

Good Water Ripples

Vol. 8 • No. 1 | February/March 2019

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



Mark your Calendar:

- 2/9 Gault Site Bio-Survey
- 2/11 Master Gardeners*
- 2/14 Native Plant Society (NPSOT)*
- 2/16 NPSOT - Garey Park Plant Survey
- 2/17 Native Prairie Society Nature Walk & Workday Indian Grass Prairie (Austin)
- 2/21 Travis Audubon*
- 2/23 GWMN River Ranch Workday
- 2/25 Austin Butterfly Forum*
- 2/28 Master Naturalists*
- 3/2 Berry Springs Annual Clean Up and Potluck
- 3/9 Gault Site Bio-Survey
- 3/11 Master Gardeners*
- 3/28 Master Naturalists*
- 3/30 River Ranch Workday

*Indicates Chapter Meeting



Fall Training Class Graduates

Congratulations to members of the 2018 Fall Training class. Graduates move to the pledge phase of membership until they complete 40 hours of volunteer work and eight hours of advanced training.

2019 Spring Training Class Begins Soon

by Mary Ann Melton

Good Water Master Naturalist (GWMN) Spring Training Class will start Tuesday afternoon, March 5. The last class will be May 21.

The class meets on Tuesday afternoons from 1:00-5:00 p.m. Some classes and field trips will be on Saturdays. Cost is \$150 and includes the comprehensive 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. Check the GWMN website at <http://txmn.org/>

goodwater after February 15, 2019 for the link to the schedule.

Bill Neville, one of our Fall Training class members says, "After my Master Naturalist training, my senses seem to have been re-calibrated. I see nature in a different way. My eyes and ears now seem to be tuned in to new sights and sounds that I wasn't aware of prior to training."

Texas Master Naturalists are people who still like to play in the dirt and are willing to get their feet wet and their hands dirty.

Continued on Page 2

Spring Training Class Continued

We are a volunteer organization and we have many opportunities to serve. Good Water Master Naturalists volunteer at many parks in Williamson County, provide nature education to children and adults in many different settings, and participate in many Citizen Science projects such as Texas Stream Team Monitoring, Cornell's eBird, and iNaturalist.

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, rangeland management, forest ecology, birds, mammals,

fish, insects, botany, climate, geology and archaeology.

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

Visit the GWMN website for online training registration: <https://txmn.org/goodwater/Training-class-online-application/> 🐦



Fall Class participants enjoy a plant identifying field trip at Booty Road Park (top), learn about bats from the Austin Bat Refuge (left insert), and learn about tree species and identification (bottom right), during the months of training.

2019 GWMN Board:

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Mary Ann Melton

Youth Development Dir. -

Mary Ann Melton

At Large Dir. 1 - Jim Hailey

At Large Dir. 2 - Bob Waring

New Class Rep. Dir. Fall - Open

New Class Rep. Dir. Spring -

Linda Lippe

Newsletter Editor - Lori Franz

Newsletter Design - Holly Zeiner



For more information about the Good Water Chaper

contact us at:

<http://txmn.org/goodwater>

or

goodwatermn2@gmail.com

Gault Site Bio-Survey

by Tonja Hamel, Project Leader

Despite the cold damp air on Saturday, January 26th, Helen Elkins, Rowan Prothro, and Hunter Yarbrough joined me at the Gault Site in Florence for our monthly bio-survey. We logged 29 species for the day.

The next bio-survey will be February 9th, 8:30 to 11:30am. These observations are posted on iNaturalist.org and used for future site development and tours. Use Sign-Up Genius to sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0a4ba-ca722aa8-gault>

Wear walking shoes and comfortable walking clothes appropriate for daily weather conditions. Bring water, bug spray and camera. Contact Tonja Hamel at metotx@gmail.com for more information. 🐛

Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker photo below from Gault Site Survey. (Photo: Hunter Yarbrough)



*Adopt the pace of
nature; her secret is
patience.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Photo: Mike Farley

FIELD NOTES

My Kissing Bug Experience

by Mike Farley

In summer of 2018 I wrote an article about Assassin bugs. The family Reduviidae began to peak my interest once I realized I had documented about half the species in Williamson County.

