



BETWEEN THE PAGES

Huntsville Public Library Monthly Newsletter

Crafts for Kids

BY MARY KOKOT, REFERENCE AND ADULT SERVICES

In place of the library's usual craft activity that takes place after story time, circulation desk staffer, Kristin Sion, has seen to it that craft time continues even though story time has been suspended. Although most small children know Sion as "the sticker lady" due to her fondness for making sure no small person leaves the library without a sticker on their shirt, lately she has been using her expertise with a Cricut to create crafts for kids. A Cricut is the brand name for a smart electronic cutting machine that allows one to create projects with precision using a variety of materials.

The library purchased the Cricut after Sion explained the variety of ways it could benefit many of the programs the library offers. Sion explains, "Using this Cricut machine has given the Huntsville Public Library another way to reach out to the public during this pandemic. We have done our best to go above and beyond to make sure our patrons, especially the children, have access to crafts as well as books in order to stimulate their minds and keep them focused on moving forward as our world changes around us."



Asked why she is willing to spend so much time and effort putting together these craft projects, Sion says, "Children, especially for me, are an incredibly important part of the Huntsville Public Library. They are our future and when they start off young in a place like the library, they use their imaginations and stimulate parts of their brains they wouldn't normally when they are sitting at home playing video games or watching TV."

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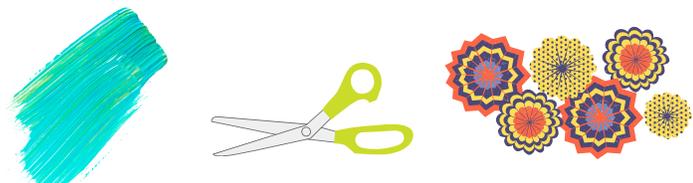
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Monday-Friday
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
& 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.



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Sion adds, "Right now, I'm working on an Easter Bunny craft...but there are many projects I plan to do in the future that will be associated with themes and not necessarily holidays. So, we may be doing something very exciting with shark week, and when story time starts up again, we'll have a fox themed craft, or an owl themed craft to go with story hour." Thinking about other groups who can be served, Sion says, "So far, the age group ranges from toddler to 10 years. Sometime in the future, I'll be concentrating on more complicated crafts such as 3D puzzles and buildable objects that can be geared more towards teenagers."



Kristin with the Cricut and one of her Easter Crafts.

Get Outside, Go On, Get!

BY KARSTON VAN TRONK, CIRCULATION



Spring has sprung in Southeast Texas! An otherwise ordinary winter capped by a freeze we'll never forget has finally passed and the redbuds and dogwoods are now speckling our forest home with splashes of pink and white. At the time of writing, wild flowers have come up and the clover next to my home is filling the air with its sweet scent. If ever there was a time to get outside and enjoy nature I'm here to tell you, that time is now. Thanks to Covid-19, last year saw record numbers flock to our nation's outdoor spaces.

Google, which tracks GPS data from cell phones, released data that show just how much we needed to escape from inside our homes. Of every category tracked, parks is the only one to experience a meteoric rise of over 80% from January 2020! From dog parks to national parks, record attendance has been reported all over the country.

This surge into the great outdoors is a fantastic thing. The North American park system, which includes national parks, monuments, lakes and sea shores, preserves and more, is one of the greatest achievements in United States history. Beginning with the creation of Yellowstone National Park by The Act of Dedication, signed by Ulysses S. Grant on March 1, 1872, the United States has fought to preserve wild and beautiful places from coast to coast. Since then, we have created 423 units covering over 85 million acres in all 50 states and all U.S. territories. This doesn't even count state parks, only those managed by the federal government, so is only a fraction of the area at your disposal for outdoor recreation. The availability of such wide open spaces, and our want to explore them, is deeply ingrained in our national identity, and something we ought not take for granted.

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Besides, getting outside is just plain good for you! A study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Health Research* found spending just 20 minutes outside each day can improve your general well-being. *Harvard Men's Health Watch* reports that a 90 minute nature walk can reduce repetitive negative thoughts and that a natural landscape reduces levels of stress, blood pressure, and worry. So, get outside!



The Frio River flows past Old Baldy in Garner State Park, situated in the heart of the Texas hill country.

