

Good Water Ripples

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2020-21 JMN Amphibian Field Trip and Graduation

By Mary Ann Melton

The Good Water Junior Master Naturalist (JMN) program went virtual this year. We had an amazing year as our participants researched and presented about the various species we were studying and as they made observations to iNaturalist.

We ended the year with an amphibian field trip to Berry Springs.



With the help of one of our former Junior Master Naturalists, Kadin Ward, all of our participants were able to catch a Rio Grande leopard frog for closer examination.

We were able to hear four species: Green Tree Frog, Blanchard's Cricket Frog, American Bullfrog, and Rio Grande Leopard Frog.

The evening ended with a simple grad-

uation ceremony where certificates and pins were handed out.

Registration is open for 2021-2022 Junior Master Naturalists. It will be a hybrid program with one virtual meeting each month and one field trip. Plans are also in the works for a middle school Junior Master Naturalist program. ♡



2021 City Nature Challenge

By Mary Ann Melton

Hats off to our chapter for the showing at the 2021 *Austin City Nature Challenge*...I hope everyone is represented here:

Jack Cochran, First in Observations - 812 observations; Second in Species - 371 species.

Mike Farley, Second in Observations - 705 observations; First in Species - 481 species.

Mary Ann Melton, Third in Observations - 682 observations; Third in Species - 339 species.

Cindy Chrisler, Ninth in Observations - 418 observations; 11th in Species - 185

species.

Larry Swift, 14th in Observations - 261 observations; 14th in Species - 166 species.

Andy Goerdel, 33rd in Observations - 92 observations; 29th in Species - 66 species.

Scott Quigley, 42nd in Observations - 72 observations; 31st in Species - 62 species.

Michelle Goerdel, 55th in Observations - 54 observations; 40th in Species - 51 species.

Todd McCann, 74th in Observations - 41 observations; 64th in Species - 31

species.

Susie Hickman, six observations; six species.

Will Ward, JMN, six observations; six species.

Waco/Heart of Texas City Nature Challenge:

Amy Flinn, Fifth in Observations - 203 observations; Fifth in Species - 115 species.

The *Austin City Nature Challenge* 2021, saw a total of 17,200 observations, 2,487 species, and 1,083 observers. ♡

Rolling, Rolling, Rolling on the River Bank

Story and Photos By James Todd McCann

In order to not sound like I am clumsy (which I am), and in my own defense, here is the story of my lizard roll. Unlike most of my photo day trips over the last few days, the weather was perfect. I had a little luck, but since the trip was just starting, I wasn't too concerned by the lack of living things to photograph. The best photo so far was ruined by a car driving on the road for some silly reason. The heron I was stalking was scared away before I could get a photo. So, a little farther up the road was a bridge that in the past had provided a few good insect shots.

The first thing I saw was a Common Spotted Whip-tail lizard.

I got excited as reptiles had been scarce so far this week. No problem, I got a photo of the first one.

I looked around some more and got a few insect shots.

I crossed the road. Your question at this point might be why did the Duck (my nickname in the family) cross the road? Well, he saw a second lizard on the other side.

The lizard was on the concrete bridge abutment, which slopes about 55 degrees to the creek. This one was running around checking out any insect he could see, but they were doodlebugs and I guess

he does not like the taste of shellfish because he did not eat any of them.

I sat down at the top and slowly scooted on my rear down the slope. So far, so good. I got a couple of photos, but wanted to get a different shooting angle. No problem, I said to myself, as long as



The first lizard. I think he warned the other one that some fool was running around taking photos.

I keep my butt flat on the concrete, I will be OK. (I still have not learned not to listen to my better ideas.) I lean a little to my left and the next thing I know I am rolling on my side towards the creek and cannot stop! The lizard is frightened that I might roll on him, so he is screaming. (Maybe I was screaming and he was laughing).



The second one. If you look closely, you might see a smile on his face because this is the exact moment I started rolling.

I managed to stop just short of the creek and the only damage was some road rash on my right elbow, and my dignity. The important camera is safe and not damaged and I have a photo.

Now you are probably going to say you cannot tell them apart. Well neither can I but they can.

(With apologies to Creedence Clearwater Revival for using one of their song titles.) ♣

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Exciting News for Texas Master Naturalists!

