



Naturalist Notes

President's Note

Hello Gulf Coast Members,

It is hard to believe we are through the first quarter of the year already, but we are, and we had our first quarter awards ceremony at our April Chapter meeting.

Three members received their first certification. Congratulations to

Berri Moffett Spencer Simons Kyle Wolfe

Several milestone awards were given, as well as recertifications for 2019 and 2018. Congratulation to all.

Our new Membership Director, Mary Horn, did a great job of organizing the awards night. She also gave us an update from "state", saying that they have become very strict with the 45 day rule for entering hours into the VMS system, so please make sure you get your hours entered within that time frame. It is no longer possible to get special assistance entering hours after 45 days.

Be sure to check out our website and calendar if you are looking for volunteer opportunities this month.

<https://txmn.org/gulfcoast/>

See you soon,

Julia Trimble, President
Texas Master Naturalist - Gulf Coast Chapter
julia.trimble@txgcmn.org



credit Becca Phillips

Organism of the Month

Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*)

Spanish moss is neither. It is native to the Americas, where it grows from Virginia south and west into Arkansas, Central and South America, the West Indies and the Bahamas. It is a flowering plant in the family *Bromeliaceae*. As an epiphyte, it does not draw nutrients from the tree. Spanish moss spreads through seeds or vegetatively, through pieces either windblown or used by birds as nesting material.

Spanish moss provides shelter to rat snakes, three species of bats, as well as one species of jumping spider, *Pelegrina tillandsiae*, that is found only there. During colonial times, it was harvested for use in mattresses and as binder for bricks and clay. More recently, it was used in upholstery and swamp coolers.

Sources

"Spanish moss" wikipedia

Episode # 2506: Spanish moss, Engines of Our Ingenuity

Species *Pelegrina tillandsiae*, Bug Guide



City Nature Challenge

April 26-29 -- Take Pictures and Upload to iNaturalist

April 30 - May 5 -- Identify what was found

Jesse Jones Park Adopt-A-Trail



Chapter members returned to Jesse Jones Park on March 29 for some trail maintenance activities. Volunteers Chris Arceneaux (left), Spring Class 2019, and Ted Andrews (right) Spring Class 2017 are shown here spreading mulch along the Canoe Trail.

During the activity, some lime green colored critters were uncovered and later identified as exotic Cuban Banana Roaches, which none had seen before.

The trail is in excellent condition. Only 1 bag of invasive Japanese Climbing Fern was removed uncovering a newly planted native Oak that should now survive. There was some evidence of Bush Killer Vine reemerging behind the Nature Center that we may be asked to remove on our next visit.

John Egan

credit John Egan



CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS ISD VISITS SHELDON

45 senior students from Cypress-Fairbanks ISD visited Sheldon Lake State Park on March 21 and 22 and managed to restore 690 native plants into the prairie. Many thanks to all who participated.

John Egan

credit John Egan

Wolves!

Ancient Europeans took note of a flower that grew in barren soil. They decided that this plant must be stealing the nutrients other plants need and hoarding them for itself. Hence, it was like a wolf, stealing animals from the flocks they tended. They called the flower lupine which is Latin for wolf-like.

We no longer harbor negative ideas about lupines. We know that they are in the pea family and peas, rather than robbing the soil of nutrients are one of the few plants able to put nitrogen into the soil and so render it useful for plants that can't make their own nitrogen. Lupines are a pioneer plant.

All of this is so cool because our favorite lupine, the Texas bluebonnet, is putting on the best show I've ever seen in the Park and it's doing it on a hillside so blasted by Harvey silt that I had been photographing it as a science project to see what happened as plants recolonized the hillside.

The project lasted just long enough for me to realize that I didn't have the patience to identify every green thing that sprang from the earth. But I still think of it as my blasted hillside. Well, look at that hillside now!



Left - Picture taken Jan 2018. The bluebonnet hill is slightly west of the picture, but the ground looked the same.

Right - Picture taken Mar 2019. credit Alisa Kline

There were always some bluebonnets on that hillside, but never a solid field of bluebonnets. I have checked with Buffalo Bayou Park horticulturist Donna Irwin and she swears she didn't plant those bluebonnets. So I have to believe that this Harvey-blasted hillside had finally recovered just enough for lupines to do their thing and start setting some nitrogen.

