



*Summer* 2019



# INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

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

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

Elaine "Muffi" Ruby

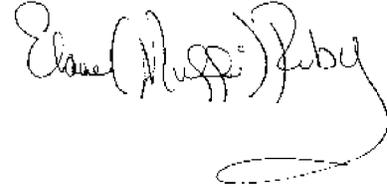
### GOOD DAY INDIAN TRAIL MASTER NATURALISTS

We have had a Marvelous Spring...Mother Nature has certainly had her way with us. We all are seeing growth and flowers we haven't seen in several years. Several of our planned activities were canceled due to the rain, but, we will have many more opportunities to share and teach about Nature and Conservation. Make sure you take time to smell the roses. Don't let life pass you by! The heat will

be here in no time. Please spend some time with family and friends.

Before we know it our 2019 class will be starting. We have seven people signed up already !!

Take advantage of all the classes to learn and investigate new ways to enjoy/learn/teach about Nature.



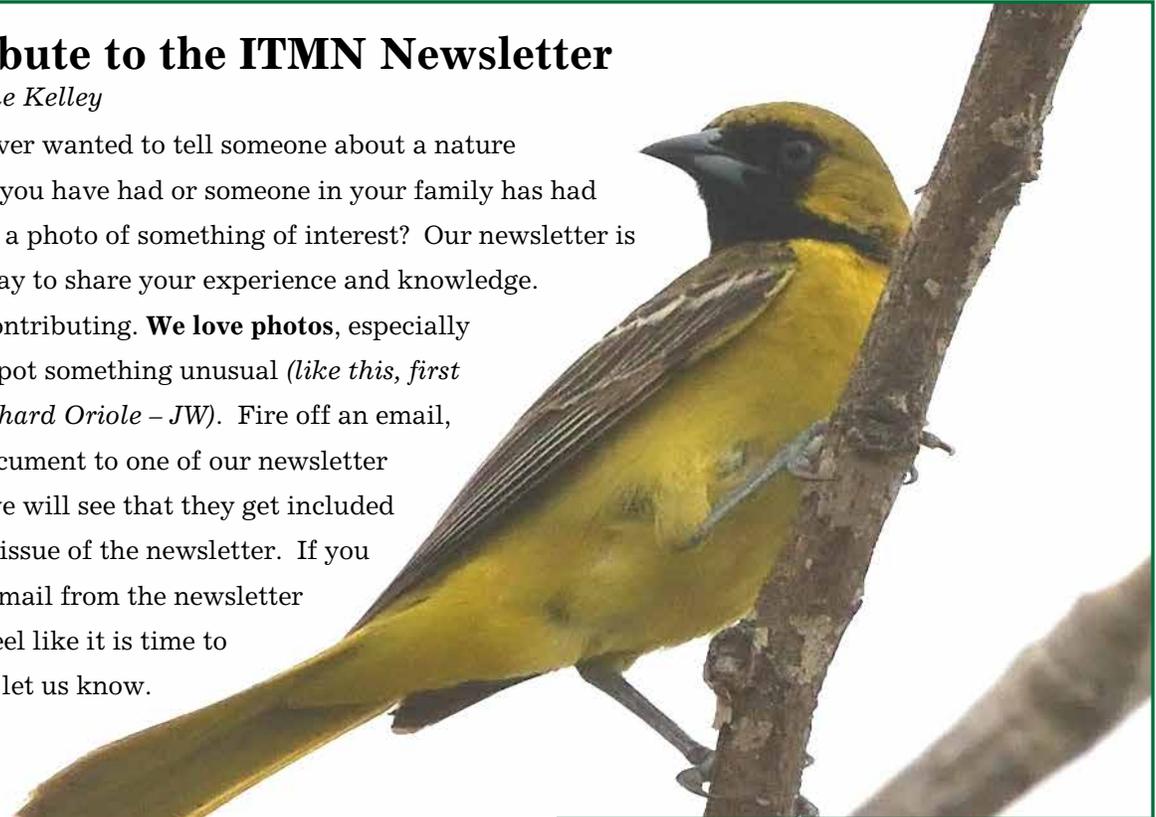
Monthly meetings are held on the 4th Monday (usually) of each month at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie. Our office is located in TexasAgrilife at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165 | 972-825-5175  
Visit our website at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail>

## Contribute to the ITMN Newsletter

By Madeline Kelley

**H**ave you ever wanted to tell someone about a nature experience you have had or someone in your family has had or, to share a photo of something of interest? Our newsletter is a perfect way to share your experience and knowledge.

Consider contributing. **We love photos**, especially when you spot something unusual (*like this, first for me, Orchard Oriole – JW*). Fire off an email, or other document to one of our newsletter team and we will see that they get included in the next issue of the newsletter. If you read your email from the newsletter team and feel like it is time to contribute, let us know.



