



The Texas Master Naturalist program activities are coordinated by AgriLife Extension and Texas Parks and Wildlife. Texas Master Naturalist and Extension programs serve all people regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

Celebrating and sharing our experiences along "the roads" we take through nature.

Award Winning Newsletter of the El Camino Real Chapter
Milam County **Texas Master Naturalist** Fall 2010

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Prairie Path, by Katherine Bedrich

Our Texas State Flower - Bluebonnet - *Lupinus texensis* - makes you think of spring; not summer, right? Walking to our tank in early July, Charlie and I noticed a couple bluebonnets growing. Hum, we said, and marked the spot. On August 9th, we had two blooming; small, pale blue flowers. Within two days, they were dried to a crisp. Needless to say, we will not be able to collect seed for Texas Seeds of Success.

rocking chair daily and watch the shows. **The young'uns looked like they woke up with "camp hair". (You know, the style that looks like your hair is flying everywhere.) They, the young'uns, stand on the edge of the birdbath, look at the**



water, put a toe in, take it out, look again, toe in, toe out, look, step in, get out, look, back in, splash, get out, look, in, splash more and this time get real crazy in the water. When they get out, they fluff up, and sit on a dead branch and dry out in the 100+ heat. Is this **where the term "bird brain" came from?**

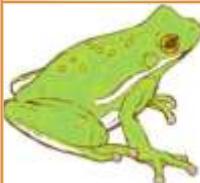
Enjoy the rest of your year, who knows what you might see in nature.

Our Texas State Bird - Mockingbird - *Circus birdis* - a family came to the birdbath this week. It was like the circus had come to town. I had to sit in my

Our Motto

- Look
- Learn
- Teach
- Conserve

Our Mascot
Green Tree Frog



Did You Know?

What is the biggest living organism?
See Answer on the last page.

Remembering Ed

By Don Travis

As most of you know, our good friend and fellow naturalist, Ed Burlison, passed away on September 13, 2010 at the much too early age of 52. Ed was a charter member of our El Camino Real Chapter, graduating with our first class in May 2008. He soon earned his Certified Texas Master Naturalist title and was an avid nature lover and gardener.

We will remember his witty sense of humor, his broad grin and hearty laugh and one who could find both beauty and humor in the world around us. He used his creative artistic talents to make a variety of unique nature related gifts for our class speakers and other chapter guests, gifts which they have stated they would cherish as very special.

His true passions in nature were Texas native grasses, prairie restoration, water harvesting and gardening—and especially planning and working on his property in Milam county in preparation for moving here.

His partner in life, Marcus Montemayor, said Ed's past 3 years were his happiest, planning and working on that property. He was devoted to learning and reading as much as he could.

The camaraderie with his fellow Master Naturalists and many Master Gardeners was something he truly treasured. Several members even claimed to have **adopted him, and he loved all his "mother hens"**.

Certainly, his personal strength and his upbeat and positive outlook as he accepted his cancer and the fate it would soon bring is something we all can admire and celebrate. He was a powerful example of a fine human being.

Ed's favorite poem was Emily Dickenson's *Not in Vain*

"If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain; if I can ease one life the aching, or cool one pain, or help one fainting robin unto his nest again, I shall not live in vain."

Well, Ed. Your life was not in vain. Here are some remembrances from some friends you have touched.



Excerpts from a letter to Ed from Dorothy Mayer: **"I will think of you often. I will not worry about whether the bees are chasing me because of some fragrance on my hair because I will remember that you taught me to watch what colors I wear. So, when I see a Bumblebee, I will think of you. And, when I am out at night looking for amphibians, I will think of you. When I'm on the side of a mountain, without a breeze blowing, but enjoying nature, just the same, I will think of you. I will think of you when I see a Galardia**

(Indian Blanket). I will think of you, as collecting those seeds was my 1st outdoor volunteer project with ECRMN. And, when I go to Wilson-Ledbetter Park I will think of you. My only regrets with ECRMN so far is that I wanted more of the journey with you there. And, I will try to live more courageously, everyday just especially because you have made me more aware that each day here is a gift. I completely believe as you told me that energy does not go away and I wish peace for you and for your spirit to soon vibrate at an even higher level than it already does. I feel blessed to know you Ed and I feel your energy and always will. I hope in some way, I can have a similar effect on people that I come to know on my journey. Peace and love to you always, my **friend."**

From Donna Lewis: "I am going to plant a tree here at my place in Ed's honor. I will probably do that as soon as it's cooler. I have always done that when someone I care about has passed on."

