

The Pine Warbler



April PWWS Program by Gary Clark

"Bird Brains & Their Complex Thinking"

Tuesday, April 18th



Gary Clark

For the April program for Piney Woods Wildlife Society, we are excited to have Gary Clark presenting "Bird Brains & Their Complex Thinking". The program takes place on Tuesday, April 18th, at 6:30 p.m. with social time at 6 p.m.

Gary will inform us of the latest research showing that the neocortex or "complex thinking" part of a bird's brain is equivalent to higher primates like Chimpanzees.

Gary, who has been active in conservation for 40 years, is the author of the weekly Nature column in the Houston Chronicle since 1999 as well as the author of many books on birding. Gary is the founder of the Piney Woods Wildlife Society, served as President of Houston Audubon Society, Vice President of Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, and currently serves on the Board of Advisors for both HAS and GCBO.

The April program for PWWS will be ONLY in-person and takes place on Tuesday, April 18th, at 6:30 p.m. (snacks & social time at 6:00 p.m.) at Dennis Johnston's Big Stone Lodge located in Dennis Johnston County Park at 709 Riley Fuzzel Road, Spring, Texas 77373.

[FYI, the Piney Woods board decided beginning with February 2023 that we are going back to in-person meetings only.]

Latest rules for bringing snacks: We are still not allowed to bring homemade items to the Big Stone Lodge (unfortunately) for social time. However, you can bring store bought items, if you'd like to. (They no longer must be individually wrapped.)



Great Horned Owl. Photo by Kathy Adams Clark



Snowcap Hummingbird. Photo by Kathy Adams Clark



Note from PWWS President

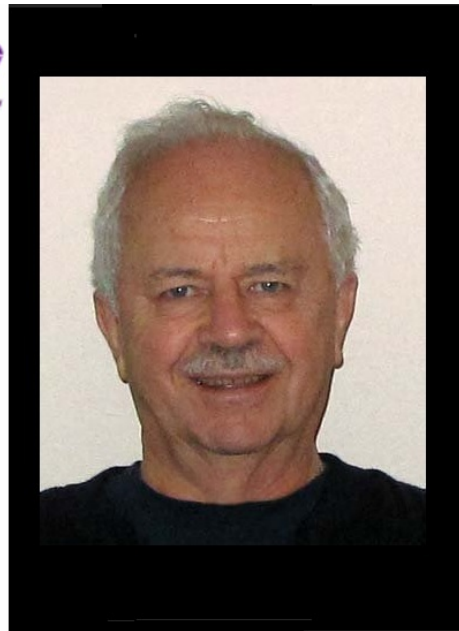
Spring is here and it's seems like a great bird year. So many seem to be nesting early, such fun for us all. Hope you can get out or at least enjoy your backyard

birds.

Speaking of building a nest, we need to keep our Piney Woods Wildlife Society alive. We really need volunteers to keep our wonderful group going strong. It doesn't take a lot of your time, let any of us know if you can help.

Enjoy this wonderful time of year and Happy Easter.

Kathy, Your President



Jim Lacey needs prayers

We are sad to inform you that our Treasurer and friend Jim Lacey has had a brain injury. Jim suffered a brain stroke and is now in memory care at The Village in the Woodlands. Both he and his wife Elsa are in assisted living at The Village at the Woodlands.

If you would like to send a card, please send it to them in care of their son.

Michael Lacey
42 North Brokenfern
Spring, Texas 77380

Farrar Stockton will be taking over Treasurer duties for the remainder of the year while we search for a replacement for Jim. If you would be willing to

volunteer in this capacity, please email our President at
justforthebirds@sbcglobal.net.



Group Viewing of Tomball Bald Eagles

Tuesday, April 4th, 10:30a to 11:45a

with Claire Moore



Tomball Bald Eagle Group Viewing With Claire

Join Claire Moore in Tomball to see what the bald eagles are doing on Tuesday, April 4th, anytime between 10:30 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. The viewing location is BEHIND the Tomball Target shopping center located at 14302 FM 2920 just west of Highway 249 -- see attached map for more details and where to park.

Claire will have two birding scopes set up for closer viewing of the eagles as well as some binoculars to borrow. Claire will have a ladder in front of one of the scopes to help children see the eagles through the scope. So, feel free to bring your kids or grandkids, too! You can drop by for a quick look or bring your portable chair and stay a while.

This is the ideal time to come by for a look because the eaglets are getting older now & have begun to "branch" -- where they flap their wings & move out onto branches near by the nest. So, they are visible almost all the daylight hours.

Make sure and study the attached picture of the Target building with indications of where it is legal to park. It is important that we do not park along any fire zone restricted area (red-painted curb). Also, there is lots of delivery truck traffic behind the Target and we need to keep that red curb area clear of parked cars. Thankfully, there are a bunch of marked parking spots close by next to the Target truck unloading bay. Additionally, please do not try to walk closer to the nest. Please stay on the grassy area next to the paved road behind Target. This fenced land belongs to the Harris County Flood Control District land and we are not allowed in the fenced area.

Let's not give Target or the Tomball Police Dept any reason to ask us to leave. We all want to enjoy seeing these wonderful creatures thrive in their natural habitat so close to civilization so that we can enjoy them.



Tomball Target at 14302 FM 2920 and where to park. Photo by Mike Maddox.



Locals viewing the Tomball Eagles behind the Tomball Target at 14302 FM 2920. Unknown photographer



by Kathy Muhle

Young bald eagles in Tomball nest at the Tomball Target at 14302 FM 2920. Photo by Kathy Muhle



Young bald eagles branching above Tomball nest located behind the Target at 14302 FM 2920. Photo by Robert Thompson



Locals viewing the Tomball Eagles. Unknown photographer



Photographers viewing Tomball Bald Eagles. Photo by Claire Moore



WHEN MOCKING IS GOOD

By Cheryl Conley Lake Creek Nature Preserve, Board of Directors



Northern Mockingbird - Photo by Cheryl Conley

Texas is the home of many firsts. Some are more well-known than others like being home to the first domed stadium. It was named the Astrodome and it opened in 1965. Another example is being the location of the worst natural disaster in US history—the hurricane that hit Galveston in 1900 that killed over 8,000 people. Lesser-known firsts are the invention of the frozen margarita in Dallas in 1971. That person should be given a medal! Pecos, Texas, was home to the first rodeo in 1883. The word “superbowl” was first used in Texas in 1966. In 1927, Texas became the first state to designate a state bird. The Texas Legislature decided the northern mockingbird would be the most appropriate to hold the title because it is “a fighter for the protection of his home, falling, if need be, in its defense, like any true Texan.” There are now four other states that have named the mockingbird their state bird--Tennessee, Florida, Mississippi, and Arkansas

From the late 1700's to the early 1900's, mockingbirds were captured and sold as pets. It is believed that this is the reason the birds became scarce during that time, almost to the point of extinction. Mockingbird populations are now stable.

