

T E X A S

Master Naturalist™
Cross Timbers



Thankful For Nature



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In this Issue:



Month Speaker

This month, learn about one of the very few bison packs left to roam on land shared by the public, from those who take care of them! Employees of the Fort Worth Nature Center will be speaking this month about their bison.

Short Story

This month, we have a few quotes, poems, or stories on why CTMN members are thankful for nature. Feel free to share these stories anytime, especially for the December issue, as this is the season of Joy in Nature!



Featured Project

The Chandor Nature Trails is a CTMN project that needs much help! Alongside the City of Weatherford, members have been working to improve the trails. If you haven't visited, please do so soon.





Three Cheers for the State Annual Meeting— McAllen, Texas!

What a wonderful, 4-day event is the TMN State Annual Meeting.

Attendees scoured the items offered in the Silent Auction, from handmade jewelry to unique art to baskets of nature-themed goodies. Small groups participated in half-day to full-day field trips, visiting locations including the Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge, Cactus Creek Ranch, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, the National Butterfly Center, La Sal del Rey (with Sam Kieschnick!), and the Edinburgh Scenic Wetlands.



We attended dozens of outstanding sessions including Spanish for Naturalists, America's Song Dog (the coyote), The Road to Recovery: Ocelots in South Texas, Chasing Monarchs (by our own Kakkie Cunningham), Expressive Bird Photography, and iNaturalist 101 and 201. We learned how to collect herbarium specimens (thanks, Kimberlie Sasan), learned even more about galls (Kimberlie again) and found out how to monitor and report many other Texas creatures.

Our keynote speaker, retired Professor Larry Lof, shared a history of the Rio Grande Delta (it's a delta, not a valley!) called The Forgotten Rio Grande. Did you know that before the Civil War, steamboats travelled up and down the river? Presenters included game wardens, US Fish and Wildlife staff, college professors, TPWD staff, as well as TMN members from all across the state.

We laughed; we were inspired; we cheered for Middle and High School science fair winners. We gave standing ovations to TMN members who have earned 10,000 hours and 30,000 (not a misprint)hours milestones during 2023.

About 470 of us boarded seven large buses for the 90-minute trip from McAllen to the East Foundation working El Sauz Ranch just outside Port Mansfield. We spent the day in the Tamaulipan thornscrub, hearing how the Ranch is managed for sustainability and about their pride in having the largest wild ocelot population in the United States, nearly 40 reproducing cats. With heavy cloud cover moving in and out through mid-day, we sat and watched the annular eclipse with a great group of nature nerds.



Photos courtesy of East Foundation, Jonathan Vail Photography

To learn about the East Foundation's work to conserve and grow native ocelots, see the fantastic 12-minute video, "Our Texas, Our Future: Ranching with Ocelots" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bK8CtKKkHI>



The 2024 Annual Meeting will be in October 24-27 in San Marcos, Texas. Plan to join us!

To see this year's photo, art, and media contest winners, project fair winners, video awards, and photos of members achieving 4000 service hours and more, [CLICK HERE!](#)

CTMN Announcements



Winter Sale - Clear the Shelves - Texas Master Naturalist Gear on Sale now!

Hello, Texas Master Naturalists,

Temperatures are dropping across the state and cooler weather is on the way. Do you need a gift for a friend? Maybe you want to treat yourself? Whatever the case, we've got you covered! Get your Texas Master Naturalist gear now while enjoying 20% off on select items.

This Winter Sale will run from **November 1 to December 15 at 5pm.**

The following items will be available for a discounted price through December 15:

- Master Naturalist Volunteer Hexagon Shirt - Green and Blue
- Master Naturalist Coffee/Wine Tumbler
- Master Naturalist Men's Auxiliary Canvas Work Jacket
- Master Naturalist Women's Auxiliary Canvas Work Jacket
- Master Naturalist Long Sleeved T-shirt
- Master Naturalist Ladies' T-Shirt
- Master Naturalist Men's PA Roll Sleeve Twill Shirt
- Master Naturalist Dark Green Short-Sleeved Polo Shirt
- Master Naturalist Brochure Shells - Pack of 50

Sizes and quantities are limited, so be quick and help us clear the shelves for new spring items coming in 2024!

