



# INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

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

*Spring* 2019

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

Elaine "Muffi" Ruby

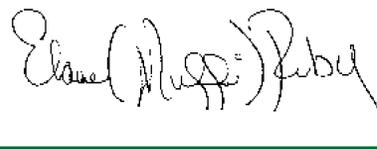
### **Spring is about to Spring...**

Texas, again has had bouncing temperatures, going from 82 degrees one day to then 34 degrees the next morning.

We have many new opportunities this spring to tell people what a Master Naturalist does, one who loves Nature and conservation of Nature.

We can have the joy to educate both children and adults and wet their palates to learn more about our Ellis County Projects and Parks, Birding, Wild Flower Walks, Prairie Restoration, Farmers Market Days, Helping instruct kids learning to Fish, LANDS project, and much more.

I'm excited for Spring, I hope you are !!



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Monthly meetings are held on the 4th Monday (usually) of each month at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie. Our office is located in TexasAgrilife at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165 | 972-825-5175  
Visit our website at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail>

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## **ALL THE NEWS THAT'S UH, WHAT?**

Lately, we've (Debbie, Jim and Madeline) been asking ourselves exactly how important is this newsletter to the membership? How many read it? How many care to read it? Is it just more spam? We've fished for feedback with very little response and, we've asked for contributions ie. photos, tips, tricks, stories, sightings, observations and gotten the same tepid reaction. The newsletter takes more time to create than you might think and we would like an honest assesment as to if it's worth the time and effort that we put into it. This is not a complaint. We enjoy what we put into it. Let us know. Maybe, we'd rather be fishing. *Jim West*



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**COVER: Spring Awakening** *Nappus interruptus*. This Great Horned Owl was tucked up into a tree when I saw it from behind as an odd lump. I backed up to investigate and this is what I found. It was very cooperative, as you can see. *Jim West*

# SEED <sup>THE</sup> BIRDS

By Jean Kastenak

This year's Feed the Birds event was, as always, a successful endeavor. About 23 Indian Trail Master Naturalists showed up on a damp, chilly Saturday morning to distribute bird treats in various locations in Ennis, Waxahachie, and Midlothian. The treats, peanut butter pinecones, suet balls, rice cakes, and fruit garlands, had been made just a few days before by chapter members and guests prior to the January meeting.

This is just one of several Indian Trail annual events that promote the goal of the Texas Master Naturalist program.

There will be lots of volunteer opportunities to continue our mission in 2019. Check out the chapter's website

[txmn.org/indiantrail](http://txmn.org/indiantrail) for more information.



Looks good enough to tweet.



# Going GREEN

By Madeline Kelley

At the January 22 ITMN Board Meeting our leaders decided to reduce plastic waste at Chapter meetings. The Board decided to no longer offer water in individual plastic bottles, but to serve it in a bulk “Igloo-like” container. The Board also agreed to buy metal utensils and paper cups and plates to replace plastic ones when the current hospitality stock is depleted. This is certainly a step in the right direction if we are trying to protect our environment.

When I was a member at North Texas Master Naturalist members brought their own utensils and eating plates and took them home to clean. That would not only help our environment, but would

save the chapter a little money.

There are many items we use on a daily basis that can be recycled, it takes some effort and planning to do so. You know those “plastic” grocery bags you get when you forget your bags in the car....those can be re-cycled at many larger grocery stores. So is all the plastic wrap that things come packaged in. Maybe you live in an area where there is no recycling service. My sister is a master gardener and naturalist and lives near Glen Rose. There is no re-cycling where she lives. She is so passionate about the recycling issue that she keeps large barrels outside her garage and hauls that stuff

to the nearest re-cycling areas when she has to come closer to the metroplex.

Many communities have recycling events. Citizens pay nothing for this service in many cases. Check out your local city or town and see what they offer.

I think it would be a wise move for our

Chapter to look at all the ways we can encourage re-cycling and smarter use of items that harm our environment.