“Mockers” got their name from their ability to imitate the sounds of other animals. The scientific name for this bird is *Mimus polyglottos* which means “many-tongued mimic.” Males sing day and night and especially enjoy vocalizing on moonlit nights. Amazingly, not only can they whistle and trill, they can mimic other sounds like a creaking gate, a dog barking, a chirping cricket and frogs and toads, repeating each sound three to six times.

Mockers are fearless when protecting their nests. During nesting season, they will fearlessly chase away predators by diving at them, flapping their wings and pecking at them. One observer reported seeing a mocker deliver 30 minutes of repeated blows to the head of a snake in an attempt to protect its nest. There are many stories of mockingbirds dive-bombing cats and dogs. Real or imagined, it doesn't seem to matter how large the predators are. The mockingbird will take them on! In many instances, the animals aren't even posing a threat. You might even see a mockingbird chasing squirrels. It's as if the birds enjoy teasing other animals. Think they won't dive-bomb you? Yes, they will.

During mating season, males will lift their wings to display his white underparts. He'll move his tail up and down, make a soft cooing sound and may even try to impress the female by running back and forth in front of her with a twig.

Both males and females share nest-building activities. The male will gather nesting materials and the female will build the nest. The nest can be completed in as little as one day or it can take three or four days. The female will lay up to six eggs and incubation is from ten to fourteen days. The babies stay in the nest for about a week while both mom and dad care for them. The young ones stay close by for several more days before gaining their independence.

Other fun facts about the northern mockingbird:

- Mockingbirds have adapted to city life. Lawns and parks make perfect hunting grounds for insects.
- They are about 9 to 11 inches

long.
Males
and
females
look
identical
but
the
female
is
a
little
smaller
and
has
a
little
less
white
in
her
feathers.

- A
female
mocker
set
a
record
of
laying
27
eggs
in
one
season!
- In
the
book
Birds
of
America,
John
James
Audubon
wrote
about
the
bird's
singing
ability.
He

wrote,
“There
is
probably
no
bird
in
the
world
that
possesses
all
the
musical
qualifications
of
this
king
of
song,
who
has
derived
all
from
Nature’s
self.”

- There
are
sixteen
bird
species
with
the
name
“mockingbird.”
The
northern
mockingbird
is
the
only
one
native
to
the
United
States.

Take some time to stop and listen to nature. Chances are you’ll hear a mocker.

Nature Fest March 4, 2023 - Jessie H. Jones Nature Center

Photos by Hugh & Diane Wedgeworth



BEST/NABA Group photo at Nature Fest - Photo by Betsy Robinson



Nature Fest group - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth





Tim showing our caterpillars to the community - Photo by Diane Wedgeworth



Nature Fest Fun - Photo by Diane Wedgeworth



Backyard Question Mark caterpillar - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



J-stage of Question Mark - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



Chrysalis of a Question Mark - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



Spring Cress host plant of the Falcate Orange tip - Photo by Diane Wedgeworth



Falcate Orangetip caterpillar - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail caterpillar on Black Cherry - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



Black Swallowtail 2nd instar on host plant fennel - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



Funereal Duskywing egg on Vetch - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



Dusky-blue Groundsquirrel - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



Little Wood-Satyr - Photo by Hugh Wedgeworth



Birdhouse I won at The Woodlands Garden Club Raffle, Paulette & her husband made it.



National Butterfly Center - Mission, Texas

Photos by Luciano Guerra

Spring has sprung at the National Butterfly Center. Here are photos of two different Vireos and a pair of Vermillion Flycatchers Luciano captured this morning at the National Butterfly Center. The fact that Blue-headed Vireos and the Vermillion Flycatchers are winter residents and White-eyed Vireos are year-round residents of extreme south Texas, means that these are not migratory visitors here. However we have seen signs of Spring migration starting. And with yesterday being the first official day of Spring, they seem to be right on schedule.



Blue-headed Vireo - Luciano Guerra



White-eyed Vireo - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Male Vermillion Flycatcher - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Male Vermillion Flycatcher - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Female Vermillion Flycatcher - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Male Vermillion Flycatcher - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Male Vermillion Flycatcher - Photo by Luciano Guerra



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Male Vermillion Flycatcher - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Male Vermillion Flycatcher - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Male Vermillion Flycatcher - Photo by Luciano Guerra

Any of you that have had an Oriole visit your hummingbird feeder know that as a general rule, Orioles have a sweet tooth. Hooded Orioles are no exception to this rule. That is why they can often be seen nectaring from flowers, as we caught this male doing from some of our Texas Wild Olive blooms the other day.

Hooded Orioles have even been known to use their pointed bills to pierce flower bases to obtain nectar from agaves, aloes, hibiscus, lilies and other tubular

flowers.



Oriole - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Oriole - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Oriole - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Oriole - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Oriole - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Oriole - Photo by Luciano Guerra

Last week we featured the Blue Metalmark in our first Metalmark Madness post of the month. Today, we're featuring its cousin, the Curve-winged Metalmark.

This distinctive looking member of the Metalmark family is listed in Dr. Jeffrey Glassberg's Swift Guide to Butterflies of North America, as a rare stray to the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas that is not seen most years. And as Dr. Glassberg describes one of this specie's most distinctive characteristics, "its

humpy bumpy forewing costal margin is quite dramatic."

For those of you interested in seeing one or more of these rare beauties, and possibly even adding it to your life list, the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas is the place to be. And a great time to do so is during our Texas Butterfly Festival. This year's Festival is being held Nov. 4 through 7. For more information, visit the TBF website www.TexasButterflyFestival.com



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



Photos by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



American White Pelican foraging beside a floating wetland at John Hargrove Environmental Complex. Beautiful bird, beautiful background. My heart skipped a beat when I first came upon this scene! Pearland, Texas 03252023 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



*Snowy Egret with "wispy attitude"! John Hargrove Environmental Complex.
Pearland, Texas 03252023 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn*



