



Texas Winter, by Don Travis

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

A Quarterly Newsletter of the El Camino Real Chapter
 Milam County **Texas Master Naturalist** Winter '08-'09

Winter '08-'09 Issue Contents

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2009, the Year to Adopt a Pet, by Paul Unger

This is the most festive time of the year. It is a time to remember friends, family and relationships we humans hold so special. Other species on this earth seem to remember experiences and maybe relationships.

The human species has one characteristic which no other species has, and that is the ability to imagine the future. We think about what we will need. What we want to do. We imagine a future event. A game. Graduation. Marriage. Birth. Moreover, we are the consummate opti-

mists - we hope for a better future for everyone.

Above everything else in this season, we are reminded by our events and experiences to be thankful on a multitude of levels. I started to list things I am thankful for and soon found the list was too long. I am sure your basket overflows also. We are so blessed.

Looking at our new chapter, we have a lot to be thankful for as well. We are

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Winter Time in Milam County, by Mike Mitchell

Our Motto

- Look
- Learn
- Teach
- Conserve

Our Mascot
Green Tree Frog



Winter is now upon us. And with it brings another fantastic opportunity to view our natural resources. Whether it be bringing a youth into the natural environment to hunt white tailed deer for the first time, or simply browsing your own backyard to view what is changing with the seasons, the opportunities are all yours.

Our chapter has done terrifically in its first year. From forming lasting friendships to forming productive programs, we are there. From winning state

awards to producing programs, we commit and succeed. I am confident that our team is on a great track to move ahead as a citizen corps.

Members are reminded that winter brings a challenging time upon our resources, albeit a time that is an important part of a larger cycle. January is typically Milam County's coldest month. Shelter, food storage, and hibernation are the themes for plants and animals alike. And all this with the ex-

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What's this? See Ans. P.9



Adopt a Pet (Continued from page 1)

blessed with dedicated and exceptionally talented members. There is breadth and depth in expertise and leadership capabilities. To have such chapter resources we are blessed.

As this year ends, we do look forward to the future. As my last column posited, the chapter formation year is almost over. A new class is at hand. With the new class, we will have new perspectives, ideas, interests, expertise, and experiences. I am thankful for the new naturalists and look forward with great anticipation.

It is now time for all current members to adopt a pet. Yes, each one of us has had a year to decide on and choose a pet. We have had time to consider and explore the many facets of the naturalist program. We have had a year to make a selection and it is time to do so. I am using the word pet to describe something loved. Something cared for. Something you nourish out of love.

I am calling on all members to adopt a special pet - pet project that is, centered on your own special interests. Some of you have already identified those special interests. The birders are a good example. They are meeting and making plans for the year. I look forward to their presentations they have planned on individual species they will research for the MC Nature Resource Book. Because of their interest, they are self-motivated and I am sure they will succeed.



One does not just "have" a pet. Responsibilities go with the pet. While daily feeding and grooming are necessary, especially important is the training. A pet cannot be beneficial without training.

And so it goes with our members and their special interests. We have been given the basic food and care we needed to become a Master Naturalist. Now it is time to begin your training in earnest so each of us can become beneficial and useful to Milam County.

Development of individual expertise is the responsibility of each member. While the chapter tries to bring meaningful training locally, the chapter cannot fulfill training requirements for everyone. Most importantly, chapter wide training is but a start. Members must take the initiative to increase their skills.

With the new class, there will be a concerted effort to join current members with new members based on like interests. What really interests you? What is your passion?

Join with the other ECRC Master Naturalists and make **it your New Year's resolution to not only adopt that pet,** but also commit to making your pet highly trained and especially useful to others.

On behalf of all ECRC members and their families, I personally extend warm wishes to all for the holidays. May you find this time of the year especially blessed for you and yours.

Paul Unger, Chapter President



What will your Pet (Project) be?



Plant Identification Workshop, by Debbi Harris

In October the Little River Basin Texas Master Gardener and El Camino Real Texas Master Naturalist chapters received an exciting two-day class on Plant Identification. The exciting and unusual workshop was facilitated by Flo Oxley, Director of Conservation and Education from the LBJ Wildflower Center in Austin.



Our chapters will be teaming up with a nationwide effort of rare seed collection and identification program, which is called the Millennium Seed Bank program housed in England. To date, there have been two species identified that will be added to the worldwide registry.



Oxley brought over 14 years of experience and a vast knowledge in numerous fields including Botany, Herbariums and Mycology. Beside hearing in-depth information on three plant families (and 15 subfamilies), all participants performed 'hands-on' plant identifications using field guides.



In efforts to build a Milam County Master library, Oxley generously donated several field guides to the organizations. This joint-chapter workshop is a first

for Milam County Little River Basin Master Gardeners and El Camino Real Texas Master Naturalist chapters!

Oxley has already been in discussions about additional upcoming courses in the area. This is a real treat for Milam County citizens, since she offers such a rare and specialized skillset directly to them.



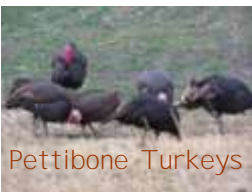
Future courses will be available to Master Gardener and Master Naturalist students and some may be offered to the public.

Article by Debbi Harris, Photos by Anne Barr

Winter in Milam (Continued from page 1)

plosion of Spring just around the corner. Perhaps it is a great time to consider changes in the environment, ones that will alter the environment in ways that make sense to you.

Our county continues to have a remarkable amount of resources. For education, we have programs, organizations, libraries, and a whole host of experts. For wildlife viewing, we have 80 miles of rivers over 750,000 square acres.



Pettibone Turkeys

We are so fortunate to have two distinct ecosystems in our area. If you live in one, please look carefully at the other, examining the differ-

ences. We are also host to a terrific number of species in and around. Our migratory birds alone are extremely worthy of consideration. Don't think we have em? Consider a river trip to or on the Brazos River. With the cell phone off, you'll see literally dozens of species using that route to traverse southwards.



In short, this is a great place to live with a fantastic variety of people, cultures, and opportunities. It is a pleasure to serve them, and to provide opportunities for enhancement of learning about them.

Mike Mitchell, Chapter Advisor



State Meeting and Advanced Training

By Paula Engelhardt

In a year of "firsts," this was another. As seven excited ECRC members headed off to Hunt, Texas on October 24th to attend the 9th Annual Statewide Meeting and Advanced Training, they weren't sure what to expect but one thing was for sure - they were about to find out.



Attendees Anne Barr, Katherine Bedrich, Ed Burleson, Ann Collins, Vivian Dixon, Sandra Dworaczyk and Paula Engelhardt, as representatives for the newly formed chapter, were on a fact-finding mission, filled with anticipation and ready to absorb all of the knowledge they could and return to Milam County with a report.



place to go to recharge one's batteries."

Accommodations within buildings made of native stone with rich decorative features were comfortable and featured porches and balconies to enhance one's access to the natural beauty of the area. Serene hiking trails were lined with juniper, giant graceful oaks and hackberry trees. Sycamores were changing color and seemed to shout, "Look at me." Towering cypress trees lined the banks of the peaceful Guadalupe River and fish swam below in the crystal clear water. Butterflies flitted about and bees buzzed from one wildflower to the next in large meadows. Black squirrels darted from tree to tree in the park-like setting surrounding the grand stone buildings with red tile roofs. Too many bird species to count flew and sang overhead.

What they found was a beautiful Texas Hill Country setting in which to commune with nature and other master naturalists. Mo-Ranch is a jewel in itself. Ann Collins mused, "Mo Ranch is a delightful

The facility included an aviary filled with a variety of exotic looking pigeons and a greenhouse bursting (literally, through the roof) with bright foliage. A sublime little chapel, nestled among the trees on a hillside, **it's stained glass sparkling in the sun, beckoned to those** who might enter and rest for a moment. The large swimming pool remained vacant this late in the year and the water slide that spills into the waters of the Guadalupe only boasted one brave soul during our stay. Brrrrr! Two catwalks spanned the gorgeous valley and allowed **conference attendees' access from the hilltop complex** to the river basin below. The gurgling river was the perfect backdrop for roasting marshmallows by the campfire and peering up at the vibrantly visible Milky Way on a crisp clear night. Several people, including **Paula Engelhardt, witnessed "shooting stars."**

What they found was an expansion of their knowledge during hands-on training sessions. These included such diverse topics as: Managing Largemouth Bass and White-tailed Deer, Plants of the Edwards Plateau, Geocaching, Wildscaping, Entomology, Wildfire Preparedness, Monitoring Habitat for Quail and other Grassland Birds, Youth Education and Outreach, and many more. Photos above right is Mike Quinn, entomologist lecturer demonstrating insect collection



from tree shaking onto a canvas, and with a net. At left is Paula Engelhardt learning to use radio telemetry for tracking game birds such as quail.



