



Wood Duck Whistler

June 2026

East Texas Chapter TMN



A Message From President Carol Lanthrum

April and May were busy months! Not unexpected as the birds migrate and nest, flowers bloom, and we master naturalists want to get out and see them all. Our East Texas Chapter MNs participated in the City Nature Challenge, the Fire and Nature Festival, the Texas Prairie Dawn plant count, and the Great Texas Birding Classic. The Wildscape expanded at TNC to include landscaping of the 2 beds at the entrance of TPWD headquarters at their request. Public was educated at the Sorelle Farms Spring Festival. Bat Acoustic Monitoring begins May 11th.

I am aware of several groups who birded at TNC. One group saw or heard over 50 species during the migration period! Gail Bean and I weren't that lucky, but we had fun watching a Great Blue Heron fish in the TNC pond!

And our trainees had many interesting lectures and field trips, including plant identification at Tyler State Park and wetland ecology at Richland-Chambers Lake. Wanda organized several of our project facilitators to show trainees and current members many activities they can be a part of, depending on their areas of interest.

Congratulations to all the trainees who graduated on May 19th!! There were tacos and cake to celebrate – thanks Caryn & Joe & Karen Rueb-Hall. Check out the list of our new graduates in this newsletter, and congratulate and welcome them at the next chapter meeting.

My hope for our newest MNs is that you not only find your niche, but that you join an activity that includes other chapter members. I know some of you have life obligations and it's hot during the summer, so it is sometimes easier to do individual activities, but we all benefit when we work together on projects. Social interaction is good for our personal health and for the health of our chapter! Come early to meetings. Talk to someone you don't know-you might find a new friend! Mentors, stay in contact with your trainees; invite them to activities you are involved in.

Happy volunteering!

Class of 
2026
CONGRATULATIONS!

Pam Boyd
Sarah Bradley
Maci Ferguson
Ryan Harris
Marsha Lucas
Tom MacAskill
Truman McHargue
Judith McKibbin
Richard Pollick
Kami Rutherford (Voted 2026 Class Representative)
Traci Schiska
Ginger Wick
Bruce Williams
Christian Wright
(find out more about the 2026 class on page 17!)



Half-Cockaded Reaches New Milestone in the Great Texas Birding Classic

By Karen Rueb-Hall



For the fifth consecutive year, the same dedicated group of Master Naturalists participated in the Great Texas Birding Classic. Bonnie Edwards, Gail Bean, Carol Lanthrum, Curt Bateman of the Tyler Audubon Society, and I proudly represented Tyler State Park in the State Park Intact Flock category for Prairies and Pineywoods East under the team name “Half-Cockaded.”

As always, we enjoyed the camaraderie and excitement of the event while continuing to expand our birding skills. This year brought spectacular weather on Monday, May 4, along with an impressive variety of species — we observed 54 birds, the highest number we have recorded to date.

Migrating warblers proved challenging to spot, but we were rewarded with several notable sightings not commonly seen at Tyler State Park, including flocks of Western Cattle Egrets, Least Flycatchers, and the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Making up for the shortage of warblers were the brilliantly colored Painted Buntings and abundant Indigo Buntings singing throughout the area. Another successful year of locating and enjoying our feathered friends.



Book Reviews

by Lance Homeniuk



Camping in the Muskoka Region

James Dickson

Camping in the Muskoka Region by James Dickson, 1960 Ryerson Press, Toronto. Hardcover, 164 pages. Reprint of an 1886 publication.

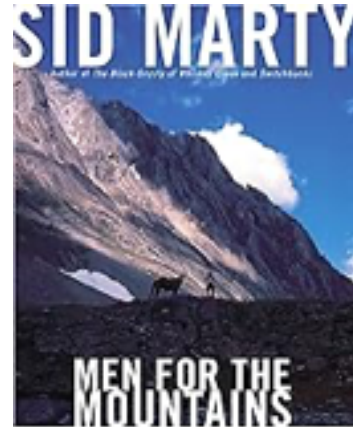
Glamping may be the newest iteration of getting back to nature (really?) but looking back on my family's camping evolution it was travel trailer, tent trailer, dome tent, two-room aluminum pole & nylon tent with folding cots and table, backpacking two person tent with egg crate foamy on which to spread the down-filled bag, canvas and wood pole monstrosity that filled the trunk of the ole Buick. It had a floor and screened windows and doorway; we slept on inflatable rubber mattresses. Even that was light and easy in comparison to Dickson's experience. Several cotton tents (roof and walls, door flaps that tied closed, poles cut onsite from saplings, wool blanket rolls, cast iron cookware, and furnishings supplied by Mother Nature. They travelled by canoe along rivers, over lakes, through

sloughs, and had to portage. A Lot! The scenery was sublime, game and fish were plentiful. What was only mentioned once but endured daily was the torture of the biting flies of the Northwoods. From large deer flies to invisible No-See-Ums. And this was in the days predating Deet, Deep Woods Off, and even netting.

