



INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

News & Events of the Indian Trail Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists...Serving Ellis and Navarro Counties

WINTER 2025

Welcome 2025!



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INDIAN TRAIL MASTER NATURALIST NEWSLETTER TEAM

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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:

For the Public:

Becoming a Master Naturalist: <https://txmn.org/indiantrail/about/become-a-master-naturalist/>

General Inquiries: <https://txmn.org/indiantrail/contact-us-2/>

For ITMN Members Only:

Committee Contacts: <https://txmn.org/indiantrail/board-and-committees/>

Happy Birthday #15, ITMN!



FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Happy holidays! As we get ready to ring in a new year, I want to congratulate you trailblazers for a job well done this year! You have accomplished so much in 2024. It was the Ladd Preserve's first full year as a project, and the work that Robbie and Tabby have led there with so many of you volunteers has been extraordinary. With the addition of Ladd, Maypearl Park, and Serenity Village, we have volunteer opportunities all throughout our geographic reach. Please consider becoming better acquainted with a project near you. I also want to say thank you to everyone who has served in leadership roles this year, and to those of you willing to try out new roles in 2025. I'll provide more details on these projects and roles in my next President's report.

The class of 2024 immediately got to work upon completion of training, and it's great to see so many new members excited about the work of the Master Naturalist program. Still, none of us would be part of ITMN without the foundation laid by the earliest trailblazers, many of whom are still very active in leadership roles. Just this year, two of our members crossed major milestones, with Sue Frary earning 4,000 service hours and Eileen Berger earning 5,000. Both of these awards are recognized with a certificate and pin from the President of the United States. It's a big deal! I look forward to presenting Eileen's award during our January membership meeting.

We will be celebrating ITMN's 15-year anniversary in 2025! At our December planning meeting, we discussed a variety of ways we would like to celebrate throughout the year, including a special celebration of our members. Stay tuned for more information coming soon. And of course, do not hesitate to reach out with ideas.

I'm honored to be a part of this chapter and inspired daily by your enthusiasm and service. I look forward to working and celebrating with you all in 2025.

Erin McKool

From TX MN website: Get excited for our Texas Master Naturalist 2025 Annual Meeting – to be held Thursday, October 16 through Sunday, October 19 in College Station, Texas. Stay tuned for more information coming soon!

The Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting provides an opportunity for the Texas Master Naturalist volunteers from around the state to gather, participate in hands-on educational seminars, and receive all their Advanced Training requirements for the year in one weekend. It's also an opportunity for program participants and supporters to network, share new ideas, and to learn from chapters in different regions of the state.

ITMN Winter Social

Games, goodies and good times are all about ITMN at the annual Winter Social., hosted 14 DEC 2024 at the home of Celia Yowell.



This is what you win for being the "most jolly" when Charlie is in charge.





Amy Allred 's cake got plenty of attention, gifts were exchanged and we gathered for a group photo, bellies full of great food and laughter.

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Winter Social 2024 was a blast!

by Tabby Brobston; photos by Ann Spencer

Although we forewent our typical December chapter meeting for our annual planning meeting, the chapter still gathered to celebrate at our winter social. Graciously hosted this year by Celia Yowell, it was a resounding success and had all the makings of a great party: friends, food, games, and a friendly puppy.

The festivities began in the afternoon with some mingling and munching, as naturalists arrived from all over Ellis and Navarro counties. (Robbie and I may have spent some of this time throwing sticks for the dog in the backyard.) As usual, the table was full of food lovingly cooked, baked, or brought to share. Once everyone had time to catch up, Charlie brought out some festive games to play. We started with a dice game, where teams raced to color our snowmen. Then, we competed to fill in the blanks in “What Would Rena Say?” with some festive phrases, and strived to be the most holly and jolly as we tallied up our celebratory credentials. Lastly, the afternoon was made complete with a holiday gift exchange.

VETERAN'S VILLAGE



by June McDarby

ITMN volunteers celebrated Veterans Day November 11, 2024, by pulling weeds and planting perennials at Serenity Veterans Village in Palmer. We enjoyed the gorgeous sunny weather as Donna, Linda S., Cheryl, and Sandy dug out grass and weeds to restore a prominent flower bed to native landscaped beauty. They planted Turks' cap and salvia strategically near a birdbath, and chopped weeds in the chicken yard for the birds to get better foraging access.

