



INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

Mar./Apr. 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 know I don't have to tell you that we Indian Trail Master Naturalists are about to be very busy. Our new training class started on Tuesday, February 25, with at least 14 (and perhaps as many as 16 as I write this). I am very excited to welcome these new people with their interests and expertise in various areas.

We will have several opportunities to tell the public about what we do, with the Lawn and Garden Expo on March 29, as well as Ferris Earth Day on April 12. We will have a chance to learn from some very interesting and informative speakers at the Master Naturalist Regional Conference in Anna, Texas on April 11-13. I hope you can attend all or part of it.

We will also be starting our monthly flower and butterfly walks in Mockingbird Nature Park in Midlothian. If you have not signed up to work or attend, watch for emails or contact your officers and other board members to let them know you are available. Most important of all, get outside and enjoy nature.

INSIDE *this issue*

- 2-4 Project Views
- 5 Natural Profile: The Gritzmakers
- 6 Robins
- 7 Natural Reads (book review)
- 8-9 L.A.N.D.S. Info

Calendar of Events, Projects & Meetings MARCH

- 1 BRIT: Pollen Nation 10:00 - 2:00 pm
- 4 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie
- 18 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 22 ITMN Chapter Potluck Picnic: Mockingbird Nature Park (to follow Field Day for ITMN Training class)
- 24 ITMN Chapter Meeting: 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Texas Native Orchids with Gary Spicer, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 25 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie L.A.N.D.S.
- 29 Waxahachie Garden Expo, Waxahachie Convention Center

APRIL

- 1 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 5 BRIT: Inspired by Nature 8:00 - 1:00; Farmers Market 8:00 - 12:00
- 7 MNP Workday 9:00 am
- 8 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 11/13 Prairie Lakes and Timbers Conference, Anna, TX
- 12/13 Bluebonnet Trail and Festival, Ennis
- 12 Ferris Earth Day: 10:00 - 2:00 pm
- 15 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 21 MNP Workday 9:00 am
ITMN Board Meeting: 6:00 pm Ryan's Steak House, Waxahachie
- 22 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 28 ITMN Chapter Meeting: 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Vines by Dana Wilson, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 29 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie

MAY

- 3 BRIT: Prairie Days 8:00 - 1:00; Farmers Market 8:00 - 12:00
- 5 MNP Workday 9:00 am
- 6 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 13 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 19 MNP Workday 9:00 am
- 20 ITMN Training; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 26 ITMN Chapter Meeting: 6:00 - 9:00 pm, Firewise/Burn restoration by Derek Broman, First UMC, Waxahachie
- 27 ITMN Training Graduation; 6:00 - 9:00 pm, First UMC, Waxahachie

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

PROJECT VIEWS

Walking In A Winter (Texas style) Wonderland



PRAY FOR RAIN!!!



We had a nice turnout for the Winterwalk with 83 people in attendance. We had 13 ITMN members working various activity tables and helping in the registration process. The city of Midlothian is fantastic to work with. Gina Moore made hundreds of copies of the checklist and other items for us.

We have an Eagle Scout candidate who is going to build a kiosk for the park. I will keep you updated on this as it develops.

Workdays will begin the first Monday in April. Sara Cornett will be in charge of the butterfly garden. We started a Cactus moth trap at the park. The Cactus moth has not invaded Texas yet. If it does, it could decimate all the cactus in the state.

Special Thanks To:

- Sara Cornett
- Jean Kastanek
- Kathleen Mack
- Dan And Deborah Rayfield
- Paul And Charlie Grindstaff
- Don Happ
- Elaine Ruby
- Carolyn Ross
- Eileen Berger
- Carolyn Gritzmaker

