

The GLC Tidings

From the President – Cindy Hobbs



Much has happened in the last few months. We have picked up two big projects, butterfly gardens at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park and at the Brenham ISD Community Education site. Allen and Karen Ginnard are the leads at WOB and Carol Paulson heads the project in Brenham

Continuing to serve as officers for 2016 are Cindy Hobbs, President; Chris Morrison, Treasurer; Deborah Copeland, Secretary (along with Cheryl Karr – not pictured- sharing Secretary duties); and Karen Mahoney-Woods, Vice President.

Our Board includes the following directors and voting members: Advanced Training Director – Dave Redden, Hospitality – Nita Tiemann, Membership – Carol Daniels, Publications – Lori Buffum, Publicity/Outreach – Karen Woods, Training Class – Jerry Gips, Volunteer Service Projects – Cindy Rodibaugh. Thank you all for your involvement in our chapter. Serving on a committee is a great way to get involved with the chapter and put your special talents to work – just ask any board member what you can do to help.

Our new *Chapter Operating Handbook* is almost ready for review by members. Three members labored over it (Cindy Rodibaugh, Lori Buffum, and Christine Morrison) and to be near the finish line is exciting. All members should see it hit their email inbox soon so a vote to adopt the new version can be held at the March chapter meeting.

Our largest-ever Basic Training Course started in January with 28 students and with the hot-off-the-press expanded and revised state curriculum book. I am looking forward to getting to know our new members – some of whom are already involved in our service projects. Many thanks to the Training Committee and Director Jerry Gips.

Check our website often (TXMN.org/glc) for the latest volunteer or advanced training opportunities. Although this winter has been a warm one, I look forward to Spring projects and getting my hands dirty; see you out and about.

Chapter Meeting & Program for March

All members are encouraged to join us at the March chapter meeting which starts at 9 am. on Saturday, March 19, 2016, at the Winedale Meadows Education Center near Round Top.



The program (Advanced Training hours for TMNers) will begin at approximately 11:00 am and is open to the public. The topic for this month is Chagas Disease. To learn more about the threat of Chagas, visit the Texas A&M site: <http://kissingbug.tamu.edu/>.

Winter Activities Keep Us Busy



Bellville: Bellville's 2nd annual Family Science Night was held at the Junior High on February 8 and we were there! Our scat display and bingo game were popular and it was great fun engaging the kids in Texas nature. Thanks to the TMN-GLC team for supporting this event: Lori Buffum, Dave & Jan Redden, Cindy & Tom Hobbs, Kevin Church, Luann & Lefty Yarnold, Tom Yates. We hope to find ways to work with the Bellville schools throughout the year. Watch the chapter website for future opportunities to get involved.



Greenhouse: On February 18, we had another good workday at the Blinn College Greenhouse in Brenham. The crew included Dave Redden, Allen Ginnard, Lefty & Luann Yarnold, Dave & MaryAnn Butler, Donna Mueller, Charlotte Von Rosenberg, Tom Yates. We had planted native forbs and grass seeds on January 20, and a month later found seedlings that had grown significantly, especially the ones under grow-lights so the team got busy bumping up our native milkweed and nectar plants for our pollinator projects. Hopefully these will be ready soon to go to our butterfly gardens

we're planning. Going to have some happy Monarchs in many different locations. Chief TMN Allen Ginnard is closely overseeing the project. A shout-out and gigantic thank you to Blinn for allowing us greenhouse space. There will be lots of opportunities for helpers, not just in the greenhouse, but out digging in the dirt as we develop the gardens at Washington-on-the-Brazos and in Brenham. Watch the chapter website for details.



