



# Rolling Plains Chapter NEWSLETTER

Vol.14, No.4

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

May 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 County; 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.*

**APRIL 5: 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:** City Nature challenge ID Party and Nature Nerds Swap Meet

**VT MAY 1-2: City Nature Challenge 2022** iNaturalist-based event. Must have an iNaturalist account and join Chapter's iNaturalist Project to participate

**AT MAY 10: TMN Tuesday** 12:00-1:00 On the Second Tuesday of each month at the noon hour (12:00pm Central Standard Time), the TMN State Office will offer an hour-long virtual advanced training event – which will sometimes



They may have been few and far between, but the April showers have brought May flowers and just in time for the City Nature Challenge and our April Saturday Hike. I hope everyone has iNaturalist loaded on their phones or bookmarked on their computers and your batteries are charged and ready to go! Our challenge for this year is to get at least 1000 different species documented in our area. Remember, our area covers 10 counties and if you make at least 2 iNat observations in any county, you can add a point to your Scavenger Hunt list. (One point for each county.) Don't worry if you don't have all of your observations identified. We will wrap up our City Nature Challenge at the May meeting with an ID party so we can all learn a little more about what is out there.

Also at the May meeting, we will have a Nature Nerds Swap Meet. If you have any books or gear that you would like to sell or trade, bring it along. (Please be sure to have a price on it if you want to sell it and your own change.)

If you have ordered a t-shirt and haven't paid for it, please pay Lynn as soon as you can. The shirts are in production now and will be ready soon!

A note about the next two TMN Tuesdays... May 10 will be Richard Heibrun of TPWD with an update on the Recovering America's Wildlife Act that is working its way through Congress right now. The June TMN Tuesday will be out of this world. Literally! It will be a downlink from the International Space Station with Kjell Lindgren, a member of the Gulf Coast Chapter TMN and a NASA Astronaut commanding the SpaceX Crew-4. The date for this presentation is up in the air right now and will be announced as soon as they get all the technicalities worked out. While we wait to see when that will be, you can read more about the mission and send your questions for Kjell to Mary Pearl at this link. <https://txmn.tamu>.

## Spring Training Schedule for May 7:00-9:00pm Bolin 213

**May 5**—Vertebrate biology overview including historical biogeography with mammals as a model

**May 7**—**Field Trip 3:** Bird Identification at Lake Arrowhead State Park 9am-noon

**May 12**—Entomology Overview including common local insects

**May 19**—Paleontology

**May 26**— Pollinators

including some fantastic new and returning guest speakers. Most run for one hour. 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 MAY 12:** *Texas Water Webinar—Managing Agricultural Nonpoint Source Water Pollution in Texas* 6:30-7:30 (This is the ONLY webinar that may be watched as a recording.)

**VT MAY 14:** *Global Big Day* Must have an eBird account. Participating is easy—you can even be part of Global Big Day from home. If you can spare 5 or 10 minutes, report your bird observations to eBird online or with our free eBird Mobile app. If you have more time, submit checklists of birds throughout the day. You never know what you might spot. Your observations help eBird better understand global bird populations through products like animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science. (you can come to the Bird Outing at LASP the same day to learn more about ebird.)

[edu/a-texasmaster-naturalist-in-space/](http://edu/a-texasmaster-naturalist-in-space/)

Lynn has Horned Lizard Surveys starting soon and a busy summer is on the horizon. For those of you who like to plan ahead, the schedule and agenda for the State Meeting will be available in July and registration will open the first week in August. In the meantime, be sure to check the calendar on the website for all the latest updates and activities.

The May meeting will be in person at 7:00 PM 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.)

—Laura

## The Return of Black Bears to Texas

*reprinted from Our Wild Texas*

Black bears are native Texans, but unregulated hunting caused them to disappear by the 1960s.

Now they're slowly coming back. These small bears are shy and normally not a risk to people or pets. Their diet is mostly plants plus some insects, but they'll eat most anything – including your trash. So if a bear's in the area, remove any outdoor food until it moves on.

Once a bear gets a taste of food from people, it's almost impossible to retrain it to be afraid of people. This typically ends badly for the bear, as was the case in Del Rio that left a bear cub orphaned.

