



The Sabal

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Flora of Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and World Birding Center, Part I: Introduction and Plant List

by *Chris Hathcock*

I fondly remember summer evenings between 1997 and 2001 at the 50-acre site of Edinburg's two wastewater treatment lakes. The area was largely ignored by visitors to the adjacent city park; so it was usually just me and a couple of fishermen. Between the lakes lay an old grassy field with scattered mesquite trees and baccharis bushes. To reach the interior of the field, I walked the haphazard dirt roads city maintenance crews drove to unload dirt or brush in this "throw-away" area.

Once a good distance in, it was "off-road" in search of greater roadrunners, curve-billed thrashers and verdin, birds favoring these dry, open lands. Every so often, my steps sent a jackrabbit bounding over a dirt mound or a cottontail scurrying into a brush pile.

In contrast to the sparsely wooded field, banks of the lakes and connecting canal were lined



Above: Discover Pond, one of two at the Visitor Center. **Right:** Hackberry Emporor nectaring on Mex. buttonbush.



with tall sugar hackberry, black willow, retama, huisache, and popinac trees, and had a dense understory of granjeno, coma, and lotebush. The woody growth made good cover for observing the green kingfisher perched on a narrow limb above the canal (a virtual guarantee) or croaking neotropic cormorants and motionless black-crowned night-herons along a lake shore. Evenings ended perfectly on the deck overlooking the northern lake, where I rested from my jaunt while watching the antics of moorhens and grebes, seemingly giddy in anticipation of nightfall. Just overhead, swarms of swallows and an occasional night-hawk swooped against the background of a pink and purple-tinted sky.

In 2003, this tract became Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and World Birding Center (hereafter Edinburg Wetlands), part of a city, state, and federal collaborative project to promote nature tourism and conservation. True to its name, most of the tract is 26 acres of shallow (1-3 feet deep), permanently flooded wetlands. This includes the 11- and 13-acre treatment lakes (referred to as “North Lake” and “South Lake”, respectively) and the 450-foot-long by 45-foot-wide canal connecting them.

Seventeen acres are still either grassy with scattered trees and shrubs or a narrow strip of early-successional bank woodland. My main stomping grounds through the old field, however, are now occupied by the Visitor Center and associated 4-acre irrigated landscape. The landscape features a diverse assemblage of bird and butterfly-attracting plants, as well as 2 large and 5 small ponds. Although I miss some aspects of its former condition (jackrabbits in particular), there is no question the new plantings and water features greatly add to this small parcel’s value as wildlife habitat and a place for people to enjoy nature.

The main purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the current flora at Edinburg Wetlands. Part I (this issue) features a site plant list. Part II (next month’s issue) features descriptions of general vegetation types found throughout the site. This information is intended to 1) serve as a basis for interpretive signage on plant identification, 2) document the presence of undesirable exotic species, particularly those most aggressive and pervasive, so appropriate control measures can

be implemented, and 3) identify areas containing the more desirable plant species and communities so these areas can be conserved, expanded, and/or replicated to achieve desired restoration and habitat goals.

Plant List

The attached list is a fairly comprehensive compilation of the vascular plants currently occurring at Edinburg Wetlands.

Explanation of Symbols and Terminology—To aid in achieving interpretive and conservation goals, symbols next to each species indicate 1) if it is exotic to the region (with an asterisk), 2) whether it occurs inside (L) and/or outside (O) the Visitor Center landscape, and 3) if occurring outside the Visitor Center landscape, whether it is naturally occurring (-n), has been planted (-p), and/or is an exotic invader (-e). The following definitions apply:

exotic/non-native: not native to Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo, or Starr County

Visitor Center landscape: area delineated to the south by the entrance road, to the east by the city park, to the north by the trail running along North Lake, and to the west by the tree/shrub line on top of the eastern canal bank

naturally occurring: likely indigenous to the site

planted: known to be recently planted or apparently planted as part of a discrete landscaped area

exotic invader: a non-native species that has been established in the more natural, non-landscaped areas of the site for several years; it is unknown whether it was introduced to the site or dispersed to the site from surrounding areas without the direct aid of humans

Summary—A total of 220 species were found throughout Edinburg Wetlands during June-August 2007, including 185 native and 35 exotic species. Inside the Visitor Center landscape, 152 species (excluding 23 undesirable grass and forb species normally removed as “weeds”) were found, of which 133 are native and 19 are exotic. Outside the Visitor Center landscape, 142 species were found; these include 97 naturally occurring, 36 planted, and 12 exotic-invasive species.