Aaron Gritzmaker

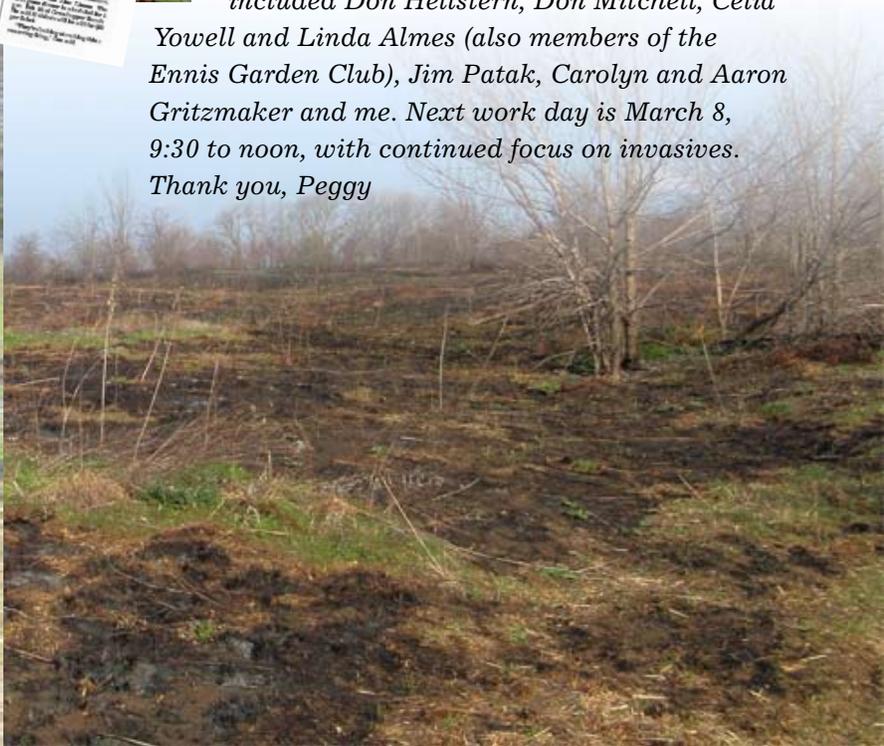


PROJECT VIEWS

BURN NOTICE



A dedicated group went after woody invasives in the burn area at Kachina Prairie, with considerable success. The team included Don Hellstern, Don Mitchell, Celia Yowell and Linda Almes (also members of the Ennis Garden Club), Jim Patak, Carolyn and Aaron Gritzmaker and me. Next work day is March 8, 9:30 to noon, with continued focus on invasives. Thank you, Peggy



NATURAL PROFILE

PRESENTING ONE OF ITMN'S COUPLES, CAROLYN AND AARON GRITZMAKER

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 Oklahoma City, where I grew up. Aaron was born in Enid and grew up mostly in New Mexico. We came to Texas from Oklahoma City in 1981 when Aaron was transferred to Dallas. He retired from Southwest Airlines in 2009 after 30 years there. We're coming up on our 43rd anniversary. No kids, just dogs cats and goldfish.

How did you learn about ITMN?

A friend told us when the chapter was forming and it sounded really interesting. We've both always been interested in nature and the outdoors.

What activities are you involved in for ITMN?

Aaron is project leader for Mockingbird Park and also volunteers at Dogwood Canyon and Wolf Creek. He has begun Citizen Forester training. I also volunteer at Mockingbird Park. I am project leader and Ellis County Coordinator for CoCoRaHS and am also the Maypearl precipitation reporting station for the National Weather Service Co-op.

Anything else you would like to add?

Aaron also volunteers once a week at the VA. I am a weaver and have won several local and national awards over the years. I am currently past-president of the Fort Worth Weavers Guild.



MIDLOTHIAN PARKS VOLUNTEER DINNER

We received an award of appreciation for our work at Mockingbird. It will be in our office.



Bless the Bees: The Pending Extinction of Our Pollinators and What You Can Do to Stop It

ISBN: 978-1492784165 by Kenneth Eade

As the weather here in Texas transitions from winter to spring, I spend more and more time on my patio. Usually I have a cold drink in hand, ready to spend at least an hour meditating and watching the birds. As the temperature gets warmer, my blissful, meditative state is often interrupted by bees hovering over my glass. Prior to reading the book I'm about to review, I had never given much thought at all to bees, other than to wish they'd leave me alone.

