Spring Training Class Registration is Open

Registration is open for the Good Water Chapter’s Spring Training Class. Texas Master Naturalists are people who still like to play outside and are willing to get their feet wet and their hands dirty. To become a Master Naturalist, one takes a training class of over 40 hours of expert training about almost every aspect of the natural world – soils, backyard habitats, prairies, range-land management, forest ecology, birds, mammals, fish, insects, botany, climate, geology and archaeology.

The class will meet on Tuesday afternoons from 1:00-5:00 p.m. Some classes and field trips will be on Saturdays. The first class is Wednesday, March 7 due to the primary elections. The last class will be May 15. Cost is $150 and includes the comprehensive and brand new Texas Master Naturalist Program manual as well as a one year membership to the Good Water Chapter. For couples who plan to share the manual, there is a discount for the second student. Click here for online registration. Click to see the preliminary class schedule. The calendar for the class will be finalized in February.

To complete the certification process, each volunteer completes 40 hours of service and an additional 8 hours of training. To maintain their certification each year, volunteers are encouraged to take their knowledge and volunteer for 40 hours and take 8 hours of additional training.

Take a course in good water and air; and in the eternal youth of Nature you may renew your own. Go quietly, alone; no harm will befall you.

John Muir
Hello Fellow Good Water Master Naturalists!!!

Reflecting . . . 2017 was a landmark year for our Chapter. We easily passed the 100 member mark of energized and interested Chapter Members, and I am delighted to see record attendance at our monthly meetings and to greet more and more smiling faces! Our experienced Members continue to hold vital volunteer and leadership roles in the Chapter and to set an excellent example for our newest Members! The willingness of our new members to get quickly involved in not only the volunteer efforts of the Chapter, but also willingly lending support to the Chapters’ leadership efforts is very exciting. We could not accomplish our mission without dedicated, motivated and hard working members. Thank you all so much!

The development of Training Committees has proven to continually improve the learning experience of our new recruits. The ongoing gains in the quality and robustness of our volunteer opportunities, and the talents of our Project Leaders, continues to astound me. Thanks to all of you who have taken on the Training Committee and the Project Leaders’ roles for the Chapter...you are all exceptional examples, guides, leaders and motivators!

2018 will be a challenging but exciting year for our Chapter. The year brings on a flurry of activity in support of our annual State meeting, and several of our projects are really gaining momentum. All of our Volunteer Opportunity Projects have improved in quality and scope and continue to make more of a difference each year. Of special note, Garey Park, led by Jim Hailey, will come on line in 2018 and will provide a robust opportunity for ongoing Master Naturalist experiences and volunteer efforts. River Ranch County Park, led by Dave Armstrong, has been a powerhouse of activity over the last year and the efforts there are really gaining momentum. The Prairie Restoration Project, trail building and invasive removal components of this project are developing exciting results. At both projects, the city and county staff who work at and oversee the new parks have been very impressed with our efforts and commitment. I hope many more of you will consider joining Jim and Dave and their “crews" as we continue to build momentum toward the openings of these parks!

And...I cannot say enough about our fabulous Board members! The strength of our Chapter is demonstrated every day through our execution within every aspect of the Board Group's efforts . . . be that Volunteer, Outreach, Advanced Training, Membership, Training Class, Monthly Program, Youth, Communication, Host, New Class reps and on and on. Thanks to you all for hanging in there and being, year after year, the most dedicated and talented Board a Chapter could ask for! It literally, could not be done without you!

2017 Year in Review

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Garey Park will open in May 2018. The City of Georgetown has been planning this park for several years. Good Water Master Naturalist Jim Hailey is the Project Leader for the Good Water Chapter’s volunteer efforts there. Chapter members have cleared ash juniper trees from along the San Gabriel River, planted 41 water elm trees along the river, and cleaned debris from the river.

Ambitious plans for our Master Naturalist volunteers include building a hiking trail that will lead down by the river and a bird blind for bird lovers. The bird blind site will be near the river. Plans include a water feature to attract our native birds. Two work days have been planned in February. Most of the work will involve removing vegetation and debris from the trail path.

