

Good Water Ripples

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Bluebird Nest Watch at Berry Springs Park

By Christie Gardner

UPCOMING EVENTS

4/12/18	NPSOT
4/19/18	Travis Audubon
4/26/18	Austin Butterfly Forum
4/26/18	GWMN
5/10/18	NPSOT
5/14/18	WAG
5/17/18	Travis Audubon
5/12/18	GWMN Picnic
5/28/18	Austin Butterfly Forum

Check the website for additional events including volunteer and training op-

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The Eastern Bluebirds at Berry Springs Park and Preserve are busy building nests and laying beautiful blue eggs in the nest boxes that our Goodwater Chapter of Master Naturalists has provided for them. At Berry Springs Park there are 10 boxes (soon to be 15) throughout the Pecan Orchard and Primitive Camping area that were put there for the bluebirds use during the

breeding season, from approximately February-August.

As citizen scientists working with Cornell Nestwatch.Org, we monitor the boxes twice a week, marking our data sheets with data such as whether nests are complete, how many eggs, when the eggs hatch and how many fledglings we see. All of this data is sent to Cornell so that they can monitor this species all across the nation.



We hope our members will come volunteer on SignUp Genius and experience the wonder of hatching blue eggs with little pink babies.

“Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries.”

— Jimmy Carter

Garey Park Project

By Jim Hailey

After several work days at Garey Park we have completed roughing in the nature trail. Thanks to all who have helped in this effort. In addition, the area where we will construct the Wildlife Viewing Blind is ready for us to begin construction in September. This past work day, March 24, we had a phenomenal turn out. In all there were 13 volunteers and 3 men from the Georgetown Parks Department.



The trail, which begins along the South San Gabriel River and returns along the bluff, is about 1.5 miles long. The lower section is primarily grassland and will be great in the winter for sparrows. The upper trail weaves through a heavily wooded area. There are some large old cedar and many massive oaks shading the walk. This is going to be an active trail in migration.

To date, we have raised about \$6500.00 of the \$12,000.00 needed to build the blind, water feature, fencing and landscaping. I urge you to make a personal donation to the Garey Park Project by going to txmn.org/goodwater/donations and then you can use the chapter's Paypal account. Your donation is completely deductible and if your donation requires a letter we will provide one.

I am also happy to report that on Friday, March 30 I had the opportunity to share what we have done and our plans with Mr. Jack Garey. Mr. Garey was very impressed and wanted to let all who have participated in this project know how much he appreciates their efforts. During our visit I explained about bird watching as a hobby and later that day Mr. Garey called me and asked me to help him get started birdwatching. So, on Monday, April 2 I am going to his home and spend some time with him. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Georgetown Parks staff for their assistance—Eric Nuner, Jamie Berns, and the three men who worked so hard with us, Paul, Kenneth & Mike. They were awesome. And I have received high praise from Assistant Park Director Nuner about what we have accomplished and the plans we have for the Wildlife Viewing Blind.



Donate to the Garey Park Wildlife Viewing Blind Fund!

<http://txmn.org/goodwater/donations>

River Ranch Workday

By Patrick McElhinney



Under the watchful eyes of Jay Gomez, supervisor of the new River Ranch County Park, and his staff, six Chapter members helped in the continuing effort to restore a demonstration pasture in the park during a Workday on March 24. Participants were Jim Abreu, Michael Brasel, John Clifford, Patrick McElhinney, Randy Spurlock, and Sandra Spurlock. They sowed seeds of 15 different native grasses over a recently burned portion of the pasture and then helped consolidate dead and burned limbs of ashe juniper trees into larger piles for later removal by the County staff and transfer to habitat piles. The next scheduled Workday for River Ranch is April 21.



Pollinator Garden Workday

By Elizabeth Sartain

On Monday, February 19th 16 Texas Master Naturalists and NPSOT members joined forces to work in the Pollinator Garden at the Hutto Landfill. The morning started out dry and warm, but the wind became stronger and unrelenting as the day went on.

Undaunted by the weather, volunteers pulled a variety of weeds. Sow thistles and henbit were by far the most abundant. Plants were trimmed and mulched. The gardeners shared tips on weeding, plant identifications, laughter, and Texas sheet cake (provided by Marilyn of NPSOT). By the end of the workday, many piles of weeds and plant trimmings were hauled away.



At the end of the workday a white butterfly was seen flitting through the garden, surely a harbinger of pollinators to come!

GWMN and NPSOT will keep an eye on what plants return after the several freezes of the winter to see if plants should be replaced or new plants added. Please keep an eye out for future opportunities to work in the garden.

Bracken Cave

By April Rohlich



Bracken Cave opens availability for 2018 tours in the month of April. I went May 24, 2017 and kept these notes. It was a joyful privilege to experience these bats emerge in an intimate setting.

I signed up for an evening at Membersnight@batcon.org. They were available June 1 through September 30; four with camping in a fenced, cleared area. There were several nights already sold out. One can sign up as a member for a \$30 – \$60 donation. Members may bring 3-5 guests who must each sign a waiver. I suggest that it was worth the effort of committing ahead of time.

The 7 mile drive from IH35 to the welcome area was as expected. Then, the 2 miles dirt road was heartwarming. I am so glad the 1500 acres area is preserved by BCI and The Nature Conservancy.

There was a short presentation, then Q&A from mostly the kids. As soon as we saw bats emerging, we went quiet. That was the most magical part for me hearing the fluttering sounds and nothing else. At some point, we each had camera or binoculars covering our faces, but tried to just be there.

