

# Wood Duck Whistler August 2023

## President's Message by Wanda Rauscher



### Part 1

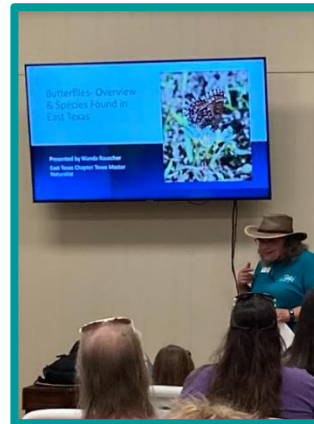
Butterflies, butterflies, butterflies! I had the opportunity to give a talk at the Longview Arboretum on July 28. Of course, the topic was butterflies. I gave a very different talk, on the same subject, at our chapter social. One of our challenges as a Master Naturalist Chapter is to become an expert in the fauna and flora within our catchment. I gravitate towards insects and butterflies



have been a favorite of mine since I was a little girl raising Giant Swallowtails on kumquat leaves and as an adult raising Gulf Fritillaries on passion vine. You know Greg Marshall set up a project in iNaturalist for our chapter catchment. If you want to see how many of a whatever-it-is have been reported in our catchment it is very easy. Go to "explore", put the organism you seek in the search box, go to filters, and select "more filters", then under Project, type "East Texas Chapter Master Naturalist Biodiversity" then hit the update

search button. This is how I was able to assemble a species list of butterflies, all 108, for our area.

As always, preparing a talk gives me a chance



to learn a lot. Did you know that our understanding of when Lepidoptera came on the scene was radically revised in 2018? A Dutch research group led by Dr. Dr van de Schootbrugge found Lepidoptera scales and proboscises dating back to the

Jurassic and THAT means that Lepidoptera came way before flowering plants! I suspect you know Painted Lady butterflies occur on every con-tinent except Antarctica and South America and that they migrate. What I did not know is the reason it took so long to understand their Europe to Africa travel is that they are flying more than 100 feet higher than the Empire State Building to catch prevailing winds and zip along at 30 mph Empire State Building to catch prevailing winds and zip along at 30 mph! It seems that Rothamsted Research has entomological radars that helped solve this mystery. I found a reference to Denver weather radar in 2017 picking up a 70-mile wide (110km) mass that was a kaleidoscope of Painted Lady butterflies. Isn't that a wonderful term - a kaleidoscope of butterflies?

I had a great audience at the Longview Arboretum with about 40 adults and 16 kids. I thank Jan Barth for steering the opportunity my way (& snapping photos).

### Part 2

My fellow Master Naturalists, it takes a fair amount of effort to operate a chapter and offer training classes each year. In the upcoming member survey, I will be asking for your help. Please respond and "raise your

hand" so we can see who wants to help with which parts of chapter management to keep our chapter soaring!



Texas Master Naturalist 2023 Annual Meeting – to be held Thursday, October 12th through Sunday, October 15th this year at the southernmost point of the South Texas Plains ecoregion, surrounded by mesquite and prickly pear brush country in McAllen, Texas. The full agenda has been posted. Housing is available now. For details:

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/>

♥ Happy 25th Anniversary to the Texas Master Naturalist Program! ♥

June 1, 2023 by [administrator](#)

In 2022, Texas Master Naturalists reached over 289,969 youth, adults, and private land owners. This is more than 6.864 million people to date. Service hours in 2022 were valued at \$11.86 million and more than \$146.80 million since the program's inception.

As part of the Texas Master Naturalist program, Master Naturalists have made considerable impacts over the past 25 years of the program. In 2022 alone, our Texas Master Naturalist Program volunteers conquered service projects, developed conservation partner-

ships, changed landscapes, and enlightened our communities.

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.

## Tyler Nature Center Update

Kay Jenkins and Ann Reynolda

Kay has dutifully been watering and weeding the Wildscape at the Tyler Nature Center during July. The rest of us aren't brave enough to tackle weeds, biting insects and the heat. But, she reported the Wildscape was being visited by Hummingbirds and Gulf Fritillaries and gardens continue to fill in as the plants grow.



