

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



HIGHLAND LAKES CHAPTER



Highland Lakes Steward

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MISSION

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a natural resource-based volunteer training and development program sponsored statewide by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The mission of the program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas

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MESSAGE FROM CATHY

by Cathy Hill

In 1913, Joyce Kilmer published "Trees," a poem that was one of my mother's favorites.

Perhaps you are familiar with it too. If not I suggest you look it up. It begins:

"I think that I shall never see, a poem as lovely as a tree."

As many of you know I developed a Tree Discovery Trunk for GOP last year, in part because I too find trees lovely and wanted to share that with others. I have since expanded the trunk's supply of materials and have presented it this year at GOP and several other venues. I also plan to have it at this year's Burnet Kid's Day Out on September 9th as HLMN gives out free trees for the children to plant. I welcome and encourage anyone who is interested to use it for any event.

Part of the presentation includes a discussion on why we like trees or what trees are good for.

I'm happy to report that the children usually come up with plenty of good answers, including, even from the GOP first graders, oxygen for breathing. Yea!! However when it comes to knowing the names of many of our local native trees, they are not so well informed. Therefore the trunk includes a large selection of preserved leaves and seeds, and when possible I bring fresh specimens from my yard for study. My hope is that they will remember some of them, and walk away with at least knowing that the pecan is our Texas State Tree and that acorns come off of oak trees (not acorn trees!). We also

discuss how important trees are as habitat for many animals, not just birds and mammals. And of course we always end the presentation with a nature loving, enthusiastic tree hug!

Now I realize you may be thinking, "Cathy, you're preaching to the choir!" And yes I imagine that most of us Master Naturalists love and appreciate our trees, but sometimes we might just take them for granted. It is certainly in our best interest to take care of them. Have you ever stopped and considered that many trees are older than we are and hopefully will be around for many years to come? And I'm not talking about the ancient bristle cone pine trees or the giant sequoias out west, but the very common live oak trees in our parks and yards right here in Texas. And what is neat is that many of those, and other species, are honored with historical markers and featured in books like "Famous Trees of Texas."

So, do YOU have a favorite tree? Maybe its a certain individual tree or a species that you prefer. Do you have fond childhood memories of climbing trees (and hopefully not breaking bones as I did) or swinging from a tire swing. Or maybe you were really lucky and had a tree house! (I did not.) Maybe even now you enjoy reading a book, having a picnic, or taking a nap in the shade of a tree. *I just love the variety of leaf shapes. As a child (and now too) I loved making*

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Water – Wendell Berry

*I was born in a drought year. That summer
my mother waited in the house, enclosed
in the sun and the dry ceaseless wind,
for the men to come back in the evenings,
bringing water from a distant spring.
veins of leaves ran dry, roots shrank.
And all my life I have dreaded the return
of that year, sure that it still is
somewhere, like a dead enemy's soul.
Fear of dust in my mouth is always with
me,
and I am the faithful husband of the rain,
I love the water of wells and springs
and the taste of roofs in the water of cis-
terns.
I am a dry man whose thirst is praise
of clouds, and whose mind is something of
a cup.
My sweetness is to wake in the night
after days of dry heat, hearing the rain.*

Please submit pictures, articles, reports,
stories, announcements, etc. to
becky_breazeale@yahoo.com

Photos should have captions and appropri-
ate credits. The deadline for submissions
for each quarter's issue are located on the
HLMN event calendar. Or contact Becky
and Martelle.

**Thank y'all for all your hard work and
contributions!!**

MESSAGE FROM CATHY

(Continued from page 1)

crayon leaf rubbings and so I was sure to include that as one of the trunk activities. But even without their leaves, I think their bare branches in winter are lovely.

There is another poem I want to borrow from. I bet you are familiar with the “Advice from” poems by Ilan Shamir often seen on posters and t-shirts. Some of the wisdom from “Advice from aTree” include:

Stand tall and proud
Let your limbs sway and dance in the breeze
Be flexible
Remember your roots
Think long term
Enjoy the view

So in closing I just want to ask?
“Have you hugged a tree today?”
Park visitors can camp, hike, fish, swim, boat, view wildlife, ride a horse or a bike, stargaze, or just kick back and relax. As Texans we should all grab a State Park Guide and plan a visit to one. As Master Naturalists we should also volunteer our time and talents to help ensure that our State Parks and our other partner sites remain places that people want to visit. In many areas they depend on us to help them do so.

