



# the **Cyrano** newsletter

2020 Spring

## President's Corner

By Donell Frank



Greetings fellow Brazos Valley Texas Master Naturalist members!

We ended the 2019 TMN year with our potluck Holiday Christmas social at TDI-BI where delicious food and drinks were served and Bruce Neville stumped many of us

AGAIN with his difficult but informative trivia quiz. Lively Christmas music was provided by John Thaden, Cheryl Lewis, the percussion section, and the much-loved train whistle. Since the musical portion of our social was such a big hit I think we need to start a TMN band. We could call ourselves the TMN Rocking Dragonflies! If you are interested in becoming a Rocking Dragonfly, please contact Cheryl Lewis ([cheryl77845@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl77845@gmail.com)).

The silent auction at the Holiday social raised \$349.44 for the chapter! Thank you to the members who generously donated more than 37 items for the auction and to the members who shelled out the dollars for some pretty awesome silent auction items!

Thank you, Kim Roese, our hospitality director, for preparing the ham and turkey for the social, retrieving the naturally appropriate table centerpieces from your yard, and bringing all the accoutrements needed for a successful party. This year some of our members requested that we lessen

our impact on the environment by not purchasing single use plastic products, paper plates, and paper napkins for our social events. Our environmentally conscious members came through with numerous donations of reusable plates, cups, and silverware that were used at our TMN social and will continue to be used at future events. Megan Konarik also made an assortment of beautiful fabric napkins for us to use instead of those boring and wasteful paper napkins.

Congratulations and welcome class of 2019 new members! This year's class began with 19 students and ended with 18 dedicated students graduating at our November 19<sup>th</sup> chapter meeting. A graduation cake, side treats, and drinks were enjoyed by all at the graduation party. Our seasoned members look forward to working with the new members at our upcoming volunteer and advanced training events.

Speaking of volunteer hours, the 2019 new member class will have their first class project workday on January 25<sup>th</sup> from 8:00am to 12:00pm at the Jay Pritchard Trail located across the parking lot from the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History.

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## YOUR 2019-2020 BRAZOS VALLEY CHAPTER BOARD

President: **DONELL FRANK**  
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Treasurer: **AMANDA CHAU**  
[treasurer@txmnbv.org](mailto:treasurer@txmnbv.org)

## *Continued from front page*

This class project is intended to keep the 2019 class members acquainted with one another as well as get them started on accruing their required 40 hours of volunteer service. They will continue to work on the nature trail throughout the year until the new training class of 2020 graduates next November.

If you don't already know, BVTMN has an ongoing partnership with Moore Wild Birds located at 750 William D. Fitch Pkwy, 120, in College Station, where we have our Save the Monarch butterfly t-shirts for sale. Desperately looking for Texas native plants and don't know where to turn? Moore Wild Birds is your answer. BVTMN will have a selection of native plants for sale at Moore Wild Birds beginning in the spring of 2020. Stay tuned for the announcement of native plants arriving at the store this spring. Don't miss out on your chance to plant Texas native plants to sustain Texas native wildlife!

Amanda Chau, our faithful treasurer, informed us this year we can pay our yearly \$25 BVTMN membership dues by check, cash, and now with the square reader. Please try to have your dues paid before March 2020. The following statement comes directly from our Chapter Operating Handbook (COH) regarding dues.

*Dues Schedule. Dues shall be payable on or before the first day of January for each fiscal year. If dues are not paid by March 31 in each fiscal year, then all privileges afforded an 'Active Member' are rescinded until dues are paid.*

We are trying out a new process for signing up for committees by holding a Project Fair at our January 16<sup>th</sup> chapter meeting. This year the directors of committees will showcase their projects by presenting a summary of their current projects. Joining a committee is a great way to reach your 40 hours, or more, of volunteer service required to recertify every year.

Finally, I would like to thank Dana Roese for his two years of service as our Vice President. Dana did a great job recruiting speakers for our chapter meetings during his tenure as VP. I am very excited that Simon Burton accepted the VP nomination for 2020-2022 and I am happy to announce that he was voted in as our new VP at the November 19<sup>th</sup> chapter meeting. Welcome Simon! I would personally like to thank the board for their commitment, encouragement, and desire to keep doing what we are doing to make our world a better place.

I hope everyone has a warm and safe holiday. See you in 2020!



- Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the Texas Master Naturalist Brazos Valley Chapter when you start shopping at <https://smile.amazon.com>.
- AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.
- Support your Texas Master Naturalist Brazos Valley Chapter by starting your shopping at [smile. amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com).

# Congratulations!

Texas Master Naturalist - Brazos Valley Chapter  
Graduating Class of 2019



## New 2019 Members:

Hannah A Cohen  
Emory H. Daniels  
Kay Douglas  
James Blackburn Dunn Jr.  
Brandy Lynn Falise  
Shane Ferguson  
Tim Foster  
Susan Hardin  
Madeline Herron  
Eric Kyle Lewis  
Tali Lewis  
Carol G. McNamara  
Michael John Scialdone  
Tyler M. Scott  
Joanna M. Skare  
Kara Bounds Socol  
Frances Thielman  
Liz Worsham



# 2019 Outstanding Volunteer of the Year

This year the board presented the first Outstanding Volunteer of the Year award. The board received many deserving nominations which made the job of choosing a winner very difficult. In the end, the winner of the award was Andrea Howard!



She was supposed to receive the award at our holiday social but it wasn't ready yet. So Andrea accepted a photo of the award on Betty's phone. Later she was presented the actual award at the Rio Brazos Audubon Christmas Bird Count party on December 14th.

Andrea has been a tireless worker for our chapter. Not only is she our secretary, and agreed to stay on for another two years, she single

handedly reinstated the Junior Master Naturalist program.

Andrea was also in charge of a Texas Stream Team site at Lick Creek Park where she would lead a group of us out every month to take water samples. Another project Andrea took on was the responsibility of updating the TMN bulletin board on the kiosk at the butterfly garden at Lick Creek Park. She updated the board



every month with new material including the dates of our chapter meetings and presentations.

She has been involved in every aspect of the chapter and I don't have enough space to write all of the other things she does behind the scenes.



Congratulations and thank you Andrea for your hard work and dedication to the chapter!!

*By Donell Frank—TXMNBV President*



Our Brazos Valley Chapter TMN Scrapbook is maintained by our Historian and 2017 TMN Class member Megan Konarik. The scrapbook was submitted for judging at the 2019 State TMN Meeting and was recognized as 'Outstanding' by the other Master Naturalist Volunteers in attendance. Congratulations on your hard work Megan!



**Megan Konarik**

**Historian - TMN Class of 2017**



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.

# 2019 Fall Native Pollinator Plant Sale

Our 2019 fall pollinator plant sale was even better this year! New plant species were added to the sale along with last years' favorites and our customers were very happy. Few plants were left by the end of the sale and some were sent to our partner, Moore Wild Birds, where they quickly sold out. The remaining handful of plants will be going into the garden at the Lick Creek kiosk later this year. Thank you to our volunteers for helping make this event so successful.



## HABITAT RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE UPDATE

By Cheryl Lewis

Habitat Restoration and Maintenance Director— [habitats@txmnbv.org](mailto:habitats@txmnbv.org)

It's been a quiet year in Habitat Restoration, my home town project. We did conduct a successful plant sale, selling almost everything we purchased wholesale from Native Texas Nursery. Our net income from the online sale and the consignment store was \$4,743.77. A lot of people worked hard to make it happen and I say, "God bless you, every one." Many thanks to Moore Wild Birds, our generous and very helpful consignment store, for selling what remained after the Fall sale.

A project fair is being planned for the January meeting. This will provide members with an opportunity to learn more about the chapter's projects and to sign on as a volunteer. Habitat restoration projects include

- \* maintaining the BRTC garden,
- \* restoring and maintaining the Gabbard Park garden,
- \* maintaining the Jay Pritchard trail,
- \* assisting with Lick Creek Park restoration, and
- \* renovating the kiosk garden at Lick Creek Park.



**January 6** has been scheduled to clean up the kiosk garden at Lick Creek Park. We will be digging and potting up excess plants, making way for purple coneflower and fragrant mistflower. Many of the plants currently there will be left in place. The following Saturday, **January 13**, we will plant/replant. Both work days will start at 9AM unless the weather outside is frightful. If it is and plans change, you will hear from me via email. On **January 25**, the Class of 2019 will head up a cleanup project at the Jay Pritchard Trail. Let's all show up and help out. Many hands make light work—AND they get a lot more done!

In **February** we will do some maintenance work on the BRTC garden, moving or removing a few things, planting some new plants. This garden is in clay soil, so hopefully some strong specimens of humanity will turn out to help. If you've never dug in clay soil before, here's your chance to find out what it's like. Also in **February**, we will re-plant the Gabbard Park garden. Dates and times TBA.

In **March** we will revisit January and February projects to determine maintenance needs. In addition, we will begin designing and producing signage for each location. This will require research and sign-making (design and construction)skills, so if those are your strengths, please keep in touch.

We should have at least one Restoration and Maintenance program at a chapter meeting in 2020. If you know of someone who might be willing and able to present a program for us, please let our new vice president, Simon ([vp@txmnbv.org](mailto:vp@txmnbv.org)) know so that he can schedule it.

May we begin the new year with hope and aspirations to expand our impact for the natural systems that support us and keep us healthy. Plant native in 2020!

## Hauling out the Trash

By Amanda Chau—TXMNBV Treasurer

THANK YOU for being a part of Team Dragonfly and for helping pick up trash on September 7, 2019 for the Keep Brazos Beautiful event. We picked up a total of 18 bags of trash and some unusual items such as 7 fish carcasses, 2 sea shells, plastic toy kitchen, a doll, a bucket of cement, a long piece of aluminum siding, a floor lamp, and 2 rebar loops.



On November 23, 2019, several volunteers showed up to help clean up Gabbard and Brison Parks. We collected very little trash from Gabbard Park but 6 bags (30 Gal) full of trash from Brison Park. We found a hub cap center piece, a shower rod, and a lei. We also found a 9-feet long blue PVC pipe and a submerged bicycle.



# Family Festifall Event

On November 9, 2019, the Downtown Bryan Association hosted Family Festifall to bring families out for a day of learning through hands on science, performing arts and exploring community resources. Our chapter volunteers teamed up with Rio Brazos Audubon Society to help people learn more about birds by providing insight on everything from habitats to migration. The kids' crafts and activities were a big hit as well. It was a busy day for our volunteers with an estimated 800 people stopping by to visit!



# In Memory of Bonnie Weber

TMNBV Class of 2017



Our Chapter would like to celebrate Bonnie's generous spirit by building a home in memory of Bonnie. We encourage our members to donate to BCS Habitat for Humanity, which is one of her charities. We will be joining Circle of Women to raise funds to build a home for a local family in Bryan/College Station. Circle of Women has been raising funds to sponsor Habitat homes for local families in our area for the past 15 years. We have already surpassed our goal of \$1,000 or more which allows us to list our donation in memory of Bonnie. Please consider donating or signing up for one of the construction dates to help build this home. The construction of this home is tentatively planned to begin in March 2020.

There are several ways to give (donation is tax-deductible):

1) **Donate Online at <https://habitatbcs.org/donate/>.**

- Click One Time Donation
- Select Donation Amount
- Under Designation, please select "Other" and enter "Bonnie Weber TMNBV"

2) **Check:** Please make your check payable to "B/CS Habitat for Humanity" and include a notation on your check that it is for the Bonnie Weber TMNBV. Please send your check to:

Julie Gurnon, B/CS Habitat for Humanity, 119 Lake Street, Bryan, Texas 77801

We look forward to building this home with you in memory of Bonnie Weber.

# T E X A S



*By Andrea Howard - TXMNBV Secretary*

Every time I think I know something, I teach kids, and realize how little I really know.

This past summer, a handful of excited, possible gluttons for punishment, met at the Environmental and Natural Resource Teaching Area (aka. the ENRTA) eager and ready to kick off our Junior Master Naturalist summer series.



Over the course of the summer we covered a wide variety of topics focusing on a different environmental science topic each week for eight weeks, introducing concepts and ideas through hands-on stations, games, and outdoor activities. Kids went hunting for insects in the field, planted a water garden, got wet and messy in the toad life cycle obstacle course, saw an alligator in the pond, and got their hands on skulls, skins, fossils, and a number of live animals.

The program was well received with more than 40 youth attending throughout the summer. Nine of those youth met the requirements to receive their JrTMN Certificate and were recognized at the September meeting.

As amazing as this summer was, it didn't start with us. As a matter of fact, the seed was planted long before I became a Master Naturalist with this Chapter, back when Dwight Bohlmeier was heading up a Junior Master

Naturalist program at Blinn during the summers. The deep desire to have a youth program never ended and has been hovering around the Chapter for many years.

Our Youth Programs Committee filled out at the beginning of 2019, and then the real work began. With a committed group of people, the details of the JrTMN program began to take shape. Many hours of planning went into what would become 1.5 hours of actual program every Tuesday. The committee poured their time and effort into building the program, the Board continued to encourage and support the program, and the volunteers came eagerly to help make the program something special. The JrTMN program was and is a product of the efforts of many.



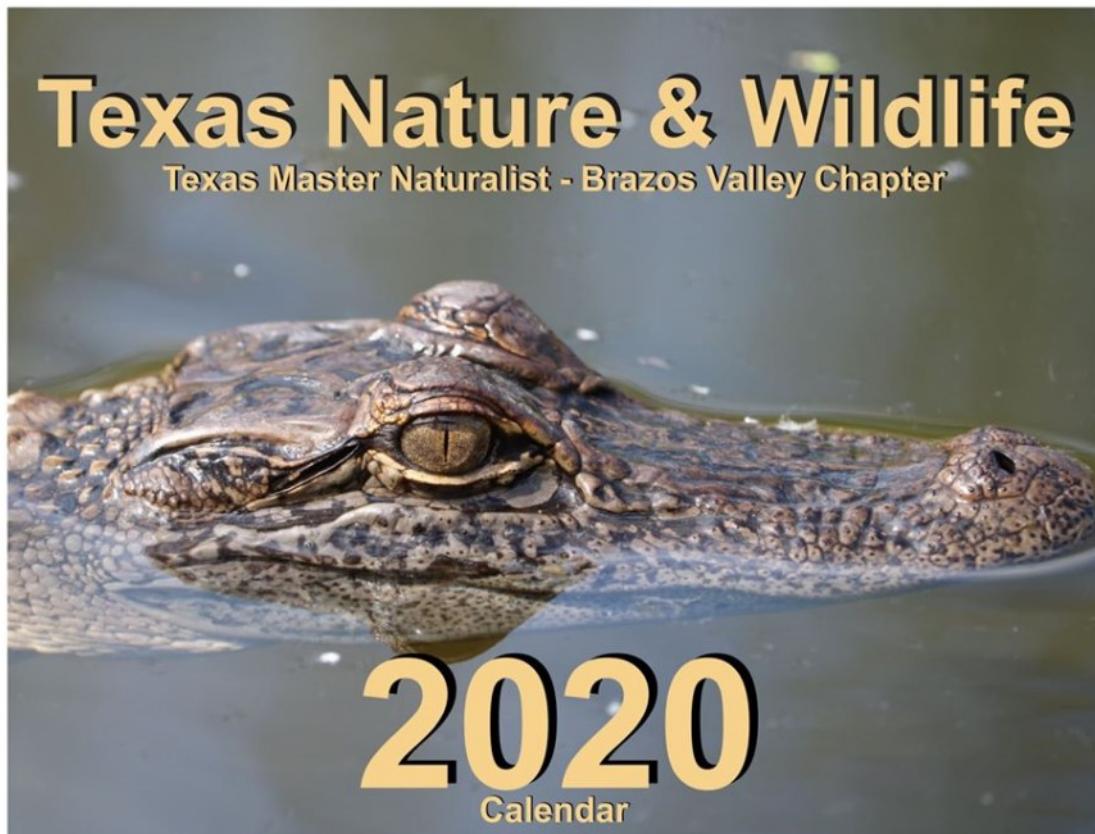
The Junior Master Naturalist program is not now what it was originally planned to be.....it is as alive and dynamic as the wild world we hope to teach our kids about. For now, the program will continue to primarily take place during the summer. Our 2020 Summer Series has been laid out, and will run from June 9th - July 28th, 2020. We will continue to offer this program free of charge at the ENRTA, encouraging family involvement, and gearing materials towards kids age 8-10.

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For those youth who attend the majority of the programs, they will be awarded a Certificate of recognition as a Junior Master Naturalist of the Brazos Valley Chapter and will have the opportunity to take part in field trips and hands on field sessions once to twice a month during the fall and spring semesters where we hope to continue to cultivate and encourage those youth who have the desire and drive to be Junior Master Naturalists.

So, where will we be taking the program next? Outside of course!, and the reset of the details we will figure out along the way. Because while planning is important for a program to function well, the goal is to share our passion for the outdoors with kids and their families, to immerse them in environmental topics, get them to be excited about exploring the wondrous world around them, get messy, and be hands-on. And maybe somewhere along the line, we just might figure out how to run a Junior Master Naturalist Program.

It's a WILD world out there, and we are going to explore it! Join us!



## Canyon Lake Gorge

By Wendi Gibson

On April 7, 2019, several TMN members and their invited guests went on a field trip to Canyon Lake Gorge in Canyon Lake, Texas. The forecast called for rain and rain did we get! As the drive out began, we were hit with torrents of rain and thundershowers that lasted the entire drive to the gorge but just as we reached San Marcos, blue skies appeared and temps held in the 60's which made for a very comfortable day for a hike.

Our tour guides and docents were master naturalists from chapters in the surrounding areas who regularly volunteered their time to give tours and teach camps about the incredible formation of the gorge, the hidden treasures beneath and the "Power of Water."



Canyon Lake Dam—the far left side is where the adventure begins

Canyon Lake Dam was built on the edge of the Balcones Escarpment and was completed in 1964. The area was prone to serious flooding and the dam was erected to protect the land and communities downstream and to conserve water. The dam held until 2002 when the area received more than 34 inches of rain and water breached the spillway for the first time.

On July 4, 2002 at 3:30 pm, water began blowing over the spillway and finally peaked 3 days later. The water continued to spill for several more



Getting a lesson on the history and geological formation of the area

weeks killing nine people and destroying or damaging an estimated 48,000 homes.

With the initial surge and incredible force of floodwaters, the crumbly bedrock below was broken up to expose the gorge in just three days. Huge boulders were exposed and washed downstream along with sediment and other churned up material



A lesson on the Guadalupe River Basin and what happened after the flood

which eventually exposed limestone terraces, streams and waterfalls. When the floodwaters cleared, the 64 acre gorge was discovered which exposed ancient, crustaceous limestone, fossils and dinosaur footprints 110 million years old.

*Continued*



The backside of the dam where boulders were lifted and sent downstream exposing ancient marine life.



Tiny sea urchin with seams and spines



Dinosaur footprints (acrocanthosaurus, a predator cousin of T.rex and its prey, the sauropod).

*Continued*



The trinity aquifer seeps through the cracks in the limestone and continues down the basin.



Ancient sea life



The basin, not too far from the spillway of the dam—as it looks today

*Continued*



For more information on Canyon Lake Gorge and to learn about public or private group tours, visit their website at:

[https://canyongorgetours.com/public\\_tours](https://canyongorgetours.com/public_tours) or call 830-964-5424

**Canyon Lake/Sattler OFFICE / Mailing Address**  
2075 FM 2673, Suite D  
Canyon Lake, TX 78133

**Office Hours:** Monday-Friday 9am-5pm



## Support the Gorge Preservation Society

The Gorge Preservation Society (GPS) is a local citizen's group whose mission is to promote the enjoyment and conservation of this unique natural phenomenon by encouraging responsible, quality access opportunities through academic partnerships, economic initiatives and citizen involvement.

## Meadows Center and Spring Lake

By Wendi Gibson

On October 27, 2019, TMN's took a field trip to the Meadows Center and Spring Lake in San Marcos, Texas. The tour started out with an overview of Texas Stream Team and its impact on Texas and water quality. We enjoyed a lecture on the history of the area including the resort and its upgrade (from an active theme park of many years), to a research institution promoting the environmental welfare of Spring Lake.

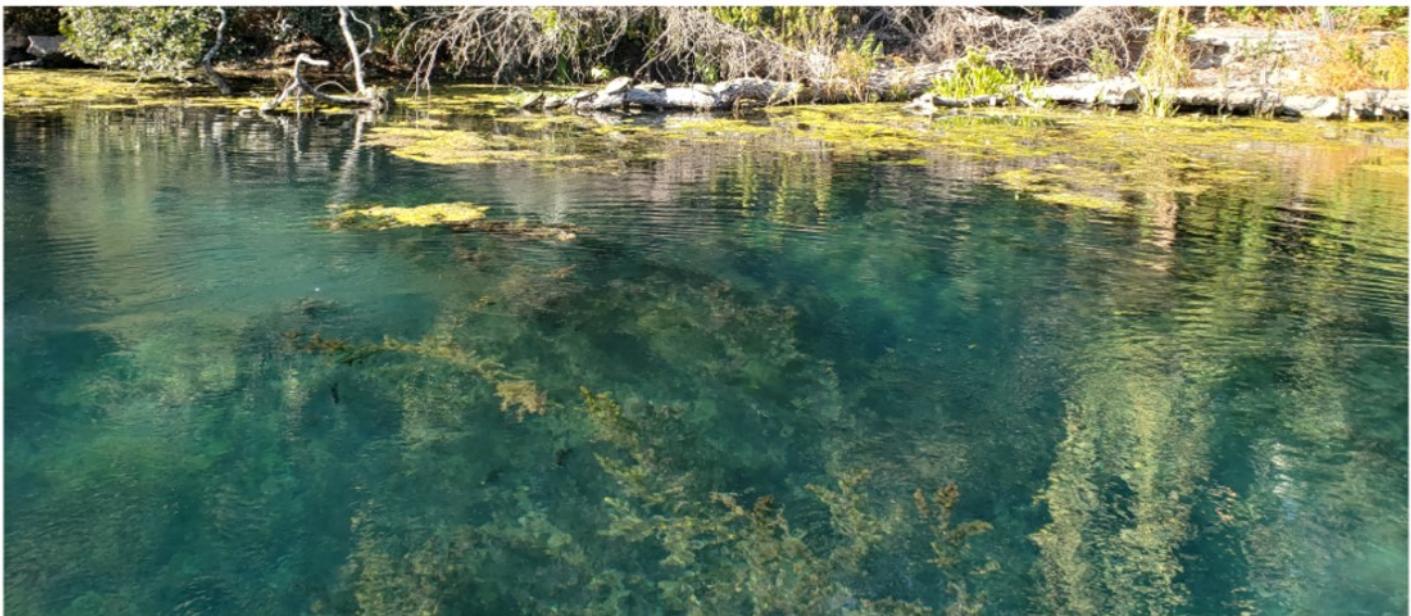
We enjoyed a tour of the floating wetlands and took a glass bottom boat ride where we were able to see a massive amount of bubbling springs and the enormous underwater ecosystem they supported.

Spring Lake and the surrounding area is known as one of the oldest continuously inhabited places in North America with artifacts discovered dating back to 12,000 years. In 1849 Spring Lake Dam was built to power a mill which created a large lake. Later in 1926, a hotel/resort was established that entertained guests with the very first glass bottom boat rides. In the 50's



the hotel was refurbished again to include a submarine theater, an amusement park (one of the first of its kind) and mermaid shows with Ralph the swimming pig. Parts of the theme park still remain but is closed off to the public.

The Meadows Center is located at Spring Lake in San Marcos, Texas. At the headwaters of the San Marcos River, Spring Lake is one of the largest artesian springs



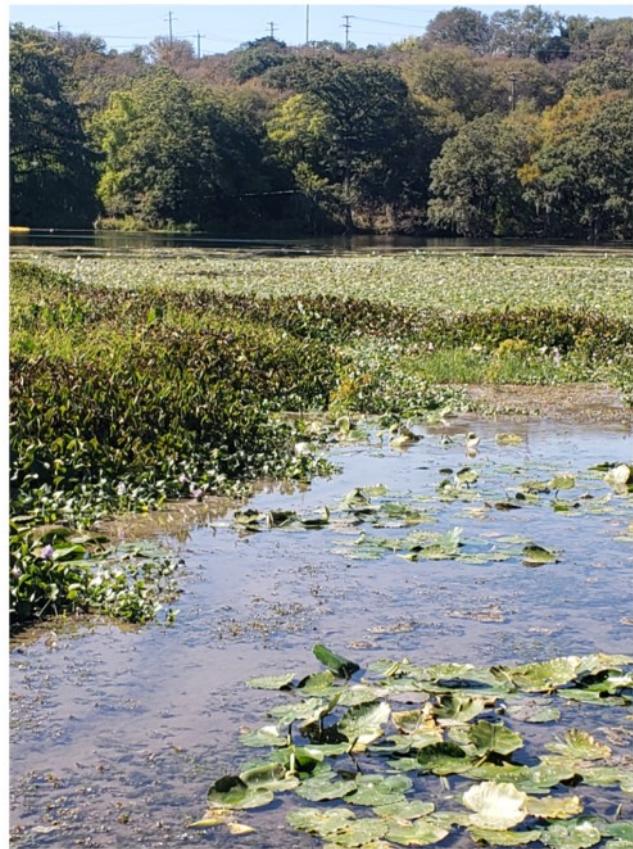
in the world. The crystal-clear water stays at a constant 72 degrees and contains one of the world's largest aquifer-driven spring systems. (Edwards aquifer). More than 200 artesian springs bubble up to form Spring Lake.



Spring Lake Natural Area is a 251 acre park surrounding the lake with natural trails for hiking, biking, birding and photography. The endangered golden-cheeked warbler breeds in the ash juniper and oak found here. The Natural Area is closed from March to

May annually to protect these species during their nesting period. Invasive plants and upkeep of Spring Lake is maintained by AquaCorps, a team of trained volunteer divers that gives back to the community by preserving this unique body of water and its natural and cultural resources.

The Wetlands Boardwalk, located in the Sink Creek Watershed, is a floating trail that allows visitors a unique view of wetland ecosystems. A tour on this trail shows what the long-term effects of planting



exotic aqua flora can do to a habitat and explains the benefits wetlands provide nature for habitats and other plant and wildlife communities. Our tour guide explained that wetlands are a collection of aquifers, springs, river, lakes and reservoirs all ultimately leading to the Gulf of Mexico. Wetlands are only sustainable if viewed as a whole in which all parts are preserved and protected.

Eight endangered or threatened species live in the San Marcos region of the Edwards Aquifer, Spring Lake and the upper four miles of the San Marcos River. <https://www.meadowscenter.txstate.edu/ExploreSpringLake/EndangeredSpecies.html> The U.S Fish & Wildlife Dept and Texas Parks and Wildlife have designated the San Marcos Springs and Spring Lake a critical habitat.



You can find more information on the Meadows Center guided tours and programs [here](#).

## Red Wolf gene still exists

Red wolves used to exist in Texas, Florida and West Virginia. In the 70's the US Fish and Wildlife Service began a campaign to save the red wolf. They trapped many and began developing a breeding population. Today, a handful are living in the wild in North Carolina but the population is struggling. A field biologist and photographer, Ron Wooten, noticed a different type of wild dog that appeared shortly after Hurricane Ike swept through on Galveston Island. Scientist were able to find a roadway victim of one of these canines and sent off for DNA comparison. The dogs were coyote/red wolf hybrids. Red wolves were always thought to be seclusive but when none were seen for some time, scientists assumed they were extinct. With the discovery of this new population of canines carrying the red wolf DNA, conservation efforts are underway to help the species survive.



### Editor's Note

by *Wendi Gibson*

[Cyrano@txmnbv.org](mailto:Cyrano@txmnbv.org)

Here's a story. In the early 90's, me, my husband and a friend of ours observed three reddish colored coyote hybrid type dogs crossing a pasture down by the Brazos River. It was remarkable memory because our friend was a DVM, in his late 70's who had seen these types of animals running free in this area long before in his younger days working mostly with ranchers in the large animal veterinary field. He said they were red wolf coyote hybrids. That was the first time I saw a hybrid.

In 2009, I worked at a veterinary clinic that regularly saw other types of wolf hybrid canines (not red). They were magnificent animals – large paws, lanky legs, lean and tall, watchful and quiet. They had a way of moving and a way of behaving that wasn't like your typical domestic dog.

Fast forward again a year later. I was at home and heard one of my dogs barking at something in the tree line in the back pasture. I went over to take a look. I could tell it was a coyote standing in the darker underbrush.

I guess it had enough of my noisy dog because out of the brush it came. I yelled and flailed at it and it was so surprised it stopped for a brief moment to look at me before it ran into the woods. This canine was an interesting sable color. It was

slightly taller than your average coyote, had bigger paws, and a snout that was just a little bit larger. Then it was gone.

Thinking I couldn't be the only one in the area to see such a creature, I called our local wildlife office to confirm and no one had seen such a thing. I got some informative feedback about how red wolf and red wolf cross canines have been extinct since the 60's. I didn't have any evidence to prove my story and my experience with wolf hybrids in a clinical setting did nothing to make anyone pause and reconsider. My husband reminded me of the ones we had seen in the 90's and how this dog looked exactly like those.

Is it my imagination? Let's be honest – the files on sightings of black panthers and sasquatch and chupacabras and such would be taking up a lot of space by now if someone were to try to keep up with it all. I couldn't provide any real evidence to back my story. I was one person with one observation.

With the discovery of the red wolf coyote hybrids on Galveston Island, could it possibly be? Is my sasquatch story real? I'll leave it to you to ponder.

Happy Trails!

