

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS

NEWSLETTER

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Bylaw Changes: The Texas Master Naturalist Program

by Larry Synder

The Texas Master Naturalist Program has revised the bylaws under which the chapter must operate. One of the changes that has a direct effect on our members are the membership categories allowed in the chapter. Previously there was no category for a member that had completed the training course, but had not yet completed the required 40 hours of volunteer time and additional 8 hours of advance training within the calendar year following the end of the training period. That type of member now will be called a "Pledge."

Here is the section of the new bylaws that cover the new membership categories.

Member Categories

Texas Master Naturalist Member-in-Training. Volunteer Participant of an official class from the first day of class to the end of the training period continuing until the Trainee has completed the Chapter Training requirements.

Texas Master Naturalist Pledge. Volunteer Participant who has completed the Chapter Training requirements and has yet to complete the State or Chapter minimum Certification requirements for advanced training and volunteer service to become 'Certified' within the calendar year following the end of the training period.

Certified Texas Master Naturalist. Volunteer or previously Certified Texas Master Naturalist who has completed the State or Chapter minimum Certification requirements (Reference 'Master Naturalist™ Program', Chapter Management Guidelines, Certification section) for advanced training and volunteer service hours for the year.

Texas Master Naturalist Member. Volunteer who has previously been a Certified Texas Master Naturalist but has not yet to complete the required volunteer service of 40 hours, and an additional 8 hours of Advanced Training toward re-certification requirements for more than one year. *continued on page 2*

E LOCALS

JANUARY 6: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM.

JANUARY 10: Invade the Park Bird Walk **Location:** Lake Arrowhead State Park **Time:** 8 AM. Walks are lead by Penny Miller the second Saturday of every month. Normal park entry fees apply.

FEBRUARY 21-22: It's All About Raptors **Location:** Hackberry Flat **Time:** 9 am - noon During the winter, Hackberry Flat is visited by many raptors, birds that actively hunt other animals for food. Come learn about these raptors and how they make a living at Hackberry Flat. Members of the Oklahoma Falconer's Association will have a live bird to help us learn how to identify raptors. After our classroom time, participants will convoy into the area to observe the raptors. Please dress warmly. There is no fee but reservations are required. To make reservations please contact: melynda.hickman@odwc.ok.gov or call 405-990-4977.

FEBRUARY 21-22: Arts Alive 2015 Home and Garden Festival **Location:** Ray Clymer Exhibit Hall **Time:** 9 am to 6 pm. *Volunteers are needed to man our booth.*

On another note, I'm still accepting dues. Remember, dues are \$15 for a single membership and \$25 for two or more. I also have tickets available for the Home and Garden show. These are \$5 each. See me at the meeting to pay your dues or purchase tickets ... or both.

Also, don't forget to get your hours to me. In order for you hours to count towards our 2014 report I must have them before I submit the report. I have to have that report in NLT 15 January 2015.

Monarch Butterfly Eyed for Possible U.S. Endangered Species Protection

by Laura Zuckerman

(Reuters)
- Monarch butterflies may warrant U.S. Endangered Species Act protection because of farm-related habitat loss blamed for sharp declines in



Monarch butterflies fly at the El Rosario butterfly sanctuary on a mountain in the Mexican state of Michoacan in this November 27, 2013 file photo.
CREDIT: REUTERS/EDGARD GARRIDO/FILES

cross-country migrations of the orange-and-black insects, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said on Monday.

Monarch populations are estimated to have fallen by as much as 90 percent during the past two decades because of destruction of milkweed plants they depend on to lay their eggs and nourish hatching larvae, according to the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

The loss of the plant is tied to factors such as increased cultivation of crops genetically engineered to

withstand herbicides that kill native vegetation, including milkweed, the conservation group says.

Monarchs, unique among

butterflies for the regularity and breadth of their annual migration, are also threatened by widespread pesticide use and logging of mountain forests in central Mexico and coastal California where some of them winter, said biologist Karen Oberhauser at the University of Minnesota.

The Fish and Wildlife Service said on Monday a petition requesting federal protections for monarchs – filed by the Xerces Society and others – “presents substantial information indicating that listing may be warranted.”

The agency's initial review will take about a year to complete.

The butterflies, revered for their delicate beauty after emerging from a jade green chrysalis ornamented by gold stitching, are roughly divided into two populations in the United States according to their fall migration patterns.

Monarchs from east of the Continental Divide wing across 3,000 miles to Mexico, while those from west of the Divide in Rocky Mountain states like Idaho make a relatively shorter journey to California.

