



Bob Mione

"He has been an active volunteer at the Connemara Meadow since Fall of 2008..."

Program planned for Chapter regular monthly meeting March 19, 2015

From Peg La Point

Blackland Prairie Restoration efforts at the Connemara Conservancy Foundation's Meadow Nature Preserve.

This discussion, with accompanying photographs (and maybe a short video or two) will outline the steps taken/planned from initial concept in the Summer of 2012 into the Fall of 2015 to restore approximately 12 acres (out of 72) of the Connemara Meadow Nature Preserve from invasive species of grass and forbes to native/Blackland Prairie grasses. The presentation will cover all details such as planning, research, costs, goals, timeframes for each step of the process, successes, challenges, adjustments to plans and planned future steps to continue the restoration process. The presentation is structured to allow detailed questions about each step of the on going effort in hopes that both the audience and the presenter can learn from each other. The presentation will focus on the restoration activities, not on the Connemara Conservancy Foundation (CCF). Details regarding the CCF can be found at www.connemaraconservancy.org.



The presentation will be given by Bob Mione, the Connemara Meadow Manager, a volunteer position he has held since Summer of 2011. The bad news about Bob is that he is not a recognized expert in the area of Blackland Prairie restoration. The good news about Bob is that he is not a recognized expert in the area of Blackland Prairie restoration. He has been an active volunteer at the Connemara Meadow since Fall of 2008, is a current member of the Blackland Prairie Master Naturalist chapter, is a lifelong student of Mother Nature with a great deal of time spent "in the field" in Texas,



Virginia, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and Kansas. Bob worked for the Department of Defense, ran his own software company for 15 years and currently works part time as a management consultant specializing in herding cats. He is an honors graduate from the University of North Texas and has an MBA from Golden Gate University. Bob can be reached at 214-534-1900, email at meadowmanager@connemaraconservancy.org and/or on Facebook at Connemara Meadow Preserve Mgr. Bob's two biggest



Mother Nature laments are the demise of the Bob White Quail and the Horned Lizard from North Texas. His most lofty Mother Nature goal is the restoration of Bob White Quail to the Connemara Meadow.

Program for Chapter regular monthly meeting April 15, 2015

Our speaker on April 15 will be **Scott Kiester**, member of our Elm Fork Chapter. Scott will lead us through the evolutionary process that produced the 21 species of Leopard Frogs that live today from Central Canada to Panama.

Scott is a retired geologist. He is an instructor for TPWD's Texas Amphibian Watch, the US Fish and Wildlife North American Amphibian Monitoring Project, and coordinates the LLELA amphibian watch. He has worked on several related projects and with conservation groups throughout Texas.

See complete bio in April edition of Naturalist News coming up.



Leopard frog—clipart

Elegant Northern Pintail Duck, *Anas acuta*

*Photo & article:
Joanne Fellows*



**"Their numbers have
been declining
dramatically"**

look for this favorite duck on every visit to Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. They are here in the winter in their non-breeding plumage. They are one of the earliest of nesters. They breed from Alaska east to Quebec and south to the central Great Plains, the Great Lakes and northern New England.

They used to be abundant and widespread across North America, Europe and Asia. Their numbers have been declining dramatically. The North American Breeding Bird Survey of 2014 listed them as Common Bird in Steep Decline. It is believed they are suffering from the effects of long-term drought and loss of habitat in the Prairie Pothole Region. This region is part of the Great Plains of North America. The name, Prairie Pothole, comes from the shallow depressions left behind by ice age glaciers.

Palo Pinto Mountains State Park

From Bob Ross



Texas Bluebells

Texas is home to more than 90 state parks, with 15 of them in or near North Texas. Be prepared to add one more to the list in our area. The new state park will be Palo Pinto Mountains State Park, located two miles west of the community of Strawn on FM 2372, which is 92 miles southwest of Denton.

The State purchased the land, 4000+ acres, in October of 2011. It is located in the Western Cross Timbers Ecoregion and is centered between Fort Worth and Abilene from the east to the west, and Wichita Falls and Brownwood from the north to the

south. The park is in the planning stage now, with the preparation and development stages to follow later. Tentatively, the park is schedule to open in 2018. Once opened, TPWD is projecting 100-150,000 annual visitors. One of the major draws in the park will be Raptor Ridge, located in a migratory route for falcons, hawks and other birds.

Although the park is not officially opened, events are planned beginning next month on the property.

The first Equestrian Trail Ride will take place April 11, 2015. The ride will be limited to 60 riders.

