



INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

News, events & calendar of the Indian Trail Chapter Texas Master Naturalist...Serving Ellis and Navarro Counties

FALL 2023



From the Desk of the **PRESIDENT**



Greetings! Time to gear back up, People!

New training class has begun, wildflower fall walks are happening, TXMN Annual Meeting, Eclipse Watch Party, Observe the Moon, and Heritage Farm events going on...not to mention new projects and so many AT hours sent out each week. I think we can all find ways to get involved this fall. I'm tired just listing all this in writing, though it does my heart good to see so many great ways that we make a difference in our world.

This is the year we elect a new president and treasurer. If you are interested in either of these positions, please contact the committee, Muffi, Lynn W. or Sheila.

We are saying, "until we meet again," not good-bye, to Lori Cryder and the Grindstaffs who are moving away from our area. They will all stay as involved as possible from their new spots. As a relatively new member, Lori has surely made great contributions to the chapter. Charlie and Paul became members in 2010. They have done so many amazing things for ITMN that there is no way to begin to list their contributions. They have also been a huge influence on most of us individually.

As always, thank you for all you do to further the mission of Texas Master Naturalists. You do make a difference with things you do for nature! Without us "Nature Nerds," our world would be in much worse shape!

Rena Sutphin, Chapter President

Indian Trail Master Naturalist Newsletter Team
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Melanie Gibson, Chair Ann Spencer, Editor
Robbie Robbins, Coordinator Dottie Love, Production Designer

Monthly meetings are held on the 4th Monday (usually) of each month at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie. Our office is located in TexasAgrilife at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165 (972) 825-5175. Visit our website at <https://txmn.org/indian/>



Saturday, October 14th
Mockingbird Nature Park, Midlothian
10:30 am to 12:30 pm

**Bring a chair or blanket and watch the
annular solar eclipse with the Indian
Trail Master Naturalists.**

Fun for the whole family!

**Solar Eclipse Glasses (while supplies last) •
Craft • and More**



Waxahachie Farmers Market Update

by Tannis Lambert

The Waxahachie Farmers Market has provided a great opportunity to meet many people and share the work we do as Master Naturalists. We have hopefully encouraged people to engage in nature by educating them about our project areas and upcoming activities.

The theme for July was vegetables and we made Fourth of July pumpkins to talk about planting in July for October pumpkins. August was pollinator month and we had educational handouts to go with our butterfly clothespin craft.

The September theme was “get out in nature and here’s where to go.” Robbie Robbins created a great flyer of some of our project areas. We also handed out a couple scavenger finds and made recycled nature journals to use as they explored the outdoors.

As of September, we have talked with more than 240 people and made approximately 55 crafts with one month left to go! Jerry McClung and I enjoy our time at the farmers market and encourage you to stop by and visit our booth from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. on October 7 at 701 Howard Road.



Fall 2023 Training Update

by Erin McKool, ITMN Training Chair

Our fall training is off to a great start! Our classes are on Tuesday evenings from 6-9 p.m. We usually meet at the Cottonwood Venue in Waxahachie, thanks to the generous hospitality of Erwin and Anna Ramos.

All chapter members are welcome to attend and meet our trainees! We do have a couple of off-site meetings, so please take a look at the schedule in advance if you'd like to join us. There is a link to the schedule with class topics and location information available to download here: [2023 Fall Training Schedule](#).

This year, we have a class of 14 enthusiastic trainees – a group that includes multilingual-istic professionals and volunteers in the fields of real estate; farming; gardening; political, military and civic service; nursing; graphic design; animal husbandry; biology; education; psychology; physiology; environmental sciences; fire and rescue; animal habitat planning; oil & gas; and more!

Here is a snapshot of these newest chapter members. Please join us in welcoming them!



PLANT FAMILY STUDY GROUP

By Tannis Lambert



Chris Cook leads the class

The Plant Family Study Group is full of variety in all things plant related. We had a good time refreshing up on our leaf knowledge in August. On September 21st, we will be mounting pressed plants for the BRIT collection with Sue Frary and making wildflower bookmarks with Chris Cook.

October 19th will follow with Moon Plants to go along with our exciting moon events. November 16th, Sherry Mossbarger will be sharing interesting things about the Lamiaceae (mint) family.