All in all, this is an adventure I prefer to participate in vicariously through the written page, though some full color video and background music would be nice.

Men for the Mountains. Sid Marty, 1978 by McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, ON. Hardcover, 270 pages.

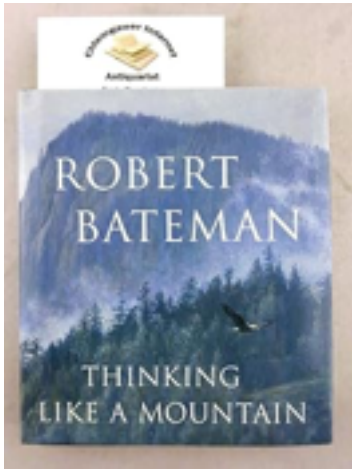
The Rocky Mountains, in many people's opinions, myself included, are the height of natural beauty and intense sympathetic feeling. Apologies to Muir and Thoreau. And the Canadian Rockies are the ultimate expression of montane grandeur, with the portion contained in the National Parks – Banff, Jasper, Yoho, and adjacent provincial parks – Assiniboine, Kananaskis, Revelstoke, the jewels in the crown. So to be a career park warden, especially in the years before the overcrowding and necessitated bureaucratic controls impinging on the freedom of the hills would be the dream job. It seems Marty has lived it all, done it all, and seen it all from the farthest reaches of the backcountry to the streets of the resort towns.



This is a hard life... with something wild to tell the world city people about what is happening to them in the land of the Rockies.
Sid Marty

My appreciation was helped by having been in many of the locales and being able to see and hear and smell with the sensory memories. Someone said you cannot go home again. I wonder if you can experience the natural mountains again. I hope the law of tourist density still applies :

Likelihood of encountering a tourist varies inversely with the square of the distance and the cube of the elevation gained from the parking lot. AND the inclemency of the weather.



Thinking Like a Mountain. Robert Bateman, 2000 by Penguin, Canada. Paperback, 129 pages.

The author is a renowned hyper realistic artist of wildlife, an environmentalist and a lifelong naturalist. I first encountered his work in an oil painting of a mountain lion. You could see every hair, the reflection in its eyes, the muscles under its hide. He brings that passion for nature and piercing honesty to the problems affecting the natural world, and to considerations that may lead us to find solutions.

The title is actually a quote from Aldo Leopold. I believe it refers to taking a long view of sustainability. We must make choices that will benefit our children, their children, the world they will live in. It's a small book – 6" by 6", less than a half inch thick. But it is packed with insight, with points for reflection, and with calls to action. Every chapter is short, easy to take at a sitting with time to ponder. It ends with "More Food for Thought," a bibliography of works, and address book of organizations you can work with, if motivated enough. The only one I know to be missing is Master Naturalists!

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department- Tyler State Park hosted a luncheon recognizing the volunteers that work at the park!

Submitted by Ann Reynolds



Left to Right: Paul Bateman, Pat Loyd, Bobbie Williams, Ann Reynolds, Vickie Hoppis and Jaime Upson.



East Texas Chapter TMN was invited to participate at Sorelle Farms' pre-Mother's Day Festival. A pollinator theme was requested. We brought our pollinator basics: What is pollination? What organisms are the major pollinators? For our kids' activity we had wooden swallowtails for the kids to color & take. Staff for the day were as follows: Ann Reynolds, Traci Schiska, Kami Rutherford, Bruce Williams, Pam Boyd, & Wanda Rauscher. We had 113 adults and 104 kids visit our booth. We also had a visit from one of the major contributors to 2026 CNC. A recent transfer to our chapter also stopped by. Next year I want to bring thaumatropes and pollinator safari! This was a great event for us with lots of families visiting. Traffic was steady but never overwhelming.



Spiders - The Ground Active Hunters Guild

Text and Photos by Robert Boggs

This is part 3 in a series on the informal guild classification system for spiders. This classification system categorizes spiders into eight “guilds” based on the way they catch their prey. The guilds can be further divided into four that rely on webs to catch their prey (Sensing Web Weavers, Sheet Web Weavers, Orb Web Weavers and Space Web Weavers) and four that do not (Ambush Hunters, Ground Active Hunters, Other Active Hunters and Spider Hunters). Using this system can help narrow down the type of spider you’ve discovered and make it easier to find in a guidebook.

Last month I wrote about what is likely the easiest of the guilds to recognize on sight: the orb weavers, who can easily be identified by their circular “orb” webs. This month, we’ll discuss the Ground Active Hunters. This is a guild that does not rely on webs to hunt, which can make it more difficult to identify on sight, because finding a spider without a web doesn’t necessarily mean it doesn’t have a web somewhere nearby.

As you might expect from the name, spiders in the Ground Active Hunters guild can be found running along the ground to hunt. While some of these spiders do climb to an extent, you’re much less likely to find them high on your walls or ceiling. (A spider on a wall or vegetation is more likely to be one of the Other Active Hunters, while a spider that remains in one place for long periods while camouflaged is likely an Ambush Hunter.)

