



T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



the Official Newsletter of the
Texas Master Naturalist
Longleaf Ridge Chapter

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- Sharon Lamoreaux.....Story & Photo Contributor**
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Kim's Corner

Editor's Note by Kimberly Wagner

After being bitten by a rattlesnake, kicked in the face by a horse, stung by a man-o-war, broken bones because of a longhorn, and taken rounds of rabies shots from being bitten by a rabid animal - just to name a few of my exciting encounters over the years - it's pretty clear that while I may love nature, it does not return the favor. But I'm no quitter.

As long as I can remember, I've preferred being outdoors over the indoors, rescuing and spending time with animals of all kinds over people, and studying the stars in the sky and the trees in the forests over shopping or social media.

My hero has always been Steve Irwin - and with my track record, I'm pretty sure I may meet my end in a way similar to his, but I'm okay with that. It means I live life and never stop learning and exploring - and sharing that joy with others.

That's why I want to be a Texas Master Naturalist - to keep learning.

I originally joined the training class of the East Texas Chapter in Spring 2021 because they offered online classes and there is no TMN chapter in my home county - Angelina. However, they started meeting in-person again and I was unable to make the drive. I thought I would have to give up the idea of becoming a Texas Master Naturalist. But, again, I'm no quitter.

Then, I found out about the Longleaf Ridge Chapter, so, here I am! I joined the class halfway through the semester, but I had already completed all of the courses online, except for field trips, so I began attending and it felt like a, well, a natural fit. I'm so happy to be here and look forward to getting more involved and meeting everyone that is part of the BEST TMN chapter - OURS!

A little more about me...I've worked for the Angelina & Neches River Authority as the communications director since February 2020 and most days it doesn't feel like work because so much of what I do for my job are things I would do as a volunteer or in my personal life anyway.

Before ANRA, I spent 10 years as a communications lecturer and director of the speech and debate program at SFA and as an environmentally-conscious advocate, I have served as a volunteer board member for multiple Keep Texas Beautiful affiliates and currently serve on the Keep Nacogdoches Beautiful Board of Directors.

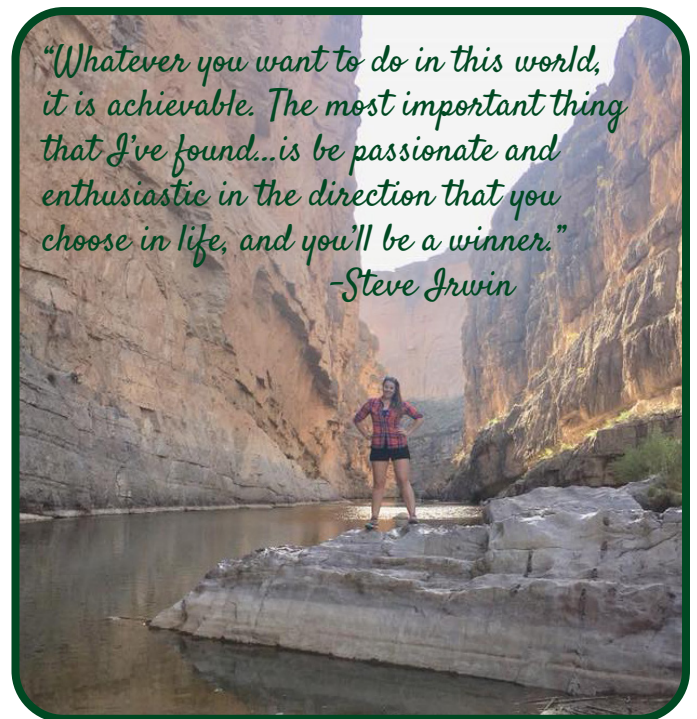
I'm a life-long learner, with a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of North Texas and a master's degree in communication from SFA, and in addition to working on my Texas Master Naturalist initial certification, I just earned my Texas Stream Team Trainer Certification and am certifying to become a Texas Water Specialist. The one thing I've learned from all of this though, is that I still have so much more to learn and seeking knowledge is something I'll never quit - and I know I'm in the right place to do that. I feel like I have found my people.

But enough about me. I want you to learn more about our chapter and what we are doing in our little corner of this big, beautiful world, so enjoy the next few pages of this newsletter!

Kimberly 🌰

"Whatever you want to do in this world, it is achievable. The most important thing that I've found...is be passionate and enthusiastic in the direction that you choose in life, and you'll be a winner."

