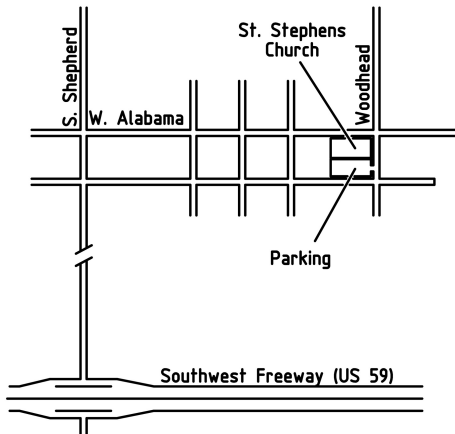




**GENERAL MEETINGS: 2nd
Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.**

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. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. 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 FEBRUARY 11, 2016
COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE**

The Houston Sierra Club will host a discussion of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and options to get truly locally sourced food. Despite a reputation for big business and heavy industry, earnest shoppers can find fruits and vegetables from farmers and gardeners working in the heart of Houston. From farm share programs like PLANT IT FORWARD (speaker Randi Rogers) to well-known operations like URBAN HARVEST (speaker Suzy Fischer) we will learn firsthand how Houstonians can obtain real, honest food, that is raised without a large environmental impact, and help support the actual farmers rather than middlemen and mega-stores.



Radishes from Plant It Forward Farms

The Sierra Club meeting is free and open to the public.

The meeting is at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, corner of West Alabama and Woodhead.

Main program begins at 7:30 p.m. (Open for a social period before the program at 7:00 p.m.)

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**GENERAL MEETING MARCH 10, 2016
TBD**

The topic for our March meeting is not confirmed yet.

Maybe we will learn about birding from an Audubon Society guest, or about native plants from the Texas Native Plant Society.

Visit our web site in March for details:
<http://www.sierraclub.org/texas/houston>

The Sierra Club meeting is free and open to the public.

The meeting is at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, corner of West Alabama and Woodhead.

Main program begins at 7:30 p.m. (Open for a social period before the program at 7:00 p.m.)

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 NOTICES ON MEETUP

Visit the Houston Sierra Club Meetup for notices of outings and updates to outings.

Join the Sierra Club Outings group on Meetup to get updated information about local outings, meetings, and events.

<http://www.meetup.com/Houston-Sierra-Club-Outings>

View the list of outings and events without joining, or join Meetup to get emails about events coming up, and updates to events. You can let the Outings leader know you are coming, so you can be informed of any last-minute changes or cancellations due to weather.

You can view the Outings in a Calendar format, or as a list. Click "Upcoming Meetups" in the left column. Then click the "Calendar" tab, just under "Welcome!"

You can also post photos from outings and view the photos from others.

The Outings and Events on Meetup are updated all the time, not only every two months like the Bayou Banner.

Bike

BIKE RIDE OUTINGS

Check our Meetup site for dates:

<http://www.meetup.com/Houston-Sierra-Club-Outings>

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 two or so hours long and moderately paced.

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

MARYSEE PRAIRIE WORK DAYS

First Saturday most months fall through spring.

Check Meetup site for possible dates, 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.

NORTH JETTY BEACH CLEANUP

Usually Saturdays, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Check Meetup site for possible dates, and for updates.

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.

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

Hike

Introduction to Sam Houston National Forest: The East End

Saturday, February 13, 2016, 7:30 a.m.

On Saturday, February 13, 2016, the Houston Sierra Club will conduct the last of three outings as part of an "Introduction to Sam Houston National Forest (SHNF)". This is a great way to "Get to know SHNF". The idea is to have fun; learn about SHNF and what you can see and where you can see it; and get you acquainted with its beauty and why it is important. This introduction will be just in time for the upcoming forest plan revision where your voice is needed and will count to protect this beautiful landscape.

Our third outing will be the "The East End" of SHNF. Some of the sights you will see and be introduced to include: Winters Bayou Scenic Area, Big Creek Scenic Area, East Fork of the San Jacinto River, the Lone Star Hiking Trail, Longleaf Pine Forest, and Seepage Creek Wetlands. After we finish our tour of SHNF we will have a delicious meal at a nearby restaurant.

