

The Tracker

Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter October 2022

MOTH NIGHT 2022 at Mother Neff State Park

National Moth Week began in July 2012 with a community environmental education and conservation organization, Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission. It was intended to be a statewide event, but quickly grew to 49 states and other countries as a citizen science project. Our chapter was one of those events in 2012 at a City park in Belton! Despite our best efforts and equipment to attract moths with lighting, we only had visits from a handful of teeny tiny “I think it’s a moth!?” moths. With one exception—there was a comparatively huge walnut sphinx moth on the wall in the ladies bathroom. But, we’ve come a long way, baby! In a bold move, we slid our Moth Night to October—when our moths are more likely to be out, and we partnered with *CTMN members ready for our 1st Moth Night*



Previous Moth Night at Mother Neff State Park. Local moth collections and crafts in the Headquarters building.

Mother Neff State Park for lots of natural area where moths live with feeding stations out before the event. Here’s how we roll now: we will have a large black light-lit viewing area for attracting moths, there will be moth collections on display in the Headquarters building along with moth crafts and glow-in-the-dark face painting for kids. Just down the road at the Prairie Loop parking we will be set up for a laser light tour of the night sky. There will also be a scorpion hunt along the rocky areas (oh wait, it’s all rocky areas!) using a black light that will cause scorpions to glow fluorescent purple. Really! It’s safe—they are busy looking for food and toddle away from onlookers. So bring the whole family—for an evening of learning and fun. CTMN members are needed for setup, people herding, and helping at the various stations we are offering. Please plan to come, on this our 10th anniversary of National Moth Night!

- Zoe Rascoe, 2004



Finally, we are starting to see a break in the heat!

Last newsletter, I wrote about the Dog Days of Summer. As I write this, our morning temperature was 57 degrees. With the break in the heat, I am looking forward to getting outside and volunteering and socializing! Once again, our calendar is filled with lots of exciting opportunities.

On October 2nd, Jean Solana will be leading a project for Sirena's Creekside Carnival in Salado. You can contact her at jmsolana76@gmail.com for more information.

I am excited to see Danny Welch resurrecting a project that we have done in the past: Texas Stream Team. They will be monitoring and reporting water conditions in our area waterways. If you would like training on this project or just more information, contact Danny at dwelchster@gmail.com.

Each year we celebrate *National Public Lands Day* with a social event. This year for our "Fallin' into Fun Family Night" we will be at Liberty Park (in place of our Chapter meeting) on Tuesday, October 11th. There will be a potluck meal, yard games, and activities for the kids, from 5:30 to 7:30. If you need more information or want to help, contact Zoe Rascoe at trascoe@hot.rr.com.



Previous Stream Team Monitoring training for Master Naturalists at Lake Waco Wetlands.

The Adopt A Loop Wildlife Survey cycle for TPWD will be starting up again in October. If you haven't been a part of this, it's a fun way to get out in some of our parks and just find wildlife! I personally have seen a skunk, deer, many different kinds of birds, snakes, frogs, insects and more. I enjoy being out with other Master Naturalists, socializing and doing citizen science. I hear there is swag for those who show up, too. If you need more information contact John Fairlie at j.fairl@yahoo.com.

Cont.

President's Pen cont.

The "Eco Harvest: Saving our Earth" event will be on the 14th of October in Copperas Cove. We will have a table there to meet and talk with others. If you are interested in more information, contact Mary Ann Everett at everett.maryann4@gmail.com.

Moth Night at Mother Neff State Park will be on October 15th. This is always a very fun event, and we often have a pretty big turnout. If you haven't experienced Moth Night, you should really consider volunteering. In past years we have had black-light scorpion searches, moth displays, face painting, and all kinds of fun things for kids and adults alike. If you want more information, contact Jessica Dieter at jessycatd@gmail.com.



On October 22nd, we have a field trip to the Waco Mammoth Site National Monument that will include a ranger-led tour and an opportunity to sift through sediment for micro-fossils. I have been to this park once and really enjoyed it. This will be even better! If you are interested in going with us, contact Zoe Rascoe at trascoe@hot.rr.com.

After a previous tour of the Waco Mammoth Site, Master Naturalists sorted and classified sea fossils from a North Carolina dig site as part of a Citizen Science project. If you don't recognize some of the people, there were participants from 3 area chapters... and the rest of us were just a lot younger back then.

This doesn't even include our regular monthly events like First Monday Gardening with

Keep Salado Beautiful, St. Mary's School hands-on presentations, Bell County Museum native plantings workdays, NestWatch nest box monitoring, and Miller Springs Nature Center and Mother Neff State Park workdays.

And that is just October!

Hope to see you outdoors...



Mother Neff State Park

1680 TX Hwy-236, Moody

Jean Solana (2019), MNSP Liaison, can be reached at jmsolana76@gmail.com

ROAD CLOSURE: TxDOT is replacing the Leon River bridge south of Mother Neff so Tx Hwy 236 from the south, Oglesby Neff Park Road and CR 338 are closed. **Please come to the main entrance of the park by accessing Hwy 236 from the north on FM 107 or FM 2671.**

After a very hot summer, it's time for a busy Fall. On September 28th we had our first Fall workday. Bill Novakoski, Bill Abright, Kelli Barton, Matt Ridley, and Jean Solana enjoyed the lovely cool morning as we hiked the woodland trails from the Washpond to the Tower, trimming as we walked. We also checked the prairie pond – still has water, and lots of dragonflies and turtles.

Calling all volunteers! We have 2 activities we need help with!!

Moth Night Saturday, October 15th, 7-9 pm. An evening event with lots of family activities. At Headquarters, guest will learn about Moths and other nighttime creatures and there's crafts for kids. At the Prairie Loop we search for scorpions with ultraviolet lights and learn about the Central Texas Night Sky. Contact Jessica Dieter at jessycatd@gmail.com if you can help!

Fall Fest November 10th, 10 am - 2 pm This event takes place in the back of the park at the CCC cabin. The Dutch Oven Gang will be cooking for us and CTMN volunteers are needed to share Discovery Trunk critters, lead children's games, and direct traffic. There will be nature hikes, storybook trails and Smokey the Bear, too. If you can volunteer at the Fall Fest, contact Jean Solana at jmsolana76@gmail.com.



Previous MNSP Fall Fest attendees

Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities for CTMN members—

Contact Jean Solana and she will connect you with appropriate park staff to schedule your visit.

