

Indian Trail Marker

Texas Master Naturalists...Serving Ellis and Navarro Counties

July/August
Volume 3, Issue 4

Meeting 4th Monday of each month at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. at the Red Oak municipal bldg <http://www.redoaktx.org/>

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Visit our website at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail>

From the Desk of the **PRESIDENT**

Eileen Berger, President ITMN

My recent trip to England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland was a great adventure. Because I am interested in nature, I was on the lookout for new and different animals, plants, and birds. My first observation overall is that these places are blessed with frequent rainfall. This results in a verdant, lush green which we see only in the spring here in Texas. I did see some new birds including magpies, pied wag-tails, and hooded crows. Since I was with a large tour group, I couldn't really get out and explore, but we did visit Killarney National Park in Ireland. There we saw red deer, a new one for me. Flower discoveries included gorse and broom which both have yellow blooms, and pink foxgloves. In the bog areas grew millions of yellow irises which looked like Siberian or Louisiana irises. The people take great pride in their gardens (yards) and have contests between villages for Most Beautiful Village. They also have invasive species, the most notable being rhododendrons, which have naturalized everywhere. It was great to journey far from home, but even better to be back.

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Calendar of Events, Projects & Meetings

JULY

- 1 MNP Workday & Wildflower/Bird Walk 9 a.m.
- 6 BRIT
- 11 Wolf Creek Workday/Night Hike Practice, 8:30 p.m., Mockingbird Park
- 15 MNP Workday & Wildflower//Bird Walk 9 a.m.
- 19 Night Hike Practice, 8:30 p.m., Mockingbird Park
- 20 Night Hike/Owl Prowl, 8:30 p.m., Mockingbird Park
- 22 ITMN Meeting/Topic "A Portrait of the Blackland Prairie"
- 27 Wolf Creek Workday & ITMN Booth @ Waxahachie Farmers' Market

AUGUST

- 3 BRIT
- 5 MNP Workday & Wildflower//Bird Walk 9 a.m.
- 8 Wolf Creek Workday
- 19 MNP Workday & Wildflower//Bird Walk 9 a.m.
- 24 Wolf Creek Workday
- 26 ITMN Meeting/program on Milkweeds–Randy Johnson, consultant

SEPTEMBER

- 2 **Labor Day
- 7 BRIT
- 16 MNP Workday & Wildflower/Bird Walk 9 a.m.
- 19 Kachina Prairie Workday (*tentative*)
- 21 Kachina Prairie Workday (*tentative*)
- 23 ITMN Meeting/Wildscapes–Derek Broman, Urban Biologist

OCTOBER

- 3 Bardwell Lake Workday (*tentative*)
- 5 BRIT & Bardwell Lake Workday (*tentative*)
- 7 MNP Workday & Wildflower/Bird Walk 9 a.m.
- 12 International Observe the Moon Night Event & Night Hike
- 17 Bardwell Lake Workday (*tentative*)
- 19 Bardwell Lake Workday (*tentative*) & **Kerens Cotton Harvest Fest (*possible outreach event*)
- 21 MNP Workday & Wildflower/Bird Walk 9 a.m.
- 25-27 Annual State Meeting in New Braunfels
- 28 ITMN Meeting/Creepy Crawlies, aka Spiders–Mike Merchant, Professor & Entomologist

PROJECT NEWS

Nature Leaders Program – (*C. Grindstaff*) would like to copy the “Nature Leaders” program by the North Texas Master Naturalist Chapter whereby fifth grade students are trained to lead the other classes from their school on a nature walk at Twelve Hills Nature Park. She asked if this is something our Chapter would like to pursue with T.E. Baxter Elementary School across from Mockingbird Nature Park. The consensus was to try to arrange a meeting with the principal and science teachers to see if they would support such a program – possibly for fall term 2013. More to come.

The Angler Education Event – (*E. Berger*) the event in Red Oak went very well with thirteen children and eight parents. She said the ITMN participants received lots of compliments. She thanked the volunteers who assisted her.

Project Wild Event – (*R. Schumacher*) the Project Wild event at Cedar Ridge Preserve went well. There were 63 third grade students learning about habitats. She thanked Sara Cornett and Nikki Miller, two of our new members, for their help. There will be a Project Wild educators class on Thursday July 25, Location TBA, the cost will be \$25.00 and you will receive the basic Project Wild curriculum and the training to use it in formal or informal educational settings! More details about location and registration will be coming soon!

Mockingbird Nature Park: (*A. Gritzmaker*) the tree ID plaques are in and for the most part installed. They look great. The Parks Board has decided to install a pedestrian gate on MOCKINGBIRD LANE near the school. The butterfly garden and native grass beds are looking very nice.

Night Hike at Mockingbird Nature Park – (*R. Schumacher*) reported on her plan for a night hike at Mockingbird Nature Park on July 20th. We will host a family-friendly moonlit hike through the park as we look and listen for night life. We will briefly explore what makes nature at night so fascinating and then hike the trail. We will be searching for owls and other nocturnal creatures, as well as using all of our senses to tune into nature at night. Closed-toe shoes and long pants are recommended. Only adults should bring a flashlight. Plan to be outdoors about two hours. Mockingbird Nature Park is located at the corner of Mockingbird Lane and Onward Roads in Midlothian.

This free night hike is sponsored by the Midlothian Parks and Recreation Department and the Indian Trail Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist (ITMN) Program.

Email IndianTrailmn@gmail.com to register. ITMN members can volunteer to work this event by contacting Rebecca and will be expected to participate in two practice sessions on July 11 & 19 both at 8:30 p.m. We will need leaders and sweepers as well as parking lot greeters/helpers so all hands are useful here! All hours spent on prep, practice and actual hike time count as VSH so this is a great way to get some hours under your belt if you are a newbie (or even if you are not)!

