

Good Water Ripples

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Lori Franz, Editor • Holly Zeiner, Layout/Design



City Nature Challenge 2019: Austin totals contribute globally

By Lori Franz and Mike Farley

Each year the City Nature Challenge (CNC) takes us to task in a competition to capture what is outside our door. Austin competes with Dallas and Houston in particular, and globally as well for the greatest number of observations and species within the four-day period.

Williamson County is in the Greater Austin area and our chapter contributed quite a bit this year. Final count of the three areas is listed below. I think we did pretty darn good.

Austin - 16,001 observations; 2,295 species; and 757 identifiers

Dallas - 36,370 observations; 2,637 species; and 1,008 identifiers

Houston - 24,534 observations; 3,367 species; and 898 identifiers

The Global Winner was Cape Town, South Africa with a whopping 53,763 observations and 4,588 species recorded. Wow!

Sixteen GWMN members offered up a combined total of 1,717 observations and 1,225 species. I tried to find all GWMN members who participated and apologize if your name is not among the

list. Alongside Mike and me were: Erin Bohls, Casey Carter, Tonja Hamel, Mary Long, Todd McCann, Mary Ann Melton, Sabrina Palmieri, Rowan Prothro, Nikki Qualls, April Rohlich, Betty Saenz, Larry Swift, and Bob Waring.



As a newbie, I hoped for 50 observations and ended up with 66. That seemed like a lot to me until I saw who won the Austin number one spot for the most ob-

servations. Mike Farley from our chapter recorded 713 observations! Amazing. I asked Mike about his strategy. According to Mike, this is how he did it:

This year I decided to anchor each end of my CNC weekend with major locations and extended time efforts there. The two days in the middle were for all my usual locations with conserved energy as they fit into my schedule and area of focus, as well as time for the Red Poppy festival and early voting in local elections.

The CNC always starts and ends with backyard moothing. When I awoke for the opening day Friday morning, I already had 43 species from midnight to 1:30 a.m. By 8:00 a.m., I was on my way to

Comanche Bluff Trail at Granger Lake. I only spent six and a half hours in the lake area as a leaky tire was cause for concern. After a rest and refuel at home, I went to Berry Springs for familiar landscape.

Much of my local observations come from extensive time in the field, and certain plants or habitats become way points on a map of known species. In walking these familiar paths from point to point there are always many other organisms that volunteer themselves to my eyes. One such surprise to me this year was the Star Milkvine also called Purple Star Milkvine. (See photo of Star Milkvine at left.)

On the first day everything is on the table. Species are right and left everywhere you look. On the succeeding days

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Mark your Calendar

- 6/10 Master Gardener*
- 6/13 Native Plant Society*
- 6/24 Austin Butterfly Forum*
- 6/27 Master Naturalist*
- 6/29 GWMN River Ranch Workday
- 7/8 Master Gardener*
- 7/25 Master Naturalist*

*Indicates Chapter Meeting

City Nature Challenge 2019: Austin Continued

it is much harder to find unique species so changing location can help, but it is always more walking and looking than snapping pics.

The last day was a trip to Balcones Canyonslands, National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) Doeskin Ranch with four hours on three trails. My total numbers were: Friday 26th, 304 observations in 15 hours; Sat. 27th, 107 observations in eight hours; Sun. 28th, 148 observations in eight hours; and Monday 29th, 153 observations in 12 hours.

Each year after the challenge I think of ways to improve my efforts and am excited about testing these ideas for next year. The edit/upload was very unpleasant for my eyes, since done in a two-day/29 hour effort. I will spread that out more next



time!

Mike's experience was much more involved than mine. I dedicated less time, but my camera and phone were pretty close by for four days, focusing on the animal kingdom and what it has to offer when one shuts off the world for an intense period. And the advantage of that self-education is only part of it.

With iNaturalist, you meet those who specialize in certain genera and help you with identification. Plus, the scientific community discovers populations in the area. It's a good cause all the way around.

I did note that the most recorded

observations were Plants, followed by Insects, and then Birds.

I encourage you to take part next year in the 2020 CNC. It's easy. With the iNaturalist app, you just take a picture of a plant or animal, and the community will help identify which species it is. Any observation in the greater metropolitan area of Austin will count during the four-day challenge. You can participate by exploring the life in your backyard, in your local park, or on a field trip with your local naturalist group.



