

# Wood Duck Whistler

## April 2023

### President's Message by Wanda Rauscher



This is the 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Earth Day (official celebration April 22). The Earth Day Organization has declared the theme "Invest in Our Planet". (Watch the Eblast for specific opportunities to volunteer on Earth Day). Suggestions for ways to participate include:

- Plant a pollinator garden with native plants to support biodiversity in our ecosystems (as we are doing with our Tyler Nature Center Wildscape Project). Speaking of native plants, on April 1 and April 2, Stephen F Austin Gardens will host Garden Gala Day Plant Sale from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, located at 2900 Raguet St. in Nacogdoches. Go to: [SFA Plant Sale](#) to find the list of available plants. Parking will be available at SFA's Janice A. Pattillo Early Childhood Research Center, located at 2428 Raguet St. Visitors are encouraged to arrive early and bring a wagon for their plants.
- Plant trees or donate to reforestation efforts.
- Recycle - don't contribute to filling up landfill space by using items only once when they can be used again. Recycle aluminum, plastic, paper, & anything else that you can. Dispose of electronics and batteries in a way that lets key raw materials be reused.

1. April 1, Love Longview E-waste recycling 8-noon at Teague Park. Requires preregistration to let them know what's coming.

[Longview E Waste Recycling](#)

2. Another option for electronics: Best Buy Recycles (from March 2023 on-line article). From cameras and cellphones to robot vacuums and speakers, regardless of where you bought it, how old it is or who made it, you can bring your tech to most Best Buy stores (if your local store can't help check for an on-line & ship option) to have it recycled. You can also make the most out of your old tech with the trade-in program. Simply redeem your tech by sending it in or bringing it to a participating store for a Best Buy gift card that you can use to upgrade to the latest tech.

Here's what you should know before bringing your electronics in to your local Best Buy:

If you're trading in your old tech:

3. See if your tech has value by using trade-in site: [Trade In Catalog](#)
4. Check out our current promotions for trading-in, [Trade In Promotion at Best Buy](#) or recycling, [Recycling at Best Buy](#) your tech at a store.
5. Due to local restrictions, the Trade-In Program is not offered at all store locations, but you can also trade in online. Best Buy will cover the costs for you to ship the item and will send an electronic Best Buy gift card for the value of your item once it is accepted.

If you're recycling:

6. Check to see what items you can recycle at your local store and what fees might be associated.



7. All U.S. stores offer the in-store programs for customers to bring their old, unused or unwanted tech for recycling, but check restrictions in your state before coming in.
8. After you drop off your old tech, trusted recycling partners will wipe any remaining data from devices before determining if the product can be repaired, repurposed or recycled, but you can also wipe your hard drive before coming in. Here's how to do it:

[How to Wipe Your Hard Drive before Recycling](#)

9. If you are buying a major appliance or have a few items you need to recycle, take advantage of our Haul-Away services and have Geek Squad or Best Buy Home Delivery recycle it for you.

Tech recycling is just one of the many ways Best Buy is working to protect the environment. (And we applaud their efforts!)

And what other BIG EVENT begins in April? YES!!! **City Nature Challenge 2023**

**APRIL 28-May 1 for iNaturalist observations and May 2-May 7 for identifications**

This is the excuse you've been waiting for to get outside and observe flora and fauna contributing to the scientific knowledge of what's here and taking the opportunity to earn VSH while doing so within the chapter catchment!! Please plan to participate whether using your cell phone or camera. Those more familiar with our local biodiversity should also plan to help make identifications May 2-May 7. Are you a newbie to iNaturalist? Check out the video how-to:

[iNaturalist video tutorials](#) . All hands-on deck, please!

## John Bunker Sands Wetlands Field Trip

Steven Curley

The stars at night may be big and bright deep in the heart of Texas, but let's sing the praise of a crisp, clear late winter Saturday morning at the John Bunker Sands (JBS) wetlands area. On March 4, the 2023 Northeast Texas Master Naturalist class congregated at the education building of the JBS wetlands near Combine, Texas in Kaufman County. It was a bad day to characterize cirrus, cumulus, nimbus, or other types of clouds because the bright, blue sky carried nary a cloud. Nobody shed a tear about the absence of precipitation because it was a beautiful day to tramp across the raised wooden walkways and along the levees of this Texas success story.

