

The Tracker

The Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter

August 2013

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The Mother of All Of Our Angler Events!!!

By: Ursula Nanna

No Kidding !!! You had to be there to appreciate the scope of this event at the Steward C. Meyer Library in Harker Heights on July 3, 2013!

We were primed by Library Staff to anticipate between 100



Diane Cooney teaches Fish Habitat.

and 125 people attending. There was much publicity in local newspapers and in Library blurbs. "So what," you say; "we've done that before and 20 people showed up...."

Not the case here at all! We were visited by 309 people in 1 hour, 30 minutes. The papers advertised the activity from 9:30 am to 11 am !!! 9:15 am it all started in a mad rush and

Continued on page 10...

Banner photo by Kelly Kitchens Photography as entered in the July Weather Snapshot Contest at www.kvue.com/weather

Calendar at a Glance

Check out "On the Calendar" on page 15.

August 13, 6 pm, CTMN General Meeting, Belton Church of Christ, see page 14.

August 31, Advanced Stream Team Training, see page 15.

Texas State Master Gardener Conference, October 25-27. Check out page 16.

Chapter Motto

Earth Day,
Every Day



From the President's Pen

Do you know the way to Balmorhea?

*I've been away so long,
I may go wrong and lose my way.*

Do you know the way to Balmorhea?

*I'm going back to find some peace of mind
in Balmorhea.*

I couldn't help but adapt the Dionne Warwick song for our weekend road trip and it kept playing in my head over and over. We were on our way to Balmorhea way out in West Texas, the first time we had been back to that area in almost fifteen years. Not surprisingly, not a whole lot had changed since 15 years ago.

If you've never been way out west, it is worth the drive to see some beautiful country. The Davis Mountains are breathtaking, reaching to the sky at a mile high.

On our short excursion, we stopped first at Iraann by the Pecos River. Now the Pecos is no Brazos—it is small and salty, but precious water in the dry west.

Then we headed to Balmorhea State Park for some swimming and a night of camping.

One of the spring fed canals ran right behind our camp site so we spent some time in and around that too. My brother, who is always looking for adventure, floated all the way from the swimming pool to our campsite in the canal. A few scaled quail and Davis Mountains cotton tailed rabbits traveled through dur-

ing their forage outings. They seemed quite accustomed to people.

When you head west from Central Texas, time seems to slow down. People out west don't seem like everything needs to be done "right now". I grew up in Big Spring which is just a piece east of Midland so when I head west it stirs up a lot of memories of home. Rocks, cactus and mesquites are a welcome sight to me.

On this trip, we were fortunate, because the Davis



Blooms of the sotol aren't spectacular, but they produce a massive amount of seeds.

Mountain area had been receiving a little moisture before we arrived. The Sotols were in full bloom and many other wildflowers were showing their colors before the August heat hit. The Sotol bloom stalks make wonderful walking sticks that are lightweight and renewable from the plant. They have been used for generations to build fences, roofs and the plant parts are used for baskets, ropes and liquor. I have

read that the blooms attract hummingbirds when they are mature. What a wonderful plant that can be used in so many ways. Rocks, did I mention that I love rocks. I really don't know that much about geology, but I love rocks. I have piles of them at my house that I have picked up in my wanderings. And if there was ever a



My husband made a beeline to the canal at our campsite when we arrived. The water was crystal clear and the current very strong.

Continued on next page...

The President's Pen...continued

place for a rock lover, it is the Davis Mountains. Violent volcanic action formed the Davis Mountains thirty-five years ago (give or take a few million). The highest peak is Mount Livermore at 8,382 feet. Mount Locke is 6,791 feet and is the home of the McDonald Observatory. Driving along the roads in the Davis Mountains is breathtaking. Each turn reveals more rugged beauty of vertical columns, huge ruddy colored boulders and outcrops.

Because the mountains interfere with the westerly winds in the area, they receive about 18" of rain annually compared to the 12" in the lowland areas surrounding the mountains. The mountains force the winds up where the moisture is condensed and sent back down as rain. The more generous annual drink of water allows a variety of vegetation to grow there such as pine trees, Texas oak, and black cherry. As in most everything else on earth—it's all about the water.

