

February 2021

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# Cross Timbers Master Naturalist Newsletter

## *President's Pen* — Sharon Hamilton

### In Praise of Browns

Color heaven: my first box of 64 Crayola crayons. I laid them out in rainbow order, adding other colors at the end. Gold, silver, and bronze were important, as were white and black. But, why on earth would the Binney and Smith Company have included so many brown crayons? Who needed muddy brown, drab tan, dreary sepia, mahogany, raw umber, as well as both raw *and* burnt sienna, when brighter pinks and yellows could be included in the box?

Over many years, I have come to appreciate the browns of the Earth, more conspicuous during winter. The foliage of prairies, pastures, and lawns, wearing the greens of spring and summer, are beautiful, but look more uniform to me. But when Nature gives these grasslands a rest, various shades of brown emerge, highlighting different grasses and forbs.

After shedding their leaves, deciduous trees and shrubs feature their brown bark, various patterns of the ridges and valleys signaling their species for those who observe. Branches separate into unique patterns on limbs and twigs, some regular as Spanish fans, others twisted and gnarled as arthritic hands.

All year long, sharp-eyed viewers recognize different browns everywhere. In the soil—from pale, sterile sands-to dark, fertile humus, full of decomposing life. Countless shades of brown cover the animals with which we share this planet. Beginning birders must learn distinctions among buffy-, rosy-, sandy-, ruddy-, and golden-brown feathers. I knew I finally appreciated browns when I marveled at the colors of seeds of grasses rippling in the wind, the “amber waves of grain” immortalized by Katherine Lee Bates.

Now I love the chocolate brown of my yellow Labrador retriever’s nose and the laughing hazel eyes of my sweet granddaughter. Did you know that Crayola now makes 24 “Colors of the World Skin Tone Crayons?” Even more shades of almond, golden, and rose. Hurray!

What shades of brown do **you** notice?

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-colors-of-childhood-36067809/>

<https://misterogers.org/episodes/a-visit-to-a-crayon-factory/> (Starts at 5:43.)

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Crayola\\_crayons](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Crayola_crayons)

Heartleaf Skullcap, *Scutellaria ovata* Lamiaceae ( Mint Family )

Heartleaf Skullcap is an unusual, little known plant that should be promoted and used more often.

It reaches a height of about two feet with thick, soft velvety heart shaped leaves that give rise to the many flowering spikes arising from the center of the main stem.

It blooms from late spring to early summer. The flowers which last for about two months are streaked with beautiful shades of blue and have the typical skullcap shape.



It spreads by fleshy roots and can fill a space in a short time, making it a good plant for hard to fill areas.

One of the unusual feature about this plant is that it shuts down in the heat of summer, even if given water, it goes dormant. It will however come back in late fall, remaining green through the winter.



**Above– Close-up flower**

**Left Below– Rosette**

**Right Below– Group of Flowers**



Hello Everyone!

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself, I am Jacklyn Jones-Doyle, your Natural Resources Agent. By now I am sure that you have heard that Steve Chaney, your previous liaison with the Tarrant County AgriLife Extension Office, retired at the conclusion of the year 2020. Therefore, I will be taking his place as your new liaison. I am excited to get to know everyone and see how we can all work together in the future.

Just to give you a little bit of my background. I was raised on a cow/calf operation in South Texas. Thanks to family, I am still able to run a small herd of cattle and horses. I also have a small hay operation here in North Texas.

I have a great passion for participating in any type of outdoor activities, from working cattle, to horseback riding, to hunting. Attached is a picture of me and two of my closest friends my horse, Chula and my dog, Gus.

As I mentioned, I am looking forward to working with everyone for years to come!

If you are ever in need of my assistance, please feel free to reach out to me at any time. My email is jacklyn.jones@ag.tamu.edu, and my direct line at the office is (817) 884-2828.



## **Cross Timbers Chapter by the Numbers—Carol Marcotte**

Cross Timbers Chapter hours logged from Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2020

Volunteer Hours (VH) = 9,491.9

Advanced Training hours (AT) = 1,806.3

These hours include our 2020 Fall Training class for a total of 135 members/trainees logging their hours.

The VH is equivalent to \$27.00 / hour to the state of Texas. The AT hours is representative of how much smarter you are getting.