Bring your day pack, hat, three quarts of water, snacks, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, field guides, and wear long pants and a short-sleeved shirt. Long pants are recommended due to briars, chiggers, and ticks. The tour will take about 3-4 hours and will consist of a car caravan with short stops where we look at different points of interest.

We will meet to carpool/caravan at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot just west of Starbucks (next to Becks Prime) in Meyerland Plaza. Starbucks fronts the 4700 block of Beechnut (south side, near the West Loop South). Look for a silver Honda Civic with bumper stickers. If you would like to come you can sign up on the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site or contact Brandt Mannchen at 713-664-5962 or brandtshnfbt@juno.com. For those who want to meet us in SHNF at 9 am, the directions are:

1) Drive from Houston about 50 miles north on U.S. 59 past Kingwood, New Caney, and Splendora and exit in Cleveland, Texas at the FM 2025 exit.

2) Turn north (left) on FM 2025 and go about 5 miles and turn left into a convenience store parking lot at the intersection of FM 2025 and FM 945. We will meet in the parking lot at 9 am.

Service

February Brings Service Outing and Lunch Pot Luck on the Katy Prairie

Saturday, February 27, 2016, 7:30 a.m.

On Saturday, February 27, 2016, join the Houston Sierra Club on a service outing to the beautiful Katy Prairie. We will help the Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) by either getting our hands "dirty" doing some nursery work with native grasses and wildflowers or some other fun activity at the Indian Grass Preserve and Field Office. The morning should be cool with spring in the air.

After we finish our project we will have a pot luck lunch (so bring a dish) and enjoy birding, strolling, and relaxing on the Katy Prairie. Bring your daypack, water (at least two quarts), a pot luck lunch dish, hiking shoes, cameras, bug repellent, sunscreen, field guides, binoculars, and clothes to fit the weather. We should be back in Houston about 5 p.m.

We will meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot just west of Starbucks (near Becks Prime) in Meyerland Plaza. Starbucks fronts the 4700 block of Beechnut (south side, near the West Loop South). Look for a silver-gray Honda Civic with bumper stickers. Contact Brandt Mannchen at the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, 713-664-5962, or brandtshnfbt@juno.com. If there is a change in plans, Brandt will contact you.

For those who want to meet us at the KPC Indian Grass Preserve and Field Office at 9 a.m. the directions are:

1. Go on Interstate 10 West past Katy, exit and turn right (north) onto Pederson Road, and then go about one-half mile to U.S. Highway 90.

2. Turn left (west) onto U.S. Highway 90, go about one-half mile, and then turn right onto FM 2855.

3. Go about 6 miles on FM 2855 and stop at FM 529. After you cross FM 529, FM 2855 is called Morrison Road. Go 1 mile and turn left (west). You will still be on Morrison Road.

4. Go 1 mile on Morrison Road and at the stop sign turn right (north) onto Pattison Road. Go 3 miles on Pattison Road and stop at Hebert Road. Turn left (west) onto Hebert Road.

5. Go 1 mile on Hebert Road to the KPC Indian Grass Preserve and Field Office entrance road. Turn left (south) onto the entrance road, drive 0.3 miles, and park in front of the Field Office.

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

Hike

It's Time for Tree Identification! Saturday, March 26, 2016, 7:30 a.m.

After three long years, what time is it again? "It's Tree ID time!" We will once again, "Name that Tree," just in time for spring. On Saturday, March 26, 2016, from 9:45 a.m. to 4 p.m., back by popular demand, the incredible and infamous "Tree Guys" (Tom and Brandt) will present an "East Texas Tree Identification Class" at "Peach Creek Woods". We will help focus your eyes on the most common trees found in East Texas, bonus trees, and simple ways to make that "Positive ID."

This is a "Fun-raiser" for the Sierra Club. The cost is \$25/person and comes with "Tree ID" materials! We will talk and then walk along the trails of "Peach Creek Woods," Tom's 128 acre private nature sanctuary, while we enjoy a pleasant spring day. You will be tested and you will pass! Guaranteed!!! Bring your lunch, water, hat, clothes to suit the weather, insect repellent, lounge chair, walking shoes, field guides, binoculars, and a "Tree ID" focus. But hurry, space is limited to fifteen people!

We will meet to carpool/caravan at 8:15 a.m. in the parking lot just west of Starbucks (next to Becks Prime) in Meyerland Plaza. Starbucks fronts the 4700 block of Beechnut (south side, near the West Loop South). Look for a silver Honda Civic with bumper stickers.