And last of all let's remember the motto of our State Parks, **“LIFE'S BETTER OUTSIDE!!”**



Cathy Hill



Wedding Tree

THE NATIVE PLANT SPOT

Article by Sammye Childers

Sphaeralcea ambigua

Globe Mallow, Desert mallow, Apricot mallow

The perennial Globe mallow can bring a unique feel to the native landscape along with some surprises. In spring a flush of beautiful flowers is produced, causing people to stop in their tracks. Thereafter, it blooms off and on throughout the summer and fall. It is very drought tolerant and deals well with hot, reflected heat. It does best in full sun. The more shade it receives the leggier it will become. They grow quickly and reach approximately 3 ft. x 3 ft. Globe mallow attracts hummingbirds as well as butterflies and bees. The large number of flowers produced over a year provides a steady source of pollen and nectar to honey bees and other insects. Plants tend to be short lived but readily self-seed and the seedlings can be moved and transplanted in the fall, if desired. This is a great plant to use for re-vegetation purposes as it grows readily from seed. Untreated seed, planted $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep in fall, will usually germinate in the winter and grow rapidly in the spring. Prune once a year to height of 6 to 12 inches after first flush of blooming in late spring to early summer. This will help maximize future blooming and minimize unproductive, woody growth. This is not the type of plant to repeatedly shear into a formal shape. When pruning, wear gloves and long sleeves since the tiny hairs on the leaves can be irritating to some as well as an eye irritant. Once established, globe mallows are extremely drought-tolerant and water use is low, but will require supplemental irrigation for the best appearance and flowering. It's also resistant to disease and insect problems and has high deer resistance.

Historically, globe mallow was used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes such as treating diarrhea, sore throats, eye diseases as well as skin disorders. Their roots were used for upset stomachs and poultices were made for treating swollen joints and broken bones. The leaves were also used to brew a black tea by early settlers and during the American Revolution.



Above: Photo by Campbell Loughmiller

Below: Photo by Linda Hardie-Scott



The 2017 Alaska Birding Adventures of the Mitchells and the Zagsts

A Contribution for the Birding and Wildflower Society

Diane and Phillip Mitchell and Kay and Fred Zagst traveled to Alaska together this past July. After taking diverse routes from Marble Falls, they united outside Gibbonsville, ID to caravan north. Birding is always a part of the Zagst's meanderings, and the Mitchells do their best to help spot and not sound too ignorant when identifying species. We birded at every campsite, and we also watched from the road. The

following are highlights of what we discovered, and observed.



At Meziadan Lake Provincial Park, British Columbia, there was a **Peregrine Falcon** fishing, and savannah sparrows.

Paarens Beach Provincial Park, BC, is located on Stuart Lake, an enormous body of water. From the beach we spotted a *Bald Eagle* sitting on a rock fishing, (fifty yards from where Phillip swam, in the cold water imitating a bit of a bird call himself--a bet with the Canadians!), and we enjoyed watching several **American Redstarts** around our campsites.



(continued from pg 6)

At Boya Lake Provincial Park Fred took a chilly-bottomed kayak paddle across the water, while Kay didn't see much on her bird walk. We did spot **Gray Jays**---up here, commonly called *Canada jays*.



The town of Watson Lake is a crossroads in the Yukon, and one of their attractions is the "Signpost Forest," started by a GI in 1942 when they were building the Alaska Highway. The story goes that this GI was so homesick he created a milepost sign to his hometown in Illinois. Thousands of visitors have



since done the same (including the Zagsts and the Mitchells), creating the forest. Nearby was Wye Lake where we found **Arctic Terns**, **Lesser Yellow Legs**, *Bonaparte, mew and herring gulls*.



The stories about the mosquitoes in Alaska, B.C., and the Yukon are not exaggerated, and certainly DO qualify as the state, provincial and territorial bird. Our sightings, dear read-

(continued from pg 7)
er, were simply too numerous to detail. We were pleased to see swallows in abundance *barn, cliff, tree, and Violet Green*.

We were advised by our guidebooks to be alert for *trumpeter swans in the lakes we passed on the road*. We saw many, including five on one lake, but those were quick, passing glimpses. In the same way, from time to time, we each spotted bald eagles flying overhead. At Lost Lake Campground, outside Delta Junction, AK, Phillip and Fred spotted a



Bald Eagle flying over the lake, and watched as it hit the water fishing, but came up empty tailed. There were also waterfowl on the lake, and we identified surf and white-winged scoters (along with six ducklings!), golden eyes, herring gulls, glaucous gulls, a red-necked grebe, buffleheads, an osprey and a beautiful **Trumpeter Swan**, as he proudly cruised from one side of the lake to the other.



(continued from page 8)

At Tangle River Campground, on the Old Denali Highway, we had *white crowned sparrows, savannah sparrows, fox sparrows, a belted kingfisher, a magpie and a hawk owl, spotted sandpipers, Swainson's thrush, robins, a northern waterthrush, Wilson's warbler, along with an Arctic tern and herring gulls. But the real fun were the Hawk Owl*(we'd almost given up on finding one), and a male and female **Common Redpoll**. On our drive to the camp we passed six trumpeter swans wandering down to the lake in the distance, all in a row. A yellow shafted flicker posed a long while, for all of us to have a good look..



