



Rolling Plains Chapter NEWSLETTER

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<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

April 2024

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.

APRIL 2: Rolling Plains Chapter Meeting - 7:00-9:00pm 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.

AT The program: Our program will be fellow RPC member, Melissa Rose, with a presentation on her work at Wild Bird Rescue.

AT APRIL 9: TMN Tuesday 12:00-1:00pm TMNTuesdays are a way to learn about top conservation issues of the state, earn advanced training hours and interact with wildlife professionals from across the state! Only TMNTuesdays and Texas Nature Tracker mini-series webinar recordings can count as AT.



The 2024 Spring Training is underway! We kicked off the training with a "Trail Mixer" at River Bend Nature Center and it was great to see everyone there. Thanks again to Lisa Winkles who did a great job with the decorations and getting all of the snacks and treats together for us. We have eleven new trainees and we are excited to get to know them! If anyone is interested in being a mentor for one or more of the trainees, we will be happy to get you set up. A mentor could make a huge difference for a new trainee and you could get more out of the program too!

With the recent rains we missed the "Spring Into Action" event at Lake Arrowhead but watch for that to be rescheduled sometime in the future. The trash clean up at the Chat Trail at Lake Wichita Park was rescheduled for the following Saturday and thanks to the Master Naturalists and other citizens, several bags of trash were collected from the creek that runs by the trail. Those weren't little bags either - they were huge! Thanks to everyone who came out to help. It looks so much better.



April looks to be pretty busy but we will have lots of offerings to help you get outside. The City Nature Challenge is coming up on April 26-29 so get out there and make those iNat observations. The identification period will be April 30 - May 5th.

Our April meeting will be *Tuesday, April 2 at 7:00 pm. Our program will be fellow RPC member, Melissa Rose, with a presentation on her work at Wild Bird Rescue.* We have so many opportunities to share with you and I hope to see you in person or on Zoom at the meeting! —Laura

FR APRIL 12: *Texas Stream Team water testing 9:00-10:00am*
Meet at the Lake Wichita boat ramp off of Kemp Blvd, then moved to Lucy Park, just inside the park near River Bend Nature Center. This event will be held the second Friday of each month, unless noted otherwise.

PO APRIL 13:
MONTHLY BIRD OUTING 8:00-10:00am
Join Penny Miller, other members and guests at Lake Arrowhead State Park for a bird outing. Meet at Lake Arrowhead State Park at the building by the boat slips and fishing pier. Look for and identify birds found at the park.

PO APRIL 20:
Monthly Hike 9:00am-11:00am Join members as they explore the Wichita Bluffs Trail. Observe the flora and fauna along the trail in preparation for the City Nature Challenge bioblitz. Meet at the trailhead parking lot off of Seymour Hwy.

FR APRIL 26-29:
City Nature Challenge Bioblitz - observations All day or Part of day
Participate in the City Nature Challenge bioblitz. Take pictures of wild plants, insects, and animals within

The Bizarre Lives of Flies



We have more than 5,000 species of flies in Texas. They're pollinators, parasites, pest controllers and a protein source for many other animals. Then there's maggots, the larvae of some fly species. Eewww, right? But maggots do the dirty work of dumpster dining and carrion consumption, so we rely on them to avoid health hazards.

Fascinating fly facts:

- Flies can have huge multi-faceted eyes in various colors, metallic and iridescent body parts, or sport beards.
- Male dance flies present silk-wrapped insects to females.
- Phorid flies are being tested in the control of invasive fire ants, because they have a worthy-of-a-horror-movie habit of decapitating an ant, then pupating in what was the ant's head.

It's hard to accurately ID flies with photos, but you can still share your shots on *iNaturalist*, and check out the many faces of Texas flies while you're there. Find out more about the secret lives of flies in the popular *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine story *The Flies of Texas*.