Monument Hill: We had a fine work day at Monument Hill in La Grange on February 11 (the first of the year). Our mission was to cut berries off nandina plants and chinaberry trees. A big thanks to our volunteers: Cathleen Dunne, Patrick McLaugherty, Martha Philipp & John Dennis, Terry Rooney, Don Sauer, Nita Tiemann, John Wantland and Karen Woods. Most of the group was from our 2016 training class, and we got a great introduction to the park. It turned out there were not very many berries to cut, so we spent a bit of time with plant identification. The group got to appreciate the diversity of this jewel of a habitat. And we got a bonus: park staffer Duncan Grigsby gave us a guided tour of the brewery. And beautiful weather topped it off! Park Superintendent Dennis Smith and Park staffers Duncan, Kenneth and Roger are appreciative of our

assistance. We'll meet again late Spring and the signs for the interpretive trail should be ready soon for installation. The brewery is also getting some improvements. Dennis is planning a grand re-opening of the Park, and we will be involved with a table and acting as docents.

Attwater PC NWR: On January 25, Ron & Mary Ann Peach, Cindy Rodibaugh (not pictured) and Butch Young trimmed the dead foliage off the native grasses and weeded the Attwater display garden. They transplanted excess clumps of Eastern Gamma grass into a reclaimed pasture. There is always lots to do out at the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge in Eagle Lake and Houston Toad monitoring starts soon so watch for opportunities listed on our chapter website.



Advanced Training Workshop: Monarchs and milkweed drew a huge crowd to Winedale on Saturday January 18. Thanks to the Native Prairies Association of Texas and speakers Pat Merkord, Jon Hayes, David Bezanson, and Barbara Willy, attendees learned about how we can all be involved in monarch and milkweed conservation. We were delighted to meet special guests: monarch caterpillars and milkweed sprouts.

Online Volunteer Management System

All TMN chapters are now using the online VMS to log volunteer and advanced training hours. Our chapter Membership Director [Carol Daniels](#) is the contact person for all questions regarding the VMS and she provides new members with a login user name and password. Email her or call her at 979-247-4260.

You CANNOT enter hours that are over 45 days old, so please get in the habit of logging your hours as soon as you can once the activity is over.

Refer to this document for basic step-by-step instructions on using VMS (you will need a user name and password to login): [Intro to the Volunteer Management System](#).

Once you are familiar with the VMS system, you can go directly to the state website: <http://txmn.org/tmn-vms-users/> and then to the login page: <http://txmn.org/tmn-hours-entry/>. Don't forget to bookmark the login page for easy quick access to your logbook.

Photo Gallery

Notice that a bee's "foot" is actually a three-pronged grappling hook type affair. That's how they hang upside down so easily. – Tom Scanio

We would like to establish a FLICKR account for photos by TMN-GLC chapter members. That way, everyone could enjoy sharing their amazing pictures with fellow nature lovers. We need a volunteer to step up and manage that project. Please contact [Lori Buffum](#) if you are interested.





I saw an unusual bird this week, one that Betsy, our birder, said was not common to see in this area. I was in the pasture and noticed what I thought was a branch sticking up in a marshy area, as it was not moving. As I got close enough to use my binocs, I saw that it was a large bird with a sharp bill with its head in the air. When I looked in one of my bird books, it said this bird holds this posture to make suspected predators leave it alone. It is an American Bittern. - *Carol Montgomery*



Red-shouldered Hawk. Absolutely posed for me. Beautiful birds, they have a nest in a very opportune spot on the ranch. Lots of food sources and my best rodent eradicators. – *Donna Mueller*

Split-beard Bluestem (Andropogon ternarius) one of the lower developmental starters for poor soils. Stephen Deiss discussed it in our TMN ECOLOGY training class. Benefits: Attracts birds, provides nesting materials /structure for native bees. – *Donna Mueller*



The Monarchs of New Zealand – Carol Paulson

As many of you know, I have been on a month-long journey to Australia and New Zealand. I have visited many wildlife sanctuaries and have lots of stories to tell about the wildlife and the people. One of the many things I learned while in those countries is that they have Monarch Butterflies! They are believed to have come by ship to Australia and New Zealand as invasives sometime around 1840. They are now considered one of the most beloved insects of both countries; here is what I learned in New Zealand.

