



INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

SUMMER 23

News & Events of the Indian Trail Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists...Serving Ellis and Navarro Counties



See Page 16!



See Page 8!

From the Desk of the **PRESIDENT**



Trailblazers,

Whew! Spring was **soooo** busy for our chapter. Thank you to all who planned, volunteered, and attended all events. Summer gets a bit slower, but we still have plenty going on with workdays, Farmers' Markets, Night Hikes and more.

Our summer social was quite an event! Several people were in attendance enjoying a nice cool afternoon when we were hit with *EXTREMELY* high winds and driving rain accompanied by hail. The rest of the day was spent visiting and watching the radar to find a time to get home during a break in the storms. Great food and lots of laughter even with the awful weather! The journeys home were enlivened by downed trees on our little country road.

Please keep up with everything going on with both our local chapter and TXMN. The July TMN Tuesday will be about the upcoming eclipses, August is about fish and September will be about birds. They are still accepting the story telling from members to go along with the 25th anniversary of TXMN. All the information is on the state website.

As always, I remind you that you do invaluable work! Every minute you spend learning, teaching, sharing, observing, and reporting is a minute that enhances nature and helps make our world a better place. I appreciate every one of you!

– *Rena Sutphin, President Indian Trail Chapter*

Indian Trail Master Naturalist Newsletter Team
indiantrailnews@protonmail.com

Melanie Gibson, Chair

Ann Spencer, Editor

Robbie Robbins, Coordinator

Dottie Love, Production Designer

Monthly meetings are held on the 4th Monday (usually) of each month at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie. Our office is located in TexasAgrilife at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165 (972) 825-5175. Visit our website at <http://www.txmn.org/indiantrail/>

ENNIS BLUEBONNET FESTIVAL WILDFLOWER WALKS AT KACHINA PRAIRIE

By Jim Patak

The 2023 Ennis Bluebonnet Festival Wildflower Walks at Kachina Prairie took place April 15-16, 2023. We had 37 volunteers (plus one future TMN, Jubilee Bacon) lead/shepherd the walks. The two teams per Scheduled Walk Times proved beneficial. Several of the walks could have supported even a third team. Our visitors totaled 612 adults, 153 kids and we collected \$62 in donations. We had out of state visitors from Mississippi, Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York.

Our interactive Wildflower Quiz Board was a grand hit. We gave out seed packets and copies of our "Wildflowers of Ellis County" booklet to all who participated in the quiz.

In closing, NONE of this would have been possible without the active internet promotion by the City of Ennis Visitor and Convention Bureau folks and our awesome team of volunteers. On behalf of Ms. Charlie and myself, THANK YOU to all who helped make this possible.



Farmers Market Experience

Story and photos by Tannis Lambert

Jerry McClung and Tannis Lambert partnered to serve at the Waxahachie Farmers Market. This is a new experience for both of us and we have been enjoying the interactions with the attendees. We are at the market on the first Saturday of each month from May through October. Anyone who would like to help is welcome to join us!



ITMN members (left to right) Lea Sandoz, Alice Thompson, Jerry McClung, and Tannis Lambert

We are partnered with Master Gardeners and provide an activity or craft to go along with their monthly theme. May had a soil theme. We took a bore soil sample and informational sheets on the soil layers known as horizons. Water was our June theme. We brought and demonstrated several types of recyclable water magnifiers. Jerry brought interesting nature items for everyone to take a closer look. Families enjoyed the fun ideas to try at home. A youth pastor was so excited with the simple project ideas that he is going to use them for his Sunday School!

We have enjoyed meeting new people and sharing the many opportunities that our chapter brings to the community.

Here's more dirt...

Indian Trail Chapter outreach dug deep this spring with a presence at the Waxahachie, Midlothian and Corsicana Farmers Markets! Members Everett and Ann Spencer are working the Midlothian market May/June/September; Stephanie Racine and Linda Sanford are working the Corsicana market.



September 24, 2023, 2:00-5:00 PM

Ellis County Rural Heritage Farm Inc

130 Cunningham Meadows Road, Waxahachie, TX 75167

*Bring your family & kids
& grandkids to enjoy
a Fun Sunday Afternoon
in the Country!*

*Farm Animals, Farm Vendors,
Hay Rides, Outdoor Games,
Farming Living History Activities
(Feel free to bring a folding chair.)*

*Free Admission & Free Snacks
(while they last)*

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ruralheritagefarm@gmail.com

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Heritage Farm**





BAREFOOT TREASURES IN HIDDEN CANYON

Story and photos by Thomas Hollingsworth

Growing up in the Carolinas, I was a barefooted explorer. I roamed the woods making discoveries of plants and critters. It's what you did.

In mid-life, I deviated from my nature. Modern lifestyle didn't nourish my passion for the outdoors. Years ago, I restored my barefooted explorer self. Later, my association with Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center and Indian Trail rounded out that passion with service, skills and a connection to like-minded naturalists...experiences that thread the needle back to my childhood ways.

My life as a naturalist has been enriched from six years of living in the tucked away hills and trees of Hidden Canyon in Cedar Hill. Neighbors note my bare feet as I roam for snakes and tarantulas with the next-door kids.

This habitat is different from my childhood haunts. Yet, nature draws me in as before and I find myself again on hands and knees inspecting tracks, bugs, and flowers.



I've been tracking this path since I was crawling, and now it's leading me to Taos, New Mexico. Lynne and I are moving there.

I'll learn new lessons from the western, mountainous ecoregion. I've traipsed the Appalachians of North Carolina, the lowlands of South Carolina, the desert plains of West Texas, the hill country of Central Texas, and the Blackland Prairies of North Texas. My bare feet will now tread on "new" turf. In addition to adventures in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, I will focus on writing and yoga instructor training at the University of New Mexico.

I'm grateful for my time with my fellow Trailblazers. What you do as naturalists, as volunteers, your outreach and service, your love of Nature...make a difference. And I'm grateful for my time in Hidden Canyon. As I reflect on the habitat, the critters, the people, I give thanks for what I've learned here. In a place of gratitude, I share tidbits of my barefooted treasures with you. There are so many things I've learned as a member of Indian Trail Master Naturalist: the varied ecoregions in Texas and the unique qualities of the Blackland Prairie, the subtle and sometimes dramatic interplay between prairies, fires, and trees, the amazing diversity of birds that reside and migrate through the Central Flyway, the surprising array of urban wildlife that eke out a living in DFW greenbelts, and the incredible knowledge and dedication of like-minded Trailblazers who LOVE nature.

I get immersed in nature at our little home. I've spent countless hours in the yard popping in and out of my taxidermy shop and working on garden and yard projects. This time allowed me to tune in closely to birds, mammals, native plants, and reptiles that frequented our property. Through awareness I've picked up on some interesting observations of wildlife:

- Blue Jays have specific behaviors and calls when they spot and follow a snake
- Some Blue Jays learn to mimic Red-Shouldered Hawks to bolster territorial behaviors
- Texas Brown Tarantulas migrate in spring and are preyed on by the Tarantula Hawk
- Great Horned Owls don't make nests and take over hawk nests when under "nest stress"
- Bees have a swarming season; they kick out old queens that "re-hive" with loyal workers
- Crows have specific calls for predators; thrice I've tuned in to catch a bobcat mobbing
- Resident birds like Chickadees and Titmouses coordinate mobbings of owls and hawks
- Weeds are not weeds; propagating native species GIVES LIFE to chains of creatures

We have more mammal critters wandering through Hidden Canyon than most urbanites could imagine exist in far-away places. Bobcat, coyote, red fox, gray fox, long tailed weasel, opossum, skunk, armadillo, bat, vole, cottontail, raccoon, pocket gopher, and fox squirrel...I've spotted them all in my bare feet while tending to one thing or another in my little yard of a preserve.

