

Naturalist News

Texas Master Naturalist,
Elm Fork Chapter

2015

Vol. 16 Issue 12

December



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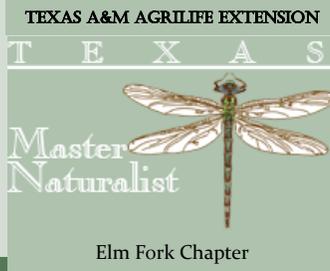
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Passionflower — Jonathan Reynolds



Passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*) is a creeping perennial vine with white, purple-tinged flowers and orange berries that grows to a height of up to 30 ft (9 m). First used by Native Americans and the Aztecs of Mexico as a sedative, passionflower has been a popular folk remedy for centuries in Europe and North America. www.encyclopedia.com

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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"

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."

Just recapping

November Chapter Meeting

Carl Franklin and Snapping Turtle

by Cindy Maloney

On Nov. 19th, 2015 the speaker at the Elm Fork Chapter general meeting was Carl Franklin. Carl is the curators and collections manager at The University of Texas Arlington's Biological Center. His presentation on turtles was fun and informative. In case any of you missed it or wish to follow up with this study, I will share some of my notes to put you on the right track to reviewing what Carl told us about the snapping turtles that are found in Texas. Both the Alligator snapping turtle and the Common snapping turtle are in the Chelydridae Family: The Snapping Turtle family. Starting with that, we will see what makes them different.

The Alligator Snapping Turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*) is listed as a Threatened Species. It is illegal to capture, possess, or own this turtle without proper permits issued by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. They were fished out which caused Texas to become aware of their possible extinction in our state. Louisiana still allows people to fish out one per day. They reproduce all year and they are active all year. Hatchlings can be found in Sept., Oct., and Nov. This turtle grows to be very large and can weigh as much as 200 pounds. Smaller Alligator turtles will eat medium size animals easily such as raccoons, possums. Bigger Alligator turtles can eat large animals, such as deer. Not only that, they will consume the entire animal except for the skull. Their shell is such a strong plate of armor with large spikes on the ridges.

Carl has seen turtle shells that have withstood gunshot wounds going into the shell and the turtle survived. The spikes are a good indicator of the species, but the best way to tell a Common Snapper from an Alligator Snapper is to look at the tongue. The Alligator Snapper will have a forked tongue that looks like a worm when it wiggles, whereas the common snapping turtle has a wide tongue that fill the mouth. View this YouTube video to see the Alligator turtle tongue. (<http://youtu.be/gC13oJjkwn>)

The Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) is easily found throughout Texas and it is a commonly mistaken for an Alligator snapping turtle. The Common Snapping turtle is not endangered. They are smaller than an Alligator Snapping turtle. The Common snapping turtle is about 8-14 inches long in comparison to the 15-26 inch long Alligator snapper. The largest Common snapper on record in Texas was 70

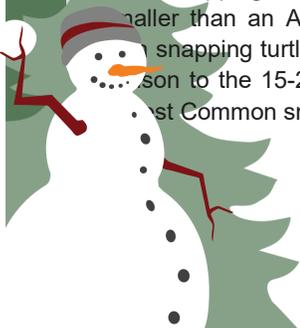
pounds. UTA has one that is well fed and cared for that weighs 22 pounds. It will have 3 ridges on it's shell, but it will not have the large spikes that an Alligator turtle has. If you see a common snapping turtle trying to cross a road, you can help across in the direction it is going. The best way to hold a turtle is by it's back legs. Here is a link to Carl's video showing you how to hold the turtle.

(<http://youtu.be/1U9i9pwlakU>)

Carl told us a very funny story of driving across Texas, with a dead Alligator strapped to the top of his car while having to smell it the entire way back to Arlington. He said the smell was so bad that he had to bury it late that night on UTA campus until it decomposed. The campus police were a bit suspicious and curious about this activity. As you can see he is dedicated to his study. If you should encounter a deceased Alligator Snapping turtle please contact Carl at Franklin@UTA.edu. He would like for you to include photos so he can confirm identity before driving to collect the carcass. Both of these types of turtles play a vital role in the health of our rivers, streams, and ponds. They play an important role in ecology and the study of them is vital to survival. As always, take care of the critters in our world because you never know what important role they play in the delicate balance of nature.

RESOURCES and LINKS:

www.Texasturtles.org
http://www.texasturtles.org/Macrochelys_temminckii.html
http://www.texasturtles.org/Chelydra_serpentina.html
<http://www.texasturtles.org/Turtles.pdf>



Recapping cont'd

November Chapter Meeting



Carl Franklin with "friend" following his presentation "Texas Turtles" at last month's meeting. Photo from Rita Lokie



Jan Deatherage presents walking stick to Carl Franklin in appreciation. Photo from Rita Lokie

At the regular meeting on November 19, the Chapter elected the following officers for the year 2016:

President — Ray Kreutzfeld

Vice president — Sharon Clark

Treasurer— Don Fikes

Secretary — Mary Morrow

Member at large — Bill Coleman

2015 class representative — Becky Bertoni

Chairpersons will be named by the Executive Board of Directors