If you want to come, sign up on the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site or contact Brandt Mannchen at 713-664-5962 or brandtshnfbt@juno.com. Be sure to bring \$25 in cash/check (no credit/debit cards) so that you can attend. If you want to meet us at "Peach Creek Woods" here are the directions:

- 1) Drive north on U.S. 59.
- 2) After the Splendora exit go about 3 miles to the Fostoria Road exit. Exit U.S. 59 and turn left onto Fostoria Road and go under U.S. 59.
- 3) Go north about 1.3 miles on Fostoria Road until you come to a blinking red light. Turn left at the light onto Morgan Cemetery Road.
- 4) Drive about 3.1 miles to the yellow gate on your right (north) side of the road. If you go too far you will come to the cemetery.
- 5) Enter through the yellow gate and follow the signs to the covered pavilion (you will eventually turn left) where you will park your car.
- 6) Come early because we want to start on time!

Hike

April is for the Birds in the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary Saturday, April 30, 2016, 7:30 a.m.

On Saturday, April 30, 2016, join the Sierra Club as we bird 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 in "peak" migration season and will look for the many songbirds that migrate through our forests as they head for their nesting homes farther north. We will also enjoy the blooming wildflowers and diverse hardwood and pine forests, spring-fed creeks, and meadows of LTNS.

Bring your daypack, hat, water, snacks, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, bird field guides and apps, and clothes to fit the weather. Long pants are highly recommended. We will bird until about 1 p.m., and then will go into Cleveland, Texas and enjoy lunch.

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 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 contact you. The directions to the LTNS are:

- 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.
- 2) Turn left (west) onto FM 945.
- 3) Go approximately 10.2 miles on FM 945. On your right you will pass Butch Arthur Road.
- 4) Continue on FM 945, beyond Butch Arthur Road, another 0.7 miles.
- 5) Turn right onto a grassy two-track road and then turn immediately left and drive 30 yards to a metal gate with 2001 on it. This is the gate to the LTNS.

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

Hike

Sierra Club Visits Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, May 7, 2016, 7:30 a.m.

Join the Houston Sierra Club when we visit the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge (TRNWR). Some of the best bottomland hardwood forests left in Texas are found in the TRNWR. Birds and wildflowers will be in abundance during this end of spring outing. We will hike a 6 mile trail system which has great views of the Trinity River.

Bring your daypack, hat, water, lunch, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, field guides, bug repellent, 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.

Contact Brandt Mannchen via the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, at 713-664-5962, or email him at brandtshnfbt@juno.com and leave your name, address, phone number, and email. In case of trip cancellation Brandt will contact you. For those who want to meet us in Liberty, Texas at 9 a.m. the directions are:

- 1) Go west on I-610 South and then north on I-610 East across the Houston Ship Channel to I-10 East.
- 2) As you take the exit to enter I-10 East, instead veer to the left and take U.S. Highway 90 (Crosby Freeway) and go northeast.
- 3) You will pass the San Jacinto River, Crosby, and SH 146 in Dayton, Texas.
- 4) You will go east through Dayton, Texas (State Highway SH 146 will join U.S. Highway 90 at Dayton) and cross the Trinity River Floodplain on elevated U.S. Highway 90.
- 5) You will cross the Trinity River and then come into Liberty, Texas. Continue on U.S. Highway 90 through Liberty until you come to the McDonald's at Spur 227. Turn into the McDonald's and we will meet at 9 a.m.

Hike

June Brings Hike in Turkey Creek Unit of Big Thicket National Preserve

Saturday, June 4, 2016, 7:30 a.m.

Join the Houston Sierra Club when we hike part of the Turkey Creek Trail in Big Thicket National Preserve. We will hike about 6 miles, from Gore Store Road to FM 420, and view Village Creek, Turkey Creek, cypress swamps, and upland pine forests.

Bring your daypack, hat, water (at least 3 quarts), lunch, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, field guides, bug repellent, 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.

