



NEWSLETTER

“Just keep working until you get the job done.” Thomas Edison

Elm Fork Chapter

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BEEKEEPING REVIEW — taking another look!

By Shelby Kilpatrick



Shelby Kilpatrick at work

At the May Elm Fork Chapter Master Naturalist meeting, I presented the program on Beekeeping. Part of my duty as 2011 Collin County Honey Princess is to give presentations at local organizations and events. This was my first time to speak to an adult audience and I was very excited because I was able to go into more detail.

See Program Review—p. 5

Special points of interest:

- Trails go to market
- Busy at LLELA
- Housing for bluebirds
- Snakes’ cordon bleu menu
- TXDOT comes across for wildflowers
- Bees are busy



PAINTING THE PRAIRIE
With “Wildflowers of Texas”

By Dorothy Brown Thetford

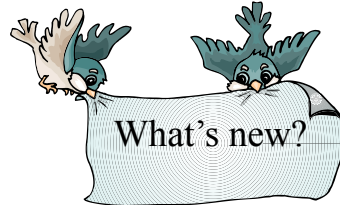
Approximately 150 wildflower enthusiasts, garden clubbers, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma Native Plant Society members and botanists attended an Annual Wildflower Workshop recently in Durant, Oklahoma.

See “Wildflowers of Texas” — p. 6

Photo-Dorothy Thetford



ANNOUNCEMENTS



AND OPPORTUNITIES

GEARING UP FOR THE 12TH ANNUAL STATEWIDE TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST MEETING AND ADVANCED TRAINING.

Mark your calendars—our 12th Annual Statewide TMN Meeting & Advanced Training will be held **October 21-23, 2011** at Mo Ranch in Hunt, Texas!!! For those of you planning fall trainings, you will need to leave this weekend open for your new trainees to have an option of attending too!

Check out these websites:

Bat Conservation International
www.batcon.org

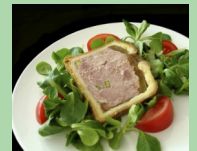
—Fantastic photo gallery for bat enthusiasts—

Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection
www.wfsc.tamu.edu/TCWC

ROUNDUP is just around the corner—August 18, 2011. Watch for details from Van Elliott and his *par excellence* training committee.

As in past years, the Chapter will provide lunch for Roundup activities. To aid in planning, a sign-up sheet will be available at the June regular meeting for members to indicate what each will bring. Please give this some thought, and be ready to sign up!

Thank you—Linda Cox,
Hospitality Chairperson



Project Managers
still needed. See
Susan Pohlen.



Publicity Chair needs
a volunteer. See any
board member for
information.



Don't forget to send your project photos to Betty Zajac so there will be plenty of time to get them into the Chapter Scrapbook for the Annual Statewide Meeting!

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Free Trees for Texas!

Odwalla is donating \$100,000 to plant trees in the United States this year. You have a vote in where those trees will be planted! Visit www.odwalla.com/plantatree and plant your tree in Texas.

Each tree planted online equals \$1 your state will receive to plant real trees in Texas State Parks. Last year you helped raise over \$15,000 for trees at [Garner State Park](#). This year's contest ends when there are 100,000 votes, so place your vote today! Texas ranked fourth in votes last year, being topped out by Maryland, Pennsylvania and Michigan. Let's put Texas in the top 3 this year!

[Plant your tree today!](#)

VOTE TO BE TAKEN AT June Chapter Meeting

Chapter members have previously been furnished a copy of the proposed amendment to the section "membership category" of the Bylaws of the Elm Fork Chapter Texas Master Naturalist. This proposal will be considered and voted upon at the June 16, 2011, chapter meeting. The reason for this proposed change is as follows:

The "Elm Fork Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist" is just that - a "chapter" of an organization created and administered by the State of Texas. As such, we are obligated to regularly report certain statistical information to the State, including demographic information about our membership. This information is used to highlight the success of the State level organization - through its chapters - in accomplishing its mission (*"The Texas Master Naturalist program is designed to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas."*), and to support additional funding for the organization in the State Budget. This Proposed Amendment re-aligns the member categories listed in our EFCMN Bylaws with the reporting information required by the State. It also simplifies the characteristics of each category, and clarifies the required timetable for completing and maintaining certification requirements. Please take a moment to review this Proposed Amendment prior to the June 16th meeting - at which time the Amendment will be presented for approval.

From EFCTMN Board

Thank you everyone for the terrific response to my "pity party" lament for newsletter material. As always, you came across in spades from both new and return contributors. I reiterate, I could not do it without you! —W. Odum—

PLUG IN



TO LLELA



Richard Johnson hard at work on the boardwalk



Mudbug—Texas size

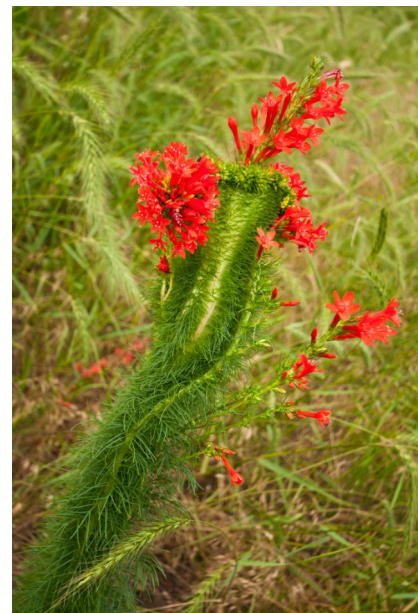
*All photos-Owen
Richards*



Richard Johnson sharing lunch with the
mudbug—or is it being lunch?

Guess all that work whets one's appetite!

{ Then there's this
"feast for the eyes"
Standing cypress }



BEEKEEPING — Program review from May 2011 Meeting

Cont'd from p. 1

I started my talk by discussing the role each type of honey bee has in a colony and the importance of pollination. Next, I covered the five different products that can be harvested from a beehive; honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, and royal jelly. The last part of my program was all about beekeepers, ways to start beekeeping, equipment, and some of the pests and diseases that bees are susceptible to.

Here are a few of the main points that I made:

- Pollination is the most important service that honey bees provide.
- Colony Collapse Disorder or CCD is still affecting honey bees and we don't know the cause of it yet.
- Anyone can be a beekeeper! It doesn't take much time, space, or equipment to start as long as you have the knowledge. There are lots of resources available to help make it easy and the benefits of beekeeping are numerous. Two books that I recommend starting with are *First Lessons in Beekeeping* by Keith Delaplane and *The Beekeeper's Handbook* by Diana Sammataro.

While there currently isn't a beekeeping club in Denton County, the Collin County Hobby Beekeepers Association (CCHBA) is open to anyone interested in beekeeping. If there is enough interest, a beekeeping club can be started in Denton County and CCHBA is willing to assist with its development.

I was impressed at the overall interest of the group and the questions that you asked were great.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my knowledge of the wonderful world of bees with you. It was an honor and a privilege!

Shelby Kilpatrick

2011 Collin County Honey Princess

Shelby at May meeting



*All photos courtesy of
the Kilpatricks*

"Wildflowers-of-Texas"

Dorothy Brown Thetford

Common name: Indian-blanket, Fire-wheel

Scientific name: *Gaillardia pulchella*

Family: Asteraceae

Cont'd from page 1



You may be interested to learn that for the first program on the agenda, 35 third-graders were bused in to the workshop as special, front seat guests. As first speaker, I provided many wildflower photographs, but when I projected the Indian-blanket flower on the screen, all of the kids applauded with enthusiasm! They were well aware that Indian-blanket was their Oklahoma state flower, thanks to their wonderful teachers.

Even though Oklahoma claims this native as its state flower, Texans enjoy miles and miles of Indian-blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*) due to right-of-way plantings by our own Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

We are in the midst of one of the most plentiful and gorgeous blooming seasons than we've had in approximately 10 years, and TxDOT efforts are reaping glory around Denton's Loop 288 at this moment, thanks to Gary Bailey, our Denton County Area Engineer, and Keith Nabors, Maintenance Supervisor. Give them a call of support.

Easily established from seed, the plants form dense colonies that thrive in heat, full sun, and well drained soils and prairies, as well as disturbed areas nearly throughout Texas. Not only is it a wonderful follow-up to Texas bluebonnets (*Lupinus texensis*) and Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja indivisa*), but is spectacular color in combination with Cut-leaf daisy (*Engelmannii pinnatifida*), Showy primrose (*Oenothera speciosa*) and Green milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*).

Bushy or wide-spread two to three foot tall plants, also known as Fire-wheel, provide beauty May through June, and longer with occasional water. If dead-headed in a groomed landscape, the blooms continue even longer. Colors vary from rusty, reddish orange to pale orange outer ray flowers tipped with yellow. Each ray flower has three, well-defined scalloped tips. Center disk flowers vary in shades of orange, oftentimes coated with yellow pollen.

As flowers mature, ray flowers dry and drop, leaving the center cluster of disk flowers to ripen as seeds. Gather these fluffy seed heads in mid to late summer, separate, press into the soil, moisten, and allow to germinate for a sunny flower-bed or pocket prairie of native 'blankets next spring. This is one of our most common wildflowers and, also, one of our most fragrant.

If you want a repeat performance of this drought-tolerant annual, allow it to reseed before mowing it. And, if you want to compete with your neighbors across the river, include every child in every learning event!



Dorothy, a certified Master Naturalist (class of 2001), and past president of Trinity Forks Chapter of NPSOT, was the first Elm Fork Chapter member to be recognized for her 3,000 Volunteer Hours Milestone of service to the community.

If you are pleased with any of our Denton County wildflower vistas along 380 or 35E/35W, drop a note of thanks to our TxDOT Area leaders. They receive 90% negative complaints from the general public about situations along the highways, tire rubber, trash, johnsongrass, etc., but rarely receive positive comments about their management. From previous experiences of working with them, I can assure you that they are truly encouraged by comments of appreciation. [As you sign off, please mention Texas Master Naturalist in your salutation; that's beneficial to both parties.] . . . **Dorothy**

FYI:

Gary Bailey: gary.bailey@txdot.gov

Keith Nabors: keith.nabors@txdot.gov

All photos for this article courtesy: Dorothy Brown Thetford

BEST HOMESITES FOR BLUEBIRDS

By Susan Tartaglino
Class of 2009



Bluebirds can make do with all sorts of unsuitable nesting areas, and sometimes they have to. But with your help, they can raise their chicks in the perfect spot, or a very good spot, or at least a not-so-bad spot. Here are some considerations:

Your own convenience. Along a pathway or a road will make the box easier to monitor, or visible from your house for your own enjoyment. Start with this and then think about the following:

Aesthetics. Best ignored! One of my first boxes was next to a lovely shaded lake set amidst a cluster of flowering plums. Oops! Both the nearby water and the plums attracted all sorts of predators. Fortunately, the bluebirds seemed to know that too and never used it. I've since moved it to a better spot..

Orienting the entry hole. Consider the direction from which the spring and summer storms come, and orient the entry hole away from it. For example, in North Central Texas the summer winds and storms come in from the south. I lost one brood of chicks after a big storm. The entry hole, which faced south, allowed the strong winds to blow rain into the box; the chicks got wet and died.

In Texas, west-facing is also a bad idea. In the long hot afternoons the summer sun will shine into the entry hole and raise the temperature in the box. That leaves east or north. Our winter storms come in from the north. This is a consideration because bluebirds and other birds will use the boxes for shelter during severe winter weather. That leaves east as ideal, with northeast or north as a second choice.

The fledge tree. A few days before fledging, young bluebirds start spending time looking out the entry hole. This gives them a head start on that brand new world into which they must soon fly. If there's a big tree such as a post oak within their range of vision, it will begin to look familiar to them and they will usually fly directly to it. Their parents will gather all the chicks together high up in the tree and feed them there until gradually they make their way lower down in the branches and finally start feeding themselves on the ground.

How close should the fledge tree be to the nestbox? Too far, and the fledglings can't fly there easily; too close and predators can use the tree to get to the box. About 15 to 20 feet would be a good place to start.

Lacking a fledge tree, a large shrub or fenceline will work in a pinch. But what if there's only grass within the chicks' range of vision? They'll fly out into the grass and their parents will have to coax them into a large nearby tree. I've watched a pair of bluebirds do this and it took them an entire day, a day better spent feeding those hungry mouths. One chick never made it. Still, you may have no other option. The bluebirds can deal with it. Just make sure there are some large trees nearby.

Perches for parents. The fledge tree works, but even better are telephone wires, which allow an unobstructed field of view around the area of the nestbox.

Hidden Meadow Box—most popular box ever. Almost surrounded by large trees but in open area away from game trails. Entry hole faces east.

Accompanying photos
from S. Tartaglino

Public domain image



An open area. My 29 nestboxes are spread over more than 200 acres. There's all sorts of terrain: dense woods, open meadows, ravines, hills and hollows. One day I stumbled upon what seemed the perfect nestbox site. It's a small meadow (about an acre) off a much larger meadow, surrounded on two sides by woods and on the other side by a few big trees. I call it Hidden Meadow. As I was preparing the PVC pole a beautiful male bluebird landed on the box to check it out, even though it was still lying on the ground. This turned out to be my best-producing box of last summer. Three broods, five eggs each, every egg hatched and every chick fledged.

