

What's Inside:

Heard Tree Survey — Page 3 Whole Lotta Stuff Going on at Connemara — Pg 4 McKinney Greens—Pg 4 In the Ditch?—Pg. 5
Say Cheese—Pg. 5 Rose, Bud, Thorn—Pg. 6 “Eager”: Beaver Book—Pg. 7 Hummer Info—Pg. 8 Calendar & Contacts—Pg. 9

History and Update—Wylie Prairie:

And Suddenly the Light Bulb Lit

by Dave Powell— Class of 2007



In October of 2011 the Parks and Rec Management for Wylie asked the President of the Blackland Prairie Chapter at

the time, me, for a meeting to discuss resources for establishing a tall grass prairie on their land. We met and discussed what they wanted and I agreed to see if I could find someone to do the job. After doing some research, the light bulb lit up. I prepared a proposal for our Chapter

to do the restoration. They liked most of it however, we had to get the approval from the City Council. Which didn't happen until March of 2012. While we were waiting we got the Parks and Recreation folks to stop mowing the 30 acres adjacent to the parking lot for the Community Complex. This is located at 300 Country Club Road in Wylie.

In April they provided 10 pounds of Blackland Prairie Grass mix which volunteers from the chapter spread in a one

We got invited to do a presentation to a club at Davis Elementary.

acre zone East of the trail toward the dumpsters. They

See Wylie Pg. 2

Newsletter Highlight:

By Greg Tonian—Class of 2017
(newsletter editor)

Have “Rosy” New Year Year! The combination of year end reflections and holiday Christmas carols conspired to present me with a theme for my editorial. This newsletter is both a closing and a new beginning. A hymn that is often heard this time of year is the lovely hymn “Lo Rose E'er blooming”. It reminds me of the practice we had in my son's scouting days to gather after a trip to allow the scouts and adults to reflect on it. It was called “Rose, Thorn, Bud.” I encourage each chapter member to reflect on 2018. Certainly, there were many “Roses” or

highlights, “Buds” or things that show promise for the year ahead and possibly a few “thorns”, or lowlights and learning experiences that we might want to forget (or hopefully, laugh about!)

For me, there were many “roses”. Seeing a number of new bird species, including Altamira Orioles in Brownsville and Summer Tanagers in Santa Fe. I also had an amazing encounter with a cow moose and her calf in my campsite while backpacking in the Weminuche Wilderness in Colorado in September. I also was co-coordinator for a nature hike and moth attractor event at LLELA in July which was a heartwarming success. I also got my Entomology Pin.

My “bud” is the continuation of my “last Saturday” Nature hikes along The

Colony Shoreline Trail into 2019 and continuing to do what I can to share my passion for nature with my community.

My “thorns” are many and I am sure I am not alone in my dismay at the continuous reports of the ecological impacts of global warming and other human activities on our environment and species around the globe.

I do hope that chapter members will be less bashful about contributing to the newsletter in 2019. I will just call that a “thorny-bud”!

Finally, I am sure I speak for many as I feel the thorn of too little time to do the things that are the most meaningful, whether its time spent with family, volunteering and exploring this amazing world!

wanted a trail too, so we laid out a half mile long soft services trail which they scraped of vegetation and spread with mulch. Now the trail is just mowed.

In November of 2013 they provided 10 pounds of the Grass mix which two of us spread between the trail and Country Club Rd. We also put in twelve sample grass plots with seed for each grass in the mix as a teaching tool; they are framed with T posts and a signs for each grass.

By 2014 I had listened to other members of the chapter and learned that we needed forbs to go with the grasses, so in November of 2014 they provided 10 pounds of Blackland Prairie mix which we spread starting at the Cottonwood tree by the trail going East to cover about one acre. Also we started cutting small trees from the prairie which is ongoing.

We got invited to do a presentation to a club at Davis Elementary in early fall of 2015 who wanted a service project. So in October, Parks and Rec provided

10 pounds of Blackland Prairie Seed Mix. We worked with the club on spreading the seed and then walking it in, we named the activity Buffalo stomp. The Club liked it so much they raised money and bought another 10 pounds of seed and we helped them spread it down by the concrete trail that the City had built. We also started collecting seed from the grasses that were first seeded to relocate to other parts of the project area.

