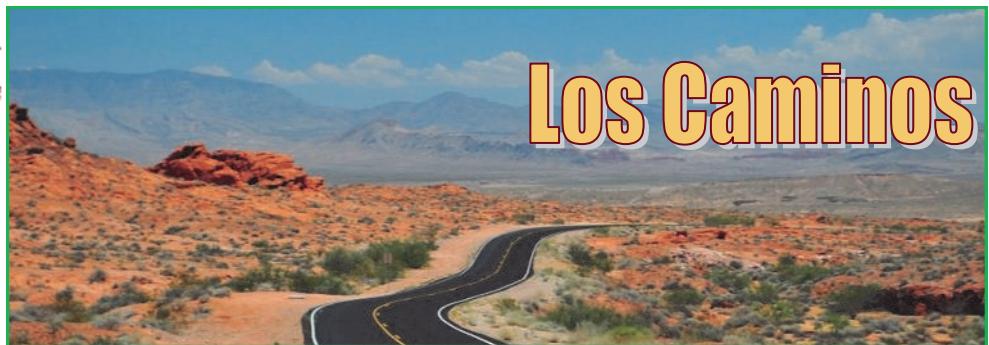


# T E X A S



The Texas Master Naturalist program activities are coordinated by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife. Texas Master Naturalist and Extension programs serve all people regardless of socio-economic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.



# Los Caminos

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

Award Winning Newsletter of the El Camino Real Chapter

Milam County      Texas Master Naturalist      Summer 2016

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### Did You Know?

What animal has stars on its nose?

See last page for the answer.

## Sweet Shenanigans      by Sheri Sweet

### GUESS WHAT!?

When we moved back to Texas a little over four years ago, we came from an area of 1.5 million population to Lexington, TX, population 1,179! Yah! I wasn't really sure if I would like small town Texas or not. It is fantastic living out from town on a fairly decent-sized acreage, having a tank, a few trees, and mostly grassland. Each day, I have no idea what I will encounter outside: a Great Blue Heron, a Great Egret, hawks, jack rabbits, Texas Rat Snakes (YUCK!), songbirds galore, deer, and the list goes on and on. And it is all made better because Wes and I are both Certified Texas Master Naturalists!

Well, a couple of weeks ago, I was sewing in the sunroom. It was pouring rain and when I looked up at the rose bush outside, I noticed a little brown ball underneath the bush. At first I thought, "a wet Eastern Cottontail." Then I decided that it was too brown for a rabbit. I got up to take a closer look through the rain streaming down the glass door. I'll be darned! I yelled for Wes to come quick. He did a double-take and dashed for the bird book, saying, "I think it's a Bobwhite." And I agreed.

Sure enough, it was a little male Bobwhite! And even better, right next to him was a female Bobwhite! Holy Cow! The rain let up to a drizzle, so we went out, camera in hand and I took some great pictures of them. Only problem was that they didn't seem afraid of us – wary, but

not panicked by us. They kindly posed for me.

I printed out some pictures that Wes took to his coffee with friends the next morning to show around. Of course, the old-timers knew what they were, but they all said it had been 15 – 20 years since any had been around here! However, the speculation was that possibly they had escaped from the wild game hunting preserve south of Texas 21, about 10 miles or so south of us. Well, maybe.

I posted a picture on Facebook. A couple of days later, my neighbor across the road and down about 1/4 mile contacted me, all delighted. Apparently her teen-aged grandson had gotten some hatchlings last June and raised them out in their back field. He started gradually releasing them



(Continued on page 2)

in July last year. She is convinced that these two Bobwhites were some of those he released.

The next day, we opened the garage door to go somewhere, and in they came. They wandered around in the garage until we shooed them out! Cute little guys! Every few days we see them around on our place. One day we were walking along our lane. I guess they heard us talking, came up to the fence, and scurried along the fence line. Wes saw them one morning out by the barn. Today I was in the sunroom and heard a loud "white!" They were back again, in the rocks by the sunroom – it was drizzling and raining – I guess they like to get out of the rain under the bushes out there. She was calling him to come on over to her!



Our neighbors' grandson is planning to come over next time he's here and see if he can "call them" to come out so he can see them. He is also planning to raise and release some more again and they are considering releasing them over here on our place as their land is not as good for them!

