



The Pine Cone Post

Longleaf Ridge Master Naturalists



July-September, 2023

President's Corner

By Lori Horne

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Welcome to the end of summer. What an amazing year we have had. Despite the record breaking heat, our Master Naturalists have stayed busy: planting Longleaf plugs, Mid-winter Eagle count, Second Saturday birdwatching, Third Saturday BioBlitz, Earth Day, Coastal birding field trips, Prairie Ecoregion field trips, mushroom and rare plant hikes, Martin Dies, Jr. State Park volunteer projects and guided hikes.

With cooler days before us, we will continue to make a difference as volunteers and educators in our natural world. As we have seen first hand, the many dangers that a drought and wildfires have shown us this year, a much needed program---FIREWISE--- is very important to us.

Before a wildfire threatens your area...

In and around your home

- Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks. This prevents embers from igniting your home.
- Remove dead vegetation and other items from under your deck or porch, and within 10 feet of the house. Learn more about the basics of defensible space on the Firewise website.
- Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Remove flammable materials (firewood stacks, propane tanks) within 30 feet of your home's foundation and outbuildings, including garages and sheds. If it can catch fire, don't let it touch your house, deck or porch.
- Wildfire can spread to tree tops. Prune trees so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- Keep your lawn hydrated and maintained. If it is brown, cut it down to reduce fire intensity. Dry grass and shrubs are fuel for wildfire.
- Don't let debris and lawn cuttings linger. Dispose of these items quickly to reduce fuel for fire.
- Inspect shingles or roof tiles. Replace or repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration.
- Cover exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from entering the home.
- Enclose under-eave and soffit vents or screens with metal mesh to prevent ember entry.

Learn more about how to protect your home and property at www.firewise.org.



Birding at Martin Dies, Jr. State Park

By Laura Clark

For over two years, Fred Lyons has led Birding at Martin Dies, Jr. State Park the second Saturday of each month. Rain or shine, temperature in the 20s or 90s, he's always there. The group is usually small, but that may be about to change. When the park's new ranger, Katie Nelligan, discovered this was a regular event, she added it to their events calendar, which automatically adds it to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Calendar for events statewide. We hosted our first out of town visitors on July 8, when a couple drove 90 miles from Trinity, Texas, to join us.

Anhinga drying its wings at Martin Dies' Observation Deck



Fred is often assisted by Phillip Hight, who loves to provide insightful comment. As a lifelong East Texan, and Jasper County's top eBirder, he will often share tidbits like the fact that wading birds have oil on their wings, but Anhingas and Cormorants don't, so that they can dive. That's why, he says, you see Anhingas and Cormorants always stretching out their wings to dry.

Phillip at the Cherokee Unit

Although birding is the primary objective of these outings, Fred and Phillip, as guides, don't mind taking the time to look at the other wonders of nature that are often seen at the Cherokee Unit or around the Observation Deck at the Walnut Ridge Unit, where the outings are held. In addition to egrets, herons, cormorants, warblers, woodpeckers and songbirds, you may inspect dragonflies, turtles, spiders, and snakes. Or you may check out some of the many botanical treasures. Regardless of what you see, the camaraderie is great, and the trips are always fun, educational and worthwhile.



Fred at the Observation Deck

Third Saturday Bioblitzes

By Laura Clark

The July Bioblitz rounded out a full year of our effort to document every living species in Jasper and Newton Counties. We've made progress, adding around 500 new species, but we still have a long, long way to go! The data collected, through our citizen science efforts, is vital for conservation decisions in our community. We can't protect something unless we know it's present! iNaturalist is an indispensable tool in the effort to preserve the biodiversity of our natural resources globally, with government and research organizations using the data extensively.

The original inspiration for the Bioblitzes was noticing the huge difference in the number of species documented in Travis County, Texas, compared to Jasper and Newton Counties. Since Longleaf Ridge's area is part of the original Big Thicket region, which has a reputation as the biological crossroads of North America, it stands to reason that more species would exist here than in Central Texas, where there's much less rainfall and forests. The difference, we would guess, is that there are many, many more citizen scientists out actively looking for things. Travis County has had almost 25,000 observers upload to iNaturalist. By comparison, Jasper County has had 905, and Newton County 259. We will never beat them in the number of observers, but if we ramp up our enthusiasm, maybe we can compete in the number of species observed.

We need to find a few more amphibians; tens more fish, mammals, reptiles, and mollusks; hundreds more birds, spiders, fungi, and plants; and thousands more insects. Yes, thousands of insect species are here in our Area, and no one has documented their presence on iNaturalist, yet. You may even discover a new species. It's been known to happen! So, bring your camera to the Bioblitzes --- or even just take a photo of Those bugs that you see on your porch or flowerbeds, or those mushrooms that come up after we finally get some rain, and upload them to iNaturalist!



Twelve-spotted Skimmer spotted at the October 2022 Bioblitz



Advanced Training Highlights

By Lori Horne



July 11, 2023

Robert Webb spoke on the various frogs and toads species in our area. He used an informational slide show of various types of frogs and toads that we may encounter. There was also a vocal section to listen to the calls to distinguish each amphibian. We also were able to take a quiz to see how much we learned.