Box Turtle & TX Turtle Watch – (*C. Gritzmaker*) we report sightings directly online to either the TPWD for the box turtles or the Fort Worth Zoo for the Turtle Watch. It's a self-start/self-monitor project in whatever location the sighting occurs. The FW Zoo will let us know if they were going to have another training class for the turtle watch. Our ITMN stats for 2012: Five of our members were active in this project and logged 57.25 volunteer hours for the Texas Turtle Watch in 2012, and a total of 120.75 volunteer hours since 2011.

The John Bunker Sands Wetland – (*P. Bailey & J. West*) is a collaboration of the North Texas Municipal Water District and Rosewood Ranches, creating a wetland to help clean the water for 1.6 million N. Texans and is, by default, a wildlife refuge. They welcome volunteers (called stewards) and master naturalists are ideal candidates. There are several from ITMN, including Marilyn Denmon, Jim West and Peggy Bailey, and some from the North Texas Chapter. An ITMN member, Maureen Nitkowski, is an educator there, which strengthens our ties. Stewards provide a wide variety of service and assistance, ranging from front desk greeting to leading trail walks to work on their newsletter. The Wetland asks that stewards commit a minimum of 20 hours per year. A short training program is required.

Dogwood Canyon Volunteers – (*R. Reeves*) For some summer opportunities to help out at Dogwood Canyon, see Rex's email dated 7/2/13.

Wolf Creek Park – (*S. Lane*) with some shade and an occasional breeze, four intrepid members put in

continued next page

PROJECT NEWS

Wolf Creek Park (*continued*) 3 hours (or 12 total man-hours) in the Texas heat on June 22nd. We got a lot done - one more half-day should complete the job to the extent that only maintenance will be needed. The goal is an ADA-criteria trail, which it will be, in terms of width and height clearance.

Kachina Prairie – (*P. Baliey*) Good news! we have permission from the City of Ennis to conduct a prescribed burn at the prairie in late autumn. We are working with Daniel Dietz from Texas Land Conservancy to get the burn proposal submitted. In the mean time, the City has agreed to mow a perimeter path in mid September. So we have scheduled two work days for Sep 19 and 21.

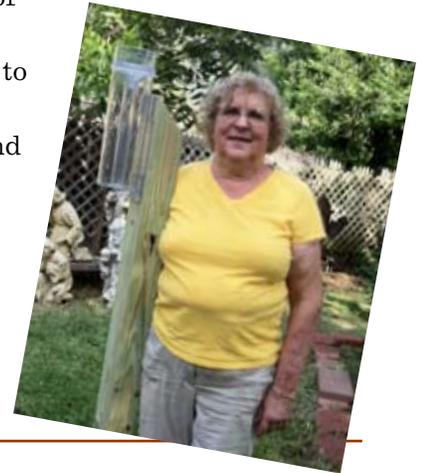
CoCoRaHS – (*C.Gritzmaker*) Year End Report for 2012: For detailed data collected by CoCoRaHS observers, check this link online: <http://www.cocorahs.org/ViewData/> . El Nino did not develop as we'd hoped. Reporting those zeros is still good, though, as it's just as important to know where it didn't rain as well as where it did. The information we send in to CoCoRaHS is one of many sources used by the government in monitoring drought. Who uses our CoCoRaHS data? National Weather Service forecast offices and the Hydrologic Prediction Center track CoCoRaHS reports every day to verify their weather

forecasts. They instantaneously receive our Intense Precipitation and Hail reports to aid in severe weather warning and verification.

National Weather Service River Forecast Centers are using CoCoRaHS data every day in predicting river levels and potential flooding all across the country. National Weather Service and private meteorological businesses are using CoCoRaHS data to validate and adjust precipitation estimates from RADAR. The National Operational Hydrological Remote Sensing Center accesses CoCoRaHS snow reports all winter to help in the assessment of snow cover and snow water content across the entire U.S. They particularly appreciate the observers who make the extra effort to report the total water content of snow on the ground each day in the winter. That is really important stuff.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is looking at CoCoRaHS data regularly to assess crop development, potential drought stress and possible crop damage and erosion from flooding or from drought.

New ITMN member, Sara Cornett joins the CoCoRaHS team



CAUGHT DOING SOMETHING INTERESTING!

By Peggy Bailey

A recent look at the Ellis County site on “ebird” reveals names we know, as contributors. Among the top 15 who provide data to this citizen-science information source are Carolyn Gritzmaker as number 5, with a recent sighting, for example of the crested caracara. Deborah Rayfield is number 14 with a recent sighting of the belted kingfisher. Note also that Ted Drozdowski, who has generously shared knowledge on bird outings, holds the top spot for contributing. He posted a note about a magnolia warbler in mid-May, and multiple others.

TOP 100 EBIRDERS IN ELLIS COUNTY 2013:

| Observer | Complete Checklists | Species (% of total) | Most recent addition |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1 Ted Drozdowski | 40 | 141 (77.9%) | Magnolia Warbler (<i>May 14, 2013</i>) |
| 5 Carolyn Gritzmaker | 24 | 76 (41.99%) | Crested Caracara (<i>May 13, 2013</i>) |
| 14 Deborah Rayfield | 4 | 36 (19.89%) | Belted Kingfisher (<i>Feb 16, 2013</i>) |

<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>

NEWSLETTER STAFF: Kitty Smith–Editor-in-chief, Assistant editor–Kathleen Mack, Designer–Jim West. To submit information or provide feedback, you can do so at: newsletter@itmnc.com



By Rebecca Schumacher

If you are a formal or informal educator, did you know that the Master Naturalists can help train you in an exciting, nature focused curriculum called Project WILD?