The **Northern Bobwhite**, *Colinus Virginianus*, is a rather chunky, reddish-brown quail that has a grayish tail. The feather coloration make them appear as scales on their fronts. The males have a very distinctive whitish throat and a white eye line above its eyes. The female is more buffy-colored and the eye line on her is not as distinct. They are a round bird with short tails and short necks. The male has a slight crest that gives his head a rounded, peaked look. They are about 9-3/4" long, have a wing-spread of about 13", and weigh about 6 oz. They have a very distinctive "bob WHITE" call that is sometimes repeated as "bob-bob WHITE".

These birds have been in a sharp decline for the last 50 years or so. This is attributed to habitat loss and agricultural changes from pesticides and herbicides. Their habitat is in agricultural fields, grass lands, grassy-brush range

lands, and the fringes of pine and pine/hardwood forests. They don't like heavily forested lands, but do seem to like patchworks of fields, forests, and range land.

Bobwhites eat mostly leaves and seeds along with some insects during breeding season. Their main food is seeds that come from weeds, crops, rangeland and forests. In the winter they eat ragweed and pine seeds, acorns and legume seeds. Their spring diet is leafy greens of plants and their summer diet is grass seeds, bugs like flies, beetles, wasps, spiders, and some fruits.

Both the female and the male dig out a shallow area about 6" in diameter and up to 2" deep which they line with grasses and weeds for their nest. Many times they will also weave an arch of grasses and weeds over their nest area to completely hide it from view. The female will lay a large number of eggs – anywhere from 7 to 28! They will have 1 to 3 broods a year. Prolific little guys! Each egg is a little over 1" long and about 1" in diameter and is a creamy white or dull white. Incubation period ranges from 22 to 24 days. When the babies hatch, they are covered with down and are able to run around; however, they depend on the parents for food and warmth. Unfortunately, the males often abandon the brood, leaving the babies to their mother. Jerks!

Bobwhites are very social creatures and are usually found in coveys of 3 to 20 birds. They generally feed early in the morning and late afternoon. An interesting item about Bobwhites is that they also will flutter around and drag a wing if they feel their babies are in danger.

My sources for this article were [www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern\\_Bobwhite](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Bobwhite) (Cornell Lab of Ornithology); The Stokes field Guide to the Birds of North America; A Guide to Field Identification Birds of North America; And The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America.



## Sweet Shenanigans—Part 2

By Sheri Sweet

During a couple of trips we took to Midland, we stopped at the International Water Lily Gardens in San Angelo. This is a fascinating place, by the way! I was enthralled by all the water lilies and spent lots of time photographing the beautiful flowers and lily pads. Then I noticed Wes concentrating on taking pictures – of something. I asked him what he was photographing and he said, “the dragon flies”. That’s when I actually started noticing them! Well! If he could do it, so could I! I was able to get some pretty neat shots of some of them!

Dragonflies belong to the insect order Odonata and sub-order Anisoptera. There are some 3,000 species all over the world. There are approximately 142 species occurring in Texas.

They are characterized by large multifaceted eyes. They have two pairs of strong, transparent, iridescent wings. Depending on the dragonfly, it can have colored spots on its wings. Their bodies are elongated and fairly slender.

The dragonfly is a fast and agile flyer. They are often found near water. Some have even migrated across the oceans. They have a complex, unique mating methodology. They use indirect insemination, delayed fertilization, and sperm competition. When the male and female mate, he grasps the female's head or prothorax. The female curls her body to receive the male's sperm, forming a heart or wheel shape. I happen to have a picture of two dragonflies mating. I don't know if the two creatures will show up in the photograph.

Dragonflies scatter their eggs over the water or lay them in vegetation that is floating or is under water. The eggs will hatch in a few days and the larvae begin eating immediately. They eat about anything they can catch – other insects and small fish. They get rid of their external skeletons several times before they are developed enough to be able to come up out of the water to emerge as adults.

This process takes anywhere from a few minutes to an hour or longer. Once the dragonfly has emerged, it must

pump up its wings and abdomen until it looks like an adult. It's body and wings must also harden before it can fly.

Adult dragonflies are voracious predators and eat anything they can catch in flight. Small gnats, flying ants, termites, mosquitoes, flies, etc, will be consumed in flight. Larger prey will be captured and taken to a perch to be eaten. The dragonflies, in turn, become prey for turtles, snakes, birds, and fish. Purple Martins love dragonflies and take them to their young for food.

I think the dragonfly I've been photographing is a Great Blue Skimmer; however, there are a couple of other ones that look similar.