These volunteer numbers are AWESOME in spite of 2020, a challenging year. Members of Cross Timbers Chapter ROCK!



# #TMNTuesdays

FEBRUARY 2021

TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS |



## *What's New This Month?*

February is already here! A new month means a new #TMNTuesday speaker session, and we can't wait for Dr. Doug Tallamy to share his stories and his inspiration with you, especially if this is your first time hearing him speak.

Remember that you can view recordings of each session at [txmn.tamu.edu/tmntuesdays](http://txmn.tamu.edu/tmntuesdays) if you ever can't make it!

Now that spring is almost here, it's time to start planning for your outdoor space and how you can make a difference for the betterment of native species, healthier ecosystems, and even wildlife corridors--all in your very own backyard! There's no better teacher to get you started than Dr. Doug Tallamy, who's 2020 New York Times Best Seller, 'Nature's Best Hope,' inspires just that.

**February 9, 12pm**

[Click here to register!](#)

*"Being with people who care about nature and who want to educate the future generations that will take our places is the most important thing."*

**ZACH CHAPMAN, CROSS  
TIMBERS CHAPTER**



## *Featured Speaker: Dr. Doug Tallamy*

Doug Tallamy is a professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, where he has authored 103 research publications and has taught insect related courses for 40 years. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities. Doug has received many awards for his work, and his new book 'Nature's Best Hope' is a New York Times Best Seller. <http://www.bringingnaturehome.net/>

With the ongoing pandemic limiting our ability to get volunteer hours, I was asked to write about one way that you can earn hours using **iNaturalist**. **Identifying observations** already entered into **iNaturalist** is important; more people are always needed to accomplish this task. Under the State guidelines on Community/Citizen Science released in 2020, this activity is now fully pre-approved as a way to get some Volunteer Hours.

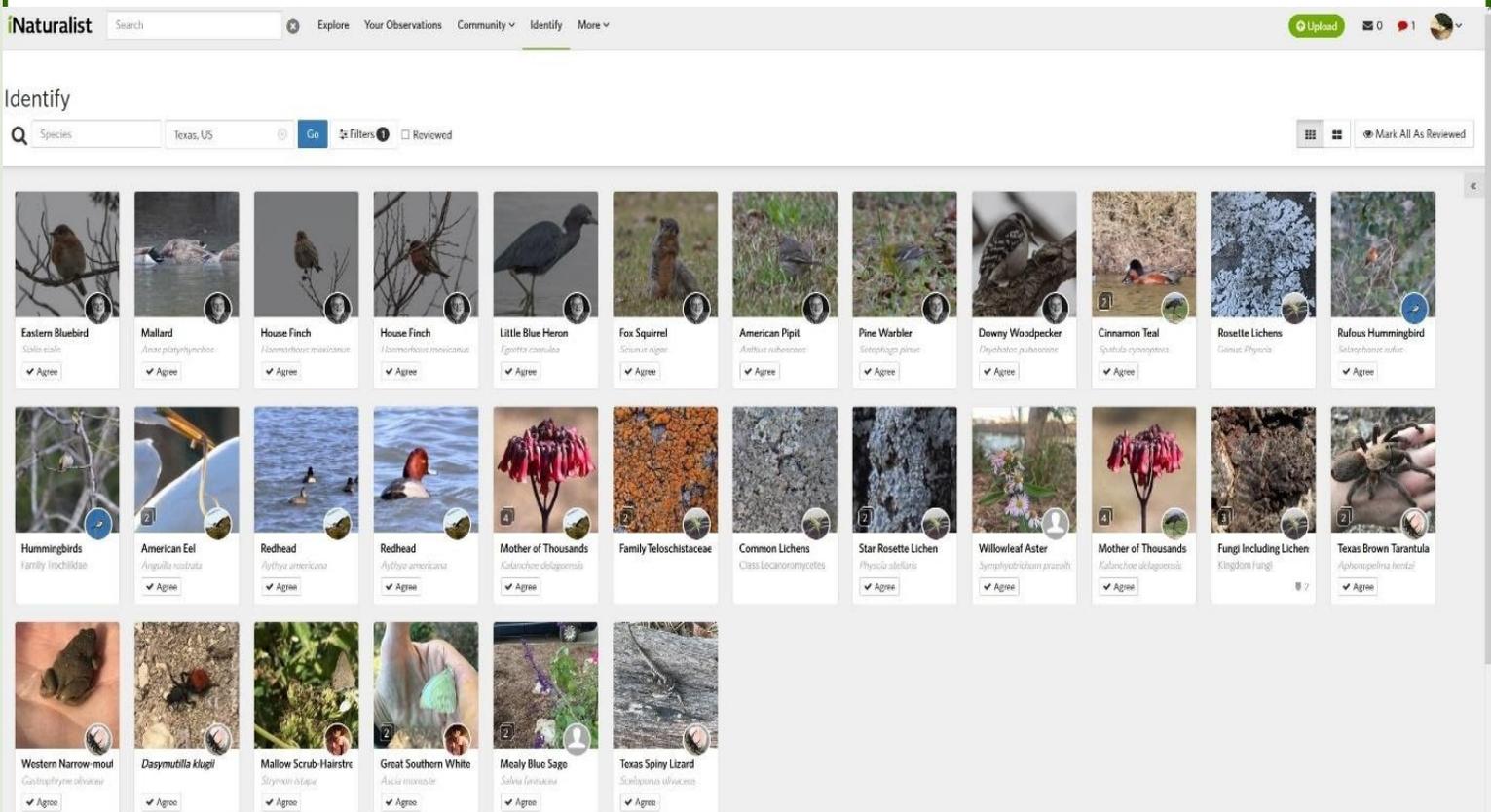
If you haven't already, I recommend that you read through the full guidelines. You can access that information from the homepage of our chapter at CTMN.org. Just look for the link that says " **Guidance for logging Volunteer Service for Community/Citizen Science Projects**" which will take you to this link: <https://txmn.tamu.edu/guidance-for-community-citizen-science-projects/>.