From 9:30 am until 12:30 pm, we learned about the fascinating history of the JBS wetlands and the abundance of wildlife that resulted. John Bunker Sands was a rancher who owned the land now occupied by the wetlands. He was a progressive thinker and planner and understood converting some of his property to a wetlands area would provide numerous environmental, water management, and wildlife benefits. Not surprisingly, his request to breach the Trinity River to flood his property was declined by the state. I don't think any state would be excited about an individual damming or diverting a major waterway. I admire him for trying it, though! John Bunker Sands was a conservationist who initiated the transformation of 2,100 acres of his 5,000 acres of property into wetlands to support wildlife and to improve water quality. Sadly, John Bunker Sands passed away from pancreatic cancer in 2003. However, his vision became a reality when the East Fork Water Reuse Project was established in 2009. The JBS Wetlands Center where we met was established in 2010 in a partnership between the North Texas Municipal Water District and the Rosewood Corporation. The JBS wetlands is the largest man-made wetlands area in the United States!



Water from waste-water treatment facilities throughout the Dallas Metroplex area percolates through the wetlands on a two-week journey to be cleansed by the plants and numerous species of water creatures. The JBS wetlands filters more than 95 million gallons of water daily. The water is then actively pumped back into a reservoir near Dallas to provide water for the citizens in the Metroplex. After a slide presentation about the plants, water dwellers, and birds of the wetlands, we divided into groups of four and hiked across the wood walkways to one of the levees separating the various large collections of water. We dipped our nets into the water near the bank, including some of our class who waded into ankle depth or a little above. There were a few wet pant legs. We emptied the nets into a bucket of water collected near the bank and headed back to the classroom. In the classroom the teams of four emptied their buckets into a tray and pipetted water into a petri dish to identify a variety of small water-dwelling species. Identification was aided by a card with pictures and names of common species. We were personally aided by having two biologists in our group. All is fair in love and species identification folks.

After our classroom session the group enjoyed the lunch brought from home sitting in rocking chairs on the covered back sitting area overlooking the wetlands. An idyllic and pleasant place to enjoy a leisurely meal. After lunch cleanup we again ventured out on a long loop atop the levees to observe birds. Our guide had a powerful spotting scope and pointed out coots (the biologists thought it important to point out they are cute), several species of ducks, a harrier, turkey vultures, red-tailed hawks, and an active bald eagle nest in the tree line bordering the wetlands. Most of the class of 2023 had binoculars and several were successful at detecting and drawing the groups' attention to birds on the water or in the air. As 3:00 pm neared, we retraced our steps across the wood walkways to the JBS Education Center. The center is an excellent place to earn volunteer hours working a four-

hour shift at the reception desk. A membership for two adults is only \$40 annually. Membership provides benefits including participation in member-only events throughout the year. We said our adieus and returned to our vehicles to drive home. The day at the JBS wetlands area was educational, entertaining, relaxing, and allowed us to spend a gorgeous day outdoors. Perfect conditions for aspiring Texas Master Naturalists!

**Calling All Birds!**  
**Nelson and Polly Jones; Allison Utley**

This Spring the Mineola Nature Preserve will be welcoming more of our avian friends thanks to the efforts of The Cavity Nester Conservancy (CNC), a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of native cavity nesting birds through on-going community outreach, education, and research.

On March 18th, CNC's Mark Byrd and Tim Green led a group of volunteers, which included Master Naturalists, in upgrading and expanding the Preserve's Purple Martin colony by adding a 24-gourd rack system donated by CNC. By all indications, the Purple Martins are excited about their new accommodations. During installation, eight Purple Martins circled the volunteers keeping a close eye on the progress. Once the rack system was raised, they began scouting out their new nest. According to Mr. Green, this is not uncommon if nesting houses are installed correctly.

