

Master Naturalist™



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.



Los Caminos

"My Blue Heaven" by Carolyn Burford

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** Spring 2010

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Our Motto

- Look
- Learn
- Teach
- Conserve

Our Mascot
Green Tree Frog



Did You Know?

What is the strongest creature in the Animal Kingdom?
See Answer on the last page.

Prairie Tracks, by Katherine Bedrich

[The Nature Of Milam County](#) is an important major project of our Chapter. Milam County has very little documentation on birds, mammals, flowers, insects, bryophytes, and actually all species. The project we are undertaking is a start to recording the riches we have in our County.

Taking photos is a very good source of identifying and documenting a species. As the weather warms, take some time and go outdoors and photograph your yard. Start snapping those pictures and see how nature surprises you. And, why not start making a list of what is in your yard. Grab a pen and paper and walk around the place and make notes on what you find in your area. Do you see wildflowers, a woodpecker, and an insect? Write it down, and describe what it looks like and where it was seen. Get a field guide and try to identify the species; bring the information to a meeting and we can all help with identification. **What is the weather doing ... is it cloudy, sunny, rainy; what is the temperature; what is the time of day?**

Guess what, you are officially helping with [The Nature of Milam County](#) project. The information collected can be

turned into the specific committee and a page can be started for that species; and your name will be on that page.

I love taking photos, especially nature photos. With the digital camera, I can take as many as I wish, and pick the better photos to keep. I am not a great photographer, but I try to learn and do my best.

Here is a photo of a [Green Tree Frog \(*Hyla cinerea*\)](#) taken in the backyard. I took several photos and this one is the best. I think it could be used on the page about the [Green Tree Frog \(*Hyla cinerea*\)](#)

If every member turned in one species this year, we could have over 50 pages in [The Nature Of Milam County](#).



Nature Festival News

By Don Travis

Our [First Annual Milam County Nature Festival](#) is coming up fast—on Friday and Saturday this coming June 11 and 12 at Wilson-Ledbetter Park in Cameron.

Our slogan **"Nature At Its Best"** was chosen in a contest with many excellent suggestions by members. The winning slogan was independently submitted by both Janice Pelzel and Paul Unger. Congratulations!

Under the creative and enthusiastic leadership of Ann Collins, a growing number of Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners have been hard at work since earlier this year planning and organizing what will be the premier nature event in the region. We are making plans to handle about 2000 visitors, and we will have family oriented activities and events for every age group or nature interest. While detailed plans are still fluid, this is what we have tentatively planned so far.

Starting off on Friday evening at 6pm, the park is going to be designated a bird sanctuary—*"The Francis Nabors Griffen Bird Sanctuary at Wilson-Ledbetter Park"*, with a ceremony including a dedication of the sanctuary sign by her grandson Chancy Lewis.

At 7pm will be our keynote speaker, Andrew Sansom, Executive Director of River Systems Institute. He will be speaking from the bridge over the creek and tell us all about water conservation issues. "We've already committed for use more water from our rivers and streams than is actually in them," Sansom warns, as a way of pointing out the urgency of water issues. "We face a future in Texas in which rivers that we identify with Texas, like the Guadalupe, could literally dry up."

Following that, at dusk, amphibian lovers will really enjoy a **"Sounds of the Night"** program put on by Lee



Wilson-Ledbetter Park

Ann Linam and Marsha May, leaders of the Amphibian Watch program with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Listen to those croakers! Then after dark, there will be an outdoor movie, complete with popcorn!

Saturday's all day long activities and events are numerous and varied. Some will be presentations at several scheduled times, and oth-

ers will run more or less continually.

We are building a "native prairie exhibit" with native grasses taken from around Milam County, and Dr Barron Rector, Associate Professor at Texas A&M will lead discussions on these wonderful grasses.

Our own "wildflower meadow" has already been seeded, and Flo Oxley, Director of Education and Conservation at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center will speak on **"Wildflowers—Legends and Lore"**, and along with Debbie Harris will **lead a children's activity** on making Lollypop Flowers.



Wildflowers in our Meadow already.

We also have a "wildscape" under way, and Mark Klym, co-author of the beautifully photographed *Hummingbirds of Texas* and an employee of Texas Parks and Wildlife, will discuss components of wildscapes and how to build one at your own home.

Jeff Williams, from Sam Houston State University, will speak on the fascinating history of the El Camino Real de los Tejas Heritage Trail, which runs right through Milam County.

Jill Nokes, landscape designer and author of *Yard Art and Handmade Places: Extraordinary Expressions of Home* will share her expertise on native plants of Texas.

(Continued on page 3)



We will have twenty bluebird houses installed around the perimeter of the park, and the Texas Bluebird Society will be on hand to demonstrate how to build and maintain a bluebird trail on your property. Bluebird houses, and plans for how to build them and mount them, will also be available.



Alston Thoms, professor of Anthropology Texas A&M University, will speak on digging for artifacts and other archaeology topics.

Mark Ellet will conduct a session on raptors, those beautiful and powerful birds of prey.

Joe Lapp, otherwise known as "Spider Joe", will lead folks on a walking and learning excursion through the trees to discover and discuss those spiders we all love so much(!). Maybe you can take some home with you!



Other activities and events will cover such topics as: Snakes, Butterflies, Pollinators, Bats, Enviroscapes, Animal track molds, Amphibians, Horned Lizards, Birds and Hummingbirds, Dragonflies, and the



list goes on and on....

Lots of wonderful food vendors will be there to satisfy every kind of taste.

There are other sites to visit in the county as well, such as our town square and historic courthouse; the fascinating old county jail and museum dating from 1895; the Rockdale Train Depot; and the Cameron swimming pool!

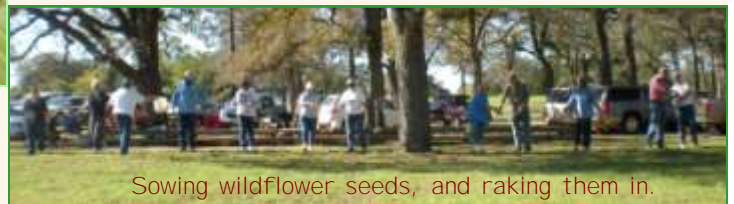
For those attending from out of town, we've got some great motels and a variety of fantastic local restaurants. Visit the Cameron Chamber of Commerce web site at www.cameron-tx.com, and Rockdale's at www.rockdalechamber.com.

Mark your calendar now, and tell everyone you know to come join you and your family at this major local event. Make a whole weekend out of it.

You'll be glad you did!



Building our bluebird houses



Sowing wildflower seeds, and raking them in.



County Courthouse



Rockdale Train Depot



Pictures along the way

By Master Naturalists

Traveling around the county offers a multitude of opportunities for catching nature in action -I F you have your trusty camera at the ready, and are looking for that special moment. Here are a couple shots taken by members. Send me yours too. — Editor.

From Lucy Coward: the other day as I was driving home, this bird ran across the road in front of me, so I

stopped and took several pictures —but this one was the best. **I'm sure** you all know what it is!



From Cindy Travis: we have sparrows making annual nests and babies on the top beam of our front porch. I took us a while, but we finally trained this Texas Rat snake to help us keep the population down! Not sure if **he succeeded or not, but that's the way of nature!**



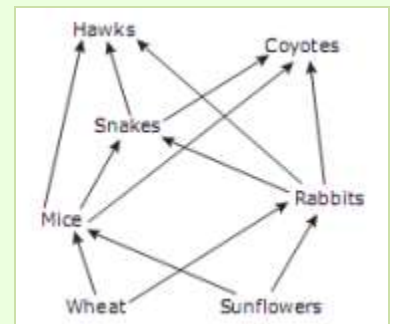
Can you pass the TAKS?

