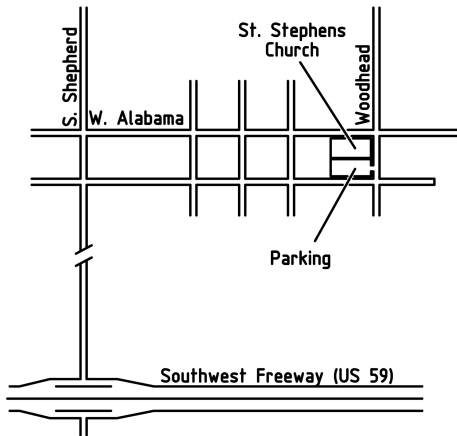




**GENERAL MEETINGS: 2nd
Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.**

Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Join us prior to the meeting for refreshments at the hospitality table and to visit the information tables for Forestry, Outings, and Inner City Outings. Find out how you can volunteer with us.



St. Stephens Episcopal Church
1805 West Alabama

Enter one parking lot from Woodhead, the other from Sul Ross. Before 7:00 PM, left turns to Woodhead are not allowed. Going west on W. Alabama, turn right at Dunlavy, then left to Marshall, then left to Woodhead.

**GENERAL MEETING JUNE 11, 2015
ECO TOURISM IN CAMBODIA**

In June, the Sierra Club welcomes Della Barbato. Barbato is an educator with Earth Voice, and she specializes in teaching groups of all ages about the recycle-reduce-reuse system, local wildlife, marine debris, and how people can make a difference in all of these areas. On June 11, Barbato will tell Sierra Club attendees about her trip to Cambodia to help implement a zero waste and recycling program in an eco tourism village. Join us to hear what you can learn right here in Houston from her experiences on the other side of the world.

The meeting is at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, corner of West Alabama and Woodhead. Social period 7:00 p.m. Main program begins at 7:30 p.m.

**GENERAL MEETING JULY 9, 2015
BIKE HOUSTON**



New Bike Lane, By Frank Blake

On July 9, the Sierra Club will host Mary Blitzer, the Manager of Community and Government Relations for BikeHouston. Blitzer will discuss the City of Houston's bike plan. The city has been working to become more bike-friendly, and has made good progress in that regard. And as the city continues working to grow our biking numbers, the city can win corollary benefits. More people bicycling means fewer cars on the road, which in turn helps reduce traffic issues and transportation-related pollution; and there is the natural health and fitness benefits to be won. A well designed bike plan would serve the occasional recreational biker and the daily/commuter bikers. July 9 is your chance to learn more about the city's bike plan, and how BikeHouston is working to bring the fun of biking to more Houstonians.

The meeting is at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, corner of West Alabama and Woodhead. Social period 7:00 p.m. Main program begins at 7:30 p.m.

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TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

OUTINGS UPDATES

MEETUP

See the outings calendar on our Meetup site: www.meetup.com/Houston-Sierra-Club-Outings for possible additions to schedule.

OUTINGS CALENDAR

Also, outings information is available at our website www.sierraclub.org/texas/houston/outings

OUTINGS LEADER TRAINING

We are always looking to maintain and expand our pool of outings leaders. Our leader training (OLT 101) provides participants with the background requirements for leading a Sierra Club outing in the field.

Besides gaining rewarding personal experience, our leaders and trip organizers make an important contribution by creating opportunities for others to experience and enjoy the natural world.

If you have an interest in becoming an outings leader, or want more information, contact Frank Blake, frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896. Each class is approximately 2 hours long, and dates are coordinated with participants.

Service

NORTH JETTY BEACH CLEANUP

Usually Saturdays, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Check Meetup site for possible dates in June and July, and for updates.



North Jetty Beach Cleanup Sign. By John Berlinghoff

The Houston Group has adopted this stretch of beach as part of the Texas "Adopt-A-Beach Program". The North Jetty is a popular fishing, crabbing, and birding spot on the Bolivar Peninsula just south of the Audubon Society's Bolivar Flats Sanctuary. Because this site is heavily used, trash and litter have been a problem. Much of the trash, such as discarded fishing line and plastics, are hazards to area wildlife.

The ferry crossing to Bolivar is usually a great opportunity to observe dolphins and brown pelicans. It is interesting to visit the jetty in different seasons. To sign up, contact Frank Blake, frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896 (e-mail preferred). Additional details will be emailed to participants.

Service

MARYSEE PRAIRIE WORK DAYS

First Saturday most months fall through spring.
Check Meetup site for possible dates in June and July, and for updates.

The Marysee Prairie is one of the last remnants of tallgrass prairie in the Big Thicket region. Come assist the Texas Land Conservancy in this ongoing effort to revive and maintain the native grasses and wildflowers on this site near Batson, Texas. Work tasks vary by month, but usually involve controlling the regrowth of woody species and keeping the prairie clear for mowing. Tools provided. Check the Meetup site for updates. For more information and to confirm work dates, contact Tom Maddux at 936-697-3425, or Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896.



Giant Coneflower on the Marysee Prairie, By Frank Blake

NOTICES

Sierra Club is a California non profit corporation, with "California Seller of Travel" registration number: CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms>, or contact the Outings Department at the national Sierra Club office at (415)-977-5528 for a printed version.

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

Bike

Bike Ride Outings

Check our Meetup site for dates in June/July.

We periodically schedule bike rides in various parts of town to try out new trails, explore specific neighborhoods, and visit unique Houston sights. We typically limit group size to simplify logistics and provide everyone a safer and better experience. Some planned destinations are the East End, downtown, Buffalo Bayou trails, Heights, etc. Usually the rides are 2 or so hours long and moderately paced. So watch the Meetup site or Houston Sierra website for new postings during the summer.



Biking Houston, by Frank Blake.

Hike

LITTLE THICKET NATURE SANCTUARY

Saturday, June 13, 2015

Join the Sierra Club as we hike in the beautiful Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary (LTNS). Owned by the Outdoor Nature Club, the LTNS has been protected from logging for over 60 years. We will be looking for blooming wildflowers, birds, and whatever else we can see. We will also view diverse hardwood and pine forests, spring-fed creeks, and a hilltop meadow.

Bring your daypack, hat, water, lunch, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, field guides, and clothes to fit the weather. Long pants are highly recommended. We will meet to carpool/caravan at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot just west of Starbucks (look for Becks Prime) in Meyerland Plaza. Starbucks fronts the 4700 block of Beechnut (south side of Beechnut, near the West Loop South). Look for a Silver Honda Civic with lots of bumper stickers.

You can come sign up on the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, call 713-664-5962, or email Brandt Mannchen at brandtshnfbt@juno.com and leave your name, phone number, and email. In case of trip cancellation Brandt will email or call you.

Directions to the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary:

- 1) Go north on U.S. 59 to Cleveland, Texas.
- 2) Get off at the FM 2025 exit and turn left (northwest) on FM 2025.
- 3) Go northwest on FM 2025 about five miles until you come to FM 945.
- 4) Turn left (west) onto FM 945.
- 5) Go approximately 10.2 miles on FM 945. On your right you will pass Butch Arthur Road.
- 6) Continue on FM 945, beyond Butch Arthur Road, another 0.7 miles.
- 7) Turn right onto a grassy two-track road and turn immediately left and drive 30 yards to a metal gate with 2001 on it. This is the gate to the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary.

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

Hike

VISIT HUDSON WOODS AND SEA CENTER

Saturday, July 11, 2015

The Houston Sierra Club will celebrate summer by hiking Hudson Woods in the Columbia Bottomlands of Brazoria County. The Columbia Bottomlands is a unique coastal forest of Live Oak, Pecan, Shumard Oak, Burr Oak, Water Oak, Hackberry, Green Ash, and many other trees.

To get out of the heat after our early morning hike we will have lunch in Lake Jackson and then visit Sea Center in the afternoon, where in air conditioned comfort, we can visit aquariums and fish hatcheries. We will also view the lake and wetlands that are located next door. We will be back in Houston at about 5 p.m.

Bring your daypack, water (three quarts is recommended), snacks, hiking shoes, cameras, binoculars, bug repellent, sunscreen, field guides, clothes to fit the weather, and enough money for lunch. Long pants are highly recommended!

We will meet to carpool/caravan at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot just west of the Starbucks (look for Becks Prime) in Meyerland Plaza. Starbucks fronts the 4700 block of Beechnut (near the West Loop South). Look for a silver Honda Civic with lots of bumper stickers.

You can sign up at the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, call 713-664-5962, or email Brandt Mannchen at brandtshnfbt@juno.com and leave your name, phone number, and email. In case of trip cancellation Brandt will either email or call you.

Directions to Hudson Woods:

- 1) From Houston, go south on State Highway (SH) 288.
- 2) Exit SH 288 and turn right onto SH 35 and go west about 5 miles.
- 3) At the intersection of SH 35 and FM 521 turn right onto FM 521 and go about one mile.
- 4) From FM 521 turn right onto Sally Lake Road, go about ½ mile, and go straight through the entrance gate.



Brandt Goes Out on a Limb at Hudson Woods, by Nicida Maerefat.

Hike

Smith Point/Anahuac Bird and Bay Trip

Saturday, September 26, 2015

Enjoy a migration bird/bay trip to Chambers County. We will drive to Smith Point and visit Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area (WMA). At the WMA we will use the observation platform to look for hawks, raptors, and other birds. Later we will drive to Trinity Bay and look for shorebirds.

After lunch we will drive to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge and bird and enjoy the natural scenery. If time permits, we will visit the visitor center for the Texas Chenier Plain Refuge Complex and enjoy a board walk through a cypress swamp on Lake Anahuac.

Bring a daypack, plenty of water, lunch, snacks, sunscreen, hat, field guides, binoculars, cameras, bug repellent, and comfortable hiking shoes and clothes. Long pants are recommended. It will be hot so plan accordingly.

We will meet to carpool/caravan at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot just west of Starbucks (look for Becks Prime) in Meyerland Plaza. Starbucks fronts the 4700 block of Beechnut (south side of Beechnut, near the West Loop South). Look for a silver-gray Honda Civic with many bumper stickers.

You can sign up on the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, call 713-664-5962, or email Brandt Mannchen at brandtshnfbt@juno.com and provide your name, phone number, and email. If there is a trip cancellation Brandt will email or call you.

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

BURNING PRAIRIES IN THE BIG THICKET

By Brandt Mannchen

Kind of a strange reason to be going to a prairie, I mused as I drove down State Highway 105. Yet, the purpose of the trip was one of service for the only prairie in the Big Thicket that has been protected and restored. Marysee Prairie lies near the Liberty County – Hardin County line. It is a unique almost 10 acre grassland.

