



NEWSLETTER ELM FORK CHAPTER



Dr. Pete A. Y. Gunter to present program at regular chapter meeting October 20— *from Rob Roy*

*Photos—National
Park Service*

Our Advance Training program will be presented by Dr. Pete A. Y. Gunter, Regents Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at UNT. His topic will be **“The Philosophy and Environment Relationship.”**

Dr. Gunter holds B. A. degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and Cambridge University and a Ph.D. from Yale University, all in philosophy. He founded the philosophy department at the University of North Texas in 1969 and aided in the creation of a program in philosophy and environment there. The program now awards a Ph.D.

A past president of the Big Thicket Association and Chairman of the Big Thicket Coordinating Committee, he has spent over 40 years in the creation, development, and enlarging of the Big



Cyprus knees at Turkey Creek Unit

Thicket National Preserve in southeast Texas. Among his books are *Texas Land Ethics* and *The Big Thicket: An Ecological Reconsideration*.

The UNT Press has just published *Travel Guide to the Big Thicket*, of which Dr. Gunter was co-editor. He will bring some copies for anyone who might want to buy a copy.



*Neches River
scene*

Come hear Dr. Gunter. Be prepared to ask some hard questions in view of the exceptional drought we are in and with the prospect of it lasting through next year or even longer. What should we do as a chapter to help and what might we do as individual citizens?

**Class of 2011, your
talents are showing!!
pp. 8-12*

October 2011

Volume 12, Issue 10

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Special points of interest:

- * MN at LLELA
- * Elm tree recognition
- * 2011 class branching out
- * Elf owl
- * Go tramping

A SHARED JOURNEY MASTER NATURALIST *at* LLELA

(Story following)



Laurie Hemming, class 2011, helps bring grass to be split and repotted



Carl Patrick demonstrates how to split little blue stem for repotting while Laurie Hemming, class 2011, observes



Deborah and Michael Estes trying to figure out what kind of snake they found



Van Elliott, Debbie and Michael Estes



LLELA – BROOKHAVEN COLLEGE PRAIRIE RESTORATION PROJECT

On Saturday, September 17, 2011, fifteen Brookhaven College students, four Master Naturalists and two students from the 2011 class met at the LLELA plant nursery to participate in a plant separation and re-potting project for prairie restoration. This was an extra credit activity for the Brookhaven College students and an opportunity for our Master Naturalists to use their leadership skills.

The Elm Fork Master Naturalist served as team leaders and participants. Carl Patrick and Deborah Estes served as team leaders and teachers on the technique for separating and repotting grasses. Both of them have become very proficient in the LLELA nursery activities and now serve as Master Naturalists training other Master Naturalists. Deborah's son, Michael, came along to serve as participant, player, snake and frog chaser.

They were assisted by Van Elliott, Training Committee Chairman, Diane Wetherbee, Project Manager for LLELA, Laurie Hemming and Rosemary Carrizales, 2011 Class Students. Laurie and Rosemary were anxious to get involved in projects right way and thus they did. They have been in class for two weeks and are already great contributors.

A cool front blew through and really made it a very nice day to do nursery work. A significant amount of work was done and much fun was had along the way. The accomplishment can be summarized:

great quantities of weeds pulled

348 pots seeded - Indian grass

138 pots big blue stem from separations

426 pots little blue stem from separations

912 pots returned to the nursery for maintenance until ready for planting

Our chapter is becoming a mainstay at LLELA and is being asked to participate in more and more activities which is an indication that our mission of *“developing 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”* is going very well.



Diane Wetherbee, Rosemary Carrizales and Carl Patrick repotting grasses for LLELA prairie restoration

Article by: Van & Judi Elliott

Photographs: Van Elliott & Laurie Hemmings



NAME THAT TREE

By Susan Pohlen

Have you ever been on a guided hike and wondered if you were looking at a Cedar Elm versus a Winged Elm? If so, there's a pretty good chance you heard at least one person claim that the presence, or lack, of corky "wings" on the branches is the surest way to tell the two species apart. Unfortunately it isn't quite that easy. According to Stahl and McElvaney, Trees of Texas, regarding Winged Elms, "Some individuals display this feature conspicuously while others show little or none of it," while the branches of the Cedar Elm occasionally have the corky wings. So, what is a guide to do? There are other subtle clues to the true identity of your Elm. The leaves of the Cedar Elm are typically smaller than those of the Winged Elm, but size is relative and can vary depending upon conditions. However, the bark of the Cedar Elm is often in the process of splitting, and the leaves normally feel very rough, like sandpaper. A better indicator is the shape of the leaf itself. Those of the Winged Elm end in a definite point, while those of the Cedar are more rounded. The Winged Elm is perhaps more drought tolerant since it is an upland plant, so if



*Cedar elm—
public domain
photo*

you're in an area with different elevations you're more likely to see the Winged Elm at the top of the hill and the Cedar Elm at the base where it can find more moisture, but not necessarily. All these clues make perfect sense, until you're standing there looking at a tree, wondering...

Spring or fall?

There is one way to tell for sure if you've got a Cedar Elm or a Winged Elm. The Winged Elm flowers in the spring, and the Cedar Elm flowers in the fall. That's assuming, of course, it's not one of the other Elms - American or Slippery. If you do figure out what species you've got, don't be surprised if someone calls it something else: Red, Rock, Scrub, Soft, Southern Rock, Sweet, Texas, Wahoo, Water, White, and Witch. Happy hiking!!



*Winged elm—UofA/Division of
Agriculture—University of Arkansas
System*





Nominees for officers for 2012

President: Rob Roy
Vice-President: No nominee to date
Secretary: Diane Kohlhase
Treasurer: Kay Crowe

Website:
Sharonbarr@charter.net

Newsletter Submissions:
wodum10043@aol.com
Communications to Chapter:
Chaffincasa@gmail.com

Interesting websites:
www.arhomeandgarden.org/plantoftheweek/current.htm
http://owling.com/Elf_nh.htm

Please continue to send any project photos
to Betty Zajac for the Chapter Scrapbook:

EAZ805@aol.com

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.

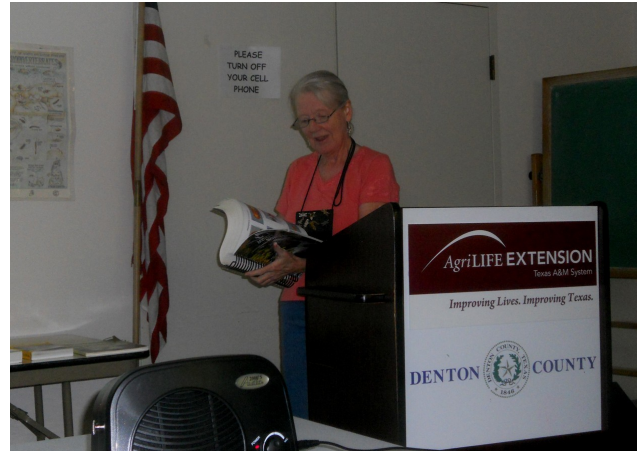


Benthic Monitoring In Review – September 15, 2011, Regular Meeting

By Adelaide Bodnar, program presenter

The work of the Benthic Monitoring project was the subject of the September EFCMN meeting.

Samples are collected monthly at 4 sites throughout the city for water chemistry testing-pH, conductivity and dissolved oxygen- and evaluation of the benthic macroinvertebrate (benthic-bottom living, macro-large) population. This compliments the City of Denton's program of monthly water chemistry testing and yearly evaluation of macroinvertebrates, performed at 81 sites throughout the city.



Determining the amount of dissolved oxygen in a stream is one of the most important indicators of stream health, as any increase in pollutants will eventually result in decreased dissolved oxygen levels.

Organisms commonly found include damselflies, dragonflies, mayflies, scuds, true flies, leeches, snails, aquatic beetles and netspinner caddisflies. An Aquatic Life Use Score is then compiled from knowledge of the number of organisms in each family, their functional feeding group and tolerance value.



*Photos courtesy
Owen Richards*



Summary of Proposed Changes to the Chapter Operating Handbook (COH)



Several months ago it was determined by the Board that certain changes and/or corrections should be made to the COH to bring it up-to-date and more accurately describe various Board appointed committee chair positions. In accordance with Chapter rules, members must be notified in writing at least 10 days prior to the Board Meeting where a vote is to be taken on the proposed changes so that any member may attend. The current proposed changes have either been, or are being, sent to the membership at this time. It is expected that a vote will be taken by the Board at the November 10, 2011, Board Meeting unless the membership is otherwise notified.