By Don Travis

I know y'all have heard of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge Skills (TAKS), right? Well, I have extracted questions related to nature from the 10th grade and Exit level sample Science tests, provided by the **Department of Education. Let's see how well you can do!** The Answer key is at the end.

- These items describe a sagebrush plant: brushy plant; lives in the desert; and has leaves covered with tiny fibers. If the tiny fibers help sagebrush leaves reflect more light than leaves of other plants, how does this adaptation help the sagebrush plant?
 - Reduces the drying effects of the sun
 - Releases large amounts of carbon dioxide
 - Increases mineral absorption
- A type of worm found on plant roots can: feed on the roots; cause a disease in the plant; weaken the **plant's root system**. **Which of the following best describes the relationship between the worm and the plant?**

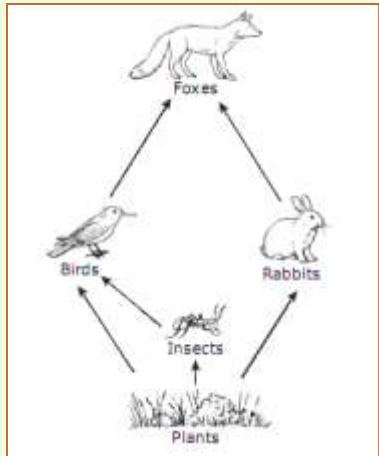
- Mutualism
 - Competition
 - Parasitism
- The traits of some organisms are: reproduce by spores; no seeds; cell walls made of chitin; no chloroplasts; and absorb food through cell walls. In which kingdom would such organisms be classified?
 - Animalia
 - Fungi
 - Plantae
 - Looking at this food web, which of the following food chains is possible?
 - wheat—mice—rabbits—coyotes
 - snakes—mice—rabbits—sunflowers
 - sunflowers—rabbits—snakes—hawks



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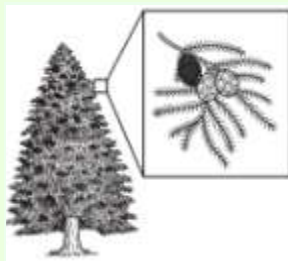
5. Millions of species of organisms are present on Earth today. Which process is most responsible for the variety of species on Earth today?
 - A. Adaptation
 - B. Respiration
 - C. Biomagnification
6. Looking at this food web, what would most likely happen if rabbits had fewer offspring?
 - A. Native plants would become extinct
 - B. The Fox population would slowly decrease
 - C. The insect population would quickly increase.
7. Some plants have a hard waxy coating on their leaves that helps prevent water loss. In which environment would these plants most likely grow?
 - A. Desert
 - B. Marine
 - C. Grassland
 - D. Rain forest



8. Given this table of information, in which plant group does the pictured plant belong?

Plant Group	Characteristics
Bryophytes	Contain no xylem and phloem; reproduce by spores and gametes
Psilopytes	Contain xylem and phloem; no difference between root and stem
Gymnosperms	Have naked seeds located on the cones
Angiosperms	Have enclosed seeds located in a fruit