The deeper you venture into the woods, the better; walk until you can't hear the sounds of the highway or the city and relax; take advantage of the exercise, fresh air, and the chance to clear your mind.

All right. I've gotten Mother Nature's bona fides out of the way. I'm sure you're wondering what there is to *do* outside, and how does one best take advantage of outdoor spaces? Let's start with the parks: Texas is home to 14 national parks and 80 state parks, and because Texas is so large and is host to such a variety of ecosystems, there is a huge range of activities and sights. From the Big Thicket to Big Bend, there's a colossal amount of land to see and hike through. Each park offers miles and miles of hiking trails and camping opportunities for everyone, from single campers in tents to families in R.V.s. Many parks even offer full cabins! Additionally, visitors can participate in activities like the famous Saturday night summer dances at Garner State Park, fishing or floating in one of Texas' many rivers, learning about natural and U.S. history, and even taking in historic Civilian Conservation Corps architecture. If I were to write here a list of everything you could do in U.S. parks it would (and does) fill a book. Come to the library to find one. Some national and state "parks" aren't even parks, like the Alamo or the battleship Texas!

Here in Huntsville we are lucky to have a local state park thanks to the Walker County officials who, in the 1930s sold bonds to purchase land for the Texas State Parks Board. From 1937 to 1942 a company from the Civilian Conservation Corps consisting of African-American World War I veterans built the infrastructure of the park and impounded the lake. The start of World War II, as well as the (unrelated) destruction of the first dam due to flooding put a halt to the opening of the park. After the dam was reconstructed, the Huntsville-Walker County Chamber of Commerce dedicated and opened Huntsville State Park to the public on the 18th of May, 1956. And what a great thing it is to have a state park so close by! Miles of forest and lakeside hiking; swimming, boating and fishing for those lazy summer days; bird watching, and a nature center with local specimens to visit. I guarantee you there is something for every single person. Just what that might be...well, you should go and find out for yourself.

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Parks, big and small, are a great way to get outside, but some folks, like myself, enjoy activities that are prohibitive to a park, such as hunting, foraging, and primitive camping. While parks around our state provide some-what limited opportunities for these types of activities, on public land they abound. The closest example we have here is the Sam Houston National Forest (the Sam, as those in the know call it). Now, a national forest is to a park what a park is to a yard. Some infrastructure, such as trails and simple campsites, is built by the U.S. Forest Service, but you won't find the same infrastructure as you will in a park. They are also managed as a resource, not purely a source of recreation. This means national forests exist so citizens of the area can use it for timber, food, recreation and livestock grazing; it also means the land is put to use as watershed protection and conservation.



In fact, you likely already benefit from the national forest and don't even realize it. Huntsville is full of beautiful birds all year around that nest and feed in the forest, and driving into town from the south, east, or west almost certainly has you on a road surrounded by reaching pines interspaced with yaupon holly, beautyberry, and dwarf palmetto. Those wanting to get to know the outdoors better are flush with choices. Amateur botanists will find the variety of plants and fungi in the forest astounding, and birders might be lucky enough to see a screeching owl, a bald eagle, or an endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Both can take advantage of the numerous trails and roads throughout the area. Fishermen have their pick of warm water fishing spots. Both Lake Livingston and Lake Conroe border the forest and many creeks and streams run through it. In spring, an avid angler can chase the white bass run for miles through hardwood bottomlands and largemouth abound in both lakes and the small ponds spotted throughout the Sam.

Hunters, too, will find that the Sam offers ample opportunity. Deer season is by far the most popular game season for Texas hunters, and the forest provides. General season for white-tail runs from November 7th to January 17th, and camping is only allowed in designated areas during this time. Other game is also available in our backyard forest for the clever small game hunter. Squirrel, rabbit, dove, and racoon all offer their own unique challenge as well as excellent table fare. An invasive population of wild pigs live in the forest as well and, while an element of danger is involved, they offer a year-round opportunity to fill your freezer.

So get outside! There are too many reasons and too many opportunities to not take advantage of the benefits and resources at your fingertips. If you are already an avid outdoorsperson, share your passion with friends and family and take somebody new to your hobby out with you. The best way to protect these resources is to cultivate pride in them and people can't have pride in them without experiencing what they offer, and why we need to keep them around. Here at the Huntsville Public Library we have all the resources you need to get out and enjoy yourself in the great outdoors.



