

Texas Master Naturalist

Newsletter

AGRI LIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist

Elm Fork Chapter



Volume 13 Issue 12

December 2012



Special points of interest:

- Become a training chairperson
- Class of 2012 not sitting on sidelines
- Getting to know your “flicker”
- Christmas party just around the corner
- Hike in the park—Clear Creek Heritage Center

Inside this issue:

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Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.



All roads lead home

public domain

Magic moment



Albeit without the sleigh in tow, this majestic young buck took time to pose for **Alex Lieban** recently at Clear Creek Heritage Center — just in time for our Holiday Issue!



November meeting — Dr. David Wojnowski, President of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society

Photo—Owen



To join the effort to preserve and conserve the horned lizard go to www.hornedlizards.org/horned or TP&W website

Elm Fork Chapter was fortunate, indeed, to hear and interact with **Dr. Wojnowski** as he presented his program on the horned lizard. With slides backed up by a vast store of knowledge, he shared important information on varieties of horned lizards and their habits and habitats. He, also, talked about what the Horned Lizard Conservation Society is doing to ensure the survival of this southwestern icon and how individuals may get involved.



Shown are some of the recipients of awards handed out by President Rob Roy and Vice-President Susan Pohlen—newsletter did not have photos of all who were recognized but please consider yourself honored as well!

Lights, camera, action!



Susan pulling it together



All photos—Owen Richards



Rob doing the honors





Rob's Ramblings – December 2012

The Elm Fork Chapter's 2012 year is about to close. It has been a very eventful period with many accomplishments. We have striven to fulfill our mission in education, outreach, and service to our communities and fellow citizens. We will have a full report next month after we prepare our report to the state office in early January.



We do need to close strongly which includes reporting our hours (service and AT) and project work. If not done already, please catch up with reporting your hours. **The last day to do so for 2012 is Thursday, January 3, 2013.** We need time to enter the hours into the master file, compile the data, and prepare the report to the state.

Perhaps the most immediate event in 2013 will be our move to the Carroll Courts Building. We are scheduled to move along with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension offices on Thursday, January 10th. The Extension office will open in its new location on Monday, January 14th. We will too. More details will be provided in emails to the membership as things progress.

One of the best things you might do in 2013, besides working on your project or projects, is to serve on a committee. Please seriously consider volunteering to help a committee. Talk to current committee chairpersons to learn what is involved with their activities. Then volunteer; we need YOU!

Please seriously consider volunteering to help a committee

In closing my final "Rob's Ramblings," I really appreciate all the work members put into supporting the chapter in 2012. Let's continue the efforts in 2013 to make it an even more outstanding year.

Rob

Prairies, Lakes & Timbers



The Texas Master Naturalist Regional Conference – Prairies, Lakes & Timbers - is scheduled for April 12-14, 2013. Mark

your calendars for this special, first-time ever, regional conference.

Collaborating Chapters include:

- Elm Fork – Denton, Wise, Cooke
- North Texas - Dallas
- Blackland Prairie - Collin
- Cross Timbers- Tarrant
- Bluestem - Grayson
- Indian Trail - Ellis
- Bois d'Arc – Fannin

So far, there are 24 classes, led by great speakers, which are sure to be informative and stimulating. This 3-Day event will be held in Anna, Texas at the YMCA Adventure Camp (<http://www.collincountyadventurecamp.org>) a 427-acre preserved prairie and nature center located northeast of McKinney.

Registration will be open soon. Look for more information to follow.



JOB OPPORTUNITY



Elm Fork Chapter is currently in need of a **Training Chairman** for 2013. No previous experience required. If you are a Certified Master Naturalist in good standing and looking for a rewarding and fun opportunity, this is the one for you! As Training Chairman you will work with a Training Committee to ensure new applicants are helped through the process to become Master Naturalists.

There is a lesson plan available which details the process – complete with necessary forms. However, you have the flexibility to develop your own lesson plan to facilitate the mandatory State curriculum. The speakers of 2012 have expressed a willingness to return and the 2012 Committee has offered to stay available as Advisors.

You will be enriched when you take on these responsibilities and develop strong members to carry our Chapter forward. There is no pay but the benefits will exceed your expectations. You can volunteer and you can recruit other members to join with you. If you are interested, please contact a Board member.

Operating Handbook
Rev. 03/08/2012
Page 3.
E.2. Chair – Training Committee



December meeting and Christmas party

December 20, 2012

**AgriLIFE Extension
306 N. Loop 288
Denton, TX**

(original meeting place)

Bring a wrapped gift (\$10—15) if you wish to participate in the gift exchange; and a favorite food to share in the luncheon

9:00 – Gathering/social

9:30 – Chapter meeting

10:00 – Games/gift exchange

12 Noon – Lunch

1:00 – Cleanup



w. odum



Of bamboo

Give the gift of life. Trying to think of what to bring to a Christmas party, or what to give as a gift? Seeds and small trees to be planted in the ground are wonderful gifts that will grow for years to come. Many home improvement stores and home décor catalogs sell plant kits that are packaged for holiday gift giving!



Living Christmas tree



For a gardener



Bird feeder



Fresh greenery



Become a "whooping crane" volunteer

Whooper Watch program is seeking volunteers

Reprint from Dallas Morning News, Nov. 25, 2012

A growing flock of whooping cranes is good news, but it presents more tracking challenges when the big birds seek new territory to avoid being crowded — which is where Texas Whooper Watch comes in.

TWW is a new monitoring program that asks volunteers to help the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department learn about changes in whooping crane migration patterns.

Since the 1940's, whooping cranes traditionally have wintered mainly on the Texas coast on and near Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Last winter, several groups used additional coastal areas and inland sites as winter homes, which surprised biologists.

This year, biologists expect about 300 whooping cranes in Texas. The flock might contain up to 34 chicks.

Whoopers usually follow a migratory path through North and Central Texas that includes cities such as Wichita Falls, Fort Worth, Waco, Austin and Victoria. They often pause overnight to use wetlands for roosting and agricultural fields for feeding, but they seldom stay more than one night.



*Photo—Sean Fitzgerald—
Trinity River Audubon Society*

Whoopers migrate in small groups of fewer than six to eight birds but they might be seen with a larger flock of the smaller, sandy-colored sandhill cranes. Whooping cranes, white birds that stand nearly 5 feet tall, are the tallest birds in North America. Sandhill cranes are a foot or so shorter and have darker feathers.

Independent volunteers may report sightings to whoopingcranes@tpwd.state.tx.us or 512-389-8999. People who would like to train as Whooper Watchers may use the same contacts to reach TPWD.

INTERESTED IN BEING A HUMMER WATCHER?



Join us on Saturday, January 19, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm identify hummingbirds and how to garden for hummingbirds.

participate in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Texas Nature Trackers' annual hummingbird survey. Your participation as a hummer watcher will help TPWD to determine more about range, distribution, favored sites, and feeding habits of hummingbirds. The survey is also a way to share information about their natural history. Information collected from the Texas Hummingbird Roundup will provide more insight on conservation and habitat needs for these wonderful birds.

The training will be conducted by Mark Klym, coordinator of the Texas Hummingbird Roundup and Texas Wildscapes programs at the Texas Parks and Wildlife department. He grew up just across the international border in Canada where he developed a love for the outdoors – spending time fishing, birding, and hiking. His special interest in hummingbirds developed early, when he found a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird exploring the plants in his grandfather's greenhouse.

Mark received baccalaureate degrees in Biological Science and in Fisheries & Wildlife Management from Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste Marie, MI. He followed the hummingbirds to Texas in 1999 to work with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He is coauthor of "Hummingbirds of Texas" by Texas A&M Press, editor of the Eye on Nature and Texas Hummer newsletters and author or editor of several booklets and publications from TPWD.

for a training workshop on how to
The training will prepare you to

tmoss@wetlandcenter.com

Teresa Moss
Educator

John Bunker Sands Wetland Center
655 Martin Lane
Seagoville, TX 75159
972.474.9100
www.wetlandcenter.com



Elm Fork Intern Finds Prize— Martha Peet, Class of 2012

On Saturday, November 17, several members of the Elm Fork Chapter joined three other chapters on a fossil hunt sponsored by the Blackland Prairie Chapter. Several interesting fossils were found including a rare sea urchin, several vertebras from a mosasaur and a few pieces of jaw, but the most exciting find, wasn't a fossil at all, but an arrowhead found by Shelby Kilpatrick.

***Fossil hunt sponsored
by Blackland Prairie
Chapter draws interest
and yields surprising
results***

*Shelby with arrowhead—
photo Van Elliott*



The day started with Keith and Diane Brownlee providing an informative lecture on the geology of Texas and how to interpret the Geological Highway Map of Texas by the American Association of Petroleum Geologists. You wouldn't believe how much information they crammed on to the map. It was certainly a good review of the information we learned from Reid Ferring during basic training.

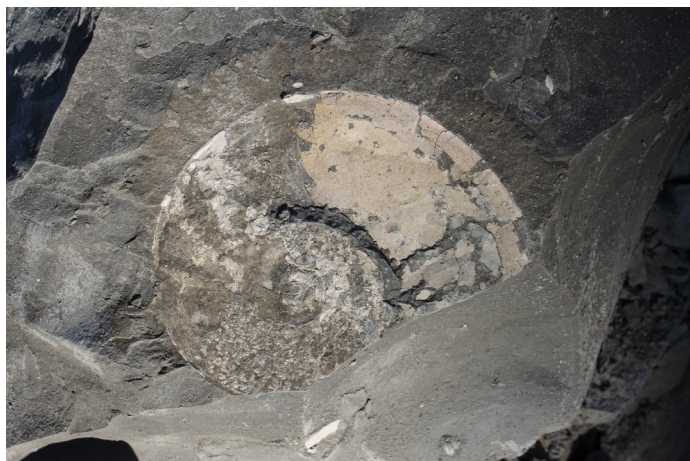


Photo from Larry Brennan

The mayor of Ladonia welcomed the 80-person group to her town in a former Presbyterian Church, which is now Heritage Hall. Then Doug Franklin, a Bois D'Arc Chapter Master Naturalist, and PK Kirkpatrick, an avid fossil hunter of the North Sulphur River, told the group about fossil hunting and showed us treasures that Kirkpatrick has collected in the 20 years that she has been hunting there.

Then it was off to the Pete Patterson Fossil Park for a more or less productive treasure hunt. All the rocks looked like fossils and I never did find anything that really was a collectable fossil. Oh well, it was still a wonderful day and a great opportunity to learn more and meet new friends.



Photos from D. Thetford unless otherwise denoted

City Nature Hike at Clear Creek Park

Dorothy Thetford, Project Leader
City Nature Hike Committee
Master Naturalist Project 080313



Susan Pohlen, Cheryl Kesterson, and C.J. Solberg— eyes front and center as Alex Lieban opines



Ms. Dorothy with Tracy Durmick, Recreational Coordinator for city of Denton



Photo at L from Sharon Barr

Alex sets the pace—"keep up, troops!"

The **Introductory to Clear Creek Hike** on Saturday, December 8, 2012, was fast-paced to cover the full loop of trails. Can you believe hiking in 70+ temperature on that date? A treat, indeed!



Gathering for the hike — never pass up a photo op!



Little ladies in a row of three
Upon the fence at levels of three
Different stances take note of three
And, if you please, different sizes of three

A cuter sight you'll never see!



w. odum

Still laughing up his tree

The call of a **Northern Flicker** is a sustained laugh, ki ki ki ki — more congenial than that of the Pileated Woodpecker. Adult flickers are brown woodpeckers with a gentle expression and handsome black-scalloped plumage. A mid-to-large sized woodpecker, it measures 11-14 in. in length and 17-21 in. in wingspan. A necklace-like black patch occupies the upper breast, while the lower breast and belly are beige with black spots. Males can be identified by a black or red moustachial stripe at the base of the beak. The tail is dark on top, transitioning to a white rump which is conspicuous in flight. When they fly you'll see a flash of color in the wings—yellow if you're in the East, red if you're in the West — and a bright white flash on the rump.

On walks, don't be surprised if you scare one up from the ground. It's not where you'd expect to find a woodpecker, but flickers eat mainly ants and beetles, digging for them with their slightly curved bill.

One may also hear a constant knocking as they often drum on trees or even metal objects to declare territory. Like most woodpeckers, Northern Flickers drum on objects as a form of communication and territory defense. In such cases, the object is to make as loud a noise as possible, and that's why woodpeckers sometimes drum on metal objects. One Northern Flicker in Wyoming could be heard drumming on an abandoned tractor from a half-mile away.

The Northern Flicker is one of the few North American woodpeckers that is strongly migratory. Flickers in the northern parts of their range move south for the winter, although a few individuals often stay rather north. These birds are widespread and common, but populations are declining.



PHOTOGRAPH BY WINTON WEYDENEI

The Red-shafted Flicker, a common bird of the Douglas Fir, Yellow Pine and Cottonwood Associations in the west

Article source: www.allaboutbirds.org (Cornell Labs of Ornithology) and Wikipedia

Photo: Red-shafted Flicker — **Nature Magazine November 1939**



LLELA – 2012 class project

By Martha Peet



Photo—Richard Freiheit

The Class of 2012 picked a beautiful day for planting grasses and flowers for a new Prairie Starter Plot (PSP) at LLELA. We chose our class service project because several members of the class already volunteer at LLELA, so it was natural that we wanted to introduce our favorite project to the rest of the class. The PSPs are patches of bare ground that are planted with native grasses and forbs. As the initial plants grow and reproduce, they spread their seeds and runners to other sections of the designated prairie section of LLELA. Hopefully the plots will all grow together creating one large beautiful prairie.

Larry Brennan had prepped the bare burnt earth by raking the ash and debris to the side and then pouring 1000 gallons of lake water on the plot before our workday. It was an excellent idea to hydrate the ground because the dry soil was like bricks (you know that crummy blackland prairie gumbo!)

The class spent a couple hours planting grasses and forbs in the Prairie Starter Plot and the LLELA staff declared it was the best one so far. Now we hope for rain and a mild winter. Hopefully it was a good omen when a family of deer ran across our path on the way to the PSP and not a sign that all the plants are going to be deer forage.



