

The Steward

Fall 2024

Highland Lakes Master Naturalists

Volume 15 Issue 3



Artist Rendition of Skyward facing Cottonwood Trees in the Fall! The cottonwood trees have a whitish trunk, with gray and black in areas. They have long branches that hang down or go in an upward direction. Sometimes you will see that deer have scraped their bark with antlers.

Artist: Kimberly Jungkind

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

becky_breazeale@yahoo.com

Photos should have captions and appropriate credits. We will announce the deadline for submissions two weeks prior to the deadline. Or contact Becky and Martelle.

Thank y'all for ALL!!

Message from our President

By Jill Goff

.Winds of Change

Change. How do we handle change? It is all around us. Some things change so quickly and easily, we do not mind or notice. Some things change, like electronic devices, that only an engineer (or our 12-year-old grandson) can decipher. Change surrounds us like a storm so much so that, as soon as we adapt to one thing, here comes another. Our computers, iPhone, cameras, televisions, communication in general all seem to be on the fast track to a new technology. And this is just in the communication field. What about navigating government services or medical care?

Everything seems more difficult when made easier.

What? Yes. There seems to be a plot to streamline our world only to make things more difficult for the end-user when we're told that the purpose is to improve ease.

As members of HLMN, can we please just keep doing the same things the same way? ...Take a breather and remain comfortable in our HLMN life. ...Sit back, go to meetings and volunteer. ...No thoughts or worries about our mission and partnerships or how to best train volunteers, improve training strategies, education outreach, chapter meetings, or start new projects. ...Just "go with the flow." Please!

At the beginning of this year, I think most of the HLMN board members thought the "flow" was sufficient "as is." Then we read our mission statements and started asking questions about everything we were currently doing. What did you have to do to start a new project? Were there forms to complete? How many members were ready or interested in teaching? Do we have a teaching process in place? Are we prepared to teach the adult community? Were we encouraging new members to become subject experts? Could we enhance our meetings to encourage attendance? And was our communication to the membership effective? ...To the public? Oh, my. The questions and the list of possible changes grew.

We then made the brave decision to enter the storm of change to fortify our mission.

And to address the questions and provide answers, the HLMN “mission committees” were born. Beginning in January of this year eight committees worked tirelessly to review all aspects of how well HLMN is fulfilling our mission. Digging into everything from chapter meetings to communicating more effectively to the membership and public, the committees dissected the topics and developed charters outlining changes needed. Through the committee leadership of Cathy Houston, Patty Harrell, Krista Paul, Roy Appleton, Mary Ann Holt, and Paula Richards, HLMN is ready to implement some changes that will strengthen the chapter’s support of our mission. Working on the committees, in addition to the chairs, were the following members: Melissa Duckworth, Lyn Davis, Karen Stewart, Lisa Stripay, Ingrid Hoffmeister, Rick Vance, Beth Lillis, Jill Goff, Al Lillis, Sharon Drake, Bill McCartney, Marvin Bloomquist, George Barr, Cathy Hill, Becky Vavrek, Becky Breazeale, Martelle Luedecke and M. J. Hansen.

So, yes, we’re doing it too: communicating our aim to you to make things easier (and more integrous). And, in this, we might, at first, seem to be making things more difficult. However, we hope you’ll discover that the results of our well intentioned efforts show much improvement in organization and mission-alignment. Take some time to read the charters that represent the outcome of this work.

We hope you’ll find, as autumn arrives, that there is no better time than the present to brave the winds of change.