Following is a brief summary of the COH sections that are being revised. For the complete text, please refer to the revisions provided each member through email notification and copy of current COH on the website:

C: ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

4. Chair – **Newsletter Committee** (See Note 1)

is changed to read:

4. Chair – **Communications Committee** (See Note 1)

E: DUTIES OF OTHER BOARD MEMBERS

2. Chair – **Training Committee**

is expanded and revised to more fully and accurately describe said duties

3. Chair – **Publicity Committee** is amended to remove language pertaining to: 1) Speakers Bureau; and 2) coordination of school programs. A separate position has been created for:

Chair – Education Committee

4. Chair – **Projects Coordination Committee**

is expanded and revised to more fully and accurately describe said duties

5. Chair – **Newsletter Committee**

is eliminated and merged into a new section:

5. Chair – **Communications Committee**

Said Communications Committee consists of chapter communications, website, and newsletter with the Chair to be the Board representative.

{ *w. odum* }

FIRST FIELD TRIP FOR CLASS OF 2011

Article from Jan Deatherage
Class 2011

Never has the term First Class been so appropriate. The Elm Fork Chapter Class of 2011 took its first class field trip to LLELA/LAERF and what a fantastic experience it was for all. Not only did the class discover a jewel of environmental restoration and preservation, right here in our own backyard, but they got to see first hand what opportunities exist to make a difference through volunteering. In fact, 100% of the class surveyed said they are very likely to do just that.



The trek started with an orientation at the Homestead where Jean Chaka, in period dress, opened the door to a simpler time with all its challenges and inherent adaptations. Seeing the real artifacts of a life totally dependent on the natural resources available to the early settlers reinforces the importance of preservation and respect for the land we leverage today.

Then, our trusty shuttle bus (rickety but room for all) took us to the prairie restoration area where, even in the toughest, hottest and possibly the driest summer, native grasses were surviving and even showing signs of rejuvenation. The bison, pleasant enough, welcomed us to their habitat.



Our picnic lunch was enjoyed with a spectacular scenic view at the top of the dam overlooking civilization, as we know it. It was a relaxing time to contemplate the contrast between the fast-paced unnatural city life that we're familiar with and the thriving natural world hidden away in this bio-diverse habitat.

For the afternoon the visit to LAERF was quite the adventure. The aquatic plant life was fascinating as were the experimental works in progress at eliminating invasive species. It took Dr. Dian Smith less than 5 minutes to climb into one of the tanks to show us the nuances of aquatic ecosystem research.

The prevailing takeaway from the class was one of respect for the hard work and dedication to preservation demonstrated by the staff. Ken Steigman, Richard Freiheit, and the aforementioned Dian Smith all have encouraged each of us to definitely consider volunteering at LLELA/LAERF.

Photo Credits:

Group photo - Owen Richards

Bison and Jean Chaka - Laurie Hemming



“FIELD NOTES IN FOCUS”



Tree Frog on Pickerel Weed
comes from Michi Harper, Class of 2011

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

FIELD TRIP FOR CLASS OF 2011 TO BLACKLAND PRAIRIE RAPTOR CENTER

Article from Faith
Fielder Class 2011

Here's what I do that drives my family crazy: we're driving through the countryside, or sometimes, even, through town, and I yell, suddenly, "There's a hawk!" This is a big deal for me, because I am always watching for hawks – meaning any big bird that is perching at the top of a tree, or circling around the sky, flapping its wings more than a buzzard does. So "hawk" is my nearsighted and ignorant term for any raptor.

Naturally, by the time the other person looks, we have already passed the spot, or the bird is no longer there. But my excitement is just as great as if I had just seen a shooting star, and I can't help wanting to share the sight and the feeling.

For this reason, when the 2011 Master Naturalist class had the opportunity to visit the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center October 27 in Lucas, Texas, and see raptors, including owls, hawks, and a peregrine falcon face to face, I saw it as the opportunity of a lifetime.