August 8, 2023

Kittie Bade spoke on a very important topic: Dark Skies aka Light Pollution. City lights that are not designed properly can confuse migrating birds. There are solutions to using the right type of lighting fixtures that broadcast the lights downward instead of all around. We need to promote the proper lighting fixtures in our general areas, parks, and towns. Just using proper outdoor lighting at our own houses is an excellent start.



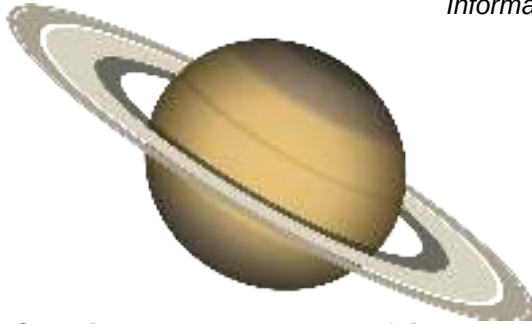
September 12, 2023

Kimberly Wagner presented a program on Riparian Zones--- areas that pertain to the banks of a natural water course. This is a very necessary and diverse ecosystem. These areas are important for water filtration and also help prevent erosion.

---Submitted by Daniel White

Night Sky October-December, 2023

Information taken from www.almanac.com



October

- October 8-10: Draconid Meteor Shower
- October 10: Conjunction of Venus, Regulus (Leo's alpha star), and the Moon
- October 14: Solar Eclipse
- October 20-21: Orionid Meteor Shower
- October 23: Saturn Visible
- October 28: Full Moon (Hunter Moon)



November

- November 3: Jupiter visible
- November 3: Saturn visible in Aquarius constellation
- November 3: ***Daylight Savings Time Ends ("Fall Back")
- November 9: Conjunction of Venus & the Moon
- November 11-12: Taurids Meteor Shower
- November 13: Uranus visible
- November 18-19: Leonids Meteor Shower
- November 24-25: Jupiter Visible again
- November 27: Full Moon (Beaver Moon)

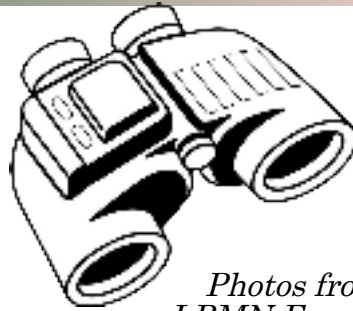


December

- December 1: Virgo's star, Spica, is visible
- December 9: Conjunction of Venus & the Moon
- December 13: Geminid Meteor Shower
- December 17: Saturn visible with the Moon
- December 21: First Day of Winter (Winter Solstice)
- December 21-22: Jupiter visible
- December 26: Full Moon (Cold Moon)



Looking Back...Summer 2023



Photos from
LRMN Facebook
page



Milkweed Seed Collection Tips

Information from monarchjointventure.org



Wild for Monarchs: Milkweed Seed Collection



Steps for collecting: Please obtain permission to collect milkweed from the owner of the property or the manager of the roadway. Do not over-collect in one area. This ensures that you get a genetic diversity and as you leave seed for wildlife and self sowing. Pick no more than 33% of one plant and no more than 33% from each site. **Safety Note:** Take care, milkweed sap can harm eyes. Do not collect near busy highways.

Easy Collection Steps:

1. Collect clean mature pods (as they begin to split) from *native wild plants only*. Paper bags work well.
 2. For each location, make a new labeled bag. Each species needs its own bag.
 3. Use attached labels.
- Please dry the pods. If you want to, clean the fluff off the seeds, and pull or shake seeds off (please do not burn).

LABEL every bag of milkweed seed. Please Email: (insert your chapter contact email address) for seed drop-off.

For more information, and to grow milkweed, please visit wildones.org and monarchwatch.org. **Thank you for helping monarch butterflies! Any amount of seed is welcome.**

Circle Milkweed Species: Common/Swamp/Butterflyweed / Other: _____ Collector's Name _____

Phone # _____ Date _____ Email _____

Location collected _____ Zip code _____ County _____ State _____

Milkweed Stem Count: ___ # up to 25 stems. Circle: 25-50 / 50-100 / 100+ Circle Soil Type: Sand/Clay/other _____

EcoRegion/Plant Community if known _____ Comments: _____

Wild Ones thanks you for helping the Monarch Butterfly!

Guidelines for Seed Collection

What to Collect

- Know your milkweed: *Do not collect seeds of rare or endangered milkweeds.*
- High priority seeds needed:
 - *Asclepias tuberosa*- butterfly milkweed
 - *A. Incarnata*- swamp milkweed
 - *A. verticillata*- whorled milkweed
 - *A. perennis*- aquatic milkweed
 - *A. oenotheroides*- side cluster--West TX
 - *A. asperula*- antelope horn, spider milkweed
- Check the seeds for viability: *The seed exterior should be brown. When seed is broken, the inside of a viable seed should be a creamy white.*

When to Collect

- Collect only ripe pods, which open at the seam when pressed. *Note: pods do not all ripen at the same time.*

How to Collect

- Peel split pod open & remove silk & seeds. *Note: do not collect seeds from pods with a lot of milkweed bugs.*
- Do not collect all pods from one location. Leave some for natural regeneration.