The CNC is organized by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and California Academy of Sciences.

Created by: texasnature-trackers - December 14,

2018. Project admins: texasnaturetrackers taniahomayoun kestrel

Field Notes: Dandelions

By Winnie Bowen

It seems everyone I talk to this year has a major complaint of the excess of weeds. My gardens are no exception although I'm seeing weeds I've not encountered before. The thistles are easy to get up with the root intact. The dandelions are another story. No matter how I dig or how careful I am, I manage to break off the root four-five inches down. So I know I shall have another crop soon.

Generally I don't mind as the little bees love them. I will try to capture the spent blossoms before they go to seed and spread everywhere.

In days before dogs ran wild every-



where, during WW II Italian women would walk my neighborhood and dig dandelions wherever they found them, and no one seemed to mind. Now I know why. They used them as a vegetable dish and now I wish I knew just how they cooked them. My dandelions are in a fenced yard and since I use no pesticides or chemicals I'm giving serious thought into harvesting them for my dinner table instead of tossing them in the trash. Sorry, I don't have a compost pile.

Here is what you may not know: dandelions are low in Saturated Fat, and very low in Cholesterol. They are a good source of fo-

late, magnesium, phosphorus and copper; and a very good source of dietary fiber, Vit. A, Vit. C, Vit. E (Alpha Tocopherol), Vit. K, thiamine, riboflavin, Vit. B6, calcium, iron, potassium manganese, and are a good source of protein.

According to the USDA Bulletin #8, Composition of Foods (Haytowitz and Matthews 1984), dandelions rank in the top four green vegetables in overall nutritional value. Minnich, in Gardening for Better Nutrition ranks them, out of all vegetables, including grains, seeds and greens, as tied for ninth best. According to these data, dandelions are nature's richest green vegetable source of beta-carotene, from which Vit. A is created, and the third richest source of Vit. A of all foods, after cod-liver oil and beef liver!

I have a new attitude about dandelions these days and will be a little more thoughtful when digging 'em up.

Colorado Bend State Park

By Jennifer Gustafson

Colorado Bend State Park is home to hidden nature gems such as spring fed swimming holes, waterfalls, caves, limestone bluffs, wildlife and six miles of river front access to the Colorado River.

Geology aficionados will want to visit Gorman Falls. Gorman Falls is a 70 foot waterfall with travertine formations created through the slow accumulation of mineral deposits from the spring water. It is accessible through a three mile hike over rough terrain and, due to the fragile ecosystem, no swimming is allowed. Swimmers should head over to the Spice-wood Springs trail which leads you to a series of spring-fed swimming holes.

Entrance Fees: Adults \$5 and children 12 years and under are free

Activities:

- Visit Gorman Falls - A 70-foot spring fed travertine waterfall
- Hikers and Mountain Bikers - 35 miles of trails to enjoy
- Swimming - Spice-wood Springs trail will lead you to a series of spring-fed swimming holes

- Fishing - Six miles of Colorado River frontage access for fishing and boating
- Kayaking/ boating - Rent kayaks on-site or bring your own
- Caving - Over 400 caves to explore and tour reservations are required
- Backpacking/Camping - Primitive and tent sites available by reservation

Hours of Operation: Gate is open from 6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. Spring and Summer are the busy season and when parking is full the park will close for up to four hours. Call the park for closure information.

NOTE: The park is closed periodically throughout the hunting season (December-January).