Denali National Park is known for its wildlife, and we were hugely fortunate to see numerous grizzly bear (some with cubs), caribou, moose, a black wolf, red fox (with kits), squirrels, pikas and marmots. Birds are not as easily spotted from the bus ride (the only way to get into the backcountry of Denali). However, we did spot *golden eagles (every time we wandered out, but there are no bald eagles in the park), a northern harrier several times, as well as grouse (a lovely family of 9; daddy grouse was all about displaying his best, and we admired his turkey-like tail feathers), and willow ptarmigan (the actual state*

bird of Alaska). A Long-tailed Jaeger solicitously offered us a viewing from the bus (on the same rock, both times we passed him), while arctic warblers flitted in the roadside bushes.

Fred and Kay were determined to find a **Gyr-falcon** since there were reports of one nesting near the Eielson Visitors Center. It proved to be elusive until our last day when they hiked several miles past the Visitors Center, serendipitously met other birders, and were treated to the whole family of gyrfalcons including fledglings doing barrel rolls, testing their new ability to fly.



(continued from page 9)

A hike near our campground presented Phillip and Diane their favorite sightings: The hawk owl that sat in a dead spruce tree some 30 feet from the road and posed for over 10 minutes (Phillip dismissed the bird as another Canada jay, but Fred saved the day by calling it correctly!). We had 3 busses that stopped, lined up behind us to see him. Additionally, we observed a merlin fishing for dragonflies over one of the kettle ponds that are so common in that glacially carved area.

The **Grey Jays** were as common and annoying as the green jays in Atascosa or the mountain jays in Estes Park, but they do have prettier songs, for sure. White crowned sparrows and robins are common everywhere we've camped.



We're taking a break from the wilderness to do some house-keeping and family business, but we'll be back on the birding trail shortly, heading to the Kenai Peninsula!

Due to camera and internet issues, photos are not those of the Mitchells and Zagsts, but were **provided by Greg Lasley and others for this photo essay** written by the

In the garden....



Bill Luedecke (Dad) and Martelle Luedecke (Daughter)

Plant wildflower seeds late this month and early October. Begin to think and plan where you want to plant wildflowers now. If you have the space, plant your wildflowers in large groupings for **floral constancy** for the honey bees.

Our guest today, **Ben Hutchins, PhD Invertebrate Biologist with Texas**

Parks and Wildlife explains **floral constancy**: "Floral constancy is a behavior (could we say bee-havior?) exhibited by some bees and other pollinating insects where individuals prefer to visit flowers of the same species rather than flowers of different species during a single foraging trip. So, if you see a honey bee visiting a milkweed flower, for example, chances are good that when it leaves in search of its next target, it will search for another milkweed even in a field full of blue bonnets and Mexican hats. That's floral constancy. Several hypotheses have been proposed to explain this behavior, primarily relating to pollen collecting efficiency: once a bee gets the hang of collecting pollen from a particular type of flower, it is more efficient to continue visiting the same species again and again rather than losing time switching to a different pollen collecting behavior (yes, how bees collect pollen differs as the bees visit different flowers). Alternative explanations for floral constancy have also been proposed, but while the adaptive basis for floral constancy may still be in question, the behavior has some significant implications. First and foremost, floral constancy is one of the keys to understanding why bees are such effective pollinators. If a bee gets covered in pollen, but then visits a flower of a different species, pollination isn't going to happen. A lantana cannot be fertilized with pollen from a mistflower, right? However, if a bee is repeatedly visiting the same species of flower again and again and again, chances increase that some pollen will be transferred to the stigma (where fertilization occurs) of the same species of flower, resulting in a successful pollination event. For the gardener interested in managing for native bees, floral constancy provides some insight into how gardens or bee pastures should be planted. Rather than uniformly mixing different plant species across the landscape, consider planting flowers of the same species in a 'clumped' pattern, resulting in patches of a single flowering species nestled within a larger landscape comprised of other patches of different flowering species. This will make the patch more visible to hungry bees and increase the ease and efficiency of foraging for those bees. Some native bees are only capable of travelling short distances from their nest, so having clumped patches of flowers isn't only a matter of convenience, but for some bees it may determine where bees decide to reside and where bees are physically able to forage." Thank you Ben!



Lawn Care: It is time to fertilize those lawns late this month and early October. It's also

time to order your Corn Gluten for the October application. TIP: Check around for the best buy. There is a wide gap in prices for a forty (40) pound bag, depending on where you purchase your product. You are going to apply it at a rate of twenty (20) pounds per 1,000 square feet. Using that formula, you can tell your source how many bags to order for you. Remember, by using Corn Gluten, you have both a fertilizer and pre-emergent application for weeds at the same time. This is a two-for-the-price-of-one deal.

Keep your souls and soles in your garden!

Remember the True Master Gardener: Jesus said, "I am the vine; my Father is the Gardener." John 15:1

Meet Our Members: by Sheryl Smith Rodgers



Anne Holly
2014, Dripping Springs

Where were you raised?

I was born in Austin.

What is your professional background?

I am a medical laboratory technician for Texas Oncology. I've also worked for Clinical Pathology Labs and St. David's Hospital.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

GOP, HOP and leading interpretive hikes at both Inks and Pedernales Falls are services I have enjoyed performing because I like seeing kids and adults gain an appreciation for nature and our relationship to our environment. On a personal level, my Master Naturalist training has awakened in me a new interest in birds and grasses, especially as I've watched both increase on our property in recent years.



