

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 8, No. 10

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

October 2016

Presidents Report

by Terry McKee

The TMN state convention is October 21-23 at Lake Conroe, and they need the help of our chapter. Every year they hold a silent auction to raise money to help fund the next convention. If you have an item you would like to donate, please bring it to the October 4 meeting. I'm sure Larry and Judy won't mind taking the items when they go to the convention. Way to put THEM on the spot! Items that sell well are books.

Can you believe the board is already planning our Christmas Party for December 6? We will be serving lasagna and salad from Luigi's. Members are asked to bring a dessert item. We also hold a Chinese gift exchange for those that want to participate. This is a great way to re-gift items you received that you no longer want. You can't believe how many people will fight over books and nature items. It's always a perfect way to start the holiday celebrations.

The Monarchs are Here!

Get your tags, get your butterfly net and head out to Lake Wichita. It's time to make a spectacle of yourself while you practice being a Citizen Scientist.

Texas is an important state in monarch migration because it is situated between the principal breeding grounds in the north and the overwintering areas in Mexico. Monarchs funnel through Texas both in

the fall and the spring. During the fall, monarchs use two principal flyways. One traverses Texas in a 300-mile wide path stretching from Wichita Falls to Eagle Pass. Monarchs enter the Texas portion of this flyway during the last days of September. By the third week of October, most have passed through into Mexico. The second flyway is situated along the Texas coast and lasts roughly from the third week of October to the middle of November.



LOCALS

OCTOBER 4: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Our speaker will be Tom Lang, District Supervisor for Wichita Falls Fisheries., will speaking about "All Things Fish."

OCTOBER 9: Big Sit **Location:** Wild Bird Rescue **Time:** Dawn to 10 a.m.

OCTOBER 22: North Texas Skywatch Star Party **Location:** Lake Mineral Wells State Park & Trailway **Time:** 7:00 - 11:30 p.m. Come to the Lone Star Amphitheater, learn about astronomy and see the night sky through a wide variety of telescopes.

NOVEMBER 5: Beavers Don't Eat Fish **Location:** RiverBend Nature Center **Time:** 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. Lynn Seman will conduct this workshop.

Congratulations!

The following members of the Rolling Plains Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist have received their recertification award: Kim Mason and Laura Gillis for achieving the 1,000 volunteer hours milestone!

The Neonicotinoid Link to the Massive Honeybee Die-Off

You don't have to smoke cigarettes to die from nicotine poisoning!

A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture study found that America's beekeepers lost 23 percent of their hives over the winter of 2013-2014. The culprit?

A widely-used class of neurotoxic pesticides marketed by German chemical giant Bayer, called neonicotinoids, a type of insecticide that affects the central nervous system of insects, resulting in paralysis and death.

When seeds are coated by neonics, the pesticide spreads throughout the entire plant—from leaves to pollen and even nectar.

A growing number of studies suggest that chronic exposure to the neonics endangers bees - who feed on the nectar and pollinate our crops - by disrupting their immune and nervous systems.

The surge in neonicotinoid use coincided closely with the honeybee population crash. In 2006, beekeepers began to notice that when their foraging bees left their colonies in search of pollen and nectar...they



never came back.

That behavior is highly unusual for such a social insect. To leave the hive, queen, and brood behind is something that bees simply do not do.

We now know that neonics impair bee mobility, navigation, feeding behavior, foraging

activity, memory, and learning. In short the neonicotinoid pesticides disrupt everything a honeybee needs to survive.

This finding of neurobehavioral disruption is a significant distinction of Colony Collapse Disorder.

When presented with such evidence, the European Union immediately suspended the use of the most widely used neonicotinoids. The United States EPA, on the other hand, did not. They've allowed the neuro agent to be used while further studies are conducted.

The result? More honeybees dying. More crops failing. And more beekeepers and small family farms going out of business.

Another Successful Sikes Lake Cleanup

by Terry McKee

We had about 80 volunteers show up for the Sikes Lake Cleanup on September 10.

It was a little soggy after the Friday night rain, but that was a good thing as the trash rose with the lake level and stayed on the ground as the lake receded, making it easier to pick up. Overall, we collected about 1800 pounds of trash.



Above: Pete Peterson joined a group of MSU students as they tackled the mess, while **Left:** Judy Snyder, Larry Snyder and Penny Miller wait to serve volunteers hot dogs.



Results of September 23rd Road Side Count

by Larry Snyder

Yesterday evening, September 23rd, Norm, Kim, and I went out and conducted a roadside count. And what a fantastic night it was. First we found a good size diamondback on the road. Then as we sat waiting to start we saw a few quail cross the road directly in front of us. But we couldn't count those guys ... too soon. Other than those first few, things started out pretty slow as far as seeing quail. We did see a flock of about 15 turkey. About 6 PM the quail started to pop up. We saw a total of 16 coveys and one single for a total of 184 quail. That's a record for our study site.

