

Wood Duck Whistler November 2023

President's Message by Wanda Rauscher



First some news from the State TMN Meeting:

- The 2024 annual meeting will be held in San Marcos, Texas on October 24-27 (mark your calendars- it's not so very far to get there!).

-Funding has been designated for significant improvements in the VMS, BUT implementation will take a while. Don't look for anything until Fall 2024.

-A new Texas Master Naturalist FRIENDS Group is organizing, primarily to take on the role of funding the annual meeting. More information later.

-TMN Tuesdays has a new link for the November 14 and December 12 meetings.

Find it at:

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/tmntuesdays/>

-Want to see the winners of the photography contests? Visit:

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/blog/2023-annual-meeting-awards-wrap-up/>

- And drum roll... the 2024 certification pin is...



Western Diamondback
Rattlesnake
Crotalus atrox
AKA: Texas Diamondbac



And here is the distribution map from iNaturalist 2000-2023:

The one entry in Corrigan, TX was believed to be an accidental transportation from points west.

Instead, our region has *Crotalus horridus* the Timber Rattlesnake.



Amanda Solorza – DOUBLE CERTIFICATION

Dawn Bahr – Recertification

Patricia Gray – Recertification

Vickie Hoppis – Recertification

Tyler Nature Center Update

Kay Jenkins

Wanda Rauscher and I watered and weeded in the Nature Center pollinator garden. Purple coneflowers and frostweed were blooming nicely. Three monarch butterflies were nectaring on the Gregg's mistflower while we worked.



Please join us for the upcoming workday November 4 at 9:00 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

Member Spotlight

Ann Reynolds

This month's member spotlight is **Carol Lanthrum**.



Where were you born/raised?

I was born in Abilene, Texas, in 1951, and my family moved to Waco when I was 2. I have 2 younger brothers. I graduated from Midway High School in 1969, in a class of 76 students. Midway is now a 6A school graduating 600+. It was educationally tough then and is still top-rated.

When I was 9, my dad and uncle bought a farm in Gholson, just outside Waco, for my grandparents to farm. It was 100 acres on the Brazos River. I spent many happy days hoeing peanuts, swimming and fishing in the Brazos with my cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles. Great memories – the cousins are still close!

My other great love was Girl Scouts. I was in GS for all 12 years, from Brownies thru Seniors. I went to Camp Kachina in Belton every summer. I loved camping, fire building, badge work especially any badge that had to do with science or the outdoors.

What was your career/education?

I went to McMurry College (now University) in Abilene and got a degree in biology and chemistry. I married a guy that moved me to Chicago where I went to Medical Technology

School (also known as Clinical Laboratory Technology) at St. Anne's Hospital there. A Texas girl is not a happy girl in Chicago, so back to Texas – the guy came with me, but it still didn't last.

I worked at the Transfusion Lab at Parkland Hospital in Dallas for 4 years where I also got a Specialty in Blood Banking and then I worked at Presbyterian.

After I moved to Tyler, I worked at Stewart Blood Center (now Carter Blood Care), ETMC in the laboratory (now UT Healthcare), and retired from Clinical Pathology Laboratory as the hematology & chemistry manager in 2019.

I currently work 3 days a week as the Parish Administrator of my church, St. Francis Episcopal.

What would you like to share about your family?

I met my second husband, Tim, at a Lake Tyler party. We were married in 1982 and were married for 38 years until his death in 2020 from heart disease (btw don't smoke for 55 years, not healthy, just saying). We have 2 children, Janelle and Clint. So I have lived in Tyler for 40 years and both my children live locally. Neither are married nor have children – not seeing grandchildren in my future!

I was Girl Scout leader for my daughter's troop for all 13 years (she was also a Daisy, which was not a level when I was young).

What are some of your hobbies?

I like to read magazines like National Geographic and Nat Geo History, Discover, and Smithsonian. I like to cook and read cookbooks. I am taking dressage horse riding lessons (still very much a novice). I like to take walks, slow enough that I can hear the birds and see the butterflies. I like to keep in shape with yoga, exercise tapes, weights at home – I do not like going to the gym and hate treadmills!

I play handbells at my church and sing in the choir. I am also a member of the Daughters of the King, an order of women in the Episcopal church who pledge themselves to a life-long program of prayer & service.

What ETCMN Class were you in? What is your favorite training class?