An array of migratory birds visits the canyon: Bald Eagle, Mississippi Kite, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Flicker, Pine Siskin, Black Chinned Hummingbird, Eastern Blue Bird, Painted Bunting, American Robin, Mallard Duck, Hermit Thrush, Junco, Pine Warbler, and Cedar Waxwing are among them. I never thought of myself as a birder; now I'm the guy with the binoculars.

My favorite guests to Hidden Canyon are reptiles and amphibians like: Western Diamondback Rattlesnake, Copperhead, Coral, Yellow-bellied Racer, Western Rat Snake, Rough Earth Snake, Texas Blind Snake, Dekay's Brown Snake, Texas Spiny Lizard, Green Anole, tree frogs galore, Leopard Toad, Little Brown Skink, and Red-Eared Sliders. For neighbors, I'll catch the venomous ones and drop 'em off down the street at Cedar Hill State Park. My wife and I leave 'em be. I work beside them as they hang out in the garden...with an eye on the fanged ones to stay safe.



As a fare-thee-well, several critters recently left us parting gifts. An opossum left some poop on the back porch. Acrow left the bones of frog legs in the bird bath. A Red Shouldered Hawk dropped two primary wing feathers and a rectrix (tail) feather in the yard. And, in a recent event before our house listed, we were gifted an eagle's eye view of a bee swarm lifecycle; it took over an Eastern Screech Owl box. The queen and hive were relocated, but after a long period I sadly had to kill a tiny ball of straggler bees hanging out at eye level on a vitex (a safety precaution for prospective buyers). I could go on – critter gifts, treasures...native spirits get this.

The other day as I did my little outdoor chores, checking things out, inspecting, barefooting it, I heard a familiar sound.

I saw bees visiting my plants again, just visiting, not swarming, and my remorse over the stragglers turned once again into...gratitude.

Nature's gifts are boundless. With heartfelt thanks to you, my brothers and sisters in nature, as you follow your paths, barefooted or not, may you experience nature's boundless treasures for all the days to come.



Editors' Note: On behalf of the Indian Trail Chapter and the newly-formed newsletter team (Melanie, Robbie, Ann and Dottie), we are grateful for the years of service as Newsletter Editor and dedicated chapter volunteer. Happy Trails to You, Thomas, until we meet again!

JUST AROUND THE RIVER BEND

Story and photos by Robbie Robbins



Do you like good food, good company? Running around in the wilderness?

Then you'll have to join us down at Little L Ranch in Glen Rose, TX for the annual river cleanup and AT-a-thon. Every year the Brazos River Chapter hosts their annual clean up event, which is filled with advanced training opportunities, and your favorite naturalists! Those of us camping arrived Friday afternoon, and had a "build your own pizza" station for dinner, along with many other tasty dishes. Saturday morning started bright and early at 7:30am. We had a light breakfast, then headed to our launching points to prepare for the big task at hand- removing tires and trash from the Brazos river.



We were kayaking and canoeing down the river all morning into the afternoon. Those of us in kayaks were tasked with hopping out and digging the tires up, while the canoe crew would store and transport the tires. We also had a crew walking along the gravel bar picking up stray trash, from fishing line to more unique items.

Some of these “unique” items were brought back to the ranch, where they joined the “Brazos Belle.” We removed about 150 tires!



After all that hard work we were ready for a break, so we sat down and listened to a presentation on dragonflies by Valerie Taber before having dinner on the ranch, which was catered by Celebration Restaurant in Dallas, TX. We wrapped up the evening mothing with Sam Kieschnick.





Sunday morning started with a grab and go breakfast, followed by some learning down in the river! Justin Grimm taught about aquatic ecology, followed by a river exploration also led by Justin Grimm. Ricky Linex led a "name that plant" walk and demonstrated some basic principles of riparian ecology related to erosion and erosion control. After a light lunch we met up in the gravel pit with Melody Holm for a class on geology. Dave Moore then led us in an orienteering lesson and scavenger hunt.

That evening we had a walk led by Aaron Lincoln, concentrating on plants of North and Central Texas. We had a potluck dinner while we learned more about the Brazos River with Bruce Bodson. Afterwards we all retreated to our tents and promptly passed out. Monday morning consisted of a small breakfast, a birding opportunity and our farewells. It was such a great time, with experienced, knowledgeable and entertaining naturalists. I hope you'll pack up your gear and join me next year!



MEET-A-MEMBER

Residence: Dallas
Hometown: Orange Co, CA/Green Co, TN
Work: lawyer/restaurateur/cattle rancher
Education: JD, University of Arkansas Fayetteville
ITMN: Class of 2021



Erin McKool

Erin McKool no doubt is a California native. Born in San Mateo, her earliest memories of nature are from living near the ocean. An avid shell seeker then and now, Erin recalls pulling gear on her boogie board from her home and spending days at the shore with her cousins. She might also claim East Tennessee as home, having spent her adolescent years there. A recent 12-mile hike at Rocky Top, Tennessee (you can start singing the song now), was a life-changing, restorative experience with the sounds of nature top-most on her mind and soul.

Deep in the heart of Erin, however, is Texas. She's most at home here. With Ellis County cattle ranching on her recent resume, she may have more Texan in her than many natives who are "all hat and no cattle."

Erin and her husband, Mike, have a high-school aged son still at home, and together they enjoy many weekends riding dirt bikes and exploring nature at their ranch. Soon after finishing her ITMN training in 2021, she stepped up to fill the Initial Training Class leader position for 2022; in anticipation of an extra busy fall, she's already booked speakers and is ready to roll for the Class of 2023. She'll be paying extra attention to any wildflower discussions as that is her latest natural passion – when she's not running cattle or herding cats in the initial training class, that is!

Interview by Ann Spencer

ATTN: FUTURE & FORMER MONARCH TAGGERS

Story by Amanda Weatherly

My name is Amanda Weatherly, and I am the chairman for the Monarch Tagging project for the Texas Master Naturalist-Indian Trail Chapter.

The time draws near for you to consider participating in the 2023 Monarch Butterfly Tagging season. If you are new to tagging or are just curious about "What a Monarch Tagger does," check out the following website: www.monarchwatch.org. The website is a wonderful resource about the monarch butterfly in general and it has the details on the tagging process.

There will be an informational signup booth set up at the July monthly meeting on July 24, 2023. Come by the booth to sign up for the tagging season, to ask me any questions that you may have, or just to say hi. If you are unable to make it to the meeting, send me an email stating that you would like to participate in the 2023 Monarch Tagging season. I look forward to working with everyone this year.

Well, that was ~~EXCITING~~, for a minute.

I knew it...I just knew that I had found a species of honeybee new to science.

Story and photos by Jim West



Traveling through my usual haunts a few days ago, I began to notice honeybees with a white thorax. I'd never seen nor noticed this before so, I thought I'd hit the jackpot. I could see my name in lights, so to speak, *Apis westii*. Oh, yeah.



I went down the road, shooting the whole time and, they were everywhere for a couple of miles. I stopped in the shade to take a closer look on the view screen and, mystery solved. Horsemint, aka, Lemon Beebalm was in full bloom and, to get at the nectar, the bees had to crawl up inside the blossom, wherein the pollen stuck to the hairs on their thorax, loading them up for the next flower.

Collecting Nature

Are you a nature collector? Do you pick up “stuff” and put it in your pocket when you are on a walk or a hike? Hmm...and do you go back, too, hoping to find more of the same?



Story and photos by Christine Cook

I think I have been a collector since long-ago childhood, but my interests have expanded beyond the space needed to store them where I can still see and enjoy them, not quite hoarding but definitely in need of organization and downsizing (so I am told, and reminded and...).

I knew I had an issue when we moved to Ennis in the early '70s, because on our first ever visit to a Red Lobster for dinner I was more interested in the rocks outside the restaurant than the food inside, hoping to slip a good one into my pocket. LOL!

Reasons for this collecting urge? Must there always be a reason? Well, maybe an instant communion with something seen as lovely or unusual, an intuition to save a bit of beauty, to share it somehow. I don't know the answer; I just do it, and it pleases my soul. Here's my short collection list: books, mostly non-fiction; fabric; yarn; old lace/embroidery; small rocks/fossils; seeds/pods; wildflowers to dry/press; lichen; wasp nests; oak galls.

