

our charter ...

Outdoor Nature Club
was established in
1923 as a nonprofit
organization with the
purpose of protecting
and conserving our
natural resources by
fostering an interest
in nature study

ONC

Outdoor Nature Club
P.O. Box 270894
Houston TX 77277-0894

our websites ...

OutdoorNatureClub.org
OrnithologyGroup.org

Rare and Interesting Butterflies in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (RGV) of Texas

by Wanda Smith

In late November Karen Stoley and I had 3 days of bliss photographing butterflies till our hearts' content in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. We were rewarded with two rare species and numerous others seen only in that part of North America. Here are some highlights of our trip.



Photo by Wanda Smith

Mexican Bluewing (above) is spectacular with its iridescent blue-purple top-side but is not considered rare. Its wings are veined with black and the forewings tipped with bright white spots, the female having more spots. The underwings are mottled resembling tree bark, an appropriate camouflage as bluewings tend to stay in the woods or in shaded edges. They will come to "fermenting sweet bait" which makes them easier to see. Wingspan about 3", larval food plant in LRGV Vasey's adelia.

Isabella's Heliconian (right) was the most rare species we saw. It has distinctive oblong forewings that are orange with black stripes and gold markings on the wing tips. It is seen about once per year in LRGV. Wingspan about 3", larval food plants passionflowers.



Photo by Wanda Smith

Band-Celled Sister (above) is another species that is almost as rare as the Isabella's. It is a dark marbled-brown butterfly with a broad white median band that is punctuated by a large gold patch on each tip of the forewings. An important field mark is the white band extending to the top edge of the forewing. Wingspan about 2.5", larval food plant is hackberries.



Photo by Karen Stoley

Continued, page 4

Group Activities

Botany•Entomology

Tuesday, February 13, 7:30 pm
 Bayland Community Center
Backyard Butterflies, presented by
 ONC member Wanda Smith (see
 some of her beautiful photos from
 the valley in this issue).

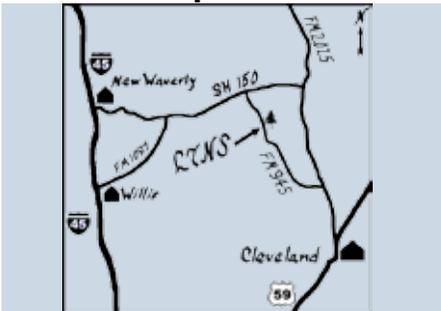
Ornithology (OG)

Monday, February 5
 Bayland Community Center
 Learning Corner: 6:30 pm
 Program: 7:00 pm
*The Northern Aplomado Falcon: Natu-
 ral History and Current Conservation*,
 presented by John Coffman.

OG FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, February 17
 Texas City Prairie Preserve (Attwater's
 Prairie Chicken).
 See *The Spoonbill* for details.

Map to LTNS



February 2006

| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | | | |

ONC Regular Meeting

NO MEETING IN FEBRUARY
 NEXT MEETING:
 Tuesday, March 8 — Winter Birding
 at Bosque del Apice NWR, presented
 by John and Gloria Jones. Mark your
 calendars; details will be in next issue.
 Bayland Community Center

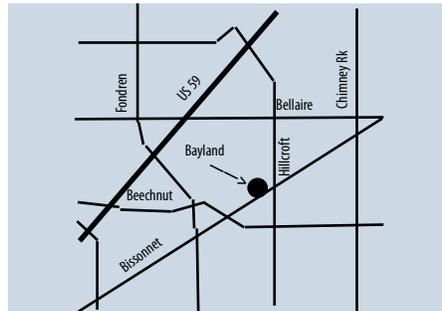
ONC Board Meeting

Thursday, February 8, 7:00 pm
 Bayland Community Center

LTNS Visitors Day

February 17-18
 Join us for a day of relaxation in the
 woods. We should see some winter
 sparrows, and might see some early
 bloomers, such as Twayblade Or-
 chids and Cardamine). If the Carda-
 mine is blooming, we will probably
 find some Falcate orangetip butter-
 flies. If the weather is mild, plan to
 camp on Saturday night.

Map to Bayland



Contact Persons

ONC General Information

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Russell Jeffords, 713-504-9215

Ornithology

Michael Williams, 713-263-1919
 Adam Wood, 713-515-1692

Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

Aaron Stoley, 713-781-1372

Outdoor Nature Club Needs Your Help

This March we will conduct our an-
 nual business meeting when you
 will elect officers. You amended
 ONC's constitution in 2002 and 2003
 to establish two year terms and to
 stagger them so you only elect one-
 half each year. This year you need to
 elect a President, Membership Vice-
 President, Conservation Vice-Presi-
 dent, and Secretary. While I hope
 the current office holders will agree
 to run for re-election, there are two
 vacancies that remain unfilled from
 previous years, the President, vacant
 for two years, and Sanctuary Vice-
 President vacant for one year. The
 nominating committee has had no
 luck finding nominees, though not
 for lack of trying.

I have felt for several years that
 we need fresh leadership with new
 ideas for taking the club forward
 and I chose not to seek re-election.
 Aaron Stoley wants to retire after
 twenty some years as the Vice-Presi-
 dent of Sanctuaries. He certainly
 deserves a rest, though I'm sure he
 will remain active at LTNS.

ONC is structured like large
 corporations: a corporate headquar-
 ters, ONC; and subsidiaries, OG and
 Botany. ONC the corporation is the
 holder of the IRS 501(c)(3) status,
 owns the sanctuary, and is the
 holder of the nonprofit bulk mailing
 permit. OG and Botany, the subsid-
 iaries are wholly dependent upon
 the corporation for these services.

