

T E X A S

Master Naturalist™
Cross Timbers



May Day! Migration!



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Month Speaker

Chapter Meeting at the Botanic Garden and using Zoom – “Oak Wilt” by Kimberlee Peterson, Woodland Ecologist, Texas A&M Forest Service.

Short Story

This month, we are celebrating some stories of how bluebirds are helping us connect with the circle of life and nature as a whole.



Member Milestones

Member recertifications for the year up to May 2024 are now published by Class Year on our member milestone page. Congratulations to all you hardworkers!



x President's Pen



With Gratitude

Each of us faces challenges, some minor —“it will cost how much to fix the dishwasher?” and some major — loss of loved ones or having serious health problems to name two.

Living is hard. Research and our own experience tell us that being in Nature improves our outlook and even our physical health, making challenges a bit easier to get through.

Another factor that supports well-being is gratitude. Thankful appreciation for what one receives, tangible or intangible. Psychologists Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough have researched the beneficial effects of gratitude. They asked participants to write a few sentences each week on particular topics and found that people who wrote about things they are grateful for “were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. Surprisingly, they also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians” than people who wrote about what aggravated them.

I am grateful for the many friends I’ve made through my experience as a Master Naturalist. I am grateful for the support you’ve given me through some challenging years. For everything I’ve learned from you, whether about birds, herps, native plants, or how to live a fulfilling life, I am grateful.

I am grateful for your enthusiasm, your hard work, and your creativity. For all who have stalwartly supported continuing chapter projects or bravely begun new ones. I am amazed and grateful for your support as I’ve served as president of our chapter.

It’s time for me to move closer to my small family and to pass the baton to others, well qualified to lead. As I step down as president of Cross Timbers Chapter effective May 31, I look forward to seeing what the future brings.

Thank you for all you do to support our natural heritage, our chapter, and each other.

-Sharon Hamilton

CTMN Announcements



RECOGNITION: Karen Brown, Class of 2023, was inadvertently left off the Annual Awards program as a Certified Texas Master Naturalist.

Congratulations Karen Brown for your accomplishment!

PICK UP: Members who have earned and not received their service pins, and /or certificates can pick them up at the May 20 chapter meeting.



Speakers

This Month's Speaker



Chapter Meeting at the Botanic Garden and using Zoom - "Oak Wilt" by Kimberlee Peterson, Woodland Ecologist, Texas A&M Forest Service.

"Oak wilt, one of the most destructive tree diseases in the United States, is killing oak trees in central Texas at epidemic proportions.

Oak wilt is an infectious disease caused by the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum*, which invades and disables the water-conducting system (xylem) in oaks. " -[TexasOakWilt.org](https://www.texasoakwilt.org)

Next Month's Speaker

Chapter Meeting at the Botanic Garden and using Zoom - Bats of Texas by Dr. Tory Bennett, Associate Professor of Environmental and Sustainability Sciences, TCU



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.

No Mow Zones - Rachel Richter



Our very own TPWD sponsor! “Mowing is time consuming. Mowing is expensive. Mowing, in most cases, doesn’t provide any benefit to wildlife. So why are so many of our community greenspaces dominated by mowed fields? This presentation will cover the benefits of reduced mowing programs, best management practices for “no mow” zones, and tips for starting a successful program in your community.”

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

2024 #TMNTuesdays	
January 9	May 14
February 13	June 11
March 5* <small>*first week of the month</small>	July 9
April 9	August 13
September 10	
October 8	
November 12	
December 10	



TEXAS
Master Naturalist

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

[Register Here](#)

[Webex Guide](#)

[FAQ](#)

TMNT Pop-Up Series



“Lee Smith is soliciting TMN Chapters around the state to shoot video of their members in action, in the field, volunteering their time and knowledge. Lee will provide a training session with guidelines on how to use your cell phone to capture video clips that can be used in future videos to promote TMN. The training will include what settings to use on your phone, along with tips on composition and technique. The videos captured will provide needed visuals to promote TMN at a state and local chapter level.”

Title: “Handheld Videographer: Capturing Quality Videos with Your Phone to Promote Your Chapter”

Date: May 21, 2024, at 12pm

Speaker: Lee Smith, Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist, TPWD

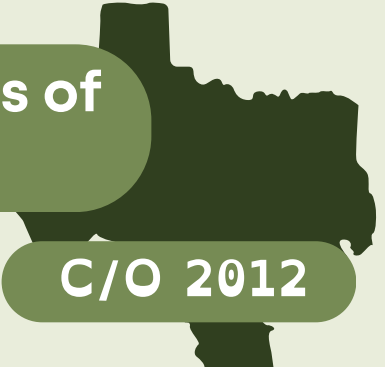
Member Milestones

Let's take a moment to help us congratulate members that have recertified in 2024 so far!

