

# Good Water RIPPLES

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

06/08	NPSOT
<b>06/22</b>	<b>GWMN</b>
06/26	Austin Butterfly Forum
07/13	NPSOT
07/24	Austin Butterfly Forum
<b>07/27</b>	<b>GWMN</b>
08/10	NPSOT
<b>08/24</b>	<b>GWMN</b>
08/28	Austin Butterfly Forum
GWMN Good Water Master Naturalist	
NPSOT Native Plant Society of Texas	

Check the website for additional events including volunteer and training opportunities. The many events are way too numerous to even think about posting all here!

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## National Wildlife Refuge Volunteers by Michael D Brasel, PhD



The Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge is a 25,475 acre sanctuary for the endangered Golden Cheek Warbler and the endangered Black-capped Vireo. Located a few miles west of Lago Vista, some 3,000 Refuge acres are open to the public along nearly eight miles of hiking trails. The Refuge is under the management of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

Since the sequestration earlier this decade, staff and budget cuts have not recovered, and volunteers have become ever more important in the daily, on-going activities at the Refuge. Volunteer opportunities abound, and some

may surprise you. If you have the time, there is hardly a talent you might have from which the Refuge could not benefit. (Continued on Page 2)

## Master Naturalist Training Class Starts September 5

2)As we celebrate our spring Master Naturalist graduates, Good Water Master Naturalists are preparing to host our fall training class. GWMN Fall Training Class is accepting applications. The application deadline is August 31. Class begins September 5 and runs through December 12. Most classes will meet on Tuesday evenings from 6:00-9:30 p.m. A few classes and field trips will be on Saturdays. Join us and become a Texas Master Naturalist. <https://txmn.org/goodwater/Training-class-online-application/>



## Volunteering at Your National Wildlife Refuge (Continued) by Michael D Brasel, PhD

If you are available during the week, working as a Greeter at the Headquarter's Visitor Center at the Balcones Canyon Lands National Wildlife Refuge frees Service personnel to do their assigned duties. During April of this year, more than 550 people came to the Visitors' Center wanting to know a little something about the Refuge, the endangered birds, hiking trails, hours of operations, and such. Most visitors are surprised to find we charge no fees and the trails are open every day from dawn to dusk.

If working with kids is your thing, then the Environmental Education program would be perfect. Curriculum design and delivery is a volunteer effort under the supervision of the Environmental Education Specialist. Supplies are provided by the Friends of Balcones. In 2016, more than 3,300 students were affected by the BCNWR EE programming, either through field trips or in-class visitations.

If you are only available on weekends, volunteers help with Refuge-sponsored events such as the annual Songbird Festival, or we are present to assist at community-sponsored events such as the Swiftfest in Jonestown.



If you like to break a sweat every now and then, consider Trail Maintenance. Volunteers, often with the training and assistance of the Central Texas Trail Tamers, work to maintain trail grade, water runoff, building steps, limb trimming, and so forth. We'll work generally for four hours on a Saturday morning every 2 or 3 months.

If you are available more frequently though, one of the most urgent opportunities is for Refuge Maintenance, including the trails. Everything from mowing the grass, to mending fences, to hunting feral hogs, and so much, much more is done by our volunteers. Please go to [friendsofbalcones.org](http://friendsofbalcones.org) and register today!

## River Ranch County Park Work Days

On April 29, Good Water Master Naturalist Volunteers went out to the River Ranch County Park to tackle removing invasive plants under these large live oak trees. What an amazing difference so much hard work made! Join us for an upcoming River Ranch County Park Work Day.

