

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

Hummingbird or moth?



by **Connie Blakley**

Obviously, it's a moth, but that's because you're seeing a still photo. When this lovely moth appeared in our backyard at about dusk, we thought at first it was a hummingbird. It darted around our Egyptian star bush tasting the nectar on each bloom, never stopping for long at any one particular flower. It only took a minute to realize this little guy was much too small for a hummingbird. Besides, it had antennae! Time to get the field guide. Yep, it was definitely a hummingbird moth, also called a clearwing moth.

According to my field guide, these moths fly during the day but ours zips into the yard every evening at sunset, about 6:30 to 7:00 pm this time of year. With a wingspan of two inches, the moth hovers while sipping nectar through a long proboscis, its wings beating continuously just like a hummingbird.

These moths are members of the fam-

ily Sphingidae, the sphinx moths. They are very small with a wing span of about two inches and large transparent areas in both forewing and hindwing, hence the name "clearwing." Although coloring probably varies in different parts of the country, the two moths visiting our yard are a light reddish brown.

Hummingbird moths are reasonably common in open forests and nearby fields. Just like hummingbirds, they are attracted to numerous flowering plants, but their preferred food plants are in the viburnum and prunus species. They fly from April to September and usually have two broods in southern states.

We haven't seen any caterpillars, but this is the third year we've seen the moths so I'm sure our native backyard habitat is hosting their nursery. Maybe some day I'll get lucky and find a brood!

Group Activities

Botany • Entomology

Tuesday, October 10

Bayland Community Center, 7:30 pm

Boraginaceae, The Forget-Me-Not Family, presented by Dr. Larry Brown.

Ornithology (OG)

Monday, October 2

Bayland Community Center

Learning Corner: 6:30 pm

Program: 7:00 pm

The Birding Culture, presented by Robin Leonard

OG FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, October 14

Beginning Birder at Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary (see map below);

Leader: Adam Wood

Saturday, October 21

Birding at Quintana/Brazoria NWR

Leader: Adam Wood

ONC BOARD MEETING

Thursday, October 12, 7:30 pm

Bayland Community Center

See map below.

ONC Regular Meeting

NO MEETING IN OCTOBER

JOIN US IN NOVEMBER:

Thursday, November 9

Bayland Community Center

Ring of Fire, Volcanic Activity in the Pacific Rim to be presented by Farrar Stockton. Mark your calendars and join us in November. Details in next month's issue.

Upcoming in November

November 6

OG Meeting: Birding Panama

November 14

Botany: Wildflowers of the Big Thicket

November 18

OG Field Trip, Birding at Sheldon Lake State Park with TPWD Guide

November 18-19

Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary Visitors Weekend and Trail Maintenance

LTNS Visitors Weekend

Saturday/Sunday, October 28-29

We hope it will be cooler by the end of September when we return to LTNS for our first visitors weekend of the new season. Maybe we'll see some migrating hawks, and we always find mushrooms in the fall. Trash pickup is on Saturday morning, then we can play! For questions or additional information, contact Aaron Stoley at 713-781-1372.

Saturday, October 28

Little Thicket

Nature Sanctuary

Halloween Celebration

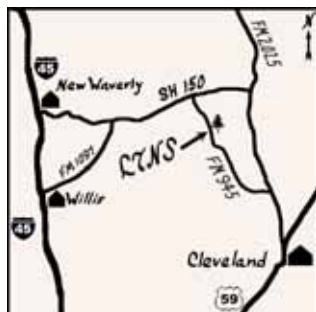
Bring the kids!



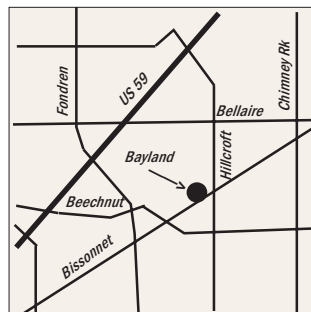
October 2006

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
29	30	31				

Map to LTNS



Map to Bayland



Contact Persons

Botany/Entomology
Russell Jeffords, 713-504-9215

Ornithology
Michael Williams, 713-228-9064
Adam Wood, 713-515-1692

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

Notes of Interest

Conservation Corner

Bleak Outlook For Texas Parks

You've heard it before but it's worth repeating ... Texas' state parks are in dire need of cash. Texas Parks & Wildlife Department is taking a hard look at closing up to 18 sites, including the San Jacinto Battleground, a popular birding spot for Houstonians.

Because of the lack of funding the department has already closed or reduced operations at 50 facilities. Many park facilities, including bathrooms and cabins, are in poor condition and much of the State Park Division's equipment and vehicles are worn out. Routine preventive maintenance funds have been reduced by half in recent years.

Another round of cuts could result in a \$5 million reduction in the parks budget ... this when the parks division needs, \$400 million over 10 years just to get its house back in order. The parks division has already reduced staff and many parks are open only because of the goodness of volunteers. Texas ranks 49th in what it spends on parks per capita. Unfortunately the current budget of \$65 million leads to annual shortfalls of \$6 to \$8 million.

A portion of park funding comes from Texas general sales tax revenue that is "attributed" (based on some obscure formula) to sporting goods. The Texas comptroller has estimated revenue from this tax to be \$104 million for 2007, but the legislature only appropriated a total of \$20.5 million to the parks division. The balance is earmarked for other programs.

Texans need to decide how important the park system is to them and write their state legislators to fully fund our

parks. To find out who is your state senator and representative, go to — <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/fyi/fyi.htm> — enter your zip code and you'll be given names and contact information. For more information, log on to www.SaveTexasParks.com, a new website recently launched by Michael Banks, president of Save Texas Parks, to raise awareness about state parks and to encourage an increase in funding.

This is your space

by *Connie Blakley, Editor*

Have you had a nature "happening" you'd like to share with your fellow ONC members? If so, we'd like to hear from you. I believe all nature enthusiasts enjoy sharing their experiences and your story will be published in Nature Notes. Send all submissions to Nature Notes Editor at address on back page. In this issue I'd like to share some of the goings on in my native backyard habitat.

We had a lot of rain during the past week, and it seemed to awaken all the critters in our backyard. Two species appeared that are new to our backyard, a polydamus swallowtail butterfly and a neon skipper dragonfly that spent the afternoon patrolling our pond. But the most interesting new critter was a crab spider.

Calvin had decided to check on our Monarch butterfly caterpillars, which were doing well except for one who had become victim of a crab spider. Seeing a crab spider was a first for us and it definitely resembles a crab, with the first two pairs of legs being larger than the hind legs. The spider uses its long legs to grab its prey.



Crab spiders are in the family Thomisidae and genus Misumena. They can change color to match their background and can usually be found on a flower waiting for prey. Crab spiders have small fangs that it uses to inject its prey with venom. Unlike most spiders who wrap their prey with silk, the crab spider holds its prey and literally "sucks it dry." A couple of hours later the spider was gone, possibly eaten by our resident Carolina wren. Serves it right for feasting on our Monarch caterpillars!

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.

Memorials for Ruby Pancoast

Charles/Wanda Smith

Memorials for Dorothy Parmesan

Russell Jeffords

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.

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

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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

Labels/Mailing

Russell Jeffords

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

HELP WANTED!! — Publicity Chair for ONC

- only requires about one-half hour per month
- write a short paragraph bimonthly about ONC's meeting
 - mail or email it to local newspapers

THAT'S IT!!

Can you help?

Call Calvin, 281-358-5407