An estimated 1 billion monarchs migrated to Mexico in 1996 compared with just 35 million last year, according to Marcus Kronforst, a University of Chicago ecologist who has studied monarchs.

Monarch populations are tracked by an extensive network of professional and citizen scientists who make up part of the butterfly's vast and loyal following.

“Almost every person I've talked to about monarchs has expressed a deep love and admiration for them that was often formed in childhood,” said Beth Waterbury, regional wildlife biologist for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The monarchs' navigation remains mysterious. While they are known to orient themselves by the sun's position, and by the Earth's magnetic field on cloudy days, it is unclear how new generations find their way to wintering sites they have never seen, Oberhauser said.

Birders Flock to See New Species in Texas

AUSTIN – The phenomenon of new birds seen in Texas jumped in 2014, underscoring the Lone Star State's rep as one of the top birding destinations in the country. It also illustrates how technology and social media are changing human culture.

There were three new species reported Texas in 2014, all new to the state's bird list, pending approval by the Texas Ornithological Society. These include a red-legged honeycreeper that drew flocks of people Thanksgiving Day to Estero Llano Grande State Park in the Valley, a gray-crowned rosy-finch seen north of Dalhart in the Panhandle around Nov. 20, and a pair of



common cranes still present as of Dec. 6 at Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge in the Panhandle. This represents almost as many rare birds in Texas this year as in the previous five years combined. Bird experts call these uncommon sightings “vagrants,” oddities



that stray from their typical ranges.

“This kind of stuff awaits any observer

who’s out there looking,” said Cliff Shackelford, a bird biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. “There will always be vagrants because birds are so mobile they can show up anywhere. We’re probably only seeing the tip of the iceberg.”

What’s fueling the increase? Some birders speculate cheaper gas prices prompted more birders to get out in November, and a continental cold snap last month may have encouraged lots of birds to move in search of food and cover.

But the iceberg’s tip may be more visible these days in large part because of better binoculars, cameras, and audio recorders to capture bird calls, plus social media and mobile apps to tie it all together.

“As soon as people hear about a rarity they get in the car or plane and go, because they can get there in time now,” said Shelly Plante of TPWD, who runs the Great Texas Birding Classic. “People traveling coordinate in real time with people who are already at the sighting location, using social media and texts to make sure the bird is still there. The honeycreeper sighting happened on a Thanksgiving weekend when many people were already off and could pick up and go, and they did. The common cranes at Muleshoe have been there a couple of weeks, and there are still people making plans on Texbirds and Facebook to go see them.”

Although avid birders often spread news of vagrants,

they are not always the first to see them. These days, that honor can fall to anyone who happens to be in the right place at the right time.

“These vagrant birds can show up anywhere, including people’s back yards,” Shackelford said, noting it was a backyard birder who in 2012 reported the state’s first Pineywoods record of a common redpoll, a small finch of the arctic tundra and boreal forest. “The takeaway is: if you see a bird you don’t recognize, take a photo. Also, record the call if it’s vocalizing. If a photo is not conclusive, an audio recording can be important.”

Who sifts all those photos and calls? The Texas Bird Records Committee of the Texas Ornithological Society is the authority that confirms or denies a rare bird sighting. A great resource in Texas is the **TEXBIRDS** listserv, which anyone can join, where people report and discuss bird sightings online. Another big online tool is Texas eBird, where backyard birders as well as those who travel for birding can report what they see year-round, contributing to an international database of bird sightings.

Texas is a particular “birdy” state, with 639 bird species recorded (a number that may increase once review of recent new bird sightings is complete). That’s the second highest of any state, after California. This birdiness is the reason Texas is home to the Great Texas Wildlife Trails, the first birding and wildlife trails created in the USA, and hosts the annual Great Texas Birding Classic, a popular birdwatching event that raises money for bird conservation in Texas.

For more about birding in Texas, or to sign up for the Great Texas Birding Classic running April 15–May 15, 2015, see TPWD’s Birding in Texas web pages. Or, for a focus on Texas State Parks by region, see the Birding in Texas State Parks pages.

Results of the Wichita County Christmas Bird Count

The following are the results of Christmas Bird Count that Penny Miller, Sue King, Warren King, June McKee and Terry McKee volunteered for on December 20, 2014.

