

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS

NEWSLETTER

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<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

September 2015

One Backyard Hummingbird Species Becomes Two

By Jennie Miller

These days, the discovery of a species usually requires treacherous treks into remote jungles untouched by science. But the world's newest bird species was discovered, not in some remote tropical jungle, but in back-



yards in the Bahamas. A member of the Bee Hummingbird group, the Bahama Woodstar includes two subspecies which scientists now say should be recognized as two distinct species.

“Much of fieldwork was conducted sitting at the backyard tables of birders, holding the recorder in one hand and a cup of tea in the other,” explained Teresa Feo, a doctoral student at Yale University and lead author of the study, published in the January issue of *The Auk*.

The Bahama Woodstar species contains two subspecies, *Calliphlox evelynae evelynae* found throughout the northern islands of the Bahamas,



Tail shape played a major role in distinguishing the Inaguan Lyretail (right) as a separate species from the Bahama Woodstar (left). The forked, lyre-shaped tail feathers of the Inaguan Lyretail produce a different sound during male courtship display dives than the fanned tail feathers of the Bahama Woodstar. Photos by Anand Varma.

E LOCALS

SEPTEMBER 1: Rolling Plains

Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Laura Gillis will talk about the monarch tagging program.

SEPTEMBER 12: Sikes Lake

Clean-up **Location:** Sikes Lake **Time:** 9:00 AM We need lots of volunteers to pull this off. We need people to supervise the students, help with the hotdogs and help with the trash. MSU will supply hot dogs, drinks, bags, grabbers and gloves, the chapter supplies the manpower. We always have a good time and it's a great way to spread goodwill in the community and get our name out there.

Make plans to attend- this counts as volunteer hours.

OCTOBER 3: Take Me Outdoors.

Location: Lake Arrowhead State Park. **Time:** 9:00 AM. to Noon Lots of opportunities for volunteer time, serving as trail guides, and other events scattered in the park.

OCTOBER 23-25: Texas Master Naturalist 16th Annual Meeting

Location: Horseshoe Bay Resort in Marble Falls, TX. Registration information will be available before the end of the summer – watch your emails!

and *Calliphlox evelynae lyrura* found only among the southern Inaguan islands of the chain. Both males and females of the two are strikingly similar, but in this case appearances were deceiving.

Physically, males in the two subspecies differ only in their forehead colors and forked tail feathers. These minor differences helped naturalists originally describe the birds as different species in the 1800's. Yet James Peters ignored that precedent when he published the Check-list of Birds of the World in 1949 and lumped the species together as the Bahama Woodstar.



Christopher Clark (left) and Jacob Musser (right) place a caged Bahama Woodstar female in the territory of a male in order to record audio and high speed video of male courtship displays. Photo by Jen Marks Clark.

air runs along male tail feathers during mating display dives.

“We originally wanted to study the two subspecies simply to capture the diversity of sounds they might produce with their tail feathers,” said Feo, “And in the course of doing fieldwork it became obvious that they were different...and different more than just normal subspecies.”

Feo and Clark found that small differences in the tail feathers between the two subspecies resulted in distinct visual and acoustic courtship signals so that males would attract only females of their own kind.

Researchers could also distinguish between the birds just by their vocalizations. Males from the more widespread subspecies in the northern islands produced the classic hummingbird “light tinkling, rambling songs,” described Feo, while males from the southern islands sounded more like “wet squeaky shoes.” The birds also sang different calls and scolding sounds, indicating a long history of geographic separation. Because hummingbirds learn their songs from parents and neighbors, species separated by distance can develop unique dialects, much like humans. In this case, separation between the northern and southern islands of the Bahamas was enough for the subspecies to create different languages.

The team also compared beak and wing lengths, and collected tissue samples from the two populations for genetic analyses. Doctoral students Jacob Berv from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Jacob Musser from Yale worked together to sequence the birds' DNA and found many species-level differences that indicated the populations have evolved in isolation for about half a million years.

Feo, Clark, Berv, and Musser conclude that the northern islands subspecies should keep the familiar name, ‘Bahama Woodstar’, and they suggest ‘Inaguan Lyretail’ for the other subspecies because it is found only among the southern Inaguan Islands of the Bahamas and because its forked tail shape resembles a classical lyre harp. The team will soon petition the American Ornithologists' Union to officially recognize the species split. But exactly how the birds should be reclassified offers new dilemmas.