The guidelines specify that while all identifications are important, you are encouraged to focus on **Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)**. You can go to this link on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website to read more about what those are: [https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife\\_diversity/texas\\_nature\\_trackers/target\\_species/](https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/target_species/).

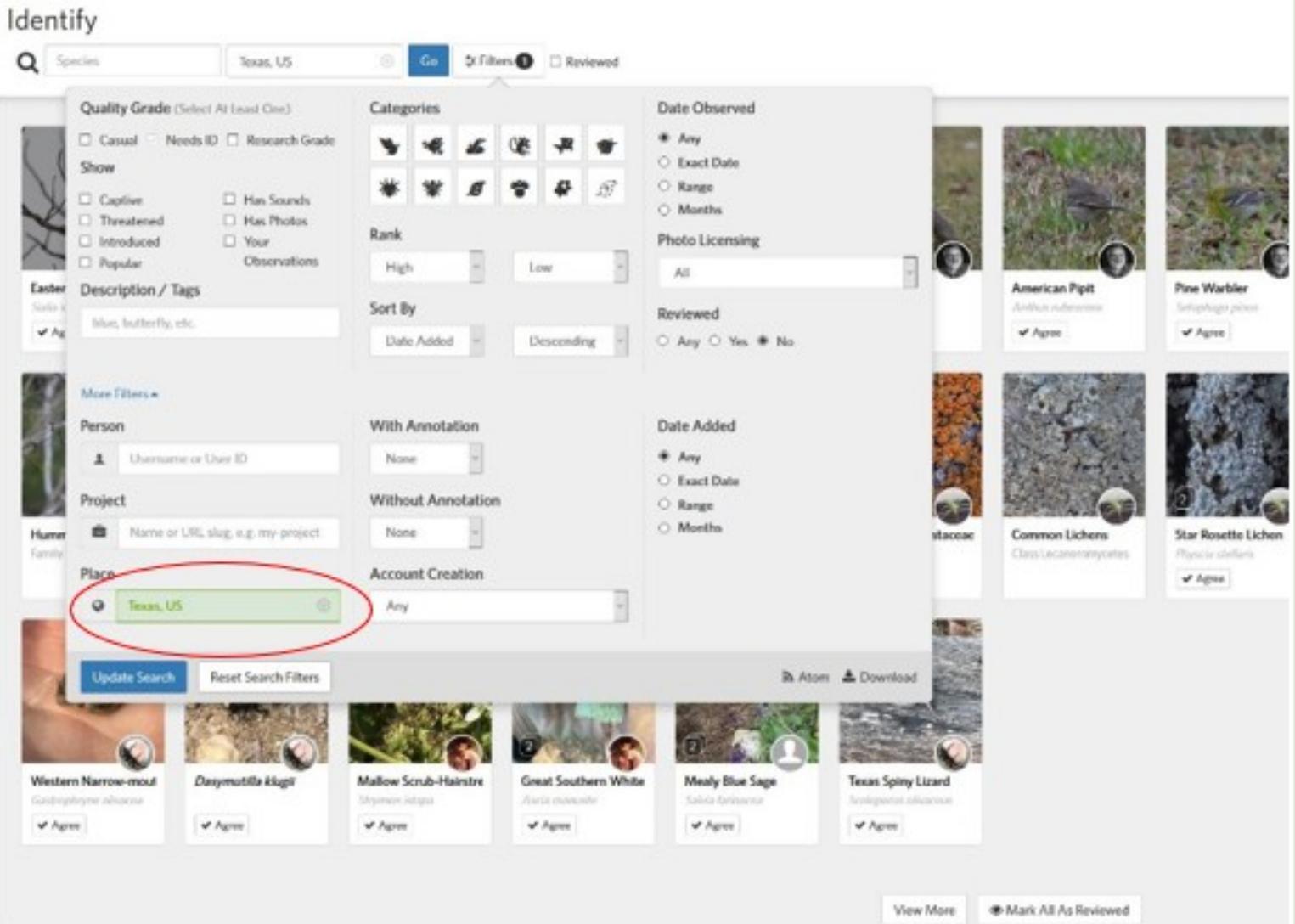
Time logged for identification must be in **30-minute increments**. With millions of observations added every year now, you can easily spend 30 minutes a few times a week and watch your hours add up.

