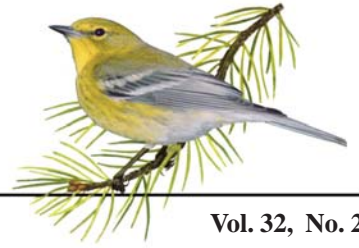


The Pine Warbler



February 2012

Vol. 32, No. 2

.....
• The PWWS board meeting will be
• Tuesday, February 7, at 6 p.m. at the
• Nature Center. The change is being
• made because the regular board meet-
• ing night conflicts with Valentine's Day!
•

Mark your calendar for Nature Center events!

The Spring Creek Nature Center is offering a number of new workshops in 2012. Registration is required for attendance at these workshops and trainings. The new workshop series for 2012 will provide information about six different groups called the Top Tens - trees, birds, etc. Nature Center Manager Teri MacArthur will provide information if you e-mail her at teri.macarthur@mctx.org or call 281-364-4225.

Here is the schedule for the Top Ten workshops, plus other presentations. These are free events, but require registration because some have limited spaces allotted.

FEBRUARY

- 2 - Hiking local trails with author Keith Stelter from 9:30am to noon
- 4 - Managing Your Land for Wildlife (Texas Parks & Wildlife workshop) from 8:30am to 3:30pm. \$25 Fee to attend. Call for more details and a registration form. Limited Seating.
- 7 - Learning about tree identification with Al Barr from 9:30am to noon
- 11 - Birding Walk with Al Barr from 7:30am to about 9am
- 11 - TOP TEN BIRDS of our area from 10am to noon
- 14 - I Love Mushrooms with Teri MacArthur from 9:30am to noon
- 23 - Creating a Garden for Butterflies by Tom Hallowell from 9:30am to noon
- 25 - Invasive Pests and Plants of our area and Monitoring Programs for them from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Limited Seating, Lunch reservation requires a fee. Call for more details and registration form.

MARCH

- 8 - A Walk through Local Nature with Teri MacArthur from 9:30am to noon

cont. on page 2

PWWS February Program The Galapagos Islands

with Gary & Kathy Adams Clark



Don't Miss the February 21 Meeting!

Gary and Kathy Adams Clark will present a program about their trip to the Galapagos Island last year complete with many fantastic photographs. Kathy says they will talk about how to get there, what we might see and also touring tips from both a birder's point of view and a photographer, too.



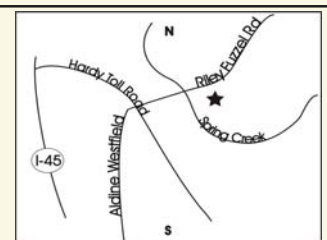
The founder of the Piney Woods Wildlife Society and Dean of Instruction at Lone Star College-North Harris, Gary writes the popular Nature column for the Houston Chronicle. He is the award winning author of several books which are illustrated by photographs taken by Kathy. She has been a professional nature photographer since 1995 and shares her knowledge with others through classes and photo tours.



The Clarks' visit to the Galapagos Islands is a program you won't want to miss!

Date: February 21
Time: Social 7:00 p.m.
Meeting: 7:30 p.m.

**Spring Creek Greenway
Nature Center**
1300 Riley Fuzzel Road





Heart Happenings

Another turtle needs help!

Rachel Rommel of the Houston Zoo made a fascinating presentation on January 17 about toads and amphibians. She also mentioned an opportunity for anyone who wants to remove crab traps from coastal waters from February 19 to February 28. These abandoned traps kill many diamondback terrapins. The Diamondback Terrapins, also known as the Jewel of the Saltwater Marsh, lives exclusively in brackish water and was once hunted to the brink of extinction for use in turtle soup. Although numbers appear to have rebounded considerably, their population status along the Texas coastline is not fully known. Due to its unique requirements this species remains especially susceptible to local extinction due to habitat alteration, crab trap by catch, boating, and other human activities. Volunteers are needed to assist in the coast-wide effort to remove the numerous wire mesh traps that have been lost or abandoned since last year's cleanup.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials announced drop-off sites for the 8th Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program <<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/releases/?req=20100205b>>, scheduled this year from Feb. 19 to 28. During this 10-day period, all Texas bays will be closed to crabbing with crab traps, and any traps left in the bay will be presumed to be abandoned and considered litter under state law, thus allowing volunteers to legally remove any crab traps they find.

