



INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

News, events & calendar of the Indian Trail Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists...Serving Ellis and Navarro Counties

701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165 | Office: 972-825-5175 | Visit our website at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail>

Nov./Dec. 2015

From the Desk of the PRESIDENT

Charlie Grindstaff, President ITMN

A few days ago I received an email from our founding member, Linda 'Mox' Moxley...Hi Charlie...How proud you all must be of the Indian Trail Master Naturalist chapter! The comings and goings as evidenced by all the emails are fabulous!....

While I am not sure you always think all the emails are so fabulous, I am sure that I am very proud of you all. When I think about our projects, activities and accomplishments this year, I can't help but be proud of Indian Trail Chapter. All of the bluebird nest boxes and insect hotels you built, Kachina Prairie on the Bluebonnet Trail, creation of Cerf Park butterfly garden, the Monarch Garden Grants, the Birds and Bats presentation, the LANDS Volunteer Workshop, working in the schools and summer camps, our second Chapter Retreat, the raptor enclosure will be finished when you read this, and we will have 16 graduates from our training class. There is not enough space to list all of the good things you did this year. Good job everyone! Pat yourselves on the back! I am looking forward to our planning session for next year to see all the good things we will do then.

Calendar of Events, Projects & Meetings

NOVEMBER

- 7 BRIT 8 am
- 7 Whooping Cranes 1 pm at JBSWetland Center
- 10 LANDS 8:30 am at Bear Creek Ranch, Aledo
- 10 Training Class 6 pm
- 12 Waste Management Thanksgiving Lunch 11 am in Ferris
- 13 Milkweed Pod Birds Workday 9 am at AgriLife Office
- 14 Project Feeder Watch begins
- 16 Wildflower Brochure Committee Meeting 5 pm at FUMC
- 16 ITMN Meeting/Elections 6 pm; Jim West
Nature: Life in the Margins 7 pm
- 16 LANDS 9:30 am at Panther Island, Fort Worth
- 17 Loma Linda Camp event 9 am
- 17 Graduation Party 6:30 pm
- 19 LANDS 9:30 am at Panther Island, Fort Worth
- 21 Meet Ellie May - 10 am at Perot Museum
- 26 Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

- 2-7 Presidents of North Central Texas Chapters Meeting 10 am
- 3 PFSG 6:30 pm in Waxahachie
- 18 ITMN Christmas Party at home of Carolyn & David Ross (details later)
- 25 Christmas

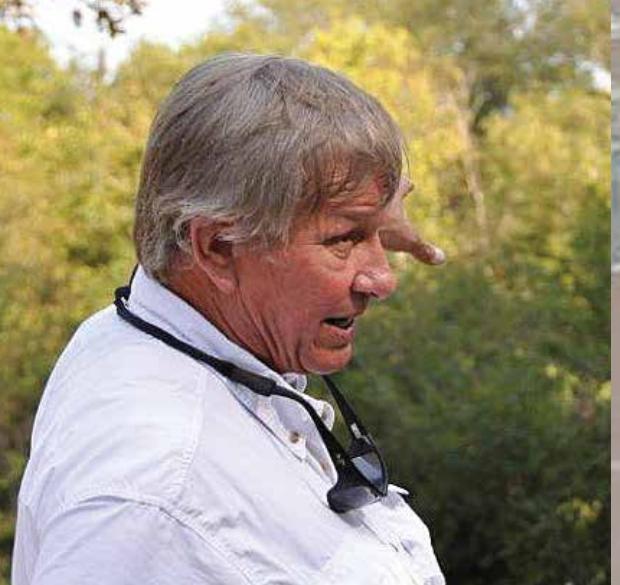
JANUARY

- 7 PFSG 6:30 pm in Midlothian
- 11 Planning/Board Meeting
- 21 PFSG 6:30 pm in Waxahachie
- 25 PFSG 6:30 pm in Ennis



ITMN 2015

RE TREAT



AWARDS

Congratulations! Sharon Lane - 1,000 hours (gold dragonfly pin) Linda Almes, Lynn Wisakowsky and Celia Yowell - Recertification (bluebonnet pins)



Joe & Pam Mundo - Recertification (bluebonnet pin), Carolyn Ogden & Celia Yowell - 250 hours (bronze dragonfly pin), Jack Dunaway & Jim Patak - 500 hours (silver dragonfly pin)



LANDS





TEN x TEN

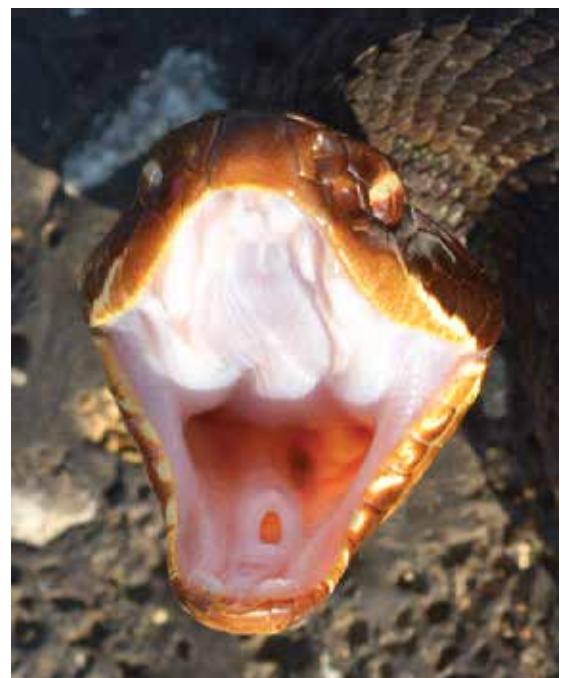
Or, how one of the world's smallest butterflies gave birth to what may be a really big idea

By Jim West

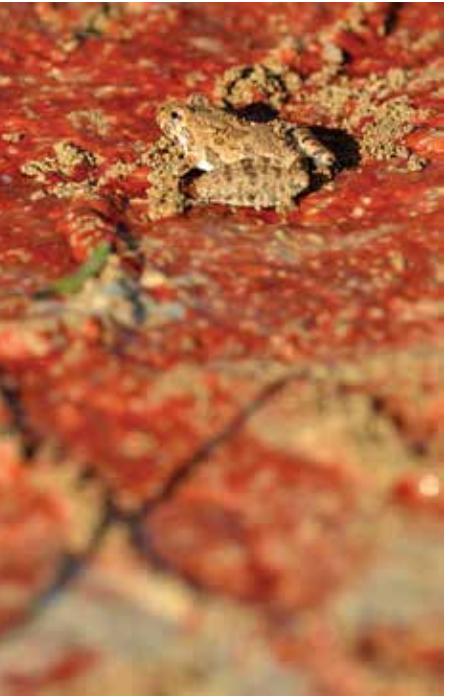
I was meandering around in a different patch of one of my favorite areas for dragonflies early one morning, kicking at the grass to see what might come up. Maybe a damselfly with some color on it if I was lucky. Instead, I saw this little guy (Probably a gal but I'm no expert. I say that because it was in the same spot for a week and there were no flowering plants around so I surmised that it was laying eggs or trying to when I wasn't pestering it.), a Ceraunus Blue. One of the smallest butterflies on earth, about the size of your little fingernail if you're a 5'10" guy. Sweet. A tiny bright blue flash is all you see of it when it's flying as it keeps its wings folded up when it's at rest. It was either tired or used to me when it finally stayed in one place long enough for me to get down on my belly, which ain't no mean feat, and crawl up to it close enough to get a few photos. The little bright patches in its black spots are iridescent and do a great job of catching the sunlight.

Having never seen one before, I looked it up as soon as I got home. The fact that I had never seen one is no mean feat in itself. I don't miss much when I'm down in the Trinity River bottom near my house as it could be very costly, both in terms of missed sightings and my health. Copperheads

abound along with the occasional Cottonmouth. I learned a lot about spotting things from watching Praying Mantises. They seem to be holding still when they approach prey but in reality, they're swaying side to side almost imperceptibly slowly which may be a way they judge distance. It helps me spot things to focus on one area and move like they do.



Any flying insect gets my attention, especially small butterflies and moths. Watching them elude Dragonflies is an airshow in itself. The thought that they had such skills led me to consider



what it really means to be a wild creature, essentially a flying Skittle in this case, in a world where everything is out to get you. This became especially profound when I watched this tiny creature had dodged Dragonflies, robberflies, birds, spiders and truck windshields. Missed being plowed under, graded, dozed, sprayed with pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers only to meet up

with me in the middle of nowhere. Well played, Cera.

I shoot a lot of nature photographs in places that the majority of people would consider useless land. Ditches, swamps and abandoned gravel pits. How wrong that mindset is. Thousands of lives are played out in these places every minute of every day. For that reason alone, these are the most valuable lands of all in the grand scheme of things yet, we continue to clear land with no regard for the lives on it. I'm not against growth, growth and progress are not the same, but there's a better way for us to proceed. We, as

a species, can do no better than to preserve as much of this "useless" land as we can. In fact, there is a way we can actually create some. More about that in a minute. When we weigh the future against our slash and burn style of making a fast buck, the way is clear. Our best tool, as humans, is our imagination. We should use it more often as it applies to those we share the planet with.



Down I-45 South of Dallas, they are clearing land and building hundreds of acres of warehouses. It would be great if all of that otherwise dead roof space were living roofs with native plants. Too expensive? Tax breaks could be given to anyone for building environmentally sound buildings. Our government hands out tax incentives for far more dubious reasons. The more that are built like that, the cheaper they will become, the less heat will be trapped and the plants and animals can be returned. A law requiring all commercial building to have living roofs wouldn't be a bad idea. While I'm on the subject of commercial buildings, putting all of the parking area inside the footprint of the building would save lots of space. Space that could be used for other things.

Earlier I mentioned a way to create living space for wildlife. What I propose is a program that I call **10 x 10**. Here's how it would work. A family (or individual) could take a 10' x 10' part of their yard, section it off and let it go wild. A family would put the children in charge of it.

Native plant seeds could be made available by the city or school district and local Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners could pitch in with guidance. Bears or wolves won't show up but birds and butterflies will. If just 200 people participated, that would still mean that there would be 20,000 square feet of land that doesn't need mowing, fertilizing or watering. Children will gain an appreciation of the other lives playing out in the world around them as well as a reason to go out and get some

vitamin D.
Who knows, we may even discover a cure for Nature Deficit Disorder.

We don't live in a perfect world but there's no reason we can't live in a better one.



10 x 10
BEFORE THEY'RE
TEN
WILDSCAPE FOR
POLLINATORS



The View From My GARDEN CHAIR

By Chris Cook

It is soon to be late September, and my Midwestern circadian rhythm is edging in to pouting. The air this morning is cooler, but damp and definitely not crisp. All the tree leaves remain green except the fronds on my bald cypress which are early to turn that dead-looking russet;



they are not happy to be crowded by bigger trees on two sides. I'll give you that we have had 3-4 early mornings in the high 60's instead of the high 70's, but my so-called Yankee self says it should not be hot enough for another month to go swimming, much less to sweat while sitting still. Not really griping because I've been in

Texas for 48 years, just wistful wandering; the time will come in a month...or more.

So here I sit in my red plastic faux Adirondack chair with the broken slat. My cat sits atop the "water feature" with her tail in the birdbath. I am careful to place my slippered feet (yep, still in my pj's) in between the several ant trails in constant motion across the patio bricks. The trails go up the oak tree trunk—to what? why? On the other side of the driveway are the bird feeders next to the line of photinias which I keep cutting back but can't cut down. They provide cover for the birdies whom the cat and I like to watch, although not for the same pleasure!

I'm looking at a wild garden now going to pot. The iris leaves have been cut to fans. They look like soldiers with no organization, and I make a mental note to never do that again. The goldenrod stalks that I didn't pull up have dead leaves drooping along each stem. Dark brown seed cones of the purple (they are really pink) coneflowers dot the garden everywhere; the slightest breeze will soon knock seeds out to proliferate next spring's display. Maybe today is the day I will cut the seedheads off into a box to share...or not. The dang spiderworts are already coming up. I love them, and even bought some to plant, but they are indiscriminate. Nobody warned me they were "travelers"; I should have paid attention to the roadsides! Some pointy-nosed creature comes every night lately to dig for grubs and is unearthing my irises and wandering Jew. A lot of short Anglo-Saxon expletives escape my thoughts as I fill up the holes and tamp them down.

Why can't whoever it is unearth the spiderworts instead?

However, in the midst of the empty stalks, the schoolhouse (oxblood) lilies are blooming a striking red. A friend and I "saved" those from the yard of an empty, falling-down house on a back road several years ago—what fun and frantic digging, oh my! Also red-blooming are the hummingbird plant (*anisacanthus*) and the Turk's cap (another stealthily moving plant). This morning what prompted me to get my yellow table and write was the lone hummingbird I watched beak-patrol the Turk's cap flowers and then twitch over my way to the pink obedient plants, probing each flower up the stem on one side and then down the other.

It is obvious what our few days of "coolness" does for my outlook; an inner sigh of rightness and a spur to be active and creative are waiting in the wings of my mind. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that my friends the plants seem in kind: the dayflower and the oxalis are blooming again, the Gregg's blue mist may blossom in time for the monarch migration, lantana has new buds, and I am, maybe, encouraged to clean up the place a bit. Silky breeze rustling through right now, and the cat came to sit in my lap. She thinks that open books and papers are personal invitations. Must be time to move and get some work done before the day's heat arrives.

Oh well, all I can say is I'll be very happy when November comes in its red, gold, orange and purplish glory, and my garden well be put to rest, and I can wear a sweatshirt! I'm really in no hurry. I'm just a seasonal gal, an Ohio to Texas transplant and glad to be here (except maybe in August...?)....and my garden will be put to rest...



Inspiration

The trainees on Tuesday night were each assigned a chapter in the Sand County Almanac to read and report on. Cathy Mitchell had “March-The Geese Return” and she wrote this poem.

One swallow does not summer make.

One skein of geese clearing the murk of a March thaw, is spring.

Staking two hundred miles in the black of night hoping to find a thawed lake.

Carries the conviction of a prophet who has burned his bridges.

*Geese proclaim seasons to our farm, they understand in November
to pass high and haughty.*

To fly to a lake 20 miles to the south to loaf by day and filch corn by night.

*November geese are aware that every marsh and pond bristles from dawn
till dark with hopeful guns.*

March geese are aware that in spring there is a truce in effect.

*They fly over the river cutting low over the gunless points and islands looking
for long-lost friends.*

Finally, after a few pro-forma circles of the marsh they glide silently to the pond.

Once they arrive they begin honking and splashing.

Our geese are home.



Robin Sissell wrote this for the “July” chapter...

*I observe as nature unfolds in early morn,
The beautiful, majestic, natural world,
The gift of creation shared with me,
It calms and stirs my soul you see.*

*I think about how things have changed,
How what was present then, has rearranged.*

*I watch as species come and go,
We only grieve for what we know.
Thousands gone forever, their splendor withheld,
Yet I am blessed because I dwell
With the natural world I love so well.*

To Everything There Is A Season

By Anne Marie Gross (TMN Fall 2015 training class)

Before I was old enough to fully appreciate these words from the verse in Ecclesiastes, I was singing them as lyrics to The Byrds' song "Turn, Turn, Turn." Written (and adapted from the Bible verse) by folk singer and activist Pete Seeger, it was a plea for peace during the turbulent 1960s, but in my young pre-teen mind it simply reflected the cycle of nature. While my older brothers and sisters were glued to the news of campus riots and Vietnam War protests, I was staring outside my bedroom window wondering what bird had left the footprints on fresh snow on my windowsill.

Fast forward to just this month when I read Aldo

Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* as part of my Texas Master Naturalist training, where I also learned about many other early naturalists and scientists responsible for much of what we know about our natural world today. While these men and women may have come from different centuries and different continents, they shared one quality essential to the understanding of the delicate balance of nature – an ability to patiently observe and record what they saw.

And guess what? There's an "-ology" for that!

Phenology is the study of the biologic timing of plant and animal life cycle events. Phenologists note the date a tree flowers, a migrating bird arrives, the first cicada sound is heard for the season, and when fish begin to spawn. Monitoring these natural events over a period of years can reveal cyclical patterns, as well as anomalies.

Aldo Leopold kept a detailed phenology, which became the basis for his beautifully written book. Henry David Thoreau dutifully noted flowering times at Walden Pond in Connecticut, data that scientists used to monitor changes in flowering among some species. British landowner Robert Marsham began recording the earliest signs of spring on his family estate in 1736, a tradition his family continued into the 20th century

Of course, these are well-respected names, but phenology is not just for the flora and fauna hall-of-famers. Farmers

and gardeners are phenologists. Hunters and fishermen are phenologists. If you've ever posted a picture of a Trout Lily on Facebook with the caption "Spring is finally here!" then you're a budding phenologist

Fall is just as exciting a time as any to start journaling about the unfolding events outside your window. We have so many rewarding signs of fall – the arrival of robins, the Red Oak's tinge of orange, sunny yellow fall-blooming crocus in your yard. It's important to record daily, and as consistently as you can. Take time to sharpen your observation skills, and be patient. Record the mundane as well as the exceptional. Be sure to note the high and low temperature of the day, times of sunrise and sunset, and any precipitation that may have occurred since the internal clocks of many species are affected by temperature, sunlight, and precipitation. You can even be creative if it brings joy to your soul and helps you enjoy the experience more. It doesn't matter if you keep



your notes in an inexpensive spiral-bound notebook, fancy journal, in a computer document, or phone app ... strive for consistency until it becomes habit. You never know -- your daily record-keeping could inspire your children and theirs to do the same, creating a multi-generational treasure of natural events!

Note – participating in the ITMN citizen science projects iNaturalist and CoCoRaHS go hand-in-hand with keeping a phenology of your sightings. To learn more, email our chapter's contact for these programs, Carolyn Gritzmaker, c.gritzmaker@gmail.com

Dear colleagues,

Last week, the Texas Monarch and Pollinator Conservation Plan was announced by the Carter Smith, director of Texas Parks and Wildlife. The announcement was made in concert with former First Lady Laura Bush, Dan Ashe, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Collin O'Mara, President and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. The plan calls for an inventory of needs, new pollinator protocols for state and agricultural lands and more. There are many actions aimed at improving habitat for monarchs and other critical pollinators. Because of Texas's key location on the central flyway, Carter Smith describes his state as "ground zero" for monarchs.

The announcement took place in Dallas and there is a terrific video covering the event and the key speakers. National Wildlife Federation was honored to have its Communities and Gardens plan for Texas included as an addendum to the State's overall plan and was successful in recruiting 10 mayors in Texas, including Austin, to take the Mayors' Monarch Pledge outlining steps that can will be taken locally to improve habitat for monarchs. There are many amazing organizations that contributed to the Texas

plan and they are listed in the report.

NWF has, in just the past couple of weeks, recruited 23 mayors across the U.S. to lead the charge for monarch butterflies in their cities, counties and towns. Please help us spread the word.

Kevin J. Coyle, JD
Vice President, Education and Training
National Wildlife Federation
703-989-6020
coylek@nwf.org | www.nwf.org



Photo©Jim West



MEMBER CHAIR'S CORNER

Your service hours add up to a great contribution!

	<u>AT Hours</u>	<u>Service Hours</u>	<u>\$ Equivalent</u>
3rd Quarter:	266.15	2,723.85	\$62,648.55
2015 YTD:	851.40	6,875.44	\$158,135.12
2014 Total:	956.40	7,250.49	\$166,750.00

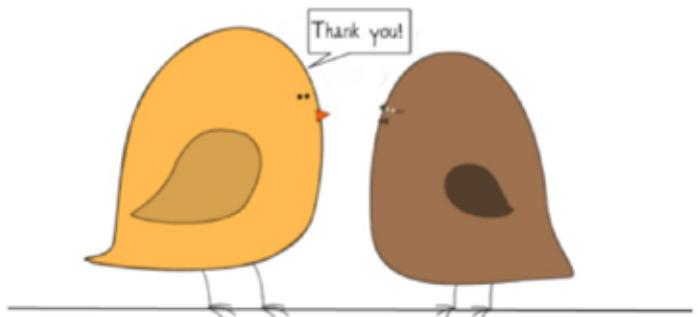
Notes From Your Member Chair

All hours are now to be reported online.

All historical data is now uploaded.

Contact Michaela if you need assistance.

itmnhours@gmail.com



MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM 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.

INDIAN TRAIL CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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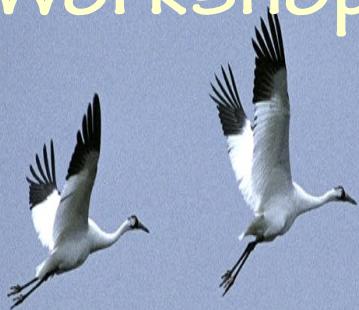
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Bullard Heights Neighborhood Park: Don Happ projects@itmnc.com
Cerf Park Butterfly Garden: Linda Almes projects@itmnc.com

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY LIAISONS

Botanical Research Institute of Texas: Debbie Pierce information@itmnc.com
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John Bunker Sands Wetland Center information@itmnc.com

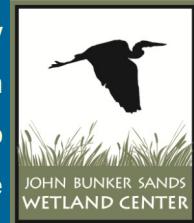
**The mission of this newsletter is to inform, educate and entertain
Texas Master Naturalists and their circle of friends.**

Whooping Crane Workshop



Saturday
November 7, 2015
1:00pm - 3:00pm

Whooping Cranes - the largest birds in North America - have recovered from a low of fewer than 20 birds to today's population of 308 birds in the Aransas - Wood Buffalo flock and two other growing flocks in the US. The eastern edge of this bird's annual migration crosses through Dallas / Fort Worth and one of the other flocks has had birds wander into the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Come out and learn about the recovery of this bird as well as how you can be part of a Story of Success! Presented by Mark Klym from Texas Parks and Wildlife. Reservations and Prepayment required.



Where: John Bunker Sands Wetland Center
655 Martin Lane, Seagoville, TX 75159

Time: Saturday, Nov. 7, 2015, 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Cost: \$10 / person, \$5 / member

RESERVATION REQUIRED

Contact: Linda Dunn at ldunn@wetlandcenter.com
or call 972-474-9100