



From Susan Poblén — first morning look on a walk in the woods



Reflections

Photos courtesy Mary Morrow

My First TXMN Annual Meeting by Cindy Maloney

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the TXMN 16th ANNUAL MEETING this year. I enjoyed it so much. Gathering with friends to continue our education, while enjoying the company of a huge group of people who are passionate about nature, was a wonderful experience. I would like to share my experience with you.

We arrived just ahead of the night of torrential rain. All of us expressed our concerns, over dinner, about the cancellation of outdoor activities. However, being true to our naturalist spirit, the presenters in charge of the outdoor hikes were going to do their best to get folks outdoors if it was at all possible. After enjoying greeting all of our chapter friends and having dinner together, we had a wonderful keynote speaker, Dr. David Schmidly, a mammalogist. His presentation brought to light how our great state of Texas has changed over the past couple of centuries through 'the eyes of mammals'. He talked about the decline of several species due to development, overuse of land and resources, and ignorance of our pioneers. There was one pioneer, Vernon Bailey, who went across Texas and documented mammals. Vernon Bailey was self-educated and was able to trap animals, without killing them, and to document their locations throughout the state. Without Vernon Bailey's work, we would be lacking vital information of our history of mammals in Texas. Dr. Schmidly's has a new book [The Mammals of Texas](#) which can be found at the following link: [The Mammals of Texas by Dr. David J. Schmidly](#)



I began my Saturday morning at a presentation about Spiders with Sheryl Smith-Rogers. She loves spiders....all shapes and sizes. Our fear of spiders is a little over board since we only have 2 spiders in our area that are seriously venomous to humans (the brown recluse and the black widow). Other spiders are fairly harmless to us and greatly beneficial to gardens and other areas. We saw great photos of jumping spiders, crab spiders, tarantulas etc. She treated us with a delightful video of the peacock spider in Australia by Jargon Otto. I urge you to watch it for some great spider entertainment. (http://youtu.be/d_yYC5r8xMI)



I then went to a presentation entitled "Save the Night" by Cindy Cassidy. She explained to us how all life on earth depends on a cycle of light and dark and how everything can be affected by the loss of darkness to the overuse of artificial light. Sea turtles, for example, use the stars and moon reflecting on the ocean to find their way to the sea. They are confused when they see other light and wander in circular patterns seeking water. Frogs will stop mating calls for an extended period of time if interrupted by light. It may take 3 to 4 hours for them to attempt mating calls after that. Many pollinators are active at night and will be adversely affected by overly lit areas. As for humans, we need night for our brain chemistry to produce proper melatonin for sleep. Our TV, computers, and cell phones send out blue light that suppresses our melatonin. Any blue light introduced to your sleep pattern between dusk to 4 a.m. will lower the melatonin production. Cindy also showed many light source alternatives that could be used in cities, neighborhoods and yard to guide lighting downward and more directly to the areas that need to be lit. Before installing outdoor lighting consider looking at 'dark sky' lighting options. Home Depot offers a large selection. It is suggested that we only know 1/2 the story of nature- the day 1/2- because we almost always need some light source to observe the nocturnal creatures and plants. Cindy handed out some information about the Texas Night Sky Festival in March at Dripping Springs. It looks like fun and might be worth a road trip. (texasnightskyfestival.org)





Next I attended "What Plant is That?" with Daria McKelvey. She is a plant lover who is totally self motivated to identify as many plants as possible as she walks this planet. She suggested a way to narrow down our data in order to put us on the right path and sort through mountains of information to pinpoint the name of the plant. Everything is a clue to a puzzle and we have to use all of our senses to solve the mystery. Learn some plant anatomy so you know the parts that lead you to the proper plant family, genus, and species. She pointed out looking at 5 main families will usually get you on track to identify a large amount of plants in our area: 1) Asteraceae-sunflowers, 2) Lamiaceae-mint, 3) Fabaceae- bean, 4) Brassicaceae- mustard, and 5) Apiaceae- parsley/carrot. Study the aspects of these 5 families and you will be well on your way to answering the question of 'what plant is that?'

