



Naturalist Notes

President's Note

Spring is just around the corner and our outreach season begins next month. We have several wonderful outreach events that are looking for eager volunteers to educate the public. It is a great way to get some volunteer hours in and enjoy a wonderful event or two. For those of you that like to get your hands dirty, there are plenty of outdoor volunteer opportunities as well. This time of the year is a great time to get those volunteer hours done before the heat and humidity of summer return. As always, if anyone needs additional information, please let myself or a board member know and we will help you find those opportunities.

Best regards,

Rebecca Lloyd, President
Gulf Coast Chapter



Silent Auction Items for State Meeting

Our chapter is running the silent auction. Do you have a business or know someone with a business that would be willing to donate an item to the auction? Are you creative and want to make something for the auction? Do you know someone that has a unique art or craft that would be of interest to the bidders? Do you have a good 'theme basket' in mind?

Finally, would you like to help out with contacting various organizations to request donations?

Contact Rebecca Lloyd with your suggestions/offers of help.

Sky365: The Discipline of (Daily) Photography

In 2019, I decided to pick one subject and try to take a picture of it every day with my cell phone camera. From the title you can tell that I picked the sky. For one, I tend to look down for nature, so I thought it would be a good practice to look up every day. The sky is always visible, and does not require any special lens. And while clouds, birds and planes do move, the sky does not go anywhere. Besides, when I told my husband he said something along the lines of “You’re planning on taking pictures of blue sky every day?” Umm..no!

Going through the pictures from last year, I found that I took at least one sky picture for 318 days. The number of pictures was pretty constant every month. My personal opinion is that perhaps ten of the pictures are worth framing, another ten or so are pretty neat, and the rest are...just pictures. Below I’ve created a collage of July.



As you might expect, committing to daily photography made me look at the sky more often. Appreciation for colors and clouds, birds and trees, and landscapes increased. Plus, these give me many pictures to use as examples for practicing water color!

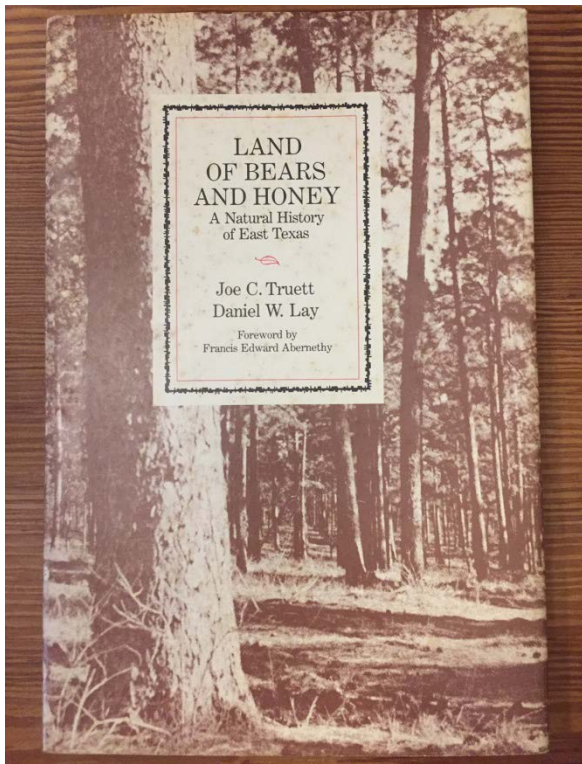
I enjoyed the exercise so much that I’ve decided to pick a different subject for 2020. I thought about trees, but rejected that as too broad. Maybe one tree would be better? Or the trees on our urban property? In the end I decided on invertebrates, or evidence of invertebrates. Not as easy to capture as the sky, but definitely interesting.

