# Naturalist Notes

Left to right: Observing and photographing spider drama above the pond; August chapter meeting; A mantis fly, which is not a mantis; August chapter meeting. 1st and 3rd picture Berri Moffett, 2nd and 4th picture Sandra Evette Garcia.

ADOPT A BEACH

## SAVE THE DATE FOR FALL ADOPT-A-BEACH CLEANUP SAT SEP 17TH

For further information and to register, visit

https://texasadoptabeach.org/volunteer/cleanups/index.html

## CHAPTER MEETINGS WILL BE EITHER IN-PERSON OR ONLINE

Through December 2022, monthly chapter meetings will be held in person at the Arboretum if the speaker attends in person. If the speaker is remote, the meeting will be virtual only. Look for a message from our president with information on the format of the monthly meeting.

## MIGRATORY MONARCH LISTED AS ENDANGERED JULY 2022

The North American migratory monarch ( Danaus plexippus plexippus) has been added to the IUCN Red List as Endangered due to habitat loss and climate change.

While the western population wintering in California is at greatest risk, the larger eastern population has also declined precipitously.

## Florence Augusta Merriam Bailey

When we hear the word “naturalist,” we often think of John Muir, the Father of National Parks, and of course, John James Audubon. But let’s not forget the women who rallied to preserve the natural realm. Florence A. Merriam Bailey became the preeminent woman ornithologist of the late 1800’s and throughout the early decades of the 1900’s. Born on August 8th, 1868, she was an American nature writer and ornithologist who not only worked with the National Audubon Society during its early years, but is also credited with writing the first known bird guide, Birds Through an Opera Glass, published in 1889.

Florence was also very involved in bird conservation, having campaigned against slaughtering birds for the millinery industry as a Smith College undergrad where she founded the “chapter” of what would eventually become the National Audubon Society, and inspired the Lacey Act, which prohibited trade in illegally acquired wildlife, and the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. She is also credited with producing the first field guides to birds and a book that launched bird watching through binoculars

In 1897, Florence’s book Birds of Village and Field was published. It was a guide written for beginning bird enthusiasts. The book was very popular because it included hundreds of drawings and easy guides for bird identification. Florence stood out among ornithologists because of her talent for writing and her ability to make the study of birds accessible to the general public.

Florence continued to be concerned about the treatment of birds and became involved in the conservation movement. Her activism in the nation’s capital helped pass the Lacey Act of 1900. This law prohibited the trade in wild animals that had been illegally killed. This was a major victory for bird protection and more laws followed, leading to the end of exotic feathers in fashion.

In 1916, the Biological Survey asked Florence to travel to New Mexico to complete a book on birds in the state. For this work, Birds of New Mexico, Florence received the Brewster Medal of the American Ornithologists’ Union in 1931. She was the first woman to receive this award. Florence continued to research and write about birds. She published her last book about birds in Arizona in 1939. Florence died in 1948.

Her legacy remains in the form of a subspecies of the California Mountain Chickadee, Parus gambeli baileyae, that was named in her honor.

Her major books:

(1889 ) Birds Through the Opera Glass (225 pages) is the book credited with ushering in modern bird watching. doi:10.5962/bhl.title.60311

(1896) A-Birding on a Bronco (227 pages) doi:10.5962/bhl.title.12539

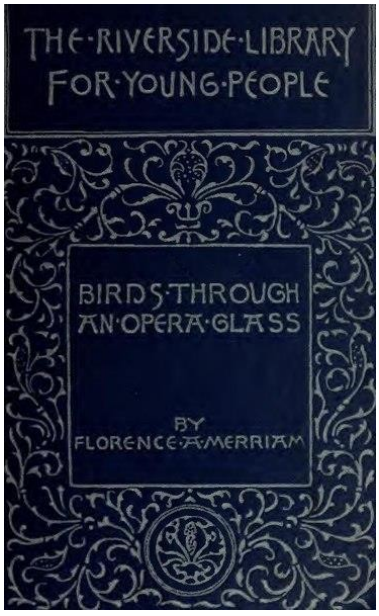
(1898) Birds of Village and Field: A Bird Book for Beginners (406 pages) which contained simple field color-keys for bird identifications and more than 200 drawings by Ernest Thompson Seton, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, and John L. Ridgway. doi:10.5962/bhl.title.30028

