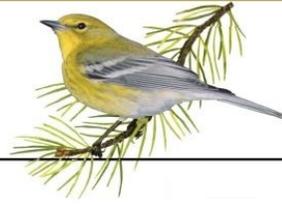


The Pine Warbler



Piney Woods Wildlife Society December Newsletter



December's Program

"Wintering Hummingbirds in Your Backyard"

By Fred Collins



Broad-billed Hummingbird in Woodlands TX. - Photo by Clifford Salawage

Fred Collins will be speaking on "Wintering Hummingbirds in Your Backyard". [Please note that we have moved the meeting up from the third Tuesday to the second Tuesday to get it further away from the holidays.]

The December program for PWWS will be hybrid (in-person and via Zoom) on Tuesday, December 13th, at 6:30 p.m. (snacks & social time at 6:00 p.m) at Dennis Johnston's Big Stone Lodge. We'd prefer to have you join us in person rather than on Zoom, if at all possible. The Big Stone Lodge is located in Dennis Johnston County Park at 709 Riley Fuzzel Road, Spring, Texas 77373. If you need to join in via Zoom, you can email Claire Moore at cdmoore3i@gmail.com for the link or you can wait for the meeting reminder email that you should receive the day before the meeting (if you currently receive the PWWS newsletters).

Latest rules for bringing snacks: We are still not allowed to bring homemade items to the Big Stone Lodge (unfortunately) for social time. However, store bought items brought by members are welcome and NO LONGER have to be individually wrapped now. Yeah!

Bio info:

Houston native Fred Collins made his first year list in 1962 and has kept one every year since. He earned a B.S. in Wildlife Science and attended graduate school at Texas A&M, where he studied wintering Wilson's Snipes. From 1994 to 2002 he served as Director of Russ Pitman Park's Nature Discovery Center.

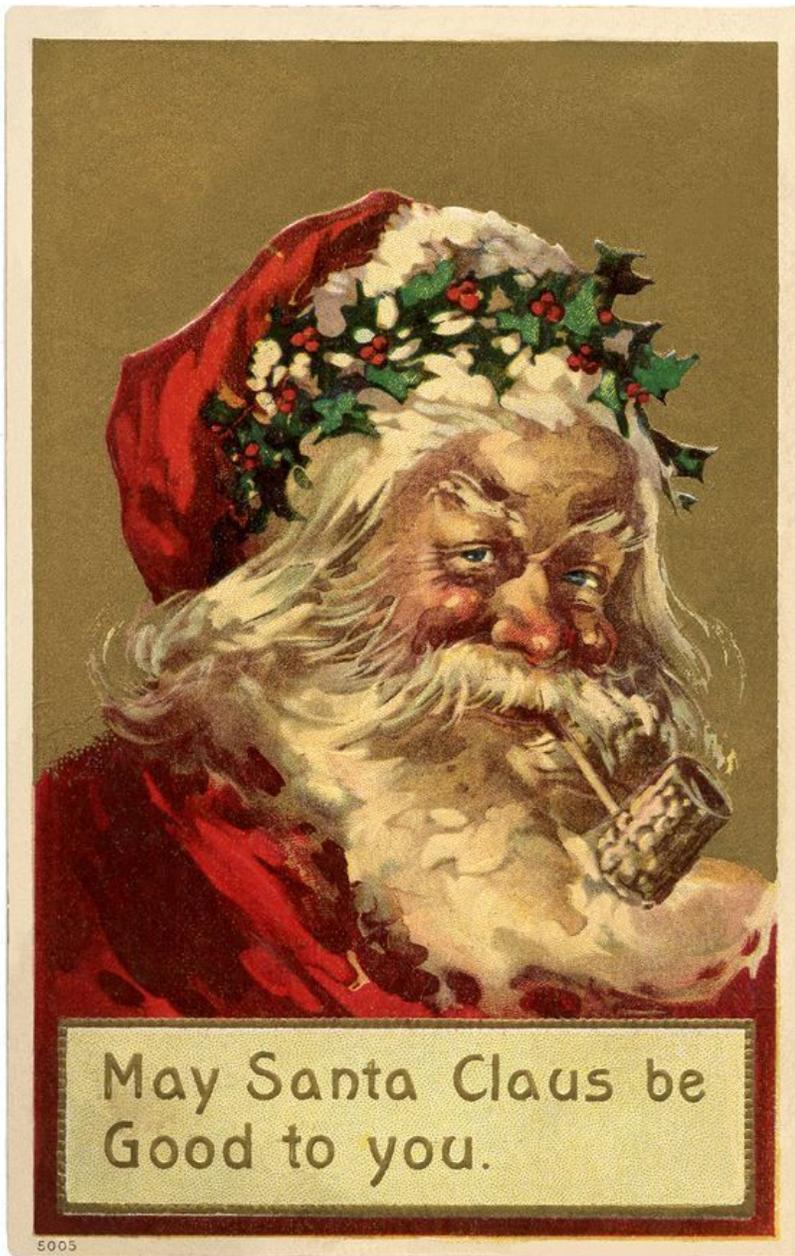
Since 2002 he has been Regional Park Manager for Harris County Precinct 3, where he developed and is currently director of both Kleb Woods Nature Center and Cypress Top Historic Park.

He sits on advisory boards for Houston Audubon and the Katy Prairie Conservancy, and he is Compiler of the Cypress Creek, TX CBC. As a member of the Texas State Historical Association and a life member of TOS and the Southwestern Association of Naturalists, Fred continues his passion for birding Texas and learning about the history of both its wildlife and its people. He retired in August 2022.

He and his wife live on 100 acres of the Katy Prairie with 2 dogs, 7 horses, 100 free-ranging chickens, and 40 parrots. While the nest isn't exactly empty, their two sons have long since fledged. He and his wife enjoy spending time with their grandchildren on the farm.



Rufous Hummingbird - Photo by Greg Kelleher



Note from PWWS President

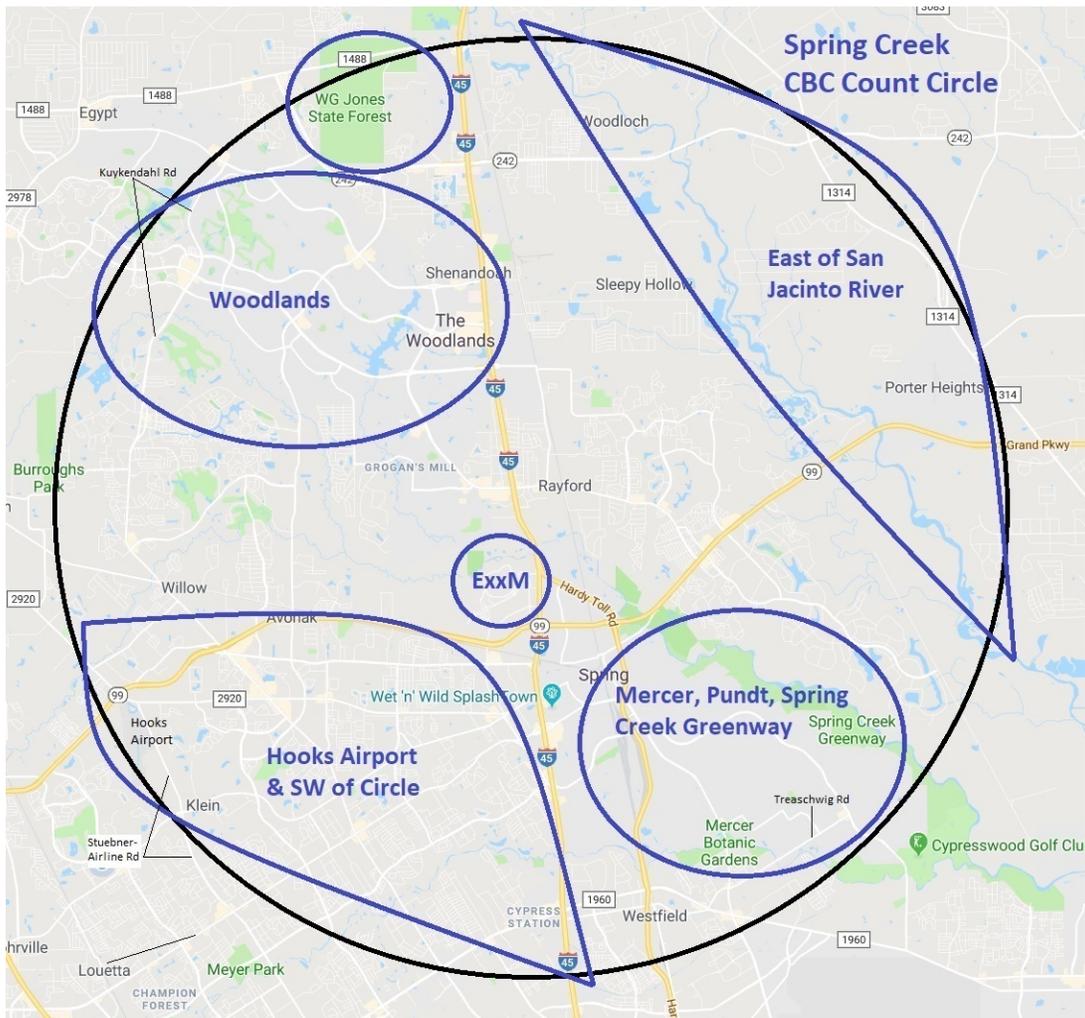
Please join us for our December 13 presentation on Wintering Hummingbirds in Your Backyard. Should be fun and informative . We miss our pot luck but this early Holiday get together should start us on the path to an enjoyable Holiday season. Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas to all of you from your President on behalf of all of us at Piney Woods.