Meet the Spring 2020 Training Class

Hello fellow Gulf Coast Chapter Members! Michelle Broussard here to introduce the newest training class for the chapter. The Spring 2020 class is composed of talented, knowledgeable, and passionate people. They come from various fields and have a multitude of interests that will enrich our chapter. Amongst them they have an art historian, geochemist, RV-enthusiast, attorney, ecologist, as well as accountants, geologists, engineers, and college students. They have many interests and hobbies including plant propagation, prairies, native grasses and plants, running, volunteering, birding, wolves, gardening, nature journaling, camping, entomology, flood management, coastal processes, and water quality. So please welcome your Spring 2020 class: Candy Donahue, Stephanie Harp, Matthew Koenig, Katie LeBoeuf, Linda Neagley, Lynda Polk, Harry Posey, Mimi Posey, Elzora Robinson, Joanna Ward, and Jordan Weller. If you see them at a chapter meeting, please say hello and welcome them to our great chapter!

Thanks,
Michelle Broussard
Training Director
Texas Master Naturalist - Gulf Coast Chapter





Book Review

Land of Bears and Honey – A Natural History of East Texas

Joe C. Truett and Daniel W. Lay; 1984

Truett and Lay weave a creative tale of how East Texas thrived pre-1600 when so much was grass lands that had no end, thickets to the north where Long Leaf Pine was king and bison migrated at will. From the text provided, the reader understands that First Humans left little if any impact on the landscape. Interspersed throughout the book are short narratives that follow the experience of creatures long gone, such as wolves, cougars, and Carolina Parakeets. The authors also include a picture in the life of First Humans and their nomadic lives.

The historical aspect is provided by recorded passages of European explorers, Cabeza de Vaca, LaSalle and others, such as lone pioneers and timber hunters. It's clear these Europeans appreciated the expansive richness of this nugget of Texas as something to behold but later an opportunity to exploit. In their minds, coming from the Old World, where nothing of undisturbed landscapes exist, this new land would provide endless bounty to benefit farmers, loggers, and homesteaders.

So just like a snippet in the life of young First Human returning to camp is offered to the reader, a window in day of 19th century bear hunters is provided, as they kill every bear and cougar they find, because they could or these apex predators were a hindrance to livestock.

If Truett and Lay were expecting to lay guilt onto present day Texans for the extermination of unique creatures such as Ivory Billed Woodpeckers or Passenger Pigeons, it worked. On me anyway. I'm guilty by association. Maybe that was not their objective. There is a well written attempt to describe the groundswell of work initiated by conservation associations in the 80's to buy up remaining tracts of "wild" lands or restore abandoned pasture, but the remorseful effect for buying a house in a planned community, complete with driveways, garage and slab still remains. Yes, I can transplant native Bluestem grasses and Coneflower into repatriated prairies that haven't been prairies for 150 years yet I'm still tied to those that came before me with the ax and plow.

Read the book. It's well written, accurate on historical facts, entertaining on the artful painting of the experiences of animals and humans alike. Call me to borrow it.

Chris Arceneaux
832-216-2483

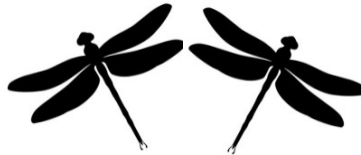


SKY OF THE MONTH

Cumulus clouds form at the lowest altitude (2,000-3,000 ft). Cumulus is the Latin for 'heap'. The clouds at left are Cumulus humilis, or humble clouds. They don't produce rain until they develop further.

Because cumulus clouds tend to form over land, South Sea islanders were able to use them as beacons, navigating toward atolls before the land became visible.

This picture was taken on Apr 25th, 2019.



New Pocket Prairie Started

As part of Jesse Jones Park Adopt-a Trail Program, GCMN Chapter volunteers help maintain the Canoe Trail there. Immediately east of the Canoe Trail entrance, you will see an open area enclosed in wood rail fencing. Assistant Park Directory Matt Abernathy has been spreading native seed in this area with some results but wished to see more. To help accelerate planting results, Sheldon Lake State Park provided 100 native grasses and forbs in 1 gallon pots ready to plant. GCMN volunteers put those plants in the ground on January 21, 2020. Hopefully we will see results this spring.

Pictured from near left to far center are volunteers Melinda Kincaid, Ted Andrews, and Chris Arceneaux. Matt Abernathy is shown in the blue shirt.

