

INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

Dec./Jan. 2018

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

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From the Desk of the **PRESIDENT**

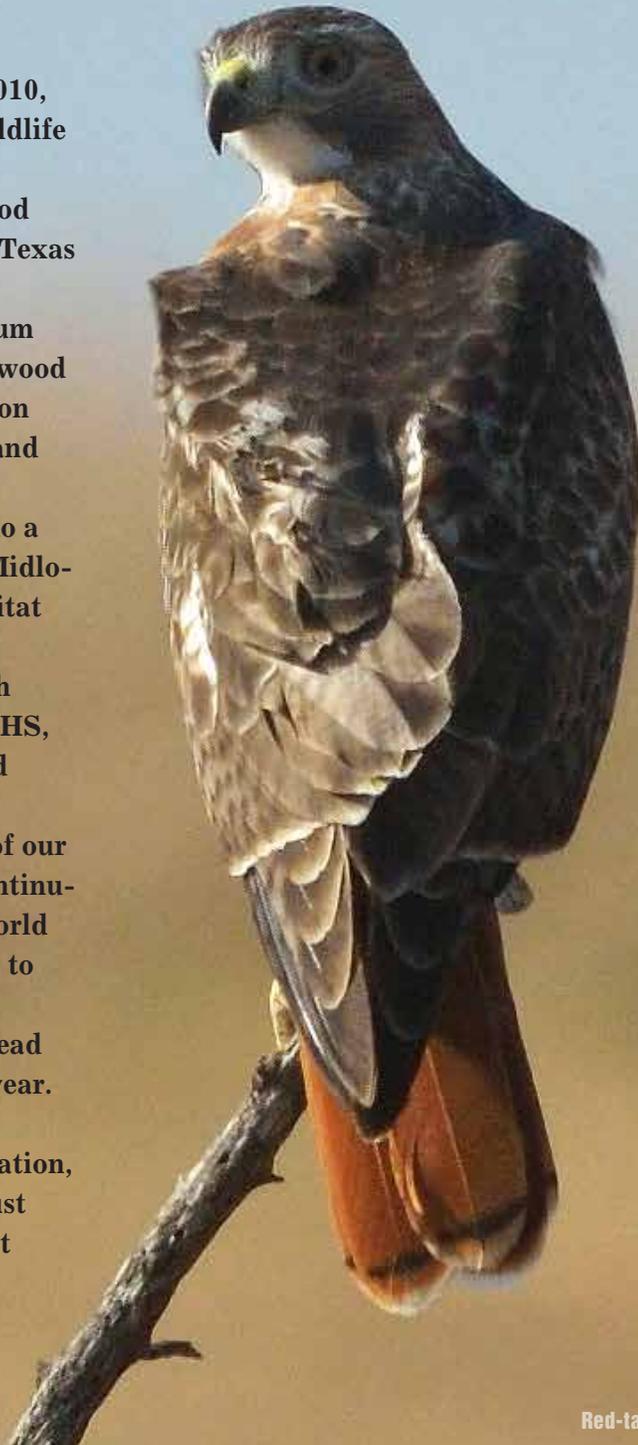
Elaine "Muffi" Ruby

In the seven years since our inception in 2010, we have achieved so much. We support the wildlife management of Kachina Prairie, Mockingbird Nature Park, and Bullard Heights Neighborhood Park. Our members actively volunteer for the Texas Wildlife Authority's L.A.N.D.S. program, the Botanical Research Institute of Texas' herbarium collection, and the education programs at Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center, Trinity River Audubon Center, John Bunker Sands Wetlands Center, and Twelve Hills Nature Center.

Just a few months ago, we were asked to do a plant survey at Paws for Reflection Ranch in Midlothian and the Waste Management wildlife habitat site in Ferris. Members also actively log their observations of our natural world through such citizen science projects as iNaturalist, CoCoRaHS, eBird, Backyard Feeder Watch, Christmas Bird Count and more.

This list just barely scratches the surface of our work! As Master Naturalist volunteers, we continuously strive to learn more about our natural world and then share it with those around us, hoping to inspire a new generation of naturalists.

As your interim president, I am happy to lead the Indian Trail chapter into an exciting new year. Let's celebrate our shared vision and commit ourselves fully to a new year of outreach, education, and service. And in doing so, don't forget to just have fun "playing in the dirt," enjoying all that nature offers.



