

LOST PINES CHAPTER

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Daydreams about Night Things

by Larry Gfeller

Have you ever considered what it would be like to be reviled by almost everyone except your own family? Imagine that you're a god; an angel comes up to you and says (reading from an invoice), "We just got an order for more diversity on earth. This time they want something different . . . something unusual, something that flips everybody's switch . . . I think it's time we give them a lesson." I mean, there are some shocking options available to a creator. Consider the scorpion. Who sees one without freaking out? Even a mother scorpion must swallow hard when the stork brings her a diaper full of creepy babies. Face it—they're seriously butt-ugly.

In one of my gauzy late afternoon naps, I imagined I was a young adult scorpion (just between us, okay?). Details are sketchy, so I'll do my best to reconstruct the fantasy. First, I need to set the scene. You go to a neighborhood bar for a few cold ones with a friend, let's call him Spike. You find a table and sit down. There's sawdust on the floor, a musty smell hangs in the air, the room—except for the mirror behind the bar—is dark. Everyone glows in the reflected light until your eyes slowly adjust. There're big ones and little ones, the place is literally crawling with activity. And Spike says to me, "Hey, check out the stinger on that sweetheart." "She's with someone, you fool," I say. In the gloomy recess of a corner, a couple has each other in what appears to be a love lock. Spike says, "He's got more than he bargained for. Look, she's got two tails, the harlot." Just then a provocative female with purple exoskeleton and a ring through her pre-oral cavity scuttles over, goes to the barkeep and says, "Hey Half-Claw, how do you like my new tattoo?" Extending her left hind leg, she proudly displays the image of a tiny human on the lower segment.



Striped bark scorpion, the species we find in Central Texas

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We're interrupted by scuffling sounds from the back of the room, and then, "Who you calling a predatory arthropod! I'll light up your face like a jukebox." The picture goes blank. The vision is over and I'm left feeling . . . relieved. Well, daydreams are not reality, but being a scorpion may not be as bad as you think. I mean: venom, claws, stingers . . . what red-blooded American boy wouldn't go for that?

Fossil records show that scorpions have been around for over 430 million years; they are

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Night Things, cont.

(Continued from page 1.)

nothing if not survivors. There are reportedly over 1,700 species of scorpion in the world. They can be found almost everywhere but Antarctica. They belong to the class Arachnida and are closely related to spiders, mites and ticks, i.e., they are not insects.

All scorpions have three primary body parts—head, abdomen and tail. Most have two eyes on the top of the head and anywhere from 2-5 pairs of eyes along the front corners of the head. The position of the eyes depends, in part, on the hardness or softness of the soil they inhabit. Claws are used for prey immobilization, defense and as sensory organs. They breathe through openings in their abdomen, known as book lungs. The first abdominal segment bears a pair of genital opercula (their “junk”). The tip of the tail contains a pair of venom glands and a hypodermic venom-injecting barb. Some scorpions have two tails, but it is a genetic abnormality.



Two tails is a genetic abnormality.

Scorpions possess chemicals in their body that make them glow fluorescent under certain light conditions. Hand-held UV lamps have long been used by humans as a nocturnal survey tool. As they grow in size, scorpions lose their exoskeletons (they molt) and this process seems to add intensity to their fluorescence. These critters can be found almost anywhere. They can be ground-dwelling, tree-dwelling, rock-loving, sand-loving and some even like to live near water. Most stay out of the light during the day (to avoid predation by birds, centipedes, lizards, mice, opossums and rats), so they come out from under rocks and underground holes at night to hunt and feed—like in a Bram Stoker novel.



A scorpion fluorescing under ultraviolet light.

Scorpions can consume huge amounts of food at one sitting. As a general rule, they will kill their prey with brute force if they can, instead of using venom. And when times get tough, they can regulate their metabolism to an amazing degree. With a very efficient food storage organ, they can get by on a single insect lunch, little oxygen and no water for up to a year. Still, when the opportunity presents itself, they can easily spring to the hunt, a gift that many hibernating species lack. Such survival skills allow scorpions to exist in some of the world's toughest environments. Researchers have even frozen scorpions overnight, only to put them in the sun the next day to watch them thaw out and walk away. But there is one thing

scorpions have a difficult time living without—soil. They are burrowing animals, so in areas of permafrost or heavy grasses where loose soil is not available scorpions may not be able to survive.

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What's Blooming?

by Liz Pullman

During late fall and winter there is a dearth of actual blossoms, but this condition just opens a door for talking about plants and holidays. We all know about Decking the Halls with Boughs of Holly, but several more species are useful as evergreen decorations and are easy to collect. Here in Bastrop and Caldwell counties we are without the classic holly (*Ilex opaca*) unless you purchase it. We do have a great "hall decking" substitute with yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*) - shiny green leaves and bright red berries - very available for harvesting and quite common all over both counties. Some judicious shaping can even give you a small tree for decorating.



Yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*)

In addition there is red cedar (*Juniperus virginica*) just begging to be cut and decorated as the centerpiece tree - very aromatic. Decorated trees are generally considered to date back to the middle ages, but well before that time pagans decorated trees, the difference being that trees were never destroyed by cutting them down and bringing them indoors. Ornaments were carried out to the tree. Apparently Roxanne was following this pagan idea last year when she decorated one of her planted-after-the-fire loblollies (*Pinus taeda*) and used lights powered by solar energy.

Mistletoe (*Phoradendron tomentosum*) is a common sight on the limbs of many species of trees in central Texas. Given the fact that most of our trees never get very tall, mistletoe is relatively easy to harvest. In my Tennessee childhood, we acquired the mistletoe by shooting it out of the high branches. Many, many legends are associated with this parasitic plant. The Druids believed that enemies who happened to meet under mistletoe would stop fighting and offer signs of friendship - kissing maybe? Later came the custom of Kissing Boughs - wreaths of evergreens were constructed and hung overhead. The middle space was filled with apples and bright ribbons and a cluster of mistletoe hung down from the center. Young ladies caught standing under the bough could not refuse a kiss. Another piece of folklore is that mistletoe is useful for husband-hunting. Steal sprigs of mistletoe from church decorations and place under your pillow to bring dreams of a future husband. But, please don't eat the berries!



Texas mountain laurel (*Sophora secundifolia*)

Evergreen plants have been used since ancient times in the celebration of the Winter Solstice since they represent the unending cycle of life and return of the sun. In the short, dark and dank days of December indoors was turned into a place of light, warmth and celebration. There were festivities with candles and decorations and yule logs and bonfires (plus food and drink) continuing until the 12th Night when everything came to a halt and life as usual resumed.

As promised, here are a few more plants that are evergreen and can be decorated or used as a base for decorations: star jasmine vines (*Trachelospermum spp.*), greenbriar (*Smilax spp.*), evergreen sumac (*Rhus virens*), agarita (*Berberis trifoliata*), Texas mountain laurel (*Sophora secundifolia*), wax myrtle (*Morella spp.*), pyracantha, rosemary and even a couple of invasives (HORRORS!) - waxleaf ligustrum (*Ligustrum lucidum*) and sacred bamboo (*Nandina domestica*).

Be radical - decorate a *Yucca gloriosa*. ✂



Spanish dagger (*Yucca gloriosa*)

Whatever Boat You Float!

Written by Cat May with photos by Andy Wier



On Sunday, October 5th at one o'clock in the afternoon they came to the river, brandishing their paddles, to launch their boats. Eighteen eager river runners, eleven kayaks with paddles, one kayak with peddles, one canoe, a fly rod, a dog and a parasol.

The flotilla got underway under a blue sky and puffy white clouds. Although the temperature wasn't July or August hot, the sun was bright and many members of the group smeared or sprayed sunblock. A strong headwind and slow current was

discouraging from the start, but even first-timers Beverly Kithcart and paddling partner Rosemary Fulton persevered, despite at first having a bit of trouble moving in a straight line.

Marsha Elrod, the event coordinator, Susie Ward, Paulette Boudreaux, Caroline Easley, Barbara Carstens, Kathy McAleese, Marsha Carr and her husband, and Cheryl Ann Arneson-Jones cruised along enjoying the passing scenery and wildlife, while Dave Hill took time-out in the calm bends in the river to do a little fly fishing (ask him what he caught). Meanwhile, Andy Wier, the man with the camera, must have covered twice the distance of everyone else as he darted ahead to hide along the bank under tree limbs drooping close to the water, to photograph the paddlers as they passed by and catching shots of turtles, dragonflies, herons, egrets, and a kingfisher while waiting for the flotilla—then backtracking to catch the stragglers before darting back to the lead like he had a motor. Miriam and Robert Vaughn paddled tandem in their army brown, extremely pointed vintage kayak whose appearance would have fit nicely in the frigid waters of Alaska. Cat May was the peddler of the group in her red Hobie, carrying a black lace parasol, the perks of locomotion by legs rather than arms. Anything for a patch of shade! Steve Moredock held his own in the only canoe among all those kayaks, accompanied by the trip mascot, his beautiful auburn-haired dog Indy. Yep, his last name is Jones, and he even joined in the swim at break time.



As the trip progressed, the group began to drift apart. Part of the group stopped for a swim and rest break on a sandy beach while others continued on, and some stopped for a break even further downriver.

Two other critters encountered along the way were a water moccasin sleekly crossing the river and an unidentified water snake, appearing to be a harmless variety, who was also in a bit of a hurry to get out of the traffic! Both were captured on camera by our fearless photographer, who seemed to be everywhere at the same time! How did he do it and keep his camera dry?

By the time the take-out at the Colorado River Refuge was reached, the group was spread out along the river—the headwind taking its toll more on some folks more than others and some wanted to spend more time bird watching or just spending a little more time soaking up the lovely scenery. Total trip time was a little over three hours. Lee of the Bastrop River Co., friends, and relatives were waiting to ferry the river runners back to town or home. The comment heard most as the kayakers and canoeist beached their vessels and stepped ashore was, “The headwind made it hard, I’m tired, but I’ll go again next year!”



Official event photographer Andy Weir waiting to photo ambush fellow kayakers. See the [LPMN website](#) for the complete photo gallery.

Meet the Ridlons

by Larry Gfeller

Logic suggests that two opposing ideas cannot be simultaneously true. How, exactly, did Noah manage that two-by-two thing? You know, with the ark? To me, the alchemy of matchmaking is inscrutable. I mean, is primordial magnetism at work here, or are couples determined by random chance? Do opposites attract, or is common interest the key to a successful paring? Born on opposite ends of our continent, on two completely different oceans, with seemingly incongruent roles in life, Frank and Louise Ridlon found each other somehow—but their story doesn't solve this riddle; rather, it validates both theories!



Frank and Louise Ridlon

We all know Louise, right? A retired school teacher, amiable to a fault, active, gregarious, easy to laugh, optimistic—a self-admitted Pollyanna! When it comes to getting involved, she's no shrinking violet. She has a hand in everything, has been on the training committee for 6 years, vice president for 2 years and chapter president for 2 years. Heck, she's shaped everyone's training since 2009. But then, who's that guy she's always with—you know the one—always sits nearby, never says a word and, were it not for that walking stick and beat-up old hat, he would blend right into the woodwork? That's Frank Ridlon—and he's a piece of work! We'll get to know him better in a minute . . . but for now, score 1 for "opposites attract" and 0 for "common interests."