All items can be purchased through the TMN AgriLife Learn Store

[Purchase Here](#)





Make Tracks

CTMN 2023

Holiday Party

December 11 6:30 p.m.

Ft Worth Botanic Garden

Rose Room

***Donations accepted for
Door Prizes & Desserts***

Supper  Games  Music

**We'll send a separate email
for reservations**





Speakers

November's Speaker

November 20, 2023. **“Bison of the Fort Worth Nature Center”** by **Nature Center Staff.**

Learn all about the bison herd that lives at the Fort Worth Nature Center. For nearly 50 years, bison have roamed the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. As the only herd of its kind in North Texas, the bison can be viewed on their native land, offering visitors a unique opportunity to experience and learn about this historic mammal.



Bison Herd

American Bison by Trinity Arts Photo Club

Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center

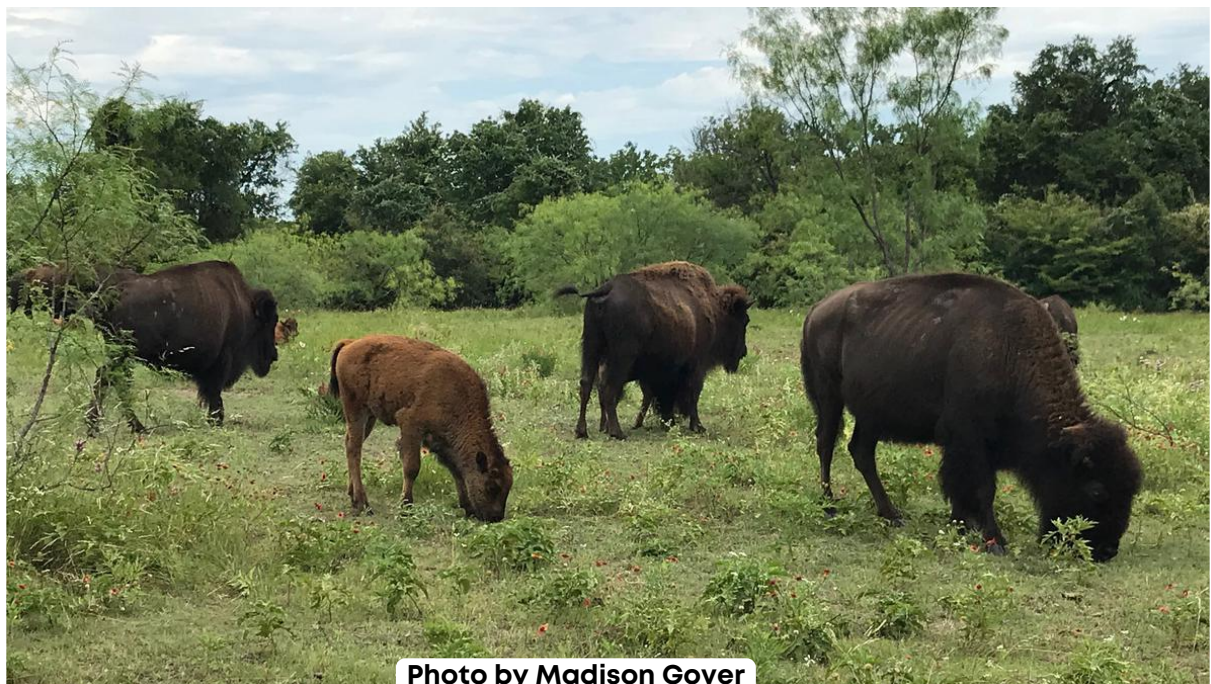


Photo by Madison Gover

TMN Tuesdays

On the second Tuesday of each month at 12:00pm Central Standard Time, the TMN State Office offers an hour-long virtual advanced training event - with fantastic new and returning guest speakers.

Healthy Forests – Better Living Through Management



The talk will focus on the current status of forests across the globe, the US, and Texas, and the differences between forests, woodlots, individual trees, and what this means for management options. Allen will also spend time on forest dynamics and how management strategies can achieve healthy forests by mimicking natural processes. Allen Smith serves as the Regional Forest Health Coordinator and Entomologist for the Texas A&M Forest Service. He has served the citizens of Texas for 22 years.