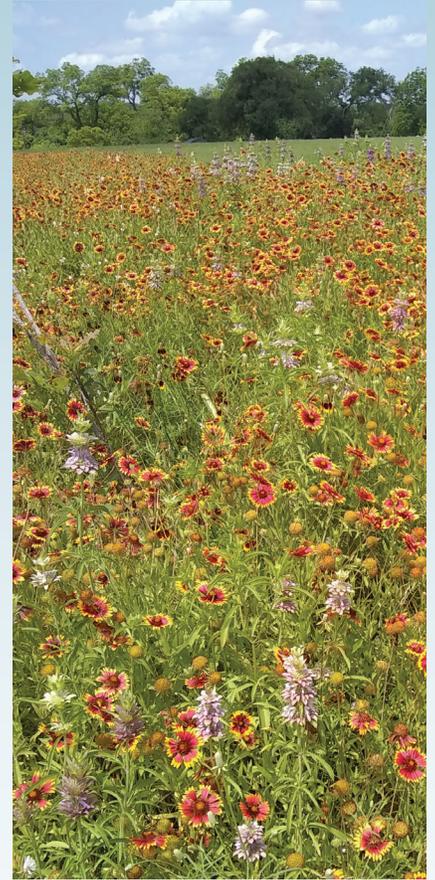
Address: PO Box 118 Bend, TX 76824

GPS: Latitude N 31 01 22.40

Longitude W 98 26 32.67

Phone: (325) 628-3240

Website: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/colorado-bend> 🐦



Berry Springs Seed Cleaning

Anyone wanting to participate in harvesting and/or cleaning seeds should contact Susan Blackledge now. She will work with your schedule and show you where to harvest & clean beds.

You can at that time take the seeds home with you to clean them and receive additional volunteer hours. Afterwards you can either bring the cleaned seeds to a meeting or bring them back to the park.

Please put your name and how much time you spent working on the container. Contact Susan at 512-844-4820 or sblackledge@wilco.org 🐦



Dragonfly Art in Drought Tolerant Garden. the Drought Tolerant Garden is located ????????????????

Pygmy Owls and Longhorn Cows

By Hunter Yarbrough

When the railroad told Henrietta King they were only interested in building lines to existing communities, she said, “Okay, give me a minute.” (I might be paraphrasing.) Two years later the railroad company moved their entire headquarters to the newly established city of Kingsville.

That’s the way things are done in Kleberg County, a land that even today can seem a country of its own. The 825,000 acre King Ranch is nearly as famous as Texas itself, with its unique brand of cattle, grass, fences, chicken recipes and in recent years, Ford pickups. (We’ll get back to the chicken in a minute.)

Deep within the nearly 1,300 square miles of this ranch are churches, schools, communities, miles of roads (paved, unpaved, and formerly known as paved), vast forests, hundreds of gates (electric, double-bump, single-bump and “get out and hold it for me, Jim”), giant exotic deer, and one very tiny owl.

Okay, there’s probably more than one owl. But if you want to see the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, you really only have one place to go. Luckily, the ranch has embraced both tourism and conservation for many years, so jumping fences and keeping a lookout for cars isn’t necessary to find the fierce little owl with eyes in the back of his head and a voice like a cheap car alarm.

Recently, a small group of us had the opportunity to join Jim and Deb Hailey

on their big year stopover at the Norias Division of the King Ranch. In typical Jim Hailey fashion, we didn’t get a standard run-of-the-mill-tour. We got THE tour.

Our adventure started Friday morning, where a short walk in Dick Kleberg Park netted a common nighthawk, yellow warbler, orchard and bullocks orioles, a black throated green warbler, a very busy curve-billed thrasher, and many others.

Meeting up with the rest of the group at noon, we divided into three cars and headed out for some coastal birding after a quick lunch at

Harrel Drug store, in downtown Kingsville.

Many thanks to Randy and Sandra Spurlock for “try-to-keep-up-with-Jim-without-running-into-Jim-when-Jim-stops-for-birds” chauffer duties.

The highlight for this afternoon would be hawks, followed by dinner at the Kings Inn. Jim says the same family has been running this place since he came here

as a boy, dating back to the 1800’s.

Saturday morning, early, we met our guide: King Ranch biologist Tom Langschied at the Santa Gertrudis Division visitor’s center.

Potty breaks were a requirement – the next gate was an hour away, and the only bathroom was in a barn somewhere beyond that. Waivers were signed, spotting scopes were loaded, ticks were sprayed for, then sprayed again for good measure, then we all climbed aboard a battered Ford van with the famous running “W” brand on the door.

Our first goal this morning was – of course, the owl. Stopping on a likely stretch of ranch road a mile inside the gate, Tom called and listened for the distinctive sound of the pygmy owl. No luck here.