Plants of Edinburg Scenic Wetlands
(Surveyed Summer 2007)

L = occurring in Visitor Center landscape, O = occurring outside Visitor Center landscape (-n = naturally occurring; -p = planted; -e = an exotic invader)* = not native to Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo, or Starr County

GRASSES: 16 species (10 native)

Bothriochloa laguroides, silver bluestem: O-n

Cenchrus spinifex, common sandbur: L,O-n

Chasmanthium laxum, narrow-leaf woodoats* O-p

Chloris subdolichostachya, short-spike windmill grass: L,O-n

Cynodon dactylon, Bermudagrass*: L,O-e

Dactyloctenium aegyptium, Durban crowfoot grass*: L,O-e

Digitaria sp., crabgrass*: L,O-e

Eragrostis reptans, creeping lovegrass: O-n

Eriochloa punctata, Louisiana cupgrass: O-n

Leptochloa nealleyi, Nealley sprangletop: O-n

Leptoloma cognatum, fall witchgrass: O-p

Panicum maximum, Guineagrass*: L,O-e

Pennisetum ciliare, buffelgrass*: O-e

Setaria leucopila, plains bristlegrass: O-p

Spartina spartinae, gulf cordgrass: O-p

Sporobolus coromandelianus, whorled dropseed: L,O-n

UPLAND FORBS: 90 species (78 native)

Vines: 18 species (16 native)

Acleisanthes obtusa, vine four o'clock: O-n,p

Ampelopsis arborea, peppervine: L,O-n

Anredera sp., madeira vine: O-n

Cardiospermum halicacabum, common balloon vine: O-n

Cissus incisa, marine ivy: L,O-n

Clematis drummondii, barbas de chivato: L,O-n

Ipomoea alba, moon vine*: O-e

Ipomoea amnicola, morning glory: L,O-n

Ipomoea cordatotriloba var. *torreyana*, tie vine: L,O-n

Ipomoea sinuata, alamo vine: L

Maurandya antirrhiniflora, snapdragon vine: O-p

Mikania scandens, climbing hempweed: L,O-n

Passiflora foetida var. *gossypifolia*, cotton-leaf passionflower: L

Passiflora suberosa, corky-stem passionflower: O-p

Sarcostemma cynanchoides, climbing milkweed: L,O-n

Senecio confusus, Mexican flame vine*: L

Urvillea ulmacea, apaac: O-n

Vigna luteola, wild cowpea: O-n

UPLAND FORBS (cont.)

Non-viney: 72 species (62 native)

Abutilon fruticosum, pelotazo: O-n

Aloe vera, Barbados aloe*: L

Amaranthus palmeri, pigweed: L,O-n

Ambrosia psilostachya, western ragweed: L,O-n

Asclepias curassavica, veintiunilla*: L

Asclepias tuberosa, butterfly weed (yellow variant)*: L

Aster subulatus, hierba del marano: O-n

Callisia micrantha, cherisse: L

Calyptocarpus vialis, straggler daisy: L,O-n

Carlowrightia parviflora, carlowrightia: L

Chenopodium berlandieri, Berlandier goosefoot: L,O-n

Commelina elegans, widow's tears: L,O-n

Commelina erecta, widow's tears: L

Conyza canadensis, horseweed: L,O-n

Croton leucophyllus, white-leaf croton: L,O-n

Cyperus rotundus, nut-grass*: L,O-e

Desmanthus virgatus, bundleflower: L,O-n

Dyschoriste crenulata, snake-herb: L

Euphorbia cyathophora, wild poinsettia: L,O-n

Euphorbia glyptosperma, ridgeseed euphorbia: L,O-n

Euphorbia prostrata, euphorbia: L,O-n

Fleishmannia incarnata, pink thoroughwort:

L *Florestina tripteris*, florestina: L,O-n

Gaura (2 spp.), gaura: O-p

Helianthus maximilliani, Maximillian sunflower*: L

Helianthus praecox, Texas sunflower: L,O-n

Heliotropium angiospermum, heliotrope: L,O-n

Heliotropium curassavicum, seaside heliotrope: L,O-n

Hibiscus cardiophyllus, tulipán del monte: L

Jatropha dioica, leatherstem: O-p *Justicia*

Justicia pilosella, tube-tongue: L
Justicia runyonii, Runyon's water-willow: O-p
Lepidium austrinum, peppergrass: L,O-n
Lupinus subcarnosus, Texas bluebonnet: O-p
Machaeranthera phyllocephala, camphor daisy: O-n
Malvastrum americanum, malva loca: L,O-n
Malvastrum coromandelianum, three-lobe false mallow: L,O-n

Manfreda variegata, huaco: L

UPLAND FORBS (cont.)

Melampodium cinereum, blackfoot daisy: L
Oenothera speciosa, pink evening primrose: L,O-n
Parthenium hysterophorus, false ragweed: L,O-n
Phyla fruticosa, Texas frog-fruit: L
Phyla nodiflora, sawtooth frog-fruit: L,O-n
Portulaca oleracea, common purslane: O-n
Portulaca pilosa, chisme: L
Ratibida columnaris, Mexican hat: L,O-n
Rivina humilis, pigeon berry: L,O-n
Ruellia brittoniana, Britton's wild petunia*:L
Ruellia (3 spp.), wild petunia: L,O-n
Salsola australis, Russian thistle*: O-e
Salvia coccinea, tropical sage: L,O-n
Salvia misella, selene*: L
Sedum texana, stonecrop: L
Sesuvium portulacastrum, purslane: O-n
Sesuvium sessile, sea purslane: L,O-n
Setcreasea pallida, purple heart*: L
Sida spinosa, prickly mallow: L,O-n
Solanum eleagnifolium, silver-leaf nightshade: L,O-n
Solanum ptycanthum, American nightshade: L,O-n
Solidago sempervirens, seaside goldenrod: L
Sonchus sp., sow thistle: L
Sphaeralcea lindheimeri, woolly globemallow: O-n
Teucrium canadense, American germander: L
Thymophylla sp, tiny tim: L,O-n
Tidestromia lanuginosa, espanta vaqueros: O-n
Trianthema portulacastrum, horse purslane: O-n
Tridax procumbens, coat-buttons*: L
Verbena officinalis, Texas vervain: O-n
Verbesina enceloides, cowpen daisy: L,O-n

WETLAND FORBS: 24 species (all native)

Transitional (lake or pond margins): 19 species
Bacopa monnieri, water hyssop: L,O-n

Cladium jamaicense, sawgrass: L,O-n
Cyperus (4 spp.), flatsedge: L,O-n
Echinodorus berteroi, burhead: L
Eclipta prostrata, yerba de tago: L
Eleocharis sp., spikerush: L,O-n
Eleocharis albida, white spikerush: L,O-n
Eleocharis parvula, dwarf spikerush: O-n
Eustoma exaltatum, bluebell gentian: L
Hydrocotyle bonariensis, sombreroillo: L
Kyllingia brevifolia, short-leaf flatsedge: O-n
Ludwigia octovalvis, primrose willow: L,O-n,p
Marsilea macropoda, water clover: L,O-n?
Marsilea vestita, water clover: L
Pluchea purpurascens, salt marsh fleabane: O-n
Polygonum pennsylvanicum, pink smartweed: L,O-n

WETLAND FORBS (cont.)