- Native Garden Maintenance
- Social media content development
- Painting signs, kiosks, fences, benches
- Invasive species removal and control
- Thistle and grass identification
- Facebook Live interpretive programs
- Trail maintenance
- Bird blind maintenance

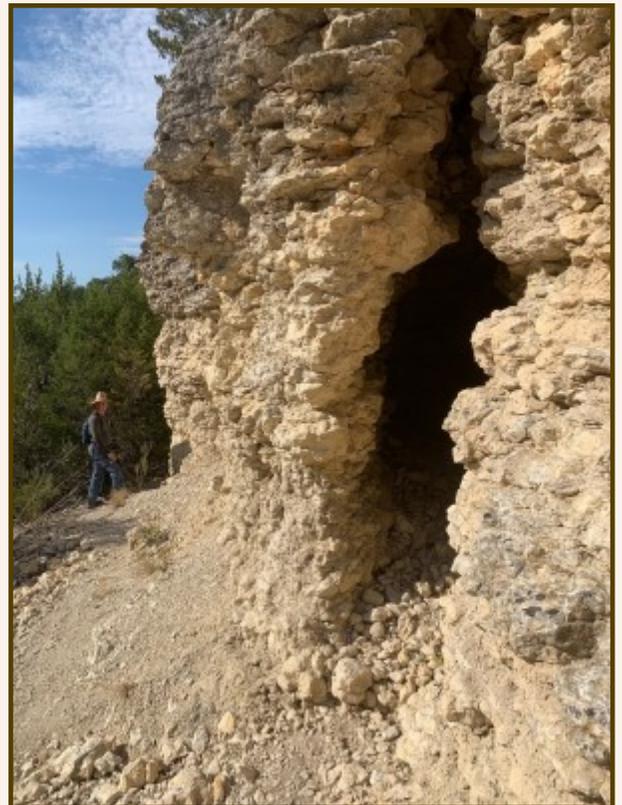


- John Burns, 2018
jaburnscgm@gmail.com

Miller Springs Nature Center 2nd Thursday Workdays August and September 2022

In August we were still in the heat wave and I was not into working hard in the heat. I didn't hear any complaints with the decision to have a light workday. We took our litter pickers and picked up litter and took some of the guys who had not been very far into the nature center to see new areas. We were also on the lookout for our next work project which most folks know is normally removing invasive plants. We found our next area to work just past Keller's trail. I just decided to call it that because I was tired of calling it the new trail. Keller Matthews came up with the idea, the location for the trail, and worked hard on the trail, so I thought, why not call it Keller's trail. (Of course, this is not the official name so you won't find it on any maps. At least not yet.)

Anyway, there are quite a few Waxleaf Ligustrums to the east of the trail that will take us several workdays to knock out. The volunteers present were: Stan Simons, Ben Clement, Bill Novakoski, Wade Matthews, Bill Cornelius, and myself. Bill Novakoski and Ben took off by themselves trying to find a way to pick up some litter down in the new canyon area. They were successful in getting to the litter and they also found some interesting caves. In the coming months I plan to try to find a possible location for a new trail to get back into the new canyon area from the green pond area. We had a good day and even with the light work I think we were all pretty hot and tired by the time we made it back to the parking lot.



Work crew (Front L to R): Bill Cornelius, John Burns, Wade Matthews (Back) Bill Novakoski and Stan Simons. Ben Clement missed the sweaty photo op, but had a cool find on the cave!

Miller Springs Nature Center *cont.*

In September I had planned to get started on the area we had scouted out in August, but plans changed as many of the volunteers who usually come were either sick, injured, or just not available. We ended up with three volunteers, Marilyn Whitworth, Bill Cornelius, and myself. So, we again grabbed our litter pickers and headed out to pick up litter. We didn't go as far as we did in August, but we ended up picking up quite a bit of litter. We also checked a few of the Bluebird boxes. Several had wasps and a couple had old nests. None of us could tell if they were bluebird nests – we need the NestWatch team for that!

It's always nice to have good feedback. I noticed during the September workday we had quite a few hikers thanking us for what we were doing. It seemed like more than normal were saying thank you. Maybe it was because we were on the move and saw more people than normal. I will say, we almost always have people hiking through where we are working and many do say thank you. My point is what we are doing does not go unnoticed and most people appreciate it. People really do appreciate our hard work.

Thank you to everyone who has come out and supported our efforts at the Miller Springs Nature Center!



The Faithful show up even when it's 90 degrees on the "autumn" workday. Marilyn Whitworth, John Burns and Bill Cornelius. Way to rock a workday!

FORT HOOD PROJECTS

- Cassie Castillo, 2022

On September 23rd I went to a training session for monitoring monarch butterflies on Fort Hood. I was joined by several other Master Naturalists to include: Jamey Douglass, Jean Solana, and Sue and Ward Critz. Our mission is to visit various points in the ranges around Fort Hood and not only count the monarch butterflies present, but also note their behavior and what plants they are nectaring on. After obtaining our range passes, we drove in a caravan out into the grassland ranges near BLORA to a practice point, led by three biologists in the Adaptive & Integrative Management department. As I was walking past Jean's truck, I heard a loud hissing and realized she was the winner of a flat tire.

We walked a 500-meter perimeter around the designated point at a very slow pace, with the very technical name "wedding walk". We were instructed to look for monarchs within a 5-meter radius side to side and above us, and note if they were flying, resting, mating, or nectaring. It was in the high 90's outside, so unfortunately too hot for any monarchs to be out and about. While tramping through the plants, we saw lots of gumweed and some milkweed. Jean gave me an impromptu lesson in identifying the differences between green and antelope horn milkweeds.



Photo by Charlie Plimpton

Jean Solana and Cassie Castillo (back L to R), Jamey Douglass (front center). Ward Critz and Sue Critz not pictured.

After finishing our route, there was a group effort to change out Jean's flat tire. Back in the AIM office, we had a much-needed cooldown and attempted to install a GPS app on our phones. Some of us (including myself) proved to be technologically challenged, and need to return next week to continue the process of learning how to upload the correct map for finding our observation points. I'm looking forward to cooler weather and seeing lots of monarch butterflies!