Ground Active Hunters have better vision than a web-using spider to allow them to spot and strike at prey. The large front eyes on wolf spiders – while not as large as those of a jumping spider – can help you locate them very quickly at night: If you shine a headlamp into the darkness (or a flashlight held near eye level), wolf spider eyes will reflect the light like little diamonds on the ground, making them highly visible even from far away.

In East Texas, here are some of the most common Ground Active Hunters in East Texas.



Wolf Spiders

Spiders in the family Lycosidae, better known as wolf spiders, are undoubtedly the superstars of the Ground Active Hunters. A search on iNaturalist will show that in East Texas we have many varieties of wolf spider, and they are notoriously difficult to tell apart even on close inspection.

There are a few distinguishing characteristics of wolf spiders that can help you tell them apart from other similar-looking spiders (the most common lookalike in our area is likely the grass spiders of genus *Agelenopsis*). First is the distinctive eye arrangement with three rows: a row of four small eyes just above the spider’s chelicerae, a second row of two large

eyes just above that, and a pair of mid-sized eyes above that but

positioned farther toward the outside of the spider’s body. Second is behavioral: Female wolf spiders carry their egg sacs on their spinnerets, and they are the only spiders to carry their newly-hatched spiderlings on their abdomen.



Hogna antelucana



Rabidosa rabida

In my own yard, I frequently find several species: *Hogna antelucana*, *Hogna baltimoriana*, *Gladicosa pulchra*, and *Rabidosa rabida*, at a minimum. From other chapter members' observations on iNaturalist, though, we have several more in our area from the genera *Schizocosa*, *Trochosa* and *Tigrosa*.

Others

While wolf spiders are the most attention-grabbing members of this guild in our area, there are a few other varieties you may find.

First are the ant-mimic spiders of the family Corinnidae. As the name implies, these spiders have at least a passing resemblance to ants.

Second are woodlouse spiders (*Dysdera crocota*, specifically). These can be identified readily by their bright orange or red prosoma, bulbous tan or brown abdomen and massive chelicerae and fangs.



Did you Know?

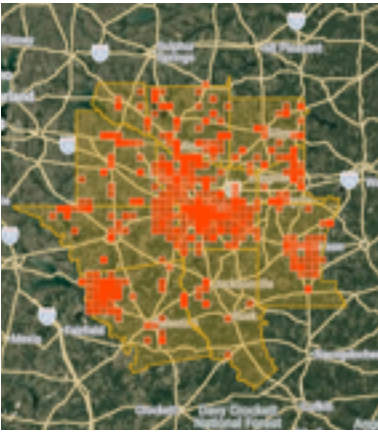
Globally, spiders eat a whopping 400-800 million tons of insects and other pests each year!

The Wood Duck Whistler is a monthly publication of ETCMN. News, essays, comments and ideas are always welcome! Please email them to Casey Boggs at caseylynnboggs@gmail.com

Would you like to be featured in the Wood Duck Whistler's "Get to Know Your Fellow Master Naturalists" spotlight? Email Casey Boggs at caseylynnboggs@gmail.com

City Nature Challenge 2026, Our Chapter Catchment Results

by Wanda Rauscher



We had observations in every county of our catchment.

Participation was excellent: our greatest numbers yet for observations, species and observers!

Year	2024	2025	2026
# Observations	3905	3225	4884
# Species	1132	1010	1405
# Observers	168	207	243
# Identifiers	501	406	474

We have 45% of the observations at Research Grade, and that will likely increase over time. We will never be at 100% because some observations cannot be determined to species (quality of observation or inability to distinguish species from photographs).

The CNC project organizers, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and the California Academy of Sciences provided some analysis of the data for the first time this year highlighting what observations might be species of conservation concern. I spent time looking at these observations in particular to see if we could get them to research grade or otherwise resolved. Their search flagged a few species not currently listed on the State Wildlife Action Plan (<https://tpwd.texas.gov/wildlife/wildlife-diversity/swap/>). For those species, I went to the Nature Serve Explorer and looked at Texas status. In some cases, the species were not of concern but in other cases there is concern and I added those to the chart below (species listed but without an “x” were seen in the catchment in a prior CNC year).

SNR	Conservation status not yet assessed
S2	imperiled
S3	Rare, vulnerable
S4	Apparently secure with some cause for long-term concern

I encourage you to look at the observations in the project. You can do so from a computer by logging into iNaturalist, going to “Explore” and selecting filters and then more filters to allow you to put in the project name: City Nature Challenge2026: Tyler/East Texas.