In addition, 10 roadrunners, 2 "other" snakes, 10 deer, 3 burrowing owls and 2 "other" owls. Lots of other critters as well.



Milkweed Identification Guide



Over 35 different milkweed species have been recorded from Texas. This guide provides species-specific information regarding identification and range for milkweed in the state.

Download Milkweed Identification | PDF at tpwd.texas.gov/monarch



Coming Soon!

The Texas Pollinator BioBlitz is a statewide effort to observe

and identify as many pollinators as possible between **October 7th and October 16th**. Texans of all ages can venture outdoors to find pollinators and nectar-producing plants, and then sharing observations by posting a photo or video to Instagram or iNaturalist. A daily challenge will keep participants on the hunt and add to the fun. All will be encouraged to plant pollinator gardens. *In the coming days, watch the TPWD website, tpwd.texas.gov/monarch/ for more information.*

Solitary Bees, Our Mellow Natives



You've probably heard of European honeybees, but did you know there are over 700 types of native bees in Texas? These include bumble bees, sweat bees and mason bees. They're extremely important because they pollinate our native plants, as well as our food crops.

Most of these natives are known as solitary bees because they don't live together in hives. This is a big benefit for us, because not having to defend a hive means it's very unlikely they'll sting. They're so mellow, folks add bee condos to their gardens to encourage them to live and work there as pollinators.

The ‘little apple of death’ tree is easily the most anti-social plant we know of. The manchineel tree is the most danger-



ous tree in the world. Every part of this tree—from the bark and sap to its leaves and fruits—are extremely lethal.

Researchers at the University of Strathclyde have discovered that the greater wax moth is capable of sensing sound frequencies of up to 300 kHz – the highest recorded frequency sensitivity of any animal in the natural world.



The veined octopus will pick up debris such as seashells and coconut halves, and use them to create a kind of portable shelter. It’s the only invertebrate known to use tools.

Texas State Parks Pass

The Texas State Parks Pass gives you and your carload of guests the opportunity to experience the beauty and diversity of Texas by providing free entry to more than 90 state parks across the state for 12 months!



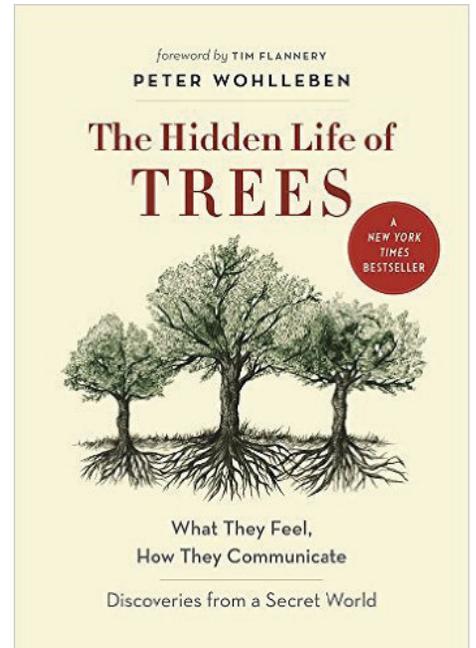
Texas State Parks Pass The Texas State Parks Pass includes:

- Unlimited free entry to more than 90 state parks for you and your guests (card holder must present the pass to get free entry)
- Discounts on camping (restrictions apply), park store purchases and equipment rentals
- Other special offers.

A Texas State Parks Pass costs \$70. You can buy a second pass for someone who lives at the same address as you for \$25. Buy a pass at any Texas state park and use it right away! Or call (512) 389-8900 to order a pass (plus shipping and handling).

RESOURCE CORNER

The Hidden Life of Trees
by Peter Wohlleben
Hardback: 272 pages
ISBN-10: 1771642483
Price: \$14.97 on Amazon



Are trees social beings? In this international bestseller, forester and author Peter Wohlleben convincingly makes the case that, yes, the forest is a social network. He draws on groundbreaking scientific discoveries to describe how trees are like human families: tree parents live together with their children, communicate with them, support them as they grow, share nutrients with those who are sick or struggling, and even warn each other of impending dangers. Wohlleben also shares his deep love of woods and forests, explaining the amazing processes of life, death, and regeneration he has observed in his woodland.

After learning about the complex life of trees, a walk in the woods will never be the same again.

Includes a Note From a Forest Scientist, by Dr. Suzanne Simard

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