

T E X A S

Master Naturalist™  
Cross Timbers



November Issue!



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### In this Issue:



### Announcements

Check out the good news brought back from the TXMN Annual Conference, including an award-winning newsletter and photography awards by our members! See next year's pin and location!

### Short Story

Go on a journey with Ellie Pate to Siberia to learn about the elusive Siberian bluethroat, known for its stunning plumage and clever mimicry.



### Featured Project

CTMN has a new project starting soon! **Do you want to help Pollinators?** The project asks Texas Master Naturalist volunteers to track flowering and seed timing of plants, documenting them through "Nature's Notebook" another project from the USA National Phenology Network, and by following their guidelines.



**CTMN Announcements**

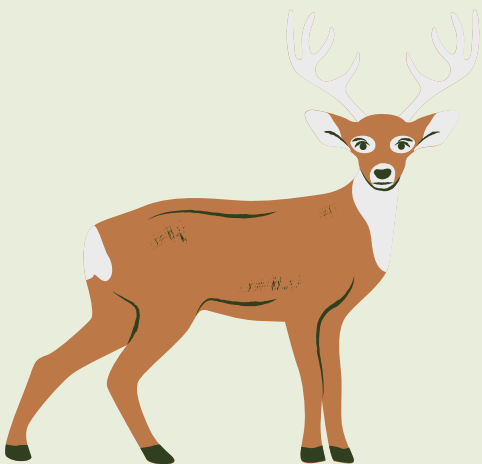


# **CTMN Holiday Party**

**Dec 9 at 6:30PM at the  
Fort Worth Botanic  
Gardens**

**RSVP by November 30TH!!**

**<https://forms.gle/nTizTfwU1RG7Hz2v9>**



**[Click here to  
RSVP](#)**



**Top Row:** Sharon Hamilton, Brent Franklin, Kimberlie Sasan, Avon Burton, Glenn Butler

**Bottom Row:** Mary Beth Lampe, Sam Kieschnick, Madison Gover

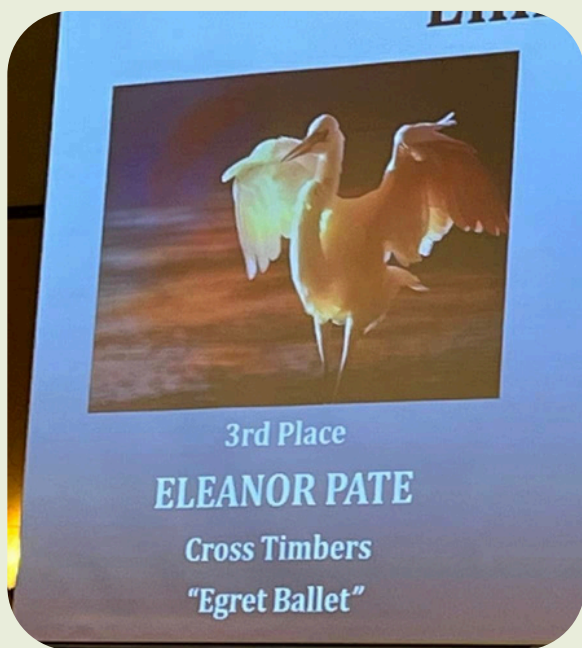
Our 2025 Recertification Pin: The Greater Roadrunner!