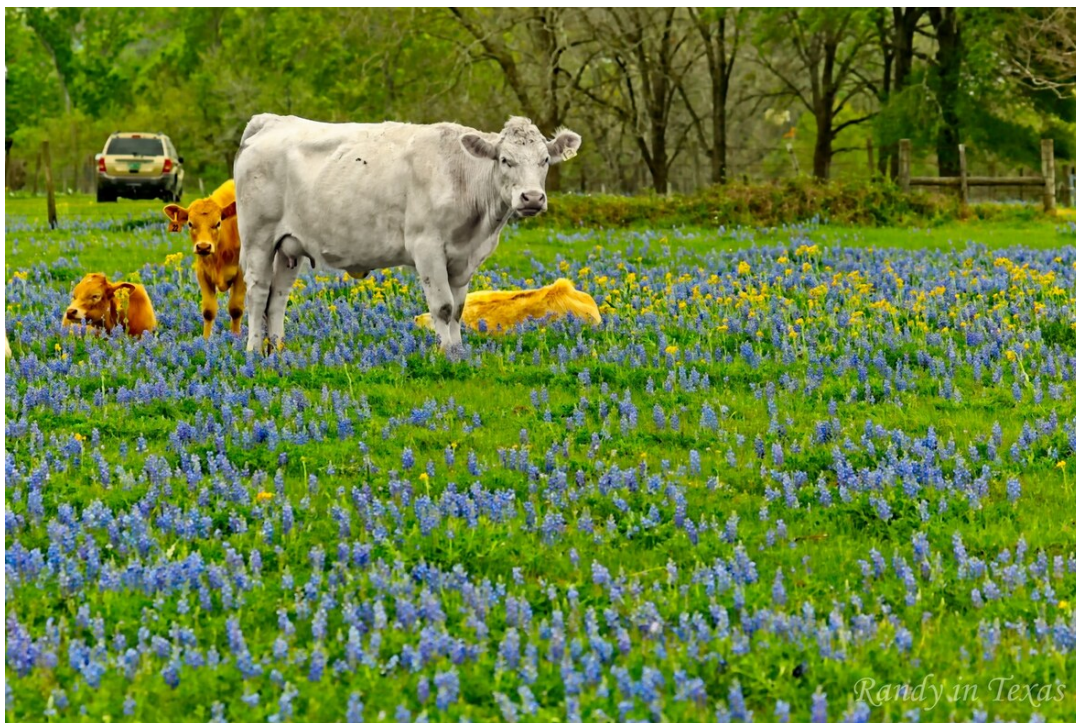
This bird was showing off! I luv it when I get a good model. - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Spotted a fresh Red Admiral today at John Hargrove Environmental Complex.
First one this spring for this butterfly enthusiast! Pearland, Texas 03252023 -
Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Photos by Randy Scott



On Hwy 290 heading back towards FM1488. - Photo by Randy Scott



Walmart, Brenham. - Photo by Randy Scott



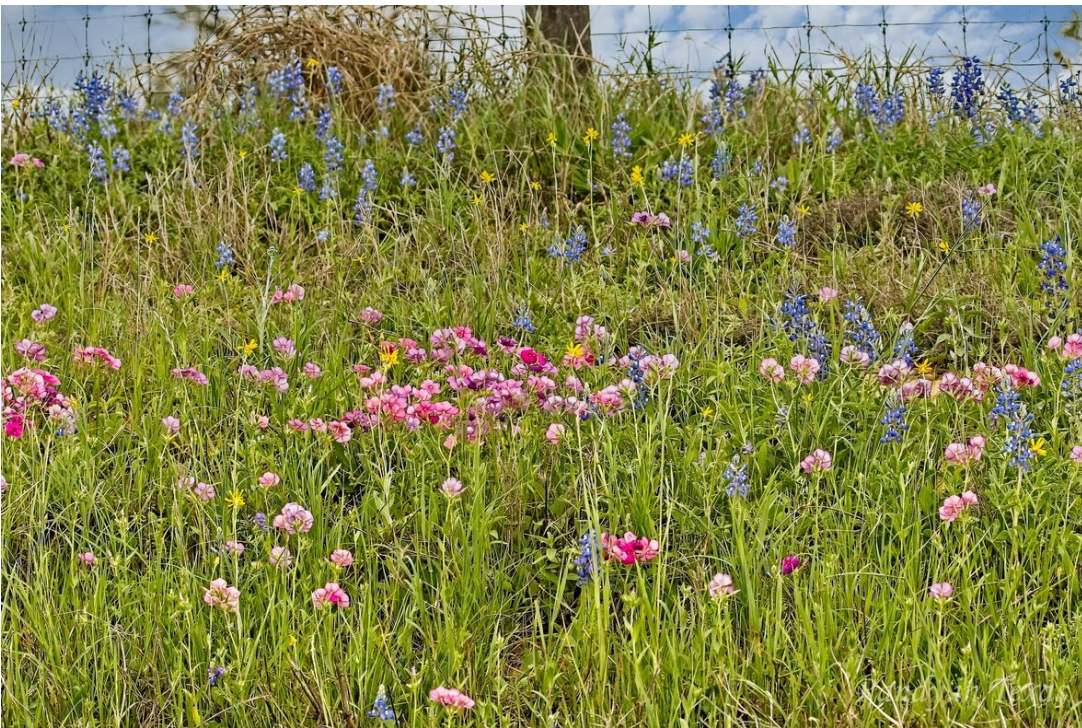
On Hwy 290 heading back towards FM1488. - Photo by Randy Scott



Indian Paintbrush on the way to Navasota, almost there on 105. - Photo by Randy Scott



Wildflowers in Southeast Texas 2023 - Photo by Randy Scott



On Hwy 290 heading back towards FM1488. - Photo by Randy Scott



On Hwy 105 east of Conroe. - Photo by Randy Scott



Brennan - Photo by Randy Scott



One of our 2022 azaleas beginning to bloom. 3-9-2023 - Photo by Randy Scott



Bluebird against the sky, nextdoor in Conroe. It's been quite a week for this guy. He chased off Chickadees,

Mockingbird and Bluejays from his nest. The biggest drama in all of this was the three Bluejays, which "got out of Dodge" when he laid into them. But the fight lasted for at least an hour. - 3-3-2023 - Photo by Randy Scott



Bluebird eggs. Two more to come. 3-6-2023 - Photo by Randy Scott



One baby bird only. Photo by Randy Scott



Crow in my backyard. A rare visit by two of them this week. No other bird wants to risk an encounter with these birds. Do you know they will challenge even hawks? ... and oftentimes win! We can hear them in our East Texas forest for miles away. - 3-20-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Photos by Bill Miller



Swallow-tailed Kites Ganado, TX - Photo by Bill Miller



I guess this Blue-headed Vireo is going to stop by during migration each year. He looks a bit miffed; I accidentally interrupted his bath. - Photo by Bill Miller



Big wildflower fields were everywhere. Wharton, TX - Photo by Bill Miller



The herb plot is full of blooming cilantro; useless to eat, but great for the bees. - Photo by Bill Miller



Choy blooming in the garden - Photo by Bill Miller



Texas Black Bear

Photos by John Warner

Near Highlands, NC, today, March 28, 2023, on Hwy 64 East. Momma bear trying to reach her very young cub. The cub looked like the size of a stuffed bear toy. Mom was giving out some loud grunting noises across the road and even though so young, cub climbed a tree until she made it over.

Drivers were very courteous giving momma plenty of space to get across the road.

So nice to have a happy ending . . . Momma and baby reunited!









