



Wood Duck Whistler

April 2026



A Message From President Carol Lanthrum

Greetings, my fellow Master Naturalists!

January started off slowly with Master Naturalist activities. No more! I do believe it is possible to get all your AT and VSH recertification requirements if you take advantage of all the activities available in March and April.

Did you hear that the TxMN Annual Meeting has been scheduled? Thursday, October 22nd, through Sunday, October 26th, in Waco! Pre-meeting field trips are scheduled on Wednesday before the meeting and are always interesting and fun. Waco is close, a little over 2 hours from Tyler, so you can go for one day if you aren't able to attend the entire meeting. But try to go for the whole meeting if you can — it's worth it! You learn so much and can get all your AT at one meeting. BTW, the Waco Mammoth National Monument is a great place to see any time you are in Waco.

The Training Class of 2026 is half-way through their study of the Texas Master Naturalist curriculum! Lectures were held on February 28th at the Mineola Civic Center in the morning. The weather for the Mineola Nature Preserve field trip in the afternoon was pleasant and dry. Lindsey Smith did a terrific job as interpreter, as usual, and we all enjoyed seeing the big alligator! Thanks, Mark Edmund, for bringing your spotting scope. Remember, attending training class field trips (as allowed by Kay Jenkins), and lectures, which you are always welcome to attend, are great ways to get hours. Thanks to all our chapter members who give lectures to the trainees!

Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine covers a Wildlife Management Area every month (there are over 50!), and the April issue highlights the Old Saline Bottom WMA! Mineola Nature Preserve is part of the larger drainage area for the Sabine River WMA. Trainees and members who attended the field trip saw how the bottomland hardwood forest soaks up and cleans the flood waters, and prevents soil erosion. AND, our own chapter member, Denise Viosca Gary, has an article titled "Bumblebee Wannabe" about the snowberry clearwing moth. Check out both of these stories in the April issue.

Our March 26 monthly meeting is a field trip to Mattox Prairie Farm in Yantis. The tour of the Purple Martin nest boxes begins at 5:30pm and the classroom lecture begins at 6:15pm. Julie Mattox will tell us about her volunteer opportunity involving Purple Martins. Are you curious about Purple Martins? I was! See my review article in this newsletter. Hope to see you there!

Can you join ETCMNs on Monday, April 13th, for the Texas Prairie Dawn Flower Count at the Kamatsu Mining Corporation in Gregg County? See Wanda Rauscher's article in this newsletter, but if you can help, send an email to tmneasttxpres@yahoo.com by April 6th.

April 18th is the TPWD East Texas Fire and Nature Festival at the Tyler Nature Center. We need lots of volunteers — volunteers to help with kids' activities (pre-planned) & to interact with visitors. Wanda Rauscher is facilitating this project and will have details soon.

April is National Volunteer Month! Thanks for all you do! Since 2020, the April TMN Tuesday meeting has been the Volunteer Fair. Organizations who need volunteers to assist in their projects make presentations to let us know about them. These are traditionally projects that you can do by yourself and so are perfect for you MNs who have life, health, work, or distance issues that prevent you from participating in group events. The City Nature Challenge is one of those events you can participate in on your own. Dates for observations are April 24-27; identifications run through May 10th. Google gives you all kinds of information and history, and the TPWD – Texas Nature Tracker site is Texas-specific. Our April chapter meeting will highlight our volunteer projects with displays by project facilitators.

Continue to see Eblasts as well as articles and announcements in the newsletter about all the AT and VSH opportunities. If you have a lecture/volunteer opportunity you would really like to attend, first review the 'Generally Accepted' reports to see if the event has already been reviewed. If not, submit an AT or VSH request 2 weeks ahead of time if possible. Please be respectful of our AT and VSH committees. There are many approved opportunities, and the committees do not need extra work unless you really intend to attend the zoom or event. The forms and the generally approved AT and VSH can be found under *Member, Forms* for our chapter of the TXMN website.

Speaking of our chapter section of the website, Jessica Coleman, our webmaster, has been working on the website to make sure all the information is accessible and current. If you see a problem, let me or Jessica know. Of course, it could be a user issue, as it was in my case recently! Thanks, Jessica!!

Our next Board meeting will be April 23 at 5:30pm. All members are welcome to attend. Directors, Committee Chairs, and Project Leaders are invited to present. If you have items you wish to bring up under new business, please get those to me at clanthrum@gmail.com by April 10th. I will send the agenda 10 days prior to the meeting. Reminder that our social time begins at 6:30pm and chapter meeting begins at 7:00pm. I suspect there will be a bunch of recertifications!

Happy Volunteering!

All About Purple Martins

by Carol Lanthrum



Purple Martins are some of America's favorite birds. We love their chattering song, graceful flight, and insect-eating habits. Also, martins don't mind living close to us, so we can watch them from our backyards! And once you get a colony started, the same birds and their subadults return to the same nests year after year.

But they need our help! Purple Martins that live east of the Rocky Mountains (*Progne subis subis*) are almost completely dependent on humans for housing. Those in the West (*Progne subis hesperia*) use abandoned nests in Saguaro cactus. California purple Martins (*Progne subis arboricola*) nest in natural cavities in trees as well as gourds and boxes.