Louise was born in Artesia, California (L.A. County) and raised in nearby Bellflower in a "typical" subdivision, with an extended family that included two sisters and both sets of grandparents—a tight, nurturing environment. Her mother read to her, her grandparents shared their hobbies and interests, and her dad gave her a start in his print shop. Louise's first serious job was as a recreation leader in a city park, leading arts and crafts, games and activities for community kids. (Why is that not surprising?) After getting her undergraduate degree from Westmont College in English, Louise started what would be a 34-year run as a kindergarten teacher in the same elementary school in Riverside, CA. There is a heritage here; you see. Her mother, grandmother and aunt had all been teachers. Along the way, Louise picked up a master's degree in outdoor education from Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, Oregon. Louise met Frank in 1976 (blind date at a Moose Lodge), married him within 8 months, and retired from teaching in 2005. This is yin. Now let's meet yang.



Frank and Jack

Frank hails from the woods and backcountry of Yarmouth, Maine (from spirited Scottish stock). His father was a district fire chief, his mom a homemaker. Frank's dad taught him a love for fishing and hunting. He died at an early age; his mother was declared terminal at

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Ridlons, cont.

(Continued from page 5)

Frank's age 14, but she managed to give birth to his sister and raise a family while battling cancer most of Frank's adult life. She died of the disease at age 83—a very strong woman who never complained or let on that she had a life threatening disease. Right after high school, Frank and 4 buddies joined the U.S. Air Force. Frank was assigned to the Strategic Air Command, and for 10 years he worked in communications, in-flight re-fueling, and airborne avionics. He logged many flying hours and saw a whole new world open up before him (Greenland, England, N. Africa, Tripoli, Newfoundland, etc.). He also set himself up for a lucrative career as a civilian contractor, working on Titan Missiles and other sophisticated weapons systems. He moved to California in 1964, looking for more adventure. He found it. Hang gliding, scuba diving up and down the southern coast of California and Mexico, playing in a country band, and racing motorcycles kept his adrenalin flowing. Especially motorcycle racing—the down and dirty kind. Then he met a school teacher on a blind date and his world changed yet again . . . the couple discovered profoundly common interests. They've been married 38 years.



The Ridlon clan

Louise had been a fire lookout host for 12 years in the San Bernardino Mountains, had belonged to the local Audubon Society, enjoyed hiking, camping, canoeing, fishing and photography. She also played guitar and had a short-lived country band. This wasn't your typical kindergarten teacher! Frank's boyhood blossomed in the woods and rivers of New England, riding logs down the raging rapids, camping, hunting and fishing . . . and he also loved photography. Frank holds an Advanced Class Ham Radio license. He eventually taught Louise Morse Code and coached her to attain her own operator's license. They shared a deep respect for the benign dark power of woods and nature. The couple took frequent canoe trips, RV trips, and primitive camping forays, climbed Mt. Langley together, and spent a lot of time backpacking through the High Sierras. The eastern Sierras are one of their favorite places on earth. They honeymooned at the June Lake Loop, sharing the last embers of many sunsets—scarlet and orange multiplied a thousand times—memories for a lifetime. They found it easy to lose themselves in the awe and wonder of the outdoors. When Louise reached a year away from retirement, there was an urge to make a new nest. The couple visited Frank's

sister in Cedar Creek, Texas. They fell in love with the simple charms of the Texas lifestyle, bought some land, and in 2005 made it their retirement home. Life-changing decisions come easy for the Ridlons.

To feed their love of nature, Frank and Louise joined LPMN in 2006, went through training together, and immersed themselves in leading hikes at Bastrop State Park, doing Christmas Bird Counts, supporting LPMN event booths, the Lockhart ISD 5th graders and cleaning up the Colorado River Refuge. After some health issues cropped up, Frank had to slow down, but Louise pressed on, taking her encouragement from charter chapter members like



Louise with Elaine and Shazaam

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Brooks on Books - Rivers of Texas

by Bill Brooks

Have you noticed a group of north/south streets in central Austin? Starting east of Lamar you have Rio Grande, Nueces, San Antonio, Guadalupe, Lavaca, and Colorado. There is a break with Congress, which runs up to the capital. East of Congress there is Brazos, San Jacinto, Trinity, Neches, and Red River before I-35. These are the names of rivers in Texas in the same order that they appear from west to east.

