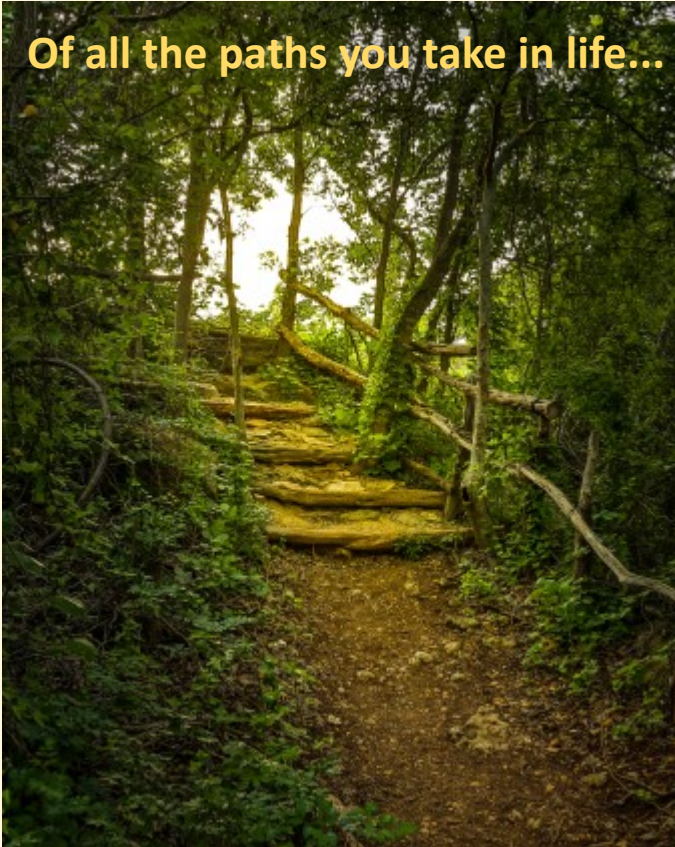


# The Tracker

Central Texas Master Naturalist Newsletter October 2021

*Photo: Lost Maples State Park by Zoe Rascoe*

**Of all the paths you take in life... make sure a few of them are dirt. (John Muir)**



*Trail to Green Pond at Miller Springs, Photo by Terry Rascoe*

Our Chapter was recently offered a great opportunity for advanced training in the sustainable construction and maintenance of trails. [Central Texas Trail Tamers](#), a nonprofit organization based in Austin, made their way to Belton to train 13 of our members who regularly volunteer at one or more of our monthly trail maintenance workdays at Mother Neff State Park, Miller Springs Nature Center, Chalk Ridge Falls Park and other federal parks in our area. Four members of the Belton Parks and Recreation staff who work on trails at Miller Springs Nature Center also attended the training.

Miller Springs Nature Center, an Army Corps of Engineers park, is open to the public thanks to an agreement between ACOE and the cities of Belton and

Temple. There is little funding for maintenance or improvements, so trained volunteers are an important resource and our chapter is pleased to have a role in this effort.

The 260 acre natural area at the Lake Belton dam borders both Temple and Belton. Miller Springs has become a very popular outdoor location for hiking and running, biking, birding, photography, scout projects, dog walks and fishing—and more. Our chapter members get their geology training here (go Dr. Rock!), the 2019 Training Class built, installed and regularly monitors songbird houses throughout the Nature Center, and our 2021 Training Class is doing the same with native bee houses near the MSNC entry parking area (see our August 2021 newsletter cover story on why that's such a good idea!) We have a crew of faithful MSNC volunteers, led by John Burns, removing invasive species every month, and we are happy to support the Public Volunteer Work Days sponsored by City of Belton Parks and Recreation Department. All to say: we see great value in Miller Springs Nature Center and work hard to help maintain it and promote it as a jewel in our communities for many outdoor activities.





Back row (left to right) Kevin Deiters, Sharon Schmitz, Bill Novakoski, Woody Durbin\*, Manuel Zapata\*, Jaime Harmon, Jared Siegler\*, Hayden Bennett\*, Carroll Adcock, Scott Newsom, Ben Clement, John Atkins, Keller Matthews. Front row (left to right) Daisy Klassy, Andrea Liles, Kelly Ann Blanchard, Jean Solana, Stephen Schmitz, Zoe Rascoe. \*Belton Parks and Recreation staff

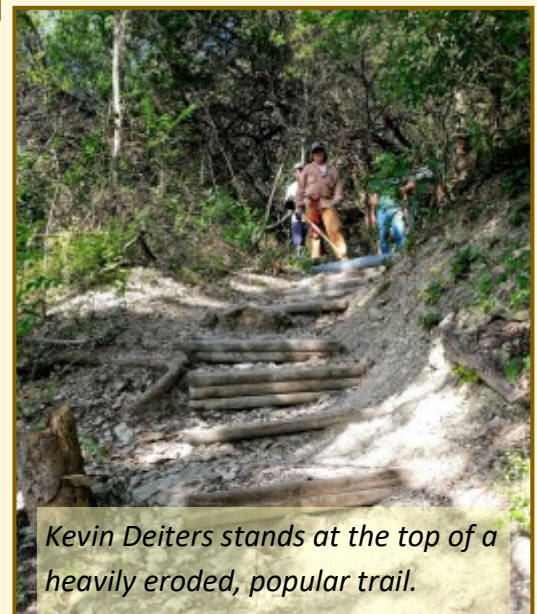
In an effort to up our game in the area of trails, we reached out to the Trail Tamers organization a few months ago. After visiting MSNC, they also recognized the opportunities there and they had the expertise to guide us in addressing badly eroding trails and using the best tools and techniques for maintaining trails for the wide variety of uses. Kevin Deiters (a Trail Tamers founder and Past President) and Scott Newsom (current President) were our instructors for an evening class on the mechanics of sustainable trail building (there's a whole language for that!) as well as a Saturday morning hands-on field training session at Miller Springs Nature Center.

We are looking forward to additional training and possibly working alongside the Central Texas Trail Tamers in our area. Watch for us on the trails at local state and federal parks!

**- Zoe Rascoe, 2004**



*Scott Newsom leads a team learning to have "trail eyes".*



*Kevin Deiters stands at the top of a heavily eroded, popular trail.*





It is time to start thinking about next year's officers and directors. Are you good with administration? Do you think you might like to serve our Chapter? The Offices of Vice President and Secretary are up for election this year and serve for 2 years. If you are interested in running for office, contact John Atkins. Full job descriptions can be found at <https://txmn.org/centraltexas/members-only/chapter-documents/> under the Chapter Operating handbook. This is a summary of the different job descriptions:

**Vice President:** Assists the President and act for the President in the President's absence, participates as a member of the Annual Financial Examination Committee, and chairs the Program Committee. Jean Solana is our current Vice President.

**Secretary:** Keeps minutes of Board and Chapter meetings, publishes a weekly calendar of events, keeps a record of attendance, and makes sure there is a quorum present. Jessica Dieter is our current Secretary.

