



# The Sabal

November 2011

Volume 28, number 7

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reformatted from [<http://leps.thenalls.net/index.php>]

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**Editor:**  
Christina Mild  
<mild.christina@gmail.com>  
Submissions of relevant  
articles and/or photos  
are welcomed.

**Editorial Advisory Board:**  
Diann Ballesteros  
Mike Heep  
Ken King  
Eleanor Mosimann  
Betty Perez  
Dr. Alfred Richardson

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November Meeting of the Native Plant Project:

**Tuesday, Nov. 22nd, 2011, 7:30pm**

*Berry Nall:*

**"Encountering and Enjoying Caterpillars"**

Valley Nature Center, 301 S. Border,  
(in Gibson Park), Weslaco.

Caterpillar use of several Starr County native plants will be highlighted.  
Berry is from Falcon Heights, where he is a science teacher and pastor of  
the Baptist church.

He has been raising caterpillars and butterflies for years as a hobby and for  
the last 3 years has worked with David L.Wagner, renowned author of  
*Caterpillars of Eastern North America*.

Berry plans to show some fascinating photos of caterpillar adaptations including one species that  
imitates a snake. Fascinating indeed.



**The Sabal** is the newsletter of the Native Plant Project.

It conveys information on native plants, habitats and environment of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas.

Previous **Sabal** issues are posted on our website [[www.NativePlantProject.org](http://www.NativePlantProject.org)].

Electronic versions of our **Handbooks** on recommended natives for landscaping are also posted there.

**Change of address, missing issue, or membership:** <[bwessling@rgv.rr.com](mailto:bwessling@rgv.rr.com)>

President - Chris Hathcock - (956)-369-1744; <[Chris\\_Hathcock@yahoo.com](mailto:Chris_Hathcock@yahoo.com)>

## Red Rim (*Biblis hyperia*) Life History

—Text and photos by Berry Nall

This study began in late November, 2010, with the capture of a female Red Rim. She produced two eggs after two days in a cage with abundant food and hostplant (Noseburn, *Tragia glanduligera*). On the third day, with no more eggs being produced, she was released. One of the two resulting caterpillars was raised to maturity.

(C.Mild photos. Right: Red Rim camouflaged on Chile Pequin. Hostplant just below: Noseburn, *Tragia glanduligera*.)



The egg eclosed after seven days, and the growing caterpillar changed almost daily for the first week to ten days. In contrast, there was little visible change through the last month of the larval stage. The mature caterpillar was fascinating to view, with intricate color patterns evident beneath all the spines and knobs that decorated its body.

A potted Noseburn was the initial source of fresh food for the caterpillar. Providentially, a Common Mestra caterpillar was also feeding on this plant, giving opportunity for the side-by-side comparison of the two species that can be seen in the 12-29-10 picture. On that date the two caterpillars were about the same size (although at different stages of development). Clearly, a casual glance could easily confuse the two species.

The caterpillar was kept in an unheated room. In this environment, it experienced similar temperatures and lighting to natural conditions, but was spared exposure to extreme temperatures. In any event, it pupated before any significant freezing weather set in. During times of warmer weather, the caterpillar remained on the host plant. During colder spells, the caterpillar moved from the plant to the bottom of its container. Outdoors, one would expect this behavior to help protect a caterpillar from cold that might otherwise kill.

The caterpillar took 58 days to pupate. I feared I would have to care for the chrysalis until the following fall, but the adult emerged 21 days later, in the midst of a February heat wave (temperatures were regularly above 80 degrees Fahrenheit). The Red Rim's winter journey from egg to adult took a total of 87 days.

*Editor's Note: Many thanks to Berry Nall, who is also a preacher and a science teacher, for sharing this incredible saga with us. To find out more about this and many other butterfly and moth species, attend his presentation on Nov. 22nd and check out his website: [http://www.leps.thenalls.net/index.php]*



Adult  
Common  
Mestra



Below: Fresh  
adult Red Rim,  
ventral, 2-22-11



## *In Loving Memory of Billie McWhorter*

- BORN: October 19, 1923

- DIED: October 4, 2011

RESIDENCE: Weslaco, TX

Billie was born in Raleigh, Mississippi in 1923, the eldest of three brothers and two sisters. The family moved from Mississippi to Harlingen in the late 1920s, eventually making Weslaco their home.

