

Garden Club Meeting Minutes
September 25, 2025

The Garden Club met at the Nottingham Forest Club starting at 1:00.

Garden Tip – Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds are migrating through Houston now. Use a hummingbird feeder with a moat to keep ants out of the solution. These can be found at Wild Birds Unlimited or online. To make solution for the feeder, boil water and add sugar, using a 1:4 ratio – i.e., 1 cup of sugar to 4 cups of water. Replace the solution every 2-3 days when the weather is hot. It can be replaced less frequently when daytime temperatures are cooler. There are many plants that help support hummingbirds. See reference material at the end of this document.

Speaker – DeAndra Ramsey

DeAndra's roles have included Buffalo Bayou Partnership Bat Ambassador, Team Coordinator of Houston Bat Team – Communications, formerly Executive Director of Nature Discovery Center, formerly Houston Zoo Conservation Champion for work with local bats & BCI. She just started a new role with Texas Children in Nature. Her topic was *Bat Celebration! The 2025 Bat Awards*.

The largest colony of bats in the world – estimated at 20 million – is near San Antonio. Bracken Cave is on private land; access to the cave is restricted to protect the bats' habitat.

There are over 32 species of bats in Texas, the most of any state. There are 11 species in the Houston area (including the inner loop). We don't notice them because they are small & nocturnal. Wildlife often declines as urban areas grow and encroach on nature. Fortunately, bats are not bothered by urban encroachment.

Species of bats have different calls, just as bird species have distinct calls. It's hard for us to hear their clicks, so there are devices to detect their clicks and identify them. Monitors are available from Wildlife Acoustics.

Never touch a bat (or other wildlife) with your bare hand, as they may carry rabies. The only way to determine if they have rabies is to sample brain tissue. Most bats can't take off from the ground so are vulnerable on the ground. If find a bat on the ground, use shovel to prop it up against a tree. It can then crawl up the tree and take off.

Hometown Heroes: insectivores, pest control, urban wildlife, biodiversity.

Hometown Heroes

- Big brown bat – not as prolific
- Evening bat – fairly prolific
- Tri-Colored bat
- Mexican Free-tailed bat – Named such because their tail is not attached to a membrane, unlike other species. This is the primary species at Waugh St. bat colony in Houston & Congress St. colony in Austin. They migrate south in winter.
- Southeastern Myotis
- Northern Yellow bat – These nest in palm trees. Leave some palm tree beards for them.

- Seminole bat
- Eastern Red bat – use Spanish moss for their nests
- Rafinesque’s Big-eared bat – very rare. Found in Big Thicket and Trinity area
- Silver-haired bat
- Hoary bat – So named because of white tipped hair. Largest bat in Houston area.

The first 4 in the above list are crevice dwellers and live in large groups. Bats are not territorial, so can co-exist with other species. Houston bats are all small and could easily fit in the palm of your hand. If a bat has hair, it’s an adult. Babies reach full size in about 1 month. The last 7 bat species on the list are more solitary or live in small groups of 5-7.

All Houston-area bats are insectivores. There are some nectivore bats in west Texas.

Awards

- Smallest bat – Kitty Hog-nosed bat (aka Bumblebee bat). Found in Thailand and Myanmar. Lives in limestone caves along rivers. World’s smallest mammal.
- Largest bat – Giant golden-crowned flying foxes. Found in Philippines. Weighs 3 pounds and has a wingspan over 5 feet. Fructivore.
- Fastest bat – Mexican free-tailed bat. World’s fastest vertebrate. Can reach 99 mph in level flight, regularly reach 54 mph. Only the peregrine falcon is faster – but only when it’s diving. This bat is faster than the falcon when traveling in a horizontal flight. They can also fly very high and are capable of flying as far as San Antonio and back in one night.
- Loudest bat – Greater bulldog bat. 140 decibels, similar to a gun shot or the din on an aircraft carrier. They drag their toes in the water to attract minnows. They “yell” very loudly at each other.
- Best traveler – Straw-colored fruit bat. Travels 1500 miles across Africa in its seasonal migration, the largest migration of any mammal.
- Oldest bat – Brandt’s myotis. A tagged one lived 41 years. Chiroptera (bats) has the highest average LQ of any group of placental mammals.

LQ (longevity quotient) – Scientist estimate life expectancy based on many factors including size, biology, etc. Bats have an LQ of 9. Scientists aren’t sure why but bats often live 30+ years. Other animals of this size (e.g., hamsters) have very short life spans. Humans have an LQ of 4-5.