So if you feel like an adventure that will amaze your senses, hop in the car and point the compass WEST. That is the way to Balmorhea.....you will find peace of mind in Balmorhea. I know I did.....Lynn

There was more to observe at the McDonald Observatory than just stars! The pines were blooming and the bumblebees were buzzing.



Vertical fingers pointing skyward can be found along the roads in the Davis Mountains.



Balmorhea State Park

(Excerpt from Texas Parks and Wildlife website)

Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the early 1930s, Balmorhea State Park is located on 45.9 acres in the foothills of the Davis Mountains southwest of Balmorhea in Reeves County.

Dive into the cool waters of the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool, which covers 1.75 acres and stays at 72–76 degrees year round. Fed by San Solomon Springs, 22 – 28 million gallons of water flow through it each day. At 25 feet deep, and with a capacity of more than 3.5 million gallons, the pool has plenty of room for swimmers and offers a unique setting for scuba and skin diving.

San Solomon Spring, which flows into the park's pool and through the canals leading to the restored ciénega (wetland), is the largest in a series of artesian and gravity springs formed by sub-surface geologic faults in the Balmorhea area. This desert wetland serves as a home for abundant aquatic life including two small, endangered desert fishes: the Pecos Gambusia and the Comanche Springs Pupfish. Other animals, including resident and migrant birds, depend upon this water and lush vegetation for food, water and shelter.

Cienega underwater viewing area.



Antlions and Scorpions and Owlflies, Oh My!

The things that really go bump in the night...

- Rehanon Pampell

At the present time, my middle child, Kortland, is afraid of snakes. It used to be snails and then spiders, but now snakes. I have to frequently remind him that snakes prefer the rock or wood pile behind the house to his bed. "So, snakes never come into the house?" he asks in his pitiful little voice. I calmly tell him that snakes can get confused and enter a house, but it's not typically its preferred location. This all started, by the way, when I went shopping one



evening and left my son in the hands of my husband. Apparently the boogie man was making noises in the kitchen and Scooby Doo was on the TV. Since then, anything "scary" is thought to be lurking under his bed.

In observance of moth week, I figured it was okay for him to stay up past his bed time and see what really goes "bump" in the night. We didn't see much at such an early hour, but he got to see what comes out at night – stuff not as scary as the boogie man.

The Central Texas Master Naturalists also came together and ventured out into the dark. We not only found many more moths this year than last, but we also found several other creepy-crawlies creeping around.

Some of most notable critters included a gecko, a walking stick, a scorpion, antlions, and owlflies.

The **Common House** or **Mediterranean Gecko**, *Hemidactylus* species, is actually an introduced species from Southeast Asia. Frequent visitors to our porch lights, they are considered a generalist predator (meaning they will eat many different things, in this case many different species of insects and spiders). These species of gecko have spread around the world as stowaways aboard ships. They are very adaptable and considered a serious threat to Texas' native reptiles. One species, *Hemi-*



Left: Rehanon sets up for KCEN TV interview; above is a gecko; and below a Walking Stick takes a stroll on Rehanon.



dactylus turcicus, is considered an invasive species in Texas. Not only can they out-compete Texas native species, but they have been known to transfer disease-carrying mites to native geckos.

Walkingsticks are native to Texas. One species, *Megaphasma dentricus*, is a Texas native walking

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Oh My...continued

stick that grows to almost 7 inches long, the longest insect in the United States! In the fall, females drop eggs into the leaf litter. The nymphs hatch in the spring and develop through several instars. They have chewing mouthparts and feed on the leaves of apple, basswood, birch, dogwood, hackberry, hickory, locust, oak, pecan, and wild cherry.

The **Striped Back Scorpion**, *Centruroides vittatus*, is the most common scorpion species in Texas. As their name suggests, they have dark stripes running the length of their back. Scorpions are arachnids and related to ticks, mites, and spiders. Scorpions have two eyes on the top of the head and usually 2 to 5 pairs of eyes along the front corners of the head. However, they do not see well,



but they have a great sense of hearing. Life span is typically 3-6 years, but may live up to 25 years. The mating process can last up to 36 hours with a gestation period ranging from 5 months to 1 year. The venom from Texas species typically produces only moderate reaction which can be relieved with an ice pack.



