

The Tracker

The Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter December 2011

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Young and Ready

- Ursula Nanna, CTMN Angler Instructor

This marks the first Event that the Central Texas Master Naturalist Angler Education Instructors did in two sessions. We received both permission and instruction from Karen Marks of Texas Parks and Wildlife. Because of the number of youth, this was an 'all hands on deck' performance.

The dates were October 5th and 19th, 2011, at the 7th Day Adventist Church in Killeen, from 5 - 7 pm. We taught fishing to the Adventurers, youth analogous to Cub Scouts ages 6 to 10. The youth were definitely primed and off we went into the world of TEACH ME FISHING..



Calendar at a Glance

Salado Sculpture Garden Work Day,
Thursday, December 1, 9:30 am

CTMN **Christmas Party**, Tuesday,
December 13, 6:30 pm.

Orientation for New Class, March 20

New Class runs March 27 - May 7

For the first session, all Docks were inside. It was a challenge because the level of youth energy was high.....We adjusted our tactics for the second session so we would be on par.....ok!!!!, ya,right.... Instructors and volunteers really stepped up because we were short-handed due to illness and the things life presents.

Coming back for the second session, Adventurers, leaders and parents alike, told us how excited their child was about what they had learned and looked forward to this second session for two

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Chapter Motto

**Earth Day,
Every Day**



From the President's Pen

Traveling by car to California recently, I was struck by how devastating our drought has been in our state. In some areas there appeared to be almost a fifty per cent die-off of the tree material. A lot of the ash juniper has died along with cedar elm and oak species. Mile after mile of dead trees is something to behold.

The further west you go, you realize people don't buy lawn mowers. They have no need for them. Yards are made of mainly rock. Now I will admit that is not too pretty a sight, however there were yards that had some plant material right along with the rock which made the landscape more appealing.

With this drought, I wonder if homeowners will begin to think of their landscape in a different manner, after all, water is a very precious resource. In talking with my youngest brother who lives in the Panhandle, he said the city had not mandated any water restrictions, except to say water your landscape on Mondays and Thursdays, but it was not monitored. He said he had seen run-off from sprinkler heads not turned right; one sprinkler head in a city park was actually spewing a geyser. When he called the city to notify them, they questioned him and thought he was over-exaggerating. Hmmm, have we not seen some of that here too?

We have so much to be thankful for in our wonderful state. This drought may have wrought havoc with some of our species, but isn't that the way nature works? Survival of the fittest. We as Master Naturalists play an important role, along with others, in helping the public become more aware of what our state has to offer, and in educating others on so many

topics, one being water stewardship. The Bell County Water Symposium covered so many good topics on our water supply and the future of our water here in Central Texas and also the state. It was also well attended which was good. Educating begins with one person at a time!

With that said, let me put in another thought. We have The Passport, which allows us to get a 'stamp' when we travel to National Parks, Monuments, Wildlife Refuges, etc. It is such a unique way to see nature and learn so much about different topics, geology, trees, archaeology, plants, and history. I would encourage you, if you do not already participate in this program, to do so. Our National Parks system is a treasure, for all of us, and is a wonderful way to learn more! Even if you don't want to get a Passport (you can get a senior citizen price, just saying), it is still a great deal.



With Thanksgiving now past, we are headed for Christmas quickly. Our party will be here before you know it. Please plan on joining us and enjoying each other's company! I look forward to seeing everyone. In the meantime, enjoy the outdoors. (We have American Goldfinches!)

Mary Ann

Photos by Mary Ann Everett



Young and Ready...continued

weeks!!!! It appeared that the Leaders and Parents were also excited about the 2nd session as well. As is the case, many of the church parents and leaders couldn't help but join in the activities. We had to pry one Adventurer leader away from the casting dock....too much fun for everyone.

The evening ended with graduation, giving out Junior Angler certificates and Angler pins and a Teach Me Fishing booklet. These kids were running up to receive these certificates and very excited to be Junior Anglers. It must be said, that out of the 21 Adventurers attending the first session, 21 also attended the second. Lots of really good pictures were taken by Gail Christian at both sessions.

This Event really deserves a special thanks to the CTMN Angler Instructors and volunteers alike. Each reached deep to accomplish this, our sec-



Thank you to all of you, especially those who taught both sessions.



ond Angler Ed Event. We enjoyed visiting among ourselves after the Event and we really had a great time with this Event.

Don Wyatt, Jerry Lewis, Joanne Millican, Kathy Cantu, Liz Pool, Lyna Pitts, Sidney van Loh, Ursula Nanna were the Angler Instructors. Richard McCarthy, Marilyn Whitworth, Gail Christian, and Lynn Fleming were the CTMN volunteers.



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Young and Ready...continued



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Young and Ready...continued

All photos by Gail Christian



Reel 'me in and then Graduation!!!



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Thank You!

- Ursula Nanna

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to **IRONWOOD PACIFIC OUTDOORS** for their generous donation of 16 Backyard Bass and 20 Casting Plugs for our Angler Event.

Photo by Gail Christian



Baylor's Wonders of Water!

CTMN's Wetland Specialists, Marilyn Whitworth and Richard McCarthy, pictured below, participated in Baylor's Wonders of Water event along with Heart of Texas MN's volunteers.

Photo provided by Melissa Mullins of Heart of Texas MN.



CTMN's Attend State Meeting

- Debbie Blair

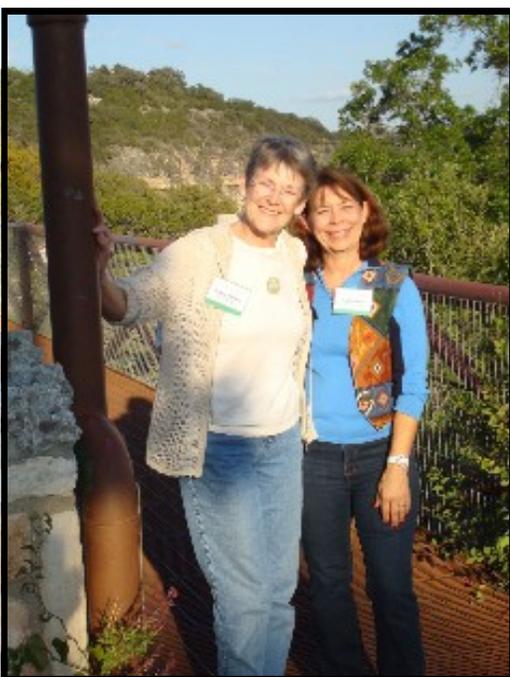
Dear members, I'm honored to report on our CTMN participation in the Texas Master Naturalist 12th Annual Statewide Meeting & Advanced Training Seminar. Because of busy schedules, we all arrived at historic Mo Ranch (on the Guadalupe River – just outside of Hunt, Tx.) from various locations around the state. Kathy Cantu had camped along the way, Becky Denton had family and CTMN duties in Salado, Richard McCarthy and Marilyn arrived on their own, and Joann Millican and I carpooled. Any of you that are familiar with Texas, will recognize the name of this historic retreat center that was started in 1934. (My dreams of going there as a child were finally fulfilled after 50-plus years – thanks to our Master Naturalist program!)



Room and board were fantastic... Rustic and beautiful in the hill country along the Guadalupe. I saw my first "wild" porcupine while on a stroll. We both surprised each other. It took me awhile to realize what I was seeing. Then he/she am-

bled off. It was great seeing such a wide variety of folks all interested in "helping Mother Nature" and in learning ways to educate the public.

A silent auction and voting on member artwork, pho-



Kathy, Becky, Richard, Joann, Marilyn and I would meet at the dining hall for meals and then go our separate ways to the various topics throughout the event. We all gathered later to share some of our information. We learned about: Land Stewardship



tography and chapter displays were ongoing in the main hall. Book sales were very popular. We all came away with bags full of nature items, Master Naturalist shirts, hats and logos. But the highlight of

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State MN Meeting...continued

the event (besides learning about all the natural things that we love) was the awards ceremony! The Awards and Recognition Ceremony was a bitter-sweet event as we all bid a teary farewell to Sonny Arnold on his retirement. He was able to get us laughing as he thanked all of us for our support. He challenged us all to continue the work that this organization is known for. I was honored to present Sonny with our Certificate of the Muddy Boot Award (only we can appreciate the title – Mary Ann will have to explain it to him) and give him a small gift as a token of our thanks from the CTMN group. He's such a gentleman and accepted it with grace.

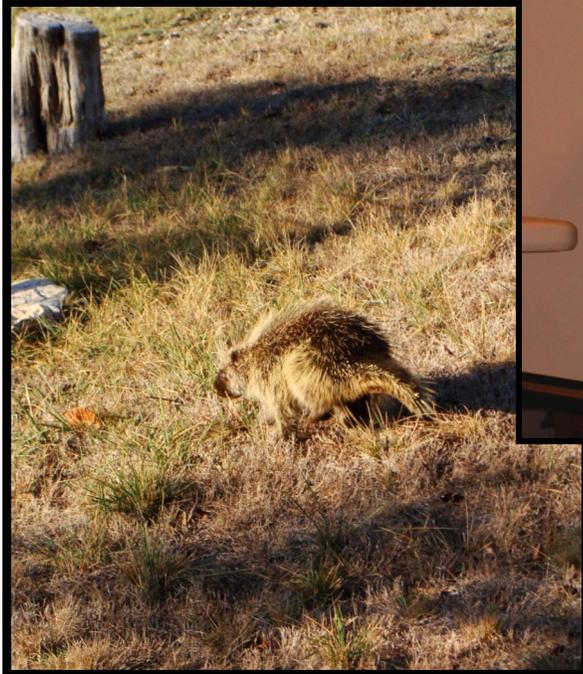
Richard McCarthy and Marilyn Whitworth were recognized for their volunteer hours. Kathy attended a star watch and also a bird watching tour. The whole event was such a treat: people with the same goals gathered in a beautiful setting, learning tools and information to pass on to the public. I can only say: Mark your calendars for next year's meeting:

2012 Statewide Meeting & Advanced Training

October 26-28, 2012

Camp Allen, Navasota, TX

Photos by Debbie Blair



Above, Debbie Blair gives Sonny Arnold the "Muddy Boot" Award and a gift from CTMN; left, meeting with a porcupine; below, Marilyn Whitworth and Richard McCarthy were recognized for their volunteer hours.



What You Might Not Know About Salado

- **Becky Denton**

You may think of Salado as a fun place for lunch, an afternoon of shopping or a stroll along the banks of Salado Creek. What you might not know is that Salado has only been an incorporated village since 2000. Because there was no Salado government until early in this century, Salado has no public land. All of Salado is owned by private entities, either individuals or foundations.

With this lack of public land Keep Salado Beautiful has taken the challenge of creating spaces for Salado residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoors and our native Texas habitat. CTMN has joined Keep Salado Beautiful on a number of projects providing much appreciated manpower for KSB and volunteer service hour opportunities for CTMN members.

Our first joint project was the Main Street Green Bridge garden where CTMN members joined Salado locals in a major cleanup and planting of native plants. Next came an even more extensive project with the Salado Sculpture Garden sponsored by KSB and the Public Arts League of Salado (PALS). On this project CTMN members have removed invasive species, planted and mulched, designed a water feature and drip irrigation system, built rock walls and more.

Our next KSB project approved by CTMN for volunteer hours was a native plant demonstration garden at the site of our recycle center. The plants here are in the middle of a circular drive that each car coming to recycle Saturday morning must navigate. What a great way to spread the native plant message. This will be an ongoing project with the addition of a pocket prairie in 2012.

The latest joint venture between KSB and CTMN is a Pocket Garden program. The goal of the program is to have garden spaces along Main Street and throughout the village sponsored by local organizations and businesses and planted in native plants. Our job as master naturalists is to plan, design and install these garden spaces. The first pocket garden is in place on College Hill, the site of the Salado College ruins. The next will be the Green Bridge when three local businesses join to sponsor that garden space. This will insure maintenance of the work we have completed.

One of the pleasures of working on the Salado projects is the partnerships that have been formed. An additional partner is the computer graphics class at Salado High School, Eagle Prints, which has designed the sign that will be placed at each Pocket Garden with a message about native plants included with the sponsor's name. These partnerships have given the Salado master naturalists many opportunities to spread the word about our organization throughout the community. I know you will be eager to hear about our wonderful project at Salado's Thomas Arnold Elementary School.

Salado Workday

- **Becky Denton**

There will be a workday at the Salado Sculpture Gardens to prepare for the Christmas Stroll. We will be adding plants, mulching, moving a few rocks and pulling fall weeds.

The date is **Thursday, December 1st at 9:30 am**. This will be our December workday. Join us if you can.

The new TXMN class will begin on

March 27th

and run through May 7th.

(The end date may be changed.)

Orientation is March 20th.

Please tell anyone you know who may be interested in joining!

Work and Play at the Salado Sculpture Garden

- Becky Denton



Caterpillars and Kids

- Becky Denton

In early October I planted three tropical milkweed (*asclepias curassavica*) plants in front of my house. Within five minutes, two monarchs appeared. The milkweed flourished and I enjoyed butterflies there and on my blue mist flower and other native plants.

When all the other monarchs flew south one stayed, apparently happy among my native bloomers. In mid-November one of my five-year old grandsons came for a six day visit. While helping him make a small water bath for small creatures, I spied a caterpillar chomping away on the milkweed. I got out my butterfly wheel and let little Miller find a match for the pretty caterpillar. Sure enough it was a monarch. Now this is the same youngster who, during an earlier visit, upon spying a handsome beetle, immediately said “step on it.”



We looked for “our” caterpillar everyday, and by the end of his stay found there were four. A couple of days after he went home, I used my I-Phone to send him this photo of a fat and happy monarch larvae. I’ve read a bit but am not sure exactly what happens to over-wintering adult and larval butterflies in Texas. Meanwhile I’ll enjoy the memories, keep my eyes open and look forward to the next opportunity to open a little ones eyes to the wonder and gift of our natural world.

States Are Catching On

- Ursula Nanna

With the onset of the metal plow and the impact of overgrazing, much has happened to our natural land-to-water filtering areas. Unlike the bison, moose, deer, and other seasonal/occasional grazers, large herds of “domestic” cattle were placed on the land and allowed to feed at will. However, land stewardship is coming to the forefront demonstrating its many benefits.



On April 27, 2011, several Central Texas Master Naturalists attended a 6.5 hour conference on

Riparian Zones and the Lampasas River. It was excellently presented by Ricky Linex and Ken Mayben USDA-NRCS under the auspices of Lisa Prcin, TX Aglife-Research, Blackland Research and Extension Center.

Rick did some myth busting, i.e.: droughts are bad as are fire and floods; streams should be straight and wide; dead and fallow trees in a creek/stream should be removed; and, vegetation should be mowed. All answers are “No” or “False”.

A properly functioning riparian area will have adequate vegetation with landforms and large wood to protect the banks from erosion. Here, willows, sycamore trees, sedges and rushes dissipate the stream’s energy and allow high stream flows to slow down and deposit silt. This stabilizes the banks while the trapped sediment builds the flood plains allowing for increased water storage. Here the watershed is recharged building up the spongy areas. Ponding and channeling characteristics develop and provide a habitat for fish, water fowl, and insects.

Creek restoration and healing takes place slowly over the years as the vegetation matt forms building the spongy areas. When the healing is strong, creeks can withstand the ravages of the 5-10-20 year floods but the more serious 60-80-100 year events usually

demonstrate such ferocity that even excellent riparian areas can be unraveled in places.



Riparian vegetation mats must be adequate to promote a properly functioning wetland. It’s necessary to stress this as we look for the sedges, rushes, grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees. These come in 2 fundamental groups: 1st are the colonizers which are the vegetation first on the scene. With shallow roots they don’t last long in the fresh sediment; 2nd are the stabilizers having strong roots like knotgrass and bald cypress.

The vegetation are also wetland indicators. Some must have water and are called obligates. Facultative wetland vegetation will be present in wet areas 65-99% of the time. They are equally likely to be present in wet and non-wet areas. Facultative uplands are minimally present in wetlands but highly present in



upland areas. Facultative plants are found in both wet and non-wet locations. Finally, the obligate upland vegetation will be in non-wet areas 65-99% of the time.

The Lampasas River watershed is 1200 sq. miles from N. Mills County to Bell County. In 1998 this wetland was reported as impaired and this had to be rectified and so it has been. To accomplish this, it was

Continued on next page... are no severe measures and, in many cases, very minimal expense to the landowner to accomplish this end.

States Are Catching On...continued

mandatory to curtail excessive livestock numbers, reduce feral hogs, control exotic deer and wildlife, repair and replace faulty and inefficient septic systems, and control and manage excessive livestock grazing.



Ken was the engineer and discussed the hydrology of riparian areas, bank formation, rock bed bottoms, erosion and deposition, and bankfull properties. Lane's Balance was discussed, which is the relationship between the water, sediment, erosion and its deposition in the stream and channels. The stream's job is to move the water and sediment downhill into the catchment areas.

To be a healthy riparian area, a diversity of vegetation is required. The vegetation must demonstrate different life stages to follow as the life process takes place and vegetation replenishes itself. Grazing is permitted but it must be less intense and the cattle needs to be moved frequently upland. No grazing or availability to riparian banks should be closer than 100 feet. As riparian sediment settles and vegetation is allowed to grow and develop, some areas have demonstrated an 85% increase in grazeable fodder areas in less than 10 years-at no expense to the farmer.

Riparian areas do their job wonderfully when they are properly managed: nutrients are recycled; pathogen populations are decreased; some toxic chemicals may be degraded; spongy uplands will hold more water making it available even far into a drought. Wildlife, fish, and valuable native plants will flourish; creek bed erosion is minimized. This is a win-win. There

Grazing MUST be managed and at a distance of 100' from the creek to minimize manure in or near the stream; minimizing housing and urban development upland of streams; install alternate water systems away from streams to keep banks from eroding and being trampled; providing controlled livestock creek crossings; grazing only when upland vegetation is abundant and in season.

Respecting our creeks and streams is a stewardship. It results in the wonderful benefits of biodiversity for bird watching, wildflower growth, expansion of native plants, better and more abundant forage, increased fish and wildlife habitats, natural beauty, and ultimately, clean water. Healthy riparian areas also purify sewage runoff drastically decreasing stress placed on water purification plants and minimizing the great cost of constructing new processing plants.

We have an abundance of beneficial vegetation ready to do their job if we would only help present the proper environment for them to help and heal.

From Washington State to New York, many movements are now in progress to invest in healing riparian areas to cut back the cost of water purification and the



building of new processing plants. The word is getting out as the benefits of riparian areas make cities and governments aware. More will happen as these benefits become blatantly recognizable.

Photos from [USDA National Resources Conservation Service](#)

Game Night for the MN's

- Lynn Fleming

Master Naturalists put their skills to use at our October meeting during Game Night! The business at hand was broken up with three breaks. Four teams sped through the Nature Relay, using clues to pick the next item to be whisked away to the nature center

(aka front table). At the second nature break, teams were given the opportunity to employ their nature

pro prowess with the ID Me Nature Boxes. Ten items (plus a bonus) ranging from mesquite wood to turtle shells. Employing the wisdom and expertise of team members, the objects of the natural world were identified in record time. The nature guides circled the tables providing hints if

needed. The clue cards provided in the boxes gave additional information if the team happened to get stumped. To end the evening, the teams were given unassembled blue bird boxes to build and challenge their engineering skills. After some head scratching, assembly, disassembly, and reassembly, the boxes



looked mostly livable. Game Night was deemed a success and a good time had by all!

The evening of fun was really training in disguise: All games were designed to work for kids or adults and use items that are freely available in nature so that our members can put on

their own Nature Games to teach others about the wonders of our environment.



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Game Night and Awards!

Nature Guides for the game were, pictured left to right, Mary Ann Everett, Lynn Fleming, who developed and prepared the games, Linda Young, Gail Hughling and Game Show Host, Zoe Rascoe. Sidney VanLoh served as Nature photographer for the night.



AWARDS FOR OCTOBER 2011

Shirley Watts,
class of 2011
graduates!



Lyna Pitts and Liz Pool, below, earn their Certification and First Year Pin. Debbie Blair and Janis Holmes earned theirs, but were not present.



Recertifying with the Horned Toad pin were Jerry Lewis and Dale Hughling. Terrie Hahn and Ray Kozusko also recertified, but were not present. Below, receiving their 250 Milestone Awards were Gail Hughling and Ursula Nanna.



Photos for Game Night and Awards are by Sidney VanLoh.

Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter

2nd Annual Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 13th

6:30pm

Potluck Dinner

Home of Zoe Rascoe

1900 N. 13th Street, Temple



Please RSVP by Monday, Dec. 12th to Zoe at 254-913-1013 or trascoe@hotmail.com

Bring your favorite dish to share. Spouse or significant other is welcome to join you for an evening of food, fun and fellowship.

MN Christmas Party

- Darla Horner Menking

There will be a raffle at our Christmas party this year! There will be several nice items that you will have the opportunity to win. Tickets will be available for purchase for \$1 each. You may purchase as many as you'd like and put those tickets in a container in front of the items you'd like to win. The money raised will be used for our Central Texas Master Naturalist chapter, where needed. So bring your dollars on Tuesday, Dec. 13th, and maybe you'll go home with a hand-made seed pod tree, a gift basket, a bird house, and other fabulous gifts for the nature-lover in us all!

If anyone is interested in donating an item to the raffle, please contact Darla Menking by email or phone 254-681-2129. It should be a new or hand-made item that Naturalists would be interested in.

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."

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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:

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