	TX Status	2026
American Elm, <i>Ulmus americana</i>	SNR/SU/SNA	x
Black Snakeroot, <i>Sanicula canadensis</i>	S3	x
Carrizo Leatherflower, <i>Clematis carrizoensis</i>	S2	x
Chuck-will's-widow, <i>Antrostomus carolinensis</i>	S3	x
Comanche Harvester Ant, <i>Pogonomyrmex comanche</i>	S2	
Eastern Box Turtle/ Common Box Turtle, <i>Terrapene carolina</i>	S3	x
Loggerhead Shrike, <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	S4	
Monarch Butterfly (migratory) <i>Danaus plexippus</i> ssp. <i>Plexippus</i>	S4	x
Northern Bobwhite, <i>Colinus virginianus</i>	S4	
Pale Pitcher Plant, <i>Sarracenia alata</i>	SNR/SU/SNA	x
Panicled False Indigo, <i>Amorpha paniculata</i>	S3	x
Prothonotary Warbler, <i>Protonotaria citrea</i>	S3	x
Red-headed Woodpecker, <i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	S3	x
Soxman's Milkvetch, <i>Astragalus soxmaniorum</i>	S3	
Texas Heelsplitter, <i>Potamilus amphichaenus</i>	S3	x
Texas sandmint, <i>Rhododon ciliatus</i>	S3	x
Tiger Salamander, <i>Ambystoma tigrinum</i>	S3	x
Yellow-flowered Beebalm, <i>Monarda luteola</i>	S2	x
Western (or Ornate) Box Turtle, <i>Terrapene ornata</i>	S3	

A **big** thank you to those who participated! Hope some of you will help organize next year!! Drum roll please! The dates for CNC 2027 will be April 30-May 3, 2027.

Loggerhead Shrike

Text and Photos by Lindsey Smith



Have you ever been out walking and see a grasshopper, lizard, mouse, frog, toad, etc. impaled on a thorn or barbed-wire fence? It didn't just happen in a wind storm, it's the work of the "Butcher Bird" or Loggerhead Shrike [*Lanius ludovicianus*]. God

gave this bird the knowledge to stab its prey and leave it to bleed out toxins prior to feeding on it or giving it to its young to eat. This species has a Conservation Status of S4B, meaning it is apparently stable within Texas during its breeding season; it is typically widespread and uncommon, but not rare. The "B" signifies that it is a breeding population within Texas.

Did you Know?

Texas is home to only two species of shrike: the Loggerhead Shrike and the Northern Shrike (rarely observed during winter in the panhandle).



Earth Day at Trinity Valley Community College

Submitted by Wanda Rauscher



Lance Homeniuk and Wanda Rauscher went to the TVCC Earth Day Celebration in Athens. We brought information about City Nature Challenge and species diversity in our area and a description of just what our chapter does. We also had the Bird Beak Appreciation activities for kids. It did not start auspiciously as the rain that was forecast for afternoon decided to fall on everyone trying to set up! TVCC came to the rescue with canopies for some of us, which included East Texas Chapter TMN. We were placed (selected by Lance) at a strategic location - next to the path to the Creature Teacher booth. Event was a success with 68 adults and 25 kids visiting. We are invited for Earth Day 2027 on April 22 with 10am-2pm being the usual format- John Placyk, our host, likes the adult & kids program mix.



Denise Gary has Written More Articles for TPWD Magazine!

by Carol Lanthrum

Our own Denise Gary, Class of 2022, has 1 article in the April 2026 TPWD magazine and 2, yes 2, in the May issue! Her son Robert takes some of the pictures for her articles.

Her article in the April issue is titled "Bumblebee Wannabe," a piece about the Snowberry Clearwing moth. Learn how it defends itself from predators and how to attract them to your garden.

In the May issue, Denise wrote the article "Safe Harbor" about the state parks and sanctuaries near the coast where migrating birds can be found after their long trip across the gulf. The second article is about the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker that is found at our own I.D. Fairchild State Forest near Jacksonville, titled "Knock, Knock."

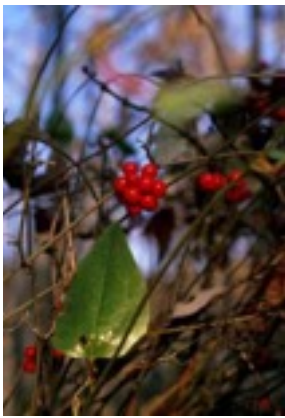
Congratulations, Denise! East Texas Chapter is glad to claim you as one of our own!

Getting Caught Up in the Garden

by Ann Reynolds

You have seen it if you live at anywhere in east Texas. It is that vine with the shiny green leaves, beautiful red or black berries, and thorns, prickles or spines (depending on species). Like you care if it is a prickle or thorn when the vine is stuck in the middle of your leg!! We are talking about *Smilax* or Greenbrier.

If you are curious, a prickle is a sharp outgrowth from the plant's bark. A thorn is a modified stem. A spine is a sharp pointed modified leaf. Even more confusing is all true Greenbriers are *Smilax* but not all *Smilax* species are Greenbriers. Here in east Texas we are "blessed" with many species of *Smilax* but suffice it to say, we will call it *Smilax*.



