

**MISSION**

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a natural resource-based volunteer training and development program sponsored statewide by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The mission of the program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As you read through the Steward this month you can't help but notice that the Highland Lakes Master Naturalist chapter is filled with motivated and active volunteers who give above and beyond of their time and energy to make a difference in the beautiful Central Texas Uplift area of our State.

It is an honor to serve this chapter as your president for 2015, and my design for this column is to use it to share some of the information about the activities we are undertaking as a group to enhance this natural community we call home.

Board Matters:

The 10 voting members of the board are assigned with the authority to conduct the business of the chapter. Three major actions were taken during the first meeting of 2015: 1) The Board voted to approve Marcy Westcott and Ann Cook as 2016 Class Coordinators. This means they will recruit, train and graduate the class of 2016. 2) Sherry Bixler was approved as chairperson for a new committee which will help in integrating and transferring new members to our chapter. 3) We have an ongoing effort to amend the State mandated bylaws to fit our chapter specifics and to present the new documents to you for a vote at a later date. Past president Linda O'nan is heading this effort.

Our Partners

Blanco State Park recently hosted the Buffalo Soldiers for a third year. These interpreters are TPWD employees who dress in period and teach soldiering skills such as hunting, fishing, animal tracking and

camp life in a military setting during the mid 19th century. They are unique because their ranks were made up of African American troops. Many of the Friends of Blanco State Park assisted the soldiers in their presenting Texas history lessons to over 250 Blanco school children. The day presented perfect weather and was filled with engaging demonstrations.

Inks State Park has a new staffed and energetic Friends Group (FOIL) which has wasted no time in getting our involvement in the park back in full operation. They recently increased the number of members from 4 to 34 and repurposed their effort to provide support for park programs which Master Naturalists participate in. A good example of this new direction was demonstrated on February 18/19 when almost 50 of our members performed hard trail work for the new Bird Blind. This project is now in full operation and it will educate and excite many generations to come.

Hill Country Science Mill in Johnson City opened to the public the weekend of February 14/15, 2015 in grand style. A large crowd of visitors toured the new laboratory and participated in the many science demonstrations including: rocket launches, holograms, glowing fish, gravity experiments and wind power. The rain machine from the Bamberger Ranch was on hand as well. I hope we spend many voluntary hours making this new venture a great success

I joined this chapter in 2013 because it had a reputation of doing lots of interesting field work and offering lots of educational

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Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, announcements, etc. to

chili865@gmail.com.

Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. The deadline for submissions to each month's newsletter is the 10th of the month and publication will be by the 15th.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *Continued from page 1)*

opportunities. I have NOT been disappointed. In fact, I have been overwhelmed. I have been to two Master Naturalists statewide meetings where the Highland Lakes chapter stands out as one of the premier groups in the entire State. I know I'm bragging, but you all really do accomplish amazing results.

I thank you for making this year another outstanding chapter in our history.

Cris Faught, President 2015

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 : The Texas Master Naturalist 2015 Re-Certification :
 : pin for this calendar year is the bluebonnet. The annual :
 : re-certification pins shall be provided to Certified Texas :
 : Master Naturalist Members when they accumulate the :
 : required 40 hours of service and 8 hours of Advanced :
 : Training for recertification in the 2015 calendar year. :
 :

MARCH PROGRAM

by Melissa Duckworth

Our Speaker for the March meeting will be Luke Metzger, Founder and Director of Environment Texas. He will speak to us about bills filed by the 84th Texas Legislature that could have an impact on Texas and our area.

The San Antonio Current has called Mr. Metzger "long one of the most energetic defenders of environmental issues in the State". He has played a key role in dozens of successful environmental campaigns, including winning permanent protection for the Christmas Mountains of Big Bend, getting Shell and ChevronPhillips to cut air pollutants at two Texas refineries and chemical plants and playing a major role in convincing the Legislature to dramatically boost funding for water conservation and State parks. He frequently appears in the media in publications such as the New York Times, MSNBC, and USA Today. He has published or co-authored " Keeping Waters in our Rivers: Strategies for Conserving Limited Water Supplies" and "Polluting the Brazos, Sullyng the Soul of Texas", which now appears in college textbooks.

