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Our Mission

Volunteers dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources through education, outreach and service in our community.

2020-2021 Officers

President, Betsy Palkowsky
 Vice President, Mark Brown
 Secretary, Linda Esco
 Treasurer, Pam Green

From the President – Betsy Palkowsky

The new year is already flying by with our chapter members working on a variety of projects since it's been like Spring most of the January and February. The pollinator gardens are in bloom and the BSD activities are in full swing. The 2020 training program is off to a great start with 24 new members in-training getting their introduction to the world of Texas Master Naturalists.



2020 Training Class began in January



John and Karen Gardner, Directors of Training

It's great to see the enthusiasm for our program as some of the new members-in-training have already volunteered to help on a couple of projects. They are seeing we're always learning, teaching and doing something to make a difference in our community and giving back to the Texas Master Naturalist™, [Texas Parks and Wildlife](#) and [Texas Agrilife](#) organizations. Visit our [events calendar](#) to see all of the upcoming volunteer, field trips and advanced training opportunities.

Chapter Meeting and AT

You are invited to attend the chapter meeting being held Saturday, March 21, 2020, 9:30-11:00pm, at the Winedale Historic Center 3738 FM 2714, Round Top, TX 78954. Advanced Training is from 11:30 - 1:30pm. Please see information below regarding the Ducks Unlimited program that is being offered.



Taylor Abshier, a biologist with Ducks Unlimited Inc., will present information regarding the Texas Prairie Wetland Project, waterfowl life cycle, various waterfowl, wetlands, and wetland management for wintering waterfowl. Taylor graduated from Texas A&M University Kingsville (2015) with a degree in Range and Wildlife Management.

Taylor's work at Ducks Unlimited has been to grow the Texas Prairie Wetland Project. Through stewarding relationships with ranchers, farmers, and private landowners along the Texas Gulf Coast he helps to create, restore, and enhance wetlands for breeding and wintering waterfowl. He also collaborates extensively with State, Federal, and NGO partners to continue to fund and deliver these critical habitats in an ever changing and developing landscape.

Who are the Pollinators?, by Betsy Palkowsky

I'm working on a decent guide about pollinators and pollinator gardens to be used at Winedale or anywhere else our chapter members want to use it. Here is a small part of what I have done so far. Stay tuned for the May Newsletter and I'll have more to share.

There are many different pollinators throughout our area. Some of these are: ants, bats, bees, beetles, birds, butterflies, flies, moths, wasps, and other unusual pollinators such as mosquitos and anoles.



Pollinators visit flowers in search of food, mates, shelter and nest-building materials. Sugars in nectar, and the proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals from pollen grains provide the energy needed for pollinator growth, metamorphosis, flight and reproduction. The relationship between pollinators and plants goes back millions of years. Without this relationship there wouldn't be many plants or pollinators. Additionally, humans would have been limited fruits and vegetables to eat because 80% of flowering plants and over ¾ of staple crop plants depend on pollinators.

<p style="text-align: center;">BEEES</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There are nearly 4,000 species of native ground and twig nesting bees in the U.S. ➤ Bees tongues of varying lengths help determine which flowers they can obtain nectar and pollen from ➤ Bees are so effective and useful as pollinators because their body is close to the ground and very wide. Their physical characteristics also make it extremely easy to collect pollen across their entire body and transport it between flowers
<p style="text-align: center;">BETLES</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Beetles are especially important pollinators for ancient species such as magnolias and spicebush ➤ They will eat their way through petals and other floral parts. They even defecate within flowers ➤ As they wander between different flowering plants they collect pollen all over their bodies and drop the pollen as they go ➤ Beetle pollinated plants tend to be large, strong scented flowers
<p style="text-align: center;">BUTTERFLIES</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Butterflies work during the day with their long legs and different body structure collecting and depositing pollen as they go ➤ They are attracted to different types of flowers and are not as efficient at pollinating flowers as bees ➤ Some of their unique characteristics make them perfect for some flowers such as the firecracker plant. The flowers of this plant are very slender and tubular and hang at a variety of angles. Without the pollination from butterflies, this plant may not exist today
<p style="text-align: center;">FLIES</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Flies prefer plants that are pale and dull to dark brown or purple, sometimes flecked with translucent patches ➤ They are also attracted to putrid smelling plants ➤ Some species of mosquitoes pollinate certain orchids ➤ Flies, such as syrphids, masquerade as bees and wasps ➤ And if it weren't for midges there would be no chocolate. Midges are attracted to smell of the cocoa tree flowers. In order to bear fruit, they need midges to pollinate them.