During that research, I learned more about a sub-family of that group known as the kissing bugs. The Triatomine family is a nocturnal group that requires a blood meal from mammals. Research shows that of the 11 species of kissing bugs in the US, Texas has the largest diversity. Some 55% are known to be infected with the *Trypanosoma cruzi* parasite that can cause Chagas disease. These results are gathered from a collection of 3,000 specimens, most of which were sent to the lab by ordinary citizens all across Texas.

In late September of 2018 I found my first kissing bug crawling on the concrete foundation of my workplace, a newly relocated manufacturing business in a brand new building just east of SH 130 on SH 29.

The area is surrounded by properties containing, chickens, goats, sheep, horses,

and cattle.

I captured the insect and preserved it in alcohol. This allows for the best genetic testing versus dispatching with ethyl acetate. Once removed and dried, I packaged it up in a small protective container for shipping to the Hamer lab in College Station. My initial email communications with the lab were not met with immediate response, until I added an image of the bug. At this point my bug was on the radar and on its way to being a statistic for the good of all mammals, especially dogs and humans.

Dr. Sarah Hamer, who runs the lab, realized early on that the citizen reporting and submissions have a much larger impact than with staff-only collecting.

After about a three month wait, I received notice from the lab that my bug had a negative result for the presence of *T. cruzi* parasite. The image included here is from another kissing bug I found the following day at the same area.

News release: <http://vetmed.tamu.edu/news/press-releases/dr-sarah-hamer-protects-human-animal-lives-through-kissing-bugs-project>

Link: <https://kissingbug.tamu.edu/> 🐛

2019 GWMN
Project Chairs:

Angler Education -

Jim Nelson

Balcones Canyonland -

Michael Brasel

Berry Springs P&P -

Susan Blackledge

Blackland Heritage Park -

Mary Ann Melton

Bluebird Count/Nest -

Christie Gardner

Citizen Science -

Open

Garey Park -

Jim Hailey

Gault Site Wildlife Survey -

Tonja Hamel

Good Water Book Club -

Dolores Hailey

Good Water Library -

Judy Grimes

Good Water Stream Team

Monitoring -

Randy Spurlock

Habitat Dev. SGU Church -

Billye Adams

Liberty Park Taylor -

Pat Shrik/Bonnie Sladek

McNeil Bridge Bats -

Christie Gardner

Odonata Research -

Mike Farley

Pollinator Garden -

Elizabeth Sartain

River Ranch County Park -

David Armstrong

Patrick McElhinney

United Way Day of Service

**Berry Springs Park & Preserve Nature Trail Work Morning
Monday, January 21**

By Susan Blackledge

It was a chilly, sunny morning when 38 volunteers showed up to work on the Berry Springs Nature Trail in honor of United Way Day of Service/Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday! This was the seventh annual gathering to work on the Nature Trail Development. The trail is one-third of a mile loop with a scenic trail section that parallels Berry Creek. The focal point of the trail is two stone walls that appear to be what is left of a bridge that went over Berry Creek but was washed



away. The stonemason work is the same as the original dam that was built in 1846 at the millpond. The land that the trail is on is part of the original land that John Berry settled on in the 1800's. No one knows for sure the story of the walls and as of now it is a mystery.



The trail has sections that are named after the type of plant you will find on the different trails, such as Yucca Way, Prickly Pear Path and Cedar Grove. This spring should have a great showing of wildflowers. There is a cluster of Mexican Plums on

the trail that every spring when in bloom you can smell them and hear the bees humming before you see the trees on the trail.



Thank you to all who participated in this year's event. We did have a little excitement while working when a coral snake was found in the mulch we were spreading. It was quickly relocated off of the trail. It is a nature trail and one should always remember that you are in Mother Nature's home and be aware of your surroundings.



Mark your calendar for our Annual Spring Clean Up/Pot Luck scheduled for Sat. Mar. 2nd 8:30am-3:30 pm. An announcement and sign up will be sent out in February. 🐦

Worth a Look...



Photos from top left and moving clockwise:

New Wildlife Sign at Berry Springs (photo by Lori Franz);

Raven and Eagle, Canyon of the Eagles (photo by Mike Farley);

Fall 2018 Graduating class Birding Field Trip at Garey Park;

Canyon of the Eagles (photo by Mike Farley);

Pedro, Pat and Audette at Berry Springs Park (photo by Karen Schnell)



When It Rains It Spores

by Lori Franz

I recorded 6.98 on my CoCoRaHS rain gauge for October 2018. Guess that's no surprise with October being one of our wettest months of the year. Many locations had much more, it's true, with incredible effects from Mother Nature. I was really astonished by the variety and abundance of mushrooms that poked their caps above ground for all to see.

