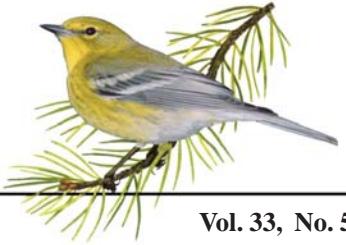


# The Pine Warbler

September 2013



Vol. 33, No. 5

## Let's Meet in the Big Stone Lodge!

Starting with the September 17 meeting, PWWS meetings will be held in the Big Stone Lodge at the new Dennis Johnston County Park at 709 Riley Fuzzel Road. It is located very close to the Nature Center where we have been meeting, but on the Harris County side of Spring Creek.

The directions to get there are much the same as to the Nature Center. Aldine-Westfield turns into Riley Fuzzel Road just northeast of Spring so there are several ways to get there.

1. Take the Rayford/Sawdust exit and go East (right) on Rayford Rd. It dead ends at Riley Fuzzel, then turn South (right) and drive to the Dennis Johnston Park past Spring Creek and on the right. or,
2. take Spring-Cypress east to Aldine Westfield through Olde Town Spring, turn left and then on to Riley Fuzzel for a short distance and turn left; or,
3. Take Aldine Westfield north from Mercer Arboretum until it turns into Riley Fuzzel. Turn right and watch for the Dennis Johnston Park on the left.

Meeting time is the same with a social time at 6:30 p.m. And the meeting starting at 7 p.m.

*Thanks to former president Al Barr, we are able to make this marvelous move for our meetings. Al is now the Outreach Coordinator at the Jesse Jones Park taking the place of Margarita Padilla who will soon move to turkey with her husband, another former president, Mike Beathard. When at Jesse Jones, you can visit with another friend of PWWS, Teri McArthur who was formerly at the Nature Center.*

We thank Dennis Johnston, the Park Administrator for Precinct 4, Harris County, for extending hospitality to PWWS. Without Dennis, we wouldn't be protecting hundreds of acres of land along Spring Creek. And now, we might not have this wonderful place to meet. Programs for Senior Citizens are held during the day so take a look at <http://www.hcp4.net/ccenters/events.htm> and click on the September Calendar for the Big Stone Lodge.



## PWWS September 17 Program

### Photo Tour of Iceland with Paul Gregg



(c) Paul Gregg 2011

Paul Gregg's September 17 program is a great way to start the Fall lineup of programs. A talented photographer, traveler and writer, he and his wife, Carol, took a North America

Nature Photographer's Association trip to Iceland. He will share his photos which he believes will encourage many of us to add the locations to our bucket lists.

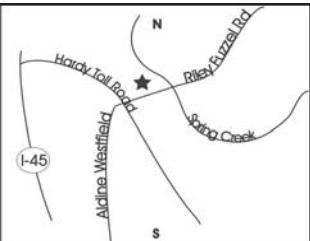
Paul will be teaching photography classes at both Kingwood Lone Star College and Atascocita LSC this fall including Digital Photography, Adobe Lightroom, Basic Wildlife and Travel Photography. For a catalog of Lone Star Continuing Education classes, and how to sign up, go to:  
[http://lonestar.edu/departments/ce/CE\\_Schedule\\_Fall\\_2013.pdf](http://lonestar.edu/departments/ce/CE_Schedule_Fall_2013.pdf).

Meanwhile, let's cool off with a trip to Iceland on September 17.



Date: September 17  
Time: Social 6:30 p.m.  
Meeting 7:00 p.m.

**Big Stone Lodge**  
709 Riley Fuzzel Road



## Heart Happenings



Kemp's ridley nesting numbers were down for Texas (209 last year with 151 this year) and also in Mexico. Everyone is scratching their heads and looking for reasons for this disappointing decline. One good note is that nests on the Upper Texas Coast were about the same as last year.

Locations are:

Bolivar Peninsula 3  
Galveston Island 7  
Brazoria County, N. of Surfside 2  
Surfside Beach 1  
Quintana Beach 1  
Bryan Beach 0  
Brazoria County, N. of Sargent Beach 0  
Sargent Beach 0  
Matagorda Peninsula 3  
Matagorda Island 0  
San Jose Island 0  
Mustang Island 4  
Corpus Christi Bay 0  
North Padre Island, N. of PAIS 3  
Padre Island National Seashore (PAIS) 87  
South Padre Island 37  
Boca Chica Beach 3  
\*Total 151

Sea Turtle Restoration Project is making big news in Galveston, Texas! A long awaited office will soon be open with Associate Campaign Director Joanie Steinhaus in charge.

With an extensive background in teaching Joanie brings a wide variety of experience including 11 years as a Zoo Instructor and Mammal Keeper at the Houston Zoological Gardens. After that, she served as Natural Science Program Coordinator for the Lower Colorado River Authority establishing relationships with educational institutions, governmental agencies, business, industry, you and non-profit groups over a 64 county service area.

Joanie also developed curriculum for the Generation Zero Waste initiative and has authored numerous publications. The office location has not been finalized.

