



Nature Notes

March/April 2012

volume 63 ♦ number 4

Story and photos by
Sergio Henao

MILLIPEDES



Millipedes belong to a group of invertebrate animals known as “Arthropods” and are characterized by having an external skeleton, with segmented bodies and joint appendages. Arthropods are the largest animal group on earth.

There are approximately 7,000 described species of millipedes in the

world of which 914 exist in the United States. Modern millipede species were already differentiated 410 million years ago during the Paleozoic era. The word millipede comes from the Latin, meaning “a thousand legs”. None, however, has that many legs. The leggiest with 750 legs is found in California. One species, *Motyia*, also in California, is the only bioluminescent millipede in the world.

Millipedes (Diplopoda) and Centipedes (Chilopoda) belong to different classes of Myriapoda (multiple legs). Millipedes have 2 pairs of legs per body segment. They move slowly, burrowing through the soil in a wavelike manner. Most eat dead vegetable matter (detritivores) and do not bite. In tropical and subtropical forests where earthworm populations are lower, they are the main debris reducing and soil-forming organism. Centipedes, on the other hand, only have one pair of legs per segment, move fast, bite and aggressively pursue prey. They are carnivorous. Both are beneficial animals.

You can handle millipedes even though they can discharge foul smelling fluids when disturbed. You should not handle centipedes. They will not kill you, but they can inflict a painful bite. So, if you see a millipede, you can pick it up and take a good look, but you may need to wash your hands afterwards. Many people use millipedes as pets and you can actually order them on the web. A popular one is the Great African Millipede. It can reach upwards of 11” with 256 legs.

Some millipedes, the “pill millipedes” can roll into a ball when

disturbed. They are not the same as the well-known ‘pill bug’, which belongs to an entirely separate family of woodlice (Armadillidiidae), a terrestrial crustacean. This defensive behavior, conglobation, is shared by various species such as pill bugs, pill millipedes, armadillos and cookoo wasps. These characteristics are known as ‘convergent evolution’ or the acquisition of the same biological traits in unrelated biological lineages.

The pictures at the left were taken at LTNS. The top photo is the handsome *Narceus americanus*, common along the eastern seaboard of North America and west to Georgetown, TX. It may grow to about 4 inches in length. It belongs to the Order Spirobolida or “round-backed” millipedes.

The bottom photo is *Eurymerodermus* sp., Order Polydesmida, or “flat-backed” millipedes. Each segment of their body has wide lateral keels (wing like structures) and they have no eyes. This particular specimen was already dead when Karen Stoley found it tightly wrapped at the end of a tall twig. A Bug Guide specialist recognized that the millipede probably had been parasitized and killed by a fungus of the Entomophthorales, a group of fungi that specialize in parasitizing insects. One group attacks ants. It grows into their brains, forces them to leave their colony, climb a branch and clench their jaws into a twig so that the fungus can securely burst out and spread its spores from a high perch. It is possible that the same thing might have happened to this Millipede, high on a twig away from his usual dark and humid soil habitat.

Outdoor Nature Club Upcoming Activities

ONC Contacts

ONC General Information

Sergio Henao, 713-729-2385

Botany/Entomology Group

See our website

Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

Aaron Stoley, 713-781-1372

Ornithology Group (OG)

Marcy Brown, 713-664-5206

Meeting Place, Bayland Community Center

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at Bayland Community Center, 5400 Bissonnet at Hillcroft.

Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary Events

All LTNS events are held at the sanctuary, 2001 FM 945, Cleveland, TX (map is available on our website).

Time To Renew

Membership Dues cover the calendar year January to December. As a reminder, if you haven't paid your 2012 dues there is a notation with your newsletter and a renewal form is enclosed with this issue.

The renewal form can also be found on our website:

http://outdoornatureclub.org/Member_Form_2010.pdf

Please take a few moments to renew today!

THANK YOU!

March 2012

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	29	30	31

April 2012

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
29	30					

05 Ornithology (OG) Meeting

6:30 pm—Learning Corner

7:00 pm—Program

See *The Spoonbill* for details

08 ONC Annual Business Meeting

As required by our bylaws, we will hold election of officers. Following the election, Helen Lewis January will share with us some of her underwater photos from her diving trips.

13 Botany-Entomology Meeting, 7:30 pm

Join us for a program by Anita Tiller, Naturalist at Mercer Arboretum and Nature Center.

25 Botany/NPSOT Field Trip

U of H Clear Lake Campus

Meet 8:00 AM at Houston Arboretum and carpool from there.

LTNS ACTIVITIES

23-25 Visitors Weekend & Camping

24 LTNS Adopt-A-Highway, 8:30 am

Come help pick up trash along our adopted highway.

24 Dally Days at LTNS, 10:00 am

What's Blooming? Join us for a day of botany to practice plant ID techniques. Plants should be in full bloom, so it's a good time to learn to "key" plants.

02 Ornithology (OG) Meeting

6:30 pm—Learning Corner

7:00 pm—Program

See *The Spoonbill* for details

10 Botany-Entomology, 7:30 pm

Paul Roling will share some of his beautiful nature photographs.

15 Botany/NPSOT Field Trip, Old Riley

Fuzzel Road/Peckinpaugh Preserves

Meet 8:00 AM at Houston Arboretum and carpool from there.

29 Botany/NPSOT Field Trip

Russ Pittman Park, Bellaire

Meet 8:45 AM, Evergreen Street parking lot on south side of park.



LTNS ACTIVITIES

20-22 Visitors Weekend & Camping

21 Feast Day at LTNS, 10:00 am—?

Saturday is our annual FEAST Day; bring your favorite covered dish for a potluck meal at noon. There will be nature walks in the morning and possibly a scavenger hunt in the afternoon.

