

Research expedition - Texas, late summer
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pexl

Eastern spotted whiptail - *Aspidoscelis gularis*



This diurnal lizard is native to the southern United States and Mexico. They are hardy, speedy, and appreciate even the hottest Texas days. This was among a group of several that were sunning in the middle of the trail as the sun came out from behind the clouds.



Dung Beetle - *Onthophagus taurus*

There are many, many species of dung beetle native to Texas. (And more species worldwide than there are mammals - you know how this planet is about its scarab beetles...) So this species is largely a guess. Regardless of the species, the lack of protruding horns means this is probably a female. She was a very alert and friendly little creature, looking right up at me as I greeted her. You can see in this image her face is sort of shaped like a shovel. I hope I get to befriend another some time - I'll try to bring gloves next time I am out here.

Beautyberry - *Callicarpa Americana*



The sight of these beautiful magenta berries are the first signal in Texas that summer is soon coming to a close. The berries are edible to deer and birds, but their astringency makes them likely to give a human a stomach ache. The leaves contain an effective mosquito repellent.

Tiger swallowtail - *Papilio glaucus*

The tiger swallowtail is a common butterfly throughout the eastern United States; this one in central Texas was at the westernmost border of their region. This butterfly was hanging around a moist patch of earth where a puddle had dried up, seeking water and nutrients.

The lack of blue spots along the bottom of the wings indicates this is a male.



Wax mallow - *Malvaviscus arboreus*



The wax mallow is an understory shrub native to the southern United States and Central America. Its flowers, which stay mostly closed, are an important source of food for the Ruby-throated hummingbird.