Following election of officers, various directors will be appointed. Are you interested in any of these jobs? If so, please let me know (**especially if you currently hold the position and want to continue!**)

Zoe Rascoe has been **Registrar** since I joined and before. She is first contact for any new members and she helps them through the process of becoming a Texas Master Naturalist.

Dale Hughling has been **Technology Director** since before I joined as well. He keeps the wheels on the VMS car, and makes sure we have the tools we need for presentations, meetings, etc.

**Advanced Training/Volunteer Service Directors:** This is actually a 3-person committee. Currently, Mary Ann Everett and Gail Hughling are taking care of this job. When Members request that a program be considered for an Advanced Training or Volunteer Service, they review and recommend them for approval or disapproval, then set them up in VMS and let members know about the new opportunity.

*Cont.*

# President's Pen cont.

Andi Bowsher is our current **Membership Director**. She reviews and approves or disapproves VMS Service and Advanced Training hours, making sure hours are recorded under the correct opportunities. She also provide names of members achieving certification and milestone awards and provides these awards. She also provides reports and keeps our data maintained, included member status, available opportunities for members, etc.

Carroll Adcock is our current **New Class Representative**. Next year's representative should come from the 2021 class. This person would represent the New Class as a member on the Board attending Board meetings, participate as a member of the New Class Committee for the next cycle training class, and attend the next cycle New Class training sessions to provide the new class insight into the New Class Representative Board position.

We currently have 2 **At-Large Board Members** – Juan Anaya and Marilyn Whitworth. They are member representatives to the board and attend all board meetings. They are eligible to vote.

There are also many positions in our various committees, such as the Training Committee, Communications Committee, Program Committee and Hospitality Committee. Please consider whether you would like to help out in any of these committees!



*Previous Training Committee meeting at Miller Springs Nature Center*

Central Texas Master Naturalists  
and Mother Neff State Park

*PRESENT*

# 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 on October 16th 7-10:00pm***

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

Once a year Central Texas Master Naturalists partner with Mother Neff State Park to celebrate some of our local pollinators, the moths. This is a free public event featuring nocturnal activities such as **black light insect-attracting stations**, collections displaying **local moth specimens**, **scorpion hunts** (they glow in ultraviolet light!), a guided tour **of the night sky**, **glow-in-the-dark face paint**, and lots of **photo opportunities and crafts for the kids**. Moth Night is open to visitors of all ages. We encourage you to bring a blacklight flashlight (find them at hardware stores) and wear neon colors. Your family will be **GLOWING** with excitement!! *Gates open at 6:45 pm.*

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆  
*The more you know:* Moths are typically thought of as night-dwelling, but many also fly during the day. There are over 11,000 species of moth that reside in North America. The largest moth found here is the Cecropia Moth that has a wingspan of up to 7 inches. The Cecropia Moth is a commonly spotted resident of Mother Neff State Park and the rest of Central Texas.

Flowers commonly pollinated by moths share the following characteristics:

- Occur in clusters
- Are usually white or dull in color (butterflies prefer bright colors)
- Open in the late afternoon or into the evening
- Flowers that produce lots of nectar that is hard to reach (examples are Morning Glory, Gardenia, Tobacco, and Yucca plants.)



Some moths are specialized pollinators meaning they are the only insect capable of pollinating a specific plant. An example occurs between the Yucca plant and the Yucca moth. The Yucca moth creates a “pollen ball” for her eggs from the pollen of the Yucca flower. She then inserts the ball into the hard-to-reach stigma of other Yucca plants. Without this behavior yuccas could not reproduce.





# Mother Neff State Park

1680 TX Hwy-236, Moody

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

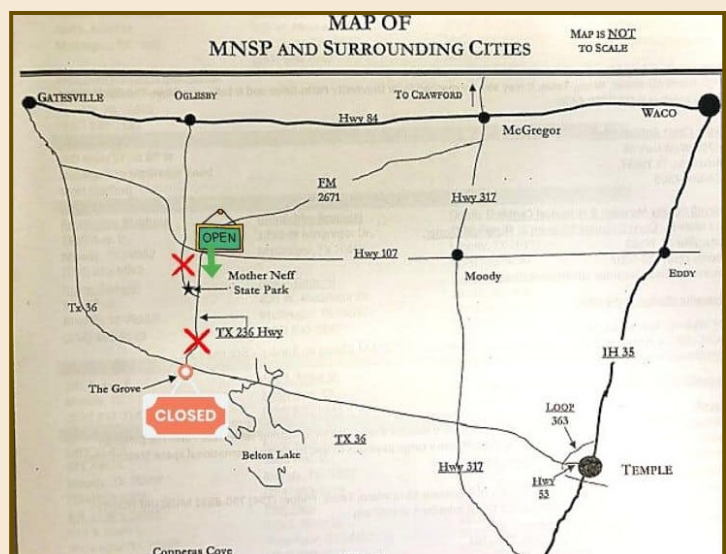


*John Ziegeler conquers the mulch pile!*

John Ziegeler has been carrying the load lately at Mother Neff. We had a one-day notice call about unloading a big load of mulch and he stepped up and unloaded most of it on August 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> with help from Jamey Douglass. Then he went on to cutting the grass, edging, maintaining campsites as well as the CCC cabin and trails, and removing invasive grasses.

John also cleaned up and cut grass at the Bottoms by the Leon River. He performed equipment maintenance and repairs and relocated road signs. Whew! I'm exhausted just thinking about it. Bryan, the ranger there, was **very** thankful for his help.

John reminded me of important news – Beginning September 2021, TxDOT will be replacing the Leon River bridge south of Mother Neff so Tx Hwy 236 coming from the south, Oglesby Neff Park Road and CR 338 will be closed for up to a year. **Please come to the main entrance of the park by accessing Hwy 236 from the north by way of FM 107 or FM 2671.**



# Mother Neff State Park *Cont.*

## Upcoming Events at Mother Neff State Park

**October 16th CTMN/MNSP Moth Night! 7-10pm** (see page 4 for details)  
CTMN members are needed for all or part of 6:00-10:30pm to set up, help with our stations and pack up our gear. We have been doing Moth Nights for many years and now partnering with Mother Neff State Park has been a great move. We will need help with black light insect attracting stations, glow-in-the-dark face painting, a guided tour of the Night Sky, a scorpion hunt, photo ops and crafts for kids. For CTMN members who need Volunteer Service hours—this would be a great event to work! Please contact Jessica Deiter to help ([jessycatd@googlemail.com](mailto:jessycatd@googlemail.com))

**October 23rd Fall Festival at Mother Neff 10:00am-2:00pm** Hosted by Mother Neff State Park Association. CTMN will have discovery trunks out and fun activities for kids. Chapter member helpers are needed for this event (please contact Jean Solana). Park entry fees will be waived during the event. Attendees can visit displays about the Civilian Conservation Corps contributions to our state park system and follow a storybook trail to the CCC cabin. Dessert samples will be provided by the Leon River Dutch Oven Gang. In addition to CTMN's activities, the event will feature the Buffalo Soldiers, Scavenger Hunts, children's games and crafts, interpretive hikes, and Dutch oven cooking demonstrations.

**Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities for CTMN members**—Contact Jean Solana and she will connect you with appropriate park staff to schedule your work visit.

- 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
- Bird blind maintenance





Hello everyone!

It was very hot for our August workday. We had 7 people come out on this hot morning. Robb Startzman came out for the first time to work with us at the nature center. He joined Marilyn Whitworth to pick up trash. Marilyn advised there was not as much trash as normal. I am guessing this was because it has been so hot the number of visitors might have been a little less than normal. John Atkins, Steven Brown, Bert Peeples, Ben Clement, and myself (John Burns) traveled down the Armadillo trail to remove some Chinaberry trees we had left when we worked the same area in June.

The goal for the day was to remove a somewhat small area of trees quickly in order to be done early due to the heat and humidity. I had hoped it would take us an hour or a little more when actually it took about two hours. The big thing was we met our goal of removing all the Chinaberries in this one area.



*It is reported that John Atkins is in this photo working to eradicate a chinaberry infestation near the dam.*



It is always satisfying to complete an area and to be able to visually see the difference. I hate to say it but as usual I failed to take before and after photos. I just get too focused on the job and getting the work done and forget to take pictures.

*L to R: Bert Peeples, Marilyn Whitworth, Ben Clement, John Atkins, Robb Startzman and Steven Brown.*



# Miller Springs Nature Center *cont.*

We had a good workday in September. I messed up a little because I had planned on us doing some lighter work due to the heat we had been experiencing and as it turned out the weather was actually very pleasant. We stayed with my plan to pick up litter and



scope out work for future workdays. We had eight folks turn out so it was a very good crew. Our volunteers were (left to right) Bert Peeples, John Burns (me!), Bill Novakoski, Matt Ridley, Stephen Schmitz, Sharon Schmitz, Marilyn Whitworth and Kelly Ann Blanchard. Matt and Bill teamed up. Stephen and Bert teamed up. Then

Marilyn, Sharon, Kelly Ann and I teamed up.

The two teams of guys took off into the rough country. I think they were trying to see how deep into the woods they could get. Just kidding although I know they went into some more remote areas than the rest of us did. Our team of four ended up splitting up later when we started hitting some areas that were a little harder on the knees. Kelly Ann and myself continued on down the Armadillo trail and Kelly Ann gave me a little catch up on the trail tamers class that took place last month. I was not able to take part in the class so it was nice to hear a little more information about the class while we were walking and picking up trash. It's always good to multi-task.

All in all it was a good day and we ended up collecting about three bags of trash. When Kelly Ann and I arrived back at the parking area, several of the others were there and I noticed Sharon was working on the new bee houses. One of them had started to fall apart because it was leaning a little and the bamboo pieces are very slick and just kept falling out of the box. It took several of us and quite a bit of patience, but I think we got it put back together pretty well. I was surprised to see these bee houses. I was told this was the project for the class of 2021. Great idea!

Thanks to everyone for all the good work and support for the Miller Springs Nature Center! Everyone is welcome to join us next month.



*Stephen and Sharon Schmitz and John Burns at our bee houses near the parking lot.*



# Chalk Ridge Falls Park

**- John Atkins, 2016**

We knew that it was going to be hot in August, so we had planned for a relatively easy workday that month. Our plan was to hike to the source of the creek, then clean up trash on our way back to the trailhead. The team (left to right) consisted of Robb Startzman, Kelly Ann Blanchard, Tina Atkins, Ben Clement and myself.

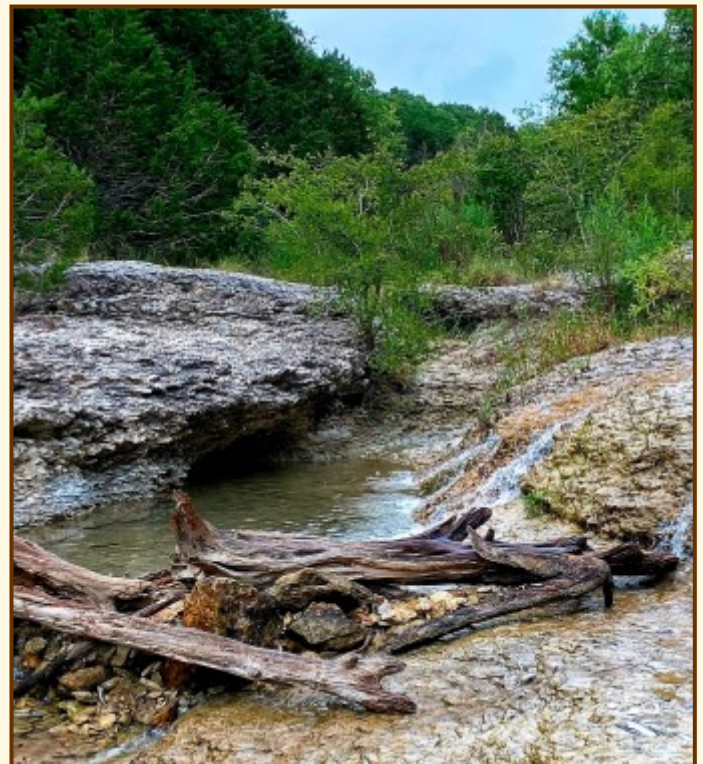


Everything went as planned and everyone seemed to enjoy having a “light” workday. The upper stream was relatively free from trash, but the area around the bridge was horrible. What is it about humans that makes them believe it is acceptable to throw

trash over the side of a bridge? It’s hard to believe that the same areas that people use for graduation and engagement photos, other people feel free to use as a dump.

The August workday came to a sad ending when later the news broke about a pet that had died after playing in the water that day. The culprit was cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) poisoning. The park has been closed for testing ever since then. Maybe it will be opened again in October before the next scheduled workday. Stay flexible.

Our September workday moved to Cedar Gap Park, another on our rotation. *Cont’d*





# Cedar Gap Park

In September, we shifted the workday upstream to Cedar Gap Park south of Harker Heights. Our team that day consisted of (left to right) Kelly Ann and Tait Blanchard, Marilyn Whitworth, Ben Clement, Robb Startzman, Jamey Douglass and myself (the shadow). The team split into two groups, one to focus on trash removal and one to focus on invasive plant removal. My strategy for invasive removal at Cedar Gap is to clear the uplands first, since the low areas will always be periodically reseeded by flooding. We will never eradicate the chinaberry trees, but if we can keep them pinned near the shoreline, we will be making an impact.



Our focus on this day was a small draw north of the boat ramp. Unfortunately, all the chinaberry trees here are large enough to require sawing. With only one chainsaw, it was slow going. To make matters worse, almost every tree was surrounded by a head-high wall of green briars, which required you to cut a path to the tree before ever starting to cut it. It was bad, my forearms look like I tried to wrestle a bobcat. Between the briars, rocks, and thrown chains, the progress was slow. Although the temperature was relatively low, sun was brutal, and breeze was non-existent. Since I'm currently on a bunch of medications for an inner ear issue, I was especially feeling the effects of the sun. At the two-hour mark, everyone was ready to call it a day and we happily trudged back to the parking lot.

