

Regularly Scheduled Board Meeting
August 28, 2025
Mineola Civic Center

Call to Order

President Wanda Rauscher called the meeting to order at 5:37 pm.

President's Update – Wanda Rauscher

Events that ETCMN participated in since January include: Great Texas Birding Classic, Texas Prairie Dawn Count on Earth Day, April Chapter meeting with Dr. Neil Ford, City Nature Challenge, Camp Tyler A-maz-ing Adventure, May Chapter meeting field trip to Tyler State Park with Jeff Sparks, East Texas Fire and Nature Festival, Fairfield Library Dragonflies/Damselflies Presentation, Tyler's Bee Day in the Garden, June Chapter meeting with Jessica Coleman, July Chapter meeting with Sam Stone and Odolympics. Also, Caryn Vorsas represented our chapter at the Rose City Farmers Market. She had a pollinator display and thaumatropes for the children.

State TMN received a grant from Texans by Nature. This grant will provide tailored support to develop a strategic plan for guiding TMN's next 25 years. This plan is essential to sustaining the program's momentum and addressing the increasingly complex conservation challenges facing Texas. Part of the process will be survey to: First: Chapter Presidents and Immediate Past Presidents, Second and third: Active and Inactive members in the VMS, Fourth: Chapter Partner Organizations, Final: Agency State Sponsors with direct oversight of the TMN program.

State meeting is October 16-19 and offers 130 classroom session and 26 field sessions. See TMN website for more information.

Vice President's and Program Chair Update –
no report

Treasurer's Report – Bob Lumpkins

Report Balance as of 7/31/25 is \$11,851.94. Much discussion centered around investing in a CD. A motion was made and seconded to purchase a certificate of deposit with monies from the chapter checking account. That motion passed. There was a question of general liability insurance but that will be fleshed out at our next Board meeting.

Secretary – Ann Reynolds

A motion was made by Karen Rueb-Hall to accept the March Board meeting minutes with changes.

Advanced Training – Karen Rueb-Hall

Karen outlined the steps for AT approval of upcoming classes/events. The approval form needs to be submitted to her and her committee as soon as possible but unfortunately late notification of classes/events prohibits completing the approval process. The requirements for AT are published in the Chapter Operating Handbook and Chapter Operations Protocols under chapter documents. The request form needs to be filled out in its entirety. Please do not just forward an email.

Community Education/Outreach – Lance Homeniuk

no report

Volunteer Service Projects – Dawn Bahr

no report

Speakers' Bureau – Greg Marshall

no report

2025 New Training Class – Kay Jenkins

Fifteen people signed up for the new training class and two dropped out. Nine completed the training, and three of the four are almost finished. One trainee is 4.25 hours away of becoming certified. One trainee from the fall 2024 class completed initial training during the spring 2025 class.

There will be a spring 2026 class with Wanda serving as co-training director. The application form, information page and flyer have been updated and will be uploaded to the website upon approval. One member from the 2024 class and one from 2025 have offered to teach units. Two people have expressed interest in attending the 2026 class.

Membership – Donna Smith

Recertification and Milestone Awards include: one member 2025 recertification, six members 2025 recertification, 250 Hour Service Pin – two members, 500 Hour Service Pin – one member and 1000 Hour Service Pin. There have been five transfer members for 2025 so far.

Volunteer Management System – Lindsey Smith

Second quarter (April, May, June) had 3016 volunteer service hours reported by 67 active chapter members which represents \$69,368 given to the state's endowment by the federal government's Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Fund. During that same time there were 392 advanced training hours entered in VMS. Year-to-date ETCMN has contributed 7,543 volunteer service hours by 78 active chapter members resulting in \$173,489 going to the state's endowment. There have also been 1,273 advanced training hours enter into the VMS so far.

As the 25th chapter anniversary approaches, it is interesting to note that there have been 319 both active plus inactive members that have contributed 91,033 volunteer service hour from January 2000 – August 2025 resulting in \$2,093,759 toward the endowment fund. These members received 13,273 hours in advanced training as well.

The state is changing the VMS database so that active members are at the chapter level. Inactive members will still be retained at the state level in the archives.

Hospitality – Caryn and Joe Vorsas with Bonnie Edwards

Things are going well and the chapter holiday party has been set for December 13.

eBlast – Wanda Rauscher

No report

Newsletter – Karen Hulene Bartell

The December Wood Duck Whistler will be the last for Karen Bartell as editor.

Social Media – Greg Marshall

No report.

Website – Jessica Coleman

There was a glitch in the website for June and July where the calendar could not be updated and events could not be posted. AgriLife noted some issues and they were resolved by July 25, 2025. If you notice any issues or need something posted, please contact Jessica Coleman.

Project Updates

Upcoming projects and events include:

- Outreach – 9/24 SFA Ecoadventures, 10/25 40th Anniversary of SFA Gardens celebration, 11/8 Family Fun Day – Kay Jenkins
- Yantis Prairie Day – 9/27 – Ann Reynolds and Wanda Rauscher
- Mineola Nature Fest – 10/18 – Team Lead Mark Edmund
- State TMN Annual Meeting in College Station – October 16-18
- Texas Arbor Day – 11/7
- ETCMN Holiday Party – Tyler Nature Center – 12/13
- East Texas Fire and Nature Festival – spring 2026

Old Business

Membership directory – tabled

Educational Kits - tabled

State TMN approved gear – tabled

New Business

25th Anniversary of the Chapter – Ann had forwarded the information from other chapters reaching this milestone and how they celebrated. Caryn Vorsas suggested a small group meet to work on this and Wanda suggested the celebration be scheduled after the first of the year.

Rodney Schroeder, Vice President and Program Chair, is moving to Washington State. Steps for nominations for a vacant position can be found in the chapter bylaws.

A motion was made by Joe Vorsas and second by Bob Lumpkins to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Reynolds
Secretary

President's Remarks for August 28 Board Meeting

EVENTS SINCE MARCH 2025-

Great Texas Birding Classic April 15 to May 15

2025 Great Texas Birding Classic

ETCMN Participation

Team Name	Team Members	Tournament Category
Bird Nerds	Dawn Bahr (ETCMN, Tm Ldr) Pat Spradlin (ETCMN) Carolyn Nanni Sandy Tibbs (ETCMN) Jamie Upson (ETCMN) Bobbie Williams (ETCMN) Ann Reynolds (ETCMN)	Adult Regional Big Day Dispersed Flock
Old Coots	Lance Homeniuk (ETCMN) Kris Homeniuk (ETCMN) Buck Lee (ETCMN) Mark Edmund (ETCMN Tm Ldr)	Adult Regional Big Day Intact Flock
Bad Loon Rising	Amy Cumbie (ETCMN, Tm Ldr) Amanda Solorza (ETCMN) Jessica Coleman (ETCMN) Laura Wilson	Adult Regional Big Day Intact Flock
Half-Cockaded	Curt Bateman Karen Rueb-Hall (ETCMN, Tm Ldr) Carol Lanthrum (ETCMN) Bonnie Edwards (ETCMN) Gail Bean (ETCMN)	Tyler State Park Intact Flock
Phantastic Phoebes	Denise Gary (ETCMN, Tm Ldr) Cory Benton Ann Reynolds (ETCMN) Buck Lee (ETCMN)	Adult Regional Big Day Intact Flock
Gray Capped Chickadees	Pat Howarth (ETMN, Tm Ldr) Meleena Byram (ETCMN) Victoria Settle	Adult Regional Big Day Intact Flock

34 species
April 26

2nd place
70 sp May 10

40 sp, April 28

1st Place
84 sp, April 29

2nd Place
20 sp, April 30

Texas Prairie Dawn Count on Earth Day (April 22) 2025

We had seven from East Texas Chapter TMN (Jan Barth, Meleena Byram, Dawn Bahr, Lance Homeniuk, Pat Howarth, Wanda Rauscher & son Jonathan) and 2 additional volunteers from Cypress Basin Chapter TMN to perform the plant count for the Texas Prairie Dawn Flower, a rare plant endemic to East Texas that is on the endangered species list. Jan

Culverson, US Fish and Wildlife, requested our assistance. The natural habitat for the Texas Prairie Dawn Flower (*Hymenoxys texana*) is a river terrace with salty sandy soils that have not been plowed before, which is rare in any part of Texas. The area we visited is on property that belongs to Komatsu Mining Corporation in Gregg County along Grace Creek

We counted 6,845 plants (where at least one plant was in the quadrat). We counted plants in 291 quadrats (0.25 square meter size) over the whole area surveyed = 72.75 square meter area (size of patch). That means there were approximately 23 plants in each quadrat (that had at least one plant) or 94 plants per square meter. We looked for plants in grids where grasses were growing and, in most cases, there were no plants or just one because there was too much competition from other plants/grasses. Those zero quadrats were not included in this density estimate. Jan Culverson used the density estimates to determine the overall count for the rest of the flowers on site.

April 24 Chapter Meeting

Dr. Neil Ford, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Biology UT Tyler talked to us about the snake species found in East Texas.

City Nature Challenge 2025 -(observations April 25-April 28 with identifications through May 4). This was the 10th year for City Nature Challenge and our 5th year as a participant. We had observations posted in every single county of the chapter catchment. Lindsey Smith led the walks at the Mineola Nature Preserve and Donna Smith, Polly Jones, and Allison Utley helped with outreach efforts at Mineola. Meleena Byram and Pat Howarth joined Wanda at Martin Creek Lake SP. We had a respectable showing with 3195 observations of 1019 different species made by 193 observers with 284 folks identifying.

Camp Tyler A-maz-ing Adventure May 12 &13, 2025 (roughly 200 students attended event) Cindy Smith worked with Wanda & then solo at the Camp Tyler A-maz-ing Adventure for the White House ISD 8th graders on May 12 &13! We used Pollinator Syndrome as a matching challenge for the teams. [Wanda spent the 13th at SFA with Kay Jenkins delivering a program for the Groveton 5th graders.]

May 22 Chapter Meeting was a FIELD TRIP. We gathered at the Blackjack Pavilion at Tyler State Park to hear Jeff Sparks tell us about recreating the Post Oak Savannah- a process that has taken years and requires ongoing effort to preserve!

East Texas Fire and Nature Festival June 7. Nineteen master naturalists came out to volunteer for the first ever East Texas Fire and Nature Festival: Amy Cumbie, Mark Edmund, Carol Lanthrum, Patty Gray, Cindy Harlan, Karen Rueb-Hall, Clay Beard, Becky Whisenant, Gail Bean, Vicki Hoppis, Ann Reynolds, Meleena Byram, Pat Howarth, Lance Homeniuk,

Dawn Bahr, Caryn Vorsas, Joe Vorsas, Dennis Minor, and Kay Jenkins. Kay was the mastermind behind the "Bird Activities" that were enjoyed by the big kids visiting our booth. Wanda provided the pollinator display that included the bee and flower thaumatrope craft for the younger set, the iNaturalist display, and the "What Does an East Texas Master Naturalist Do?" display. Lance kept count of our visitors. We had 63 adults and 66 kids visit our booth. Toni Aguilar reported just under 300 in attendance at the event. A number of folks suggested we should do this event again. I was impressed with how many kids were able to answer fire fest questions correctly by the end of the festival. Just so you know Kay and Carol spent some hours preparing the booth materials and Kay, with Dennis and I spent almost four hours getting canopies & floors & tables & supplies ready the afternoon before the event. A fellow master naturalist said if there was an award for best booth we surely would have won such. We did have guests from Cypress Basin Chapter TMN and North Texas Chapter TMN visit our booth. We WILL have a chance to do it again! Plans are in the works to do the Fire & Nature Festival Spring 2026.

Fairfield Library Dragonflies & Damselflies Presentation June 18

Wanda presented on odonates to the younger set at Fairfield library. Had 41 kids and 21 adults attending presentation & participating in a craft activity to decorate a wooden dragonfly.

Tyler's Bee Day in the Garden was June 21, 2025 at the Goodman-Legrand House & Museum grounds. We had a great pollinator display. For our kid activity we taught bee vision- they see orange but not red and see into the UV range where we can't. Participants made their own flower guide with invisible ink and then filled in the wildflower designs with colored pencils. When finished, the artists could view their masterpiece under a UV light and then add a bee sticker. Attendance was 71 adults and 61 kids. Big thank you to Ann Reynolds, Karen Rueb-Hall, and Dawn Bahr who worked with Wanda!

June 26 Chapter Meeting

Jessica Coleman, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Biology UT Tyler gave a talk entitled: "Look, Listen, and Learn: Birds and Habitats of East Texas". This presentation focused on four key habitats of our region—Pinewoods; Bottomland Hardwood Forests; Prairies; and Wetlands, Rivers, and Bayous. For each habitat, she shared insights on bird species, highlighting how to observe and identify them by sight and sound.

June 28 Rose City Farmers Market

Caryn Vorsas took pollinator display & thaumatropes to the Rose City Farmers' Market.

July 24 Chapter Meeting

Via ZOOM Sam Stone, Conservation Program Manager with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Foundation, talked about pocket prairies & pollinators, a future app in development, and issues in conservation for Texas.

ODOLYMPICS Aug 16-24

For Texas there were 2214 iNat observations of 96 species and in Odonata Central there were 337 records (for Texas).

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NEWS FROM STATE

State TMN received a grant from Texans by Nature. This grant, the Conservation Wrangler, is an accelerator program that catalyzes the very best Texan-led conservation projects occurring in the state. Through the Conservation Wrangler program, the TMN Program will receive tailored support to develop a strategic plan, along with a sustainable strategic planning process that the TMN Program can utilize into the future.