Black bears are threatened in Texas, and it's illegal to harm them. If you find yourself near one, do NOT run, DO back away. Then let your local biologist know where you saw it.

It is a violation of law to kill a black bear in Texas, with penalties of up to \$10,000, added civil restitution fines, jail time and loss of all hunting privileges.

All our wildlife, including black bears, will have a better chance at survival if the Re-



covering America's Wildlife Act passes.

### **Black Bear Facts:**

- The black bear is a protected and rare species in the state of Texas.
- Male bears weigh 150 to over 350 lbs., and females weigh 120 to 250 lbs.
- Male home ranges average 20,000 acres, while females average 5,000 acres.
- Denning can start as early as November and continue until late May.
- Bears den in large, hollow trees, brush piles, thickets, rock crevices and caves.
- Denning bears go into a deep sleep but can be aroused if disturbed.
- Females mature at three to five years of age and, on average, have two cubs every other year.
- Cubs are born in the den weighing 8 ounces and will exit the den weighing 4 pounds.
- Cubs stay with their mother for 1-1/2 years.
- Bears are opportunistic feeders and will eat almost anything that is available. Up to 90 percent of a bear's diet is vegetable material, which includes nuts, fruits, berries and plants.
- Most of the protein in a bear's diet comes from insects like beetles, wasps, termites and ants.

**VT MAY 14: BIRD OUTING at LASP**  
 8:00-10:00 - meet at the dump station at the campground area. Join other birders or bird watchers during the Rolling Plains Chapter during the Monthly Bird Outing at Lake Arrowhead State Park on May 14, at 8 am, as we will be censusing the birds in the park that day, too. The hike will be easy and handicap-accessible. - in conjunction with Global Big Day.

**AT MAY 15 & 16: Whiteside Museum Field Trip-registration required 9:00-1:00.**  
 Rolling Plains Chapter members have permission to attend one of these sessions. You can count your time for one field trip only.

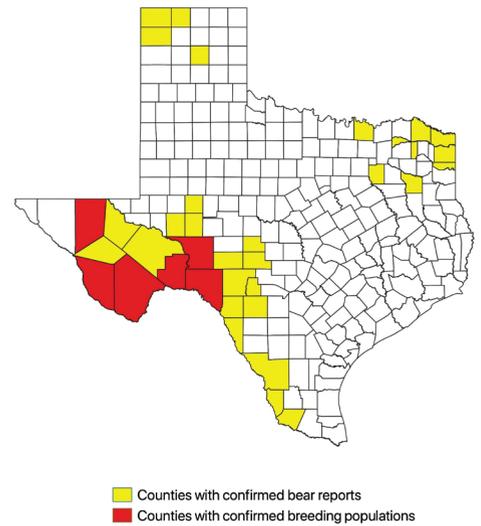
**VT MAY 21: Monthly Nature Hike 9:00-11:00**  
 Join member for our Monthly Nature Hike. Learn about the birds along the Chat Trail with Debra Halter. Meet at the back of the parking lot at 5205 Fairway (Chat Trail).

- Prime bear habitat includes escape cover, dispersal corridors, diverse foods and dens.

**What to Do if You Encounter a Bear:**

1. Do not approach it.
2. Bears are normally shy and not aggressive to humans.
3. If you encounter a bear at close range, talk in a calm manner while backing away slowly. Do not make direct eye contact.
4. **DO NOT RUN!** This can trigger a bear's chase instinct.
5. If a bear approaches you, stand your ground and raise your arms, backpack or jacket to appear larger. Yell at the bear to scare it off.
6. If attacked, fight back aggressively with anything available. Let the bear know you are not easy prey. **DO NOT PLAY DEAD!**

Confirmed Texas Black Bear Sightings 2000-2020

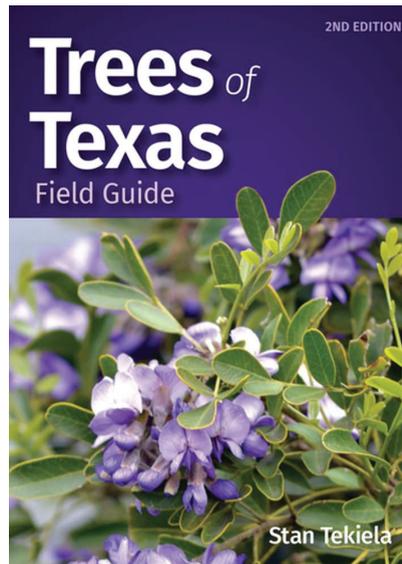


# Trees of Texas Field Guide

by Stan Tekiela

Learn to identify Texas trees with this handy field guide, organized by leaf type and attachment.