Joan Mukherjee
2007, Marble Falls

Where were you raised?

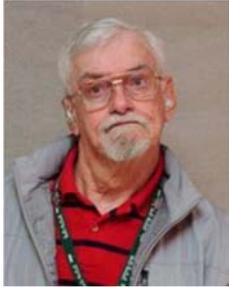
I was raised while working hard on a farm in southern Minnesota near East Chain.

What is your professional background?

In addition to being a farmer, I am an organic chemist, tax preparer, amateur botanist, and investor.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

My passion is in preserving some of our beautiful natural world. Most of my recent work has been at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, where I am on the board of the Friends group, chair the land acquisition committee, and serve on the membership committee. I also help with children's education, clearing trails, and writing articles.



Daniel Nutter
2012, Marble Falls

Where were you raised?

I was born in Alcester, South Dakota, where I spent my first 18 years. Then my family moved to Denison, Texas, where I finished high school. Then I was an undergraduate at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and then onto University of North Texas, where I graduated with a major in library science.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

My favorite nature-related activity is providing food and water for birds and butterflies.



Judy Parker
2010, Buchanan Dam

Where were you raised?

I was born and raised in San Francisco. I got to Texas in 1992.

What is your professional background?

I worked in financial services. I managed finance companies, thrift and loans, and service centers for banks.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

I love birds. I help to maintain the bird blind at the hatchery and go on birding expeditions whenever I can.



Karyn Parker
2013, Austin

Where were you raised?

I was an Air Force kid and raised all over the country. I have lived in or visited every state in the U.S.

What is your professional background?

In Houston, my company was Pondering Inc. I was a curator and independent fine art consultant there for almost 40 years. I organized and put together art collections for clients, such as Compaq Computer Corp., Occidental Chemical Corp., and Hermann and Methodist Hospitals along with many law firms and banks.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

I just love being outside. I like doing the kids' day activities at Inks, Balcones, and Blanco, teaching everything from bird ID and behavior to butterflies and other insects. Also, I LOVE to teach people and kids how to fish.



Jean Schar
2011, Horseshoe Bay

Where were you raised?

I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and raised there until I was 10. Then we moved to Glenview, Illinois. It was then a small town outside Chicago, but it soon became a suburb. I attended college in Iowa.

What is your professional background?

I worked to implement the fledgling food stamp program in Iowa after college. Then I moved to California and worked with the child welfare department. In Dallas, I became an antique dealer and worked in interior design for 15 years.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or volunteer activity.

I have spent my time in the Hill Country with the HLMN trying to absorb all the knowledge about the area and being a good steward of our incredible natural surroundings in whatever ways I can, both in my daily life and as part of this great organization.



Terri Whaley
2006, Bertram

Where were you raised?

I was born in Houston and lived there all my life until we moved to the Texas Hill Country in 2006. But we vacationed here often, even when I was a child, and Bob and I had a vacation home at Canyon Lake for 18 years, so we knew we were destined to live in this area one day.

What is your professional background?

After getting my pharmacy degree at the University of Houston, I worked at MD Anderson Cancer Center for 29 years. For the last half of my career there, I was a clinical pharmacist in the Leukemia Department.

Tell us about your nature-related passion or favorite HLMN volunteer activity.

My main interests are nurturing native plants and preserving habitats for native species. And golden-cheeked warblers are my passion. When we first learned that our property was designated as part of a USFW protected habitat for the endangered golden-cheeked warbler, I was thrilled. And now we hear and see them every year right outside our door. I am determined to do my small part to maintain habitats for these birds.

And here comes
 HLMN Experianz





HLMN Experianz

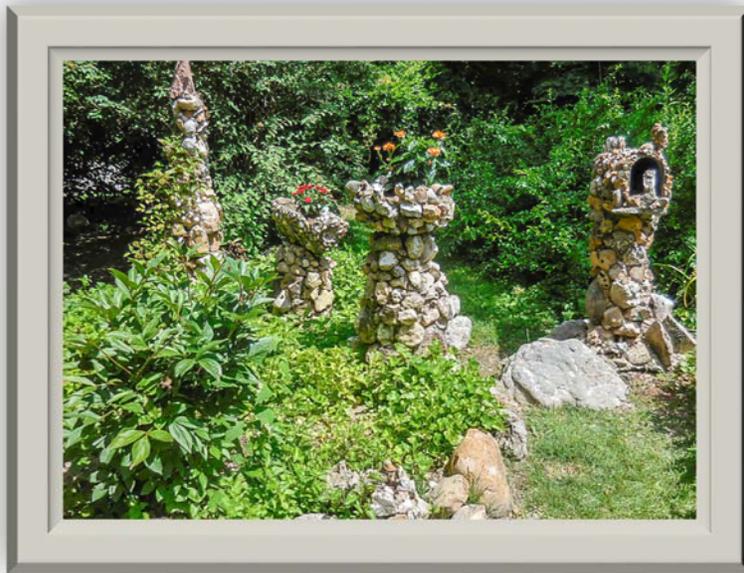
Who: Sheryl Smith-Rodgers
What: Quigley's Castle
Where: Eureka Springs, AR
When: June 2017
Website: <http://quigleyscastle.com/>



Rating: Thumbs Up

A side trip from Eureka Springs, Arkansas. This unique home and gardens were intriguing! The great-granddaughter of the couple who built the place gave us a brief history. Then we were free to explore inside the house and around the gardens. The "Butterfly Wall" in an upstairs bedroom was amazing!