- A. Bryophytes
- B. Psilophytes
- C. Gymnosperms
- D. Angiosperms



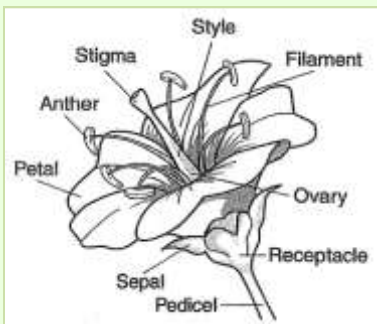
9. A group of researchers discovered the fossilized remains of a flying mammal that appears to have lived 130 million to 165 million years ago. Since the earliest flying birds are believed to have appeared about 150 million years ago, researchers concluded that birds and mammals began to fly at about the same time. This conclusion would be most weakened by evidence of which of the following?
 - A. A 100 million year old fossil of a flying bird
 - B. A 120 million year old fossil of a flying bird
 - C. A 160 million year old fossil of a flying mammal
 - D. A 200 million year old fossil of a flying mammal
10. Parthenogenesis is a type of asexual reproduction in which an organism is produced from an unfertilized egg. A female spring peeper frog produces 200 eggs through parthenogenesis. If all the eggs hatch, they will produce _____.
 - A. 50 females and 150 males
 - B. 100 females and 100 males
 - C. 150 females and 50 males
 - D. 200 females and 0 males
11. Cell membranes perform all the following functions except?
 - A. making nutrients for cells
 - B. holding cytoplasm within cells
 - C. regulating substances exiting cells
 - D. recognizing other cells
12. The long term survival of any species of organism is possible only if the organisms can ____
 - A. migrate when temperature changes
 - B. reproduce successfully
 - C. find protection from predators
 - D. locate a constant food source
13. Members of the kingdom Animalia are best described as ____
 - A. unicellular, prokaryotic, heterotrophic
 - B. unicellular, eukaryotic, autotrophic
 - C. multicellular, eukaryotic, heterotrophic
 - D. multicellular, eukaryotic, autotrophic
14. Scientists recently found a fossil representing a newly discovered animal species that they named Tiktaalik roseae. The fossil indicates that he had a fish-like jaw and scale covered fins. The front fins had bones similar to those of a shoulder, an upper

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(TAKS Test, continued from page 5)

arm, an elbow, a forearm, and a wrist. This information suggest that populations of this species most likely lived in which two environments?

- A. saltwater and freshwater
 B. water and land
 C. land and treetops
 D. glaciers and caves
15. Compared to annual rings of trees that have experienced years of sufficient rainfall, the annual rings of trees that have experienced a dry period will ____
- A. be softer
 B. grow at a faster rate
 C. be thinner
 D. photosynthesize at a faster rate
16. Which best represents a mutualistic relationship?
- A. A tapeworm absorbing nutrients from the intestine of a dog
 B. An orchid being pollinated by a nectar-collecting wasp
 C. A human losing blood to a feeding mosquito
 D. An armadillo rooting in the soil at the base of an oak tree
17. Characteristics of a plant that has adapted to its environment may include: grows in clusters low to the ground; able to grow under a layer of snow; carries out photosynthesis at freezing temperatures; flowers very quickly and briefly during the summer; and produces small moisture retaining leaves. Which environment would be typical for this plant?
- A. Desert
 B. Grassland
 C. Tundra
 D. Rain Forest
18. Which parts of the flower are not directly involved in sexual reproduction?
- A. stigma and style
 B. sepal and pedicel
 C. anther and filament
 D. receptacle and ovary
19. The bullfrog, *Rana catesbeiana*, is most



closely related to the ____

- A. spotted chorus frog, *Pseudacris clarki*
 B. Asian flying frog, *Polypedates leucomystax*
 C. northern leopard frog, *Rana pipiens*
 D. African bullfrog, *Pyxicephalus adspersus*
20. Which of these classifications is most specific?
- A. Family
 B. Genus
 C. Phylum
 D. Order
21. The kingdom Animalia includes all of these except?
- A. jellyfish
 B. sponges
 C. amoebas
 D. roundworms
22. One biological way to control fire ants might be to introduce organisms that are ____
- A. mutualistic with fire ant queens
 B. nurtured by fire ant workers
 C. preyed on by fire ant drones
 D. parasitic to fire ant larvae
23. As a banana ripens: its skin color changes from green to yellow to brown; the taste becomes sweeter; it produces an odor. What causes it to become sweeter as it ripens?
- A. Physical change
 B. Environmental change
 C. Chemical change
24. Plants get energy for growth from ____
- A. Soil
 B. Water
 C. Sunlight
25. Which of these characteristics might help a plant survive with minimal sunlight?
- A. bright flowers
 B. large leaves
 C. short stems
 D. thick cuticles

Now, wasn't that fun? ... by Don Travis

Answer key: 1-A, 2-C, 3-B, 4-C, 5-A, 6-B, 7-A, 8-C, 9-D, 10-D, 11-A, 12-B, 13-C, 14-B, 15-C, 16-B, 17-C, 18-B, 19-C, 20-B, 21-C, 22-D, 23-C, 24-C, 25-B.