From Janice Johnson: **"Ed's generosity inspired me from the first time I met him. I remember at the Christmas party at Paula's, I hadn't taken the class yet, but the newbies were invited. Ed had made hand-painted ornaments for everyone there, even people he had never met before (the newbies). I**



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was so impressed, and thrilled to get one. I still treasure it. At the State conference last year, Ed had several women from our group knocking on his door because he didn't come to part of the conference. He slept through all the knocking. We were worried about him, and he was snoozing away. He later called us his mother hens."

From Paula Engelhardt: "One of my favorite things about Ed was his perpetual smile -- that loving and mischievous grin!! Along with it went his positive attitude, his zest for life and his generous nature. When Ed was around, you knew there would be laughter. To the very end of his life, he kept LIVING it and he was always thinking of others. But, that was Ed. I was blessed to call him friend. I will miss him very much and think of him often."



From Sandra O'Donnell: "I will always remember Ed as being the bright spot in my life. He could bring laughter in a moment with his stories. I loved talking to him. I always felt richer for the experience. His stories were the best. Once he wrote a thank you note that kept me in stitches forever. Ed was creative in so many ways. He had a gift for creating the funniest stories."

And from Jim O'Donnell: "I remember how much he loved his property and the plans he had for every inch of it. Ed was always visionary. He had hoped to give to Milam County the love and educational aspect much as had been done with Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. He worked with and was loved by Flo Oxley. Ed gave all of us so much in our short time together. He was a happy person."



From Mary Waldson: "There was just something about Ed."

So hard to put a finger on. I just knew, from the 1st moment we meet, we would be fast friends. Kindred spirits. Artistic comrades. In fact I remember saying "have we met before, Ed, you seem so familiar". What I will remember about Ed is his deep spiritual connection to all of life. As I write this and think of our friend not being here my eyes well up with tears & my throat constricts. Then, forcing myself to think purely of Ed, somehow I feel stronger. That's how he affected me. As he would say "you have two choices, to live in fear or to live in love, I choose to live in love". He has inspired me with his strength to not be afraid, to enjoy my relationships & cherish my friendships. He is and always will be a huge inspiration to me to further my artistic/creative endeavors. I am so grateful for our friendship. With deep affection, thank you Ed."

From all your friends, we will miss you!



The Name Game

Reprinted from eNature.com

Sometimes the common name of a species makes perfect sense; the Bald Eagle is one obvious example. But sometimes a name tells us more about the fickle nature of humans than about the creature it describes. Test your knowledge of common names with a special eNature quiz.

Q. What's a daddy-long-legs?

A. **It depends on a person's location. In England the term is used to describe a type of spider, usually in the family Pholcidae, common in homes and other buildings. These are the spindly legged spiders often seen hanging in messy webs near ceilings. Americans call them Cellar Spiders.**

A daddy-long-legs stateside is another type of arachnid, in the order Opiliones, also known as Harvestmen.

These creatures are found outdoors, usually in moist, dark places where they hide during the day. While they look like spiders and have eight legs, **they're not spiders.**

There's also a type of fly that's referred to as a daddy-long-legs. These insects are more appropriately called crane flies—a reference to their long legs, similar to those of the birds called cranes. These flies are also known as mosquito hawks or mosquito eaters. And though crane flies resemble mosquitoes, they could never eat one because they lack functional mouth parts as adults.

Q. What's the difference between the Eastern Towhee, the Spotted Towhee, and the Rufous-sided Towhee?



© James C. Coker/Dolphin



Western Towhee Birdsource.org

A. Time is the main factor with these bird names.

Originally the Eastern Towhee and the Spotted Towhee were considered distinct species. Biologists later decided that these were simply two forms, or subspecies, of a single species, the Rufous-sided Towhee. More recently, though, opinion has swung back, and current field guides again recognize the Eastern Towhee in the East and the Spotted Towhee in the West.

Confused? You're not alone. But take comfort in the knowledge that no matter where you live or what you call it, the beautiful black, white, and red towhee scuffling in the leaf litter is as fascinating to watch as ever.

Q: What do the Long-tailed Duck, the Northern Pikeminnow, and the Gray Pine have in common?

A. The common names of these three species have been modified to eliminate terms that were disrespectful to Native Americans. The



Long Tailed Duck © Jim Flynn / Root Resources

Long-tailed Duck

was formerly known as the Oldsquaw, the Northern Pikeminnow used to be known as the Northern Squawfish, and the Gray Pine was called the Digger Pine, a term applied to several tribes of California natives who dug for edible roots and bulbs.