Saved in the mid-1970's from subdivision development and saved again in the early 1990's from neglectful management, Marysee Prairie is located on the northern-most boundary of the Upper Texas Gulf Coast tallgrass prairie.

Marysee is located right where the Big Thicket (Piney Woods) and the coastal prairie ecosystems meet and vie for advantage as they wax and wane depending on whether the climate brings drought or rain. When it rains, the forest will advance. When there is drought, wildfires from lightning strikes ensure that the prairie will succeed. Now though there are no lightning fires because we put them out!



Jennifer Walker with her tamping tool, By Jennifer Walker

As I pulled up on the grass just outside of Marysee Prairie I thought how odd that both ecosystems, Big Thicket and coastal prairie, should today be endangered and in need of protection. I got out and greeted those who had already arrived. I shook hands with Tom, Daniel, Charlie, and Ashley. I found out that Ashley would be our official photographer as we readied to prescribe burn Marysee Prairie.

Marysee was wet which was a blessing and a curse, less concern about the fire getting off the prairie but at the same time a more complete burn would not be possible. But any burn is better than no burn at all for fire adapted and dependent plants on prairies.

Soon others arrived, Frank, Jennifer, and Mark. Maxine would come later, our “Angel of Mercy”, with a great lunch for us hungry folks. But first we had to rake the perimeter of dead grass and other vegetation to ensure that the fire stopped. Houses and other property don't need to be prescribe burned.

After we raked and Daneil assessed the weather (southerly winds with 10-20 mile an hour winds) and the perimeter we stopped for lunch. Maxine laid out quite a spread and we ate voraciously. I do like chicken salad along with a little lettuce and tomato.



Maxine Johnson, the major advocate for the prairie who made us all lunch that day. She's been working on the prairie for decades, By Jennifer Walker

After we sated ourselves Daniel went over the rules of the burn with us. We had backpack sprayers, flappers (to stop the fire from spreading), safety glasses, and drip torches (how we start the fire). We were told to keep out the way of the fire (common sense), get out of smoke as soon as possible, and watch for burning embers so no off-site fires would start.

We broke into two groups with Tom and Daniel leading a group. Each group had a person with a drip torch, flapper, and backpack sprayer. First a backfire (against the wind) was started at the boundaries that the wind would blow the fire toward. By the time the fire got to the backfire there would be no fuel left and the fire would go out. We watched the perimeter of the prairie carefully to ensure no fire escaped.

Some parts of Marysee Prairie burned quickly and ferociously. These were the dryer areas with greater grass cover (light, fine, fuels that burn very quickly). However, because the ground was wet, in some places the fire could not maintain itself and went out. This created a mosaic of burned, partially burned, and unburned areas. The pimple mounds (small 6 inch to 1 foot tall mounds, 10-20 feet in diameter, with permeable soils) burned well since they were better drained and not as wet as the clay soil ground that made up most of Marysee.

See BURNING PRAIRIES IN THE BIG THICKET on Page 7

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

FLOWERS, FLOWERS, EVERYWHERE, AND THEN THERE WERE THE DICKCISSELS!

By Brandt Mannchen

There the five of us were standing in the parking lot waiting. I had folks sign in and we waited for the other 7 people to show. They did not show (Meetup is like that, people say they are coming and then don't) so we all climbed into my car and off we went to the over 10,000 acre Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).



Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, By John Anzalotti

This NWR is over 10,000 acres and has been set aside and managed for the federally endangered Attwater Prairie Chicken. There is only a handful of this species of grouse left in the wild and they are left secluded and undisturbed in this NWR. I did not expect to see any prairie chickens today but was hopeful that we would see many other birds and wildflowers.

We sped up the West Loop; traveled I-10 to Sealy; went about a mile south on State Highway 36; and finally drove about 10 miles west on FM 3013 until we got to the NWR entrance. As soon as we turned into the entrance to the NWR we saw two things that you expect to see in Texas, one good and one not so good. First, we saw thousands and thousands of wildflowers, many of them yellow *Coreopsis*, covering the roadsides. We also saw pipelines and oilfield equipment, also ubiquitous on the Texas landscape.

As we swung into the parking lot I saw several other parked cars. David, Tom, Jacqueline, AD, and I poured out of the car and met and said hello to Lisa and John. After a few minutes packing gear into our backpacks and taking a restroom break we were off. The array of wildflowers was impossible to ignore as we hiked along the Sycamore Trail toward the San Bernard River.

A small sampling of the red, yellow, white, blue, purple, orange, and pink blooms that we saw includes Butterfly Weed, Dayflower, Brown-eyed Susan, Boneset, Spiderwort, Horsemint, Bull Nettle, Texas Thistle, Bull Thistle, Power Puff, Old Plainsman, Bluet, Scarlet Pimpernel, Japanese Honeysuckle, Smartweed, Wine Cup, Wood Sorrel, Texas Vervain, Morning Glory, *Coreopsis*, Brazilian Vervain, *Herbertia*, Prickley Pear, Lantana, Sily *Evolvulus*, Yucca, Dwarf Dandelion, Texas Dandelion, Sow Thistle, Firewheel, Queen's Delight, McCartney Rose, Meadow Pink, Meadow Beauty, Winkler *Gallardia*, Bracted *Sida*, Bluebonnet, Prairie Larkspur, Cudweed, Venus Looking Glass, Mexican Primrose, Blue-eyed grass, Wild Indigo, and on and on, and on.