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department sponsors a suite of Project WILD programs, each offering a special iteration of this outstanding, hands-on approach to learning. Project WILD is a Kindergarten through 12th grade environmental and conservation education program emphasizing awareness, appreciation and understanding of wildlife and natural resources. It is interdisciplinary and supplementary and can be used to teach basic skills in science, social studies, language arts, math, art, music and physical education. TPWD offers Project WILD through hands-on workshops for educators.

Project WILD:

- teaches young people how to think about wildlife, not what to think...
- provides a set of fun, hands-on, easy to use educational activities...
- trains teachers and youth group leaders in an outstanding six-hour, hands on workshop ..
- includes helpful, scientific background information with all activities...
- incorporates powerful techniques and methods for teaching problem solving and decision-making skills, and
- is a program that is kid-tested and teacher-approved!

Who can use Project WILD?

- Classroom teachers, environmental educators, park and nature center personnel, Scout, Camp Fire and 4-H leaders, and others who work with young people.
- Activities work well with gifted students, impaired learners as well as mainstream students
- Nature centers, museums, zoos, parks, camps, wildlife refuges and youth groups as well as schools. Project WILD can be used indoors and outdoors.

- Teachers: Project WILD activities develop conceptual skills such as analysis, classification, description, estimation, evaluation, inference, hypothesis formation, and problem solving and are correlated with TEKS and TAKS! The lessons help incorporate wildlife-related concepts into classroom curriculum, and each activity is designed to teach one or more of the following concepts:
 - awareness and appreciation of wildlife,
 - human values and the wildlife resource,
 - habitat and ecological systems,
 - wildlife conservation,
 - cultural and social interaction with wildlife,
 - environmental issues and trends, alternatives and consequences, ecological systems and responsible human actions.

Each guide also includes grade level, subject, topic and skill indices as well as a glossary of terms.

Who endorses Project WILD?

Project WILD is endorsed by the Texas Education Agency through the Texas Environmental Education Advisory Committee (TEEAC), and the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC.) Project WILD has earned the endorsement of organizations including the California Board of Education, the National Council for the Social Studies, and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

In addition, Project WILD has received numerous awards including the 1984 Conservation Education Award from the Wildlife Society, a 1991 President's Environmental and Conservation Challenge Award for Education and Communications, and recognition from the North American Association for Environmental Education and National Wildlife Federation.

Find more information on Project WILD at: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/project_wild/. Or contact me at rebecca.schumacher@sbcglobal.net for information about becoming certified in Project WILD!



NIGHT HIKE



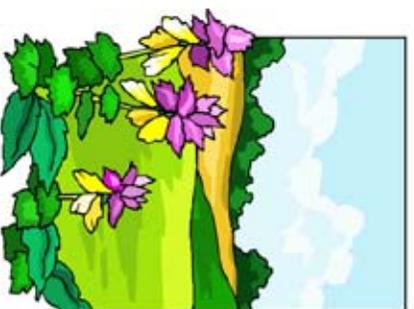
Mockingbird Nature Park in Midlothian, Saturday, July 20 at 8:30 p.m.

The Indian Trail Master Naturalists will lead a fun and family-friendly hike into the nighttime world of the park. A trail which is familiar by day becomes a whole new experience at night. Come and learn about the sights, smells and sounds of nature at night. Closed-toe shoes, long pants, and bug spray are recommended. Adults bring a flashlight and everyone bring a bottle of water. Plan to be outdoors at least two hours. Registration is required and you can register at indiantrailnm@gmail.com.

This free night hike is sponsored by the Midlothian Parks and Recreation Department and the Indian Trail Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

Practices are scheduled for the Mockingbird park night hike for this Thursday July 11th and for Friday July 19th. Practices will begin at 8:30. We will need to arrive considerably earlier on the 20th to set up and be ready to greet guests. We will decide on the arrival time together at practice. If you are able to help we can use you no matter your level of skill or experience!

Don't forget: Closed toe shoes, bug spray, water and a flashlight! If you think you might like to be a guide, or man an exploration station look over those parts of the outline in advance if you are able! If you are sure you want to help please respond, so I have a rough idea how many helpers we will have, this helps us know how many hikers we can accommodate and tailor registration appropriately!



Wildflower Bird Walk

Members of the Indian Trail Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program will be leading a combined Wildflower and Bird Walk the at

Gain the first and third Monday of
June, July and August at

Mockingbird Nature Park



Join us on this ½ mile stroll along the trails as we identify the wildflowers and birds. The public is invited to attend, and there is no charge. Participants should bring drinking water and binoculars for bird watching.

The walk will be canceled if raining.

Serving Ellis and Navarro Counties Visit <http://txnm.org/indiantrail/> Email information@txnmcc.com
Indian Trail Texas Master Naturalist Chapter

The Mockingbird Park wildflower/bird walks will continue into October.

“Tis the Season”

By Rebecca Schumacher

There are certain aspects of nature that are associated with certain seasons. For example, snow in winter, baby animals in spring, wild flowers in spring and summer, turning leaves in the fall. Largely we make these associations because this is the time when these occur most frequently in nature, and we are most likely to encounter them. There is one notable exception, and that is that folks most commonly associate bats with Halloween. The truth is that June is the month in which the average person is most likely to have a close encounter with a bat.

Many types of bats are native to Ellis and surrounding counties, some are just passing through and some remain here year round. The important thing to know about bats in June, is that it is pup season! Some species of bat, like the famous Mexican Free-tailed bat, maintain maternity colonies and leave their babies there in nurseries during their night flights for food. Other less known species of foliage roosting bats, like the Eastern Red Bat may bear up to 4 pups at once, and the mother takes them with her on her night flight for food. Each of these pups can equal as much as 25% of the mother's body weight! Imagine a mother carrying around four 10 year olds while she's doing her grocery shopping!

It's also important to know that there is no species of bat in N. America that can take flight from the ground, all bats native to this area must drop into flight, and they are helpless if stranded on the ground!