He currently serves as a Commissioner on the Austin Resource Management Commission. He has been named one of the " Top Lobbyists for Causes" by *Capitol Inside*, received the President's Award from the Texas Parks and Recreation Society for his work to protect Texas parks, and was chosen for the inaugural class of "Next Generation Fellows" by the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law at UT Austin.

An amateur actor, Luke recently appeared in stage productions of Ghostbusters and The Princess Bride. Luke, his fiancé Rachel and seven year old son Gus are working to visit every State park in Texas.

GET WELL!

The chapter has sent get well wishes to the following fellow Master Naturalists.

- Marjorie Dearmont – husband, Dean, started chemo and radiation for a mass in his chest
- Lori Greco – husband, Mike, for a speedy recovery from knee surgery
- Judy Haralson – started therapy for her broken leg

Keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

A COMMON HILL COUNTRY BACKYARD VISITOR – THE CAROLINA CHICKADEE

by Joanne Fischer

I'm sure you are ALL familiar with the expression "everything is bigger (and better) in Texas". Well, I always thought that this was a true statement especially when I first encountered a Texas Centipede – yikes!! But it does not hold true when it comes to our resident Chickadee. In this part of the country (and the southeastern states), we have as a year-round resident the Carolina Chickadee. In the northern climes you find the Black-capped Chickadee and in the West you see the Mountain Chickadee (there are several more species in the United States but they have much more limited ranges). Anyway, low and behold, the Carolina Chickadee is the smallest of the three (granted only by a half of inch – but it is smaller nonetheless).

No matter, the Carolina Chickadee – regardless of it's size, and it's relative the Black-crested Titmouse are a couple of my favorite backyard feeder birds. Both the Chickadees and the Titmice are of the family Paridae. In North America the species in this family without crests are called chickadees, while those with crests are titmice. Most of what I describe below about the Chickadee also pertains to our friend the Black-crested Titmouse.

Chickadee's are quite easy to identify due to their black cap and black bib, white cheeks and undersides, and gray wings, back and tail. They have a rounded body with a head that is quite large given their overall size and they have a very short (almost nonexistent) neck. Their tail is fairly long and narrow. Both sexes as well as juveniles are all similar in appearance (the same holds true for Titmice). Another easy identification trick is to listen for it's song. Like the Eastern Phoebe which is often identified when it sings it's name "fee bee", the Chickadee does the same. The song is a fast and high-pitched *Chick-a-dee-dee-dee!*

Carolina Chickadees live in a variety of habitats from forests to swamps and riparian areas to suburban yards and parks. Their diet consists primarily of insects during the warmer months and is supplement-



ed by seeds (they are especially fond of sunflower seeds) and berries during the winter months. They are very acrobatic and are often seen hanging upside down in trees as they glean insects from the foliage and tree bark. They are also well known for hiding seeds in storage sites to be retrieved at a later time.

Chickadees are non-migratory even in the northern areas of their range. In winter, however, they often travel in flocks with Titmice, Kinglets, Nuthatches and even smaller woodpeckers. It is said that Titmice are dominant to the Chickadees. However, although I often see them together at my feeders, I haven't been able to discern any dominant behavior exhibited.

Chickadee's are monogamous and many pair for life. Like Titmice, chickadees are cavity nesting birds. They can and sometimes do excavate their own nesting holes (both the male and female participate in the excavation), but will often use an abandoned woodpecker or sapsucker nest cavity. They will also use nest boxes. The female builds a nest inside the cavity that consists of a base of moss and bark lined with a thick layer of hair and plant fibers. Chickadees have one clutch per year which can consist of between 3

to 10 eggs that are white with fine dots or blotches of reddish brown. The nesting female will sleep in the nest cavity while the male sleeps in a sheltered tree branch or shrub nearby. And it is reported that when a Chickadee is disturbed in its nest during incubation, it will hiss and strike intruders, similar to how a snake would act.

