

The Pine Warbler



Pineywoods Wildlife Society September Program

**"The Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary" will be Tuesday,
September 19, 2023**

**By Nicole Rogers - Executive Director for Saint Francis Wolf
Sanctuary**



Photo by Carlos Hernandez

The Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary is a non-profit organization committed to providing exceptional lifelong sanctuary to non-releasable wolves and wolfdogs, while sharing a message of education and conservation about these amazing animals. The sanctuary was founded on October 4, 2002, by Jean LeFevre, who was dedicated to animal conservation and protection when asked to rescue a wolf found in Spring, Texas. She named it "Mystery" since no one knew the origin of the Timberwolf. Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary has remained the only wolf sanctuary in Texas for the past 20 years. In 2020, the sanctuary relocated to Navasota, TX after securing a 15-acre site in which to build bigger and better animal enclosures and eventually have the ability to rescue up to 36 wolves and wolfdogs at the site. Currently, the sanctuary is home to 6 wolves, 6 wolfdogs, and one dog who desperately believes he is a wolf, so we let him stay!

Nicole Rogers has served as the Executive Director of the Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary since 2017. As the sanctuary's first and only Executive Director, she has passionately led the way for rapid, yet sustainable, growth of the sanctuary over the past 5 years by leveraging her 24 years of diverse nonprofit leadership. Animal welfare is near and dear to Nicole's heart, so leading SFWS in collaboration with the Board of Directors for the sanctuary is truly a labor of love for her.

For the Piney Woods September program, the Executive Director of the Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary (SFWS) will speak about the history of wolves and wolfdogs in Texas, what exactly a wolfdog is, and how the animals living in their sanctuary were rescued.

The September program for PWWS will be ONLY in-person and takes place on Tuesday, September 19th, 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: If you wish to bring some store bought items for snack time, you are welcome to do so. Items no longer must be individually wrapped. However, we are still not allowed to bring homemade items to the Big Stone Lodge (unfortunately).



Meeko eating a big bone - The Saint Wolf Sanctuary





A&R - The Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary



McQuade 2021 - The Saint Wolf Sanctuary



Ryu - St. Francis Wolf Sanctuary

Note from PWWS President

Know we are all hoping for a little fall weather and a some rain. Let's kick off the year with a great Piney Woods meeting, more interesting subjects and meeting up with good friends again. Look forward to seeing you soon.

Kathy, Your President





Purple Martins Gather at Group Roost thru September

by Claire Moore

Don't miss this amazing spectacle! The sky is speckled black with a flurry of tens of thousands of birds at sunset.

Houston Audubon hosts several of these free Purple Martin Watch Parties to educate the public and share information about these fascinating birds.

From July thru September, Purple Martins form large flocks and roost together in preparation for migration in late September. They spend most of the day feeding on flying insects to build energy for their long journey across the Gulf of Mexico. They spend their evenings resting in huge group roosts in big cities. In Houston, they have a couple of areas where they normally roost -- The Fountains Shopping Center in Stafford (12634 Fountain Lake Circle, Stafford TX) or in the Willowbrook Mall area. Houston Audubon monitors things to see which location they are using thru the summer. Double check the web site below closer to the actual date as a final confirmation of which roost the martins are using and where we'll be visiting.

Visit this web site for more details and to confirm location and time a few days before the event:

<https://houstonaudubon.org/programs/all-age-groups/purple-martins.html>

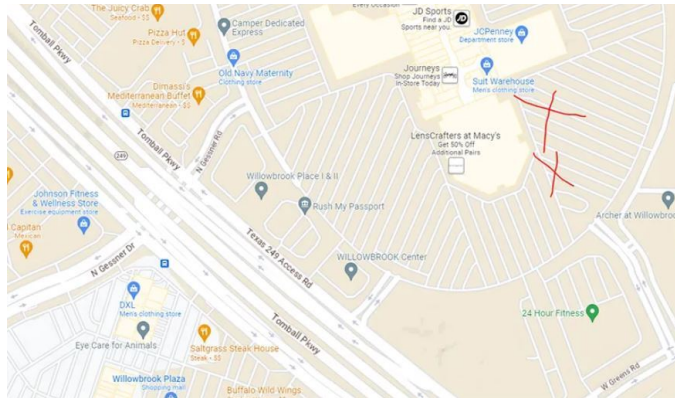
Remaining dates for the 2023 Watch Parties: September 3 and September 17.

Time: usually 8 p.m.

Tentative Location: The martins have moved across 249 to an area between Macy's and JC Penney at the southeast corner of the Willowbrook Mall. Refer to the map below for the location. (But please do double check the web site above for final confirmation a few days before!)

There is always a chance the martins will move but it would most likely be near by. Look for the Houston Audubon Birdmobile. Stop by the booth to learn more about these amazing birds. The martins will begin to descend into their roost around 8:15 PM so plan on being in your spot by 8 PM.

We recommend you bring a chair and an umbrella and be ready to take some great photos!



Currently, the purple martins are roosting where the red "Xs" are on the map. This is the southeast corner of Willowbrook Mall in the parking area between JC Penney & Macy's.

Videos and Photos to enjoy from Paul Gregg

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6wEQ1iSa74&ab_channel=PaulGreggJr
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keoskCMbXro&ab_channel=PaulGreggJr
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTd8eUwH4jU&ab_channel=PaulGreggJr

3 Was my first video of the purple martin communal roost. It was at the Stafford location. #1 and 2 were at Willowbrook in front of Costco.



Purple Martin Migration - Photo by Paul Gregg





Purple Martin Migration - Photo by Paul Gregg



Purple Martin Migration - Photo by Paul Gregg



Purple Martin Migration - Photo by Paul Gregg





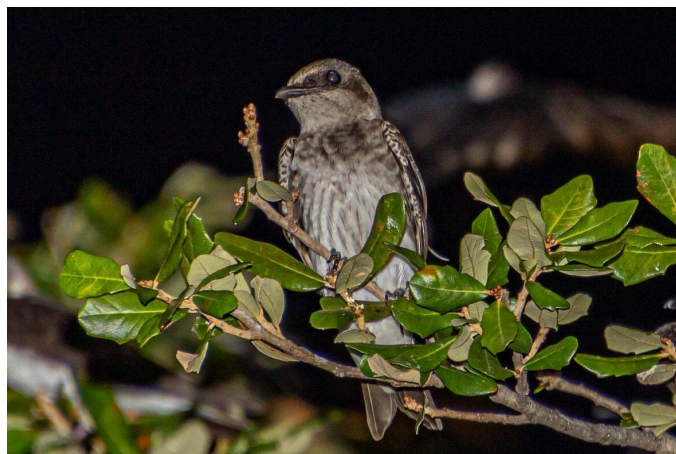
Purple Martin - Photo by Paul Gregg



Purple Martin - Photo by Paul Gregg



Purple Martin grounded - Photo by Paul Gregg



Purple Martin Migration - Photo by Paul Gregg



A Little Chicken on the Prairie

By Cheryl Conley, Board of Directors Lake Creek Greenway



Prairie Chicken - Photo by Cheryl Conley

They once ranged across coastal Texas and Louisiana and are one of the rarest and strangest species of birds in the country. There were once close to one million of them and now fewer than 200 are left in the wild. They are one of the most endangered birds in the USA. Can you guess what it is? It's Attwater's prairie chicken. So what happened? The reasons for their decline are the loss of their habitat, habitat fragmentation, overhunting and imported red fire ants.

