Lost Pines Chapter

Texas Master Naturalist

May/June 2016 Volume 15, Issue 3

Gossip, Galaxies & Ghosts
by Larry Gfeller

Automobile trips are my favorite kind. It's not so much the anticipation, it's the surprises—those rich encounters that seep through as accidental deposits to lifetime accounts. We recently made our first ever trip to Big Bend National Park, touted as a unique and sprawling ecosystem divided from Northern Mexico by the Rio Grande. It seemed endless, stark and primal—at once haunting and peaceful—and, yes, it was beautiful, even in winter. But we sated our curiosity within three days and headed off to explore the surrounding counties. Given the unpeopled expanse of the region, we felt lucky to find lodging (with pets) in Fort Davis. It was a small eclectic two-bedroom, protected by old adobe walls, hidden on the back streets among the residents of this historic town. A great base camp from which to explore the area and its many attractions.

While Fort Davis projects the rural provincialism of many small Texas towns—the streets were deserted by 9:00 pm—the atmosphere was somehow larger, more inclusive, almost festive. First order of business: the visitor center. As you enter town, painted into a backdrop of historic old buildings, on duty that day was an elderly Hispanic lady. A long-time resident, she was sagacious and stoic. It was as if we had to show our cards first. This was no problem, as my wife is quite the opposite. Kathleen probed for the inside scoop—and was rewarded with recollections, stories and a history of what it was like to grow up in this small west Texas town.

My wife loves to shop - her eyes light up, her mood brightens and she spreads her happiness around like a campaigning politician . . . it's not like buying a hammer in a hardware store. It's about engaging the shopkeeper, learning names, previous occupations, how they came to settle in Ft. Davis, sharing stories—gaining way more information than is needed to merely make a purchase. By the time she finished working both sides of the street, she had collected two armfuls of shopping bags and captured the life histories of most of the merchants. There was Raine from Javelinas and Hollyhocks, Kadon from the Hotel Limpia Gift Shop, and the tattooed and saucy barista at Blue Mountain Bistro who told us, over a cup of steaming cappuccino, about her proposal of marriage from a French tourist. "I would never leave Texas!"

Most folks come to Ft. Davis to visit the McDonald Observatory—that storied collection of telescopes perched 16 miles up in the Davis Mountains. Oh, we did that too—and it was awe-inspiring; highly recommended. But in between scheduled events, our focus drifted toward local folklore and context. Wandering around the outskirts of town we sought out the Chihuahuan Desert Research

(Continued on page 2)

In This Issue

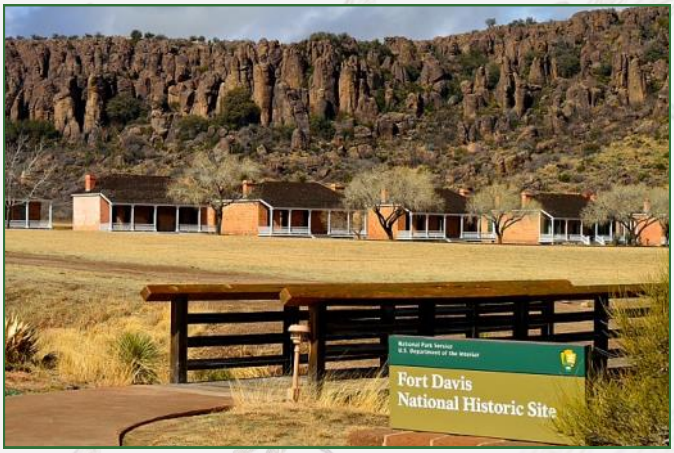
Gossip, cont.

(Continued from page 1)

Institute Nature Center and Botanical Gardens. It's a desert nature preserve with almost every west Texas native plant represented, with emphasis on cacti. The real treasure we found was not the plants but Leslie the gardener and Lisa the gift shop manager—two animated volcanoes of knowledge. Together they nurture all visitors. It was here we learned that while the Bastrop County Complex fires of 2011 may have been the most destructive wildfire in Texas history, they certainly weren't the biggest. In May of 2011 the Iron Mountain Fire burned 89,400 acres near Alpine, Texas . . . theirs was mostly open prairie and sparsely populated. Ambassadors to the outside world, these two ladies made quite a tag-team.

