

JULY 2008

Volume 9, Number 7

EFCMN Newsletter

Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists

EVENTS

JULY MEETING

Social Time: 6:30 PM

Meeting: 7:00 PM

Date: 7/17/2008

Location: Extension
Office Conference Room

AUGUST BOARD MEETING

Time: 9:30 AM

Date: 8/14/2008

Location: Extension Office
Conference Room
Board meetings are open
to members.

2008 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elected

President: Alex Lieban

Past President: Dave Rowley

Vice President: Lee Ann
Jernigan

Secretary: Lynne List

Treasurer: George Kragle

2007 Class Rep: Christana
Coleman

2007 Class Rep: Andrea
Krofina

Appointed Chairs/editor

Training: Sherrill Campbell

Publicity: Cheryl Kesterson

Projects: Dave Ford

Newsletter: Theresa Page

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Dues are \$15 per year and
are due by January 31. A \$5
late fee is added after that
date.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

Submission of material for
publication is welcomed and
encouraged. The deadline is
always the second Friday of
each month that the
newsletter is published.

PROJECTS IN THE NEWS

EFCMN BIRD BREEDING SURVEY PROJECT. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (PWRC) and the Canadian Wildlife Service developed the protocols for the North American Bird Breeding Survey project over 40 years ago. Its job is to oversee the collection and analysis of the data. PWRC is part of the US Geological Survey, and therefore is under the auspices of the Department of the Interior.
(www.morpwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/bbs.html)

Bird Breeding Survey's data is regularly used by local and national conservation organizations to implement new bird management goals. For example, Partners In Flight (PIF) uses the data to develop models to estimate breeding density and distribution for all the species they track. PIF, an international cooperative venture, was formed to help protect migratory birds and includes groups from various government agencies, local community groups and non-governmental conservation organizations. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department used the bird breeding survey data to develop its statewide conservation plan for birds. In 2007 Audubon released a study on the decline of common breeding birds in the US based on the Bird Breeding Survey's data that had been collected.

Texas has 196 bird breeding routes distributed over its ten ecological areas with at least fourteen different routes per ecological area. This provides a statistically valid sample of population trends of birds breeding near highways. My EFCMN project covers two of these routes - the first begins at Rhome and a second just outside Weatherford.

The methodology used for the survey is the same countrywide. The counts are done between May 15 and June 30. The counter must be familiar with all the birds in the area and know most of their songs. Counting days should have wind speeds under 12 mph and no significant rainfall. The starting point is always at the same location and the count begins half an hour before sunrise. The counter is timed for three minutes during which all birds seen and heard are recorded on the data sheets. Once that is completed, the counter drives to the next counting location approximately a half a mile down the road and repeats the process for the next 24 miles.

There are 50 stops along each route. All cars that pass the counter during the three minutes period must be noted on the data sheets and any

ONGOING SERVICE HOUR OPPORTUNITIES

Newsletter Articles (SH): You can receive credit for researching and writing articles for the EFCMN Newsletter. Articles must pertain to Chapter interests and cannot be political in nature. Copyrighted materials may not be included without permission of the author. Send submissions to Theresa Page, EFCMN Editor, at theresapage3@mac.com

EFCMN Publicity (SH): If you have Master Naturalist activities or projects that are open to the public, please help publicize EFCMN by submitting calendar events for publication in the Denton Connection magazine to Wanda Odum at: WOdum10043@aol.com

EFCMN Projects (SH): A list of projects can be found online at our website: www.efcmn.org Please consider volunteering for one or more projects to help your community, enjoy activities with like-minded people, and earn service hour credit. Contact the manager for a given project to volunteer. *(For those members who have difficulty with physically demanding tasks or with working outdoors, the chapter offers service opportunities such as data entry and copying. Contact LeeAnn Jernigan at texasgirl@pwhome.com for information.)*

Other Organizations Offering Service Hour Opportunities: Service hours are available at any time with Fort Worth Nature Center (FWNC), www.fwnaturecenter.org Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT), www.BRIT.org Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA), www.ias.unt.edu/llela and Lewisville Independent School District Outdoor Learning Area (LISDOLA) spurgers@lisd.net

excess noise from gas wells, construction, etc. also recorded. The goal is to finish counting all sites within five hours. Once the route is completed, the data is submitted online to PWRC for further review. The volunteer counter commits to doing the survey for at least two years. In some sections of the United States there are those who have faithfully counted for forty years.

