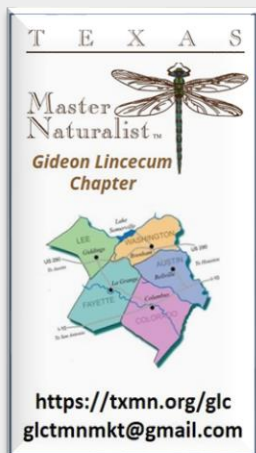


The GLC Tidings

June 2022

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Our Mission

Volunteers dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources through education, outreach and service in our community.

SAVE THE DATES

Board Meeting – 7/1/2022
Chapter Meeting
7/16/2022, Blinn College

Aug 5

AUGUST NEWSLETTER
ENTRY DEADLINE

Send articles or photos to

glcnwsltr@gmail.com

From the President

Sheri Wilcox



Wow! What an incredible month our chapter had in May.

Our volunteers were busy this month.

All of our pollinator gardens were looking fabulous with their displays of spring blooms. Spring cleanups at the gardens had them looking their best. I was impressed by the beautiful and well-marked display in front of the Fayette County AgriLife office in LaGrange. The garden at Winedale was in full bloom for our May meeting. American basket flower was drawing in the pollinators at our garden at Washington-on-the-Brazos.



These and all of our gardens really shine in the spring. Volunteers were busy at our other projects too. We informed the public about the benefits of native plants and the dangers of non-native invasive species at the Honeybee Jubilee and recruited new members at the New Landowners program.

I would be remiss if I failed to applaud our members who participated in the Agricultural Safety Days in Fayette, Colorado, Washington, and Austin counties that wrapped up in May. [thank you note attached] Cumulatively, our chapter touched the lives of 1,000 children through the Agricultural Safety Days and Giddings ISD field day.

Love

Thank You.

Thank you for teaching us about dangerous animals that bite and sting to keep us safe we appreciate it.
miriam

Rebekah Idella
Halle Liliana Keely Haynes
Nicholas Max Morgan Ben
Caydara Sloan R. Paul
Cassi Ximena Connor
Holden Alexander Laylah

From the President (continued)



I hope everyone enjoyed our May meeting at Winedale. Charlotte von Rosenberg's presentation on her 15+-year riparian restoration was inspiring. I know I got some great ideas to use on my own property from her talk. I see a chapter field trip in our future. The three presentations by members of the Class of 2022 were varied and informative, covering habitat gardening for birds, the value of yaupon, and the benefits of earthworms. Thank you to all of our presenters.

Our graduation celebration gave us the opportunity to join together in welcoming our newest volunteers from the Class of 2022. Congratulations to graduates Michelle Bramblett, Mike Morton, Tressie Roark, Matt Holdeman, Debra Salcedo, Frank Michel, Wendy Hiester, Barry Zeluff, Cindy Ferguson, Greg Mills and (not present) Alan Atchley.

Thank you to everyone who jumped in to make our celebration a success.



Connie Shortes Introducing Graduates



2022 Graduates with Buddies

Our July meeting will be held at Blinn College in Brenham. See the website calendar for details. Pat Merkord, President of the Native Prairies Association of Texas, will be speaking on "Grassland Wildlife of Native Prairies and How to Help Protect Prairie Wildlife". Additionally, we will hear from our scholarship recipients. These young people are always a treat. I hope you will be able to join us.

Plans for the annual meeting in Houston on October 20-23, 2022, are underway. Be sure to watch your email in early July for the conference agenda. Current plans are for this conference to be fully in-person. Registration will open in early August. Our chapter will be hosting the photo, art, & media contest. If you would like to assist with the contest, please reach out to me at glctmnpres@gmail.com.

Let me close with a quotation from Leo Tolstoy, which I have borrowed from Cindy Crosby's blog *Tuesdays in the Tallgrass*. I found this quotation intriguing because of Tolstoy's belief that history, for good or evil, is made through the numberless, unremarkable decisions of ordinary people. May our decisions always be good ones.

**"One of the first conditions of happiness is that the link between man and nature shall not be broken."
Leo Tolstoy**

State Information

2022 #TMNTuesdays

January 11 May 10 September 13
February 8 June 14 October 11
March 8 July 12 November 8
April 12 August 9 December 13



#TMNTuesday [#TMNTuesdays \(tamu.edu\)](https://twitter.com/TMNTuesdays)

July 12, 12 CST *Authentic Leadership in Public Service.*

Dr. Kenneth Anderson Taylor will join TMN this July to define authentic leadership and discuss how nonprofit leaders can transmit leadership to other members of the team.



[2022 Annual Meeting \(In Person\)](#)

Put it on your calendar now as we prepare for our 23rd Texas Master Naturalist Program Annual Meeting, an event to gather, learn, and celebrate another year of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. We're preparing this year's meeting as an in-person event at the Omni Houston Thursday, October 20th to Sunday October 23rd.



Order YOURS Today!!!

ANYONE can purchase this plate and \$22 of each \$30 annual plate fee comes directly back to the Texas Master Naturalist Program for continuing our mission.

