

# Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 8, No. 6

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

June 2016

### Presidents Report

*Terry McKee*

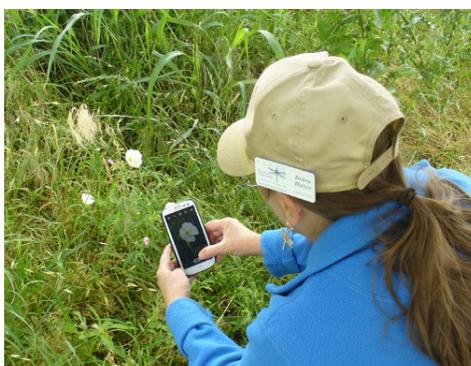
Water, water everywhere...

Who would have thought after 4 years of drought, that we would have so much water in all our area lakes. All this rain is not that great for clearing a trail through high water without waders, but it is prime habitat for fishing during the **Mark Howell Memorial Kid Fishing Rodeo, Saturday, June 4 from 10 to noon.** Volunteers should arrive at Lake Arrowhead State Park around 9:30 a.m. There are lots of opportunities for you to help by signing up kids for the contest, recording their catches, passing out bait, and helping cheer on the kids. Just remember the sunscreen and bug repellent if you are outside.



**Our first Bio Blitz at Lake Arrowhead** was a lot of fun, not only being out in the field with friends, but trying to solve the mystery of what plants and insects members had photographed. We had 110 species identified

May 14, even though the weather was cool and very windy. To see our findings check out the site: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/lake-arrowhead-state-park-tx-bioblitz-2016> or google inaturalist lake arrowhead and it should pull up. Many thanks to the state park personnel for having the dining hall open for us so we had a refuge from the wind to consult our field guides. Another Bio Blitz is in the works.



June 25 is our annual butterfly count at Lake Arrowhead State Park. Meet at the headquarters at 7 a.m. Our last count was a little sparse of butterfly species, as our main trail was underwater (seeing a theme here?), but we had lots of orb weaver spiders. Hopefully this year with plenty of flowers blooming, we should have a good selection of butterfly species, so bring your nets and field guides. Maybe it will have dried up a little by then.

### E LOCALS

**MAY 3:** Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Barbara Keller-Willy is with the Monarch Host Cities Partnership Project Coastal Prairie Texas Master Naturalist. She will talk about a variety of topics: monarchs, the Monarch Gateway, sustainable habitat, milkweeds and seed collection and the OE study at the University of Georgia.

**JUNE 17:** 2016 Bat Tour **Location:** Caprock Canyons State Park & Trailway **Time:** 6:30 PM to 9:00AM. Join us on a guided vehicle tour to historic Clarity Tunnel for the bat emergence flight. Reservations are required. Clarity Tunnel, an abandoned railway tunnel on the Caprock Canyons Trailway, is home to up to half a million Mexican Free-tailed bats each summer. During these guided vehicle tours along the Trailway, visitors can view the bat emergence flight and enjoy spectacular views of the rugged and beautiful breaks of the Llano Estacado. Tours take at least 2 hours to complete. Registration is required. Please call the park at (806)455-1492 for reservations or for more information. Registration and fees must be paid by 12:00 noon on the day of the tour.

# How to Identify Egg Thieves

reprinted from [www.discoverwildlife.com/british-wildlife/how-identify-egg-thieves](http://www.discoverwildlife.com/british-wildlife/how-identify-egg-thieves)

You can learn a lot from broken bird eggs, including whether they hatched naturally or were predated. Birds' eggs are a nutritious source of food, so it's hardly surprising that many are lost to predators.

In summer, egg remains are common, so if you find one, first check if it hatched normally. If it didn't, it is often possible to identify the thief from the signs left behind. Keep your eyes open and check the evidence carefully – it's not just the usual suspects that steal birds' eggs...

## HOW TO TELL IF AN EGG HATCHED NATURALLY OR WAS PREDATED – AND BY WHOM:

### Naturally hatched eggs

- Most eggshells you find will have been thrown from nests after the chicks hatched or are the remains of ground-nesting birds' eggs that hatched normally.
- When hatching, chicks use their egg-tooth (a horny spike on the upper mandible) to make a circular cut across the blunt end of the egg; the edge is jagged where the chick has chipped its way out.
- As the empty shell dries out, the inner membrane contracts and 'rolls' the chipped edge inwards.
- Unlike predated eggs, hatched eggs never have yolk or egg-white left inside the shell.
- The two halves of the shell are often found close together. To remove them from the nest, the parent may carry one half of the egg inside the other.