"I took a class called 'Sounds of the Night' and was delighted to see tiny Cricket frogs, hear bats go 'blip' in the velvety darkness and have the constellations in a crystal clear sky pointed out with a long range green laser," states Ann Collins.

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State Meeting (Continued from page 4)

Ed Burluson, who spent most of his time off-site at Kerr Wildlife Management Area attending the extended advanced training session "Rainwater Harvesting for Birds and Wildlife at Home and on the Land", says he already has plans for implementing what he learned in the course on his own property. As part of his training session, he constructed a rain barrel and water guzzler to take home.

Vivian Dixon was absolutely "tickled" by the "Murderous Plants: Poisonous Herbs?" presentation given on Sunday by Barney Lipscomb. It was more like a theatrical production, she says, complete with suspenseful music, eerie fog and a dramatic performance by Barney as he discussed the cultural, historical and mythological aspects of potentially dangerous poisonous plants. Both she and Ann agreed that his humorous, but educational session was the perfect ending to a long weekend.



What they found was delicious meals enjoyed together in the dining room while often sharing their latest experience with a new acquaintance or an old friend. Chatter and laughter were abundant.

They discovered what amazing accomplishments other chapters have achieved and found them to be warmly receptive, sharing stories and offering guidance.

What they found was recognition and a hearty welcome. A highlight of the event was the Awards and Recognition Ceremony where the El Camino Real Chapter was recognized as a new chapter and received much applause. The photo and art contest resulted in four ribbons being claimed by ECRC members! Ed Burluson won second place in the art contest for his pen and ink drawing. Photo contest winners were Katherine Bedrich who took second



place in the plants category and Paula Engelhardt who took second place in the scenery category and third place in the master naturalists at work or play category.



The chapter's tracking mat (spawned from the Leopold Education Project Training that Katherine, Paula and Sandra attended, along with member Lynda Lewis) was entered in the project fair. Although the project is still in its infancy, it received praise and genuine interest from the panel of judges.

And, last but not least, what they found was a valuable and enjoyable experience. Camaraderie with one another and with other chapters, a rejuvenation of spirit and oneness with nature were but a few of the benefits of attendance. Ann Collins said that being



"with like minded people" was a very pleasant experience. Paula Engelhardt was impressed with the expertise and moved by the passion and commitment of the event's organizers and instructors. Katherine Bedrich summed up her experience stating, "I saw the excellence chapters have achieved through their training and volunteerism. The total love of nature was inspiring." After a wonderful weekend, the group returned to Milam County echoing this inspiration, ready to share their newfound knowledge and eager to return again next year.



Article By Paula Engelhardt, Photos by Anne Barr

Milam County Nature Resource Book by Debbi Harris

One active Master Naturalist team is the "Milam County created!

Nature Resource Book" committee. The team was formed with the vision to create a Milam County nature resource book and database. Some of the topic chapters will be waterways, birds, wildflowers, bridges, plants, streams, cemeteries, geology, insects, fish, reptiles, soils, grasses and mammals.

Our 2008 goal was to establish a team, create a vision, design a standard format and begin creating resource chapter material. To date, we have exceeded our goal because of our outstanding members! The team has streamlined the topic-creating process to make it as quick and easy as possible on any contributor. Just download your picture and information and your page is

Although this resource book will be an on-going building process, we are confident all Master Naturalist will benefit from it. Per our advisor Michael Mitchell, we are setting the standards for such a resource book for Texas Master Naturalist! With everyone's input this will be a successful venture useful to all.

We will always be in need of contributors. Anyone that has an interest or passion for a particular topic area is encouraged to contact Debbi Harris for further information.

By Debbi Harris

Perry Pecan Patch Camp Out by Katherine Bedrich

If you were on FM 908 Friday, November 7th and saw a white Styrofoam box at the Perry Pecan Patch gate and **did not turn in to investigate... well, you missed a bunch** of Master Naturalists communing with Nature.

Friday evening Phyllis gave a presentation on lichens. Phyllis showed the different types on limbs collected from the area. She explained how lichens are fungi and algae coming together to form a symbiotic union. A photo of Wolf Lichen is shown. Phyllis has a special love of lichen and gave us a new look at liking lichen.