Antlions, *Myrmoleon* species, are most recognizable by the funnel-shaped pits they leave in the dirt up to 2 inches in diameter.

Antlion larvae bury themselves just below the pit with just their sickle-shaped jaws exposed waiting for their prey (typically ants) to fall to their doom. These critters are also sometimes called doodlebugs for the winding trails the larva leave in the sand while looking for their next pit location.

Owflies, *Haplogenius* species, are not true flies, but belong to an order of carnivorous insects that have four net-veined wings and chewing mouthparts. They are closely related to lacewings and antlions as part of the Order Neuroptera. Adults are strong flying predators feeding on other insects. Some produce a strong musk-like odor to deter an enemy. A great predator to find in your garden.



As many of you know (or can tell), when it comes to insects I am eager to volunteer my time and share my knowledge. However, when a call was received from

Above: an Owlfly; below: Yvonne Eele, Mary Ann Everett, and Lynn Fleming check out a field guide; top left; a scorpion; bottom left: an Antlion.



KCEN news, I got really tongue-tied and couldn't even tell Mr. Davis what moth week was about. I told him

Continued on next page...

Oh My...continued

to go to nationalmothweek.org to find out more information. Then he said he wanted to capture us at work with a live interview. My brain went on autopilot and I agreed to whatever he said. Needless to say I probably would have agreed to eat a moth if he had asked.

I was so nervous. I tried to pawn off the interview onto Zoe and Mary Ann, but they convinced me that I knew what I was talking about. "Just pretend you are talking to your kiddos," said Zoe. So I took Zoe's advice and pretended to talk to Clayton (my 11 year old son). I was still very intimidated by the camera and the pressure of aptly representing our organization, but for my first time on camera, I am fine with the result. I truly appreciate everyone that came out that early morning and those that offered a compliment after the fact. I am especially grateful to Mary Ann for securing a place for the interview and helping me at 11 o'clock at night to set up for the interview at 5 am the next morning. I also appreciate her being on standby to do the interview herself. Many thanks to Zoe for being there to prep me and walk me through some talking points. She just oozed calmness that morning which I tried to absorb. Yvonne, Lynn, and Kathy – thank you all for being there that beautiful morning bright-eyed and bushy-tailed ready and willing. CTMN wouldn't have anything to report if it weren't for all of those that came out the other two nights loaded with flashlights, moth bait, and clipboards. I truly appreciate each of your contributions to science.

And since I'm handing out gratitude... Many of you know how hard the transition to Texas has been on me. Two years and I still desperately miss Alaska – much of that due to the community that I had found there. But I have found a sense of

community with the CTMN. It feels good to be part of a group that not only shares my interest in Mother Nature and her creepy-crawlies, but also genuinely cares about me and my family. Words cannot express how thankful I am that I stumbled upon the Master Naturalist website and someone responded to my email with a friendly call and invitation to the next meeting. Each one of us have talents that are different from the rest, but we come together for a common cause and do great things.

I look forward to seeing the amazing things we will continue to accomplish together.



Above: Rehanon Pampell records data while Kathy Cantu captures an image to send to the International Database. Below: moth watchers for the KCEN TV interview.

Photos by Rehanon Pampell, Zoe Rascoe and Kathy Cantu.



Watch Out For the Muggles!

- Patricia Wyman

What ever is a muggle? Well, if you are a Harry Potter fan, you know. But the term is also used in geocaching. When someone announces: "MUGGLES!!" that means there are people in the area that do not know about geocaching and one must be extra sneaky so the game is not spoiled. If they see the geocache, or "cache," being found, they will likely go see what the fuss was about and may take the whole container, not knowing that they just spoiled the game.

What am I talking about? Geocaching is a game one plays, with a 99 dollar hand-held gps unit and the military's multi-million dollar satellites. As these two talk to each other, the hand held unit directs you to a location of a hidden container that can be the size of a large ammunition can or can be as small as an acorn. Inside the larger ones are trade items, called swag. If there is any swag that you want, it is yours to keep as long as you replace something of equal value for the next person to possibly take. Trade items can be anything one finds at the dollar store, free items, McDonalds Happy Meal toys, coins, batteries, match box cars, etc., and these are usually found in the larger containers. The smaller ones can hold tiny trinkets or coins but usually just have a log.

Once found, you sign the log, trade items if you want, and replace the cache exactly as you found it. Once back home at your computer or in the field on your i- phone, you log your find on the website as well. On the website, you can describe how fun or hard it was to find, its condition, what you traded or if you saw a saber-toothed tiger on your hike to the cache. (The website also keeps track of how many you find.) Don't want to hike too far? Well, urban caches are just for you! You can find them downtown, in magnetic boxes attached to the newspaper machine right outside Starbuck's, for example. Those are fun in that

there may be several muggles in the area, and you have to sneak in, grab the cache, sign the log and replace it, right in front of the customers, but they don't even notice what you are doing. You may bend down and act like you are tying your shoe, but you are actually feeling for the container.

What does caching have to do with Master Naturalists? The motto for geocaching is: "Cache in, Trash



Our 100th find!

out, or CITO." This means that on your way back to the car, pick up any trash that you find. A great trade item is to get an old film canister and fill it with a plastic shopping bag. Put a sticker on it that says CITO and if the next cacher wishes, they can use the bag to pick up trash, replace the film canister with a fresh bag and drop it in the next cache they find. Cachers respect the environment and never hide caches that may harm or damage the flora of fauna in the area.

Caching is not only fun and is good exercise, but it allows one to find locations that you would otherwise not know about. My kids and I discovered Chalk Ridge Falls, the Miller Nature Center, and many other great and beautiful locations through caching. Once

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Spotlight on Natives

Gulf Muhly



- Darla Horner Menking

I just love Gulf Muhly, or *Muhlenbergia capillaris*. This Texas native is a stand-out ornamental grass that is sure to catch the eye of any passerby. It has more than a few great features including: great texture, a constant impact in your landscaping, and the beautiful pink seed heads that burst forth each fall.



Plan on this grass getting up to 2 ½ feet tall, plant it in sun to part sun, it won't need a lot of watering, and it is deer resistant. It is deciduous and some information says to cut it back in January, but I have found that mine looks good year-round. It turns to an olive green shade but greens up nicely by late winter. Gulf Muhly is well worth it when Fall comes around. When the pink seed heads bloom, just imagine a pink fog! And if you plant a few together, it is awesome. They sway in the breeze and show off their pink feathers for all to admire. It'll get you running for your cameras, for sure. Find you one today and enjoy!

Photo by Darla Horner Menking

Watch Out...continued

the gps is purchased, the only other expenses are gasoline and trade items.

Are you interested yet? Go to Geocaching.com and read more about it! Its free to sign up and get an account! Then type in the zip code of the location you wish to search and all the caches pop up. You load the coordinates into your gps, grab a bottle or two of water, put on your hiking boots and hit the road! Is every cache found when you look for it? No. It may have been mugged, or it may be so well camouflaged that you cannot see it. Some are attached to branches, some are in bird decoys on the tree, some are at the base of a tree under a pile of rocks or sticks. Some look like a piece of pvc pipe coming out of the ground or attached to a fence pole. They are everywhere and some are so very cleverly hidden. A search of my zip code shows 439 caches within a 10-mile radius. Will you ever find all of them?



The roadside CITO crew.

Nope! As of this writing, there are 2,137,618 caches hidden world wide, even in Antarctica!

So what are you waiting for! Go get some exercise, discover a beautiful natural area and don't forget to CITO!!

Photos by Patricia Wyman

Angler Ed Event...continued

the public streamed in until well after the advertised hours. Let's attempt to recap this Mother of All Events!!!