Honorable Mention

- Pest Control
 - Insectivorous bats are primary predators of night-flying insects – mosquitoes and other agricultural pests
 - Pregnant or nursing mothers of some bat species will consume up to their body weight in insects each night.
 - Bats are worth more than \$3.7 billion a year in reduced crop and pesticide use. (conservative estimate). ~99% eat while in the air while hunting, using echolocation.

- Pollinators
 - North American deserts – giant cacti and agave. Bats are the sole pollinator of agave. There are none of these bats in the Houston area.
 - Tropical bats pollinate incredible numbers of plants
 - Bananas, peaches, durian, cloves, carob, balsa wood, and agave
 - One species of nectar-feeding bat has the longest mammal tongue in the world

Bats are nocturnal, so pollinate flowers that open at night (often white flowers).

- Seed Dispersers
 - “Farmers of the tropics”
 - Regenerate clear-cut forests
 - Seed cropped by bats can account for up to 95% of the first new growth
 - Dates, figs, and cashews, among many others

Bats are the only species that don’t mind crossing land that’s been cleared. Thus, they scatter seeds farther and increase the area of a forest. Other species stay under the canopy so only increase density without increasing the arial extent.

- Biodiversity
 - Over 1400 different species of bats. New species are still being discovered. ~300 species were discovered during 2010-2025. In 2018, a new species – the Halloween bat – was discovered in mountains in Africa. It has orange fur and black wings.
 - 2nd most diverse group of mammals. (Rodents are first.)
- Best moms
 - Rule breakers
 - 1 to 7 months gestation
 - Will adopt orphaned pups
 - Colony pitches in to raise the pups

They have only one baby at a time and only one per year. They use “baby talk” with their pups.

- Best friends
 - Vampire bats
 - Not constrained to blood relatives
 - Grooming, sharing, pup care

They will hold a space for their friends in a colony. Vampire bats will care for a sick friend, bring food to a sick friend. They will adopt a friend’s pup. Bats are very clean & will groom each other.

Babies are seasonal. It varies by species. Mexican free-tailed bats live in co-ed colonies in Mexico. They migrate north, where females live in maternity colonies. They have their pups within 48 hours of each other. If a baby dies, the mom will not have another pup until the following year.

Call to Action

- The IUCN classifies almost a third of bat species as either threatened (vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered) or data deficient, indicating the need for more conservation attention to these species.
- Pseudogymnoascus destructans (Pd) - White-nose syndrome
- Wind turbines – Eastern red, hoary, Silver-haired making up to 80%
- Habitat loss
- Bushmeat/commercial trade
- Support bat-friendly companies – Tequila Interchange Project
- Create bat-friendly spaces
- Educate yourself and others

At a bare minimum, do not harm bats. Anything you do to help bees, butterflies, hummingbirds will also help bats. Native plants are best. These actions help to create healthy invertebrate populations, benefitting upper levels of the food chain.

Bat Conservation International and Bat World Sanctuary are good sources of information. The former is based in Austin while the latter is based in Mineral Wells.

There are bat chats at the Waugh Street bat colony every Friday night from April – October. It starts ~30 minutes before sundown. Bat chats are on the platform at street level (free) or you can take a boat ride, if available (fee).

Resources

<https://www.npsot.org/posts/14-on-the-14th-attract-hummingbirds-with-these-native-texas-plants/>

<https://www.natureswayresources.com/newsletters/>

Waugh St. Bat colony: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/bats/bat-watching-sites/waugh-drive-bridge.phtml>

Bat Conservation International: <https://www.batcon.org/>

Bat World Sanctuary: <https://batworld.org/>

[Tequila Interchange Project](#)

Bat monitor – [Wildlife Acoustics](#)

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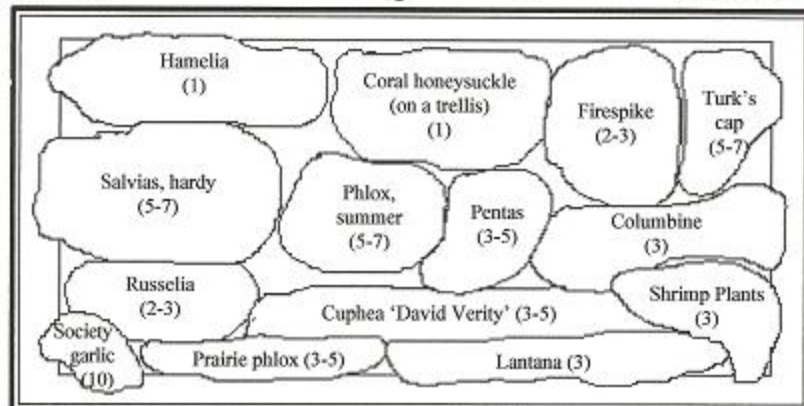


Sunny side

A Hummingbird Garden



Partially Shady side



Numbers indicate recommended number of plants for 10' x 8' garden.

