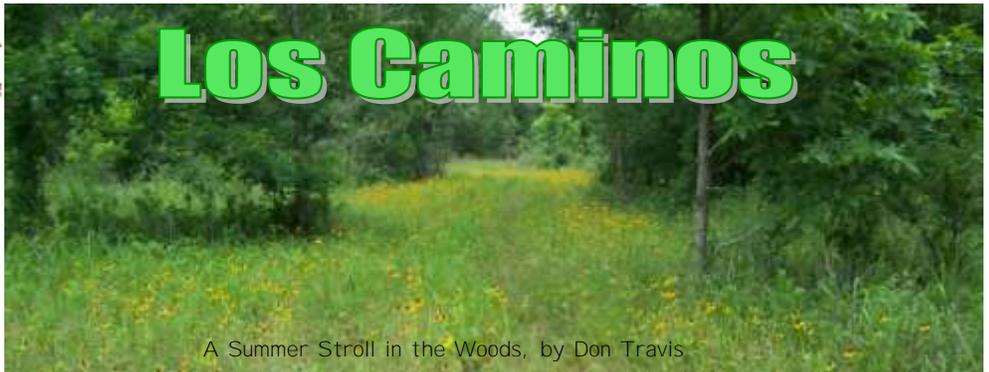


Master Naturalist™



The Texas Master Naturalist program activities are coordinated by AgriLife Extension and Texas Parks and Wildlife. Texas Master Naturalist and Extension programs serve all people regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.



Los Caminos

A Summer Stroll in the Woods, by Don Travis

Celebrating and sharing our experiences along "the roads" we take through nature.

A Quarterly Newsletter of the El Camino Real Chapter
 Milam County **Texas Master Naturalist** Summer '09

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Hop Aboard the Conservation Train, by Paul Unger

All members of the chapter are taking a breather from the training classes, preparing to jump on the train again.

Graduation was quite an event. Good friends. Good food. Hard to beat that.

It brought 29 new individuals into membership in the Chapter. We are becoming a significant conservation force within Milam County dedicated to our nature resources.

Everyone is very excited about the ECRC sponsored Milam County Nature Festival. This was an outgrowth of the Birders interest group and has been adopted as our major event for 2010. Everyone in the chapter will want to be involved in this conservation event. Most importantly, we will be bringing nature conservation to the public eye. There will be many opportunities for activities leading up to our "first annual" Festival throughout this year. (Read more on page 11.)

The Operating Committees are reviewing their charters to refocus on our motto of LOOK, LEARN, TEACH, and CONSERVE. There are open positions needing to be filled. This is an excellent way

to provide services to fellow members. Helping others is always satisfying.

The interest groups are becoming more active now that summer is here. The Tree Committee is planning a fall rollout to the public of "Big Trees of Milam County. Got any "big trees"? Wildflowers enjoyed the wetter spring and are giving us a good display. Amphibians are just croaking along in unison. The opportunities for volunteering are endless and a good way to learn to know others with similar interests. They are the best place to learn more about your special interest.

The Forum committee is bringing speakers on nature topics of high public interest to the Milam community each month. The Oak Wilt presentation was very well attended and of great interest to all. That committee could use additional people to plan new topics and staff the presentations.

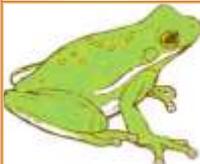
The Milam County Nature Resource book will soon go on line with the first of many pages. Page researchers are needed. Best bet is to be involved in an

(Continued on page 2)

Our Motto

- Look
- Learn
- Teach
- Conserve

Our Mascot Green Tree Frog



Did You Know?

What is the fastest creature on Earth?

Hint: It's a predator and it flies.

See Answer on the last page.

(Hop on Board, Continued from page 1)

interest group. This presents the best opportunity to really LEARN a species, preparing you to TEACH others. And a great way to earn those volunteer hours.

It is within these committees and groups where ideas **and interest are generated for nature's betterment.**

One needs only to encourage others by your ideas, participation and enthusiasm.

If a you have an interest not covered by a current group, take the initiative and form one. It is easy and a lot of fun doing so. Ask an officer or chair to help you.

