

T E X A S



GOOD WATER MASTER NATURALIST
WILLIAMSON COUNTY

RIPPLES

Volume 3 Number 2
March/April 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS

Book Club 3/19/14
NPSOT 3/20/14
Austin Butterfly Forum
Field Trip 3/22/14
Austin Butterfly Forum
Meeting 3/24/14
GWMN Meeting 3/27/14
Austin Butterfly Forum
Special Meeting 3/25/14
Project Aquatic Wild
Training 3/29/14
NPSOT 4/17/14
GWMN Meeting 4/24/14

Check the website for the many opportunities coming up--way too numerous to even think about posting here!

NOW YOU KNOW

A Murder of Crows
A Kettle of Hawks
A Convocation of Eagles
A Parliament of Owls
A Nursery of Raccoons
A Company of Badgers
A Colony of Bats
A Cloud of Grasshoppers
A Husk of Jackrabbits
A Warren of Hares
A Den of Snakes
A Bevy of Quail
A Cluster of Spiders

Berry Springs Park & Preserve by Susan Blackledge



It takes a lot of work to keep a spring fed Pond in shape for spring. Berry Springs pond water is 68 degrees year round which makes for a perfect aquatic greenhouse for vegetation to thrive. Unfortunately, not all of the vegetation is welcomed. Just like there are invasive plants on land, the same goes for the water. At Berry Springs the culprits are algae, charra or muskgrass, and milfoil. With the newly built dam and the springs flowing the pond looks beautiful and we would like to keep it that way.

Williamson County Parks and Recreation Department has received guidance from Texas Parks and Wildlife to enact a management plan in order to keep the pond "fishing friendly", aesthetically pleasing in addition to being healthy habitat for native plants, fish, birds, as well as other aquatic habitat. The plan consists of four phases with each phase being conducted every two weeks to treat sections of the pond and to manually remove excessive weeds.

As with any successful plan it takes manpower to stay on track to keep up with the aquatic greenhouse. **We are looking for volunteers to work with Williamson County Juvenile Services to help remove vegetation on Wed. March 12th, 8:30am till noon.** It only takes a rope and a rake. You tie the rope onto the rake and drag the weeds ashore. Unlike fishing, you are always guaranteed to catch a whopper with each cast. The weeds are recycled and used as compost. Wear rubber boots and bring gloves and a water bottle. It is fun and rewarding to see the results. Be a part of helping to keep a natural treasure beautiful for everyone to enjoy.

Contact Susan: susieblackledge@gmail.com to volunteer.

White winged Dove Banding by Nancy Chisum

In the summer of 2013, after receiving information on the Dove Banding Program through Texas Parks and Wildlife, Gene Chisum made contact with TPWD to apply for the program.

It was necessary to fill out applications before being given approval to participate. Once approved, TPWD sent training in the form of a video as well as hands on instruction by the local TPWD biologist.

We were taught how to fill out the necessary forms on the birds, how to identify the particular doves they wanted to track and the process for getting the doves to come to the traps.

In the beginning the bottomless traps were placed upside down and birdseed provided by TPWD was sprinkled on the ground over the trap. The doves then were attracted to the food and at the same time they were getting used to the presence of the traps. After about a week or so, we began to turn the traps right side up.



At that point, the doves were familiar enough with the traps that they would walk into them but because of the shape of the entryways, they could not get out.

Gene and I checked the traps several times a day. This program runs through summer months and of course it was hot, so we didn't want the doves to ever be in the traps more than a couple of hours and get over stressed.

When there were doves in the traps, we took them out, held them, stretched out a wing, and counted feathers, to discern what molt they were in.

While we had the birds we also attached the numbered cuff to their legs. We recorded their molt, sex, cuff number and a few other details on the form and then set them free.

Over the summer we banded both White Wing Doves and Mourning Doves but we also caught other birds such as Inca (or Spanish) Doves, Cardinals, Blue Jays, Grackles and even a juvenile Blue Grosbeak.

We also managed to get a number of squirrels and a baby opossum.

We had 38 traps in two locations and over a period of three months, with the help of Liz and Jeff Wimberley, we banded 300 White Wing and Mourning Doves. The program was a great experience for us. The doves were so gentle that it was easy to develop a real appreciation for them.



Contact Derrick Wolter: derrick.wolter@tpwd.state.tx.us to participate in 2014.

