

EAST TEXAS CHAPTER TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST

Check the website for all events and activities and other project lists: txmn.tamu.org

(updated 05/04/2026)

APPROVED VOLUNTEER SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

If you cannot find one you like then propose a new one! Email it, text it, or print it and snail mail it to Lead Director, Lance Homeniuk homeniuk@yahoo.com, 903-987-3410, 622 Bean Ave, Kilgore, TX 75662; or to Greg Marshall at Marshall7707@gmail.com.

When reporting your VHS (Volunteer Service Hours) on any of these projects in the VMS (Volunteer Management System) portal, click on Volunteer Login, type in your user name and password, then click the “Report My Service icon (a clock) please remember to use the drop down menu and scroll past the AT (advanced training) listings to find the descriptor for your project. In the box under “how many hours did you volunteer?” fill in the “describe your research” - the activity for your reported hours.

WHAT'S NEW AND WHAT'S HOT!!

Get outside with Wild Bunch projects and the Tyler Nature Center Wildscape. See detailed listings under ONGOING TPWD / AGRILIFE PROJECTS & COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

City Nature Challenge/ iNaturalist Identifications

Get ready to help make ID's after all of the City Nature Challenge observations! Identification period is April 28-May 10. Go to Identifications and then filter data using “more filters” and select Projects- East Texas Chapter Master Naturalist Biodiversity. Record time under “iNaturalist-Identification”.

Bat Acoustic Monitoring

Sara is looking for more staff & a co-director. This project is scheduled to keep collecting data for a few more years. Planning starts before monitors go out in April/May. See detailed project description under **SEASONAL PROJECTS**.

Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) Project

Dr. Kira Delmore, currently at Columbia University, (& her students) placed GPS backpacks on purple martins at Julie Mattox's colony in 2024. In 2025 they recaptured some of the birds at Julie's to download the data from the devices. Additional birds received backpacks in 2025. The birds must be recaptured to download the data from the devices in 2026. By having volunteers monitor birds at Julie's colony and Mark Byrd's colony in Gladewater, birds with backpacks can be identified with their nesting locations. These observations will make it easier for the university team to pinpoint which nests to go to for bird retrieval. Report time under “Chapter Data Collection Projects” and note “Purple Martin Conservation”

Community science opportunity: Project GNBee (Ground-Nesting Bees)

Researchers at Cornell are seeking your help to better understand and protect the nests of solitary, gentle, ground-nesting bees. Even though 90% of bees are solitary and 70% of bees nest in the ground, knowledge about solitary ground-nesting bees is lacking. This project will study how factors like soil characteristics affect these bee populations, which will help us learn how to protect and improve nesting habitat for bees that provide crucial pollination services. By promoting nesting sites for native bees, we can enhance ecosystem and agricultural sustainability and resilience. To participate, join the iNaturalist Project GNBee and add your observations to the iNaturalist with your picture(s) of a ground-nesting bee and its nest entrance, ideally showing a bee entering or exiting the nest. Past observations are accepted! Also, visit a previously reported aggregation in your area and experience your local biology. Look for nest entrances in grass or soil from early spring to late summer. To enable bee identification getting a photo of the face, the back, the side, and the wing venation helps. Report service hours in Chapter Data Collection Projects; and note Project GNBee. Questions? Visit <https://www.gnbee.org/>. Submitted by WandaRauscher wvrauscher@gmail.com.

ACTIVE PROJECTS

(they are listed here alphabetically but for details see the following pages under the headings by type of project)

