

The Tracker

The Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter February 2015

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Calendar at a Glance

February 2, Salado workday
February 5, Hours due
February 10, General Meeting
February 12, Miller Spring workday
February 13, Science Fair
February 19, Mother Neff Workday
February 20-22, Home and Garden Show
March 24, Training Orientation
See page 10 and 11 for more information

SAVING WATER

By Marilyn Whitworth

Mark Klym of the *Texas Wildscapes program* gave a presentation at the annual Texas Master Naturalist Conference in October, 2014. It was titled "Water, Water, Where's The Water?" He stated that on average 70% of our water is used indoors and 30% is used outdoors. He then stated that 70% of our outdoor water use is used in our gardens. Thus a little over 20% of our water use is on our gardens. The presentation then focused on ways to reduce water consumption with small changes to our garden practices.



There were five topics discussed in how to reduce water waste and consumption. These topics were 1. **Overspray**=water falls on hardscape, infrastructure, etc.; 2. **Leakage**= the equipment loses water before the water reaches the intended target; 3. **Runoff**= water falling on the garden washes away soil and nutrients in running to the street and streams; 4. **Water Hogs**= plant species inappropriate for the area in which they are planted and 5. **Inappropriate Planting**= plant at wrong time and/or wrong place.

Continued on page 4...

Chapter Motto

**Earth Day,
Every Day**



From the President's Pen

I found a dollar bill at the Bell County Museum on our last workday there. My lucky day, I got paid for volunteering that day. Then I got to thinking



about what our volunteer time is really worth.

If you're reading this, then you have volunteered for something, probably a *lot* of things. We all volunteer for different reasons and none of them involve money in our pockets. The smiles from children, the satisfaction of a new trail, the civic pride, whatever reason that prompts us we collect hours of

time. A whole bunch of hours.

Texas Master Naturalist State Coordinator, Michelle Haggerty stated that "As a result of quarterly reports through June 30th, TMN volunteers have provided over 178,593.37 hours of service and obtained over 22,769.06 hours of Advanced Training thus far in 2014." This is where you come in. Your hour reports are important not only to our chapter, but to the Texas Master Naturalist program. The hours gleaned from chapter reports go toward recognition events, grant application or communications to show the amount of community support an organization receives from its volunteers.

Our chapter is transitioning into a new hour reporting system that the state has adopted. Our own Dale Hughling has spent countless hours working on the new system with Michelle Haggerty and others before it was introduced to

make it run as smoothly as possible. Linda Mahaffey has also been working to get historical data loaded for each chapter member, whether they are still active or not. We will be hearing more about the new system of hour collection from Dale and Linda soon. It is a big change (yes I know, change is hard) from what we are now used to. If we can carve out a new trail at Mother Neff State Park, then I think we can tackle this!

We have an amazing group of chapter members who volunteer tirelessly to a variety of projects. From trail work, scout programs, angler education, and interpretive programs at state parks you are out there doing your part to promote the beauty of nature. Please record your hours for all of the important projects that you volunteer for. Volunteer hours are worth well more than that one dollar bill.

- Lynn

Remembering Ursula Nanna

Our friend left us January 15th with friends and family by her side. Ursula played a huge role in this Chapter's mission to teach young people to love nature and the outdoors. Her enthusiasm and dedication to those young people will be sorely missed.



Saving Water...continued

Some ways to address water loss due to overspray would be to reorient your sprinkler heads and change your watering technique; to leakage would be to replace/repair and maintain your equipment; to runoff would be to capture the water on your property by using tanks, reservoirs, guzzlers (devices designed to collect water from a larger surface area and direct it into a container designed for wildlife use; and slow water flow.

Some ways to slow water flow and enhance percolation are terracing, catchment pond, berms, plant bunch grasses, improve soil composition, compost, and aerate the soil, reduce impervious covering, mulch and select plants with thick roots (blue stem, Indian grass, muhly) and plant native plants.

There was much discussion by everyone on ways to save our water consumption. It was very informative and enjoyable.

Giant Snail Invasion in Florida

Editors note: This article from Reuters by way of Fox News was pointed out to me by Mary Ann Everett. We thought it was an interesting way to get rid of invasives.

Florida officials seeking to eradicate a species of giant snails that is invading the state are training Labrador retrievers to help in the fight.

Reuters reports state agriculture authorities are engulfed in an aggressive extermination campaign to snuff out an invasion of Giant African Land Snails, one of the world's most destructive invasive species. Since the campaign started, authorities have collected 128,000 of the snails.

The species has no natural enemies and can grow as big as rats. They devour plants as well as stucco and plaster in a hunt for calcium they need to grow their big shells and can cause massive property damage, Reuters reports.