Named after British-born naturalist Henry Attwater, the Attwater's prairie chicken is actually a member of the North American grouse family. In the wild, they require both short and tall grasses. During mating season, males will gather in an area of bare ground or short grasses called "leks." Here they are very visible to the females. Males inflate their air sacs, raise their tails, droop their wings and stomp their feet while "dancing" around. It is believed that the mating dances were the inspiration for many of the dances performed by the Native American tribes of coastal Texas and Louisiana. Very dense, tall grasses are required for nest-building. Hens will lay between 10 and 14 eggs that will hatch in about 26 days. Because of predators, only 3 in 10 eggs hatch.

Although they're endangered and there's only around 200 left in the wild, there is hope. There is a recovery effort in place to ensure that the bird will recover. A team of researchers and wildlife experts from across the country has been assembled to guide the recovery. Here are some of those participating:

- The US Fish and Wildlife Service
- The Nature Conservancy Texas City Prairie Preserve
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Texas A&M
- Fossil Rim Wildlife Center – Attwater's Prairie Chicken
- Houston Zoo
- San Antonio Zoo
- Sea World – San Antonio

Located just 60 miles west of Houston is the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. It is home to one of the largest remaining areas of native coastal prairie in southeast Texas, the habitat required for the survival of the prairie chicken.

The best hope for saving the birds is through captive breeding. The very first chicks hatched through captive breeding took place in 1992 at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose, Texas. Since then, several more zoos and institutions have joined in the effort. Once the captive birds are old enough to survive on their own, they are fitted with a radio transmitter and taken to specific release sites. They live in pens for about 2 weeks while they adjust and then they are released. The transmitters allow biologists and experts to monitor their movements and survival.

It's always a sad day when an animal goes on the endangered species list but Attwater's Prairie Chicken just may be one that is able to come off the list someday. Let's hope!



National Butterfly Center - Mission, Texas

Photos by Luciano Guerra





My photo of a bobcat pouncing on a Grackle in mid-air at the National Butterfly Center. Additional photos and a slow motion video I took of this predator/prey interaction are available on my Facebook page. - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Critter wrangler. Here he saved the gator that had become snared in a fishing line. Here's the rest of the story of this photo/rescue: 7-17-2023

[https://l.facebook.com/l.php?](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fblog.nature.org%2F2014%2F06%2F16%2Falligator-rescue-border-national-butterfly-center%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0ZlgGHmptKTKSVjZHonC3TsCRBBaUifaj35aVqUx8mqus0A47qp1B0wsi&h=AT0c_7q7UK*F)

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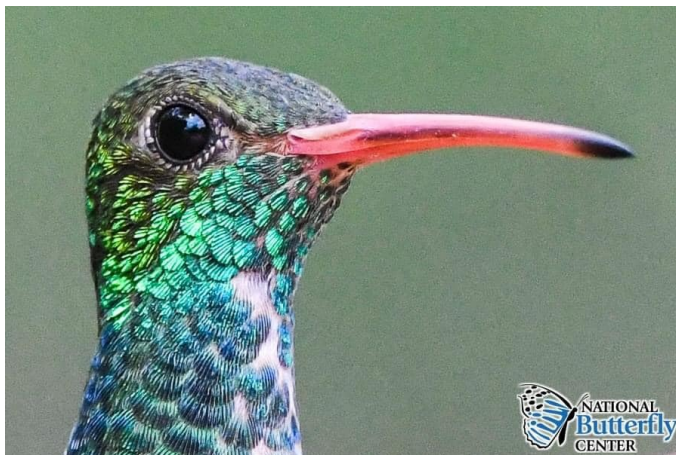
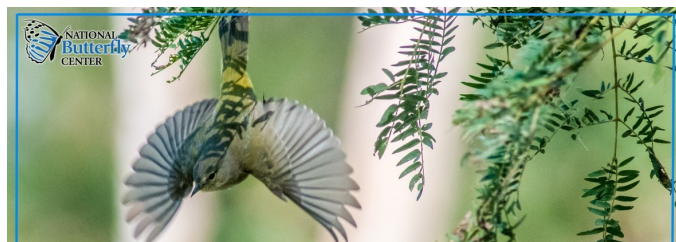


Photo at National Butterfly Center - Photo by Luciano Guerra



An Orange-crowned Warbler that I photographed in flight and with an interesting shadow pattern on its back.
- Photo by Luciano Guerra



Male Painted Bunting I photographed at the National Butterfly Center. - Photo by Luciano Guerra



This is a photo I took back in 2012. I needed to change my banner photo so I decided to look at some of my oldies but goodies and this one caught my eye. It's a picture I took of two ground squirrels at the former Martin Valley Ranch golf course in La Joya. It is now owned by the La Joya ISD. I call it, "Got your nose." - Photo by Luciano Guerra



It's been a while since I did an action sequence shot but I saw an opportunity to do one this morning when I spotted this young Gray Hawk perched atop a dead tree at the National Butterfly Center. So I waited until it lifted off and I took a series of shots without panning my camera to follow it. I then combined the seven individual images into one. These are easier to do against a clear blue sky but I was able to make it work against a cloudy background anyway. - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Photo taken at the National Butterfly Center - Photo by Luciano Guerra





Ladybird beetle or ladybug taking flight. — at National Butterfly Center. - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Cuckoo wasp. Also known as emerald wasp. This is a parasitic wasp. - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Kingbirds - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Audubon's Oriole - Photo by Luciano Guerra



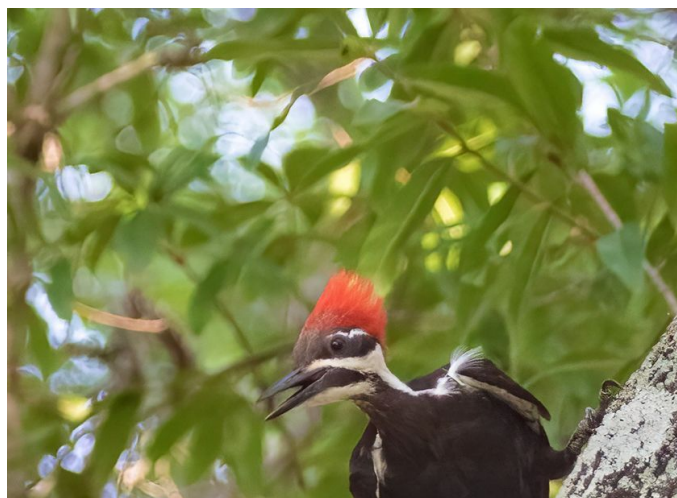
Nine-banded armadillo. - Photo by Luciano Guerra