Did you Know:

- Purple Martins are swallows, and a little bigger than barn swallows.
- Adult males are the pretty ones everyone wants to see: all dark plumage that shines black, dark blue or purple.
- Females are hard to tell from subadults males as they both have scattered dark feathers on their head, throat, and belly. Females have more purple on their head than subadults.
- Martins are arial insectivores, catching a variety of flying insects. Unfortunately, they do not eat that many mosquitoes (which fly close to the ground).
- They line their nests with dry plant material and twigs, but they also put green leaves on top before they lay their eggs.
- They lay 4-6 white eggs and begin a 16-day incubation when the next to the last egg is laid. All eggs hatch within 48 hours.

How to Attract Purple Martins:

- Choose the center of the largest open spot available, 30 to 120 feet from human housing and 40 to 60 feet from trees.
- Offer a combination of gourds and houses.
- Scouting males arrive in our area in February. Do not open housing until then to prevent House Sparrows and European Starlings from claiming housing.
- Martins may come as late as June to begin nesting, so don't close the entrance holes until late August.

- Housing needs a multi-compartment housing with starling resistant entrances, perch rods, owl and hawk guards. Poles must be 12-18 feet high, have a telescoping pulley, and have a predator guards.

Monitoring Housing is a Commitment!

- Housing needs to be lowered, sometimes daily, to remove competitive nests. Martin nests need to be monitored at least every 4 to 5 days. Access to each unit during breeding season is essential.
- As housing is in open areas, it needs good ventilation, drainage, and insulation.
- In the fall, housing must be scrubbed with 10% bleach as well as making any needed repairs. It is best stored indoors until needed again.
- Although you can build your own, gourds and houses are commercially available.
- Predator guards must be installed in all active housing.
 - Compartments must be deep to allow nests to be further from the entrance.
 - Owl and hawk guards are essential.
 - Pole guards are also necessary to keep snakes and raccoons from accessing nests.
 - Do not use guide wires to support the housing as this allows access by predators. Cement the pole base in the ground.
 - Decoys may be of some use.
- You may need to provide supplemental food during droughts. Shade, ventilation, drainage, and insulation may be needed in difficult weather.

You can have a great time observing Purple Martins and contribute to community science through the “Project MartinWatch”. Participants report when the scouts arrive, monitor nests, count birds, and other activities. Refer to purplemartin.org/how-to-help.



American Golden Plover

by Mark Edmund

Texas is a great place for birding thanks to our location along the Central Flyway and nearby proximity to the Mississippi Flyway. We enjoy many wonderful migratory birds that pass through and stop along the way to rest and refuel. One such migrant is the American Golden Plover that passes through East Texas in March and April.

The American Golden Plover is a medium-sized sandpiper (about the size of a Killdeer) and a long-distant migrant. The plover breeds on tundra habitats in Alaska and northern Canada. As summer in the Arctic draws to a close, the plover begins its migration south to the grasslands in southern Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and northern Argentina. Their fall migration is from the Canadian Maritime provinces and US East Coast over the Atlantic Ocean to South America. During spring migration back to the tundra, the majority of the American Golden Plovers pass through the middle of North America giving us opportunities to spot them. Their preferred habitat during spring migration includes shores, mudflats, turf farms and prairies.

In breeding plumage, the American Golden Plover shows a distinctive black face with a white S-shaped mark along the head and sides. The back is golden brown with golden spots and the underside is black. These markings provide camouflage to blend in with the tundra breeding grounds. During spring migration through Texas (as the birds fly north) we see them mainly in non-breeding plumage. The birds are brown overall with darker upperparts and a white belly (lacking the distinctive black-and-white markings).

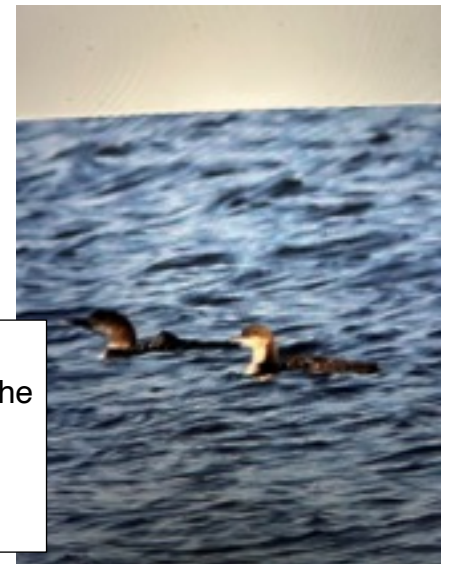
Per the All About Birds website (Cornell Lab of Ornithology) the oldest American Golden-Plover was at least 13 years old when it was recaptured and released during a banding operation in Alaska. The American Golden Plover conservation status is Least Concern.

On Thursday March 19th, David Brotherton led a NETFO field trip to find the American Golden Plover as they passed through East Texas. The field trip started at the Titus County Water District park near the Lake Bob Sandlin dam. We were lucky to find one American Golden Plover on the shoreline along with Killdeer, Least Sandpipers, and Wilson's Snipe. We also found a Pacific Loon amidst 20 or so Common Loons. Later, a stop at a farm pond on FM 1734 gave us two American Golden Plover again mixed in with several shore bird species. This stop also produced several species of duck and other water fowl along with a Northern Harrier, a Snow Goose and a Ross's Goose. The field trip just before noon in a small wooded area where David was able to call up two Barred Owls that flew in and gave us some nice views.



American Golden Plover in non-breeding plumage

Photo by David Brotherton

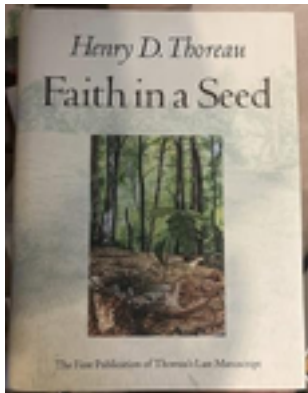


Common Loon (left) and Pacific Loon (right). Note the smaller size for the Pacific.