Miriam Jordan writing diplomas and diplomas and diplomas and diplomas - 179 to be exact. Hair flying, pens writing and diplomas everywhere, and kids backed up for 5 table-lengths, Miriam took this in her ever graceful and pleasant stride smiling and feverishly writing names on diplomas and handing out Angler Education fish pins as is customary for graduation.



Clockwise, above: Marilyn Whitworth talks about Marine Debris; Miriam Jordan writes out diplomas for the kids; kids and parents tie knots; Richard McCarthy demonstrates Bait and Lures.

I wish you could have seen Marilyn Whitworth expounding about Marine Debris and her “rock hen” eggs as she described what styrofoam, plastic, cigarette ‘butts’, fishing line, bottle caps, baby diapers, and other garbage does to fish and wildlife. She was her very own “Rim of Debris” in Harker Heights !!



Richard McCarthy gave new meaning to Bait and Lures and he handed out live worms for squealing kids to hold and touch. His rendition of Lures was totally amazing as he demonstrated their travel through water and how they attract fish to catch.

Diane Cooney attended this event as her 1st after being Angler certified. She aptly applied her teaching skills and calm manner to Fish Habitat as kids built their way to healthy habitats where fish could live, eat, hide, and have food.

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Angler Ed Event...continued

Ray Machovsky and Ursula Nanna tied enough Palomar knots to catch the Whole state of Texas!!! We quickly knew we had to re-invent ourselves to get this done for 40 kids at a time with the kids actually tying the knots for themselves. Parents and adults also had a hand in the knot Dock.

Yvonne Eele and Gail Christian taught a terrific version of Fishing Safety by demonstrating and giving new meaning to “man overboard” !! The kids learned NEVER, NEVER, NEVER jump in to save someone who has fallen into the water... there are correct and safe steps to follow. Yvonne and Gail showed a graphic poster of 10 pictures which depicted adults in fishing accidents with boats and their pals.

Life jackets were all worn out after showing the kids a proper fit for themselves. Previously referred to as PFD (personal

floatation devices) we are now back to calling PFD's LIFE JACKETS. This is a major media thrust to tell the public how very important life jackets are to saving lives.

And always, there was Don Wyatt and Tom Christian demonstrating casting as lines and reels were feverishly swung all over the place!!! They handled the massive crowd of casters with their usual flair. We had to break up the kids into casting groups because otherwise they would have stayed all day....some adults caught the casting fever too !!!

After all this, I was able to interview a few kids and adults as to what they liked and learned. Above ALL WAS the safety Dock and the pictures, then the NEVER jump in to save someone. Casting was wonderful, everyone said. They learned about the fish

catching and no one wanted to stop casting !! Everyone I asked loved the ‘rock’ eggs and told about what the garbage does to wildlife. The kids ALWAYS love touching the live worms and learning what to use to catch a fish. The kids like the knot tying but the adults REALLY liked that palomar knot for sure. When it



came to hands-on, the building of a fish habitat peaked the kids' interest because they learned it's “more than just there” as one kid said to us.

Now, accolades must be given to the wonderful, wonderful Library Staff for the excellent way they set up and tore down for us, for all the paper-work they printed and cut, for their publicity about the Event, for how they organized the flow of the public into manageable groups and gave direction to casting and other Docks. Their cadre of Honor Student volunteers was wonderful in every respect and not only helped out but were actually learning from the Dock at which they participated, BUT THEY ALSO HELPED US TEACH !!! We truly could not have carried this off so smoothly and effectively without the Library Staff and the Wonderful Honor Student Volunteers !!!!

Thank you to all our Angler Volunteers in attendance. We have exceeded the reach of our average capabilities. HATS OFF on this one.....Ya done good – EVERYONE !!!

Above left: Yvonne Eele teaches Fishing Safety; Right: Don Wyatt teaches Casting.

Photos by Gail Christian

Wild Again in Salado

- Becky Denton

A group of CTMN members were again found having a Wild time with kindergarten and first grade students at Thomas Arnold Elementary School in Salado. These Wild volunteers are experts at using the Growing Up Wild curriculum to teach children ages four to seven about the natural world.