It is not too early to look to the next year. Soon the Nominating Committee will be appointed. This gives eve-

ryone another opportunity to be a part of overseeing **the ECRC's nature conservation and education initiatives** by becoming an officer or committee chair. Let your aspirations be known.

The forgoing are but a few examples. The opportunities to make a difference are many.

The ECRC will have a significant impact on nature conservation in Milam County. The conservation train is leaving the station. You have a seat made by you just for you. No one can sit in your seat, only you. Hop aboard the conservation train, and enjoy the ride. Your seat will make a difference.

Paul Unger,
ECRC President

Our Committees by Don Travis

Our Conservation Train has lots of committees (passenger cars, dining cars, lounge cars, viewing cars, wildlife animal cars, you got the idea) which are the lifeblood of our chapter. Group meetings in the passenger car(s) of your choice are where it all happens.

I tend to view our committees in three major categories: Operating Committees, Project Committees, and Nature Interest Committees.

The Operating Committees have missions defined by our Chapter Operations Handbook and include the following with their chairpersons:

- Training: Paula Engelhardt
- Advanced Training & Programs: Katherine Bedrich
- Membership: (open)
- Projects: Connie Roddy
- Communications: Don Travis
- Host: Anne Barr
- Historian: Tense Tumlinson

The Project Committees handle the planning and leadership for our approved Chapter Projects and other major activities that are broad in their Chapter coverage and

generally ongoing kinds of projects, but may also be a 1 time project, or a primary interface role:

- Milam County Nature Book: Debbi Harris
- Milam County Nature Festival: Ann Collins
- Graduation: (different each year)
- Forums: Becky Marek
- Public School Education: Toni Lafferty
- Chapter 501(c)3 non-profit filing: Paul Unger

Nature Interest Committees were originally formed during the organization of the Nature Book project, as subcommittees of that project, for researching various nature interest areas such as birds, mammals, wildflowers, etc. and writing Nature Book pages on their favorites. While this remains the major, or perhaps only, activity for some of these interest area committees, some have ventured into additional activities pertinent to their nature group, such as sponsoring field trips, doing surveys, collecting seeds, and working on the **Nature Festival's special feature areas.** Others may be focusing on different projects of their choosing. Where and how far each committee goes is entirely up to that com-

(Continued on page 11)

Fresh Water Mussels Are Good For Bass, by Marsha May

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is proud to recognize the El Camino Real Master Naturalist Chapter as a Texas Nature Tracker Partner. Members of the Chapter completed Texas Amphibian and Mussel Watch trainings and have agreed to aid TPWD biologists by promoting these programs in the community.

Do you enjoy fishing? Have you ever seen freshwater mussels or clams in the river or stream where you fish? Did you know that these critters are good for bass?

That's right! Scientists in Oklahoma found that where beds of native freshwater mussels occur so do scores of benthic macroinvertebrates! So what are benthic macroinvertebrates and why are they important? Benthic macroinvertebrates are very small animals without backbones (invertebrates) that live in the river or stream bottom on rocks, logs, sediment, debris and aquatic plants during some time in their life. These animals include crayfish, snails, worms, aquatic insects and the young or larvae of mayflies, damselflies and dragonflies.



Threeridge

When bass are young they feed on insects, crayfish (benthic macroinvertebrates) and small fish. As adults, they eat just about anything that they can catch and swallow, including other fish, crayfish, frogs, salamanders, snakes, mice, turtles and even ducklings (Hodge,

L., TPW Magazine, Bass Buffet, January 2007). Bluegill are a favorite food for bass and what do bluegill eat? They eat aquatic insects and their larvae - benthic macroinvertebrates! So, if it is good for benthic macroinvertebrates - it surely is good for bass!

Caryn C. Vaughn and Daniel E. Spooner (2006) from the University of Oklahoma, researched benthic macroinvertebrate numbers in mussel beds in 8 streams in Arkansas and Oklahoma. They found that macroinvertebrate numbers were significantly higher in areas containing mussels than in areas without mussels. Vaughn and Spooner concluded that mussels probably help macroinvertebrates by creating structure, stabilizing stream sediments, and providing food. Spooner and

Vaughn (2006) found in another study that the algae and invertebrate numbers were higher in live mussel beds than in areas with just mussel shells or areas without mussels. They concluded that the macroinvertebrates were re-

sponding to the increased amount of algae on live mussels as food and/or shelter. Both studies conclude that live mussel beds are good for macroinvertebrates, therefore we can conclude that live mussel beds are good for bass!

