

ECRTMN Board Retreat Minutes

February 3, 2024

10:00 A.M. All Saints Episcopal Meeting Room

Attendees: Linda Jo Conn, Mike Conner, Patricia Coombs, Carolyn Henderson, Janice Johnson, Sue Ann Kendall, Liz Lewis, Michelle Lopez, Ellen Luckey, Pamela Neeley, Alan Rudd

- I. Welcome
 - A. Retreat objective – plans and goals for coming two years

- II. Ordering /updating pamphlets
 - a. Michelle Lopez noted she still needs to order business cards for outreach. She will do so soon.
 - b. Predators and Prey: Joyce Conner offered to sell us some of her excess copies of the Predators and Prey brochure. We were told the price would be \$.37 per copy, though Mike Conner thought it was more. Alan Rudd moved to purchase; Michelle Lopez seconded. The motion passed.
 - c. Wildflowers:
 - i. Carolyn Henderson suggested we use a different photo on the cover of this brochure, to focus more on flowers. Sue Ann Kendall will look for the original to the brochure for editing.
 - ii. The question arose as to whether to keep the El Camino Real de los Tejas Trail Association logo on the brochure. We will do so, since they helped fund the brochure originally and are also using it.
 - iii. We discussed changing the title to “Wildflowers of Milam County” with subtitle “along the El Camino Real Trail” to make its purpose clearer.
 - iv. Pamela Neeley moved to make the suggested edits; Sue Ann seconded. The motion passed.
 - v. There was discussion of how to keep the pamphlets supplied at the places that distribute them, such as the Chambers of Commerce. It was suggested that Linda Burgess, publicity chair, be in charge. As she was unable to attend the meeting, we will bring the idea up to her later.
 - d. Bees: Noted this comes from University of Texas and is reprinted with their permission. The group discussed printing it on less expensive paper next time. Mike mentioned an issue with distributing someone else’s brochure. It was noted that this is one of our most popular handouts.
 - e. Recruitment: Alan asked to have more of our recruitment brochure printed. Others said it could be edited some before reprinting. Later in the meeting, a large box of these was located in storage, which makes reprinting this brochure less pressing. Nonetheless, Alan moved to reprint it; Pamela seconded, and the motion passed.

- III. Service pins
 - A. Do you want to continue to give them? When?
 - a. Noted that the 2023 pins were a project of Alan and Carolyn, funded by Alan. Pins cost \$6 each.
 - b. Sue Ann pointed out that the Board had voted not to distribute pins rewarding members.
 - c. Mike said this is better than giving monetary gifts to officers and committee chairs and is more meaningful.
 - d. Alan proposed there be pins for teams (such as CoCoRaHS, Wildscape, and iNaturalist participants).

 - B. Set criteria for “Special Service award” pins

- a. There wouldn't be pins given out every year to Board members and committee chairs; just when someone finishes their first year in a position.
- b. The Board would vote at the end of the year to determine additional service awards. They would be given at the December meeting.
- c. Another type of pin suggested was for people who spoke at Chapter meetings or TMN Annual meetings.
- d. After much wordsmithing, Mike Conner moved to present awards at the end of the year, meeting the criteria described in a-c above. Patricia Coombs seconded the motion, which passed with one abstention.
- e. Note that the plan is to continue to provide ceramic frog magnets created by Pamela Neeley and thank-you notes to outside speakers at Chapter meetings.

IV. Increase members participation/projects

A. Suggestions for increasing participation:

- a. Spring Fling in Cameron, March 22
- b. Rockdale Sesquicentennial celebration in June
- c. Steak Stein and Wine in Cameron, October
- d. Blessing of the Animals at All Saints Episcopal Church, October