<p style="text-align: center;">MOTHS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Most moths are out during the night where they aren't competing with the daytime pollinators ➤ Moths are attracted to flowers that are strong, sweet smelling, open in late afternoon or night, and are typically white or pale colored ➤ They prefer nectar that is deeply hidden, such as in a morning glory
<p style="text-align: center;">HUMMINGBIRDS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hummingbirds pollinate plants as they thrust their bills deep into a flower collecting pollen on their bills and feathers. Each subsequent plant they visit gives a little pollen, similar to how butterflies and moths pollinate plants ➤ Its unique ability to fly backwards, forwards and even upside-down as well as hover enables hummingbirds to pollinate plants with long tubular blossoms which are difficult for other pollinators to get to ➤ Hummingbirds are most attracted to red, pink, yellow, and orange blooms, and flowers may have solid colors or patterns to catch their attention

Resources

- <https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/animals/>; <http://birdsandblooms.com>; Pollinator Partnership™, www.pollinator.org and North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) www.nappc.org

Monument Hill Update, by Karen Woods

A huge thanks to our volunteers who came to tackle the KR Blue Stem daring to show itself on Monument Hill. It didn't have a chance! And the weather was outstanding! We had rookies David & Lori Hessel and Ellen Morris. This was one of their first volunteer jobs. Also helping were our veterans Ron & Mary Ann Peach and Annette Holdeman. It was good to see Park employee, Kenneth Coleman, again who in addition to helping pulling KR clusters, enhanced our appreciation for the Park by telling us about its rich history. It turns out there were more sites than originally documented and, alas there is another pretty strong cluster near the Kreische home. I think we're going to torch this batch. If anyone has suggestions of how else to eradicate, please let me know.



Youth Education Projects Keep Volunteers Busy, by Lori Buffum

“Cubs in Nature” kicked off part III on January 31 at Brenham Elementary with 3rd and 4th graders. Three stations were run by TMNers: learning about birds, meeting feral hogs, and practicing journaling. Thanks to Jim Wilson, Jaci Elliot, Peggy Cadenhead, Ellen Morris, Judith Deaton, and Lori Buffum. Come join us for the next Friday series beginning March 6! There are so many ways you can get involved with youth education this Spring – check out the events calendar on our chapter website.



Family Science Nights – An Annual Tradition

February 10th was the 5th year for our chapter to participate as an exhibitor at the Bellville Family Science Night - such fun with Jim Wilson, Jon Watkins, Annette Holdeman, Lori Hessell, Ann Ray, Lori Buffum, and Linda Esco and her new Bug Bingo. (And the 3rd year to participate at Flatonia on February 6, coordinated by Cindy Rodibaugh and her crew.) We have learned that Giddings started a similar event this year so we hope to add that to our calendar next year.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD...

“A few weeks ago, while assisting Dr. Jim Wilson (in front of a class of third grade students at Krause Elementary) during his terrific presentation on feral hogs, I had to stifle a chortle when he spoke about the pigs carrying dangerous diseases such as the bubonic plague, and one girl responded by raising her hand to ask “what is the blue bonnet plague?” As Art Linkletter opined...kids say the darnedest things!” Jaci Elliot



Beautiful SFA Bluebonnets before the bloom

FIRST DAY HIKE

Gideon Lincecum volunteers along with over 80 new friends and TPWD volunteers started the New Year off on the right foot on January 1 for the annual First Day Hikes (FDH). FDH is a program of free, guided hikes offered by the fifty state park systems of the United States each year on New Year's Day. Participants are invited to savor the beauty of their state park's natural resources with the comfort of an experienced guide, so they may be inspired to take advantage of these local treasures throughout the year.