To round out the year Sue Frary will share holiday fun with Viscaceae (mistletoe) on December 14th. Please join us at the Waxahachie Parks and Rec building (401 S. Elm St.). Program starts at 7:00 pm.



Collecting wildflowers to press for the Botanical Research Institute of Texas

The finished specimens



PARKTOPIA!



ITMN members manned a Nature Crafts booth at City of Midlothian's Parktopia in September at the Community Park.



FERTILE HARVEST SENTIMENTS

By Christine Cook

I remember writing these for a request for Fall entries for the Ennis Daily News and laughing while I composed them. I recently found the sheet I had typed them on (using a manual typewriter), and chuckled to see it was back in the dark ages before many of you were born-11/4/1982! I think you can tell I like to play with words. The humor is a bit ribald, and at the time that was a good half the fun. I hope they give you a chuckle or two.

SWEET CORN

Outside her bedroom winnow
Herb scythed and said in a husky voice,
“I’m chaffing at the beet.
I doughn’t know rye I love you sow much.
I barley know ewe, but I’d walk a milo to seed
you.
Wheat’ll we do?”



I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU

You are sow radishing!
I yam carroting for you, my little cabbage.
What I really mint was
I broke out in chives and gooseberries
When I was planting in your row.
Will you string along to my celery
Or do I have to take root in your
heartichoke?
Don't beet around the bush or squash my
spaghettasies. Wheat a hybrid we could
eggplant!
Tomato with you has bean my hoel
existence!
If we cantaloupe, I'll pearish on the vine!
Oh, well, enough of this okrap—
I'll truck along with you any whey you like.
Lettuce grow!



How I Spent My Summer Vacation by Dottie Love

photos by Dottie Love and Tom Sale





*I stayed home
with my husband
and we took pictures.*

PHOTO TIPS

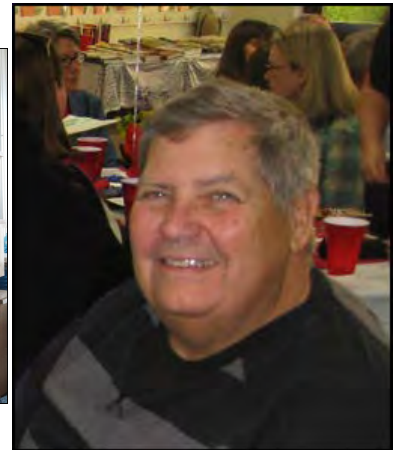
Sometimes, particularly when shooting well camouflaged insects, it's easy to lose them in the background in the transition from the subject to the viewfinder. When that happens, you can use manual focus or, try the Praying Mantis method. When they're closing in on their prey, mantises will move their head side to side, almost imperceptibly slowly, in order to get a better perspective on their next meal. At least I think that's why they're doing it. If not, we'll call it the Jim West method. Anyway, it works for me and I very often find myself in that situation. JW



The end of summer begins with the Goldenrod abloom and Buckeyes flying in wait to harass the returning Monarchs. JW



In Memoriam: Donald Glen Mitchell
ITMN Class of 2013
July 1, 1947-September 21, 2023



By Charlie Grindstaff

Don retired as an executive labor leader with the Texas AFL-CIO in 2012 and soon became a volunteer labor leader. He was certified as an official bluebird nest box builder by the Texas Bluebird Society. He set up an assembly line in his shop, where he trained Chapter members to perform steps in the construction of the nest boxes. From 2015 through 2018, he was responsible for the construction of more than 1,000 bluebird nest boxes. Members were always eager to help and have fond memories of the shop comradery and the sausage balls and cookies served on workdays by his wife and fellow member, Cathy.

His Midlothian shop was also home to several vintage cars which he restored and took to car shows across the country.

Born in Dallas and raised in Oak Cliff, he graduated from UT-Arlington with an Associate of Science degree in Engineering. His career centered on work as an elevator mechanic, IUEC Local 21 business manager and National IUEC leader. He is survived by Cathy, his wife of 53 years, two sons and four grandchildren.

When describing Don, the word "nice" is used most often. We were honored and blessed to know and work with this very nice man.

In Don's own words, "Life goes on and Life is Good!"

