

The Pine Warbler



April 2009

East Texas Nature

Vol.29, No.4

How Much Should I Water? by Diane Cabiness, Texas Master Naturalist

The watering of a garden requires as much judgment as the seasoning of a soup.—Helena Rutherford Ely

In answer to the question “How much should I water?”—Remember the goal is to get water to the roots of your plants. Wetting the soil surface without penetrating the root zone does nothing for your plants. Over watering literally drowns plants, rotting their roots and inhibiting nutrient absorption. So how much is right? The best way to find out if plants need water is to watch for signs that they are thirsty. You can also check how well your soil retains moisture by digging into the root zone with a garden trowel. If the soil feels moist (usually feels cool), wait a day or two and check again. Water deeply but less frequently, keeping in mind the weather, the season, your soil condition, and the specific needs of plants.

To determine the delivery rate of your watering system, perform this simple test. When it's time to water (check soil moisture with a trowel first), run sprinklers or drip/soaker lines for 15 minutes, then wait a few hours and dig into the soil to see how deep the water has reached. Repeat until soil is moist as far down as the roots grow. Check the soil every few weeks in summer to keep up with seasonal changes. Avoid water run-off onto sidewalks and driveways.

By checking your system periodically you will have one more reason to get out of that air conditioned house or office. I remember one particularly hot summer evening; I had been running my soaker hose along the raised bed that runs parallel to my east fence line. A surprise was in store for me that muggy, summer evening. I started poking my fingers into the soil along where the soaker hose ran to determine the moisture content in the soil when out of the blue hopped a large toad from a hole underneath the soaker hose. He looked up at me, blinked with his huge dark eyes and then turned around as if in disgust with this human that towered over him. He turned around dismissing me as a big bother and hopped back into his hole. Taken aback with this turn of events I prayed I had not caused soil to sprinkle down on his warty head.

There are a delightful variety of native and low-water-use plants that grow well in East Texas and on the Coast of our fair state. Some plants add year-round greenery and texture. Others offer bursts of seasonal color. Xeriscape zoning helps create a seasonal palette for the senses while conserving our very precious resource—water.

“Water links us to our neighbor in a way more profound and complex than any other.”—John Thorson

March Presentation Texas Amphibian Watch Presented by Scott Kiester

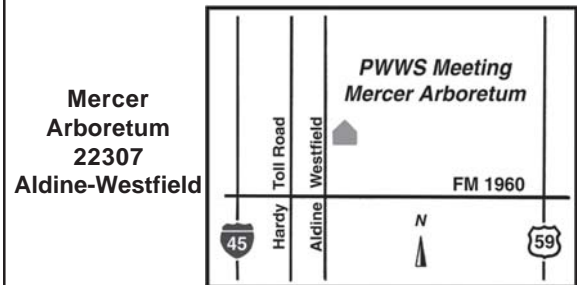
Let's Learn about the Texas Amphibian Watch!

The April program will be given by Scott Kiester who will discuss the Texas Amphibian Watch (TAW) which is part of the Texas Nature Trackers program of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Scott has been a Texas Master Naturalist for six years and is currently the Heartwood Chapter of Master Naturalists Chapter State Representative. He has been working with North American Amphibian Monitoring Program for five years.

Scott's program will last approximately one hour followed by a trip to Mercer's pond areas to listen for frogs and toads. Participants interested in data collection and reporting will be provided with monitoring packets that include data collection forms for their use and additional details about reporting the data collected to the TAW program. Since amphibians breathe through their skin, they are particularly sensitive to climate and environmental changes affecting air and water quality.



Date: April 21 **Time:** Social 7:00 p.m.
Meeting 7:30 p.m.



Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.





Heart Happenings

Thanks to the PWWS members who came to Sea Turtle Saturday at the Zoo on February 28! It was great to see friendly and familiar faces in the crowd. The entire event was a success and a lot of great comments have been received about the presentations that were made.

Of course, the most exciting thing for me was the surprise presentation of the Houston Zoo's 2009 Alban Heiser Award with a check for \$1000 now deposited in the PWWS/HEART treasury. The award was made to Carole Allen and HEART "In recognition of notable contributions to appreciation and preservation of the earth's heritage of living creatures, their environment, their ecology and their relation to human welfare."

From now on it is a waiting game to see if Kemp's ridleys again visit the upper Texas coast to nest. A lot of sand has been replaced on both Galveston Island and Bolivar Peninsula but a number of questions remain as whether or not the turtles will come back. Dr. Andre Landry of Texas A&M University at Galveston has surveyed the beaches and is hopeful that we will see turtles this spring and early summer. More people are needed to talk the beaches whenever they can to look for tracks or nesters. (Please send me an e-mail if you do any walking to look for turtles. Just give the date, time involved and location. This information is very important to the researchers.)

After this year, no more funds for patrolling will be available from the Texas General Land Office which was also receiving funds from the federal government. Anyone with any ideas about raising at least \$50,000 for 2010 should contact me immediately. Also, if we could raise \$8,000, we can get the state of Texas to design a sea turtle license plate. From then on, proceeds would be received for sea turtle patrolling from the sale of the plates. It would, of course, be a tax-deductible donation to a non-profit organization. Let me know if you have \$8,000 laying around unused.

April is a month of Earth Day celebrations and there will be a sea turtle table at North Harris County College (Lone Star System), the Woodlands and the Houston Zoo on several days. We may even be at an Astros game on April 22! Thanks to everyone who volunteers to help or stop by.