But not too open. A box on the high point of a large hill with a single tree (a good fledge tree, however) was not occupied till late spring.

Shade. I don't worry about it any more, although I do consider it. Trouble is, trees and shrubs near enough to provide afternoon shade can also allow predators to jump or drop onto the box, especially snakes and squirrels.

Distance from other boxes. I consider 100 yards a minimum unless the boxes are out of sight of each other. My two home boxes are only about 90 feet apart but the house is in between them so the bluebirds can't see each other. I often have two pairs simultaneously raising chicks.

Safety from predators. What are the usual nestbox predators in your area? Squirrels? Raccoons? Snakes? Cats? Or aerial predators like the House sparrow?

In my area, which is out in the country, raccoons and House sparrows are the big problems. The House sparrows I deal with by placing my nestboxes more than 1/4 mile away (most are 1/2 mile away) from their main food source, which is a hobby farm down the road with horses and poultry. (Make sure you're not feeding them yourself.)

The raccoons I deal with by placing the nestboxes away from the cow paths and game paths - even 15 feet off the path is helpful, along with active control when needed. For the same reason, stay away from water edges. Predators follow the easiest path. If you put a nestbox right next to a path, they're going to investigate. People tell me that the raccoons need to eat too. To them I say, like Marie Antoinette, "Let them eat House sparrows."

Good feeding areas. This is what makes your back yard so attractive! That short, mowed grass makes finding bugs lots easier. But open patches of dirt and road margins (quiet country roads preferably) also work well.



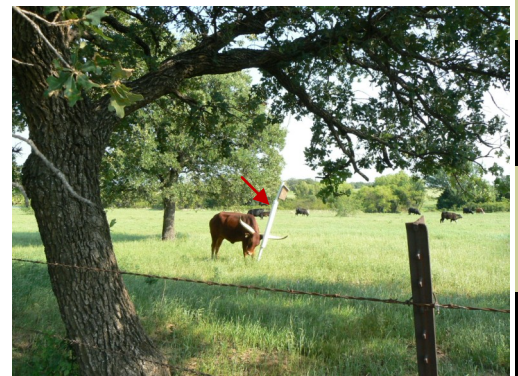
Country Road Box—PVC pipe is painted green for camouflage because it is near a county road. No good fledge tree but plenty of cover and shade, plus telephone wires overhead and good bugging on county road margins.

Lastly, get that box up early! That means in the fall, or at least during the winter months, where the local bluebirds can find it and get accustomed to it. Having said that, I'm usually late with new boxes, and even those I put up after the first broods are out often get used.

5 Trees Box—Cattle can get to all boxes but only this one has gotten this sort of treatment, probably because the cattle like to hang out here (good shade and extra-good grass). Box has not been used by bluebirds yet, and is about to be moved to another area with a stouter T-post



NW Gate Box—Faces east with large fledge tree and a fenceline for more good perching. This combination of open meadow/oak trees is ideal.



MEMO TO 9-YEAR OLD NEPHEW—ABIGAIL MILLER shares thoughts and memories ...

Hi, Tom -

While I was keeping the Interpretive Center open at Isle du Bois (pronounced "zilly boy" by old-time locals) Park at Lake Ray Roberts last Sunday (this is a volunteer job done by Master Naturalists), the park ranger in charge of the care of the three caged snakes came in to feed them and clean their tanks. The food is previously frozen ex-mice, warmed up in the microwave so that the snakes detect the warmth and are fooled, usually, into thinking it's live food.

There are three snakes, a small Prairie King Snake, a Speckled King Snake, and a good-sized Prairie Rat Snake. The Speckled King Snake was eventually persuaded to take a mouse. The little King Snake never wanted one. And the Rat Snake, a very active, speedy, and somewhat bad-tempered critter, had two. Gruesome pictures attached.

I also got a pretty good picture of a lizard that came up onto the porch and perched for a while. There were two hummingbirds that came fairly often to the feeder, but I never happened to have my camera ready at the second they came zooming in.

You have been to this park, but I am sure you don't remember it. Your mom and I thought we would go up and have a picnic supper there back when you were two. As soon as we started off in the car, you went sound asleep. You only sort of woke up when we got there, until you started to get munched on by dozens of mosquitoes, that didn't bother me at all because all of them thought that you tasted better. So we came back home again.