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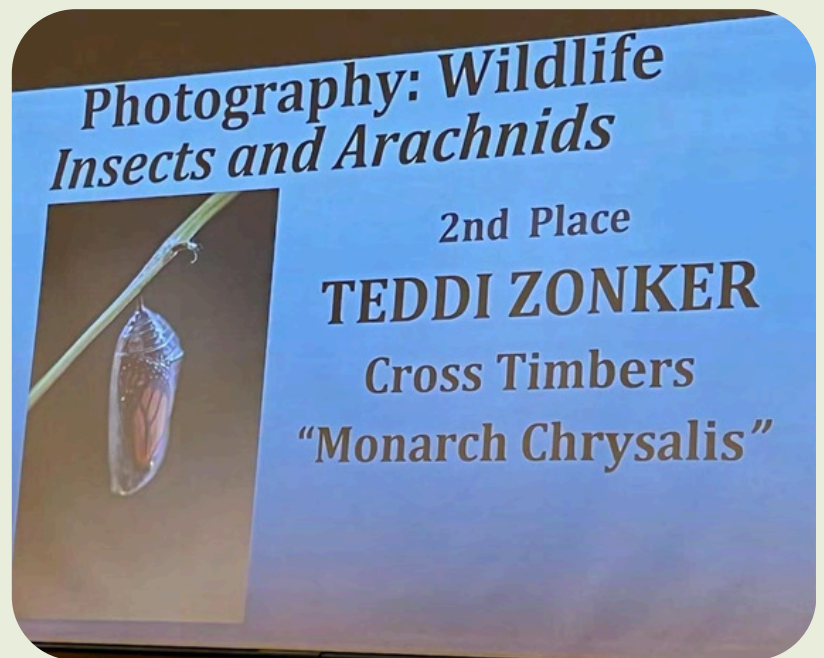
The TXMN Annual Meeting was a GREAT success for CTMN! Not only did we have multiple members attend, but we were recognized for celebrating our 25th Anniversary AND received prizes for the art & media competition!

## Photography - Digitally Enhanced



3rd Place, Eleanor Pate, C/O 2023

## Photography - Wildlife: Insects and Arachnids



2nd Place, Teddi Zonker, C/O 2023



## Newsletter

1st Place, Madison Gover, C/O 2022

Thank you everyone for making it possible ;,)

*continued ->*

# IMPORTANT!

## Definitions of Master Naturalist Certification Levels

### Certification Status Definitions-June 2024

#### TMN-Active:

An active member of your chapter. They currently:

- are signed up as a volunteer member in a chapter;
- have a current and valid background check;
- have a profile in the Volunteer Management System;
- have paid dues (where applicable) for the current year;
- have completed all the chapter initial training and requirements for certification/recertification;

—and—

- have submitted service and/or AT hours for the year in which the last TMN Annual Report was submitted.

#### TMN-Inactive:

Was previously a Master Naturalist volunteer in a chapter and is in VMS. These volunteers:

- have not submitted volunteer service or AT hours to their chapter/program within a calendar year for which the last Annual Report was submitted, —or—
- have been deemed ineligible to volunteer by TPWD (*the TPWD status field on the front page of the volunteer profile will be marked as Not Eligible*). —or—
- have not paid dues (where applicable) by March 31. —or—
- have been removed from the chapter roster for other reasons. —or—
- did not complete the Initial Training course and/or the Initial Certification requirements in the specified time allotted and do not wish to continue in the program.

When marked TMN-Inactive, the volunteer is notified, and opportunities are removed.

#### TMN-In Training:

This volunteer is a 'Texas Master Naturalist Member-in-Training' as stated in the TMN bylaws. They are a member of an official TMN class from the first day of class until the Trainee has completed **both** the Chapter Training and the chapter initial certification requirements.

Once the training and certifications have been completed the status will change to "TMN-Active" in VMS, and they should be removed from the initial training opportunity.

The chapter board shall work with the trainee prior to the deadline to finish the training and certification requirements. If the trainee is unable to complete the program, they should be marked to a status that reflects their future with the Master Naturalists: **TMN-InActive** if they are not going to return to the program, **TMN-Interested** if they would like to return to another class in the future, or **TMN-Associates** if they wish to remain in the system for communication purposes.

During the training process the volunteer will have passed a background check.

**continued ->**

## Hey Volunteers!!

**RANDOL MILL PARK** has many volunteer opportunities. And for those of you trying to earn more VS hours before December 31, 2024 to either CERTIFY or Re-CERTIFY, text, call or email Carol Marcotte. She will work on YOUR schedule to get you to your goal.

cell (817) 793-3917 or [carol@carolmarcotte.com](mailto:carol@carolmarcotte.com)

1900 W. Randol Mill Road, Arlington 76012



# Speakers



## January's Speaker

**CMTN Chapter Meeting/Presentation  
January 20, 2025, 7:00 p.m.**

**Fort Worth Botanic Garden**

**Jeff Ray, Senior Meteorologist KTVT  
Channel 11/CBS Texas**

## Changing Seasons, Changing Gardens

Jeff dives into the surprising shifts in our weather patterns—from warmer winters and sizzling summers to more intense rainstorms. He'll explore what these seasonal changes mean for everything from our gardens to local wildlife. Jeff also shares tips on how we can adapt, protect our environment, and enjoy North Texas's evolving seasons. Get ready for a fascinating look at how climate impacts our daily lives!