Please join us for the upcoming workdays August 5, September 9 and 23. Please RSVP to Kay so she can plan the work around the number of volunteers. Her email is [kay-jenkins@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kay-jenkins@sbcglobal.net). Bring the following:

- Gloves
- Hat
- Sunscreen
- Knee pads or kneeling pad or towel to kneel on

- Shovel
- Rake
- 5-gallon bucket
- Pruners
- Loppers
- Cultivator
- Water to drink



## Caddo Days

### Quita Russell

On September 2, 2023, an event, Caddo Culture Day, will be held on the site grounds to celebrate and learn about Caddo culture and history in the ancestral homeland of the Caddo people. The event will include artisans, vendors and other activities. Of special interest to this chapter will be the Sha-Ho Memorial



dedication to the survivors and victims of the tornado destruction at the last culture days celebration.

This chapter has been a participant in many of the volunteer work days at this site. Two of our members were present on the day of the tornado and will be included in the dedication.

During the past year, the Grass House was rebuilt and will be open for viewing.

There will be volunteer opportunities available on the event day. I will have a booth set up to publicize our chapter. If you have any demonstrations or activities which you would like to use for this purpose, please contact me at [quitarussell@hotmail.com](mailto:quitarussell@hotmail.com) The event hours are 10 am to 3 pm. There will also be volunteer activities to help in the set up and take down on this day. You may want to bring a chair. Food vendors will be there, and we are hoping for some Indian tacos!

Other volunteer opportunities exist throughout the year, including cutting switch grass for a repair to the Grass House, gardening in the Snake Woman Garden, and trail maintenance.

There is a volunteer group called the Friends of Caddo Mounds, which maintains a Facebook page where you can keep informed of activities relating to the Site.

## Purple Pleat-leaf: Nature's Pinwheels

### Denise Gary

On the forest edges of East Texas, there exists small pinwheels of a fairy-like sort. They dance enticingly along the edges of forest roads and clearings, and look as though they could sputter and roar into motion at a moment's notice, then zoom off in flight, their purple and yellow colors spinning into a buttery royal confectionery blur. The fanciful pinwheels are the flowers of the Purple Pleat-leaf (*Alophia drummondii*), also commonly known as

Propeller Plant, Pinewoods Lily, and Prairie Iris. Pleat-leaf refers to the plant's interesting iris-like leaves, which appear to have pleats running nearly their entire length of 1.5 to 2 feet. But it is the beautiful 2-inch blossoms that catch the eye of the appreciative observer. They have three large, spreading tepals, with three small, curled tepals in between. Each is a sumptuous shade of purple, which fades to yellow with rusty spots in the center. What creature, human or pollinator, could resist such stunning artistry?



The common name, Prairie Iris, is also apt, as this lovely perennial is a member of the iris family, and springs forth from a tunicated bulb



(a bulb covered in a thin, papery "tunic," such as onion and garlic). They bloom spring

through summer, enjoying forest edge, prairie, meadow, and roadside habitats in eastern and coastal Texas. Their native range extends from these areas of the Lone Star State into most of Louisiana, a small portion of southeastern Oklahoma and southwestern Arkansas, and south into Mexico. The species name is a nod to Scottish naturalist, Thomas Drummond, who collected specimens in Texas during the early 1830s.

Go forth and seek ye little purple pinwheels along the verges between forest and grassland. If you use your imagination a little, you just might see them begin to whirl.

## Member Spotlight

**Ann Reynolds**

This month's member spotlight is **Amy Cumbie**.

**Where were you born/raised?** I was born and raised in Jacksonville, TX.

**Where do you live now?** Jacksonville, TX.



**Would you care to share with us about your family?** I have three amazing kids: Shelby is 20

and is on her way to medical school. Olier is 17 and a senior in high school. Tanner is 14 and is beginning his freshman year in high school.

**What is/was your career and education?** I have an Associate's Degree in Business Administration but am currently working in Technology Department at Jacksonville ISD as the System Administrator and Assistant Network Administrator.

