Texas Master Naturalists

A Guide to Getting Outside at the 2019 Annual Meeting

October 18th-20th
Rockwall, Texas
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“The question is not what you look at, but what you see.”

- Henry David Thoreau
About This Guide

This guide serves as a comprehensive guide to the field sessions offered at the Texas Master Naturalist 2019 Annual Meeting located in Rockwall, Texas. Not only does this guide provide information on each field session (day, time, location, etc.), it will also inform you on any gear needed, any precautions, and whether or not it qualifies for Advanced Training Credits or Volunteer Service Hours. Use this guide before the conference to plan your field sessions, during the conference to stay on top of your sessions, and after the conference as a reference for places to see and visit in the Dallas/Rockwall area.

Session Key

AT
Advanced Training

V
Volunteer Service

!  
Strenuous Activity

Extra Gear Required

Transportation Required

Extra Cost for Activity
## Master Schedule

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<td>Pristine Prairies: Clymer Meadow &amp; Paul Mathews Prairie</td>
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<td>National Fossil Day at North Sulphur River</td>
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<td>Geology, Hydrology, &amp; Ecology of the N. Texas Coastal Plain</td>
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<td>7:00 AM - 12:00 PM</td>
<td>Paddling the Trinity River Elm Fork with Groundwork Dallas</td>
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<td>7:30 AM - 11:00 AM</td>
<td>Birding at Connemara Meadow</td>
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<td>Native Plants &amp; Prairies of Dallas</td>
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**SUNDAY 10/20**

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<td>Mockingbird Park: A Hidden Gem</td>
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<td>Pastures to Prairies: Healing the Land</td>
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Sunset at High Point Prairie & Wildflower Preserve

Steve Bolgiano, High Point Prairie & Wildflower Preserve

Steve Bolgiano always knew the land he called home was special. But once prairie experts such as Matt White informed him of its rare uniqueness and pristine quality, he felt charged to preserve it. Now called High Point Prairie & Wildflower Preserve, Steve is researching ways that ecologically compatible uses can bring in income to manage the 50-acre site. Attendees will listen to a presentation by Bolgiano about his efforts to preserve the prairie and author Matt White on the preserve’s prairie virtues and its fascinating buffalo wallow ecosystem. An easy amble down an old ranch road ends in a magnificent sunset viewing from this hilltop site.

Fire Ecology of the Blackland Prairie: A tour of two fire-managed prairie remnants in North Texas

Chase Brooke, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service; Brandon Belcher, The Nature Conservancy; Erin O’Connor, Texas A&M Forest Service; Sam Kieschnick & Trevor Tanner, Texas Parks & Wildlife

The Blackland Prairie is a historically fire-managed ecosystem. Frequent fires encouraged the biodiversity of grasses, forbs, and other plants characteristic of this critically endangered ecosystem. Our pre-conference field trip will cover two prairie remnant and restoration sites managed by The Nature Conservancy. We will be hiking through TNC’s Clymer Meadow, and Collin County’s Park Hill Prairie to explore how prescribed fire is being used to restore the prairie, and the fire ecology of the area. Expect to learn about fire effects, prairie biodiversity, and using prescribed fire helps restore our natural areas and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.
**Field Sessions**

**Pre-Event**

**Thursday, October 17th**

### Lake Texoma: Waterflowl Wonderland with Immense Vistas

**Kathy Whaley, US Fish & Wildlife Service; Margaret Avard, Bluestem Chapter; Cody Edwards, Texas Parks & Wildlife**

Explore two locations on sprawling 89,000-acre Lake Texoma on the Texas/Oklahoma border. Constructed from the Red River in the 1940s by German prisoners of war, it is one of the nation’s largest reservoirs. The 11,000-acre Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge serves as a major stopover for migratory birds on the Central Flyway. Habitats including Blackland Prairie, wetlands, bottomland hardwood forest, open water, and cropland are managed to support more than 330 species of birds, 30 species of mammals, and 60 species of fish. Jack Chiles, who has conducted weekly bird counts at the refuge for more than 30 years, will lead a hike on the beautiful Harris Creek Trail. Bring your lunch to enjoy on the patio overlooking the lake, then take a short scenic drive to the 460-acre Eisenhower State Park. Located on the rocky cliffs overlooking the Lake Texoma dam, the clifftop trail boasts stunning views of the lake. Hear a program about the ecological impact of dam construction. Take a dip at the swimming beach. A **$5 entrance fee** is required at Eisenhower State Park.

