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Please send chapter events and nature-related articles, photos, and items of interest to the chapter to [Lynn](#) by the 25th of the month. Suggestions for the newsletter are also welcome. Thanks.

**Lynn Trenta,
Courier Editor**

We are a group of trained volunteers who share our appreciation and knowledge of nature with the community through outreach, education and conservation/restoration projects

President's Message *By Bert Stipelcovich*



Fellow Chapter Members:

These are difficult times with many unknowns. What we do know is that we have faced significant challenges before, and we have overcome each of them. I firmly believe we will do that again. We are a resilient tribe.

I met today with Michelle Haggerty (State Program Coordinator), Mary Pearl Meuth (Assistant Program Coordinator), and other chapter presidents across the state. Amidst the current depressing circumstances, I have some very good news to report:

- *Current spring class members can acquire all 40 hours of required initial training online.*
- *All members can get all 8 hours of required advanced training (AT) online.*
- *The state is developing a list of recommended volunteer service projects (VSP) that can be completed virtually.*
- *The state is creating online courses for use by all TMN chapters.*
- *Our chapter has access to a shared, regional Zoom license that allows meetings with up to 100 participants and webinars with up to 10,000 participants.*
- *We can continue to work at Seabourne and other locations as long as we maintain our adherence to social distancing, CDC protocols, and local government requirements.*

I have spoken with our New Class Director (Spring Class), Shannon Westveer. She has already scheduled Jaime Gonzales for an online training class for Tuesday, March 31. At my request, she has started collaborating with neighboring chapters to schedule shared training sessions. Shannon is working to reschedule canceled class sessions from in-person to online sessions. More news to come.

A couple of weeks ago, I challenged our AT and VSP Directors — Ramona Ridge and Johanna DeYoung, respectively — to create an updated list of opportunities that can be accomplished given the constraints of the current pandemic. Ramona and Johanna have responded brilliantly, and the first draft of their evolving work is included in this issue.

In addition, we have procured our own Zoom license at a significantly discounted price. If the state regional license is unavailable, we have an alternate way to meet and communicate.

Continued on next page--

President's Message *(Continued)*

The chapter program meeting, originally scheduled for April 2, has been rescheduled using Zoom for April 9. Amber Leung has agreed to deliver her presentation, "Becoming a Backyard Astrophotographer," online via a Zoom webinar. Other chapter programs will follow the same format, including virtual chapter meetings following the presentations. In addition, we are rescheduling board meetings with Zoom as well. Expect additional information about Zoom and upcoming events.

When I meet with the other chapter presidents and the state leadership, and I describe what our members are doing, I could not be prouder. We are a special chapter in a state of outstanding chapters.

As always, call me with any concerns or questions. As an IT nerd, I am also available to help with Zoom, Slack, and anything else computer related. 😊

We will weather this storm together and emerge stronger — together.

Be safe.

All the best,

Bert Stipelcovich

713-540-2378

The Membership Minute *By Bob Naeger, Membership Director*

Congratulations to the following members who recently achieved certifications and milestones:

Initial Certification

Sandra Brown

Johanna DeYoung

2020 Recertification (11 members recertified so far)

John Cooper

Terry Hurley

Ella Stroupe

The recertification pin for 2020 is the American Bumble Bee!

500 Hour Milestone

Sal Cardenas

Thanks to everyone who has paid their 2020 dues.



What is Zoom? Why it is Important? *By Bert Stipelcovich, TMNCPC President*

[Zoom](#) is a video conferencing platform that allows people to interact virtually over the Internet. The software runs on Mac, Windows, iOS, and Android devices. It is robust and simple to use.



The capabilities that Zoom provides is important since we are currently unable to meet in person. The state Texas Master Naturalist™ organization has selected Zoom to hold meetings and webinars. Our chapter has been given access to a shared license that allows up to 10,000 participants in a webinar. And we also have our own license we can use to host meetings with up to 100 attendees.

Going forward, we plan to use Zoom for our chapter, board, and committee meetings. Other chapters have adopted the same strategy.