Master Naturalists will be volunteering regularly both before the park opens and afterward. The hiking trail will be completed before the park opens. The bird blind should be open sometime next fall. Youth Development Director, Mary Ann Melton, has already been involved in planning meetings for Youth Nature Educational activities at the new park.
Sightings around Williamson County

**Bald Eagle**
Berry Springs Park & Preserve
Photo by Mike Farley

**North American Osprey**
Berry Springs Park & Preserve
Photo by Mike Farley

**Red Shouldered Hawk**
Mankins Crossing
Photo by Mary Ann Melton

**Gadwall**
Old Settler’s Park Pond
Photo by Mary Ann Melton

**Bobcat**
Hutto
Photo by Mary Ann Melton

**North American Beaver**
Berry Springs Park & Preserve
Photo by Mike Farley
United Way of Williamson County's Day of Service @ Berry Springs Park & Preserve on Mon. Jan. 15th, Martin Luther King Holiday was a huge success. The weather was perfect for working. Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, individuals and WILCO Parks & Recreation Dept. worked on a variety of projects to enhance the Park & Preserve. The Nature Trail received road base and chinaberry mulch to alleviate muddy rain days on the trail entrance. The Native Plant Garden was weeded, dead growth cut back, compost and mulch added and rocks moved to the border of the bed. The entrance road to the Northwest gates of the park had tree limbs raised and removed making the area more attractive and easier to maintain. And the infamous Chinaberry Grove was manicured more by removing limbs, and chipping the downed tree limbs to create mulch for the trails. This area still needs work but is nothing like it was when over a 100 invasive chinaberry trees were cut down by our local invasive removal leader Charles Newsom. We now have a beautiful view of Berry Creek on the North side of the park along the concrete, AKA Blackledge trail.

Many thanks to all who participated. Your Day of Service is truly appreciated by all park patrons and especially by the Park staff.

United Way Day of Caring in Sept. date to be announced soon. Information and sign up genius will be sent out.
A strange thing happened after the hikes with Cub Scout Pack 304. Some background – Good Water Chapter was asked to lead an interpretive hike at Berry Springs Park where the Cubs were going to be camping over the last weekend in October. We (Robin English, Mike Finn and I) divided the group in half so that we would have a better opportunity to reach the boys (there were 40+ Cubs and assorted parents, leaders and siblings at the campout). We walked the trails from homestead to pecan orchard to millstone and then around the pond, along the boardwalk, past the dam, across the footbridges and back to the campground.

It’s only about 1.5 miles, but there seemed to be something to see along the way in spite of the frigid weather on Saturday. We talked about the history of the place and the people who used and lived on the land and observed hawks, herons, grackles, white-tailed deer and doves.

One observation was a clump of Bushy Bluestem we saw on the bank of the pond about 20 feet from the millstone. I love this grass because it is easy to identify, it is beautiful, and it has a message to tell, only growing in or near moist soil. So I made a big fuss about the grass to the Cub Scouts. Upon returning home I used Robin’s photo to record an observation in iNaturalist. Mike Farley confirmed my identification and shared that this plant was one of 3 Bushy Bluestem plants he had rescued from roadside construction and sheltered in his yard for a year.

Mike has been working with this grass around the pond since 2014. Here is his comment from iNaturalist:

There is a lengthy history with that particular plant! Originally the Bushy Bluestem sign was positioned very near where you are standing. Park staff mowers would routinely mow down the plants leaving a sign with no plants in sight. I transplanted a plant from elsewhere in the park to the sign and was mowed again even with rock barriers.

I was asked to transplant again out into the water. The plant in your image is one of three I planted, which came from my backyard. These were still victims of weed eating staff!

Finally I was asked to move the sign, which is now down the trail closer to the boardwalk, with many plants nearby and out of the mowers path! There is a lengthy history with that particular plant! Originally the Bushy Bluestem sign was positioned very near where you are standing. Park staff mowers would routinely mow down the plants leaving a sign with no plants in site. I transplanted a plant from elsewhere in the park to the sign and was mowed again even with rock barriers.

All during the preparation for the hike I had been thinking that we would be “planting seeds” of love for the wild with these young people. It is an investment in the future of nature - in the future of all of us. But we rarely enjoy that moment when we see the results of our work and here it was - that special moment - Mike Farley seeing the long-term importance of his oft frustrating efforts to establish the Bushy Bluestem at Berry Springs.

