



The Tracker

The Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter

April 2012

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Whooping Cranes at Granger Lake!

- Liz Pool

In February of this year I caught my first glimpse of a Whooping Crane at Granger Lake here in Central Texas. The fact that two families of the large birds were over wintering here was big news in the birding world. Normally migrating from their summer nesting grounds at Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada to winter at Aransas Wildlife Refuge on the Texas Coast, these two families apparently flew to the coast and then came back to Granger Lake. Drought in Texas has played a large part in this event. Whooping Cranes have been forced to travel back further inland and diversify their diets. Their diet usually consists of fish, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals as well as grains, roots, acorns and berries. Low water levels at Granger Lake exposed large beds of fresh water clams and some farmers mowed corn fields leaving grain available to the birds.

Five feet tall with a wingspan of seven feet, Whooping Cranes are large. Larger than both the Sand Hill Crane and Great Blue Heron. On the brink of extinction in the 1940's with a population of 15 birds, conservation efforts have successfully increased the number of wild and captive cranes to

around 350. Efforts are hampered by the birds slow maturity rate and the fact that they raise only one chick per year. A program to take one of two eggs out of the nest has met with some success in increasing captive Whooping Crane populations. Now terminated, another program introduced the Whooping Crane egg into the nest of Sand Hill Cranes and was thought to be successful until the birds refused to mingle or mate with their own species. Biologists still hope to establish wild breeding populations in other states because a natural or manmade disaster on the Texas Coast could decimate the existing Whooping Crane population.

Calendar at a Glance

Salado Sculpture Garden workday, April 2, 8:30 am

Salado Library Series, April 6, 1 pm

Milam County Nature Festival, April 14

MN General Meeting, April 17, 6 pm

Earth Day in Salado, April 20 and 21

New Class runs March 27 - May 7

Chapter Motto

**Earth Day,
Every Day**

T E X A S



From the President's Pen

- Mary Ann

It keeps looking more and more like summer than spring, with the temps ever rising. With this wonderful rain, so many plants have come up that we missed last year due to lack of rain.

And with those rains, came a wonderful opportunity to rescue some of our native bulbs and other plants along I-35. I had never seen wild hyacinth (*camassia scilloides*) or celestials (*Nemastylis geminiflora*). I was able to dig some of these beauties during our plant rescue. What a delight!

During spring break, we took some of our grandchildren to Caddo Lake, the only natural lake in the state. On the way, we passed a large brown sign stating Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Hmmmm, I had not seen this on my map, nor did I know of its existence. It has actually only been operating for a short time, since October 19, 2000. This refuge contains some of the best examples of mature flooded bald cypress forest in the United States and some of these are over 400 years old, some they think are over 1000 years old.



This refuge was established on about 8,500 acres on portions of the Longhorn Army Ammunition

Plant in Harrison County. The main purpose is the management, conservation and protection of migratory birds and other fish and wildlife. This refuge is located within the Central Flyway. While birding one morning we saw some wood ducks, fish crows, pine warbler, Carolina wren, and some others. Also learned of some of the fauna, which was indeed intriguing.

The really neat thing about these wetlands is that in 1993, they became the 13th site in the United States designated as wetlands of international significance under the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar Convention provides for international cooperation for wetland conservation.

While we were at headquarters, we noticed their greenhouses. It seems that Caddo Lake has an infestation of water hyacinth. In these greenhouses they have been working with a weevil, which eats the hya-



cinth, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will be releasing them into the lake, hoping they will survive the winter. Our guide also told us there is a flip side to this. There are some who think the hyacinth may have some chemicals which may help in the treatment of cancer.

Our trip was indeed a fruitful one, and we learned a lot. There is so much just in the state of Texas to learn about and share with others. I am so glad we are able to allow our grandchildren the opportunity of finding some of the treasures that our wonderful state has to offer.



Photos by Mary Ann Everett

The First Time

- Ursula Nanna

On March 8, 2012, Central Texas Master Naturalist Angler Educators participated in their first event in a school, Saegert Ranch Elementary, from 8 am to 3 pm. Not knowing what to expect, we certainly had to be flexible especially since the weather curtailed our Casting Dock from the start.

In attendance were 5 - 3rd grade classes at 45 minute intervals. Liz Pool shared Fishing Safety and Regulations along with several new ideas received from attending Growing Up Wild in Waco the weekend before. Kathy Cantu memorized the youth at her Dock on Knots and Tackle while volunteer DJ Campbell showed Fish Identification and Habitat and their importance to fishing. Don Wyatt implemented his skills with Indoor Casting and Fish Measuring and what fish are legal to keep. Ursula Nanna demonstrated Bait and Lures with live worms and also Ethics and Responsibility involved in fishing. Volunteer Gail Christian digitally captured these memories as our expert photographer. Lyna Pitts pulled full duty teaching Bait and Lures and Marine Debris while volunteers Pat Maskunas filled in where needed and Nancy Kozusko teamed up with Kathy Cantu in Knots and Tackle.