I'd like to thank everyone that came out to help at both parks. Whether you are picking up trash, clearing a path to the tree, or simply handing down a spray bottle, you are making an impact. See you out there!



***OUCH!! And chiggers are still out, too!***

# 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!

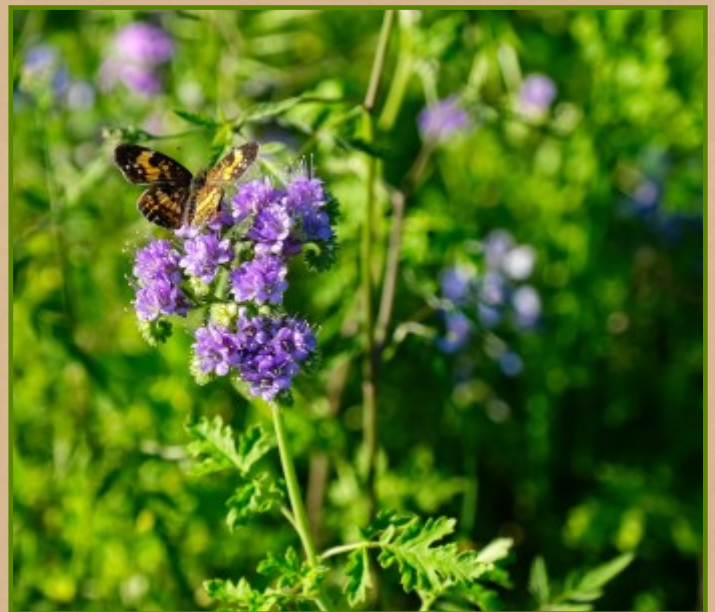
## TEXAS POLLINATOR BIOBLITZ

What began as a community science project to track the yearly migration of Monarch butterflies along the “flyway” to Mexico has grown to include multiple pollinators throughout Texas. Bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, birds, bats, and the plants they pollinate are all subjects of the upcoming Texas Pollinator BioBlitz from October 1-17, 2021.

Organized by Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Texas Nature Trackers, the BioBlitz seeks help from community scientists like you to provide important data about pollinators, their habitats, and their patterns. Wildlife scientists then use this data to manage and conserve pollinator populations in Texas.

Participation in this year's Pollinator BioBlitz is a breeze! You can make your observations anywhere in Texas, even your backyard. Then, you can record your data in two different ways: by using iNaturalist or by uploading photos to social media with the hashtag #TXpollinators. Your observations will automatically be collected for the project.

If you are using iNaturalist, you can take it a step further by joining the [2021 Texas Pollinator BioBlitz project](#) within iNaturalist. And if you're looking for inspiration to make the BioBlitz even more fun, [check out this fun list of daily challenges!](#)





# FIELD NOTES

*Cont.*

## FEATURED COMMUNITY SCIENCE PROJECT

### Texas Pollinator BioBlitz

**Where:** Anywhere in Texas

**When:** October 1-17, 2021

#### How to get involved:

1. Visit the [2021 Texas Pollinator BioBlitz website](#) and register to receive weekly challenges, event information, and other fun stuff. (Note: Your observations will still be counted even if you do not register.)
2. Observe! During the date range, observe pollinators and plants in whatever way is fun for you. Use iNaturalist to record and share your findings. Upload photos to social media and tag #TXpollinators. However you choose to submit it, your data will be a valuable contribution to community science.
3. Attend an event! There are Texas Pollinator BioBlitz events all over the state – [check this list](#) to find an event close to you. Luckily, there will be a Texas Pollinator BioBlitz event in Nolanville on October 2, 2021, so you won't have to go far! Contact Kelly Ann Blanchard at [kelly.a.blanchard@gmail.com](mailto:kelly.a.blanchard@gmail.com) for more details about the event.



Texas Master Naturalists, remember to keep track of any time spent participating in the Texas Pollinator BioBlitz so you can enter your Volunteer Service hours into VMS at “Data Collection Activities: TMN Field Research” and put Texas Pollinator BioBlitz Oct 2021 in the description box.



# A Conversation with the Friendly Oaks:

## *Time*

- Bill Novakoski, 2020

*My friends, The Survivor and Old Patriarch, are longstanding oak trees on a peaceable corner near Ding Dong, Texas. This column is written from notes I've taken on our conversations to share with nature-loving Master Naturalists.*

The Survivor: "Bill, good morning. Old Patriarch and I recently discussed how much more leisurely and joyful your walks appear to be with your domesticated dogs. Before you retired, your morning walks were often more hurried. Soon after finishing the walk, you would drive your automobile down the hard black path and not return until nearly sunset."

Old Patriarch: "Yes, Bill, at times now you are chatting with your dog companions and you don't even mind when the smaller black dog stops to smell the flowers along the gravel road or when the brown dog stops to watch the deer feeding on forbs. Even when you are in deep thought, your pace is relaxed and your face appears cheerful."

Bill: "Hello friends. You are so observant. We humans can be so time conscious and hurried, trying to pack too many activities into our days. We hang time devices on our walls and wear them on our wrists. We divide our days into 24-hour segments and schedule tasks for most of those segments, and we repeat this busyness day in and out. Since many humans work inside buildings, not even changes in weather or seasons interrupt the routines of our endless activities. Sadly, the rushing and fear of being late often cause problems in our relationships and cause stress, leaving us without peace and happiness."

The Survivor: "How glad we are not to have to organize our lives around those time devices! Our days are marked by daylight and night. They vary in seasons of spring with increasing warmth and the birth of new life, a summer of hot breezes and much growth, a cooling fall with a shortening of daylight and the cold winter of dormancy and rest. The cycle of seasons is repeated throughout our lives. Different animals and plants have different lifespans and experience fewer or more of these cycles. Our pace of life allows for calmness, contentment and friendships."

Bill: "Humans who work in some professions, such as farmers, fishers and hunters, know and understand nature's timekeeping of days and seasons."

Old Patriarch: "Bill, would you please encourage Master Naturalists to practice and teach our ways of timekeeping so they can have happier and more peaceful lives? And Bill, promise me you will never strap a human time device around any of my limbs. Ha, ha!"

Bill: "Old Patriarch, I promise."





# PICTURE THIS



*Sensitive natural areas, like Gorman Falls at Colorado Bend State Park (left), are vulnerable to ever-increasing foot traffic. Signs and barriers are intended to limit damage.*

## Responsible Nature Photography

*Photographers need to put nature first to protect landscapes and wildlife.*

### BY EARL NOTTINGHAM

It may be a rhetorical question, but as outdoor photographers who admire the wide variety of beautiful landscapes in Texas, we need to ask ourselves: Is it possible that we can actually be a liability to those same landscapes that we cherish? Is it possible that we could be on the way toward loving them to death?

Historically, photography has been a wonderful medium to promote the appreciation and conservation of wild places. Iconic images by photographers such as Ansel Adams inspired generations of Americans to venture outdoors and hit the trails to experience the grandeur for themselves. Sadly, over the years, many of those trails and the areas surrounding them have become degraded by the throngs of nature lovers and photographers who use them. More and more, some photographers are trampling wild lands, ignoring regulations, trespassing property lines, damaging sensitive areas, disturbing wildlife and inviting (implicitly or explicitly) the public to do the same.