My sources for this article are <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragonfly>, and Dragonflies of Texas by James L. Lasswell and Forrest L. Mitchell.



## Monitoring Dragonfly Migrations

by Cindy Travis

I've been interested in this project for some time. Very interesting and coincidental that Sheri's article was submitted at the same time for this issue.

The Migratory Dragonfly Partnership is an organization that includes dragonfly experts, academic institutions, and federal agencies of the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, as well as nongovernmental programs. The Partnership's goals are two-fold: to better understand North America's migrating dragonflies, and to promote conservation of the habitat on which they rely. Their initial focus is on establishing a network of Citizen Scientists to track the spring and fall migrations. While none of the known migratory species are endangered, they are of great ecological importance in the food chain of aquatic systems, and their migrations are a poorly understood phenomenon. Best of all they eat mosquitos and biting flies!!

For migration monitoring, participants only need a pond or wetland that can be regularly accessed throughout the year. Documentation of the presence, emergence and behaviors of the five best known migratory dragonflies in North America; Common Green Darner, Variegated Meadowhawk, Black Saddlebag, Wandering Glider and Spot-Winged Glider, is done by visiting the website [www.migratorydragonflypartnership.org](http://www.migratorydragonflypartnership.org) and clicking on "Enter Migratory Data". The project started in 2011 and there are now over 1000 citizen scientists making contributions. That web site will give you all you need to know to get started.

For the "not so squeamish" and scientifically minded, an extra component of monitoring is collection of adult migrants returning north in early spring or south flying migrants from late July to mid-October. Also, the collection of exuviae (cast-off nymphal skin left behind when adults emerge) may be done at any time they are found. These collections provide scientific information stored in the bodies of developing nymphs and preserved in the wing tissues of the adult - no matter how far from its birth site the adult is captured. Info provided will tell the latitude at which a nymph developed! For more information visit the Vermont Center for Ecostudies site: [vtcostudies.org/projects/lakes-ponds/dragonfly-migration/](http://vtcostudies.org/projects/lakes-ponds/dragonfly-migration/) and to participate in this part, contact Sara Zahendra at (szahendra@vtcostudies.org)

This Citizen Science project has been approved for our chapter to participate in the gaining of information regarding the migratory habits of these specified dragonflies. Hours can be logged under the VMS category "Cit. Sci. – Migratory Dragonfly Project". To assist with ID in the field, an iOS app "Dragonfly ID" is available for download, and an Android version is under development.

The individual photos of the five species are labeled for reuse and are from commons.wikipedia.org.

Some resource data I have collected for use in this project are:

1. Dragonflies of Texas. A guide to Common and Notable Species. James L. Lasswell & Forrest L. Mitchell

(Continued on page 5)



Green Darner female



Black Saddlebags



Spot Winged Glider



Variegated Meadowhawk Male



Wondering Glider

2. Monitoring Dragonfly Migration in North America. Protocols for Citizen Scientists. Migratory Dragonfly Partnership
3. Dragonflies and Damselflies. A Folding Pocket Guide to Familiar, Widespread North American Species. Kavanagh/Leung
4. Introduction to Dragonfly and Damselfly Watching. Texas Parks and Wildlife
5. Dragonflies. Q & A Guide. Ann Cooper
6. Dragonflies and Damselflies (Odonata) of Texas, Volume 5, 2011. John C. Abbott



Green Darner pair by Dennis Paulson, from awaytogarden.com

## More Birds in the Bush

The rains in our area of central Texas in the last 8-10 months brought a respite to the drought-weary region. For us that means a lot of growth. Our pastures and wooded areas are what I call "woolly." So we are faced again with how do we provide supplemental shelter as part of our wildlife management and yet control the wild over-growth.

Providing supplemental shelter for your property is important because many wildlife species require a variety of shelter types for use as nesting and breeding cavities, and "escape" cover for protection against predators and the harsh Texas climate. Providing supplemental shelter is defined as "actively creating or maintaining vegetation or artificial structures/cavities for utilization by wildlife." So how do we do that? First of all **Brush Piles** are really easy this year. Because of the drought we lost many trees. Then came the torrential rains that toppled several of those dead trees. Also with the rains came a lot of underbrush that we have to clean out to provide for water flow when the rains return. So...we have an abundance of brush. We cut the brush and the trees stack them and shape them into piles out in the pasture. We want to be sure to leave some of the

**By Barbara Cromwell**

dead trees spaced throughout our land. These dead trees are called "snags" and most are hardwood trees that provide an excellent source of cavities, often utilized by a variety of wildlife.