Photos by David Armstrong and David Gage



June 17 Riverbed Trash Cleanup

October 21 Fall Prairie Clearing

November 4 Fall Prairie Clearing

December 9 Fence Removal



## Consider the Lowly Hermit Crab by Amy Flinn

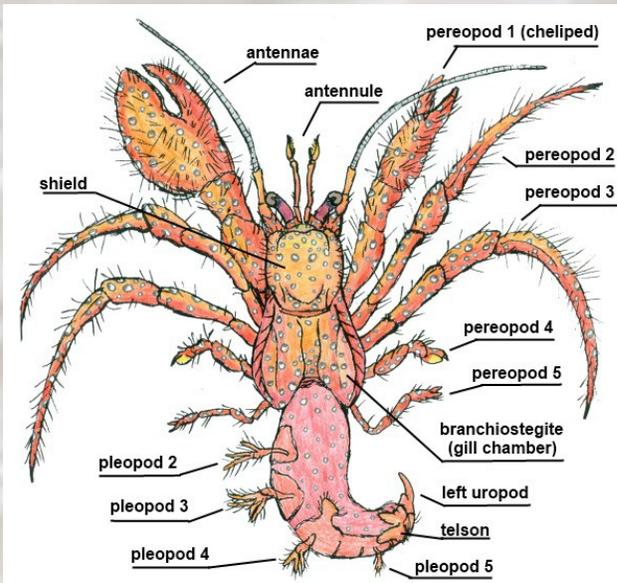


*Thinstripe hermit crab in Knobby Whelk.*  
Photo by Jo O'Keefe

Any beachcomber, collector of shells, saltwater fisherman, or small child splashing in the waves will tell you, hermit crabs are some of the most interesting creatures to be found along the water's edge on the beaches of Texas.

While there are at least eight (8) hermit crabs native to Texas, by far the most common aquatic (primarily shallow water) hermit crab is the Striped Hermit Crab (also known as the Thinstripe Hermit Crab), *Clibanarius vittatus*. Found along the coasts of the western Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico, the Striped Hermit Crab ranges as far north as North Carolina and Virginia and as far south as Brazil. It remains a relatively small creature – about 1.5 inches (3 cm) at the carapace, but can occupy shells as large as 4 inches in length. Common homes for the Striped Hermit are the lightning whelk, moonshells and other whelks.

Strangely enough, hermit crabs are neither crab nor hermit. Hermit crabs live in the empty shell of a gastropod mollusk. They no longer have the abdominal exoskeleton that characterizes a true crab. Hermits also have a large and obvious abdomen, not the smaller abdomen the true crab carries folded under its body.



*Storm Martin 2012*

Hermit crabs, while living “alone” in their temporary housing, can enjoy a number of symbiotic relationships. Many hermit homes sport barnacles. Some hermits carry sea anemones on their backs. The anemone protects the hermit from predators while the hermit stirs up food for the anemone. Though hermit crabs are seen singly along the shore, they are often found in groups (called “casts” or “collaborations,” depending upon the authority). Whether gathering as protection from rough surf, performing a “shell swap,” or enjoying an area of available food, hermit crabs are often observed in twos, threes or larger groups.

You too may see these fascinating creatures on a visit to the Texas gulf coast. The 2018 Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting is in Corpus Christ on October 20-22. Indian Point Park, the location of some photos used herein, is located across the Harbor Bridge from the location of the meeting.



## Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting

*Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting  
October 20-22, 2017  
Corpus Christi, Texas*



Each year Master Naturalists from across the state of Texas converge to share ideas, learn new things about nature, and gain energy from like-minded people at the Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting. There are lectures that provide Advanced Training, interesting field trips, and sessions where members from different chapters share things that their chapter is doing. Registration typically opens in August and it is a good idea to register early in order to get your choice of sessions and to make sure you have a room at the hotel.

This year's event will be in beautiful Corpus Christi where there will be some great opportunities for field trips and birding as well as other Advanced Training opportunities.

### Attending the Annual TMN Conference: A Testimonial by AJ Senchack, PhD

I attended the last two TMN state meeting and found them to be richly rewarding. And, a host of activities fill the day and night, beginning at 8:00 a.m. and running until 9:00 p.m.---clearly this can test your endurance!

So, what did I find that made my attending the annual meetings so interesting and rewarding? First, I loved meeting new MNs from other chapters. I didn't meet a single person I didn't enjoy spending time with and swapping ideas about how to improve our chapters. In addition, I never missed a single time slot for the sessions because it was always so easy to find something of interest. The organizers do an excellent job of blending a range of many naturalist topics and field trips. A minimum of 20-25 two-hour or four-hour sessions, panel discussions, and round tables are available to choose from every morning and every afternoon. There also are normally 3-4 half or full day field trips (e.g., "Prairie Restoration in Sam Houston National Forest"), if you prefer to get outdoors.

It's never difficult to find a session that sounds interesting. For instance, I wasn't even sure what a bryophyte was until I sat in on Dale Kruse's incredibly informative, 4-hour class on bryophytes and lichen two years ago, which opened a whole new world to me. Moreover, you can take a break from purely naturalist topics and attend sessions on honing your technical skills and improving our chapter's organization. For instance, to develop your personal skills, you can find sessions such as "Camera, Lenses and Techniques for Nature Photography" or more computer-intensive subjects such as "Texas Ecosystems and Virtual Mapping." How about sessions to improve our chapter organization such as "Managing Conflict in Volunteer Groups." (Last year, there was even a "Gentle Yoga & Envisioning Nature" session held every noon hour!)

