



Prairie Partner Update

A publication for and about Blackland Prairie Texas Master Naturalists

Naturalist Celebrates 70th Birthday by Hiking Trail in Arkansas

by Ron Bamberg



Ron makes camp at Rock Hole campsite in Devils Den.

Last October, I took a backpacking trip with a small group on the Butterfield Trail, which begins and ends in Devils Den State Park in northwest Arkansas. Not long after that, I decided I would like to hike the entire trail to commemorate my 70th birthday, which occurred on May 1.

After a delay of several weeks because Arkansas was having heavy rains, we began our hike. The trail is a loop of about 16 miles taking into account spur trails to camp sites. I knew the Ozarks would be beautiful at this time of year, and I was correct (although the rains created unusual conditions). For the most part the area is quite heavily forested, mixed hardwood generally described as oak-hickory. Wildlife is plentiful with a great diversity of bird life. I saw bear tracks but no bear. When I went to the Ranger Station to sign out, the ranger asked if I had seen bear signs. I'm sure they are getting more of them and want to stay on top of locations where they are being seen. The terrain is quite steep in parts and very rocky at many places. One must be quite careful in walking, especially with a 40-pound pack on the back. I'm glad I did this.

I finally went on and safely completed my solo backpacking trip on the Butterfield Trail. A good part of the trail is in Ozark National Forest. I arrived on Tuesday afternoon and decided to walk the trail for about a mile to a hike-in camp area (part of the regular SP camp facilities). I had to cross a knee-deep, fast-moving creek less than a mile on the trail. My boots got wet and stayed that way for three more days. There was a lot of mud everywhere from the recent rains and intermittent creeks weren't intermittent — they were running. Fortunately, I had brought enough socks to have a dry pair to start every day.

On Wednesday, I covered the six miles to Rock Hole Camp (one of two primitive camping areas on the trail) on Blackburn Creek. The first three miles were mostly uphill. The trail soon passed around the tallest point on the trail, then began a reasonably steep descent down to the bottom of the canyon. This terrain is very rocky and uneven, inviting ankle twists most all the time. (This was of particular concern since there is no cell phone access anywhere on the trail, and rangers later told me I was the only person who signed in for the trail during the entire week). The muddy slides didn't help in that regard.



Outsmarting the critters

At one point a couple of miles from Rock Hole Camp, the trail made what seemed a detour into Quail Valley. The trail went in, crossing a creek three times

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then came out almost parallel to the inward leg and not far from it. At that turnaround point, there was a pretty little waterfall and the end of a large bluff. As I worked my way around the bluff to the bench just below it, I spooked a bunch of black vultures, who undoubtedly were using the protected area as a roost. I laughed and thought, "They heard I was coming this way and decided this might be where I go down for the count." Anyway, the bluff is 85 feet high and quite long. It is riddled with caves and other declivities, an interesting and amazing geologic site.



A scenic area along the trail

I got to Rock Hole Camp about 2 p.m., set up camp, filtered enough water from the creek for the rest of the day and next day's travel. Blackburn Creek was

moving pretty swiftly, which made for pleasant sounds going to sleep that night, an advantage I enjoyed all three nights out. I got up the next morning, had breakfast, and took my time breaking camp. It was only three miles to my next stop, Junction Camp, where Blackburn Creek, after making an abrupt turn to the west, runs into Lee Creek. Up to that point just below Rock Hole Camp, the streams run roughly parallel in a SSW direction. (Junction Camp is where I went last October with a group. We went in the opposite direction from the trailhead, stayed two nights, then went back out the same way). I got to the next camp about 10 a.m. so had a long day for rest, reading and exploring. I saw four people on horseback come down on the east side of Lee Creek, cross Blackburn Creek just above the junction, then go back across Lee Creek and up the hill. They were about 300 yards away and never saw me. I had a very good day there.

