

Volume 16, Issue 4

April 2015

Publication from Texas Master Naturalist, Elm Fork Chapter

# NATURALIST NEWS

Welcome  
*April*

Catch us on the web: <http://txmn.org/elmfork/>

- \* See upcoming events
- \* Check resources
- \* Read articles
- \* Watch videos

Like us on Facebook

Look for us on YouTube

*"act naturally"*



w. odum

“April hath put a spirit of youth in everything.  
(Sonnet XCVIII)”—[William Shakespeare](#)

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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.*

### Special points of interest:

- Where does our spending get us?
- Leopard frogs in upcoming program for April meeting
- See the mystery hole
- Who's contributing this month?
- Who will contribute next month?

### Inside this issue:

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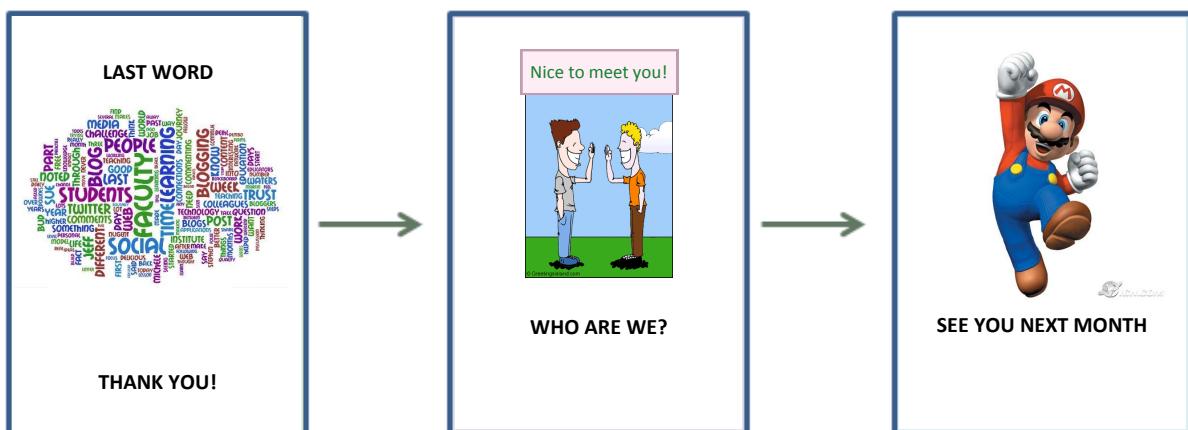
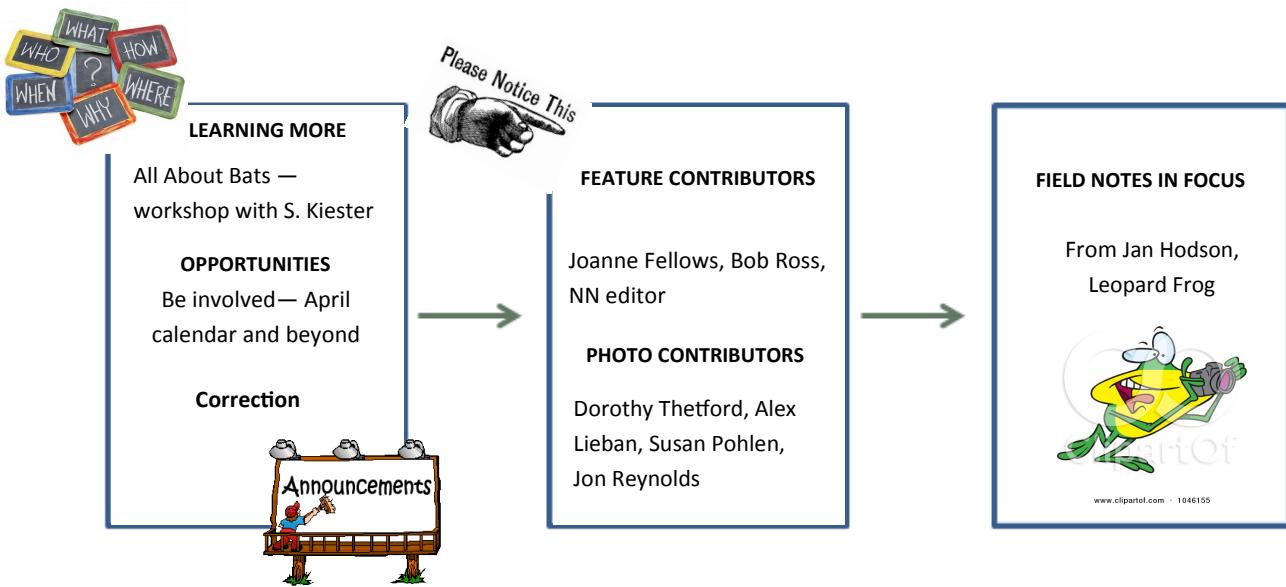
## Squirrels — How do they compare? (see p. 6)



Photo — Dianna Smith (Springfield, IL)

**Red squirrel—feisty little critter!**

## What Naturalist News is offering this month . . .



From Peg La Point

**Program for Chapter regular monthly  
meeting April 15, 2015—Scott Kiester**

**The Tale of the Leopard Frogs: or What is a Species Anyway?**



**There** are three species of Leopard frogs hereabouts. That's either a blessing or a curse. Depends on whether you can just sit back and enjoy the wonders of nature or if you're sitting out in a swamp in the dark, swatting mosquitoes and trying to tell their calls apart so you can count them and report to Texas Parks and Wildlife.

And our three are just the tip of the iceberg. There are 21 recognized species of leopard frog. They stretch from central Canada to Panama. Some live in tiny areas, the Ramsey Canyon leopard frog is found only in the Huachuca Mountains of Arizona. The relict leopard frog ranges from the hills of southernmost Colorado to possibly as far as the north rim of the Grand Canyon, or maybe not, that one could be yet another species. Still an open question. Others inhabit a sizeable portion of the continent.

Some prefer lakes, others streams. A few have adapted to ephemeral ponds in arid climates, some are happy with a grassy puddle, most need a good sized, permanent pond or lake with clear water. The newest member of the group, still unnamed, lives only in the area around Yankee's Stadium in New York City. It was discovered when its calls sounded funny to someone who knows their frogs.

Together they are formally known as the *Rana Pipiens Species Complex*. Why are there so many closely related species within a single group? What is their history? How do such things happen? How do we tell one species from another? *More importantly*, how do the different species tell one another apart come time to make a new batch of tadpoles?

Perhaps most important, from a naturalist standpoint anyway. What is this thing called a species? As of today there are about 24 different definitions. How do species come to be separate from one another in the first place? How do they stay separate once they are? How do selective pressures, genetic drift and differing behaviors underpin the whole process? Together we'll explore the science behind these kinds of quandaries and in the process learn how to tell our local leopard frogs one from the other.

Scott has been a certified Texas Master Naturalist since 2003. For 11 years he has been a volunteer and instructor for TPWD's Texas Amphibian Watch as well as USFWL North American Amphibian Monitoring Project. For several years he worked with TPWD's Houston Bat Project as a "Bridge Host" at the Waugh Street Bridge bat colony. He has worked on different conservation related projects and with conservation groups throughout Texas. Currently he is active in EFCMN's speaker's bureau, leads a monthly bird walk at the Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center, and coordinates the LLELA amphibian watch. He is a retired geologist and is finally getting close to finishing his M.S. in environmental science. Husband and partner to the very patient Lovely Deborah for 38 years and Grandpa to Hayden, Parker, Lorelei and come sometime toward the end of March AnnElisse.

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## Where Does Our Money Go?

**By Bob Ross**

# We

are entering the middle of the month of April. We are in the eleventh hour of paying our income taxes for last year. April is the month for procrastination. It is probably a very good month for companies selling antacid products. Tums anyone?

Have you already filed your income tax? When the final transaction was completed of you sending money to the government, or the government sending you a refund, did you have a smile or a grimace? Are you going to be financially sound if you owe taxes or do you feel the need to take out a loan against the farm?

Have you ever just wondered where does the U. S. government spend our income tax dollars? As Master Naturalists, it is important to each of us to understand how much money is being spent toward our natural resources and our environment. Master Naturalists give countless hours of time, effort and talents to the areas of which we believe need our help. It is only natural for us to want to know if our government is properly spending the tax dollars we give them each year. The following is a list of the top 10 biggest things your income taxes pay for and the percentage of the total dollars being used:

1)	National Defense	25.0%
2)	Health Care	22.5%
3)	Income Security	17.0%
4)	Interest on loans	8.0%
5)	Veteran's Benefits	4.5%
6)	Education and Job Training	3.3%
7)	Law Enforcement and Immigration	Just over 2.0%
8)	Natural resources, Energy and Environment	About 2.0%
9)	International Affairs	1.7%
10)	Science, Space and Technology	Just over 1.0%



Natural resources, energy and environment ranks number 8 on the list receiving 2% of the total income tax money being used each year. About one-third of that money goes toward water and land management, with the remaining funding environmental protection initiatives, as well as, management of the nation's energy assets and conservation efforts. For every dollar received by the government through paid income taxes, only 2 cents is used toward natural resources, energy and the environment. Or to put it another way, if you paid \$10,000 in income taxes, only \$200 will be used for natural resources, energy and the environment.

**EARTH DAY**



**EVERY DAY**

Such revelations explain why local, state and federal governments love programs such as Texas Master Naturalists. To governments we are a cost-free body of many different talents helping to educate, maintain, and serve. We are a program of pay-it-forward. We want our children, grandchildren and their children to have an inkling of what our environment and ecology has been, is, and what we are trying to keep and protect. It is a daunting task, but as primates who can ideate, we can handle the tough job.

Have a good Earth Day and Arbor Day this month. Let's hope our April showers bring May flowers.