Featured Texas natives already planted by local landscapers include cactus, pepper bush and yucca. Paul C. and Kay B. planted Gregg's mistflower, garlic

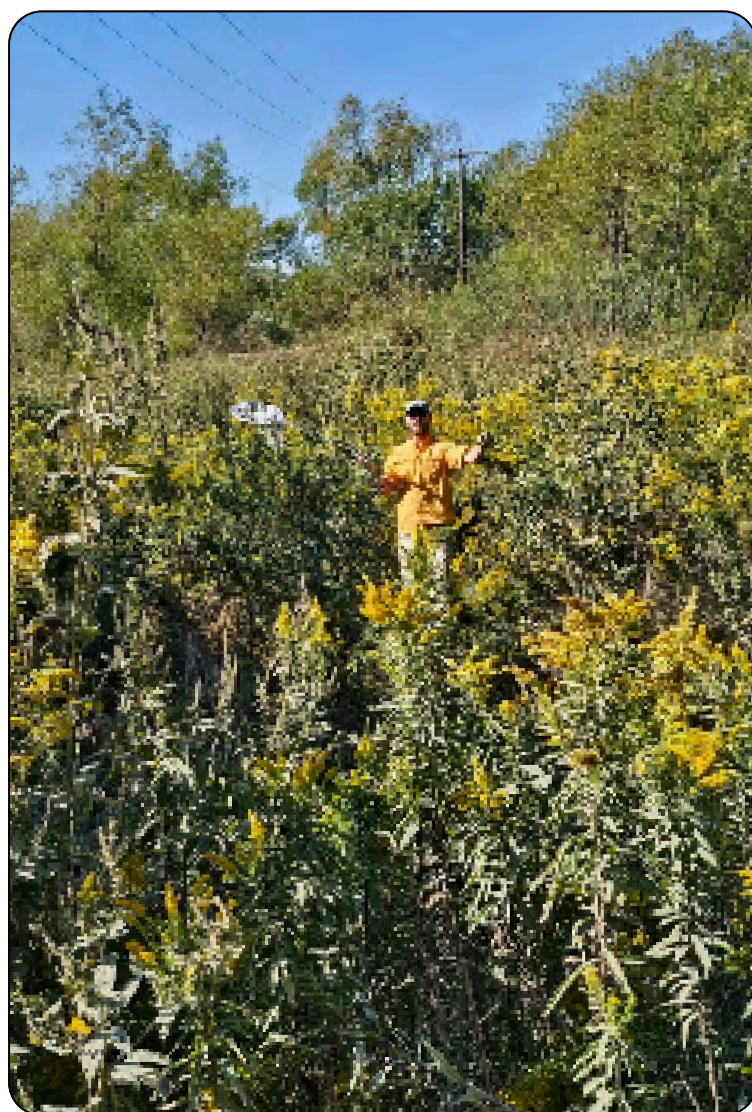
bulbs, and onion slips in cow trough flowerbeds near the center pavilion. This winter produce can add flavor to the guys' meals, if they're so inclined, and brighten up the pavilion area. By planting tough Texas native plants, we hope to develop the west side of the pavilion into an almost year-round supply of blooms, bringing the energy of hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies to enliven the seating area. Our unsolved dilemma remains where to plant bluebonnets so that they don't get run over, trampled, or mowed. Our goal is to have the entrance become a sea of bluebonnets, without hindering parking or mowing operations. I hope you all come join us in early 2025 as we continue to develop the native landscaping at Serenity Veteran's Village.

2024 End-of-Season Monarch Tagging Report

Text and photos by Amanda Weatherly

There were 200 tags purchased from Monarch Watch by the Texas Master Naturalist Indian Trail Chapter for the 2024 tagging season. As of December 12, 2024, monarch butterflies tagged by our chapter volunteers totaled approximately 120 butterflies. Nevertheless, the number could be slightly higher due to a few volunteers who have not officially updated me about their data for this report.