Now to help you out a little more in case you are not overly familiar with **iNat**. And if you're not, please email me right away—we need to talk! Following are some instructions and photos to help you get started in identifying on **iNat**.

**Identifying can't be done on the phone app**. As I know you've heard me say, **the website is where the magic happens**. So, to get started, go to iNaturalist on your computer. After you **Log in**, one tab you will see at the top is "**Identify**". Or just type in your address bar <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/identify>. That will bring you here:



From here, you have to **filter the observations** that need further identification to just show **Texas**. Look just above the photos and click on the filter function. Once the box pops up you will need to click more filters and type **Texas** in the “**Place**” field at the very bottom as shown in the next photo.

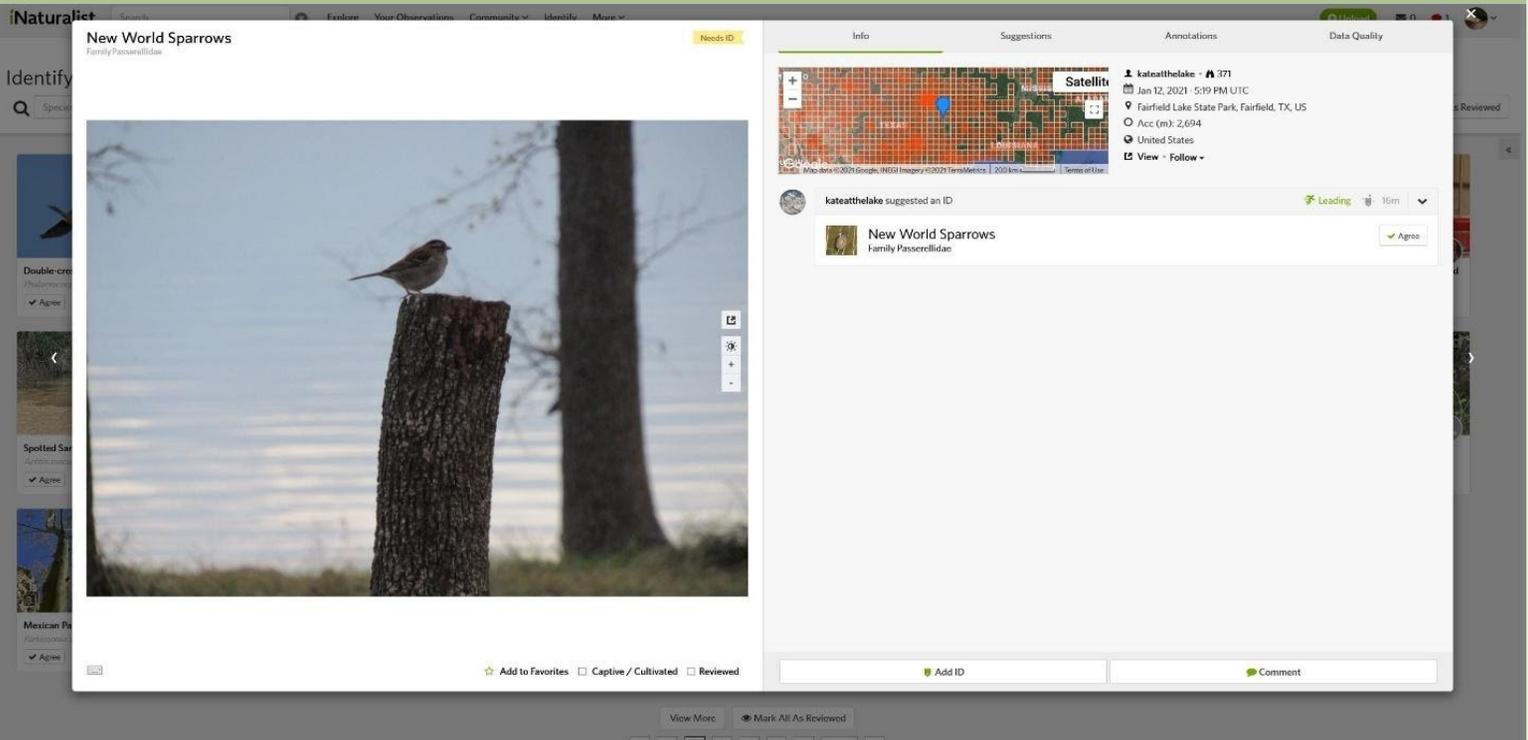


Click “**Update Search**” and it will change to only show observations posted here.

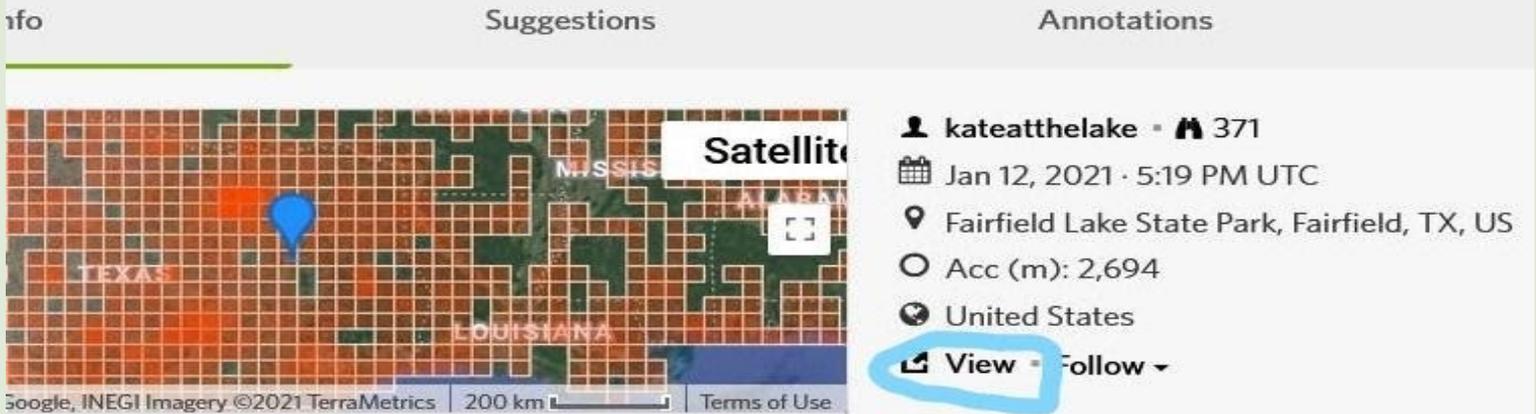
What you are seeing is thumbnails of observations in order of when they were posted. These are observations that need to be further identified in order to reach “**Research Grade**”. In case you are not aware or have forgotten, observations have to be identified to species level with at least 2/3rds agreement to be considered Research Grade. Thus, if an observation has only one ID or is only identified at larger than species level, it has not yet reached that status.