Contributing to that is a convergence of complex factors that have an increasingly negative impact on public, private and protected lands. These factors include:

- The rise of social media, increasing the ease of sharing photos and location information online.
- A significant increase in the popularity of photography.
- Steep increases in visitation to public lands and wild places.
- Lack of widespread knowledge of basic stewardship practices and outdoor ethics.

One international organization, [Nature First: The Alliance for Responsible Nature Photography](#) developed seven core principles called the “Nature First Principles” as a guide for both professional and recreational photographers to minimize impact on the land and preserve pristine locations. Photographers have always been some of nature’s best ambassadors. Let’s continue the tradition.

# PICTURE THIS

## **PRINCIPLE #1: PRIORITIZE THE WELL-BEING OF NATURE OVER PHOTOGRAPHY.**

We are guests in wild places, with their unique natural features and diverse, delicate ecosystems. We, therefore, should tread lightly and never cause harm to the natural world in our pursuit of photography. Instead, we should minimize our impact to the greatest degree possible in order to preserve and protect these places we love.

## **PRINCIPLE #2: EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT THE PLACES YOU PHOTOGRAPH.**

Different landscapes require different kinds of stewardship practices, so in order to best care for these places, we need to be knowledgeable about them. Knowledge about the environments we photograph is essential to effective stewardship.

## **PRINCIPLE #3: REFLECT ON THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF YOUR ACTIONS.**

Seemingly innocuous actions may have significant consequences. For example, it might not seem like a big deal to set up a tent next to a lake or in a field of wildflowers for a photo, but such activities can have a cascade of negative effects. Other visitors will do the same, eventually eroding riparian areas that are necessary habitat for wildlife, or permanently eliminating the ability of vegetation to grow in heavily trafficked areas. Also, consider how your behavior affects the experience of other users of natural places. Even if a photographer does not cause damage to a place, he or she may still ruin the experience of others by actions such as using drones or leading noisy groups.

## **PRINCIPLE #4: USE DISCRETION IF SHARING LOCATIONS.**

Sharing location information can have significant consequences for that location. As soon as a place is determined to be photogenic, it becomes a magnet for photographers and the general public. Many natural places, such as soft travertine terraces below waterfalls, simply cannot survive a significant increase in visitation. If you decide to share

information, share the locations only of well-known places or areas which are unlikely to be damaged by increased visitation. Some areas can also be seasonally sensitive such as wildflower fields.

## **PRINCIPLE #5: KNOW AND FOLLOW RULES AND REGULATIONS.**

It might be tempting to hop over a fence and venture into private land for a photo. These actions, however, can have a snowball effect with negative consequences for both the land and others in the photography community, possibly increasing the likelihood of further restrictions on photographers.

## **PRINCIPLE #6: ALWAYS FOLLOW “LEAVE NO TRACE” PRINCIPLES.**

You can take Leave No Trace a step further by striving to leave a place better than you found it by practicing these principles and doing simple things like picking up litter and reporting vandalism.

## **PRINCIPLE #7: ACTIVELY PROMOTE AND EDUCATE OTHERS ABOUT THESE PRINCIPLES.**

Regardless of the size of your audience, you have the ability to teach others about these principles and encourage their adoption. When you share your photos or stories about your travels, you can influence others to be good stewards of our public lands, thus amplifying these messages.

*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. If you can’t wait, many of Earl’s articles are archived at [tpwmagazine.com/photography](http://tpwmagazine.com/photography).*







## - Jean Solana, 2019

Everyone loves a field of wildflowers – but how do you grow one? You start with seeds – you buy them or gather them. Places to buy seed include: Native American Seed in Junction, Tx, Turner Seed in Breckinridge, Tx, Wildseed Farms in Fredericksburg or buy them online. Make sure they are seeds for Texas. I ordered a Texas/Oklahoma mix off Amazon this year – they were one inch tall for the February Megafreeze and they survived and made a beautiful wildflower patch.

Which plants do you choose? The National Wildlife Federation has a great site called [“Host Plants by Ecoregion”](#). Be sure and choose plants for each of the seasons.

To gather seeds, you wait until they are brown and dry and then collect them in a paper sack or grocery bag – make sure the bag is open so any moisture can get out. Then get ready to do the “coneflower stomp”.



My resource book, “The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook” by Stephen Packard and Cornelia

Mutel says to prepare seeds for planting, you make a 2 x 2 foot wood frame with ¼ inch wire on it and stomp on the seed heads until they are ground into seeds.

*Cont...*





Another handy tool to collect milkweed and bluebonnet seeds is an organza bag – the type of bag used in weddings to hold rice. You tie the bag over bluebonnets or milkweed pods to contain them when their seeds burst forth.



Once you have dried seeds you are ready to plant – October and November are the best months. However, I asked for wildflower seeds for Christmas presents – planted them in early January and they still did fine. Don't bury the seeds very deep – just loosen the dirt with a rake and sprinkle them on the loose soil. Barely cover them up – then stomp them in place. Do not fertilize – but I use compost to cover them up. The black compost helps me remember where I planted them. I draw diagrams of my planting beds and label them, as well.



My results were mixed this year – the flowers that came up well were monarda/bee balm, Indian Blanket, prairie coneflower, standing cypress, Maximillian sunflower, Illinois bundleflower, and bush sunflower. I already have a natural patch of Engelmann Daisy. My good meadow soil had better results than my clay and rocky patches. Bluebonnets and milkweed continue to be a challenge. My book suggests bagging in perlite

and refrigerating for a month – maybe I will try that this year. If anyone would like free Sideoats Grama grass you can come to my house and I will show you how to strip it where it grows on my I35 slope. It's the state grass of Texas and our new Master Naturalist pin has it on it. Email me with any questions – [jeansolana@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jeansolana@sbcglobal.net).







## Get To Know: Lynn Williams

- Janice Gibbs, 2021

Lynn Williams of Copperas Cove spent her career as an educator, introducing middle school students to the wonders of life science. As a Master Naturalist, Lynn continues that work with youngsters who show up at the many events where members of the Central Texas Master Naturalists have booths where participants can learn about and make plaster casts of animal foot prints, explore the skulls of local predators and prey or solve puzzles about the animals that make up our Central Texas surroundings.

Lynn learned about Master Naturalists at a home and garden show where she went to pick up a soil testing kit. She initially stopped at the wrong booth where she was given directions to the appropriate table after she learned all about the goals of the Master Naturalists.

After receiving the required training in 2014, Lynn was asked to come up with a presentation on the Titmouse that could be used by local Master Naturalists in school presentations and at community events. Admitting to having obsessive tendencies, Lynn expanded the Titmouse project to include many more birds. Patterns for Christmas decorations turned out to be ideal for making models of the birds.



Lynn has a number of different felt birds that are seen in the area. She also constructed models of the different bird nests. Students learn better when they can touch the objects, Lynn said. "I try to have something for them to take home", she said. "If they can teach mom and dad or a brother or sister about what they learned they're more likely to remember it."