They suggested we visit the Roadrunner Nursery, about 1½ miles outside Ft. Davis. Kathleen was looking for a particular cactus to purchase. Thinking we were lost, we kept searching. At the end of a dead-end dirt road, we turned into what looked like the shipping dock of the garden section of Home Depot. No one was outdoors, but soon after pulling in, a somewhat startled lady approached us as if she hadn't seen a tourist in years. With a frayed denim jacket and jeans stuffed into her rubber boots, this was clearly not the customer service center of Nordstrom. She was in the nursery supply business, and no (she said in a slow-motion West Texas drawl), "we ain't got the cactus you want." Efforts to engage her in stimulating conversation fell short, like a badly thrown horseshoe. We cut our losses and moved on.

Fortunately, we had been given another local business we just had to visit. Fort Davis Outfitters, run by Kevin and Karen, carried everything one might need to survive out here: horse bridles, guns, fishing gear and an unfettered gift of gab. Grandkids, family pets and the finer points of weaved palmetto cowboy hats were just some of the topics that bubbled up over the next 45 minutes. Kathleen was in her element. In business only three years, the couple decided to erect their sprawling metal building a mile outside the city to help preserve the distinctive character of downtown Ft. Davis. To their great offense, a year later a Family Dollar Store set up business in the center of town in a—you got it—sprawling metal building! I bought a weaved palmetto cowboy hat—it was the least I could do.



It was another afternoon, still and dreamlike, with the sun late in the sky before darkness beckoned us to Mount Locke and our much anticipated Star Party at the observatory. We happened upon the Fort Davis National Historic Site. A fluke; a time-filler. This was the semi-preserved remains of the old military post of Ft. Davis, first established in 1854. It had been the locus of many Indian battles over the years, as the site was originally a Comanche camp, nestled as it was, in a great expanse of prairie surrounded by the Davis Mountains. It housed Confederate soldiers during the civil war and was looted by the Apaches after the war. After 1867 when troops of the Ninth United States Cavalry (buffalo soldiers) reoccupied the fort, the town of Ft. Davis became "the most important town in the Trans-Pecos country," by virtue of its position at the crossroads of two important trails and its status as a base for travelers and hunters. We had entered a 460-acre time warp.

(Continued on page 8)

What's Blooming?
by Liz Pullman & Judy Turner

A Vernal Latin Lesson

Plant names = family + genus + species. Family is now a "clan" with similar DNA. Think of genus like a person's surname with species as the given name. The species is also referred to as the part of a taxonomic name identifying a subordinate unit within a genus or the epithet. It's the epithet that is the most descriptive part of a plant name.

Current blooming examples:

Penstemon cardinalis
Passiflora lutea
Houstonia caerulea
Asclepias viridis
Baptisia alba
Ratibida columnifera
Solidago odora
Erigeron procumbens
Lespedeza repens
Physostegia digitalis
Rudbeckia triloba
Sabatia campestris
Coreopsis grandiflora

We begin with the basics—all the way back to pre-school when we begin to learn colors. Occasionally the simple word coloratum is used as a specific epithet (the second word in a scientific name) . . . some unspecified color - big help. More useful by far are names denoting a real color - generally the color of a flower. Great Clue! Imagine coming upon a tall plant that reminds you of that hibiscus growing in your garden. It is blooming and has a very large bright red flower. You can go down a list of hibiscus species. Easy! Go to the index of your wildflower guide, look for hibiscus, and one of them will likely be *Hibiscus coccinea*—Scarlet Hibiscus! Bingo! Coccinea is not the only word meaning "red" in Latin. We have rubrus, rufus, sanguinalis, cardinalis, corallinus, and erythro-. If we move on to "yellow" here are some of those names for the color yellow - lutea, flavescens, flavus, aureus, helvolus, chrysanthemus, palliflorus and xanthinus. Some really good ones denoting "blue" are azurea, caeruleus and coelestinus—think clear blue sky color!

More basics—size of a particular flower part or leaf is reflected in the Latin species name and all of these are familiar adjectives. For large or small—how about micro, maxi, macro, major, minor, grandi-, minimus-. In addition, leaf and petal arrangements commonly have a numerical description:

1 (one) uniflora, uniphylla, monosperma
2 (two) biflora or bifolia
3 (three) triflora, tripetala, triloba
4 (four) tetrafolia, tetracanthus
5 (five) pentaflora or quinquefolia
etc. up to 10 (ten) decapetalus

Seasonal emergence or bloom time is sometimes reflected in the name. Vernalis for spring-appearing or spring blooming is common (Check the title of this article Spring Latin). Also used is Aestivalis for summer, Hyemalis or Hibernalis for winter and surely you can guess what season for Autumnalis.