As a young boy he developed a love of nature, plants and the outdoors. Exploring the largely undeveloped area around Weslaco (on horseback) was a favorite pastime in his early years. Caring for the environment, our natural resources and the preservation of nature were important to him throughout his life.

Billie studied Urban Planning at UT Austin and earned a Bachelor's degree and later a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from the University of Houston.

His career was spent as a city planner and engineer, working for many cities throughout Florida, Mississippi and Texas.

He was a student of history and enjoyed researching the local history of the cities in which he worked, volunteering his services to historical preservation efforts of many. Billie enjoyed traveling, visiting more than 25 countries throughout the world.

He was recognized for his knowledge of the Valley's local flora and also enjoyed reading and writing poetry. He wrote many nature articles which were widely published. After retiring in 1984, Billie returned to Weslaco to help care for his parents. He became a community volunteer and served in many organizations, including the Weslaco Historical Museum, Weslaco Public Library, Weslaco Parks Department, Valley Nature Center, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a land steward. He was a member of the Native Plant Project, Palm Society of South Texas, Nature Conservancy, Frontera Audubon Society, and he was named Outstanding Naturalist in 2001 by the Valley Nature Center.

## *In Memory of Bill MacWhorter*

### **Keeper of the Keys**

—by Jann Miller

You were an old man wearing khaki pants, tucked in long-sleeved shirt, and plain leather lace-up shoes with dark socks that attracted mosquitoes like magnets.

All this topped off with a Texas Parks and Wildlife baseball cap.

The wide red scar on the side of your neck revealed your battle with lymphoma....

a battle you had apparently won.

You had an unquenchable desire to explore the back roads and the secret places that very few knew about....

Places that you and "Burgess" had surveyed for U.S. Fish and Wildlife years before.

For some reason people liked you and trusted you with keys to these secret places.

I had volunteer time on my hands and a trustworthy vehicle. So off we went on many a journey through the native brush of Deep South Texas.

The lessons were invaluable.

The emotions ran high.

The disappointments were real.

"Life is cruel," you would say.

You opened and closed many gates for me while I waited with the motor running and the AC on.

You introduced me to many good people who respected you and sought you out for advice.

The landscape of Weslaco is a testimony to your wisdom.

I am proud to have known you.

I loved you dearly.

I remember your parting words,

"When shall I see you again....in sunshine or in rain?"



**Editor's Note:** I think we sometimes forget that organizations are based on individuals. In order to continue our work, we must appreciate each other for our unique talents and even for our eccentricities. For that reason, I think it's especially important to emphasize what we remember about Bill. For some, it is too soon to comment without the all-consuming angst of mourning. Indeed, I mourn deeply as this is created. .



### **Thoughts on Mr. McWhorter** —by Cortney Mild

What I remember most is going on nature walks with Bill. He was always calm, loving and

imaginative. Perhaps this is why he so thoroughly enjoyed a child's company; they could share that same sense of wonder he retained about the world.

He was a storyteller, usually incorporating the child he was with, making them part of the tale, making them feel appreciated.

I didn't realize until I began my Master's program (specializing in active transportation) that Bill was a City Planner. I hope that he'll be proud of the work which I do, following in his footsteps.

Bill was very quiet, which probably enhanced his awareness of the world around him. He could nail a person's character; being observant not only of nature but of the people he encountered.



Bill meets Matthew Heep for the first time on an RGV TX Master Naturalist fieldtrip to Heep's Native Plant Nursery in Harlingen.

Matthew is the son of Mike & Claire Heep, native plant growers.

The grief of loss is tempered by the joy of new lives and their excitement about the world around them.

Photo is from about 2004.

## Memories of “Billy Bob” —by Christina Mild

I met Bill beneath the State Champion Moctezuma Cypress trees along a San Benito resaca . From that point, I stuck to him like glue, asking questions about the plants around us, for which he had many answers. His answers were sometimes of the meandering and oft-repeated sort. We became so familiar that I considered him an adopted uncle.

I can't say it was surprising to read in his obit. that he held an M.S. in Clinical Psychology; he discerned one's personality almost upon meeting them and often ascribed a hybrid nickname based on their actual name and unique personality. This was entertaining, but often led us to stumble over their actual name.

Bill was likely my first visitor at Valley Nature Center when I started work there in 1996 or so. He guided me, amused me, aired myriad complaints and suggestions. He felt it unsafe for a woman to work alone at that location, and stayed with me (sometimes completely out of earshot in the nature park) through the open hours. I would, often as not, send him packing and lock the doors when open hours were over, so that I could actually accomplish a bit of necessary work.

