

## our charter ...

**OUTDOOR NATURE  
CLUB IS A NONPROFIT  
EDUCATIONAL AND  
SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZA-  
TION ESTABLISHED IN  
1923 TO PROTECT AND  
CONSERVE NATURAL  
RESOURCES BY FOS-  
TERING AN INTEREST IN  
NATURE STUDY**

**ONC**

Outdoor Nature Club  
P.O. Box 270894  
Houston, TX 77277-0894  
[www.OutdoorNatureClub.org](http://www.OutdoorNatureClub.org)



## There's Something in the Air

story by Connie Blakley  
photo by Calvin Blakley

**M**mmm ... what's that wonderful fragrance, I thought as I wandered around our garden early one spring morning. Then I realized our Mexican Plum tree (*Prunus mexicana*) was blooming. As I got closer to the tree the fragrance was almost overpowering but at the same time addictive. This tree makes a lovely specimen for any yard. It grows up to 35 feet tall in full sun or as an understory tree in the eastern half of Texas. In its native habitat it is usually found in deep rich soils of river bottoms, open woods, fence rows and well-drained prairies. By early March it is covered with clumps of white fragrant flowers that are up to an inch wide (see photo inset).

Mexican Plum is deciduous and its leaves turn a showy orange color in fall. The dark red to purple fruit, which ripens late in the fall, makes excellent jams or jellies — so I've heard. The animals in our yard strip the tree of its fruits before I even see them. But that's okay; the whole idea of a native landscape is to provide food and shelter for local wildlife.

If you've never seen — or smelled! — a Mexican Plum, you can find one at ONC's Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary growing at edge of Big Meadow in the northeast quadrant of the property. It's a beautiful, full-grown tree, and is covered with blooms in early March.

# Group Activities

## Botany/Entomology

Tuesday, May 13, 7:30 pm  
 Bayland Community Center  
 6400 Bissonnet (at Hillcroft)  
*Texas Cacti*, by Bobby Crabb.

## Ornithology (OG)

Monday, May 5  
 Bayland Community Center  
 6400 Bissonnet (at Hillcroft)  
 Learning Corner, 6:30 pm  
 Program, 7:00 pm  
*Adventures During Twelve Years of the Great Texas Birding Classic*,  
 by Bill Baker

## OG Field Trips

**REGULAR MONTHLY FIELD TRIP**  
 Saturday, May 17, 7:00 am  
**Birding at Huntsville State Park**  
**Leader: Rick Bello**  
 Huntsville State Park is a 2083 acre park that lies in the pineywoods of the Sam Houston National Forest. The park is most productive in the spring when

migrant wood warblers, vireos and thrushes can be common in the park. Bring binoculars, field guide, hat, sunscreen, water, snacks, camera, spotting scope, rain gear in case it rains and a lunch.

## ONC Regular Monthly Meeting

Thursday, May 8  
 Refreshments: 7:00 pm  
 Program: 7:30 pm  
 Bayland Community Center

*A Brief History of the Earth — Historical Geology*, to be presented by ONC member Aaron Stoley. Aaron's program will include a short rendition of the history of the universe beginning with the Big Bang of about 14 billion years ago, followed by a brief non-technical discussion of what geology is all about. Topics of discussion will be the Earth's history,

how the earth was formed, how it was changed until reaching its present formation. This will include the formation of continents, the evidence relying heavily on how life, both faunal and floral, has formed and changed. Join us for this enlightening and educational experience.

## Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

May 17-18  
**Visitor Weekend, Spring Feast**  
 Join us for our annual potluck luncheon. See details, page 3.

June 7, Saturday, 8:00 am  
**Summer Hiway Trash Pickup**  
 Due to the heat, we will start early. Meet at the entrance to LTNS at 8:00 a.m. Bring hat, gloves, lots of water, and insect repellent. Ice-cold watermelon will follow your hard work!

## JUNE EVENTS

**2009 Planning Meeting**  
 Thursday, June 12, 7:00 pm  
**Bayland Community Center**  
 All members are encouraged to attend ONC's annual planning meeting at which we set our schedule of programs and field trips for the upcoming season. If you can't attend but have ideas for programs or field trips, please let us know. Contact Calvin Blakley (281-358-5407, or email [onc\\_pres1@outdoornatureclub.org](mailto:onc_pres1@outdoornatureclub.org)).

