

Wood Duck Whistler

May 2023

President's Message by Wanda Rauscher



City Nature Challenge will be finishing up as this newsletter issues. Hopefully most of you have submitted some observations to iNaturalist. Photographs can be taken only through May 1 within our chapter catchment to "count" (that's Smith County and the counties that surround -Rains, Wood, Upshur, Gregg, Rusk, Cherokee, Anderson, Henderson, and Van Zandt). That said there is a big second step: identifications. From May 2 through May 7, we need help getting identifications for organisms submitted!

A few pointers on making identifications:

- Use the website not the phone! The app is mostly for creating observations and lacks features found on the website.
- It's ok to leave an identification at a broader level, like "sunflower family" or even just "plant." If someone helps identify something further, please don't "agree" with the ID until you've confirmed the identification seems correct (use field guides, reference books, internet sites such as BugGuide and Moth Photographers Group). Otherwise, observations may become "research grade" mistakenly.

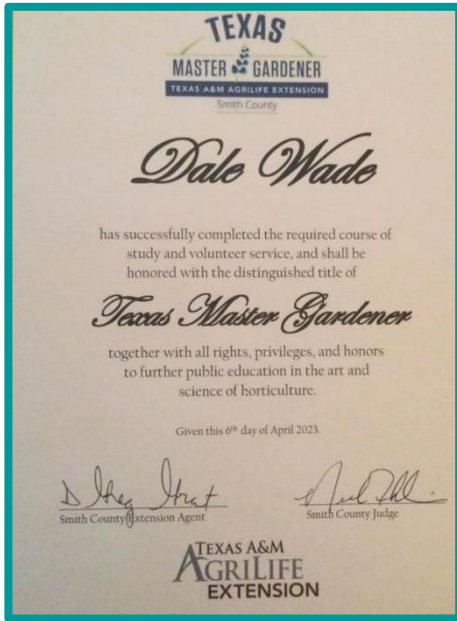
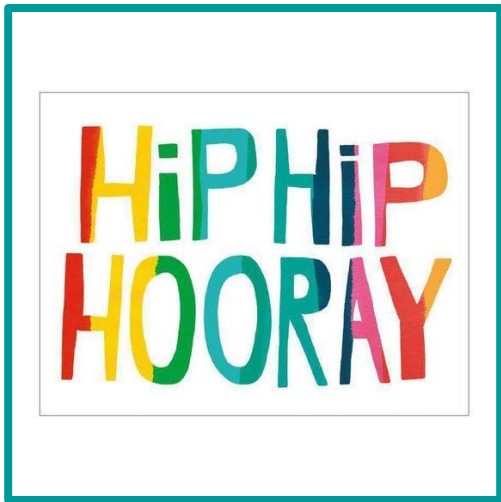
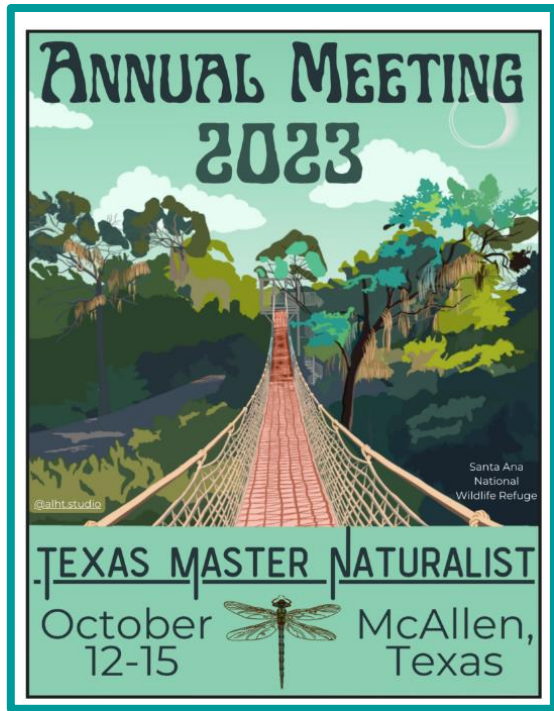
- Take the automated species identifications with a grain of salt. Sometimes it provides suggestions for organisms that are only found halfway across the world!

For details as to mechanics of the process please refer to the article I posted in the newsletter May 2022 (can pull it from our website <https://txmn.org/etwd/>).

I can't wait to look through the many photographs submitted and learn more about our biodiversity! I wonder what new species we will find this year!

April was National Volunteer Recognition Month. I want to extend my thanks to all our master naturalist volunteers contributing to so many different projects! Thanks to the project directors who are helping the chapter increase our impact through new service opportunities. I want to thank our officers and directors as well. There is a lot of work in the background to keep the chapter functioning well. Our Training Director, Beverly Guthrie, will have almost finished the initial training for the Class of 2023 a momentous task (even with help) and deserves lots of kudos!

Looking ahead have you heard about the 2023 Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting?! It will be held October 12-15 in McAllen, Texas. This meeting is a big deal! It is the 25th anniversary for the Texas Master Naturalist Program and coincides with an annular solar eclipse. The Lower Rio Grande Valley is famous for its diversity of birds, butterflies, and endangered species like Ocelots, Texas Tortoises, Sabal Palms, and Piping Plovers that call the region home. McAllen offers some of the best birding and nature exploration opportunities in Texas, with its sunny subtropical climate and prime location along the Central Flyway. Hotels are already taking reservations (<https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting/>). Detailed meeting agenda will be published in July. Meeting registration will open the first week of August.



TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM SKELETON AGENDA	
Thursday 10/12	Pre-Event Field Sessions
	Chapter Leadership Luncheon
	Afternoon Concurrent Advanced Training Sessions
	Welcome Dinner
Friday 10/13	All Day Field Sessions
	All Day Concurrent Advanced Training Sessions
	Keynote Address
Saturday 10/14	Annular Solar Eclipse
	All Day Off-Site Conference Location
	Annual Awards Reception & Dinner
Sunday 10/15	Post-Event Field Sessions
	Contest Awards
	Morning Concurrent Advanced Training Sessions
	Conference Wrap up by Noon!
HTTP://TXMN.TAMU.EDU	



East TX Chapter TMN members earning 2023 recertification

Announcing for April 2023

Joe Archambault
Mark Edmund
Bonnie Edwards
Lance Homeniuk
Ann Reynolds
Pat Spradlin
Caryn Vorsas

Announced for March 2023

Beverly Guthrie
Wanda Rauscher
Ray Rottmann
Karen Rueb-Hall
Joe Vorsas
Bobbie Williams

East TX Chapter TMN Initial Certification:

Announced April 18, 2023 (at training class)

Jessica Coleman
Amanda Solorza

East Texas Chapter Earth Day

Polly Jones - Mineola

We had a small but determined group of volunteers visit the Mineola Nature Preserve on Earth Day. With the help of six young men from



the Mineola High School Ag Department, new firepits were built in the Greer Hill primitive

camping sites. Additionally, the new tree carving at the entrance of the Preserve was adorned with an iron ore rock border and a boulder for visitor photo ops. Amidst our work, we took the opportunity to make observations of the new bluebird houses installed last month. We are happy to report two of the new houses are occupied and expecting! It is always



exciting to see our volunteer's hard work pay off.

Nancy Faber - Tyler

TMN table at Bergfeld Park in Tyler. Beautiful weather. Fun to see the kids get excited about scavenger hunt, nature hike or bingo, and get an earth squeeze ball when they finish!



Pat Howarth - Holly Lake Ranch

The very first Earth Day Celebration was introduced to Holly Lake Ranch on Saturday, April 22, 2023! It was kicked off by residents picking up roadside trash and celebrating with booths set up for residents to see at the

Greenbriar Deck near the lake. It was a fairly small but mighty group of exhibitors for our first year, including East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists, Wood County Master Gardeners, McGowan Recycling, Holly Lake Kiwanis and UPSHUR Rural Electric.

Ann Reynolds, Sandy Tibbs, and Pat Howarth provided a children's table including: a hands-



on project making a hummingbird spinner, as well as, butterfly/damselfly wings, turtle shell, fossils, bees, and cicadas to investigate under a magnifying glass. Engaging children at an early age is key to awareness. It's our goal that they will grow up teaching their children, creating a cycle to evolve for the importance of preserving nature and their habitats. Adults were treated to demonstrations of Merlin and iNaturalist. East Texas Master Naturalist and City Nature Challenge brochures were distributed and discussed for future members. Lots of reference books were available to browse.

Looking forward to building on this first event at Holly Lake Ranch and gaining the interest of our residents and children to be a part of their beautiful natural surroundings.

Tyler Nature Center Update

Ann Reynolds

Come join the group on the next workday, May 13, at 9:00 am. – noon. You make a lot of new friends and work with a bunch of fun people.



Venomous Cottonmouth found under the water spigot. We finished and left it to enjoy the work we completed.

Mussels

Neil Ford

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed listing two freshwater mussels that occur in East Texas, the Texas Heelsplitter (*Potamilus amphichaenus*) and the Louisiana Pigtoe (*Pleurobema riddellii*). If listed the Texas Heelsplitter will be considered as endangered and the Louisiana Pigtoe as threatened under the



(Louisiana Pigtoes from the Sabine River. N. Ford)

Endangered Species Act. These species live in mid to large sized streams and rivers of east Texas such as the Sabine and the Neches. Mussels in rivers across the U.S. have been negatively impacted by habitat degradation such as pollution from agriculture and urbanization, poor water management including dams, and invasive mussels like the zebra mussel. The proposed rule would designate critical habitat for both species. Dams in particular have negatively impacted freshwater mussel by restricting the movements of the fish that they depend on to disperse their juveniles. Mussels produce larva (glochidia) that attached to the gills of fish and then drop off into sediments in the river to develop and grow. Each species of mussels depends on particular species of fish to attach to and so dams affect those movements both by restricting fish movement and also by changing the temperatures of the rivers below dams. Over 300 species of freshwater mussels

occur in North America with over 35 of them now extinct and 70% of the remainder under some threat of extinction in the future.

Native Plant of the Month

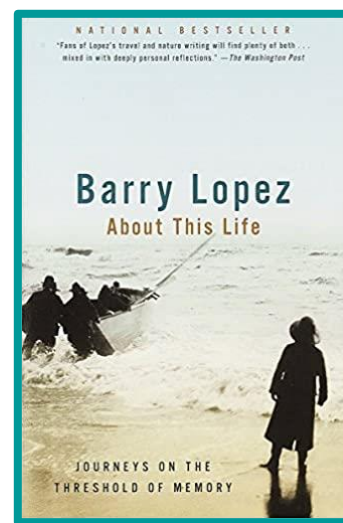
Denise Gary



A sweet lavender star bedazzles skies of emerald as the sun sets on east Texas. This is Venus's Looking Glass (*Triodanis biflora*), so named for the numerous shiny, black seeds it produces, each resembling a miniature mirror. An annual wild child that can be found in all of the lower 48 states, bees and small butterflies eagerly pay homage at its blossoms. After all, the flowers reflect the beauty of the Goddess of Love herself.

Book Reviews

Lance Homeniuk



About This Life: Journeys on the Threshold of Memory. by Barry Lopez. Published 1999 by Vintage Books, NY. 273 pages, paperback.

Something of interest for everyone is found between the covers of this book. In a collection of 17 essays, from settings around the world, the author writes, with great wisdom and insight, an autobiography encompassing poetry, philosophy and nature.

My favorites were, of course those centered on natural history. One of the most memorable, titled "American Geographies", a paean to the multitude of differing places encompassed in the concept of America. Lopez states that "our genuine desire is to ... actually know these places... to sojourn in it [the land]" which is attained by those few who spend a lifetime of intimacy in a locale. They abide there, have a feel for the soil and history, the sounds and smells, and their understanding can be borrowed as they are glad to take an "outlander" in tow. They are usually anonymous, not scholars or writers, but geniuses in experience. (But I think of the Ozark naturalist in Barney's video). They are nearly flawless in the respect they bear for these places they love. Their knowledge is intimate rather than encyclopedic, human, but not necessarily scholarly. It rings with the concrete details of experience.

One of his best books. I may not reread it in entirety but like a box of chocolates, will dip into various chapters again.

Reading the Mountains of Home by John Elder. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1998. Paperback, 253 pages.

Another work celebrating place – a very specific place around a small town, Bristol Vermont. But Elder has woven his ramblings along the twin mountains (North and South) with the history of the area, his family and personal memoir, and poetry. Robert Frost's poem "Directive" is the skeleton and soul of the narrative- it is followed verse by verse as we

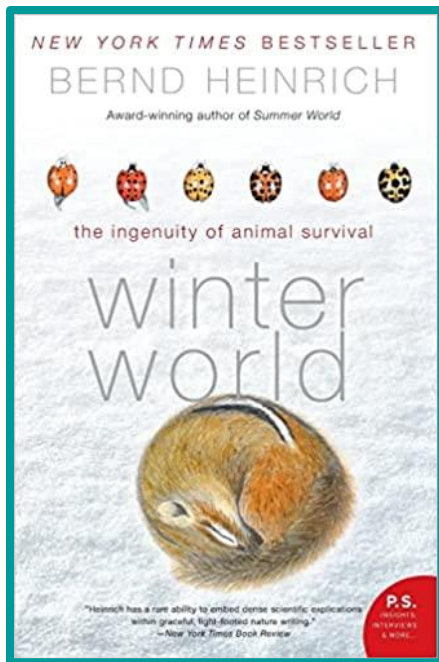


journey step by step. "Hiking a poem and reading a wilderness, like cultivating a relationship with the land, can never be passive experiences. I haven't partaken of such in-depth exegesis of a work since college; the author is, after all, a professor of English **and** environmental studies! And I reckon he is a gifted writer and guide.

In the ultimate chapter "A Confusion of Waters" Elder observes "Becoming lost enough to find yourself is not a permanently achieved, and therefore trivial resolution. Rather, it is a perpetual practice – like a daily walk, like playing music, like prayer."

There are maps, notes, selected readings (under the headings: Natural and Human History of New England, Robert Frost), topographical writing and an index. I see here a hoard of treasures to search out. I may never visit the Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area but I feel I know it. I know it in a deeper way than I do my own neighborhood. But now I have a map of how to get to know it.

Winter World: the ingenuity of animal survival by Bernd Heinrich. Published 2003 by HarperCollins, NY. Paperback, 357 (plus 31) pages.



Not as critical in East Texas as in, say, the Great White North (from the Red River to Arctic Ocean), winter survival is essential for most life outside the tropics. Heinrich, who I have read before and am always on the lookout for, investigates the myriad ways creatures meet the challenge. Hibernation, torpor, antifreeze, migration, and freezing solid (!) are just some of the strategies animals have adapted. Species may overwinter as adults, pupae, larvae, eggs, or newborns. Sometimes he gets scientific (empirical, detached, may I say “dry”) but it is worth the effort to find out how tiny birds who must eat their own weight per day just to stay alive are also able to hunt for food with deep snow and below zero temperatures. Hey guys! Read about your fine feathered friends who migrate. Which examples include the poster child *Danaus plexippus*. He tells the story of how we learned about that near-miraculous journey. Some things I knew, some I just thought I knew, some gobsmacked (completely astounded) me. Fascinating and mind opening and any other superlatives you can think are appropriate.

Many B&W pencil illustrations are included, as well as a thermometer comparing Celsius and Fahrenheit (Pop Quiz: what is the only temperature identical on both scales?) As a bonus, after the references and index, is

appended a P.S. – Insights, interviews, and excerpts from a (then) new book. Oh, and a “Have you read?” section introducing 5 more of his books. 1 yes, 4 not yet.

Member Spotlight

Ruth Adame

Please welcome Denise Gary, the Class Representative of 2022. Denise is also the Adopt-a-Loop leader of the Texas State Railroad Loop, a co-leader of I.D. Fairchild State Forest Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Monitoring Project, and the ETCMN Mentor Program Coordinator. Denise previously coordinated the ETCMN Private Tour of I.D. Fairchild State Forest and that she currently tallies 375 VHS hours.

Do you believe that your previous work experience has helped you as a Master Naturalist? Yes, as the founder and Executive Director or Kids Need to Read, a non-profit organization, I learned about volunteers and the challenges that leadership faces.

Why did you choose to become a Naturalist? Denise stated she has been passionate about nature for as long as she can remember sharing this passion with her renowned grandfather, Percy Viosca Jr, a leading biologist employed by the State of Louisiana. On a personal note, she speaks of Nature as being her “...first and ... most beloved... friend.”