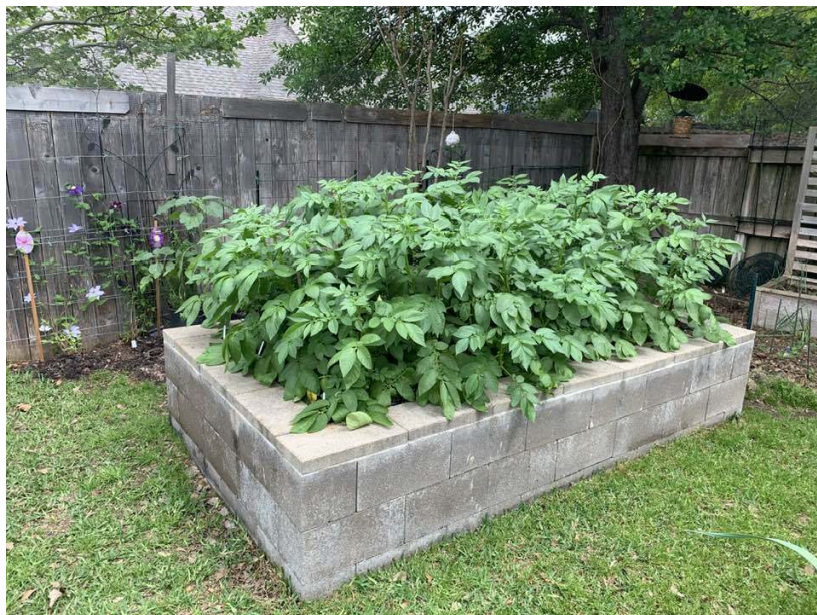
Photos by Jim Snyder



We had our FOS ("first of season") Monarch butterfly in the yard today. She laid eggs on some milkweed and then found nectar on this newly planted butterfly bush. 3-11-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder - Photo by Jim Snyder



I just discovered a female Eastern Black Swallowtail in one of the butterfly rearing cages today. She overwintered as a chrysalis for over 6 months. - Photo by Jim Snyder



Irish potatoes. After last year's violent spring weather that tore up our potato plants, this year I staked each plant. They have all withstood winds of up to 30mph so far. College Station, TX- Photo by Jim Snyder



Broccoli, spinach, arugula, purple kale, romanesco broccoli, leeks - Photo by Jim Snyder



Leeks - Photo by Jim Snyder



Texas sweet onions - Photo by Jim Snyder



Collards, kale, lettuce, arugula, leeks - Photo by Jim Snyder



Texas Blue Bonnets - College Station, TX - Photo by Jim Snyder



Texas Blue Bonnets - College Station, TX - Photo by Jim Snyder



Our 10 year old dwarf Bonanza Peach is in full bloom. - Photo by Jim Snyder



I found a White-lined Sphinx Moth in the yard today 3-18-2023. - Photo by Jim Snyder



CREATOR'S CANVAS/THOSE STUNNING METALMARK BUTTERFLIES!

By Wayne Easley



metalmark, variegated bluemark near rancho oriente, cr., june of 2020 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley

Metalmark Butterflies are some of the most spectacular butterflies in the world. They make up the family Riodinidae and include over 1,500 species world-wide but most of them live in the American Tropics. The silver or gold markings on their wings give them their name. Vivid colored butterflies does not even do justice to their beauty. Their beauty has caused some of us to wonder, "Why are the metalmarks adorned with so much color?" The first thing that comes to mind is that they use their attractive coloring in some way to camouflage themselves. But wait a minute, "Isn't camouflage used when a creature wants to HIDE ITSELF?" So those brilliant colors don't seem to help with that? As I was doing this report a new thought came into my mind, "Maybe they are using those marvelous colors in some sort of a reverse order? Maybe they are trying to blend in with their gorgeous surroundings?" Come to think of it the metalmarks that I have seen have all been associated with beautiful settings: attractive Poinsettia plants, Chordia blossoms, or trees that have big red powder-puff balls on them." So just maybe, they are trying to blend in with their delightful surroundings? It brings to mind Psalm 104 which is a tribute praise to the Creator God who made such a vast array of beautiful and colorful things. Verse 24 says, "O, Lord how manifold are YOUR WORKS, IN WISDOM YOU HAVE MADE THEM ALL. THE EARTH IS FULL OF YOUR POSSESSIONS." Maybe a Designer God just gets a kick out of making beautiful things?

It is reported that many metalmarks seek out the host plant where they will lay their eggs during the hottest part of the day. The reason for that is not known but it may have something to do with the fact that during the heat of the day, there are fewer enemies lurking around that want to eat the freshly laid eggs. From the time the eggs are laid, it will take approximately fifty days for the creature to become an adult butterfly. The cycle is a complete metamorphosis: egg, larva or caterpillar, time in the chrysalis and hatching into the adult metalmark. The adult butterflies make up different families within the metalmarks: there are beautymarks, jewelmarks, fiestamarks, eyemarks, checkered metalmarks and a host of others including the Red-bordered Pixie. They are butterflies that are a delight to the eyes. So if you are in the right place, at the right time, you may see a metalmark but you might also be able to photograph it. Enjoy the butterflies.

Wayne Easley/written on Feb. 13, 2023 in Sierra Vista, Arizona



metalmark, sailor's lemmark, above jurai, cr., sept. 2017 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



metalmark, foxface date and place unsure RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



metalmark. common jewelmark, casa rancho, cr., date not sure RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



Blue and Gold Beautymark a beautiful combination of black, blue and gold, - Photo by Wayne Easley



metalmark, beautymark above jurai, cr., august of 2018 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



butterfly, beautymark, near atierro, cr.jpg Download Preview JPG922kB m - Photo by Wayne Easley



metalmark, blue near hotel turire, cr., june of 2020 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



metalmark, shining blue grayler on tuis valley rd., aug. of 2017 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