Your President,
Kathy



Hummingbird & Other Bird Sightings Needed for CBC

by Claire Moore



Spring Creek CBC Count Circle with team areas

Do you have feeders (seed or sugar) in your yard and do you live inside the CBC circle (see map)? We need your help as a feeder watcher for the Spring Creek Christmas Bird Count scheduled for Saturday, Dec 17th.

If you'd prefer to go outside and bird, you can join one of the teams in the field that same day looking for our local birds.

If you can help in either way, just email Claire Moore at cdmoore3i@gmail.com and let me know. I'll send you the forms that you use to send me your list of birds that you see on Saturday, Dec 17th.



FOREST THERAPY

By Cheryl Conley

Lake Creek Nature Preserve Board of Directors



*Nature is
the
greatest
place to
heal and
recharge.*

Photo by Cheryl Conley

Do you ever feel overwhelmed and swear you can't take one more phone call, wash one more load of clothes or cook one more meal? Do you ever want to tell your co-workers to take a hike? Well, maybe you should follow your own advice and take a hike. Can taking a walk in the park or a nearby forest really be beneficial to our mental and physical health?

Numerous studies have been conducted concluding that a mere walk in the woods does wonders for our overall health. One such study was done by the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. Researchers devised the study using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) involving a small almond-shaped structure in the center of the brain called the amygdala. The amygdala is involved with stress processing, emotional learning and the fight-or-flight response. Adult volunteers were asked to fill out questionnaires and perform memory tasks. Some of the activities were designed to create stress. While performing these tasks, they underwent MRI's. Some of the participants were then asked to take a 1-hour walk in either a busy urban area or a forest. After their walk, each volunteer was given another stress-inducing task and completed another questionnaire while undergoing another MRI. The volunteers who took a walk in the forest showed reduced activity in the amygdala indicating less stress.

"The results support the previously assumed positive relationship between nature and brain health, but this is the first study to prove the causal link," says

environmental neuroscientist Simone Kuhn, head of the Lise Meitner Group for Environmental Neuroscience at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development.

This study gives some of the clearest evidence yet that stress can be reduced by simply getting out and enjoying nature.

Research has found that adults and adolescents in the U.S. spend over 90% of their time indoors and more than seven hours per day looking at screens (EPA, 1989; Moody, 2022; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Do yourself a favor and spend some time with Mother Nature. Bask in the sunshine, breathe in the fresh air and put that phone away!



Pictures from the Grand Canyon

By Kristen Jarrell



Raven - Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Banded Kingfisher recently taken on Lake Conroe. - Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Elk - Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Rock Squirrel - Photo by Kristen Jarrell



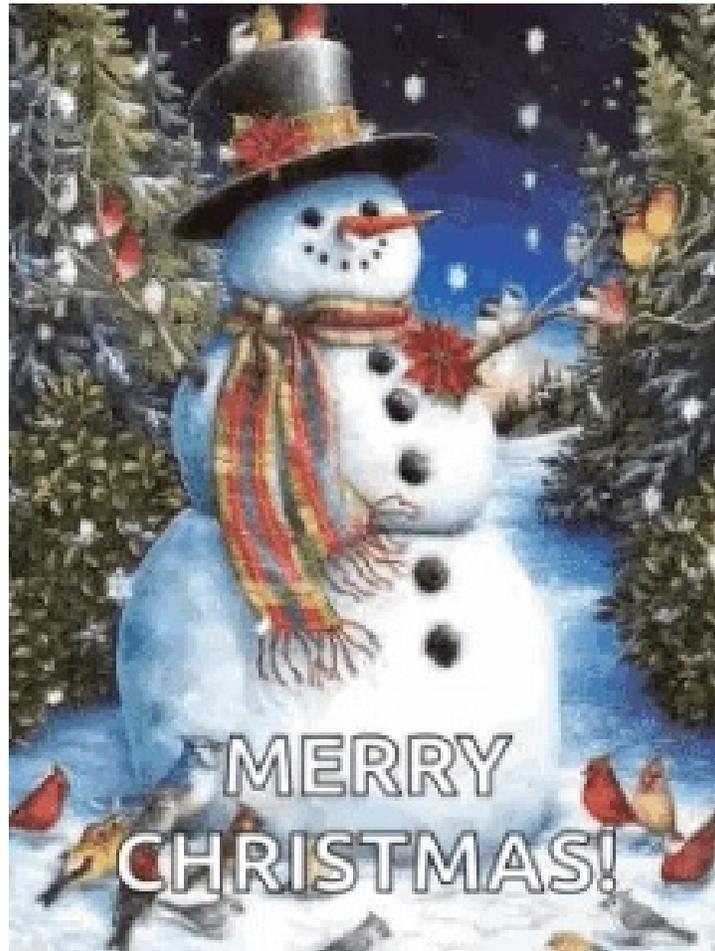
Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Photo by Kristen Jarrell