Now the dogs are being trained to aid in the fight. They will join a team of 45 people who regularly search Miami for the snail.

The program so far has been a success. It is reported that the number of detections this last year were in the thousands; now they are down to around 200 to 300 a week.

Photos from Reuters/Joe Skipper

Why I am a Master Naturalist...

Who are these People?

- Joe Dorn

But first who are we...

Sarah and I have been involved in nature and outdoor activities all our lives including camping, sailing, gardening and almost anything else that would let us smell fresh air and see the sun. We have also belonged to several groups and societies that reflected our interest.

We moved back to Belton in 1984 and live on 250 acres of old family land; it has been in Sarah's family since 1848, two years before there was a Bell County. We were able to purchase the last 40 acres from other family members in 1981. We ran cattle on this and what is now the Belton Business Park until drought and Belton's growth made it not worthwhile to continue with cattle. We were able to qualify the land in the Texas Wildlife Conservation Program in 1999 and to maintain that qualification; we must have active and ongoing programs in place to support our 'critters'. I periodically check with the assigned Texas Parks & Wildlife biologist, Derrick Wolter, to get recommendations for improvements. About a year ago, Derrick and I took a tour of the place and he mentioned the Central Texas Master Naturalist was about to have their annual class that qualifies you for membership. I was not aware of a local chapter and immediately jumped on the internet and made contact with Lynn Fleming and Zoe Roscoe....

So who are these people???

Lynn and Zoe both contacted me shortly after I made my inquiry and gave me a quick overview of the group and in my fashion I went looking for all of the information I could find including reading all of the online newsletters, the class curriculum and the photos on the web site. After seeing photos of some of the activities, including one of Zoe up a tree with loppers in hand, I developed a concern about being able to physically participate with this old body (by the time you read this I will have passed number 79). I contacted Lynn and she assured me that physical re-

straints would not be a problem and so we ended up at the Orientation Meeting.

They look a lot like us...

The meeting consisted of a bunch of 'Blue Shirts' wearing CTMN badges and another bunch with 'sticky' badges; we were evenly matched in case things got out of hand. The age mix was typical of today's volunteer organizations, some over forty, most over fifty with very few young faces. The meeting got underway with a 'meet and greet' and then Lynn, the current president, gave an overview and introduced the 'Blue Shirts' who then went one-on-one with the 'Sticky Badges'. After about thirty minutes, the 'Blue Shirts' were called forward and they introduced each of us with a short review of our interview.

They have the same interests we do...

During the interview and review it became obvious that we all had similar interest in things relating to the natural world and were willing to expend time and effort to further our education and commitment to those activities. The people, 'Sticky Badges' and 'Blue Shirts', were well educated, either formally or informally, as might be expected of people who have been or will have been through a multiple week course to learn more about subjects of interest to them.

Physically, people ranged from my grandson who assists his mother in her gymnastics business, to me who has good 'getting down' tools but the 'getting up' tools don't work so well anymore. Most tended to be more like me rather than grandson.

The common denominator for all of us was flexible hours with many retired and others free to attend classes and events during the '8 to 5'ers' workweek.

Now, on to the 'Dragonfly'...

The orientation session was a success. We left with an introduction to a group of folks who would soon become friends, 'Sticky Badges' and 'Blue Shirts'; along with a built up anxiety to get started with the classes and projects to earn the 'Dragonfly' badge, the identifier of a 'Texas Master Naturalist'...

Next: 'The Classes' with a short Interlude for 'The State Convention'

Which Stick Is This?

- Richard McCarthy

Walking Stick and Water Scorpion

These insects are designed to be difficult to detect by their predators. The Walking stick is Brown and appears to be a part of the vegetation in which it lives. The Water Scorpion is darker brown in color and hangs up-side down in the water with only his tail filaments exposed to get oxygen making no movement and appearing to be a piece of stick.

These specimens were collected at two different locations. The Walking Stick was collected at the edge of a wooded area, and the Water Scorpion was collected from a wetland.



Walking Stick

ORDER: Phasmida CHARACTERISTICS: Length: Up to 7 inches Color: Green to Brown

Terrestrial; No wings on Texas Species; Eats Leaves of trees and shrubs, favors Oaks and hardwoods.

Female often drops eggs randomly; some species bury eggs in soil or glue them to vegetation. Eggs hatch in a few weeks.

Over 3000 species in the world and more than 30 species in the U.S. and Canada. 13 species are found in Texas. These insects are also called; stick insects, walking sticks and in tropical areas Leaf insects.



Water Scorpion

ORDER: Hemiptera

CHARACTERISTICS

FAMILY: Nepidae

Length: 12-100 mm long

GENUS: Ranatra

Color: Always Brown

Poor Swimmer; Winged - can fly from pond to pond; Active throughout winter

Predator- eats: tadpoles, small fish, and insects. They pierce with beak and inject saliva that sedates and begins to digest their pray.

