

East Texas Chapter Master Naturalist
Board Meeting
February 1, 2026
Tyler Nature Center

Mission: 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

Agenda

Call to Order

President Carol Lanthrum called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

Attendance: Dawn Bahr, Karen Bartel, Jessica Coleman, Amy Cumbie, Lance Homeniuk, Kay Jenkins, Carol Lanthrum, Bob Lumpkins, Crystal Mann, Wanda Rauscher, Ann Reynolds, Karen Rueb-Hall, David Shafer, Donna Smith, Lindsey Smith, Caryn Vorsas, Joe Vorsas

Meeting Minutes – January 22 Board Meeting minutes were emailed prior to the meeting. Kay Jenkins made a motion to approve the minutes and Joe Vorsas seconded the motion. The motion passed.

President's Update – Carol Lanthrum thanked the group for trusting her to be chapter president. Her position is to guide the chapter forward but the members must decide the goals for the chapter. She outlined the role of Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) and stressed that the chapter must follow the updated governing documents. All Board members need to sign the Conflict-of-Interest policy (see Secretary Ann Reynolds for the document). The top goals for TMN for 2026 are member retention, member experiences, diversity and public access. State priorities for 2026 and near future are: governing documents updated and adopted by chapters and help with Conservation Wrangler project with Texan by Nature. The VMS will be migrated to a more stable platform on February 28 and admins will receive training.

The East Texas Chapter (ETCMN) goals from Carol's perspective are: retain membership (with uses of mentors for new class trainees), research TPWD goals for the Tyler Nature Center and how we can partner with them. Another goal is to make it easier for members to give presentations at public events by retaining information from past events, create a comprehensive list of members willing to present and/or share presentations through the Speakers' Bureau. A detailed eBlast will not go out every month as there are already lists of approved AT and VS for members to review.

Vice President – Dawn Bahr – Wanda Rauscher presented “Asian Beetles” at the January 22 chapter meeting. February 26th Liz Tidwell will have a Zoom presentation on Predators. March 26th will be a combined field trip and chapter meeting at the Yantis Prairie Classroom. The field trip will begin at 5:30 pm and the chapter meeting will start at 6:30 pm. The subject of both will be Purple Martins. April 23rd chapter meeting will be the Project Fair, May 28th will be Crystal Mann presenting Mycology, June 25th will be Texas Nature Tracker Wendy Anderson, September 24th will be Sharpen Your Pencils – Texas Trivia Night presented by Dawn Bahr, and October 22nd will be Jessica Coleman speaking about the upcoming Christmas Bird Count. She asked the group whether it would be more beneficial to have a Friendsgiving party in November as opposed to a Holiday party in December.

Secretary – Ann Reynolds – All past chapter meeting minutes have been uploaded to the chapter website with the help of web master Jessica Coleman. Secretary goals for 2026 is to have all files in her possession and in the office meet the TMN retention requirements.

Treasurer – Bob Lumpkins – distributed the December 31, 2025 year-end financial report and stated that a \$2,000 12-month, 3 ½% interest bearing CD was purchased.

Past President – Wanda Rauscher – Wanda distributed a list of accomplishments during her 4 years as President which included a list of outreach projects, chapter meeting presenters/topics, spring training class, and the 2025 Great Texas Birding Classic final numbers. She said that the Bat Acoustic Monitoring project needs members to help as Sara Emry-Arhtur will be moving.

Hospitality – Caryn and Joe Vorsas – Hospitality has provided drinks and light snacks for chapter meeting plus set up and clean up as required by the Tyler Nature Center. On December 13, 2025, President Wanda Rauscher and the Hospitality Committee provided 45+ members and guests with BBQ and side dishes for the holiday party. A good time was had by all.

Advanced Training – Karen Rueb-Hall – An updated Advance Training Request form was uploaded to the chapter's web site. The Advanced Training Committee has reviewed several new events. Karen's report listed 12 current opportunities so member should be able to recertify easily.

Volunteer Service Hours – Lance Homeiuk – The volunteer committee report showed that 58 volunteers reported 5953 service hours for 2025, That is about a third of the active members and an average of about 100 hours each.

Speakers' Bureau – Greg Marshall – no report/not present

New Training Class Mentors – Kay Jenkins – Kay stated that the training class initially had 17 members sign up but two have dropped out. The field trip on January 31 to Caddo Indian Mounds was well attended (even though it was very cold) with 24 people in attendance. A Zoom class was held on Tuesday, January 2th due to the snow and ice.

Membership – Donna Smith – There were 15 people registered for the 2025 training class, 13 members attended classes and 9 graduated completing the 40-hour course. Two received initial certification.

New state rules allow members who did not certify in their first year after their class graduation, to continue their initial certification by adding to hours already recorded in the VMS. There were 2 initial certifications completed under this program – one each from 2019 and 2023 classes and two from the 2024 class. This gave our chapter a grand total of 6 initial certifications for 2025 and 4 transfers. There are a total of 164 active and in-training members. Forty members re-certifications in 2025. Not all pins have been picked up. The exciting news is the 2026 recertification pin is the Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)

Volunteer Management System – Lindsey Smith - As of 1/31/26, there have been 538 volunteer service hours entered which is 136 fewer hours than the previous year. Last year there were a total of 5,953 volunteer service hours entered into the Volunteer Management System. The previous year there were a total of 5,532 volunteer service hours. In 2025 there were 775 Advanced Training hours entered into the system which was 20 fewer than in 2024. There have been three members that were on inactive status who have rejoined our chapter so far this year and two are completing their class training from previous years with the 2026 class.

Newsletter – Casey Boggs – no report/not present

Social Media – Greg Marshall – Carol Lanthrum announced that Dale Wade is now the committee chair. Dawn Bahr reconsidered and is staying on the committee. Ann Reynolds stepped down as two on the committee is enough to handle the two Facebook pages.

Website – Jessica Coleman – The web site is up-to-date and a page has been designed to showcase our members at work. Please forward any photos that need to be uploaded to Jessica.

Photography – Lindsey Smith – no report.

There are three positions open – Historian, Publicity and Outreach. Contact Carol Lanthrum if you are interested.

New Business – Crystal Mann – There is an opportunity for our chapter to become involved in documenting macrofungi. She has been collecting mushrooms in our area for the UT Fungarium project to document our local fungi and she has found a new species belonging to the genus *Lepiota*, another specimen has been documented at Longview's Williams Lake Park and another was documented at Caddo Lake. She proposed to the board that the chapter apply for a \$4000 grant to pay Mycota Lab to barcode fungal specimens collected outside their bioblitz dates. This is a great opportunity for our chapter to contribute to scientific knowledge. Dawn Bahr made a motion to apply for the grant and Wanda Rauscher seconded the motion. Kay Jenkins suggested an amendment to the motion that the grant criteria be investigated and presented at the next meeting. The amended motion passed.

The meeting concluded at 4:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Reynolds
Secretary