

Texas Master Naturalist Brazos Valley Chapter Minutes of Meeting Held Thursday, March 8, 2007

Attendees: [Kitty, do you have the attendees list?]

The meeting was called to order at 6:50pm.

Business Meeting

The minutes from the January meeting were approved.

JoAnne asked that we recognize the excellent work of Kate, Manuelita, Jimmie and Leo in producing the first issue of our chapter newsletter. She also asked that we recognize Anna, who was recently awarded the Graduate Student Teaching Award.

Committee Business

Training Committee:

- Dwight passed out a copy of the class schedule for the fall training class. Classes will start on Sept. 6th and end on Nov. 8th. Some things may yet be changed. They will be looking for 25 new members to take the class.
- They will ask the membership chair to send out a pdf of the application forms so that members can forward a form to anyone who is interested in the training class. People will be enrolled on a first-come first-served basis.
- For those members who will be working with kids, the state wants us to go through a background screening. They will be asked to fill out the 4H adult screening form. We will get the form from Eric Zimmerman. If we use the 4H form, the 4H umbrella will cover the cost. This is voluntary for chapter members but required for any members who will be doing any activities with kids.

Advanced Training:

- Mary Ann reported that the amphibian watch training is scheduled for tomorrow from 10 am – 3 pm, and the mussel watch training is scheduled for Saturday from 3 – 5 pm. She reminded everyone that all volunteer and advanced training activities need to be pre-approved. Once the activity is pre-approved, anyone in the chapter can get credit for participating. All Nature Tracker projects are pre-approved. Phillip has Nature Tracker forms.

Membership:

- Kitty is the new Membership Committee chair since Sara Jane relinquished the chairmanship. Kitty reminded everyone to send her their volunteer and advanced training hours as they are earned. People can use the form created by Dwight; they are also looking at creating a new form. Kitty asked how many people don't have Excel; 3 people raised their hands. If we decide to adopt an Excel-based form, they'll

give everyone instructions. David picked up forms from other chapters and will give them to Kitty.

- Everyone is required to sign a waiver of liability saying they won't sue the state if they get hurt on a field trip, etc. Anyone who hasn't done that should get with Kitty during or after the meeting.

Outreach:

- Jean Paul reported that he has copies of the Bioblitz forms – both the self-guided trail and the signup form. He invited those who are interested in helping at Bioblitz to sign up for specific times. They also need pine cones, peanut butter, bird seed and spreaders.
- Heather also needs volunteers for Friday night. No one has signed up to help with the nature walk, so they could use TMN volunteers. They will get started Friday around 4 pm. They need a team leader for bugs and someone to help with plants. They also could use help with promotion. The city of College Station is providing an air-conditioned port-o-potty this year! The set-up will be different; they will allow parking in the equestrian lot and will have tents in the field. They also are looking for someone to speak about nature and help with kid blitz hands-on activities such as making mammal tracks.

Volunteer Services:

Mary Strauss reported that we have lots of volunteer opportunities coming up.

- Bioblitz, which has already been discussed, will be on March 31st.
- Also, Bryan parks and Rec has invited the chapter to work on a trail at the Bryan Regional Athletic Complex. Eddie will do a trail training on April 1st – an e-mail will be sent out on this.
- April 14th, the Trash Off will take place. We will meet at 9 am at Wolf Penn Creek Park. After clean-up there will be a party at the Brazos Center.
- April 21st will be Earth Day in Bryan. They have 42 organizations attending. TMN will be in the kid zone near the Bryan Library and the Children's Museum and will set up to make pine cone feeders.
- On April 28th, there is a fishing Tournament, but we don't yet know the details on this yet.
- In addition, they plan to open up the Blinn Aquatic Center on Tuesday evenings this summer, and they will need volunteers to staff that.
- They will be putting a volunteer opportunity suggestion form on the website, so if anyone has any ideas they can fill the form out and give it to Mary.
- Diane Mitchell, the web administrator, is out of the office, but when she gets back they will put all of these events on the website calendar page.

New Business

- Someone asked what will happen with the Google Groups e-mail distribution tool. Manuelita reported that so far 16 people have signed up. She emphasized that this tool is especially good for large groups because it's easy to keep everyone's e-mail address up-to-date (each member can update their own address) and recipients can control when and how their TMN e-mails are delivered; e.g., they can all be delivered at one time at the end of the day. Kitty and Joanne are designated managers of the group. People who hadn't signed up yet expressed interest in signing up; Manuelita said she would re-send the invitation. Jo Anne said she would forward an e-mail from the Cradle of Texas chapter, who recommended Google Groups, about the advantages of using that tool. Those who don't want to join will continue to get their e-mail notices as they have.
- Jimmie said that the Newsletter Committee intends to put out an issue of the newsletter every season, and they are currently working on the Spring issue. They are inviting submissions. If anyone wants to write something, please send it to the newsletter staff. You can write it or they can write it for you if you send the information you want included.

The business meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Leo then gave a presentation on the history and nature of pecans in Texas.