Female lays eggs in the spring, two to four weeks to hatch, young mature in about two months.

The front legs are used to catch prey. Their common name refers to the painful bite if they are mishandled. The water scorpion usually stays below the surface of the water with the two long breathing tubes on its aft end just out of the water. It hangs this way until prey comes close enough to grab with its raptorial front legs.



Continued on next page...

2015 Harker Heights Seed Swap

- Zoe Rascoe

The City of Harker Heights hosted its 3rd Seed Swap on January 24th. It's really a Come and Get Free Seeds for the public – a great way to start planning for spring before it actually arrives. CTMN took Indian Grass, Little Bluestem and Side Oats Grama seeds to share along with a big bowl of soybeans and corn to remind folks of the seed and feed our local farmers grow. There were vendors with beautiful salad greens, rain barrels, honey, tiny starter plants and well, seeds. We had an opportunity to tell interested visitors about our upcoming Spring Training Course as well as sell Nature Guides and our nature-y tile coasters. Thanks go to Gail Hughling for organizing the booth items and volunteers and to Dale Hughling for hauling a lot of it in. Carolyn Stewart, Mary Odom, and Zoe Rascoe also answered questions and otherwise spread the good story of what Master Naturalists can do for our communities. Kudos to Mary Odom for folding an origami jumping frog in a flash to entertain a four year old long enough for us to talk to her newspaper reporter mom! CTMN and information on our Spring Training Course was in 3 local newspapers. Won't you help spread the word about the only way to become a Master Naturalist, too?



Volunteers (right to left) were Carolyn Stewart, Mary Odom, Gail Hughling, Dale Hughling, Zoe Rascoe.



Which Stick Is This...continued

Water Measurer

ORDER: HETEROPTERA

CHARACTERISTICS:

FAMILY: HYDROMETERIDAE

Length: 4-11mm

GENUS: HYDROMETRA

SPECIES: 9 recorded

Lives on top of water; No wings; Predator: eats pond Invertebrates, larva, Dragon flies & Beetles.

Photo from, "Images of Water Measurer Insect",bing.com/images



Christmas Party

- Zoe Rascoe

2014 Christmas Party

Lots of great food, laughter and fellowship, more TMN Armadillo and dragonfly pins presented, a Chapter President and a Treasurer re-elected, and another successful auction to raise money for our projects. We made almost \$250.00! We should just give Lyna Pitts a lot of yarn and let her open an Etsy shop of her knitted hats and scarves and we'd make all sorts of money!



Jacki Bakker, Yvonne Eele and Gail Hughling received their recertification pins and Ray Hughes received his 250 hour milestone pin.



Photos by Joe Dorn and Terry Rascoe



Now Accepting Applications!

- Zoe Rascoe

The 2015 Master Naturalist Spring Training Course is now open for business! Have you thought about the fact that taking a class is the only way to become a Master Naturalist? If you know someone who may be interested or someone that should be interested, be sure to let them know about our spring classes – otherwise it will be another year before the opportunity arises again. Do help us spread the word. We can provide you flyers if you have places to put them. Orientation, and the last chance to join the class, is Tuesday evening March 24th. Classes start the following Tuesday, March 31st, and run 7 weeks through May 26th skipping our PACE and Chapter meeting dates.

Please check your calendars and arrange your schedule to attend orientation to meet and encourage prospective members that evening. And come to any of the training classes, too – I hope you found it helpful and reassuring to have members attend your classes when you were new to the Chapter. They will get to know our members and be more likely to volunteer during the training months if they have someone they have met with which to work. If you can take this a step further and be a mentor for a trainee, we need you! Just let Yvonne Eele know you are interested and she will get you matched up with just the right trainee. The complete schedule with dates and locations is on our website under “New Class”. Now get out and round up some recruits!



Become a
**TEXAS
MASTER
NATURALIST**

2015 Training Class

**7 Tuesdays
March 31st – May 26th**

Applications
Available



For application or information
on the Central Texas Master
Naturalist Program contact:

Zoe Rascoe	254-913-1013
MaryAnn Everett	254-721-0931
Lynn Fleming	254-760-4739

txmn.org/centraltexas



In the Know!

- Zoe Rascoe

Need Volunteer Hours?

The 2015 Home & Garden Show can fix that!