Snow Goose – 16, Canada Goose – 917
Cackling Goose – 1, Gadwall – 654
American Wigeon – 5, Mallard – 316
Northern Shoveler – 264, Canvasback – 5
Ring-necked Duck – 7, Bufflehead – 19
Hooded Merganser – 14,
Ruddy Duck – 16, Pied-billed Grebe – 2
Am. White Pelican – 11
Double-crested Cormorant – 32
Great Blue Heron – 6
Northern Harrier – 2
Sharp-shinned Hawk -1
accipiter specie -1, Red-tailed Hawk – 24
American Kestrel – 14, falcon specie – 1
American Coot – 25
Killdeer – 14

Ring-billed Gull – 312, Gull specie – 85
Rock Pigeon – 1423
Eurasian-collared Dove - 416
White-winged Dove –140
Mourning Dove – 23, Inca Dove – 7
Greater Roadrunner – 1
Belted Kingfisher – 4
Red-bellied Woodpecker -3
Ladder-backed Woodpecker – 7
Downy Woodpecker -3
Hairy Woodpecker – 2
Northern Flicker – 5
(Red-shafted -2) (Yellow-shafted -1)
Eastern Phoebe – 2
Loggerhead Shrike – 7, Blue Jay – 57
American Crow – 11
Carolina Chickadee – 13
Tufted Titmouse – 1
Black-crested Titmouse -3
Carolina Wren – 1, Bewick’s Wren – 1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet – 5
Eastern Bluebird – 12
American Robin – 46
Northern Mockingbird –47

European Starling – 2007
American Pipit – 1
Cedar Waxwing – 7
Orange-crowned Warbler -2
Yellow-rumped Warbler-5
Spotted Towhee – 5, Field Sparrow – 1
Lark Sparrow – 4
Fox Sparrow – 16
Song Sparrow – 18, Harris Sparrow – 50
White-crowned Sparrow -8
Dark-eyed Junco – 32
(Slate-colored – 10)
Northern Cardinal – 70
Red-winged Blackbird-162
Eastern Meadowlark – 20
Western Meadowlark – 1
meadowlark specie -99
Brewer’s Blackbird – 56
Common Grackle – 37
Great-tailed Grackle -1891
Brown-headed Cowbird -143
House Finch – 72
American Goldfinch -144
House Sparrow – 163



There is no way of telling male oysters from females by examining their shells. While oysters have separate sexes, they may change sex one or more times during their

life span. The gonads, organs responsible for producing both eggs and sperm, surround the digestive organs and are made up of sex cells, branching tubules and connective tissue.

The closest relatives to the elephant shrew are actually elephants, not shrews. All 18 species or elephant shrews (aka sengis) are found exclusively in Africa



Dogs' nose prints are as unique as human fingerprints and can be used to identify them.



Invasive Spotlight: Gypsy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*)

Gypsy moth is one of North America's most devastating forest pests. Introduced from Europe and Asia, the gypsy moth was first found in America in the late 1800s near Boston, Massachusetts.

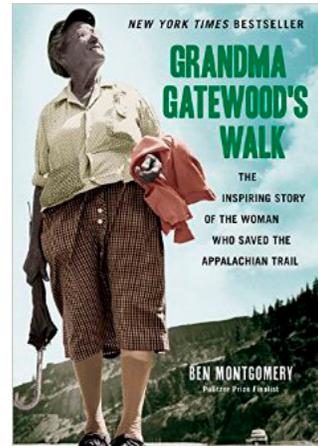
This species is especially problematic because it can feed on and defoliate hundreds of different tree species in North America, but prefers aspen (*Populus*) and oak (*Quercus*) species. This species can alter forest composition and eliminate sensitive host species.



RESOURCE CORNER

Grandma Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail

by Ben Montgomery
Hardcover: 288 pages
ISBN-10: 1613747187
Price: \$16.99



In 1955, at 67, Gatewood left her small Ohio town and her 11 children and 23 grandchildren and set off to trek the Appala-

chian Trail. She'd long been fascinated by the 2,050-mile trail and was particularly lured by the fact that no woman had ever hiked it alone.

Knowing her family wouldn't approve, she didn't tell them when she set out with a little 17-pound sack of supplies and no tent or sleeping bag. Journalist Montgomery draws on interviews with Gatewood's surviving family members and hikers she met on her five-month journey as well as news accounts and Gatewood's diaries to offer a portrait of a determined woman, whose trek inspired other hikers and brought attention to the neglect of the Appalachian Trail.

She became a hiking celebrity, appearing on television with Groucho Marx and Art Linkletter.

Montgomery intertwines details of Gatewood's hike with recollections from her early life and difficult marriage.

Maps of the trail and photos from Gatewood's early life enhance this inspiring story.

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