

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 13, No. 9

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

September 2021

President's Report

Summer is winding down and hopefully, the temperatures will come down soon too. The birds are talking about flying south and I have noticed the spiders packing up and preparing their egg sacks for the fall and winter. Change is all around us as everything seems to be busy preparing for winter.

The monarch migration has also started and we will be tagging soon! We will have a training session one evening out at Lake Wichita and we will pass out the tags after that. As soon as we set a date, we will let you know. I hope we can use all of our tags this year.

Congratulations to Betty Bowles, Sharon Hyde and Ray Hyde for re-certifying this month. Thank you for all the time you have spent volunteering.

And, speaking of volunteering, our annual Sikes Lake Cleanup will start at 9:00 am, Saturday, September 11 at Sikes Lake. We will meet near the Sikes Lake Center (behind the Redwine Wellness Center on the MSU Campus). From there we will join other volunteers to help clean up around the lake.

This month we will be doing a hybrid meeting and we are pleased to have Jill Garcia with the Trinity River Authority here to present our program. Those who would like can meet in person at MSU in Bolin Science Hall, Room 209. If you would prefer to attend via Zoom, watch for the link to the meeting in your email. Either way, I hope you will join us at 7:00 pm on September 7, 2021.

– Laura



A Grass Spider toting her fashionable blue egg sack to safety.

LOCALS

SEPTEMBER 7: Rolling Plains Chapter Meeting
- 7:00pm at MSU's Bolin Science Hall, room 209. If you would prefer to attend via Zoom, watch for the link to the meeting in your email. Either way, I hope you will join us.

The program: Jill Garcia with the Trinity River Authority.

September 1- October 1- Standard registration is open for the **22nd Texas Master Naturalist Program Annual Meeting**. Go to www.txmu.tamu.edu for more information and to register.

September 11 - Sikes Lake Clean Up - 9:00am - Meet at the area behind the Redwine Student Wellness Center at Sikes Lake.

September 24 - Wildlife Tracking 101 at Caprock Canyons State Park & Trailway 6:00p to 7:00p. Learn the basics of animal tracking and about some of the resources you might want to take on your next hike! The soil substrate and numerous spring fed creeks make Caprock Canyons State Park a great place to track animals!

TWO CREEPY CRAWLERS, ONE VICTOR

By Rachael Bale, *ANIMALS* Executive Editor, *National Geographic*



If you saw a spider attacking a snake, would you feel sorry for the snake? Or would you cheer the spider on?

Spiders and snakes are two of the most commonly feared animals, so it's an interesting thought experiment—it forces you to decide which one you like more (or dread less). For many of you, thinking about either—not to mention both at the same time—may be more than enough to give you the heebie-jeebies.

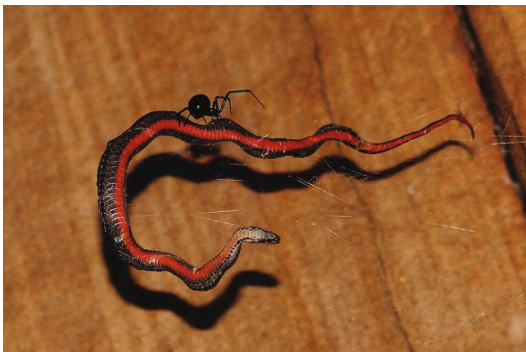
This mash-up is on my mind thanks to this Nat Geo story by Jason Bittel, which reveals that scientists have identified at least 40 species of spiders that prey on at least 90 species of snakes, on every continent except Australia. (Pictured above, a spider preys on a snake in Peru's Amazon rainforest; below, a black widow predator in West Virginia.) Spiders eating snakes is far more common than anyone realized, and it has all sorts

of implications for how we understand ecosystem health, snake conservation, and spider behavior.

On average, the snakes preyed upon by spiders are small—usually around just 10 inches in length. But even these little serpents are many times the size of the arachnids, which averaged body lengths of less than half an inch.

In most cases (such as the theridiids), these itty-bitsy spiders build extremely tough webs, which often extend to the ground and ensnare unsuspecting snakes. Once caught, the spider delivers its venomous bite to paralyze its victim, wraps the snake in silk, and hauls it aloft to dine. Digestive enzymes in the spider's bite liquefy the snake's soft parts, just as they would with a fly. The spider then takes its time slurping up the insides, with some meals stretching out days and even weeks.

Perhaps surprisingly, it turns out a fair number of people are willing to intervene in spider attacks to try to save the snake, even if it's venomous. Of the 319 spider-vs.-snake incidents researchers examined, 11 percent ended with a human stepping in.



