

NATURALIST NEWS



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NATURALIST NEWS –TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST, ELM FORK CHAPTER

JULY 2013

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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.



Chapter Welcomes Bill Utley as Speaker—July Meeting

Native Texas Cacti of North and Central Texas

Our speaker on July 18 will be **Bill Utley**, President of the **Fort Worth Cactus and Succulent Society**. Mr. Utley will discuss habitat requirements and the threats currently posed for native succulents. He will also introduce us to the art of growing cacti and agaves in “captivity.”



Bill was born and raised in Fort Worth. After a tour in the Navy he returned to work at Bell Helicopter for 30 years until his retirement in 1996. He and his wife, Mary, have lived in Colleyville for 39 years.

His father grew agaves in large pots at their home in Fort Worth and they hold fond memories for Bill. When his father passed away in 1979 Bill’s mother gave him a cactus his father had grown for many years in a tall strawberry pot. Bill later learned it is a *Coryphantha missouriensis* which is native to North and Central Texas. Today it is a beautiful clump and still growing in the same pot.

In the ensuing years, Bill has collected cacti from many sources. Although he grows a few succulents, his main interest is Texas native cacti and agaves. His hobby has grown over time with the addition of a cactus garden and a greenhouse, and a few species not indigenous to Texas.

Since most Texas native cacti are small in size, their cultivation is compatible with Bill’s other hobby, which is making pottery. He creates stoneware and terracotta plant pots and functional kitchen pottery.

Bill has served as Treasurer of the Fort Worth Cactus and Succulent Society, and is currently President. He has also served as Treasurer and President of the Texas Association of Cactus and Succulent Societies (TACSS).

Bill’s motto is: “You just can’t have too many plants.”



Peg La Point

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ Take a walk on the wild side—visit LLELA or Clear Creek Heritage Center
- ◆ Scan the announcements section for opportunities
- ◆ D. Thetford’s blue birds deliver
- ◆ Good things happening with Jr. Master Naturalist
- ◆ Don’t forget August Roundup

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Photo—Owen Richards

“ WE’RE IN AN ORGANIZATION WHERE WE SHARE MANY COMMON INTERESTS. . .

We’re counting down to Roundup 2013, and we all need to focus on this objective now. Some of you have heard me talk about how the chapter is made up of like-minded individuals. We’re in an organization where we share many common interests, but have a great deal of personal freedom of choice and expression.

It’s probably not a coincidence that most members are recruited into the chapter by a friend, neighbor, or associate. That’s because we’re drawn to people with similar values and interests. It’s time to grow our Master Naturalist circle of friends again, so take a hard look at the people in your circle that share similar values and interests. Please invite them to our Roundup open house meeting on August 15th.

Food is always a part of our Roundup meeting. As you think about what type of food to bring this year, please **plan on a much lighter fare - basically finger food such as fresh fruit and veggies, cheese and crackers, hors d’oeuvres, mini quiches, etc.** Lighter food is much more appropriate for late morning/early afternoon on a hot summer day. Perhaps most importantly, however, is that a lighter fare should make it easier for all of us to eat and then spend time with our guests viewing chapter displays and sharing wonderful project experiences.



Things accomplished...



CITY OF DENTON
FORESTER, ANGIE
KRALIK, SPEAKER,
WAS
ACKNOWLEDGED
BY CHAPTER
PRESIDENT SUSAN
POHLEN.



Things to come...

From Peg La Point

Our September Program on the Threats and Pressures to Herpetofauna in Texas

As human populations expand, particularly into the southwestern United States, associated increased resource demands and land use changes will undoubtedly further alter the natural functional processes that shape ecosystems (eg., natural land cover, healthy riparian zones and flow regimes, connectivity and food webs). These changes are exacerbated by the effects of climate change and instability, invasive and introduced species and disease

The majority of our native reptiles and amphibian populations have already experienced significant pressures and human induced change. Portions of all major Texas ecosystems have been altered by anthropogenic pressures such as the channelization, damming, dredging and draining of our aquatic resources. The installation of roadways and utility easements such as oil and gas pipelines, water and wastewater lines and overhead utility lines fragment the landscape and isolate wildlife.

Historically, Texas herpetofauna have been targeted by both private and commercial trappers for sale to the pet trade, Asian markets and rattlesnake roundups. This activity still thrives today in parts of the Southwest and are threats to the future viability of our native reptile and amphibian species and has resulted in reduced diversity, density and local extirpation from portions of their historic range.