Freshwater mussels play an important role in aquatic ecosystems. They not only create good habitat for bass, but they clean the water by feeding on debris and bacteria and they are an important food source for many critters in the water and on the land. There are about 52 species of freshwater mussels in Texas and six species can only be found in Texas. About 38 percent of those 52 species are thought to be in danger of becoming extinct. These amazing creatures are very sensitive to changes in their environment which include siltation from construction sites, pollutants, river flow alterations, and salinity.

To learn more about freshwater mussels and Texas Mussel Watch please check out this web site:

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/mussels.

Marsha May, TPWD Biologist

References:

Spooner, D. E. and C. C. Vaughn. 2006. Context dependent effects of freshwater mussels on stream benthic communities. *Freshwater Biology* 51: 10160-1024

Vaughn, C. C. and D. E. Spooner. 2006. Unionid mussels influence macroinvertebrate assemblage structure in streams. *Journal of North American Benthological Society* 25(3): 691-700



TX Heelsplitter



TX Fawnsfoot

Kayaking on the Little River By Deborah Stephens

Talk about an adventure! That's what we had on our kayak trip down the Little River to the Brazos River. Unfortunately, we didn't make it to the Brazos, but that did not lessen the trip one little bit. I'm talking about the kayak trip that Brazos Master Naturalist's planned and invited ECRMN to join. Which we did! There were 6 of us from ECRMN who took the challenge, 22 total.



We met at Kerry and Dave Cunningham's river retreat that used to be a road side rest stop. He gave us a brief history of the spot, noting that the train trestles built there in the early 1900's, were still in operation. The land was the site of an old State Park that was dedicated by the Daughters of the Texas Revolution. (DAR) in 1936.

They had trucks to load us into along with our canoes/kayaks and we were taken to the bridge by Sugarloaf Mountain where we put in. And off we go...

Most of us had a bit of experience floating on the water. My husband and I had been on several of the maintained floats on the Guadalupe. However, this was a bit different on the natural lay of the water on the Little River. Most of the running water areas were blocked with the trees and branches that head down river in a rain storm. Did that stop us? Oh, no way! We forged along by allowing the bravest among us to lead the way. At times you would hear a holler, "Go the other way!". But, I say, never a dull moment. We would all get

through, and then take a rest from the excitement by floating down the calmer waters.



The adventures of the river were not all to complete our day. About $\frac{3}{4}$'s way through, the rumble of thunder came from behind us. The group then became a bit more determined and the laughter died down a bit and some serious paddling began. The wind turned to the north and picked up dramatically. Around the next couple of bends we saw our rest stop.

The Brazos group had planned a lunch stop for us on a sand bar. There they were, with 2 bright blue canopies set up with our lunches all lined up and cookies and extras on tables. The mussel group was also there for us to have a lesson. It was a sight to behold. Bout that time, whoosh, the wind grabbed the blue awnings and blew them over the truck. The waiting group quickly figured they wouldn't withstand the cold strong wind and by the time we made it to the trucks, the canopies were safely put away. We made our stop and ate the best sandwich I had had in months and learned a few things about mussels. Got to admit, there was some pretty good shivering going on. I'm sure the temperature had dropped 20 degrees.

We took a quick consensus to see who would want to go on and after no hands were raised, walked our kayaks and canoes up to the top of the hill and headed for the

(Continued on page 5)

(Kayaking—Continued from page 4)

cars/trucks that would take us back to our cars. Just about the time we were ready to load, we heard one large crack of thunder, the skies let loose and we were outa there. A few got a little wetter while riding in the back of the truck but I truly do believe a good time was had by all.



We made tentative plans to have Brazos River Float Part 2 at a later date. I can't wait. I guarantee I will be on that sign up list.

