

MAY 2016



Underground World of Mushrooms



BRIT is pleased to announce that Dr. Denis Benjamin, BRIT Resident Research Associate and author of two popular works on mushrooms (*Mushrooms: Poisons and Panaceas* [1995] and *Musings of a Mushroom Hunter* [2010]), will be reprising his popular workshop "The Underground World of Mushrooms" on Saturday, May 7. This half-day workshop will introduce participants to the wide variety of mushrooms that exist in our own backyard, the Cross Timbers ecosystem of North

Central Texas. Sign up quickly since space is limited! For more information about this class, please visit our webpage. [Register Here](#) for Saturday, May 7, 8:30 a.m. – noon, \$10 members/\$15 non-members.

Research Exhibit & Researcher Seminar Series

Please join us beginning May 18 for "BRIT Collections: The Hidden Gardens of BRIT," an exhibit showcasing some of the valuable items within BRIT's collections. Visitors will see an assortment of specimens from the BRIT herbarium and important rare books from the library collection.



In addition, every Tuesday during the month of May we will host special presentations by BRIT researchers. Bring your brown bag lunch and learn about the world of science from **12 noon – 1 p.m.** There will be time for Q & A with the presenter following each presentation.

- May 3 - Dan Caudle, "Acadian Adventures: Natural Resource Management in Cajun Country"
- May 10 - Denis Benjamin, "The Edibility of Wild Mushrooms: Some Common Adverse Reactions - Incidence and Mechanisms"
- May 17 - Brooke Best, "Up There in the Air: BRIT's Living Roof"
- May 24 - Jason Best, Tiana Rehman, & Peter Fritsch, "Out of the Cabinets: Characterizing the Contents of the BRIT Herbarium"
- May 31 - Peter Fritsch, "Cryptic Species in North American Redbuds (*Cercis*) and the Search for Madrean-Tethyan Links"

For more information on these lectures, please visit our website.

Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT)

1700 University Drive | Fort Worth, Texas 76107

Phone: 817.332.4441 | Fax: 817.332.4112

Open Tuesday to Friday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

1st Saturday each month from 9 a.m. - noon (Apr-Oct)

Please email membership@brit.org to receive this Leaflet by email.



CELEBRATE the PRAIRIE at BRIT'S PRAIRIE DAY

MAY 14, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Honorary Chair Tony Prenger

[Website](#) & [Contact](#)

Schedule of Entertainment

- 9:00 Bella's Prairie Read
- 9-11:30 Singer & Songwriter, Chris Gonzales
- 10:00 Birds of Prey Presentation
- 10:30 BRIT Tour
- 11:00 Bat World Sanctuary Presentation
- 11:30-2 Everybody's Darlin' with Jeff Gibbons & Barbara Taylor
- 12:30 Nature Walk
- 1:00 Texas Discovery Garden's Reptiles Presentation
- 2:00 Raffle & Announcements



Ongoing Activities

- Discovery Booths
- T-shirts on Demand
- Balloon Animals
- Face Painting
- Food Trucks



Prairies in Bloom Photo Contest

Our prairies are coming into full bloom! Celebrate the crisp morning breeze by heading outside and snapping a photo for our spring photo contest. To submit, post a photo to Facebook with the hashtag #BRITprairies, and then email it to membership@BRIT.org for the chance to win a gift bag blooming with lots of swag and a free BRIT membership! Winner will be announced at BRIT Prairie Day on May 14th, and we'll feature the winning image on the BRIT Facebook page and Twitter feeds throughout the season.

Above photo submitted by Tiana Rehman

Smoky Mountains Treetop Exploration

Please join us on Thursday, May 15, as we welcome Courtney Kilgore to participate in BRIT's Visiting Researcher Seminar series. Courtney will explain how she accessed, climbed, and gathered samples



(myxomycetes, macrofungi, lichens, mosses, liverworts, and ferns) from the tree canopy in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a project that was featured on the National Geographic PBS Television Special "Wild Chronicles." We will be watching a clip of the PBS episode prior to her presentation.

This lecture will occur from 12 noon – 1 p.m. in the large Conference Room. For more information about this event please visit our [webpage](#).



1st Annual Urban Agriculture Day was a Hit

Green Revolution's Agents of Change combined forces with TCU's Ranch Management division, Texas Brigades, and the Taggart Ranch to produce a great experience during the first-ever Urban Agriculture Day held at BRIT. The Agents from various middle and high schools in the Fort Worth area collaborated with students participating in the Texas Brigades program. Green Revolution's Agents had the chance to experience the life and work of both ranchers and farmers. The event may have lasted only one day, but the Agents of Change created memories for a lifetime.