The red-berried *Smilax* (*Smilax walteri*) creeps over bushes at the edges of sandy swamps or near streams. It is a thin woody vine, which may be spiny or nearly spineless. Its leaf surfaces are shiny green and it bears red berries during the winter. It has long underground runners, but is not tuberous.

Sarsaparilla Vine (*Smilax pumila*) can be found growing in the open sandy woods of east Texas. This weak, "unarmed" vine has few tendrils at the nodes and prefers to climb over low plants. The young leaves and stem are densely pubescent (having fine hairs), becoming lustrous and smooth as it ages. It, too, has red berries but in the spring.

China-root *Smilax* (*Smilax tamnoides*) likes the damp woods and low areas near creeks. It has knotty rhizomes, while the vine runs over bushes and climbs into trees using its tendrils. The lower part of the stem is covered with needle-like spines. The shiny leaves are of different shapes.

There are other species of *Smilax*: *laurifolia*, *bona nox*, *rotundifolia*, *smallii*, and *glauca*, *lasioneura* that grow in Texas. One species is enough for me!



The one redeeming quality of this plant is that parts are edible.

****DO NOT EAT ANY PLANT UNLESS YOU ARE 100% SURE WHAT THE PLANT IS.****

On Merriwether's blog "Foraging Texas", he states that tender vines, tendrils, tubers, leaves and berries are edible. He even makes vegan jello shots from this plant. Here is his blog:

<http://www.foragingtexas.com/2008/08/greenbriar.html>.

You may not want this vine in your garden or yard and are having trouble getting rid of it. No amount of cutting or spraying will do the trick. The problem is tubers! Digging out the tubers is the only way to do away with this leg-eating vine. But if you read Merriwether's blog, the tubers are high in starch and edible. Wonder if I can substitute tubers for potatoes in my diet?



So, if you are out working in the woods, be sure to wear leather gloves, long sleeves and jeans. Be sure to tell your family where you are. If you should go missing, they will know you are being held captive by the thorns, prickles, and spines of *Smilax*!

And, as always, things could be worse...



Did You Know?

Pereskia grandiflora, like the one pictured at right, have very sharp spines that are 2 inches long!



Caldwell Zoo – Conservation Leader in East Texas

by Carol Lanthrum



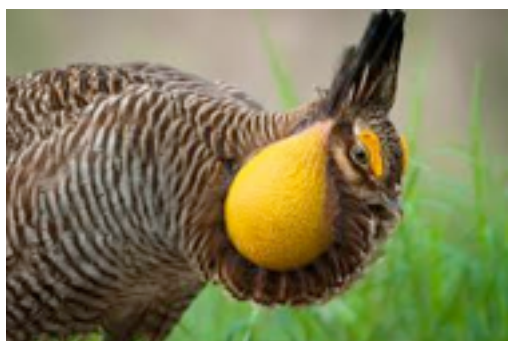
Do you think that the Caldwell Zoo in Tyler is just a fun place to go and see all kinds of animals? Well, it is that - but is also a leader in conservation of species from all parts of the world. Although there are many animals in conservation programs at the zoo, I will discuss those that are related to Texas.

I grew up in Waco and 'horny toads' were common when I was a child. People who grew up in East Texas tell me they were common here as well. The Texas Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*) is listed as threatened in the state of Texas, but not listed federally (what?!), due to habitat fragmentation, road hazard and imported fire ants.

The Caldwell Zoo is a partner in the *Texas Horned Lizard Conservation Coalition* and is one of the 4 zoos in Texas involved in the breeding and release program. Head to the North American section and on the other side of the Wild Bird Walkabout you can view the breeding area. You can learn the process the zoo follows month by month to raise horny toads for release.

- From October to March, Texas Horned Lizards hibernate in specially temperature-controlled refrigerators.

- In March keepers slowly raise the temperature in the refrigerators until it matches the outside temperature.
- In April the lizards move to their outdoor sun table to soak up the rays and eat harvester ants to fatten up for breeding season.
- In May, males and females are housed together and breeding occurs.
- Females dig a nest in June to lay their eggs. Each lizard lays between 13 and 45 eggs and they hatch in 6 to 8 weeks. Of course, the keepers dig the eggs up and incubate them to get the highest number of babies possible.
- July is spent letting the little babies mature.
- In August and September, the new lizards are taken to partners who are in charge of fitting them with a tracking device and releasing them onto a secure TPWD property.
- In October, horned lizards that are part of the breeding program are put in plastic containers in sand and not fed for 2 weeks to simulate hibernation. The cycle repeats.



Another area of conservation that the zoo is participating in is the restoration of Attwater's Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido attwateri*). It is a species of grouse and there used to be millions of them in the gulf coast prairies. The primary reason for decline is habitat loss. The few that were there were decimated by the Hurricane Harvey floods. Caldwell Zoo works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to breed and release chicks into their native habitat.