I'll begin with two seeds that I love. I find both of them in Austin when I go visit my daughter Julia and family. I think that Austin has mountain laurel the way Ellis County has crape myrtle! It is a smallish tree with shiny leaves and purple blossoms that on a first-time drive-by resembles lilacs. When they are in bloom, the area breathes the flavor of grape Kool-Aid, close to intoxicating. That beauty is later offset, however, by the seed pods which, when mature, resemble dried up segmented dog poop. BUT, inside each pod is a surprise – a lovely red seed, like a small bean. So as I walk the neighborhood to get my steps in, I fill my pocket on every visit. Two zip lock bags and two jars I know of, so far.

The second seed I love is a round little brown job (not the bird LBJ) from the Mexican Buckeye. This is a small tree that in the spring has lovely pink flowers blooming at the same time as the redbuds and is often mistaken for them. It has no relation to the buckeyes of my home state Ohio (I collected those also as a kid). However, the seed resemblance is similar, just not the size or the genetics. Ohio buckeyes are about the size of a ping pong ball; the Mexican buckeye is the same dark brown with a small ivory eye, just a bit bigger than a pea, but smaller than a marble. The pod is a dangling three-section structure that starts out green but turns dark brown. At maturity each section opens and the little round balls can exit or just hang out in there until a big wind or Chris Cook comes along. So far I have located my two jars full, but I know there is a bag more somewhere.

Both these red seeds and brown seeds are pleasing to the touch — shiny, smooth, and small. A few of them in your pocket are great to roll around every now and then, like a lucky penny or a smooth rock. They also share the notoriety of being dangerous for humans to ingest, so don't try to check that out!

My biggest collection (besides pressed flowers and fabric!) lately comes from my own neighborhood – one oak tree up the street and my own live oak tree in the backyard. I've been picking up oak galls! You may remember that in the past we had a most entertaining speaker on this subject at one of our meetings, so I know that there are several kinds of oak galls.



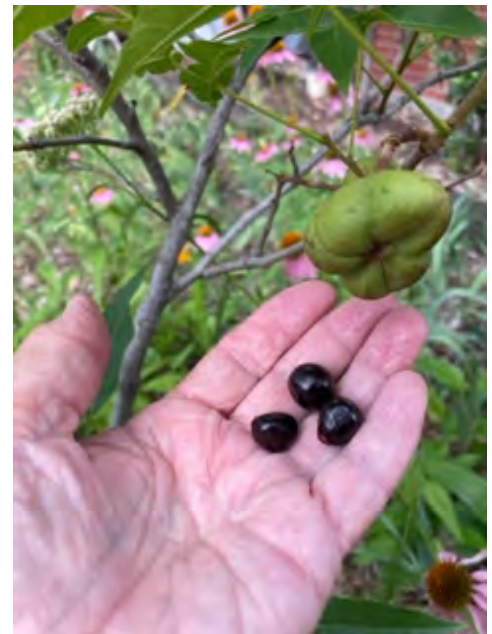
After a bit of research here's my take on it: it's kinda like different strokes for different folks. Galls are formed as a defense of sorts when a very tiny cynipid wasp lays a very tiny egg on an oak twig. According to Neil Sperry (Neil Sperry.com), "chemicals in the egg induce the oak to grow a home for the soon-to-hatch grub" who will mature and leave through a hole it makes in the surface. However, the gall can stay on the tree for a very long time, even years, before it falls off. Each kind of wasp will induce a different kind of gall!



The red oak tree up at the turn at the top of my street yields the puffy kind of gall - oak apple gall, so I look for them in the spring on my not-so-daily walk. I first saw a few on the ground and swiped them up to study and show to my sixth grade kiddos. They can be 1-2 inches in diameter and are very spongy and light in weight. They start out with a lovely spring green outer wall, but by the time they fall off and I find them, the wall is a papery light brown with little bumps. The inside looks a bit spider-webby in ball shape. I have probably collected 15 or more of these, but some of them have been put on nature wreaths I like to make.

My huge backyard live oak tree (named Archie because it arches) harbors gobs of hard round galls that have a smooth but fuzzy surface, like an old flannel shirt. Neil Sperry's oak gall ID calls them mealy oak galls. I have found some that are the size of a small pea and many that are more like a big marble. Often I find the gall attached to the small leaf or twig where it was formed. My cat and I look for them most days, and we usually find at least one or more.

As I write this (June 11-12) we have had two days of wild wind and rain; I found 39 galls after the first day, and 34 more after the second! So why do I look for them? Because I know they are there? Because I like the way they feel? Because they fascinate me?



Because the whole process with them is so scientifically cool? I have two tubs of these and have yet to glean what fell during the scary weather we had last night. Many branches and branch nubs fell, so I am looking forward to the hunt! Sitting outside at Starbucks where I like to write, I asked my daughter Karina, who proofreads for me, if it was interesting. Her reply: "Yes, Mom, but You Weird!" Gotta laugh and keep on collecting!



Story and photos by Steve Mayo and Thomas Hollingsworth

From Thomas: It's been over 35 years since my last visit to Big Bend National Park. When Steve Mayo planned his latest camping adventure there, I couldn't pass up a chance to join him. February's temperatures were ideal for tent camping, hiking, and sightseeing...cold nights and mornings, warm afternoons. Steve has multiple trips to Big Bend under his belt. This allowed me the benefit of his local knowledge and experience to get the most out of the trip.



Here are a few of my highlights. I was amazed at the wildlife surrounding the camp. As an animal tracker, I spend a lot of time searching for signs like burrows, tracks, and scat. Wildlife tracks tell

stories. I identified coyote, cottontail, javelina, fox, bobcat, crow, and even Kangaroo Rat tracks...likely a Merriam's (confirmed by observing one in our campsite).



One evening, I spent 20 minutes or so on my hands and knees following the tracks of a cottontail on the run from several coyotes. I don't know how the story ends, but I can say that the rabbit darted so quickly it threw off a coyote which slipped in a sharp-angled slide. Oh, don't forget Brer Skunk; he was there too (read Uncle Remus to learn more about the Brer Critters).

Our longest hike was over nine miles round trip to the Nail Ranch Corral, an historic stone structure abutting a cliff with a stone watch-cabin nearby. The park is full of native, natural, and pioneer history, artifacts, trails, structures, and other sites. On another venture, we explored the ruins of the Nail ranch house. The views of the surrounding Chisos Mountains were incredible. We tended to visit the less touristy areas...which I appreciate about Steve. He's an explorer, like me, and we look for the treasures in remote spots.



One of my favorite moments was resting under Cattail Falls after a light picnic lunch. It's about a four-hour round trip hike. Among other sites, we took a gander at Mule Ears Mountain and Santa Elena Canyon. Getting refreshed by nature is the best medicine for modern life. As I reflect on this trip today, the calming energy, awe, and quietude of the night sky with bright stars from horizon to horizon and the orange glow of the desert mountain sunsets sweep my mind and re-center my sometimes-fidgety spirit.

