



class of 2013

Texas

What She Brings To the Table

By Bob Ross

In the 1970's I left the classroom, as a social studies teacher, and began working in the educational publishing industry selling educational materials to public, private and parochial schools throughout Texas and Oklahoma. I was fairly new to the job when one afternoon I had stopped at a school, in a very small town, in a very, very rural area of Texas. After the principal and I met, he got busy taking care of one of the many problems a principal has each day. I walked out of his office to the central office area where a couple of young teenage girls were standing at a counter watching all the other students walking down the hallway between classes. I said to one of the girls, "Excuse me, can you give me directions to the administration office?" She responded by saying, "It is across the street from the Dairy Queen." Of which I countered, "I'm sorry, I don't know where the DQ is located." The other young girl who had said nothing, looked at me with a quizzical stare and boldly said, "You mean you don't know where the Dairy Queen is?" Without knowing it, that young girl had shown me the realm of her little world!

At the end of World War II I was born in Dallas, Texas. The two tallest structures in downtown Dallas at that time were the Mercantile Bank Building and the Magnolia Building (one with the recently restored red Pegasus sign on the roof). Today, these two locations are engulfed in the present Dallas skyline. My dad worked in the Mercantile Building and decided he did not want to raise a family in the big city. So, on my first birthday, our family moved from Dallas to Waxahachie and my dad commuted back and forth each day to Dallas for his job. After living south of Dallas for a few years my dad began climbing up the career ladder, causing our family to move each time he got a new promotion. I lived in quite a few different locations growing up and I enjoyed it thoroughly. Each location had its own uniqueness, or so I thought. As a youngster I realized I began to compare my present home where we were living to Texas. If I lived where there were mountains I would think Texas doesn't have mountains. But, I was thinking in my realm of Dallas and Waxahachie. If I lived at a coast I would think Texas doesn't have a coast. Again, I was thinking in my realm of Dallas and Waxahachie. I was not unlike that young teenage girl who couldn't believe I didn't know where the Dairy Queen was located.

Fortunately, we all mature and get beyond our childhood realms. Unfortunately, many of us who now make Texas our home do not travel to the many areas of the state beyond our own little "neighborhood" realm. When visitors come to Texas they so often leave with the concept that all of the state is similar to the area where they spent some time. We all have seen the misconceptions given by film and television that everyone from Texas wears a 10 gallon hat and ride horses.

The State of Texas brings so many things to the table with both state and national attractions. Texas provides us with 55 state parks, 4 state forests, 2 state airports, and 5 state fish hatcheries. In Texas, we are fortunate to have 2 national parks, 4 national forests, 1 national historic site, 1 national historic park, 11 national wildlife refuges, 2 national recreation areas, and 1 national seashore.

The State of Texas is divided into 7 different and distinct regions. If one wants to climb the highest elevation in Texas they should travel to the Big Bend Region to Guadalupe Peak, elevation 8,751 feet. If one wants to see a huge canyon they should travel to the Panhandle Plains Region and explore Palo Duro Canyon, the second largest canyon in the U.S. One may explore a portion of the Edwards Plateau in the Hill Country Region or explore a portion of the Llano Estacado in the South Plains Region. One may travel a few miles south of Corpus Christi and enter Padre Island National Seashore, the longest stretch of undeveloped barrier island in the World. If one wants to spend time around lots of trees then all they have to do is travel to the Piney Woods Region in East Texas to take in and enjoy 4 state forests and 4 national forests. Lastly, members of EFC enjoy daily our own Prairies and Lakes Region with its oak woods and blackland prairies.

We all live in, and should enjoy, a very diverse state. When one can climb approximately one and a half miles up in elevation, camp in a desert environment, see a varied supply of trees in forests, walk along coastlines at sea level, discover varied geological formations, enjoy wonderful rivers and lakes, observe a huge canyon and imagine how Native Americans and settlers moved through the prairies, well that is a bundle of things that are included in just one state. Thank you Texas!

Oyster Mushrooms, *Pleurotus sp.*



*Joanne Fellows—
class of 2008
(Elm Fork's resident
"facts" consultant)*

On our trail hike at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center we found this wonderful display of Oyster mushrooms growing up a fallen log. The gills on the caps' bottom surfaces extend onto the thick stems. Oyster Mushrooms produce white spores. *Pleurotus ostreatus* is the most widely eaten and *Pleurotus populinus*, specializes on growing on poplars, and cottonwoods.



September 1, 2014, marked the 100th anniversary of a sad, historic occasion: the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon, the largest-scale human-caused extinction in history. The last known passenger pigeon, Martha, died in the Cincinnati Zoo on September 1, 1914. Martha was named after George Washington's wife.