Down the road for a second try, we met up with another group, also searching. Maybe it was the larger crowd of groupies that drew him in, this time we heard the owl calling almost immediately. He appeared, posed for eight or nine hun-



GWMN birding trip to the King Ranch .



King Ranch fried chicken lunch.

dred photographs and seemed happy to have an audience. I eventually moved out of the way and allowed the others to take a couple of photos, as well.

From there the day was never-miss, non-stop action. A short hop down the road netted us a Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, and a Verdin, followed quickly by the first of many

Brown-Crested Flycatchers. Backtracking through division headquarters, we picked up a Botteri's Sparrow. Turkeys were too numerous to count, or even mention after a while.

Between bird sightings, we would catch a glimpse of coyotes, deer, and the rare (and bizarre) nilgai – something best described as a 400 pound Indian moose. These had been imported to the ranch during early conservation efforts. From my spot near the back of the van, it sounded to me like Tom was pointing and yelling “Nude Guy!”, so unfortunately I have no photos.

We broke for a late lunch at an old campground and Tom presented us with homemade fried chicken and potato salad from the King Ranch kitchen, followed by ginger cookies. Before the meal was over, Randy had spotted action in the trees, and we had a Black-Throated Green, and Nashville warbler, as well as a familiar Hill Country friend, a very lost Ruby-Crowned kinglet.

Driving deep into the vast live-oak forest below the division headquarters, we

found our last “goal” bird late in the day, a Tropical Parula.



Total count for the day from Deb's official list was 59. Our only “miss” was not finding a reported Pileated woodpecker. For a complete list of bird sightings, see below:

Species Name

- Blue-winged Teal
- Northern Shoveler
- Mottled Duck
- Northern Bobwhite
- Wild Turkey
- Rock Pigeon
- Common Ground-Dove
- Mourning Dove
- Greater Roadrunner
- Wilson's Plover
- Upland Sandpiper
- Whimbrel
- Baird's Sandpiper
- Spotted Sandpiper
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Cattle Egret
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Mississippi Kite
- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Harris's Hawk
- White-tailed Hawk
- Broad-winged Hawk
- Swainson's Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl
- Golden-fronted Woodpecker
- Ladder-backed Woodpecker
- Crested Caracara

- Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet
- Vermilion Flycatcher
- Brown-crested Flycatcher
- Great Kiskadee
- Couch's Kingbird
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
- Loggerhead Shrike
- White-eyed Vireo
- Green Jay
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow
- Black-crested Titmouse
- Verdin
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Northern Mockingbird
- Sprague's Pipit
- Botteri's Sparrow
- Cassin's Sparrow
- Olive Sparrow
- Lark Sparrow
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Hooded Oriole
- Altamira Oriole
- Bronzed Cowbird
- Great-tailed Grackle
- Nashville Warbler
- Tropical Parula
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Summer Tanager
- Northern Cardinal
- Indigo Bunting 🐦



The Ferruginous Pygmy Owl (top left) and the Tropical Parula (bottom right) are just two of the many species on the King Ranch.

Snake Spit

By Mike Farley

As a young boy I often heard the words “snake spit” used to describe frothy white spittle on lower plant stems. Never knowing whether this was true or not I cast cautious glances all around for the snakes hiding out as I walked. Pretty soon, evidence of snakes appeared to be everywhere, yet while chasing plenty of snakes as a boy I never saw any spitting on plants!

Spittlebugs, as they are known in larval nymph form, are from the family Aphrophoridae and superfamily Cercopoidea. They produce the spittle as a form of protection from predators while they feed on the sap of plants using sucking mouthparts. This also coincides with the arrival of springtime. The spittle is produced by mixing air from their abdomen with excess amounts of watery urine along with a mucilaginous substance excreted from the epidermal glands. The larvae must poke its abdomen tip outside of the frothy mixture to breathe and then retreats back inside.



There are approximately 930 subspecies in 160 genera worldwide, with 30 ssp. in 7 genera in the U.S. One species I managed to observe during the city nature challenge was the Hill-Prairie Spittlebug *Lepyronia gibbosa*.