Jeff has been a senior meteorologist for CBS 11 and TXA 21 since 2010 and is a primary reporter for CBS's "Climate Connection" series. Through his Weather on Wheels program, he visits local schools weekly, sharing his passion for meteorology with young audiences. Originally from Lubbock and raised in Tennessee, Jeff holds a Communications degree from the University of Texas at Austin, a Broadcast Meteorology degree from Mississippi State, and a Master's in Science Education from the University of Missouri.

# 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.

## This Month's Speaker



**Title:** Technical Guidance Projects Showcase

**Description:** Join Various Texas Master Naturalist Chapters as they present on how they provide landowner and community technical guidance assistance through their specialized service projects –which can be emulated and adopted by other chapters across the state!

TEXAS A&M  
AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION

[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 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.

C/O 1999

Jan Miller

C/O 2013

Brent Franklin

C/O 2014

Banjo Moore

C/O 2020

Ryan Wiggins

C/O 2022

Denise Pederson  
Annamarie Fresta



## Member Milestone Achievements

### 500 Hours (Silver Dragonfly Pin)

Hollie Carron

Ray Conrow





## My Blue Dream

by Eleanor Pate

Siberian bluethroat is not an entirely Siberian bird. Because of its ecological plasticity it is distributed broadly all over the world, including Europe and Asia. Also you can see it in Africa; it doesn't nest there, but migrates there for the winter. Carl Linneus gave it a name - *Luscinia svecica*, the Swedish nightingale. As a Swedish national, he put a great pride in this name. Because of the richness of the song and its colorful plumage, it was one of his favorite birds. He didn't know back then, how wide its area is. It is even registered in Western Alaska. But just because it can survive in different habitats (as long as they are near a water source), it doesn't mean that Siberian bluethroats are numerous. The density of its population in Southern Siberia is pretty low.

Collecting data this past May in a regional district of 10 000 square kilometers, I was only able to fill 27 nesting cards. Each year this number varies, but not significantly. The highest number I could collect was in 2020, and it was 36, which actually means that 72 birds were inhabiting the area. In 2019 we had a serious flood that destroyed a lot of pine and birch forests in the national park where I worked in Siberia. Water was everywhere. As a result of this we had a surge in numbers of various woodpeckers feeding on the dead trees, grey herons and other species of birds, which demand wet habitats, including the Eurasian golden oriole, Siberian bluethroat and Siberian rubythroat. These beautiful birds with bright plumage and melodic songs are usually rare in this area. The next year, the numbers of bluethroats went down a little: 32 nests in 2021, 30 in 2022. In 2024 there was a drought, so the number of nesting bluethroats decreased considerably in the area.



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The bluethroat is a small, passerine bird, that was formerly classed as a member of the thrush family Turdidae, but is now more generally considered to be an Old World flycatcher, Muscicapidae. The size varies from 12 to 15 cm, weighing 20 grams at average. It is plain brown above, except for the distinctive, black tail with red side patches. The species has a strongly developed sexual dimorphism. Dull looking females wear a black “necklace” under a white throat, but males have a precious colorful necklace of bright blue, red, white and black. Male bluethroats usually have a spot on the blue plastron, which is called a “star”, even though it could be any shape. The star can be of white or red color. Usually European birds have a white star and their Siberian cousins have a red one.



When the male sings, the plastron is vibrating and shimmering, gleaming in the dim, early morning. But it is a rare site, because bluethroats live in dense thickets. You can hear the song, but the bird is hidden in layers of brush. Being a self-trained ornithologist, I was observing birds for several years before I saw my first bluethroat. Very early in the morning I was slowly driving my car with open windows to be able to listen to the birds and to stop in time, if needed.