I got up early Friday and left camp at 7 a.m. I wanted to assess the situation at Butterfield Falls in case I needed to make some travel adjustments. I had gone down then back up the falls in October when they were dry. They were a challenge for me. With all the rain, I was afraid there would be a lot of water

coming down them, in which case I might have to take a long, steep detour. There was water but not as much as I thought, and most of it came down along one wall then found egress under and between some stacked boulders. After taking a couple of big steps up on boulders, I had to cross a sloping rock slab that was wet and had algae growing on it, making it pretty slick. I took small, careful steps and made it across OK. After completing that, I knew the final five miles or so wouldn't be easy, but there wasn't anything in particular to worry about (except for the perpetual ankle twisting risk). I made it out a little after 11 a.m., tired, sore and happy and had only to check out at the ranger station. Before going in, you give them a lot of information and your route of travel and expected date/time of return. They then ask you to choose a "start search party" time. I gave them 2 p.m. for arrival and 5 p.m. for start searching.

I enjoyed doing this; wanted to do it to commemorate my 70th birthday. I'll probably not do another extended solo hike, especially when I know there is no phone access and few (or in this case, no) people around. That decision is not so much for myself. Had I twisted an ankle such that I couldn't walk out, I would have had food, water and shelter since my pack was with me. The concern is for my wife Wanda, who in that event would receive a call saying they were starting to search for me. She said over and over she wasn't worried. When people would say she should be, she would just tell them about the time I walked off a high ridge in Utah for three miles with a broken leg (which I didn't realize was broken until three days later). Anyway, solo efforts will be limited.

On this trip I confirmed what I had earlier suspected: six miles a day with a 40-pound pack is just about my limit. I recover quickly enough that I could do that on a number of successive days, but I wouldn't want to do much more



Ron completes his hike.

than that on a single day, at least in terrain that is somewhat steep and rugged as it is on the Butterfield.

If you are interested in birds, are interested in collecting information about birds and would like to share your findings, then this project is for you.

To learn the details of this program go to The Cornell Lab of Ornithology at <http://feederwatch.org/>

To participate you pay \$18 the first year if you are new or \$15 if you are a seasoned hand. The data-collecting season runs from early November until early April in the United States. The time you use to do this project are approved volunteer hours.

So, what do you do? You simply put bird food in a bird feeder and then watch the birds.

When you sign up for the feeder watch project, you are given step-by-step directions for documenting where your feeder(s) are located. Then, you select two consecutive days in a week to carry out your counts, select four hour blocks of time for each day, learn how to count the birds and what to count. After you count and identify the birds, you go online via an assigned ID number. You record the weather conditions, which feeder(s) you are using and record your bird info. This program provides ample information on how to identify all types of birds.



If you have a history of feeding birds, then the actual process goes quickly. I purchased one feeder that is squirrel proof (very important detail one) and can stand up against weather, especially the sun (very important detail two). My feeder has lasted three years and is still in great shape. You will need to go to a higher-end pet store to see these and purchase or you can always buy them at amazon.com. One approach is to place the feeder in a wide-open area so the birds can find it and you can see the birds. The other option is to place the feeders in a tree that allows you to see and photograph your visitors.

As far as drawing birds, I purchase 20# bags of wild bird feed at a time from Lowes and put it in a couple of harder plastic containers for ease of carrying and to keep the rain, field rats and ants out. I have a Finch feeder. This year I have added a varmint feeder with nuts and corn. Finally, I have a hummingbird feeder away from the other feeders but still in my view.

I placed my feeders on a section of open fence in line with my back door that has a window glass. Regardless of the weather, I sit inside and count the birds, take their photographs without disturbing them and drink my morning coffee.

I have added pictures of two visitors to my feeders. I hope you find them helpful and enjoyable.

Board of Directors Thanks Nancy Furth

The board of the Blackland Prairie Chapter extends a sincere thank you to Nancy Furth for her dedication to the prairie garden and expansion plans for additional gardens at the Plano Heritage Farmstead Museum. She has asked that a new project leader be found, and Cathy Westmoreland has stepped up as liaison between the chapter and the museum.

In 2011, Nancy developed the prairie garden at the Farmstead that includes grasses and forbs planted in a way to inspire those who view it to do the same in their own yards. Recently she has worked with both master naturalist and Farmstead volunteers to expand the area to include a pollinator garden. She started a Monarch way station project this spring by designing a raised-bed area. Additional expansion will include her vision for a fall-planted wildflower area with milkweeds and native butterfly-attracting plants. Nancy applied for and obtained grants to support projects, and the garden has won awards and recognition from the City of Plano. It is a valuable addition to the Farmstead. Nancy also helped establish a junior naturalist program at a Plano school.