CNC also provided 10 nesting houses that were installed throughout the Preserve. Some of the nesting boxes were installed in open areas for the Bluebirds, while others were placed in woodland areas to serve the needs of various cavity nesters such as the Prothonotary Warbler, Titmouse, Chickadee, Nuthatch, and Wren.

The installation of the nesting houses is just the beginning as the nesting boxes will require ongoing maintenance and monitoring, which CNC will oversee. "We love doing

conservation work. We are so proud to make the Mineola Nature Preserve one of our 2023 project sites," said Mr. Byrd. CNC will continue to empower volunteers interested in the learning about cavity nesting conservation and encourage volunteers to get involved. For pictures of the event or more information about CNC's conservation efforts, visit their Facebook page. Better yet, plan a trip to the Mineola Nature Preserve to welcome our cavity nesters back home and observe the great work being completed by CNC and members of this Master Naturalist Chapter. Happy Birding!!!



## Wait, What?

**Dale Wade** - 14% (33,000) of England's red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) population live within the city limits of London.

**Ann Reynolds** - A group of butterflies is a kaleidoscope. They're also known as a swarm, flutter, flight, rabble, or a wing of butterflies.



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail by Vicki Betts, Flint TX



Male Luna Moth by Vickie Hoppis, Tyler Nature Center



You're Invited!

The Friends of the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge and  
the US Fish and Wildlife Service  
invite you to join us for a fun FREE

# FIELD DAY AT THE REFUGE

Saturday, April 8, 9:00-noon

There'll be activities for all ages:

Bird walk

Caravan Tours

Dutch Oven cooking

Net-dipping "critters" for kids

Planting native plants

Photography Walk

*Location: Neches River National Wildlife Refuge*

*On Hwy 79 between Palestine and Jacksonville*

***Please mark your calendars and join us!***

# April 28 – May 1, 2023

# City Nature Challenge

## Tyler/East Texas



**Do you like observing nature?  
Make your observations count!  
Join the  
City Nature Challenge  
& become a citizen scientist!**



Join us in a fun challenge to see which city can document the most species during April 28 - May 1. It's easy to participate by making observations using the iNaturalist app. With iNaturalist, you take a picture of a plant or animal, & the community will help identify it. Observations in the greater ten county region of East Texas (Anderson, Cherokee, Gregg, Henderson, Rains, Rusk, Smith, Upshur, Van Zandt, Wood) will count during the four-day challenge. You can participate by exploring the life in your backyard, your local park, or on a field trip with your local naturalist group.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2023-tyler-east-texas>





## TAMING THE WILDSCAPE

Kay Jenkins

If you have been to recent chapter meetings, you've probably noticed that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Tyler Nature Center wildscape is being renovated with the help of ETCMN members. Over ten volunteers showed up for the first wildscape cleanup on January 7, 2023. Wanda brought drinks and snacks for the volunteers. The volunteers focused on removing introduced plants, trimming back shrubs, and cutting and/or removing dead stalks of annual weeds that had grown up in the beds. On the second workday held on February 4, 2023, three chapter members plus one husband volunteer continued working on removing unwanted plants in the wildscape beds. Additional workdays were held March 4 and March 25 during which dwarf wax myrtles were transplanted and beds were prepared for new plantings.

Why tame the wildscape, you might ask? Shouldn't people allow anything that wants to grow, grow in a wildscape? No, as noted on TPWD's Wildscapes webpage, "The fact that a plant grows in an area without human assistance does not make that plant "native" to that area" (TPWD, 2023). Plants that are native to the ecoregion are the best plants to use in a wildscape because native wildlife and native plant communities evolved together. Introduced plants do not make good substitutes for native plants. However, even native plants can be nuisance plants in the wrong settings. When soil is disturbed for any reason, plants referred to as "pioneer plants" will be the first to grow in the disturbed area. These plants are typically annual plants that are prolific seed producers. The very wildlife that wildscapes are meant to attract can bring in seeds of undesirable native and introduced plants. Therefore, regular maintenance is needed to keep wildscapes attractive to wildlife and humans so that both may live in harmony. Well-planned and well maintained wildscapes in public settings demonstrate the

use of native plants in place of introduced plants in landscapes and allow for placement of interpretive signage identifying plants and the wildlife they attract. Thus, public wildscapes educate people about the multiple benefits of using native plant species while they also provide habitat for native wildlife.

