

Gideon Lincecum Chapter Texas Master Naturalist™ NEWS



December 2014, January 2015 Newsletter

From the President:

One of the topics at the TMN Annual Conference, was ***Pet Waste Management***, and as I am involved in pet rescue organizations and all things Dachshund, this peaked my interest. What I learned.....

Pet Waste Management

One government report estimates there are about 1.2 million dogs in the 16 county North Central Texas region. The Food and Drug Administration estimates the average dog produces three-quarters, of a pound of waste each day. In North Texas that's about 1 million pounds of daily dog waste.

Pet waste can and does lower the quality of water and health. In urban areas most pet waste is washed into open waters through storm flows. Because housing, business, and road development covers land with impervious surfaces, less rainfall is absorbed in the soil and the rainwater runs off into our waterways.

Just a few of the diseases transmitted to humans are:

- Campylobacteriosis – causes diarrhea in humans
- Cryptosporidium – a parasite that can be fatal to humans
- Toxocariasis – Roundworms

Leaving pet waste to decay in the yard can benefit plants when microorganisms break down the waste which is then used by plants. However, pet waste left near areas of water flow – such as medians along roads and storm sewers, or areas near lakes, waterways, ditches and drainage ways should be picked up and disposed of properly. Pet Waste and Water Quality, recommend three ways to properly dispose of pet waste.



1. Flush it down the toilet, waste only - no cat litter.
2. Bury it in your yard, 5 inches deep away from water flow areas.
3. Throw it in the trash.

With this knowledge, educate others and let's strive to keep our waterways pet waste free.

Christmas Party Information - Sunday, December 14th, 2014, at 4:00pm

Our Vice President (Karen Mahoney-Woods) has graciously offered to host the party at her residence. She lives on 20+ acres and invites our members to walk her property practicing plant identification etc., prior to the start of the party. Her address is 7080 Race Track Road, La Grange, TX 78945. Phone number (281) 682-2810. The party starts at 4:00pm, the meat will be provided by the chapter and we request you bring a side dish or dessert.

A gentle reminder, dues payments are approaching. Renewal will be \$20 a person.

I wish everyone a happy, safe Christmas Season and New Year.

Cindy Hobbs



[Attwater Christmas Bird Count](#)

Contributed by Cindy Rodibaugh

The Attwater's Christmas Bird Count, in Eagle Lake, Texas will be held on Wednesday, December 17, 2014. Join us for a wonderful opportunity to bird the Refuge. This event is open to all birders and is one of the highest in-land Christmas Bird Counts, for diversity, in the Country. A hot dinner will be provided, at the Refuge, to all participants following the event. If you are interested in participating, please contact: Sumita Prasad at sumita@alumni.utexas.net

[The Secret's In The Soil](#)

Contributed by Charlotte von Rosenberg

Featuring: "The Rainulator" Video

On Friday November 14, 2014 the [Wildlife Habitat Federation's Third Annual Field Day & 10 Year Anniversary](#) event was held at the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge near Sealy. That's www.whf.org A group of naturalists, conservationists and landowners including TMN-GLC members Dave Redden, Bert and Wilda Pecore, Carolyn and Keith Hale, Cindy Rodibaugh and I gathered in a large

metal building in the bitter early morning cold. Chill factor – about 20 degrees. Space heaters and fellowship warmed the place up quickly. Phillip Shackelford of Texas AgriLife was the coordinator of this very informative event. In his opening remarks he said that the good attendance in cold weather showed the high level of interest in Soil Health and Native Grasses. No kidding! The subject was **Soil Health Benefits of Native Grasses for Conservation and Agriculture**. The key words here were Soil Health. Mr. Willy Durham, Biologist, of NRCS gave a 10 minute demonstration of water absorption on Tilled and on No-Tilled soil that conveyed a graduate course worth of information. Here is a link to that demonstration <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1aR5OLgcc0>. In short, there should be no bare soil and no run-off. This leads into another conversation for another day on COVER CROPS.

If you are interested in Chemistry and the molecular world, as in nitrogen, carbohydrates, bacteria, carbon, then Soil Biology is for you. The NRCS website www.NRCS.gov is where you can find anything you want to know about SOIL and other important information like the Guide to the new Farm Bill Conservation Programs and EQIP landowner assistance programs. Many of you already know this site from its user-friendly Web Soil Survey tool. NRCS originated in 1935 during the Dust Bowl era as the Soil Conservation Service under the US Dept. of Agriculture. There is an office in Brenham with Ben Garcia, Biologist.

Ken Blezinger and Jim Willis of the WHF discussed planting natives for restoration and wildlife corridors. Another startling visual is the grass roots in the photo. These native grasses were grown in tubes to illustrate extensive roots that help carry rainwater deep into the ground.



A delicious hot lunch of baked chicken leg quarters was enjoyed by one and all.

Volunteering On the Prairie Is A Learning Experience

Contributed by Cindy Rodibaugh

Fall is my favorite time of year. The light is indirect and bright. The air is crisp and clean, especially after a rain. There's a cool nip in the breeze from the north. The prairie grasses bloom and sway in the breeze like waves on the sea. It's wonderful to be outside!

