

L. pycnostachya is not your normal *Liatris* even though it is a perennial with a corm-like root structure, has tiny lavender-colored flowers, is a magnet for butterflies, and survives in meadows of poor soil, in and around boggy areas, plus rocky gravel roadsides, (and did I mention rock-hard, red clay?) but is the giant among all of them. It is known to grow 3 to 5 feet tall. (see perspective of height photographed next to me, as I'm 5'6" tall). Our local sightings of Kansas Gayfeather bloom in June-July.

Other common names for this *Liatris* are Blazingstar and Button-Snakeroot. The 'snakeroot' name was derived from use of the root structure in treating snake bites, and Native Americans used it also to treat sore throats.

Dorothy Brown Thetford, Class 2001



Photo courtesy of Shirley Lusk taken of the transplanted plants in 2004.

Information from w odum

Not All Blue Jays Look Alike

THINK YOU KNOW YOUR BLUE JAYS?

Blue jays really don't all look alike. I had never given it much thought until I ran across an interesting YouTube video by LesleytheBirdNerd who discusses and shows with photos the differences. You will find it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8PRarNtRt0> However, let me get you started with pointing out some of the differences you should look for.



Look for eye shape, color shades such as dark or light blue or even a purplish tint, markings on the body, including the crest, and on flight feathers. Notice the differences in black lines, markings under the eyes, eyebrows, a black line maybe under only one eye or none at all. Sometimes different jays may have a washed out looking face.

“If you know what to look for, you can readily see that not all Blue jays look the same.”

If you know what to look for, you can readily see that not all Blue jays look the same. To your right below is a still of the three most prominent comparisons in video — Sweet girl, Bug and Mordecai; other photos here were taken from: nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/featured_photo/bird.cfm?pix=Blue_Jay Check it out. Very interesting.



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Article and photos from Brenda Maston

Daytripping

It is summertime in Texas! Can you feel the sweat beads dripping off your brow? Going outside is like stepping into a sauna. So how do you enjoy nature when the weather is unbearable? Pace yourself and stay hydrated.

I live to explore the wild places, so for the next few days I will be riding the rolling hills around our state capital. My shoulders leave the weight of urban sprawl and gnarled traffic behind. After driving for a few hours, I arrive at my first stop, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. This dream of the former first lady is now a reality and through her efforts vast numbers of Native Texas species are showcased. My treat was seeing a red dragonfly for the first time. Have you seen one?

With over 270 acres of pristine habitat the Center has 5 trails, including the Hall of Fame for trees in the Texas Arboretum section. This treasure should be on the must-see list of any Texas Master Naturalist.

The next morning I drove through the Hill Country to a picture of paradise. Disappearing into the woods, I slowly descended following Hamilton Creek. To my surprise, I saw Cypress trees growing in the clear waters of this rippling creek. Crouching under a rock ledge, my eyes cannot believe what has appeared in front of me. I will let these pictures describe it because my words don't do it justice.



Quite impressive



"This is Texas, not Hawaii. Hamilton Pool is spectacular and should be on your list of places to go."

This is Texas, not Hawaii. Hamilton Pool is spectacular and should be on your list of places to go. Swimming is allowed in the pool. Unfortunately for me, I could not jump in and indulge because of bacteria levels. It is best to call ahead and check conditions. You must pre-register online or you will not be admitted to the wilderness area. Permits are not sold at the gate.

Pedernales Falls was my afternoon destination. This naturalist did not understand that rock jumping was a requirement to reach the falls. The river current is very strong and any water walking around the falls is prohibited. That is why you become mountain goat for this adventure. However the beauty of the Pedernales makes the trek worth the fatigue to get there.



Rock Jumping definitely wore down this hiker so after snapping some fantastic pictures I wound my way back to the lower part of the river for a relaxing water treatment. Great place to go tubing!

I made my final park stop the next day at Longhorn Caverns State Park. There's nothing like going underground to beat the heat. My tour guide provided quite a history lesson about how the cave was used by Indian tribes, part of a Texas Ranger rescue, and a speak-easy during prohibition. Today concerts are held underground in some rooms of the caverns. I even got to see a small bat! Longhorn Caverns now has a small population of solitary eastern pipistrelle bats.



This Hill Country road trip has come to an end and your weary traveler has to go back to make more money for her next adventure.

Take some time out for a Texas adventure and if it is just too hot for you, go underground spelunker!