-Steve Irwin



Picture by Skye Wyckoff

Location: Santa Elena Canyon, Big Bend National Park

Longleaf Ridge Chapter

Class of 2022

Story & Photos by Sharon Lamoraeux

Welcome Longleaf Ridge Class #5!

Trying to keep with our traditional schedule of offering a training class for new recruits every two years proved to be quite difficult this time around.

Timidly scheduling a class for the fall of 2021 after a year of Covid's masks, social distancing, room size limits, disastrous virtual meetings, and low attendance, we laid out a game plan and began contacting potential presenters for the 23 subjects needed to initiate our students to the world of Master Naturalists "Texas Style".

Our schedule filled surprisingly easy, with all contacts eagerly volunteering to fill our slots. I suppose after being cooped up from Covid, everyone was glad to get out and do something. We sure appreciated it. With 3 weeks remaining before our first class night

and only 4 students registered, Covid cases popping up everywhere and a handful of hurricanes lining up to come into the Gulf of Mexico, our board reluctantly and sadly decided it would be best to postpone until early spring of 2022.

With prices reduced to help with financial woes, and the start date looming, finally word began to spread and on the evening of February 15th, 2022, we began with a roster of 14 students. Meeting once a week for 12 weeks is a big commitment for directors and students alike (with several driving long distances to attend), but with great support and encouragement from their mentors and fellow-members, the class flourished.



Pictured L-R: Doug Boutte, Harlene Michaels, Kimberly Wagner, John Lanham, Penny Lanham, Toni Roddey, Garrett Arnold, Ferryn Martin, Steve Russell, Greg Bade, Kittie Bade

“All have shown an infectious enthusiasm for our purpose as naturalists...”

The presenters did an awesome job, as always. The discussions were interesting with the students asking “spot-on” questions and interjecting with their own experiences and knowledge, keeping the presenters on their toes at all times.

Of the 14 enrolled, 11 completed their 40 hours of Initial Training. Sadly, two couples had to drop out, one due to medical reasons and one due to work schedule conflicts. Both couples are still welcome to join our ranks as we continue on. Their achievements won't be officially recognized by the State, but anything they do to help us will be greatly appreciated by our team.

As their director, I am proud of each and everyone of them. Several have already stepped into administrative positions for our group and some are already scheduled as presenters in upcoming Chapter meetings.

All have shown an infectious enthusiasm for our purpose as naturalists and I'm confident that each will find their niche and will go on to earn their “certified” status. I am positive that their achievements will be many in the coming days and years. I hope you have the privilege of meeting them soon.



*Longleaf Ridge Class #5 is **ALIVE!!!***

Yaupon Leaves: A Surprising Special "Tea" (and Coffee!) Substitute

Story & Photos by Penny Lanham

Yaupon Holly, *Ilex vomitoria*, is the only Native American plant that contains caffeine, and drinking the tea is a lost art that is recently making a comeback. Yaupon tea is a tisane, or herbal infusion. It is not a true tea like that of the Chinese black tea, *Camelia sinensis*.

Yaupon grows throughout East Texas like an undesirable weed. The shrub-size to tree-size plant can be found in pine, hardwood, and mixed forests. It is a menace for pine plantation owners. After thinning a stand of timber, yaupon often takes advantage of the light that reaches the forest floor.

The berries are a favorite food of birds, who spread the seeds in their bird droppings. It doesn't take long for these seeds to find their way onto open ground. In 2-3 years the mature plants can take over the understory and grow to be between 12-45 feet tall, with 25 feet being most common height. In the event of a wildfire, it is a ladder fuel that can allow the fire to move into the canopy of the forest and spread from one tree crown to another. Though a native to the southern states of North America, it is considered a noxious or invasive plant.

As a drink, yaupon tea is becoming popular in cities like Austin, TX because of its potential to provide a more environmentally-friendly replacement for coffee. It even reduces the need for importing Chinese tea. Some enterprising individuals have created companies that will remove the pesky yaupon from your property and at the same time harvest leaves to be sold commercially. But the Austin-ites aren't the first to discover yaupon's usefulness.

Native Americans called yaupon tea, "Black Drink," and early tribes drank it gluttonously during a ceremonial purging or "cleansing ritual," which caused them to vomit.



Evergreen leaves of Yaupon Holly (Ilex vomitoria).