Throughout the morning our team led two separate groups along the upper trails where we took note of the various types of plants and trees in this big ecosystem. After a quick family photo and selfie time at the Brazos River Scenic Overlook we ventured down into the rich bottomland forest of the Brazos River. Here we were able to compare the foliage and fauna to that which we noted at the beginning of the trek. Of interesting note was the high water marks 30+ feet up the native Cottonwood trees. The watermarks provide a glimpse of how high the river rose during the hurricane Harvey flood event almost 3 years ago. A few equipped hikers were also able to log a Geocache along the way.

After returning to the trailhead where the adventure began we all reminded each other Happy New Year, congratulated our Jr. Rangers and patted ourselves on the back for a job well done. Many of the enthused hikers, thirsty for more, continued their adventure and kept on hiking into the afternoon.

Stephen F. Austin State Park Wildscape Interpretive Garden



Signs of a new year are emerging at the chapter's, Wildscape Interpretive Garden. 2020 will be the second full year for one of the chapter's latest projects. We are excited to see how the native annuals behave this year after a colorful spring in 2019. Newly added native perennials are eager to educate the public on their origin and purpose.

Volunteers met for a quick clean up in February to rid the beds of the deadfall from winter. Already prevalent was the hearty Bluebonnets emerging. It was interesting to note that the Bluebonnets were coming up only in the areas of the poorest soil conditions! The next phase in building up the project will be designing, creating and placing the interpretive signage at the site.

Moving forward we hope that chapter members will be able to participate in this highly visual Texas Master Naturalist project. Over ten thousand children and adults visit Stephen F. Austin State Park annually. The Gideon Lindecum Chapter's Wildscape Interpretive Garden is located directly in front of the park's headquarters building, main office and park store.

Save the date: Monday May 4, 2020 is Graduation Day for the 2020 Training Class. The whole chapter is invited to come and celebrate.

New Landowner Education Program for 2020 by Kara Matheney MS, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, County Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources



As land fragmentation and the urban sprawl from the Houston-Austin corridor continues to impact the multi-county area, new landowner issues are regularly identified by members of local Program Area Committees and through Community Futures Forums. New landowners in the area seek opportunities to learn more about land and resource management as they embrace owning property with the potential to engage in an agricultural or wildlife endeavor. These landowners are typically generationally removed from being involved in agriculture or land management and seek information to help them improve their properties and thus improve their lives.

Based on the identified need for education and support, County Extension Agents in Austin, Colorado, Fayette, and Washington Counties developed a series of educational programs for new landowners to provide them with information on a variety of topics related to agricultural production and natural resource management. The topics are selected with four goals in mind:

1. assist landowners in gaining or maintaining the tax valuation in agriculture or wildlife,
2. provide education on viable agricultural endeavors to help maximize production and/or value of their land,
3. provide education on resource management and conservation as it relates to proper land stewardship, and

4. deliver a basic understanding of agricultural practices that improve agriculture literacy.

The course schedule and topics are identified based on survey feedback from the previous year's course, clientele feedback through County Extension Offices, input from local Central Appraisal District Advisory Boards, and from members of the Multi-County Ag Committee.

The 2020 Multi-County New Landowner Education program is a series of 8 informational meetings, seminars, and field days designed to make new landowners in Austin, Colorado, Fayette, & Washington Counties aware of what types of agricultural enterprises are best for their property. Participants in the program will hear from experts in a variety of fields in agriculture about best management practices that can be implemented on their own property. This innovative program assists new landowners in understanding the concepts of rural living. Participants in the program are given exposure to ideas on raising livestock and horses, plant identification, fence building, applying pesticides, soil testing, stock pond management, pond construction, fruit and nut production, rainwater harvesting, turf management, and much more. The program also serves as a way for new residents of the four counties to network and meet new people in their communities, find out what can be done on their land, what operations can be successful, and possibly what opportunities they have to serve the community.

The programs will be held on the third Friday of the months of February through May and August through November. Each month's meeting will be held at different locations in one of the four counties. The meetings begin at 1:30pm and will last between 4 and 5 hours depending on the topic and possible tour stops. The cost for the program series is \$125.00 per person, \$200.00 per couple for all eight meetings, \$20.00 per person per meeting. Continuing Education Units (CEU's) for pesticide applicators will be offered as they are applicable.

February 21st – Introduction and Program Overview – Ag & Wildlife Valuations
March 20th – Pond Management – Construction, Aquatic Weed Control, and Stocking
April 17th – Weed & Brush Control – Plant Identification and Control Recommendations for Common Weeds and Brush
May 15th – Forage &/or Livestock Production – Options for Small Acreage Operations
August 21st – Bees and Trees for Homeowners
September 18th – Horticulture Production – Fruit Trees, Pecans, and Grapes for Landowners
October 16th – Wildlife Management and Native Prairie Restoration
November 20th – Emerging Issues for Rural Landowners

A great selection of refreshments will be provided at each session. Participants who sign up for the entire series will receive a notebook at the beginning of the series to fill as we progress through the program with handouts and reference material that will be useful as they move forward with improvements on their property. Please use this contact kjmatheney@ag.tamu.edu or by phone (979) 277-6212 for questions or interest.

Indian Creek Nature Area, by Ann Ray

7 volunteers X 2 hours = 4 large loads of invasive Ligustrum to the burn pile behind the old cotton gin at Indian Creek in Burton. Thanks to Kathe Forrest and Peggy Cadenhead who joined us for the first time. Tom and Susan Scanio, Judith Deaton, Marty S, and Bob and Ann Smith Ray, rounded out the group. Kathy and Judy worked hard in the humidity removing debris of the pollinator garden beds. Bob had the “biggest” catch of the day. Two new signs were left to advertise our trail. We had lunch at the White Horse Saloon with Carol Montgomery of our first GLC class and she has agreed to make some more signs to direct visitors to the Nature Trail. Small wildflowers everywhere! The bees were a buzzin’ and we enjoyed these tiny Anemones and Dandelions too! A big thank you to Kathy, Judy, Bob, Peggy Tom, Susan!



The city has requested more signage since big crowds for the MS 150 will be rolling through Burton in May. Aren't we glad Carol Montgomery has agreed to make some new signs? I tried my hand at using a router, but it would take more practice and patience I don't have to make professional looking signs.

Earthstars, by Judith Deaton

It's a fresh misty morning and the resurrection plants on the venerable live oak uncurl in the dew. A wagging invitation to play lures you out in your cozy fleece, phone and coffee in hand, to survey your weekend landscaping efforts. Snuffling in the leaf litter Fluffy bounces sideways in snake discovery mode and there in the grass is a sick, rigid tarantula. Arming yourself with the long armed thingy you use to get frisbees out of the trees, you poke tentatively at the dark brown leggy critter. No movement and sadly one must assume it has expired. Reaching for your rusty spade you scoop up the sad little corpse and it rolls off. Not tarantula. When you take it inside and leave it on the counter, it suddenly curls up into a little ball. Very, very weird. It seems neither plant nor animal nor insect nor comes from the hardware store so time to Google. Brown...stiff...puffy center.... fungus?

“Earthstar fungus has a friendly relationship with a variety of different trees, including pine and oak, as the fungus helps the trees absorb phosphorus and other elements from the earth. As the tree photosynthesizes, it shares carbohydrates with the fungus.”