The plate is available for purchase on the website:

Personalized plate (\$70): <https://www.myplates.com/design/personalized/passenger/texas-master-naturalist/>

Non-Personalized plate (\$30): <https://www.myplates.com/design/background/passenger/texas-master-naturalist/>

Membership Memo

By Chris Morrison



Recording Hours Reminder

When logging hours for state-sponsored things, please use the appropriate opportunity titles.

AT: TMN Tuesdays – for watching live or recorded “TMN Tuesdays” or “Be the Change” webinars

TMN Virtual Volunteer Service – for watching the Virtual Volunteer Fair (live or recorded) and for participating in any of the projects that do not already have a Gideon Linsecum opportunity title.

Service Awards (May Chapter Meeting)

Against All Odds - at least one volunteer hour and 8 AT hours during 2021

58 chapter members received this pin

Initial Certification – first 40 volunteer and 8 AT hours - Four color Dragonfly and certificate

Carol Gaskamp and Vicky Greene



2022 Recertification (lightning whelk)

Lori Buffum
Linda Esco
Julie Itz
B. R. Koehler
Betty Scardino
Dottie Schoeneberg
Swee Leng Rapatz
Jon Watkins
Sheri Wilcox

250 All-Time Hours Bronze Dragonfly

Randy Hegemeyer
Ken English

500 All-Time Hours Pewter Dragonfly

Karen Gardner

Member Profiles

David and Julie Itz

About Us

David, a San Antonio native and Julie, a Houston native, met while students at Rice University and recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. David began his geology career exploring and evaluating lignite, coal and uranium deposits in Texas and the western US. When changes came to the electricity market in Texas, David moved into trading wholesale electricity.

We moved around a bit (Boise ID, El Paso, Farmington NM, & Dallas) before returning to Houston. We bought our property in Washington County in 1978 and ran cattle there until 2011.



Why TMN?

In 2017, we took the Master Naturalist course, encouraged by Ginny Welch (a Middle School classmate of Julie's) because we were interested in learning about restoring our property.

TMN-GLC Projects

In August 2017 we realized that we had only about 3 months to get our 40 volunteer hours before the end of the year, so when we saw an email from Dave Redden, asking for volunteers for a Saturday Workday in the chapter's pollinator garden at Washington-on-the-Brazos, we signed up and then agreed to serve as Project Leaders.

Some Chapter Members find weeding a pollinator garden each month to be boring, but each month always has a surprise for us:

- an interesting spider web,
- a new plant/flower (is it an invasive, non-native?),
- evidence of a visitor (feral hog or armadillo?), and
- park visitors who stop to take photos or ask questions.
- Best of all is meeting other Chapter members and finding out more about their expertise and interests.

Recent Big Trips

Our last big trip was in January/February 2020 to Tasmania & Uluru in Australia and then to New Zealand – a trip that highlighted the consequences of introducing non-native species. The botanist Joseph Banks, a member of Captain Cook's 1769-70 expedition, wrote of New Zealand: "I was awaked [sic] by the singing of the birds ashore....certainly the most melodious wild musick [sic] I have ever heard,....". In 2020 as we walked along trails in several New Zealand National Parks, we noticed that the sounds of bird calls were much reduced from what the European sailors heard in 1770. However, we found that conservation efforts aimed at preserving native plants, birds and mammals are finding success at Zealandia, a former wildlife park located in Wellington, NZ.

Sheri Wilcox

About Me



I was born in California, but raised in Minnesota where I was blessed with the opportunity to spend lots of time outdoors, especially on the water. Minnesota is the land of 10,000 lakes. I met my husband, Duane Clementson, at St. Olaf College (yes, of Betty White and Golden Girls fame). After college and graduate school in Minneapolis (J.D. for me and M.B.A. for Duane), we moved to Houston so we would never have to shovel our way out of our front door again. We have two children, William who is a civil engineer specializing in bridge design, and Elizabeth who is a mixed animal veterinarian. After a career as a tax litigator and advisor, I retired from full-time employment last October, and am enjoying having the time to spend riding my quarter horse mare Ms. Mighty Impression, and learning more about the

natural world.

Why TMN?

I learned about TMN at a New Landowners program. Donna Mueller's enthusiasm for TMN sold me.

TMN Projects

My longest-term project with TMN is Washington-on-the-Brazos. Julie and David Itz are so welcoming. We have a lot of fun trying to identify the plants that pop up and figuring out what we should plant next. My newest project is Teaching the Prairies, which will be a teacher workshop in partnership with the Fayette Prairie Chapter of NPAT.

Favorite thing about being a Texas Master Naturalist

My TMN path has taken me in the direction of prairie restoration. I love spending time with TMNs and others who so willingly share their knowledge and love of the land.

Favorite critter (or plant, insect, herp, fish, bird...):

I have to go with a category of plants – native grasses. They are endlessly fascinating and endlessly frustrating.

Favorite place in Texas

Any place that I can see between the ears of my horse.

