



GENERAL MEETINGS: 2ND THURSDAYS

7:30 p.m.

February 12, 2015

March 12, 2015

Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

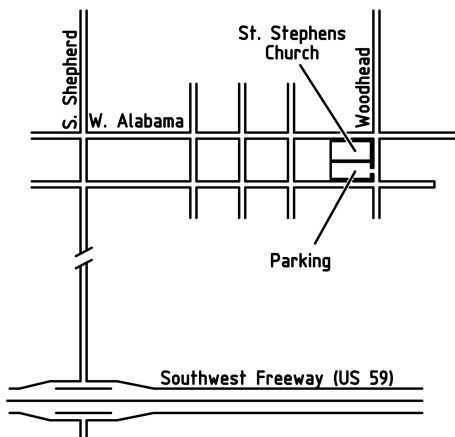
St. Stephens Episcopal Church
1805 West Alabama

Enter one parking lot from Woodhead, the other from Sul Ross.

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

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.



Map: Getting to the General Meeting

GENERAL MEETING FEBRUARY 12, 2015

LaVerne Williams, Environment Associates, Architects and Consultants. Speaking on Cultivating and Implementing Sustainable Living Concepts and Practices

Many people think you have to go to California to find state-of-the-art environmental design in home building, but they have not met Houston's LaVerne Williams. LaVerne is an architect and building ecologist, bioneer, founder and CEO of Environment Associates, Architects and Consultants. He specializes in helping Texans live with a lighter impact on our world. A good example of this is the Integral Urban Homestead in the Heights



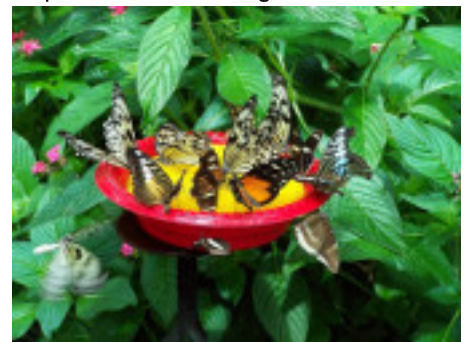
Houston Heights Integral Urban Homestead

designed for a Houston couple interested in sustainable living. From a rain catch system that will supply all the owner's needs, to PV solar cells providing electricity, it's a prize example of what can be done with true "green" design. With all its design features the home is registered Platinum LEED. If you have designs on sustainable living, but you don't want to go to California, come to our next Sierra Club meeting Thursday, February 12, and hear from one of Houston's leading lights in living lightly. (Meeting held at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, corner of West Alabama and Woodhead. Social period 7:00 PM. Main program begins at 7:30 PM.)

GENERAL MEETING MARCH 12, 2015

Nancy Greig, Director of the Cockrell Butterfly Center, Houston Museum of Natural Science

Tiger Longwing, Blue Morpho, Green Triangle Kite, Thoas Swallowtail, Red Peacock, Rice Paper, Blue Wave -- if names like this are foreign to you, you need to know about the bevy of beauties one can find at Houston's Cockrell Butterfly Center. The Center is part of the Houston Museum of Natural Science. In addition to showcasing hundreds of exotic insects and plants,



Happy Butterflies at the Cockrell Butterfly Center

the Center offers a three-story-tall tropical rain forest where free-flying butterflies might land on your shoulder. For amateur naturalists and photographers, the Cockrell Butterfly Center offers great fun. For environmentally conscious Texans, Nancy Greig, director of the Cockrell Butterfly Center, offers an entomologist's insight into the glorious and perilous life of these colorful creatures. Join us Thursday, March 12, to learn about these delicate beauties and the conservation required to save them for future generations. (Meeting held at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, corner of West Alabama and Woodhead. Social period 7:00 PM. Main program begins at 7:30 PM.)

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TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

OUTINGS UPDATES

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

Also, outings information is available at our website
<http://houston.sierraclub.org>

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.

OUTINGS CALENDAR

Feb 7 - Work Day - Marysee Prairie

Feb 7 - Service - Katy Prairie

Feb 20-22 - Weekend Outing - Government Canyon State Natural Area

Feb 28 - Service - North Jetty Beach Cleanup

Feb 28 - Hike - San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge

March 7 - Work Day - Marysee Prairie

March 14 - Hike - Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge

March 27-29 - Weekend Outing - Ivy's Forest Walk

April 4 - Hike - Roy E. Larson Sandylands Preserve

April 17-19 - Weekend Outing - Guadalupe River State Park

BACKPACKING BASICS COURSE

Have you ever wanted to really experience the less traveled sections of a national park or a wilderness area, away from your car and civilization? We periodically schedule a beginning backpacking class, usually in spring and fall. This class covers backpacking equipment (with samples), clothing, water treatment, and food preparation with handouts. For the next scheduled class, watch for notices at our web site or Meetup site, or you can contact Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896.

Service

MARYSEE PRAIRIE WORK DAYS

First Saturday most months fall through spring.

Saturday, February 7, 2015

Saturday, March 7, 2015

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

Service

KATY PRAIRIE SERVICE OUTING IN FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 7, 2015, 7:30 a.m.

Join the Houston Sierra Club on a visit to the beautiful Katy Prairie. We will help the Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) on this service trip 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 a harbinger of spring in the air.

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

We will meet 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 bumper stickers on the back.

Contact Brandt Mannchen at the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, 713-664-5962, or brandtshnfbt@juno.com. If there is any change in plans, Brandt will contact you.

For those who want to meet us at the KPC Indian Grass Preserve and Field Office at about 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. 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.



Snow Geese, By Linda MacPhee-Cobb [CC-BY-SA-2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons.