Photo by David Brotherton

Book Reviews

by Lance Homeniuk



Faith in a Seed by Henry David Thoreau, Bradley P Dean, ed. 1993 Island Press/Shearwater Books, Washington, DC. Hardcover, 284 pages.

“The Dispersion of Seeds and Other Late Natural History Writings” ; “The first publication of Thoreau’s last manuscript.” If the first tag line doesn’t interest you the second should intrigue you. It did me. When I thought I had read everything written by America’s first and foremost natural scientist (naturalist), I came across this book. It contains previously unpublished works.

They are as good as one might expect ...AND... what may be the first record of phenotype data – The sprouting, blooming, and fruiting of all identified plants of his home township.

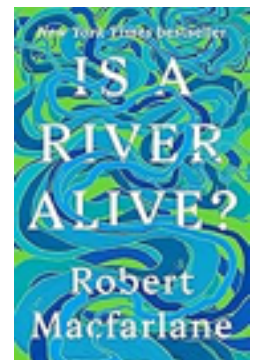
And for this end these silk streamers have been perfecting themselves all summer, snugly packed in this light chest, a perfect adaptation to this end – a prophecy not only of the fall, but of future springs. Who could believe in prophecies that the world would end this summer, while one milkweed with faith matured its seeds?

It took 125 years to make it in print but it was worth the wait!

Is A River Alive? By Robert Macfarlane. 2025 by W.W. Norton and Co., London, England. Hardcover, 374 pages

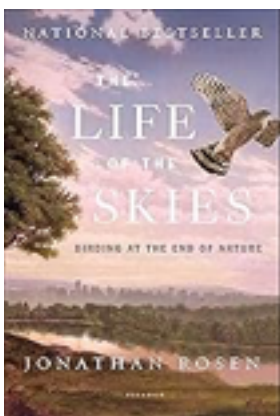
I cheated and jumped this gem up to the head of the TBR pile. But when I saw it on the shelf, a new book by one of my favorite nature authors I had to break my own rule. And I do not often pay full price for any book. Was it worth it?

Anchored in the springs seeping from the chalk downs near his home in England, Macfarlane travelled to three continents; expeditions to three very different rivers, each under threat from human practices. But each has its



advocates and champions, and each has been given legal status of personhood.

The cloud forest of Ecuador holds a wild river endangered by mining international interests and holds unique fungi, many unknown to science. Streams and lagoons in India have been contaminated by industrial and urban effluence but are being incrementally cleaned, and the sea turtles that nest on the beaches at its mouth are being protected. He kayaks down a raging torrent in Quebec, Canada that is treasured by indigenous peoples but desired by the hydroelectric concerns that have already dammed many neighboring water courses. This is the living and spiritual climactic water of the story.



The Life of the Skies: Birding at the End of Nature by Jonathon Rosen. 2008 Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY, NY. Hardcover, 326 pages.

A native New Yorker began birdwatching ten years before he wrote this masterful work that intertwines the connections “ - historical, literary, spiritual and scientific – “ between the birds and the watchers that make this our true national pastime (it is actively participated in by 48 millions of people). He brings together his own experiences and those of James Audubon, E. O. Wilson, Charles Darwin, Teddy Roosevelt, Thoreau, Whitman, Tristram. If I quoted Rosen once for each post-it in the leaves it would fill not just the article but the newsletter. So here is one of many:

(referring to Audubon’s dementia causing him to forget the names of birds)
“ Extinction is like that sadness amplified, as if the earth itself had the power to forget the animals that inhabit it, as if all awareness of a thing could be erased, not just in an individual mind but in God’s mind.”

Spiders - The Guild Classification System

Text and Photos by Robert Boggs

With more than 49,000 spider species globally and over 4,000 species in North America, identifying your native arachnids can be daunting. Fortunately, there is a classification system that can help us understand the tremendous variety of spiders in our houses and back yards.

First proposed in 2011 by a team led by Pedro Cardoso (<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0021710>), the "guild" system divides spiders into categories based on their hunting behavior. Unlike the taxonomic categories (domain, kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus and species), these are informal classifications. Today, we typically define eight guilds, half of which use webs to hunt and half that don't:

- Guilds that use webs to hunt:
 - **Sensing Web Weavers:** Spiders that use silk lines like alarms to detect the presence of prey, but do not ensnare their prey with their webs.
 - **Sheet Web Weavers:** Spiders that use a horizontal platform of webs, often outside a funnel-shaped retreat where they can hide before pouncing on their prey.
 - **Orb Web Weavers:** Spiders that build elaborate circular webs (known as orb webs) with a sticky spiral to catch primarily flying insects.
 - **Space Web Weavers:** Spiders that build tangled, disorganized-looking three-dimensional webs (known as tangled webs or cobwebs) to ensnare prey.
- Guilds that do not use webs to hunt:
 - **Ambush Hunters:** Spiders that lie in wait for prey to get close enough to strike, usually by blending into their environment.
 - **Ground Active Hunters:** Spiders that actively pursue their prey on the ground.
 - **Other Active Hunters:** Spiders that pursue their prey from a variety of surfaces and often are able to pounce from a distance.
 - **Spider Hunters:** Spiders that feed upon other spiders.