Bat Acoustic Monitoring
BRIT Armchair Botanist
Caddo Mounds State Historic Site projects
City Nature Challenge
City of Tyler Arbor Day November 7th
City of Tyler Parks
CoCoRaHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network)
DFW Wildlife Coalition
Earth Day education & outreach April 22nd
ETCMN Newsletter
Great Backyard Bird Count Feb 14-17, 2026
Great Texas Birding Classic April 28-May 10, 2026
iNaturalist Biodiversity
iNaturalist Identification
Lake Gladewater Park
Langley Island
Longview Arboretum and Nature Center
Martin Creek Lake SP Projects
Mineola Nature Preserve Trails & Wildscape (Wild Bunch)
Mineola Nature Fest Oct 17, 2026
Mission Tejas State Park
Monitor Bluebird Nesting
Mrs Lee's Daffodil Gardens
Nature's Notebook (National Phenology Network)
Native Prairie Association Bird Counts
Odolympics June13-23, 2026
Prairie Dawn Count
Project East Texas Seeds
Project Feederwatch – begins Nov. 1st, 2025 until 4/30/2026
Project GNBees
Project NestWatch
Purple Martin Conservation Association
Science & Nature for Kids& Their Families at SFA Gardens
Speakers Bureau
Texas Litter Database Project
Texas Pollinator Bioblitz October 2026
Tyler Bee Day June 20, 2026
Tyler Nature Center Wildscape
Tyler Nature Center Trail Maintenance (Wild Bunch)
Tyler State Park Trail Maintenance (Wild Bunch)
Yantis Prairie Day Sept. 26, 2026
UT Fungarium Project

CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECTS

BRIT Armchair Botanist

Enter data from the Botanical Research Institute of Texas displayed herbarium specimens into an on line program from home. 1 hour training required. Contact Carol Lanthrum clanthrum@gmail.com or Tiana Rehman, herbarium

collections manager trehman@brit.org . See <https://fwbg.org/science-conservation/herbarium/armchair-botanist/> Report volunteer hours under “Community Work Projects”

City Nature Challenge 2026 Bioblitz

Project Leader Wanda Rauscher

Territory is our chapter catchment- Smith County and the 9 counties surrounding Smith. Count days are expected to be April 24-27, 2026 with identifications to be made April 28- May 4.

1) Involve our neighbors- get non-master naturalist folks involved in observing our flora & fauna and posting to iNaturalist. We care about what we know- so let's help our neighbors learn! I would love to have chapter members plan to host bioblitzes/ nature walk blitzes at area parks and nature centers both before the count days and during the count period.

2) Plan such that our members are making observations in every county of the catchment during the observation days.

3) Make a plan to seek out “Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Texas” VSH should be posted under “City Nature Challenge: TMN Report Hours”.

See also iNaturalist- identification

CoCoRaHS precipitation reporting Buy a rain gauge, open an account and send in daily reports (even zeros count) of rainfall, snow, and hail. Go to <https://www.cocorahs.org/> to learn details. Data is used by the National Weather Service and NOAA. Contact Lance Homeniuk for info at homeniuk@yahoo.com Report service hours in “CoCoRaHS – Weather Reporting.”

The Great Texas Birding Classic

Tournament date April 15-May 10, 2026. Registration deadline 4/1. Contact Mark Edmunds maedmund321@gmail.com for information about our chapter teams. For general rules go to <https://tpwd.texas.gov/events/great-texas-birding-classic/how-to-participate>. Report volunteer hours under “TPWD Approved Activity” and note Great Texas Birding Classic.

iNaturalist: A Citizen Scientist program dedicated to the study of global biodiversity. www.inaturalist.org Observe and photograph any wild organism and post to iNaturalist (through the App for your cell phone or from your camera via computer). Pay special attention to Texas Nature Tracker projects that are looking for information on the distribution of specific species. Note that all observations are verified by peer review. As you develop expertise, participate in peer review identifications especially in support of TPWD bioblitz projects. iNaturalist data is used by many conservation agencies and universities, including TPWD, University of Texas, and TAMU. Contact Crystal Mann Cosmic_cat84@yahoo.com or Lindsey Smith lindseys71@hotmail.com for info. Report service hours in iNaturalist.

iNaturalist Identifications: You can be part of the peer review process. Plan to do this from the website, not the app on your phone (so you have more filters & tools at your fingertips). When just starting out look for the “unknown category” and make the initial placement such as plant, bird, mammal, especially for organisms within an area that is familiar to you. As you develop expertise, identify to family and maybe even genus and species. There is a good introduction to identification by our Texas Nature Tracker Biologists and Wildlife Biologist Sam Kieschnick <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJwrHUOVNik> Other master naturalists in our chapter can help you get started too! Contact Wanda Rauscher wwrauscher@gmail.com for info. Report Service hours in “iNaturalist- Identification”. Tip- you can filter data using Projects- East Texas Chapter Master Naturalist Biodiversity in the “more filters” option to focus on observations from our catchment.