Chickadees are considered one of the most friendly and inquisitive backyard bird species. People have reported being able to coax chickadees to eat from their hands. It's my understanding however, that this takes quite some time and patience to accomplish.

Carolina Chickadees are common to abundant across their range. Their populations appear to be stable according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey and they are not on any Watch Lists. It is reported that where the ranges of the Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees come in contact, they will

occasionally hybridize. And an interesting fact is that while the two have slightly different songs, the hybrids can sing the songs of either species.

Another "interesting fact" (and I have no idea who comes up with these things) is that a group of chickadees are collectively known as a "banditry of chickadees" or a "dissimulation of chickadees"!!! See if you can remember that.

Finally, why do I love seeing Chickadees frequent my feeders (besides the fact that they are very cute)? Chickadees (and Titmice) are the most polite visitors to backyard feeders. If you watch them, they will fly onto a feeder, select one seed and fly off to a nearby tree branch to crack and eat the seed. They seldom rifle through the seed (like many other species) and they don't hog the feeder perches. They take a seed (one seed) and fly off. Quite delightful little creatures!

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Wade Hibler, leader and facilitator of "Team Quail" for Burnet County updated the chapter on the state of Bobwhite Quail in Burnet County. He then introduced Rebekah Ruzicka, Wildlife Biologist who has worked with Dr. Dale Rollins at the Rolling Plains Quail Research Foundation on large scale projects including Operation Idiopathic Decline, a quail disease study. She currently works with Texas A & M Agrilife Extension Service. She brought us up-to-date on the state of quail in Texas and the efforts to improve the population.

Also present from "Team Quail" and a member of the Bobwhite Brigade was Isaac Carver, who gave us an overview of his experience in the Brigade program.



AN OUTLANDISH OWL STORY

by Debora Maroney

It all began on a cold, damp, dreary winter morning around 10:30 a.m. which was Wednesday, January 14, 2015 while I was dawdling around the house at a slow, semi-hibernating pace. (Thank goodness, as you are about to read, I was home!) I had gone to my utility room for a totally unrelated reason, when I looked out the bathroom window. MUCH to my surprise there were the two BIG, WIDE OPEN eyes of a Great Horned Owl looking back at me from my lakeside porch bannister! I must admit I was QUITE taken aback and instantly forgot "the reason" I had gone there in the first place. All I could do in those first moments to follow was to *stay there and stare*. I mean, right here at my home in broad (cloudy) daylight was this MAGNIFICENT creature who was OBVIOUSLY in distress. We made eye contact, but he was hypothermic beyond his ability to react. I watched him for a long while, not wanting to disturb him, but I knew he needed help. He turned his head, closed his eyes, sometimes both, sometimes blinking only one, and he just looked so COLD, EXHAUSTED, and MISERABLE.

At first I didn't want to move for fear of disturbing him, then I finally HAD to, and I called Arlene Pearce, our federally licensed bird rehabilitator. As I was talking with her on my cell phone while watching the owl from the window, my voice evidently startled him and he "attempted" to fly, but he landed on the ground, and in a panicked state of being, he WALKED to the boat dock above the water here on Lake LBJ. Next, he managed to rise about two feet or



more and landed on a boat tie up post. He stayed there for a few moments before he TRIED to fly back to my yard, but he missed it by a few inches and landed on the rocks at the retainer wall. He was able to muster up enough strength to rise back up onto the ground, and he WALKED from there to the privacy

fence on the other side of my yard. He then managed to perch himself upon my father's old, antique garden "roll about" to wait for his rescue team to arrive, none of whom he realized were getting into formation.