Raven Lodge at Huntsville State Park is a popular place for weddings in the spring and summer.

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There are guidebooks for both local and statewide trails, identification books for plants and animals, natural history books and books about the national history of our relationship with the outdoors. In the Johnnie Jo Sowell Dickenson Genealogy Room, you'll find even more connections to our past. Photographs of days gone by, from the construction of Huntsville State Parks to its opening, as well as photos of happy campers throughout the decades are all part of the special collection. Library staff are more than happy to connect you with these resources and can always help you find information about rules and regulations as well.

[Books to Inspire a Hike at the Huntsville Public Library.](#)

1. ***Idiot's Guides: Foraging*** by Mark "Merriwether" Vorderbruggen, PhD
2. ***Trees of Texas*** by Stan Trkiela
3. ***Wild Flowers of the Big Thicket, East Texas, and Western Louisiana*** by Geyata Ajilvsgi
4. ***Big Bend Vistas: A Geological Exploration of the Big Bend*** by William MacLeod
5. ***Roadside Geology of Texas*** by Darwin Spearing

Starlight, Star Bright, Starling Birds in Flight

BY BAILLIE PRETZER, CHILDREN'S COORDINATOR



Every year beginning in the Fall, our horizons are graced with beautiful synchronous formations of Starling birds. But do you know there is a name for these formations? No, it isn't 'flock' nor is it 'swarm,' rather they are called murmurations. Because they are always such a spectacular sight to see, we have probably all wondered how, and perhaps even why, these birds move in such fascinating patterns. The study of these very questions dates back to 1987 and allowed researchers in Italy to match computer simulations gathered then to reality 30 years later in 2008. The researchers discovered that when one bird changes direction, so do its seven nearest neighbors. Then each of their seven nearest neighbors follow suit, continuing throughout the flock creating a ripple effect. This is why the murmurations look like pulsating waves and clouds that come alive with varying speeds and different directions.

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Starling Birds, Continued From Page 5

As beautiful as their flight patterns are, do you know these birds are in fact a nonnative invasive species to the US? Indeed, this species is actually from the Eurasian continent. What started as a mere 80 Starlings being released into Central Park in New York City in 1890 peaked to an estimated 200 million breeding-age adults across the entire North American continent. What is perhaps most fascinating about this species, however, is that in just a little over a century, evolutionary change has already occurred within regional populations of the species. In February of this year, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (study of birds) released an article about their deep-dive study into the species' genetics. They found that a genome in their DNA has shifted just enough to allow them to adapt much faster and easier to these new environments not found in their native European habitats.



Closeup of a Starling

Normally in other less mobile species, such a small gene pool would result in what's called a "genetic bottleneck" that would lead to extinction. However, scientists suspect that due to the bird's scope of movement across the North American continent, each population adapted to their new environments. As a result, genetic variations were able to develop amongst future generations, firmly establishing them in each ecosystem they inhabited. Quite tragically, however, the European Starling has seen a fifty percent decline in population across the whole of North America as compared to 50 years ago. While the study does not suggest what the reason may be, one can speculate that it may be due to varying aspects of human development.

Spring is now upon us and migratory animals are escaping the impending winter season of the southern hemisphere as nature emerges from hibernation. As for the Starlings? Thankfully they are here to stay and we can continue to enjoy the mesmerizing murmurations they create. While you await your first Starling sighting of the season, come check out the materials Huntsville Public Library has to offer on birds, migratory habits and patterns, and more.

1. CALVIN, LOOK OUT! A BOOKWORM BIRDIE GETS GLASSES;
PICTURE BOOK BY JENNIFER BERNE
2. **Birds: Nature's Magnificent Flying Machines; juvenile nonfiction by Caroline Arnold**
3. BACKYARD BIRD WATCHING FOR KIDS: HOW TO ATTRACT, FEED,
AND PROVIDE HOMES FOR BIRDS; JUVENILE NONFICTION BY
GEORGE H HARRISON
4. **A Backyard Birding Adventure: What's in Your Yard;
juvenile nonfiction by Kermit Cummings**
5. THE AVIARY ; JUVENILE FICTION BY KATHLEEN O'DELL



Bigfoot in East Texas

BY JOSH SABO, IT SERVICES COORDINATOR

Sasquatch, Skunk Ape, Skookum, Yeti, Wild Hairy Man, Wood Ape, Fouke Monster, and The Grassman. These are some of the many monikers given to a worldwide phenomenon that most of us in the United States simply refer to as Bigfoot. The creature is usually described as being seven or eight feet tall, bipedal, covered in thick hair, and resembles something like an ape-human hybrid.