Spider identification guides such as "Spiders of North America" by Sarah Rose or "Spiders of the United States and Canada" by Dr. Sebastian Alejandro Echeverri use this classification system to help point you to the right section of the book to start with. Rather than leafing through the whole book trying to find a photo that looks like your spider, you can quickly flip to the right section based on the type of web the spider was in or the surface upon which it was hunting. For example, a spider perched in the middle of a circular web is almost certainly a member of the orb weaver guild, while a spider hiding in a flower is likely an ambush hunter.

But even if you are using a digital tool like iNaturalist to identify your spider, the guild system has its advantages. Not only does it inform you about how the spider spends its days and nights, it can give you hints about other qualities of the creature you've found. For example, an orb weaver like the yellow garden spider typically has terrible eyesight and relies upon its web to catch prey, whereas a ground active hunter like a wolf spider needs precise vision to identify and pursue its prey.

In future articles, I'll take a closer look at each of the guilds and give examples of spiders that you can find in East Texas. For now, the accompanying table offers a preview of which common spiders belong to each guild.

Table: The eight spider guilds, with examples in East Texas using their colloquial names

Guild	Examples in East Texas
Sensing Web Weavers	trapdoor spiders
Sheet Web Weavers	grass spiders, bowl-and-doily spider, filmy dome spider
Orb Web Weavers	yellow garden spider, spinybacked orb weaver, spotted orb weaver, orchard orb weaver
Space Web Weavers	black widows, false black widow, common house spider, triangulate combfoot spider
Ambush Hunters	crab spiders, brown recluse
Ground Active Hunters	wolf spiders, ant-mimic spiders
Other Active Hunters	jumping spiders, fishing/nurseryweb spiders, green lynx spider
Spider Hunters	pirate spiders



Ground Active Hunter (left): The orange ant-mimic sac spider (*Castianeira amoena*) has striking orange coloration that somewhat resembles a velvet ant, which is known for its painful sting.

Orb Web Weaver (right): The spotted orbweaver (*Neoscona crucifera*) is a common sight in East Texas in the summer. Note the distinctive shape of its orb webs; if you ask someone to imagine or draw a spider web, they will probably think of the classic orb web shape.





Other Active Hunter: The green lynx spider (*Peucetia viridans*) usually stalks its prey in low vegetation.

Sheet Web Weaver: Spiders in the Agelenidae family are commonly known as grass spiders or funnel web weavers. This spider is a member of the genus *Agelenopsis*, but identifying the specific species can require inspecting their genitalia under a microscope. These spiders create a large sheetlike web out in the open, with a funnel-shaped retreat to hide inside.



ETCMN Monthly Chapter Meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month at the Tyler Nature Center, 11942 FM 848, Tyler, TX 75707. Meet and greet at 6:45 PM; meeting at 7:00 PM.

Everyone is welcome!

If you are interested in learning more about the business side of the chapter, all ETCMN Members are invited to attend the quarterly chapter Board Meetings.

The Wood Duck Whistler is a monthly publication of ETCMN. News, essays, comments and ideas are always welcome. Please email them to Casey Boggs at caseylynnboggs@gmail.com

Chapter Volunteers Needed!



Prairie Dawn Count Set for April 13th — NEED CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS!!!

We've been invited to help with the plant count for the Texas Prairie Dawn, a rare plant endemic to East Texas that is on the endangered species list. Jan Culbertson, just retired from 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 will visit is on property that belongs to Komatsu Mining Corporation in Gregg County along Grace Creek. Plan will be to

meet at Komatsu in the morning to attend an orientation and to sign liability waivers and then to car caravan closer to the site. There will be a roughly 0.5 mile hike off the road. Insect repellent, hats, & water bottles should come with you! PLEASE send an email to the tmneastxpres@yahoo.com as soon as you can if you will be able to participate. I will send details to those responding. Project counts for volunteer service hours. Report time under "Chapter Data Collection Projects" and note Prairie Dawn Count.

Hopefully some of you were able to ZOOM the Heartwood Chapter TMN webinar on March 16 to learn more about this rare plant. There is a population of Prairie Dawn plants near that chapter's catchment that blooms a few weeks before ours.

Counting involves using screens and a clicker. There is a lot of bending/kneeling involved as you count all the Prairie Dawn plants within your screen and then you pass your count to the data person and flip the screen forward to count again. The more volunteers we have the faster we can cover the assessment area!

Jan has handouts about associated plant species & how to recognize the Texas Prairie Dawn that I will send to participants who let me know they intend to come! Spring is a great time to get outside and you will get to be in a place most never see.

Wanda Rauscher

Single bloom photo from <https://www.fws.gov/species/prairiedawn->





Quarterly Webinars Providing Advanced Plant Training to Agency Professionals, Volunteers and Landowners/Land Managers

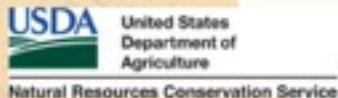
2026 Plant Party Line-up

MARCH 25TH
NATIVE PLANTS AND INSECTS

JUNE 24TH
GRASSES FOR THE WIN!

SEPTEMBER 16TH
SEDGES HAVE EDGES, RUSHES ARE ROUND

DECEMBER 9TH
TREES OF TEXAS



[SOUTHTEXASRANGELANDS.TAMU.EDU/PLANT-PARTY/](https://southtexastrangelands.tamu.edu/plant-party/)

It's Daylight Saving Time, Deer!

It's a nice evening. Not much traffic on the road. You are a bit tired after a long drive and looking forward to that next RV park for the night. Suddenly, a deer darts across the road followed by two more. You saw the "deer crossing" sign, so you are alert. You brake and, thankfully, no collision.