“The program just celebrated our 25th Anniversary and, as we look towards the future, we recognize the need for a strategic plan that will serve as the foundation for guiding our next 25 years,” said Mary Pearl Meuth, Texas Master Naturalist Program assistant program coordinator. “Developing a plan is essential to sustaining the program’s momentum and addressing the increasingly complex conservation challenges facing Texas, and we’re very fortunate and excited to collaborate with Texan by Nature.”

As a part of this process surveys will be going out!

- First Survey went out to Chapter Presidents and Immediate Past Presidents - Replies Due THURSDAY, Aug. 29th.
- Second Survey and Third Survey will go out to Active & Inactive Members in VMS first week of September
- Fourth Survey is for Chapter Partner Organizations Week of September 17th
- Final Survey will be for the Agency State Sponsors with direct oversight of the TMN Program

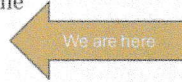
State Meeting will be at College Station Oct 16-19 and will offer 130 classroom sessions and 26 field sessions. Contest entries are due by Sept 1. Registration fees increase as of Sept 1 and registration closes with end of Sept. See State TMN web page for all the details!

TMN Governing Documents



Triennial Timeline implemented 2023

- Documents to be reviewed on regular 3-year cycle:
- Comments & Feedback collected through website – <https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/governing-documents-feedback-form/>
- 2023 – Year 1
- 2024 – Year 2
- 2025 – Year 3
- Summer 2025 – Review feedback & edits – Compile
- Fall 2025 – Completed updates made & sent out.
- 2026 – New Documents Year 1



Board Meeting

By Karen Riehl-Hall

AT Report

**Receiving requests,
finding opportunities within the list serve or emails,
requests forwarded to Karen Bartell sent to me to
investigate**

**Once the committee approves/declines respond to
request**

**If accepted referred to Wanda for eblast, Jessica to
post on website, Karen to post in newsletter and
Lindsey to approve when member enters event into
the portal**

**Unfortunately some opportunities are published so
close to the date there is not enough time to approve
and publish in time.**

**Send in requests ASAP, look at our website under
MEMBERS AREA, drop down to forms, Advanced
Training Request.**

**Advanced Training requirements are in the
Chapter Operating Handbook & Chapter Operations
Protocols under Chapter Documents**

East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists

Training Director Report to the Board of Directors

08/28/2025

Spring 2025 Class

We started in January 2025 with fifteen people attending the training class. Two dropped out early due to health reasons leaving 13 trainees. Of those 13, nine completed the training. Three of the remaining four are almost finished. The following people completed the initial training:

Clay Beard

Casey Boggs

Robert Boggs

Cynthia Harlan

Carrie Hughes

Kathryn Marshall

Julia McCann

Dennis Minor

Zoe Ann Stinchcomb

One person, Clay Beard, is just 4.25 hours shy of becoming certified.

In addition, one person, Kelley Pettit, from our Fall 2024 class completed her initial training during the Spring 2025 class.

Spring 2026 Class

Wanda Rauscher has agreed to serve as co-training director as she will be relieved of her presidential duties in the spring. I have updated the application form, information page, and flyer for the Spring 2026 class. As soon as Wanda approves the documents, I will ask Jessica to upload them to our website. The TMN staff updated their website with the new class information. Carrie Hughes, from our Spring 2025 class and Debbie Shaefer from our 2024 class told me that they would like to teach a unit. I reached out to Carrie to see if she would like to teach geology since Dr. Buchanan has asked me to try to find someone else to teach it. Carrie said she would love to teach the geology class and I have also asked her to serve on the committee as a representative from the previous class. I'm waiting for a response on that request. Debbie would like to teach the education unit.

I have had two people reach out to me saying they would like to attend the class. So, I'm hopeful that we won't have any trouble filling the slots.

East Texas Chapter Master Naturalist Program

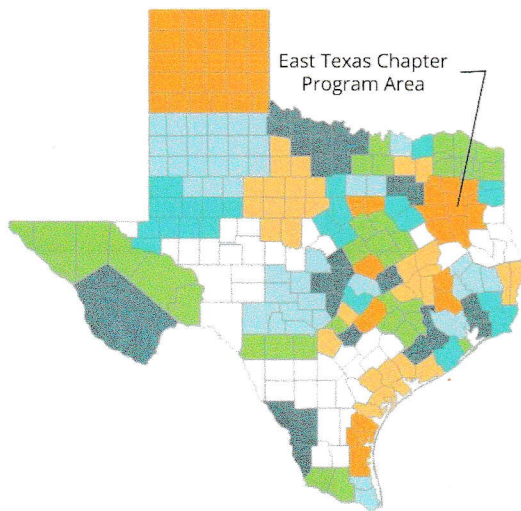
Now accepting applications for Spring 2026 Training

The East Texas Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program is holding new member training for people over 18 years of age who are interested in becoming a Texas Master Naturalist. Training classes will begin January 20, 2026, and are tentatively scheduled to be held on eight Tuesday evenings (Jan 20 and 27, Feb 17 and 24, Mar 24, Apr 21 and 28, May 19) and six Saturdays (Jan 31, Feb 7 and 21, Mar 28, Apr 25, May 23), five of which will include field trips.