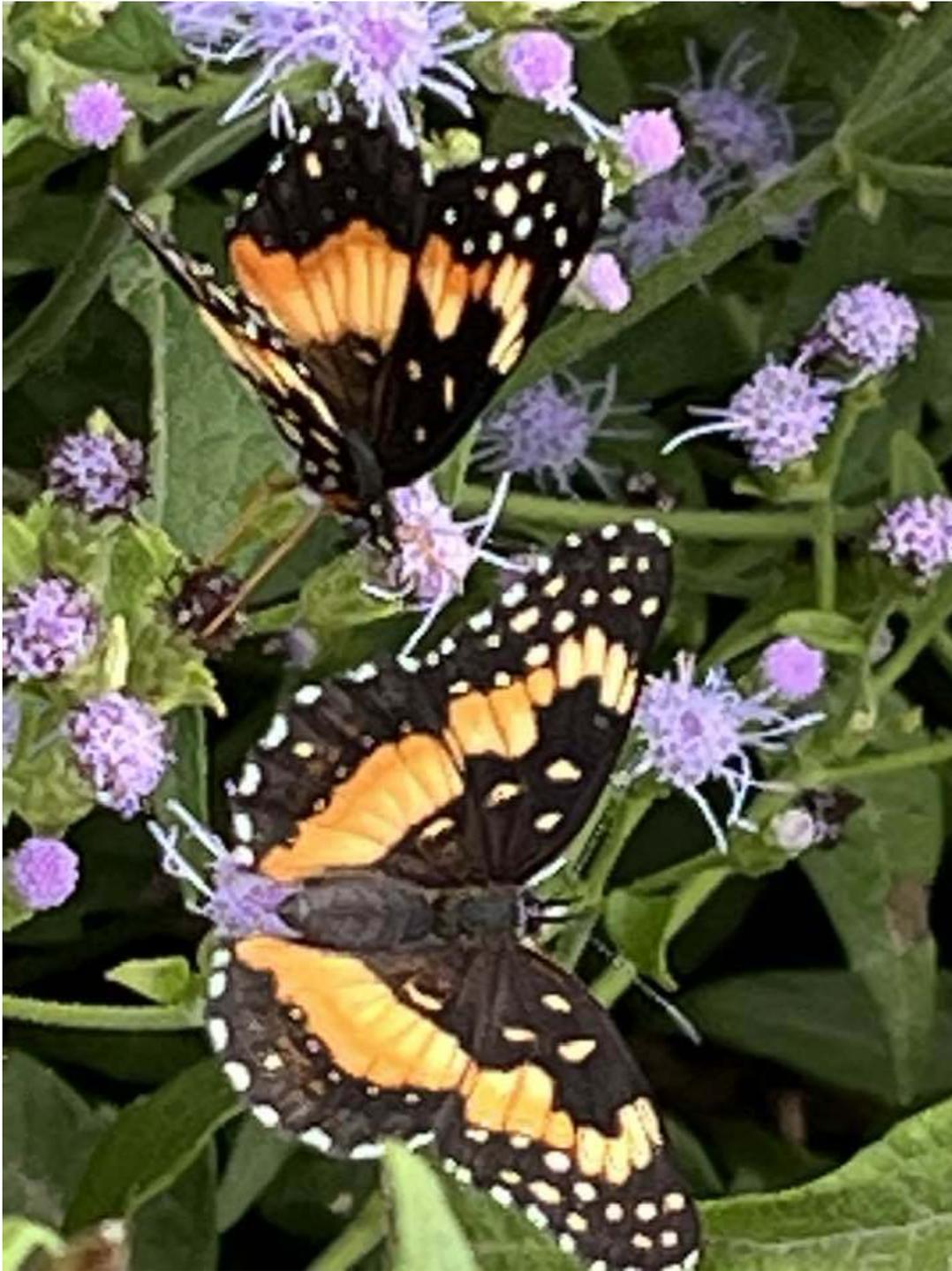
Big-horned Sheep - Photo by Kristen Jarrell



Photos by Lucinda Valdes



Steve spotted a banded patch in the Gardens at Oleander Acres. - Photo by Lucinda Valdes



Banded patch courting at National Butterfly Center. - Photo by Lucinda Valdes

11-4-22 - Not as common as the name implies—common mestra found shelter from winds in the conservatory at NBC. So lovely to see both views of wings.



Common Mestra - Open-winged displaying the dorsal view. - Photo by Lucinda Valdes



Common Mestra - Ventral view with wings closed. - 11-4-22 - Photo by Lucinda Valdes

Study in blue in lower Rio Grande Valley. 11-7-22



Dorsal view of Mexican bluewing at NBC.- Photo by Lucinda Valdes



Ventral view of Mexican bluewing at NBC. - Photo by Lucinda Valdes



The vibrant color of wings and body fail to escape the I-phone lens. So tiny, blue metalmark shimmers while nectaring on crucita in the woods at Resaca de la Palma. - Photo by Lucinda Valdes



Tawny emperor—subtle coloration with elegant patterning. - 11-3-22 - Photo by Lucinda Valdes



National Butterfly Center - Mission, Texas

Photos by Luciano Guerra

Many members of the Metalmark family of butterflies have green eyes. They also seem to be somewhat cross-eyed, which makes them rather comical to look at face to face. That is why Luciano loves getting face shots of these butterflies, as he did earlier today 11-9-22, with a Curve-winged Metalmark he came across in our gardens. Here are a few of his shots.



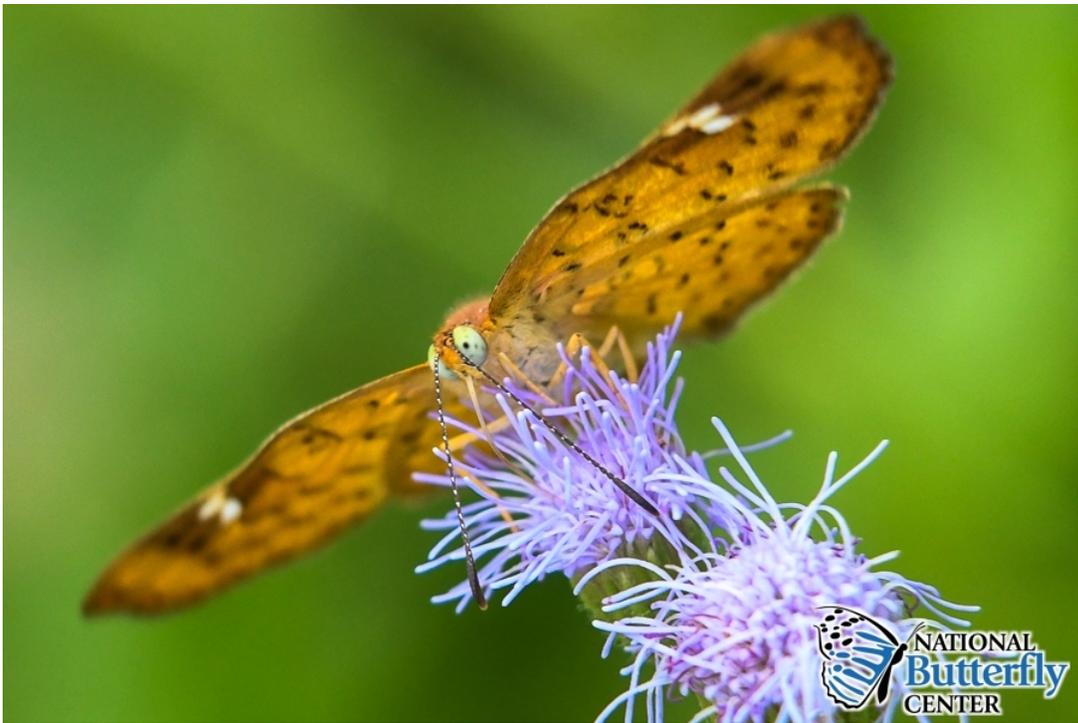
Curve-winged Metalmark - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Curve-winged Metalmark - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Curve-winged Metalmark - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Curve-winged Metalmark - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Curve-winged Metalmark - Photo by Luciano Guerra

A long time ago in a bird feeding area not so far away our Green Jays were enjoying much warmer temperatures than we're experiencing today. Actually it was last Friday, (11-18-22), but after the 90+ degree weather we had back then and the temps being in the 40's and 50's this week, it seems like much longer. Regardless, here's hoping these photos of one of our many tropical species of birds will warm you up wherever you may be and however cold it may be there.