I first became aware that the Monarchs were part and parcel of the country while visiting one of the thousands of souvenir shops in New Zealand. A coffee cup with a butterfly on it caught my eye (the image was in black and white) and I turned it over to see if it named the butterfly on the cup and it said, simply, "Monarch". After that I paid more attention to anything to do with insects. During my time in Auckland when my friend and I visited some of her cousins, we were in a parking lot one day when I saw a very strange plant and asked Peter if he knew what it was. Being a naturalist himself, he replied that it was a "Swan Plant" (*Comphocarpus fruticosus*), and that it was food for Monarch Butterflies. I have since learned that 2 other Milkweed plants: Giant Swan Plant (*Asclepias physocarpus*) and Tropical Milkweed-Bloodflower (*Asclepias curassavica*) are widely used to raise Monarchs. The common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), Swamp Milkweed and other members of the milkweed family that we are familiar with are banned in NZ.



Monarchs in New Zealand do not follow the same migration patterns as their North American relatives. They have adapted their migration behavior to suit local conditions. When the air temperature drops to 55 F, monarchs flock together in overwintering sites. These sites tend to be located in milder coastal areas where the temperature remains at least 86 F. They prefer sites that are sheltered from the wind, have trees with a rough bark surface to cling to and have a nearby source of nectar. When temperatures warm up, they move inland to reproduce. Keep in mind that New Zealand consists of 2 islands. We are mainly talking about the northern island since its climate is more temperate. All of New Zealand is only about 103,000 square miles, so we are not talking a huge migration like the one we know, just a few miles.

Because of their coloration and the toxicity they obtain from the Swan Plant, most vertebrate predators stay away, with the exception of the shining cuckoo. However, several invertebrates are threats including the brown soldier bug, praying mantis and Tasmanian paper wasp. The Monarchs dependence on Swan Plants also affects their ability to thrive. New Zealanders are encouraged to plant Swan Plants in their gardens. While New Zealand has very strict laws about invasives coming into their country and will even check your shoes, they seem to enjoy having the Monarch Butterfly, not only nurturing it but also using it as one of their "natural" attractions.



Save the date and start making your plans to join us!

Dragonfly Tales – Lori Buffum



Sometimes, they zoom around in a flock, putting on an airshow as they flit from a quick perch to skim over the water collecting unseen bugs for their meal. Other times they're solitary jewels of color dashing from plant to plant, seldom still long enough for me to get a good look.

I never realized until last summer when I was intent on trying to observe and photograph them, that I've enjoyed these delicate creatures of the sky since I was a small child playing by a stream in the mountains of California. There, I was reassured that "they don't bite" so we let them land on our wet hands and toes, and get a quick drink from our skin.

Spurred on by fellow master naturalists, I now go dragonfly hunting near our pond here in Bellville and revel in the delight of finding Roseate Skimmers, Blue Eyed Darner, and Black Saddlebags Skimmer. I like to call them pink ladies or biplanes or the court jester (the shiny blue-green little guy). Rarely, I can take a quick picture of one at rest and that gives me a chance to look it up, find its proper name and appreciate its place in the order Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies). They are a delightful puzzle of delicate (with wings you can see through) and sturdy (able to fly long distances). How do they do that? Another wonder of nature.

Now I see them anytime we're near water – hitching a ride on our paddleboat in the middle of the lake in Arkansas, resting on my wet hand as I waded out into a lake in Missouri, and skimming around the botanical garden in Canada after the sprinklers have been on.



A special memory: I watched the small pale blue dragonfly stand on the back of my hand as I stood in the water. I could feel her feet clinging to my skin as she padded through the water drops. Her wings were carefully folded and as I gently turned my hand, she repositioned herself to face into the soft breeze. She would take flight momentarily on those gossamer wings then alight once more to explore the landscape of my hand. What a wonderful few moments I had with her.

They are gone now that it is winter but I look forward to Spring when I can hone my dragonfly hunting skills once again and find even more varieties inhabiting our ecosystem. I have a feeling that if I sat very quietly at pond's edge I would be amazed at what I would see – not just more dragonflies of different shapes, colors, sizes and flight patterns (remember that some are called skimmers and some darters), but also their myriad companions of the water world – dragonfly tales to be continued.

