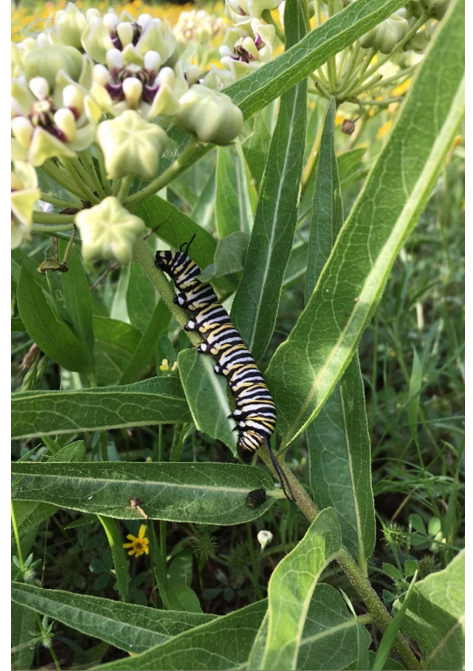


**WHAT'S HAPPENIN' ON THE HILL**  
**NATURAL HISTORY OF HAYS COUNTY**  
Beacon Hill, Buda, Texas  
May 2021

**A REGAL MIGRATION**

In Central Texas we are fortunate to witness one of the Animal Kingdom's greatest migrations. In springtime, Monarch butterflies stream north from wintering grounds in Central Mexico and begin a multi-generational journey across North America. Eggs laid on toxic Milkweeds develop into vividly colored caterpillars that turn into butterflies that continue the migration. With conservation of larval, nectar and roosting plants, the Monarch's procession will keep enriching our lives.

**ANTELOPE-HORNS, *Asclepias asperula***, is a perennial herb found from the Blackland Prairies westward through the Hill Country and Trans-Pecos into Mexico and Southern California and north to Nevada and Nebraska. Over 100 species of milkweed are found in North America, but only ¼ of these are suitable hosts for the Monarch butterfly. Antelope-horns is one of the food sources for the larvae of the Monarch. Many insects, like Gray Hairstreak butterflies and bumble bees, drink of the showy flower's nectar. The 2'X2' sized plant has stems with linear-shaped, opposite leaves and a terminal cluster of white & green flowers. The milky sap is toxic to vertebrates, but consumed by the vividly colored caterpillars that retain the toxin, thus providing them protection from predators. The genus name comes from Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine & healing, as this plant has been used medicinally for centuries.



Antelope-horns - member of the Milkweed subfamily (Asclepiadoideae)

**PEARL MILKWEED VINE, *Matelea reticulata***, is an uncommon herbaceous perennial vine growing 6-15' on shrubs and small trees in partly sunny locations. It is found in Texas and Mexico, and is one of five milkweeds encountered on Beacon Hill. The twining stem and oppositely arranged heart-shaped leaves are covered with soft hairs. The flat, star-shaped flower is especially attractive with its net-like veined petals (see species name) and the shiny pearl-like centerpiece. The plant begins flowering in April and continues intermittently through the summer. It produces the familiar milky sap that contains a toxin dangerous to most animals. This vine is not a preferred food source for Monarchs, but it is a host plant for the related Queen butterfly. Pollinated flowers produce a spiny pod that opens to expose seeds with silky threads that float on the breeze and disperse this unique native plant.



Pearl Milkweed Vine - member of Milkweed subfamily (Asclepiadoideae)

By Eric Beckers, Natural Heritage Committee  
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