2023
#TMNTuesdays

January 10	May 9	September 12
February 14	June 13	October 3* <small>*first week of month</small>
March 14	July 11	November 14
April 11	August 8	December 12

[View Past #TMNTuesday Presentations Here for Advanced Training Hrs.](#)

[Register Here](#)

[Webex Guide](#)

[FAQ](#)

Member Milestones

Let's take a moment to help us congratulate members that have recertified in 2023 so far!

They have completed, logged, and had approved 40 volunteer hours and 8 advanced training hours. They will all receive the Texas Ecoregion Pin.



Last Month's Recertifications

Terry Austin
Kim Conrow

Michele Cyr
Kimberlie Sasan
Ryan Wiggins



November Recertifications

Bret Franklin



Member Milestone Achievements

Terry Austin - 500 hour - Silver Dragonfly Pin
Ryan Wiggins - 500 hour - Silver Dragonfly Pin



Meet-a-Member

Meet CTMN-in-training Teddi Zonker!

What year did you become a master naturalist?

I just finished my training this year; class of 2023! I've been interested in the program for several years after a friend told me I would love it. After completing the Master Gardener program first, I helped Kimberlie Sasan with bluebird box checks and I was hooked! I heard about Kim in a Yoga class - a lady told me, "Follow this lady on Facebook, you both like bugs!"



What is your work career?

Since 1997, I've worked in the field of Parks and Recreation and since 2001, I've been a Fitness Manager for a local city recreation/fitness center. I've been able to share my passion for plants and animals at my day job too! Working with the Great Seed Bomb, our summer camp made nearly 2,000 seed bombs for our city trail system and recently, I spearheaded the NRH Monarch Restoration Program. This program provides Monarch education and encourages residents to create their own Waystation. Each year, I bring my rearing kit to the center and visit with members and guests of all ages about how to aid butterflies.

Where do you like to earn your volunteer hours?

So far, Bob Jones Nature Center, Lights Out/Fort Worth, CoCoRaHS, DFW Wildlife Hotline and the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden. I recently took on sharing the Membership Committee position with NPSOT and I love being a part of the NPAT activities! I'm also one of three Monarch Conservation Specialists in Texas (Monarch Watch), providing outreach and education for Monarchs. I also enjoy offering my presentation on planting for pollinators to nature centers and garden clubs.



What are your interests outside of naturalist activities?

Road trips with my Irish Setter (Frida), gardening for pollinators, photography (Go Nikon!), travel and weight lifting. My favorite most recent trips include: Mexico/the Monarch overwintering grounds (sanctuaries) and the ultimate Bucket List trip (after beating endometrial cancer), Galapagos Islands!



Thankful For Nature

“I’m thankful for nature because it is an infinite source of discovery and wonder that is available to everyone for free—no one is excluded and all are invited.

Whether taking in an expansive vista or crouching down to peer at some tiny creature, nature invites us to step outside of our walled lives to experience whatever beauty we will open ourselves up to.

Something as simple as stepping outside to take a deep breath, watch a bumblebee hover, spy a lizard skittering away, touch a plant, hear the birds, or experience that day’s weather provides a much-needed mental reset from our digital lives. For that and so much more, we owe nature our gratitude.”

-Meredith Chacin



I am thankful for nature because it is who I am. I am an animal and I am a part of nature. I spent most of my childhood wandering around outside, learning about plants, insects, birds, and animals. I feel peaceful and happiest when I am outside, whether it is in my backyard or a place that supports nature.

I have a 4 year old granddaughter, who stays with us often while her parents work. When she is inside she is all over the place deciding what to do, color, watch tv (awful), play with clay, play with dolls, etc. When we go outside, she becomes calm and happier.

We explore the plants, insects, spiders, butterflies, moths, snails, birds, the sky, and dig in the dirt. I like to say that we are all animals and animals live outside, so that is why we all feel at peace outside. This is why I am thankful for nature.

