



Naturalist Notes



Fall in Pictures (left to right) Fall foliage - Shannon Morrison; Nature Journaling Workshop at Annual Meeting - Irmi Willcockson; Green Lacewing observed at Moth Night; Nine-banded Armadillo - Andrea Matthews

ART EXHIBIT AT THE POST

Houston artist Mel Chin's exhibit "Meditations on Climate Change" runs 11/29/22 - 4/20/23 at the POST, 401 Franklin Street in Downtown Houston.

DECEMBER MEETING IN PERSON AT HANC

Food, awards, chapter elections, raffle baskets, quiz bowl - Oh My! Be there Thursday December 1st, at the Houston Arboretum.

HOUSTON AUDUBON HOSTS RAPTOR FEST

Meet the raptors at this holiday themed event on Sat Dec 3rd from 3 - 7 pm. Tickets are \$5 for non-members, free for members. Raptor Ed Center, 3997 River Drive.





Some of the attendees at the Annual Meeting. The background is the TMN license plate.

Put Grease in its Place: The Trash



POUR

Scrape or pour grease into an empty container, such as a heat resistant bag, glass jar, or tin can



COOL

Cover the grease and let it cool. Store in the fridge until the container is full



TOSS

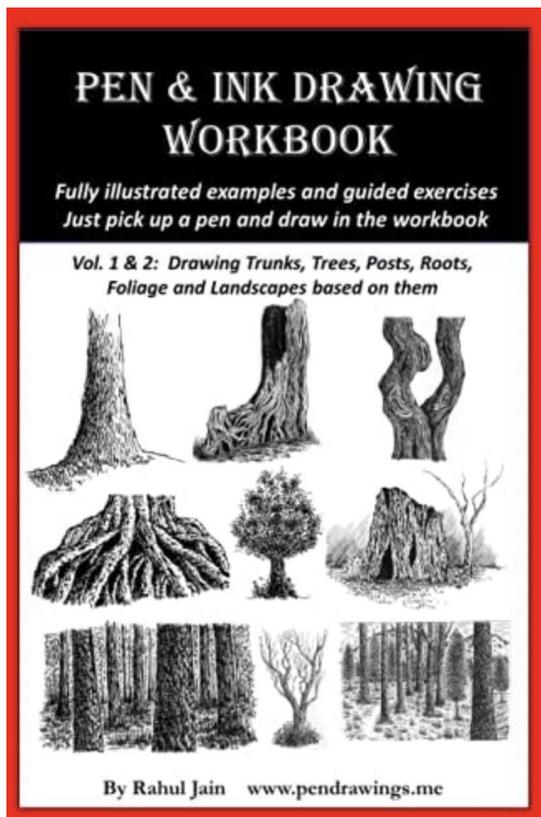
Once full, toss the container in the trash

Leave Those ‘Volunteers’ in Your Yard!

This is a photo of a full-grown larva of a spicebush swallowtail (*Papilio troilus* L.) feeding on a young redbay (*Persea borbonia* L.) Spreng) in our garden. Last year I cleared a small area of the backyard and planted native wildflower seeds. Because I generally neglect this area, a few redbay seedlings popped up and were not mowed or weeded. There is a five-year-old redbay nearby, so I assume the seeds were deposited in the wildflower patch from that other redbay. In any case, female spicebush swallowtail butterflies are known to prefer saplings about 1-6 feet tall. So this is a good reminder to me to think twice before pulling an unknown “weed” - it might just be a host plant for an insect that is important to the ecosystem and fun to watch.



Text and Photo by Jeremy Weise



Book Review

Jain, Rahul (2018) Pen & Ink Drawing Workbook
www.pendrawings.me

This book concentrates on something I love, trees. Especially the bark, trunk shapes and snags. It's great to carry anywhere with a pen, and read about the characteristics of trees, and sketch along with it, right in the book.

I found it helpful in tree identification, and journaling. There are more books in the series including “Quick and Easy Small Size Landscapes.” Helpful in drawing out your landscaping projects.

Joyce Gigout

Out of this world!

That's how I would describe Friday evening at the TMN Annual Meeting. It's hard to imagine Jaime Gonzalez being a warm-up to an even bigger event, yet he was followed by chapter member Kjell Lindgren! Back on the planet only a week after months on the International Space Station. With beautiful imagery of Earth as seen from the ISS, Kjell encouraged us to think of Earth as a spaceship. Like the ISS on which astronauts spend 30% of their time maintaining, Earth needs similar care and attention. Kjell stayed afterward for autographs and selfies. What fun to fist-bump an astronaut!



Then on to a night of nothing with Sam Kieschnick. And by an amazing coincidence, a beautiful moth appeared whose genus, *Cosmosoma* means "universe body". *Cosmosoma myodoræ*, the Scarlet-bodied Wasp Moth, has a bright-red thorax and abdomen, and the abdomen has blue metallic dots that resemble tiny planets!