### Trinity River: A Float Trip Through Time

**Francisco Pinto**

Canoe the Trinity River in an afternoon from the Sante Fe Trail south of downtown to the upper Great Trinity Forest, approximately 8 miles long, through Eagle Ford shale and Upper Cretaceous limestone outcrops. See snapping turtles, alligator gar, beaver, and waterfowl in the river, and coyotes and more on the shore. Learn of Trinity River Expeditions activist Charles Allen’s battles to keep the Trinity flowing free while working hard to introduce people to the beauty and natural riches of Dallas’ beleaguered river. **$45 rental fee required for canoe.** Route may depend on weather and water conditions. Participants must bring drinking water, and insect and sunburn protection. Bring snacks or bag lunch.
A Tour of Trinity River Elm Fork’s Paddling Trail

Alex Dubovsky & Dale Harris, Trinity Nature Conservancy/Trinity River Paddling Trail

The Elm Fork of the Trinity River traces I-35E for much of its length, making it prone to urban travails and trash. Yet its natural beauty can not be denied. Take a float trip from California Crossing Park, location of a pioneer ford of the Elm Fork, to Frasier Dam, where adjacent riparian bottomlands are being rehabilitated by Groundwork Dallas’s Green Team consisting of youth under-represented in naturalist activities. This segment is part of a 127-mile/22 trailhead Trinity River Paddling Trail project being led by Dallas Downriver Club. It is being considered for inclusion in the National Park Service system, including a possible national recreation area. Canoes & Kayaks are available for rent. **$55 per canoe or $45 per kayak.** Two Paddlers to a canoe, one per kayak. Participants must bring water to drink, and are encouraged to apply sunscreen and insect repellent prior to arrival.

Botanical Research Institute of Texas: Herbarium Treasures

Tiana Rehman, Botanical Research Institute of Texas

The Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT), founded in 1987 and based in Fort Worth, boasts one of the 10 largest herbariums in the U.S. with approximately 1,445,000 plant specimens from Texas, Oklahoma, and in Southeastern US, as well as Mexico, Belize, China, and the Philippines. View herbarium samples and the extensive specimen vaults, and learn about the Conservation Seed Laboratory and Seed Bank, with botanist Tiana Rehman. See the process of digitizing specimens, many rare and collected in the 19th century, into an online database. View the new Molecular and Structural Laboratory where important work on plant systematics is being done. Hear about the BRIT Library collections of botanical works in the southwestern United States, including many rare ones, from Barney Lipscomb. Tour BRIT’s 70,000-square-foot LEED building with green living prairie roof, geothermal wells, and more. Enjoy rotating nature art galleries for adults and children. Amble the BRIT grounds with native-plant landscaping, rain and research gardens, and wetlands pond. BRIT partners with the adjacent Fort Worth Botanic Garden whose attractions include the Native Texas Boardwalk outdoor classroom, Rock Springs Garden geologic showcase, and Water Conservation Garden.
Private Landowners Preserving Prairies

BF Hicks, Daphne Prairie Preserve; Karl & Kelli Ebel, Ebels Grassland Ranch

A full day focusing on private landowners using the tools of Aldo Leopold to manage and conserve the native regional prairies. Participants should plan for a full day with a lunch stop available mid-day. There are limited facilities at the sites. Wear sturdy boots and long pants, bring drinking water, and insect and sunburn protection. Attendees will be driven about at both ranches for short walk-and-talk excursions.

Karl and Keri Ebel met in North Africa overseas and had a dream to raise a family on a Texas ranch. The couple and their two sons converted 1003 acres of poor cropland, degraded prairie pasture, and a riparian corridor into Ebels’ Grassland Ranch, a Silveus dropseed prairie (listed as critically imperiled). They use cattle and goats to help maintain the restored native prairie ecology with three key management techniques: rotational grazing, prescribed burning, and trample planting that uses cattle to integrate native grass seed into the soil and naturally fertilize it. By relying on native grass forage, Ebels’ cattle costs are nearly half of conventional ranchers.

Sandwich lunch in Greenville between field trips (not provided; additional cost).