Lynn has an alter ego named Screech, that delights both children and adults. The owl comes with a costume and has quite an impact on those who meet the bird.

Lynn grew up in San Antonio and liked the outdoors, but didn't have much opportunity to do much exploration.

There were field trips during college where Lynn saw many new critters, but being a Master Naturalist, she said, gave her the opportunity to skin a snake.

# My Sub-Urban Backyard

**- Carroll Adcock, 2020**

I would never have thought that a little 3-4 inch praying mantis could be such a fearsome predator. I had found a mantis poised on a feeder last summer and relocated it but later queried the internet to see if they were a threat to hummingbirds; I was aware the roadrunners in my area could pose a threat and attempted to place feeders where they would have difficulty preying on my feathered friends.

I discovered there have been dozens, no, hundreds of observations of mantis attacks on numerous species of hummingbirds and the birds being consumed by the mantis. It seems that the mantis grabs the hummingbird with its weapon-like front legs and clasps it and begins eating while the bird is still alive, typically sucking out the blood and brains from the head/neck area while clinging to the feeder or tree or shrub with its back legs. I recently photographed this mantis on a feeder in my back yard prior to relocating it, only to find it had returned the next morning!

*Cont.*





## My Sub-Urban Backyard *cont.*



Above is a photo of a Snowberry Clearwing moth (*Hemaris diffinis*) that I photographed around a patch of honeysuckle and passion vine. This little “hummingbird moth” is a treat to observe. They are relatively small and at a glance may be mistaken for a bumble bee. Wingspan ranges from 1.25 —2 inches and habitat includes a wide variety of open habitats, streamsides, fields, gardens, and suburbs.

Adults fly swiftly during the day. Caterpillars pupate in cocoons spun in leaf litter on the ground. Range is much of North America, I did find some conflicting data on this topic that said they are found primarily east of the continental divide. Food plants include Snowberry, dogberry, honeysuckle, viburnum and mint among others. Larva is green with black spots encircling spiracles. Two generations per year with adults flying from March through September.

# Texas Riparian & Stream Ecosystem Training

## Lampasas River Watershed

**- Julie Sieh, 2020**

Our training was held September 7 near Gatesville at Joe Hanna's JH Ranch. This ranch is on the Cowhouse Creek, part of the Leon River watershed. JH Ranch estate was made available for the training due to the generosity of Mr. Hanna giving the ranch to the State of Texas to be used for educational purposes.

There were several parts to the presentation including: 1) Watershed Management and Water Quality 2) Creek Function 3) Riparian Vegetation 4) Management Practices 5) Leon Watershed Protection Plan 6) Role of Forests and Trees in Watershed Protection 7) Walk along watershed to discuss plants and ecology. I would like to review a few of these areas as I understand them and I thought were particularly interesting.

A review of a healthy watershed was discussed first. A "riparian sponge" was defined as the grassy/plant/tree area next to the waterway which provides stability of the soils and also contains a reservoir of water available next to the stream. But of interest was what occurs when there is a flood incident. Floods are a normal part of a healthy stream. If the riparian zone is in poor condition, the strength of the flood waters would erode vertically down in the stream bed first. The erosion would progress down until the bedrock was encountered. The process is called "down cutting". This lowering of the stream bed may cut into the water table. After the flooding event the water will continue to drain into the new deep river causing lasting damage to the now unstable water table. Future flooding would start pushing its flood waters out laterally from the normal banks.

Laterally flowing flood waters cut away the banks and riparian zone if it is not intact. As the stream/river banks are scoured the river becomes broad, generally shallow with the water table seeping into the old stream bed. The sediments coming down the river are spread across a wide area decreasing the water depth. This shallow broad water is now very susceptible to increasing temperatures. Warm waters are deadly for the fish populations. It is also makes prime condition for blooming of algae and bacteria that can cause illness or death to those who rely on the water system.





## Texas Riparian & Stream Ecosystem Training Lampasas River Watershed *cont*

Rivers are dynamic. Time and replacement of needed riparian zone can work toward the stream repairing itself. Examples were shown of streams coming back into a normal sized stream bed. The vegetation moved back in to stabilize the riparian sponge. Normal flows were again seen in the stream/river. If the proper zones are not disturbed by man or managed properly, these zones act as a normal beneficial buffer when the next flood occurs.

The specific vegetation in the riparian zone was the other very interesting point during the day and during our creekside walk. Riparian plants include: sedges, rushes, grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees. These plants are then colonizers and stabilizers. The colonizers come in first, of course, to spread rapidly but may not have strong roots. The stabilizers have the strong long roots that dissipate the strong flood flows to protect the bank and plants in the riparian sponge. A good riparian vegetation mixture is colonizers (2 or more species), stabilizer sedge-grass(2 or more species) and stabilizer woods (shrub and tree species). The stabilizers were grouped to their need to be in direct contact with water or a distance from water source called obligate wetland plants. There was a progression up to the upland obligate plants that were not in contact with water or in non-wetlands.

The distinction with their proximity to water was also cross defined with their stability rating graded by the length of roots. This was really brought out as we walked along the creek and plants were pointed out by their water need and root length.

Healthy riparian vegetation indicators include: 1) Plant diversity 2) Wetland plants 3) Plant vigor 4) Multiple ages of each plant/tree 5) Amount of plant cover 6) Source of large wood. All these factors assist the dynamic riparian area to withstand stressors of man, flood, drought and natural changes.

The Riparian Ecosystem presentations were very interesting. This is only a small part of the class. If this interests you, you may want to join the next training. <https://texasriparian.org/>



*Ricky Linex, (in front) retired NRCS wildlife biologist and Ryan McGillicuddy, TPWD is behind Ricky.*

## *RURAL HOURS, BY SUSAN FENIMORE COOPER*

### **- Review by Kelly Ann Blanchard, 2020**

“What a noble gift to man are the forests! What a debt of gratitude and admiration we owe for their utility and their beauty!” Susan Fenimore Cooper penned this line over 170 years ago in her book, *Rural Hours*. As America’s first female nature writer, Cooper saw the importance of preserving the land around us, and many of her views continue to be championed by naturalists today.

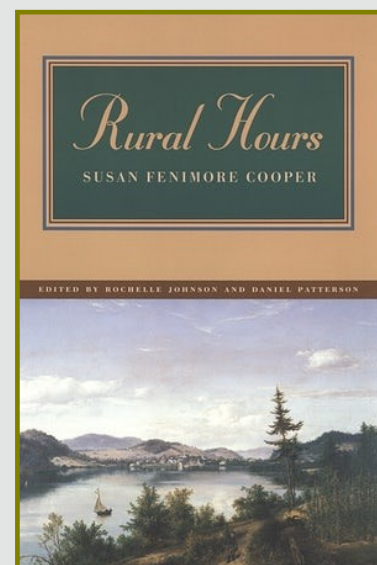
First published in 1850, *Rural Hours* is a collection of Cooper’s nature observations in rural New York state over the course of a year. *Rural Hours* extols the value of forests, native plants and animals, and the preservation of cultural history. While reading this book, I was amazed by Cooper’s knowledge of nature. In today’s age, I am spoiled by iNaturalist and other online databases which can tell me the name of an unidentified species within moments. Cooper’s detailed descriptions of birds, plants, and animals were based purely on years of education and observation. She delights in describing the habits of nesting robins, the strange home-invading behavior of hummingbirds, and even a mysterious panther that locals claim to have seen but without proof (sound familiar?).