Recognitions

1000 TMN Hours

Roy Appleton



500 TMN Hours

Lynne Clair

Mary Jo Hansen



Initial Certification

Ron Hardiman

Annette Raver

Betty Secret

Larry Secret

Davis (Butch) Williams



2024 Recertification

Vicki Adcock
 George Barr
 Becky Breazeale
 Ray Buchanan
 Dannielle Clayton (Double)
 Lynne Clair
 Kathy Griffis-Bailey
 Carol Guthrie (Double)
 Dianna Hodges
 Cathy Houston

Meghan James
 Charles Powell
 James Purcell
 Paula Richards
 Mike Riley
 Kristin Rodgers
 Sheryl Smith-Rodgers
 Mark Stracke
 Shirley Winslow
 Ed Houston



Davis Mountains Field Trip

Summary Article: HLMN Davis Mtns Area Trip

In the dark-early hours of Sunday, September 22nd, 2024 thirty-eight intrepid souls, mostly Master Naturalists, finished loading their vehicles and started the long drive west towards the Davis Mountains, the largest mountain range in Texas. It was the beginning of our HLMN Fall Trip.

Our adventure began with a visit to Balmorhea State Park. While it features the largest natural swimming pool in the country, most visitors know little about what makes this area so special. Ranger Emily ensured that we didn't make this mistake. We learned that San Solomon Springs, around which the nation's largest naturally-supplied swimming pool was built, produces an astounding 15M gallons of water a day. It's the largest of six springs in the area, all of which have unique chemical signatures, thus different base sources – something scientists are still studying. We learned that the springs form

Cienegas (small wetlands), which are critical to local flora and fauna. San Solomon Spring also provided metered water to local farmers and its outflow supplies Lake Balmorhea – both important to the livelihoods of area residents. Unfortunately, one of the springs, at a slightly higher location, is currently dry – a serious conservation concern.





From there we made the scenic drive to Davis Mountains State Park for our traditional Potluck. We share any last-minute changes/updates, answer questions and, most importantly, it provides an opportunity for our members to get to visit with old and new members. Ranger Charlie gave us a very good overview of the park and the Davis Mountains area. The main course was provided, but the highlight is always the side dishes our members prepare. There was a special request for Beth Lillis' exceptional sourdough bread – let's just say the Trip Committee got its share ;>).



Morning activities started early. Monday began with an 8am volunteer service at the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI). We pulled invasive weeds, snipped sprouting ashe juniper and briefly adopted part of CR 118. We had an excellent introduction to the Institute by Director Lisa Gordon and enjoyed an exceptional tour of the high-fenced botanical gardens by Head Gardener Faith Dishron. We inspected some endangered species up close and sampled the fruit of the Mountain Hawthorne – a rare treat! The pollinator garden was very impressive – second only to the one at the National Fish Hatchery – OK, a little bias here! We lamented that we didn't have time to hike the wonderful trails at CDRI but, small consolation, dense fog hid our tears and the views.







Monday afternoon found us at Sul Ross University, meeting with Kelsey Wogan, the University's greenhouse manager, and Lindsay Bredemeyer, from the Tierra Grande MNs. Kelsey led us on a 1.3-mile hike along the Hancock Hill trails yellow trail, discussing the plant life and its importance along the way. Some of us went on to the Infamous Desk. The visit concluded with an excellent presentation on the agave and its importance to beneficial insects and bat species of greatest concern, especially the Mexican long-nosed bat.





