



# INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

November 2017

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>

## *From the Desk of the* **PRESIDENT**

*Donald Happ, President, Indian Trail Chapter*

**What a year we have had and continue to have. To list all our successful projects and outreach days would fill the entire newsletter.**

**The new training class is going well and with the knowledge and enthusiasm of our trainees, our chapter has a bright future indeed.**

**I am all hyped up as I will be going to the State Conference in Corpus Christi in a few days. If you missed the opportunity to attend this year start saving for next year's conference. Not only will you learn a lot but you will make many new friends from around Texas.**

**It is with much sadness that I will have to give up the presidency for the Indian Trail chapter. Chronic health concerns prevent me from devoting myself to chapter business as fully as I would like and on a timely basis.**

**I am extremely proud of our members and all the help you have given me. In all the years of professional work and belonging to civic organizations, I have never seen anything to equal the care for fellow members or enthusiasm**

**of Indian Trail Master Naturalists. I will still be around to enjoy all my Naturalist friends most of the year, and of course, to support the transition to our new president.**

North American River Otter © JimWest

Meeting 4th Monday (*usually*) of each month at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie

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# ★ AWARDS ★

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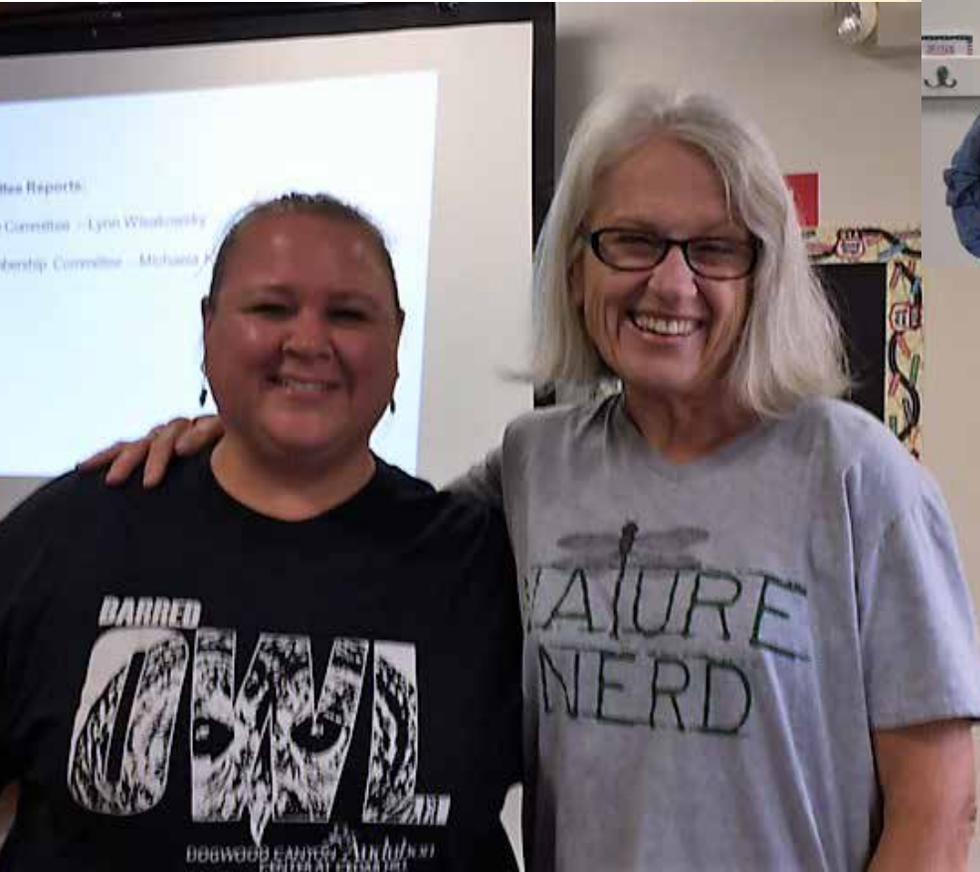
Congratulations to chapter members who received certification and recognition pins for their achievements in volunteer service. In August 2017, Membership Director Michaela Kral presented achievement recognitions to the following individuals:



2017 Recertification:  
Don Mitchell and  
Robin Sissell



250 Hours: Sue Frary



500 Hours: Jean Kastanek

# NOTEWORTHY



## TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### Bullard Heights Cleanup Crew

*Our volunteers were up bright and early clearing brush and some leaning snags at Bullard Heights Neighborhood Park in Waxahachie.*



members who helped make the walk such a success. Thanks to Midlothian Parks for their help getting the word out & making sure the trails were ready.”