For beginning my Saturday afternoon session, I went to a presentation by Mark Klym about introducing Texas Milkweed and Monarchs. One of the big questions they are trying to answer is whether or not loss of milkweed is a problem. They are working through the iNaturalist app to try to get citizens to help document milkweeds throughout Texas. They gave us a wonderful handout to identify milkweed in Texas. Join "Texas Milkweeds and Monarchs" in iNaturalist to be a part of helping them with this research. (Note: Currently our chapter does not have any project set up for any iNaturalist credit so you will not be doing this for credit hours, only to help with the study) Here is where to find information on iNaturalist. (www.inaturalist.org)

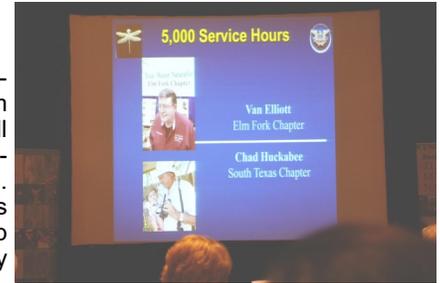
I next went to "Caddo Lake - The Lake, The Battle" with Carl Turner. He is a TXMN who is a resident on Caddo Lake. He loves everything Caddo Lake has to offer as far as birds, amphibians, mammals, reptiles, fish, plants, trails, cypress forest, with the exception of one special water plant-- the Giant Salvinia. Giant Salvinia is a very invasive species brought in from South America that appeared there in 2006. This plant has been the first thing in centuries to really threaten Caddo Lake, our only natural lake in Texas. Fortunately with the help of organizations who have banded together to save Caddo Lake, there has been significant improvement on the situation. A weevil that eats only giant Salvinia has been introduced into areas where it is appearing and this weevil is bringing some balance back into to ecosystem. Carl Turner's presentation will make you fall in love with Caddo Lake and inspire you to visit it and see the beauty of nature first hand. However, know before you go and educate yourself and others on how to keep the invasive species of Giant Salvinia from getting in other lakes throughout the USA. The following link will show you this invasive species and provide tips on how to prevent spreading it.

(<https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/exotic/salvinia.phtml>)

My afternoon ended with a delightful presentation by Marsha May called "Frog Calls Made Easy". She has a very good power point presentation with the most common frogs and toads in Texas along with the audio to go along with the species. We had fun trying to think of common ways to reproduce the frog calls and learn to recognize them by their sounds. Examples included the spotted chorus frog and the upland frog being imitated by running your finger over the teeth of a comb, using large teeth or small teeth according to sound desired. The Rio Grand Chirping Frog sounds much like tennis shoes squeezing on a basketball court. Some frogs sound like ducks, geese, or even sheep. You can find hear some of these on the Internet, of course, and enjoy the songs for yourself. Go check it out!

(https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/amphibian_watch/amphibian_species/)

We had a very enjoyable dinner and our Elm Fork Chapter was well represented with significant recognitions. Four of our attendees were recognized up front because they reached the 500 service hours milestone:



Irene Hanson, Mary Marrow, Kris Robinson, and Judy Riley. Jan Detherage and Cheryl Ellis (unable to attend) were recognized for 1000 service hours. Judi Elliot was recognized for 4000 service hours and Van Elliot for 5000 hours. That is more than the life of most light bulbs folks! Way to go Elm Fork Chapter. The highlight, however, was the video contest where Jan Deatherage was representing our group with the LISDOLA video that received a 2nd place award! Great video that made us all very proud. You can view the award winning video at (<http://youtu.be/C9BZB8-rzVA>).

I attended one final session on Sunday morning with Yvonne Eele on Poison Ivy. Yep-- "leaves of three let it be". Treat it like it is poison ivy or poison oak even if it might be virginia creeper. The urushiol oil from these plants can stay active on clothing, tools, boots, etc for up to 5 yrs. Most products are only temporary symptom relief product. Wear clothing to cover exposed skin in areas that have poison ivy. Stay on trails. Wash clothing, boots, shoes, and tools as soon as possible. Dawn dish soap breaks down the urushiol oil. Wash your body with cool water, so as not to open skin pores, with Dawn. If it's in your yard, DO NOT burn it or shred it with your weed eater. Breathing it in can be very harmful to your lungs. How do you kill it? Well persistence is the key. Use good rubber gloves that you can toss or wash. A Good tip was to clip a section on each side of its roots, apply a single drop of the full strength round up (made for poison ivy) directly to the open poison ivy stem. This type of application will prevent the round-up from getting on other plants and keep it isolated to this single plant. The cleaning product, Kaboom, is effective, but slow. I personally have had a battle with some I my yard and have attacked it with heavy salted water. It dies back and sometimes does not return, but if it returns, you have to continue the attack.

Well that was my experience at the TXMN 16th Annual meeting. I had a great time socializing with my Elm Fork friends and meeting other naturalists from different areas. This is something that I hope to attend again and I hope more of our chapter will join the fun and learning in the future.

Field Notes in Focus



**Female Widow Skimmer (*Libellula luctuosa*)
from gallery of Marilyn Blanton**

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