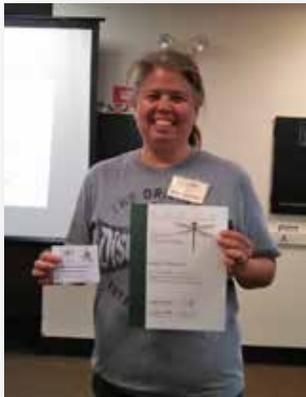
Red-tailed Hawk © JimWest

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

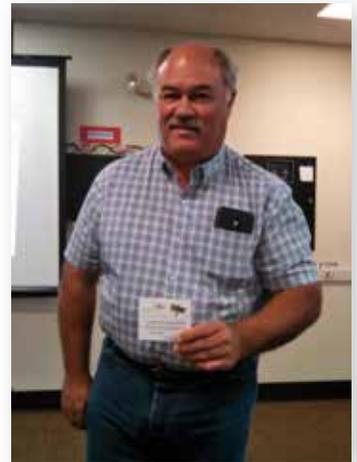
★ AWARDS ★

Congratulations to chapter members who received certification and recognition pins for their achievements in volunteer service. In October and November 2017, achievement recognitions were awarded to the following individuals

New Certification
(October):
Michelle Ostendorf



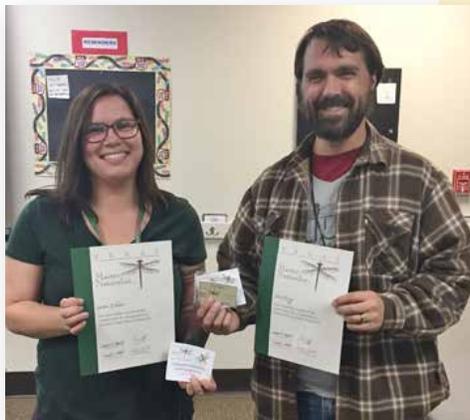
2017 Recertification (October):
Dan Rayfield, Lynn Wisakowsky



250 Hours (October): Rex Reeves



500 Hours (October):
Sue Frary



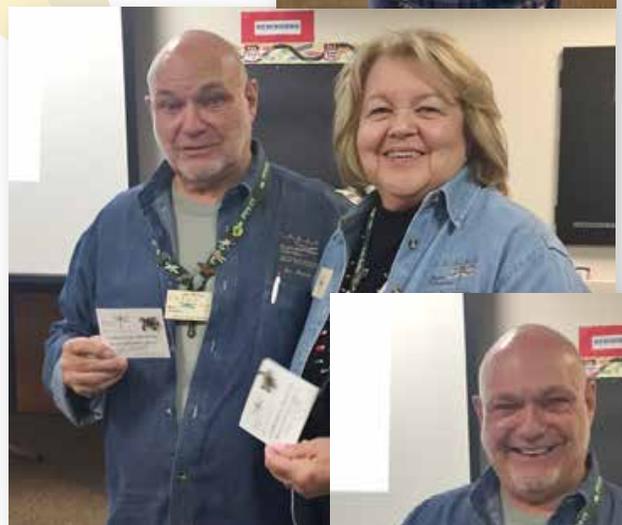
New Certification (November):
Gwen Eishen, Tim Brys

2017 Recertification
(November):
Rex Reeves



2017 Recertification
(November):
Dawn Wheeler

2,500 Hours (November):
Carolyn Gritzmaker



2017 Recertification
(November):
Joe and Pam Mundo

1,000 Hours (November):
Joe Mundo



NOTEWORTHY



TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Cerf Butterfly Garden

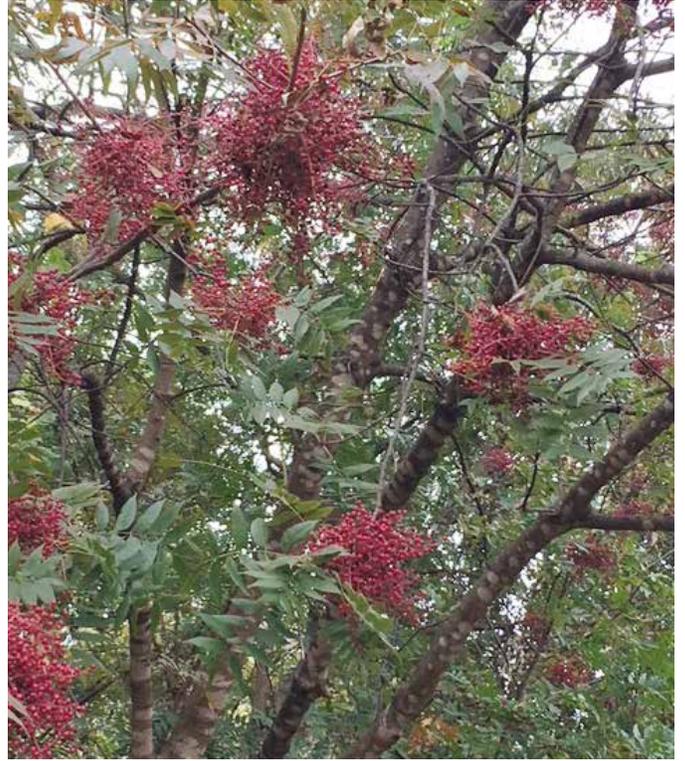
Thanks to Chris Cook for sharing these pictures of Cerf Park Butterfly Garden. Someone needs to tell that bluebonnet it is either really late or really early!