In Memoriam: Joan Ellen Mahony

ITMN Class of 2016

August 17, 1953-September 2, 2023

By Charlie Grindstaff

I am so very sad to report that Joan Mahony passed away on Sept. 2 after a long bout with cancer. Joan was in our 2016 class and was very active in ITMN. She was such an interesting person...she skydived, she traveled, she used to be a teacher, she volunteered at the Dallas Arboretum, she even drove for Amazon., She was smart and fun and a real asset to the Chapter. She will be missed.

Joan spent much of her life on the California coast that she loved. She was a medaled marathon runner and proudly served as the jumpmaster for the Annual Vietnam Veterans Death Valley Marathon at Death Valley Junction. She moved to Texas in 2011 to care for her brother, Mel, as he fought cancer. She was the Butterfly Gate Attendant at the Rory Meyers Children's Adventure Garden at the Dallas Arboretum for the past nine years. She also volunteered at Hutchins Library, Rogers Wildlife Center, BRIT and more.



Joan is survived by her siblings Janet and Lyndon Nichals; Tom and Susie Mahony; and Rosemary Mahony; numerous nieces and nephews.



"Rocks and Fossils" by Tom Sale

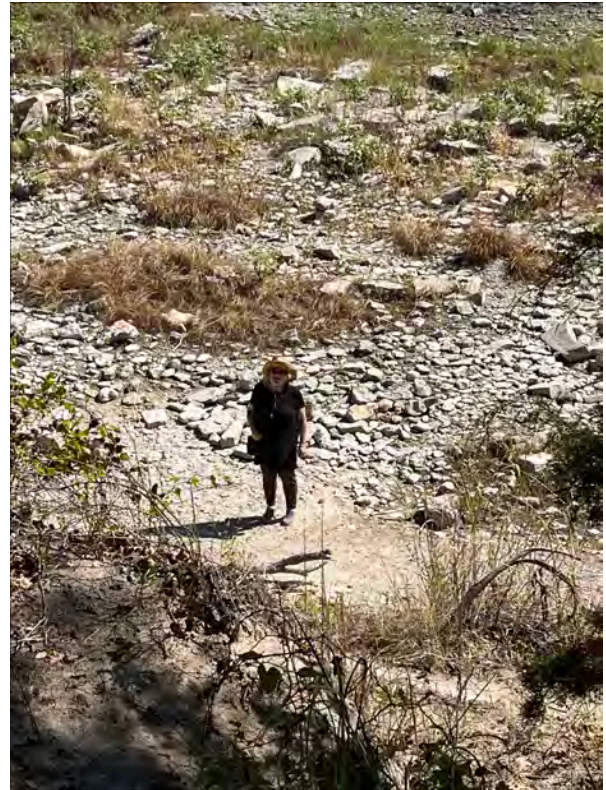
Searching for love in all the right places

By Ann Spencer

Photos by Ann and Everett Spencer

If I say I'm gonna love you til the river runs dry, I might just be talking about the Paluxy River in Glen Rose, Texas – especially the river bend that wraps around Dinosaur Valley State Park. After traipsing through slippery rocks a few years ago to see the Main Tracks area of dinosaur fossil prints in the park, I was more than happy to be on dry riverbed recently to see the “new” tracks unveiled by this year's record drought in what is labeled the Devin Site.

I can only imagine the years of floods and earth-moving layers that lifted these 113 million-year-old prints in the Paluxy. Researchers and volunteers have worked to clean and record tracks at the park before this “new” area goes back under water at some point.



Ann Spencer at Dinosaur Valley State Park.



Acrocanthosaurus (theropod) tracks

I marveled at the Acrocanthosaurus (theropod) tracks left by a meat-eating dinosaur standing on its two legs about 15 feet tall and weighing about seven tons.

Also unveiled were prints of Sauroposeidon proteles, reaching some 60 feet in height and some 44 tons in weight. (Finally, a species that makes me feel quite light on my feet and small!) This friendly guy, the longnecked pet we recall from our Flintstone cartoon days, is the official dino of Texas. Its big fat feet (sauropod) look more like prints we might see an elephant leave behind.



Sauroposeidon proteles prints

All told, the park has found some 75 prints in what looks like a dino trail dream – step by step. The new prints are on the east side of the park in a part of the Paluxy that is usually well under water. Devin Site is a very short walk from the primitive camping sites; the steps down to the “river” were not very steep or difficult to manage.