Over the past few years a lot of books have been published on the waterways of Texas.

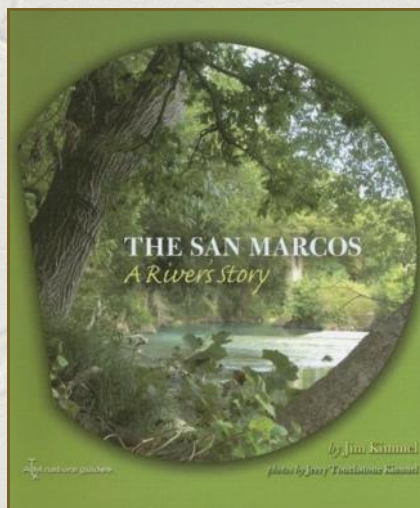
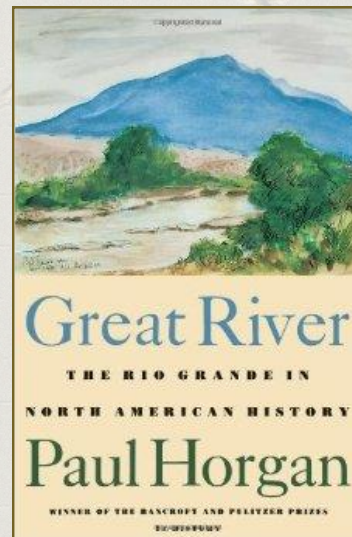
If you want to read about the history of the Rio Grande it's hard to beat Paul Horgan's two volumes on the Rio Grande. In "Great River, The Rio Grande in North American History" you get both volumes, "Indians and Spain" and "Mexico and the United States."

If you want to paddle the canyons of the Rio Grande near Big Bend you should get the guides "The Upper Canyons of the Rio Grande" by Louis Aulbach and Linda Gorski, "The Lower Canyons of the Rio Grande" by Aulbach and Joe Butler, or "The Great Unknown of the Rio Grande" by Aulbach. If you are interested in more than just the canyons you should read Keith Bowden's "The Tecate Journals, Seventy Days on the Rio Grande."

"The Lower Pecos River" by Louis Aulbach and Jack Richards is a paddle guide and should be read by anyone who gets a chance to paddle this most pristine but difficult to access river.

There is not a lot written about the Nueces, but my friends Margie Crisp and Bill Montgomery are currently working to remedy this. They are shooting to have the manuscript done by December 2015 for publication in 2016 or early 2017.

I've never read much about the San Antonio River, which is a shame because San Antonio is my hometown. There are a couple of books about the River Walk but not much else as far as I know.



The soulfully written "The San Marcos, A River's Story" by Jim Kimmel is well worth a read. The history of the Aquarena Springs and the rise of the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment are interesting.

The Wild Rice Festival was first held in the town of San Marcos in 2014. The festival published a book, "Texas Wild Rice Anthologies 2014." This is a great little publication about the history of the Aquarena Springs and the endangered Texas endemic wild rice. The San Marcos River is the beginning of the longest river race in Texas. The Texas Water Safari begins here and continues to the Guadalupe River and on to the Gulf of Mexico. A great book about this race is "Paddlefish" by Christine Warren, who did the race solo. I captained my brother's boat during this race in 1992.