Peanut Butter Suet Bird Block

by Cindy Travis

I found a nice recipe for a suet block, and the birds **really like it! It's pretty easy to make, and you'll know** you are providing a nice high protein energy food.

The birds love these. Cardinals, chickadees, tufted titmouse, phoebe, many varieties of sparrows, red bellied woodpecker and yellow rumped warbler have been

Suet Bird Block Recipe

- 1 Cup lard (cheaper by the bucket)
- 1 Cup crunchy peanut butter (the cheapest store brands work just as well)
- 1/3 Cup sugar
- 1 Cup whole wheat flour, or cream of wheat, or oatmeal
- 2 Cups cornmeal
- Optional: raisins, sunflower seeds without shells, dried fruit or eggshells (I like currants as they are small)

Dump it all in a pot and heat over medium heat until lard and peanut butter melt and stir thoroughly. Make a triple batch for efficiency. Pour into square pan(s) to a depth and size that will fit your block feeder, or into a Ziploc type plastic storage container, until cool and solid. You could use a larger pan and just cut them to fit as well. Then hang it in your block feeder. They freeze nicely too.



spotted at my feeder, especially during our 1 snow storm of the year —**just piggin' out!**

Make sure you tell your husband what these **are, as he might think it's a new snack. On second thought, don't tell him and see if he** likes it. Mine did.

Photo and article by Cindy Travis

Benefits of Joining Our Chapter

by Dorothy Mayer

In December of 2008, I received a Christmas letter update from a close neighbor who added a link to a newly formed master naturalist group in Milam County. This friend and neighbor was instrumental in helping get this organization started. Rather than repeatedly asking my neighbors more about this interesting sounding organization, I decided to get out of my regular routine and to take the classes myself so I could learn more about this newly formed organization. There was an initial investment of \$150, which I have learned first hand is an extremely good investment.

There is hardly a week that goes by that I do not have the opportunity to do something fun and exciting right here in Milam County. Of course, I have the option to do as little or as much as I want to or am able to do.

I have been living in the country here for a number of years and have always been most appreciative of nature. But I figure the more you know about anything, the more you appreciate it's value and the more enjoyment you will get. I also have always loved to read and learn about things. And, of course, meeting new friends with similar interests to share this love of nature and learning was more than worth my initial investment.

Our classes are taught by professionals such as TX Parks and Wildlife employees, University I nstructors and other professionals in related fields of study. The classes vary from simple to quite challenging information so there is plenty of information for anybody with an interest in nature to learn. I do not know of anybody too 'dumb' or too 'smart' that would not get something

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(Benefits, continued from page 7)

out of taking the classes.

Since first joining the El Camino Real Master Naturalist Chapter in early 2009, I have not only made a



whole bunch of new like-minded friends, I have learned so much about so many different things. Birds, reptiles, mammals, wildflowers, trees, insects, wetlands, lichens, mosses, amphibians, water tables, weather and climate,

eco-regions, native plants, grasses, and wildlife as well as tons of other interesting information.

There is really not enough room to give justice to the many things that have been presented to us to learn about locally. But if something has to do at all with nature or preserving nature you can be assured that the topic will be of interest to our group. And if you have a

particular interest in a subject there is a very high probability that this group would find a way to enhance your studies.

So, if you are thinking that you need or want to get outside and off the couch a little more, I challenge you to get involved and become a participant in something exciting that is happening right here in your local area.



