

THE TRACKER

Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter August 2021

Where Would We Bee Without Them?

2021 Class Installs Bee Condos at Miller Springs Nature Center

- Jenna Chappell, 2019

Why choose Miller Springs Nature Center? Location, Location, Location...

There were numerous upsides to choosing Miller Springs for our latest habitat restoration project. This new build targets local native bee populations, specifically Leafcutter and Mason Bees that are cavity nesters. Miller Springs Nature Center fulfills all the requirements needed to support a healthy population of these two species.

Both species require access to pollen and nectar producing plants that are

free of pesticides. The female bee makes approximately 30 trips for pollen and nectar for every 1 egg that she lays. Conveniently, the local Native Plant Society maintains a garden of native plants in the



immediate vicinity. A close water source is also needed, and the nearby lake checks this box. Individually, Leafcutters need waxy leaves to build their nests and Mason Bees need access to bare soil to create their mud tubes. Additionally, insects are dependent on the outside atmosphere for the regulation of their body temperature, therefore access to direct morning sun is also important. The parcel for the new habitat meets all the above requirements and is easily accessible to chapter members and the public for educational purposes. That's a win-win!

Bee House Construction and Installation at Miller Spring Nature Center

- Guy Fowler, 2021

As the saying goes, "WE NEED TO 'BEE' PREPARED"! Are bees important? Are bees in trouble? Can we help? YES, YES, AND YES! With Jenna Chappell as our fearless leader, we decided to help homeless bees by building "bee condos," AND A PROJECT WAS BORN! Our group divvied up the jobs, and away we went. Installation workers included Mike Belcher (and some of his family), David Jennings, Kerry Phillip, Jamey Douglass, Guy Fowler, Robb Startzman and Steven Brown. Pre-install carpentry included Edwina Brown and John Fairlie (along with Linda). I know we had others who sanded down the bamboo entrance holes to make sure the delicate wings of our pollinating friends would not be damaged. Several folks made the bee box frames, and others cut bamboo and oak wood pieces 6" long/thick. Although you can use wood such as pine or spruce, we used oak. Under NO circumstances do you use pressure-treated wood, as the chemicals infused into the wood may be harmful to nesting bees. The oak pieces had different size holes drilled for different size bees ($\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ ").



We searched and found a great location by the entrance pavilion and made sure the area was clear from brush and got sun, but not too much sun. Next, we dug holes for metal poles, attached the boxes, and then carefully put in the wood pieces with the bamboo surrounding and supporting them. Now, we have 3 Bee condos at Miller Springs. The talented Jenna burned some drawings of bees and flowers onto the sides of the bee boxes and also gave the CTMN group credit for the construction by burning "Texas Master Naturalists" onto one of the sides. This was a fun project that will take some continued maintenance each year, but a worthwhile one that will help our busy bees to flourish.

So, why did we do this project? Well, we needed the hours of course...JUST KIDDING. Yes, we did need the hours, but more importantly we needed to help out our buzzing buddies with housing so they could flourish and continue pollinating our plants. I recently checked our bee condos, and we have numerous tunnels encapsulated, but still plenty of vacancies, so hopefully over the years to come, the word will get out.

So to those that helped...THANKS! For those that weren't able to participate, you'll have an opportunity to help maintain them in the future. Remember...we need our bees, so "BEE" mindful of their importance, and let's keep things buzzing!



I would like to congratulate all of our new graduates of the Central Texas Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists: Mike Belcher, Steven Brown, Edwina Brown, Tony Cellini, Jamey Douglass, John Fairlie, Kerry Phillip, Guy Fowler, Tom Gerik, Janice Gibbs, David Jennings, Keller Matthews, Sarah McCormick, Chris Robinson, Robb Startzman and Larry Turner. You have worked hard and hopefully have gained the knowledge you need to start your journey as a Texas Master Naturalist. Most of you have already begun volunteering, in addition to your 40+ hours of initial training and advanced training. Some of you have already achieved your initial certification, and as a group have volunteered more than 368 hours!

Below are some of the projects that our trainees, now graduated, have been working on since classes started in March.

- Authoring Newsletter Articles
- TPWD Adopt-A-Loop Wildlife Monitoring
- Bell County Museum Native Landscape
- Annual Butterfly Count/Field Research
- Mother Neff Trail and Invasives Projects
- Salado Sculpture Garden Maintenance
- St. Mary's School Rainwater Project
- Copperas Cove Library "Tales and Tails"
- Army Corps of Engineers Pond Project
- Chalk Ridge Falls Trails Maintenance
- Rain, Hail & Snow Monitoring
- Miller Springs Nature Center (trail maintenance, class project and nest boxes)



David Jennings and Kelly Ann Blanchard collect specimens with Dr. June Wolfe during Aquatic Biology field class.

Cont.

President's Pen cont.

I asked our newest members for their impressions of their training and these are the responses:

Jamey Douglass: "As a retired Soil Scientist with SCS/NRCS, I knew a bunch. When we started, they try to cover all the bases. Working to become a Master Naturalist involves so many aspects of nature. Identifying geology, soils, birds, bugs, snakes and turtles, weather, economics, land uses, the list goes on. I will still remain somewhat of a soil scientist, but now I am exposed to all those things I forgot some 40 years ago. I too, have made new friends with like-minded interests. We all want to tell the story, or find someone who can. Being able to "give back" is what I was looking for when I retired. Now I have a place to do so."

David Jennings: "The classes were excellent! I really did learn and the subjects were very interesting. The WebEx classes were surprisingly very well done and I did not mind not being in the classroom. I plan to plug into the events that are out in nature at Miller Springs Nature Center, Chalk Ridge Falls Park, Mother Neff State Park and other beautiful outdoor nature gems."

John Fairlie: "I feel like I have learned a lot in so many areas, and am glad to be part of the group."

Janice Gibbs: "I appreciated the individuals with the expertise who spoke to the class each week. They were passionate about the subjects and were eager to pass that knowledge along."

Tony Cellini: "The time invested is well worth the experience thus far. It has been well beyond my expectations with an overwhelming amount of well presented educational information by some interesting and highly educated and experienced folks lecturing. Focused on some of the intimate details of our beautiful ecosystem all around us not only locally but also on a broader sense of the great big state of Texas gives me a deeper appreciation for all of the volunteer work put in by all Master Naturalists, past and present. I am proud to be a part of this!



Kelly Ann Blanchard shows Guy Fowler and Sarah McCormick how to use the cable camera on nest boxes.

