

July 2020

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Cross Timbers Master Naturalist Newsletter

President's Pen — Bill Collins

Gosh, how did I have time for all those meetings before the pandemic? Staying busy with home projects. Still working on a complete plant inventory of our property via iNaturalist. Trying my hand at sowing seed and growing native plants to fill in behind privet removal (yeah, I got it too). Growing some vegetables (mostly herbs) doing some landscaping, wood working, cleaning and repairing rental property and cooking (using lots of those home raised herbs).

And working with the CTMN training team to prepare for this year's training class. We will have a training class, we are just not exactly sure what it will look like (in-person vs virtual, etc.).

The Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge is now open on weekdays and volunteers are back at the greenhouse with masks in place. Not very comfortable, but not awful. The good news, the staff was able to keep the plants in the greenhouse watered so our mortality rate for the plants was pretty low. Most were overgrown, but still healthy.

I understand other areas are open for volunteers as well (Molly Hollar, SW courthouse, Arlington Prairie, OS Gray nature area, Lake Mineral Wells State Park pollinator garden, and more). Get out and volunteer as you can, but be safe. Not sure? Stay home!

With the recent rains, we are getting a spurt of growth of new wildflowers in our area, go out and take a look around.

Speaking of the new training class, if you know of someone that is interested and did not get the email with the connection to the application, let Frank know. The last I heard, we had about 25 applicants (probably more by now). So get those applications in and fill in completely to help us pick the right people for this training.

Ruellia nudiflora, Acanthaceae (Acanthus Family)

Are you dreaming of a plant that can bloom in the heat of summer with very little water and propagate itself? If so, this is the plant for you!!

The wild petunia is a wonderful choice for edging a flower bed because of its low profile of about twelve inches. It can also be used as a ground cover, and can even be mowed or cut back very short, but don't worry, it will bounce back with renewed vigor.

The flowers are light purple little trumpets that last one day, but never fear, it will continue to make new ones everyday for a long blooming season that starts in late June and continues through fall.

Ruellia nudiflora has amazing roots that are at least five times the length of the plant and maybe more, making this plant basically fool proof and very drought resistant. This plant is not picky about soils and does well in sand or clay. This plant likes full sun to part shade, it doesn't do well in full shade and it may not bloom there.

Propagation is not a problem with this plant because it is so very prolific. I have never had to plant seeds or root cuttings from it. Once you have it will propagate itself for you abundantly.

I have seen it blooming lately at the xeriscape where it has planted itself and looks like a carpet of purple trumpets, Beautiful!!

One of the special reasons for this plant's ability to reproduce itself is the fact that it is "cleistogamous". This is a special process that *Ruellias*, *Violas* and other plants take advantage of when they want to make seeds without spending too much energy. They make self-fertile flowers without petals that never open, thus allowing them to make seed a lot quicker and with very little effort.



As if all those attributes were not enough, this plant is also a larval host for the beautiful Buckeye butterfly and the Texan Crescent butterflies which happen to be two of my favorites.

For more pictures look at page 15.

Pictures by Josephine

Above: Close up of a flower

Left: Buckeye Butterfly

Get to Know A CTMN Member: Zach Chapman - Carol Marcotte

- 1) I was certified in the year 2016
 - 2) I am at a community college getting my basics but I am studying wildlife and macro photography.
 - 3) The South Nature and Outdoors Club is a group that I created to let our student body at TCC South Campus get closer to nature. They can take time out of their busy lives to slow down and enjoy all aspects of the natural world being of the major types of Flora and Fauna, Geology. And even get into some action with outdoor adventures such as camping, hiking, and other types of activity. We also deal in community service projects like clean up days and such.
- This year we won Recognized Student Organization of the Year Award or (RSO of the year). This is a prestigious award given to those who have done a lot for the student body and the campus as a whole. I am not sure of all the details. Still kind of new to this whole range of stuff. We have only been in operation for a year and a half.
- 4) The South Nature and Outdoors Club is for college students only but if anyone is interested in being a guest speaker to give interactive and informational talks and programs, please let me know.
 - 5) My greatest passion in the Texas Master Naturalist group is enriching the community in learning about local wildlife. Wildlife, respecting and loving the land is what inspired me.