Hear B.F. Hicks’ tale of how over 900 acres of rare Silveus’ dropseed prairie, family land that dates to the late 1800s, were repaired and restored. The talk will end in the center 50 acres which was grazed and mowed only on July 4th as part of family festivities. It contains spectacular examples of mima mounds and hundreds of plant species, truly evoking the feeling like a primeval prairie. Learn the methods Hicks and his team use to restore and maintain the land, including his newest acquisition of harshly abused and overgrazed prairie.
Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area (LLELA): Wilderness on the Elm Fork

Richard Freiheit, LLELA; Adelaide Bodnar, Elm Fork Chapter

At nearly 2000 acres, Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area (LLELA) is one of the largest and definitely the wildest preserves in North Texas with white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and river otters. Located where the Blackland Prairie and the Eastern Cross Timbers meet, it was once a large swath of neglected Army Corps of Engineers land along the Trinity River Elm Fork. Now it is laced with trails and host to naturalist summer camps. Its extensive native plant greenhouse operations and aquatic plant center train University of North Texas students. Volunteer naturalist crews work weekly to rehabilitate woods and prairie. Hear from center director Kenneth Steigman about the Green Centerpiece Master Strategy and Richard Freiheit, LLELA Restoration Manager, will speak on LLELA’s groundbreaking advances in raising native grasses. Participate in an hour of hands-on volunteering in the greenhouse. After a lunch provided by Friends of LLELA (fee TBA), participants will be driven about the property to see the highlights and learn more about the facility’s rehabilitation efforts. The day concludes with an hour of hiking on participants’ choice of trails or visiting the 1870s Minor-Porter Log Cabin.

EcoPark: Green Infrastructure for the 21st Century

Daniel Cunningham, Texas A&M AgriLife Water University

A guided tour of Benny J. Simpson Ecopark at Dallas’ Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center, created to demonstrate how green infrastructure and resource-efficient building practices contribute to sustainable urban and suburban development. Grounds include a 3-acre rainwater detention pond, a rain garden for stormwater detention, 4 acres of restored Blackland Prairie, more than 140 native Texas plant species, and over 50 historic trees originally planted by the famed Texas A&M horticulturist. A 30,000-gallon rainwater-harvesting and filtering cistern supplies the adjacent landscape. The tour begins in the Ecopark centerpiece, the 10,000 square-foot Water and Land Resources building, with talks by AgriLife’s Daniel Cunningham and Meghan Peoples. The building and many of the trails are ADA.
Field Sessions

Day 1

Friday, October 18th

Escarpment Treasures of Southwest Dallas

Anna Palmer & Tom Willard, North Texas Chapter; Julie Collins, Audubon Texas

A pair of field session experiences in one afternoon. First stop will be at Ceder Ridge Preserve, and then on to Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center. The most popular preserve in Dallas County, the 600+ acre Cedar Ridge Preserve draws over 400,000 visitors a year to its nine miles of trails through a wide range of habitats. Participants will take a guided hike on the Cattail Pond Trail past a Blackland Prairie restoration along an 755-feet escarpment with stunning vistas, then down to loop around the pond. Then up to yet another epic overlook and down to the wooded Trout Lily Trail and the riparian Fossil Valley Trail. Managed by Audubon Dallas on land provided by the city and county of Dallas, it depends on its extensive cadre of volunteers, including Texas Master Naturalists and youth rangers. Led by preserve manager Tom Willard. Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center (DCAC) is the one of the highlights of a wild greenspace corridor. In the center’s striking, LEED-certified C.E. Doolin Visitor Center, hear DCAC director Julie Collins’ inspiring tale of private-public partnership that bloomed from a land gift by avian expert David Hurt into an integral partnership with the City of Cedar Hill whose sustainability plan includes setting aside 20% of the land as green space. Along this greenspace, a hike/bike trail system with native-plant landscaping is being created to link the city of Cedar Hill with nearby DCAC, Cedar Hill State Park, Cedar Mountain and Cedar Ridge Preserves, and Newman International school. Followed by a short walk on the center’s Canyon Floor Trail. A small donation is requested by each location.