Texas Master Naturalist Listserv – A Great Resource

The Texas Master Naturalist Listserv is a communications media hosted by Texas A&M for the Texas Master Naturalist at no charge to provide a means of quickly distributing news, announcements, notification of events, grant opportunities and other items pertinent to Texas Master Naturalists. To sign up for this free service (you may unsubscribe at any time) please visit the State TMN website and follow the instructions: <http://txmn.org/staying-connected/sign-up-for-tmn-listserv/>

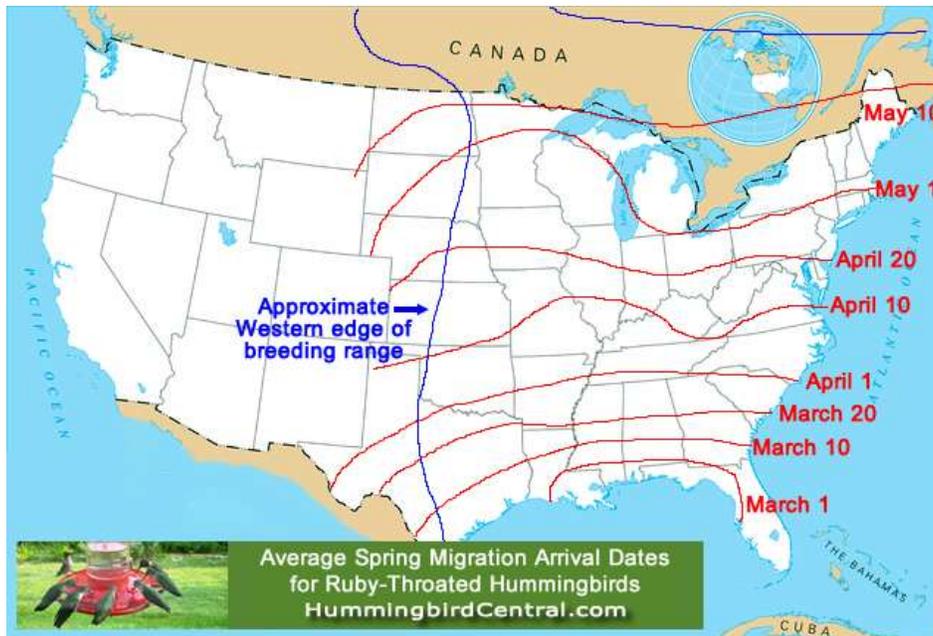
News from the Prairie - Charlotte von Rosenberg



Our very own Quebe Prairie was mowed and baled on December 9, 2015. Native prairie remnants need maintenance too. And it is painful – for humans anyway. Baling and burning are major disturbances for the land and for humans. As owner and steward I take these very seriously. For those who are new to the prairie, Quebe is 12 acres of never been plowed native prairie remnant. These remnants are rare and precious. Quebe Prairie has been a partner with TMN since 2006. Many of you have memories of years past on the prairie. To those naturalists who are new, springtime on the prairie is a time of wildflowers and forbs. Quebe is very diverse with fox glove, downy paint brush, camus plant and other rare species. Prairie tallgrasses are warm season plants blooming in the summer. Get ready for plant identification heaven. Last year's bluebonnets peaked on April 12. Who can predict when bluebonnets will be in full bloom?

April 2 Training Class Prairie Tour

Our 2016 Training Class will have their introduction to plants and prairies on April 2nd. Phillip Shackelford will give a talk on plant ID. He is a great speaker – you are in for a treat. Then, after lunch, at 1:00 pm, class members will meet up with James Schulenberg at the Girls' Place in Burton, TX for a springtime prairie stomp including Blum Prairie and Holt Prairie.



Chapter Resources Keep You Informed

Texas Master Naturalist Website <http://txmn.org/> - the state website

Gideon Linccum Chapter Website <http://txmn.org/glc> - visit often for event listings and more; no login required

TMN – GLC Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/21969044537/> - find us on Facebook and ask to join

The GLC Tidings newsletter is published 6 times a year. Submit articles and photos to Editor [Lori Buffum](#).