For the 4th year, CTMN will fill the last turn of the exit aisle with handmade bird, bat and butterfly houses, handy laminated nature guides and nature-themed coasters to raise money for our projects. We will also be recruiting trainees for the 2015 Spring Training Course which starts March 31st. The Home and Garden Show has been our biggest source of like-minded recruits each year. We will need to fill 9 shifts over Friday, February 20th, Saturday, 21st and Sunday, 22nd – which usually takes about 22 people. You can work any shift on any of the days that you are able. If you work the whole weekend, one half of your annual volunteer service hours will be behind you before February is even over! Please contact Zoe Rascoe at trascoc@hot.rr.com by Friday, Feb 13th to schedule a time to help set up, sell, recruit, hand out seed packets, engage kids with our biofacts, or just smile and pass out brochures. Everyone can find something they will enjoy. Special thanks to Temple Area Homebuilders for giving CTMN a free booth at this event. **V**



Science Fair Judging

St. Mary's Catholic School in Temple

Friday, Feb 13th, 9:30am-1:30pm (lunch provided)

We have helped with this (and others) for several years. You will be given instructions when you arrive and all the judges will score projects until all projects are recorded. They are looking for 9 volunteers.

Deadline for signing up: Tuesday, Feb 10th **V**

It's a Facebook "LIKE"

We have recently hit over 200 "Likes" on our Facebook page and the number continues to grow almost daily. If you are a Facebook user, you likely know this is a great sign that people are interested in the science and nature issues and photos we are sharing. If you think Facebook is kooky, then just tell those that use it Thank You for sharing good information about what our chapter contributes across Bell County and the many nature facts and photos that might otherwise gone unknown.

This also reminds us that we need a new Chapter photo. Get your shirts washed!



Upcoming Events

- Yvonne Eele

As January winds down, we look forward to a very busy February. There are lots of opportunities for both advanced training and volunteer hours. There will also be many chances to talk about our upcoming new class. Orientation is March 24, 7:00-8:30pm and classes run Tuesdays (except the second Tuesday of the month) March 31-May 26. Invite Friends, family and everyone else you think may be interested.

February 2 (V) Salado Workday; Contact Lyna Pitts at lyna.pitts@gmail.com

February 2 World Wetlands Day

February 5, January Hours due; ctmn.bell@gmail.com

February 7 9:00-12:00 (V) Workday for bird houses and tiles at Hughling Home.
Contact Dale Hughling at dalehughling@aol.com

February 7 (AT) Basic Stream Team at Waco Wetlands; Contact Jenna Walker at jennaw@ci.waco.tx.us
FULL - WAITING LIST ONLY FOR THIS DAY.

February 8 (AT) Advanced Stream Team at Waco Wetlands. (Only open to those currently active stream team samplers.) Contact Jenna Walker at jennaw@ci.waco.tx.us

February 10 (AT) General Membership Meeting featuring the Crawdad Man Ken Johnson. 6:00 at Belton Church of Christ. Contact Jerry Lewis at lewis1@hot.rr.com

February 12, 8:00 (V) Miller Spring work day
Contact MaryAnn Everett at everett.maryann4@gmail.com

February 13th 9:30-1:30, (V) Science Fair Judges needed: St. Mary's Catholic School, Temple.
Contact Zoe Rascoe at trascoe@hot.rr.com or 254-913-1013

February 19, 9:00-12:00 (V) Mother Neff State Park Work Day
Contact: Yvonne Eele yeele@ymail.com

February 19-22 (AT&V) Whooping Crane Festival in Port Aransas
For more information go to <http://www.whoopingcranefestival.org>

February 20-22 (V) Temple Home & Garden Show.
Contact Zoe Rascoe at trascoe@hot.rr.com

March 5, 12:30-4:30 (AT) Whooping Crane Watch training with Mark Klym at the Agrilife Center in Belton. Let Jerry Know if you plan on attending.

Contact Jerry Lewis at lewis1@hot.rr.com

March 24 (V) Training Orientation 7-8:30 pm Church of Christ Belton
Contact Mary Ann Everett at everett.maryann4@gmail.com

V Approved for Volunteer Hours
AT Approved for Advanced Training
MA Must Apply for approval of hours

Newsletter Mission Statement

"Our mission is to inform and educate Master Naturalist members and the general public about our local environment and resources, and what we, as caretakers, can do to protect them."

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Lyle Zoeller,
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Derrick Wolter,
Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife

Newsletter Staff

Editor: Terrie Hahn

Proofreader: Werner Hahn

Contributing Writers: Lynn Fleming, Zoe Rascoe, Marilyn Whitworth, Richard McCarthy, Yvonne Eele, Joe Dorn

Contributing Photographers: Joe Dorn, Terry Rascoe, Gail Christian, Zoe Rascoe, Richard McCarthy

Please send any news of events, articles or photos of what you're doing or what's going on in your yard or area to:

Terrie Hahn at moompie45@hotmail.com

Photos of Ursula on page 2 are by Gail Christian.
Front page photo from Mother Neff is by Joe Dorn.