You will notice that some of the thumbnails show an **Agree** button and some do not. If there is an “**Agree**” button it means there is only one identification to species level. If the button is not there, then it has not been identified to species level at all.

**If you can glance at the thumbnail and know that the species is correctly identified, then simply click the “Agree” button. You have now helped to identify/curate that observation by bringing it closer or up to “Research Grade”.** If there is **not** an agree button, you can click on the observation and a pop up of the observation will appear as seen in the next image.



You will see a snapshot of the observation showing the larger photo(s), the location, date of observation, and the poster’s best guess. From there, at the bottom you see the buttons for “**Add ID**” or “**Comment**”. If you would rather see the full observation at the top with the location, date, and posters info, you can click the “**View**” button and it will **open in a new tab** .



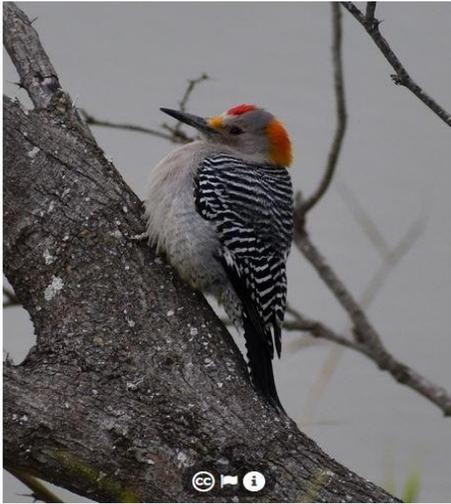
relake suggested an ID

**New World Sparrows**

If you look at the observation in a new tab, you can just **agree with the ID or add identification from there**. At that point, it will show at the top of the page if the identification has reached the necessary “**Research Grade**”, as shown in the next image. It would also then disappear from the list of needing identification and no thumbnail would appear in that search.

Golden-fronted Woodpecker (*Melanerpes aurifrons*) Research Grade

Follow



mako252 62,795 observations

Observed: Jan 12, 2021 · 2:40 PM CST Submitted: Jan 12, 2021 · 8:40 PM CST



Hidalgo, TX, USA Details

Be the first to fave this observation!

Activity

mako252 suggested an ID Improving 33m

Golden-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes aurifrons* Compare

brentano suggested an ID 1s

Golden-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes aurifrons*

Community Taxon

What's this?

User has opted-out of Community Taxon

Golden-fronted Woodpecker (*Melanerpes aurifrons*)

Cumulative IDs: 2 of 2

0 2/3rds 2

Agree Compare About

Annotations

If you aren't sure of the identification, feel free to leave a comment for the original poster with any hints you may have or resources you could suggest they look into to try and find an answer. Also, under comments you could tag someone that might know something about the area that could help them. For example, if it's a dragonfly you might know someone that knows a tiny bit about local odonates. You would type @brentano and then that person would get a notification to go and look at that observation. Same if you know a bird expert you just type the @ symbol and their iNat user name.

You can also log hours for eBird entries if you are strictly a birder and don't use iNat. Those guidelines are a bit more detailed so I would refer you to the guidelines linked from our homepage as mentioned above. But again, we need to talk.

I really hope this information is helpful and thorough enough without being too much. Definitely let me know if you have questions. My email is [brentano42@gmail.com](mailto:brentano42@gmail.com) and I usually respond within 3 years.

Note: To participate in the City of Fort Worth Parks project IDing and/or verifying organisms in iNat, go to this address. You'll be asked to log in to iNaturalist, then directed to the project! [https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/identify?quality\\_grade=needs\\_id%2Cresearch&place\\_id=150294](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/identify?quality_grade=needs_id%2Cresearch&place_id=150294) (Thank you, Sam Kieschnick!)