Album Portfolio 151 Top Picks 2013-2023

Photos by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn

I recently reconnected with an artist friend who used to own a camera shop in New York. She asked to see some of my work. I put together a portfolio. These are my top picks. Ten years of documenting nature. Hopefully some humdingers! Thank You, Bev, for the challenge. Thank you to all who stopped by!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoXioQZ7tKs>





A late in the day and ALWAYS welcome visitor to the backyard oak tree. Pileated Woodpecker. Times two!! Mom and youngster. Clear Lake City (Houston) Texas 062123 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Pileated Woodpecker - 062123 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn





Pileated Woodpecker - 062123 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn

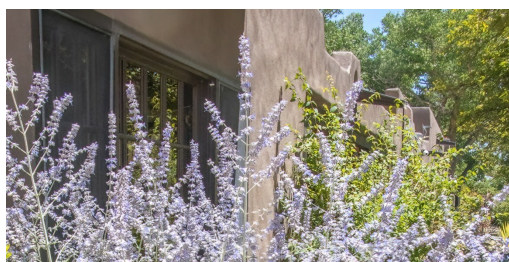




Western Bluebird - Bluebird mom with youngster! Abiquiu, New Mexico 071723 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Sleepy Orange nectaring on lavender- 072523 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn

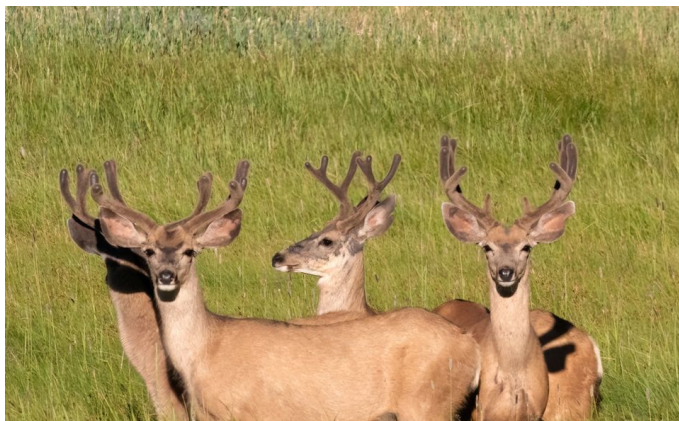




Lavender - 072523 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Cliff Swallow colony, Colorado - 072523 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn





Early Morning Buck Mule Deer Candelabra! Off of 114 between Gunnison and Saguache, Colorado. 072523
- Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Chipmunk chowing down on a dandelion flower! Gunnison, Colorado July 2023 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Bighorn Sheep Ewe. Roadside Yellow Sweetclover was being eaten like it was candy! Almont, Colorado 071323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn





Bighorn Sheep, Ewes and lambs. Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Desert Willow 072323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



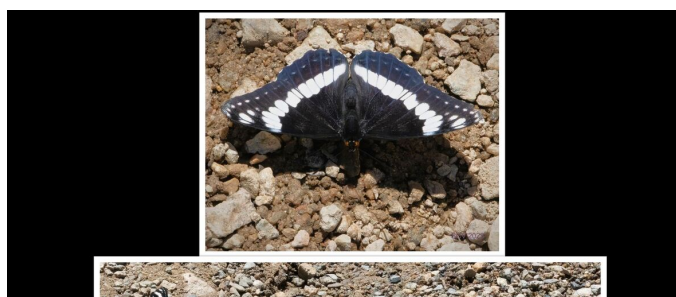
Marine Blue 072323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn

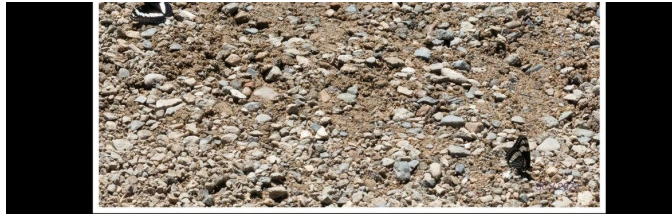


Columbine, the state flower of Colorado 072323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Fiery Skipper 062323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn





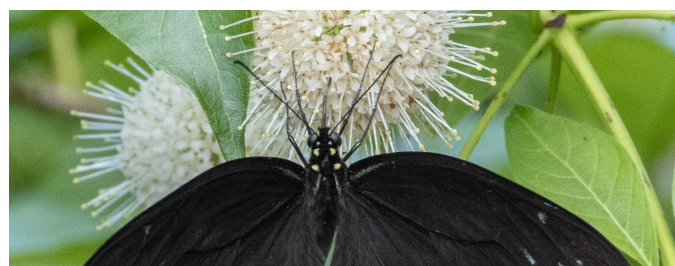
Weidemeyer's Admirals puddling at the bank of Taylor River 062323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn

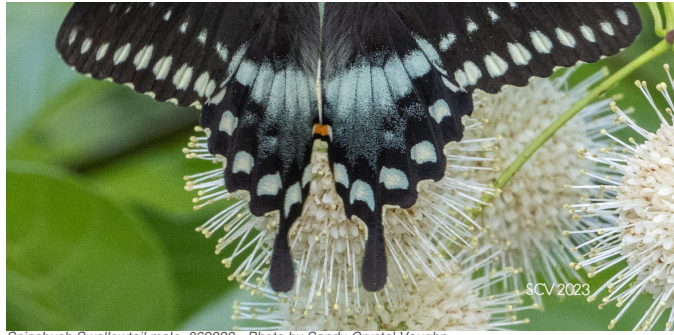


Eastern Tiger Swallowtail female, 062323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail male, 062323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn





Spicebush Swallowtail male, 062323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



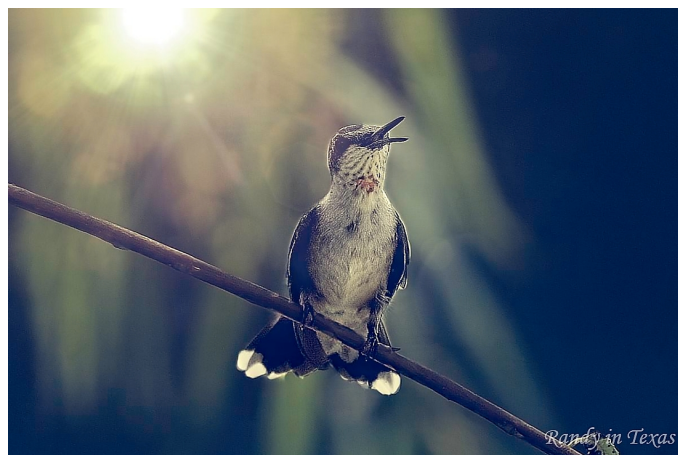
Monarch female 062323 - Photo by Sandy-Crystal Vaughn



Photos by Randy Scott



Everywhere in Texas ... applied to the weather ... This is a House Finch looking over his domain in Conroe ... with a twist of created amazement in the sky. - 8-8-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Yesterday, a hummer (maybe this one) came to the window to check me out inside. Usually, this means the migration has started and the bird is asking for more feeders. I hope so. Conroe 8-16-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