Our success rate averages around 60 percent for this tagging season. I would consider that a successful year considering the strange conditions that occurred. However, there were 26 fewer butterflies tagged in 2024 compared to the 2023 tagging season. Unfortunately, the gradual downhill trend does seem to continue with the monarch migration.



This year, more so than in previous years, some taggers were asking for more tags while others did not see any butterflies. Unfortunately, the slight delays in the redistribution of tags may have contributed to fewer butterflies being tagged this season.

Despite the struggles, the top tagger position for this season was tied by Chris Cook and Laura Beattie. Congratulations to both members for successfully tagging 20 butterflies each.

Overall, thank you to all the 2024 taggers for making this a successful season. As a dedicated group, we are always able to consistently tag over 100 monarch butterflies every year. That is amazing and keep up the great work!

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As a reminder to the taggers, if you have not done so already, please submit your data to Monarch Watch as soon as possible. Also, if you have any unused tags, you may give them back to me at the January meeting.

To the membership, be sure to look for the 2025 Monarch Tagging Season signup/information table at the July stated meeting if you are interested in participating in the Monarch Tagging project next year. However, I am always available to talk about butterflies throughout the year so please feel free to ask me any questions that you may have.

Thinking ahead, I am planning to order approximately 200 tags for the 2025 season. However, as a group, we need to find a solution to close the gap in distributing/redistributing tags for next season -- a solution that will allow everyone to have more immediate access to the tags. For instance, having a logbook with the tags left at the Ag office where you could sign them in/out as needed. I would greatly appreciate it if everyone would begin brainstorming and give me some feedback on how to improve for the 2025 tagging season.

Remember to think like a monarch butterfly and “Just Keep Flying!”

Every leaf

By Jim Bush

Every leaf is a miracle and a map
as mysterious and profound as any star,
green and yellow light displaying in its time.

Every tree is a living library, a brief history of photosynthesis,
in spring the green buds beginning to write a new season,
in summer the blessed revelation of shade, in fall the
stained glass displays of reds and yellows, and in winter
the living skeletons that have donated their pages to rebirth.

The leaves mark the circling seasons of the sun
as all life comes and goes in its appointed time
and we see into it as deep as we are willing and awake.

Annual Night Hike

by Tannis Lambert; photos by Amanda Weatherly

The Night Hike was held on November 9, 2024. With so many incredible volunteers, we had a great night! The weather and sky cooperated to give the experience that many will remember. The addition of the bug station and telescope added even more ways to explore and enrich our senses. We had about 50 people in total with volunteers and visitors.



An untouched relic

Text and photos by Omar Rivera



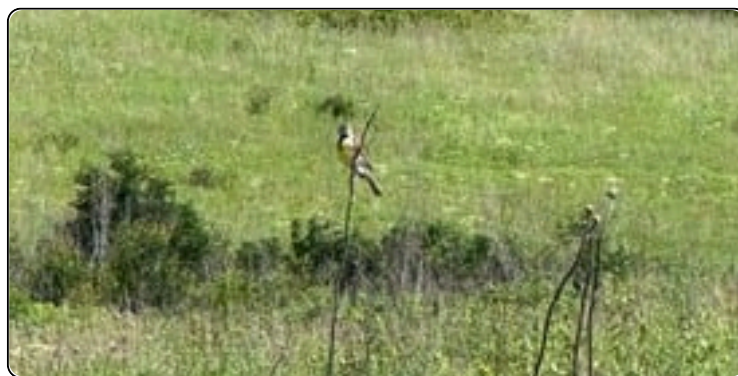
Hey fellow nature nerds,
So I've gotta tell you about this place I visited on June 1 -- Clymer Meadows Preserve in Celeste, Texas. Yeah, it's a bit of a drive, but trust me, it's worth it! This spot is one of the last pieces of unplowed Blackland Prairie, and it's pretty much what you'd expect a native Texas prairie to look like, untouched and wild.

I did a late spring wildflower tour, and let me just say, this place is a dream. There aren't even any official trails. You literally just start walking through knee-high grass, creating your own path as you go. It felt so free and raw, like I was exploring the land as it was hundreds of years ago. No concrete paths, just you and the prairie.



