

# LOST PINES CHAPTER

Texas Master Naturalist



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## A Message to the Class of 2016

by Larry Gfeller

Hey, Psssttt . . . yes, you . . . the one who just signed up to become a Lost Pines Master Naturalist (LPMN). Congratulations on taking the plunge! May we talk frankly? There is only one LPMN class a calendar year and each training class is unique. You only do this once. As you look around the table at your classmates, understand there's a knot in everyone's stomach; it's not just you. I know, I know . . . you have many questions. Will you really get out of this experience what you seek? Will you be able to keep up? Can you manage the time commitment and still keep a semblance of a life? Will you be accepted by the group? Are your expectations realistic and will they be met? The answers to these questions have been carefully engineered and planned by a lot of folks working over the summer to be a collective "yes," but, individually, only time will determine the actual answers.



This may be a crass analogy, but in some respects your experience as Master Naturalists in Training can be compared to the NFL draft. Yep, you will be observed and studied carefully! Oh, there're no hungry-eyed coaches standing around with clipboards and whistles, but if you don't already feel the crosshairs on the back of your neck, you soon will. People will be watching you throughout your training – weighing, assessing, categorizing, trying to figure out what the training class of 2016 means for the future of our chapter. Yes, you hold all the promise – the rest of us are known quantities by now. If our chapter is going to move beyond what we currently are, it's going to be you and your classmates who do it.

Your training program, or one like it, is playing out all over Texas in 2016. So once you've been issued your 10 lb. training manual, given your initial orientation and met your mentor, you'll probably recognize a certain structure to your regular meeting format, a kind of repetitive and protective cocoon, designed to produce the "perfect" naturalist – a boot camp of sorts. You will meet some very smart people, speakers from all walks of life – educators, experts, scientists. Their objective is to connect with you, open your eyes, spark a fire in your heart, help encourage your innate passion for nature. Most will inspire you, some will disappoint. Can't be helped. That's just the nature of people.

Making this commitment was probably not easy for you, but as your adventure unfolds there are certain things you should know. This is not advice really, think of it as a kind of vague road map . . . one way to get from point A to point B.

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# Listening, cont.

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There are others of course and, in the end, you will be forging your own path. But, if you get confused or somehow lose your way or just want to check your bearings, I hope you will find it valuable to pull out this edition of the newsletter and re-read it. Consider what follows to be a series of “sign posts,” little flags that I believe indicate you are moving in the right direction.



**Sign post #1. Purpose.** If your primary motivation in joining LPMN is to advance your own personal interests, you are headed the wrong way. Don't misunderstand. It's alright to want to learn more about taking care of your land or to be able to identify and understand the plants and animals you share it with. That's only natural. But, *our focus is outward*, not inward. We are all about volunteering our time and expertise to help our communities, our store of natural resources, our state parks, our citizens and their children. Indeed, to become and remain certified after graduation, you must give at least 40 hours of yourself each year to these beneficiaries. If you are not in a position to do this, after graduation

you will most likely fade away like mist in the morning sun. And the knowledge you gained will waste away, too. To hold and actually expand your knowledge, it must be reinforced through broad application across different properties, circumstances and experiences. Without this very critical element of applying your skills in volunteer service, your knowledge will die on the vine. A flash in the pan, a flameout. The whole experience, a big mistake.

**Sign post #2. Certification.** Get involved, get out there. Your life as a Master Naturalist in Training will be busy – it's designed that way. We are encouraging you to push your limits, surprise yourself and get to work immediately on accumulating volunteer and advanced training hours *while you are in training*. There are so many opportunities to volunteer and more than enough advanced training options for each of you to become certified several times over, by the end of 2016. Yes, this goal is more difficult if you work full or part-time, if you are a student, are raising a family or meeting other demanding life obligations. But, you've got to gut through it and get it done! If you fail to certify in your first 12 months, the odds increase exponentially that you never will. Organize your activities carefully, be choosy about how you use your precious time – be resolute – we've all done this; so can you! If you fail to certify this year, you will end up a Master Naturalist in name only – and as a first year graduate the likelihood is you will become discouraged and lose interest; you will miss the experience of sharing and helping to build something bigger than yourself.