On the first part of the tour, led by Erich Neupert, executive director of the Raptor Center, we walked along the shore of Lake Lavon, seeing the shore-bird habitat, and the platform for the osprey nest. The ospreys winter-over here each year. North Texas is fortunate. Such a nest is so prized by bird-lovers that my sister's entire neighborhood in Ft. Hunt, Virginia, worked together to build a nesting place for ospreys on Little Hunting Creek, a tributary of the Potomac.

The level of Lake Lavon was so low that we could see stumps of trees, and a few fresh-water mussel shells three inches or more in diameter.

The classroom portion of the advanced training covered much more than raptors, however. A brief summary follows.

Birds occupy three biomes: Grasses, Edges, and Deep Woods.

In the short-grass prairies just away from the mountains, birders find Mountain Plovers. Birds like the Sprague's Pipit like to run through grasses rather than fly. Other kinds of birds like the shorelines, where they find insects, seeds, and low-lying food sources. The Short-eared Owl, the rarest small owl, also falls into the grassland category. This owl winters in the Blackland Prairie area, and usually LLELA workers see two or three each year. The Upland Sandpiper migrates through this area.

"Birds on the Edge" include the American woodcock, which nests on the ground, in the woods. This bird has a display sequence in February, in which the males fly high and flutter down, hoping to impress a prospective mate. The bird is also characterized by a beak that is long relative to its body, with the zygomatic bone enabling it to open just the tip of the beak to get grubs.

Scissor-tailed Flycatchers also fall into the Edge category: they nest in trees, but like to feed in grassland. I once watched a pair of fledglings learning to fly in the parking lot of the company where I worked just south of the LBJ Freeway in Irving. Because of DFW Airport, there is still some open prairie in that area.

Painted buntings, another Edge bird, are declining in the eastern states because of cowbirds, which were originally found only in the Midwest, but expanded their range as humans cleared spaces.

The Mississippi Kite (Miki in the Raptor Center) migrates to this area from South America; many can be found in Wichita Falls now.

Of the birds in the Woods biome, the red-shouldered hawk Pippin (<http://www.bpraptorcenter.org/birds.html>) is one of the Raptor Ambassadors in the Center. Other Woods birds include the Prothonotary Warbler (http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?_adv_prop=image&fr=mcafee&va=prothonotary+warbler), which needs marshland, and the Red-Eyed Vireo, a common woodland species. The Ruby-Crowned Kinglet (http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=A2KJkIZZH5JO_VUATwOJzbf?_p=ruby%20crowned%20kinglet&fr=mcafee&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&fr2=sg-gac&sado=1) likes to feed on spider eggs in cedars as it winters here.



Another Woods bird, “Beaker”, the Barred Owl in the Raptor Center, is one of a species that prefers night feeding. They can be heard calling back and forth to each other at night.

All these groups of birds face dangers from urbanization, including loss of habitat, collision with buildings and cell towers, fragmentation of habitat by roads and autos, and poisons such as organophosphates. Organophosphate pesticides burn the feet of baby birds on the ground.

Other threats are posed by trapping or shooting, and competition with invasive species, such as the cowbirds mentioned above.

At the same time, there are some good things working to help native and migratory birds’ survival. The Northern Harrier and the Bobwhite Quail have used this tactic. But, birders ask, how far can they move? Burrowing owls, for example, can’t go far; they live in prairie dog holes. Prairie dog extermination in Lubbock and other Texas Panhandle areas, then, poses a risk to burrowing owls as well.

Some species, such as Grackles, Cooper’s Hawks, and meadowlarks, have adapted to changes to some extent. Grackles eat moths and crickets at night, and some egrets have learned to follow fishing boats.

Cooper’s Hawks are increasing in this area, as they learn to attack small birds who gather at bird feeders.

Other birds are facing serious threats of extinction: the Piping Plover, the Least Tern, the Golden-Cheeked Warbler, the Black-Capped Vireo, and the Prairie Chicken are at risk.

Preserving the habitat is one alternative to extinction. The preservation of Prairie-Chicken leks (worn-down areas in the grasses where Prairie-Chickens perform their display dance) is one strategy (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT6oZFmpfjU>).