The mix of colors was overwhelming as was the number of different plants. If this was not peak blooming time then we must have been awfully close. In addition, we found that we also reached peak foraging time. Ripe, dark, juicy, blackberries were everywhere and we took advantage of this natural bounty. David pointed out butterflies, grasshoppers, and beetles that flew, buzzed, and burrowed into the tantalizing, nectar-lace flowerheads.



Butterfly Weed on the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, By John Anzalotti



Wine Cup on the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, By John Anzalotti

We also wandered through the riparian forest along the San Bernard River and saw water lilies blooming, White-tail Deer bounding away, and a Red-eared Slider attempting to dig a nest to lay its eggs. Meanwhile, overhead, AD watched as Turkey Vultures glided and hovered on the thermals and in the steady breeze that blew over us on this cloudy day. It was delightful to hear the leaves of the trees swish and watch the flowers bend over and then spring back as the wind swirled, stopped, and started. As we neared the end of our hike on the Sycamore Trail both AD and Lisa spotted a Rough Green Snake that walked right by as it slid into the grass and disappeared.

We had a great lunch and looked at bird and flower field

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

FLOWERS, FLOWERS, EVERYWHERE continued from Page 6

guides in an effort to determine what we had seen. Then we hiked the Pipit Trail and saw water-filled ponds, a Great Egret, and Red-winged Blackbirds. The Dickcissels were everywhere, especially the male birds, singing their territorial songs while looking spiffy with their chestnut wings, yellow chest, and a black bib tucked under their chins.

To finish off the day we drove the five-mile auto tour. Highlights included a Bobwhite Quail, Common Night Hawk (perched on a fence and power line respectively), a Little Blue Heron that flushed from a wetland pond, and a Crested Caracara that flew overhead.

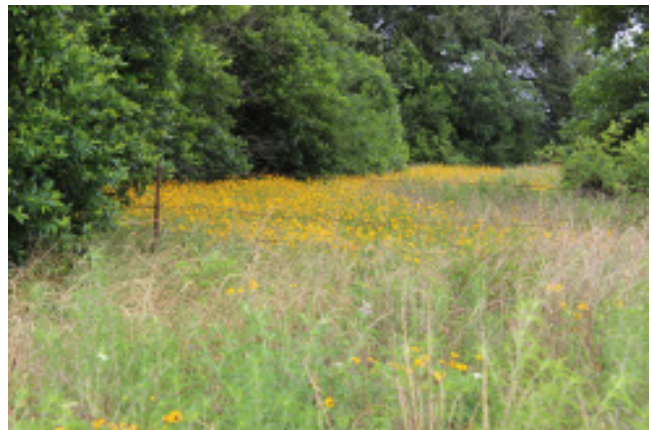
It was another great outing and Tom summed it all up when he said, "This outing not only met, but exceeded my expectations". Who could ask for anything more?



Herbertia at Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, By John Anzalotti



Coreopsis at Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, By John Anzalotti



Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, By John Anzalotti

BURNING PRAIRIES IN THE BIG THICKET continued from Page 5

Within two hours almost all of the fires were out and the burning was in essence complete. All that remained was to put out (mop up) any small flames and pack up the gear. It appeared that about 70% of Marysee Prairie had burned and another 30% had either not burned or partially burned. Considering how wet the ground was, this was a good burn.

The burned woody plants and the rich ash that is on the ground will give the grasses and wildflowers a head start for the growing season. Ultimately, Marysee Prairie will be healthier and grow better. That, after all, was the point. Reintroducing fire allows Marysee Prairie a chance to breathe and live as it has for thousands of years. That is a result well worth the effort.



Post-burn Through the Strand of Trees that has been left on the Prairie, By Jennifer Walker

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

SPRING AT IVY'S BRINGS BLOOMING DOGWOODS AND MEMORIES

By Brandt Mannchen

Ivy's Preserve is located in Elkhart, Texas, about 15 miles south of Palestine on the very edge of the Piney Woods. Ms. Ivy Payne bought 450 acres over many years for her enjoyment as a refuge for wildlife. When she died in 1987 the property was given to The Nature Conservancy, who a few years later gave it to the land trust, Natural Areas Preservation Association (now the Texas Land Conservancy), to be preserved forever to protect the beauty of this oak-hickory-pine and stream-side landscape and its wildlife.



Ivy Paine Wildlife Refuge, By Jacqueline Lerma

It had been 10 years or more since I last visited Ivy's Preserve. I had always had a great time there and I wondered if things had changed. With great anticipation I drove a small group of Sierrans on our two and one-half hour journey and arrived at Ivy's at 10:30 a.m. The memories started flooding in. There were about 10 other people already there and it was good to see Earl Matthew again, although I missed seeing Heinz Gaylord. Staunch Sierran Regina had come over from Shiro and she joined Paul, Jackie, and I, and the others on a walk on the trails on the eastern side of Ivy's.

It was a beautiful spring day and the Redbuds, Flowering Dogwoods, and Cherry Laurels were blooming in the upland and slope woodlands. Meanwhile, the phlox, toadflax, bluebonnet, indian paintbrush, Crow Poison, violet, Woolly White, and Southern Dewberry were blooming in the fields and

open woods where gophers made their unique, sandy, mounds. While I enjoyed the Post Oak, Water Oak, Rusty Black Haw, Sassafras, Winged Elm, Sweetgum, Black Cherry, Carolina Buckthorn, Eastern Red Cedar, White Ash, greenbriar, and Gum Bulmelia on the uplands I was really looking forward to seeing the riparian vegetation and the waterfalls on the creek.