By Mary Pearl Meuth

Mark your calendar now as we prepare for the 22nd Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program Annual Meeting, an event to gather, learn, and celebrate another year of the TMN Program. This year's meeting will be a HYBRID event - both online and in-person - at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Marriott in Irving, Texas. The event is Thursday thru Sunday, October 21-24, 2021, with plenty of activities throughout the event! Join us for a long weekend of greenspace adventures in the hideaways of Texas' largest urban area.

This year's Annual Meeting is hosted near the center of the Dallas-Fort Worth urban metroplex. Ecologically, the host-site is part of the Blackland Prairie and Oakwoods and Prairies ecoregions. This is just south of Grapevine Lake, within an easy drive of numerous greenways and a short jog to the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area and Nature Preserve. Centered within the metroplex and providing easy access to these numerous naturalist sites, the Annual Meeting looks forward to showcasing the hidden gems of these sister cities and their surrounding TMN chapters.

What is a Hybrid Event?

In the Annual Meeting hybrid format, participants can register to attend the event either "in-person" or "virtual". Certain aspects of the event will be made available for each audience type. For example, we are planning field sessions for in-person attendees with limited

capacities of the hotel and all relevant health and safety precautions taken to follow protocols for the time. Virtual attendees can participate in the majority of advanced training sessions as available for streaming. All virtual aspects of the meeting will be available for in-person attendees. The look and feel of this new hybrid format is still evolving and as we develop the meeting and agenda, more of details will be shared on our website.

COVID Contingency

As a result of the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the TMN Program will continue monitoring federal and state health and safety guidelines. We are committed to creating a valuable and engaging educational and networking experience, while keeping the safety of our membership and speakers at the center of event planning. Any decision affecting the final format of the Annual Meeting will be shared immediately, and travel/registration considerations will be made alongside these updates.

The TMN Program maintains its responsibility to protect the health and wellbeing of its members, conference attendees, and the general population, while still serving its mission to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas.

Call for Proposals!

Later this week we will open our Call for Proposals. Please help us share this

announcement and build our agenda with some of the fantastic speakers you've heard from recently or want to hear at the Annual Meeting. Workshop presenters will have the opportunity to inform and train TMN members from across the state on various natural resource topics providing more in-depth information than their initial core training and curriculum. We're encouraging presenters to make this an opportunity to enlist and train our program volunteers to assist their natural resource conservation and stewardship work or program.

Please have patience as we develop the Annual Meeting in this NEW HYBRID format. We're excited about the opportunities this format presents for our program, accessibility to our Annual Meeting advanced training for our members across the state, and ways to continue to stay safe yet still take steps to gather for conservation and comradery.

Information about the meeting will be shared via our website, social media, and this email listserv as we pull this event together.

2021 Annual Meeting website - <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2021-annual-meeting/>
TMN Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistProgram>

Texas Master Naturalist Email Listserv - <https://listserv.tamu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=TMN&A=1> ♣

Berry Springs Needs You!

Volunteers are needed to help weed the many flower beds at Berry Springs Park and Preserve. Due to Winter Storm Uri, weeding was put off to concentrate on removing dead vegetation. Volunteers may work at the time of their own choosing; there will be no formal day of service. There are some invasive species creeping into the beds, so bring your plant ID skills! Please contact Cindy Chrisler at chirlser@csusb.edu for more information. Volunteer hours count as credit on VMS under NPA: Berry Springs Park and Preserve. ♣



Enter the Diverse and Amazing World of Lichens

Story and Photos By Mary Ann Melton

A year or so ago I noticed something growing along the trunk and branches of my pecan tree. The birds were obviously finding food around these growths. I started researching to try to find out what these were. While I knew about lichens, I had no idea that these organisms living on my tree were so many different kinds of lichens. The winter storm felled one of our hackberry trees. It was covered in lichens and gave me an excellent opportunity to photograph and save samples for later presentations.

While I have made attempts to get photos and identify the different kinds of lichens both at my place and during the City Nature Challenge, I am just learning about the fascinating world of lichens. From online research I am sure of some of the identities. Other identifications started with iNaturalist and are waiting for confirmation either from iNaturalist or from the book with lots of lichen photo identification pictures that has been ordered.

Lichens are composite organisms of two or three kinds of organisms that live together and have mutualistic, symbiotic relationships. There are 13,500 lichen species. Lichens are part fungus and

part photosynthesizing algae or bacteria. The alga or cyanobacterium does the photosynthesis to produce the food while the fungus provides the form and reproductive system. Both the algae/bacteria and fungus absorb water, minerals and pollutants from the air through rain and dust. Lichens attach themselves to tree bark (and other things) with rhizomes. These

do not penetrate the bark and the lichens get no nutrients from the tree. They do not harm or damage a tree, but it may be an indicator of a tree's health. Younger and faster growing trees shed bark such that it is difficult for lichens to attach.