Q: What's the difference between the Prairie Rattlesnake, the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake, and the Great Basin Rattlesnake?

A. These are all forms of a single species, the Western Rattlesnake. Each is a distinct subspecies that occupies a different geographic region. The Western Rattlesnake is also known as the Timber Rattlesnake in the Sierra Nevada and the Rockies—a misnomer because the true Timber Rattlesnake exists only east of the Rockies. Such is the problem with a lot of folk names or regionalisms.

Q: What's the difference between Steelhead and

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Rainbow Trout?



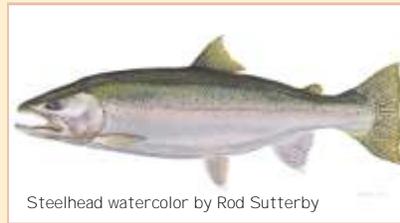
Rainbow watercolor by Rod Sutterby

A. These two names refer to the same species. Inland versions of the

fish that remain in freshwater all their lives are called Rainbow Trout, while coastal forms that migrate to the ocean and return to streams to spawn are called Steelhead.

Even more confusing is the history of the scientific name of the species. Prior to 1989, the fish was officially known as *Salmo gairdneri*, and now it's *Oncorhynchus mykiss*.

Why? Paleontologists looking at fossil evidence concluded that certain "trout" were actually more



Steelhead watercolor by Rod Sutterby

like Pacific Salmon, which are in the genus *Oncorhynchus*. The species name was changed when someone realized that a specimen collected in Asia

and named *mykiss* at the time was actually the same species. Because the name *mykiss* appeared first, it was then applied to all members of the species.

Autumn's Bounty

Reprinted from eNature.com

Autumn's Bounty Often Turns Carnivores Into Carb-loving Vegetarians.

What would you expect a Grizzly Bear to eat when fattening up for winter? Caribou? Salmon? How about a nice fruit salad? Yes, some of our most celebrated carnivores become vegetarians in the fall.

Even the largest terrestrial predator, the Grizzly Bear, turns into a berry specialist at this time of year. It feeds on Salmonberries, crowberries, elderberries, and numerous other species of berries. One type of manzanita is called Bearberry because of its importance in the fall diet of bears.



© G. C. Kelley/Photo Researchers

Black Bears, which tend to be more herbivorous than Grizzlies, also load up on berries before the winter, and in areas where oak trees grow, these bears consume vast quantities of acorns, too. Not to mention apples, grapes and other fruit they may encounter in farms and gardens.

Even the Polar Bear, the most predatory of all the bears, feeds on berries when they're available.

Coyotes and foxes follow a similar pattern, dining on a broad range of fruits during the fall. The superb climbing ability of the Common Gray Fox offers it access to berries and other fruits growing in places inaccessible to Coyotes and bears.



© Daniel J. Cox/Natural Exposures

Wolves, too, will eat berries in the fall, though these seldom constitute a significant portion of their diet.

At first glance, it seems odd that these large "meat eaters" would consume fruits at a time when their need for stored fats and proteins is paramount. Research, however, reveals that the carbohydrates found in fruits are easily converted into fats when eaten in large quantities.

[Editor note: eNature.com is a wonderful source of information on all aspects of nature.]

Haiku Poetry, part 2

By Paula Engelhardt

[Editor Note: Our Spring issue had part 1 of Paula's poetry, and this is part 2. Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry. It is non rhyming and uses a total of 17 syllables in three metrical phrases with 5 syllables in the first phrase, 7 in the second and 5 in the third. Many will focus on nature and seasons. The brevity of these means each word may carry a lot of feeling or meaning. To learn more about the subtleties of Haiku, visit: www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Haiku-Poem or www.ehow.com/how_3336_write-haiku.html, then try some yourself.]

Wild Horses



A hoof paws the ground
Fire-breathing dragon snorts
It is a standoff

Wild Horses II



Hooves pound rhythmically
Mane and tail are streamers
Grace, power unite

Feather

Floating on the wind
Released by a soaring bird
A feather finds earth



"Selma in the city"

Whooping Crane II

Beautiful white Crane
You stir my soul, touch my heart
Grace under pressure



River

Lofty cypress trees
Water cascades over rocks
Sunlit waves sparkle



Fire

Flames licking the air
Fire consumes its fuel
It wants to escape

[Ed. Now it's your turn, try your hand at it and send them in!]



