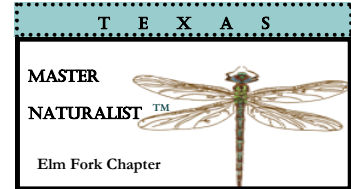


# Elm Fork Chapter Newsletter

Texas Master Naturalist Elm Fork Chapter

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 3

MARCH 2012



## Elm Fork Chapter members eagerly emerge from winter hibernation expecting April showers . . . but what about March?

### Special points of interest:

- *Scouts hike at Clear Creek*
- *Service opportunity with DISD students*
- *Hone your photography skills with Lynne Richards*
- *Program coming up*
- *LLELA experiments*
- *Guest contributor James Frisinger*

— Dorothy Thetford explains in this Showcase of Early Wildflowers—

### Watch Your Step—Windflower (*Anemone berlandieri*) ID by Dorothy Thetford



Photo courtesy: D. Thetford

When March wind begins blowing, you can rest assured that the Windflowers will appear everywhere.

It is mostly white and about 6 to 12" tall.

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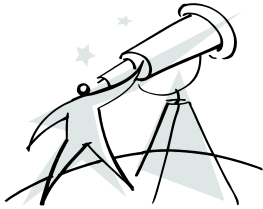
### Low Bluet (*Houstonia pusilla*)

This little flower is only an inch or two tall and grows in colonies, creating a mirage of light blue color from February thru April.



Photo courtesy: D. Thetford

## FEBRUARY 2012 CITY NATURE HIKE AT CLEAR CREEK PARK



**There was much to see on city nature hike with the Daisy Scouts on February 11, 2012**

*Photos courtesy Sharon Barr, Sandra Aldridge-Troup Leader, Dorothy Thetford and Alex Lieban*



*From Dorothy Thetford*

*L to R back: Sandra Aldridge (troop leader), MN's Peg La Point, Sharon Barr, Dorothy Thetford, Dave Ford, Alex Lieban, (plus troop parents)*  
*L to R front: Kyleigh, Ella, Megan, Allison and Katherine*

When temperatures hover around 35 to 40 degrees in Denton, Texas, there aren't too many people foaming at the mouth to go on a hike. However, when a City Nature Hike is scheduled six months in advance, and is printed in the City's PLAY Magazine, the show goes on. And, we've got proof-in-the-puddin' that the latest venture actually took place.

With the number of hikers maxed out far in advance of deadline, we approached the February 11 hike date with lots of enthusiasm and lots of apprehension. Who would really show up for a hike in this temperature? Nine Master Naturalist City Nature Hikes committee members were committed to hike 15 registered hikers. And, by show time, my committee had dwindled to five members and the registered guests had dwindled to nine. Perfect combination.



*Dorothy Thetford on left and Peg La Point on right discussing seed dispersal by animals.*



*This 20"-diameter tree seems to be no challenge for big-toothed beavers near 'The Confluence'*

So, with bodies bundled beyond recognition, the 14 of us trekked down Rookery Trail, veered off onto the Wetlands Trail and, WALLA, the bone-chilling, cold wind was blocked by the bottom land forest, the trail had been mowed and green grass growing as though it were summertime, and the sun warmed our bodies as we joyfully hiked, stopped, discussed, questioned, explained, walked and talked our way along the long trail to The Confluence. What more can I say other than it was one of the best hikes we've ever had among some of the most delightful guests. And, not nary a complaint came from anyone as we bush-whacked through an unknown portion of the trail on our return trip! Geeminy, was that fun or was that fun?!?!?!?



*Further discussions about Elm Fork and Clear Creek waterways merging at The Confluence.*



Yep, we hiked Girl Scout Daisy Troop #4687 on their first troop hike and their first exposure to Clear Creek Park. They were beyond excitement as each had found her perfect hiking stick for pointing out her newly-discovered animal tracks, or for splashing water in our many pathway puddles, or for just plain hopping and skipping with her magic wand as we moved along the trails. They were beautiful, charming, polite, enthusiastic, energetic, inquisitive little girls who were extremely responsive to our non-stop dialog about any and everything in our trail. The scout troop leader, Sandra Aldridge, emailed me the following day to express her appreciation for our guidance and, more importantly, to report that the five scouts, who had braved the cold weather, immediately contacted the remaining nine members of their troop as soon as they returned home! She said that they were ecstatic with excitement and were anxious to return for another dose of Master Naturalists!

**K**udos to you, dear committee members. Great job! We now have future Master Naturalists in the making.

**Dorothy Thetford, Chair**  
City Nature Hikes Committee  
MN Project #080313-CNH



*Alex Lieban sharing details about female Bois d'arc tree, its orange bark, strong wood, & large horse apple fruit*



*Bush walking thru the wetlands was a fun venture*



*Scouts must be prepared and that means carry a big stick*



*Tracy Durmick, City Recreation Coordinator with Dorothy Thetford, CNH Committee Chair*



*Dave Ford, Dorothy Thetford, and Alex Lieban providing seeds for inspection at scout eye-level*



## OF INTEREST TO THE CHAPTER AND AROUND THE COMMUNITY

**J**ust a reminder—to avoid confusion or delay in getting your information to the chapter, please remember that **email communication, website, and newsletter** have distinct functions and send your requests accordingly:

**email messages** (Monica Chaffin) [chaffincasa@gmail.com](mailto:chaffincasa@gmail.com)

**website—webmaster** (Sharon Barr) [sharonbarr@charter.net](mailto:sharonbarr@charter.net)

**newsletter** (Wanda Odum) [wodum10043@aol.com](mailto:wodum10043@aol.com)

If you have an idea for, or information about a **speaker**, please send your suggestions, with all contact information, to **Peg La Point**, programs chairperson.

[tnplapoint@msn.com](mailto:tnplapoint@msn.com) 891-4984

Thank you!

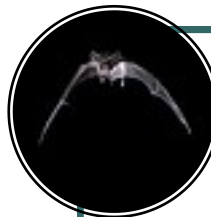
**Summer camp** is just a few short months away. Registration is now open for LLELA's outdoor camps for 7-12 year olds. Where else can kids explore the Beaver Pond, set a pitfall trap for insects, cast a fishing pole, learn to paddle a kayak, or do the "chores" at a real log house? We offer only two weeks of summer camp, and they fill quickly. Registration forms are available at [www.ias.unt.edu/llela](http://www.ias.unt.edu/llela). Questions? Call 972-219-3930.

### Lisa Cole

Education Coordinator, Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area  
1801 N. Mill St., Suite A, Lewisville, TX 75057  
972-219-3930  
[www.ias.unt.edu/llela](http://www.ias.unt.edu/llela)

**Great service hours opportunity** - host the Interpretive Center (IC) at Isle Du Bois - Ray Roberts State Park this Spring. Volunteer slots on Saturdays (10-1 and 1-4) and Sundays (11-1 and 1-3) March through June are available.

**Douglas J. Chadwick**, Project Manager  
[cjdathome@yahoo.com](mailto:cjdathome@yahoo.com)  
(940) 387-1140



**Several months ago** this newsletter reported on **White Nose Syndrome** that is devastating bat populations particularly in the east. "Bat Conservation International headquartered in Austin, announced in mid-January that the updated death toll from White Nose Syndrome may be nearly 7 million bats."

Better news is that it is felt that Mexican free-tailed bats, found more abundantly in Texas, are not as susceptible because they are migratory and do not hibernate. Source: *Dallas Morning News*



### 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** [chaffincasa@gmail.com](mailto:chaffincasa@gmail.com); **Donna Wolfe** [donna.wolfe@dentoncounty.com](mailto:donna.wolfe@dentoncounty.com); & **Susan Pohlen** [spohlen@verizon.net](mailto:spohlen@verizon.net).

Public domain photos



## OF INTEREST TO THE CHAPTER AND AROUND THE COMMUNITY—cont'd

### Service Hours Opportunity

**M**arch is the time of year when the chill of winter eases and warmer days hold promises of spring in the air. As nature reawakens and the constraints of winter survival are broken, many insects and other critters can be seen in abundance as they take to wing, paw, or hoof to roam the fields, forests and streams.

Among the "natural" critters one might encounter are ones of the two legged kind. The twitter and guffaws they emit are enough to scare the beasts of the wild into hiding for days at a time. However, they are cute although often wiggly and inattentive, full of energy and equipped with a willingness to learn. This is where the knowledgeable adults of the Master Naturalists of Denton County can be of great assistance.

In an attempt to get these little "critters" on two legs to learn more about their surroundings and become more attuned to the natural world, Denton ISD will be bringing all 2nd and 4th grade classrooms to Clear Creek during the months of March, April and May. We as Master Naturalists can be great facilitators in their learning process by being on hand to help them interpret what they see while on their trip to Clear Creek, which, in some cases, might seem as alien to them as the surface of an intergalactic planet.

For those wishing to be of help to these students and teachers, you may choose as many of the days as you wish to help with the classroom field trips to Clear Creek.

*Students making sand tracks in Clear Creek library*



*From Cheryl Kesterson*

If interested, email Cheryl Kesterson at [crkester-son@gmail.com](mailto:crkester-son@gmail.com) the day or days you plan on being there and then just show up with your name tag on.

Once there, you can interpret items in the library for the students, lead a classroom on a hike, point out interesting or unusual items found outdoors around the building or on the trail and just be on hand to answer questions the students or teachers might have. It is simple and easy Service Hours earned.

Bring your own lunch and water if you plan on staying the entire day.

Here is the schedule of days that schools are planning on attending.

Buses will start arriving between 9:00 and 9:30, depending on how far the school is from Clear Creek. Buses will remain the entire day with the classes. They will depart between 1:00-1:30.

—Please see schedule on the following page—

*MN helps girl scouts take plaster casts*



*Photos—Cheryl Kesterson*



### SCHEDULE

School	4th Grade Date to Clear Creek	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Date to Clear Creek
WS Ryan	March 5	April 18
Stephens	March 6	May 23
Wilson	March 7	April 20
Savannah	March 8	April 23
Nelson	March 9	April 24
Hodge	March 12	April 25
Blanton	March 13	April 26
Borman	March 14	April 27
McNair	May 21	April 30
Evers	March 16	May 1
Ginnings	April 12	May 2
Hawk	April 13	May 3
Houston	April 16	May 4
Lee	April 17	May 7
Pecan Creek	April 2	May 8
Paloma Creek	April 3	May 9
Providence	April 4	May 10
EP	April 5	May 14
Cross Oaks	April 9	May 15
Newton Rayzor	April 10	May 16
Rivera	April 11	May 17

Fourth Grade Make-up Dates: April 19, May 22

Second Grade Make-up Dates: May 24



*Students on the trail*



*Students exploring wildlife at Clear Creek library*



*Examining animal parts in Clear Creek library*



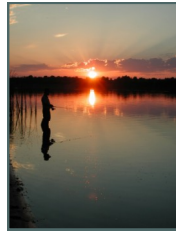
## OF INTEREST TO THE CHAPTER AND AROUND THE COMMUNITY—CONT'D

### Kids' Fishing Events at Ray Roberts Lake

#### Junior Angler Trainings at the State Park

Kids will learn fishing basics such as:

- ⇒ fish identification
- ⇒ knot tying
- ⇒ casting
- ⇒ safety
- ⇒ rules and regulations



#### Dates:

- \* March 24 (Johnson Branch Unit, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)
- \* April 28 (Isle Du Bois, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)
- \* May 12 (Johnson Branch Unit, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.)
- \* June 2 (Isle Du Bois, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.)



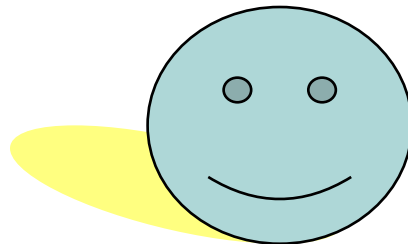
**\*\*For more information, or if you are interested in volunteering, please see park headquarters.\*\***

**NOTE:** Although we received the Spring Break schedule of events at Johnson Branch, the dates were too early to include in the current newsletter. There were some great events planned. If you would like more information about what's upcoming, please contact Bethany Galster, Park Interpreter, Ray Roberts Lake State Park—Johnson Branch; **940-637-2636**; or Kelly Lauderdale of the Isle Du Bois Branch [Kelly.Lauderdale@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:Kelly.Lauderdale@tpwd.state.tx.us) or call **940-686-2148**



This space intentionally left blank to remind you, the readers and “doers” of Elm Fork Chapter, that you are needed each month to help fill it — *or it is likely to be filled with trivia like this!*

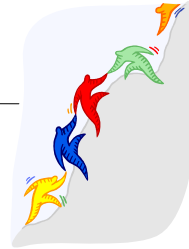
[wodum10043@aol.com](mailto:wodum10043@aol.com)



All newsletter material welcome!  
Next deadline 4-11-2012



OF INTEREST TO THE CHAPTER AND  
AROUND THE COMMUNITY—cont'd



**Lend a Hand—Consider Mentor Commitments for 2012 Class**

It is time to begin thinking about the 2012 Training Class. In 2011, with Board approval, the Training Committee tried an experiment for mentoring the new students. Rather than having a Mentor for each student, we had only twelve Mentors. This was a much more manageable situation and both the Mentors and the Training Committee were pleased with how well the plan worked.

The Training Committee would like to continue with this plan for the 2012 Class. Anyone who is a Certified Master Naturalist in the Elm Fork Chapter who wishes to be a Mentor for 2012 may apply. Copies of the application will be available at the March, April and May meetings and should be returned by the end of the May 17 chapter meeting.

To help you decide if you want to apply to be a Mentor, along with the application form we are making available the “Calendar of Events” that the Mentors will be expected to attend and a “2012 List of Responsibilities.”

If you cannot make a full commitment for 2012, you may want to consider waiting for another year to apply.

For any questions you might have, please contact one of the following:

Ruth Ann Morrison at 972-317-9954 or [ramorrison@juno.com](mailto:ramorrison@juno.com) or  
Carol Fegan at 940-464-7190 or [Fegfamily@aol.com](mailto:Fegfamily@aol.com).

You can mail your application to 2440 Glen Ridge Drive, Lewisville TX 75077 or bring it to the March, April or May meetings.

Sincerely, the Training Committee Members

**I WANDER'D** lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze....

**William Wordsworth**

“ice follies” (*Narcissus*)



*signs of spring —photo w. odum*





## OF INTEREST TO THE CHAPTER AND AROUND THE COMMUNITY—cont'd

### Photography for Master Naturalists

April 28, 2012 9:00-noon  
Lynne Richards, M.F.A.

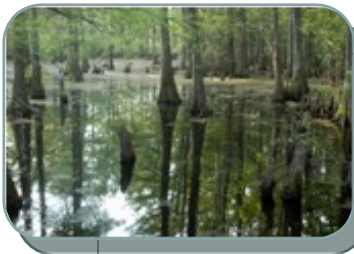
**P**hotography can be a helpful tool for Master Naturalists as we document TMN projects and create educational presentations. It can also be a wonderful outlet for creative expression capturing the beauty of the natural world and bringing it to those who might not otherwise see it. In addition, photography can be a powerful medium to bring attention to important environmental issues through photojournalism projects.

I will be leading a three-hour advanced training session on photography for Master Naturalists on Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup> beginning at 9:00 a.m. until noon. We will meet in the Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center in their training facility.

We will explore the basics of photography – how shutter speed and aperture settings work together, what difference ISO makes, what constitutes a well-composed photograph, and other topics to help you achieve the results you want. There will be time for hands-on practice with your camera so you will leave with increased confidence in your photography.

Along with your camera, please bring its manual, fully-charged batteries and plenty of memory media.

Lynne earned her Master of Fine Arts degree in Photography, is an experienced workshop leader, and is a certified Texas Master Naturalist in the Elm Fork Chapter.



**LOOKING FOR SHANGRI LA?** Not so farfetched as you might think. Visit Shangri La Botanical Gardens & Nature Center in Orange, TX — Earth Week at Shangri La is April 17-22 with daily classes and events. It concludes on April 22 with annual butterfly release—1,000 native butterflies are released simultaneously. ECO-FEST April 21, 2012, 9:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m. [www.shangrilagarden.org](http://www.shangrilagarden.org)

**Don't miss this great Advanced Training Opportunity.**

*From Peg La Point*



*Tom La Point*

## Going With the Flow

Saturday, March 24, 2012

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

AgriLIFE Building on Loop 288

A discussion about water and the issues surrounding it:

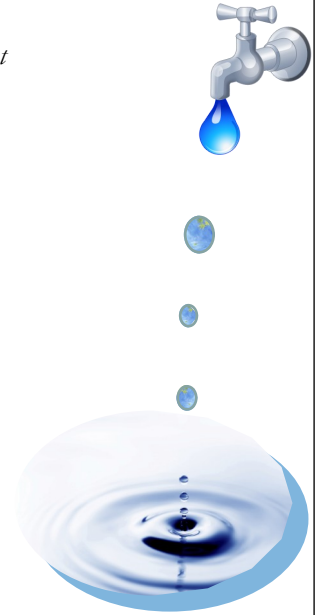
**What is water?**

**What does water do?**

**What does water mean for life on earth?**

**How do we use water in everyday life?**

**What are water issues specific to North Texas?**



This class will cover a wide range of topics dealing with water, why it is so critical to life, and how it needs to be viewed. As North Texas develops, it becomes increasingly important to understand how we allocate water for human needs while leaving enough for natural systems to survive.

**Dr. Tom La Point, Senior Scientist with the UNT Institute of Applied Sciences, and Professor in the Dept. of Biology.** Dr. La Point is an outstanding teacher well known for his ability to explain the natural world in an exciting and understandable way. Some of his special interests are aquatic toxicology, population dynamics, and biostatistics. His most gratifying class is the introductory environmental science class, where he gets to explain the world to undergraduate students and show them their impact on the natural systems that support them.

## HABITATS PRESERVED

*From Peg La Point*

**Nine cave-dwelling species** in Bexar County, Texas, got 4,200 acres of protected "critical habitat" in February 2012 in response to a lawsuit from the Center for Biological Diversity and friends. The designation is almost four times the size of a previous designation and will help protect the often-blind, colorless, dark-adapted invertebrates from urban sprawl that's threatening to blight the life-sustaining entrances to their caves. On average, species that have been given critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act are twice as likely to be recovering as those without it.



With colorful names like "robber baron cave harvestman" and "vesper cave spider," the nine species depend for their survival on native vegetation around their cave openings, which will be better protected now that critical habitat has been finalized. The vegetation is a source of food, climate regulation and humidity control for the creatures -- as well as a barrier to the invasion of enemies like fire ants.

From Peg La Point

## CHAPTER MEETING—MARCH 15, 2012



O

ur speaker for the March 15 meeting will be **Dr. Jeff Johnson**, Assistant Professor of Biology in the Institute of Applied Sciences at UNT. Dr. Johnson is an ornithologist whose research interests have taken him from Central America, Greenland, Africa, and Southeast Asia to Madagascar .

**Dr. Johnson** received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Before joining the UNT faculty, he worked and did research for Smoky National Park; the North Carolina Natural History Museum; Genome Systems; the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design; the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology; and The Peregrine Fund. He is currently a Board Member of the High Arctic Institute, and an Associate Editor of *Animal Conservation*. He teaches courses at UNT in Ornithology, Biological Resource Conservation and Management and Principles of Evolution.

**Dr. Johnson's** research focuses on conservation-based questions, especially as they relate to birds. "My research has a strong applied component relative to active conservation management. Unfortunately, many species throughout the world are in decline and the focus in my lab is to try to reverse that trend. My lab works with many species or populations on the verge of extinction, and our primary goal is to provide results that can be used by managers to improve the likelihood of survival of those species. This is the kind of stuff that keeps me up at night," Johnson said.



One of the projects that he and his students are working on involves the federally endangered Attwater's prairie-chicken. They are working with the Attwater's Recovery Team to help determine factors that are crucial for the survival of these birds after they are released from captivity.

**Dr. Johnson** is also working with researchers in India and the U.K. to create a captive breeding program for three vulture species that are critically endangered due to feeding on livestock carcasses that were exposed to Diclofenac, a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory pharmaceutical similar to ibuprofen. The research that Dr. Johnson is conducting will minimize the potential for inbreeding in the captive population.

He is also doing ongoing research in Greenland, which involves multiple projects. Johnson is working with The High Arctic Institute monitoring bird populations in northwest Greenland near Pituffik. They are interested in recording basic demographic information on both marine and terrestrial bird species in the Arctic such as breeding success and population numbers.

One of the projects is focused on the adaptive significance of plumage color in gyrfalcon, a large falcon that ranges in color from white to grey and almost black. He is exploring how plumage color influences adaptation in this species using a combination of field- and lab-based research. These results may better predict how animals react to a changing climate.

"An important question in the debate on the ecological effects of climate change is whether species will be able to adapt fast enough to keep up with their changing environment. Knowing the evolutionary processes that had led to the current gyrfalcon distribution will help us predict how the species may respond to challenges in the future. We are seeing a change in population numbers among many bird species in our study areas, presumably due to climate change and other factors related to ecology in the surrounding area," Johnson said.

*Attwater's prairie-chicken photo by George Levandoski—U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services*



## BIRDS AT RISK

*From Peg La Point*

**B**irds are bipedal, warm-blooded, egg-laying vertebrates with about 10,000 living species. The fossil record indicates birds evolved from theropod dinosaurs 200 to 150 million years ago, and the earliest known bird is the late Jurassic Archaeopteryx.

Globally, 1,240 species of birds, or about 12 percent, were deemed endangered or threatened with extinction by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2010 Red List. In the United States, about 74 bird species are at risk, about 9 percent of the total.

Most species live on land. Based on the middle range of the IPCC's projection of warming—3.5 degrees Celsius or 6.3 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100—534 to 800 tropical land bird species could become extinct, out of a total of 7,565 species. Worldwide, of all of the 8,500 or so land bird species, as many as 600 to 900 could disappear. And for each degree of climate warming above that, the experts say, another 100 to 500 birds might go extinct.



*Endangered  
brown pelican*

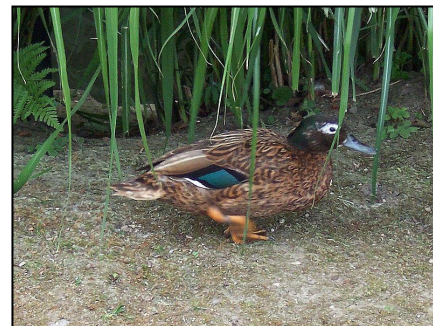
The wide range of numbers on possible extinctions is because of the wide range of human decisions that have yet to be made that could affect outcomes, including how much habitat protection we afford them. Other factors will be new weather patterns and the spread of new or more virulent diseases.

Birds are literally the canaries in the coal mine and sentinels of what is to come. Even though some of them can migrate, they are a strong indicator of local, regional and world environmental health. For animals that cannot migrate, the future looks even more bleak.

Source: R. Primack, C.H. Sekercioglu, "The Effects of Climate Change on Tropical Birds" published online in [Biological Conservation](#).

*All photos in the public domain*

Releasing endangered masked bobwhite quail birds-Vintage photos



*Endangered laysan duck*



*Red-cockaded woodpecker*

Public Domain—original work of United States federal government

## Building for birders while reducing flood risk

The Trinity Bird Count finds some of its quarry in Dallas Floodway Extension project's Lower Chain of Wetlands

By **Jim Frisinger, Public Relations Specialist, Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

Birders headed out in a chill wind for a January outdoor adventure in the backyard of Dallas' historic Joppa Community. At the end of Fellows Lane, they stepped through a kind of looking glass into the Lower Chain of Wetlands built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and City of Dallas that both reduces flood risk and creates new wildlife habitat. Their goal: to participate in the quarterly Trinity Bird Count.

Every three months for the past year, bird-counting teams have moved out into the forest, bushes, prairies, floodway and wetlands along the Trinity River to take stock of the diversity of the avian population and visit some of Dallas' most forgotten public lands.

"Our goals are to learn more about the birds that are in the Trinity River Corridor and to get people out to enjoy nature in the corridor," said Karen Walz, who manages the count. The effort is sponsored by the Trinity Commons Foundation and funded by a grant from The Boone Family Foundation and others. The Trinity River Audubon Center is an active partner in the bird count.

Bird counts are important for bird conservation because they give researchers critical information about key species, according to the project's website, [www.TrinityBirdCount.com](http://www.TrinityBirdCount.com). Insights about birds and their habits help researchers examine larger environmental issues such as climate change and habitat conservation.

The bird count divides the Trinity River corridor in Dallas County into seven areas. On Jan. 28 we are at Area 5, the series of wetlands adjacent to the Trinity River. The cold wind has driven a lot of waterfowl into shelter, but the count is still considerable. By the end of the morning 43 different species are spotted according to the official count, bringing the count to 97 for this area across four seasons.

What many of the birders don't realize is the uniqueness of Area 5.

*Joppa birdwatchers*



This birding spot was once part bottomland forest, part Sleepy Hollow Golf Course, part dump. It's now a new man-made ecosystem, which also reduces flood risk for Dallas, conceived through years of collaborative planning between the City of Dallas and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The result was a new chain of wetlands, surrounded by a collar of prairie, which presents a path through the Great Trinity Forest. That allows for a more efficient conveyance of flood waters and thereby reduces flood elevations along the southern Trinity River corridor between downtown Dallas and Loop 12.

Between 2004 and 2008 this Lower Chain of Wetlands was excavated. Biologists and environmental planners from City of Dallas, Fort Worth District, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked with the Lewisville Aquatic Ecosystem Research Center to execute the re-vegetation plan. The Lewisville unit, a satellite lab of the Corps' Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC), selected a diverse mix of plants to populate the area and make it a feedlot for wildlife and to foster some degree of water cleansing. More than two dozen varieties of plants were planted including burheads, sedges, spikerushes, pondweed and water lilies. Treated effluent from the nearby Dallas Waste Water Treatment Plant provides a year-round water supply that kept the wetlands thriving through the 2011 drought.

Corps researchers manipulate a system of sluice gates to help new vegetation get established and to accommodate the needs of certain shorebirds which, during migratory season, benefit from lower water levels that create beach zones for feeding. Concurrently, fish and macro-invertebrate communities developed and matured in the cells, an attractive food source for a variety of waterbirds, including ducks, sandpipers, egrets and herons.

ERDC scientists count species, too: several dozen macro-invertebrates, 19 species of fish, five amphibians, seven reptiles and evidence of 8 different mammals in this area adjacent to the Trinity's main channel. Dr. Gary O. Dick, who supervises the wetlands project for ERDC, said monitoring over the past three years has shown steady diversity increases in the plant communities, invertebrates and fisheries – a sign the new ecosystem is working.

“All cells now appear to be holding more birds for longer periods during the winter than they did early on,” Dick said. “This year we have seen more waterfowl on the cells than in previous years, which is most likely a combination of migration patterns and food availability – lots of plants, invertebrates and fish to support lots of waterfowl.” As an example researchers have seen hundreds of pintails in the cells this year but only saw a few in previous years.

*Mississippi kite—photo Darlene Moore*



On this day the wetlands are temporarily inundated from heavy rains from earlier in the week. The high water at what the Corps calls wetland Cell G draws murmurs from the bird counters who have never seen it like this before. But with binoculars in hand, they strike out into the area where ducks have replaced golfers.

The birders follow an old cart path that blends into the underbrush that provides such good cover for small birds. Darlene Moore homes in on a ruby-crowned kinglet. Her audio device repeats the kinglet's call. In no time it reacts, hopping back and forth through the bushes, giving everyone an eyeful of the petite red-roofed bird.

At the top of a nearby rise we look south across Cell G's watery expanse with Loop 12 in the background. Today only few ducks are seen paddling in the distance. (Corps researchers sometimes see thousands of birds in a single wetland cell.) Twenty northern shovelers have been spotted along with a single ring-necked duck. These are new species that had not been spotted in the Area 5 bird count before. The crew captain carefully notes the discovery in her report.

Moore, a neonatal nurse practitioner in her day job, was drawn to birding by her father who would take her to the Long Island shore to watch hurricane winds blow in unusual offshore birds. She now totes around a camera with a 400/100 mm telephoto lens. She has photographed 191 Texas birds in less than a year since moving here from Georgia.

Alva Baker had heard about the chain of wetlands but until this day had never seen them. The communications consultant lives in the South Dallas-Park Row Historic District. That's a few miles from the chain of wetlands and close to the next wetlands phase planned just across the Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge.

“Being out there, walking along, seeing the landscape. It was just gorgeous,” Baker said. Shortly after the trip she got to talking about the Trinity again while working with her church group at the MLK Center. She plans to come back to the Trinity River this spring – this time in a canoe.

By the end of the morning, 10 new species had been added bringing to 97 the number spotted for the Trinity Bird Count at this location.



“Bud and I both like this particular area; It’s a beautiful place to go,” said Annie Melton, a trail –planning consultant with her husband, Bud. Both are regulars. “We wish more people knew more about it and wished there was a gateway instead of having to go over a gate.”

The City’s project engineer Mary Ayala said the city is expanding South Central Park towards Cell G. The improvements will include off-street parking and trail access to the Cell G property. This will link the park to a new trail network.

Trail builders are partway through building 31 miles of trails. Eight miles are planned under Trinity Trail Phase 3 in this partnership between the Corps and the city. Trinity Trail Phase 3 trails will run beside Cells F and G and connect to existing trailheads to the north and south. Another spur will head east to Elam Road and the planned equestrian facility. One this phase is complete a 9-mile trail loop will be in place for public use. For the moment, the recreational infrastructure needed to make Cells F and G more accessible are in the late design stage with a construction date unknown.

