

Larke Takes Wing

Julia Larke, botanist with the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program will be "retiring" from her position in mid-July. She joined the LNHP in 1993. One of her first projects was to follow through to publication, *Volume I of the Atlas of the Flora of Louisiana*, by Dr. R. Dale Thomas and Dr. Charles Allen. Initial work on that volume was done by Nelwyn McInnis. She oversaw the publication of Volume II of the Atlas, and hopes to finish Volume III before she leaves. Julia coauthored *Rare Plants of Pine-Hardwood Forests in Louisiana* with Latimore Smith in 1994. Botanists in the state have praised her work on keeping the state's rare plant species list up-to-date.

Using her considerable artistic talents, Julia has contributed to the native plant and conservation movement in our state. Her drawings grace the covers of the two published atlases and the LNPS brochure. Her latest illustrations were done for a T-shirt for the Louisiana Nature Conservancy. She jokingly refers to the shirt as, "the only T-shirt in the world with *Geocarpon* on it." She has done illustrations previously for *Trees and Shrubs of Trans-Pecos Texas*, by A. Michael Powell, and has done drawings of new plant species for various botanists.

Julia will be missed by all of those who know her. She is a genuinely nice person and a delight to be around. She is moving to Los Angeles to attend to family business and hopes to return to the Southeast and possibly Louisiana in the future. Julia assures us that she will miss us as much as we miss her. Good luck Julia, and come back soon!



Julia Larke is pictured here explaining a water plant to LNPS members on the Fall 1996 field trip. Photo by Rector Hopgood

Prose from the president's pen...*Jim Foret, Jr.*

Greetings fellow natives fanatics. I sincerely hope your spring has been one of much wild-lands wandering and that you have been treated to many wonder-filled moments, as I have. I will miss the folks who attend the Saturday field trip on May 24. Friday, May 23, is when I graduate my second child in one week from college. This one is in Maryland, so I and my wife will be on the road Saturday. I will be with you all in spirit though, and God willing, I will be driving up Sunday to join the third session.

Good news on the National Forest front. Though I have heard nothing about Kisatchie and the military, as your president, I have been made privy to a very interesting document. I was asked to review and constructively criticize the final draft of a forest service document, "Guidance for Conserving and Restoring Old Growth Forest Communities on National Forests in the Southern Region." This is exciting stuff for us folks who believe in habitat preservation. The plan is to define various kinds of old growth forests and determine criteria for setting aside various sized old growth areas and where possible, connect them with corridors of mature forest in our national forests. I have commented on this document and I will make it available to any who would like to review it. Gotta go, 'cause Terry says I am taking up too much space.

Are Your Dues Due?

Check your mailing label. If the number after your name is highlighted name, your dues are due with this issue. Please send your dues to the treasurer, Jessie Johnson, 216 Caroline Dorman Road, Saline, La. 71010. **Remember to send us your change of address.** The newsletter is sent bulk mail and will not be forwarded to you by the postal service.

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The *Louisiana Native Plant Society News* is published four times per year. It is the official publication of the Louisiana Native Plant Society. The editor welcomes articles, notices of upcoming events, and book reviews of interest to native plant folks, as well as illustrations, poems, and prose. Deadlines for submissions are June 1st, September 1st, December 1st, and March 1st. Send any address changes to LNPS News, P.O. Box 126, Collinston, La., 71229.—*Terry Erwin, editor.*