-MaryBeth Lampe



For the Beauty of Nature:

- Nature's vibrant colors and breathtaking landscapes provide us with endless opportunities for photography, painting, and artistry.
- Sunsets, rainbows, and meteor showers give us free and awe-inspiring light shows.

For the Healing Powers of Nature:

- Forests offer "forest bathing," a proven method to reduce stress and improve mental well-being.
- The sound of flowing water, like rivers and waterfalls, has a soothing effect that can ease anxiety.
- The scent of flowers and pine trees can have aromatherapeutic benefits, lifting our spirits.

For Outdoor Adventures:

- Nature provides endless playgrounds for outdoor activities like hiking, camping, and skiing.
- Oceans and rivers offer opportunities for water sports, from surfing to kayaking.
- Rock formations and cliffs are perfect for thrilling experiences like rock climbing.

For Biodiversity and Education:

- The variety of species in nature sparks curiosity and learning, from bird-watching to bug collecting.
- Nature is a classroom where we can study biology, ecology, and environmental science.
- It's a source of inspiration for scientific discoveries and innovations.

For Food and Sustenance:

- Nature's bounty provides delicious and diverse food options, from fruits and vegetables to seafood and honey.
- Gardening and agriculture allow us to cultivate our own sustenance, connecting us with the Earth.

continued

For Conservation and Preservation:

- By appreciating nature, we're more likely to protect it, safeguarding endangered species and habitats.
- National parks and nature reserves offer a window into the world's natural wonders.
- Biodiversity ensures a stable and sustainable environment for future generations.

For Connection and Mindfulness:

- Spending time in nature fosters a sense of interconnectedness with all living things.
- It encourages mindfulness, helping us live in the present and reduce stress.
- Nature's unpredictability teaches us to adapt and go with the flow.

For Creativity and Innovation:

- Many inventions and innovations, like Velcro and the airplane, were inspired by nature's designs.
- Biomimicry, imitating nature's solutions, can lead to breakthroughs in technology and engineering.
- Nature's resilience offers lessons in problem-solving and adaptability.

For Inspiration and Spirituality:

- The natural world has been a source of inspiration for poets, writers, and artists throughout history.
- Many cultures have deep-rooted nature-based spiritual practices.

For Recreational Fun and Entertainment:

- Nature is the stage for countless recreational activities like picnics, bird-watching, and stargazing.
- Nature's whimsical oddities, like unusual rock formations and bizarre creatures, provide entertainment and amusement.

- Teddi Zonker

The Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge is one of the places that feels most familiar and welcoming to me. I will not forget standing in a prairie, watching and listening to a thunderstorm, or listening to a chorus of frogs calling from the marsh at night. There are other places like the LBJ National Grasslands where I feel like I belong. I've been lucky enough to visit these places so often that they feel like home. Just being in those places makes me happy, so I will add that to the many things I am grateful for this Thanksgiving.



Photo by Michael Smith

When I was nine years old I became great friends with a vacant lot full of sunflowers and lots of green dragonflies. Sometimes a local park with a pond or small stream becomes a great place to explore. I hope that you have a place like that nearby, whether it is a vacant lot or a National Grasslands.

Something else for me to add to my gratitude list – and that is you who are reading this. Everyone who likes wading in the creek or camping in the forest and who knows the magic of wild things. So many people are pulled away from such things and forget them. And when we forget about those things, sometimes they are lost. We all need meadows full of tall grass and ponds where fish and tadpoles swim.

You will be the ones who keep many of those places from being lost. You will keep them alive when you talk about them to others, reminding them about the magic. When there is a chance to say something, you will speak up in favor of saving those places.

continued

We know that we don't always win. But sometimes we do. Isn't that a great thing to put on our gratitude list? When a wild place gets protected, and some species of hawk or salamander will survive because it has a place to live, that's something to be thankful for!

I'm more thankful than I can express for many of the people in my life, my wife and son, granddaughter Lilly, and people who are family because we have chosen each other. It is people and places that can turn my days into treasures. Maybe yours too.

