



Rolling Plains Chapter NEWSLETTER

Vol.14, No. 8

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

August 2022

The Rolling Plains Chapter partners with River Bend Nature Center and Wild Bird Rescue, Inc. in Wichita Falls; Lake Arrowhead State Park in Clay County; Copper Breaks State Park in Hardeman Count.; Whiteside Museum of Natural History in Seymour; and Comanche Springs Astronomy Campus in Crowell. Our Chapter covers Archer, Baylor, Clay, Foard, Hardeman, Jack, Montague, Wichita, Wilbarger, and Young Counties.

AUGUST 2: Rolling Plains Chapter Meeting - 7:00pm at MSU's Bolin Science Hall, room 209. If you would prefer to attend via Zoom, watch for the link to the meeting in your email. Either way, I hope you will join us.

The program: Eileen Vale with the NRCS speaking about who the NRCS is and what they do. She will also have information on the "Earth Team Volunteer Program.

AT JULY 31: Lawn Gone: The Environmental Disaster that is the American Lawn 7:00-8:30 pm This presentation discusses the origin and evolution of the maintained 'lawn'. From it's beginnings in Europe and England to it's 'import' and promotion in the United States, exposing some of the environmental,



Is it hot enough for ya?! Ugh. This heat has been brutal and I hope everyone is taking care with their outdoor activities.

It's almost (but not quite) too hot to hike. But even with toasted grass underfoot and sizzling sand in the forecast, I am looking forward to July's Saturday Hike at Copper Breaks State Park. We will start out early and maybe we will see some Horned Lizards before it gets too warm.

The Chapter Board members got together for a mid-year retreat at Lake Arrowhead this month and we have some exciting things cooked up for the rest of this year. First, we will be meeting with all of our partner organizations to see how we can serve each other better and we are hoping to add Fort Richardson State Park to our list of Partners. We are also working a special field trip opportunity with Dr. Estes that I am very excited about. I will let you know when we have more details.

In our upcoming meetings, we have some fun things planned as well but we will need your help. In November, we would like to have a Resource Share. We would like you to share a short review of your favorite nature related book, magazine or news article, podcast, app, website or other resource at the meeting. Alex Nelson will compile a list of all of your favorites so we can all hit AmazonSmile after the meeting (supporting the Rolling Plains Chapter, of course!). **Please turn your titles in to Alex by October 24th** so she will have time to get the list together and minimize duplications.

And, since there's nothing like thoughts of sugar plums and reindeer to cool you down, we have made some plans for this year's Christmas Party! This year we will have DESSERTS only. (I think we should call this a "pot-lucky" party!) Feel free to eat healthy before you come, but save room for dessert! Kevin Scanlin will provide some jolly entertainment and of course we will have the Bad Santa gift exchange and the Photo & Nature Journal Contests. Our free-will donation this year will go to River Bend Nature Center with the Chapter matching your donations up to \$250.

August is also when we start thinking about elections of Chapter officers. This year, the offices of **President and Treasurer** are both open for nominations. The unelected positions for **Hike Committee Chairperson, Hours Keeper, and Historian** are also open. I sincerely

financial and social consequences of the seemingly benign lawn. Alternatives to the monstrosity will be offered.

AT AUGUST 9:

TMN Tuesday 12:00-1:00 Connecting All Texans to Conservation Through Meaningful, Engaging Interpretation. Guest Webinar Moderator: Tania Homayoun, Texas Nature Tracker Biologist and Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Advisor. *You may watch this webinar live or its recording at a later date (as long as it is watched within the calendar year it was recorded).*

AT AUGUST 11:

Texas Waters Webinar-They Live Here, Too: Wildlife Habitat Restoration as Water Supply Protection with Katie Myers & Michelle Wood-Ramirez, Watershed Coordinators at Tarra—6:30-7:30 Report your time under AT: Texas Waters Certification. Include a description of the presentation. **Must be watched live.**

VT AUGUST 13: BIRD OUTING at LASP

8:00-10:00 Join Penny Miller, other members and guests at Lake Arrowhead State Park for a bird outing. Look for and identify birds

hope you will consider serving in one of these positions. They are all very rewarding positions and the Chapter truly needs you! If you are interested in any of these positions, please let me know. I will be happy to get you more information or add you to the ballot.

Annual Meeting agendas, sessions and field trip information have been posted on the State TMN website. Registration will open August 1st, so you are running out of time to get your sessions picked out and planned. Sessions will fill up FAST, so get ready to register!

I invite you to get out of the heat and join us for the monthly meeting on August 2nd at 7:00 PM. We will be in Bolin Science Hall, Room 209 at Midwestern State University and also on Zoom at the same time. (Watch for a link in your email.) Our program this month will be **Eileen Vale with the NRCS** speaking about who the NRCS is and what they do. She will also have information on the “Earth Team Volunteer Program.

I hope to see you soon.
Keep cool and carry on!—*Laura*

Imperfect Plumage

Four rare genetic traits that affect feather colors.

Albino Bird



An albino bird lacks all of the color pigment melanin. It sports completely white plumage and is usually devoid of any regular field marks, making it

tricky to identify. The genetic mutation is called albinism. Look past its feathers to tell if it's a true albino—the eyes, beak and legs are always red or pink. The lack of melanin allows blood vessels to show through.

Leucistic Bird



A lesser-known genetic condition is called leucism. Unlike albinism, leucism doesn't completely eliminate pigment. Leucistic birds have incredibly varied patterns.

They may appear more muted than their counterparts or they can be dotted with white patches. These birds are occasionally mistaken for albinos, but leucistic birds always have some pigment in their feathers or other body parts, such as their feet, eyes or beak.