The landscape at the Tyler Nature Center was originally planted many years ago by TPWD staff and volunteers as a demonstration wildscape as part of the TPWD Wildscapes Program that encouraged Texans to restore habitat to provide food, shelter, and water for wildlife where they live and work (TPWD, 2023). Agency budget cuts led to staff reductions and the wildscape at the Tyler Nature Center was neglected. Then in 2012, the East Texas Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists and the Tyler chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) designed and replanted the landscape beds as a joint project to feature native plantings. Funding for new plants and soil amendments was provided by the East Texas Woods and Waters Foundation. Members of the ETCMN and NPSOT Tyler chapter maintained the wildscape by watering, weeding, trimming, and planting for several years. When the Nature Center was closed to meetings and visitors as a major construction project to build a new regional headquarters began, and then continued to be closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the wildscape was left unattended for many years. Most of the plants died from lack of water and from being overtaken by aggressive native and introduced plants that moved into the gardens.

The current renovation of the Tyler Nature Center wildscape will restore a demonstration landscape designed to help visitors learn about, appreciate, and plant native plants to support wildlife on their own properties. A new planting design has been developed for the wildscape and it focuses on providing pollinator habitat and features native plants that are relatively easy to find at native plant



## Native Landscape Certification Program

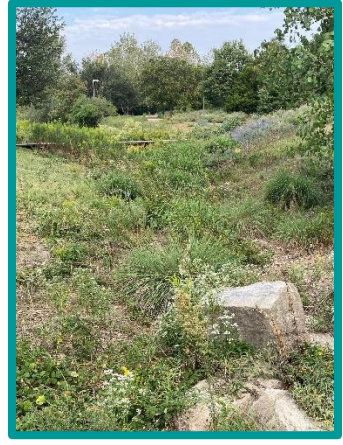
Ann Reynolds

As a native plant enthusiast and former member of Collin County and Tyler Native Plant Society (NPSOT), I was intrigued when I saw a four-level course being offered by NPSOT in landscape design using native plants. The goal of the Native Landscape Certification Program (NLCP) is for the participant to learn the benefits of native plants, desirable plants for your area and design considerations for your landscape.

The first course is a prerequisite to the remaining courses, which then can be taken in any order, and there is an optional segment called Using Native Landscapes for Birds. This

nurseries or sales. The design was approved by the ETCMN board of directors and TPWD in late January. The chapter applied for and has been awarded \$600 in funding from the Native Plant Society of Texas Bring Back the Monarchs Program. Although TPWD no longer awards Texas Wildscapes Certifications, there is still plenty of information to be found on the TPWD Wildscapes [website](#) to help Texans develop and maintain a wildscape. Providing the basic requirements for wildlife in a diverse and well-planned manner makes gardens more attractive to native wildlife.

ETCMN members are encouraged to participate in upcoming workdays at the wildscape. They begin at 9:00 am and usually end at noon, but volunteers can come and go as their schedules allow. Next workday is **April 8.**



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

class was held virtual on day one and on day two there was a plant ID class held at the Laura Bush Native Garden at the Bush Library in Dallas. (I wrote about this in the December issue of the Wood Duck Whistler). The optional birding class was held at the Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary the following week. It was much fun to get to know other Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners and NPSOT members. Here is the certification program outline:

- Level 1:** Introduction to Native Landscapes
  - Learn the value of including and preserving native plants in landscapes and building wildlife habitats

- Understand the differences between sustainable and conventional development
- Discover your Texas ecoregion, vegetation, and soil.
- Become familiar with 45 native Texas plants recommended for your landscape and 5 plants to avoid

**Companion Class: Native Landscapes for Birds**

- Appreciate the rich bird diversity in Texas and their contributions to the natural world.
- Understand current threats to bird populations and what you can do to help.
- Recognize the importance of native plants and plant diversity to the success of birds.
- Create and maintain bird friendly native plant landscapes.



