



# Rolling Plains Chapter NEWSLETTER

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<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

June 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.*

## **JUNE 7: 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:** Christie Gardner will present a program on Blue Birds

**VT JUNE 4: Mark Howell Memorial Fishing Rodeo 9:00-4:00** Lake Arrowhead State Park will host the Mark Howell Memorial Fishing Rodeo again this year. Volunteers are needed to help with registration of participants, recording catches, etc. Do not need to attend full session.

**VT JUNE 5: Trash Cleanup-Adopt a Highway** Contact Lynn (940-867-3006 [rlynnseman@gmail.com](mailto:rlynnseman@gmail.com)) to choose a



June is going to be a celebration of blues... Blue skies, Blue Birds, and Blue Gill!

The summer is heating up and we will kick off our celebration of blue on Saturday, June 4th at Lake Arrowhead with the Mark Howell Memorial Fishing Rodeo where there will hopefully be a few Blue Gill on the hooks of our littlest fishermen. June 4th is also National Trail Day so we will observe this day with a guided hike on the Dragonfly Trail, hopefully, under a beautiful blue Texas sky.

And speaking of blue skies, the June TMN Tuesday will be high in the sky... in space, actually! The presentation 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. Due to technical issues, the estimated time for the program is 2:30 - 4:00 pm CST on June 14th but please note that this could change and we will need to be flexible. Watch the State website for registration information. (We will try to let you know!) If you have any questions you would like to ask Kjell, send them to Mary Pearl at this link. <https://txmn.tamu.edu/a-texas-master-naturalist-in-space/>



And, finally, to round out our blue theme, Christie Gardner will present a program on Blue Birds at the Chapter Meeting on June 7th. The June 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.)

I hope you will enjoy some blue this month and hope to see you all soon.—*Laura*

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

**June 2**— Water resources

**June 9**— Plants

**June 16**— Moths and other insects at night

**June 23**— Rangeland ecology/ managements

**June 25**— **FIELD TRIP 4**  
Warter testing

**June 30**— Interpretive, volunteer opportunities & communication

section of the Adopt-a-Highway to clean up at a time and date of your choosing. She suggests not doing the clean up by yourself.

**VT JUNE 6: STEM Conference** Region 9 Educational Service Center will be hosting a STEM conference on June 6. The Chapter will have a booth set up. This involves talking to people who are attending the conference about the Texas Master Naturalist organization at our booth. See the Calendar on our website for the link to sign up. Different time slots are available.

**VT MAY 14: 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 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.

**AT JUNE 14:**  
**TMNTuesday 12:00-1:00** On the Second

# What's Hiding in Your Potting Soil?

*reprinted from iwire May 2022 issue*

The growing trade in cultivated plants and potting soil has been linked to the dispersal of many invasive species. However, the unintentional spread of seeds via human transport is often under evaluated, especially seeds transported in soil. A recent study was conducted to evaluate the seed count in your typical potted soil and horticultural substrates, and how this might be influencing accidental invasive species introduction.



those without. In nature, seeds are typically dispersed via the wind or transported in the fur or fecal matter of animals. Wild herbivores, grazing livestock, and fruit-eating wildlife spread the seeds which ensures the survival of a diverse and thriving ecosys-

tem. This is the likeliest explanation for why soil that contained manure also contained more seeds.

Potting soils are usually imported from distant countries and the growth mediums are generally cultivated in very large quantities. The impact of this dispersal pathway requires further investigation. Researchers bought bags of potting soil from garden centers, counted the seeds that were found within, and identified them. They also calculated the greatest distance each species may have been dispersed. They found that one liter of potting soil contains an average of 13 seeds of 6 different species. An average 20-liter bag of soil could contain around 265 viable seeds. Although soil content varied between the different types of potting soil, those that contained manure contained a significantly higher number of seeds and species than

In the study, five of the species found were not native to the area. Four of these were already widespread and problematic in the country, however, many native species were also found. Many of the natives found are sparse in the area, suggesting that spread of these species through potting soil could be beneficial. The researchers concluded that the global plant and soil trade could represent a general dispersal of both native and alien species and result in both adverse and favorable effects. It may help gene flow between otherwise isolated populations, shifting ranges, landscapes effected by changing climate, and “other large-scale ecological processes of great conservation concern”.

## Texas Wildlife Profile

# Black-tailed Jackrabbit

The Black-tailed Jackrabbit is a large, long-eared rabbit of the open grasslands and desert scrub of the West. Its fur is a dark buff color peppered with black, and its

black-tipped ears are almost the same length as its hind feet.

