

# NATURALIST NEWS



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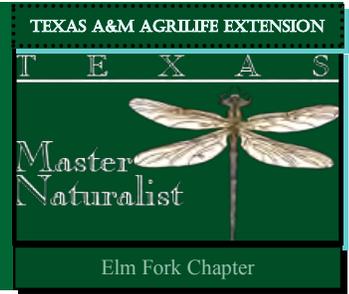
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June 2013



# NATURALIST NEWS

## Texas Master Naturalist Elm Fork Chapter



**Our vision...** in our community, Elm Fork Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program will be recognized as a primary source of information, education and service to support natural resources and natural areas today and in the future.

### UNCOMMON BEAUTY AWAKENS THE SENSES

**Points of interest:**

- Learn about Citizen Forestry
- Newsletter name
- Sea urchin experiments
- Projects update
- Bully bird drama
- Goose story



**Inside this issue:**

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*Photo comes from Susan Pohlen*

*Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,  
With charm of earliest birds.*  
JOHN MILTON, *Paradise Lost*

**Coming up....**



**June program—Citizen Forestry comes to Denton & Flower Mound — p. 5**

City Nature Hikes—p. 9



Greater white-fronted goose—p.13



In Bonnie Brae rookery—p.12

Wild flowers of Texas—p.11





*Susan Pohlen-  
President*

*Photo-D.  
Theford*

**H**ave you ever noticed how some families seem to accomplish so much together relative to other families. I suppose one could argue that some families have an advantage over others in terms of wealth or health. But in many cases those families that have to work much harder at reaching their goals are able to excel. Perhaps they are good at utilizing each other's strengths to offset any shortcomings.

**I**n some ways our chapter is like a family. We've all got personal goals and ambitions, but we also work toward accomplishing the mission and vision of Elm Fork Chapter. In order to be successful we need to continue to support one another by using individual talents. And, just like in a family, sometimes we have to do things simply because it needs to be done.

**R**ight now there are several teams that are working really well together to make our chapter successful. However, at times these teams could use some assistance from other members. You'll be hearing more about ways to help our chapter over the next few months, so please be attentive and help when you can. After all, we're all in this together. The success of our chapter lies with all of us.



What we did ...

Photos courtesy  
Owen Richards

Highlights  
from Meeting  
on May 16,  
2013



*Tom La Point,  
speaker, with  
Susan Pohlen,  
President*



and will do ...



ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

**PROGRAM JUNE 20, 2013**

*From Peg La Point*

## **C**itizen Forestry comes to Denton & Flower Mound

In 2006 the City of Fort Worth kicked off the first Citizen Forester program through the Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council. Citizens interested in learning about trees and volunteering for their community have participated in the program, taking a three hour classroom training and three hour outdoor fieldwork training.

In 2013, the program started in Denton and Flower Mound. Each month a new topic was taught, including Tree Ecology and Planting Basics; Tree Biology and Pruning; Diagnosing tree diseases and tree identification; Managing trees in an urban setting and tree risk assessment; Construction, development and conservation development; and Storm water and comprehensive urban forest inventories.



The goal of bringing this program to Denton was to build an educated and involved citizenry who wish to volunteer their time in “growing” Denton and Flower Mound. *Angie Kralik*

**Angie Kralik** graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University in 2000 with a degree in forestry with urban forestry emphasis. She has worked for the City of Fort Worth as their education/GIS forester and the Texas Forest Service as their conservation education state coordinator prior to coming to the City of Denton in July 2011.

Angie has held leadership positions in the Cross Timbers Urban Forestry Council and Society of American Foresters Texas Chapter. Her passion for Texas’ trees and forests has lead her all over the state, educating citizens about the importance of conserving our natural resources.



### **Special note**

Thank you for your thoughts, cards, prayers and kindness. Your expression of sympathy for the loss of my brother, **Jimmy Wynn Massey**, and my mother, **Velma Jewell Massey**, is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

**Marilyn Blanton**

The Chapter offers its sincere sympathy to Marilyn in the recent deaths of brother, Jimmy Wynn Massey, and mother, Velma Jewell Massey. Memorials were held in May. Please remember Marilyn during this very difficult period.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS cont'd

**Owen Philpot**, with his family, attended the meeting on May 16 to receive his pin and certificate as a Junior Master Naturalist. Owen received his JMN education attending the Denton Parks and Recreation Preschool Naturalist Classes and continued into the home school classes.