East Texas Chapter Master Naturalist Biodiversity (iNaturalist Project): This project is designed for members and friends of ETCMN to record photographic and/or audio recordings of observations of all flora and fauna within our ten county area to have data of the biodiversity within our responsible area. The counties we serve are Rains, Van Zandt, Smith, Wood, Upshur, Gregg, Rusk, Cherokee, Anderson, and Henderson county. All data (no matter where or when it is recorded within our ten county chapter area) in this service project is important to show trends of how verified species in this area are helping to maintain, improve, and restore the ecology of this region. Only observations that have attained a Research Grade quality can be used to further the scientific data used by iNaturalist

to be shared publicly which will require accurate data locations (ideally, less than 500 meters). This project will also allow for disabled persons to collect nature observations from an area that facilitates their needs. By including non-member observations in our project, we hope to encourage others to become an East Texas Master Naturalist. Report service hours "Chapter Data Collection Projects: TMN Report Hours" Contact Greg Marshall for info Marshall7707@gmail.com

Native Prairie Association Bird Counts

If participating in a formal bird count hosted by the Native Prairie Association of Texas can report time under Chapter Data Collection Projects noting Native Prairie Count.

Nature's Notebook - National Phenology Network:

Collect observations of plants and animals that interest you and report them to a national database. Choose your target plants and/or animals from provided lists. Learn the features and behaviors to be observed as well as how to record and report them. Upload reports to the database where you will be able to view maps and data collected by other observers. Data are used by researchers in climate change and cyclical environmental studies. Explore link for more information: <https://www.usanpn.org/about> . Report service under "Nature's Notebook". Contact Lance Homeniuk at homeniuk@yahoo.com if you have questions.

Odolympics:

On June 13 until June 23, 2026, there will be a Western Hemisphere push to collect data on odonata (dragonflies & damselflies) and their locations. This data collection time is a citizen science effort to gain knowledge of odonata species and their distribution. To help in this effort post all of their odonata sightings either in OdonataCentral.org or into iNaturalist.org. Sightings must be in Texas so they can count towards VSH, but they can be anywhere in Texas. Please look at <https://www.odonatacentral.org/odolympics/#/> for detailed instructions for your posting of observations. If you need assistance contact Lindsey Smith at LindseyS71@hotmail.com. Report service hours in "Chapter Data Collection Projects "

Project East Texas Seeds

Project Monarch Watch needs seeds of wild populations of three species from our area: Shore Milkweed (*Asclepias perennis*), Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and Green Antelopehorn (*Asclepias viridis*). Carol Clark made the initial appeal: "Each year, Monarch Watch contracts a Texas grower to produce small plants from milkweed seeds of species native to Texas, which are distributed back into Texas. Each plant is sent back to the same region its seed came from. In the past, these plants were only available in the spring, but they want to make some available in the fall too. To do that, they need to replenish the seeds they have in order to be able to grow a spring crop as well. We're asking anyone who has milkweed seeds or can pick seeds to help." Go to <https://monarchwatch.org/bring-back-the-monarchs/milkweed/seed-collecting/> for the detailed instructions on gathering the seeds. Milkweed seed should be brown and leathery when mature, though the pods themselves may still be green. You can test an unopened pod for maturity by applying gentle pressure to the seam. If it does not open readily, the seed inside is immature. Note that our species bloom from March/April through September. Seeds get ripe roughly six weeks after blooming. Do wear gloves as the sap can irritate skin and keep the sap out of your eyes. Report service hours in "East Texas Seeds."

