



# THE PRICKLY PEAR

Big Country Master Naturalist - [txmn.org/bc/](http://txmn.org/bc/)

## In this issue:

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- President's Column
- The Other Cardinal
- First Quarter Full Moons
- Game
- Creature Feature of the Quarter
- Resource Corner
- Spotlight
- Forms/Sign-ups

## 2024 BCMN Officers

**President**  
 Annabelle Moore

**Vice President**  
 Randy Deming

**Secretary**  
 Melanie Heinz

**Treasurer**  
 Mike Richins

## Upcoming Special Events

**Texas Farm Ranch & Wildlife Expo**  
 Friday, March 1, All Day Event

**AISD students at Abilene State Park**  
 Thursday, March 7, 9:00a-12:00p  
 Volunteers needed.

**STEAM event, Abilene Christian University Hunter Welcome Center**  
 Thursday-Friday, March 7-8

**Wild Days at Abilene Zoo**  
 Saturday-Sunday, March 9-17 Volunteers needed

**Archaeological dig at Paint Rock**  
 Saturday, March 23, 10:00a-4:30p

**Wings on the Wind**  
 Saturday, April 20, 11:00a-3:00p

**City Nature Challenge Training at South Branch Library**  
 Tuesday, April 23rd, 6:00p

**City Nature Challenge**  
 Friday-Monday, April 26th-29th

Please check our private BCMN calendar for dates for meetings, star parties and monthly hikes. Click here: [txmn.org/bc](http://txmn.org/bc) Password is: BCMN

#TMNTuesday Page

2024 #TMNTuesdays	
January 9	May 14
February 13	June 11
March 5*	July 9
April 9	August 13
September 10	
October 8	
November 12	
December 10	

Watch for emails with information about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

**Nature**  
*Always*  
**wears the**  
**color of**  
**the**  
*Spirit.*

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*



Come join our members group on Facebook!

Click the Facebook icon to be redirected to join the page

**VMS Link to submit hours [Texas Parks & Wildlife Department](http://Texas Parks & Wildlife Department)**

Click the following link for the Big Country Master Naturalist page for more calendar event information. Enter password (BCMNM) [txmn.org/bc](http://txmn.org/bc)

Monthly nature articles & past Abilene Reporter News articles can be found: [HERE](#)



## President's Note

Hello Master Naturalists!  
 Spring has sprung early this year. What a surprise to have such warm weather so soon. A big thank you to everyone who has made the Farm and Ranch Show such a success! We have a busy March ahead and there are plenty of opportunities to participate: from the Wild Days at Abilene Zoo to sharing the wonders of nature with AISD students at Abilene State Park and STEAM students at Abilene Christian University. Thank you for all you do! Don't forget to log your volunteer hours!












Your 2024 President,  
*Annabelle Moore*



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## The Other Cardinal

Article by: Tim and Tammy Layman

What might surprise you is there is more than one cardinal. The cardinal we all see with regularity is the brilliantly colored Northern Cardinal or "Red bird." The legend is when you see this beautiful bird in your yard or garden it is a visit from a loved one that has passed.

Now "the other cardinal" we have in our area is known as the Pyrrhuloxia. Other names given to this dapper in looks, cheerful in song, and tough as a boot songbird include the desert cardinal, the gray cardinal and/or the false cardinal. The Pyrrhuloxia is a non-migrating bird that is found in west and southwest Texas. When you put your eyes on this very secretive bird of the brush you will be truly astonished, and literally taken aback by its stunning beauty.

It can be attracted to your backyard by water elements and seed feeders. Their favorite is the black oil sunflower seed. They use yellowish, stubby parrot-like bills to crack these sunflower seeds faster than you can say Jack Robinson. They also feed on insects and benefit cotton fields by eating cotton worms and weevils. It loves mesquite thickets and heavy brush. Being that mesquite beans are a favorite treat it is no wonder they love our rugged and wild place.

Let's talk about how you can distinguish between the Northern Cardinal and the Pyrrhuloxia. They are cousins you know. The male Northern Cardinal will be solid red with a black mask and throat, and a reddish bill. The female Northern Cardinal will be buff brown with red on her wings, tail and crest. She has the same black features as the male, with a red-orange bill. The male Pyrrhuloxia is grayish overall with red tinges on his wings, crest, and tail. He has a red mask and belly stripe with a yellow bill. The female Northern Cardinal and the male Pyrrhuloxia are sometimes hard to distinguish if you do not look carefully. The female Pyrrhuloxia is pretty much solid gray in color. She has a little red on her wings and crest, and a yellow bill. After several sightings of the two cardinals, you will be quite good at identifying the differences.

When you first see the male Pyrrhuloxia and put your binoculars or camera on him you will be wowed. This starts an adventurous journey to know more about the other cardinal. Oh by the way, be quick they are very reluctant. There is much more to discover about the Pyrrhuloxia such as mating, nesting and most interesting is parenting. Watching these birds parenting skills will astound you. Both parents are involved in teaching two to three chicks. Some of the teaching moments you will observe will include flying lessons that involve moving from one tree or bush to another. How to feed and what to eat is an important lesson. These parents are intensely expectant for the young to watch, pay attention and react to their vocal demonstrations. We as humans could probably learn a few helpful things from these beautiful birds.

As we like to say, "Open your eyes, look with purpose and God will amaze you."