The trail ride will begin at 9:00 a.m. followed by a short break for lunch and another ride at 2:00 p.m. Camping will be permitted Friday night, but no electricity or water hookups are available. The fee is \$20 which includes a BBQ lunch. A second event will be a Star Party taking place on April 18, 2015 and is free to the public. Members of both the Texas Astronomical Society of Dallas and the Fort Worth Astronomical Society will be there with telescopes visitors can use to view stars and constellations, or bring your own telescope.



<http://keranews.org/post/take-sneak-peek-newest-state-park-texas>

Photos by D. Thetford

WILDFLOWER ROSETTES

Dorothy Brown Thetford

W

hen spring weather arrives, we immediately think of trees popping out with budding flowers and leaves, fresh green grass, or maybe flowers to come. And, needless to say, we become overly anxious to see our native wildflowers hit the scene. However, while waiting for the wildflowers to show their faces, there is a very fun and challenging game to play of learning to recognize these plants before the flowers emerge.

What? you say. Yep, you can meet the challenge by learning to recognize each wildflower's basal rosette during the winter months, and then you'll be even more thrilled to follow its development to the flowering stage.



Black-eyed Susan

A rosette is generally described as the basal set of leaves that grows primarily in a circular arrangement, ofte times in a symmetrical design, and mostly at a low-growing or flat height, a.k.a. the immature stage of the plant. The center leaves may be very small and short, and the leaf length and width size graduates toward the outer perimeter. As the rosette begins to grow, the leaves grow taller, wider and longer. So you

have plenty of time to play the 'recognition' game. In fact, some of the spring-blooming wildflower rosettes are growing and recognizable as early as October-November-December of prior year. And, understandably , those are the plants that will provide the earliest blooms, i.e., **Texas bluebonnets, Texas thistle, Showy primrose, Mexican hat, Black-eyed Susan, Baby blue-eyes, Golden groundsel, and Gulf-coast penstemon**, to mention a few of the most common ones.

Take a walk and check your skills at playing the 'rosette' game. Learning to recognize the wildflower rosettes gives you a giant head-start on spring.



Gulf-coast penstemon



Showy primrose



Engelmann daisy



Mexican hat



Texas bluebonnet



Golden groundsel



Prairie verbena



Texas thistle

HC

As everyone had enough cold weather, snow, sleet and icy roads? Are you enjoying the temperature being in the 70's one day followed by sub-freezing temperatures the next? Are you beginning to feel we are being beaten down by the weather demons? Are you beginning to want to feel sorry for yourself?

Think how you would be feeling now if you lived in Boston. Those folks are nearing a record snow fall of 107 inches, with more snow in the forecast. Many of them have not visually seen their own automobiles for weeks, due to being covered in snow. They have not seen nor felt the heat of the sun for quite some time. Now, you are feeling a little better about yourself, aren't you?

We made the transition from the year 2014 to the year 2015 with all the excitement and giddiness of a young child awaiting their birthday party. We made resolutions and had anticipations of a better year. Suddenly, our on-again and off-again weather threw a monkey wrench into our plans. Our schedules had to be changed. We just could not immediately jump in our own automobile and take off down the road as usual. Black ice was the menace! Our commercial and social lives were coming to a standstill. We would have to wait 24, maybe 48, or, OMG, 72 hours before our lives would continue as usual. Again, I ask you to remember what people have gone through in many other parts of the U. S. during this same period of time.



We are so lucky to live where each of us reside. We only go days without seeing the sun. We only have moments of nasty weather, followed by the anticipation of what is approaching in the near future. I am talking about spring! As Master Naturalists we are more tuned in to how birds, mammals, plants, flowers and trees are preparing to "come alive" than many other people. Most of us will agree our favorite season is spring, a season full of anticipations.

We begin watching for and anticipating the birds that pass through our area heading northward in the flyways. We always anticipate there will be a new generation of mammals. Many of us get an adrenaline rush seeing mammals in the wild and readily change our normal routines to have the chance to see various animals, whether they are crepuscular (primarily active at dawn and dusk) or nocturnal (active at night). We often anticipate spring giving us a bumper crop of new and exciting wild plants and wild flowers in our area meadows. Many of us are anticipating what new and unusual plants and flowers we will plant around our homes. And, how can one not get excited about area trees beginning to bud and teasing us as to their future appearance with flowers and leaves.

For most of us, anticipation is hope. We hope we will have an array of beautiful birds, mammals, plants, flowers and trees in the next few weeks. We hope spring will be fruitful and kind to us. For many of us there is a hope that our vegetable garden will produce so much food we cannot eat all of it within our own families, therefore, we will have plenty to share with our friends and neighbors. What better gift is there to give to someone else?

I fully anticipate that all of us will make it through this winter period, some for the worse and some for the better, to get to our wonderful season of spring. Then, we will begin anticipating the torrid heat from our high temperatures and arid conditions of our upcoming season of summer!

By Bob Ross

Anticipations