

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 7, No. 3

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

March 2015

Spring 2015—TX Master Naturalist Training Agenda

March 10, 2015 — May 7, 2015

Welcome: Program Orientation Statewide program mission, local program goal and pre-test	Jim Hensley local chapter president Texas Master Naturalist	March 10 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Ornithology, bird watching and conservation	Penny Miller Texas Master Naturalist Wichita Falls	March 12 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Field Trip 1 Birdwatching	Lake Arrowhead State Park LASP personnel	March 14 8:00 a.m.
Weather and Climatology	Bryan Rupp Meteorologist KFDX	March 24 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
Overview of freshwater fisheries ogy and conservation	Robert Mauk District Fisheries Biologist Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept	March 26 biol- 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
Field Trip 2 Lake Gordon, fisheries and Invasives	Tom Lang TPWD Inland Fisheries	March 28 8:30 am- noon
Natural Resource Conservation Service perspective on grassland ecology and management	Jerry Payne NRCS office (retired)	March 31 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Anatomic adaptations of plants to our region	Dr. Magaly Rincon-Zachary Professor of Biology MSU	April 7 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
Vertebrate biology overview including historical biogeography with mammals as a model with functional morphology and geographic variation	Dr Ray Willis Professor of Biology MSU	April 9 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Field Trip 3 Grassland and wildflower morphology and ecology	Paul Dowlearn Wichita Valley Nursery	April 11 9:00 am-noon River Bend

LOCALS

MARCH 3: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Tom Lang, Inland Fisheries biologist will be speaking on the Lake Wichita Revitalization Project.

MARCH 7: Kid Fishing Rodeo at Plum Lake **Location:** 1202 Sheppard Access Rd by the softball complex **Time:** 10:00 AM to Noon Volunteers needed to help TPWD with fish measuring, kid wrangling, etc.

MARCH 7: Plum Lake Clean-up **Location:** 1202 Sheppard Access Rd by the softball complex **Time:** Noon to 1 or 2 PM Volunteers needed.

MARCH 10: Master Naturalist Spring Training Begins **Location:** MSU Bolin Science Hall, room 213 **Time:** 7:00 to 9:00 PM

MARCH 14: Take Me Outside Event **Location:** Lake Arrowhead State Park **Time:** TBA

MARCH 21: Wild Bird Rescue Work Day **Location:** Lake Shore Drive **Time:** 9:00 AM to Noon We will be working on the flower beds and the front entrance. *A Volunteer Opportunity!*

Overview of local geology and soils, stratigraphy, lithologies fossils and minerals geologic features of north Texas	Dr. Jonathan D Price Assistant Professor of Geology MSU	April 14 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
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Herpetology with general discussion of local amphibians and reptiles	Dr. Charles Watson Professor of Biology MSU	April 16 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
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Field Trip 4 Hackberry Flat, Frederick, OK to observe wetland ecology and migratory waterfowl	Chapter Master Naturalists ODWC biologist Kelvin Schoonover and staff	April 18 8:00-noon car pool
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General botany	Dr. William Cook Professor/Chair of Biology MSU	April 21 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
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Entomology overview including Common local insects	Daniel Patrick WFHS biologist	April 23 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
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Mycology Study of fungi	Dr. James Masuoka associate professor Biology Dept, MSU	April 28 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
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Ecological concepts with a discussion concerning biomes, trophic levels and energy movement through succession stages.	Dr. Rebecca Dodge associate professor geosciences program, MSU	April 30 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
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Chapter meeting	Rolling Plains Chapter	May 5 7:00 p.m. River Bend Nature Center
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Interpretive, volunteer opportunities & communication Evaluation/ test, wrap up	Jim Hensley Rolling Plains Chapter President	May 7 7:00-9:00 p.m. Bolin 209
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2015 Great Texas Birding Classic: Sign Up Now!

How many of Texas' 639 documented bird species have you seen? Join Texas' biggest birding roundup – the Great Texas Birding Classic and search for a few more. From the Panhandle to the Golden Triangle, anybody can play because the world's biggest, longest and wildest bird watching tournament is statewide!

Gather your friends and family to form a team and put your binoculars and your bird ID skills to work.

Choose a tournament category that suits your interest, ability and leisure time, and register at birding-classic.org. Categories range from half-day tournaments to full days and vary by age group, with some all-age tourneys. There's even a week long statewide event for those with the stamina and spare time.

There's truly something for everyone!

Keep these dates in mind:

April 1: Registration deadline for participating teams. All fees and forms are due. Late registration fees begin on this date.

April 15 - May 15: Official Birding Classic tournament days. Teams can choose which date to compete for their tournament category (or categories if participating on more than one team).

Read more about how to participate. http://tpwd.texas.gov/events/great-texas-birding-classic/how-to-participate?utm_campaign=feb2015&utm_medium=email&utm_source=LBO
All teams must fill out their registration form, pay their online registration fees, alert Birding Classic staff of their selected tournament date(s), and submit their checklist through eBird following the checklist submission guidelines to be in good standing for the event.

Days are Numbered for the Tumbling Tumbleweed

The Russian thistle, or tumbleweed, has become synonymous with the Old West of Hollywood. The tumbleweed's reign over the Southwest could be coming to an end though. The USDA is working to release a fungus that has been shown to eliminate Russian thistle in other countries.