Back  
HOMES  
ON  
THE  
RANGE



Eastern Meadowlark

Like the pioneers of the Old West, these birds are the vanguard of a larger migration on the way. Unlike the brighter species that will follow, they're very well camouflaged, especially the Pippit. If you look at an open field and it seems like the dirt is alive and squirming, look closer. You may have spotted a flock of them.  
*Photos by Jim West*



American Pippit



Horned Lark

# Please Don't Kill Those Dandelions!

Story and photos  
by Carolyn Gritzmaker



Western Honey Bee

Besides offering cheery bright flowers to our yards on winter and early spring days, Dandelions provide food for our pollinators in the form of nectar and pollen, while the seeds provide food for our visiting winter sparrows.

Those warm sunny days we have during the winter and early spring are not only welcome to ourselves, but also to the many small pollinators we find (If we look) visiting the early flowers. Here are a few you'll find on our dandelions:



Vinegar Fly



Small Carpenter Bee



Large Horned Bruchid Beetle



Sylphid Fly



Spotted Cucumber Beetle

# RAVENS

By Debbie Pierce

In July of 1998, my husband and I took a rafting trip down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon with 26 other people in 2 boats. During our trip ravens visited us several times and we were able to see firsthand how bold and gregarious these birds can be. We watched as several birds worked together and demolished campsites opening up bags and backpacks distributing whatever they found all over the site. On our last day, as we were loading up, the ravens gathered on the beach and walked around as if they knew the fun was over. They posed for pictures and bid us farewell.

During another trip to Yellowstone I witnessed a raven demonstrate that they have true insight when solving problems. I watched as a raven purposefully and methodically picked up saltine crackers from a parking lot stacking them one on top of another. He then picked up the whole stack and flew away with all of the crackers he had gathered. I was speechless.

Ravens are part of the Corvidae family. Corvids are medium-size to large birds with rounded wings and tails. They have strong feet and their legs are scaled in front, but smooth in the back. Most species have stiff, bristle like feathers covering the nostrils and the bill is stout and straight. Corvids are generally bold, and noisy and are at home in many habitats including some of the bleakest area such as deserts and the Arctic. Crows, magpies, nutcrackers, and jays are also members of the Corvidae family.

The diet of Corvids varies greatly. Crows, ravens and magpies eat carrion, but primarily depend on invertebrates and vegetable based foods. Jays depend mainly on insects and seeds as well as any small animal they can subdue. Corvids can also be predators at bird nests eating the eggs and nestlings of other birds. Corvids, especially crows and ravens are opportunists taking advantage of any food source. They frequent dumpsters, compost piles, and other

sources of waste food and are adept at opening plastic bags, backpacks and bags with zippers and anything else without a padlock. They are effective hunters and sometimes work as a team. The Raven has accompanied people for centuries, following their wagons, sleds, sleighs and hunting parties in hopes of a meal.

Ravens are excellent and acrobatic fliers and are on par with falcons and hawks. Their aerial skills are on display during mating season. Mating rituals include an elaborate dance of chases, dives and rolls. Younger birds have been fond of playing games with sticks, dropping them and then diving to catch them in midair.

People have been aware of the spirit of the raven for centuries. Edgar Allen Poe found them to be creepy. The ravens at the Tower of London are beloved and somewhat feared; the legend of the raven states that if they ever leave the tower, the British Empire will crumble. Native people of the Pacific Northwest regard the raven as a trickster bringing fire to people by stealing it from the sun and stealing salmon only to drop them in rivers all over the world.

People the world over sense the personality in ravens. From their finely turned problem solving skills to their acrobatic aerial shows, ravens are intriguing as well as one of the smartest of all birds and they have become one of my favorites.



Photo © Brendan McGarry

# MEMBER P | R | O | F | I | L | E

## Lois Larson Lyon

By Madeline Kelley

**MK:** Tell us a little bit more about your life outside of Texas Master Naturalist and what activities do you enjoy when you're not busy with chapter programs?

**LLL:** From the time I was a child in Western New York State, I always loved the outdoors. My family grew their own vegetables and canned for the winter months. I rode a horse-drawn sugar wagon to retrieve maple sap in the woods where it had been dripped into buckets on the maple trees. This liquid gold was poured into large vats with wood burning ovens below them. The sap was reduced into syrup. The best part was when the farmer dropped snow into the bubbling syrup to make maple "snow candy" for me and my siblings.