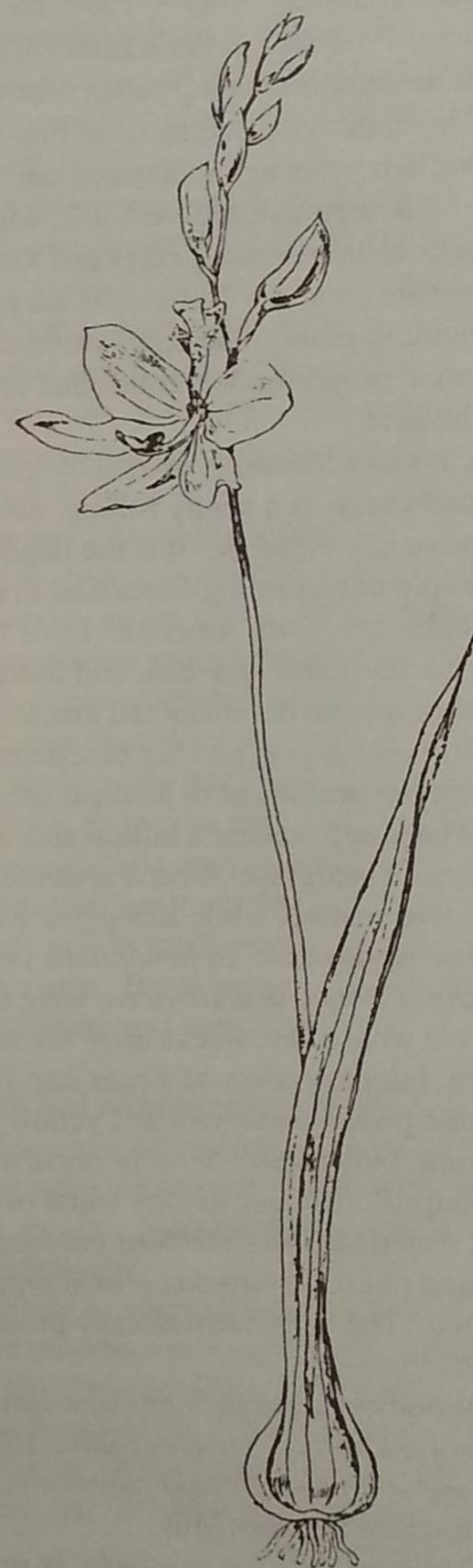
Field Trips

July 19, 1997 ARKANSAS Native Plant Society. Dry Creek Wilderness Area. Leader: Don Crank, 501-623-1035.

Montgomery/Scott County. Meet at the Booneville Post Office at 9:30. We will go "to find something" and report to the Forest Service our findings rather than "to go see something that has already been found." The area is about 1900 feet elevation. Some of the area is inside, some outside, the wilderness area. It is a hilltop area with sparse vegetation—hopefully a cedar glade area. If it is a "bust," we'll go to the Buffalo Road area(Needmore, AR) which is a Red-cockaded Woodpecker area and has lots of flowering plants. Then, time permitting, maybe to Mill Creek Recreation Area (an area used for springtime flower walks by the Waldron Ranger District) or might go to Buck Knob for a down-hill two mile walk that was suggested by the Forest Service personnel. This area requires us to shuttle cars and the Forest Service would appreciate knowing what we find. Some wet areas — umbrella magnolia, ferns, etc. Trek ends along Rock Creek east of Mill Creek Recreation Area, Hwy. 270 east of Y City. **Bring your lunch and drinks.**

August 2, 1997. LNPS. Corney Lake Area of Caney District of Kisatchie National Forest. Leader: Dr. R. Dale Thomas, 318-342-1812, 318-343-1518. Claiborne Parish. Meet at the boat launch site at Corney Lake Recreation Area east of LA. 9, north of Summerfield. There are signs at the Recreation Area. There are campgrounds, restrooms, and running water at the meeting site. Mature loblolly pine forest, and clear-cut areas, blazing stars, *Sebastiania*(Candlebush), usual North La. display of members of sunflower and legume families. **Bring your own food and water.**

October 10, 11, 12, 1997. Annual Fall Field Trip, New Iberia Area. Guy in charge: Jim Foret, 318-365-7806. **Friday evening**—Meet at the boat dock at Lake Martin, which is part of the Nature Conservancy's Cypress Island Preserve at Breaux Bridge. See huge wading bird rookery, BIG gators, many "nutra-rats"—come watch it "rain" birds. Supper at Café des Amis, Breaux Bridge, known for world famous food and a great art exhibit. **Saturday**—Saturday & Sunday plans are not completed at this time, but will include Avery Island. At 8:30 p.m. Saturday night, caravan leaves for night of dancing at La Poussiere Dance Hall, which has the best dance floor in South La., with the Cajun band, Walter Mouton and the Scott Playboys.



