

# The Tracker



The Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter

August 2015

## Inside This Issue

President's Pen/Turtles	2
Look a Little Closer	4
Spotlight on Natives	5
Butterfly Counting	7
2015 Interns Graduate	8
Keep Celebrating	10
Beauty of Nature	11
Backyard Bonanza	13
Purple Finches/CTMN's work	16
Nature Fest	17
Stream Team Adv. Training	18
Upcoming Events	18

Photo of LETE Fledge by Nicole Norelli.

## Calendar at a Glance

August 5, Hours due

August 11, 6 p.m. General meeting

October 9, Night Hike and Star Party

October 10, Nature Fest

October 23-25th, State Conference

November 14th, Advanced Stream Team Training

See page 17 for more.

## CTMN Asked to Teach at State MN 2015 Annual Meeting

The Master Naturalist 16th Annual Meeting will be held October 23-25th in Marble Falls. Central Texas Master Naturalist, Nicole Norelli was accepted to teach two of their seminars.

On Saturday morning, October 24th, 8 a.m. - 12 noon, she will be giving "Beach-nesting Bird Stewardship" Training.

*Join this workshop to learn about Beach-nesting birds and how you can help protect them. The workshop will cover identifying beach-nesting species of Texas, the state and federal protection status, and their life cycles. Following this, the workshop will cover where, when and why we need stewards on the beach to assist in conservation efforts. We will discuss how to be an effective steward for the birds and the community, address potential problems you may face, and resources for when and where you can volunteer to use your new training! The workshop will also cover information on how to begin working with the ebird website to submit surveys and how to correctly identify shorebird band combinations.*



Continued on page 6...

Chapter Motto

**Earth Day,  
Every Day**



# From the President's Pen

*This is an article from my husband, Robert, who was born and raised to love country life. If you haven't yet met him, I hope you do someday. Those that have met him, you see that he writes straight from the source, no bones about it. And I even edited a few parts....Lynn*

## Turtles

\$1,000,000 is what I would have if I had a dollar per hour that I spent on tank dams and river banks in Falls County shooting turtles. A many young kids have been entertained and sharpened their shooting skills through the year on turtle control patrol of local stock tanks.

While fishing for catfish, beef or chicken liver was the main bait that the nuisance turtles would love to grab from your hook and mess up your trip to the local fishing hole. Once on the hook, turtles are nearly impossible to remove without killing them. My granddad always said "Never let one bite you, they won't let loose until the moon comes up."

Farm ponds are ideal habitat for red eared sliders, yellow belly sliders and soft shell turtles. The sliders got their names from the habit of sliding off of their sunning log or rock into the water whenever they

sense danger. Soft shell turtles have incredibly long necks and can reach around behind them and grab a predator which was occasionally my hands.

Once while fishing on the Brazos River, we caught a soft shell turtle the size of a large wash tub. We removed the shell in the middle of the night on the banks of the river, dressed it and threw it on ice for the first fish fry at a later date. Quite tasty as I recall.

In the early 70's, box turtles were very common in Falls County. As I traipsed about the country side, I would pick them up and transplant them to 13<sup>th</sup> Street in Temple. They would live in the back yard and I would feed them bologna, give them fresh water and shade, but they always seemed to disappear. Masters of escape, they didn't like living in town I guess.

That's one of the many things that have changed in the last 70 years. There are practically no box turtles, very few bull frogs and the non-evident horny toad and scorpion. I still blame the imported fire ants for most of the problem of their reduction in numbers.



**Red eared slider nest. With the mud still damp.**

Continued on next page...

# Turtles...continued

Twice in my life, I have seen turtles laying eggs. The first time was in 2007 when Belton Lake was flooded and backed up over highway 317. We loaded up to go look at the water (a common thing that farmers do)

and were over the fence looking around. A large slider was digging a hole under a cedar tree and depositing eggs. Normally, she would have been a long way from water, but was only about five feet from it then. The other time I have seen an egg laying female was at a stock pond. She had dug a hole about 3 inches wide and probably at least 6 inches deep after she had wet the ground with urine I suppose. Then she deposited about a half dozen eggs and crawled back to the water. I assume all the turtles we see traveling this time of the year are looking for nesting places.



**Future red eared sliders.**

What turtle tale is complete without an alligator snapper account? The largest alligator snapper I ever came across in the wild was in a

small pool of water in Buttermilk Creek just west of Salado. It was over two feet in diameter and looked very prehistoric. I later learned that alligator snapping turtles grow to be well over 100 years old and have been documented to have arrowheads and musket balls found lodged in their large shells. Tough critters, I'm telling you.

These are just some of my memories of being out in nature. I feel that getting outside and seeing things is a great education. There are so many lessons for young and old alike. I credit my shooting skills to my early years with a .22 rifle in hand and a box of shells from Gibson's in my pocket. Maybe if the youth of today spent more time outside, we would hear less bad things on the local news. I strongly believe in what my mentor Charlie Pack always said, "Off the streets and on the Creeks."

# Look A Little Closer

- Lynn Fleming

Nature is all around us. Do you take a look? Do you listen? I know many of you are very in tune with the sights and sounds of nature. I wanted to share some of the things I have encountered in the last few months....



Our friend, the orb spider.



Maximillian Sunflower



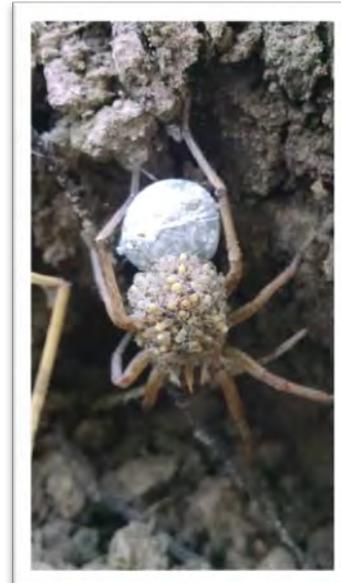
Ant mounds. Not the Fire type!



Apricot blooms leading to a bumper crop.



On the back porch one evening.



Wolf Spider with newly hatched babies on her back and egg sack trailing behind. Found in a cow track at a stock pond.



Beautiful, but kind of creepy sunset during the rains.

I don't have pictures, but we have had a pair of bob white quail close to the house. How wonderful it has been to hear and see them making a comeback after such a long dry spell of activity.

Get out there and look and hear. No telling what you will discover. I hope you go out and enjoy nature. It's so much better in person than it is on the computer screen. Get out there and look and hear. No telling what you will discover...Lynn

# Spotlight on Natives



## Name That Wildflower!

- Mary Ann Everett

Jerry Lewis and I were wandering along Salado Creek Saturday, July 18, looking for those elusive butterflies. Any butterfly! The wildflowers were there. Frogfruit galore, but no butterflies. Maybe the windy conditions contributed to them not being out and about. However, we stumbled upon this interesting plant. Can you guess what it is? I had heard of it, but never seen it.

Devil's claw, *Proboscidea louisianica*, is an apt name for this plant. The leaves are quite large, and are covered with a glandular nectar. The flowers are creamy-yellow, tubular, and are five-lobed. Sometimes the flowers are spotted with purple. The fruit is a fleshy, curved pod, that splits into two claws when it dries. This leaves an in-



ner woody shell, tipped with a long, curved beak. The beak splits lengthwise, and the shell opens between the two parts of the split beak. These are easily caught on the legs of animals which spread the claws.

There are about 40 black seeds which are gradually released when the claws split apart.

The blossoms of devil's claw plants are strikingly similar to those of Catalpa and Desert Willow. Several species of bees frequent the fragrant blossoms, which often have bright yellow nectar guide lines and reddish-purple flecks along the inner corolla tube. (I did note this while taking a picture of the blossoms).

The fresh green pods and dried black seed capsules were important items in the cultures of many Native American tribes of the southwestern United States, and are still used to this day for food and in basketry. The fruits are collected and used in nature crafts.



## CTMN to Teach...continued from page 1

On Saturday afternoon, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m., she will be teaching "Shorebird Identification and Conservation."

*Shorebirds are everywhere in Texas. Texas is part of the Central Flyway, meaning we regularly have shorebirds of all shapes and sizes traveling through our state on their way to wintering or breeding grounds. The Texas coast itself also plays home to key breeding habitat for some of our more endangered species. However, shorebirds can be a tricky nut to crack when it comes to identification. Identification of species by body morphology, habitat, and behavior will be emphasized over birding by sight. Learning to identify these birds can be fun and they also play a key role in identifying a region, indicating the land or water health, and provide beauty and wonder to those who know how to look for them. We will also discuss methods of conservation of these birds and their habitat, and how this effort ties into protection of local communities (Houston Audubon Society, American Bird Conservancy).*

Nicole graduated from high school in 2009 and from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in 2011 with a degree in Organismal Biology at just 19 years old. Not

content to sit behind a desk, Nicole knew from the start she wanted to be a field biologist. Nicole chose



to chase birds for a living, having done waterfowl and shorebird research in Connecticut, New York, and Louisiana and has worked several years with the National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy. Nicole's main goal is to expand her skill set and have fun trying new things and new places. Called the "All-Weather Adventurer" by her friends and family, Nicole has lived and worked in field conditions from snow storms to the blistering heat of the Sonoran Desert to the rough open ocean. Nicole is currently employed with Texas A&M AgriLife Research at Blackland in Temple and is a member of the Central Texas Master Naturalists.

- Nicole Norelli



# Butterfly Counting

By Marilyn Whitworth

I had done butterfly counting in 2011 but had not continued to do it every year after that until I did it again this year. I did the counting July 18 in Confed-

erate Park along Nolan Creek from the Belton Christian Youth Center parking lot up to the Harrison Community Center. I did my count with Ray Hughes, Cindy Allen and Sue Valdez. I really don't know how many we spotted and even though I had my Butterflies Guide of Central Texas with me I couldn't identify with complete accuracy which ones I saw. While I was counting I felt like that old saying "Only Mad Dogs and Englishmen go out in the Noonday Sun". After looking and counting butterflies at Confederate Park, Sue Valdez and I went to the Agrilife Extension Building in Belton to look for more butterflies. That is where we saw the most butterflies that day. Almost all of them we saw were on the blue mist flowers at the front of the building. Cindy Allen joined us at the blue mist flowers to count the butterflies. I have tried to include a few pictures of the butterflies we saw. All-in-all it was a nice time counting the butterflies.



# 2015 Interns Graduate

- Zoe Rascoe



The Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter's 2015 Class graduated June 9th. Celebrating with ice cream and holding snakes and other assorted critters from Franklin HERPES, the following graduates received their certificates. Clockwise from top left:

Nina Archambeault, Rene Berkhoudt, Sarah Byrd, Len Cilliers, Anita Hardin, Kelly Kemp, Wade Matthews, Nicole Norelli, Violet Okeson, Shawn Perry...and on the next page...



# 2015 Interns Graduate



Also graduating were: left:

Tom Salmi,  
Mary Settle,  
Torry Smith,  
and right:

Jeannie Wilson,  
Ed Winder,  
Andreas Wooten.



# Let's Keep Celebrating!

- Zoe Rascoe

Other awards given out on Graduation night were (right) the 250 Hour pin to Joe Dorn and Ray Kozusko. Certifying was Jeannie Milbery (below). 2015 Recertification pins went to Sarah Dorn, Mary Ann Everett, Dale Hughling, Gail Hughling, Linda Mahaffey, Marilyn Whitworth, Zoe Rascoe and Don Wyatt.



# The Beauty of Nature

- Mary Ann Everett

Recently Phil and I had an opportunity to travel to Minnesota and Wisconsin, being gone ten days.

We both had never traveled into that 'neck of the woods.' I would like to share several observations with you.

Having traveled worldwide and into other states, it is amazing to find there are like species of plants. For example, MN had a beautiful spiderwort, but it was a different species. They also have a standing buttercup, while here in Texas, we have the large buttercup, which I first saw at McKinney Falls State Park several years ago. The brilliance of that yellow bloom was what



Shoreline of Lake Superior; Red Columbine and Green Frog.

caught my eye, almost didn't look real. There were also red oaks and apple trees, but then you add other conifers-spruce, fir, red cedar, white cedar, pine, tamarack, alders, hickory, walnut, sarsaparilla, pussy willow (have you ever seen one of those? I thought there was a cotton wood tree, but found the source to be this species.), and there

are many others. Lots of berry laden shrubs, for the bears to eat the fruits.

They don't call Minnesota the Land of 10,000 Lakes for no reason. Everywhere you look, there is some sort of

pond, stream, river, lake. Beautiful scenery. I can still hear the flow of the falls at Gooseberry Falls State Park, close to Lake Superior. Another interesting item,



the tamarack tree colors the water a brownish color, kinda like compost tea. This is due to the tannin in the leaves of this tree.

How much do you know about Lake Superior? I did not know these facts about her:

*It is the largest fresh water lake in the world. The average water temperature is 40 degrees F. If you were to empty her, it would cover North America, Central America, and South America with 1 foot of water. The year 1997 was the last time the lake totally froze over. There have been over 350 recorded shipwrecks with over 1,000 lives lost. It is also said by old timers, the lake never gives up her dead. It is also the deepest of the Great Lakes, 1,333 feet, west of Marquette, MI.*

How would you like to live in an area where there are black bears and wolves? The citizens up north do so. In fact outside Ely, MN, there are both a North American Bear Center and the International Wolf Center. I for one did not realize how large wolves are. Both centers are all about educating the public about these two species. There are a lot of misconceptions about them. We thoroughly enjoyed our time at both centers.

Ah, we enjoyed the geology of this area tremendously. I thought about our Dr. Rock-Ray- and

Continued on next page...

## Beauty of Nature...continued

thought he would have a hay-day up there. This was all volcanic rock. I did not know that. The rocks are beautiful, but then I love rocks! Along Lake Superior, they have these agates, beautiful things. The best places to find them, we were told, was where they are making new roads, and they grade the road area and bring them to surface. Now mind you, they don't look like much, but the treasure is below the surface. We did stop at a rock shop along the lake and purchase two of these beauties. I will try to remember to bring to a meeting to share.

Lest I forget the birds, I was sorely disappointed. I never got to hear the loon. However our scouts canoeing on the boundary waters said they heard too many to count and that should count for something. However we did observe several other species we had never seen before: red eyed vireo, black throated green warbler, nuthatch-white-breasted and red-breasted, rose-breasted grosbeak. On our river cruise, we saw a nesting pair of eagles.



So why am I writing about another state, and not Texas?

Well, we learn a lot when we are out and about. We stopped at numerous state parks along the way and some national

parks also. I picked up several pamphlets, and the message is the same. Some states seem to be doing a better job than others on the message. I picked up several pamphlets on the emerald ash borer. Brightly colored, meant to catch the eye of the reader. Firewood Alert! Firewood can Spread Pests, Help Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species-is on the cover of one such publication put out by the MN Dept of Agriculture. There are some quarantined counties in MN. You cannot move hardwood firewood out of the quarantined county into another, nor can you move opened firewood bundles, or move firewood long distances. MDA certifies firewood is to be used by the homeowner, especially on state-managed and federally-managed lands.

Another brightly colored publication states: Give Invasive Species The Brush Off. Then you see a picture of a hiking boot wiping off the soles upon a mat. The publication states: arrive with clean gear; burn local or



St. Louis River, outside Carlton, MN, which runs into Lake Superior; Rose Breasted Grosbeak.

certified firewood; use local or weed-free hay; stay on the trails; before leaving, remove mud and seeds. This is followed by a diamond shape sign stating Play, Clean, Go. Stop Invasive Species in Your Tracks.

At Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, I picked up this pamphlet: Natural Sounds Program: Safeguarding the Sounds of Life, Listening to the National Parks: "All the sounds of the earth are like music." Oscar Hammerstein II

This wonderful pamphlet states that the National Park System is working in partnership with parks and others to increase scientific understanding and inspire public appreciation of the value and character of soundscapes. It goes on to add paragraphs about noise pollution, hearing our past: cultural and historic sounds; sound and wildlife; and natural sounds and night skies Division Expertise. Excellent tool for teaching awareness about listening to the sounds of nature!

We have so many jewels within our country's boundaries, some well known, others not so well known. In talking with park rangers and naturalists they are experiencing some of the same problems that Texas is, especially in regard to invasives. It is encouraging to see that so many entities have banded together to educate others about the problems being faced, but also to encourage people to get outdoors and enjoy the beauty that is out there.

Hope you enjoyed the tour. Just leave your tip in the jar on the way out.....

This is your traveling naturalist, Mary Ann, signing off.

# My Backyard Bonanza

## (Or All Those Slimy Things My Mother Hates!)

By Andreas Wooten

My wife and I live in a fairly typical suburban neighborhood; at least that is what you would think if you drove down my street. Wide paved road, mailboxes, mini-vans, UPS trucks delivering Amazon packages and all the normal traffic of suburbia. Not the best place for nature. Wrong! It is a fabulous place if you choose to invite in Mother Nature and take the time to look around once you have sent out the invitation.

So what is the invitation you ask?? Easy. Have the three basic things that every critter on the planet needs. Food, water, shelter. A little variety in the shelter and food categories help. My wife and I actually accomplished this somewhat by accident. We started a garden. This simple garden has grown over the past few years, and as it has grown so have our encounters with wildlife in the backyard.

The food source was of course our garden, the fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers of which we have a large variety. The shelter was rocks and timbers around the raised beds, vines growing on the fence and some newly planted and existing trees and the plants themselves in some cases. Our water is from the aerobic septic system, the sprinkler system, a birdbath and a small pond in the garden. Kind of the build it and they will come approach (hey, it worked!).

Reptiles, amphibians, mammals, insects and birds of many varieties reside or pass through our yard and garden daily and with every season. For a relatively populated and busy area I am constantly surprised at how well these animals and insects adapt and overcome to make it into our garden. Some stay for a long time, some only for a short time. Others of the snake variety are quickly relocated at my wife's request.

My wife and I are native Texans. She is from the San Antonio area and I originally grew up in the El Paso area (Yes, El Paso is Texas and not Mexico). We have now lived in central Texas now for almost four years. Between us that is quite a few years of experi-

ence at watching and tracking Texas critters. Our backyard bonanza has brought in things neither of us had ever seen before and is constantly sending me to the computer to figure out what "that thing is." Our red heeler, Sergeant, is also always on the hunt and with his nose has shown us more and more hiding places for the critters as time goes on.

So here are some photos and short descriptions of just a very few of the critters we have encountered in our backyard bonanza over the past few months. All relocated animals names are withheld to protect their identities! (All photos courtesy of Mrs. Brandy Wooten) Please feel free to research any of my answers to what these critters are since there is such a variety you may have more detail, or I might be wrong in my description or identification of a particular animal.



*Sphecius speciosus*, often simply referred to as the cicada killer or the cicada hawk, this is a large digger wasp species. Females have significant stingers which they plunge into cicadas to inject venom that paralyzes them. Their stings are painful. However, they are not aggressive and do not have nest-guarding instinct of honey bees and hornets.

Males lack stingers but are territorial. They will approach anything that enters "their area," including people mowing or using weed-eaters, or riding tractors. They may hover and challenge trespassers but are harmless. These solitary wasps choose sites with specific characteristics: well-drained, light-textured soils in full sunlight that are near trees harboring cicadas. They may dig along sidewalk or patio edges, in

Continued on next page...

# Backyard Bonanza...continued

flower beds, gardens, or lawns. As much as 100 cubic inches of soil may be brought to the surface as tunnels are formed. So bottom line, who needs to aerate the soil when you have these guys around!!! This one hangs out near the garden hose under the fig ivy.

Terrestrial flatworm - Terrestrial flatworms are free-living soil animals, with flattened and unsegmented bodies. The size of a flatworm is not constant, as they can stretch out or contract considerably, changing shape as they move. Typically, the body is long and thin, with narrower head and tail ends. Eye spots may be present, but often are very small, so that the head and tail ends of a flatworm are not easily identified if it is not moving. The movement is by a gliding motion, and a thin mucous trail is left behind the worm as it moves. Terrestrial flatworms are predators that attack a range of small animals including slugs, snails, earthworms, and other soil invertebrates. Flatworms hunt actively in the soil, moving along crevices and burrows, as they follow the scented trail of their prey. The mouth of a flatworm is not on its head end, but halfway down the body. Flatworms are normally found in damp shady places — under logs and stones, in soil or under leaf litter. At night they can be seen in the open in habitats with high humidity, such as on the stones along stream beds or on the surface of moist soil. In and around human environments flatworms are often found under bricks, paving tiles, pieces of wood, or in folds of black garden plastic, in greenhouses, gardens, and plant nurseries. This one we found while digging for a new raised garden bed.



The common whitetail or long-tailed skimmer (Plathemis lydia) is common across much of the US. The male's chunky white body with the brownish-black bands on its otherwise clear



wings, give it a checkered look. Females have a brown body and a different pattern of wing spots. Whitetail females can be distinguished by their smaller size, shorter bodies, and white zigzag abdominal stripes. The common whitetail can be seen hunting for mosquitoes and other small flying insects over ponds, marshes, and slow-moving rivers in most regions. They often rest on objects near the water, and sometimes on the ground. Males are territorial, holding a 10 to 30 meter stretch of the water's edge, and patrolling it to drive off other males. The nymphs are dark green or brown, but are usually found covered in algae. They feed on aquatic invertebrates such as mayfly larvae and small crayfish, and also on small aquatic vertebrates such as tadpoles and minnows. Because of their abundance, whitetail naiads are in turn an important food source for various fish, frogs, and birds, and also for other aquatic insects.

Argiope aurantia or Common Black and Yellow garden spider, zipper spider, corn spider, and writing spider. This one was not in the garden, but close by, just



around the corner under the eaves by the back porch. This is a female, males are much smaller, thinner and generally a solid brownish color. This

species is harmless to humans. As is the case with most garden spiders, they eat insects, and they can consume prey up to twice their size. They might bite if grabbed, but other than for defense they do not attack. Their venom is not regarded as a serious medical problem for humans. A bite by the black and yellow garden spider is comparable to a bee sting with redness and swelling. Since we have small ponds and birdbaths we have a lot of flying insects that are a great food source for this spider.

Western Hognose Snake - blow snake, bluffer, (western) hognose snake, faux viper, prairie hognose snake, spoonbill snake, spread-head snake, Texas rooster.



Continued on next page...

## Backyard Bonanza...continued

(*Heterodon nasicus*), commonly known as the western hognose snake, is a harmless snake, found across North America. Western hognose snakes are relatively small, stout-bodied snakes found throughout the Great Plains states of the United States from Canada to Mexico. Their color and pattern is highly diverse from subspecies to subspecies, although many appear much like the infamous rattlesnake to the un-



trained eye. This bluff, used in conjunction with a wide array of other defense tactics, makes them unique among snakes.

Although there is still debate whether the hognose is mildly venomous or non-venomous with toxic saliva, it is generally agreed that the species is indeed venomous. Regardless, the extremely rare bite from this rear-fanged snake is of no medical importance to humans. Symptoms range from irritation to localized slight swelling and itching. As with any animal though, care must be taken not to receive a bite as allergic reactions and infection are always a slight possibility.

Males are considerably smaller than females, with adult lengths rarely exceeding 15-20 inches.

These snakes get their common name from the modified rostral (nose) scale that is formed in an upturned manner, providing a very "hog-like" look. Additionally, this adaptation makes these snakes adept burrowers, which is a useful skill when hunting or seeking refuge from the elements.

All of these were found in or near our garden where we have an abundance of toads and frogs hanging out in the garden beds.

All of these were relocated to a large field a few blocks down the street. However, since we have such an inviting area, I am sure we will see some of

them again. The grayish green one was the largest at almost 30 inches!