Going through a patch of sea-buckthorn, I heard a bluethroat. It was a gorgeous male performing his courtship display. He was flying in circles, showing his beautiful tail with bright red feathers, opened as a fan, landing on the top of a bush and singing with such passion and energy, that couldn't be ignored. Quietly I got out of the car and crawled into the nasty, thorny thicket to get close to the dream. I was able to see how every feather was moving on the plastron in the first rays of the sun. And it became the love of my life.

Every day I was coming to that place to see the bird again. Sometimes I could only hear him but not see him. Sometimes I watched him hunting insects on the ground. In a month I knew about all his daily routine. I met the lucky lady that he was trying to impress so hard and observed them building a nest, laying eggs in it, having chicks – all of them survived and eventually became fledgings. I devoted myself to study them, and every April I was waiting to hear their first songs after the arrival from the wintering grounds.

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During my study I discovered that all bluethroats are great imitators. You could call them the mockingbirds of Siberia. And sometimes this ability pays off. A lot of birds prefer to nest and feed in brushes by the water, so this area is very densely populated with multiple species competing for food sources, advantageous location to build the nest, building materials, etc. And Siberian bluethroats get rid of annoying competitors--they can reproduce the sounds of alarm and anxiety of neighboring species, and they perform them much cleaner and louder than the species with which these signals originate. They can transpose alarm signals by tone, and pronounce them slower or faster, as a result, neighbors fall into a state of panic and horror.



The life of neighbors becomes so stressful and uncomfortable, that they have to fly away looking for another place to nest, with no bluethroats nearby. After I learned about it, I used this knowledge to conduct my bird counts more effectively. In the areas with a lot of thorny brushes with a very limited visibility I would use the record of a bluethroat singing on my phone, and not only bluethroats, but a lot of different species of birds would show up almost immediately after hearing sounds of their own. I could never find them in these thickets myself, but could cut my clothes and body with sharp thorns and waste a lot of time, but thanks to bluethroats singing I didn't have to go in there - all the birds were coming to me, or I could hear their loud complaints and ID them audially.

But bluethroats don't always imitate on purpose. During the mating season males try to impress females by their songs, and the more different tones, tunes and sounds it contains, the more original it is and therefore the most appreciated by females. In anthropogenic landscapes they don't just copy other birds, but human noises as well. It's best described in the phrase: "What I hear, that I sing!" And there's a story how a bluethroat totally fooled me once.

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It was early May in Siberia – the most beautiful season, when a lot of trees are blooming and birds are singing almost everywhere from dusk to dawn. I was driving slowly with open windows again, trying to spot some interesting birds. And there was a beautiful male bluethroat, perching in the blooming apple tree. He looked so bold in the frame of white lace of the blossom that I wanted to take some pictures. But it wasn't a safe place to leave the car, because the road there was winding and it was hard to see ahead. I put my car as close to the thicket as I could and ran to the apple tree, hoping that I can take a few photos and go away before anybody would drive by and get mad at me. But as soon as I took my first photo, I heard a very loud beep. I was sure that another driver was honking at me, because I blocked the road, so I had to forget about the bird and go to move my car.



But when I came back, there was no car around. I stood there for a while, looking in both directions. “That's weird!” - I thought and came back to try my luck with this bluethroat again. I was happy to take some really beautiful shots, and then I heard this loud beeping again. But this time I figured out that the sound is not coming from the road – it was a part of the song of the bluethroat!

Apparently in this dangerous, winding spot a lot of drivers start honking to warn other cars, so they don't run over each other, and a bird, whose nesting area was located closeby, learned to reproduce them with amazing loudness. These non-melodic abrupt noises were ending his song several times, instead of a traditional clicking sound.

By the way, Siberian bluethroat is not the only imitator in my park. Its close relative, Siberian ruby-throat, does as good a job as the blue. Once I read in the news that due to a navigational mistake, a Siberian ruby-throat found itself somewhere in a park in Denmark, and birders from all Scandinavia were gathering every day to see that unusual species for the area and take its photos. The bird got so used to the photographers, that started to reproduce the clicking noise in its songs, attracting attention of ornithologists.