**COVER: Hail the conquering hero!** The Cattle Egret on the cover may well have saved the world as we know it. Look what he's got ahold of.



# GETTING TO THE DOGWOODS AT DOGWOOD CANYON AUDUBON CENTER

By Madeline Kelley, Julie Collins and Aaron Gritzmaker

## What is the current status of the trail building?

The trail is currently on hold until the trail builders, S&S Trail Services, Inc., can return to continue the work. There is currently 0.3 miles of trail built and one of two bridges completed for two



separate creek crossings. The new trail will be a loop trail that will extend off from the current West Loop trail, adding

about 1 mile of new trail.

## What are you trying to accomplish by building the trail?

There has been a plan to construct a trail to the Flowering dogwood grove since the inception of Dogwood Canyon. However, construction could not begin until funds could be obtained, which about 2 years ago. Dogwood earned a 40k trails grant from TPWD, managed through TxDOT, specifically for this trail. The purpose of the trail is to further connect people to nature and the beauty of the canyon. This includes sustainable access to view the Flowering Dogwood grove which is a unique occurrence. We wanted to prevent impacting the grove and allow viewing from a safe distance on a viewing platform. These dogwoods, normally seen further east, typically thrive in slightly acidic soils with a low calcium carbonate tolerance. However, the grove of dogwoods thriving in this limestone escarpment at Dogwood Canyon, are further west and, as the name suggests (limestone escarpment), growing in slightly alkaline soils. It is posited, but not proven, that this grove could be a genetic variant. In addition, this section

of the canyon has even larger groves of Trout Lily plants than what is typically seen on current trails.

## What help did ITMN volunteers provide?

Aaron Gritzmaker, another NTMN volunteer and a non-TMN volunteer, have been a great help with the trail crew including: carrying material up the trail, clearing brush, carrying brush to block old social trails and construction of the bridge.

## What help do you still need?

When the trail company returns in June, volunteers are welcome to help with fine-tuning the trail surface, moving lumber up the trail, and construction of the next bridge.

## When do expect to finish the trail?

The company expects trail completion by end of June, early July. In addition to the trail loop, there will be a short spur trail that leads to an elevated hill near the grove of dogwoods. From that point, an elevated platform deck will be constructed to assist in viewing the dogwoods when in bloom from a vantage point that will allow the blooms to be in view, but not impact the grove itself.



# Eureka Herb Festival



*continued next page*

# My Random Thoughts on the Expo...

By Dan Rayfield

First, we ITMN folks have done a lot of Expo events for a long time now. In my humble opinion, this one was one of the best. The numbers Charlie provided attest to that (see below). Our new location was much better than our previous one and we should thank the Master Gardeners for that. And speaking of the Master Gardeners, I think they did another great job on the Expo. It is a tremendous amount of work and they pulled it off again. The lunch and desserts were top notch, which is always and everywhere how I judge an event!

I also want to send out kudos to the ITMN group that planned this year's booth. The theme of invasive plants vs. native plants seemed to be of high interest to a lot of our visitors. The bad plant vs. good plant photo examples were eye-catching and had people asking questions. Deborah and I were honored to have our place used as the back drop for the "photo booth". That was a huge draw for people with kids. And while I did not make it over to the children's table, I heard that it was a "beehive of activity". (Had to sneak in a naturalist reference...)

Jack's bird photo board was also something that brought people in to talk. I can't tell you how many people wanted to show us pictures of their birds from their phones.

Folks, when the public begins to invest sincere emotional value in their own piece of the environment

like that, you know we are making progress. It is not some abstract concept anymore but something that they can do to make things a tiny bit better in their piece of the world. As an example, I had one guy tell me with great enthusiasm about watching a wren land on his arrow while he was out bow hunting. One of Jack's photos was what brought him into the booth and got him to talking. Turns out he and his hunting buddy have put up bluebird nest boxes at their hunting property. And we may see them at the next Advanced Training session on wildlife tracking.

Of course, we spoke with a great number of home owners about ways to attract birds, or provide habitat, or do any number of things to improve their property for wildlife. However, I was most impressed by the number of people who were currently renting property but were still wanting to do something for the environment, even before they eventually buy their own home. We talked with them about birdfeeders or wildlife water sources or using pots and containers to plant some Gregg's Blue Mist to attract butterflies this year.

Not someday, or next year, but this year. I'm sure other members can speak to this also but I could detect a real feeling of excitement while talking to many of the folks that stopped by our booth.

Let me close this by stating the obvious. I came away from this year's event feeling like our chapter is really making a contribution to our community and to the natural world we all love. So, kudos to the entire chapter.

## Charlie's Report on Expo Numbers

WOW!!!!