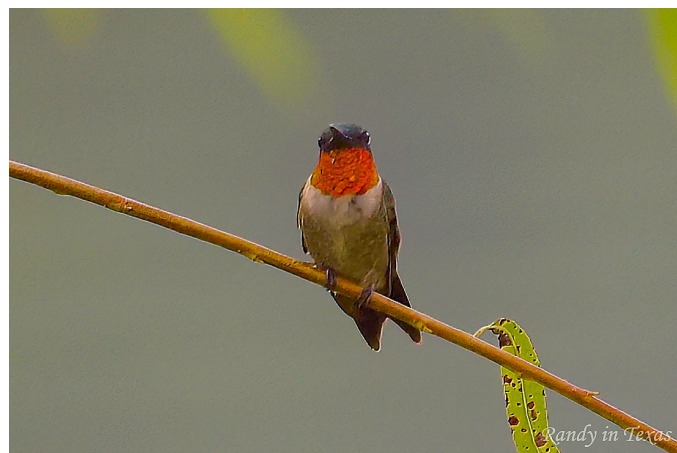
Randy in Texas

I posted this in Birds and Butterflies in Texas this morning. A new toy for the birds outside of my study. -
Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

Guardian of the feeder. This Conroe hummingbird is a resident and takes her feeder seriously. Always ready to attack... Soon, the migrants will start arriving along the Gulf Coast. Are you ready? 8-14-23 - Photo by Randy Scott

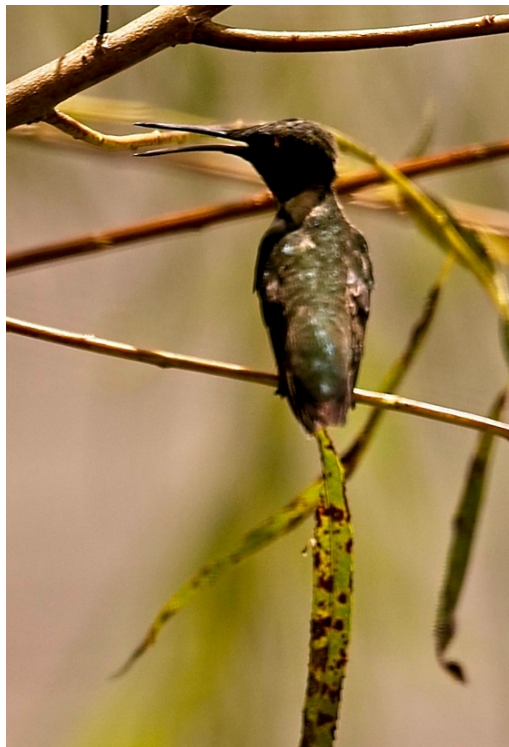


Randy in Texas

In my backyard, Conroe, this Ruby-throated Hummer showed up yesterday. I saw a third hummer the same day, so I put out one more feeder. He is staring me down as I focused on him. 8-6-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Conroe male hummer guarding his territory next to my home - 8-10-23 - Photo by Randy Scott





Randy in Texas

Look what I grew while you were away! I am now a Spotted Tail Ruby Hummer.
LOL - Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

I love these House Finches. This male photo was taken a few days ago in Conroe, Tx. He is eating finch food mixed with ordinary millet and Sun Flower seeds. - 8-4-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

Mockingbird caught stealing Beauty Berries. We have an entire family of these birds now attacking these plants. It is rare to see anything on our yard eating these berries. #Conroetx - Photo by Randy Scott





Backyard Water Lily - 8-12-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Bettina's Sailfish. She did this with only guidance from the deck hand (shown) but he grabbed it for photos and released it soon thereafter, because I had another one on my line also. 6-24-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Sailfish - 6-24-23 - Photo by Bettina Scott





Randy in Texas

Southern Dogface butterfly. Photographed a few days ago in my Conroe front yard. #texasbutterflies- Photo by Randy Scott



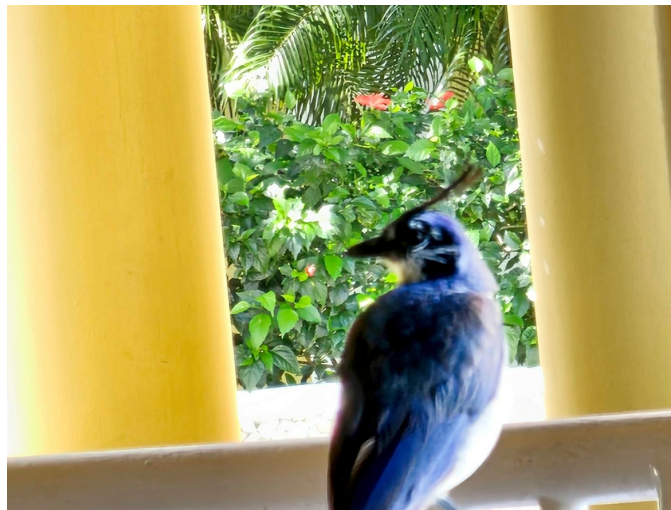
Randy in Texas

Chickadee now a frequent visitor despite this heat in Conroe, Tx. - 7-18-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

Our current male Bluebird frequently visiting our backyard. This is, I believe, the juvenile from our first nest this season. Only one baby bird survived in the Spring from the clutch of 5 from this nest. The nest was attacked by a creature, probably a Rat Snake. This one escaped the attack. About one week later, our second nest was also attacked and that is the one where I believe the female lost her life, where we found the feathers. We are still learning how to create a safe environment for them to nest, but it is difficult. If attacked by a Racoon, we have a way to prevent that, but do not yet have a way to protect them from a Rat Snake. - 7-11-23 - Photo by Randy Scott





White-throated Magpie-Jay, similar to a Bluejay. Long tail! - Photo by Randy Scott



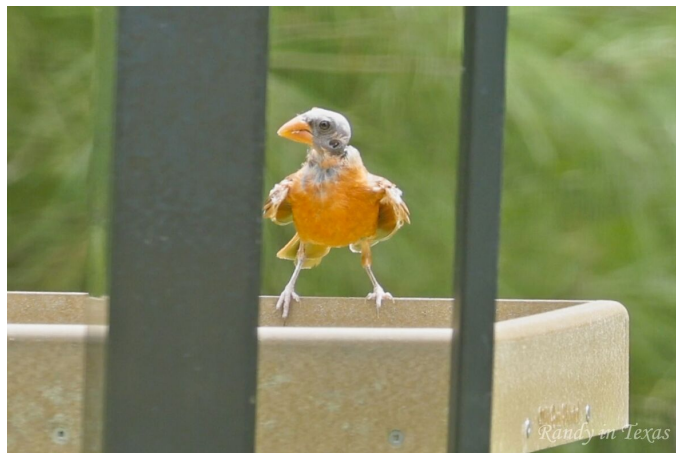
Mockingbird juvenile in my Conroe backyard. It flies and feeds with two families. The Mockingbirds are dominating the feeders right now. However, my Bluebird males are not backing off. They attack the Mockingbirds and the Bluejays and run them off. You get two families of Mockingbirds, two families of Bluejays and add in the squirrels and other bird species and the backyard becomes total chaos. 7-6-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Clay-colored Robin, national bird on hotel grounds. We saw these birds a lot. The common Robin. 6-19-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Painted Lady in my Conroe front yard yesterday. She was very shy. - 8-20-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Orange bald juvenile Cardinal in our Conroe backyard at the end of June trying to survive the hot sun and weather. - 7-4-23 - Photo by Randy Scott