CADDO LAKE STATE PARK

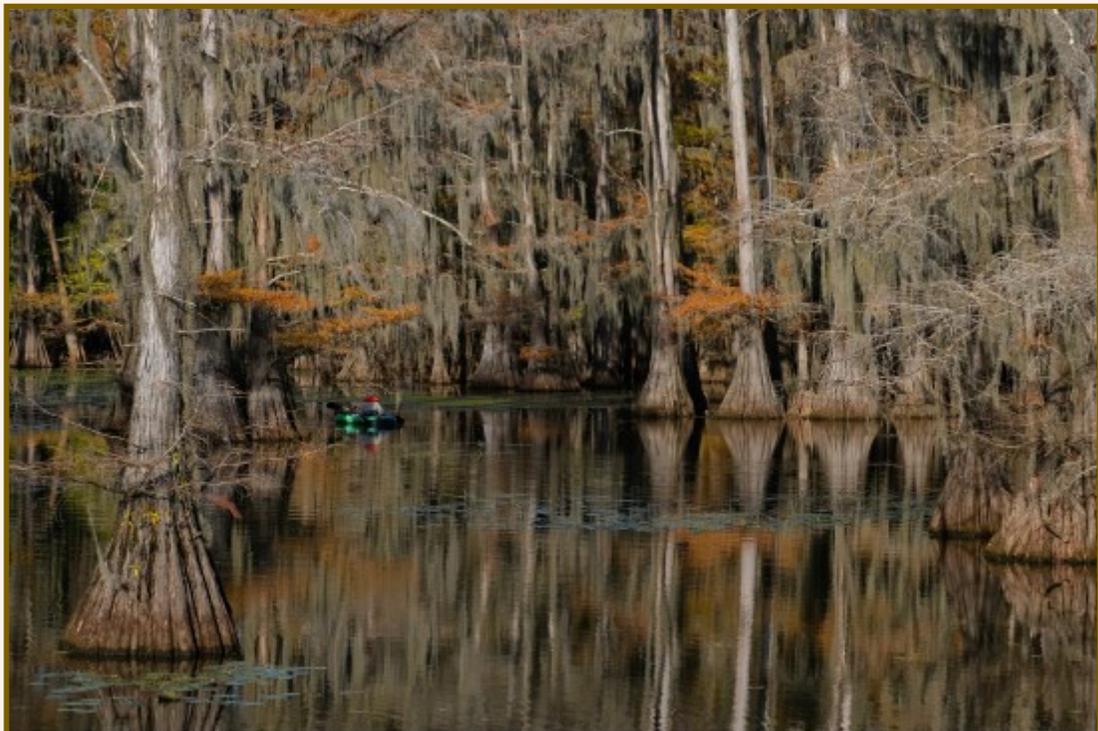
- **Zoe Rascoe, 2004**



As I usually do, I was bidding on several items at the Texas Master Naturalist State Conference silent auction. It's a good cause. Near bid closing I was hanging near two items I really wanted. One was a long, beautiful wooden tool carrier handcrafted by Dale Hughling, and another was a long weekend stay at a house on the shore of Caddo Lake. I came home with both. My husband Terry and I were anxious to try out Caddo Lake—the environment is so unusual for Texas and it's interesting that there is very few public access points to the lake. The Lake lays claim to being the only natural lake in Texas. It's history is sordid and interesting. I'll let you look that up.

Our weekend house was up on stilts and was only a few steps from the edge of the lake. And there was a seasonal swamp right out the back door. We went in early November, right after the State Conference. The many cypress trees in the area had lovely fall color which lost a little glory from the creepy Spanish moss that encased most everything. Caddo Lake State Park had canoes and kayaks available, fishing docks and boat ramps, and lots of trails to explore. Like many of our state parks, there are old CCC structures there. We now will stop by the State Park when on our way home from trips to eastern states, and spend just a little time in Uncertain, Texas on the shore of Caddo Lake.

Here are some photos that may entice you to give Caddo Lake State Park a spot on your Go To List in the fall.



CADDO LAKE STATE PARK *CONT.*



Photos by Zoe and Terry Rascoe



Spanish Peaks State Wildlife Area Colorado

- **Carroll Adcock, 2020**

All images by Carroll Adcock

In the shadows of the namesake peaks lies 6,450 acres reserved for outdoor enthusiasts who hold a Colorado hunting or fishing license, or a state wildlife area pass. The area is divided into 4 units and navigating between them can be a bit confusing, so refer to the map on the orientation kiosk at the main entrance, or see maps on links below. Located in Las Animas County west of Trinidad, the habitat includes Pinyon-Juniper Forest, Scrub Oak Forest, Ponderosa Forest, Spruce and scant Aspen stands. The terrain is rocky ridges and canyons and elevations vary from 7500-8800 feet. Wildlife includes deer, elk, black bears, squirrels, rabbits, wild turkey and horned lizards.

Image below: Hedgehog Fly

Cont.



[Colorado Birding Trail—Spanish Peaks](#)

[Colorado Parks & Wildlife: Spanish Peaks SWA](#)

[Spanish Peaks Map](#)

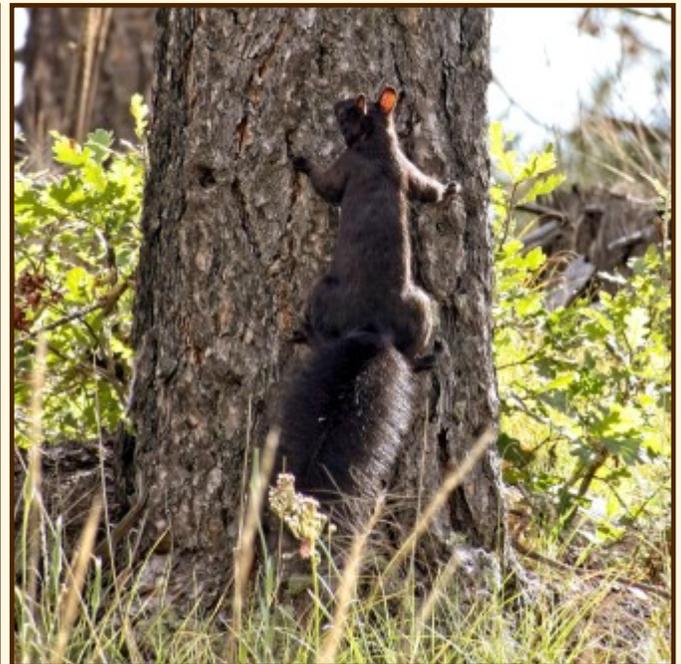
Spanish Peaks State Wildlife Area *cont.*

I recently spent nearly 3 weeks exploring and hunting elk in the area and was fascinated with the many unusual rock formations, wildflowers and pollinators and wildlife (with the exception of a scarcity of elk). The area was unseasonably warm and dry and the elk were few and far between. The area has three primitive campgrounds with potable water and latrines. Birding and wildlife



opportunities abound. I added four birds to my life list and saw an Albert's squirrel, a first for me, in the Ponderosas – the southeasternmost edge of their range.

Get outside and explore. Happy trails.



*Top: Spotted Towhee. Above: Albert's Squirrel
Left: Hunt's Bumblebee on thistle*

WHAT'S THAT HONEY DRIPPING FROM MY TREES?

- **Mary Ann Everett, 2003**

Yuck, what is that sticky stuff all over my car (or sidewalk, or plants)?!

This year was the worst I have seen for the sticky stuff under, not one, but two pecan trees in our front yard. It was literally falling by droplets upon the sidewalks, driveway and vehicles parked beneath them. What causes this to happen? The black-margined aphids are found on the pecan, both improved cultivars and native trees across the pecan belt. These pests overwinter as eggs under the bark of trees. The nymphs emerge during the spring and feed primarily on the underside of the leaf on the leaf veins. During the summer, many generations of aphids are produced by unmated females giving birth to live female aphids. The time period from birth to adult is about 6 days, and there can be 16-32 generations per year. All aphids during the growing season are females, which give birth to live young. Males are not produced until the fall. At that time, they mate with the females, which lay the overwintering eggs. Both adults and nymphs feed on plant sap and excrete a sticky substance referred to as honeydew.



When you have honeydew, a black sooty mold will grow on the honeydew, and this will reduce the photosynthetic ability of the foliage.

How to manage this pest: You could use an insecticide, but several things you should think about.



Because of the overuse of insecticide, these insects have developed an immunity to them. What a homeowner must do is rotate the different insecticides that treat aphids. Read the label carefully.