**Sign post #3. Focus.** There are so many programs, so many ways for you to contribute, so many opportunities to make an impact. Try to sample a little of everything on the table before you fill your plate. It is too easy to overcommit. Don't worry, you'll eventually find your niche in the chapter . . . it takes time. Chapter members will be lobbying you to join this committee or that committee, help with varied projects, join this group or commit your scarce time to myriad good causes. That's because they want the chapter to continue getting better and you are fresh new talent. But ease into it slowly, be selective in how you

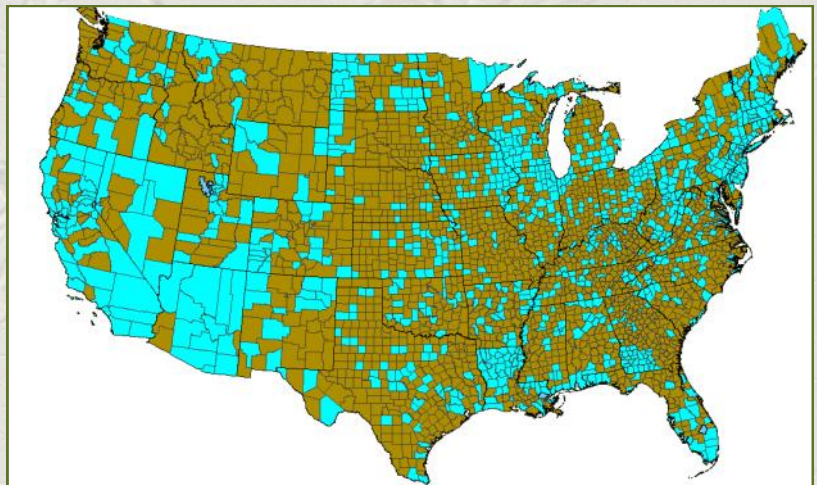
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# What's Blooming?

by Liz Pullman & Judy Turner

Or more appropriately for this issue, “What’s BONAP?” As a departure from the usual “What’s Blooming,” this issue discusses a nation-wide project for listing all those blooming (and non-blooming) plants. BONAP is the acronym for the Biota of North America Project, which constantly updates “which plants are where” county-by-county for all the lower 48 states. Those of you who get excited over finding a plant that’s eligible for the new-to-the-county-list need to know that this project is the ultimate destination for the plant you found. Some states have better coverage than others and sad to say, Texas is one of the worst. Many, many of our counties have less than 500 species, which is the number that indicates a reasonable and attainable goal. In actuality, some Texas counties have less than 100 species. The highest numbers usually reflect proximity to colleges and universities with an active biology program since new botanical research is likely done by students in graduate studies. You may be thinking that Texas has a high number of counties with low numbers because of all our dry and brushy plains and rocky terrain. Sorry, but plants are there and a species count of 75 simply means that no one is looking.



US Counties (in blue) with extensive floristic surveys/inventories plus those that house significant plant collections (herbaria/museums)

The director of the BONAP project is particularly concerned with the state of county lists in Texas, believing that this state’s counties are a goldmine of new, unusual and rare plants. He would like to see more research – both outdoor and indoor. A Texas Master Naturalist can help. Someone with access to private land and familiar with any of these depauperate counties can perhaps say, “I believe we had groves of Madrone (*Arbutus xalapensis*) trees on our creek over in ABC County.” Madrone would be a cool addition to the county list. Possibly one of your relatives with a yen for wildflowers kept a list of species that were transplanted from the rangelands to the yard – perhaps firewheels (*Gaillardia* sp.), golden waves (*Coreopsis* sp.), vervain (*Verbena* sp.) or a plum tree (*Prunus* sp.). This old garden list could fill in common plants never before listed in that county. Perhaps you are going through old photos and find images of flowers. Start asking for ID’s and you may find yourself sitting on a county record! Some indoor research requires going through digitized herbarium lists (these always specify county) and finding new plants.

Another form of research is to contact Texas State Parks and ask about any lists of plants – along certain trails or even a list for the entire park. For best results, a person to person request is usually more productive. County parks offer the same possibility and frequently these lists are under the auspices of the local garden club where “plant people” hang out. Lockhart State Park had an old Nature Trail list and a few LPMN hike leaders have added considerably to an original list in addition to updating all the ID signs along the trail. If you need help with ID’s there are several people in any chapter who can evaluate the plant (or know the person to ask).

