

Good Water Ripples

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T E X A S



2018 Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting

UPCOMING EVENTS

12/13	NPSOT (potluck)
12/18	GWMN (potluck)
1/10	NPSOT
1/24	GWMN
1/28	Austin Butterfly Forum
2/11	WAG
2/14	NPSOT
2/25	Austin Butterfly Forum
2/28	GWMN

Check the website for additional events including volunteer and training opportunities. The events are too numerous to post here.

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The Annual Meeting for the Texas Master Naturalists was held in Georgetown this year. Master Naturalists from all over the state gathered for a 4 day weekend of education and camaraderie.



There was an all day workshop on prescribed burns conducted by the Texas Parks & Wildlife's Chris Schenk and the TPWD Fire Program team. A demonstration burn was conducted at River Ranch County Park using hay to demonstrate backing fires, heading fires and strip-heading methods of conducting a prescribed burn.

Good Water members share their experiences at the Annual Meeting:

"This my first TMN Annual Meeting to attend and managed to get to most of it! The sheer range of topics to hear speakers on was truly amazing and it was difficult choosing what to attend! I went to presentations that would be relevant to me both personally and professionally and was not disappointed. I do look forward to next years conference to go on some field trips and see more of the state's natural wonders! It was also fun to hang out with some of our MNs outside of monthly meetings." Jessica Woods

"This year's State meeting was truly amazing. Hats off to everyone involved! I'm already looking forward to Rockwall! For me the effort started in February I believe with the Field Trip planning committee. Excitement began to grow as the year progressed and seeing the number of people registering as well as the large quantity of planned field trips. The weather broke in favor of a beautiful weekend! There were still

"I thought this is incredible. We did like a 10 mile hiking trip and it just completely changed my perspective of what a watershed is and what a landscape is." Ben Masters, TMN annual meeting Keynote Speaker 2018

2018 Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting (Continued from Page 1)

stresses associated with the field trip but, all in all they were well received. I met so many new friends as well as reacquainting with old. I won 3rd place in a photo contest for my Pearl Milkweed image.” Mike Farley

“I feel, as a new trainee, that the opportunity to spend time with so many members of the Master Naturalist program gave me a wonderful sense of how numerous and active they are. I'm excited to be a part of Texas Master Naturalists.” Helen Elkins

“I attended several field sessions that were informative and invigorating. My first session on Friday was an all-day field trip to Milton Reimers Ranch Park and Hamilton Pool, led by Christie Gardner. In the morning small groups of Master Naturalists wandered along the trails by the Pedernales River sharing information about butterflies, bees, cactus, trees, native and invasive plants. What we didn't know, we would find out by googling or posting pictures to iNaturalists. The highlight of the day and the whole weekend was the breathtaking falls at Hamilton Pool. The hike through cypress trees and fern to the pool was gorgeous. We even spotted a porcupine in the top of a tree close to the falls. Because of recent rains, everyone, who had been to the falls before, agreed that they had never seen the falls look more spectacular. I hated leaving Hamilton Pool and can't wait for an opportunity to return. The last field session I attended was to Old Settlers Park on Sunday afternoon. Tania Homayoun of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and James Giocomo of American Bird Conservancy were two of the leaders who spotted shrikes and educated the participants about urban grassland birds and their habits. Although I am a novice birder and do not even own a pair of binoculars, I loved learning about the birds in that area. The pond close to the soccer fields was a great area for birders and we saw many birds, including herons and egrets.” Nancy Martin

Thank you to the businesses that donated to the Silent Auction for the Annual Meeting!

Georgetown

Dragonfly Sage
The Williamson Museum
For The Birds
Georgetown Winery
Pinot's Palette
Mesquite Creek Outfitters
Gabriel Valley Farms
Texas Design Company
DIVA
The Escape
Antiques and Artisans
Inner Space Cavern

Pflugerville

Costco

Cedar Park

Sam's Club - Cedar Park
Hill Country Water Gardens
Natural Grocers
Half Price Books
Julia Oldham Watercolors
Pinott's Palate
Texas Design Company

Round Rock

Jack Allen's Kitchen - Round Rock
Living Waters Fly Fishing
Round Rock Garden Center

Hutto

Creative Touch

Austin

Melissy Jo Handmade Jewelry
Two Hives Honey
Root Designs

Taylor

Friends of the Bride

Gladewater

Cavity Nester Conservancy

Other

Gang Plank Chairs
Photo Art by Dave

Finding Your Park by Amy Flinn

Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? ~ Mary Oliver

Mike and I are about to celebrate our third year as Texas Master Naturalists and we plan to spend as much time in the wild (after spending well over half our lives in public service often wandering the expanses of Texas - and other places, collecting great experiences and stories - some true) as possible. Most recently we have embraced the current theme of the National Park Foundation, "Find Your Park" ("Encuentra Tu Parque"). That idea, finding one's park, (encountering it, embracing it, committing to it) is very much on our minds these days as local and national parks are endangered by funding issues and development pressures.