Also, there are beneficial insects which prey upon the aphids, such as lady beetles, both larvae and adults and lacewing larvae. There is also a small wasp which parasitizes aphids, turning them black.

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WHAT'S THAT HONEY DRIPPING FROM MY TREES?

Cont.

This aphid infestation happens yearly if you have pecans, and one just has to learn to live with this reality. It is soon over, and you can wash your car, driveway and sidewalks, and hopefully the bottoms of your shoes won't stick to your home flooring when you walk indoors!

Another interesting thing is the crape myrtle aphids are doing the same thing. These insects have been at it since about May. In visiting with Cullom Simpson at the Bell County Master Gardener plant sale in September, I asked if he had noticed all the honeydew, and he said yes, he had. We both think it has to do with this weather we have had, the drought, with high temperatures and high humidity going into the late evening hours.

One thing about the crape myrtle aphids is they are monophagous, meaning they only feed on one plant species, and thus will not move from crape myrtle to other plants in the landscape or nursery.

Same treatment applies to these pests, be aware of treatment with pesticides as it will kill the good insects. Another thought is to buy species that are not as prone to these pests.

Advice: Go forth and wash your vehicles and plants and walkways. Pray for rain!

My source for part of this article was from Bill Ree, Extension Program Specialist III IPM (Pecan).



Perennial Pleasures

- **Sally Jordan, 2022**

Between the sizzling hot, 100-degree days of summer and the super cold, below-freezing days of winter, our Texas climate can be a challenge for any plant, especially a pretty flowering plant. In spite of our extreme weather, I have found a recipe for growing flowering perennials that is successful. I am lazy and cheap, so I am partial to perennials that do not have to be replanted and bought every year like annuals.



Rule #1 is to prepare your flower beds with deep, rich soil using lots of compost. Then, put 2 or 3 inches of hardwood or other good mulch on top. I have tropical plumbago that comes back every year in my north flower beds, but we added several inches of good soil to those beds.

Rule #2 is to water the plants thoroughly, especially when they are becoming established. My big perennial bed faces west so I do water it at least once a week during the hottest summer months if it does not rain. Also, if a serious cold front is coming in the winter, I try to water before the cold weather arrives, and this helps the plants make it through a hard freeze. Watering also helps your lawn to survive a serious cold spell.

Rule #3 is to choose the right plants. Blue Salvia or Mealy Cup Sage is a winner, and it attracts hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees. It can be somewhat invasive, but it is easy to pull. I combine it with Gold Lantana and Rock Rose, also called Pavonia, for an English garden look. An orange Esperanza is my tallest plant and grows right in the center of the flower bed creating a focal point. This year I have added tall, purple Ruellia Brittoniana or Mexican Petunia, and it is thriving. For the border, I like to use the small, Mexican Petunia or Ruellia Simplex. It comes in pink, purple, or white. I enjoy having Salvia Greggii in the front areas, but it does not always return in the spring and is more of an annual. Purple Trailing Lantana is another shorter plant to use around the border, but it is also considered an annual, so sometimes, it has to be replanted.

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Perennial Pleasures cont.

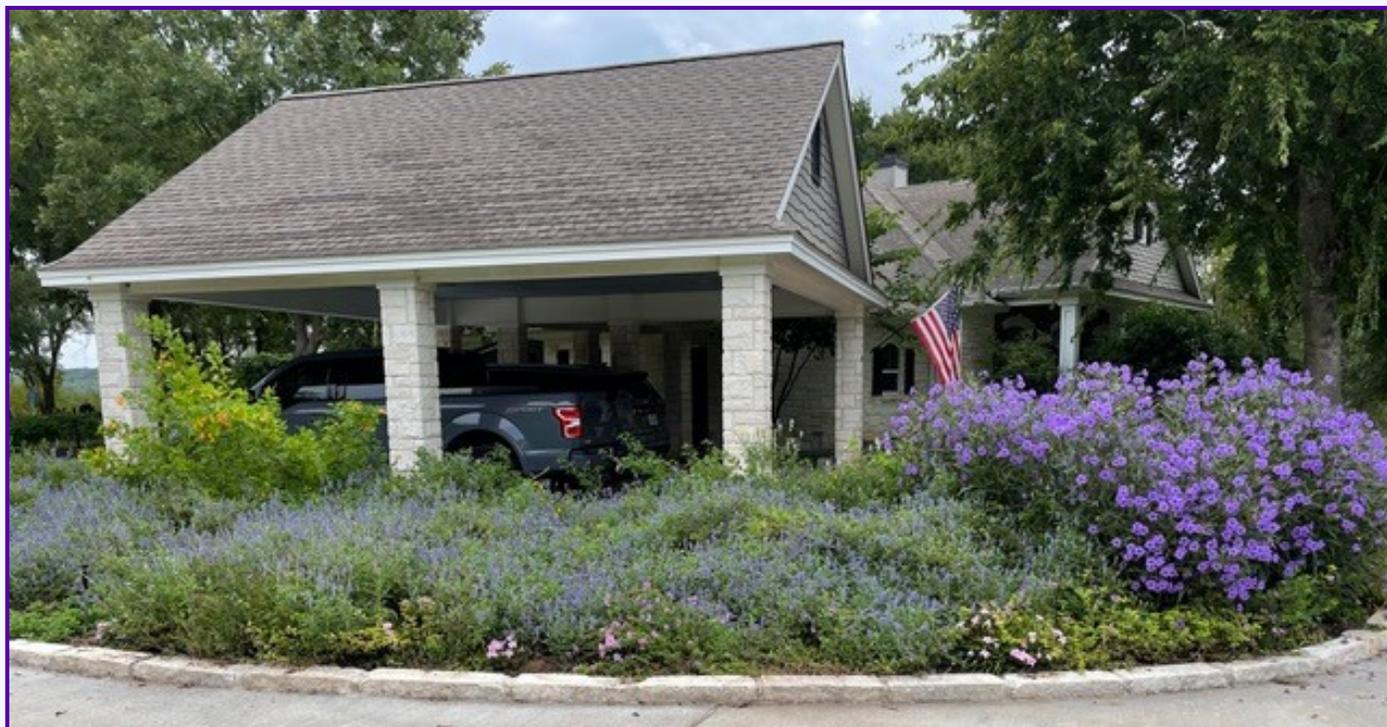
I like to add cone flowers in the mix as well. They will return from their seeds.

I do not cut these perennials back until late February when the chance of a hard freeze has passed. For several months, my garden looks rather unkempt, but my plants are hardier as a result.

Rule #4 is to apply plenty of fertilizer every year. My favorite fertilizer is called Milorganite, which is processed pellets of sewage sludge from the city of Milwaukee and can be bought at Lowe's for a reasonable price. It does not cause burning and is totally organic. I also like Osmocote for flowering plants. Both of these can be tossed out by the handful before a good rain.

There are always weeds to pull in early spring and a few later on, but once the flowers get established the bed is low maintenance. We have deer, but they are not attracted to these perennials. I feel like I am providing a patch of mother nature for all my critters and little friends. I enjoy watching all the bumblebees, honey bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds that come to the flowers.