Weekend Outing

GOVERNMENT CANYON STATE NATURAL AREA

February 20-22, 2015
Friday through Sunday

Government Canyon State Natural Area, just northwest of San Antonio, is one of the newer parks in Texas and opened to the public in 2005. The park covers over 8,600 acres and lies on the Balcones Escarpment, an area of deeply entrenched canyons that defines the eastern boundary of the Edwards Plateau. Approximately 88% of the natural area overlays the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone, and the park was established to help protect this important water resource. Government Canyon SNA features more than 40 miles of hiking and biking trails, and also has some 110-million-year-old dinosaur tracks.

Car camping means tent camping at a regular car accessible campground. For further details and to sign up, contact Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896 (e-mail preferred) or Lorraine Gibson at 281-384-4104 or rainygib@aol.com.

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

Service

NORTH JETTY BEACH CLEANUP

Saturday, February 28, 2015, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Check Meetup site 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.



North Jetty Beach Cleanup, By Frank Blake



North Jetty Beach Cleanup Sign, By John Berlinghoff

From Galveston we will take the ferry to Bolivar, watching for birds and dolphins on the way. It is interesting to visit the jetty in different seasons. In winter there is usually a flock of white pelicans close by. After the clean up, those interested can visit the Bolivar Flats Audubon Sanctuary or Anahuac NWR depending on the route taken back to Houston. We plan to return to Houston by late afternoon.

For meet up times and complete details, contact Frank Blake, frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896.

Hike

VISIT NEW REFUGE ACQUISITION

Saturday, Feb 28, 2015, 7:30 a.m.

The Houston Sierra Club will visit a new land acquisition to the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. We will be guided by Mike Lange, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who will show us the Braniff Tract which contains 425 acres of Columbia Bottomlands Coastal Forest.

The Columbia Bottomlands Coastal Forest is unique in Texas and consists of huge Live Oaks, Pecans, Green Ashes, Cedar Elms, Western Soapberrys, Shumard Oaks, and many other tree species in a jungle-like subtropical forest that is lovely to the eye, heart, mind, and soul (the birds love it too). Since this will be the last weekend in February the weather should be cool with spring just around the corner.

Bring your daypack, hat, plenty of water, lunch, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, field guides, and clothes to fit the weather. Long pants are highly recommended since we will be bushwacking some of the time. 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. We will be back in Houston about 5 p.m.

If you would like to come contact Brandt Mannchen at 713-664-5962, brandtshnfbt@juno.com, or use the Houston Sierra Club Meetup site. In case of trip cancellation Brandt will contact you. For those who want to meet us in Brazoria County we will meet at Hudson Woods at 9 a.m. The directions to Hudson Woods are as follows:

- 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 drive straight into the entrance of Hudson Woods (road veers left).

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

Hike

SIERRA CLUB VISITS TRINITY RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Saturday, March 14, 2015, 7:30 a.m.

On Saturday, March 14, the Houston Sierra Club will hike and see some of the best bottomland hardwood forests in East Texas at the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge (TRNWR). Spring will be here and we may get a glimpse of some early wildflowers. Birds will be nesting, having families, and thinking of migration.

Bring your daypack, hat, water, snacks, 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. We will be back in Houston about 4 p.m. If you would like to come you can sign up at the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, call 713-664-5962, or email brandtshnfbt@juno.com. In case of trip cancellation you will be notified.

For those who want to meet us in Liberty, Texas at about 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 cross the San Jacinto River, pass Crosby, and SH 146 in Dayton, Texas.
- 4) You will go east through Dayton, Texas (State Highway 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 this location about 9 a.m.

Weekend Outing

SPRINGTIME AT IVY'S WILDLIFE REFUGE

March 27-29, 2015

Friday through Sunday

The Texas Land Conservancy (TLC) will host an open-house weekend at Ivy's Wildlife Refuge in Elkhart, Texas, just south of Palestine. Sierra Club members are especially welcome.

Come for a day or spend the entire weekend. People can come as early as Friday afternoon March 27 and spend the weekend camping out. If you cannot come for the weekend, then spend Saturday or Sunday at Ivy's.

TLC is a land trust which protects valuable wildlife habitat and natural ecosystems throughout Texas. Ivy's was donated to TLC by Ms. Ivy Payne to protect 465 acres on the far western boundary of the Piney Woods. Guided hikes will be provided, camaraderie will pervade, and star watching will be great during late March nights.

Ivy's has drinking water, a covered pavilion, bathrooms, showers, a drive-in camping area, and a kitchen. If you want to stay for the weekend bring a tent, sleeping bag/pad, food, and cooking utensils. The Houston Sierra Club will go to hike and enjoy Ivy's special delights for Saturday only on March 28, 2015. Bring your daypack, hat, water, snacks, lunch, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, field guides, and clothes to fit the weather. Long pants are highly recommended.

This will be a long day trip. It takes about 3 hours to get to Ivy's so we will stay until about 5 p.m. and get back to Houston between 8-9 p.m.

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. If you would like to come you can sign up at the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site or you can call 713-664-5962 or email brandtshnfbt@juno.com. In case of trip cancellation you will be notified.

For those who want to drive to Ivy's by themselves the directions are as follows:

- 1) Take Interstate 45 North (I-45) from Houston about 70 miles to Huntsville, Texas.
- 2) When you get to Huntsville, take the State Highway (SH) 19 exit (take a right).
- 3) Continue on SH 19 through Riverside, Trinity, and Crockett.
- 4) At Crockett, SH 19 is joined by U.S. 287 so you will be traveling on SH 19/U.S. 287.
- 5) Continue through Latexas and Grapeland on SH 19/U.S. 287.
- 6) As you enter Elkhart, turn left onto SH 294.
- 7) As soon as you cross the railroad tracks on SH 294 turn right and parallel the railroad tracks for about one-half mile where the road will veer left and become County Road (CR) 133.
- 8) As you continue on CR 133, the first dirt road on your right is CR 135. About one-half mile further on CR 133, the next dirt road is CR 134. There should be a sign that says "Ivy Payne Wildlife Refuge" at CR 134. Turn right onto CR 134 and drive until you dead-end into the refuge.

If you have any questions about Ivy's and how to get there contact Gloria McElroy at 903-764-2605.

