

# THE TRACKER

Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter October 2020

## Texas Master Naturalist 2020 *VIRTUAL* Annual Meeting October 14-17, 2020

The 21st Annual State TMN Conference is happening! **Deadline is October 2<sup>nd</sup> at midnight**—we hope you haven't missed it! The conference will be all things nature – from how to guide hikes, spot native plants and attract owls, to impacting local policy. And anyone interested in Texas' natural resources and conservation efforts across the state can register!

This year is going to be pretty different from the first twenty. No surprise there—many chapters, including ours, have embraced the “virtual” everything since mid-March. The handful of state TMN staff have worked very hard to convert an in-person, meals-and-lodging conference for 500 people from around the state with 150 concurrent sessions and 30 field trips into something quite different with a few months notice during a global pandemic. Good news is: great learning opportunities from the comfort of your recliner, porch rocking chair or a computer at the library. Four days for \$55. For Master Naturalists, if you are behind, you can get all of your annual Advanced Training hours with this conference. Plenty of interesting topics and expert speakers. **Click on any nature item below for a link to conference info.**

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Photo: Autumn in McKittrick Canyon, Guadalupe National Park by Zoe Rascoe

# President's Pen

## - John Atkins

Howdy Folks!

Since Tropical Storm Beta is blessing us with some rain today, I figured it would be a good time to write this article. The rain is coming at the right time to ensure we have a good crop of wildflowers in the spring. It also looks like we might have an actual autumn this year. That is good news for some of our members who started putting up their fall decorations in mid-August! I am sure there will still be some hot days to come, but at least we are not going from upper 90's straight to a frost.



Both dove and teal season have opened, so I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone to be safe while enjoying the great outdoors. Do not forget that white-tailed deer archery season begins on 3 OCT, so remember to look up for tree stands and put on that blaze orange when in public hunting areas.

This leads me to the most important lesson of the day: always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return. Twenty years ago, I was stationed in west-central New York in an area known as the Finger Lakes.



*Howland Island, NY*

One beautiful autumn afternoon, I decided to go duck hunting. I always told my wife the general area I would be hunting and that I would be back after sunset. She was adamant that I take a cell phone to call her in case I needed help. Yeah sure. I threw it in the truck but had no intention of taking it hunting with me. Back then cell phone coverage was sketchy and the last thing I wanted was to get a call as a flock of ducks was making a pass.

I was hunting at a place called Howland Island at the northern end of the Great Montezuma Swamp. It was fairly remote, in fact, it had been used as a POW camp during WWII. It encompassed 3600 acres and was roughly 9 miles in circumference and had two entrances to the island.

There were quite a few hunters on the island that afternoon, and as expected, they crowded the areas nearest the two entrance points. That meant I had to hike several miles to a more remote section to get in some shooting before sunset. I made it to a promising area with about a 1½ hours till sunset. I decided to walk out on this point to put out some decoys that I was carrying in a duffel bag on my back. I got to the point and started to step on a series of hummocks to get out to deeper water. As I stepped on the last hummock, *cont.*

# President's Pen cont.



it broke apart and I went in the water. I had chest waders and the water was not deep, so it should not have been an issue - wrong. As soon as my leg hit the bottom, it kept going. The water was only about 24 inches deep, but I was already up to my crotch in mud and sinking fast. The more I struggled the faster I sunk. Within a minute I was over my waist in mud and the ice cold water was starting to pour into my chest waders. I immediately quit struggling, dropped my shotgun in the swamp, and threw the decoy bag in front of me as a float. Now confident that I was not going to disappear in the quicksand like a Tarzan movie, I seriously began to have second thoughts about leaving that cell phone in the truck (yes, Tina, you were right).

With the threat of drowning in the muck averted, my thoughts now turned to hypothermia. It was a clear 40-degree day and the temperature was dropping fast as sunset approached. Additionally, the sounds of gunfire were quickly fading as the other hunters left the island. I knew that there was no one that I could signal for help.

With the decoy bag supporting my upper body, I tried a new strategy, I started to "swim" my legs. This began to work. It was a slow, exhausting process, that took me 45

minutes to break free from the muck, and I had to ignore the cold water that flowed down the front of my waders, but it beat the other option. I finally retrieved my shotgun and wallowed back to solid ground and walked out of the island well after dark.

Back at the truck, I called my wife who was a combination of angry and relieved, and I had to eat a healthy portion of crow. Crow never tasted so good.

Two years ago, this incident came back to the forefront of my thoughts after a rancher from Cleburne became stuck in the mud and drowned trying to free a calf from a stock tank. It was a tragic event that reminded me how close I had been to ending up the same way. To reiterate, always tell someone where you are going and when you are expected to return.

I would like to congratulate the class of 2020, not only for graduating, but also for having one of the highest percentages of completion. You showed great perseverance and dedication during a trying year. It will get easier after this! I would also like to thank the dozen or so members who have signed up for the Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting this year. This is the cheapest chance you will get to attend, and they have been working hard to give you quality seminars.

Stay safe and hopefully, we will get to meet in person soon.





# Mother Neff State Park

1680 TX Hwy-236, Moody

Bill Abright (2016), MNSP liaison, can be reached at [b\\_abright@yahoo.com](mailto:b_abright@yahoo.com)

*Editor's note: Events continue to be on hold and but it's a great time of year for hiking and camping out in nature though! This is the third in a series of interviews with MNSP staff. We enjoy the privilege of our partnership and want you to know more about those who work there.*

Meet James McDowell, Lead Ranger at MNSP. James grew up in Pasadena, southeast of Houston. Since his first job at a Boy Scout Camp at the age of 16, he has loved being out in nature. But living in a community with heavy industry, James worked in industrial construction for 15 years along the Houston Ship Channel, although he knew at the time he wanted to get back in nature.

In 2009 James took a big step and returned to school as a full-time student at Stephen F. Austin University. While there, he formed a Sustainability Group that worked on policy development with SFA, which had started a Sustainable Community Development degree program. During his time in the Pineywoods of East Texas, James had the opportunity to attend a Volunteer Day at Mission Tejas State Park. He was offered a job as a Maintenance Assistant at the State Park and he jumped at the chance, although he continued at SFA as a full-time student. That experience cemented his desire to build a career with TPWD. James left school for a while to work again in Houston, but he had also scored a summer internship at Mother Neff State Park, which opened the door to return here as a Maintenance Supervisor in 2018. And he is now Lead Ranger at our nearby State Park.



James McDowell

Photo by Meriel Williams

# Mother Neff State Park *Cont.*

James is responsible for managing the facilities and grounds at MNSP. For those who have volunteered there, you know the small staff all share in the work and do what it takes to care for the land and give visitors an enjoyable experience. Some of James' duties include maintenance of buildings and fleet vehicles, prairie restoration project implementation, preventive maintenance programs, recordkeeping, safety for staff and guests, trail maintenance, managing various projects, invasive plant removal and coordinating volunteer efforts related to his areas of responsibility.

James is in his element out in nature and he gets to do that every day at work. Other interests include camping, bike riding, nature photography and reading – hmm, all of that can be done out in nature, too! James and his wife Laura have a 10-year-old son JR, who is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. They also enjoy having family living in this area.

***Event scheduling at State Parks is still on hold for now, but they are open and happy to have visitors come to hike or camp. Reservations are required (online or by calling the office) so they can make sure park capacity isn't exceeded. On nice weather days, they have had to turn folks away. Groups of up to 10 people are allowed and face coverings are required inside park buildings.***

**Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities:** Volunteers are welcome to come on your own to work—contact Melissa or James as noted in advance so they can have tools ready. CTMN member Jean Solana is a regular at MNSP and works with James often: *“I have worked with James for almost 2 years as he coordinates volunteers for Mother Neff State Park. He does a great job of matching volunteers with tasks they will enjoy and be able to perform well. Last year he taught me how to harvest side-oats grama (the state grass of Texas). This year I have learned how to take down, download and remount wildlife cameras. James gives you the tools and knowledge you need to get the job done.”*

**Contact Melissa Chadwick, Superintendent at [melissa.chadwick@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:melissa.chadwick@tpwd.texas.gov)**

- Headquarters native garden maintenance
- Thistle and/or grass identification help is needed
- Facebook and social media content
- Facebook Live interpretive programs

**Contact James McDowell, Lead Ranger at [james.mcdowell@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:james.mcdowell@tpwd.texas.gov)**

- Painting signs, kiosks, barriers, fences and benches
- Trail maintenance
- Johnson grass and other invasive species control
- Bird Blind maintenance





### **- John Burns, 2018**

I doubt this will surprise anyone, but it was hot for our August workday. It was so hot when we all arrived and talked about working, most of us (I think mainly me) were not too excited about doing any hard work. So, we took a vote and decided to walk the trails and pick up litter. It was a good opportunity to check out some areas we have not visited in a while and for some to see areas they have never seen before. I, too, was rewarded by seeing some areas I had never seen, and I learned some CTMN history about the nature center. I believe everyone enjoyed our day of leisurely walking, talking and picking up litter. It was an excellent time to get to know each other a little better. Oh yes, and we did pick up several bags of trash so we still made an impact. We had 6 volunteers: Marilyn Whitworth, John Atkins, Tina Atkins, Ben Clement, John Burns, and Bill Novakoski (aka Santa Trash). All Bill was missing was the red suit!

While on our trail walk, we noticed Temple parks has installed some new trail signs. It was nice to see some upgrades from the colored tape trail markers. That was the positive side, but on the negative side we noticed many of the QR code signs which the Belton Parks had installed about a month ago had been destroyed. It's sad that people have to be so destructive.



*Bill Novakoski, John Burns, John Atkins, Ben Clement, Marilyn Whitworth, Tina Atkins*

# Miller Springs Nature Center *cont.*

September rolled in with a blast of much needed rain. I hated to cancel the September workday since the temperature had fallen along with the rain and it would have been much more pleasant to work. I finally made the decision based on the fact that I had received 7.37 inches in the week leading up to the workday with 2 inches of that rain coming on Tuesday and Wednesday prior to the Thursday workday. It did not rain the morning of the scheduled workday; however, the rain predictions were very high for that day and it did rain in the afternoon. Hopefully we will be able to take advantage of cooler weather in October.

I hope to see everyone soon. Stay safe and God Bless!

## ***Next scheduled workdays:***

*Thursday, October 8th at 8:00am*

*Thursday, November 12th at 9:00am*



*Santa Trash Bill!!*



# Chalk Ridge Falls Park

## - John Atkins, 2016

The Chapter has been busy at Chalk Ridge Falls over the past two months. We have contributed 42 manhours of volunteer service during this period.

In August, the team consisted of myself, Tina Atkins, Ben Clement, Andrea Liles, Stephanie Preciado, Marilyn Whitworth, Kelly Ann Blanchard, and Sharon and Stephen Schmitz. I used this workday to orient new members to the Nature Area while cleaning trash from the trails and riparian areas. Marilyn was a real trooper and made the complete hike up to the caves and springs area. Everyone took turns helping her negotiate the obstacles. Her perseverance was rewarded by getting to see the karst features for the first time. We were also lucky enough to view a pair of summer tanagers that were living in the canyon. Their diet consists largely of bees and hornets, and since there is a giant hive located there, it would help explain their presence. Marilyn was not the only one who enjoyed the day, I swear that Kelly Ann and Stephanie had smiles that never left their faces! It was good to see something other than exhaustion on the crews' faces at the end of the day.



*Andrea Liles, Stephanie Preciado, Tina Atkins, John Atkins, Stephen Schmitz, Sharon Schmitz, Marilyn Whitworth (front row) Kelly Ann Blanchard, Ben Clement*



*Marilyn gets an escort!*



*Kelly Ann Blanchard gets in the weeds*

# Chalk Ridge Falls Park *cont.*

In September, the team consisted of myself, Tina Atkins, Ben Clement, Jaime Harmon, Marilyn Whitworth, and Kelly Ann Blanchard. We focused on collecting trash and boy did we collect a lot. The litter would be cut in half if the Corps enforced their no alcohol policy. It put me in a bad mood, and I was left wondering who raised these people. I guess trash begets trash. Jaime and Kelly Ann were able to take a break from trash collecting to tighten up some of the bolts on the suspension bridge. Marilyn gave us all a scare by going down a steep creek bank and almost getting stuck. We thought we were going to have to get the come-along to winch her back up the hill, but she made it up and out under her own power! While cleaning along the creek, we came across what might have been the world's angriest crawdad. He quickly became quite the celebrity with everyone taking a few moments to pose with him before releasing him into the creek.

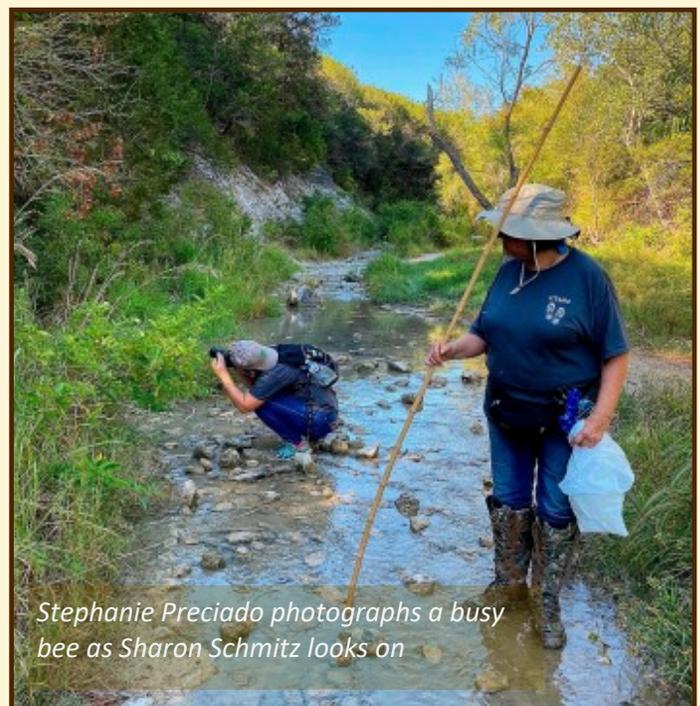


*Jaime Harmon and Kelly Ann Blanchard tightening bolts*

In the upcoming months, I hope to see more of you coming out to volunteer. We will stay out of the Wildlife Management Areas for the next couple of months but hope to get back to invasive removal as the weather cools down and the trees start to lose their leaves. See you out there.



*Tina Atkins and Mr. Crawdad*



*Stephanie Preciado photographs a busy bee as Sharon Schmitz looks on*

# Chalk Ridge Falls Park

## A First-Timer's Perspective

**- Andrea Liles, 2020**

For 5+ years, my husband and I would drive across the Stillhouse Dam (FM 1670) and see the signs for the Chalk Ridge Falls Park and see it below and we'd say, "we should go see what's down there". There were always cars but because of the tree canopy, no people or activity can be seen from above. Lo and behold, it's an amazing treasure down below.

The August 2020 work day for Chalk Ridge was going to be a warm one so John Atkins made the decision that because of the heat, the full crew would focus on trash clean up instead of clearing invasives. The crew of 10 or so left the sunny parking lot to head for the shade of trees and the park. The trail works its way east and begins to descend down to the creek bottom. The regulars would point out the next places along the trail to be cleared, signage to be repaired/replaced, damage from the mountain bikers to be repaired (again) and other work-related tasks to be addressed. As a first-timer to the park I was looking up to the tree canopy and down to the river bottom finally understanding why so many people visit the park.

We headed up-stream first with the goal to hike to the end of the springs and then pick up trash on the way back. The group crisscrossed the stream finding the best path for all in the group, each pointing out different interesting sights based on our individual



*Painted Bunting by Carroll Adcock*

interests – beautyberry growing out of the rocks 20 feet up, an underground bee hive, a red tanager (not all red birds are cardinals), frogs and minnows in the stream, ferns growing in the seep holes, small caves formed by hundreds (thousands?) of years of water always making its way down, and yes snakes (shudder, can you guess I'm not a snake fan). Trash pickup was easy as it seems few people make their way upstream.

# Chalk Ridge Falls Park

## A First-Timer's Perspective *cont.*

The same can't be said of the rest of the park. We quickly filled 4-5 bags of trash and clothing (anyone need a spare sock, we found about 20, all different sizes and colors). The trash is proof of how well attended (loved??) the park is to the neighboring communities. We saw people of all ages out to explore the outdoors or looking for some cool water to break the oppressive heat that is Texas in the summer.

The variety of landscapes within the park encourages exploration: Secluded upstream areas, a large waterfall and swimming hole, raised boardwalks and a suspension bridge, tall tree canopies by the boy scout benches allowing for both shade and an open-air feeling, an open river/stream for kayakers and probably soooo much more I didn't get to experience in my first (but not last) visit to Chalk Ridge Falls Park.



*Black Rock Squirrel by Carroll Adcock*

We all have different reasons for wanting to be outside – different ways to reset, relax or refresh. The local, state and national parks provide these magical pockets of “different” that we all need to remind ourselves that there is so much more to living than the normal routines of indoor work, school and home.

As Master Naturalists, we get to help share the “different” with our communities in so many different ways: outreach into schools/clubs, clearing invasives; picking up trash; providing rest benches because exploring can be as exhausting as it is exhilarating; providing knowledge nuggets (aka signage) to educate/inform, and so much more. As a 2020 trainee, I'm thrilled to be included in such an amazing team.

Keep up the good work y'all, we're all making a difference!!

# FIELD NOTES

**- Kelly Ann Blanchard, 2020**

Looking for a way to contribute to scientific research in a field you love plus earn volunteer hours at the same time? Community science, also known as citizen science, is an increasingly popular field of knowledge scientists rely on to provide data for important research projects around the world. As Texas Master Naturalists, our contributions to local projects are especially vital to conserving and protecting our state's biodiversity. These projects range from common observations to specific interests – there is something for everyone!

In this issue, we will highlight a unique opportunity to contribute to community science by monitoring the weather – right from your own backyard!

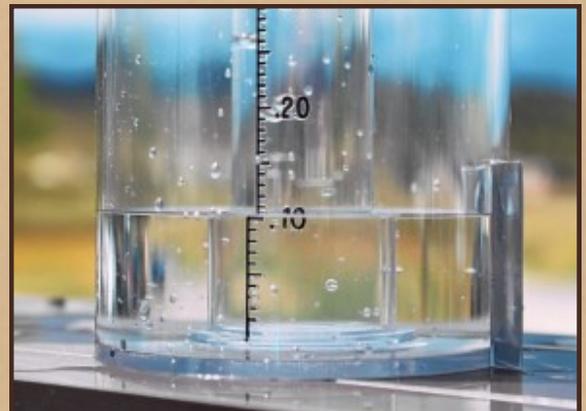
## **CoCoRaHS: Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network**

Thanks to a significant rain event followed by Tropical Storm Beta, our creeks are flowing again, the lakes are full, and the ground is once again a lush green instead of brown and cracked. Paired with cooler temperatures, this time of year is a lovely respite from the dry, crispiness of a hot Texas summer. If you monitor a rain gauge at home or have been excited about the recent rains, perhaps now is also a great time to consider volunteering with CoCoRaHS!

The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network, or fondly called CoCoRaHS (pronounced KO-ko-rozz), is a group of citizen scientists who combine their backyard weather data in order to map and measure rain, hail, and snow across the nation. These measurements are then used to observe more accurate weather patterns as well as to alert meteorologists to hazardous weather events.

Following an unexpected and destructive flood in Fort Collins, Colorado in 1997, climatologist Nolan Doesken observed huge differences in rainfall amounts during the flood that were not noted by the local weather stations. He realized that more accurate data was needed to measure rainfall variations in his community, subsequently leading to the creation of the CoCoRaHS that we know and love today.

[A Brief History of CoCoRaHS](#)



# FIELD NOTES

*Cont.*

Over the past 22 years, CoCoRaHS has grown to more than 22,000 people spread across the United States as well as Canada, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The program has greatly contributed to the understanding of how rain falls in extreme events and to the creation of more effective early warning systems. According to Joe Dorn, a CTMN member and long-time local CoCoRaHS contributor, “The information gathered is used by many organizations and groups that have an invested interest in weather, rain in particular.”

CoCoRaHS is always in need of more volunteers to provide data. Scientists are able to observe more accurate weather patterns with each new rain gauge that a volunteer installs and actively monitors. According to Nolan Doesken, “Automated rain gauges are convenient and very informative. But the most reliable and consistent source for accurate precipitation totals is still an interested volunteer, using a good-quality manual rain gauge, measuring and reporting diligently.”

If you are interested in becoming a CoCoRaHS volunteer, we can help you get started! All monitoring activities are eligible for Volunteer Service (VS) hours and can easily fill your VS requirement for the year. To begin, you will need to purchase a standard rain gauge for about \$30, but then there is no additional cost to participate. You may purchase your rain gauge [here](#) or you can contact Joe Dorn to see if he has any gauges for sale locally. When you are ready, you can enroll by filling out this [application](#) online. Reports are made daily at a given time, usually around 7:00 a.m. Volunteers are also encouraged to report extreme weather conditions when they are occurring in order to provide data for early warning systems. Measurements are submitted online to the [CoCoRaHS website](#), which also houses numerous interactive maps and real-time [data](#).

Our resident weather expert, Joe Dorn, has submitted over 3000 observations to CoCoRaHS! He has shared some wonderful resources (listed below) for anyone who is interested in joining. For more about Joe and his contributions to community science, check out his article and achievements on the following page.

[CoCoRaHS Overview](#)

[Training Session on CoCoRaHS \(1 hour\)](#)

[App for Android](#)

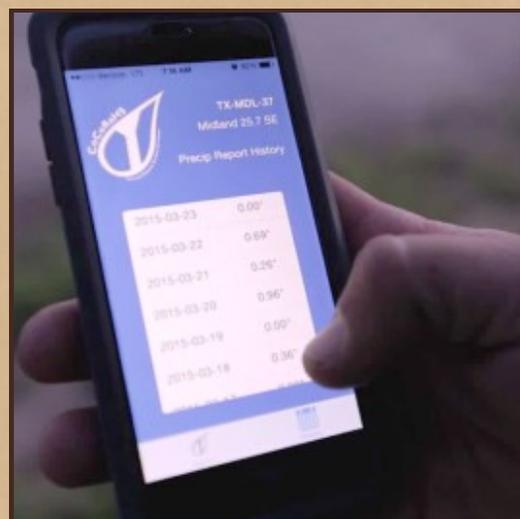
[CoCoRaHS on the Weather Channel](#)

[YouTube Rain Gauge Introduction](#)

[National Weather Service Support](#)

[How to Make a Hail Pad](#)

[CoCoRaHS on an episode of \*The Crowd and the Cloud\*](#)



# COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE RAIN, HAIL & SNOW NETWORK

## CoCoRaHS How To

### - Joe Dorn, 2014

I was asked to do an article on the Citizen Science CoCoRaHS project, so I share my experiences here. For more information, I have provided weblinks to many CoCoRaHS websites in the Field Notes article above.

I first heard of the strange sounding operation at an amateur radio meeting. Mark McGraw, the Bell County coordinator, introduced CoCoRaHS to the group. Many hams are also weather enthusiasts because of our storm spotter activities. I immediately ordered my gauge and now have over three thousand daily reports to my credit.

We currently have 79 registered stations in Bell County. I would expect about half of those are Master Naturalists due to our volunteer activities. A Master Naturalist gets "Volunteer Service" time for each day you make a report. The minimum credit is 15 minutes for a report so this makes getting our annual 40-hour requirement much easier. I have the reporting URL on my Firefox startup so that I am reminded every morning to make the report. Daily reports are encouraged even if there is no precipitation.

To participate in the program, sign up at <https://www.cocorahs.org/application.aspx> and have one of the approved rain gauges that is marked in hundredths of an inch. The gauges are available at <https://weatheryourway.com/> for about thirty dollars. If I get ten or more people committed, I will order them by the case and resell them at my cost rounded to the nearest dollar up or down. Yes, I sometimes take a small loss on the order.

The reporting process takes just a few minutes on rain event days, depending on the gauge location. One of mine is just outside of my door and the other is about a mile away. The second one is at the end of our daily "dog-run". I have two gauges to see if I can catch the difference in rain amounts that occurs as fronts approach IH-35. This will be a subject of another article that I have been wanting to write.

***CONT.***



# CoCoRaHS *CONT.*

We have 79 stations in Bell county, so do we need more? Yes!!! Bell County is on the break line between the Hill Country and the Blackland prairie. I often peruse the map of the area and I am fascinated by the differences even a mile can make. Our surrounding counties are less well represented with CoCoRaHS volunteers, and if you reside in one of them, your reports are even more valuable. This can be a fun project, one that most people are interested in, and you are performing a significant public service.



*Congratulations to Joe Dorn for receiving recognition for submitting over 3000 observations to the CoCoRaHS database! The CoCoRaHS Team says they appreciate Joe Dorn. Well, Central Texas Master Naturalists appreciate him, too!!*

*Regarding Joe's milestone, Bill Runyon, Texas CoCoRaHS State Coordinator said "Go Joe!!! What a major contribution Mr. Dorn has made to CoCoRaHS on the State and National level! To reach 3,000 plus reports is quite a milestone and a recognition that is long overdue. Way back in April of 2005, Texas officially joined the CoCoRaHS Network as the fifth state to begin reporting. Since then, CoCoRaHS has grown to include all 50 states, US Territories, Canada and the Bahamas! So you see the significance of Joe's milestone recognition."*

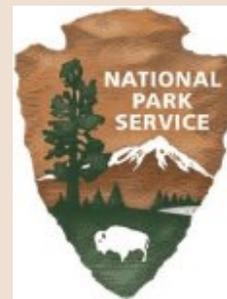


# GUADALUPE NATIONAL PARK

Texas

- **Zoe Rascoe, 2004**

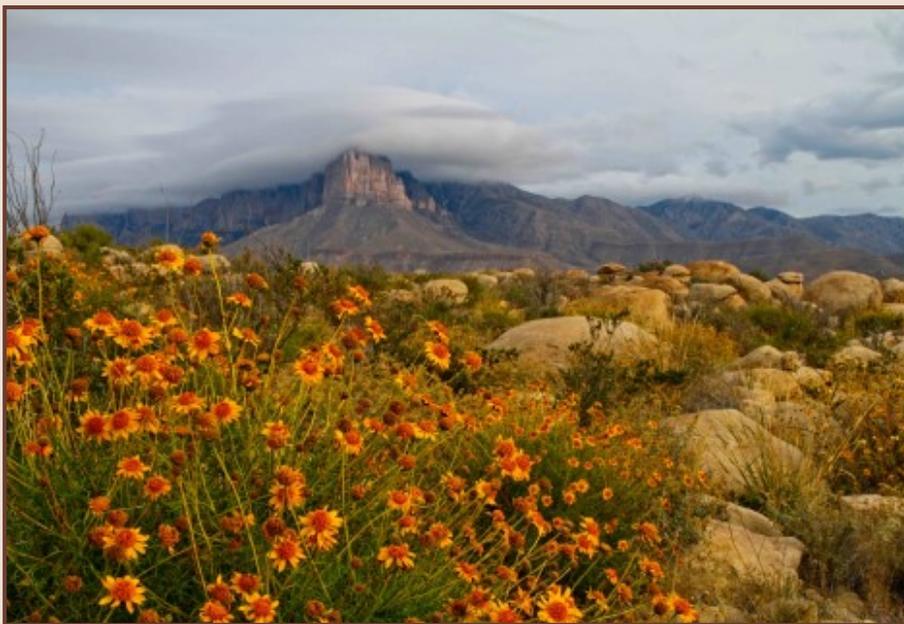
*Photos by Zoe Rascoe*



Fall color. You know what that means. Not a list of oranges and browns for your autumn wardrobe or your Thanksgiving table, but the splendor of nature winding down with the gentle changing of green to yellows, oranges and reds before winter comes. Due to our variety of ecosystems, Texas boasts nearly 300 species of native trees (depending on who you ask) – almost half of all trees represented in the US – but somehow, we didn't get much of those whose fall colors bring hoards of "leaf peeper" tourists this time of year. But we do have a trio of spectacular sites for fall color: Lost Maples State Park with Red-toothed Maples and Red Oaks and nearby Garner State Park with large bald cypress in the Hill Country, and the Big-toothed Maples of Guadalupe National Park in west Texas.

We had long wanted to visit Guadalupe National Park – both for fall color and to climb to the highest point in Texas atop Guadalupe Peak – so we scheduled a November trip. Due to a chain of events, it was also our first time to camp (just one night). That part of the story will not be told here. We have not camped since, but I do have a cute little camping tea pot.

We started the adventure with a day-long drive to Van Horn where we spent the night at the historic Hotel El Capitán. Designed by famed architect Henry Trost, the hotel opened in



1930 at the crossroads of just-opened Carlsbad Caverns and forthcoming Guadalupe and Big Bend National Parks. It was completely restored in 2007 and was a lovely place to stay, but only a few hours as we were up at 4:00am to drive to Guadalupe NP to meet two photography friends from Bell County who had been visiting National Parks in Arizona. The rendezvous was scheduled for 6:00am on the side of Highway 62 in front of the iconic El

Capitan peak on the southern end of the mountain range. As we pulled up in the dark, a white pickup pulled in behind us – our friends arriving from Arizona. We all retrieved our camera gear and found spots to set up our tripods. There was no amazing sunrise, but there was a lenticular cloud over the peak that was very dramatic, and some fall color blooms.

## GUADALUPE NATIONAL PARK *cont.*

There are 3 ecosystems in the Park: There's the Chihuahuan Desert surrounding the mountains with salt flats, creosote bushes and honey mesquite on the west and pinyon pine and junipers to the east – that is where we stopped for El Capitan photos. The second ecosystem is canyons. We spent the rest of the day hiking in McKittrick Canyon where the famous Bigtooth Maples live. It was breathtaking, certainly for a Texan. There were also Texas Madrone, Alligator juniper, Mexican buckeye, Chinkapin oak and sotol yucca (we have those last 3 in Central Texas!) There had recently been a flood through the canyon that dropped in a large amount of gravel which the Park Service was working to remove.



## GUADALUPE NATIONAL PARK *cont.*



*Terry and Zoe Rascoe*

The third ecosystem is the Alpine areas above 7000' with Ponderosa pine, Arizona pine, Alligator juniper and Quaking aspens. The plan for the second day in the Park was to climb to the top of Guadalupe Peak – the highlight of our trip. At 8,749' (the 8.4-mile round trip trail has a 3,000' elevation gain) it is the tallest peak in Texas. OK, Colorado – don't judge. It was a pretty day, but as we climbed higher, it was also a windy day. We made it to the top in good time and ate lunch while gazing out over the Chihuahuan Desert below and El Capitan peak in front and 700' lower.

A memorial marker stands on the summit, placed there by American Airlines on the centennial of the Butterfield Overland Mail Trail. Carrying passengers and U.S. mail, the Butterfield Stage Line passed near this site for the first time on September 29, 1858, in route to San Francisco. There is a notebook in an ammo box to sign your name commemorating your arrival.

The National Park covers over 86,000 acres and is the largest wilderness area in Texas. There are no internal roads by design: hiking and horseback riding were all that were intended. The Guadalupe mountain range, includes Carlsbad Caverns NP 25 miles north. Much of the range is built from the ancient Capitan Reef, formed at the margins of a shallow sea during the Permian Period, and is composed almost entirely of limestone. To the west of Guadalupe Peak and still in the National Park is Salt Basin Dunes—2000 acres of gypsum dunes, some 100' tall.

The park has 58 known mammal inhabitants, including elk, and more than 260 kinds of birds. Eight species of amphibians and 44 kinds of reptiles make their home here, including the red-spotted toad, collared lizard and three species of horned lizards. Tarantulas and western diamondback rattlesnakes like this place, too. Leave the snakes alone. Tarantulas are slow and nearsighted so it was easy to just step over those on the trail.



*Salt Flats*

# GARNER STATE PARK

- Zoe Rascoe, 2004



*Photos by Zoe Rascoe*

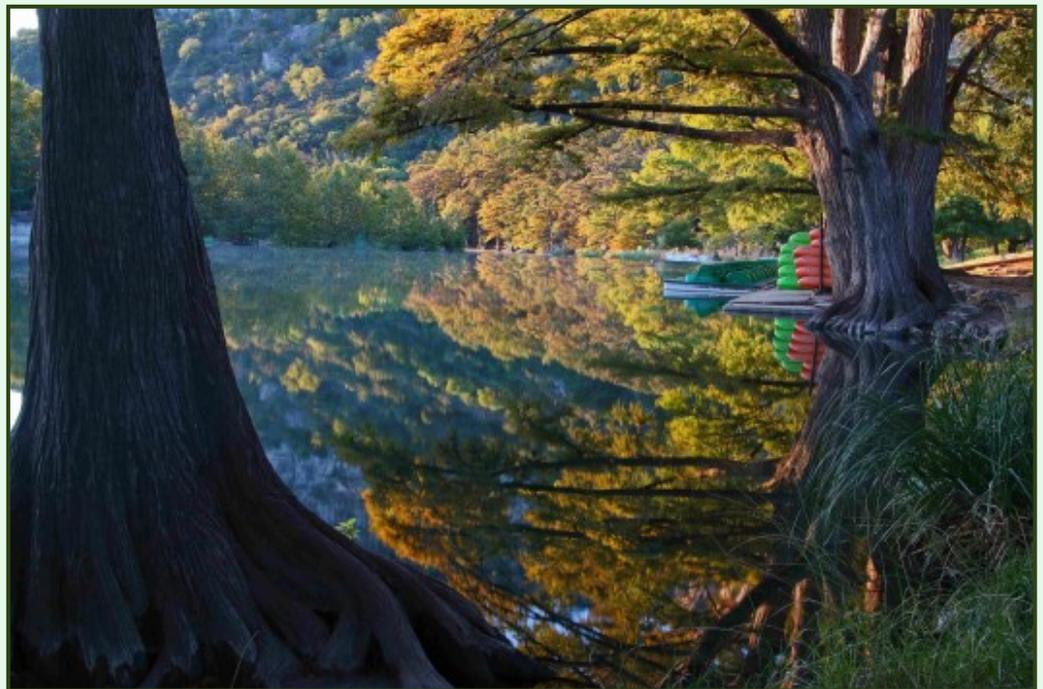
Sometimes we miss out on fall weather pretty much altogether in Central Texas. So at least it's nice to get out and find some fall color elsewhere. If you need a fix like that, too—try Garner State Park near Concan. The nearly 1800 acres along almost 3 miles of the Frio river is a lovely Hill Country getaway in autumn. The stars are the tall bald cypress that line the banks on both sides of the river.



*Photo Courtesy of TPWD*

There are 16 miles of shady hiking trails through rocky, wooded areas and a little more strenuous trek up the side of Mount Baldy which towers over a bend in the river. There are paddle boats, kayaks and inner (outer?) tubes to rent, fishing, miniature golf, geocache sites, and areas to ride bikes.

You can stay in shelters, cabins or campsites, but plan way ahead in the busy spring and summer seasons. Park Rangers provide programs on the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) history and nature, as well as programs for kids during the busy season. We haven't been during the busy season—we've almost had the park to ourselves in autumn. You'll see all sorts of native vegetation like inland sea oats and cockle burrs, and Texas Madrone and lacey oak trees join the towering bald cypress in the Park.

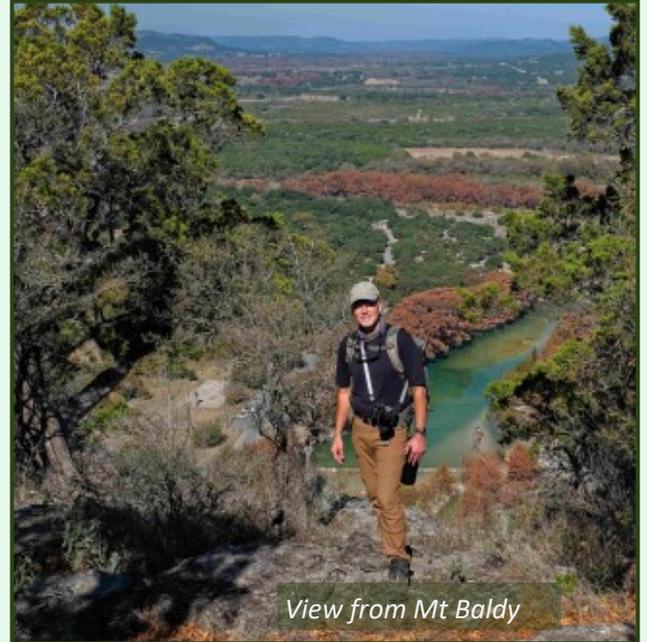


## GARNER STATE PARK *cont.*

Familiar, at least by name, to Central Texans are resident Golden-cheeked Warblers and Black-capped Vireo birds. If you are a local Master Naturalist, you'll remember that the Warbler nests only in the mixed Ashe juniper and oak woodlands where they eat insects and spiders from the oaks and use the peeling bark from old junipers for their nesting material.

The wildlife we saw were the expected white-tailed deer, turkeys, black vultures (turkey vultures are surely there, too) black rock and fox squirrels, herons in the river edges and tracks from raccoons along the streams from the river. Park information indicates eastern bluebirds hang out in the area.

If you have a long weekend for a fall color getaway, I recommend Garner State Park (and nearby Lost Maples State Park, too!)



*View from Mt Baldy*



*Bald Cypress Trees*

# That's Not Here!

I haven't been  
everywhere, but  
it's on my list.

-Susan Sontag

## RAIN FORESTS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

- **Brent Blumenthal and Julie Sieh**

*Photos by Julie Sieh and Brent Blumenthal*

Earlier this summer we were able to take a camping trip to the Pacific Northwest. Using our small camping trailer, we were able to take a socially distanced trip. Other than a once every 7- or 10-day trip to the grocery store, we were able to keep to ourselves. Reflecting on the trip now that we are back, we feel that we were able to stay more socially distant on the road than we are back in central Texas.

One of our more interesting stops was at the very green Hoh (pronounced hoe) rainforest. The Hoh rainforest is located on the Northwest section of the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state. It is just off the Coastal Highway 101, two hours west of Port Angeles, Washington.



It is a very interesting environment. This area receives over 140 inches of rain per year. Fog and mist provide another 30 inches of precipitation per year. The western slopes of the Olympic mountains are the first land mass that gets hit with the moisture-laden winds coming off the Pacific Ocean. Hoh is known as a temperate rainforest. The temperature ranges between 70 degrees in the summer and as low as 20 degrees in the winter. The undergrowth is thick; moss and ferns abound. The tree canopy is also very thick with trees including the Sitka Spruce, Big Leaf Maple and the Douglas Fir. With so many trees there is much shade, until one of the giant trees fall.

## RAIN FORESTS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST *CONT.*

There are actually 4 rainforest sites on the Olympic Peninsula with the Hoh being the only one designated as a World Heritage Site and a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. The forest is home to elk, deer, bear, river otters, birds, insects, and rodents. Two of the things that really impressed us were things called nurse logs and the ever-present banana slugs.

Nurse logs are an interesting phenomenon. When a tree dies in the forest, if it is younger, it may stand for a while and become home to many birds and rodents. If a



larger tree (some approach 300 feet tall) dies, it will eventually fall with tremendous “destructive” force. The force of the fall creates space in the canopy and provides sunshine to the usually dark forest floor.

After a few years the log starts to decay. Seeds from nearby trees land in the decomposing bark which is now a rich, moist, organic soil. The sunshine from the recently opened tree canopy helps the seeds germinate. Being off the forest floor, landing on the log, the seeds are above the shade of the thick fern undergrowth. As the seeds grow, they send roots down the log into the soil. Eventually the log will completely decay, leaving the new tree(s) standing upright on their roots. The

view of the trees up on their roots is an interesting, if not disturbing site. The root bottoms look like they might be the home of the Keebler elves. Occasionally there is a line of trees growing on a nurse log. This line of tree growth is called a colonnade.

## RAIN FORESTS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST *CONT.*

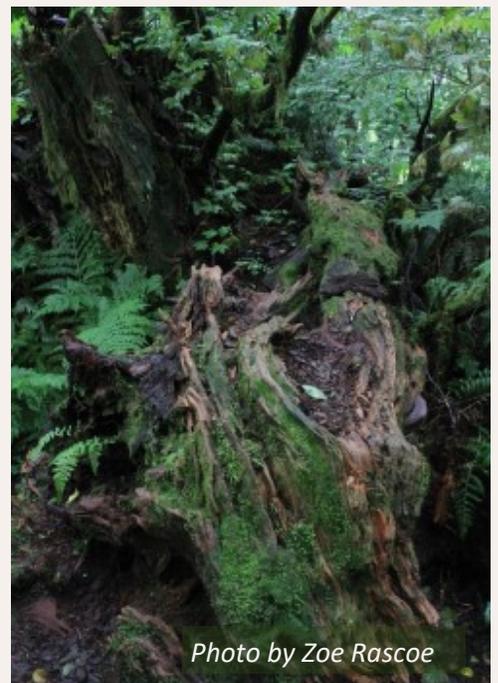
An interesting creature we were able to observe in the Hoh rainforest was the banana slug. Banana slugs (*Ariolimax columbianus*) are very colorful. They can range from light yellow to bright yellow and have mixtures of brown, black, white and green. These slugs change colors based on diet, light and moisture levels. The slug can grow up to almost 10 inches making it the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest slug in the world.

Slugs are detritivores or decomposers. They process leaves, animal droppings and dead plant materials and turn them into humus.

Banana slugs are preyed upon by raccoons, garter snakes, ducks and salamanders. The slug's mucus slime contains chemicals that can numb the tongue of their predators. Native Americans in the Pacific



Northwest occasionally dined on slugs. Although we like to think things are “bigger in Texas”, these slugs will give our slugs a run for their money.



*Photo by Zoe Rascoe*

# My Sub-Urban Backyard

## THE FUNGUS AMONG US

- **Andreas Wooten, 2015**

*Photos by Andreas Wooten*

Yay for rain!!! But we have had a lot recently. As of today, my rain gauge has totaled 11.25 inches in the past few weeks. My grass looks great, my Koi pond stays full without me having to add water and the cooler weather is just plain nice. That being said, the fungi love this weather and moisture.

Who would have thought that one yard could harbor so many different and colorful varieties of fungus and mushrooms. In the past three to five weeks, we have had at least six different ones between the front and back yards.

My favorite is the big orange one that crops up every year about this time along the edge of our dry creek bed.



It is usually around for a week or two (sometimes three weeks if the weather does not get cold) and then it turns to mush and we won't see it again until next year. This guy grows fast!! From the size of a ping pong ball to the size of a bowling ball in just four or five days.



The creepiest one is this one, which I found in the water meter box. It looks like something from a SciFi movie. I put it on iNaturalist and made an ID of Tapioca Slime Mold, but the community seems to disagree with that, even though none of the naysayers have come up with a better answer.

## My Sub-Urban Backyard *cont.*

All of the other ones I found are pretty basic mushrooms, but with such a variety in the world and with very subtle detail differences, I have yet to be able to identify any of them.

But they crop up all over the place. Two are from the front flower bed (nothing but dirt and maybe a little mulch) but they are totally different. One is orange and yellow and the other a milky white.

The others were found around the edge of the porch and under the bedroom window. I have yet to positively ID anything, so NOTHING will be going into my next salad or batch of spaghetti sauce. If anyone has any ideas on what is what, please let me know.



# Free Forest School

## - Carina Costa, Founding Member

*Editor's Note: Taking cues from the original Scandinavian forest schools, playworker principles, and self-directed learning practices, the FFS program prioritizes free play in nature. Giving children the chance to take reasonable risks, FFS encourages the development of confident, responsible, inquisitive children who have a deep, personal connection with the natural world. [FFS Bell County Website](#)*

It's that time of the year again – Free Forest School's Bell County chapter is celebrating its second-year anniversary, and we are excited to have our members and community volunteering to clean up Chalk Ridge Falls Park.

I am Carina Costa, a member of Free Forest School (FFS) and a mother who loves nature. I really enjoy seeing my children playing free in nature, especially at Chalk Ridge Park. This park is my happy place and the happy place for our FFS group.

FFS is a beautiful program that supports children's natural capacity to learn through unstructured play in nature. One of FFS's visions is "Children who are intimately connected to nature see its essential value for humans and the planet."



In our weekly meetings, children go for nature walks to explore what interests them on that specific day while parents keep a close eye to ensure kids' safety. Unfortunately, right now we are on hold due to COVID-19, but we usually meet once a week to play and learn together in nature. We miss seeing everyone.

A little about the event last year – after one of our meetings, I got home and my heart was not at peace with the amount of trash I saw at Chalk Ridge on that day. So, I contacted Kelsey Case, the founder of our chapter, and I asked her if it was a crazy or doable idea to organize a community clean up. She was on board right away, and the annual event was born. After exchanging some ideas with a lot of people and advertising a lot, the event happened on an extremely hot Texas summer day. The event was a success – we had more than 100 volunteers and we were able to pick up a lot of trash. All volunteers were troopers, and I am quite sure they all felt great after the hours dedicated to our beautiful park. Fun fact: I was 38 weeks pregnant during the event, and I managed to pick up some trash with the help of my young toddler, and 10 days later I delivered my baby.

# Free Forest School *cont.*

This year was the same situation. After hiking with my child and seeing him counting trash (he is learning his numbers) along the trail, my heart broke and I knew I had to do something about that. I do not want him thinking it is okay to have trash in nature. I immediately contacted Kelly Ann Blanchard and asked for her help in organizing this year's event as she is a Master Naturalist and knows a lot about nature and the way to get it all set up.



*2019 Free Forest School Cleanup Event at Chalk Ridge Falls. CTMN Member Melissa Jue and son Clive are checking in.*

using a QR code (at right), and if possible, we would love to see a picture of the trash that is picked up so we can somehow have an idea of how much we cleaned up this year. Please use the hashtag **#KeepChalkRidgeClean** when posting to social media.

With all the challenges we are facing this year, we hope for a good turn out and cleaner trails. To me, 2020 is a year of thinking out of our comfort zone and focusing to connect more with our Mother Nature.

Our 2020 event will be challenging due to COVID -19, but we cannot let our park down while we wait for the virus situation to resolve. So, we decided to have a 10-day event respecting all CDC guidelines to make sure we are social distancing and being safe.

The Community Clean Up will be from Oct 2-11. We will provide trash sacks at the entrance of the park. Please bring your own gloves and grabbers. We encourage volunteers to do a simple online sign-up



# Forest Bathing

## A Therapeutic Encounter with Nature

### - Stephanie Preciado, 2020

One of my favorite places to visit while living in Venezuela as a child was a river tucked away in the mountains equipped with mesmerizing waterfalls cascading with rejuvenating, ice-cold water. The thrill of climbing the rocks to reach the waterfall and bathe in its waters was like arriving victoriously at a finish line. These moments were usually filled with wonder and curiosity while I explored the diversity among local plants and wildlife thriving at the edge of the river's path. Often, I would indulge in some of nature's savory treats after consulting with my elders about which fruits were edible. I mindfully narrated to myself its texture, flavor, smell or interesting features. For as long as I can recall, connecting with nature through gratitude and wonder while being fully present in each moment has been the most therapeutic act of love for myself and for our planet.



*Stephanie Preciado in Pacific Northwest*

Forest bathing, also called forest therapy, is a Japanese-inspired practice, known as “Shinrin-yoku,” that follows the general principle that fully immersing in nature invites healing interactions for the purpose of enhancing health, wellness, and happiness. Even a small amount of time spent in nature while connecting to all of your senses can yield a wide range of health benefits. There is now a wealth of research that demonstrates health benefits from practicing Shinrin-yoku. Being in nature can reduce blood pressure, lower stress, improve cardiovascular and metabolic health, lower blood-sugar levels, improve concentration and memory, lift depression, improve pain thresholds, improve energy, boost the immune system, increase anti-cancer protein production and help you lose weight. My personal healing journey has seen the most success when I expose myself to the elements of the natural world, even when I find connection to nature by bringing some of those elements indoors.

After my separation with the military in 2016, I struggled with depression, anxiety, and PTSD. I spent many months isolated in my room dissociating from my obligations to myself, my family and society. My mental health drastically deteriorated and I was desperately seeking relief and healing. The VA played a crucial role in educating me on identifying symptoms, triggers and utilizing coping skills. Still, in many ways I struggled emotionally, spiritually, and physically to connect with the part of me that felt joy and a genuine connection to life.

*Cont.*

# Forest Bathing cont.

Gradually, I began practicing mindfulness and exploring local hiking trails. My time in nature was usually spent sitting in a carefully selected spot where I felt most aware of my senses. I felt the ground with my bare feet (earthing) while watching the sunset (sungazing). I walked by a bush of rosemary and rubbed its leaves together to take in its scent. I admired busy ants collectively working hard to fulfill their mission. I sat still while the fall breeze hugged my cheeks. All of these acts were carried out intuitively and with no plan. The only purpose was to just be. Be present. Be aware. Be in the moment.

Eventually, I began to encounter moments of bliss, peace, relaxation and connection. I set the intention to experience more of nature throughout my day, so I began caring for plants that I brought indoors after experimenting with different ones. Research has shown that having living plants indoors can improve concentration and productivity, reduce stress levels and boost moods among other health benefits. Recommended indoor plants include: peace lily, golden pothos, english ivy, chrysanthemum, gerbera daisy, mother-in-law's tongue, bamboo palm, azalea, red-edge dracaena and spider plant. So far, I have acquired three from the list and plan to continue introducing plants in my indoor space.

Next time you find yourself wondering how you can experience nature therapy in your home, consider some of the following alternatives to immersing in forest bathing. Bring the smell of outdoors into your own home with essential oils by filling a diffuser with water and adding a few drops of your favorite essential oils. Light candles with fragrances that remind you of the outdoors. At night, limit the amount of artificial light exposure to help your body's natural light cycles (circadian clock) fall back into harmony. Play your favorite outdoor sounds. Find a window with a natural space to observe the trees, birds or changing seasons. If you don't have a window, put up pictures of nature and take a moment to enjoy them. Nature offers healing power. Take care of nature, and it will take care of you!



Trail at Mother Neff State Park

<https://infta.net/>

[NatureAndForestTherapy.org](http://NatureAndForestTherapy.org)

# A Day on the Fleming Farm



- LYNN FLEMING, 2004

Sundays are never dull around our house. We always have cattle to check and other chores to wrap up and last Sunday was brush pile day. We have a place that we bought a few years ago and have been working on it a little at a time to bring it back to productivity. The previous owners had done nothing, absolutely nothing to it in over 40 years and the brush had just about taken over when we got it. We call it The Jungle.



Earlier this summer, we bulldozed an area of trees and put the brush into piles to burn when they dried down and it was a little wetter time of year. After the big 11 inch rain, we set them on fire and they burned pretty good, but you always have to push them together to get the rest to burn. My husband Robert climbed on the bulldozer and started pushing. Since that thing is no Lexus and there is only one seat, I decided to walk around and look at things.

It has always intrigued me how Bois D'Arc tree roots turn bright orange when exposed to air. The layers dry out and peel off like paper. Bois D'Arc is French for "wood of the bow". Indians used this very strong wood for their bows. Early pioneers found many uses including as fencing material that was described as "horse high, bull strong and pig tight."



## A Day on the Fleming Farm *cont.*

Mr. Ornate Box Turtle was very wary and would only stick out his head and give me the stink eye. After I picked him up for a closer look I realized why he was so cautious. He only had three legs and some pretty good scars that looked like a coyote had gotten ahold of him. I set him down to live long and prosper.



Cochineal palace! This cactus was covered with cochineal bugs. It looks like cotton balls but inside those pillowy fluffs are cochineal bugs that, when squished, produce a red dye that has been used for centuries in South and Central Americas then imported to the New World where it was as important as gold and silver. Still used around the world, even as food dyes.

***Just another day on the Fleming Farm!***



# What's in YOUR backyard?



- Zoe Rascoe, 2004

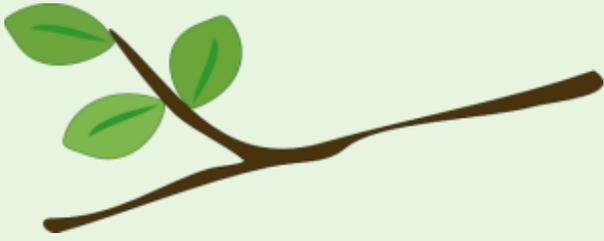


Left: Juan Anaya throws parties for his hummingbird visitors hoping they'll hang around longer. This was his Hummerween Candy Bowl. I suspect they have been enjoying the Turk's cap I see in the background. By the 3rd week of Sept he had gone from 30 down to 8 guests. Time to move on...

Below Left: Jessica Dieter shared a portrait of Melvin, a leaf-footed bug who sucks sap from her backyard plants.

Below: A Mississippi Kite fledgling in Zoe Rascoe's yard. After a month in training, the Kite family heads out and the squirrels and doves move back in.





- Mary Ann Everett, 2003

# Out on a Limb

**Tree Description:** Small to medium tree, usually 30-50 feet, but up to 75 feet in height.

**Blooms:** Male and female catkins on the same tree. Both are reddish-brown, 1-3½ inches long.

**Fruit:** Produces reddish-brown acorns that are an important food for deer, squirrels, turkeys, jays and other wildlife.

**Location:** Adapts to western, arid habitat from the Red River down through the Hill Country.

**Leaves:** Wide, deeply divided into 5-9 lobes, makes a pleasant sight from the roadway, especially in the autumn when leaves turn bright shades of red and orange.

**Bark:** Brown to gray with plate-like scales, deeply fissured, sometimes smooth.

**Heat & Drought Tolerance:** Tolerant of both heat and drought. A great shade tree.

**Interesting Facts:** A hybrid swarm of this species occurs along the White Rock Escarpment-Balcones Escarpment line from the Red River through Dallas, Waco, Austin and San Antonio, extending several miles to the east and the west of this line. Golden-cheeked warbler also depends upon this tree, as well as the Ashe Juniper for its nest material, and binds the nest together with webbing from the tent caterpillars found on this species. The caterpillars from these webs are then fed to the newly-hatched chicks. This species is also susceptible to a fatal fungal canker (*Hypoxylon* sp.).

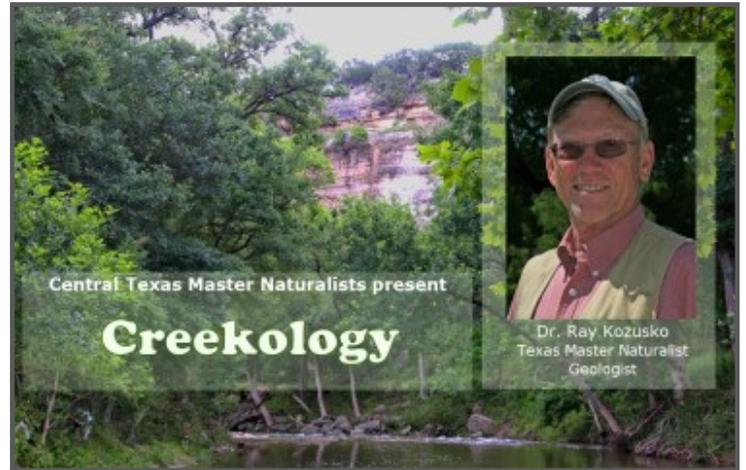
[Click here for name of tree](#)



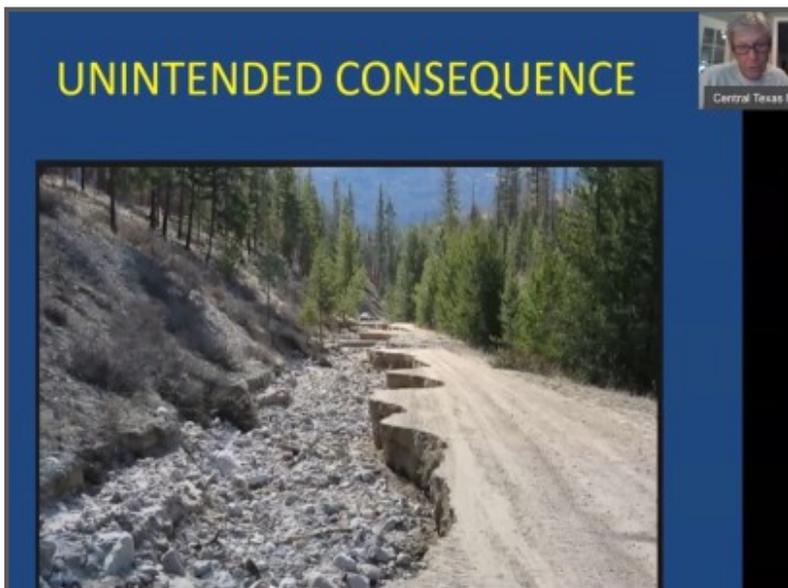
# CHAPTER MEETINGS

## – KELLY ANN BLANCHARD, 2020

While we hope to have our chapter meetings face-to-face again soon, our last two meetings were once again conducted virtually from the comfort of our homes. In August, we were lucky to host Dr. Ray Kozusko (or “Dr. Rock” as most of us know him), a geologist with over 50 years of experience as well as a fellow Texas Master Naturalist. With over 40 people in virtual attendance, Dr. Rock’s presentation, “Creekology, or what makes a stream do that?”, was both informative and fascinating, much like the geologist himself!



Dr. Rock started off with a brief introduction to geomorphology, the study of landforms sculpted through natural processes like streams. He covered many different types of channels, drainage patterns, stream types, and stream discharge, including a few math equations to help us better understand stream velocity. The most fascinating portion of his presentation was the evolution of landscape and stream dynamics. While I was familiar with the idea of forest succession, I had never considered that streams had their own cyclical equilibrium process as well! I enjoyed learning the different stages of stream succession and how each stage shapes the land differently.



According to Dr. Rock, though we may be tempted to change the course or shape of a stream to suit our own purposes, ultimately “the stream is boss – you can’t try to move it!” Failure to heed this advice can lead to disastrous consequences like erosion damage and landslides. As Texas Master Naturalists, our understanding of streams and their role in the native landscape helps us help others to prevent environmental complications and become better stewards of the land.

# CHAPTER MEETINGS

Our September chapter meeting webinar was a real treat! We were honored to welcome back Dr. Tania Homayoun with the Texas Nature Trackers, a program through Texas Parks and Wildlife that cultivates community science and conservation projects to track the status of native species. We have been lucky to host Dr. Homayoun twice this year – she taught a community science course to our 2020 class of trainees back in April. This time she focused on a specific topic that is near and dear to most of our hearts – owls! Her presentation, “Owls at Home: Hoo’s in Your Neighborhood?”, was chock full of so many interesting facts, identification tips, and conservation information that I couldn’t list them all here! I highly recommend you take the time to watch her presentation for yourself [on our website](#).

Dr. Homayoun stated that there are over 200 species of owls worldwide and 19 of those species are in North America. Here in Texas, we are home to the world’s smallest owl – an elf owl, which is about the size of a sparrow! Owls can turn their heads a full 270 degrees (not 360° as cartoons would have us believe) and the tufts of feathers at the tops of their heads are not actually their ears – these tufts are called plumicorns! Owls use their plumicorns to assist in camouflage and for social signaling purposes. “We see so much of ourselves in owls,” said Dr. Homayoun regarding why owls



appear so often in online memes, attributing this to their round faces, large eyes, and expressive features. She also gave detailed descriptions of five different native owl species including their sizes, habitats, diets, and calls.

Sadly, since 1970, 2.9 billion birds (1 in 4 birds) have disappeared. These staggering numbers include owls, many of which are considered “species of greatest conservation need.” Dr. Homayoun outlined seven things we can do to protect and nurture the birds that remain. She mentioned that “community science is one of the most powerful tools we have” when it comes to protecting our owls. There are many opportunities for us to make a difference as community scientists, including the [Texas Nature Trackers](#), [Project Nest Watch](#), and data gathering sites like eBird and iNaturalist. I’m sure our owl brethren will thank you very expressively for your help!



# Good to Know...

Texas State Arbor Day is the first Friday in November. Fall is a great time to plant trees all across Texas! Check with your city or community garden clubs for Arbor Day events near you!



2020 Texas State Arbor Day celebration

Nov. 6, 2020

Growing Texas Traditions

Carl Levin Park, 400 Millers Crossing

Harker Heights, Texas



## TEXAS POLLINATOR BIOBLITZ

### October 2-18, 2020

- Pollinator BioBlitz participants observe and identify pollinators.
- All ages and abilities are encouraged to find pollinators and nectar-producing plants, take photos, and share with friends!
- Share observations by posting a photo or video to [Instagram](#), [iNaturalist](#), or the Facebook event pages.
- Pollinator observation challenges and informative links will be emailed to all [registered](#) participants regularly to add to the fun.



<https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/bioblitz/>

# More Good to Know...



## ATTEND ONE OR MORE EVENTS

[Check out the calendar of events](#)

Pick and choose; virtual means you can attend a number of events, near and far!

October 2020 is our inaugural, month-long celebration of the region's most dazzling night-time feature — the star-twinkling, planet-glowing, comet-crossing night sky — where beauty and wonder abound.

**The first annual Hill Country Night Sky Month, October 2020, is a celebration of our region's night skies and of the hard work that Hill Country communities do to preserve it.**

<https://www.hillcountryalliance.org/nightskymonth>



<https://www.lovetbynature.com/>

On Amazon Prime



An award winning film narrated by Liam Neeson, Love Thy Nature, shows how deeply we've lost touch with nature and takes viewers on a cinematic journey through the beauty and intimacy of our relationship with the natural world. Love Thy Nature shows that a renewed connection with nature is key not only to our well being, but also to solving our environmental and climate crises.

# Contributing Authors to this Newsletter



Clockwise from top left:  
Joe Dorn, John Atkins, John Burns,  
Lynn Fleming, Andrea Liles,  
Zoe Rascoe, Stephanie Preciado,  
Kelly Ann Blanchard, Mary Ann  
Everett, Andreas Wooten. Below:  
Brent Blumenthal and Julie Sieh





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**Newsletter Staff**

*Hornets nest by Zoe Rascoe*

**Editor:** Zoe Rascoe

**Assistant to the Editor:** Kelly Ann Blanchard

**Contributing Writers:** John Atkins, John Burns, Andrea Liles, Brent Blumenthal, Julie Sieh, Lynn Fleming, Stephanie Preciado, Carina Costa (guest writer), Joe Dorn, Andreas Wooten ,Mary Ann Everett, Kelly Ann Blanchard, Zoe Rascoe.

**Contributed Images:** John Atkins, Tina Atkins, John Burns, , Brent Blumenthal, Julie Sieh, Stephanie Preciado, Carina Costa, Jessica Dieter, Carroll Adcock, Andreas Wooten, Juan Anaya, Kelly Ann Blanchard, Terry Rascoe, Zoe Rascoe.

**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 for members!**

**Zoe Rascoe**     [trascoe@hot.rr.com](mailto:trascoe@hot.rr.com)

**Chapter Advisors**

Whitney Grantham,  
Bell County Extension Agent, Natural Resources  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Derrick Wolter,  
Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife



When you go to the store for things that aren't plants, but then you see plants over there...

**The Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter**

Starting in October 2020, Chapter meetings will again be held on 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. Topic information is available on our website and Facebook page.

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