Contact Brandt Mannchen at the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, 713-664-5962, or email him at brandtshnfbt@juno.com. In case of trip cancellation Brandt will contact you. For those who want to meet us at the BTNP Visitor Center at 9:45 a.m. the directions are:

- 1) Go east on I-10 until after you cross the Trinity River (about 40 miles).
- 2) Exit and turn left (north) onto FM 563 and go 8 miles until you reach FM 770.
- 3) Turn right onto FM 770, go north on FM 770 until you get to Highway 90 in Raywood. Turn right onto Highway 90, go 100 yards, and turn left onto FM 770.
- 4) Go 15 miles on FM 770 and stop at the FM 770/State Highway (SH) 105 intersection in Batson (blinking red light).
- 5) Turn right onto SH 105/FM 770, go 6 miles, and then turn left onto FM 770 at its diverging intersection with SH 105.
- 8) Go on FM 770 through Saratoga until you come to FM 1003, turn left onto FM 1003, go 8 miles to the US 69/287 intersection.
- 10) Turn left onto US 69/287, go two miles, turn right onto FM 420. The BTNP visitor center is about 100 yards on your left.

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

CYPRESS CREEK CANOE/KAYAK – NOVEMBER 21, 2015

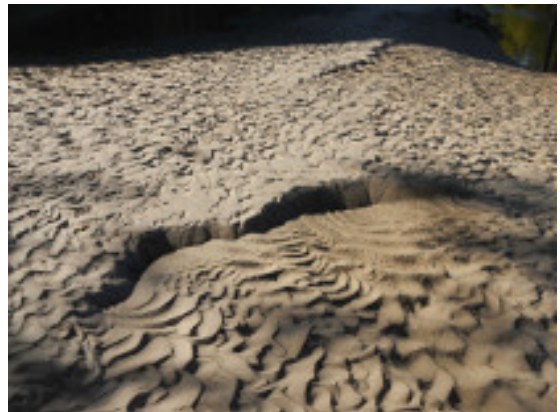
By Tom Douglas

We all know that the creek is a constantly-changing environment, and today we definitely got in touch with that change. On Saturday morning, a rapidly-moving Canadian cold front pushed storms through our area. Fortunately, the detailed timing of the weather forecast proved to be right on target, and the rain tapered off just as our group met up at the Cypresswood Drive bridge over Cypress Creek. A larger rainfall on the previous Tuesday had raised the water level in Cypress Creek by about 9 feet, but more than 90% of that peak flow had already run off. Early on Saturday morning there had been up to an inch and a half more rain in the upper watersheds of Cypress Creek and Spring Creek, and we knew that the water would be rising again during the day.



Last Tuesday's Waterline by Tom Douglas

Once the morning car shuttle had been run, the group reassembled at the launch site, where we went over plans for our 5.9-mile paddle and made a brief study of small sand waves on the river bank, thinking about the way that flowing water interacts with materials in the river bed. By the end of the day, the creek would rise by about two feet, and those very same sand waves would be reshaped yet once again by the rising water.



Small Sand Waves by Tom Douglas

The brisk flow in the creek meant that our group moved along at a faster-than-usual clip, reaching the lunch spot at the confluence of Cypress Creek and Spring Creek in about 40 minutes, instead of the usual time of around an hour. Just before lunch, we were greeted by the glorious sight of a flock of about 30 white pelicans that were swimming up the river, coming toward us. A sandbar on river left provided a picnic spot with great views of both Cypress Creek and Spring Creek.



White Pelicans by Linda Shead

The sky cleared steadily during the morning, and the wind that came in behind the cold front was gentler than expected. We talked about the need to consider the potential risk of hypothermia during paddling trips that are planned for the colder parts of the year, and we made a quick after-lunch stop to check the temperature of the air and water to see how the current conditions would compare with the "golden rule of air and water temperature" (<http://www.canoeingthenew.com/safety.html>). Each of these measurements came in at higher than 60 degrees, so we were officially good to go.

We could see that the water had risen while we were having lunch, and the afternoon paddle down to the Highway 59 bridge went by all too quickly.

A small but determined crew carried boats up to the parking lot, so that by the time the afternoon car shuttle had been run, loading up our boats was easy. All in all, it was a great day.



Fall Color by Linda Shead

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE BEING OUTDOORS IN PERFECT WEATHER

By Brandt Mannchen

The first Saturday of most months, a few volunteers gather at Marysee Prairie, the only restored tallgrass prairie in the Big Thicket, to cut and herbicide woody plants and on occasion to burn or mow the prairie to recycle nutrients and give all prairie plants a boost in growth.

