



EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Stalia stalis* (Linnacus))

SYMBOLS OF HOPE AND HAPPINESS

How were we to know that the project that past members, Jana and Pat Smith, created for Clear Creek Natural Heritage Park would provide educational experiences for our Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist (MN) members for 10 to 12 years ongoing?

Jana and Pat's sons built and installed Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes in various locations across the Clear Creek prairie as their scouting project. However, improvements and baffling have been added along the years with the energy and materials provided by MN members.

The boxes have withstood several years of weathering as we MN members have enjoyed the nesting boxes. Yes, some of them have been relocated (to accommodate human logistics) and, even though the boxes have endured all kinds of abuse, in addition to accepting new nails and screws, the Eastern Bluebirds have never missed a nesting season. They, too, have enjoyed those gifts, and occasionally even share their boxes with the Wrens.

Members of our chapter volunteer to monitor the 12 boxes on a weekly basis during the Bluebird nesting season, which is normally mid-February through July, and those findings are relayed to the national Cornell Lab Nest Watch Program by our Clear Creek project coordinator, Jonathan Smith.

Trekking through the tall prairie grasses is a great time for visiting with the monitoring team and collecting chiggers. Judy Riley (MN 2014), Brenda Wellenreiter (MN 2014) and I gathered data (and chiggers) on two visits which involved finding 5 Bluebird eggs in one nest, 4 Bluebird eggs in another nest, and 7 Wren eggs in a third nest. Granted, some chicks may have already fledged by the dates that we monitored in May, so not every nest had eggs or nestlings, but the lessons in identifying nesting material and construction design were available with each inspection.

Dorothy Thetford

MN 2001





—Sit a Spell and Enjoy the View—



Come be Happy! —
from Dale Meyer



From Susan Pohlen, "First time to actually see a monarch caterpillar on one of these less showy milkweeds. This is *Asclepias verticillata* (Whorled milkweed)."



Angling on Elm Fork Trail — comes from
Jonathan Reynolds





Coral Honeysuckle *Lonicera sempervirens*

Written by Janie Farler

Coral honeysuckle is a perennial, semi-evergreen twining vine and is one of the best for Texas landscapes. It is native to the Eastern half of the US but is well suited to Texas heat. It will grow in full sun or partial shade, preferring moist soil but tolerating some drought. Its showy blooms begin in late winter/early spring and continue intermittently throughout the year. The tubular flowers (red, yellow or white) attract hummingbirds, bees and butterflies. The fruit, maturing in the fall, is a red berry that attracts quail, Purple Finch, Goldfinch, Hermit Thrush, and American Robin.

The first leaf below the inflorescence is fused together (see picture). Unlike Japanese honeysuckle (*L. japonica*), coral honeysuckle is not invasive in Texas. It can be used either as a climbing vine, growing 15-20' long, or as a ground cover.

Coral honeysuckle can be propagated from softwood cuttings any time from early summer to fall when the vine is actively growing.



Joseph LaForest, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



John D. Bird, University of Mississippi, Bugwood.org

Sources:

Ward, Bill, "Coral honeysuckle is the perfect vine for landscapes," March 1, 2010, <http://npsot.org/wp/story/2010/1252/>

Texas Native Plants Database: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/Lonicerasemper.htm>

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Database: https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=lose



FIELD NOTES IN FOCUS

(Make your heart sing with the natives!)



Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and Purple horsemint (*Monarda citriodora*)—comes from the gallery of Dorothy Thetford

*Featuring Master Naturalist photographers—
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