--
Abigail

First course

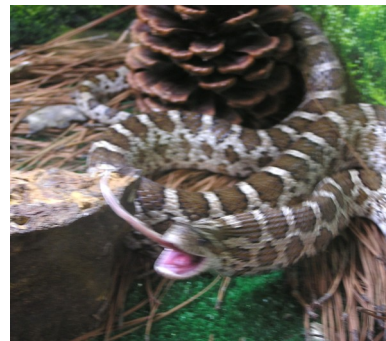


Photos-Abigail Miller



Lizard perch

Second course



Down the hatch!

At June 2011 meeting, JOANNE FELLOWS
will present her program on butterflies entitled —
LOOK!

Summary: Joanne Fellows is bringing her butterflies for a visit. Her collection is a sample of the 50+ species that have visited her garden. There will be a short presentation on learning to identify the many North Texas Butterflies. She will share her best resources and answer questions to the best of her knowledge. There will be ample time to 'Look' at the butterflies and see the many cool details that you often miss when they are flying from flower to flower.



Biography: Joanne Fellows has a Bachelors of Fine Arts from University of Irvine, CA. Major: Fine Arts, Minor: Art History.

She spent several years showing her art work, drawings, in several west coast galleries, including the Museum of Modern Art in Los Angeles.

She worked as an illustrator and web designer. Spent 3 years drawing that 'top secret' stuff for President Ronald Regan.

She completed the Denton County Master Gardener program in 2004 and obtained specialist training in Propagation and Entomology.

She completed the Elm Fork Master Naturalist program in 2008.

Submitted by Rob Roy, vice-president

Trivia—"The Houston toad was the first amphibian protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Although the small, reddish-brown toad first was discovered in Houston, it disappeared from its namesake city in the 1960s. Today, the largest population exists in Bastrop County." *American Profile 2011*

The Trails of Denton County ‘Goes Green’ At The Lewisville Farmers’ Market



Ron and Joanne Fellows ready and waiting for the market to open.

It was blustery, but the Trails of Denton County project booth did a brisk public session all morning. We were stationed right next to the farm produce, so as they say in real estate, ‘location, location, location.’

The official count from the City of Lewisville for the market was 500 attendees. We had direct contact with 118 people. Some even downloaded a trail as we spoke. Since the booth, we have had another 20+ downloads of Wichita Forest and Lake Ray Roberts.

Interest was high for having trails on your smart phone. Some had already used the Trails of Denton County website and were interested in seeing how trails looked in the new application for a smart phones. A couple said, ‘now I have a reason to get a new phone.’

With this successful launch of our Lewisville Farmers’ Market booth, we will be setting up again on June 11 with displays, handouts, iPad, and iPhones.

Ron and Joanne Fellows



Photos by Van Elliott

“FIELD NOTES IN FOCUS”



This baby beauty, only 7-days old, is from **Owen Richards** taken at the LLELA bison preserve

*A periodic feature showcasing member photographers.
No people pictures here, please!
— just flora and fauna as you see them —
Submit to wodum10043@aol.com*

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST

ELM FORK CHAPTER
Texas AgriLife Extension
306 North Loop 288, Suite 222
Denton, TX 76209-4887

Phone: 940-349-2883

Education, Conservation, Preservation, Restoration

We're on the web
www.efcmn.org

Monthly Chapter Meetings

9:30 a.m. preceded by a social time at 9:00 a.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

Meetings are held at the Denton County AgriLIFE Extension Office Conference Room unless otherwise noted.

Chapter meetings are open to the public.

June 16th — **Joanne Fellows** is bringing her butterflies and expertise for a program entitled "Look!".

Board Meetings

The Board meets each second Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m., Denton County AgriLIFE Extension Office. The Board last met June 9, 2011. Next meeting is July 14, 2011.

Board meetings are open to members.

Members of the Board

PRESIDENT—George Kragle
VICE-PRESIDENT —Rob Roy
SECRETARY—Marian Kester
TREASURER—Kay Crowe
CLASS REPRESENTATIVE—Deborah Estes
MEMBER-AT-LARGE—Doug Chadwick

COMMITTEES:

Communications—Monica Chafin
Education—Cheryl Kesterson
Historian—Betty Zajac
Hospitality—Linda Cox
Newsletter—Wanda Odum
Projects—Susan Pohlen
Publicity—**OPEN**
Resource—Jan Hodson
Training—Van Elliott
Website—Sharon Barr

ADVISOR—Janet Laminack

OUR MISSION ...

"to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within our community"