Over the past 23 years, I have been to Marysee Prairie when it was cold, hot, wet, and humid. But on Saturday, December 5, 2015, I worked on Marysee Prairie when the weather was perfect. We had been having halcyon weather for several days so I was hoping that it would hold for our monthly workday.

As David, Alex, and I pulled up next to Tom the temperature was cool, probably in the low 50's, and the sun was shining brightly in a azure blue sky so clear that it seemed you could look past the fence-line trees, half-way around the world.

Over time, Frank, Glen, Heinz, Julie, and Maxine arrived. Everyone worked hard. The beautiful early winter browns, tans, yellows, greens, and reds streak Marysee with a colorful palette of incomparable tones, hues, and textures.

Only a few flowers still bloomed. Blue Mist Flower, Prairie Gaura, Brown-eyed Susan, Canada Goldenrod, obedient plant, coreopsis, and various asters struggled to give one last sign of life before they shut down and went quiet for the winter.

This was the season of seeding and the *Liatris*, goldenrod, Knotroot Bristle Grass, Swamp Sunflower, Bushy Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Yankeeweed, and other grasses and wildflowers floated their secret packages of life to the wind or to the ground. We worked insistently, cutting the Sweetgum, Yaupon Holly, Southern Wax Myrtle, Water Oak, Common Persimmon, American Beautyberry, and other woody plants so that this prairie not only lived but thrived.

Sparrows flitted through and then landed in the thick grassy cover. In the distance, a Pileated Woodpecker called and then during lunch showed itself to us as it flew across the northern end of Marysee. A Belted Kingfisher made a surprise appearance, probably attracted to the next door neighbor's pond.

The big lightning-struck pine had finally fallen over, but did not reach the ground because two Sweetgum trees held it firmly in their green embrace. By leaning on the Sweetgum trees the pine had saved our fence, gate, and tool shed from immediate demise.

It felt great eating, talking, and sitting with old friends. Maxine brought out a wonderful spread. We mammals all descended upon it in ravenous hunger. There is nothing like hard work, brilliant sunshine, and clean, fresh air, to bring out that appetite and make you happy to be a human being and an animal.

After lunch we worked a bit longer. But after being sated it was enough for us to feel fulfilled and happy about the work done and the meal eaten. Not to mention the weather enjoyed. Making memories outdoors is one of the best ways to connect with our "community of life". That and perfect weather!



Blue Mistflower on the Marysee Prairie by Heman Wai



American Beautyberry by Carol Woronow

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

CYPRESS WONDERLAND! OUTING DECEMBER 5, 2015

By Tom Douglas



On Lake Charlotte by Linda Shead



Paddling Route

After only a few paddle strokes on the calm waters of Lake Charlotte, any initial concerns that we might have had about being uncomfortably cold quickly vanished. The day was simply glorious – the stuff of dreams. Knowing that the forecast was for calm winds all day long, we took the unusual measure of heading straight across Lake Charlotte, from Cedar Hill Park on the northeast to Lake Pass on the southwest.

Soon after entering Lake Pass, we confronted that troublesome invasive plant species, water hyacinth. Working as a team, we pushed through several rafts of these floating plants before turning into a short channel that leads to Lake Miller. Now, all that stood between us and our lunch spot on the south shore of Lake Miller was one patch of water hyacinth at the lake's north shore, and a much smaller one just offshore from our landing site. The high water level in the swamp meant that we were greeted by a gently-sloping beach and only a moderate number of submerged cypress knees, ready to bump or strand any approaching boat.

After our lunch break in a grassy clearing (with not a mosquito in sight), we made a short hike up the bank to visit a live oak tree and a pecan tree that are both very old and large specimens of their species. In addition to paying our respects at the memorial marker for Corporal Miller, who served in the War of 1812, we came upon a large "city" of mounds built by leafcutter ants, some of which were out on parade, carrying bits of cut, green foliage to their subterranean fungus gardens.

While we were relaxing up on the bank, our advance scout, Dave Kitson, was out paddling a loop of more than a mile and a half, under what turned out to be arduous conditions, to check out an alternative exit from Lake Miller. Many thanks to Dave, whose scouting intelligence spared the rest of us what could have been a tedious and tiring experience.