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### The Kemp's Ridley is the Official Sea Turtle of Texas

The Green Team of the Fourth Grade of Oppe Elementary in Galveston led by their teacher, Katie Blaser and STRP's Carole Allen researched the Kemp's ridleys for several months. Next, they wrote a resolution which was introduced in the Texas House

of Representatives by Galveston Representative Craig Eiland. Several of the students and their parents went to Austin to testify about the Kemp's ridley and why it has earned the right to be the state sea turtle. Both the House and Senate passed the bill and on May 10, Governor Rick Perry signed the bill proclaiming the Kemp's ridley sea turtle as the Official Sea Turtle of the State of Texas!

### Program Notes:

Programs to plan on this fall at the Big Stone Lodge:

October 15, 2013: Kathy Adams-Clark and Gary Clark will give a program on Big Bend

November 19, 2013: Claire Moore will present a program on her birding in South America and Australia

December 17, 2013: Christmas Party

### Potluck Fun!



PWWS members brought delicious food to share at our annual potluck on Saturday evening, August 17. Thanks to Kathy and Mary Anne for making sure everything went smoothly. Thanks, too, to Al Barr and Steven Stones for managing the laptop and projector so we could see photos taken by Steven, John Jones and Dick Lee this past year. Al showed pictures of the Big Stone Lodge at the Dennis Johnston County Park where meetings will be held starting in September. The facility looks marvelous and PWWS wants to thank Mr. Johnston for allowing us to meet there. He is the Park Administrator of Precinct 4 and is responsible for saving hundreds of acres along Spring Creek to be enjoyed for generations to come.

## East Texas Nature

### A Friend or Foe

By Diane Cabiness, Texas Master Naturalist



It is good to be alone in a garden at dawn or dark  
So that all its shy presences may haunt you  
And possess you in a reverie of suspended thought.

- James Douglas, Down Shoe Lane

My sister sent me a photo of the opossum that you are viewing in the photo. It seems she looked out in her open backyard and a huge bird with a white head and white tail was on the ground and looked up as she moved to get her camera. You guessed it an adult Bald Eagle was hoping to have dinner before he was so rudely interrupted. I checked with Yvonne and he had not come back to her knowledge. What an adrenaline rush to spot a Bald Eagle.

Did we get excited about the opossum sighting? Yes. It gave my sister and me something else to talk about to one another rather than just health issues.

One of my fondest memories of a local opossum was late winter or early spring when I spotted a marsupial heading to his underground nest. I noticed what looked like a big blob of something sticking out of his rear end. Before you say "eeuw" let me finish. I ran and got my binoculars and zoomed in. The blob of something turned out to be a bunch of leaves the opossum was carrying to its cubby hole. Boy that gave me a high!

A female opossum gives birth to helpless young as tiny as honeybees. They will crawl into the mother's pouch where they will continue to grow for about 2 to 3 months. The female can have up to 25 young. She only has 13 teats. Those that do not get a feeding station...die.

This solitary and usually nocturnal mammal is about the size of a cat. The adult opossum has fur that is grey to black topped off with a pointed nose which some folks would call ugly. Listen I used to think Jimmy Durante was cute.

Opossums do not have a long life span typically 2 – 4 years.

And at one time in the southern US opossums were a part of the diet for us humans.

Get too close and you may hear the opossum hiss or growl and display its 50 sharp teeth at you. As a last resort this critter can play dead called "Play Possum". While "playing possum", they emit a smelly substance from their anal gland which smells like rotten meat. Unless you like eating rotting carcasses the theory is you will leave him alone.

Opossums are normally timid and gentle. One of the times I spied an opossum up close was a youngster that had decided to "have a sit" in our swing before dawn. When I flipped on the porch light, this adorable little critter slowly got down on all four legs and ambled off as if it did not have a care in the world. Perhaps earlier in the night he had decided to check out the insects that flew around the outside of my kitchen window (I get up very early). Besides insects they will chow down on snails, rodents, berries, over-ripe fruit, grasses, leaves and carrion. We all know that a chicken house would be an invitation to chow down on the eggs as well as a nice plump chicken. Before you call the critter a varmint remember he is an excellent rat catcher.

Opossums are superb tree climbers and with the use of their sharp claws can climb trees easily. Even though they will use their prehensile tails to grip a branch they do not hang from their tails. Although young opossums for short periods of time can hang by their tail it is an uncommon activity.

As you have guessed I am fond of this homely rat catcher who will also occasionally snack on a snake. Well no one is perfect.

Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission—to be of service to them wherever they require it.

- St. Francis of Assisi

#### REFERENCES:

1. [www.opossum.org/facts.htm](http://www.opossum.org/facts.htm)
2. [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)
3. [www.planetopossum.com](http://www.planetopossum.com)

Please share with me your nature experiences with me at [dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net](mailto:dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net)





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**The deadline for submissions is the 25<sup>th</sup> of the previous month, earlier if possible. Always add "PWWS" in the subject line. All emails will be responded to within 3 days. If you do not receive a response please call 832 717-3276. All articles are subject to approval by the PWWS Board.**

**Please send all new address changes and any corrections to [cdmoore3@gmail.com](mailto:cdmoore3@gmail.com) (Claire Moore) and add PWWS to the subject line. Thank you.**

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