

The Tracker

The Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter

February, 2011

Volume 1, Issue 2

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Saturday in the Swamp

- Marilyn Whitworth

Saturday, Jan 22, 2011 Richard McCarthy, Joanne Millican and Marilyn Whitworth took an Advanced Training Course called "Water, Water Everywhere." Its purpose was to prepare teachers and volunteers with training required to assist Waco Wetlands and Baylor University Staff in providing 10th and 11th grade students with Hands on Experiences of various scientific concepts (Biology, Chemistry, Integrated Physics and Chemistry, and Physics) thereby enabling the students to perform well on their TAKS test.

There were four demonstration areas set up. At each demonstration area hypotheses were formulated on various properties of water and then data collected, measurements made accurately and precisely, information evaluated and analyzed to prove or disprove the hypotheses.

Calendar at a Glance

Tuesday, February 8, CTMN bi-monthly meeting

Thursday, February 10, Georgetown, NPSOT talk on native orchids*

February through April, Marsh Madness at Waco Wetlands *

February 19, Growing Up Wild*

Thursday, March 31, Milam County Photo Contest Deadline *

Saturday, April 9, Milam County Nature Festival *

* more information inside.

1. Adventures in Acids and Bases: This showed the Ph readings in different types of ecosystems (freshwater and bogs) and also rainwater and surface water. You are asked to explain what causes the differences that are measured and how the different plants in freshwater and bogs adapt to the different conditions the plants encounter. Explain what causes acidity in unpolluted rain and acid rain.

2. Will It Float: Data was collected on depth vs. water temperature, the weight of different objects, the physical and chemical properties(specific gravity, temperature, salinity, and conductivity) of Lake Waco Wetlands and simulated Gulf of Mexico. Then

Continued on next page...

Chapter Motto

Earth Day,
Every Day

T E X A S



Chatter from the President

Seems like such a long time since our last meeting. Thinking of what to write for this newsletter.

We have been busy getting this year's Central Texas Master Naturalist training together. It is all every bit as good and maybe even better than our very first training. Everyone has been working on getting top presenters. Keep Salado Beautiful is donating the refreshments for the first training meeting due to the work some of you did within the Salado community. This is what is so encouraging about working with others and how that partnership blooms and grows.

We had a great showing at the Invasives class last month. What a great place to hold the training at TSTC and then go into the field and identify some of those very plants that cause havoc in our Texas landscapes. Thanks to Zoe for helping get this wonderful training together not only for Bell, but Heart of Texas and Camino Real chapters also. Some master gardeners also joined us for a fun day.

We just spent the weekend at Inks Lake camping with our Boy Scout troop and then taking the Vanishing River Cruise. We couldn't have asked for better weather. Although we didn't see any eagles, we did see an osprey who had just caught a fish and was feasting on his catch. Our scouts have been working on the Bird Study merit badge, and they have been logging their sightings. We are going to Stephen F. Austin State Park in April and then on to the Attawater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. There is some excellent birding there, and we are excited. It is so wonderful to share love of nature with our scouts, for they can learn something that for some will become their vocation and for others, a hobby.

With all this said, I hope you continue to enjoy this beautiful weather, until the next cold front arrives. Zoe has some great speakers lined up for the meetings this year and also some great advanced training opportunities. I will see you soon at the February meeting.

- Mary Ann Everett

Saturday in the Swamp...continued

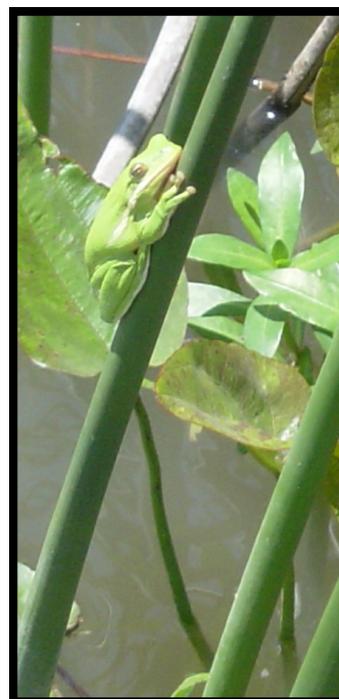
with the data collected you were asked to investigate the density of the objects to predict if they would or wouldn't float in the two different ecosystems (freshwater and saltwater).