Soon we had come down 200 feet off the red iron ore soil and the undulating hillside (where ancient shark teeth can be found) to the pipeline right-of-way (ROW) - it is hard to get away from oil/gas in Texas - and we started into the floodplain. Earl pointed out a rare Nutmeg Hickory that grew on the edge of the creek bank. We then visited one of the waterfalls and marveled at the solid rock bottom that the clear creek water flowed over. You don't see bedrock very often in East Texas!

Most people left with Earl to walk down the ROW to visit another waterfall while a few intrepid folks followed me as we walked through the lush floodplain. What a joy to find Hackberry, American Holly, Water Oak, hickories, and many small basswood (American or Carolina I do not know). My biggest find was the Mayapples that were growing, tiny umbrellas spread over the forest floor, some with large very attractive white flowers. We also discovered a Five-lined Skink and a Green Anole on the same tree. They played hide and seek with us and then disappeared as lizards often do. Spring Beauty wildflowers, Farkleberry trees, and Shortleaf Pines rounded out the plants we saw near the creek.



Ivy Paine Wildlife Refuge, By Jacqueline Lerma

By the time we rejoined the others they had begun climbing the long, steep, road to the pavilion. What a set-up! A covered pavilion, with kitchen facilities and lots of pots and pans, sleeping quarters, two bathrooms, and even showers. Talk about luxury in the woods! We had lunch and then began our afternoon hike to Ivy's western woods.

We did quite a lot of up and down as we hiked about two miles. What was really interesting was finding in these dry uplands Spider Lilies growing near Louisiana Yucca and prickly pear. Talk about crazy, jumbled up hydrology. We speculated over how these wetland plants survived on the dry landscape. Was there a hidden spring? Perhaps a high water table? That's what is fun about walking through the woods. You never know what you will find and you leave asking more questions than you answer.

It seemed as we walked through the high and dry upland woods that the dogwoods had peaked with

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EVERYONE DISAPPEARS IN THE BIG THICKET?

By Brandt Mannchen

As a Sierra Club outings leader I have learned to never boast about how well I lead trips. Things sometimes can go in a direction you never anticipated. Keeps you guessing and sometimes jumping. That is what happened on our outing to the Roy E. Larson Sandland Sanctuary near Silsbee, Texas recently.

The “Larson Sanctuary” is owned by The Nature Conservancy and has been open to the public since 1977. This 5,500 acre property contains some of the last Longleaf Pine-Sandhills habitat left in the East Texas Big Thicket. In addition to this rare and invaluable habitat, beautiful Village Creek weaves through the landscape leaving breath-taking, white sandbars along its shoreline.

Unique ancient wetlands called baygalls (for the Gallberry Holly and Sweetbay Magnolia that exist in these wetlands) are interspersed throughout the land, remnants of old channels of Village Creek that have almost filled in. Diversity in plant and wildlife species and the upland, slope, and bottomland vegetation communities provide you with a wide range of changing landscapes to enjoy. Everything from yucca and prickly pear to Southern Magnolia and American Beech to Water Tupelo and Bald Cypress! But before I further diverge and wax poetic about the beauty and fascination that is found at the “Larson Sanctuary” I need to return to my story and dilemma.

We had driven about two hours from Houston to the “Larson Sanctuary”. There were twelve of us including Alex, Kathleen, David, Tom, Gordon, Sunn Sunn, Penny, Sri, Mellissa, Jacqueline, Roma, and myself. One of the things I love most about being a Sierra Club outings leader is the really fine and wonderful people I meet. The diversity of folks and their experiences is fantastic. We had people from China, India, Australia, France, Pennsylvania, Weatherford, good old East Texas, and on and on. What a great crew. But I did not know how they would test me!!!



Big Thicket Trail, By SunnSunn Hallikin

We gathered in the parking lot and after some introductions and a few words about safety we started off. First, we visited the overlook of Village Creek and people “ooed and aahed” the beautiful white sand, the Bald Cypress, and the vista. Then we started out on the Longleaf Sandhill Trail. After hiking a few minutes we came to our first decision. I decided we would take the 0.8 mile Baygall Loop Trail.

Simple, short, trail, how could anything go wrong? Boy was I wrong! After hiking for about 10 minutes, and looking at ferns, trees, and wildflowers, we started to head toward a road and then back to the Longleaf Sandhill Trail. Someone mentioned that Tom and David had fallen behind, taking photos or looking at something. I did not worry because David was my drag person (the last person on the hike who ensures that no one drops behind the group) and I had hiked with them scores of times. Not to worry. Wrong!!!

We hiked to the intersection of the Baygall Loop Trail and the Longleaf Sandhill Trail and took a break. I kept expecting Tom and David to arrive, any minute. No deal. Finally, after Jacqueline said that she had cell phoned Tom and gotten no answer I decided I would backtrack and find them. I told my group to wait until I got back. Unfortunately, I did not state how long I might be gone.

I hiked the entire Baygall Loop Trail in reverse and then hiked the Longleaf Sandhill Trail back to the pavilion and then to the parking area. No Tom and David. Then I hiked back up the Longleaf Sandhill Trail to my group. I was gone about 20 minutes. No group!!!! A leader's worst fear is losing a hiker. But an entire group? My day was going from bad to worse.