Texas Pollinator Pow-Wow 2015

September 19-20
Kerrville, Texas

Written by Carrie McLaughlin

The TEXAS POLLINATOR POWWOW 2015 will be held on Saturday and Sunday, September 19-20th in the Schreiner University Ballroom, Kerrville, Texas. That will put us in the beautiful Hill Country on the clear, cool Guadalupe River just in time for the first monarchs to be wafting through on their way to their winter forests in Mexico.

We have reserved a large block of rooms at the uniquely western YO Ranch Hotel for an incredibly attractive government rate available to EVERYONE. There are also other enticing places to stay which may fit your interests and budget—such as the newly renovated Inn of the Hills on the Guadalupe riverbank just down the road from the university, charming bed and breakfasts in town or in the surrounding hills, or tent and RV camping at any number of picturesque natural areas nearby. If you need help with this, please let us know, or please contact our new best friends, Leslie or Marie, at the Kerrville Convention & Visitor's Bureau (services@kerrvilletexascvb.com; 830-792-3535)

The second day of the conference will be “Monarch-Centric” and will end with a Q&A panel of monarch conservationists taking questions from the floor. The first day of the conference will be everything OTHER than monarchs, and will also end in a Q&A panel of landowner conservationists who have been restoring or conserving pollinator habitat. Please look at the meeting agenda attached to this email for a list of our TWENTY gifted and knowledgeable speakers and their topics.

Our new website includes short bios of the speakers, registration information, resources, links to our past events, and a page of partici-

“All of bee hummingbird taxonomy is in a major flux at the moment,” explains Feo.

The study is a reminder that new discoveries still exist close to home. “There’s a big wide world out there and a lot to learn about birds,” reflected Feo, “And sometimes there’s new stuff to learn even in your own backyard.”

Sikes Lake Clean-up September 12, 2015

Our big annual event is coming up Saturday, September 12 starting at 9:00 a.m. We need lots of volunteers to pull this off. We need people to supervise the students, help with the hotdogs and help with the trash. MSU will supply hot dogs, drinks, bags, grabbers and gloves, the chapter supplies the manpower.

We always have a good time and it’s a great way to spread goodwill in the community and get our name out there.

Make plans to attend- *this counts as volunteer hours.*

Terry



**What are you doing to keep Texas beautiful?
If the answer is "not enough", now is your chance!**

Join the Sikes Lake Cleanup Saturday, September 12

**Volunteers will meet at 9:00 AM
on the east side of Sikes Lake.
Free lunch after the cleanup.**

STATEWIDE QUAIL

—SYMPOSIUM—

Featuring leading professionals and experts in quail management, conservation, and research.

Abilene, Texas
September 16-18, 2015

To learn more or to register go to:

www.statewidequailsymposium.com



pating institutions who enthusiastically support our community outreach and education efforts. Please take the time to click on our supporters’ logos to learn more about them, their work and their areas of concern.

At least three dozen exhibitors will be with us this time, sharing and answering questions and providing resources. Please note that there is NO CHARGE to visit with the exhibitors. That may be helpful to some of you who are traveling with your friends or family. Please encourage them to stop by and check out the bees, butterflies and bats while YOU relax on comfortably padded chairs at skirted tables with like-minded conservationists as you enjoy the excellent presentations.

Near the exhibitors’ area is a very large, sofa’ed, and laid-back lounge room, with pool tables, ping pong, TV, a jukebox and the Lion’s Den Cafe (featuring Starbucks, Blue Bell, wraps and subs, soups, breads, burgers and more). A good place to take a break with your buddies, or succor your loved ones for a few hours. Just outside the front doors to the conference center is a largely shaded, bricked courtyard featuring native plantings and a perpetual breeze, and a safe place for little ones to stretch their legs.

We have made every attempt to make you and yours comfortable for your lengthy stay with us on this historic occasion in this historic city. We are excited about the outstanding opportunities for you here, and the resulting pollinator conservation possibilities for our natural resources. We cannot thank you enough for caring as you do, and we do hope you will find a way to be with us in September.

Carrie McLaughlin
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<http://www.texaspollinatorpowwow.org/>
682-459-1684 (c)

It's time! Registration is **NOW OPEN** for the Texas Master Naturalist 16th Annual Meeting!



