



# Naturalist Notes

## City Nature Challenge Results are In!

City/Region	Observations	Species	Observers
Austin	16929	2480	1055
Corpus Christi Area	983	460	62
Dallas/Fort Worth	37594	3060	1124
El Paso	1063	373	53
Houston	33452	3707	1190
Mustang Island (Pt Aransas)	1078	397	25
San Antonio	15117	2216	715
Texas Big Country (Abilene)	2355	617	54
Wichita Falls	2946	717	52

## Water of the Month - Color of Water

If you look at tap water in a clear glass, the water will be transparent. However, when you look at any body of water, it may have many different colors. What is beneath the water, what is in the water, what is on top of the water, and light all combine to produce the color of water.

In this photograph of the shallow Cypress Pond at the Nature Discovery Center in Bellaire, all of the effects are present. In the distance, the water appears blue, reflecting the blue sky.

In the middle distance, above the red leaf floating on the water, the water appears to be faintly purple.

Closest to the viewer, the muddy bottom is clearly visible through the shallow water.

Navigators all over the world have used the changing color of the water as the depth changes to find safe passage between shallow coral reefs and along rocky shores.



Three of the many pictures taken during the City Nature Challenge. Left: American Bumblebee by Bob Romero; Middle: Loggerhead Shrike by Jaime Gonzalez; Right: Juvenile Bald Eagle by user rockinrobbin.

 **Organism of the Month**  
**Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*)**

The Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*) is a large pink wading bird with a spoon shaped bill. Roseate Spoonbills wade through shallow water swinging their head side to side with their bill under the water feeling for prey. They tend to forage with their bodies held in a horizontal position just above the water with head hanging down. Their habitat includes the shallows of fresh, brackish, and marine waters including bays, mangroves, forested swamps, and wetlands. This makes them perfect organisms to utilize our gulf coast region of Texas. Roseate Spoonbills nest in colonies with egrets, ibises, and herons, typically on islands or over standing water. Right now, they can be found in abundance at the Smith Oaks rookery in High Island, TX where a good population is nesting.

Text and Photo Credit: Adrian Medellin

Source: AllAboutBirds.org



**Native Plant Society of Texas Announces First Executive Director**

The Native Plant Society of Texas is proud to announce Tiffany Lipsett, PhD, as its first ever executive director. The highly anticipated leadership addition responds to the steady growth of the organization over the past decade and the Society's ambitious strategic plan.

Bill Hopkins



**We are thrilled to announce that the Katy Prairie Conservancy and partners have been awarded \$7 million for the Texas Coastal Prairie Initiative to conserve the highly imperiled coastal prairie ecosystem in Texas!**

The Texas Coastal Prairie Initiative has been selected to become a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) project by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and will focus on protecting the coastal prairie in Texas, and with our partners we aim to permanently conserve lands that serve as critical habitat for at-risk birds, pollinators, and other aquatic and terrestrial species. In addition to protecting land with conservation easements, projects will include improved management and restoration techniques for lands held by farmers and ranchers.

Mary Anne Piacentini



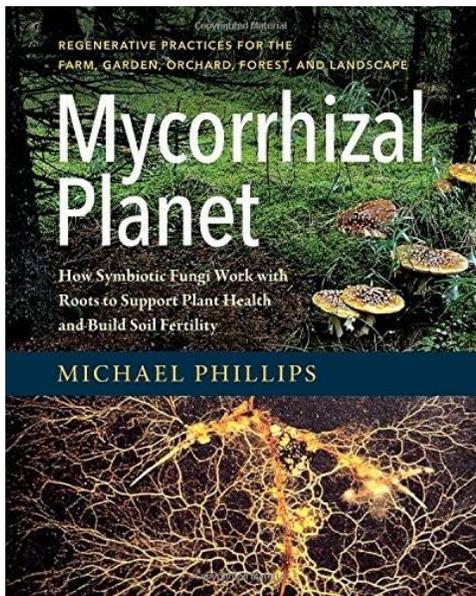
## **Do not fear cicadas.**

### **Adult cicadas do not feed on plants.**

Mated females lay eggs in woody plant stems. Young plants could be susceptible to damage in areas of high emergence. Mature and healthy trees and shrubs are not likely to suffer damage.

Small or young trees can be covered in light fabric to prevent oviposition of eggs. Consider waiting until after emergence and egg-laying to plant new woody plants.





**Mycorrhizal Planet: How Symbiotic Fungi Work with Roots to Support Plant Health and Build Soil Fertility** – Regenerative Practices for the Farm, Garden, Orchard, Forest and Landscape by Michael Phillips, 2017, Chelsea Green, 244 pp.

If you have ever wondered about mycorrhizal fungi and their role in the functioning of 80% of plants on earth, you will find a good resource as the title would indicate. The extended title shows the book's orientation to the practical application of the scientific information and the experience of the author and others in enhancing/preserving the mycorrhizal network at every scale.