**Strip Mowing** is another practice. On our large open field we try to alternate or mow irregular strips. These strips provide lanes where ground-feeding species can feed adjacent to taller growth. They can also use this taller growth to quickly find escape cover when necessary. Recently we heard of another way of cutting parts of our pasture. **Half-cutting:** This activity is especially useful where you have an abundance of mesquite or huisache. Half-cutting is the practice of partially cutting branches of a live tree to encourage horizontal, living cover near the ground. These structures provide loafing and roosting cover for wildlife and are fantastic for quail and small mammals.

While providing shelter for wildlife we have to be careful about not "rescuing" what we think might be abandoned or hurt wildlife. It may be hard to not do something to help, yet that may be the very best thing we can do. Many ani-

(Continued from page 5)

mals deliberately avoid areas where their offspring are present. Such "hiding" behaviors reduce the chance of calling a predator's attention to the young. While you may not be able to sense the presence of the parent, it is likely close by and in visual or auditory contact with its offspring. Patiently observe the nest to see if the parent returns. If, after observation, you still believe the nest is abandoned, carefully, without touching the nest, place small sticks around it. If after a day the sticks have been disturbed and the offspring still appear to be healthy, the nest has probably been visited by a parent.

If a nest is blown down and is relatively undamaged and the young birds or eggs are unharmed, replace the nest into the tree from which it fell or in a nearby tree. The parents should continue to tend the nest. A badly damaged nest may be placed into a strawberry basket or other appropriately sized basket before placement in a tree. You may need to secure the nest to the branch with twine. Note: It is a common fallacy that birds reject their young if they have acquired a human scent. In fact very few bird species possess a developed sense of smell. Excessive handling should be avoided none-the-less, as mammalian predators may be attracted to human scents in their search for food.

Frequently, birds seen hopping on the ground begging for food do not require your assistance. It is common for birds to fledge from the nest before they are fully feathered or flight-ready. They will be fed on the ground for a day or two until they are able to fly, and then may fly with a parent until able to forage on their own. Usually, if the grounded bird is a healthy fledgling, you will see a parent attending it or foraging nearby. Careful observation should help you make a correct determination. If the bird is in a street, place it under a nearby bush. If there are dogs or cats pre-

sent, try to keep them away from the area for a few hours. Never unnecessarily handle or move the fledgling from the area where it was found. Baby blue jays are slow to mature, so the fledgling stage will generally take longer for them. We all know not to mess with what may look like an abandoned deer fawn. But what I recently read were some signs to look for to make sure the deer is "ok." If the fawn is not crying, is not covered with fire ants, the eyes are not swollen and there are no visible wounds, do not handle or disturb it. Your presence will only cause unnecessary stress for the fawn.

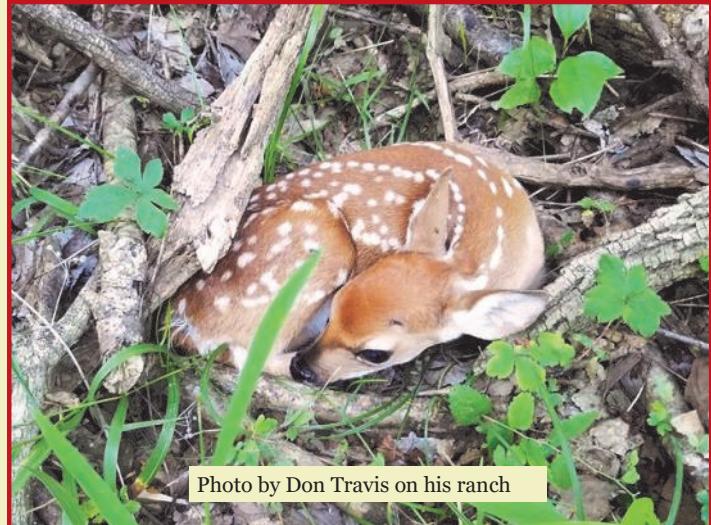


Photo by Don Travis on his ranch

So we get to work and do our "thing" because we are so blessed with abundance and it is our job to take care of this gift.

## Interesting Things in the Spring Night Sky

by Don & Lynn Hagan

[Editors note: This was submitted for our Spring News-letter but somehow I missed it. Better late than never!]

