



SEPTEMBER 2020

Chapter News

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope you had a chance to attend the Virtual Volunteer Fair (VVF) along with over 600 other Master Naturalists. As for myself, I found two great opportunities that I hope to get selected for:

1. Writing articles about flora and fauna for *Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine*
2. Organizing flora and fauna photos for Bensten-Rio Grand Valley State Park.

New Class interns, please let me know if any of you had the opportunity to attend the sessions.

For those unable able to attend the VVF, or now want to view/select an opportunity(s) being offered, the session was recorded and can be accessed via the state website.

<https://www.TXMN.org>. VT hours can be charged to the VVF in VMS, whether you attended it live or watched the recording.

As you know, it's registration time for the State Annual Meeting. It's all virtual, and the registration cost is \$55.00. Also, the Photo, Art, and Media Contest is now open for entries through September 30th at 11:59 PM. You don't have to be registered for the meeting to submit an entry, but if you aren't registered, you can't vote for your favorites.

The Monarchs are coming! On September 16th, Craig Hensley of Texas Nature Trackers will host a WebEx event from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM on monarch fall migration. The event is free and is listed on the State TMN website (TXMN.org) as approved for AT, but as always, check with Bob Whitmarsh to be sure. Find out more about this event via the State TMN website EVENTS tab.

The 45-acre Lakeside Park and Nature Center project in Angleton is continuing to

move forward. Several members of the Lakeside Park committee went to The Woodlands and toured Rob Fleming Park to check out their pavilions for style ideas. The park is being designed to provide many opportunities to observe nature such as wetlands, lake habitat, and prairies and will also be set up for kayaking and fishing. It should provide many opportunities for Master Naturalists to volunteer.

It certainly looks like we will be meeting virtually at least through the end of the year and probably longer. I saw in the newspaper that the Federal Government has sent letters to all governors, stating that the CDC will be sending vaccines to hospitals and local health agencies for use by November 1. The letter also asks states to remove any requirements that would prevent the vaccine from being distributed and administered. I looked up the requirements for getting a vaccine approved by the FDA:

1. It must be efficacious – in other words, do what it is intended to, and be safe
2. It doesn't have to keep you from getting the disease (but it might). It just needs to make a case of the disease milder
3. It must work on at least 50% of the people taking it.

Until next time, stay safe, and go out into nature. Check out the fall bird migration – it's starting.

Bill

Bill Ahlstrom is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. He can be reached at ahlstrom@tmn.com.



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The Texas Master Naturalist program is coordinated by Texas A&M AgriLIFE Ext. Svce. and Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.

TMN programs serve all people without regard to socio-economic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Masthead photo by Charles Jesse Miller Jr at Mercer Botanic Gardens.

Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
Chapter News – September 2020

REMINDERS

1. **Deadline for the TMN 2020 Annual Meeting Photo, Art, and Media contest is September 30. See Page 3.**
2. **THERE WILL BE NO OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING.**

Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter General Meeting and Advanced Training

Wednesday, September 9, 2020, 9 AM

Via email meeting invite to Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service's
Microsoft Teams Meeting license

9:00 AM – 9:10 AM	Welcome and Meeting Participation Notes
9:10 AM – 9:30 AM & 10:15 AM – 10:30 AM	Nature Notes Speaker: Susan Heath, Director of Conservation Research, GCBO Topic: "Update on Wintering Shrike Project" Speaker: Jackie Hicks Topic: "GRANTing Wishes: An Overview of COT's EcoFund Grant Project at GCBO"
9:30 AM – 10:15 AM	Advanced Training Speaker: Bryan Frazier, Brazoria County Parks Department Director Topic: "Brazoria County Parks Department Update and Vision for the Future" <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>
10:30 AM – 11:00 AM	General Membership Meeting <i>[This meeting is approved for 1.00-hour volunteer time]</i>



Photo by Nash Baker

As the director of parks for Brazoria County, **Bryan Frazier** manages a staff of several dozen park superintendents, rangers, maintenance staff and headquarters employees, and oversees operations, resource management and all other aspects of a diverse, 11-park system. Brazoria County Parks offers RV and tent camping, cabin and group facility rentals, trails, 22 boat ramps and some 14 miles of public beach access along the Gulf of Mexico. This region represents multiple eco-regions in Southeast Texas, including bottomland hardwood and pine tree forests, bayous, bays, estuaries, and great beaches. Brazoria County Parks also operates the Stephen F. Austin-Munson Historical County Park, statue, and visitor center.

