

# THIS WEEK ON THE LLANO ESTACADO

AUGUST 23-27, 2010



Folks are seeing lots of grasshoppers at present. Every year, somewhere, in West Texas, there is a population explosion of grasshoppers. Our plentiful July rains and the green verdant growth that followed has provided plenty of food for every grasshopper that hatched. The dense vegetation has given plentiful cover for protection from predators. Now that the ground has dried out and the lush green is beginning to turn yellowish or brownish, grasshoppers are beginning to move around in significant numbers, looking for greener feeding grounds. Several species are drawn to the lights in town and gather by the thousands on the walls under the lights.

As few as seven grasshoppers per square yard is enough to alter the amount of forage, the growth of plants, and the dynamics of seed production. A serious infestation can change habitat and lead to soil erosion. It is not only man that alters the landscape, for many creatures disturb ecosystems with regularity.

**Teacher and student challenge;** If you have the time and interest, please catch grasshoppers and macro-photograph them with the highest resolution and then email ([bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.org](mailto:bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.org)) or mail (1307 E. Wadley, 79705) a CD of the picture(s). Or you can post the picture to the Burr Williams Facebook wall! We post 3-7 photographs every day on Facebook... of West Texas history, flora and fauna. Often great discussions occur with knowledgeable folks about animal behavior, plant adaptation, and more. We also often pose questions for people to try to answer for fun!