Arlene's husband, Richard, who often assists in these matters was in Burnet paying taxes at the time, so she called the Llano co. and Burnet Co. game wardens. My residence is in Burnet Co., so Llano would not assist, and the Burnet county game warden was busy with another matter. So, Arlene's husband came over with another couple to rescue the soaking wet and nearing death raptor. By the time they had all arrived, he had been just sitting out in the cold for around an hour or more, unable to even stir. I have NO idea how long he had been sitting on my bannister before I discovered him.

Richard had brought along a box. I gave him a blanket. He and his friend walked up to the suffering owl who never even showed a sign of trying to escape as they approached him, covered him with the blanket, gathered him up and put him in the box without any struggle. Everyone departed and Richard took this outlandish owl home to Arlene.

A few hours later Arlene called to tell me that the reason the owl could not fly was because somehow he had been in the lake; he was SOAKED, and she was blowing his feathers dry with a warm hair dryer as we spoke, which she said he was "enjoying." She had offered him nourishment which he had gratefully eaten and was beginning to "fuss" at her, all of which were good signs. She told me that if I had not called and he had not have been rescued, he would have died from hypothermia.

I was still reeling with excitement, so I called another bird lover (and photographer as well), Sue Kersey, just to tell her the story. I kind of felt like that was "the end" because Arlene had intimated that "our outlandish owl" would be going to a rehabilitation center in San Antonio. Then quite by surprise, she



called me on Saturday, January 17 to let me know that the owl was ready for release! She wanted to bring him to our area the next day around sunset!!!! So - once again I called Sue Kersey to tell her and ask her to come join in on this awesome event

On Sunday, January 18, Sue arrived at my house with her camera at 5:15 p.m. Arlene and Richard arrived approximately at 5:30 p.m. with the owl and Arlene handed me photographs of before and after. My husband, John, was also here for the event, and we all left in three red vehicles to go to a more suitable place for his release in the neighborhood. Arlene was wearing a padded jacket and leather gloves for protection as she reached into the box and removed the owl. He was SUCH a SIGHT to behold! I was able to pet him on the head while she was holding his talons ever so tightly, and Sue was taking WONDERFUL photographs. After a short while of Arlene's information sharing, she let him go~~~~~.In a fleeting glimpse of time, he flew AWAY into the wild where wild things long to live. May we all be so blessed.

And so now, every time I hear the "who, who, who" sound of an owl outside my window, I will think of my Outlandish Owl Story.

NATURE CENTER FRIENDS CREATE NATIVE BEE HABITATS

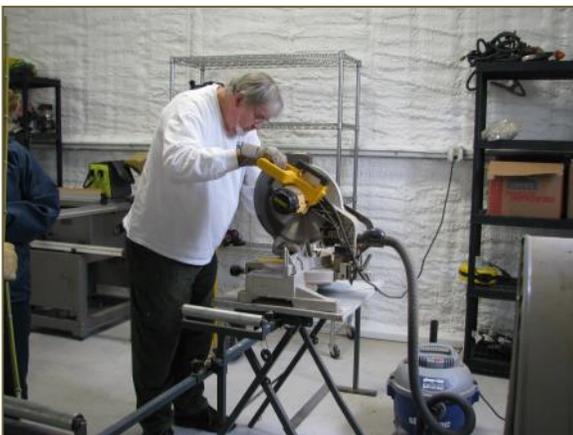
by Billy Hutson

After the last meeting on Feb 12th the friends of the nature center gathered to build habitat for our Texas native bees. There are approximately 700 native bee species in Texas and while 70% of them nest in the ground, the rest nest in holes in trees mostly excavated by beetles or other insects.

Members of the group found their way to one of the assembly places they were comfortable with and sawed, drilled, nailed and mounted roofs and mounting brackets for 15 habitat boxes as seen in the picture below.

One way to create habitat is to use some hollow items of the right dimensions in a creative way to assimilate tree holes. We chose bamboo, which was cut at the Inks Lake Natl. Fish Hatchery after last month's meeting. Bamboo can be invasive but with its varying diameters it makes very applicable and durable material for the bee houses.

