

Outdoor
Nature Club

Nature Notes

October '05
volume 57 • number 2

our charter ...

Outdoor Nature Club
was established in
1923 as a nonprofit
organization with the
purpose of protect-
ing and conserving
our natural resources
by fostering an inter-
est in nature study

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

our websites ...

OutdoorNatureClub.org
OrnithologyGroup.org



During mating, a pair of
Common Green Darners (*Anax
junius*) oviposit while the male
holds the female in tandem.
[Photo by Calvin Blakley]

Fighting For Survival

by Connie Blakley

Dragonflies are quite common in East Texas, but only if you're in the right habitat at the right time of year. The hot, humid, lazy days of summer are perfect for sitting by a pond and observing these miniature jet fighters. One of the best ponds I've found is the wetlands on Cullinan Meadow at ONC's Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary.

Calvin & I were there over Labor Day weekend and found numerous species of dragonflies patrolling the pond. They weren't obvious at first, but when I walked onto the boardwalk extending into the pond I was suddenly in the midst of a war! It's the mating season, and the instinct to procreate must take precedence over everything else at this time of year. There were pondhawks, amberwings, and whitetails, some flying in tandem and others ovipositing.

But the most numerous species in the vicinity were Common Green Darners (*Anax junius*) and we saw several pairs mating. According to Dunkle's book on dragonflies, this is the only darner that oviposits while the male holds the female in tandem. With the male's terminal abdominal appendage pressed into the eyes of the female, the pair would flit around the pond and then land on a twig. They seemed to prefer cattail stalks. After landing, the female probed beneath the water with her abdomen to deposit eggs in submerged plants. While observing at least three pairs ovipositing in this manner, I noticed other males patrolling in search of a mate. All of a sudden I heard a loud zzzzzT, zzzzzT and looked up to see a second male attacking one of the mating pairs. He obviously wanted to mate with the same female and a nasty battle ensued with the three flying up into the air ... zzzzzT, zzzzzT ... then back down into the water ... zzzzzT, zzzzzT ... until the attacking male fell into the water. He flapped around for a few seconds and finally managed to grab hold of a twig, but he wasn't giving up. After drying off for a few minutes, he was back on the offensive and the battle began anew. This went on for several minutes until the attacker finally gave up and I assume flew off in search of another female. What a wondrous sight! I had read about this behavior but never before been so lucky to observe it in the wild.

Since we are having such hot weather throughout September, I'm hoping to catch another show at LTNS during the upcoming visitors weekend. Hope I'll see you there. 

Group Activities

Conchology

Thursday, October 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, October 11, 7:30 pm
 Bayland Community Center

Wildflowers and Their Fruiting Structures,
 by Dr. Larry Brown.

Ornithology

Monday, October 3
 Bayland Community Center

Learning Corner: 6:30 pm
 Bob White Quail Ecology

Program: 7:00 pm
 Presented by Chris Godfrey with Grouse Partners

OG FIELD TRIP

ORNITHOLOGY GROUP
 Saturday, October 15
 W. G. Jones State Forest

Jones State Forest is located in Montgomery County just a little northeast of The Woodlands and is a popular site to see the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, an endangered species that is only found in Texas in undisturbed areas with mature Loblolly pines.

Details for this trip with meeting time and place will be published in the Ornithology Group's newsletter *The Spoonbill*.

ONC Regular Meeting

NO REGULAR MEETING IN OCTOBER
 Join us on November 10
 Program: Fire Ants
 Speaker: Pat Ireland

November's program will be presented by ONC member Pat Ireland, who recently retired as a teacher at San Jacinto Community College. Details of this program will be published next month.

ONC BOARD MEETING

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

ONC Field Trip

October 21-23
 Caddo Lake State Park

Join us at Caddo Lake State Park in East Texas north of Marshall for a fall weekend in one of Texas' most beautiful state parks. See details, adjoining page.