On Saturday, November 1, 2014, I attended a workshop at Quebe Prairie given by the NRCS Plant Materials Center in Kingsville, TX, to review 'when is the right time to harvest seed'?



In addition to bringing several seed collections, the brochure they provided stated, “The optimum time for seed harvest is the hard dough and mature stage. Seed harvested in this stage tend to be filled, will survive the curing process, and will germinate when planted”. Got it? I’m still trying to figure it out!! :)

On my way home, I stopped at a culvert just west of Brenham and collected Knotroot Bristlegrass and Bushy Bluestem. On a different day, closer to my home, I collected Yellow Indian grass and Sideoats Grama seed heads. Are they filled? Will they germinate? Even after attempting to proof the seed heads using the demonstrated field methods I had just learned, I am not confident the seeds I collected will produce plants.

On November 12th I had the privilege of transplanting Eastern Gama Grass at Attwater Wildlife Refuge. Rebecca Chester, a facility Biologist, during the spring months provided volunteers with lists of plants to collect for the herbarium and Ferris Calderon, Wildlife Specialist, directed the recent grass transplanting activities. What fun to volunteer with the experts and learn!

Two days later, I was back at Attwater for The Wildlife Habitat Federation’s Third Annual Field Day to learn about soil health for native grasses. Machinery to collect and plant native grass seed was demonstrated. This is what a seed drill looks like:



‘The Perils of Planting!’



The more I expose myself to the prairie, the more plants I am able to recognize. Visiting Attwater several times over different seasons this year has provided me the opportunity to see plants in different stages. I actually feel like I'm making progress with identifications. I actually recognize several grasses and wild flowers—now, the challenge is remembering their names☺. One of my favorites is Wild Plains Indigo—it's toxic but beautiful! Prairie Indigo blooms yellow in the

spring and leaves turn a distinct grey in the fall.

The prairie is especially beautiful this time of year. The colors of maturing grasses and prairie plants remind me of the colors displayed in the fall forests of the northeast U.S.—reds, yellows, gold, greens, greys, browns, and even white! Capturing the essence of the prairie in a photo is like trying to capture the awesomeness of the Grand Canyon! There is so much to learn from such a diverse landscape!

I want a native prairie in my back yard!



[Adopt-a-Highway Clean Up News](#)

Contributed by Marianne Butler



David and I have spent way too much time taking care of our house in Ohio. A tree fell on it in February and ever since then we have been coming back up here to take care of numerous other things not related to the tree that we never got around to since we moved 4 years ago. We have spent at least half of our time up here, and have missed all things going on with TMN-GLC in the past several months. We are looking forward to being back in Texas most of the time from now on.

We hope to have another roadside cleanup early in December if weather permits.

Two Master Naturalists Look At the Time They Spent at Annual Meeting



As a first time attendee, I loved the beautiful location and diverse subject matter offered throughout the conference. The “Update on the TMN Bylaws,” and the “Get Social, Tips and Training using Facebook and other Social Media,” was especially informative. The “Backyard Habitat Certifications”, presented by Molly Harris, was insightful and fun. The “Citizen Scientist and Invasives Program”, was one of my favorites. I brought back several handouts that I hope to copy and distribute to our chapter. The educators were friendly, knowledgeable, and forthcoming. I learned so much and had a great time doing it. I truly recommend this conference for all TMN

members.

My favorite part of the conference was interacting with other likeminded people from all over the state. Having several members of our chapter in attendance was a big plus, thank you Lori Buffum fellow road warrior and bunkhouse mate, and the Peaches for the great company. I would love to see more GLC members in attendance next year, you won’t regret it. I wouldn’t miss it.

The silent auctions are always fun, I came home with several native plants, seeds and a framed picture of a squirrel (my backyard nemesis). I hope I can sprout the mountain laurel seeds I won, but it’s not as easy as you might think. I picked up the best plant ID book from a vendor for only \$20, it was the deal of the weekend.

Lastly, if you have never been to the Mo Ranch, I highly recommend it. It’s a beautiful place, and family oriented. I can’t wait till spring so we can visit with the grandchildren.

Cindy Hobbs

A few of my favorite things about the TMN Annual Conference:

- Spending time with traveling buddy and bunkmate, Cindy Hobbs, our chapter president.
- Walking along the banks of the Guadalupe River at Mo Ranch on a plant ID walk.
- Sharing meals with fellow master naturalists from far and wide.
- Watching Monarchs flitter through the trees and rest on their migration south and being fascinated to watch a team at work tagging individual butterflies.