Keep planting seeds folks!
The Vanishing Texas River Cruise travels upstream at Lake Buchanan toward the mouth of the Colorado River. Bald eagles spend the winter in the upper part of the Lake Buchanan area and are often seen during the winter cruises. During Eagle Season (Nov 15-February 28) there are currently 3 cruise choices—the 2 hour Eagle Cruise (18 mile round trip), the 3 hour Enhanced Eagle Cruise (27 mile round trip), or the 4 hour Ultimate Eagle Tour. (36 mile round trip.) The longer cruise (water level permitting) takes you to beautiful Post Oak Falls. From March 1-November 14 the Scenic Wilderness Cruise offers a shorter 2 1/4 hour cruise that goes past the beautiful Fall Creek Falls. Regardless of the season, the scenery along this stretch of Lake Buchanan and the Colorado River is beautiful and bird watching is enjoyable.
Good Water Master Naturalist (GWMN) Volunteers working: Joe Ross, Patrick McElhinney, April Rohlich, Mike Rodgers, Dave Gage, John Clifford, Dave Armstrong. Community volunteers present: Mike Plaster, Michael Plaster, Ian Plaster. The ten of us were joined by five members of the park staff.

Our mission was to open a new 1/3-mile trail that would connect two existing ranch roads, basically cutting a short trail from the Porcupine Hill area to a road that accessed the prairie and the river.

We loaded into two ATVs and a park truck and motored over to the trailhead. The weather was chilly but perfectly suited for heavy ranch work. We supplied the labor and the park supplied the equipment, except that April Rohlich brought her own loppers—and did she know how to use them! After brief instructions and a safety briefing, the race was on and everyone threw themselves into the task to the sound of the happy voices of GWMN volunteers and the cacophony of chain saws and brush trimmers. Some of us swamped (editor’s note: picking up the cut limbs) while others lopped as we followed the bright ribbons and spray-painted ground markings through the brush, confident that we would emerge at an ending point not yet visible. In three hours, we cleared the 1/3-mile trail of brush, rocks, and trees and broke through to the road that led down to the prairie and to the river. River Ranch County Park (RRCP) was now in possession of a new trail that was 10 feet wide and 15 feet high. We all cheered and, of course, we posed for a group photograph.

We loaded up in the ATVs and journeyed over to the prairie to examine the results of a recent burn covering about 30 acres of the 67-acre prairie. Controlled burns are a friend of native grass prairies and, come spring, the burned portion of the prairie will be beautiful and well on the way.

Mr. Gomez and staff were pleased with our work and posited that we had saved them about three weeks of work clearing that path.

I am proud of the GWMN Brush-whackers who volunteer their time to do the ranch-hand manual work essential to getting the “Ranch” ready to become a park. While we Brush-whackers sweat in the summer and shiver in the winter, we are all committed to making RRCP a safe and enjoyable place for visitors. Some of the old ranch buildings are disappearing but what is appearing is a new nature park that retains the spirit of the Texas ranch era. RRCP will be the crown jewel in the collection of Williamson County parks and GWMNs helped to make it happen.

Again, a heartfelt thank you to volunteers: Joe Ross, Patrick McElhinney, April Rohlich, Mike Rodgers, Dave Gage, John Clifford, Mike Plaster, Michael Plaster, and Ian Plaster. WELL DONE!!!

I would like to express my appreciation to the professional and hard-working park staff who allow us to work alongside them doing the stuff that they do daily. We look forward to working hand-in-hand with them on more vital projects in 2018.

Special accolades are made to the volunteers who have volunteered almost 1,000 hours at RRCP since inception of the project. In 2017 alone, GWMNs volunteered 719.80 hours at RRCP. And I must call your attention to a momentous accomplishment: No one has been injured while volunteering at RRCP. Our safety record is 100%. We intend to keep it that way!
Pillbugs by Todd McCann

Scientific name: Armadillidium vulgare (Latreille)
Class: Malacostraca
Order: Isopoda
Family: Armadillidiidae

Armadillidium vulgare, Isopoda also known as the Pillbug or “roly-polie” is a very interesting critter, and very under-rated. Scientifically they are crustaceans, breathing through gills. They are beneficial by recycling organic material and a food source for other insects and reptiles.

Start with the human food chain. They taste like shrimp, are edible and nutritious, make a readily available emergency food source, and are reportedly delicious when boiled, then fried or added to soup. After all they are really crustaceans. Like most insects they should be washed and cooked before eating them. There has to be something said about being consumed raw. Ask any toddler that had a chance to gobble a hand-full.

From an economic standpoint, if you are looking for an insect to raise and sell, there is a market for pillbugs. They are very easy to raise. Dark place, moisture, dog kibble, mushrooms, fish flakes every couple of months. They will thrive and generally have a life-time of three years. So, your breeding stock pretty well assured, reptile keepers are a ready market.