Mycology, the study of fungi is quite interesting, yet one with which I have little to no experience. We all know that fungi are fundamental for life on earth in

their symbiotic role, but I am intrigued most by the beauty and value of the mushroom.

For centuries, the mushroom has been used in religious and psychedelic movements (think psilocybin, and "Magic" Mushrooms). But current research focuses on mushrooms that may have hypoglycemic, anti-cancer, anti-pathogenic, and immune system-enhancing benefits. Scientists are looking for a way of incorporating fungi to aid in production of fresh food in space and the degradation of biological waste, without compromising the necessary sterile environment of a space capsule.

It goes without saying that touching

or ingesting unidentified mushrooms has its risks, but the culinary use of a trusted variety is rich in trace minerals, low in calories, fat and cholesterol free, not to mention very tasty. The Oyster mushroom is one of the most cultivated edible mushrooms. I have several friends who harvest all edibles but I'm still looking for the expert in the field to confirm my findings before I put one on my plate. 🐦

Mushrooms: 1. *Agaricus* (photo by Lori Franz); 2. *Parasola plicatillis* (photo by April Rohlich); 3. *Boletes* (photo by Susan Hickman); 4. *Leucocoprinus birnbaumii* (photo by April Rohlich); 5. *Calvatia bovista* (photo by Lori Franz); 6. *Tylopilus* (photo by Susan Hickman)



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3



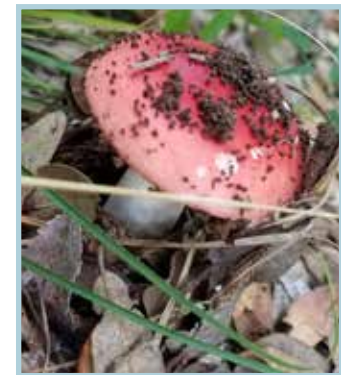
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*Look deep into nature,
and then you will under-
stand everything better.*

Albert Einstein

Calling all Writers

Have you ever considered telling others about your discoveries in nature? Got a backyard story or a recent trip adventure? There is no safer group who would like to hear about it than ours. Consider what you've marveled at and send it to me for our next newsletter. I want to see any photos you might have as well, related to your article or not.

Send submissions to gwmn.newsletter@gmail.com. Deadline March 13, 2019. Contact Lori Franz, Ripples newsletter editor, with any questions. 🐦

Garey Park Wildlife Viewing & Photography Blind Dedication

by Jim Hailey

Saturday, January 26, was the official dedication and opening of the Wildlife Viewing and Photography Blind constructed by the Good Water Chapter (GWC) at the new Garey Park. The dedication was held to honor and thank the generous organizations, local businesses and individuals who contributed either their time, talent or money to this project.

The volunteers of GWC put in over 700 hours to build the blind. The blind is a large structure that seats 20 people. It provides a glassed-in viewing area focused on a large water feature with flowing water and many feeders for birds.



On each end of the blind, photogra-

phers will have the opportunity to set up and take photographs of the wildlife, primarily birds, that visit the feeders and bathe in the water feature.

As Project Director I would like to thank all our contributors. McCoy's Building Supply donated all the lumber, D. Wright Inc., put in the concrete piers, Beacon Construction provided the water feature, Georgetown Deck & Fence installed the beautiful



split rail fence and partnered with American Fence Supply to provide the wire, Austin Landscape Supply provided landscape rock, Thermotic Glass provided the amazing glass, and Williamson

County Native Plant Society of Texas did the landscaping. Others who contributed

monetarily include, Wild Birds Unlimited, Williamson Audubon Group, Randy and Sandra Spurlock, Jim and Deb Hailey, Williamson County Sun, North America Nature Photographers Association, Texas Ornithological Society, and Cavity Nester Conservancy.

This would not be complete without thanking Georgetown Parks staff that supported this operation, specifically Terry Young, Paul Pekar, and Kenneth Elliot. In addition to the blind, GWC members have constructed a Nature trail along the river in the park. And finally, I would like to thank Jack and Cami Garey for donating this beautiful piece of property to the City of Georgetown.