How to Distinguish Texas Thistle from Non-Native Thistle by Melanie Shuchart

Many of us have seen the blooming thistles along the roadsides, but can you tell the difference between our native Texas Thistle, *Cirsium texanum*, and one of the non-native thistles, Nodding Thistle or *Carduus nutans*? The Nodding Thistle, also known as Musk Thistle, blankets the disturbed areas this time of year on the side of roads, vacant lots, parks and even in our yards. It is easily seen as it can consistently reach five

allows it to grow and form monocultures (single plant growing in large clumps) in the fields as most wildlife find it too unapproachable to eat.

In a recent third Saturday class on invasives, I learned from instructor, Dana Wilson, that if the Nodding Thistle makes it to bloom, if you cut the seed heads off the plant, it will not come back the following year. One lady in our class shared that

Texas Thistle *Cirsium texanum*



- Sunflower Family
- Nectar plant for pollinators
- Painted LCady Host Plant
- Goldfinches use seed/silk to build their nests
- Seed preferred by many birds

Texas native plant — works well in prairies
Less thorny
Native habitat for our native Insects and birds
Host Plant for the Painted Lady Butterfly

to seven feet. Both plants provide nectar for our butterflies and bees — especially bumblebees — and also are a favorite of our goldfinches who prefer the seed and also use the seed/silk to line their nests. Since both provide benefit for our pollinators and birds, you would think that would be a good thing. But as we know, anything non-native cannot be good.

The Nodding Thistle can produce up to 12,000 seeds in one seed head or on average of 120,000 seeds per plant allowing it to quickly spread. It forms a rosette the first year, blocking out our native plants and then blooms the second year, thus making it a biennial. The unusually prickly nature of the nodding thistle



Musk Thistle Nodding Thistle *Carduus nutans*



Non native — Invasive and can take over sites
Extremely thorny
Single seed head can produce 120,000 seeds
To control, cut flower head off after blooming

she had done this in Breckenridge Park over a two-year period, and now they are gone. While of course you could spray or dig them up, this option seems like a much more manageable one for me.

Our native thistle, on the other hand, is not as aggressive and provides one additional benefit that I enjoy. It is the host plant for our Painted Lady butterflies. And if you are not sure which one it is, the easiest way to identify it is to look underneath the leaf as the native thistle is almost pure white. So before you eradicate that thistle in your yard this year, give it a second thought and check to see if you might be lucky enough to have the native.

Melanie's Blog

Melanie has put together a blog for her inaturalist page about the recent rains and abundance of different creatures she has seen. Check it out at : <http://www.inaturalist.org/journal/butterflies4fun>

I am supposed to be a master naturalist and yet, I do not do the very thing that a naturalist is supposed to do and that is keep a journal. I think



about it but ... something conveniently gets in the way. I should be writing about the young **rabbit** that lives in the south bushes. It scrambles between our yard and the neighbors through a chain link fence in order to stay away from our big dog that likes to hunt for bunnies. Someday I am afraid it will become too big to get through the fence. And then I discovered there may be more rabbits than I knew about as there was one in the other garden at the same time — plus one that came out from under the patio — and one in the front garden — and one in the field next door — and one across the street at the neighbors. We do have promiscuous rabbits in the neighborhood!

The very shy **brown thrasher** comes through the bushes and lands on the ground under the feeder and searches for tidbits



that have been dropped there. And then suddenly he is gone! There is a family of crows (I have seen 10 at once) that come through each day. Sometimes they are quiet and come in to find some morsel. But the blue jays do not like them in their habitat and tend to dive bomb them and try to drive them away. One crow always seems to stand guard and tell the others when something is not the way it should be such as when the dog went out to take 'care of business'. They all began to shout at her and she looked up at them — a long look — and then gave them her deepest biggest bark!

The cardinals have been busy this year and there are constantly cardinals of reds and browns dash-

ing from bush to bush and low tree to low tree. I think the adults are teaching the youngsters how to look for good bugs in the bushes. I don't see the young ones at the feeders, but the adults come early in the morning and late in the evening for sustenance — unless the blue jays have come to the feeders and dumped out the seeds to the ground!



