Volume 12, Issue 9 September 2011

Texas Master Naturalist™
Elm Fork Chapter

Texas AgriLife Extension Service

# NEWSLETTER

## Texas Master Naturalist — Elm Fork Chapter

# FALL MEMBERSHIP ROUNDUP STRUTS ITS STUFF

**Inside this issue:**


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**Special points of interest:**

* Roundup photos
* Water quality
* Squirrels in the belfry
* Fairies on the loose?

**Elm Fork Chapter Master Naturalist** has a mission — to recruit and train with excellence — and that mission is taken seriously!

(most of the time)

**Fritz Poppe,** who combines his Master Naturalist interests with unique travels, brings his show in from the road for Roundup.

Full details of Roundup gala—beginning on p. 2

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# ROUNDUP REVIEW


***Van Elliott — Training Committee Chairman 2011, sums it up.***

The annual Roundup on August 18, 2011 was an overwhelming success! There were a total of 60 Members and 14 visitors. 11 of the visitors have submitted applications for the 2011 class.

The speakers, Joanne Fellows, Dorothy Thetford and Fritz Poppe, did a knock-out job of telling our visitors about being a Master Naturalist. There was a lot of emphasis on humor and how much fun we have doing projects together. Joanne delivered a most entertaining talk on 'What is a Master Naturalist?' Dorothy followed with comments about why she became a Master Naturalist and a humorous look at the special abbreviated vocabulary we use to describe our projects, places and events. Then Fritz followed with his famous Hat Tricks talk on why he became a Master Naturalist and demonstrated how collecting wearing apparel can be good fodder for presentations.

Linda Cox, Hospitality Chairman, did a great job getting Members to bring food, organizing and setting up a splendid lunch. As usual there was more than enough to go around. There's even some for the first session of the 2011 class on September 6.

Susan Pohlen and the Project Managers set up fourteen beautiful displays. They were some of the best we have seen. It was obvious the Managers worked hard to have professional displays and there was plenty for our visitors to talk about! The displays were: *(see p. 3)*

***Big Board of Projects*** welcomes and directs focus towards the many outstanding individual project displays.


| | EXHIBITORS | EXHIBIT SUBJECT |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Training Committee | Curriculum manual, schedule & class photos 2010 – 2011 |
| | (Van & Judi Elliott, Ruth Ann Morrison, Sherrill Campbell, Carol Fegan & Shirley Holland) | |
| 2. | Ron & Joanne Fellows | Trails of Denton County |
| 3. | Renee Province | Lewisville Aquatic Ecosystem Research Facility [LAERF] |
| 4. | Diane Wetherbee | Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area [LLELA] |
| 5. | Susan Tartaglino | Bluebirds of LBJ Grasslands |
| 6. | Marilyn Blanton | Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition |
| 7. | Sherrill Campbell & Doug Chadwick | Interpretive Center – Lake Ray Roberts |
| 8. | John & Adelaide Bodnar | Benthic Monitoring |
| 9. | Jan Hodson | Junior Master Naturalists & Resource Room contributions |
| 10. | Cheryl Kesterson | Science With Attitude [SWAt] |
| 11. | Bill & Katy Hammon | Beaver Creek Ranch |
| 12. | Janet Gershenfeld & Joan Stanley | Texas, Our Heritage Demonstration Garden |
| 13. | Peg LaPoint | Elm Fork Education Center – Lunch table handout |
| 14. | Wanda Odum | Newsletters |

The event was held at the AgriLife Extension office rather than Ben E. Keith as in previous years. This was a contributing factor to the success as visitors could tour our meeting area and we were able to take extra time as needed. Also, our collection of Master Naturalist paraphernalia was easier to set up and take down.

**Many thanks** to everyone who helped with the set up and take down. A significant amount of labor went in to these activities. (Maybe a few sore backs, too.) Just judging from the favorable comments, phone calls and emails, our Chapter is getting better at what we do! Thanks to each of you for your support and participation.

Alex Lieban and Shirley Holland greeting visitors at signup table


Even the dining area was decked out


Prospect Jan Deatherage views displays

Shirley Holland, MN, listens intently to guest Jan Deatherage


Van Elliott and Rob Roy working on set-up and enjoying it!

*Article: Van & Judi Elliott*

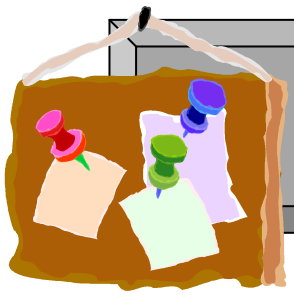
*All Roundup Photos: Susan Pohlen, Van & Judi Elliott*

# *"FIELD NOTES IN FOCUS"*

This patient **copperhead** watched as Master Naturalists cleaned out the native grass area at Ray Roberts last year — courtesy of **Alex Lieban.**

**"Suburban Sprawl" comes from Susan Pohlen**

*A periodic feature showcasing member photographers — flora and fauna as you see them —*



# REMINDERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Keep in mind that the 12th Annual Statewide TMN Meeting and Advanced Training will be held October 21-23, 2011, at Mo Ranch in Hunt, Texas.**

## CONTACT INFORMATION CHANGES

If you have any changes in your contact information (name, address, telephone number or numbers, and/or email address) you want the chapter and members to know about please send the changes to **Monica Chaffin** at **chaffincasa@gmail.com**; **Donna Wolfe** at **donna.wolfe@dentoncounty.com**; and **Rob Roy** at **robt_t_roy@msn.com**.


Two very important board members work tireless in low profile behind the scenes — **Marian Kester**, secretary and **Kay Crowe**, treasurer. Extend a word of appreciation to them when you have the opportunity.

**Send photos to Betty Zajac for chapter scrapbook**

Communications to Chapter:
**Chaffincasa@gmail.com**

Website:
**Sharonbarr@charter.net**

Newsletter only:
**wodum10043@aol.com**

***Interesting website:***
***aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/***

**Sign Up!**

**For an advanced training class:**

**Benthic Explorations**

Learn how to use the resource equipment to teach children (adults can have fun too) about aquatic ecosystems, water quality, and the food chain.

Crosstimbers Park by the pond

7112 Montecito Dr., Denton

Wednesday, Oct 19, 9 to noon

Email Jan Hodson to sign up:
**janhodson@ntin.net**

*Crosstimbers Park pond*

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# Are Your Plants

Some years ago it was popular to "talk to your plants." Well, that advice may not have been as crazy as it sounds. Researchers are now finding that plants do, in fact, communicate — at least with each other. We may not think of them as outgoing beings, but it appears that plants have evolved ways to know who is growing nearby; and just like people, some plants do better in a social setting while others prefer the solitary life. Various plants release chemicals through their tissues, and other species use soil bacteria to check out their neighbors.

Botanists have discovered that many trees do not grow well when among their own species. In an attempt to find out why this happens, studies were carried out by Biologist Scott Mangan and colleagues at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. The conclusions were that newly sprouted seeds probably react to the microorganisms dwelling in the soil surrounding the trees' roots rather than responding directly to the chemicals released by their mature relatives. Because this reaction can be detrimental to that tree's seedlings, many trees have evolved ways to disperse their fruit away from the parent tree.

# Secretly Tweeting?

*"Red sunflower" & friends*

*Photos—w. odum*

Sagebrush plants, on the other hand, are healthier when growing among their own kind, concluded researchers at the University of California, Davis. These shrubs send out airborne chemical cues from their foliage that appears to protect the plants from insect attacks. The ability of plants to engage in self-recognition may aid in communicating danger to their genetically identical cuttings, or clones, that are growing nearby. If plants are able to recognize each other's alarms, they are better equipped to stay safe.

So, if that annoying Twitter is keeping you awake at night, **ground** them!

***Artemisa tridentate — sagebrush***
***public domain photo***


w. odum — source material from Biology-blog.com; Discover Magazine, November 2010; and http://entomology.ucda

## *September 15, 2011 Advanced Training, Chapter Meeting*

### What's In the Water?

**Have** you ever looked at a creek, pond, or other body of water and wondered about its quality? Most, if not all, of us have at one time or many times. This month at our chapter meeting we are going to learn about "Monitoring Water Quality in Denton Streams."

**Our** own **Adelaide Bodnar** will tell us what testing is done to determine the overall quality of a given body of water. This includes the following:

+ Water Chemistry – pH, specific conductivity, dissolved oxygen, and nutrients
+ Physical Habitat – temperature, light, water color, odor, flow, and substrate materials
+ Biological Community – freshwater, benthic macro invertebrates

**Adelaide** earned a B.Sc. and Ph.D. in Microbiology at the University of London. She received a Post Doctorate Fellowship at the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies, Dallas (now the University of Texas at Dallas.) Adelaide held various positions in medical reference laboratories, the last 16 years in Clinical and Forensic Toxicology at Quest Diagnostics.

**Come** join us at the September meeting to hear about "What's In the Water." Then sign up to participate for actual application in the field for additional AT in October.

*Information from Rob Roy, vice-president*

*clipart*

**Follow-up** to the article "Going to Bat for Bats" reprinted in the July newsletter:

According to that article, WNS (white nose syndrome) is devastating bat populations across the northern section of the U.S. and moving ever closer to Texas. Bracken Cave near San Antonia "is the summer home of the world's largest bat colony." Some 20 million free-tails congregate at Bracken each March to raise their young and then return to Mexico in November. Mylea Bayless, a conservation biologist with Bat Conservation International, states that they are "cautiously optimistic that it wouldn't be detrimental to the free-tails" because free-tails do not hibernate, but, nevertheless, they are working with other "Texas agencies to develop a WNS response plan." Opar, A. (2011, Sept./Oct). Night moves. *Audubon*. (*13, No. 5)*, 24.

# Fairy Rings

*By L.C. Peltier*

During the late summer and fall months one will occasionally come across a curious ring-shaped growth of fungus in the grass of a lawn or pasture. Even at times when the toadstools themselves are not in evidence, these so-called fairy rings can often be seen as a circle of low-growing grass, bordered, particularly on the outer side, by a somewhat ranker growth.

The poets and even the groping scientists of an earlier day explained the rings as being caused by the footsteps of the fairies as they danced together on the grass while the toadstools growing there served as seats when they became tired of dancing. Strangely enough, recent years have witnessed a revival in a belief in fairies.

The circular formation is assumed by a number of different varieties of fungus. A single microscopic spore will suffice, if all conditions are favorable, to develop eventually into a large fairy ring. When a spore falls in a suitable location it germinates and produces the threadlike spawn or mycelium. This spreads outward beneath the soil in all directions in search of nutrition. Naturally the nutriment in the center of this mass is soon used up and the mycelium at the center dies from the lack of it. Thus a ring of mycelium is formed in which the outer threads are continually spreading out in search of fresh nutrition while the inner portion starves in the exhausted soil.

Thus the ring constantly grows, sometimes becoming very large and attaining an age of several hundred years. The writer saw one instance where large puff balls, ranging in size from six inches to a foot in diameter, formed a huge ring more than one hundred feet across.

# Something to make you smile!

*Randy with a 'possum's eye view!*

*Photos—Judi Elliott*

**How** nice when you have to call a professional service and you get a person you know and trust! We spotted a squirrel building a nest that we were afraid might be in our attic. The fake mustache is actually palm tree fiber – a favorite among the squirrels around here.

**Van** called a wildlife rescue service and none other than our own Master Naturalist Randy Kimball, Class of 2010, (and a capture from an hour before) came to the rescue! Randy thoroughly checked the attic, the roof and the perimeter and pronounced us squirrel-free – for the moment.

**Apparently** our roof was the easy access route to an oak tree. We're left with no damages and just some fun pictures.

*Judi Elliott*

Texas Master Naturalist

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*Education, Conservation, Preservation, Restoration*

**We're on the web**
www.txmn.org/elmfork

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"*

## 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

BOARD COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Communications—Monica Chafin

Projects—Susan Pohlen

Publicity—**OPEN**

Training—Van Elliott

ADVISOR—Janet Laminack

## Monthly Chapter Meetings

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

**Chapter meetings are open to the public.**

**Next meeting: September 15, 2011**—Adelaide Bodnar, Elm Fork Chapter, speaking on "What's In the Water?"


## 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 September 8, 2011. Next meeting is October 13, 2011.**

**Board meetings are open to members.**