Favorite big trips

I have never taken a trip I didn't like. A few highlights – Cambridge University during my junior year of college for its history and academic challenge; Alaska for its magnificent scenery and wildlife; Yellowstone for the same, especially in the snow; Ontario for a fabulous display of the northern lights; and most recently, northern Minnesota for its turbulent waterfalls and rivers during the spring snowmelt, the grandeur of Lake Superior, and the opportunity to revisit the 1918 log house my family once owned on its shore.

Adventures and Observations



Crossing Paths with History — And Ants

By Frank Michel

As a volunteer at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site and a member of the Gideon Linsecum Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists, I found it more than interesting when my path recently — and literally — crossed with both the historical Linsecum and his famous naturalist work with ants.

A fellow volunteer and I, traveling one of the San Felipe gravel walking paths, stumbled across a linear path of chewed leaf fragments that painted a racing stripe of sorts across the gravel. It then meandered for dozens of yards through the surrounding grasslands to a small mound in the sandy soil.

Intrigued, I discovered that it is the likely handiwork of Texas leaf cutter ants, *Alta texana* (Buckley).

They are remarkable critters. Linsecum referred to them as the “Horticultural Ants” because, as he observed, they take leaves into their subterranean nests to supply themselves with food. Not by eating the leaves, but by cultivating a type of fungus on the leaf fragments which then becomes their food source. The leaves are, in essence, the fertilizer for their fungi crop.

In addition to their cultivation talents, these ants are remarkable builders of ant “highways” to ostensibly get their fertilizer into their “greenhouse.” They build these remarkable roads without a blueprint or a road boss. Experts also tell us that they have a caste society on one of the most complex societies in the natural world.

There are a lot of reasons to be amazed by these ants. And some good reasons to be wary of them. Mainly, they are voracious eaters. In Texas, these ants damage weeds, grasses, plum and peach trees, blackberry bushes and many other fruit, nut and ornamental plants as well as several cereal and forage crops, says Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. They also attack pine trees when other green materials are scarce.

The path also leads back to Gideon Linsecum. As readers of this newsletter likely already know, Linsecum, one of the early naturalists in Texas first came to San Felipe in 1835 with a party of fellow Mississippians scouting Texas as a place to settle. With the Texas Revolution brewing, he enrolled at San Felipe in Capt. Moseley Baker’s Company of volunteers.

But friends, knowing of the wife and 10 children back in Mississippi, convinced him to withdraw and return to his family.

Linsecum had Texas in his heart and returned with family in 1848, eventually settling in Washington County where he carried out his life’s naturalist work and famously struck up his relations with Charles Darwin. History records that Darwin himself read Linsecum’s scientific paper on Texas



“Agricultural Ants” (*Myrmica [Atta] malefaciens*) in April 1861 before the Linnean Society of London (zoology).

On Page 31 of that reading, the leaf cutter ants of Texas make a very brief appearance. Darwin wrote the following:

“... In his second letter Dr. Lincecum proceeds to give some account of what he terms the "Horticultural Ant," which appears to be identical with the "Cutting Ant," *Æcudoma mexicana*, Sm., described by Mr. S. B. Buckley in the 'Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia,' 1860, p. 233*; but as his account does not contain any important additional observations, it is here omitted.”

For a brief moment this week at San Felipe, it seems, the paths of Gideon Lincecum and the “horticultural ants” had come full circle.

Additional resources

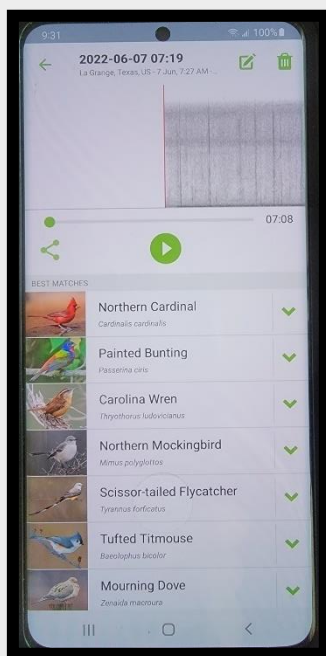
[Atta-texana-Seth-Patterson.jpg \(560x374\) \(agrilife.org\)](#)
<https://citybugs.tamu.edu/factsheets/landscape/ants/ent-1002/> .



Fun with the Merlin app

By Marcia Braun

Merlin is a free phone app for bird identification produced by the [Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology](#). Its newest feature is sound identification – a fun way to learn bird song and discover common birds. However, in a Cornell Lab webinar, the speaker explained that the sound recording identification section was the weakest part; that the most accurate ID’s come from the question and answer section about birds seen.



A friend and I are doing some comparisons with the sound function. We walked together around a La Grange neighborhood with some varied habitat. There were yards with trees, open grass areas, a sheep pen, and a wooded area near a pond. We simply had our Merlin sound ID apps turned on as we walked. We discovered right away that her Apple iPhone picked up more birds than my android Samsung S21 Ultra. “Results may vary.”

