



Naturalist Notes

Pulling Change

Change – does it instill fear?
Change – does it generate a tear?
Change – will it happen this year?
Change – listen up now, you hear.

Change – why is it so hard?
Change – will it leave me scarred?
Change – will it lead to the graveyard?
Change – buckle up – en garde.



Would it help if I had a change puller?
And a fire for change that made my urge fuller?
A figure to stoke me when my fire became weak?
A figure to pull and help my tired feet?

When my feet tire, I reach out to the birds,
And from them comes the energy to write the
words
That might help us address our changing climate
And power my commitment into a blasting
rocket.

So, I reach out to my friend the whooping crane,
Who I recruit to help me stay sane,
And pull my fire when it's too heavy for me,
And along the way to keep me company.

So, pull, my friend, pull,
Pull my fire for change,
Stoke the fire of my imagination,
And my priorities rearrange

And when the day's done,
And we've completed our run,
Come and lay down beside me,
And let's just be.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
We celebrate change
And empower it in you.

Jim Blackburn
Illustration by Isabelle Chapman



Sky of the Month – Glitter Path Interaction of Sun and Water

The reflection of a bright light on the water is called the “glitter path”. It is caused by thousands of tiny reflections of the sides of the waves stretching into the distance. The width of the glitter path is influenced by the angle of the sun and the roughness of the water. The path in the picture above is uniformly wide, which suggests that the roughness of the water was the same across the lake. The glitter path gets narrower as the sun drops lower and the water gets calmer.

This picture was taken at last year’s annual meeting in Rockport.

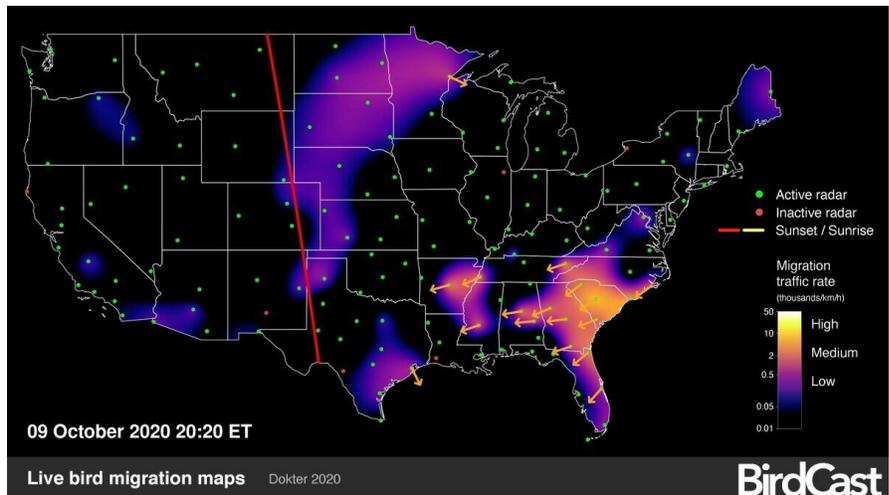
Source: How to Read Water by Tristan Gooley



Lights Out Texas

To protect birds migrating at night, turn off non-essential lights between 11 pm and 6 am until the end of October.

Pass it along to your employer, if applicable.



Climate Change Emergency: The Problems and the Solutions

Urban Harvest, 1st August, 2020 – Presentation review

Urban Harvest recently broadcast two virtual presentations: the first was a presentation by Jim Blackburn, environmental lawyer and planner, and the second by Bob Randall, founder of Urban Harvest.



Jim Blackburn, is a “professor in the Practice in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department at Rice University, co-director of Rice’s Severe Storm (SPEED) Center (speed.rice.edu), and a Faculty Scholar at Rice’s Baker Institute where he is leading the development of a United States standard for storing carbon in the soil of prairies and grasslands.”

The first part of his presentation outlined the scientific data supporting climate change. Multiple global scientific data sets highlight noted changes in the warming of coastal waters, rising sea level and increased carbon dioxide, etc. The dire consequences of forecast models if emissions are not mitigated were shown from both a worldwide and local standpoint. Texas is forecast to experience over 100 days/year above 100 degree F temperatures by 2080 if emissions are not mitigated! Expanding on the local consequences of climate change in our area he illustrated the increased number of severe storms, increased rainfall rates, tidal flooding and the effect of increased temperatures on bird migration, and coastal fisheries.

The second half of the presentation explored climate change and the economy. Jim shared methods to communicate the uncomfortable topic of climate change with the economic community. After defining the carbon emission challenges, with the USA and Harris county both significant contributors, he showed some simple but powerful graphics outlining a positive way forward. At Rice University’s Baker Institute, a system is being established as a standard to bring together buyers and sellers for soil storage carbon transactions, i.e. paying landowners to grow prairie grasses to sequester carbon in the ground. This is believed to be the cheapest method to remove carbon from our atmosphere. Jim stated that he hoped to be seeing transactions being brokered in early to mid 2021.