Flowers are not the only things gracing our spring-scape. We often forget, in our haste to look down, that looking up (in the nighttime) can offer just as many wonders. Most of what we will discuss here are easily seen with the naked eye. Add binoculars, and you might be able to see even more. Remember, stay away from those pesky city lights, street lights, and yard lights, to get the greatest view.

Let's begin with a cornerstone of the spring sky – The Big Dipper. The Big Dipper is not really a constellation in its own right, but rather a part of a larger constellation, Ursa Major. If you aren't familiar with how to locate it, try this. To find the Dipper, just look up in the hours of early evening as darkness falls, and there it is, spanning as much sky as your outstretched hand held at arm's length (Ventrudo, 2014).

The two outer stars of the bowl of the The Dipper point to Polaris, the North Star (essential for navigation). The

middle star of the handle of The Dipper is actually a double star – Mizar and Alcor - not just a single one. If you continue to follow the handle on around to a bright, orange star named Arcturus, one of the few stars mentioned in The Bible (KJV Job 9:9) (Rao, 2015).

Arcturus is part of the constellation Bootes, a kite-shaped group of stars. If you have found Bootes, it is the base of the "kite" beginning the formation of the tail. This star is about 36.66 light years from Earth (remember, a light year is the distance light travels in one year – and light travels at a speed of 186,000 miles a second). Suffice it to say, Arcturus is a long way from Earth. It is the fourth brightest star in the night sky. It is considered a red giant, appearing orange to the naked eye, which means it is in its latter stages of life (Sessions & Byrd, 2015).

Arcturus is roughly 25 times the diameter of our sun. Because of its larger size, in visible light, this star radiates more than 100 times the light of our sun. Additionally if

(Continued on page 7)

you add infrared and other radiant energies, Arcturus is about 200 times more powerful than the sun. The color of Arcturus gives us clues as to its temperature, which is about 7,300 F (Sessions & Byrd, 2015). You might think that is a lot, but actually it is several thousand degrees cooler than the surface of the sun.

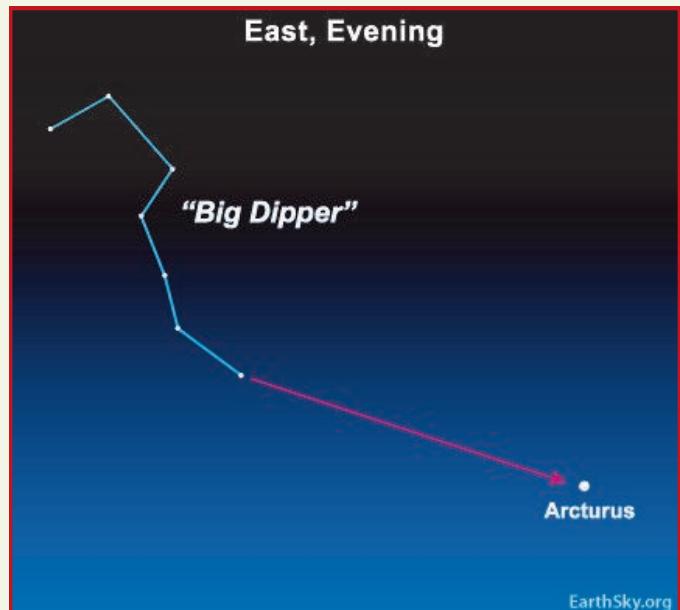
So, if you can find the Big Dipper, you have found some very interesting sights in the spring sky. Polaris or the North Star, Mizar, Alcor, and Arcturus. Luckily, you have been able to see a double star (Mizar and Alcor) and a red giant (Arcturus). Now, onto some planets.

There are three planets very visible at this time of year. Venus can be seen in the west, just before and during twilight until just before midnight. About 2/3 of the way up from the south/southwest horizon is Jupiter and is really a spectacular sight to the naked eye (and even better with binoculars). During the last week of April, Mercury can be seen low to the west/northwest horizon about 45 minutes to an hour after sunset (Rao, 2015).

#### References:

Rao, J. (2015, March 27). Star power: Spring's night sky dazzles with constellations aplenty. Retrieved April 3, 2016 from <http://www.space.com/28953-spring-night-sky-stars-2015.html>

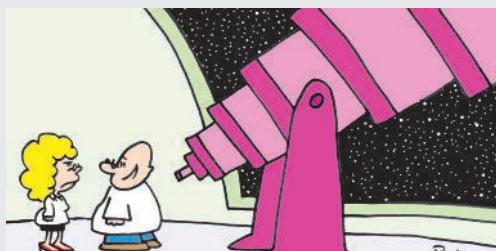
Sessions, L. & Byrd, D. (2015, May 13). Arcturus cuts through galaxy's disk. Retrieved April 3, 2016 from <http://earthsky.org/brightest-stars/bright-orange-arcturus-use->



EarthSky.org



"What do you mean, you can't look at the Milky Way because you're lactose-intolerant?"