In our yard, my husband and I had discovered early on that Merlin can make recordings of some species without identifying them. We became aware of the presence of two Brown Thrashers this winter when we heard them calling loudly and distinctly. We went out looking for the singers and managed to photograph one. Then we turned on Merlin. It identified the Northern Cardinals, Carolina Wrens, White-throated Sparrows, etc., but ignored the thrashers, even though we could hear one distinctly on the playback. When we checked the Merlin Bird pack

for this area, Brown Thrasher was not included because it is all based on local eBird reports.

Now that Julie and I are walking with Merlin turned on we are getting more species than we expected for our respective areas. That leads us to look harder to confirm Merlin's ID's. For example, American Robins are expanding their nesting range. In Houston they used to be only around Rice University and West University Village in summer. Otherwise, robins were only winter birds around Houston and here. Merlin recorded one singing in La Grange in June – and we managed to find and see it. Some of its other ID's are a bit more problematic: Couch's Kingbird, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Black-throated Green Warbler. These are either out of range, wrong season, or in the wrong habitat. Maybe, like the robin, we may eventually discover them. It is common knowledge that birds don't read the field guides. In the meantime, we are operating with the advice: visual confirmation recommended. And for eBird entries it's a good idea to add a note saying that it was a Merlin sound ID only.

Bottom line: While the Merlin app isn't perfect yet, Cornell is improving it. Merlin is still a great way to learn bird song and a really fun way to rediscover nature.

Green Heron Hatchlings

By Jaci Elliott



My sister Jennifer and her husband Quintin own a (tree and butterfly sanctuary of sorts) piece of property near Sealy. It also has, running through the middle of it, a 3/4-mile section of the Little Bernard Creek. She and I will occasionally kayak up and down this section of the waterway to spot snakes, fish and swallows, and to monitor the status of its banks and their flora.

While out on a solo trip of her own May 15, my sister happened to spot a low-lying branch with a nest and some beautiful blue, nearly duck-sized eggs. There appeared to be two eggs in the nest, and she didn't quite see the mother bird fly off, so she wasn't sure what kind of bird this was.



Just this past weekend (May 28) not even two weeks later, I stealthily paddled with her past the same nesting site, and we spied three adorable chicks, standing stock still with their yellowish faces and dagger-like beaks. As we did spot the mother perched in a tree nearby, my suspicions about the species were confirmed, though I must say I was amazed that these chicks, in what must have been less than two weeks from hatching already seemed to be about a third the size of their parent.

I do think, of all the herons, the green, being smaller, thicker of neck while in flight, and a bit persnickety about sharing personal space with humans, might be my favorite.

A Lifelong Dream Comes True

By Jaci Elliott

For three weeks, starting in mid-April of this year, while under the excuse of cat sitting for my son and his wife, I had a most lovely respite from our Texas heat and drought by visiting the Seattle area.

Week One

A fellow Master Naturalist (Coastal Prairie Chapter) friend of mine came up for four days to keep me company, and after catching an Astros v. Mariners game, we hopped a ferry for Orcas Island to do some whale watching. While we didn't see orcas that trip, we did find the island's life-size replica, and we did spot three California Gray Whales, along with several harbor seals, some California sea lions and the rarer Stellar sea lions.



A life-long goal of mine has been to paddle alongside killer whales in the aquamarine waters of the San Juan Islands, and I still had two weeks in which to try to make that happen.

Week Two

I drove past the tulip fields of Mt. Vernon, WA, to Whidbey Island via Deception Pass, a double arch bridge that is not for those with vertigo issues. It was off this coast that we had viewed the gray whales a few days back, and so I thought I would see if I could find them again with my binoculars from the shoreline. Sure enough, "Thar she blows!" and since I also have this other habit of jumping in cold waters wherever I travel (this trip already having swum, albeit briefly, in Lake Moran on Orcas Island and now, Puget Sound) I dove in. Swims-with-Whales, my Dances-with-Wolves moment, I suppose.



This lovely day spent exploring three state parks ended with me scanning the horizons on two ferry rides via Coupeville/Port Townsend then Southworth/Fauntleroy. Even though I did manage to spy some very cute harbor porpoises, no orcas were to be found.

Week Three



Having read that a transient pod of killer whales was seen off the south end of Whidbey Island, I knew what I must do. This time, I took the ferry from the Mulilteo terminal to the quaint little village Langley on the south end of the island, checked in to my adorable cottage and explored the local whale museum, another state park and a few more beaches and hiking trails. Early the next day, I climbed into a rented kayak and paddled for two hours, exploring the coastline with its nesting bald eagles, eelgrass beds and a wide range of waterfowl, including mergansers, loons, and harlequin, golden eye and bufflehead ducks. Harbor seals followed me, but alas,

no big black and white cetaceans.

I had planned to do some more hiking, so I stopped in at the village grocery store and, after returning my items to the car, noticed a crowd of folks sporting spotting scopes gathering along the overlook. When I inquired about their excitement, they told me that the transient pod was rounding the south of the island and were now in the same waters where I had just been kayaking!

At last, there they were: a family group of orcas—Stanley, Sydney and calves Lucky and Lefty— surfacing and shining with their trademark patterns and the adult male with his famously tall dorsal fin.