The Cross Timber tree of the month is the Blackjack Oak (Quercus marilandica).

Blackjack Oaks are characterized by their distinctive leaf shape and dark bark. They often grow in close association with Post Oak. (The Cast Iron Forest: A Natural and Cultural History of The North American Cross Timbers: Richard V. Francaviglia)

Indians used the bark for dysentery and acorns for drink. The Choctaw people used Blackjack Oak as medication to aid in childbirth. It is the larval host to Horaces Duskywing and White M hairstreak (wildflower.org)

One of the densest populations of Blackjack Oak in Arlington parks is at the Southwest Nature Preserve. An abundance of Blackjack Oaks can be found in Parkway Central Park, Crystal Canyon Park & JW Dunlop Park of Arlington. (<http://ctufc.org/news/blackjack-oak-tree/> Jeremy Priest)

Blackjack oak produces acorns which take two years to mature. The Blackjack Oak has a distinctive dark black-gray bark.

Average Height: 40 – 50 feet

Spread: 40 - 60 feet

Diameter: 16 – 24 inches

Pictures: 1) summer foliage (by Jeremy Priest) 2) tree in winter time (by Carol) 3) fall leaves (By Carol) 4) acorns (by BRIT)





Blackjack Oakacorns. Photo courtesy of BRIT Herbarium



There's a first time for everything. My backyard bird feeders are always full. The enjoyment of bird watching from my window is pure joy. There are always lots of visitors.

A few years ago, I decided to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. I googled the procedure, for tips on how it's done. The website <https://www.birdcount.org> was a great resource and one place to record your observations. Even still, I was anxious, yet excited. What if I did something wrong?

My backyard was the first field trip. First I made a list of the birds I expected to see. On my list were Cardinal, Blue jay, Mourning Dove, Juncos, Woodpecker and a few others.

On the first day of the count, I sat on my "observation" chair by the window facing the backyard feeders. For 15 – 20 minutes I made tic mark next to the different bird species I'd written on the list. Using an old pair of binoculars and bird guides, I was counting birds in my own backyard!

I had so much fun. I walked down the street, found a park bench near the Randol Mill Park Duck Pond and started counting water fowl.

What I learned in those few days: the names and ID of more birds in my area, how to use this user friendly website to record my observations, and that you're never too old to learn something new.

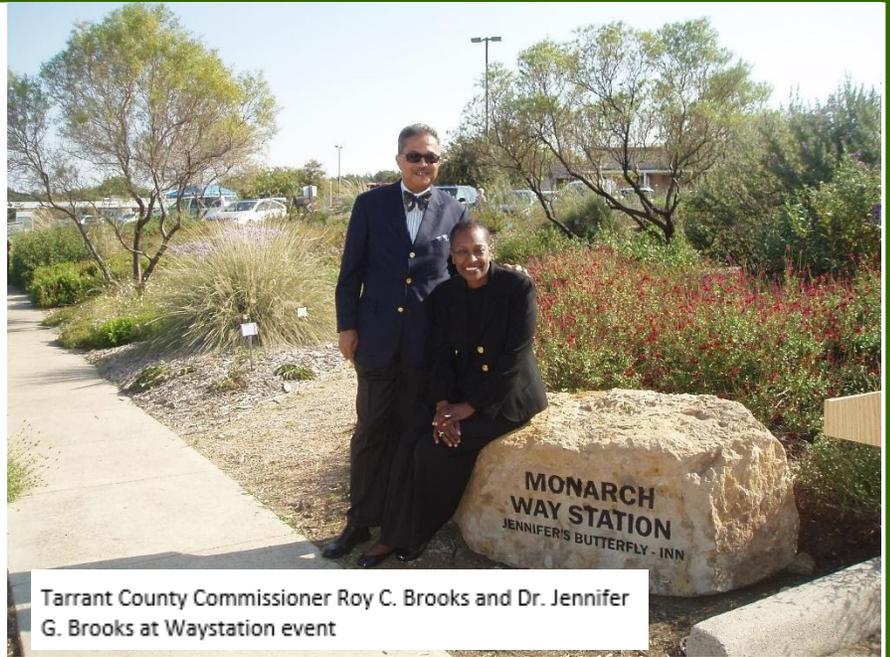
This year the Great Backyard Bird Count is February 12 – 15, 2021. Take your sweetie out on Valentine's Day into nature and count birds together.