As I listened to this informative talk, the first part painted the grim picture of human impact on our planet’s environment. This is often overwhelming to an individual looking to do more than reduce, reuse and recycle. The second part gave me hope that large scale efforts were already underway, working hard towards solutions to comply with the Paris Climate Agreement and more. I look forward to being offered more “carbon neutral” products in order to reduce my own impact.

An edited version of the recorded presentation has been made available by Urban Harvest to share;

[Introduction to Climate Change: Problems and Solutions](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGblt6KpPqo&feature=youtu.be>

Julie d’Ablaing

Buffalo Bayou Trail Repair – Part 2

Most of the work crew's efforts in Buffalo Bayou Park have been focused on restoring asphalt trails that were damaged by earlier flooding while bolstering their banks to prevent future damage. For the most part, affected areas could be easily cordoned off, and those who chose to ignore the protective barriers were not putting themselves or others at great risk.

One of Buffalo Bayou Park's asphalt paths was hit particularly hard by earlier flooding. This photo, taken in mid-February 2018 from west, shows the area on the south bank — just west of the Dunlavy and Lost Lake — that was most affected. Note that the silt has been eroded from under the path. The tree that has fallen on top of the path was uprooted by Hurricane Harvey and subsequent flooding (left). At some point after this photograph was taken, park staff began to place barriers, across and along the path, to discourage its use (right).



This tactic may have discouraged some — but by no means all — users. The photo to the left shows the means used to keep users from entering this area of the asphalt path. What is not clear is that this photo, shot on March 13, 2020, was taken a little more than 30 yards west of that displayed above. In the meantime, the path in that area had completely and dramatically collapsed, leaving a steep drop into the asphalt debris below. Close examination of this photo shows a barrier was then put to keep users away from that area. Note that the fencing material fasteners, on the foreground right, have been clipped.

Clipping these fasteners before or after work hours became a daily occupation for some. Park staff would then replace the missing fasteners during work hours. When the construction crew began work in the area, however, access to this site was no longer possible, and this public safety issue was finally resolved.

Construction in this part of Buffalo Bayou Park should be completed in the next few months. Damaged trails will have been repaired, and stabilization of the banks upon which they rest will ensure their safe availability for years to come, and those users — including naturalists — will soon be able to fully enjoy them again.

David Strong

Book Review

Sparrow Envy

2019, J. Drew Lanham, Southeastern Printing
Available from Amazon

J. Drew Lanham is an American author, poet, and wildlife biologist with an interest in songbird ecology and the African-American role in resource conservation. His prose has been published in magazines and an award-winning memoir.

In "Sparrow Envy", it is clear that the poet has spent not only time in nature, but also love, using John Muir Laws definition of love as sustained, compassionate attention. While the situations he describes – a walk along the beach, watching a flock of birds, listening to a wood thrush – are ordinary, Lanham's poetry is anything but. Birders especially will appreciate his insights and turns of phrase.

I highly recommend this book.

SPARROW ENVY

were I the sparrow
brown-backed skittish and small –
I would find haven
in thorniest thickets –
search far and wide
for fields lain fallow
treasure the unkempt
worship the unmown
covet the weed-strewn row

I would slink
between sedges
chip unseen from brambles
skulk deep within hedges
and desire the ditches grown wild

I would find great joy
in the mist-sodden morning
sing humble pleas
from the highest weeds
and plead
for the gray days to stay



2021

Recertification Pin:

SIDEOATS

GRAMA

Bouteloua curtipendula

 **Organism of the Month**
Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*)



credit Adrian Medellin

During one of my weekly Sunday strolls I heard a loud cheerful song between two birds across a small pond. Sure enough, after scanning trees for the sound source I found a beautiful Carolina Wren singing out loud and proud while perched in full view.

Carolina Wrens are usually found in dense shrubby habitats, sometimes making them difficult to spot, but this was putting on a show. Most of their diet consist of insects and

spiders and a small amount of plant matter. Occasionally they will eat small herps as well. A weak flyer, this species usually makes quick aerial forays for short distances.

Pairs will stay together year-round to defend their territory and continue singing. This may have been what was happening when I heard them sing to each other. As we approach cooler temperatures it is good to know that, if you would like to attract these gorgeous birds to your yard, they tend to visit suet-filled feeders during winter. Just make sure to hang feeders at least 5ft from the ground to protect them from pets.

Adrian Medellin

Source: Allaboutbirds.org



Finally! Our License Plate

Keep your eyes out for the announcement this winter on how to purchase your own (\$30) license plate. \$22 of each purchase go directly back to our program. Show what drives you!