My family deals with a lot in nature. My aunt is a school teacher with a science and mathematics background but likes geology and what not. My brother used to be big in birds and got me into birding. My grandmother who passed away back in 2018 got me into gardening. My dad used to be a rancher on his uncle's ranch so we have a lot of respect for wildlife and the world around us.

The one thing I want to convey to people is to care for all the little critters and to love the land and plants. Everything goes hand in hand in nature. We need a planet before we can have anything else.

My second interest is Citizen Science. Sam Kieshnick is one of my best buds in this program and so is Brent Franklin. Several others and connecting with the iNaturalist gang is one of the best ways I have been able to better express love for insects and my love for photography.

I love iNaturalist with a passion and use it all the time. It was Sam who got me into it. I just ran with it. I love to get more than just insects or anything I can find that I can catch on camera.

My Third Interest is the insects and pollinator gardens. I was in the Future Farmers of America back in High School. I was introduced to the State Entomology ID contest in Lubbock TX at Texas Tech (which both my teams won first prize at in 2011 and 2012) I used to not like insects that much before but after that, my attitude changed. I began to really see the inter-



I began to really see the interest of all the species.

My favorite kinds of insects are Dragonflies, Moths & Butterflies (which I have loved pretty much all my life). Beetles and now ants thanks to my friend Dr. Ann Mayo, who has been sending me books on ants and entomology.

I have also been a big supporter of the pollinator garden movement. I have helped with many demonstrator gardens and noticed so many cool insects.

Now have one at my house. Though it is small, it gets a whole bunch of arthropod visitors. Insects are one of the biggest passions. Gardening for them and making landscapes for them is really important to keep the diversity alive.

Also, it is important to put plants that support insects so you support the other critters like the birds and mammals who feed off them. You're creating a garden for insects means much more. You're gardening for the whole circle of life. Insects are my greatest passion in the stuff I study but as I have said I am interested in the whole picture.

I am also a big fan of other things like mammals, reptiles, and Sharks but arthropods are my greatest obsession. I am not known as Galactic_Bug_Man on iNaturalist for nothing. I do like science fiction and some of the famous movie monsters that I adore are based on the creatures in nature and some of them are based on insects.

2020 Photo Contest Judges

Paul Knudson - Professional nature photographer
Candy Halliburton - judges photos for other organizations
Jon Stewart - armature photographer & nature lover

First and second place winners were posted in the June newsletter, some third place winners posted on pages 11 and 12 of this month's newsletter.

Picture on right by Kate Morgan: View From Mesa



Fort Worth Nature Center opened up on June 16, you will need a ticket to get in.

How to Register for Admission Tickets to the Nature Center in ActiveNet (Public Site)

1. Click the link for ActiveNet below, or copy and paste the url:

<https://apm.activecommunities.com/cityoffortworth>

2. Click “Sign In” on the upper right-hand corner or Create an Account if you do not have an account
a. If you are a member/previous program participant, you will already have an account set up in ActiveNet. Use the “Forgot your Password” link to gain access to your account.

3. The first screen that opens when you log in is Account Options. From this menu you can make numerous changes to your ActiveNet account.

a. Change contact information b. Make payments c. Plus much more

NOTE: *This is a great time to make sure all of your information (address, birthdates) is correct.*

4. When you are ready to register, click the “Home” button on the top menu bar.

5. From the home page, use the activities search bar and type “nature center” and click search.

6. Click on the blue title Admission - Nature Center.

7. This opens up the details and listing of all the sessions (entry hours) available. Click the green Enroll Now button to the right of the description.

8. On the next screen, the first thing is to choose the participant from the drop-down menu. This list is compiled from all the people in your family group.

9. Next, select the date/dates you wish to visit the Nature Center. Once selected, the date will highlight blue.

10. Once the date is selected, the list of all the sessions (entry times) will appear below the calendar.

a. You will need to delete all of the other hours except the time you will enter the park for all the days selected.

