

# **Blackland Prairie Chapter**

**TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS**

**December 8, 2020**

# BLACKLAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER MEETING

**Mute your microphone to help with meeting noise when the meeting begins**

- **Introduce yourself in the Chat Room**
- **Rick Travis will be “host” and monitoring the chat room**
- **We will start at 7:00 pm**
- **Slides and notes will be available in our Newsletter when next published**



**WELCOME**

- **Members**
- **Visitors interested in Nature & Natural resources in our community**
- **Chase Brooke / Naturalist Speaker**

### **Mission Statement**

To provide 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.

# MEMBERSHIP REPORT

- **Certifications**
- **Chapter activity**
  - **Volunteer activity**
  - **Advanced training**

## Reminders:

1. Request that you update membership contact information in VMS.
2. Chapter is now accepting dues for 2021

## RECERTIFICATIONS for 2020

- James Dulan
- Ernest Stokely
- Rebecca Schwemmer
- Ed Ellerbe
- Bebe Bodenhamer
- Floyd Nixon
- Stephen Their

## 2020 Class certification

- Mark Coker

# **BLACKLAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER MASTER NATURALISTS**

## **Membership Totals:**

172 - active members

23 - in-training

312 - inactive/interested members

## **Re-Certifications:**

2020 Total recertification - 99

<b>November</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
Total Number of VH reported	1060.65	1602.79	1783.25	1277.4
Total number of members reporting VH	70	91	79	60
Total number of AT reported	65.45	86.8	108.25	139.25
Total number of members reporting AT	45	55	58	42
Total number of opportunities	39	52	49	48
Total Active Members reporting VH/AT	80	98	88	65

<b>October</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
Total Number of VH reported	1597.1	2294.6	1638.85	1518.75
Total number of members reporting VH	88	101	71	70
Total number of AT reported	499.5	663.75	345.5	232.75
Total number of members reporting AT	79	83	66	59
Total number of opportunities	54	59	55	51
Total Active Members reporting VH/AT	112	109	91	76

<b>Year</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
Total Number of VH reported	17296.07	23930.95	21099.9	20676.95
Total number of members reporting VH	165	156	143	136
Total number of AT reported	2432.35	2688.95	2348.45	2192.7
Total number of members reporting AT	173	158	139	132
Total number of opportunities	96	92	96	87
Total Active Members reporting VH/AT	180	163	147	140

# **2020 Against All Odds Pin**

( Covid 19 Pin )

Awarded for Grit & Determination

Available for those with 8 hr AT and 1 hour of Volunteer Service in 2020  
Ships to chapter in late January.

If 2020 trainees did not complete initial certification / is there an extension?

Our by-laws provide for extension, August 31, 2022



2020 Against All Odds Pin  
( Covid 19 Pin )

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**Diversity and Inclusion** in Collin County is a challenge. We have had to shift the planning and implementation of almost every activity due to COVID 19 this past year. The recent emphasis in the Country has been on insuring that all voices are heard and valued. This has left many puzzled and concerned that we should have a greater focus on our complicated and nuanced history.

We can only achieve this by including underrepresented and or marginalized voices in Collin county. The Chapter population versus the County population show that the *historically underserved population* in Collin County is comprised primarily of Hispanic, African American and Asian individuals. Anything we do as a Chapter to increase interest within these populations would be a positive step in involving these individuals in nature and natural areas. In many of our activities we emphasize the importance of a diverse ecosystem to insure growth and wellbeing for everything within the ecosystem. Anything we do to increase interest within these historically underserved populations will be a positive step and a huge benefit to everyone of us.

#### **What are we supposed to do in the Chapter?**

- Continue the conversation and keep it relevant in Chapter activities (forethought instead of afterthought)
- We have initiated a Diversity & Inclusion ad hoc committee – Charlise Larson is the chair. **We still need interested members!** Need people that wish to promote change. Anticipate this rolling out in January. Initial plans submitted to the Board in February.