Hmmmm. It's way too dry in here!



Drop it into water and watch what happens!

So, the curious Master Naturalist in us just has to know...Phylum: *Basidiomycota*, Class *Agaricolycetes*, Order *Geastrales* Family *Geastraceae*. There are 120 different **Geastrums** according to a 2014 DNA study. (Fungi are regularly going through classification changes.)

The Geastrums are a soil fungus that appears generally as tough gray-brown balls enclosed by a skin with four layers of tissue. The outer tissue splits open forming a four part star shape and exposing a spore case. Inside this case is the gleba or fertile spore producing a pale tissue that turns brown and powdery as it ages. They are generally interrelated with bacteria and some have antimicrobial properties. The fruits last a few weeks, but the underground hyphae may last years. They act as barometers and can sense humidity. They fruit after rain showers in late summer and autumn.

Other related fungi are the Chanterelles (Canthartellales) and some toothed fungi. Another genera is the large, puff ball-like Myriostoma (the spore bearing sac splits open when rain water hits it dispersing spores), they are saprophytes found in organic matter (chemically digest plant matter) and grow in groups in well-drained soils and in the understory. They like southern slopes and are rarely found in North America.

Finally, Sphaerobolus or “shotgun fungus or cannonball fungus” has spore sacs that are sticky and explode. They are small (1-3 mm) and white to beige. The outer part of the fungus ball is called the exoperidium or outermost layer of the ball. It splits open to expose the spore sac called a peridiole. This is launched leaving the endoperidium or innermost layer.

Earthstars are all incredible. Most have a pinhole in the peridiole that shoots forth spores and are usually found on mulch, decaying wood and dung or in leaf litter (For Examples—see chart below). The takeaway is that there is so much more to learn about these interesting fungi. Kids love to watch them open and close and they are all tree huggers.

<p>Geastrum fornicatum</p>		<p><i>Acrobatic earthstar</i> that looks like the figure of a person once it opens – it can be up to an inch in diameter – commonly found under cypress trees</p> <p><i>*photo by Michael Wood</i></p>
<p>Geastrum quadrifidum</p>		<p><i>Rayed earthstar</i> that is uncommon and occurs in the litter of coniferous forests</p> <p><i>*photo by freenatureimages.eu</i></p>
<p>Geastrum triplex.</p>		<p><i>Collared earthstar</i> that measures up to 4.7 inches and has a world-wide distribution</p> <p><i>*photo by viking_77 - Flickr</i></p>
<p>Geastrum rufescens</p>		<p><i>Rosy earthstar</i> with a beige to rosy colored exoperidium and rays</p> <p><i>*photo by Ralf Carlsson</i></p>
<p>Geastrum berkeleyi</p>		<p>Berkley’s earthstar is non hygroscopic – its rays do not respond by opening when it rains – found in Europe and Asia</p> <p><i>*photographer unknown</i></p>

Washington on the Brazos Workdays, by Julie and David Itz

Sheri Wilcox worked alone in the GLC Pollinator Garden at Washington-on-the-Brazos in January, but she made great progress trimming back the cherry sage to promote more even growth.

At the February workday, Steve Thompson, Gerri Hanten, Sheri Wilcox and David & Julie Itz cut back the dead wood in the garden. The dead stalks were left in stacks to provide shelter to insects while the garden is still dormant. The early native perennials, annuals and biennials are already popping up.

We planted a Texas wisteria, a coralberry and a skeleton leaf goldeneye. The first Bluebonnet bloom of the season was right below the TXMN GLC sign! And of course, little Ragweeds were already making an appearance throughout the garden!

It's great to see the garden looking so tidy and ready for the many visitors expected at the Texas Independence Day Celebration at Washington-on-the-Brazos.