The evening is time for dinner/banquets, socializing, award ceremonies, notable keynote speakers, MN Quiz contests, and even social time campfires and music gatherings. Finally, I found the hotels and locations to be first-rate---no, make that spectacular! The 2015 and 2016 meetings were at resorts on the shores of Horseshoe Bay and Lake Conroe, respectively. Next year's state meeting will be at the Omni Hotel on Corpus Christi Bay, which should prove to be just as awesome.

Just go to <https://txmn.org/2015-annual-meeting/> or <https://txmn.org/2016-annual-meeting/> to see more details about what all you can do at our TMN annual meetings and, more importantly, try to take in our next meeting in Corpus Christi! Better yet, plan on conducting a session yourself (see <https://txmn.org/2017-annual-meeting/#Call%20for%20Proposals> for more information).

## Junior Master Naturalist Graduates

Congratulations to the 2016-2017 Good Water Junior Master Naturalists! In April, we enjoyed presentations on astronomy including learning to take our own pictures of the universe. Then, we finished off the year with a party and exploration of hawks in the classroom as inclement weather prevented heading out to Camp Tejas.



## Thanks to Youth Development Sponsors

A big thanks to the companies that sponsored our Youth Development Activities. These contributions help us expose our precious children to the wonders of nature.

McNeil Bridge Bat Interpretation

Jim Hailey Nature Photography

Beacon Construction Company

The Sun

For the Birds

Paint with Me Kimberly Keller

Georgetown Parks & Recreation



*"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder ... he or she needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering together the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."*

Rachel Carson, The Sense of Wonder

## Meet the Good Water Master Naturalists

*Shannon Spann*



Shannon Spann and her husband, Patrick McElhinney, are graduates of the Fall 2015 and Spring 2017 Master Naturalist classes, respectively. They live on 10 acres of land about four miles northeast of Liberty Hill. They are working to bring their acreage from overgrazed pasture and cropland to a restored native prairie with Little Bluestem as the predominant grassland. With the advice and assistance of a TPWD biologist, they developed and began implementation of a Wildlife Management Plan in late 2015. Already, they have seen considerable positive change in the land, especially in the number of native wildflowers and bird activity.

*Patrick McElhinney*



Shannon is a Texas native herself, born in the Panhandle town of Hereford. She trained as a cosmetologist and eventually made her way to Austin, Cedar Park, and the Liberty Hill area. She retired as a hairdresser in 2011. Her interest in restoring her land as a Wildlife Management Area led her to the Master Naturalist program and her goal to become a “prairie protector.” While her priorities are with Draco, she plans to help with our Chapter's efforts in Garey Park.

Patrick was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, but spent his high school years in Wisconsin. After graduating from college, he was privileged to serve as a career Marine Corps officer in the communications field and, on retirement from his military service, work for an Arlington, Texas, communications company in various capacities until moving to Georgetown. He plans to specialize in learning to identify the many types of grasses that currently are in the Draco prairie and to take part in the Chapter's River Ranch project.

Shannon calls her prairie Draco, a name the early Native Americans used for the area. Draco, according to a nearby historical marker, means “favorite place.” The land is certainly Shannon's and Patrick's favorite place. They are hopeful that, in time, it might be worthy of a stop on the Master Naturalist class.

## Youth Activities Update

The Good Water Chapter loves to teach kids about nature. In addition to graduating another Junior Master Naturalist Class, we also gave presentations at libraries, schools, and the Texas Memorial Museum. During the summer we will be doing presentations at the Georgetown Recreation Center, Hutto Park Kids, the Georgetown Library, the Round Rock Library, Round Rock Community Gardens and an after school program summer camp. Bring your children out to enjoy one of our public events.

June 6	Round Rock Garden Center	Pollination and Pollinators
June 7	Georgetown Library	Worms, Worms Everywhere
June 13	Round Rock Garden Center	Edible Soils
July 11	Round Rock Garden Center	Birds in the Garden
July 19	Georgetown Library	Let's Talk About Dirt
July 25	Round Rock Garden Center	Parts of Plants

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