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

Hike

FOREST WALK IN ROY E. LARSON SANDYLANDS PRESERVE

Saturday, April 4, 2015, 7:30 a.m.

On Saturday, April 4, the Houston Sierra Club will hike at The Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larson Sandylands Preserve near Silsbee, Texas. This unique part of the Big Thicket is found along Village Creek and has deep, sandy Longleaf Pine forests, desert-like yuccas and prickly pear, and many grasses and wildflowers. The beauty of the white, sandy bluffs, overlooking the tannin-stained waters of Village Creek, is breath-taking. Photographers should have a great time.

Bring your daypack, hat, water, snacks, 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. We will be back in Houston about 5 p.m. If you would like to come you can sign up at the Houston Sierra Club Outings Meetup site, call 713-664-5962, or email brandtshnfbt@juno.com. In case of trip cancellation you will be notified.

For those who want to meet us at the Preserve at about 10 a.m. the directions are:

- 1) Go east on I-10, cross the Trinity River, and exit to FM 563.
- 2) Turn left (north) onto FM 563 and go about 8 miles to FM 770.
- 3) Turn right onto FM 770 and go until you come to U.S. 90 (in Raywood).
- 4) Turn right (east) onto U.S. 90, go 100 yards, and turn left (north) and continue on FM 770.
- 5) Go on FM 770 about 15 miles to the blinking red light at State Highway (SH) 105/FM 770 in Batson.
- 6) After stopping at the blinking red light, turn right and go about 3 miles and turn left onto FM 770. SH 105 continues straight to Sour Lake.
- 7) Continue on FM 770 until you come to the town of Saratoga (about 5 miles).
- 8) Continue through Saratoga and go about 13 miles where you will dead-end into SH 326.
- 9) Turn left onto SH 326 and go about 3 miles until you come to U.S. 69/287 in Kountze, Texas.
- 10) Turn right onto U.S. 69/287 and go about 3 miles to SH 327.
- 11) Turn left onto SH 327 and go about 3 miles. After you cross Village Creek turn left into the parking lot.

Weekend Outing

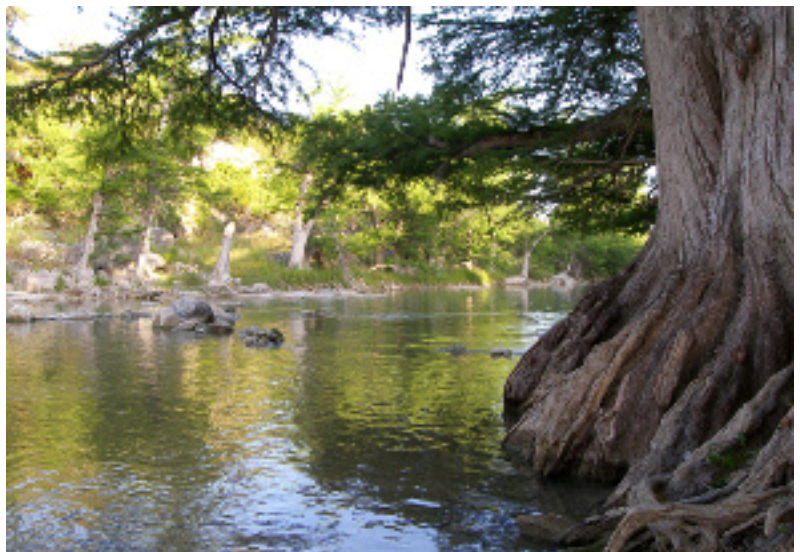
GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK

**April 17-19, 2015
Friday through Sunday**

Guadalupe River State Park is situated about 30 miles north of San Antonio. The river, with banks lined by huge bald cypress trees, is the park's most outstanding natural feature. On its winding path through the park, the river courses over four natural rapids. In the uplands away from the river, the limestone terrain is typical of the Edwards Plateau and is composed of oak and juniper woodlands, with interspersed grasslands. The park includes habitat for the rare golden-cheeked warbler, as well as a variety of other hill country wildlife. There is a network of hiking trails on both sides of the river.

Adjacent to the park is the Honey Creek State Natural Area, which usually offers a two-hour guided tour on Saturday mornings, emphasizing the history, geology, flora and fauna.

Car camping means tent camping at a regular car accessible campground. For further details and to sign up, contact Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896 (e-mail preferred) or Lorraine Gibson at 281-384-4104 or raineygib@aol.com



Cypress Tree on the Banks of the Guadalupe River, By Larry D. Moore, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

LITTLE LAKE CREEK WILDERNESS AREA

By Brandt Mannchen

The 50th anniversary wilderness hike was a big success on December 6.

I was concerned about the size of our group. Being a Houston Sierra Club outings leader means I take on a certain responsibility. Safety of people on a Sierra Club outing is the number one priority. That of course, and having fun. Most of the groups I lead consist of 5-10 people. This one had 14 people. Not a great difference from 10 people but when you add up everyone's individual hiking abilities it can be a tricky thing. But it appeared I had a game group and I was excited to introduce them to Little Lake Creek Wilderness Area on the 50th anniversary of the wilderness act.



Little Lake Creek Wilderness Hikers, By Nicida Maerefat.

After a brief presentation about Sam Houston National Forest, Little Lake Creek Wilderness Area, and The Wilderness Act, we were off. Within about 15 minutes I began to see how my group was going to hike. There were three different groups of hikers. The first group, about one-half dozen, could hike at a moderate pace for long periods of time. The second group had four or five people, and hiked a little slower. The third group was the slowest hiking group and would be the arbiter of our pace.

Thank heavens for David. I had surprised him by asking if he would play "backdoor" to my "front door" on the hike. Like the trooper he is, he did not hesitate. By "backdoor" I mean that David would always be the last person hiking in our group so that no person would get left behind. In most hikes the "backdoor" is the most important person on the hike

and I was glad David was serving in that role.