To facilitate volunteer trap removal efforts this year, TPWD will provide facilitated trap drop-off sites at several locations along the coast Saturday, Feb. 20, from 8 a.m. to noon, weather permitting. Additionally, at all sites, dumpsters marked with banners will be available to receive traps for the duration of the closure. Volunteers can work at their own pace during the closure as time and weather permit, but traps cannot be removed prior to Feb. 19 or after Feb 28. Last year, volunteers, with the aid of numerous sponsors, removed more than 1,900 traps bringing the total removed since the program began to 25,974.

Thanks to the donations of the Coastal Conservation Association, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, and others, volunteers can arrange to pick-up free tarps, gloves, trap hooks and additional information at their local TPWD Coastal Fisheries Field Stations <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/about/divisions/coastal_fisheries/offices/>. TPWD requests that volunteers record and submit information about the number of traps that they collect as well as any sightings of diamondback terrapins.

For more information about the Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program and how you can volunteer, please contact your local



TPWD Coastal Fisheries Office or Art Morris at the Corpus Christi Field Station: (361) 825-3356, art.morris@tpwd.state.tx.us; or Tonya Wiley at the Dickinson Marine Lab: (281) 534-0131, tonya.wiley@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Programs from page 1

- 10 - Birding Walk with Al Barr from 7:30am to about 9am
- 10 - TOP TEN MAMMALS of our area from 10am to noon
- 12 - Advanced Birding with Al Barr from 9am to 11am
- 16 - Join the Windsor Hills Garden Club to learn about Bluebirds from Linda Crum from 9am to noon
- 29 - Meet Me at Alligator Pond with Al Barr from 9:30am to noon - meeting at Pond. call for details. Limited Space.

APRIL

- 14 - Birding Walk with Al Barr from 7:30am to about 9am
- 14 - TOP TEN FUNGI of our area from 10 am to noon
- 24 - What Do Snakes Do All Day? with Al Barr from 9:30am to noon

MAY

- 5 - Birding Walk with Al Barr from 7:30am to about 9am
- 5 - Bluebirds Are Here! by Linda Crum from 9am to 11am
- 12 - TOP TEN INSECTS of our area from 10am to noon

JUNE

- 9 - Birding Walk with Al Barr from 7:30am to about 9am
- 9 - TOP TEN REPTILES of our area from 10am to noon

Whooping Crane Field Trip!

Saturday, February 4, 2012

Join Piney Woods Wildlife Society for our February field trip to Rockport, Texas, to see the magnificent Whooping Cranes. These beautiful birds have made an amazing comeback from just 16 individuals in the 1940s to over 200!

What is the best way to see these five-foot tall birds? Why, by boat, of course! Members of Piney Woods will take a four-hour boat tour on the Wharf Cat to spot these astonishing birds, along with many, many other birds. The boat tour not only



East Texas Nature
by Diane Cabiness,
Texas Master Naturalist
Near One Cattail



"Nature is a revelation of God, Art a revelation of man."
-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The wetland garden can be a place of beauty and serenity. There exists opportunities to have more plants in a wetland than those with a dry yard. "Low areas that remain wet or damp much of the year are the easiest places to establish wetlands. Any depression that collects rainwater or runoff from downspouts, or serves as the path of drain water leaving your yard, is an excellent spot to plant wetland plants. You'll create a backyard wetland area that will be very low maintenance. There will be no more "bogged down" lawn mowers because no mowing will be needed! The area will attract wildlife and filter the water draining off your property. If you do not have an appropriate natural site, you can create a wetland the same way you would a backyard pond. Do not put excess fertilizer or pesticides on your lawn or other areas feeding your wetland." (Backyard Conservation, NRCS, Audubon, Wildlife Habitat Council, Nation Assoc. of Conservation Districts)