The passenger pigeon or wild pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) is an extinct North American bird. Named after the French word *passager* for "passing by", it was once the most abundant bird in North America, and possibly the world. It accounted for more than a quarter of all birds in North America. The species lived in enormous migratory flocks until the early 20th century, when hunting and habitat destruction led to its demise. One flock in 1866 in southern Ontario was described as being 1 mi wide and 300 mi long, took 14 hours to pass, and held in excess of 3.5 billion birds. That number, if accurate, would likely represent a large fraction of the entire population at the time.

The species went from being one of the most abundant birds in the world during the 19th century to extinction early in the 20th century. At the time, passenger pigeons had one of the largest groups or flocks of any animal, second only to the Rocky Mountain locust.

The pigeon was nomadic and had no site fidelity, often choosing to nest in a different location each year. Pigeon migration, in flocks numbering billions, was a spectacle without parallel. **John James Audubon** described one flock he encountered with the words:

"I dismounted, seated myself on an eminence, and began to mark with my pencil, making a dot for every flock that passed. In a short time, finding the task which I had undertaken impracticable as the birds poured in in countless multitudes, I rose, and counting the dots then put down, found that 163 had been made in twenty-one minutes. I traveled on, and still met more the farther I proceeded. The air was literally filled with Pigeons; the light of noon-day was obscured as by an eclipse; the dung fell in spots, not unlike melting flakes of snow; and the continued buzz of wings had a tendency to lull my senses to repose... Before sunset I reached Louisville, distance from Hardensburgh fifty-five miles. The Pigeons were still passing in undiminished numbers, and continued to do so for three days in succession."

Others frequently described these flocks as being so dense that they blackened the sky and as having no sign of subdivisions. These migrating flocks were typically in narrow columns that twisted and undulated, but they were reported as being in nearly every conceivable shape. At the height of its population of three to five billion it may have been the most numerous bird on Earth. Many observers described the noise produced by flocks of passenger pigeons as deafening. Generally, the bird's voice was loud, harsh, and unmusical.



Passenger Pigeon by John James



Hunt of a flock, depicted in 1875

Why the Passenger Pigeon Went Extinct

The birds weren't just noisy. They were tasty, too, and their arrival guaranteed an abundance of free protein. Among the game birds, passenger pigeons were second only to the wild turkey. After colonization, the passenger pigeon was an important source of food for the poor or common people due to its availability and low cost. Some colonies counted on the pigeon to support their population.

They shot the pigeons and trapped them with nets, torched their roosts, and asphyxiated them with burning sulfur. They attacked the birds with rakes, pitchforks, and potatoes. They poisoned them with whiskey-soaked corn.

Passenger pigeons were shot with such ease that many did not consider them to be a game bird, as an amateur hunter could easily bring down six with one shotgun blast; a particularly good shot with both barrels of a shotgun at a roost could kill 61 birds.¹

Passenger pigeons might have even survived the commercial slaughter if hunters weren't also disrupting their nesting grounds--killing some adults, driving away others, and harvesting the squabs. It was the double whammy. It was the demographic nightmare of overkill and impaired reproduction. If you're killing a species far faster than they can reproduce, the end is a mathematical certainty. But no one believed that anything so abundant could be killed off.

Lesson from the Past for a Sustainable Future

The story of how the most abundant bird in North America disappeared so quickly (40 years) is unique in the annals of human history. Though a century has passed since the loss of this species, it remains a poignant example of nature's abundance, as well as a powerful reminder of humanity's ability to exhaust seemingly endless riches. The echoes of the passenger pigeon's life still resonate today and can teach us lessons of stewardship, hope, and sustainable living for the 21st century.

Project Passenger Pigeon

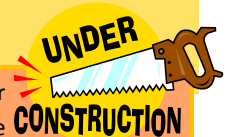
Project Passenger Pigeon is an international effort to commemorate this anniversary and use it not only as an opportunity to familiarize people with this remarkable species, but also to raise awareness of current issues related to human-caused extinction, explore connections between humans and the natural world, and inspire people to become more involved in building a sustainable relationship with other species. (passengerpigeon.org)



NOTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Please remember that the deadline for **Naturalist News** submission is the Wednesday immediately preceding the monthly board meeting. Anything received after that will be held over to the following month (if appropriate). **Deadline for October is 10-8-2014.**



Steve Houser has agreed to come back to Denton and teach a class on proper tree pruning

Proper pruning extends the life expectancy of a tree, reduces the odds of structural failure (limb breakage), and increases the health of a tree. This presentation explains why a tree should be pruned, as well as the various methods and tools that are utilized.

Topics covered include; why we prune, how to prune, when and how often, basic tree mechanics, and a brief discussion of the necessary tools. After the classroom portion, we will look more closely at trees in the field through the eyes of a tree climber and arborist. Any tree that was not pruned in the past will have deficiencies that should be corrected before they cause problems later in life. Without proper pruning, most trees will not live as long or be as healthy.

