

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



The Night Sky — Saturn

by ONC President Calvin Blakley

SATURN, Roman god of the harvest, was the father of Jupiter, Pluto, and Neptune. Saturn, the sixth planet from the sun, was known to the ancients but it is not known how the planet got its name. Medieval astrologers considered it bad to be under Saturn's influence, probably as a result of the reputation of the Saturnalia, the Roman festival of Saturn. Not being into astrology, however, I'd rather discuss the science.

Well known for discovering the four Galilean moons of Jupiter, Galileo was also the first to observe Saturn with a telescope in 1610. His telescope

was three feet long, had a 1.5" diameter objective lens, a very narrow field of view, and a magnification of x14. To better understand Galileo's accomplishment, observe Jupiter with your 10x40 binoculars. Jupiter is currently visible in the southwest just before sunrise. How easy was it? How many moons did you see? Now visualize your binoculars three feet long with crude, scratched lenses. Try looking at Saturn. It's visible high in the east at sunset. See the rings?

Galileo was not able to distinguish that Saturn has rings, variously describing what appeared to be handles. He noted that they disappeared in 1612 and reappeared in 1616. For many years Saturn was known as the triplet planet. Huygens recognized the rings in 1650 and Cassini discovered the division, named after him, in 1675.

Of all the planets, Saturn appears the most three dimensional, almost always eliciting "wow" comments, especially when seen for the first time. That is because shadows are often visible, of the ring on the planet and of the planet on the rings. There is some banding and a "white" spot, but neither is as prominent as those of Jupiter. To most observers, the attraction that keeps them coming back is the ring.

Saturn is tilted, like the Earth. It revolves around the sun in a little over twenty nine years causing the rings to expose to us alternately their bottom and top, fifteen years each. Then of course we see them edge on also; and since they are only one mile thick they disappear, as Galileo observed in 1612.

We are now seeing the bottom side of the planet and the rings are approaching the edge-on view in the fall of 2009 from a maximum tilt in the winter of 2002. This

Continued on page 3

Group Activities

Conchology

Thursday, April 27, 7:00 pm
 Bayou Manor, 1st Floor
 4141 S. Braeswood

Join our monthly meetings to share you photos and experiences with fellow group members.

Botany • Entomology

Tuesday, April 11
 Bayland Community Center, 7:30 pm
 Spring Wildflowers, presented by Dr. Larry Brown. Learn how to key out and identify local wildflowers.

Ornithology (OG)

Monday, April 3
 Bayland Community Center
 Learning Corner: 6:30 pm
 The Vireos
 Program: 7:00 pm
 Golden Cheek Warbler, presented by Gil Eckrich of Fort Hood.

OG FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, April 8
 Jasper County: Bachman's Sparrow
 Leader: Tom Kihn

Saturday, April 29
 Birding Galveston
 Leader: Jim Stevenson

ONC Regular Meeting

NO MEETING IN APRIL
 Join us for our next meeting on
 Thursday, May 11

Bayland Community Center
 Tracking Trees: Dendrochronology and Dendroecology to be presented by geologist Lincoln Foreman. Details in next issue.

ONC Board Meeting

Thursday, April 13, 7:30 pm
Bayland Community Center
 All members are welcome at board meetings.

Upcoming in May

May 1
 OG Meeting, Participating in the Texas Birding Classic

May 9
 Botany • Entomology Meeting
 Identification of Some Local Trees by Their Leaves

May 11
 ONC Meeting, Tracking Trees: Dendrochronology and Dendroecology

May 13-14
 Visitors Weekend at LTNS

May 13
 OG Field Trip to Big Thicket National Preserve

May 25
 Conchology Meeting

LTNS Visitors Weekend

Saturday/Sunday, April 1-2

SATURDAY, 8:30 am: We will participate in Texas' statewide trash-out and pick up trash along our adopted highway. Bring gloves. The state provides safety vests and trash bags.

SATURDAY, 10:00 am: Our Spring Feast (formerly Reunion Day) begins. There will be food galore, games, hikes, and tractor rides. Bring your favorite covered dish for our potluck lunch at noon. We provide utensils and drinks. **PLEASE NOTE:** last month's newsletter had the wrong date. **SPRING FEAST** is on April 1.

Primitive camping is permitted in the Cove area. For more information about accommodations, contact Aaron Stoley.

Saturday, April 1
at
Little Thicket
Nature Sanctuary

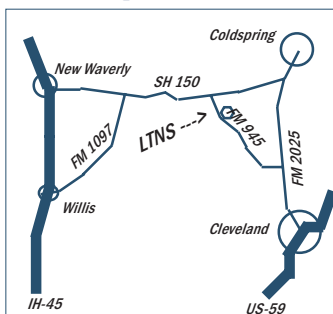
8:30 a.m.
Trash Pickup along
our adopted highway

10:00 a.m.
SPRING FEAST begins!

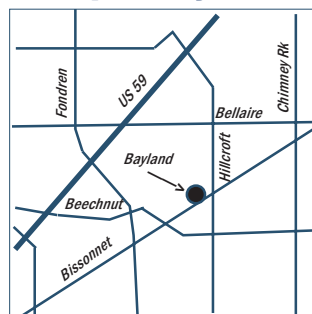
April 2006

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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Map to LTNS



Map to Bayland



Contact Persons

Conchology
 Elizabeth Ruthven, 713-861-7301

Botany/Entomology
 Russell Jeffords, 713-504-9215

Ornithology
 Michael Williams, 713-228-9064

Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary
 Aaron Stoley, 713-781-1372

Membership Renewal

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 270894, Houston TX 77277-0894**

Thank You!!

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 to
Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary***

*Ron Anderson
Gerald Blakeman*

Donations to General Fund

Michael & Margarita Beathard



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.

Saturn ... Continued from page 1

spring they are tilted 19 degrees. One can see the rings with a x25 spotting scope, but one needs at least x50 to see them as distinct from the planet.

The accompanying photograph on page 1 was taken this past February in our backyard with our eight inch telescope using a 480x600 pixel web cam. Basically, it's a 2000 mm lens on a camcorder. Saturn's image was only 35 x 50 pixels. Amateur astronomers invented this photographic technique and made it generally available only a few years ago. The image processing software is remarkably sophisticated freeware and allows amateurs to acquire images of the moon, sun, and planets that rival those from the big observatories.

If the weather permits, I usually take my scope to Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary on open house weekends for Saturday evening viewing. Martin Flat permits relatively unobstructed views of the sky and is convenient to the cove. During the next few months, Saturn will be up and visible as soon as it gets dark. In the unlikely event one tires of the rings, there are lots of other interesting objects to look at. If you want to stay up late, Jupiter will be visible sometime after midnight. Rising earlier each day, though, it will be better this fall. I will likely have my imaging paraphernalia too if you are interested in seeing how it works.

ONC Outdoor Nature Club
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Houston TX 77277-0894

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Read *Nature Notes* in COLOR at
www.OutdoorNatureClub.org

Saturday, April 1, at Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

8:30 a.m.

Trash Pickup along our adopted highway

10:00 a.m.

SPRING FEAST begins!

see page 2 for details and map