Green Jays - Photo credit: National Butterfly Center



Green Jays at National Butterfly Center - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Green Jays - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Green Jay - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Green Jay - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Green Jays- Photo by Luciano Guerra



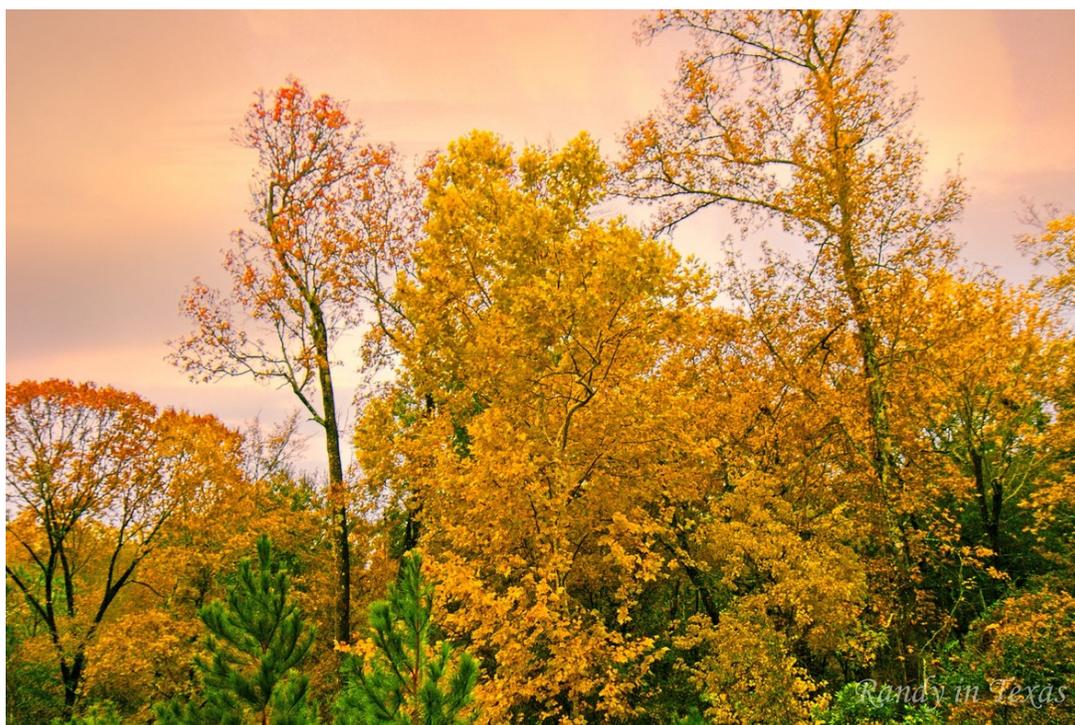
Green Jays - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Green Jay - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Photo by Randy Scott



Wilderness behind our home at a different angle. - Photo by Randy Scott



Wilderness behind our home. - Photo by Randy Scott



Neighbor's trees next door. 11-26-21 - Photo by Randy Scott



Fence behind our home and wilderness trees - Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

Brown Thrasher in our backyard a week ago. I darkened the grass to bring the bird out more. #birding #thrashers - Photo by Randy Scott



Photo by Randy Scott



#Bluebirds in the rain, taking street baths. #conroe tx - Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

Conroe Texas is a place where migrating birds often touch the ground. Some of them stay the winter and this Fall feels like winter to many of them, as well as us humans, such as this Chipping Sparrow. He is fluffing his feathers, which traps warm air over his body, and seems to be saying "brrrrrr". Taken this past week.
#birdsphtography #sparrows - Photo by Randy Scott



CREATOR'S CANVAS-PART 5-THE CATTLE EGRETS/CONQUERORS OF CONTINENTS!

By Wayne Easley



Cattle Egret in breeding plumage - Photo by Wayne Easley

We continue our series dealing with the Herons and Egrets of the World as we turn to the Cattle Egrets. The stocky rather short Cattle Egrets were originally from the Continent of Africa. They were at home with zebras, wildebeests, elephants and buffalos and possibly even camels in the north of Africa but suddenly and no one knows exactly how it happened, they were discovered in

the Country of Suriname in South America. The year was 1877. Were they stowaways on a transatlantic ship? Were they wind-blown by a rogue hurricane? We don't know. And in the meantime, they have moved into every nook and cranny of South America after which they headed north to North America. In 1941, they were seen for the first time in the United States and since that time, they have colonized the whole of the country and are residents as far north as Canada, and in Newfoundland in the east and Alaska in the west. Their arrival here has been rapid and persistent. And the amazing thing is, they have learned to migrate south when wintertime comes. Sometime called cow cranes, or cow herons or even elephant birds, they spend most of their time on the dry grassy fields with cattle. At times, they will even ride piggyback on the animals themselves. Unlike other herons and egrets that thrive along the rivers and in the wetlands, Cattle Egrets prefer the grassy fields where they can feed on grasshoppers, flies and ticks they find around cattle. And in the Americas, domestic cattle work just fine; even a farmer's tractor might do the job since that too can stir up the insects they like. And by the way, they have not finished their colonization yet: they were seen for the first time in Britain in the year 2000. And it looks as if Europe may be the next continent they have in mind.

Cattle Egrets are predominately white birds with adorable buffy plumes during the breeding season. During mating season, the area around the eyes and the bills flush with a bright red color. During this time, males often perch with their heads pointed skyward or at times, they will pluck a twig from a bush or tree and toss it into the air. These are signals to the female that nesting season needs to begin. The nest itself is made of sticks and twigs which are arranged in a somewhat untidy fashion. Since sticks are a great priority in building the nests, some females spend a lot of their time trying to rob other nest builders of their materials. Often times, the nesting space is shared with Great Egrets or such birds as Roseate Spoonbills. Usually three or four eggs are laid and incubation takes about three weeks. Generally speaking, farmers and ranchers welcome the coming of the Cattle Egrets. They help to control flies and ticks that bother the cattle. If you are interested in seeing Cattle Egrets, take an afternoon drive into the country side and watch for domestic cattle. Chances are good that you will find Cattle Egrets there as well. Success in finding them.

Wayne Easley/written on Oct. 23, 2022/Harvey, North Dakota

PICTURES: PLEASE USE ONLY FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES. THANK YOU



Cattle Egret showing bright red around around the eyes in breeding season - Photo by Wayne Easley



Cattle Egret showing buffy colors when nesting - Photo by Wayne Easley



Female Cattle Egret feeding chicks - Photo by Wayne Easley



Beautiful Cattle Egret looking for insects - Photo by Wayne Easley



Cattle Egret, up close - Photo by Wayne Easley



Cattle Egret feeding alongside a baby elephant in Kenya - Photo by Wayne Easley



Cattle Egrets preparing for nesting - Photo by Wayne Easley



Cattle Egrets preparing for nesting - Photo by Wayne Easley



Cattle Egrets preparing for nesting - Photo by Wayne Easley

**CREATOR'S CANVAS-WALKING STICKS/ARE THEY
THE MOST BIZARRE OF INSECTS?**

By Wayne Easley



stick, walking showing flight wings at casa rancho, cr - Photo by Wayne Easley

My wife and I spent six delightful years in East Africa in the country of Kenya. On one trip to the Kenyan Coast, we paid a visit to our good friend David Engala. David lived in Malindi to the north of Mombasa and he was a park ranger at the time. When we made contact with David, we could tell he was a bit disturbed. He explained he had just rescued a Giant Walking Stick (about 15 inches long) from some unruly kids who were trying to kill the beautiful creature by throwing stones at it. Fortunately, David had come on the scene in just the nick of time and was able to save it.

Walking Sticks are some of the most unusual insects on Planet Earth. Not only are they bizarre, they are the largest of all insects. David's Walking Stick was very large but there is one that lives in Borneo that reaches a whopping two feet in length. And that is enormous! That means that they are larger than any of the beetles or butterflies or even the huge moths that we have. Walking Sticks go by many different names: they are often called The Devil's Darning Needles or at other times Ghost Insects or Stick Bugs among other names. Most of them resemble vegetation. They often look like some sort of plant or a leaf or a twig. They use this approach of natural camouflage to give them protection from their many predators. At times, when they sense extreme danger, they may use a startle display such as opening their wings up, or even secrete what looks like blood from the joints in their legs and their bodies. They live mostly in tropical areas and include some 3,000 different kinds. They range from less than an inch long to the giant ones that we have mentioned earlier.

Their life cycle is an incomplete metamorphosis where the female lays from approximately 100-to over 1,000 tiny eggs that resemble seeds covered with a hard shell. The females often live high in the trees and may simply drop their eggs to the leaf litter below on the ground. Or a female may hide her eggs in cavities where they may rest for a long time before they hatch. In Neo-tropical areas where the weather can be a little colder, the eggs may not hatch until the spring of the year. (this process is called Diapause when hatching is delayed). Surprisingly some females are thought to be parthenogenic which means they can lay eggs that have not been fertilized by a male. When this happens, all of the nymphs are females looking exactly like the mother. Most Walking Sticks have extremely long legs and some have wings and can fly. Another unusual thing, it is thought that the legs of Walking Sticks work independently from the other legs. Strange indeed! Young Walking Sticks tend to be out and about in the day time as their eyes can handle the radiation from the sun better than the adults who tend to be more nocturnal. Mating, at least for some Stick Insects can be a long drawn out process. In India one mating pair was noted to have been coupled together for seventy-nine days. That is a long honeymoon for sure!