An example of how LPMN has already contributed to BONAP? When we started with our chapter website plant lists back in 2011 Caldwell had only 477 plants listed on BONAP; the most recent count is 754, meaning 277 species have been added in four years. Last week while I was vacationing in Maui, my email had an image of a purple flower found near Lockhart which, thanks to instant communications, was identified as Texas toadflax (*Nuttallanthus texanus*). A map check on the BONAP site (which shows dark green if a native plant is present in the state and a bright green coloration if present in a county) showed no presence in Caldwell. *One more new plant added!*

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# Meet Anna Stalcup

by Larry Gfeller

I have a personal appreciation for Anna Stalcup, forged in the aftermath of the wildfires in Bastrop County. Like an unexpected death in the family, the loss of our beloved loblolly pines left us stunned and bewildered. The Bastrop County Complex fires left a monochrome wasteland on our property where a noble forest once stood. It was the fall of 2011 and attention turned to assessing what trees, if any, could be salvaged. The Texas Forest Service asked Lost Pines Master Naturalists to assist providing this service to burned-out residents after receiving diagnostic training. Anna volunteered her time and was assigned to evaluate our property. On the appointed morning in October, I anxiously waited to learn the fate of several favorite pines around our home. They were close old friends. With professionalism and compassion, Anna offered her best opinion: Only two would survive; the coming months proved she was right.

Some would call this a lucky guess, but Anna Stalcup has been making accurate diagnoses for many years – she retired as an optometrist after 21 years with the U.S. Navy, an occupation she still practices on a part-time basis. Helping those in need is also second nature. She has deployed on a humanitarian hospital ship, helping patients in twelve different countries in Central and South America as well as the Caribbean.

Recalling her time in the U.S. Navy Anna says, “I was very lucky and got to do fun and exciting things like fly in helicopters, T-34C training planes and jets.” Navy life was second nature for Anna. You see, her father also was a career seaman, married to a lady from south Texas.

Growing up in this family was not exactly a page out of the Norman Rockwell portfolio. First, Anna’s childhood years were split between Japan (her physical birthplace) and then Guam. Next, Anna’s own mother was her first school teacher in the U.S. school system in Japan. Anna then moved to Guam where she spent most of her primary school years. It was also in Guam where she learned an appreciation for the outdoors. Upon her father’s retirement she moved back to Texas and spent 8<sup>th</sup> grade through high school in Corpus Christi. Through her mother’s love of animals, Texas for Anna was all about horses and horse shows. After a divorce, her father moved to Santa Cruz, California. When people ask her what state she’s from, Anna claims to be half Californian and half Texan—a country girl with a touch of refinement!

You might be thinking that Anna’s own Navy career was cast by her father’s legacy. Although that certainly was a factor, it wasn’t the deciding one. After high school Anna chose to study veterinary medicine at Texas A&M University, but she was ambivalent. She loved animals alright, but working with sickness and death,

not so much. Generally, being a successful vet means settling down in one place to establish a solid practice. After traveling the world, Anna’s childhood left her with a serious case of wanderlust. It was in her blood. Then one fateful day in College Station, after riding her bike to a routine eye appointment, Anna met her first female doctor. Sharing a common interest in the medical field, Anna began asking questions, lots of questions. The lady physician was impressive, articulate and persuasive. Right there, that day, Anna decided to become a Navy optometrist. It was the ideal combination – a way to help people and work in the medical field, all while continuing to see the world.

Anna’s Navy years were rich, varied and fateful. Always intrigued by aviation, she completed training as a flight optometrist (the fourth winged



Recognition for a job well done



Anna as a young mariner

(Continued on page 5)



## Anna, cont.

*(Continued from page 4)*

doctor of optometry and the first female); however, her eyesight did not meet naval aviation standards so she remained earthbound—for a while. It didn't take her long to find the Naval Jacksonville Flying Club in Jacksonville, Florida and sign up for private flight lessons. There she met her soon-to-be husband, Craig. Now all that remained to be done was convince Craig! Landing an aircraft was apparently easier than landing a husband. Anna says, "I was smitten and had to chase him since he was so shy! We both completed our private pilots' licenses, although Craig went on to earn his commercial, multi-engine and flight instructor licenses."