Pigmy Owl - 6-19-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Two shots of our juvenile male Bluebird this year. He was the only hatched egg in the bunch and left the nest rather quickly. Now he visits the back yard regularly. Conroe. 8-15-23 - Photo by Randy Scott



Red-headed Woodpecker in Conroe. I was shocked to see this bird on our suet feeder but did not have time to get my camera for a closeup. As luck had it, he flew up to this tree (quite a distance away) and gave me enough time to use the current settings in the camera, which were not so great for this photo. However, I managed to recover enough detail to show him off. My favorite species of all woodpeckers! #woodpeckers #conroetexas - 8-18-23 - Photo by Randy Scott





*Palamedes Swallowtail. It's habits observed are fast flying and very active. Feeding on Zinnias.
#texasbutterflies #butterflies - 8-12-23 - Photo by Randy Scott*

Photos by Bill Miller



Whale-watching in the Gulf of Maine 8-27-23 - Photo by Bill Miller





Whale-watching in the Gulf of Maine 8-27-23 - Photo by Bill Miller



Whale-watching in the Gulf of Maine 8-27-23 - Photo by Bill Miller



Green tree frog - Photo by Bill Miller



Squirrel - Photo by Bill Miller

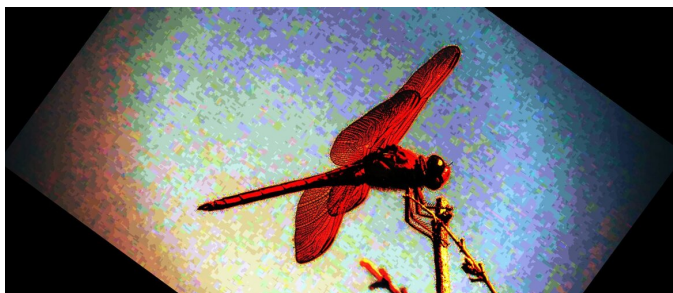
Squirrel - Photo by Bill Miller



- Photo by Bill Miller



Painted Bunting - Photo by Bill Miller



Dragonfly - Photo by Bill Miller



Dragonfly - Photo by Bill Miller



They are very elusive, but I finally managed to get a decent picture of one of the wren parents coming in to feed the chicks. 6-28-23 - Photo by Bill Miller



Blue Bird - Photo by Bill Miller



Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillar - Photo by Bill Miller



Ruby-throat Hummingbird - Photo by Bill Miller





Maine - Photo by Bill Miller

Photos by Jim Snyder



I found this little Hummingbird fledgling in the grass this morning, 8-19-23. Hopefully he'll figure out how to fly soon and be on its way. He made it okay. - Photo by Jim Snyder



This very large female Pipevine Swallowtail emerged today. Within just a few minutes of releasing her a male flew in to mate. Her abdomen appears to be full of eggs and I have plenty of the Pipevine host plant in the yard, so I expect to find a new batch of caterpillars in a week or two.- Photo by Jim Snyder



I had three more butterflies emerge today. This one is an Eastern Black Swallowtail. I had two Pipevine Swallowtails earlier today. These three brings the total butterflies raised and released to 94 this year! 8-3-23 - Photo by Jim Snyder



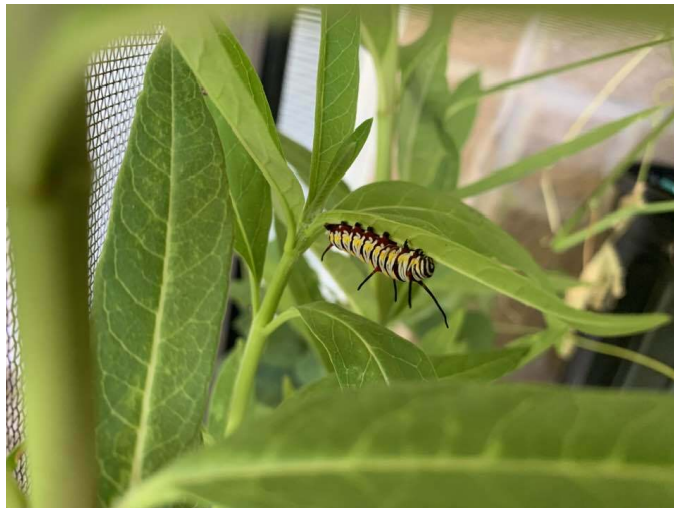
The cicadas are out in force this year! — in Emerald Forest. -7-27-23 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Today we have a female Eastern Black Swallowtail and a male Gulf Fritillary. 6-29-23 - Photo by Jim Snyder



We had a super butterfly find in the yard today; a Bordered Patch. This is only the second individual of this species that I have seen in our yard in 10 years! 7-9-23 - Photo by Jim Snyder

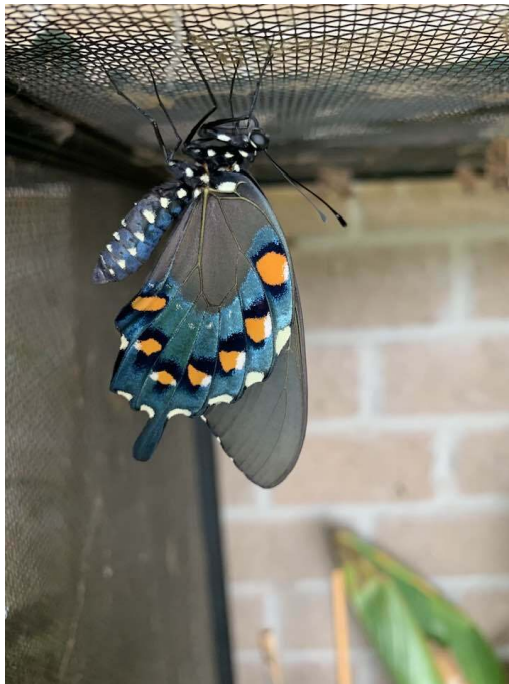


Super excited that I found this Queen butterfly caterpillar today, 6-26-23. It was on the ground on leaf litter that I happened upon while pulling weeds (an otherwise thankless task in 100 degree heat)! I have plenty of milkweed in my plant nursery so, needless to say, this little guy has a new home in my rearing cage with plenty to eat. - Photo by Jim Snyder





A fresh Painted Lady was in the yard at first light this morning, 8-22-23 - Photo by Jim Snyder



And another Pipevine Swallowtail. That's three different species in one day! 6-20-23 - Photo by Jim Snyder