NOTEWORTHY

Twelve Hills Nature Center

Madeline Kelly sent in these photos of preschoolers enjoying a lesson about falling leaves. The kids weren't the only ones who enjoyed playing in the piles of leaves!



Mockingbird Nature Park Workday

A crew of volunteers set out bright and early to cut down smaller trees through the park in preparation for a full-park mowing to encourage more wildflower growth in the spring. Jean Kastanek said "It was a beautiful day out there," to which Jack Dunaway replied "...only a Yankee would think cold is beautiful!"



Night Hike at Mockingbird Nature Park

Photos by Chris Cook

There was something almost magical about the Night Hike held this past November. The night sky was clear, the air was crisp, and a gentle rain earlier in the week gave us the perfect opportunity to light a fire. Charlie Grindstaff and an energetic crew of volunteers planned a fun-filled evening for our guests, which included a walk through the front of the park with stops at education stations to learn about senses that help nocturnal animals navigate and hunt prey at night.

Over 80 guests were welcomed at Mockingbird Nature Park and invited to warm their hands by the fire ring while listening to cowboy poet David Smith. Volunteers then led small groups quietly through the park, where visitors young and old stopped, listened, and learned about all the adaptations common to local nocturnal animals. The tours ended back at the fire ring, and guests enjoyed hot chocolate and cookies. As our visitors headed out for the night, we heard the same question again and again ... "When's the next nature walk?"



At the Night Hike in Mockingbird Nature Park, visitors warmed their hands by a fire ring while Cowboy Poet David Smith entertained us with his original poem created just for the event.

Night Sounds

By David Smith, Cowboy Poet

*When yer on trail the sounds of cattle become routine.
Of an evenin' you realize there is more than what is seen
That makes a sound and you git pretty good and you can bet yer boot
You know that was a barn owl, the other, a screech owl hoot.*

*There is a time between the full moon and when the dark moon is set
That different sounds occur and you won't soon forget
The sound of rocks cooling or when clouds start amovin'
You know the sounds and hear the sounds of what you ain't approvin'.*

*The falling weather makes a sound an dslowly advances.
Some old boys call that "environmental circumstances."
You know the male mockingbird sings all night for a mate
And a whippoorwill goes on and on, early and late.*

*Your senses are heightened, you are aware of transgressions.
You calm your wits – and check all of your possessions.
What's that? You think that somethin' else is there?
But you're a cowboy, not one easy to scare!*

*And right when you think you might hear a somethin'
You console yerself and tell yerself, "Oh, that was just a nuthin'."*



Notable NATURE

Smartweed

Text and photos by Jim West

An herb in the buckwheat family, Smartweed can be found throughout much of the US and, there are eight species that call N. Texas home. The nectar of the flower attracts many different insect species, more than I have ever seen on one plant, including long and short-tongued bees, butterflies and moths. The flowers vary in color from deep pink to almost white, at least down here. It's also an excellent food for waterfowl including ducks, geese, doves, and other game and non-game species. The plant bears flowers from March to November.

Species Profile

Common Name: *Smartweed*

Also known as: *Knotweed, Knotgrass, Pinkweed*

Species: *Polygonum pensylvanicum*

Size: Vinelike, it grows up to 4' tall.

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Augoclorea sweat bee



Green Lynx spider w/egg sac

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Key identification Characteristics.

- Small flowers in spikes, with pale-colored bracts instead of petals
- Swollen leaf nodes covered by a papery sheath called an ocrea positioned just above where the leaf attaches to the stem
- Seeds are triangle- or pyramid-shaped

The photos are a small sampling of the many species of insects that I found in a little patch of Smartweed. JW



Scaly bee fly



Tachina fly



Crab spider



Bee fly



Yellowjacket bee fly



Bordered Patch butterfly



Potter wasp

NATURAL reads

Book Review by Charlie Grindstaff

The Growing Tree

Brayton F. Wilson, Professor Emeritus, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1071, Revised 1984

While suggesting a tree is a system with only three components – leaves, shoots, and roots – like every other plant, Professor Wilson looks at why trees are the **TALLEST, STRONGEST** and **LONGEST LIVED** plants and why trees look the way they do. Trees have not invented any new types of structures or processes that other plants do not have; but they have refined some of their internal anatomy for physical strength and to allow physiological processes to proceed efficiently. I liked his comparison of a tree with “a tower bearing many small solar collectors,” the difference being that trees can only grow using materials they produce themselves.