Our spring class recently completed a Zoom session presented by Jaime González — Houston Urban Conservation Programs Manager for The Nature Conservancy in Texas (TNC). It was well attended, Zoom worked well, and all attendees really enjoyed the experience. Shannon Westveer, New Class Director (Spring), is working to schedule additional online classes.

To learn more about Zoom, go to the help center at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>. There you will find articles and videos about using Zoom effectively. As always, contact me with any questions, concerns, and suggestions.



Volunteer Service Projects Highlights

By Johanna DeYoung, 2020 Volunteer Service Project Director

This month, considering COVID 19 and the changes we have implemented day-by-day in our lives, I appeal to you, TMNCPC members and trainees, and to your imaginations to uncover VSP opportunities. This past month, TMNCPC had its gallant "Seabourne Warriors" safely carrying on activities within Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP)

As your Volunteer Service Projects (VSP) Director, I want to safely connect you with VSP opportunities which appeal to your talents, skills, and interests, while observing the Center for Disease Control's recommendations and the Fort Bend County "Stay at Home to Save Lives" Order we have in place.

Please check the website calendar, Slack, and the CPCTMN Members Only Facebook page for other opportunities and/or communications. If you have any questions about VSP opportunities, please contact me at johanna@coastalprairie.org

Seabourne Creek Nature Park (SCNP)

With parks being accessible while the Fort Bend County "Stay at Home to Save Lives" Order is in effect, there opportunities within SCNP.

When: Daily

Please contact Jerry Trenta, TMNCPC Seabourne Director (jerrytrenta@txtrentas.com) if you are interested in participating out at the prairie restoration project. He notes there is minimal training needed for bump ups and prairie planting, and the training can be done with a phone call. He can also be at SCNP for the first time for individuals and train using social distancing (2meters/6feet distancing between people).

Work in the gardens should be done at the direction of the 2 garden leads: [Katie Sallean](#) and [Mark Morgenstern](#). Direction from these 2 leads can also be done over the phone and/or using social distancing.

Remember, if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol hand sanitizer that contains 60% or more, alcohol
The Fort Bend County order allows citizens to go county and city parks (open areas, not playgrounds) while practicing distancing. So, this allows TMNCPC members and trainees to go SCNP to do VSP while consistently being 2 meters/6 feet part. So, filling the bird feeders, and/or working the gardens can be done.

[VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category "SCNP-7 Habitats Public Access: TMN Report Hours"]

See Jerry Trenta's Seabourne report for more details on volunteering at the prairie area on page 6 of this Courier.

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Volunteer Service Projects Highlights *(Continued)*

Quintana Xeriscape Nature Reserve

When: Daily

Where: Quintana, TX

Margo Johnson noted there are newly planted gardens along the entryway walking bridge with flowers and an installed watering system. These gardens need to be monitored for weeds. Margo noted there are "nice porta-potties" on site.

Since there is neither soap nor water available, use an alcohol hand sanitizer that contains 60% or more alcohol. [VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the category "Gulf Coast Bird Observatory: TMN Report Hours"]

Preparation for the TMN Annual Meeting (October 16-18, 2020)

When: Daily

Where: In the comfort of your home

Needed Terri Hurley is looking for someone(s) to create the TMNCPC entry for the "project" competition that will be held at the TMN Annual Meeting. The TMNCPC wants to enter a submission on our signature project – SCNP, and maybe also one on Seabourne Nature Fest. Those interested can familiarize themselves with the rules and create draft plans for the TMNCPC entries. The chapter has a small budget for supplies.

Additionally, those interested could work with Terri on Setting up a field trip to SCNP and one to the Katy Prairie Conservancy for the field trip selection at the TMN Annual Meeting. [VSP hours to be recorded in VMS under the Category "Chapter Business: TMN Admin Report Hours"]

Advance Training *By Ramona Ridge, Advanced Training Director*



On Demand Online Video:

- Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

You Tube Channels with On Demand:

- Houston Museum of Natural Science
- Texas Parks & Wildlife
- Prairie Partner
- Katy Prairie Conservancy
- Texas Master Naturalist Program
- Jaime Gonzales is doing a Zoom lecture on April 22nd and an iNaturalist training on April 15th. These can be seen on The Nature Conservancy of Texas's Facebook page. Galveston Bay Foundation and Bayou Land Conservancy
- AgriLife Horticulture Facebook Live talk every Wednesday and Friday at 1pm