As we have mentioned, Walking Sticks utilize plant mimicry, trying to look for all the world like the plants they are resting on. They may even rock back and forth giving the idea they are simply a part of the wind-blown vegetation. This probably saves a lot of them from being eaten by hungry predators. In some remote parts of the world, some native peoples may roast and eat Walking Sticks. "Wow, I think I just lost my appetite." There are places too where, Walking Sticks are kept in bird cages and are treated as pets by children. Many of the folk that do this feel that keeping a Walking Stick around will bring good luck to the family. While I have serious doubts about any good coming to the family by hosting a Walking Stick, at least they are not trying to stone them to death as the kids were doing when David Engala came on that incident. At any rate, here is hoping in your many travels, you will get acquainted with the beyond strange Walking Sticks. They are bizarre insects worth knowing.

Wayne Easley/written on Oct. 14, 2022/Harvey, North Dakota

PICTURES: CAN BE USED BUT ONLY FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.



Winged Walking Stick in Costa Rica with wings open - Photo by Wayne Easley



Walking Stick on La Mina Road, Costa Rica showing size of insect and closeup of head, horns and eyes - Photo by Wayne Easley



Walking Stick on La Mina Road, Costa Rica showing size of insect and closeup of head, horns and eyes - Photo by Wayne Easley



Walking Sticks in Costa Rica showing bizarre shape and coloration - Photo by Wayne Easley



Walking Sticks in Costa Rica showing bizarre shape and coloration - Photo by Wayne Easley



Walking Stick at my home in Costa Rica showing huge size and unique shape - Photo by Wayne Easley



Exciting Walking Stick at Rancho Naturalista (birding lodge), Costa Rica. Work from the vivid V-marking on the insect - Photo by Wayne Easley



Exciting Walking Stick at Rancho Naturalista (birding lodge), Costa Rica. Work from the vivid V-marking on the insect - Photo by Wayne Easley



Note Walking Stick resting on red plant. The insects positioning so perfect - Photo by Wayne Easley



Giant Walking Stick rescued by David Engala in Kenya - Photo by Wayne Easley



Giant Walking Stick rescued by David Engala in Kenya - Photo by Wayne Easley



Photos By Bill Miller

In one of those things that only matter to birders, the 2022 Clements world checklist updates came out. This time "splitters" won out as various species got split into one or more species. Most of these were don't cares to us, but...the spectacular Streamertail hummingbirds of Jamaica got split into Red-billed and Black-billed species! So not only did our list get longer, I get to post these pictures from 2016.



Baby Olive Ridley sea turtle hatching out and heading for the sea. We came across some scientists digging these guy's nests up from where they had been moved to for safety, and releasing them. - Photo by Bill Miller



Xanctus Hummingbird, only in Baha California Sur. - Photo by Bill Miller



Gray Thrasher, only in Baha California Sur. - Photo by Bill Miller



It's kind of hard to access the desert habitat because of the lack of public lands. We resorted to driving into the small villages, parking, and walking the dirt roads, Baja California Sur, Mexico. - Photo by Bill Miller



Lots of butterflies in one of the villages. - Photo by Bill Miller



Photo by Bill Miller



We did a tourist thing and took a 'transparent boat' to see rocks sticking out of the ocean. - Photo by Bill Miller



Our main goal today was to see a bird that only lives in this area. This is not that bird. We did see the one we were after with some difficulty, but I could not get a decent picture. The bird lives in reeds and occasionally pops out into view for a couple of seconds. I have lots of pictures of where it was. - Photo by Bill Miller



Hooded Oriole 11-7-22 - This bird gets into California and the south edges of the western border states, but is widespread in Mexico. This one was photographed in Baja California Sur. — with Sue Peretti Miller in Todos Santos, B.C.S. - Photo by Bill Miller



Lobos marinos = "sea wolves" - Photo by Bill Miller



Photo by Jim Snyder

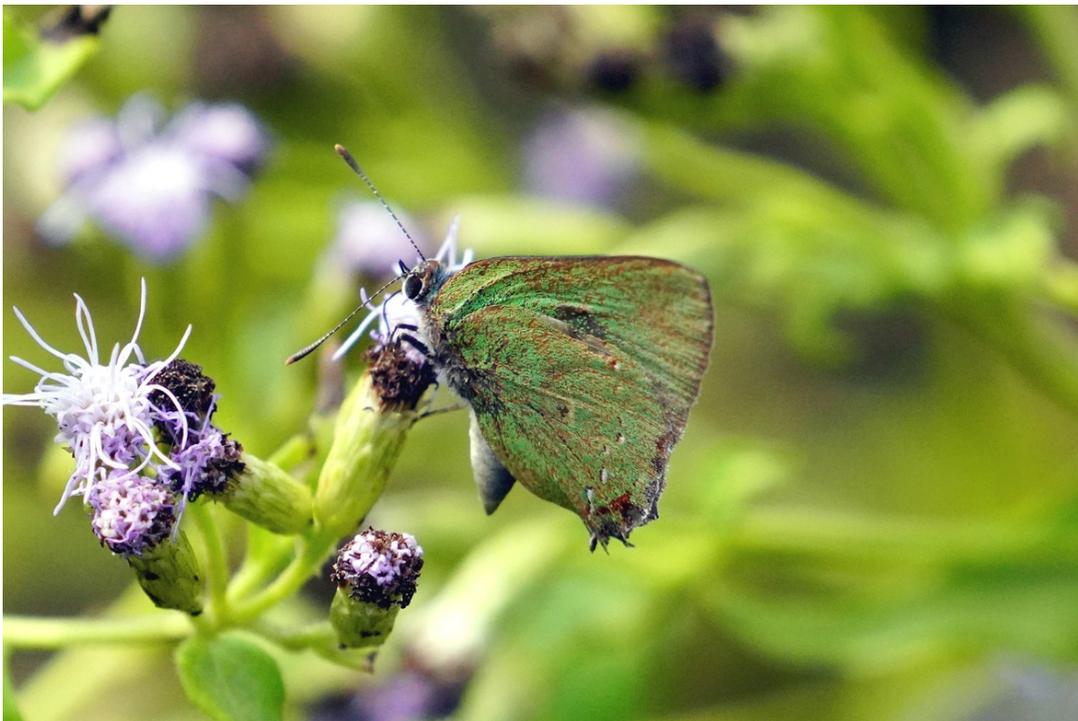


Townsend's Solitaire (Myadestes townsendi). This is a medium-sized thrush, the only solitaire native to America north of Mexico. The birders in our group were very excited about this bird so I decided to take a photo.- Photo by Jim Snyder

Yesterday was the best day for butterfly diversity in our yard in year 2022 by far as I counted 30 individual species! I took that opportunity to practice my photography skills as I am driving next week down to the Lower Rio Grande Valley to attend the Texas Butterfly Festival. I'm very excited since this will be my first trip of any kind since the beginning of Covid-19 in February 2020.



