turtle (*Apalone spinifera*)

Red eared slider (*trachemys scripta elegans*)

River cooter (*Pseudemys concinna*)

It should be noted that these turtles do not pose any threat to the health or safety of the residents. Soft shell turtles are notably carnivorous and their presence was not as frequent as the other two species the slider and the cooter. While sliders and cooters will consume prey items they also consume substantial amounts of algae that often contain snails, insects and other invertebrates.

While no snapping turtles were seen they are likely inhabitants of the pond. However, these turtles are often valuable components in a sizable pond such as this one and contribute greatly to its overall ecological health.

With information provided by residents I was able to view the (now legendary) large adult female diamondback water snake. This non venomous snake has been routinely seen by residents and asides from her impressive size I would have to consider her a distinct caveat of interest for the pond.

Given the likelihood of White Rock Creek serving as a source of wildlife I spent some time carefully searching for snakes along the banks, in piles of rocks and jams of wood. During this time the only species of snake found (or seen) was the diamondback water snake. All size classes and sexes were represented in the 12 specimens encountered.

On a slightly different topic, White Rock Creek is an important environmental feature that should be protected from development throughout its course in Dallas County. Walking through the stream revealed many animals not commonly noticed in Dallas such as: kingfishers, freshwater mussels, and foxes. Turtles are abundant in the creek as are some amphibians such as cricket frogs and bullfrogs.

My overall assessment is that residents have been noticing the very abundant (and non venomous) Diamondback water snake (*Nerodia rhombifer*). Due to their aquatic affiliation these snakes are regularly confused with the venomous water moccasin (cotton mouth). However, it should be noted that cottonmouths are known from Dallas County and there does remain the chance that they could at some point appear close to White Rock Creek close to Forest Hill Lane. Fortunately the differences between the non venomous water snake and the venomous cottonmouth are discernable so that anyone familiar with the water snake should be able to detect and avoid the cotton mouth. I would also like to add that the water snake while non-venomous is not friendly. Therefore anyone aware of their social behavior would not likely pick one up or handle one.

In a nutshell, there was no recognized danger or risk to the residents from the presence of snakes. While snakes are likely to remain a presence in the area, the various natural predators help keep their numbers in check.

On Wednesday evening I will not only provide a power point assessment of the property survey, but also a workshop on snake identification. Along with this I will also provide examples of helpful literature and other information outlets pertaining to the identification of snakes in the DFW area. I will also provide information regarding some methods used for trapping snakes and turtles as well as what residents can do to discourage snakes from coming into their property.