**Some of these have videos on the list would not qualify for AT (ie. kid's videos or some of the HMNS) so we're just going to have to trust members judgement until we find a better way. [AT: Skills Enhancement Courses for credit]*



Seabourne Volunteering *By Jerry Trenta, Seabourne Director and Past President*



Photos by Lynn Trenta

Post Social Distancing

We had hoped that the scout's construction of the Implement deck would use more of the old floating dock material saved for repurposing. They chose to use mostly new material, so we still had a big pile of material looking for a purpose. We chose to use it to expand the nursery table space. New 4'x3' tables are being built from the recycled material. There is enough material to make about 20 new tables which will expand our nursery capacity by about 60% (that's space for about 1000 more pots.)

A look inside the greenhouse shows why all that nursery space will be needed. It is full and the plants are growing fast and will need to be bumped-up very soon. This leads to the question of how? in the time of COVID-19.

The Fort Bend County Public Health Order "Stay at Home to Save Lives" allows citizens to go the county and city parks (open areas; not playgrounds) and practice 'social distancing' while there. I have noticed a large increase in the number of people using the parks lately but fortunately it's a BIG park. This allows us to go to Seabourne and while there do some VSP, as long as it is consistent with staying at least six foot apart. So, filling the bird feeders, or working in the gardens can be done.

I plan to set up bump-up stations sometime the first week of April where individuals (or couples) can do plant bump-ups safely. They would have to do all tasks involved by themselves to be safe. I can manage up two or three stations each with their own wheelbarrow for the soil and the new nursery tables for workspace.

Also, about the same time we will need to begin planting in the restoration area. Many of the plants already in the nursery are ready to be put in the prairie. Again, this can be done on an individual basis. Additional VSP activities are being planned, such as painting the sheds.

If you would like to participate in either of these VSP activities, please let me know at jerrytrenta@txtrentas.com or on Slack. I will be putting it together and start scheduling the first week of April and as Mark Morgenstern releases plant trays from the greenhouse.

The actual method of scheduling is vague at the moment due to a number of constraints (number of empty pots, when greenhouse trays are ready, weather, number of volunteers, etc.) Hopefully after the first one or two of these get started it will all smooth out.

Looking forward to volunteering safely at Seabourne!

The Wonderful World of Mushrooms *by Erik Wolf*



Photos by Robbin Mallett



Man has been cultivating crops, like Squash and peppers, in America since 5000 BC but mushrooms were not cultivated for another 6500 years. With only 155 years of cultivation, much is still being learned about mushrooms. Many of the things we thought we knew are turning out to be false. We used to think mushrooms needed manure and darkness to grow. We now know mushrooms can be grown on various substrates and in most cases light at every stage of growth is beneficial.

Mushrooms are not plants. They are the fruit of the fungus. A mushroom's DNA more closely resembles that of humans than plants. Plants and Animals grow through cell division which is a long slow process. Mushrooms on the other hand grow through cell enlargement. They can grow as fast as water can be pumped into their cells. This is how mushrooms can appear overnight.

Mushrooms produce spores, not seeds. The spores contain all the necessary materials to form a new fungus. A single mushroom can produce over a billion spores a day. Spores size and shape can help determine the species of a mushroom.

Mycelium is the vegetative part of the fungus and its function in the ecosystem is to decompose organic material. 1 cubic inch of soil can contain enough mycelium to stretch 8 miles. The largest living thing on earth is a mycelium patch in Oregon. It covers almost 4 square miles and is referred to as the "Humongous Fungus". Mycelium can be used as a natural insecticide, a packaging material to replace Styrofoam, and an edible supplement. Mushroom and Mycelium supplement sales are at an all-time high and are projected to be a \$7.4 Billion industry in 2020. Some mushrooms supplements, like the Cordyceps Sinensis sell for \$10,000 a pound.