I want to thank the Training Committee leaders and members worked tirelessly to once again have online training, but also added those in-person sessions so the class could get to know one another, and provide a class project and coordinate sponsors. This committee consists of Lynn Fleming, Mary Ann Everett, Sue Valdez, Sarah Dorn, Jenna Chappell, Paula Finley, Stephanie Preciado, Dale Hughling, Ben Clement, and Joe Dorn. Thank you also to other chapter members for their assistance: Zoe Rascoe, Jessica Dieter, John Atkins, Bruce Polikoff, Andi Bowsher, and Jean Solana.

Class of 2021 Graduation!

Each trainee's Sponsor presented their certificate of completion and graduation gift before the trainee chose a walking stick made by members from local trees.



Paula Finley (2019) to Mike Belcher



Jaime Harmon (2020) to Edwina Brown



Matt Ridley (2020) to Steven Brown



Zoe Rascoe (2004) to Guy Fowler



Kelly Ann Blanchard (2020) to Kerry Fillip



Lynn Fleming (2004) to Jamey Douglass



Chris Nixon (2020) to Tony Cellini



Burr

Class of 2021 Graduation July 13, 2021



LouAnn Hight (2010)
to Janice Gibbs



Carroll Adcock (2020)
to David Jennings



Zoe Rascoe (2004)
to Sarah McCormick



Bruce Polikoff (2015)
to Steven Brown



Juan Anaya (2018)
to Robb Startzman



Lynn Fleming (2004)
to Larry Turner



Jerry Lewis (2010)
to Tom Gerik



*Guy Fowler was presented the
2021 Daisy Award by 2020
recipient Kelly Ann Blanchard.*



John Fairlie (out of state
for graduation)



Keller Matthews (out of
state for graduation)



Mother Neff State Park

1680 TX Hwy-236, Moody

Jean Solana (2019), MNSP liaison, can be reached at jeansolana@sbcglobal.net

Central Texas Master Naturalists
and Mother Neff State Park
PRESENTS

Moth Night

Moth Collecting and Identification
Scorpion Hunting with Black Lights
Guided Tour of the Night Sky
Glow in the Dark Face Painting

Free Event Coming in October!

Mother Neff State Park—1680 TX Hwy 236 Moody, TX

We are looking forward to resuming programs this fall. Check our website and Facebook page for announcements. Other volunteer opportunities for our members are listed below.

Contact **Melissa Chadwick, Superintendent** at 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
- Painting signs, kiosks, barriers, fences and benches
- Trail maintenance
- Johnson grass and other invasive species control

**FALL FESTIVAL AT MOTHER
NEFF STATE PARK!**

OCTOBER 23, 2021

Fun activities for the whole family



- JOHN BURNS, 2018

jaburnscgm@gmail.com

Hello everyone!

Summer has arrived. We had a very nice spring with some cooler temperatures and some good rain. I think we got a little used to the cooler temperatures. The June workday started at 9:00 and by 10:30 we were all pretty beat by the heat. It was a hot humid morning and the work was vigorous. John Atkins and John Burns were operating the chainsaws with Ben Clement, Bill Novakoski, Bert Peeples, and Steven Brown were clearing the areas of downed trees and limbs. Ben worked hard clearing the trunks of the Chinaberry trees so we could more easily get in with the chainsaws to drop the trees. It was very much appreciated and it really helped us make more progress.

Wade Matthews took care of litter removal around the main parking area and on the main trails near the entrance. There was a lot of litter this month probably due to heavy public use of the nature center with the good spring temperatures we experienced. We would have had better volunteer numbers if not for the butterfly count competition. We lost several of our regular volunteers. You know who you are and you are in my doghouse. Alright, you know I'm just kidding. I'm glad you guys joined the butterfly counting event.



Bill Novakoski (left), Ben Clement, John Atkins, Bert Peeples, John Burns (seated) take a water break.

Miller Springs Nature Center *cont.*

OK, the July workday report is here and I may have been wrong about the butterfly count causing our volunteer numbers to be low. We only had five volunteers for the July workday. Maybe the heat has something to do with low numbers. The volunteers were John Burns, John Atkins, Ben Clement, Bert Peeples, and Carroll Adcock. With all the rain we had leading up to this workday we changed our work focus to trail repair. There were several spots on the main trail leaving the parking lot that had begun to wash out. John Atkins made some diversion ditches and the rest of us loaded and hauled decomposed granite to fill in the washed-out trails. We also used mulch to fill in one low area that held water during rain events. The mulch should keep the low spot from being so muddy.



John Atkins (left), Bert Peeples and Ben Clement work on trail repairs.



Carroll Adcock—mulch hauler.

The Native Plant Society maintains the bed at the entrance of the parking lot. I happened on a couple of their volunteers working in the bed and asked if they wanted us to help by spreading some mulch. They did not want mulch in the bed itself, but did say the path that runs through the bed could use some fresh mulch so we freshened up the path with a good layer of mulch. We also did a little work on one of the bluebird boxes to help out Kelly Ann's Nestwatch team by removing some ants. All in all the July workday was a little different and still a good successful day.

Thanks to everyone for all the good work and support for the Miller Springs Nature Center!

Chalk Ridge Falls Park

- John Atkins, 2016

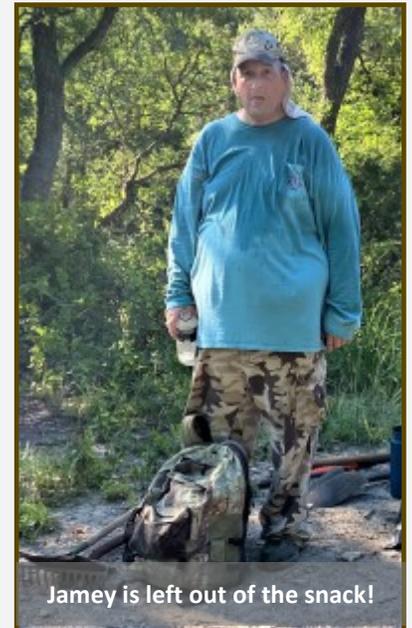
The Chalk Ridge Falls June work party consisted of myself, John Burns, Ben Clement, Jamey Douglass, Tina Atkins, Marilyn Whitworth, Carroll Adcock, and Kelly Ann Blanchard (along with Patrick and Finn). We supplied a total of 16 manhours of volunteer service to the Nature Area this month. We spent the morning improving erosion/drainage features that we had previously installed. After this we cleaned out the leaf

litter that had dammed up beneath a section of boardwalk and trimmed some vegetation. At this time, I received a message from Tina that someone had vandalized the suspension bridge making it unsafe. After a quick assessment, we determined that someone had disconnected one of the hanger buckles, but luckily had not thrown away the hardware. I was able to repair it by straddling the bottom cable and lifting the deck

with one foot and screwing it back together. We also had the large "Mystery Bundle" of trash that no one wanted to touch for fear that there was a body inside. After I loaded it in my trash bag

