

October 2025



Naturalist Notes

Upcoming

Fall Festival & Pumpkin Patch at the Nature Discovery Center in Bellaire
October 25th & 26th from 11 am to 4 pm

Prairie Plant-A-Thon at Sheldon Lake State Park on Saturday, Nov 1st from 8:30 am to 11 am. To register, please contact Stahr Seck at lauren.seck@tpwd.texas.gov.

Monthly Chapter Meeting on Thursday Nov 6th at the Arboretum.

Smith Point Hawk Watch at Candy Abshier WMA, Smith Point Road now through November 30th from 8 am to 4 pm daily

Review by Roel Guerra



LISTERS: A Glimpse Into Extreme Birdwatching, a documentary published to YouTube in August 2025, tells

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Harris County Prairie Dawn Preserve Field Trip

This is a photo of a saline barren where both Prairie Dawn and *Rayjacksonia* grow. Prairie Dawn bloom in the Spring. See page 3 for more.

Photo credit Judy Thomas.

the story of two brothers setting out to learn about the competitive birdwatching community by becoming birdwatchers themselves. Owen and Quentin Reiser embark on their whimsical journey as novices and tackle the challenge of a "big year". For the community, a big year is dedicated to identifying as many bird species within a specific geographical area over a single calendar year. While their 90s camcorder aesthetics evokes nostalgia, their lighthearted brotherly banter and modern humor make the whole thing irresistibly fun to watch.

Spending a year living out of an old Kia Sedona minivan, the two brothers explore each corner of the lower 48 states to build their life list. Throughout the documentary, the pair meet a wide variety of birders and naturalists with varying levels of expertise and feature their stories. Some examples are: David and Tammy McQuade, accomplished birders and the only couple to surpass over 700 species in six consecutive years; Ezekiel Dobson, the youngest birder to reach over 700 species observed in a calendar year; and a mention of "Guy Who Farted."

While Owen and Quentin's shenanigans shine light on the exciting world of birdwatching, the documentary highlights the competitive nature of the community. The ability to publicly list accomplishments on eBird, a popular bird identification "software," takes away from the experience of birdwatching itself. Suddenly, the birdwatching burnout began.

Their competitive quest once fueled by the adrenaline of filling their list and sharpening their identification skills transformed into something deeper. It became less about the numbers and more about the magic of birds. It's about the people you meet along the way, the friends who you share the journey with, the growing awareness of habitat protection, and above all else - the birds. Watching them in their own world, some doing their best to stay hidden from view as Owen and Quentin discover. A world that can take you a mile into an icy marsh with grass up to your shoulders or deep into the Pacific Northwest bear country.

LISTERS envelopes you in Owen and Quentin's journey and inspires you to take your own.

Link to the Documentary: [LISTERS: A Glimpse Into Extreme Birdwatching](#)

Link to Bird Guide: [Field Guide of All the Birds We Found One Year in the United States](#)

Harris County Prairie Dwan Preserve Field Trip

On Sunday, October 12, 11 members and soon to be members met at the Harris County Prairie Dawn Preserve to look for the three fall-blooming rare plants found on the prairie and to see what else was happening.

Anita Tiller, Mercer Botanic Gardens Botanist, and Kari Hernandez, Mercer Horticulture Curator, generously spent the morning telling us about how the small, 3.6 acre prairie full of rare plants was preserved as streets and warehouses were developed all around it and they also guided us through the site.

The rare *Rayjacksonia aurea* was going strong and it was a treat to see their rich yellow clumps of flowers in several of the saline slicks. Yellow was the color of the day, due also to the flowering Goldenrods, two species of *Euthamias*, - Goldentops -, and Swamp Sunflowers.

An interesting note is that the *Iva angustifolia*, Sumpweed, was blooming and we were raising clouds of pollen due to the fact that we were walking through plants and not on trails, since it is a wind-pollinated plant. Most of us were not bothered but it was a little challenging for a couple of people who, undeterred, soldiered on. I don't remember experiencing that before.

After a couple of hours, the walk ended and we left educated, with photos and memories of nature and having had the opportunity to spend some time with fellow members.



Photo Credits – above and right Katy Emde, middle Judy Thomas.

Urban Nature Facilitates Human Flourishing

A prairie soaks up rainwater, a tree provides cooling shade, a bee pollinates flowers. Nature provides these ecosystem services. Nature, especially urban nature, also provides cultural ecosystem services. Examples include cultural identity, inspiration, and quality of life. These can be expressed at different levels, from sensory experiences to life teachings.

How have you experienced these cultural ecosystem services?



Researchers in Finland studied two different groups, young people aged 15 – 24 and people over 60. Young participants spent most of their nature time inside the city and valued the solitude they experienced. Older participants ventured closer to natural preserves and valued intergenerational experiences. While the groups differed in both the places they visited and the kinds of activities they engaged in, they also had much in common.

"Spending time and being active in nature brought to the surface what was really important to the participants in their lives...." JOHA JÄREKARI

Working with local communities can identify culturally significant elements such as old trees. Preserving these elements leads to deeper engagement and benefits.

Sources : msn.com, JÄREKARI et al
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.70104>





Weather - Conclusion

"Don't knock the weather; nine-tenth of people couldn't start a conversation if it didn't change once in a while." - Kin Hubbard

As Master Naturalists, we pay attention not only to the living parts of an ecosystem, but also to the non-living factors that influence everything. The daily weather is one such factor. I've enjoyed exploring various aspects of weather this year. Hopefully you have as well.

If you have any suggestion for a topic for the 2026 abiotic column, please let me know.



Looking Forward to 2026

The 2026 Annual Meeting will be held in Waco, Texas. Dates depend on the football schedule, tbd.

The recertification pin for 2026 will be the bobcat.

If you have any photos, impressions, fun facts to share about the 2025 Annual Meeting, please send them to me for the November newsletter. Thanks!