



SEPTEMBER 2019 VOLUME 12, ISSUE 09

A Newsletter for the Residents of Legend Oaks II



SWING NETWORKING GROUP

Promote your business with local independent business owners. SWING (South west Austin Inclusive Networking Group) has been meeting every Thursday morning from 8AM to 9:30AM at the Waterloo Ice House on Escarpment for 14 years.

We have no dues, no initiation fees, we don't take attendance. Just pay for your own breakfast. The more often you show up the better we get to know

you. We are an inclusive group, we will enjoy competition. So, bring your business cards and a good attitude and let's get to know you.

If you want more information, contact Liz Jensen at 512-301-6966 or lizleej@gmail.com or Peter Berardino (The King of SWING) at 512-695-2334 or peterberardino@gmail.com.

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NATURE WATCH

by Jim and Lynne Weber

A DIFFERENT KIND OF LONGHORN



'Cottonwood Borer'

The Cerambycidae are a family of longhorn beetles, typically characterized by extremely long antennae, often as long as or longer than the beetle's body. Also called longicorns, over 400 species have been described in Texas alone. The scientific name of this beetle family is named after the shepherd Cerambus, a mythical Greek figure who was transformed into a large beetle with horns after an argument with nymphs. Most of these beetles can fly well and are be found on tree trunks, logs, flowers, or at lights at night. Some even squeak when held, making a rocking motion with their head which rubs tiny ridges against the inside surface of their thorax.

Two of our more common longhorn beetles are the Cottonwood Borer (*Plectrodera scalator*) and the Long-jawed or Horse-bean Longhorn Beetle (*Trachyderes mandibularis*). The Cottonwood Borer is one of the largest insects in North America, reaching 1.6 inches in length and 0.5 inches in width. It has a bold black and white pattern on its body with long black antennae. The white portions of the pattern are actually microscopic masses of hair. Adults are active by day, feeding on leaf stems and shoots of cottonwood trees. The female bores small holes in the base of the tree to lay her eggs. The larvae take up to 2 years to mature, then they pupate for about 3 weeks in a root below ground, and once metamorphosis is completed, they chew their way out of the root and dig their way to the surface.

Long-jawed Longhorn Beetle has a glossy black or dark brown body with 4 generally large but sometimes reduced yellow to yellow-orange markings, and segments of its antennae and legs alternating between black and yellow-orange. It can grow to a length of 1.3 inches and is generally common from March to November. Its species name comes from the fact that the males have much expanded jaws or mandibles. Active during the day, adults are mostly found near wounded trees as they feed on oozing sap, and

its larvae feed on native hackberries as well as non-native ficus and tamarisk species.

This large family of longhorns includes beetles called sawyers, pruners, and girdlers in addition to borers. Most are found in dead or dying wood, and some mine live plants. While many of these beetles are considered to be occasional pests, it should be noted that they literally help shape the forest canopy and assist in recycling dead wood into precious soil. All the more reason to appreciate this different kind of longhorn!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our books, *Nature Watch Austin*, *Nature Watch Big Bend*, and *Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies* (all published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.



'Long-jawed Longhorn'

WILDFLOWER NOTES

Here's what's likely to be blooming, fruiting or setting seed in Central Texas this time of year. Look for these native plants around town, at the Wildflower Center and perhaps in your own backyard!

INDIANGRASS (SORGHASTRUM NUTANS)

Talk about a gold rush! Indiangrass positively shimmers in tallgrass prairies thanks to its beautiful, metallic blooms. And those golden tops are all the more stunning on their blue-green stems — which are a favorite snack of livestock. Birds and small mammals eat the seeds, as well, and the plant is a larval host to pepper-and-salt skipper butterflies. Who knew grass could do so much? Well, lots of people, including our own ecologists. Like many native grasses, this drought-hardy perennial lives harmoniously with wildflowers, resists weeds and prevents erosion. And it can handle various soil types, sun exposure and moisture levels. This is not a fickle plant. Its fall color ranges from deep amber to purple and paints landscapes across Texas and well beyond. A wide-ranging native, *Sorghastrum nutans* goes for the gold in nearly every contiguous state.