As the evening progressed, we gathered around the campfire and shared our food. Chili, sausage, hamburgers were some of the food cooked over the fire. Marshmallows, chocolate and graham crackers were enjoyed by those who recalled their campfire girl, girl scout, and boy scout days; and some of us nature lovers **who like to play with fire. Debbi's granddaughter, Layne,** kept us all young at heart with her playfulness. **Anne Barr's daughter brought a telescope and we saw three** moons of Jupiter and craters on our moon.

Ghost stories were told by Paula and Ed Burleson. Paula **entertained us with a story about "the hairy toe" (we** will all make sure our toes are shaved from now on) and Ed shared a story of passed Indian tales about his land at Marlow. Connie and husband Wayne, came out and set up the award winning BBQ pit around 11:00pm. They (Connie) cooked all night for the meal on Saturday. **Bean, brisket and sausage may have provoked "Big Foot" (not toe) to come out during the night and see** what was happening. Creature sounds were heard by those who camped out.

Saturday morning came early with the fire still going and coffee brewing. A thin layer of frost was observed by some of the campers.

As we sat around the fire, Katherine gave a brief summary about mussels. We are planning on having the mussel and amphibian watch program in the spring. Homemade biscuits cooked in a Dutch oven over the fire, sausage and scrambled eggs helped fuel the group for the day.

After breakfast, Ann Collins took the "birders" out to look for our feather friends. A downy woodpecker was heard and spotted.

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Perry Pecan Patch (Continued from page 6)

Ab Woods, a knapper, joined our group and made an obsidian arrowhead from scratch. That was very interesting; a true art form. Arrow points, scrapers, axes and other tools from flint rock were knapped by the American Indians. Ab makes his own bows and arrows. He

tans leather and makes string from sinew.

The "Camp-Out" ended with a delicious BBQ meal and all the fixings. Planning on doing this again, if you missed this one, more to come.

By Katherine Bedrich

Mapping the El Camino Real Trail by Dr. Lucile Estell

As the National Park Service moves forward with its management plan for the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail, consideration is being given to verifying and/or mapping sites and segments along the Trail.

The quest for the accurate mapping of historic trails is not a new one. During the past twenty years, new technologies such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) and the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have virtually revolutionized map making, thus making it much easier to verify trails and to store and retrieve information about them. Historians, archeologists and trail experts need to work together to document the paths of significant routes.

How will the National Park Service approach the examination, identification and verification of the historic trail which affects us? According to Dr. Susan Boyle, Chief Historian for the National Park Service, there will be several important steps. First, historic documentation must be gathered and analyzed to document the location of historic routes. Much information exists. The task is locating it, reviewing it and analyzing it for accuracy. Much of this has already been done and can be found in the book *Texas Legacy* by Al McGraw et al. Dr. Herbert Bolton is another secondary source which is useful. However, there are probably diaries, maps, and letters which have never been seen, or at least never examined in the light of the Trail. Archeological reports and other sources need to be examined.

In all probability, on-site examination of trail segments will be done when possible. Much of the land affected by the Trail is privately owned, a factor that obviously will have to be considered in implementing this step. This on-site examination will be influenced by the re-

search of Jeff Williams from Nacogdoches, Texas. His M.A. thesis focused on examining a segment of Trail in East Texas. At some point both Mr. Williams and Dr. Boyle plan to be in this area to plan further for what is to be done.

And so we are living in exciting times. As we examine the Trail and potential sites of interest in Milam County, we need to keep in mind that what we are doing is preserving our heritage for future generations, just as our activities as Master Naturalists are preserving our dear old world for future generations.

By Dr. Lucile Estell



2009 Class Enrollment still OPEN—Enroll Now!!

By Paula Engelhardt

On January 13, 2009, we will begin our second class for Master Naturalists in Milam County. Our first class was held from January to May 2008 and graduated 24 volunteers, and we are looking to have at least that many again.

This 16 week class will be held on Tuesdays, from 6pm - 9pm at the Peace Lutheran Church in Rockdale, and on some Saturday mornings for field trips. During the class and after graduation, volunteers will be working towards Certification as a Texas Master Naturalist by completing 40 hours of volunteer work on various exciting and educational projects. Believe me, the 40 hours goes by real easy, and many will achieve more hours than that.

Further information and enrollment forms are available from: our website at <http://grovesite.com/tmn/ecrnmn>; the AgriLife Extension Office by calling 254-697-7045. Enrollment fee is \$150 (primarily to cover class expenses), and must be included when you mail in your application. Application deadline was December 1, 2008, but will be extended into early January.

