

WOODDUCK WHISTLER



Volume 6 Issue 9
September 2011

Drought and triple digit temperatures! What does this mean to us as master naturalists? Here are some of my thoughts. Lets take a look at the oak trees for one example. One might think it's fall the way they are losing leaves or just turning brown on the branches. How about the acorn crop this year? How will this weather affect acorn production and how will that affect the squirrels and deer populations? Lets look at some of the shrubs that produce fruits and seeds for the fall and winter bird populations. Many of these plants are in serious trouble because of this weather.

Water! This drought has put a major hurt on our wetlands, lakes, and rivers. As I have traveled across Texas this summer I've seen many places that have an absence of water, just dry as a bone. Many of the wetland areas I know are bone dry and I wonder how this will affect the amphibians? I know that they will burrow underground and hibernate but how long can they last in dry mud and high temperatures? Another question is how are the lakes and coastal bays doing with the sluggish creep of river water into them. As some of us know, portions of the upper lakes are dry land now, harboring riparian grasses and plants.

The best I can make of all this, is that it's a cycle that just happens from time to time. Too many folks using water needlessly on non-native plants in the big cities and a lack of water conservation compounds the situation. Educating the public and setting an example are some ways that we as master naturalists can help. Keeping the birdbaths full and feeding the wildlife as best we can will help a good deal. So see in the shade with your favorite cold beverage!

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Finally.....technology and the outdoors are finally together!

Thinking of an iphone/ipad/computer class. What do you think?

Let Janet Cook or Laura Wilson know you are interested. What is your passion?

What Program would you like to see?

How can we keep the classes interesting?

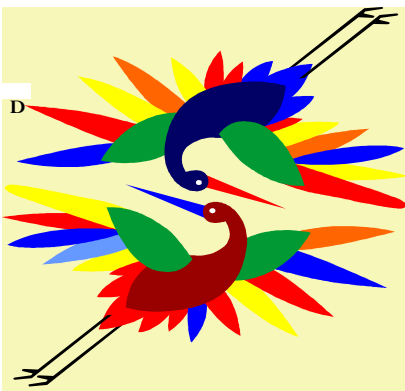
Prez Neal

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HEY WE ARE ON FACEBOOK!

East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists



Seminar Offerings

The East Texas Chapter Master Naturalist are providing a series of seminars September 2011– February 2012.

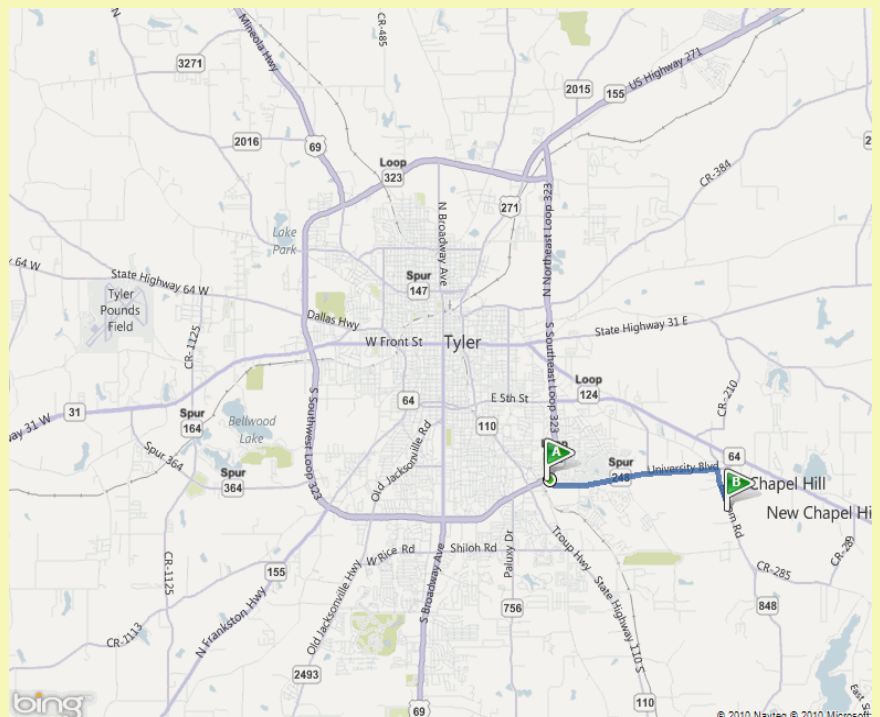
These seminars will be open to the public.