(Continued on page 4)

Blooming, cont.

(Continued from page 3)

You may recognize certain Latin words for plant characteristics and growth habits such as:

creeping - repens
sprawling - procumbens
reclining - decumbens
spreading - divaricatus
climbing - scandens
having a distinctive odor - odoratus
bad-smelling odor - foetidus
absolutely stinking - foetidissimus
columnar - columnaris
twisted - contortus
finger-form - digitalis

Frequently used epithets that are useful hints as to the habitat of the plant:

aquaticus - from water
arvense - from cultivated ground
articus - from the arctic
calcareus - from limestone
campestre - from fields and open country
fluviatilis - from rivers
maritimus - from the ocean
montanus - from mountains
saxitilis - from rocks
sylvaticus - from woods and forests

Many species epithets pertain to finer details, such as the leaf surface, and these range all the way from smooth to super fuzzy and botanists do go on and on and on about just how fuzzy are the leaves - both sides! Leaf shape has many, many descriptors. The same is true with prickles and spines—how many, how sharp and how long.

You don't need to memorize all these Latin words since actually you may already recognize them as Latinized English.

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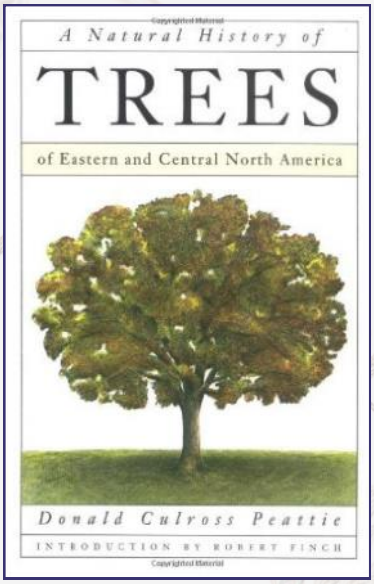
Brooks on Books
by Bill Brooks

You know that the smaller the area covered by field guides, the more accurate the species descriptions. On the subject of trees however, there are several notable publications that I like that cover more than just Texas trees.



One of my favorite historic authors is Donald Culross Peatie. His original "A Natural History of Trees" (1948) is a joy to read. In 1968 Houghton Mifflin Company republished this work in two volumes - Western and Eastern & Central North American.

I have an even earlier set of volumes by Charles Sprague Sargent, the one time director of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University. Sargent released his classic "Manual of North American Trees" in 1926. Dover Publications, which is well known for republishing classic scientific works, re-published his work in two volumes in 1965. The illustrations are quite good.

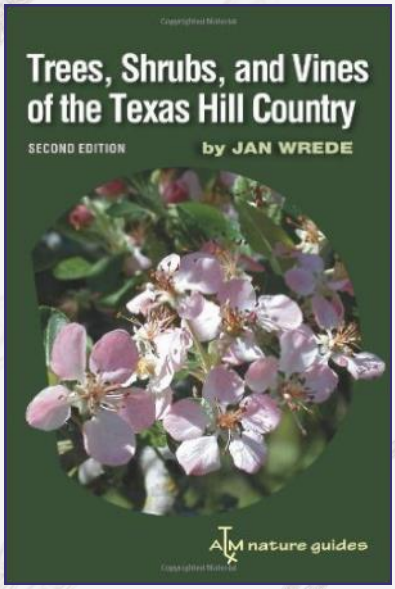
Back in 1905 Dr. Thomas S. Elias published "The Complete Trees of North America Field Guide and Natural History." It turns out that today this volume is not all that complete, but it is still loaded with illustrations and range maps.

An interesting volume released by the University of Texas is "The Trees of Texas" by Issac M. Lewis, Ph.D. in 1915. This small volume of 169 pages is an interesting mix of drawings and early photographs.

"A Photograph Guide to More than 500 Trees of North America and Europe" (by Roger Phillips in 1978) is one of the first good leaf photographs books around, but its reach is a little large. If you want a local guide, buy "Trees of Texas, An Easy Guide to Leaf Identification" by Carmine Stahl and Ria McElvaney (2003). This is one of my favorites and the photographs are outstanding.

