

August 2026



Naturalist Notes

Upcoming

Thur, Sep 3rd – Monthly Chapter Meeting, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm, Houston Arboretum.

Fri, Sep 4th through Sun, Sep 6th - First Weekends on the Prairie. Indiangrass Preserve open 7 am to 1 pm.

Sat, Sep 26th – Fourth Sat of the Month Phenology Walk, 9 am – 11 am, HANC, free.

Sat, Sep 26th – Bat Fest, 10 am – 2 pm, HANC.

Sat, Sep 26th – Wildscapes Workshop and Native Plant Sale, NPSOT – Houston, 9 am – 3 pm, Houston Zoo. Registration required.

Monarch on Aquatic Milkweed by Ridley Smith



Houston Audubon Bird Week Sep 19 – 26

Check Audubon's website for an updated list of events associated with Houston Bird Week.



Soil – Soil Minerals

Around 50% of soil volume is minerals. Primary minerals, for example feldspar, mica, and quartz, come directly from parent rock unchanged. Secondary minerals such as clay minerals and iron oxides form when primary minerals break down and change chemically.

Minerals are essential for plant growth. These minerals are divided into primary, secondary, and micronutrients.

Primary Nutrients

Plants obtain carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen from air. Nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus are obtained from soil. Nitrogen is an essential building block of proteins and DNA. Potassium controls water and sugar movement and growth hormones. Phosphorus is essential for converting sunlight into usable energy, building strong roots, and growing flowers, fruits, and seeds. Fertilizer contains these three soil minerals in varying ratios, depending on use.

Secondary Nutrients

Calcium, magnesium, and sulfur are secondary nutrients. Calcium builds strong cell walls, helps cells divide and grow, and protects plants from disease. Magnesium is the central core of the chlorophyll molecule, which captures sunlight. Sulfur forms vital building blocks for proteins and chlorophyll, helps process nitrogen, and activates enzymes and vitamins.

Micronutrients

Iron, chlorine, manganese, boron, zinc, copper, and molybdenum are needed in very small amounts.



lone conttoward leaf
spirals in harsh summer heat
grass yellows loudly

- Shay Wills
<https://haikujournal.org/issue66-poem805399.html>

Organism of the Month

Common Baby's Ear (*Sinum perspectivum*)

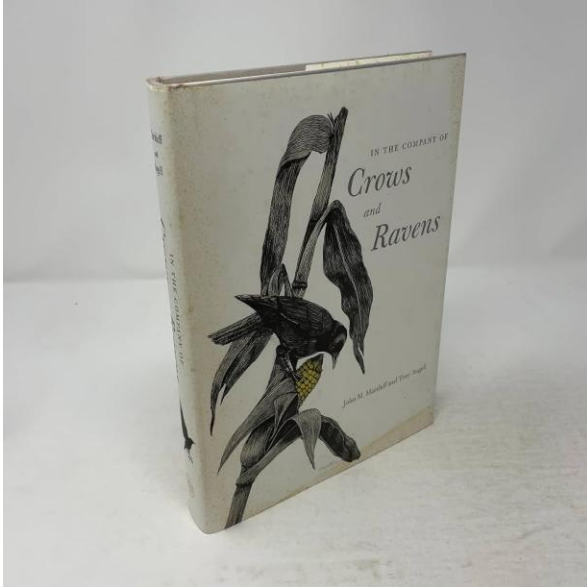
Common Baby's Ear is a member of the moon snail family *Naticidae*. The shell is almost flat with a curved appearance. It can reach up to 3 cm in diameter. Both the shell and the snail's body are white. The snail is much bigger than its shell (bottom image)

Common Baby's Ear is found along the Atlantic Coast of both North and Northern South America, the Gulf, and Bermuda. It ranges in depth from intertidal down to 70 meters.

Despite its sweet name and delicate appearance, this marine snail preys on other mollusks and even other moon snails. It envelopes its prey and drills a beveled hole in the shell using the radula and acid secretions. Once drilled, the snail uses its proboscis to slurp up its prey.



Top – Shell found at Bolivar Flats July 28, 2026. Bottom – Shell and live animal from Sanibel. Photos by José H. Leal, Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum and Aquarium.



Book Review

In the Company of Crows and Ravens

John M. Marzluff and Tony Angell, 2005

I chose this book because the American Crow is my Bird of the Year, and I wanted to learn more about them.

I loved the wide-ranging topics in this book, from biology and a list of corvid species to both bird's influence on human culture across time and around the world to crow culture.

Each chapter is meticulously researched and referenced. From pre-historic and historical records to modern ecology and genetics, each is placed carefully in context. The illustrations are another point in the book's favor. Tony Angell's pen and ink illustrations are wonderfully detailed and enhance the text.

My main criticism stems from the book's strength. At times it felt more like reading a textbook than a book directed at a lay audience. However, if you are interested in exploring all or part of the relationship among crows and ravens and between crows and humans, this book deserves a spot on your "To Be Read" list.



HANC Accessible Trail Maintenance

This sweaty group worked hard on the accessible trails at the Houston Arboretum. We trimmed back plants encroaching on several of the trails.

From L to R: Frankie Ortega, Miriam Froneberger, Trey Robinson, Richard Solberg, Tisha Page and Jamin Perez. Not pictured are Isaac Mendoza and Alma Lopez.