B. Suggested projects for the next two years:

- a. Somerville Lake State Park (Birch Creek Unit) with TPWD Park Ranger Lisset Monteagudo. Recommended by Linda Jo Conn – Positive feedback.
- b. Ecology and Natural Resources Teaching Area (ENTRA) at TAMU – Linda Jo Conn – we could have a tour, then eat at the nice restaurant at the airport – positive response.
- c. Gault Site at Florence with Dr. Clark Werneke (hopefully) – Linda Jo Conn – not sure if Clark is still there.
 - i. Suggestion was to go see the artifacts wherever they are stored, such as at the Belton Museum. Agreed that the museum is great for summer, since it's indoors.
 - ii. Also, the Mammoth site near Waco came up.
- d. Texas Nature Trackers "Acoustic Monitoring of Texas Bats" project. You can see a presentation about it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15FAZLx44es> - Linda Jo Conn – this is a very involved, scientific program that will require follow through. Linda recommended watching the YouTube link above before deciding to participate (you also get AT hours for doing so).
- e. Creation of a Bird Station at Bird and Bee Farm – led by Ann Collins – already approved. Many are interested in participating.
- f. Presentation by Owl and Raptor Expert Roger Rucker. He works with "All Things Wild" rehab facility. Either at a meeting or a trip to All Things Wild. Recommended by Debi Sorenson. Positive feedback.
- g. Dale Kruse's Milam County plant identification project. Should we invite Bell County Chapter to participate? No objections to this.
- h. Aquarena Springs in San Marcos (Now called the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment). Recommended by Phyllis Shuffield – wait on this, since it will probably be an option during the Annual Meeting in October.
- i. McKinney Falls near Austin, Recommended by Jackie Thornton – enthusiastic response.

- j. Spring trip to Washington on the Brazos during bluebonnet season with a picnic and stop at Rose Emporium. Recommended by Catherine Johnson – noted distance might be an issue, but not ruled out.
 - k. Jay Wilder’s Sunflower Farm in Snook. Recommended by Linda Burgess – there are issues with it that preclude tours, so this one we can’t do. Linda clarifies: “had mentioned to Carolyn about a tour of Revol Greens lettuce farm near Temple.... but they don’t give tours. However, we should be able to go to the Sunflower farm near Snook, if that wants to be rediscussed.”
 - l. Alan Rudd had ideas but would have to schedule them close to when they happen, such as visiting dogwoods in bloom.
- V. Board member topics – Carolyn asked each member to contribute something.
- a. Pamela provided information on squash vine borer research. She had been asked to create yellow containers to entice them to be studied.
 - b. Michelle reiterated that she will get business cards made. There was also discussion of updating the chapter website, which she agreed to work on, with help from others.
 - c. Patsy suggested that people get pins for other positions they have held, not just the “highest” one, and volunteered to pay for them. In response, Alan gave Sue Ann a Pileated Woodpecker pin he just happened to have on him for being the Board Secretary in addition to Past President.
 - d. Sue Ann said she can do presentations on using crafts to visually represent scientific data with her temperature blankets.
 - e. Alan reminded everyone he has lots of field trips he can provide or suggest, but they need to be scheduled close to the actual events. That was not deemed to be a problem.
 - f. Mike said he will send information out about workdays at the trail site on their property. There needs to be some sawing and clearing.
 - g. Janice Johnson said she didn’t have any new topics, but everyone expressed gratitude for her work on the weekly email.
 - h. Ellen Luckey asked if it was all right to have Indian and Mediterranean meals as potluck topics. She was reassured that she can pick whatever she wants and people can comply or not, as they wish.
 - i. Linda Jo asked that we worry about people who have dropped out of the group.
 - j. Liz Lewis said she is looking for a speaker on rattlesnakes for this year, since that is our yearly recertification pin.
- VI. New Business
- a. It was noted that CoCoRaHS has new gauges and some new processes. We need to have a refresher training on it. Note that you can only get a certain number of hours per month doing this.
 - b. Carolyn notes that the Annual Meeting is in San Marcos at the Embassy Suites on dates around October 23-27 (depending on who you are and what type of activities you are participating in).
 - c. Reminder that TMN Tuesday presentations provide AT hours whether viewed live or on recording.
 - d. Carolyn also pointed out that this is the year we can provide suggestions for changes to the TMN governing documents, so that all of us who are annoyed we can’t get iNat hours on our own property can suggest changes to that policy. It’s a three-year cycle, so proposals would not take effect any time soon.
 - e. There is a new employee at the Master Naturalist program office who is the liaison to members.

Minutes submitted by Sue Ann Kendall, Board Secretary