- Michael Smith



Photo by Michael Smith

Game Birds of the Cross Timbers

by Madison Gover

Upland Game Birds

Rio Grande Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*)

This subspecies of wild turkey is the one you are likely to see in North Texas. Their footprints are easy to learn from a mammal. They are much skinnier than the selectively bred domestic turkeys.



Photos by Madison Gover



Photos by Madison Gover

Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*)

The sweet song of the bob-WHITE! is one that you won't forget. Now very rarely, if ever, found in DFW, these quail are native to our prairie regions, and love to nest in the crowns of little bluestem and other prairie grasses.

Greater Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*)

Most subspecies of the greater prairie chicken are extinct or endangered. These birds do NOT have a hunting season. In fact, one of the largest conservation programs for Attwater's prairie chickens is located in the Cross Timbers, at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose. These prairie chickens dance and "boom" in a beautiful mating ritual.

continued

Migratory Game Birds

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)

This dove used to be the most common dove of this region. Its most identifiable by it's funeral-esque mourning song and the black spots on its wings. They have pointy tails and enjoy foraging for seeds on the ground.



Photos by Madison Gover

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

This dove used to be located in only South Texas, but due to opportunistic tendencies and shift in climate has become increasingly numerous throughout the state. They are most noted for the white band on the ends of their wing.

If you find a banded bird or see a band number in a photo:

Please report bands to the toll-free telephone number (1-800-327-BAND [2263]) or **on the Internet.**

Link: **Know Your Doves**

Becoming A Mama Master Naturalist 101

by Alyssa Austin

The topic of this article may not apply to all master naturalists, but I feel that everyone will relate in some capacity. Everyone either knows a Mama, has a Mama, or is a Mama, right? As Master Naturalists, we love the natural world around us, and without Mamas (and Daddies for that matter) this world we diligently work to conserve would not exist.



If you have attended the last couple of chapter meetings at the gardens, you may have heard Theo make noises throughout the meeting's presentation. I started bringing Theo with me to the meetings, because as a new Mama and a Master Naturalist, my time is very limited. I also want Theo's childhood to be infused with the outdoors and all the opportunities it brings to play and learn.

When I take Theo on walks outside, I point out different plants and animals to him and tell him about nature's beauty. My goal is for Theo to learn the value of the natural world and to strive to be a good steward of his own backyard. I feel by setting an example for him, teaching him about the wonder of nature, and exposing him to groups of nature lovers like, Master Naturalists, He will appreciate the natural world. As a new Mama, it is a balancing act to get everything completed on my to-do list. With Theo nearly 9 months old, there is always something that needs to be washed or straightened. I also work full-time in the environmental sector and have all the normal "adult" tasks to complete. I certified as a Master Naturalist in 2019, and my goal has always been to re-certify each year.

continued

This year has proven to be more difficult; I have had to get creative by asking for ways to gain VH online, but I honestly have been struggling to log my volunteer hours. I am working on data entry, writing newsletter articles, etc. in an attempt to get those 40 hours logged by the end of the year- say a prayer for me.



In 2022, I monitored blue bird nests while pregnant and saw how diligently the Eastern Bluebird parents work to provide their hatchlings with food, shelter, and proper care. I now relate to these bird parents in ways I never imagined. Raising a baby requires a lot of new and seasoned parents alike; your priorities and focus shift as this new little member of your family's well-being becomes your most important goal.



Photos by Madison Gover

Just like nature has different seasons, parenthood is a new season for me. I wanted to write this article as an encouragement for all the Mama and Daddy Master Naturalists out there- keep thinking outside of the box and finding ways to balance family life with naturalist life. Setting an example for your kiddos by working to conserve the natural world is of vital importance.

We need the next generation to think differently about agriculture, land use, energy sources, biodiversity, etc. By striving to raise Theo with an appreciation of his own backyard, I hope to encourage him to be an environmentally responsible member of his generation. Perhaps, a Junior Master Naturalist too... haha, but no pressure, Theo.