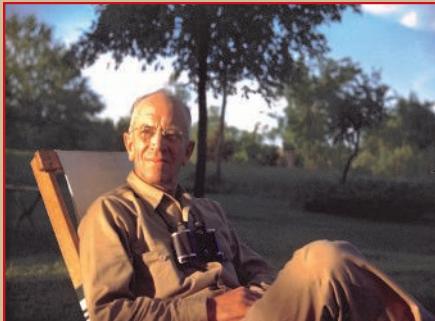


"I found a distant, frozen chunk of ice — I think I'll name it after you."



"Intriguing theory, Dr. Kleinhertz, but the fact that the Universe is expanding doesn't necessarily mean that God is a capitalist."

Aldo Leopold Says:



""All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively the land."

## Getting to Know You—Sheri Sweet

By Don Travis

This is our first Member interview using a template I created to ferret out fascinating little tidbits about our fellow nature lovers. I would love to feature one member in each issue, if you are willing. I have placed the interview instructions and questions on our newsletter web page, [txmn.org/elcamino/los-caminos-newsletter/](http://txmn.org/elcamino/los-caminos-newsletter/). Thanks to Sheri for volunteering for this one.

**Where were you born and spent your childhood?** I was born and raised in Laredo, TX, on the Mexican border.

**What do you remember as your first encounter or a special encounter with nature growing up, and what was special about it? (Several is fine)** Probably the first encounter with nature that I can remember was the little fish pond with gold fish in it on the property where we lived – I was somewhere between 1 and 3 years old. A little later, I can remember my mother showing me a caterpillar! And then there was the time we were at the lake (Casa Blanca). I was out in the water playing when I started hearing someone yelling, "Sheri!" I finally looked around and my mother was frantically waving her arms and pointing. I looked – OMG! And here came a cotton mouth water moccasin right for me! Ever seen an 8-year-old walk on water!?! Geeeee! That scared me! People in a boat were chasing it, but it was way ahead of them!

**Tell us a little about your family today, and your adult life – formal education, career, places lived, countries visited.** I went through Texas Woman's University in Denton in 3 years and two summers, graduating with a degree in Business with minors in Economics and Accounting. Shortly after graduation, I met Wes and that is good history! I had an opportunity to get into computer programming with LTV Corporation. I was a programmer/analyst and database analyst for 25-30 years. We have two children – Laurel, who lives in Norfolk, VA, and Brian, who lives in Liberty Hill, TX. And I have a stepson, Mike, who

# Getting To Know You



lives in Weston, TX. We have 4 grandchildren – 2 of each. Wes and I met in Dallas; moved to Midland where we got married; then moved to the Monterey, CA, area, where Laurel was born. Then we moved to the Oklahoma City area, where Brian was born, and

after 38 years there, we finally came home to Texas about 5 years ago! I have been to central and northern Mexico several times and across part of Canada a couple of times.

**What areas of nature most interest you today, and why?**

I guess my favorite area of nature is birding and bird watching. I also like critter-watching! I remember my mother being so interested in all the birds that would come around our house in Laredo. She had a bird book and would tell me to find out what kind of bird we saw. Laredo gets the Green Jays, Greater Kiskidees, wild parrots, etc.

If you could come back after this mortal human life is over as some other kind of life form, what would that be and why? I think I'd come back as a Blue Jay! I just love their blue feathers and their raucous, bossy ways!

How about any funny, embarrassing or stupid things you've done – and are willing to share. My mother had a small pond at her place in Laredo. The frogs and toads gathered there to sing like crazy. One time I was

visiting down there and we went out to see if we could shut one particularly noisy frog up! There he was, sitting on a lily pad. He kept on singing and every time he'd sing, he'd blow his throat skin out, like a balloon. I squatted down beside him and next time he sang, I poked my finger against his throat. He made this awful, choking sound like I strangled him! My mother was out there with me and I got so tickled at the look on her face and at the frog that I lost my balance and just fell over backwards on the ground, laughing! Later I found a wonderful little frog statue with the throat blown out and I got it. I still have it, too.