Grass-pink orchid, *Calopogon* was in bloom for the B's Blast trip in late May

Remnant Blackland Prairies of East Texas

by Joan Moncrief

Historically, over 12,000,000 acres of Blackland Prairies occurred in Texas. Today, less than 1 percent remain. Saturday, May 3, 1997, Dr. Dave Montgomery, Biology Professor at Paris Junior College, escorted us to three of these remnant prairies near Greenville, Texas.

The underlying sediment of this area was deposited over 70 million years ago in a warm sea. The soils developing from this sediment are Vertisols, which have abundant smectitic(shrink-swell) clays and low to moderate calcium carbonate content. These soils are highly erodible and very difficult to plow. The distribution of the Vertisols and their physical properties has controlled the vegetation and the use of the land.

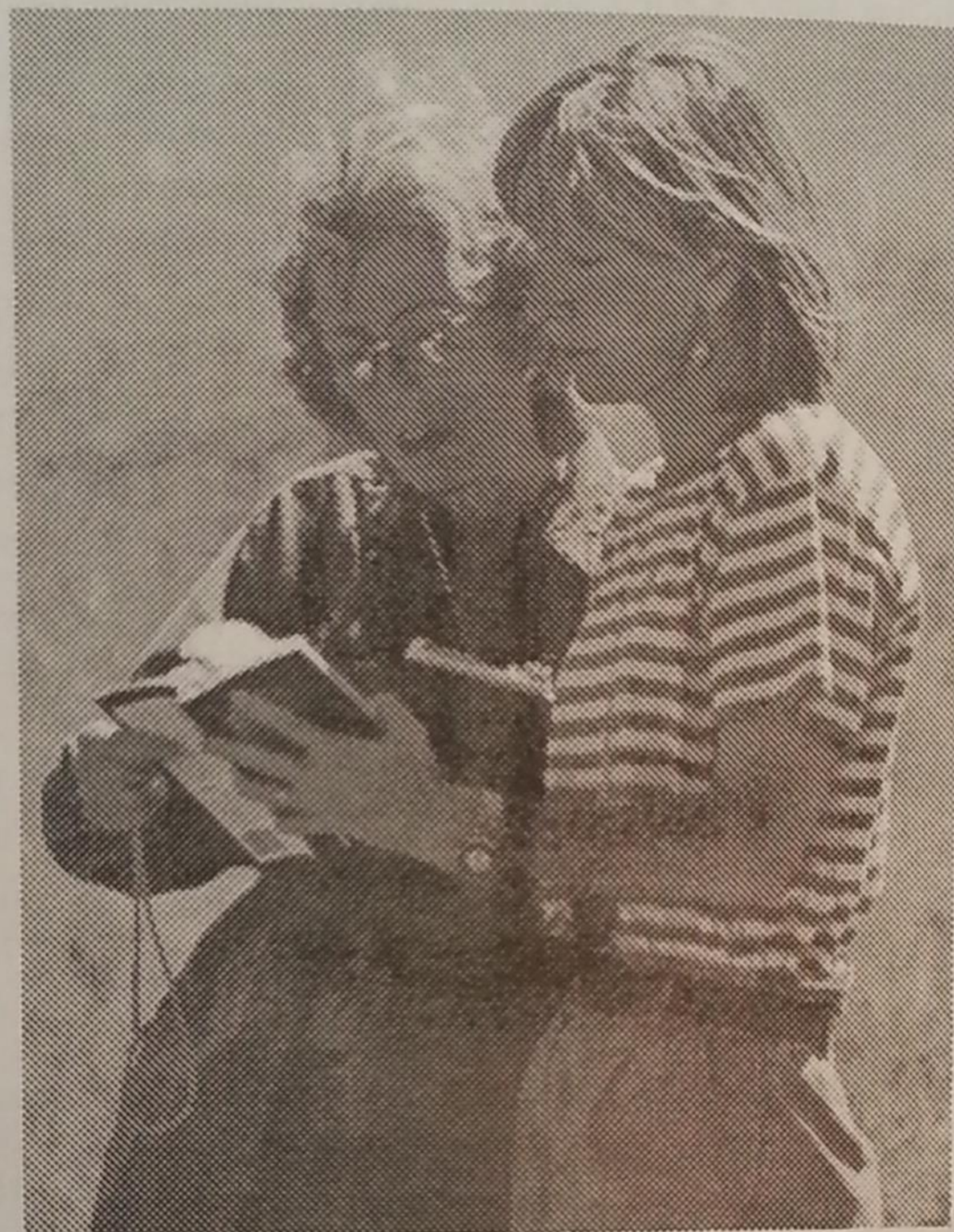
Clymer's Meadow, owned by the Texas Nature Conservancy, is a gently rolling, dissected plain managed as a native hay meadow. It is the largest and best quality example of remaining Blackland Prairie in Texas and, probably, in North America. Little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*, and Indiangrass, *Sorghastrum nutans*, are the dominant tall grasses, with tall dropseed, *Sporobolus asper*, and big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*, becoming prominent in lowland areas.