They're easy to construct and will help to maintain habitat for native bees as human expansion takes it away.



MONARCHS - TROPICAL MILKWEED OR NOT?

by Sondra Fox

A short review of Monarch butterfly habits and the current population: Milkweed is the only plant on which Monarchs lay their eggs. Native milkweed dies back in the late summer to early fall. Monarchs stop mating then and fly to Mexico for the winter. In the spring, when native milkweed returns, the Monarchs return to the U.S.; and mating and egg laying begins again. Numbers of migrating Monarchs have decreased by 90% over the last 20 years; and especially the last 10 years with last year's numbers being the lowest ever recorded. 2014-2015 numbers were released in late January, 2015. They showed a slight increase over last year but still the 2nd lowest numbers ever. One major cause of this decline is a decrease in the amount of native milkweed.

A major cause of the loss of native milkweed is the use of weedkillers. For example, half of the overwintering Monarchs in Mexico come from the U.S. Midwest. Nearly 60 percent of the native milkweed in that area disappeared between 1999 and 2009. The loss occurred at the same time as increased use of weedkillers on corn and soybean fields genetically altered to tolerate herbicides.

Many of us have been planting milkweed in our landscapes to supplement the wild plants in order to try to help increase the numbers of Monarchs. Since native milkweed has been all but impossible to buy from local nurseries, many of us buy a nonnative, tropical milkweed, which is available. As you may have read, a recent scientific study by Dara Satterfield has brought up the question as to whether this most commonly available milkweed for purchase is doing more harm than good to the Monarch butterfly popula-



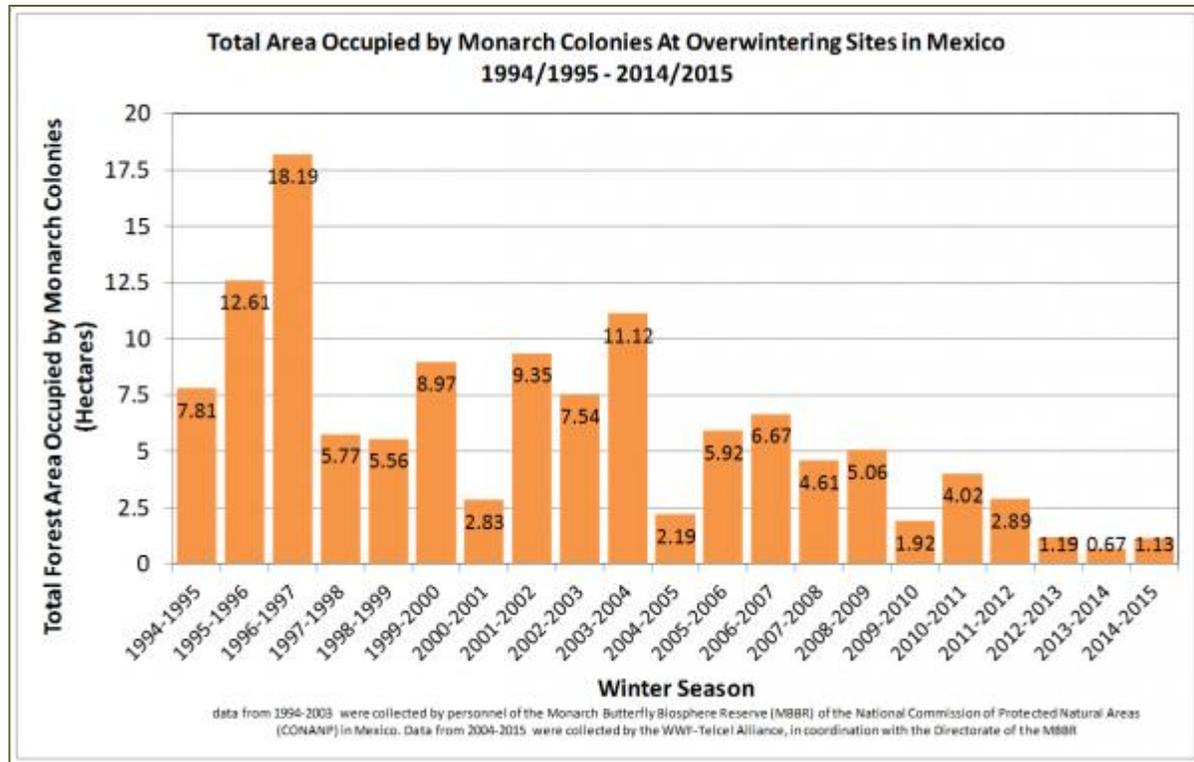
Monarch on nonnative Tropical milkweed by Sondra Fox

