

CROSS TIMBERS MASTER NATURALIST NEWSLETTER

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



June 2023

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President's Pen - Cowtown Great American Cleanup and Earth Party Celebration

Sharon Hamilton

On Saturday, March 24, volunteers, including members of Cross Timbers Chapter, performed litter clean up along Trinity Trails and the Trinity River, then brought trash to Trinity Park for an Earth Party celebration. Even a kayak group was organized by the Trinity Coalition! The event was organized by one of our own—**Avery Pesek**, the city's Keep Fort Worth Beautiful Coordinator. Special events included a “trashion” show featuring costumes made from trash, live music, and a hot dog lunch for all.



The CTMN booth displayed the skins of local residents-- beaver, skunk, coyote, deer, bobcat, and raccoon—borrowed from our sponsors at **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**.

Sandy Thornburgh and I enjoyed meeting human visitors drawn to our booth by the furs. When a youngster asked what each animal was, we asked what he or she guessed it was. Almost everyone recognized the skunk and raccoon, but fewer could identify the beaver. And while we appreciated when a handful guessed platypus, we reminded them that the platypus is not native to Texas. About two dozen organizations hosted booths at the event, from the **Tarrant Area Food Bank** to the **Welman Project** and the **Sierra Club**. Two groups new to me caught my eye.

The **North Texas Renewable Energy Group** demonstrated the use of solar energy, with not only a working outdoor fountain, but by providing the energy needed to run the public address system for the program! The mission of **NTREG** is to further the development of renewable energy, sciences and technologies with concern for the

President's Pen - Cowtown Great American Cleanup and Earth Party Celebration

Sharon Hamilton

ecological, social and economic fabric of [the] community and state. They promote renewable energy through the exchange of ideas and information at meetings, discussion groups, and public and private events. Monthly meetings are held in Dallas. Their website says that NTREG has earned a silver classification from GuideStar, a database of financial transparency of nonprofits; they recognize the City of Dallas and Dallas County Community College District among their supporters.

Texas Blossoms is a 501c(3) organization founded on a dream of Anne and Charles Tandy, who envisioned lining the banks of the Trinity River with cherry trees. After the passing of the couple, Texas Blossoms realized that cherry trees were ill-suited to the climate of north Texas and focused on other species. Today, the group has planted flowering and shade trees, including Texas redbuds, Mexican plum, Mexican buckeye, rusty blackhaw viburnum, desert willow, Texas mountain laurel, and ahem, a few species of non-natives along Randol Mill Road in Fort Worth, at nine city libraries, and at four east side city parks. [Wouldn't we like to have a conversation with leaders of this organization? 🗣️]



Neither Cross Timbers Chapter nor Sharon Hamilton endorses either of these groups. Just wanted you to learn about them. For more information, see their websites:

North Texas Renewable Energy Group <https://www.ntreg.org/>
Texas Blossoms <https://www.texasblossoms.org/>

Note to self: **learn the Spanish names** for the animal skins in the trunk, so that chapter outreach can better serve all Tarrant and Parker County's residents.

June 2023

Monthly Announcements

June Chapter Meeting at the Fort Worth Botanical Gardens:

Our upcoming meeting on June 19, 2023 will be held in person and on Zoom, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Social time will start at 6:30 pm. We will be discussing a new project for the Lights Out Dallas campaign this month. Hope to see you all there.

To all Members:

Your hours matter. Please record them within 45 days of service.

Hours may qualify as \$74 worth of matching funds so the State of Texas can receive money from the Federal Government. Let's get our tax dollars back in Texas!

Looking for the monthly Calendar of Events?

Please go to <https://txmn.org/crosstimbers/events-calendar> for a readable, upgraded calendar

Help us include as many Master Naturalist activities as possible to our online calendar.

If you have CTMN items to add or corrections, contact Mary Beth Lampe at mblampe@gmail.com

Thank you!

TMN 2023 Annual Meeting

Photo & Video Contest

Are you ready to share your best photographs? Did you capture a perfect image of a native prairie, bird, insect, or chapter member at work or play?

Photographers may submit one photograph per category, so it's time to start selecting your best to share with your fellow naturalists.

- **Photo, Art & Media Contest**

- Hosted by the Rio Grande Valley Chapter and South Texas Border Chapters of Texas Master Naturalists
- Entries to be submitted online (dates to be determined)
- Note: Photos & Media must be taken somewhere in Texas and within the current year: 2023.

- **Video Contest**

- Videos of 1 minute to 3 minutes

Photo Categories

- Plants
- Wildlife Birds
- Wildlife Insects
- Wildlife – Other
- Chapters at work/play
- Scenic

You do not need to be registered for the TMN Annual Meeting to enter any contest.