What's Happening with Bella at BRIT

The Marvels and Mayhem of Nature

Aristotle said, "In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous."



"Children are marvelous," explains Bella, "but mayhem is undeniably part of childhood. Children can move as fast as this spring's flood waters, be a bit destructive, and like this season's landscapes and gardens can quickly outgrow any attempt of our control. That is why my job is important," said Bella, "to help parents, educators and care providers of our youngest learners understand the power of play, exploration and discovery, and talking with children when inspiring young minds and hearts. We embrace the something of the marvelous in children and guide, not control, the mayhem."



Bella's First Saturday Story Time and Bella's Book and Nature Club's Featured Book is *On Meadowview Street*, written and illustrated by Henry Cole. Join Bella for an interactive read aloud and family-friendly activities that provide fun explorations of art, nature, and science! For more information, please contact [Kimberly Whitlock](mailto:Kimberly.Whitlock@brit.org) at 817.546.1958.

- Bella's Story Time: Saturday, May 7 (10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) - Free
- Bella's Book Club: Tuesday, May 3 (10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) - Free to BRIT Members/\$10 per non-member family.

BRIT Proudly Announces Carter Smith as the 2016 Winner of the International Award of Excellence in Conservation

SAVE THE DATE

October 20 Gala at the Worthington Renaissance Hotel

Join us for a joyous celebration as BRIT honors Carter Smith, Executive Director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, for his lifetime achievement in conservation. More details to follow. For reservations, contact [Sara Richardson](#) at 817.332.2748.



Come Read with Us!

Join the BRIT Reads Book Club in May and discuss “a true American Classic,” John Graves’ *Goodbye to a River*.



In this 1957 volume Graves visits a stretch of the Brazos River in North Central Texas that he had known intimately as a boy. It was something of a farewell tour as a series of dams had been proposed that would change the landscape of the river forever. On this journey “he braves rapids and fatigue and the fickle autumn weather, he muses upon old blood feuds of the region and violent skirmishes with native tribes, and retells wild stories of courage and cowardice and deceit that shaped both the river’s people and the land during frontier times and later” (Vintage Books, publisher). BRIT Reads will meet on Monday, May 16, from 12 noon – 1 p.m. on the BRIT campus. Join us for lively discussion, interesting people, and cookies! For more information about this group please visit our [webpage](#).



Annual Blue-Eyed Grass, New to North Central Texas

You never know what you will find if you just take a careful look around you! A case in point comes from the critical eye of one of our library volunteers, Anne Hollingworth, who noticed some plants growing in the lawns of her neighborhood in Tarrant County that were slightly different than the typical blue-eyed grasses (*Sisyrinchium*) she had seen there in past years. She brought a few in for the BRIT staff to identify, and they turned out to be annual blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium rosulatum*), an entirely new species record for North Central Texas. The species ranges across much of the southeastern United States but until now was known locally only as far west as Rains County, 100 miles to the east. We have deposited a representative sample in the BRIT herbarium, processed under Anne’s first official collection number. Anne’s finding serves to highlight how much there is still to discover about our local flora!

Above right: Annual blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium rosulatum*)

Above left: Peter Fritsch, Anne Hollingworth, & Bob O’Kennon with the annual blue-eyed grass.

Teacher Tuesday - Curious by Nature

The April Teacher Tuesday provided teachers with effective strategies for engaging students' appreciation of their environment. Teachers experienced



activities on the BRIT prairie that sparked their curiosity of the natural world and discussed possible investigations that would inspire all students to see their environment differently. At



the end of the evening, teachers were leaving the last Teacher Tuesday of this school year doing the "Habitat Boogie" with plans to take their students outdoors to explore! Tanner Rohne, the El Tesoro Camp Director for Camp Fire, shared his passion for outdoor education and encouraged teachers to take time to explore nature and have fun with their students!



The Search for Dr. Raven's Encelia...

