

February 2026



Naturalist Notes

Upcoming

Thu, Mar 5th - Monthly Chapter Meeting at HANC, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm.

Sat, Mar 7th - SPLASh Exploration Green Clean Up, 9 am - 11 am. Meet at Bluebird Pond parking lot.

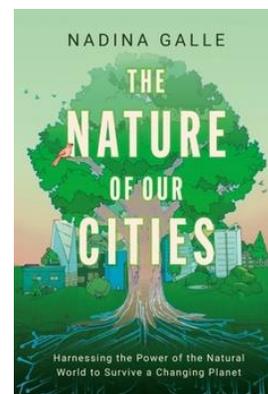
Fri, Mar 20th and Sat, Mar 21st - Native Plant Sale, 9 am - 2 pm both days, HANC.

Sat, Mar 21st - Native Plant Sale, 8 am - 10:30 am, UHCL campus. NPSOT - Clear Lake Chapter.

Fri, Apr 24 - Mon, Apr 27, City Nature Challend

Sat, May 2nd - Native Plant Sale, Audubon Nursery, Edith L. Moore.

Book Club Book March 2026



Book Club List of Books through Jan 2027

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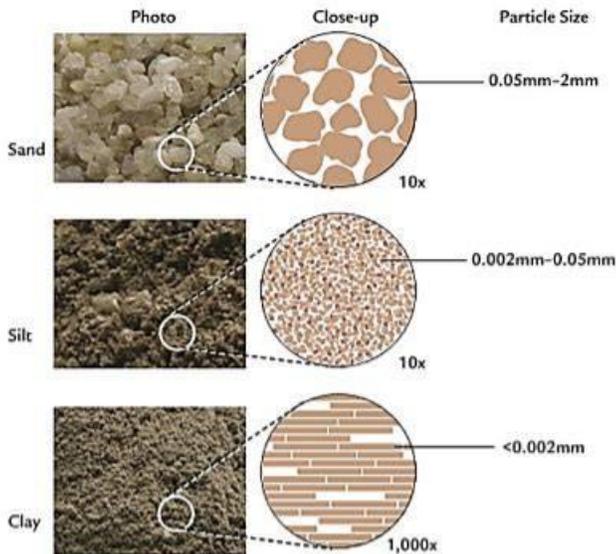
In the Spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.”

Margaret Atwood



Soil - Sand

Sand, Silt, and Clay



Sand is defined by particle size. Gravel particles are bigger, and silt particles are smaller than sand. The particle size included in sand has varied over time. However, it is easy to tell sand apart from silt by rubbing it between your fingers. Sand feels gritty, while silt feels smooth.

In inland areas, sand is made up mostly of silica in the form of quartz. Around Houston, granite sand and some basalt may also be present, each contributing different minerals.

Sand has the largest particle size of the three parts of soil. Sandy soils have excellent drainage and aeration but lack nutrients.

Next month we'll 'dig into' silt.



How to Identify Shed Snakeskin

Snakes shed their skin generally in one piece, inside out. If you are lucky enough to find a shed skin, you can try to identify it. Here's what to look for:

- Dorsal pattern - even though the shed skin is thin, the dorsal pattern is usually visible
- Number of scale rows - Count the number of scale rows around the middle of the body, from 1 edge of the belly scales to the other
- Number of ventral scales (scutes) - count the number of ventral scales between the head and the cloaca
- Subcaudal scales - look at the ventral scales under the tail. If each scute is single, the snake that shed the skin is most likely venomous, if each scute is divided, most likely non-venomous
- Supralabial scales - if the head is present, count the scales on each side of the 'nose' scale back to the jaw. Also note how many scales are touching the eye.

Book Club List of Books

The Gulf Coast Chapter Book Club meets in odd months (January, March, May, July, September, November). Both Zoom and in-person meetings are available. AT is awarded for attending the book club meeting. You don't have to have read/finished the book to attend.

See the list of upcoming books below:

March 2026 - *The Nature of Our Cities: Harnessing the Power of the Natural World to Survive a Changing Planet* by Nadina Gale

May 2026 - *The Milkweed Lands: An Epic Story of One Plant: Its Nature and Ecology* by Eric Lee-Maeder

July 2026 - *Prairie - A Natural History* by Candace Savage

September 2026 - *The Hummingbird's Gift: Wonder, Beauty, and Renewal on Wings* by Sy Montgomery

November 2026 - *The Book of Wilding: A Practical Guide to Rewilding, Big and Small* by Isabella Tree and Charlie Burrell

January 2027 - *What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman



What Kind of -phile are You?

Anthophile - loves flowers

Dendrophile - loves trees

Thalassophile - loves the ocean

Heliophile - loves the Sun

Astrophile - loves stars and the night sky

Pluviophile - loves rain and rainy days



Organism of the Month – Plain-Bellied Watersnake *Nerodia erythrogaster*

Plain-bellied water snakes are a common snake found in every southeastern state at lower elevations, along the East Coast from Florida to Virginia, and throughout Texas West to Oklahoma. They are generally found near permanent freshwater sources. While subspecies used to be recognized, they were difficult to tell apart, so they are no longer recognized. Thick, pattern-less with a belly that can have different colors, they can get up to 40 inches in length.



Hibernating during the coldest months, they are active both day and night during the hottest months. Their prey consists of crayfish, small fish, turtle hatchlings as well as amphibians. While they hunt actively most often, they have been observed to lie in wait under water. They swallow their prey alive without constricting or envenomating.

The Buffalo Bayou Park Conservation team found a shed snakeskin in the park in January. Based on the article above, it is most consistent with a plain-bellied water snake. Feel free to stop by the Visitor's Center between 9 am and 6 pm any day and ask to see it.