His first class was on insects. He looked forward to every class and would ask his mom when the next bug class was scheduled. He put in 2 hours at LISDOLA, 6 hours in the Children's community garden, and .75 hours picking up trash at parks.

Owen would like to add that he has had his red wiggler compost bin for two years now. (Wiggling worms is one of the most popular preschool programs taught at Clear Creek in January or February.)

*From Jan Hodson*



*Photo courtesy Owen Richards*

strike up the band

strike up the band



The newsletter of the Elm Fork Chapter has come of age with a name — **Naturalist News**. **Betty Mullenweg** suggested the name that was voted on by the chapter and announced at the May regular meeting. She has been presented with a \$25 gift certificate from the Wildbird Center. Thank you, Betty.

Also, a very special thanks to all you clever people who submitted your unique choices. I don't know how to adequately acknowledge all of you but know that your participation was appreciated.

w. odum

Can You Host a Horned Lizard Survey?

The Horned Lizard Conservation Society is looking for survey locations for 2013 and 2014. If you have property, or know of someone who does, where the Society could organize a survey, please contact Lee Ann Linam (leeann.linam@tpwd.state.tx.us) to help HLCS provide this critical service.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS cont'd



*Susan Pohlen Leaks  
the Secret*



It's time to let the cat out of the bag. In other words, let me share some details that some of you might never think about. Each month we have the good fortune to hold our meetings at the Carroll Courts Building. Did you know many other organizations also use the facility, and that the rooms we meet in must be reserved in advance?

Since the space is shared, the room configuration can change daily, or even a couple of times during the course of a day. Consequently, the meeting rooms we use have to be set up prior to the meeting. You may recall that at last month's general business meeting I mentioned that you should be thinking of ways to help us manage the chapter. Well, this is an easy way for several of you to help each month. Remember, you can count this as service, and I know you'll feel good about helping out. Look for the sign-up sheet at our general business meetings.

### A new program introduced by TPWD to get families into the parks

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/programs/junior-ranger-program>

The **Junior Ranger Explorer Pack** is a free activity pack that parents can check out for kids at many state parks across the state beginning this summer. Each Explorer Pack comes with a binocular, magnifying glass, animal tracking key, sketchbook, pencil, crayons and watercolors, colorful guides to identify the flowers, birds, butterflies, trees, rocks, wildlife and plants, plus a journal to record what they see and learn. Plus there's room in the pack to carry your own water and snacks!

Michelle M. Haggerty  
Texas Master Naturalist Program Coordinator  
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TMN website: <http://txmn.org>

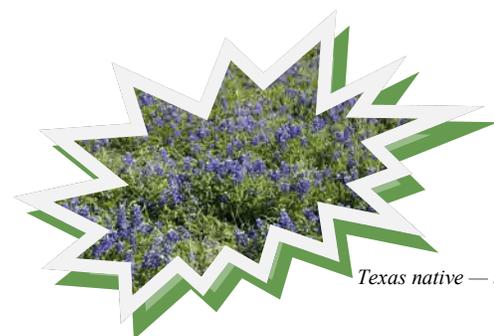
### Dallas Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas announces program for June meeting

*From Jeanne  
Erickson*

**On June 17, 2013, at 7 pm:** Jim Eidson from The Nature Conservancy on "Vegetation and Ecology of Blackland Prairie, Grand Prairie and Western Cross-timbers of North Central Texas"

Jim Eidson is a range ecologist (MS TAMU-College Station) who has focused on prairie restoration and grassland ecology for more than 20 years. Much focus is currently being given to the repair of degraded watersheds by establishing functionally diverse plant communities based on native plant species. Jim is employed by The Nature Conservancy where he has held various positions for the past 18 years. He is also adjunct faculty at TAMU-Commerce where he teaches courses titled "Ecological Restoration" and "Plant Diversity and Conservation".