Ryan Blankenship, A.W.B.

A native Texan, Ryan Blankenship earned his B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M University, College Station, and his Master's of Science degree in Conservation Biology from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Ryan is a Certified Associate Wildlife Biologist with an interest in restoration ecology and wildlife management. He has specific experience with resource management on public and private lands both locally and abroad, working with regulatory agencies such as Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the New Zealand Department of Conservation.

Ryan has nearly 10-years of experience handling native Texas wildlife as well as 3 years of experience with federally listed threatened and endangered species, invasive species management, predator/prey interaction, and ecological restoration of degraded sites. Ryan currently resides in Dallas, Texas while serving as a wildlife biologist for Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., a national engineering consulting firm.



Ryan Blankenship

 ANNOUNCEMENTS, REMINDERS, AND OPPORTUNITIES



 TPWD TEXAS BUMBLEBEE WATCH TRAINING

PROVIDED BY MICHAEL WARRINER, TPWD BIOLOGIST

SATURDAY, JULY 20, 2013, 9 AM TO 4 PM

UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES BUILDING

3309 N. MAIN ST. (Hwy 174), CLEBURNE, TX

There are only nine (9) species of bumblebees in Texas. The last Texas historical data gathered for these critically important pollinators was nearly one hundred years ago. And for the counties of Tarrant, Parker, Johnson, Hood and Somervell, *there is no historical data at all.* Bumblebees are sonicators- buzz pollinators. Many agricultural crops must be pollinated by this vibration (think tomatoes, for instance). The unique work of these native bees is also biologically matched to the needs of so many of our native plants, who cannot be pollinated any other way.

Michael Warriner is asking for our help to identify and catalog the species. Only then can we formulate a plan for protecting them and encouraging their vital work. Michael will teach us how to identify the nine species and how to report our findings. As field researchers, botanists, naturalists, agriculturists, rangers, nurserymen, and home gardeners, we are in a unique position to observe these important creatures as we go about our routines, and to make note of them and their habitats for the scientific database that Michael is creating for the State of Texas. He will also delineate the habitat needs of our native bumblebees.

Michael Warriner is the invertebrate biologist for TPWD, and the creator of this TX Bumblebee Watch program <http://texasbumblebees.com/>. His background includes forest entomology and invertebrate zoology, and his scientific findings have been prolifically published.

Additionally, and importantly, **Ricky Linex** and **Randy Johnson** will be conducting an afternoon training for those of us wanting to protect or create a nurturing habitat- rural or urban- for these native sonicators.

Ricky Linex, USDA/NRCS wildlife biologist and Cross Timbers NPSOT chapter president, as well as the editor and founder of *The Reverchon Naturalist*, will be introducing the Web Soil Survey and how to use it, and also discussing the brand new and improved federal CRP plans and other cost-share pollinator programs that have just this year become available to landowners and other private entities. He will also be sharing with us some successful wildflower mixes he has been using in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Randy Johnson will be focusing on urbanized, organic horticultural solutions for bumblebee-friendly native plantings- species recommendations, plant and mixed soil management, and aesthetics appropriate for HOAs and government code enforcers. Randy is the innovative and popular past Horticulture Director of the Texas Discovery Gardens in Dallas (a 7.5 acre organic, native habitat, garden facility), a Texas Aggie, and the Dallas NPSOT chapter president.

We will begin PROMPTLY at 9 a.m., so please come a little early in order to check in and to visit prior to the start time. There is plenty of parking on the west side of the building at the back entrance door. Please plan to bring your own lunch, as there are no nearby eating facilities. We will break for lunch at 12 after Michael concludes his workshop, and resume the afternoon session promptly. There will be coffee and light snacks in the morning, ice in the freezer, and soft drink and snack machines. THIS EVENT IS FREE, AND ENTIRELY AIR CONDITIONED...

Space is limited. Please pre-register by contacting Carrie McLaughlin, Texas Master Naturalist, carrie.mclaughlin58@gmail.com and providing your name, email, county of residence, contact phone number and affiliations (if any).

LISDOLA (Lewisville Independent School District Outdoor Learning Area) volunteer opportunities!

Come join us every Monday or the Second Saturday each Month. This Saturday, July 13, we will be starting at 8:00 am and finish by noon. Please come join us.

Overview: LISDOLA is an eighty-acre tract of land located on the south side of LLELA and the Lake Lewisville Dam in Denton County. The landscape boasts wetlands, forests, fields, rivers and streams and contains approximately five miles of hiking trails. LISDOLA is a Lewisville ISD facility created to teach children about the great outdoors. It provides teachers, students and visitors with an outdoor, hands-on-educational experience. There is a small parking lot near the trail head just off Fish Hatchery Road.