Our tour leaders were graced by the presence of a young naturalist in the group, Ada Lee (13) who was busy sketching the natural wonders she saw.

Maybe we'll see Ada in a future training class!



Photo by Tristan Lee

### Wildflower Walk at MNP

Here's Charlie Grindstaff's report from our last Wildflower Walk of the year at Mockingbird Nature Park: "Wow! I can't tell you how excited I was when I drove up to Mockingbird Nature Park this morning and saw how full the parking lot was. I caught myself thinking, "I hope they are all here to walk with us." And they were! There were 38 of us today. We had 23 guests (including 10 kids), 8 trainees & 7 members. There were so many that we split into 2 groups and walked in opposite directions. We identified over 40 plants today...the gerardia/prairie agalinis, eryngo & snow-on-the-prairie were beautiful. Lots to see, touch, smell and explore. Thanks to all

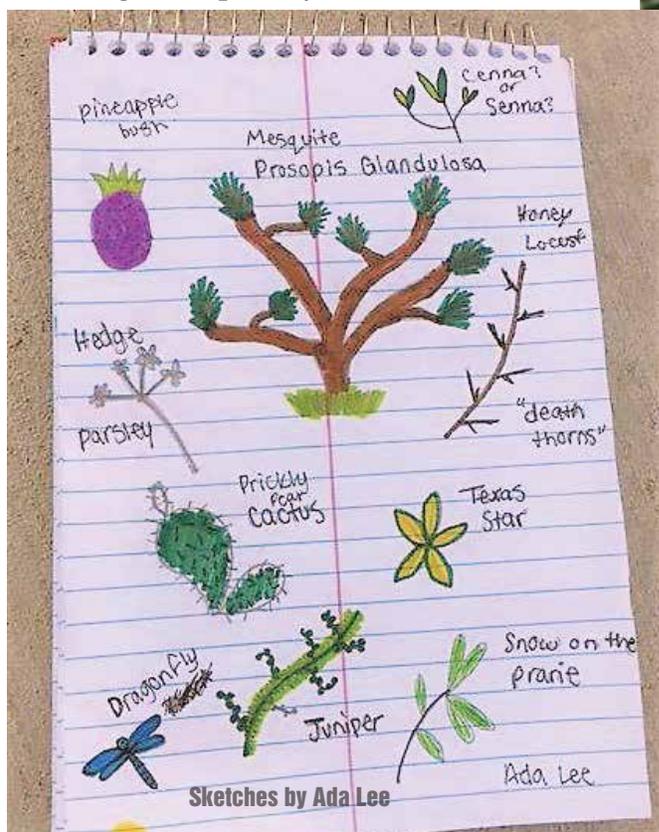


Photo by Tristan Lee

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# NOTEWORTHY

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## Backyard Discoveries

*Jane True brought in photos of this mystery plant that popped up in her backyard.*

“I am new to the country and a new trainee to the Master Naturalist group. So when I found this volunteer growing in my backyard, I started mowing around it and photographing it in early Spring. After a month or two, a bloom started and I felt the overwhelming urge to start watering it. (I might add that it was doing fine by itself in full sun and poor caliche soil.) These blooms eventually grew on hardy stalks to a height about three feet high. It was a white clustered blossom. I sought some help from fellow Master Naturalists who identified it as a Cast Iron plant, sometimes called a Bar Room plant. It’s not a Texas native (it is native of Japan, China and Taiwan), but seems to be quite happy in my backyard!



**I heard a commotion coming from a slough in the bottoms and thought, hmm, maybe I Otter stick around and check it out. *Jim West***

# Nature Play That Nurtures



Story and photos by Katie Christman

As the spring slowly moves to summer, most parents come up with a game plan with what they're going to do with their children for the summer. Some hire a sitter, some go through summer school, and even more enter the realm of summer camp.

With the ever increasing challenge of bullying, depression and peer pressure, summer camp offers life-changing positive experiences that will carry through with a child for a lifetime. Camp counselors help facilitate friendships and positive experiences through social interaction during a child's time at camp. Do you remember singing songs, performing skits and getting to know you games during your time at camp?