Both of these species are elusive and hard to find, and each year it seems harder and harder to study them, because of human expansion in nature, that causes loss of habitats. I hope that one day it will change and to support this day coming, I try to raise awareness of society by writing articles about birds and publishing them in magazines and social networks. Because it's hard to care about birds that we don't know and don't see in our everyday lives. But if we learn how amazing, smart and beautiful they are, and what an important role they play in the ecosystem, then hopefully, we'll finally care...



# Featured Project

## Time To Restore

by Tina Olivas

### The “Time to Restore” Project has come to the Great State of Texas!

The Time to Restore project began in neighboring States of Oklahoma, Louisiana, and New Mexico. It is a project connected with researchers at the USA National Phenology Network (NPN) and other collaborators. **Time to Restore is now ready to include the large and diverse State of Texas in the project.**

1.The project asks Texas Master Naturalist volunteers to **track flowering and seed timing of plants**, documenting them through “Nature’s Notebook” another project from the USA National Phenology Network, and by following their guidelines.

2.The goal is to start **collecting data on the timing of specific nectar plants** selected for Texas by Texans by next Spring. The data will be SO helpful! Not surprisingly, we do not have a great deal of phenology data in Texas.

3.The outcome is that our data will provide guidance to those working on pollinator restoration about when pollinator plants bloom and go to seed, and **how climate change is impacting these plants and pollinators.**



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## **So, what is Phenology anyway?**

Phenology is a term that few people know, but that most are familiar with. Think of how a Maple tree looks in Spring, then in Summer, then Fall, and lastly Winter. Phenology is the study of the timing of life cycle events of plants and animals and their relationship to the climate and other factors like day length.

## **How are we going to implement this new Project?**

Our strategy will be to collect data on nectar plants in a way that is **EASY** and **CONVENIENT**. If you want to participate in this project, you can choose to track the timing of nectar plants in your own yard, along a park or walk you visit regularly, OR while you and your volunteer friends are out among native nectar plants doing greenhouse support, garden care, outreach, trail maintenance, etc. Setting up a team at your volunteer site will be ideal. That way, one person is around to observe the chosen plant or patch of plants each week. Also, you do not have to make a personal commitment to the minimum of 3 yrs of this project. It's the collection of data by the group that will last that long. The same plant(s) should be inspected at least WEEKLY to adequately capture when these phenological events occur. Keep in mind, the actual inspection and logging of the data shouldn't take more than 2 to 10 minutes, and logging can be done on a worksheet and entered later online or entered in on the Nature's Notebook app.

There are **29 native plants** to choose from to monitor.

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Below are the Priority Nectar Species selected across all 4 States in the Time to Restore Project for their exceptional benefit to pollinators.



Priority species:

1. wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*; Phenophase Photo Guide)
2. cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*; Phenophase Photo Guide)
3. green antelopehorn (*Asclepias viridis*; Phenophase Photo Guide)
4. common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)
5. eastern purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
6. buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
7. showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)
8. tall blazing star (*Liatris aspera*)

The 29 Texas Priority species list below was selected across many Texas ecosystems and includes plants that have additional benefits to pollinators, such as nesting. Note: the same 8 priority plants are included in this list as well.

### Texas priority species list

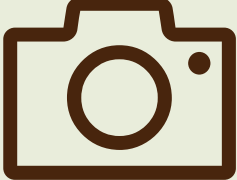
American Basket-flower, <i>Centaurea americana</i>	Gregg's Mistflower, <i>Conoclinium greggii</i> *
American Beautyberry, <i>Callicarpa americana</i>	Horseherb, <i>Calyptocarpus vialis</i> *
Antelope Horns Milkweed, <i>Asclepias asperula</i>	Mealy Blue Sage, <i>Salvia farinacea</i> *
Blackeyed Susan, <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Prairie Coneflower, <i>Ratibida columnifera</i>
Blue Mistflower, <i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i> *	Purple Horsemint, <i>Monarda citriodora</i> *
Butterfly Weed, <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Showy Milkweed, <i>Asclepias speciosa</i>
Buttonbush, <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Tall Blazing Star, <i>Liatris aspera</i>
Cardinal Flower, <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Tall Goldenrod, <i>Solidago altissima</i>
Common Sunflower, <i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Texas Bluebonnet, <i>Lupinus texensis</i>
Cowpen Daisy, <i>Verbesina encelioides</i>	Texas Frogfruit, <i>Phyla nodiflora</i> *
Eastern Purple Coneflower, <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Texas Lantana, <i>Lantana urticoides</i> *
Eastern Redbud, <i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Texas Thistle, <i>Cirsium texanum</i> *
Firewheel, <i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	Turk's Cap, <i>Malvaviscus arboreus</i> *
Frostweed, <i>Verbesina virginica</i>	Wild Bergamot, <i>Monarda fistulosa</i>
Green Milkweed, <i>Asclepias viridis</i>	