There was a wonderful lunch for us all complete with the School's Stompers presenting us with synchronized entertainment.

We shared Angler Education with 124 3rd graders with hands-on demonstrations peaking their interests and answering hundreds of questions. We left exhausted but extremely satisfied with our participation in this, our first school event. We had immediate positive feedback from the teachers each sharing the enthusiasm of their students to our participation. We were asked if we would be able to do separate class events and demonstrations and handed out our 'calling cards'. We ended the day with the words "Please, please, do this Event again !! " ringing in our ears.



CTMN Angler Education Instructors Break New Ground Again !!

- Ursula Nanna

Thursday night, March 22, 2012, 5:30 - 7 pm, a handful of CTMN Angler Education Instructors attended "It's Cool To Be A Geek Night" at Cavazos Elementary School in Nolanville. It was our first free-roam event and we were visited by over 102 youth and parents alike.

Kathy Cantu demonstrated Knots and Tackle in her own illustrious way improving on her dock at every Event. Liz Pool was sharing her wealth of knowledge with Fishing Safety and the required State Fishing Regulations. She has also gotten into Aquatic Invasives. Lyna Pitts makes sure we all get to do our job

Continued on next page...

CTMN Angler Ed...continued



and helps out beyond measure. I think she can teach each Dock now. Gail Christian takes the wonderful pictures that commemorate each event for the CTMN Historians, the Angler Instructors and Volunteers, and the Tracker. Ursula

Nanna has really become interested in Bait and Lures and peaked the interest of the group with home-raised worms and fish teeth. Peter Dillilio from Killeen Recycling had a fabulous display of waste items and how long they take to break down. His bin of worms was bigger than Ursula's !!!

He really made recycling a part of Angler Education. We thank him for sharing his knowledge with everyone.

The time went very quickly. The youth really got into the Angler demonstrations and the parents' participation was priceless. It was a good event and our first of that venue.

There are several Events coming up. All are fun and educational.



April 14th is Nature Fest in Rockdale 8 am - 3 pm. April 28 is at the AgriLife



Bldg. in Belton and it is a full regalia event for 4-H with the youth receiving Junior Angler Certificates and an Angler pin



from 8 am to noon. June 21, 8 am - 5 pm is a chance for us to help 4-H from Ft. Hood. It's called Sports Fishing

Event and held near Austin on Mc Neil Rd and is actual wet fishing in a very large tank. We will carpool for the Rockdale and McNeil Events. We can ALWAYS use a few experienced hands but just participating with us is terrific as no experience is needed. It's fun; it's about fishing !!! Ursula is email available for you to let her know that you can hardly wait for an event to happen so you can participate: fishingpole16@gmail.com



Photos by Gail Christian

CTMN Draws Crowds at Home and Garden Show

- Zoe Rascoe and Darla Horner Menking

The interest was unmistakable around the first ever Central Texas Master Naturalist booth during the TABA Home and Garden Show, held at the Bell County Expo Center Feb. 24-26. Over the two and a half days, the Master Naturalists had 14 volunteers manning the booth, which was donated by the Temple Area Builders Association. One goal for the weekend was to educate area citizens about the Master Naturalist program. There were several thousand people who attended the event and many of those stopped by the booth, asked questions, received pamphlets, checked out photos and displays of ongoing projects, and kiddos got to choose a nature item such as a fossil, pinecone, or burr oak acorn from a basket to take home with them. Another goal was to sell our inventory of nature-related items to help with project expenses for our two year old chapter. In a little over 10 hours almost everything sold out, including handmade bluebird, wren and butterfly houses as well as handy laminated nature field guides, and wooden stumps fashioned into planters and sculptures. The third goal was to publicize the new Master Naturalist

training course which would begin March 20th. The recruiters were successful in that effort resulting in nearly a quarter of the new trainees making contact at the Show.

Kristin Hamilton, one of the volunteers at the booth, had already signed up for the training course and happily volunteered even though it was too early for her to get service hours for her work. Talk about a Master Naturalist In-Training! By fire.



From top: Darla Menking answers questions from a local family; I to r: Kathy Cantu, Darla Menking, Kristin Hamilton talk with visitors; Linda Young arranges the merchandise, Darla checks the inventory and Mary Ann is supervising; and Marilyn Whitworth, Jerry Lewis and Richard McCarthy are ready to greet visitors early Saturday morning.