You can see where I'm heading. If
 the corporation cannot operate
 owing to a lack of members will-
 ing to work at the corporate head-
 quarters, then the corporation is in
 danger of folding. Please consider
 volunteering to take a leadership
 role. ONC needs your help.

Calvin Blakley, Acting President

Conservation Corner

Sugar, Sugar

In "Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed," Jared Diamond describes how societies commit suicide when their cultures do not adapt to ecological conditions.

For example, in Greenland the Norse superimposed their pasture/cattle culture on a fragile environment. After 450 years of their practices, the topsoil was gone, the hay was gone, the last cows had been eaten, and the Norse starved to death surrounded by a sea full of fish. To the Norse, eating fish was taboo.

Meanwhile, the native Inuit, considered ignorant savages by the Norse, hunted seals, ate fish, and survived before, during, and after the Norse were dead.

Diamond details similar cultural short sightedness coupled with ecological foolishness in the histories of Easter Island, the Anasazi, and the Maya. Modern examples include Rwanda, Haiti in contrast to the Dominican Republic, China, and Australia.

Montana is also a developing example where the mining industry has left more pollution than the profits from mining could have ever paid for; assuming of

course that the money had been set aside for clean up purposes. And today, the marginal dry land cattle industry is selling out to developers who are putting too many straws into the already scarce water supply.

On the Financial Page of The New Yorker, November 27, 2006, James Surowiecki describes another cultural disconnect. Americans consume more sugar per capita than any other people in the world. And we pay a higher price for it because American sugar producers are guaranteed a fixed price for their sugar, and, in addition, there are stiff quotas and tariffs on imported sugar. This has forced U. S. candy makers and other manufacturers with high sugar needs to move their operations overseas.

At the same time ethanol is supposed to save our energy day with a 51 cent per gallon tax credit going to domestic producers of ethanol. Problem is, the domestic ethanol is made from corn sugar which has a "net energy balance" lower than that of other alternatives such as sugar cane. Sugar cane ethanol has 8 times the "net energy balance" of corn. Corn farming is also more expensive and harder on the land than sugar cane

farming. The situation is worsened because there is a 54 cent per gallon tariff on imported sugar based ethanol.

Contrast this with Brazil where every gallon of gas is at least 20 percent sugar cane based ethanol. And Brazil has enough ethanol to export to us, if it made economic sense for them to do so.

The Montana situation and our sugar policies seem to indicate that we have a taboo against comprehensive policies which is apparently fueled by ecological foolishness and cultural blindness.

John McCrevey, ONC VP of Conservation, can be contacted at ONC, P. O. Box 270894, Houston, TX 77277-0894 or onc_consv@outdoornatureclub.org

Donations ... Honor Gifts ... Memorials

Donations are always appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. Memorials and Honor Gifts are contributed to the Permanent Endowment Sanctuary Fund for Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary. Other gifts go to special projects designated by donors. Thanks, everyone, for your generosity.

Donations for Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

*Charles & Priscilla Bauer
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Ellyn Roof
Bill & Sharon Saulmon
Monroe & Edith Waxman*

*In Honor Of Aaron Stoley
Lucie Wray Todd*

*General Fund Donations
Kate Hillhouse (Botany)
Libby Whitmire*

Please Renew Your ONC Membership

If you haven't already done so, please take a moment to renew your membership. A dues envelope was included in your December newsletter, or you can use the form below. Thanks for your continued support.

| Member Category | Amount Enclosed |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Regular | \$8.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ |
| Family..... | \$15.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ |
| Ornithology (OG)..... | \$14.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ |
| OG (2nd family member)..... | \$5.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ |
| Life Membership..... | \$250.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ |
| Donation, LTNS Sanctuary Fund | \$ _____ |
| Donation, General Fund..... | \$ _____ |
| TOTAL ENCLOSED | \$ _____ |

Fill out form and return with your check to: ONC, PO Box 270895, Houston TX 77277-0894

Thank You!

Leave a Legacy

Please consider including ONC in your will or estate plan. By so doing, you can help ensure that our sanctuary will be protected for future generations.

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Read Nature Notes in COLOR at
www.OutdoorNatureClub.org

Butterflies of the Rio Grande Valley

Continued from page 1



Banded Peacock (above) is reportedly abundant in Mexico but still fairly rare in the Valley. In November 2006, however, Dr. John Tveten reported seeing 7-8 per day. It is a dark brown butterfly with a broad white median band, most easily distinguished by the red median band on the hindwing and the white spots on the wing tips. Wingspan almost 3", larval food plants members of the Acanthaceae family.

Silver-banded Hairstreak (below) is a little grass-green butterfly that has a prominent silvery-band on the underside and brown edging on the hindwings, so that overall it resembles a brown-edged leaf. They rarely sit with their wings open, but the topside of the males is iridescent purple. When sitting, hairstreaks often rub their hindwings together presumably to draw a predator's



attention to the rear instead of the head. Wingspan about 1", larval food balloon-vine.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley is reportedly the most productive area in the U.S. for butterflies. The peak season is October through early December, although most any time of year should be productive.

Want more information?

Visit Jan & David Dauphin's award-winning website for breathtaking photos of RGV butterflies, birds, amphibians, reptiles, etc. as well as links to everything related to Valley nature study and more. The Dauphins have a "yard list" of 138 species at their home in Mission, Texas! <http://www.thedauphins.net/>