Happy Gardening!



What's in YOUR backyard?



Black-chinned hummingbird

Look out!

Guy Fowler has a new camera.

Welcome to the New Camera Club!

Next step:

Join the I Need a Much Longer Lens Club.

Just sayin'

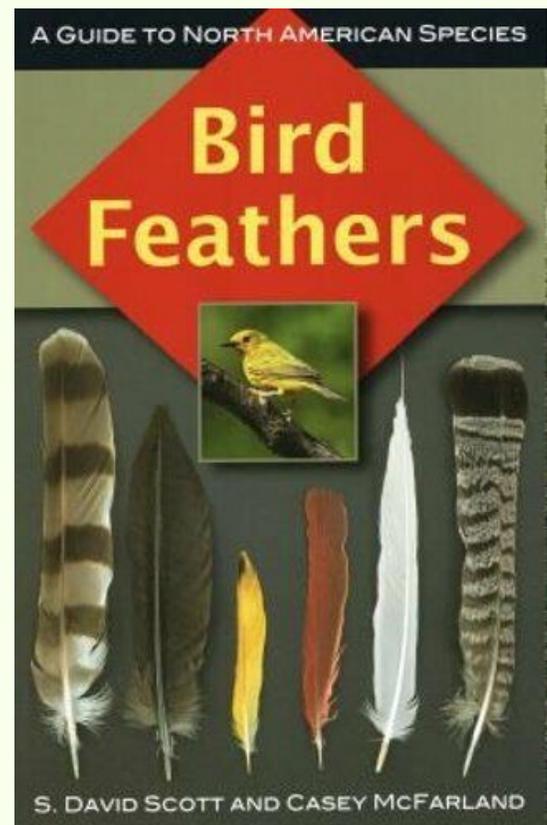


Titmouse

What's in YOUR Backyard?

There is always so much nature happening in Andreas Wooten's yard. His wife Brandy found this little feather. We mean *little* feather. A little too little to figure out what kind of bird it used to be attached to. Andreas has ruled out hummingbird, gnatcatcher, titmouse and chickadee. Anyone??

Not to be outdone, Zoe Rascoe spotted a tiny feather in her own yard. Rumor has it that she didn't even bother to get out her 368 page feather field guide. Which she got at a TMN State Conference 1/2 day class by the book authors. What she learned there? Feather ID is really hard without the bird.





- Mary Ann Everett, 2003

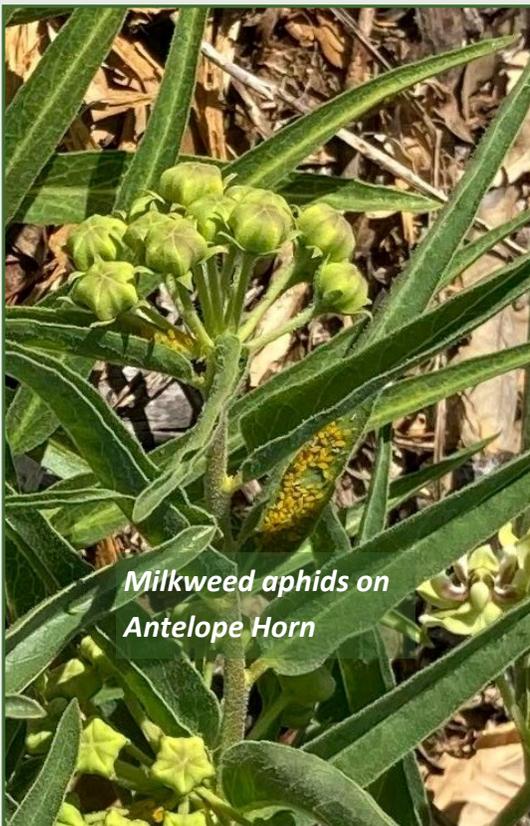
Fifth graders at St. Mary's Catholic School in Temple went outdoors today for a nature scavenger hunt, a bit of a change from vegetable gardening. Let's see, what did they learn? All sorts of things. Fossils, right here in central Texas?

Insect galls? What's that? We found two kinds of those on a live oak tree, and kids were intrigued. What are herbs good for? What *is* an herb? Well, they can be great pollinator plants; they can be medicinal and good to eat with meat and vegetables and even tea and lemonade!

The really neat sighting today was finding the black swallowtail caterpillars on the rue plants. I even had them watch as I pestered one of the big caterpillars and it poked out its osmeterium. It shoots out this Y-shaped organ on top of its head and releases a smelly substance. Scientists believe it's a defense mechanism to defend against those insects who try to eat them. Even the ants leave them alone.



Butterfly on Mist Flower



Milkweed aphids on Antelope Horn

After the class returned inside, and I was fixing to leave the campus, and what should show up but a Giant Swallowtail! Also seen were queens and skippers and lots of bees and other pollinators.



Black Swallowtail caterpillars on rue



Musings of the Contemplative Naturalist

Humankind

- **Bill Novakoski, 2020**

In past issues we have contemplated together the moon and sun; the water, soil and air; the grasses and trees; and the fishes and birds that contribute to our earthly ecosystem. Recently, while trimming the cedar trees, mowing the native grasses, walking our domesticated dogs, and admiring the wildlife at our Peaceable Corner on the edge of the Hill Country, I have pondered my role within the ecosystem. More broadly, what is humankind's responsibility to the environment? So again, I turned to the ancient naturalist to see if he might illuminate my pondering. Listen deeply with me as you read this excerpt from this early naturalist:

God created humanity . . . blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground". . . God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good. -*Genesis 1:28,31, Common English Version Bible.*

I looked at various translations of this saying in my attempt to understand what he specified as the tasks or purposes for humankind within the ecosystem. Just as humans were told to reproduce and fill the earth, so were plants and animals, given this mandate. Only humankind, however, was given the unique command to "master the earth." Other translations of this early naturalist use words such as *dominion*, *dominate*, *subdue* and *rule* to explain the special human role. By today's definitions, these words are often understood as authoritarian, domineering and exploitative. If this understanding is correct, many humans, especially those with power and in pursuit of financial gain, have fulfilled this purpose by using the rest of the ecosystem exclusively for our benefit, to the neglect of and without regard for adverse impacts on other species, and to the pending destruction of our own species. Even now, our brothers and sisters in many parts of the planet are suffering the effects of this exploitation.





Musings of the Contemplative Naturalist *cont.*

The tone of the sage's writing belies the interpretation many humans have given this command. With each new day's creation, be it the celestial bodies, the atmosphere and land waters, the earth, the plants, the animals and human beings, the creator declared his work as "very good." His writings also made clear that collectively the inanimate and animate constituents of this creation sustained each other, and for centuries those who heard these words lived in this manner.

I asked myself, "What should I do when given a very good gift?" Without a doubt, I should cherish it, care for it, nurture and sustain it. And how do I do this, I seek to understand it and what it needs



to be safe, to thrive and to flourish.