In 1968 Mushrooms containing Psilocybin, these are commonly referred to as "Magic Mushrooms", were made illegal. They were also classified as a class I drug meaning that they are highly addictive and have no medicinal value. In 2018 The FDA granted Permissions for University and Labs to begin testing the effects of Psilocybin on humans to treat various forms of depression and addiction. Using Psychedelics to treat addiction was a common and successful practice before they were outlawed. New research is challenging the fact that Psilocybin is addictive and offers no medicinal value.

Mushrooms, Fungi and Mycelium are being researched more right now than ever before. They are being looked at to fight colony collapse in bees, clean up oil spill, Fight PTSD, treat Dementia, and even as an alternate to Styrofoam. We are in a mushroom Renaissance! Next time you see a mushroom I hope that you look at it a little different and can appreciate the role it plays in our ecosystem.

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo *By Jim Butcher*

Chapter Members Sal Cardenas, Jim Butcher, and Roger Hathorn joined TMN State Assistant Program Coordinator Mary Pearl March 5th at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Booth at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Thanks, guys!!



A Pre-Pandemic Bird Hike at Cullinan Park *By Robbin Mallett*

TMN CPC Communications Director, Cullinan Park Conservancy Board

When I led the Ornithology Field Trip at Cullinan Park on Saturday, March 7, I could not have imagined the changes that would completely transform our world before the end of the month. I'm so glad we were able to introduce so many people to the park before the coronavirus pandemic emerged. Although the restrooms are closed and social distancing rules apply, the park and trails remain open for use, and I know it is serving as a wonderful escape into nature for many.

It was a cool day when we met in the parking lot at Cullinan to check out the 754-acre property that has been experiencing a renewal in the past few years. In 2015, an Inter-local Agreement was hammered out between the City of Houston, Houston Parks Board, City of Sugar Land and the Cullinan Park Conservancy. In January 2016, the City of Sugar Land annexed the 754-acre Park, and now the City provides police patrol and park maintenance services. Phase 1 Improvements completed include a new restroom, .33-mile accessible concrete trail and lake overlook, new benches, donor recognition, understory clearing and more. Planning for Phase 2 improvements is underway which will include two additional miles of trail, additional parking and a nature-oriented LEAP Area (Learn, Explore & Play) for children.

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A Pre-Pandemic Bird Hike at Cullinan Park *(Continued)*

We had a great turnout with 30 people joining in. Fortunately, I had recruited two highly skilled birders to help lead the hike. Thank you to Mark Scheuerman, our Fort Bend County eBird reviewer and Albert Ribes (aka the King of Cullinan) for sharing your knowledge of both birds and Cullinan. We began our park exploration at the boardwalk and observation tower to look for aquatic birds & ducks on White Lake and its shore-hugging wetlands. The Wood Ducks were a highlight and we heard Virginia Rail and Sora calling. We also saw blue-winged teal, ring-necked ducks, pied-billed grebes, a belted kingfisher and more. We then decided to split into two groups to take to the trails. Mark and Robbin took a group on the new accessible trail around White Lake and then checked out a few spots along Oyster Creek. Albert led a large group along Oyster Creek and all over and surprised some past park visitors who told me they saw parts of the park they'd never discovered before. It was a fun day, and even though it was too early for Spring migrants, as a group we saw 57 species and (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S65547049>) and made sure to point out all the best spots to check once migration is in full swing.

Thank you to the chapter members who joined us on March 7th and, for those who weren't able to attend, check out this link for a 1-minute video produced by KHOU-Channel 11 about birding at Cullinan:

<https://www.cullinanparkconservancy.org/news/11/cullinan-park-in-sugar-land-is-a-birder%27s-paradise>





Seabourne Projects *By Jerry Trenta, Seabourne Director and Past President*



Photos by Garrett Engelhardt



Over the past six weeks a lot has been accomplished at Seabourne Park.

Pre-Social Distancing

Eric Krush led the way with his Eagle Scout project. He and his scout troop with the help of some dads completed the tractor implement deck near the tractor shed. It will be a tremendous help in getting the mower and other tractor tools attached and unattached to the tractor.