Buff-bellied Hummingbird nectaring on Turk's Cap at Edinburg World Birding Center. - 10-31-22 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Glanville's Greenstreak. This butterfly is a very rare stray from Mexico. It's only been seen in the U.S. a couple of times! - Photo by Jim Snyder



Olive Sparrow - 11-2-22 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Brown-banded Skipper - - 11-2-22 - Photo by Jim Snyder



First wild turkeys I've seen in Texas! - Mission - Photo by Jim Snyder

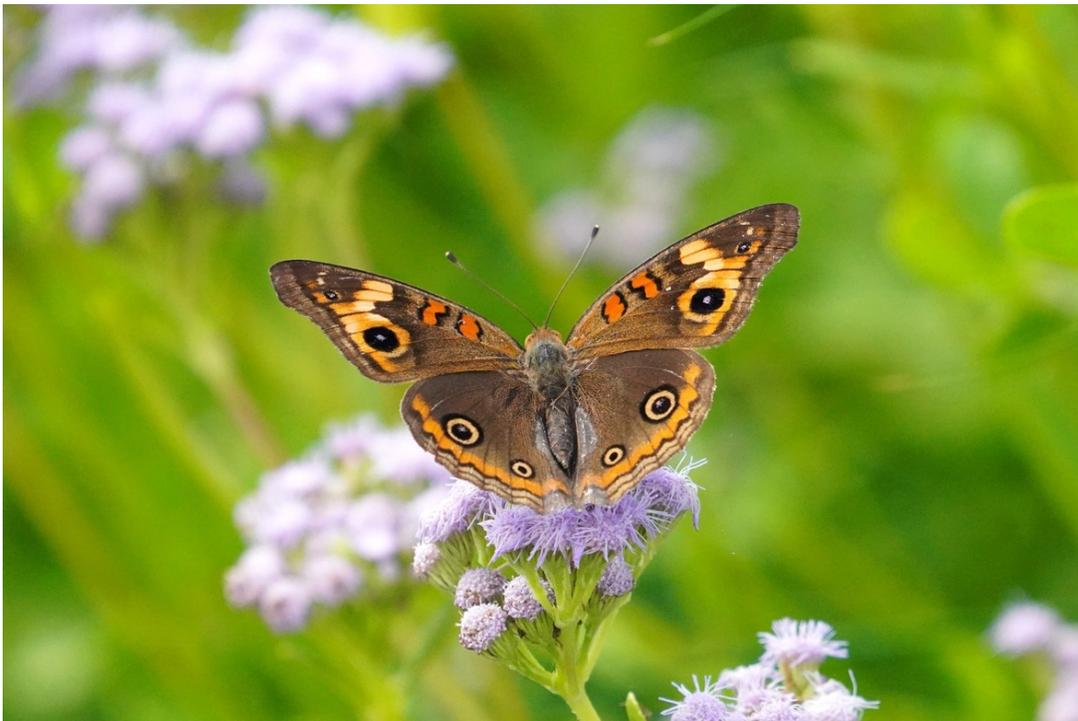


Dark Tropical Buckeye on the Grasslands Nature Trail - Photo by Jim Snyder



I found this Dark Tropical Buckeye along the Grassland Nature Trail on Padre Island. 11-8-22 - Photo by Jim Snyder

Padre Island National Seashore and the Texas State Aquarium.



Mangrove Buckeye - Photo by Jim Snyder



Roseate Spoonbill - Photo by Jim Snyder



Soldier - Photo by Jim Snyder



Sea horse - Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder

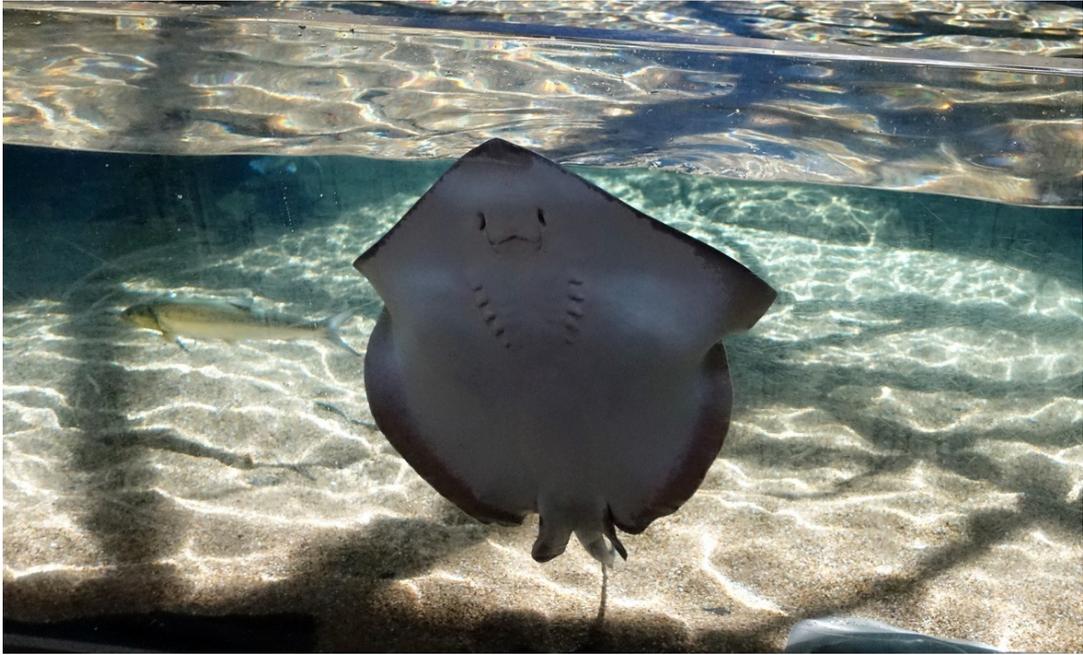


Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder



American Alligator - Photo by Jim Snyder



Great Purple Hairstreak male 28-Nov-2022 — in Emerald Forest. - Photo by Jim Snyder



Curve-winged Metalmark - Photo by Jim Snyder



Great Southern White (female) - Photo by Jim Snyder



Great Southern White (male) - Photo by Jim Snyder



Photo by Jim Snyder

HO HO HO

Rio Grande Valley (RGV) - Nov. 12-17, 2022

Photos by Paul Gregg



Ladder-backed Woodpecker - Photo by Paul Gregg

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

Carol and I drove down to the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) and met Shannon, Amy, and Dave from Colorado. Shannon and I met years ago at a birding location on High Island and we've met and birded a number of times. Shannon

is a much better record keeper than I am and he made a trip report to eBird that listed 112 different species of birds. I think Dave was able to add 10 or 11 birds to his life list. Carol and I added around 6 or 7. The first couple days the weather was pretty nice, but after that clouds darkened birding spots and strong winds were blowing mostly out of the north. I firmly believe if the weather had been much better all the days we were there that we would have seen a much higher number of species.

The attached photos are 8 from that first day, beginning with the Lesser Grebe. We saw them in two or three of the parks we visited and in the Houston area, we see mostly Pied-billed Grebe birds with only a few Lesser Grebe ones showing up. The Eastern Screech Owl (McCalls) is a sub-category of the Eastern Screech Owl, this species mostly found in southern Texas and Mexico. This little one has a home in an old building with an entrance to its dwelling just under the eave of the roof. The Ladder-backed Woodpecker was busily working on a hole in a limb, throwing chips of wood everywhere, completely unfazed by the group walking below him, just out of reach. The Black-crested Titmouse was a hard one to photograph as it would visit the seeds and disappear into a tree. Green Jays are at almost all birding locations and when riled up can really make a noise. (You may see a couple more photos of Green Jays.) The White-tipped Dove's range is in southern Texas and Mexico. They too, come to parks where feed is put out. Plain Chachalaca birds are fairly large, and reminded us of maybe a small turkey. At one location, one was running back and forth and it reminded us of a Roadrunner. They can be very loud and vocal when a group gets together. I asked if there's an open season on them and was told that there actually is a time when hunters can shoot them. Maybe someone who has eaten one will respond and tell me how they taste. At one tank (what we call a pond in Texas) I photographed a duck that I couldn't figure out which species it was due to the coloration pattern. It was a product of a Gadwall and Northern Pintail mating.

In a future e-mail, I'll list some of the locations we visited. From National Wildlife Refuges to State Parks, to a highway stop or two, it was an awesome trip. Stay tuned, the best is yet to come.

Enjoy,

Paul Gregg, SMSGT, USAF (Ret.)



