

THE TRACKER

The Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter December 2014

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Get Your Nature On!

- Zoe Rascoe

The 2014 Central Texas Nature Fest, hosted by CTMN on October 18th at Bend of the River Park in Temple, was the culmination of 16 months in planning by many of our members and partner organizations. The entire event was all about nature and was organized around the elements of Earth, Fire, Water and Air- with 45 exhibits, a dozen vendors, food trucks, seminar speakers and over 100 volunteers welcoming over 500 guests, there were nearly 800 people at the park.

Many state and federal agencies as well as nonprofit organizations, including two other Master Naturalist chapters, were represented and there were lots of activities for both kids and grownups ranging from dry land casting with Angler Education to making seed bombs from mud with the Native Prairie Association. Other exhibits had live Central Texas reptiles, flint knapping demonstrations, Texas crawdads, a chance to touch animal pelts of Texas mammals, activities about bats, horned lizards, the



Calendar at a Glance

Christmas Party, December 9
Angler Ed, Christmas on the Farm December 13
Miller Spring Workday, December 18
Mother Neff Work Day, December 18
See page 11 for more information

Chapter Motto

**Earth Day,
Every Day**

Continued on page 5...



From the President's Pen

Giving Thanks

Thanksgiving morning started out with flies this year. I am not thankful for flies. Especially when they are in my car or any other vehicle that I might be driving. I know they have their place in the ecosystem, but I can't stand it when they buzz around me when I'm trying to drive.

When I got in our cattle feed truck to go check the feeder calves on Thanksgiving morning, the whole cab was full of flies. On the ceiling, the seats, the dash and on the floor. Somebody left the windows down the day before when we were working cattle and flies love open windows. They will find even the tiniest opening of a window and joyfully fly inside to the sanctuary of a vehicle. I don't know if they are looking for a ride or just like the calm inside a parked car.

It was pretty chilly Thursday morning so the flies were very sluggish. When I swatted at them, they would fall and attempt to get their wings going. Down went my window to try to herd them out. I couldn't reach

the passenger side and this truck doesn't have electric windows so there was no cross draft. Then it hit me, crank up the heater to get their wing juices going so they can fly and be guided to the nearest exit. Down the road I went, heater blasting, window down waving around leather gloves and swatting at the roof like someone possessed. Pretty standard behavior for me if you ask my kids. Just about the time I reached the gate to my first stop, I finally got most of the buggers outside.

My original mission before getting sidetracked by the flies, was to recount all of the calves that we had moved to different ranches the day before. Somehow our count had gotten off and it was my mission to figure out why.

Whenever you count cattle, you have to move slowly thru them so they don't move around too much. The majority of our cattle are lookalikes because they are all solid black and that makes it hard to tell if you've already counted that one, or that other black one or the other black one.... So I honk the horn a little and put out some range cubes in a line so these heifers will be easier to keep together to count. One, two,

three....excellent all of them are here that are supposed to be and on the first try which is amazing. I'm thankful for their cooperation.

On to the next ranch to do more counting. This bunch isn't nearly as obliging. The group is mostly steers and they are all busy trying to see who is bigger and stronger like teenage boys do. Pushing each other