This scene, as described by European observers, lead to the species name for the plant, vomitoria. However, in moderate amounts, the drink is safe to consume. In later reports, the tribes used the drink as part of social and communal gatherings. It gave energy and alertness before important decisions were made.

The scientific name has made it somewhat difficult to commercially market the tea, but scientists say that it does not have emetic properties. Actually, according to an article from NPR, Steve Talcott, a professor of food chemistry at Texas A&M University, says it is rich in polyphenols, which are antioxidants.

While it is the only North American plant that contains caffeine, the caffeine content is comparable to green and black tea. The caffeine is still quite addictive. As noted in the book, *Black Drink: A Native American Tea*, it was often drunk by early Spanish settlers in America. "In 1615 Father Francisco Ximénez...reported that it was drunk first thing in the morning and that 'there is no Spaniard or Indian who does not drink it every day in the morning and evening . . . it is more of a vice than [hot] chocolate in New Spain.'"

Foraging for wild edible plants is a practice that was largely forgotten, but has risen in popularity, especially with help from local experts who often teach classes in plant identification, medicinals or herbalism, and foraging. Many books and blogs have been written by homesteading and gardening enthusiasts, who recognize the importance of living off the land. It has become a movement for, environmentalists, preppers, dieters, organic growers, chefs, and those who simply wish to get back to nature.

Foraging for yaupon is especially easy because it is so readily available and no one minds if you harvest it! Examples of experts on the subject include 1) Mark “Merriwether” Vorderbruggen, who teaches foraging classes throughout the state is the author of the informative website “Foraging Texas” and the book *Idiot’s Guide: Foraging* 2) Charles Allen, of Allen Acres Bed & Breakfast in Pitkin Louisiana, teaches classes on plant identification and foraging in East Texas/Western Louisiana and co-authored the book *Edible Plants of the Gulf South*, and 3) and the two person team consisting of Eric M. Knight and Stacy M. Coplin, who teach foraging classes at the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, TX and authored the book *Falcon Guides: Foraging Texas*.

Before you make your own Yaupon Tea, be sure you have the correct plant! Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), an invasive, exotic, ornamental bush with fragrant flowers, looks similar to Yaupon. Chinese Privet has opposite leaves and smooth “leaf margins” (leaf edges).

“This drink provides energy that is jitter-free, long lasting, and without the coffee crash.”

Yaupon’s leaves alternate on the stem and have “small, round-toothed leaf margins” (referred to in botany as “crenulate.”) Chinese Privet is known for its fragrant flowers in spring. Yaupon is known for its bright-red berries in fall. Do not eat the berries! Both are wonderful for birds, but toxic to humans.

So, how is the tea made? Yaupons leaves are plucked off the stem and can be used fresh, dried, or roasted before brewing. Tea made from fresh or dried leaves tastes more like green tea. Roasting the leaves gives the drink a smoky flavor is said to be very similar to yerba maté (the South American equivalent, made from *Ilex paraguariensis*). Native American tribes roasted the leaves (also referred to as parching or blanching) in a pan over the fire.

Today, most people prefer to roast leaves in the oven at 350°F for 10-15 minutes. Once roasted, the leaves will turn from green to brown. A few blackened leaves will not affect the flavor. Grind the crispy leaves using any method you prefer: mortar and pestle, coffee grinder, or herb grinder.

Backpackers and bushcrafters use the old Indian method by grinding with a rock. At this point, your tea leaves can be stored in an airtight jar for later use. If you’re ready to taste it now, add 1 tsp per cup of hot water and let steep for 5 minutes. Longer steeping will result in a stronger tea. Lost Pine Yaupon Tea company claims that boiling or simmering the decoction for a little while will enhance the flavor and bring out the stimulating effects of the caffeine and theobromine (the feel good relative of caffeine found in cacao). The original Black Drink was thought to have other herbs added to it and the recipe varied by tribe.

When you are finished simmering, allow the tea leaves to fall to the bottom and decant the top liquid into a mug. Enjoy hot or iced and feel free to add milk or your favorite sweetener.



Yaupon Tea Instructions:

1. Remove leaves from stem.
2. Roast in oven at 350°F for 10-15 minutes until brown to almost black.
3. Add 1 tsp dried or roasted leaves to hot water and simmer for 5 minutes.
4. Add other herbs as desired.
5. Allow tea leaves to settle and decant top liquid.
6. Add milk or sweetener as desired.
7. Drink hot or pour over ice.