The Black-tailed Jackrabbit spends most of its day

resting in a scratched-out hollow in the ground. They are generally most active at dusk and throughout the night. Under the cover of darkness, they can forage

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 include 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 JUNE 15: *Plant Party-edible and medicinal plants Webinar*—10:00-11:30** Five short presentation from experts in the field of edible and medicinal plants and door prizes. *You must register the day before the presentation* to receive the link to the presentation. <https://www.surveymonday.com/r/medicinalpp>

**AT JUNE 15: *Texas Water Webinar Artificial Reef program*—6:30-7:30** The Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) Artificial Reef program was established in 1990 with a guiding mission to develop, maintain, promote and enhance the artificial reef potential in Texas Coastal waters. Funded through industry partners and

with relative security.

Jackrabbits are strict vegetarians. During the spring and summer, they feed on clover, alfalfa and other abundant greens. During the lean fall and winter months, they subsist on woody and dried vegetation.

Jackrabbits always seem to be on their guard. They are very alert to their surroundings and watchful of potential threats. They rely on their speed to elude predators and, if they are lucky enough to escape, they will flash the white underside of their tail to alert other jackrabbits in the area.

Black-tailed Jackrabbits mate year round. They have one to four litters per year with one to eight young per litter. Young jackrabbits are born bright-eyed and active, and after only one month they



can fend for themselves. Jackrabbits may live up to eight years in the wild but, like many other animals, they must contend with predators. Hawks, Coyotes and badgers are among the predators that regularly hunt jackrabbits.

Black-tailed Jackrabbits can be found on brushlands, prairies and meadows. They are often associated with

pastures that have been grazed by livestock. Unlike other animals that need dense brush cover, jackrabbits use the high visibility of pasturelands to spot predators before they spot them.

Jackrabbits are common throughout most of the western United States and in Texas except for the far eastern portions.

## TEXAS TRAILBLAZERS

# Big Year for Birds...and Safety

*by Melissa Gaskill*

*reprinted from the Mau 2022 Issue of Texas Parks and Wildlife*

Tiffany Kersten sort of fell into doing a birding Big Year in 2021, yet she managed to break the record with 726 species. What matters more to her, though, are the hundreds of personal safety alarms she distributed to women in the outdoors thanks to her birding activities.

A birder since age 12, Tiffany had guided as a side gig for about 10 years. When she lost her job in 2020, she relied on guiding to pay the bills. In early 2021, she took off on a birding road trip. Driving out of Franklin Mountains State Park on Feb. 10, she

flushed some scaled quail.

“That was 287 species for the year, and something just flipped. I said, ‘OK, I’m going to try to do this,’” she says. “This” being a Lower 48 Big Year — checking off as many bird species as possible in one calendar year in the continental U.S.

Then, two things happened: allegations of sexual assault rocked the birding community, and Tiffany noticed a personal safety alarm company, She’s Birdie, on social media. An assault survivor herself, she decided

grants, the program has established almost 100 reef sites that run along the Texas coast and include locations in both state and federal waters. These reefs include sunken ships, prefabricated concrete pyramids, culverts and a myriad of other suitable materials. During this webinar we'll get a fish-eye-view of some of our larger artificial reefs and learn the science behind our monitoring program.



Some shared their own stories. Others gave her \$50 and told her to pay it forward.

Tiffany hit 700 birds, her publicized goal, on Oct. 2. Looking at the list of birds left to see, she realized the record — 724 — was within reach. She broke it on Dec. 18 with a bat falcon at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, just down the road from where she lives. A northern lapwing in New Jersey became No. 726.

At the beginning of 2022, she launched her own guiding company, Nature Ninja Birding Tours.

She's continuing the partnership with She's Birdie, with every \$10 donation providing a free alarm for Tiffany to hand out. This next year will be big on purpose.

## Did You Know?



One of the largest insects in the world, giant water bugs can grow up

to 12cm long. These big insects communicate by moving their body up and down in the water to create ripple signals. That's some seriously good vibrations!

to broaden the focus of her mission.

“Part of my goal became to show women birders there is space for us — to create safer spaces for women, not just physically but also emotionally,” she says.

On March 8, International Women's Day, she launched a blog and a GoFundMe campaign. From every \$50 donation, she used \$35 to support her Big Year travels and \$15 to buy alarms. (Later, the company began matching donations, allowing her to use the entire \$50 to chase birds yet still provide alarms.)

“It was kind of awkward at first,” Tiffany says. “I made cards with my story and info about my blog and fundraiser and started having casual conversations with women I met about safety in the outdoors.”



For more about Tiffany Kersten check out the June 2022 issue of *Texas Monthly*.

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