

Klondike Park (Lewis and Clark Trail)

February 9, 2026

(What? No Species List? Yep. We usually don't make species lists for our winter hikes because most plants are dormant. Trying to determine the species of a dormant plant from its dried-up remains is not always reliable. It serves little purpose to create unreliable species lists.)

NOTES

We met in the spacious "Klondike Boat Launch" parking lot next to the Katy Trail. We then walked along the Lewis and Clark Trail (which parallels Hwy 94) nearly all the way to the park's main entrance (about 1.75 miles round trip). The crushed-rock trail was still covered with a patchwork of crunchy snow, but it wasn't slippery.

Although walking near a noisy roadway may not seem appealing, we come here from time to time quite purposefully to check for signs of spring.

On our NORTH side we are separated from the highway by a wide, prairie-like strip of grassland. We were able to identify quite a few dried-up leftover plants and wildflowers along that strip.

- A big attraction were the large Ozark Witch-hazel shrubs that had been planted on the prairie strip. Although several were profusely blooming, only one yielded its famous fragrance. But the sky was overcast and we noticed no pollinators. Had the sun been shining, maybe the flowers would have been more fragrant.
- We also noticed at least a dozen egg cases from the Chinese Mantis (*Tenodera sinensis*). They were tightly affixed to plant stems.

On our SOUTH side the terrain was quite different. Instead of a prairie strip, it was heavily wooded. Instead of a highway, there was a stream.

- We were able to identify many trees (including at least 1 pecan tree) by their winter buds.
- We were able to identify the many vines mostly by the color of their bark and by the location of their aerial rootlets. With no leaves to obstruct us, we all got to clearly observe the distinctive dark-on-light lenticel pattern of the Oriental Bittersweet's bark.

Of course John always has lots of stories. Here are a couple that stood out this week:

- the first was his story about Jeremy Bentham (which he told in response to a question about the possible renaming of *Cornus florida* [flowering dogwood] to *Benthamidia florida*). Nearly 200 years after his death, Jeremy Bentham's clothed body (now with a wax head) still sits in a glass case in University College London. It is said that he is still recorded in council meeting minutes as being "present but not voting".
- a second story was about John's distrust of the purity of any homemade "DMT" – a hallucinogenic drug known as American Ayahuasca. He told this story in response to somebody who found an Illinois Bundleflower [*Desmanthus illinoensis*] plant – whose roots are used in the making of the drug.

It was a very pleasant walk. We were all happy that we came.

PARTICIPANTS:

There were 17 of us botanists today, who are (in alphabetical order):

Kathy Bildner, Steve Bizub, Jerry Castillon, Wayne Clark, Christine Ellis, Ann Esswein, Karen Gabbert, Michael Laschober, Len Meier, Burt Noll, John Oliver, David Steinmeyer, Kathy Thiele, George Van Brunt, Elaine Wolshock, Matthew Wolshock, and Richard Wolshock.