Prior to coming to Brazoria County, Bryan was the Director of Travel Services with the Texas Department of Transportation. Bryan first became a recognized fixture in Texas tourism and outdoor recreation as the Public Affairs Director for the State Park system at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He oversaw all aspects of the public affairs, promotions, marketing, special events, advertising and information campaigns for state parks, and managed

PR, media access and public presentation functions, serving as the official public spokesperson for the State Parks Division at TPWD. He represented TPWD on statewide initiatives and committees as a lead liaison with outdoor recreation organizations, state agencies, business partnerships, and numerous revenue strategies. As a PR writer, he has won more than 20 regional and national awards and has also been a freelance newspaper and magazine writer, columnist and photographer for sports and outdoor publications for three decades.

Before his 12-year stint at TPWD, Bryan worked in college athletic administration, TV sports broadcast and media relations in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He served as a collegiate assistant athletic director and worked various media projects for organizations such as the U.S. Olympic Trials, and Southern Methodist University football.

Bryan attended Abilene Christian University, he graduated summa cum laude with a degree in advertising and marketing and, as a college baseball player, where he was awarded one of the nation's highest honors, the prestigious, GTE Academic All-American team for both athletic and academic achievement.

In his spare time, he enjoys fishing, working out, coaching youth baseball and spending time with his wife, son, and extended family, which includes an identical twin brother, Brent.

NOTE: Stay tuned for information and instructions via email in order to "attend" the September, virtual General Meeting.
THERE IS NO OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING.

MEMBERSHIP DATA REPORT by Dave Brandes, Data Manager

Congratulations to those achieving recertification and milestones as of August 31:

Recertification

Cindy Goodrum
Karen Leder
Pam Peltier

250 VT Hours Milestone

Paula Hanson

1000 VT Hours Milestone

Bill Ahlstrom

Impact Data YTD—31 August 2020

2,031 Adults 6,219 Youth 8,250 Total

Hours Totals YTD—31 August 2020¹

8,015 Hours VT 1,314 Hours AT

¹ August hours: 512 VT; 95 AT

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST 2020 ANNUAL MEETING—*News*



ENTER THE PHOTO, ART AND MEDIA CONTESTS NOW!!

Deadline is September 30.

Photo, art and media contest: <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2020-photo-art-and-media-contest>

A BIT ON THE BIOBLITZ by Deb Nance

My husband Jim and I spent a morning at the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge surveying during BioBlitz. We didn't see anyone else from COT there, but it was a great day to be outdoors, with pleasant temps and no mosquitoes.



The Texas Mid-Coast Refuge System's BioBlitz was held August 7 through August 9 at the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, and the Hudson Woods Unit. It was hosted by the American Conservation Experience (ACE) with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A total of 1,559 observations of 526 species were made by twenty-seven observers and 212 identifiers. The most observed species were the Golden Silk Spider, 42 (left), the Eastern Pondhawk, 26 (right), and the American Alligator, 18. Photos by Greg Lavaty, with permission.



ORON ATKINS ACHIEVES 4,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS!

Way Above and Beyond the Call to Service...

A sampling of Oron's volunteer activities in the past four years since he graduated with the COT Class of 2016:

- Texas Stream Team (TST) Certification; monthly monitoring at Buffalo Camp Bayou at GCBO since 4/2016
- Multiple, annual Christmas Bird Counts beginning 2016
- Migration Celebration volunteer annually beginning 2016
- COT Board Member since 2017
- Camp Mohawk Nature Camp volunteer
- GCBO:
 - Installed 11 of 15 Texas Gulf Coast Motus Wildlife Tracking System antenna arrays along the coast from Galveston to Corpus Christi. <https://motus.org/>
 - Hummingbird Extravaganza volunteer
 - Spring Host Station maintenance, trail maintenance and volunteer
 - Shorebird Protection Project with Amanda Anderson
 - American Oystercatcher surveys including trapping and tagging
 - Loggerhead Shrike trapping and banding
 - Plover and least tern surveys at Mat Pen
 - Youth Bird Camp volunteer
 - Smith Point Hawk Watch RV maintenance and volunteer activities
 - Building restoration after Hurricane Harvey
 - Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary expansion
 - Ongoing general habitat and facilities maintenance and improvement projects
- FOBWR:
 - Board Member
 - DEEP volunteer, two years
 - Redeck Big Slough boardwalk at BNWR Discovery Center
 - Project Manager, SBNWR Bobcat Woods Trail replacement, boardwalk and concrete loop construction, Wolfweed observation platform redecking
 - Yucca Plant Project
 - Apple snail removal at Hudson Woods Unit
 - Louisiana-eyed Silkmoth Project at BNWR and SBNWR
- Sea Turtle Patrol annual training and volunteer since 2016; USFWS UTV operation, sea turtle nest detection/excavation and sea turtle tagging certification



Left: Texas Mid-coast NWR Complex Manager Jennifer Sanchez presents Oron with Volunteer of the Year award, March 2019.

Below: Oron's April 27, 2017, excavation of Kemp's ridley sea turtle nest on Matagorda Peninsula.



Oron with presentation board at COT Bonus AT Day, January 2019.



Oron (standing) with Tom Taroni and Chip Sweet, redecking the Wolfweed observation deck on the SBNWR Bobcat Woods Trail. Photo by Marty Cornell.

SPOTLIGHT ON TWO (VERY) ACTIVE MEMBERS—JO AND HERB MYERS

By Kathy Pittman



Left: Jo Myers in front of the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge's Discovery Center after a DEEP school field trip.

Below: Herb Myers after the archery session at Brazoria County Parks Department's summer camp at Camp Mohawk County Park.



Left: Herb shows "Herman," the alligator skull, to campers at Brazoria County Parks Department's summer camp at Camp Mohawk County Park.

Right: Jo Myers configuring a trap during the Louisiana-eyed silkmoth, citizen science project. Photos from various sources.



This month's Member Spotlight (new this month) focuses on Jo and Herb Myers, Class of 2016. They live in the Alvin area and both are retired: Jo worked as a nurse and Herb as a project engineer. Jo and Herb became interested in the Master Naturalist program because they wanted to do something together that was different from their "previous lives" and about nature. Also, COT member Joycelynn Grigson invited them to what was their first Migration Celebration.

Over four years later, Jo's favorite volunteer activity is working in the butterfly tent during Migration Celebration. Herb enjoys teaching people about nature via DEEP and Migration Celebration, Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges programs. These highly active volunteers are also involved in the Brazoria County Parks Department's summer camps at Camp Mohawk County Park and Quintana Beach County Park and love supporting COT's participation in Brazoria County Library System's summer programs coordinated by Ruby Lewis.

One of Herb's favorite TMN memories was leading a group tour of the San Bernard Oak Trail during Migration Celebration and observing a cottonmouth snake catch and swallow a bullfrog. Herb enjoyed the visitors' reactions and discussing the incident with the adults and children on the walk. Jo's favorite memory to date was helping "Miss Ruby" Lewis teach campers about owls and how to dissect owl pellets. Jo has also dissected two pellets and then shared them with a kindergarten class to which she regularly reads. The children enjoyed looking at and touching all the bones in the pellets. Before the pandemic, the Myers' calendar was full of TMN activities, but they are enjoying some down time and the chance to simply "appreciate God's creation." TMN has opened a new world of learning for Jo and Herb and continues to keep the "ole gray cells working."

For future TMN goals, Jo wants to become more comfortable around reptiles, and Herb would like to obtain a better working knowledge of tree species. Outside of TMN activities, Jo and Herb enjoy hiking, deer hunting, RV camping, gardening, and volunteering at local schools. Their advice to new members: The training classes can be overwhelming, but try a variety of volunteer activities, and then decide your favorite area on which to focus. There are lots of members who are willing to help you. As far as Mother Nature is concerned, they feel, you can never learn everything. **JUST KEEP LEARNING!**

WELCOME TO COT's FALL NEW MEMBER CLASS

STEVE BAKER (photo not provided) lives in Lake Jackson, is retired from Deepsea Technologies, and lists CAD and drafting/design among his special skills. Steve enjoys bicycling, fishing, all wildlife, camping and the outdoors. "I've recently been working on a new nest box for eastern bluebirds and fitting it with a more advanced CCTV camera," says Steve. On becoming a Master Naturalist, Steve says, "I would like to learn more about the part of life that's always interested me and to share that with others."



ANGELA GRIFFIN lives in the Manvel/Pearland area. Retired, she has worked with preschoolers and Scouts. Angela is an avid animal and nature lover and loves working with kids.



DAVEYON EDWARDS is from Angleton, and he works for the Parks and Recreation Department as the "Keep Angleton Beautiful" coordinator. He is "interested in everything" and likes "working with kids on nature outings." Daveyon also wants to be able to identify more plants in the field and to share his knowledge with others.



REBECCA (BECKY) INGALLS comes to COT from Freeport. She has volunteered with the Hobby Center and the Alley Theater. A retired school principal, Becky joined the new member class to "become involved with environmental care and causes. Since returning to Southern Brazoria County for retirement, I would like to invest my efforts into the environmental care of our community." Becky likes working with children and young people.



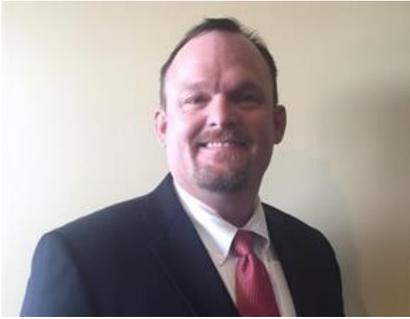
LINDSAY GONZALES, a nonprofit fundraising and organizing consultant, is a recent transplant from Houston to Brookside Village with her husband, two sons, dog and eight chickens. She and her sons spend time implementing visions of prairie restoration, rain gardens, and a sizable veggie garden. Lindsay is interested in TMN because of her passion to understand the natural world, to share this love with others, especially youth, and to maximize opportunities to work in concert with nature to solve shared problems such as flood mitigation.



MIKA MENDOZA is from Friendswood but grew up in Brazoria County. She loves nature, kayaking and just about anything outdoors. Mika wishes to learn more about conservation and Texas wildlife to share with her grandkids and others and hopes one day to create an after-school nature program in the area.

Continued next page

WELCOME TO COT's FALL NEW MEMBER CLASS Continued



LARRY MOORE is from the Pearland area. A former Marine, he has an accounting degree as well as a master's degree in industrial distribution. His interests are college football, going fishing and to the beach with his family. He wants to become a Master Naturalist to learn more about identifying plants and animals.



KAREN MOSIS is retired and lives in Alvin. A former educator, she has worked with children from preschool to age 13 and is also experienced in working with special needs children. She is most interested in working with kids in library programs and nature outings. Karen is interning along with her husband of 26 years, Malcolm. They have two sons and five grandchildren; granddaughter Rain is also an intern in the fall class.



MALCOLM MOSIS is from Alvin, where he lives with his wife Karen (also an intern, along with their granddaughter, Rain). He is retired from Lyondell and is most interested in outside/nature outings. Malcolm is also extremely interested in and has knowledge of plants.

ALLISON ZAPATA (photo not provided) lives in Houston. She is a children's book author and wildlife/nature photographer. She likes to spend every spare moment outside. An avid birder and "insect junkie," Allison has a pet spider named Penny. She "wants to be a voice for nature and get young people excited about Nature."



RAIN MOSIS is from Alvin. Currently working in retail sales, she is also pursuing a master's degree in environmental management. Rain joined the fall COT training class "to learn more about my local environment as well as local conservation methods." She has experience working with children in learning activities. Karen and Malcolm, also in the class, are her grandparents.



ERIC SCHAEFER has lived in the Pearland area for the last 22 years, working as an engineer at the Johnson Space Center and raising two daughters with his wife, Cathy. He enjoys spending time outdoors in the extreme Texas heat, regardless of whether it's the aridity of Big Bend or the humidity of Brazos Bend. He has visited parks ranging from Denali, Alaska, to Dry Tortugas, Florida, and eventually intends to visit every U.S. National Park.

Photos and blurbs collected by Kathy Pittman.

COT'S FALL NEW MEMBER TRAINING CLASS TAKES FIRST FIELD TRIP

Photos by Kyle Purvis

The TMN-COT fall, New Member Training Class, which began (virtually) on August 26, took its first field trip on September 2. Speaker Chris Kneupper led interns and training team members through Hanson Riverside County Park's trails, identifying and discussing plants, trees, and other flora, and their role in the Columbia Bottomlands.

New to this class was use of two-way radios, recently purchased by the COT Board of Directors, to facilitate group presentations in the field, and which allowed participants to hear the speaker while social distancing.



Chris Kneupper, who led the afternoon's field trip on fauna, performs a radio check before beginning the walk.



Chris Kneupper explaining fauna of the Columbia Bottomlands.

Right: Interns and training team members gather in the shade of a cottonwood tree at the end of the field trip.



Taking a pause by a live oak: (from left) training team members Kathy Pittman, Regina Tippett and Mary Schwartz (Training Director), interns Daveyon Edwards (in tree), Rain Mosis, Lindsay Gonzales, Angela Griffin, training team member Luanne Salinas, instructor Chris Kneupper, interns Eric Schaefer, Mika Mendoza (behind tree), Larry Moore, Karen Mosis, and Malcolm Mosis. Training team members not pictured: Jimmy Salinas, Kyle Purvis, and Melanie Hollenshead. Interns not pictured: Steve Baker and Allison Zapata.



COT New Class Training Team members Kathy Pittman and Luanne Salinas.

HANSON PARK TRAILS TO EXPAND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

By ALEXA CRENSHAW | reprinted from *The Facts*, 8 August 2020

WEST COLUMBIA

A new pavilion to host educational programs and gatherings, families fishing off a new dock, more trails suitable for hiking or casual nature strolls and other amenities will beckon visitors to Hanson Riverside County Park, Brazoria County Parks Department officials believe.

Those upgrades and others to the three-decade-old park on the banks of the San Bernard River are part of a long-term vision in the works for the facility. The improvements are being made with the public in mind, addressing some of the amenities they would like to see, Parks Director Bryan Frazier said.

“We know that that’s what people want when they go to a park,” he said. “They want a place to take a hike, a place to picnic, ...and so to be able to offer that in a vicinity where there really aren’t that many multi-use trails, that’s exciting.”

TRAIL MIX

The park’s trail system will expand from 80 acres to about 650 acres. “Then the plan is to go several more miles from that, building from there,” Frazier said. The park has had trails since its creation in 1988, he said, so upon receiving grant money to add new paths, the parks department decided to go ahead and renovate existing trails...

The new trail surface has four to five inches of crushed concrete and two to three inches of decomposed granite on top of that. “What that does is makes it really resilient, while, if you went with an asphalt surface and there was damage, it would be difficult... to repair,” Frazier said...

Each trail will be about three miles long, Frazier said. “There are parts that are still not complete, but walkable,” Frazier said. “The new surface is more user-friendly on your feet as well, as there’s more give in the ground.” The new trails were built to match the older trails’ renovations, he added...

The new trails have been under construction for two or three years, he said. “They’ve all been walkable since approximately January,” Frazier said.

BUILDING UNITS

Brazoria County purchased a house and five acres of land around it to serve as a park ranger unit, Frazier said. “That’ll replace the ... unit that was destroyed during Hurricane Harvey and it’ll also serve as a visitor’s center,” Frazier said.

The department is building an observation deck beside the existing wetland pond. “We’ve added stones and wetland plants, and we put this in as an overlook,” Frazier said. “The handicap ramp hasn’t been completed yet, so it’s not quite finished.”

A new pavilion is another addition that’s mid-construction. It is not yet open for rentable use, he said. “It’s a 52-foot pavilion that we built about seven months ago,” Frazier said. “Soon, there, we’ll be able to do interpretive and outreach events, and also people will be able to rent it.”

A new parking lot and a trailhead, as well as a restroom complex, are also in the works, along with the newer trails and some renovated benches, Frazier said...