### MEET THE PREDATORS:

**Mustelids**—Pine martens and polecats generally carry eggs off to eat elsewhere. They characteristically bite across the egg, leaving an oblong or rectangular hole through which they lick up the contents. Small canine tooth punctures may be left in the eggshell. **Stoats and weasels**, being smaller, eat larger eggs in the nest. They bite a hole in one or both ends of the egg.

**Foxes**—Foxes generally carry eggs away from nests. They may then eat them or they will cache (bury) them for consumption later. The whole egg is taken in the mouth, crushed and the contents eaten. Eggshells are left some distance from the nest. A fox will often catch mallards, pheasants and partridges on their nests. If this has happened, the nest will be damaged, with scattered feathers if the carcass has been carried away or the remains of the carcass if it has been eaten nearby.

**Rats**—Rats prefer the large, cryptic eggs of colonial nesting birds and consume the eggs in the nest. They make a hole in the side or end of the egg with characteristic chip marks, then lick out the contents.



**Squirrel** signs are very similar. A common myth is that rats co-operate to steal hens' eggs – one lies on its back, holding the egg to its chest, while another rat pulls out the content with its tail. This is not true.

## TX M/N 2016 Re-Certification Pin

The Texas Master Naturalist 2016 Re-Certification pin for this calendar year is the Guadalupe Bass.



The annual re-certification pins shall be provided to Certified Texas Master Naturalist Members when they accumulate the required 40 hours of service and 8 hours of Advanced Training for recertification in the 2016 calendar year.

Read more about why our State Fish of Texas was selected as this year's TMN Recertification pin: <http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/gdb/>

## Monarch Tagging Update

The folks at Monarch Watch have posted the 2015 tag recoveries on their website. Thank you to Jane McGough for checking on these!

Jane had 4 of her personal tags recovered and six tags from the Chapter have been recovered. They are:

(UGH prefix for all):  
677 - Paula Savage  
694 - Warren King  
729 - Martha Ford  
753 - Terry McKee  
803 - Kay Murphy  
826 - Betty Bowles



If you would like to see where your butterfly wound up and how many miles he/she flew to get there, go to <http://www.monarchwatch.org/tagmig/recoveries.htm>.

While you are there, you can print out a certificate with your information to display.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Monarch Watch Tagging project!

– Laura Gillis

**Cuckoos**—Cuckoos parasitise the nests of many birds, typically dun-nocks, pipits, robins, wagtails and warblers. A female cuckoo lays one egg in each nest and removes one of the host's eggs. The cuckoo hatches first and then ejects the eggs or nestlings of the host. It squirms beneath them, rears backwards against the sides of the nest with its back arched and wings raised, and then rolls the egg or nestling over the edge of the nest cup. The eggs or nestlings can be found below the nest; the eggs will normally have a well-developed embryo inside.

**Crows**—Crows (corvids) are probably the most common predators of bird nests. They actively search hedgerows for nests and scan the ground from trees for nesting birds. They make a small puncture in the side or end of the egg, then insert their upper bill into the hole to lift the egg and drain the contents. They may eat the egg on the nest but often carry it off – remains of several eggs can be found at favoured eating points. Gulls make similar holes but generally eat the egg on the nest.

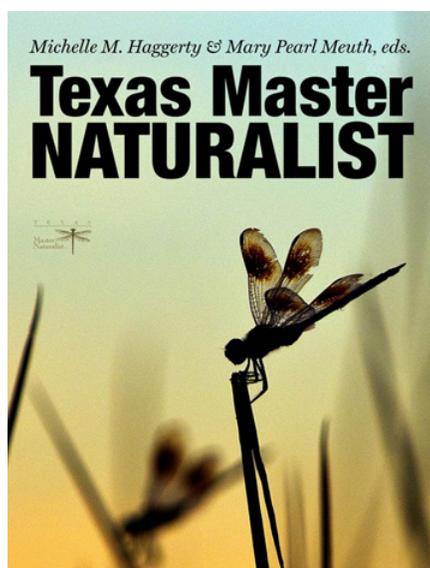
**Hedgehogs**—Hedgehogs drive sitting birds off their nests and eat the eggs in situ. They bite a large hole in the side of the shell and lick up the contents. All that remains are shallow cups of eggs, shattered fragments of eggshell and the remains of the contents spattered around the nest.