The wonderful LDS Volunteers did most of the work in installing the three new security lights in the tool, greenhouse and equipment shed area. These new solar powered lights operate from dusk to dawn using 30% power at night when no motion is detected, increasing to 100% when motion is detected. They are a dark sky design with all light focused downward, which is why they needed to be on tall poles to cover the large area.

We received two loads of road base material (bottom ash) which Sal Cardenas expertly spread with the tractor. One load was used for the Tractor Implement Deck site and the second load was used to prepare the site where the new 20'x8' cargo container (i.e. cart shed) is to be located.

See plans for future post-social distancing volunteer projects on page 6, after the VSP Announcements by Johanna.

Seabourne Projects *(Continued)*

Seabourne Prairie and Native Plant Demo Garden

This is the beginning of the prettiest time of year for the demo garden. See photos below. It is a great place to get volunteer hours while social distancing. The pathways always need tending!



Photos by Lynn Trenta



Compost Basics *By Andrea Morgenstern*



In order to use our compost bins as they were intended, please bring any items you want to add.

Do Add This:

- ⌘ Grass Clippings
- ⌘ Fruits
- ⌘ Vegetable scraps
- ⌘ Coffee Grinds
- ⌘ Egg Shells
- ⌘ Manure
- ⌘ Newspaper/Paper Bags

Do Not Add these:

- ✗ Meat
- ✗ Bones
- ✗ Clay Clods
- ✗ Weeds
- ✗ Branches
- ✗ Dairy



As the materials breakdown the pile will get warm. This process creates compost that we can use in our gardens. Thank you for saving 43% of waste from reaching the landfill.

New Plant Labels at Seabourne *By Mark Morgenstern*

At Seabourne Creek we are converting campaign signs to plant tags. We cut them up into 6" markers. I've been using them and they last several years! Keeps them out of the landfill.



Plant of the Month *Text and Photos by Mark Morgenstern*

Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)



Our plant of the month is Coral Honeysuckle. The scientific name is *Lonicera sempervirens*. It is a high climbing and twining vine up to 20' tall. It is semi evergreen with glossy leaves. The flowers are tubular red outside and yellow inside. They attract hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. The red berries are a favorite of birds including Quail. Also, it is the larval host of the spring azure butterfly and the snowberry clearwing moth.

I have been growing them for several years. However, the 1st two I planted died. They prefer rich soil. The 3rd one I planted with compost under a live oak on the east side. It took off and is massive! Every year I put some berries in a pot. They germinate in January. This year I only had 2 plants. For the 1st time tried rooting 36 cuttings. Still a work in progress. These are easily found in local nurseries. I highly recommend this plant. Our plants are growing well and can be seen at Seabourne Creek Demonstration beds.



Meet the Ecologist Who Wants You to Unleash the Wild on Your Backyard

By Jerry Adler; Photographs by Matthew Cicanese Sent to TMNCPC Facebook by Linda Lourim



SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE | April 2020

The land is ten gently sloping acres in rural southeastern Pennsylvania, at one time mowed for hay, with a handsome farmhouse that Douglas Tallamy bought around 20 years ago. It isn't much to look at, by the standards most Americans apply to landscaping—no expansive views across swaths of lawn set off by flowerbeds and specimen trees—but, as Tallamy says, "We're tucked away here where no one can see us, so we can do pretty much what we want." And what he wants is for this property to be a model for the rest of the country, by which he means suburbs, exurbs, uninhabited woods, highway margins, city parks, streets and backyards, even rooftops and window boxes, basically every square foot of land not paved or farmed. He wants to see it replanted with native North American flora, supporting a healthy array of native North American butterflies, moths and other arthropods, providing food for a robust population of songbirds, small mammals and reptiles. He even has a name for it: Homegrown National Park.

On a June day in 2001, not long after he bought the property, Tallamy, an entomologist at the University of Delaware, was walking his land when he noticed something that struck him as unusual. Before he bought it, most of it had been kept in hay, but at that point it hadn't been mowed in three years and "was overgrown with autumn olive and Oriental bittersweet in a tangle so thick you couldn't walk. The first thing I had to do was cut trails," Tallamy recalls. And walking through his woods on the newly cut trails, what he noticed was what was missing: caterpillars.