As Master Naturalists, the lessons to be received from this pondering are that we should 1) strive to understand the natural world of which we are part, 2) do what we can to nurture our environment, and 3) teach others to protect and conserve our great gift. In doing this, humankind will help keep creation *very good* for all species, great and small.

PICTURE THIS

Though autumn foliage doesn't always show off, these tips will help you get the best shots.

Shooting Fall Color

BY EARL NOTTINGHAM

I've often heard from photographers that the autumn foliage images they took just didn't do justice to the colors they initially saw with their creative eye. This is usually due to the camera's limitations relative to the abilities of the human eye. Our visual abilities can discriminate a much greater range of color and light value than the camera can. However, there are a few things you can do to increase the odds of getting some great photographs.

Although bright sunlight might make colors look brilliant, the added contrast sometimes makes colors appear harsh, especially when contrasted with deep shadows. Try shooting on days with slightly overcast or cloudy conditions. While it may go against our nature to shoot on cloudy days, diffused light is the photographer's friend and will result in greater color and tonal range.



It's also easier to find more diffused lighting conditions in the early morning or late afternoon, so plan your shooting accordingly.

If you must shoot in bright sunlight, try to find angles where the sun is coming from behind the foliage, thus trans-illuminating the brilliant colors of the leaves.

Other unique atmospheric conditions such as rain, fog and even frost can greatly enhance any fall photograph, and you can feel very lucky if you encounter them while shooting. Raindrops and frost patterns are especially good candidates for close-up images. One of the secrets of good photography is that some of the best conditions for taking a photograph occur under what we would normally consider "bad" weather.

Camera settings on digital cameras also play an

PICTURE THIS

important part in reproducing brilliant foliage colors, and two settings in particular will help get better results. They are the color saturation and white balance settings.

Color saturation settings that intensify outdoor scenes have different names depending on the manufacturer. Some may have a “Vivid” picture style setting, while others may call it a “Landscape” setting. Both will intensify the color saturation of landscape colors. Consult your camera’s manual for the proper setting.

Correct white balance is important. While most point-and-shoot digital cameras will default to the “Auto” white balance feature, colors may not reproduce as accurately as possible. A better choice is to manually change to either the “Daylight” or, preferably, the “Cloudy” white balance icon when shooting under diffused light. This ensures that the warmer autumn colors will be faithfully reproduced. For even warmer colors, try the “Shade” setting. In fact, shoot several images at different settings and see which results you like. That’s what the delete button is for.

Finally, don’t forget that the autumn outdoors make a great studio for people pictures. Just put your subjects in earth-toned clothing (no white shirts), and you’ve got the makings for colorful family memories.

Because most Texas land is privately owned, access to good places for photography can sometimes be limited. Luckily, some of the best locations for peak color are in Texas state parks, and all are photographer-friendly. Learn more about park foliage at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/parkinfo/seasonal/foilage/.



Softer light — such as the diffused light of a cloudy day — will bring out the delicate details of fallen foliage on a forest floor.

Editor’s Note: Earl’s book, [Wild Focus – 25 years of Texas Parks & Wildlife Photography](#), covering his TPWD career is now available from Texas A&M University Press.

We are grateful to Russell Roe, Managing Editor of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Magazine we all love, for allowing us to share Earl Nottingham’s “Picture This” articles on photography tips. If you can’t wait, many of Earl’s articles are archived at tpwmagazine.com/photography.





- Mary Ann Everett, 2003

Out on a Limb

Tree Description: A multi-trunked tree or shrub, it can grow 15-20 feet.

Blooms: The blooms are orange and yellow, and the bloom time is January through April. The yellow-orange flowers have many protruding stamens per flowers. They are very fragrant.

Fruit: A reddish brown to black woody pod 1-3 inches long, rounded and tapered at both ends.

Leaves: The tree bears finely divided leaves, bipinnately compound foliage is light-green and ferny. Leaf arrangement is alternate.

Bark: According to Bennie Simpson's *A Field Guide to Texas Trees*, the wood is reddish brown, hard and dense, and makes excellent firewood. The branches bear paired spines up to 2 inches in length.

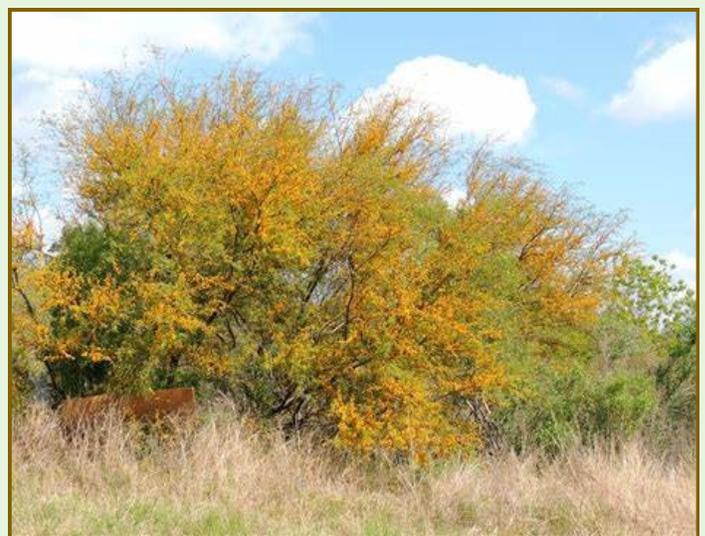
Location: It grows in southern North America from southern California to southern Florida, southward to Mexico and Central America to northern America. In Texas, it is found mostly in central and south Texas.

Heat & Drought Tolerance: Great plant for both heat and drought. Potential landscape plant for dry areas. The wood also serves to make fence posts.

Interesting facts: According to H.B. Parks, a TAMU apiarist in the 1920s, the pollen of this tree is a good bee food, but the flowers contribute no nectar to the honey flow. Several other species of this tree provide the source of fine, clear "Uvalde honey." The seed pods are eaten by livestock and wildlife.

The common name of this tree is derived from Nahuatl and means "many thorns." In southern Europe this species is extensively planted for the flowers which are used in perfume.

[Click here for name of tree](#)



MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

250 Hours!



Jamey Douglass reaches 250 Volunteer Service hours!
CONGRATULATIONS!



Danny Welch DOUBLE CERTIFIES for 2022!
CONGRATULATIONS!



Michael Belcher and Debby Bridge receive
Initial Certifications!