**June Field Trip to LTNS**  
 Saturday, June 21, 9:00 am  
 Our annual summer field trip to LTNS is popular even though the heat can sometimes be overwhelming. Texas bluebells and other summer wildflowers will be blooming and butterflies are always plentiful in summer.

## ONC Contact Information

**ONC General Information**  
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 Russell Jeffords, 713-504-9215

**LTNS**  
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**Ornithology**  
 Bernice Hotman, 713-782-7889  
 Adam Wood, 713-515-1692

May 2008

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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June 2008

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29	30					

# Happenings at LTNS

## Seismic Survey at LTNS

The board met with agents from gas exploration companies at the April board meeting who are planning to do a major seismic survey of San Jacinto County. We own the mineral rights to only a small portion of LTNS. Joe Heiser retained those rights when he sold the tracts to the club in the fifties and they are now held by his heirs.

Most of the discussion at the meeting dealt with minimizing the impact of the survey. Happily, the surveyors will not be using the massively heavy trucks you've probably seen trampling the Utah desert. If you visit the sanctuary during the next month or so, don't be surprised to see small crews, accompanied by Aaron Stoley or Charlie Smith. Any disturbance is expected to be minimal.

## East Texas Botanical Reference added to Richard L. Brister Memorial Library

ONC has added an informative and scholarly work to the Richard L. Brister Memorial Library at LTNS. Through our Library Fund, we bought a copy of "Illustrated Flora of East Texas" volume one by George M. Diggs, Jr., Barnery L. Lipscomb, Monique D. Reed, and Robert J. O'Kennon, published in 2006 by the Botanical Research Institute of



Texas, Fort Worth. This volume covers the pteridophytes, gymnosperms, and monocotyledons. Two forthcoming volumes will be devoted to the dicotyledons.

This is a massive 1594 page reference. A lengthy Introduction discusses the plant association communities, the geology, conservation history,

and botanical art of East Texas is followed by an 800 page illustrated (line drawings) key to species. Many will find the 25 appendices useful, covering such topics as name changes, collecting and preserving specimens, suggested native and noninvasive nonnative plants for landscaping, and host plants for butterflies and moths.

## Sightings

At our April Visitors Weekend, a dragonfly new to the sanctuary was found by Wanda Smith. It perched for several minutes on a twig at the edge of The Cove about 20 feet off the ground.



The Painted Skimmer (*Libellula semifasciata*) is found in the eastern U.S. as far west as East Texas, mostly in marshy forest areas. It is uncommon but easily identified by its amber color and wing pattern: amber tips with a brown spot mid-wing and brown streaks at the base.

## Spring Feast at LTNS – May 17

Our annual potluck luncheon and reunion at Little Thicket will be on Saturday, May 17. If you haven't been to LTNS in a while, this is a good time to renew old acquaintances and enjoy some good eatin' at the same time.

Bring your favorite covered dish; eating utensils and drinks are provided by the club. There will be a bird walk in the morning (9:30 am) and a flower walk after lunch (1:30 pm), so bring some sturdy walking shoes.

## Mea Culpa!

In our March issue, we mistakenly reported finding a Louisiana Pine Snake at LTNS. That ID was questioned, and after further review it turns out the snake was a rather common Texas Rat Snake. We stand corrected and promise to be more diligent with future identifications.

## ONC Appreciates Your Donations

Donations to ONC are always appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. Memorials and Honor Gifts are contributed to the Sanctuary Fund for Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary. Other gifts are used to fund special projects as designated by the donor. Thanks, everyone, for your generosity.

for Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

from Milton Reim



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## Remember These Dates!

**Saturday, May 17**

**Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary  
Spring Feast**

**Thursday, June 12**

**Bayland Community Center  
ONC Planning Meeting**

**Saturday, June 7**

**Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary  
Summer Hiway Trash Pickup**

**Saturday, June 21**

**Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary  
Field Trip to see Bluebells**