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



Recertified Members as of May 14, 2024



C/O 2000

Hester Schwarzer

C/O 2010

Dick Schoech
Theresa Thomas

C/O 2012

Suzanne Tuttle

C/O 2014

Kimberly Conrow

C/O 2015

Carol Marcotte

C/O 2016

Donna Honkomp

C/O 2017

Sandy Thornburgh

C/O 2018

Avon Burton
Glenn Butler
Christopher Honkomp
David Vestal

C/O 2021

Dana Austin
Peggy Carr
James Frisinger
Patsy Miller
Kristine Smathers

C/O 2023

Meredith Chacin
Karen Harden
Eleanor Pate
Theresa Posani
Teddi Zonker

C/O 2022

Karen Hembree



Barefoot and Bluebirds

by Donna and Chris Honkomp

Through a chance encounter at a service project to remove invasive plants along the Trinity River, Chris and I were given the opportunity to address a group of 60 children and adults about the Eastern Bluebird breeding habits, nest box monitoring, and data collection.

The mission of Barefoot University is “Connecting homeschool families to nature and each other.” This month their focus was on bird migration, so when the Benbrook group met at a park, we were able to educate them about habitat loss that has led to the importance of placing and monitoring nest boxes.



We also discussed Eastern bluebird nest building habits, the timetable involved with egg laying, incubation, hatching and feeding, and the all-important fledging event. We fielded lots of questions, including "why are there Bluebirds", and left the group with a better appreciation of why this particular species has come to rely on human assistance.

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Following our presentation, we all took a hike to look at some existing nest boxes, and to look for birds. We were even able to see a male Eastern Bluebird as well as a host of other birds. This hands-on experience should help this budding group of naturalists improve their understanding of the natural world and our influence upon it.



Photos provided by Donna Honkomp

Spring Bird Count

by Eleanor Pate

Some of the Master Naturalists took part in the Spring bird count that was conducted on April 27th, 2024 at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge. Peak of the migration had already passed, but there were still nice birds around. Our group was designated to the area 12, where we also did the Christmas Bird Count last year. This route included three different biomes: marsh, prairie and forest. We ended the count with 25 species, including summer tanager, painted and indigo buntings, ruby-throated hummingbird and blue-gray gnatcatcher.



Photos by Eleanor Pate

Eastern Bluebirds at Lake Benbrook, TX

by Donna and Chris Honkomp

The US Army Corps of Engineers manages a series of parks and campgrounds on Lake Benbrook in Tarrant County. Bluebird nest boxes were installed approximately 8-10 years ago and have continued to play host to a regular population of Eastern Bluebirds. Twenty-five of these boxes are maintained and monitored weekly by CTMN members from February through August.



For the current 2024 breeding season, 56 young have fledged as of April 25th, 2024. Some breeding pairs have already completed fledging their first clutch and started on their second. We commonly get at least two and often three clutches per breeding pair before the breeding season ends in July/August.

Although we also get other species in our boxes, such as wrens, chickadees, titmice and a one-time Tree Swallow, Eastern Bluebirds are the predominant species. Their distinctive grass nest cups and bright blue eggs make them easy to identify. A clutch of five eggs is the norm, with one egg laid each day before the female begins incubation. After 12 to 14 days of incubation, we begin to see hatchlings.

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Both parents actively feed insects to the young, and they grow quickly from naked hatchlings to fully feathered juveniles in 16 to 21 days, and then they are ready to fledge. Like many species, the parents work to encourage their nestlings to emerge into the real world through calls and offers of food, and they continue to feed the young once they have fledged (for up to one month) until they are ready to take care of themselves. The sooner this happens, the sooner the breeding pair can start on the next brood!



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For the current year with a fairly mild winter and early spring, we saw our first egg on February 28, 2024, in two separate boxes, and currently have 20 of our 25 boxes occupied. It looks to be a good season. Breeding success is often weather dependent (an early summer will decrease success of later broods), and we are occasionally faced with nest predation by snakes and raccoons.