David Itz and bluebonnets by the TXMN GLC sign at WoB



Sheri Wilcox, Steve Thompson, Gerri Hanten taking photos



First 2020 Bluebonnet bloom in the WoB garden

Our next two Workdays will be Saturday, March 28 and Saturday, April 18 from 9-11 am. There should be lots of visitors to the park then, enjoying the bluebonnets and asking questions about the pollinator garden, so come join us!

New version of the Payment Request Form is on the chapter website for download. Please use!

Membership Memo, by Chris Morrison



I'm educating, but how do I log it? It depends on the situation. We have three possible opportunity titles if there's not one with the specific name of the project you worked on.

- If you are primarily **recruiting new members**, usually with the chapter's trifold set up at a new landowner's meeting, a seminar, or a festival, for example, then it is "**Administrative Work/Recruiting**". Choose Administrative Work, then in the dropdown menu within that survey form, choose Recruiting.
- If you are leading a talk on Backyard Birds for a club, presenting at an Ag Safety Day, teaching children a class about bees at the Bee Festival, or leading an interpretive hike, for example, where you have a **captive audience that generally stays for the entire presentation** (not roving by at will), it is "**Educational Group Presentation**". We have a few projects of this type that have their own separate opportunity title, and for those you would use their title.
- If you are helping with an **educational booth** set up where the **audience comes and goes (roves by at will)**, such as at the science nights or Cotton Gin Festival, it is "**Outreach Booth**". There may be a game for children to play, might be informative posters on various nature topics, demonstrations of planting techniques, etc., designed to inform people and you are there to answer their questions. There may be the chapter trifold with information about joining the chapter, but primary focus is educational activities. Outreach Booth is also where you record hours for **writing an educational article or brochure**, including posting informational articles to our Facebook page or for our newsletter. (Articles about chapter business or reports on our projects fall under Administrative Work/Communication.)

As you may remember, it is the type of service performed that determines which opportunity title to use. It's all based on the nine Federal Category definitions. A very good reference for you is **VMS for the Chapter Member** (latest update Nov 16, 2019). It is found on our chapter website TXMN.org/GLC under the Members Section tab, Logging Hours.

Log all of your hours, please! They are each worth over \$23 to TPWD in federal grants

Field Observation: Koehler Prairie Ranch Bluebird House between double rainbows, by Buford Koehler

Our place outside of Sealy is under a Wildlife Management Program and we have 17 bluebird houses set up with snake guards as part of this program. Here is a photo of one of our bluebird houses between double rainbows taken at 5:32 p.m. on January 2, 2020.



Field Observation: What the heck is this?!, by Jaci Elliott

A friend in the Dallas area said her friend in Garland found this creature (pictured on the left) and asked me if I knew what it was, being a TMN and all. After searching the web, it appears there is an exotic called a Raccoon dog which is actually neither, but a Canid from Eastern Asia. They are not recommended as pets. The ears look different in this photo, so it could also possibly be a hybrid of some sort. Hmmm. Either way, it's an introduced species I'd rather not encounter on a dark, stormy night!



(LEFT): Unidentified Observation, Garland, TX 2020



(RIGHT): Exotic Raccoon Dog

SAVE THE DATE! 21st Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting



When: October 16th-18th, 2020

Where: [Omni Houston Westside Hotel](#), 13210 Katy Fwy, Houston, TX 77079

Website: <https://txmn.org/2020-annual-meeting/>

Resources

Chapter Resources Keep You Informed, On Track, and in Touch

- *Gideon Lincecum Chapter Website* <http://txmn.org/glc> - visit often for event listings and more
- *GLC Facebook Group* <https://www.facebook.com/groups/21969044537/> - find us on Facebook and ask to join
- *Volunteer Management System:* Go to the state website to log your volunteer and advanced training hours:
<http://txmn.org/tmn-vms-users/>.

State Resources Expand Your Horizons

- *Texas Master Naturalist State Website* <https://txmn.org/>
- *Texas Master Naturalist Listserve* <https://txmn.org/staying-connected/sign-up-for-tmn-listserv/> - subscribe to the listserv to get notices about activities across the state

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