I am proud to say that although Milam County may be rural, we are not behind. I will be hoping to meet you soon, but right now I am going to enjoy this nice weather and see what wildlife is peeking out ready to enjoy it with me.

Photos and article by Dorothy Mayer

Could you run on sunlight?

By Don Travis

Y'all know about photosynthesis, right? It's the ability to derive energy from sunlight. And it has long thought to be restricted to the plant kingdom. Well perhaps not any more.

Scientists from the University of South Florida have identified the first animal capable of running on solar power: *Elysia chlorotica*, a leaf-shaped sea slug native to the salt marshes of New England and Canada. It seems this sea slug eats photosynthetic algae and is known to permanently borrow tiny cell parts called chloroplasts, which are critical in converting sunlight to energy, from its meals.

In order to work, these chloroplasts need a steady supply of the green pigment chlorophyll. Since most slugs cannot make their own chlorophyll, this is not a self-sustaining system. To get more chlorophyll, the slugs would normally have to constantly eat more algae. This new study confirmed that the sea slugs actually **generate this pigment themselves, using genes they've stolen from the algae and incorporated into their own DNA!**

Once it incorporates algae genes into its system, the green sea slug passes these genes on to its offspring. Upon hatching, the babies need one last ingredient to make the whole system work: chloroplasts.

The baby slugs don't yet have the genetic instructions to produce the chloroplasts on their own. All a young slug has to do to get such instructions, however, is have a big meal of algae.



Once a young sea slug consumes a chloroplast, it can stop eating and live off sunlight like a plant for the **rest of its life.** "This could be a fusion of a plant and an animal," invertebrate zoologist John Zardus tells *Science News*. "That's just cool."

Anyone want to try a big meal of algae? ... Don

Backyard Hummingbirding

By Ann Collins

I have been a birder for about thirty years. That's more than I care to admit to. I have had lots of interesting and exciting experiences. This past summer was right up there with some of the best ones. I had the great, good fortune of being able to observe a female Ruby Throat nesting in my backyard. Dense woods surround my home so Ruby Throats are about all I get, and not many of them. Quality over quantity is best any day of the week for me.

Mark Klym advised some of us to tie red ribbons on bushes in our yards to possibly attract the hummers. I think he even quietly suggested that the next car we bought should be red. I did tie the ribbons near the feeders but it was still a quiet year, possibly due to the heat and drought. I kept three feeders filled from March to early November.

One morning in mid May, as I sat with binoculars trained on the feeders, I noticed a female Ruby Throat zooming to a limb about twelve to fifteen feet off the ground and about twenty or so feet away from my perch on the deck steps. She was actually dive bombing a **bright red male Cardinal. I've seen Mockingbirds dive** bomb Crows and Crows mob owls, but never a tiny speck of a bird actually attacking any bird other than another **hummer. I didn't**

know what to think. It never occurred to me that she would be defending a nest that was quite invisible to my naked eye. But, she was! As the



summer dragged by I saw her dive bomb numerous Cardinals, both male and female and a Tufted Titmouse. About ten days after my first observation, a pair of Cardinals built a nest on the same limb above the hummer. Guess they figured she was a real warrior and would protect their nest as well as her own.

Birders all have addictive natures so I was hooked immediately. I could hardly do my daily chores for watching this industrious little homemaker about to be-

come a mother. I finally located the exact spot the nest was attached to the pencil sized limb. It was so fascinating, smaller than the palm of my hand and exactly the color of the limb of the Oak tree it was on. It was covered with lichen from the oaks in my woods and glued together with a fine mesh of spider webs. I observed her on several occasions seeming to check or repair the spot where nest met limb. There were a couple of leaves just above the nest that served as umbrellas to protect from rain and the relentless sun.

