

Wood Duck Whistler February 2024

President's Message by Wanda Rauscher



I want to remind everyone that the February chapter meeting will be ZOOM format only. Since it has been a little while since we have done one of these let me explain how this will work. Before mid-month VP Cindy Smith will share the details about the speaker with me. I will then share this information in an Eblast and ask for RSVP from those who want to attend. The Monday before the meeting I will send the ZOOM link by email to those who sent an RSVP. On February 22 you will need to log in at 6:45 p.m. to give us enough time to clear the "waiting room" before the meeting starts at 7 p.m. During the meeting I ask that folks not have their cameras on, and that the mute stays on for attendees while the speaker is talking. We selected February as a ZOOM month because of how many times we have had weather issues in this month! Hopefully we will all have power and no white stuff that day.

My thanks again to Kay Jenkins for stepping up as Director for Training Class 2024 and to the folks who are volunteering on the committee. I hope we will have dates firmed up soon. The plan is to start classes in August.

Our next **Board meeting will be March 28 at 5:30.** All members are welcome to attend.

Directors, Committee Chairs, and Project Leaders will be invited to present. I will send the agenda 10 days prior to the meeting. If you have items you wish to bring up under new business, please get those to me by March 14.

I hope everyone has been enjoying what winter brings: the crunch of ice and the squeak of snow when the temperature gets cold enough, the flocks of goldfinches and chipping sparrows, the way you can see further in the forest with the leaves off the deciduous trees and no biting insects-well unless you've disturbed them! Enjoy!



Initial Certification:

Angle Hudson
Rodney Schroeder

Recertifications:

Alan Arthur
Sara-Emry Arthur
Kay Jenkins
Nelson Jones
Polly Jones
Crystal Mann
Anton Yastrebov

Milestone Award:

Allison Utley – **250 Hours**

Member Spotlight

Ann Reynolds

This month you get a two-fer! Please welcome Caryn and Joe Vorsas as our member spotlight couple.



Development encouraging the growth of specialty crops for export; mainly Turmeric, Ginger, and Cocoa.

Caryn and Joe met while volunteering in the West Indies and after getting married they moved to Tyler. Joe went back to school at UT Tyler and received his BA and MA in History, and a teaching certificate in history and business. Joe wrote grant proposals, worked in HR at UT Health Center, taught history and human resources management and retired from UT Tyler as Associate VP for HR in 2014.

What are some of your hobbies? Joe enjoys playing guitar, woodworking, reading historical fiction and cooking. Caryn loves yoga and anything outdoors, kayaking, hiking and gardening. Both Caryn and Joe have travelled extensively over the years. Caryn and Joe volunteer at the Rose City Farmers Market. Caryn also belongs to the Texas Outdoor Women's Network.

What do you attribute your love of nature? Growing up on Vancouver Island was honestly a dream for Caryn. The mountains, rain forests and tide pools provided endless places to explore. Scuba diving in her teens allowed her to have some pretty incredible encounters with octopuses, seals and whales. Joe also spent a lot of his childhood outside and in the water, especially in Hawaii and on Midway Island, fishing, snorkeling on the reefs and surfing.

What was it that interested you in the Texas Master Naturalist program? After Joe and Caryn retired, they decided they needed to explore the flora and fauna of East Texas. Filling their with new information in a group of like-minded people filled that need.

What class were you in? Joe and Caryn graduated from the "pandemic class" of 2019.

What has been your favorite volunteer experience? Joe loved going to the Ebel's

Where were you born/raised? Caryn was born and raised in Victoria, BC. Joe was born in Corpus Christi but because he was in a navy family he lived on Whidbey Island, WA; San Diego; Oahu, Hawaii; Longview; Midway Island; and Beeville.

Where do you live now? We have lived in Flint, Texas for 35 years.

Would you care to share with us about your family? We have 2 daughters (31 and 29) and they both live and work in Austin.

What is/was your career? Education? Caryn has a BS in Rehabilitation from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and an MS in Interdisciplinary Studies from UT Tyler. After graduation she worked in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan for 2 years and then volunteered for 6 months in St. Vincent in the West Indies. After moving to Tyler, she worked at UT Health Science Center Tyler and retired in 2015 after 27 years as Director.

Joe graduated from UT Austin with a BBA and then worked as the Director of Career Planning and Placement for the College of Business Administration and Graduate School of Business at UT Austin. He then spent 2 years in the Peace Corps in St. Vincent and the Grenadines where he worked as a small business advisor for the Organisation for Rural

prairie restoration outing and Caryn loved visiting the Cockaded woodpecker project.