**Level 2: Landscape Design with Native Plants**

- Learn to create landscape designs using native plants.
- Recognize important considerations for creating a design.
- Outline steps in the design process; practice creating a native landscape design.

**Level 3: Installation and Maintenance of Native Landscapes**

- Recognize the differences between native and non-native landscapes.
- Become familiar with how to install the different types of native plants into a landscape, including: plant choice, purchase, placement, spacing; soil choice;

bed and soil preparation; planting seeds and plants; mulching.

- Understand maintenance requirements and techniques. Create maintenance schedules for different types of native plants.

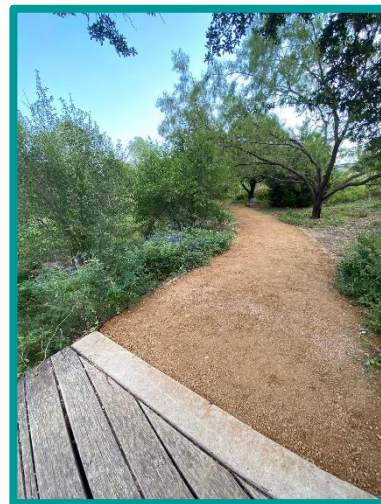
**Level 4: Stewardship of Native Plant Communities**

- Learn about the value and practice of land stewardship
- Application of stewardship, from urban neighborhoods to large-scale natural areas.
- Threats to natural habitats and resulting impacts
- How to create an effective land stewardship plan, including:
  - Researching and assessing what you have
  - Setting and prioritizing your goals
  - Prioritizing and implementing appropriate land management practices
  - Monitoring and re-assessing the effectiveness of your land stewardship.

Level 4 can also be taken as a standalone class for those interested in conservation and not landscaping. You are not required to have taken Levels 1-3.

Levels 1-4 involve an optional test that demonstrates competency and you must pass with at least 80% to obtain a certificate.

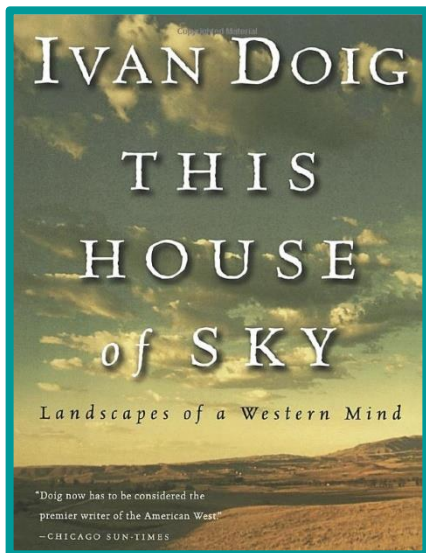
To see the class schedule visit: [Native Plant Landscape Design Calendar](#)



## March Book Reviews

Lance Homeniuk

This House of Sky - Landscapes of a Western Mind by Ivan Doig. 1978 Harcourt, Brace Jovanich, NY. Paperback, 314 pages.

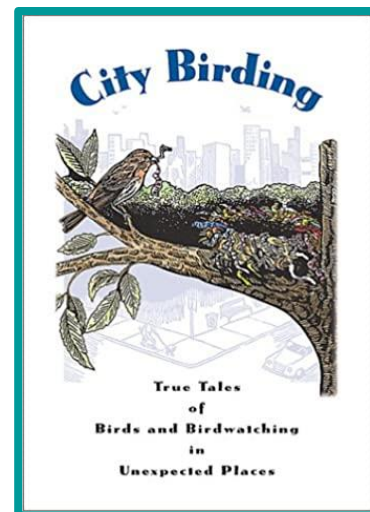


Autobiographies are about a person, their life story from their point of view. But every so often one casts a wider net, enclosing and narrating the history of a local and a time. That is what Ivan Doig has given us. His life and the threefold relationship he shared with his father and maternal grandmother as seen through his eyes with added perspectives by those who knew them all and from the family history passed down to him by his elders. The post-frontier and premodern era of the rural west witnessed as the last traces of unworkable homesteads disappeared, as some small towns withered away and others grew into self-sustaining concerns with civic institutions. The passing of generations of stock western characters revisited on trips back to attend sickbeds and funerals. If I may be so presumptuous, I would say this is the American version of "How Green Was My Valley".