You most likely have seen your share of critters in the road. Hopefully, you have avoided any unpleasant critter collision. However, be aware. There are certain times when you are more likely to encounter a deer crossing the road.

When is 'prime time' for deer-vehicle collisions?

Collisions are more likely to occur at dusk or shortly afterward. In fact, the odds increase 14-fold during this time of day. In a study reported in **Current Biology** scientists reviewed over a million deer-vehicle collisions.

Additionally, they found that within 2 hours after sunset, when switching from daylight saving to standard time, collisions increased 16% more.

What are the costs incurred?

The study predicts that many deaths, both deer (36,550) and human (33), could be avoided by reducing the need for after-dark traffic. Plus, a year-round daylight saving time could help 2,054 folks dodge injuries sustained from a collision. All in all, savings could be in the \$1.9 billion range.



How can you avoid deer-vehicle collisions?

Firstly, highway departments post deer crossing warning signs for a reason. Those denote that area is a known path for deer. Be particularly alert shortly after dusk up into later at night.

Secondly, remember deer travel in herds. Where there is one, there are more. That single doe that dashed across the road may soon be followed by a few friends. When you see one on the road a long blast of your horn may dissuade others from jumping in front of you.

Finally, use your high beam headlight setting. This will reflect a deer's eyes more readily as they graze roadside. That gives you a chance to pay attention to the deer's movement.

By the way, check with your insurance agent about **coverage**. Not all insurance companies will cover a deer-vehicle collision without certain provisions.

Stay alert and be safe out there, and, Happy Travels!

PUBLISHED BY

wadevillage

Master Naturalist, Master Gardener, former Educators, Jazz Aficionado, World Travelers, Foodies, RVers, & Retired Folk. Life is so short, one must move very slowly. **[View all posts by wadevillage](#)**

Spring Workday at the Tyler Nature Center

Help get the Nature Center looking its best for the Fire and Nature Fest!

Upcoming workday is **Sunday, April 12th at 8:00 AM**. We usually work until noon, but volunteers can come and go as they are available. We plan to submit grant proposals to help fund the purchase of new plants and mulch for the wildscape.

Please contact Kay Jenkins at kvjenkins86@gmail.com if you plan to come so she can let you know if a workday is changed due to weather or other concerns.

Changed VMS Title

An edit has been done to the opportunity entitled Nature Center Wildscape in the VMS drop-down opportunity list and changed to the title **Tyler Nature Center**. This was done by request so that any physical work done at the Tyler Nature center, whether wildscape, trail maintenance, bench repair, office equipment storage moving, etc. would all fall under one heading. Please look further down the list for this title the next time you enter hours for work at this facility since the VSH opportunities are in alphabetical order.

Uncovering Unusual Pollinators
of Texas Prairie Dawn Flower
Speaker: Julia Freeman, U. Illinois
Zoom Meeting Sponsored by Heartwood Chapter MN
Reviewed by Carol Lanthrum

As our chapter will be counting Texas Prairie Dawn Flowers on April 13th, I zoomed in on the Heartwood Chapter meeting to learn more. As we know *Hymonoxys texana*, the Texas Prairie Dawn, is a state and federally endangered rare plant found in salt barrens in only 6 counties in Texas, one being Gregg County.

Not much is known about their breeding system. No wonder! The plants are very small so the pollination process is difficult to study, and possible insect vectors are tiny! These are the questions to be investigated:

- Do the plants self-pollinate?
 - It was decided it did happen but not an important contributor to pollination.
- Does cross-pollination increase successful seed production?
 - Again, not a significant contributor to pollination
- Do the plants use an insect to assure successful pollination? Probably.
 - Which insects visit the plants? Do the insects carry pollen?

Various methods were used to observe insects:

- Observers watched a small patch for 10 minutes, noting number and species.
- Observers walk around a large patch, and collect, photograph, or describe species.
- Micro-cameras took a photo every 3 seconds from sunrise to sunset, observing 2 or 3 plants. Bees, flies and checkered skippers were found, but the most common were thirps. Yes, those common agricultural pests.

To study the thirps, flowers were frozen and the thirps counted and examined for pollen on their body. The scientists found an average of 3 thirps per flower and 9 grains of pollen per thirp. The most prevalent species was *Microcephalothrip abdominals*. To determine that the thirp was the pollinator vector, the investigators devised mesh bags that allowed thirps to move from flower to flower, but not large insects, as well as bags that prevented thirps from moving to a different flower. It was found that when thirps were deterred from flowers, the plants produce fewer fertile seeds.

The scientists also investigated seed dispersion. As a member of the sunflower family, Texas Prairie Dawn have 'fluff' on their seeds, which many sunflowers use for wind dispersion. Sticky pads set close to flowers did not collect any seeds. The most likely dispersion method seems to be a combination of drying and water, as fallen, dry seeds open their bracts after 10 minutes in water and are carried by water to a new spot to germinate. Ants may help in dispersion by moving the seeds out of their paths, but they do not take them into their nests. Cold stratification does not seem necessary for germination. It was found that the seeds have a high germination rate, about 70%, and each flower has 15-50 seeds.

Conclusions:

- Cross-pollination is the least important form of pollination
- Thrips seem to be the key to successful pollination
- Water (and ants?) disperse seeds

How can we help? By continuing to provide education, outreach and service — educating the public about this rare plant, to use less pesticide, to plant more native plants, to leave fallen leaves on the ground, and advocating for preservation of natural areas, and helping scientists by participating in the plant count scheduled for April 13th in Gregg County!