Spittle bugs in the adult form are known as Froghoppers due to their ability to jump great distances compared to their relative size. 🐸

Free Youth Nature Programs Bring in Hundreds

By Madison Haynie, Recreation Program Coordinator, Garey Park

During April, the Good Water Master Naturalist Youth Committee led Youth Nature Programs at Garey Park one day per week for four weeks. The programming was free to the public and brought in an average of 225 people per day.

Each week focused on a different aspect of nature with kid-friendly activities. A special thanks to Mary Ann Melton, who coordinated the programming and pulled together some wonderful volunteers to help out each week.

The Activity Stations featured a wide range of topics including:



April 2 - Birds

Bird migration game, nests, beaks and feet, toilet paper roll bird feeder. Turkey anatomy and photos, turkey call and nest and egg. 190 attended.

April 9 - Insects and Butterflies

Butterfly plants, Butterfly life-cycle plate activity, pollinator game, aquatic invertebrates, bug mounting collecting station, and spider anatomy craft. 350 attended.

April 16 - Water on a penny – cohesion and adherence. Trailing water – wax paper water droplets (toothpick lead water; soap interferes). Floating and non-floating objects. Density of various liquids vs water. Floating paperclip. 250 attended

April 23 – Earth Day; Fossils

Rock Samples – igneous, sedimentary, metamorphic. Shell fossils. Paleontology: dig for the bones. Dinosaur claws and teeth. 154 attended

Thanks to all who worked on this:
Mary Ann Melton, Mike Farley,
Jennifer Gustafson, Anna Martin, April

Rohlich, A.J. Senchack, Mary Gail Hamilton, Carole Minnix, and Lori Franz. Everyone at Garey Park is excited to continue working with the Good Water Chapter to provide fun outdoor experiences for our community.

Upcoming programs include a Parks for Pollinators “Bioblitz” event that Garey Park will host June 14. With the help of experienced guides, participants will use their phones to take photos of different species within the park and upload them to a database. This community event will be open to the public. If you are interested in being a part of this event, please contact Garey Park at 512-930-6800. 🐝

For more information about
the Good Water Chapter
contact us at:

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

Spotters Save Lives!

By April Rohlich

Skywarn Storm Spotter classes train citizens to become the first line of defense for the protection of life and property. The basic course covers forms of severe weather, what National Weather Service (NWS) spotters do, and how to give specific reports to the NWS area contacts. The advanced course involves storm structure, the parameters NWS meteorologists look for to determine severe storm potential, and basic radar meteorology. These courses

were presented by Paul Yura, Warning Coordination Meteorologist. Good Water Master Naturalists Lisa Matthews, Lori Franz and April Rohlich were trained in these two courses.

Lisa said, "I have been interested in the weather for as long as I can remember. I took Meteorology for my science in college, my youngest son and I were part of the Weather Watcher network in Northern Colorado for about fifteen years. I have had several "close encounters" with extreme weather. Life got busy and I put this interest on the shelf until the March chapter meeting when we had an excellent presentation on CoCoRaHS. It rekindled my interest in meteorology. I love the variety of opportunities we have through GWMN and am excited to pursue this new/old area of interest and service."

As Naturalists, we find ourselves out in the field quite often. Being in Flash Flood Alley, we need to stay apprised of our ever-changing weather for everyone's safety. We are also prime citizens for helping report potential and current conditions we witness. Radar (radio detection and ranging) beams spread like a cone and

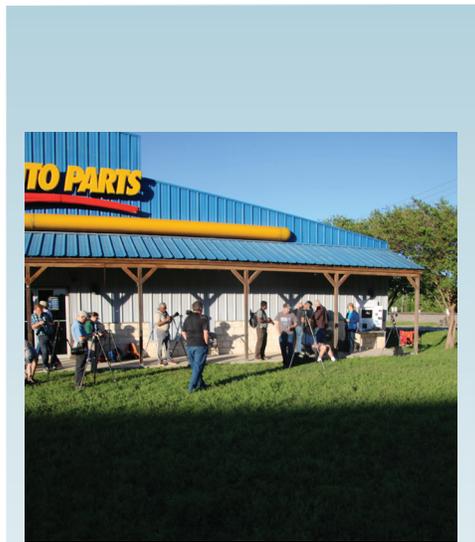
can only "see" slices of weather activity. We rely on aircraft soundings for additional reports.