tion. Since this milkweed may survive through the fall and winter in our area, some Monarchs are changing their behavior by remaining to mate and reproduce instead of migrating to Mexico. Nonstop breeding on the same plants can unleash a parasite called OE, for *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*.

Research shows very clearly according to biologist Karen Oberhauser of Monarch Monitoring Project that Monarchs breeding on tropical milkweed throughout the winter have higher levels of OE compared to monarchs in the migratory cycle. Dr. Oberhauser states that it is yet unknown as to whether winter-breeding locations will affect the Monarch



Native Antelope Horn milkweed by Sondra Fox



from Monarch Joint Venture, 1/27/15

population as a whole. It depends on the number of nonmigratory butterflies as compared to the whole population and how much these two groups come into contact with each other. Many of the winter-breeding ones could spread the parasites if they mate with the migrating ones and lay eggs on the same milkweed plants. OE parasite spores are transmitted from infected adults to milkweed to caterpillars; spores can also be transferred from adult to adult during mating..

Tropical milkweed is not “bad.” It is the winter-breeding behaviors that it enables that is the problem.

In our warmer part of the country, its year-round growth prolongs Monarch breeding. If multiple generations of Monarchs lay eggs on the same plants, this results in the build-up of OE spores on the plant and the transmission of the parasites to caterpillars. Migrating butterflies return in the spring to newly sprouted, parasite-free native milkweed. So, what to do about the tropical milkweed that many of us have? Now that we know that Monarchs are healthier when milkweed is seasonal and not year-round, we should cut it back from October to February to within six inches of the ground (unless it dies back naturally on its own). Remove any new plant growth at the base

and prune it about every three weeks as it regrows. My tropical milkweed has always died back but later in the fall than the native. So I will be cutting mine back in October as stated. Of course, the best solution is to plant native milkweed. The Native Plant Society has offered Green milkweed at their plant sales in the past, however that source is no longer available. New sources are being searched for. Native American Seeds has the seeds for several varieties of native milkweed for our area available for purchase (www.seedsource.com) and those are also available at Backbone Nursery. The seeds are a challenge to sprout, but we must continue to try. Do NOT buy seeds from growers in other parts of the country. Their native milkweed is not our native milkweed.

Sources: *Monarch Joint Venture*, monarchjointventure.org, 1/20/15 by Sonia Altizeer, Karen Oberhauser, Dara Satterfield, and Candy Aarikonda; 1/27/15 by Gail Morris, Karen Oberhauser, & Lincoln Brower.

Newspaper articles: UGA Today, www.news.uga.edu/releases/article/monarch-butterflies-loss-of-migration-more-disease-0115/; and *Austin American Statesman*, November 23, 2014, p. A26.

SKUNKS

by Cathy Hill

I suppose I have seen and smelled hundreds of skunks in my life, but unfortunately most of those have been flattened corpses on the road. Isn't it amazing how that pungent scent lingers long after their demise? Have you noticed, as I have, that there are more of those dead bodies to be seen at this time of year? It turns out that in February and March, just like humans with Valentine's Day, skunks' thoughts turn to love, or at least mating. Sadly for many male skunks on the prowl that search for a mate often ends with a fatal encounter with a moving vehicle. This search for "l'amour" can't help but make me think of the lovable Pepe Le Pew who was forever chasing some poor female cat with an accidental white stripe.