Deborah Stephens

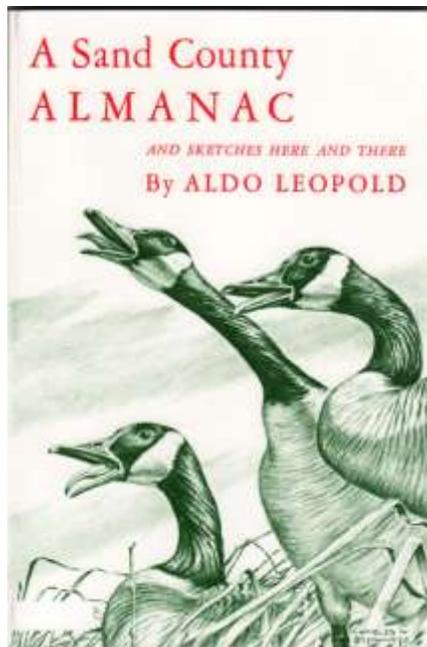
A Conservation Ethic by Lisa Davenport

Aldo Leopold is considered to be the father of conservation and wildlife management. His 1949 collection of essays entitled "A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There" integrates the concepts of the beauty and aesthetics of experiencing the land and all that dwells in it and the ethics of preserving and respecting the natural world. There is no better way to describe Leopold's purpose in writing these essays than in the first two paragraphs of the Foreword where he begins his seminal work as follows:

"There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot.

Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away

with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher "standard of living" is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech."



These statements, and many others throughout the essays, are timeless. It's sometimes hard to believe that they were written sixty years ago.

Divided into three parts, this work begins with the section entitled "Part I: A Sand County Almanac" in which Leopold records his observations on a formerly-abandoned farm in Wisconsin throughout the twelve months of the year. Here he describes everything from the thrill of following a

(Continued on page 6)

(Conservation Ethic, Continued from page 5)

skunk trail in the snow to the observation of the loss of native prairie-lands to the recognition that what might be consid-



ered a great loss in the falling of diseased tree could actually be a benefit to numerous other living things such as birds and bees. Throughout these essays, he describes many species that may be unfamiliar to those of us in the southern and western states, but, nevertheless, the themes and sentiments are familiar to observers of nature anywhere. And, since he was an ornithologist, many of his descriptions of bird behavior and activities will hold the attention of any birder regardless of their location.



The next section of the book is **"Part II: Sketches Here and There"** which contains essays describing scenes in other parts of North America involving wildlife, various habitats, and Leopold's personal interactions with each. One of the most poignant essays in this part is entitled **"Thinking Like a Mountain."**

In this essay he describes an experience he had as a young man out hunting in the mountains of the southwestern United States. He writes that he once believed that an opportunity to kill a wolf was an opportunity to save more deer for future hunting. However, after shooting a wolf and arriving at **her side in time to see "a fierce green fire dying in her eyes," he had a sense that he might be wrong about this notion.** And later, in observing areas that were over-populated with deer, he found bushes and trees that had been decimated from over-grazing, and he realized that preserving the natural order is still the best wildlife management technique.

Finally, in the third part entitled **"Part III: The Up-**

shot," Leopold asks the reader to consider the ethics and values of using (or not using) wild lands in such a way that is beneficial to all living things. He begins this series of essays by discussing the merits and hazards of the pursuit of outdoor recreation by vacationers, nature-lovers/naturalists, and sportsmen. The merits of promoting the exploration of the outdoors are that the more people are exposed to the natural world, the more they may be inclined to treasure it and preserve it. However, with overuse can come degradation and destruction of resources that may not be able to be recovered. Leopold then goes on to discuss how individuals can often have the most meaningful experiences with nature literally in their own backyards. In the end he basically sums up his theories and observations in this way: ***"The evolution of a land ethic is an intellectual as well as emotional process. Conservation is paved with good intentions which prove to be futile, or even dangerous, because they are devoid of critical understanding either of the land, or of economic land-use. I think it is a truism that as the ethical frontier advances from the individual to the community, its intellectual content increases."***



In many ways this also describes one of the missions of Master Naturalists. And, one way that Master Naturalists can share this appreciation of the land is through the Leopold Education Project, a program that uses the **essays in "A Sand County Almanac" to teach 6th through 12th** graders to understand and respect the natural world around them and to develop their own personal land ethic. The more that this appreciation is taught and shared, the better the chance that future generations will enjoy the natural cycles and communities around them.