And the **orange squirrel** — have you ever seen an orange squirrel? It is a bit larger and furrier than the others in the area and always seems to be alone.

But, like the other squirrels, when the day is very warm and there is no cool air, it will sprawl on a limb and just lie still for some time. The tree limb must feel a bit cool to its stomach.

Seven species of birds raised babies in our yard this year. I do not know where all of the nests were nor how many babies were raised. I only saw the young ones following the parents as they fed. And most of those were early in the season, through all the rain! Tadpoles were in the creek when it wasn't racing. A large red eared slider 'slid' back up stream one day after being washed down the creek. The **swallowtail** butterflies have been the most numerous with an occasional monarch wandering through and some queens flitting around the flowers. And the mosquitoes are having the time of their life with all the puddles to lay eggs in and all the animals to bite including me!



Many years ago a well-known environmental type, **Isaac Asimov**, said he took a well-earned vacation and went to his own backyard and found amazing plants and animals with all sorts of wonderful adaptations for life. We should all visit the corners of our own world even as we visit the bigger places.

Junior Naturalists



Collin County Game Warden Leroy Thompson joined students and teachers for the May certification of 12 new junior naturalists including two who were double certified.

According to Gwen Thomas, "The double certs were a first ever for us as it is hard to get the kids to participate for more than a year given the many after-school clubs and sports in middle school. These two girls participated in the program for two full years!"

Why I Like Bats

by Amri Carrasco, junior naturalist

Did you know that Texas has a state flying mammal? It's the Mexican free-tailed bat, AKA, the Brazilian free-tailed bat! Despite the common misconceptions, bats aren't all blood suckers, they don't *all* have rabies and they definitely aren't vampires. There are vampire bats which do drink blood, but they live in South America, and they like livestock juice, not people juice.



Instead, our state bat is insectivorous, meaning it eats — you got it — insects. The free-tailed bat likes to eat moths, flies and wasps. It uses echolocation to find its food, using high pitched squeaks of sound that bounce off its prey to the bat's ears, making it an excellent hunter. But even though our bat is an awesome predator, it is still the prey to many other creatures. The Mexican free-tailed bat gets munched on by raptors, raccoons and even snakes. With all those predators, the bat is lucky if they get to live to its full lifespan, which is 18 years. But there are dangers other than predators...

White nose syndrome is a fungal growth that affects bats during winter hibernation. It grows onto their muzzles, tail membranes and wings. It damages the muscles and tissues, waking the bat up much earlier than it is supposed to. The poor bat wakes up starving and dehydrated and, unfortunately, dies from malnutrition. Another sickness bats can get is one everyone is familiar with — rabies.

Only a small percentage of bats carry rabies. Even when a bat does get rabies, the bat will go off somewhere quiet to die. The best way to avoid catching rabies yourself is to avoid bats that are active during the day. This is an irregular behavior in bats. If a bat seems injured or is lying on the ground, use a box to cover it. Then call a bat rehabilitator or animal control. Never handle a bat with your bare hands. Wear thick leather gloves and avoid touching the face of the animal. Only handle a bat if *absolutely* necessary. I love bats and people, and I don't want either party getting hurt from a dumb mistake.

Bats live almost everywhere, and it is our job to make sure that people understand what an impact bats are to our lives. Bats eat insects, they pollinate, and are the only true flying mammal. These wondrous creatures are a truly beautiful sight to behold. I love bats, and I hope you do too.

Master Naturalist Volunteers Tell about Their Interests *by Nancy Hoke*



Richard Lefebvre, a chapter member with high number of volunteer hours, is a great example of volunteer service. He volunteers at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center in Wylie.

“I help to maintain the raptors that are used for education. This includes cleaning their enclosures, monitoring their health, and giving educational programs to school children using the raptors as the main attraction in the presentations. I also lead most of the major construction activities at the raptor center. The team of construction volunteers has built three buildings and two decks there.

“My primary motivation for this work comes from my childhood interest in becoming a falconer. I discovered that it took a huge commitment in time to properly operate as a falconer, and I did not have the time when I was young. When I retired, I had much more time available and thus was able to devote much of that time to my interest in raptors.