Frame 352 of the famous Patterson-Gimlin film.

Oh yeah, and it has really big feet.

Often plaster casts are made of alleged “footprints” from Bigfoot and cited as evidence of its existence. The most compelling piece of evidence, however, is a film taken by Roger Patterson and Robert “Bob” Gimlin in 1967. The two had rented a movie camera and were shooting stock footage in the Northern California forest when they happened to spot a large ape-like creature walking through the trees. Patterson ran towards the “creature” and began filming. This 10 second clip would become the second most scrutinized piece of film after the infamous Zapruder Film that captured the assassination of President John F. Kennedy four years prior.

Although a large percentage of Bigfoot sightings occur in the Pacific Northwest, it has also been sighted in the Piney Woods. In fact, according to the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization, the county with the largest number of sightings in Texas is Montgomery County. Bigfoot hunters regularly search the Sam Houston National Forest for the elusive creature. Huntsville has even hosted the Southeast Texas Bigfoot Conference and there are actually people who search for Bigfoot in the Piney Woods for recreational purposes.

The Huntsville Public Library offers several books on Bigfoot, as well as the paranormal and other unexplained phenomena. My personal favorite is *Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture* by Christopher D. Bader, F. Carson Mencken, and Joseph O. Baker. Another book I recommend is *Bigfoot and Other Monsters* by John Hawkins.

If you happen to have any stories or sightings of Bigfoot in the Huntsville area, email them to jsabo@huntsvilletx.gov! They could be featured in this newsletter!



Things Happening at the Huntsville Public Library



National Library Week

Beginning Sunday, April 4th the Huntsville Public Library will be celebrating National Library Week with daily challenges and events including a live music performance!

Sunday 4/4 - Super Star Sunday

Submit the name of a library worker that has made a difference to you at:

<https://bit.ly/3dkQLpN>

Monday 4/5 - Much Love Monday

Share the love in a quick video or social media post or by sending us a note or drawing that completes the following statement:

The Huntsville Public Library is important to me because...

Tuesday 4/6 - Toast of the Town Tuesday

Join library staff at City Hall at 6 pm for the City Council Meeting to hear the Mayor's National Library Week 2021 Proclamation. Post something from the meeting you find interesting or important in addition to the Proclamation.

Wednesday 4/7 - Wilderness Wednesday

Use a library resource to learn about Native Texas flora and fauna. Then, try to find a real-life example at one of our City, State, or National Parks. Send us a picture of you in the "wilderness" and tell us what you looked for, what you found, and something new you learned.

Thursday 4/8 - Thrilling Thursday

Craft a tail based upon a character in a favorite tale for members of your family/household to wear. Submit/post a picture of them. Tell us which character inspired the tail.

Friday 4/9 - Fine Arts Friday

Enjoy a live musical performance by the Sam Houston Jazz Combo at the Huntsville Public Library at 5:00 pm. This will also be streamed on our Facebook page.

Saturday 4/10 - Self on the Shelf Saturday

Using a book that has a face on the cover, digitally insert or affix a picture of yourself in place of the book's face OR cover your face with the one on the book and take a photo. Submit it on social media.

Earth Day Story Walk

Hosted by Huntsville Public Library and Sponsored by The Home Depot

10:30 a.m. Thursday, April 22

For Ages 5-9

Walk through Eastham-Thomason Park at your own pace. Bilingual signs with the story will be posted along Prairie Trail.

Take home kits available at the end of the walk with seeds, pots, and soil (while supplies last).

For more information, please contact Children's Coordinator Baillie Pretzer at 936-291-5910.



The Earth Day Story Walk on 4/22

All submissions for National Library Week can be sent to HPL@huntsvilletx.gov or posted on our Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram!