

WILDFLOWERS 101
Texas Wildflowers - Native Plants
Dorothy Brown Thetford

A thrill of excitement runs through my veins when I'm invited to help people who are interested in learning about wildflowers. The title of my program sounds very mundane, but in order to get to the point of recognizing wildflowers, one must jump into the beginner's circle and start from ground up (pun intended).

Such was the case for the program presented to Trophy Club Nature Preserve on March 29, 2014. Kathy Trotter's MN Project #130912 is developing the Preserve's Adventure Trail and, in addition to creating a Bluebird Trail, one of the interests of the group is to fill the trails with wildflowers. But which wildflowers? Native or introduced? For what purpose? To appease ourselves or to attract birds, butterflies and pollinators? Yes to all. However, my objective is to encourage each of us to identify our native plants so that we can then protect and preserve them for all critters that depend on them for survival.



Kathy Trotter(l) and Veronica Ruangskul — coordinators of Trophy Club educational series of programs

We are initially attracted to wildflowers by their color, but color is only the beginning of learning curve and, thus, our discussion evolved into recognizing them by time of year the flower is found in bloom, height, location, soil, elevation, temperature, rainfall, sun or shade, etc., etc., etc.

Once the basics were discussed, we then discussed flower shapes, and, leaf shapes and arrangements along the stem.

Marilyn Blanton assisted, with a demonstration from potted plants, by giving detailed descriptions about several of our early spring natives that are already showing in the prairies or in our personal, native landscapes.

If you have an extra supply of native wildflowers and/or seeds from plants that are native to within 30-40 mile radius of Trophy Club, and would like to share with the Preserve's Adventure Trail project, Kathy or Veronica Ruangskul welcome your contribution. A 'donation box' will be available on the sign-in table at April 16 Master Naturalist meeting.

One goal for the Adventure Trail is to keep the trails as native as possible and, therefore, Wildflowers 101 Program emphasized the importance of knowing what's native to the Trophy Club area, protecting what's there, and then adding only native plant material that's indigenous to that area.

Dorothy
MN Class 2001



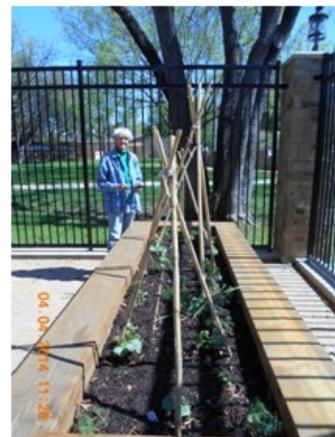
Marilyn Blanton (L) and
Dorothy Thetford

More projects . . .

Project No. P-070520 update
— from Dorothy Thetford

Under the umbrella of Project No. P-070510, Advisory, Educational & Outreach, various Master Naturalist members have been invited to offer expertise or guidance to support various community projects. One that comes to mind is the Denton Senior Center outdoor garden whereby Master Naturalist-Dorothy Thetford and Master Gardeners-Mary Morrow and Judy Riley collaborated with the Senior Center Recreation Coordinator-Tracy Durmick to plan and plant vegetable and flower gardens inside the Center's private arena.

Dorothy and committee planted tomato, banana pepper, cilantro, parsley, basil, and cucumber plants plus a border of bush green beans, while the Master Gardener committee filled their two raised flower beds with shade tolerant flowers. The garden entrance is from within the building, but the garden can be viewed through the iron fence at any time. Feel free to share your comments with Jeff Gilbert, Manager, who is grateful for our community support. The Center is located south of Quaker Park City Swimming Pool, on Bell Avenue.



Sybil Flash and Audrey
Laud, SrCn committee
members

Dorothy



Photos by Tracy
Durmick

In other news . . .

NOTE OF APPRECIATION

Ken, Larry, John, Adelaide, Val & Vin

[Ken Steigman, Larry Brennan, John & Adelaide Bodnar, Val Beardsley, Vin Merrill]



Recently, I have had a chance to tour a large portion of the LLELA property and saw many nest boxes with the labeling system which was discussed at the nest box planning meeting on January 21, 2014. It was a privilege for me to be invited to this meeting. I remember the discussion about how the property would be divided in sections and the labeling system to be used. It was really a treat for me to see the plan turned into reality. I know this is only part of the program, but so important to the preservation of our bird community.

This team has made tremendous strides with Nest Box Management Program and I am very proud to be a small part of it. It also is a big compliment to you that other projects in the area are modeling after what this team is doing. Thank you for your dedication and effort to keeping birding alive in Denton County.

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Banding — photo
Larry Brennan

Fort Wildflower

From Bob Ross

Chapter President, **Van Elliott**, was contacted by a resident of Flower Mound who was inquiring as to whether or not Elm Fork Chapter would be interested in an advisory capacity for a project. The resident, Kim Chance, claimed she had gotten a grant for \$5,000 from the hair products company, Pantene to be used in a Nature Education Project. Chance had also contacted Kari Biddix, Park Development Manager, City of Flower Mound.

Approximately a year ago many citizens from Flower Mound constructed a large playground facility in Heritage Park and named it Fort Wildflower. Kim believed Fort Wildflower would be the perfect location for her project.

Chance and Biddix had already had previous discussions as to what they thought would be possible ideas for their nature education. On March 25th, Elliott, Chance, Biddix and member Bob Ross met at Heritage Park to discuss the project. They felt many children who play and exercise in the Fort Wildflower area would be well served with something about the local nature in Heritage Park. The ladies contacted EFC as an advisory/education outreach organization to lay out their ideas.

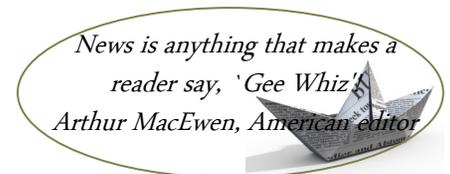


(left to right) is Kari Biddix, Kim Chance, and Van Elliott.



(left to right) is Van Elliott, Nicholas Chance (Kim's son), Kim Chance.

It was decided that two signs will be erected in the Fort Wildflower area. Kim Chance was persuaded by signs she had seen at the Fort Worth Nature Center. Kari Biddix was aware of a company that could do the specialty signage. They asked us to provide them with two lists: one with ten mammals and another list with ten birds that are indigenous to the area. Once the lists were provided they began the process of manufacturing the two signs. One sign will be tactile and have animal tracks for the children to feel and see. The other sign will be auditory and have bird calls singing once a child pushes a button on the sign.



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Becoming a Master Naturalist

By Bob Ross

Have you ever just thought about what it was that attracted you to consider becoming a Master Naturalist? For me, it first began with an article in the January, 2013 issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine informing readers about the good deeds provided by master naturalists across Texas.

I had first heard about Texas Master Naturalists in 2003. I thought it would be a fun organization to check into, however, I was traveling constantly with my job and just could not devote the necessary time to become a member. At that time, I pretty much came home to drop off dirty clothes and pick up clean ones before hitting the road again. Here is where I should insert another “thank you” to my wife Gwynne and to our local dry cleaners for my rotation of clothing. Eventually, my limited knowledge of master naturalists fell into the recesses of my brain.

After retiring and reading last year’s magazine article I once again began to check out the parameters of becoming a master naturalist. I first “Googled” (and you know how painful that can be) Texas Master Naturalist and began reading the state website. It was very informative and allowed me to find the various chapters spread throughout Texas. The website also had information about the recently attended 2012 state conference which made the overall function of the organization look very appealing to me. I realized the chapter in Denton was the closest to where I lived. I then looked at the Elm Fork website and discovered that the general public could attend the general meetings on the third Thursday of each month. I decided to make a trip to Denton.

My first introduction to Elm Fork Chapter was March of last year when I attended my first general meeting as a non-member. When I walked into the meeting room a man started walking over to me and introducing himself. I saw on his name badge that he was the immediate past president and his name was Rob Roy. When he found out that I lived in Flower Mound he immediately introduced me to Van Elliott, who also lives in Flower Mound. When he discovered I had attended Stephen F. Austin State University in East Texas he introduced me to Diane Wetherbee, who is working on her doctorate in forestry at SFA.