I was in the 2021 class, yes, the all-virtual class. I wanted to be a Master Naturalist for a long time, but working full-time, taking care of children and sick husband did not leave me any time until after my husband's death. I loved the field trip to John Bunker Sands. So amazing to see the critters under the microscope, all the water birds, the eagle nest. Also, to see how a wetland can be created to clean the water so that it benefit nature and provide clean water for people gives me hope for our future.

What is your favorite volunteer experience? Favorite nature activity?

My favorite activity is to take walks almost anywhere so that I can see the plants, birds, butterflies, bugs, whatever is there. I loved the Fairchild woodpecker event – so interesting to see how the birds build their nests in the trees. Never got to see one, but there is always next time!

Describe your perfect bucket-list natural science encounter?

I plan to go to Costa Rica next year and visit my brother Jim, who retired there a few years ago. He is an amazing photographer and is always sending me picture of birds, butterflies and mammals. Can hardly wait!

What books or field guides do you recommend?

I really enjoyed a book by Heather Wolf titled *Find More Birds: 111 Surprising Ways to Spot Birds Wherever You Are*. Each page has a helpful hint, like *Stay in One Spot for 10 Minutes* or *Search for Seeds*, followed by why and how to follow the hint. It is an easy read, and even though it doesn't tell you anything you don't

intuitively know, the reminders give you the “oh, yeah” moment.

Advice for new Master Naturalists?

There are some wicked-smart and knowledgeable people in this chapter! Don't get discouraged if you don't feel up to their level (note: my advice to myself). Everyone is willing to share what they know and want you to be successful. Pick a subject area you like and concentrate on it through reading and asking others questions. Ask for help and GET INVOLVED!

Lechuza

Sharon Hanzik

Awoken in the middle of the night by a scream, I bolted upright in bed. This sounds like a scene from a classic thriller, right? Thankfully, I knew



exactly what it was, a Barred Owl crying out in the night from the top of a live oak tree outside my bedroom window of my home in a heavily forested area. Whew! The owl did not make this call again, nor any others, and I was able to calm my heart rate and return to peaceful slumber. Most people think only of the classic “hoo-hoo” of the Great Horned Owl, one of North America's most widespread owl species and what you see and hear in most television shows and movies. However, each owl makes its own distinct call. Some, such as the Barred Owl, have quite the vocabulary. For instance, their main call is “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?” can be accompanied by a drawn-out “hoooooo”, screams and the

almost “hissing” sounds from their young which has kept me awake during their midnight feedings upon the flat roof of an abandoned shed.

Owls have been both feared and revered for most of human history and play a prominent role in cultural history and superstition alike. For instance, the title of this article is derived from Mexican folklore. Although “lechuza” simply translates to “owl”, particularly the Barn Owl, it entails negative connotations referring to the legend of La Lechuza, a 7-foot owl with a woman's face that is, according to several sources, said to be a woman, who after the death of her child, turned into a hideous monster seeking revenge. In Native American Indian cultures, it can be viewed as a protector, a guide for the healers, and also a harbinger of death.

Although many cling to their superstitions, scientific study has taught us that owls are very beneficial animals to have around. Their main diet of rodents being one of, if not the top benefit to their ecosystem as well as a benefit to humans. Owls, depending on their size, have a diet that consists of anything from insects to small birds, rodents, reptiles, amphibians and larger prey such as rabbits, raccoons, **and** even skunks. Most owls are nocturnal with a few species being diurnal. It is not so unusual to see a nocturnal species during the day. As humans can wake in the middle of the night with an empty stomach seeking a snack from the kitchen, nocturnal owls can be compared in the same way. Hopefully, that midnight snack we have eaten won't result in indigestion. Owls, however, have what I consider to be “delicate digestion”. They cannot digest hair, feathers or bones. So, what can't go down, must come up in the form of a pellet containing all of this undigested material that researchers can use in determining what owls are eating.

Nocturnal or diurnal, owls have near-perfect nocturnal vision due to their eyes consisting of more rods than cones. Rods are much larger



than cones. Simply put, they allow for better vision in low light. Cones on the other hand allow for color vision. The number of rods makes for a very large eye inside the animal's skull and **this** is why owls cannot rotate their eyes in the socket. Therefore, they rely on a broader range of motion in their neck, which consists of an incredible number of bones that allow them to turn their heads almost all the way around in order to get a full scan of their surroundings.

Although their eyesight is near-perfect, one sense is even better, hearing. According to Cornell University, owl hearing is the best of any animal that has ever been tested. On a dark night with extremely low visibility, an owl will rely more on its hearing than eyesight. And, if one is relying on its hearing to catch prey one must be a very stealthy creature, which owls are also designed to be.

Owls are mostly feathers and do not weigh much at all. These feathers are designed to be virtually soundless in flight. The primary wing feathers have soft edges that do not catch the wind. Other feathers are soft to the touch as well. Their legs are covered up to the talon so that their scaly skin doesn't catch the wind. A close look at their faces will show modified, almost hairlike growth surrounding their sharp beaks. Another feature of their faces that contributes to hearing, other than their ears, of course, are the facial disks surrounding their eyes. Think of these disks as satellite dishes that bring in audio signals and direct them straight to their ears.

Cool stuff, right? This article is only an introduction to the world of owls. I encourage you to visit sites such as www.allaboutbirds.org to learn more about some of the most common species in our area as well as owls in general. Native species such as the Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Barn Owl and Eastern Screech Owl have interesting characteristics of their own to discover. And, if you are interested in viewing owls at night I recommend either covering a regular flashlight with red or green cellophane or purchasing a multi-colored

flashlight. I have one and I highly recommend it.

Wait! What?

Lance Homeniuk - One more instance of why biodiversity matters: In 1969 a new species of bacteria was discovered in The Mushroom Spring in Yellowstone National Park and named *Thermus aquaticus*. In 1976 an enzyme, Taq polymerase, was isolated from the bacterium that stayed functional at extremely high temperatures. It is now used in PCR (polymerase chain reaction) research of DNA for medical and genetic research.

A pit viper native to Brazilian jungles whose taxonomic name is *Bothrops jaracara* and goes by several names. (Ho) In 1960 a toxic peptide was isolated from its venom. (Hum) It was soon identified as an angiotension-converting enzyme. (Huh?) Labs developed an ACE inhibitor that is now one of the most used drugs to treat high blood pressure. (Hooray!)

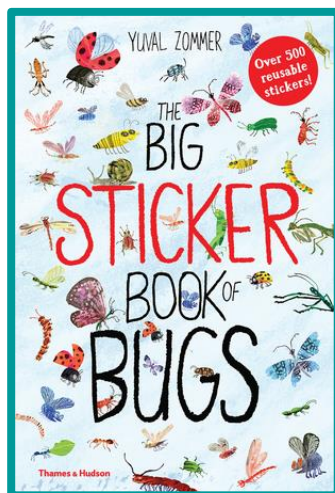
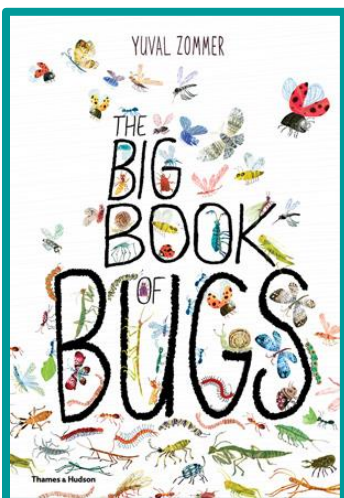
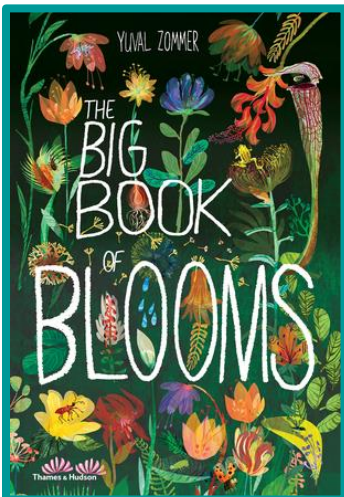
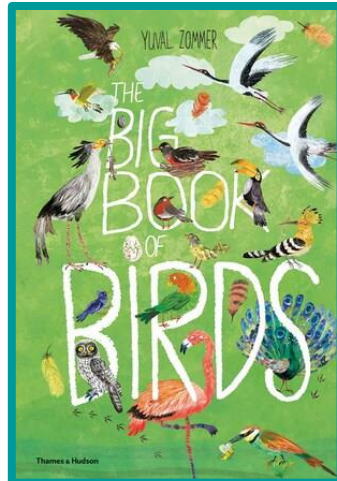
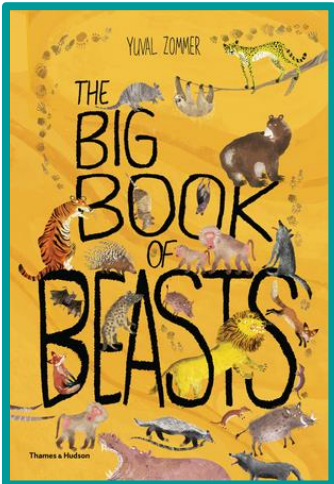
NATURALIST GIFTS FOR KIDS