Rogers Wildlife Rehabilitation: Saving the Wild Birds of North Texas

Judy Aschner, Rogers Wildlife Rehabilitation

No one is responsible for saving more birds in North Texas than Kathy Rogers. Her nonprofit rescue facility, Rogers Wildlife Rehabilitation, takes in thousands each year, including songbirds, waterfowl, and birds of prey. Kathy will share her story of how she began the facility and some of her most remarkable rehabilitation successes made possible by a squad of devoted volunteers. Meet the wild birds, unable to be released, that now serve as avian ambassadors. Rogers is the focus of North Texas Master Naturalists’ Big Chapter Project for 2019.
**Spring Creek Forest Preserve: Preserving an Uncut Riparian Forest**

**Tom Frey & Dana Wilson; David Parrish, North Texas Chapter**

An old-growth bottomland hardwood forest with some of the oldest (up to 150 years), tallest (over 100 feet tall), and widest (trunks 4 feet across) trees in the county, yet is quite close to commercial and residential developments. The cooperative Spring Creek Preserve consists of the 70-acre county-owned Lee F. Jackson Spring Creek Forest Preserve, and the Garland city owned Spring Creek Park Preserve and Spring Creek Greenbelt: Fred E. Harris section, for a total of about 200 acres, with management support from Preservation Society for Spring Creek Forest. Led by native plant experts Tom Frey and Dana Wilson, participants will visit a Keep Garland Beautiful pollinator garden and explore the eastern part via an ADA paved trail and dirt trails. On the quieter west side centered around a limestone prairie remnant, participants will experience an TMN-designed interpretive trail on both the diverse ecosystems and challenges of suburban nature preserves, plus a local NPSOT demonstration native plant/pollinator garden.

**The Imperiled Wild Cats of Texas at In-Sync**

**Monica Morrison, Texas Native Cats**

An expert-led private tour of In-Sync Exotics, home to over two-dozen mountain lions, also called cougars or pumas. Unlike in most other states, these beautiful big cats are offered no legal protection in Texas. See the elusive nocturnal bobcats who flourish in urban area. With luck participants will get a glimpse of three-legged Quisto, the facility’s shy and rare ocelot, which is endangered in Texas. Each of these wild cats, unable to be returned to the wild, comes with an incredible story of survival and rehabilitation. Led by Monica Morrison, founder of Texas Native Cats, and In-Sync lead volunteers Robert and Karin Saucedo of the Blackland Prairie chapter. **A small donation is requested by In-Sync from participants of this field session.**
Field Sessions

Day 1

John Bunker Sands Wetlands: Cleaning Water, Creating Habitat

**John DeFillipo, John Bunker Sands Wetland Center**

Created from a family ranch, learn how the vision of John Bunker Sands to create a manmade wetlands to purify wastewater using biological methods was brought to fruition by the North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD). A centerpiece of its 2000-acre East Fork Wetlands Project, water it is piped over 43 miles to Lake Lavon, a the primary water source serving the NTMWD area. Experience hands-on water testing and macroinvertebrate collection while learning about water quality and the purification process. Another 1200 acres in the Bunker Sands Mitigation Bank protects Trinity River bottomland forest. Experience the bird, reptile and amphibian wildlife fostered by these habitats, including a pair of nesting bald eagles, through its trails and boardwalks. **Participants will need to bring $10 for entrance.**

Treasures of the Great Trinity Forest

**Bill Coleman, Texas Historic Tree Coalition; Claire Howell, Trinity River Audubon Center**

Travel the Great Trinity Forest with two stops: one at the Trinity River Audubon Center (TRAC), and wrapping up at the Bur Oak Tree at Pemberton’s Big Spring. At the TRAC, a primary entry to the Great Trinity Forest, see Dallas’ river up close in a short hike along the riparian corridor. Take an amble through lush wetlands on boardwalks. See fall wildflowers in a restored Blackland Prairie. Hear the center’s story of creating natural beauty from an illegal waste dump through community involvement. Peruse their stunning LEED building with educational displays on the bioregion and its inhabitants. At Pemberton’s Big Spring, take a walk in the Great Trinity Forest, the nation’s largest urban hardwood forest, with the Texas Historic Tree Coalition, dedicated to highlighting the vital role of large old trees in urban environments. Stand in the shade of the historic Bur Oak, nurtured by Pemberton’s Big Spring. This official historic landmark has served as a camping ground for Native Americans, a source of water for Sam Houston, and fostered the settling of Dallas by the Beeman and Bryant families. Learn of the danger the emerald ash borer may pose to the Great Trinity Forest.
The Wildly Diverse Parks of Southeast Dallas

