

The Pine Warbler



October 2008

Vol.28, No.7

EAST TEXAS NATURE

By Diane Cabiness, Texas Master Naturalist

"If nothing moves in your landscape but a lawnmower, it's time to think of designing a natural yard."—Rochelle Whiteman

Gary Haugen, president of International Justice Mission relates a family vacation from his youth in his book, *Just Courage*. When his dad, 2 brothers and he arrived at Mt. Rainer and were told they were all going to try to reach the base camp, ten year old Gary opted out and stayed behind in cushy comfort at the visitor's center. Mr. Haugen writes, "I went on the trip, but missed the adventure."

If you do not have garden, times a wasting.... there is an outdoor adventure waiting for you. I spent Sept. 6 and 7th with friends in case Hurricane Ike turned out to be as bad as predicted by the weather forecasters. As soon as the rains stopped, the Cardinals and Carolina wrens came out to serenade us with the most heavenly songs. That did it for me. I missed my wildscape. I packed my bags and bid ado.

Who should greet me but fighting hummers, hungry titmice, Carolina wrens singing at the top of their lungs, foraging raccoons, and frogs hopping about the yard. For me walking outside my front door is like falling down a hole and landing in Alice's Wonderland. One never knows what will happen in a wildscape, you just know it will be memorable.

For those of you folks who have a low spot in your yard and are looking for native plants that will be easy to maintain, please, consider these two likely candidates: Mist flower and Salt Marsh Mallow.

Mistflower, *Conoclinium* (*Eupatorium*) *coelestinum* is sometimes referred to as Wild Ageratum. This rhizomatous perennial can reach 3 ft in the shade and 2 ft in the sun. Often forming colonies of small flower heads of blue to lavender and fluffy in appearance, similar to Ageratums used as garden bedding plants.

Mistflower is adapted to most soil types, but is especially suited to heavy textured and to highly organic soils but can be found in sandy soils as individual plants.

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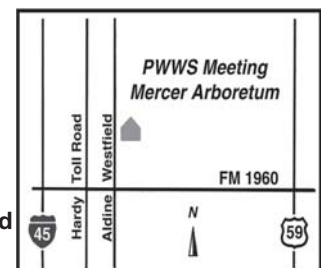
October Presentation O Extremo Norte' do Brasil with David and Ednelza Henderson

Take the Florida Everglades. Surround with Southeast Arizona's mountains. Cover the mountains with rainforest. Drain the whole area with clearwater streams and lakes straight out of Central Texas, and feed these into a river that dwarfs the Mississippi. Pepper the wetlands with palm groves, and the drier areas with cactus. Now fill this all with jaguars, anteaters, tortoises, lizards, incredibly exotic fishes, insects, and plants, and as many bird species as what normally occur in all of the US and Canada. Pack all this and much, much more into an area slightly smaller than the state of Minnesota. Then you will begin to have an idea of the Brazilian state of Roraima - *O Extremo Norte' do Brasil*.

In July and August, longtime PWS members David and Ednelza Henderson spent two weeks canvassing this state on Brazil's far northern frontier, while visiting family in Boa Vista, the state capitol. From spending a week in a rainforest *sítio* to soaking up some of the state's many *cachoeiras e banhos*, or just relaxing and enjoying the many avian visitors to her sister's guava tree in downtown Boa Vista, Ednelza and David experienced a bit of the state's natural heritage firsthand. Far beyond a simple ecotour, however, they also worked the land, went shopping, and prepared meals from the region, gaining a deep appreciation for the area's frontier culture as well.

Come join David and Ednelza as they share their unique perspective on this very unique land.

Date: October 21
Time: Social 7:00 p.m.
Meeting 7:30 p.m.
Place: Mercer Arboretum
22307 Aldine-Westfield



Elephants bellow, donkeys bray;
Most voters silent on Election Day.





Heart Happenings

As we all know only too well, Galveston took a real beating from Hurricane Ike. I worried for several days about the 200 loggerheads and several Kemp's ridleys in their facility behind the San Luis Ho-

tel. I finally received a call that the turtles came through the storm all right although the pump and equipment used to bring Gulf water to them was destroyed. Ben Higgins, the senior biologist at the Galveston Lab, and his wife are living in a trailer by the turtle "barn" since their Galveston home was torn up in the storm. Ben is a very creative person and I know he will figure out a way to get fresh water to the turtles.

Next spring, we will need to redouble efforts to get people to patrol beaches on the north Texas coast. With many homes gone on Bolivar, Gilcrest and Crystal Beach and east to the Louisiana border, the turtles will find more room to nest until homes are built again. Surfside had its share of nestings and many homes there were washed away.