Photos by Zoe Rascoe

NOTABLE NATURALISTS

By Darla Horner Menking

As Master Naturalists, we understand that exploring and learning about our world around us is more than a hobby, but is incredibly important if we are to be able to proactively tend to it, as well as respond to its needs as they occur. When we took our Central Texas Master Naturalist course, the first class introduced us to our state's historic beginnings as it was seen by some incredible men and women, both professionals and amateurs, committed to exploring, observing, documenting, mapping, collecting, studying, researching, evangelizing, and teaching- not to mention sacrificing their time and lives- for others to know about our state's earliest treasures of natural resources, flora, fauna, geologic timeline, and ability to thrive as an inhabited territory. I shudder to think of what serendipities would have gone unclaimed had those naturalists not done what they set out to accomplish. Because of their efforts, its citizens are richer and more learned about this great state they fondly call Texas. Because of their efforts, we ourselves have chosen to join their lead, and out of concern, personal accountability, and a deep desire to continue to educate ourselves and others, have become ... "master naturalists." As the Central Texas Master Naturalist chapter, let's honor these who have gone before us- by reviewing their "notable" accomplishments in each newsletter. Please take the time to glance over the brief bio presented in this column, in appreciation for those early (and recent) contributions by naturalists who really were "masters"!



Frederick Jacob Lindheimer

I wish I could say that the "Father of Texas Botany" was a native Texan, but he was not. Born and raised in Germany, Lindheimer didn't come to Texas until 1836, when, after coming to the U.S. as a political refugee, he joined the US Army and was sent to duty in Texas to join the fight for Texas's independence from Mexico. He must have loved it here because he stayed on after his Army commitment and, in 1842, began pursuing his interest in botany by collecting Texas plant specimens. He was the first permanent Texas resident to be a "naturalist". His commitment and longevity in the acquisition of thousands of Texas plant species continue to earn him an all-time high ranking among Texas pioneer botanists.

(If anyone would like to contribute a brief bio for this column, please feel free to do so and email it to Terrie Hahn at moompie45@hotmail.com for future publications. Thanks!)

(There are books and articles written about Lindheimer if you are interested in learning more about this self-made Texan. I got my information for this article from our Master Naturalist curriculum.)

Come to My Rescue...

- Zoe Rascoe

The new song by New Song kept playing in my mind: "come to my rescue." And that's just what nearly 20 volunteers did on a hot Sunday afternoon in March. Joanne Millican came up with what I think is a quintessential Master Naturalist project - rescue native prairie plants from imminent bulldozing in a road construction

area. Sunday afternoon was chosen to ensure we would not be out on our hands and knees back in the weeds when work crews were onsite. Local native prairie expert Mickey Burleson was on hand to identify plants and instruct us in what was most in need of rescuing. Those tiny little white, star-shaped flowers that popped up in your yard as a kid? There's a gazillion of those - no need to rescue, thank you. Lynn Fleming brought the most important tool: a Gator for toting workers, tools, water bottles and plants from one end of the project to the other. Considering we had to cross an actual briar patch to get to the goodies, that Gator was a welcome addition. Hyacinth, foxglove (I think those were chosen more for their contribution to



Joanne had a plan! She had made arrangements with Blackland Research Center scientists to deliver the plants the next morning so they could be planted in Blackland's Native Prairie Demonstration

Plot which encompasses several acres. The 2012 Trainees will get to visit the plot during their class on Native Prairies in mid-April. Hope our rescues survive until then! Speaking of our Trainees - Ray Hughes, Tom Olsen and Marjorie Lewis all showed up to toil in the soil and they had not even had their first class yet! Great job guys..



Hm hm de dum. Come to my rescuuuuue.

Photos by Zoe Rascoe



a lovely flowerbed back home), prairie celestials, and others were carefully extracted, stacked in shady spots then loaded on Joanne's trailer for a good watering and a night at her house in Salado.

No point executing a rescue if you don't have a plan for delivery. And



Texas Naturalists

Series – Salado

Public Library

- Becky Denton

On February 17, Salado resident Jim Gio-
como treated a number of CTMN members and
fellow Salado folks to a presentation at the
Salado Public Library. As the Oaks and Prairies
Joint Venture coordinator for the American Bird
Conservancy Jim was interested in sharing a Citi-
zen Science program with area residents.

Jim used his vast knowledge and experi-
ence in bird observation to introduce us to the
Citizen Science program the Great Backyard Bird
Count. The GBBC, an annual four-day event, is ap-
propriate for experienced birders as well as beginners
like me. Jim explained the ease of participation in this
fun program. For as little as 15 minutes at a time, as
many times as desired over the four days, participants
count birds and then report their counts in an online
checklist. Jim clearly explained the details of counting
species and numbers in a species and showed us ex-
actly how the on-line reporting form is filled out.

The group also had questions for Jim about
specific bird sightings. All were interested to learn
more about the whooping cranes that decided to
spend this winter at nearby Granger Lake.

As you can imagine no scientist or team of sci-
entists can possibly document the complex distribu-
tion of bird species. The annual GBBC gives profes-
sionals, using the eyes of many amateurs, a real time
snapshot of where the birds are across our continent.
Check out the GBBC website at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. You will find a wealth of information about birds
there and next year perhaps you will want to be a Citi-
zen Scientists. Jim later reported that this year in
Salado 12 counts were recorded and only four of
those were his. This professional birder thought that
was very good for small town Salado.

Photos by Darla Horner Menking

Do These Count?!

- Darla Horner Menking

*Editor's Note: Darla snapped these photos in her
backyard. I wonder if she's involved in the Great
Backyard Bird Count!*



This double-crested Cormorant has been enjoying
spending time around the lake behind my home. It
spends time swimming, spreading out its wings, and
even perches in this tree for hours at a time. It is a
large bird whose wing span is around 52 inches, a
difficult bird to miss! There are a couple of other Cor-
morants in the area as well.

This beautiful Coo-
per's Hawk came to
our lake last week for
a morning visit and
several sips of water.
He stayed for an hour
or more, letting me
get within 25 feet of
him/her to capture
this picture.

**Coming up at the
Texas Naturalists
series in Salado:**

Friday, April 6, 1pm – Dirk Aaron speaking on under-
ground water in central Texas.

Saturday, May 5, 11am – Our own Angler Ed team
presenting a Go Fishing event for children.



Cleaning Up at Miller Springs Nature Area

- Liz Pool

Friday, February 3, Shirley Watts, Linda Young, Mary Ann Everett and Liz Pool spent a pleasant morning checking and cleaning the Bluebird houses at Miller Springs Nature Center.

There are 6 Bluebird nest boxes on the parking lot side of Miller Springs and 9 boxes above the painted wall. The houses were all in various states of repair, some of them



needing more attention than others. One of the houses needs to be replaced and 4 need a few minor repairs. It was decided that the 4 nest boxes very close to wooded areas need to be moved to provide a more attractive locale for these colorful members of the thrush family. Bluebirds can be quite picky about home building. There are Bluebird

House specifications and plans available at <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/nestboxplans.htm> if anyone is interested in building a Bluebird nest box.

Bluebird nest boxes must be checked and cleaned before each nesting season. For future forays into the field, a "nest box" cleaning kit might be applicable. Gloves, pliers, a hammer and a bottle of homemade wasp spray are basic necessities. Homemade wasp spray is a mixture of water and dishwashing soap in a spray bottle. It provides immediate knock down of wasps without pesticides and would have been a useful tool if remembered today--as wasps were the only residents of several of the cavities!

All three types of Bluebird species occur in Texas but the Eastern Bluebird is the most common in Central Texas. Because of habitat depletion and pesticide

use, this insect eating bird faced serious population declines in the 1960's. Thanks to volunteer work, Bluebird populations have recovered nicely.

- Mary Ann Everett

On Saturday, February 18, a few people, including some of our Central Texas Master Naturalists, were undaunted by the lovely rain. The rain actually quit for several hours, allowing us to work on picking up trash, working in some of the beds off the parking lot, righting the stones along the hiking trail, lopping some lower branches off the ash junipers, and cleaning the parking area around the established beds.

While one of the main purposes was to work on bike and hike trails, with the rains it was just too muddy to pursue that endeavor. However, Keller Williams had a small chipper/shredder, and a lot of the accumulated brush in an area off the parking lot was chipped that morning with the help of some other volunteers from the community.

The existing beds off the parking lot had been neglected for a while, but we made a dent in getting some of them back into shape. There are some nice native species in them, including Turk's cap, spiderwort, possumhaw, kidneywood, cedar sage, coralberry, Texas persimmon, just to name a few.



Photos by Liz Pool and Darla Horner Menking

Miller Springs, a Special Place

- Zoe Rascoe

Our Chapter thinks Miller Springs Nature Area near the Belton Dam is a great place to learn about nature. We have helped scouts put up blue bird houses, cleaned beds at the entry, worked on fences, built ramps, held geology training classes and on March 24th we supported the Miller Springs Alliance at a Trail Work Day. Kathy Cantu served as the Volunteer Coordinator registering participants and assigning them to work crews. Trails were cleared of fallen trees and overhanging limbs and the path was flagged for future work. Some new trail was cut that will provide a shortcut to the parking area. There were areas where springs could be seen flowing - a good sign from recent rains! The grass in the area near the river that had been shoelace high had shot up to thigh high (at least on me) in less than 2 weeks making the trail hard to discern at times. CTMN members worked alongside members of a local bike organization who promote outdoor activities and are participating in the Miller Springs Alliance, too.

Miller Springs has a brand new website - check it out for future Trail Work Days as well as public education events that will be hosted by our Master Naturalist chapter: millerspringspark.org



THEY'RE BadAACK!!!

By: Ursula Nanna

Editors Note: this is a follow up to the February Tracker story "What Was I Thinking" which told of the problems Ursula had setting up these huge Martin houses.