Lichens cannot conserve water during droughts. When growing conditions are dry, lichens become brittle and go dormant, a process called poikilohydry. The darker the greens and blacks show whether it is currently doing photosynthesis. If a lichen looks dry and brittle, it is alive but dormant.

There are three morphological types of thalli: foliose, crustose and fruticose.

Foliose lichens are leaflike, with two easily distinguishable sides. They can be flat and leafy or full of ridges and bumps. The Powdered Ruffle Lichen, *Parmotrema hypotropum*, is an example of a foliose lichen.



The Powdered Ruffle Lichen, Parmotrema hypotropum.



The Bumpy Rim Lichen, Lecanora hybocarpa.

Crustose lichens are crust-like, forming a crust over a surface. 75% of all lichens are crustose, forming a crust over a surface. They can be very colorful or a drab gray or green. The Smooth Shadow-crust Lichen, *Hyperphyscia syncolla*, and the Bumpy Rim Lichen, *Lecanora hybocarpa*, are examples of Crustose lichens.

Because lichens get their needs from the air, they can be sensitive to pollution. While some are tolerant, other species will die from air pollution. Others will change structure in ways that reduce photosynthesis and they may bleach.

Fruticose lichens have no distinctive top and bottom. They can be pendant and hairlike; upright or shrubby; or upright and cuplike. Some fruticose lichens may have flat branches that tangle together.

The Cartilage Lichen, *Ramalina celastri*, was the first species that really caught



The Cartilage Lichen, Ramalina celastri.

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my eye because its leaflike vegetative features stand out from the trunk and branches of my tree. There are over 240 species in the *Ramalina* genus. *R. celastri* is found across the southern United States, parts of South America, southern African, Southern Australia, and New Zealand. *Ramalina celastri* is a fruticose lichen. The Texas Mushroom website describes *Ramalina celastri* as an octopus-like palmetto lichen. This is a good species to use for lichen anatomy. The leafy thallus has long pointed leaf-looking structures with mushroom shaped growths, the apothecia. On the top of the apothecia are microscopic, sack-like structures called asci (singular ascus) where the spores reproduce. Almost everywhere I have observed lichens recently, this

species has been present.

The Golden Hair Lichen, *Teloschistes flavicans*, is another fruticose lichen that I have been observing in many places.

Lichen Trivia: Scientists have isolated a compound called parietin from *Ramalina celastri* that has demonstrated antiviral activity against certain arena viruses. Arena viruses are associated with diseases transmitted by rodents. Scientists are also researching whether parietin can be used to inhibit tau protein aggregation as a possible treatment against Alzheimer's disease.

Take time to check out your trees or fallen branches for lichens. You will be surprised how many different kinds you can find all living together. ♣



The Smooth Shadow-crust Lichen, Hyperphyscia syncolla.

Southwest Texas Getaway

Story and Photos By April Rohlich

Val Verde and Kinney Counties were my destination April 29-May 2, 2021. I attended Texas A&M Agrilife Extension's Birding the Border. Their goal is to connect people to the land through the experience of birding, thus fostering an interest in conservation of natural resources. My goal was the same and also to jump into the Devil's River at Dolan Falls. These goals and more were achieved.



Cape May Warbler

We had a dozen destinations at the intersection of three different ecoregions from which to choose to visit each day. A highlight from Friday was seeing our guide Bryan, get shaky and joyous as we found a Cape May Warbler off course at Fort Clark Springs. He grew up in the area which added to the unique experience. We saw and heard cooperative Tropical Parulas. Their dark eye mask, orange wash on

breast, and yellow extending to the belly differentiate them from the Northern x tropical hybrid. At the Devil's River on Sunday, we caught up to the hybrid which has notable white eye-arcs.

Saturday morning before dawn, we had the privilege of being one of the first groups to bird on the fifth-generation Zuberbueler Ranch. The family has raised Rambouillet sheep and Angora goats on the property since 1898. It was my delight to see and hear a Cassin's Sparrow skylarking on the near horizon. It was a soul-refreshing place to visit on my birthday.