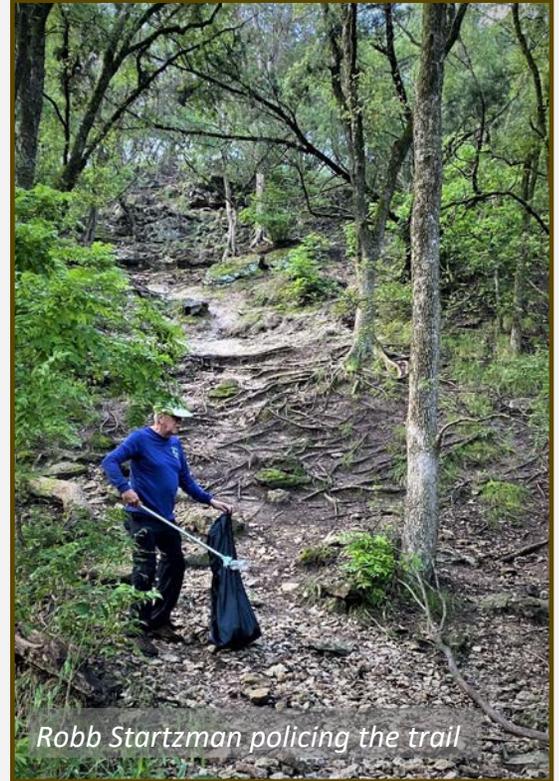
someone told me that a man had told them that he had seen a

snake in the bundle. Thankfully, no body and no snake, just someone's picnic trash all bundled up in a blanket! At the end of the day, Carroll had a welcome surprise for us: ice cold watermelon! Unfortunately, Jamey is allergic to watermelon, so we made him watch us gleefully eating it from across the parking lot.



Chalk Ridge Falls Park *cont.*

In July, myself, Tina, Ben Clement, Jamey Douglass, Marilyn Whitworth, and Robb Startzman showed up to work on another muggy Lampasas River Valley morning. There were several other members who could not make it due to illness and injuries and we hope to see them again next month. The team contributed 12 manhours of labor this month. We were happy to see that the drainage work we had performed on the trail worked during an exceedingly wet month and the trail was in good shape. As expected, the area was full of trash and that is where we spent 90% of our effort. We were surprised to find that one of the trails we had cleared earlier this year was completely overgrown from lack of use. Now that people are back to “normal” activities, there has been a noticeable decline in people using the area during the middle of the week. That is good news, and we will clear the trail this fall. Ben made a new friend this month: a young black



Robb Startzman policing the trail



Ben and the Buzzard

vulture. He seemed quite interested in Ben and to a lesser degree, rest of the work party. Maybe it was because we stunk to high heaven with our giant bags of trash and dirty diapers.



LONGHORN CAVERN STATE PARK

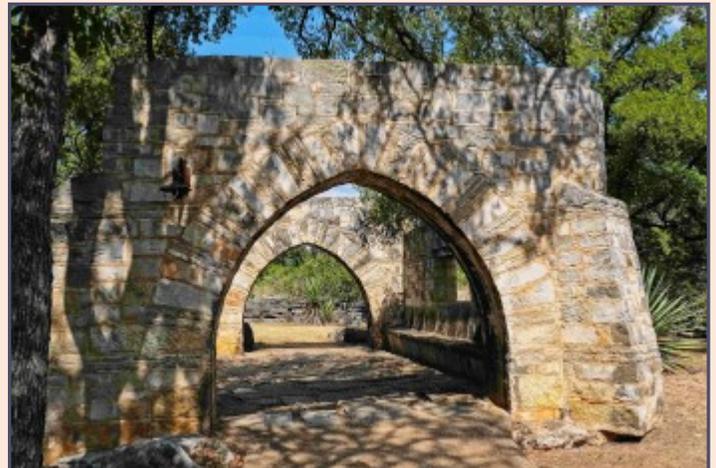


- Zoe Rascoe, 2004



Central Texas is fortunate to have several State Parks close enough to visit in a day. One of those is Longhorn Cavern 12 miles southwest of Burnet. It is a CCC-built Day Use only park so no camping, but there are picnic areas; and there is no entry fee. The underground cavern is remarkable—and—it is 68 degrees inside year-round. A great place for a Texas summer destination! The cave tour is \$19 per person and lasts about 90

minutes. It is fascinating as caves go, and for its unusual history as well. There is also a Wild Cave Tour (physically demanding!) for \$95. A park pass will get you a discount. I've seen folks emerge from that adventure completely covered in mud and moving pretty slowly. I love adventures of all kinds. I'm not sure, but I don't think I like wet, tight places in the dark, though. I did enjoy the challenge of photographing inside a pretty dark cavern. The park is near Inks Lake State Park, so that's another way to fit in a visit.



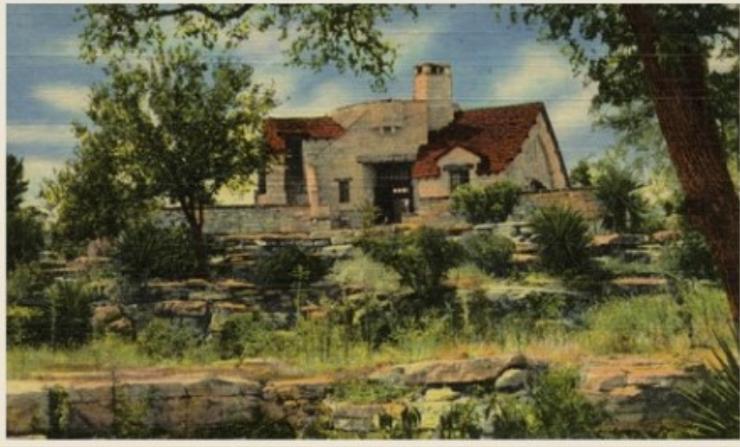
Below is information from the TPWD website for Longhorn Cavern, The National Cave of Texas.

The geologic history of Long-horn Cavern is complex, and the theories do not all agree. Geologists think a shallow tropical sea covered most of Central Texas some 450 to 500 million years ago. The



mud under that sea eventually turned into limestone. Between 280 and 300 million years ago, mountain-building forces shifted under Central Texas in an event known as the "Llano Uplift." During this upheaval, faults and fractures formed in the flat limestone. Water flowed through the cracks, dissolving the limestone. The downward flow continued until water cut great underground streambeds out of solid rock.