The University of Texas Press printed "Trees of Central Texas" by Robert A. Vines in 1984. This is a very useful guide by one of the best Texas botanists.

George B. Stevenson's 1980 "A Leaf Guide for the Identification of the Native Trees of the Texas Hill Country" is an interesting little 32-page guide. It is filled with only fair leaf drawings.



We are now getting to publications a little more recent. One of my favorite tree books is by my friends Patty Leslie (now Payton) and Paul Cox. Their "Texas Trees, A Friendly Guide" (1988) is still a very informative publication.

Texas Monthly put out a wonderful group of field guides. The "Field Guide to Wildflowers, Trees, and Shrubs" (1991) is still very useful. Anything written by Delena Tull and George Oxford Miller is always first class. It is filled with photographs and range maps.

Gone but not forgotten, Brother Daniel Lynch's "Naturalized Woody Plants of Austin and the Hill Country" (1981) is a classic that should be in everyone's library. I'm so glad I got him to sign my book before he passed.

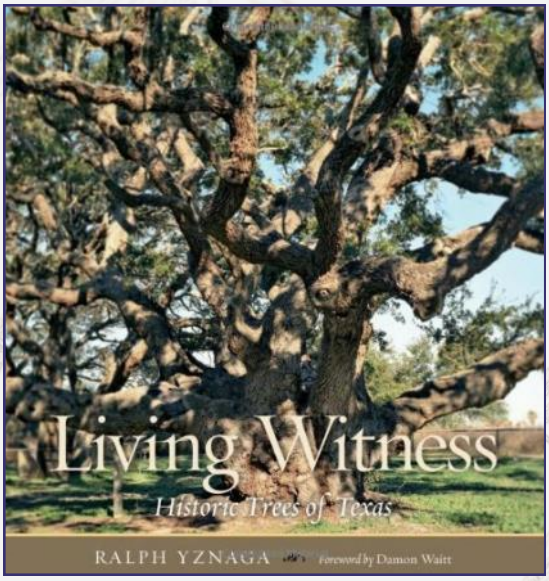
Howard Garrett's "Texas Trees" (2002) is well written but I'm not a fan of the photographs in this book. Jan Wrede's book "Trees, Shrubs, and Vines of the Texas Hill Country" (2005) is often my first "go to" book.

(Continued on page 6)

Books, cont.

(Continued from page 5)

There are lots of guides dedicated to specific species of trees. Some of my favorites are "The Black Drink (1979) edited by Charles Hudson all about the Yaupon. It's a group of academic papers and is so dry it's hard to read . . . but it's full of interesting facts. "The Pecan Tree" by Jane Manaster (1994) is chock full of fun facts by this friend and wonderful writer.



"The Magnificent Mesquite" by Ken Rogers (2000) is also a great read.

If you are interested by specific historic trees you might find an old copy of "Famous Trees of Texas." The Texas Forest Service (TX A&M) has stopped printing this book, but all the information is on line. Ralph Yznaga visited a lot of these famous trees and wrote "Living Witness Historic Trees of Texas" (2012) about his travels to see these historic trees.

An interesting children's book that's good for adults, too, is "The Tree That Would Not Die" (1995) by Ellen Levine. This is all about Austin's Treaty Oak that was poisoned (and saved) in 1989.

Woodworkers might want to look up "What Wood is That" (1969) by Herbert L. Edlin. This book contains 40 samples of actual wood slices. It's pretty amazing.

These last books are about trees not found in our area, but they are fun to read. I recommend "Ginko" (2013) by Peter Crane. I've mentioned this book before. I also like "The Chocolate Tree, A Natural History of Cacao" (1994) by Allen Young.

Read on and enjoy, my friends!

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Yellow River
by Larry Gfeller

Why are some plants so disagreeable? Could it be that there are no bad plants, but only bad people? What happens in a plant's evolution to cause it to turn rogue? Here's a modern example: Generations of mindless parents force their children to trample bluebonnets to pose for family photos. They could make images just as striking with the kids alongside the roadway, but no—they gotta traipse through a stand, hollow out a spot and wait for the little urchins to settle into the perfect pose. Don't they realize these defenseless plants cannot escape this abuse? I can just hear the bull nettle's response to this nonsense, "Hey kids . . . over here! Come on, make my day!" From some primal time, nettles probably got fed up and decided they weren't going to take it anymore—the revenge of natural selection. Most everyone hates bull nettles, but not me. You have to respect them. The plant is attractive, is actually edible and can be used as a "sentry plant" to guard the doorways and windows of your home from intruders. Nettles can actually be cultivated in large pots with good quality soil and—if you're really feeling saucy—spiked with poison ivy. You can now rest secure that for insolent trespassers, hours will hold the weight of days.

