

President's Corner*By Donell Frank*

Happy New Year! I would like to start off the year by welcoming our newest TMN members, the class of 2018 graduates. I was excited to kick off the Jay Pritchard Trail Project with them on February 23rd. The primary goal of this project is to help each new training class begin accumulating the required 40 hours of volunteer time, as well as forming bonds with new classmates and current members of our chapter.



The project consists of removing invasive species, picking up trash, and planting native plants along the trail. Jay Pritchard was a former member (class of 2004) of our chapter and was very involved with the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History. He passed away in 2014 and the trail (formerly called the Carter Creek Nature Trail) was renamed in his memory. The Jay Pritchard Trail is conveniently located across from the museum entrance at the back of the parking lot. We were so glad to see so many of our members come out to help initiate our chapter project and honor the man that meant so much to the museum and our chapter.

The 2018 Texas Master Naturalist State Meeting held this past October at the Sheraton in Georgetown had the largest attendance ever with 647 registrants. This meeting was also the 20th anniversary of the TMN program. Visit the link (<https://txmn.org/20th-anniversary/>) to view the capstone TMN video and oral histories from other TMN chapters. The meeting had 152 different presentations and field sessions with a variety of topics and speakers from around the state. I

signed up for three field trips and eleven presentations. Unfortunately, one of my field sessions was cancelled because of the massive amounts of rain that had fallen the week before. There were so many sessions to choose from that I had a difficult time picking which ones to attend. A couple of my favorite one-hour sessions were The Spiders of Central Texas and The Natural History of Mexican free-tailed Bats.

You can get all your advanced training hours and more in one weekend at the state meeting. Sessions range from one to four hours. Last year Dale Kruse,

curator of the S.M. Tracy Herbarium, taught one four-hour session on sedges and one four-hour session on grasses. Rumor has it he might have more sessions to choose from at the 2019 meeting this year. I hope to be able to get into at least one of his sessions at the 2019 meeting. A word of advice if you do plan on attending the 2019 State Meeting you must register the day it opens because the sessions and field trips fill up very quickly.

The 2019 meeting will be the 20th annual meeting and will be in Rockwall, Texas from October 18-20, 2019.

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YOUR 2018 BRAZOS VALLEY CHAPTER BOARD

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Continued from front page

I highly encourage our members to attend the state meeting because there is so much to learn from the presentations and field sessions as well as see what other chapters are doing, purchase some sweet silent auction items, and shop at the TMN general store. The most important thing to know is it's just a whole lotta fun!

Since I attended the session on the Mexican free-tailed bats at the meeting and just finished reading "The Secret Lives of Bats" by Merlin Tuttle I have this new fascination with bats, and I think one of our field trips this summer should be to the Bracken Cave Preserve or the Old Tunnel State Park. Who would be interested in a field trip to one of these bat places? Let me know and maybe Sascha (our field trips manager) can look into planning a group trip! Go to <http://www.batcon.org/> to learn more about the plight of bats and how we can help protect them.

CELEBRATE SERVICE



On November 5, 2018, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension held their yearly Volunteer Recognition Luncheon at the Brazos County Expo Complex in Bryan, Texas. This awards ceremony recognizes the many volunteers who donate their skills, share their knowledge, and spend much of their time volunteering within the Agrilife System. Some of those volunteers stand out above the rest. They go above and beyond and leave an impact on their community that lasts a lifetime.

This year the coveted award of Outstanding Volunteer within the category of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Horticulture for 2018 is our very own Bruce Neville!



Congratulations Bruce! It is truly an honor to have someone like you represent our Texas Master Naturalist Brazos Valley Chapter.

Congratulations!

Texas Master Naturalist - Brazos Valley Chapter

Graduating Class of 2018

New 2018 Members:

Susan Balthrop
Simon Burton
Kevin Gamache
Aleksa Greenawalt
Christian Hauser
Hannah Marie Hauser
Michael Havens
Julie Hunt
Regina Levoy
Nikki Locke
Margaret Novotny
Vappy Severs
Devan Sewell
Lela Shepherd
John Thaden
Nancy Thaden



Greetings from Lake Somerville!

Sue McBeth Welfel, Advanced Training Director



Greetings from Lake Somerville, Master Naturalists: We have been saturated with rain for the past quarter. It's been cool, wet and the fish are not striking. Time around the lake has been spent in birding by being involved in two Christmas Bird Counts in Matagorda county @ Mad Island Marsh Preserve at Collegeport, TX and the Grimes County count at TMPA's reservoir at Carlos and the area of Keith.

Also I've participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count on February 16 around the Jay Pritchard Trail and Country Club Lake in Bryan. Feedback on the Mad Island CBC had the count on species in the 230's, which was once again a top location in the US. Notes from Aransas Wildlife Refuge show the first pair of Whooping cranes flew in on October 22, 2018. With all the rain there should be plenty of freshwater and improved numbers of blue crabs and the Carolina wolfberries, their preferred diet.

This recovering species migrate from Alberta's Wood Buffalo National Park which is 2500 miles North in the Central Flyway. The migration can take up to 50 days. They do stop along the route to feed and rest, so if you happen to see them, please keep a distance and do not disturb them. Know they are federally protected and it is illegal to disturb them. Also, if you have the opportunity you can report sightings on the Whoopers at the citizen science project within the Texas Parks & Wildlife site. This data assists in knowing their locations and in knowing their numbers. These types of data, from Whooper Watch to CBC's, assists ornithologists and conservation biologists in being informed on the health of birds over time.

To participate in such activities, locate your chapter of the Audubon Society. Our Rio Brazos Audubon chapter meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm at the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History at 3232 Briarcrest Drive, Bryan, 77802. Monthly programs, when they cover birding issues in our counties, often serve as Advanced Training opportunities. Saturday Audubon field trips occur following the monthly meeting or as scheduled. Just watch their website for details. Birding 101 is held the first Saturday of each month, usually at

Lick Creek Park, but this may change periodically, so watch the website. Membership dues are now \$20 for single or family and \$15 for students per year.

In the area I live in, on a private ranch of FM 1948, there is evidence of a significant deer population. We've had a great acorn crop and the deer are in good shape. We have had several multiple twins this year as well as plenty of single births. Check your hunting guides for some hunting season changes in January and February in deer, dove, waterfowl, quail, & woodcock.

Due to early 2018 dry season, I have lost one additional oak tree. This winter I screened off a portion of the front porch as a greenhouse for the outdoor plants and with some fine tuning the plastic wrap held and the plants are alive. Hopefully we've been able to avoid the freeze that usually happens in early March but may appear before Spring arrives.

I'm really looking forward to the ground drying out some in order to construct my greenhouse which now sits in boxes in storage. Also have plans for a composting area of 2 or 3 bins. I hope you can get outdoors and create a native habitat that supports wildlife and birds in your yards. And please volunteer in our native garden areas at ENRTA, BRTC and city parks we have adopted. Be reminded that our Post Oak Savannah Native Plant Society programs may count as AT opportunities for meeting your annual 8 AT hour requirement to re-certify as a Master Naturalist.

Also, if you find training offerings that may be of interest to members, please submit them to me or the website and our AT committee will process your request. And if you find that you do not have an AT opportunity on your own list, please let me know so that I may approve it for you. You can email me personally or use the at@txmnbnv.org email. Thanks for being a Master Naturalist and Enjoy the outdoors in 2019!



iNaturalist is a great online program that combines field research and data reporting and you can volunteer on your own schedule. These programs allow you to share photos and data, record your sightings, and network with other naturalists in your area. Click on the logo for more information.

2018 Fall Native Pollinator Plant Sale

Our very first 2018 Fall Plant Sale was very successful and a lot of fun! We sold a large number of plants through our online sale platform and we really enjoyed getting to meet new people on pickup day. There were some challenges and learning curves but I think everyone is in agreement that we can't wait to do it again and next time is even going to be BIGGER and BETTER. Thank you to all who participated—we couldn't have done this without you!



HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE SATURDAY



April 27, 2019

Twin Oaks

Household Hazardous Waste
www.TwinOaksHHW.com

979-764-3809

TAMU UNIVERSITY

SERVICES BUILDING- PARKING LOT

7am-2pm



Enter HWY 30/Harvey Rd.

Entrance is between Veteran's Park & Copperfield Pkwy

*NO ENTRY ALLOWED FROM UNIVERSITY DR. EAST/HWY 60

ACCEPTED MATERIALS:

- AEROSOL CANS -AUTOMOBILE FLUIDS -BATTERIES
- COMPUTERS & ELECTRONICS
- COOKING OIL -CFL'S
- HOUSEHOLD CLEANING AGENTS
- MEDICATIONS -OIL & FILTERS
- PAINTS/THINNERS
- CHEMICALS -TVS
- NO HOUSEHOLD GARBAGE/TIRES



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Jay Pritchard Trail Work Day—Class 2018 Project

February 23, 2019

Despite a rainy start, our very first trail maintenance day at the Jay Pritchard Trail was very successful. Several bags of trash were collected and many parts of the trail were trimmed back and cleared out of over growth.

There is an abundance of invasive plant species on the trail. However, when you look within, the trail has lots of potential with its shady wooded area, wetland area and open area around the pond that just happens to be a great place for birding.

Trail maintenance duties include trimming and lopping, bagging of brush/seeds/trimmings, hauling trimmings out and general trash pickup and upkeep of the area. Keep an eye out on our [webpage calendar](#) for our next workday and come and volunteer!



First annual

Wildflower Day

at Boonville Heritage Park

March 23, 2019

On Saturday, March 23, 2019, several organizations gathered to participate in the first annual Wildflower Day celebration at Boonville Heritage Park (formerly Boonville Cemetery) in Bryan, Texas. There were educational booths, kids crafts, opportunities to learn about flowers through flower dissection, music and more. Many local photographers were drawn to the area as well as local artists who showed up to attempt to capture the beauty of it all on canvas.



Tips for Photographing Wildflowers

Carol Henrichs, Communications Director

Whether you're hoping to capture a field of flowers or the beauty of a solitary bud, the following tips will help you to capture amazing images of plants and wildflowers and create beautiful photographs.

Light

Perhaps it goes without saying that photography is all about light. Personally, I think it is worth reminding myself of this every time I go outside to shoot so that I consider the light before pressing the shutter button. Whether soft or hard, light influences the feeling and drama associated with a photo and deserves careful consideration.

Soft light is a great choice for soothing, serene scenes of flowers and foliage. This type of light usually occurs during the golden hour, just before sunrise and after sunset. However, the soft light of overcast, dreary days are also great for flower photography because the lack of strong shadows allows you to capture many details in the image.

Generally, nature photographers avoid shooting outdoors when the sun is high in the sky because of the hard light. Hard light can however,



be used to create striking images with a bit of an edge, through strong, deep shadows. Ironically, the hard light causes viewers to pay less attention to the black areas and more to what is brightly illuminated. So, even when the sun is shining brightly, you can create stunning wildflower photos. I

If you're out on a sunny, clear day, try to position your camera so that the light is hitting the back of the flower, making it backlit. You can also take advantage of indirect lighting, which is often soft, by finding flowers that are in the shadows.



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Schubot Exotic Bird Health Center

Sascha Lodge, Field Trip Coordinator

Earplugs are highly recommended when you walk into a room containing dozens of monk parakeets. The first bird room at the Schubot Center for Avian Health contains monk parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*), also known as Quaker parrots, and they are ***loud***.

These birds have been studied as part of efforts to better understand and try to prevent avian bornavirus and proventricular dilation disease. This disease causes gastrointestinal and neurological distress in domestic and wild parakeets, and can lead to bird death.

On a Saturday in mid-November, about a dozen master naturalists attended a lecture and tour of the Schubot Center, a part of the Texas A&M University Vet School.



The Center houses approximately 168 birds, including macaws, African grays, and cockatiels, as well as the monk parakeets. These birds play roles in research, teaching, outreach, and conservation.

Some of the current research studies include examining bird behavior following digital enrichment – basically putting iPads in bird cages so that the birds can play elec-



tronic games to see how bird behavior changes as compared to interacting with traditional enrichment tools like ropes and blocks. Apparently, the iPads need to be installed in sturdy cases because some of the birds are more interested in pecking at the object than in playing the games.

Researchers at the center have also successfully sequenced the complete genomes of the scarlet macaw, the bobwhite quail, the whooping crane, and the sandhill crane.

Cleaning, bird health assessments, and research are conducted by a small staff assisted by multiple graduate and undergraduate students. The director of the center, Dr. Sarah Hamer, who was our chapter's monthly seminar presenter last spring, is currently researching ticks carried from the tropics by migratory birds.



She is interested in the zoonotic diseases the ticks carry, some of which can be transmitted to humans and other animals.

She regularly sets up mist nets in the BCS area to catch birds, removes ticks from them (an Acadian flycatcher she caught carried 27 ticks around its eyes!), and tests the ticks for diseases. She promised to let us know the next time her team sets up mist nets nearby so our members can go watch and learn more about this interesting research, so keep an eye on your email!

Certifications, Recertifications and Milestones in 2018

We are lucky to have such a dedicated group of individuals within our organization who renew their membership each year by volunteering within our chapter and our community. Thank you for your service!

Members who recertified and received the Ocelot pin:

Jim Anding
Kitty Anding
Jim Balthrop
Dwight Bolhmeyer
Amanda Chau
John Cupps
Katahrine Cupps
Bill Eisele
Donell Frank
Jackie Girouard
Carol Henrichs
Andrea Howard
Sascha Lodge
Charlene Manning



Bruce Neville
Betty Vermeire
Sue McBeth Welfel
Mary Dabney Wilson
Greg Pitts
Ted Preston
Addison Regennitter
Preston
Katie Reed
Susan Reed
Dana Roese
Kim Roese
Kathryn Sneed
Michael Stetcher

Milestones achieved:

250 Hours

Carol Henrichs
Andrea Howard
Kim Roese
Michael Stetcher



500 Hours

Donell Frank

1000 Hours

Amanda Chau
Bruce Neville
Sue McBeth Welfel



2500 Hours

Betty Vermeire

Members of the Class of 2017 who achieved initial certification:

Justin Finke
Wendi Gibson
Maya Lazarus





Editor's Note

by Wendi Gibson

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Where does the saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words' come from? No one really knows, but a little scouring in the internet and you'll find this saying was used quite frequently in journalism in the early 1900's in regards to the war, most often as a caption with pictures meant to make an impression.

Our chapter has been very busy with activities and community events. We've had a great turnout of volunteers and we are so happy to see our newest members actively involved in our community projects such as removal of invasive plants at Lick Creek Park, cleanup and maintenance of the Jay Pritchard Trail and habitat work days at the ENRTA.

Spring is here and we are not slowing down. We've got activities, field trips and outreach events planned that will keep our members busy well into the summer, and some of our committees are already scheduling events for the fall.

It is a wonderful feeling seeing the pictures of our Texas Master Naturalists working along with other groups and individuals to make our community a better place. You've probably noticed that this issue contains several photos of our members at different

events. These photos are snippets of moments in time but they tell a story.

When I look at these photos, I see hard work and dedication, teaching and learning, laughter and comraderie and an overall feeling of doing something for the greater good. I hope that is the impression you'll get as well!

Recently our chapter decided to make the fourth Saturday of every month a 'Habitat Work Day'. Hopefully having this 'fixed' work day every month will help avoid conflicts with scheduling around our personal lives or other volunteer efforts. The type of work will change each month, so be sure to check the website for information on the event taking place that day or contact Mike at volunteer@txmnbv.org.

For more information on outreach events, contact Katie at outreach@txmnbv.org. If you have questions regarding upcoming field trips or have an idea for a future field trip, contact Sascha at fieldtrips@txmnbv.org.

"In nature we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it and over it." — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe