



Mission. To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.

BOARD MEETING

Guadalupe Master Naturalists
Board Meeting Minutes
July 27, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 10:02am by the president.

The following members were present: Marilyn Anderson, Michelle Darnell, Mark de Kiewiet, Chris Dyess, Jennifer Ehlers, Jeff Hanselka, Tom Hardaway, Clara Mae Marcotte, Nancy Masterson, Craig Wagner

Nancy moved and Clara Mae seconded that the minutes from the last meeting (January) be approved as written. The motion carried

Jennifer Ehlers moved and Craig Wagner seconded that we approve the treasurer's report ending July 27, 2020. The motion carried.

Old Business: Michelle made the changes to VMS that were requested during the January meeting. Chris Dyess and Craig Wagner updated the chapter by-laws. Chris will send a copy to all board members for approval before sending them out to the membership.

New Business: John Edson resigned as treasurer due to COVID19 concerns. The board membership decided to ask John if he will continue doing the books if Tom, with help from others, physically handles checks and any other paperwork, and provides those records to John electronically.

Reports of Committees

Program: Clara Mae reported that she has programs lined up for Aug, Sep, Oct. Mark suggested a speaker for November. Following much discussion about room capacity and various COVID19 concerns we decided to do the programs live and on Zoom. Up to 10 people can reserve a spot and attend the meeting in person. All others can watch via Zoom. Speakers can be present in person or Zoom from their home. Clara Mae will work out details with Matt Miranda.

Training: Marilyn reported the committee held two "meet and greets" for potential students. Eight students are registered and paid. Speakers are lined up, textbooks have arrived, and COVID precautions are in place. Since classes will be in Schertz where the facilities are larger than at the Seguin AgriLife building we agreed that Marilyn could accept late applicants.

Nature Ed: Nancy and Mark reported that they cancelled the Bugs' World presentation that had been scheduled for September. The October presentation, Horns and Thorns, was designed to be no touch with take home kits for further enrichment. A November program on Journaling will also have take home content. Currently attendance will be limited and programs will be presented outside. Per AgriLife regulations, the organizations providing presentation space for TMN must keep a record of participants for potential contact tracing. Schertz Parks and Rec has this in place. Nancy will continue working with Seguin Library to ensure they will also keep records. The committee has discussed other options for future programs: Drive-thru where parents would pick up packets for parent-empowered home projects; Video programs; Zoom programs that lead participants through an activity, participants complete the activity and log back onto Zoom to show their creation; Virtual hikes—leader walks with phone or tablet narrating what they see, zooming in on items of interest.

Citizen Sci: Chris reported she and Nancy held an AT event at Park West in February. She suggested that a similar AT introducing Crescent Bend could be presented for members of this year's training class.
Park West pollinator garden weeders have continued to work on Wednesday's throughout the summer. Forest health work will begin on Wednesday's starting in November.
Nancy will share with Schertz Parks and Rec the safety kits that we use at Park West activities. FYI-when we volunteer and sign in at Park West we are covered by the city's insurance.
Tom reported that a number of members continue to work on and record their individual citizen science projects.

Adv. Training: Michelle reported that all AT is currently online. Check the calendar for suggestions.

Communication: Michelle reported that four members, Mark de Kiewiet, Kim Lewis, Trina Martin, Kathy Pearson take turns posting items on Facebook.

Membership: Michelle reported no problems.

Michelle moved and Nancy seconded that we adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:00.

Chris Dyess, Sec'y protem

TRAINING CLASS

Plans are still going forward to begin our Fall Training class on August 11 with 9 students currently enrolled. Committee members have volunteered many hours of time in the planning and preparation for the class and we are excited to get it started.

Special thanks to Mark de Kiewiet for taking charge of setting up the ability to conduct ZOOM meeting when and if the need arises. The restrictions created by COVID-19 have resulted in planning we have never considered before; we are definitely blazing new trails!

To our 2020 Class students: We look forward to meeting you and being a part of your Master Naturalist experience.

ADVANCED TRAINING

Reminder about Advanced Training: Please go to <https://txmn.org/guadalupe/calendar/> to access the **Calendar of Opportunities** on our Chapter website! I have included some I feel you might be interested in but many more are on the website calendar.

Unless sponsored by a pre-approved organization, all AT programs must be submitted on the appropriate form to the chairman of the Advanced Training Committee Chairman Cinde Thomas-Jimenez at cindetjimenez@gmail.com or cthomas-jimenez@gbra.org
A copy of the form is attached to the Newsletter email.

DIY Drip Irrigation

Date: Tuesday, August 4, 2020

Time: 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Location: Virtual - This class will be presented virtually. Please register at <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/august-4-2020-diy-drip-irrigation-virtual/> by 5:00pm the day of the event to ensure the class link can be sent to you. The class link will be emailed to you the day of the event to prevent spamming. Please make sure your email is correct!

Description: Make every drop count! Whether you have an existing sprinkler system or just an outdoor faucet, learn how to install, convert and maintain a drip irrigation system. Drip irrigation is the most efficient irrigation method for landscape beds, potted plants, vegetable gardens or home foundations. The flow of information from our experts will make “do it yourself” drip irrigation seem easy!

Sponsor: Texas A&M AgriLife Water University

Family Friendly Gardening

Date: Tuesday, August 11, 2020

Time: 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Location: Please register for this FREE class at <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/august-11-2020-family-friendly-gardening-virtual/> by 5:00 PM the day of the class to ensure the class link can be sent to you. The class link will be emailed to you the day of the event to prevent spamming. Please make sure your email is correct!

Description: Outdoor living just got a lot more fun and we're not kidding! In this class you'll learn how to create a safe, beautiful, interactive space every member of the family will love. Discover ways to bring your children back to nature with simple tips for butterfly gardening, edible landscapes, and sensory gardening. We'll also cover practical ways to reduce (or avoid) chemical use, plus toxic plants to steer clear of--for both kid and pet proof plantings. Shrink your lawn & maintenance bill so your household can explore, learn, & grow together!

Sponsor: Texas A&M AgriLife Water University

Dragons and Damsels, Oh My: The World of Odonates

Date: Wednesday, August 12, 2020

Time: 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Location: Join Webex meeting:

<https://tpwdtexas.webex.com/tpwdtexas/j.php?MTID=m9c739e95b38bd586ed76392dbcd21170>

Meeting number: 146 596 1340 Password: ryVypH5ew38



Description: Join TPWD Texas Nature Trackers Biologist Craig Hensley for a look at the world of dragonflies and damselflies. These ancient predators, around since the time of dinosaurs, are well-adapted predators of both water and air. You'll be introduced to their adaptations, natural history, and meet a host of species from both groups, learning how to identify these amazing creatures.



Texas Plants

Date: Thursday, August 13, 2020

Time: 6:00 – 7:00 PM

Location: Virtual; register at <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/august-13-2020-texan-plants-virtual/>

Description: There's a growing trend to incorporate native plants in landscapes not only for their ability to save water, but also for the incredible beauty and the countless ecosystem services they provide! Learn how to grow our favorite native wildflowers, trees, shrubs as well as perennials with lush vibrant colors and textures to make your garden the envy of the neighborhood. We'll also talk proper soil preparation, proper installation, and provide tips for long term maintenance to keep your native landscape looking its best. You'll be provided a plant list as big as the Lone Star State!

Cost: FREE This class will be presented virtually via Microsoft Teams. Please register for this FREE class by 5:00pm the day of the event to ensure the class link can be sent to you. The class link will be emailed to you the day of the event to prevent spamming. Please make sure your email is correct!

Sponsor: Texas A&M AgriLife Water University

Texas Trees

Date: Thursday, August 27, 2020

Time: 6:00 – 8:00PM

Location: Virtual - Please register for this FREE class at <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events/2020/august-27-2020-texas-trees-virtual/> by 5:00 PM the day of the class to ensure the class link can be sent to you. The class link will be emailed to you the day of the event to prevent spamming. Please make sure your email is correct!

Description: Trees are without a doubt, our most valuable landscape investment! Whether you're interested in their ornamental value for your property, their contribution to energy and water savings at your home or business, or the many other ecosystem services they provide, this program covers it. Branch out and join us to learn tips on tree selection and proper planting practices, as well as proper watering, pruning, common insect issues and diseases.

Sponsor: Texas A&M AgriLife Water University

Visit <http://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/courses> for the time and location of all courses offered.

Water University also has YouTube videos, classes and overviews. To see the offerings, go to <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/>

WILDLIFE DISTRICT 7 WEBINAR SERIES

**WEBINARS BEGIN AT 12:00 NOON
PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE A LINK TO TUNE IN LIVE**

Aug 6: Habitat Management for Quail

Aug 11: Using Prescribed Fire to Improve Deer Habitat

Aug 13: Brush Management Practices for Improving Wildlife Habitat

Aug 18: Grazing as a Tool for Wildlife Management

Aug 20: Turkey Habitat and Plant ID

Aug 25: Supplemental Water for Wildlife

Aug 27: Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife

To register please go to: <https://bit.ly/D7webinar>

For Questions Contact: clinton.faas@tpwd.texas.gov



Life's better outside.

IS IT A STING OR A BITE?

THE RED IMPORTED FIRE ANT PROBLEM IN TEXAS

By David Benbow

I went out this morning to pick figs (the ones that remained after the Mockingbird finished his breakfast.) And, soon enough, I felt the familiar sting of a renegade fire ant that found my ankle. This inspired me to do some research and find out a little more about the Red Imported Fire Ant (*Solenopsis invicta*.)

EXPLAINING THE PAIN



In answer to the question in the heading, fire ants actually bite and sting at the same time. (Which may explain why they seem to curl up when they sting you.) They use their mandibles to get a grip on the victim then inject their stinger (the cause of the pain) out of their lower abdomen. The stinger injects venom called solenopsin. On the pain scale, the pain is pretty minor (more than a mosquito but far less than a wasp sting.) The bite can result in a pustule, but in my experience, that is more rare than usual. (Note that it is better not to “pop” the pustule. It will go away on its own after a few days.) Severe reactions to stings are rare, but seek medical attention immediately if you think you are having one. This applies also if you have numerous stings (over 50 or so.)

SOME DATA ABOUT FIRE ANTS

Much of the following data comes from the website www.fireant.tamu.edu. The little pests, which now infect most of non-arid and mild-wintered Texas, were accidentally imported in the 1930s from South America. There are two forms of the ant, one of which is the “single queen” form and the other is the “multiple queen” form. The website has details on how to tell them apart, not that it matters when you find yourself standing in a cauldron of furious ants. Note also that most ant beds are obvious even to the untrained eye, but some beds can lie well hidden, especially in tall grass or weeds. It is a good idea to learn how to distinguish a fire ant mound from a pocket gopher mound. From a distance, they look a lot alike.

If untreated, fire ants can form up to 300 colonies per acre. Even in the same bed, I’ve noticed that the ants can vary considerably in size. Males, usually winged, have the sole function of pairing with the queen. After performing their job, they are usually expelled from the colony. All the worker (and stinging) ants are sterile females. Interestingly, unlike some of those huge South American ant queens you watched on the old Wild Kingdom show, the fire ant queen is not a whole lot bigger than the worker ants. They can live up to seven years and produce as many as 1,000 eggs per day. A mature colony can house up to 400,000 workers. If we apply some very basic arithmetic, we find it is possible that a 10 acre plot of land could contain over one billion fire ants.

PROS AND CONS

The “cons” of imported fire ants are pretty obvious, so you might ask, “What possible benefits could imported fire ants bring?” I know this is anecdotal evidence at best, but I haven’t found any disagreement when I’ve discussed the issue with the experts from A&M. When I was a child, any excursion into the woods or fields would result in numerous welts from virtually invisible red chiggers (*Eutrombicula alfreddugesi*) and various kinds of ticks (too numerous to name them all,) all stuck around my ankles and belt line. Now, on exactly the same location in DeWitt County, many years after the fire ants arrived, I have not seen a chigger or tick in the nearly 20 years I’ve lived here. Is it the fire ants?

Everybody knows about the downside of fire ants. They invade electrical devices. They have virtually depopulated the big Red Harvester Ant (*Pogonomyrmex barbatus*), which was the primary food source of the Texas Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*). They are highly aggressive and sting like the dickens. They find their way into your garden where you don’t want to use poisons to get rid of them. Their mounds can disfigure a beautiful meadow of grass. They attack every living animal within their reach. And, a lot of other bad stuff.

CONTROL

Fire ants can be controlled effectively in localized areas, such as your lawn, flower beds, house, etc. They can be treated bed by bed, or more preferably, in my opinion, by a poisoned bait granule that can be broadcast over the area you want to treat. Control in the garden is more of a problem. I don’t like ant poisons where I grow my tomatoes and okra. I will mention a couple of home remedies that I have used with mixed success. (1) Wood ash – I have eliminated more than one mound by dumping maybe a half pound of wood ash on the mound and watering it in thoroughly. It actually has some benefit to the soil, as well, if you don’t overdo it. (2) Alcohol volcano – take a long piece of re-bar (5 feet minimum) and drive it quickly into the center of the mound, pull it out before the ants swarm it, then pour about 8 ounces of rubbing alcohol into the hole. Ignite it with a match, and it will start a subterranean fire that immolates the underground nest, and hopefully the queen. It will rumble and smolder for minutes before it goes out. **WARNING!! DO NOT USE GASOLINE!**

IN SUMMARY

Only entomologists like fire ants. However, let me say this. They are here to stay. Like everybody else in Texas, I have learned to live with them. And one more thing, I will choose a fire ant sting over a chigger welt any day of the week.

Diaphoretic Plants
By Clara Mae Marcotte

Our ancestors (and some of today's herbalists) used sweating as a way to eliminate waste from the body and to get rid of problems. Plants used were *Eupatorium perfoliatum* (Boneset), *Capsicum minimum* (Cayenne), *Sambucus nigra* (Elderberry), *Zingiber officinalis* (Ginger), *Achillia millefolium* (Yarrow), *Nepeta cataria* (Catnip), *Mentha piperita* (peppermint) and many others.



One of Central Texas' favorite plants is Boneset.

Wildflower.org says the plant attracts birds, butterflies, and is of special value to native bees. The website conjectures that since the stem appears to grow through the leaf, early herb doctors assumed that this meant the plant would be useful in setting bones. So they wrapped the leaves around splints. Boneset tea was thought effective in treating colds, coughs and constipation. One of today's herbal remedy

practitioners suggests that the tonic will relieve aches and pain and aids the body in dealing with fever. Also, it will help clear the upper respiratory tract of mucus congestion, can be used as a general cleansing agent, and provides relief for rheumatism. However, the site adds, hot tea may produce diaphoresis, and vomiting and evacuation of the bowels. User beware!

Sambucus nigra, the Common Elderberry, is a perennial shrub with black or purple fruit. It blooms in May and June, and I think I spotted it growing along Walnut Creek. Wildflower.org says the plant was used by Native Americans for many medicinal purposes but warns that the leaves, twigs or stems, roots and unripe fruits should be considered poisonous. They contain cyanogenic glycoside and alkaloid. An herbalist on the Internet, however, recommends using the flowers and berries as a mild diaphoretic. The site says the tea is good for colds, infections, rheumatism, colds and coughs, and allergic conditions. It also warns about using bark, leaves or roots because of their toxicity.

Mentha piperita or peppermint is another diaphoretic and is one that I am not afraid to recommend. Unless, of course, you have a heavy metal concentration in your soil. I was extremely surprised when I checked Wildflower for information on peppermint to find that someone had asked about the phytoremediation of lead in his garden. The answer from Mr. Smarty Pants was that he could find articles on using salvia and mint. Extracted oils from the plants could be used without fear of lead but not the leaves. Another article looked at honey and concentrated lead in the soil. The conclusion drawn was that honey was okay because the lead concentration is mainly in plant roots unless there was aerosol contamination.

AND THEN COVID HAPPENED!

By: Deborah Benbow

We were going to rescue sea turtles on the beach at Padre Island. Then, all my plans for the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle rescue volunteer program crumbled into dust. David and I were scheduled for the rescue training classes the weekend of March 14 and March 15, just as the "stay-at-home" lockdown orders came down.

The classes, to our knowledge, were not cancelled, but when Dave called about the safety of attending, he was told there were going to be 200 attendees from all over Texas and the rest of the country. This was before the safety protocols were well developed. We decided to wait till next year, when we hope this is all over.

Several classes are held in the early spring, with the one we registered for in March. There are two 8 hour classes, on Saturday and Sunday.

The first day, volunteers "learn about the Kemp's Ridley Recovery Program and about the volunteer opportunities available during the nesting season." There are two basic programs, (1) the winter volunteer cold stunned training and (2) the summer volunteer nesting sites discovery. We were training for the summer session.

The second day, which is required only if you want to drive an ATV on the beach, trains the volunteer on driving the ATV, spotting nests and relaying nesting data to the rescuers, so the eggs can be saved and safely hatched and prepared for releasing them back into the wild (the Gulf of Mexico.)

I had been looking forward to this since September. And, with the Covid situation, I'm just hoping we can do this next year.

KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLE – *Lepidochelys kempii*



It is the rarest and smallest species of sea turtle and is critically endangered. It rarely exceeds 30 inches in carapace (upper shell) width and length, usually weighing slightly less than 100 pounds. (That's still pretty big if you are handling the grownups!) Hatchlings, which weigh about half an ounce and 1.5 inches in length, are dark purple to black and that color changes to an olive-gray as they mature.

They prefer warm waters, and were originally found in the Gulf of Mexico and American South Atlantic as far north as New Jersey. Females return each year to the beach where they were hatched, with a single 16 mile stretch of beach, the Rancho Nuevo in Tamaulipas, Mexico accounting for over 90 percent of returnees. They spend most of their life in the ocean, near the shore in shallow water, marine estuaries and eat sea creatures such as crabs, jellyfish, algae, mollusks, and fish.

They, like many turtles, are long-lived, from 30 to 50 years, and do not reach reproductive age until at least 10 or 12 years old. Nesting occurs during daylight hours between April and August. In addition to Mexico, they now also nest on Padre Island, which is, of course, where our volunteer work is done. Females land on the beach in masses, sort of like an invading army, and lay their eggs in sand dunes and swampy areas on the beach. Clutch size averages 110 eggs and incubation takes 45 to 70 days. The sex of the hatchling is determined by the temperature of the sand where they are incubating, with mostly males produced when the temp falls below 29.5 C. Park Rangers prefer the females, as you would expect.

CONSERVATION

They were first listed as endangered in 1970, when the number of nesting females seemed to be dangerously low.

Primary threats to their existence are (1) fishing nets (2) oil spills and (3) egg predation on the shores of Rancho Nuevo, where the eggs are still harvested and eaten, and mature turtles are used for food and material for boot manufacture.

About 1981, realizing that leaving the future of the sea turtles outside of American oversight could lead to their extinction, American scientists airlifted some 22, 500 eggs from Mexico to Padre Island National Seashore, and began a long process of “imprinting” nesting females to the Texas coastline. After many years of these efforts, the first tagged female returnee showed up in 1996. Since that time, the population of returnees has increased considerably, even though the program has a long way to go to return the population to its original number.

Much more information is available on-line. There is a nice You Tube video about the preservation work at: <https://youtu.be/afgsYchpD> Q.

This video details briefly the history of the turtle rescue effort, and includes parts of the remarkable film taken in 1947 in Mexico, showing thousands of returning females to deposit their eggs. From this old film, scientists were able to estimate that at least 40,000 turtles were on the beach at Rancho Nuevo at one time. By 1970, that number was down to only 700.



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Residents in several states have reported receiving unsolicited seeds from outside the USA. Seeds of unknown origin may be invasive or can introduce plant and animal disease, toxins or pathogens. If you receive a mystery package, please do the following:

- Do NOT open the seed packets
- Do NOT plant the seed packets
- Do NOT throw the seeds in the trash, flush them down the drain, or expose them to the environment in any way.

Please be sure to contact the USDA if you have received a package. All incidences should be reported to USDA-APHIS at (512-916-5241). Phone lines may be busy, so an email is preferred.

Email should be sent to:

Carol Motloch USDA-APHIS-PPQ State Operations Coordinator carol.m.motloch@usda.gov

Email should include your name and phone number as well as a description of package (a photo of the label and material is helpful).

Your cooperation is much appreciated as the USDA continues to investigate these packages.

<https://agriflifelife.tamu.edu/2020/07/28/mystery-seeds-arrive-in-texas/>



NEXT NEWSLETTER

Please send announcements and news items for distribution in the newsletter to Marilyn Anderson, MarilynA@access4less.net.

Deadline for next issue – August 28 for the September issue.

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and
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