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- Zoe Rascoe

Nature Fest 2015 at Bend of the River Park in Temple, October 10th: Beginning last February, Rehanon Pampell chaired (and cheered) her team of volunteers through our second successful Nature Fest. We were once again aligned with Air, Water, Fire and Earth chaired or co-chaired by Kathy Cantu and Nicole Norelli, Torry Smith and Lynn Williams, Patty Wyman, and Lyna Pitts respectively. The number of exhibitors increased by 30% to over 65 nonprofit organizations and local, state and federal natural resource conservation agencies. We also had a dozen vendors selling nature-y goods along with food trucks to feed the hungry. People “on the grounds” went up nearly 50% from last year to 1150, including 890 paid guests through the gates (slightly under half were kids), about 100 volunteers including Master Naturalists from CTMN, HOTMN and ECRMN chapters and a number of local organizations. Many of our members helped with this event in some way. An event this size could not have been so successful without members stepping up and local support with donations and in-kind services. This year nearly \$3000 was raised in cash donations and the in-kind donations far exceeded that amount. With an additional \$2060 in event-day revenue, and nearly all

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Calendar at a Glance

December 5, hours due
December 5, pay dues
December 8, 6:30 p.m. Christmas party at Zoe's. page 14
January 5th, 3 p.m. BOD meeting

Chapter Motto
**Earth Day,
 Every Day**



From the President's Pen

Crickets

We've lived at our house for 22 years, but I've never seen the crickets as bad as they have been this year. You may not have had them where you live, but they were so thick on our porch you couldn't take a single step without hearing that "pop" from crushing an exoskeleton underfoot. After weeks of sweeping them up day after day, I decided to do some research on the little critters and try to understand why the invasion was taking place.

Black field crickets, or field crickets as they are also known, are members of the order Orthoptera, which also includes grasshoppers and katydids. Most of the cricket species involved in outbreaks belong to the *Gryllus assimilis* complex. After checking with my Latin dictionary, I learned that *Gryllus assimilis* means: closely resembling (assimilis) cricket or grasshopper (gryllus). Pretty descriptive those scientific names.

Field crickets lay their eggs in the fall about two weeks after the females mature and develop wings. According to Michael Merchant, Ph.D. and Texas Agrilife Extension Urban Entomologist, "A single female cricket may lay from 150-400 eggs. Firm, bare soil sites are preferred for egg-laying." Hands down, female crickets beat my chickens in the egg laying contest.

All of this frantic egg laying is in preparation for winter when the adult crickets die. Except in Texas. I don't think they ever die in Texas. The eggs hibernate in the soil all winter and hatch the following spring. After hatching, their metamorphosis begins and lasts for



approximately 12 weeks. The nymphs go through about 10 molts before they reach maturity. And that is when humans and crickets collide. Once the cricket is an adult, they can fly and start looking for a mate. Nighttime mating flights turn into cricket outbreaks when large numbers of nymphs complete their development.

Below: Results from two broom swipes. Above: photo from the web of a field cricket.



According to what Dr. Merchant has written, the weather in 2015 was a perfect storm for a cricket outbreak. The spring was wet until June. Remember when we thought it would never stop raining in May? And then it did. Completely. A dry summer and fall allowed the nymphs to hatch and grow without fungal disease to keep their numbers

in check. The cricket troops were preparing for their mating flights.

In October, the rains came and right after that, so did the crickets. Into the house, barn, porch, everywhere. My guess is that it rained so much that they were looking for somewhere dry to mate. Field crickets are

Continued on next page...

Crickets...continued

not normally inside dwellers.

Field crickets aren't known for doing much damage in the human world. What is seen as damage during an outbreak is mostly from feces or vomitus (yeah). They sometimes feed on soiled clothing or draperies and for some reason they love cardboard boxes, feed sacks and Styrofoam coolers. Perhaps the most unsettling thing in the house is their body parts, mostly rear legs, which you just can't seem to sweep up and appear everywhere. And the bodies in the washer and dryer—ewww.

After you realize that "Houston, we have a cricket

2 weeks" with the disclaimer "although crickets will continue to remain active for many weeks, until cold weather arrives." Hurry up cold spell.

Last weekend, I was going to put some coolers in the attic, but I made a hasty retreat when I opened the access door. Crickets started raining down on my head and getting down the back of my shirt. Hundreds of thousands were on the ceiling as high as they could possibly climb. I'll venture back up there after we have a week or so of freezing weather. Yuck.

I set out to learn about field cricket invasions. Truthfully, there isn't that much documentation on it except that in Texas it happens frequently. I had a handle on that much. But maybe the next time we have a wet

spring, dry summer and wet fall, I'll remember to make a defensive stand and get some spray out early before the outbreak takes over the porch. Maybe.

- Lynn



Town outbreaks happen too.
Photo: Michael Merchant

problem" how do you control the outbreak? About the best you can do is get out the hand sprayer and load it up with insecticide. A product we use is called demon WP (wetable powder) that is safe to spray on the outside and inside of the house and barn. The problem then becomes the dead and dying crickets. They are everywhere. Start sweeping them up and a few survivors always make a last, pathetic attempt at escape kicking their leg(s) and spinning in the circle of death.

Dust pan after dust pan full of black exoskeletons. Is there no end to this horror movie? Dr. Merchant writes "The heaviest cricket mating flights usually last only 1-

Spotlight on Natives



Project Milkweed

- Marilyn Whitworth

At the Texas Master Naturalist Conference this year, I attended an Advanced Training Course about Project Milkweed put on by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The Wildflower Center is trying to provide local growers with regionally appropriate milkweed ecotypes and research results to facilitate commercial production of milkweed species. There are 37 species of milkweed in Texas.

The method they plan to use is to collect seeds of locally adapted ecotypes of all milkweed within the Texas/Oklahoma Monarch migration corridor, grow milkweeds, develop growing protocols and best practices for seedling

propagation and distribution, safeguard the seeds in National and Wildflower Center seed banks, and train citizen scientists to collect seed, grow plants, and increase milkweed populations in their communities. The ultimate goal of Project Milkweed is to promote the health of Monarchs and other pollinators. They distributed hand-

outs on a list of Texas Parks and Wildlife sites with Monarch Projects or Planning Monarch Projects and Milkweed Germination Basic Protocol and how citizen scientists can help.



To learn more about their project and to help, contact them at https://www.wildflower.org/conservation_pollinators/ Their phone number is 512-232-0100.



2015 Central Texas NATURE FEST

nature, look into it



...continued from page 1

invoices in, it appears we made a little money on the event this year.

New exhibitors this year included Inks Lake State Park demonstrating use of GPS units for geocaching, Texas beekeeping, Horned Lizard Conservation Society, Texas Hawking Association (Falconry), Texas Bluebird Society, a large raptor who calmly tolerated a gentle petting from visitors, Monarch Watch, Stormwater Management, Native American and Pioneer children's games from Bell County Museum, archery



and shooting sports, a helicopter that helps with aerial eradication of feral hogs, a visit from Smokey the Bear - and more! Also new was our Wild Things Exchange - a store selling nature items made by our members, gently used nature guidebooks and picture books, loupes for looking at nature closely and other fun things to purchase. Thanks goes to Jacki Bakker for heading up that effort.

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2015 Central Texas NATURE FEST

nature, look into it

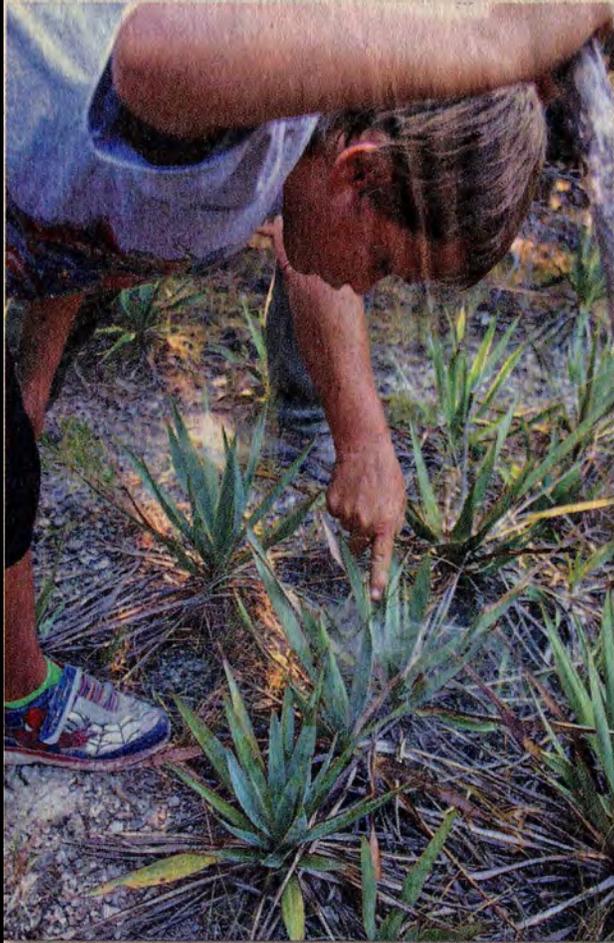


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Also this year was the addition of an entirely new event: A Night Hike and Star Party the evening before Nature Fest. The Night Hike was actually a stroll through the grounds to various tables set up (in the dark!) with activities and displays on Sounds of the Night, Nocturnal Critters of Central Texas, Bugs of the Night, Plants, and Moths. The Night Hike was to be followed by a Star Party hosted by the Central Texas Astronomical Society but unfortunately the stars did not align for this and stargazing was cancelled due to overcast skies. The Night Hike however was a huge success attracting, best we can tell, nearly 400 people. We had small flashlights covered in red film to protect our “night eyes” for the star party. It made for nice dark conditions, but, well, it’s difficult to manage that many people when you can’t see them. We couldn’t even find our own people! All guests were very patient as we divided them up and sent them through the stations with the sound of a cow bell ringing in the night air. All who were asked said they planned to be back the next day for Nature Fest. Although a great event, it occurred to those of us working that holding two completely different large events essentially a few hours apart was a bit much! But the oo’s and ah’s at glow in the dark scorpions and listening to owls screech and seeing moths attracted to a black light made the extra effort worthwhile.

If you didn’t get to participate in Nature Fest you missed a great chance to help us reach a lot of people for nature. Although I don’t think that applies to very many because our list of helpers was long! Thanks to all who worked before, during or afterwards and those who donated money and materials. It took a village, but we served a 5 county region!





BUY THESE PHOTOS AT KDHNEWS.COM

PHOTOS BY MIKE BARTOSZEK | HERALD

OUTDOOR OBSERVATIONS

ABOVE: Yvonne Eele discusses multiple ways to identify plants with Jennifer Fay while hiking along the Dana Peak Park equine hiking trail Aug. 13.

AT LEFT: Riley McKinniss, 7, looks into a plant to try and find a small spider inside of its web, while hiking.

Night Hike Lures Crowds into the Darkness!

These two photos of the Night Hike were posted on our Facebook page by Adolph Lopez. Below, Bend of the River Park at sunrise the day of Nature Fest.

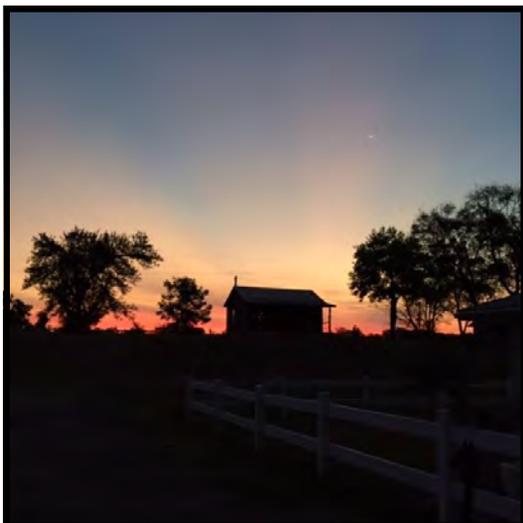


Photo by Adolph Lopez and Zoe Rascoe.



Rockin' Out With Dr. Rock!

- Werner Hahn

Ray Kozusko, aka Dr. Rock leads his geological expedition in Miller Springs on October 17th



Waco Wetlands Fun and Learning

- Richard McCarthy

It is fall again and the school field trips to Waco Wetlands have begun in earnest.

It was a beautiful fall day (October 29) for the Tennyson Middle School's visit to the wetlands.

Students had the opportunity to be involved in the following activities: dip netting off the boardwalk for macro invertebrates; gathering algae and identifying utilizing microscopes; obtaining water samples and testing for; dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity, and temperature.

The students were divided into three groups and rotated through the various activities, getting hands on experience in each.

There were a total of 92 students and 3 teachers for the day.

Any day out of doors is a great day.

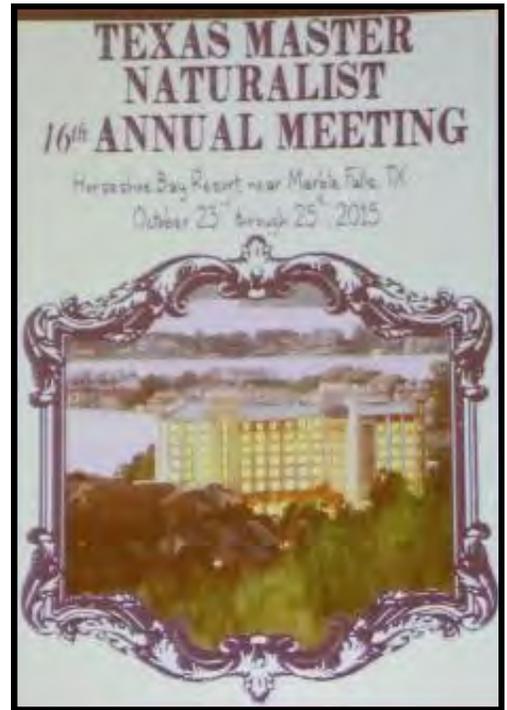


CTMN's Attend MN State Conference

- Zoe Rascoe

Texas Master Naturalist 16th Annual Conference was held October 23-25 at Horseshoe Bay Resort near Marble Falls. Yes, that's right – a resort. Not an encampment an hour away from civilization (ie no cell, internet or Wal-Mart). No bunk beds or cafeteria food. No long walks (albeit in nature) to various workshops and seminars. It is not lost on me that this was also the largest State Conference to date: over 430 attendees plus enough instructors and presenters to cover nearly 100 concurrent sessions. Another nice benefit

was that we were in the path of remnants of Hurricane Peggy but other than noticing it was raining when you had a room with a window, we were well insulated from that news. Unfortunately some of the field trips had to be cancelled and a few speakers could not get through the floods but otherwise the conference moved along just fine.



Some of the sessions offered were A Natural History of Milkweed, Indian Marker Trees (boy am I looking for those now! And Lynn thinks she has one!), Texas Climate's Wild Ride, Bees and Wasps of Texas, Starting a Junior Master Gardener Program, Bird Tales for the Elderly (did any of you go to that?), You Can Help with Pollinator Recovery, Spiders of Central Texas (shall I get you the video Jacki?), Conservation Ease-

ments, Texas National Wildlife Refuges, Nature Photography, Frog Calls Made Easy and a number of chapter administration, volunteer recruitment and oh my, more than you want to know about VMS (although no implementation team members were injured during sessions this year.) The Volunteer Management System Helpdesk Team (including our patient Dale Hughling) provided a table full of laptops on which attendees could practice, ask questions and otherwise get help with this new reality for Master Naturalists.



Above: Yvonne Eele talks about Poison Ivy to a packed room. Below: CTMN State Conference attendees.



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Conference...continued

We also had two of our members who were accepted as presenters this year. Yvonne Eele taught "Poison Ivy: Fact and Fiction" to a packed room. We could have been there all day – seemed everyone had a testimonial about how to treat it once you get it. Nicole Norelli conducted a 4 hour workshop on "Beach-nesting Bird Stewardship Training" followed by a 2 hour session on "Shorebird Identification and Conservation". Congratulations to Yvonne and Nicole for representing our Chapter as instructors!

Check out the stats for what Master Naturalists across the state accomplished in 2014. Mark your calendar for the third week in October 2016. What fun to be amongst a few hundred folks from all over Texas who enjoy the outdoors and care about nature

and teaching the next generation to conserve our natural resources!

Who says Richard McCarthy doesn't have a sense of humor! Below, Joe Dorn has a breakfast of champions!



Pin Ups

- Zoe Rascoe

At the October General meeting, Lou Ann Hight received her recertification pin. Rene Berkhoudt received his certification pin and Nicole Norelli received her certification pin just in time to be a presenter at the State Conference.



CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK!

<https://www.facebook.com/Central-Texas-Chapter-Texas-Master-Naturalists-116648718373317/timeline/>

Lanell and Harvey Price

- Zoe Rascoe

Introducing new CTMN members! Lanell and Harvey Price have transferred their membership to our chapter and we want to make sure you know them when you see them. Their Master Naturalist training was through the Heart of Texas Chapter (from whence our chapter was born) so we know they come from good stock. We were happy to have them join the CTMN contingency at the Texas Master Naturalist state conference in October.

Both Lanell and Harvey enjoy volunteering outside and help with various tasks at Mother Neff State Park, as well as assisting our friend Clark Wernecke, Executive Director for the Gault School of Archaeological Research, and others at several Gault project locations. They have also done work with the pervasive invasive species in our area.

Lanell and Harvey are both native Texans (hailing from Wichita Falls and Dallas respectively) but ended up in High School together in Waco. Lanell was Manager of the Research Division Computer Center for ExxonMobil and Harvey was a clinician, researcher and teacher.

Please welcome Lanell and Harvey Price!



Celebrate!

Our chapter will gather for Food, Fellowship and Fun as 2015 draws to a close. The Rascoe's will host the 6th Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner on Tuesday, December 8th at 6:30pm.

We will continue our successful tradition of 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 you, our members

- 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!

Notify the social chairman in your household and get your Santa hat on!

- Zoe

Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter

6th Annual Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 8th
6:30pm

Potluck Dinner

Home of Zoe Rascoe
1900 N. 13th Street, Temple



Please RSVP by Monday, Dec. 7th to Zoe at 254-913-1013 or trascoc@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.

Llano Earth Art Fest

- Terrie Hahn

I was sorry to have missed the Llano Earth Art Fest this year. Next

year, it's set for March 11-13. Looks like a fun time, especially for those of you who like rocks!!! Werner's always liked to stack rocks, so this should be fun!



On the Horizon

Hello all.

This is the official notification of the slate of officers selected by the Nomination Committee for the two positions up for election in December.

For Vice President: Rene Berkoudt

For Secretary: Sarah Byrd (assisted by Olivia)

Voting will take place at the December meeting at Zoe Rascoe's home on December 8th. Nominations may be taken from the floor at that time as well.

A few things to share....

Chapter Dues: They are a bargain at any price, but for a full year of membership with CTMN it is only \$24. You may mail it in or bring it to the December meeting at Zoe's house.

To mail: make check payable to CTMN and address to:
Don Wyatt

1605 N Main, Rm 102

Belton, TX 76513

Chapter Gift: At the Texas Master Naturalist State Conference, all chapters received a digital microscope for use in our projects and programs. The microscope plugs into a computer by USB and puts the image on the screen. Magnification is up to 200x. If you are interested in using the microscope, please let me know.

Wish List: If you have something that you think the chapter could use and be beneficial to all, please let me know. We currently have in our inventory: a projector for slide shows, two canopies, two 5' folding tables, and the new microscope. On the list right now is a request for two more tables and some matching chairs.

Board of Director Meetings: At the November BOD meeting, it was decided to change the meetings to 3 p.m. on the first Tuesday of every other month. The change will begin in January, 2016.

- Lynn

Join TWA and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension for the next *Wildlife for Lunch* webinar!

Presented by: Thomas Janke, Borderlands Research Institute

Topic: Ecology and History of **Texas' Desert Bighorn Sheep**

This webinar will discuss basic ecology of desert bighorn sheep in Texas along with their decline and restoration success over the last century. Also included will be information available from recent research and restoration efforts.

Where: Your home or office computer

Cost: FREE!

This webinar was November 19th. If you missed it, each webinar is archived and available for viewing following the initial air date at the TWA website:

www.texas-wildlife.org

AT

New Class Mentors Needed

- Yvonne Eele

We are again approaching the exciting time when we are about to start a new training class. We are looking for folks that would be willing to mentor one of the new trainees. Please let me know as soon as you can if you would be willing to be a mentor to help one of the new trainees or reach out to me if you have any questions. We are hoping to have a good class and mentors help keep things working well for the trainees and help them along with information and support.

Please contact me as soon as you can. **V**

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."

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Contributing Writers and Photographers: Zoe Rascoe, Lynn Fleming, Marilyn Whitworth, Richard McCarthy, Adolph Lopez, Michael Merchant, Werner Hahn, 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

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 Tuesday of January, March, May, July, September and November at 3 p.m. in the Board Room at the Agrilife Extension Center at 1605 Main in Belton.