LONGHORN CAVERNS STATE PARK *cont.*



LONGHORN CAVERN

Fresh off their completed work at Blanco State Park, CCC Company 854 enrollees turned their attention to the 639-acre Longhorn Cavern State Park in 1934, beginning with the arduous task of hauling some 2.5 tons of silt, debris, and guano out of the underground river-formed limestone cavern. Thus began an organized exploration of one of Texas's natural wonders. The enrollees mapped passageways, installed more than two miles of lighting, and made improvements to allow public access.

From sediment, limestone, and crystal formations found inside the cave, the CCC, under the direction of noted architects Samuel C. P. Vosper and George Walling, fashioned a fantastic and unique set of aboveground public facilities, including the administration building, with its dramatic silhouette, colorful materials, and Gothic arches. An observation tower, one prototype tourist cabin, and cavern entrance compound stairway were also erected, all of cut stone quarried on the park.

Over the last million years, water left a thick layer of mud and debris in the cave so that early visitors could only use a small area of the cavern. The cave has provided shelter since prehistoric times. Anglo settlers discovered the cavern in the mid-1800's. They mined bat guano, used to manufacture gunpowder inside the cave during the Civil War.

Photos previous page and following: Large yuccas dot the rocky landscape. The CCC built an arched entry down into the cavern with many wide rock steps allowing for an easy descent. The tour through the cavern points out many interesting formations, history of uses over time (like for a ballroom!) There is a large old map in the Headquarters building showing how very long and extensive the cavern actually is. And yes, the photo below is call the Dog. There is also a frog, a skull and real live bats along the trail. It's a lovely drive and an interesting stop. You should add it to your list of Texas Parks!



PICTURE THIS



From Selfie to “Selfiescape”

A great outdoor selfie takes your surroundings into account.

selfie

[sel-fee]

noun

An image that includes oneself (often with another person or as part of a group) and is taken by oneself using a digital camera or smartphone, especially for posting on social networks.

BY EARL NOTTINGHAM

As social media-savvy Texans head out this summer for the Great Outdoor Scavenger Hunt (GOSH) and try to capture the perfect “selfie” at scenic locations around the state, it’s a good opportunity to talk a little about selfies and ways to make them even better when shooting outdoors.

Seasoned readers of this magazine should understand that the terms “duck face” and “fish gape” have no relevance to wildlife and are merely two poses employed by serious selfie photographers to aid in capturing maximum facial appeal and, ultimately, a greater accumulation of social media “likes.” In general, most selfies are posed, close-up and often over-retouched facial shots showing little or no background.

However, the key to a great outdoor selfie is to minimize the “self” component and add the environmental elements surrounding you to allow the viewer to not only see you, but you as

part of the overall landscape — a much better way to share your experience. Think of it not as a selfie but as a “selfiescape”!

There are several ways to make your selfiescapes stand out from the crowd and make them much more GOSH-worthy.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LIGHT! Regardless of the location, any photo will have more impact when shot at those “magic light” times of day — in the few minutes surrounding sunrise or sunset. Try to avoid shooting during the sunny midday hours when the light is typically harsh and unflattering. If you must shoot during the harsher hours, try to find an area of open shade. If you must shoot in harsh daylight, many of the new photo enhancement apps can help accentuate colors and add creative effects. Another good shooting opportunity is in light fog, which can produce a nice moody feel.

GO THE DISTANCE. Good composition is

PICTURE THIS

important in turning your selfies to selfiescapes. The best way to accomplish this is by putting distance between the camera and yourself to show more of the surroundings, making you just another compositional element of the broader landscape. At a minimum, a selfie stick will help provide some distance from the camera. For more separation, consider mounting your camera to a small tripod and using the camera's self-timer, which will give you time to walk into the scene. Try not to end up in the center of the frame and instead strategically place yourself off to one side of the frame.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT YOU. Sometimes, the best selfiescape doesn't need to include your face at all. Compositions such as close-ups of feet hanging off a beach lounge chair, hands building a sandcastle or hiking boots trekking



through the desert can often say more than any facial expression. Just make sure you frame the image to include the background to help tell the story.

HAVE FUN WITH ANGLES! No law says the camera must be held at eye level or exactly straight. On the contrary, putting the camera at ground level or raising it high can produce exciting perspectives. Tilting a camera anywhere from 15-45 degrees can often make an image more dynamic and engaging. Diagonal lines in a scene always make it more interesting.

GET CREATIVE WITH EFFECTS. After shooting, explore your camera's creative effects or those from third-party apps. Often, just adding some color saturation or warming the tones can make a world of difference in the final image. Be frugal with effects, though, or your image will look overly processed.

Editor's Note: We are grateful to Russell Roe, Editor of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine we all love, for allowing us to share Earl Nottingham's "Picture This" articles on photography tips. These articles will be a recurring column. Earl grew up and lives in Bell County with his wife Paula, pup Maggie and cat Bertha Jean. He is a good friend to the Texas Master Naturalist Program and a now-retired (but still out shooting!) marvelous nature photographer.

If you can't wait, many of Earl's articles are archived at tpwmagazine.com/photography.





A Conversation with the Friendly Oaks: *Families*

- Bill Novakoski, 2020

The Survivor and Old Patriarch are longstanding oak trees on a peaceable corner we have cohabitated for nine years. We frequently talk when I walk with my domesticated dogs.

The Survivor: "Bill, a very good morning to you. Thank you for your kind understanding earlier this summer when I was too weak to join the conversation with you and Old Patriarch. I did listen carefully, though, and was thrilled to hear that Master Naturalists believe humans and other creatures should live in mutually beneficial relationships. As you can see, I have gained some leaves and am somewhat improved, even though my oak wilt is not cured."

Old Patriarch: "Yes, good morning, Bill. I am yielding this conversation to The Survivor since he feels well. I do, however, want to comment on the joy I saw last evening as your visiting son and daughter walked with you, your wife, and your domesticated dogs after the cooling down of sunset. I especially noticed the happiness your new granddaughter brought your family."

Bill: "Thank you, Old Patriarch. And Survivor, I am so glad you are feeling better."

The Survivor: "I noticed their joy as well, Old Patriarch. Bill, let me share something about how we and the animals view families. In central Texas, summer is the season which is hottest with the longest hours of sunlight and often with thunderstorms that bring too much rain or drought that results in too little rain. Despite the weather conditions, summer is the time when our families are most noticeable. Among plants, seeds become seedlings and pop their "heads" high as they grow taller. We mature trees grow as well, gaining a few inches and sprouting new leaves. Birds fly back and forth to their nests, feeding their recently hatched nestlings. Animals such as our local whitetail deer give birth to their little spotted fawns. Among different plants and animals there is great diversity when it comes to families, but there are many commonalities, too. Families connect individuals to past, present and future generations. Within families, children become parents, and parents become matriarchs and patriarchs. Children bring joy to their parents and grandparents as they develop and learn. Parents give life, provide nurture and protection and teach life skills to their young. Grandparents can impart the perspective and wisdom of many seasons of experience."