metalmark, purple-washed eyemark, la mina rd., early oct - Photo by Wayne Easley



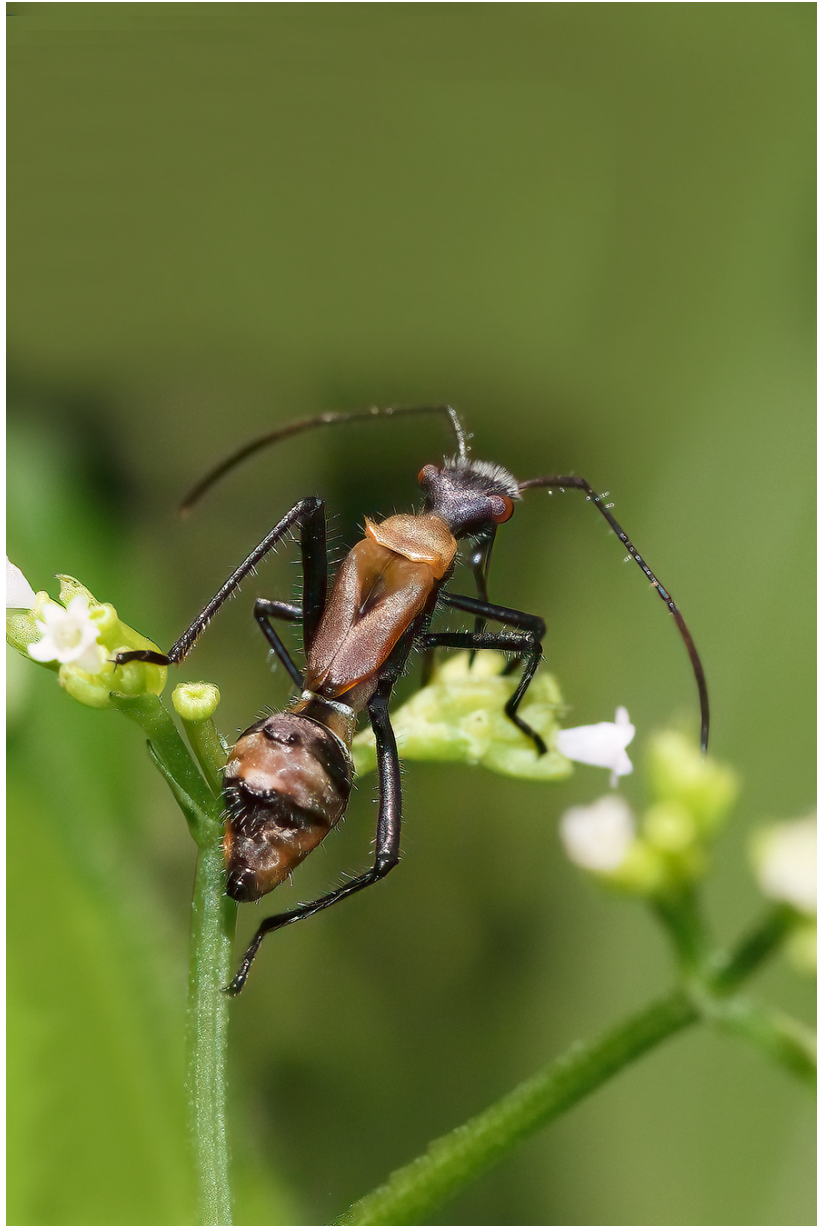
metalmark, la marta road, cr., date not sure RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



metalmark, likely tanmark on la mina road, cr., oct., 14-14 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



pixie, red-bordered, jurai, cr., date not sure RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



ant, at casa rancho, CR, late may of 2019 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley

CREATOR'S CANVASS-THE GOLDFINCHES/AMERICAN, LESSER AND LAWRENCE'S!

Photos by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, american, jones farm, nd., may 5, 2012 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley

There are only four goldfinches in the entire world. They are the American, the Lesser, and the Lawrence's here in America and way over yonder in Europe, the European Goldfinch. In this article, we will feature the three we have in the New World. All three generally are found in flocks and tend to subsist on weed and grass seeds. Let's begin with the incredibly beautiful American Goldfinch.

The breeding male is a brilliant yellow with black wings and cap. The female bird is an unstreaked gray-brown to yellowish plumaged bird and has dark wings with obvious pale wingbars. It is widespread in orchards, over-grown fields and suburban gardens. Both male and female birds tend to be less colorful in the wintertime. The American Goldfinch is so well-loved that it has been named as the State Bird of three different US States. The bird is seen pretty much nation wide in the US and can be seen in the lower Canadian Provinces.

Our second goldfinch is the Lesser Goldfinch. It is our smallest goldfinch and has a short tail. The male Lesser always shows white patches at the base of the primaries while the female shows more uniform olive on the head and neck. The bird is extremely fond of Thistle Seeds. It is seen from SW Texas all the way to the Pacific Coast and from Oregon in the NW down into Mexico. All of the goldfinches tend to sing a variety of different phrases often picked up from other species of birds.

Our last goldfinch is a real jewel. It has a somewhat short bill with a long tail, The male is a gray finch and has a black face with a lemon yellow belly. The female

is an olive bird with yellowish wing bars and lacks the lemon-yellow belly. Lawrence's Goldfinches tend to nest on the Pacific Coast and often move East in the wintertime to over-winter in Southern Arizona and NW Mexico. Many are, at this present time, over-wintering here in Southern Arizona. Enjoy the exquisite goldfinches.

Wayne Easley/written on March 14, 2023/Sierra Vista, Arizona!



goldfinch, american, peaceful valley, nd., 5-20-11 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, american antelope hills, nd., june of 2012 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, american peaceful valley, nd., 2-25, 11 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, lesser male at thistle feeder, sierra vista, az., mar., 14, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, lesser, male and female at thistle feeder, sierra vista, az., mar., 14, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, lesser male, hereford, az., mar., 14, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, lesser male, sierra vista az., mar., 14, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, lawrence's, near green valley, az., march 4, 23 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, lawrence's at green valley, arizona, mar., 3-23 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, lawrence's at canoa historica, az., mar., 4, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



goldfinch, lawrence's at green valley, az., march 4, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



Brazos Bend SP - Great Horned Owl Family

March 13, 2023

Photos by Paul Gregg



Great Horned Owl - Photo by Paul Gregg

Howdy!

I feel like it is about time to send out a few photos. On March 13, Carol and I went to Brazos Bend State Park with the goal of seeing the pair of baby owlets and their Great Horned Owl parents. By the time I'm writing this, they may have fledged. The same pair of GHOs have nested in the large oak tree just at the entrance of the park for a number of years. People can walk around the perimeter the park has placed around the tree and watch for any action from the babies. We got there around 9:30a.m. and the owlets were already taking their morning nap, maybe having been fed earlier by the adults. The photo with the two shows one yawning and the other sleeping. The parents were present in other trees nearby, maybe wondering when all those photographers (see the photo) would take a lunch break.

The weather was very cloudy and morning fog wasn't completely gone yet, so we decided to go on into the park and walk around to see what else we could find walking around some of the ponds. We walked, and we walked, and we walked! After the weather cleared up, we saw a good variety of birds (and an alligator or two) and I'll have to send a 2nd BBSP e-mail in a couple days. All total, at the end of the day we had walked 8 miles around the trails.

Back to the GHO parents and their two owlets. Late in the afternoon, not far from dark, we returned to the tree and one owlet was standing on the edge of the fork of the tree where you see the photographers pointing their lenses. The owlet disgorged a mouse it had previously eaten (sorry if that is TMI). And it

looked at its feet as if discovering it had a foot. The size of the foot and talons are quite impressive for such a youngster. There were other photographers under another large oak tree where one of the parents was perched on high. Both parents were issuing low calls back and forth to each other. The 2nd baby, was at another fork in the tree. Both owlets kept looking for their parents to bring an evening meal.