While there are many studies to show the impacts of summer camp and its positive affect on children, real life experience highlights the impressions summer camp has on children.

Take the example of Chuck

(name changed to protect camper identity), a camper that I've had the privilege of working with at Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center for four years now. Chuck started coming to camp when he was seven and would often struggle with how he shared his emotions with other children. Sometimes he would shout and get angry if another child "pushed his buttons."

Summer camp has given him an outlet where he could focus, and express himself in a more positive way. Not only did we see a more mature and respectful child this summer, we saw a leader emerge throughout each week. Chuck offered to lead activities and help with cleaning up after meal time. If he grew impatient or was upset at another person, he learned to walk away and speak more respectfully to fellow campers and staff about what bothered him.

Another camper that I took delight in working with was a young boy named, Ed. Ed was with our camp for two years, but he grew leaps and bounds in the short time that he was here. Ed had limited experience with nature and had a legitimate fear of everything. Butterflies, bees, any plant that could touch him, dirt; basically the outdoors. By the end of the summer Ed could walk outside

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could touch him, dirt; basically the outdoors. By the end of the summer Ed could walk outside without having a breakdown.

By the end of summer two, Ed was looking for and holding snails, was ok if his shoes got dirty (as long as you cleaned them off), asked if he could lead the nature walks and wasn't afraid to see birds, butterflies and bees anymore. A previously frightened, timid child, turned into a confident, adventurous child. So, what changed? The opportunity to play and gain skills in a supportive, positive environment builds interactive social skills both at camp and beyond. Add the freedom to play in nature into the mix and you give children a significant advantage to learning how to be compassionate, using imagination, being bold and challenging the status quo against at times a confining school environment.

My hope is that the summer camp tradition will be carried on through generation to generation. The influence it has is a powerful one!



## NOVEMBER | DECEMBER

### NOVEMBER

- 1 BRIT Work Day (10am)
- 1 Night Hike Practice Mockingbird Nature Park (6:30pm)
- 2 Indian Trail Chapter 2017 New Class Training (6-9pm)
- 2 L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Panther Island (9:30am)
- 4 Indian Trail Chapter, 2017 New Class Field Trip
- 4 BRIT Work Day (9am-12pm)
- 4 BRIT TERM Class "Grasses: The Rodney Dangerfield of the Vascular Plant World" (1-3pm)
- 4 Rebecca Schumacher presents "Beneficial Bats" North Haven Garden (3pm)
- 5 Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 7 L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Panther Island (9:30am)
- 8 Night Hike Practice, Mockingbird Nature Park (6:30pm)
- 9 Indian Trail Chapter 2017 New Class Training (6-9pm)
- 10 Night Hike, Mockingbird Nature Park (7:30pm)

- 11 Veterans Day
- 14 Plant Family Study Group (6:30pm)
- 14 L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Panther Island (9:30am)
- 16 Indian Trail Chapter 2017 New Class Graduation (6-9pm)
- 16 L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Panther Island (9:30am)
- 17 Kachina Prairie Workday (9am)
- 23 Thanksgiving Day
- 25 Kachina Prairie Workday (9am)
- 27 Indian Trail Chapter Monthly Meeting (6pm); Program "Scat and Tracks: What Animals Leave Behind" (7pm)
- 28 L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Panther Island (9:30am)
- 30 L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Panther Island (9:30am)

### DECEMBER

- 4 Indian Trail Chapter Planning Meeting (6:30pm)
- 5 L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Bear Creek (9:30am)
- 7 L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Bear Creek (9:30am)
- 9 Indian Trail Chapter Annual Christmas Party (2-4pm)
- 25 Christmas Day



## Can You Name That Plant?

By Charlie Grindstaff

On Aug. 18, thirteen Indian Trail Chapter members and one Girl Scout with her mother spent a very enjoyable 90 minutes identifying (and misidentifying) trees, shrubs, vines and other forbs in a 4-acre nature area in Midlothian owned by Paws for Reflection Ranch, an educational and recreational environment that uses equine and other animal therapies to help improve the lives of their clients. They asked our chapter to do a nature inventory of the



Carolina Buckthorn

area that is used for scavenger hunts with kids, projects with Scouts, as well as a meditation meadow. We broke into teams and listed about one plant a minute