Professor Wilson states that “The aim of this book is to show how the great size and the incredible complexity of a tree is generated by relatively few processes, repeated over and over each year as the tree grows.” I believe his aim was right on target.

His focus on the form and growth of trees covers just about everything one would want to know about how a tree grows, except reproduction, which he claims needs its own book.

The magic of trees is in the meristems, tiny localized areas that act as cell producing factories, which cause elongation, thickening, and branching. Meristems produce new cells by division, which enlarge and subsequently differentiate into one of the many cell types that make up a tree. Apical meristems at the tip of each growing root and shoot are responsible for elongation while lateral meristems (the cambium between the wood and bark) are responsible for thickening the shoot/trunk. Meristems also produce new meristems. Elongation occurs only near the apical meristems. Most of the tree, once formed, stays the same. A wire fence nailed to a tree stays at the same height over time. Meristems are absolutely vital to trees, so they are protected by leaves or bud

scales, the root cap, or the bark.

Branching patterns are determined by the apical meristems. Form and pattern in tree growth is remarkably consistent. Even when some of the apical meristems are injured, the roots or branches may be replaced by new ones that bend to grow in the same direction; maintaining the form. Elongation occurs by the same basic process in shoots and roots; the major difference being that shoots produce leaves as they elongate. Elongation distributes the functional leaves and root tips so they can best exploit their environment for needed materials (sunlight, moisture and nutrients). Leaves are oriented in multilayers that allow light penetration and reduces mutual shading.

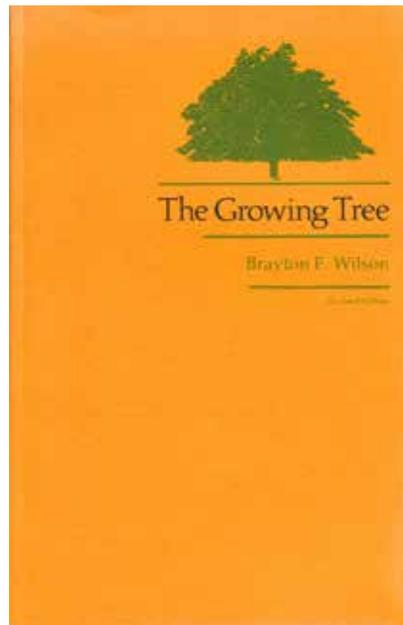
The sugars produced by photosynthesis are transported in the phloem, which is a living tissue. In contrast, water is transported by “dead cells in the wood” – xylem. Branches are not maintained if they cost more in energy for maintenance and growth than they produce from new photosynthesis. The growth will slow and ultimately the branch dies.

A plant is only the means by which a seed produces more seeds. A seed is actually a whole little tree inside a protective seed coat. Seeds are very resistant to inhospitable environments. They permit the little tree inside to avoid the bad times and not grow until the environment is favorable. When the

seed germinates the tree starts to grow. Small seeds cannot grow very long on the small amount of stored food in the seed, so they must get their root into the ground and begin making food as quickly as possible. They seldom survive if they fall on leaves and debris of the forest floor; whereas larger seeds produce large taproots that can penetrate leaves and grow down for a long way on the stored food.

This book contains information on internal growth regulators and inhibitors, cambial activity, root systems, mycorrhizal fungi, transpiration, orientation and survival. Wilson provides many drawings that I would call geometrical in form, which are a mixed bag of helpful and confusing. I admit having to reread a few paragraphs before they made sense, I also admit to enjoying the several ways the author found to say,

“There are many unanswered questions.” I recommend this book to anyone who really wants to understand how trees grow.



CALENDAR

DECEMBER:

- 4** Indian Trail Chapter Planning Meeting (6:30pm)
- 5** L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Bear Creek Ranch (9:30am)
- 7** L.A.N.D.S. Field Day, Bear Creek Ranch (9:30am)
- 9** Indian Trail Chapter Annual Christmas Party (2-4pm)
- 15** Work Day, Kachina Prairie (8am)
- 25** Christmas Day

JANUARY 2018

- 1** New Year's Day
- 5** Newsletter Deadline
- 15** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 15** Indian Trail Chapter Qtly Board Meeting (6pm);
- 19** Work Day, Kachina Prairie (8am)
- 22** Indian Trail Chapter Monthly Meeting (6pm); Program (7pm)
- 27** Work Day, Kachina Prairie (8am)



MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR

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