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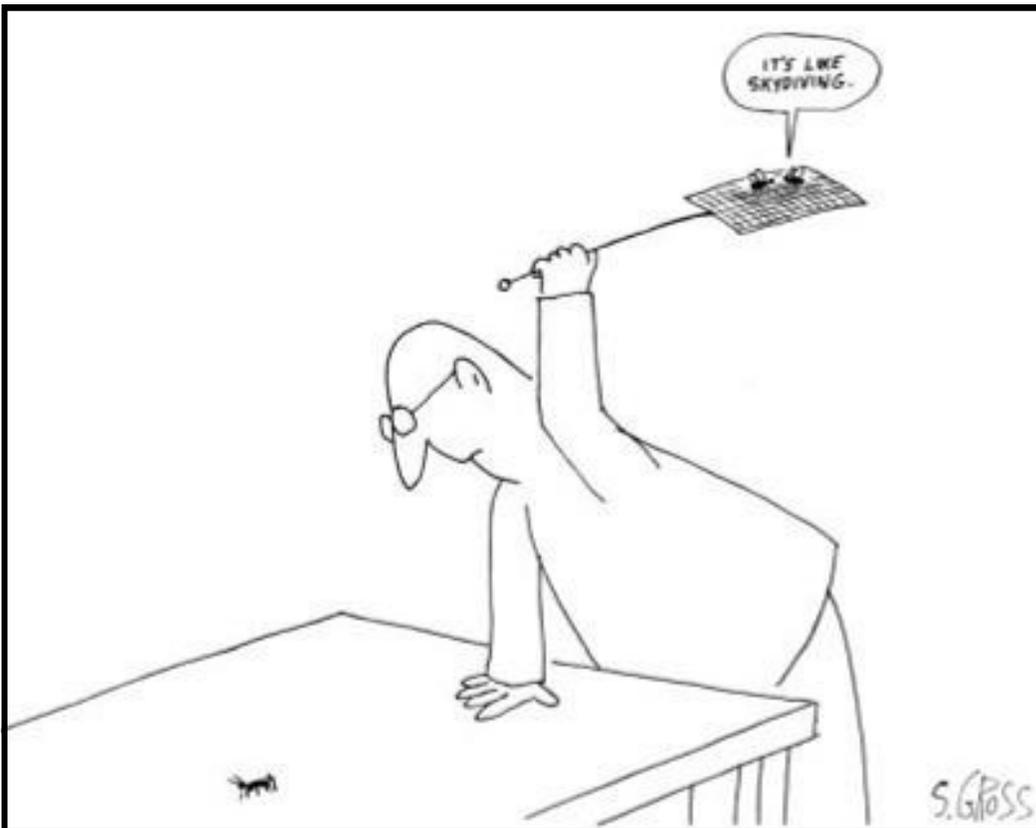


Photo by Stan Gross from <http://www.nature.com/scitable/blog/cognoculture/> on_the_origin_of_thoughts

Giving Thanks...continued

around, bucking and snorting then running off in all directions. It doesn't help that the cows on the other side of the fence have come up because they heard the feed truck and are looking for a treat this morning. The calves on my side are smelling the cows and calves on the other side and bunching up in a pulsing wave of black heads, tails and backs. There is no way I can get a good count on them. Arghhh. On to plan B.

I go thru the gate and entice the cows up the hill and away from the calves. Since they are looking for a bite to eat, I honk the horn to herald my arrival and make sure they all get a chance at a range cube or two. I stop the truck to give all the cows time to walk to the truck. That's when it strikes me how lucky I am to be able to be doing what I am doing at that moment.

Two hawks are singing to each other on the creek and start to circle overhead. Here comes a cow with a brand new baby by her side, his legs still wobbly from his first contact with the earth. Meadowlarks are busy walking the grass looking for insects or perhaps a grasshopper that escaped the latest freeze. Occasionally, a cow will send out a low moo to reassure her calf that she is right here and he better not wander off too far. A few mourning doves fly over with the dee-dee-dee-dee sound that their wings make and land on the fence next to a grasshopper that has been impaled on a barb. Mr. Shrike will make a fine future meal from his horizontal pantry. All of this takes place within a few minutes and it hits

home how much I take for granted in nature. These are the noises and movements that I see every day, but today, on Thanksgiving Day, they take on more meaning and I am thankful.

After a little reflection, I go back to counting calves and eventually finish up with a much better number in hand than what I started with. Now back home to get ready for the Thanksgiving meal. We don't normally have the traditional turkey at our house for Thanksgiving. We eat what we raise or what has been brought home from hunting or fishing expeditions. This year, we had a black bass fish fry, but other years meals range from duck, dove, steak, venison or geese. One year we even threw in some calf fries just for variety. I hope that you had an opportunity to give thanks for things in your life. There are so many things to be thankful for. Except for flies, in my car, when it's cold.

- Lynn



Photo from Ranchwife4life.com

Teach a Boy to Fish...

- Zoe Rascoe

Ursula Nanna, a graduate of the chapter's second class in 2011, found a passion for something unexpected: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Angler Education Program. Unexpected, because Ursula had actually never fished. She, along with other CTMN and ECRMN members attended an Angler Ed training course held in Salado shortly before graduation of the 2011 students. Ursula was hooked! She tackled the program, organized a team of certified Anglers and helpers and began soliciting businesses in Bell County for funding for CTMN Angler Ed supplies. Our first chapter donations for any purpose came in through Ursula's door to door efforts on behalf of Angler Ed.



Armed with poles and squiggles (rubber fishing worms), she went out looking for opportunities to host Angler Ed events for both children and adults, ultimately running over 20 events in

some months! The Angler Education program teaches people about the environment and our impact through the sport of fishing - right up the Master Naturalist's alley! Ursula quickly became a champion Angler of backyard bass (the flat, plastic variety used in teaching) and was an important advocate for the program at the state level.