Many things can ground a strong and healthy bat: storms, predators, an unexpected cold snap, or downed tree limbs. Bats carrying pups are at even greater risk, and in the month of June, licensed rehabilitators like me are kept busy caring for injured and orphaned bat pups and moms who have been a victim of any and all of these mishaps. You can help too, by understanding that most grounded bats are not sick or injured and you can safely help them get on their way again!

NEVER HANDLE A BAT BARE HANDED!

First, line a ventilated shoe box with a t-shirt (not a towel please). Then use the lid to gently scoop the bat into the lined box (remember, it can't jump at you or fly away!). Secure the lid with a rubber band and place the box in a shady area until one hour before dusk. Carefully lift the t-shirt from the box with the bat clinging to it, and hang it as high as you can from a tree limb or clothes line. Check the next morning, if the bat has not left please contact a rehabilitator through the Bat World International Web site. Remember that rehabilitators are all volunteers and receive no compensation or financial support to assist them in doing what they do and most have full time jobs too! Expect to at least meet a rehabber half way if they are not in your area!



INDIAN TRAIL MASTER NATURALISTS ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

July/Aug 2013

Links and contact information may be used to find training opportunities announced after this list is published. Send AT approval requests to Jack Dunaway at jackd_sr@hotmail.com.

Jul 18, Wildlife for Lunch Webinars, on your computer!
<http://texas-wildlife.org/files/WFL%20webinar%20flyer%20-%20full%20page%202012.pdf>

To learn more about wildlife and land management from your own computer, watch this wildlife and land management from your own computer, watch this webinar series from 12-1 pm every 3rd Thursday. Use the link above to find out more info.

July 20, TPWD Texas Bumblebee Watch Training, Provided By Michael Warriner, TPWD Biologist, Saturday, 2013, 9 am To 4 pm. United Cooperative Services Building, 3309 N. Main St. (Hwy 174), Cleburne, Tx. Michael Warriner Is The Invertebrate Biologist For TPWD, and the creator of this TX Bumblebee Watch program.
<http://texasbumblebees.com/>.

His background includes forest entomology and invertebrate zoology, and his scientific findings have been prolifically published. Michael Warriner is asking for our help to identify and catalog the species. Only then can we formulate a plan for protecting them and encouraging their vital work. Michael will teach us how to identify the nine species and how to report our findings.

As field researchers, botanists, naturalists, agriculturists, rangers, nurserymen, and home gardeners, we are in a unique position to observe these

important creatures as we go about our routines, and to make note of them and their habitats for the scientific database that Michael is creating for the State of Texas. He will also delineate the habitat needs of our native bumblebees.

Additionally, and importantly, Ricky Linex and Randy Johnson will be conducting an afternoon training for those of us wanting to protect or create a nurturing habitat- rural or urban- for these native sonicators. We will begin PROMPTLY at 9 a.m., so please come a little early in order to check in and to visit prior to the start time.

There is plenty of parking on the west side of the building at the back entrance door. Please plan to bring your own lunch, as there are no nearby eating facilities. We will break for lunch at 12 after Michael concludes his workshop, and resume the afternoon session promptly. There will be coffee and light snacks in the morning, ice in the freezer, and soft drink and snack machines. **THIS EVENT IS FREE, AND ENTIRELY AIR CONDITIONED...** Space is limited. Please pre-register by contacting Carrie McLaughlin, Texas Master Naturalist, carrie.mclaughlin58@gmail.com and providing your name, email, county of residence, contact phone number and affiliations (if any).

Friday, July 26, 2013 - Prairie Restoration Roundup a day of hands-on activities focused on practical, on-the-ground restoration of prairies on the upper Texas coast. The class is taught by Jaime Gonzales, the master teacher. Cost: \$25. Time/Date: July 26, 2013 from 9 am - 3 pm, Location: Texas City Prairie Preserve (Nature Conservancy of Texas). Hosts: The Nature Conservancy of Texas. More information contact: prairiepartner@gmail.com. Registration required:
<http://prairiepartner.org/page/heartland-series-1>

Sept 14: The CORE, training for Texas Stream Team Volunteer Monitor Certification will be conducted at the Killeen Community Center, on the corner of W.S. Young and Business 190. Class is limited to 25 registrants. To register, contact Richard McCarthy, Central Texas Chapter Master Naturalist, rgm3372010@live.com. Additional information will be provided as available.



© Jim West

MONTHLY MEETINGS

July 18, Elm Fork Chapter Master Naturalist Program,

Joseph A. Carroll Court Buildings; 401 W. Hickory Street, Denton, TX 76201. Program lasts 9:30am – 12:00pm “*Native Texas Cacti of North and Central Texas*”, by Bill Utley, President of the Fort Worth Cactus and Succulent Society. Mr. Utley will discuss habitat requirements and the threats currently posed for native succulents. He will also introduce us to the art of growing cacti and agaves in “captivity.” His father grew agaves in large pots at their home in Fort Worth and they hold fond memories for Bill.

When his father passed away in 1979 Bill’s mother gave him a cactus his father had grown for many years in a tall strawberry pot. Bill later learned it is a *Coryphantha missouriensis* which is native to North and Central Texas. Today it is a beautiful clump and still growing in the same pot. In the ensuing years, Bill has collected cacti from many sources. Although he grows a few succulents, his main interest is Texas native cacti and agaves.

<http://www.txmn.org/elmfork/calendar/>

July 22: Indian Trail Master Naturalist

Program, Red Oak Library, 200 Lakeview Parkway, Red Oak, TX 75154. Program begins at 7:00 PM “*A Portrait of the Blackland Prairie*” by Matt White, teacher of American and Texas History at Paris Junior College. In its most extensive prime, the Texas Blackland Prairie formed a twelve-million-acre grassy swath across the state from near San Antonio north to the Red River. Perhaps less than one tenth of one percent of this vast prairie remain—small patches tucked away here and there, once serving as hay meadows or sprouting from rock too stony to plow.

Matt White’s connections with both prairie plants and prairie people are evident in the stories of discovery and inspiration he tells as he tracks the ever dwindling parcels of tallgrass prairie in northeast Texas. In his search, he stumbles upon some unexpected fragments of virgin land, as well as some remarkable tales of both destruction and stewardship.

Aug 13: Blackland Prairie Master Naturalist Program,

The Heard Natural Science Museum, 1 Nature Place, McKinney, TX 75069.

www.heardmuseum.org Please join us at the Heard’s Science Resource Center on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. The program begins at 7:00 p.m. “*Friends of Hagerman*” by Sue Malnory. <http://bptmn.org/>

- **September 10 - Duke Monson,**

Trinity Trail Preservation Assn. - Lake Lavon Trail

- **October 8 - Ken Steigman,** Director of LLELA

Rio Brazos Chapter MN: no July meeting

North Texas Chapter MN:

<http://www.ntmn.org/new/>

Central Texas Chapter Mn,

Texas AgriLife Research and Extension, Urban Solutions Center, 17360 Coit Road, Dallas, Texas.

The Fort Worth Audubon Society: meets the second Thursday of each month (except summer months). A birding ID session begins at 6:50 p.m., with the general meeting commencing at 7:30. Meetings are now held in the Research and Education (RES) Bldg., Everett Hall, Room 100, at the University of North Texas Health Science Center (formerly Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine), which is on 3500 Camp Bowie Boulevard (at Montgomery Street). Programs are about one hour and are approved AT for ITMN members. The bird ID session before the meeting is typically about 30 minutes long and also is approved AT. www.fwas.org

OUTSIDE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

(Note: all AT for ITMNers must be pre-approved by Jack Dunaway)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Programs:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/texas_nature_trackers/

Trinity River Workshops: www.trinitywaters.org

Trinity River Audubon Center:

http://www.trinityriveraudubon.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Discover_CitizenScience

Ft Worth Zoo Education Programs:

<http://www.fortworthzoo.org/education/teachers/>

Dallas Zoo Education Programs:

<http://www.dallaszooed.com/>

Dallas Arboretum Education Programs:

<http://www.dallasarboretum.org/AdultEducation/SpecialInterest.htm>

OUTSIDE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES *(continued)*

Texas Society for Ecological Restoration:

<http://txser.org/>

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center:

<Ttp://www.wildflower.org/events/>

Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT)

Extended Education Classes: Boost your understanding of basic botany concepts and experience the collections and field research through continuing education courses taught by BRIT botanists and staff via Texas Christian University's (TCU) Extended Education Program. BRIT members receive a 10 percent discount on course fees. Teachers earn Certified Professional Education (CPE) credit. To register for a course, follow the instructions listed in the TCU Learner's Guide or register online through TCU's Extended Education web site.

<http://www.brit.org/>

The 14th Annual Statewide Master Naturalist Conference & Advanced Training

will be held October 25-27 at the T bar M Conference Center, New Braunfels, Texas. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this three-day informative workshop. Our chapter will be submitting entries in the both the art contests (from our "Creative Challenges") and the newsletter contest. In addition, each year members donate items such as books, jewelry, t-shirts, anything with a dragonfly, etc. that are grouped into a gift basket or two. This is a fundraiser auction for the next year's annual conference. Eileen has volunteered to put it together for us this year.

Planning is underway and there are several areas where the state-level planning committee needs your help.

- * Present a Volunteer Service Project
- * Present an Innovative Solution to Chapter Development
- * Lead a Roundtable Topic*

Short Session Advanced Training

For details see Charlie's email dated 6/28/13. Send your ideas for Eileen and Charlie for review. Time spent developing your submission and presentation is eligible for TMN volunteer service time.

Mark your calendars ya'll! It's going to be a blast!

CoCoRahs Webinars: none currently scheduled

John Bunker Sands Wetland Center:

www.wetlandcenter.com

Fort Worth Nature Center:

Contact Fort Worth Nature Center at 817.392.7410 or anne.hamman@fortworthtexas.gov.

Dogwood Canyon Citizen Science

<http://tx.audubon.org/Dogwood.html>

Everyone can play a role in conserving Texas' amazing wild and natural areas! Get involved in citizen science at Dogwood Canyon. Citizen science projects use data you collect to help inform conservation and management of our plants, animals, and native ecosystems.

For more information about citizen science at Dogwood Canyon and how you can participate, please contact Tania Homayoun by email or (469) 526-1986. Please check back as we add more projects.

ITMN Training: by Paul and Charlie Grindstaff

Congratulations to the ten trainees who have completed all their training requirements and have received their Master Naturalist Member name tags. Congratulations to Nikki Miller who was elected New Class Representative and will serve on the Board until the next chapter election.



Thank you to all members who have been suggesting possible make-up classes. We appreciate your help and please continue to keep us informed.

FIRE-PREScribed BURN

Sharon Lane

FIRE! THE GOOD, THE BENEFICIAL AND THE POSITIVE.

By Sharon Lane

Few, if any, of us do not have some fascination with fire. It has been used for hundreds of years as a tool in land and habitat management and was a natural part of the ecosystem; but as cities grew our fear of fire suppressed its use in land management.

Today we are seeing it used more and more as an effective tool in the form of prescribed burns to combat invasive species and to restore and enhance native grasses and habitat. A prescribed burn is a fire that is intentionally set within specific and defined parameters. This includes weather conditions, habitat structure, personnel, equipment and time of year. Effective planning is absolutely necessary to achieving beneficial effects from prescribed burning. A fire plan should be developed well in advance of the planned burn.

Elements of a burn plan are described on B1310, "Prescribed Range Burning in Texas" (available from your county Extension agent). Checklists developed by the Soil Conservation Service are used in working with ranchers, landowners and city officials on burn plans.

