

A Sticky Situation

by James “Drew” Bennie, Rio Grande Valley Chapter

One late spring, I was volunteering at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen and noticed a man walking along the trail followed by his three sons. The boys were each about two years apart and were in stair step order, the smallest one trying to keep up. As they passed me, the man asked me what I was doing. I replied that I was removing Guinea grass (what else?) so the other plants would have less competition and a better chance to grow. I wished them a good day and off they went down the trail.

Within a couple of minutes the middle boy, about seven years old, came running down the path yelling, “Sir! Sir! You have to come help! A bird is caught!” I dropped my tools and hastened to the path. With a puzzled look I asked “What do you mean caught?” “It’s caught in a bush,” he hastily said as we hustled down the path.

His brothers and dad were there looking down at something as we approached. I looked and there was a humiliated but scared half grown Kiskadee flycatcher entangled in a healthy native Plumbago bush covered in sticky seeds. The stems of the plant had stuck both to each other and to the bird thus preventing the bird’s escape.



The man suggested that if we used a t-shirt we could grab the bird and untangle it. Before I could say yes the older boy had his shirt off and shoved it to me. I placed it over the bird and as I held it, they helped untangle the stems. The bird worked his head out and gave me a tentative peck on the hand. Do you suppose the Kiskadee had second thoughts about making me mad and got nervous? Great Kiskadee (photo by Chuck Cornell)

As we tried to remove the copious amounts of sticky Plumbago seeds from the little guy, he began to wiggle more. I moved him over to the other side of the path and put him on a low branch of a mesquite tree thinking he would prefer to be in a tree. He had other ideas and dropped into the Guinea Grass below him to hide from us.

As I turned to the boys to thank them I noticed the mama bird in a distant Ebony tree watching us. “You boys probably saved that bird’s life. You should be proud of yourselves!” I said as the three puffed out their chests a little. I told them that I had seen the mother bird and she would be able to help the little one now. As the bare chested older boy picked Plumbago seeds from his shirt, we said our good byes and the group walked on to new adventures. I guess Good Samaritans come in all sizes.