For the third year we used the lesson “Aqua Charades” to help first grader youngsters learn how important water is to all living things. The kids got wet as they hypothesized then tested objects with a float and sink activity and they learned that a raisin and a grape are the very same thing as they squashed that grape. Painting a waterscape and story time were also fun.

Our next visit was to kindergarten. We know some of you adults, even master naturalists may be afraid of spiders – not so kindergarten kids. With “Spider Web Wonders” the children leaned many facts about spiders through out door exploration, story corner, painting a spider web and making a black spider with wiggly eyes.

Back to first grade it was time for serious science with “Grow As We Go” and practice saying metamorphosis. The children learned about life cycles of several animals with a life cycle game, outdoor time in the Monarch Way station (also a CTMN project) making a butterfly and of course story time.

The Growing Up Wild is the Project Wild curriculum for very young children. If you like kids this age you will want to take the Growing Up Wild training when it becomes available. However you might just have trouble finding a spot in our volunteer cadre as our current volunteers enjoy it so much. (Just kidding here.)

We thank are partners Lisa Nix, TAE principal, all the K and 1st grade teachers and Keep Salado Beautiful. We plan to be back in the Spring semester of 2014!

Keep it Wild for Kids!

Bad Bees!

- Jerry Lewis

This colony of Africanized bees decided to occupy an Owl box in front of my house. They had been there 2-3 weeks when my grandson found them (they were in his owl box that he made for boy scouts). I called Wayne Baker and Steve Gardipee, Master Gardeners and beekeepers, to remove the colony. They said that the bees were the most aggressive that they had seen in over two years and could do nothing but destroy them. My grandson is allergic to bee stings so I am glad they are gone.



GRADUATION DAY!!!



On June 11, 2013, the following trainees graduated with Certificates of Completion for completing TMN course work . Clockwise from top left: Jerrie Cooper, Melissa Fletcher, Lisa Hutka, Lori Nunke, Mary Odom, accepting for Sam Priori was his wife, Carolyn Stewart, above Carolyn is Kevin Prince. Back to the bottom left corner is: Sue Valdez, Amanda Williams and Patty Wyman. - **Zoe Rascoe**



Graduation Day!!!



Lynn Fleming and Heart of Texas MN Chapter President, Diane Cooney kick off the Master Naturalist Graduation of 2013. Yvonne Eele and Gerri Johnson, Class of 2012, received their Certificates and their Dragonfly pins.



Photos by Zoe Rascoe

Announcements

Stars Are Bright for August CTMN Meeting

Aubrey Brickhouse will be our speaker for the August 13 CTMN General Meeting at 6 pm.

"Stars are Bright... Deep in the Heart of Texas"
**Presentation by Aubrey Brickhouse,
 President of Central Texas
 Astronomical Society**



Horse Head nebula photographed by Aubrey

**Tuesday, August 13th
 6:00pm - Belton Church of Christ**



Meyer Observatory near Gatesville holds monthly Open Houses

Practice what you learn during the next Bell County Public Star Party Saturday, August 31st at 7:45pm Overlook Park, Stillhouse Hollow Dam

Announcements

Standing monthly events

Salado Sculpture Garden Workday: 1st Mondays at 8:00 am (contact Becky Denton)

Miller Springs Nature Area Workdays: 2nd Thursdays at 8:00am (contact Mary Ann Everett)

Mother Neff State Park Workdays: 3rd Thursdays at 9:00am (contact Yvonne Eele)

Nolan Creek Trail Maintenance: 5th Mondays at 8:00am (contact Mary Ann Everett) **V**

Advanced Stream Team Training

- **Richard McCarthy**

Advanced Stream Team Training will be conducted, **August 31**, 2013 at the WACO Wetlands Lab, 1752 Eichelberger Crossing. Training will start at 9:00, with a 30 minute lunch break, then continue until 3:30.

Phase 1: * An orientation of material to be covered.
*Sample collection for E. Coli, Turbidity and Nutrient measuring. How to plate E.Coli samples.

* Identifying E.Coli Colonies.

*Measuring stream flow.

Phase 2: Conduct Nitrogen and Phosphorous measurements using a standard of known value.