The process sounds simple, but as I found out nothing is that easy. For the first 20 days of June the wind exceeded the 12 mph limit every day except June 10. At 5:49 A.M on that date, I began my count in Rhome. I was supposed to have driven the route prior to beginning my count, but the price of gas being over \$4.00 a gallon made this impossible. It was very time consuming for me to read the directions, look for the proper count locations, count the birds and cars, and transfer the data to the count sheets. After 2 hours I realized I would not finish on time no matter how fast I went. I also encountered several problems finding locations. In one case all of the area description markers had been burned in a gas well fire. At another site a mailbox, the only marker for this location, had been removed, and in another area, the county paved the road and left a 12" drop between the road and my parking area making it impossible for me to pull off the road. Instead of finishing in the 4 – 5 hours, it took me 6 ½ hours.

Having learned from my mistakes on the Rhome route, my husband, Bill assisted me on the Weatherford route. We began promptly at 5:52 A.M. He timed me for the 3 minutes while I counted the birds. He also counted the cars on the road, figured out the next location, and then drove to it. This count was finished in 5 hours 15 minutes. It too had problems. The distances between several of the stops were not calibrated correctly so 5-6 of the locations were difficult to find. One of the stops was on the cloverleaf exit of 820, making it too dangerous to get out of the car. Two other locations were in a very dangerous section of Fort Worth. I drive a new car and felt car jacking was a distinct possibility. At the second to the last stop, the directions ended and we were not able to find the final stop.

I enjoyed the actual counting of the birds by song, but the rest of the details made the project more work than fun. But, it is the love of birds and concern for their welfare that keeps me going out year after year to participate in the Bird Breeding Survey—even when it turns into more work than fun. Without studies to

demonstrate that bird populations are declining, it would not be possible to determine the best way to protect a species. For example the Henslow Sparrow population is dropping at the rate of 7% annually. The Bird Breeding Survey shows this, but the why had to wait until ornithologists discovered that the sparrows will not breed in an area that has less than 30 acres of contiguous tall grass prairie. Knowing this fact now gives habitat managers a concrete starting point on which to base changes. Most of us who participate in the Bird Breeding Survey are not trained scientists; we contribute to the overall goal of protecting birds by performing the counts that are the basis for the scientific studies. **Georgette Guernsey**



Blue jay photo by
Georgette Guernsey

WILDLIFE HABITATS at July Meeting

The July EFCMN meeting is being held at night — 7:00 PM, and the speaker is from our chapter. Janet Gershenfeld has been a EFCMN since 2005 and a Master Gardener since 2002. She received her B.S. in Textile Chemistry and Design from Arizona State University and moved to Texas in 1988 after getting married.

If anyone is a specialist in Wildlife Habitats it must be Janet! She holds four certifications relating to habitats: National Wildlife Certification, Backyard Wildlife Habitat, Texas Dept of Parks and Wildlife Certification, Best of Texas Wildscape, Texas Discovery Gardens Butterfly Habitat Certification and the University of Kansas Monarch Migration Weighstation Certification.

Upcoming EFCMN meetings:

August 21 at 10:00 AM, Round-Up, no speaker.

September 18 at 9:30 AM, Dave Ford speaking on the "Barnet Shale."