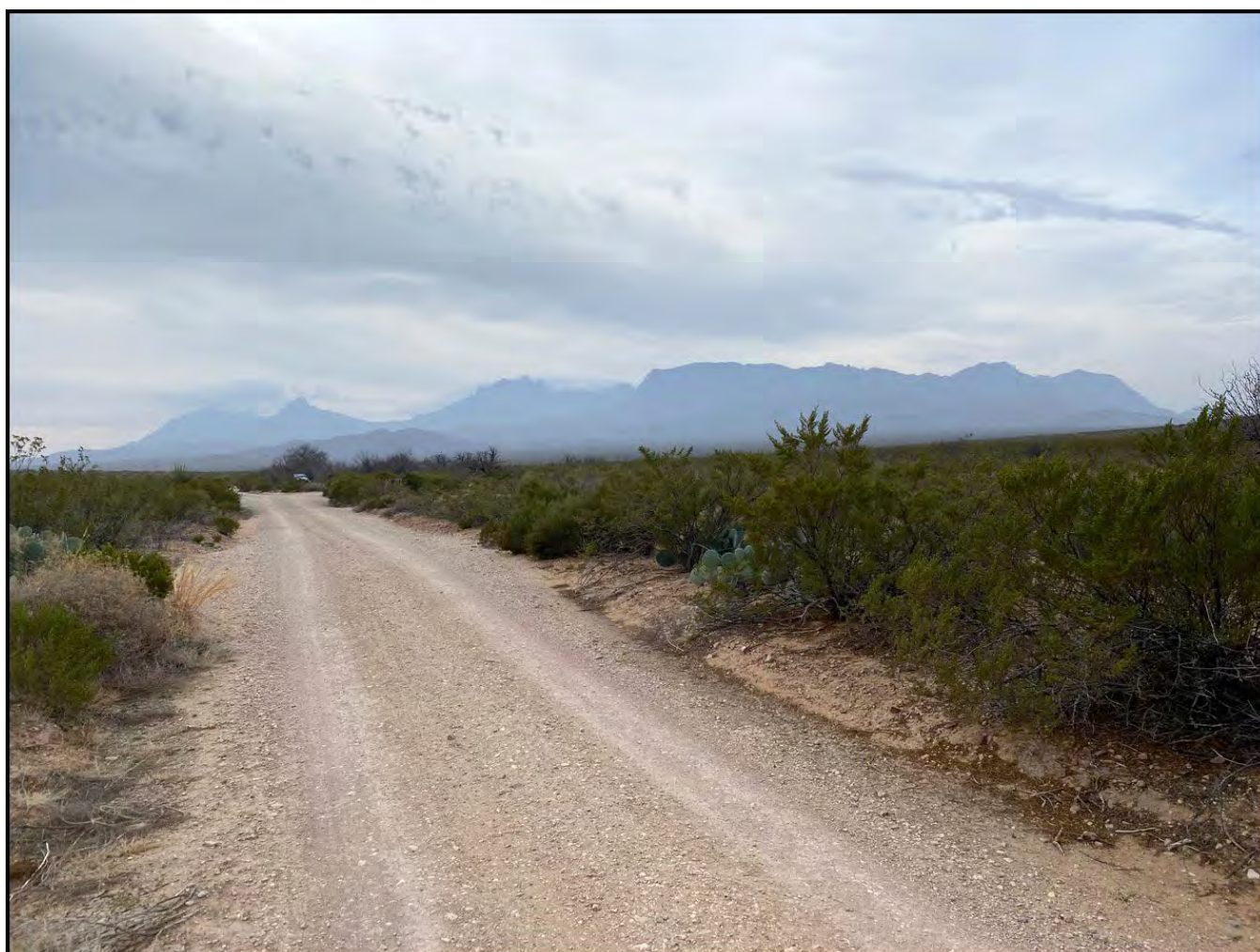


From Steve: This was my 10th trip to Big Bend NP, and I have just begun to explore this huge park. It's actually three parks in one – desert, mountains and river. As Thomas mentioned, I do like to visit and hike to out-of-the-way points of interest, avoiding the masses of tourists. I visit this place for solitude and communion with the vastness.

Exploring with Thomas was a joy, as he is an experienced outdoorsman, and brought an added dimension to the experience (did you notice the coyote sign we just passed?). I did not have to worry about him at all (I think he was worried about me). I enjoyed showing him parts of the park he had not seen before, like sharing my favorite toys ;-). He is automatically invited on any of my next trips to Big Bend NP. I'm trying to go twice a year, while I am still able to do long hikes, although I have noticed my hikes are getting shorter and flatter.



Some of my trip highlights: The roadrunner in the tree above my tent, trilling in the morning to its mate; the gurgling of the water in the stream from Cattail Falls; pondering the effort it took to build the large (75'x150') stone corral on the trail to Apache Canyon; the Kangaroo Rat that visited our camp one evening; the trail cam video I got of the bobcat visiting the dry pond next to our camp; the best cheeseburger I have ever had at the Starlight Theater in Terlingua; the deep philosophical conversations we had at camp and on the road. These memories will always bring a smile to my face.



Reakirt's Blue Butterfly

Story and photos by Jim West

*Good things are associated with the color blue,
like clear days.....David Carson*



This is a Reakirt's Blue, the smallest butterfly I have ever seen. About the size of my little fingernail, it's also one of the hardest to find, despite the bright blue flashes as it goes by, which is how I spotted my first one a few years ago in the Trinity River bottoms.



They are apparently not all that common. I found one this year for the first time in quite a while. It's been there every day, stopping occasionally to lay an egg before resuming its zig zag flight pattern. I've learned not to hunt for them, one will show up if it's around. There's a whole section in my butterfly guide on blue butterflies but, what they don't mention is how seldom you will find one sitting with its wings open.

These photos of the inner wings are pure serendipity, and they don't do the blue justice. Also the large black spot on the lower outer wing has a chrome-like iridescence when the light hits it just right. Kudos to Mr. Reakirt on his discovery.





*Story by Maureen Nitkowski
Photos by Tom Sale, used by permission
Photocollages by Dottie Love*

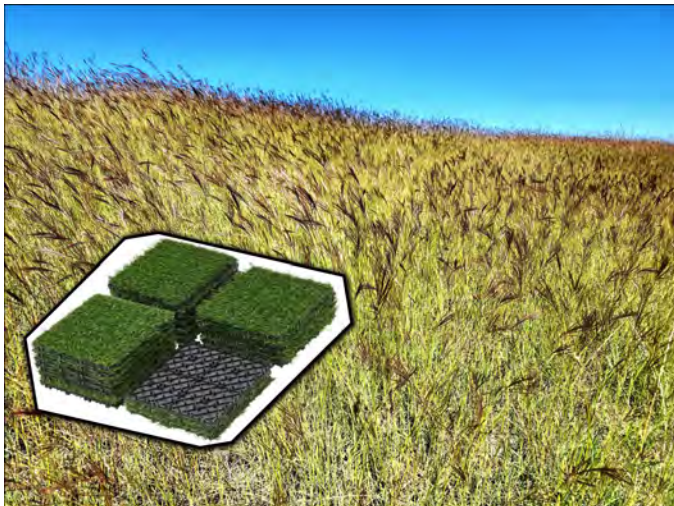
If I were to tell you that I was enjoying the very green expanse at latitude 53.35 and longitude (-) 6.26 you should not be surprised – this is the location of Dublin, Ireland.

In contrast, my location in Ellis County is latitude 32.35 and longitude (-) 96.79; why ever would I expect a green expanse all year here?

As you can tell from the difference in latitude, Ellis County is much closer to the equator than Dublin, Ireland. This means that the average July high temperature here is 96F while Dublin comes in at 59F. The January low temperature is 34F and 39F, respectively which seems not so different until you factor in the temperature range in each place: 62F in Ellis County and 20F in Dublin. There must be very different plants and animals which are adapted to these temperature ranges. Add to this the summer high temperatures and duration of the same here in Ellis County and the difference is even more apparent. Surprisingly, Dublin and Ellis County each average about 37 inches of rain annually. Dublin receives its rain in 3- to 4-inch increments per month while Ellis County can go months without any precipitation, particularly from July through September. If we have these facts available to us, why do we continue to expect to have green lawns and meadows here throughout our summers as happens in Ireland?

I will confess that I am not an anthropologist, but I do recall a theory about humankind in the distant past wanting to remove trees and bushes near their habitation in order to eliminate hiding places for predators and enemies. This seems like a reasonable idea to me. Moving forward in time, actual land ownership was in the hands of a few powerful people, while the majority of folks worked for them without owning any land.

If owning the largest parcel of land indicated status and power, having a labor force at your disposal to manicure it would be even more prestigious.