For the next three hours, the whale experts next to me documented these fascinating marine creatures and they enthusiastically answered my many questions. I learned about the history and habits of this foursome as we watched them hunt for seals; the adults at times breaching and even cartwheeling out of the water.



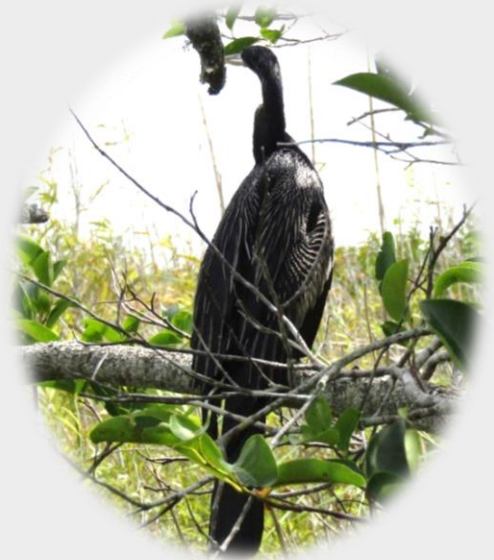
My life-long dream realized beyond my expectations, I drove back to my son's apartment that night, truly giddy with the day's adventure. The cats in my care could sense it as well, I'm sure.

Meeting the Anhingas and a Morph in the Everglades

By Lori Buffum



As we were walking with the Ranger on the Anhinga Trail in Everglades National Park in Florida, we watched for alligators, turtles, and of course, the water birds we expected to see along the waterways. Lots of Anhingas were about, males (dark neck), females (lighter brown neck), and juveniles (lighter color and still a bit fuzzy looking), and we were all delighted to see them perched in trees, drying their stretched out wings, diving into the water, and even one or two swimming just beneath the surface of the crystal clear water as we walked along the boardwalk. They are often referred to as the Snake Bird or the Piano Bird, the first nickname because they swim underwater with their long necks stretched out like snakes, the second because of the feather pattern on the back of the male.



Anhinga (honestly, that's its scientific name) are rather unique among the water birds because their feathers aren't waterproof. As the bird hunts for fish in the water, stabbing them with its dagger-like bill, the wet feathers help them submerge. Out of the water, they extend wings and turkey-like tail as they preen and dry out. They are excellent flyers so can be seen coasting the thermals high in the sky.

If you are in an area that is likely habitat for these fascinating birds and think you hear a frog croaking, look around, it's probably an anhinga. Prevalent in Florida along the many waterways, anhingas are found in freshwater regions all along the Gulf Coast and throughout much of Central and South Americas.



Now, about that "morph". Our Ranger guide (who by the way was wonderfully engaging), told everyone to look ahead at the large white wading bird poised in the grasses at the edge of a stream. "What bird do you think you see?" Many (including me) guessed Great Egret. Then we all got in observation mode to look more closely at the shape and color of the beak/bill, and the color of the legs and the general bulk of the body.

Well, those things didn't match up to egret (characteristic orange bill, black legs and slim body). As we approached the very cooperative bird, the Ranger said, "Meet the white morph of the Great Blue Heron!" So, this was a color variation (morph being short for morphology - the study of the distinctive characteristics of an animal) of the GBH (*Ardea herodias*) only found in this part of Florida!! A white morph is different from a leucistic or albino individual. In addition to its pure white feathers, it had the shape and color of the GBH bill and pale, yellowish legs of the GBH. We all were excited to see this magnificent bird several times as we headed down the trail and again when we returned.



As I researched this bird, I found a fair amount of controversy about whether it is a color variation (a white morph), a subspecies, or even a distinctive species sometimes called the Great White Heron. I just enjoyed adding this bird to my Florida photo collection.

Teaching Moments



Rat Snake and Glue Boards

by B.R and Charlene Koehler

On June 2nd, Charlene and I were scheduled to do volunteer work on the SFA State Park Native Plant Garden with Tom Shaughnessy and others.

About 7:30 am, I went down to our barn to get the gardening tools that we would need. When I opened the door, I found a 30-inch Texas Rat Snake trapped on a glue board next to my sacks of deer corn. Maybe he was guarding my deer corn! We have saved rat snakes on glue boards before and released them in our garden as they are excellent predators for vermin.



My thinking at the time was that we could write a TMN-GLC Newsletter article about how to remove them from a glue board and release them back to the wild. I took the glue board and snake back home and put it in our kitchen sink. Using vegetable oil, Charlene rubbed it on one of the snake's loops and was able to free only a small part from the glue trap. I gave the snake several drops of water as its mouth seemed to be open a lot. The bottom jaw was totally stuck in the glue. Photos show what we were dealing with. The snake was glued down so well that we decided to leave it on the glue board in the sink and go do our volunteer

work at the SFA Park. We were only gone about an hour and a half.

Guess what? When we returned, the snake was gone and somewhere in our house!