We hiked in a nearby preserve recently and I shared with another hiker that I was glad I had made the hike, but that this wasn't my park. He challenged me – "**Why not?**" He demanded a response. "**What is wrong with this place?**" I found myself defending my statement. I recited a number of reasons that it wasn't my park, but realized that many I listed should rule out some, if not most, of our favorites. So, why not this park?

How does it happen exactly? How do you decide a park is YOUR PARK? Do you really decide or does the park whisper in your ear – "**I'm your park.**" Is it love at first sight or is it one of those things that grows on you? Does something happen on that first visit that leads to a second and a third and suddenly – it's your park before you realize it? What captures your imagination and makes you yearn for a return trip?

Is it the view across the pond at Berry Springs Park and Preserve?



Berry Springs Park & Preserve,
Williamson County



Yettie Polk Park,
Belton, Bell County, Texas

Is it the Great Blue Heron that greets you and poses for a photo every morning at Yettie Polk Park?

Is it the Bluebonnet clearings at Cedar Creek Wildlife Management Area?



Cedar Creek Wildlife Management Area,
Bell County, Texas

Mike says, "*It can be all kinds of different things. It's not really a science. It's more of an art. It's how you respond to the place - how it makes you feel.*" I like that explanation. But for me, it's simply something you know – whether it happens the first time your feet touch the ground or your appreciation comes gradually with repeat visits.

“Leaves” them Be! Don’t Toss that Fallen Foliage

By Martin Byhower

Tired of raking and bagging all those leaves? Hate dragging them to the curb? Running to Home Depot to buy more lawn bags? Or maybe you are paying a lot of money for your lawn folks to use noisy blowers and then haul off your unwanted “browns”?

A better option is to simply mulch-mow all the leaves that fall onto your lawn. (You can rake the ones that fall into your garden beds and walkways onto your lawn first.) You may need to go over a spot one, or occasionally two additional times, until the leaves are in dime-sized pieces or smaller, but it will be worth it! (Now you know why you see some folks “mowing” their brown lawns in winter!)



Recent studies by Michigan State University and others confirm that leaving your leaves as shredded mulch has the following benefits:

- decomposes to become rich compost
- retains moisture (reducing amount of watering necessary)
- prevents weeds (!)
- provides essential nutrients to your lawn and garden
- insulates soil from drying out or freezing
- reduces or ends the need for fertilizers, weed killers, even aeration
- keeps a huge amount of waste out of landfills

I have large Live and Post Oaks, Cedar Elms, and other trees growing over my Emerald Zoysia lawn, and I’ve been mulching my yard leaves during the 3 years I have lived in Sun City. I have never used any sort of supplements, pesticides, or herbicides on my lawns, and I challenge anyone to detect any difference between my yard and those of my neighbors! The mulched leaves magically blend in or break down and disappear within days after mulching, as the soil microorganism go to work turning them into plant-pleasing organic matter. Mulching the leaves actually prevents problems caused by leaving the leaves in place. If you have a lawn service, they already know this and should be happy to do it for you (if not, hire someone better!)

A few more notes. Nitrogen is what greens up your lawn. Lawn clippings and deer poop contribute nitrogen back to your soil, and good old rainwater is also an excellent source (lightning striking Nitrogen molecules in the atmosphere converts them to nitrates, which then dissolves in, and fall as, raindrops).

And if you DO have excess leaves to dispose of, consider putting them in a reusable plastic or metal trash bin, which you have labeled “yard waste” with a marking pen or paint, on your curb on the first recycle day of each month. These go to the transfer station near San Gabriel Park and are turned into mulch, which the city will give back to you free of charge! OR...I have some sticker labels that you can use. Let me know if you want one; eventually they will be offered to all Sun City and Georgetown residents.

Time to Replace Invasive Nandina with Native Berry Plants By Betty Saenz



Nandina
Photo by Rachel Cywinski
<https://TexasInvasives.org>

If you have invasive Nandina in your yard, now is the time to get rid of it before the beautiful Cedar Waxwing birds (*Bombycilla cedrorum* <https://xtbba.tamu.edu/species-accounts/cedar-waxwing/>) arrive in December. Nandina domestica is also known as heavenly bamboo or sacred bamboo but there is nothing sacred or heavenly about having this poisonous plant in your yard. No, it is a killer! Not just the berries but all parts of the plant are poisonous and could be fatal if ingested. The berries can kill birds and other animals like cats, dogs or grazing animals like horses who may ingest them or other parts of the plant. The Nandina's berries contain highly toxic hydrogen cyanide (HCN) which is poisonous to all animals and humans.

For more information see <http://ar.audubon.org/news/nandina-berries-kill-birds>

Instead of Nandina, why not plant native evergreen plants like *Ilex vomitoria* (Yaupon Holly), *Leucophyllum frutescens* (Cenizo) and *Salvia greggii* (Autumn sage) or semi-evergreen choice of *Malpighia glabra* (Acerola or Barbados cherry). You can make a great tea to drink out of Yaupon and its bright, red berries are lovely and non toxic to our birds. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/08/04/429071993/heres-the-buzz-on-americas-forgotten-native-tea-plant> Why not welcome hungry migratory birds with healthy alternatives, native berries and fruits to enjoy from yaupons, Possum haw holly (*Ilex decidua*), mistletoe, Hackberry (*Celtis* spp.) and other natives!