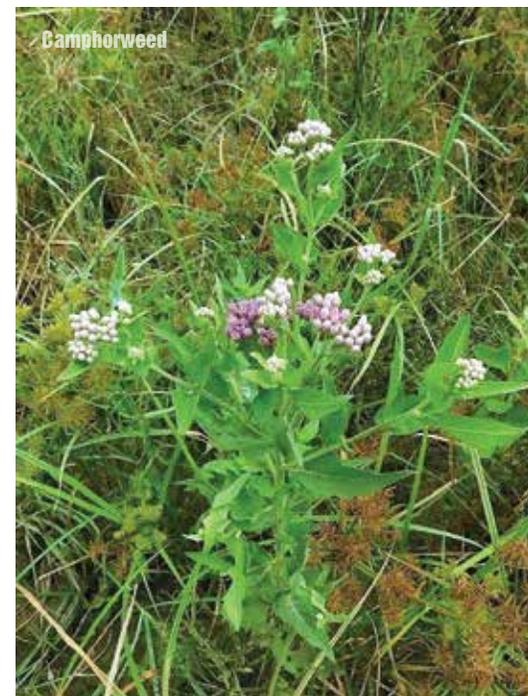
made up of 29 species of trees, shrubs & vines and 24 species of wildflowers including some surprises... a bluebonnet and an Indian paintbrush were blooming long past their normal bloom time!

Plant photos by Charlie Grindstaff

## Now, Can You Name This Plant?

The following week, our group met again, this at Waste Management in Ferris to conduct a flora and fauna survey of their refuge areas. In previous surveys at the site between 2005 and 2009, 101 species trees, shrubs, vines and forbs had been identified. In 90 minutes we added 43 species, with about 15 yet to be identified. Seven birds and seven animals (or evidence of their presence) were identified but only feral hogs were new to the existing list. Insects had not been included in previous surveys, so we added 30, of which, 17 were species of dragonflies. Greta Calvery of Waste Management presented members with t-shirts and provided lunch. And just to make a good time even better, we were told a donation of \$500 was being made to ITMN!

Many thanks to everyone who participated; to Chris Cook's team for tackling the very tall prairie, to Eileen Berger's team for identifying the most species while being eaten by chiggers and to Don Happ's team for their enthusiasm.



Camphorweed

# Notable NATURE

## Cedar Waxwing

By Lois Lyon

It was a real treat in mid-December to look out my kitchen window and see a flock of Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) in the bushes in front of our house. These winter visitors are a delight to see, but you can't always count on them to come back each year. They are known for having a rather erratic schedule of where to take up their winter residence. They are spread across the northern parts of the country in the summer months and will only make an appearance in Texas in the winter months.

I quickly grabbed my cell phone and attempted to take a picture of them in the bush. The quality suffered greatly because my phone kept wanting to focus on the window screen and not the birds!

My husband is friends on Facebook with Christian singer and songwriter Fernando Ortega who also happens to be quite good with a camera. He filled his feeders with berries, fruit, small nuts and seeds and captured some excellent photos as they came to his feeders. Fernando was gracious enough to grant us permission to include these exquisite photos.



© Jim West



© Fernando Ortega

The Cedar Waxwings love to travel together in groups and they call out to each other often. They have a distinct high-pitched trilling sound that speeds up or slows down depending on their excitement level. The National Audubon Society reports that these birds have been seen sitting in a row and passing a berry back and forth to one another until one of them decides to eat it.

I love seeing these birds with their mask on as though they are trying to hide their identity from us. However, their distinct markings, velvety appearance, and trilling song is unmistakable.

If you wish to see Cedar Waxwings in the winter months, make sure your feeders are well stocked with berries and fruit. Perhaps planting some of the shrubs and trees they love the best would also attract them. They eat almost exclusively fruit in the winter, relying on the berries of mountain ash, juniper, dogwood, and others. I know our feeders will be filled with what they love, and hopefully they will visit us again this coming winter.