PAYING THE WAY

The array of visitor improvements are being supported by grants obtained by the Brazoria County Parks Department and a partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Frazier said.

“The grants that the department plans to use for the trails improvement projects at Hanson Park include a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Non-Urban Outdoor Grant and a Coastal Management Program Cycle 23 Grant from the Texas General Land Office,” Frazier said.

The Non-Urban Outdoor grant is for \$975,310 and the Cycle 23 grant is for \$220,436, he said. The parks department also partnered with U.S. Fish and Wildlife to acquire some of the land needed to expand the trails, Frazier said.

“They used some migratory bird money to purchase the property directly adjacent to that current park, and then Brazoria County will manage that acreage, and then our plan is, in the coming years, to continually build trails and primitive camping sites and even an RV campground there,” Frazier said.

CAMPING IN

There are currently not many tent camping options in Brazoria County, Frazier said, and he looks forward to having some more available. “We need more places where families and people can spend a weekend or more away here,” Frazier said. “It’s part of the bottomland hardwood ecosystem forest, and people should be taking advantage of that.”

Frazier is also looking forward to hiring full-time staff sometime soon, he said. “As full-time staff just for this park, we’d like a park manager and a few park rangers,” Frazier said. “They would take care of the trails and they would check in folks for day use and for overnight stays, once we have that set up.”

The updates are all wonderfully exciting, Sweeny resident Matt Gregory said while fishing with his family at the park [see photo]. “We’re waiting for them to finish up the trails and we’ll look forward to seeing what new additions they put on there,” Gregory said, standing beside his daughter, Lillie Gregory.

OUT IN NATURE IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC—PART II

Mickey Dufilho is a big veggie gardener, so she spends a lot of time maintaining a veggie garden. “I am currently planting seeds for fall transplants and doing some direct seeding for my fall garden,” she says. “Almost daily, I do a survey of the pollinators on 10 plots of flowers as part of the Pollinator Citizen Science Project. I enter data into the online Contribution Form along with date, time and temperature and any other notable environmental factors.”



Deb and Jim Nance participated in the Texas Mid-coast Refuge Complex’s BioBlitz in August and offer a few of their submissions. See Deb’s BioBlitz remarks on Page 3.



Candace Novak spoke to the Brazosport Lions last month on cone snails (left) and used her poster and shells displayed at the January 2020 Bonus AT Day. Above right, Grandson Travis shows off Candace’s eight-foot tall okra plant!



A lovely, very socially-distanced vista from underneath **Brenda Stitt’s** patch of sand at Surfside Beach.



Mary Schwartz contributed the following. It is that time of year when Mississippi Kites soar in the skies above us! Often, their familiar whistling sound can be heard before they are seen. Small birds of prey in the family *Accipitridae* (hawks and eagles), Mississippi Kites have narrow, pointed wings and are graceful in flight, often appearing to float in the air. It is not uncommon to see several circling in the same area. They primarily eat large insects.

Pictured above left are two babies found by citizens and rescued by Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue volunteers. Adult birds are mostly gray with a paler gray head and a black tail, as pictured left. These migratory birds winter in South America and spend summers with us.

FROM THE SPIDER'S WEB by Melanie Hollenshead, Class of 2019

If you are an arachnophobe, STOP reading now. However, if you are willing to learn a bit more about spiders, come and explore with me.

Current estimates indicate nearly 4,000 species of spiders in North America, north of Mexico. On the forest floor, these animals account for as much as half of the predator biomass. Further, density estimates of spiders range from hundreds to millions per acre!

Before you totally freak out, please note that many of these spiders are <3 mm Total Body Length (TBL). That is less than the diameter of your cell-phone charging cable. Due to the lack of information on the small spiders of our area, I have started collecting specimens for identification. Let me introduce you to one today...the **Dew Drop Spider** (*Argyrododes elevatus*).

These small and usually overlooked spiders are approximately 3–5 mm TBL. They are generally found in the web of a larger Orb Weaving Spider such as the Golden Silk Orb Weaver (*Trichonephila clavipes*). The one pictured here was found in a mass of webs along the ramp railing to the Discovery Center at Hudson Woods. To my naked eye, it appeared to have a white abdomen. However, under a low power microscope, its abdomen looked like fine polished silver with black blotches on the side and a long, inverted cross down the center. The end of the abdomen rose to a point.

While these beautiful spiders are harmless to us, that is not always the case with other spiders. Dew Drops are a kleptoparasitic species. They often take smaller prey from their host's web. Sometimes, they wrap and remove larger prey before the host spider claims its catch. They have also been observed feeding on their host spider!

So that is the Dew Drop Spider. "Dew" drop what you are doing and look for one yourself!

Reference: Richard A. Bradley, *Common Spiders of North America* (American Arachnological Society, 2013), 4, Plate 25, 224.

Photos by Melanie Hollenshead.



TWO NATIVE VINES by Carol Jones, Class of 2001

Did you know there is a passionflower vine native to our area that hosts a diminutive, 7mm long solitary bee? Read on to find out more.

Two lovely, native vines are currently blooming on my property on the far west side of Brazoria County. There are more varieties blooming, but I'll focus on two of them in this short article. Yellow passionflower, *Passiflora lutea* (image on right), and Leatherflower, *Clematis pitcher* (below left, seed pod with some foliage and below right), can both be easily overlooked. They grow in a variety of soil types and are fairly drought and flood tolerant. Growing in part shade or full shade, they will bloom more abundantly in moist, well-drained soil.

The pale-yellow blossoms of *Passiflora lutea* are an inch or less across and can be covered by its foliage. Filaments of the corona hide the five petals and five sepals. The leaves have three shallow lobes, are wider than they are long and pale green. This vine blooms from May through September.

So, what about this bee? Seven millimeters is equivalent to 9/32 of an inch. That's pretty small in my world of flying insect watching.

The passionflower bee, *Anthemurgus passiflorae*, nests in the ground. It is a solitary bee, meaning it does not nest in colonies. Female



Yellow passionflower



Leatherflower seed pod

bees collect nectar and pollen from the yellow passionflower to feed their larvae. I have been unable to confirm that this bee is resident in Brazoria County. The closest area in Texas that I found any confirming data was Austin. Maybe someone in our chapter would like to take up this quest!

In addition to hosting visits from this unique bee, yellow passionflower is a food source for the butterfly larvae of Gulf and Mexican fritillaries, Julia Heliconian, and Zebra and Crimson-patch longwings. Even if the bee is not resident here, the plant is an important part of our butterfly fauna life cycle.

Clematis pitcheri has multiple common names, including leatherflower, purple leatherflower, bellflower clematis, purple clematis, and pitcher clematis. The purple, urn-shaped flowers are, in fact, sepals that curve backward at the tips. There are no petals, but the multiple stamens and pistils are contained in the hanging vase.

The blossoms are long lasting, and this vine will also bloom from May to September.

Leaves are opposite, divided into three to five pairs of ovate shaped leaflets. The underside of the leaves has a prominent raised network of veins. Seedpods are most interesting, and I liken them to an exploding nova of the plant world: They are a cluster of flattened achenes with long hairs. In addition to providing pollen for some species of bees, the flowers' achenes attract seed eating birds. Of Texas's native clematis, this one is the most cold hardy. (An achene is a one-seeded fruit of many of the plants in the buttercup and rose families.)

Both native vines die back to the ground in fall and are perennial.

They are not invasive like *Passiflora incarnate* can be. So what's not to like about these two, lovely, native vines?



Leatherflower

Photos by Carol Jones.

Cradle of Texas Chapter Board

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Website	https://txmn.org/tmncot/
Facebook	http://facebook.com/TMN-COT
Twitter	https://twitter.com/tmncot
E-mail Listserv	http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail





Master Naturalist Email Lists

TMN-COT Chapter list

- Instructions <https://txmn.org/tmncot/organization/email-lists/>
- Send messages to TMN-COT@googlegroups.com
- Message Archive <http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail>
- All messages are sent immediately.

State Master Naturalist list

- Instructions <http://txmn.org/staying-connected/sign-up-for-tmn-listserv/>
- Subscribe listserv@listserv.tamu.edu
- All messages are held for moderation by the TMN State Coordinator.

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