**Any favorite books, songs, poems, movies, people, places, pets, etc.?** I like Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum novels

(Continued from page 8)



and Debbie Macomber books. Hearing Music Box Dancer in the mornings makes me happy all day! My all-time favorite place to go is our little ranch outside of Fredericksburg. I wish we could live there, but the house just isn't big enough. I had always wanted a black Schnauzer. A few years ago, friends in OK had one they didn't want any more. They offered her to us. She's a barker and is pretty rough, but Porsche is a very sweet girl. She's a city dog, but she tries hard to be a country dog! She definitely loves the room we have for running!

**What are some typical daily activities that you love to do?** I love to do counted cross-stitching, quilting, and machine-embroidery. I also like to read and garden. And I always have my camera handy to get nature shots.

**Any neat photos you can share to help tell your story?** A few of my favorites are included here.

**How did you first hear about Texas Master Naturalist?** I first started hearing about Texas Master Naturalist from some of the people who were already members during the Texas Master Gardener classes.

**What has the program meant to you?** I really enjoy Master Naturalists. We have participated in things we would never have gotten involved with except through this program. We have learned quite a few very interesting things about nature and how to attract and protect little critters. I enjoy the opportunities to write about various aspects in nature and then see them in print in the News Letter! I had never had an article printed in a newspaper until I was at the Lexington Leader one day and the then owner saw some of my butterfly pictures on my camera. She asked me if I could do an article for them about butterflies, so I did. I never expected a full-page in the paper to be devoted to my article and pictures! To me, that was quite a humbling experience. I also rather enjoy doing little programs for the Lexington Garden Club on different subjects – I'll be showing pictures from the International Water Lily Gardens in San Angelo in August.



## It's Summer Meteor Time

By Don and Lynn Hagan

Every summer, it is a wonderful time to look to the sky for the August Perseid meteor shower. With rates of about 60 meteors an hour, it is one of the most spectacular shows in the summer sky. In 2016, the greatest show will be before dawn on August 12. While the Perseids shower peaks gradually, there is another show to be seen too. The Delta Aquarid shower does not have a peak per se, but it produces a steady supply of meteors.

The Delta Aquarid shower reaches its nominal peak in late July. Remember that the Perseid shower is now rising to its peak so late July and August make for prime meteor shower viewing for both, the hours just before dawn. The Delta Aquarid meteors tend to be faint so they are best observed from a very dark, moonless sky (but this is a good

continue to wax larger and set later. What does this mean? The moon will begin filling the predawn with light around mid-August. To keep that dark sky that you want for meteor watching, try any dark sky between the end of July to around August 12.

For optimal viewing remember:

*1. Find a dark, open sky to enjoy the show. They can come from multiple directions, so stay away from trees that could block your view. Give your eyes about 20 minutes to adjust to the darkness.*

*2. Know that the meteors all come from a single point in the sky. You can trace the paths of Perseid meteors backwards, you will notice that they come from a single point in the sky. You don't have to look just in one place, but it is*

*interesting to know that they come from one place in the sky – the constellation Perseus.*

*3. Lay on the ground or a reclining lawn chair. Bug spray might also help. Binoculars don't help with meteor showers – they narrow your field of vision. Leave them at home unless you want to look at other interesting things in the sky while you wait (but know that you might miss them with your narrow field of view).*

*4. Meteors are part of nature. You can't predict how many you will see on any given night – so be patient. Find a good spot, watch, wait – and don't think that you have to wait until the peak. Try any night....the night of the peak might be cloudy!*

Being a rural county, Milam County has brilliant dark skies, but stay away from yard lights and even small town lights of Cameron and Rockdale. Happy viewing!

<http://earthsky.org/astronomy-essentials/everything-you-need-to-know-perseid-meteor-shower>



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rule of thumb for any skywatching).

So when is really the best time to watch? Remember that with any meteor shower, they tend to be best viewed exactly when should you watch? Remember two things. First, be a real night owl. Meteor showers generally are the best after midnight, with predawn often the best time. Second, this year (2016), the new moon comes on August 2 and a first quarter moon on August 10. After the first quarter moon, it will



## Milano Junction Memorial Garden

By Debbi Harris

The MJMG (Milano Junction Memorial Garden) is thriving again this year, even in our 100 degree temps! When visiting today, I noticed 3 types of butterflies and several bugs. If you look closely, you too will see a couple of butterflies.