PRAIRIE GOLDENROD (SOLIDAGO NEMORALIS)

Detect a theme here? Our September picks are basking in a favorite fall color: gold. It's fitting that low-angle sun and plants beginning to go dormant are accompanied by grasses and wildflowers blooming in burnished tones. And prairie goldenrod is most definitely a symbol of fall at the Wildflower Center. Its yellow plumes attract butterflies, bees and birds (the big three b's!) and complement purple Texas gayfeather and crimson-colored autumn sage in our gardens — a look you should definitely consider replicating. Perennial *Solidago nemoralis* is an underappreciated, slightly shorter species of goldenrod that is less aggressive than common tall goldenrod — and its blooms keep on giving. Because individual plants bloom at various times, a stand of prairie goldenrod can have an extended flowering season. Plant some in a sunny place and let the golden days begin.

Find these plants at the Wildflower Center and learn more about them at: wildflower.org/plants-main



FREE PIZZA FOR TEENS

Do your teens need volunteer hours for school? Would they like to earn them close by at the Wildflower Center? Would they consider joining us for our first-ever teen gathering? We are building a Teen Council involvement and advisory program and would like to hear ideas from local teens about how we can better engage with them. Opportunities may include shared after-school study space and the chance to help educate youth. Join us Thursday, Sept. 12, from 5 - 6 p.m., for free pizza and to share ideas. Please RSVP to cmcdonald@wildflower.com if interested.

*Submitted by Amy McCullough, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
Photography by Sally and Andy Wasowski (Indiangrass) and Ray Mathews (prairie goldenrod)*



SAVE MONEY ON SUMMER ROAD TRIPS



Photo courtesy of Getty (family picnic)

If financial constraints are keeping you from exploring the world, it may be time to reassess your approach to travel. From road trips across the country to jaunts across your state, there are plenty of ways to curb costs, so your biggest challenge is finding more days away from the office, not replenishing your bank account.

Make reservations in advance. Shopping early for lodging is one way to save. Give yourself plenty of time to watch deals so you can grab the best one, and if it's

possible, be flexible with the travel dates. Shifting your trip by even a day can sometimes make a difference in the rates.

Utilize rewards programs. Shopper loyalty programs make it easy to save money on essential purchases. Not only can you access exclusive card-holder discounts, but you can accumulate rewards points or even earn cash back. For example, with the Shell | Fuel Rewards® credit cards, you can save 10 cents per gallon (up to 20 gallons) every time you fill up at Shell, in addition to earning rebates on other qualifying purchases. See store for details or learn more at shell.us/roadtrip.

Share the journey. If your travel party consists of multiple families,

consolidate into as few vehicles as you can. This helps minimize costs on everything from gas to per-vehicle admission fees at destinations like national parks.

Pack snacks. Next to lodging, food is the biggest expense you're likely to encounter on a road trip. Consider packing snacks for the road so you can save money while managing your hunger. Alternatively, an option like the Shell | Fuel Rewards Mastercard lets you earn rebates on qualifying purchases made with the card.

Be conscious of your gas mileage. You may not have much of a choice when it comes to which vehicle you'll drive, but paying more attention to your driving habits can stretch your gas tank a little further. Be sure your tires are inflated to the correct pressure. If your vehicle is a gas guzzler, consider renting a more efficient vehicle for the trip. Weigh the additional cost of the rental versus what you may spend in fuel for your personal car before making a decision.

Research attractions. Admission fees to various attractions can really add up, but a little pre-planning can help you capitalize on discount days and other special deals. If your plans are flexible, you can schedule your trip around those offers to capture the same experiences at a significantly lower price tag.

Travel doesn't have to drain your wallet. Managing your trips with practical tips like these may even free up enough funds so you can fit in an extra adventure or two.

Content courtesy of Shell

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		6		9		8		7
5								
2	6	9	5				8	
			4		9			
	8				2	7	9	1
								5
6		4		7		2		
		1	2			9		3

A black and white photograph of a chef in a kitchen, wearing a dark apron and a light-colored shirt. The chef is holding a large knife and is in the process of cutting a large piece of meat, possibly a brisket, on a cutting board. The background is slightly blurred, showing kitchen equipment.

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