

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

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<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

February 2017

President Report

by Terry McKee

Spring is starting to bust out all over.

And with spring comes Spring Training Class. This year's class is almost finalized. Training will begin March 7 through May 4. Cost is \$100 and includes the new curriculum.. Please encourage everyone you know that has an interest in nature and science to sign up for the class. They'll learn a lot from our guest speakers and meet a great group of people.

If you are a current member or trainee, the classes are absolutely FREE. You do not have to pay to retake any session if you have ever taken the training class before, just show up!

Since the first session is March 7 at 7 p.m., which is our normal meeting night, everyone that comes to that class at Midwestern State University will be allowed 1 hour of volunteer time. That night we will NOT meet at River Bend.

Don't forget the Home and Garden Show, February 25 and 26. Jane McGough is in charge and she has lots of activities planned. Please be sure to volunteer at our booth. This is our best opportunity to talk up the spring training class.

Your board of directors has come up with plenty of exciting events for the upcoming months, so batten down the hatches and hang on. It's about to get fun!

We Need Your Help!

by Jane McGough

We need your help! Home and Garden Festival is just around the corner, and we want our Master Naturalist Chapter to shine brightly as always.

This year we are part of a room with Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Kemp Center for the Arts and our own Laura Gillis with her sculptures from castoffs and other finds.

We will have a table with our "standard" information plus information on a center kiosk and "projects" with children to interest them in the natural world around them.

LOCALS

FEBRUARY 7: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Our February 2017 program will be about the Great Backyard Bird Count held February 17-20.

FEBRUARY 6: Home and Garden Show Peperation **Location:** River Bend **Time:** 11:00 AM. Meeting at River Bend for people helping with door decoration for Home and Garden Show – contact Lynn Seman, if interested 940-867-3006

FEBRUARY 18: Birds of Prey Program **Location:** Hackberry Flat WMA, Frederick OK **Time:** 8:00 AM. Those that wish to carpool can meet at Atwoods and leave by 8 AM. **Advanced Training Opportunity.**

FEBRUARY 19: Great Backyard Bird Count **Location:** Wild Bird Rescue **Time:** 8 AM.

FEBRUARY 25-26: Home and Garden Show **Location:** MPEC **Time:** Saturday 9AM.-6 PM. Sunday 11 AM.-5 PM. Discounted H&G tickets are still available- See Larry.



The artwork this year is “Dragon Flies [sic.] of Spring,” and the theme is “*Better Living: Home, Garden, Life.*” What could be more appropriate for Master Naturalists?

We also will have sign-up sheets at the meeting for people to sign up to work “shifts” at the show on Saturday and Sunday, February 25-26. We will need “booth” workers to sit at a table to talk to adults, and we also need people to work with kids.

Call for Special “Recyclables”!

- toilet paper & paper towel rolls
- biodegradable egg cartons
- “coloring book” type nature pictures
- pictures of animals, domestic & wild

Please bring as many as you can to our meeting Tuesday. The pictures can be of mammals, fish, amphibians, birds, etc.

Wilson’s Wood-nymph Moth

by Debra Halter



On Oct 1, 2016, during the fall bioblitz at Lake Arrowhead State Park, several members hiking along the Dragonfly Trail spotted a large, dark caterpillar. The caterpillar was about 2” long, dark brown with pale stripes, rusty markings, and three pairs of appendages sticking from its body. Lynn Seman, Pete Peterson, and I all photographed the caterpillar and submitted it to inaturalist.org. It was determined that it was a Wilson’s Wood-nymph Moth (*Xerociris wilsonii*). Named after Thomas B. Wilson, it is the only *Xerociris* species found in America north of Mexico. The moth ranges from Mexico, across Texas and into south central Oklahoma. Its main larval food is Possum Grape (*Cissus trifoliata*), which is abundant in the area where the caterpillar was spotted. The adult moth is mostly white with black markings. Adults fly between February and October.