We employ predator guards where possible and use hole extenders to provide some defense against predators. All of this data is submitted into the NestWatch Data base for scientists to use when tracking the status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. So, if you see a flash of blue on a small songbird this time of year, it may be an Eastern Bluebird working hard to feed a box full of hungry children in this annual cycle of life.



Native of the Month



Green Milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*)

by Madison Gover



Green milkweed is a native perennial, and one of the many beneficial *Asclepias* plants that aide in monarch survival. You can often see these unique plants growing on the side of the highways when they are left alone. The plant itself is toxic to animals and humans, containing cardenolides. This quirky feature is another aide in the monarch's survivability, as the monarchs co-evolved to be able to tolerate this toxin - so much so that *Asclepias* are the only plants that the caterpillars can eat, and thusly the only plant the monarch can lay their eggs on. The monarch also becomes toxic itself.

Milkweed are notoriously hard to propagate. The seeds require complex scarification. Soaking the seeds overnight in water and then sticking them in the fridge for 30-45 days. They don't do well in containers because they have a very long taproot, so naturally sowing the seeds in an area you would like it to grow is the easiest. Cross your fingers!

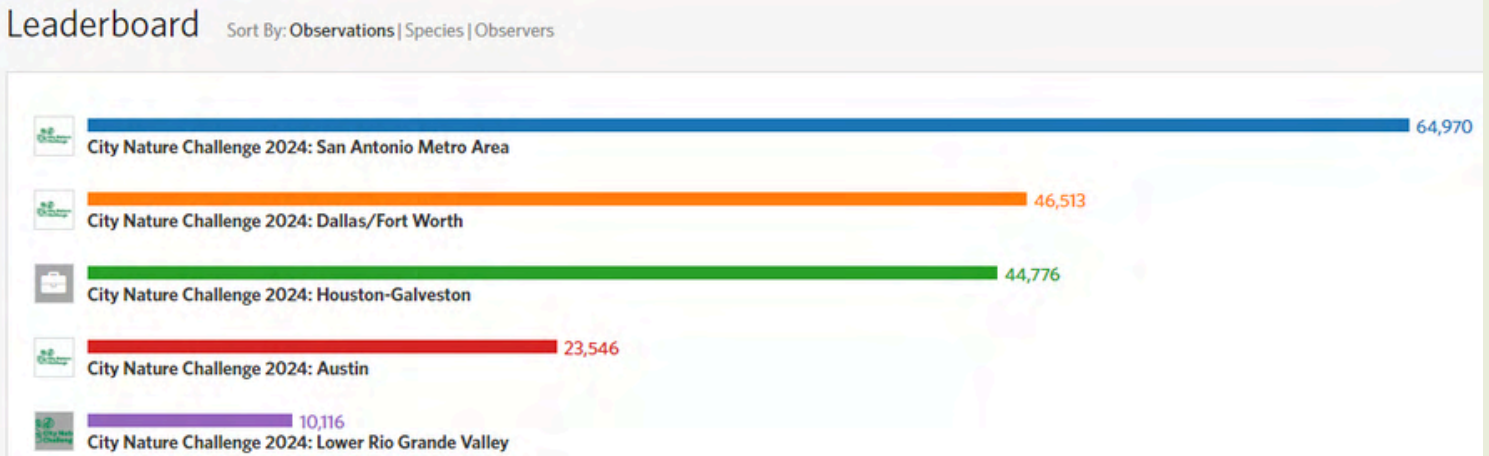




Featured Project

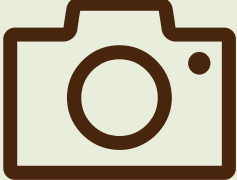
DFW City Nature Challenge

April 26th - 29th was the annual City Nature Challenge, and DFW went head-to-head for another year of friendly rivalry between other big Texas cities. And wow you guys! **Looks like we got 2nd place!** Great job, and **CONGRATS** if you made it in the Top 10!!



