



INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

Jan./Feb. 2014

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

Eileen Berger, President ITMN

I am looking forward to a productive and enjoyable 2014. Don't forget that we will again be meeting in Waxahachie at the First Methodist Church. We have some great programs shaping up. January starts off with our first volunteer project, the bird tree decoration on January 11.

I hope to see many of you there. We also have a Winter Walk on February 22 at Mockingbird Nature Park. With all the rain that we have had this past fall, surely the wind will cooperate to let the prescribed burn take place at Kachina Prairie something this winter. Our friends at Texas Wildlife Association have sent out their schedule asking for volunteers to work with students. Take a look and sign up. You will enjoy working with the kids and the other volunteers, and meeting other like-minded individuals. Stay warm and I will see you at the bird trees.

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Calendar of Events, Projects & Meetings

JANUARY

- 4 BRIT
- 11 "For the Birds" Tree Decorating: Tentative schedule: 10:00 am Mockingbird Nature Park, 12:00 noon Sims Library, Waxahachie; Lunch at El Fenix; Red Oak location TBD; (alternate date 18th)
- 16 Wolf Creek workday 9:00 am
- 27 ITMN Chapter Meeting 6:00 – 8:00; Jack Dunaway-Wildlife Photography 101; First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie
- 31 Deadline for ITMN chapter dues. Cash or check made payable to ITMN.

FEBRUARY

- 4 BRIT; Deadline for 2014 MN Training Class applicants
- 21 "For the Birds" tree decoration clean-up: Red Oak, Midlothian, Corsican, Ennis, Waxahachie
- 22 9:00 am; Winter Walk - Mockingbird Nature Park, Midlothian
- 24 ITMN Chapter Meeting 6:00 – 8:00; First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie; Program TBA
- 25 Classes begin for ITMN Training applicants; 6:00 to 9:00 pm; First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie

MARCH

- 1 BRIT
- 3 Mockingbird Nature Park workday; 9:00 am
- 4 ITMN Training; 6:00 – 9:00 pm First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie
- 17 Mockingbird Nature Park workday; 9:00 am
- 24 ITMN Chapter Meeting 6:00 – 8:00; First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie; Program TBA
- 24 25 ITMN Training; 6:00 – 9:00 pm First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie
- 4 29 Waxahachie Garden Expo (no Field Trip)



© Jim West

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

2013

It Was a Very Good Year!

Someone from a much larger Master Naturalist Chapter once told me “Your Chapter may be small, but you are mighty”. While we have grown some since then, I believe we are still mighty.

In 2013 we had three members reach 250 volunteer service hours, two reach 500 vsh and 2 reach 1000 vsh. Six of the members from the class of 2013 have certified and two of them have recertified.

WE SAW CHANGES IN 2013:

Our monthly meetings were held at the Red Oak Library; instituted monthly Chapter Challenges;

We cancelled our first event ever because of a loose mule;

We documented and organized our Chapter Library;

We surpassed 200 names on our “friends” email list; our newsletter, The Trail Marker went from good to AWE-SOME!

We adopted our first budget ever;

We were able to make a monetary donation to the Annual State Meeting

Switched to evening training and had our second largest class ever

Attended a webinar as a group and showed our flexibility when we couldn’t connect

WE WERE “MIGHTY” BUSY IN 2013:

Winter Tree Decorating for the Birds in Corsicana, Waxahachie and Red Oak

Collaborated with Midlothian Parks for a Winter Walk Event at Mockingbird Nature Park attended by over 70 walkers

Mockingbird Nature Park - installed native grass demonstration beds; added tree signage; installed bee houses and pollinator hotels; led nature walks and a night hike; began a fauna survey and worked with Boy Scouts to clear the Onward Road fence line

Held a One Day and Done Clean-Up project at the AgriLife Office

Angler Education Event at Red Oak Library was well attended by children and parents

Project Wild Event at Cedar Ridge Preserve in collaboration with North Texas Chapter

Trained at Wolf Creek Park and continued trail building children’s program at Keren’s Public Library

Participated in more Outreach Events than ever – Ellis County Master Gardeners EXPO; Ferris Earth Day; member profiled in Corsicana Now Magazine; Ellis County Health Fair; Coffee with Friends of Ennis Public Library; twice at Waxahachie Farmers Market at the invitation of Ellis County Master Gardeners; Outdoor Living Event (or more accurately Non-Event) at Corsicana

Wildscapes Tour of two members’ yards and the Molly Hollar Wildscape project of Cross Timbers Chapter

