

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



GOOD WATER MASTER NATURALIST
WILLIAMSON COUNTY

RIPPLES

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UPCOMING EVENTS

NPSOT Meeting 2/13/14
NPSOT Meeting 3/13/14
WAG Meeting 2/17/14

Check the website for the many opportunities coming up---way too numerous to even think about posting here!

NOW YOU KNOW

Rabbits are altricial – their young are born blind, hairless and helpless.

Hares are generally born with hair and are able to see (precocial). Young hares are able to fend for themselves very quickly after birth.

THE NATIONAL BUTTERFLY CENTER – MISSION, TX

By Wayne Rhoden



Last October I was fortunate enough to visit the National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas. Fall is a prime time to visit the center because there are multitudes of different species of butterflies on the grounds. While walking on one of the trails, I came upon a branch of a tree that was swarming with butterflies and wondered what was attracting so many in one place. There were hundreds of tawny emperors, white peacocks and many kinds of bees and wasps feeding with no awareness of my presence. I took pictures of them feeding for a few minutes and walked further down the path that led to a garden planted with trees and plants with many different species of butterflies nectaring. A tree limb caught my attention with more of the tawny emperors feeding on the same mixture I had seen earlier. One butterfly in particular stood out among the others. I learned later that it was a Malachite, a beautiful brown and green colored butterfly. The mixture was bananas, brown sugar and beer, which had fermented a little, and was spread over the branches and limbs and the butterflies loved it. I will surely consider visiting this center again.

For information contact: <http://txmn.org/goodwater> or goodwatermn2@gmail.com

A Message from President, Charles Grimes

Welcome to 2014! I have the honor of filling the shoes of Wayne Rhoden, the Chapter president for 2013. As a founding member of the Goodwater Master Naturalist Chapter, Wayne has been instrumental in the formation and continuing growth of our Chapter.

As your new president, I plan to work hard to continue building on the successes of the Chapter, and to focus on the growth of our Membership. For the 2014 Chapter year, there are two New Member classes planned. As the spring class unfolds in March, I would ask each of you to rally with me to welcome, include and embrace our new prospective members. The best time to keep the enthusiasm going, and to involve our prospective new members in the efforts of our Chapter, is during this time.

2013 has been a year of great accomplishments for the Chapter. All of our Chapter metrics have shown marked improvement and growth, from volunteer hours, to advanced training achieved. Our outreach efforts have jumped exponentially, which speaks volumes about each of our member's dedication to supporting one of the Master Naturalists prime objectives, of spreading our knowledge and enthusiasm. I hope that that everyone can get "charged up" for 2014 so that we can show the same level of progress this time next year!

To take a minute and speak about the class of 2013 is something that must be done. Class of 2013 members have "risen to the call" to participate in the Chapters volunteer and leadership efforts. Class of 2013 member Gene Chisum is your new chapter VP and comes to us with another new member, his spouse Nancy. Mary Jo Kleinert has accepted the role of Chapter Secretary for this year, and comes with her spouse and new Chapter member Glenn. 2013 class member Lori Merlino volunteered to serve the Chapter as Membership Chairperson, and new member Patty Ozga volunteered to serve as the Chapter Historian. Thank you all!

2014 is going to be a pivotal year for the Chapter. All of the groundwork laid by the founding members, the time and energy put forth by past Chapter Boards that have worked so hard to keep things moving forward, and the tireless efforts of our Membership, will come to bear for a fabulous year.

I look forward to serving you all in 2014, and am excited and energized to be part of such a wonderful group of people working on such a selfless effort!

TIME TO PREPARE FOR EASTERN BLUEBIRDS AND THEIR NEST BOXES

Mary Ann Melton



Bluebirds are only native in North America and have been symbols of happiness, love, and hope as well as a sign that spring is on its way. Navajo Indians considered them to be sacred because of the beautiful sky blue feathers. Bluebird numbers dropped 90 per cent due to competition for natural cavities from non-native English house sparrows and European starlings. Thomas Musselman of Quincy Illinois began designing nesting boxes in 1926. In 1934 he wrote an article for Bird Lore encouraging bluebird trails throughout the country. Numbers continued to decline through 1970. The North American Bluebird Society was formed in 1978. The bluebird population has rebounded and stabilized due to the efforts to build and monitor bluebird houses.

Bluebirds are cavity-nesting birds that have adapted well to nest boxes. They like open areas surrounded by trees for some cover and protection from predators. While they eat insects and fruit, one of their favorite snacks is a mealy worm provided by humans.

January and February are good months to put up bluebird nesting boxes as the bluebirds prepare for nesting season. Bluebird nest boxes are made from wood and placed on a galvanized steel pole or conduit. Wooden posts and T-bar posts are too easy for predators to climb to disturb the nests. The entrance hole should be no larger than 1 1/2 inches in diameter or 1 9/16 in diameter to prevent competing species from taking over the nesting box. Place nesting boxes where there is shade from the western sun to prevent overheating during the hot summer months. Painting them white will also help keep them cooler. Adequate ventilation is important. A baffle is recommended to prevent snakes from getting to the eggs. Using tanglefoot on the posts will help prevent fire ants from reaching the nest. For more information about setting up a bluebird nest box, go to Texas Parks and Wildlife (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/birding/birdhouses/>) or the Texas Bluebird Society (www.txblues.org).

Monitoring the nest box is very important. Project NestWatch (<http://nestwatch.org/>) is a great way to keep records of the bluebirds and other nesting birds on your property. NestWatch begins with monitoring the number of eggs, then the hatchlings, and ends when the clutch fledges. When monitoring the boxes, be sure not to leave a “dead end” trail, which a predator can use to find the nests. Always make a loop so that the scent trail leads away from the nesting boxes.

WHO'S WHO---CHAPTER PROFILES

Charles Grimes



Our new president, Charles Grimes joined our Chapter with the 2012 GWMN class. Charles and his wife Judy live in Georgetown and feel blessed to be close to family. Becoming Good Water Master Naturalist's as a couple has been a fun way to spend time together enjoying nature and serving the community. Charles approaches learning about nature with enthusiasm and keenly strives to share with others what he has learned. When not working, Charles enjoys RV'ing, nature photography, hiking, bird watching and spending time with his pups.

Judy Grimes



Judy serves on the GWMN Board as Chair of the Outreach Committee. A former teacher, Judy gravitated towards the 2012 GWMN classes as a good way to learn about the natural world while focusing on local flora and fauna found in Williamson County and Texas. At the same time, she wanted to give back to her community through education and service. Judy has always loved to learn new things and spend time outdoors, whether that is gardening, hiking, taking photographs, rescuing plants, watching animals or bird watching.

2013 – THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Total Volunteer Hours reported in 2013: 5243 hours **Total Advanced Training Hours Reported:** 1081
19 people completed the Training Class.

Book Club, Whooper Watch, Chapter Training Class, Workdays at Berry Springs, Laredo Bird Festival, United Way Days of Caring at Berry Springs, Archaeology Days at Berry Springs, White wing Dove banding, Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery and Prayer Gardens Nature Trail Development, Pollinator Garden Joint Project with NPSOT, Bat Interpretation at the McNeil Bridge, Youth Education – Spring Break and Summer Camps at Georgetown and Hutto Recreation Centers, Junior Master Naturalists at the Georgetown Rec Center, Laurel Mountain Elementary School, Nature Education Cub Scout Camp, Earned Third place Exemplary Project at the State Meeting, Field trip to view the Purple Martin Roost at Highland Mall in Austin Texas