

LOST PINES CHAPTER

Texas Master Naturalist



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Naughty at Night by Larry Gfeller

Because we tend to kill or run off animals that eat our children, the majority of the United States is nearly devoid of the great predators and large mammals of yesteryear. There is still quite a lot of life out there, but it is mostly small. According to a wildlife census by an ecologist at the University of Illinois named V.E. Shelford, a typical ten square mile block of eastern American forest holds almost 300,000 mammals—220,000 mice and other small rodents, 63,500 squirrels and chipmunks, 470 deer, 30 foxes, and 5 black bears. With the exception of black bears, this census data might come pretty close to describing our experience in Central Texas. Surprisingly, raccoons do not appear in this breakdown—and they are known to inhabit the eastern U.S.—but we most certainly have them in Central Texas. In fact, ours is a large dark subspecies commonly known as the Texas raccoon. It is found in more states than Texas, but somehow it carries our name.



Texas raccoon (*Procyon lotor fuscipes*)

Most of us familiar with wild spaces have some experience with raccoons, those rascally, beady-eyed bandits that eat anything and play havoc with our best laid plans. Ringed tail and a distinctive mask across the face only lends credence to their Zorro-like outlaw reputation. They are notorious nighttime raiders. There's something about them—almost too human to define—that makes the experience unforgettable. Chapter member Michal Hubbard does annual battle to protect her hummingbird feeder, hanging from a tree limb. As expert climbers, the raccoons manage to either lift up the feeder and drink the goodies right out of the container, spill it on the limb and then lick it up, or knock the feeder to the ground for one exalted, gluttonous feeding frenzy. "This spring I'm considering putting it on something rigid, like a piece of broomstick, as well as adding a canopy to keep them from climbing down," she says. During the winter months, the mama coon and her youngsters sometimes wait in ambush until the outdoor cat gets fed—six against one usually means a successful bushwhacking.

Marmalade has to work on his hunting skills if he wants a meal on those evenings.

Raccoons have been around for a very long time. The first person to leave a written account of raccoons was Christopher Columbus. Similar tooth and skull structures suggest that raccoons and weasels share a common ancestor, but molecular analysis indicates a closer relationship between raccoons and bears. In many languages, the raccoon is named for its legendary "food-washing" behavior, in conjunction with that language's name for "bear." It's no wonder, as a raccoon can stand

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on its hind legs like a bear, it carries a heavy torso like bears (like the broad end of a slice of pie) and it's a master at ransacking a campsite for food. Unlike bears, raccoons are not usually able to run quickly or give cause for a change of underwear in an unexpected encounter.

As of 2005, *Mammal Species of the World* recognizes 22 subspecies of raccoon (one of which has since been regarded as a separate species, and another is now extinct). Four of the remaining 20 subspecies are found in Central American and Caribbean islands.

Another four of the smallest raccoon subspecies mostly inhabit southern Florida or its adjacent islands. The rest of the subspecies differ only slightly from each other in coat color, size and other physical characteristics. The two most widespread subspecies are the Eastern raccoon and the Upper Mississippi Valley raccoon; Texas has its own subspecies (except extreme North and West Texas), as mentioned already.

Texans regard raccoons quite differently, depending on their profession, past experience or sensibilities. To some they are pests, to others they help maintain the balance of nature, and some even keep them as pets. I've never had pet raccoons, but my young grandchildren can't be too far off the mark. Regardless of your point of view, give raccoons credit for being smart. Researchers have documented raccoons recalling solutions to problems for up to three years. Although a coon may never master Boolean algebra, anyone who has struggled to keep them away from food sources has a healthy respect for their cunning. They come in all imaginable sizes, some large, some small, but on average tipping the scales between 8 and 20 lbs. They are the most variable in size of any mammals we have (the record is 62.6 lbs.).

While they can be viewed as "cute," especially baby coons (called kits), anyone who has ever hunted coons with dogs, especially in water, knows they can hold their own, even outnumbered. They are excellent swimmers and can remain in water for several hours. Raccoons are extremely comfortable around water because that's where they find much of their food. Nothing makes a raccoon happier than a juicy frog or crawfish dinner; however, they are adventurous gastronomes, enjoying bugs, worms, wild grapes, nuts (acorns), persimmons, fish, mollusks and bird eggs. Contrary to popular opinion, raccoons seldom eat large or active prey (like birds or other mammals) because they're practical critters and dislike working too hard for their meals (a nice contained chicken coop, extravagantly decorated with hapless chickens is considered fast food).