Eureka Springs, AR

Who Kim and Stennis Stotts
What: South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center
Where: South Padre Island
When: May 2017
Rating: Thumbs up



Kim and I took her parents to South Padre Island. The hotel we stayed at was across the street from the Civic Center and the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. Given we were there in May there were still a number of migratory birds at both locations. It was exciting because we got add a number of new birds to our list. We saw American Redstarts, Bay Breasted Warblers, Yellow Warblers (male and female), the Black and White Warbler, Yellow Billed Cuckoo, a Sora and a number of other birds.



American Restart



Black and White Warbler



Black Crowned Heron



Skimmer



Tennessee Warbler



Yellow Warbler, male

Who: Phil Wyde
What: Ireland
Where: Fanore
When: May 2017
Rating: Thumbs up



From May 12th until May 29th we vacationed in Fanore, Ireland. Fanore is on the far west edge of Ireland. The nearest “big” city is Galway, which although only about 40 kilometers (~24 miles) to the north of Fanore, was more than an hour away. This discrepancy between distance and time gives you an inkling of the highway system in Ireland. Highways! Grand Prix race tracks would be more like it! Most of the Irish road were ridiculously narrow, curved and closely lined with thick stonewalls or extremely dense hedgerows. I watched my life pass before my eyes many times a day.

With roads being the only exception, Ireland is a beautiful place, truly emerald green, picturesque, rustic, pastoral and bucolic. The people were 110% friendly, spoke English with the most beautiful lilt and clearly were infused with Viking blood.

Each day we would set out on a day trip. We went by boat to the Arun Islands, walked the Cliffs of Moher, drove around the Ring of Kerry, slept in the midst of the very rocky Burren

Falcon Raptor Sanctuary



and travelled much the Wild Atlantic Way. We visited caves, took ferry rides, climbed “castles,” walked around gardens and abbeys, and visited a raptor sanctuary. Of course, we frequented the ubiquitous pubs. While others in our party were very partial to various Guinness concoctions, I very much favored pub food, music and company. Because of where we stayed, the sea and rugged coast was everywhere.

The temperature highs were generally in the 60s, the lows in the 40s. It was generally windy and we had rain showers almost every day. However, the latter were generally short.

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Thus, I include the following images for you to look at. Looking will save you the equivalent 13,000 words. You can also conclude from these images that Ireland is a very fine place to visit.

No Blarney!



Irish Castle
(above)

(below)
Galway bay



Irish Cow



Puffins



Gentian flower



Cliffs of Moher looking back



Irish Horses



Irish Dancers Bunratty

Dolphin Arun Island



Abbey



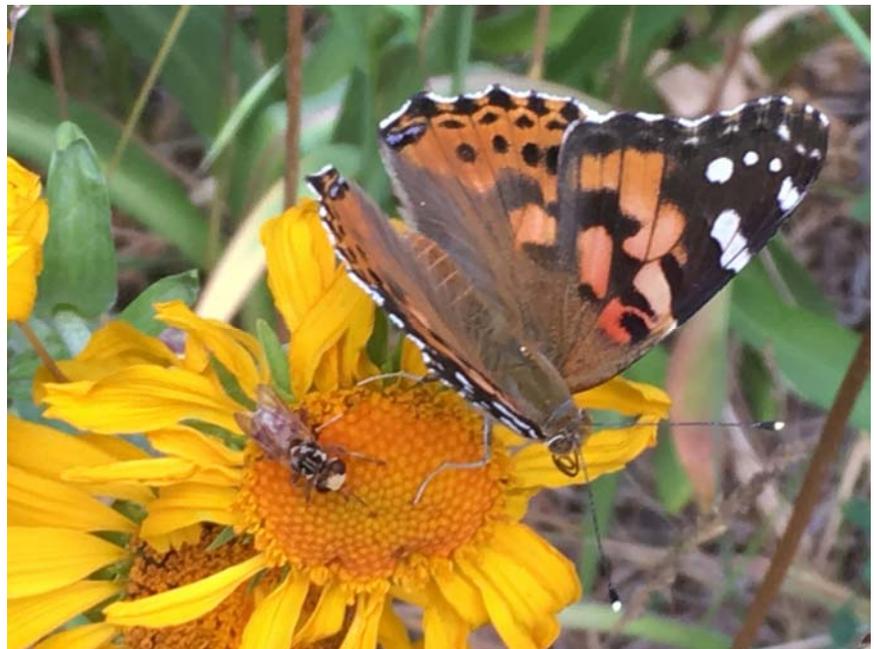
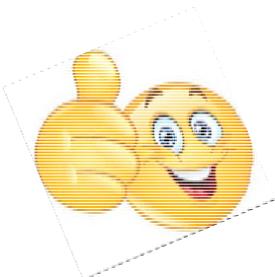
Hills Connacht Peninsula