**What are some of your hobbies?** I love to kayak and go birding in between working. Hiking I another favorite pastime but I will save that for fall. 😊

**What do you attribute your love of nature?** I grew up in the country on 30 acres and was always outside. We had a huge garden every year and lots of farm animals. Nature is what I was raised around and it feels like home.

**What was it that interested you in the Texas Master Naturalist program?** I was looking for ways to volunteer in the Texas State Park system and came across the Texas Master Naturalist program. I loved the abundant ways to volunteer.

**What class were you in?** I attended the class of 2020, so half of the classes were virtual. I can say I prefer in person classes.

**What has been your favorite volunteer experience?** My favorite volunteer activity so far has been helping the Audubon Society clean out the Wood Duck boxes on Langley Island at Lake Tyler.

**Favorite nature activity?** Birding.

**Describe what would be your perfect, bucket-list natural science encounter or experience.** I have a very curious nature and would love to help collect data on just about anything that has to do with birds or the many inhabitants of a river or creek.

**Advice for new master naturalists?** Learn everything you can and soak it all up. Ask a lot of questions even if you think you the answer. Enjoy!

## Aerial Acrobats of Summer

Sharon Hanzik

Growing up surrounded by the pasturelands, farmlands and coastal prairies of Fort Bend and Brazoria Counties of the Coastal Bend of Texas, Scissor-Tailed Flycatchers were a common sight in the summer months. I could spend hours captivated by their twists and turns in pursuit of their prey, not limited to flies as their name would imply. Oftentimes, I never saw what delectable morsel they may have caught in mid-flight. Occasionally I was blessed to observe them dining on more sizable prey such as grasshoppers, crickets or beetles while they perched on a fence post.



Later, in my adult years, living in a shaded old farmhouse surrounded on all sides by hay meadow and pasture, I was lucky enough to have them choose my trees for nesting habitat each summer. I knew for sure that summer had arrived when the males appeared first from their wintering grounds in Southern Mexico and Central America. They migrate before the females as their job is to scope out and defend their nesting habitat. I was never quite sure when the females arrived as both sexes are identical. I was never able to find their nest, as they were very high in a tree and well hidden.

I could, however, identify the female as she was the architect and builder carrying her materials to the treetop while the male kept an avid watch for intruders. As their scientific name *Tyrannus forficatus* suggests, they are the ruler of their territories, driving away birds as large as hawks, their agility enhanced by their forked tail that allows them to turn abruptly, escaping harm by such predatory species.

Once their nest is established and their 3-6 creamy, colored spotted eggs are laid, it will take approximately 13 - 23 days for them to incubate and once hatched, approximately another 14 -17 days to fledge. They may have as many as 2, sometimes 3 broods each season. It was always a special treat to watch the young learn to fly. Seeing their much shorter forked tails reminded me of the short, blunt scissors we were allowed to use as children. It will take almost a full year before their tails reach their adult length of almost 12 inches (sharper adult scissors). In their full life of nearly 10-15 years, they are not often monogamous except for the breeding season.

Living in this mostly wooded area of East Texas I don't often have the opportunity to observe them as frequently. So when I do find an open grassland I take special care to comb the skies, power lines and fence posts for one of my favorite birds to watch. I hope you do, or will, as well.

Sources:

Allaboutbirds.com

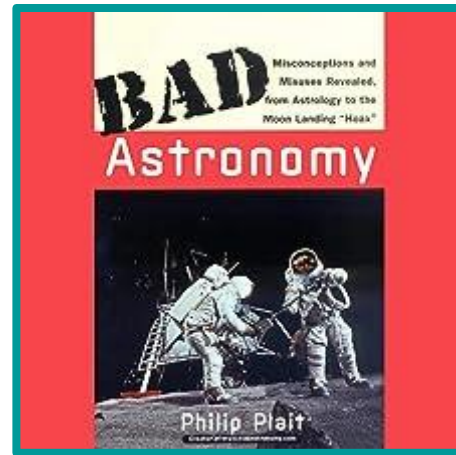
National Audubon Society website

American Bird Conservancy website

## Book Reviews

Lance Homeniuk

BAD Astronomy by Philip C. Plait. 2002 John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, NY. Paperback, 227 pages.