Invasive Spotlight

Blue Hound’s Tongue (*Cynoglossum creticum*)

Blue hound’s tongue is a non-native plant from the Mediterranean region north through France. It has been introduced to



Blue hound’s tongue starts growth as basal rosettes. When flowering, it grows 1-3 stems up to 60 cm (24 in) tall and covered in

Argentina, Chile, and Australia. In Australia it is currently on the Alert List for Environmental Weeds (“28 introduced plants that are currently not very widespread but are considered to pose a threat to Australia’s environment”). It was discovered in Texas for the first time in March, 2015, and its only other U.S. populations are found in Missouri and Arkansas. An article describing the plant and its distribution in North America was published in the journal *Lundellia* in December 2016.

Blue hound’s tongue has the potential to outcompete and suppress native grasses and forbs. Its leaves contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids that are toxic to livestock. While livestock will avoid it in pasture, they may consume the plant if it is mixed in with fodder. It has become a problem in pastures in some parts of the world.

fine soft hairs. The inflorescence uncoils as it ages, with the flowers arranged along one side of a stem. The flowers are small (7-11mm [0.3-0.4 in]), consisting of five petals and range from blue to pink with dark veins. The dark green leaves are oblong, can reach a length of 200 mm (8 in) and a width of 25-30 mm (1-1.2 in), are covered in hairs and are alternately arranged with short petioles. They have entire (untoothed) margins. Fruits occur in groups of four. They possess tiny hooks that allow them to attach to animals (including people) and travel long distances.

Please keep your eyes peeled for this potentially invasive plant, especially if you live in the vicinity of Oakalla. If you find it, please report it to your local AgriLife Extension agent and to us at tippc@texasinvasives.org.

2016 Year End Report

Total volunteer hours reported: 2,537 (Great job, we were really concerned about reporting of hours but this number is pretty average for our chapter.)

Total advance training hours reported: 456 Total new trainees: 9

Total re-certifications: 22 Total who graduated: 4

Total initial certifications: 2 Total volunteers 2016: 53

First Day Hike at Lake Arrowhead State Park, Jan. 1, 2017

written by Lynn Seman photos by Lynn Seman

On Sunday, January 01, 2017, a group of nature loving naturalists headed out to LASP for the annual First Day Hike. I left a little early so I could get a good view of the morning sunrise which was spectacular. While driving in the entrance to the park, I saw two white-tailed deer standing in the road watching me. They quickly darted off into the sand plum thicket as I drove into the park. When I turned off into the drive headed to the group pavilion, I saw a group of white-tailed deer grazing along the edge of the gate entrance. Once again, they sprinted off quickly when my Jeep drove up. The first bird I saw after parking was a northern cardinal with its bright red in a brown background. I hurried to take a photo before it flew off. The sunrise was beautiful and worth the early arrival as it snuck out behind the morning clouds.



One by one, the vehicles began to congregate in the parking lot and hikers prepared for an adventure. It was a chilly 29 degrees when we started out. I was surprised by how many were showing up for the early hike. There were about 18 total along with the 3 park rangers – Adam, Steven, and new ranger, Call Casarez, a former MSU soccer player. We took off on the Onion Creek Trail that starts at the group pavilion and crosses the Frisbee golf course. The combination of clouds, sun rays, and the crystal clear water along the trail's edge were absolutely breathtaking. It is one of those scenes that make you feel like you are standing in the middle of a famous painting. Although there were plenty of pelicans on the lake, one of the hikers thought for sure she had seen a swan, but that was not confirmed. The hikers in the group were varied in speed and began to stretch apart in distance. Penny Miller and Debra Halter were pointing out birds and recording the species observed. I think Penny ended up with 30 species on the hike! One lady in the group was so very excited that she got to see an Eastern Bluebird.

As the hike progressed, I had a chance to talk to and get to know some of the participants. One lady was a Girl Scout and Cub Scout leader from Iowa Park

who was an expert at Geocaching. One couple came from Austin to see their son, the new Park Ranger, on his first day of his new job. Another couple came from Windthorst, TX to enjoy being out in nature on the first day of a new year. Each of the hikers had a chance to absorb the beautiful sunshine and breathe the clean crisp air while sharing the trail with others. Even two dogs had joined in on the hike, Gus and Prince, who seemed to be all “tuckered out” by the end of the trail.

By the afternoon hike, the sun was out in full force and the air temperature had warmed up to about 60 degrees.