Meridian State Park has some Golden-Cheeked warblers (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden-cheeked_Warbler), and Black-Capped Vireos (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/species/bcv/>) can be found in the Edwards Plateau. Several different groups are working to preserve the habitat of the Piping Plover (<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover/>).

Some species that now fall into the “back from the brink” category are the Whooping Crane, the Peregrine Falcon (“Stoop” in the Raptor Center), the California Condor, and Wood Ducks.



Bird counts and work by rehabbers provide information on what is changing in bird populations. West Nile virus, for example, was brutal on corvids such as jays and crows, but they are not disappearing. Owls and hawks were decimated, but are now coming back. Avian flu cases also are decreasing now.

In the last portion of the field trip, the MN class got to see each of the Raptor Ambassadors individually, and in the living areas specifically modified for each bird’s needs.

As I said before, this was an unforgettable experience. It would be impossible to say which was the favorite education bird, but it would not be an exaggeration to say that everyone fell in love with “Otus”, the little red Eastern Screech Owl.

First Saturdays at Brockdale Park are open to adults and children over three years of age the first Saturday of each month from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at the BPRC at Brockdale Park at Lake Lavon in Lucas.



Photos courtesy Dale Myers



MORE PHOTOS FROM BPRC
FIELD TRIP

Living area for the raptors



Willie, the Common Barn Owl



Photos
courtesy
Michi
Harper



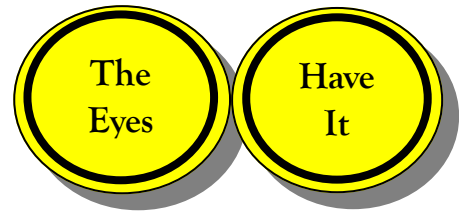
Otus, the Eastern Screech Owl



Erich Neupert, executive director of the
Raptor Center



The **Elf Owl** (*Micrathene whitneyi*) is a member of the owl family Strigidae that breeds in the southwestern United States and Mexico. It is the world's lightest owl. The mean body weight of this species is 40 grams (1.4 oz). These tiny owls are 12.5 to 14.5 cm (4.7-5.5 in) long and have a wingspan of about 27 cm (10.6 in). Their primary projection extends nearly past their tail. They have fairly long legs and often appear bow-legged. They can often be heard calling to one another just after dusk or at sunset. Their call is a high-pitched whinny or chuckle. The male and female dart around trees and call back and forth.



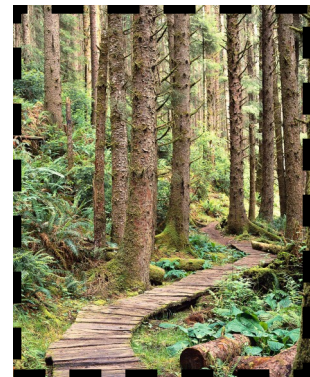
Reproducing - They choose an abandoned woodpecker cavity and the female lays 3 round white eggs. Incubation lasts around 24 days. Once the eggs hatch, the young fledge from 28 to 32 days later, looking much like carbon copies of the adults. Usually, chicks are born in mid-June or early July. By the end of July, they are almost always fledged and ready to set out on their own. *Wikipedia & TPW Magazine*

For more on elf owls see:
http://www.tpwmagazine.com/archive/2008/may/ed_3/
 May 2008 "Black Gap Elves"

w. odum

Enjoy the cooling fall air—take a friend “tramping”.

Now, the true charm of pedestrianism does not lie in the walking, or in the scenery, but in the talking. The walking is good to time the movement of the tongue by, and to keep the blood and the brain stirred up and active; the scenery and the woody smells are good to bear in upon a man an unconscious and unobtrusive charm and solace to eye and soul and sense; but the supreme pleasure comes from the talk. It is no matter whether one talks wisdom or nonsense, the case is the same, the bulk of the enjoyment lies in the wagging of the gladsome jaw and the flapping of the sympathetic ear. *Mark Twain., A Tramp Abroad*



w. odum



Texas Master Naturalist

ELM FORK CHAPTER

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76209-4887

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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: October 20, 2011—Dr. Pete A. Y. Gunter, Regents Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at UNT. His topic will be "The Philosophy and Environment Relationship."

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 October 13, 2011. Next meeting is November 10, 2011.

Board meetings are open to members.