In our enthusiasm as landowners in the U.S.A. – where almost everyone has a piece of real estate, if only 0.1 acre – are we mimicking the prestige model by trying to maintain green turf/meadows all year long and in opposition to the climate and available resources?

Would it not be more enjoyable and cost-effective to use the plants that are native?

Unfortunately, all of us are under pressure from advertisements as to how our property should look and how we remember summers elsewhere before coming to Ellis County. My suggestion is to make the most of the beauty that has always been here instead of trying to change it to something foreign to all the plants and animals which did just fine without us in the past.



WEEDS NOT FOR SALE



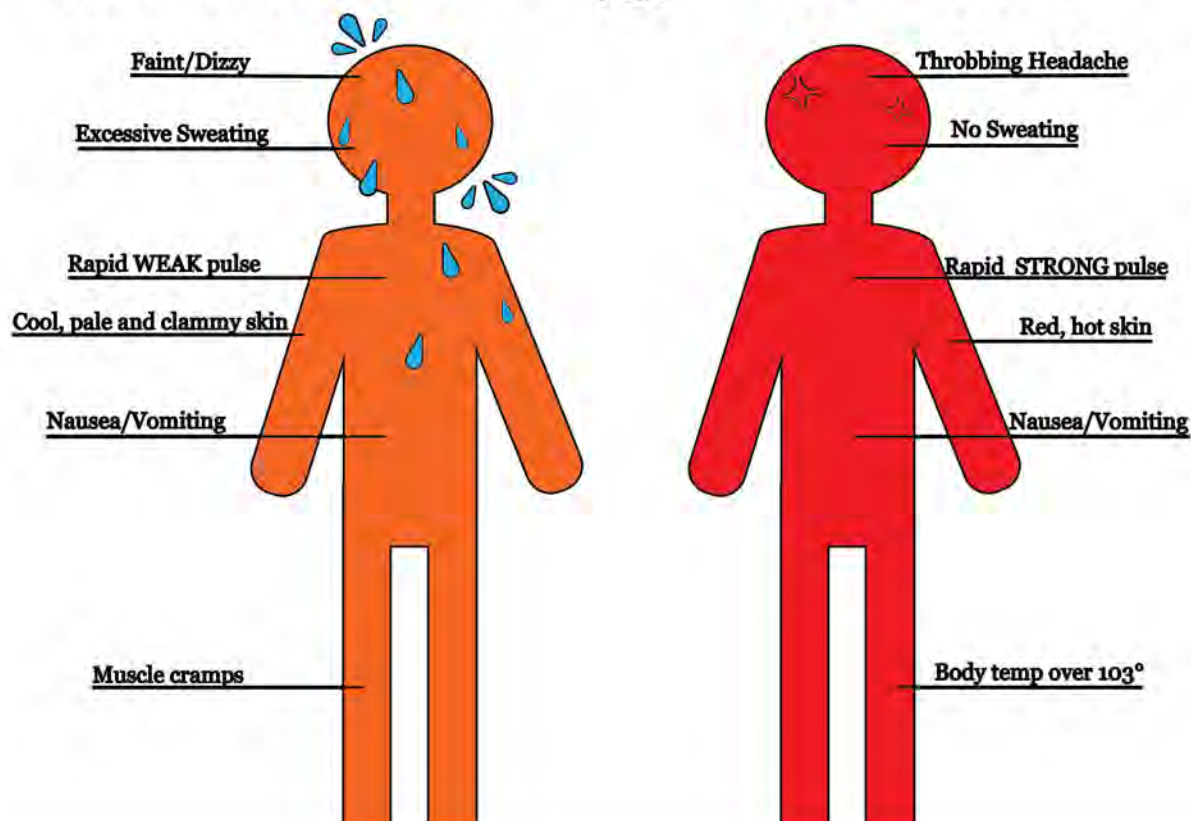
Story and photo by Ann Spencer

Weeds are just plants in the wrong place, right? When our 2022 potato vine that wasn't supposed to return to our front flower bed came back anyway, we put it in a nice pot rather than fight its desire to overtake our front porch and maybe even our roof! When this beautiful grass popped up among some liriopie purposely planted, Everett couldn't bear to throw it out so he stuck it in the pot with the potato vine. Now we have a pot that any commercial nursery might envy. No, our weeds are not for sale!

Heat Exhaustion

vs.

Heat Stroke



NATURE BOOK NERDS NEWS

Story by Charlie Grindstaff

Photos courtesy of Amazon.com

Nature Book Nerds met June 6 and discussed **"The Earth Moved"** by Amy Stewart, which everyone enjoyed. The writing style was particularly enjoyable and easy...lots of experts consulted but information written in a homey, everyday style. Who knew earthworms could be so interesting and important and sometimes very invasive!

"Living Things We Love to Hate" was not widely available so not discussed as much. Author Des Kennedy wrote about why we 'hate' some of these things (think slugs, dandelions, and rats) and then tried to mitigate that hate with some information about the good they provide.

Then we drew the names of the books to choose from for our July 11 meeting (July 4 is actually the first Tuesday, but thought you might be out enjoying fireworks):

"How to Shit in the Woods" by Kathleen Meyer provides timely techniques for keeping trails, bushes, and wild waters clean and protected when indoor plumbing is not an option.

"The Drunken Botanist" by Amy Stewart explores the dizzying array of herbs, flowers, trees, fruits, and fungi that humans have, through ingenuity, inspiration, and sheer desperation, contrived to transform into alcohol over the centuries.



BECOME A NATURE BOOK NERD!

Choose one or both books to read and come join us to discuss them. Actually, even if you don't finish or even read one or both, you are invited to come join us for a lively discussion. Thank you to Maegan Bacon for bringing snacks and thank you to Matt Bacon for the pop-up lesson on Discord.

Keep reading and please let me know the name of the best book you have read lately!

We invite you to join us for any of our upcoming meetings (usually) at 6:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at Waxahachie Parks & Rec Bldg. at 401 S. Elm St., Waxahachie. You can find a link to our book club meetings (and other events) on our Indian Trail Master Naturalist chapter homepage public calendar at <https://txmn.org/indiantrail/>. VMS Credit: Our book club discussion meetings will count as AT credit, recorded as AT: Nature Book Nerds Club. Homemade dishes can be counted for one hour of Hospitality (maximum eight per year). For more information, contact Alleasha Austin at alleasha@sbcglobal.net.

“Exploring the Edges of Texas”