Pre-Annual Meeting Entries – all due by **5pm on Friday, September 15, 2023**

More contest details to follow in coming months or visit <http://txmn.org>

OPEN HOUSE RESCHEDULED

Due to unforeseen issues with the power at the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge, we had to move the original date of the Open House.

The rescheduled date for the Cross Timbers Master Naturalist Chapter will be **June 20**
from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

There will be **no Zoom option for the Open House, in person attendance only.**

If you plan to attend, [RSVP HERE](#)

Find out more about the Texas Master Naturalist program, meet current Cross Timbers members, and ask questions.

Location: Hardwicke Interpretive Center inside the Fort Worth Nature Center.

The entrance fee is waived for this visit.

Map and directions to FWNCR: <https://fwnaturecenter.org/map/>

Map to Hardwicke Interpretive Center inside FWNCR: <https://fwnaturecenter.org/trails/>

Application and Training Information on our website: <https://txmn.org/crosstimbers/class-schedule-2/>

Advanced Training Opportunity

Dr. Jared Barnes

Dr. Jared Barnes, one of our nation's top academic horticulturists, inspires gardeners to learn about what is useful and new in contemporary horticulture. As a professor, Jared Barnes is blessed to travel across the country and the world learning about new plants and how to use them, and then he carries that knowledge back to share with students and fellow gardeners. In this presentation, he will focus on lessons learned that are applicable to the southeast and Texas.



Jared Barnes, Ph.D., started gardening when he was five years old, and since then he has enthusiastically pursued how to best cultivate plants and cultivate minds. He currently fulfills those passions as an award-winning associate professor of horticulture at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX. He also hosts The Plantastic Podcast, and writes a weekly newsletter titled plant•ed. He obtained his Ph.D. in horticultural science from North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC; he interned the summer of 2008 at The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, PA; and he has travelled around the United States and into eleven countries to gain a broad perspective of horticulture. His fresh perspectives and writing have been shared in many national publications and programs.

[Welcome! You are invited to join a webinar: Dr. Jared Barnes, The Traveling Plantsman. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email about joining the webinar.](#)

What's the Stink?

Stephonia Roberts

Let me take you back down the road for a spell when I was a kid living with my grandmother in east Texas.

I will never forget the day my curiosity wanted me to have the experience of my life.

My grandmother and I was awakened by a strange noise in our small living room. We both got up to investigate with her in the lead. I saw it at the same time she exclaimed, "Pole cat!"

I was already a fan of nature, especially small critters therefore my response was move closer for better investigation. I did and the next few days found myself in a tub of tomato juice, washing all of my clothes, getting expelled from school until the scent dissipated and the faculty, staff and students were able to tolerate my newly acquired eau de parfum.

Even though, I've never forgotten that valuable lesson. My quest for more information led me to understanding our lovely state has at least 4 identifiable mammals which carries an odorous aerosol spray which will burn your eyes and call your momma. .

The animal I experienced was spotted white but still had the black and white color of a skunk. Shucks, it smelled like a skunk.

Therefore, Texas has several skunks from our familiar striped skunk, eastern and western, hog nosed and hooded skunk.

What's the Stink?

Stephonia Roberts

In retrospect people commonly interact with the name pole cat to identify skunks however polecats are not skunks. They are from the family of wild ferrets native to Africa, Asia, and Europe. When Europeans settled in North America the word pole cat (the cat that eats chickens) became synonymous with skunk. However, the word skunk is an indigenous word from the Algonquin tribe to describe the native mammal.

My brother-in-law recently had a skunk removed from his property because it was digging holes in his yard. Upon investigation I informed him he had an infestation of grub worms in his yard and the skunk was the actual exterminator helping to rid the yard of grub worms. Skunks are friendly but be cautious because of rabies. But skunks do not spray unless they feel threatened. So, word to the wise ***curiosity kills the cat*** or if you get sprayed the humiliation will make you wish you died.



June 2023

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Amy Martin, past featured speaker for the TMN Annual State Meeting and for Cross Timbers Chapter, announces the publication of *Wild DFW: Explore the Amazing Nature Around Dallas-Fort Worth*, to be released by Timber Press on July 11, 2023. Amy will present at our September 18, 2023 chapter meeting. From the book's press release:

Natural history, ecology, and geography of North Texas from ancient history to the present; a field guide to over 100 species of flora and fauna; and 25 eye-opening hiking adventures. This book has over 350 color photos and more than 40 detailed maps.

“Nature isn’t just someplace we visit — it's where we live.”