And the best part? Seeing all the plants and animals just living together in perfect harmony. It gave me this weird sense of peace—like, this is how nature is supposed to be, you know? It made me think about how much of this we've lost, and how special it is that this spot has been left untouched.

If you haven't been, put it on your list. It's not just a pretty place; it's a full-on reminder of what our prairies used to be. And it's pretty wild to walk through land that's never been plowed. Go check it out. You won't regret it!



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Did you know?

The Native Plant Society of Texas is hosting an art contest! Each artist can submit up to two pieces. There are six different themes to choose from this year.

All work must be your original artwork, and you will need to submit a picture of yourself with the artwork to enter. There is a \$10 fee per ARTIST, for up to two submissions. You can create a quilt, a centerpiece, draw, paint or even create a tattoo design!

PlantArte Call for Native Plant Art!

Wildflowers <i>Flores silvestres</i>	Endangered plants <i>Plantas en peligro</i>
Resilience <i>Resiliencia</i>	Plants of my people <i>Las plantas de mi gente</i>
Plants & critters <i>Plantas y fauna</i>	Native plants beyond borders <i>Plantas nativas más allá de la frontera</i>

Art submission deadline: 4/2/25

Pyrography 	Seed mandala 	Charcoal 	Embroidery Plant fiber Weaving Rock Metal Leather Clay Cyanotype Felted wool
Paint 	Textile 	Tattoo design 	




plant family Study Group

by Tannis Lambert

Eileen Berger presented the Euphorbeacea family (spurge) and brought in samples. A couple of favorites are the colorful bracts of the Poinsettia and Snow-on-the-Prairie.

Tannis Lambert shared two classes on the Poaceae family (grasses) with many thanks to those who shared books, posters, samples, and a fabulous Kachina Prairie Grass Display. Jim Patak helped Chris Cook collect these and she created the display. We were challenged with the vocabulary and then were able to understand so much more about these vital plants.

Lea Sandoz will present the Lythraceae Family on January 16. Lynn Sawyer will present Brassicaceae (mustards and cabbages) on February 20.





MR. WEST'S NEIGHBORHOOD

Scorpion fly. At the end of a hot summer, these guys begin to appear in low hanging brush and shrubs around houses. Harmless to humans and, not the handsomest creatures around, they eat fruit, vegetation and dead insects. Their name comes from the male's genitalia which resembles a scorpion's tail.

Judging from the numbers of them I ran across in a friend's yard, I assumed it was their breeding season, a distraction that often proved fatal, as an abundance of predators laid in wait. JW

The females don't have the flashy reproductive appendage that that the male does.



They're also a food source for any number of insects, spiders and birds in a part of the year when food is scarce.

Farmer's market

Text and photos by Tannis Lambert



Our team of Jerry McClung, Cheryl Michael, Lea Sandoz, and Tannis Lambert have transitioned to the winter schedule for the Waxahachie Farmer's Market.

In October we made 39 fabric pumpkins. Many of our 41 visitors were from out of state or new to the area and excited to learn about our programs. For November we made a Harry Heads craft to go with our grass theme. The Kachina Prairie Grass Display was intriguing for our guests. They would point out the grasses they were familiar with, not native, and fall in love with the natives. It was a great way to engage with and educate the public. We had 32 visitors, and 22 crafts made!

For our December market we focused on feeding our feathered friends by showing how to decorate outdoor trees with bird foods. They made an orange cup feeder. As the weather was colder, we only had 10 visitors and 8 crafts made. We met a Scout leader interested in posting our future crafts to her troop! There will be no Farmer's Market in January. We will resume the first Saturdays in February.



Cleanup at the Ladd

Text and photos by Mark Graham



Giving credit where credit is due. On November 16, 2024, Indian Trails Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists held a work day at Duncanville's Charles F. Ladd Nature Preserve. The latest graduating class of ITMN have embraced the Ladd and shown up regularly. They are all volunteers and, since the Chapter is located in Waxahachie, TX, some have to drive quite the distance to volunteer their time and expertise. The chapter, with local members Robbie Robbins and Tabby Brobston leading the way, have, despite the distance, taken the Ladd Preserve as its project to restore, preserve, and maintain. I cannot thank them enough for what they do.