Walking the Walk By Dorothy Mayer

Almost 2 years have passed since I first learned about the El Camino Real Master Naturalist Chapter that had formed in Milam County, TX where I was and still am residing. Milam County is also the only place where I have spent longer than a decade of my life. I was very excited to learn about this organization that had been created to study, educate others, and learn everything possible about the diversity of nature that occurs here in Central Texas and also how to conserve that habitat as much as possible for future generations. And all of this was happening right here, under my nose, in the place that I had managed to stick around long enough to finally put down enough roots to call home. I was and still am totally excited to discover, form friendships with, and work with such a diverse and interesting group of people that share my interest in learning more about nature. Like me, this group of people are thirsty for knowledge and remain anxious to learn more about the environment that we all live in and share.



We share a common desire to do our parts to help conserve this environment for future inhabitants. We have a blast sharing the tremendous amounts of knowledge we all learn through advanced training workshops, individual research and observations, community service projects and group activities. Odd, how little tidbits of information added to another person's little observations or discovery, sometimes combine together to explain something or to arouse enough interest that everybody starts watching closer and we just realize more and more why we need to be observant of the nature all around us. And, the many experts that come to speak to us about different specializations in various nature studies all seem very interested to get input from us about our observations.

Now, this is just 'way cool'. To feel like we are making a difference in the study of nature, is just an awesome feeling. But, to me, once we are educated about ways we can help improve our environment, then we become obligated to share what we have learned. We can no longer really do things the same way we always have

done them. Because, "once we know better, we should do better." And, I have always heard that if you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem. So, for this reason, I think that as Certified Master Naturalists, we must keep in mind that people will be looking at us as examples of what they can do to help conserve our environment.

One of the biggest issues that a lot of us need to think about is invasive plants. If we have them in our yards and are nurturing them, then we are probably helping to spread the seeds, etc. And, if others see them in our yards, then they will think they are fine in their yards, too. We all know that we cannot guarantee those seeds will not end up getting spread outside of our yards. That is just one way we are setting an example. I know a lot of Master Naturalists have beautiful yards and I can see people anxious to create a similar environment in their yard. Anyway, I just wanted to give people a little food for thought there. And, after studying our curriculum, can you say, "I'm part of the solution, and not part of the problem?"

Of course, we cannot necessarily change years of erroneous planning overnight, but we need to start somewhere. This Spring, I had my husband cut down my Mimosa trees. And, yes the hummingbirds were enjoying them, but I could not guarantee where the seeds were going to go. After much research on the internet and reading how they were taking over native habitats, I just could not keep them anymore. I will find a native replacement as soon as I have done more research and planning.

Next on my agenda, is to get an enclosed cage or dog run built so that I can put my outside cats inside the cage when I have baby birds fledging. I decided that I absolutely must have my cats, and I want birds, too. So, before concentrating too much effort in putting up birdhouses, I will get the cage ready and help keep the baby birds safe while they learn to fly. I feel I owe them this. Other than that, the birds will have to

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be watchful. I will provide shrubs and trees of various heights and not set too comfortable of a hunting place up for my two outside cats. Anyway, I feel that I will be making a start in the right direction.

After concentrating on removing the invasive plants I am responsible for planting, and providing a way for fledging birds to safely learn to fly, I will figure out what step to take next to make my property a more

natural wildscape.

I am not sure exactly what the next step will be yet, but I know that I will not be planting anything new on my property that goes against things I have learned in my Master Naturalist training.

I absolutely wear my new designation with pride, and I challenge all Master Naturalists to also be mindful to remain part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Ooops! By Dorothy Mayer

I plead guilty of drowning 2 toads! I'm ashamed to admit what I have done, but I can guarantee that my actions were not intentional. I am almost positive that somewhere in some of my MN training, I was warned something about something like this happening.

I am sure I read somewhere to plan an escape route for wildlife when providing a water source for my wild friends. Anyway, I was checking on things for a neighbor who was out of state. And, even though I had been told not to worry about keeping the water filled, I decided that doing so would be an act of caring and kindness. (I told you my intentions were good).

So, I filled the approximately 8 inch tub to the top and felt great about doing this, especially since there had been no rain to speak of in quite some time. Anyway, the water had almost completely evaporated leaving only about 1/2 an inch of watery goo, so I refilled it to the top. I left feeling like I had done a great thing.

In about 4 days, I went back to refill, and to my horror there were 2 dead bloated toads floating on the top. The water had evaporated about 3 or 4 inches and I suppose that the toads got in and because I had not had the foresight to build them a ladder, they were doomed. So, the poor creatures must have swam and swam, were unable to get a toe hold anywhere and probably just finally exhausted themselves and drowned.

I couldn't help but wonder if they were expecting me to come save them before it was too late or if they blamed me for making them think they didn't have to make a long tiring journey to a natural water source, or

possibly they thought that I had purposefully enticed them into this pit of no escape. (You really never know unless you speak or understand toad. They actually could have felt that I had a personal vendetta against toads.)

Of course, "I" know that I didn't do this intentionally. But, in hindsight, I do really believe that somewhere I had read about creating an escape route for wildlife when planning a water source for a wildscape. I'm almost positive this was discussed in some of my required reading materials.

Nevertheless, I choose to not dwell on my mistake, but rather to learn from it and hope by sharing my story, I can keep others from learning this lesson the same horrible way I did. Maybe in the long run, I will actually save a few toads. And, I do like to look for a silver lining in everything.

So, these are the positives that I can see:

- 1) I have now added a ladder made of rocks for future use-so that more critters will not suffer the same fate.
- 2) In the future, I will continue to always build a way out for wildlife at any watering sources I provide.
- 3) Neither toad was an endangered Houston Toad.
- 4) There was one green water frog having a blast swimming in that tub when I found the floating carcasses of my unlucky victims.
- 5) Lastly, while I learned a valuable lesson, I was also reminded of something else I have learned in my Master Naturalist training: "Build it, and they will come."



Our New Website Don Travis



EL CAMINO REAL CHAPTER

MILAM COUNTY - TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST

- Home Calendar and Current Events Los Caminos - Newsletter
- The Nature of Milam County Milam County Nature Festival Natural Areas of Interest
- Organization Library Outside Resources Photo and SlideShow Gallery
- Volunteers Training Members Area Contact Us

As many of you know by now, we have moved all our old web site pages over to a new site and format, and done a little reorganizing in the process.

At the top of every page will be the new Menu (above) showing the major sections of the site, and hovering a mouse over one of the titles will show a detail list of each page.

Below is part of the current Home page. The photo collage will change periodically showing recent chapter activities or special photos.

cluded on this "Calendar and Current Events" web page, so it is just a few clicks away should you need to refer to it, as well as for those not on our email list.

Our Calendar

- Sat, Sep 25: Water Conservation Conference (Adv. trng Hrs) [\[More Information\]](#)
- Wed, Sep 29: Dale Kruse returns for Bryophyte hunting (Gause area) [\[More Information\]](#)
- Thu, Sep 30 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm: Nature Journaling Workshop AT (Lolly Lewis home) [\[More Information\]](#)
- Fri, Oct 1 8:00 am - 11:00 am: Highway 79 cleanup (Meet at roadside park)
- Thu, Oct 7 - Sun, Oct 10: Tx Native Plant Symposium (Texas Womens University, Denton TX) [\[More Information\]](#)
- Thu, Oct 7 6:00 pm - 10:00 pm: Class - Mammalogy, Dr. John Young (Gause school)
- Fri, Oct 8 8:00 am - 11:00 am: Highway 79 cleanup (Meet at roadside park.)
- Thu, Oct 14 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm: Chapter Mtg - Social, AT (American Legion, Ledbetter park) [\[More Information\]](#)
- Sat, Oct 16: Sugarloaf Mtn Class field trip
- Fri, Oct 22 - Sun, Oct 24: TMN Annual Mtg
- Thu, Nov 4 6:00 pm - 10:00 pm: Class - Herpetology, Dr. Toby Hibbits (Gause school)
- Thu, Nov 11: 2010 Class graduation
- Thu, Nov 18: Annual Membership Mtg - time TBD
- Thu, Nov 25: Happy Thanksgiving!
- Sat, Dec 25: Merry Christmas!
- Sat, Apr 9: 2011 Milam County Nature Festival (Wilson Ledbetter Park, Cameron) [\[More Information\]](#)

Welcome

You are here: Home



"The best place to study nature is at one's own home - on the farm, in the mountains, by the sea - wherever that may be."

by American Naturalist John Burroughs

Our full chapter calendar is maintained on Google Calendar, and links into our web site page. This gives a quick overview of all upcoming events. In addition, the "ECRMN This Week" that comes in your email is in-

ECRMN This Week

Nature at its Best!

Activities for Week of

September 19th:

Our Home page also contains an overview of the entire website content, as shown below, and every page also has a navigation bar down the right hand side seen here. I think the richest part of our site is all the class presentations, web links, book suggestions, and nature articles (including all of Shawn Walton's newspaper articles), all organized by Nature Topic, as seen under "Natural Areas of Interest" on the right. Find your favorite nature area and see what is in store!

Contributions by members on their favorite topics is always welcomed.

Nature At Its Best!

We have a very rich web site chock full of fascinating information about the natural world in which we live, especially here in our beloved Milam County - home of many beautiful natural treasures and abundant wildlife. Let us share it all with you.

Please note the navigation panel down the right side of the page, and be sure to visit some of our major offerings.

- o **Calendar and Current Events** - our Calendar as maintained on Google Calendar showing highlights, and the latest "ECRMN This Week" that is emailed to everyone.
- o **Los Caminos Newsletters** - All of our past newsletters are online for viewing or download.
- o **The Nature of Milam County**
 - **Texas Seeds For Success** is our participation in the Millennium Seed Bank project, harvesting local seeds for preservation "forever".
 - **Big Trees of Milam County** documents some of the largest trees we can find, and therefore some of the most historic in the county.
 - **Our Nature Book** will be documenting, over time, all the neat flora and fauna found in our county.
- o **Milam County Nature Festival** - our annual celebration of "Nature at its Best"
- o **Natural Areas of Interest** - pick your favorite area of nature and see what we have for you in terms of definitions, class and advanced training presentations, recommended web sites and our favorite books and guides.
- o **Organization** tells you who we are, what the Master Naturalist program is all about, and how to join.
- o **Library** is our collection of brochures, meeting minutes, reporting templates, and other operating documents.
- o **Outside Resources** contains some general external links of interest.
- o **Photos and Slide Shows** includes various photos of classes, our member photo gallery so you can place names with faces, some really great powerpoint slide shows about nature in general, and some member submitted photos.
- o **Volunteer Hours Reporting** explains about our volunteer projects, and how reporting of hours is managed. Email me for the password if you don't have it.
- o **Training** tells about our classes and advanced training opportunities.
- o **Members Area** is a login controlled area for members only documents, such as our members phone numbers, and email / mail addresses, etc.
- o **Contact** gives you a form to email us directly with questions or comments.

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I hope you find our txmn.org/elcamino site entertaining and informative!

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Los Caminos is a quarterly publication of the El Camino Real Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists.

Certifications, Etc. By Cindy Bolch

Achieving 2009 Annual Re-Certifications year to date include:

Carolyn Burford, Joy Graham, Sandra Dworzaczyk, Sandra O'Donnell,
Shawn Walton, Lisa Davenport, Dorothy Mayer

Achieving 2010 Annual Re-Certifications year to date include:

Ann Collins, Anne Barr, Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch, Don Travis, Bruce Merryman, Cindy McDaniels, Cindy Travis, Connie Roddy, Dorothy Mayer, **Ed Burleson, Janice Johnson, Jim and Sandra O'Donnell, Kim Summers,** Lisa Davenport, Lucy Coward, Paul Unger, Paula Engelhardt, Phyllis Shuffield, and Rusty Thomas,

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250 Hours—Paul Unger, Katherine Bedrich, Ann Collins, Cindy Bolch, Paula Engelhardt, Don Travis, Debbie Harris, Joy Graham, Lucile Estell, Shawn Walton, Anne Barr, Ed Burleson, Connie Roddy, Dorothy Mayer, and Lucy Coward

500 Hours—Paul Unger, Ann Collins, Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch, Paula Engelhardt, Don Travis and Anne Barr

1000 Hours—Paul Unger, Ann Collins, Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch and Don Travis

[Congratulations to All!](#)

Did You Know?

What is the biggest living organism?



It's an invasive fungus called *Armillaria ostoyae*, of the Honey Mushroom genus commonly known as Shoestring Rot. The largest known sample is living in Malheur National Forest in Eastern Oregon and it covers 2200 acres and is estimated to be over 2400 years old! It is responsible for killing many trees in the Forest. To go into the forest where this giant makes its home you would not look at it and see a huge, looming mushroom. Armillaria grows and spreads primarily underground and the sheer bulk of this organism lies in the earth, out of sight. Occasionally, during the fall season, this specimen will send up golden-colored "honey mushrooms" (as seen in the photo) that are the visible evidence of its hulking mass beneath. And yes, the honey mushrooms are supposedly edible, but apparently not very tasty. To learn more, see <http://www.extremescience.com/zoom/index.php/largest-living-thing>, **It's a "humongous fungus among us", that's for sure!**