River Ranch County Park Workday by Patrick McElhinney



An even dozen GWC members got a “two-fer” Workday at the River Ranch County Park on Saturday, November 17. Six of the group – John Clifford, Lynne Hester, Faye Hubele, Holly Stave (with son, Ben), and Shannon Spann – under the supervision of County Park employee, Alie Urista, took advantage of the fact that native grasses are at the height of their inflorescence and collected seeds for later distribution throughout the park.

The others – Mary-Gail Hamilton, Trish Lopacki, Patrick McElhinney, Mike Rodgers, Randy Spurlock, and Bob Waring – assisted park employees Cody Smith and Brandon Westmoreland in removing debris and widening of trails.

The contract for the Phase I development of the park has been let by the County, and work is expected to begin soon. There still will be plenty work for Master Naturalist volunteers to help get the Park ready for its opening, probably in late 2019. Another Workday is scheduled for Saturday, December 15. Call or email Patrick McElhinney (pjm124@columbia.edu) for more details.

Junior Master Naturalists Night Moths



Snowy Urola Moth
Photo by Mary Ann Melton



Gracile Palpita Moth
Photo by Mary Ann Melton



Samea, Crambid Snout Moth
Photo by Mary Ann Melton



Chalcedony Midget
Photo by Mike Farley



Spotted Beet Webworm Moth
Photo by Mike Farley



Eggplant Leafroller Moth
Photo by Mike Farley



Drab Brown Wave
Photo by Mike Farley



Common Eupithecia Moth
Photo by Mike Farley

Junior Master Naturalist Night Insect Field Trip by Amy Flinn

See the entire story at <http://walkinthepark-padimus.blogspot.com/2018/11/fountain-of-youth-woohoo.htm>

The Junior Master Naturalist field trip took us to Berry Springs Park and Preserve - in the dark.

BEFORE the dark we set up two stations with bright lights and screens so we could attract, observe, catch, photograph, and identify the insects and moths that showed up. And they showed up. As darkness fell, JMNs and parents arrived and prepared for the evening of "catch and release."

It was the first time for me to meet with this big new group. There were eager faces - some familiar,* some sibling, and some new. These trainees were busy taking notes and focused on the task at hand. Volunteers and parents joined in.

Two groups peeled off to head to a nearby pavilion where scorpions were often observed. "I'm a like a wolf. I can see in the dark," said one of the young people as we headed out to see if we could find scorpions with an ultraviolet light.* The scorpions did not show up, but caterpillars, spiders, a frog, and a praying mantis kept us on our toes.



Our mascot** took over the hike at the end of the final hike. "Raise your hand if you think those tracks were made by a duck!" he directed. Yes, this is the next generation of naturalists. It is a privilege to walk among them.

NOTES:

*Our program allows for a young person to take it three years. So some of the participants took the classes last year. I remember them from the frog class, field trips, and their volunteer project.

**The grandson of one of the steadfast volunteers. He attends more meetings than I do.

Exploring Leaf Litter First Methodist Church Round Rock

Photos by Jennifer Gustafson & Mary Ann Melton



Centipede



Wood Louse



Twin Flagged Jumping Spider



Click Beetle Larvae

From the President's Desk by Charles Grimes



As I sit at my desk reflecting on the last 5 years as President, I am amazed and overwhelmed thinking about the strides we have made as a chapter. Everyone has helped to make improvements in virtually every area of our chapter...way too many to list and I couldn't be more proud of our board, accomplished project leaders and members. Good Water chapter volunteers are always learning and improving their skills and applying them in the field, whether it's removing invasive plants, teaching a class, guiding a hike or the hundreds of other things you do.

YOU have made it happen and have made a difference. Many of you have stepped up into leadership roles and have proven to be skilled and enthusiastic! The infectious dedication and care for your projects have inspired others to participate and to become passionate leaders and volunteers themselves. It is this enthusiasm that was demonstrated when Good Water stepped up to make this year's annual meeting the absolute best ever....in every metric. Congratulations and thanks to you all.

For 2019, I will step out of the Presidents role, but remain on the chapter board as Past President and will assist in that role anyway I can. I am looking forward to spending more time side by side with folks out in the field and getting involved with our chapter projects and efforts that are expanding and coming online in 2019. Plus...I just want to spend more "hands on" time outdoors, which is the fun part of what we do!

Berry Springs Park & Preserve



United Way Day of Service 2018



Decorating for Christmas

Berry Springs will be working with United Way of Williamson County and hosting United Way Day of Service on Monday, Martin Luther King Holiday January 21st 8:30am-Noon. We will continue to develop the Nature Trail. A sign up will be sent out as time draws nearer to the event date. Hope to see you there.



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