One thing doing 20 programs a month will get you is volunteer service hours! Ursula was recently awarded a new CTMN Chapter Volunteer Service Milestone Award for 2000 hours of service. The award, like those provided by the Texas Master Natu-

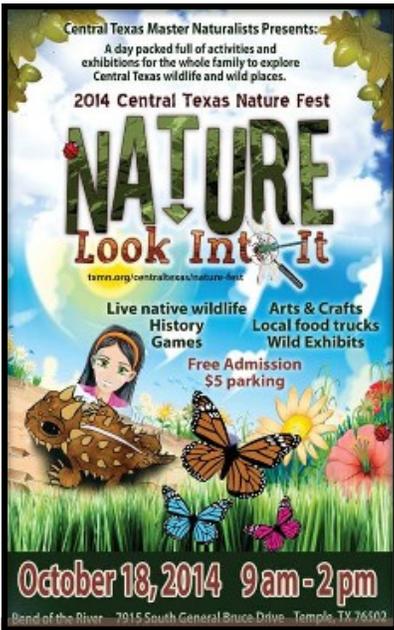


ralist program, is a pin, however Ursula's is a Special Edition of the new award - a miniature felted bobber and wooden fishing pole.

If you'd like to see a video of Ursula receiving her awards, go to: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/a535bixaendb79n/Ursula%20Nanna.mp4?dl=0>

Since Angler Ed has been exceptionally busy in Bell County (thank you Nature Fest), Ursula hit another Volunteer Service Milestone award - 2500 hours! This is an amazing level considering that our chapter is still relatively new and she has just been a member for 3 years. So, Ursula has also been awarded the Texas Master Naturalist 2500 Hour Volunteer Service Milestone dragonfly pin by the state program, the second pin handed out to one of our members, the first recently went to Mary Ann Everett. We are very proud of Ursula and the contribution she has made both to our chapter and to seeing that environmental responsibility was taught to thousands of Central Texans over the last three and a half years. Thank you Ursula! *Fish on...*





Get Your Nature On...continued

extinct passenger pigeon, bird watching tips, identification of invasive species, and both fire and water safety.

There were 36 CTMN members that either helped set up for the Nature Fest or worked the day of the event - or both! - and others who helped in the planning but were not able to attend. We also appreciate the help of El Comino Real Master Naturalists who ran three exhibits and provided guidance from their own nature festival experience and Heart of Texas Master Naturalists who also ran three exhibits.



A Steering Committee of 16 people, chaired by Jacki Bakker, worked with their teams for over a year and the response from both guests and our exhibitors and vendors was very positive. Seeing the excitement of children (and adults!) learning about the many aspects of Central Texas nature was well worth the effort to make



our first Nature Fest a reality. Thank you to all who participated in some way! A special thank you goes to Jacki and the Element chairs: Rehanon Pampell, Patti Wyman, Gerrie Johnson and Mary Ann Everett and to Dale Hughling who helped us manage and share a large amount of electronic data during the long planning phase. If you missed this chance to be a Nature Fest contributor, there will be another!



Continued on next page..

Steering Committee Members

Chapter President: Lynn Fleming

Chair: Jacki Bakker

Earth: Rehanon Pampell

Fire: Patti Wyman

Water: Gerrie Johnson

Air: Mary Ann Everett

Data Management: Dale Hughling

Finance: Don Wyatt

Food Coordinator: Holly Leiferman
(City of Temple)

Logistics: Zoe Rascoe

Marketing: Nicole Norelli (Audubon)

Media Relations: Jacki Bakker

Seminar Coordinator: Peggian
Jones & Cindy Allen

Sponsorship: Zoe Rascoe

Vendor Coordinator: Gail Hughling

Volunteer Coordinator: Angela
Cases

Photos by Joe Dorn, Zoe Rascoe and
members of a local photo club: Terry
Rascoe, Cindi Dockery and Wayne
Stockburger.

Get Your Nature On...continued



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**Get Your Nature
On...continued**



Lots of Certifications and Milestones

- Zoe Rascoe

Central Texas Master Naturalists continue to rack up volunteer service hours and new graduates are certifying and even recertifying at lightning speed. Keep up the great pace!!



At the October meeting, (below) the following members certified for the first time after graduation: Jacki Bakker, Lin Williams and Joe Dorn - all class of 2014.