Project FeederWatch

Register your site and details on The Cornell Lab Project FeederWatch website and pay a fee of \$18 if you are not already a member of Cornell Lab. Begin (or continue) watching birds at your bird feeders from November 1, 2024 through end of April 2025. You are allowed to observe twice a day for two consecutive days every week. Then log on to the website and report your observations. For more depth you may decide to record behaviors and report those too. Contact Lance Homeniuk (903-987-3410 or homeniuk@yahoo.com) for more information. Report hours as "Project FeederWatch."

Project NestWatch

Project NestWatch from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a nationwide nest-monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds, including when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, how many eggs hatch, and how many hatchlings survive. The database is used to study the current condition of breeding bird populations and how they may be changing over time as a result of climate change, habitat degradation and loss, expansion of urban areas, and the introduction of non-native plants and animals. Take the on-line training and register to participate <https://nestwatch.org/about/overview/> . Want to ask questions of a participant? Reach out to Donna Hamill, txgardengal@icloud.com . Report time as “Chapter Data Collection” and state Cornell Lab Nest Watch.

UT Fungarium Project

See background and details at the “Fungarium Kickoff”, supported by the Central Texas Mycological Society. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LAdzXXJ3dw#:~:text=UT%20Fungarium%20Kickoff%20\(Full%2Dlength,grwth%20of%20a%20new%20collection](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LAdzXXJ3dw#:~:text=UT%20Fungarium%20Kickoff%20(Full%2Dlength,grwth%20of%20a%20new%20collection)

Need to follow the detailed guidelines for collecting, photographing, describing, recording specimen location and date. Also must dry per instructions before shipping specimen. Identified specimens are preferred - can use family name but if possible, genus. Record time under “Data Collection Projects”, noting UT Fungarium Project Contact Crystal Mann (Cosmic_cat84@yahoo.com) for further information.

ONGOING TPWD / AGRILIFE PROJECTS & COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Caddo Mounds State Historic Site: Ongoing volunteer opportunities

Contact Lance Homeniuk homeniuk@yahoo.com, 903-987-3410 for updates and directions to the site. Periodic volunteer projects at this site include docent guiding, staffing booths at Caddo Cultural Day and Camino Real Day, trail maintenance- gravel, leveling, help visitors, answer questions, take visitors through museum. Docent work - explain Museum on Fri., Sat. Sun. Help with snake woman garden maintenance. Report service hours in "Service at Texas State Parks, Preserves, Refuges, Historic Sites, and Wildlife Management Areas.”

DFW Wildlife Coalition

Volunteers answer questions about injured and orphaned wildlife and help callers find solutions to wildlife conflicts. Data collected is especially relevant and useful to urban biologists, animal control agents and others collecting information about wildlife because we keep records on coyote, bobcat, mountain lion, alligator and other sightings. That data is used to manage wildlife and support research. We educate the public in order to reduce human/wildlife conflicts. We also help orphaned and injured wildlife find help they need. Ongoing training offered. Contact Karen Reub-Hall at karenruebhall@gmail.com . Report service hours in “DFW Wildlife Coalition.”

Lake Gladewater Park

Clean up of the park and creek area at Gladewater Lake. Contact Greg Marshall at Marshall7707@gmail.com for dates and activities. Report service hours in “Community Work Projects.”

Langley Island (on Lake Tyler) Clean-up Project

Help repair wood duck boxes, clear trash, and work on trails. Watch Eblast for dates and times. Project Leader: Jessica Coleman jcoleman@uttyler.edu
Report volunteer time under “Community Work Projects”

Longview Arboretum and Nature Center

To assist the director with educational and event opportunities for the public. Contact Jan Barth, jebarth48@sbcglobal.net Report service hours in “Community Work Projects.”

Martin Creek Lake State Park (MCLSP)

The park has some high priority maintenance projects that could use helping hands - trail drainage installation, painting of screened shelters. Farther down the road they want to clear about 4.5 acres of invasive plants and reseed

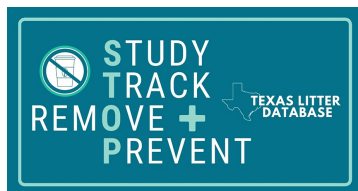
with natives. Lance Homeniuk is project lead and will schedule workdays. Contact him to join the team and receive schedule updates homeniuk@yahoo.com, cell 903-987-3410 Report service in “Service at Texas State Parks, Preserves, Refuges, Historic Sites, and Wildlife Management Areas.”