#### **What could the State Office do?**

- One of the TMN Tuesdays in 2021 will be a panel discussion on this topic.
- Round table discussion at the 2021 annual meeting –
  - Discussion on how chapters diversify membership & promoting diversity related speakers / partners

## Texas Master Naturalists Guidance & Updates

- Below is guidance for operations for December 9-23rd . This guidance will take effect December 9th and run through 23rd. The county lists associated with this guidance will be updated again on December 11th. The sponsoring state agency updates the county list once a week based on cases from the previous week, so the county list will change from week to week, but the wording of the guidance is not expected to change before the 23rd.

With the recent rise in COVID 19 cases, we are very focused on the best practices and guidance that will not only keep our employees safe but our volunteers and clientele also. We began recently to track specifically some key factors by each county. In the past, we have not developed face to face programming guidance related to local positivity rates. We feel like with the current surge in positive cases in communities and our employees, the overwhelming effects on health care systems and the need for community response to the pandemic, we must change the way we look at agency guidance.

*The attached guidance will take into effect December 9 and run through December 23<sup>rd</sup>, unless factors significantly change.*

AgriLife Extension will be assembling an advisory group to assist the agency in making future decisions. This group will consist of our experts and specialists in public health and agency response. Our data source for decision making is the Community Profile Report distributed by the Department of Health and Human Services (USA) and the US Department of Homeland Security. When making decisions we are looking at positivity rates over a seven day average. This advisory group will take into account the latest data and science available, enabling our agency to make the most informed decision for our employees and stakeholders. Updated guidance should come again on December 11.

The safety of our employees, volunteers, attendees, and community is our utmost priority. We encourage you to always consider the health and safety of those populations that may be more at risk due to age or health status. In addition, we ask that you continue to use non pharmaceutical interventions (face masks, proper hygiene, etc.) that keep you and others safe. The guidance in this document covers December 9-23, 2020. If factors change significantly the guidance will be updated.

Please also remember to access and reference our agency COVID 19 resources at <https://texashelp.tamu.edu/>. The password for the Extension Employee resources is 77843. This is the location for screening forms, preparedness checklists and other valuable resources.

**External Agency Face to Face Meetings (public events)**

*NOTE: Face coverings are required at all events.* Outdoors, masks are required when a six-foot social distancing radius cannot be maintained. *All facilities of The Texas A&M University System require the use of facial coverings.* Employees are asked to clearly communicate the requirement for face coverings but are not asked to physically enforce the requirement.

**FACTORS FOR DECISION MAKING**

**DESCRIPTION**

- Greater than 8% positivity rate  
Percent test positivity in the last 7 days and comparison to the previous 7 days
- Hot Spot \*Emerging Hotspot  
Communities with a high likelihood to become hotspots in the next 1-7 days \*Hotspot – communities that have reached a threshold of disease activity considered as being of high burden \*Sustained Hotspot – communities that have had a high sustained case burden and may be higher risk for experiencing healthcare resource limitations
- Rapid Riser  
Rapid Riser counties meet the following criteria: - >100 new cases in last 7 days - >0% change in 7-day incidence - >-60% change in 3-day incidence - 7-day incidence / 30-day incidence ratio >0.31 - one or both of the following triggering criteria: (a) >60% change in 3-day incidence, (b) >60% change in 7-day incidence

**Red Level: Counties with two of three factors pertaining to positivity rate of greater than 8% or more, OR a rapid rise in cases OR a hot spot**

- No face to face Extension-hosted or Extension-sponsored events.
- No guest speaking or presenting at other entities' events.
- No overnight events.
- Mission critical events may be considered on a case by case basis. Requests should be made through direct supervisor.
- Essential training related to continuing education and emergency response may be approved by the executive associate director on a case by case basis.

**Yellow Level: Counties with a positivity rate of greater than 8% or more, OR a rapid rise in cases OR a hotspot**

- Group meetings **with a limit of 10 people** at 75% capacity of space or less are allowed only if social distancing can be practiced.
- No overnight events.
- AgriLife Extension requires a screening form for each participant at day youth events.
- Seek alternative methods to deliver face to face meetings and educational programs.
- Mission critical events may be considered on a case by case basis. Requests should be made through direct supervisor.
- Essential training related to continuing education and emergency response may be approved by the executive associate director on a case by case basis.

**Green Level:**

- Group meetings **with a limit of 50 people** at 75% capacity or less are allowed only if social distancing can be practiced. If greater than 50 attendees, a preparedness plan must be submitted and approved by the supervisor. (Employees in large offices do not count against this max if they are not part of the meeting and remain socially distanced.)
- All overnight events require a submission of a preparedness plan that is approved by the supervisor.
- AgriLife Extension requires a screening form for each participant at day youth events and all overnight events and programs.
- Daily temperature checks are required at all overnight events.
- For individuals seeking alternative methods of delivery for traditional face-to-face meetings and educational programs, the Digital Education unit has put together a [resource on best practices and tools](#) that are currently supported by AgriLife.

**NO TRAVEL TO OR FROM A RED LEVEL COUNTY UNLESS MISSION CRITICAL**

The State has been set up in districts that align with geographic location. Collin County is in District 4

The entire county list for Texas is available on our website. This listing below is a partial for District 4 and includes only those counties that are considered contiguous with Collin County.

The counties are printed in their current AgriLife designation as red, yellow or green.

**COLLIN**

**GRAYSON**

**COOKE**

**HUNT**

**DALLAS**

**KAUFMAN**

**DENTON**

**ROCKWALL**

**FANNIN**

**TARRANT**

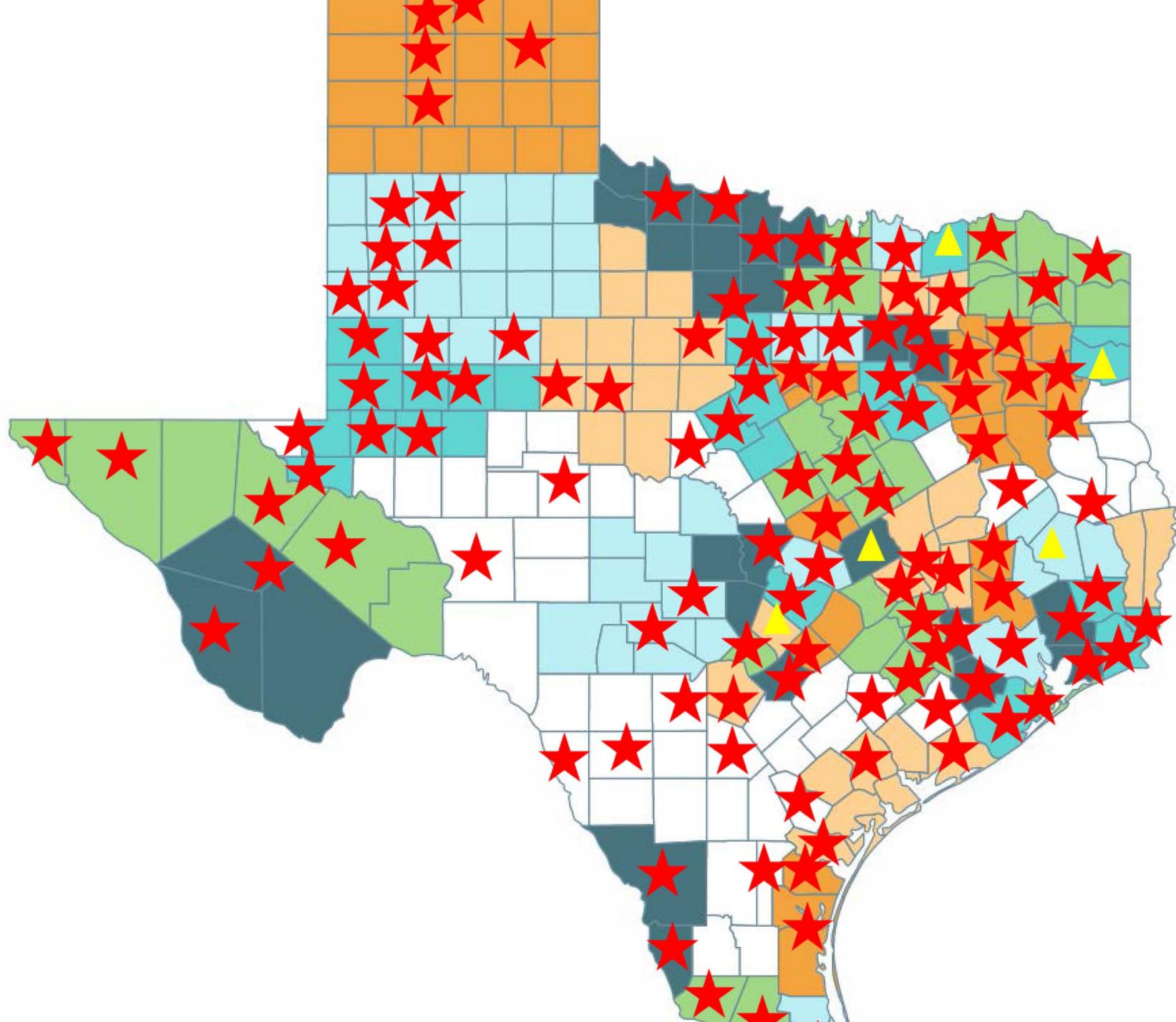
- No **face to face** Extension-hosted or Extension-sponsored events in red counties.
- No guest speaking or presenting at other entities' events in red counties.
- Any volunteer activity with a project or partner that is in VMS is considered to be an Extension hosted / sponsored event. There will be no approved VH activity for any county that is designated as **RED**
- A request has already been submitted for "mission critical" status for the following activities. These would also be eligible for VH if approved but only in the area specified.
  1. Blackland Prairie Raptor Center - animal care / rehab only
  2. Heard Wildlife Sanctuary – animal care only
  3. Connemara – Quail restoration project – animal care only

**Update 12/08/2020**

### **TMN Program Policy for Return to Service Guidelines**

The Texas Master Naturalist Program has issued the additional statewide policy effective immediately:

- *All multi-county TMN Chapters will follow the STRICTEST level of guidance for the counties in their chapter territory.*
  - i.e in a chapter with three counties – one green, one yellow and one red – that chapter will follow the RED level county guidance issued by AgriLife.
- *TMN Chapters MUST follow AgriLife's weekly county level updates & color coded county lists only*
  - County designation may differ by other municipalities/local/federal maps
  - IF Local City/County restrictions are more strict – those supersede AgriLife's guidelines
- *TMN Program/Chapter operations are NOT considered Agency Mission Critical under these Return to Service Guidelines*



## December Calendar

### Upcoming events

12/9	VH	LLELA Wednesday work crew
12/12	VH	Frisco Parks 2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday
12/12	VH	LELLA Saturday work day
12/12	AT	Hagerman 2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday
12/14	VH	LLELA Monday Mayhem
12/16	VH	Clymer Meadow
12/19	AT	Heard Winter Walk
12/21	VH	LLELA Monday Mayhem
12/23	VH	LLELA Wednesday work crew

These events will not be eligible for either VH or AT due to current IN-PERSON restrictions

Currently across Texas approximately 90% of all Chapters VH /AT activity is shut down.

Moving forward.....

Be Flexible in our planning....

Hope for the Best !!!!!

I was asked if a Master Naturalist can volunteer as a citizen, provided they not wear a name badge, logo clothing or identify themselves as part of the organization. Just an interested party. A similar scenario came up earlier in the year with another VH opportunity – specifically Clymer Meadow. I was very tempted to volunteer as an “interested party”, but then felt this would be sending the wrong message and the optics in doing this would not reflect favorably on either the Chapter or myself.

Mary Pearl stated yesterday that we cannot tell a person as a citizen, what they can or cannot do. She said that not following guidance from the State Program is not be in line with current best practices and contrary to what Science is telling us we should do.

I will not tell people what to do as individuals. I have informed the Master Naturalists as a group what the State position on dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic is.

I reiterate; activities within our VMS system for partners or projects are considered extension hosted / sponsored events and subject to Program issued guidance. We are expected to follow that guidance as Certified Texas Master Naturalists.

*Reputation is what Men and Women think of us; Character is what God and Angels know of us.*

*Thomas Paine – Author*

Susan Abernethy spent 2 years revitalizing and invigorating the Outreach function for our chapter. She has continued to work on new and innovative methods to reach out to interested people and provide them the opportunity to become engaged with Nature despite the impact of COVID19.

Susan Smith has taken membership to a new level. She took on the task of assisting in tracking the progress of our new class members; providing feedback that has helped both students and mentors become more engaged and effective. She also took on the role of providing information to our Chapter advisor to in determining how our efforts measure up to other programs and provide focus for our program.

Valerie Dalton has steadily and quietly (most of the time) seen that all Chapter business is reported and help maintain transparency. I compare her role to that of a conductor on a train. The engineer may sit up front; but the conductor makes sure the train runs on time and efficiently. In spite of COVID 19 and the unique challenges it raised; she kept us on the track.

Rick Travis took the Vice Presidents role to a new level - He provided a wide variety of guest speakers on a broad range of topics. This created many new opportunities for our membership at Chapter meetings and Deep dive sessions. This past year Rick assumed the role of "Zoom Guru" and provided "tech" support as everyone adapted to the new methods of meeting and continuing Chapter advanced training and chapter business in a professional manner.

Deborah Canterbury - Talk about versatility! Deborah has served as President, Past President, filled in on vacancies and openings for president, past president, state rep, occasional secretary and anywhere else she was needed. She provided a huge repository of knowledge and history of the Chapter for a new chapter president. Her assistance has proven invaluable to me in attempting to provide the type of leadership that Blackland Prairie is accustomed to.

I extend my sincere thank you to each of the Board members who have given so much to the Chapter. You are each a tribute to what it means to be a Texas Master Naturalist. More important is that you exemplify integrity and character.

Wishing you Health and Happiness as you continue forward!

PLUS

I acknowledged the departing Board members who helped guide the Chapter this past year. I would be remiss if I did not thank every single member of the Chapter for their efforts in helping the Chapter continue to grow and to make a difference for Nature and Natural resources in our community. This has been a challenging year for our membership and want each of you to know how much I appreciate your individual and group efforts in 2020.

Wishing each of you - Healthy and Happy Holidays.

Thank you,

Tom Shackelford

# BPTMN

Mary, Susan, Cynthia,  
Shawn, Nancy, Holly, Bette, Ted, Alfred,  
Mark, Leah, Bryan, Lauren, Jamie, Eric, Jim, Jackie,  
Brent, James, Bebe, Stephanie, Gailon, Chase, Elizabeth,  
Joshua, Shannon, Celia, Clyde, Kathi, Deborah, Beverly, John, Roseline, Carol,  
Richard, Wade, Mark, Donna, Terry, Michelle, Carolyn, Larry, Nancy, Valerie, Daisy,  
Rochelle, Matt, Peter, Denise, Lauri, Tom, Cheryl-Lynn, Deborah, Alex, James, Gregg, Chris, Lisa, Elizabeth, Ed,  
Sally, Sherry, Louise, Mauricio, Pamela, Brian, John, Mary, Karen, Yvette, Leah, James, Lissa, Molly, Laura, Peter, Nikki, Richard,  
Robin, Angela, Sara, Marcia, Stan, Daphne, Tony, James, Renee, Melissa, Linda, Mittie, Charles, Mike, Bob, Karen, Duane, Beth, Kenneth,  
Rita, Robert, Cindy, Tiffany, Mary, Linda, Nick, Kathy, Radhika, Richard, Lorry, Tasha, Kimberly, Michael, Grace, Patrick, Logan, Dave, Laura,  
LuAnne, Jim, Mike, Judy, Manju, Divya, Lisa, Mikel, Rhonda, Douglas, Karen, Roberto, Jennie, Heather, Page, Evonne, Melanie, Lonnie,  
Trent, Becky, Tom, Laurie, Shravan, Anita, Jane, Susan, Lionel, Christie, Karen, Dub, Sharla, Carolyn, Michael,  
Lorelei, Ernest, Jean, Scott, Kristin, Trevor, Nancy, Stephen, Rodney, Gwenn, Toby,  
**LeRoy, Michael, Elly,**  
**Greg, Rick, Lisa, Patricia,**  
Sharon, Jessica, Lanisha, Kristen, Cathy, Peter, Joyce,  
Barbara, Susan, Mary, Jeff, Frances, Jay, Dick

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# **“The Junipers of Texas”**

**Chase Brooke  
guest presentation**

**Junipers are a ubiquitous sight across Texas. From the trans-Pecos to the piney woods, most ecoregions in Texas have at least one species naturally occurring within it. Chase will discuss: the five most commonly occurring native juniper species in the state, their unique characteristics, how to manage them, and how to identify them.**