When it comes to sensory perception, feeling is the most important to raccoons. Some people think that night vision is their strong suit, but actually, a raccoon sees about as well at night as a human does. So, what about this sense of feeling? Turns out, raccoons have hyper-sensitive front paws, protected by a thin, horny layer of skin, which becomes pliable when wet. Almost two-thirds of the area responsible for sensory perception in the raccoon's cerebral cortex is focused on tactile impulses—the most of any other studied animal. To boost their sense of feel, they also have little hairs (called vibrissae) between the fingers of their front paws, which



Front foot of a raccoon

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Venomous Snakes of the Lost Pines Region

by Roxanne Hernandez

Last night a friend of mine sent a couple of photos taken with her iPhone of a snake on her porch. She was hoping I would tell her it wasn't it a copperhead. Well, I told her what she hoped to hear, but then added that it was a cottonmouth. The inability to identify our area's venomous snakes can be hazardous to your health. When my husband and I moved to the Lost Pines area in 2004 one of the first things I did was learn what creatures lived here that could do us harm. Within our first year here I saw my first black widow spider (they live in Colorado, too, but I'd never seen one) and four of the area's venomous snakes in our yard. A few years ago I found a brown recluse living under the chicken coop. Most recently, our dog found a timber rattlesnake in the yard. When we choose to live in the woods, close to nature, it behooves us to understand what else is living here with us.

We have five venomous snakes in our area – two species of rattlesnake (timber (*Crotalus horridus*) and western diamondback (*Crotalus atrox*)), Texas coral snake (*Micrurus tener tener*), cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*), and copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*). All but the coral snake are pit vipers, meaning they have a heat-sensing pit organ located between the eye and the nostril on either side of the head to locate prey. They also have retractable hollow fangs—hollow for transmitting venom to its prey. The rattlesnakes are easy to identify because . . . well they often, but not always, shake their keratin rattled tail when threatened. The other snake easily identified is the coral snake. The first time I saw a coral snake (my husband brought it to me amid a tractor bucket full of mulch) I startled when I saw it, then immediately recited “Red touch yellow kill a fellow, red touch black venom lack.” I learned from Bill Brooks not too long ago that if you see something around here that looks like a coral snake, it *is* a coral snake. There are no similar looking, nonvenomous species in our area.

We've been visited by several copperheads and cottonmouths. Copperheads get their name, appropriately enough, from their copper-red heads. The first copperhead I saw had me literally jump out of my sandals. I was pulling up a dense patch of catnip I'd planted (*sans* gloves) and the copperhead was sheltering within it. After I had disturbed its repose enough, it slowly emerged to move on to a more suitable location. It was not at all aggressive. In contrast, cottonmouths have been the



*Reputed to be aggressive, the cottonmouth's disposition is often shy unless provoked. Good swimmers, they are sluggish on land. They spend a lot of time coiled at the edge of bodies of water or draped loosely in overhanging vegetation. When found away from their escape route they will often coil their body and open their mouth in a wide gape displaying their white lining of the mouth, thus the common name.



*The mild tempered timber rattlesnake tends to rely primarily on camouflage as its main defensive strategy.



*Copperheads are relatively shy and inoffensive unless provoked or otherwise disturbed. They do occasionally climb but they spend most of their time on the ground. They can swim but are rarely found in the water. They may be active throughout the year under the right conditions. Spring and fall they are generally active during the day, and switch to night activity during the summer.

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Snakes, cont.

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most aggressive of the snakes I've encountered. They remind me of bulldogs – thick bodied and stocky. Every cottonmouth I've seen has been in the vicinity of the air conditioning unit, presumably because of the condensation produced.

The pit vipers here share several common characteristics. First, and perhaps the most easily identifiable feature of pit vipers, the head is thick, blocky and triangular-shaped with an obvious neck. The head is also flat rather than round. Second, they appear thick-bodied for their length. Third, they have rough looking “keeled” scales. Fourth, with the exception of the copperhead, they all have a dark facial band that extends from the eye to the corners of the jaw. Finally, they all have cat-like vertical pupils. As Bill pointed out, however, *if you're close enough to see the snakes pupils you're too close!*

There are a variety of resources out there to help with snake identification. I have a poster produced by Texas Parks and Wildlife that I purchased right after we moved here, and I've referred to it many times over the last ten years. I couldn't locate it on TPWD's website, but I did find the [poster online](#). I also have a laminated quick reference guide titled “Snakes of Central Texas” that I picked up at a local feed store. It includes about three dozen different snakes, including all of the venomous ones. Another good reference I own is “Texas Snakes, A Field Guide,” written by James R. Dixon and John E. Werler. Bill recommends the book “Venomous Snakes of Texas” written by Andy Price.

I've become a bit smarter over the years with regard to my behavior when outdoors. I no longer pick anything up without wearing leather gloves. I once picked up a piece of post-prescribed burn debris (again *sans* gloves) and was promptly bitten on the finger by a little copperhead that was resting beneath it. Even when walking through the yard I watch every step. After all, with the exception of the aforementioned incident, every venomous snake I've seen on our place has been within what we consider the yard. And now, when in tall grass or thick brush I wear snake boots. It also helps to have a dog who watches out for us. Our dog, Charlie, has a characteristic “I found something you need to come see” bark. One summer night after dark, as we made our way from the pool to the house, Charlie blocked the walk and began his warning bark. Coiled in the middle of the walk was a small rattlesnake. Thanks to Charlie, we've been warned of the presence of venomous snakes on several occasions.

For your safety and the safety of your family and friends, take some time to learn how to identify the five venomous snakes who share with us this place called home.



*Western diamondback rattlesnakes are active during the summer at night. As the days shorten, they tend to be more active during daylight hours. When disturbed, these snakes are quick to adopt a defensive position, body curled in an “s” from which they can quickly strike. The rattle is shaken vigorously and the tongue darts in and out of the mouth. This is a purely defensive posture and if the threat does not escalate, the snake will usually move away.



*Coral snakes will attempt to escape if discovered and individuals will engage in complex defensive displays if prevented from escaping. They may coil, hiding their head beneath the coils and mimicking the head with their tails. They may also engage in erratic body movements and feign death. Some individuals will be very temperamental and bite if restrained in any way.

*All descriptions taken from TPWD's “Venomous Snakes of Texas” poster.

What's Blooming?

by Liz Pullman

Let us consider NYCs, which are blooming now and will continue to bloom for weeks and weeks. NYC is shorthand for Damn Yellow Composite and is a term heard frequently among botanists who come to a screeching halt along the road, reverse and park, and get out of the vehicle only to find yet another yellow flower in the Aster family that needs to be identified.

Highways are lined with hardy bright yellow flowers that erupt, bloom, then slowly subside and reseed themselves. There are four species that have been dubbed "Golden Waves" due to their habit of colonizing fields with bright yellow blooms on limber stems that wave in the slightest breeze. All are *Coreopsis*, also called Tickseed and the specific epithets are *lanceolata*, *tinctoria*, *basalis* and *wrightii*. They vary in that some have maroon at the base of the ray flowers, but all of them fill up any available space and the overall effect is an ocean of yellow waves.



Golden wave coreopsis (*Coreopsis basalis*)



Texas sleepy daisy (*Xanthisma texanum*)

A very common NYC that has been blooming for quite some time is Engelmann's daisy (*Engelmannia peristenia*), which forms many-stemmed clumps and is easily identifiable by its bristly cut leaves (the winter rosettes are noticeable very early). Colorful NYCs commonly called blanket flowers, firewheels or Indian blankets are multicolored, but the overall effect on a speedy drive-by seems to be yellow-orange. We have three species, the most common being *Gaillardia pulchella*.

Then there are the NYCs with unlovely names - broomweed (*Gutierrezia*), sneezeweed (*Helenium*), and camphorweed (*Heterotheca subaxillaris*) - just ask Larry or Kathleen Gfeller about the last one! All three of these plants can be found in waste places (such as burned over areas), highway medians and fallow fields.

Intermixed with crops in the fields and particularly along the field edges and ditches are an abundance of annual sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*). This hardy sunflower is one plant that seems to prosper even in extreme drought. Texas star, with a sneaky yellow flower that gives you the impression of a simple bloom with five petals but is really a composite



Seed from Texas star (*Lindheimera texana*)

with 5 ray flowers, is also known as Lindheimer's daisy (*Lindheimera texana*). The seed heads are quite interesting and worth close scrutiny - very unlike most of the composite family. The various coneflowers need be included in this list - Mexican hat (*Ratibida columnifera*), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and clasping Coneflower (*Rudbeckia amplexicaulis*). All are showy and abundant. Goldenrod, with hundreds of individual little flowers, can form a yellow backdrop along fence lines, edges and creek banks. We have two



Cowpen daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*)

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The Art of Interpretation

by Larry Gfeller

This is a story about personal discovery—mine. Like puppies, unicorns and fairies, small children usually trace a whimsical smile on most people's faces. Me, I wince. Oh sure, I have grandkids and they're delightful little leprechauns . . . when they're sleeping. Awake they are plump, pousy little mischief-makers, generally less than three feet tall with sticky hands, loud voices and unfettered personalities. They have the attention span of a goldfish, climb over everything like swarming ants, and can spring a leak without warning. Logic is useless and they don't care about experience or wisdom. I can't take it for long. To really engage small children requires more inventiveness, more patience and more stamina than I can sustain for long.

There's a reason parents are young people! When I observe the natural ease of young parents working effectively with little kids, I'm totally humbled. How do they do that? There's a difference between quitting and knowing when you're beat. As a lightning rod for requested interpretative hikes, I never considered toddlers a source of lightning. So, when I got that email asking if Kelly Alecci could do an Earth Day program for Bastrop's Early Head Start program at Fisherman's Park, I felt a warm sense of relief. . . she's a sorceress with the little people. Please, God, let her be available!



Ampy (Early Head Start), Kelly (LPMN) and Veronica (Early Head Start)

Kelly was requested by name because she had done this before with swimming success. Turns out, she was available and agreed to do the program. I showed up early to observe and take a few pictures. As I crunched over the playground pea gravel at Fisherman's Park I noticed a distinct chill in the air. A cold front had moved in that morning blowing in sprinkles of moisture and lots of uncertainty. A mom and her little one were testing out the mini-slide, another nearby giving the six-pronged horsey ride a workout. More adults with kids mysteriously appeared out of nowhere. I was greeted by Veronica Carnahan, a veteran family education administrator with Head Start National for 28 years, five of which right here in Bastrop.

"Everybody here?" I asked.

"They'll be coming along shortly," Veronica said.

Soon, eight or ten children with accompanying adults spread over the playground like light sweet crude. Amid shrieks of delight and children running and climbing everywhere, Kelly also arrived with her "black box" of goodies and a big smile. Something flashed in my peripheral vision; it was a little boy squatting in the gravel playing with a toy car, his eyes all pupil, deep and black. This child was dressed in electric colors, vibrant and fetching. His three caretakers were similarly festive. Upon asking, I was told the mother and child were originally from Puerto Rico and the other ladies were the aunt and grandmother who flew to Bastrop to be present for the child's first birthday. A celebration of immense import on the island!



Veronica explained, "Early Head Start caters to everything from pregnant mothers up to 3 years. It's a diverse cultural mix: Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indian, Pakistani, just about everything you can imagine. Approximately 80% of the families are low income, 10% have a disability and 10% come from 'over income'

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Interpretation, cont.

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families. Many of these families have little access to early childhood development programs, so we try to fill that gap.” Obviously, speaking several languages is a plus.

The next character to arrive on the scene was Ampy . . . That would be MariAmparo Elizondo, the driving force behind the program here in Bastrop, also a family education administrator. She proudly informed me that 2015 was the 50th anniversary of the national Head Start Program and that Early Head Start was in the process of expanding. Headquartered with CEN-TEX Family Services, Inc., it is open 5 days a week and carries a student/teacher ratio of 12 students for every teacher (or two families per teacher—they make home visits, you see). It’s an organization dedicated to serving the needs of the community.