Date	Fee	Seminar Topic	Speaker
September 10	0	What is a Naturalist	* Barney Lipscomb
October 1	\$10	Entomology	* Alan Smith
October 29	\$10	TBA	
November 5	\$10	Ornithology	* Jeff Kopachena
January 21	\$10	Weather and Climate	* Steve Lange
February 11	\$10	Geology of Soils	* Steve Lange

Seminars will be held at the Nature Center; located at 11942 FM 848; Tyler, Texas and will be from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

- See the TMN Calendar
- <http://Txmn.org/etwd/>

Curriculum Committee



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*** Ann Reynolds gave me this article in the Spring.....and I haven't put it into our newsletter until now, so let's reminisce about Spring, and hope Winter gets HERE SOON!**

The birds are singing, there is a burst of wildflowers and the temperatures are mild. This is my favorite time of the year. It is almost magical. You wake up, go into the garden or drive to work and there is always something new in bloom. Seeing the Bluebonnets, Drummond Phlox and Paintbrush in bloom makes one want to rush out and buy some wildflower seeds so your landscape will look as beautiful as Mother Nature's.

Stop right there! My thoughts for this article were the virtues of landscaping with native plants but realizing 99.9% of the people reading this article are Master Naturalists, I thought I would be preaching to the choir. Luckily for you, I have just finished an outstanding book and thought it might lend itself worthy of a column. I will give you my feeble attempt of a book review plus other random thoughts.

The Worst Hard Time by Timothy Egan is a can't-put-it-down historical account of the great American Dust Bowl and those people who survived. The New York Times classifies it as a "classic disaster tale." As students, we studied the great wars, roaring twenties, stock market crash, depression, and dirty thirties. But, quite frankly, I don't ever remember being taught the impact of this environmental disaster on the communities of No Man's Land and the people who lived there.

The author conducted interviews with people of the High Plains and Comanche tribal elders who had survived the dust bowl. His research led him to the Oklahoma and Nebraska Historical Societies, Cimarron Heritage Center, Museum of the Great Plains, U. S. Forest Service among others. He had access to news reports, first-hand accounts and to diaries.

The book chronicles several families occupying the area of New Mexico, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas known as the High Plains. Many of these folks settled there just trying to make a better life but the greed for money that an unsustainable wheat market was bringing changed their lives - and, the land. People go from being quite comfortable to dying of dust pneumonia, clubbing jackrabbits for food and selling emaciated livestock to the government for pennies. In Chicago a man offered to give away his baby so he could keep his car.

This is a story of how the greatest grassland in the world was turned inside out, how the top crust of the earth blew away and then rained down a suffocating blackness off and on for most of a decade. This is a land where the native annuals were ripped up only to be planted with non-native annuals. It is not only a story of disappearance of sod and rain but of people. All of this happened during a time when one out of every four adults was out of work.

During the dust bowl, "dusters" boiled up, ten thousand feet or more in the sky, and rolled like black, moving mountains covering everything in their paths. Shovels were needed to uncover homes, outhouses, cars and livestock. In May 1934, Chicago reported twelve million tons of dust had fallen in the area. New York, Washington and even ships at sea, three hundred miles off the Atlantic coast, reported a blanket of dust.

Enter Hugh Bennett, a chemist, with his "new" theory of conservation. In his extended memo, *The Future of the Great Plains*, Bennett states that climate had not changed. The prairie had suffered severe droughts, high temperatures and gale-force winds but these things had been going on since the beginning of time. The problem, Bennett reported, was over-cropping, over-grazing and a system of agriculture to which the plains could not adapt. Added to this was a series of mistaken public policies. Bennett's conclusions echoed Aldo Leopold's groundbreaking conservation essay of 1933.

(cont'd)

The reclamation plan involved contour plowing, planting of wind breaks and seed from a type of grass from Africa and tapping into the Ogallala Aquifer. The goal was to make the desiccated ground a living thing again. The High Plains never have fully recovered. There are places that have healed and some that are forever scarred.

I will leave you to read the book so that the blanks can be filled in. But, here is where the world becomes much, much smaller. I was relating this story to my ninety year-old mother who was born and raised in southwest Oklahoma. Her father had come to the area during the land lottery and acquired thousands of acres from which he built a huge polled Hereford ranch. I never remember my mother speaking much of this time in her life. So I asked her about the bank failures and she said her dad only lost \$16.00 when the Roosevelt, OK bank closed. She said grandfather chose to bank in Oklahoma City when he took his cattle to market. My grandfather was the Kiowa County Conversation District agent (these districts were in Hugh Bennett's plan) and he educated and urged farmers to plant the land as a single ecological unit. My mother even recounted the fence rows of Bois D'Arc trees that he planted after soaking the "apples" and harvesting the seed.

Read the book. . .it is a heart wrenching story of a lonely, haunting time. And, it reinforces why we, as Master Naturalists, educate and encourage people in the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

Ann Reynolds

This is a good read. It puts in perspective the dry conditions we currently have here.



The Rough Riders Pecan

“Rough, tough, we're the stuff.
We want to fight, and
We can't get enough!
Whoopee!

This cry of the Rough Riders expressed well the spirit of the 12 companies of mounted cavalry which were organized and trained in San Antonio during May, 1898. This was about 3 months after the mysterious explosion blew up the battleship Maine in Havana harbor and less than a month after the declaration of war against Spain.