In addition, it was hunting season, and as an extra precaution David and I wore orange vests. I offered the other hikers orange caps and vests and several of them took me up on my offer and wore them.

We first hiked through the uplands. Over the past 30 years (in 1984 Little Lake Creek was designated by the U.S. Congress as wilderness) much has changed. Many large pine trees died due to predation by southern pine beetles. As a result, on the uplands, more Southern Red Oaks, Post Oaks, and other hardwood trees have taken over.

The Flowering Dogwood had turned a mottled red and other trees were shades of yellow and orange and highlighted our forest walk. The trail goes up and down and winds around until it comes to Pole Creek, a tributary of Little Lake Creek. We met one hiker before we got to Pole Creek and then as we left the wilderness, crossed Pole Creek, and then reentered the wilderness, we ran into a group of about a dozen Boy Scouts and leaders that had camped and were now striking their tents to head out on the Lone Star Hiking Trail.

We said goodbye to them and then headed toward the flood plain of Little Lake Creek. As we rolled down to the flood plain we saw ash trees and Osage Orange trees (along with their "Horse Apples") and Michael, our birder, spied a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (yes, there really is a bird by that name).



The Large Tree is One of the "Pillars", By Nicida Maerefat.

Before we got deep into the flood plain we saw downed trees which formed "mound and pit" topography on the forest floor. We stopped at a Green Ash wetland (a depression that is sometimes called an "Ash Flat") and had our lunch. I was delighted to see that American Beavers had been chewing on the Green Ash. We also saw many Palmettos. A Common Persimmon, with its charcoal colored bark, was leaning over the Green Ash wetland and still had its fruit attached high up in the tree. A wildlife "critter" somewhere would surely make a bee-line to this tree to gulp down a morsel of this tasty fruit.



Green Ash and Palmetto Pond, By Nicida Maerefat.

After lunch we plunged into the heart of the Little Lake Creek floodplain. We passed the "Pillars", as I call them, a very large American Elm and Green Ash, that stood about 40 feet apart, one on each side of the trail. In the

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

A FOREST, TWO CREEKS, AND A RIVER

By Tom Douglas

This outing was originally scheduled for November 16, but due to weather concerns, it was postponed until November 22, and still again, to November 23. The trailing edge of a rain storm finally moved out of the area by around 2:00 on Sunday morning, and Cypress Creek crested about two hours later. After a long night of monitoring about twenty gauges that measure rainfall and stream flow, I decided that conditions on Sunday should finally be alright for the trip. The rich reward for all of this was a good flow in the creek and a bright, clear day with a high temperature of 80°. Compared with what I had seen during a scouting trip to the Cypresswood Drive put-in point on the previous Wednesday, the usual sandbar had now been transformed into a higher-elevation, but still very paddler-friendly, launch site (red oval in the photos), and a previously dry channel that runs parallel to the low-water stream bank (red arrow) now offered a safe route out into the main flow of the creek.



The Put-in on November 19, By Tom Douglas.



The Put-in on November 23, By Joe Coker.

Once all ten of us had gotten underway, the rest of the trip was practically a magic carpet ride through cypresses and sycamores in vivid fall color, standing out in contrast against the evergreen pines.

After less than an hour's paddling, we reached our lunch spot on a sandbar at the confluence of Cypress Creek and Spring Creek. There, we spread out a picnic blanket and explored the myriad of animal tracks, streamside plants, and small bits of petrified wood that had washed down out of Spring Creek.

Now we were paddling on Spring Creek, where we took a brief detour into a small channel that carries stormwater from a neighborhood just upstream of Jesse H. Jones Park. The channel, which is lined by river birches, sycamores, palmettos, and inland sea oats, leads back to a culvert that collects innumerable "floatables," such as plastic bottles, in between storms.



Where the Creeks Join, By Tom Douglas.

One of our paddlers described his previous experience as a Master Naturalist volunteer at Jones Park, cleaning out the upstream side of this very same structure. Having just been swept entirely clean by the previous night's rain, this small tributary gave us a memorable lesson on the need for recycling plastics.

The next couple of miles down Spring Creek led through yet more beautiful forest and past the Bender Preserve, which is protected by a conservation easement. Having now reached the relatively wide-open West Fork of the San Jacinto River, we encountered some wind. But this didn't last too long, and, all too soon, our trip down parts of two different creeks and one river was at an end.



Down Spring Creek, By Linda Shead.

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

A BOAT TRIP ON ARMAND BAYOU

By Brandt Mannchen

For many years I wanted to take the pontoon boat trip on Armand Bayou. Then in 2013 I bid on this trip at the Houston Sierra Club auction and won! Finally, I was going to take the trip. However, I kept forgetting to make a reservation to go on the trip. Then it got to be December 2014 and the certificate for the boat trip was about to run out. My hand was forced and I made a reservation for the trip for my family and me.

After herding cats (my family) we got underway. But with Christmas so close I feared the holiday traffic. I was right to fear. It took us over an hour to get to Bay Area Park, where the pontoon boat was docked. After fighting traffic, construction, missing my exit, and in general feeling stressed we finally made it to the dock.

Our guides, Captain Mike and First Mate Diane, were as cool as could be and got our family and another family on-board. The younger folks were required to wear life jackets and I took one too because I knew that water is not a forgiving medium. The pontoon boat is called the "Bayou Ranger" and was given to Armand Bayou Nature Center about 25 years ago. The boat looked in good shape, the seats were comfortable, and the view was great since we had no roof (open air).

Off we went, powered by a quiet electric motor. Captain Mike steered us carefully on the hidden channel of Armand Bayou while avoiding logs and stumps from dead trees. Trees had died because the land had subsided nearly 40 years ago due to excessive removal of underground water and oil. There were a number of small islands which we moved around and that were about six inches to one foot above the water and covered with wet-loving vegetation.