Just before it got too dark for me to even focus on any of the owls, a parent was seen up on a large limb with what appeared to be the body of a waterfowl, but the head was missing and I could not identify the prey held by the talons of the adult owl. I think that the bird was going to be brought to the cavity in the tree for an after dark feeding.

What a great day we had. For a couple hours we were joined by a couple we met down in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. And we bumped into a photographer who had joined us on one of our bird count walks at Mercer Botanical Gardens.

For a short video of an owlet I took, go here:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1yIR66VT_8

Enjoy!

Paul Gregg, SMSGT, USAF (Ret.)



Great Horned Owl with prey - Photo by Paul Gregg



Great Horned Owlet - Photo by Paul Gregg



Great Horned Owlet - Photo by Paul Gregg



Great Horned Owllet - Photo by Paul Gregg



Great Horned Owl Owlets - Photo by Paul Gregg



Photographers at BBSP - Photo by Paul Gregg

Brazos Bend State Park - #2 - March 13, 2023

Photos by Paul Gregg



Little Blue Heron - Photo by Paul Gregg

Better late than never?

Over the years I've declared that my middle name is "Procrastination" instead of Emerson and this email is proof. Sorry to be late sending this one out, but hope you enjoy the photos. Brazos Bend State Park has water features, woods, trails, picnic tables, camping, and even an observatory for night sky viewing. If you haven't been there, please consider taking a trip. To know more, go here: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/brazos-bend>

The Little Blue Heron paid no attention to us as we passed him on the trail around a pond. The White Ibis were foraging across the water. I took a few photos from the boardwalk. The Black-necked Stilt and the Stilt with the White-Faced Ibis, Long-billed Dowitcher and Least Sandpiper were all taken from the boardwalk. There were a good number of birds there. That Least Sandpiper

shot is very heavily cropped, but yielded a fairly decent photo. The Red-shouldered Hawk photos were barely useable, as the side/back lighting almost made it impossible to get a decent processed photo. We enjoyed a group of Fulvous Whistling Ducks and I took another famous “butt shot” of the FWDs all foraging at once. That shot will go into my folder marked “Butt Shots”. AND. . .what photographer who visits Brazos Bend SP doesn’t take a few photos of the American Alligators (some really large ones) who are present at almost every water feature in the park?

The spring migration is beginning to heat up (as well as the weather). I’ve seen lots of photos of migrating birds and can hardly wait to get out there.

Enjoy!

Paul Gregg, SMSGT, USAF (Ret.)



White Ibis - Photo by Paul Gregg



Least Sandpiper - Photo by Paul Gregg



Black-necked Stilt - Photo by Paul Gregg



Stilt and White-faced Ibis- Photo by Paul Gregg



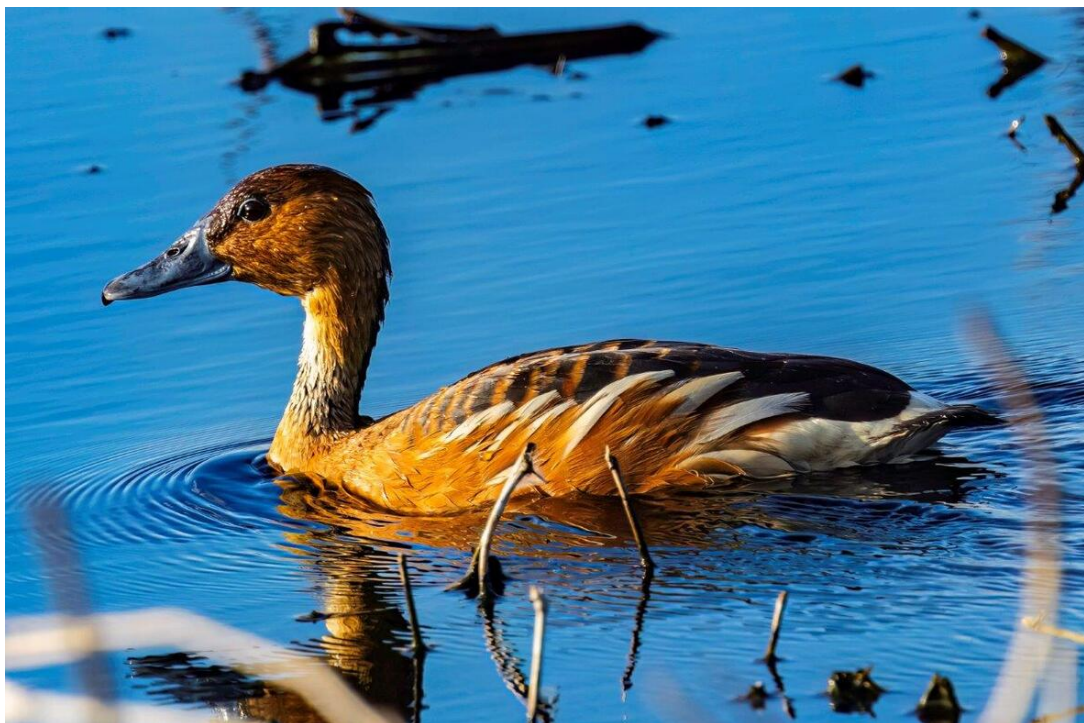
Long-billed Dowitcher - Photo by Paul Gregg



Red-shouldered Hawk - Photo by Paul Gregg



American Alligator - Photo by Paul Gregg





THE END - Fulvous Whistling Ducks - Photo by Paul Gregg



Chester Island 3-6-2023

Photos by Hank Arnold

Yesterday was a very special day, as we were invited to go to the Audubon sanctuary at Chester Island, up near Port O'Connor.

In early March, the breeding and nesting seasons are just getting started in most places, but up there, nobody got the memo.

There are bird flying everywhere, lots of special colors,



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

The most popular nesting real estate locations are already occupied. Some bushes that, taken by themselves, would be considered either large bushes or possibly small trees, have 10 or more Brown Pelicans in them.



Photo by Hank Arnold

Sometimes more.



Photo by Hank Arnold

It seems like more up off the ground than usual. This might be because some

are still emotionally recovering for the wild hog we had a two years ago. It feasted on eggs from nests on the ground. Most birds came back last year, and we're hoping we get back on track for a steady rise this year.

This shows how difficult it must be to perch in a bush wearing, essentially, flippers...



Photo by Hank Arnold

The uniform that a Brown Pelican changes into for breeding season is that their colors seem to get brighter, but more importantly, they show bright red on their pouches,



Photo by Hank Arnold

and sometimes at the end of their beaks,



Photo by Hank Arnold

When a male Brown Pelican is sent for nesting sticks, we are talking true air

freight...



Photo by Hank Arnold

There are also still some visitors that probably aren't going to nest on the island...



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

But you never know.