Those of us who had come for the morning hike had shed most of the clothing layers by this time. Cars kept lining up in the group parking lot bringing more and more people to join in the fun. By 2:00pm, I was getting a little nervous to see almost 40 people ready to take off on the dragonfly trail, but only one Park Ranger – the others from the morning had been sent off to take care of other business. Park Ranger Steven welcomed everyone while we tried to figure out how we were going to get 40 people on this short hiking trail. I think he called the front for reinforcements. We made some short introductions and then got started like a stream of ants following each other down the path. Our members spread out among the group and tried to emphasize points of interest with little bits of information to the hikers nearby. By the end of the trail, everyone seemed to be enjoying the hike! Debra Halter did a fantastic job, explaining nature and birds along the way! Jane McGough had the children completely fascinated with the treasures found along the trail. It was so rewarding to see everyone enjoying the great outdoors. Some of the hikers had a few questions at the end of the trail that our members were happy to answer.

The First Day Hike was quite an experience that I highly recommend as a great way to start out the New Year. I made some new friends who love the outdoors as I do and got a little exercise as well. My iPhone app tracked 14,885 steps total for the hikes – every step was absolutely worth it!

FUN FACTOIDS



The wood frog, which can be found in cold northern states such as Alaska, is famously freeze-tolerant creature capable of surviving for weeks on end with 65% of its body frozen solid.

Giant redwood, *Sequoiadendron giganteum* in California is the tallest tree in the world dwarfing both Big Bend and the Statue of Liberty at 379.7 feet. It's root system is only 6 to 12 feet below the ground but can reach a diameter of 50 feet or more.



Gravity wave clouds are created by air moving through a stable area of the atmosphere. The upward thrust of air creates bands of clouds with empty space between them.

THE TEXAS POLLINATOR POWWOW

A pollinator conservation conference for Texas and beyond
Friday through Sunday, MAY 5-7, 2017

MAY 5-6 - NACOGDOCHES CIVIC CENTER: http://nacexpo.net/documents/Brochure_000.pdf Address and Directions at the bottom of this page: <http://www.nacexpo.net/map.asp> NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

MAY 7 - BOGGY SLOUGH: <http://www.texashighways.com/history/item/7716-boggy-slough-conservation-effort-counters-forest-fragmentation>
<http://www.conservationfund.org/projects/boggy-slough> APPLE SPRINGS, TEXAS 75926

To provide education, resources and networking opportunities to natural resource management professionals and volunteers- and the community at large- and to empower them all in conserving our pollinators and their habitats across the landscape

Fifteen speakers, three dozen exhibitors, raffle of pollinator-related items, MOTH NIGHT and CAT WALK, BAT NIGHT, and four teams of botanists/entomologists/biologists as trip leaders to the ecologically sensitive old-growth forests and bogs of the Pineywoods (BOGGY SLOUGH)

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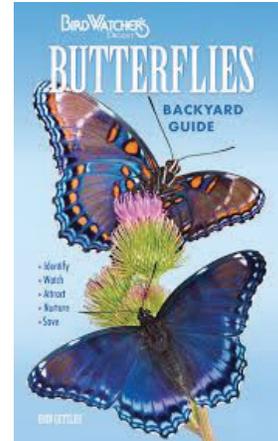
Bird Watcher's Digest Butterflies Backyard Guide

by Erin Gettler

Paperback: 160 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1591866756

Price:\$17.99 on Amazon



Learn to identify the butterflies you see, and find out what to plant in your garden so they visit you at home!

Replete with more

than fifty of the most common butterflies in North America, the book is a fully illustrated guide that makes it easy to identify these fragile winged insects. Each butterfly in the book is presented on a two-page spread with images and facts about the butterfly, as well as tips for what gardeners can plant in order to attract that particular butterfly to visit their backyards. Other information provided for each butterfly includes: size, lifespan, habitat, diet, range, predators, and reproduction.

Butterflies Backyard Guide is organized by major butterfly type, so readers can easily flip open the guide and zero in on the facts about the specific butterfly they're identifying.

Keep this guide close at hand for a quick analysis of the iridescent butterflies you see floating from flower to flower. You'll be pointing out Monarchs, Eastern Tiger Swallowtails, and Common Buckeyes before you know it.