

# The Pine Warbler



November 2009

Vol.29, No.8

## East Texas Nature

### Up Pawpaw by Diane Cabiness, Texas Master Naturalist

*"Where, oh where is pretty little Susie?  
Where, oh where is pretty little Susie?  
Where, oh where is pretty little Susie?  
Way down yonder in the paw-paw patch.*

*Come on, kids, let's go find her,  
Come on, kids, let's go find her,  
Come on, kids, let's go find her,  
Way down yonder in the paw-paw patch.*

*Pickin' up pawpaw, puttin' 'em in her pockets,  
Pickin' up pawpaw, puttin' 'em in her pockets,  
Pickin' up pawpaw, puttin' 'em in her pockets,  
Way down yonder in the paw-paw patch.  
("The Paw Paw Patch, Traditional folk song)*

The American Indian is credited with spreading the pawpaw, *Asimina triloba* across the eastern US to eastern Kansas and Texas, and from the Great Lakes almost to the Gulf. The trees were discovered in 1541 by the Spanish explorer, Hernando Desoto, on an excursion into the Mississippi Valley, and he sent plant samples back to Europe.

The deep winter dormancy of the tree makes it highly frost tolerant, enduring temperatures of -25 degrees F or lower. Because of their deep root system it is not practical for the average home gardener to keep this native in a pot. Fossils prove the pawpaw is indigenous to the US. Sad to say pawpaws are reported to be endangered or threatened in the forests of New York and New Jersey where it grows naturally.

The pawpaw is a deciduous, often narrowly conical tree growing from about 12 feet to around 25 feet. Pawpaw trees are prone to producing root suckers a few feet from the trunk. The suckers do not seem to produce flowers and fruit.

*cont. on page 3*



## Piney Woods Wildlife Society to hear about Big Bend National Park

### November Presentation Presented by John and Gloria Jones

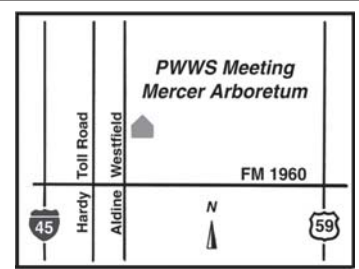
John and Gloria Jones are well known for their photographic skills and slide presentations. Their program for the Piney Woods Wildlife Society on November 17 will be about the Big Bend National Park.

The Jones describe Big Bend as a gem in our national park system with its name coming from its location in deep, remote and rugged southwest Texas where the Rio Grande River makes a big southward bend into the Mexico states of Coahuila and Chihuahua. The Chisos Mountains rise majestically almost 8,000 feet from the center of the park creating ecological systems varying from moist floodplains of the river and vast tracts of desert, to mountains with lush canyons and pine forest. This leads to an extremely diverse kingdom of plant and animal life.

*cont. on page 2*

Date: November 16  
Time: Social 7:00 p.m.  
Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Mercer  
Arboretum  
22307  
Aldine-Westfield



Walls for the wind, a roof for the rain and tea beside the fire.  
Laughter to cheer you, those you love near you  
and all that your heart might desire.





## Heart Happenings

November will be a big month although it isn't nesting season for the sea turtles. HEART will have a booth at the

annual Conference for the Advancement of Science Teaching (CAST) in Galveston on November 5, 6 and 7. It's a great opportunity to meet hundreds of science teachers from around the state. The Conference is set for Moody Gardens. If anyone in PWWS would like to spend an hour or two talking about sea turtles to teachers, just call me! It will begin Thursday afternoon at 1:30 and continue until noon Saturday.

The next big event includes a trip to California. The Sea Turtle Restoration Project (STRP) is celebrating its 20th year of working for sea turtles and the marine environment. Their website says they have "been making waves to protect these gentle giants for 20 years! Founded by Todd Steiner under the guidance of David Brower at the Earth Island Institute the organization first protected Nicaragua's sea turtles, and has grown to take on formidable foes and win." A evening dinner and party called "The Big Splash" will be held at the Brower Center near the University of California at Berkeley on November 14. Anyone who would like to attend, just let me know.

HEART (Help Endangered Animals-Ridley Turtles) is part of STRP which confuses a lot of people. HEART also continues to be a standing committee of the Piney Woods Wildlife Society, so it is alive and well in two ways. Although the server for our website was recently hacked, we are restoring it at [www.ridleyturtles.org](http://www.ridleyturtles.org). More details about STRP can be found at [www.seaturtles.org](http://www.seaturtles.org).