Midday Stopover by Richard Cunningham



Toward Bird Island by Linda Shead

Retracing our path up Lake Pass, we headed north to Bird Island. (It was underwater for now, and birds won't return to nest there until spring, so the name seemed a little incongruous.) Then, on north to Buzzard Roost. (One nest of sticks was visible high up in a tree, but no birds were home for now.)

Next, we headed through the forest, along the western edge of Lake Charlotte for about three-quarters of a mile. Because of the varied and moving reflections of light that are projected up onto the trunks and canopies of the cypresses in this area during the late fall and winter, we often call this part of the trip "going to the movies."

When we reached the large, broken-off cypress tree that resembles the Statue of Liberty to some, we headed through open water up into the mouth of Mac Bayou. Now, for the first time, we encountered a significant current, flowing down Mac Bayou into Lake Charlotte. After checking out a nesting box that had been installed along the bayou for use by wood ducks, we took a "magic carpet ride" on the current flowing down into Lake Charlotte. A short paddle to the east, back to Cedar Hill Park, completed our trip.

True to prediction, the temperature had been very mild, the skies blue, and winds extremely light, all day long. It just doesn't get much better than this!

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR

By Brandt Mannchen

It had been a long time since Jane, Kelly, and I had gone birding. A few years ago it was not unusual for all three of us to enjoy the outdoors together but the pull of environmental work, family responsibilities, and life had kept us from getting together.

I was delighted when both said they would join me to bird on a Sunday at Brazoria and San Bernard National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). We met at 7 a.m., packed our gear into the car, and off we went!

It was good talking with both of my friends, catching up on what was happening during our days apart. Before you knew it we turned onto the road that led to Brazoria NWR and we began to see birds.

One thing you should know about Kelly and Jane, they are really good birders, particularly when it comes to sparrows and songbirds. We drove the road and one or both would say, "Stop!", usually next to a thicket or a fence-row of trees and they would begin a back and forth about where the bird was and what it might be. To say I was slow and way behind is to state the obvious. Occasionally, I saw the birds they pointed at, but identifying them was out of the question for me. I was an outdoors chauffeur and proud of it.

Meadow Lark, Catbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Common Moorhen, Mocking Bird, Red-wing Blackbird, Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, Blue-Gray Nat-catcher, Coot, Eastern Phoebe, Palm Warbler, the bird names just flew by and I was along for the ride, or should I say, drive.

We scoured Brazoria and saw Brown Pelican, Northern Harrier, White Ibis, Pied-billed Grebe, Red-tailed Hawk, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Shoveler, Caracara, and many more. The White-tailed Kite was a favorite and the White Pelican that flew overhead just as we prepared to leave was a great sign of a good day.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service volunteer at the education center was great. She showed us what they found that morning in pond water. The tiny crawfish and other miniature creatures were flashed on the screen from the microscope. There are many worlds unknown and uncharted that we are ignorant of as we waltz through our days.

We sped off from Brazoria, very hungry, and in Lake Jackson enjoyed an-all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet. Full and ready for the afternoon we drove to San Bernard NWR and the results were the same. Birds everywhere! The Red-tailed Hawks, Kestrels, and Northern Harriers, ruled the air. Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Goldfinch, and Chipping Sparrow ruled the thickets in Bobcat Woods. At the large lake we visited Common Moorhen, and Coots floated and cackled and laughed.

On the lake, across from the observation deck, we scoped out two large American Alligators sunning themselves on the vegetated bank. A Green Treefrog tried to hide on a limb but stuck out like a sore thumb. A Broad-banded Watersnake, coiled loosely, warmed up displaying its reddish-orange cheeks and patterned bands that were visible and glistening in the wet grass.

Over the afternoon we saw Savannah Sparrows, Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, Red-wing Blackbirds, cormorants, Pied-billed Grebes, White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbills, and many other of our fine-feathered friends. One of the highlights of the entire trip was when we stopped at a marsh and started scanning the vegetation. To our surprise, only about 150 feet away, four beautiful and enormous Sandhill Cranes stood. They did not flush as we oohed and aahed and Kelly snapped what seemed like dozens of photos.

Finally, as we moved toward the exit to San Bernard NWR and we rounded a corner, four beautiful white-tail deer stood on the road and looked at us. They slowly sauntered off and disappeared in the brush, leaving us excited, like a good-bye committee waving its last response.

Good friends, both human, animal, and plant, made for a great day at Brazoria and San Bernard NWRs. I want to go again and share these delights. You can't visit your friends too often.