“Working at the raptor center means I am not alone working with the birds as I might be as a falconer. We get to spread the load of work that it takes to care for these raptors across many volunteers. So I get most of the benefits without having to make the huge time commitment required in falconry.

“Now that we are about ready to open the hospital at the raptor center and start rehabilitating and releasing them, I hope to enjoy the satisfaction of helping to return healthy raptors back into the Blackland Prairie.”



Mike Roome found the Texas Master Naturalist program and his whole perspective changed.

“Volunteering has opened up a new world to me, enabled me to engage in activities which are personally rewarding and important to our planet, and introduced me to a whole new circle of friends and like-minded individuals,” says Mike. “The fact that I can do this as part of a great organization like our chapter of master naturalists is just icing on the cake.”

“I was up for volunteering to do whatever was needed, and animal care, is where I began. I figured this would be a good way to find out more about some of our native animals and prepare me to be an animal presenter someday for the Heard Museum. I started out with a commitment to work two Sunday mornings a month helping feed and care for the animals kept outdoors. This soon expanded into working every Sunday. It was not long before I recognized that the Heard could also use some help during the week with the educational animals. I started working every Thursday morning doing this, enjoyed the work very much and was learning a lot about the animals that I could share with others.

“After a few months, I was honored to be given more responsibility and ultimately permitted to work with all the native animals we had. In addition to my work with care and feeding of the animals, I wanted to become a trail guide. So I trained with Dave Powell and now volunteer to lead trails as often as I can. I found the overall experience at the museum so rewarding that I often volunteer for other museum activities. Fortunately I am retired, so I have plenty of time to do this. I have found it to be an experience that helps keep me physically fit, mentally alert, and engaged socially, all things that are as important as we age.”

Outings and Opportunities *by Mandy Carrasco*

As the cooler months once again entice us to enjoy the great outdoors, North Texas greets us with open arms! When planning your excursions, remember to call ahead to confirm details, dress for the weather and take plenty of water.

Collin County Adventure Camp (1180 W Houston Street. Anna, 75409)

For Outdoor Education volunteer opportunities, contact Amy Massingill. 214-667-5600. amassingill@ymcadallas.org

The **Connemara Conservancy** will be hosting bird walks at 7 a.m. Sunday, August 2, Saturday September 5, and Sunday, October 4. The Connemara Meadow Preserve is located in North Plano on Alma Drive, just South of Bethany Drive, though the entrance is in Allen. 214-351-0990

GreenFest on the GreenBelt (Lake Ray Roberts Dam Road. Denton, 76258)

Saturday, September 26th, 12-6 p.m. This festival is a celebration of outdoor family fun. Take your family, or better yet, volunteer! For information: <http://www.greenfestdenton.com/#!volunteer-registration/cigy>

Collin County Farm Museum (972-548-5752. 7117 Co Rd 166. McKinney 75071)

Volunteer in the Trial Research & Gardens, or enjoy one of their fun classes, such as:

- Saturday, August 1, Noon - 4 p.m. Natural Dyes Workshop \$20
- Saturday, August 8, Noon - 4 p.m. Pine Needle Basket Weaving \$30

City of Plano

Do you know someone who has done something that demonstrates outstanding environmental leadership? The 2014-15 Environmental Community Awards application process has begun. Submit your individual or group application by 5 p.m. on Friday, August 7, 2015. Learn about the categories and requirements, and download an application through the [Environmental Community Awards page](#).

- Various volunteer opportunities are available

through the Parks & Recreation department. Some examples include Park Stewards, Park and Creek Cleanups, caring for the Plano Community Garden, working with educational programs like the Sustainability Series, or helping with events such as the Great American Cleanup or Texas Recycle Days. Call 972-941-7114 for more info.

The **Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary** (972-562-5566. One Nature Place. McKinney, 75069)

- August 15, 9:30 a.m., enjoy BPTMN Tony Manasser's lecture, "Extending the Season – Organic Vegetables All Winter."
- September 7, 10-11 a.m. you can catch BPTMN Melanie Schuchart's "Amazing Monarchs" butterfly talk, followed with a walk through the butterfly house and garden. The Heard's butterfly house is open now through September 30.