Favorite nature activity? Although they had to miss the field trip to Caddo Lake, they have gone there often. It's such a special place and kayaking in the fog on the lake is surreal.

Describe what would be your perfect, bucket-list natural science encounter or experience.

Caryn said she hopes to have many more bucket-list encounters but guessed it would be snorkeling with whale sharks. She has been lucky to hike volcanoes, swim with Manta Rays and talk to Vicunas at 13,000 '. The Galapagos Islands were definitely a bucket list item. Joe would like to snorkel on a pristine coral reef again.

Advice for new master naturalists? When you are outside, spend the time to just sit and look around you. Listen to the sounds of the birds, smell the air, touch the plants. Nature is amazing! Oh, and go see Big Bend and the UT Observatory!!

Tyler Nature Center Update

Kay Jenkins

Please join us for these upcoming workdays February 3, 2024 at 9:00 am and March 2 8:00 am. Please RSVP to Kay so she can plan the work around the number of volunteers. Her email is: kay-jenkins@sbcglobal.net.

Bring the following:

- Gloves, hat, sunscreen and water to drink
- Knee pads or kneeling pad or towel to kneel on
- Shovel, rake, pruners, loppers, hoe
- 5-gallon bucket
- Pruners

Wait! What?

Dale Wade - The Red-tail hawk cruises at 20 - 40 mph. However, they reach up to 120 mph when diving for prey.

Ann Reynolds – While the American Woodcock can fly upwards of 30 miles per hour in short bursts, the males are also capable of some of the slowest flights on record. During their aerial displays, courting males flap along at a mere 5 miles per hour. Along with slow speeds, woodcocks often fly at low elevations, typically migrating below an altitude of 100 feet.

Frost Weed

Sharon Hanzik

Verbesina virginica (resembling verbena from Virginia), has many aliases including ice - ribbons, flowers, fingers, filaments, leaves, frost - flowers, freaks (yes, freaks), ribbons, beards, castles or rabbit - ice and butter. It is native to



most of the eastern half of the United States. A shade-loving rhizome with fleshy, green flanges running longitudinal, it can be found in colonies at the forest's edge. Its leafy, green foliage resembles small tobacco leaves. In fact, according to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildlife Center website, indigenous people did use the leaves for tobacco. Frostweed blooms from July - December. Its blooms make it the perfect pollinator plant attracting a host of

butterflies including monarchs, plus a variety of bees and wasps. It serves as the host plant for the Bordered Patch butterfly. This perennial



herb can grow from two to eight feet tall. It is dormant in the winter months. The dried stalks soak water from the soil. Upon the first hard frost or freeze, its "pipes" burst, emitting frosty/icy curls that to me and many others, resemble white ribbon candy. If you haven't noticed it this winter, you've probably missed the show. I'm not sure any of the plants could contain themselves during the recent hard freeze.

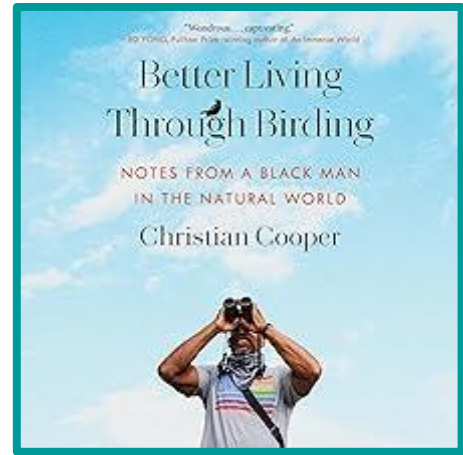
Many of you may have included this plant in your native wildscapes. If you have not, please consider it. It is deer resistant but can get out of control. You may want to keep it within a border or harvest some of the seeds. And after the first hard frost or freeze you can rush out to witness this natural phenomenon.

Book Reviews

Bonnie Edwards – ETCMN Class of 2022

[Better Living Through Birding, by Christian Cooper](#)

We naturalists and bird lovers know instinctively that birdwatching is good for us, don't we?



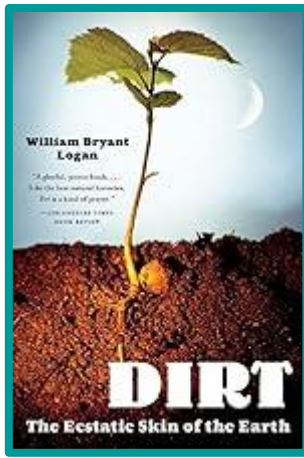
In his book, Christian Cooper points out seven specific benefits, or "pleasures," of this avocation. He also scatters practical "Birding Tips" throughout this delightful book that is part birding guide, part autobiography, and part confessional. He introduces us to the joys and challenges of the lifelong search for specific species, both at home and abroad. He tells about his love of birding that began in his childhood. He reveals his struggles to find his identity in a complex family dynamic. And he praises the mentors who have helped him along the way.