Bless the Bees: The Pending Extinction of our Pollinators and What You Can Do to Stop It begins with a quote by Albert Einstein: "If the bee disappears from the earth, man would have no more than four years to live". That certainly caught my attention.

Consider the facts Eade shares with us in his book:

- One of every three bites of food comes from plants pollinated by honeybees and other pollinators.
- Bees are responsible for pollinating 90% of all flowering plants.
- Bees have survived over 100 million years of evolution, yet they have been declining steadily over the past 30 years. Feral honey bees in the United States have declined 80% to near extinction, and domestic bees in the United States are down to 60%.

According to Eade, without our pollinators we would have to exist on food products made almost entirely from soy, rice, corn and wheat. Some might consider this an acceptable diet, but I prefer a more balanced diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables. There would be no coffee, chocolate (no chocolate???), apples, avocados, melons, bell peppers, beans, cranberries, carrots, cauliflower, okra, green beans, tomatoes, sunflowers, watermelon, and the list goes on

The honey bee is the primary commercial pollinator of agricultural crops in North America and the primary species used for the pollination of agricultural crops globally. Although facing extinction, the honey bee has no legal protection under the U.S. Endangered Species Act or any state endangered species statutes.

Studies done as recently as 2012 point to neonicotinoid insecticides as a major cause of the decline in bee populations. This group of pesticides is known to be particularly toxic to honey bees. They are used as seed treatments in hundreds of crops and persist in the soil for about twelve years.

Nearly all of the genetically engineered (GMO) Bt corn grown in the U.S. is treated with neonicotinoids. Its lethal effect on bees is the reason that Monsanto's Mon810 corn has been banned in Poland. Italy, Germany, and France have taken action against this insecticide to protect their pollinators. In spite of this, the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States continues to approve new neonicotinoid insecticides for the market, such as Dow's sulfoxator.

Eade suggests several ways we can help to save the bees and other pollinators (all are at risk):

- Avoid GMOs. Buy local and organic food. To find local sustainable farmers, try this site:

<http://www.localharvest.org>.

- Plant bee-friendly flowers and herbs, but buy only certified organic plants and seeds. Seeds can be purchased from several companies online who state in their catalogues that they sell only untreated seeds. One of those is

<http://www.kitchengardenseeds.com>.

- Save your own seeds. Check out <http://www.seedsave.org>.
- Let "weeds" such as dandelions and clover (which bees love) be present in your yard.
- Leave fresh water outside in a container with gravel (to prevent drowning) for the bees.
- Don't use pesticides on your plants.
- Build an insect hotel.
- Raise your awareness. Eade provides many resources in his book. A good one to check out is www.facebook.com/BeeBay.org
- To find out what products to avoid in your garden, see: <http://www.xerces.org>
- Become politically active and let your voice be heard. There are many petitions circulating now to save the bees. For more information, see <http://www.thepetitionsite.com>.

As Eade says, Bees don't vote, so it's up to us to get the buzz out.

Kenneth Eade is a Los Angeles-based attorney specializing in international law. He and his wife, Valentina (a well-known photographer), collaborated on the production of *Bless the Bees.....* and an illustrated children's book, *A, Bee, See*.

When Robins Sing

by Kathleen Mack

A friend recently posted on Facebook that she had seen a flock of robins in her yard. ‘Doesn’t that mean it will soon be spring?’ she asked. Unfortunately, the answer is no. Even though the American Robin has long been associated with spring, a sighting of them in the dead of winter is not that unusual. This is especially true in Texas where many robins stay year-round.

The American Robin (*Turdus Migratorius*) is well known. It is hard to miss this beautiful red-breasted species. This robin is actually the largest of the thrushes. It is one of the most abundant land birds in North America.

It has been heralded in poems and songs, and its blue eggs even have a color named for them. English settlers named this bird because it reminded them of the Robin Red Breast, which is common throughout Europe. The European bird is actually a member of the flycatcher family.

Many robins navigate to warmer climates as food becomes scarce in the winter, but it is not unusual for American Robins to winter in their breeding ground. Robins are more than capable of staying warm. They flock together and use body fat for heat. If provided a heated birdbath, they will visit when their usual water supply is not available.