No caterpillars on the Oriental bittersweet, the multiflora rose, the Japanese honeysuckle, on the burning bush that lined his neighbor's driveway. All around him plants were in a riot of photosynthesis, converting the energy of sunlight into sugars and proteins and fats that were going uneaten. A loss, and not just for him as a professional entomologist. Insects—"the little things that run the world," as the naturalist E.O. Wilson called them—are at the heart of the food web, the main way nature converts plant protoplasm into animal life. If Tallamy were a chickadee—a bird whose nestlings may consume between 6,000 and 9,000 caterpillars before they fledge, all foraged within a 150-foot radius of the nest—he would have found it hard going in these woods.

Tallamy knew, in a general sense, why that was. The plants he was walking among were mostly introduced exotics, brought to America either accidentally in cargo or intentionally for landscaping or crops. Then they escaped into the wild, outcompeting their native counterparts, meeting the definition of an "invasive" species. By and large, plants can tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions. But insects tend to be specialists, feeding on and pollinating a narrow spectrum of plant life, sometimes just a single species. "Ninety percent of the insects that eat plants can develop and reproduce only on the plants with which they share an evolutionary history," Tallamy says.

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Meet the Ecologist Who Wants You to Unleash the Wild on Your Backyard *(Continued)*



In the competition to eat, and to avoid being eaten, plants have developed various chemical and morphological defenses—toxins, sticky sap, rough bark, waxy cuticles—and insects have evolved ways to get around them. But as a rule, insect strategies don't work well against species they have never encountered. That's true of even closely related species—imported Norway maples versus native sugar maples, for instance. Tallamy has found that within the same genus, introduced plant species provide on average 68 percent less food for insects than natives. Hence, a plant that in its native habitat might support dozens or hundreds of species of insects, birds and mammals may go virtually uneaten in a new ecosystem. Pennsylvania, for example.

Demonstrating that point might make for a good undergraduate research project, Tallamy thought. So, he asked a student to do a survey of the literature in preparation for a study. The student reported back there wasn't any. "I checked myself," he says. "There was a lot written about invasive species. But nothing on insects and the food web."

That, he says, was the "aha" moment in his career, at which he began to remake himself from a specialist in the mating habits of the cucumber beetle to a proselytizer for native plants as a way to preserve what remains of the natural ecology of North America. He was following in the footsteps of Wilson, his scientific hero, who went from being the world's foremost expert on ants to an eminent spokesman for the ecology of the whole planet. "I didn't exactly plan it this way," Tallamy says with a shrug. "In the musical chairs of life, the music stopped and I sat down in the 'invasive plants' chair. It's a satisfying way to close out my career."

*As a scientist, Tallamy realized his initial obligation was to prove his insight empirically. He began with the essential first step of any scientific undertaking, by applying for research grants, the first of which took until 2005 to materialize. Then followed five years of work by relays of students. "We had to plant the plants and then measure insect use over the next three years, at five different sites," he recalls. "To sample a plot was an all-day affair with five people." Out of that work eventually came papers in scientific journals such as Conservation Biology ("[Ranking lepidopteran use of native versus introduced plants](#)"), Biological Invasions ("[Effects of non-native plants on the native insect community of Delaware](#)") and Environmental Entomology ("[An evaluation of butterfly gardens for restoring habitat for the monarch butterfly](#)"). And then popularizing books aimed at changing the face of America's backyards: Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants and, this year, Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard. And in turn a busy schedule of talks before professional organizations, environmental groups, local conservation societies, landscape designers—anyone who would listen, basically. **Continued on the next page--***

Meet the Ecologist Who Wants You to Unleash the Wild on Your Backyard *(Continued)*



Squirrels aren't the only animals that like acorns. Weevils develop inside the oaknuts, and the larvae, in turn, nourish blue jays and woodpeckers (Matthew Cicanese)



To Tallamy, spiders serve as a linchpin species to birds because they are the second most important food, outweighed in nutritive value only by caterpillars. (Matthew Cicanese)

When insects disappear, humans may not take much notice, but the recent population declines of two species have received a great deal of attention: the monarch butterfly, because it's an iconic, easily recognizable and beautiful creature; and the honeybee, because it's needed to pollinate crops. But those episodes are symptomatic of a larger disruption in the ecosystem. Tallamy estimates that the worldwide population of arthropods, chiefly insects, has declined by 45 percent from preindustrial times. Without insects, it would be the case that lizards, frogs and toads, birds and mammals, from rodents up through bears, would lose all or a large part of their diets. "The little things that run the world are disappearing," he says. "This is an ecological crisis that we're just starting to talk about."