Rank	User	Observations	Species
1	bobbie79	1,396	443
2	tadamcochran	1,301	592
3	charley	1,197	393
4	sambiology	1,191	929
5	denver	1,177	370
6	kathrynwells333	1,013	367
7	k8thegr8	987	360
8	sahi2018	986	349
9	nathanmayflower	903	418
10	sam_dragon-moore	792	439

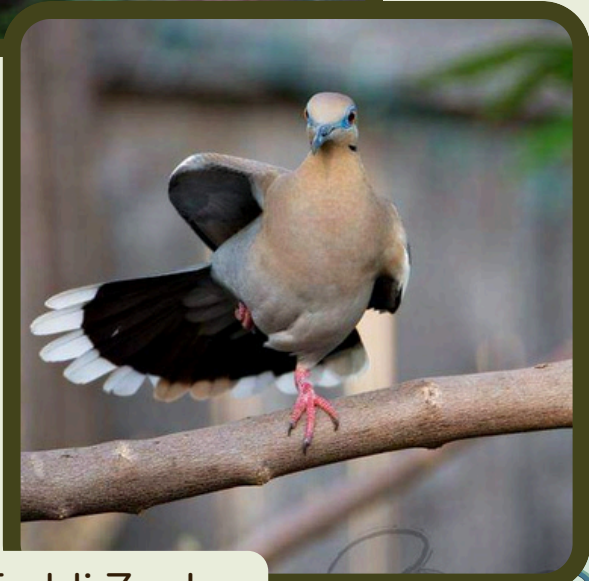
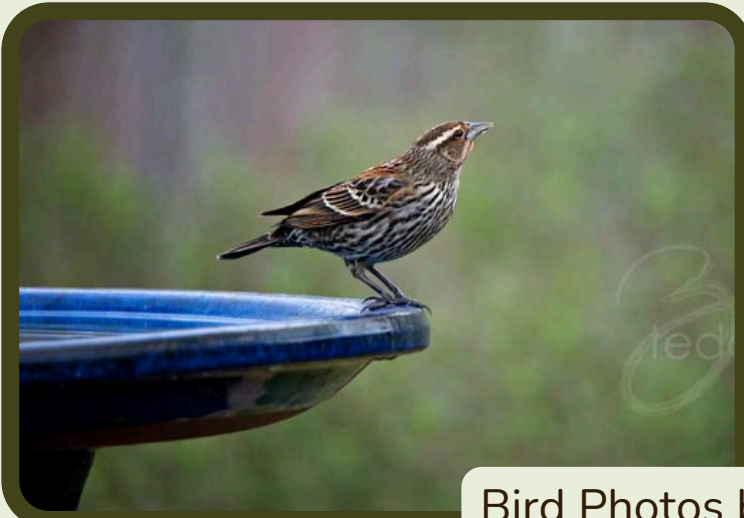
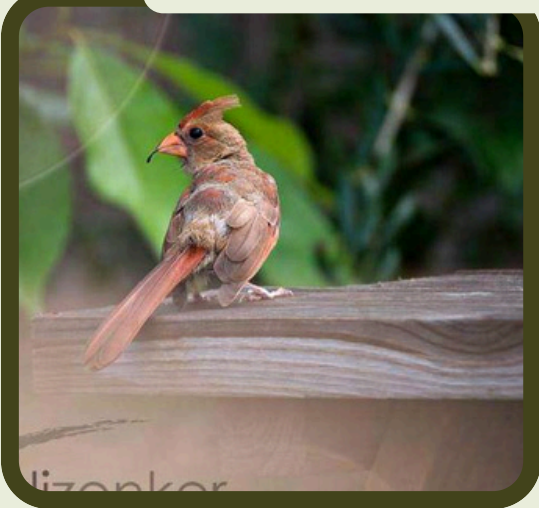
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5	nathanmayflower	903	418
6	sehnature	622	418
7	charley	1,197	393
8	annikaml	596	375
9	denver	1,177	370
10	kathrynwells333	1,013	367