As an adult, Anna has lived in California, Florida, Connecticut and Texas. Today, Anna, Craig and their teenage son, Scott, live in a neighborhood in Cedar Creek, within walking distance of Scott's school. The one-acre plot is nestled among cedar elms, post oaks, Texas ash and other native trees. It also backs up to a sprawling ranch that affords ample wildlife viewing. Anna has added native plants to the landscape and tends her own garden in a fenced-in back yard. This love of the outdoors comes from her childhood. As a child growing up in Guam, television was a rarity; the Armed Forces Network only broadcast at evening time, so she was outdoors most of the day playing, sailing, swimming and going on hikes with her parents – fueling her naturalist instincts inside.

Education has always been a natural draw for Anna. After three years at Texas A&M, Anna transferred to the University of Houston College of Optometry where she finished her bachelor's and doctor's of optometry. While on active duty with the Navy, Anna managed to complete an MBA degree. Today Anna is an active member of U.T. Nova – a lifelong adult learning program – and continues to attend classes with the University of Texas Osher Lifetime Learning Institute. It's not another degree she's pursuing, but the simple joy of learning. History, art, music, science – stuff that makes the world tick! History is one of Anna's favorite subjects. She began reading presidential biographies . . . in chronological order. Some presidents were so interesting to her that she's devoured several works on the same president. She's finished Reagan and will soon need to find a different historical focus.

Anna graduated from the South Texas chapter of Texas Master Naturalists in Corpus Christi in 2009, then transferred to the Lost Pines Chapter upon retirement from active duty in 2010. Known within the chapter for her love of birding, it all started with her mother's gift of a field guide and binoculars at an early age. Anna, despite her birding skills, believes she still has much to learn about the pastime. When asked about



Anna with her canine crew

her favorite bird, Anna says, "It's very hard to choose a favorite species, but I have to say that I still respond with 'wow' every time I see a scissor-tailed flycatcher; they are beautiful." Anna also actively supports the Lockhart ISD Fifth Grade Outdoor Field Days each spring and fall and participates in other chapter volunteer projects as she can squeeze them into her busy schedule. As a board member of her local Parent Teacher Association, Anna estimates she spends roughly 50% of her free time between the PTA and LPMN.

Craig and Anna, until recently, fostered dogs for the Austin Dog Alliance. The last one – Toto, a 10-pound terrier mix – ended up a member of the family instead of being adopted out, so with a total family canine count of four, it was time to draw the line. Feeding time at the Stalcup household is like an explosion of cartwheels at a firecracker carnival. Food bowls are out for a lab-mix named Gracie, a funny-looking terrier/Shepard mix called Teddy and Biscuit the beagle, who is absolutely thrilled to hear himself bark. Oh, and did I tell you that Anna and Craig love animals???

After what amounts to two careers in the Navy, Anna still likes exotic travel. She and Craig have done Alaska, Galapagos and the Amazon. Anna's bucket list is made up entirely of destinations she would yet like to visit: New Zealand, Australia and several European countries. So far, however, her most interesting trip

*(Continued on page 6)*



## Blooming, cont.

(Continued from page 3)

So, why is this project so important? It constantly updates the information contained in state BONAP maps, which can be accessed at the county level, and always updates any taxonomic changes such as a splitting or a lumping of species (yes, both the current names and families as well as the old ones are available). BONAP also records *all* plants – native and introduced (invasives, exotics and hybrids), which simplifies research by botanists and others all over the world. Recent dramatic changes show the results of a great deal of DNA research with some big surprises in the old family trees. As the molecular level data fall into place, we should be looking at lasting concrete data for North America with fewer taxonomic changes. But, there remains a need to catalogue new plants county by county.



Texas toadflax (*Nuttallanthus texanus*)

The BONAP site, which contains the comprehensive North American Plant Atlas, has revolutionized the way we search for floristic data. Twentieth century styles for listing involved collecting and processing data for several years and then publishing flora lists. Not all publications, however, had easy access. The BONAP project removes that long time gap by making data readily available on line.