It feels like forever between the time the Purple martins leave to migrate and the time they return. But those gurgling, cackling, chirping, happy creatures have once again taken up residence in the back yard.

They quickly fill up the Martin houses, but reluctantly occupy the gourd houses. This year it looks like some of the gourds will be called Martin Houses!!! Mornings and evenings are very active times around here. As the number of Martins increases so does the level of activity noises. These are a real source of joy to me.

The House sparrows are relentlessly occupying every space they can. I have been on a vendetta to rid the yard of these birds and your suggestions are welcomed. Last year's cleaning of nests revealed that the sparrows nested right over a total of 6 Martin nests killing 12 Martin hatchlings. So, this year, I am actively engaged in monitoring and cleaning the houses of sparrow nests every several weeks. The sparrows really get flustered after a nest cleaning, but the Martins love it.



* Nature at its Best *

FREE - 3rd Annual Milam County Nature Festival

Rockdale Fair Park, Rockdale TX --- Saturday, April 14 9am - 3pm

Nature Photo Contest
Entry Deadline April 4th

Our Featured Animals - Bats



Rain or Shine
For Adults, and
Kids of all ages

Hands on Activities for kids

- Animal Track Molds
- Archaeology Digs
- Angler Education
- Bat Projects
- Nature Crafts
- Face Painting
- And more...



Nature Exhibits and Demonstrations

Bats, Birds, Bees and Hives, Prairie Dogs, Crawdads, Bryophytes and Lichens, Houston Toads, Pollinators, Knapping, Native Grasses, Wildflowers, Backyard Wildlife, El Camino Real National Historic Trail, and more...



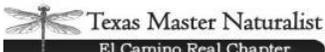

Presentations by Experts

- 9:15am - Bats and Bat Houses
- 10:30am - Lasagna for Hummers and Butterflies
- 11:45am - Wildflower Legends and Folklore
- 1:00pm - Impacts of Drought on Fish and Wildlife Resources
- 2:15pm - Nature Photo Contest Award Ceremony







txmn.org/elcamino/naturefest/

**You can receive
Advanced Training
hours and Volun-
teer hours at The
Milam County Na-
ture Festival.**

Spotlight on Natives



A Texas Landscape "Must-Have"

- Darla Horner Menking

This beautiful shrub goes virtually unnoticed most of the year by many passers-by, but it sure earns its attention come springtime. I am referring to *Sophora secundiflora*, or best known as Texas Mountain Laurel. Its incredible evergreen foliage is only overshadowed by its spectacular purple blossoms, which cascade slightly and smell of grape Kool-Aid.

This native to our central Texas area is also found in the south and west of parts of the state. It is a member of the pea family, can be grown as a single-trunked medium size tree, but is usually a multi-trunked shrub. It grows very slowly but don't let that keep you from having at least one somewhere in your yard or property. Mountain laurels more than make up for that in winter when they stand out green and strong. They are also considered deer-resistant.

There are a few facts to know prior to planting them. They do not require much water, so be sure you locate them in a spot that has well draining soil and make sure the plants around it are also low-water-needs plants. Watch for moth larva or web worms, which, if they discover it, will forage on its foliage. Mountain laurels can take the full Texas sun but will also tolerate some shade. Also, in time, this plant can grow up to thirty-five feet, although they are most commonly



seen around twelve feet or so. No pruning is necessary.

Mountain laurels can take the Texas heat so there's no need to be afraid to plant it during times of drought. As long as it is watered regularly only while

its roots are establishing, it should be just fine. If, in nurseries, they have a yellowish look instead of dark green, this means it could use some added nitrogen to green it back up. Mountain laurels produce dark pods which contain poisonous red seeds. Although not impossible, it is very difficult to grow a mountain laurel from its hard-coated seed, so purchasing a potted plant is recommended. Because it is a slow-grower, you'll have to pay for the larger sized ones, but it'll be an

immediate attraction.

Take a look at the beautiful specimens around and blooming right now, and don't mistake them for wisteria. Take a sniff of a blossom and you'll be hooked!

Spotlight on Natives

- Lynn Fleming

Red Tail Rescue

Raptors are probably my favorite bird, especially red tailed hawks. The birds are majestic, graceful and make me feel free and alive when I see them soaring in the air. Now and then, I will hear the beautiful cries of red tails when it is mating season as they soar with the mate they have chosen for life. Swainson hawks have landed in nearby fields on their fall trek to Mexico. I am not sure who watches who more as I pass by a post or telephone pole with a raptor perched upon it. I watch with fascination, they peer at me with apprehension.