3. It's a Gas: You were asked to explain what you observed in terms of temperature effects on gases dissolving in water. You measured and recorded temperature, dissolved gases, and pH for submerged



aquatic plants and fish. This showed the principles of photosynthesis and respiration and how adaptations are made to various organisms to live with the amount of dissolved oxygen (DO) and carbon dioxide (CO₂) available.

4. What's the Solution: This demonstrated surface tension (cohesion and adhesion) water molecules and polarity of solids and liquids. Polar has to do with the charged ends of water (positive and negative). You were asked to explain how bonding and charges of various substances caused them to dissolve or not dissolve in water.



CT Master Naturalists Organize Seminar at Salado Library

- Debbie Blair

On November 6, Central Texas Master Naturalist, Becky Denton introduced Dr. Randy Pinkston as he presented "Bird Watching in Bell County," another

topic in the Salado Library's Texas Naturalist Series. Master Naturalist, Debbie Blair explained what a Master Naturalist is. Dr. Pinkston and his topic drew a record crowd (32) for the Library's Texas Naturalist Series. His power-point presentation and his input was priceless. Discussion and questions were lively and ongoing. Jeannie Lively, displayed Salado Library's bird books.



This is the third program at the Salado Library the CTMN's have put together, and Denton already has more plans in the works for Salado. Watch for volunteer hours as she helps develop environmentally educational projects around the new Sustainability Center.



CTMN CHAPTER MEMBERS REFURBISH SALADO'S GREEN BRIDGE PARK

Top photo pictures some of the crowd listening to Dr. Pinkston; Debbie Blair and Becky Denton pose with Dr. Pinkston after the program; Photo to the right is of a juvenile Coopers Hawk sitting in Terrie and Werner Hahn's birdbath. Dr. Pinkston was able to identify the hawk that sat there for ten minutes in the August heat.

Photos by Becky Denton

Photo of hawk by Terrie Hahn

- Debbie Blair

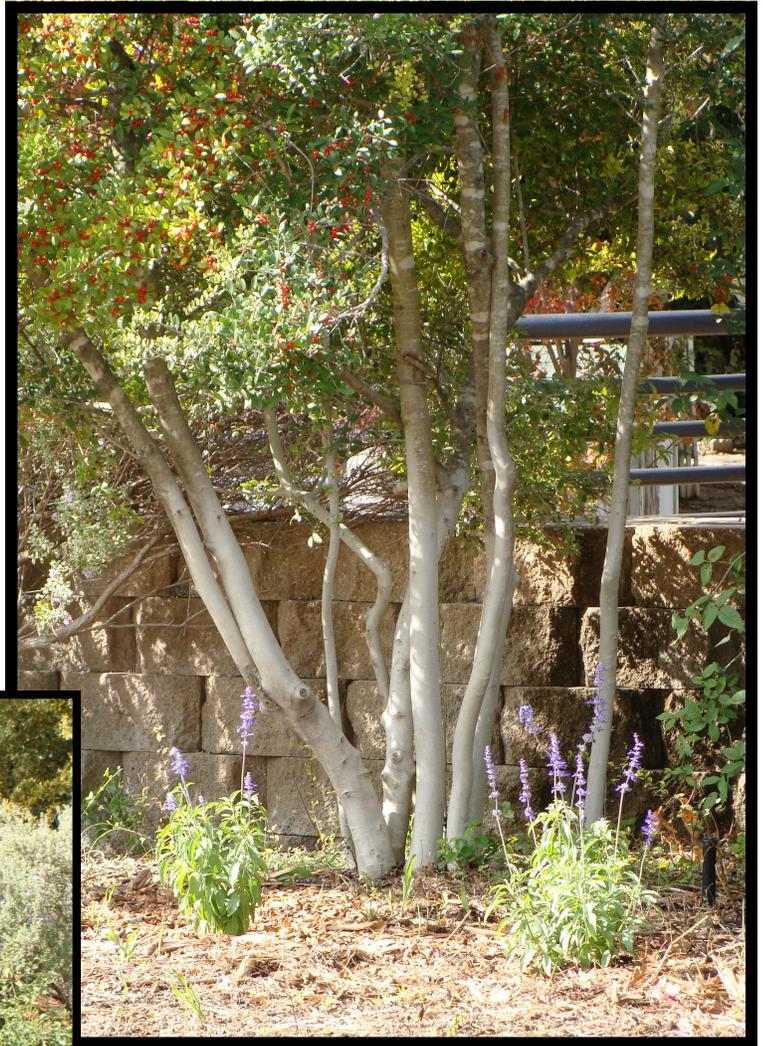
The Village of Salado can thank CTMN members, Becky Denton, Debbie Blair, Janis Holmes, Sandy Horn, Ray Kozusko (with wife Nancy), Linda Mahaffey, Darla H. Menking and Joanne Millican for orchestrating an education and beautification project

Continued on next page...

Green Bridge Park Project ...continued

on the Main Street “Green Bridge Park.” Denton approached Keep Salado Beautiful’s (KSB) chairman, Susan Terry, about forming a joint team of volunteers to clean up and re-landscape the overgrown park. Our CTMN members joined with KSB volunteers and other members of the Salado community in donating approximately nine hours of community service in weeding, trimming, planting native plants and mulching the neglected area on Main Street (near the “bicycle fence”).

In keeping with the Master Naturalist mission of educating the public, Denton is overseeing the creation of a sign, funded by KSB, that describes the benefits of landscaping with native plants.



Photos by Becky Denton

Master Naturalists/Gardeners “Invade” TSTC

- Darla Horner Menking

Several **Central Texas Master Naturalists** joined together with **Heart of Texas** and **El Camino Real MN** chapters, on Saturday morning, Jan. 22nd, to complete the “Invaders of Texas Citizen Scientist” training course, held on the campus of Texas State Technical College. Also in attendance were **Bell County** and **McLennan**

Michael Murphrey “Pulling it Together.”

Continued on next page...



MN's "Invade" TSTC...continued

County Master Gardeners. The training was lead by Mike Murphrey of the Texas Forest Ser-vice. De-veloped by the **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** in April of 2005, the major program partners of Invaders of Texas include the TX Forest Service, TX Parks & Wildlife Dept., Texas Master Naturalists, and the Houston Advanced Research Center.

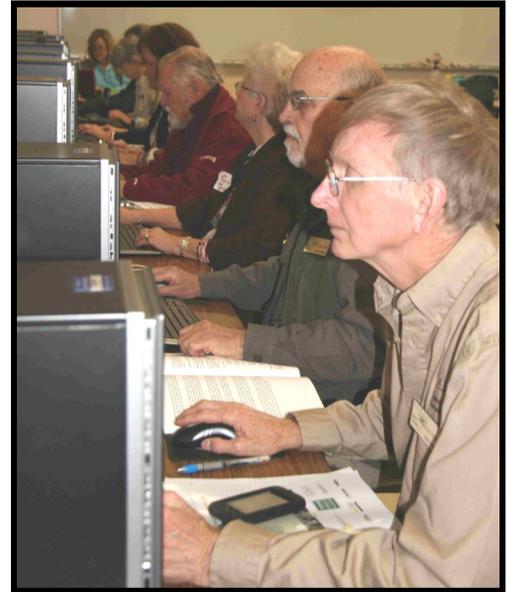
The intent of this training program is to "*empower the public to become involved as citizen scientists in order to more effectively slow the spread of harmful invasive species and reduce their environmental and economic damage*". (**Citizen Scientist Handbook**) That's a mouthful!

Each attendee received a curriculum handbook, a clip board, data sheets, and numerous pamphlets and materials concerning the increasing environmental and economic problems due to the rapid increase of exotic invasives into Texas native habitats. The magnitude of this issue is so vast, it has become necessary to utilize and train private citizens to help locate and collect data, for not only research but for developing solutions to the problem.

The training went from 9am to about 4:30pm, and it covered not only classroom information, but data collection out in the field and data input into the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center computer tracking network. Mike Murphrey did an outstanding job disseminating information and getting participants excited about doing their part to combat the most common invasive plant species in the local areas. His quick-witted humor yet serious focus on his topic made the hours invested on a Saturday well worth it!

By the end of the course, attendees had: reported valuable data into computers, taken an oath of commitment to utilize their training and stay involved in the quest to save Texas native resources, were given

a comprehensive field guide for indentifying inva-sives, learned how to use a GPS, how to take quality digital images for verification, and received a certi-ficate of training as Invaders of Texas Citizen Sci-entists. All left the training as eager Citizen Scientists "apprentices", the first level of three. As more data is reported and verified in the reporting sys-tem, "intermediate" and "expert", levels may be reached.



There are presently over 300 Invaders of Texas Citizen Scientists. Anyone interested in knowing more may visit the website www.texasinvasives.org. This is definitely a worthwhile course and the cooperative effort of working together increases the chances of controlling and/or eradicating harmful exotic inva-sives, thereby saving precious Texas native plant species. There will be additional opportunities to train for this program, coming up in the near future.

Central Texas Master Naturalists in attendance were: Linda Mahaffey, Sidney Van Loh, Mary Ann Everett, Lynn Fleming, Terrie Hahn, Jerry Lewis, Linda Young, Becky Denton, Louann Height, Dale Hughling, Darla Menking, & Zoe Rascoe.

Pictured on left are: Mary Ann Everett, Gail Christian and Linda Young in the field with their GPS; Above, Dale Hughling, Jerry Lewis and others enter their data; Left, Linda Mahaffey and Terrie Hahn in the field.

Photos by Zoe Rascoe.



Spotlight on Natives

- Darla Horner Menking

The Texas native in the spotlight this newsletter is none other than... drum roll, please... *Berberis trifoliolata*. We call it Agarita. A wonderful specimen, this native is an all around shrub with something for everyone and everything to love.

To begin, *Berberis* is Latin for berberys, Arabic for its fruit. *Trifoliolata* means three leaflets. Agarita might also be called Agarito, Wild Current-of-Texas, Desert Holly, or Laredo mahonia (after horticulturist B. M'Mahon).

The Agarita is evergreen, always a plus. It doesn't grow too tall- maybe up to six feet- and the only possible downside is it is very prickly. It blooms small yellow blooms early in the year, providing valuable pollen and nectar for bees. The flowers are said to be edible. (I may have to give that a try.)



Agarita gets its name from the Spanish word for "little sour" since it produces small, red, sour berries in early summertime, providing food for animals and making a pretty good jelly if you add enough sugar.

This lovely, little bush is a wonderful and safe habitat for small animals that can shelter among the prickly foliage and away from larger predators.

There is so much to say about this awesome Texas native, but not enough room to put it all here. From dye to medicines, you will want to check out this plant to find out more.

I selected this native, not only because I think it's just great, but because it's been such a challenge for me personally. I've tried, and failed, twice to grow one. I grit my teeth each time I pass them, growing along

the side of the road, looking wild and carefree on the fence lines.

Looking for a small, native shrub with everything? Our hunt is over... with the Agarita.

(A large part of my information came from the book Remarkable Plants of Texas, by Matt Warrock Turner.

Photo by Darla Horner Menking

A Backyard for the birds!

- Glenda Turck, CTMN in Killeen

As I sit at my computer each day I can look out the window at my large yard with a bird feeder and bird-bath just feet away. Next to them is a Mexican Plum Tree that is still small but is thorny and protective.

We have nearly 20 Cardinals every day that flit from the tree to the feeder or the water. Along with the Cardinals are Sparrows, Wrens, Titmice, Chickadees, White-winged and Inca Doves. Sometimes a Blue Jay drops in and I am reminded again what large birds they are. One of the female Cardinals has a white spot on her head just above the cere.

Is this mutation from pollution or was it one of Darwin's random genes expressing itself? I don't know and wish I did.

None of the songbirds seemed to be tagged so we have no way of knowing where they've been or how old they are. Are they taking advantage of the many trees and shrubs we have here to roost now and raise families in the Spring and Summer? Or do they come to our yard from the Lampasas River only about 1,000 feet away? How polluted is this part of the river as it enters Stillhouse Reservoir? How does this affect the bird population, which seems different now than it did 10 years ago? Has a bird count ever been done in this part of Bell County? This seems to me to be a perfect spot for such a count and for a general evaluation of the native habitat.

I invite my fellow naturalists to come out here and take a walk down by the river. There are some interesting surprises down there.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Milam County Nature Festival

Work on the 2nd Annual Milam County Nature Festival planned for Saturday April 9 is well under way! For more information, go to:

www.txmn.org/elcamino/naturefest/

MA

The El Camino Real Chapter of Master Naturalists is again sponsoring a Nature Photo Contest. It will be held in conjunction with the Second Annual Milam County Nature Festival at Wilson-Ledbetter Park in Cameron on Saturday, April 9th. The objective of the contest is to promote awareness and an appreciation of the natural world around us by encouraging participants to look for nature in their own back yards, around the county and throughout Texas. Entries will be judged prior to the festival and the **DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS MARCH 31, 2011**. All entries (space permitting) and winning photographs will be on display for public viewing at the Nature Festival site on April 9th. The Awards Ceremony will be held earlier in the day this year (2 pm) allowing more festival-goers to view the presentation of ribbons. Contest rules and guidelines, entry forms and information on how to submit photographs can be viewed at:

<http://txmn.org/elcamino/naturefest/photo-contest/>

MA

Marsh Madness Volunteer Opportunities

- Zoe Rascoe

Hello All!

I'm passing along a plea for help from the Baylor Center for Reservoir and Aquatic Systems Research who need volunteers for their Marsh Madness educational programs held at the Waco Wetlands. Dates for the events are listed below. Training to help with the events (which also counts for hours) is this Saturday morning. Melissa knows three Master Naturalist chapters will be sending people to the Invaders of Texas Workshop this Saturday, so she's willing to train you during an event if necessary (even being a

helper helps!) You may remember that Melissa taught one of your classes at the Waco Wetlands last spring - and she's a Master Naturalist as well. She's a great teacher and a lot of fun to work with.

If you are looking for volunteer service hours and can help at any of the dates below, please let Melissa know directly. Many of you know Diane Cooney - she is a regular at Marsh Madness and could fill you in on more details if you would like to check with her.



Spring, 2011 Schedule

GEAR UP Waco Marsh Madness

Field Trips:

University High: January 25, 27; Feb 1, 3, 8, 10.

Note: UHIGH has requested 9 am-10 am Pre-field trip activities. 10 am- 2pm Field Trip. 2 – 2:30 pm Post-field trip activities.

Waco High: Jan 31 2:20- 3 pm, pre-field trip campus visit. **Field Trips:** Feb 15, 17; March 15, 17, April 5 (ADDED) and April 7 (ADDED)

La Vega High: Jan 26- After School teacher meeting. **Field Trips:** Feb 2 (Wed), Feb 9 (Wed); Feb 22, 24

AJ Moore: Feb 21 10:15- 11am, pre-field trip campus visit. **Field Trips:** March 22, March 23rd (WED-ADDED), 24, 29, 31 . **Note:** AJ Moore will be bringing 2 busloads, 60 students, each field trip **V**

V Approved for Volunteer Hours

AT Approved for Advanced Training

MA Must Apply for approval of hours

More Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Growing Up Wild Workshop

- Mary Ann Everett

When: **Saturday, February 19, 2011, 9 - 12 noon**

Where: **Lake Waco Wetlands**, Education Center

What: Activities correlated to the National Association for the Education of Young Children standards and the Head Start Domains.

Who: K-2 Elementary Teachers, Early Childhood educators and caregivers, Camp counselors, TMN's anyone involved with 3-7 year olds and nature

Why: Get a Growing Up Wild Activity Guide, 3 hrs TEEAC and Advanced Training Hours for TMN's. Learn how to build on a young child's sense of wonder about nature and invite them to explore wildlife and the world around them. And it's fun!!!

How much: \$10 to cover snacks and materials

Send a Check for \$10 to:

Diane Cooney

2816 Pecan Valley Dr.

Temple, TX 76502

Include your phone number and/or email address.

Registration is limited, Reserve Now!!!

Questions: Call The Wetland Office at 254-848-9654 or Diane Cooney at 254-742-2816 **AT**

V Approved for Volunteer Hours
AT Approved for Advanced Training
MA Must Apply for approval of hours

NPSOT/Williamson seminar

February Chapter Meeting: Jason R. Singhurst on Native Orchids-Thursday, February 10, 2011, 7:00 pm — 9:00 pm at the Georgetown Public Library

Jason R. Singhurst -Botanist/Plant Ecologist, Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and co-author of Rare Plants of Texas. He will speak on **Native Orchids** and some rarely-seen and restricted flora in "**Herbaceous Seepage Slopes and Bogs of the West Gulf Coastal Plain.**" Jason's talk will include many rare flora, including carnivorous plants and orchids, that inhabit the regions just to the east of Austin. **MA**

FYI

A MN Podcast is now available

Check out Lester Harlow's podcast. He's with the Piney Woods MN Chapter. He only has a December/January podcast on line so far. He talks about what's going on in some of the other MN Chapters and upcoming events. He's a very good speaker, so easy to listen to and has interviews too.

Just go to your iTunes. Good idea to download it-it's free. Click on Podcast and type in Texas Master Naturalist in the search section in the upper right hand side of the screen. It's as easy as that!

Identification Day at UT

The Texas Natural Science Center of the University of Texas, Austin hosts an Identification Day twice a year. Have you ever wondered about a fossil you've found? Then bring it with you to Identification Day. Scientists and experts from all over Central Texas are on hand to look at and identify natural objects (fossils, bones, rocks, etc.) and archaeological materials (arrowheads, points, scrapers, etc.).

For more information contact Pamela R. Owen at 512 -232-5511 or send her an email at p.owen@austin.utexas.edu.

You can also go to their website at:

www.utexas.edu/tmm/events/iddays

Christmas Party Memories



Central Texas Master Naturalists got together for a Christmas Potluck supper at Zoe's house.

Marilyn Whitworth is thrilled to be given the Royal Order of the Muddy Boots award from Jerry Lewis. Mary Ann Everett had received this award previously.



Becky Denton receives her Certification.



Christmas Party Memories...continued

Year in Review from Membership

- Linda Young

Our First Year as a Chapter has been very successful. Twenty-nine interns started training on April 6, 2010. One intern terminated after the second week and Twenty-three students completed training and graduated and five continued to work to complete training.

The chapter accumulated 1,529 service hours and 351 advanced training hours. The membership today is at 30, there were four transferred into the chapter and three terminations.

Nine members have successfully completed the requirements (completion of training, 40 hrs. service hours and 8 hrs. advanced training) for recognition as a Certified Texas Master Naturalist and received their Certificate and 4-color Dragonfly Pin). Seven members have qualified for re-certification and will receive their Wood Duck pin. One member has met the requirements for 250+ Milestone Bronze Dragonfly Pin.



Dale Hughling receives his certification.

Many awards were given out at the CTMN Christmas party. Linda Young finished her class hours and received her certificate. Becky Denton, Linda Young, Dale Hughling, Jerry Lewis, Richard McCarthy, Darla Menking and Marilyn Whitworth all received their MN initial certification.

Richard McCarthy and Marilyn Whitworth received a special certificate and Keep Texas Beautiful ornament from the HOTMN chapter for the **huge** number of hours they have put in on the Marsh Madness at the Waco Wetlands. They worked **every** Marsh Madness Field Trip this past fall and each of them accumulated 120 hours.



Left, Richard McCarthy and above, Darla Horner Menking received their certifications.



Photos by Terry Rascoe

Newsletter Mission Statement

"Our mission is to inform and educate Master Naturalist members and the general public about our local environment and resources, and what we, as caretakers, can do to protect them."

Board of Directors:

President: Mary Ann Everett

Vice President: Zoe Rascoe

Secretary: Lou Ann Hight

Treasurer: Gail Hughling

Web Master: Dale Hughling

Membership: Linda Young

Historian: Becky Denton

Historian: Joanne Milican

Host: Marilyn Whitworth

Newsletter: Gail Hughling

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County Extension Agent, Ag and Natural
Resources

Randall Rakowitz,
County Extension Agent, Natural Resources

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Rascoe Becky Denton, Darla Horner Menking, Terrie
Hahn

Cover Banner Photo: Terrie Hahn

Please send any news of events, articles or photos of what you're doing or what's going on in your yard or area to:

Terrie Hahn at moompie45@hotmail.com