I know what you're thinking – even its historic range was not in our catchment area. True. But our connection is with one of our members from last year's class and our newsletter editor, Casey Plummer Boggs. Casey worked for the zoo several years ago doing lab work and necropsies among other things. She identified a new parasite in Attwater's Prairie Chicken named *Eimeria attwaterii*. Way to go, Casey!

Did you know that the zoo has a pollinator garden? You don't even have to pay to visit the zoo to see it! It is located on the walkway by the parking lot closest to the zoo entrance. There are plants in full sun to deep shade and plants are identified with stakes. Bees, wasps, butterflies and hummingbirds are everywhere. It's a great place to get ideas for your garden, to take pictures or just rest in the beauty. When you pay to go inside, there are plenty of other plants that attract pollinators. Check it out!

The zoo has many other Texas species that they house, including bobcats, Crested Caracaras, Timber and Western Diamondback rattlesnakes, black bears, the list goes on. I watched a Great Blue Heron catch a fish in the duck pond – it may or may not have been a resident of the zoo – who knows. Retaining these animals allows the public to see them up close, learn about them, and most importantly, care about conserving them in the wild. Also the housed animals may provide genetic diversity that their wild relatives need for survival of the species.

If you haven't been to the zoo in a while, go! They have recently refurbished their South American section and it is fabulous! Their signage is everywhere and very informative.

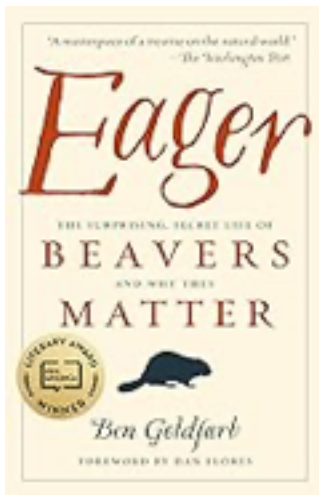
Important Chapter Information!

ETCMN Book Club First Meeting!

You are invited to join us on Sunday, June 14 at 6pm for our first ETCMN Book Club. You can get the book from Amazon, an independent bookseller, or your local library. You may read a physical or electronic copy, or you may listen to the audiobook. You do not receive AT credit for reading the book, but you do for participating in the discussion. Each participant must provide one thoughtful question for the group to discuss beyond, "Did you like the book?"

We will meet on Zoom at 6pm on June 14, 2026, which is a Sunday evening. Bring a snack and a drink and be ready for a hearty discussion! You will receive one hour AT for your active participation!

Please RSVP to etcmnprograms@gmail.com and the link will be sent to you. Zoom will open at 5:45 so we can get settled and visit beforehand. I will also let you know which category to put your AT in at the time of the meeting.



Something for you to enjoy while you read!

<https://www.youtube.com/live/hy765udqi0E?si=-FaWQ5Cfy2Y9YulD>

Upcoming SWAG Order!

Watch your inbox for an email from club President, Carol Lanthrum, with details on how to order ETCMN swag! Now is the time to order a new name tag, shirt, hat, bag, vest, jacket, mug, or other item with our official ETCMN logo!

Order EARLY!

Upcoming ETCMN Meeting Topics

June 25-Wendy Anderson, Texas Nature Trackers

July 23 - Nothing! Time TBD.

August 27 - John Zumwalt

September 24 - Trivia Night

October 29 Jessica Coleman - Christmas Bird Count** *meeting date changed due to State Meeting on 10/22*

November - no meeting

December 12 - Holiday Party at Tyler Nature Center

All meetings at Tyler Nature Center unless otherwise noted.

ETCMN 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 at 6:45 PM; meeting at 7:00 PM.

Everyone is welcome!

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.

Fourteen People Graduate from the 2026 Initial Training Class

by Kay Jenkins

I am happy to report that the 2026 Initial Training Class has produced 14 graduates! We started with 15 brand new trainees and two prior-year trainees who were restarting their initial training. Thirteen of the graduates are brand new trainees and include Pam Boyd Bombyk, Sarah Bradley, Maci Ferguson, Ryan Harris, Tom MacAskill, Truman McHargue, Judith McKibbin, Richard Pollick, Kami Rutherford, Traci Schiska, Ginger Wick, Bruce Williams, and Christian Wright. Marsha Lucas restarted her training and graduated with the 2026 class. Gabe Valdes from the 2025 training class completed his initial training this year and graduated with the class of 2026. Congratulations to all of them! Kami Rutherford was elected by the 2026 class to represent them on the chapter board of directors.

This year we had three new presenters. Daniel Duncum with the Texas Forest Service spoke about Forestry and led the field trip at the Longview Arboretum. Daniel has presented the topic in previous years, but this was his first time in recent years. Carrie Hughes presented the Geology and Soils topic and Clay Beard presented the topic of Urban Ecosystems. Both are graduates of the 2025 training class. In addition, Jessica Coleman filled in for Neil Ford and taught Herpetology in addition to presenting on another day on Ornithology. Neil had to suddenly go out of town and was unable to attend. Additional chapter members who presented one of the 24 training topics include Ann Reynolds (Citizen Science) and Wanda Rauscher (Ecological Systems, Ecological Concepts and Volunteers as Teachers).