As we headed downstream we began to see the great diversity of bird life that lives along Armand Bayou. We probably saw about six to eight Ospreys, also known as "Fish-hawks", that were posted like sentinels on dead trees near the water's edge or in the water. Several of the Osprey had just captured fish and were enjoying a fresh dinner. I must admit I thought about "fried catfish" while watching them eat. Funny, later after the trip a fish and shrimp dinner was what I had. Great minds think alike!

Besides Osprey there were Laughing Gulls, Brown Pelicans (I always think of them as graceful bombers coming in for a landing), Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Turkey Vultures, dozens of Black Vultures (made you feel edgy like they were watching you), Tri-Colored Herons, American Coots, Little Blue Herons, Anhingas, Double-Crested Cormorants, Belted Kingfishers, Snowy Egrets, and an individual Pileated Woodpecker, Rosette Spoonbill, Mocking Bird, and Pied-billed Grebe. In addition, as we wended our way along the bayou we could hear and see fish splashing ahead, beside, and behind us. Mullet and gar provided us with surprises of delight as they either leaped or rolled on the surface of the water.



Brown Pelican, By Carol Woronow.

The greatest surprise was near the end when Captain Mike, who had mentioned eagles, spied a Bald Eagle perching in a tree near the water. What an incredibly big bird. I would not want to be a duck or an Osprey with a fish!!!

Along the shoreline I could see a variety of trees and other plants including Eastern Red Cedar, Yaupon Holly, American Elm, Cedar Elm, Loblolly Pine, Hackberry, Palmetto, Box Elder, Elderberry, Water Oak, Cherrybark Oak, Marsh Elder (*Iva frutescens*), Sea-Myrtle (*Baccharis halimifolia*), Trumpet Vine, Carolina Mood-seed, and Post Oak. I saw a Gray Squirrel run up and then down a tree limb covered in Spanish Moss as it tried to hide from us as we went by. Red-eared Slider turtles were balancing on top of each other on stumps and logs and gave the impression that they were dinner plates stacked up high.

Unfortunately, non-native plants made their presence known in this wilderness surrounded by the city. Chinese Tallow, Japanese Honeysuckle, Water Hyacinth, and Elephant Ear were scattered along our route. But at least they did not dominate our surroundings and some even seemed to blend in. Wish they were not there but we have inserted nuisance plants in Armand Bayou by accident or design which does not help the forest and aquatic habitat survive.

After almost an hour and a half of great nature viewing and with a beautiful setting sun behind us, we were within about 200 yards of the dock when I heard a loud thump and our boat stopped moving. Captain Mike was chagrined because he hit a hidden log. He should not have been embarrassed because the log was where it was not supposed to be. Within 15 minutes he had us going again with a spare electric motor and poles that moved us through some stump-infested waters. We were all amazed at his prowess and clapped when he pulled the boat alongside the dock and tied it up.

What a great trip!!! My long-time desire to see Armand Bayou by boat had been fulfilled and I had used the certificate I had bid on at the Sierra Club auction. Who could ask for anything more?

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

CANOE/KAYAK THE CYPRESS WONDERLAND

By Tom Douglas

We had a big group for our December 6 canoe/kayak outing to the Cypress Wonderland – 18 people paddling both solo and tandem canoes and kayaks. As we launched our boats at the Interstate-10 bridge over the Trinity River, we knew that the route had been checked out on the previous Sunday, but, due to the operation of the Wallisville Salt Water Barrier, the water level had subsequently dropped by about two feet and then recovered almost to where it had been. Whew! We also knew from our river scouts that an invasive plant, water hyacinth, was likely to present a challenge. And then there were the duck hunters, who, to our relief, were through shooting for the day by the time we arrived back in the swamp.

With the temperature in the low 70s and a light breeze from the northwest, we set off up the Trinity, then turned to the east at Lake Pass. Floating mats of water hyacinth could mostly be maneuvered around until we reached the turnoff for Lake Miller, where some significant muscle power was needed to get through. With that behind us, we crossed to the south shore of Lake Miller, where we found the last 10-20 yards tough going because of yet more patches of rafted-up water hyacinth. But we eventually did make it up onto the shore for a fine picnic lunch in the woods, even if a little wading was required. The lively lunchtime conversation eventually lulled as we sensed that the wind was shifting direction and becoming a little cooler. Working our way back across Lake Miller, we pushed into the Lake Pass and then had relatively hyacinth-free going as we again headed east. The southern end of Lake Charlotte was becoming a little rough, but this only served to make us appreciate the calm that greeted us on Mud Lake and then on Mud Lake Bayou. Retracing our path across the southern end of Lake Charlotte, we found that conditions had now grown choppy. This presented a challenge, but it was met by some excellent teamwork on the part of Richard Cunningham, Joe Coker, Joya Chandra, Taylor Cutshall, and others.

Navigating around and through the water hyacinth in Lake Pass on the way home now seemed a little less difficult, and our trip down the Trinity to the put-in was easy going with the wind at our backs. Loading up boats and gear went pretty quickly as we noticed that the temperature was now dropping again, causing those wet feet to ache a bit.

Back home, with their feet once more warm and dry, several of the paddlers kindly sent us positive comments and photos, some of which are included with this article.



Ready to Launch, By David Portz.



River Scout Joe at Work on the Hyacinth, By Dave Kitson.



Cruising Lake Pass, By Richard Cunningham.

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

CANOE/KAYAK THE CYPRESS WONDERLAND Continued from Page 10



Lunch in the Woods, By David Portz.



Lunchtime Parking Spot, By Ron Vlaskamp.

Check out Joe Coker's photo albums of our December 6 outing, plus the scouting trip a week earlier, at the Houston Canoe Club page at <http://www.houstoncanooclub.org/>

And you may also enjoy viewing Natalie Wiest's video clips of our river scouts at work:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stQreeBGajE&feature=youtu.be>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR6Uxeqps_8&feature=youtu.be
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-G9yGQtulpl&feature=youtu.be>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evCvg3Vsy-4&feature=youtu.be>

Wind at Our Backs, By Linda Shead.