Larvae feed on Climbing Hempvine *Mikania skandens* which is abundant along the bayou and in wooded areas, and adult males feed on Dogfennel *Eupatorium capillifolium* to obtain defensive compounds that protect from predators. During courtship the male transfers these compounds to the female. See link to find out more:

https://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/BFLY/MOTH2/scarlet_bodied_wasp_moth.html



Any time you get a bunch of naturalists together, someone will probably dare someone else to "go ahead, pick up that thing!" Egged on by TPWD's Sam and Ben to pick up a huge water bug known for inflicting a very painful bite, a few of us took the challenge with Uhler's Giant Water Bug *Lethocerus uhleri* also known as "toe-biter".

Joyfully in nature,
Mary Spolyar
aka "rednat"



ORGANISM OF THE MONTH**EASTERN MUD TURTLE (*Kinosternum subrubrum*)**

The eastern mud turtle is one of twenty-eight species of turtles in Texas. It is found from the Pineywoods to the eastern edge of the Hill Country. It is a small, dark brown to olive turtle with a smooth shell and spotted head. They are no larger than 5 inches across and only weigh a few ounces. Mud turtles have hinged lower shells that work independently, allowing them to close access to their head, limbs, and tail.

Females may begin nests in several locations to test them out before committing to laying their eggs. Because turtle mortality is highest when they are eggs - neither sex plays an active role in parenting - this ensures the highest survival rate for their hatchlings.

Because they are weak swimmers, these turtles inhabit still or slow-moving shallow waters such as ponds, lagoons, marshes, cypress swamps, and bayous. Eastern mud turtles are crepuscular, or active during twilight. They hibernate between November and March in shallow burrows at the edge of wetlands. Even so, it's still possible to see these common turtles in our area!

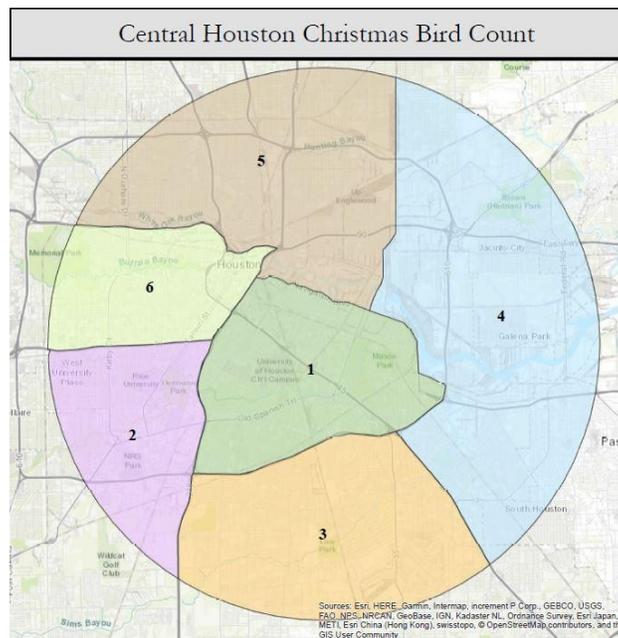
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Sources: https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Kinosternon_subrubrum/;
<https://tpwmagazine.com/nature/media/Turtles.pdf>



Photo by Patrick Coin on iNaturalist

Christmas Bird Count - Help Needed on Dec 19th



For those of you who haven't joined us before: The CBC is one of the longest-running community science projects in North America. Birders all over the US and Canada join forces between December 14th and January 5th to count birds in predefined areas known as count circles. The compiler of each circle organizes teams of volunteers to come together on one day during the count period and cover the entire circle, which is 15 miles in diameter. With your team you visit all kind of habitat and birding spots, counting every individual bird you see. It might sound hard at first but once you get started it's quite addictive!

At the end of the day we come together, often at a local restaurant, to tally the birds for the whole circle, share stories from the field, and see what unique species were found during the day. All levels of birder are welcome to join, and all you need to bring is a pair of binoculars, weather-appropriate clothes, and a lunch.

Check out the map below for all of the areas the count circle covers. We especially need help in these areas:

Area 6, specifically Downtown parks and along Buffalo Bayou west to the McGovern Cascade - this is a great route to bird by bike! List of target parks provided, ability to make your own route.

Area 3, South of 610 between 288 and I-45 - covers some really great parks around Sims Bayou! Google map with full list of target parks provided. Almost all flat walking in parks. Several larger parks mixed with a driving route with stops at smaller parks, good for families or groups with some less experienced birders.

Area 5, North of Downtown between I-10 and Crosstimbers - a car-heavy route with lots of stops, good for a solo experienced birder or small team of more adventurous birders. Google map with target sites and driving directions provided.

If you want to sign up for ANY AREA or want to know more, please email me.

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