Adult booth	349 adults visited		
	84 children	Total	433
Children's booth	93 adults	165 children	Total 258
Grand totals	442 adults	249 children	Total 691

We received **\$32.04** in donations for our booklets





## Waxahachie Resident Prepares Blackland Prairie for Wildlife, Wildflower Adventure Event

By Ashley Ford | @aford\_news

For the better part of the past year, Don Happ has embraced the natural Blackland Prairie that rests between Waxahachie and Maypearl.

As a member of the Indian Trails chapter of Master Naturalists, he has dedicated his time to prepare the property of the McKinney-Aday Family Farm to maintain an authentic feel of the native lands.

In preparation for the Prairie Wildlife and Wildflower Adventure event at the end of April, Happ is currently knee-deep in tall grass and creating fun activities for children.

As he spoke out the property, the 20-year Waxahachie resident explained he pulled up European grass to allow more of the natural silver bluestem grass takes over and admired the pucoon flowers that stood out. “Most of what we do is educate children, and this is great for our future,” Happ said.

Happ mentioned several tables will be scattered around the historic Aday home with various informative and interactive activities. One activity will have patrons create seed balls that will fertilize the land. “If you just take the seed that is 26 cents a pound — the cheapest you can get them — you throw them on the ground the birds will eat them, they blow away,” Happ detailed. Happ has already thrown out several hundred and explained the key is to mix clay, soil and water with the seeds to form little mud balls. Once they dry, throw them in the yard.

“It has to rain three times before the seed falls all apart,” he elaborated. “That means that there is actually enough water in the soil for the plant to live. This was actually invented by Native Americans to plant food.”

Children will also make soil samples out of edible treats, and a chart will be filled out that describes each layer. Another station will cover pollination with plants and wildlife. A woman from the National Audubon Society will also discuss prairie birds.

Happ brought out a box from his vehicle with holes cut out on top. He reached in to pull out a fake worm and

explained the animal, a short-tail shrew, is native to the area.

“It’s poisonous but not enough poison to hurt a human,” Happ explained. “They are almost pure carnivores. What I’m going to have them (kids) do is hunt for food like a shrew.”

Happ continued to explain the creature has to eat its own body weight daily and then pulled out a giant toy beetle, and then a small rubber lizard. He pulled out a fake snake and explained the shrew would no longer be the predator but the prey. Happ noted the only shrews he has seen on the property were dead.