We also had a new field trip this year to the Richland Creek Wildlife Management Area where we had a presentation followed by a behind the scenes tour of the re-use wetlands by T. Wells Shartle. Wells works for the Tarrant County Water District who built the 2,000-acre wetlands. The wetlands are designed to clean nutrients from water drawn from the Trinity River before it is piped into the Richland Chambers Reservoir, a flood control and water supply lake. Tarrant County Water District manages the wetlands in collaboration with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Mark Edmund led the bird walk after the wetlands tour.

I am extremely grateful to my co-training director this year, Wanda Rauscher, who filled in when I could not attend, put the trainee notebooks together, presented three topics, arranged the Mineola and Longview training sessions and field trips, and thought of everything I forget. Another member of the training committee who helped make this year's training a success is Lindsey Smith, who keeps us all on the right track when it comes to entering our hours in the volunteer management system. Lindsey also attended nearly every training session and helped us set up the audio system and clean up afterwards. Karen Reub-Hall brought the mentoring program back to life in full capacity this year and mentored the mentors very well.

ETCMN members who volunteered to bring snacks, greet trainees, help with audio visual needs, and serve as either emergency response or wrangler on the field trips included David Shafer, Debbie Shafer, Dawn Bahr, Carol Lanthrum, Ann Reynolds, Karen Reub-Hall, Lindsey Smith, Wanda Rauscher, Caryn Vorsas and Joe Vorsas. Mentors who helped our 2026 trainees included Meleena Byrum, Pat Howarth, Lance Homeniuk, Lindsey Smith, Robert Lumpkins, Mark Edmund, Ann Reynolds, Bonnie Edwards, Zoe Ann Stinchcomb, Joe Vorsas, Betty Cruikshank, Wanda Rauscher, Caryn Vorsas, and Karen Reub-Hall. Some of you played multiple roles in supporting our 2026 training class and I'm very grateful to you all.

This was my third training class for which I have been the ETCMN training director or co-training director, and I have learned so much in this role. It is so rewarding to see how the graduates from the 2024, 2025 and 2026 classes have become involved in our chapter. They bring new ideas, enthusiasm, and willingness to learn and lead. Wanda Rauscher will become the training director for the class of 2027, and they will be in the most capable hands.

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST
2025
ANNUAL
REPORT



Since 1997, our skilled volunteers have worked with organizations and their local communities across 49 chapters covering 214 counties to implement youth outreach programs, help operate parks, nature centers, natural areas, and lead local conservation efforts. 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.

T E X A S



Texas Master Naturalists contributed more than **621,982 hours** of service—a new record!—in 2025 and more than **8.1 million hours** to date. Service hours in 2025 were valued at **\$14.3 million** and more than **\$184 million** since the program's inception.



Get excited and join us for our Texas Master Naturalist **2026 Annual Meeting**—to be held October 22-25 in Waco, Texas!



Show your love for TMN by purchasing a **TMN specialty license plate**! Anyone can purchase it and \$22 of each annual fee comes to TMN.



#TMNTuesdays are a way to learn about conservation issues in Texas, earn TMN advanced training hours, and interact with natural resource professionals.



Pollinators for Texas—a collaboration between TMN and H-E-B—benefits Texas through the restoration and creation of pollinator habitats. The initiative awarded 17 TMN Chapters with funding in 2025.



The mission of the **TMN Endowment** is to further enhance TMN, its chapters and volunteers, now and into the future, for the benefit of natural resource education, conservation and stewardship.



The TMN Program was selected as a 2025 **Conservation Wrangler** by Texan by Nature. Through the program, TMN is developing a strategic plan.



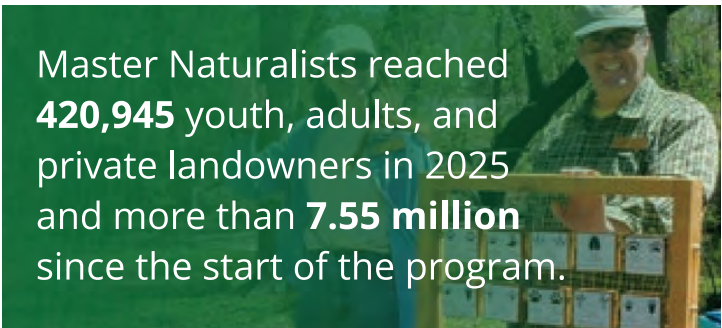
There were **834 NEW** naturalists trained in 2025 and **18,246 naturalists** trained to date.



Texas Master Naturalists engaged in stewardship and management on over **20 NEW** acres in 2025 and have made an impact on **260,488 acres** to date.



TMN volunteers developed or maintained **1 NEW** mile of trails in 2025 and over **2,353 miles** of trails to date.



