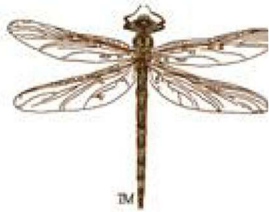


September 2025



Naturalist Notes

Upcoming

Fall Plant Sale at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center on October 3rd and 4th from 9 am to 2 pm

Fall Plant Sale at the Natives Nursery at Edith L. Moore on October 11th from 8 am to 11 am. Park in the church parking lot

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

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

Guided Native Garden Tour at Edith L. Moore on October 18th 9 am - 1 pm



Weather – Freeze

All organisms native to the coastal plains of Texas must deal with extreme weather. People are also affected, although we usually have effective ways to keep cool or warm. One of the extreme weather events is a hard freeze, with temperatures remaining well below freezing for a day or several days.

There are several ways cold air can reach Houston. The polar vortex is a circulation of cold air high in the atmosphere over the North Pole. When it is disrupted, pieces may break off and travel south. 'Blue Northerners', Arctic fronts, can also reach the Gulf Coast when conditions are favorable. An upper-level atmospheric flow pattern, the McFarlane signature, can also direct Arctic air from Canada into Texas.

The dense urbanization of Houston causes the Urban Heat Island effect. This protects the inner city from many freezes. However, an Arctic front can still drop temperatures below freezing.



Woodpeckers Instrumental for Creating Forest Homes

Woodpeckers are primary cavity nesters, creating their own holes in dead, or in the case of the red-cockaded woodpecker living, wood. Owls, chickadees, and bluebirds take advantage of existing cavities. In North American forests, avian excavators create ~ 77% of nest cavities. Researcher Kathy Martin coined the term 'nest web' to describe the relationship between nest-site producers and consumers.



Woodpecker Nest Webs. Nest webs show the relationships between nest-site producers (cavity excavators, especially woodpeckers) and consumers (the many other birds and mammals that use them). The dark gray arrows in this illustration of a western Canada forest point from cavity producers to cavity consumers. For example, Northern Flicker holes are a main source of cavities for Mountain Bluebirds, American Kestrels, and Buffleheads. The white arrows show additional food-web relationships that can stem from the relationships in this nest web. Species, left to right: Northern Flicker, Mountain Chickadee, Bufflehead, Northern Saw-whet Owl, red squirrel, short-tailed weasel, woodrat, female Mountain Bluebird, deer mouse, Northern Flicker (flying), Pileated Woodpecker, male Mountain Bluebird, American Kestrel, Barrow's Goldeneye. Illustration by Bartels Illustrator Lauren Richelieu.

For more information on this topic, please visit <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/> and search for The Hole Story: How Woodpeckers Make Homes For The Rest Of The Forest.



From L - R: . Elise Nishikawa, Richard Solberg, Livia Garza, Frankie Ortega and Jay Dryden. A picture from our latest effort maintaining the ADA trails at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center Saturday September 20th. Welcome to Livia, a first timer and welcome back to Elise who we haven't seen for a while.

Ode to the West Wind (Part I)

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

- Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)