

Summary: Realzola, Gyrinidae (Whirligig Beetles)

Jerry Cook initiated the efforts for a study of Gyrinids. Edward Realzola worked as the lead collector for the first Gyrinids- Whirligig Water Beetles project. He was a Biology student at Sam Houston State University and worked under the supervision of Dr. Cook, who served as President of the Thicket of Diversity during its formation years.

The first project, “*Survey and Inventory of Gyrinids of the Primitive Texas Big Thicket Area*” was for \$7,000. From financial records it appears that the funding came from Cook’s work with Terrestrial Arthropods which was the recipient of the \$7000. The work with gyrinids was completed. A review of submitted data by ToD Director Mona Halvorsen showed that some of the collection sites were outside of our designated Big Thicket area. The *Primitive Big Thicket* area is much larger than what is designated today. She removed those data points in the final analysis and incorporated changes into the final species list. Data was interactively mapped using ARC GIS. The map can not be viewed online without renewal of the subscription.

In 2014-15. Realzola submitted a request for a second project, “*Survey and Inventory of Gyrinids in Big Thicket Wetlands (Continued Survey)*.” This identified a more specific collection area. Realzola was enrolled as a graduate student and still under the supervision of Dr. Cook. It was TCEQ funded for \$15,050. All of the funds were not expended, although most of the project was completed. Funds spent were \$13,050. Realzola’s outreach was excellent. He lectured for Kountze High School, the National Park Service and at a Science Café. He was a field trip guide for numerous trips. He assisted other researchers as a volunteer with their collections, most notably with Alison Tarter’s mussel research.

Realzola found a specimen that could not be identified and may possibly be *New to Science*. Data identification was not completed as Realzola became very ill with a permanent disability. Total data identification was thus not completed. Realzola’s work did get formally published and the project was recognized in newspapers and the BTA’s newsletter. He was granted a time extension but was unable to continue. The project is now closed. TCEQ remaining funds will be reallocated elsewhere.

Submitted by Mary C. Johnston July 17, 2020

In 2026, ToD Chair Mary Johnston and Intern, Natalia Doiron, reviewed data and records. The 8 species listed in the most recent Tally remained unchanged in 2026 as no additional data had been submitted. The species are verified.

Submitted by Mary C. Johnston, April 2026