Bill: "Wow, The Survivor, this lesson you have given me today is both simple and profound. You have taught me the richness and beauty both in your diversity and in what we have in common."

Old Patriarch: "The Survivor is wise beyond his seasons. Grandpa Bill, you and your wife will enjoy your new role as the patriarch and matriarch of your family, even as you enjoy being parents of your son and daughter."





THE ELK RIVER

KAYAKING THE ELK: EXPLORING THE NEAR OZARKS

- Ward Critz, 2018

It goes without saying that our CTMN membership is pretty familiar with the Texas Hill Country and the enjoyment that comes from visiting the cool rivers that flow there. Especially in the hot summer months. The Guadalupe, Frio, Medina, Sabinal and Blanco are all clear, rock-bottomed rivers with swimming holes and rapids along their length that Central Texans have enjoyed for generations. Most of us have experienced them in a tube, canoe or some other floating device in the course of a weekend or vacation. They have become a bit crowded as the state's population has grown, so exploring some alternatives where the natural beauty and outdoor experience offers more seclusion and opportunities to enjoy a quieter "pack or paddle" trip are in order. This article will introduce you to the Elk River, a spring-fed stream that flows along the Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri borders and empties into the Grand Lake of the Cherokees.



First, a little geography. Across the border from northeast Texas, the land begins to rise toward the Boston Mountains which flank the Oklahoma/Arkansas border in a steady climb to the Ozarks. It is characterized by a large number of state and national forest areas and a tiny population of people. Campgrounds and outdoor opportunities abound. The uplift associated with the Boston Mountains, like that of the Texas Hill Country, gave rise to fractures in the limestone which produced thousands of springs that feed the creeks and rivers found throughout the area. The rivers go by names such as the Illinois, Mulberry, Kings, White and the Elk.

ELK RIVER *CONT.*

The Elk River is formed from the juncture of the Little Sugar Creek in Arkansas and the Big Sugar and Indian Creeks in Missouri, ultimately adding the flow of the Neosho River just before emptying into Grand Lake of the Cherokees at Grove, Oklahoma. Floating the Elk is both easy and enjoyable. There are numerous private campgrounds along its course, all of which will rent



you the float of your choice or let you use your own. Campground staff will pick you up down river at appointed sites and bring you back where you are done. Accommodations range from cabins to rough campsites. An all-day float will generally begin in Pineville, MO and end at [Noel, MO](#). Along the way are deep swimming holes, such as the aptly named Giver Blue where Indian Creek flows into the Elk,

and plenty of gentle, shallow rapids to speed through before pulling into a gravel bar for a beverage and soak in the cold, clear water. Shorter floats are also available from public and private access points along the way.

Summers are long in Central Texas and the heat in August and September offer plenty of incentive to find a cold river bounded by tall shade trees in order to enjoy nature at her best. While our own Hill Country rivers are wonderful, I urge you to look a little further across our northern border and consider discovering the Elk, and the other rivers and trails of the Near Ozarks .



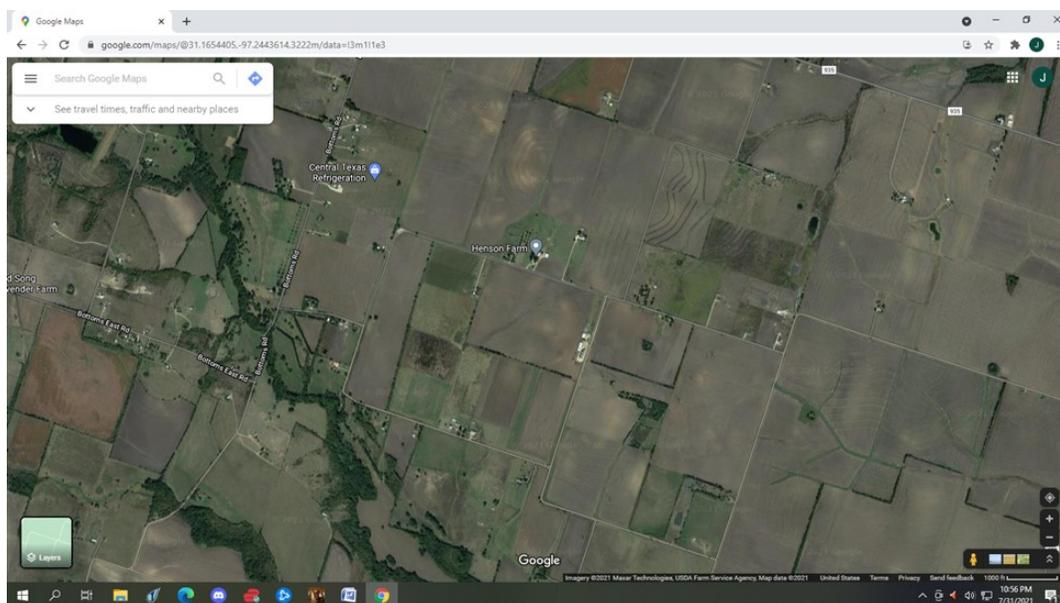
GROUPS, WHICH ONE?