But the co-star of this saga is the land. You can smell the hot, dry dust and sage and the coming of the rain. You can feel the bone-chilling cold of a blue norther and the soft, mild caress of a springtime breeze. You visualize the distant Sawtooths, the high plains and odd

shaped hills. The raucous sound of saloons give way to the bleating of herds of sheep, and both are interwoven with the words muttered by Doig, Sr. and the Lady, memorized by the author and transcribed so one can tell the sound of voices unheard. As he spoke of the old timers hunched together in twos and threes, nodding "as they reheard each other's stories, remembering them before they were spoken." I have seen many stories described as being full of a sense of "place" but this one alone defines the word in its western late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century sense. And I realized that I knew it.

City Birding - True Tales of Birds and Birdwatching in Unexpected Places. 2003 Stackpole Books, Mechanicsville, PA. hardcover, 181 pages.

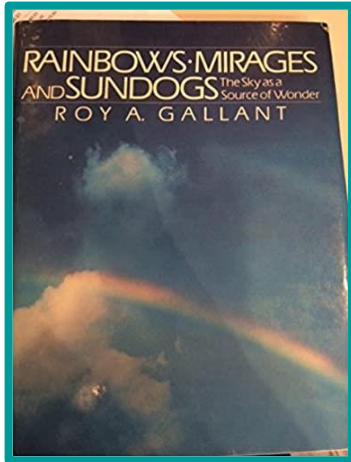


Birds are where you find them, and what you see is not always what you look for. These eighteen stories by published observers are here collected to show the surprising locales and birds they have observed. Included in the former are parking lots, water treatment facilities, dumps, city parks, polluted harbors and roadsides. The latter run from starlings and sparrows to unique specimens from far continents that popped up amongst common residents. I recall a recent Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine article on birding at a sewage pond outside of Austin. I will probably never take a

birding safari to Costa Rica but the local landfills and settling ponds are within my reach.

One added bonus to the stories – after each one the author's published titles are listed. A few I have read, the rest go on my "to look for" list.

Rainbows, Mirages, and Sundogs The Sky as a Source of Wonder by Roy A. Gallant. 1978 Macmillan Publishing Company, NY. Hardcover, 94 pages.



This is a good book for young readers, or to be read to young ones. Nevertheless, I found much I did not know (or did not remember to have known). Well written and illustrated by Gallant, an astronomer and "author of more than sixty books on scientific subjects." Four types of rainbows, as well as fogbows and dewbows; three kinds of mirages, twinkling stars; blue skies, white skies, red skies, clouds with silver linings, clouds that glow at night, mother-of-pearl clouds, the auroras, sundogs, moondogs, halos & pillars in the sky, zodiacal light, and all phases of eclipses...did I miss anything? Oh, yes! How to photograph nearly everything and how to reproduce most effects with handy materials. A little dated with respect to the photo techniques – from the ancient "roll of film age", but otherwise on the nose!