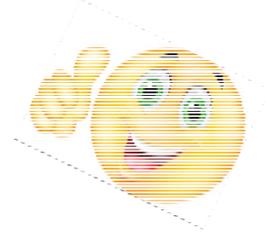
Horse and cart

Who: Gary and Victoria Hampton
What: Hiking
Where: Sangre do Cristo Mountains near Santa Fe, NM
When:
Rating: Thumbs Up

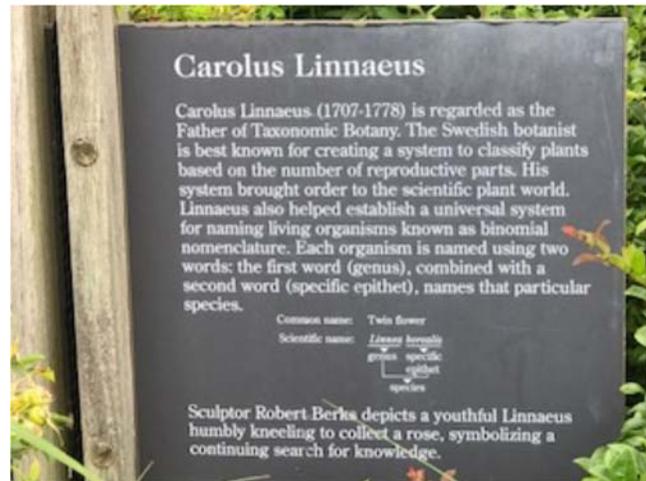
Meadows were full of butterflies and other pollinators.



Who: Betsy Bouchard
 What: Statue of Carolus Linnaeus and commemorative biography
 Where: Chicago Botanical Gardens
 When: July 26, 2017
 Rating: Thumbs Up

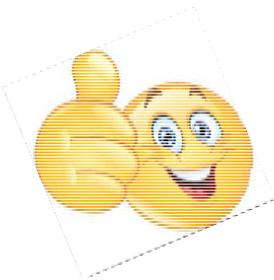


Father of Taxonomic Botany, bringing order



Who: Becky Breazeale
 What: Bryan Museum
 Where: Galveston Orphans Home, Galveston, Texas
 When: August, 14, 2017
 Rating: Thumbs Up
 Website: <https://www.thebryanmuseum.org/>

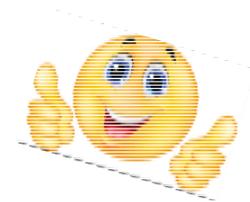
This is a COOL place to visit – literally. They keep the AC at 65 degrees to protect the artifacts in the museum. J. P. and Mary Jon Bryan collected and assembled the pieces that are housed in the historic Galveston Orphans Home. The pieces date from Native American cultural artifacts to modern cultural twenty-first century objects. Even though most of the objects are a reflection of Texas History, a Master Naturalist would be interested in the huge mortar and pestle found in Big Bend and the pictographs discovered on the banks of the Pecos River. I liked the photos of Chief Quannah Parker and the Native American Exhibit and my husband like the Battle of San Jacinto diorama. You can also have a wedding at the Museum.





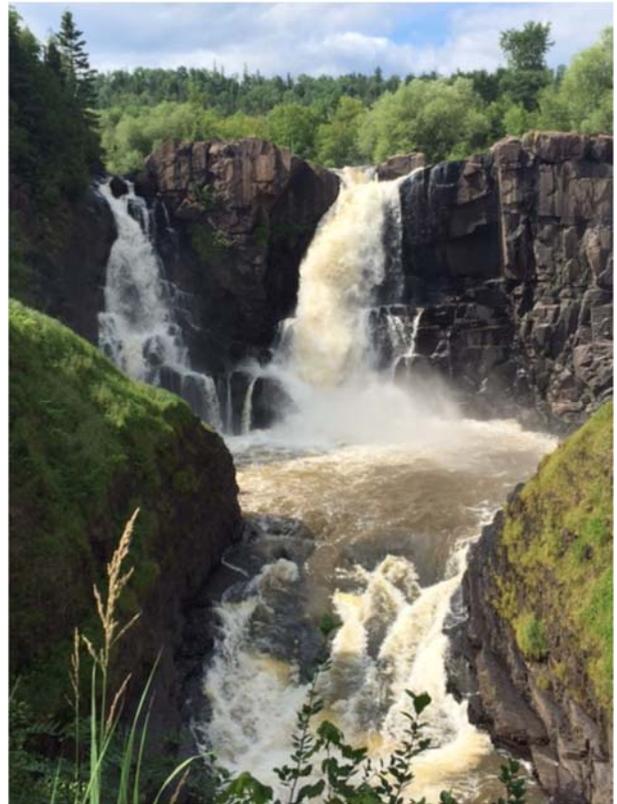
They don't allow photography inside the building so this is all you get. Photo by Milburn Breazeale