Date: November 6th

Time: 9am - noon

Location: Carroll Courts Building, Room 507 with field trip to South Lakes Park

Contact: Jan Hodson at janhodson@ntin.net to sign up. Class size is limited.



Take care of your trees so they can take care of you!

See Biosketch p. 13

Send contact information changes to: **1) Van Elliott velliott2105@msn.com; 2) Jan Deatherage jan.deatherage@gmail.com; and 3) Donna Wolfe master.naturalist@dentoncounty.com; and 4) Rob Roy robt_t_roy@msn.com**

Getting Information to Chapter

Items to website: Martha Peet marthawpeet@gmail.com

Email messages to chapter: Donna Wolfe master.naturalist@dentoncounty.com

Items for newsletter: Wanda Odum wodum10043@reagan.com

Reporting Hours:

At the beginning of each month, Janet Laminack, Denton County horticulturist and one of our EF-CMN chapter advisors sends a report about extension activities for the previous month including the events, project activities and community involvement of our Master Naturalist chapter to the district Extension office and the Denton County Commissioners Court. To report fully just what EF-CMN members are doing in “our community” your help is needed by reporting your hours sooner.

Please turn in your time sheet(s) for the previous month by the 3rd day of the current month. You can email your time sheet(s) to master.naturalist@dentoncounty.com (if you haven't signed your sheet you can sign it at the meeting) or stop by the Extension office to put your time sheet in Hours Book.

2014 Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting and Advanced Training



Does this summer heat have you ready for a fall weekend in the Texas Hill Country? **Join** us for the Texas Master Naturalist 15th Annual Meeting & Advanced Training this year! It will be hosted at the Mo Ranch in scenic Hunt, Texas on October 24th through 26th.

Registration for this highly anticipated event is NOW available through the Annual Meeting page on the Texas Master Naturalist State website at <http://txmn.org>!

Additional information about the weekend, registration details, the events agenda and costs can be found on the Registration page.

We look forward to seeing you this fall!

Thanks,

Michelle & Mary Pearl

On September 15, 2014, at 7 pm: Matt White on “Prairie Time. A Brief Blackland Prairie Environmental History.”

This presentation discusses the flora and fauna of the once vast Texas Blackland Prairie along with the appeal it held for settlers. It also includes the link between the richness of the soil and the richness of the region today, which came at the expense of the flora and fauna. In short, the rich black soil of the Blackland Prairie was Texas' first black gold.

Matt White teaches American History at Paris Junior College in Greenville. A product of Blackland Prairie people he has written two books interpreting the flora and fauna of the region. The first, *The Birds of Northeast Texas* in 2002 was followed in 2006 by *Prairie Time* (both Texas A&M University Press). He lives near Campbell where he and his wife are raising their children.

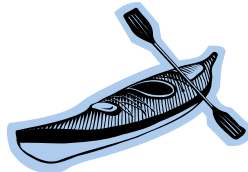
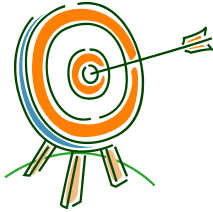
Dallas Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas monthly meeting, 7 pm on Monday, September 15, 2014, at the upstairs ‘Guadalupe Peak’ meeting room of the Dallas REI store at 4515 LBJ Fwy, Farmers Branch (635 and Welch Rd).



September Programs and Events

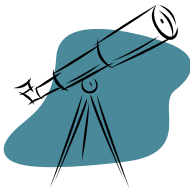


September 13 – Ray Roberts Reads Book Club 11 am For our September meeting will be discussing *The Ocean at the End of the Lane: A Novel* by Neil Gaiman. Everyone is welcome to join! Questions? Contact: kelly.lauderdale@tpwd.texas.gov



September 13– Trail Notes 2pm Tap into your creativity while enjoying the outdoors. Meet at the Lost Pines Amphitheater, bring along a notebook and something to write with. This program is open to adults and children.

September 20 – Hike with a Master Naturalist 9am Hike with a Texas Master Naturalist and learn the secrets of the Cross Timbers. Meet at the Lost Pines Nature trail for an easy .5 mile hike. This guided hike is appropriate for all ages and skill levels. Be sure to pack water a hat and a sense of adventure!

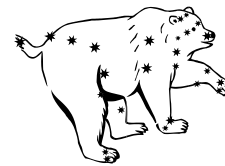


Ray Roberts Lake State Park

Isle du Bois Unit

100 PW 4137

Pilot Point TX 75068



Passenger Pigeon Exhibit

Open Now through October 31, 2014

Ask the story of finding an undiscovered pigeon in their archives

Heard Museum
1 Nature Place
McKinney
Texas 75069