11. After you have your date and time selected, click the green Add to cart under the Fee Summary.

12. Now you are in the Shopping Cart. From this point, there are a few different next steps.

a. If you have just one participant, then your next step is Check Out. Click the green button.

i. Check the wavier box.

B. If you need to add another participant/visitor, please click the blue program title. Repeat steps 7-12.

13. Next is the payment screen. After your membership information has been confirmed or entered into ActiveNet by a Nature Center customer service representative, ActiveNet will discount your entry to \$0.00. You will not need to enter credit card information. Then click the green Pay button.

Blue Bird Monitoring at TCC North East Campus- Zachary Chapman

For the last month at TCC Northeast Campus Kimberlie Sasan and I have been monitoring Bluebird nest boxes every Thursday after I get out of my Photography I class. We have already been seeing a lot of activity. One of the nests had hatchlings already in the nest back early on 13th of February. We have been having some chill snaps here and there so it is kind of puzzling why they have already had babies. During the first few weeks of monitoring we have cleaned out old nests and got rid of old rotten eggs and started fresh; we have also logged in GPS locations of each nest and the directions that the openings point.

Nest box one (where the photos were taken) is the one with the most activity right now. We have made a two data sheets so far during the monitoring. The male and female have been working non-stop to feed their brood. We have seen about four live babies but we are sad to report that one of the nestlings at nest box one perished due to unknown causes. However, we are happy to report that there are four healthy chicks. They have grown up so fast and it will not be long until they will face their own challenges in the wilds of TCC Northeast and the surrounding areas.

It is a real treat to get to be one-on-one with Kimberlie Sasan. Me and met during the second CNC that Texas was involved in and ever since have been really good friends. She and I really enjoy the time together to watch the birds and take data on them and just to hang out. What better way to hang out with friends than with citizen science. I am catching on pretty quick on how to monitor and how to log stuff on the data sheets. It is not iNaturalist but that doesn't mean I have not taken the opportunity to get observations for iNaturalist. I love watching the Bluebird gathering insects and watching the parents when they are acting as sentry or lookout. It is kind of fun to photograph them as they come to and from their nests. Seeing the little yellow beaks of the babies as mamma or daddy bird land to feed them. They just meet them halfway and it is a beautiful thing to watch the bonds of these magnificent birds. Spending time after school with Kimberlie and doing this takes my mind of school stresses and gives me a bit of a breather from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

I really like watching birds and I know about the bluebird and have observed them many times; but I never knew that much about their life history until now. The booklet that Kimberlie gave me on the second week we monitored gave me some good insights on the birds and their natural history. You never really know about animals until you walk among them and watch them for long periods of time. You start to notice things you have never known before. There is a magic to observing animals. There is a sense of calm, peace, intrigue, and curiosity. There is a lot that you can learn if you take the time to slow down and take it all in.

We have another nest being built and we should soon have eggs in the nest the mated couple are now building but it will be completed very soon. It is fun to watch birds and notice how tireless they are. It is a great experience for both the young and experienced naturalists of any age can really learn a lot from watching bluebirds or anything in nature if you just stop drop and observe. I will be keeping an eye on the boxes for a while but my time at TCC will soon be coming to a close but for now at least I will be sure to make it out to the boxes and make an observation and keep lists of how they are doing. I am most interested in continuing this and I want to thank Kimberlie for taking the time and spending it with me and the birds. It is hard to make friends in a commuter college so it is really nice to see familiar faces and share nature together.

Pictures on page 5.

Blue Bird Pics- Zachary Chapman



Adult Pictures by Zach
Babies Picture by Suzanne

The **Texas Master Naturalist 2020 Annual Meeting** is going virtual!

As a result of the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Texas Master Naturalist Program has decided to suspend this year's in-person event in Houston, Texas, in favor of a fully virtual experience.

The decision reflects TMN's responsibility to protect the health and wellbeing of its members, conference attendees and the general population while still serving its mission to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas.

While we may not be seeing you in Houston this fall in person, we are committed to creating a valuable and engaging educational and networking experience that mirrors our in-person Annual Meeting. In fact, we're quite excited about all of the new possibilities that a virtual conference opens up for our event!

Please save the dates for us now! We've shifted the dates to **Wednesday through Saturday** to accommodate the virtual setting. We'll be online with you **October 14th through 17th** with four days of sessions, interactive programs, and some surprises we'll be sharing later this summer.

For news, updates and details about the Annual Meeting as our plans for the virtual conference develop, please check out our website - <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2020-annual-meeting/>

Don't worry about missing out on Houston. We'll make sure to get back there soon!!

Thanks,

Mary Pearl & Michelle

If you are going to Volunteer in this COVID 19 Time Remember the Following Rules by the CDC

Please continue to observe the personal safety guidelines established by the DSHS/CDC, including:

- Practice social distancing of 6 feet between other people
- Wear a face mask.
- Washing hands regularly with soap and water for a minimum of twenty (20) seconds and encouraging others to do the same.
- If no soap and water are available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover all coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Disinfect surfaces, buttons, handles, knobs, and other places touched often.
- Stay home if you are sick; have a cough, cold, or other malady or are otherwise beginning to feel like you may be coming down with something.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Regularly wipe down keyboards, desks and other hard surfaces.

Wednesday, July 1st, noon to 1pm

"Human Use of Mushrooms: A Brief Ethnomycological Journal" by Dr. Denis Benjamin

This presentation covers how different societies have viewed mushrooms over the years and the relationships they have developed with them. Some cultures remain afraid of mushrooms, while others have elevated them to near mythic status. We will examine the use of mushrooms as food, medicine, spiritual and totemic uses, a source of dyes, and even fire starter.

\$18 (\$15 members), register by June 29th

Visit <http://brit.org/human-uses-mushrooms> for more information.

Saturday, July 11, 1pm to 2pm

"Biters and Stingers" by Gail Manning

Working in the garden this season, you have probably seen quite a few little creatures amongst the plants. Join Botanic Garden entomologist Gail Manning to learn about biting and stinging insects and spiders of the area. Find out about different venoms, bite site reaction, and how OTC products work to relieve symptoms.

\$18 (\$15 members), register by July 9th

Visit <http://brit.org/biters-and-stingers> for more information.

Pictures by Kate Morgan
Left: Giant Spiderwort
Right: Foxglove



For me, the Covid shutdown began March 13. We returned from a winter trip to Idaho March 12 and had dinner at our favorite restaurant in Boyd, gogo gumbo! And that was the last time we've eaten out. When my regular volunteering gig at the Fort Worth Nature Center closed the following week, it was clear I needed to find some other way to be a naturalist and I did not have far to look.

I recently accepted the post of President of the Fort Worth Chapter of the Native Prairies Association of Texas and I decided to become more involved in the statewide NPAT meetings and plans for the future. Like so many others I downloaded Zoom and remotely attended many NPAT online meetings.



One thing led to the next – even in quarantine – and when a local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution requested someone to speak to their group about prairies, I volunteered. This DAR group was recently formed and they chose the name Blackland Prairie Chapter. That sure looked like a good prairie topic to me, so I spent some time researching the NPAT prairies north and east of Dallas. Suzanne Tuttle shared with me the presentation she gave to the Cross Timbers Master Naturalist back in October, and I tailored the presentation to highlight the nearby blackland prairies and their special features, like mima mounds, gilgai, and Silveus dropseed.

The DAR ladies were great listeners and I can only hope they enjoyed the presentation as much as I did. I have to put in a plug for Zoom. It is so easy to use and incredibly rich in useful features. Compared to similar apps it also has much better screen resolution. It's an essential tool for those of us who are longing to connect with other naturalists around the world.



