



## From the President's Desk

By Eileen Berger

Thank goodness the days are getting longer, and pretty soon we will be going back to Daylight Savings Time. Hope you have been able to get outside for a walk or to visit a wildlife area. Some of our members and I have attended advanced training at John Bunker Sands Wetlands, Trinity River Audubon Center, and Fort Worth Nature Center. If you have not experienced a day with teenagers lately, there are some opportunities coming up to help Koy Coffey with the L.A.N.D.S and aquatic programs from Texas Wildlife Association. These are held at private wildlife ranches including 77 Ranch at Blooming Grove, Cedar Mountain Lodge at Scurry, as well as at John Bunker Sands Wetlands. All these places offer a great way to get outside and enjoy nature. Of course, we can look forward to wildflower walks at Mockingbird Nature Park, and in April, a chance to see the outdoors at the Regional Conference at Anna, which will be at the YMCA camp. Hope to see you OUTDOORS. Your humble president, Eileen

## Writing Newsletter Articles

By MicroSoft

"You can transform your life and business in just seven minutes a day." If that statement makes you want to read on, consider yourself hooked.

A newsletter is competing against a lot of distractions for the reader's attention, so it's important that the first one or two sentences of an article hook the reader. And since that hook creates an expectation, the article needs to justify the use of the hook, or the reader will feel manipulated.

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### Calendar of Events, Projects & Meetings

#### March

- 2: BRIT plant mounting
- 9: Mockingbird Park – night hike
- 11-15: Red Oak Library – fishing program (dates TBD)
- 16: ITMN Booth at Ellis County Master Gardener Expo
- 18: Master Naturalist Training Applications Due
- 25: ITMN meeting w/program "John Bunker Sands Wetland Center – History, Mission & Events" by Linda Dunn

#### April

- 2: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., First United Methodist Church (FUMC), 505 Marvin St, Waxahachie, TX
- 6: BRIT plant mounting; MN Training field trip
- 9: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., FUMC Waxahachie
- 12-14: Regional Conference in Anna, TX
- 16: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., FUMC Waxahachie
- 20-21: ITMN Booth, Bluebonnet Fest Ennis, TX; MN Training field trip
- 22: Mockingbird Park - Earth Day event w/school
- 22: ITMN meeting w/program "Into the Prairie – A Celebration of Native Grasses" by Rich Jaynes
- 23: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., FUMC Waxahachie
- 24-27: ITMN Booth at Corsicana Derrick Days
- 30: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., FUMC Waxahachie

#### May

- 4: BRIT plant mounting
- 7: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., FUMC Waxahachie
- 14: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., FUMC Waxahachie
- 18: Master Naturalist Training filed trip
- 20: ITMN meeting w/program "Bobcats of River Legacy Park" by Dr. Richard Ashley
- 21: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., FUMC Waxahachie
- 24-26: ITMN Booth at Polka Festival in Ennis, TX
- 28: Master Naturalist Training 6-9 p.m., FUMC Waxahachie

#### Jun

- 8: BRIT plant mounting
- 24: ITMN meeting w/program "Quails and Birds of the Grasslands" by Jay Whiteside

## Trails Cleared & Cleaned

By Kitty Smith

ITMN volunteers finished clearing trails and picking up trash at Bardwell Lake's **Buffalo Creek Wetlands** area. Project Co-Chairs Peggy Bailey and Kitty Smith were joined by three ITMN members Danny Smith, and Pam and Joe Mundo as well as local resident and marina owner, Victor Pochobradsky on Saturday, February 2nd.

The second of two workdays in the park saw a quick conclusion to the trail maintenance and clean up. On the first workday, Dec 18, 2012, five volunteers spent a total of 15 hours cutting brush and removing litter. The second work day added



*Danny Smith cutting brush back at Bardwell Lake, 2 Feb 2013.*

15 hours for a cumulative project total of 30 volunteer hours. The three-quarter mile trail winds through open meadows and wooded areas past a permanent wetland dubbed "Heron Lake", a semi-permanent wetland, "Beaver Slough" and an occasional wetland, "Sedge Meadow". The Buffalo Creek Wetlands area is a Corps of Engineers owned and managed area.

## Chapter Project News

By R. Schumacher

**Mockingbird Park** – Aaron Gritzmaker will begin attending the Midlothian Parks Board meetings. The winter hike to be held in conjunction with the city of Midlothian on Saturday, 23 Feb is on. ITMN will host 4 to 6 stations with info about birds, bats, native grasses and plants, as well as something about the water feature at the bird blind.

