Watch the May 5 Heard Nature Walk Rerun


What’s Blooming at the Refuge This Week

At Clark Haven Farm and Wildlife Refuge in North Texas, there was so much to see this week. Butterflies galore, Painted Buntings singing, lizards slinking, all kinds of fun insects, and native wildflowers everywhere!

Here are a few samples of what’s blooming now.

Native Plant Society of Texas – Collin County Chapter
Yarrow, *Achillea millefolium*

Fleabane Daisy, *Erigeron annuus*

Sour Dock, *Rumex hastatula*

Sundrops, *Calylophus berlandieri*
Prairie Gaillardia, *Gaillardia aestivalis*

Green Milkweed, *Asclepias viridis*

Spiderwort, *Tradescantia ohiensis*

Narrow-leafed Coneflower, *Echinacea angustifolia*
Plantago aristata

Prairie Parsley, Polytaenia texana

Coreopsis grandiflora
Barbara’s Buttons, *Marshallia caespitosa*

Prairie Larkspur, *Delphinium virescens*
Wildlife in the Garden: Friend or Foe?

by John Worley

Furry critters, birds, and butterflies hanging around the yard, playing in the garden, and raising their young. Just the thought brings a smile to our faces. All winter, we can hardly wait for spring to watch them. And then we remember the damage they did to our favorite plants.

Here’s a little quiz to stretch your mind. I call it Friend or Foe, and it simply consists of deciding which side the animal in the photo falls on.

Let’s get started.

Bluebirds eat bugs. Friend, right? But when the entire family comes to the platform feeder daily, tapping their little feet, wanting mealworms, they can seem like such vicious taskmasters. Yet I still call them Friend.

An easy one: A plague of grasshoppers—definitely Foes. This was several years ago when they were so bad that they chewed everything green. On the other hand, Sherry would grab a grasshopper and toss it into the Giant Orb Weaver spider web to feed them.

Snakes, yuck! Foe! Texas rat snakes are not poisonous, but can climb straight up the brick wall and out the patio ceiling to eat my baby barn swallows. I’m putting up tack strips hoping the nails abrade them enough that they turn around. Snakes are safe from me if they stay out in the pasture eating field mice. But if they come near the house, it’s curtains for them.

On a rather creepy note, I’ve found that snakes get caught in the webbing of bird netting. They can’t back out, so they die there. I discovered this several years ago in netting I put over my tomatoes in an attempt to keep the mockingbirds out. It was a bit gross to move the netting—with the snake—out of the way to pick the tomatoes the rest of the year. Last year, I put netting down under a yaupon so the cardinals could raise their young. Two snakes died, but the baby cardinals survived.
Ah, a butterfly on a blossom: Surely a **Friend**. But if butterflies hang around, here come the caterpillars. Are you willing to dedicate some greenery for them? This one is on a corkscrew reed over the waterfall in my pond on my patio. I grow parsley and other things just for them, but I usually have to move them over there manually.

Ah, a cute white-tail deer fawn at my in-law’s home near Tulsa a few years ago. This cute little Bambi is surely a **Friend**. But how about an entire herd? Don’t they bother the landscape?

In this case, they are **Friend**. My father-in-law feeds them every evening and they safely spend the rest of the time on the neighbor’s—Garth Brooks’—huge ranch. They never bother his landscape. (Maybe he told them he would stop feeding them if they bothered his landscape?)

A cute little bunny must be a **Friend**, right? But they eat my green bean shoots and our eats my coneflowers as they emerge. (Who knew bunnies were such selective eaters?) Perhaps the bunny is a **Foe** after all. However, since the great horned owl became a **Friend**, my coneflowers are back.

Why is Mama Owl our **Friend**? We found her smaller baby had fallen out of the nest and we rescued it. (Actually, we called the Raptor Center for help.) We watched them grow and fledge from a distance. Mama Owl let us know that as long as watch from a distance, she won’t sink her claws or beak into our soft flesh.
Collin County NPSOT Newsletter

Bees are **Friends**. There were hundreds on the Mexican Plum in very early spring. They didn’t bother or scare me. They were busy gathering pollen.

Hummingbirds are **Friends**, too. Well, except for that one female, that one time she got “stuck” in our garage. The garage door was open, yet she couldn’t see the exit and she thought she was trapped. Holding a branch, I was hoping to have her land on it. I inched toward her. Skittish, she would fly back to her original perch. I worked for an hour in a hot garage in August with one arm above my head holding the branch before I got her close enough to the door that she escaped. I admit I had begun to think of her as **Foe**. (But, after I had a long, cool drink and let the blood flow back in my arm, I relented on that thought.)

It’s all a matter of context. What is a **Friend** some of the time may be a **Foe** at other times.

**Thoughts for the Day**

- “Man has created some lovely dwellings, some soul-stirring literature. He has done much to alleviate physical pain. But he has not created a substitute for a sunset, a grove of pines, the music of the winds, the dank smell of the deep forest, or the shy beauty of a wildflower.” *Harvey Broome*
- “Almost every person, from childhood, has been touched by the untamed beauty of wildflowers.” *Lady Bird Johnson*
- “Where flowers bloom, so does hope.” *Lady Bird Johnson*