Amy Martin, North Texas Chapter

Experience three diverse ecosystems in an afternoon along two major tributaries of the Trinity River. At Crawford Memorial Park, with guide Amy Martin hike a loop down to Prairie Creek and back among rippling rust-colored tallgrass seedheads at a pristine 25-acre remnant of Blackland Prairie, and then a short amble to view a Post Oak Savannah. During a very short drive to the upper White Rock Creek watershed, attendees drop by the Comanche Storytelling Place, a multi-tiered escarpment clearing, plus one of the oldest trees in Dallas, with guide Kristi Kerr Leonard. Then explore with Robert Ritchie of Foraging DFW the botanically rich Piedmont Ridge, a large Austin Chalk Escarpment draped in its finest autumn colors. One of the highest points in Dallas, its many vistas overlook the northern end of the Great Trinity Forest.
Field Sessions

Day 2

Saturday, October 19th

National Fossil Day at North Sulphur River

Linda Brinlee, Doug Franklin & PK Kirkpatrick, Boid d’Arc Chapter; Mick Tune, Dallas Paleontology Society

Come and explore one of the nation’s richest fossil beds with experts before it’s flooded to create a lake at Ladonia Fossil Park’s National Fossil Day. You get to keep your finds! North Sulphur River Canyon fossil beds are noted for Cretaceous Period marine mega-fossils such as mosasaurs and plesiosaurs, Ice Age fossils such as mammoths and mastodons, and North American Indian artifacts. Start the day at nearby Fannindel High School with fossil identification table, local fossil displays, and special collectors’ tables (8 am-3pm). Keynote speaker (10 am) is vertebrate paleontologist Nathan Van Vranken, speaking on the wildlife that made their home along the coastlines of Cretaceous period “Texas.” that takes in modern day Ladonia, North Sulphur River, and other famous fossil locations within the state. Followed by (11am-12pm) Mick Tune, member of Dallas Paleontological Society and author, on significant local 2019 finds, PK Kirkpatrick on safety issues on the river, and Doug Franklin on fossil hunting at future Lake Ralph Hall. River exploration from 12 to 2 pm. Attendance is come-and-go for either or both segments.

Pristine Prairies: Clymer Meadow & Paul Mathews Prairie

Brandon Belcher, The Nature Conservancy

A botanical and geological tour of a pair of Texas’ finest Blackland Prairie remnants that also exemplify cooperation between nonprofits and the private sector. The 100-acres of Paul Mathews Prairie is riddled with deep gilgai impressions and is an excellent example of a rare eastern gamagrass-switchgrass-Indiangrass plant community found only on vertisol soils. Mathews attained financial success and returned to purchase his childhood prairie. Native Prairies Association of Texas (NPAT) coordinated private donors to purchase it. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) holds the conservation easement and leads the management. TNC owns Clymer Meadow, but has nearly doubled its original size through adjoining parcels purchased by conservation owners and NPAT. Snack and gas station stop between prairies. If weather and seed maturation permits, participants have an option to collect seed for use in rehabilitation projects at Clymer and other TNC prairies in North Texas.
The Gentle Hills of Collin County: Natural History & Raptor Rehabilitation

Sy Shahid, Heard Natural Science Museum; Erich Neupert, Blackland Prairie Raptor Center; Mike Roome, Blackland Prairie Chapter

At the 289-acre Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary, discover the many ways they instill an appreciation of nature in children through fun and education. Attractions include The Living Lab dioramas of regional ecosystems, Animals of the World displays of rescued wildlife that emphasizes animals’ importance, the Native Texas Butterfly House & Garden, and fossils such as 34-million-year-old tortoises known as Tootsie and Peanut, and a 85-million-year-old mosasaur, a large marine reptile. The interactive Magic Planet provides a 4-ft interactive Earth globe with ecological and geological information. Attendees will be given free time to choose a trail through habitats including Blackland Prairies, wetlands, upland & bottomland forests, and white rock escarpment. The trip concludes with Blackland Prairie Raptor Center which rehabilitates injured birds-of-prey. See the rehabilitation clinic, care enclosures, and flight cages where raptors must prove they can fly and catch mice before being released. Meet the education ambassadors unable to be released back into the wild. Amble the Blackland Prairie restoration, view the lake from a raptor-shaped shelter, and peruse the carbon-sequestration demonstration gardens.