Numerous times I observed her perched on the side of the nest poking her beak into the bowl. I suppose in the beginning she was just making sure the eggs were arranged to her liking. Later on she would feed them in the same manner until finally, their sharp little beaks were consistently visible above the top of the nest. The way she sat on the nest was quite interesting. She looked like she was sitting on a flat surface, with head exposed on one side and her tail in the air on the opposite side.



Many of my observations began at dawn and ended with the falling of darkness. I tried to take pictures. I even climbed up on an eight foot ladder and got as close as I thought sensible but none of the pictures were very good. *(Editor note: all pictures here are ones I located on the internet.)* She had chosen her spot well. I invisible from the ground and shaded by leaves from the top.

Toward the end of the nesting period I could see the juveniles fluttering their wings, practicing for their final launch. I began my observations on May 19th, 2009. On the 14th of June, at 8:05am I could see two juveniles on the nest. At 8:49am there was only one. At 11:31am there was one juvenile on the nest. When I checked at 12:14pm the nest was empty at last! I saw them for a day or so around the feeders. After that

(Continued on page 10)

(Backyard Hummingbirding, continued from page 9)

they blended in with the other Ruby Throats in the area.

I think I was as proud of them as their own Mama. Next year, I will be more vigilant and if there are nests to be found, I will find them and begin the process all over again.

I should be so lucky!

Ann Collins



Storm Protection By George H. Harrison, eNature.com

Where do the birds go for protection during severe weather such as blizzards, hurricanes, and tornadoes?

Birds have an amazing ability to find refuge from storms, but they do it in a variety of ways, depending on the species and the bird's natural habitat.

Bluebirds, for example, often winter as far north as New England. They find protection against the cold and storms by communal roosting, often in a bird house. There are photographs of 13 male eastern bluebirds, all crowded into one bluebird house. This behavior shares warmth, and keeps the birds out of the wind, rain and snow.



Other cavity nesters, such as chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers, also seek out old nesting sites in dead trees or bird

houses in which to roost or find protection during a storm.

Nuthatches, which sometimes nest behind a loose piece of tree bark, may seek the same kind of shelter against the cold.

Flocks of rosy finches often roost in an outcropping of rock where they can get out of the cold wind.

Bobwhite make a circle of the covey, huddled side-by-side, with head facing out. This allows them to share body heat, while being ready to escape in all directions, should they be attacked.

Ruffed grouse take a different tactic. They dive into a snow bank, and may stay there for several days until the storm passes.

Many other birds retreat to dense, evergreen thickets where they are protected from the elements for the duration of the storm.

In the past 25 years Eastern Bluebirds have become uncommon for reasons not altogether clear. Competition for nest sites with European Starlings and House Sparrows is likely a critical factor. The erection of many artificial nest boxes in recent years seems to **be helping to increase the population.** [Ed. And we're helping!]

By George H. Harrison, reprinted from eNature.com

Haiku Poetry

By Paula Engelhardt

[Ed. Note] 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!

Here are some selections written by, and photos by, Paula Engelhardt. Future issues will include more.



River Life
Leaping fish catch flies
Turtles tumble off of logs
Lone heron wings past



Clouds
Dreamily gazing
High above me, clouds float by
Wish I, too, could fly



Canoeing
Canoe cuts water
Glurp, glurp, it licks the boat's side
Softly bounce downstream

Whooping Crane
Gliding on the wind
Touch down in a salty marsh
Looking for a meal



Cypress
Enchanted forest
Lumbering giant cy-
press
Roots yield fairy
homes



Campfire
Campfire crackles
Flames dancing, embers
glowing
Smoke tendrils climbing

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

Hints and Tips

By Don Travis



1. Why am I missing Emails that others get?

You may have some important email messages hidden away in your Email program's **Spam Folder**, which are not spam at all, and may be important messages you would not want to miss (like from the Chapter!). These are known as "false positives" in the computer world.

Why does this happen? Most Email programs (Yahoo, Gmail, Outlook, etc.) will consider messages which have a large number of addresses on the distribution list as possibly some kind of broadcast spam mail. Since many of our chapter email messages go to ever increasing numbers of people, these messages may be going into your Spam Folder—and you are not seeing them!