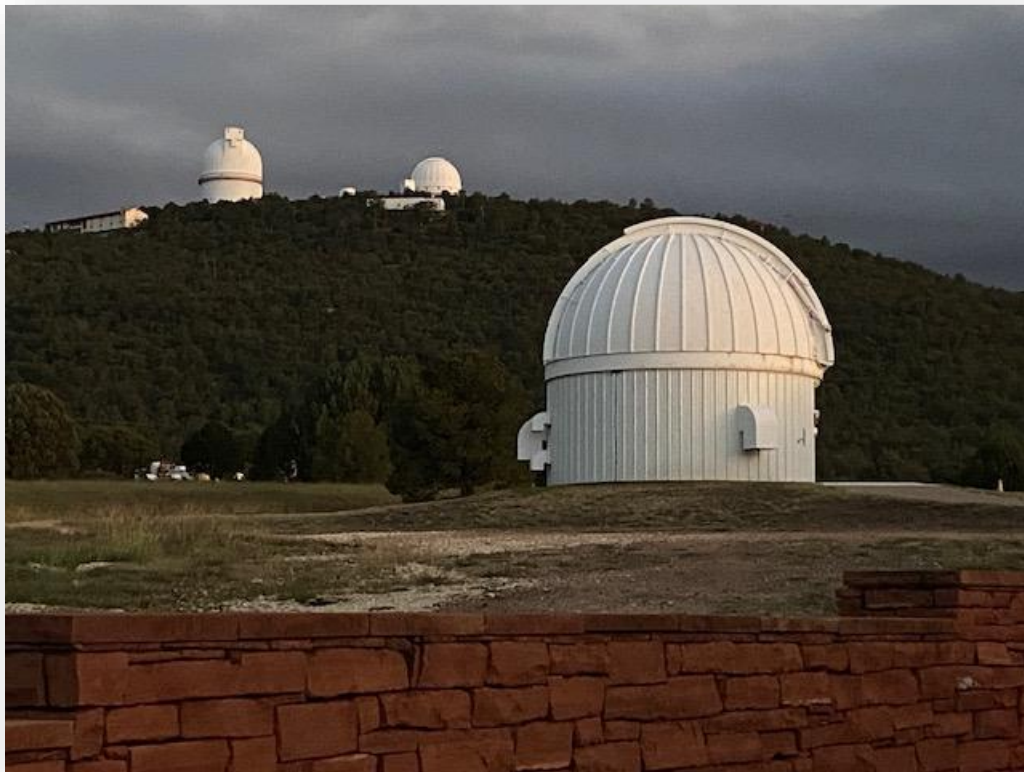
We ended the day with a group dinner at the Reata-Alpine restaurant. Good food, fine beverages, fun company, old and new stories to share – both old and new friendships cemented.

Tuesday was our sleep-in day, if you consider meeting by 9am after driving 30 miles to Alpine a late start. We spent a wonderful morning back at Sul Ross U, meeting with Kelsey for a tour of the greenhouses and with Dr. Mike Powell, where we learned about herbariums, their importance in the preservation and study of plant life and how they are impacted over time. The Davis Mtns area is a close-knit community. Dr. Powell co-founded CDRI some forty years ago and is still quite active in its development. Kelsey discussed the issue of illegally-harvested cacti and how the practice of hybridizing them (they command higher prices) has the potential to further endanger native species. Her greenhouses have become a permanent home for some of these plants and currently she has a supply impounded by customs officials in Memphis, TN! Being Master Naturalists, she entrusted us to be permanent custodians for some of these lovely, hybridized (forever house) plants and well as small agave for our properties. Small treasures!





We spent the afternoon at the Museum of the Big Bend, which is located at Sul Ross. It houses some exceptional murals and other artworks, mostly with a West Texas theme, and interesting artifacts, both ancient and from the settlement of the West. After an entertaining and informative introduction by retired professor Matt Walters, we were free to roam the museum and, of course, their gift shop. Gift shop manager Jean Cargo advised that the museum had a banner day .



Not done yet – after a dinner-on-your-own, most of us traveled to the McDonald Observatory for a Star Party. While the three main telescopes, ranging from 87 to 107 inches, are no longer part of the party, the program still includes viewing through a number of telescopes, ranging to 22 inches. We enjoyed a clear and cool evening, making for very enjoyable viewing of constellations, nebulae and, the “star” attraction, Saturn in all its glory.

“The bus waits for no one!” had everyone on board before 8am for a four-plus hour Geology Tour of the Davis Mountains Scenic Route, led by geologist, and Tierra Grande MN, Denis Foley. Denis spent most of his career working out of Denver, but was born, raised, and has retired to, Alpine. He was sort of a sure thing – Denis led a group of us on a Geology Tour of Big Bend during the Fall 2022 Trip. But, unfettered from our vehicles, and with the excellent sound system on the bus, we enjoyed not only learning



about the very interesting geology of the mountains, but also about its history, its agricultural and environmental importance, and the significance of climate islands. We made a number of stops along the way. Excellent times to use our binoculars, visit with Denis and each other, inspect the “geology” up close and enjoy the cool mountain air. Spoiled only by the insistent “back on the bus” by one of our Trip-Com members, who suffered angry stares while trying to keep us on schedule. For the record, he didn’t want to leave either!







Our only real “Free Time” was on Wednesday afternoon. There were days’ worth of events we couldn’t fit into the schedule. Folks visited the Ft. Davis National Monument, went hiking, spent time at Davis Mtns SP, traveled to Marfa, took the McDonald Observatory Facility Tour, visited local museums and so forth. In the evening, several of us participated in a Dark Skies presentation at Davis Mountains SP, led by Ranger Charlie.

Thursday morning broke cool and crisp, with temperatures in the lower fifties. Birding with Sherry is usually a highlight of our trips and this session was no exception. While the crew didn’t see the elusive Montezuma Quail, Karen Stewart and a few others had a fortunate encounter].



The Trip Committee's mission has three primary objectives. The first is to Educate. Mary Ann Holt served as our AT timekeeper. With Cathy Hill's approval, those who participated in all of the events earned a total of 18 hours of advanced training and 1.5 hours of VS, plus travel time to and from their local lodgings. The second objective is to Engage. By providing opportunities to learn more about the natural world of Texas, we hope to spark new areas of interest, learning and involvement among our Chapter members. As humans, we tend to associate with those we know, like and who have similar interests...we gravitate towards volunteering with folks we enjoy being with. By Engaging our members, we hope to support volunteerism. Finally, we try to Entertain. When learning is fun, we learn more. When volunteering is fun, we volunteer more.

Your Trip Committee is already beginning to consider plans for a few Day Trips and the "Big Trip" for 2025. Perhaps you'd like to contemplate with us? Your Trip Committee....Beth James, Al Lillis, Bill McCartney and George Brugnoli.

Photo credits. Meghan James except : (long-nosed bat and McDonald's three telescopes – Al Lillis. Karen Stewart – Quail. Mexican long-nosed bat with black background By Rolf Nussbaumer/Danita Delimont)



