

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 6, No. 7

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

July 2014

Good News for Texas Bats

AUSTIN— Recent surveys in Texas for white-nose syndrome, a devastating fungal disease that has killed more than six million bats across eastern North America, found no evidence of the disease in the state.



Bat Conservation International conducted the surveys through a grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and in cooperation with

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of California in Santa Cruz.

Samples to test for the presence of the fungus that causes WNS were taken from caves in parts of the Texas Panhandle. This region was identified to be the most susceptible to harboring the disease. The tested caves were in Childress, Cottle, and Hardeman counties.



BCI biologists swabbed cave walls and individual bats for the fungus. The majority of bats sampled were cave myotis, though Townsend's big-eared bats, tri-colored bats, and big brown bats were also encountered. This Texas effort is part of a larger national effort to monitor the spread of WNS as it continues to move westward across the United States.

In addition, a sample from Oklahoma that preliminary tests indicated was positive for the fungus responsible for causing WNS, has now been confirmed to be from a similar but harmless fungus. This was the only possible occurrence of WNS in Oklahoma and the state has now been removed from the list of areas with confirmed or suspected WNS. The

E LOCALS

JULY 1: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **Program:** The Bobwhite Quail survey presented by Rebecca Herd

JULY 12: North American Butterfly Association butterfly count at Lake Arrowhead State Park. **Location:** Lake Arrowhead State Park Headquarters **Time:** 6:30 a.m. **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY**

JULY 12, 19, 26 : Under Cover of Darkness **Location:** Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge **Time:** 8 p.m. Participants will have an opportunity to learn about nighttime activities of wildlife. Tour will include a short walk. Reservations will be taken starting Monday July 7, 2014.

AUGUST 2: Dear Fest The chapter will need volunteers to man our booth. **Location:** MPAC **Time:** 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY**

AUGUST 15: Better Lights for Better Nights Conference **Location:** Dripping Springs Ranch Park Event Center, Dripping Springs, TX **Time:** 10 a.m. Early Bird Ticket Price: \$50 After July 15, 2014, Ticket Price: \$60

nearest confirmed occurrence of WNS to Texas is now in north-central Arkansas.

Despite these glimmers of hope for Texas bats, WNS, first noticed in 2007 in New York, has since been confirmed in 25 states and five Canadian provinces. In some caves, 90-100 percent of the bats have died from the disease. Although the origin of the fungus is unknown, it has also been found in parts of Europe. There is no known cure at this time, though research is ongoing.

Bats play a crucial role in the environment through consuming insects, pollinating plants, and dispersing seeds. Some species of bats can consume as many as 1,000 insects an hour. Many of the insects eaten by bats consume agricultural plants. Researchers estimated that bats in the United States save farmers nearly \$4 billion annually in prevented crop damage and reduced pesticide costs.

TPWD will continue to work with partner agencies and organizations to monitor Texas caves for WNS.

Rolling Plains Chapter Members Participate in the Texas Quail Initiative

by Jane McGough

Photos by Jane McGough and Larry Synder

Eighteen members of the Rolling Plains Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists are involved in Texas Quail Index, a state-wide study to address the decline in the Texas Quail population. The study is administered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and funded by a legislative initiative from the Upland Game Bird Stamp fund.



David Graf,



given by the Big Covey chapter of the Quail Coalition and area Quail Masters.

Members also have met with J.F. Cadenhead, retired Range Specialist from Vernon, for assistance in identifying the flora of the area and later will evaluate the habitat for its “quail friendliness.” In the fall members will conduct roadside counts of quail.

Led by Laura Gillis, several members are working to put together a



Wichita County Extension Agent, invited interested members to attend some training sessions and participate in the study whose purpose is to increase knowledge of quail, their environment and challenges, and to educate landowners and hunters on the best management practices.

Master Naturalists are providing the field work and have divided into four teams. So far they have set up a transect, conducted call counts in which they counted the number of quail and the number of calls, set out dummy nests using hen eggs, checked on the eggs, and

Above Left and Center: Texas Quail Index site leader, AgriLife agent, David Graf and Chapter Members, evaluates quail habitat. **Right Top:** The one with the index card with “2” on it was taken about three feet away from nest 2 on Transect 3. It is of one of the eggs that had been taken from the nest and broken and--presumably eaten--most likely by a raccoon. **Right Bottom:** One of the undisturbed nests showing the three hen eggs.

using “Predator CSI” determined likely predators.

Later game cameras will be set to help identify what predators are in the location. Assistance with providing the cameras has been



Plant Guide to identify some of the plants (grasses, shrubs and forbs) of the area.

Members have been ecstatic about the wildlife and sunrises they have seen while conducting their work.

In addition to hearing (and seeing) quail, they have spotted roadrunners, swallows, pigs, deer, jackrabbits, turkeys, etc.

In April Sue and Warren King, Kay

Murphy and Jane McGough attended training with Dr. Dale Rollins and Becky Ruzicka of the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch in Roby, Texas. Ms Ruzicka later met with interested members who could

not attend that two-day training at a location near Lake Arrowhead State Park to provide them some field experience. Some members also attended the Clay County Quail Appreciation Day.

Chapter Makes Donation to Wild Bird Rescue, Inc.

Jim Hensley, President of the Rolling Plains Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist presents a \$500 donation to Terry McKee, secretary and Penny Miller, Board President of Wild Bird Rescue, Inc.



Chapter Members Hike the Wichita Mountains

What a beautiful day for an outing to the Wichita Mountains on May 31. The weather was absolutely beautiful, pretty blue sky, white fluffy clouds, colorful wildflowers and great company.