In 1982, my husband L.B. and I moved to Texas where I worked for Fisher Price Toys in the World Trade Center in Dallas. In 1986 I left the company so I could devote time to raising my children. I was actively involved in a Pre-School PTA and then public school PTA programs. I was a sub-teacher at Ovilla Christian School for many years and served a term as PTF President. The busyness of family caused me to put my love for gardening on the back burner.

As the children got older I was able to spend time in the gardens I created at our home on the outskirts of Waxahachie. A flat and bare piece of land was turned into beautiful blooming flowers, shrubs and trees. In 2013 we moved to a little over

11-acres in Red Oak. The property had plenty of trees but not a flower in sight. I changed that!

**MK:** How did you become interested in Texas Master Naturalist? What projects do you enjoy the most?

**LLL:** I learned about the Indian Trail Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists through the Agri-Life Office and have been actively involved since the 2016 class. At home with hubby, L.B., I plant gardens to attract pollinators and create habitats for bees to help them populate and thrive. Through my efforts in planting habitat for pollinators our property is now designated as a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation and the Texas Conservation Alliance. I have a special interest in the native and adaptive plants of Texas as well as the preservation and creation of wetlands. I am actively involved in composting, recycling and rain water harvesting and am working on developing a more efficient system of catchment.

**MK:** What nature/environmental issues interest you the most?

**LLL:** The most important issues to me are habitat loss, extinction and overpopulation. I hope that in some way, I can have a bit of a positive impact on these problems.

**MK:** When you're not involved with Master Naturalists, what types of things do you enjoy.

**LLL:** When not involved with the Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners, I enjoy working in my garden and enjoying the company of my children and grandchildren. Quilting (when I have a spare minute), taking care of six dogs, attending yard sales and flea markets or going to classic car shows with L.B., takes up the remainder of time.

When there is time to take a breath and pause I love to watch the cloud formations in the sky, listen to the songs of the many birds visiting my property and enjoy a hobby of photographing beautiful sunsets, flowers, insects, and of course, grandchildren! .



# *Mellothian Mayor's Walk at Mockingbird Nature Park*



# Stars and Smores Event at Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center



*By Madeline Kelley*

On January 19, 2019 a number of Indian Trail Master Naturalists helped out with a special “moon-gazing” event at Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center in Cedar Hill, Tx. It was a very cold and windy night but everyone bundled up and roasted marshmallows over open fires, went on night time trail hikes and waited for the “eclipse of the moon” or another name was the blood orange or wolf moon. There will not be another one that we can see in our area for two years. Families came and watched through large telescopes at the changing of the moon. Crafts that helped understand the solar system were available for kids and it looked like all had a great time in spite of the cold.

Some interesting information about moons comes from the Farmer’s Almanac that can be found on line. There are many types of moons described in the article. The one below describes what we saw at the January 19th event at Dogwood Canyon.

Full Moon names date back to Native Americans of North America. Tribes kept track of the seasons by giving distinctive names to each recurring full Moon. Full Moon names were applied to the entire month in which each occurred. There was some variation in the full Moon names, but in general, the same ones were consistent among regional tribes. European settlers followed that custom and created some of their own names.

Here is the Farmers Almanac’s name for the January full moon of 2019. For more names and explanations of meanings for each month check out [www.farmersalmanac.com/full-moon-dates-and-times](http://www.farmersalmanac.com/full-moon-dates-and-times)

## Full Wolf Moon – January

Amid the cold and deep snows of midwinter, the wolf packs howled hungrily outside Indian villages. Thus, the name for January’s full Moon. Sometimes it was also referred to as the Old Moon, or the Moon After Yule. Some called it the Full Snow Moon, but most tribes applied that name to the next Moon because it is opposite a low Sun.



Book Review by Charlie Grindstaff

## *The Man Who Planted Trees*

by Jean Giono, Wood Engravings by Michael McCurdy  
Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1985

So, I was in a cool bookstore in LaMesa, California I found “The Man Who Planted Trees” and my first thought was that it was going to be about Johnny Appleseed. The cover featured a wonderful wood block print of a hand putting an acorn into a hole in the ground. This 51-page book has a wood block print on almost every other page...a veritable feast for the eyes.

The author is a young man “taking a long trip on foot over mountain heights quite unknown to tourists... where the Alps thrust down into Provence”. The region is deserted, barren, colorless and growing only wild lavender. He drank all of his water and the spring was dry in the abandoned village he passed. Luckily, he found a flock of sheep tended by a shepherd, who shared his water. After a meal, the shepherd he took out a bag of acorns and sorted out one hundred perfect acorns. In the morning the shepherd plunged his sack of carefully selected acorns into a pail of water.

During a walk with the shepherd the author noticed the shepherd’s stick was actually a thick iron rod. Reaching a valley where he left his dog in charge of the flock of sheep, the shepherd climbed to the top of the ridge and “began thrusting his iron rod into the earth, making a hole in which he planted an acorn; then he refilled the hole.” When questioned, the shepherd admitted it was not his land and he was not interested in finding out whose it was. For three years he had been planting trees in this wilderness...one hundred thousand of which about twenty thousand had

sprouted and he still expected to lose about half. That left ten thousand oak trees to grow where nothing had grown before. The shepherd had lost his family and he found pleasure living with his sheep and dog. It was his opinion that this land was dying for want of trees. He had a nursery of beech seedlings and was studying birch trees for future plantings.

The author continued his journey and the following year war broke out. When peace came five years later, he took to the open road again and looked up the shepherd. He had only four sheep, but the war had not disturbed him and he had continued to plant trees. The oaks he had first planted were taller than either man. His forest stretched almost seven miles by two miles.

Fifteen years later the shepherd was visited by a forest ranger who notified him of an order against

lighting fires out of doors for fear of endangering the growth of this natural forest. It was the first time, the ranger said he had ever heard of a forest growing of its own accord. The shepherd moved some six miles so that his walk to unforested land for planting was shorter, as he was now in his seventies. A couple of years later the whole forest was placed under the protection of the State. And ten years later, the author retraced his steps from his first trek and found the abandoned village was inhabited and vibrant with crops and orchards in the valley.

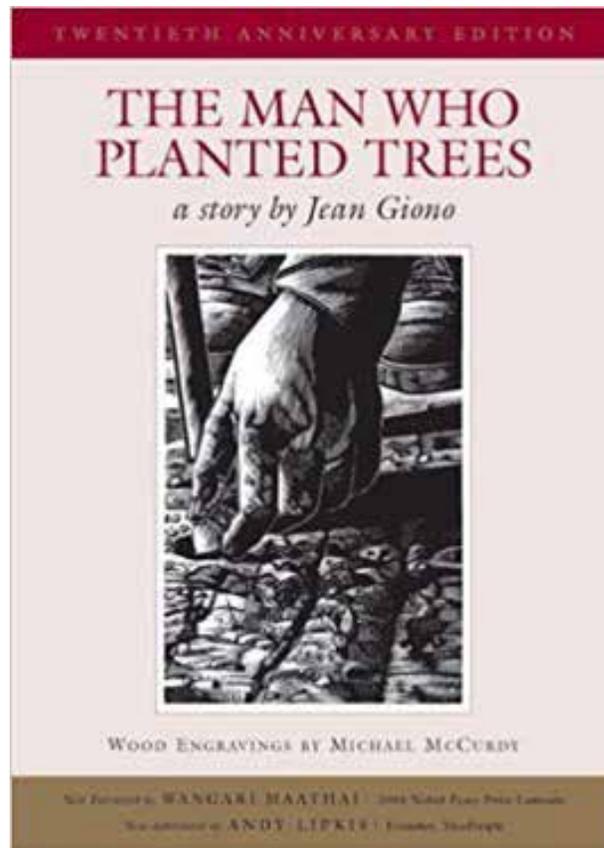
“Yes, one person can make a huge difference” I thought as I finished the book. However, proceeding to the

Afterword.....I was

devastated to learn this was just

a made up story. I so wanted it to be true. Jean Giono said the purpose of this story “was to make people love the tree, or more precisely, to make them love planting trees.” The publisher, Chelsea Green collaborated with Global ReLeaf’s campaign to ease the threat of global warming by planting millions of trees.

So, I just reread the book and this time I didn’t read the Afterword. The glow is back! Google Global ReLeaf to see the incredible work they have done since their beginning in 1988 and are still doing now.



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