Art & Photography Gallery

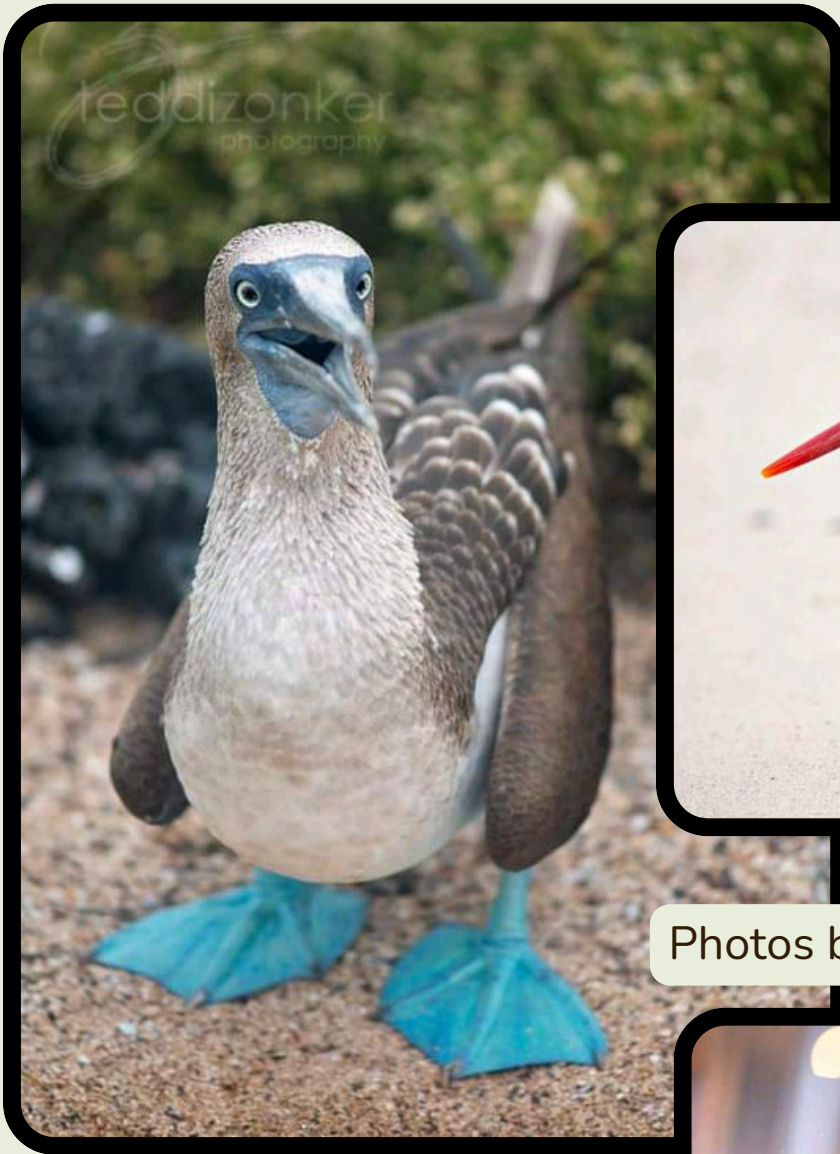


Bird Photos by Teddi Zonker

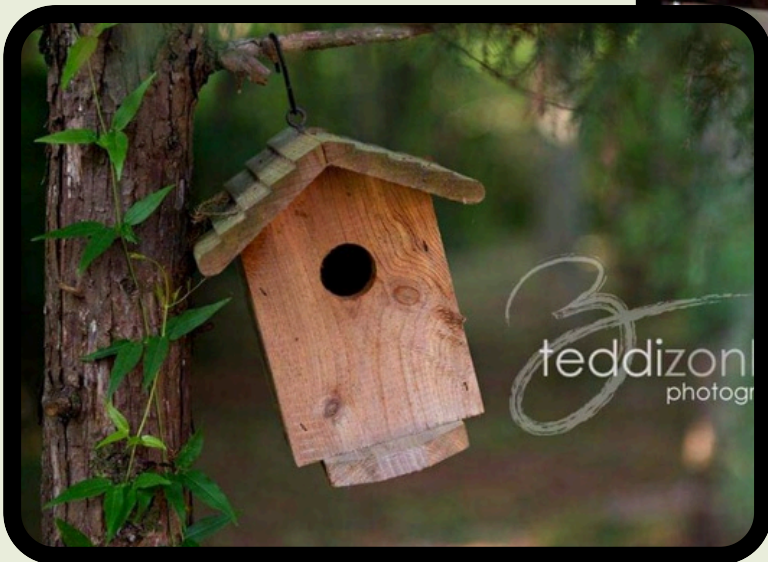


Bird Photos by Teddi Zonker

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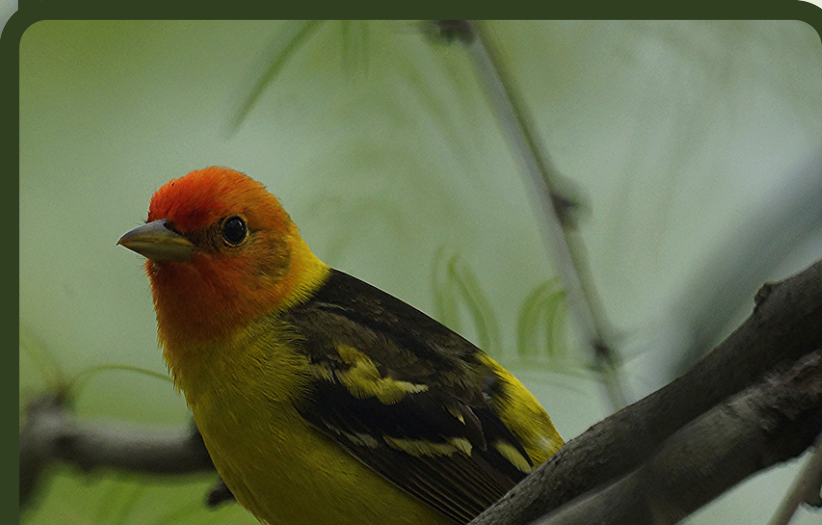
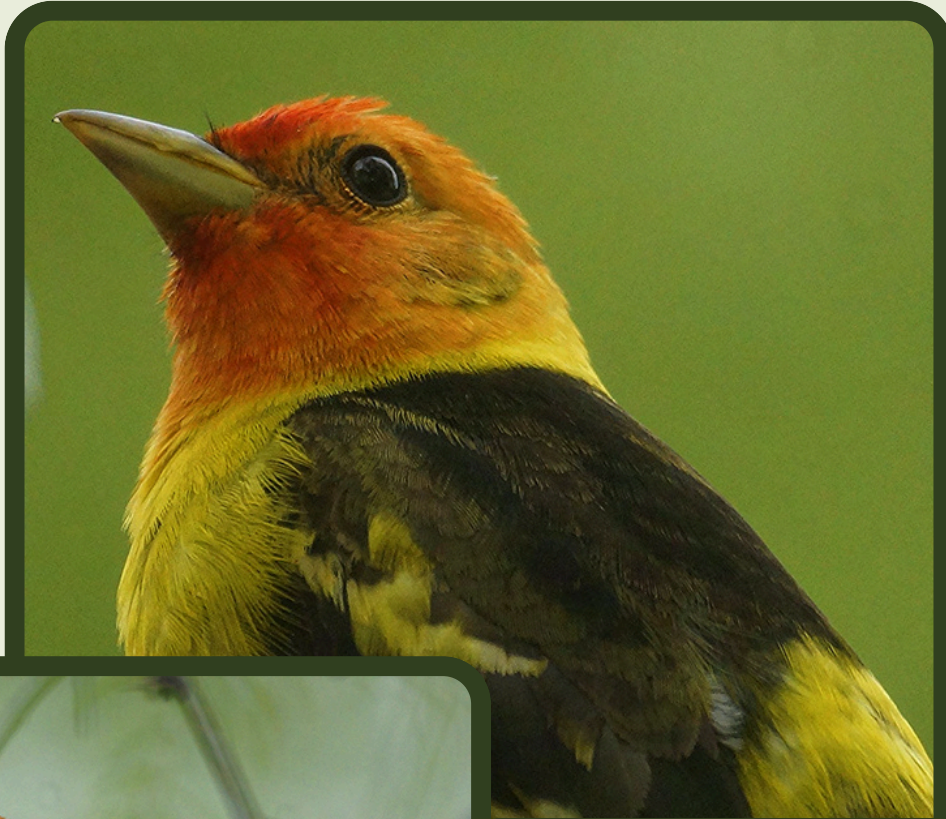


Photos by Teddi Zonker



continued ->

Western Tanager - Photo by Eleanor Pate



“Male Western tanager in breeding plumage with bright red face was spotted by me at the Trinity Trails (Clear Fork, Fort Worth). It is a rare bird for North Texas. The first encounter with the species was registered in 2012 and this is the second one. Western tanagers are not uncommon in West Texas, since their migration corridor is at the western edge of the state. This observation was also made during the spring migration. Maybe it is a navigational mistake, or maybe the bird stopped to take shelter during a series of storms that happen all over Texas this week. “

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.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

mnbrewer



Time: 5:30PM

Date: 5/4/2024

Location: Arlington, TX



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



Current Events

LEARN HOW TO PREVENT DISEASE AT YOUR BIRD FEEDER



[#FeedSmart Link](#)

LIGHTS OUT, TEXAS!

#LightsOutTexas
bit.ly/Lights_Out_Texas

Ovenbirds exclaim
"teacher teacher teacher"
Turn off non-essential lights
from 11pm-6am for nocturnal
migrants



Spring migration
March 1 - June 15

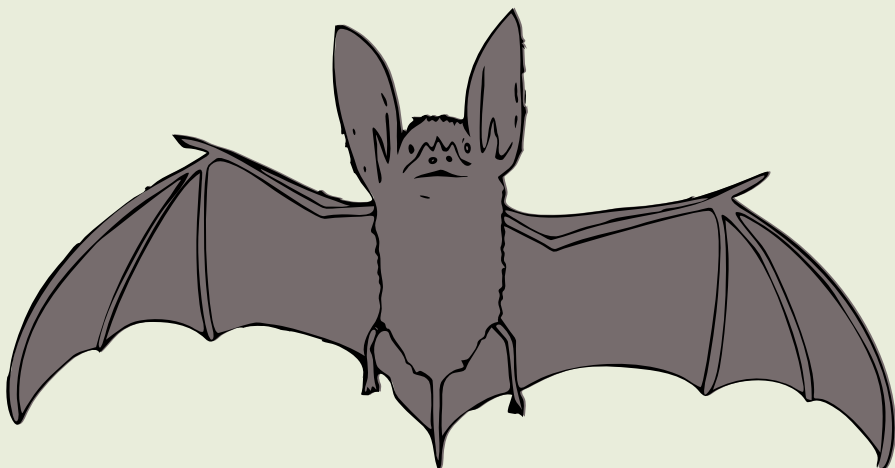
[#LightsOutTexas Link](#)

TPWD - Wildlife Rehabbers of Tarrant County

Name	City	Specialization	Contact Information
Arenson, Thomas	Keller	Birds (including small raptors)	817-991-0630 cell (8am - 8pm) No text messages please.
Godbey, Beverly	Fort Worth	Small mammals	(817) 475-1760 (9am - 8pm)
Hoyt, Lee	North Richland Hills	Small mammals, Texas horned lizards and fawns	(972) 658-0213 (anytime)
Miller-Skaggs, Cynthia	Fort Worth	Small mammals (squirrels, chipmunks, prairie dogs), White-tailed deer fawns, and Birds (ducks, pheasant, raptors)	817-457-4021 6am to 11pm or cynchip@yahoo.com
Moodhe, Sandra	Grapevine	Squirrels	smoodhe77@gmail.com
Moore, Dr. Greg	Southlake	Small mammals (no deer); birds (including raptors)	817-481-2014
Nature's Edge Wildlife & Reptile Rescue	Cleburne	Small mammals, raptors, bats, reptiles, and amphibians	682-463-9453 (anytime) naturesedgewildliferescue@gmail.com
Rader, Gina	Keller	Squirrels only	(817) 475-3177 (prefer text messages)
Singleton, Kay	Fort Worth	Small mammals (specializes in opossums)	(682) 556-2311 or sensiblepet@yahoo.com
Spiritual Wildlife Rescue	Arlington	Small mammals (specializes in bobcat, fox, coyote and cougar), reptiles, and amphibians	(817) 422-6080 (anytime) swrrs@yahoo.com

Did you know you can earn volunteer hours with the [DFW Wildlife Coalition](#)?

Migration isn't always easy. There are increasingly more animals in need this season due to a rough summer. Please use this guide to help instruct others who may have reached out to you for help, or if you have found a critter in need.



[Click Here](#)
[What To Do](#)
[If You've](#)
[Found A Bat](#)

[Click Here](#)
[What To Do](#)
[If You've](#)
[Found A Bird](#)



[Click Here](#)
[What To Do](#)
[If You've](#)
[Found A Bunny](#)





Board Members

CTMN Board Members

- Sharon Hamilton - President
- Mary Beth Lampe - Vice President
 - Bill Collins - 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

- Carol Marcotte - Memberships
 - Sharon Hamilton - Outreach
- Melinda Wolfinbarger - Education
- Theresa Thomas - VOL Services and AT Hours
 - Sandy Thornburgh - Hospitality
 - Theresa Thomas - Records
 - Madison Gover - Newsletter
 - Frank Keeney - Webmaster
- Theresa Posani - Class of 2023 Rep.

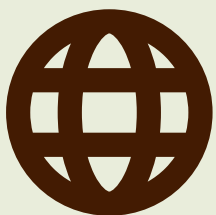


Inclusivity:

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
Facebook Group**



**Cross Timbers
Master Naturalists
Website**

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