Who: Ed and Vick Myatt, Jerry Stacy, and Linda O'nan
What: Lakes, waterfalls, rivers, eagles, and brewpubs
Where: Boundary waters, north shore Lake Superior
When: August, 2017
Rating: Thumbs Up (look at the group)



The Myatts were great hosts





Who: Eva Hobbs
Where: Iceland
When: July, 2017
Rating: 10 Thumbs Up



Iceland is known as the country of fire and ice. They should add waterfalls to that description because they are everywhere. The landscape is otherworldly because of centuries of volcanic activity and the numerous geothermal areas. The fjords are magnificent and the island is sparsely populated - 330,000 citizens. They let all sheep loose in the spring and round them up in the fall so these free range sheep are found anywhere and everywhere.

The animal picture is an arctic fox which turns white in the winter.



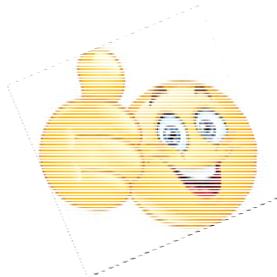
Who: Helen Smith and Dee Perlberg on vacation

Where: Juneau Alaska at Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center

What: found a Bluebonnet with the glacier in the background

When: August 1st

Big thumbs up to see this bloom along side this massive glacier!



Who: Cathy Hill

Where: Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge, Sam Houston National Forest

When: August, 2017

Rating: Thumbs Up

My travels this summer did not include any exotic destination, but instead were limited to a few places right here in Texas. But as a proud native Texan, that should be sufficient, right? In keeping with the tree topic of my Presidential address I'm going to highlight some of the trees I saw on my trip. In August, family business took us to Liberty County in southeast Texas where my husband operates several oil wells near the town of Dayton. Our son Thomas was able to come down from Wisconsin to help dear old Dad do repairs on a well because he had helped design a specialized tool they were going to use.

So while the guys were busy working with the oil rig, I took a little field trip to the nearby

Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge. Established in 1994, it now includes 30,000 acres in several sections of bottomland hardwood forest ecosystem along the Trinity River. This floodplain is made of swampy forestland, numerous sloughs, oxbow

lakes, and river tributaries and thus is an important breeding, wintering, and stopover habitat for a variety of migratory and resident wildlife.

The section I visited was called Champion Lake, a picturesque and tranquil body of water with surrounding forest favored by fisherman, kayakers, hikers, and birders. The jungle-like trail I ventured down was well shaded by tall pines, live oaks, pecan, sweetgum, sugarberry, and bald cypress along the shore. I had to be careful and not trip over the many protruding cypress knees. Did you know that scientists still aren't sure of their actual function. The prevailing theory is that they provide additional support in their swampy environment, and not for respiration as previously believed. Understudy plants included yaupon, palmettos, trumpet vine, and poison ivy to name just a few. I only saw a few cardinals, gray squirrels, and heard some frogs or turtles plop into the water.

There was however no shortage of mosquitoes, dragonflies, and butterflies. In addition there was an abundance of those funny little love bugs that I hadn't seen since I lived in the Houston area. These

small black flies with orange thoraxes are also known as honeymoon flies or double-headed bugs because of their habit of remaining connected both during and after mating, even in flight, for up to several days. They usually have two large emergences in spring and in late summer. They were so numerous that driving down the country roads it sounded like rain on my windshield and my car was soon plastered with them. I'm glad I was

able to get a picture of them on some of the pretty snow-on-the-prairie plants. This was an interesting place to visit but I wouldn't recommend it on a hot and humid August day. I should think winter and spring would be a much better time for hiking and birding.

On my way home back to the Hill Country I took a route that would take me through the Sam Houston National Forest. This is one of four national



Bill and Thomas Hill with rig

forests in Texas and its 161,508 acres is spread across parts of Montgomery, San Jacinto, and Walker counties north of Conroe. Again, as at the refuge I was impressed by the very tall pines trees and hardwood understudy trees, as it is such an interesting contrast to what we have here in the Hill Country. I wish I could have had more time to linger and Explore.

Note: As I was finishing this article Hurricane Harvey was devastating much of coastal, rural, and urban south and southeast Texas. I'm sure the Trinity River NWR that I visited was flooded and probably sustained damages to buildings and such. We can only hope and pray that ALL the areas impacted can begin to recover soon.