Keep looking!



**About:** Stop by this 10,000 square foot garden that sits on a busy street where cars rush by mornings and evenings. You may be rewarded by seeing hummingbirds, various species of **bees, beetles, butterflies, lizards, or even rabbits** partaking of the smorgasbord of pollinator and nectar plants. Like you, animals are attracted to the natives jam-packed into this space: **asclepias, flame acanthus, fall aster, rock rose, goldenrod, coneflowers, desert willow, goldenball leadtree, Texas sage, Chile pequin, winecup, Lindheimer muhly, snake herb** and more.

Dedicated in 1998, the garden was started by NPSOT, and has been supported by Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and Tarrant County Commissioners since its founding. The garden is self-sustainable, using water in only the driest periods of the year. Funding sources include donations as well as plant and seed sales.



Tarrant County Commissioner Roy C. Brooks and Dr. Jennifer G. Brooks at Waystation event



**Activities:** Maintain and improve the native plant garden. Weed, replace plants, spread mulch, remove overgrowth. A perk for volunteers: they often take home “out-of-place” native plants!

**Training:** Train as you go. Project leads patiently identify plants and explain how to perform the day’s activities.

**Dates and Times:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, and last Wednesday of each month.

Times vary with season and weather: start 9 am spring and fall; 10 am winter; 8 am summer

**Location:** 6551 Granbury Road (about 2.2 miles

south of Interstate 20) Fort Worth, 76133

**How do I participate?** Contact Project Leads Gailon Hardin at [gailonhardin1@gmail.com](mailto:gailonhardin1@gmail.com) or Dawn Hancock at [dawnhancock@hotmail.com](mailto:dawnhancock@hotmail.com).

After volunteering the first time, you’ll be invited to be on the email list that notifies workers of each upcoming workday. Lots of plants go home with folks each workday!

**Photos by Gailon Hardin and Sharon Hamilton.**





# February 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <b>E</b>	2 <b>G</b>	3 <b>F, L</b>	4 <b>A, B, L</b>	5	6 <b>B, F</b>
7	8	9 <b>K</b>	10 <b>F</b>	11 <b>A, B, J</b>	12	13 <b>B, M</b>
14	15 <b>D</b>	16	17 <b>C, F</b>	18 <b>A, B</b>	19	20 <b>B, H</b>
21	22	23	24 <b>F</b>	25 <b>A, B, J</b>	26	27 <b>B</b>
28						

A– FWNC– Restorative Greenhouse from 9:30– 11:30 AM

B– FWNC– Natural Guard– Outdoor Conservation from 9 AM to 12 PM

C--Sierra Club Monthly Meeting via Zoom. Via Facebook or Meetup.

D– CTMN Monthly Chapter Meeting via zoom

E– CTMN Board Meeting, contact a board member if you would like the Zoom link.

F– Molly Hollar Wildscape Volunteer Opportunity from 9 am –12 pm. The mini class has been canceled until further notice.

G– BRIT Brown Bag Lecture from noon to 1pm, more info [HERE](#)

H– Lake Mineral Wells Pollinator Garden Volunteer Opportunity from 9-11 am, this is every 3rd Saturday of the month at the park administration building. Contact Cynthia Crump

I– Tarrant County SW Sub Courthouse Garden Volunteer Opportunity from 8am –12 pm. Contact Gailon Hardin

J–Southwest Regional Hulen Library Native Plant Demonstration Garden on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month.

Saturday can be scheduled with leads. From 8:30 to 12:30 am (Summer 7:30 to 11:30 am). Contact Theresa Thomas

K– Texas Master Naturalist Virtual Trainings #TMNTuesdays!

L– TXMN Virtual Volunteer Fair more info [HERE](#)

M– OS Gray 9-12 am/pm.

\*The State has imposed significant restrictions to all face to face events due to Covid-19, allowing only mission critical activities.

Guidelines are in effect until January xx and will likely be extended beyond that date. Contact project leader for information specific to the worksite before traveling to any event listed below.

\*\* For contact numbers and more information check out the [website calendar](#)