Dale Wade

OMG! it is already the Fall season with holidays quickly upon us. Regardless of the holiday that you celebrate, we all love giving, especially to the little ones. Unless you are in daily contact with the young ones in your family, chances are you, like me, are at a loss as to gift-giving. With 5- and 6-year-old grandchildren, I depend upon their parents for guidance. But this year, I will change that with gifts that bring the joy of being a naturalist. Here are some suggestions for consideration.

A good start is with books about nature. I really like the BIG BOOK Series by Yuva Zummer. Each huge format (9.4 in x 13.7 in x 0.6 in) covers the topic in a fun, colorful, and imaginative way. Stimulate their curiosity with bugs, birds, beasts, blooms, and blue. My fav is Bugs that covers everything from butterflies to

spiders, and, there is a separate series with stickers.



Finally, how about a gift each month. You cannot go wrong with The National Wildlife

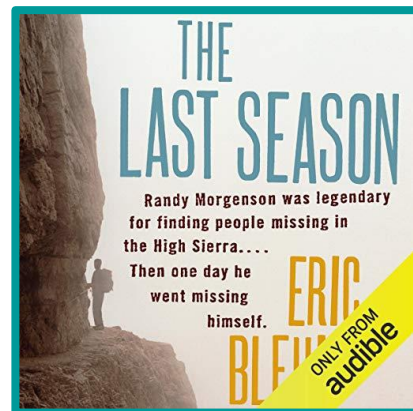
Federation (NWF) Ranger Rick series or the Zoo Books.



Of course, these are only a few of my choices. There are loads of ideas on-line. Happy Holidays!

Book Reviews Lance Homeniuk

The Last Season by Eric Blehm. Published by Harper Perennial, NY, NY, 2006. Paperback, 335+ pages.

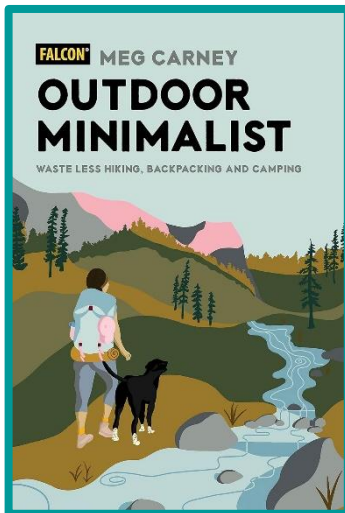


Backpacker magazine circa 1970's was my fantasy read. Articles featuring Yosemite trails, Cascades waterfalls, and especially, Sierra alpine meadows. My daydreams put me there. But at that same time period Randy Morgenson WAS there, hiking, climbing, photographing and writing about the high Sierra backcountry. He was also packing out trash, cleaning up fire pits, giving advice and aid to tourists. And too often taking part in search and rescue operations. For 28 seasons he was a ranger in Sequoia and Kings Canyon

National Parks. Then he disappeared while on patrol. A massive multi-agency search ensued. And was terminated. But then...

Eric Blehm has woven strands of biography with detective thriller, and wilderness adventure into a tapestry that highlights the land Morgenson loved. He presents a thoroughly researched portrait of a complicated man, one who by turns struggled with authority, bureaucracy, realization of his creative urges, relationships with family coworkers and the public, and with the threats against the wild places he loved. His job as he saw it was "to protect the park from the people and the people from the park". He said he drew strength and calm from nature, but he lost his final battle to the land he loved. Or did he willingly yield to it? My number one pick for an adventure movie, starring the peaks and valleys of the high Sierras!

Outdoor Minimalist: Waste Less Hiking, Backpacking and Camping. by Meg Carney. Published 2022 by Falcon, Essex, CT. Paperback, 209 pages.