In October of 2016 they provided us

The only cost is mowing the trail.

with 10 pound of Blackland Prairie Mix which we spread East from the Cottonwood to the bend in the trail. We spent more time gathering grass seed from the first planting area and relocating it, we will continue to do this each year. The diversity of forbs has been enhanced by the seeds donated each year by our members. I thank you! When we got to the end of 2017, I told the Parks and Rec folks they would not need to provide any more seed as we have enough produc-

tion from the areas we had seeded. Now their only cost is mowing the trail.

2018 was a productive year and it has



been enjoyable to see the changes in the area. We will always have an issue with litter which can be picked up by Texas Master Naturalists and other volunteers during their visits if they are interested in pitching in. We have sprayed the poison ivy that got too close to the trail, this is the only chemical we have used. We will all ways have to control the small trees because we cannot burn and do not want mowing. We are setting up the first guided trail opportunity for the public in Wylie on October 12th 2019, the Wylie Rec folks are setting it up and we will be guiding.



Our active membership grew from 143 to 175, a 22.4% growth

Meeting attendance has consistently been between 70 and 90 members

Dues paying membership increased by almost 32%

Our income exceeded expenses

December Stats

The Blackland Prairie family continues to grow and provide support for the state mission

Class of 2018

Arguably the most enthusiastic and involved class ever graduated

20 of 33 or over 60% of its members have certified.

9 of its members have double-certified

9 members have already or will in January assume leadership roles in our chapter

As of December 2018, 20,967 hours of volunteer time were donated

You have participated in almost 2,240 hours of advanced training

You have spread your volunteer efforts over 95 differing opportunities

So far this year, 19 members have obtained their 250-hour milestone pin

6 members their 500-hour pins

3 members their 1,000-hour pins

What Kind of Wood in the Heard Woods?

by Rick Travis— Class of 2018

At the request of the Heard Nature Center, we've been conducting an extensive survey of the Heard Sanctuary woodland areas. The intent of this survey is to provide a detailed profile of the woodland species that can be used to build a care and maintenance program for the Heard's forested areas.

We began the survey in June, and plan to complete the survey by mid-summer 2019. For this survey, the forested areas were divided into 26 sections. We conduct each survey outing as a 2-3-person team. For each section, we're collecting the following information: 1. A count of the larger/canopy trees (by species); 2. A list of understory trees and shrubs; 3. A list of common/dominant ground-cover plants; 4. Any notes, recommendations, invasive species noted. Once a section is completed, the survey results are recapped and delivered to the Heard Sanctuary Manager, Parviz Shakeri.

We aren't attempting to count every single large/canopy tree in this survey. The intent is to travel through each section in multiple headings, counting the trees within wide bands along these different headings. We feel this approach covers enough territory within each section to provide a good species profile for that woodland area.

We've completed 18 of the 26 sections to-date. The remaining 8 sections consist primarily of bottomland

areas adjacent to Wilson Creek. We suspended the survey in September when the heavy rains flooded those remaining sections. We'll re-start the survey in the spring once the bottomland areas have dried out sufficiently to be accessible.

We're going to share our to-date findings and experiences with the Heard Forest Survey at the upcoming 3rd Saturday Nature Talk scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 19, at 9:30am in Laughlin Hall. Please join us for this presentation on the 19th!



Update — Connemara:

Whole Lotta Stuff Happening

by Bob Mione— Class of 2012

The volunteers at Connemara rescued several hundred native grass "clumps" from two separate native prairie remnants in Richardson, TX and:

- Successfully prepared several native grass/wildflower plots for seeding in 2019.

Connemara Provided restoration expertise via presentations to MN chapters in Granbury, Stephenville, Milano and Bastrop. Presentations were also made to Native Plant Society chapters in Marble Falls, Carrollton and White Rock Lake and to a Kiwanis Club in Wichita Falls.

- Successfully seeded, irrigated, and and grew native grass and wildflowers in the 2018 native grass/wildflower plots.
- Successfully eliminated, throughout the growing season, invasives from these same plots.
- Continued the efforts to restore Bob White quail to the Connemara Meadow.
- Successfully maintained an invasive



grass mowing program which allowed the entire 72 acre Meadow to be brought under mowing management.

- Successfully managed an irrigation system allowing the timely irrigation of several new native grass/wildflower plots.
- Successfully grew in the Allen High School greenhouse, several hundred native grass seedlings and then main-



tained these seedlings through the Summer allowing them to be moved to new plots within the Meadow.

- Successfully eliminated 964 tree saplings which were depriving the

native grass and wildflowers in the Meadow of precious moisture.

- Continued research and preparation to help reduce creek bank erosion of Rowlett Creek.

Bob Mione, Connemara manager, said that he was sure many other



things were done but that these are the big ones.

The following BPMN's were of great service to the restoration efforts at the Connemara Meadow Nature Preserve:

Barbara Wilson, Mike Wilson, Mike Thomason, Al Baum, Karin Saucedo, Robert Saucedo, Leah Beck, Daisy Davis, Michelle Rodenbach, Phyllis Graham, Greg Hupf, Anna Lawson, Steve Their, Scott Swanson, Sherry Wood, Bradley Bartlow.

Update — McKinney Greens , Newest BPTMN Partner

Supporting and Enhancing McKinney's Parks

by Greg Smith — Class of 2017

The McKinney Parks Foundation partners with the Parks

Department to assist in the maintenance and beautification of our natural spaces. The group organizes volunteer events, supervises Eagle Scout projects, presents educational programs and helps with park development.

MPF adopted the stewardship of the McKinney Community Center Nature Trail and McKinney Greens restoration for their long term projects with alternating monthly events at each location presenting volunteer opportunities to individuals, church, corporate and service groups.

We have had work events with Ribbon Communications, Young Men Service League and their moms as well as individuals who sign up online— MPF and their volunteers have logged 107 hours year to date.

To volunteer:

<https://www.mckinneyparksfndation.org/volunteer/>

Or contact chapter member Greg Smith at lg.smith2412@att.net

Journaling:

In a Ditch You Can Find...

by Lisa Travis — Class of 2018

In August, 2018, while visiting my parents in Nederland, Texas, I saw a really interesting looking plant growing in a ditch. It was at least 6-7 feet tall, with yellow flowers hanging in bunches. It came up on iNaturalist as "Rattlebush" (*Sesbania drummondii*.) It's a plant in the legume family, and has the pinnately compound leaves typical of these plants, but it's as big as a small tree.

On our drive to Houston a few days later, we saw these plants everywhere! I grew up in Southeast Texas, but I had never seen (noticed?) one of these before in my life! I had observed a Big Pod Sesbania in DFW area, and I soon realized these two were related. When I got back home, I found several more of both types of *Sesbania*. Next, I found a similar looking plant that turned out to be Bladderpod, *Glottidium vesicarium*, (syn. *Sesbania vesicaria*) and soon I saw several more of those. Once these plants developed seed pods, I really loved them! You can definitely tell them apart, even in pictures!

It's true that Bladderpod is not actually in the *Sesbania* genus, but it once was, and

they're similar enough that they are often confused. So, I'm lumping the three plants together here.

All three: Erect, non-twining, herbaceous plants with leaves even-pinnately compound, without tendrils or spines, growing up to 12 feet tall in a single year. The leaflets are entire and are not glandular-punctate. Flowers solitary or in racemes of 3-30 flowers. Fruits are non-segmented, several seeded.

If they have fruit (seed pods,) it's easy! The seed pods on Rattlebush (*Sesbania drummondii*) are about 2 - 3 inches long, 4-sided, winged, and typically have 3-7 seeds per fruit, while Big Pod Sesbania (*S. herbacea*) has seed pods that are much longer and narrower, do not have wings, and each pod has many tiny seeds. Bladder Pod (*Glottidium vesicarium*; syn. *Sesbania vesicaria*) has seed pods that are about the same size as those of Rattlebush, but they are two-sided, without wings, and usually have 2 seeds per fruit. In Bladder Pod, as the seedpods mature, they separate into a thicker outside layer and a papery- thin, inside layer, which is also quite distinctive.

If fruit has not yet appeared:, the flowers are still quite recognizable: Bladder Pod usually has several flowers in short ra-

cemes, but sometimes the inflorescence is a solitary flower; flowers are reddish brown to orange or yellowish, often tinged with pink or red. Each flower is 6-9 mm long; usually there are 1-6 flowers per raceme, but occasionally up to 12. Big Pod *Sesbania* has yellow flowers, 2-6 per raceme. Rattlebush has yellow flowers, sometimes with red lines, 10-30 per raceme.



Editor's Note: Despite the pod's appearance, it is not an edamame substitute. They are toxic to both humans and other animals.

Say Cheese!



Want to see the photo taken of you for certification, milestone, candid that makes you look marvelous or photos taken in the field?

Go to: . <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bptmn/>

Contact: Steven Lester, our hard working photographer at : stlester@live.com if you need a lesson in download.

Quarterly Highlight Articles: Rose, Bud, Thorn

By Rick Travis, Tom Shackelford, Greg Tonian,
Duane Mortensen

Rose/Bud

This fall, our chapter partnered with the Lewisville Aquatic Ecosystem Research Facility and the City of Frisco Parks Department to harvest almost 500 Green Milkweed plants from a 6-acre field slated for construction of a Frisco Fire station in 2019. The rescued Milkweed will be transplanted into the Stewart Creek Wetlands Preserve this winter.

The City of Frisco is very supportive of continuing an ongoing relationship with our chapter to scout land that is planned for parks or other city developments, and, if warranted, harvest and relocate valuable plants and/or seeds that are in harm's way prior to grading, etc. As with the milkweed harvest, rescued plants and seeds will be moved to protected areas within Frisco parks or preserves. The scouting, coordination, and harvesting efforts would be in partnership with city staff and any other agencies or organizations interested in participating in this endeavor.

The total acreage of undeveloped park land in Frisco is now over 1000 acres. This city land WILL be developed over the next several years, and the "budding" partnership with the City of Frisco will allow our chapter to make significant contributions toward preserving local native flora and fauna during this period of very rapid development.

Rick Travis, Class 2018

Rose

Erwin Park progress.... Raising canopy on Eastern red cedar to the eastern edge of the lower loop. Knowledge gained of the prairie while walking it on various Mondays.

Thorn

My ever-present companions and not so good friends; Greenbriar and Poison ivy.

Bud

Pocket prairie - backyard project... 150 SF of native grass, pollinators and wildflowers that will continue to work on growing and the numerous "Good" people that I have had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know!

Tom Shackelford, Class 2018

Rose/Thorn/Bud

Quote by the late Kim Chang-Ho who was killed in a freak storm in the Himalayas this past year. He climbed the world's 14 tallest peaks in a span of 7 years and 10 months without the aid of oxygen.

"Endless glaciers under my feet make my heart throb. I feel like I should discover every corner of the Himalayas."

Thorn

Quote from Carol Cullar's essay entitled 12 variations on a theme or why I live in Southwest Texas published in *Pride of Place: A Contemporary Anthology of Texas Nature Writing* edited by David Taylor.

"I have caught the wind that whistles through the buzzard-stripped carcass of all my fleshless dreams. I cannot let it go."

Thorn

I found you curled, peacefully next to the pocket prairie I had planted

You were not playing

There were signs of violence on your cheek and your long scaly tail

Your almost human hands and feet were curled, I hope your pain and suffering was brief

Perhaps you ran out in front of a car and were struck

Beautiful possum, you ran out of luck

You were another one of my neighbors that I had never met

I grieve for you and our loss.

Perhaps someday your legacy I will come across

I will pray that our neighbors will drive more carefully

And your children will live on,

so that they too,

Will not be, the neighbors I have never met

Greg Tonian, Class 2017

Rose

Digging up a mega milkweed for the milkweed relocation project.

Thorn

The heat in August.

Bud

Got my big Shaw book of Texas grasses. Now I've got to learn it all.

Duane Mortensen, Class of 2018

BOOK REVIEW by Greg Tonian

“Eager”

The Surprising Secret Life of Beavers and Why they Matter by Ben Goldfarb

I had heard an interview with the author of this book in passing not too long ago and decided to check it out from the local library. I found it full of interesting facts about this industrious rodent of unusual size and its impact on the ecology of the places it chooses to live. There are numerous accounts of current restoration projects and movements to utilize the natural tendency of beavers to modify their environments which can have beneficial results in the formation of natural ecosystems with increased diversity, flood control, water conservation, safe havens for young trout and salmon, waterfowl breeding areas and erosion control.

There are challenges and inconveniences that can result when a beaver decides to undertake a construction project and they do not take the time to file a building permit. Often their efforts can lead to flooding of areas that people like to use, like roads, yards, pastures and homes! And yes, they do like to chop down trees for food and for building dams and lodges. Often the immediate reaction to the presence of a beaver in the neighborhood is sending in the exterminator. In Britain, where the Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) is being introduced, educational efforts were undertaken to convince that just because the beaver in *Wind in the Willows* was a piscivore, that in fact beavers will not

harm fish and prefer to eat saplings. By the way, the Eurasian beaver has a different number of chromosomes, so it cannot breed with the few North American beavers (*Castor canadensis*) that were brought over to help restore beavers to the Old World. * *Castor is a reference to the fact that sexes do not look different as the sex organs are not visible externally in beavers.*

Like the buffalo, Beavers were nearly decimated by trapping efforts in the exploitive years of taming America for human habitation, when the mindset was plunder away. In fact, the California Wildlife Department saw beavers as invasive species because of the erroneous belief that they were not originally found in the State. This, despite the obvious references to beavers in the place names, both native American and anglicized in the state with references to beavers and the naïve mindset that surely man could not have effectively eliminated a creature from such a large habitat.

An interesting case study that may be familiar is the impact of beavers, with the help of wolves, on the restoration of Yellowstone National Park. With the elimination of wolves, large grazers, especially elk were decimating the saplings that beavers rely on growing into trees for food and construction. The wolves did a great job in allowing the habitat around streams, where willows and alders grow to get some relief from the hungry grazers in certain areas of the Park. It so happened that beaver restoration projects had also been going on in the areas north of Yellowstone Park and some of the beavers had made their way into Yel-

lowstone. They were able to begin establishing themselves in some of the watersheds. Not all, yet. As a result, streams have become more sinuous, multi-channeled, silt laden. Succession has allowed a variety of riparian plants and trees to flourish. Ponds have formed, some eventually becoming lush meadows for grazers. The vegetation and ponds have provided habitat for a more diversified array of insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

In some cases, it is necessary for man to lend a hand and keep grazers, including cattle from a beaver restoration area and even plant or provide trees or dam infrastructures. There are also systems used to prevent local beaver projects from flooding areas inhabited or used by people. In some cases, towns have rallied to protect beavers that live close by. Beavers are doing well, but they often require localized political support as they are not considered endangered or rare and still are often seen as pests. There is still a need to determine the best operating procedures to take advantage of their beneficial engineering efforts.

I encourage you to read this informative book and perhaps you will then join me and others eager to be known as Beaver Believers! Their motto is “Let the rodents do the work!”

HUMMINGBIRDS OF TEXAS: a report By Greg Tonian

I attended a meeting of the Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society on November 27 th at the Heard to hear a lecture on Texas hummingbirds by Kelly B. Bryan, a biologist based out of Fort Davis Texas who has banded 20,000 specimens. He assured us that, thus far, none have perished. This is amazing since he showed us a photo of a dime with one tiny metal ring atop and revealed that 5700 hummingbird leg bands weigh an ounce. Capturing the bird, identifying, measuring and weighing it and banding it in less than 100 seconds or so sounds daunting to me!

He interspersed highlights of his experiences and other interesting facts about these tiny whirling dervishes as he catalogued with photos and factoids the 19 species that have been observed in Texas and one that almost crossed the Rio Grande near Brownsville (Cinnamon Hummingbird) and which surely has made it across at one time or another. Males, females and juveniles of each hummingbird species have different color schemes as his many photos illustrated. He noted that the iridescence of hummingbirds is the ability of the feathers to trap air bubbles.

He also showed us examples of hybrids, alerting those of us who like to identify the birds we see, that hummingbird identification has its challenges, even for experienced hummingbirders. The sexually aggressive males are the culprits, of course. He explained that hummingbirds are also aggressive in staking out their preferred feeder and recom-

mended setting up feeders in clusters as this makes it more difficult to protect one over another and encourages multiple birds and species to visit your hummingbird nectary.

Mr. Bryan lives in the Davis Mountains, one of the most diverse areas for hummingbirds in the State. In fact, he serendipitously added the 19 th species of hummingbird to the Texas list quite

recently when it not only visited the battery of hummingbird feeders at his mountainside retreat, but also allowed itself to be photographed and captured on the only



hummingbird webcam in the United States, devoted solely to sharing live action shots of hummingbirds right at his home. He revealed that there are 7 species that breed regularly in Texas and 3 rarely. Hummingbirds migrate great distances and he related experiences with birds banded at his homestead that have returned more than once to his home and he even captured one that had been banded by a colleague in Alaska at his home.

This imprinting ability is important to remember as it is quite possible that hummingbirds will return to your own garden or feeders as well. He recommended putting out cotton for nest building. If you are lucky enough to have nesting hummingbirds in the nest will be tic tac size eggs. He also explained that hummingbirds over winter. While they may feed on insects a great deal during this time, they will still be drawn to hummingbird feeders, so you may leave some up.

The following are the 19 species of Texas hummingbirds.

1. Mexican Violet Ear
2. Green Breasted Mango
3. Rivoli's
4. Blue Throated
5. Amethyst Throated
6. Lucifer
7. Ruby Throated
8. Black Chinned
9. Anna's
10. Costa's
11. Broad Tailed
12. Rufous
13. Allen's
14. Calliope (smallest)
15. Broad Billed
16. Beryline
17. Buff Bellied
18. White Eared
19. Violet Crowned

Check out these websites for more information about hummingbirds and Kelly B. Bryan's activities.

www.westtexas hummingbirds.com

and

www.westtexasavianresearch.org

Prairie Partner News is published quarterly
by
Blackland Prairie Texas Master Naturalists.

Editor: Greg Tonian

Layout Provided by Deborah Canterbury

email newsletter@bptmn.org.

Past issues can be found on our website at:
http://bptmn.org/_BOARD_FTP/newsletter/

Other BPTMN communications are at:

Chapter Photos: click on double dots in Social
Media Links Box on website Home Page

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/bptmnforum.bptmn.org>

The Mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.

The Texas Master Naturalist program is a partnership between the Texas AgriLife Extension Parks & other local Service, Texas Wildlife and partners.



Postal Mailing Address

Upcoming BPTMN Meetings

February 12 - "Habitat Restoration of Large and Small Plots and Unintended Consequences" - Bob Mione

Bob is a chapter member, and is the Preserve Manager of the Connemara Meadow in Allen. He has also served as the chapter Membership Director and is a popular speaker across the state.

March 12: "Turtles" - Carl Franklin

Carl is with UT Arlington Dept. of Biology and is the Biological Curator and Collections Manager for the Amphibian and Reptile Research Center.

Outreach Opportunities:

March 16-17 Collin County Master Gardener Show
outreach@bptmn.org

Websites of Interest...

All About Birds:

<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/features/birdanatomy/>

Blackland Prairie Texas Master Naturalist Calendar <http://bptmn.org/calendar/>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology –

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Page.aspx?pid=1478>

Earthkind Landscaping

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/>

Green Source DFW

<http://www.greensourcedfw.org/>

Ladybird Johnson Wildlife Center

<https://www.wildflower.org/>

Texas Aggi Horticulture

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>

Texas Parks & Wildlife Updates

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/>

Texas Smartscape <http://www.txsmartscape.com/>

Texas Superstar Plants <http://www.texasuperstar.com/plants/>