Melanistic Bird

On the other end of the color spectrum is a very rare genetic condition called melanism, in which a bird has extra melanin pigmentation. Most animals—



including humans—produce melanin, which pigments hair, skin and more. In birds, it's responsible for black, brown and tan feathers. When a bird is melanistic, it will appear much darker than the typical coloration for their species.

Xanthochroic Bird



If a bird is yellow or orange where red feathers should be, it could have xanthochroism. Unlike the other conditions covered here, this one can be caused by diet or genetics. It's more

obvious in birds with lots of red plumage, including cardinals and male house finches.

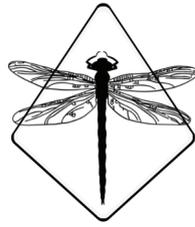
found at the park. This is a leisurely hike on level ground (handicap accessible). Binoculars helpful, but not required. You can borrow a birding pack (bird book/binoculars) from the State Park headquarters. This outing happens on the 2nd Saturday of each month. Meet at the dump station at 8 am.

VT AUGUST 13:
Monthly Nature Hike
 8:00am-5:00pm
 Tentative subject(s)
 Astronomy, insects.
 August 13 or 20. Date, time and location to be announced.

Did You Know?



Not every predator needs fangs, but the cobra lily certainly looks like a snake! This lethal lily developed dastardly new techniques to trick its prey and find fuel. Tiny translucent windows at the top of a tube lure insects in towards the light through a small opening. Once inside, downward-pointing hairs and a slippery surface pull prey into its deadly depths!



TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST

2022 ANNUAL MEETING

HOUSTON, TX

OCTOBER 20-23

Agenda & Registration Prices

Early Registration

Closes August 31st

Full Event Registration - \$365.00
 Two Day (Fri & Sat) - \$340.00

Standard Registration

Open September 1st – September 29th

Full Event Registration - \$390.00
 Two Day (Fri & Sat) - \$375.00

Thursday
10/20

Morning Field Sessions

11:00am - 2:00pm
 Chapter Leadership Luncheon

Social Dinner

Friday
10/21

All Day Field Sessions

8:00am - 5:30pm
 Technical Sessions

11:30am - 1:30pm
 Conservation of the Night Sky & Lunch

7:00pm - 8:30pm
 From Green Space to Outer Space Keynote Address

Saturday
10/22

All Day Field Sessions

8:30am - 5:00pm
 Technical Sessions

12:00pm - 1:00pm
 TMN Science Fair
 Winners Presentation

6:30pm - 8:00pm
 Awards Reception

Sunday
10/23

8:00am - 9:00am
 Contest Awards &
 2023 Certification Pin
 Announcement

Lodging for this year's conference will be at our contract Omni hotel in Houston, TX. Discount lodging prices in the TMN Program block will be offered through our direct lodging reservation link after registering for the meeting. In-person registrants will be given the option to reserve lodging upon the completion of registration with that direct link emailed in the registration confirmation message. Lodging reservation will open with Meeting Registration the first week of August. *Please do NOT call the hotel directly.*

The Agenda and Registration for the 2022 Annual Meeting in Houston is now posted on the TMN website! <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2022-annual-meeting/>

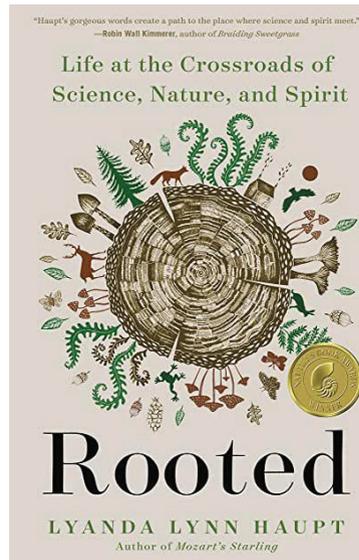


Hungry for moisture and carbon dioxide, the kissing bug might have a cute name, but it's also known as the vampire bug—beware of its bite! These mini menaces aim for the mouth while people sleep. Like mosquitoes, these biting bugs carry diseases.



Bronze frogs have specialized eardrums. They do not have external ears like ours, but you can see their tympanum (eardrum). It is the round, circular shape on both sides of their head which allows them to hear. Frog calls are relatively loud, so their eardrums are connected to their lungs which protects their eardrums from becoming damaged by the sound.

Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit



Deepen your connection to the natural world with this inspiring meditation, "a path to the place where science and spirit meet" (Robin Wall Kimmerer).

In *Rooted*, cutting-edge science supports a truth that poets, artists, mystics, and earth-based cultures across the world have proclaimed over millennia: life on this planet is radically interconnected. Our bodies, thoughts, minds, and spirits are affected by the whole of nature, and they affect this whole in return. In this time of crisis, how can we best live upon our imperiled, beloved earth?

Award-winning writer Lyanda Lynn Haupt's highly personal new book is a brilliant invitation to live with the earth in both simple and profound ways—from walking barefoot in the woods and reimagining our relationship with animals and trees, to examining the very language

we use to describe and think about nature. She invokes rootedness as a way of being in concert with the wilderness—and wildness—that sustains humans and all of life.

In the tradition of Rachel Carson, Elizabeth Kolbert, and Mary Oliver, Haupt writes with urgency and grace, reminding us that at the crossroads of science, nature, and spirit we find true hope. Each chapter provides tools for bringing our unique gifts to the fore and transforming our sense of belonging within the magic and wonder of the natural world.



RUNNING YOUR WAY THIS SUMMER.

Purchase a Greater Roadrunner license plate for \$30 and help fund nature tourism, wildlife viewing programs and conservation projects. Best of all, \$22 of the \$30 goes directly to help fund conservation efforts right here in Texas. BEEP-BEEP!

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