Incidentally trivia fans, "For Scentimental Reasons" starring Pepe won the Oscar for best animated short film in 1950. Pepe however must have been French Canadian because there are no native skunks in Europe.

But back to scientific facts. Skunks belong to the Order Carnivora, suborder Caniformia, and Superfamily Musteloidea of which there are four Families. Skunks belong to the Family Mephitidae of which there are four Genera and twelve species. The two species of Genera *Mydaus* live in Indonesia and the Philippines and are known as stink badgers. The other three Genera, *Mephitis*, *Spilogale*, and *Conepatus* occur in the Americas from Canada to central South America and include 6 species in Texas.

The most common of these is *Mephitis mephitis*, the striped skunk, whose range includes all of the United States, southern Canada, and northern Mexico. The striped skunk has a white stripe that begins at the top of its head, splits at its neck, and extends down each side of its body. The width of the stripe and the amount of white in its tail can vary among individuals. It also has a narrow white stripe down the center of its face. Striped skunks are mid size with an overall length including the tail of 20–30 inches and a weight of 6–14 pounds. As drawn both Pepe Le Pew and Flower of Bambi fame are striped skunks.

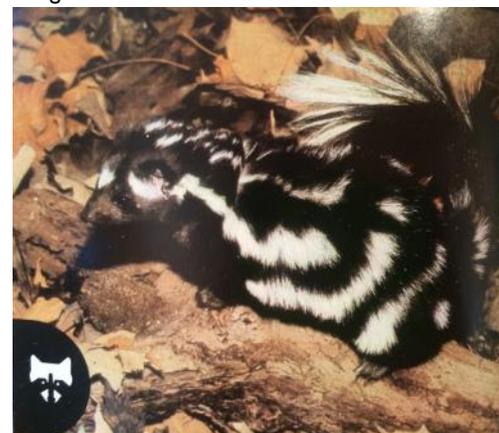
Whereas the striped skunks can be found throughout Texas, the other species here have a more limited distribution. The hooded skunk, *Mephitis macroura*, is primarily a Mexican species and can be found only in far West Texas in the Big Bend region. Its color pattern and size is similar to the striped skunk,



Striped Skunk



Hog nosed skunk



Spotted Skunk

but differs in having longer, softer fur and a distinct ruff of longer hair on its upper neck thus earning it the hooded name.

There are two species of spotted skunks in Texas (though some taxonomists consider the second type to be a subspecies). The eastern spotted skunk,

Spilogale putorius, occurs in the eastern half of the United States and in Texas is found in the Panhandle region, plus the north, east, and southern part of the state. The western spotted skunk, *Spilogale gracilis*, occurs in the western part of the United States including West and Central Texas. There is probably some overlap in their statewide distribution.

A small white spot on its forehead and another in front of each ear gives the spotted skunk its name. Four white stripes extend from its head down its back and more white stripes and spots are found on other parts of its body giving it a somewhat zebra-like color pattern. The spotted skunks are the smallest of the skunks averaging 13-22 inches in length and weighing 1-3 pounds. Squirrel-like, they are faster and more agile and often climb trees to forage or escape enemies.

The last type of skunk in Texas are the two species of hog nosed skunk. Again there is some taxonomic discussion as to whereas they are really two species or if one is a subspecies or just a variant.

I will use what information I found on the TPWD website. The hog nosed skunk, *Conepatus mesoleucus*, can be found throughout western and southern Texas and extending into parts of East Texas as well, plus parts of New Mexico, Arizona, and northern Mexico. The rarer Gulf Coast hog nosed skunk, *Conepatus leuconotus*, resides from Brownsville north along the coast to Aransas Pass. These largest members of the skunk family, 20-35 inches in length, and a weight of 3-10 pounds, are distinguished by a single broad white stripe and a predominantly white tail. In addition they have a long, broad, naked snout which they use for rooting in the ground for food. This habit has earned them the nickname of "rooter skunk."