EFCMN CERTIFICATION AWARDS January-June, 2008

JULY 2008 AWARDS

Certified

Susan Pohlen

Recertified

Sherrill Campbell

Linda Cox

Judy Guthrie

Bill Hammon

Katy Jo Hammon

Betty Mullenweg

Fritz Poppe

250 Hours

Russell Bilyeu

Certified

Adelaide Bodnar

John Bodnar

Barbara Cramer

Diana Hatch

Mary Hooser

Robert Judy

Marian Kester

Recertified

Russell Bilyeu

Dale Branum

Dave Ford

Janet Gershenfeld

Georgette Guernsey

Jan Hodson

Theresa Kavi

Cheryl Kesterson

Susan Kilpatrick

George Kragle

Alex Lieban

Lynne List

Wanda Odum

Theresa Page

Joan Stanley

Marilyn Turnage

Betty Zajac

250 Hours

Alex Lieban

Maxine Lindauer

500 Hours

Sherrill Campbell

Janet Gershenfeld

LeeAnn Jernigan

Elizabeth McMath

Joan Stanley

1000 Hours

Dave Rowley

RAY ROBERTS LAKE STATE PARK ACTIVITIES

Interpretative Center: Hours are Fridays, 3-8 PM, Saturdays, 10 AM-4 PM, and Sundays, 11 AM-3 PM, March 1-July 6. The center is located across from the Park entrance at the Isle du Bois Unit.

Stargazing Parties (AT): Learn more about the night sky. The fun begins at dusk and lasts until 11:00 PM on Saturday, Aug. 2 and 30. This event is being held at the Isle du Bois Unit.

Kids n' Nature Outdoor Classroom (AT or S*): July 26, 9 AM – 12 noon, Bluestem Pavillon. Certified Angler Education instructors will teach the basic skills of assembling tackle, identifying fish, fishing regulations, safety, and good fish habitat. Then try your luck at the kid's fish pond.

August 9, 2008 — Ray Roberts Lake SP— *Birding on the Greenbelt (AT/S)*— Join the park naturalist and volunteers at Elm Fork Park (one mile west of the Isle du Bois entrance on FM 455) where we will explore wetland habitats and wildlife along the Elm Fork Trinity River. Ray Roberts Lake State Park bird checklists will be provided. Please bring your boots, binoculars, water and quest for discovery! 7-9 AM; park entrance fees apply.

Check out the website: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/calendar> or contact Don Whited for more information about any of these events at 940-686-2148. To volunteer to assist with nature hikes and other activities, you may also contact EFCMN (Ray Roberts) Project Manager, Jan Hodson, at janhodson@ntin.net

**First time volunteers/attendees may count it as advanced training; for trained volunteers, it counts as service.*

Contest for **OUTSTANDING** EFCMN PROJECT

All EFCMN project presentations will be showcased at the August meeting and ROUND UP where the "outstanding project" will be selected by popular vote. The manager of the "outstanding project" or their representative will be given an expense allowance of up to \$150 to attend the Texas State Master Naturalist Annual Meeting in October and hopefully win *Best of Show*.

To help project managers prepare their project presentations, the chapter is offering reimbursement for poster materials (up to \$50) to the first 7 managers who sign up. To request reimbursement submit all receipts and a reimbursement form (download at www.efcmn.org) to EFCMN Treasurer, George Kragle.

Poster presentations are standard, but if you wish to use an alternative form of media presentation, let us know and we'll check with the TMN conference coordinators to determine if it is acceptable. Contact Dave Ford, paford2@verizon.net to sign up for the materials

MENTORS wanted! EFCMN ROUND UP

WHEN: August 21, 2008

TIME: 10:00 AM

CLASS REGISTRATION DEADLINE:
August 22.

COST: \$100.00

CLASS MEETINGS: September 9–
Nov. 18.

CLASS TIME: Tuesdays, 9:00 AM—
3:00 PM

Mentors will be needed as well as help with setting up. Contact: Sherrill Campbell to volunteer:

sherrillcampbell@verizon.net



Photo by
Dorothy B. Thetford

WILDFLOWER AWARENESS

by Dorothy Brown Thetford

Common name: Wand Milkweed
Botanical name: *Asclepias viridiflora*
Family: *Asclepiadaceae*

It's always interesting to be reminded that Texas is divided into ten vegetational zones and that our Cross Timbers and Prairies area is considered Zone 5. And, it's even more interesting to learn that within Zone 5, fifteen of the thirty-six species of *Asclepias* grow natively. Therefore, one or more milkweed plants can be found on any fieldtrip from March through November.

Wand milkweed (*Asclepias viridiflora*) requires the search by a serious weed-stomping field tripper. And even at that foot pace, one must look closely because the bland color of this perennial blends in with the dried spring grasses.