Photo—Larry Brennan

Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension is asking that Texans be aware of a possible invasion of an obnoxious Asian stink bug that could do widespread damage in gardens, cotton, pecans and other vegetation. The bug is brown marmorated with white

Photo-U of Georgia

Here's a stinker for you!



bands on dark antennae and a distinctive black-and-white pattern around the abdomen. They are being brought to Texas from the east coast. If you see one, don't crush it as it emits a very offensive odor—capture it in a pill bottle and take to your area extension office or take a photo so it can be correctly identified.

w. odum-source Dallas Morning News



Crested Caracara on the wing!

By Susan Pohlen

It's official. The **Crested Caracara**, *Caracara cheriway*, has made its way to Denton County. We had heard of sightings near Lake Ray Roberts, but until now there had been no conclusive proof that the Crested Caracara was in the area. Al Key, Denton Record-Chronicle photographer, snapped this photograph of a Crested Caracara in Northwest Denton city limits in April of 2012.

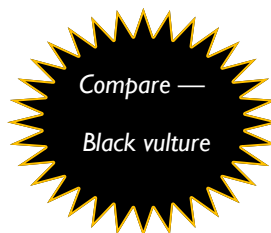
Most of you have had the pleasure of observing a Caracara close up at one of Doris Mager's educational raptor programs. Doris often points out during her program that the Crested Caracara is sometimes referred to as the Mexican Eagle. It is believed the original Mexican flag was designed with the Crested Caracara in mind; however, the image on Mexico's current flag is actually that of a Golden Eagle. The Crested Caracara is not an eagle, but is in the same family as falcons. If that's not confusing enough for you, the species often associates with vultures and is fond of carrion.



Photo courtesy Al Key

While fond of carrion, the Crested Caracara will eat many things including insects, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, eggs, and fish. The bird is quite lovely, has a rather conspicuous call, and can throw its head all the way back so that the beautiful crest on its head rests on the feathers of its back. At a quick glance, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish a Crested Caracara from our native vultures since in flight the wing tips of both spread apart. However, the white on its neck, wing tips, and tail distinguishes the bird from the Black Vulture.

Now that you know the **Crested Caracara** has made its way to North Texas you might want to look a bit closer when you see a flock of vultures. I know I'll be looking, and I would love to hear from anyone in the chapter that sees them in Denton, Wise or Cooke Counties.



public domain



“FIELD NOTES IN FOCUS”



FROM THE GALLERY OF

OWEN RICHARDS



***Thanks, Santa,
for all the merry-
making. Party
goers will miss
you this year!***

*photo Laurie
Hemming*

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



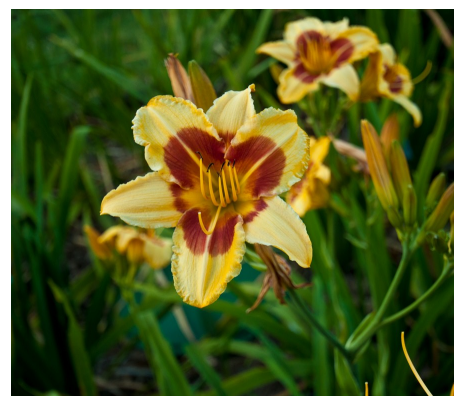
OUR MISSION . . .

“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”

**Texas Master Naturalist
Elm Fork Chapter**
Texas AgriLIFE Extension
306 North Loop 288, Suite 222
Denton, TX 76209-4887

940-349-2883

*Education, Conservation,
Preservation, Restoration*



Photo—
Owen Richards

We're on the web

www.txmn.org/elmfork

Members of the Board

PRESIDENT—Rob Roy
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT—George

Kragle

VICE-PRESIDENT—Susan Pohlen

SECRETARY—Diane Kohlhasse

TREASURER—Kay Crowe

CLASS REPRESENTATIVE—Dale Meyer

MEMBER-at-LARGE—Doug Chadwick

COMMITTEES:

Communications:

Newsletter—Wanda Odum (chair rotation
with Sharon Barr & Monica Chaffin)

Publicity: Jan Deatherage

Training: Van Elliott

ADVISOR:

Janet Laminack,

Extension Agent



*Hope your Holidays are abundant
with blessings!*

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: December 20—
Holiday Gift Exchange and Lunch**

**Location: AgriLIFE Extension Office,
306 North Loop 288, Suite 222
Denton, TX 76201**

**Annual Meeting January 17, 2013—Installation
of Officers and Awards.**

Location: Crowley Courts Building

Board Meetings

The Board meets each second Thursday of
the month at 9:30 a.m. The Board last met
December 13, 2012. Annual Meeting—
January 10, 2013

Board meetings are open to members.