Looking to volunteer? Contact Darlene Sumerfelt at dsumerfelt@heardmuseum.org. They'll be needing plenty of volunteers the evening of Saturday October 17 for the 9th annual Halloween at the Heard fund-raising event.

LLELA has plenty to offer this fall. (972-219-3930. Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area. 201 Jones Street. Lewisville, 75057)

- Saturday, August 15, 8:30-10:30 p.m. and Saturday September 12, 7:45-9:45 p.m. Stars on the Prairie — an exploration of the night sky. \$5 program fee, in addition to the regular gate fee of \$5 per person. Registration required.
- Friday August 21, 8-10 p.m. and Saturday, September 19, 7:30-9:30 p.m. Join the trail guides for a night hike. No flashlights are necessary. \$10 per person. Registration required.
- Saturday, September 5, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and Saturday, October 3, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. Monthly Nature Walk — free with general admission.
- Saturday, September 12, 7:30-10:30 a.m. and Saturday, October 10, 7:30-10:30 a.m. Bird watchers of all levels are invited on a Bird Walk. \$7 per person, no reservations required.

(continued on next page)

Heat, heat, and more heat! What to do when your children or grandchildren are driven inside by the blistering Texas sun? Why not try viewing animal webcams, guaranteed to cool everyone off. Many sites include information about the critter on screen. Remember to have a journal at hand so your young naturalist can record observations and key facts just like the pros. Here are a few recommendations:

www.explore.org - watch Audubon's Seal Island webcam to see puffins or take part in a live chat such as service dog recipients with their great danes. This site offers *extensive* webcam choices of animals from all over the world.

<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/WebCams/default.cfm> - the National Zoo has webcams focused on their elephants, lions, and GIANT PANDAS! Follow the blog on the giant panda webcam to read notes about Bao Bao, Mei Xiang, and Tian Tian.

www.liveanimals.tv - sorted by categories, webcams can be found for birds, dogs, cats, and more. The mission of the sponsors of this site is to go beyond collecting and sharing webcam videos. They hope to raise awareness and money for animal shelters, zoos, and nature preserves. This means you will encounter ads, but even those are interesting. I watched several by Eukenuba on different aspects of dog shows!

<http://seaworldparks.com/en/seaworld-orlando/animalvision/viewanimals/penguins/> - this site features the penguins, turtles, and stingrays of SeaWorld in Orlando, FL. Also available are facts about these animals.

<http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals-and-experiences/live-web-cams/monterey-bay-cam> - the Monterey Bay Aquarium hosts a wonderful variety of web cams ranging from open water to kelp forests, jellyfish, sea otters, and more. Try viewing during a scheduled feeding time; you'll have a better view than if you were there in person!

Fall Outings and Opportunities (contd.)

- Saturday September 19, 7:30-9:30 a.m. Birding by Boat. Participants will learn basic bird identification and an introduction to kayaking on dry land before pushing off in Beaver Pond. All equipment provided, including binoculars. \$20 per paddler. Ages 10 and up, registration required.

Savannah's Meadow Lavender Farm (214-668-4299. 4473 FM 903. Celeste, 75423)

- Saturday, August 1 and Saturday, October 3 the lavender farm will be open to the public 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Saturday, September 5, 6P p.m. Lavender and Lights
- Friday, September 25 and Friday, October 16, 7 p.m. Starlight Music, pay what you can.
- Saturday, October 10. Fall Festival 9 a.m.-3 p.m., \$5 entry fee.

Websites of Interest...

Best Hikes in Dallas - [Click to view](#)

Blackland Prairie Texas Master Naturalist Calendar
[Click to view](#)

Cornell Lab of Ornithology - [Click to view](#)

Earthkind Landscaping [Click to view](#)

Green Source DFW [Click to view](#)

Insects in the City - [Click to view](#)

Ladybird Johnson Wildlife Center - [Click to view](#)

Prairie Partner Update Past issues [Click to view](#)

Texas Aggi Horticulture - [Click to view](#)

Texas Parks & Wildlife Updates - [Click to view](#)

Texas Smartscape - [Click to view](#)

Texas Superstar Plants [Click to view](#)

Texas Tree Planter [Click to view](#)

Do you know of any Web sites that would interest master naturalists? Email newsletter@bptmn.org

Annual Meeting October 23-25 Offers Field Trips and Array of Speakers

by Gwen Baumann

With 97 presentations on topics ranging from milkweed to chapter management, a renowned mammologist keynote speaker, and six field trips within the Highland Lakes/Balcones Canyonlands area, this year's annual meeting promises to be one for the ages.