What to do? I had three options. Hike back to the pavilion and parking lot to check again. Hike the Baygall Loop Trail again. Or hike north on the Longleaf Sandhill Trail. I chose the latter option and sped-up my hiking pace. I hiked about a half-mile but saw no one. I finally decided to hike back to the pavilion because I thought it was a place where people would return. I was depressed and worried. How could I have lost my entire group? Nothing remotely like this had ever happened to me on the almost 200 outings I had led for the Sierra Club. Paranoia crept into my mind.

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EVERYONE DISAPPEARS IN THE BIG THICKET continued from Page 9

As I rounded the corner and looked toward the pavilion I saw to my relief, my group. I was relieved but if I was honest I was also upset. Why did they leave? I walked up to them and tried as calmly as I could to tell them they should always follow their leader's requests. I felt responsible for their safety and I had been very worried. Although there was some concern about my statement they took it well.

I sat down and ate my lunch. My group had not seen Tom or David. After I ate I asked if they would help me search for Tom and David. They agreed and we broke into two smaller groups, one to walk north on the Longleaf Sandhill Trail and one to walk north on the road. Five were in each group.

Off we went, and within 15 minutes we got a call that Tom had been found. But the response was garbled and I thought they were where we had rested, waiting for Tom and David, at the intersection of the Baygall Loop Trail and the Longleaf Sandhill Trail. Wrong again. I finally understood my mistake and we met up with the group. I was so glad to see Tom that I did not give him much grief. He said that David had stopped for lunch farther north on the Longleaf Sandhill Trail. Tom, Roma, and Jacqueline decided to go back and rest at the pavilion.



Sand Bar in the Big Thicket Trail, By SunnSunn Hallikin

The rest of us hiked quickly to find David. We did in about 15 minutes and I was finally able to breathe and relax again. David showed us where a Red-headed Woodpecker was nesting and all was forgiven. We used binoculars to look at this spectacular bird. I asked everyone if they were up for more hiking and got a hearty yes. So we started down the Floodplain Trail.

This was more my style. We followed the blue markings on the trees and it became a standing joke of "Blue! Where is the blue!" since the trail needed clearing and many of the blue marks had faded. But the scenery was great as we went from wetlands to bends in Village Creek to sandbars to gorgeous cypress-tupelo swamps. We each slipped as we climbed up and down the clay shelves in the floodplain. But as a team, we helped each other out with hands extended to cushion any slips.

After hiking about 2 miles we finally climbed out of the Village Creek Floodplain and walked back to the pavilion and parking lot. We were all together and had experienced a lot on this trip. The weather had been perfect and we had seen a lot. And we all left with heartfelt goodbyes. But please folks, next time follow the leader. Enough said!

SPRING AT IVY'S continued from Page 8



Ivy Paine Wildlife Refuge, By Jacqueline Lerma

beautiful white appendages. These small trees peeked out of the woods everywhere I looked. We stopped at the ROW to rest, perched a 100 feet in the air, and were delighted when a group of four deer burst from the forest, ran across the ROW, and then disappeared. As we walked on the ROW back toward the pavilion, prairie plants, like Rattlesnake Master, seemed to appear magically at our feet.

The day was over much too soon and we had to leave Ivy's. On our way back to Houston we had a great Mexican dinner in Huntsville. What a great return trip to a place I had not seen for a long time. Old memories were renewed and new ones made. Who could ask for anything more?

FEATURES

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YARD SALE

By Frank Blake

Many thanks to all our donors and helpers with the yard sale! Fortunately we had a good weather day - no rain showers, and a steady stream of customer traffic.

Special thanks go to all of our hard working volunteers on the day of the sale: Lorraine Gibson, Carl Lindsey, Penny Lindsey, Arlene Diehl, Joanne Jackson, Page Williams, Evelyn Merz, Michael Batten, George Batten, Sue Lehrer, Jim Williams, Stephanie Thomas, and at least one other whose name I don't have.

Many of these volunteers stayed throughout the day and helped pack up at the end - which makes for a long day.

By the way, I believe that this year marked our 20th year of continuous annual yard sales.

We did retain a few items for our annual auction in December.

Left overs were donated to Goodwill (three car loads). We recycled whatever we could of any remaining cardboard, paper, plastic, glass, metal, etc.

Only a very small amount went into a trash bag.

Special thanks again to Chris Murphy at Corazon for hosting the yard sale. Chris also assisted with yard sale signs and internet notices, and rounded up additional sale items. And his willingness to receive donations at the store during the week prior to the sale is a huge logistical advantage.

Thanks again everybody!



Annual Yard Sale, By Frank Blake

RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL SIERRA CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

By Carol Woronow

The results are final for the election for the national Sierra Club Board of Directors, with 54,025 votes counted, 27% by the internet and 73% by mail.

The five candidates elected are Allison Chin, Spencer Black, Margrete Strand Rangnes, Liz Walsh, and Steve Ma.

Thanks to all of you who signed the petition to get Liz Walsh on the ballot, and those who voted for her. An experienced Sierran from El Paso, she is the only candidate from a Gulf Coast state.

See all the election information and candidate statements at

<http://www.sierraclub.org/board/election>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLEAR LAKE/BAY AREA MEETING

The Sierra Club organization meeting in Clear Lake, and then on a hiatus, is rebooting!