Lisa Davenport

(Sketches by Charles W. Schwartz in "A Sand County Almanac")

From the Outdoors of the V.P. By Katherine Bedrich

When was the last time you were outdoors and enjoyed what was happening? This morning I was in one of my herb areas and I saw the brightest green, striped big caterpillar on a parsley plant. Wow I said, this is so



pretty and ran into the house to get the camera. Took several photos, (digital is so cool), and then watched a big yellow butterfly fly around the yard. Nature was giving me a free show

and I was enjoying all her domain. Now I am listening to the cicadas sing their little wings off. Beauty, color and music; it is all out there. And it is free of charge. All you have to do is look and listen. Nature gives us a show every time we slow down, look and listen.

While I was planting more herbs, our dog Brownie, always has to investigate the dug out hole. She was looking for grubs, but none where found today. I guess it is June and the June Bugs are gone.

The butterflies are having a good time at the Butterfly Banana Bar. I take my old, brown bananas, split the peel, open them up a bit and set them outside in different places. The butterflies love it. Happy hour any time of the day. Go to the grocery store and buy those sacks for 99 cents. You can even make a banana shake for your roses. Just chop up up, place in a container, add water, cover, and shake. Let it sit a day or two, (home brew!!!) and then pour it all around your rose bush. Yum, yum... good stuff.

We have a couple new tanks (ponds to some of you) on the place. After we had several inches of rainfall last fall I walked up to them to check out if they were hold-

ing any water. They had some water each, and they also had many animal footprints around the banks. There were bird feet, raccoon, dog or coyote, and a few other tracks. So I decided to try to cast some tracks. Boy was that fun. First time I used Plaster of Paris. This was an interesting experience. I mixed up the powder with the water. Well, the instructions said to use so much water to so much powder. And I did, but I had way too much water and kept adding powder to get a good consistency. Finally after mixing about 5 times what I wanted, I started pouring. I had cut the bottoms out of dip, whip, and other plastic containers to place around the tracks. I needed more containers since I had so much mixture, but I did not want to walk back to the house and let Charlie know I really did not know what I was doing. So I decided to just pour the mixture on the track without a mold. The mixture run all over the place, but I was having fun learning what to do, and what not to do next time. I also was doing this around noon, another learning experience. Next time, less water, not at noon and more molds. The prints did turn out pretty good all things considered.



Another time I was able to watch and learn outside, I saw dragonflies laying eggs in the water. Again, I was at the tank one day. I had luckily been to a dragonfly workshop recently; anyway, I was sitting in the stillness of the outdoors, looking at the clouds and the prairie and the water in the tank and a lot of dragonflies flying around the area. I kind of wished I had my camera, but I also thought sometimes I need to just watch and enjoy what is happening. So I am noticing all these dragonflies around the water. Some are sitting on the bank,

some are flying over the water, some are dipping their rear end into the water and I know what is happening. They are depositing their eggs. It was so cool to know what nature was doing. I know I have seen this before and thought what are they doing. Well now I know since I attended the workshop, I have learned something about dragonflies I did not know before. Oh, I also had

(Continued on page 8)

(Outdoors, Continued from page 7)

attended a workshop on animal tracks; but it did not teach us how to cast.

I thought this was so neat to realize I knew what those dragonflies were doing. They were not just playing in the water, dipping their tails around for nothing. They were making sure their species would continue. It made my day.

One other kool experience I have had recently. A month or so ago, I was doing some sprinkling in the front yard. I was holding the water hose with my thumb, watering some newly planted flowers. All of a sudden a hummingbird came directly towards the sprinkling water. It was looking around like it wanted to get

wet, but not sure how get in the water properly. Finally it flew under the sprinkling water and flew around under it for a few seconds, then went to the nearest dead branch and preened itself. Several more times it came for a shower and each time it went back to the branch. That was fun, giving a hummingbird a bath.

Oh well, I need to take a break and get something very cold to drink. I have more stories to tell, but they can wait. Have some good tales to tell? Send them in to the newsletter... we would love to read about your outdoor experiences.