If you haven't visited the park you should and please check out the blind. 🐦

UPSTREAM / DOWNSTREAM

2/6 • Williamson Co. Master Gardeners Gardening Series: Basic Garden Maintenance
<https://txmg.org/williamson/event/green-thumbs-up-gardening-series-basic-garden-maintenance-2/>

2/15 • Williamson Audubon Group Whooping Crane Field Trip - Rockport
<https://www.meetup.com/WilliamsonAudubonGroup/events/257041055/>

2/22 • Williamson Audubon Group Granger Lake Field Trip
<https://www.meetup.com/WilliamsonAudubonGroup/events/258197113/>

2/27-28 • Southwestern University Brown Symposium XXXIX "The Anthropocene"
<https://www.southwestern.edu/academics/brown-symposium/index.php>

River Ranch Update

by Patrick McElhinney

Good Water Chapter (GWC) members were in the audience on December 10 when Williamson County officials and others held the groundbreaking for Phase I development of the River Ranch County Park. The park is located southwest of Liberty Hill and contains more than 1,100 acres of meadowlands and woodlands. The land was purchased by the county in 2008, and the GWC, under Project Coordinator David Armstrong, has been involved since January, 2015.

The next workday is scheduled for Saturday, February 23. Contact Patrick McElhinney at pjm124@columbia.edu for more information.

Phase I Development will include

an area for day-use activities, primitive campsites, group campsites, and RV camping as well as Park headquarters, 10 to 12 miles of hiking and equestrian trails, and a maintenance compound. An Interpretive Center is under design and is planned for construction soon. The park is expected to be open in early 2020.

GWC members were initially involved in documenting this historic ranch in photographs as well as in oral and video histories. They also participated in plant, bird, and odonata surveys as well as in the recovery and safeguarding of antique ranching equipment.

Current work is centered on assisting the County Park staff in invasive plant removal, prairie restoration, native plant seed collection, and trail creation and maintenance. 🐦

From the President's Desk

by Wayne Rhoden



What a strange weather pattern this year. We have been blessed with many days of rain and some real winter weather for a change.

Of course everyone knows Texas weather is not predictable. It gives us something to talk about with our friends.

I want to welcome all our members to

the new year and more volunteer opportunities than ever before. I know we all breathed a sigh of relief after the whirlwind activities of last year hosting the annual State Conference. However, each year brings with it more projects where we can showcase the dedication of our members helping educate the folks in our communities in Williamson County.

Garey Park has opened, and we have been involved in some training with the park staff which we have to attend in order to volunteer at the park. We have some great educational talks, hikes and youth-oriented sessions in the park. This year should also bring on more opportu-

nities at River Ranch Park.

We also were excited that the Williamson County Commissioners voted to not allow the wastewater line to go through Berry Springs Park and Preserve. The park was the first volunteer opportunity we had when we started the Good Water Chapter.

Finally, I want to thank all the officers, directors and project chairs for stepping up to lead our chapter to bigger and better things. I look forward to working and volunteering with each of you throughout the year and to attending the annual meeting in Rockwall Texas on Lake Ray Hubbard this fall. 🐦

Mary Ann Melton Hits 4,000 Hours!

by Mary Ann Melton

Mary Ann Melton has earned the 4000-hour milestone pin and the U.S. Presidential Volunteer Service Award. She took her Master Naturalist training in the Lost Pines Chapter in 2009.

At Lost Pines she did some nature photography classes at Bastrop State Park and helped with a children's activity time at the park. Mary Ann served on the Steering Committee for the forming chapter in Williamson County where she has lived since late 2009. As part of that Steering Committee she headed up the Training Committee for the 2010 Training Class. When the chapter formed, she was the first Vice President in 2010. In

2011, she became President. At the end of 2011, the Youth Education Committee formed and Mary Ann has served as chair of that committee from its inception to the present. In 2013, Mary Ann became the Communications Director overseeing the website and the newsletter. Over time she has volunteered at many of the chapter projects including the WILCO Pollinator Garden, River Ranch County Park, outreach booths in Hutto and Georgetown as well as the many Youth Development activities.

Mary Ann uses her photography to document the flora and fauna around her with iNaturalist and eBird. She loves travel and birding. She has taken the Master Entomology Training and is certified for that specialty.

Mary Ann has been writing a biweekly nature column that began in the Hutto News in 2011 and is currently being published in the Taylor Press.

In 2018, she served as the chair for the Field Trip Committee for the 2018 Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting. In other parts of her life, Mary Ann Melton is a published nature photographer. 🐦



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