Halloween at Little Thicket Nature Center

October 29-30 ... VISITORS WEEKEND
 and HALLOWEEN CELEBRATION

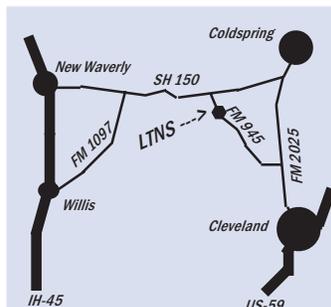
Halloween weekend is a popular time at LTNS. We hope you can join us for this special event. See more, next page.

There is primitive (no water/utilities) camping at LTNS in Camp Cove. There is camping with hookups at an RV park in Evergreen (3 miles north), or there is a motel in Coldspring (15 miles northeast). For more information about accommodations, contact Aaron Stoley.

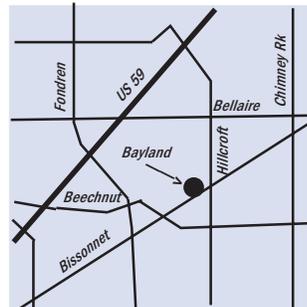
October 2005

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Map to LTNS



Map to Bayland



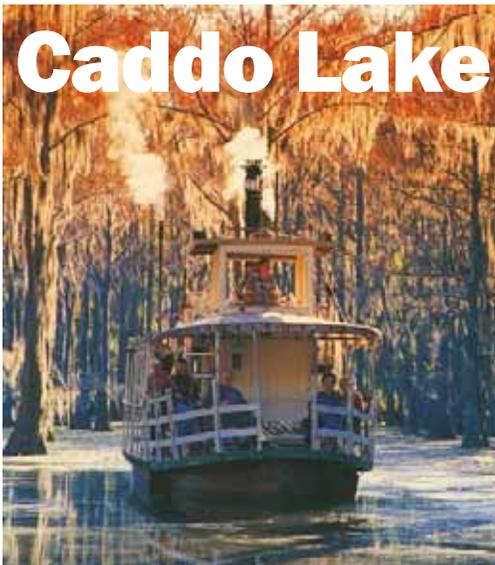
Contact Persons

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, 713-781-1371



Caddo Lake Field Trip

Friday-Sunday, October 21-23
Caddo Lake State Park (see map)

SATURDAY: Boat Tour of Lake
SUNDAY: Canoeing The Lake

RESERVATIONS:
Call Virginia Anderson
at 281-930-1518

Caddo Lake State Park is a popular fall destination. When the weather turns crisp and cool, it's time to get outdoors and enjoy nature. Plan to arrive at the park on Friday, camp Friday and Saturday nights, and return home on Sunday.

We plan to hike the trails on Saturday morning, take a lake tour on Saturday afternoon on The Graceful Ghost steamboat, then enjoy an evening around the campfire. Because this park is so popular and campsites fill up rapidly, we have reserved a few spots for ONC. You can make your own reservations through Texas Parks & Wildlife (512-389-8900 or on the web at www.tpwd.state.tx.us). The riverboat is on "first come, first serve" basis, but if we have at least 12 people we can reserve spots and we will get a discount; the regular fare is \$15 per person. **PLEASE CONTACT VIRGINIA FOR RESERVATIONS** (281-930-1518).

Additional information about Caddo Lake in general can be found at website www.caddolake.com. For those who don't wish to camp, there are motels available in Marshall, which is about 20 miles from the park. Hope you can join us for a fun-filled weekend in East Texas.



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 General Fund
Katrina Ladwig

Donations to LTNS Sanctuary Fund
Charles Peterson

Life Membership
Chaille Hutcheson

In memory of Mary Tigner
Martha Branam

In memory of Elizabeth Martin
Dorothy Parmesan
Charles/Wanda Smith



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.

Halloween at LTNS, October 29-30 ... join the fun!