- By Jamey Douglass

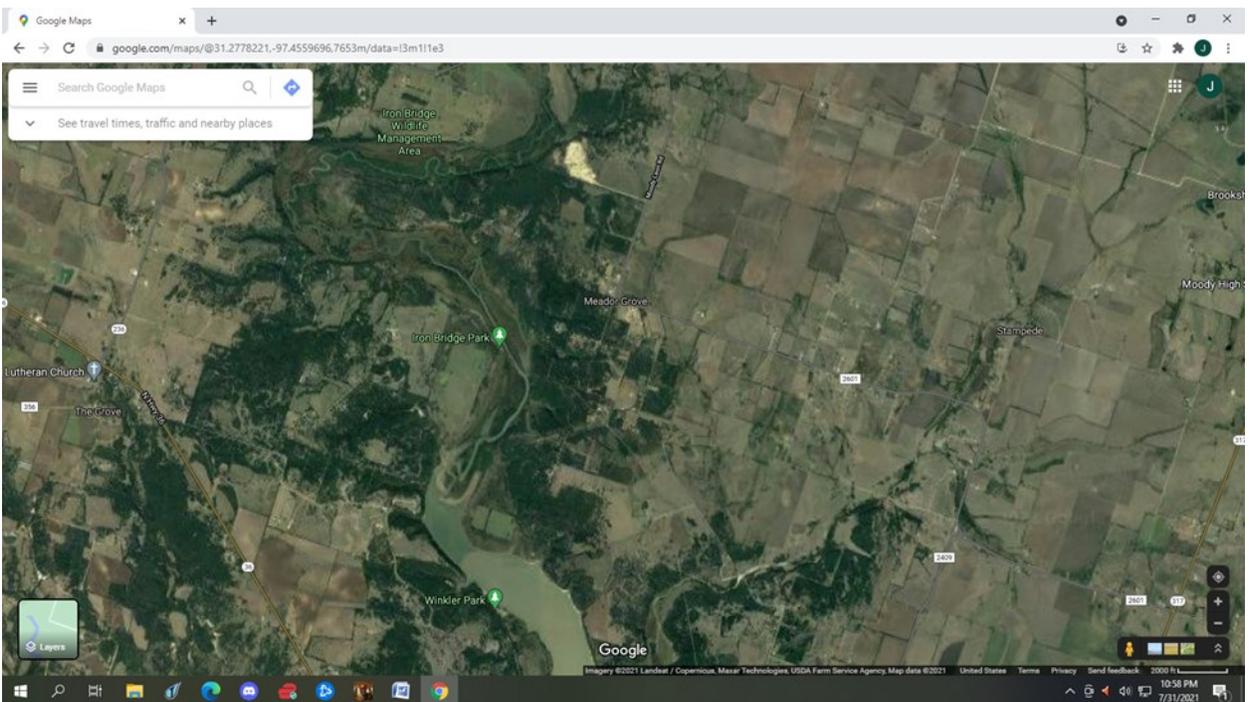
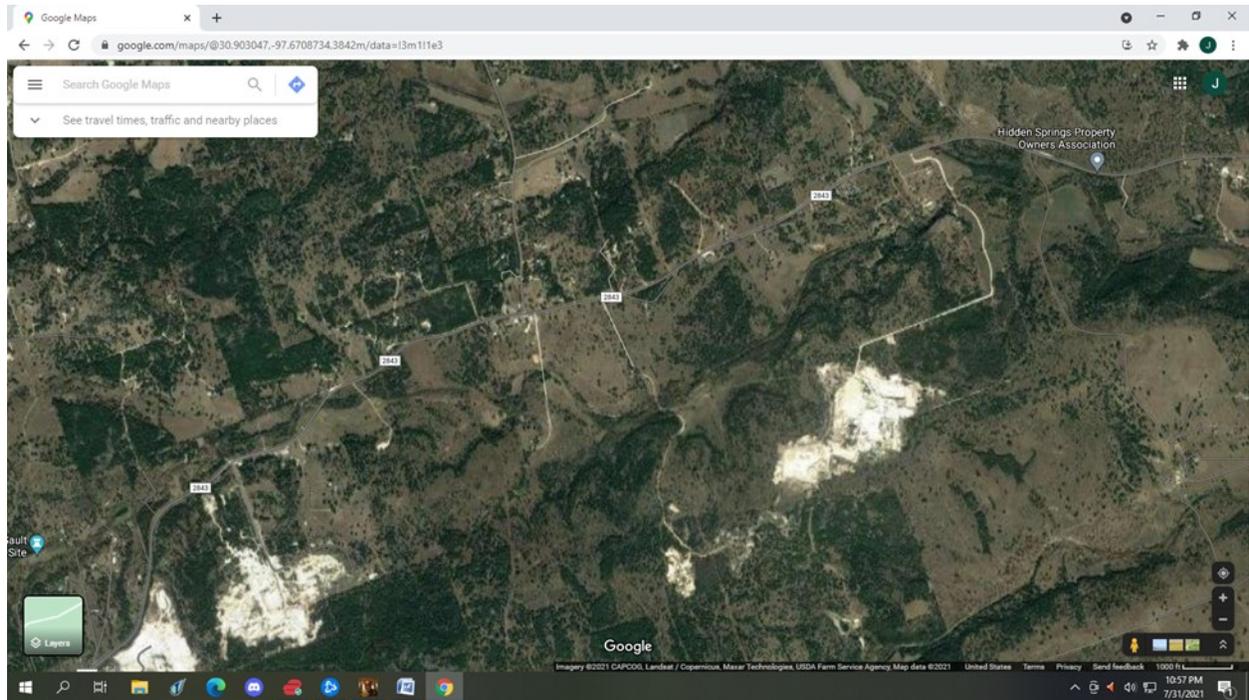
Man naturally likes to identify items and place them in groups. Insects are placed in orders, such as *Odonata* (dragonflies).

Natural Resource managers are no different. In the preface of the publication USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Basin, “Early farmers and ranchers realized that the different soils and climates they encountered required them to grow certain types of crops in order to survive economically. Such terms as “Corn Belt” and “Cotton Belt” were coined because of the crops typically grown by the early settlers. These were very early versions of land resource areas. As soil mapping progressed across the country, soil scientists worked with other natural resource managers to subdivide land into resource units with similar soils, climate, and vegetation or crop types. This work allowed a few soil scientists and natural resource planners to provide soil interpretations and soil conservation recommendations that were useful to many landowners in a region instead of to a few limited individuals.” This is a large publication known as the [Agriculture Handbook 296](#).

So why are MLRAs separated, and does anyone really care? These regions are divided to assist in conservation planning, modeling, identifying plants, soils, land uses, and a myriad of other items. I believe most folks have no clue about soils, vegetation, crops, and land use. However, Master Naturalists find these divisions interesting, and are adept at explaining to the public. Below are three satellite views of Bell County, what MLRA is associated with each image?



GROUPS, WHICH ONE? CONT.



There are three MLRAs in Bell County. They are Grand Prairie; Texas Blackland Prairie, Northern Part; and Edwards Plateau, Eastern Part.

What's in YOUR backyard?



Andreas Wooten is getting a lot of practice after Jenna Chappell's Bug Pinning Class. From top: Blue Margined Ground Beetle, Bark Scorpion, Cicada Killer Wasp, Walking Stick, Ox Beetle. He has an assortment in progress and brought a stunning Red-headed Centipede mounted on a stick to our meeting. He also shared a content yellow warbler. Zoe Rascoe spotted the freshly emerged cicada—one of a zillion in her yard.