Good news about the documentary to replace the old "Heart-break Turtle." The Trull Foundation of Palacios has given \$5000 and the Houston Zoo is contributing \$2500. Only \$12,500 more and we can get to work on completing the documentary. The Zoo will introduce it at a special event when we get done. Happy Thanksgiving to everyone!

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### *Big Bend from page 1*

John and Gloria say that each season offers something unique. Spring is the best time for many of the cactus blooms, many of the migratory birds and early wildflowers. For some, Big Bend has become a favorite destination to get away from the heat and humidity in the summer and early fall. This surprises many who have never been to Big Bend and can't imagine anyone going to the desert during this time of the year. The desert, however, cools during the night and is very pleasant during the early morning hours. Afternoons are spent in the cooler elevations of the Chisos Mountains. This is also the rainy season for the park so the desert and foothills are usually green and alive with blooming wildflowers and plants.

Gloria and John have been to the park an average of every

other year for the last 20 plus years, the rugged beauty and wilderness scenes of the mountains, deserts and river—ever changing with the time of day, the weather and the seasons—continue to astound them. These striking vistas as well as the birds, butterflies, animals and plants that inhabit this area of the Chihuahua Desert provide many photographic opportunities.

"We still look forward to each trip with the same eager anticipation." John said.

The Big Bend program can be seen November 17 at the Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Gardens located at 22306 Aldine Westfield beginning with a social time at 7 p.m. President Al Barr will open the meeting at 7:30 p.m. There is no charge and the public is welcome. More information about the society is available at [www.pineywoodswildlifesociety.org](http://www.pineywoodswildlifesociety.org).

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## The Passing of the Consummate Naturalist

Butterfly Enthusiasts in Texas lost a dear friend and role model last week: John Tveten, nature writer, photographer, and consummate naturalist, passed away last Monday after a brief struggle with cancer. John's interests in nature were truly polymathic. He was a birdwatcher, wildflower lover, wildlife artist, and he possessed an uncanny ability to capture it all on film (he never switched to digital), and in print – not just well – but SPECTACULARLY well. His photographs were without peer, his writing was informative without being overbearing, and never tedious, and he was a gifted speaker who entertained many audiences across the area. While nature in general consumed John's interest, insects had a particular grip on his soul. As he once told me when I, as a starstruck teenager, first met him– "Insects are my first love." Truly – this was the indeed the case, if the delightful tome he co-authored with Gloria (his wife of 51 years) , [Butterflies of Houston & Southeast Texas](#) is any evidence. The book is packed with gorgeous photos of our lep friends, along with facts dealing with everything from Latin nomenclature and etymology to host plants, courtship behaviors, parasitoids, and much, much more – an indispensable reference book for any nature enthusiast in the area.

John is survived by Gloria, son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Lisa; granddaughter, Amanda and step-grandson, Brett. He leaves behind a litany of books, an anthology of nature writings collected under the title, [Nature at Your Doorstep](#), what must be a literal library of slides, and many, many pleasant memories for those of us who could count themselves fortunate to have known him. With his passing, his opus work on the moths of Southeast Texas lies unfinished. It is hoped that this work can somehow be completed, and that John can once more inform, delight and enthrall us all with what he called "the butterflies of the night". Truly I can think of no more fitting memorial.

*David F. Henderson*

*Past President, Butterfly Enthusiasts of Southeast Texas*

For the gardener of the exotic flower this is the one that is a collectors choice. The flowers are produced from velvety, dark brown flower buds in the axils of the previous years' leaves. The flowers are maroon, upside-down flowers up to 2 inches across. The bloom period is about 6 weeks. Each flower contains several ovaries which explain why a single flower can produce multiple fruits. ([www.crfg.org](http://www.crfg.org))

The pawpaw is the largest edible fruit native to America weighing in from 5 to 16 ounces, looking a lot like a mango but tasting like a banana. The best fruiting is produced where pawpaw gets full sun, but often objects to it for the first couple of years. Either grow pawpaw on the edge of the woods or if planting in full sun, build a tent over the small plant for a couple of years till it is acclimated to your site. The research results by Peterson, 1991 showed Pawpaw is light sensitive (<http://appalachianhistory.blogspot.com>). Pawpaw is an excellent edible landscape addition to a small backyard that longs to pick its own fruit. Expect a pawpaw not to mature till it is about 6 feet tall which could take 5 to 7 years. Pawpaw prefers deep, fertile soil that is moist, but well-drained and slightly acid—pH 5-7. Please avoid heavy, wet, alkaline soil. Pawpaws have fleshy, brittle roots which look similar to a carrot root and are difficult to transplant.