We could tell from things knocked off the counter that the snake probably made it into our family room. We spent a couple of hours looking in possible hiding places and under things with flashlights. No luck in finding the snake. We went to bed that night thinking that it would be a bad surprise to find a cold snake in bed with us. We put towels by the doors to prevent the snake from going into other rooms and Charlene put out two deer cameras to see if there was any snake activity that night, because Texas Rat Snakes are mostly nocturnal. No activity and no signs of the snake that first night.

The next evening, Charlene was coming into the kitchen back door as it was becoming dark. As she opened the door, the snake sprang over her foot, out the door and into her garden. What a relief! No more snake in the house worries!

We have never seen a snake get off a glue board before. To free a snake from a glue board, we have always had to rub it all over with vegetable oil and free it inch by inch. Lessons learned:

1. Don't bring a snake trapped on a glue board into the house.
2. If you bring it into the house, don't leave it unattended.
3. Our vet says putting a snake in an old pillowcase calms it and confines it.



If These Old Oaks Could Talk

By Frank Michel

Scattered throughout New Mexico's mountainous Cibola National Forest is a mysterious collection of small medallions tacked to various trees.

Bizarrely, each references a historical date, as if forest gnomes had come out of the woodwork to catalog human history. It is unknown who placed them or exactly where they all are. Also unclear is how many there are. Rumors are that there have been more than 80 identified and perhaps double that number exist.

What is known is that the silver dollar-sized discs actually designate the ages of the trees, tied to historic events. Custer's Last Stand Tree, for example, circa 1876.



Beginning in the 1920s, someone began coring the trees to date them and then placing the medallions. Some have added information, such as the date the coring/dating took place. It has been reported that the oldest tree may be the Robert Crowned King of Scotland Tree of 1371 and the youngest is the Alaska 49th State Tree of 1959.

As a New Mexico Master Naturalist, I was a volunteer guide/instructor for several years at the Sandia Mountain Natural History Center. Through that, and my own wanderings I chanced upon a half dozen. The Custer tree is located at the site of a natural spring, along a trail near the Natural History Center property. High up on the rocky walls of Hondo Canyon I came across the Huygens Manometer Tree, 1661, which I came to learn is tied to the invention of an early form of barometer by Dutch mathematician Christiaan Huygens. Another I stumbled across was the "1st UNM Classes Tree, 1892, tied to the opening of the University of New Mexico.

My serendipitous encounters with these tree discs over the years, and curiosity about the age of the majestic live oaks here on my Texas homestead led me a simple, accepted method to approximate without having to core and count the rings. The formula is simply to multiply the diameter of the tree by the "growth factor" of the particular species of tree you are measuring.

As I barely remembered from high school geometry, you get the diameter of the tree by measuring how big around it is (circumference) and dividing that number of inches by pi (3.14). It is suggested you do that measuring four or five feet up from the ground. You then just multiply that number by the growth factor of the tree, which can easily be found on the Google machine on many websites, including treehugger.com or Wikipedia. Here's a handy link to one growth factor table — <https://goodcalculators.com/tree-age-calculator/#TreeSpeciesGrowthFactors>.

Using this formula (diameter x growth factor) I determined one of my largest oaks is 89.8 inches around. Dividing that number by 3.14 I got a diameter of 28.6 inches. And multiplying that by the white oak growth factor of 5, I determined an approximate age of 143 years.

Based on that, I am thinking about inscribing a disc for my tree dubbing it the "Rutherford B. Hayes Administration Tree of 1879." Or perhaps better, the "First Light Bulb Tree" for the Dec. 31, 1879, date Thomas Edison first demonstrated his illumination for the public.

So, as it turns out, our trees really can talk. How would you inscribe the disc on your dear old tree? May the forest be with you!

The Life Cycle of Lady Beetles (aka lady bugs)

by Ellen Morris



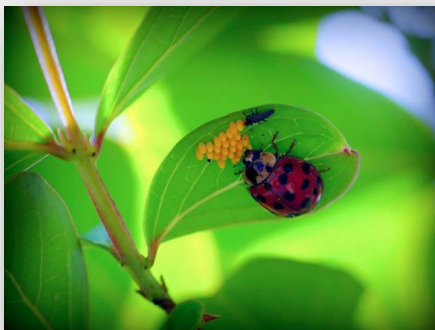
After repeatedly finding lady beetles, commonly known as lady bugs, inside my home, I decided to do some research on the little insects. They have a sweet reputation, perhaps because they connote friendly characters in children's books. They don't seem scary like some of their fellow arthropods, most probably because they are beneficial insects- and they don't sting, although they can give a bit of a bite-like pinch with their mandibles.

They are omnivores and thrive in a variety of habitats. European farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary to save their crops from invading pests, and when voracious beetles showed up eating the pests, they were called the beetles of our Lady, hence the name we use today for both males and females.



Lady beetles are valuable and beneficial in a different way than pollinators because they're predators in our gardens, with both larvae and adults feeding on aphids, scale and spider mites (also, indiscriminately on lady beetle and butterfly eggs - oops) and sometimes on pollen and nectar. One lady beetle can eat about 5,000 aphids during its lifetime.

