

Klondike Park (Lewis & Clark Trail)

February 9, 2026

What? No Species List? Nope. 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. So, we'll just give an overview of things that happened on our walk today.

NOTES

We met in the spacious "Klondike Boat Launch" parking lot next to the Katy Trail. We then walked westward 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 partially covered with a patchwork of crunchy snow, but it wasn't slippery.

Although walking near a noisy roadway may not seem appealing, we often come here this time of year to check for signs of spring.

On our NORTH side we are separated from Hwy 94 by a wide, prairie-like strip of grassland. Along that strip we were able to identify the dried-up remains of quite a few plants and wildflowers.

- 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 creek.

- 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 his name is still recorded in council meeting minutes as being "present but not voting".
- in another story, John expressed his distrust of any homemade "DMT" – a hallucinogenic drug known as American Ayahuasca. Evidently it is difficult to make and its purity is always doubtful. 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.