**Project Wild** – Eileen Berger says we will begin working at Ovilla Christian School after spring break. Also, PW Facilitator training is to learn to train others to use the Project Wild curriculum ... to qualify you must already be certified to lead one of the Project Wild suite of programs, and must be willing to lead one training per year....

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/calendar/project-wild-facilitator-training-4>

*"Project WILD is a wildlife-focused conservation education program for K-12 educators and their students."*

The training is on March 18/19 @ Brazos Bend State Park, which is a great place to see birds and alligators!

**Texas Turtle Watch** – Carolyn Gritzmaker says if you see any turtles the website is still up for your reports. We talked about possible training class in the spring, so when she has more information on that she'll pass it along.

**CoCoRaHS** – The 2012 year report is on file at the AgriLife office. Also available to view each station information online at <http://www.cocorahs.org/ViewData/> Choose the subject, then enter the state, county and dates to pull up the information.



*An adult red-eared slider turtle. Adult shell length is between 5-12 inches, females are larger than males.*

## The Dandelion Invasion

By Mox Moxley (archived article)

The perpetual battle against dandelions is upon us. Dandelions, *Taraxacum officinale*, form dense circular leaf mats that crowd out desirable species and reduce the vigor of those that do survive. The plant's common name, dandelion, is derived from the French "dent de lion" meaning lion's tooth, that refers to their coarsely toothed leaves. These deep-green leaves are crowded in a rosette at the base of the plant, each is 2–8 inches long, with lobes that are slightly broader at the tips.

When pickers remove the dandelion flowers, the seed dispersal system goes as well. If not harvested, the flower heads mature into spherical disks containing single-seeded fruits called achenes. Each achene is attached to a fluffy pappus that enables wind seed dispersal over long distances.

The removal of dandelion roots is critical if this

## North Texas Regional Conference

By North Texas Chapter

Join Master Naturalist chapters of the North Texas region for the **Prairies, Lakes & Timbers Conference** at the Collin County YMCA Adventure Camp in Anna. This will be a weekend of fellowship and advanced training, with many great speakers lined up, including TPWD's Wildlife Diversity Director, John Davis.

Sessions will be both indoors and outdoors, utilizing many of the trails at this beautiful location. Programming includes: Prairie Wildflowers by Jim Varnum, Forests of North Texas by Jim Flood, and examples of the outdoor education curriculum presented by the camp staff. Other session topics include: Water Ecology, Recent Trends in North Texas Wildlife Populations



*Taraxacum officinale* means, in Latin, "the official remedy for disorders."

worrisome weed is to be wiped out. Dandelions produce strong tap roots that are capable of penetrating soil to a depth of 10 to 15 feet, but they are most commonly 6 to 18 inches deep. Harvesting is easiest when the soil is moist.

Buds grow from the uppermost area of the root, producing a crown that can regenerate "new" plants even though the plant is cut off at or below the soil surface. Sections of the root as short as one inch in

Please see *Dandelions* on page 5

(separate sessions for birds, mammals, herps, and insects,) Snake Hormones, Predicting Mussel Populations, Hexalectris Orchids, Wild Onions, Milkweeds, Alligator Study at Fort Worth Nature Center, Land Management with Bison, Prescribed Burns, and more. Special sessions are also planned for chapter presidents and board members, a great opportunity to learn from other leaders and organizations.

Registration options:

\$125 per person with lodging for two nights;

\$ 75 without lodging;

Registration includes all meals and programming.

The Camp offers dormitory style cabins, with

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### **Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge**

By Eileen Berger, Certified Indian Trail Master Naturalist

While visiting with several Master Naturalists during the Christmas Bird Count, I learned that Jim Varnum, a North Texas Master Naturalist and one of our native plant “gurus”, was going to lead a bird walk at Hagerman NWR that week. Since I had never been there and am always up for a field trip, my fellow ITMN member Charlie and I decided to go.

Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge is situated on the shores of Lake Texoma. We met our tour guide and the other members of the tour at the beautiful new visitor’s center. The trip would have been a success if for no other reason than to view the educational exhibits in the lobby of the center. However, after gathering some brochures about the birds we might see, we headed out in our cars to begin our tour.

The literature stated that Hagerman is home to more than 338 species of birds either resident year round or migrating here for the winter. We were able to view all manner of birds that live on or near water including many species of ducks, geese, gulls, herons, cormorants, egrets, sandpipers, and terns. We were also entertained by being able to view harriers, several different kinds of hawks, kestrels, merlins, woodpeckers, sparrows, vireos, wrens, cardinals, meadowlarks, finches, blackbirds and many more.

As we drove slowly from one area to another, we would pause to notice birds flying up from vegetation planted especially for cover and nesting areas. The refuge includes large wheat fields planted to attract and feed snow geese. Evidence of the ongoing drought was everywhere, with lake levels obviously down several feet. While we were standing outside our vehicles with our binoculars and spotting scopes trained on far-off birds, other birders would arrive. We met people from other states who make yearly trips to Texas to make use of our plentiful areas for viewing birds. Bird watching is one of the fastest-growing hobbies, and ecotourism is very important to the Texas economy. I have decided that you can tell serious birders by the expense of their binoculars and scopes, with brands like Swarovski and Leica numerous. Those same birders arrive in ten year old cars and vans with bumper stickers saying “I brake for birds”. They definitely have their priorities straight as far as I am concerned.

If you would like to experience Hagerman NWR, you can get directions and information at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/Hagerman/index.html> (the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website) or by calling 903-786-2826. The refuge is open daily from sunrise to sunset year round. The visitor center is open Monday through Friday from 7:30am-4:00pm, Saturday from 9:00 am-4:00 pm, and Sunday 1:00-5:00 pm and closed on federal holidays. There are hiking trails and picnic areas, as well as Second Saturday nature programs offered by Friends of Hagerman. Fishing is permitted year round and hunting in season.

The Friends of Hagerman will host a special three day festival called Birdfest Texoma on May 3-5, 2013. It will include classes on photography, attracting birds and butterflies, native plants and trees, hummingbirds, rainwater harvesting, beginning birding, snakes, spiders, propagating plants, and classes of interest to children. Birding tours will be available all three days, by car and tram. For information about this festival visit [birdfesttexoma.org](http://birdfesttexoma.org)

*Newsletter Articles* from page 1

Along with the hook, the article needs a headline that is brief, active, and clear in its purpose. Beyond these essential characteristics, a headline attracts attention if it is highly relevant, inspires curiosity, or has some other irresistible quality. Newsletters are short on space and their readers are short on time, so the articles must be well focused, aiming to make one major point. In addition, keep the article brief and well focused.

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heating and air conditioning, bunk beds and clean bathroom facilities. The climate controlled classrooms, a campfire amphitheater, well-appointed dining room and good food add comfort to the beauty of the natural environment for a pleasant weekend experience.

Space is limited, so please make your reservations early.

## Board of Directors

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*Each achene is attached to a fluffy pappus that enables wind seed dispersal over long distances.*

length are also capable of producing new plants.

Dandelions were brought to America by the Pilgrims, who believed they were medicinally beneficial for everything from tired blood to toning up internal organs. And they ARE healthy edibles! For maximum flavor, these culinary delights should be cut when the leaves are young, shortly after they pop out of the ground and before the flower buds appear. In this early stage, the leaves are good for salads and as cooked greens. They are credited with more food value than tomato juice or spinach due to their vitamins A and C, iron, calcium, phosphorous and protein levels. A pound of raw dandelion greens has only 200 calories. So get them out of your turf and into your salad bowl!

## Project Chairs

Box Turtle Survey..... Carolyn Gritzmaker  
 Texas Turtle Watch..... Carolyn Gritzmaker  
 Mockingbird Park .....Aaron Gritzmaker  
 Stream Team.....Maureen Nitkowski  
 Project Wild..... Rebecca Schumacher  
 CoCoRaHS..... Carolyn Gritzmaker  
 Dogwd Canyon Audubon Ctr..... Rex Reves  
 Wolf Creek Park.....Sharon Lane  
 Bardwell Lake Co-Chair.....Peggy Bailey  
 Bardwell Lake Co-Chair.....Kitty Smith

**Editorial/Newsletter Chair**

Kitty Smith

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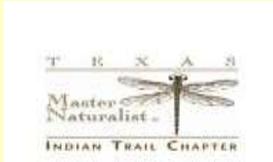
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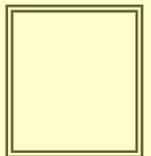
**Master Naturalist Program Mission:**

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.



The Texas Master Naturalist program is a partnership between the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Parks & Wildlife, and other local partners.

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