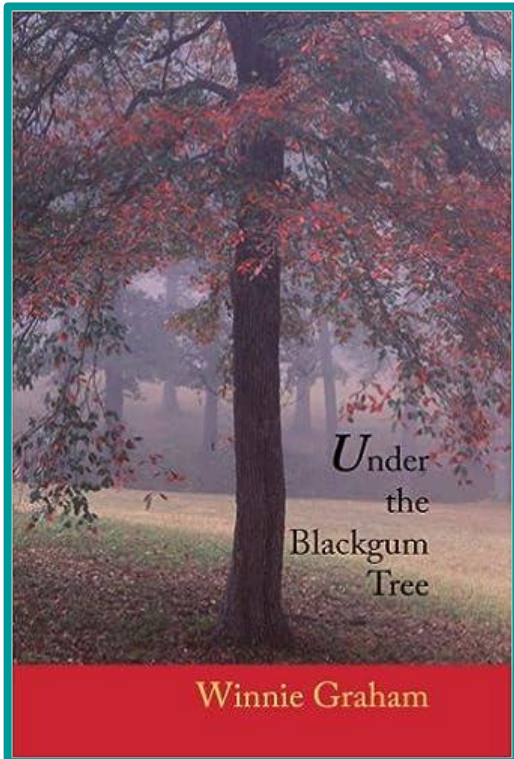


The author, an astronomer and physicist, has a website devoted to clearing up misconceptions and debunking junk science. And that is what he does in this, his first book. He has written scientific and popular articles, a column and of course - [www.badastronomy.com](http://www.badastronomy.com).

It is by turns, educational, useful, and entertaining. The author is witty, humble (he admits to have held some of the wrong opinions himself) and acerbic, but always informative. I found myself curling a lip at some of the ridiculous ideas gullible folks espouse and he shoots down but before it could turn into a full-on sneer Plait popped some of my own hot air balloons. I'll share just one – the sky is blue due to a complex interplay of factors I shan't go into here, not just that blue photons scatter off particles in the atmosphere. I need to track down my students and reteach that. However, using Oreos to demonstrate moon phases helped me avoid other errors. If only they were made spherical, we could dodge the flat-earth (and flat-moon) crowd.

As one reviewer opined "BAD Astronomy is Good Science". And may I add a good reference to have on hand.

Under the Blackgum Tree: 165 years in the Piney Woods by Winnie Graham. 2013 Stephen F. Austin University Press, Nacogdoches, TX. Paperback, 204 pages.

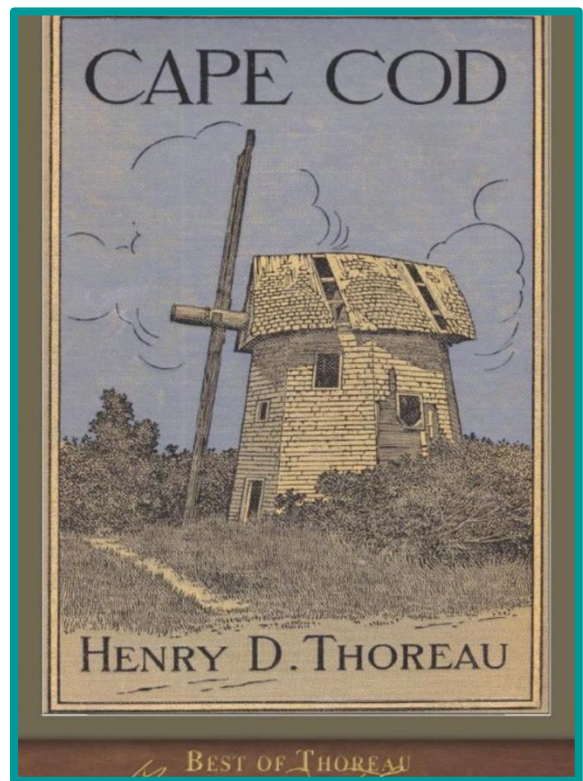


A sixth-generation Texan and self-described native "Pineywoodsian" interweaves her genealogy with the Piney Woods region and anecdotes and yarns which were shared under the old Black Gum tree. Just as Texas is a special subset of the southern U.S. so is East Texas a unique in Texas. Graham says it's in the black-eyed pea versus pinto bean side of a divide; the denim overhaul & work boot versus jeans & cowboy boot side; pine trees versus mesquite. I recognized the people, the living conditions, and the environment in her story as the same my wife and her kin told and retold stories about. Anybody with roots and relations in deep East Texas will recognize them too. You can almost feel the summer heat & humidity, smell the jasmine and honeysuckle, taste the sweet potatoes and peas, hear the drone of flying insects and crunch of pine straw under foot in these pages.