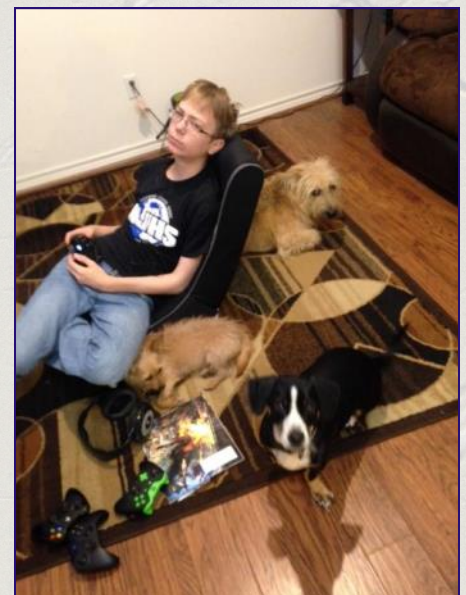
Now that I have had your attention, I will point out that research along these lines counts as volunteer service. Furthermore, LPMN does not have to confine botanical research to Bastrop and Caldwell counties. Recently, we have branched out into other counties by contributing to BONAP for Burleson, Blanco, Burnet and Lipscomb counties. Anytime and anywhere in the state of Texas are now the TMN research boundaries. If you are passing through East Texas, keep in mind three very small counties that have low numbers of recorded plants (Delta and Rains – less than 70, and Rockwell with 125), while one only slightly larger county in East Texas (Madison) has 1,049 on the list! Think of the potential for additional plants! Think of making Texas botanically up-to-date! ✈

## Anna, cont.

(Continued from page 5)

was the Peruvian Amazon. Anna recalls, “It was a river boat cruise so we were on the river most of the time. We took daily trips in a small boat to get to shore and go on narrow parts of the river. My favorite part was getting up early before sunrise and being on the deck of the boat hearing all the animals and birds and the smell of the river.”

So how does this gentle, introspective woman feed her inner child? Her love of learning, uncommon travel tastes and voracious appetite for history; all factors in the equation. But her real inspiration comes from the simplest things: putting up your feet up and reading a good mystery; and a scenic view, as still as if it had been painted. Anna muses, “I am happiest when I am outdoors, walking the dogs perhaps, and I can see something special in nature, just by observing. It is even better when my husband, my son, my mom or a friend is there to share the spectacle with me.” We don’t always know who holds our hand. ✈



Scott and pals



# Brooks on Books The Magazines Issue

by Bill Brooks

Volume 4 of the encyclopedic “Useful Wild Plants of Texas, the Southeastern and Southwestern United States, the Southern Plains and Northern Mexico” can now be purchased.

In the early '70s Scooter Cheatham founded the Useful Wild Plants (UWP) Project to assemble his dream. This was a new stage in the life of Mr. Cheatham. Scooter was an Austin based architect and was teaching architectural design, drawing, and watercolor at the University of Texas with a bachelor's degree in Architecture and a master's degree in Community and Regional Planning. He is a former planner with the Texas General Land Office and was co-director of the Matagorda Bay Estuarine Resource Management Project. Scooter produced the first environmental analysis of the Bull Creek Watershed, co-authored the original Hyde Park Neighborhood Plan of 1984, and is president of Responsible Growth for the Windsor Park Neighborhood Association and the Northeast Austin Business and Community Alliance.



Scooter Cheatham (Photo by Ralph Barrera)

Since the 1970s Scooter Cheatham has been working on this encyclopedia of Texas native plants, documenting their uses as food sources, medicines, and other commercial applications. Dr. Marshall Johnston, a co-author retired in 1985 as a professor of botany at the University of Texas, wrote many of the technical descriptions in the early years of this project. Lynn Marshall, the 3<sup>rd</sup> co-author came aboard in 1977.

With a band of volunteers known as the Grassburs, they have been researching, documenting, and photographing useful plants through out the south. Lynn actively recruits grant writers, proofers, fact checkers, media moguls, and booth sitters. There is always general office work to be done at their 4700 Loyola Lane #104 office. Master Naturalists are welcomed.

Memberships at various levels are always accepted. I've been a member since 1993. Scooter and Lynn pass on a wealth of information during their occasional Weedfeed classes. The 6-week class consists of multiple field trips, a campout, and a banquet. This class is a must for anyone interested in local ethno-botany. I attended the shorter one day Speedy Weedfeed class in 1999 and was stunned at the amount I learned roaming Austin parks and the alleys of Hyde Park.

One of the benefits of membership is a discount in the volumes as they are published. Volume 1, published in Nov. 1995 is 617 pages packed with text, range maps, and color photographs covering 78 genera (267 species and varieties) from Abronia (sand verbena) through Arundo (giant cane).

Volume 2 came out in March of 2001. Its 599 pages cover 79 genera (254 species and varieties) from Asclepias (milkweed) through Canavalia (sea bean).

Volume 3 arrived at the UWP office around August 2009. Its 569 pages cover 23 genera (129 species and varieties) from Canna (canna) through Celtis (hackberry).