Roseate Spoonbill by Carol Woronow

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

COLD, WINDY, WET, MUDDY, LOTS OF HARDWOODS, AND A GREAT TIME IN THE CENTRAL SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL FOREST

By Brandt Mannchen

It was a full house at the Sam Houston National Forest District Ranger Office parking lot. We had 18 people, a combination of old timers and first timers. Rose, Gary, Lynn, David, Nancy, Yong, Darrell, Phyllis, Samson, Luis, Allen, Beverly, Tisha, Cindy, Eva, Weiping, and Irina were all bundled up and smiling, glad to be out of the city and in the woods. We all decided which cars we wanted to carpool in, the caravan formed, and off we went. The sun was out and then everything went dark as the clouds took over.

We went through the new rotaries on FM 1375/Interstate 45 North in New Waverly and then toiled up Interstate 45 and got off at the Huntsville State Park exit, turned right and drove to U.S. 75, turned right and then left onto Evelyn Lane and – Whoa Nelly what are we seeing! Green was all over the road.

The road looked like a grassy promenade. We all stared in disbelief. Eventually David said, “it must be the hail!” The night before, a windy, rainy, and apparently hail-laden storm passed through Houston and Southeast Texas. We now saw the results as many pine tree branches littered the road. We picked our way along the road, including a muddy area that we had to bull through.

We parked at the Lone Star Hiking Trail entrance on the Phelps Section of the trail, and hiked about one-half mile in, attempting to avoid the pools of water and wet, squishy soil. We topped a ridge and then started down. We were in a beautiful hardwood-dominated cove with large White Oak, Southern Red Oak, Black Hickory, Shortleaf Pine, and other trees scattered across a several hundred yard area. It is rare to see an upland hardwood forest like this in Sam Houston National Forest. Most were cut down from the 1940's through 1960's for timber stand improvement – in other words, make room for more pine trees.

Some people found golf ball sized hail still on the ground. The tall hardwood and pine trees protected us from the wind. It was a great place to hike and talk about the forest (Yong kept asking good questions) but we had a lot of territory to cover so we hiked back to our cars and took off.

We drove down U.S. 75, FM 2296, and turned onto Four Notch Road and drove until we came to Forest Road 206, and drove across Boswell and Briar Creeks. We parked our cars along the side of the road and walked about 100 feet into the forest. We were on the lower slope of a 330 foot ridge, where it met the floodplain of Briar Creek.

We appreciated the large White Oak, Sweetgum, American Holly, and American Basswood (a tree that is rarely seen in SHNF). Black Walnut were scattered in the forest and Switchcane (the cane in “canebrakes”) was thick in growth with large grape vines that hung from trees. It was truly an impressive forest and reminiscent of descriptions of the “Big Thicket” from the 1800's as related in Del Weniger's “The Explorers' Texas, The Lands and Waters”. Christmas Fern was on the floor of the forest and lichens and mosses lined and covered the bark of trees. Again, we had to go. We were over an hour behind schedule and still had our longest hike in front of us.

We drove a few miles further north and parked our cars at the trailhead for the Lone Star Hiking Trail in the Four Notch Area. We began a long downward walk, with water draining on the trail, and Red Maple standing in silent watch as we headed to the bridge over Briar Creek. We crossed the bridge, paralleled the creek, and continued, covering a mile in all.

We finally left the creek and climbed up a slope, down a slope, and then up another slope before we crossed a small ephemeral stream and found ourselves in a concave bowl with many large hardwood trees. As we stood on the trail I heard a calling and said, “The frogs are calling!” We walked slowly to a vernal pond, that dries up in the summer, that was full of calling frogs. This is the time of year when frogs mate and our pond was full of vigorous activity. We also heard far in the distance, the spooky call of the Pileated Woodpecker, a crow-sized bird with a great, red crest and white on its wings.

We admired the large Black Gum, Winged Elm, and other upland hardwood trees. We also viewed the beauty of wet, bright green, spore-laden, Resurrection Fern which covered the trunk of a large tree.

I looked at my watch and started! We needed to get into Huntsville if we wanted to eat at Fiesta Taqueria by 2 pm. We doubled back and made our hike in record time. We drove for about 20 minutes and made it to the taqueria just in time, before they closed. The folks at this restaurant took good care of us and we had a late lunch with great conversations.