Cypress tree

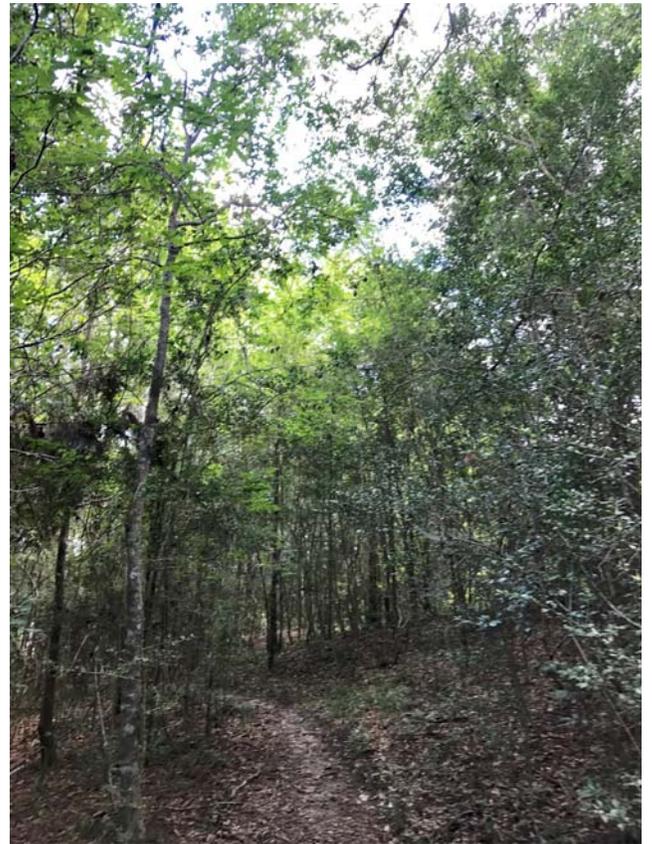
Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge





Champion Lake (at left)

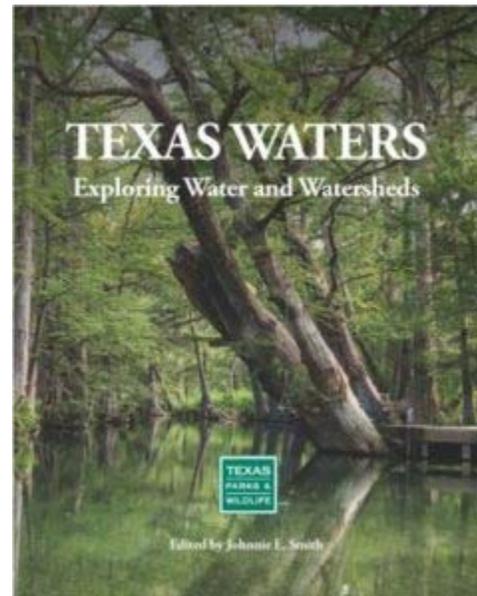
Trail at Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge (at right)



Love bugs on Snow of the Prairie plant (at left)



Sam Houston National Forest Tall Pines



Texas Waters Specialist, a new program for Texas Master Naturalists

As a newly certified Texas Master Naturalist, I have chosen to pursue my main area of interest in our Highland Lakes area by learning how to keep our lakes and the many rivers and streams coming into and flowing out of them as clean and pure as possible. TPWD's Texas Waters Specialist Program is the newest way you can get involved in this very important volunteer activity. I'm very happy to have completed all the AT hours required to become a Texas Waters Specialist, and I am looking forward to getting to work!

Training was not difficult and consisted of attending quarterly online webinars scheduled throughout this past year. Training topics included how to identify a healthy watershed ecosystem; the ecological significance of natural flow regimes; what causes watershed change; and a breakdown of Texas water law and planning.

Additionally, I attended a Water Workshop at Bamberger Ranch to learn first-hand how

to identify soils and understand their potential use in dam and pond construction; how to identify sites that can hold water when ponds are properly constructed; how to identify which grasses work best for good watershed management; how to box low volume seeps and springs; and how to store and deliver the captured water.

I am confident that I am now a well-informed volunteer who can provide outreach and service for good management of the water resources and habitats in our area. Before the end of the year I'll be participating in the LCRA Water Quality Program to monitor and protect the waterways of the lower Colorado River watershed. In fact, the work of volunteers participating in this monitoring program were the first ones recently to detect the presence of the invasive and damaging zebra mussels in Lake Travis. How exciting to know that the water quality data I will be collecting for either Inks Lake or Lake Buchanan will be part of this early warning system!

Let's get more folks from our chapter involved as certified Texas Waters Specialists. If you are interested, check out the TPWD link below:

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/water-education/texaswatersprogram/texaswatersspecialist>

Info supplied by Debbie Kennedy, HLMN Class of 2017

Editor's Note: Debbie is the first in our chapter to receive this certification. Alice Rheaume has since received her certification and Phil Wyde is 1 hour away from receiving this as of this date. They will be among the first in the state to be awarded a special pin for Texas Water Specialist at the Texas Master Naturalist 18th Annual Meeting.

Stewardship

An ethic that embodies cooperative planning and management of environmental resources with organizations, communities and others to actively engage in the prevention of loss of habitat and facilitate its recovery in the interest of long-term sustainability.