Eastern_Screech_Owl_McCalls - Photo by Paul Gregg



Lesser Grebe - Photo by Paul Gregg



Black-crested Titmouse - Photo by Paul Gregg



Green Jay - Photo by Paul Gregg



White-tipped Dove - Photo by Paul Gregg



Plain Chachalaca - Photo by Paul Gregg



Gadwall x Northern Pintail hybrid - Photo by Paul Gregg

"Wings Over Houston" Airshow - Sunday, Oct. 30, 2022 - Part 1

Photos by Paul Gregg



Messerschmitt MS262 - Photo by Paul Gregg

Happy “turn your clocks back” weekend!

Last Sunday, Carol and I went to the annual “Wings Over Houston” airshow at Ellington Field. We couldn’t have asked for a better day to photograph the planes and action. I took over 2,000 photos and have deleted well over 1,000 and haven’t finished processing yet. We had tickets for the “Photo Pit” that was located at the edge of the action, across from where the Navy Blue Angels were parked. One of my friends from The Woodlands Camera Club was on the platform. I didn’t read how many were in attendance at the show, but estimates were maybe 200,000 people were there. Venues selling flight items were all up and down the infield, as well as planes on static display.

The Photo Pit had an elevated platform and we got there in time to get a couple chairs on the stage, overlooking the field. Other photographers had staked out their positions and we had plenty of room to watch the action. Canon had a representative there and we talked about the new cameras Canon has out. He had a 600mm lens on a tripod and offered me the use of it when the action started. I declined the opportunity, thinking the 600mm lens was maybe too much for where we were located.

When the action starts and the planes take off, one definitely needs ear plugs for hearing protection. The Photo Pit had free earplugs to wear and we used them. I don’t think they worked very well and if we attend next year, I’m taking our ear protection we use when we go to the gun range!

The airshow has a schedule they follow, and special planes will fly their demonstration, and as always in this airshow they dramatize a re-enactment of the attack on Pearl Harbor in what is called “Tora, Tora, Tora!” A narrator announces the action during the show and most of the time cannot be heard for all the noise. Vintage planes fly back and forth across the field and timed explosives go off in a great display of noise, fire, and smoke.

The F-15 Eagle, F-16 Viper, B-29 “Doc”, and C-17 photos attached are examples of individual planes that flew their demonstrations. The B-29 connects with me as no other because my dad knew Kermit Beahan, the bombardier who was on “Bockscar” that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki to end WWII and I was privileged to fly in the bombardier position when the B-29 FiFi was here in a previous airshow. The Messerschmitt was a jet, showing the Germans had a jet in the air before the U. S. did. The C-17 is one huge plane and when it was on static display they let airshow attendees walk through it. The F-25 Eagle and the F-16 “Viper” gave awe inspiring demonstrations. We were fascinated at the markings on the Viper and its demonstration was breathtaking. It was piloted by a woman and after her flight, she taxied past the stand, giving the University of Texas “Hook ‘em Horns” sign.

Since I haven’t finished processing photos, I’m saving the Blue Angels demo for another email, as well as some photos of the Tora, Tora, Tora presentation.

Enjoy!

Paul Gregg, SMSGT, USAF (Ret.)





0906 B-29 - Photo by Paul Gregg



1187 F-16 Viper - Photo by Paul Gregg



F-16 Viper Pilot. - Photo by Paul Gregg



F-15 Eagle - Photo by Paul Gregg



F-15 Eagle - Photo by Paul Gregg



C-17 Globemaster - Photo by Paul Gregg



C-17 Globemaster - Photo by Paul Gregg



Tora Tora Tora B-17 - Photo by Paul Gregg



Tora Tora Tora - Photo by Paul Gregg



Tora Tora Tora - Photo by Paul Gregg



Skimmer Group Trip

Photos by Hank Arnold

Yesterday was our big day aboard the Skimmer.

It was supposed to be a chance to take Ray up to the Refuge, but sadly in the end that didn't work out. Since he can't see the pictures anymore, I'll do my best to explain everything to him.

I think we were all a little skeptical of the weather, as it was supposed to be in the 40's, blowing hard, with a distinct chance for rain.

Although it was an overcast day, it turned out to be in the 50's. The wind wasn't all that bad, and although there were a few times when there was a light sprinkle, it was never enough for me to worry about the camera getting wet.

It was special for us because Lorraine and Tom Stehn were able to go with us, along with several other friends. Tom spent many years as the Whooping Crane Coordinator (?) for US Fish and Wildlife, including the years when they came back from the brink.

We all owe a lot to Tom for his efforts, and obviously to Lorraine who kept him

in line all those years.

Although Captain Moore gave his usual entertaining verbal description of what he saw, I found myself often looking at Tom to see what he was looking at, then pointing the camera in that direction.

As for the birds, it was a great day.

We saw probably 20 Whooping Cranes in total, some off in the distance.

The ones that were up close were pretty much all families...



Photo by Hank Arnold

After their long trip down here, there was lots of feeding of young mouths, with this blue crab pretty much prepared by de-clawing and de-legging, under the watchful eye of the next generation...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Something new to me was one adult that seemed to specialize in catching shrimp.



Photo by Hank Arnold

At first I thought it was just an oddity, but that adult repeated this several times, always to great appreciation by the juvenile. One of the highlights for the day was another set of twins...



Photo by Hank Arnold

I have been “observant” of Whooping Cranes for many years now, but obviously not observant enough, because I never noticed something that now seems obvious... During the first few days of Whooping Crane arrivals for the year, there is a significant level of angst and aggression about territories. It makes perfect sense though, after the long trip down here, they are defining the boundaries that will last for the entire winter.



Photo by Hank Arnold

Lots of hooting, and it didn't sound at all friendly...



Photo by Hank Arnold

We had a little get together here at the house last night to look at the pictures on the TV, which was very educational with Tom's years of insights.

One thing he taught us was that if you notice in the picture above, the bird on the right is showing it's black flight feathers down low during aggression.

This signifies that it's a male.

I'm not at all sure if that's because only the males enforce territorial boundaries, but now I want to go back and look at fight pictures from the past with that new knowledge.

Another thing I noticed just this year is that even though the adults can get down to actual physical contact during these arguments, there is never any aggression shown towards the juveniles.

It's like it's an unwritten rule, thank goodness.

As one aggressive adult chases one less aggressive adult, the juvenile just walks calmly along nearby.

One special bird Tommy called out was this Lesser Black Backed Gull...



Lesser Black Backed Gull - Photo by Hank Arnold

We do have a possible scoop with this bird...



Photo by Hank Arnold

We've had several different species opinions from birders whose opinion I respect, but I think it could be a Great White Heron, sometimes called a White Morph Great Blue Heron.

There was a pretty widely agreed upon ID of one on an island about a mile from this location a few years ago, so it wouldn't be without local precedent.

Some folks think it is a Great Egret with a dark bill, but after spending some time looking, the only Great Egrets with any bill other than yellow that I see are from Europe and Africa.

I did find one picture of a Great Egret from Utah with some non-yellow...



Photo by Hank Arnold

And the green pretty much solves the ID as Great Egret, so for me it's a quandary.

Here is our hero up close...



Photo by Hank Arnold

And an obvious Great Blue a few hundred yards away...



Great Blue - Photo by Hank Arnold

I've almost got Tom talked into the Great White Heron conspiracy, but he's playing his cards pretty close to the vest.

I'm sending the image to some other folks, and we'll see how it plays out.

This picture is included because it's an oyster boat clearly over the line in Carlos Bay. This goes against the new Texas Parks and Wildlife Fisheries rules we fought so hard to get enacted.



Photo by Hank Arnold

We weren't quite close enough to be able to get a readable picture of the registration numbers on the bow, but I do think we would be able to ID the boat back in Fulton if it comes down to it.

Tommy and I were both getting ready to break out the cutlasses for a Erol Flynn style boarding operation...



Photo by Hank Arnold

(I have GOT to get me one of those belts!!!)

when we noticed that there was nobody on the boat.

It does look like there are some burlap bags behind the cabin, but nowadays its my understanding they mostly use the polyester bags that are much easier to see.

I'm going to go down this morning to see if I can find the boat in the Fulton Marina, or if it spent the night in Carlos Bay.