Mission Tejas State Park

Contact Lance Homeniuk homeniuk@yahoo.com, for updates and directions to the site. Periodic volunteer projects at the park may include trail work and interpretive programs. Report service hours in “TPWD Approved Activity.”

Texas Litter Database Project

First site- Lake Striker Boat Ramp in Cherokee County near New Summerfield



Register a planned clean-up and follow project protocol (<https://txlitter.org/>) to record the type of trash being picked up at a site. Contact Crystal Mann Cosmic_cat84@yahoo.com for further information. Report service hours in “Community Work Projects”.

Tyler Nature Center Wildscape

Maintain the wildscape in front of the nature center in collaboration with members of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Please contact project leader, Kay Jenkins, by email kvjenkins86@gmail.com at or by text at 361-790-6092 to let her know you want to help and be informed about workdays. The Tyler Nature Center is our home base! Please consider helping to maintain this wildflower demonstration garden. Report service hours in “Tyler Nature Center”.

The Wild Bunch

The “Wild Bunch” is a group of outdoor loving Master Naturalists who help maintain trails in the catchment area. We are looking for more volunteers to join our “Bunch”. Another way to earn VSH!

Mineola Nature Preserve Hiking/Biking Trail Maintenance and Wildscape Garden Maintenance

Clean debris, clear overgrowth and pick up trash on the Greer Hill hiking/biking trails, Rail Bed walking trail, and other public areas. Perform cleaning/maintenance at the Wildscape Garden and Caddo Spring (formerly Todd Pool). Contact Polly Jones pollyjones72@gmail.com or 903-521-0586. Report service hours in “Community Work Projects.”

Tyler State Park Trail Maintenance

Help park staff with trail clearing and maintenance. Jamie Upson is project leader and asks that anyone interested in joining the team send her an email at jamie@blueriveroil.com or call 972-741-3117. Report service hours in "Service at Texas State Parks, Preserves, Refuges, Historic Sites, and Wildlife Management Areas.”

Tyler Nature Center Trails

Work on trail maintenance at our home base, The Tyler Nature Center. Contact Vicki Hoppis VLH6475@comcast.net or text Vicki Hoppis at 205-310-0824. Report service hours under “Tyler Nature Center”

ON GOING OUTREACH PROJECTS

ETCMN Newsletter

Submit articles and photos of interest to the chapter. Research a topic you were introduced to in a meeting and got motivated to dig deeper. Share an area of expertise. Write up your most recent service project, field trip or

workshop. Then send them to Casey Boggs at caseylynnboggs@gmail.com by the 20th of the month. You get to count the time you spend on the project if you wish. Report service hours in “Administrative Work/Communications.”

Science & Nature for Kids & Their Families at SFA Gardens

Provide fun learning activities about the natural world around us while also teaching science & ecology. Expect quarterly events. Watch Eblast for call for volunteers and details. Project leader Kay Jenkins (kvjenkins86@gmail.com). Report time under “Outreach”

Speakers Bureau: Raise awareness about the natural world by giving presentations to local groups such as schools, scouts, Rotary, etc. or writing articles for local newspapers and newsletters. If you have an area of expertise, or want to develop confidence and meet people, as well as being an ambassador for nature and a face of the Master Naturalists. Contact Greg Marshall at Marshall7707@gmail.com or check out the link at <https://forms.gle/7H3xPdiGndvrkjmw7> Report service hours in “Outreach”.