Master Naturalists reached **420,945** youth, adults, and private landowners in 2025 and more than **7.55 million** since the start of the program.



TMN volunteers participated in **84,121 hours** of advanced training in 2025 and more than **1.15 million AT** hours to date.



Lakes and Pines Chapter

(Wood & surrounding counties)

Wednesday, June 3rd, 2:00-3:30pm
Bob Wells Nursery at Sorelle Farms
975 County Road 2220 in Mineola



Email us: Lakes-and-Pines-Chapter@npsot.org

Chapter Website: npsot.org/chapters/lakes-and-pines/



“Where Gardening Meets Stewardship”

iNaturalist Classic - an app that helps identify plants, birds, insects, reptiles, mammals, even tracks & scat, while supporting environmental conservation efforts.

Ann Reynolds was born and raised in Oklahoma where she learned to garden in the red soil. After pursuing a degree in education, she moved to Plano, Texas where she gardened in the black gumbo soil and became an organic gardener. Her gardens were featured on the Collin County Native Plant Society garden tour and declared a Certified Backyard Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. Upon retirement she moved to the piney woods of east Texas where she now gardens in sugar sand.



ANN REYNOLDS

She became a Certified Master Naturalist in 2006 and Master Gardener in 2018 (Master Gardener of the Year 2020). She has also completed all four levels of the Native Landscape Certification Program. She is a member of Holly Lake Gardeners, Tyler Audubon Society, Native Prairie Association of Texas and the North East Texas Field Ornithologists.

Although a life long gardener, her passion is nature, birds and native plants.

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS MISSION STATEMENT: Promote conservation, research and utilization of native plants and plant habitats of Texas through education, outreach, and example.

To view the chapter website:

- www.txmn.tamu.edu
- Scroll down past the “green blocks” to the State of Texas map.
- Click on our chapter location.
- Select any tab to see the upcoming events on the right. Select the top event, and you can scroll through the event by selecting the back and forward tabs at the bottom of each event. Or go straight to the one you are interested in by selecting it.
- You can also see coming months’ events in calendar format by selecting ‘View Calendar’ below the event listings.
- **NOTE:** It looks different on your phone.
 - Select ‘Chapter Info’ to see pictures and information about current chapter activities.
 - Select ‘Newsletter’ to see current and past Wood Duck Whistlers

WHERE YOU CAN FIND US

Find East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists at the following locations:

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

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

<https://www.instagram.com/easttexasmasternaturalist/>

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

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

Organization

Officers

Title	Term	Name	Email
President**	2026-2027	Carol Lanthrum	clanthrum@gmail.com
Vice President**	2026	Dawn Bahr	dmebahr@yahoo.com
Secretary**	2025-2026	Ann Reynolds	reynolds.ann1@gmail.com
Treasurer**	2026-2027	David Shafer	davidrshafer@gmail.com
Immediate Past President	2026-2027	Wanda Rauscher	wwrauscher@gmail.com

** indicates Officers and Executive Board Members

Committees 2024

Title	Name	Email
Hospitality	Caryn Vorsas	carynvorsas@gmail.com
	Joe Vorsas	jvorsas@utexas.edu
	Bonnie Edwards	edwardsbonnie2020@gmail.com
	Open for addition	
Historian / Archivist	TBD	
Advanced Training (AT)	Karen Rueb-Hall	karenruebhall@gmail.com
	Amy Cumbie	amycumbie83@gmail.com
	Kari Steph	kabaster@gmail.com

Volunteer Service Projects (VSH)	Lance Homeniuk	homeniuk@yahoo.com
	Greg Marshall	Marshall7707@gmail.com
	TBD	
Community Education / Outreach	Lance Homeniuk	homeniuk@yahoo.com
Speakers Bureau	Greg Marshall	Marshall7707@gmail.com
Training Class 2026	Kay Jenkins Wanda Rauscher	kay-jenkins@sbcglobal.net wwrauscher@gmail.com
Membership	Donna Smith	lindseys71@hotmail.com
VMS Director	Lindsey Smith	lindseys71@hotmail.com
Asst VMS Director	Dawn Bahr	dmebahr@yahoo.com
State Representative	Carol Lanthrum	clanthrum@gmail.com
2026 Class Representative	Kami Rutherford	

Communications 2024

Title	Name	Email
E-Blast	Carol Lanthrum	clanthrum@gmail.com
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Social Media	Greg Marshall	Marshall7707@gmail.com
	Dawn Bahr	dmebahr@yahoo.com
	Ann Reynolds	reynolds.ann1@gmail.com
Website	Jessica Coleman	jcoleman@uttyler.edu

Chapter Advisors

Name	Organization	Email
Clint Perkins	Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Smith County	clint.perkins@ag.tamu.edu
Boyd Sanders	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	boyd.sanders@tpwd.texas.gov

Vacant roles:

Historian

Publicity

Outreach

If you have interest in filling one of these roles, please contact clanthrum@gmail.com