Plant for Wildlife: Frostweed

You may have seen photos of frostweed ice sculptures in your social feed after our recent freeze. This phenomenon occurs when freezing sap and water expand through cracks in the plant's stem, hardening as it flows out.

Only a few species of plants are capable of producing these fascinating creations. The frostweed *Verbesinia virginica*, found in Texas, is one of them. Look for them early in morning – once the sun hits them, they melt.



This native plant also produces clusters of white blooms that appear in autumn, just in time to provide nectar for migrating monarchs and other pollinators. Find out more in the *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine story *Flora Fact: Frostweed and Monarchs*. Try adding frostweed to your landscape. It grows in most parts of the state, preferring moist semi-shade.

Tips for Building a Toad House

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and toads are adorable once you realize they can eat 10,000 insect pests in one summer. Help persuade a toad to live in your garden by making a toad house.

Toads need a cool place to escape the heat, hide and sleep. You can buy pre-made



toad houses, but it's easy to make one from a flowerpot or with stones. Increase the

value of your toad home with:

- A back exit to escape predators, like cats
- Leaves or soil for burrowing
- A shallow soaking pool – try a pot saucer filled with water
- A shady location near a water faucet or other damp area

the 10 counties of our Chapter. Upload them to inaturalist or use the inaturalist app. Join the inaturalist project "City Nature Challenge 2024" to have your observations uploaded.

FR APRIL 30-MAY 5:
Identification ONLY of observation from City Nature Challenge All day or Part of day
Report your time identifying others observations in the City Nature Challenge. This is for identifying only, not reporting observations.

PO APRIL 30:
AFTER-SCHOOL FISHING PROGRAM 4:30-6:00 pm
The city of Wichita Falls Parks and Recreation Department is teaming up with the Texas Parks and Wildlife to offer free after-school fishing. These fishing events held at South Weeks Pond. Help children interested in learning how to fish. Show up at the fishing pond at 2006 Southwest Pkwy.

Urban gardens provide much-needed habitat for our wild toads. Report your toad sightings to the *Herps of Texas* project on *iNaturalist*.



Find out more about toad conservation in *Texas Parks and Wildlife* short video *Friend of the Toads: Paul Crump*.

Training Class Schedule for 2024

Classes begin March 21 to July 25 at MSU Bolin Hall room 213
Time: 7:00 to 9:00 pm, Thursdays with 4 Saturday field trips between 9am and noon

March

March 13: Deadline for class registration
Registration limited to 25 trainees
March 2: Orientation at River Bend, volunteer opportunities: *Chapter Partners*

April

April 4: Introduction to Rolling Plains Chapter: *Laura Gillis president, RPC*
April 1: Ornithology: *Dr. Marcy Brown Marsden*
April 18: Fish Biology: *Wes Dutton, Inland fisheries TPWD*
April 20: FIELD TRIP to Lake Arrowhead, electro-fishing, with TPWD
April 25: Geology: *Dr Jonathan Price*

May

May 2: Botany, Invasive Species: *Dr Timothy Pegg*
May 4: FIELD TRIP to Lake Arrowhead, history, natural resources, with Ranger L
May 9: Ecological concepts: *Dr Kashif Mahmud*
May 16: Paleontology: *Dr Steven Rosscoe*
May 18: FIELD TRIP to Mineral Wells, fossil dig with Dr Rosscoe
May 23: Insects: *Dr Roy Vogstberger*
May 30: Mammals: *Dr Ray Willis*

June

June 6: Waterways: *Daniel Nix, Executive Director Texas American Water Works Association*
June 13: Mycology: *Dr James Masuoka*
June 15: FIELD TRIP to Lucy Park, water testing, Lynn Seman
June 20: Forest Ecology: *Kimberlee Peterson, Texas A&M Forest Service*
June 27: Pollinators: *Cedar Sanderson, Master Naturalist*

July

July 11: Weather: *Michael Bohling, KFDX Chief Meteorologist*
July 18: Rangeland Ecology: *Ricky Linnex*
July 25: Final Review

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