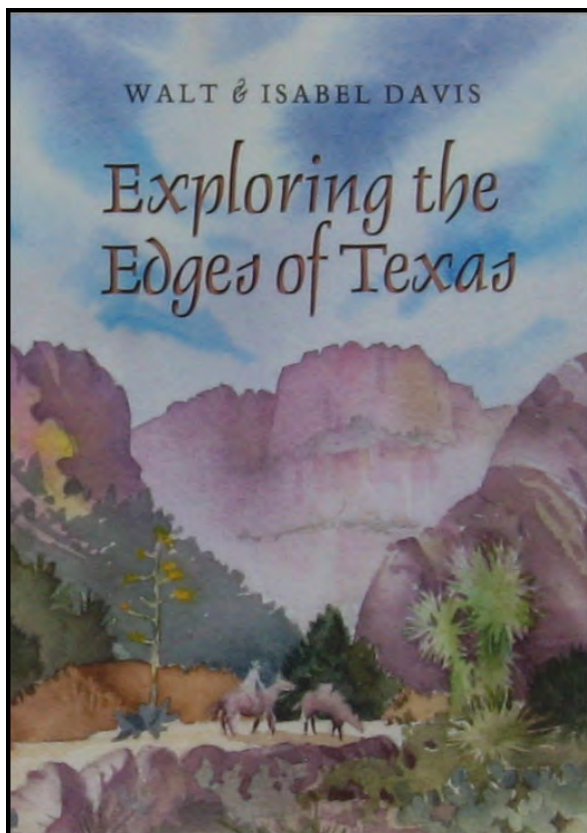
Book by Isabel and Walt Davis

Reviewed by Madeline Kelley

Photos courtesy of Amazon.com

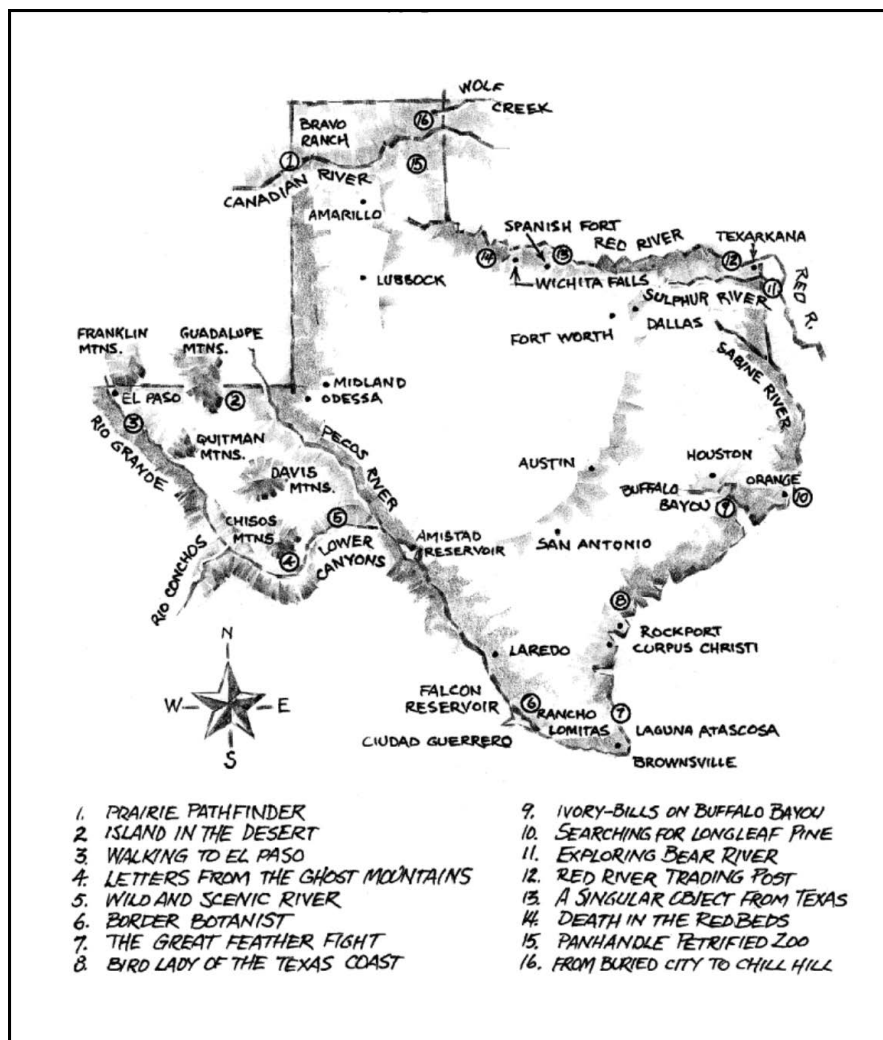
A long time ago I met Walt and Isabel Davis at a small United Methodist Church in Casa View (East Dallas). We became friends because they had two sons and we had two sons and we were outdoors lovers. My former husband and Walt were also artists. Some of you may have heard Walt speak at one of our meetings about three years ago. Together, Walt and Isabel have written at least three books, but the one that I really liked was, “Exploring the Edges of Texas.”

Some of you may remember Frank Tolbert who was a columnist for the Dallas Morning News in the 1950s. He and his nine-year-old son went on a trip to circumnavigate Texas in 1955. He would send back dispatches (not emails) to the Morning News about his journey. Readers really enjoyed these articles. I remember reading repeats of the dispatches later.



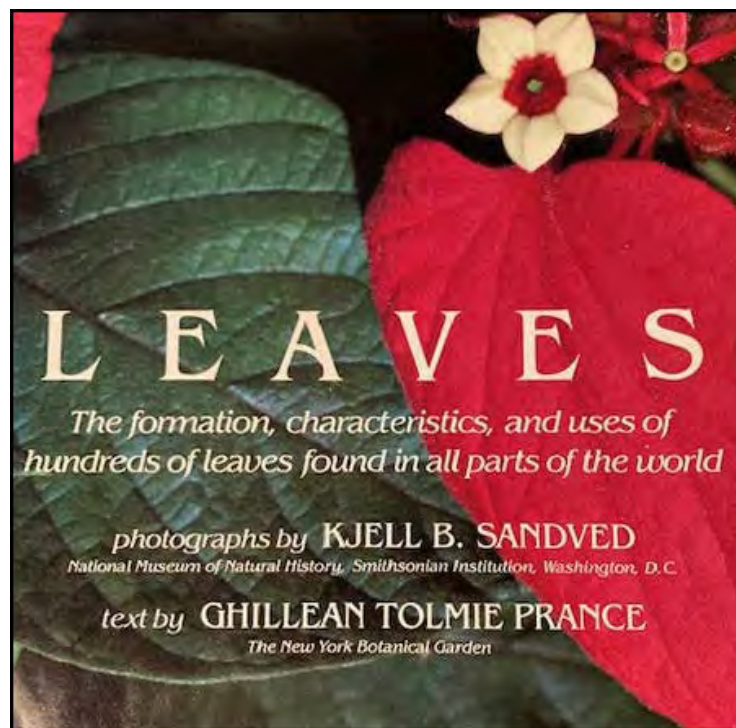
Walt and Isabel decided in the early 2000s to repeat what Frank did and they published a book about it in 2010. They took their travel trailer and stayed in campgrounds around the state. Walt did pencil sketches about the areas they visited; his sketches are included in the book. Isabel did research about the history of the areas (her specialty as a retired librarian). Together they captured all of the differences in this state. As you can see in the drawing, they started at the top of the panhandle and went south and west and all along the border of Mexico. They journeyed all around the borders and their stories tell of the natural world and the history of this state. As they say in their Epilogue they had many companions on their journey: archeologists, artists, bird banders and watchers, botanists, cowboys, ecologists, explorers, geologists, paleontologists, log-pullers, map makers, river-runners, writers and zoologists.

A quote from the book: “Our four-thousand-mile long, three century deep journey around the state has taught us two important lessons. First-people are more likely to preserve and protect things they know about and value. Kirk Courson, the Panhandle oilman, put it simply, when he said that education was the key to preserving archeological sites. That insight applies to a wide range of cultural and environment resources. Lutch Moore, the East Texas lumberman, once considered saving some stands of longleaf pine for the future, but he knew his competitors would not relent. Reluctantly, he gave up the idea and cut til the last tree fell. Had he known then what we know now, he might have decided differently.



But knowledge of the natural world comes at a price...that is the second lesson we learned from our journey. Hardworking men and women took risks and invested their lives in search or information that enlightens. A botanist walked nearly seven hundred miles collecting plants. A fossil hunter died on the prairie looking for fossils. An ornithologist spent sixty years studying Texas birds. What they and others have learned has changed the way we look at the natural world.”

I hope you will check out the book and enjoy it as much as I have.



Book Review by Charliss Grindstaff

Have you ever bought a book just because it was so pretty?

I did! This book is full of beautiful pictures of leaves in every imaginable shape, size and color. It turned out to be so much more than “just a pretty face” when I actually sat down and read the words. And speaking of words, Prance uses the longest, unpronounceable, unfamiliar, proper botanical terms. Luckily the pictures visually demonstrate what those terms mean.

After covering the basic functions and structure of leaves, including shapes, veins, margins, color patterns, and arrangements – the author goes into defense/offense: leaves that provide homes for insects, leaves as food, building materials, and medicines, mimicry of leaves by insects, fossil leaves, and so much more.

