

Texas Master Naturalist – El Camino Real Chapter

Monthly Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 12, 2024

All Saints Episcopal Meeting Hall

5:30 p.m.

- I. Welcome
 - A. Potluck – soup and sides – these were very popular. Thanks to all who contributed.
 - B. Speaker – Dr. Rhonda Richardson – Forest Therapy
 - a. Learn more from the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy natureandforesttherapy.org
- II. President's notes – Carolyn Henderson
 - A. The group surprised Carolyn with a birthday card and cake.
 - B. Please be sure to separate politics and your role as a Texas Master Naturalist. When representing the organization, we need to be politically neutral. Carolyn thanked our members for being good at this separation.
 - C. Annual meeting – Regular registration is open until the end of September. There are already 550+ signed up to attend. While the meeting hotel is full, there are plenty of rooms in the area.
 - D. On October 8, you can watch the presentations of the TMN Exemplary Project Fair. This is the monthly TMN Tuesday event. There will be a link on the TMN website to watch it afterwards. This does count as AT.
 - E. Memorials have been sent to the state for the four chapter members who have passed away since late 2023. They will be displayed at the annual meeting.
 - F. Start recruiting new student trainees for January – speak with Alan Rudd or Debra Sorenson for more information (see their notes below). We hope for 20 students.
 - G. Has anyone signed up for Ft. Boggy State Park Post Oak Savannah project presentation? There are a few spots left. No one has signed up so far.

- H. Mike Conner will be retiring as treasurer after 6+ years of volunteer service at the end of this year. If you are interested in the job, let Carolyn know. We have one member who is willing, so far. The other chapter members expressed gratitude.
- III. Officers and Directors
- A. Liz Lewis, VP
- a. The October speaker is Debra Sorenson.
 - b. The November speaker will be a presentation on iNaturalist, coordinated by Linda Jo Conn and Michelle Lopez.
- B. Mike Conner, Treasurer – there is around \$5800 in the treasury, though we have spent money on business cards and other supplies.
- C. Sue Ann Kendall, Secretary
- a. Phyllis Shuffield moved to approve the meeting minutes from last month. Sandra Dworaczyk seconded. The motion passed.
 - b. There were eight blog posts in the past month, about two per week.
 - c. We have new pages on the blog, to highlight the Wildscape Project and the Wild Wings Bird Sanctuary. They have information on each project and a collection of the blog posts about each project.
- D. Michelle Lopez, Communications
- a. ECRTMN business cards have been developed by Michelle.
 - b. They contain a QR code as well as links to our website, etc.
 - c. She is placing an order for 500 of them.
- E. Patricia Coombs, Membership
- a. Ann Collins received her recertification pin from earlier in the year.
 - b. Dorothy Mayer, Alan Rudd, Debra Sorenson, and Kim Summers received their pins for recertifying in the past month.
- F. Patricia Neeley, VMS/AT
- a. The newest approved project is the Little Free Wildflower Seed Box (see below).
- G. Alan Rudd, Student Trainer
- a. Alan is in the process of lining up interesting speakers for the class, including Texas A&M professors.
 - b. Linda Burgess is working on a flyer about the class to distribute around the county and in neighboring areas
 - c. Debra Sorenson has created a class schedule. It starts on January 16 and will be 6-9 pm on Thursdays other than when our chapter meeting is being

held. Members are welcome to attend class sessions but are asked to refrain from asking questions.

- d. Representatives will attend the Senior Expo on Tuesday, October 29 at the Yards of Cameron and encourage people to join the class. There will be some activity to go along with it.

H. Linda Jo Conn, State Liaison

- a. She has organized a BioBlitz to commemorate El Camino Real Day in October. The BioBlitz will run the 18-20th and will track observations along the roadsides where the El Camino Real de los Tejas Trail once ran. To join, please sign up for the El Camino Real Day BioBlitz project on iNaturalist.
- b. Linda Jo gave out three WOW awards.
 - i. Ann Collins for finding a new fungus in the county earlier this year.
 - ii. Michelle Lopez for finding a beautiful lichen after attending a Master Gardener talk on lichen.
 - iii. Carolyn Henderson for the cutest observation of young Black-bellied Whistling Ducks all with their rear ends sticking up.
- c. Linda Jo observed that each of our members who are on iNaturalist have been the first observer of at least one species.

I. Linda Burgess, Publicity

- a. Little Free Wildflower Seed Box: this project will let people exchange native plant seeds.
 - i. We will have up to three boxes created by members or their family members.
 - ii. Potential locations for the boxes include the wildflower garden at the Episcopal church, a location in Rockdale, or the Wildscape.
 - iii. Interested parties can meet at the Wildscape Saturday afternoon, September 14, to collect seeds there.
- b. New class recruiting publicity
 - i. Linda has made a flyer to distribute and will share it across the county and surrounding area, put it in the newspapers, etc.
 - ii. These will be distributed at the Senior Expo as well.

J. Ellen Luckey, Hospitality – Next month’s theme is casseroles and comfort foods.

K. Janice Johnson, Notifications – please send her information on upcoming events, and don’t forget to let her know if an activity is approved for AT or VT hours.

IV. New/other business

- a. Carolyn reported that the wildflower garden at the Episcopal church is doing well. Linda Burgess has volunteered to water the plants, since they are still settling in. Help with weeding will be appreciated.
- b. Sue Ann Kendall and Ann Collins reported that the Wild Wings committee invites all members to the bird sanctuary on Saturday morning, September 14 to help count birds, refill the feeders, and so some forest bathing. There are now five people on the committee, but more are always welcome.

- V. Adjourn: Sue Ann Kendall moved to adjourn and Gene Rek seconded the motion.
 - a. 1.25 hours AT for the presentation
 - b. .75 hours VT for Chapter Meeting
 - c. 1 hour VT Hospitality for bringing food