The Texas spiny lizard (*Sceloporus olivaceus*) is a species of phrynosomatid lizard native to the south central United States, in the states of Texas and Oklahoma, and northeastern Mexico in the states of Coahuila, Nuevo

León, Tamaulipas, and San Luis Potosí. They are quite common throughout their range, where they can be found in trees or on fences.

They can grow 7.5-11 inches in total length, and are typically grey in color with black, white, or red-brown blotching down the back. Patterns vary greatly by location, but the colors and pattern typically serve to be adequate camouflage against the bark of trees in its chosen habitat. The underside is usually uniformly light grey in color, but males typically have blue patches on either side of the belly. Their scales have a distinctly spiny texture to them. They have long toes, and sharp claws suited to climbing.

This guy was in full breeding colors and was hanging out on top of our big railroad tie garden bed. He basically thought "if I lay flat and stay still they won't see me!"

The anole is a common lizard, slender in build, with a narrow head and a



long, slender tail that can be twice as long as the rest of the animal. Color can vary from gray-brown, to brown, to bright green. Each animal can change its color to blend with surroundings. Males can have a noticeable dewlap that is pink when displayed. It is commonly referred to as a "chameleon" due to its ability to change color, but not a true chameleon. They require greenery, occasional shade, and a moist environment. They prefer to be in trees or shrubs, but can also be found on walls and fences. We have quite a few of these

Continued on next page...

## Backyard Bonanza...continued

around the house, but mostly in the fig ivy by the back porch which gets watered daily by the aerobic septic system.



There are several species of cottontail rabbit, but the eastern cottontail is the most common. This animal can be found from Canada to South America and, in the United States, from the East Coast to the Great Plains. Cottontails range from reddish brown to gray, but all feature the distinctive "cotton ball" tail for which they are named.

These rabbits seek out habitat on the

fringes of open spaces, such as fields, meadows, and farms, but can adapt to other habitats—including those of humans.

They browse at night on grasses and herbs and are fond of garden fare such as peas and, of course, lettuce. In winter, their diet becomes a bit coarse and consists of bark, twigs, and buds. During the day, cottontails often remain hidden in vegetation. If spotted, they flee from prey with a zigzag pattern, sometimes reaching speeds of up to 18 miles (29 kilometers) an hour. So my dog has been getting some great exercise trying to catch him. So far it is rabbit 4, dog 0.

Rabbits breed three or four times every year and produce three to eight young each time. Young rabbits mature quickly and are self-sufficient after only four or five weeks. They are sexually mature after only two or three months.

Photos by Brandy Wooten

## Purple Finches in My Backyard

By Marilyn Whitworth

This year I have noticed several purple finches in my backyard. There seem to be more than in any previous years. We put out some winter suet and noticed them eating it which was not unusual. Something I never noticed before was the purple finches drinking from our large hummingbird feeders. Two or three of them would perch on one side of the hummingbird feeder so as to tilt it some and then one or two of them would drink from the feeder. They even tried to drink from our small hummingbird feeders but were unsuccessful in getting any drink. I had never noticed a bird as large as a purple finch ever try to drink from the small openings in a hummingbird feeder before this year. It has been delightful to watch them maneuver the feeder and drink from it. I tried to get a picture of them but had to settle for a picture I found on the internet of a purple finch perched on a hummingbird feeder.



## CTMN's Work Hard

- Lynn Fleming

Our Chapter has put in an amazing number of hours! We have done 2735 Volunteer hours and 583 hours of Advanced Training through June. A lot of work going on out there!

# Mark Your Calendars - Nature Fest is Almost Here!!!

- Rehanon Pampell

The Central Texas Nature Fest Steering Committee has been working hard to organize an exciting festival. They have secured exhibitors like the Bluebird Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Franklin H.E.R.P.S., American Bird Conservancy, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Twin Lakes Audubon Society, Monarch Watch, Texas Crawdads, Smokey the Bear, and many more!! New this year will be our CTMN Nature Gift Store. The store will be stocked with nature guides, bird/bat/butterfly houses, and nature coasters. We also would like to stock our store with donated (gently used) nature guides and books, as well as, any other nature-related items. Please contact Jacki Bakker at [jacki.bakker@gmail.com](mailto:jacki.bakker@gmail.com) for donations or bring them to the next CTMN meeting(s). If you have any contacts for sponsors, exhibitors, or vendors, please contact Rehanon at [rpampell@brc.tamus.edu](mailto:rpampell@brc.tamus.edu) or 979-224-5507. Be sure to spread the word! You don't want anyone to miss this year's Nature Fest!