Only the Avocet on the far right is showing any of the breeding brown on his head.

We were treated to a “Ritual Mating Flight” by some terns...



Photo by Hank Arnold

They make the Blue Angles look pretty wimpy.

I just couldn't resist this young lady enjoying a day at the beach...



Monarch - Photo by Hank Arnold

On the way back we witnessed a group of young dolphins playing some sort of game that involved significant splashing...



Dolphin - Photo by Hank Arnold

At that age, though, rules are just not that big a deal.

Also saw this...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Taking all suggestions about what it might be.

“All suggestions” that is, unless Nan chimes in, then the polls are closed.

There is a video at the very end that shows most of the island that we couldn’t see from the water...

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230305-Chester-Island/>

Magnificent place. We’re lucky to be allowed to visit.

Home Again

Photos by Hank Arnold

On our second day in Midland, we visited the Midland Country Club Golf Course. Nancy wrangled an electric cart for us, and we toured the place in the

dawn light before any actual golf business was transacted.



Photo by Hank Arnold

Being a golf course, there are several water holes, kept full at great expense in the desert...

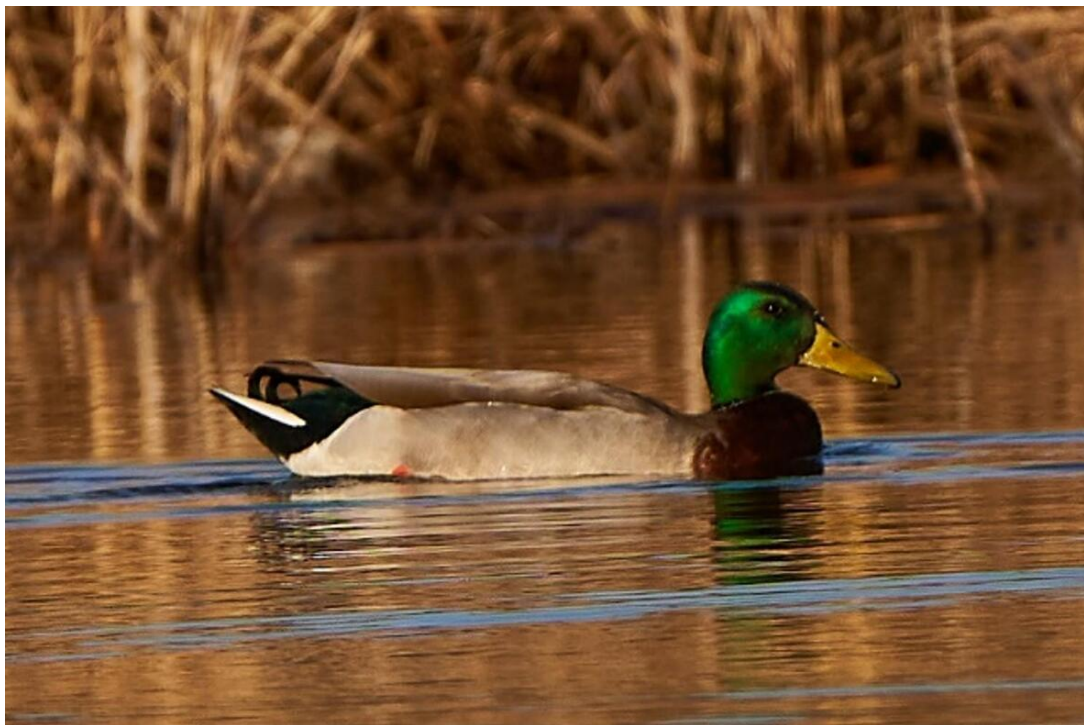


Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

Even the birds we thought we knew looked different, like this Red Tailed Hawk...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Kind of a Brown-Tailed Hawk, but not enough to be a Harlan's.

No idea what these are, but there are quite a few of them...



Photo by Hank Arnold

The entire time we were riding around there was a Harrier swooping in and out of the trees, and at one point he pulled up and tried to sneak up on the squirrel whose tail is just visible behind the tree...



Photo by Hank Arnold

After a few seconds it was obvious the squirrel had gotten away, and he just sat there looking cheated out of breakfast...



Photo by Hank Arnold

After a few seconds, he flew away, carrying the only thing he actually caught, which turned out to be a pine cone...



Harrier - Photo by Hank Arnold

After the Harrier exited, a ground squirrel popped out of his hole to see what all the commotion was about...



Ground Squirrel - Photo by Hank Arnold

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230317-Midland/>

My father was in the Air Force, so our family lived all over the place. Never anywhere for long.

My grandparents lived in Midland, and part of my idyllic childhood included going to visit them for extended stays.

My grandfather was a banker in the oil business, so his life evolved around playing golf at the Country Club. I was blessed to stow away every time I was there from about 4 years old until I went off to Annapolis.

I probably chased that Ground Squirrel's great-great-great-great grandfather around that same area, many years ago.

Being on the course again after all these years brought out my inner Hemingway...

Even at 11 years old, I clearly understand that this is what heaven must be like...

The Midland Country Club golf course, a clear day, and my grandfather.

Wilber Yeager is also with us, my grandfather's best friend and usual golfing partner. We were playing today with two other friends, unnamed local oil

tycoons that were unimportant to me.

Mr. Yeager and my grandfather are both in their 70's. At this point both their golf swings and their eyesight are on a steady, inexorable, downhill trend.

Although it's an expensive combination for most golfers, it's the perfect situation for a hawk-eyed kid enjoying life to it's fullest.

When I was younger I was of no golfing utility at all, always out in the brush chasing ground squirrels or snakes. I had memorized all the locations of the water fountains around the course, and could often be found at them drinking, bathing, or just generally misbehaving with them.

I am older now, and have an important place on the team.

My duty station is behind them for each shot, ready to memorize the arc of the ball they could no longer see, rarely on a trajectory that ended on the fairway.

I then run on ahead, leaving them to catch up in the golf cart. I then find each shot with a clarity and precision that would make the best pointer spaniel proud.

As soon as I have shown them the first ball, I sprint ahead to the second, repeating the results of my observations.

This continues until we are within 50 yards or so of the green, when they will pick the final iron of their choice and their putter from their golf bags on the cart, and walk the rest of the way. I then drive the cart carefully around the green to the tee area for the next hole and go back to the green to man the flag as they putted.

"Manning The Flag" was a position of extreme responsibility.

If it looked like a distant putt might actually fall into the cup, it was my job to take the flag out so the pole wouldn't interfere with birdie destiny, and prepare for the possible screaming, jumping celebration that might follow by all involved.

Now that I was older, I am, on very rare occasions, asked if I think the line of the putt would break left or right.

This always confuses me, because Midland is like, REALLY flat. They do build some artificial topography into the greens, but it's just not a lot.