The group walked a hilltop area that had been burned in March. Speargrass, *Stipa leucotricha*, with its long, bent awn was mature, while Junegrass, *Koeleria pyramidata*, prairie wedgescale, *Sphenopholis obtusa*, and European fescue, *Festuca arundinacea*, were beginning to mature.

We were a few weeks early for the brightest Spring color, but the yellow of Texas star, *Lindheimera texana*, bladderpod, *Lesquerella* sp., yellow stargrass, *Hypoxis hirsuta*, butterweed, *Senecio imparipinnatus*, and meadow parsnip, *Polytaenia* sp., the white of fleabane, *Erigeron* sp., and American bifora, *Bifora americana*; and the purple of ground plum, *Astragalus crassicaupus*, flowers were showy. The latter were already producing round, succulent fruit.

Woody species such as cedar elm, *Ulmus crassifolia*, sugar hackberry, *Celtis laevigata*, roughleaf dogwood, *Cornus drummondii*, and hawthorns, *Crataegus* sp. grew in the lowland between hills.

Parkhill Prairie's topography is similar to Clymer's Meadow; gently rolling plains are dissected by low, wooded creeks. Many spring forbs were in full flower. Prairie larkspur, *Delphinium virescens*, showy beard-tongue, *Penstemon cobaea*, poppy mallow, *Callirhoe* sp., celestial lily, *Nemastylis geminiflora*, two Indian paint



LNPS members Joan Moncrief & Peggy Reilly discussing plants on the Parkhill Prairie.

brush species, *Castilleja indivisa*, and *C. purpurea* var. *citrina*, flax, *Linum* sp., and showy evening primrose, *Oenothera speciosa*, were scattered in around large areas of *Phlox pilosa*.

A clear blue sky, a cool breeze, the brilliant flower colors among the green grasses, and noisy migrating seagulls circling overhead created a perfect field trip day! *Ed. note:* Several participants were observed sitting and/or reclining among the grasses and expressed marked reluctance to moving on, while the under-21 group roamed over every inch of the prairie and expressed reluctance to leave also..

Paul Matthews Nature Preserve is a privately owned hay meadow. Its terrain is flat with an interesting topography called gilgai. Gilgai is a micro-relief feature that develops under noncultivated conditions in the smectitic(shrink-swell) clays of Vertisols. Micro-lows up to 16 inches deep are separated by micro-highs by six to twelve feet. Unique micro-habitats occur with the lows and highs, often having

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B's Blast

by Charles Allen

The seventh annual Bogs, Birds, Butterflies, and Bivalves Blast was held Saturday, May 24, and Sunday, May 25, 1997. Some new "B"'s were added including Bats and Bacon. More than 50 people showed up at Little Cypress Recreation Area in the Kisatchie National Forest at 9:00 a.m. Saturday. They included enthusiasts from the Leesville area, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Lafayette, Elizabeth, Jena, Marksville, Alexandria, and El Dorado, Arkansas.