Last weekend we drove down a paved country road. I glanced out the window and

saw in my mind's eye shortleaf pine stands giving place to loblolly pines, and finally to plantations of slash and yellow pine. Scattered throughout were heavily overgrown patches. But they were overlaying images of small corn fields here, a clearing surrounding a dog-trot cabin or one room church there, a family cemetery with a brush arbor farther along. I don't see the generations of inhabitants but I know they were in these places. Graham gives me the connection to some of them.

Cape Cod by Henry David Thoreau. 1987 Penguin Nature Classics edition New York, NY. Paperback, 309 pages.



This edition has an intro of 10 pages by no other fellow peregrinator than Paul Theroux! Is his surname pronounced the same as H.D.T.? I read Walden fifty years ago and maybe once since. Now I have read a second classic by the grandfather figure of American "nature" writing. As with the former publication there is good nature writing interspersed with anthropology, history, sociology and philosophy. Imagine walking the length of a 35-

mile-long beach and return trip. Before tourist services, paved roads, convenience stores, sunscreen or bug spray ... with two reference books, a Bible, and possible some Virgil. No flip flops, sunglasses or cooler! So now I have an idea of what Cape Cod was like in the pre-Kennedy era. On the *The Maine Woods* and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, if I can find them.

## Heatwave

### Dale Wade

*Warning: If you are a climate change denier, do not read this.*

It is hot! Is it hotter than usual? Well, no. We have experienced hotter summers, but that is not the issue. The issue is climate change. Wait. Continue reading. This is not a treatise on climate change. Rather, it is a few simple remarks about one of the results of a warming climate...heatwaves, and their effects on nature.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) defines "heatwave" as more than five consecutive days when the daily maximum temperature exceeds the average maximum temperature by at least 5°C (9°F).

As a naturalist, heatwaves, much like the ones we are experiencing currently, concern me regarding nature's response. For example, how does this affect pollinators. As a honey bee colony senses temperatures above 96.8°F workers go into emergency A/C mode. Many begin fanning their wings at hive's entrance. Others head to the nearest water source to bring droplets back. The "water-collectors" shed the droplets around the hive combining with the "fanners" to create effectively an air conditioning system.

Butterflies respond during a heatwave by slowing down. They tend to seek the cooler temps of shade and remain there rather than flutter around flowers. Not only does this negatively affect pollination, but the butterflies

as well. Heatwaves can reduce a butterfly's body mass by 20%.

You can help out pollinators easily by keeping a pollinator puddle. Let me remind you what that is. Bees and butterflies need water. Not only that, they need salt and minerals. A pollinator puddle can provide them with all those.

Assembling a pollinator puddler is simple. Take a flat pan like a plastic one you put under a flower pot. Add some soil from your garden on one side. Toss in a few pebbles so that the bees and butterflies have a sound landing pad. Fill with water and place in your garden. The mud will add minerals to their diet. The water will keep them hydrated. You might add a slice of orange or a ripe peach for extra nutrients.

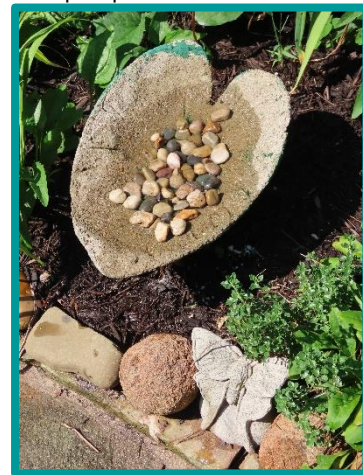


Photo courtesy of Ann Reynolds

Yeah, it is miserably hot outside. You can keep cool inside of your air-conditioned house (if ERCOT can keep up). Just remember, you can help our pollinators keep cool as well. Check that puddler every day and keep it filled.