Registration Open - <http://txmn.org/2015-annual-meeting/>

This year's event will mark the Texas Master Naturalist Program's 16th Annual Meeting and will be the 17th year of the program. The event will be hosted at a larger than ever before facility, Horseshoe Bay Resort, just west of gorgeous Marble Falls, Texas. Situated along the lakeshores of Lake Lyndon B. Johnson, this year's meeting location will offer scenic views, close proximity to local, state and even national wildlife areas and nature centers, along with state of the art meeting rooms, resort style accommodations and award winning meals. The Annual Meeting provides an opportunity for the Texas Master Naturalist volunteers from around the state to gather, participate in hands-on educational seminars, and receive all of their Advanced Training requirements for the year within one weekend. It's also an opportunity for program participants and supporters to network, share new ideas/projects, and to learn from different chapters from different regions of the state.

We are pleased to extend an invitation to ALL Texas Master Naturalist Program volunteers, along with all other program affiliates. This includes those certified volunteers, those still in training, program administrators and advisors of local chapters, and your local chapter partners, sponsors, or special guests. This year's gathering has several chapter enhancement and Advanced Training topics to choose from. Our social times, chapter project fair showcase and round table discussions will offer great opportunities to meet your fellow Texas Master Naturalist peers from our 45 Chapters across the state and share new ideas from the past year. Hear what projects your peers are contributing their volunteer time towards and make new acquaintances all at the same time. The Texas Master Naturalist Store and other surprises are also on the agenda. So, come out for a weekend filled with fun, fellowship, and learning in a beautiful October, Texas Hill Country setting.

This year's meeting is scheduled for October 23rd through 25th at the hill country scenic Horseshoe Bay Resort, located on the shores of Lake Lyndon B Johnson. Registration for this highly anticipated event is NOW available through the Annual Meeting page on the Texas Master Naturalist State website at <http://txmn.org/2015-annual-meeting/>. Additional information about the annual gathering weekend, annual awards and contests, the advanced training sessions agenda, and registration details can be found on the website as well.

We look forward to seeing you this fall!

Thanks,
Michelle & Mary Pearl

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The cobra lily picks up its ferocious name from its pitcher which is formed from a modified leaf that look like a cobra ready to strike. Instead of using fangs to attack its prey, the cobra lily draws insects into its sunny pitcher, thanks to transparent windows on top of its trap that work like a skylight. The insects are drawn to the light, but once they're trapped inside, it's, uh, lights out.



There are an estimated 390 billion trees in the Amazon, and in every hectare (2.471 acres) of the forest there are about 40 to 100 different tree species.

House flies use their antennae to smell with. They can fly 45 mph and beat their wings up to 200 times per second. That is more than twice as fast as a hummingbird. Houseflies existed 65 million years ago.



Invasive Spotlight: Giant Hogweed *(Heracleum mantegazzianum)*



Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is originally from Eurasia. It is an aggressive competitor. Because of its size and rapid growth, it out-competes native plant species, reducing the amount of suitable habitat available for wildlife. It prefers moist, disturbed soils such as riverbanks, ditches and railroad rights-of-

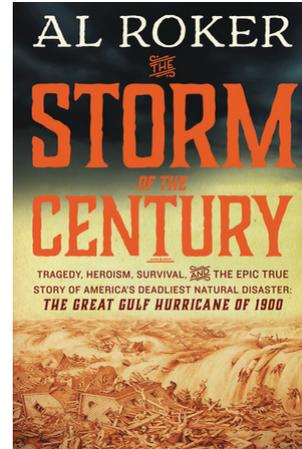
way, but can be found in a variety of habitats. Giant hogweed dies back during the winter months, leaving bare ground that can lead to an increase in soil erosion on riverbanks and steep slopes.

It is not found in Texas -- YET!

WARNING! Giant hogweed contains a substance within its sap that makes the skin sensitive to ultra violet light. This can result in severe burns to the affected areas, producing swelling and severe, painful blistering.

RESOURCE CORNER

The Storm of the Century
by Al Roker
Hardcover: 320 pages
ISBN-10: 0062364650
Price:\$27.99



This gripping narrative history vividly brings to life the Great Gulf Hurricane of 1900, the deadliest natural disaster in

American history.

On the afternoon of September 8, 1900, 200-mile-per-hour winds and fifteen-foot waves slammed into Galveston. By dawn the next day the city that existed just hours before was gone. Shattered, grief-stricken survivors emerged to witness a level of destruction never before seen: 8,000 corpses littered the streets and were buried under the massive wreckage. Rushing water had lifted buildings from their foundations, smashing them into pieces. In less than twenty-four hours, one storm destroyed a major American metropolis—and awakened a nation to the terrifying power of nature.

The Storm of the Century brings this legendary disaster and its aftermath into brilliant focus. No other natural disaster has ever matched the havoc caused by the awesome mix of winds, rains, and flooding that devastated this bustling metropolis and shocked the nation.

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