Last Field Trips for Class of 2023

Field Trip #4 - Urban Wildlife

“Classes and fieldtrips are coming to an end and it’s a bit sad! BUT, we’ll have amazing volunteer opportunities with our new friends! Class 9 of 11 we learned about Urban Ecosystems with Rachel Richter and fieldtrip 4 of 5 was an amazing tour of Arlington! Tierra Verde Golf Club, The Molly Hollar Wildscape and River Legacy Nature Center.” - **Teddi Zonker**



Photos by Teddi Zonker

Field Trip #5 - Land Stewardship Field Trip

The last field trip for the training class of 2023 was optional, yet most people showed up anyways. This shows the dedication and passion that the Class of 2023 has shown throughout training. Now go out there and do great things!



Photos by Teddi Zonker



Photos by Teddi Zonker



Native of the Month



Agarita (*Mahonia trifoliolata*)

by Josephine Keeney



What surprising qualities this plant has!! It is tough and **drought tolerant** and the gray green leaves are prickly and resemble holly. They look rather unremarkable most of the year. This evergreen plant can reach **8 feet high** which makes it very impressive.

But come February it bursts into bloom up and down every stem with **beautiful tiny yellow flowers** that perfume the air in a most delightful way. You can smell them from far away.

If that wasn't enough, the flowers mature into orange red berries which are edible and have a very pleasant **lemony flavor**. Some people like to make lemonade by crushing and mixing them with water. Or, you can make a delicious jam for your toast.

Be careful if you come close to this plant, you might get a prickly welcome that will have you smarting for a while. What a great plant this would be to set beneath your window and along paths where it could be used to keep away unwelcomed visitors.



Photos by Josephine Keeney



Featured Project

Chandor Nature Trail

by Sharon Hamilton



During the hot and dusty final week of September, twelve volunteers and the staff of S&S Trail Services of Austin, Texas, cleared areas of **Chandor Nature Trail in Weatherford.**

Areas cleared included a large copse of deadwood at the trailhead, trail from the Lee Street service entrance, and the Keechi Street parking lot.

S&S plucked out as much as possible from the nature preserve using a skid steer, digger, and 6" chipper. Volunteers lugged many trailer loads of debris to be hauled off. True to Douglas Chandor's tradition of hospitality, six volunteers provided each day's crew over delicious lunches and dinners.

The **City of Weatherford Parks and Rec** funded most of the project and provided a truck and trailer. **Jerri Pond**, City Horticulturist, **Cindy Crump**, Chandor Head Gardener and CTMN member, and **Ricky Linex**, native plant expert, guided the project by locating and marking native plants to be conserved. Weatherford's local Native Plant Society of Texas paid for the chipper rental. Volunteers came from the Friends of Chandor Gardens, Native Plant Society of Texas, Master Gardeners, and Cross Timbers Master Naturalists, including **Christie Tull**.

The newly cleared area will be replanted in native plants, including wildflower seeds.

continued

If you haven't visited the Nature Trail at Chandor Gardens, **please do so soon**. Opened to the public in **2021**, it is a work in progress, and much progress has been made to restore the area to its native condition.

For more information, including location and directions:

[Chandor Gardens](#)

[Chandor Nature Trail](#)

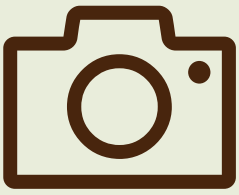
Volunteer work at the Nature Trail is approved for TMN volunteer hours in VMS.

To find out about volunteering, contact **Christie Tull** at greenwoodfarminc@aol.com.

To record hours, use: **Chandor Garden/Weatherford Parks and Recreation Nature Trail:TMN Report Hours**

Information provided by Christie Tull. Photos from [HERE](#).