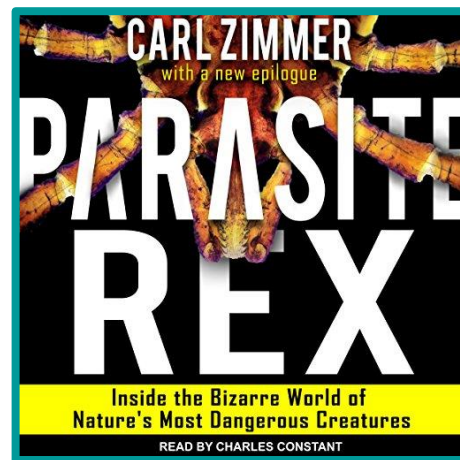


One of the few books I have purchased new, but I was in the Garden of the Gods Trading Post and decided I did not want the usual souvenir. Asking a couple of employees for their recommendations I narrowed down the options to this LITTLE book and a big, heavy hardback. So, I let the title make my choice!

A very informative and user-friendly guide for the outdoor enthusiast who is willing to think about what they want to do, pay attention to what they're doing, and put in the effort to do what's right for the environment. (When I think of the tons of trash R.M. – see the preceding review- hauled out of the wilderness I see red. Smokey Bear could do worse than whack a few trashy nature "lovers" with his shovel.)

But Meg does not preach or rant. She teaches, encourages and persuades. She gives lots of helpful tips and more than one list. My favorite is the 7 R's: Reduce, Refuse, Rethink, Repair, Remove, Rehome and Restore. I fear I am too undisciplined to be her disciple but I have resolved to apply each of these at least once. And she blesses baby steps so I can start with small and easy things. So, I'll fix that tote bag strap and use that reusable water bottle in the cabinet, and... so on. Very readable, very practical, very useful. And worth the cost of a brand-new book!

Parasite Rex: Inside the bizarre world of nature's most dangerous creatures. by Carl Zimmer. Published 2000 by Simon and Schuster, NY. Paperback 298 pages.



Zimmer presents parasites in a new light, not just the evolutionary degenerate organisms that infect and kill "higher" creatures, but paragons of evolution, perfectly adapted and displaying some of the most complicated life cycles in nature. He makes even more claims –

parasites are not just sneaky predators, but contribute to the health of populations of their hosts, some strive to keep their hosts well, others facilitate genetic variability (they may even be the drivers of sex!). And to ensure we humans do not feel smug he posits we are acting as parasites of our planet.

“As ecosystems have faltered, scientists have come to recognize that parasites are important to their health. A healthy ecosystem is riddled with parasites, and in some cases, an ecosystem may even depend on parasites for its health. As humans alter the world, tipping the biosphere out of kilter, it may be possible to enlist parasites to help us undo some of our mistakes and perhaps keep us from making new ones.”

Cringe factor – moderate, at least there are no full color photos! (B&W only)

Christmas Bird Count

Ann Reynolds

Yes, it is that time of year again! Time to form your Christmas bird count group. Contact these folks if you are interested:

The **Tyler Audubon** welcomes anyone interested in joining the annual Christmas bird count on Dec. 30, 2023. If you are interested in helping Tyler Audubon, contact Jessica Coleman at jcoleman@uttyler.edu about your interest in joining a team. When you email about your interest please put in the title "Christmas Bird Count", and include contact information in your email. You will be paired with a team to visit various habitats and birding spots, counting every bird you see. All levels of birders are welcome to join, and all you need to bring is a pair of binoculars and weather-appropriate clothes.

The **NETFO** Christmas Bird Counts will be headed up by Mark Edmund. Contact Mark Edmund at maedmund321@gmail.com. We always welcome birders of all ages and

experience levels to participate. The more eyes on the skies (and trees) means a better CBC.

Longview Christmas Bird Count - Saturday December 16.

Lake O' the Pines Christmas Bird Count - Saturday December 30

Tenaha (Lake Murval) CBC - the CBC will be held sometime week of January 1 through January 5. Exact day will be set at a later time.

Or, form your own group and count!

Master Naturalists Out and About

Ann Reynolds

Several Master Naturalists have been spotted at local festivals, fairs and other community events during October.