Environmental-ly, they are recyclers of organic material plant or animal. No matter what they consume they are still edible afterwards. Imagine if you will, how much organic waste would be laying around if it were not for the pillbug.

Coyote Scat being recycled by pillbugs
Photo: Public Domain US Fish and Wildlife Service, Photo by: Todd McCann/USFWS Volunteer
2018 GWMN BOARD OF DIRECTORS & PROJECT LEADERS

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Vice President – A. J. Senchack  
Treasurer – Larry Swift  
Secretary – Sandra Spurlock

**Directors**

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Volunteer Services Projects Director – Maggie Bond  
Advanced Training Director – August Wusterhausen  
Outreach and Publicity Director – Ray Wahrenbrock  
Historian/Archivist Director – Nancy Phillips  
Host Director – Betty Jo Phillips  
Communications Director – Mary Ann Melton  
Youth Development Director – Mary Ann Melton  
At Large Director 1 – Jim Hailey  
At Large Director 2 – Open  
New Class Representative Director Fall – Kate Knight  
New Class Representative Director Spring – Bob Waring

**Project Chairs**

Angler Education – Jim Nelson  
Balcones Canyonland – Michael Brasel  
Berry Springs P&P – Susan Blackledge  
Blackland Heritage Park – Mary Ann Melton  
Blue Bird Count/Nest – Christie Gardner  
Citizen Science - Open  
Garey Park – Jim Hailey  
Gault Site Wildlife Survey – Tonja Hame  
Good Water Book Club – Gail McAdoo  
Good Water Library – Judy Grimes  
Good Water Stream Team Monitoring – Randy Spurlock  
Habitat Dev. SGU Church – Billye Adams  
Liberty Park Taylor – Pat Shirk/Bonnie Sladek  
McNeil Bridge Bats – Christie Gardner  
Odonata Research – Mike Farley  
Pollinator Garden – Elizabeth Sartain  
River Ranch County Park – Dsvid Armstrong  
Invasives – Open
Training Class Representative Directors

In the last revision of the chapter documents from the state, a new board position was created for New Class Representative Director. Because Good Water holds two training classes a year, Good Water has two New Class Representative Directors. The main function of these positions is to represent their class as a member on the Board. They make suggestions as to what both the Board and the Chapter can do to facilitate new members as they enter into chapter volunteer efforts. Trainees can make suggestions to the Board through their representatives. The Training Class Directors are a good source of information about who to contact for questions about the chapter, volunteer activities, and advanced training.

Kate North
Fall Training Class Representative Director

Bob Waring
Spring Training Class Representative

In Memoriam  Al Kirchner

Al Kircher was Chair of the Steering Committee that formed the Good Water Chapter. He was both a Master Naturalist and a Master Gardener.

He enjoyed the outdoors and sought to preserve the beauty of God’s creation through volunteer work as a Master Gardener and Master Naturalist in the Bell County, Highland Lakes, and Good Water chapters and used his business skills to help other Master Naturalist chapters in Texas obtain 501(c)(3) designations. The backyard of his home was certified by the National Wildlife Federation as a backyard habitat and was also designated as a Texas Wildscape.

Did you Know?

- There are 9,676 Certified Texas Master Naturalist volunteers.
- Volunteers have contributed more than 2.833 million hours of service.
- More than 218,000 acres of wildlife and native plant habitats have been impacted.
- Volunteers have reached more than 2 million Texas Residents of all ages.
- These volunteer efforts are worth more than $55 million to the State of Texas.
Nancy Phillips
2500 Hour Award

Nancy Phillips has enjoyed all the volunteer hours she has put in to get to 2500 hours. Most of her hours have been involved with Youth Education. She helps with the Good Water Junior Master Naturalists, spring break and summer camp programs, and library presentations. She also served as Treasurer from 2013-2017. She is the Historian for 2018. She has co-chaired the Fall Training Class Committee for the last three years.

Perfect Attendance Award
2017
Eddie Wusterhausen
Todd McCann

Good Water Honor Award
Dave McAdoo
In recognition and appreciation of his contribution, involvement, and commitment to the Texas Master Naturalist program And for your many volunteer hours benefitting Good Water Chapter Enriching both the environment and our fellow Texans

For information about the Good Water Chapter
http://txmn.org/goodwater or goodwatermn2@gmail.com