Saturday evening the moth sheet will be out. We will also try some tree baiting to attract some new species. Camping Saturday night for those who wish to stay over. SEE YOU THERE!

Other Notes of Interest

ONC Appreciates Your Donations

Donations to ONC are always appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. Thanks, everyone, for your generosity.

for LTNS Sanctuary Fund

Ron Anderson
Chuck/Priscilla Bauer
Mike/Margarita Beathard
Sheryl Marquez
David/Iris Poteet
Aaron/Karen Stoley
Lucie Wray Todd
Edith Waxman

for Ornithology Group

Jennifer Backo
Bill Clendenen
Bob/Margret Simmons
Jim/Betsy Winn
Ann/Hooker Wood

for ONC General Fund

Arlene Bennett
Jean Hackney

In memory... Jane Rowland

ONC lost a long-time life member and good friend when Jane Rowland passed away January 31. Jane was a retired math teacher and taught at Bellaire High School for four years. Later in life, after earning a Doctorate in Education, she was a Math Professor at Texas Southern University.

Jane had many interests, including travelling the world, playing bridge, singing in her church choir, and enjoying outdoor activities. It was her love of the outdoors and native plants that brought her to join ONC over 30 years ago. She became active in the Botany/Entomology Group and served as Secretary/Treasurer of the group for many years.

For her numerous accomplishments, Jane was a quiet, unassuming lady and she'll be missed by her fellow native plant enthusiasts.

New trail open at LTNS

There's a new trail — The Willows Trail — at LTNS. It begins at the tractor bridge linking Cullinan and Big Meadows, follows Mill Brook for a short distance, then meanders through the northern most area of the sanctuary. The ultimate destination is a boggy area in the northeast corner where there is a good crop of Black Willow trees. Thanks to Sergio and Wanda Henao for all their hard work in blazing and marking this trail. It cuts through some low, wet areas, so if you go be sure to wear your rubber boots ... and ENJOY!

Winter Tree Identification

If you weren't at the January Dally Days event at LTNS, you missed an excellent presentation by Charles Peterson, followed by a walk along Dillo Wallow Trail to practice what we learned.

The day started with a discussion of important characteristics to assist with identifying trees in winter. Habitat is an important key to identifying any species, so the first question to ask is, "Where Am I?" Following that, learn to identify and observe the following characteristics, in the order listed: bark, leaves/fruit on the ground, twigs, buds, lenticels, bundle scar, stipular scar, and pith. With this knowledge, you're ready to hit the trail with "key" in hand.

We were able to key out several trees along the trail; of course, it helps to have an expert guide who already knows the answer and helps lead you through the keys! Oh, yes, it also helped to have the Dillo Wallow Trail Guide. It was definitely an educational process.

Next time you're out in the woods, or even in your own back yard, try to identify a winter tree by working

through a key. Even if you start out knowing the species, you'll learn something, and isn't that half the fun of being outdoors.

What's that tree?

by Connie Blakley

What's that tree?

Look at the key.

Can't find a leaf;

Look at the bark, good grief!

Don't know a twig from a bud?

Then ... lud oh lud!

The bundle scar won't take you far,

And you'll never find the stipular scar.

Oh, wait, did I forget?

Amateurs we, not experts yet.

We'll study hard and learn the key,

Then some day, we'll ID that tree.

Critters at LTNS

In January, while wandering through Martin Flat, Aaron Stoley found this interesting caterpillar, the larva of a Common Buckeye — a butterfly frequently found on Martin Flat. Sure hope this little fella made it through the winter.





Outdoor Nature Club
 P.O. Box 270894
 Houston, TX 77277-0894
www.OutdoorNatureClub.org

Nature Notes

March/April 2012, Volume 63 • Number 4
 Published bimonthly September through May

Editor:

Connie Blakley
 (nature_notes1@outdoornatureclub.org)
 2007 Wilderness Pt, Kingwood TX 77339

Address Changes:

Margret Simmons
 (member1@outdoornatureclub.org)
 6111 Bayou Bridge, Houston TX 77096

Memorials:

Karen Terrell
 (memory1@outdoornatureclub.org)
 c/o Outdoor Nature Club
 P.O. Box 270894, Houston TX 77277-0894

Officers and Board of Directors

PresidentSergio Henao
 Executive VP vacant
 Membership VP Margret Simmons
 Sanctuaries VP(acting)..... Aaron Stoley
 Past President Calvin Blakley
 Secretary..... Andrew Beck
 TreasurerMike Correll
 Custodian vacant
 Botany-Entomology Rep..... Leland Day
 Ornithology Rep Marcy Brown

our charter...

A nonprofit educational and scientific organization established in 1923 to protect and conserve natural resources by fostering an interest in nature study.

our sanctuary...

ONC owns a 700-acre nature preserve, Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary (LTNS), 11 miles northwest of Cleveland, TX. All members and guests are invited to attend monthly open houses.

The LTNS of the ONC

A Letter from The Sanctuary Committee

A purpose of the ONC is to be outdoors and enjoy and study nature. That is the name of our club - Outdoor Nature Club. The club is so fortunate to have a 700-acre sanctuary, the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary, to fulfill this purpose of the ONC. Available at the LTNS are maps, knowledgeable club members, a library, sanctuary plant identification books, and more. The ONC calendar has LTNS activity dates.

The LTNS offers a peaceful place to get together with fellow club members as you share common interests. Come explore, learn, and be involved in our outdoor nature sanctuary. Visiting can be very relaxing and invigorating.

The Sanctuary Committee, Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

Aaron Stoley, Chair	Cissy Donaldson
Calvin Blakley	Charles Peterson
Connie Blakley	Charles Smith
Larry Brown	