- Basking in the celebration of all that master naturalists have accomplished in the state in the last 15 years. (TMN volunteers dedicated almost 350,000 service hours just in 2013 and those numbers keep going up.)
- Being able to choose from myriad advanced training sessions and finding each one interesting and well-presented. (I chose Regaining Your Sense of Place in Your Bioregion, Driven to Discover: Citizen Science and Youth, Backyard Habitat Certification – One Woman’s Story, Identifying Native Plants Walking Tour, Grab their Attention to Make Programs Memorable, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management.)
- Seeing and sharing hugs with fellow chapter attendees MaryAnn and Ron Peach and Tom Yates.
- Shopping for deals at the bookstore and silent auction.
- Getting up early and bundling up in the crisp autumn air watching the sun rise in time for breakfast.
- Glimpsing a gray fox crossing the road as we drove back down to our bunkhouse under a clear starry sky.
- Learning lots of little tidbits about our natural world from naturalists willing and eager to share their particular passions.



I loved every minute of the conference and I hope everyone in our chapter has an opportunity to go and experience this wonderful gathering of kindred spirits.

Lori Buffum (*tickled that my name badge noted “First Year Certification”*)

[Walking in the Woods Today](#)

Contributed by Carol Paulson

October 28 - Today I volunteered to join other Master Naturalists and students from Blinn and Texas A&M to help work in the “Outdoor Classroom” for Brenham ISD 5th grade students. I’ve done Outdoor Classroom many times before, but this year it is changing somewhat under the direction of Outdoor Classroom Specialist at BISD, Natalie James.

The segment I got to do today was entitled “Ecosystems”. It was so much fun. First, we talked about what ecosystems were. We talked about what those living in ecosystems need: the inter-relationship of plants and animals, plants and plants, and animals and plants. Then we went for a walk in the woods to see if we could find some of those things. We went in groups of 2 or 3 and each group had a camera to document what they found. We saw things that the animals could eat, such as beautyberries and

greenvine. We found evidence of deer by looking at how the greenvine had been eaten and also finding deer droppings. We saw a large stand of little bluestem and talked about what animals might eat the seeds and what kind of animals might use it for habitat. We even found a large mound of bluestem that an animal probably used for a bed last night.

We found bird nests and lots of snags. Some snags were full of bugs and we could hear woodpeckers working nearby. We saw one deer in the first class early in the morning. Later we saw a rabbit. Best of all, the last class of the day found a fresh snake skin – it was still wet. Miss Faith made us all wait on the porch near the area in case the snake was still around. After she had investigated, she carefully picked up the snakeskin and brought it for us to see. While we usually leave things in the woods where we find them, this particular find was approved by Ranger Nutt to be saved and shown to future classes.

After each walk, the children wrote in their journals to let other citizen scientists know what they had seen, smelled, felt and heard on our hike. The pictures in their cameras went back to their classrooms so that they could review what they had seen and talk about it some more.



We always need more volunteers with this project and it should have people waiting in line – it's just such a great time. To those of you who say that you would rather do this program in your own school districts than travel all the way to Lake Somerville for a day,

please volunteer with us a time or two to see how we work and how great the programs are. They you can go back to your school districts knowing how to get programs like this started in your own neck of the woods. See you in the Spring!



Dues for 2015 are due in January. \$20 per person. You can bring your dues to the December Christmas Party or the January Chapter meeting or you can mail them to cindy, Hobbs, 306 Rolling Hill Dr., La Grange, TX 78945

A Discovery in the Woods

Contributed by Lori Buffum



Thanks to the keen eyes of the 5th graders in the last group to hike with us on Tuesday, we spotted a rare, endangered flower unique to this area of Texas. The flower is called Navasota's Ladies Tresses and is actually in the orchid family. Scientific name is *Spiranthes parksii*.

Once the kids pointed it out to me, I recognized it because I had seen it on our property in Bellville and a fellow master naturalist had helped me identify it so I could research it further.

Congrats to the kids for finding this little treasure in the woods. We'll look for it again on Friday and see how it's progressing. And, by the way, I know several of the kids took pictures of the plant so we can look for it on the cameras.

Learn more here: http://www.centerforplantconservation.org/collection/cpc_viewprofile.asp?CPCNum=4079



CALENDAR FOR THE NEXT MONTH OR 2?

Make sure you mark all of these on your calendar. Each opportunity here will increase your knowledge as a Master Naturalist. (The camaraderie is a big bonus too!) These are in date order:

Sunday, December 14 - Sunday, December 14th, 2014, at 4:00pm

Our Vice President (Karen Mahoney-Woods) has graciously offered to host the party at her residence. She lives on 20+ acres and invites our members to walk her property practicing plant identification etc., prior to the start of the party. Her address is 7080 Race Track Road, La Grange, TX 78945. Phone number (281) 682-2810. The party starts at 4:00pm, the meat will be provided by the chapter and we request you bring a side dish or dessert.

Attwater's Christmas Bird Count - Eagle Lake, Texas - Wednesday, December 17, 2014. Contact Sumita Prasad at sumita@alumni.utexas.net if you are interested in attending.

January 1-10 - Please turn in your Volunteer and AT hours to Carol Daniels at glcmembershipcommittee@hotmail.com before January 10. This is our last chance to get credit for all the good work we have done in 2014.

January 17, 2015 – Chapter meeting, 9AM at Winedale

Some of our Recent Activities

At the Master Naturalist Conference



Lindheimer Muhly Grass at Mo Ranch



Ladies Tresses at Nails Creek State Park