In this Internet Age, anything goes. Take common remedies for a bull nettle sting . . . some suggest tobacco juice, insect sting-relief pads or simply spitting on the affected area. The most incredible (yet most frequently cited) palliative is urinating on the offended area! While I suppose it could work—and without trying to paint too vivid of a picture here—this procedure has obvious shortcomings based on wound location, present company, urological physiology, dexterity and, ultimately, pain threshold. I particularly enjoyed one blogger's comment: "We used to break a leaf off with our shoe and then pick it up with our fingertips and throw it on the back of the neck of associates nearby. Not many people can pee on the back of their own neck and most will not let anyone else do it for them, so it makes for a fun time watching the painful choice play out." Ah, a sordid form of entertainment.

Opinions vary regarding how long the effects of bull nettle stings last. I found everything from a few hours . . . to days. I guess it depends on your metabolism—and the quality of your insurance. When leading hikes, I always try to point this plant out to hikers at my first opportunity. I am surprised how many adults, let alone children, are unaware of the pain the bull nettle can inflict. When they make initial contact it's like they've been instantly transported to the seventh circle of hell—it often means their hike is over. For those unsuspecting, white-legged urban warriors in shorts and sandals . . . bloated with self-importance . . . well, this is how they learn to stay on the trail.

Cnidoscolus texanus is one of seventy-some spurge nettles worldwide, a perennial herb from the plant family Euphorbiaceae. The genus name is actually derived from Greek words pulverized by Latin; cnide means nettle and scolopes means prickle or sting. Other nicknames include Tread-softly, Mala-Mujer and Devil's Dandelion. Mala Mujer is said to come from a story about a guy who gets drunk and his wife beats him with a nettle—it means 'bad woman.' Ya think? Everyone knows about poison ivy, but bull nettles are what poison ivy wants to be when it grows up! Our particular variety is known as Texas bull nettle. It grows naturally in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Kansas. It's also native to the north Mexican state of Tamaulipas. Somehow, our state gets the credit. Other types of stinging nettles grow in other parts of the globe; it's no wonder newcomers are slow to recognize the threat—ours doesn't look like what they're used to.

(Continued on page 9)

Gossip, cont.

(Continued from page 2)

The parade field defined everything; it dominated our view. In proper military fashion, everything needed to support a cavalry regiment and their families was arrayed around the parade field—the heart of this universe. We walked the rectangle, observing the living quarters, the quartermaster building, the bakery, the horse barns, the church, the schoolhouse, commissary, hospital—some were only foundations, others weather-worn relics with a few refurbished to their original 1880's state. On the right side of the field were the enlisted quarters, on the left the officer housing with garden plots behind and servant quarters behind them. Like stumbling on a pot left steaming, there was a spectral sense of human presence in these old buildings.

Later, I sat on a shaded bench overlooking the quadrangle as my wife departed to ravage the gift shop. I was not prepared for what was about to happen. Over the P.A. system came an audio reenactment of a typical day in garrison life and a full pass-in-review ceremony. Every sound had been recorded. It was as if I was in the reviewing stand observing the troops myself. I could see the soldiers as they hurried to formation, I could hear them being called to attention, the First Sergeant reporting in a loud and clear voice, "ALL PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR, SIR," similar reports echoing up the chain of command to the regimental Sergeant Major. With Old Glory slapping briskly in the wind, I heard the regimental commander put the men "at ease" as he read the general orders of the day. Horses stamped, spurs jingled and muffled voices buzzed. I could smell the horses. I was rapt, completely pulled into the moment.

As the command group proudly looked on and the band played, the order was given: "PASS IN REVIEW." I could hear every horse blow, every scabbard clink, the harnesses creaking and the wheels of the caissons as they slowly turned in the neatly cropped grass. I was touching the past. As the formation slowly wheeled around, I could feel the pride and precision; I was swept away by the experience! Crisp commands moved the procession and I could hear the footfall of the soldiers as they marched by the stand. "EYES RIGHT. PRESENT ARMS!" the sky flashed cerulean blue as sabers were extended and regimental colors dipped in deference to the Stars and Stripes. Upon her return, Kathleen interrupted my reverie with, "You'll never guess what I found." My thoughts exactly! It was like sitting on the knee of the Lincoln Monument, with Lincoln speaking to you. I was covered in goose bumps, a tear in my eye. We both left with gifts, but mine was for all time—the best kind there is!