It is, however, a unique creation. A one- to two-foot tall, stout, unbranched stem may have one, two, or three spherically-shaped flower heads, possibly in different stages of bloom. Each cluster grows from the leaf node (very close to the stem) and is secund (faces the side), truly resembling the shape of a wand.

The two-inch diameter cluster is comprised of many individual, complex flowers, most notable for their reflexed sepals. The five sepals are approximately 1/4 inch long, and creamy-beige colored. The five petals are also 1/4 inch long, but are extended in the opposite direction and are mauve colored.

Oblong to obovate (egg-shaped), opposite leaves grow close to the stem on very short petioles. They are approximately two inches long by one inch wide, and have as much character as the interesting flowers. Light-colored (off white) fine line veins are visible as a very intricate design on the top side of the leaf, and even more pronounced on the underside. Upon close inspection, you'll discover a very fine line bordering the leaf edges.

History reports that many of the milkweed plants were used medicinally by Native Americans and yet we are taught that many, if not most, species are poisonous...interesting? A sticky, milky sap exudes from any break in the leaf, petiole, or stem, and can be applied daily to rid warts. But at the same time, this milky latex can cause dermatitis to persons susceptible to skin irritants...interesting?

The female Monarch butterfly has learned to appreciate *Asclepias* species as a safe haven for laying her eggs. The larvae munch their way to maturity, consuming cardiac glycosides from the leaves which provides them protection from bird predators. [Gee, I wonder if we could protect ourselves from mosquitoes by eating those leaves...interesting?]

A. viridiflora is distasteful to livestock and is commonly found in large colonies in severely overgrazed pastures, or in sandy, calcareous, and gravel soils of open prairies and unmowed roadsides. It blooms from late June through August in our Zone 5; now's the perfect time to take a milkweed hike!

Dorothy, MN Class 2001, Gold Dragonfly recipient 2003, past president of Trinity Forks Chapter of Native Plant Society and Upper Clear Creek Wildlife Mgmt. Association, shares her photography through her "Wildflowers-of-Texas" greeting card line which is available locally at Cupboard Natural Foods & Cafe and Bob Jones Nature Center of Southlake.

THE ARMCHAIR MASTER NATURALIST

Medicinal Plants of the Desert and Southwest by Michael Moore is a book that I have had on my bookshelf for years but still value highly. I would like to see an updated version published but that has not happened yet. Michael Moore is a practicing herbalist, merchant, picker, therapist, teacher, and writer. He has been a lecturer at a number of institutions such as the University of New Mexico School of Medicine and the University of Arizona School of Medicine.

Most herbal books only give a brief description of a plant, how to prepare it and some of its uses. Moore's book on the other hand provides detailed information on each plant in an easy to understand format in the following categories: Names (scientific and common); Appearance; Habitat; Constituents; Collecting; Stability; Preparation; and Medicinal uses. The ways that plants use their chemical defenses is fascinating, not to mention useful for us.

As an example of how detailed Moore's information is, *acacia* contains the following constituents in its leaves, pods, and roots: anisaldehyde, benzoic acid, benzyl alcohol, butyric acid, coumarin, cresol, 7,3,4'-trihydroxyflavan-3,4-diol, leucoanthocyanidin, N-methy-B-phenethylamine, N-methylpentathylamine, N-methyltyramine and tyramine; gum (same as mesquite gum). Some of you may recognize coumarin as a commonly used blood thinner.

I have long held an interest in ethnobotany and medicinal plants and one of the organizations to which I regularly contribute is the Amazon Conservation Team, www.amazonteam.org. The mission of the Amazon Conservation Team is to work in partnership with indigenous people in conserving plant biodiversity, health, and culture in tropical America. Mark J. Plotkin, Ph.D, is an ethnobotanist as well as being the organizer and President of the organization. I had the pleasure of meeting him and getting an autographed copy of his book, *Medicine Quest*, when he presented a fascinating lecture at the University of North Texas a few years ago.

I highly recommend both of these books. **Theresa Page, EFCMN**

ELM FORK CHAPTER OF MASTER NATURALISTS

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