By next year, they may have improved the soil enough that we will have a riot of other wildflowers. But this year, it's bluebonnets, and nothing improves a field of bluebonnets like a few babies. So what are you waiting for, go throw some kids to those wolves!

Alisa Kline
<https://buffalobayou.org/blog/wolves/>

to a brown spider: en el cielo

Brave arachnid

spinning with star-lit dreams

your daring web

- how precarious is your perch!

I too h

a

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g by a thread.

Angela de Hoyos

April is National Poetry Month. I try to read a poem each day during April. Angela de Hoyos is a Mexican-American poet whose poetry has won many awards across the world. Born in Mexico, she now lives in San Antonio. Her latest book is the 2017 "Woman, Woman".

The above poem was published in "Is This Forever, Or What? Poems & Paintings from Texas" edited by Naomi Shihab Nye.

**Larry Allain's Fantastic Plant Database Available Online**

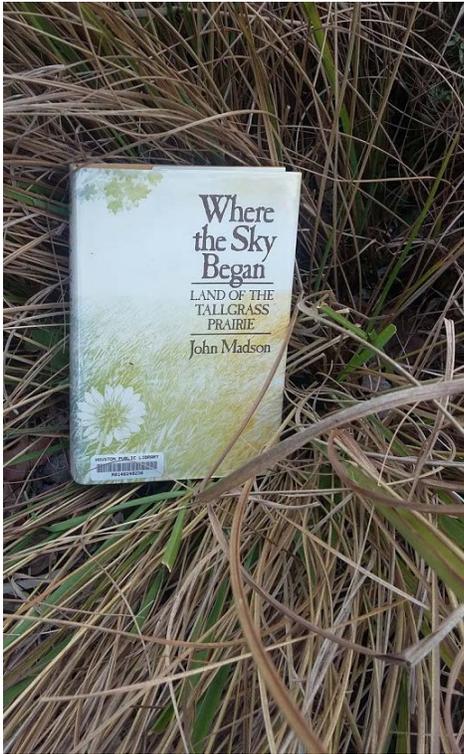
houstonprairie.org/2019/03/25/plant-database-l-allain/ Read the blog about a fantastic plant database titled Plants of Louisiana, mostly by Larry Allain, retired USGS. It contains information that many years ago, Larry gave out on CDs, which stopped working after Windows XP expired.

It covers not just prairie plants of Louisiana but also shrubs, trees, etc. Although the database is for plants of Louisiana, many of the prairie plants in it are also found in prairies of greater Houston and other parts of Texas. Many shrubs and trees of Louisiana are also native to Texas, especially east Texas.

For many plants in the database, propagation and plant culture information is provided!

Check it out!

Lan Shen



Book Review

Where the Sky Began: Land of the Tallgrass Prairie

1982, John Madson

Available from Amazon and Houston Public Library

“It was flowing emerald in spring and summer when the boundless winds ran across it; a tawny ocean under the winds of autumn, and a stark and painful emptiness in winter when the great long winds drove in from the northwest.” (Prologue)

Written by someone with both personal and scientific understanding and appreciation for the prairie, this book delves into many different aspects of the prairie. Why does prairie exist where it does? How do the combination of soils and climate affect the type of prairie and its extent? What animals lived and live in the prairie? All of these and more are answered in the first part.

The second, shorter part deals with the people of the prairie. European settlers were at first wary of the wide open, treeless expanse, then took advantage of the fertile soil until very little prairie remained. The last chapter of the book describes more recent efforts to preserve and restore prairie habitat both large and small.

While the author is most interested in the prairies of the heartland, he frequently mentions the unique aspects of the coastal prairies of Texas and Louisiana. If you are interested in prairies from many different angles, this book is an engaging and worthwhile read.

Note: I retrieved the 1982 edition from the library, Amazon has newer printings, including paperbacks.



BioBlitz at Russ Pittman Park May 6th, 10 am to 2 pm

Come join a staff naturalist or walk the park on your own.

Add species to Russ Pitman Park Project on iNaturalist (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/russ-pitman-park>). For early morning bird walk, contact Mary Ann at mbeauch@naturediscoverycenter.org. For night time bat survey, meet at front of nature center at 8:30 pm.
Eric Duran, Staff Naturalist