## Jason Pike becoming one with Nature



Photo courtesy of Cinny Pike



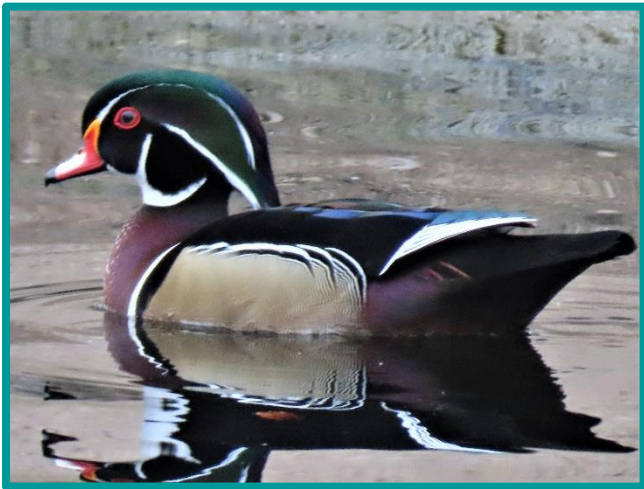


Photo courtesy Ann Reynolds

**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.**

Unless otherwise noted, all photos belong to the author of the article.

## Upcoming Events

**April 8 – Wildscape Work Day**, 9-noon, Tyler Nature Center, contact Kay Jenkins

**April 11 – TMN Tuesday noon –**

**April 15** – 10:00 Clean up at the Mineola Nature Preserve – contact Allison Utley

**April 20 articles for the chapter newsletter due to Ann Reynolds**

**April 22 – Earth Day** – details in eBlast

**April 27 – Chapter Meeting**, 6:45 pm, Tyler Nature Center

**April 28 – City Nature Challenge begins**

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY Adopt-A-Loop**

Need members to be Lake Tyler site reporters for three locations: Caldwell Zoo, East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society, and Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center. Your responsibilities are to visit the site seasonally, complete a site report, upload any wildlife photos to eBird and iNaturalist. If interested, please contact Dale Wade

### **IN THE COMMUNITY**

**NETFO** – 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday 6:30 pm, Alethea SS Classroom at Greggton UMC (1101 Pine Tree Road) in Longview.

**Tyler Audubon Society**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 6:30 pm St. Francis Episcopal Church, Education Room, 3232 Jan Avenue, Tyler.

**NPSOT**-Longview – 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday, 2:00 pm, Longview Arboretum

**NPSOT** – Linden – 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday 6:30 pm, Senior Citizen Center, 507 S. Kaufman St., Linden



## WHERE YOU CAN FIND US

You can find East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists here:

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

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



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

Texas Master Naturalist – East Texas Chapter 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 6:45 pm; meeting at 7:00 pm.

Everyone is welcome.

Safety Guidelines from TMN: Safety is our guiding principle. Follow all federal, state and county guidelines for TMN activities. Virtual platforms are useful and should remain an important consideration for planning meetings and events. Masks and social distancing considerations are encouraged. (July 2021)



## ETCMN CHAPTER ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

**\*\*President:** Wanda Rauscher

**\*\*Vice President:** Cindy Smith

**Hospitality Co-Chairs:** Caryn Vorsas, Joe Vorsas; Bonnie Edwards

**\*\*Secretary:** Carol Lanthrum

**Historian/Archivist:** TBD

**\*\*Treasurer:** Phil Guthrie

**Immediate Past President:** Paul Wick

### DIRECTORS:

**Advanced Training (AT): Lead** - Beverly Guthrie with Amy Cumbie and Cindy Smith

**Volunteer Service Projects (VSH): Lead** – Dawn Bahr with Lance Homeniuk and Greg Marshall

**Community Education/Outreach:** Lance Homeniuk

**Speakers Bureau:** Greg Marshall

**Diversity and Inclusion:** TBD

**Training Class:** Beverly Guthrie

**Membership:** Wanda Rauscher

**Volunteer Management System Director:** Lindsey Smith

### **Communications Support:**

**E-Blast:** Wanda Rauscher

**Newsletter:** Ann Reynolds

**Photography:** Lindsey Smith

**Public Relations:** TBD

**Social Media: Lead** - Greg Marshall, Dawn Bahr and Julie Davis

**Website:** Dale Wade

**State Representative:** Wanda Rauscher or appointed alternative

**2023 Class Representatives:** Natalie Curley

### **Chapter Advisors:**

**Clint Perkins – A&M Agrilife Extension Agent-Smith County**

**Boyd Sanders – TPWD Advisor**

**\*\* = Officers & Executive Board Members**

**Revised 2/16/23**