Bill was obviously hard at work with NPP as early as Vol. 1 No. 1 of the **Sabal**. In the July 20, 1984 meeting notes, “MacWhorter Property” appears under “Old Business.” I believe this property is now part of Estero Llano Grande SP World Birding Center. Myriad properties were converted to conservation ownership on the basis of Bill’s determination and outright nagging.

He was a worrier; I told him he could worry for both of us, leaving me free to enjoy myself. He tried his best to improve my use of sit/set and lie/lay, without much effect, other than remembering him when I stutter over which to employ.

Bill wrote about native plants for the local papers and for every conservation organization which asked for his assistance. He was an excellent artist and creator of maps. These qualities were vital to his work as a city planner and many of his maps are probably still in use in many places. He was an intrepid explorer with an amazing memory. He saw cactus where I saw brown dirt and leaves. He repeatedly made connections between the written history of the valley and current, often incorrect,

opinions of what is native here.

He's definitely on the short list of who I want to see in Heaven. I'm certain he'll be surrounded by a crowd; he helped almost everyone he met, usually in myriad ways. We are each the better for having known him.

### My daughter

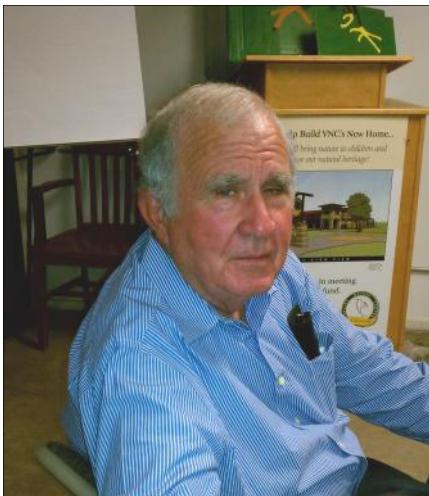
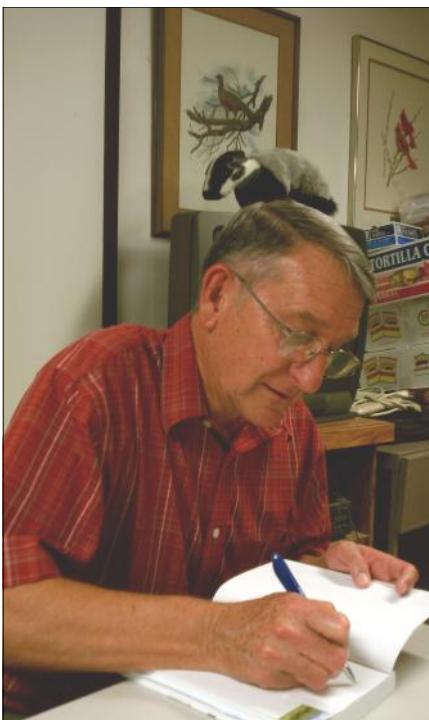
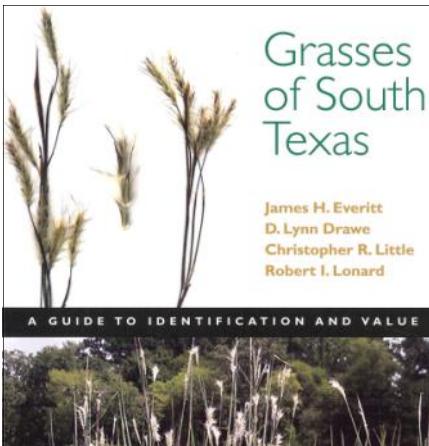
Cortney adopted him as a great uncle figure. She would complain to me that it was too hot outdoors with too many mosquitoes and thorns. With Bill, she'd remain captivated in the great outdoors for hours.

Bill was able to laugh at himself. I don't think he ever saw the Star Wars movies, but I told him he reminded me of the robot C-3PO, who was always hesitant, very proper, and ultimately resourceful. Bill's verbal characteristics, movements and mannerisms were so much like C-3PO that he could've been the model for that character.

If you add the frugality of the typical Scotsman, the manners of an English gentleman and a dash of curmudgeon, you'll be a bit closer to imagining Bill.

He never failed to amaze and amuse those of us who knew him well, though we could often predict just what he'd have to say. He never learned to cook, though he lived alone, typically eating frozen dinners. Perhaps those frozen dinners are what got him in the end!