Benefits of prescribed burns:

- Stop growth of undesirable/invasive plants (example: woody vegetation taking over native grasslands)
- Promote regrowth of warm and cool season grasses (example: restoring remnants of Blackland Prairie as a tall-grass prairie)
- Replenish soil nutrients
- Improve habitat for wildlife
- Aid in prevention of wildfires
- Increase diversity

Fire in the form of prescribed burning is one of our most effective methods of restoring and maintaining our native prairies and grasslands. When integrated with other practices, fire can be used to maintain desired vegetation composition and structure. Assistance and training are available for developing your prescribed burn program. Agencies currently involved are the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, Texas Forest Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife.

<http://txmn.org/indiantrail/>

X *Libris*

Our library – 360 publications=145 books or booklets & 225 pamphlets, handouts, articles, etc. in the 3-ring binders. A complete index of what is in the ITMN library is posted on the chapter website in the member's only area. It is an Excel spreadsheet. If you don't have Excel and would like a paper copy, contact our office manager, Kitty Smith. Log on and see if there is something you want to check out today!

TEXAS TURTLE WATCH

By Eileen Berger

Master Naturalists are always interested in learning more about the flora and fauna of Texas, as well as helping to conserve and protect the plants and animals and their habitats. There are many threats to wild turtles. During the warmer months, females travel to nesting sites which may be across roadways, leaving them at risk from vehicle traffic. Perhaps you have stopped to watch or even assisted a turtle to the other side of the road.

Turtles are reptiles, and are important in the ecology as consumers of snails, insects, crawfish, small amphibians and fish. Also, turtle eggs and small turtles are a food source for many species. Some eat algae that might otherwise deplete oxygen from the



Photo courtesy: Orlin@lhter

water, while others serve as cleaners by consuming carrion. The mission of Texas Turtle Watch is to provide an outdoor experience for citizens of all ages and interest levels while learning and gathering data that will contribute to the knowledge about turtle populations in Texas. Last year we participated in a training session at the Fort Worth Zoo to learn to spot and count three species of turtles present in Texas.

Some confusion may exist regarding the names turtle, terrapin, and tortoise. Terrapin refers to a species of turtle living in salty coastal marshes. Tortoises live only on land, and the name refers to one large group of related genera and species. Turtle Watch concentrates on observing 3 of the 28 species of native turtles in Texas.

Red-eared Sliders (*Trachemys*) are easily identified by a red stripe on either side of the head beginning at the eye. They have yellow stripes on the head and neck, and the carapace, or top, of the shell is olive to brown with yellow stripes or reticulated patterns. The adult female is larger than the male and the shell will measure from 5 to 12 inches. The Big Bend slider has an orange stripe on its head. Sliders are known for basking in the sun and may even be seen stacked on a log to maximize their exposure.

Cooters (*Pseudemys*), both river and Texas, are also known for basking behavior. They are larger than sliders, with adult males growing 8-12 inches, and females 12-16 inches. They have yellow lines on the skin with 2 large stripes on the top of the head and legs. There is also a Rio Grande river cooter.

The third type of turtle on the Turtle Watch list is **Soft shell** (*Apalone*). Two species live in Texas, a smooth and a spiny soft shell. The carapace will blend in when the turtle is in the water, and will appear shiny when dry. The head is on a longer neck than the two previous species, and the nose is snorkel-like. Adult turtles range from 5-21 inches with the females being much larger than the males. Like cooters and sliders, soft-shell turtles bask, but they are easily startled and require a quiet wait by the would-be observer for reappearance.

Ellis County has many creeks, ponds, and lakes in which these three species live. Of course, other species of turtles, including snapping turtles and box turtles live in the rural and sometimes suburban areas. For more information about Texas Turtle Watch, you may visit the website

www.fortworthzoo.org/conservetxturtlewatch.htm

Some guides about turtles include *Turtles Wild Guide* by Charles Fergus, Peterson *First Guides Reptiles and Amphibians* by Conant, Stebbins, and Collins, and *Reptiles and Amphibians Golden Guide* from St. Martin's Press. For information about the Texas Master Naturalist program, contact TX A & M Agrilife Extension Office at 972-825-5175 or e-mail information@itmnc.com.

Last Child in the Woods

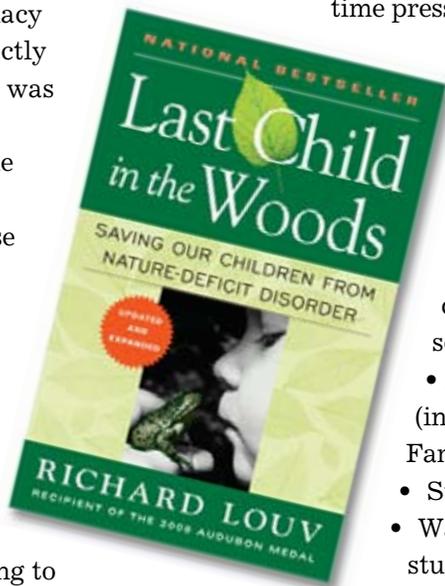
Book Review by Jean Kastanek

In the introduction to his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv writes, “Within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically”. Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment, but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading. That’s exactly the opposite of how it was when I was a child.

He continues throughout the book to explore what he calls “nature-deficit disorder”, a phrase he coined to describe today’s disconnect between children (and often their parents) and nature. He cites numerous studies to support his belief that contact with nature is an absolute necessity for healthy child and adult development.

The gifts of nature, according to Louv, include freedom, fantasy, privacy, physical and mental health, the opportunity to learn how humans are connected with the natural environment, and the opportunity to learn about caution. All of these gifts inspire sensory awareness and imagination.