Inks Lakes State Park

Little Free Library

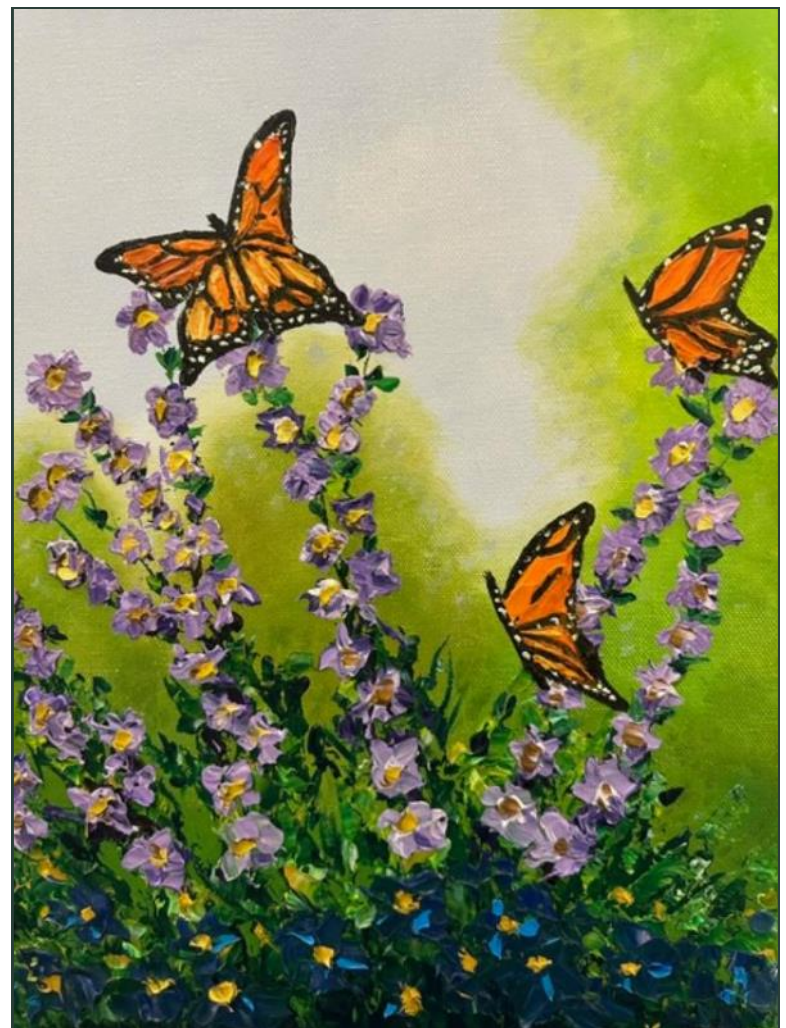
By Meghan James
Photo by Meghan James

My mom and I had been wanting to get a little free library at Inks Lake State park for forever and we are excited to share that it's happened!

Special thanks to Lori Greco for locating a group who made them (a group of school kiddos in Burnet) —I purchased one that had already been used for a very discounted price and my mom and I have made repairs and spruced it up and it's being taken over to the park. They are making final decisions on exactly where it will go (most likely the back of the park store) so stay tuned for final details. Please start looking through old nature books you have or things for kiddos to put in the library.

Let's keep up with sharing our love for nature and learning (and reading in general) for all who visit ILSP!

~Meghan James



"Monarchs in the Garden"— Artist Rendition of purple Verbena and blue Spiderwort with Monarch butterflies. Acrylic painting, original and signed. Artist: Kimberly Jungkind

HLMN Sunset Paddle

By Lori Greco

Photos by Lori Greco

Nine kayakers from HLMN joined Lori Greco and DJ Sanders for an Inks Lake Texas Paddling Trail cruise around Inks Lake. The paddle Trail consisted of the Devil's Waterhole, Waterfowl Run and some of Stumpy Hollow. We leisurely took in almost 4 miles in 3 hours and were witness to a full moon on the rise! Absolutely stunning and





Inks Lakes State Park Night Fishing

By Jamie Langham
Photos by Jamie Langham and Meghan James

If you didn't see our social media post, we had a super, one might even say "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" event on Saturday night! We partnered with TPWD Angler Education Director Adam Comer to do a special Night Fishing event, and while I knew it would be popular, boy did it exceed our expectations. Over 130 people attended to learn about Angler Ed, make glow in the dark bobbers, the kiddos enjoyed some popsicles, and of course everyone loved the fishing. Not everyone caught something but fun was had by all and we were getting rave reviews the entire night.

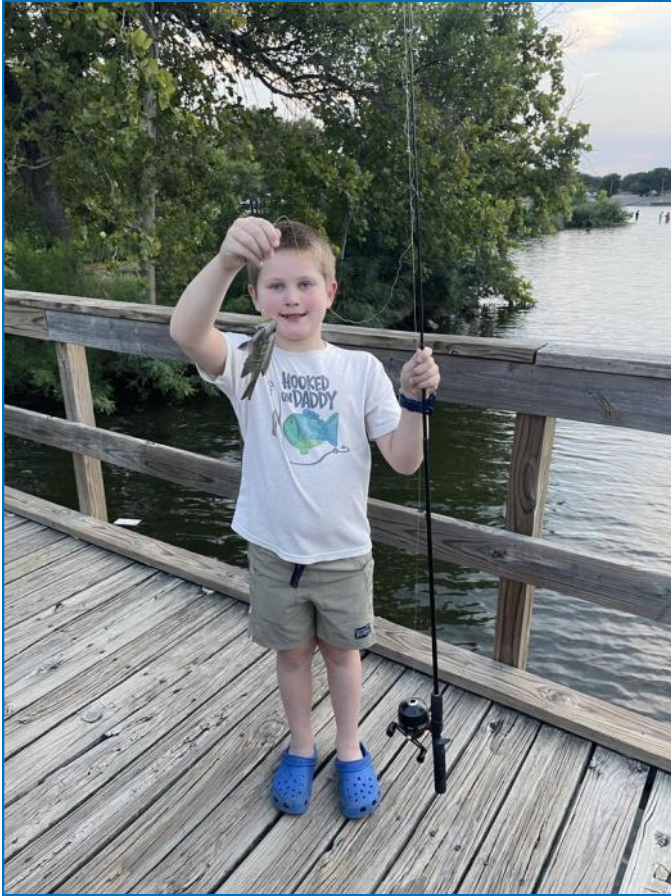
I can't thank our volunteers enough for their help. From directing people at HQ (PH Cindy), parking cars anywhere we could (PH Kathy and David), and helping bait over a hundred poles over and over and over again (PH Jessica, FOIL Meghan, and MN Gary and Pamela), we were a small but MIGHTY crew and helped so many families make happy memories on a beautiful summer evening.