LITTLE LAKE CREEK WILDERNESS AREA Continued from Page 7

floodplain there were many birds and Michael got excited. Eastern Phoebe, Goldfinch, Tufted Titmice, and many who did not reveal their identities.

People were starting to get tired and I knew that soon we would have to turn around and go back. But I wanted to make it to the "Twin Ponds". I was not sure how much further ahead they were but I quickened my pace. We all helped each other cross Little Lake Creek and periodically stopped for a break and to allow those at the back to catch up.

Finally, I told the group I was going to go ahead and see if I could find the ponds. Otherwise we would start back. As I walked I kept my fingers crossed that the "Twin Ponds" were not very far away. Luck was with me and in about 200 yards I sighted the ponds. As I walked toward them I saw a bird flutter and fly about. The bird looked familiar but was still too far away for me to reliably identify. Then as I got closer the bird flew quickly overhead and gave a happy call and I knew I had seen a Belted Kingfisher. Several folks followed me and we went a few 100 feet beyond the ponds to see some Black Walnut trees.

Now it was time to go. The day had stayed overcast and cool and we made good time. However, everyone was a bit tired and we stopped at the Green Ash Flats for a break before we pushed on. We also stopped where we crossed Pole Creek for a break and then moved forward. In less than an hour we were back at the cars. Some folks were a bit slower but everyone made it and remarked on what a great hike it was.

Little Lake Creek, you once again exceeded my expectations. I will be back soon!

OUTINGS AND TRIP REPORTS

A BOBCAT, BIRDS, AND THE RAIN

By Brandt Mannchen

I was worried about the weather. The forecast had consistently said that rain would fall on the day of our outing to Brazoria and San Bernard National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs), the temperature would not rise above 44 degrees, and there would be a 10-20 mph wind. I had several cancellations on Friday and Saturday morning and expected several more.

I arrived at the Starbucks in Meyerland a little early and got myself a medium “hot chocolate”. It was going to be a very cold day and I wanted some “heat” in my belly. Gordon, Donald, Sterling, and Michael showed up. Many others did not make it. We decided to take two cars and off we went. I had already decided that if the weather was not good at Brazoria NWR that I was not going to push it and go to San Bernard NWR.

We got to the the refuge in 70 minutes and pulled into the parking lot where the bathrooms and education center are located. Before I knew it Lynn, Dan, and Lalith pulled into the parking lot. After making a bathroom break we visited the education center and talked with the host, collected some maps, and then piled out of the building.

I led the group to a wooden platform on the edge of a pond that was right behind the building to show them the freshwater marsh. As we talked, shivered, and excitedly looked around I noticed a form on the boardwalk across the pond from the platform. My eyes focused and I had trouble believing what I saw. I yelled, “A Bobcat” and everyone saw the tan shape stride up the boardwalk and then disappear. What a find!!! I had only seen Bobcats two other times in my life. I told everyone that as far as I was concerned this was a successful outing.

We left the platform, approached our cars, and got ready to leave. Michael pointed to a hovering bird a few hundred feet from the parking lot. We all pulled out our binoculars and focused. Michael asked for a identification and I said Osprey. He said no and I looked again. “White-tailed Kite,” I yelled and Michael smiled and shook his head up and down. What a deal! Within 10 minutes a Bobcat and a White-tailed Kite. We were cooking.

As we got into our cars I noticed hundreds of Laughing Gulls flew overhead. I had never seen so many gulls at Brazoria NWR. Throughout the day we saw hundreds more. Must have been a “gull convention”.

We began our trip by turning and going past Gator Nest Pond. We stopped, got out and scanned the pond. A few American Coots, Northern Shoveler Ducks, and a Pied-billed Grebe were what we saw. Gosh it was cold! We dove back into the warmth of our cars and kept going.

Next we came to Olney and Cross Trails Ponds. We took a long time here and saw a White Pelican and Snow Geese fly overhead, Common Moorhens, Pintail Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, Lesser Scaups, Ring-billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Osprey, White Ibises, Green Winged Teal, Blue Winged Teal, and a Belted Kingfisher. We would pop out of our cars, scan the ponds, dive back in, drive a few hundred feet further, pop back out, and repeat. It was cold and the wind chilled our hands to numbness really quickly.

Occasionally, Michael would bring out his spotting scope and we would get a much better look at some birds. In particular, he focused on a Long-billed Curlew that was walking back and forth next to marsh grass while scores of gulls ignored his animated antics.

We finally left these ponds and drove to Rogers Pond, the turnaround point. On the way we saw a Rosette Spoonbill and Great Blue Heron. We focused on Rogers Pond and saw many Snow Geese and Gadwall Ducks. Then Michael broke out his spotting scope and we saw some Greater Yellow Legs. Then it started to rain.

We beat a hasty retreat to our cars. We slowly drove toward the entrance as the rain increased in intensity. As we drove on, we saw two Crested Caracaras, three Brown Pelicans, a Northern Shrike, and some dowitchers that we could not identify.

To finish our cold, but very successful day, we drove into Lake Jackson and had lunch at “The Local”. We then drove back to Houston, bid each other a fond farewell, and headed home. For an outing that could easily have been canceled the day, cold, wet, and windy, turned out quite well with a Bobcat ... birds ... and the rain! We will have to go back soon, in better weather of course, and visit San Bernard NWR. Winter outings can be fun!!!

SMOKING VEHICLES

Eco-Tip

Have you ever been behind a vehicle belching smoke? For Texas vehicles, you can report them anonymously.

If dirty smoke is coming from an exhaust for more than 10 consecutive seconds, write down the license number, date, time, and city. Then call 1-800-453-SMOG to report them.

For more information, see

<http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/airquality/mobilesource/vetech/smokingvehicles.html>

TREE DEATH, BIOLOGICAL LEGACIES AND FOREST HEALTH

By Brandt Mannchen

People love trees. People naturally are upset and concerned when trees die. Trees die, sometimes in great numbers, due to natural “disturbance events”. These “disturbance events” include droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, lightning, windstorms, insect attacks, fungal/disease attacks, ice-storms, fires, hail-storms, floods, and other events. Some people call these “disturbance events” catastrophic, destructive, and detrimental to forest health. But are these “disturbance events” bad for the forest?

Over the past 30 years scientists have studied natural “disturbance events” ever more carefully and closely. The results are fascinating and surprising. In particular, scientists now believe that “disturbance events” that kill trees, far from being destructive, are necessary for forest health, regeneration, and survival. How can this be? How can something that kills trees be good for the forest? The answer to that question lies with the condition the forest is left in after the “disturbance event”.



Snags on Cypress Creek, By Carol Woronow.

After a “disturbance event” dead trees are left standing, and in forest ecology lingo these trees are called “snags”. Some dead trees are left down on the ground. These dead trees are called, “woody debris”. Large dead trees on the ground are called “coarse woody debris” and small dead trees that are on the ground are called “fine woody debris”.

So what good is a dead tree anyway? Isn't it a waste to leave wood in the forest? Shouldn't we salvage log dead trees and get some economic value from them? If we want a healthy forest ecosystem then the short answer to those questions is, “No”.

A dead tree, whether standing or down on the ground, provides many benefits. For instance, “snags” provide important wildlife habitat (shelter and food) for birds like woodpeckers that need a place where they can stay (home) or roost. Woodpeckers peck cavities in standing dead trees and move in. Sort of like a “woodpecker hotel”. But this is not all. Those dead trees, as they decay, provide shelter and food for other wildlife. For instance, under the bark of dead trees bats find a place to hide. Dead trees also provide a home for food sources (insects and other invertebrates) for woodpeckers and other birds to eat. When the woodpeckers move out of their cavities (homes) then other “critters” move in like kestrels, squirrels, opossums, raccoons, and many other forest residents.

When dead trees hit the ground they also benefit wildlife. This is especially important during our long, hot, dry summers. The process of decay creates, among other things, water which is embedded deep in the rotting wood found in a dead tree on the forest floor. Thus small critters like mice, shrews, snakes, salamanders, toads, frogs, insects, centipedes, millipedes, sow-bugs, and many other living things find moisture and shade in the refugia of decaying wood.

Downed dead trees also protect against soil erosion by the creation of miniature check dams which impede the flow downhill of water and reduce its speed and erosive energy. This same blocking ability also serves a useful purpose during fires by forcing flames to move around large, downed, dead trees. This slows the speed of fires and in many cases protects vegetation behind downed dead trees so that it does not burn or burns only slightly. As a result, a patchy pattern of differently burned vegetation is created across the landscape.

Downed, dead trees, when they fall into streams or rivers, create shelter and food for wildlife and plants. Dead trees can change the direction of water (volume and flow) and makes deep holes or riffles for fish and aquatic life. Downed dead trees also clean water by slowing it down so that sediment (sand, silt, clay) drops out.

Finally, dead trees set the clock back on forest growth (succession) so that vegetation can once again renew itself because of the additional sunlight that now reaches the forest floor. Downed dead trees serve as nurse beds for the seeds of trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers so that they have a great place to begin their new life. Dead trees supply nutrients and organic matter for small and large trees and other vegetation as they grow toward the canopy (sunlight) of the forest.

“Disturbance events” do not just leave dead trees that are good for forest health. Dead trees are just one of the “biological legacies” that “disturbance events” leave. “Biological legacies”, other than standing and downed dead trees, include large living trees; intact thickets of understory vegetation; seeds, rhizomes, and root-stocks of surviving vegetation; well developed top-soils and leaf litter layers; and remaining populations of animals. All of these “biological legacies” enhance the restoration of the forest as it grows back after a “disturbance event”. The forest in fact is healthier because it is more diverse in age and species of trees and other vegetation. This means that animals which feed upon that diverse vegetation or on each other also benefit.

So the next time you see a story about a “disturbance event” in the media or you come upon dead trees in the forest, remember that while trees may die, a healthy forest remains.

SIERRA CLUB AND FOREST SERVICE RESOLVE OBJECTION ON LONGLEAF PINE PROJECT IN SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL FOREST

By Brandt Mannchen

The Houston Regional Group and Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club (Sierra Club), resolved, with the U.S. Forest Service (FS), their objection about a proposed Longleaf Pine Restoration Project in Compartment (C) 112 on the east side of Sam Houston National Forest (SHNF). Historically, Longleaf Pine stretched from the Atlantic seaboard to East Texas on about 70 million acres. Today about 2-3 million acres, much of it degraded, of Longleaf Pine forest ecosystem remains.

The Sierra Club supports the restoration of the westernmost population of Longleaf Pine in the United States, as found on the east side of SHNF. However, the Sierra Club was concerned that several issues had either not been addressed or that the FS had not committed to definitive protective measures with regard to these issues.

The four issues of concern were protection of vernal ponds for wildlife; protection of wetland pine savannah and dead wood; definition of monitoring methods used to determine success/failure of the project; and the protection of unique genetic diversity found in existing Longleaf Pines at the westernmost edge of their range.

On December 11, 2014, the Sierra Club met with the FS in Lufkin, Texas and discussed the objection with the Forest Supervisor, District Ranger, and staff members for about an hour. The result of this discussion was that the FS agreed that important design criteria or mitigation measures would be implemented for the project. These measures include:

- 1) Some of the best vernal pools will be marked, protected, and potentially enhanced as part of the project.
- 2) The FS pledged to design, lay out, and implement the project so that as many Longleaf Pines (seedling, sapling, and mature trees) are protected during logging and burning.
- 3) Use of a Longleaf Pine seed source from the Angelina National Forest.
- 4) Wetland pine savannah areas (sandy topsoil areas with an underlying hard clay-pan that holds water close to the surface of the forest) will be impacted as little as possible by heavy equipment during the project.
- 5) Dead wood standards (downed wood and snags, which are standing dead wood) will be implemented.
- 6) Monitoring will include Longleaf Pine seedling checks (success/failure of regeneration), Red-

cockaded Woodpecker cavity and foraging habitat monitoring, and native grass planting and vegetation plot, intersect, or photo-comparison monitoring.