Due to their statewide distribution skunks can be found in a variety of habitats. However they all prefer wooded or brushy areas and like rocky outcrops for their refuge and denning sites. Some species are more sociable, while others are loners. Although it varies some with species skunks are primarily nocturnal and seldom venture forth until late in the day and return to their hideouts early in the morning. This was when I had one of my few live skunk sightings as I saw one heading back to a rock pile at the edge of our property. Skunks have a varied diet which includes insects, small rodents, birds, eggs, and some vegetative matter. Breeding as mentioned earlier takes place for most species in late winter or early

spring with males having numerous mates. Young are born about two months later from April to June. Number of young varies with species from 3-7 per litter. By August most are weaned and foraging on their own.

Of course no description of skunks would be complete without a discussion of their most distinctive characteristic, its defensive spray mechanism. Two musk glands, located just inside the anal tract, contain the foul smelling ammunition, a clear yellow sulphide fluid, chemically known as n-butyl mercaptan. Not only is its odor bad enough to discourage most enemies but it also burns when it contacts skin. A direct hit can cause painful, though temporary, blindness and severe inflammation of the eyes, nose, and mouth as well as choking, nausea, and even fainting. The musk is discharged from the glands through two ducts which are exposed when the tail is raised and can be shot separately in any direction at any height with a range up to twelve feet! Some species will even rear up on their front legs and spray forward over their heads. In addition the musk can be released in controlled amounts giving the skunk the ability to shoot 5-6 times from each gland. Young skunks can spray by the time they are seven weeks old and won't hesitate to demonstrate this ability. Although some believe that holding a skunk by its tail will prevent it from spraying, researchers have learned the hard way that this isn't true. Besides you can't hold onto the tail forever. Normally a skunk will give several warnings when approached before it sprays. These include lowering its head, arching its back, raising all but the tip of the tail, and stamping its feet. If you see the tip of the tail come up though, get the heck away! However if surprised or seriously threatened the skunk will usually spray immediately without the warning signs. Not surprisingly skunks have few natural enemies though predation by coyotes, golden eagles, and great horned owls has been reported. Even so the average lifespan of skunks is only 2-3 years.

Luckily my dogs or I have never had a skunk encounter of the worst kind. I imagine some of you have not been so lucky. The old remedy of tomato juice is no longer recommended. From what I have read either apple cider vinegar or a solution of hydrogen peroxide, baking soda, and liquid soap (check online for the recipe) are now considered to be the most effective treatments. Also one last thing to remember, rabies is prevalent in skunks. Just one more reason to give these handsome critters a wide berth!

GALLERY

Driving into the fish hatchery for our monthly meeting I saw this roadrunner taking a "sunbathe" . I knew what it was doing and so wanted the picture that I almost caused the car behind me to run into me!

This is what I found on the Cornell website So much fun to see and I am always in awe of how mother nature works.....

"In the morning, roadrunners often "sunbathe" to warm up after a cold night in the desert: with its back to the sun, the bird raises the feathers across its back and wings to expose its heat-absorbent black skin. In winter, birds may sunbathe several times a day."

by Sue Kersey



Sunrise over Lake Buchanan: still beautiful even with increased lakefront!
By Cathy Hill



Yellow rumped Warblers



by Lori Greco

HLMN MEETINGS SCHEDULE 2015

By Cris Faught

Chapter Meeting 1:00pm

07 January 2015
04 February 2015
04 March 2015
01 April 2015
06 May 2015
03 June 2015
July No Meeting
05 August 2015
02 September 2015
07 October 2015
04 November 2015
02 December 2015 Christmas Party

Board Meeting 10:30am

Board Meeting

Board Meeting

Board Meeting

Board Meeting