Seed Separation

- Shake silk & seeds in a paper bag with stones or coins, then cut a small hole in bag for seeds to fall through.
- In a dryer on the cool setting, place seeds & silk in a bag with a tennis ball.

Seed Storage

- Store moist seeds in a paper bag.
- For long-term storage, place in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

*** Seeds must be stratified (exposed to cold temps) for germination. Plant in fall for winter stratification.

Quarterly VMS Report

By D'Ann White

In the last quarter, members reported to the the following opportunities, totaling 338.75 volunteer hours:

• CB: Chapter Meeting & Admin Work.....	111.75 hours
• FR: Birding at MDJSP.....	22.5 hours
• FR: Citizen Scientist.....	52.0 hours
• FR: Texas Nature Trackers.....	7.5 hours
• FR: Texas Stream Team.....	34.75 hours
• NPA: Arboretum.....	3.0 hours
• PO: MDJSP.....	1.5 hours
• PO: Public Outreach Service.....	1.0 hour
• RM: Forest Service.....	7.0 hours
• RM: Keep Texas Beautiful.....	2.0 hours
• RM: MDJSP Volunteer.....	9.0 hours
• RM: Resource Management-LRMN.....	4.5 hours
• TG: Friends of MDJSP.....	20.0 hours
• TR: MDJSP Paddling Guide.....	6.0 hours
• TR: Programs/Presentations.....	44.75 hours
• TR: Shangri-La Gardens.....	11.5 hours

From the Editor

Hi, everyone! I hope you all have enjoyed this edition of the chapter's newsletter. Being a relatively new member, I thought I would introduce myself. My name is D'Ann White, and I am the VMS Coordinator for the Longleaf Ridge chapter.

My husband, Daniel, and I have been married for 29 years, and we have 6 children (all of which we home-schooled) and are now enjoying getting to spoil our 3 grandchildren. We were missionaries in Mexico for about 5 years, but have also lived many places in Texas, covering several different ecoregions, as well as in Georgia and Florida. The diversity of regions has been extremely educational for us.

We have been a member of the Texas Master Naturalists since 2015, having been trained in the Big Country Chapter in Abilene. Right after completing our training, we moved to Southeast Texas, where we were members of the Sabine-Neches Chapter for many years, until we moved to the Longleaf Ridge Chapter in 2022.



Upcoming Events

October

- Oct. 7--- Butterfly Festival
- Oct. 10--- TMN Tuesday
Chapter Meeting
- Oct. 12-15--- Annual Meeting
- Oct. 14--- Big Thicket Anniversary
Celebration
- Oct. 14--- Birding at MDJSP
- Oct. 21--- Bioblitz

November

- Nov. 11--- Birding at MDJSP
- Nov. 14--- TMN Tuesday
Chapter Meeting
- Nov. 18--- Bioblitz

December

- Dec. 9--- Birding at MDJSP
- Dec. 12--- TMN Tuesday
Chapter Meeting/Christmas
Party
- Dec. 16--- Bioblitz



50th Anniversary of Big Thicket Preserve
October 14, 2023
Big Thicket Visitor Center
Kountze, Texas
9 am-2 pm



Proud supporters of the event

CHAPTER INFORMATION

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Longleaf Ridge Master Naturalists website..... <https://txmn.org/llr/>
Longleaf Ridge Master Naturalist Facebook..... <https://www.facebook.com/groups/196451348395608>
Martin Dies Jr. State Park events..... https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/martin-dies-jr/park_events
Watson Preserve Facebook..... <https://www.facebook.com/groups/564425933696669/>
Big Thicket National Preserve..... <https://www.nps.gov/bith/index.htm>
Keep Texas Beautiful..... <https://ktb.org>

CHAPTER OFFICERS

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Richard Peters

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Georgia Purdy

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Fred Lyons

Past President
Sharon Lamoreaux

COORDINATORS

Birding Trips
Fred Lyons

Bioblitzes
Laura Clark

Field Trips
Keith Stephens

VMS / Newsletter
D'Ann White

Website
Daniel White

Article Submissions Due: December 31, 2023

- Email me any pictures or articles you would like to see in our next quarterly newsletter! My email address is danielwhitefamily@gmail.com.
- You can also upload to the Google Drive, and just email me to let me know that you have done so.

Our Chapter has a Google Drive!

Do you have any pictures, videos, or files you would like to share with the rest of the chapter? You can scan the QR code to access the drive & upload.



Spread the Word!
New Training Class begins
February 13, 2024.



Meetings:

2nd Tues of each month, 6 pm
At St. Michaels Catholic Church
2898 US Hwy 190 W, Jasper, TX 75951

Board Meetings

1st Thurs of each month, 10 am
At the Jasper County Agrilife office
271 East Lamar, Suite 101 Jasper, TX 75951

Partners

Martin Dies, Jr State Park
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers---
Sam Rayburn

Advisors

Texas Agrilife: Caitlin Gallegos
TPWD: Chuck Hubbard