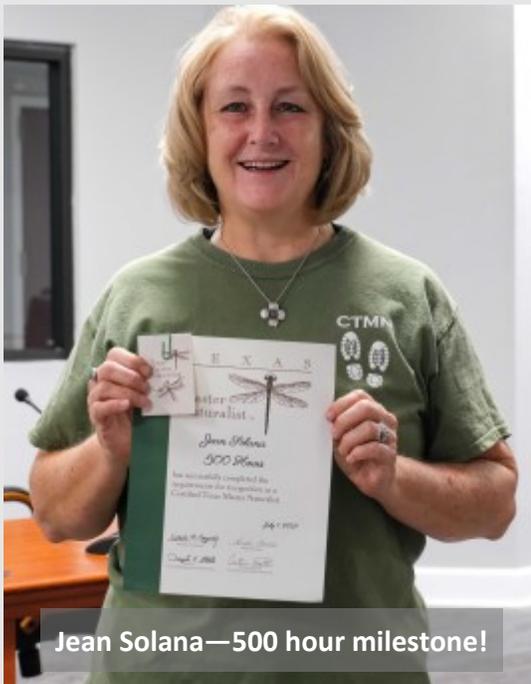
What's in YOUR backyard?



Clockwise from left: Juvenile Cooper's Hawk (did you know their call sounds like a chicken?) and Neon Skimmer near pond in Rascoe's yard. From Juan Anaya's backyard bird paradise: Painted Bunting snacking on sprouted millet; female Baltimore Oriole on an apple; Northern Cardinal mom dishing out grasshoppers for lunch.



MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Jean Solana—500 hour milestone!



Bruce Polikoff—500 hour milestone!



Wade Matthews— 250 hour milestone!



Brent Blumenthal—Initial Certification



Left: Dale Hughling (on right) and Ben Clement (far left) are presented gifts by Training Co-Director Lynn Fleming in appreciation for putting their technology skills to the test during the last 16 months allowing our chapter to train and graduate 34 new Master Naturalists through high quality, web-based instruction under a number of scenarios. Dale and Ben have both contributed greatly to the success of our chapter over the years, and 2020-2021 made their efforts shine!

MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Left: Joe Dorn (on far left) (2014), Sarah Dorn (2014), LouAnn Hight (2010) and Dale Hughling (2010) recertify for 2021.

Right: Lynn Williams (on far left) (2014), Wade Matthews (2015), Bill Abright (2016), Sue Valdez (2013) and Ben Clement (2016) recertify for 2021.



Left: Jaime Harmon (on far left) (2020), Jenna Chappell (2019), Paula Finley (2019) recertify for 2021.



It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living.

- Sir David Attenborough



MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Left: Virginia Sanders, Ft Hood Program Manager in the Natural and Cultural Resources Management Branch, presented a certificate of appreciation to Bill Abright (2016) for “5 years of outstanding support at a volunteer staff member working as an aquatic species monitor for the zebra mussel and ecosystem health. Your professional skills and volunteerism as a licensed social worker are helpful to the Red Cross at Fort Hood and across Texas. Your combined efforts reflect great credit upon yourself, Natural and Cultural Resources, Red Cross and the United States Army.” Signed by Brian Dosa, Director of Public Works.

Congratulations Bill Abright!! You are a credit to the Texas Master Naturalist Program as well!

Thank you to Bill and Bruce for representing our chapter so well!!

Right: Virginia Sanders, Fort Hood Program Manager in the Natural and Cultural Resources Management Branch, presented a certificate of appreciation to Bruce Polikoff (2015) for “5 years of outstanding support as a volunteer for the Natural and Cultural Resources Management Branch, Directorate of Public Works working as an aquatic species monitor. Your hours of labor contributed greatly to team success in monitoring our lakes for the zebra mussel and ecosystem health. Your efforts reflect great credit upon yourself, Natural and Cultural Resources, Directorate of Public Works, and the United States Army.” Signed by Brian Dosa, Director of Public Works.

Congratulations Bruce Polikoff!! You are a credit to the Texas Master Naturalist Program as well!



CHAPTER MEETINGS

Texas Parks Near Me

Tuesday, August 10th, 2021 6:00-8:00PM

Belton Church of Christ 3003 N. Main Street



"Leave No Trace" Presentation

Information on 4 Nearby State Parks

Camping Gear to Save the Day



Saturday, September 18, 2021

6:00-8:00PM

The Fleming Farm

**"TOOL CARE AND
MAINTENANCE"**

First Monday Salado Workday

- Jamey Douglass



What do guns and pickup trucks have in common?

When you purchase a gun or a pickup truck, all kinds of issues come with that product. Guns are fun to shoot, aid in harvesting meat, and can provide a defense in case of trouble. Pickups carry people, haul loads of all sorts of things, provide shelter in stormy weather, and depending on the terrain, can be fun to drive.

I own several guns, and a pickup. So far with CTMN, I have not had to use my gun. However, when I show up at Bell County Museum, or the First Monday Salado workday, I usually leave with more than I brought.



This past Monday, August 02, 2021, several Master Naturalists came to work. There were some additional folk who helped as well. I picked up trash, and the ladies went to town pruning the mealy sage near the statue of Sirena. They quickly filled the trash cans. I broke out my tarp, and my pickup quickly filled over the sides.

Thanks to hauling debris to my home in Temple, I gained two new species of wildlife. As I was moving the trimmings to my shredder pile, I had two Praying Manti on the exterior of the pickup. I moved them to my Bur oak. Here is a photo of the larger of the two.



DR. ALISTAIR DOVE

Studying, conserving & sharing passion for marine life

Funny Scientific Names—Abra Cadabra

I started my career in taxonomy. Its a serious business, the naming of new species, and you're not supposed to make light or fun out of an animal (or plant) name. After all, they are stuck with it for all time. Nonetheless, people can't help themselves and from time to time, you get some real crackers! A fella by the name of Arnold Menke at USDA put together [a list of them](#), so did Doug Yanega.

Here's some of my favourites. Which do you like best?