Disclaimer: When foraging, please note that it is vitally important to be sure that you have identified the plant correctly and prepared it correctly. Not doing so can result in illness or death. Side effects of ingesting large amounts of caffeine include digestive issues, anxiety, irritability, changes in heart rate, increased urination, and insomnia. Severe cases may experience disorientation, heart problems, seizures, and psychosis. When using herbal infusions, please consult with your health care provider to determine if there are any interactions with medications you may be taking.



Texas Stream Team: Making Waves in Water Quality Protection

Story & Photos by Kimberly Wagner


Texas Stream Team is dedicated to understanding and protecting the 191,000 miles of Texas waterways, by bringing together students, educators, researchers, environmental professionals, community members and public and private sector partners to conduct scientific research and promote environmental stewardship.

Trained citizen scientists are the first line of defense for Texas natural resources, with 4,000 documented monitoring events to assess water resource conditions at over 400 sites annually.

After traveling to beautiful San Marcos and Port Arthur for training over the course of two weeks, assisting in training sessions, and hours of study and practice, aspiring Texas Master Naturalist and Communications Director for the Angelina & Neches River Authority Kimberly Wagner, recently earned her Texas Stream Team Trainer Certification.

Kimberly is one of 24 trainers in the state of Texas and the only certified trainer throughout the majority of the East Texas area.

This certification marks the start of new outreach opportunities to educate students, teachers, and individuals to learn about the importance of water quality and to conduct water quality monitoring as citizen scientists.

If you or someone you know is interested in being a part of the Texas Stream Team, please contact Kimberly at kwagner@anra.org 



Texas Stream Team

Caring for Our Waters



*“42% of the waterways
in the Neches River
Basin have water
quality impairments.”*

A Look Back

Spring 2022

Photos from LRMN Facebook Page



Busy as can be...it's just our nature!



Longing to Know More About Longleaf Pine

Infographic from <http://www.naylornetwork.com/ppi-otw/articles/index-v2.asp?aid=345957&issueID=42774>

A LOOK AT THE LONGLEAF PINE

Longleaf pine forests are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the world. These forests have many uses, which have been important to the South's livelihood.

FACTS

The natural range of the longleaf pine extends FROM VIRGINIA TO TEXAS!

CAN GROW UP TO
120 FEET TALL
3 FEET IN DIAMETER²

CAN LIVE UP TO
500 YEARS²

*'Here's to the land of the long leaf pine,
The summer land where the sun doth shine,'*

HOME TO



MANY INSECTS that make their home in the bark, and also provide food to other species living in the forest!

300
SPECIES OF BIRDS³

2,500
SPECIES OF PLANTS³

about 900 of these plants are **ONLY** found in longleaf pine forests⁶

PROVIDES & PROTECTS



LUMBER for building homes, businesses and boats!



MEDICINES used to treat a variety of illnesses as early as the 1600s!



RESINS a thick liquid that comes from the tree, used to make turpentine!



DECAYING NEEDLES provide kindling for fires needed to clean the forest floor of natural debris!



ANIMALS AT RISK such as gopher tortoises, red-cockaded woodpeckers and indigo snakes²

*"Where the weak grow strong
and the strong grow great,
Here's to "down home", the
Old North State!"*

Summer Happenings

June

- 14 Monthly Chapter Meeting & LRMN Class of 2022 Graduation
- 15 Texas Waters Seminar
- 18 Mushroom Walk at David Lewis Property

July

- LRMN Birding at MDJSP 9
- TMN Tuesday & LRMN Monthly Meeting & Texas Waters Seminar 12
- World Snake Day 16

August

- 9 TMN Tuesday & LRMN Monthly Meeting
- 11 Texas Waters Seminar
- 13 LRMN Birding at MDJSP


End of the Trail

Pining for more?

Have story ideas or pictures to submit, accomplishments to brag about, upcoming events to announce, or anything else newsletter-worthy, email me at kwagner@anra.org or call/text 936.219.5622.

Until then, here's a few links worth checking out!

 <https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/water-education/texaswatersprogram/texaswatersspecialist>

 <https://txmn.tamu.edu/tmntuesdays/>

See ya next time!



Photo credit: The Longleaf Alliance

Next Newsletter Date: Friday, September 23

Newsletter Submission Deadline: Friday September 9