--Amy Martin

CTMN projects and Texas Parks & Wildlife are showcased in the book, specifically the Fort Worth Nature Center and Village Creek Drying Beds/River Legacy locations. We have it on good authority that at least one included photo was taken by a CTMN member!

Wild DFW's section on natural history and ecology covers:

- The wild ways of nature after dark.
- Geology created from an ancient inland sea.
- Invasive species that threaten the region's ecology.
- How to turn your backyard into a nature sanctuary.
- Epic migrations of birds and insects through the area.
- Native urban wildlife and the native flora that sustains them.
- Citizen scientists who survey nature for scientific extrapolation.
- Weather accentuated by tornadoes, ice storms, drought, and floods.
- Urban creeks that provide an entry to nature for many, especially children.

According to author and fellow Master Naturalist, Cross Timbers Chapter will be included in the [North Texas Nature](#) page (in progress) on the book's website.

See <https://wilddallasfortworth.com/wild/> for more information. You are invited, but not pressured, to pre-order through the website.

Bluebirds on Holiday!!!

Donna Honkomp

The US Army Corp of Engineers Holiday Park Campground, located on the southwest shore of Lake Benbrook, has proven to be an excellent habitat for the Eastern Bluebirds in our area. We are on our eighth year at the campground, and currently monitor 25 nest boxes. As of June 15th of this year, we have had 43 nesting attempts resulting in 75 fledglings so far (some eggs and young are still in the nest). We attribute these good numbers to a cool spring, and as expected, we have noticed a considerable downswing in second nesting attempts as the weather has heated up.



We typically start seeing our first bluebirds at the end of January/beginning of February, so we use the first half of January to clean, repair and relocate our boxes. We have recorded our first egg laid as early as February 13th, but a cool spring delayed things this year, with our first completed nest being recorded on February 20th. Our bluebirds have been pretty consistent with 5 eggs per clutch, but we also wind up hosting wrens, titmice and chickadees with up to seven eggs per clutch. We even had a tree swallow one year, so we have a considerable diversity.

Bluebirds on Holiday!!!

Donna Honkomp



Clutch of seven titmice



Chickadees and Wrens

Bluebirds on Holiday!!!

Donna Honkomp

With close proximity to the lake and plenty of open spaces, and especially lots of insects, the bluebirds are very successful in getting their young raised and out of the nest. We normally have about 90% of our nesting attempts made by bluebirds, and have always had one or two boxes “vacant” in the area in case other couples come in, or if a couple with a newly fledged clutch want to try a new location. We also experience a lot of other wildlife, including deer, roadrunners, raptors and waterfowl.



When we do our monitoring, we also try to do some outreach by advertising what we are doing to the many walkers, bikers, staff and campers in the park. A great way to encourage folks to stop and ask about our program has been to add a magnetic sign to our car doors to attract interest. We have had a lot of conversations with folks interested in bluebirds, birding, or just to pass on the success they have had with their own bluebird boxes in their backyard.



Bluebirds on Holiday!!!

Donna Honkomp

In the past, we recorded our data by hand on the Cornell data sheets, and then transferred the information to the website once we got home. We have been using the Nestwatch App this season, which speeds up the data entry considerably. Why didn't we start this sooner???? Oh, well, we live and learn. We still normally close out nesting attempts at home since using the app makes it a little difficult to find key data, but overall, the app has been very useful. In mid-April, we were able to help out at the TBS booth during the "WingDing" at Dinosaur Valley State Park, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. We had a lot of visitors, and were able to pass along more bluebird boxes to new members.



As usual, we have had to take measures to discourage predators. This year a couple of boxes have been predated by snakes, so the use of cones, baffles and snake netting have helped. It is always sad to return to a nest box to find it has been raided, and we have lost two clutches so far. It is a constant battle to "outsmart" these ever-present members of the food chain but then again that is "nature".



It is mid-June now, and the 100 degree temperatures are headed our way, but we continue to monitor as long as our birds continue to breed. We usually go through to the end of August, depending on the weather and season. Not sure what the rest of this year will bring...hopefully, lots of fledglings!

Volunteer Opportunity

HOPE Farms

In early May, CTMNs joined forces with Tarrant County Master Gardeners when the Tarrant Regional Water District provided new pollinators – the planting day was a big success.

HOPE Farm summer camp begins on Monday, 6/5. The program director, Mr. Mario Choice, will identify young men who are interested in gardening to join the next work day, which will be on **Tuesday, 6/20**, roughly 8 am to 11 am. We're inviting both Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners to come, just as we did for the planting day on 5/6.