With this famous field guide by award-winning author and naturalist Stan Tekiela, you can make tree identification simple, informative, and productive. There's no need to look through dozens of photos of trees that don't grow in Texas. Learn about 180 species found in the state, organized by leaf type and attachment. Just look at a tree's leaves, then go to the correct section to learn what it is. Fact-filled information contains the particulars that you want to know, while full-page photographs provide the visual detail needed for accurate



identification.

**Book Features**

- 180 species: Every native tree plus common non-natives
- Easy to use: Thumb tabs show leaf type and attachment

- Compare feature: Decide between look-alikes
- Stan's Notes: Naturalist tidbits and facts
- Professional photos: Crisp, stunning full-page images

This new edition includes updated photographs; expanded information; a Quick Compare section for leaves, needles, and silhouettes; and even more of Stan's expert insights. So grab *Trees of Texas Field Guide* for your next outing—to help ensure that you positively identify the trees that you see.

*Paperback: 384 pages*  
 ISBN-13:978-1647552190  
 \$13:29 on Amazon

## Did You Know?



These round, fluffy, and cute little sea creatures are fondly called “sea bunnies.” They are actually sea slugs that belong to the group of mollusks called nudibranchs.

They are less than an inch long and have a fur-like coat. This little coat is made up of tiny rods that covers its back. The furs are arranged around small knobs sometimes in black giving it a speckled appearance.

All nudibranchs can produce both sperm and eggs because they are hermaphrodites.

They only live a few months up to a year. They are very, very poisonous and anyone who eats them will definitely have a hard time afterwards.

# Honey Bees, Bred for Better Things

reprinted from the April 2022 Issue of *iwire*

Varroa mites (*Varroa destructor*) have been the prime threat to honey bees since their introduction 50 years ago. This small arachnid (about 0.6 inches wide) is an external parasite of honey bees (*Apis* spp.). Varroa's have a flattened and oval body and eight legs. Adult females are reddish brown and males are yellowish with tan legs. Males are smaller and more spherical in shape.

These mites originated from Asia and were only ectoparasites of the Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana*) until it evolved the ability to parasitize European honey bees (*Apis mellifera*). European honey bees have not built up a resistance to these invasive mites. Heavy mite infestations can cause malformed wings, legs, and bodies in newly emerged bees. Parasitism in adult bees affects flight, orientation, and can cause bees to get lost, preventing them from returning home. The loss of worker bees severely weakens the colony. Weak colonies are susceptible to robbery by stronger hives. Eventually, the colony dies.

Varroa destructor also carries several viruses that are fatal to bees including: deformed wing virus, acute bee paralysis virus and slow paralysis virus. These virus-



**Top:** Varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*). Credit: Scott Bauer. **Middle:** Adult female varroa mite feeding on a developing honey bee. Credit: Scott Bauer. **Bottom:** Worker bee with deformed wing virus due to severe varroa mite infestation. Credit: Klaas de Gelder.

es result in a condition called “parasitic mite syndrome” and a colony can be destroyed in a few months.

Methods for controlling the mites, and the diseases they carry, have had limited success, and the varroa mites' resistance to chemical treatments is increasing. Desperate for a solution, the Agricultural Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) began to breed honey bees for resistance to the varroa mite. This rigorous breeding program lasted for 20 years and has shown promising results. The mite resistant bees were named “Pol-line” bees.

Pol-line bees were twice as likely to survive the winter (60% survival) compared to standard honey bees (26% survival). High losses were experienced in standard honey bees unless extensive chemical miticide treatments were initiated. The mite resistant colonies also show a level of resistance to three of the major viruses: deformed wing virus variant A and B, and chronic bee paralysis virus. Although further investigation is required, the results have demonstrated, thus far, a strong potential for varroa resistance and the reduction of colony loss.

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