Louv’s childhood memories include kite-flying, climbing trees, building tree houses and forts, and picking flowers. He wonders why we don’t see children



engaged in these and similar activities anymore. In fact, we don’t see children playing outside much even during the summer months.

His research suggests there are several reasons for this: our efforts to protect nature, strict community covenants, fear of litigation, education trends leaning towards overdependence on computers, open spaces designated for organized sports instead of natural play, time pressures, and fear of crime and stranger-danger.

Louv devotes the second half of *Last Child in the Woods* to a discussion of what we can do to resolve the problem of nature-deficit disorder. He describes the current back-to-nature movement to reconnect our children to nature. He then lists 100 actions we can take to resolve society’s nature-deficit disorder. The list is divided into several sections, including:

- Nature Activities for Kids and Families (includes a list of Good Books for Kids and Families)
- Suggestions for Transforming Our Communities
- Ways educators, parents-teacher groups, and students can Promote Natural School Reform

At the end of the book is a topic headed:

Discussion Points for Adults, Children and Young People, and Community Groups.

This book is a good resource for parents, grandparents, and educators. It is designed to bring us together to continue Louv’s discussion and, more importantly, to work together to “bring nature home” again for our kids.

FUN in THE Field

by Rebecca Schumacher

On May 17, two chapters of Texas Master Naturalists, North Texas and Indian Trail chapters, combined to lead a field trip for sixty-three third graders from Mesquite ISD to Cedar Ridge Preserve in southwest Dallas. We had two certified master naturalists: Rebecca Schumacher and Rose Mercer, two master naturalist interns: Sarah Cornett and Nikki Miller, two members of the Dallas Audubon Society, four teachers, and several adult chaperones (and a partridge in a pear tree!).

The kids were divided into four groups of roughly 15-16 each. Teachers and chaperones escorted kids to each of four activities focusing on the elements

of habitat (food, water, shelter and space).

Naturalists guided the activities that included nature journaling, a half-mile guided hike, an exploration of the Butterfly and Sensory Garden using Project WILD curriculum “Habittracks”, and hands-on exploration of the learning center’s natural artifacts and insect collection. Kids got to touch a scorpion (it was dead) and discuss human habitat needs with another Project WILD session called, “What’s that, Habitat?”

We all came back alive and the kids had a great time. All of the children left with a better understanding of the concept of habitat and the master naturalists all got at least five volunteer service hours for the effort! I’m looking forward to more opportunities to partner with North Texas Chapter chapter at CRP!

NEWS & VIEWS

NEED TO RECEIVE SOME ADVANCED TRAINING HOURS?

The John Bunker Sands Wetland Center is offering a series of Environmental Education workshops that will count towards advanced training. Listed below is a list of all the workshops and a website for each so you can research the workshop a bit more:

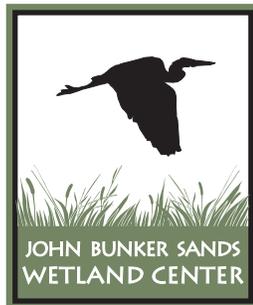
Project Learning - Thursday, July 11th 9:00 - 3:00
www.plttexas.org

Project WET - Thursday, July 18th, 9:00 - 3:00
www.projectwet.org

Wonders of the Wetland - Thursday July 25, 9:00 - 3:00

Energy & Society - Thursday, August 1, 9:00 - 12:00
www.plttexas.org

All workshops include a curriculum guide with numerous activities that can be done with adults and children. The Wonders of the Wetland will also satisfy the wetland fieldtrip in case anyone needs to make that one up. This workshop will go more into depth regarding plants and their function in the wetland than during the ITMN fieldtrip to the Center. To see a list of all the workshops with brief descriptions go to www.wetlandcenter.com. You can also call Linda at 972-474-9100 or email ldunn@wetlandcenter.com



Paul Grindstaff was presented with his well-deserved 1,000 hour pin by Muffi Ruby



The May Chapter Challenge, “Found Object - Nature” was won by Carolyn Ogden who brought in an animal skull and the June Challenge, “Nature Story Telling” was won by Cathy Mitchell (wife of member Don Mitchell). Debee Arnold announced the challenge for July will be to embellish/decorate/spiffy up the wooden dragonfly key ring that Paul Grindstaff made...contact him if you were not at the meeting and you need to pick one up. Bring your entries to the next meeting.

NEWS & VIEWS

WHAT'S BLOOMIN' NOW?

by Christine Cook,

Back in the days of CB radio my handle was Flower Girl. In my teaching days I was mostly remembered (dreaded?) for the wildflower collection project. Coming from “up north”, the panorama of spring wildflowers was, and still is, a yearly spiritual explosion. My daughter and I escape for an hour or so when we can (with a stop at Starbucks first of course), to troll the back roads around Ennis, looking for birds and flowers. She’s looking up and I’m looking down, which makes the driving a bit iffy! We love to make short stops for photos, bird book searches, and talking to ‘moo-cows’ and horses that are at the fences.

We are now near the end of the great spring floral displays except for the last hurrah, the beautiful Texas Blue Bells. Scientifically known as *Eustoma grandiflorum*, it has a scientific synonym of *Eustoma*



russellianum. In the trade they are also called ‘Lisianthus’ and as such can be purchased in purple, pink, or white and are usually annuals; the natives appear to be short-lived perennials. Our Texas Blue Bells are more like a medium to dark lavender with a maroonish throat, 5 yellow anthers, and a double greenish stigma. But, hey, you can read all this online just as I did. None of that explains the thrill of topping a hill and seeing the glory of blue bells spread out

across the field below. The search is worth the price (gas \$!) and great for the soul and the camera.

There are a few places in Ennis to see blue bells, but the best is out FM 85 going east from South Kaufman Street several miles to a right turn at the top of a hill onto Zmolek Road; you’ll see them in the field to your right as you make the 90 degree turn and that’s where I took my photo. To return to Ennis, continue to the

end of Zmolek Road and you will hit the frontage road to I-45 and can go north back to town. If you are a wildflower lover, you won’t be blue, but the flowers will...well, sort of, but not really...