Art & Photography Gallery



Giant Swallowtail by Teddi Zonker



Giant Swallowtail on Meyer Lemon by Teddi Zonker



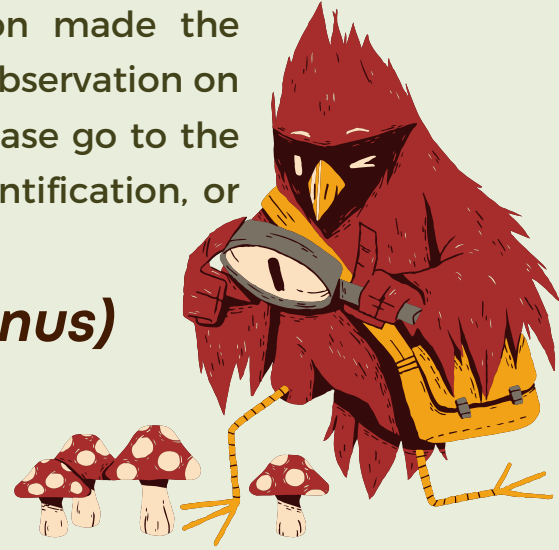
Monarch Chrysalis by Teddi Zonker

iNaturalist Observation of the Month

Each month we will choose an iNaturalist observation made the previous month in Tarrant or Johnson County*. Make an observation on iNaturalist to be in the running for this achievement! Please go to the observation itself to congratulate the user, add your identification, or favorite (star) the observation.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

cnacree



Time: 9:16am

Date: Nov. 5, 2023

Location: Parker County



Photo by Chris Acree - Some Rights Reserved

*Observation copyright settings must not be set to full rights reserved so that the photo can be used for the newsletter.



Current Events






Make Tracks

CTMN 2023

Holiday Party

December 11 6:30 p.m.
Ft Worth Botanic Garden
 Rose Room

*Donations accepted for
 Door Prizes & Desserts*

Supper  **Games**  **Music**

**We'll send a separate email
 for reservations**







Don't Forget!

Hikes & Talks

Observations at Oliver Nature Park, Mansfield, TX

November 21, 2023

8:30 am - 10:30 am

1650 Matlock Rd. Mansfield, TX 76063

Sponsored by Ft. Worth Audubon Society

Hike Leader - Jennifer Cross

[Click here for details](#)

Birding in Parr Park / Grapevine, TX

November 26, 2023

8:00 am - 10:00 am

3010 Parr Lane, Grapevine, TX 76051

Sponsored by Ft. Worth Audubon Society

Hike Leader - Karen Rice, Tom Haase and Chuck Baskin

[Click here for details](#)

First Friday Feathers / Kelley Park, Arlington, TX

December 1, 2023

8:30 am - 11:00 am

4195 W. Arkansas Lane, Arlington, TX

Sponsored by Ft. Worth Audubon Society

Hike Leader - Chuck Baskin

[Click here for details](#)

Birding at Foster Park, Fort Worth, TX

December 9, 2023

8:30 am - 10:30 am

3725 South Drive, Fort Worth, TX 76109

Sponsored by Ft. Worth Audubon Society

Hike Leader - Jean Ferguson

[Click here for details](#)

HELP! I love current events but sometimes it gets a little daunting so if you ever want to compile a list of naturalist events (best if they can count for AT) near you, please do and send to me!



Board Members

CTMN Board Members

- Sharon Hamilton - President
- Mary Beth Lampe - Vice President
 - Glenda Walker - Secretary
- Dee Ann McGinnis- Treasurer

For submissions, nominations or announcements, please put the subject line as the newsletter category you are entering for and email to newsletter@ctmn.org

CTMN Chair Members

- Debbie Stilson - Memberships
 - Sharon Hamilton - Outreach
- Melinda Wolfinbarger - Education
- Theresa Thomas - VOL Services and AT Hours
 - Sandy Thornburgh - Hospitality
 - Theresa Thomas - Records
 - Madison Cover - Newsletter
 - Frank Keeney - Webmaster
- Erika Swyrn - Class of 2022 Rep.
- Theresa Posani - Class of 2023 Rep.

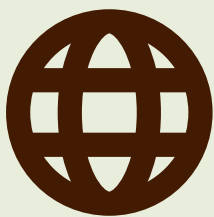


Inclusivity:

Together we can make the newsletter inclusive to the visually impaired. Consider providing a text description of your photos for screen-reader software.



**Cross Timbers
Master Naturalists
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CTMN Sponsors

- **Rachel Richter**, TPWD, Urban Biologist, Rachel.Richter@tpwd.texas.gov
- **Jacklyn Jones Doyle**, Texas AgriLife, County Extension Agent – Agriculture and Natural Resources, jacklyn.jones@ag.tamu.edu
- **Michael Perez**, Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge michael.perez@fortworthtexas.gov