

CANYONLANDS CHRONICLE

Balcones Canyonlands Chapter at Concordia University TX

Summer, 2017



T E X A S



Master Naturalist 2017-2018 Training

Because our chapter is a collegiate chapter, many of our members will leave us after they graduate at Concordia. This means it is important that aside from our wonderful new college members we also push to acquire wonderful new community members! These members are vital for us to sustain the chapter!

We are currently taking applications for the 2017-2018 training class for our Texas Master Naturalist chapter. If you know someone who would be interested in joining us, point them to our application on the website: [https://txmn.org/balcones/2017/06/12/want-](https://txmn.org/balcones/2017/06/12/want-to-be-a-master-naturalist-apply-now/)

[to-be-a-master-naturalist-apply-now/](https://txmn.org/balcones/2017/06/12/want-to-be-a-master-naturalist-apply-now/)

The first class will be on August 31st and go through March 22 at Concordia University.

Class Limit will be 15 community members & 15 CTX students.

We will continue to take applications through the first week of class for CTX applicants.

For questions, have applicants email Theresa Rooney at theresa.rooney@ctx.edu

Fall will be here before we know it and our new 2017-



2018 class will have begun, so please get the word out now!

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Save the Date!

08/15/17—Chapter Meeting at Concordia

08/31/17—Chapter Volunteer Fair

08/31/17—New Trainee Class begins

09/12/17—Chapter Meeting at Concordia

From the President

Hey Naturalists! It's getting to be that time of year again where things start ramping up, so make sure to check your email frequently for updates and things going on in the chapter.

I'm excited to say that so far we have 10 applicants for our new class and more coming in daily. So if you

still think you may know someone who may be interested, send them our way. Coming up soon is the TXMN 18th annual meeting. This year it will be in Corpus Christi at the Omni hotel from Oct. 20th-22nd. It's a great way to meet fellow nature lovers and hear some great presentations. Registration for the annual meet-

ing opens up the first week of August. Hope to see you all at our next chapter meeting!

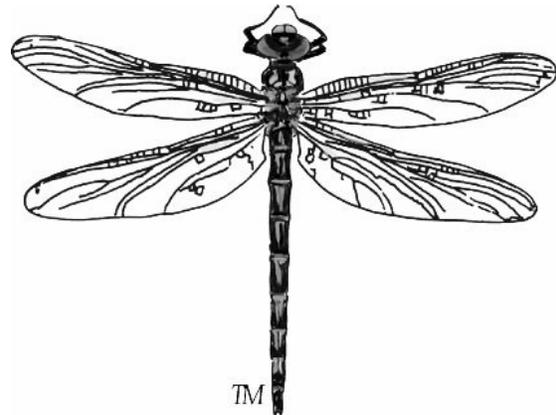
- **Walker Watts**



TMN Categories of Membership

Recently, there seems to have arisen some confusion about the various types of Master Naturalist membership. Let's go through those levels:

- **Master Naturalist Member in Training or Trainee** - This is the member starting out in basic training. They remain a trainee until they complete basic training.
- **Master Naturalist Pledge** - This member has completed basic training but has not completed their 40 hours of volunteer service and/or their 8 hours of advanced training. They remain a pledge until they complete certification.
- **Certified Master Naturalist** - This member has completed basic training, 40 volunteer service hours and 8 hours of advanced training. If not in their first year of membership, has completed 40 hours of service and 8 hours of



advanced training for the calendar year

- **Texas Master Naturalist Member** - This is a member who was certified in the past but for some reason is unable to complete certification in the current calendar year.
- There can also be **honorary chapter members** who have all the same privileges as the rest of the chapter. In our chapter, we currently have one honorary member and that is Dr. Laurence Meissner.

There can be many reasons why a member may not be certified in any given year, such as illness or schedule changes. Let's keep in mind that although some may not be able to achieve certification, they are frequently still working out in nature or otherwise supporting the chapter. Although there are certain rewards for being a "certified" Master Naturalist, there is still a place in the chapter for those unable to achieve certification in any year. Please don't treat them differently.

- **Theresa Rooney**



Photo courtesy of Heather Valey

Fun Facts About: Common Whitetail Dragonfly

- The scientific name for the Common Whitetail is *Plathemis lydia*
- The male Common Whitetail has a chalky white abdomen, the female is brown with white spots on each side
- Common Whitetails feed on small insects that they catch in mid-air
- Sexually mature Common Whitetails only live for around 36 days
- The Common Whitetail is territorial and aggressive during breeding season. They will commonly perform a "duel" in flight with any other males interloping into their territory.
- Common Whitetails are primarily a summer species but can be seen as early as the end of April and as late as November 1st

Purple Martins Prep For Migration

You've probably seen the white gourd like bird houses around Austin and perhaps you've wondered what they're for. These are Purple Martin houses.

Purple Martins are birds in the swallow family, however they are larger than most swallows. Males are black with a dark blue/purple sheen and females have a dark upper body with silver looking underparts.

The first purple martins (scouts) get to Austin in late February/early March and are males usually. The term scout is misleading, because the early birds don't report back to the flocks, they stay and make sure they stake out the best nesting structures for themselves.

Purple Martins here in Austin nest exclusively in man made structures. The American Indians used to hang hollowed out gourds up for them to nest in. Now we use fancy manu-

factured bird houses and plastic gourds for the birds.

Purple Martins are aerial insectivores, meaning they eat flying insects and catch them while they are flying. Contrary to popular belief they do not eat mosquitos though, the birds fly up much higher in the sky when they are hunting than the mosquitos do so they are not part of the bird's diet.

After they have fledged their young, the martins will gather as a large flock at a communal roost to feed, socialize and rest before migration. They usually choose a set of trees near human activity. This year the martins chose some trees in the Land & Cattle Steakhouse parking lot on I-35. Thousands of birds will gather at the roost every night for around a month from the middle of June through the middle of July.

They migrate to South America and winter there. They usually roost in urban centers over the winter in South America.

If you want to see the Purple Martin flock this year, the Audubon Society is hosting Purple Martin parties every Friday and Saturday until July 29th. For more information visit the Travis Audubon page: <http://travisaudubon.org/purple-martin-parties>



Photo courtesy of Heather Valey



Herp Corner



Black- Necked Garter Snake

(*Thamnophis cyrtopsis*)

spotted by Mark Staerkel while out volunteering at a BCP property.

Photo courtesy of Mark Staerkel



Lace Bugs



Adult lace bugs are small, about 1/8 an inch, and highly sculptured on the upper surface. The thorax and front wings are expanded and have numerous transparent cells that look like lace. Nymphs, or immatures, are wingless, smaller, and often covered in dark spines. Eggs are inserted into leaf tissue and covered with dark excrement. Lace bugs are found on the underside of leaves.

Lace bug adults and nymphs have piercing-sucking mouthparts and suck juices from plant tissue. Feeding damage causes yellowing, stippling, and bleaching of the leaves, but damage usually isn't seen until late summer. The insects' dark excrement can also be unsightly both on the plant as well as surfaces underneath the plant.

While lace bugs are typically not a problem for healthy plants, when populations are especially high or last for a long period of time, it may cause leaf drop or a reduction in plant growth. Since healthy plants usually do not die from lace bugs, try to keep plants in top health using cultural control methods (right plant/ right place, proper watering & fertilizing, etc.). Damaged foliage

will not repair, so will either need to be replaced with new growth or pruned from the plant. Conserve beneficial organisms to help naturally reduce pest populations.

Any pesticide treatment that you choose will need to be targeted to the underside of the leaves. Less toxic options would include things like insecticidal soap, azadirachtin, or pyrethrins.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

- Wizzie Brown



Photos courtesy of Wizzie Brown

Conservation at Fort Hood

An army base may not be a place that immediately comes to mind when thinking about conservation efforts. However, this summer I had the chance to see just how great they can be for protecting and saving wildlife.

I have been working up at Fort Hood for several months surveying the base for pollinators and milkweed. Everyday we go out to different points and collect data on pollinators, specifically butterflies, and determine how much milkweed there is, what kind, and what stage of life cycle it is at. Surprisingly, given the abundance of antelope horn, green, and comet milkweed, the place is great place for milkweed dependent species

such as Monarch and Queen butterflies.

In addition, to our group, there is a group dedicated to studying migrating bird species, a specific black-capped vireo group, and a golden cheeked warbler group. The data we collect will offer insight into how the habitat is being uses, and will be used, to manage the land in a way that meets the need for training and for wildlife protection.

Overall the season has been great. There are some challenges with access as the army does use the base for extensive training, and tanks tear up the roads. They also have live ammunition-fire which creates a great amount of noise, but many

of the birds and pollinators seem able to ignore it and keep on with regular life activities.

- Stephanie Putnam



Photo courtesy of Heather Valey

Swimming With The Turtles

This past May I was lucky enough to take part in a freshwater turtle population study that took place in New Braunfels and Austin. Working with biologists from the North American Freshwater Turtle Research Group and the Turtle Survival Alliance, we would don snorkeling gear each day and catch as many turtles as possible while swimming in the Comal River and Bull Creek. We also used underwater traps and nets to help with the captures.

There are six species that naturally occur in these waterways and we found them all: Common Snapping Tur-

tle; Guadalupe Spiny Softshell; Texas River Cooter; Texas Map Turtle; Red-Eared Slider; Common Musk Turtle. All told, we gathered more than 500 turtles over the five sampling days. The turtles were sexed, weighed, measured, injected with a microchip, and their shells were notched to help with identification before being released back into the waterways where they were found. Females were also examined to see if they were gravid.

These long-term population studies are being used to determine the health of native chelonian populations. Besides the four times a year

NAFTGR is in Texas, they are also performing similar studies in Florida and Pennsylvania. The next turtle sampling in New Braunfels is scheduled for September 15-17, 2017. Contact me if you would like to be a part of the research team.

- Steve Brockway



Photo courtesy of Steve Brockway

Where Are They Now? Grads 2015-2017

I would like to update the chapter on what our graduate CTX members are doing now.

Hannah Coffey has moved to Dallas and is looking for both a job and a graduate program.

Maire Cox is still making coffee at Starbucks and is also employed as a seasonal clerk at Palo Duro Canyon.

Kaitlyn Rodriguez is a horticultural intern at Walt Disney World.

Kenneth Sparks is interning for the Grow Green program at City of Austin and is one of two Mickey Leland interns with Travis County. Kenneth's job keeps him out in the field most of the



Photo courtesy of Kenneth Sparks

time.

Amanda Sullivan is an educational intern with City of Austin Watershed Protection Department.

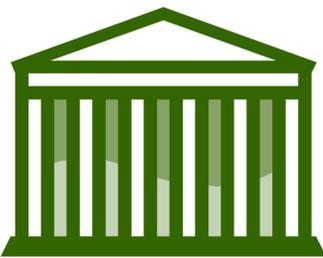
Congratulations to all of our graduates as they use what they have learned to make our world a better place. Please keep us updated on

your work and other accomplishments.

- **Theresa Rooney**



Chapter Officers & Committee Heads



A big "thank you" to our officers and committee heads!

Officers:

Current officers for the **Balcones Canyonlands Chapter at Concordia University TX** are:

- ◆ [Walker Watts](#), *President*
- ◆ [Dorothy Martinez](#), *VP*
- ◆ [Stephanie Putnam](#), *Secretary*
- ◆ [Joshua Wheatley](#), *Treasurer*

Our mascot: Salamander
Newsletter masthead: Jessie Zehr

Committee Heads:

- ◆ *Training & Communications:* [Theresa Rooney](#)
- ◆ *Membership:* [Maire Cox](#)
- ◆ *Volunteer Service:* [Rachel McGill](#)
- ◆ *Advanced Training:* [Rachel McGill](#)
- ◆ *Program:* [Dorothy Martinez](#)
- ◆ *Youth Services:* [Cindy Harding-Woodhull](#)
- ◆ *New Class Reps:* [Heather Valey](#) and [Frances Franklin](#)
- ◆ *Newsletter:* [Heather Valey](#)
- ◆ *Webmaster:* [Heather Valey](#)
- ◆ *Historian:* [Pete Aranda](#)
- ◆ *Outreach:* [Theresa Rooney](#)
- ◆ *Hospitality:* [Ruthann Panipinto](#)
- ◆ *Nominating:* [Kaitlyn Rodriguez](#)
- ◆ *Trails:* [Amanda Sullivan](#)
- ◆ *Student Welfare:* [Sam Whitehead](#)

Chapter members are encouraged to [contribute](#) articles and photos to the newsletter. Let us showcase your recent activity, favorite native plant, tree, bird or book! Most stories are 125-250 words in length.