Take care, stay kool.

Katherine Bedrich,
V.P. - ECRC

Second ECRC Class Graduates

by Paula Engelhardt

Tuesday, May 12th was an evening to celebrate as the second class of the El Camino Real Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists graduated with 28 students receiving certificates of completion and becoming Texas Master Naturalists. The evening was a fun-filled culmination of 15 weeks of education, building new friendships and chapter development.

The 2009 training class was held in Rockdale at Peace Lutheran Church on Tuesday evenings from 6-9 p.m.

from January 13th through May 5th. The curriculum encompassed subjects as diverse as ecological concepts, weather and climate, entomology, ornithology, mammalogy and wetland

ecology. Presenters included professionals from such institutions as Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas A&M University, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and



Michelle Haggerty, Sonny Arnold, Kim Summers and Mike Mitchell

Baylor University. Many first year lecturers returned for encore performances and new lecturers did not disappoint. Field trips to Texas A&M University, the Cameron School Farm, Lake Waco Wetlands and Sugarloaf Mountain got people out of the classroom and up close to nature.

The evening of May 12th began with opening remarks from chapter President, Paul Unger, followed by comments from guests Michelle Haggerty, Master Naturalist Program Coordinator with TPWD; Mike Mitchell, game warden, chapter founder and past Chapter Advisor; Paula Engelhardt, Training Committee Chairperson; and Pastor Jan Campbell of Peace Lutheran Church. Also present was Sonny Arnold, Assistant Coordinator for the TMN Program, TPWD.

After opening remarks, a delicious dinner of fajitas with all the trimmings was prepared and served by Con-



Lucy Coward, Lolly Lewis at the BBQ line.

(Continued on page 9)

(Graduation, Continued from page 8)

nie Roddy, ECRC member, and her husband Wayne. Class participants brought an amazing assortment of decadent desserts and the meal was enjoyed by all.

After dinner, members of the class of 2009 were presented with a certificate of course completion and a 2009 chapter t-shirt. Paul, Mike, Michelle, Sonny and Paula assisted with presenting these special items to the graduating class.



Lisa Davenport receives Graduation goodies from Paula Engelhardt, and Paul Unger.

Those who completed the required 40 hours of course study and received their Texas Master Naturalist certificates were: Stella Booker, Carolyn Burford, Robert Burnett, Lucy Coward, Joyce Dalley, Lisa Davenport, Frank Harris, Pat Holley, Janice Johnson, Toni Lafferty, Lolly Lewis, Becky Booker Marek, Donny Marek, Dorothy Mayer, Cindy McDaniels, Gary McDaniels, Bruce Merryman, Pamela Neeley, Janice Pelzel, Larry Reynolds, John Rinn, Deborah Stephens, Kim Summers, Rusty Thomas, Cindy Travis, Shawn Walton, Derrellene Zbikowski and Kenneth Zbikowski.

Three individuals from the class also completed 8 hours of advanced training and at least 40 hours of volunteer service and became Certified Texas Master Naturalists. They received the course comple-



Lucy Coward receives Certification pin from Paula, with Anne Barr watching.

tion certificate and t-shirt as well as a certificate of certification, their official ECRC name badge and the coveted enamel dragonfly pin. These individuals were: Lucy Coward, Joyce Dalley and Rusty Thomas.

A highlight of the evening was the "Did You Know?"

presentation by the graduates. As each graduate came forward to receive their goodies, they presented a new fact that they had learned during their course of study, along with a photo to represent their fact. Some were funny, some surprising, some unusual. Overall, it was a light-hearted and entertaining program that really showcased the **class's personality.**



Kenneth Zbikowski and his "Did you know?"

The 2009 Graduation Committee then surprised several ECRC members who had been highly involved with **putting together this year's curriculum and seeing it to fruition** by presenting them with beautiful thank you plaques bearing the chapter logo of the tree frog. All who received these plaques were touched and deeply appreciative.

Many individuals were involved with ensuring that the 2009 training program was a success. A big thank you goes to the following people who spent many hours and much energy doing just that.