Rebecca Herd and Jonathan Alfano did an excellent job scouting the trails and keeping tabs on everyone so no one fell in a lake or tumbled down rocks.

This is definitely an event we will try again in the fall, as there are still plenty of trails to explore.

Terry



Wild Bird Rescue, Inc.
5101 Lakeshore Drive - Wichita Falls, TX - 76790 - (940) 691-0828
www.wildbirdrescueinc.org

"To care for sick, injured and orphaned wild birds with the goal of returning them to the wild when possible. To educate our community about wild birds and wild bird issues."

Executive Director June 10, 2014

Vacant Rolling Plains Texas Master Naturalist
 1300 Lamar St.
 Wichita Falls, TX 76701

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Dear Rolling Plains Texas Master Naturalist chapter,

Thank you for your generous donation of \$500.00 to the Wild Bird Rescue, Inc. Without donations like yours, we would be unable to continue our mission of rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing our community's feathered friends.

In addition to caring for our local birds, Wild Bird Rescue, Inc. provides education on birds and their environment. Our Avian Ambassador program takes owls, kites and hawks into classrooms, summer camps, and other venues so children and their families have the opportunity to see these beautiful and fascinating creatures up close.

Thank you again for your donation—people like you make our work possible.

Very Respectfully,

[Signature]

Penny Miller
 Board President, Wild Bird Rescue, Inc.
 (940) 691-0828

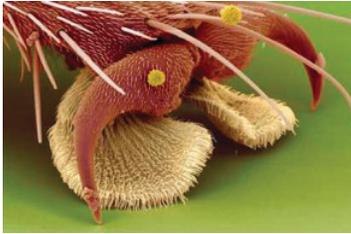
*Thanks!
 It means a lot
 to work with such
 great people!*

The Wild Bird Rescue, Inc. is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Please retain this letter as a receipt of your donation for your taxes. No goods or services were received in exchange for this gift.



FACTS FUN

Flying fish are able to launch themselves above the surface of the water to escape from predators. They support themselves in the air with large outstretched fins which gives the appearance of flight. The lower lobe of a flying fish's tail is extended so the fish can still propel itself along by beating it in the water while its body is above the surface. A single 'flight' above the water can cover a distance of 490 feet, at a speed of 34 mph.



The feet of a fly are adapted so that they can stick to almost any surface by means of a combination of tiny hooks and sticky pads. A fly's feet can even grip on shiny surfaces such as glass.

Migrating birds use the position of the Sun to orientate themselves. Some migrating birds use magnetic particles within their body to create a 'map' with which to navigate using the earth's magnetic field.



Invasive Spotlight: Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe* ssp. *micranthos*)

Spotted knapweed is a biennial or short-lived perennial herbaceous plant from Eurasia that grows from 2-3' in height. Basal leaves form a rosette the first year from which grow 1-20 wiry, branched stems during the second year of life.

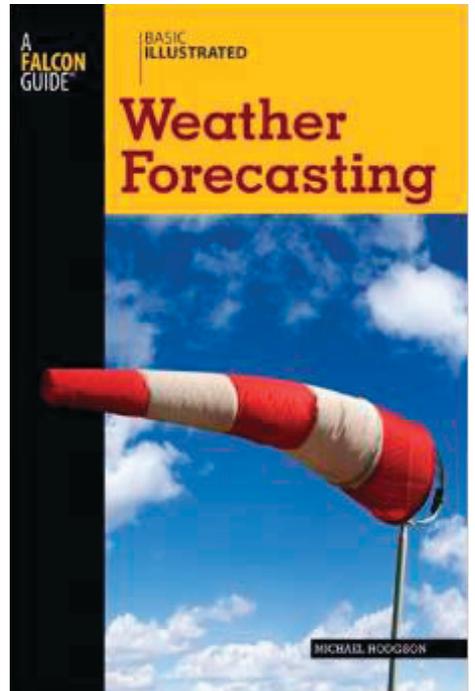


This species threatens prairies, fields, dunes and areas with sandy soils. It spreads rapidly in transportation corridors, gravel pits, field margins and pastures. It has been shown to be phytotoxic, meaning it will kill other plant species where it grows.

In the first state-wide find for this species, participants on a Native Plant Society of Texas field trip to Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge found and identified the invasive plant. One day later, voucher specimens were collected and all plants were removed.

RESOURCE CORNER

A Falcon Guide Basic Illustrated Weather Forecasting
by Michael Hodgson
Paperback: 80 pages
ISBN-10: 0762747633
Price: \$9.95



Richly illustrated and information-packed tools for the novice or handy reference for the veteran, the BASIC ILLUSTRATED *Weather Forecasting Guide* distill years of knowledge into affordable and visual guide. Whether you're planning a trip or thumbing for facts in the field, the BASIC ILLUSTRATED *Weather Forecasting Guide* shows you what you need to know.

Discover how to:

- Predict and recognize shifts in weather patterns
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Chapter Contacts:

Jim Hensley, President 569-4713; Rebecca Herd, Vice President 232-5607; Cynthia Archibald, Secretary 704-8474; Larry Snyder, Treasurer 569-4534

Committees Chairperson:

Leslie Fernandez, RiverBend Liaison 767-0843; Paula Savage, Newsletter Editor and Designer 691-0231, pasavage@sbcglobal.net; Tami Davis, Website Manager 224-0131; Activities Chair: Terry McKee 766-4097; Dian Hoehne, Communication Chair 692-7234

Advisor: Robert Mauk, TPWD Advisor 766-2383