A basic background check will be conducted, as many volunteers will be working with youth in our county, and for the safety of all in the program.

So, get ready to learn all about nature, wildlife and conservation from experts around the state -- so you can apply that knowledge on your own property, participate in volunteer projects in Milam County, and share your knowledge and experiences with others.

The current but still somewhat tentative class schedule is as follows: **Blue Lettering = not yet confirmed**

- 1) Tuesday, January 13, Introduction; TX Naturalists prior to WWII; Volunteers as teachers, by Mr. Sonny Arnold; Mr. Mike Mitchell
- 2) Tuesday, January 20, Ecological Concepts and Regions of TX; Ecosystem Management, by Dr. Jane M. Packard

- 3) Tuesday, January 27, Texas Wildscapes, by Mr. Mark Klym
- 4) Tuesday, February 3, Wildlife and Fauna of TX, TCWC FIELD TRIP (6-9pm), by Mrs. Heather Prestridge, Mr. Dale A. Kruse, curator
- 5) Tuesday, February 10, Nature of Naming; Plants, by Florence M. Oxley
- 6) Tuesday, February 17, Entomology, by Robert Baldrige
- 7) Tuesday, February 24, Geology and Soils of TX, by Dr. Sam Feagley
- 8) Tuesday, March 3, Ornithology, by Dr. Craig Farquhar
- 9) Tuesday, March 10, Herpetology, by Dr. Toby J. Hibbits

Tuesday, March 17, NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

- 10) Saturday, March 28, Grasslands and Range Management, **LOCATION TBA**, by Dr. Barron Rector
- 11) and 12) Saturday, April 4, Wetlands; Aquatic Ecology; Ichthyology, WACO WETLANDS LECTURE AND FIELD TRIP (6 hours = 2 classes), by Ms. Melissa L. Mullins, Ms. Nora Schell
- 13) Tuesday, April 7, Mammalogy, Dr. John Young
- 14) Tuesday, April 14, Weather and Climate by Dr. Steven M. Quiring,

Tuesday, April 21, NO CLASS

- 15) Saturday, April 25, SUGARLOAF MTN FIELD TRIP, **Indian's Role, by Dr. Alston Thoms; Plant Composition**, Monique Reed

Tuesday, April 28, NO CLASS

- 16) Tuesday, May 5, Archeology, Forestry, or Blackland Prairie topics, **Speakers TBA**, Graduation Planning

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Upcoming Major Events:

- 1/6 2009 Class prep. Session, Peace Lutheran Church, 6pm
- 1/13—5/5 Class sessions on Tuesdays, Peace Lutheran, 6pm-9pm
- 5/15 Class of 2009 Graduation

2009 Class (Continued from page 8)

and Wrap up Class

Tuesday, May 12, GRADUATION DAY!!

Pass along the information to anyone you know, and help us grow the number of Certified Master Naturalists in Milam County!

By Paula Engelhardt

Certifications, Etc. By Cindy Bolch

Our first year as a chapter has seen amazing contributions in volunteer hours by our members, with resulting recognition in Certifications, Re-Certifications and Milestone Achievement Awards.

Achieving initial Certifications year to date include:

Anne Barr, Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch, Ed Burleson, Ann Collins, Kerri Cunningham, Vivian Dixon, Sandra Dworzaczyk, Paula Engelhardt, Dr. Lucile Estell, Joy Graham, Debbi Harris, **Lynda Lewis, Jim O'Donnell, Sandra O'Donnell, Connie Roddy, Phyllis Shuffield, Nancy Soechting, Don Travis, Paul Unger**

Achieving 2008 Re-Certifications year to date include:

Anne Barr, Katherine Bedrich, Cindy Bolch, Ed Burleson, Ann Collins, Vivian Dixon, Paula Engelhardt, Debbi Harris, Jim **O'Donnell, Sandra O'Donnell, Nancy Soechting, Don Travis, Paul Unger**

Achieving new Milestone Achievement Awards include:

250 Hours—Paul Unger, Katherine Bedrich
500 Hours—Paul Unger

Congratulations to All! May 2009 be another wonderfully fulfilling year for the Chapter and all its current and new members.

By Cindy Bolch

What's This?



TPWD

It's the San Marcos Salamander!

More info: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/species/