## October NPP Program: Grasses of South Texas by authors Robert Lonard and James Everitt

This was an excellent program and we are grateful to two of the book's authors for an eye-opening presentation on our native (and invasive grasses, as well.) We were also pleased to have retired professor of zoology from UTPA, Dr. Frank Judd, in attendance.

Each presenter detailed different information about the featured grasses, such as typical habitat, use by wildlife, and propagation. Sea oats, for example, rarely propagates from seed, as weevils have already bored holes into each seed. Propagation is usually from the roots. It is an important species for revegetation of eroded dune sites.



Hopefully, audience members learned a few new grass species from the presentation. Many bought the new book, which means they'll be able to identify a lot more grasses in the near future.

For many years, those of us in revegetation have been afraid to transplant unidentifiable (to us) grasses from areas awaiting construction projects. This guide should improve our ability to discriminate between an exotic invasive species and one which is native. It will also give us much more information regarding how the grass will be used by wildlife and how we should go about any attempts at propagation.

The native species featured in this new book number 175! We have a lot of choices in terms of which native grasses to include in revegetated habitat!

(A few of us may limit our attention in this new tome to the final paragraph on each species, choosing to ignore the preceding descriptions of glumes, lemmas, paleas and caryopses until all other options are exhausted!)



## **LRGV Native Plant Sources**

### **Heep's Nursery (& Landscaping)**

(Mike Heep)

1714 S. Palm Court Drive

Harlingen, TX 78552

(956) 423-4513 \* By appt. only

### **Valley Nature Center**

301 S. Border Ave.

Weslaco, TX 78596

(956) 969-2475

<info@valleynaturecenter.org>  
[www.valleynaturecenter.org]

### **Perez Ranch Nursery**

(Betty Perez)

12 miles north of La Joya, TX

(956) 580-8915

<PerezRanchNatives@gmail.com>

### **Mother Nature's Creations**

(Billy & Sue Snider)

2822 Nueces; Harlingen, TX 78550

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(956) 428-4897

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Old Military Hwy & Butterfly Pk Dr  
Mission, TX 78552  
(956) 583-9009

### Rancho Lomitas Nursery

(Benito Trevino)

P.O. Box 442

Rio Grande City, TX 78582

(956) 486-2576 \*By appt. only

### Valley Garden Center

701 E. Bus. Hwy. 83

McAllen, TX 78501

(956) 682-9411

### **Landscaper using Natives:**

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(Allen Williams)

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-Environmental Education and Exhibit Hall-

### **NPP Board & General Meetings 2011: (no Dec. mtg.)**

(Fourth Tuesday each month) Board Meetings at 6:30pm. Speaker at 7:30pm.

Most meetings held at Valley Nature Ctr. (see above)

### **Here are a few upcoming programs for 2012:**

Jan. 24th, 2012. William (Bill) Carr — Rare Plants of Texas—A review of the plants in Jackie Poole and W. Carr's new book by the same title. Book signing available afterwards by Bill.

February 28, 2012. James Lovegren, a local native plant grower—Growing Native Seedlings for Revegetation Projects—A detailed look at what it takes to grow 100,000 native plants a year.

March 27, 2012. Ken King will be giving our annual Wildflower program.

April 24, 2012. John Goolsby will discuss the role of insects on native trees.

The Native Plant Project (NPP) has no paid staff or facilities. NPP is supported entirely by memberships and contributions.

Anyone interested in native plants is invited to join. Members receive 8 issues of **The Sabal** newsletter per year in which they are informed of all project activities and meetings.

**Meetings are held at:**

Valley Nature Center, 301 S. Border, Weslaco, TX.

**Native Plant Project Membership Application**

Regular \$20/yr.  Contributing \$45/yr

Life \$250 one time fee/person

Other donation: \_\_\_\_\_

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[www.NativePlantProject.org](http://www.NativePlantProject.org)

*Native Plant Project presents:*

**Tuesday, Nov. 22nd, 2011, 7:30pm**



*Berry Nall:*

**"Encountering and Enjoying Caterpillars"**

Berry will highlight the many caterpillars which depend upon our native brush species. His photos and stories are awesome!

Valley Nature Center,  
301 S. Border  
(in Gibson Park), Weslaco.  
956-969-2475



Photos from the Nall's website:



Above: Zebra Heliconian.

Below: Crimson Patch