An organic or granular fertilizer high in potassium twice yearly should receive a desirable response from your pawpaw. Fruit will be produced on the new growth the following year. Leaves or other organic composted materials are very beneficial to this wonderful native.

Even though bees are not inclined to pollinate the flowers certain species of flies and beetles will. The insects seem to be half hearted in their pollinating maneuvers. And if that was not enough of a complication when the female stigma matures and is no longer receptive is when the male pollen is shed. Plus the pawpaw seems to be self-incompatible, requiring cross pollination from another unrelated pawpaw.

Pawpaw fruit ripens during a 4 week period between mid August and into October. You can tell when it is ripe because it will be soft and yield easily to a gentle squeeze, with a definite perfumed fragrance. The skin of the green fruit usually lightens in color as it ripens and often develops blackish splotches which do not affect the flavor or edibility. The yellow flesh is custard like and tastes like a combination of a banana and a pineapple. There are the healthy benefits of the yellow flesh from high concentrations of Vitamin C, proteins, and amino acids. They are also rich in magnesium, copper, zinc, iron, manganese, potassium, and phosphorus. Even the bark contains fluids that demonstrate anti-tumor properties and have been used over the years to fight scarlet fever and red skin rashes. ([ezinearticles.com/?History-Of-The-Pawpaw](http://ezinearticles.com/?History-Of-The-Pawpaw))

#### **Pawpaw Cookies**

- ½ c. raisins
- ½ c. diced dates
- 1 c. water
- ½ butter or EVO

- 1 c. oatmeal
- 1 c. self-rising flour
- 2 eggs
- ½ c. pawpaw pulp
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ c. walnut or pecan pieces

Mix together raisins, dates and water. Boil 3 minutes. Add butter or extra virgin olive oil. Blend oatmeal, flour, eggs, baking soda, and nuts. Add cooled cooked mixture and pawpaws. Mix and refrigerate overnight. Spoon dough onto cookie sheet and bake at 350 F for 10 minutes. Store cookies in refrigerator.



This tree has so much in its favor besides being a popular nickname for Southern grandfathers or songs sung by young children. The pawpaw tree was voted by Better Homes and Gardens, in the year 2000, as the landscape tree of the year. If you are a flower gardener you might want to own this unusual plant for its unique flowers. Perhaps if you are a Fruit gardener you might want to add this gem to your collection. Even the bark contains fluids that demonstrate anti-tumor properties and have been used over the years to fight scarlet fever and red skin rashes. Or perhaps you enjoy planting flora that will entice butterflies that live in your local area or are migrating through your area. Pawpaw is a host plant for the Zebra Swallowtail butterfly. These are simply a few of the reasons to consider finding several spots in your backyard habitat for the Pawpaw.

Most folks will find with the smallest amount of devotion after the first 2 or 3 years that are needed for getting it adapted to the area, your Pawpaw will grow by leaps and bounds from small in stature to eventually a tree that will produce for you flowers and fruit. When your pawpaw has matured, you will find it a comforting presence as you tend your garden. A blessing like this is not to be kept to yourselves, have an afternoon tea party with friends and family under or near your pawpaw tree...and see if you do not change your corner of the world for one divine moment.

*"There is always Music amongst the trees in the Garden, but our hearts must be very quiet to hear it." - Minnie Aumonier*

Please share your nature experiences with me at [dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net](mailto:dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net)

#### **Education Chair Needed**

PWWS needs a new education chairperson, someone with energy, enthusiasm, and resourcefulness. The challenge is how to "hook" more people into protecting our environment. Contact Al Barr, president.



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

### Piney Woods Wildlife Society Field Trips

Join Pineywoods for a field trip to Pundt Park on Saturday, November 7. This recently opened Harris County Precinct 4 park consists of 380 acres including two lakes that should be great for finding all kinds of birds. In addition, Spring Creek forms the northern border of the park, making it possible to view herons and egrets. Fall migrants should be found fluttering around in the abundant forested trail.

*Directions:* Pundt Park is located at 4129 Spring Creek Drive off Aldine Westfield Road. From Mercer Arboretum, drive north on Aldine Westfield Road until you reach Spring Creek Drive (one road past Cypresswood Drive), then turn right on Spring Creek Drive and continue. Spring Creek Drive will dead-end into Pundt Park. Follow the main road through Pundt Park; parking will be on the right. We will meet in the parking lot at 8:30 a.m. See you this Saturday.

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### Numbers of Interest

Heart Hotline.....281444-6204



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**The deadline for submissions is the 25<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:drummond@thedrummonds.com) and add PWWS to the subject line. Thank you.**

**Visit: <http://pineywoodswildlifesociety.org>**