Just before Ike came calling, Texas A&M University at Galveston had raised almost \$25,000 to match the challenge donation offered by Attorney Joe Jamail of Houston. Mr. Jamail owns a home in Galveston and was enraged when he read that the Texas General Land Office was being forced to cut funds for patrolling the beaches of Galveston and Bolivar Peninsula next year. The GLO received word that they would receive \$50,000 less in federal funds for next year. Hopefully, the full amount of \$25,000 was raised so patrols can start next spring.

Another bit of news, the four wheel vehicles used for sea turtle patrols were stored at the Galveston State Park which suffered severe damage to all of its buildings including a new one just finished this summer. Texas Parks and Wildlife will be deciding whether to rebuild the Galveston State Park as well as Sea Rim which was scheduled to open this fall after being torn up Rita. We'll have to wait and see if the facilities return as before or if they are scaled back.

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The soil conditions that are enjoyed by Mistflower are moist to wet sites, such as low woods, wet meadows, and ditches. This wildflower will readily grow in sun to partial shade. Butterflies nectar on this wildflower from late summer to fall. I have often enjoyed watching migrating monarchs feasting on this flower.

Salt Marsh Mallow or Seashore Mallow, *Koseletzkya virginica*, has pink (there is a white selection also) 3" hibiscus like flowers that appear throughout the summer, occasionally into fall on 4-6' stems with a max width of 4 feet. This hibiscus has a

coarse and hairy texture. The growing conditions for this plant vary from slightly brackish, freshwater marshes, ditches, the edge of swamps to regular garden soils plus all day sun to ½ day. I first spied this lovely deciduous hibiscus on the way to Anahuac to go birding about 30 years ago. Ruby-throated hummingbirds and some butterflies will visit this desirable perennial. The passion pink flowers are a lovely addition in a flower arrangement.

"Labor intensive, manicured, exotic turf lawns became the rage during the late 1800's after Frank J. Scott's book, *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds* became the bible for American homeowners. Today, food plants & native alternatives to exotic turf grass are replacing old-fashioned, large lawns... An Ecologically functional landscape offers so much more than a sterile, static monoculture landscape. It offers imagination to our children, plus beauty, color, sound and wonders to us all. It is cleaner, quieter and healthier, and may even increase property values."

"Did you know that at least 60% of water consumed on the West Coast, and 30% on the East Coast, goes to watering lawns? Also, U.S. News and World Report state that a 1000 sq. ft. lawn requires 10,000 gallons of water per summer to maintain a "green" look." (www.squidoo.com/naturally_native_wildflower_gardens)

To become a gardener in Texas is to fall in love with flowers that vary during different seasons. The two plants I mention in this article are hardy and easy for the "newbee". And like Alice you will meet at times some unusual wildlife in your wildscape, but unlike what happened to poor Alice your critters will not talk back to you or I certainly hope they do not talk back to you.

"Gardening is the art that uses flowers and plants as paint, and the soil and sky as canvas."—Elizabeth Murray

Please share your nature experiences with me at dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net.

October Field Trip Sam Houston State Park

Our trip for October will be on Saturday, October 18 to Sam Houston State Park where we will look for late migrants and early winter arrivals. This will be an easy to moderate hike through the park led by our own Pat Collins. We will meet at the park store at 8:30 and break for lunch. You can bring your own lunch or get something to eat at the store. Bring water and insect repellent. If it rains, the trip will be canceled. There is a \$3 charge to enter the park.





Piney Woods Wildlife Society
 P.O. Box 189
 Spring, Texas 77383-0189

Piney Woods Wildlife Society Field Trips

Sam Houston State Park

Saturday, October 18 - Leader: Pat Collins

Bird Walks with Al Barr - 2nd Saturday of every month through May, 2009. 8:30-10:30 at Mercer Arboretum. All that participants need to bring is some binoculars and mosquito repellent if it is needed.

Visit: <http://pineywoodswildlifesociety.org>

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For membership information write to us at P.O. Box 189, Spring Texas 77383-0189. Annual Dues: \$15.00 per household.

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The deadline for submissions is the 25th of the previous month, earlier if possible. Always add "PWWS" in the subject line. All emails will be resonded to with in 3 days. If you do not recieve a response please call 832 717-3276. All articles are subject to approval by the PWWS Board.

Please send new address changes and corrections to Mike Drummond at drummond@thedrummonds.com and add PWWS to the subject line. Thank you.