

Native Plant Society of Texas
Big Bend Chapter
March 2008 Newsletter

March and April Meetings -

* The deadline for the photo workshop has passed, but you can still register for the Cactus Propagation Workshop, at 10 a.m. Sat. March 15 at CDRI. Admission to the site is free to NPSOT members and the workshop fee is \$15. Call Jan Carpenter at 364-2499 to register.

If you have company over spring break who might NOT be interested in the workshop - but you are - remember that this is the CDRI Cactus Festival, and they are chock-full of stuff to do - hikes, ogling cactus blooms and more. Bring your guests, do your separate things and then go to lunch!

* April - is upon us. The **April 5** meeting is a day-long trip to El Paso for more ogling - this time at the **UTEP Museum's native plant gardens** on the UTEP Campus. Since El Paso is about a month ahead of us, you'll be able to see plants in bloom and in maturity that you can then purchase at the end-of-April CDRI Plant Sale (April 25 and 26).

We have asked Wynn Anderson, our UTEP host, to arrange a lunch for us beforehand, so let's make **April 1 the deadline for signing up** so that he can arrange that.

We plan to carpool, leaving Alpine at 9 a.m. (Marfa at 9:30 a.m.) and arriving in El Paso at 11:30 El Paso time, have lunch, tour the gardens from 1-3 p.m. and then head home, arriving in Marfa about 7:30 and Alpine about 8, Central Time.

This is one of our "favorite meetings that we want to do again" so please plan to join us, bring a friend(s) and see a really gorgeous garden.

Get Out your Gloves and Shovels -

Last fall we began the restoration of the gardens at the Sunshine House in Alpine. To date, trees have been planted, lawns and existing planting spruced up and a master plan created. Many folks from the community have made this possible.

But with spring springing, there is more to be done!

Coming in April, date and tasks to be determined, there will be more opportunities to get the restoration to the next level. Please plan to help with this - it's a great opportunity for all ages and skill levels to work to make something beautiful!

IS Nature Boring? -

This excerpted from an op-ed piece by Danny Heitman and forwarded to us by Mike Mecke:

Why we're disappointed with nature

Nature is often very boring.

What I mean to say is that nature can often be boring when measured against our longstanding human desire for compelling narrative and catchy endings - a cultural impulse that drives everything from books to movies to TV shows to video games.

Which is why, one gathers, Mother Nature isn't the most popular girl on the block these days, as evidenced by the latest findings of The Nature Conservancy. In a new study, the conservancy concluded that people across the United States and in other developed nations are spending between 18 and 25% less time outdoors than recent generations.

Nature's magic, while deep and enduring, is not the kind that promises to pull a rabbit from every hat at any given moment.

Or so I was reminded a few years ago, when my young daughter's elementary school class followed the metamorphosis of some larva into beetles over the course of several days.

"How are the mealworms doing?" I asked after the first day of her class experiment.

"Doing?" she responded with a heavy sigh. "The mealworms aren't really doing anything."

The time-lapse techniques of television, which can fast-forward a cocoon to a butterfly before the station break, had conditioned my daughter to expect an equally speedy costume change in the glass jar holding her worms. Modern childhood could not prepare her for the glacial pace at which nature so often moves.

The lesson here, one often lost on children and adults alike, is that nature isn't an amusement ride of guaranteed spectacles. It operates on its own schedule, answering impulses that usually have little to do with our personal agendas and desires.

To truly savor creation, the next generation must learn that nature doesn't follow the scripts we'd like to write for it, and that its own plot line, despite vast advances in science, remains profoundly inscrutable.

In confronting that mystery, we find humility, which is, after all, the beginning of true wonder.

• *Danny Heitman is the author of "A Summer of Birds: John James Audubon at Oakley House," which will be published in April. To read the entire article, go to*

http://news.yahoo.com/s/csm/20080229/cm_csm/yheitman

How could NPSOT introduce more area kids to the slow wonders of the natural world?

Xeriscape Conference -

The Xeriscape Council of New Mexico's 13th Water Conservation/Xeriscape Conference held in Albuquerque in February was a great success! Entitled "The Art of Landscape and the Environment," the conference brought together over 350 people from across the southwest as well as the nation to hear inspiring and informative presentations by a diverse and amazing group of people devoted to promoting, preserving or protecting the environmentally appropriate landscape.

- * Hunter Lovins kicked off day one with a discussion of the new energy economy as the antidote to life in a carbon constrained world.
- * Ketzell Levin, NPR Senior Correspondent, LA, placed our efforts in the context of what's being done across the world through her recent stories for the NPR series, "Climate Connections".
- * Gloria Flora, Executive Director of Sustainable Obtainable Solutions, shared her 30 years of experience in developing and applying effective techniques for environmental advocacy.
- * Peter Warshall, Project Director for Dreaming New Mexico and former editor of the Whole Earth Catalog talked about the "Unholy Triumvirate" - the entanglement of water, energy, and cash flows in human and natural history.
- * Keith Bowers, LA, Biohabitats, discussed the business of ecological restoration from a landscape architect's viewpoint.
- * Susan Tweit, plant ecologist and writer, showed the success of brownfield reclamation project in Salida, CO that became her residence.
- * Betsy Damon, Artist, showed her landscape and water reclamation work in China. Her mantra is that "There is nothing that you cannot do if you can imagine it and invite other into your imagination".
- * Charles Mann, photographer, shared insights and observations about how to use the camera as a frame to renew your enthusiasm for the garden and view the world.
- * David Salman, High Country Gardens, showed how a diversity of plant types in combination with organic soil care adds texture, form and color to the xeric landscape while enhancing its ecological health.
- * Gary Mallory, Heads-Up Landscape Contractors discussed the differences between maintaining traditional and xeric landscapes.
- * Charles Anderson, LA showed examples of his firm's work, with especial focus on the new Seattle Sculpture Garden.
- * N. Scott Momday, Pulitzer prize-winning author and Native American, closed the conference with readings from his works concerning spirit and place.

Be sure to mark your calendars for next year's conference. This is not one to miss! -- Polly Melton