The core training committee, comprised of Katherine Bedrich, Debbi Harris and Nancy Soechting and led by chairperson Paula Engelhardt, was charged with overseeing everything from publicizing the class and recruiting students to setting class dates, securing a class location, streamlining the 2009 curriculum under the **state's guidelines and securing knowledgeable speakers.** This committee benefited greatly from the guidance of Paul Unger, president and Mike Mitchell, past advisor, who were instrumental in establishing the chapter.

Hostess committee chairperson, Anne Barr, worked

(Continued on page 10)

(Graduation, Continued from page 9)

tirelessly making sure that everyone was well fed each night. She developed the sign-up sheet and schedule for bringing food and made sure everyone was reminded of their commitments. She and her husband, Gary, transported food, drinks, serving items and paper goods to class each night. Anne, assisted by Connie Roddy and too many others to name, helped with serving, clean-up and doing the dishes each night. Thank you to ECRC members and to the 2009 class for bringing the most delicious food and for providing the sought after recipes for many of the dishes.

The AV team was indispensable as they made sure that the sound system was up and working (Paul Unger and **Connie Roddy**) and that the speakers' PowerPoint presentations were loaded, ready to go and ran smoothly each night (Don Travis). Anne Barr was a dynamo, **pulling double duty as she recorded each evening's class on video and then transferred those recordings onto DVD's** for students who missed class to view later. Don Travis also pulled double duty by transferring many presentations to the chapter website and taping two field trips with his personal camcorder.

A special thank you goes to Cindy Bolch of the membership committee who established the sign-in sheet for the class and meticulously recorded and maintained the **database of the students' hours**. **Cindy also attended class** when needed, distributing handouts and explaining to the students how the training, advanced training and volunteer hours recording system works.

Another special thank you goes to Nancy Soechting, chapter treasurer, for ordering and assembling the class curriculum binders, overseeing and handling the details for the class and graduation budgets and for ordering and procuring the dragonfly awards pins among other duties.

Ed Burleson deserves special recognition for the time and effort he put into ensuring that each guest lecturer received a unique and personal thank you gift, delivering many of them in person. Thank you to

Phyllis Shuffield for providing pressed flowers and poetry for the thank you cards.



Thank you to class members Deborah Stephens, Becky Booker, Joyce Dalley, Lucy Coward and Janice Pelzel who comprised the Graduation Planning Committee and were responsible for the enjoyable and unique graduation program of May 12th.

They planned the evening including **the "Did You Know" presentation, designed and ordered** the 2009 t-shirts, made beautiful gift bags and table centerpieces, planned the meal along with Connie and saw to a myriad of details on graduation night.

Class members Kim Summers and Dorothy Mayer went the extra mile to assist with the 2009 training session as well. Thank you to Kim for coming to class early to help with set-up and taking speakers to dinner and for staying late to help with clean-up. Thank you to Dorothy for overseeing DVD distribution to classmates including delivery and pick-up as well as storage and tracking.

Thank you to the class of 2008 ECRC members, too many to mention here, who assisted by bringing food, greeting class members, attending class to make various program announcements and supporting the class of 2009!!

Thank you class of 2009 for bringing food, assisting with clean-up after class and pitching in wherever needed to ensure the success of the program!



Pastor Jan Campbell with Stella Booker and her husband.

A final gratitude is extended to Pastor Jan Campbell and Peace Lutheran Church for the use of their activity room and kitchen that made classes so convenient and comfortable.

Congratulations El Camino Real Chapter Texas Master Naturalist Class of 2009!

Paula Engelhardt
Training Committee Chairperson

(Committees, Continued from page 2)

mittee. These committees range in size from 1 to 15.

Here's the current list of active committees that have members, with their chairpersons listed where one has been selected:

- Lichens, Phyllis Shuffield
- Entomology, Anne Barr
- Wildflowers (including Millennium Seed Bank Collection), Debbi Harris
- Birding, Ann Collins
- Trees (including Big Trees of Milam County), Don Travis
- Bats (including Bat Houses, potentially Bats & Bridges survey), Rusty Thomas
- Native Plants, open

- Mammals, Katherine Bedrich
- Horned Lizard, Lucy Coward
- Vegetable Gardening, open
- Fish, Kerri Cunningham
- Reptiles, Nancy Soechting

(My apologies to anyone if I have miss-stated anything.)