The Sierra Club has agreed to work with the FS to ensure that these design criteria or mitigation measures are implemented for the project. The Sierra Club agreed to withdraw its objection on January 5, 2015 after the FS incorporated the above mentioned provisions into the project.

INDIAN MOUNDS WILDERNESS AREA

By Brandt Mannchen

In a precedent, the U.S. Congress gave away the use of about 240 acres of Indian Mounds Wilderness Area (IMWA) because the Sabine River Authority (SRA) wanted the land as part of its high water boundary for the Toledo Bend Hydroelectric Project. The acreage was shoreline to submerged acreage on Toledo Bend Reservoir and has commonly been called "strip lands".

In the past the U.S. Congress has with great reluctance tinkered with boundaries of wilderness areas for local or colloquial reasons. The U.S. Forest Service, manager of Sabine National Forest and the IMWA, had begun discussions with the SRA for a trade of land so that the IMWA would not be diminished.

Unfortunately, the SRA was impatient and urged U.S. Representative Louie Gomert to introduce House Bill 3411 in October of 2013. The bill was going nowhere until the U.S. Congress, in another dysfunctional attempt at passing budget measures, allowed this bill (and other negative environmental legislation), to be added as a rider onto the National Defense Authorization Act which passed in December 2014.

The law now states that for purposes of the Federal Power Commission (since electrical power is generated by the Toledo Bend Dam), the approximately 240 acres of IMWA is not a federal reservation, not land or property of the United State for recompensing use by the SRA, and is not land of the United States. This means that despite use by the SRA of 240 acres of IMWA, that the United States may not be able to get any monetary or land in return for its use by the SRA.

Essentially the use of 240 acres of wilderness has been given to the SRA for whatever purpose they deem fit while operating their "dam" project. The Sierra Club will continue to follow this controversy. The U.S. Congress continues to show its anti-wilderness leanings. What a shame that a bi-partisan law passed in 1964 is now made into a bargaining ship for politicians who only give a "dam"!

TEXAS COAL PLANTS & POLLUTION: TELL EPA YES, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

By Art Browning

"Texas sources produce more haze-causing pollution than Oklahoma and Arkansas combined." That is Fact #1 in Sierra Club's "Beyond Coal" campaign flyer distributed at an EPA public meeting in Austin January 13th. The EPA contests TCEQ proposed rules as being too lax. Here is a link where you can find the Sierra Club fact sheet:

<https://content.sierraclub.org/COAL/texas/regional-haze>

A couple dozen Houstonians attended and testified there, along with other people from all over our great, big state. We thank Air Alliance Houston (<http://airalliancehouston.org>) for spearheading the bus that took quite a few of us up and back. If you'd like to add your voice, the public comment period has been extended by the EPA more than two months from an earlier deadline to April 20, 2015.

Here is a link to the official EPA comment website for this issue:

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=EPA-R06-OAR-2014-0754-0001>

or you can go to

<http://www.regulations.gov/>

and search for EPA-R06-OAR-2014-0754-0001

It is a little bit long. If you wade through it, you will see that the EPA challenges the weak standards proposed by TCEQ (read: "Do Nothing" as our Sierra Club lobbyist, Cyrus Reed says). Coal plant defenders say that they've met standards already set; if that's so, and we still have haze, the standards are not good enough, we say.



At the EPA Public Meeting in Austin, Photo from the Texas Sierra Club Facebook page.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Bayou Banner Editor,

I have served on the ExComs of both the Lone Star Sierra Chapter and of the Houston Regional Group. There are always endless duties and environmental issues that these groups face, which is perhaps why I never paid much attention to National Sierra's governing board.... until it was recently pointed out to me that the only Texas board member on it, El Paso's Liz Walsh, had been interviewed by the nominating committee, but not selected, to be placed on National's ballot for a third term.

As interim chair of Biological Sciences at UTEP, and having served on her local ExCom for 15 years, Liz is highly qualified - as are all members of National's board. However, without Liz, there is nobody to represent us on unsafe storage of nuclear waste in west Texas, Big Bend haze, or survival of Mexican wolves; there are no board members from Arizona or New Mexico (nor from Nevada, Utah, Colorado, or Oklahoma.) Without Liz, there is nobody from any Gulf of Mexico state (not Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama or Florida) to raise our concerns over oil spills, the dead zone, hurricane protection solutions, freshwater inflows into bays and estuaries, or the deterioration of the Mississippi delta and the Florida Everglades. Nor is there anyone from the Atlantic coast south of Delaware (specifically Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia or Maryland.) Additionally, there is nobody from West Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kansas, or Missouri.

As I read the National board bios and studied a map, I felt like our third of the continental USA was woefully under-represented, thus under-served. See for yourself at <http://www.sierraclub.org/board/meet>. That is why I assisted Liz in her campaign to gather enough Sierra signatures on a petition that she should again be on the National board's ballot. I am now urging the recipients of that ballot, when it arrives, to consider the geographical distribution of the candidates. Remember, if you don't vote, you can't complain!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNUAL YARD SALE AND ANNUAL AUCTION

Each year the Houston Sierra Club conducts two fundraising events when we solicit donations of goods and services from members. Our Yard Sale is usually scheduled in May, and the Auction in December. If you are cleaning out closets or garages and have items that you wish to donate, you can do so at any time. We can store donations until the next fundraiser. To make a donation, or to ask questions about donations, contact Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896.

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 @ junio.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@junio.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://Houston.sierraclub.org/>
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://lonestar.sierraclub.org/news/>

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](https://www.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://houston.sierraclub.org>). 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

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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.