The volunteers can start working while it's "cool" from 8 to 9 am. The boys will arrive around 9 am, and we can pair up with them to garden from 9 to 10 am ish, at which time we can go inside to cool off and have some interactive learning about pollinator gardens and common pollinators, as well as have a taste test of bell peppers and tomatoes fresh from the vegetable garden.

This would be a great opportunity to connect with the boys and do some gardening and environmental education during their summer camp. Please let Gina Alexander (g.alexander@tcu.edu) know if you are interested or if you have anyone in mind who would like to come.

Here is the HOPE Farm address:

865 E. Ramsey Ave.

Fort Worth, TX 76104

2023 Memorial Day Weekend Brazos River Cleanup and Campout

Cheyna Kaspar

Starting that Friday night, several organizations began showing up for the 2023 Memorial Day Weekend Brazos River Cleanup and Campout at Little L Ranch.

Rio Brazos TMN Chapter
North Texas TMN Chapter
Cross Timbers TMN Chapter
Indian Trail TMN Chapter
Friends of the Brazos
Lower Brazos Riverwatch
Texas Conservation Alliance
TPWD



And friends or relatives of those in the organizations

Friday, May 26th weekend campers began pulling into the Little L Ranch, a wonderful wildlife preservation owned by the Walkers to enjoy a pizza potluck and camaraderie around the campfire. Some brought their campers, others tents and hammocks, and still others stayed in the barn/bunkhouse.

On Saturday May 27th, breakfast was served to the campers, then volunteers met at the Glen Rose HS Parking Lot or at Little L Ranch to walk the riverbanks or launch their canoes and kayaks to clean trash from segments of the Brazos River. Between the two sites, over 40 tires were removed and several bags of trash. That evening was filled with a presentation on dragonflies, then after a catered dinner, Sam Kieshnick held an interactive mothing workshop. Some ventured to stay out discovering what the black lights brought in through the night, while others dropped exhausted to bed before midnight.

2023 Memorial Day Weekend Brazos River Cleanup and Campout

Cheyne Kaspar

Sunday morning, May 28th, a yummy mountain man breakfast was served and then Advanced Training commenced: Aquatic Ecology, River Exploration, Riparian Ecology were all held in the morning with field trips to the river, then after a satisfying lunch, it was on to Geology, Orienteering and Plants of North Texas which had participants delving through a natural gravel site, following crazy directions, and another field trip to the riverbank. A potato bar dinner brought volunteers to a presentation of the challenges of the Lower Brazos Riverwatch, then all gave into exhaustion when the start party was cancelled by cloud cover.

After a grab & go breakfast, a bird watching walk and trek was had by those who remained, and the long weekend was ended with a brunch.

Little L Ranch had many breathtaking views, and the hosts were so gracious! The land was covered in wildflowers which had numerous butterflies and dragonflies and fireflies at night. Many commented they felt they were at a retreat, or resort even with the work that was done Saturday morning.

Numerous new connections and friends were made with plans to meet again in 2024. If you don't have plans already, seriously consider Little L ranch for your Memorial Day weekend next year, and come join the uplifting Brazos clean-up party!



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- SHARON HAMILTON - PRESIDENT
- MARY BETH LAMPE - VICE PRESIDENT
- GLENDA WALKER - SECRETARY
- DEE ANN MCGINNIS- TREASURER

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- THERESA THOMAS - RECORDS
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Citations

- "COVER PAGE" PHOTOS - GLENWOOD PARK PHOTO - [HTTPS://HTTPS://FORTWORTHREPORT.ORG/](https://fortworthreport.org/); HORSE HERB - [HTTPS://NATIVE-GARDENERS.COM/PRODUCTS/HORSEHERB](https://native-gardeners.com/products/horseherb); FWNC - [HTTPS://WWW.ALLTRAILS.COM/PARKS/US/TEXAS/FORT-WORTH-NATURE-CENTER-REFUGE/WILD-FLOWERS](https://www.alltrails.com/parks/us/texas/fort-worth-nature-center-refuge/wild-flowers); LODGE - [HTTPS://MYTANFEET.COM/ACTIVITIES/HACIENDA-BARU-DOMINICAL/](https://mytanfeet.com/activities/hacienda-baru-dominical/)
- "PRESIDENTS PEN" - PHOTOS BY SHARON HAMILTON
- "AT OPPORTUNITY: - PHOTO -[HTTPS://MERISTEMHORTICULTURE.COM/MY-STORY](https://meristemhorticulture.com/my-story)
- "WHAT'S THE STINK?" - PHOTO BY STEPHONIA ROBERTS
- "BLUEBIRDS ON HOLIDAY" - PHOTOS BY DONNA HONKOMP
- "BRAZOS RIVER CLEANUP" - PHOTOS BY CHEYNA KASPAR