They also eat other small, soft bodied, slow moving insects. It turns out we find them around the house in springtime because they overwinter, or hibernate, known as aestivation, in groups in dry, protective spaces they find where many crowd in together- in house cracks, leaf litter or under rocks. The beetles emerge and get active, mating, looking for food, and the females laying eggs. A lady beetle can live one to three years. There are many species of lady beetle worldwide, with a variety of colors and patterns.



Their first life stage is an embryonic stage: springtime through summer, lady beetles lay clusters of eggs, often yellow, on leaves and stems of plants that host aphids and other preferred foods. In two to 10 days, depending on weather and other factors, lady beetle larvae hatch from the eggs.

In the second stage, the larval stage, lady beetle larvae are (the look varies depending on the species) small, black, bumpy looking, elongated oval insects with short legs. They often have red bands or spots on their black bodies, and they eat, eat, eat, sucking sustenance from their prey. This stage lasts several weeks as the larvae feed and get bigger through roughly four instar stages between molts, allowing them to grow. They are then prepared to pupate.



Next, in the pupal stage, the pupa attaches to a leaf, another plant part or a site nearby, and undergoes metamorphosis. It is immobile, becomes rounder and in Texas is often orange or yellow with black accent areas on its body and black spots. After one to two weeks, the transformation is complete, and an adult lady beetle has developed.

The fourth stage is the adult stage: a young lady beetle or imago emerges and soon reaches its adult maturity. The soft young adult lady beetle is at first a paler color than it will end up and is vulnerable to birds and other predators until it's exoskeleton hardens. The adult beetle body has three parts: the head which includes the mouthparts, compound eyes and antennae, the thorax which has three pairs of legs and two pairs of wings, and the abdomen. The outer set of an adult lady beetle's wings, called elytra, are hard, shiny and rounded, closing together in a protective dome shape over its roundish and oval body, and hiding its more fragile pair of flight wings. I'm used to seeing vibrant adult lady beetles in my garden, and unfortunately, sometimes in my house, but now I think I'll be on the lookout for other stages of lady beetles- the eggs, the larvae and the pupae.

Resources

 [Field Guide to Common Texas Insects - Lady Beetle](https://texasinsects.tamu.edu) ,[Texasinsects.tamu.edu](https://texasinsects.tamu.edu)

 [National Geographic Kids - Ladybug facts and photos \(nationalgeographic.com\)](https://nationalgeographic.com)

 [The Four Stages of the Ladybug Life Cycle](#), Debbie Hadley 2020

 [Extension Entomology TAMU- Lady beetles](#), Pat Porter

Volunteering Highlights



Springing into summer at Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site

By Julie Itz

Spring at Washington on the Brazos arrived later this year and was very breezy.

Now summer's heat has definitely arrived! With regular maintenance and great volunteers, undesirable "weeds" are being kept at bay, and every workday provides new surprises: some good and some questionable: plants planted in one spot often move to another; the biennial Standing cypress are producing plants each year and are scattered throughout the garden; Ragweed still hides under the grasses & sunflowers and among the mistflowers, making it hard to spot!



Annette Holdeman and Carol



Grasses in March

The area dedicated to displaying examples of native grasses has done very well, with Big bluestem, Little bluestem, Silver bluestem, Indiangrass, Switchgrass and Inland sea oats (planted in May). We hope to add Sideoats grama soon.

March brought a lovely display of Bluebonnets, but by May and June, the plants have died back, and the area has opened up to other pollinators.



Grasses in June



March



May



June



What do you do with 400 fourth-graders?

By Lori Buffum

Play scavenger hunt/bingo! On May 17 at the Washington County fairgrounds, our chapter was one of the 11 stations for AG Day. We were glad to be back with the kids after missing 2020 and 2021 (y'all know why).

Thanks so much to John & Karen Gardner stepping in as event leaders, ably assisted by Jim Wilson, Sheri Wilcox, Peggy Cadenhead, Betty Scardino, Joanna Hagler, Donna Mueller. (Photo credits Sheri Wilcox.)



Volunteer Opportunities

Snapshot from our chapter events calendar

CONTACT THE PROJECT LEADERS TO VERIFY DATES AND START TIMES

Events for June 2022

June 21 @ 8:00 am - 10:00 am

[La Grange Agrilife Extension Bldg. Native Plant Landscape Workday](#)

June 25 @ 9:00 am - 11:00 am

[Washington-on-the-Brazos Historic Site workday](#)

Events for July 2022

July 7 @ 8:00 am - 10:00 am

[Native Seed Project for CKWRI](#)

July 12 @ 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

[TMN Tuesday](#)

July 16 @ 9:30

Chapter Meeting, Blinn College Ag Center, Brenham, TX

This & That

Suggested Reading

By Belinda Weatherly

These books are all science based and organic with practical application.

Teaming With Microbes by Jeff Lowenfels and Wayne Lewis

Teaming With Fungi by Jeff Lowenfels

Teaming With Nutrients by Jeff Lowenfels

Teaming With Bacteria by Jeff Lowenfels



Helpful References

Books

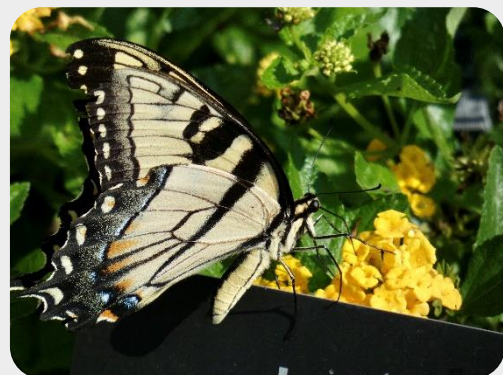
- National Wildlife Federation(R): Attracting Birds, Butterflies, and Other Backyard Wildlife, Expanded Second Edition, by David Mizejewski
- Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies: a Field Guide, by Jim Weber, Lynne Weber, and Roland H. Wauer (There is also one for moths)
- Native Texas Plants: Landscaping Region by Region, by Sally Wasowski and Andy Wasowski
- Wild Edible Plants of Texas: A Pocket Guide to the Identification, Collection, Preparation, & Use of 60 Wild Plants of the Lone Star State, by Charles W. Kane (This includes non-natives)



Online Resources

- Bumble Bee Watch: <https://www.bumblebeewatch.org/>
- Ecoregions of North America: <https://www.epa.gov/eco-research/ecoregions-north-america>
- Ecoregions of Texas: https://tpwd.texas.gov/.../pwd_pl_w7000_1187a/media/1.pdf
- The Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center: <https://www.wildflower.org/>
- National Wildlife Federation: <https://www.nwf.org/>
- Native American Seed: <https://www.seedsource.com/Default.asp>
- Native Plants by State: <https://nativebackyards.com/native-plants-by-state/>
- Native Plant Society of Texas: <http://npsot.org/wp/>
- Native Plant Society of Texas - Plant Lists By Region: <https://npsot.org/wp/resources/plant-lists-by-ecoregion/>
- Native Prairies Association of Texas: <https://texasprairie.org/>
- Plants for Birds – Audubon <https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>
- Texas Butterfly Ranch: <https://texasbutterflyranch.com>
- Texas Invasives: <https://www.texasinvasives.org/>
- Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation: <https://xerces.org/>

SEND ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO ADD TO THIS LIST TO qlcnwsltr@gmail.com



Chapter Resources

Officers for 2022

President – [Sheri Wilcox](#)

Vice President – [Norbert Dittrich](#)

Secretary – [Patti Brown](#)

Treasurer – [David Hessel](#)

Board Members

Advanced Training Director – [Norbert Dittrich](#)

Communications Director – [Lori Buffum](#)

Marketing Director – [Ken English](#)

Membership Director – [Chris Morrison](#)

Training Class Directors – [Connie Shortes & Chuck Linton](#)

Volunteer Service Projects Director – [Jaci Elliott](#)

Education Director – [Joanna Hagler](#)

Chapter State Representative – Sheri Wilcox

Previous Past President – Betsy Palkowsky

Advisor – [Kara Matheney](#) (Washington County Texas AgriLife)

Committees and Contacts

Hospitality Chair – Nita Tiemann

Newsletter Editor – [Betsy Palkowsky](#)

Website Editor – [Sheri Wilcox](#)

Grants and Donations Chair – [Mary Ann Butler](#)

Volunteer Project Leaders

Adopt-a-Highway – Mary Ann Butler and Jaci Elliott

Agricultural Safety Days – Donna Mueller

Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR -Terry Rooney

Brenham ISD Outdoor Education – Lori Buffum

Colorado River Watch – open

Family Science Nights – Lori Buffum

Fayetteville Native Plant Project – Karen Bookout

Indian Creek Nature Area – Ann Ray

LaGrange AgriLife Building Native Plant

Landscape – Cindy Rodibaugh

Monument Hill State Historic Site — Karen Woods

Prescribed Burning – Mark Brown and B.R.

Koehler

San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Native

Plant Gardens – Mary-Helen Giles

Schubert House Pollinator Project – Karen Woods

Stephen F. Austin State Park – Tom Shaughnessy

Top Ten Presentation – Cheryl Karr

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site –

Julie Itz and David Itz

Winedale Trails and Pollinator Garden – Jan Hughes

Sponsor Contact

Each county has its own TPWD Biologist and Texas AgriLife Extension agent. We work closely with these sponsors.

Use the following links for contact details.

[*Austin County*](#)

[*Colorado County*](#)

[*Fayette County*](#)

[*Washington County*](#)

[*Lee County*](#)



- **Our Chapter Website** <http://txmn.org/glc>
- **GLC Facebook Group** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/21969044537/>
- **Volunteer Management System**; log your hours <https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/tmn-vms-users/>
- **Texas Master Naturalist State Website** <https://txmn.tamu.edu/>
- **Texas Master Naturalist Listserv**; get notices about activities across the state <https://txmn.org/staying-connected/sign-up-for-tmnlistserv/>

Contact Us

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