The Texas Master Naturalists' 16th Annual Meeting will be held October 23 - 25 at Horseshoe Bay Resort near Marble Falls. Registration information with costs and an official schedule will be available August 1 or when the meeting website: [www. http://txmn.org/2015-annual-meeting/](http://txmn.org/2015-annual-meeting/) goes live, according to Mary Pearl Meuth, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Associate and meeting coordinator.

Horseshoe Bay Resort, located in the Hill Country 54 miles north of Austin, has set aside 200 rooms, with the promise of more if needed, according to Meuth. "We were able to secure a bargain," she said. "All food and lodging will be included, along with some pretty top-notch amenities offered by the hotel, including free WiFi, access to all hotel pools, tennis and fitness center, along with in-room coffee and lobby newspaper."

Field trips begin Friday evening and continue through Saturday, all to locations with a 30-minute drive of the resort. "One of our field trips on Saturday will be to the scenic Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, where the [refuge highlights] will be given in conjunction with the local Highland Lakes Chapter's Texas Quail Index project highlights," Meuth said.

Within the resort, a vast array of programs will be offered. Milkweed and the Monarch will lead in number with eight presentations. There will also be "seven presentations on the weather we've had this year and what we should expect in the future,

a number . . . on youth programming, a handful . . . on chapter management, and a whole lot . . . on all things natural," Meuth explained.

Historically-inclined members won't want to miss Dr. David J. Schmidly, a writer and zoologist who studied at Texas Tech and the Uni-

versity of Illinois. As keynote speaker, Schmidly will speak about Texas' early naturalists, Meuth said.

"From our early explorers to our turn of the century field scientists, his keynote speech will ring about the

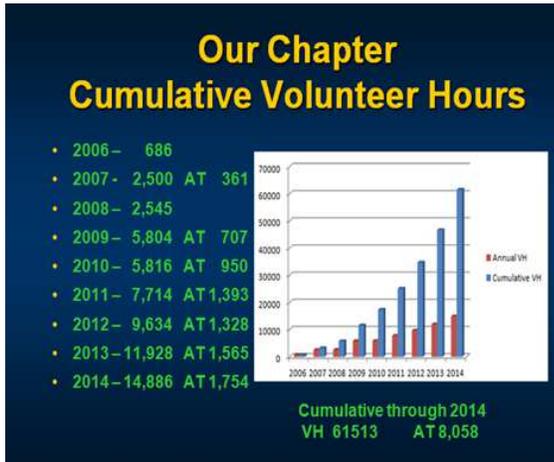
impact these early gentlemen and ladies had on the study of all things natural in Texas," promises to be one for the ages.



Master naturalist volunteers at Children's Hospital Plano report that the seeds they sowed in the spring are thriving including daisy, zinnia, cardinal vine, red yucca, Engelmann Daisy, Turk's Cap, bee balm, Black-Eyed Susan and Maximilian sunflower.

Volunteering

BPTMN 2014 Volunteer Statistics



- 108 people contributed VH hours
- 80 recertified
- 4 people contributed to 25% of the total
- 13 people contributed to 50% of the total



Send Your Volunteer News & Photos

Send photos of your volunteer activities with an explanation of your project to:

newsletter@bptmn.org.

For questions about volunteering, contact Melanie Schuchart at VHAT@bptmn.org

These are just a few groups where you can earn volunteer hours. More approved activities for volunteering and advanced training can be found at <http://bptmn.org/info/project-opportunities/>.

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center

Brockdale Park, Lucas, 469-964-9696
(www.bpraptorcenter.org)

Contact **Erich Neupert**

erich.neupert@bpraptorcenter.org, or **Dick Zartler**, zartler@verizon.net

Collin County Adventure Camp

1180 W. Houston, Anna, 972-832-4791
(www.collincountyadventurecamp.org)

Contact **Ron Bamberg**, rbamberg@gmail.com,

Connemara Meadow

300 Tatum (near Alma & Bethany), Allen, 214-534-1900, (Connemaraconservancy.org)

Contact **Bob Mione**, meadowmanager@connemaraconservancy.org

Heard Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary

1 Nature Place, McKinney, 832-332-9099,
(www.Heardmuseum.org)

Contact **Wes Morrow**, Wesmorrow39@yahoo.com,
and **Dave Powell**, powell1217@yahoo.com.