On Sunday, we arrived before dawn

at the Devil's River State Natural Area. We heard an Elf Owl but couldn't see it. The Canyon Wren's call was a thrill to hear again and again. The pristine water and remoteness had a force that drew me in. It was a splashy end to a weekend's wealth of sights and sounds. As a group, we saw 87 bird species on Friday alone. The stories are endless from getting stuck in the mud to the inspiring keynote speaker, Laura Keene.



Tropical Parula

Wait! On the way driving out, our 15 person van, with seven socially-distant adults inside, slid to a stop on the rough road. There was a beautiful Black-necked Gartersnake bidding us a farewell from his Southwest Texas land.

The amazing Birding the Border team of Dr. Maureen Frank, Emily Grant, and Bryan Calk will be hosting again April 21-24, 2022. ♣

Texas Butterfly Monitoring Network Project

Story and Photos by Cindy Chrisler

I found out about the Texas Butterfly Monitoring Network project during the Virtual Volunteer Fair held in February. There were a number of interesting projects presented during the Fair, but this one seemed to call to me. While I did take a general entomology class in college, I have not particularly studied butterflies. But the presentation by Irmi Willcockson convinced me to give it a try. Irmi may have been more successful than she anticipated: before the Fair she had a few dozen routes in the network, but over 100 people across the state applied for routes after the Fair!



My route following a creek, gravel road, and tire tracks.

training sessions that optimal conditions for butterfly viewing are sunny days with a light breeze and a temperature of at least 70 degrees F, and between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. I guess butterflies are late sleepers! She suggested taking a camera and binoculars during walks, and provided a data sheet to record observations. Participants enter information onto Pollard-Base, which collects information from programs across the nation for scientists to analyze. I bought a fold-out field guide as well as Glassberg's

and populations as the seasons progress. I've learned to identify some of the more common species I encounter without having to refer to a guide, and it seems like every week brings at least one new species! While I'm at it, I have also been documenting the species of flowers that are blooming and providing nectar for



Green Skipper on Blackfoot Daisy.

To apply for the project, you need to establish a route which you can walk at least four times a year, between the months of March and November, with two walks before mid-July and two more walks after mid-July. I decided to map a route on a private ranch in Blanco county, part of which is owned by myself and my siblings, and adjoining land owned by cousins. Because my route was not along a path or road recognized by Google Maps, I had to submit a picture of the area with my proposed route "inked." Once my route was approved, I was ready to go!

Starting in March can be challenging, but guidance from Irmi was invaluable. Participants found out in small group



Juniper Hairstreak on Antelope Horns.

Butterflies of North America to assist with identification, and eventually joined iNaturalist (finally! you say). I conducted my first formal observation walk on March 14 and became hooked. I've managed to walk about once a week and am tracking the changes in species

the butterflies. This has broadened my knowledge of species in the Hill Country, and given me a new appreciation for management of this ranch, which has not been severely overgrazed.

I have found the Texas Butterfly Monitoring Network project a very fulfilling endeavor as a Master Naturalist. I feel connected to land that has been in my family since the 1850s, and I hope that my observations contribute in a meaningful way to research on the value of biodiversity.

There are other members of our chapter who are participating, with locations in Williamson County, mostly in city parks. It may be too late this year to join, but if you'd like a fun project that counts as field research, I would encourage you to consider joining this project when they next take volunteers. Areas that are not yet covered include Lake Georgetown, Garey Park, Granger Lake, and the Balcones Canyonlands Wildlife refuge, all within easy access of our chapter. ♡

Salutations GWMN!

Story and Photos by Paige Wood

I just completed the Spring training class and wanted to share how much fun I had participating in the iNaturalist City Nature Challenge 2021.

Prior to the challenge I had minimal experience with iNaturalist. I doubted that my observations would be helpful, but nonetheless I headed out to Tejas Park ready to contribute to the



Checkered-Skipper Butterfly

greater good of the scientific community. I arrived the morning after a heavy rain and walked the riverbed leading away from camp. A pair of Muscovy ducks bid me good morning. It was sunny, and I began taking a few pictures of some of the wildflowers I was learning to identify.

I have been to Tejas Park many times before, but I noticed it with new eyes this time. I appreciated the new sights and sounds. I closed my eyes and listened, following the sound to a new-to-me waterfall just off the main trail. I crouched down and found a Common Checkered-Skipper butterfly clinging to the underside of a blade of grass drying her wings.