The Guadalupe is my favorite river in Texas simply because I've paddled so much of it. I've paddled most of the "interesting" parts of the river (meaning the light to medium white water

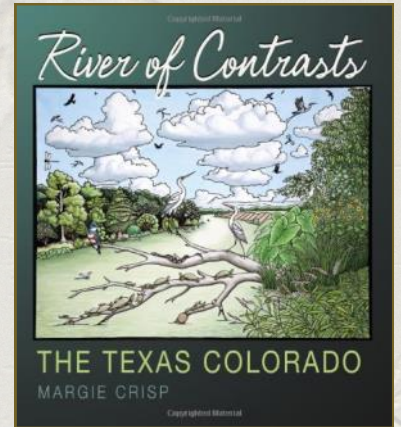
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Books, cont.

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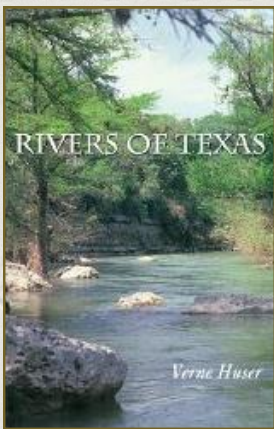
areas) with family and friends since the '60s. When you consider accessibility and flow, on most days, it's the best Texas has. "Paddling the Guadalupe" by Wayne McAlister has recently been my go-to book.

The book "River of Contrasts, The Texas Colorado" by Margie Crisp is so well written and artfully done that it should be in everyone's library. 'Nuff said. There are several books on the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA). The one I own is "Damming the Colorado, The Rise of the Lower Colorado River Authority, 1933-1939." This speaks to the attempt to "tame" the Colorado and produce electricity for rural Texas. The publication "Discovering the Colorado, A vision for the Austin-Bastrop River Corridor" has a lot of great information about this one section of the river. The 'coffee table book' "Every Town Needs a Trail" is a great history and has wonderful photographs of Austin's Town Lake Trail.



I'd have to turn in my "pen" if I didn't mention John Graves book "Goodbye to a River." The book is about an author's trip down the Brazos before proposed dams were built. The dams haven't been built but they are still being discussed. Even though he talks a lot about his dog, it is a book that should be read by everyone.

For more up to date information about the Brazos you should read "Exploring the Brazos River: From Beginning to End" by Jim Kimmel.



Jack Kerouac called the Sabine an "evil old river." Author Wes Ferguson disagrees. Wes paddled the river and met many of the "river rats" living on the banks. He even went scuba diving in the dark waters and described it all in his book, "Running the River, Secrets of the Sabine."

I can't believe the old paddle Texas bible, "An Analysis of Texas Waterways," by the TPWD is still for sale. I used this book exclusively in the late '60s and early '70s. It's still a great book but a more recent general overview can be found in the "Rivers of Texas" by Verne Huser.

If you want to take your canoe or kayak out on our Texas rivers you should read "Texas Whitewater" by Steve Daniel. It describes what little we have. To be safe you should read "River Rescue" by Les Bechdel and Slim Ray.

Finally, EVERYONE should study the classic book "Path of the Paddle, An Illustrated Guide to the Art of Canoeing" by Bill Mason. The book has also been turned into a DVD.

Paddle forth, read on, and enjoy! ✈

Addendum: In my last article on Dinosaurs of Texas, I left out a wonderful resource right here in our neighborhood. I strongly recommend visiting the Dinosaur Park, 893 Union Chapel Road, Cedar Creek, Texas. The property, owned by a local couple, is full of life-sized dinosaur statues in a natural setting. See TheDinoPark.com. \$7 per person. Open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during the school year.

Night Things, cont.

(Continued from page 2)

Eating habits are pretty unique. Small claws extending from the mouth tear off pieces of food and pull it into an outer chamber (the pre-oral cavity). Scorpions take food only in liquid form. Digestive juices from the gut are regurgitated onto the food, turning it liquid, and then it's sucked up like a 7-Eleven Slurpee. Any non-digestible material (fur, bones, etc.) is held in the pre-oral cavity and later spit out. What do they eat? They eat mostly small insects, but some have been known to prey on small lizards and mice. Their claws, legs and underbelly have small tactile hairs that detect prey, which they clasp with their claws. Depending on the toxicity of their venom and the size of their catch, they then either crush their victims to death or sting them with their stinger, which contains a neurotoxin. Gnarly, huh?

