



## **Texas Master Naturalist Brazos Valley Chapter Meeting Minutes for November 12, 2015 Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History**

Attendance: Laura Biddle, Dwight Bohlmeier, Amanda Chau, Mike Conner, Bruce Neville, Kathryn Nigh, Amanda Schwede, Betty Vermeire, Deb Wilson

The meeting was brought to order by Bruce Neville at 5:35 PM.

October minutes - Bruce Neville - Correct minutes- Kathryn Nigh with a K. Committee reports C9 Jan (not Jon) Korbajevski (get correct spelling). Amanda Chau-New Business C-proposed new day and it was Nov 21 not open ended date. Amanda Chau approved. Laura Biddle seconded. Approved unanimously.

### **I. Old Business**

- A. Bruce Neville – Chapter Operating Handbook, including committee rearrangement. We need to adopt this at the December meeting. I will have a draft to you by the end of the week. -- Titles have changed slightly. Can have separate committees for web and newsletter but donot have to have either. Also a mentoring chair, a data manager (relates to VMS). We don't have enough members to sustain all of the committees if they arenot mandatory. We will leave these in the handbook as possibilities should we grow to be able to have them. Historian should be put under membership and should keep record of everything except the minutes. This notice will be sent to membership before December 2<sup>nd</sup>, along with the new slate of officers, to follow guidelines (ten days in advance) and can vote at business meeting at the holiday social. Minutes are stored by the secretary. The blog was created to work as a record, including pictures. Dwight-one person should be assigned to take pictures at every event and post to blog with a brief description. Amanda Chau moved to have sent to membership for vote. Mike Conner seconded. Motion carried. Bruce will send out.
- B. Bruce Neville – Holiday meeting planning, including tenth anniversary event(s) and the status of the officer slate. – Full slate of officers for Donell Frank as Vice President. Deb Wilson has a sign-up sheet for food, drinks, set-up, clean-up, decorating. Set-up around 4 PM. 6 PM start of holiday social. Asked how meat is purchased and paid for. Bruce suggested someone offer to order and pick up a turkey and a ham, and then be reimbursed by the chapter.
- C. Amanda Chau – I already contacted the City of College Station and scheduled our Brison/Gabbard park clean up for 11/21 (8:00 to 10:00 am). The City wants us to re-do all the waiver/release forms. I plan to email the release form out this week and have the master naturalists to complete the form at home and bring it to our 11/12 meeting or email it to me. I will also bring a few copies for people to fill in at the meeting. -- She has the release forms with her today. Please fill out, sign and return to her today.

### **II. New Business**

- A. Bruce Neville+Betty Vermeire – Update on VMS roll-out: In October, I submitted the People Upload Template spreadsheet. To date, I've received no response. However, at the State meeting, I learned that some data should now be listed differently than what we were first told;

for example, they want the month and day of certification / recertification, not just the year. They will, however, accept just the year for historical data (whew!).

Also at the State Meeting, I attended (endured) two 2-hr workshops on VMS administration. Clearly, they were aimed at chapters that are already using the VMS, in that they demonstrated what else can be done with it, and how to do some more advanced functions, such as transfer a member into or out of the chapter. All instruction assumed that the admin people know the basics. The trainers were complaining that the software is 17 years old, and therefore clunky. They are somewhat behind in adding chapters to the system because of encountering problems and quirks and having to figure out how to solve them as they go along.

However, from what I understand, they will train a group of 6 of us, in a live webinar, on what we need to know when they are ready for us to know it. They will help us categorize and enter the volunteer and AT opportunities, which we will continue to update as more of those come up. Once the system is in place for us, each member will log on and see pull-downs for the volunteer and AT opportunities, then enter their hours. One of the two designated hours-keeper admins (my term) will receive an email that XXX entered their hours, and will have to approve or send back for corrections. They two admins approve each others' hours. One, and only one, admin will know who passed the background checks, which TPWD will do each year, at no charge to us. The six people are Bruce, Betty, Amanda C. and Amanda S. Laura, and Melissa.

- B. Bruce Neville – Committees: membership, volunteer and training have offered to renew. Social committee is considering renewing. New member training, web master, and communication and outreach unable to renew. Must have certified at least once in the past and be paid up for that year's membership.
- C. Bruce Neville – Planning for an all-member retreat (Feb?) to discuss goals and direction for the Chapter, potentially including annexation of additional counties. – We are going in different directions. Some feel we are a completely social committee. Some feel we no longer get dirty. No news on the city moving forward with LCP nature center, cannot cut down invasive species at BVMNH nature area, etc. We are missing a project for the chapter to do. Chapter does not have a real home or facility. We no longer have activities for kids or a junior master naturalist program. Get advisors more involved in the chapter. We are surrounded by counties that do not have TMN chapters. Consider annexing those to increase membership and opportunities to volunteer. Our grand project could be in one of those counties. Have meetings every other month here and the months in between at Somerville State Park (leaf cutter ants, birding), Canyon Lake Dam (fossils, dinosaur footprints), etc. More scheduled field trips and activities for fun. Keep members excited.
- D. Kathy Wheeler - Suggested additional agenda item: I would like to see a printed, detailed, document showing exactly what the rules are for credit for volunteer hours. There appears to currently be a lack of uniformity in interpretation. -- Betty, Melissa and Bruce are working through this and will have something on the website and handbook soon.

Dwight moved to adjourn. Amanda Chau seconded. The meeting was adjourned by 6:29 PM.

### **III. Officer and Committee Reports**

- A. President – Bruce Neville – The State Meeting was eye-opening for me. I have been to the State Meeting before, but attending as President was different. Talking with other Chapter and State leaders was thought-provoking. Six people from the Brazos Valley Chapter registered for the State Meeting, which was about average. Several chapters had double-digit attendance. We can and should do that.

At the State Meeting, people from TPWD and AgriLife Extension talked about establishing an endowment that would generate money to support the Master Naturalist Program into the future. At the moment, the Program is operating with basically the same budget and staff that it had seventeen years ago, when there were only a couple chapters. Now there are 46. They are not

asking for contributions from chapters, but ideas for fundraising or ways to use the income generated. We should hear more about that in the near future.

Several chapters mentioned that they receive 50-70 applicants each year for their new member training, allowing them to pick the 30 they retain, increasing their retention. Grimes County previously had a chapter, but it failed. We currently have members or trainees from Burleson, Grimes, Leon, Limestone, and Robertson Counties, all of which lack a chapter (see <http://txmn.org/chapters/>). If we officially annex and market to these (and Madison) counties, it could increase our “market base” and give us a larger pool of potential trainees and active volunteers.

I propose to hold an all-member retreat, potentially in February, to determine what the membership wants from the Chapter. It was clear from the State Meeting that our Chapter lacks the Central Focus that energizes successful chapters. What do we want to be? What will be our legacy? It doesn’t have to be a single focus, but we need to identify one or a couple Grand Projects that will define us.

I’m in the process of finalizing my comments to the Chapter Operating Handbook (COH), but I wanted to let you in on my thoughts for reorganizing the standing committees. We do need to adopt the (COH) by the end of the year. The new Chapter Operating Handbook requires the following Standing Committees with representation on the Board: Executive, Training, Membership, Volunteer Service Projects, and Advanced Training. The following Standing Committees with representation on the Board are given as optional: Program, Newsletter, Outreach, Historian/Archivist, and Host. The following functions are given as required, but without representation on the Board: Annual Financial Examination and Officer Nomination. I propose to use a New Class Training, Membership, Volunteer Service Projects, Advanced Training, Communication and Outreach, and Host. Within the Membership Committee are (potentially) the Data Manager and Mentor Program Manager. Within the Communication and Outreach Committee are (potentially) the Publicity Manager, Newsletter Editor, and Webmaster. We need a Historian-Archivist. Whether that position reports to the Membership or the Communications and Outreach Director or is a separate position is up for discussion. Programs will remain the responsibility of the Vice President, who may maintain a committee to assist. The dates for the election of officers are in the Bylaws, not the COH, so we can’t change them. I spoke with Michelle Haggerty about this at the State Meeting. When I have a chance, I’ll put together an email to her asking for special dispensation to modify the Bylaws to allow us to elect officers earlier in the year. At this point, we have a couple years to deal with it.

**B.** Vice President - Bruce Neville –

**C.** Secretary- Amanda Schwede - Sign in; approval of October 2015 meeting minutes

**D.** Treasurer- Amanda Chau – As of 11/08/15, our balance is \$3567.36 and we have 48 members who paid their 2015 membership dues.

**E.** Committees

**1.** Outreach – Olivia Ash, Chair – **Event:** Boonville Day **Date:** October 10, 2015

**Location:** Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History

**Coordinators:** Olivia Ash, Cheryl Lewis, Elrey Ash

**Description:** A display booth was set up to educate visitors on the issues facing Texas on the decline of natural prairie lands in the state with emphasis on the Post Oak Savannah and Blackland Prairie ecoregions.

**Public Contacts:** 68 adults, 45 children

**Activities:** Packets of mixed native prairie plant seeds were distributed to visitors to encourage the establishment of “pocket prairies.”

Numerous books, brochures and other printed materials were available for reference and/or distribution to educate visitors on use of native plants and their advantages. A collection of native plants was also on display.

A display describing the monarch butterfly presence in Texas and its dependence on flowering plants, particularly milkweed, was set up. A handmade activity book of coloring, mazes, wordsearch, etc., was available for children and was well received. A display of common backyard invertebrates was set up and was very popular. About 8 volunteer members worked the booth most of the day and several other members – at least 3 others including some 2015 trainees - helped with duties other for the Museum

**Supplies/Equipment Used:** Two 6 foot tables (Museum also provided one 8 foot), Canopy, Table covers, Monarch brochures and activity book, Chapter specific information, native plant literature, native plants, “Pocket Prairie” seed packets, “Bug-arium”

- **Pumpkinpalooza numbers** – 56 adults, 9 children

2. Membership – Betty Vermeire, Chair – submit your October 2015 hours. For the Third Quarter Report (July-August-September) to the TMN State Office: Q3 Volunteer Service = 426.8 hrs, Advanced Training = 122.5 hrs. Y-T-D (Jan through Oct) Volunteer Service = 2168.0 hrs, Advanced Training = 398.5 hrs. To date in 2015, 5 members certified: Class of 2014 John Cupps, Donell Frank, Terri Sandvik, Deb Wilson. Class of 2013 Bob Presley. To date in 2015, 14 members recertified: Jim Anding, Kitty Anding, Jim Balthrop, Jo Anne Bates, Laura Biddle, Dwight Bohlmeier, Ananda Chau, Mike Conner, Katharine Cupps, Rick Laughlin, Sarah Laughlin, Bruce Neville, Betty Vermeire, Mary Dabney Wilson. Kathy Wheeler, Class of 2014, completed her training class requirements. Several more members need just a few more hours to certify or recertify. We have received two inquiries for next fall's training class,
3. Advanced Training – Laura Biddle, Chair –
4. Volunteer Services – Melissa Brown, Chair – Afternoon of October 21, 2015 about 12 members met at the BRTC and cleaned up the flower garden removing unwanted and dead plants.
5. Host/Social – Deb Wilson, Chair – Holiday Party, December 12<sup>th</sup> - Decorations have been retrieved from the storage facility. \$48.00 has been paid to the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Brazos Valley for rental hours, 4:00 PM - 10:00. If more hours are needed, add \$8.00 for each additional hour. Deposit of \$125.00 paid to UU church. Will be returned if no damage. The rental agreement is attached. The committee members, Donell Frank, Kathy Wheeler, and Deb Wilson, are working on the logistics and plans for the party. Laura Biddle volunteered to create the power point presentation to highlight the 10th anniversary of the TMN chapter of Brazos Valley, however she needs pictures and assistance from veteran/charter members. An invitation has been created and sent to all members
  - A. Training Class snacks are being coordinated by Deb Wilson and weekly reminders are sent via email - An invitation was sent to all TMN members to attend the last class and graduation on November 17. Class Hosts for November have been Deb Wilson (11/3), Kathy Wheeler and Donell Frank (11/10) and (11/17)
  - B. Chapter Meeting snacks are being coordinated by Deb Wilson and monthly reminders are sent via email
  - C. Plans to create Host Guidelines are underway.
6. Historian – TBD, Chair –
7. Web – Mike Conner, Chair –
8. Program – Bruce Neville, Chair –
9. New Member Training – Dwight Bohlmeier, Chair – The 2015 Training Class is coming along smoothly except for the recent weather. The plant trip with Monique Reed to Lick Creek Park was postponed twice and is now scheduled for Sunday, November 15 from 2-4:00 pm. The field trip to TMPA was cancelled as well but Dr. Horbaczewski gave his presentation this past Saturday at the BRTC. The last class will be Tuesday November 17th. All 14 trainees are still attending the class.

#### IV. Announcements

##### **Upcoming Programs Dates/Calendar Items**

- 1. TMN Fall Meeting Schedule:** (Second Thursdays at 6:30 PM, BVMNH)  
November 12, December social
- 2. Monthly Meeting speakers** (each monthly meeting counts for one hour of AT credit)  
November 12- Christine Figgenger-sea turtles
- 3. Garden project at the City of College Station Community Services bldg** (1207 Texas Avenue.) Join Cheryl Lewis **on a Saturday** that works for you. 571-6448
- 4. Southern Plains & Prairies Conference, Nov 12-14**, Houston (see Laura Biddle's 10-22 email for AT credit)
- 5. Texas Society for Ecological Restoration Conference, Nov 13-15**, San Antonio-Trinity University campus (AT approved)
- 6. Wildlife nature walks Nov 14**, Millican Reserve (V approved)
- 7. Project FeederWatch, Nov 14, '15 - Apr 3, '16.** (V approved)
- 8. Tuesdays thru Nov 17, New Member Training**, (AT if haven't seen speaker or topic before)
- 9. Gabbard and Brison Parks clean-up, Nov 21<sup>st</sup>.** Meet at 7:45 am at Gabbard Park, then move to Brison Park. Hope to be done by 10. Contact Amanda Chau; [amanda.chau@blinn.edu](mailto:amanda.chau@blinn.edu) (V approved)
- 10.** AT Comm added [list of pre-approved advanced training activities](#) on BVTMN website. Can also find this list by going to Advanced Training Committee webpage. Note that any AT opportunity that is NOT on this list, must still be submitted for approval.
- 11. Pre-approved volunteer projects list:** Note that you must report the data to the appropriate website for a collecting activity to count for volunteer time. Collecting and reporting data for iNaturalist is approved for volunteer credit. This includes organizational projects such as the development of a iNaturalist guide to a Texas area. Collecting and reporting eBird data is approved for volunteer credit.