A first meeting was held Wednesday, March 18 at the same location as in the past.

For the next meeting of the Bay Area Sierra Club, contact Linda King. Location is the Bay Area Community Center in Clear Lake Park (across NASA Parkway from Clear Lake) at 5002 NASA Parkway, Seabrook. Visitors are always welcome! Contact Linda King at 281-467-3624 or LindaAWKing@att.net for more information.

CLEAR LAKE WALKERS

Every Saturday morning at 7:30, rain or shine

Some Bay Area Sierra Club members and friends meet weekly for a three-mile walk, conversation and breakfast. Much of the walk is along the water and we often see a variety of shore birds.

Where: Nassau Bay, meeting in the Dollar Store parking lot across from the Post Office.

Contact: Betty Armstrong at 281-333-5693.

Editor's note: The Clear Lake Walkers have been active for 21 years. 🌍

The station with much for Sierrans:

Explorations, Tuesdays, 5:00 AM
Eco-Ology, Wednesdays, 3:00 PM
Democracy Now (with Amy Goodman),
7:00 AM and 5:00 PM, weekdays.
Progressive Forum (with Wally James)
Thursdays, 7:00-9:00 PM

Of course there is news:
BBC News, 6:00-7:00 AM and 8:00-9:00 AM
KPFT local news, weekdays, 4:00-5:30 PM
Bird Note, 9:58 AM... at the end of
Open Journal, 9:00-10:00 AM

And lots of music, especially on the weekends.

You can see the program schedule at

www.kpft.org

RSS and ATOM web feeds, and
PODCASTS are available.

Revised March 31, 2014

CREDITS

Some photos in the Bayou Banner are public domain photos provided by the National Park Service, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or Wikipedia. All photos are used by permission, and the photographer is given credit, where known.

RECYCLING RESOURCES

CITY OF HOUSTON RECYCLING

The City of Houston has several dropoff sites (some are specialized for certain items), and provides curbside recycling in many neighborhoods. Principal dropoff locations are the Westpark Consumer Recycling Center at 5900 Westpark, and the self-serve site at 3602 Center Street in the Heights. For other locations and a complete list of recyclable items, consult the City's recycling web page, phone the City's 311 hotline with recycling questions, or connect to <http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/recycling/>

For Houston e-waste recycling options at GREENspot locations, just do an online search for Dropoff Houston, or visit <http://dropoff.houstontx.gov>.

BELLAIRE RECYCLING COMMITTEE

This group has a useful website, with a variety of information on recycling activities in the Houston area. Committee phone line is 713-662-8173. bellairerecycles.org/index.html.

Huntsville

The City of Huntsville's recycling facility — north of town on the I-45 access road — takes cardboard, paper, tin and aluminum cans, glass, used oil, plastics, and has a warehouse for reusable donated construction materials (doors, windows, tile, wood etc). One employee is available Monday-Friday to help you unload; it is self-service on Saturday. The web site is http://www.huntsvilletx.gov/residents/trash_and_recycling/recycling.asp.

Pearland Recycling Center

5800 Magnolia Road in Pearland, Texas, 77584, 281-489-2795. Takes most recyclable wastes: PC's, TV's, plastics, bottles, cans, paper, etc.

More available at <http://www.h-gac.com/>

Some activities shown on the Announcements pages are not managed by the Houston Sierra Club.

BAYOU BANNER

Newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club

VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

MONTHLY MEETINGS

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

Second Thursday monthly in Pecore Hall of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 West Alabama. Enter parking lot from Woodhead. The meeting opens at 7:00 p.m., and the program starts at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Before 7:00 p.m., left turns are not allowed at Woodhead. If you are going west on W. Alabama, turn right at Dunlavy, then left to Marshall, then left to Woodhead.

CONSERVATION

Second Tuesday monthly, 7:00 p.m. Meet in the H-E-B food court at West Alabama and Dunlavy. Contact Evelyn Merz, 713-644-8228, elmerz@hal-pc.org. Come early (6:30) and grab a bite to eat.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Fourth Thursday monthly, 7:00 p.m.
Contact Frank Blake frankblake@juno.com.

INNER CITY OUTINGS (ICO)

Meeting times and place to be determined. Please contact Lorraine Gibson at 281-384-4104 or rainygib@aol.com for more information.

OUTINGS:

Usually the third Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m., at the Whole Foods store on Bellaire near Wesleyan. Help us plan regional day outings, weekend trips, and air/bus trips to exciting outdoor destinations across the country. Please call to confirm meeting date. Frank Blake, 713-528-2896, frankblake@juno.com.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED TO HELP WITH THE HSC WEBSITE

We need a couple of people to assist the webmaster with posting material to the Houston Group website. This normally requires a few hours per month. For more information, contact the webmaster at houston.webmaster@lonestar.sierraclub.org.

JOIN THE SIERRA CLUB

Just go to our web site
<http://www.sierraclub.org/texas/houston>
and click on
Join or Give/Membership Benefits

For a limited time:

Only \$15
Get a FREE rucksack
See it online

Part of your payment
comes back to support the
Houston Sierra Club

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

The Houston Sierra Club gets a small part of your membership renewal fee (the rest of it is used by the National Sierra Club and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club). The amount passed to the Houston Sierra Club is more if you use a credit card and renew online through our website than if you mail a check.