My husband and I are blessed to live on a small ranch with two remnant prairies of our own. While I always enjoy those prairies in spring, this year they help keep me and my homebound dogs sane. The photos are all taken on our ranch and while this year wasn't the most spectacular for prairie wildflowers, the walks were restorative, not for the prairies, but for me surrounded by nature's bounty. When anyone asks me what I did during Covid-19, I can answer I spent it Zooming around the Texas prairies.

Pictures by Kate: Above Right: Brown Eyed Susan , Above Left: American Basketflower, Bottom Right: Cloth of Gold, and Bottom Left: Indian Paintbrush

Page 11 **“What have you been doing during covid-19?” -Suzanne Tuttle**

Yes, I've been very busy. Every day I publish a 'Good News from Nature' post on my Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/suzanne.tuttle.3> with photos from my daily walks and things happening in my yard.

I've also been keeping up a 'What's Flowering on the Fort Worth Prairie' series on the Native Prairies Association Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/npatfortworthchapter/> . It's published M-W-F.

I did a Facebook Live prairie walk in Benbrook on May 23rd for the Native Prairies Association. Here's the link to the video clip: <https://www.facebook.com/npatfortworthchapter/videos/2320077194968566/>



Pictures by Suzanne: Above Right: Bluebird Hatchlings , Above Left: Fire wheel with Beetle, Bottom Right: Brown Lizard on Brick, and Bottom Left: Gray Tree frog



I recently went to Palo Duro State Park. Talk about social distancing! No Problem.

My husband & I went in the middle of the week. We packed all our food. What else to do in the canyon ~ hike & horseback ride.

Most campgrounds were vacant of campers. The amphitheater, pavilions and half the restrooms were closed. All that may explain the absent visitors. Really, we saw very few people.

The scenery was beautiful. The weather was perfect. The critters were everywhere, including lizards, birds, wild turkey and Aoudad Ram Sheep. I highly recommend going.



Pictures by Carol: Above Right: Common Spotted Whiptail, Above Left: Prickly Pear Cactus, Bottom Right: Visitor Center Overlook Lighthouse, and Bottom Left: Paso Del Rio Tail Carol





Right
Banjo Moore
Animal Life
Owl

Left
Donna H.
Plant Life
Prairie Rose on Paul Matthews Prairie





Left
Suzanne Tuttle
Chisos Mountain Sunrise at Pine
Canyon

Right
Banjo Moore
Insect Life
Dragonfly





Pictures by Josephine

Above Left : Flowerbed with Wild Petunias

Above Right: Cluster of Flowers

Bottom Left: Texan Crescent Butterfly

Bottom Right: Root Length



July 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 F, I, K	2 A, B	3	4 F, I
5	6 E	7	8 F, I	9 A, B	10	11 I, K
12	13	14	15 C, F, I	16 A, B, J	17	18 H, I
19	20 D	21	22 F, I	23 A, B	24	25 I
26	27	28	29 F, I	30 A, B	31	

A– FWNC– Restorative Greenhouse from 9:30– 11:30 AM– this event is a reoccurring event every Wednesday

B– FWNC– National Guard– Outdoor Conservation from 9 AM to 12 PM– this event is a reoccurring event every Thursday and Saturday

C--Sierra Club Monthly Meeting via Zoom. You will need to get the link via facebook or Meetup. This counts for an advance hour of training. This is a reoccurring even every 3rd Wednesday of every month.

D– CTMN Monthly Chapter Meeting via Zoom, you will receive an email from the board with a link.

E– CTMN Board Meeting, contact a board member if you would like the Zoom link.

F– Molly Hollar Wildscape Volunteer Opportunity from 9 am –12 pm. The mini class has been canceled until further notice.

G– BRIT Water Saving Seminar from 6-8 pm

H– Lake Mineral Wells Pollinator Garden Volunteer Opportunity from 9-11 am, this is a reoccurring event.

I– Tarrant County SW Sub Courthouse Garden Volunteer Opportunity from 8am –12 pm. Volunteers can take home plants.

J– TMN Summer Sale Ends

K– BRIT Adult Education Classes (to see more look on page 9 of this newsletter)