East Texas Fire and Nature Festival

at the Tyler Nature Center April 18, 2026

**EAST TEXAS
FIRE & NATURE FESTIVAL**

SCAN FOR
MORE INFO

TYLER NATURE CENTER
APRIL 18, 2026
10:00AM - 3:00PM
11942 FM 848 TYLER, TX 75707

The second East Texas Fire and Nature Festival is coming up on April 18! This is a major public outreach event for the chapter at our home base. More than 300 attendees are expected. At the festival we will be promoting City Nature Challenge: informing visitors about it and trying to get folks ready to participate (getting iNaturalist on their phones and going over the basics of making observations). We will also have information about the species that thrive when brush is managed to keep grass & forbs available. For the kids, we will be doing bird beak appreciation with hands-on analogies. There will be many additional activities for kids and families beyond our booth. Please spread the word about the event to families & friends! Of course we need lots of volunteers! We want folks to help set up on April 17, late afternoon (weather permitting) and need morning shift and afternoon shift on April 18. PLEASE send an email to tmneasttxpres@yahoo.com to volunteer. I don't think we can have too many! This year there is a rain date should severe weather impact the 18th. After all it's Texas in the spring. Report volunteer time under "Outreach" and note East Texas Fire and Nature Festival.

I want to offer a HUGE thank you to all who have helped get the Wildscape ready for spring and our expected visitors! That Wildscape is the first way some folks learn about Texas Master Naturalist program.

Wanda Rauscher

"Living Dinosaurs on the Prairie: The Evolutionary Story of Birds and the Fight to Save the Attwater's Prairie Chicken"

with Jaide Cooper, Wildlife Refuge Specialist

Thursday, April 2, 7:00 - 8:30pm

Social Hour: 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Location: [Rosenberg Civic Center](#)

3825 TX-36, Rosenberg, TX 77471

Please join us on Thursday, April 2, at 7 p.m. at the Rosenberg Civic Center for a fascinating blend of past and present as we learn about the evolution of the Attwater's prairie chicken and the modern conservation efforts being used to preserve the species.

Birds are more than distant relatives of dinosaurs - they *are* dinosaurs, the only surviving branch of the theropod lineage that once dominated Earth. This talk traces the extraordinary evolutionary journey from giant predatory dinosaurs to the diverse birds around us today, highlighting key innovations such as feathers, air-sac breathing systems, and the adaptations that made powered flight possible.

We then bring this deep history closer to home, focusing on the Texas coastal prairie and one of North America's most endangered birds, the Attwater's prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido attwateri*). Each spring, this species performs courtship displays rooted in behaviors that stretch back tens of millions of years, making it a true "living dinosaur of the grasslands".

By linking evolutionary science with modern conservation, the lecture explores why the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service established the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge and how habitat restoration, research, and public support are helping prevent the disappearance of this remarkable species. Ultimately, the story of the Attwater's prairie chicken shows how understanding its deep past can guide our efforts to protect its future.

About Our Presenter: Jaide Cooper is a Wildlife Refuge Specialist at the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, where she supports a wide range of refuge operations. By day, she coordinates volunteers and educational programs that connect the public with prairie conservation; by night, she's often in the field radio-tagging prairie-chickens and helping monitor this critically endangered population.

A lifelong dinosaur enthusiast, Jaide's passion for paleontology led her to birds. Birds led her to conservation, and conservation has taken her across dramatically different ecosystems. She earned her B.S. in Conservation Biology from Arizona State University, studied desert ecology in the Southwest, interned with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the island of Kaua'i, and now works on the Texas coastal prairie helping "wrangle" the fragile Attwater's prairie chicken population back from the brink of extinction.

In-Person Meeting: Texas Master Naturalist - Coastal Prairie Chapter programs are free and open to the public. All ages are welcome. Refreshments and social time start at 6pm and the program starts at 7 pm.

Zoom Attendance: You may also attend by Zoom. Use the link below to register in advance for Zoom attendance.

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_T_vxRjnxTo-KWvELwyCpew#/registration

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Please join us either in person or by Zoom for a great presentation!

Jan Poscovsky, President
Texas Master Naturalist™, [Coastal Prairie Chapter](#)



Note from the Editor:

I had the rare opportunity to work with the Attwater's Prairie Chicken during my time at Caldwell Zoo. They are fascinating animals in dire need of help. I highly encourage everyone to attend this Zoom meeting to learn more about these incredible birds and the amazing people working hard to save them from extinction!



NATIVE PLANT SALE!

SFA Gardens Annual Spring Gala Plant Sale is Saturday, April 11 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, 2900 Raguet St., Nacogdoches, Texas.

The sale features many native plants. More information can be found on the SFA Gardens Plant Sales [website](#). The spring 2026 plant sale plant list can be viewed or downloaded from this [link](#).

Meetings In the Community

[Tyler Audubon Society](#) – 2nd Tuesdays, 6:30 PM, for more information, see page 15

[NPSOT](#) – Tyler - TBA

[NPSOT](#) – Longview – 4th Thursday 2:00 PM, Longview Arboretum

[NETFO](#) – 1st Wednesday 6:30 PM, Community Connections Building, 501 Pine Tree Road, Longview, TX

November 1, 2025-April 30, 2026 - Project Feeder Watch <https://feederwatch.org/about/detailed-instructions>

MINEOLA NATURE PRESERVE TOUR

on the Sabine River

Friday, March 27, 2026

9:00am - meet at the Pavilion

10:00am - 12:00pm - walking tour

Location: 1860 CO RD 2724, Mineola, Tx 75773

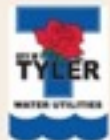
Greg Grant, Smith County Horticulturist and award-winning naturalist will lead a group walking tour of the Mineola Nature Preserve discussing native plants, ecosystems, and wildlife along with the effects of land use changes and management. Join him for a talk about the birds and bees!