LISDOLA's entrance is located on Highway 121 (business) at Fish Hatchery Road. For more information, please call Deborah Estes at 214-642-3298 or email at deb.estes@gmail.com.

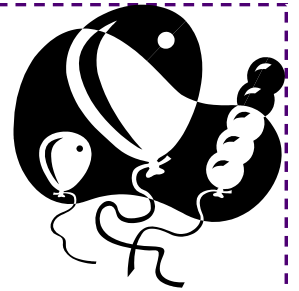
A special thank you to the University of North Texas



and in particular, Brian Wheeler and Marti Lathrop, for their continual support of Elm Fork Chapter. The most recent support came in the form of loans of both live and specimen reptiles for use in the Junior Master Naturalist summer camp program run by Jan Hodson and sponsored by the City of Denton. The live turtle was loaned to us by Brian Wheeler from resources in the Environmental Education Center. The other specimens came from the James Kennedy Elm Fork Natural History Museum in the Department of Biological Sciences. These resources are generally available for chapter use simply upon request.

Thank you!!

Susan Pohlen and Marian Kester



SOCIALIZING PLUS

We have such a wonderful and interesting mix of people in our chapter. Consequently there are some members that have expressed an interest in having more social time. But the structure of the organization is such that we do not have many opportunities for members to socialize and get to know one another better. Unfortunately our monthly gatherings can only provide a short amount of time for socializing because we have to conduct a minimum amount of business, including member recognition, and still have time for our guest speakers.

I've taken the liberty of asking Donna Wolfe if the Extension building could be used by members for other social activities. She indicated the building could be used, but someone would have to schedule the room in advance. Of course set up and clean up would also be the responsibility of participating members.

If you are a member that would really like more social opportunities you may want to consider scheduling some monthly or quarterly fun gatherings. These informal gatherings would not count as service, but rather an opportunity for members to spend time together and get to know one another better. Some examples: birthday of the month, game night, hobby sharing, crazy apparel, etc.

My intent is simply to let you know that this option exists. If you decide to plan an event please coordinate date and space with Donna, and provide specific information at our general business meetings.

Susan

FOOD FOR ROUNDUP/OPEN HOUSE



Look for food sign-up sheets at the July Business meeting.

Junior Master Naturalist Camp June 10-14, 2013

Junior Master Camp has come to a close. This is the second year Elm Fork has partnered with Denton Parks and Recreation to have a camp. This was the first year, however, to call it JMN camp. (Last year was a pilot program called Bug Eyed Trailblazers.) We had 17 students, 3 hours each day. The program covered 10 subject areas from soils to mammals, with lots of hands on activities and teaching crafts. We caught insects and spiders. Discovered animal tracks and where water goes. Observed snakes in the wild and looked at nature through microscopes. We measured the difference in temperature under the shade of a tree, compared to a gravel surface in the sun. We learned that you can tell the age of a fish, by counting the rings in the scales. On Wednesday Denton P&R included a field trip in the afternoon to Denia and a presentation from Black Land Raptor Center with live birds.



How hot it is



Looking at poster



Checking out scopes

Our guides (all saints deserving crowns of glory) in this week of environmental exploration included: Sherrill Campbell, Linda Cox, Jan Hodson, Marian Kester, Cheryl Keserson, Susan Pohlen, and Louise Wyss. Jan Deatherage helped with updating our hold harmless form and trucking tubs of materials. Thank You! Thank You! Each day included 2 hours of setup and cleanup with a trip to the 6th floor resource room to pickup or return material. About half of the materials in resource made a round trip to Clear Creek. Displays were changed each day to match areas of exploration. We also met before the camp to plan, prepare materials, and stage supplies for transport.

Wheew! Glad it's over. Well... not really, it doesn't stop after camp and start again next year. We met this week to discuss ideas to improve the program. Don't get me wrong, the program was great and all the survey forms said it was outstanding. But, that doesn't mean you don't try to make it better. Also, I have programs scheduled every month until June 2014 and often have to turn down requests. So, we need to make it easy for anyone to step in and help. It is work, but it is also fun.

Join the fun! The next JMN meeting is Tuesday, August 13, 1 pm

We will be working on ideas to improve the soil and plant programs, activities, and materials.

Jan Hodson



Making bug suckers



Tuesday insect and spider display