On September 30, Sandy Tibbs and Ann Reynolds attended the fourth Yantis Prairie Day



and taught children about pollinators and explained the Master Naturalist Program to



adults. Other entities at the event were: The Texas Grazing Coalition, Texas Parks and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Texas A&M AgriLife,

Audubon Society, Native Prairie Association, Texas Master Gardeners and Northeast Texas Farmers Co-Op. These folks made this such an educational and fun time for all of the community to enjoy.

Julie Maddox has made a true difference in this a growing success each year. The education of nature and restoration has put the Northeast Texas Prairie Classroom along with Yantis on the map! The prairie classroom is about cultivating stewardship of our prairie ecosystem.

On October 21, Lance Homeniuk and Ann Reynolds attended Curtis Creek State Park



celebration of 100 years of Texas State Parks with an event geared around wildlife conservation and land management.

Creature Feature

Walking Stick
(Phasmatodea)
seen by Erica
Dunn at Holly
Lake Ranch



Bluebirds in
Wanda
Rauscher's
backyard



Crested
Caracara and
Rosette
Skimmer –
Male. Lindsey
Smith –
Mineola
Nature
Preserve





East Texas Chapter TMN Holiday Gathering

- From Hospitality: We look forward to gathering at the Annual ETCMN Holiday Party and Celebration.
- Please join us with your spouse or significant other on Saturday, December 2 at the Tyler Nature Center Tyler, Tx from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- The entree of smoked turkey and brisket , and drinks will be provided. Please prepare your favorite salad, vegetable side dish or dessert. We typically are heavy on the desserts so would like a variety of healthy sides. Please type up your recipe to post with your contribution. This allows everyone to photograph and make your recipe in the future and also helps those with food allergies.
- While out and about look for a fun gift item (\$15.00 range) related to nature for a white elephant gift exchange. This is always the highlight of the party. It could be a cool gadget for outdoors, a nice nature related book, yard art, knickknack made from natural ingredients. The possibilities are endless. Be creative! You want your contribution to be the gift that everyone steals. Make sure to bring a gift for any guest attending. We want everyone to join in the gift exchange.
- We will be celebrating all the accomplishments of our chapter as well as voting on our nominees for next year officers and will also accept nominations from the floor with the consent of the nominee.
- Please RSVP right away to Wanda Rauscher at wwrauscher@gmail.com and Caryn Vorsas @ carynvorsas@gmail.com. The deadline is Friday, November 24. We need numbers for the food and drink count.
- We look forward to seeing each and everyone of you!



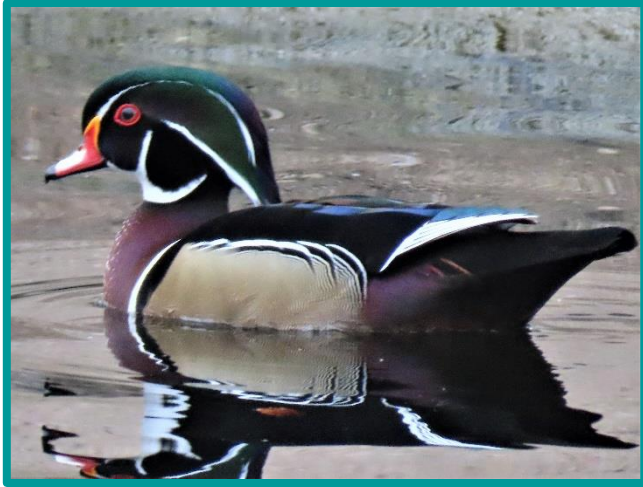


Photo courtesy Ann Reynolds

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

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

November 4, 9:00 am - Wildscape Work Day,
Tyler Nature Center, RSVP Kay Jenkins

November 14, noon TMN Tuesday – TBA

November 20 articles for the chapter newsletter due to Ann Reynolds

NOVEMBER – NO CHAPTER MEETING

December 2 11-2 - Tyler Nature Center
EAST TEXAS CHAPTER TMN HOLIDAY PARTY –
see eBlast for details

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-Longview – 4th Thursday, 2:00 pm

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Longview - contact Mark Edmund
maedmund321@gmail.com

Longview Saturday December 16.

Lake O' the Pines Saturday December 30

Tenaha (Lake Murval) will be held sometime week of January 1 through January 5. Exact day will be set at a later time

Tyler – December 3 contact Jessica Coleman
jcoleman@uttyler.edu



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:** Interim 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: TBD

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 9/30/23