Dale Hughling, Jean Solana and Zoe Rascoe Recertify for
2022

MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS



John Atkins, Louann Hight and Tom Gerik Recertify



Junior Master Naturalist Sofi awaits her next task

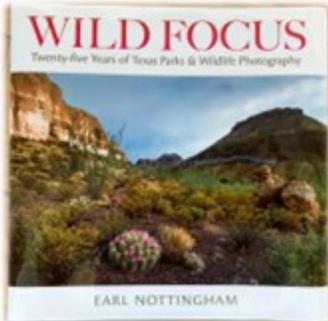


Tina Atkins Recertifies for 2022

CHAPTER MEETINGS

- ZOE RASCOE, 2004

Our Chapter was delighted to host Earl Nottingham, former Chief Photographer for TPWD with a career there that spanned 25 years. His presentation not only highlighted how he had traveled to every “corner” of Texas in his effort to cover TPWD’s interest all over the state, but it also showed the breadth of topics that TPWD covers as their mission is “to manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide



hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.” Whew! And Earl caught it all on film (so to speak). We greatly enjoyed his stunning photos as well as his tips for shooting great images in all sorts of circumstances. He has taught me the best way to learn is to just “get out and shoot!” The TPWD Foundation printed a book of many of Earl’s images that’s called “Wild Focus: 25 years of Texas Parks and Wildlife Photography.” I can recommend it! And since Earl is local, he will be happy to sign your book. All proceeds go to the TPWD Foundation.

Our own Jamey Douglass spoke at the September chapter meeting. His topic, Using the Web Soil Survey Tool, came from a 39 year career as a soil scientist with NRCS. Jamey started us at the beginning with how and why soil surveying got its start in the “old days” and ended with a powerful online tool that NRCS provides free to all that is chocked full of information on all things soil at every spot in Texas—right at our fingertips. Jamey ran a demonstration of the tool for a site nearby where he had helped identify and record soils and terrain characteristics. The instruction on using the Web Soil Survey was very helpful in maneuvering through a lot of information, but you could also just click around on your own. Go to the [Web Soil Survey](#) website, click the big green button to start, put in a location you want to know about (is grandpa’s house really sitting on solid rock??) - and you will have entered the world of soils! Thanks Jamey!!



NEXT CHAPTER MEETINGS

Fallin' in to Fun Family Night!

Central Texas Master Naturalists

Tuesday, October 11th

5:30–7:30pm

Liberty Park, Belton

POTLUCK MEAL, YARD GAMES, KID'S ACTIVITIES

RSVP for your family to Zoe Rascoe at trascoc@hot.rr.com or 254-913-1013

Central Texas Master Naturalists Presents

CONSERVING TEXAS PRAIRIE

Dr. Carly Aulicky, Director of Outreach and Stewardship
Native Prairie Association of Texas



Tuesday, November 8, 2022 6:00pm

Belton Church of Christ 3003 N. Main, Belton

Our monthly chapter meetings are open to the public!

txmn.org/centraltexas



MASTER NATURALISTS AT WORK

Hey, look at us! An article in the *Fort Hood Environmental e-Newsletter* published by the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division. Thank you to Brad Burden, a field biologist with the AIM Team, for sharing it with us!



Central Texas Master Naturalists

VOLUNTEER AT POLLINATOR SANCTUARY

Members of the Central Texas Master Naturalists volunteered at the Fort Hood Pollinator Sanctuary on June 16 for summer garden upkeep and maintenance.

"The Texas Master Naturalist Program's mission is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas. At the chapter level, we want to provide great volunteer opportunities and the essential training that allows us to be effective volunteers to the organizations we work with," Bruce Polikoff, Master Naturalist, said. "Volunteering provides essential help to organizations and helps connect folks to their community."

Although the summer heat is present, Master Naturalists worked hard to combat many invasive plants present at Fort Hood. Removal of invasive plants is essential for the survival of the native plants at the Pollinator Sanctuary. Native plants are well-adapted to the harsh summer weather of Texas. However, invasive plants outcompete native plants. "I love the goal of restoring native plants to the prairies and forest where they used to be, supporting pollinators and other animals in the process," Jean Solana, Master Naturalist, said. "It is important to volunteer to help care for the natural world."

The Fort Hood Adaptive and Integrative Management Team maintain the Pollinator Sanctuary and demonstration grassland, which provides habitat for important pollinators. If others are looking for volunteer opportunities, Polikoff suggests, "Start looking in your communities. Whatever size organization you approach is usually grateful for volunteers to help with their mission," he said.

MASTER NATURALISTS AT WORK



Several Master Naturalists manned a booth at the Master Gardener's Fall Plant Sale. There were plenty of discovery trunk items available for learning and play—for kids and adults alike. We like to be where there are outdoor folks, just in case they discover the Master Naturalist Program is just what they need!



Good to Know...



MOTH NIGHT
October 15th
Mother Neff State Park
7:00 - 9:00PM

Consider volunteering for this event with our State Park partner—all kinds of helpers needed. Contact Jessica Dieter at jes_syctd@gmail.com



Waco Mammoth Site Field Trip
Saturday, October 22nd 11:00am-1:00pm
**National Park Ranger-
led Tour and Citizen
Science onsite sediment
sifting for micro fossils.**

Central Texas Master Naturalists

Contact Zoe Rascoe to RSVP at trascoc@hot.rr.com or 254-913-1013
CTMN members only, please.

Good to Know...

Surveys •••

Ant
Aquatic
Butterfly
Dragonfly & Damselfly
Milkweed Monitoring
Small Mammal
Riparian Woody Plant
Water Snake/Reptile Search

Also •••

Amphibian Watch
Exotic/Invasive Plant Removal
iNaturalist Bioblitz
Prairie Plant Review
Prairie Photo Points

Come out to the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne for science and fun!
Go to givepulse.com to learn more and register.



140 City Park Road
Boerne, TX 78006
(830) 249-4616



Wildlife Field Research

October 2-8, 2022

Cibolo is in it's 23rd year of fall wildlife surveys: Outstanding Citizen Science Opportunity!

Lots of Advanced
Training and Volunteer
Service opportunities!



TXMN 23rd Annual Meeting

October 20-23, 2022

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Entire
Conference
is open to
the public!

- ◆ One of the most ecologically diverse urban centers in the nation.
- ◆ Conference Center is on Buffalo Bayou with 160 acres of greenspace in downtown Houston.
- ◆ 100 concurrent technical sessions & 22 field trips
- ◆ Registration closes Sept 29th

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/2022-annual-meeting/#registration>

Good to Know...

Could the Volunteer Management System be any easier??

Well, yes. Yes it could...

Have you been recording hours in VMS and realize you aren't sure which opportunity your hours should go under? Or what if you can tell that there is not an applicable opportunity and you will need to fill out the AT/VS Approval form—but where was that form? Dale Hughling, who spends his days trying to make VMS kinder and gentler, has added a fix for those situations.

When you are in VMS "Report Service" screen and can't seem to find the right opportunity, look at the opportunity drop-down list: the 2nd item is a full list of our opportunities with detailed descriptions. After checking that list and you see that you need to complete a request for a new opportunity, that form is now the 1st item on the Report Service drop-down list! No more jumping to other parts of the website! Watch this space in future issues for more tips on taming VMS.