Emergent: 2 species

Sagittaria longiloba, narrow-leaf arrowhead: L
Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani, soft-stem bulrush: L

Submergent: 1 species

Chara sp., muskgrass: L,O-n

Floating: 2 species

Lemna aequinoctialis, tropical duckweed: L,O-n

Nymphaea mexicana, yellow water lilly: L

CACTI: 4 species (3 native)

Acanthocereus tetragonus, night-blooming cereus: O-n

Opuntia engelmannii, Texas prickley pear: L,O-n

Opuntia ficus-indica, Barbary fig*: L

Opuntia leptocaulis, tasajillo: L

SHRUBS: 59 species (47 native)

Abutilon hypoleucum, Rio Grande Indian mallow: L

Abutilon trisulcatum, amantillo: L,O-n

Acacia berlandieri, guajillo: L

Acacia rigidula, blackbrush: L

Adelia vaseyi, Vasey's adelia: L,O-p

Aloysia gratissima, whitebrush: L

Aloysia macrostachya, sweetstem: L

Amyris madrensis, torchwood amyris: L

Amyris texana, chapotillo: L,O-p

Anisacanthus quadrifidus, flame acanthus*: L

Baccharis neglecta, Roosevelt willow: O-n

Bernardia myricifolia, oreja de ratón: L

Capsicum annuum var. *glabrusculum*, chilipiquín: L,O-n

Celtis pallida, granjeno: L,O-n

Cephalanthus salicifolius, Mexican buttonbush: L
Chromolaena odorata, crucita: L,O-n
Conoclinium betonicifolium, betony-leaf thoroughwort: L,O-n?
Coursetia axillaria, babybonnets: L
Croton cortesianus, palillo: L
Croton humilis, low croton: L
Datura wrightii, jimsonweed*: L
Erythrina herbacea, coral bean: L
Eupatorium greggii, Gregg eupatorium*: O-p
Eysenhardtia texana, kidneywood: L
Forestiera angustifolia, elbowbush: L,O-p
Guaiacum angustifolium, guayacán: L
Heimia salicifolia, hachinal: L
Hesperaloe parviflora, red yucca*: L
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis, Chinese hibiscus*: L
Ipomoea carnea, bush morning glory*: L
Karwinskia humboldtiana, coyotillo: L,O-n
Lantana achyranthifolia, desert lantana: L,O-p
Lantana camara, West Indian lantana*: L,O-p
Lantana sp., var. 'New Gold', new gold lantana*: O-p
Lantana urticoides, Texas lantana: L,O-n,p
Lantana velutina, velvet lantana: L
Leucophyllum frutescens, cenizo: L,O-p
Lippia graveolens, redbrush lippia: L
Malpighia glabra, Barbados cherry: L,O-p
Malvaviscus arboreus, Turk's cap: L,O-p
Melochia tomentosa, pyramid flower: L
Phaulothamnus spinescens, snake eyes: L,O-p
Plumbago scandens, white plumbago: L,O-p
Randia rhagocarpa, crucillo: L,O-p
Salvia ballotaeflora, shrubby blue sage: L,O-p
Schaefferia cuneifolia, desert yaupon: L
Sesbania macrocarpa, bequilla: O-n
Solanum diphyllum, two-leaf nightshade*: L
Sophora tomentosa, yellow sophora: L
Tamaulipa azurea, blue boneset: L
Tecoma stans, esperanza*: O-e
Trixis inula, trixis: L,O-p
Viguiera stenoloba, golden-eye daisy: L,O-p
Wedelia hispida, orange zexmenia: L
Xylosma flexuosa, brush holly: L
Yucca sp., short yucca*: L
Yucca sp., variegated yucca*: O-p
Zanthoxylum fagara, colima: L,O-n
Ziziphus obtusifolia, lotebush: O-n
TREES: 27 species (23 native)
Acacia farnesiana, huisache: L,O-n
Acacia greggii var. *wrightii*, Wright acacia: L

Celtis laevigata var. *laevigata*, sugar hackberry: L,O-n
Condalia hookeri, brasíl: L
Cordia boissieri, anacuita: L,O-p
Diospyros texana, Texas persimmon: L,O-p
Ebenopsis ebano, Texas ebony: L
Ehretia anacua, anacua: L,O-n
Ficus religiosa, bo tree*: L
Fraxinus berlandieriana, Mexican ash: L
Havardia pallens, tenaza: L
Leucaena leucocephala, popinac*: O-e
Leucaena pulverulenta, tepeguaje: L
Melia azedarach, Chinaberry*: O-e
Parkinsonia aculeata, retama: L,O-n
Prosopis glandulosa var. *glandulosa*, honey mesquite: L,O-n
Quercus virginiana, live oak: L
Sabal texana, sabal palm: L
Salix nigra, black willow: L,O-n
Sapindus saponaria var. *drummondii*, soap-berry: L
Sideroxylon celastrina, coma: L,O-n
Solanum erianthum, potato tree: L,O-p
Sophora secundiflora, mountain laurel: L
Taxodium mucronatum, Montezuma bald-cypress: L
Ulmus crassifolia, cedar elm: L,O-p
Washingtonia filifera, California fan-palm*: L,O-e
Yucca treculeana, Spanish dagger: L,O-p