Showtime arrived and I was anxious to learn how to avoid a train wreck with a bunch of three-year olds. The baby that was present would have to be the responsibility of its mother. Kelly foraged around the park and pulled up a weed from the damp earth, roots and all. This served as a prop for a simple discussion of how a seed eventually matures into a full-fledged plant with roots, stem, leaves and flower, and then, with the help of the wind or an industrious bee or butterfly, the whole cycle starts over again. Focused attention wafted through the morning breeze for a time, then blew completely away, seemingly on cue. Blithely reacting to the change, Kelly immediately pulled an illustrated book on plants from her black box and began to read to the kids. It worked . . . attention was all on her and what she was reading, like some kind of spell cast over the group. Questions peppered the presentation and it drew enthusiastic responses . . . immediate, knee-jerk contributions offered freely and in unison—these children were participating. She was connecting. I’m thinking to myself, this is interpretation of the highest order!



Tools of the trade

It was time for the center attraction, as Kelly handed out cardboard construction paper parts of a plant to each child—the simple root system fashioned from her own 8-year old’s inverted hand print, leaves, stems



Anatomy of a plant from a child’s eyes

and, of course, a menagerie of leaves—all meticulously cut out and prepared in advance. You’d have thought she was handing out Christmas gifts! With a little glue, glitter and ample help from parents, all of this ended up as each child’s interpretation of a plant—a remembrance. Some finished products looked like plants, others were done in the impressionist style . . . all, especially to the child/parent team involved, were classic works of art.

As attention began to fade once again, Kelly shifted gears—like some frantic scramble to stay one step ahead of the changing tide. She produced little moss-lined cups and partially sprouted “rattlesnake beans.” For a time the children were as silent as a held breath. Once again, each child received all the materials and help needed to plant their own beanstalk to take home and watch it grow. Nursery rhymes or not, I’m sure each child secretly hoped it came with its very own giant, or at least a little boy named Jack to play with.

Without realizing the time, we had burned the better part of 45 minutes and it was time to eat. Ampy and Veronica had prepared “ants on a log,” celery

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Brooks on Books—Early Texas Naturalists

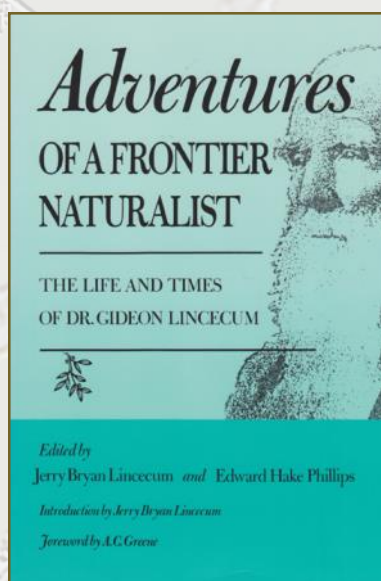
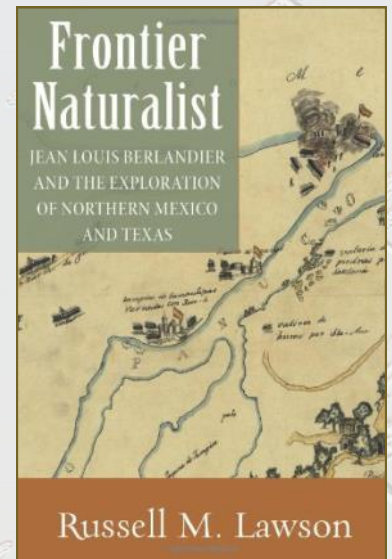
by Bill Brooks

Our Lost Pines Master Naturalists in training were treated to an amazing class on May 4th. Lower Colorado River Authority naturalist Nicholas Cowey was tasked with teaching about early Texas naturalists. Nicholas in turn drafted a rag-tag group of LPMNs and friends to help with the class. The participants, most in early Texas garb, represented seven famous naturalists. One, Joe Tyson, played himself. Joe is a teacher and Texas Department of Transportation ecologist. He developed the first plant zone map for Texas.

If you attended the class or heard about it and want to know more about Nic's naturalists, this issue of Brooks on Books points you to writings and stories about six of them.

Nic kicked off the program with his depiction of Jean Louis Berlandier. I own "Frontier Naturalist: Jean Louis Berlandier and the Exploration of Northern Mexico and Texas" by Russell M. Lawson. This is a good book about his life, studies, and the perils of travel. Berlandier was an artist and drew the Native Americans he met. "The Indians of Texas in 1830" by Berlander and John Ewers captures a fleeting moment in early Texas history.

Our own LPMN Jim Sherrill followed with tales of Ferdinand Jacob Lindheimer. "Life Among the Texas Flora: Ferdinand Lindheimer's Letters to George Engleman" was translated from Old German script by Minetta Goyne. She found the original letters at the Missouri Botanical Garden archives. Lindheimer worked for fellow botanist George Engleman from 1843 through 1852. Lindheimer, the acknowledged "Father of Texas Botany," was also a newspaper publisher and you can still tour his home, the place he published his newspaper in New Braunfels. Lindheimer also helped Prince Carl of Solms settle New Braunfels. For more on that story you can read "Voyage to North America, 1844-1845: Prince Carl of Solms' Texas Diary of People, Places, and Events" by Wolfram M. Von-Maszewski and Theodore G. Gish.



Bridge Maniac Jim Estes told the story of Charles Wright. I didn't find a book totally devoted to Wright so I guess this is as good a time as any to push a children's book, "Wilderness Walkers, Naturalists in Early Texas" by Betsy Warren and Aline Speer. This book covers most of the naturalists in this article and others. It is full of wonderful information for all ages. All I need to say to prove this statement is that when I introduced Nicholas to this book he bought five copies.

I was chosen to represent Gideon Lincecum. This doctor's inquisitive mind is well documented in the books "Gideon Lincecum, 1793-1874: A Biography" by Lois Wood Burkhalter, "Adventures of a Frontier Naturalist: The Life and Times of Dr. Gideon Lincecum" and "Science on the Frontier: Observations of Dr. Gideon Lincecum," both by Jerry Lincecum (a direct descendant of Gideon) and Edward Hake Phillips.

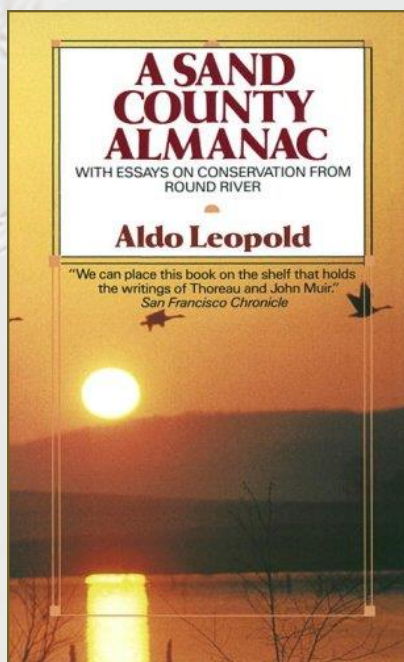
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Brooks on Books, cont.

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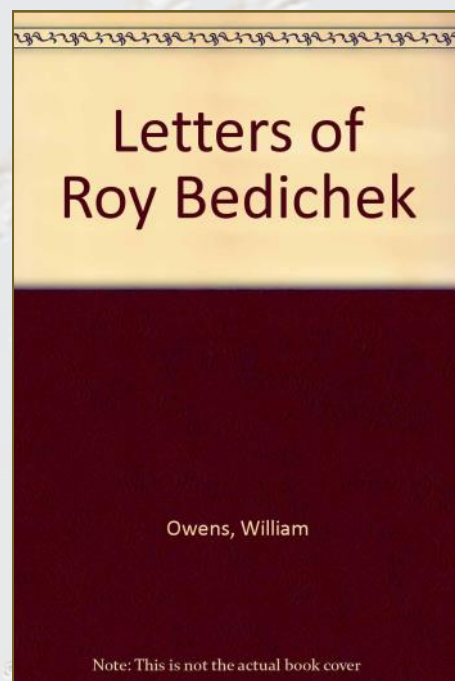
Doug Kelsay, Nic's friend, played the part of Thomas Drummond. You can find out more about Drummond in "Wilderness Walkers" and a small chapter in "Pioneer Naturalists, The Discovery and Naming of North American Plants and Animals" by Howard Ensign Evans. Drummond mysteriously disappeared in Cuba. It was quite effective when Doug got up and left the panel after his spiel.

Chainsaw wizard Larry Gfeller resurrected Roy Bedichek with an amusing story. In the 1950s Roy Bedichek was one part of the triumvirate of Texas writers that included Bedichek (or Bedi as he was called by his friends), J. Frank Dobie, and Walter Prescott Webb. You can see a statue of these three perched on philosopher's rock at their favorite swimming hole, the Zilker Park Pool. You can learn about these three Texans in "Three Friends" by William A. Owens.



Owens also edited "The Letters of Roy Bedichek" where you can get a real feeling for this eloquent wordsmith. Bedichek wrote "Karankaway Country," but his most famous and one of my very favorite books is his "Adventures With A Texas Naturalist." At graduation we all received a copy of Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac." Bedichek's "Adventures With A Texas Naturalist" is called The Sand County Almanac of Texas.

I'd like to personally thank Nicholas for the time and energy he spent to put together this enjoyable program. If we do this again I hope even more of our members will attend.



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Naughty, cont.

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allows them to identify objects before touching them. They have an advanced sense of smell and hearing too, even to the point of hearing earth worms move under the ground. For climbing down a tree head first—an unusual ability for a mammal of its size—raccoons rotate their hind feet so they are pointing backwards. Even so, they are not bothered by a drop of 35-40 feet. Raccoons have a dual cooling system to regulate their temperature. They can both pant (as a dog) and sweat . . . just like football players.

Raccoons are widely believed to “wash” their food before eating it. In fact, the tactile sense of the front paws is improved when rubbing food under water because the water softens the hard layer of skin covering their paws. Manipulating food with their human-like fingers is probably done to remove unwanted particles. Moreover, “washing” is practiced more by raccoons in captivity. Even in captive situations, this dousing of food is believed to be a fixed action pattern adapted from foraging for aquatic food along a shore in the wild. Cleaning dirty food does not seem to be a reason for the dousing seen in raccoons. In other words, we simply don't know why they do it.

Raccoons were once thought to be solitary; we now know this is not entirely true. Related females often share a common area while unrelated males live together in groups of up to four to maintain their positions against competitors during the mating season (January through March) and against other potential invaders. Love-making, to include foreplay, can last over an hour and is usually repeated over several nights, often occurring at central meeting places. Females will mate with more than one male (social behavior, it seems, is not unlike that found on modern college campuses).

Gestation period is 65 days, with two to five “kits” or “cubs” to a litter, all raised by their mother until late fall or even through their first winter. Young are born blind, deaf and helpless. Males have no part in raising young. Mothers will isolate themselves from other raccoons until their young are old enough to defend themselves against aggressive males. In the fall, after their mother has shown them dens and feeding grounds, the juvenile group splits up. While many females will stay close to the home range of their mother, the males usually move more than 12 miles away. This is thought to be an instinctual behavior to prevent inbreeding.

Natural predators include bobcats, coyotes and the great horned owl, the latter mainly preying on young raccoons. Despite their high level of intelligence, life expectancy for the typical raccoon is slightly over 3 years in the wild. Rabies and distemper take a toll, but the two largest threats are nighttime mortality (road kill) and hunters. If you live in or near deciduous forest or woodlands, chances are you are living with raccoons. They can be a challenge—just ask the cat! ✨



Newsletter Deadline

Submission deadline for the next issue is August 21, 2015. We welcome relevant contributions, photos, announcements, or other material relating to the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program, particularly those pertaining to our local area. Submissions may be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling, and space requirements. Please send information to the editor at Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com.

Interpretation, cont.

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sections filled with peanut butter, sprinkled with raisins on top. This was WAY cooler than candy! Snack time was somewhat less than controlled chaos, but it was clear the kiddos (and their doting parents) were having a blast. After attempting to sit still for this extended period, the great tsunami was released to swarm the playground equipment. They slipped through the gates like dirty water through a colander.

As I contemplated what I had just witnessed, I realized it wasn't really different from interpretation we do on the trail with adults, just different notes struck from the same chord: You tell 'em what you're going to do, you do it, then you tell 'em what you told 'em. Being ever watchful of fading interest, Kelly-the-entertainer switched activities to ensure everyone was always occupied with something new, something fresh, something unexpected. This was about as far as you can get from a classroom, yet creativity, imagination and participation generated a learning experience. Everyone went home with something uniquely their own. By comments from admiring parents, everyone enjoyed the fresh air, the time together and the fun that was seemingly generated out of thin air. Quite a magic show. I learned a lot about the dedication of the Early Head Start organization . . . and the art of interpretation. I probably learned more than anyone else there that morning.



Kelly demonstrates, with rapt attention from her charges, how to plant a beanstalk.

Lost Pines Master Naturalist Monthly Business Meetings

The monthly business meeting, which occurs on the third Monday of each month, is an opportunity to hear first hand about volunteer and advanced training opportunities. The chapter's project leaders update members on their work and recruit volunteers if needed. In addition, chapter administration issues are discussed: brief committee reports, financial decisions, and news from our state organizers. Stay tuned to Meetup.com to learn more about upcoming meetings.

One hour volunteer time is awarded for attendance at qualifying business meetings.

STATE PROGRAM CONTACTS

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SPONSOR CONTACTS

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Blooming, cont.

(Continued from page 5)

common goldenrods, which are rough goldenrod (*Solidago radula*) and tall goldenrod (*S. altissima*). The prolific cowpen daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*) colonizes old pastures and roadsides and is also known as crownbeard. Having arrived at the end of the alphabet, we have sleepy daisy (*Xanthisma texanum*). This DYC is slow to “wake up in the mornings,” i.e., not spreading its ray flowers until near noon (just like the white Arkansas doze daisy *Aphanostephus skirrhobasis*).

Latin 1013 by Judy Turner

Ahh, *compositum flavo condemno*! Did you figure out the Latin meaning yet? Now, how many of you have found the five plants with a botanist’s name attached to them? And the one named after a famous person? One of the plants has a genus name that is completely made up by a nineteenth-century polymath or “Renaissance Man.” As for the English translations, the poor Arkansas doze daisy has the longest. *Aphanostephus* translates to “inconspicuous garland” and *skirrhobasis* means “hard swelling base.” So the Arkansas lazy daisy is an inconspicuous garland with a hard swelling base. Aren’t you glad it has been shortened?

Coreopsis is from the Greek meaning bug-like, referring to the achenes which supposedly look like ticks. The *C. basalis* suggests “bottom layer,” *C. lanceolata* “slender-pointed,” and *C. tinctoria* “sap which can stain.”

Other specific epithets with their translations: *peristenia* = extra bands, *pulchella* = pretty, *amplexicaulis* = stem clasping, *altissima* = tallest, *hirta* = hairy. And, in fact, a number of plants have *hirta* as part of their scientific name. Take *Rudbeckia hirta*. It is described as “*hirta*” because the oval leaves are covered with bristly hairs, distinguishing it from all the rest of the plants with yellow ray flowers mentioned above. Picture this scenario. You and several other botanist types are strolling along and see a yellow rayed composite. Someone calls out “black-eyed Susan,” then “*Rudbeckia*.” You reach out and grab one of the rough bristly leaves and announce, “Ouch! *Rudbeckia hirta* me.” Soon you will be infamous for your identification prowess.

Snippets

OUR TOAD TO RUIN

If you haven’t read the July issue of *Texas Monthly*, you should. Our very own Bill Brooks is featured in Alex Dropkin’s article, “Our Toad to Ruin,” about the disappearance of the horny toad (*Phrynosoma cornutum*). Bill is a past president of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society (HLCS) and is currently in charge of HLCS merchandise. Congratulations on your contributions to the article, Bill!



MUD DAUBERS

For over a week now I’ve been watching a mud dauber build and provision a nest above and alongside a light fixture in our garage . . . fascinating. Instead of stocking a nest cell with one or two large spiders, mud daubers cram as many as two dozen small spiders into a nest cell. They appear to know exactly what they are hunting for, and where to find it. To capture a spider, the wasp grabs it and stings it. The venom from the sting does not kill the spider, but paralyzes and preserves it so it can be transported and stored in the nest cell until consumed by the larva.