In the vicinity of this pecan tree, the Rough Riders were drilled into one of the country's finest fighting units. Commanding the First U.S. Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, was Colonel Leonard Wood, a noted army surgeon and Medal of Honor winner, with experience in campaigns against the Apache Indians. Serving under him as a Lieutenant Colonel was Theodore Roosevelt, formerly Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

Life in San Antonio was not easy for the Easterners or Westerners. Few were used to the close confinement, the high humidity and heat, and choking dust kicked up by their hundreds of horses during daily drills. They were paid 50 cents a day as regular troopers. This was considered fabulous pay at the time.

On June 8, 1898, after 23 days of training, the troopers were in Tampa, Florida and formed a part of the first military expedition against the Spanish in Cuba. The force consisted of 30 officers and 580 men.

On July 1, 1898, Colonel Wood received a field promotion to Brigadier General and Roosevelt was made a full Colonel and given command of the Rough Riders. That same day Colonel Roosevelt led his men up San Juan Hill and on to victory.

On September 12, 1898, just 4 months after being organized, the First U.S. Cavalry Regiment was mustered out of service.

The Rough Riders Pecan is located 2 blocks north of the San Antonio River near the east edge of US Highway 281, in front of the Central Bexar County Office of the Texas Highway Department.

Article from “Famous Trees of Texas” published by the Texas Forest Service in 1984.

Submitted: Mike Price



VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR ARTICLES ABOUT THE CHAPTER

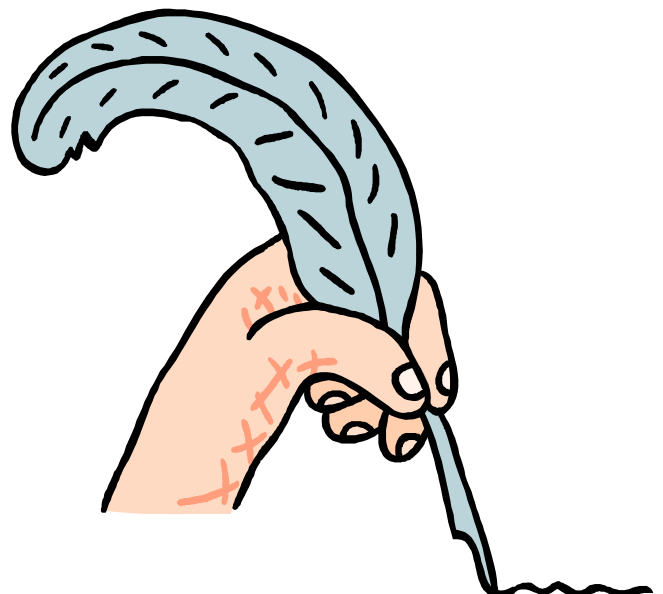
The Public Relations/Outreach Committee has plans to improve our publicity endeavors and wants to send additional information to newspapers about our Chapter. One way to do this is to write follow-up articles on our Chapter meetings, seminars, classes, and activities. We are asking individual members to participate by writing stories and taking pictures, which will be reviewed and/or edited by our Committee member, Anita Baker, who will send this information to appropriate publications. Please include the speaker's and your telephone number or email in case there are questions.

If you feel uncomfortable writing, take good notes and send to Anita. Your name can be submitted with the article if you would like. Anita is a journalist and lives in Van Zandt Co. with her husband, Larry.

Articles should be submitted to her at ldandanita@hughes.net.

The Committee may develop written procedures in the future if they are needed.

If you have questions or suggestions, contact Anita, Gloria Rognlie, or Tappa Burt.



**EAST TEXAS CHAPTER MASTER NATURALISTS
P.O. BOX 131184
TYLER, TEXAS 75713
PHYSICAL ADDRESS TO TEXAS NATURE CENTER:
OFF LOOP 323 ON STATE HWY 248(OR IT'S
CALLED UNIVERSITY BLVD). RIGHT ON FM 848
(BASCOM ROAD) ON THE RIGHT.....**

I encourage everyone to submit articles, photos, quotes, (with permission web links , and other forms of submission with written consent).

TMN.EDITOR@GMAIL.COM
Deadline is 15th of every month!!

HEY WE ARE ON FACEBOOK!

** East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists*



We're on the WEB!!

<http://txmn.org/etwd/>



Our Officers, Committee Chairs, & Meeting Dates

The East Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists meetings are on the 4th Thursday of every month @ 6:45 pm. Texas Nature Center

Neal Stilley - President	Clyde McKinney – Vice President
Carol Wilcox - Secretary	Mike Price - Treasurer
Cindi McCullough - Database Mgr	Helen Mar Parkin - Membership Mgr.
Curriculum Chair	Laura Wilson - Newsletter & Web-Mistress

Our Advisors:

Kevin Herriman