Provided the impetus for the City of Ennis, Texas Land Conservancy and the Ennis Garden Club to work with us to save Kachina Prairie

Held a very successful International Observe the Moon Night event at Cherry Creek Nature Preserve in partnership with Red Oak Public Library and Red Oak Parks Department

Provided Project Wild Training and certified five

Teamed with North Texas Chapter to teach Night Hike 101 at the Lakes, Prairies and Timbers regional conference

Cut tree cookies for John Bunker Sands

Volunteered at several L.A.N.D.S. field investigation days; Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center; BRIT; John Bunker Sands Wetland Center; Cedar Ridge Preserve; Ovilla Christian School; and Pettigrew

I am sure I have missed several events and accomplishments, not intentionally. I believe we have taken our mission to heart...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.

Pat yourselves on the back for a “mighty” good year. We have done well, learned so much and touched so many. Can’t wait to see what we do in 2014. – *Charlie Grindstaff*



PROJECT VIEWS

REBECCA SCHUMACHER graciously hosted the 2013 Christmas Party. Fun, food, and a gift exchange were the highlights of a delightful evening.



PROJECT VIEWS



KACHINA PRAIRIE:
The working warriors finished the trail all the way to the lake. Hurrah! Not that we are finished, but the minimum sized trail is done. The hardest part is done. We should go back and widen it in a few places before the burn takes place sometime in January. So expect to hear from Kitty about another workday at Kachina.



PROJECT VIEWS

KACHINA PRAIRIE: *Thanks to all who attended Daniel Dietz's presentation to landowners adjacent to the KP and the Ennis community at large. It turned out to be the Ennis-Waxahachie "287 Rivalry" football game night... so we only had one property owner attend. On a positive note, the Ennis Daily News editor ran the meeting announcement on the front page for us...and it was free! Thanks to Don, Happ, Don Hellstern, Sharon Lane and the Grindstuffs for attending the meeting and asking insightful questions.*



MOCKINGBIRD NATURE PARK: *We had a workday on 16 DEC 2013. We installed the POLLINATOR HOUSE that many of you helped build. We also installed the MASON BEE HOUSES that Don Mitchell built. We then walked the PARK watching Dan and Deborah clean and service the BLUEBIRD houses, all of which were productive last year.*

In 2013 we installed the NATIVE GRASS BEDS, the TREE ID markers and got a new entry gate installed by the city across from the school. Holcium Corporation has put a new bottom in the pond and

hopefully it will hold water. Charlie, Carolyn and Don Happ led several NATURE WALKS all spring and summer.

We participated with the city in the WINTER WALK. We had over a 100 people at this event. Indian



Trail members also worked on several EAGLE SCOUT bush clearing projects. Sarah has kept the BUTTERFLY GARDEN looking great!

Near term future events include a TREE DECORATING on 11 JAN 2014, The MIDLOTHIAN WINTER WALK is on 22 FEB 2014. We will need volunteers to man 5 tables, after the WINTER WALK we can clean up the DECORATED TREE.

In 2014 we hope to get at least one KIOSK built in the BUTTERFLY GARDEN area. If the POND does hold water we plan on landscaping with NATIVE GRASSES and other WATER PLANTS.



NATURAL PROFILE

GETTING TO KNOW DON HAPP, CLASS OF 2013

by Kathleen Mack

*Can you give us some general information about yourself?
Things like: Where were you born? Where do you live now?
Family history — married, children, pets, etc.? Career info?
Hobbies?*

I was born in Conway Pennsylvania and went to High School at Freedom, PA. I now live in Waxahachie with my wife Donna and my dog Kandy. I have three daughters, ten grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



I received a BS degree with a major in biology from Clarion University in Pennsylvania.

My first career was working as a microbiologist at Georgia State University. When the funding dried up I managed a Bonanza restaurant in Marietta Georgia. Next I got a position at Armco Steel in Ambridge, Pa as a millwright. They sent me to school at Geneva College for a BS in

mechanical engineering.

When they shut down I went to work as an engineer for Kaiser Aluminum at Ravenswood, West Virginia, then Alcan Aluminum in Oswego, New York followed by Alumax Aluminum in Texarkana, Texas. Next I designed steel mill equipment for Delta Brands in Irving, Texas before coming to my present employer Perfect Technology in Oak Cliff, Texas. I still work part time on designing equipment for the window manufacturing industry.

How did you learn about ITMN?

I found out about the master naturalist program from The Waxahachie News. It is similar to a program that I worked at in Oswego, New York which was only for a specific nature preserve.

What activities are you involved in for ITMN?

I am involved in as many activities as my time and health allows. I was thinking about getting my doctorate in ecology now that I am sort of retired but found this program which is just as interesting.

What would you like to achieve as an ITMN?

Unless someone else wants the position I will be the next secretary.

BIRD FEEDERS NEEDED

We have verified plans to decorate a tree in Mockingbird Park/Midlothian, thanks to the arrangements made by Jean Kastanek. Also Eileen Berger had planned to contact Sims Library in Waxahachie to allow the ITMN to decorate a tree or the grape arbor at the Library.

We need volunteers to find an appropriate tree in Corsicana, Ennis and Red Oak and to obtain permission for the Feed the Birds decorations. Any volunteers? Please email pmundo@mundoandassociates.com if you want to volunteer to find the tree and obtain the permission. Deadline would be January 6th 5 p.m

Unless we have other plans we would meet at Mockingbird Park at 10 AM on Saturday, Jan 12th to decorate a tree and meet at Sims Library in Waxahachie at Noon to decorate the arbor and then lunch at a TBA location.

Please bring your own pinecones (unscented) dipped in peanut butter and bird seed with natural string or hanging. Or your secret suet recipe, raisins, cranberries, old bread, orange slices and apples strung on twine or other ideas.

Share our time with the birds, let's have some fun and share the sunshine together! Remember to mark your calendar for Feb 22nd to clean up the left over string and materials on the trees.

Thanks
Pam Mundo

Note Feed the Birds: *If you have not seen the movie, Saving Mr. Banks go see it. You will be singing "Feed the Birds" after the movie.*

NATURAL *reads*

Book review by Jean Kastanek

The Forest Unseen: A Year's Watch in Nature
by David George Haskell ISBN: 9781101561065

As we approach another year, it seems fitting that I would come across my latest natural read, *The Forest Unseen—A Year's Watch in Nature*, by David George Haskell. Haskell's book is an account of his visits to a one-square-meter patch of Tennessee forest over a period of one year. He called this patch a mandala. According to Webster's dictionary, a mandala is a geometric figure representing the universe in Hindu and Buddhist symbolism. Haskell believed that the forest's ecological stories could be revealed most clearly in a small area. He asks, "Can the whole forest be seen through a small contemplative window of leaves, rocks, and water?" This book is his attempt to answer that question.

Haskell chose the mandala's location by simply walking through the forest until he found a comfortable rock to sit on. He had no set schedule, but visited several times a week. His rules for himself were simple: visit often, keep disturbance to a minimum, no killing, no removal of creatures, no digging or crawling over the mandala.

In the book, the author's visits begin with quiet observations that lead him to describe the biology and ecology behind those observations. From there Haskell weaves in the history of the flora or fauna (or both). He then spends time reflecting and speculating on the present and future states of the environment. The book is divided into several chapters for each

month. "Partnerships" begins with his first visit to the mandala on January 1st. He marvels at the "glow" from the rocks he observes. He knows their color comes not from the stone but from lichen growth. Lichens are a blend of two creatures, a fungus and either an alga or a bacterium. Fungi can be grown in a lab, but without its partners it is malformed. Algae and bacteria can survive without fungi, but only in a restricted range of habitats. By surrendering their individualism millions of years ago to become part of this partnership, they produced a "world-conquering" union. Lichens cover nearly ten percent of the land's surface.

In "Salamander", an account of his February 28 visit, the author observes a salamander in the leaf litter. What follows is a chapter in which the salamander's world comes to life. Haskell debunks two myths about amphibians—the first is that amphibians are dependent on water for breeding. The second myth is that amphibians are "primitive" and don't care for their young.

The author's training as a biologist provided him with a wealth of prior knowledge to assist him in his experiment. In spite of this, and due to his endless curiosity, he spent many hours observing, sometimes spread out on the ground with a magnifying glass to get a better view.

It is no surprise that Haskell won several awards for *Forest Unseen*: Finalist for 2013 Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction and Winner of the 2013 Reed Environmental Writing Award, among others. It appears he achieved his goal of viewing the whole forest through his mandala. Imagine what could happen if we all did this in our own backyards. We might just create a "world-conquering" partnership with nature.

NEST BOX REPORT - DEC 2013

Box 1 - closest to parking lot - nest looks to be "multiple" use, added to over the nesting season. No dud eggs in any part of the nest - Since most BB's lay 5 eggs at a time, I estimate at least 8 young fledged from this nest.