John Egan



Upcoming Outreach Events

We have a few outreach activities coming up in March and I would love to have some volunteers represent Texas Master Naturalist - Gulf Coast Chapter. I know that doing outreach activities can be out of some peoples comfort zone; however, the benefits are great. These benefits are working on your people skills; educating children and the community about our chapter and different topics; and most importantly you can get a good chunk of your annual 40 hour volunteer work done in a day or weekend. If you are not comfortable talking to folks, no worries I need someone to keep track of how many visitor we get and to ensure all of our materials are fully stocked.

Jesse Jones Park Nature Fest March 7, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Texas Woodlands and Wildlife Expo (Lonestar College Woodlands) March 28, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Spring Fling Nature Festival (Clark Henry Park - Jersey Village) March 28, 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Willow Waterhole Music Festival (5300 Dryad Drive) April 4, 11:00 AM - 8 PM & April 5, 2020 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM (Time May Change)

University of Houston Sustainability Fest April 14, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

TPWD Community Outdoor Outrace Program (MacLean Park - Lake Jackson) April 18, 1:30 PM to 3:30 pm

Discovery Green Earth Day Event April 19, 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Spring Outdoor Celebration (City of Mont Belvieu) April 25, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Houston Arboretum Earth Day 2020 April 25, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Please email me which event(s) and time you would like to volunteer.

Thank you kindly,

Cassie Moore

In Memoriam - Dr. Chris Mathewson

TMN Family,

In the evening hours of January 21st, 2020, Dr. Chris Mathewson was surrounded by family and passed from this life. Many (so, so many) of you were students of Dr. Mathewson's geology courses at either your chapter level or at the Annual Meetings in October. And each of you carries his unit of the geology of Texas in your Texas Master Naturalist state curriculum. We will miss him terribly.

Chris was an incredible teacher. When I started on the curriculum rewrite in 2014 and contacted him for his thoughts on how to revise the geology unit he wrote back in 2004 originally, he said, "wait right there, I'll be in your office in an hour". He came over to my office, then in Nagle Hall on the Texas A&M campus, and gave me the full geologic history of Texas over a three hour conversation. He was a valued friend and mentor from that moment on. Chris was also a regular at our Annual Meetings, lugging with him seven boxes of rocks, posters, maps, and printed field guides (many times providing those out of his own pocket). He gave instruction to thousands of Master Naturalists at both the Annual Meeting and at local chapter trainings, traveling hundreds of miles throughout Texas to spread the geologic history gospel! Forever a guide to the natural wonders of our state, he was a true Master Naturalist, one of us from the start!

Please keep his family in your thoughts as they begin to mourn the passing of their father and teacher.

His passion to teach is what I will miss the most.

Donations can be made to the Mathewson Scholarship Fund for students that was established by the Association of Environmental & Engineering Geologists Foundation at <https://www.aegfoundation.org/funds/mathewson.php> (you have to go through the foundation page to find the Donate page)

Thank you everyone for your love and support.

Many thanks to Hillier Funeral home in College Station for helping us with arrangements, as well as Traditions Hospice care, St. Joseph's Hospital, and A&M United Methodist Church.

Thanks,

Mary Pearl Meuth & Michelle Haggerty

 Organism of the Month

Common green lacewing (*Chrysoperla carnea*)

Adult lacewings are a pale green color, with golden eyes. They overwinter as adults hiding in leaf litter. In early Spring, the female lays several hundred eggs, each egg on a single stalk. Eggs are attached to plants, but also to windows (what a perfect excuse to put off window cleaning until later Spring!)

The larvae are only 1 mm in length upon hatching, and prey on a variety of hemipterans including aphids, as well as other insects. Three weeks and three molts later, the larvae spin a cocoon, from which the adults emerge in 10-14 days. Temperature influences the length of the life cycle.

Adult lacewings feed on aphid honeydew, nectar, and pollen. Because the larvae are voracious predators, lacewings are considered beneficial insects.



photo credit rich451 oniNaturalist

Sources: Wikipedia, bugguide



Tree Yoga

Sweetgum tree doing a solitary backbend

large limbs reminiscent of creeks, meandering sharply, petering out gradually

- lots of twigs still holding on to their seed balls, large distal dots -

standing in a brown leaf lake against a blue and white sky.

Irmi Willcockson