Junior Master Naturalists

Contact: **Gwen Thomas**

gmthomas29@fastmail.gm

Meets every Wednesday during the school year, from 3:30-5 p.m. at Wilson Middle School, Plano
The class is for 6th-8th graders.

Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA)

201 E. Jones, Street, Lewisville, TX
www.ias.unt.edu/llela

Contact Education Coordinator **Lisa Cole** at lisacole@unt.edu or **Mike Petrick** at mike.petrick@verizon.net

Plano Environmental Education Center

4116 West Plano Parkway, Plano, TX

Contact **Heather Harrington**, heather-ha@plano.gov or 972-769-4313

To volunteer, go online and create a volunteer profile then sign up at eeoc@plano.gov for volunteer activities.

Advanced Training and Meetings

The following classes are sponsored by the Blackland Prairie Master Naturalists and count for advanced training hours. All classes will be held at the Heard Museum starting at 9:30 a.m. unless otherwise noted.

August 15, 2015 – Laughlin Hall
“Extending the Season – Organic Vegetables all Winter” - Tony Manasseri, master naturalist, native plant specialist and local farmer

Longtime veggie gardener, Tony will show us how he is able to grow vegetables through the long winter months here in North Texas. He will cover varieties, starting seeds, soil prep, fertilization and harvest, all without the use of toxic chemicals.

September 19, 2015 “How to Identify Wild Flowers” – Jim Varnum, Master Naturalist

Heard Museum’s Laughlin Hall

“I’ll teach you wildflower parts in 10 words,” says Jim. We will learn about flower parts and then go outside to identify some of the wildflowers in bloom in the area. Just dress for the weather. Chiggers may be gone by then but mosquitoes?!

October 17, 2015 “A Visit to Parkhill Prairie” – Randy Moore, retiree of the USDA’s Natural Resources & Conservation Service Parkhill Prairie in Northeast Collin County

Bring walking shoes, insect repellent, binoculars, hat. Lunch tables on site. Restrooms may not be available.

Directions: Driving directions: From McKinney, go East on US Hwy 380 toward Farmersville. At Farmersville take State Highway 78 North toward Blue Ridge. Near Blue Ridge turn right onto County Road 825 (east). CR825 is asphalt and will bend to the south. Turn left onto County Road 668 (east). Parkhill Prairie entrance will be on the left side approximately two miles.

November 21, 2015 “Historic Uses of North Texas Plants” –

Carol Clark, Blackland Prairie Master Naturalist, Native Plant Society President

Heard Museum’s Laughlin Hall

When settlers of European descent first moved into the North Texas area, there was no such thing as the modern “shopping trip”. Stores were few and far between,

and weren't guaranteed to have what they needed anyway, so settlers had to be resourceful and hunted, grew crops and foraged to fill most of their needs. Learning from the local Native Americans, they discovered how North Texas native plants could be used for food, medicine, shelter, fiber, dyes and more. You'll look at some of our most common local plants in a whole new way after this presentation.

December 19, 2015 “Winter Tree Identification and Ecology of the Heard” – David Powell, Blackland Prairie Master Naturalist

Heard Museum’s upland and lowland trails (all outdoors) – Meet at back parking lot.

Participants will explore the more unknown areas of the Heard’s site and see some unusually large trees in the lowland areas. There may be an occasional sighting of some of the wild critters of the area as well.

Upcoming BPTMN Meetings 2nd Tuesday, 7 p.m.

Heard Museum Science Resource Center
Each meeting counts as one hour of advanced training

- August 11 - Bob Mione - "Large Blackland Prairie Restoration Efforts at the Connemara Meadow Nature Preserve"
- September 15 - Jeff Holba - "Confessions of a Habitat Mass Murderer"
- October 13 - Kate Rugroden, Bat World Sanctuary "The Essential Bat"