Paddling the Trinity River Elm Fork with Groundwork Dallas

Megan Davis & Aaryaman Singhal, Groundwork Dallas

Once a swath of neglected municipal land inundated by flood-borne trash from the adjacent Elm Fork of the Trinity River, Groundwork Dallas changed that. Made of youth underserved by nature-based activities, and joined by volunteers from other groups, the Green Team has removed tons of trash. Take a float trip from California Crossing Park, location of a pioneer ford of the Elm Fork, to Frasier Dam, ending with a short hike through lush wooded riparian bottomlands. This segment is part of a 127-mile/22 trailhead Trinity River Paddling Trail being considered for inclusion in the National Park Service system, including a possible national recreation area. Possible volunteering opportunity cleaning up segments of the river and surrounding areas.
Field Sessions

Day 2

Saturday, October 19th

**Birding at the Connemara**

*Rodney Thomas*

Explore treasures of the northern Trinity River watershed. Enjoy some morning bird watching, including wetlands species and re-introduced bobwhite quail, at the 72-acre Connemara Meadow in Allen. Its extensive Blackland Prairie restorations and recreations have greatly increased habitat for threatened grassland birds including eastern meadowlarks.

**Geology, Hydrology & Ecology of the Northern Texas Coastal Plain**

*Chris Mathewson, Department of Geology, Texas A&M University; Paul Dolliver, North Texas Chapter; Heather Mathewson, Tarleton University*

This full-day field trip will investigate the interaction between the geology of a site, including bedrock and soil formation; the influence of the geology on the surface, shallow soil and groundwater environment and how the landscape reflects this interaction; and finally the impact of the physical environment on the establishment of the plant, animal, and bird ecology. The trip is intended to provide an overview understanding of the regional environment of the northern Texas coastal plain for Texas Master Naturalists who are not geologists, hydrologists or ecologist, but who are interested in learning about the interaction of these sciences on your environment. The trip will start at the hotel and head west toward Dallas to investigate the rocks of the “Hill Country” that were deposited as the great inland sea was displaced as the North American continent rose from the sea and the land appeared. Erosion and sediment transported from the new continent filled in the shallow sea with marine sand, silt and clay as the coastal plain developed. The final development of the landscape is related to the colder and wetter glacial period in Texas when extreme precipitation, freeze-thaw, and accelerated erosion established the drainage patterns that reflect the impact of the underlying geology of the coastal plain. The ancient rivers were as much as 4 to 9 times larger than their modern size, this creates a series of unique landforms and ecosystems that produced the interesting and exciting environment of the area. It is hoped that participants on this field trip will be able to take their new observational skills home and apply them to teaching, entertainment and enjoyment of their environment by their neighbors at their Chapter. Participants will receive a guidebook and other educational materials as part of the trip.
Native Plants & Prairies of Dallas: Ecosystem Sampler and Lakeside Beauty

Brett Johnson & Lois Diggs, Native Texas Park
Native Texas Park
The 8-acre Native Texas Park recreates in the center of Dallas the Blackland Prairie, Post Oak Savannah, Cross Timbers Forest, and wetlands of Pres. George W. Bush's beloved Prairie Chapel Ranch. Learn more about the ecosystems and the plants they harbor in a guided tour along a one-mile paved ADA trail. Learn of the park’s elaborate hydrology and water conservation methods. Located at the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

White Rock Creek Watershed
On the east flank of White Rock Lake, one of Dallas’ most popular and urban parks, exists about 160 acres of original Blackland Prairie, preserved by being on soil too shallow to farm. Learn of its serendipitous discovery, naturalists’ determination to preserve it, and Dallas Parks & Recreation’s progressive management of these rare parcels and their community involvement programs. Participants will take short walks through a few parcels that boast impressive lake backdrops. A short drive up the White Rock Creek watershed to Harry S. Moss Park to witness the results of large-scale prairie rehabilitation using private contractors and naturalists volunteer labor.
Field Sessions

Day 3 - Post-Event

Sunday, October 20th

Twelve Hills Nature Center: Where Children Learn About Nature

Marcie Haley, Twelve Hills Nature Center

Born from the ashes of crime-ridden apartments, the 5 acres of Twelve Hills Nature Center now provides outdoor classroom activities and vital green space for fast-developing north Oak Cliff. Hear about the center’s partnership with Rosemont Primary from director Marcie Haley. Meet Matilda, a converted school bus that houses outdoor learning for preschoolers. Then enjoy an amble around a recreated Blackland Prairie and experience first hand what Twelve Hills learned from restoration efforts.