SEASONAL PROJECTS

Bat Acoustic Monitoring

Initiated by Texas Nature Trackers of the Wildlife Diversity Program of TPWD. We do not have good data on bat populations and ranges. Many bat species consume insect pests thus improving crop yields (and decreasing pesticide use) and others act as important pollinators. The USDA has established the project NABat, a continent-wide program to monitor bats at local to range-wide scales for effective conservation decision-making and long-term viability of bat populations across the continent. TNT and TMN are joining this multi-year program. 2024 is the pilot year for the program. Monitors to be placed in the time period April-June (specified by protocol). NABat has grids defined and will want monitoring done following a detailed and specific protocol. Identification of suitable properties needs to be completed well before April. Deployment Volunteers will be needed to place and pick-up monitors (place on a Monday, pick up on a Friday and then move to the next corner of the grid). Data Review-Volunteers will be needed to process the collected data using Kaleidoscope Pro software. Note: all private landowners must sign agreements before participating. Report time under “Bat Project Acoustic Monitoring”
Project Leaders: Sara Emry Arthur

Email: sarabethea@gmail.com and the3arthurs@gmail.com

City of Tyler Arbor Day

Now held on Texas Arbor Day, November 7th at different parks in Tyler, TX. Watch for details in the Fall. ETCMN usually has a display table and some activities for the kids. If you would like to participate let Wanda Rauscher know wrauscher@gmail.com. Report service hours in “Outreach”

Earth Day April 22nd

Typically, there are many requests for outreach across the chapter catchment. Make plans well before April if there is a talk or table display you would like to share! Watch Eblast for specific requests. Past venues have been Camp Tyler and Trinity Valley Community College contact Wanda Rauscher to lead wrauscher@gmail.com.

Great Backyard Bird Count gbbc@birds.cornell.edu

Will take place **Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17, 2026**. Contact Lance Homeniuk homeniuk@yahoo.com, 903-987-3410 for more info. Weblink for more information: <https://www.birdcount.org/> Report hours as “Great Backyard Bird Count”

Mrs Lee’s daffodil Gardens

In early spring when the flowers bloom you can help guide and interpret for visitors who drive through and/or stroll and take photos. You can also share the master naturalist message. Suzanne Ceglia is the property manager and contact. 254-396-0708. If you would like to schedule a chapter field trip (maybe a hike and picnic?) speak to her about an off-season date.

Mineola Nature Fest

October 17, 2026. Staff a table to interact with the public and represent the chapter and master naturalist program or to host a hands-on activity for young people. Contact Wanda Rauscher, wwrauscher@gmail.com

Monitor Bluebird Nesting Activity at Tyler Botanical Gardens

Monitor 17 bluebird nest boxes once per week and report findings (number of eggs/hatchlings) to nest watch mobile app. Clean nest boxes between hatchings and perform minor repairs to nest boxes. This activity will occur between February and September when the bluebirds are active with their 2 to 3 nesting cycles per year. Contact Paul Wick at 903-571-5557 or phwick@yahoo.com for more details. Report service hours in "Community Work Projects."

Prairie Dawn (*Hymenoxys texana*) Count (March/April 2027 on Komatsu property)

Texas Prairie Dawn Flower, a rare plant endemic to East Texas is on the endangered species list. US Fish and Wildlife has requested our assistance performing a census of the population along Grace Creek, Longview TX area. 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. Contact Wanda Rauscher for details. Report time under "Chapter Data Collection Projects" and note Prairie Dawn Count.

Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) Project

Purpose of Project: Members will gather at one of two properties: one in Yantis or one in Gladewater. The Yantis property is owned by Julie Mattox and the Gladewater property is owned by Mark Byrd. Members will monitor gourds for 1 hour per week (early AM or at dusk is preferred) to see which of the Purple Martins come out of the gourds with a registered GPS "backpack" on. Members will make note of this so that birds can be tracked by the Purple Martin Conservation Association PMCA. Contact Dawn Bahr at dmebahr@yahoo.com

Tyler Bee Day

Held around Pollinator Week in June, June 13, 2026. The chapter sets up a display about pollinators and has a hands-on craft for children. Event moved to the grounds of the Goodman-LeGrand House & Museum at 624 N. Broadway in 2024. Watch Eblast for call for volunteers. Project Leader is Wanda Rauscher (wwrauscher@gmail.com). Report time under "Outreach".