Adult male Northern Cardinal (left) and adult male Pyrrhuloxia (right).  
 Courtesy of Jeff Clow, Jeff Clow Photo





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*February*

*is short,  
 it is*

*Filled with*

*lots of love and  
 sweet*

*Surprises*

*-Charmaine J. Forde*

## First 3 Months of Full Moons

### Their Names and a Brief Meaning



Photo Credit Colleen Quinnell/The Old Farmer's Almanac

The Wolf Moon was named based on the legend that wolves are more likely to be howling at this time of the year due to hunger.



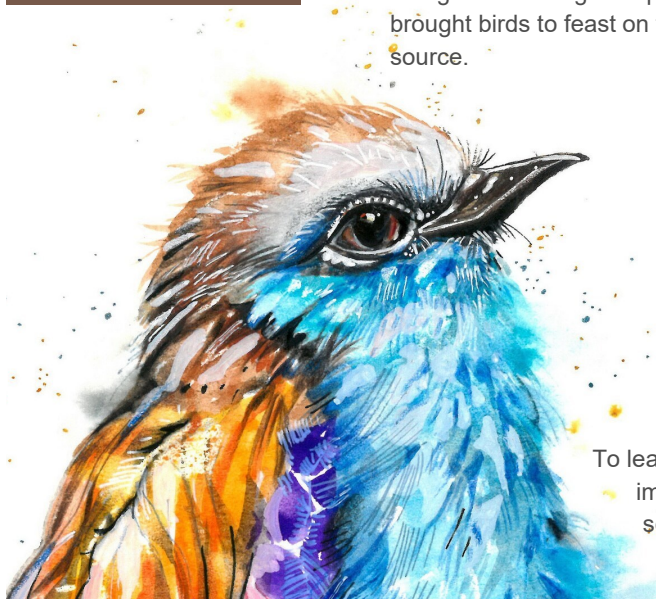
Photo Credit Colleen Quinnell/The Old Farmer's Almanac

The Snowy Moon received its name due to February usually having the heaviest snowfall of all the months. February is typically the the snowiest month of the year in the U.S.



Photo Credit Colleen Quinnell/The Old Farmer's Almanac

The Worm Moon was believed to show around the spring during the wetter season. The rain and moisture was thought to be a sign of spring as it brought birds to feast on their wiggly food source.



To learn more click the moon image to be redirected to source material from the Farmer's Almanac.



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## Can You Name Them ALL?



Photo Credit Nathan Rostampour

Female Blue Jay

Northern Mockingbird

Common Grackle

Safe Thrasher



Photo Credit: LA Dawson

Eastern Garter Snake

Rat Snake

Prairie Rattlesnake

Lined Snake

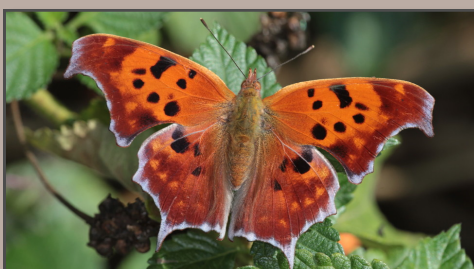


Photo Credit: (c) John Flannery, some rights reserved (CC BY-SA)

Tropical Buckeye

Painted Lady

Hackberry Emperor

Question Mark



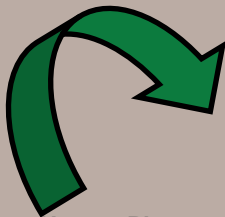
thomasmale / Getty Images / iStockphoto

Mediterranean Gecko

Brown Lizard

Texas Spiny Lizard

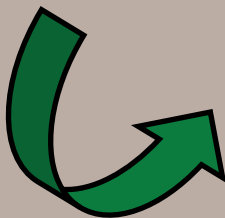
Earless Lizard



**How to Play**  
 Click the box with what you think the answer is.



If you're correct you will get a correct if not you get a red X, click back on each answer window.





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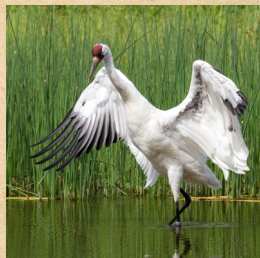
**Treasurer**  
 Mike Richins

## Creature Feature

### Whooping Crane

**Scientific name:** *Grus americana*

Is an endangered crane species, native to North America, named for its "whooping" calls. Along with the sandhill crane (*Antigone canadensis*), it is one of only two crane species native to North America, and it is also the tallest North American bird species. The whooping crane's lifespan is estimated to be 22-24 years in the wild. After being pushed to the brink of extinction, due to unregulated hunting and loss of habitat, and just 21 wild (and two captive) cranes remaining by 1941. At last count there are nearly 700 wild Whooping Cranes.



Information and graphic from Wikipedia

For further content click link [Whooping crane](#)

Click the Box to be directed to the Sheet

Wings on the Wind Sign-up

Zoo Wild Days Sign-up



Plant a tree to provide shade, oxygen, and habitat for wildlife.

- Conservation Tip

## Spotlight

Thanks to everyone who helped set up the MN booth at the Farm and Ranch Expo. What a great job and it looks perfect.



Picture By: Carl Marugg



Check out this resource book to add to your library.

Click the book icon to be redirected to the Amazon page



Click the icon to be redirected to the Podcast

## Committee Leader's Email

- Campout** - Irene Fuentes  
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- Training** - Position Open  
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- Wings on the Wind** - Lauren Clark  
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Click on any of the Officers names their emails.

## Resource Corner