A Message from President, Charles Grimes

Two things are happening this month that should be the focus of each Member of our Chapter. First, our 2014 Spring Training Class has begun. I took the opportunity to sit in for some of the first session, and to meet most of our prospective new members. The class is an outstanding mix of folks from all walks of life, each with a focused interest in the natural world around us. Let us embrace each of them as they build their knowledge, develop their interests and hopefully become active and productive new members of our Chapter!

Second, as the weather warms and spring takes hold, the time to renew our volunteer efforts is at hand. Spring will offer many opportunities to earn volunteer hours, and I encourage you to connect with other members of the chapter at our monthly meetings and plan to volunteer together. Volunteer opportunities are continually being updated on our Chapter website, so please go take a look. I look forward to seeing you all "out in the field"!

Our Lady of the Rosary Walk of the Beatitudes Nature Trail By Lori Merlino

In many European countries cemeteries are a reflection of the natural environment and an integral part of their culture and family life. In 2002, after spending several years in Austria, Nick and Ellen Brumder founded Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery in Georgetown, Texas. The Brumders vision was to create the cemetery as a place of artistic merit, reverence, and natural beauty. It has been their passion to create the most inspirational, consoling and hope filled cemetery possible.

The cemetery is approximately 20 acres, with a pond and nature trail. The pond area, nature trail and short grass prairie area have been managed as a joint project for recent graduates of the Habitat Stewards class with NPSOT- Williamson County and Texas Master Naturalists Goodwater chapter since the fall of 2012. The area under this program is approximately seven acres.



The goals for this area are to:

- Create a native plant wildscape along the nature trail.
- Promote a healthy pond management program to benefit wildlife and the enjoyment of visitors.
- Formulate a soil erosion program to prevent and reverse erosion in the areas that feeds the pond.
- Identify and suggest dead tree removal along the nature trail and around the pond.
- Establish a plant information database.
- Establish a plant, bird, amphibian, and insect count/observation plan.
- Manage the short grass prairie, native plant area.

The project is a three year plan, with the first year priorities to:

- Clear the area along the nature trail of invasive and non-native plants.
- Stabilize the pond area and do a survey of the water depth for future work.
- Establish a native plant population along the nature trail
- Re-establish the short grass prairie area where premature mowing has taken place.

With the first year goals in mind, most of the nature trail has been cleared of non-native and invasives plants. Plant surveys have taken place to identify key natives, and a vigorous replanting plan has been implemented. Over 80 species of native plants and trees have been catalogued and planted.

The nature trail has been certified as a NWF Wildlife Habitat, a Monarch Way Station and we have been asked to submit an application for a TPWD demonstration garden.

WHO'S WHO---CHAPTER PROFILES

Gene Chisum



Gene Chisum is a member of the 2013 Goodwater Master Naturalist's class and current chapter Vice President. Gene took the 2013 class with his wife Nancy and they have enjoyed all the classes and projects doing something they both love.

In addition to Gene's full time work for CH2M HILL as a Project Manager he is also continuing education instructor in the water and wastewater industry. When not working, Gene enjoys gardening, photography and woodworking and just being out in nature with Nancy.

Nancy Chisum



For Nancy Chisum, being a member of the Goodwater Master Naturalists represents a goal finally realized after 10 years. It has been that long since she heard of the program and immediately wanted to be part of it. All these years however, work and other things have just seemed to get in the way. Finally however, with a cooperative employer and vacation time, the goal of being a Master Naturalist was realized in 2013.

Nancy works full time for Williamson County Juvenile Services and in her spare time enjoys photographing and identifying wildflowers, foraging for edible plants, gardening, spending time in nature, working on her family history and planning and scheming to retire to country life some day.

In Memoriam

Diane Goodwin was a member of the first Good Water Training Class in 2010. She served as Webmaster and Newsletter Editor before serving as President of the Chapter in 2012. She passed away January 26, 2014. Memorial contributions may be made to First United Methodist Church, 1301 Milne Dr., Lockport, IL 60441 or Joliet Area Community Hospice, 250 Water Stone Cir, Joliet, IL 60431.

To send sympathy cards:

Browne Goodwin,
24730 Generation Drive
Plainfield, IL 60585

For information about the Good Water Chapter
<http://txmn.org/goodwater> or goodwatermn2@gmail.com