Sex is a scurrilous topic famous for its fetishes and bizarre twists, but scorpions seem to have written the book on exotic. First off, not all scorpions require sexual relations to reproduce—hey, it cuts down on prostitution—but the adventurous ones certainly do. It starts with the male grasping the female by the pincers with his own, the pair then perform a dance (promenade a deux) where the male leads the female around, searching for just the right spot on the ground. The ritual can involve several other behaviors, like grasping the pincers in a softer, more intimate grasp, and, in some cases, by the male injecting a small amount of his venom into the pincers of the female (or the edge of her abdomen), probably as a means of pacifying her (sex and drugs—a common cocktail). When the male finds a suitable location, he deposits his sperm on the ground and guides the female over it. From that point on, it's comparable to playing an extended game of squat tag or musical chairs. Now this is not something you want to try at home . . . an interested female can make this process last up to 25+ hours! Guys, if that ain't enough to put you in counseling, consider this: In some cases, females top off their lovemaking by eating the male. In the Kama Sutra, that's called giving of yourself completely! A bit extreme perhaps, but it eliminates all later paternity or divorce issues.



Scorpion foreplay

Baby scorpions (average brood size is eight) are carried around on their mother's back until they've gone through their first molt, which takes about two weeks. Scorpplings cannot survive on their own without their mother, who provides protection and regulation of their moisture levels. It generally takes between 5-7 molts for the babies to become fully mature.

There're about as many types of venom as there are scorpions. All known species of scorpion possess venom. The many types of venom are tailored to their user's lifestyles and their species' chosen prey. The venom is made and stored in a pair of glandular sacs and is released in a quantity regulated by the scorpion itself. Of all the known species of scorpion, only 25 or so are believed to have venom deadly to humans (none in Texas).

Most all of nature's creatures have predators, but unlike us, politicians don't bother scorpions. As for most species, man has become a major predator, instinctively stomping them to death or pulverizing them whenever encountered. Fried scorpion is a traditional dish from Shandong, China. As a part of Chinese medicine, scorpion wine is used as an antidote and analgesic. Bottom line: I could find no rescue group or movement to "save the scorpions" . . . they seem to be doing just fine on their own. ✂

Ridlons, cont.

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Andy Butler, Sue Fischer, Bill Brooks and Elaine and Alvin Cearley. She worked 6 years as an educator/naturalist at McKinney Roughs Nature Park. A tireless worker and dedicated leader, today Louise has amassed over 1,500 hours of volunteer time. She still pursues citizen scientist projects for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, CoCoRaHS and TPWD's annual Hummingbird Roundup. Frank—that modest guy in the back of the room— now takes a quieter route: He's a loyal member (hardly misses a meeting) who keeps up with chapter goings-on, mostly observing from the sidelines now.

Ask Frank about family life in Texas and his face lights up like the birthday boy in a Norman Rockwell painting. Frank and Louise have one son together (who also lives in Cedar Creek), but Frank's previous marriages add depth to their family—to the total tune of six children and twelve grandchildren. And this is a real family . . . they genuinely enjoy each other's company, getting together whenever they can. There's also three cats (Miss Brown, Shadow & Tasha), two dogs (Jackpot & Bart), two miniature horses (Elaine & Shazaam) and a goat named Ferdinand (who later turned out to be a Barbados sheep with wool all down his back—none on his body, mind you—just all down his back, Mohawk style). With this menagerie, the Ridlons could run their own traveling circus!