Keeping the powder dry in my flintlock pistol, though.

We'll also see how this one plays out.

It was a great time, and as always, the best sightings were of friends...



Here are the rest of the pictures on the day...

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20221117-Skimmer/>

Odd Visit To Lamar

Photos by Hank Arnold

We took some family friends up to Lamar to see the Whooping Cranes in the light rain yesterday, and everything was discombobulated.

First, there were 10 cranes in the field next to the beach road. As near as we could tell there were two families, each with a juvenile, then a contingent juvenile cohort of 4 other birds. To add to the confusion, there was a pair of Sandhill Cranes mixed in, and another adult Whooper at the house behind.



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

For those of you keeping score, that's 11 Whooping Cranes visible from one spot on the face of the earth.

Aside from the one at the house, they were all mixed together, none of them eating, and at least for the first few minutes, nobody chasing anybody off.

Under normal circumstances I would expect one of the families to be chasing the other family off, then clearing the field of the teenagers, then not-so-politely inviting the Sandhill Cranes to leave as well.

Nope

Everybody standing around, as if in line waiting for something.

The final odd sighting was that one of the first year juvenile birds was sitting down in the tall grass, with just his head sticking up.

Although I have seen this before, its very rare.

As I recall, Tom once pointed out that after flying in from Canada, the little guys are a bit tired.

It appeared to us that several of the adults seemed to be “attending” him, as they never wandered very far astray.

After a few minutes the juvenile that had been down in the grass stood up, and although it was a fair distance away, appeared to have dried blood on his upper leg.



Photo by Hank Arnold

I'm assuming he was well enough to fly in from the refuge, and he didn't appear to have any kind of limp.

I took some video of him walking which is included in the link below.

I packaged up some pictures of the juvenile and the video and sent it to Tom, in case he feels like there is anything we need to do to follow up.

After a few minutes of peace and harmony, the families appeared to be moving the teenagers along noisily, but when we left the two families (6 birds?) were still together.

Here are the pictures from the visit...

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20221125-Lamar/>

Hopefully its just something like a pilot landing training mishap.

Next, we watched a Nature video about Woodpeckers, and I highly recommend it.

The reason I'm including a link because it describes a survival tie-in between some Sapsuckers in Maine and Ruby Throat Hummingbirds arriving from

Texas.

It's not something I ever would have guessed, but now that I've seen it, it makes perfect sense.

Here is the video...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=581WW3Mv648&ab_channel=NatureonPBS

Its just under an hour long, with the part about the Ruby Throat is right about the 20 minute mark.

If you have any trouble watching it, let me know.

We witnessed the Sapsucker protocol up at Bennet Park (NW of Port Lavaca) a while back during Covid, as I marked the pattern of the holes with yellow dots to show the lines...



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

We have been talking about going up there again if anyone is interested



Photo by Hank Arnold

Loose Ends and Happy Endings

Photos by Hank Arnold

A lot of water has passed under the bridge in the past few days.

The Stehns came for a nice visit and we had a wonderful time. Then Nancy and I went up for a family thing near Dallas.

That means that a few questions that I promised to report on came up have been unanswered.

The first is this white bird we saw twice, several days apart, in Lamar...



Photo by Hank Arnold

The yellow/green legs hints of a Little Blue Heron. Little Blue Herons are born white, but I was all wrapped up in the fact that usually birds born in March/April usually have a significant color change towards adulthood by November, and that this bird is spotless.

White Ibis juveniles are almost all white by now, and you have to look pretty close to see any childishness in Great Blues or Reddish Egrets.

Turns out that several sources say that Little Blue Herons retain their full white dress code until the next spring.

So its just a first year Little Blue Heron and I need to quit trying to do any math.

It's hard

Next up is this bird we saw on the Skimmer trip...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Several sources have now agreed that it is a White Morph Great Blue Heron. There was one seen several years ago up in the First Chain of Islands in San Antonio Bay (?), but as near as I can tell, not since then.

Kevin Sims also sent this...

Yes. This is a White Morph Blue Heron. Very rare for us. I believe only one in our area.

One hatched in 2017 both parents were regular Blue Herons. This is astronomically rare. It should have fledge before Harvey so maybe the one you found is that one.

This is the hatchling in April of 2017.



Photo by Hank Arnold

Glad you found it.

Kevin

Next up, we had the oyster boat that was in Carlos Bay, against the new regulations won at great effort by a lot of people...



Photo by Hank Arnold

I was out the next morning for the parade of out-of-state boats going out...



Photo by Hank Arnold

But didn't see that boat.

Agent Guthrie, however, DID see that miscreant boat in Fulton Harbor during the middle of the normal environment ravaging work day...



Photo by Hank Arnold

The fact that it wasn't out scouring the bottom somewhere reinforces my

suspicion that it had broken down, and the fact that it was in Fulton Harbor makes me think it's probably a local boat, not one of the out-of-state boats we've had so much trouble with.

I don't see myself attending any local oystermen birthday parties any time soon, but I don't have the same level of dislike for the few local boats we have down here. They may indeed be overfishing the local resources, but not anywhere near the scale of the big commercial fleets from Galveston and Louisiana.

Next, we've been very concerned about our Burrowing Owl friend, Clyde.

We were delighted to see him at his normal concrete debris duty station when he first got here in late October, but haven't seen him for several weeks.

Your mind starts to wander toward a piles of fluffy brown feather crime scene complete with yellow tape and a chalk outline of a little bird somewhere nearby.

But he turned up on the last day the Stehns were here.

We saw John Dillinger (Dilly) at his normal hideaway...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Then went over to the concrete pile to look for Clyde Barrow (Clyde). He was

nowhere to be seen in his normal places, but just as we were giving up again, Tom said calmly, "There he is, over in the grass"...



Photo by Hank Arnold

After significant study of past pictures for eyebrow and forehead characteristics, we're glad to say its our boy.

On our trip north we did see some nice birds...



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

And the first Blue Jay I have seen in years...



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

Even a short trip, however, makes me realize we live in birding heaven down here.

Unless you're in the market for Ravens and Vultures, there isn't much sense in taking any binoculars or camera equipment any further north than Victoria

Christmas Morning Fun with Hank & Tycho



Hank "Santa" Tycho & friend



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20201222-Sandy-Oaks-Christmas/>

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From our home
to yours.



Merry
Christmas!



Big Stone Lodge - Dennis Johnston Park

709 Riley Fuzzel Road

PWWS meetings are held at the Big Stone Lodge at the new Dennis Johnston County

Park at 709 Riley Fuzzel Road.

The directions to get there are much the same as to the Nature Center. Aldine-Westfield turns into Riley Fuzzel Road just northeast of Spring so there are several ways to get there.

1. Take the Rayford/Sawdust exit and go east on Rayford Rd. At Grand Parkway (99), turn right on the Grand Parkway frontage road. Go 2 miles (staying on the frontage road) watching for the Johnston Park sign on your right just before you get to the Hardy Toll Road overpass; or,
2. Take Louetta Road east from I45 to where it deadends into Aldine-Westfield. Turn left on Aldine-Westfield until it deadends into Riley Fuzzel Road. Turn right onto Riley Fuzzel Road and go only 0.5 miles to the park entrance on your left just after passing under Hardy Toll Road; or,
3. Take Aldine-Westfield north from Mercer Arboretum until it deadends into Riley Fuzzel Road. Turn right onto Riley Fuzzel Road and go only 0.5 miles to the park entrance on your left just after passing under Hardy Toll Road.

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Last Name(s):	First Name of Member(s):	
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Pine Warbler will be delivered by E-mail Only		
Annual Membership Fee \$15.00* Additional Contribution \$ _____ Total \$ _____		Mail this form and check made payable to PWWS to: Piney Woods Wildlife Society P.O. Box 189 Spring, TX 77383-0189
*Per Household – Includes <i>The Pine Warbler</i> newsletter New _____ Renewal _____ Rejoining _____		

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Please send all new address changes and any corrections to cdmoore3@gmail.com (Claire Moore) and add PWWS to the subject line.
Thank you.



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