

THE TRACKER

Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter February 2020

Photos: Above-US Fish & Wildlife Service, Left Terry Rascoe



Great Backyard Bird Count February 14-17, 2020

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Calendar at a Glance

Feb 13th— Miller Springs NC
Feb 15/16—Mother Earth Fair
Feb 18th—Chalk Ridge Falls
Feb 22/23—Home&Garden Show
Mar 10th—Chapter Meeting
Mar 17th—Training Class #1
Mar 22nd—World Water Day
Mar 24th—Training Class #2
Mar 31st—Training Class #3

- Kathy Cantu

It is time again for Audubon and The Cornell Lab of Ornithology to host the annual worldwide Great Backyard Bird Count. Wildbirds Unlimited is also a sponsor and points out on their GBBC website that when you feed birds in your backyard, it shows that you value having a daily encounter with nature and that you are willing to take action to foster it.

Birds are excellent indicators of ecosystem health. Your backyard observations become part of an extensive worldwide database that is analyzed by scientists to better understand important trends in bird populations, range expansions, habitat changes and shifts in migration patterns. Last year 210,000 checklists from around the world reported 6850 species.

Both novice and lifelong birdwatchers can participate in this citizen science project. Begin by going the GBBC website:

<http://www.birdcount.org/>

If you are new and don't already have e-bird access, create an account.

Cont.



Great Backyard Bird Count

Your observation area could be your backyard or a park or any spot where birds hang out. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the event, then submit a checklist for each observation period.

If you have difficulty identifying birds, there is some help. You could buy or borrow a guidebook. My favorite for beginners is "*Birds of Texas*" by Stan Tekiela which is arranged by color of bird. An online guide is "*All About Birds*". Apps include Audubon Bird Guide and iBird. The Merlin Bird ID app can identify a bird from a picture or description. Or send photos to someone who knows the local birds.



Chipping Sparrows by Kathy Cantu

If you see a bird that is not on the list for your area, you can report it as a rare bird. Be prepared with a photo or multiple observers if questioned by a reviewer. You can submit photos and audio recordings with your observations. For help on how to estimate a large flock refer to the official website. For Master Naturalists, report this volunteer service in VMS under *Cornell University: Citizen Science Activities*.

Another way to enjoy the GBBC is to participate in the photo contest. It will be good to have a camera or smart phone with you in case you need a better look at a bird for identification purposes after it flies away. Rules for the competition can be found at <https://gbbc.birdcount.org/photo-contest-rules/>.

So, if you feed birds, be sure your feeders and birdbaths are filled and inviting so that when the results come in you can say that one of those birds was yours!

"At times, we can feel like there's little we can do on environmental issues," says Steven Price, president of Birds Canada. "The Great Backyard Bird Count gives all bird enthusiasts a chance to help, as well as a great opportunity to include family and friends of all skill levels in a common conservation effort. Go out, have fun, and take heart that you are helping birds and nature!"



Female Cardinal by Terry Rascoe



Become a TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST

Volunteer Training Course

March 17th – June 2nd

Tuesdays: Classroom & Field Trips



Applications Now Online

For information on the
Central Texas Master
Naturalist Program contact:

Zoe Rascoe 254-913-1013

Lynn Fleming 254-760-4739

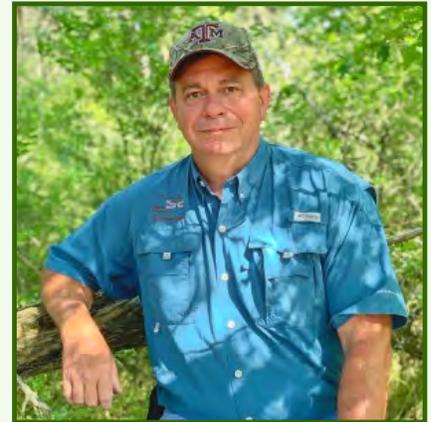
Mary Ann Everett 254-721-0931

txmn.org/centraltexas



President's Pen

- John Atkins



Howdy Folks! I 'd like to kick this off by thanking the Rascoe family for once again hosting the Chapter's Holiday Party. Excellent job as always! The food and fellowship were great, and everyone looked stuffed as ticks as they waddled out the door at the end of the evening.

Winter is here, well kind of. I always enjoyed fall and winter while growing up. Fall meant hunting season and trapping season. Days filled with ducks and pheasants and nights out in the woods. It was always high adventure racing an incoming snowstorm to catch the pheasants as they hunkered down to survive the storm. For those of you who trapped in your youth, you know it wasn't all sunshine and lollipops, in fact it was often more like work. Cold, wet, smelly work with little sleep. Going to school smelling like skunk and sardines, leaky waders, afternoons spent skinning and combing furs, but I sure do miss it. It certainly had its moments though, like catching your first mink or red fox. I remember one night when I was sitting on a ridge watching over my trapline to ensure thieves didn't steal my furs and traps. Trap thieves were a big problem back when fur prices were high, and yes, rifle fire was sometimes exchanged. Anyway, it was a crystal clear, cold night and as my Grandpa used to say, you could hear a mouse pee on a cotton ball. Off to the north, I started

to see a shimmer of light every so often. That immediately piqued my interest, since it could mean a spotlihter working the far ridge. I quickly realized that what I was observing was [the northern lights](#). The lights continued to get stronger and change colors and occasionally stretch closer to me as they danced across the sky. As they eventually faded away, I quietly thanked God for providing me with this celestial show, grabbed my rifle and made my way back to my vehicle. Of course, my



Iowa Northern Lights

folks did not seem quite as impressed, since I was long overdue returning home. Remember this was well before the days of cell phones!

Cont.

President's Pen cont.



I lived in a small town (250 people) and delivered newspapers at 4:30 every morning back then. Winter can be pretty harsh in Iowa and I remember one year when it was particularly bad. We had a couple of blizzards that blew through in a short period of time and then the bottom fell out of the thermometer until the end of March. The blizzards buried everything under feet of snow and the drifts had a crust that could support a man. It was so bad that they had to bring in rotary plows to dig through drifts that were 10ft high. One below-zero morning, as I started walking my paper route, I heard a pack of coyotes west of town start up. As I continued along my route, the howls started to get closer. By the time I got to the north side of town the pack had also made it there. That's when I realized that they were actually hunting me. They continued to track my movement, and every time I would hit a street on the edge of town, they would be there howling and gnashing their teeth, just out of sight in the dark pastures and fields. They never got brazen enough to enter town, but they were desperate enough to follow me for 45 minutes, hoping I would leave the safety of the streetlights and go floundering off in the snowdrifts.



Enough reminiscing about my misspent youth, and back to the present. I finally got some of my honey do list done and was able to get out to the woods for a bit. We have been seeing bald eagles here for the first time this year. We had two of them catching thermals over our house a couple of weeks ago. Of course, the auto focus on my camera didn't want to cooperate, and the eagles were not interested in sticking around for a photo op. I did manage to get one blurry, sasquatch quality photo of an eagle before he headed to the east end of the lake. Certainly not up to Zoe or Daisy's standards, but still identifiable. We were able to get down to Stillhouse Lake this week, but unfortunately, there were not too many ducks to observe. Have seen 1000 American coots and a smattering of redheads, canvasbacks, and scaup. The good news is that there were ospreys to watch. It's always fun to watch them catch a fish.



The 2020 CTMN Training Class is starting to shape up nicely. It looks like a lot of experienced folks, many of which have been coming to our meetings for months, and some of them have already invested some sweat equity into our volunteer opportunities. We are all looking forward to getting them into VMS, so they can start to get credit for the work they do. Getting them into the course is the easy part, keeping them active is harder. That's where all of you come in. Remember to take them under your wing and make them part of our family. I'll see you at the next meeting.

Come
See Us

Home & Garden SHOW

Saturday, February 22 9:30am-6:00pm

Sunday, February 23 11:30am - 6:00pm

Chapter Booth and Kid's Zone Activities

We have over 30 of our members scheduled to work the 2020 Home and Garden Show—our 11th year as a chapter. We will have a Chapter Booth in the Assembly Hall at the Expo Center and CTMN will be BIG in the Kids Zone with our own Screech (aka Lynn Williams) running fun nature games (Bird Yoga anyone?)

As always, we have talented members who donate handmade nature-y items like walking sticks, nature-themed coasters and jewelry and various animal houses to sell in our booth at great prices. Proceeds help fund our work projects.

With our 2020 Training Course starting in mid-March, this is a great opportunity to have someone you think may be interested in becoming a Texas Master Naturalist stop by and visit with our members about what we do and why we enjoy doing it. Please spread the word!





Mother Neff State Park

1680 TX Hwy-236, Moody

- **Bill Abright**

Bill can be reached at b_abright@yahoo.com

The 5th Annual Christmas at the Park was held this year on December 8th. John Atkins, Tina Atkins, Mary Sharp, Jean Solana, Jessica Dieter, Bill Abright and Stephanie Abright all helped out. We had at least 162 people visit our booth. We also had a surprise visit from Santa Claus (However it might have been Jessica's husband John but it was hard to tell.) A camera crew from Channel 25 out of Waco filmed John showing several youngsters how to make animal stamp bookmarks. John's arm was showcased on that night's news.



Above: John Atkins has replicas of animal tracks, skulls, eggs, bird feet, snakes and real candy canes. Our wingspan banner shows relative size from a humming bird to a condor—how do you compare? Tina Atkins, Jessica Dieter, Jean Solana, Mary Sharp, Bill Abright and John Atkins ready to share their love of nature! And who showed up for this Christmas event? Santa (aka John Dieter—thanks!)



Mother Neff State Park *Cont.*

2020 First Day Hike

387 visitors turned out for the four First Day Hikes on New Years Day and all of the hikes were full. People had to register beforehand due to the large numbers in the past causing parking problems. Mother Neff had the second highest attendance of all state parks in Texas and missed being number one again this year by just 3 registered participants. Mary Sharp and Bill and Stephanie Abright helped out with the hikes.



Top: Ranger tells how Tonkawa Indians used the cave near water and food in the 1800's. Zoe Rascoe reads over a info-graphic about the CCC legacy at the park. Bill and Stephanie Abright are dressed for cool weather. iNaturalist suggests this spot of green in Jan is seductive entodon moss.

Ongoing Maintenance Opportunities

Bird blinds – Cleaning blinds, putting out bird feed

Garden Maintenance – Bi-weekly. Trimming dead limbs, pruning, basic gardening for our native garden

Trail maintenance – Walking the trails. Trimming back growth, notifying rangers of downed trees, cleaning signage.

Making new signs for trails – ensure all signage is uniform for all trails

Painting projects – Road signs, Kiosks, Gates and other pieces of equipment as needed.

Debris removal at the river bottom area – picking up small limbs, possible mowing to help get the river bottom ready to open for day use again.

Chinaberry Tree Removal – need a large group when project is setup

Carpentry projects – as needed: bird blind brochure project, Bird blind repair – replacing the glass windows with slats

Check the weekly calendar of events email for the February and March opportunities.



Invasive Species Control

- JOHN BURNS

jaburns@utexas.edu

Well it's time to say goodbye to 2019 and welcome in a new decade. We had a great year in 2019 ramping up our efforts to remove invasive plants in the nature center. We have made some very apparent impacts and some that are not so obvious. It does not really matter if it's visible or not, we are impacting nature and that is what is important. Thanks to everyone who has helped through the year and for your commitment to improving nature and our CTMN group.

Our last workday of the year in December was a very productive day. We had beautiful weather starting the day with temperatures in the upper 30's. It was a nice change from the blistering heat and high humidity we suffered with through the summer months and into the fall. We had five volunteers and worked mainly in the Green Pond trail area. We had two chainsaws working for about three hours and Chris Nixon one, of our new recruits, working hard with the puller bear. It sure was nice to have some younger hands working with us old guys! Speaking of the older guys, Ben Clement, John Atkins, and I would be in this category. This was the most productive day we have had since we began our workdays last year. I have to say I was excited to get so much work done in one day. Great progress to finish out 2019!



OK if you are keeping count, we did have another volunteer. I have to admit I made a mistake and jumped the gun getting to work. We took off for the Green Pond trail before 9 o'clock. When we returned from the Green Pond area I found a surprise hanging on my car. It was a bag of trash and a note from Marilyn Whitworth. She had come but missed us, so picked up trash on the flat trails. Sorry Marilyn, I'll do better in the future!

Miller Springs Nature Center *cont.*

On December 31, 2019, the City of Belton Parks and Recreation department had a Last Day Hike and volunteer day. It's likely this will be a new tradition opportunity for families on the last day of each year! There were more than 30 people present and the group hiked the trails, picked up trash, and did some trail work by removing low hanging limbs on the trails. What a great way to close out 2019 by being out in nature and helping to improve our wonderful Miller Springs Nature Center resource. By the way, I was told there was not much trash to pick up. I attribute this to our own Marilyn Whitworth leading in the efforts each month to remove litter. A big thank you to Marilyn and all those who helped through the year with litter removal, your efforts are appreciated and have been noticed!

The weather was not nearly as nice for the first workday of 2020. We had some light rain so for safety reasons we decided it would be better to stay in the flat areas



east of the parking lot. John Atkins, Bert Peeples, and I worked on removing invasive plants while Marilyn Whitworth picked up trash. It's sad, but Marilyn always gets a bag of trash. Even with the change of plans we were able to make a good impact on the area. We have worked this area several times and we now have most of the invasive plants removed. The area has a few larger trees left which will require chainsaws to remove, but most of the smaller plants have been removed. Of course, we have to keep in mind they will return so we will need to stay vigilant and return every few months.



The City of Belton is making plans to have the next trail maintenance day in March. The date has not been set at this time. Stay tuned I'll pass along the date when it is determined.

Above: Community volunteers for Last Day Hike. Left: Heavenly bamboo is one of several invasive species that our Chapter is helping remove at the Miller Springs.

Photos by Zoe Rascoe

Army Corps of Engineers Parks

CHALK RIDGE FALLS



Paula Finley and John Burns were on rock toting duty and Tina Akins and John Atkins wielded the sharp tools on a chilly January morning at Chalk Ridge Falls Park.

CEDAR GAP



John Atkins, Tina Atkins and Ben Clement braved the sunny but frigid December day to clear chinaberry, the day's target species, from Cedar Gap Park. John speculated that the 25 degree temp may have dissuaded others from coming. Well, probably!

DINOSAUR VALLEY STATE PARK



- **Nicole Norelli**

This year, I promised myself I was finally going to make proper use of the Texas State Parks pass I keep spending money on. The goal this year is to go camping at least every other month, more if possible. The first trip of the year was Dinosaur Valley State Park, January 31st - Feb 2nd.

You'd think it would be a terrible time of the year to go camping, but the weather was a beautiful 60s during the day and 30s at night, perfect for a heavy duty sleeping bag, and I decided to run away for the weekend to where the dinosaurs roamed. I generally do the bulk of my camping solo, but this time, I invited some friends to join me for a portion of the trip; they had never been camping before and it was sure to be an adventure!

I arrived on Friday and set up our camp in a lovely spot in the bend of Paluxy River. I spent the afternoon and night bundled up in my hammock, enjoying a book and watching the stars. As much as possible, I choose campsites near water (always set up your camp at least 100 yards from water!). I love to sit in my warm sleeping bag late at night or set up my hammock in a tree next to the river during the day and read a book with only the sound of the water for company.



The Paluxy River has crystal clear water and a beautiful limestone bed, making it feel like a giant bathtub! The Paluxy River Valley is home to endangered Golden-Cheeked Warblers and Black-Capped Vireos, but, once upon a time, this location was home to dinosaurs!

DINOSAUR VALLEY STATE PARK *cont.*

During the Cretaceous period, this region looked very different. The valley was partially filled with a shallow sea, full of coral reefs and edged in sandy beaches. Calcium carbonate from ancient shellfish created the limestone bed of the river and the special “limey” mud that preserved dinosaur tracks for us to see so clearly today. The dinosaur tracks were discovered in 1909, first by George Adams, but made famous by Roland T. Bird and several other researchers that followed. There was some debate about what kind of dinosaurs had made these tracks for a time, but bones discovered elsewhere in the valley in the 1990s provided additional evidence that the tracks were made by several kinds of dinosaurs, sauropods and theropods.

The theropod prints likely belong to *Acrocanthosaurus*, a carnivorous dinosaur similar to a *T. rex* who ran on two legs and



had distinctive 3-toed tracks. The sauropod tracks most likely belong to *Sauroposeidon proteles* and *Paluxysaurus jonesi*, the latter of which is a relatively newly described species of dinosaur unique to the region. Sauropods stood at 20ft high and nearly 100ft long and you can practically feel their sheer size in the deep set, rounded tracks preserved in the riverbed.

DINOSAUR VALLEY STATE PARK *cont.*

My friends joined me on Saturday morning and we went exploring further down the river bed, looking for tracks and braving icy spring water. I went swimming in the Blue Hole of course, but I'm pretty sure passersby were asking my friends if I wasn't quite human because I heard Jessy clearly tell someone I was a magical water creature...which might be true. We checked later to find that the water was hovering near 40 degrees, and even colder 20ft down where I was diving, looking for fossils and all the neat shiny things humans lose when they go swimming.

We warmed up around a lovely campfire and I taught the basics of simple campfire food, sharing tall tales and wisdom from my favorite outdoor author of all time, Patrick McManus. Every time I was cold or found a rock under my sleeping pad or the campfire smoke blew in my eyes, it reminded me of his words. "The more you talked about the miseries of life in the woods, the more you wanted to get back out there and start suffering again. Camping was a fine and pleasant misery."

I can't wait to get back out there and suffer again! Until next time!

Editor's Note: If you don't know, Nicole really IS a magical water creature. She has another life as a mermaid named Nereida. If you ever need a mermaid, she's the real deal!



Photos by Nicole Norelli and her first time camping friends.

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/dinosaur-valley>

My Sub-Urban Backyard

- **Andreas Wooten**

An Observatory for Fish (they love people-watching!)

I have a small pond in my backyard where I keep some Goldfish, Fantails and Koi. Simple little thing, easy to maintain. But like any project, I just had to do something different. My wife saw a video on YouTube of an “inverted aquarium”. This is super simple to do. Items you will need:

1. A glass container – I used a 5-gallon fish tank. With a plastic lip on the open side.
2. Some blocks – I used 4 full-sized cinder blocks. Set up on the tall side.
3. A vacuum – I used my ShopVac.

Place the blocks in your pond in the approximate location of the corners or edges of your container, make sure the edge is below the water line. Place the container into the pond so that it partially fills. Then turn it so that the opening is down under water. At this point your container should be partially full. Guide the container over the blocks and gently place it on top so it is stable. Once you have it where you want it, get your vacuum and put the hose inside the tank as far as you can and up to a corner that has air. Turn on the vacuum, be fast with the off button as this will only take a second or two (on my 5-gallon tank, I turned on my ShopVac and immediately turned it off and still got a bunch of water in the hose). The longer the hose the better, you are less likely to get water in you vacuum.

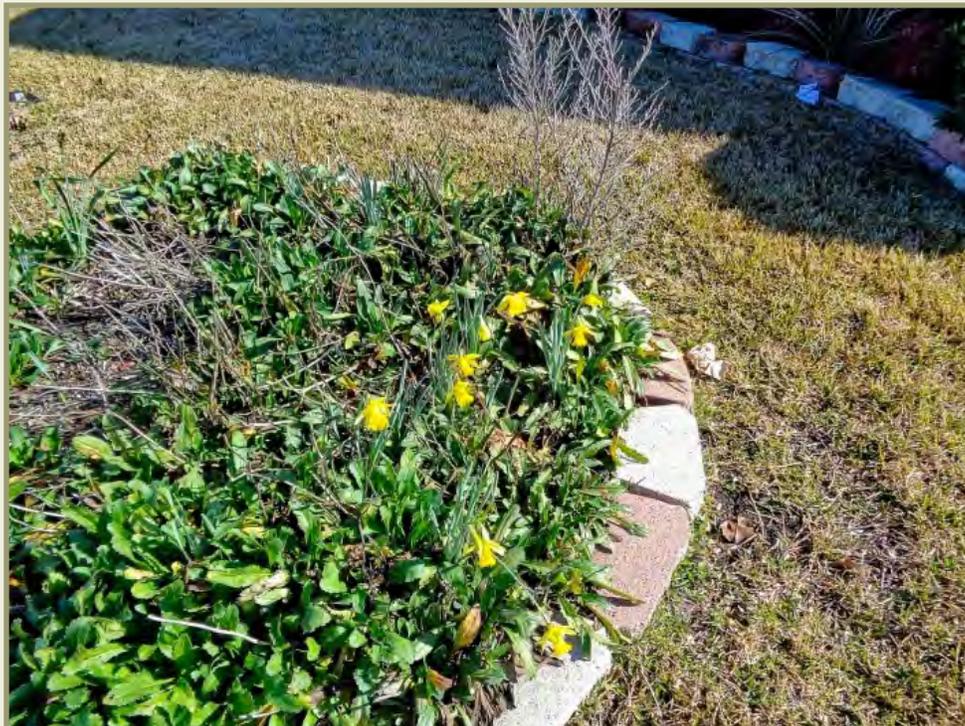
Once the air is out, **YOUR DONE!!!** Sit back and your fish will find the “observatory”. I don’t know if it is a temperature difference, lack of any current or the light, but my Goldfish and Fantails love it. The Koi, not so much.



WHAT THE BLOOMIN...?

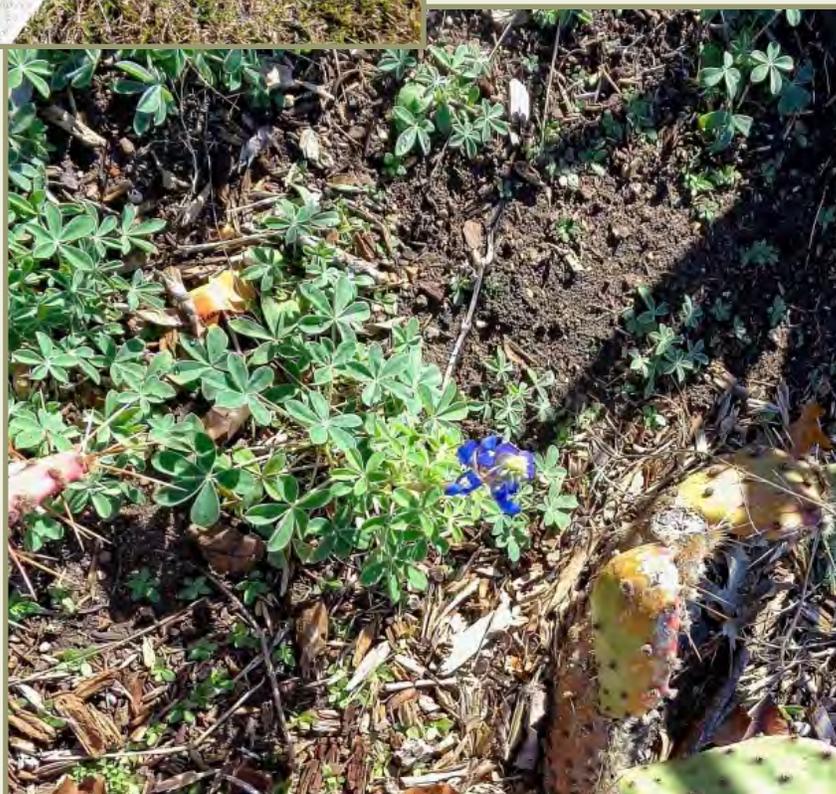
- Marilyn Whitworth

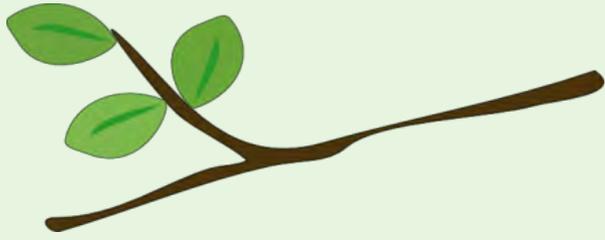
I'm sharing a couple of pictures of Spring Flowers that are blooming in my front yard right now and have been for a week.



I think they are blooming because of the crazy Texas weather we've been experiencing lately. The first picture is of Daffodils. They are blooming about a month earlier than normal.

The second picture is of a Bluebonnet. It is blooming about *two months* earlier than usual. Since the Bluebonnets usually don't bloom their best until the first part of April I thought I would share my picture with everyone. I hope you enjoy both pictures.





Out on a Limb

- Mary Ann Everett

Tree Description: Medium-sized tree or shrub with a dense crown. Takes a shrubby appearance on dry hillsides, but can reach 50' along streams and river valleys. Will freeze back in northern Texas and won't bloom.

Blooms: Small, white and clustered at the ends of branches, fragrant, blooms early spring.

Fruit: Spherical, 1/4 to 1/2 inches in diameter, orange or yellow 2-seeded fruit produced in clusters, fleshy and edible.

Location: Native in our country only in Texas, but range extends into northern and eastern Mexico. Grows well in alkaline soils.

Leaves: Semi-evergreen, olive to dark green, oval to oblong, pointed at the tip. Margins often toothed from middle to tip. Has tiny dot patterns on the surface of the leaf to prevent water loss. Very rough on the upper surface and often called the sandpaper tree. Replaces its leaves in early spring.

Bark: Usually gray to reddish brown, becoming furrowed with age. The wood is tough and was historically used for spokes, wheels, yokes and tool handles.

Heat & Drought Tolerance: It is drought and disease tolerant, requires little water once established.

Interesting Facts: This tree was given the name *Vogelbeerenbaum* by early German settlers near New Braunfels. The word means "Birdberry Tree" because birds love the sweet fruit. It also serves as a larval and host plant for [Coptocycla Texana](#), a type of tortoise beetle. The tree is a member of the Borage family.

[Click here for name of tree](#)



Use leaves as sandpaper!

MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Don Wyatt (2011) receives his 1000 hour milestone award!



Mollie Huber (2012) receives her 1000 hour milestone award!



Joan Stanley (2005) recertifies for 2019



Kathy Cantu (2011) recertifies for 2019



John Ziegeler (2019) recertifies for 2019



Juan Anaya (2018) recertifies for 2019

MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Top Left: Sue Critz (2018) completes her certification. Mary Sharp (2016) recertifies for 2019 and receives the Golden Cheeked Warbler pin. Lynn Fleming (2004) reaches the 2000 hour volunteer milestone! Way to go, Lynn! Paula Finley (2019) wins more auction items than anyone ever has. But look at the pile of tickets she bought!

CHAPTER MEETINGS

At our January Chapter Meeting, 2019 CTMN graduate Jenna Chappell presented “Good Bugs... Bad Bugs?” Jenna has an undergraduate degree in Entomology and is currently in graduate school at UMHB on the same topic. She pointed out that bugs we consider “good” can have some pretty bad habits, and visa versa. She also talked about the categories of Medical Entomology (think flies, midges, ticks, mosquitos and more flies) and Agricultural Entomology (lots of worms and beetles). Although Texans like to go big on things, we learned the Lonestar tick transmits 120 different viruses. On the other hand, possums eat 5000 ticks a year. We have a great resource in Jenna! Below, a shout out to Mary Odom who continues to provide members and guests with yummy, healthy snacks with a nod to sustainability with bamboo utensils. Notice the “bugs” in the centerpiece? Those are Jenna’s artwork from a biological illustration class. And

there’s Burr on the table, too - our mascot who travels to our meetings.

Photos and story by Zoe Rascoe



CHAPTER MEETINGS

Our December “meeting” is more appropriately called a feast and a party—significant others included (no worries, no trail maintenance that night!) We share a pot luck that comes with jambalaya, tamales, duck meat poppers, sweet potatoes, homemade mac ’n cheese, fresh salads and luscious desserts. We laugh and visit and acknowledge milestone awards like each month, but we also hold a raffle fundraiser. Members donate all things nature-y and/or handmade including plants, bird feeders and seed, jewelry. This year a Yeti cooler appeared in the offering! With our member’s generous donations of items and generosity during the auction we raised over \$400 to go towards projects. Yay for us! We also elected Jean Solano as Vice President and Don Wyatt graciously agreed to another 2 year run as Treasurer. Jessica Dieter took over the Secretary position from Melissa Jue as she prepares to move out of state.



UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETINGS

Building Houses for Bees, Birds and Bats

Tuesday, March 11th 6:00-8:00pm
Belton Church of Christ (3003 N. Main)

Open to the Public



Don't Forget About Native Bees!

Tuesday, April 14th 6:00-8:00pm
Belton Church of Christ (3003 N. Main)

Open to the Public

Less well known than European Honeybees, Texas' native bees are nevertheless vital components of a healthy environment, and can provide a new dimension of enjoyment in your home garden. This program will cover basic information on the current challenges all bee species are facing, why they are important to all of us, facts about gentle solitary native bees and their lifestyles, and photo examples of the many beautiful forms and colors of native bees. Presenter Carol Clark is a Texas Master Naturalist, a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas, and a Conservation Specialist with Monarch Watch.

BABY SHOWER



Melissa Jue, class of 2018 with an MS in environmental science, will be having a baby boy soon! Her husband Nicholas is taking the family to CA for a 1 year medical fellowship in plastic surgery. Clive, who is 3 and a regular at trail workdays, will be the baby's big brother. Melissa has been our Chapter Secretary and faithfully sent out our busy schedule every Sunday evening. The baby is due in March and then off to California in June. She was showered with gift cards (for easy packing!) good eats and fun games at the Atkins home. Thank you for your service to our chapter and best

BABY SHOWER



Good to know...

Deep Time Fossil Opportunity in Midlothian

Ash Grove Cement Company owns a quarry and mines limestone and shale for their on-site cement plant near Midlothian. The limestone is from the Austin Chalk Formation which is the primary ingredient of the cement they make. Ash Grove gives geologists and amateur paleontologists from all over the world access to the quarry to study the exposed the Eagle Ford-Austin formation.

Bruce Polikoff attended a field trip associated with the TMN State Conference last fall and has arranged an opportunity for a limited number of Master Naturalists to get a tour of the quarry. Read more about the field trip in his article in our December 2019 newsletter.

The Austin Chalk-Eagle Ford Shale contains marine vertebrate (Cretodus, Ptychodus, Squalicorax), shark teeth, and occasional mosasaur, turtle and fish material. There will be a short lecture on safety and geologic history of Central and North Central Texas. There are also display cases which contain specimens found in the quarry. There are three spots in the quarry to sample, representing three geologic times. At each spot we learn about the different species to be found and observe and learn about unique geologic features.

The tour will be in March—the date will be announced when available.



MOON HIKE



Friday, February 7th, 7:00pm

Mother Neff State Park

Arrive in advance to check in. \$2 Park fee is only charge.

Learn about stars and the moon and listen as animals awake for their night out.

More good to know...

A Field Guide to Roadside Wildflowers *At Full Speed*



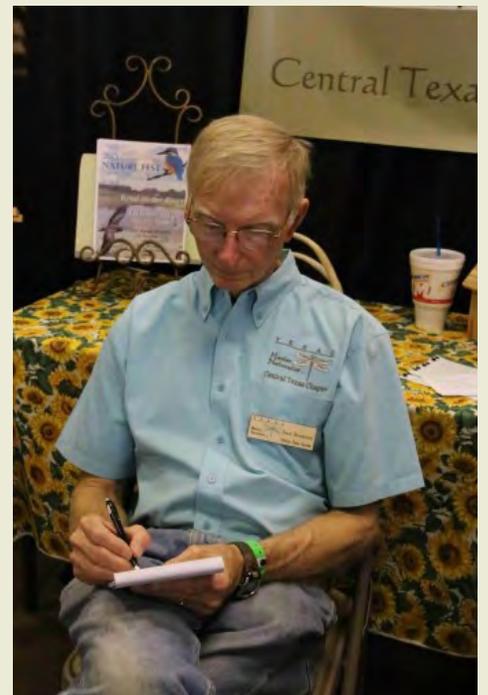
Chris Helzer

The Prairie Ecologist
prairieecologist.com

People travel from across the country to drive through parts Texas in the spring and summer for our wildflower show. It's pretty amazing even in not-so-good years. And some years - WOW! Thanks to Chris Helzer for acknowledging what we all do much of the time. Drive-bys! He offers a FREE, 28 page, downloadable e-book. Snatch yourself a copy and put it in the car glove-box or keep it on your phone or iPad. You're going to want to have it come April. And a shout-out to our Plant ID instructor, Ricky Linex who *can* ID at high speed. Too bad he doesn't fit in a glove-box.

Looking to add a monogrammed CTMN shirt to your collection of outdoor wear? "1st Place Awards and Gifts" in Belton now has our logo on file. You can take any shirt or most any other item there to be monogrammed for a fee. If you've noticed a lot of aqua shirts showing up at our events, it is a Port Authority brand shirt (or something similar) in Maui Blue color. You can order this shirt from Unique Creations and other suppliers and take it to 1st Place for a monogram. There is no requirement to have a monogrammed shirt, though. 1st Place Awards and Gifts, 2304 N. Main St, Belton. Phone: 254-939-2442.

Dale Hughling is wearing the Maui Blue shirt at a previous Home Show while he writes talking points for Zoe's Facebook Live interview by a local radio station.





Lake Travis—Austin

Recurring Activities

1st Mondays: CTMN Board Meeting, AgriLife Extension in Belton 11:30am; open to members

1st Mondays: First Monday Garden Maintenance at Salado Museum 8:00am

2nd Thursdays: Miller Spring Nature Center Work Day 9:00am; John Burns- jburns@utexas.edu

4th Thursdays: Bell County Museum Landscape Maintenance 8:00am; lynn.fleming99@gmail.com

4th Fridays: Pond Maintenance Project at US Army Corps of Engineers, Belton Dam 9:30am;
Andreas Wooten—awwootten101@gmail.com

February 2020

Tues 2/12 (AT) Texas Waters Seminar on Texas Instream Flow Study; 6:30-7:30pm [CLICK HERE to register](#)

Sat 2/15—Sun 2/16 (VS) **Mother Earth News Fair Booth**, Bell Co. Expo 9:00am; Gail Hughling gailhuhling@aol.com

Sat 2/22-2/23(VS) **TABA Home & Garden Show Booth**, Bell Co Expo; Zoe Rascoe trascoe@hot.rr.com

Sat 2/29 (AT)- Native Plant Society of Texas Spring Symposium, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

March 2020

Tues 3/10 (AT) **CTMN Chapter Mtg**, Belton Church of Christ 6-8pm “*Building Houses for Bees, Birds and Bats*” Open to the Public

Tues 3/17 (VS) **CTMN Training Course Kickoff**, Belton Harris Comm Center, 6-8pm All members encouraged to attend to meet the 2020 trainees

Wed 3/18 (AT) Texas Waters Webinar on CoCoRaHS 6:30-7:30pm [CLICK HERE to register](#)

Sun 3/22 (VS) World Water Day at Mother Neff State Park 1:30-3:30pm John Atkins at jfahhx@gmail.com

Tues 3/24 (VS) **CTMN Training Course** Harris Community Center 8:30am-3:00pm

Tues 3/31 (VS) **CTMN Training Course**, Ft Hood 8:00am-3:00pm, preauthorization required to attend

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: Kathy Cantu, John Atkins, Nicole Norelli, John Burns, Bill Abright, Andreas Wooten, Mary Ann Everett, Bruce Polikoff, Marilyn Whitworth, Zoe Rascoe.

Contributed Images: John Atkins, Tina Atkins, John Kathy Cantu, Andreas Wooten, Terry Rascoe, Zoe Rascoe. Please note I receive photos of sweaty people in big hats—sincere apologies for those missed or misidentified!

Have you noticed the recurring feature articles on member visits to National Parks and Texas State Parks, “Fish Tales” (of any kind!), backyard nature, travel to places unlike Texas and more. If you have a story to share, just send me your idea. Volunteer Service hours apply!

Zoe Rascoe trascoe@hot.rr.com



**You're going to do WHAT
with my owl pellet?**

The Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter

Chapter meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Belton Church of Christ at 3003 N. Main. Location exceptions are in December (Holiday party!) and June (trainee graduation!) Meetings include a nature-related program and the public is welcome to attend. Find topic information on our website and Facebook page.

The Board of Directors meets the 1st Monday of each month from 11:30am-12:30pm in the Board Room at the AgriLife Extension Center at 1605 North Main in Belton. All members are welcome at attend.