One of our chapter's ongoing volunteer projects is quarterly wildlife surveys for the Great Texas Wildlife Trails (GTWT) Adopt-A-Loop program. Our chapter has adopted the Chisolm Trail Loop, which includes eight sites -- Chalk Ridge Falls and Dana Peak Park on Stillhouse Hollow Lake, Belton Lakeview Park, the Miller Springs Nature Center, Mother Neff State Park, Lake Waco Wetlands, Cameron Park, and the Cameron Park Zoo. We meet at these sites once a quarter to record the critters we observe on our walks. All are welcome to participate in this low impact, laid back citizen science project. Don't know your critters? No problem, there's an app for that! Come to one or more survey walks. All start at 9:00am. If you need more hours to get your 40 to certify for 2022, this project could be your answer! Contact John Fairlie, our Adopt-A-Loop Coordinator at j.fairl@yahoo.com.

Oct 10—Belton Lakeview Park

Oct 12—Dana Peak

Oct 14—Chalk Ridge Falls Park

Oct 18—Lake Waco Wetlands

Oct 21—Miller Springs Nature Center

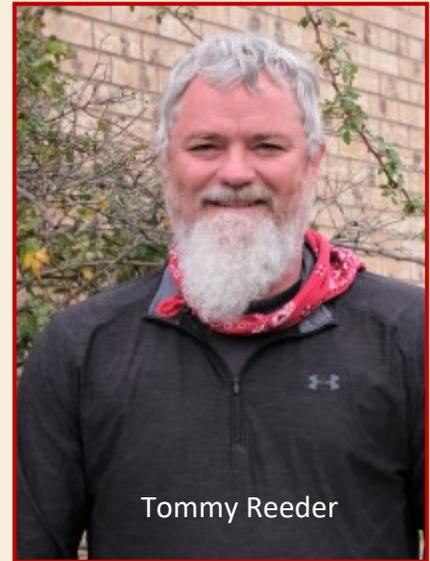
Oct 25—Cameron Park Zoo

Oct 28—Mother Neff State Park

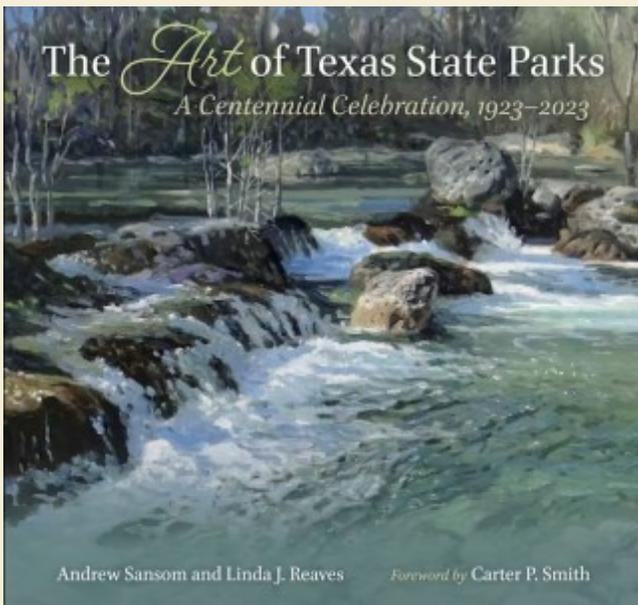
Good to Know...

USACOE Workdays Restarting this Fall

I know some of you have missed your lopper chopping, pick swinging, boulder toting, tree dragging workouts through the 100+ degree days this summer. Well, good news for you folks! Tommy Reeder, class of 2022, has volunteered to organize the monthly workdays at the US Army Corps of Engineers parks near our two area lakes. John Atkins was crew leader for over two years and will help get Tommy rolling. Workdays will likely still be on Thursday, but watch for an email announcement, or reach out to Tommy if you just can't wait. You know who you are.



Tommy Reeder



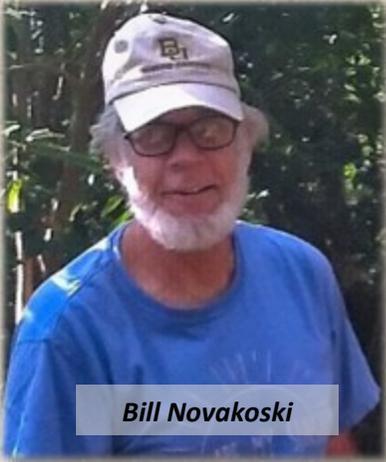
In 2023, the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife marks the 100th anniversary of the state park system. From its inception in 1923, the Texas park system has grown to 95 sites, covering more than 627,000 acres and comprising 74 state parks, 13 historic sites, and 8 natural areas. This vast collection of natural lands and public places now accommodates almost 9 million visitors each year.

The Art of Texas State Parks celebrates this rich tradition, offering an engaging visual arts survey of Texas state parks as seen through the eyes of leading artists from across the state. Editors

Andrew Sansom and Linda J. Reaves have collected original works from **thirty of the state's most influential artists**. These stunning visual works are accompanied by a thoughtful essay by William E. Reaves on the time-honored legacy of landscape painting in Texas and by Sansom's reflections on the vital place of landscape art in Texas conservation.

Order from TAMU Press for \$40. 11x10.5" 264 pages www.tamupress.com

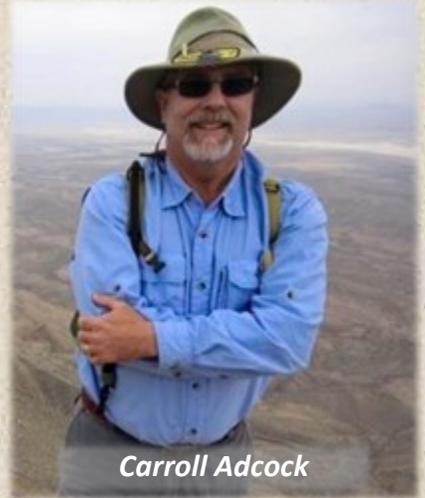
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Zoe Rascoe



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Lost Maples State Park—Zoe Rascoe

Editor: Zoe Rascoe

Contributing Writers: Linda Fairlie, Jean Solana, John Burns, Cassie Castillo, Bill Novakoski, Carroll Adcock, Sally Jordan, Mary Ann Everett, Zoe Rascoe.

Contributed Images: Linda Fairlie, Tina Atkins, Jean Solana, Bill Novakoski, Sally Jordan, Guy Fowler, Andreas Wooten, Carroll Adcock, Charlie Plimpton, Mary Ann Everett, Zoe Rascoe, Terry Rascoe.

Have you noticed the recurring feature articles on member visits to National Parks and Texas State Parks, “Fish Tales” (of any kind!), backyard nature, travel to places unlike Texas and more? If you have a story to share, just send me your idea. Volunteer Service hours are available.

Zoe Rascoe

trascoe@hot.rr.com

I really want to know what this squirrel is annoyed at..



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Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Meetings

Chapter meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Belton Church of Christ at 3003 N. Main. Location exceptions are in June (graduation) and December (holiday party!) and occasional outdoor demonstrations. Meetings include a nature-related program and the public is welcome to attend. Find topic information and locations on our website and Facebook page.

The Board of Directors meets the 1st Monday of each month from 11:30am-12:30pm at the AgriLife Extension Building in Belton. Meeting notices will be sent to chapter members with location information and all members are welcome.