The group split and some observed the banding of bats and red-cockaded woodpeckers, while others headed straight for the bogs. The pitcher plants were very noticeable this year. Grass pink orchids were approaching their peak. Rose pogonias were just about through, but a search turned up several in good flower. Two populations of black death camass (*Zigadenus densus*) with their large inflorescences of white flowers were found. Five species of candyroot (*Polygala*) were found in the bogs and pine forests nearby. Many trees and shrubs were examined, smelled, and tasted by the group as they wandered through the area. These included wax myrtle, baygall wax myrtle, poison ivy, poison sumac, poison oak, queen's delight, sandjack oak, winged sumac, dwarf paw paw, red bay, white bay, large gallberry, alder, red chokecherry, possum haw, summer azalea, witch hazel, white oak, sassafras, silverbell, summer huckleberry, winter huckleberry, horse sugar, white titi, fringe tree, longleaf pine, and others that I forget. On Ft. Polk, the only known population of yellowroot in Louisiana was visited and we are happy to report it is still in good shape. Royal, cinnamon, bracken, netted chain, Virginia chain, sensitive, and lady ferns were observed. Other plants scrutinized by the group included beard-tongue, pale lobelia, snakeroot (*Aristolochia reticulata*), white-topped sedge, butterfly milkweed,

longleaf milkweed, bluntleaf milkweed, puccoon, Carolina false vervain, wild petunia, goat's rue, wood sorrel, phlox, sweet goldenrod, flat-topped goldenrod, rosin weed, black-eyed susan, Sabine black-eyed susan(not in flower yet), mountain mint, Sampson's snakeroot, nose burn, boneset, bog-buttons, butterwort, and sundews.

The roots, fruits, and shoots cuisine in the afternoon started with a tasting of washed and dried silver bell fruits and wound wort tubers. This was followed by the main course of parboiled and lightly buttered and salted Smilax tips. The meal was washed down with a choice of persimmon leaf, blackberry tip, or sassafras tea. Ms. Manners would have approved of the meal except the mismatched cups and lack of saucers.

Sunday morning, eleven of the hardy Saturday participants were joined by two new plant people including one from Texas. The Sunday group visited the Ft. Polk inland calcareous prairie and saw more butterfly, whorled, and green-flowered milkweeds. Littlehip, cockspur, and parsley hawthorns were seen plus other trees and shrubs such as toothache, crab apple, rusty black haw, persimmon, Carolina buckthorn, redbud, and white ash. Herbaceous plants observed were prairie acacia, purple prairie clover, white-wand beard-tongue, sunflower everlasting, crown-beard, heart-leaf skullcap, yellow puff, sensitive brier, Carolina thistle, and blue sage. Basal leaves of Carolina lily, Missouri black-eyed susan and lousewort were observed.

The bunkhouse bunch had an interesting and memorable experience making coffee and dealing with no electricity for several hours. There were pleasurable events such as the slide shows at night, gumbo, K and B burgers-that's Ken and Becky, and golden grits.

All who attended seemed to have a good time and hundreds of shutters and mouths were opened and closed. Thanks to Rhonda and Earl Stewart of the U.S. Forest Service for their assistance and to the Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries for use of the bunkhouse. Notably absent was Robert Murry, but let's all hope he can join us in 1998.

(Continued from page 4)

different flora. We observed several wet lows with spikerush, *Eleocharis* sp., surrounded by abundant leaves of Maximilian sunflower, *Helianthus maximiliani*, on the highs.

Of the 5,000 acres of native Blackland Prairie that remains in Texas, about a dozen sites have been located in East Texas. Remnants have been spared from cultivation either by the highly erodible terrain and/or by the sticky, plastic clay soils that make plowing impracticable.

Some Notes on Button Snakeroot *by Carl Amason*



Button Snakeroot, *Eryngium yuccifolium*.

Photo taken at Rector's Prairie by Rector Hopgood,

The genus of *Eryngium* is a large group of cosmopolitan plants found in many parts of the Old and New Worlds. It belongs to the *Apiaceae* family that used to be known as *Umbelliferae*. This is the family that includes such umbel bearing plants as Queen Anne's Lace and water penny, *Hydrocotyle* sp. Cultivated family members are carrot, celery, and some ornamentals. The family contains some poisonous plants. Water hemlock, *Cicuta maculata*, is an exotic that is frequently found growing wild in Louisiana. This is a family of botanical characters, and our subject plant, *Eryngium yuccifolium*, is certainly no exception. It is found in almost all of the Louisiana parishes except the Delta Lands along the Mississippi River. A colleague on frequent field trips, Joe Stucky of Texarkana, Arkansas, has aptly described it as a dicot that thinks it is a monocot. The common name is button snakeroot. Apparently, this is a name that goes

back into Indian lore, when so many plants were used in some manner for snake bites. I do not know how it was used for snake bites. Snake bites must have been a common thing among the American Indians as there are so many plants with "snake" as part of their common name.