Putting at the Midland Country Club is a lot like putting on a dry Astroturf football field.

“Looks pretty straight to me”, is always well received advice, but this only comes after a very careful surveying operation that includes, at a minimum, me lying down on the green to sight along the line from the ball to the hole.

Another thing about being 11 is that you begin to understand that there are some situations where “geographic arbitrage” might be possible.

As in “cheating”.

But, in truth, it is cheating with a side order of love.

Some tee shots were so errant that, given a good bounce off the asphalt cart path, could easily have come to rest in Ozona.

No way I’m going to be able to find that ball without a tent and several days of supplies.

On such occasions, if I just happened to have a second copy of whatever ball my Grandfather or Mr. Yeager were playing that day, by the time they arrived I would have miraculously found their tee shot off in the general direction it went, not too far off in the rough, and generally with a pretty good lie for the next shot.

It wasn’t in Ozona after all, and I would then quietly get another ball from their bag for future use.

If I were a practicing Catholic, I might have needed to cover that in confession.

But I wasn’t, and God already knew, as I did the same thing for Father Steve when we played with him.

Heaven

Midland Visit

Photos by Hank Arnold

We got back yesterday from a quick trip to Midland to visit my mother on the occasion of her 97th birthday, along with my brother and his wife.

Everyone is in good shape, and my mother is still surprisingly sharp of mind.

Apparently all the problems I caused in my youth have now been lumped into a single category of a level that allows forgiveness, and what’s left she now terms

as “a life with an entertaining child”.

I’ll put that in the “Win” column.

Nancy and I also have a common friend, Susan, from our early years, that still lives in Midland. She claimed to have Blue Jays, so the entire trip was molded around me being able to spend some time in her back yard.

Full Disclosure : Susan was once the object of my affections, but in reality, I was even more clueless then than now, so she probably never knew it.

You have to keep in mind it took me 40 years to make any headway with Nancy.

But she does have a very nice back yard, and had been offering peanuts in anticipation of my arrival.

As it turns out, she had a major renovation project going on, with workmen and saws all over the place, including one about 20 feet from the peanut offering.

If you think of it from the workmen’s point of view, some guy with a huge camera sets up a chair a few feet from their table saw, and then drifts in and out of “siesta events” for 4 hours.

So the saw wasn’t used that much.

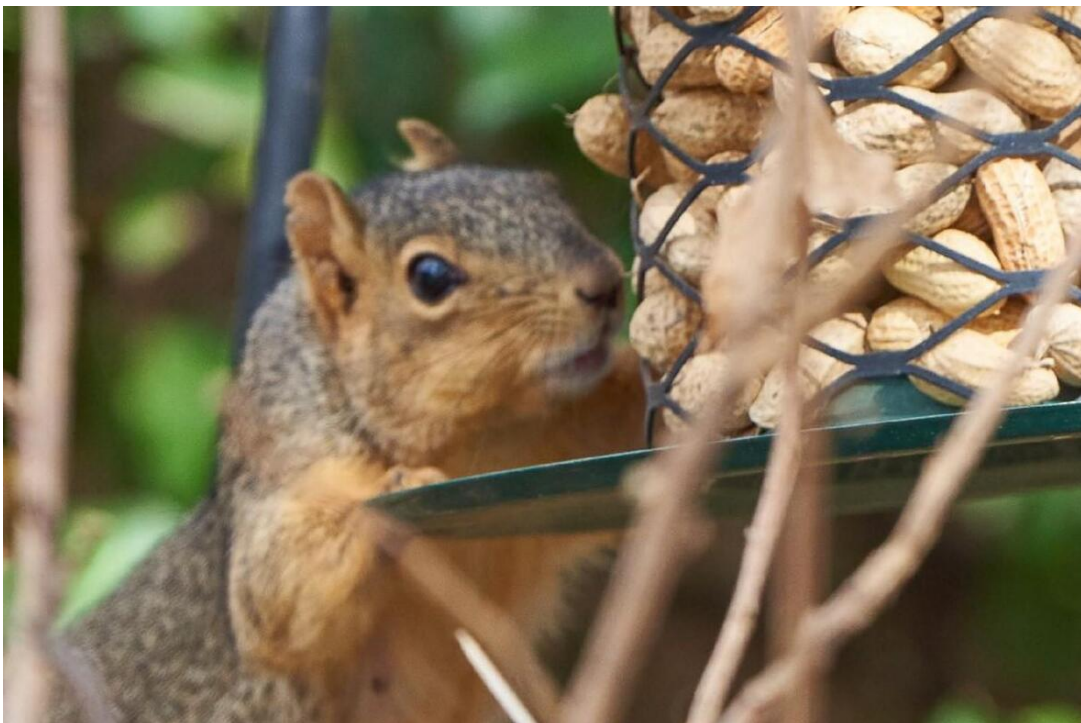
There was a mother squirrel that didn’t mind the renovation commotion or Santa napping at all...



Mother Squirrel - Photo by Hank Arnold

If you look closely, that's a locally grown pecan she's eating, and she had very little concern for her girlish figure when it came to them.

After she cleaned up the pecans, she turned her attention to the peanuts, and I got this picture showing her cheeks...



Squirrel - Photo by Hank Arnold

I'm thinking some young squirrels are going to get some peanuts out of all this.

Hopefully they turn out to be “entertaining”.

You can always tell when there is a lull in the birding, because I start taking pictures of the visible flowers between naps...



Photo by Hank Arnold

As it turned out I had several hours of “flowering”.

Susan had predicted that the Blue Jays usually came in about 3:30, but she hadn’t taken into account the recent Daylight Savings time change.

About 4:30, they started coming in.



Blue Jay - Photo by Hank Arnold

They certainly saw me, and with the renovation hubbub, they never just sat quietly in the sun munching peanuts. I was, however, able to get some pictures of the detail of their colors...



Blue Jay - Photo by Hank Arnold

At one point one of them flew in to the ground next to the peanut stash, picked something up, and flew away.

It wasn't until later that I saw it was a juicy wasp...



Blue Jay - Photo by Hank Arnold

He took it up into the tree, knocked the stinger off, and popped it down the hatch.

All in all it was a very enjoyable afternoon, and I'm sure that the renovation will be back on schedule soon.

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230316-Midland/>



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.

| Piney Woods Wildlife Membership Form | | |
|---|----------------|---|
| Last Name(s): | | First Name of Member(s): |
| Street Address: | City: | State and Zip: |
| Home Phone No: | Work Phone No: | Email Address(s): |
| 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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For membership information write to us at P.O. Box 189, Spring, Texas 77383-0189. Annual Dues :\$15.00 per household.

Please submit any articles you'd like considered for the PWWS Newsletter. The Pine Warbler, to our President, Kathy Coward, justforthebirds@sbcglobal.net or Diane Wedgeworth, Editor, milanodi@yahoo.com

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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