TEXAS WEATHERCASTING.

by Jim West

With all of their fancy radars and other new technologies, TV meteorologists can predict storms with such incredible accuracy to the point where they can tell you if a tornado will touch down in your shirt pocket. When it comes to the temperature however, they get a little, um, ambiguous. So, as a public service I have come up with this handy formula on how to interpret a Texas summer weather forecast.



If they say, “We’ll be nearing the century mark today” they really mean, we’ll be at least 100°. If they say, “We’ll be around 100° today” they mean, we’ll be 100 – 105°. If they say, “We’ll be in the triple digits today” they mean, you are toast, literally. It will be at least 105°. I find this to be a fairly reliable substitute for an accurate forecast.

***Prediction is very difficult,
especially if it’s about the future.***

–Niels Bohr, physicist

NEWS & VIEWS

COOKIE MONSTERS

Last Monday, July 8th, Paul & Charlie Grindstaff hosted a Tree Cookie party. The staff at John Bunker Sands Wetland Center asked if the ITMN chapter

could make them 50, 3” diameter tree cookie medallions. Of course we were happy to oblige and had fun doing it!



ITMN members cut “tree cookies”, from a 3-inch tree branch.



Slices are 1/2-inch thick and will be used to make camp medallions for John Bunker Sands Wetland Center.



Each tree cookie receives a hole for the cord to hang them.



Paul Grindstaff, Don Mitchell, Dan & Deborah Rayfield and Dawn Buck proudly display their work.

ITMN volunteers made 50+ tree cookies for the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center



The Mockingbird Park wildflower/bird walks will continue into October.

ITMN member Don Happ is going to set up an outreach table at the Waxahachie Farmers’ Market from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, July 27, in conjunction with the Ellis County Master Gardeners. The booth will be on attracting wildlife, what we can plant and things that we can do to provide habitat for wildlife. If you’d like to help Don with this “Wildlife-Friendly Gardening” booth, contact him by email or phone asap.

NEWS & VIEWS

1892.24'!!!!

That's the amount of trail cleared and traversed by 6 heat-tested Master Naturalists at Wolf Creek Trail. That brings the total to 3873 feet of an approximately 1.25 mile (6600') trail. There is a little more woods to clear and trim and then the meadow with a little trimming.

Once the clearing and trimming is complete we will haul some of the cut limbs and brush into the meadow for eventual burning. But we will leave "critter condos" (Don giving credit to the Rayfields) too. A hot Thank You to: Aaron, Christina, Donald M, Peggy and Kitty. *Sharon*



NEXT MEETING INDIAN TRAIL CHAPTER, TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST:

July 22, 2013

“A Portrait of the Blackland Prairie”

Location: Red Oak Public Library,

200 Lakeview Parkway, Red Oak, TX 75154

- 6:00 PM - Business Meeting
- 7:00 PM – Program by Matt White, teacher of American and Texas History at Paris Junior College

In its most extensive prime, the Texas Blackland Prairie formed a twelve-million-acre grassy swath

across the state from near San Antonio north to the Red River. Perhaps less than one tenth of one percent of this vast prairie remain—small patches tucked away here and there, once serving as hay meadows or sprouting from rock too stony to plow.

Matt White’s connections with both prairie plants and prairie people are evident in the stories of discovery and inspiration he tells as he tracks the ever dwindling parcels of tallgrass prairie in northeast Texas. In his search, he stumbles upon some unexpected fragments of virgin land, as well as some remarkable tales of both destruction and stewardship.

Photos © Jim West

Waltz Of The Drought

(As seen by a blade of grass) by Kathleen Mack

All around me, life dances to the waltz of the drought. Wheat-brown grass surrounds me and recedes into fields of cinnamon, broken by patches of barren, gray-brown earth. My tip has already turned a pale brown, and I am an aged winter green, though still young. Grasses closer to the house’s foundation still receive precious, rationed water and are a brighter green. I am not as fortunate. I survive only because I reside over a septic tank. I am dependent upon people bathing, washing dishes or clothes, and yes, flushing the toilet for my very life. I am grateful for this artificial sustenance, but I long for the taste of rain, and to feel my roots puddle in mud. Cruel desert winds fling me right then left, day and night. I wish a cold winter chill would gently dip me into icy moisture. It has been months since the wind has brought the delicious aroma of charcoal and grilled meat drifting across my blade.

Cookouts are a forbidden step in this sad dance. Instead the wind whispers of charred lives from distant fires. It is a constant fear. I do not want to curtsy to black death. I would rather stand tall and feel the sharp blade sweep away the pale brown tip that reminds me I will not survive long. I do not want to die surrounded by brown, swaying to this harsh and melancholy waltz. I want to die in spring green fields. Bathed by life-giving rains. Kissed by a soft breeze. Comforted by bluebonnets and butterflies.

This is a piece that I wrote as an exercise for a writing class I took. It is basically thoughts on a drought as seen by a blade of grass. – KM

MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM MISSION:

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.

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| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
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| Texas Turtle Watch..... | Carolyn Gritzmaker |
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| Stream Team | Maureen Nitkowski |
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| John Bunker Sands Wetland..... | *Jim West & *Peggy Bailey |

Texas Master Naturalist 15th Anniversary Slogan

Contest & T-shirt Design Contest

For details, see emails from Charlie dated 6/21/13)

Slogan entries must be submitted by Friday, July 19th, 2013 for consideration in the contest.

T-shirt Design Contest designs must be submitted by July 30th, 2013 for consideration in the contest.

Send your submissions for either contest to: Nadia Gaona, TMN Program Intern, ngaona24@gmail.com