



# Naturalist Notes



Left to right: Cub Scout Twilight Camp Outreach (Jill Johse); Butterfly Monitoring - Horace's Duskywing (Irmi Willcockson); Fungi Hike at Little Thicket Nature Preserve with mycological societies (Richard Solberg)

## MAJOR MILESTONE COMPLETED WITH NEW BIRD ROOKERY ISLAND

The Texas Trustee Implementation Group expands important colonial bird nesting bird habitat in Galveston Bay with its completion of the construction phase of Dickinson Bay Island II. Visit the [Texas Restoration Area webpage](#) for more information about this project and many others.

## GORDON HEMPTON - ACOUSTIC ECOLOGIST

If you love nature sounds, check out his website [soundtracker.com](#).

He advocates for preserving places where human noise does not interfere with sounds of nature.

## WASHINGTON STATE'S IDEA FOR GETTING PEOPLE OUTSIDE

In Washington state, library patrons can check out Adventure Packs, including special discovery passes (state parks passes), binoculars and field guides.

This program is especially geared towards communities with health disparities.

I wonder if this would work in Texas.

Visit the [Texas Restoration Area webpage](#) for more information about this project and many others. All drone photos provided by Galveston Bay Foundation.



## UPCOMING CITIZEN SCIENCE SURVEYS

Ready for another bioblitz? Two are coming up soon—Pollinator Week, June 20-26, and National Moth Week, July 23-31.

Pollinator Week is an annual event celebrated internationally in support of pollinator health. In iNaturalist, the “Pollinator Week 2022 - Pollinator Bioblitz” project is hosted by the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign’s Pollinator Communications Taskforce. It seeks to collect data on the distribution of pollinators across the U.S., Canada and Mexico during Pollinator Week, June 20-26. They are also interested in the floral resources (plants) that pollinators use, so please include that data too if you can. Pollinators tracked are: bees, bats, butterflies, hover flies and hummingbirds. Go here for more information: <http://inaturalist.org/projects/pollinator-week-2022-pollinator-bioblitz>. You can join the project if you like, but you do not have to do so for your observations to be included.

It's especially helpful to look for pollinators on public lands such as state parks, and to keep an eye out for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). For our Gulf Prairies & Marshes ecoregion, the invertebrate SGCN's are American Bumblebee, Sonoran Bumblebee and Bay Skipper. See this link for more information:

[https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife\\_diversity/texas\\_nature\\_trackers/target\\_species/gulf\\_coast\\_prairies\\_marshes.phtml#collapseSix](https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/target_species/gulf_coast_prairies_marshes.phtml#collapseSix).

Pollinators, especially native bees, are fascinating creatures. Spend enough time with them and you can catch them doing interesting things like buzz-pollinating, taking naps, bachelors bedding down for the night in groups, or blowing bubbles! Just today I watched a female Two-Spotted Longhorn Bee as she “bubbled” (regurgitated nectar to evaporate the water and concentrate the sugars). See photo.





Next month, it's National Moth Week! While some moths do fly during the day, most are night fliers. Night-time mothing is a fun way to observe nature while out of the severe daytime heat we've been having lately. The National Moth Week 2022 project in iNaturalist can be found here: <http://inaturalist.org/projects/national-moth-week-2022>. Again, you don't have to join the project for your observations to be included, but joining does allow you to receive notifications from the project admin's.

Lots of great information can be found at <https://nationalmothweek.org/>, including a series of short how-to videos called 'Mothing School with Dr. Carl Barrentine'. I especially like his how-to tips on building your own lights and traps, including repurposing bug zappers by de-fanging them.

For anyone who has not yet tried mothing, I highly encourage it. It can be as simple as hanging out around your porch light. And moths aren't the only draw. I've mothed a few times in the last few weeks, and have been surprised and delighted by the new critters I've met—Say's and Four-Spotted Mantidflies (fun to watch them munch tiny prey), Virginia and S-banded Tiger Beetles (big "teeth"!) and my most recent wow, a Pseudoscorpion. Much like Remoras on sharks, Pseudoscorpions hitch rides on large beetles and feed on their mites.