I really enjoyed this book and learned some fun things: stomata (the openings under leaves that let excess moisture out – transpiration) may be on the top and bottom of leaves as in corn leaves. The white petals of dogwood aren't petals, they are bracts – just like the red bracts on poinsettias and Indian Paintbrush. Some plants don't provide stems for their flowers, but grow them directly on the leaf itself.

The last chapters cover collecting and preserving leaves, including instructions for clearing, staining, and making leaf prints. Great way to close out a good book!

TRAILBLAZERS, STAY IN TOUCH BETWEEN MEETINGS!

Start Using Discord: QRG

By Matt Bacon

Get the app

Desktop app for Windows

1. Go to their [Download](#) Page
2. Click the Download for Windows button
3. Open DiscordSetup.exe

For Mac-OS

1. Go to their [Download](#) Page
2. Click the Download button
3. Open Discord.dmg
4. Drag the Discord over the Applications folder

For mobile devices: [Google Play store](#) or [Apple App store](#).

If you don't want to download the app, you can use the [Web](#) to access Discord directly from your browser.

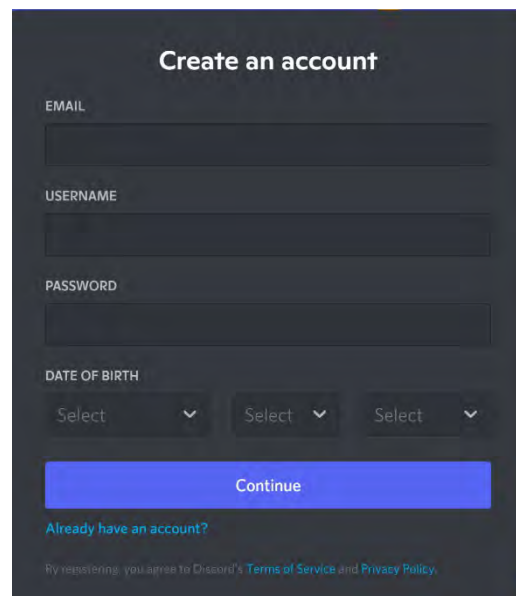
Create your Account

You can create your account on the [Discord Registration page](#) or in the app.

Your username can be anything you want. Discord will add some numbers at the end of it to make sure it's a unique account name. It does not need to be your actual name. You can always update your displayed name in the Discord server so we can know who you are (more on that later).

There's the usual email/password verification process. It also asks for a birthdate, but that's there to make sure that the account holder is over 13.

It should send you an email where it will have something like a "Verify email" link for you to click. Once your account is set up, you're ready to join the server.

A screenshot of the Discord 'Create an account' registration form. The form is dark-themed with white text. It includes input fields for EMAIL, USERNAME, and PASSWORD. Below the password field is a DATE OF BIRTH section with three dropdown menus labeled 'Select'. A blue 'Continue' button is at the bottom. Below the button, there is a link 'Already have an account?' and a small text line: 'By registering, you agree to Discord's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy.'

Join a Server

Servers are the different spaces on Discord for different communities, groups, etc. We have one for our Indian Trail chapter. Click the invite link here to join it: <https://discord.gg/wypxDBENcW>

Once you're in, you won't be able to see everything yet. We have a Public section and a Members section. Once I know who you are (and that you're a member), I'll update your role to get you the right access.

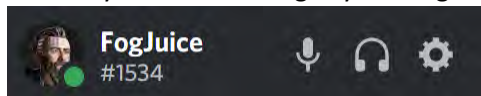
There are different rooms in the server. Most are text, but there are a couple of voice channels available if anyone wants to use it. The text channels start with a # and are called whatever that chat is about, such as #kachina-prairie, #plants, or just #members-lounge. But before we dive too deep into the chat aspect, we should customize your profile a bit.

Account Customization

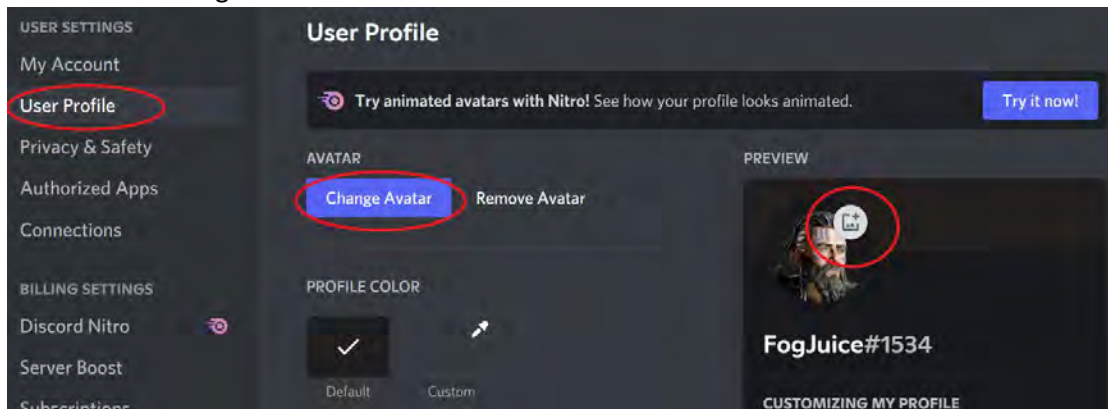
Let's personalize your profile for how it appears to other Discord members.

How to change your Avatar

1. Go into your User Settings by clicking the cog/gear icon (⚙️) at the bottom-left part of the app.



2. Navigate to the User Profile tab
3. Press either Change Avatar button

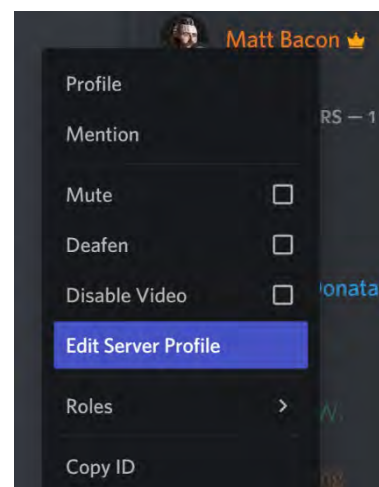


4. Upload a picture of your choice!

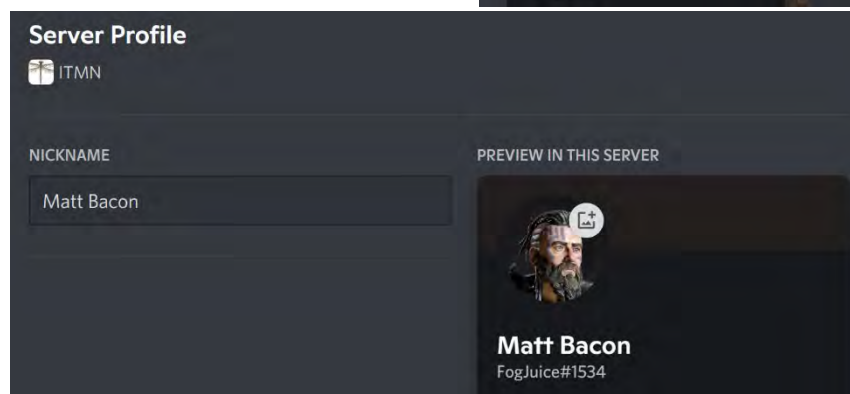
How to change your Profile Name

By default, you'll join the server with your account name. But you may want to change that to your actual name, now that we're on our own server, so we know who we're talking to and avoid confusion. For example, my account name is FogJuice, but I show on our server as Matt Bacon.

1. Once you're on the server, you should see your name on the right side. Right click it, then choose Edit Server Profile
2. Where it has Nickname, put your name there. It's not *required* that you put your first and last name, but it sure would help to avoid confusion.

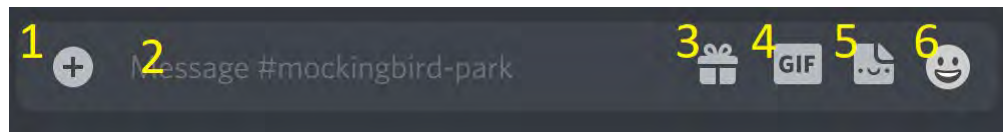


Now that we know who you are, it's time to get chatting. I mean, that's the point of this whole thing, right?!