© Fernando Ortega

# NATURAL reads

Book Review by Eileen Berger

## *Goodbye To A River*

By John Graves, Copyright 2002, Vintage Books

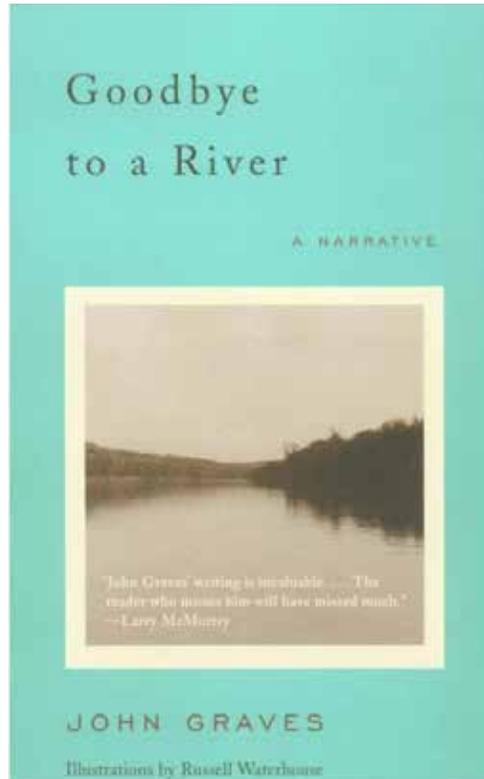
For many years my father had urged me to read *Goodbye To A River* by John Graves. I knew very little about the man except that he had taken a canoe trip down the Brazos River, which flowed right by my parents' home near Acton, Texas. Our family had owned several canoes since the 1950's, the first one being a homemade wood and canvas one that I helped my father build. Finally, last year I saw the book in our library at the AgriLife office in Waxahachie. Although my father has been dead since 2009, I knew he would be pleased that I was going to read the book.

As I read the author note in the back, I realized that Graves was born in Ft. Worth, Texas, attended Rice University and was a noted author and conservationist. He wrote for the Department of the Interior and the Sierra Club and eventually bought a farm near Weatherford. The book was published in 1960.

As he explains in the first few chapters, he decided to take a solo trip down a portion of the Brazos River because that part was scheduled to be dammed and used for recreation as well as flood control. He chose to make the trip in autumn, for reasons that would be obvious to fellow Texans, ranging from fewer mosquitoes, snakes, chiggers, ticks, and heat. That did not preclude rain, cold, flooding and any number of dangers that could come up on a canoe trip with no way to communicate to the outside world, alone except for his little dog.

This book is an easy read, with short chapters which make for good places to stop. It is not politically correct, so be forewarned. It is "folksy" but not cute. It is in places satirical, and the author does not take himself too seriously. You will laugh, shake your head, and if you, like me, were raised here in Texas by a family who farmed post-Reconstruction in the south, you will recognize your uncles and aunts, grandmas and grandpas, and learn a little more about old settlers and "characters" of that area around the mighty Brazos. I would rank this book right up there with Henry David Thoreau's

*On Walden Pond* and Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. Read it and see if you agree.



Great purple Hairstreak on Smartweed © Jim West



# The View From My GARDEN CHAIR\*

## On the Back Road to 'Hatchie

Text and photos by Chris Cook

It's 7:45 AM the last week of August, and I'm off to run errands early to beat the heat. I'm on the 'back road' from Ennis to Waxahachie, with a stop at their coffee spot, and then at Hobby Lobby when the doors open. There is also what we call the 'front way' to Hatchie--that would be Rte. 287 all the way, maybe 15 miles or less. The back road may be a tad longer, but it's always better for my naturalist soul, especially on a shining blue-sky morning, not even one puff of cloud, windows down, directing music with WRR, checking the roadsides and skyways, and straightening out the road on the curves.



Trumpet vine

There is actually a back road off the back road, and today I'm taking it. At the entrance to my friend Joan's ranch are two huge pink heirloom rose bushes, a piece of which I was unsuccessful, several times, in propagating. The bushes were an anniversary gift from her husband; both of them are gone now, and 'my' Ennis is missing her spot. Across the road is a somewhat wavy field with an extended tank (Yankees, read that as pond...) that will fill with quite a variety of ducks in a few months.



Onion flower head

At the first turn is a small field I always check out for seasonal wildflowers, yellow horse nettle tomatoes, and especially clots of Texas bluebells. I am sad to see

it has been mowed too soon. On down the road a short piece is a home with peacocks that often rest under a tree near the front fence. Down the hill on the right is where I will look for liatris (gayfeather) to bloom soon. At the bottom of the hill is the drain pool, occasionally adorned by cattle egrets and a blue heron. Going up the next hill now, I see a vista of soft white, the snow on the prairie that is the harbinger of the new school year. The hillside on the left is a sea of Indian blankets in the late spring, graced by the sweet calls of dicksissels.