BTW: keep that bird bath cleaned and filled as well.

## Wait. What?

**Dale Wade** – Bioluminescence, the production of light by living organisms, is not limited to fireflies. Several other species "light up." These include certain fish, shrimp, plankton, jellyfish, fungus, and gnats.





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September 2, 2023

									
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**SAVE THE DATE!**

YANTIS, TEXAS

**PRAIRIE DAY**

**Saturday, September 30, 2023**

**ETCMN will once again have a table at Yantis Prairie Day. Plan to attend to see the incredible progress of this restored prairie AND enjoy hosted walks and talks on all things natural!**

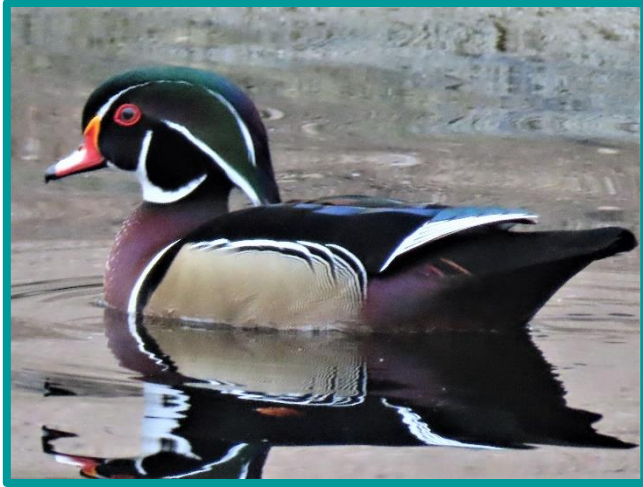


Photo courtesy Ann Reynolds

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. You can also access the Board meeting minutes on the chapter website under Members Only section, select Board of Directors and enter the current password.

The Wood Duck Whistler is a monthly publication of East Texas Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. News, essays, comments, and ideas are welcome. Please email them to Ann Reynolds at [ann@etex.net](mailto:ann@etex.net).

Photos for Book Reviews are courtesy of Amazon. Unless otherwise noted, all other photos belong to the author of the article.

## Upcoming Events

**August 2, 8:00 Wildscape Work Day**, Tyler Nature Center, RSVP Kay Jenkins

**August 8 – TMN Tuesday noon** – Management and Educational Activities for Community Ponds

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

**August 24 – Chapter Meeting, 6:45 Social, 7:00 Speaker**, Tyler Nature Center, see eBlast for speaker details.

**Sept 2 Caddo Culture Day Celebration**, Caddo Mounds State Historic Site

**Sept 5-Oct. 31 Master Volunteer Entomology Advanced Training**. See eBlast.

**November 9-11th Native Plant Society of Texas Fall Symposium**, Nacogdoches

### IN THE COMMUNITY

**NETFO** – 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday 6:30 pm, Alethea SS Classroom at Greggton UMC (1101 Pine Tree Road) in Longview. **(not meeting during summer)**

**Tyler Audubon Society**, 2nd Tuesday, 6:30 pm St. Francis Episcopal Church, Education Room, 3232 Jan Avenue, Tyler. **(not meeting during summer)**

**NPSOT-Longview** – 4th Thursday, 2:00 pm, **Daniel Duncum, Texas Forest Service**, Longview Arboretum



## WHERE YOU CAN FIND US

You can find East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists here:

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

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

<https://www.instagram.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: 2022-2023** Wanda Rauscher

**\*\*Vice President: 2023-2024** Cindy Smith

**Hospitality Co-Chairs: 2023** Caryn Vorsas, Joe Vorsas; Bonnie Edwards

**\*\*Secretary: 2023-2024** Carol Lanthrum

**Historian/Archivist:** TBD

**\*\*Treasurer: 2022-2023** Phil Guthrie

**Immediate Past President: 2022-2023** 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 5/9/23**