The book is well documented and illustrated. Toward the end of the book, there is a list of online “Soil Health Resources” grouped into 3 categories: Mycorrhizal Wherewithal (“Companies that offer righteous inoculums for making the world a more fungal place.”), Fungal and Plant Information (“Let your mind wrap around these matter-of-fact leads to greater plant-fungal awareness.”), Non disturbance Websites (“Fungal applications for those seeking practical earth truth.”). This list of online resources is followed by detailed notes for each chapter, then by a helpful glossary, an extensive bibliography and a comprehensive index.

In striking contrast to what the solidity of the information gathered in this book would lead one to expect, the language of the author is quite idiosyncratic, ranging from offhand to conversational to whimsical to poetical as you can already see from the author’s description above of the categories of the online “Soil Health Resources” as well as from the titles of two of the chapters, “Mycorrhizal Ascendancy” (Chapter One) and “Soil Redemption Song” (Chapter Eight). It makes for an interesting reading experience, something akin to the experience of an apprentice following a master craftsman around who throws out gems of wisdom here and there in an offhanded way all the while expounding on the details of his craft in a somewhat nonlinear fashion. Here is one small sample the author’s way of getting across ideas:

“Ask Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) about its 117 species of known mycorrhizal associates and you’ll come to understand there’s a party going on.” (p. 18)

This book can serve as a good reference for any naturalist who is interested in mycorrhizal fungi and especially for anyone interested in the practical application of the extensive scientific and experiential information in this book. When used as a reference (it really is a reference book; one read-through is not enough), the language seems somewhat less distracting for its unusualness.

Bob Romero

## Member Spotlight – Mary Horn

At a very young age Mary's awe of nature led her to a strong connection and faith in her Creator. She has always enjoyed gardening and all outdoors. When she heard about the TMN Program in 1999 she wanted to learn more. However, her desire to join was sidetracked as she traded her Pension Administrator position at a major insurance company to become a new mom fulltime.

Homeschooling allowed them many opportunities to experience nature. It was a thrill for her to see her son witness the life cycle of the Monarch Butterfly up close. In the BSA Scouting Program they participated in many conservation and environmental efforts while providing a public service. Her participation included being on the District Roundtable Staff, the Pack's Cubmaster, and later the Troop's Website Manager. At the William T. Hornaday Award Weekend, a conservation awards program, she was a part of the program's staff. At all levels the Leave No Trace training was implemented. After her son achieved the rank of Eagle and earning 3 Palms he began classes at UH in 2017. Now Mary was looking to address how best to redirect her energy.

At one of the Chapter meetings of the newly formed NPSOT Clear Lake Chapter she met Jerry Hamby who told her about the GC TMN training classes. Shortly after the Fall 2017 class started they were hit very hard by Hurricane Harvey. Undaunted and very blessed with transportation from new classmates Katelyn Shaver and Jennifer Logsdon, Mary never had to miss a class or fieldtrip. In time Mary came to terms with this natural disaster while still loving all aspects of nature and its Creator.

Through heavy involvement with NPSOT as a Chapter President and one of the Society's VPs, Mary engaged others while also expressing herself artistically. After designing the Chapter's logo, the Society asked her to create the 2019 Fall Symposium logo. Her latest project was this [Coloring Book | Native Plant Society of Texas](#) under the Education tab. With ABNC's encouragement she became a Certified Interpretive Guide. Being a Tour Guide she shared with visitors what can be learned from a natural wetland forest, prairie, and marsh habitats that is surrounded by development. Mary wants to encourage others to continue to express themselves in our likeminded efforts to coexist with nature better. This was her motivation to volunteer as this Chapter's Membership Director. She's into her third year now managing our VMS while she enjoys recognizing the many accomplishments of our hard-working dedicated members. Mary's happy to be able to volunteer physically, analytically, and artistically connecting others to the inspiring resources around us in our part of this amazing planet.



## Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful

This roadmap lays out the goal of conserving at least 30% of lands and waters by 2030. Representing the US Departments of Interior, Agriculture and Commerce along with the Council on Environmental Quality, this report lays out the following principles:

1. Pursue a collaborative and inclusive approach to conservation
2. Conserve America's lands and waters for the benefit of all people
3. Support locally led and locally designed conservation efforts
4. Honor tribal sovereignty and support the priorities of tribal nations
5. Pursue conservation and restoration approaches that create jobs and support healthy communities
6. Honor private property rights and support the voluntary stewardship efforts of private landowners and fishers
7. Use science as a guide
8. Build on existing tools and strategies with an emphasis on flexibility and adaptive approaches

For the full report, go to <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/report-conserving-and-restoring-america-the-beautiful-2021.pdf>