Being a city bred girl, I have had barn envy since I was a kid, reinforced by travels to the barn capitals of Pennsylvania, upstate New York, and Vermont. At the top of the hill is a supremo metal barn home, with raised clerestory center, the right red color, apple and pear trees, long gravel drive, tremendous view...ah!!! Two other look-for spots. One is where I often see a jackrabbit, and I score today! After a look at me, he turns and the sun highlights the black tips of his ears. The other is a crop field corner that fills with water after a heavy rain. There my daughter and I have noted a variety of birds not expected to be seen there--lesser yellowlegs, yellow crowned night heron and others of similar ilk--but today it's dry.

The next turn takes me along the railroad



Ragweed



Horse nettle 'tomatoes'

track a short way: trumpet vine, ragweed, reeds, ragweed, burdock burs, ragweed. In the spring there are lots of onions, and I see the dried flower heads now, ready for gather-

ing for fall arrangements. This area across from the tracks was a sea of sunflowers earlier in the summer where we took many photos and helped ourselves to a few flowerheads for the birds this winter (thank you).

\*Most of the time.

Now returned to the more major back road again, I'm winding the curves into the community of Boyce, where the most prominent feature is the cotton gin, one of the few still functioning in the area. It will be busy soon enough. The fields along the way are, at different times, a hopscotch of wheat, corn, sunflowers, and milo. The dry stalks of wheat and corn match the hair color of my three daughters, somewhere between red and blonde (my mother often called hers disappointed orange); I find it beautiful in the still slanted sunshine.

I cross a stony creek that is dry now, but it always entices me to explore it for cool rocks and fossils. The yard of one of the few homes along the back stretch sports two tall poles, each holding many of those white roundish fake nests for purple martins. I spy a little activity there, not much. I've already seen several scissortails, the juveniles easy to spot with their shorter tails. Also on the wires I've spotted two hight-hawks, one redtailed hawk, two kestrels. Oh yeh, and starlings and lbjs (my kids always reminded me that they have mommies, too.).

At the end of the back road is a huge field, usually of cotton. Some white blooms are evident, with ripe



The back, back road

2 donkeys, or the good entrance to walk the railroad tracks.

I'm back to 287 and the rest of the day. Hope you enjoyed the back road to 'Hachie with



Milo, sorghum



Snow on the Prairie



Boyce gin

flowers: first day white, second day red, third day dead. Some of the cotton from this field has gone to Minnesota and Vermont for my young relatives to share at school (thank you). At the last turn is a holding area for road supplies, hills of gravel waiting for a challenge I feel but have never accepted. I haven't even mentioned the exotic animal ranch, the Tamales for Sale sign, the

balls below on the same plant. A friend who is a native taught me about cotton

me, and that you have a back road to provide you with pleasure in the midst of the mundane errands of life. Now, which way shall I go home?



Reeds

**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.

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## INDIAN TRAIL CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## SUPPORT