Volunteer Service Hours Milestone awards were presented to: (left) Yvonne Eele (500 - Silver) Linda Mahaffey (500 - Silver), Shirley Watts (250 hours - bronze), and a first for our chapter, a **2500 Hour Volunteer Service Milestone award** and a bouquet of flowers was presented to Mary Ann Everett (above) - CTMN founding member, for her service in many, many projects!



Below left: from the November meeting, miscellaneous photos including: "The Short and the Long of it!"



Photos by Zoe Rascoe and Joe Dorn



More, More, More!



At the **October** meeting, above, 2014 Armadillo recertification pins went to: Sue Valdez, Patti Wyman, Jerry Lewis and Liz Pool. Shirley Watts, Linda Mahaffey and Joe Dorn (that's a certification and re-certification in the same year for Joe!) also received their recertification pins and are pictured on the previous page receiving *more* awards.



And at the **November** meeting, (clockwise) Zoe Rascoe showed off the Chapter 2000 hour Milestone award for Ursula Nanna; Lynn presented Ursula with her 2500 hour award at the hospital (see page 4); Sarah Dorn and Cindy Allen (not pictured) received their 2014 Certifications and receiving their Armadillo recertifications were Lynn Fleming, Lin Williams and Kathy Cantu. Sue Valdez received her 500 Hour Milestone pin.



Congratulations to all! Once all the hours from Nature Fest are submitted, this list will likely grow even longer.



This and That

'possum Hunting

- Zoe Rascoe

While working at Bend of the River Park preparing for Nature Fest, Lynn had diagnosed a problem with animal holes as the work of an opossum. City of Temple staff set out a trap and sure enough - a 'possum appeared. Finding the creature on our work day, Lynn agreed to take him to the woods in Troy where he would join friends of his own kind in a more natural environment than the fenced yard at a city park.



Pumpkin Eating Deer

- Terrie Hahn

The deer don't usually bother with the whole pumpkins I put up front, I think because they can't get their mouths around it well enough to bite through. This year, we kept finding the pumpkin rolled across the driveway with little nips in the skin, and one day they managed to finally bite through. This doe had her whole head stuck in the pumpkin at one point. Then another doe came over and they pawed each other like cats do to see whose turn it was. The seeds and mash inside went first. It had been scraped the way you do when carving a pumpkin. The next day it had been completely devoured by critters.



State Conference

This is a group photo of most of the CTMN's who went to the State Conference this year. Watch for the next edition of *The Tracker* for more fun-filled photos and stories!



Upcoming Events

- Yvonne Eele

December 9, Christmas Party at Zoe's home, 6:00 pm

December 13, Angler Ed at Christmas on the farm. Volunteers needed. **V**

December 17, 11:00 at George's Westroc in Waco, Leah Huth's (Mother Neff State Park superintendent) retirement party. Master naturalists welcome. RSVP to Yvonne.eele@tpwd.texas.gov if you plan on coming.

December 18, Miller springs workday. Contact MaryAnn **V**

December 18, 9:00 am Mother Neff workday. Still working on trail. Need some chainsaw work and help removing T-posts. **V**

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

Celebrate!

Our chapter will gather for Food, Fellowship and Fun as 2014 draws to a close. The Rascoe's will host the 5th Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner next Tuesday, December 9th at 6:30pm.

Once again we will have a Chinese Auction where the more tickets you purchase and put by an item, the more likely you are to win it! Items for raffle are donated by our members - things like handmade crafts, field guides, plants, purchased items, things from nature, or anything decorative or festive. Tickets are only \$1 and you can put as many tickets on an item as you like. Buy a lot of tickets and put it all on one thing and you just might go home with it! If you can donate something, just bring it on Tuesday night. All money collected will go towards our chapter projects and activities. Thanks to our generous members, we usually raise a few hundred dollars in one night! Looking forward to seeing you next week!



Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter

5th Annual Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 9th

6:30pm

Potluck Dinner

Home of Zoe Rascoe

1900 N. 13th Street, Temple

Please RSVP by Monday, Dec. 8th to Zoe at 254-913-1013 or trascoe@hot.rr.com

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

Newsletter Mission Statement

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

Board of Directors

President: Lynn Fleming

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Secretary: Louann Hight

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Membership: Linda Mahaffey

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Chapter Advisors:

Lyle Zoeller,
County Extension Agent, Natural Resources

Derrick Wolter,
Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife



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Contributing Photographers: Zoe Rascoe, Joe Dorn, Terry Rascoe, Cindi Dockery, Wayne Stockburger, Terrie Hahn

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

Terrie Hahn at moompie45@hotmail.com



More photos from the November General Meeting.