Thank you Adam and your intern for the idea and awesome glow in the dark bobbers and jewelry, and Angler Ed swag.

Lastly, thank you Officer Preston for being flexible with your schedule and providing much appreciated enforcement support! :)

I cannot thank y'all enough and I am not exaggerating when I say we could not have pulled it off without your help.







Girls Scouts Love State Parks Weekend

By Karen Stewart

Photos by Karen Stewart

On September 14, Master Naturalists and Friends of Inks Lake provided programs to local Burnet/Marble Falls area Girl Scouts camping at Inks Lake State Park.

The weekend was a national event with Girl Scouts of the USA as Girl Scouts Love State Parks weekend. Pictured are Kaye Barr and Mary Ann Holt who provided information about Leave No Trace, and how many years it takes for trash to biodegrade. Karen Stewart, a Lifetime Girl Scout member, HLMN and FOIL helped the girls make seed balls that will be used at the ILSP Wildlife Viewing Station.

Karen Brents and Bill Blevins presented information about Monarch migration. Robin Miskimins presented Skins and Skulls information about mammals and a few other insects.





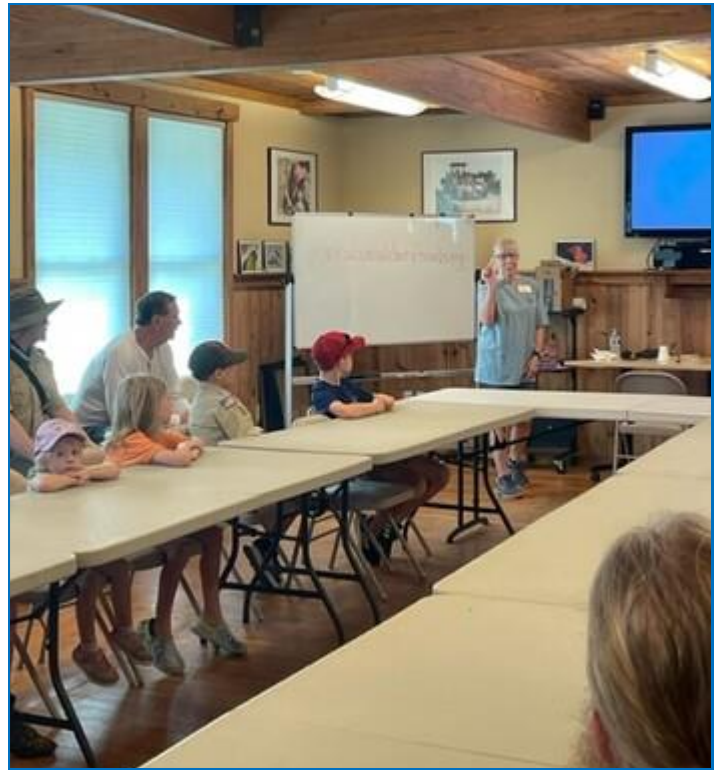
INKS Dam National Fish Hatchery

Cub Scout
Fishing Derby









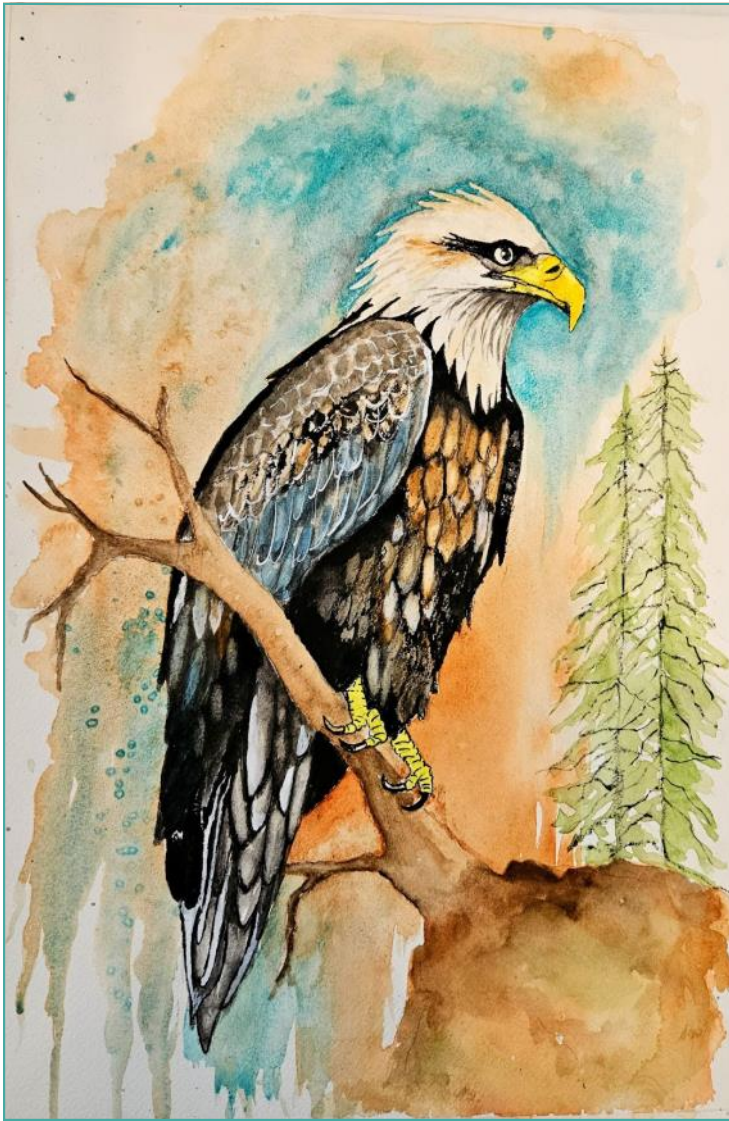
Archery

Photos by Karen Stewart





Becki Vavrek says Happy Halloween with photo of Harvestmen clustered at her house.