Some splashing took me back to the river where I saw a pair of Carp spawning in a very shallow, previously dry bed. It made me realize that we are a small part of the bigger picture. In February, we were inconvenienced because of power



Gar

outages, and downed tree limbs but these creatures' homes were washed away. Other animals had been waiting for the rain to further their lineage. Plants that had

been thriving the day before, were now washed downstream, perhaps helping to reseed another riparian area, or trapping silt and mud to become deposited elsewhere.

I went home with 79 species sighted and a new perspective of this area. The next morning I headed out in the opposite direction, toward the "mountain" at Tejas. I ran into several people along the way and shared with them what I was doing. I met some fishermen who had caught a Gar and a Hybrid Bass. I asked to take a picture of their catch for the bio-blitz challenge. We had a great sharing of pictures and stories. The two gentlemen went away with more than just a fish story. They left with a new app on their phone and hopefully took a few pictures to add to the wealth of knowledge that is iNaturalist.

Over the next day I added more observations and finished in the top 30 for most observations. I was super proud to have been ranked so highly my first year. Even more inspiring is the number of people who took time to confirm my sightings as correct or gently suggest a new species. Then to hear of scientists using the data from iNaturalist to conduct research papers, and document sightings of species in new areas is truly great. I have genuinely been blown away by the time I spent taking pictures and thinking of hundreds of others elsewhere doing the same thing to expand their knowledge or to help others. This kind of renews my hope in mankind.

Thanks for taking the time to read my thoughts. I hope to meet you on a trail, or garden, or even shoveling manure over at Berry Springs. ♡

Be the Change by Nancy Phillips

One of the goals of the Texas Master Naturalist Organization is to be an organization that has Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. That's one of the reasons that we have the third Tuesday presentations.

April's presenter was David Bugg from TPWD. This was a very interesting presentation and it has made me think about my ideas on this subject. One book he suggested is *BLACK FACES, WHITE SPACES*, by Carolyn Finney.

Of the many ideas he discussed, the three most important points made were:

1. Each person needs to examine their own beliefs, thoughts and concerns. Everything we do starts with this.
2. Get used to having uncomfortable conversations. Diversity onversations can be very uncomfortable but we can't let this stop us.
3. When talking to people just be yourself and be open to their comments, ideas and beliefs. Focus on developing relationships with people by finding something you agree on and talk about that.

A woman I spoke to told me she was an immigrant over 20 years ago and she still remembers the first person who talked to her and made her feel welcome.

Maybe you can be that person for someone now.

This program was recorded and can be listened to and counted as one hour of Advanced Training. Report it under AT: TMN Tuesday. You have 45 days from the date that you listen to it to report it. ♡

Mary Ann Hits 5,000!

By Mary Ann Melton

Mary Ann Melton earned her 5000-hour certification this year. She started on the Steering Committee when the chapter formed in 2010. She has served the chapter in many capacities including Vice-President, President, Youth Development Director, Communications Director, and Advanced Training Director. Planning activities and working with children is probably her favorite way to earn hours, but she also is very interested in learning about and observing birds, insects, and native plants. She loves keeping track of her observations on iNaturalist and eBird. The Nature Tracker project helped inspire more game cameras at her 5-acre home.

a nature column for the Taylor Press since 2011. Mary Ann has done small things for many of the other chapter projects partly because she is interested in all things nature related. 🍀



In addition to giving presentations for young people, she also does nature presentations at various adult groups. She has been writing

Friends of Berry Springs supports BSPP

By Mary Ann Melton

The initial meetings to establish the Friends of Berry Springs (FOBS) began in the fall of 2019. Supporters of Berry Springs Park and Preserve (BSPP), River Ranch Park, and Williamson County parks department personnel realized that both parks could benefit from the support of non-profit groups.

In early 2020, the Williamson County Commissioners Court approved the establishment of the FOBS and the Friends of River Ranch.

FOBS was created to support the history, conservation enhancement and sustainability of BSPP through fundraising, advocacy and volunteerism.

In recent years we have seen a great deal of growth in Georgetown and William-

son County. This growth has made many people realize how closely our natural resources need to be guarded. FOBS brings additional support to the beloved natural resources at BSPP.

Even during the chaos of 2020, the FOBS was able to build membership. Volunteer projects at the park were at a minimum, but the community still demonstrated their love for Berry Springs through record breaking visitation. FOBS objectives for 2021 include: increased membership, develop a recycling program, and the purchase of two aerators for the pond.

For more information about FOBS, visit our website at <https://friendsofberysprings.org/> 🍀



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

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