Other Nature Interest committees can be formed for Grasses, Fauna, Wetlands, Geology and Soils, Archeology, Ecosystems, Water Ecology, etc. and any other areas you may be interested in. Scan through the General Interest section on our website, or think through all the **classes and field trips and see what "conservation train car" you want to hook a ride on. It'll be the ride of your life!**

Don Travis

Milam County Nature Festival

by Don Travis

Our "First Annual" event will be on Friday afternoon / evening and Saturday daytime, June 11 and 12, 2010 (a little over a year away) at Wilson Ledbetter Park in Cameron. Everyone's help will be needed to help make this a successful inaugural event. Ann Collins is the committee chairperson, and is holding regular planning sessions. Please contact her for more information.

Key concepts include:

- El Camino Real chapter is the prime event sponsor and manager. City of Cameron, and many others, will be supporting players.
- Key note speaker Andrew Sansome, past head of Tx Parks and Wildlife and a widely recognized nature authority and speaker.
- A "sounds of the night" session with Lee Ann Linam and Marsha May, TPWD.
- A wildflower garden to be planned and built ahead of time, with consulting and seminars at the event by Flo Oxley, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Ctr.
- A wildscape and hummingbird section to be planned and built ahead of time, with consulting and seminars at the event by Mark Klym, TPWD.
- A native grasses section to be planned and built

ahead of time, with consulting and seminars at the event by Dr. Barron Rector, Associate Professor and Extension Range Specialist, Texas A&M.

- Various other nature exhibits and activities including Bat houses, Bluebird houses, Butterflies, Dragonflies, Birds, Bugs, Trees, etc.
- The park will be officially commemorated as a Bird Sanctuary by the City of Cameron.
- Various partnerships, grants and donations are in process, and much more are possible and needed to help with funding.
- Lots of publicity and advertising to do.
- Lots of facility support to do - porta potties, food vendors, trash, EMS, sound systems, tents, signage, etc.
- We won't try to do everything we can think of the first year, but what we do plan on will be done very well.

Obviously, this will be a significant project for the chapter. Wilson Ledbetter Park, and other venues in Milam County, will evolve to become really neat nature and wildlife demonstration centers with these annual events. Your help and support will be appreciated!

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 Los Caminos is a quarterly publication of the El Camino Real Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists.

Upcoming Major Events:

- 6/23 Adv. Training, Weather by Bill Hecke, Rockdale General Store, 6pm
- 6/24 Planning Meeting, Nature Festival, Wilson Ledbetter Park, 9am
- 6/27 Thorndale BBQ cook-off and Festival, ECRC booth.

Certifications, Etc. By Cindy Bolch

Our second year as a chapter continues at a great pace!

New Certifications year to date include: Lucy Coward, Joyce Dalley, Rusty Thomas, Connie Roddy, Lisa Davenport, Shawn Walton and Tense Tumlinson.

Achieving 2009 Annual Re-Certifications year to date include: Cindy Bolch, Katherine Bedrich, Don Travis, Ann Collins, Anne Barr, Connie Roddy, Ed Burleson, Nancy Soechting, Paul Unger, Paula Engelhardt, and Vivian Dixon.

Lifetime to date Milestone Achievement Levels Awarded include:

250 Hours—Paul Unger, Ann Collins, Cindy Bolch, Katherine Bedrich, Paula Engelhardt, and Don Travis

500 Hours—Paul Unger

1000 Hours—Paul Unger

Congratulations to All!

Did You Know?

What is the fastest creature on Earth?



The Peregrine Falcon.
 They can cruise along at a spiffy 40-55 mph, with bursts up to **65-68 mph. However, their real speed is when "stooping", or** dive bombing their usual prey of other birds. They can exceed 100mph easily, and have reached speeds well over 200 mph!! They close their talons and strike their target, killing it on **impact. As it falls they swoop around and capture it. If it's not** dead, they will break its neck with a quick strike on the spine by its powerful beak.

Reference: <http://www.extremescience.com/fastinworld.htm> which includes a great video of stooping in action.