Hawks are known to eat road kill, but the other day when I was on my cow feeding rounds and spotted a hawk on the side of the road on a dead possum, something just didn't look right. I slowed down, stopped, but it didn't fly off and still didn't move when I got within a few feet, something wasn't right. Being a little pressed for time to get through with my cow chores, I went on. Three hours later, with cows fed, I crossed the creek and the hawk was still in the same place, I knew something was definitely wrong.

She just sat there and looked at me. I don't really know if the bird was male or female since both of the red tails look the same. To me—it was a she. With my gloves on, I reached out to her and she tipped backwards in a defense stance and grabbed me with talons sharp as tacks. Whether the bird was hurt or sick, she needed help. I carefully scooped her up and put her in the passenger seat covered by my jacket....no resistance. This wasn't looking good.

When I got home, I grabbed the dog's kennel and put a piece of fire wood in it for a perch. I put the hawk in the box and she scuttled up on the wood and peered out at me. This feathered lady needed help from someone who knew more than me about hawks.



Thinking back to my Master Naturalist training group, I remembered Nada who was a wildlife rehabilitator. I looked her up on the Texas Parks & Wildlife website and gave her a call. She was ill and couldn't take the bird, but told me to give her water and beef heart or venison. Can do. The next rehabilitator in our area no longer had her bird license. Strike two. It was Sunday, so the next morning I called the Temple Texas Parks & Wildlife office. They have a lady in Killeen that takes raptors for rehab. Thank goodness.

Let me tell you something, if you have never been close to a raptor and it's excrement, you are lucky. I have smelled plenty of foul stuff, poked around dead cows, and even trapped skunks in my younger days (in our bee yards), but when I reached in the kennel to retrieve the hawk for transport, I just about lost my cookies. Whew, what a smell!!! Into the big cardboard box and away we went to TPW to get help from a pro. Had to crack the windows on the way, but we made it.

I don't advocate picking up wildlife that we humans may think is in trouble. We have had fawns in wheat fields and had to hit the brakes on the combine to keep from hitting them. Momma left them there and told them not to move no matter what. Even if a humongous, scary machine is just about to eat you.

Photo by Lynn Fleming

Continued on next page...

Spotlight on Natives

Red Tail Rescue ...continued

I picked up a kestrel on the side of the road once and he looked plenty dead. When I took him in the house for a closer look and to show the kids out of the box he flew. Before I could capture him to let him go, he got in a bite on my hand and some wing hits to my head. He was just stunned and really didn't need human help at all.

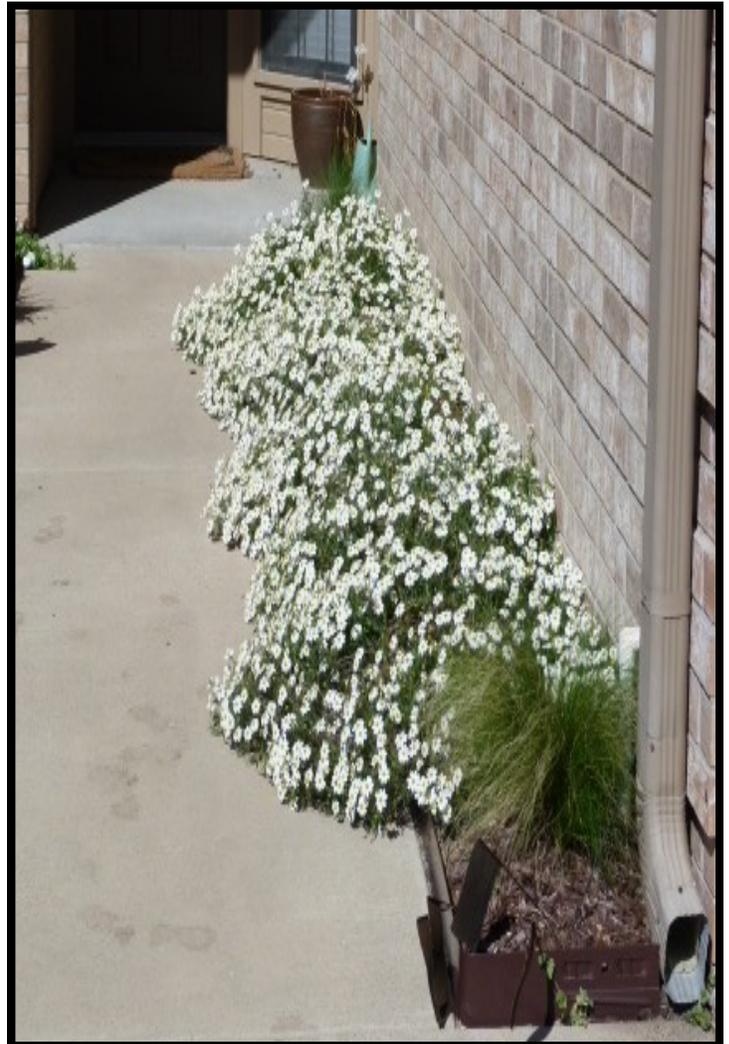
Make sure that what you try to "help" really needs help. Texas Parks & Wildlife has a great page on their website about wildlife rehab and the *volunteers* that take in injured or sick animals. It is worth a visit to get familiar with what may or may not be an animal in need of help. They also list rehabilitators by county. <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/>

This is my theory about the hawk– she was a young bird out of the nest last summer. Mice and other prey were pretty scarce this summer and winter. We had a red tail hanging around the end of our driveway for about a week before I found this one. I have a feeling they are one in the same bird. She was very weak from lack of food. Hunting takes a lot of energy so the dead possum was probably the best she could do. Unfortunately, she was another casualty of the monumental drought of 2011. We will be seeing the effects of this one for years to come. I haven't heard if the red tail survived. I sure hope so. It would be a great loss of such a majestic bird if not.

A Real Texan

- Darla Horner Menking

This native Blackfoot Daisy is true to its roots, pardon the pun! It loves to spread out into wide open spaces, as if to say "Don't Mess With Texas" natives. I planted a few small specimens thinking they would probably fill in this long, narrow bed leading up to my daughter's front door. The Blackfoots did that, and MORE. They have no concept of borders as they spread across the sidewalk, happy as can be!



Central Texas Master Naturalist 2012 Training Schedule

Tuesday, April 3rd 8:00am-3:45pm

Fort Hood ** Must arrive on time to travel with group

8:00am-11:30am	Ornithology
11:30am-12:15pm	Lunch (bring a sack lunch)
12:15pm-1:15pm	Naming of Plants (Taxonomy)
1:45pm-3:45pm	Archeology

Tuesday, April 10th 9:00am-12:00pm

Blackland Research Center (Temple)

9:00am-10:30am	Native Prairies
10:30am-11:30am	Ecoregions of TX & Ecological Concepts

Tuesday, April 10th 6:00pm-8:00pm

General Chapter Meeting, Belton Church of Christ

Tuesday, April 17th 8:30am-4:00pm

Tahuaya Boy Scout Camp (Belton)

8:30am-10:00am	Mammals
10:00am-12:00pm	Forest Ecology
12:00pm-12:45pm	Lunch (bring a sack lunch)
12:45pm-4:00pm	Rangeland Ecology & Mgt

Tuesday, April 24th 8:30am-4:00pm

Channel 10 TV Station, Waco

8:30am-10:30am	Meteorology
10:30am-11:30am	Volunteers as Teachers
11:30am-12:30pm	Lunch (includes travel to Wetlands – bring sack lunch)

Lake Waco Wetlands

12:30pm-4:00pm	Wetlands Ecology and Mgt
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Midcourse Saturday, April 28th, 8:30am-12:30pm TENTATIVE

Orienteering, Use of GPS, Team Building and Project Management

Continued on next page...

Tuesday, May 1st, 8:30am-4:30pm

Lake Belton Corp of Engineers Office (Belton)

8:30am-11:00am **Urban Systems and Ecology**
Nolan Creek Stormwater Issues

11:00am-11:30am **Lunch (bring a sack lunch)**

11:30am-1:30pm **Amphibians and Reptiles**

Miller Springs Nature Area

1:30pm-4:30pm **Geology**

Tuesday, May 8th, 9:00am-4:00pm

Harris Community Center (Belton)

9:00am-10:30am **Ichthyology**

10:30am-12:30pm **Aquatic Systems**

12:30pm-2:30pm **Nature of Naming Plants**

2:30pm-4:00pm **Plant Identification**

Nolan Creek Hike and Bike Trail

- Mary Ann Everett

What better way for our Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter to become more visible in our community than to help with the Adopt-A-Park Program. Anyone can help with this, and it was just started this year in Belton, and Johanna Long, from City of Belton, said that we were the second group to respond to this program. We have agreed to clean up along this hike and bike trail at least 4-6 times a year, and one of them has to be during the One Community, One Act day, which is March 31st. This One Community calls on anyone to come and make the community better, by picking up trash or whatever projects the city needs help with.



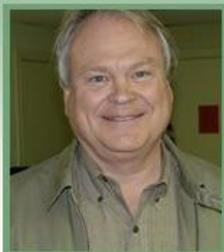
Our chapter has signed up on those months having a fifth Monday. We did our first trash pickup on January 30. Tomorrow, March 31 (One Community Day), is our second work day. The other dates are as follows: April 30, July 30, October 29 and December 31. We meet at the Park and Ride right off the Interstate, and have split into two groups.

If you have not been before, you must sign a release, but that is easy to do. Harris Community Center has the forms, and that can be easily taken care of.

We are also planning on a Butterfly Count July 7, working with Gil Eckrich, Nature Conservancy, along this trail. The City is excited about having our chapter doing a community program such as this, and they will help with the advertising. This should be a lot of fun for anyone who would like to be a part of this.

Pictured above: Trainee, Tom Olsen, Ursula Nanna, Gail Christian, Lynn Fleming, Mary Ann Everett, Don Wyatt and Lou ann Hight.
Photo by Darla Horner Menking

2012 Class of Master Naturalist Trainees



Bill Messer



Cathy Foreman



Gerrie Johnson



Jaclyn Jeffery



Kristin Hamilton



Laurie Fitzgerald



Marjorie Lewis



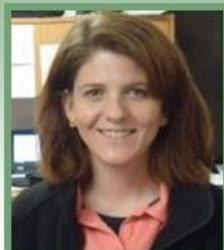
Miriam Jordan



Nancy Kozusko



Ray Hughes



Sara Christensen



Sandy Summers



Tom Olsen



Yvonne Eele



We are very excited to welcome our newest group of Master Naturalist trainees to the Central Texas Chapter. There are 14 people who now have orientation and the first of 7 ½ days of training under their belts. It is another great group of energetic and highly diverse folks - not unlike our first two groups of trainees. They are diverse in both vocations and in their interests. We've picked up another geologist to talk rocks with Ray, two nurses (Jerry has noted that), teachers, biologist, ecologist, chemist, a dosimetrist (I think: he's like a pharmacist for radiology - I had to Google it) and we have finally attracted an attorney. Oh, and Yvonne can operate heavy equipment. I'm thinking we should be pretty well covered on most any project! None who attended Orientation were deterred and all arrived ready to learn their first day of class. Please take a look at the 2012 Class Directory so you can get to know our new members. Many of you already are learning their names and faces -members came to Orientation to meet the new class and we had as many members attend the first day of class as we have trainees. Thanks to those of you who are able to come to classes! Please join us whenever you can. A schedule is included in this newsletter. And to our 14 new Trainees - Welcome!! -Zoe

Announcements

Salado Sculpture Garden Volunteer Opportunities

- **Becky Denton**

Monday, April 2nd, will be a work day at the Salado Sculpture Garden. We want the garden to look lovely for Salado Earth Day on April 21st.

Location - behind ACE Hardware on Salado Plaza Drive

Time - 8:30 - 11:30

Tools - basic yard hand tools, spading fork, sharp shooter

Task - weeding, moving mulch, weed eating, some heavy duty work

If you need more information, please call or email me at beckydenton@embarqmail.com, 254-947-5626 or 254-718-5374

You may also contact me if you are interested in helping with Earth Day. **V**

Salado Public Library Texas Naturalists Series

April 6th, 1pm Dirk Aaron, Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District "Understanding Groundwater Issues in Bell County"

May 5th Ursula Nanna, CTMN Angler Education Team. Bring the kids and grandkids out to learn casting, knot tying and fishing safety. **AT**

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

Salado Earth Day!

- **Debbie Blair and Becky Denton**

Friday, April 20th, Thomas Arnold Elementary School (K-2), 9-noon.

We need help with a butterfly life cycle activity. If we have enough volunteers we'll add an additional activity from Growing Up Wild.

Contact Debbie Blair - TBlair9938@aol.com

Saturday, April 21st, Salado Main Street 9-5.

Help needed again with butterfly life cycle activity. Marilyn and Richard will be teaching Creek Critters

Contact Becky Denton - beckydenton@embarqmail.com

If you have a program or project and would like to take part either Friday or Saturday, please let us know as soon as possible. V

April General Meeting

- **Mary Ann Everett**

The April 10th General Meeting topic is Firewise Landscaping. After experiencing such wildfires as the state did last year, the Texas Forestry Service has set up training to help homeowners in protecting their property. Is your house firewise? How about those plants around your house, how firewise are they?



We learned our lesson last year and only planned a half day of class for the Trainees so they will have some energy left to attend the chapter meeting that evening. Come to the meeting at 6:00 pm at the Belton Church of Christ at 3003 N Main to learn more about this topic. **AT**

Check This Out

The current status of the monarch butterfly. And what we can do to help: Plant milkweed.
<http://monarchwatch.org/blog/2012/03/monarch-population-status-14/>
http://www1.umn.edu/news/features/2012/UR_CONTENT_378473.html

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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Newsletter Committee Chair: Gail Hughling

Editor: Terrie Hahn

Proofreader: Werner Hahn

Staff Writer: Darla Horner Menking

Contributing Writers: Ursula Nanna, Liz Pool, Lynn Fleming, Zoe Rascoe, Mary Ann Everett, Debbie Blair, Becky Denton

Contributing Photographers: Liz Pool, Lynn Fleming, Mary Ann Everett, Ursula Nanna, Darla Horner Menking, Zoe Rascoe, Gail Christian

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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:

Terrie Hahn at moompie45@hotmail.com