Two Cooper's Hawks swooped in to dine but were scared further away by the growing noise we were beginning to make discussing our fascination. A Western Coachwhip showed up at the mouth of the cave for dinner also. I saw a Summer Tanager atop a dead branch as I was leaving about two hours after the 10 million or so pregnant bats began coming out for the night.

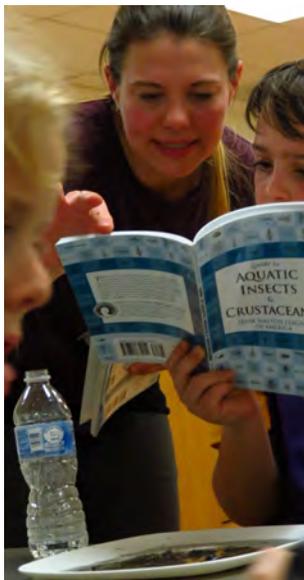
Many of the 55 attendees had never seen any bat. I was so accustomed to seeing Congress Bridge and McNeil Bridge bats, but was still very captivated by this natural landscape. The others were in complete awe. A couple from China were there on a stop while traveling all around the U.S. and Canada. They loved it. It appeared that each member may attend once per year. Perhaps more as a guest, but I think they want to share with as many people as possible. I'll go again!

Junior Master Naturalist Pond Scum Cleanup

Berry Springs Park & Preserve



Round Rock Library—Water Studies



Herpetology Sightings around Williamson County



Red Stripe Ribbon Snake
Devine Lake
Photo by Amy Flinn



Cope's Grey Tree Frog
Devine Lake
Photo by Amy Flinn



Rio Grande Leopard Frog
Devine Lake
Photo by Amy Flinn



Cope's Grey Tree Frog
Devine Lake
Photo by Amy Flinn



Eastern Yellow-bellied Racer
Williamson County Pollinator Garden
Photo by Mary Long



Gulf Coast Toad
Hutto
Photo by Mary Ann Melton



Bullfrog eating another frog
Retention pond in Georgetown
Photo by Mike Farley



Green Tree Frog
Hutto
Photo by Mary Ann Melton



Blanchard Cricket Frog
Photo by Mary Long

Green Lacewings

By Wizzie Brown



Green lacewings are considered beneficial insects and are predaceous in all larval and some adult stages. Larvae are well-known for consuming aphids and are sometimes referred to as “aphid lions”, but they feed not only on aphids, but a variety of soft-bodied insects as well as mites and insect eggs.

Eggs are laid singly or in small groupings on top of a thin stalk. Since lacewings eat insect eggs, having the eggs off the plant surface allows them to reduce cannibalism from siblings. Larvae are mottled brown and white and can grow to $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch in length. Larvae have bodies tapered on both ends with sickle-shaped mouthparts. Some larvae cover themselves with debris to camouflage themselves from predators. Lacewings spin a round, light colored, silken cocoon on the plant surface.



Adults are green and about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in length. They have four wings of similar size and shape that contain numerous veins, cross veins, and cells. Adults can often be seen near porch lights at night. Some adults are predaceous while most feed on nectar, honeydew, and pollen.

While lacewing larvae are great when feeding on insect eggs and small insects, they can be a nuisance when they bite. While this does not happen often, it can leave a red, itchy spot on some people.

Encourage lacewing populations in your yard by providing pollen and nectar sources.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com.

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Meet our Members

Lori Franz



With Environmental Studies degree in hand and thirty years of work from The University of Texas, Lori retired and moved to two acres in Georgetown and reconnected with her love of horses. She recently retired her horses on to greener pastures, hung up her 35-year-old spurs, and is pursuing her next chapter. That chapter involves gardening, traveling, and, of course, nature. Riding miles of Texas trails, the wonders of nature were ever present, and the love of plants, birds, and wildlife continues to grow.

The Master Naturalist experience intersects with her college education as do the observations and learning along the way. An interesting aside for fellow naturalists is what you gain with like-minded people. Working alongside someone, sharing your curiosities, and learning from the specialists expands your connection not only with nature but with the affinity group we belong to now.

There have been road trips with new friends seeing the total solar eclipse, sharing the wonders of the bats' emergence for the night, peering into bluebird houses, and studying the Gulf's treasures on the shoreline. We learn from each other and can be science nerds together. How fun is that?

April Rohlich



April was born in San Angelo, moved to the Texas panhandle, then arrived in Austin at age 6. She has remained an Austin resident since 1969, exploring the ever-changing Central Texas landscape.

At age 19, she was promoted from part time employee to restaurant manager. After her 32-year career with the company, she began an early retirement. She and her husband enjoyed traveling to Peru, Bolivia, Japan, Europe and throughout the United States.

On a summer day in 2016, she was hiking at Bright Leaf Preserve looking for new adventures. There, she was introduced to a visiting Master Naturalist. She eagerly learned about the program, considered the nearby chapters and enrolled with Good Water in the Spring of 2017. The privilege of spending time with animals, including humans, in their native habitats has been inspiring. She has also enjoyed playing with word pairings such as Earn your Turtle and Lots of Ocelots.

April is looking forward to working with everyone at natural jewels Berry Springs, Garey Park and River Ranch. Having attended the October state conference in Corpus Christi, she is excited about the chapter hosting the upcoming 20th annual!

For information about the Good Water Chapter
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