We finally wound our way back to the District Ranger Office and dropped everyone off so that they could pick up their cars. While we got cold, got wet, got muddy, and the wind blew and chilled us, we saw some fabulous hardwood trees in the uplands and along creeks. I felt tired but refreshed and recharged. I waved to the woods and look forward to visiting them again along with all my Sierra Club friends.



Hail in the SHNF by Allen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOUSTON GIVE 5 PROGRAM

This year Houston Sierra Club is joining several other local environmental organizations for the 2016 Houston Give 5 fundraising event. In this program, area businesses sign up and pledge to donate 5% of their revenue on a specified date, or a minimum of \$150, to support the participating beneficiary organizations. The date this year will be Saturday, April 23, the day after Earth Day. Participating businesses will be promoted at the Houston Give 5 website and beneficiary group websites, and in various promotional materials and publicity efforts. The beneficiary groups this year in addition to the Houston Sierra Club, are Air Alliance Houston, Texas Campaign for the Environment, Houston Tomorrow, San Jacinto River Coalition, and Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Coalition.

For further details visit the Houston Give 5 website at www.houstongive5.com

If you have a business or service and are interested in participating, or if you would like to invite a business that you know to get involved, please contact Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896, or Lorraine Gibson at raineygib@aol.com or 281-384-4104.



WASHED ASHORE AT THE HOUSTON ZOO JANUARY 15 – APRIL 15, 2016

The Washed Ashore Project, a non-profit organization, found a creative, artistic use for some of the roughly 315 BILLION pounds of plastic in our oceans today.

Visit the Houston Zoo to see a special Washed Ashore art exhibit featuring giant sculptures of the sea life most affected by plastic pollution, made entirely of marine debris collected from beaches.

Under the leadership of Angela Haseltine Pozzi, community members of all ages work together to clean up our beaches and process the debris into art supplies to construct the sculptures. It's a labor-intensive process...dump, rinse, sort, rinse, soak, wash, scrub, rinse, dry, sort, test, sort, test, sort, cut, drill, stitch, twist, string, weave, design, attach, test, secure...but from it, thousands of pounds of debris are removed from local beaches, and a work of art is created.

Washed Ashore is included with your paid Zoo admission and is free for Zoo members.

For more information, see www.washedashore.org.

RECYCLING MEDICAL SUPPLIES

By Page Williams

Project C.U.R.E. is the largest provider of donated medical supplies and equipment to developing countries around the world. It has a four-star rating with Charity Navigator and is rated by Forbes as one of the 20 most efficient large U.S. charities. They will accept most any leftover medical supplies, but not medicines, ranging from hospital beds to leftover wound dressings.

The Houston office is conveniently located to drop off small items at 8251 Kempwood Drive, in the near northeast sector, and their truck can pick up that hospital bed that Medicare won't let you return. So don't throw away grandma's walker - send it to someone who can't afford one by contacting these "Ambassadors of Hope" at 281-236-3598 or

houstondonations@projectcure.org.

If you have time to spare and can lend a helping hand sorting and packing donations, phone 832-453-4526 or email

houstonvolunteers@projectcure.org



TRASH BASH APRIL 2, 2016

Help clean up the Galveston Bay Watershed on April 2, 2016 at 8:30 a.m. This event promotes environmental stewardship of our watershed through public education by utilizing hands-on educational tools and developing partnerships.

Cleanup sites are all over the greater Houston area, from the Sam Houston National Forest in the north, to Lake Jackson in the south. For location information, see

<http://www.trashbash.org/sites.html>

To participate in this half-day cleanup event, download a registration waiver form and select a site at

www.trashbash.org

Bring your completed and signed registration waiver form to your site's Check-In Station on the day of the event.

For more information visit

www.trashbash.org

Or call the Trash Bash® Hotline at (281) 486-9500, or e-mail

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

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.

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 is published 6 times a year, in odd-numbered months. See the Group's web site for the latest information (<http://www.sierraclub.org/texas/houston>). Current circulation is online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/texas/houston/newsletters>, except for a printed December/January issue for the elections of Executive Committee members.

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

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.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

INSPIRING CONNECTIONS OUTDOORS (ICO)

Meeting times and place to be determined. Please contact Lorraine Gibson at 281-384-4104 or raineygib@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.

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.

JOIN THE SIERRA CLUB

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

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

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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.



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.