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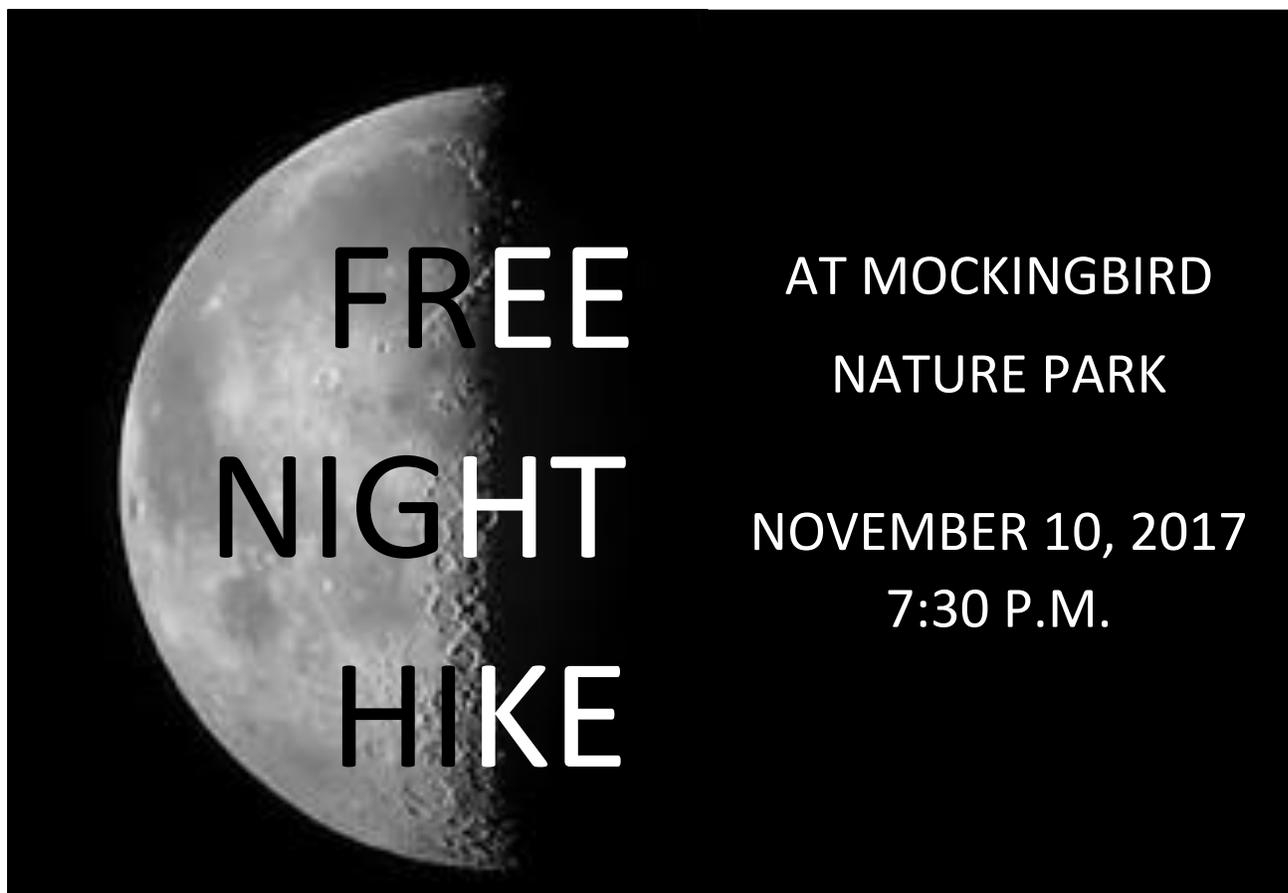
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## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY LIAISONS

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Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center: Michaela Kral ..... [michaelarkral@gmail.com](mailto:michaelarkral@gmail.com)  
John Bunker Sands Wetland Center: Maureen Nitkowski..... [maunitka@att.net](mailto:maunitka@att.net)

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



Indian Trail Master Naturalist Chapter invites you to come and learn about the sights, smells and sounds of nature in the park at night during this family friendly hike.

Closed-toe shoes and long pants are recommended. Plan to be outdoors about two hours.

Call 972-291-2868 to register.

**1361 Onward Road in Midlothian**

Sponsored by the Midlothian Parks and Recreation Dept. and the Indian Trail Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.



**Monday – November 27, 2017**

## **SCAT AND TRACKS: WHAT ANIMALS LEAVE BEHIND**

**Location: First United Methodist Church  
505 W. Marvin Ave., Waxahachie, TX  
Family Life Center - Gathering Room**

**Indian Trail Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist**

- **6:00 PM - Business Meeting**
  - **7:00 PM - Program by Kayleigh Medeiros - Education Manager**
- Trinity River Audubon Center**

The evidence animals leave behind, like tracks and scat, are clues to where they're going, how they move, and what they eat! Kayleigh Medeiros will discuss the basic principles of tracking and how to determine who left those prints behind. Ms. Medeiros will then focus on what else was left behind – scat, the shape and composition of which help in determining the "owner"!

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Kayleigh Medeiros graduated from UMASS Amherst in 2011 with a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Conservation and moved to Texas 5 years ago for an educational internship at Shangri La Gardens and Nature Center in Orange, TX followed by a related assignment with Houston ISD. In 2015, Kayleigh joined Trinity River Audubon Center where she manages 3 programs: the Eco Investigations program, the Conservation TREKs program, and Audubon's Conservation Leaders Program for Young Women. In her spare time, she likes to work out, hang with her dogs, kayak, camp and hike with her fiancé, and bird watch.

Indian Trail Chapter is part of the statewide Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer Program of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

*The 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.*

This program is part of a series of "no cost" "open to the public" Master Naturalist programs offered the fourth Monday (generally) of each month, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. Please bring a friend! For more information, please call the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension at 972-825-5175 or email: [information@itmnc.com](mailto:information@itmnc.com)