Above: South Lake's many wetland plants include five sedge species and water-hyssop (background)

Chris Hathcock is the Secretary of the NPP Board of Directors and Habitat Restoration Coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, State Parks Division in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Nature Happenings Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas

For a comprehensive calendar of Nature Happenings go to RGV Nature Coalition at www.rgvnaturecoalition.org Scroll down to and click on Nature Events Calendar on right side

Sabal Palm Grove Sanctuary— Saturday, October 20, 2007: Wonders of Nature Festival
Call (956) 541-8034. Or go to www.tx.audubon.org/centers/sabal

Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and World Birding Center — Bird Walks and Nature tours.
Native Plant Landscaping. 714 Raul Longoria Rd., Edinburg, TX (956) 381-9922.

Quinta Mazatlan - McAllen Wing of the World Birding Center— 600 Sunset Ave., McAllen, TX. Call Colleen Hook (956) 688-3370 for scheduled events

Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park WBC offers butterfly walks, bird walks, nature tours. Call 956-584-9156 for details and times.

12th Annual Texas Butterfly Festival, October 18-21 2007, in Mission, TX **The Native Plant Project** will be selling a variety of Mike Heep's healthy native plants. **One-gallon plants are \$6.50 each; 5 or more are discounted to \$5.00 each.** Questions about growing natives? Stop by and get the answers from the NPP booth at the Expo Marketplace.

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The Sabal is the Newsletter of the Native Plant Project and conveys information on the native habitat, and environment of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Texas. Co-editors: Gene Lester and Eleanor Mosimann. You are invited to submit articles for *The Sabal*. They can be brief or long. Articles may be edited for length and clarity. Black and white line drawings -- and colored photos or drawings -- with or without accompanying text are encouraged. We will acknowledge all submissions. Please send them, preferable in electronic form - either Word or WordPerfect - to: Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, TX 78589 or contact **Gene Lester @ 956-425-4005, or g-el1951@sbcglobal.net**

See *The Sabal* and our 5 handbooks on our website:
www.nativeplantproject.org

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Regular \$15 per year Contributing \$35 per year Lifelong \$250 one time fee per individual. Members are advised of meetings, field trips, and other activities through *The Sabal*. Dues are paid on a calendar year basis. Send checks to Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, Texas 78589.

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New Renewal Address Change

Comments/ suggestions/ speaker recommendations should be sent to: Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, TX 78589 or contact G. Lester (956)-425-4005; g-el1951@sbcglobal.net

Native Plant Project Meetings – September 25, 2007. **Board meeting** at 6:30 p.m.; **General meeting** at 7:30 p.m. Sue Griffin and Billy Snider Jr. of Mother Nature’s Creation will show us how to build a pond or water feature in our own backyard. They know first hand how to choose the perfect location, which filters work with our water and which don’t because that’s their business. Come learn from the experts

Board and General Meetings 2007:

September 25
October 23
November 27

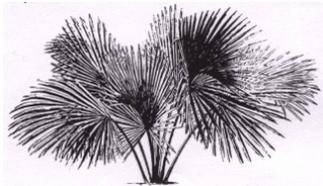
Board and General Meetings 2008:

January 22 April 22 September 23
February 26 May 27 October 28
March 25 November 25

SUMMARY OF THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING - May 22, 2007

The board moved to increase its membership fee paid to the Valley Nature Center from \$35/year to \$200/year. This increase will be retroactive for this past year. The NPP will prepare a press-release supporting a virtual, as opposed to a physical, fence along the border. This statement will focus on the potential habitat destruction that a physical fence would impose.

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