Newsletter Deadline

Submission deadline for the next issue is June 17, 2016. 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.

(Continued from page 7)

This plant loves loose-soiled and disturbed areas right out in the full sun . . . it hardly ever grows in deep forests. Bull nettles are especially irresistible in springtime, for they gaily decorate themselves with the most delicate and beautiful white flowers, enticing newcomers to get close and admire their beauty first hand. The blooms last through mid-summer, equally attracting pollinators and unsuspecting city slickers off the trail. They attract bees, butterflies, beetles and other insects and some songbirds—they've been doing this since the rocks of the earth were still warm.

Like so many Texas plants, the bull nettle is one tough hombre. It likes heat on a mythic scale (as in mirages wreathing across the highway). It sports a deep taproot in a huge tuberous mass, much like a long potato. It grows one to three feet tall and is about three feet wide at full maturity. Leaves are wide, a majestic deep green color, deeply lobed. . .and the whole plant is virtually covered in murderous little white hairs, which are the source of so much pain and suffering. Seed pods form about a month after flowering. If any part of the stem is broken, a white milky sap will emerge. The fruits are prickly 3-seeded capsules and the seeds are considered delicacies by wild turkeys and mourning doves.

Here's what makes the plant such a holy terror: Cute fuzzy white hairs that cover the whole plant contain a combination of formic acid, histamine and acetylcholine (the aforementioned milky white sap). This serum is the plant's gift that keeps on giving. It is designed to instantly reorder the priorities of any flesh-bearing animal and can instantly convert the most devout among us into raging, foot-stomping sinners with feral vocabularies. Each glass-like hair is like a tiny hypodermic needle which breaks off in your skin.

This creates two complicated and time-consuming problems: getting the prickles out and neutralizing the nasty sting; they are not the same thing! Removing the tiny hairs is nothing short of a wax job—masking or duct tape works well I'm told, although I never seem to carry either. A basic preparation such as baking soda mixed with water to form a paste can neutralize the acids in your epidermal layer, but once again, I'm usually without these necessities. I usually end up jumping around and cussing a lot. Fortunately there are no long-term effects . . . but once stung, the long-term matters little.

If you are a gourmet, you'll like what's next. Part of the appeal of exotic food is rarity and the degree of care in preparing it. Even the most fearsome tiger is eventually food for man, the greatest known predator. Did I mention that the Texas bull nettle is edible? Okay, when I think of edible, I think of radishes, onions or perhaps a juicy tomato—something tasty you can actually eat without a lot of trouble. Bull nettles are a true gourmet food—not so rare but a lot of work. Mind you, I've never done this, so I'm forced to trust my source. Both the taproot and the seeds are edible, the seeds even tasty I'm told, but you have to be careful. When mature, the outside skin of the seedpod shrivels and exposes the tough shell that contains the compartmented seeds. To harvest the nut-like fruits, use thick gloves or barbeque tongs. Place these pods in a brown paper bag and wait a few days for them to completely open. When they dry they will rupture and release the seeds. Toast the seeds for a treat (like macadamia nuts) or they can be pounded/ground into a cornmeal-like substance if

(Continued on page 11)

Bill's Snippets

Nueces River Book Project Update

Check out Bill Montgomery's new art for Bill and Margie's Nueces River Book Project

Kangaroo Rats

There are 5 species of Kangaroo Rats found in Texas. The Texas kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys elator*), which lives in a small area along the Red River, has been added as a State Threatened Species.

Farthest galaxy ever seen spotted by Hubble, astronomers say

The Hubble Space Telescope has spotted the farthest galaxy found so far, 13.4 billion light-years away, according to findings published in the Astrophysical Journal. Astronomers say the galaxy, GN-z11, dates back to just 400 million years after the Big Bang. "We've taken a major step back in time, beyond what we'd ever expected to be able to do with Hubble. We managed to look back in time to measure the distance to a galaxy when the Universe was only three percent of its current age," said lead study author Pascal Oesch.

Carnivorous Plants

There are five carnivorous plants found in North America. Four of them can be found in the Big Thicket (Texas). "Big Times in the Big Thicket" by Dan Oko "Texas Highways" magazine, Feb. 2016, pgs. 33-37.