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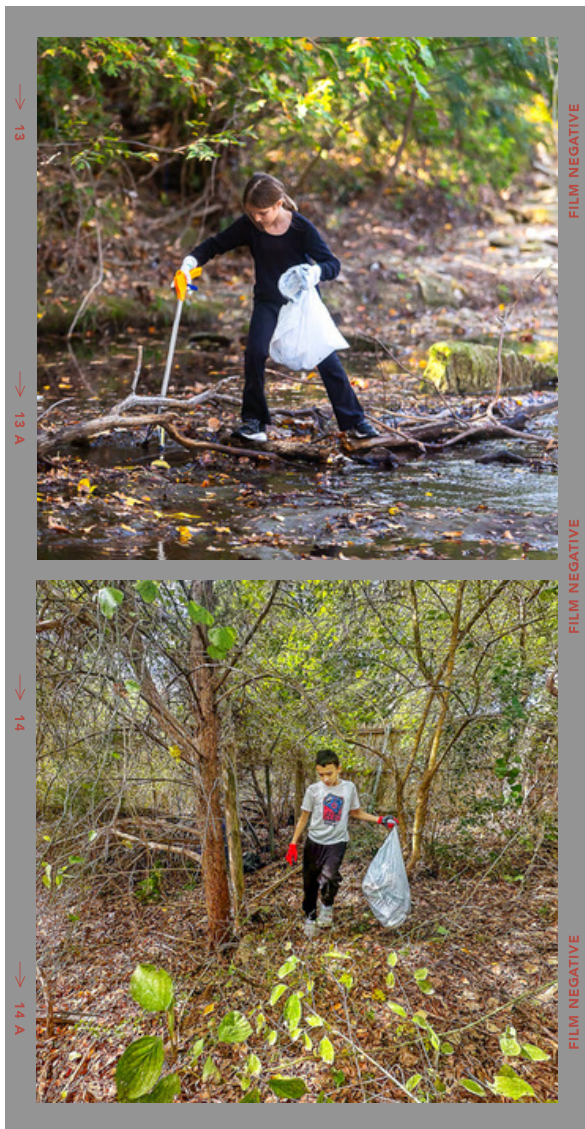


On that same Saturday, Madeline Bracken, one of the new Texas Master Naturalists, brought a youth group from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to help with trash pickup and invasive species removal. There were a lot of parents involved as well.

In all, they brought 25 volunteers. They worked two hours and picked up 900+ pounds of trash from the preserve. They worked hard. They also got to enjoy some time seeing the wonders the preserve offers. Saying thanks isn't enough for what they accomplished. My hope is they all return to enjoy the land they helped clear of an impressive amount of trash.

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The church volunteers not only donated their time, they also brought their own tools, including wagons and wheelbarrows to haul things. They supplied their own trash pickers, trash bags, shovels, etc. to do this work. Our local Master Naturalists also donated their time, supplies, and knowledge of the Ladd to help focus on areas most needing care. I have had seven+ years of working at the Ladd (most of that time was before it became a preserve) and the efforts put forth by the new ITMN trainees has been nothing but amazing.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of any land preservation project. Without them, nature preservation would not happen on the scale it does. As for me, after years of working toward a true nature preserve with protected Blackland Prairies, there is real light shining on the land. Committed volunteers have stepped up. Projects will be happening. Texas Master Naturalists and iNaturalist citizen scientists visit and look after the land often. The Ladd (and myself) thank them.



Kachina Update

During the past few weeks, the Prairie has begun to transition to dormancy. Several frosty mornings recently have turned the grasses pale. The forbs and woody plants have not been affected as much.

When scheduled workdays resumed in September, climbing up the trees, removing hanging vines, and clearing underbrush around the entrance gate have been the focus of attention. The west side has been cleared from the light pole to the trailhead. On the east side, just beyond the gate to the rough-leaf dogwood patch.

Check the member calendar or watch for my emails for scheduled workdays. If you don't have family commitments or need to work off some "party pounds," come on down to the Prairie.

We'll talk later!

Jim Patak