Dallas Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas monthly meeting, 7 pm on Monday, June 17, at the upstairs 'Guadalupe Peak' meeting room of the Dallas REI store at 4515 LBJ Freeway, Farmers Branch (635 and Welch Rd).



*Texas native — bluebonnets*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS cont'd

Who does what with communications?



A notice of correction of any **factual errors** in current newsletter will be published the following month.  
 wodum10043@reagan.com — or contact the author of the article.



Print, clip & keep for reference

**Dissemination of chapter information comes from:**  
 Email communication: **Monica Chaffin**  
 Facebook: **Sharon Barr**  
 Website: **Martha Peet**  
 Newsletter: **Wanda Odum**



Who keeps Chapter Directory information?

Send **contact information changes** to: 1) **Monica Chaffin chaffincasa@gmail.com**; 2) **Susan Pohlen pohlenusan@gmail.com**; 3) **Rob Roy robt\_t\_roy@msn.com**; and 4) **Donna Wolfe donna.wolfe@dentoncounty.com**



**WORTH LOOKING INTO**

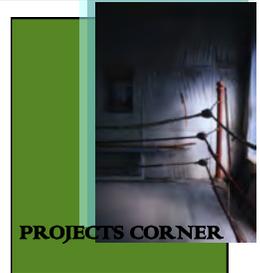
*Audubon* May/June 2013 issue has presented an interesting study of how the sea urchin is sparking interest of researchers who say that at the larval stage the “...small, spiny, globular animals have an unusually high concentration of nickel.” By adding nickel nanoparticles to a solution of greenhouse gas found in water, Lidija Siller of the United Kingdom’s Newcastle University tested her hypothesis that CO<sub>2</sub> is pulled from the water and transformed into their hard shell. The result was that the metal removed 3-4 times more CO<sub>2</sub> than ordinary water. She has suggested this might be used in power plants to remove CO<sub>2</sub> at a fraction of the cost of traditional methods.

Larval stage – echinoblog.blogspot.com



Photo public domain: Laura Francis - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Central Library

CITY NATURE HIKE  
PROJECT REPORT



*On the trail!*



*Jim Shoemaker  
with D. Thetford*



We couldn't have asked for better weather for our City Nature Hike on May 11; nor could we have asked for a better group of city hikers, thanks to Jim Shoemaker, our new City Recreation Specialist. Within our group was a troop of girl scouts who arrived with surplus energy and non stop jabbering from their youthful mouths. However, once we hit the trail and they began listening to our Master Naturalist guides, their energy became focused on wildflowers. We found Vervain, Verbena, Mealy blue sage, Showy primrose, Texas star, Bindweed, Green-thread, Gaura, Cut-leaf daisy, Green milkweed, Indian paintbrush, Carolina horse-nettle, Woolly-white, Fleabane, and Sensitive brier, to mention a few and, by the time we headed to-the-barn (!), the scouts portrayed being the guides as we MN's listened to their teachings (in reverse role).

'Twas a fun hike whereby we witnessed a taming-of-the-energy and an instant wildflower-awakening among the troops!

Mission accomplished?