## 2016 Texas Master Naturalist Training Curriculum

*Larry Snyder*

I've just found out that the new 2016 version of the Texas Master Naturalist curriculum is available for preorder for our chapter. They should be available for mailing during the first week of July.

We will, of course, be making a bulk order for our 2016 Trainees, so Trainees disregard this unless you want an additional copy or copies.



When we found out about the new curriculum a few of our long term members expressed a wish to acquire the new curriculum. By adding your order to our bulk order you'll save 50% off the cost of the book. So the cost will be \$35 plus tax of 8.25% or \$37.89.

This is a one-time opportunity for you to save that 50% ... at least until next year's bulk order for the class.

I will be taking money for your preorder at the June 7th meeting so bring a

check made out to Rolling Plains Chapter, TMN for \$37.89 if you want the new curriculum. If you don't plan to attend the meeting and you still want the new book you can mail your check to me at 1020 Pawhuska Ln, Burkburnett TX 76354-2815

I'll be making the order shortly after the meeting on June 7th so don't delay. Take advantage if you want to.

The book will also be available in an e-reader format. No preorder and it will cost \$70 with no discount.

If you wish to make your own preorder the discount is only 30% but, of course, you're welcome to do that if you wish.

## Members Wildlife Sightings

Pete Peterson and his wife Sue found these Black-bellied Whistling Ducks hanging out at MSU, May 23. These is an uncommon species seen in Wichita County.



Marilyn Meador found this Woodhouse toad in her yard May 23.



The Greater Roadrunner is a regular visitor to Paula Savage's backyard.

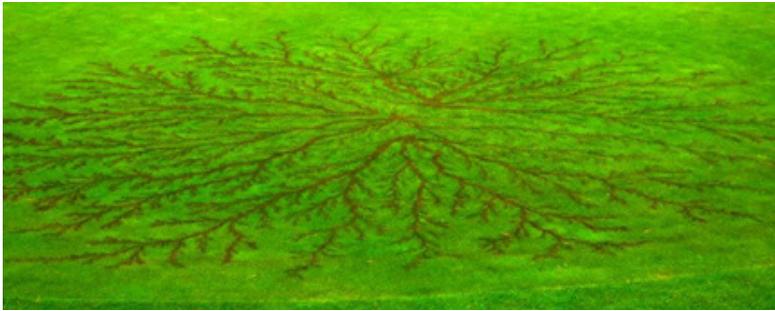


## Go Wild

What have you always wanted to see in the wild? Birds, butterflies, wildflowers, mammals and more are alive and well in your state parks, and it's all thanks to your



support. Now is the best time for you to visit! See wildlife in state parks at [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)



A lightning bolt travels at about 14,000 mph and brings 300,000 volts of electricity to the ground.



The Greater Roadrunner is a swift, animated cuckoo often runs instead of flying, whether chasing down reptiles or fleeing from danger. Its X-shaped footprint helps conceal the direction it is heading.

A deep-sea expedition in the waters off Hawaii discovered what they say is the world's largest known sponge. Roughly the size of a minivan, the sponge was discovered about 7,000 feet down in a marine conservation area off the shores of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The rare sponge, with a bluish-white color and brain-like appearance,



## Dragonfly License Plate

The master naturalist program is considering raising funds to bring a Dragonfly vehicle license plate to the membership. The cost for such a program would be an \$8,000 deposit. That deposit would be funded by each chapter donating \$175. After the sale of 800 plates our deposit would be returned.



What we need to know is how many of our chapter members would be interested in purchasing such a plate. Please let Larry Snyder know if your are interested.

(Note: the annual cost of a special plate is \$30 more than the normal registration fee, of which \$22 goes to the sponsor organization, which is Texas Parks and Wildlife, for wildlife conservation.)

## RESOURCE CORNER

*The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs*  
by Tristan Gooley  
Paperback: 416 pages  
ISBN-10: 1615192417  
Price: \$12.13 on Amazon



Gooley's more than two decades of pioneering outdoor experience include research among the Dayak people of Borneo and the Tuareg of the Sahara. With his first book, *The Natural Navigator*, he started a renaissance in the rare art of reading nature's clues.

Now, in *The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs*, Gooley has compiled more than 850 outdoor tips—many not found in any other book in the world—that will open readers' eyes to nature's hidden logic. He shares techniques for forecasting and tracking, and for walking in the country or city, along the coast, and by night.

This is the ultimate resource on what the land, sun, moon, stars, plants, animals, and clouds can reveal—if you only know how to look!

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