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## How to Get Started:

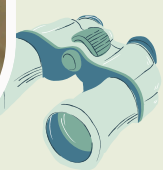
1. **First, let Tina Olivas know you are interested:** [tinaolivas4@gmail](mailto:tinaolivas4@gmail.com) or text 469.222.1038 (include your email address in the text)
  - a. We already have a few participants. Maybe you caught their presentation at the TMN Annual Meeting in October?
  - b. Do you want to participate? We'd love for you to join us!
2. Attend a 2 hour training on how to use Nature's Notebook and how to document plant changes correctly and consistently according to the USA NPN protocols. David Gwin, the Time to Restore Coordinator for Texas will provide approximately 4 training options in January 2025, or possibly in December 2024.
3. Visit: <https://www.usanpn.org/community/TimeToRestore> to understand more about project details.
4. Attend one of two planning calls Tina will set up with interested volunteers to discuss sites, preferred species, and first steps.
5. Continue uploading your nectar plant photos to iNaturalist. (Researchers get phenology data here too!)
6. Set up an account in Nature's Notebook.
  - a. Sign up as a Backyard Observer:  
<https://www.usanpn.org/nn/become-observer>
  - b. Consider taking the Observer Certification Course on the USA NPN website: <https://learning.usanpn.org/>



# Art & Photography Gallery



All Photos by Ellie Pate





# Current Events

## NOVEMBER

Tandy Hill Natural Area cleanup  
Tandy Hills, 11/23, 9am-11a

## DECEMBER

FWAS Birding  
Kelley Park, 12/6, 8:30am  
4195 W Arkansas Ln, Arlington

FWAS Birding  
Foster Park, 12/7, 830am  
4398 Trail Lake Drive, Fort Worth 76109

FWAS Birding  
Village Creek Drying Beds  
Wed., 12/11, 830am  
1500 NW Green Oaks Boulevard, Arlington 76012

FWAS Birding  
Christmas Bird Count  
Saturday, 12/14  
Email/Text: maroonmichael19600@gmail.com,  
817-781-7018.

FWAS Birding  
Oliver Park, 12/17, 8:30am  
1650 Matlock Rd, Mansfield

Village Creek Drying Beds/Christmas Bird Count  
12/27  
gabriellemc.cbc@gmail.com

## JANUARY 2025

FWAS Birding  
Kelley Park, 1/3, 8:30am  
4195 W Arkansas Ln, Arlington  
FWAS Birding/Bird Walk/Count  
1/5, 7:30a  
3000 S Hulen St #143, Fort Worth

Hagerman National Refuge  
Friday, 1/17-18, 8am  
Overnight excursion,  
tom.haase@sbcglobal.net, 817-229-  
4987



# Board Members

## CTMN Board Members

- Mary Beth Lampe - President
- Teddi Zonker - 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](mailto:newsletter@ctmn.org)

## CTMN Directors

- Carol Marcotte - Membership
- Sharon Hamilton - Past President
- Melinda Wolfinbarger - Training
- Theresa Thomas - VMS Admin & Vol and AT Hours
  - Sandy Thornburgh - Hospitality
    - Theresa Thomas - Records
    - Madison Cover - Newsletter
- Frank Keeney - Announcement eblasts
  - Mary Beth Lampe - Webmaster
  - Julio Corralejo - Class of 2024 Rep.

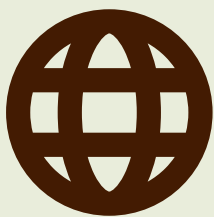


### Inclusivity:

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