The latest, Volume 4 came out this December and spans whopping 645 pages covering Cenchrus (grassburs) through Convolvulus (bindweed).

*(Continued on page 8)*



## Brooks, cont.

*(Continued on page 7)*

As you can see, these epic volumes aren't released quickly. It takes mountains of research and months of writing to put together each book. Just how many volumes will complete this behemoth of a project? In the beginning it was guessed that it could be completed in 12 volumes. Later that guess was changed to 14. Today, who knows? It's going to take as many volumes as it takes.



Will Scooter Cheatham see a completion to his dream? Not without a lot of help. What brings all dreams to fruition? Perseverance and MONEY.

UWP are very grateful for the grants they have already received but massive grants are still needed to hire enough full time employees to bring this dream to completion. In the meantime, your support of volunteer time and memberships are always needed. To lend a hand, please contact Lynn Marshall at 512-928-8091 or via email at [info@usefulwildplants.org](mailto:info@usefulwildplants.org)

The mission of the UWP is to advance stewardship of the wild and naturalized plants of Texas and surrounding regions. To that end we are dedicated to the sensitive tasks of promoting

the economic development of underutilized renewable native botanical resources in an ethical and responsible manner and preserving wild plant populations and their habitats from extinction. Through the formation of a comprehensive information base we:

**Document** human uses of regional botanical resources from early man to the most recent advances in scientific research;

**Explore** untapped applications for botanical resources in nutritional, pharmaceutical, industrial, and domestic use;

**Advance** interdisciplinary research by encouraging and participating in cooperative projects among scientists including economic botanists, anthropologists, agronomists, chemists, nutritionists, medical scientists, pharmacologists, and industrialists;

**Teach** about the indispensable function of plants in fragile life ecosystems and the crucial, but often unnoticed, role that plants play in our daily experience;

**Preserve** endangered plants and habitats through conservation efforts.

The UWP organization has goals that partner well with the goals of the Master Naturalists. Useful Wild Plants is yet another Austin based group that should be supported by our wonderful TMN members. For more information see [www.uesfulwildplants.org](http://www.uesfulwildplants.org).

## Lost Pines Master Naturalist Monthly Business Meetings

The monthly business meeting, which occurs on the third Monday of each month, is an opportunity to hear first hand about volunteer and advanced training opportunities. The chapter's project leaders update members on their work and recruit volunteers if needed. In addition, chapter administration issues are discussed: brief committee reports, financial decisions, and news from our state organizers. Stay tuned to [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) to learn more about upcoming meetings.

*One hour volunteer time is awarded for attendance at qualifying business meetings.*



## Listening, cont.

(Continued from page 2)

contribute, pick those activities that excite you, move you, interest you – and don't take on more than you can deliver. I know of no better way to fail here than to one day realize that you are no longer having fun because you have lost your balance.

**Sign post #4. Communication.** It's easy to get confused with any new endeavor. That's why we assigned you a mentor. This person has been chosen carefully for his/her knowledge and experience within the chapter – they're all veterans. Use these folks! Talk to them, email them with questions (no matter how insignificant the question may seem to you), sit down over a cup of coffee privately, invite them to your classroom, and participate with them in one or more volunteer projects. It takes a while to learn your way around the chapter – it may take your entire first year to figure out what is going on! Come to chapter meetings, raise your hand, ask a question, make an observation or recommendation. Try to meet as many chapter members as you can. We're all different. We possess many different temperaments, talents and convictions. But there's one thing we all have in common with you . . . *we love nature, too!* If you're having a problem, or run into a roadblock, or start to have doubts, speak up; call your mentor and spill your guts. There is no one on earth more committed to helping you succeed in this journey than

your mentor. Use them; use 'em up like a pencil eraser!

**Sign post #5. Cooperation.** Respect your fellow naturalists for being individuals with their own view of the world and how it works. This is part of what makes our chapter rich and interesting. But, when working with others accept these differences and search for ways you can make the organization stronger. Plug holes in the fabric of our chapter when you find them, don't create new ones. Our mission requires teamwork and that means pulling in the same direction rather than pulling apart. We have a code of ethics and we have standards of conduct – the kind of stuff that defines who we are. Take a few minutes before you get sucked into the deep waters of routine and read them ([www.txmn.org/lostpines/](http://www.txmn.org/lostpines/)). You'll find these short epistles under the Members Tab/Statewide Guidelines. If they are not a good fit for you, this is a major red flag!