Carole Allen receives the Houston Zoo's 2009 Alban Heiser Award

PWWS members Spencer and Abigail Stones learn about robotics and sea turtle conservation from Steve Gomez of Schlumberger, the mastermind of the program.

Adventures of the Rolling Stones

The Stones family and Grambo Allen took advantage of Jane's spring break from medical school to visit the Lost Maples State Natural Area the first week of March. Spring is in the air with red bud blooming and trees showing delicate shades of green along the Sabinal River.



Drought conditions are evident with no campfires allowed but the peace and quiet of West Texas was marvelous. We attracted cardinals, titmice, finches and chickadees to a birdfeeder by the camper and also saw Rio Grande turkeys and canyon towhee nearby.



We drove 50 miles on a misty day to find the Devil's Sinkhole Natural Area at Rocksprings. The only access is by a special bus driven by someone from the Devil's Sinkhole Society. As we drove to get to the bus, the driver took his lunchhour at 10:30 a.m., so we weren't able to see the Sinkhole.

Stay tuned for the next adventure of the Rolling Stones!



The March PWS Program

Dennis Johnston, Parks Administrator for Precinct 4, gave a fascinating review of the Spring Creek Greenway Projects and news about parks on the drawing board for our area. Dennis and Commissioner Eversole are to be commended for their work to obtain acreage along both Cypress and Spring Creek for parks, hiking trails and other uses for the public. An aerial view of the creeks showed the damage done by sand pit operators and developers who remove acres of trees and growth to remove sand and then leave the area without replacing the plant material. Senate Bill 800 introduced by Senator Tommy Williams of Montgomery County would require sand pit owners to replace topsoil and trees after taking the sand.

To make a comment about this bill, go to <http://www.statesurge.com/bills/477136-sb-800-texas>

Carole Allen sent this message: "Areas along the San Jacinto, Cypress and Spring Creek should not be exploited by developers or anyone taking sand. The acreage that is disturbed should be returned to its natural state so that wildlife and forests can be preserved as well as the water quality of the rivers and creeks being affected by development or exploitation of natural resources. Law enforcement is needed to prevent ATV racing and vehicle damage to banks along the waterways." -Carole Allen



Pineywoods members enjoyed themselves at El Franco Lee Park last March, where we saw lots of interesting birds and got a list of sixty four species. Birds included a Bald Eagle which we were able to watch the whole time we were there as it sat on a snag, periodically flying off to chase ducks and to catch a fish. The day began with dense fog which lifted by 10a.m. and was followed by beautiful sunshine for the afternoon. We walked the trail around the lake and along Clear Creek where we also found two small snakes and many butterflies. We had lunch in the Gazebo over the water sharing the lake with the eagle, nutria and lots of ducks and wading birds. After a slow start, it turned into a great field trip. -Jennifer Backo

April Field Trip - Kleb Woods Nature Preserve and Historical Farm with Jennifer Backo

Join The Pineywoods Wildlife Society on April 18th at 8a.m. for a visit to Kleb Woods a park project of Precinct 3. The county acquired the property in 1999 after the death of Elmer Kleb who lived there his whole life without modern conveniences, but surrounded by the wild-life and trees that he loved. We will walk the trails to look for migratory birds and enjoy the new growth of Spring plants and animals. After walking the trails, we will tour the old nineteenth century farm buildings which have been lovingly restored by dedicated volunteers and staff.

To get to Kleb, go West on Fm 2920 through Tomball and continue to Mueschke Road (approx. 6 miles) turn left at the light and go South to Draper Road (approx. 1 mile), turn right on Draper and into the parking lot on your left. Walk down the trail to the Visitor Center.

We will go for lunch to one of the restaurants in the vicinity or you can bring lunch and eat it on the front porch. However, it is a good idea to bring water and a snack. Come prepared for rain or heat. The trails are easy walking and we will probably spend several hours on them.

If you have questions about the trip, contact Jennifer Backo at jennb@hal-pc.org or 281-351-8615.

May Field Trip

On May 9, Pineywoods Wildlife Society will have a field trip to Jones State Forest in Montgomery County. It is the home of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and other forest breeders. More details in next months Pine Warbler.



"To get the full value of Joy, you must have people to divide it with." - Mark Twain

And so you are cordially invited to share

Music for a Sunday Afternoon

with Karen Stockton, pianist

Sherman Clay Piano Max April 26, 2009
7530 FM 1960 West, Houston 77070 4:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Prelude in C Major, WTC #1.....J.S. Bach
Sonata in C, K. #545. Allegro.....Mozart
Nocturne in C# Minor, posthumous.....Chopin
Etude in F Major, Op. 10, #8.....Chopin
Clair de lune, from Suite
Bergamasque.....Debussy
Jeux d'Eau.....Ravel
Nottuno.....Respighi
Andalucia (Suite Espagnole).....Lecuna
Andalucia
Malaguena
Autumn Leaves.....Mercer, Prevert, Kosma, Williams, Stockton



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

Piney Woods Wildlife Society Field Trips

Kleb Woods Nature Preserve and Historical Farm

April 18, 2009 at 8a.m. - Jennifer Backo

Jones State Forest, Montgomery County

May 9, 2009

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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Heart Hotline.....281444-6204



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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.

Publisher: Allison Marks
Publish1@copperheadfarms.net or
jdfagm@swbell.net
 P.O. Box 131776 Spring, TX 77393

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.