More Animal Species Named for Celebrities

Aleiodes shakirae was discovered by Dr. Eduardo Shimbori and Dr. Scott Shaw in the eastern Andes mountains of Ecuador. This parasitic wasp was named after Shakira since it causes its caterpillar host to shake and wiggle like the singer's signature belly dance. It seems like biologists have a tendency to name wasps after celebrities. *Aleiodes frosti* is named after poet Robert Frost because of his poem "The Road Not Taken." Other 'celebrity species' from Ecuador named by the two scientists include Ellen Degeneres (*A. elleni*), Stephen Colbert (*A. colberti*), Jimmy Fallon (*A. falloni*), and John Stewart (*A. stewarti*).

Caligula japonica (a Japanese silkworm moth is named) after Roman emperor Caligula.

Effigia was excavated and collected by Edwin Colbert in the late 1940s. The specimen was left to languish in a museum until 2006, when it was "rediscovered." Although it looks like a six-foot-long, two-legged dinosaur, it's actually a distant cousin of today's alligators and crocodiles. Effigia means "ghost," referring to the decades that the fossil remained hidden from science. The species name, okeeffeae, honors the artist Georgia O'Keeffe, who lived near the site in northern New Mexico where the fossil was found.

Anophthalmus hitleri is a species of blind cave beetle found only in five humid caves in Slovenia. German collector Oscar Scheibel named the bug *Anophthalmus hitleri* in 1933, in honor of Adolph Hitler, who only recently had become Chancellor of Germany. Touched, the Fuhrer sent a thank you note to Scheibel.

Jason Bond of Alabama's Auburn University discovered *Aptostichus angelinajolieae* (a spider) in 2013 in the California desert at Joshua Tree National Park. Bond identified 33 new species in the park, among which *A. bonoi*, named after U2 front man Bono.

(Continued on page 11)

Snippets, cont.

(Continued from page 10)

A fly species was named after Bill Gates in recognition of his great contributions to the science of Dipterology. Bill's fly is only found in the high montane cloud forests of Costa Rica.

Paul Sikkel, an assistant professor of marine ecology and a field marine biologist at Arkansas State University named this "gnathiid isopod" (*Gnathia marleyi*) after Bob Marley — the late popular Jamaican singer and guitarist. The animal is a small parasitic crustacean blood feeder that infests certain fish that inhabit the coral reefs of the shallow eastern Caribbean. This species is as uniquely Caribbean as was Marley, Sikkel said.

Prince Albert I of Monaco was an amateur teuthologist who pioneered the study of deep sea squids by collecting the 'precious regurgitations' of sperm whales. He devoted much of his life to oceanography, but also made reforms on political, economic and social levels, bestowing a constitution on the Principality in 1911. *Grimalditeuthis bonplandi*, named after prince Albert's family (Grimaldi), is a deep-sea squid whose tentacles glow.

Cat Spring Yaupon Tea

You can now buy Yaupon Tea on-line. "The Illinois State Museum runs a series of "Hot Science" featuring the history of Black Drink, its chemistry, and the fact that yaupon tea is now commercially available again (you are welcome!). The museum served some of our Cat Spring Yaupon Tea at the exhibition opening!"

River, cont.

(Continued from page 9)

you are so inclined. This is your first and most treasured course.

The second course is boiled taproot—yum! I'm told digging up the taproot is a little tricky, too. The root is brittle, very deep, earth colored, and is easy to destroy with a spade. Instead, cut away the top part of the plant with a machete or other long blade, then dig a circular trench about a foot away from the stem of the plant. Carefully shave away the soil on the plant-side of the hole until you find the root. Remove the dirt from around the fragile root until you can lift it from the soil—work carefully, like an archaeologist. Once removed the root must be peeled and boiled. It will be a bit firm, not soft like a potato. A strong fiber core runs through the center of the root; throw that away. Are you hungry yet? Nope. Me neither.

Next time you're out enjoying the bluebonnets, think about the Texas bull nettle. Have a little respect for Great Nature's flora. Take a lesson from the beetles, pollinators, turkeys and songbirds. All God's inventions love comfort, warmth and love. Only human beings have the arrogance to assume it all exists for their pleasure. There are no bad plants; only bad people. To atone for past sins, consider taking a Texas bull nettle to lunch.