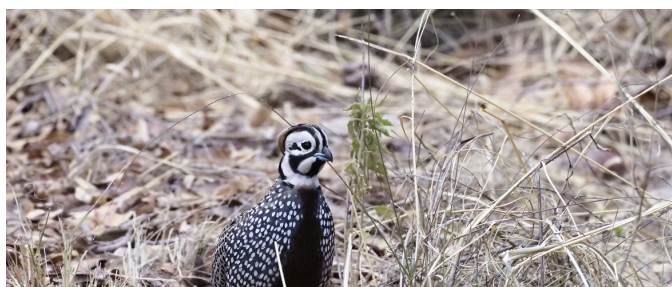


Eastern Black Swallowtail (male) 6-17-23 - Photo by Jim Snyder



**CREATOR'S CANVAS-ARIZONA QUAIL/MONTEZUMA
AND SCALED!**

By Wayne Easley





quail, montezuma, near coronado visitor ctr., az., june 18-23 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley

Someone I was talking to about seeing the Montezuma Quail told me, "You don't go looking for that quail; IT HAS TO FIND YOU." Indeed, it a beautiful quail but much more difficult to see than the more common Gambel's Quail. Yesterday, my two boys and I were working our way past the Coronado National Forest Visitors Center (road goes to the right between Hereford and Bisbee off of Highway 92) all the way to the top of the mountain. There is some kind of communication tower up there. After passing the Visitor's Center, we discovered a lone male Montezuma Quail feeding along the side of the road. The Montezuma has specialized claws for digging out tubers and bulbs. They do eat insects and acorns as well. The Montezuma has a small head and a round body and a sorta of a clownish look to it. They sport lots of white spots on a blackish-brown body. They tend to live higher up than the other quail in Arizona and are found often in grassy pine-oak foothills. It is said that they prefer to feed close to where they nest, often returning day after day to the same spot. The nest itself is placed on the ground where the female lays from 8-15 eggs. Incubation often coincides with the late summer rains (called monsoons) and incubation can last for almost a month. The immature birds can fly within ten days of hatching and while they are at first with their parent birds, they feed pretty much on their own. One of the reasons the bird is so difficult to see is that they prefer to hide in the grass rather than to fly away. May our grassy oak and pine canyons continue to have the magnificent Montezuma. They are worth having!

The other quail in our area is the Scaled Quail. It is found lower in the desert and is a plump, short-legged bird with white and black scales and a topknot that looks like white cotton. It is often called the Cotton-top Quail. This quail most often avoids wooded areas and stream-sides and prefers to live on the plains and dry open valleys of the desert. While the nest is in the desert, the bird does prefer, if possible, to be within 5-8 miles of water. We are seeing our Scaled Quail just beyond the San Pedro River that flows into Arizona from Mexico. The San Pedro River is about ten miles or so from Hereford, Arizona. The San Pedro has enough ground water that it keeps the river flowing all year in spite of the desert. Studies have shown that the Scaled Quail often is double-brooded. the female laying a dozen or so eggs each time. Its major food is seeds, some of which are quite large. Predators include hawks such as harriers, and red-tails, foxes and coyotes and several snakes that live in the area. Again this is a really handsome bird. I invite you to take a close look at those black and white scallops and that unique topknot. You will be impressed!

Wayne Easley/written on June 20. 2023/Sierra Vista, Arizona!



quail montezuma, near coronado natl forest visitor center, arizona june 18, 23 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



quail, montezuma, near fort davis, west texas date not sure R3 (1) - Photo by Wayne Easley



quail, scaled near hereford, az., june 18, 2023 R3 (2) - Photo by Wayne Easley





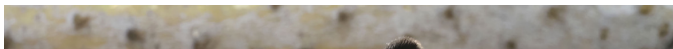
quail, scaled, near hereford, az.,, san pedro river area, june 18, 23 R3- Photo by Wayne Easley



quail, scaled, near san pedro river, arizona june 18, 2023 R3- Photo by Wayne Easley



quail, scaled near san pedro river, hereford, arizona june 18, 2023 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley





quail, male and female, sierra vista, az., mar., 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley

CREATOR'S CANVAS - THE FIVE-STRIPED SPARROW/RARE AND LOCAL BIRD IN ARIZONA!

Photos by Wayne Easley



sparrow, five-striped singing on ocotillo blooms in box canyon, az., may of 2023 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley

I remember vividly a couple of trips we made to see the Five-striped Sparrow. Those birding trips were years ago when the best place to see that elusive bird was the California Gulch in Arizona. Located west of Nogales, Arizona, the Gulch was about as remote as you can get. Noted in earlier times for its mining possibilities, it is today a part of the ghost town tours of South Central Arizona. Places like Leadville and Ruby, Arizona welcomed miners who were looking for gold, silver, copper or even zinc or quartz. At that time, there was a fever in the air! When the mining ventures ran their course, the areas were abandoned. Schools, jails, and mining equipment were all that was left until the early 1960s when birders began to find the rare and local Five-striped Sparrow along with other exciting birds that are quite difficult to see in the US. While it is true that birds such as the Five-striped Sparrow may have been overlooked in the past, recent sightings in Box Canyon, Arizona have been encouraging. Let me explain.

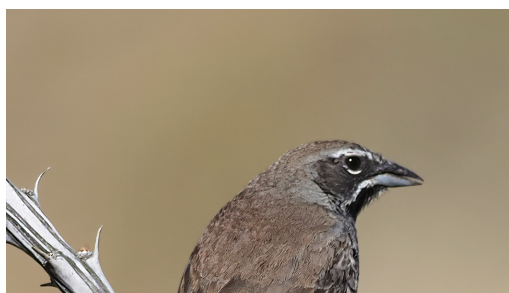
Box Canyon is a canyon that connects Madera Canyon (fairly close to Tucson and Green Valley) to pasture land near Sonoita, Arizona. As one travels east on the winding road through the canyon, there is a wall of rock that reaches skyward on your left with a steep rocky ravine on the right. It is here where the Five-striped Sparrow along with a few Varied Buntings and Ash-throated Flycatchers are being seen. There are Summer Tanagers in the area as well which seems out of place. The Five-striped is a handsome bird which is mostly gray with a brown back. The five vertical white stripes on the throat are very prominent but the bird is difficult to see unless it is singing. It appears to like the spindly stems of the Ocotillo that blooms in the area toward the end of May and early June. We were there on May 31 and the sparrow was singing his heart out from a nearby Ocotillo. Of course, our cameras were busy as well. Five-striped Sparrows do spend a lot of time on the ground looking for seeds and they eat

Sparrows do spend a lot of time on the ground looking for seeds and they eat insects as well. There is some thought that this sparrow tends to nest later in the summer which coincides with the coming of the monsoon rains. On that note, I can not say for sure! It has been documented though that the female provides shade for her babies at the nest with her own body when the weather is really hot. Now, that is pretty cool! I hope you can see and enjoy this wonderful sparrow which for now, at least, it is easier to see. Enjoy the wonders of nature here in Arizona.