Spacing is limited:

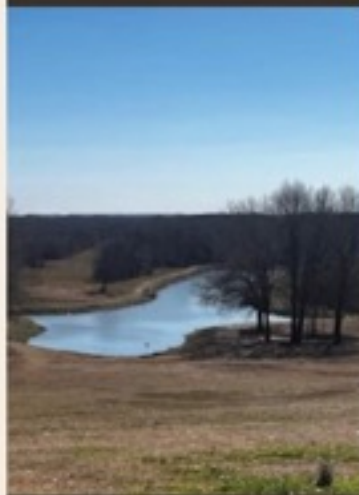
Call Wood County Extension Office (903) 763-2924 or Smith County Extension Office (903) 590-2980 to reserve your spot today:

(Tip books will be available for sale from the Wood County Master gardeners)

Presented By: Wood County Master Gardeners
and Smith County Earth Kind Environmental
Educational Committee



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University system, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts Cooperating.



Project Ground-Nesting Bee (GNBee)

Launched in June 2023, Project GNBee has quickly emerged as a leading initiative in the research, conservation, and applied management of wild bees. The project brings together a broad coalition of community scientists, researchers, and institutions to establish a national monitoring program for ground-nesting bees. Bee pollination contributes hundreds of billions of dollars annually to the global economy. Wild bees, which provide pollination services at no cost to farmers, significantly enhance both the quality and quantity of crop yields. Some species form large, long-standing nesting aggregations that deliver essential pollination services, supporting ecosystem resilience, agricultural sustainability, and food security. Despite their importance, locating bee nesting sites remains a major challenge. Conservation efforts have historically focused on floral resources, leaving critical gaps in our understanding of native bee nesting biology. To address this, Project GNBee has three primary goals: 1) discover, document, and study the nesting requirements of ground-nesting bee aggregations; 2) protect nesting aggregations and assess associated health risks to bees; and 3) develop multi-scale, evidence-based management strategies for agriculture. By advancing knowledge of native bee nesting ecology, Project GNBee aims to sustain pollinator biodiversity and promote a resilient, diversified pollinator community—essential for the health of ecosystems and agricultural economies alike.





Lakes and Pines Chapter

(Wood & surrounding counties)

Wednesday, April 1st, 2:00-3:30pm
Bob Wells Nursery at Sorelle Farms
975 County Road 2220 in Mineola



Email us: Lakes-and-Pines-Chapter@npsot.org
Chapter Website: npsot.org/chapters/lakes-and-pines/



“Understanding Soil Biology for Healthier Plants Using Earth-Kind Practices”

Clint’s session highlights how healthy soil biology improves plant vigor, drought tolerance, and nutrient uptake.

Clint grew up in Kaufman County and graduated Kaufman High School in 1990. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy from Texas A&M University in College Station and a Master of Science degree from Texas Tech University in Soil Science in 1997. After graduating with his master’s degree, Clint worked in industry before accepting a faculty position with Trinity Valley Community College teaching horticulture and biology. In 2003 the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension offered him the Agriculture & Natural Resources position in Milam County. He transferred to Wood County in 2005 as the Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent. He served Wood County until 2018 when he transferred to Smith County to serve as the Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent. He works closely with his program area committees to address programming needs in Livestock & Forages, Horticulture, Wildlife and Natural Resources, Earth-Kind Living Practices, and Result Demonstrations and Applied Research Projects to serve the needs of the County and the residents of Texas.



Clint T. Perkins
County Extension Agent-Ag/NR
Smith County

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS MISSION STATEMENT: Promote conservation, research and utilization of native plants and plant habitats of Texas through education, outreach, and example.

East Texas Spring Flowers You're Probably Walking Past

The temperatures here in east Texas have been up and down — one day it is 77 degrees, cloudy and windy; the next bright, sunshine and 19 degrees. Even though the weather changes often, one thing doesn't change. This time of year heralds the arrivals of small ephemerals in your landscape. During early spring, much attention often goes to redbuds, dogwoods, and azaleas. But beneath those showier blooms, a quieter floral display unfolds at ground level. Speedwell, Chickweed, Crow poison and the Common Dandelion—often dismissed as weeds—are among the earliest and most dependable spring flowers in the region. Together, they paint lawns, roadsides, and forest edges with subtle color while playing an important ecological role.



Speedwell (genus *Veronica*) is easy to overlook until sunlight catches its tiny blue to violet flowers marked with darker veins to guide pollinators toward the nectar. This plant is native to Europe but also can be found throughout the US with several species growing here in East Texas.

Blooming as early as late winter, speedwell thrives in lawns, fields, and disturbed soils. The flowers are hermaphrodite (having both male and female organs). Bees and small flies are frequent visitors, grateful for a food source when few other flowers are available. Despite its fragile appearance, speedwell is resilient. It tolerates mowing, compacted soil, and fluctuating temperatures—making it a reliable sign that spring has begun in East Texas.

Chickweed (*Stellaria media*), which is native to Europe and can be found throughout the US. This plant spreads like a soft green carpet across gardens, yards, and shaded areas. Its small white flowers resemble stars, each petal deeply divided so it appears to have ten petals instead of five.