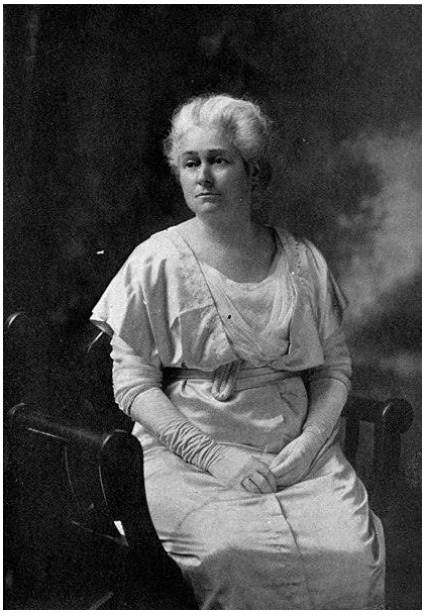
(1902) Handbook of Birds of the Western United States (600 pages) became the companion volume to Chapman’s Birds of the Eastern US (1895) and was arguably more complete. doi:10.5962/bhl.title.7872

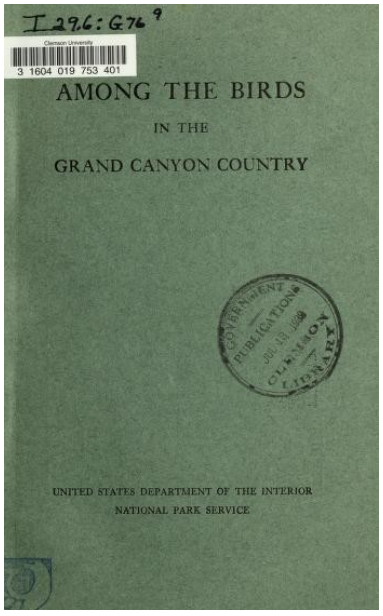
(1928) Birds of New Mexico (807 pages) was recognized as a major work, which culminated in the Brewster Medal (1931) https://archive.org/details/birdsnewmexico00bail/page/n5/mode/2up

(1939) " Among the Birds in the Grand Canyon National Park" (211 pages) was published by the National Park Service in 1939, when she was 75.

Rob Beaton






## ORGANISM OF THE MONTH

### RED-EARED SLIDER ( TRACHEMYS SCRIPTA ELEGANS)


Red-eared sliders are named for the characteristic red stripe behind the eye, where the external ear would be if they had one. They slide easily into the water when disturbed, hence the slider part of the name. Although they can reach 16 in in size, the average is 6-8 in. They have a shell composed of a carapace on top of the body, and a plastron underneath. When threatened, they can withdraw completely into their shell. Mature males are smaller than females but have much longer front claws and a slightly concave plastron.

Mating takes place under water in the summer. Females use their hind legs to dig a small hole on land and lay their eggs in it. Eggs hatch after 2-3 months. The sex of hatchlings is determined by the incubation temperature. Males require a lower incubation temperature (72-81 F) than females.

Hatchlings must stay on land for about 3 weeks, until their yolk sac is absorbed. Their tiny size and camouflage coloring keep them hidden until they slide into the water for the first time. Fish and invertebrates make up about half of the diet of young turtles, while older turtles eat almost exclusively underwater vegetation.

Commercial harvesting of red-eared sliders on private land was permitted until 2018. Local declines in population prompted Texas to prohibit commercial harvesting anywhere.

Sources: Anonymous (n.d.) “Turtle, Red-eared Slider” Retrieved from https://wildlifewaystation.org/animals/species/turtle-red-eared-slider May 25th, 2022.

Kramer, M (2020) “Texas Turtles”. Retrieved from abnc.org/nature-blog/texas-turtles May 25th, 2022.

# How to create habitat for stem-nesting bees

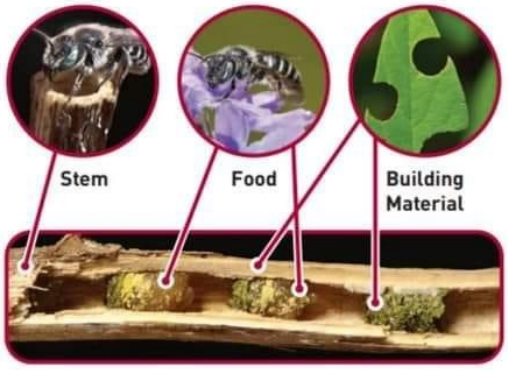
Help wild bees find places to live by providing essential nesting habitat. Around 90 out of 470 bee species in Minnesota nest in cavities made in stems or wood. Removing dead flower stalks is a common gardening practice, but these bees need stems to survive the winter. Bees also need a variety of other resources such as leaves, mud, plant hairs, and resin to build successful nests.

How can you manage stems to provide natural habitat for a wide diversity of stem-nesting bees?