Bring with you a thirst for knowledge and a sack lunch. Coffee, bottled water and morning snack will be provided. There are no costs for this program except your time. PLEASE REGISTER NO LATER THAN AUGUST 10, 2013. **AT**

Save the Date

- **Richard McCarthy**

The CORE training for Texas Stream Team Volunteer Monitor Certification will be conducted **Sept 14, 2013** at the Killeen Community Center, on the corner of W.S. Young and Business 190.

Class limited to 25 registrants. Additional information will be provided as available. Contact me for registration: Richard McCarthy, rgm3372010@live.com **AT**

On the Calendar

- **Yvonne Eele**

August 5, 8:00 until finished (**V**) Salado Sculpture Garden workday Contacts are: Miriam Jordan, mejcom@gmail.com or Becky Denton beckydenton@embarqmail.com

August 5, Hours due if you report Monthly, contact Sandy Summers, ctmn.bell@gmail.com

August 13, 6:00 (**AT**) CTMN General Membership Meeting. Speaker: Aubrey Brickhouse, President of Central Texas Astronomical Society. Topic: Stars are Bright -Deep in the Heart of Texas Contact: Lynn Fleming lynn.fleming99@gmail.com or Zoe Rascoe trascoe@hot.rr.com

August 17, 9:30- 12:30 (**AT**) Texas A&M Agrilife Extension How to build a Rainwater Harvesting System for more information: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/index.cfm/productDetails/productid/1298/>

September 2, 8:00 until finished, (**V**) Salado Sculpture Gardens workday. Contacts are: Miriam Jordan, mejcom@gmail.com or Becky Denton beckydenton@embarqmail.com

September 7, 9:00-3:30 (**AT**) Advanced Spring Team Training Waco Wetlands. Contact Richard McCarthy rgm3372010@live.com

September 9, 8:00-Noon (**V**) Andy Wells Hike and Bike cleanup. Contact Richard McCarthy rgm3372010@live.com

September 14, 10:30-4:00 (**AT**) Core Stream Team Training. Contact Richard McCarthy rgm3372010@live.com

September 19, 9:00-noon (**V**) Mother Neff Workday Contact: Yvonne Eele yeele@ymail.com

September 28, 8:00 until finished. (**V**) Miller springs Run For Hope. Contact: Mary Ann Everett

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

Announcements

State Conference

- Dale Hughling

As you probably know, the 2013 TMN State Conference is coming up **October 25-27** in New Braunfels at the T bar M Resort. For those of you who have not been before, once registration opens next month, you can register for all three days or as many days of the conference as you wish. It is a great time to get a variety of Advanced Training hours; some programs even provide certifications in their subject matter. In addition to the training, there are volunteer opportunities at the conference and a variety of activities from field trips to silent auctions and an awards ceremony. For an up to date description of activities, go to:

<http://www.txmn.org/2013-state-meeting/>

(the advanced training opportunities will not be available until sometime in August.)

This is the same page you will want to watch for registration information. Check out the page above and see if you can't find an area that interests you. You will find information about putting on one of several types of presentations (and we have some very talented and knowledgeable folks in our Chapter), contests, and volunteer opportunities (all with details) and who to contact. This page is updated as soon as information about the conference becomes available.

Hope to see you at the conference! **V, AT**

State Conference Silent Auction

From the TMN Website:

"Donate an item or items for the Silent Auction for the Annual Meeting:

This year the Elm Fork Chapter is hosting the Silent Auction. Each year funds raised from the auction helps with TMN project grants and scholarships to the annual meeting. Some big ticket items in the past

have been an overnight stay at a bed and breakfast, outdoor equipment, or a wildlife training class or workshop. Other items that have been donated in the past include, books of interest to a Master Naturalist, crafts, paintings, bird houses, jewelry, bird feeders, toad houses, etc. Please contact Marian Kester with the Elm Fork Chapter at asmvkester@verizon.net to learn more about donating for the silent auction and/or door prizes."