You probably won’t see robins at your feeder. Their diet normally consists of invertebrates (such as beetles, grubs, earthworms, and caterpillars), fruits and berries. During winter they travel around large areas to forage for food, surviving mostly on berries.

Robins are among the first birds to breed. Migrating robins will begin to appear in late February or early March. While robins winter throughout Texas, they breed primarily in the northern and eastern portions of the state.

Males are the first to arrive at the breeding ground, and once there will begin singing

Their song is highly recognizable. It is a bold “gurgling, leisurely singsong, cheerily cheer-up cheerio”, with phrases often repeated. The song period is from early March in California to late July or early August elsewhere. Some birds, particularly in the East, sing occasionally into September or later. The American Robin is often among the first songbirds singing as dawn rises, and the last as evening sets in. It usually sings from a high perch in a tree.

So, to answer my Facebook friend’s question, it is not the sighting of robins that proclaims spring, but their song.

Photo © Jack Dunaway



Photo © Jim West

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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PROJECT CHAIRS

Box Turtle Survey	Carolyn Gritzmaker
Texas Turtle Watch	Carolyn Gritzmaker
Mockingbird Nature Park	Aaron Gritzmaker
Stream Team	Tina Hendon
Kachina Prairie	Peggy Bailey
Project Wild	Rebecca Schumacher
CoCoRaHS	Carolyn Gritzmaker
Wolf Creek Park	Sharon Lane

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY LIASONS

Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center	Rex Reves
Botanical Research Institute of Texas	Debbie Pierce
John Bunker Sands Wetland Center	Maureen Nitkowski

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



Texas Wildlife Association
Learning Across New Dimensions In Science
(Intensive and Trinity) Teacher / Volunteer Workshop
March 29, 2014
Sheldon Lake State Park & Environmental Learning Center
15315 Beaumont Hwy (Bss 90), Houston, TX. 77049 (281) 456-2800

8:30 – 9:00am	Check-In
9:00am	Welcome & Wildlife Bingo
9:30am	Introduction to Texas Wildlife Association / Why L.A.N.D.S. ?
10:00am	Group Picture
	<u>Texas Ecosystems & Adaptations</u>
10:15am – 11:45am	Worm Measurement Becoming a Bird (Adaptation Artistry) Run For Your Life
11:45am – 12:15pm	LUNCH provided <u>or</u> bring your own
	<u>Wildlife and Texas Economy / Land Stewardship</u>
12:15pm	Show Me The Money
	<u>The Importance of Water</u>
1:00pm	Rainfall Simulator / Land Stewardship
	<u>Trinity L.A.N.D.S. Stations</u>
1:30pm	1. Riparian Walk 2. pH, Dissolved Oxygen, Temperature 3. Nitrates, phosphates, Ammonia 4. Macroinvertebrate Collection 5. Water Flow and Turbidity
	<u>Teacher Toolbox</u>
3:00 – 3:45pm	How To Become a L.A.N.D.S. school Example of Field Day Investigation Day Agenda G/T Differentiation Natural Resource Partners & Websites
3:45 – 4:00pm	Wrap Up, Evaluation and Certificates

L.A.N.D.S. Teacher/Volunteer Workshop

March 29, 2014 Registration Form

Sheldon Lake State Park & Environmental Learning Center

15315 Beaumont Hwy (Bss 90), Houston, TX. 77049 (281) 456-2800

Name: (will appear on Name Tag) _____

Phone Numbers: (work) _____ (cell) _____

E-Mail: (work) _____

Work Address: _____

Personal Address: _____

Subject(s) you teach: _____

Workshop Cost: **FREE** (please fill out form for each person)

Includes: * Hands-on training; * Hand-outs of classroom activities, * Natural Resource contacts,
* Ability and time to network with other educators.

At The End Of Class You Will Receive: * 6 Hours of SBEC Credit (Teachers)
* 6 hours AT (Master Naturalist, Master Gardener's)
* Workshop Certificate

After filling out the Registration Form, Scan and E-mail to kcoffer@texas-wildlife.org,
or Fax to 210-826-4933.