PS—A Xenvo lens for your smartphone will really help photograph small critters, and a covered petri dish will corral the ones who won't sit still.

Happy Mothing!

Rednat (Mary Spolyar)



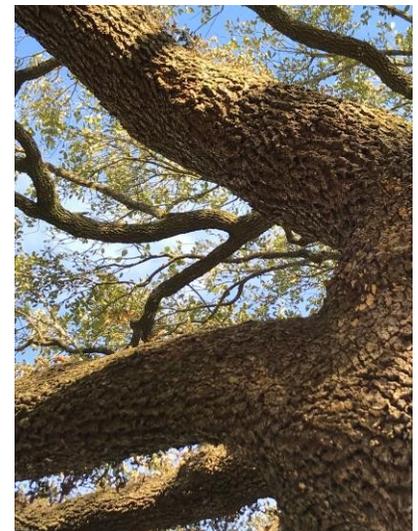
## ORGANISM OF THE MONTH

### SOUTHERN LIVE OAK ( QUERCUS VIRGINIA)

Live oaks are an iconic part of Houston. They can grow up to 80 ft tall and 100 ft wide and have a lifespan of several hundred years. The trees drop their leaves in the spring, right before new growth appears.

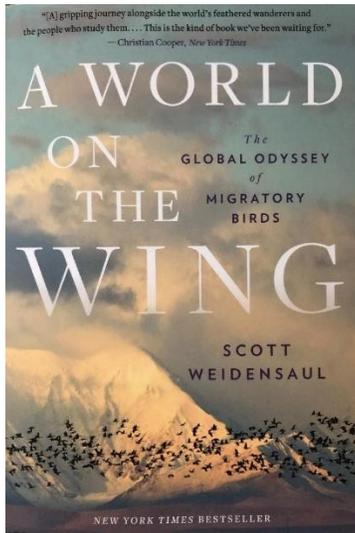
In the city, live oaks provide several benefits. The tree produces oxygen and shade from a live oak can reduce air conditioning costs. Squirrels and other animals nest in the crowns and eat the acorns. Butterflies such as several hairstreaks and Horace's Duskywing use the tree as a larval host.

Sources: [buchanantree.com](http://buchanantree.com); [biodiversity.utexas.edu](http://biodiversity.utexas.edu)



## A REVIEW OF A REVIEW

The staff naturalists at Harris County's Precinct 4, John Paul Landing Park - Environmental Education Center, lead a monthly Nature Discussion Group.



In May, staff naturalist Megan Ahlgren presented an excellent review of “A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds” by Scott Weidensaul for group discussion. She lead us through selected chapters of the book, discovering some amazing feats of migration and some of the challenges faced by migratory birds.

One example of a long distance migratory shore bird, which builds up significant fat stores prior to their migration flight, transferring it to flight muscles prior to taking flight, have the capability to change the physiology of their internal organs pre and post migration!

We know of the utility of radar to monitor large numbers of birds migrating though our own Houston area, hence the call for “Lights Out” to avoid night time collisions. Another illustration of the

astounding numbers of birds that migrate was from Quebec, Canada, where a group of birders submitted this incredible eBird report this Spring - counting thousands of birds per second passing by.

[eBird Checklist - 28 May 2018 - Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac--Dunes - 108 species \(+3 other taxa\)](#)

The book was an excellent choice to review with the group, and I believe we all learned many new facts about the amazing migration of birds.

Next months Nature Discussion Group will be reviewing “The New Wild - Why Invasive Species Will Be Nature’s Salvation” by Fred Pearce. It should be an interesting read and a lively topic for debate.

Julie d’Ablaing.

“Conservation is an action, but the foundation of any action is a story.”

Janice Greenwood, in a review of Robin Wall Kimmerer’s “Braiding Sweetgrass”