*Green heron—photo Darlene Moore*



The Corps of Engineers has just begun plantings of adjacent grasslands surrounding each cell that have been dominated by giant ragweed, a nuisance species. The Corps plans to convert these areas to native prairie grasses and forbs by plantings and managing (by mowing) through 2013. This will provide habitat to a wider array of birds and other animals. These plantings include such Texas natives as big and little bluestems, Maximilian sunflowers, switchgrass and white tridens.

One more census is planned this spring for the Trinity Bird Count. A final report and updated bird checklist of birds you can see along the Trinity River corridor is expected soon after. Walz said the project is working to sustain its mission beyond this last season’s count.

With birding teams having taken the field on 27 trips to these seven areas, the Trinity Bird Count has already spread the word about the great outdoors at Dallas’ doorstep. It has sparked new interest in good birding spots: the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School campus and McCommas Bluffs among them. Many are identified on its website map. Through its website and other information, the Trinity Bird Count publicizes a unique wildlife-viewing opportunity to the public inside and outside of Dallas, Walz said.

“Having this information on the website makes it easier for people coming to visit to this area, it makes it easier for them to see what’s here, so that encourages people,” she said. “This project provides the raw material for additional efforts to attract ecotourism.”

*Exiting Joppa*





### “Texas Our Heritage—The Ten Climate Zones of Texas” Presentation at February Meeting Sparked Awe and Wonder!



Project managers—Janet Gershenfeld and Joan Stanley  
with collaborators Joanne and Ron Fellows

Photos below —  
Laurie Hemming

Joanne explains  
her work



Rapt audience

Ron speaks about technicalities of  
the project



Janet elaborates on the building and maintenance of the garden while Joanne lends support



Janet and Ron, above; and Joanne, below with Rob Roy, President—receive appreciation awards



Graphics from the program



Expand  
your world

The Tech of Trails <https://sites.google.com/site/thetechoftrails/home>



**“FIELD NOTES IN FOCUS”**

**FROM THE GALLERY OF ALEX LIEBAN**



**Pelicans at Unicorn Lake — a rare stop on their migratory route**

*Featuring Master Naturalist  
photographers—flora and  
fauna as you see them*



## THE MIDNIGHT CREATURE STALKERS



*Viewing from left to right:*

*Front: Diane Wetherbe, Dale Meyer, Deborah Meyer, Lisa Cole [Son Zach standing behind her], Randy Kimball, Lynne Richards, Andie Krofina*

*Rear: Adelaide Bodnar, John Bodnar, Judi Elliott, Van Elliott, Larry Brennan [LLELA Volunteer] Mike Petrick {Blackland Prairie Chapter and group leader}, Vin Merrill*

**Mike Petrick** from Blackland Prairie Chapter and **Lisa Cole** from LLELA put together a night hike and experiment to try and call up predators. It was a great evening and fun was had by all. We didn't have any luck on the predator call up this time but hopefully there will be another great adventure. It was very nice to see Blackland Prairie and Elm Fork working together.

*From Van Elliott—  
Photo Owen Richards*



*When all is said and  
done—be inspired yet  
again with another beauty  
from Alex Lieban*

**Texas Master Naturalist  
Elm Fork Chapter**

Denton County AgriLIFE Extension  
306 North Loop 288, Suite 222  
Denton, TX 76209-4887  
940-349-2883

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*“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”*

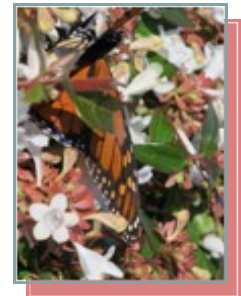
*Education, Conservation, Preservation, Restoration*

**WE'RE ON THE WEB**

[www.txmn.org/elmfork](http://www.txmn.org/elmfork)



*From Cardinal to Butterfly  
we're looking out for you —  
photos from  
**Laurie Hemming***



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    Patrick Schutz, TP&W

**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: March 15, 2012, Dr. Jeff Johnson, Asst. Prof. of Biology UNT & ornithologist discussing ornithology in general and his research on Attwater's prairie chickens in particular**

**Meeting: April 19, 2012, Dr. Bruce Hunter, Adjunct Prof. Dept. Geography, UNT—Wildland Fire-A Key Component of Nature**

Location: AgriLIFE Extension Office

**Board Meetings**

The Board meets each second Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m., Denton County AgriLIFE Extension Office. The Board last March 8, 2012.

Next meeting is April 12, 2012

Board meetings are open to members.



**Elm Fork  
Chapter  
sharing  
the load!**