Ferdinand, the goat turned sheep

Louise relaxes with reading, needlework and gardening—and preserving her alone time. She doesn't own a smart phone and doesn't want to. "It doesn't take much to make me smile: music, a field full of wildflowers, a surprise appearance of a new bird in the yard, a fresh cool breeze, something delicious to eat, a glass of wine," she says. Today Frank most enjoys fishing with his son, Brian, and hunting dove and deer. For a little extra excitement, he also hunts feral hogs . . . Soooo-eeee! He believes it's important to appreciate the simple things in life: kids, dogs and good country western music.

So what's the takeaway from my visit with the Ridlon family? It depends. If you're interested in getting more involved in the chapter, what better role model could you find than Louise? "Don't be afraid to jump in and try a variety of activities! Just tag along if you don't feel confident; observing is a great way to learn! Find a buddy in the group and explore new projects. Find what fits your skills, personality and available time," she says. If you're interested in the secret to happiness, Frank says, "My grandfather had it right. He told me to do what you enjoy and live life to the fullest." In my most serious interviewer voice I asked, "If you had it all to do over again, Frank, is there anything in your life you would change?" The reply was abrupt and sincere: "No." Although I certainly don't know, I'm guessing that somewhere a grandfather smiles. So let's restate the question . . . what draws couples together: similarities or differences? Apparently, the answer is "yes." Their marriage seems to give them both energy rather than drain it away—bound as tightly as barbs in a fence wire. ✂

NEW HORNED LIZARD SPECIES

Contributed by Bill Brooks



I heard the rumor for months. Finally, a new horned lizard species was announced in the [70\(2\) June edition of Herpetologica](#). Adrián Diego Arenas-Moreno, Elizabeth Beltrán-Sánchez, and Adam D. Leaché authored the physical and genetic account of this new species found in Guerrero, Mexico. The new species has been named *Phrynosoma sherbrookei*, after friend, Horned Lizard Conservation Society member, and the fellow who literally wrote the book on horned lizards, Wade Sherbrooke. This honor could not be bestowed on a more deserving person.

ONE HUGE WOODPECKER

Contributed by Bill Brooks

I was reading the book “Paisanos Past, Selections from the interpretive newspaper of Big Bend National Park 1978-1997.” I came across an article by super ranger (and author) Roland Wauer.

In his article he mentioned the large, probably extinct Imperial Woodpecker of the mountains of northwest Mexico. I spent a nice afternoon looking up references to this bird. If you get a chance, you should, too. It's larger than our Pileated and the possibly extinct Ivory-Billed. This bird was huge. What a thrill it would have been to have seen one.



Imperial, Ivory-Billed, and Pileated woodpeckers (males)

ESA PROTECTION SOUGHT FOR MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

Contributed by Judy Santerre



In August, the Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Xerces Society and monarch scientist Dr. Lincoln Brower filed a petition to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seeking Endangered Species Act protection for monarch butterflies, whose populations have declined by more than 90 percent in under 20 years. The FWS listing process is a lengthy one, and if the petition is approved it will likely be years before protections are in place. The incredible 2,000 mile annual migration of the Monarch butterfly is one of the most amazing phenomena in nature. Let's hope it continues forever.”

TINY RANGE FOR A TINY FISH

Contributed by Bill Brooks

The vertebrate with the smallest range is the Big Bend Pupfish (*Gambusia gagei*). All the individuals of this species live in two man-made ponds inside Big Bend National Park. Read more about this tiny fish on the [US Fish and Wildlife website](#).



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Snippets, cont.

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THE AYE-AYE

Contributed by Bill Brooks

The Aye-aye is the only primate whose incisor teeth grow constantly like rodents. Aye-ayes can be found only on the island of Madagascar. [Read more at National Geographic online.](#) ✈



Newsletter Deadline

Submission deadline for the next issue is December 19, 2014. We welcome relevant contributions, photos, announcements, or other material relating to the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program, particularly those pertaining to our local area. Submissions may be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling, and space requirements. Please send information to the editor at Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com.

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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