Chickweed thrives during cool, damp weather and often peaks in early spring before fading as temperatures rise. In East Texas, it commonly appears after winter rains, flourishing in rich soils and partially shaded areas. Beyond its visual charm, chickweed is valuable wildlife forage. Birds feed on its seeds, while pollinators take advantage of its early blooms. Historically, chickweed has also been used in herbal traditions and as a spring green, prized for its mild flavor and nutrient content.



Crow Poison (*Nothoscordum bivalve*) is a Texas native early bloomer that pops up in yards and almost says, “Ta da!” It grows from a bulb and looks much like the wild onion, but has fewer and larger flowers on long stems and lacks the onion odor. The leaves are all at the base of the plant, about 1/8 inch wide, but often quite long, 4-15 inches. The white flowers have 6 tepals (a segment of the outer whorl in a flower that has no differentiation between petals and sepals), and 6 stamens. Individual flowers are 1/2 inch across and grow in loose clusters on stalks 8-16 inches tall.

Few plants spark as much debate as the common **Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*). In East Texas, its bright yellow flowers, dotting fields, lawns, and roadside shoulders, are among the most recognizable signs of spring. Dandelions are often criticized for their persistence, but their ecological importance is hard to deny. Each flower is actually a composite of dozens of tiny florets, providing abundant pollen and nectar for bees emerging from winter dormancy. As the flowers fade, they transform into familiar puffball seed heads, designed for wind dispersal. This efficient strategy allows dandelions to colonize in open spaces quickly—one reason they are so widespread across the region.



These small flowers reward careful observation with delicate colors, intricate patterns, and quiet resilience, reminding us that some of nature's most important work happens close to the ground and in the smallest of blooms. They may be easy to overlook, but they play a huge role in both ecology and beauty.

Ann Reynolds



iNaturalist turned 18 last week, and what a celebration it was!

From March 20–23, the community came together to mark 18 years since the very first observation was uploaded to iNaturalist. People from all over the world went outside, found the species they love most, and shared them as a birthday gift to iNaturalist and to each other. The result? Almost 3,400 observers documented nearly 16,000 species from every corner of the globe — and more than 5,300 identifiers jumped in to verify IDs and help put names to what people found. Everyone who contributed helped make this birthday something special!

From “The Nature Notice”

WHERE YOU CAN FIND US

Find East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists at the following locations:

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

<https://www.facebook.com/EastTexasMasterNaturalist/>

<https://www.instagram.com/easttexasmasternaturalist/>

<https://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/>

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/>

Organization

Officers

Title	Term	Name	Email
President**	2026-2027	Carol Lanthrum	clanthrum@gmail.com
Vice President**	2026	Dawn Bahr	dmebahr@yahoo.com
Secretary**	2025-2026	Ann Reynolds	reynolds.ann1@gmail.com
Treasurer**	2026-2027	David Shafer	davidrshafer@gmail.com
Immediate Past President	2026-2027	Wanda Rauscher	wwrauscher@gmail.com

** indicates Officers and Executive Board Members

Committees 2024

Title	Name	Email
Hospitality	Caryn Vorsas	carynvorsas@gmail.com
	Joe Vorsas	jvorsas@utexas.edu
	Bonnie Edwards	edwardsbonnie2020@gmail.com
	Open for addition	
Historian / Archivist	TBD	
Advanced Training (AT)	Karen Rueb-Hall	karenruebhall@gmail.com
	Amy Cumbie	amycumbie83@gmail.com

	Kari Steph	kabaster@gmail.com
Volunteer Service Projects (VSH)	Lance Homeniuk	homeniuk@yahoo.com
	Greg Marshall	Marshall7707@gmail.com
	TBD	
Community Education / Outreach	Lance Homeniuk	homeniuk@yahoo.com
Speakers Bureau	Greg Marshall	Marshall7707@gmail.com
Training Class 2025	Kay Jenkins Wanda Rauscher	kay-jenkins@sbcglobal.net wwrauscher@gmail.com
Membership	Donna Smith	lindseys71@hotmail.com
VMS Director	Lindsey Smith Assistant Director	lindseys71@hotmail.com
State Representative	Carol Lanthrum	clanthrum@gmail.com
2026 Class Representative	TBD	

Communications 2024

Title	Name	Email
E-Blast	Carol Lanthrum	clanthrum@gmail.com
Newsletter	Casey Boggs	caseylynnboggs@gmail.com
Photography	Lindsey Smith	lindseys71@hotmail.com
Social Media	Greg Marshall	Marshall7707@gmail.com
	Dawn Bahr	dmebahr@yahoo.com
	Ann Reynolds	reynolds.ann1@gmail.com
Website	Jessica Coleman	jcoleman@uttyler.edu

Chapter Advisors

Name	Organization	Email
Clint Perkins	Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Smith County	clint.perkins@ag.tamu.edu
Boyd Sanders	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	boyd.sanders@tpwd.texas.gov

Vacant roles:

Assistant Director VMS

Historian

Publicity

Outreach

If you have interest in filling one of these roles, please contact clanthrum@gmail.com

To view the chapter website:

- www.txmn.tamu.edu
- Scroll down past the “green blocks” to the State of Texas map.
- Click on our chapter location.
- Select any tab to see the upcoming events on the right. Select the top event, and you can scroll through the event by selecting the back and forward tabs at the bottom of each event. Or go straight to the one you are interested in by selecting it.
- You can also see coming months’ events in calendar format by selecting ‘View Calendar’ below the event listings.
- **NOTE:** It looks different on your phone.
 - Select ‘Chapter Info’ to see pictures and information about current chapter activities.
 - Select ‘Newsletter’ to see current and past Wood Duck Whistlers