**Finally:** Locate a member of the 2015 class and befriend him or her – that person sets a high bar and is a rare vintage. So, raise your glass . . . here's to a few little bread crumbs on the forest floor to mark your way. Welcome aboard and enjoy your journey! ✈



## Newsletter Deadline

Submission deadline for the next issue is February 19, 2016. We welcome relevant contributions, photos, announcements, or other material relating to the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program, particularly those pertaining to our local area. Submissions may be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling, and space requirements. Please send information to the editor at [Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com](mailto:Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com).



# A Message from Julia Akin, LPMN President

## The Year in Review

There's nothing stagnant or stale about our chapter. Members are constantly discovering new, valuable volunteer opportunities and finding creative advanced training courses. In 2015 our members worked to conquer invasive species, protect endangered species, educate children, save wetlands, help the public discover the state parks and support area park personnel with a variety of projects and educational programs – All this in addition to dealing with the devastation of yet another major wildfire and two destructive floods, both as community-minded naturalists and as homeowners. What a year!

Through November 2015, chapter members reported 9,657 volunteer hours, a 50% increase over hours reported through year end 2014. We were a busy bunch of naturalists.

Just when I think we're really on a roll come the 2015 training class graduates. All of a sudden we're moving at light speed. The graduates' energy, creativity and tenacity is evidenced by their accomplishments. Collectively, class members logged over 1,400 volunteer hours between February and November 2015, and 16 graduates have already achieved their initial certification. Three class graduates will join the LPMN Board of Directors in 2016, providing fresh, new perspectives and ideas.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to our chapter and our communities within Bastrop and Caldwell counties. I'm looking forward to facing new challenges and opportunities with you in the coming year. My very best wishes to you and your families for the holidays!

Here's to no local natural disasters in 2016! ✨



Chrissy Wise and Kim Iberg help local Boy Scouts identify animal tracks.

## STATE PROGRAM CONTACTS

**Website:** <http://txmn.org>

**State Coordinator:** Michelle Haggerty, 979-845-5777, [mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu)

The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

## SPONSOR CONTACTS

**Caldwell County Extension Office:** Michael Haynes, 512-398-3122, [caldwell-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:caldwell-tx@tamu.edu)

**Bastrop County Extension Office:** Rachel Bauer, 512-581-7186, [bastrop-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:bastrop-tx@tamu.edu)

**Bastrop/Caldwell County TPWD Wildlife Biologist:** Robert Trudeau, 512-332-7280, [Robert.Trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:Robert.Trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov)





# Snippets

## CHYTRID FUNGUS BREAKTHROUGH

For the first time, researchers have successfully eliminated the chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*) from a wild population of mallorcan midwife toad (*Alytes muletensis*). The team of researchers treated the environment using a combination of antifungal treatments on mallorcan midwife toad tadpoles and a decontaminant commonly used to sterilize laboratories. The chytrid fungus has been a major factor in the decline of amphibians worldwide. [Learn more about this new elimination method.](#)



Photo credit: Jaime Bosch MNCN-CSIC

## DID YOU KNOW?

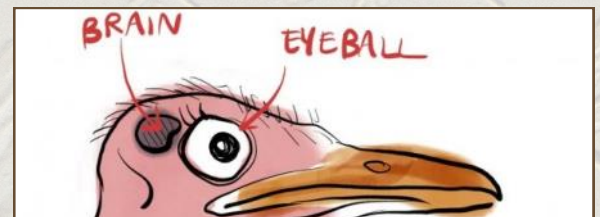
The largest carnivore in the world alive today is the Southern Elephant Seal.

Your tongue is the only muscle in your body that is attached at only one end.

The ostrich has the largest eyes of any land animal. Its eyes are much larger than its brain.

Elephants can “hear” through their feet.

Our noses, earlobes and ear muscles keep getting bigger throughout life. That's because they're made mostly of cartilage cells, which divide more as we age. At the same time, connective tissue begins to weaken.



## SPOON FOR THOUGHT

It's pretty amazing that our society has reached a point where the effort necessary to extract oil from the ground, ship it to a refinery, turn it into plastic, shape it into a spoon, truck it to a store, buy it, and bring it home is considered to be less effort than what it takes to just wash the spoon when you are done with it. ~An Occupy Wall Street sign

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