The Texas Master Naturalist Program's mission is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.



East Texas Chapter



The program area of the East Texas Chapter includes Smith County and the nine surrounding counties. Communities and organizations in the program area, and adjacent areas where no active Master Naturalist Chapters exist, rely on trained citizen volunteers for implementing youth education programs; for assisting parks, nature centers, and natural areas; and for providing leadership in local natural resource conservation efforts. Annual dues for membership in the East Texas Chapter are \$20 and are due in January of each year.

How to become a Texas Master Naturalist:

- Master Naturalist Trainees must successfully complete an approved training program with at least 40 hours of combined field and classroom instruction through a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter.
- While completing the training above, the candidate serves at least 40 hours of volunteer service in their community and engages in 8 hours of advanced training to advance their knowledge and connection with their ecoregion.
- In subsequent years, the candidate must complete another 8 hours of advanced training and donate 40 hours of volunteer service to maintain their certification (or to re-certify) as a Texas Master Naturalist.

The cost for the initial training program in the East Texas Chapter is \$150 and includes a hardbound copy of the *Texas Master Naturalist Curriculum* and entry fees to most field trip sites, if applicable. Trainees may purchase digital versions of the curriculum directly from Amazon ([Kindle](#)) or Google ([Google Play](#)) and reduce the training fee by \$50. Download the application to attend training from the ["Join Us"](#) tab on the East Texas Chapter [website](https://txmn.org/etwd/) (<https://txmn.org/etwd/>).

Membership

**2nd Quarter Report for ~~VMS~~
East Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists**

We have a new initial certification from 2023 whose pin will be presented next month because the certification was just completed Tuesday.

We have five transfer members for 2025.

Betty Cruikshank

Paige Horton

Allen Pape

Tasha and John Patterson

Recertification & Milestone Awards

August 28 , 2025

2024 Recertifications

Ray Rottmann

2025 Recertifications

Neal Ford

Denise Gary

Patricia Gray

Todd Guest

Laurie Hero

David Shafer

Milestone Awards

250-Hour Service Pin

Bonnie Edwards

Carol Nanni

500-Hour Service Pin

Sara Emmy-Arthur

1000-Hour Service Pin

Karen Bartel

2nd Quarter Report for VMS

East Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists

The second quarter (April, May, & June) of 2025 had 3,016 VSH reported by 67 of our active chapter members which represents \$69,368 given to the state's endowment by the federal government's Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Fund. During this same time, there were 392 advanced training hours entered in VMS.

This year, to date, we have contributed 7,543 volunteer service hours by 78 active chapter members resulting in \$173, 489 going into the state's endowment. There have also been 1,273 advanced training hours entered this year into VMS.

As we approach our 25th anniversary for our chapter, it's interesting to note that we have had 319 both active plus inactive members that have contributed 91,033 volunteer service hours from January 2000, through August 2025, to the state's master naturalist program resulting in \$2,093,759. These members also received advanced training totaling 13,273 hours to help make us better volunteers!

The state is purging our VMS database of inactive members which will let me see only active members, but they will retain all the records in their archives.

East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists
Communication Support: Website
August 28, 2025

Since the last board meeting, we have had one glitch with the website. Over June and July, I was unable to post any events, and the calendar on our website fell behind schedule. This was due to the AgriLife web team noting some issues with site performance and the event calendar across the sites. There were some memory limitations on the network that were used to store large amounts of legacy data and old plugins. Due to this, we had to complete a Chapter Website Survey that focused on our use of the WordPress Template and platform. I completed the survey in mid-July. The AgriLife FirstCall Ticket I submitted for our issue with the website was resolved on July 25, 2025. All events were updated and back working by July 27th, and I am working to maintain our events as they are revised via the newsletters and Eblasts.

If you notice any issues or need something posted, please don't hesitate to contact me. You can email me at jcoleman@uttyler.edu or TEXT me at 903-570-1010 with suggestions and edits.



Jessica L. Coleman, Webmaster