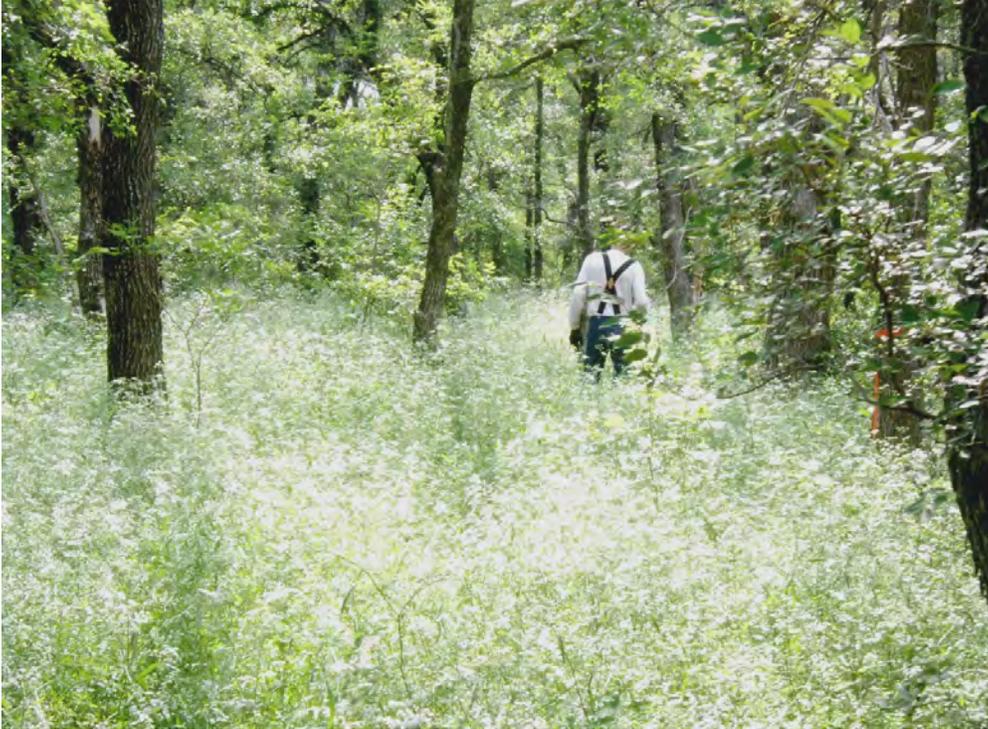
Dorothy Thetford, Project Chair  
City Nature Hikes Committee  
MN Project: 080313



*Photos courtesy D. Thetford  
and Randle Davis*

**Back Country Trail at LLELA (good  
for the soul!)**

*Courtesy Owen  
Richards and  
Larry Brennan*



***Larry Brennan walking, clearing logs from  
the trail***

***Larry's shot of Owen Richards on the mower***



## "WILDFLOWERS-OF-TEXAS"

by Dorothy Brown Thetford

Common name: Slender vervain or Texas vervain

Scientific name: *Verbena halei*

Family: Verbenaceae

**V**erbena is the genus name for a group of plants in the Verbenaceae Family, but in popular usage trailing forms of the plants have come to be called verbenas and erect ones vervains. In Roman antiquity 'verbena' signified the leaves or twigs or certain sacred plants and were used in religious ceremonies. Although vervain was sacred to Mars, Roman god of war, one of its reputed powers was to reconcile the bitterest of enemies. Roman heralds wore crowns of verbena when they went to meet potential foes as ambassadors of peace, or, when they went to meet them to issue challenges to fight.

Many central European countries had superstitions connected with vervain. People wore the leaves to protect themselves from harm; and it was believed to possess power in a love potion. Until recently, German brides wore hats made of vervain to ensure lasting happiness in their marriages. There are numerous American folk medicinal beliefs.

Correll and Johnston lists fourteen genera of the Verbenaceae family in Texas, and *Verbena* is the largest, with some thirty-five species. However, lets see if we can identify this particular one that's in bloom now.

Slender vervain (*Verbena halei*) rises above the Indian paintbrush, Winecup, Phlox, Flax, Prairie paintbrush, Green milkweed and Showy primrose wildflowers to produce a pale blue mirage across the prairie, beginning in April. However, mid May seems to be the prime showing this spring. The flowers are not large or showy, nor will you likely spot the plant from your moving vehicle until you specifically begin your search to find it.



(photo: D. Thetford)

The mirage effect comes from a very slender, 15 to 20-inch woody stem that's normally branched in the upper half. These vertical upper branches are covered with numerous, small blue to purple-blue flowers. Each tubular, trumpet-shaped flower of five lobes grows from the leaf axils on the upper stem.

And, since each flower is only 1/4 inch wide, one plant of Slender vervain may be easily overlooked. But, when found growing in a large colony, vervain creates an illusion of a blue haze atop the lower grasses and flowers.