Eryngium yuccifolium grows in sunny to partially shady ditches or open woodlands where there is some seasonal moisture, but a dry summer. The umbels are compressed into small heads at the ends of stems that have leaves with parallel veining and usually a winter rosette of leaves. These winter leaves are about three to five inches long with soft bristly edges. In fact and in fancy, the leaves do have some appearance to some yucca seedlings. As warm weather progresses, the thin leaves grow long and narrow. They grow ten to twelve inches long and a half-inch wide, in bunches of six to ten. A stem comes from the center, and it usually grows to two feet in height, bearing some leaves, with several branches at the top. Each branch ends in a terminal flower cluster that is greenish in color, never really developing any bright color at all. The flower heads are roughly one inch long and about as half wide. They are composed of individual flowers that barely open. They are more interesting than beautiful. A single plant will develop root stolons. In a year or so, there will be several stems developing. It is not an invasive plant, but its flowering appearance is enhanced by any colorful flowering plant nearby. It is easily transplanted from a wild population into a garden setting. Its major requirement seems to be well drained sandy type soil in a sunny place. As often as I have seen this plant, I haven't seen it bothered by an insect, nor have I seen butterflies, bees, or hummingbirds use it as a food source. I have not seen it browsed by white-tailed deer or rabbits. *Carl Amason is a superior plantsman who lives and gardens near Calion, Arkansas.*

Additional Comments on Button Snakeroot

by Beth Erwin

Carl Amason's plant profiles frequently send me to my personal library and occasionally other folks libraries, too, in search of illustrations and additional information. In the case this article on *Eryngium yuccifolium*, Button snakeroot, which is also known as Rattlesnake-master, I decided to share the result of my digging. Geyata Ajilvsgi, in her book, *Wildflowers of Texas*¹, states that the Cherokee used this plant to ward off whooping cough in children, and that the root is supposed to contain a strong stimulant. She also states it was used as a remedy for snakebite, hence its common name. I inherited a good many books on herbal/Indian/folklore remedies from my mother. One of those, *Earth Medicine-Earth Foods*², by Michael A. Weiner, gave many uses for the plant. Pounded roots were supposedly used by the Creeks as a diuretic. He states that the Natchez of Mississippi put the chewed stem and leaves into their noses to stop nosebleeds. Other tribes used concoctions of pounded root to reduce fever. It was used by several tribes as an emetic. It has been reported to have been used as a stimulant, diuretic, and expectorant. Sam Touchstone, of Princeton, La. mentions the plant in his book, *Herbal and Folk Medicine of Louisiana and Adjacent States*.³ He states that it was used for throat ailments and was considered a cure for diphtheria is late as the 1930s. Beth Erwin is secretary of the LNPS, curator of Kalorama Nature Preserve, and wife of the LNPS News editor

¹Ajilvsgi, Geyata, 1984. *Wildflowers of Texas*, Fredericksburg, TX: Shearer Publishing.

²Weiner, Michael A., 1972. *Earth Medicine—Earth Foods*, New York, NY: MacMillan Company.

³Touchstone, Samuel J., 1983. *Herbal and Folk Medicine of Louisiana and Adjacent States*, Princeton, LA: Folk-Life Books.

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on subjects like:

propagation on small and large scale
ferns, pokeweed, mosses, and magnolias
creating prairies and swamps in your yard
and assorted other interesting stuff

The Louisiana Native Plant Society was founded in 1983 as a state-wide, non-profit organization. Its purposes are:

- œ to preserve and study native plants and their habitats.
- œ to educate people on the value of native plants and the need to preserve and protect rare and endangered species.
- œ to promote the propagation and use of native plants in the landscape
- œ to educate people on the relationship between our native flora and wildlife.

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