Even more surprising to me were her views regarding invasive plants and their negative effects on native species: “It is remarkable that these troublesome plants come very generally from the Old World; they do not belong here, but following the steps of the white man, they have crossed the ocean with him. A very large proportion of the most common weeds in our fields and gardens... are strangers to the soil. Some of these have come from a great distance, travelling round the world.”

Cooper’s reflections, in a place so different both in time and distance, surprisingly juxtapose our own observations and values in Texas in the present day. Almost two hundred years later, we continue to battle deforestation, invasive species, and lack of appreciation and respect for nature. Yet, we now have better tools to educate others about the importance of the natural world.

Reading *Rural Hours* is not for the faint of heart, but if you are a nature lover who is curious about different species and ecosystems, then I highly recommend it. Cooper’s reflections were refreshing and wholesome to this present-day naturalist!

*Drawing/painting by Susan Fenimore Cooper*



*Crested Purple Finch*



# BAMBOO FOR YOU

**- Bill Cornelius, 2020**

*Editor's Note: This is one in a series of articles. Bill became interested in bamboo as a child when he discovered a neighbor's backyard completely overtaken with bamboo. In 2012 he discovered the American Bamboo Society and attended their annual meeting in Austin where he met interesting people from all over the US and other countries. He began volunteering at the monthly bamboo grove grooming at Zilker Park. Soon he was President of the Texas Bamboo Society and began participating in the annual maintenance of the bamboo grove on Avery Island, LA (the private island where Tabasco is made). He's starting here with bamboo native to the US.*

## Bamboo—The Bigger Grass

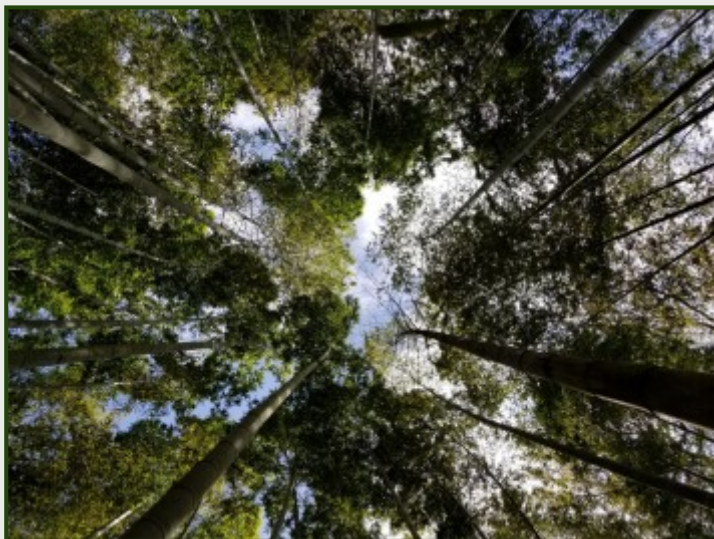
Bamboo is a member of the grass family (Poaceae). It comprises over 600 genera and more than 1200 species. Does bamboo have a bad name? For some it does – as a nursery man once told me “Don’t turn it loose.” Not all bamboos are runners; i.e., they do not spread widely. In urban environments a runner

should probably be contained. Bamboos can grow from several inches high to well over 100 feet and from fractions of an inch in diameter to over 10-12 inches. Their wall thicknesses likewise vary considerably from less to being solid. All this growth of a culm (cane) amazingly takes place in about 90 days. Once it reaches its maximum height it is done. It will not grow any higher or get any thicker.

So, let's start by reviewing the bamboos native to the continental U.S. Most bamboos that we see in the U.S. are not native to north America, but there

is one genus of which there are three species that are native. The three native bamboos of the continental U.S. are all “runners”. They are leptomorphic; i.e., they send out their rhizomes in a linear pattern and spread out over a wide area. They grow from full sun to partial sun and do well as an understory plant. The indigenous peoples used both those characteristics and harvested them early for basket making or later when more rigidity was required as with tools or weapons.

The pre-European range for all of the species was from roughly southern New York on the east coast down to Florida, North to the Ohio river valley and close to the great lakes and then west into eastern Texas to the Brazos and eastern Oklahoma.





# BAMBOO <CONT.>

Below is information on the three bamboo species that are native to the US, each occupying a different habitat.

*Arundinaria appalachiana* (Hill cane) first described in 2006. A *Appalachiana* generally prefers a bit drier soil than the other two. Its range is now confined to western North and South Carolina, eastern Tennessee, northern Alabama, and Georgia. It exists mainly as an understory plant. It does drop its leaves in the fall which is unusual for a bamboo. Most are evergreen.



*Arundinaria tecta* (Switch cane) is sometimes designated as a subspecies of *Arundinaria gigantea* (River cane). A *tecta* can grow from 3-6 ft commonly and to 8 ft under ideal conditions. It prefers wetter soil than the other two species. It is a good stabilizer in areas prone to erosion. Its current distribution is mostly in the southeastern U.S. It is also available commercially. Historically, widely distributed it provided cover and habitat for animals.

*Arundinaria gigantea* (River cane), Mississippi River cane was habitat to many native animal species and the indigenous people of the southeast and south-central North America used their canes for many applications like weapons, arrow shafts, items for fishing, baskets, jewelry, shelters, food, and medicine. The Bachmann's warbler used it extensively and it's suggested that its demise was largely due to the destruction of the cane brakes. River cane can grow to 30 feet under ideal conditions. A *gigantea* is also available commercially.





# MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Andreas Wooten recertifies for 2021



Jamey Douglass receives initial certification



John Atkins recertifies and receives a 1000 hour milestone award!



Bill Novakoski recertifies for 2021



Guy Fowler receives initial certification



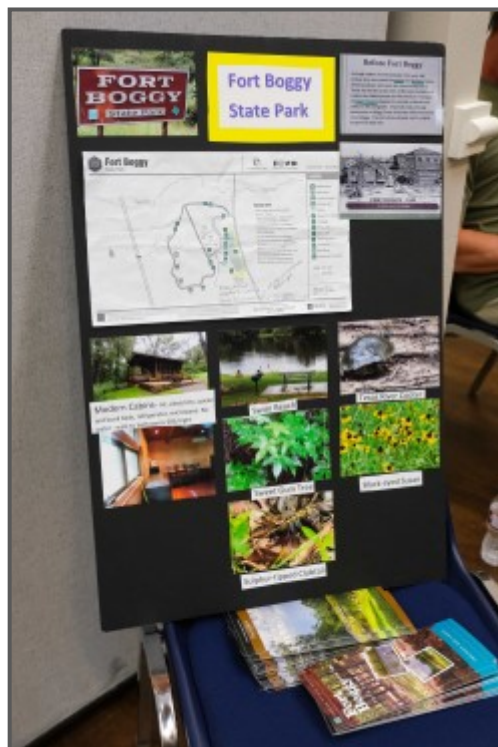
This is Marge—Dakota Fleming Massey's pup who has attended many of our events. If you forget her name, it's written in Sharpie on the cow ear tag attached to her collar.