Tallamy is 68, graying, soft-spoken and diffident. In his talks he cloaks the urgency of his message with an understated wit, as when he presses the unpopular cause of poison ivy, whose berries at certain times of the year are an important food for the downy woodpecker and other birds. "When do you get a rash from poison ivy?" he asks an audience. "When you try to pull it out! Ignore your poison ivy. You can run faster than it can." To which many people would reply: "Nature had plenty of poison ivy and insects in it the last time I was there."

But to Tallamy, that attitude is precisely the problem. It speaks to a definition of "nature" as co-extensive with "wilderness," and excludes the everyday landscape inhabited by virtually all Americans. The ecosystem cannot be sustained just by national parks and forests. A statistic he frequently cites is that 86 percent of the land east of the Mississippi is privately owned. A large fraction of that acreage is either under cultivation for food or planted in a monoculture of lawn, a landscape that for ecological purposes might as well be a parking lot.

Tallamy incorporated his thinking into "Homegrown National Park," an aspirational project to repurpose half of America's lawnscape for ecologically productive use. That would comprise more than 20 million acres, the equivalent of nearly ten Yellowstone. The intention is to unite fragments of land scattered across the country into a network of habitat, which could be achieved, he wrote in Bringing Nature Home, "by untrained citizens with minimal expense and without any costly changes to infrastructure." The plots wouldn't have to be contiguous, although that would be preferable. Moths and birds can fly, and you're helping them just by reducing the distance they have to travel for food.

To read the rest of this article go to [Doug Tallamy Article](#)