If his name is familiar, you may remember the incident in Central Park that made national news: a young African American male with binoculars, accused of threatening a white woman walking her dog. She felt threatened enough to call the police. That young man was Christian Cooper, birdwatching during the pandemic. He tells the story as it really happened, without rancor, in the context of the Black Lives Matter emphasis of 2020.

This book is written with humor, scientific inquiry, and a great appreciation for the community that birdwatching inspires. It is available as an audiobook, told in his own voice, which I highly recommend.

Lance Homeniuk

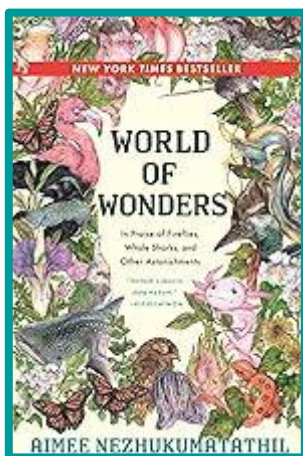
[Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth.](#) By William Bryant Logann, 1995. WW Norton and Company, NY, NY. Paperback, 202 pages.



Do you want to know all the facts, the dirt, on dirt? Geology, microbiology, history, agronomy, zoology... well, everything is here. But this is more of a daily devotional, the 44 chapters are as short as one page, they are by turns poetic, philosophical, religious, contemplative, and humorous. If anybody wrote about soil, from Virgil to Thomas Jefferson to Hans Jenny they have been quoted herein. Charles Darwin on earthworms, John Adams on manure, Isaiah on planting and Cato the Elder on farming economy, all woven into the narrative in a most natural way.

Logan's main thesis? Soil is alive, brings forth life, enables life to persist and its health determines ours.

World of Wonders: In praise of fireflies, whale sharks, and other astonishments. By Aimee Nezhukumatathil, 2020. Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis, MN. Hardback, 165 pages.

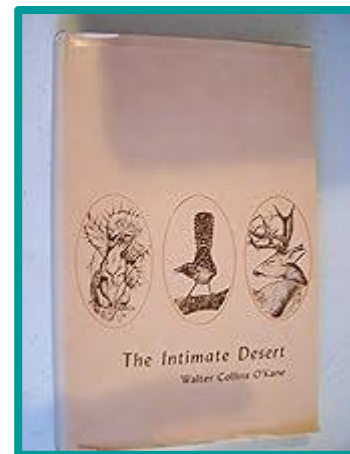


What do you expect from an Indo-Filipina American professor of literature and amateur naturalist? Something profound, sublime, insightful, observant, down to earth, and lyrical perhaps? It is most like a daily devotional guide (albeit for a month, not a year) featuring flora and fauna she herself has encountered and become close to. But she also includes her parents, sister, husband, and sons in the vignettes as well as the many places she has called home.

Here is a snippet: "It is this way with wonder: it takes a bit of patience, and putting yourself in the right place at the right time. It requires that we be curious enough to forgo our small distractions in order to find the world."

But in the very next paragraph she relates that in a class of 22 elementary students 17 could not relate to the memories and sensory details of watching fireflies in the evening. Because they had never seen, never heard of, and could not believe in fireflies. Guess what they do in their free time...

The Intimate Desert. by Walter Collins O'Kane, 1985. The University of Arizona press, Tucson, AZ. Paperback, 143 pages.



The O'Kanes, author and wife, spent an unrevealed period of time living in a cabin and exploring in an unrevealed location in the American southwest. For sure Arizona. Maybe including New Mexico, Nevada and/or

California. Desert lands, definitely. Mojave? Chihuahuan? Sonoran? All three.

Very detailed and clear descriptions of plants and animals of the desert(s), some of them surprising, are shared. No statistics, little in the way of lifecycles, scientific names are relegated to the end papers, this is not an academic or exhaustive collection of essays. Rather, it reads as a series of short stories, and some are mere fragments. And O'Kane does not present himself as an omniscient author – a knowledgeable and observant one, yes – but it is clear he did not return to his office or study or the library or the internet to flesh out the factoids he did not know at the time. He writes as in the present, experiencing and supposing, guessing, inferring - “perhaps” is used a lot. I liked it. It is a refreshing read.