Wayne Easley/written on June 2, 2023/Sierra Vista, Arizona!



sparrow, five-striped at box canyon, az., may 31-2023 R3 (1) - Photo by Wayne Easley





sparrow, five-striped, box canyon, arizona, may 31, 2023 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



sparrow, five-striped singing in octotillo in box canyon, arizona on may 31, 2023 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



row, five-striped showing black dot on the breast, box canyon, az., may of 2023
R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



ocotillo blossoms in organ pipe national mounument near why, arizona, april 27, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



ocotillo in bloom SHOWING SPINDLY BRANCHES. NOT HOWEVER, THE PICTURE WAS NOT TAKEN IN BOX CANYON. - Photo by Wayne Easley



Proposed Reddish Egret Mini-series

Photos by Hank Arnold

This is a great time to be a birder in Rockport, Texas.

Actually every time is a great time to be a birder here, but this time is better than most.

Our vacant lot of Least terns is very active right now.

You've got your hatchers...



Least Terns - Photo by Hank Arnold

Your feeders...



Least terns - Photo by Hank Arnold

Your hiders...





Least tern - Photo by Hank Arnold

Your seekers...



Least terns - Photo by Hank Arnold

(these are adults, are looking and calling for their chick, who has wandered off)

And your race-across-the-open-sand-because-its-just-funners...



Least tern - Photo by Hank Arnold

This next one is actually a sequential set of images showing a shift change for a nesting pair of Least Terns...

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230606-Rockport/i-qrwLzZz/A>

After all that entertainment, I went over to the beach park, and as usual, saw wondrous sights...

A Skimmer "scrape" (yup, that's what Skimmer nests are called) with 4 eggs...



Skimmer - Photo by Hank Arnold

He feels like his steady 5 year commitment to their relationship was bound to be worth something, but she pretty obviously didn't agree.

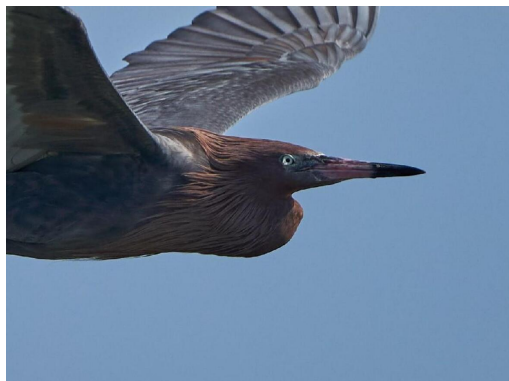
And folks, Laughing Gull girls are a pretty "friendly" group.

Maybe next year

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230411-Rockport-Beach-Park/>

I sent the picture to David Newstead, the area Black Skimmer expert and protector, and he said he has seen up to 9 eggs in one scrape before. He implied it might be some sort of family sharing, ending with the fact that they think "something funny is going on" when they see that many eggs.

There sky is full of Reddish Egrets flying back and forth constantly to the island where the chicks are, and they all show the damage to the base of their bills that's normal for this time of year...



Reddish Egrets - Photo by Hank Arnold

Here is a picture from the past that explains where this damage comes from...





Reddish Egrets chicks - Photo by Hank Arnold

That's two not quite so young Reddish Egret chicks exhibiting bad table manners for an adult returning with fish.

Its bad enough when this parent abuse happens in the nest, where the chicks are small. Once they grow up though, they go out into the shallow water to attack their parents as soon as they land.

Right now the Reddish Egret chicks are still too young to fly, but soon the parents will encourage them to learn flight skills by leading them in short hops around the nest area, followed by jumpy flights of 20 or 30 yards before they will get fed.

Graduation from flight school for Reddish Egrets is when the parents make the kids follow them to different fishing spots in order to get fed. This also shows the young ones HOW to catch fish.

After that phase, the Rockport Beach Park is covered in juvenile Reddish Egrets wandering the shallows, looking very hungry.

During the hungry, wandering phase, the youngsters tend to group together, which makes for some pitiful sights. Here is a short video of a sunrise youth meeting...

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20190628-Rockport-Beach-Park/i-ccjCQ4t/A>

I suppose that as some of them start to catch fish, the others eventually catch on.

Eventually they look down and see fish, and SHAZAM, the base of the bills on the adults starts to heal again until next year's nesting season.

The good news is that in all my years of watching this cycle in Rockport, I've never once seen a sick or dying juvenile Reddish Egret, so the system works well.

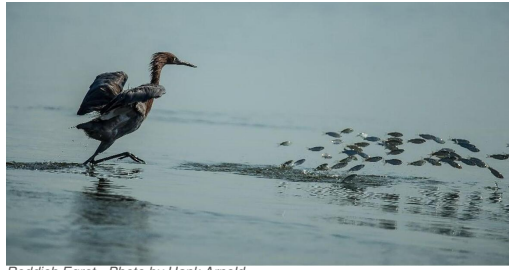
They grow up to become so adept at catching fish they make "clumsy" look "graceful"...



Reddish Egrets - Photo by Hank Arnold

Eventually then rise to fish cowboy level...





Reddish Egret - Photo by Hank Arnold

Maybe we need a miniseries to compete with "Yellowstone".

That's Rip, right there.

In the midst of all this flying and feeding chaos, a group of ducks swam calmly across towards me from the island, then swan right in front of where I was sitting...



Photo by Hank Arnold

I had, quite literally, a front row seat, and I am still clueless as to how to even attempt a guess at any kind of genetic history for this family.

This picture deserves a special mention...



Photo by Hank Arnold

I was taking pictures of the Black Necked Stilts about 30 yards away through the window of our car, when this young lady flew up and landed on the fence right next to where I was parked.

At first I thought she would never wait long enough for me to change the settings on the camera and lens to take a picture from that close.

But she patiently waited for me to get my short game act together, then as soon as I took the picture, she flew off.

I really believe she just wanted to show off her catch and have it recorded for posterity. Then she flew off and took it home for the kids.

I'll have to admit that as bugs go, it's a pretty good one.

After sitting out in the sun taking pictures for about an hour, I was just about to head home for the air conditioning, when I got one last slice of splendor...



Spoonbills, roseate - Photo by Hank Arnold

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

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230606-Rockport/>

Little Bay New Residents

Photos by Hank Arnold

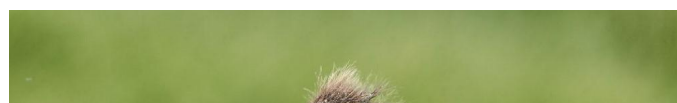
We had the opportunity to take Monica and the Grandkids around Little Bay in the new boat.

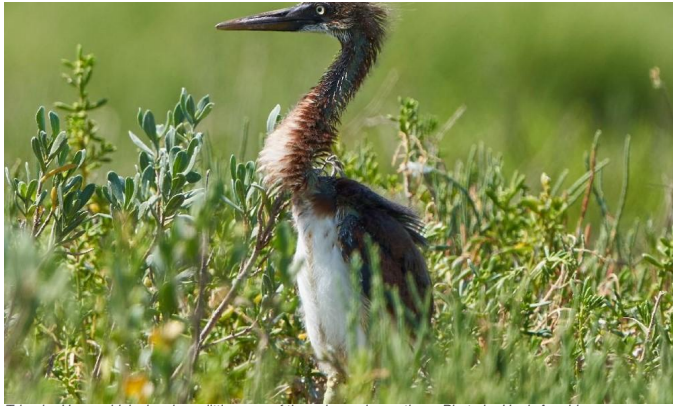
The population of the island has now more than doubled from a month or so ago, because of all the new residents that have hatched.