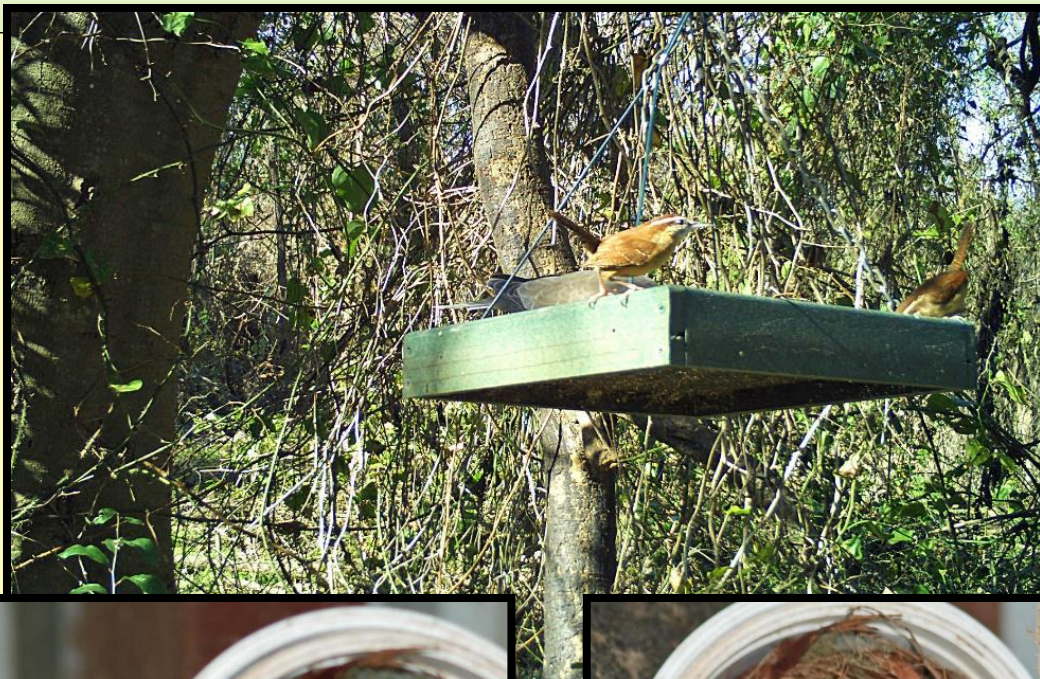
In Our Own Backyards and Other Places

Carolina Wrens *Photo and Text by Diane Eismont*

Have you seen Carolina Wrens out and about this Spring? They stay year 'round' and are primarily insect eaters. Now, they like to eat the larvae from mud and other wasps in the nooks and crannies of the house. They are also occasional feeder guests looking for sunflower seeds, nuts and raw peanuts. I generally see them in pairs like the two in the photo. Males and females have the same markings.

These are the birds that have nests where you least expect to see them! The photos show a nest and hatched young in an old yogurt/water container on a stockpile of steppingstones in the barn. We have also had them nest in hose caddies, open cabinets and the tops of stored farm equipment.

The nest is typical - with large and small grasses and leaves loosely interwoven with an open front area. Their song is the familiar "cheater, cheater, cheater."



The Book Corner



Attracting Beneficial Bugs

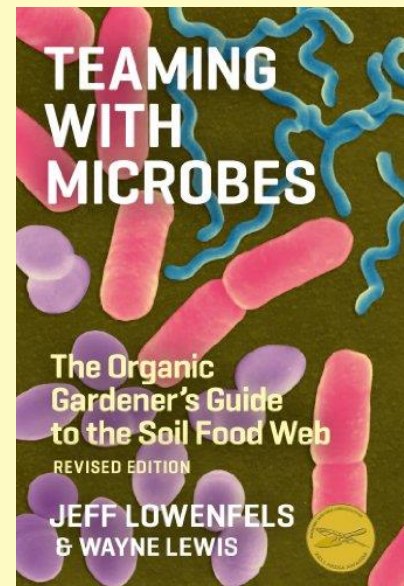
By Jessica Walliser

“Jessica Walliser lets readers in on the secrets to a garden that buzzes with activity. Her profiles, on the insects that fight pests and the best plants for attracting them, offer clear, practical tips.” —Martha Stewart Living

*Say goodbye to common pests like spider mites, aphids, and leafhoppers just by planting a beautiful garden full of the right flowers and herbs! In *Attracting Beneficial Bugs*, organic gardening expert Jessica Walliser provides an accessible guide to selecting, placing, and caring for plants that will invite beneficial insects into your garden to do the dirty work of pest control for you. You’ll learn which plants lure in pest-eating predators and how to design a beautiful garden that provides for these beneficial bugs throughout the year.*

Smart gardeners know that soil is anything but an inert substance. Healthy soil is teeming with life — not just earthworms and insects, but a staggering multitude of bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms. When we use chemical fertilizers, we injure the microbial life that sustains healthy plants, and thus become increasingly dependent on an arsenal of artificial substances, many of them toxic to humans as well as other forms of life. But there is an alternative to this vicious circle: to garden in a way that strengthens, rather than destroys, the soil food web — the complex world of soil-dwelling organisms whose interactions create a nurturing environment for plants. By eschewing jargon and overly technical language, the authors make the benefits of cultivating the soil food web available to a wide audience, from devotees of organic gardening techniques to weekend gardeners who simply want to grow healthy, vigorous plants without resorting to chemicals.

Recommended by John Ferguson



Teaming With Microbes

By Jeff Lowenfels and Wayne Lewis

The Lighter Side



Thanks to John Donaho (Facebook)



Thanks to Becky Leugemors (Facebook)



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Bates M. Allen Park *Text and photos
shared on Slack by Shannon Westveer*

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/bates+allen+park/@29.4322862,-96.0030897,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0xe1b75978b3194730!8m2!3d29.4322862!4d-96.0030897> map

Shannon says: "super quiet and secluded woodland park on the San Bernard River, the open prairie between brimming with insect life. Y'all should go check it out...social distancing never felt so good."



Our Chapter Facebook Page is at
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To post photos and information, email
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