Christmas Bird Count - Tyler

Jessica Coleman

The National Audubon society has conducted Christmas bird since 1900s when the ornithologist Frank M. Chapman proposed a new holiday tradition – the “Christmas Bird Census.” Originally, the holiday tradition was centered around the “side hunt” here people would go into the field with their guns to hunt birds. Whoever brought back the biggest pile of birds won. Conservations were starting to become worried about the state of bird populations since bird populations were starting to decline. Thus, Chapman proposal turned the hunting for the holidays into counting them instead.

The Tyler Audubon Society Count, just one out of 2,100 count circle across the US and Canada, held their count on December 30th, 2023. Thirty-two observers covered the count circle that is centered 5.25 miles south and slightly east of the Smith County courthouse. The East Texas Master Naturalists participated in the Tyler Audubon's Count circle were Jessica Coleman, Amanda Solorza, Amy Cumbie, Neil Ford, Karen Rueb-Hall, and Laura Wilson. Weather was clear with temperatures

ranging from 27°F to 60°F, with a slight southwest wind (3-10mph).

The count total was 114 species, which was nine more species from the previous year. While this was not a record, it was higher than our past five-year CBC average of 107 species. While we had a great year for the total number of species that were observed, the overall number of birds that were observed were quite low across the board. Even with low reported numbers, we have four rare bird sightings the day our count (Black Tern, Merlin, Summer



Photo courtesy Drew Allen

Tanager). The observation of a Black Tern was observed at 10:05am at Lake Tyler off the pier at Camp Tyler by Laura Wilson and Micheal Matthews. A Merlin observed by Eric Lisenbe and Zoe Ann Stinchcomb at 12pm near Lake Tyler Concession Dam, near the marina (behind the bathrooms). A Summer Tanager was reported by one of our feeder watchers, Drew Allen, at 9:24am.

Overall, a great year was had by all that participated and we are excitingly awaiting next year's count!

Christmas Bird Count – Henderson County

Corey Benton

Tyler Audubon Society

This was the first official year for the Henderson County CBC, and it was quite a good one.

Overall, we had 99 species, giving us an obvious goal of 100 for next year. Highlights this year included a Little Blue Heron, some Yellow-headed Blackbirds, a Rufous Hummingbird, and several other rare and uncommon birds. There were 11 volunteers, including two feeder watchers. Our circle covers an area from Brownsboro down to Larue, and from the edge of Lake Athens to Lake Palestine. We have quite the variation across our range, which allows us to get a fair amount of species diversity, including water birds, lots of sparrows, and woodland birds.

Participants included: Denise Gary, Laura Wilson, Buck Lee, Ryan Banek, Cliff Burke, Amy Cumbie, Curt Bateman, Amanda Solarza, Libby Benton and Addy Call.

Update White Oak Genetics and Tree Improvement Project

Wanda Rauscher

In September 2022 we were asked to help with the White Oak Genetics and Tree Improvement Project. The project goals are to collaborate with industry (forest, wood, distilling), and agencies and organizations (forestry, conservation, wildlife) to: (1) quantify genetic variation in white oak and, (2) improve traits that have economic and ecological value. There is apparently a problem with white oak seedlings failing to develop into large trees in at least part of its range (old trees that are cut down are not being replaced by younger white oak trees in the overstory but rather displaced by other species). For phase one of the project white oak genetic material is being collected from the entire geographic range of white oak. Dr. DeWald specifically asked for acorns from trees in our region (*Quercus albas* only). She has an ulterior motive for making sure she gets our oak tree genetics- with expected climate change she wants to make sure today's southern variations are captured for future need. Her update to us follows:

“Thanks in part to the Texas Master Naturalists we have finished our acorn collection efforts in Texas. Your acorn collections were planted at a nursery in KY and the seedlings that grew will be planted into progeny tests this spring! One of the largest tests is being installed in Texas!

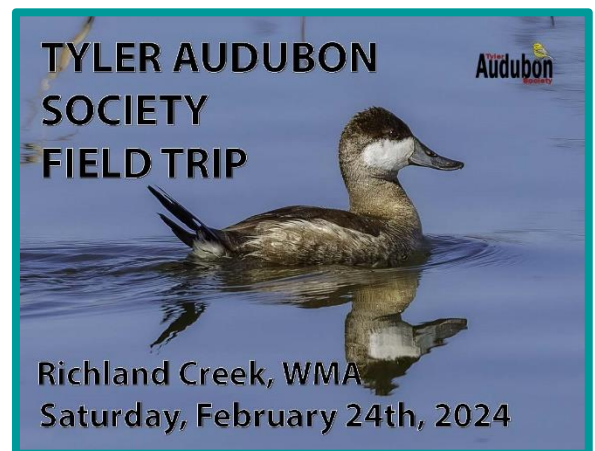
If any of the seedlings from the Texas collections indicate the mother tree was superior, we might contact you to show us your tree so that we can collect twigs from it to graft and create clones for a grafted seed orchard. These copies of your superior mother tree will produce acorns for the Texas nursery that will result in superior white oak seedlings for restoration in Texas.

Great job and thank you everyone for helping the White Oak Genetics and Tree Improvement Project be successful and for helping move it forward!”

Laura E. DeWald
University of Kentucky

Audubon Society Field Trip

Richland Creek WMA (North) on Saturday, February 14th at 8 am. This is near Fairfield, Texas. It is on Hwy 287, about 1/4 mile east of 488. Here are the coordinates. Copy them and paste them into your browser. It should open in Google maps, and then you can click on Directions. 31.972179048555656, -96.08331232596488





Native
Plant
Society
of Texas

<https://www.npsot.org/chapters/tyler/>

Meeting of the Tyler Chapter
Business Meeting & Guest Speaker

Monday, February 12, 2024

1:00 PM at the
Tyler Nature Center

11942 FM 848, Tyler

The mission of the Native Plant Society of Texas is to promote conservation, research and utilization of native plants and plant habitats of Texas through education, outreach, and example.

Native Texas Trees Not Typically Found in Local Nurseries

Daniel Duncum, Texas A&M Forest Service

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Daniel Duncum has served in the Texas A&M Forest Service as a Forester in East Texas since September 1979 in Crockett, San Augustine, Tyler, and Longview. After becoming a Certified Arborist in 2002, his primary responsibility is promoting urban forest management to city leaders, engineers, civic groups, and individual schools, businesses and homeowners. In addition, he also promotes rural forest management to private landowners, assists in emergency response to natural disasters, and provides environmental education (rural and urban forestry) to individuals, schools, and groups such as Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and Native Plant Society chapters.

DIRECTIONS

Tyler Nature Center,
11942 FM 848

Located southeast of central Tyler.
Take Loop 323 to University Blvd
(SH 248).
Go east on SH 248 past the UT Tyler
Campus to FM 848 (about 3 miles).
Turn right on FM 848 and travel about
0.7 mile.
Turn right at 11942 FM 848.
The meeting is in the first building on
the right, next to the pond.



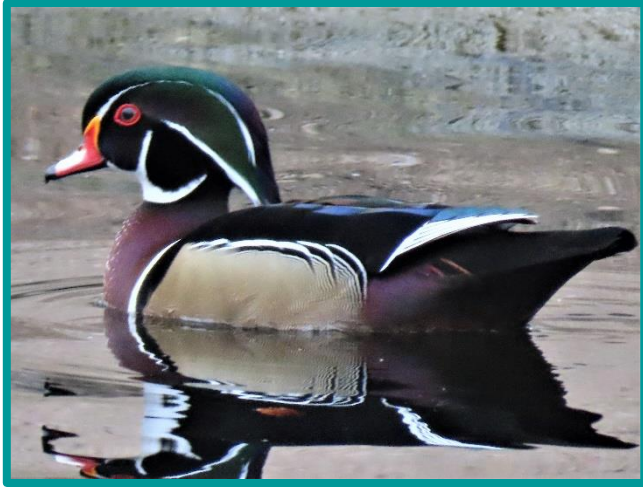


Photo courtesy Ann Reynolds

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.

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

Upcoming Events

February 3, Wildscape workday, **9:00 am**, Tyler Nature Center, RSVP to Kay Jenkins

February 6, **TMN Mini Series 11:00 am - 1:00 pm**, Craig Hensley and Wendy Anderson will be presenting a webinar titled "*iNaturalist Train the Trainer*" Workshop.

February 13, TMN Tuesday, noon, Chip Ruthven, Natural Resource Specialist and Project Leader, presents a webinar titled "*Rattlesnakes*."

February 20, articles for the chapter newsletter due to Ann Reynolds
Reynolds.ann1@gmail.com

February – 22, 6:30 pm Chapter meeting, and Zoom – see eBlast for details

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

IN THE COMMUNITY

NETFO – 1st Wednesday 6:30 pm, Alethea SS Classroom at Greggton UMC 1101 Pine Tree Road in Longview.

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

NPSOT-Tyler – 2nd Monday, 2:00 pm, TNC

NPSOT – Wood County – 1st Wednesday, 2:00 pm Sorrelle Farm, Mineola

NPSOT – Longview – 4th Thursday 2:00 pm, Longview Arboretum

Tyler Audubon Society Field Trip

February 14, 8:00 am
Richland Creek WMA



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/>

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

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



<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: 2024-2026** 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: 2024** Robert Lumpkins

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 2024: Kay Jenkins

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 1/30/24