When choosing a wetland, pick one that has not succumbed to the allure of fame. A plant that is well-grounded is easy to work with. When you find yourself enamored with a plant celebrity that has reporters shouting its merits...beware. Read the small print on the tag...where does it hail from....possibly up north or California dreamin' is the sweet home of this newbie. Beware. Pick a plant that can stand up to criticism which for Texas gardeners involves heat and variable rain patterns. Just remember if you pick a finicky plant you will have a problem. That plant will be like the frog thrown into a pot of cold water. Your plant will not notice the water has started to boil until it is too late and you will be looking at a dying plant that will not resuscitate no matter what you do for it.

My advice is to pick a hardy native that can withstand our weather patterns. Cattails come to mind. Cattails have flat to slightly rounded leaves that twist slightly over their length and can grow to 5 or 10 ft. in height. Flowers form a dense dark brown, cigar-shape at the end of spikes which are called catkin. Cattails can be partially submerged or in boggy areas with no permanently standing water.

These marsh perennials have creeping rhizomes which form closely packed stands in shallow water and offer a favorable habitat for red-winged blackbirds, as well as, ducks, geese and fish. Muskrats, nutria and beavers enjoy the shoots and roots, while teal ducks, goldfinches and least bitterns eat the seeds. Muskrats can cause large "eat outs", creating areas of open water in the marsh. Keep in mind that without these mammals you will have to do the thinning unless you do not mind a bog filled with these beauties.

Cattails spread rapidly because their seeds blow in the wind and float on the water's surface and vegetatively they spread

from underground rhizomes which are mostly starch and edible. These perennials were ground into meal by Native Americans, and the early colonists also used it for food. The young shoots can be eaten like asparagus; the immature flower spikes can be boiled and served as greens. Pollen from Common Cattail is sometimes used in fireworks. Cattails are able to tolerate a high metal concentration and are excellent as a key species for water restoration. Historically cattails were found in caves in Ohio dating 800-1400 AD.

We have 2 cattail species in Texas, Narrowleaf cattail, *Typha domingensis* (*T. angustifolia*) and Broadleaf cat-tail or Common cattail, *T. latifolia*. Narrowleaf cattail is best distinguished with narrower leaves than Broadleaf cattail. On further observation you will notice Narrow leaf cattail has a gap between the male and female flower clusters. It is found in deeper water usually more than 21/2 deep and leaves typically extending beyond the spike. Cattail stands produce large quantities of litter and they are found on soils with high amounts of organic matter.

Typha species are monoecious, which means that both male and female flowers appear on the same plant. The male flowers are at the top of the plant with the female part just below.

Children love cattails. Who wouldn't with a seed head that is so recognizable? Joaquin my "little brother" saw his first cattail last year at Memory Park in Montgomery. Now when he sees the leaves even without the seedhead he recognizes cattails.

The book Near One Cattail: Turtles, Logs and Leaping Frogs by Anthony Fredericks tell us of a world where tadpoles play, and crowds of bugs dance through the day. If wetlands are not possible in your yard, maybe reading a book to your child, grandchild or "little brother" on a lazy summer day that plays tribute to the importance and beauty of North American wetlands will be just the ticket. Here a young girl discovers a diverse wildlife around one cattail in this very special wetland. While Joaquin and I were heading for a BBBS event he read this book and gave it a 5 star rating with one star being the least interesting. I challenge you to an adventure of great magnitude....build your own wetland than you can tell your true story "near one cattail" to your young friends.

"We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures."

- Thornton Wilder

References:

- www.aquaplant.tamu.edu
- www.wildflower.org
- www.rook.org

dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net