Some are large enough now that it takes both parents out fishing to keep them happy food-wise, so there are little heads sticking up everywhere...



It's pretty hard to tell the species of some of these apparitions, because they don't look anything like their parents. The only thing they all have in common is a coating of fuzz. The one above is a Tri-Colored Heron chick. - Photo by Hank Arnold





Tri-color Heron chick showing a little more of the color underneath... - Photo by Hank Arnold



Here is a Reddish Egret chick... - Photo by Hank Arnold



White Morph Reddish Egret chick (dark bill)... - Photo by Hank Arnold

As with every year, there are a lot of birds that we think we recognize..





Great Egret chick (yellow bill)... - Photo by Hank Arnold



And here a Black-Crowned Night Heron chick... - Photo by Hank Arnold

There are a bunch we have no idea about (and aren't taking any concrete steps to learn)...



White Ibis requesting a refueling... - Photo by Hank Arnold





Another actually being fed... Photo by Hank Arnold

The object of the game for the adults is to keep them fed until they are old enough to fly, then give them flying and fishing lessons, then to quite feeding them.

It's a time honored plan that seems to work very well for birds, but has limited results for humans.

Until they learn to fly, the older chicks tend to be quite aggressive when the adults return with food, as evidenced by the battle damage around the base of the bill on this Reddish Egret...



Reddish egret - Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

Summer Yard Birds

Photos by Hank Arnold

Couldn't go boating yesterday, so I went yarding.

The Mulberry Tree is bearing fruit again, and its attracting lots of interesting locals...





Kiskadee - Photo by Hank Arnold

I've been trying to get pictures of one of our Kiskadees for several weeks now. I think we have two local nests, one somewhere South and one somewhere North. This guy is from the South.

They fly in to a branch on the outside, then look around quickly to the inside for a likely looking berry, then they're gone.

They clearly know I've been trying to get a picture, and they are also clearly out to make a fool of me.

The fact that it's so easy is extra entertainment value to them.

This, along with Mulberries, are their two favorite things in life.

It started because they knew I was keeping the camera inside, in the air conditioning, so that when I took it outside, the lens would fog over for about 5 minutes.

Wiping a large lens doesn't work, as it just fogs right back over and now you've got water streaks.

They would hop around, in the sun, clearly visible, on the outside branches, doing Cirque Du Soleil acrobat tricks...

For about 4 and a half minutes

Then leave.

Just downright mean.

So I started keeping the camera in the garage, where it won't fog over.

Now they fly into the tree, out in the open, where I can see them from my office window.

Until I get downstairs, get the camera, and walk through the door.

Gone city.

When I set up outside and wait, they always fly to side of the tree I can't see.

It's good that I can't hear their high pitched bird laughing.

So I gave up.

I think this one flew in just to get me to start trying again, so they can get their evil jollies at my expense again.

We have a very steady stream of hummingbirds, I'm assuming all Black-Chins...





Black Chinned Hummingbird - Photo by Hank Arnold

They like my cooking. The ladies behave, but the males put up a brief show of guarding the feeders, then give it up quickly, because it's just so hot.

From the coloring, I'm thinking this is the male Cardinal that was born here this year...



Male Cardinal - photo by Hank Arnold

He's turned into a fine looking young man.

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230701-202-SHW/>

Just A Picture

Photos by Hank Arnold

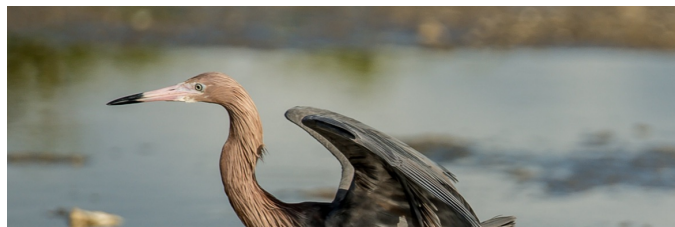
Every now and then I get asked which picture I like the best, out of all the pictures I've ever taken.

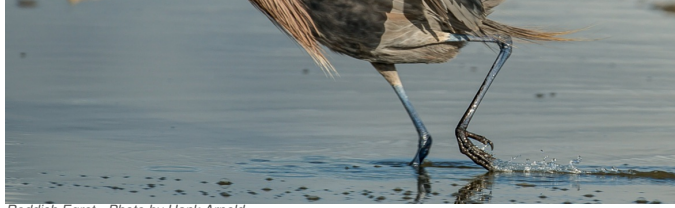
That's a lot of pictures to choose from.

Well over a million images.

Although lately I've been blessed to be around some beautiful birds, in incredible photographic situations, holding in my hand unbelievable technology in terms of electronics and lenses...

This is still my favorite picture...





Reddish Egret - Photo by Hank Arnold

Taken on a camera light years behind what I'm packing today.

I had some quiet time thinking about that one image while driving to Port A yesterday, so I could study it only from my memory.

Why was this image special?

First, Reddish Egrets are difficult to find. Next, they are hard to get near enough to take high resolution images. It's even more difficult to be able to work your way up to them in such a way that they go on about their fishy business, doing something interesting, instead of just standing there looking at you or flying away. On top of all that, you don't choose the situation in terms of light, the situation chooses you.

This picture was the culmination of beating all those problems for a single moment in time.

But it has more than just focus, shutter speed, and depth of field going for it.

The most artistic person I know, our pseudo-son Patrick, has always told me that why you like a picture is not important, just THAT you like a picture. Over the years that he's been trying to help me find my artistic inner child, hidden under several layers of engineer and geek, I get the impression that the more you can't explain what you like about a picture, the better that picture is. Structure?

Layout?

Composition?

Ambiance?

If it has any of those, it wasn't from any serious planning or skill on my part. I was just a distant viewer of the scene, not any kind of director.

That picture was taken on June 5th, 2013, so oddly enough we're within a week of the 10 year anniversary of me pressing the magic, one in a million, button.

After all this contemplation, I made it to Port A, flew the drone for the City as requested, and was on the ferry coming back across when a quiet sadness came over me.

I haven't seen a Reddish Egret dancing in the sun like that for several years.

Places that used to be open water with Reddish Egrets are now parking lots. I couldn't think of a single place where I could go to find one. I used to know 20. Then even if I did find one, I probably wouldn't remember all the tricks Ray taught me to be able to sneak up on them.

It was right about then that I remembered that the place where I took that picture 10 years ago was a tide pool just up ahead that was next to what was then an abandoned dirt road.

Probably has a hotel or a gas station now.

But I turned in anyway...

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230325-REEGAs/>



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		
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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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