Halloween weekend at LTNS is filled with activities for children and adults alike. Our pumpkin carving contest on Saturday is a challenge to everyone's creative side with prizes being awarded that evening. Don your Halloween costume for trick-or-treat fun around the camp fire. After dark, we'll have ghost/tractor rides to see what we can find lurking in the dark of night! Bring a few weiners and marshmallows for roasting on the campfire. **SEE YOU THERE!**



Memorial chair retires, President names replacement

Sharon Donahue has retired as the Memorials Chair for the Outdoor Nature Club. Thanks and kudos go to Sharon for her eight years of exemplary service. Acting President Calvin Blakley has appointed Sylvia McCrevey, with the help of her husband John, to assume the chair. Thank you Sylvia for accepting the appointment.

Future memorials should be sent to Sylvia McCrevey, 2 Carlotta Ct, Houston, Texas, 77074-7817.

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

Nature Notes

published monthly September thru May

Editor

Connie Blakley
2007 Wilderness Pt, Humble 77339
email: connie@cblakley.com

Address Changes

Margret Simmons
6111 Bayou Bridge Dr, Houston 77096
email: msimmons@compassnet.com

Memorials

Sylvia McCrevey
2 Carlotta Ct, Houston 77074-7817
email: mcreveyj@netzero.net

Labels/Mailing

Russell Jeffords

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Houston, Texas
Permit No. 1063

A loooooong field trip

[Editor's note: Long time ONC life members Mike & Lynn Noel settled in the state of Washington last year. I received this email in May and thought those of you who know the Noels would enjoy reading about their new home. A field trip is tempting, huh!]

by Mike Noel

Two thousand miles is probably a bit long for a field trip, but it might be worth it. Our little slice of paradise continues to amaze us as we constantly see new things. Our resident coots, Canada geese, and mallards we pretty much take for granted now, though we were a bit surprised when the female mallard laid an egg in our orchard this week, but the other sightings, many from our living room, leave us ecstatic. For example, the first time we saw an otter — and two days later when it swam by in the other direction, looking very strange to us until Lynn figured out the black lump in its jaws was a COOT! Or the day two muskrats and a beaver crossed paths swimming by our boat ramp. A few days ago a pair of osprey, one of three pairs nesting

within one mile of the house, chased a bald eagle.

We constantly watch for birds on the water. Recent sightings include shovelers, ring-necked ducks, buffleheads, common mergansers, common golden-eye, can-vasback, ruddy duck, wigeon, gadwall, blue- and green-winged teal, pied-billed, eared, horned, and western grebe, ring-billed gull, double-crested cormorant, and some scaup. A few days ago a male wood duck swam by giving his plaintive little peep and then jumped up onto our dock. We thought that was the ultimate until a few days later when a pair walked up into our orchard and dabbled around on the ground under our rather small bird feeder. Then the male flew up *INTO* the feeder, barely fitting, and proceeded to eat the seeds there. Eventually the female became frustrated and flew onto the roof of the feeder, so we had double-decker (ducker?) wood ducks swinging back and forth.

In the orchard we have had, aside from the inevitable house finches and starlings, mourning doves, black-capped and mountain chickadee, downy and

hairy woodpecker, white-crowned sparrow, house and Cassin's finch, red-winged and Brewer's blackbird, rufous-sided towhee, evening grosbeak, white- and red-breasted nuthatch, northern flicker, red-naped sapsucker, western kingbird, flocks of California quail numbering up to fifty, and rufous, broad-tailed, and calliope hummingbirds. Last Saturday we were on an Audubon Society field trip and realized we were driving right by the house, so we invited them in and in a few minutes they had found common loon, shovelers, wigeon, Western grebe and, the best species of more than eighty on the day, red-necked grebe. Shortly after they left we saw the most beautiful male rufous hummingbird ever on the apple blossoms, heard the red-naped sapsucker, and, while snacking on the deck, watched a bald eagle catch a fish in front of us.

By the end of each day we are exhausted and sleep well except when we wake up to listen to the calls of loons or coyotes.