**Steps to create stem-nesting bee habitat**

- Provide hollow and pithy stems from flowers and grasses.
- Cut stems in spring.
- Provide a variety of stem heights from 8 to 24+ inches.
- Provide a variety of stem diameters from 1/8 to 5/16 inch.
- Leave stems through summer, winter, and at least the first half of second summer.
- To deter parasites, don't clump or bundle stems.
- Bees will use vertical, horizontal, or angled stems.
- Protect the plants from pesticide exposure.
- Provide diverse plants nearby to provide other nesting needs such as leaves, plant hairs, and resin.
- Provide open water for mud-building bees.

**Nest necessities**

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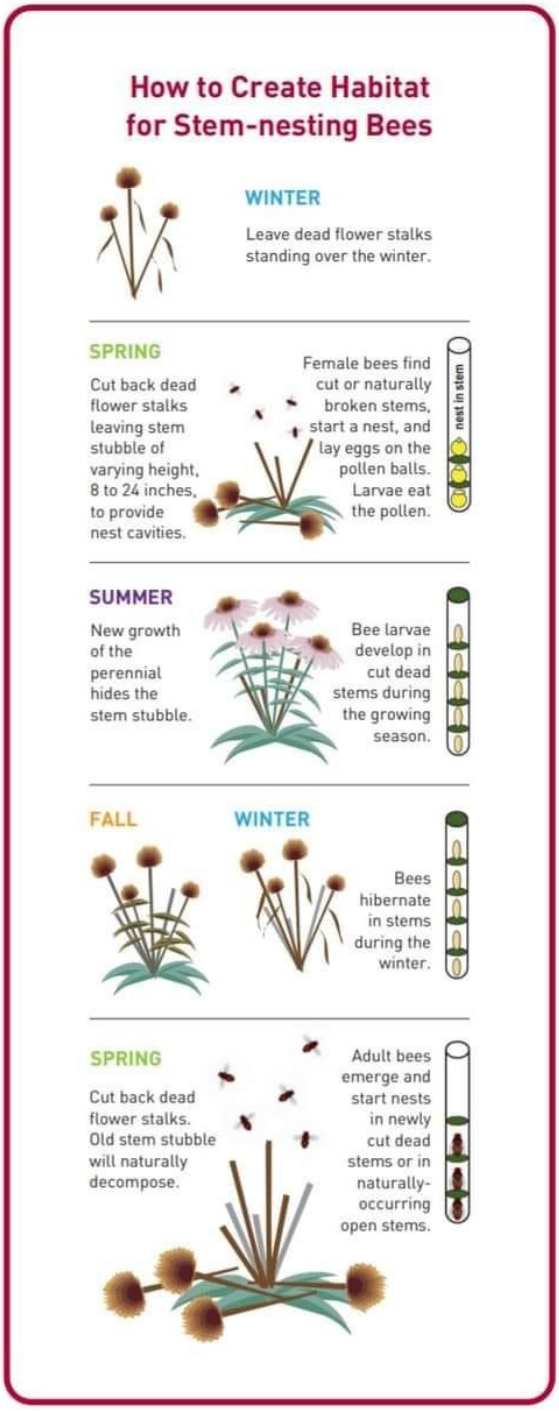

## Mothing at the NDC

On Wednesday, July 20th I stayed up WAY past my bedtime skulking around the Nature Discovery Center trying not to step on any sticks – walking sticks that is. In preparation for National Moth Week and an effort to make us all join the cult of nocturnal entomology, Sam Kieschnick gleefully had us staring into bright lights, crawling around on the ground, and sniffing the aforementioned walking sticks to describe their odor.

The mothing event was held at Bellaire Nature Discovery Center. Mary Spolyar, Shannon Morrison, and others helped set up seven observation stations consisting of a light source and a white sheet to attract a huge variety of tiny fauna. Sam indoctrinated us during the fading light, and as the sun went down he lured us along the path with exclamations of “nitidulid!” and “scarab!” and “sphinx!” And then we fell into a hidden pyramid full of snakes.

Luckily the real snakes stayed away, but we did see tons of beautiful insects including some moths, more leafhoppers than I know existed, so many male/female pairs of walking sticks, and so many beetles. Mosquito numbers were blissfully low but roach numbers were uncomfortably high.



Left – Sam summoning the powers of the night; Middle - Fully immersed, Mary Spolyar leads others into the mercury light; Right - This cuddly leafhopper species was everywhere and glows pink in the black light.

A few neighborhood visitors even joined in the fun. By the end of the evening the cries of “Sad underwing!’ and “Pawpaw!” were carried through the dark by many different voices. It was a magical way to spend a hot summer night with new and old friends.

Berri Moffet