

## There's a new book in town

Article & photos by Anita Westervelt  
South Texas Border Chapter

An aura of grey-olive drab fur on the moth sheet caught my eye in the early dawn light. The lone moth was on the sheet long after the other night flyers had scarpered off to their daytime venues. I took advantage of the opportunity to capture photos from several angles. I rely on [www.iNaturalist.org](http://www.iNaturalist.org) to help identify what I find on my moth sheet/black light apparatus.



Identification was quick: **Heiligbrodt's mesquite moth** (*Syssphinx heiligbrodti*).

Some years ago, I photographed **Io moths** (*Automeris io*) and caterpillars.



A frequent flyer to the moth sheet is the **Indomitable Graphic** (*Melipotis indomita*). If you're into Art Deco, the wing markings of this moth fit richly into that era.

Interestingly, these three moths have something in common: They use the **honey mesquite tree** (*Prosopis glandulosa*) as a larval food plant.

Indomitable Graphic Moth

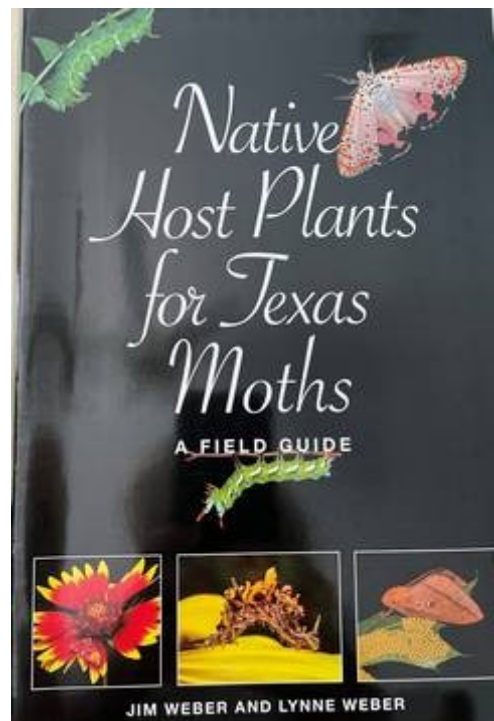
I know this because I have a new book – a quick reference to some of my favorite moths and favorite and not so favorite plants. Because of this valuable book, I have a bit more incentive to keep some of those less appreciated plants because they are food for moth caterpillars – like snailseed vine feeds moonseed caterpillars and climbing hempvine feeds scarlet-bodied wasp moth larvae and *Condica confederata* caterpillars.

Here's the book that's flying off the bookshelves and winging its way to Texas moth fans:

Weber, Jim and Weber, Lynne. “**Native Host Plants for Texas Moths: A Field Guide.**” 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 2022. Here's a quick link to the university press for your own copy: <https://www.tamupress.com/search-results/?category=TAMUGG>

This is more than a moth book. I would recommend first-time and veteran moth enthusiasts, and native plant lovers alike, to go through the book page by page. It won't take long to breeze through the 288 pages; you'll be at the end all too soon.

The book is designed in double-page spreads. Look at the Texas range map at the bottom of the left-hand page; if there are black dots at the tip of Texas, read up on the plant and the moths it attracts. The left page also has three photos of a plant: an overall view, and close ups of leaves and fruit or of the seed pods or flowers. The right-hand page describes the plant and shows photos of the moths and caterpillars that use the plant. Check out the photo credits of the caterpillars and moths; where the authors used stock from local experts, you'll see familiar names of Texas Master Naturalists and friends of our TMN chapters, like John Brush, Berry Nall and Seth Patterson.



The book is sectioned by plant categories: wildflowers, trees, shrubs, vines and ferns and grasses; the fore edges of the leaves are marked by different colors to distinguish each section.

The back of the book has an amazing appendix that provides Texas moth and native host plant associations, helpful because many moth caterpillars eat more than one type of native plants.

Following the appendix is a glossary of helpful botanical terms, an alphabetical index of native host plants and a separate alphabetical index of moths.

This is an excellently put-together book: it's informative, the photography is clear and colorful, and the layout and design of the pages makes it inviting and easy to use.