## 2015 Central Texas NATURE FEST

*nature, look into it*



**Bend of the River Park**  
**7915 South General Bruce Drive,**  
**Temple, TX 76502**

**Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**11 am – 5 pm**  
**\$5 per vehicle**



# Stream Team Advanced Training

- Richard McCarthy

Stream Team Advance Training will be conducted **November 14th**, at Waco Wetlands, 10:00AM to 3:00 PM. **AT**

Training is open to anyone that has completed the Basic Stream Team Course. Training will consist of sampling & testing for: E-Coli; Turbidity; Orthophosphates; Nitrate-Nitrogen; and Stream Flow.

Training will be conducted at the Wetlands. Please bring your lunch. Water, coffee and light snacks will be available. Part of the training will be conducted outside. Dress for the weather.

Any questions and to register for the training please contact: Richard G. McCarthy [rgm3372010@live.com](mailto:rgm3372010@live.com)

## Upcoming Events

- Yvonne Eele

August 3, 8:00-12:00 **(V)** Salado Workday

August 8, 1-2:30 pm: **(V)** Seed Swap in Harker Heights. Contact Gail Hughling at 254-702-0980 or [Gail-Hughling@aol.com](mailto:Gail-Hughling@aol.com)

August 13, 9 -4 p.m. **(AT)** Stream Team Training, Georgetown. Contact Larry Swift. Good Water Master Naturalist Stream Monitoring Coordinator at: [paddlers@gmail.com](mailto:paddlers@gmail.com).

September 19-20, **(AT)** Texas Pollinator Powwow 2015. Contact Carrie McLaughlin, <http://www.texaspollinatorpowwow.org/>

October 10, 11:00-5:00 **(V)** Nature Fest 2015. Lots of opportunities. Contact Rehanon Pampell [terrapathic@hotmail.com](mailto:terrapathic@hotmail.com)

October 23-25 **(AT)** & **(V)** State Conference at Horse shoe bay. Two education sessions given by our own Nicole Norelli. More information as it is released or check the chapter website.

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

## *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

**Past President:** Mary Ann Everett

**Vice President:** Jerry Lewis

**Secretary:** Ray Hughes

**Treasurer:** Don Wyatt

**Web Master:** Dale Hughling

**Membership:** Linda Mahaffey

**Historian:**

**Host:** Mary Odom

**Training:** Sue Valdez

**Newsletter:** Gail Hughling

### **Chapter Advisors:**

Heidi Prude,  
County Extension Agent, Natural Resources

Derrick Wolter,  
Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife

### **Newsletter Staff**

**Editor:** Terrie Hahn

**Proofreader:** Werner Hahn

**Contributing Writers and Photographers:** Lynn Fleming, Robert Fleming, Nicole Norelli, Mary Ann Everett, Zoe Rascoe, Marilyn Whitworth, Andreas Wooten, Brandy Wooten, Richard McCarthy, Rehannon Pampell, Yvonne Eele

**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](mailto:moompie45@hotmail.com)**

### **The Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter:**

Holds member meetings the 2nd Tuesday of February, April, June, August, October and December at 6 p.m. at the Belton Church of Christ at 3003 N. Main. Location exceptions are in December and June.

**PACE** meetings are at the Church location at 6 p.m. the 2nd Tuesday of January, March, May, July, September and November. **THE PUBLIC IS WELCOME AT ALL OF OUR MEETINGS.**

**Programs      Activities      Committees      Everything else**

The Board of Directors meet the 1st Friday of January, March, May, July, September and November at 9 a.m. in the Board Room at the Agrilife Extension Center at 1605 Main in Belton.