Agra vation (a beetle)

Colon rectum (another beetle)

Ba humbugi (a snail)

Aha ha (a wasp)

Lalapa lusa (a wasp)

Leonardo davinci (a moth)

Abra cadabra (a clam)

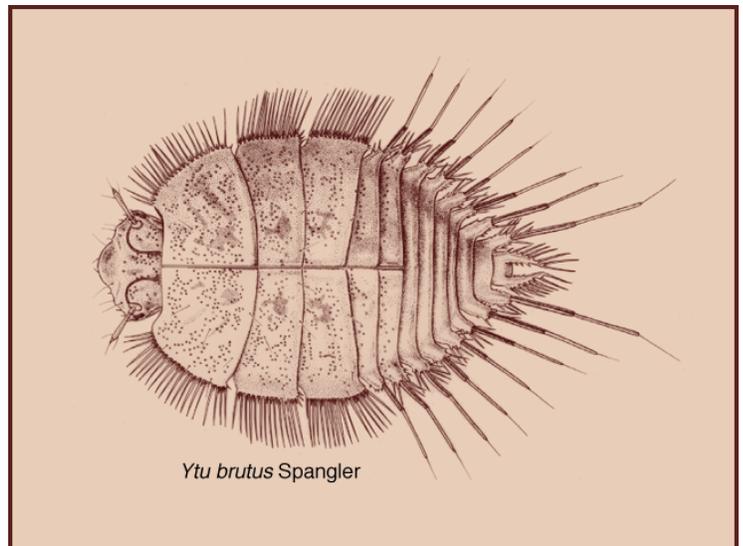
Gelae baen, *Gelae belae*, *Gelae donut*, *Gelae fish*, and *Gelae rol* (all are types of fungus beetles)

Villa manillae, *Pieza kake* and *Reissa roni* (bee flies)

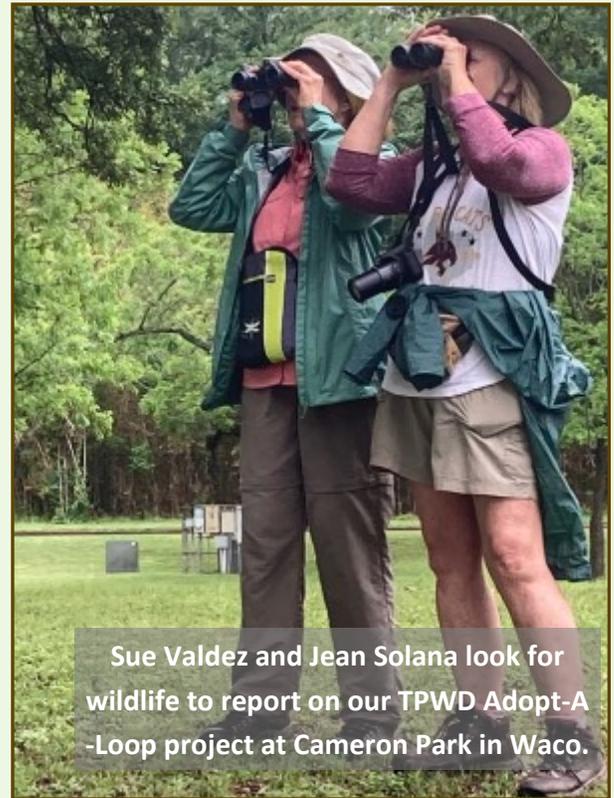
Ytu brutus (a beetle)

And my personal favourite (whenever possible): *La cerveza* (a moth)

I'll drink to that – here's cheers to creative taxonomists!



Master Naturalists at Work



Our chapter members do all sorts of jobs on our trail workdays! Kelly Ann was happy to see the furry mound was just a piece of fake fur and not a dead animal. Below, Jamey Douglass removed an injured sheep from the trail and John Atkins, right, deftly reconnects a bridge cable hanger buckle at Chalk Ridge Falls Park.



Master Naturalists at Work



COPPERAS COVE
LEADER PRESS

Texas Master Naturalists Visit Copperas Cove Library's Summer Reading Program

Thu, 2021-07-22 18:44 david_morris

By BRITTANY FHOLER
Cove Leader-Press

Children learned about different birds and bird nests thanks to a visit from certified Texas Master Naturalists Tuesday afternoon in the Copperas Cove Public Library's meeting room as part of the Summer Reading Program.

In addition to the displays of different types of nests, the group of children, ages 11 and under, got to shake their tail feathers as Master Naturalists Lynn Williams, dressed as Screech the Owl, and Marilyn Whitworth led them in a quick dance lesson teaching how different birds fly.

Williams mentioned vultures, eagles, hummingbirds, flamingos and the Attwater Prairie Chicken, of which the male inflates its yellow air sac to emit a strange, booming sound to "get a girlfriend."

As Screech the Owl, Williams also shared some information about the physiology of a screech owl. While humans have seven bones in their neck that allow for movement, a screech owl has 14 bones that allow it to move its neck, Williams said.

An owl also has zygodactyl toes, which means its feet have two toes pointing forward and two pointing backward.

Williams also read "The Best Nest" by P.D. Eastman about two birds searching for their perfect home before the kids learned about cup nests, cavity nests, suspended cup nests and more.

"The main goal of the Master Naturalist is to educate the next generation to help conserve and preserve all of our natural resources and give them appreciation of them, so they come and they learn something and they get so excited, well, they're going to go out and pass it on and keep it up," Whitworth said about getting to come to the library.

Kaley Saunders brought her son, Luke, 4, to the library Thursday afternoon. They found out about the Master Naturalists coming to the library after they attended the story time earlier that morning, Saunders said. Luke loves animals, especially owls, Saunders said. Screech the Owl was a big hit.

"He asked to come back to meet the bird lady, as he called her," she said. "It was so wonderful, and there's so many people out there that can't afford to always take their children and go do stuff, so this not only is a great way to teach the kids to take care of our Earth and love our birds, but it's something free, so it's great."

Lynn Williams, also known as "Screech" the Owl, led visitors at the Copperas Cove Library through Tails and Tales using her handsewn bird pops with the help of Marilyn Whitworth, Andi Bowsher and Edwina Brown. Thank you to #BrittanyFholer for



the great article on the event and all about the TMN Program, too!



What the heck??

Guy Fowler discovered this gelatinous blob along the shore at Lake Belton. He researched and found it is a freshwater bryozoan *Pectinatella magnifica*— colonies of microscopic invertebrates that live form jelly-like clumps. They are usually an indicator the water is clean. Click the image to learn more from Adam McBeth at Fountains2Go.

Contributing Authors to this Newsletter



Clockwise from top left:
Bill Novakoski, John Atkins, John
Burns, Guy Fowler, Jenna Chappell,
Zoe Rascoe, Linda Fairlie, Jamey
Douglass, Ward Critz.





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Have you visited a National Park or Texas State Park, have “Fish Tales” (of any kind!), backyard nature moments, or travel to places unlike Texas for it’s nature? If you have a story to share, just send me your idea. Volunteer Service hours apply for members!

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Central Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Meetings

Chapter meetings are 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 June (graduation) and December (holiday party!) and occasional outdoor demonstrations. Meetings include a nature-related program and the public is welcome to attend. Find topic information and locations on our website and Facebook page.

The Board of Directors meets the 1st Monday of each month from 11:30am-12:30pm. Meeting notices will be sent to chapter members with location information and all members are welcome to participate.