I thought to myself, Rob is the “Connection Man.” He knows how to hook-you-up with a comparable being with similar interests or backgrounds. He has traits that were appreciated by this “newbie.” What a nice introduction and experience attending my first EFC meeting.

What was it that attracted you to want to be a Texas Master Naturalist? Was it the title, being with friends, making new friends, the love of nature, learning about plants and animals, serving the community or simply a redirection of your life? No matter if you have been a member from the beginning or if you are in the process of completing your certification, now is a good time to reevaluate your journey in the chapter. Look at where you are now as a member, what you have done in the past as a member, and where do you want to go in the future as a member. Our lives, wants, needs, and goals are continually changing. Maybe you are happy with your present and past record and want to stay on course. That’s okay too. After some soul-searching if you decide you want to change, now is a good time to start anew. It is a new season. It is spring. A time when buds begin to bloom, some animals come out of hibernation, and humans begin to spend more and more time in the beautiful weather outside their homes.

Challenge yourself to new tasks in the chapter. See where you might make a better or different contribution to the chapter. Belong to the chapter with your heart and not just by paying your annual dues. Have pride that you have earned, or in the process of earning, the title Texas Master Naturalist.



*Bob Ross —
Class of 2013*

Look Who You Find On The Mudflats At Hagerman National Refuge!

From Joanne Fellows
— class of 2008

A pair of Greater Yellowlegs, *Tringa melanoleuca*, were found at Hagerman National Refuge at the edge of the mudflats leading to Lake Texoma. They are often the first to arrive during migration. Their breeding grounds are in the sub-arctic and it winters in neotropical zones.

This is a medium-sized shorebird with distinctive long, bright yellow legs. Its white tail is crossed with thin, black bars. It has a long, thin, slightly up-turned, dark bill with a paler base. The bill length is about 1.5 times the length of the head. They are more solitary than other shore birds and often announce their arrival or exit with a sharp piercing call. They run with their neck outstretched and walk with a high stepping gait.



Photo by Joanne Fellows



Photos by Joanne Fellows

They forage in shallow water using their bills to stir up the water. The Greater Yellowlegs eat small aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, small fish, frogs and seeds or berries. They swallow their prey whole and head first. Sometimes repositioning it if it is large. Sometimes they eat insects along the shore or snatch them out of the air. They drink by dipping their bill and then tipping their head backward.



You might also find Joanne there.

THE HUMINGBIRDS ARE BACK!

April 1 may be April Fool's Day, but for our area, it is the day that large numbers of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds return, particularly to the eastern portions of the Southlake Cove Ecosystem. The Black-chinned Hummingbird always arrives almost one to two weeks earlier. Mary Lee Johnson sighted a Black-chinned on March 24 and Jan Lapine reported her first of the season on March 29. A male and female arrived at my feeder on March 30.

The point--THE HUMINGBIRDS ARE BACK! If have not put up your feeders, you need to do so in the next day or so. The sequence is predictable. You will get a number of hummingbirds in the next several weeks. One or two pair will establish nesting territories in the your yard or immediate area. The rest will have to find areas elsewhere. The result will be a tapering of numbers and it will seem like they are leaving your feeders except for a few that hang around. These are the nesters that will stay all summer.



Even when the numbers at your feeders drop, it is imperative that feeders be kept clean and that they be cleaned at every refill. Otherwise, a fungus will develop in the feeder that affects and grows on the tongue of the hummingbirds, making them sick.

It will then be next September and October, when fall migration begins, then we again will have large numbers in everyone's backyard. They will stop over to re-fuel energy supplies for their return migration into central and South America.

Arriving Black-chinned Hummingbird Backyard 3-30-2014

This has been an exceptional year for early molting of American Goldfinches. Many years we do not get to see much color at all. American Goldfinches normally begin to move northward in mass in about three weeks. In that last week or so, they will leave your feeders to feed more on emerging buds to get vitamins and nutrients for their color changes and breeding.

If you still have the American Goldfinches, observe them daily. One can literally watch them change color by the day. It is a great year to see them more in the colors normally represented in field guides--not their winter colors we normally see.

American Goldfinch in early color transition



RayChancellor@aol.com

Download iphone app for hummingbird: audubonconnect@audubon.org