With no sizeable fall rains in sight, there might still be time to explore these remarkable finds while the river still runs dry.

Charles F. Ladd Nature Preserve

Duncanville, Texas

Designated July 18, 2023

The Blackland Prairie



by Tabitha Brobston
Photos by Mark Graham

The Blackland Prairie in which we live is rapidly disappearing; with development showing no signs of stopping and only 1% of untilled blackland prairie remaining scattered across the region, there is a very real fear that it will one day be gone entirely. However, conservationists in Duncanville, Texas have achieved a small but hard-fought victory: 42 acres of undeveloped prairie land, now known as the Charles F. Ladd Nature Preserve.

Though right now the property is easy to dismiss as just another field to pass on your daily commute, the Ladd property is special in that it has never been developed or tilled for farming, making it a remnant prairie, thus an ideal location for prairie restoration. The 42 acres includes both a north and a south prairie, as well as a riparian area that is fed by the Tenmile Creek. Even with the encroachment of invasive species, the land hosts an incredible amount of biodiversity, with over 1000 native species documented on the property via iNaturalist, including river otters (*Lutra canadensis*), great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*), compass plants (*Silphium albiflorum*), and monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*).



The Ladd land was originally deeded to the City of Duncanville in April of 1998, donated with the understanding that the property would be used for the betterment of the community. Though the deed gave multiple possibilities for community-oriented use of the donated property, the word “primarily” was used in the deed, giving some wiggle room for the city to divide the land for commercial benefit. However, the city was never successful at attracting

developers, perhaps due to the property's location on a floodplain, and it sat vacant for decades.

It wasn't until about 2021 that a large group of Duncanville citizens, spearheaded by resident Mark Graham and a group of individuals who would eventually form the Duncanville Nature Conservancy, began to push for the land to be preserved. A petition was circulated through nearby neighborhoods and across the web, ultimately garnering the signatures of over 1800 residents in favor of a nature preserve.



Though many roadblocks to the creation of the preserve had to be overcome, it was clear to the city zoning board and the city council that the citizens of Duncanville wanted the property to become a protected greenspace. After meeting upon meeting, the city council finally voted to designate the property as a nature preserve on July 18th, 2023.

Now officially the Charles F. Ladd Nature Preserve, the final challenge will be found in restoring the land to a thriving example of a blackland prairie. Under the lead of Duncanville resident and ITMN member Robbie Robbins, the Ladd preserve has been approved as a Master Naturalist project. With the need for removing and treating invasive species, reseeding and planting native plants, clearing trails, and keeping the property free of trash and pollution, there's still quite a bit of work to do, but we are well on our way to having a beautiful example of what the blackland prairie once was.



"Eryngo Bloom" by Tom Sale



It's Not Easy Bein' Green

— Kermit

Text and photos by Jim West

I had seen a video of a Green Heron using a piece of bread for bait to lure fish in but I've never witnessed it in person despite seeing this guy two or three times a week.

It was behaving strangely, walking to a patch of clear water, gently putting its beak into it and, backing off to watch. It did this a number of times so I just kept shooting,

It wasn't until got home and looked at the shots on the computer that I figured it out. It had what looked like, a spider molt. I couldn't see that from a distance, but, based on its behavior it was using it for bait. It didn't have any luck but, there were distractions.



Mind if I play through?





MR. WEST'S NEIGHBORHOOD



The Green Heron is one of my favorite birds to watch but first, I have to find one. Not much given to public display, they prefer staying in the shadows. By not sky lighting themselves, it's harder for their prey, as well as a human observer, to spot them. Fortunately for humans, their bright yellow legs stand out and that's what I look for when I think one might be around.

Did I mention how quick they are? No, well generally when they're about to strike, they wag their tail feathers and, that's my cue to start shooting photos. Once, I started shooting at the first twitch of its tail. At six frames per second, I still missed the strike.

The next time that you're in a dark swampy area, keep your eyes open for those bright yellow legs. Enjoy. *JW.*



INDIAN TRAIL CHAPTER MASTER NATURALIST BOARD

Chapter 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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For additional information about the Indian Trail Master Naturalist Chapter please visit:

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"Across the Road" by Tom Sale