THE BAYOU BANNER (PRINTED EDITION) HAS ENDED

The Bayou Banner has ended printing and distribution by conventional mail. The issue of June-July, 2014, was the last issue for which paper copies were mailed to members.

A PDF copy of the newsletter, letter-sized, suitable for printing yourself, is available at the website of the Houston Sierra Club <http://www.sierraclub.org/texas/houston/newsletters>

Also, outings, trips, and other activities are posted on our Meetup site meetup.com/Houston-Sierra-Club-Outings and we have a facebook page for discussion of environmental issues facebook.com/HSCenvironment

The primary reason for abandoning mailed paper copies was the cost.

If you have questions about the current Bayou Banner, contact the editor at HSCBanner@gmail.com.

If you do not receive email notices of the availability of the *Bayou Banner* online, you should sign up on the Email Alert/Announcement List.

The Bayou Banner is the newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club. It has been published 6 times a year, in odd-numbered months, but that is changing. See the Group's web site for the latest information (<http://www.sierraclub.org/texas/houston>). Current circulation is 5500 issues sent to members and distributed through various outlets.

CURRENT EDITOR: Carol Woronow.

SUBMISSIONS: The deadline to submit articles is the 15th day of the month before the date of the issue in which the articles are to run (for example, articles for the September/November issue must be submitted by August 15) — but articles and information is welcome at any time. The online Bayou Banner will be posted on the first day of the month (for example September 1).

All submissions must have the author's name, and contact information even though it will not be printed. All photos must identify the source and have proof of permission to use (or link to the policy of royalty-free photos). Articles may be edited for clarity, accuracy, and space considerations. Opinions stated are those of the author and not necessarily that of the Houston Sierra Club.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Telephone 415-977-5633 or send address changes to Sierra Club Membership, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322, or via email to address.changes@sierraclub.org.

Include both old and new addresses and allow 6 weeks for delivery of the first issue. Please DO NOT CONTACT THE EDITOR FOR CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

HOUSTON SIERRA CLUB

EMAIL

ALERT/ANNOUNCEMENT LIST

Subscribe to the Houston Sierra Club's email alert list to get timely alerts on Houston area conservation issues, and occasional announcements of interest to Houston Sierra Club members. Whenever you want to drop from the list it is easy to unsubscribe yourself—those instructions are included at the bottom of each message sent out on the list.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Send FROM the email address to which you want to direct the messages.

Subscribe by sending TO:

LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG

Subject: [this line may be left blank]

Message Body:

SUBSCRIBE LONESTAR-HOUSTON-

ANNOUNCE FirstName LastName

(Insert YOUR name in place of "FirstName LastName")

That's it. You will receive confirmation messages from the listserve. Thanks for your interest.

If you need assistance in locating the instructions or in signing up for the email list, please contact Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896.

Since the Houston Group will not be mailing out the *Bayou Banner* on a regular basis, one option for getting information on Club activities is this Houston Group EMAIL ALERT LIST.

Note: There is the possibility that we may produce some sort of periodic newsletter in the future that could be mailed out to those members specifically interested in subscribing.

The December-January issue may be mailed because of the Executive Committee ballots.

HOUSTON REGIONAL GROUP

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Art Browning (Chair) (Lone Star Chapter Delegate)	art.browning@gmail.com
Jim Williams (Vice Chair)	ezz@pdq.net
Lorraine Gibson (Treasurer)	raineygib@aol.com
Page Williams (Secretary)	page.williams@gmail.com
Melanie Oldham (Alternate Lone Star Chapter Delegate)	oldham_melanie@yahoo.com
Evelyn Merz (Conservation Committee Chair)	elmerz@hal-pc.org
Frank Blake	frankblake@juno.com
Patsy Gillham	patsytbb@gmail.com
Stephanie Thomas	Stephanie.germaine@gmail.com

REGIONAL GROUP LEADERSHIP

Banner Editor	Carol Woronow	HSCBanner@gmail.com
Beach Cleanup	Frank Blake	frankblake@juno.com
Conservation	Evelyn Merz	elmerz@hal-pc.org 713-644-8228
Conservation Subcommittees		
Air Quality	Brandt Mannchen	brandtshnfbt@juno.com 713-664-5962
Coastal Issues	Page Williams	page.williams@gmail.com
Energy and Global Warming	Jim Williams	ezz@pdq.net
Forestry and Big Thicket	Brandt Mannchen	brandtshnfbt@juno.com 713-664-5962
Recycling Watershed	Frank Blake Evelyn Merz	frankblake@juno.com elmerz@hal-pc.org 713-644-8228
Hospitality	Carol Lee	713-523-2294
Inner City Outings	Lorraine Gibson	raineygib@aol.com 281-384-4104
Lone Star Chapter Delegate	Art Browning	art.browning@gmail.com
Membership Outings	John Berlinghoff Frank Blake	johnb@hal-pc.org frankblake@juno.com
Political	Doug Peterson	dougpeterson@earthlink.net
Programs	Joe Lengfellner	thatsjoesmail@yahoo.com
Webmaster	houston.webmaster@lonestar.sierraclub.org	



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

1. Explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth.
2. Practice and promote responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources.
3. Educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment.
4. Use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.

The ant seen on these pages is the fictitious *Sieromeyrmex houstonensis*, drawn for and named after the Houston Sierra Club by world-famous biologist E. O. Wilson.