To attract hummingbirds, feeders are very effective. Solutions should be changed every 2-7 days, depending on the weather. How much easier it is just to let flowers do the work for you! A pond or birdbath will provide the necessary water, and shrubs help hide their nests.

CORAL HONEYSUCKLE. Vine, needs trellis. Red cigar-shaped flowers; bright red fruit.

CUPHEA 'DAVID VERITY'. All cupheas or cigar plants are great, this one's considered the best.

COLUMBINE, 'TEXAS GOLD'. Ferny foliage, delicate yellow flowers.

FIRESPIKE. 5', lush upright foliage, red spike flowers. Can take shade as well.

HAMELIA (HUMMINGBIRD BUSH). 4-6' if it likes you. Can take all day hot sun, needs at least 6 hours. Orange or red flower spikes summer/fall.

LANTANA. Prostrate lantana is low and spreading. Don't overwater. Pinch tips to make bushier.

PENTAS. 2-3'. Cluster flowers. Multi-colors. Annual.

PHLOX, PRAIRIE. 8-12". pink/lavender blooms, may go dormant in summer.

PHLOX, SUMMER. 2-3' mounds, large flower clusters.

RUSSELLIA. 2-3'. Coral fountain plant, orange flowers.

SALVIA, HARDY. Multiple varieties, multiple colors — tall, short, summer bloomers and fall bloomers.

SHRIMP PLANTS. 2-3', red or pink shrimp-shaped flowers.

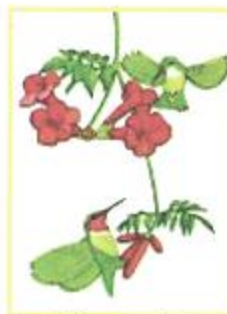
SOCIETY GARLIC. 1-2'. Lavender flowers on tall stalks.

TURK'S CAP. 5', red flowers on upright stalks, look like unopened hibiscus flowers.

Other choices: heebalm, buttonbush, coral bean, duranta, halberd-leaf hibiscus, four o'clocks, Mexican bush sage, pineapple sage, prairie phlox, red yucca, scarlet buckeye.

Annuals: cleome (spider flower), delphinium, flowering tobacco, foxglove, geranium, larkspur, pentas, poppies, sweet peas, zinnias.

Vines: Carolina jessamine, cypressvine, gloriosa lily, honeysuckle, jasmine, morning glory, thunbergia, trumpet vine (get a named variety like Mme. Galen — not the invasive native!).



Trumpet vine

(If you don't like, or can't find, any of these plants, show this sketch to your nurseryman and let him make other recommendations!)

A HUMMINGBIRD GARDEN

Native Plants That Provide a Food Source for

Hummingbirds

This is only a partial list. Hummingbirds use many other native plants.
Many of these species are available at native plant nurseries.

Flowers: (herbaceous)

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Blue sage (*Salvia azurea*)
Scarlet sage (*Salvia coccinea*)
Beebalm (*Monarda citriodora*, *M. fistulosa*, *M. punctata*, *M. lindheimeri*)
Sunflowers (*Helianthus* sp.)
Arkansas yucca (*Yucca arkansana*)
Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Carolina Larkspur (*Delphinium carolinianum*)
Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis* A. *hinckleyana*)
Cupleaf Penstemon (*P. murrayanus*)
Foxglove- Purple Beard Tongue (*Penstemon cobaea*)
Gulf Coast Penstemon (*Penstemon tenuis*)
Gayfeather (*Liatris* species)
Fall Obedient Plant (*Physostegia virginiana*)
Standing Cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*)
Lyre leaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*)

Shrubs: (woody)

Texas Lantana (*Lantana urticoides*)
Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus drummondii*)
Indigo bush (*Amorpha fruticosa*)
Eastern Coral Bean (*Erythrina herbacea*)

Vines:

Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)
Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*)
Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*)
Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)

Trees:

American Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)
Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
Green Hawthorn (*Crateagus viridis*)
Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)
Wild Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)



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