Local Naturalists Captivate the Kids with Nature and Environmental Education Trunks at Marble Falls Library

Members of Highland Lakes Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists packed their trunks and took them on the road—their nature and educational trunks that is!

By MJ Hanson and Cathy Houston

Al Lillis, Lisa Stripay and Cathy Houston hosted a pollinators and fish session at the Marble Falls Library recently with hands-on demonstrations. The kids had fun learning how to build a solitary bee house and practiced swimming like a fish!

Both presentations are a part of the Environmental Education Trunks Project recently launched by the Highland Lakes Master Naturalists. These trunks are tailored to third through fifth grade TEKS* and are designed for use in classrooms, after school or on field trips. Other TEKS topics include Birds, Water, and Vertebrates.

If your organization is interested in having a Master Naturalist come and speak to your group, contact txmn.highlandlakes@gmail.com

*Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills



Cathy Houston
Photo by Lauren Banks



Left: Al Lillis and Lisa Stripay
Photo by Lauren Banks

Below:
Apache Paper Wasp
(*Polistes apachus*)
Photos by James Reimer



T E X A S 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

Officers:

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- V.P.** Cathy Houston (281) 467 3822 cell
- Secretary** Bill Edwards (210) 274-4496 cell
- Treasurer** Krista Paul (281) 513-7312 cell