From CTMN Leadership:

A volunteer project proposal for time spent preparing your donation has been submitted to the Central Texas Master Naturalist Project Approval Committee and has been approved for CTMN members donating an item to the State Conference Silent Auction; the conditions of the project are as follows:

"The purpose of this proposal is to provide volunteer service hours availability to those CTMN members who spend time, not otherwise covered in an existing project, creating, drawing, preparing, constructing, developing, or otherwise providing an item to be donated to the TMN State Conference Silent Auction. This proposal includes time spent purchasing the item or materials (not shopping for, that is looking and trying to decide what to get or do), and/or time spent collecting the item or materials, and time actually spent in the creation of the item. The item, for which time is recorded, must actually be donated to the auction. This proposal does not cover reimbursement by the Central Texas Chapter for any expenses incurred by the member under this project."

Members wishing to donate an item to the auction may either deliver it to Marian Kester upon arrival at the Conference or you may send it with someone who is going; if you send it with someone, please include your name and our chapter name. A great way to pick up some volunteer hours! **V**

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

Announcements

- Zoe Rascoe

If you have been helping with our Angler Ed events and would like to become a certified instructor, Ursula wants you to know about an upcoming workshop about an hour from Temple/Killeen:

There will be an Angler Education Instructor Workshop in Cedar Park on Saturday, **August 10th** from 9:00am-2:30pm.

Additional information at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/calendar/angler-education-instructor-certification-workshop-2>.

Contact Caleb Harris at TPWD to pre-register at caleb.harris@tpwd.texas.gov or 512-348-4472. He just needs a name and phone number.

I hope you will consider becoming certified. We have many opportunities to serve the Angler Ed program. And this class will be about as much fun as you can have with plastic worms.

FYI

New Book by Master Naturalist

- Kris Kirkwood, Mid-Coast Chapter Historian

Karen Benson, a Mid-Coast Chapter Master Naturalist, has compiled a selection of her volunteer newspaper columns from the Beeville Bee-Picayune and her own website (<http://coastalbendnaturalist.com/>). Her book, **Brush Country Backyard**, is now available as a paperback or eBook from Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/Brush-Country-Backyard-ebook/dp/B00D5EFVKC>.

Amazon's description of the book:

A visitor's first impression of south Texas brush country is a land of dry desolation where every scraggly shrub is armed with vicious thorns. It is the land where wild longhorn cattle roamed free for two hundred years before leather-skinned cowboys learned to herd them to the railheads in Kansas. A more rugged country is hard to imagine. How could anything live here?

But closer looks reveal a complex and diverse environment filled with animal and plant richness found nowhere else north of Mexico. Known as the South Texas Plains, the brush country has the highest recorded number of bird species in Texas, and by extension, the highest avian richness in the United States. Complementing the birds are some of the strangest and most interesting plants, reptiles, and insects to be found in North America.

Karen Benson is an ornithologist and a Texas Master Naturalist. A keen curious observer of the nature around her, Karen takes you on a delightful journey of insight and learning as she encounters the plants and animals of the Texas brush country, her Brush Country Backyard.

This 34-chapter book was designed to be read on the Kindle Fire and is liberally enhanced with exquisite color photography. Although it can be enjoyed on other devices, a tablet with high-resolution color graphics capability is recommended. The book is also available as a paperback for readers who prefer a more traditional format.

Bee Observer Cards Available

The Entomology Department at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology and the Encyclopedia of Life (eol.org) have collaborated to develop a set of "Bee Observer Cards" that are intended to teach naturalists, teachers, resource managers and other interested public something about the diverse anatomy, natural history, and behaviors of bees. The cards are not a guide to taxonomic identification, but more a tool to help people observe the remarkable diversity of body structures, nesting habits etc. when they are out in the field. They are freely available to anyone as a PDF on the EOL website:

http://eol.org/info/disc_observer

From there, they are easy to print up as cards or for use on screen devices. Please take a look, and spread the word! Thanks.

Tracy Barbaro, Encyclopedia of Life
Harvard University
Museum of Comparative Zoology

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:

Terrie Hahn at moompie45@hotmail.com



Photo to the left by Terrie Hahn shows why you shouldn't pull out those wild sunflowers as they come up in your beds.