# CHAPTER MEETINGS

## – ZOE RASCOE, 2004

In August, our VP Jean Solana, planned a fun and informative evening called “State Parks Near Me”. Jean spends many hours volunteering on all sorts of project at Mother Neff State Park—which is near her home. And since one of our sponsoring agencies is Texas Parks and Wildlife, she wanted to make sure our members and guests knew where to go for State Park getaways. She arranged for camping members to bring some of their favorite camping equipment with a note of why they love it. She brought a super-easy to set up full-size tent! Jean put together information boards on 4 nearby State Parks with a map and photos of plants and park facilities. She provided mini



and camping equipment displays,

and an overview of the “Leave No Trace” program by Mike Belcher (left), a graduate of the 2021 class. Jean even arranged for our refreshments to be trail snacks and bottled water! Which State Park will you visit next? We’re booked for Bastrop SP in November. We are working through all 89!





# CHAPTER MEETINGS

## - ZOE RASCOE, 2004

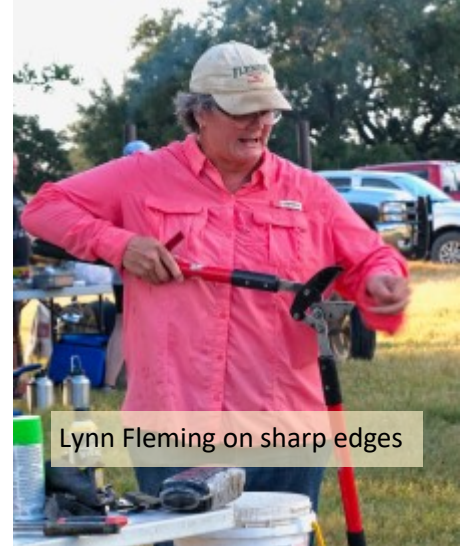
September brought back a favorite: Pasture Party hosted by the Fleming clan, waaay out in the country. At the cow's place. If it looks like people are soaked from an unexpected downpour, it's true. John Atkins ran through instructions on chain saw safety. Lynn covered tool maintenance. Yes, that's a thing. We had 60 members and family enjoying the evening.



Hope, Augustus, Dakota and Josh cooked burgers



Lynn brought out the noisy rattle to run off the cows



Lynn Fleming on sharp edges



THANK YOU TO THE FLEMINGS!!



John Atkins with lots of gear for safe chain saw work





- Mary Ann Everett, 2003

# Out on a Limb

**Tree Description:** Belongs to a large family of trees, but only one (*Ericaceae Arbutus xalapensis*) is native to Texas Hill County and Trans-Pecos regions. Usually multi-stemmed trunk, vase shape and round crown growing 30—40 feet high.

**Blooms:** Beautiful and fragrant white to pink-tinged flowers March—April.

**Fruit:** Flowers turn to red or orange-red berry-like drupes in the fall. Persistent fruit is important to birds and mammals.

**Location:** Native to west Texas and New Mexico. Can withstand wind, cold, snow and heat!

**Leaves:** Dark green leaves cling to the tree all winter, falling with the new ones appearing in the spring.

**Bark:** The bark peels from the trunk to reveal white, pink or red wood tones. Often dubbed Naked Indian or Lady's Leg. The tree is impressive on a backdrop of snow.

**Heat & Drought Tolerance:** Dry to moist alkaline soils, limestone, sandy, sandy-loam, clay, acid-based, and calcareous soils. Here the sky is the limit to where it can grow.

**Interesting Facts:** It is very difficult to grow in a domesticated setting. As we impact the environment that this tree needs to survive, it has begun to disappear in its wild setting. It attracts pollinators, but not browsing deer.

[Click here for name of tree](#)





# Master Naturalists at Work



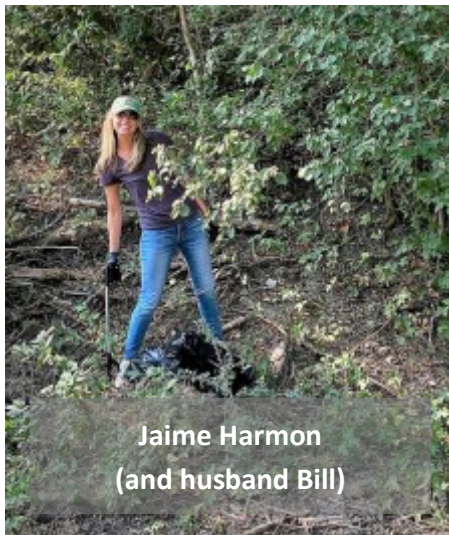
## Keep Nolanville Beautiful

September 11 at 1:28 PM · 🌐

Thank you to all who helped with our Water Work Day on Nolan Creek this morning! On this day especially, it was wonderful to see so many people coming together to help their community. A big thank you to the [504th Military Intelligence Brigade](#), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, [Central Texas Chapter Texas Master Naturalists](#), and community members and neighbors - you all accomplished so much! Nolan Creek looks so beautiful and the waterway is much more functional now thanks to your hard work. We appreciate all that you do!



On September 11, the National Day of Service, Keep Nolanville Beautiful hosted a Water Work Day to clean up Nolan Creek and invited our chapter to join the fun. Matt Ridley, Kelly Ann Blanchard and Jaime Harmon (plus her helpful husband, Bill Brown) worked alongside other groups to clear trash from the creek and along the surrounding roadways. In total, **over 900 pounds of litter** were removed from Nolan Creek thanks to their hard work!



Jaime Harmon  
(and husband Bill)



Matt Ridley



Kelly Ann Blanchard



# Contributing Authors to this Newsletter



Bill Novakoski



Janice Gibbs



John Atkins



John Burns



Carroll Adcock



Jean Solana



Linda Fairlie



Mary Ann Everett



Bill Cornelius



Jenna Chappell



Kelly Ann Blanchard



Julie Sieh



Zoe Rascoe





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**Training:** Lynn Fleming/Mary Ann Everett



[Hawk's Bill Crag](#), at Whitaker Point,  
AR can be a lovely spot for fall color.

### ***Newsletter Staff***

**Editor:** Zoe Rascoe

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**Contributing Writers:** Linda Fairlie, Jean Solana, John Burns, John Atkins, Jenna Chappell, Kelly Ann Blanchard, Bill Novakoski, Carrol Adcock, Bill Cornelius, Julie Sieh, Mary Ann Everett, Janice Gibbs, Zoe Rascoe.

**Contributed Images:** John Atkins, Tina Atkins, John Burns, Jean Solana, Juan Anaya, Carroll Adcock, Julie Sieh, 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

Cullom Simpson,  
Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife

## **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 in Nolanville. Meeting notices will be sent to chapter members with location information and all members are welcome.