Churning Out That Carbon

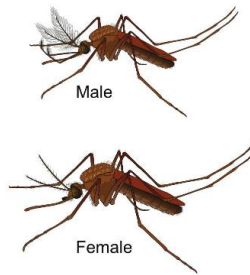
According to an international team of researchers, wild pigs (*Sus scrofa*) are releasing around 4.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually across the globe by uprooting carbon trapped in soil, the equivalent of 1.1 million cars. The team used predictive population modeling coupled with advanced mapping to pinpoint the climate damage wild pigs were causing across five continents. The researchers simulated carbon emissions from wild pig soil damage based on previous research from America, Europe, and China. They modeled the soil area disturbed from long-term soil damage across multiple climate conditions, vegetation types, and elevations.



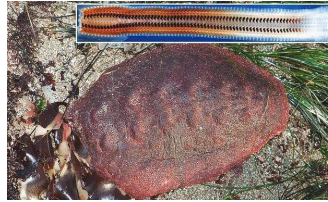
Wild pig damage. Credit: Karan A. Rawlings, University of Georgia.

As the wild pigs churn over the soil looking for food, carbon is released into the atmosphere. Since soil contains nearly three times as much carbon than in the atmosphere, even a small fraction of carbon emitted from soil has the potential to accelerate climate change. Multiply that by the 36,000 to 124,000 square kilometers being uprooted by the millions of invasive wild pigs and there is potential for a problem. This affects soil health, carbon emissions, biodiversity, and sustainable development in local ecosystems. The models indicate that if wild pigs continue to expand into areas with abundant soil carbon, there may be an even greater risk of greenhouse gas emissions in the future.

Only female mosquitoes 'bite.' They need the blood meal to produce eggs. The male mosquitoes feed on nectar. You can tell the difference between a male and a female by the antennae. Female antennae are straight and thin, while males are bristly on both sides like feathers.



A weird mollusk, affectionately known as the "wandering meatloaf," has teeth made of a rare iron mineral, previously found only along rocky coastlines. Researchers detected the rare iron mineral — called san-tabarbarite — in the teeth of the rock-grazing mollusk *Cryptochiton stelleri*.



Unlike other ant species, Indian jumping ants (*Harpegnathos saltator*) do not die with their queens. Rather, select females participate in month-long antenna-boxing matches to decide who gets to be the new matriarch. The victorious female then expands her ovaries and shrinks her brain to three-quarters of its original size.

RESOURCE CORNER

Celestron Trailseeker 10x32 Binoculars
Price on Amazon: \$161.99



This pair of *Celestron Trailseeker* 10x32 binoculars are premium quality binoculars at an affordable price. Superior coatings and optics allow for enhanced light transmission, creating brighter and sharper images. Improved resolution and contrast provide unique image detail to improve your wildlife viewing. Their lightweight and durable body make them perfect for birding, hiking, or any other activity where transportability is a factor.

Rugged magnesium alloy frames allow for a sleek design light in weight with the added waterproof feature. These ergonomically designed binoculars have ease of use with fit and function in mind, making them excellent for bird-watching trips.

Unique twist-up and multi-stop eyecups provide ease of use and comfort with or without glasses. This pair claims metal eyecups that offer longer life and correct positioning, which are more durable than plastic eyecups. Their expansive field of view makes them perfect for following moving points without needing to move your binoculars. The TrailSeeker binocular is also relatively light at 2 lbs.

Key Features:

- Magnification: 8x
- Angular field of view: 8.1 degrees
- Objective lens diameter: 1.7inch(42 mm)
- Eye relief: 0.7inch (17 mm)
- Bright images
- No fogging
- Wide field of view



Texas Master Naturalist 2021 Annual Meeting October 21st-24th

Standard Registration – Open September 1st – October 1st

Standard – Full Event Registration – \$350.00

Standard – Two Day (Friday and Saturday only) – \$325.00

Put it on your calendar now as we prepare for our 22nd Texas Master Naturalist Program Annual Meeting, an event to gather, learn and celebrate another year of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. We're preparing this year's meeting as a HYBRID Event – both online and in-person at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Marriott in Irving, Texas. The event will be held the weekend of Thursday October 21st through Sunday the 24th, 2021 with plenty of activities throughout the event!

Join us for a long weekend of greenspace adventures in the hideaways of our largest urban area in Texas.

go to www.txmu.tamu.edu for more information and to register.

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