Although a couple of plants have died out and need to be removed, others plants are growing in its place, which will create the fall garden flowers and nectar for our pollinators.



## KBTX WeatherEDGE Visits Hagan Ranch

By Don & Lynn Hagan

On June 22, the KBTX-TV's state-of-the-art "WeatherEDGE" made a visit to Master Naturalists Don and Lynn Hagan's home in Gause. Meteorologists Shel Winkley and Max Crawford were on hand to discuss the implications of the vehicle and how it is useful to keep television viewer informed of severe weather in the Brazos Valley.

Winkley said "Before this technology, we were limited to where we could go to broadcast weather. But now, we can go just about anywhere – even out in Milam County."

The WeatherEdge is basically a self-contained broadcast vehicle with a weather station attached.

The vehicle has three cameras – one atop the roof in what is known as the "MesoDome." This camera has 360 degree visibility capability, GPS capability, and auto tracking. The second is on the windshield and provides viewers with the driver's view of the road conditions. The third camera is mounted on the passenger side and provides for live reports of road conditions with a view of Crawford or Winkley as they report from the road.

Mounted atop the vehicle is a satellite dish. This dish is a rapid deployable, self-contained antenna system. It provides near instantaneous broadband communication. As with any broadcast satellite system, it broadcasts to a satellite and then signal is transmitted to the television studio. It gives them the ability to broadcast from any location whereas previously they were very limited as to where they could go and on what they could report. Directly behind the satellite dish is a self-contained weather station that measures temperature, wind speed and direction, barometric pressure, humidity, rainfall totals and rainfall intensity. The information is updated every 2.5 seconds.



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#### Certifications, Etc.

By Cindy Bolch

New since the Spring 2016 newsletter **are in this color**.

2016 Re-Certifications (Guadalupe Bass pin). Lucy Coward, Don Travis, Cindy Bolch, Donna Lewis, Cindy Travis, Katherine Bedrich, Ann Collins, Linda Jo Conn, Joyce Conner, **Sherry Colley, Mike Conner, Debbi Harris, Kim Summers, and Nancy Webber**



Highest Level of Lifetime-to-date Milestone Achievement Levels earned by current members as of July 2016 include:

**5000 Hours**—Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch

**4000 Hour Presidential Award**—Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch, **Donna Lewis**

**2500 Hours**—Don Travis, Ann Collins, and Debbi Harris.

**1000 Hours**—Paula Engelhardt, Sue Taylor, Lucy Coward, Dorothy Mayer, Phyllis Shuffield, Sandra Dwarczyk, Linda Jo Conn.

**500 Hours**—Anne Barr, Barbara Cromwell, John Pruett, Sheri Sweet and Wesley Sweet

**250 Hours**—Lucile Estell, Shawn Walton, Vivian Dixon, Cindy McDaniels, Janice Johnson, Gary McDaniels, Kim Summers, Rusty Thomas, Cindy Travis, Sherry Colley, Kathy Lester, Wesley Sweet, Pam Neeley and Darlene Anglen.

Our July 2016 Year-to-Date Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours are **3,303** and **933** respectively (47 current active members) and Total Accumulated hours for Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours are **54,049** and **7,277** respectively (92 total volunteers past and current).

**Congratulations to All**

#### Did You Know?

#### What animal has stars on its nose?



It's the Star-nosed Mole (*Condylura cristata*), which is a small North American mole found in eastern Canada and the north-eastern United States. It is the only member of the tribe Condylurini and the genus *Condylura*.

It lives in wet lowland areas and eats small invertebrates, aquatic insects, worms and molluscs. It is a good swimmer and can forage along the bottoms of streams and ponds. Like other moles, this animal digs shallow surface tunnels for foraging; often, these tunnels exit underwater. It is active day and night and remains active in winter, when it has been observed tunneling through the snow and swimming in ice-covered streams. Little is known about the social behavior of the species, but it is suspected that it is colonial.

The Star-nosed Mole is covered in thick blackish brown water-repellent fur and has large scaled feet and a long thick tail, which appears to function as a fat storage reserve for the spring breeding season. Adults are 15 to 20 cm in length, weigh about 55 g, and have 44 teeth. The mole's most distinctive feature is a circle of 22 mobile, pink, fleshy tentacles at the end of the snout. These are used to identify food by touch, such as worms, insects and crustaceans. Reprinted from the source: [divaboo.info](http://divaboo.info)