April stated, "I enjoy recording observations of biodiversity for iNaturalist. Likewise, I may, hopefully rarely, report an observation of extreme rainfall, straight-line wind damage, funnel cloud formation or specific hail size from an exact location. This immediate data could

lead to the issuance of an Advisory, Watch or Warning reducing risk of life and property loss. Let's be safe out there and "Turn Around Don't Drown."

Lori had this response, "When I was young, I rode my horse all over the place. But my dad was real strict about bad weather and said not to ride in storms as livestock attract lightning. I asked our weather instructor about this and he said most livestock are killed because they are out there in great numbers, sometimes not so lucky taking safety under trees that can also fall and kill them. But as to livestock having a connection to an electrical charge – not so true."

It is recommended we each have at least three sources for weather warnings including weather radio, tv, cell phone apps, and emergency alerts such as WarnCentralTexas.org, ATXfloods.com, Texasflood.org, or Mobile.Weather.gov. Regional classes begin before Spring 2020. Online modules offer baseline training. Instructors are Ray Mejia, Emergency Management Coordinator, and Paul Yura, Warning Coordination Meteorologist at NWS 🐦



Bat Interpretation a Success

On Thursday April 18, 2019, the Goodwater Master Naturalists conducted a Bat Interpretation for the North Austin Photographic Society meeting held at McNeil Rd. and I-35.

A total of 31 members of the society were present. Six non-members were also present. The bat emergence and hawk activity were exceptional. (James Todd McCann)

Dinner in the Garden with Wayne Rhoden

By Mary Ann Melton

On April 13, 2019, the Master Gardeners and the Master Naturalists of Williamson County honored Wayne Rhoden for his dedicated service to both of these organizations.



The event was planned in the beautiful demonstration gardens near the plaque in his honor, but the weather didn't cooperate. The event was moved indoors and well attended. Highlights included members from both organizations expressing their gratitude for the many things he tirelessly does for both organizations. He is much appreciated for everything he does.

Wayne became a Master Gardener in 1996 in Fort Bend County and quickly became Vice President there. He has been both President and Vice President of the

Texas Master Gardener Association. He took his Master Naturalist Training in Houston (Gulf Coast Master Naturalist Chapter) in 2000.

In 2005, he moved to Georgetown and discovered that neither organization existed in Williamson County. He immediately started work to get a Master Gardener chapter started in Williamson County. The first 30 Master Gardener students graduated in 2007.

Offices held in Williamson County Master Gardener:

- President 2007 – 2009
- Past President 2010
- Secretary 2012
- President 2014 – 2015
- Communication Committee Chair 2015 – 2019

By 2009, he had connected with Al Kirchner and was part of the Steering Committee that formed the Good Water Chapter Texas Master Naturalist that was chartered in 2010.

Offices held in Good Water Master Naturalist:

- Steering Committee member 2009
- Training Chair Good Water Master Naturalist Chapter 2010 – 2015
- President 2013
- Past President 2014 – 2018
- President 2019 🐦



UPSTREAM / DOWNSTREAM

- June 2-5 - 25th North American Prairie Conference, University of Houston - Clear Lake www.northamericanprairie.org
- June 14 - Parks for Pollinator Bioblitz at Garey Park
- June 15, half day - Nature Tracking Workshop GWMN Refer to Sign-up Genius
- June 25 - Monarch and Social Science, Webinar Monarchjointventure.org
- July 23 - How to Plant for Success: Pollinator Habitat, Webinar Monarchjointventure.org

June 27 GWMN Chapter Meeting

Chris Johnson, Owner and Founder of Living Waters Fly Fishing will be the program speaker at the June 27 GWMN Chapter meeting.

The Texas Hill Country offers the fly angler more opportunities than can be exhausted in a lifetime! Chris Johnson grew up fly fishing the heart of Texas, and to this day it is still one of his favorite places on the planet. From Guadalupe Bass to Rio Grande Cichlids, the Texas Hill Country has it all! In his presentation, Chris will take you on a quick tour of some of Texas' most breathtaking rivers. Chris will not only cover the wide range of fish species that inhabit our rivers, but will also talk about some of the other species that call the Texas Hill Country home. 🐦