Sending Messages

Time for chatting! Sending messages, expressing yourself with emojis and gifs, and even posting those dank memes. You can do it all in the chat bar.



1: Attachments

You can attach images, videos, and any other files by clicking the “+” on the left side of the chat bar. Additionally, you can also drag and drop files directly into Discord. It can be “What is this?” or “Look what I saw!” or just something you want to share.

2: Message Box

This is where you type all your amazing messages!

3: Gift

Discord has a subscription service called Nitro. This is how they make their money and can afford to host all these servers. The service is free, but subscription has extra perks. It’s up to you if it’s worth it for you, but totally not necessary.

4: GIF Picker

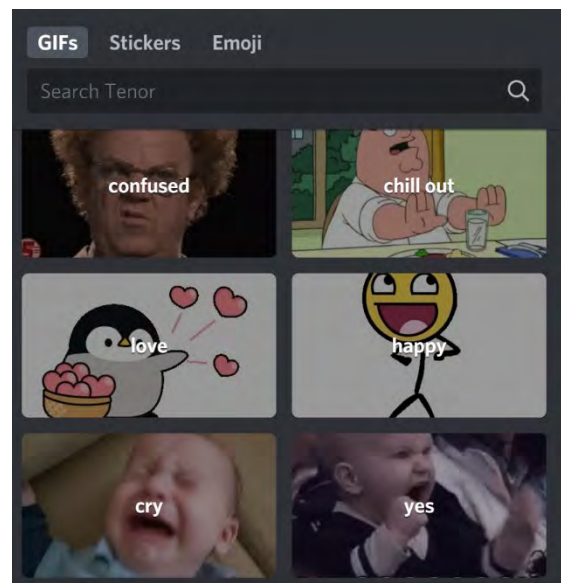
Express yourself with animated GIFS, right from your chat bar. More details on sending GIFS in Discord can be found [here](#).

5: Sticker Picker

Besides being fun to say, I haven’t used this. More subscription “cost” offerings.

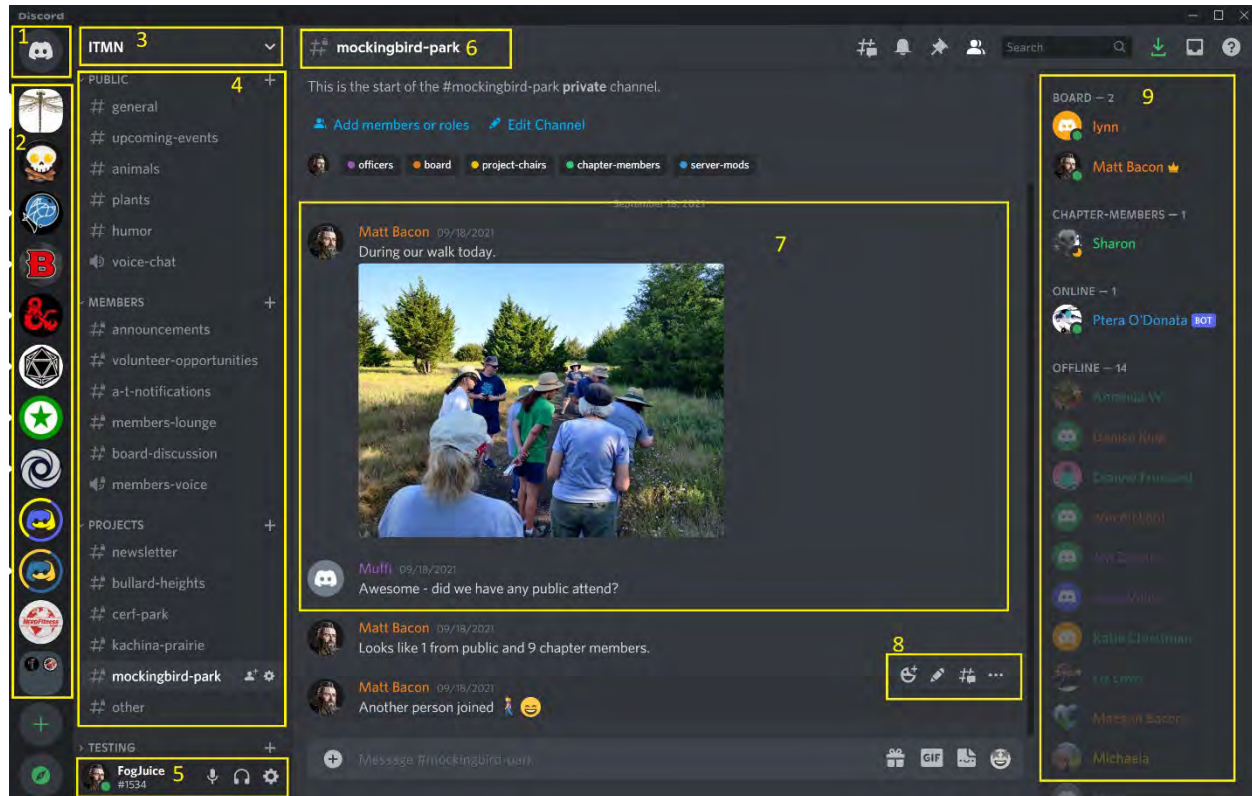
6: Emoji Picker

Lots of emojis to pick, plus a few custom ones we can put on the server. (Maegan snagged the Nature Heart one I uploaded, and used it as her avatar.)



Screen Overview

So, you're up and running. But there's a lot of info all over that screen. What does it all mean?



1. Direct messages are here. This is where you can chat with other Discord members without it needing to be in one of the chat rooms. Like maybe coordinating a carpool where not everyone in the chapter needs to know about it. I may reach out to you here if I have a question about who you are because I can't tell by your account name or server profile name.
2. The list of servers you belong to. I probably belong to too many. The one at the top is the important one here. That's us!
3. Shows you which server you're looking at. There's a dropdown arrow here with LOADS more options that are beyond the scope of this document. But in there is where you can turn on the server notifications, so if you have the phone app installed, you'll get a buzz/ding that someone's saying something.
4. The channels! The # are text, the speakers are voice. We can add/modify as needed.
5. Your account. More settings in there for you, including how you want your speaker and mic to work if you want to do some voice chatting (or even screen sharing).
6. Tells me what channel I'm in.
7. Persistent chat. You can scroll up and see previous messages. Part of the nice thing about this tool is that if you have to catch up later, you can. You can see in this example I posted a picture from a walk at Mockingbird Park. I did that from the app on my phone while we were there.
8. You can react/reply to specific messages. Handy sometimes if 25 people give a thumbs-up to a comment instead of 25 comments of "I agree."
9. The people on the server – hopefully more soon (I'm looking at you, reader of this document).



MR. WEST'S NEIGHBORHOOD



The Green Heron is one of my favorite birds to watch but first, I have to find one. Not much given to public display, they prefer staying in the shadows. By not sky lighting themselves, it's harder for their prey, as well as a human observer, to spot them. Fortunately for humans, their bright yellow legs stand out and that's what I look for when I think one might be around.

Did I mention how quick they are? No, well generally when they're about to strike, they wag their tail feathers and, that's my cue to start shooting photos. Once, I started shooting at the first twitch of its tail. At six frames per second, I still missed the strike.

The next time that you're in a dark swampy area, keep your eyes open for those bright yellow legs. Enjoy. *JW.*



INDIAN TRAIL CHAPTER MASTER NATURALIST BOARD

Chapter Mission: To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

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For additional information about the Indian Trail Master Naturalist Chapter please visit:

For the Public:

[Becoming a Master Naturalist: https://txmn.org/indiantrail/about/become-a-master-naturalist/](https://txmn.org/indiantrail/about/become-a-master-naturalist/)

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