What can I do? First make sure you check your Spam Folder frequently, say every time you are about to close out your mail. Just looking at the list of emails in this folder will not do any harm to your computer, as long as you do not open any of them. Second, if you see email you know should not be marked Spam, then use your "Not Spam" button or feature (if you have one) to tell your email program that mail like this one is ok, and it will put it back into your Inbox and should properly handle future ones from this sender as well. You can also add that sender's email address to your contacts list or address book, as most email programs will not

place messages from people you know into the Spam Folder. Third, set your Spam Folder settings to keep mail there for at least a couple of weeks before automatically deleting it. **You'll be glad you did.**

2. How do I Keep up with what's going on? How do I tell everyone else about something important?

Paul Unger is the creator of our "ECRMN This Week" notices that go to all members and potential members, so if you want a scheduled event published here, get the news item to him. These weekly notices are also placed on our website soon after they are sent out, and are under the "Current Events" link on the upper left of the first web page.



Our web site's month-at-a-glance **Calendar** is also updated to show all known events past and future, including notes about the details of each one if you open the event item. It also has a link on the upper left of the main page. This is maintained from the above weekly notices, and other information.

If you want to share or forward some general information or an item of interest to all the membership via email, send it to our chapter email address EICamino-RealMasterNaturalist@gmail.com, and let me know to whom you want it sent. I have distribution lists setup for Chapter Members, Chapter Advisors, Potential Recruits, Chapter Board Members, Friends of ECRMN (an odd collection of interested folks), Past presenters and professors from our classes, Milam County school contacts, Local radio stations, Local and regional newspapers, City and County officials, and State Texas Master Naturalist contacts. Whew!

And this long list is why you might want to re-read **item #1**, so you don't miss any of our notices.

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

Upcoming Major Events:

- 3/27 Advanced Training, Invasive Species Workshop, 9am
- 4/1 Chapter Membership Meeting at Alligator Ranch, 9am
- 4/1 First day of 2010 Class, Gause School, 6pm
- 4/10 Adopt a Highway cleanup, 10am
- 6/11-12 "Nature at its Best" - Nature Festival

See our website "Calendar" and "Current Events" for all the details.

Certifications, Etc. By Cindy Bolch

Certification: Stella Booker

Achieving 2009 Annual Re-Certifications year to date include: Carolyn Burford, Joy Graham, Sandra Dworzaczyk, Sandra O'Donnell, Shawn Walton

Achieving 2010 Annual Re-Certifications year to date include: Ann Collins, Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch, Don Travis, Anne Barr, and Dorothy Mayer

Lifetime to date Milestone Achievement Levels Awarded include:
 250 Hours—Paul Unger, Ann Collins, Cindy Bolch, Katherine Bedrich, Paula Engelhardt, Don Travis, Debbie Harris, Joy Graham, Lucile Estell, Shawn Walton and Anne Barr

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

1000 Hours—Paul Unger

Congratulations to All!

Did You Know?

What is the strongest creature in the Animal Kingdom?



The Rhinoceros Beetle or Rhino Beetle is one of a number of subspecies in the Scarab Beetle family (Scarabaeidae), and can lift 850 times its own weight. If you were that strong, you could lift a 65 ton object! Very handy in foraging through heavy underbrush. In contrast, the elephant can only lift about 1/4 of its weight. Their name refers to the horn of the males, which is used in fighting other males for breeding rights of a nearby female. In some cultures, their larvae are fried and eaten as a bush delicacy. In Asia, many are kept as pets as they are clean, easy to maintain and safe to handle—**unless you're another male rhino beetle.** The Japanese call their species Kabutomushi, and in

addition to being pets and breeding in the home, they are used in gambling where two males are placed on a log, and the one that doesn't get pushed off is the winner—along with those who bet on him.