Box 2 - Large Bluebird nest observed, used multiple times, no dud eggs - estimate another 8 young fledged

Box 3 - Wren nest - it seems this box has a Carolina wren nest each year, no dud eggs in nest - 5 estimated as fledged

Box 4 - Wren nest, nesting at least twice, top layer with a neat fringe of some cotton type bloom around edges. Sara will take this nest to Audubon in Cedar Hill. One dud wren egg. 8 fledglings estimated

Box 5 - Bluebird nest, 2 dud eggs - 4 estimated fledged

This is the first season that all of the nestboxes have been used for cavity nesting birds - very much a success. Thanks to the Midlothian Parks department for contributing to the success of the nesting. Many bluebirds were observed flying around the park this morning, Early in February, the pairs will start to select their boxes for 2014.

-Deborah Rayfield

AWARDS AND CERTIFICATIONS

JANUARY: **Kitty Smith** and **Peggy Bailey** were certified class 2012

Sharon Lane and **Aaron Gritzmaker** received 500 Hr pins

Pam Mundo received her 250 Hr pin

MARCH: **Kitty Smith** recertified, **Eileen Berger, Aaron & Carolyn Gritzmaker, Sharon Lane, Joe Mundo, Debbie Pierce, Paul & Charlie Grindstaff** recertified 2013.

APRIL: **Peggy Bailey & Jack Dunaway** recertified 2013

MAY: **Elaine Ruby** certified class 2012, **Pam Mundo** recertified 2013

JUNE: **Paul Grindstaff** 1000 Hr pin

AUGUST: **Kathleen Mack, Don Mitchell**, certified class 2013, **Debee Arnold, Rebecca Schumacher, Dan & Debbie Rayfield** recertified for 2013.

SEPTEMBER: **Jim West & Sara Cornett** certified class 2013.

NOVEMBER: **Catherine Collins, Christine Cook, & Carol Ogden** certified class 2013, **Kathleen Mack, Don Mitchell, Sara Cornett, Elaine Ruby** recertified for 2013

VOLUNTEER PINS: **Eileen Berger** 1000 HR, **Kitty Smith** 250 HR, **Debbie Pierce** 250 Hr

Purple Martin Expo

Saturday, January 18, 2014
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

John Bunker Sands Wetland Center



Come and join the Purple Martin Landlords of North Texas as they teach about purple martin history, predators/competitors, proper housing, and erecting a purple martin house. There will be an actual demonstration of erecting a purple martin house at the EXPO.

Did you know the purple martin is the largest swallow in North America and one of the largest in the world, with a length of 7 – 8 inches? Purple Martin colonies have declined by 90% in the United States since the 1900's. These passive cavity nesters are almost 100% dependent upon humans for housing west of the Colorado Rockies. Learn more this and more at our Purple Martin EXPO.



Where: John Bunker Sands Wetland Center
When: Saturday, January 18, 2014
Time: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Cost: \$10.00 per person (includes admission)
Boxed lunches available for purchase on site

So, you want to see your photos in the newsletter? We do too.



Photos © Jim West

Here's a short primer to help you get the best images from your camera.

by Jim West

The advent of digital technology has revolutionized photography. It certainly has for me but it hasn't always been for the better. It has its pitfalls like everything else and, as I've fallen into many of them, I thought I might share some of what I've learned.

FILM IS CHEAP.

Indeed it is. For all but the most dedicated purists, it's non-existent. The fact that you can shoot literally thousands of photos at no expense is truly amazing. The downside of that is, even for experienced shooters, there's the option to just blast away. Hey, it's free. That makes sense if you're shooting fast moving subjects, like race cars, and have the time to sort through and edit your images. It's a waste of time if you can get it right when you shoot it. So, take a little extra time, if you have it, and compose your shot.

While you're composing, look at the background. Is anything distracting there? If so, move. Also, try to ground your subject by framing it with something close by, possibly by including a nearby branch or leaves.

COLOR IS YOUR FRIEND.

Most of the time, anyway. Sometimes it can be a distraction but, for the most part, it's a plus. It's an especially good way to save an otherwise unremarkable shot like the one above right by using color as a graphic element on its own.

STEADY AS YOU GO.

Lots of cameras have image stabilization (IS) in them to eliminate camera movement which is a leading cause of soft images. For the most part, they work but, nothing works as well as a steady hand on the camera or, even better, the camera on a tripod or solid surface. Though I can't show you

here, I have two shots of a very cooperative red-winged blackbird, shot at a shutter speed of 1/1250 of a second with an IS lens, one hand-held and the other from a tripod, and you can see the difference in sharpness when they're viewed side-by-side.

COMPENSATE.

I will introduce you to your new best friend, the exposure compensation button. Find it, learn it, love it. Most cameras have one somewhere and it's the best tool on the camera to save shots (beforehand) where the background is much lighter or darker than your subject, like the hummingbird shot above.



And, you can do yourself a favor and attend Jack's Photo 101 class on January 27th.



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

President: Eileen Berger	<i>President@itmnc.com</i>
VP/Programs: Carolyn Ross	<i>Programs@itmnc.com</i>
VP/Projects: Rebecca Schumacher	<i>Projects@itmnc.com</i>
Treasurer: Peggy Bailey	<i>Information@itmnc.com</i>
Secretary: Don Happ (tentative)	<i>Information@itmnc.com</i>
Advanced Training: Jack Dunaway	<i>Information@itmnc.com</i>
Historian: Debbie Pierce	<i>Information@itmnc.com</i>
Host Chair: Debee Arnold	<i>Information@itmnc.com</i>
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Outreach/Publicity Co-Chairs: Pam/Joe Mundo	<i>Information@itmnc.com</i>
Webmaster:	<i>Webm@itmnc.com</i>

PROJECT CHAIRS & LIASONS(*)

Box Turtle Survey	Carolyn Gritzmaker
Texas Turtle Watch	Carolyn Gritzmaker
Mockingbird Nature Park	Aaron Gritzmaker
Stream Team	Maureen Nitkowski
Project Wild	Rebecca Schumacher
CoCoRaHS	Carolyn Gritzmaker
Wolf Creek Park	Sharon Lane
Bardwell Lake Co-Chairs	Peggy Bailey & Kitty Smith
Kachina Prairie	Carolyn Ross
Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center	*Rex Reves
Botanical Research Institute of Texas	*Debbie Pierce
John Bunker Sands Wetland Center	*Jim West & *Peggy Bailey

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

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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Tel: 972-825-5175 Fax: 972-825-5184
Ellis-tx@tamu.edu <http://ellis.agrilife.org/>

January 9, 2014

Dear Master Naturalist:

The Ellis County Extension Annual Meeting will take place on **Tuesday, January 21st, 6:30p.m.** at the **Ellis County Youth Expo, 2300 W 287 Bypass, Waxahachie.** This meeting will bring together the volunteers who have assisted in the success of Extension programs during 2013.

Please feel free to bring your spouse or a guest and join us for dinner.

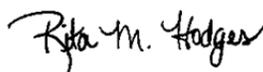
So that dinner arrangements can be made, we are asking you to R.S.V.P. no later than January 17th, by calling our office at 972-825-5175.

Please mark your calendar and we hope to see you on January 21st.

Sincerely,



Mark Arnold
County Extension Agent
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Ellis County



Rita Hodges
County Extension Agent
Family & Consumer Science
Ellis County



Page Bishop
County Extension Agent
4-H & Youth Development
Ellis County

MA/jo

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CALLING ALL INFORMAL EDUCATORS AND EARTH SCIENCE TEACHERS!

Each workshop is \$15 (includes lunch), runs from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., and is worth 6 credit hours.

Teacher Workshop | January 25, 2014

Exploring Climate Science from the Seafloor

Speaker: Texas A&M Associate Professor Debbie Thomas

During this one-day workshop, we will explore the types of sediments that accumulate on the seafloor, how they are retrieved for study, and how we use the various components of deep-sea sediments to investigate past climate. The activities will combine hypothesis formulation and testing using cores (and core photos) recovered by the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program with discussion and presentations led by Debbie Thomas. We will focus on primary data and processes to explore Earth's past, present, and future climate.

Teacher Workshop | February 8, 2014

Tools of the Trade: Collecting Sample Cores from the Field

Speaker: PhD Candidate Mark McKay, Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi

This workshop will focus on the collection of sample cores for teacher investigative purposes. Specific logistics still need to be worked out, however teachers will meet at a specific site in the Corpus Christi area and collect sample cores that will be "processed" by the teachers at the educational facilities at the Texas State Aquarium. These activities will build on information provided in the previous session on hypothesis and using core samples in investigations.



For more information or to reserve your workshop, please contact:

Adriana Reza
areza@txstateaq.org
361-654-1450