Dr. Peter Raven (former director of Missouri Botanical Garden) is arguably the world's most famous botanist, but perhaps more importantly, he's been an ambassador, advocate, and champion for the plant kingdom for decades. One of the many plants named in his honor is *Encelia ravenii* (Raven's brittlebush), a showy sunflower restricted to a very small area of one of the driest deserts in Mexico

on the north-eastern coast of Baja California. As private developments in the region continued to expand, access to this area has become more restricted, and the botanical community has not seen the plants for many years. However, they say that if you want to change the world you need a lot of friends, and as a result of the connections of many different people, BRIT's Interim Vice President Dr. Sula Vanderplank teamed up with Dr. Naomi Fraga, Director of Conservation Programs at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, to try and relocate the remote population. Local residents Teddy and Dick Merrick (friends of another colleague Jon Rebman) kindly opened both their home and the road to the mountains, allowing the team to search for the elusive sunflower. Despite a very dry year, they were able to identify the plant from some old flower stalks which have a very different branching pattern compared to the more common relative *Encelia farinosa* (common brittlebush). Fraga and Vanderplank hope to return to this population after the rains return and carefully collect some of the seeds of this species for long term storage and preservation in the seed banks of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, the Millenium Seed Bank Partnership at Kew Royal Botanic Gardens (London, UK), and Mexican institutions to preserve endemic plants of the Baja California peninsula. Stay tuned for more information and keep your fingers crossed for some flowers (and fruits) later this year!



Free Tours of BRIT - What Could Be Better?

Spring is a great time to tour BRIT to learn more about what we do and how. It's also a great time to enjoy the wildflower meadow! Are you curious about LEED buildings? Do you wonder what happens to the specimens botanists collect? Would like you like to learn about research? The best way to brush up on these subjects is to take one of our free public tours. Public tours are held every Thursday at 1:30 and the First Saturday of most months at 10:30. Public tours are free, and reservations aren't necessary unless you are bringing more than ten people.

One of our engaging Ambassadors would love to share the mission of BRIT with you and your friends! In addition to our free tours, private tours may be scheduled at a time convenient to your schedule for a small fee. If it has been a while since you have toured, or you keep meaning to tour, please come

visit us and learn the latest! For more information, please contact [Julie Donovan](#), Director of Volunteers and Public Engagement, at 817.546.1846.



Whales, Mangroves, Islands, and More!

Each year, our Biodiversity Explorer in Baja California, Dr. Sula Vanderplank, takes one week of her time to join staff scientists from Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in an education, outreach, and research expedition to the islands and lagoons of Baja California. Experts on birds, cetaceans, whales, and plankton join our botanist as they interpret the world around them while visiting some of the best examples of community conservation in Mexico. In the San Ignacio lagoon they tour the mangroves and shore line, learning about the many ecological functions of these coastal ecosystems, as well as meeting the friendly whales who often approach the boats and can be touched! This year bad weather limited time in the lagoon, but allowed extra time on the large and remote island of Cedros, which is home to at least eight plants found nowhere else in the world and where Vanderplank toured the salt mine with local residents. These trips are the intersection of research and education, allowing the public hands-on opportunities to participate in the collecting of herbarium specimens and learn more about their surroundings. If you are interested in joining one of these opportunities, please visit this [webpage](#).



Left to right: Mangroves of San Ignacio Lagoon; whales (mommy and baby!)



BRIT Announces the Results of Herbarium Inventory

BRIT is proud to announce the official publication of the herbarium inventory! Completed late last year, the inventory dataset provides BRIT and researchers across the globe with precise information on the overall size of our collection, as well as its taxonomic and geographic scope. To conduct the survey, our own Jason Best created custom software optimized for use with iPads and used by over 130 BRIT staff and volunteers to survey the collection folder-by-folder for species and basic locality data. After the 11 months it took to complete the process (we finished a month early!), we arrived at a final specimen count of 882,815. After including the estimated 145,460 specimens in special collections or those not yet inventoried for various reasons, the BRIT holdings total 1.028 million specimens---18,000 more than previously estimated! For further details of the inventory results and the full dataset, please visit our [webpage](#).

MAY

3rd - Brown Bag: Dan Caudle

3rd - Bella Book & Nature Club

7th - Bella Story Time; Public tour; Plant ID

10th - Brown Bag: Denis Benjamin

14th - BRIT's Prairie Day

16th - BRIT Reads book club

17th - Brown Bag: Brooke Best

19th - Visiting Researcher Seminar

24th - Brown Bag: Jason Best, Tiana Rehman, & Peter Fritsch

31st - Brown Bag: Peter Fritsch
Every Thursday - BRIT tours at 1:30 p.m.

JUNE

4th - Bella Story Time; Public tour; Plant ID
7th - Brown Bag: Vianney Flores with Green Revolution
7th - Bella Book & Nature Club
20th - BRIT Reads book club
Every Thursday - BRIT tours at 1:30 p.m.
Additional information can be found at brit.org.