Leaves vary widely from the medium sized, deeply-cut basal leaves to the slender, slightly-toothed or smooth-margined upper leaves. They are described as oblanceolate or obovate, toothed or lobed. In other words, the size varies from lower to upper leaves, the shape varies from lower to upper leaves, and leaf margins vary within the same plant.

Slender vervain, also commonly called Texas vervain, explodes into bloom in mid April, and continues to bloom sporadically until October to November. It attempts to rebloom even after the spring mowers begin their roadside management schedules. Even tho the flowers are beautiful, delicate and dainty when growing in the prairie, I've never known them to be 'keepers' in a vase.

History references Slender vervain as being used in treating eye diseases and, also, as being an important medicinal herb as well as a charm against witches. Maybe you should grow your own plant for Halloween!

This native perennial is found in any soil throughout the state. and is in full bloom now in all prairies, fields, abandoned pastures, roadsides and woodland edges.

Once you learn to identify Slender vervain, you'll be able to appreciate it all summer.



**Alex Lieban**, with camera slung across his shoulder, recently walked into the rookery just off of Bonnie Brae in Denton. He was keeping a sharp eye out for some interesting shots when this treetop bully-bird drama began unfolding.



1) White egrets are preening and resting when a Great blue heron swoops in.

2) The Great blue appears to target one particular egret with a threatening glare.



3) With nervous flapping, the displaced White egret realizing he is the target, takes flight while the remainder of the colony sits fixed, unruffled and undisturbed.

4) Observe the smug look of the Great blue as he settles in on his stolen branch.



**Moral of this story** — don't get **too** comfortable in your position as you could be displaced and choose your acquaintances wisely since you never know when you could use an ally!

Article and photos from  
Joanne Fellows

## Greater White-fronted Goose; *Anser albifrons*

[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/greater\\_white-fronted\\_goose/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/greater_white-fronted_goose/id)

“Breeding across the tundra from Nunavut to Siberia, across Russia, and in Greenland, the Greater White-fronted Goose has one of the largest ranges of any species of goose in the world. In North America, however, it is common only west of the Mississippi River, where it is found in large flocks in wetlands and croplands.”



“As is true of many geese, Greater White-fronted Goose pairs stay together for years and migrate together, along with their offspring. White-front family bonds can last longer than in most geese, and some young stay with their parents through the next breeding season. Parent and sibling associations may continue throughout their lives.”

Ron and I found one at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. It watched us approach, honked a warning at me when I took its photo, and then flew away.



**“FIELD NOTES IN FOCUS”**



*Swallowtail on Fragrant phlox— from the gallery of  
Dorothy Thetford*

*Featuring Master Naturalist photographers—  
flora and fauna as you see them*

Texas Master Naturalist  
Elm Fork Chapter  
Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension  
Joseph A. Carroll Building  
401 W. Hickory Street  
Denton, TX 76201-9026  
**940-349-2883**

*Dragonfly with prey—  
Paula McCormick*



*Education, Conservation,  
Preservation, Restoration*

## Board of Directors

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### COMMITTEES:

Communication: Martha Peet, Monica Chaffin, Wanda Odum  
Projects: open  
Publicity: Jan Deatherage  
Training: By committee

### ADVISORS:

Janet Laminack, Extension Agent  
Kelly Lauderdale, TPWD

### Monthly Chapter Meetings

**9:30 a.m. preceded by a social time at 9:00 a.m. on the third Thursday of each month.**

**Chapter meetings are open to the public.**

**Next meeting June 20, 2013**—City of Denton Forester, Angie Kralik, outlines the Urban Forest Program

**Meeting July 18, 2013**—Bill Utley, member of the Fort Worth Cactus and Succulent Society on Native Texas Cacti

**Location: Joseph A. Carroll Bldg., 401 W. Hickory Street, Denton, TX 76201-9026**

### Board Meetings

**The Board meets each second Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m. The Board last met June 13, 2013. Next meeting July 11, 2013.**

**Board meetings are open to members.**

## OUR MISSION . . .

*“to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within our community”*

*“The greatest way to live with honor in this world is to be what we pretend to be.” Socrates*