Training classes or Volunteering? Both. “I found the training classes to be exceptional and was greatly inspired by Beverly Guthrie’s passion and dedication,” a passion and dedication that Denise sees reflected in the chapter’s members and leaders.

What is your favorite volunteer experience? One of her favorite experiences was researching and advocating for the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge to become a new site on the Texas State Railroad Loop.

Do you have a long-term project? The Adopt-a-Loop program is at the top of her agenda, at least for now. She is dedicated to ensuring that everything is in order for nature seekers to safely explore.

Another experience that she enjoyed was the private tour at I.D. Fairchild State Forest, which is already a site on the loop. This particular activity generated new projects for the chapter, to help monitor the red-cockaded woodpeckers and to help develop a bird list for that state forest.

What is your favorite nature activity? Denise stated that her favorite activity is solo hiking. She summed the challenges and dangers of solo hiking by saying, "I would rather die living life to my most joyful, than die having the life sucked out of my soul well in advance of the end."



Advice to new Master Naturalists: Two bits of wisdom from the Class of 2022 representative: One, try many volunteer activities so you know what is available and what you prefer. Two, don't overlook the small things. Don't always look up or at the big picture, look down sometimes. She said she calls unexpected findings "humbles," and when I asked for clarification, she said, "tiny mushrooms" and other small things you might find on the ground or under a leaf. "Humbles," she said, "sometimes ... can lead to the most fascinating discoveries."



Book recommendation: [Paddling the Wild Neches](#), by Richard M. Donovan

Notable Quote: "I was born a naturalist, so I was well prepared to serve as a Master Naturalist."

Texas Mushroom Festival

Susie Stillwell – North Texas Chapter – TMN

Please follow the below link for information about this interesting and informative festival.

[Texas Mushroom Festival 2023 – North Texas Mycological Association \(northtexasmycology.org\)](#)

Wait, What?

Dale Wade - What do butterflies, mushrooms, and crabs have in common? They all have exoskeletons comprised of chitin, a macromolecule that helps form hard outer layers to protect their soft bodies.

Ann Reynolds - Armadillos live anywhere from seven to 20 years. They give birth once a year, and always to a litter of four males or four females.

Sandy Tibbs – the Stapelia or Starfish Flower plant, comes from regions of Africa without native pollinating honeybees. So the plants produce flowers with the fur, the colors, and the scent of carrion to attract pollinating ants and flies.

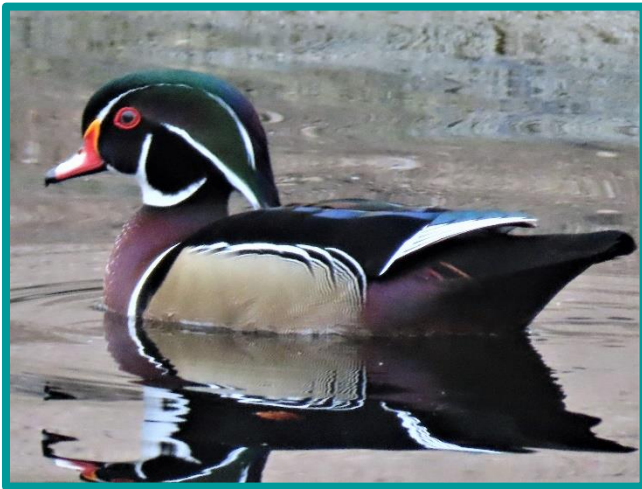


Photo courtesy Ann Reynolds

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.

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

Upcoming Events

May 6 – Field Trip to Ebel's Prairie, Sulphur Bluff. See eBlast for details.

May 9 – TMN Tuesday noon – Ben Horstman, TPWD - Roving Interpretation: Making Casual Connections that Matter

May 13 – Wildscape Work Day, 9-noon, Tyler Nature Center, contact Kay Jenkins

May 20 articles for the chapter newsletter due to Ann Reynolds

May 25 – Chapter Meeting, 6:45 pm, Tyler Nature Center

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 – 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, Tyler.

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

NPSOT – Linden – 4th 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