Mockingbird Park: A Hidden Gem

Pam Mundo, Charlie Grindstaff, and Eileen Berger Indian Trail Chapter

A 62-acre nature park brought to life by Indian Trails Master Naturalists. Stretch your legs on the way home and enjoy a saunter in Midlothian’s Mockingbird Park. Gentle trails explore the park, going past Girl Scout-installed bluebird houses to circle a large pond. Sit a spell in a Boy Scout-built bird blind or on a Master Naturalist-built bench. Take a boardwalk into a small wooded riparian area. Enjoy demonstration gardens for native grasses and flowers, plus a butterfly garden.

Finding Fossils at Ash Grove Quarry

Francisco Pinto, Ash Grove Cement Company; Elaine Ruby, Indian Trails Master Naturalist

Fossil hunting in quarry cast-offs from cement production. Austin Chalk-Eagle Ford Shale contains marine vertebrate (Cretodus, Ptychodus, Squalicorax), shark teeth, and occasional mosasaur, turtle and fish material.
Kachina Prairie: A Cooperative Venture that Birthed a Wildflower Festival

Jim Patak, Indian Trail Chapter

People were always impressed with the wildflowers in a 30-acre patch on the shore of Lake Clark in Ennis. Then it was discovered to be a rare Blackland Prairie remnant. The original attraction of the Bluebonnet Trails self-driving spring tours, now Ellis County boasts a major county bluebonnet festival. Amble the quarter-mile mowed path through the prairie and enjoy birdwatching (optionally bring binoculars). The prairie is under the stewardship of Texas Land Conservancy, in partnership with Indian Trails chapter and Ennis Garden Club.

Pastures to Prairies: Healing the Land

John Wilt, North Texas Chapter

John Wilt “retired” after 30 years as a pilot for American Airlines and soon became an indefatigable volunteer for North Texas Master Naturalists. Whenever he actually retires, he’ll have a place to retire to: his rehabilitated 108-acre preserve south of Dallas. With skills learned from his naturalist volunteering, Wilt has introduced little bluestem and indiangrass along with plentiful milkweed in a pasture-to-prairie process, while also improving the health of a riparian corridor. A 2019 grant from Texas Parks & Wildlife is taking the rehabilitation to an even higher level. Forbs include unusual species such as spring coralroot orchid and fall spiranthes orchids. Surveys indicate birds are thriving as never before with a confirmed 44 species including pileated woodpecker and grasshopper sparrow. Learn of the passion it takes to heal the land, as well as build a barn-abode with solar panels from scratch.
History & Beauty: The Little Church on the Frankford Prairie

Gary Barton, North Texas Chapter; Kathy Wells Power, Frankford Prairie Preservation Foundation

Kathy Wells Power loved the circa 1897 Old Frankford Church where some of her relatives were interred in its cemetery. When the land ended up in her hands and she sought to improve the grounds, landscape architect Rosa Finsley noticed the presence of a few native plants. Once mowing was halted in one area, they rebounded with vigor. Now thanks to the efforts of native plant experts, the Frankford Prairie Preservation Foundation, and Texas Master Naturalists new monthly workdays, 2.5 acres of Blackland Prairie now flourish around the picturesque church. Though small the prairie boasts exceptional biodiversity. The historic Indian Springs at Hall’s Branch, a feeder of White Rock Creek, still percolates near the ford where pioneer wagons once crossed. Experience the beauty and history of North Texas as it once was.

Biodiversity Education Center at Coppell Nature Park

Judy Parsons, North Texas Chapter

The children of Coppell wanted a nature center to deepen their experiences at the 66-acre Coppell Nature Park. City funds were not sufficient. So they lobbied the city, got approval, and raised money to build the Biodiversity Education Center adjacent to the park. Explore the outstanding facility boasting 96 solar panels and a 9,400-gallon rainwater cistern. Learn about the family festivals, eco-education and gardening classes, guided nature walks, and more that keep people flowing through their doors. A popular choice for field trips for schools from multiple counties and summer camps for kids, it now offers Junior Master Naturalist program to 4th through 6th graders. Afterward, enjoy a short hike at Coppell Nature Park and explore three ecosystems: Eastern Cross Timbers, Blackland prairie, and the riparian wonders of Cottonwood Creek that forms the park’s core.
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Members of the North Texas Chapter
Stalin SM, Carroll Mayhew, Ivan Garcia, Alan Lusk, and Matthew Stepanek

In-Sync Exotics

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