It's considered a pest by farmers and landowners. According to Midland Naturalist Burr Williams, tumbleweeds are a plant that only grows where the soil is disturbed one way or the other.



sian Thistle is displacing our native species and causing economic damage by harming our crops because it takes a lot of water to grow.

Last January, Clovis New Mexico made national news when the town became buried in tumbleweeds after a windstorm. It took the city weeks to dig out.

Justin Bush, the Invasive Species Coordinator for the TexasInvasives O R G partnership, says that Rus-

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Chapter Activities for February 2015

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And it's no wonder, Scientists have found that a single mature tumbleweed plant can yield more than three million seeds.



Russian Thistle typically blooms between May - October and produces tiny, white to pink flowers which grow from the base of the leaves on the upper branches of the plant. The plant is not native to the southwest. It was brought to South Dakota in the 1870s in a shipment of flax seed. As the plant ages it forms a large, prickly ball which breaks off at ground level in the wind. As this tumbling weed rolls, it scatters thousands of seeds. That and the fact that no animals will eat it have caused this invasive to take over large portions of the western US.

Plant Pathologist Dr. Dana Berner and his team at the US Department of Agriculture scientists have found a remedy for this pest that's been plaguing the Plains for over a century.

"Colletotrichum salsolae, we've tested it extensively in both Greece and Russia and it's an excellent biological control fungus," says Berner. "When we released it in 3 sites in Greece, it took one to two seasons to eliminate it and these sites were 100 percent infested with Russian Thistle."

Berner also adds that the fungi pathogen has not been found to be harmful to plant species similar to the Tumbleweed.

Approval for the trial tests for Dr. Berner's fungi remedy may take up to two years, and then tests will be conducted only on two approved sites, one in Colorado the other in California.

After that, the USDA will be reaching out to property owners across the U.S. to help test their plan against the pesky tumbleweed.



Jane McGough sets up an impressive display on the Quail Index Study at the Home and Garden Show, Feb 21-22 at the MPAC.

Great Backyard Bird Count Report

by Penny Miller, Photos by Terry McKee

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was February 13 - February 16. I did take part in two group counts on Saturday and Sunday.

I was very happy to see 13 people join me for the GBBC at Lake Arrowhead State Park on Saturday. Since the Rolling Plains Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist counted this as volunteer time, it did help our numbers, and we had

several members there. We had some very experienced birders with the McKees and also some very new birders. Our new birders were able to add some life birds to their lists--that always makes for a great day.

It was really a beautiful morning. During our 2-hour walk, we saw several good birds.



Above: Members and guests meet for a birdwalk at Lake Arrowhead State Park to celebrate the Great Backyard Bird Count on February 14, 2015. **Left:** Penny Miller, Sue King and Warren King at Wild Bird Rescue for the GBBC on February 15, 2015.

Australian Peacock spiders are so-named because of their bright colors and their dance like, courtship rituals.



The tiny mouse brain is packed with more than 86 million neurons, each with more than 1,000 connections, clustered into different nodes—similar to a complex highway system. This road map of neural pathways is called a connectome.

Spinosaurus, at 50-foot carnivore, is the largest land predator ever known. It is also the only aquatic



dinosaur ever identified. It lived about 95 million years ago in the massive river systems of what is now northern Africa.

Wasps Help Scientists Control Carrizo Cane (*Arundo donax*)

Carrizo cane (*Arundo donax*) goes by the nickname of water thief. It creates a thick stand that crowds out native plants can impact water levels. Scientists are studying the effects a wasp has had on invasive carrizo cane along



the Rio Grande. The wasps were released in 2007 and have had a

considerable impact on the carrizo cane population, giving hope to researchers that the wasp is an effective control agent.

The wasp is much smaller than a typical yellow jacket and they don't sting. The insect only feeds on the carrizo cane. It lays eggs inside the stalks, weakening the invasive plant.

The cane is not native to the Valley. Spanish explorers brought it to the region in the 1700s because it was used to make roofing material. Now the cane grows along the entire river.

RESOURCE

National Geographic Extreme Weather Survival Guide: Understand, Prepare, Survive, Recover

by Thomas M. Kostigen
Paperback: 384 pages
ISBN-10:142621376X
Price:\$30.00



Hurricanes, floods, wildfires, tornadoes—weather is becoming extreme, and this book tells you how to plan ahead and

prepare, respond to emergencies, and survive the worst-case scenarios. From the risks of building on changing coastlines to the safety kit you should have packed up at home, from the telltale signs of a hurricane on the horizon to how to power up when the grid goes down—this will be the one book to carry with you through all kinds of bad weather. Divided into four sections (Hot, Cold, Wet, Dry) each chapter includes a level-headed discussion of current weather extremes, facts and details on conditions, and theories for why these changes are occurring; dos and don'ts for inside and outside; and gives at-a-glance guidance for how to prepare for, survive, and recover from every extreme. Sidebar features include: gears and gadgets; protecting your pet; and firsthand accounts from survivors and the experts who help them. Spectacular photographs of wicked weather plus useful checklists and how-to illustrations make page after page both useful and entertaining, even when you're contemplating the unthinkable.

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