Book Review by Debbie Pierce

## *The Botany of Desire*

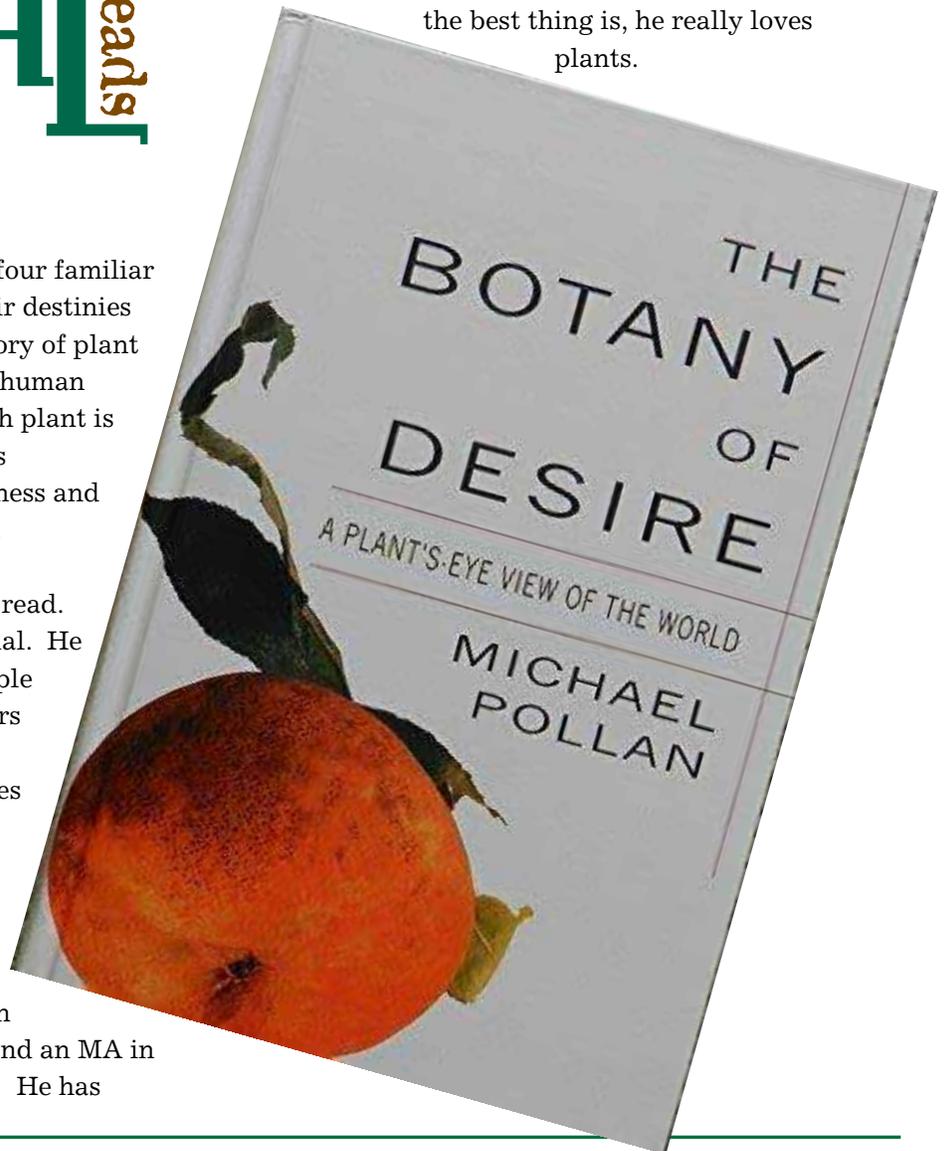
By Michael Pollan

*The Botany of Desire* tells the story of four familiar plants and the human desires that link their destinies to our own. This book is both a social history of plant domestication and a natural history of the human desires these plants evolved to gratify. Each plant is focused on a different human desire and its exploitation of domesticated plants: sweetness and apples, beauty and tulips, intoxication and cannabis, and potatoes and control.

*The Botany of Desire* is not a fun, easy read. Pollan does not walk us through his material. He scatters ideas like seeds and never lets simple statements stand. Instead he adds qualifiers and redundant clauses that overwhelm the reader. Circling the same ground sometimes leads him to startling new ideas, but more often than not he overburdens the subject.

Michael Pollan has written numerous books, articles, and essays and is recognized as an American author, journalist, and activist. He received a BA in English from Bennington College in 1977 and an MA in English from Columbia University in 1981. He has

received plenty of recognition for his work, but the best thing is, he really loves plants.



## ELLIS COUNTY RURAL HERITAGE FARM

The Heritage Farm is an ongoing project to enhance public appreciation or and provide educational opportunities to students and learners of all ages about farm life.

The mission of the Heritage Farms is to preserve and to promote public awareness and appreciation of the natural and farming heritage of rural Ellis County. Through public and school tours, living history programs, and garden, row crop or native prairie demonstration projects, opportunities for future generations have been provided to educate others as they gain an understanding and appreciation of rural life in the late 19th and early to the mid-20th century.

The 145-acre property is currently owned by Lu Ann Aday, and collaborated with the Ellis County Museum on the farmland development that is located

on Farm-to-Market Road 66, about two miles west of Waxahachie.

One might only notice the 1913 Prairie style McKinney-Aday Farmhouse driving by. The home was restored in 2011 and received a marker granted by Historic Waxahachie, Inc. in 2012 that acknowledged the historical and architectural significance. The Texas State Historical Commission also designated it as a Recorded Texas Historic landmark the year after.

The farmland currently operates a working farm and native prairie areas. The website reads that the 145-acre Heritage Farm is only a remnant of the original 460-acre Marvin W. and Mattie F. Aday family farm.

According to the website, the Superconducting Super Collider Project appropriated a total of 315 acres in the early 1990s.

# Ennis Bluebonnet Festival 2019



*By Jim Patak*

The 2019 Ennis Bluebonnet Festival was the most unusual event I've experienced. This year's Festival kicked off on a mild sunny breezy day. The crowd was unexpectedly vibrant for a Friday afternoon. We had a large number of visitors stop by our booth.

Saturday morning brought a whole different take on the weather. No sooner than we got our booth ready for visitors, Festival officers passed word along that, with severe weather quickly approaching from the Southwest, the Festival was being cancelled for the entire day.

Sunday morning brought even more interesting events. It started with a voice mail message I received from my daughter, letting me know that our booth downtown sustained damage from an overnight windstorm. When I got out of early morning services and arrived at our booth, I was informed that both canopies had been lifted by the wind and deposited atop another vendors' booth. This happened with all

eight leg weights installed and the canopies fully lowered. Next year there will be 5 gallons buckets of water anchoring our booth. Fortunately, City workers were able to dislodge our booths from their "perch" and returned them to our designated location. Our opening crew set about making our booth ready for visitors. All we lost were 6 glass handled mugs, used as vases, to display wildflowers.

Sunday turned out to be a beautiful sunny day. Lots of people stopped by, most keenly interested in our Native/Alternative Plants display and Jack's "Name That Bird" board game. The kids had a blast with the Critter Photo Booth as well. However, I think Don had just as much fun working the kids to participate.

Although we could not conduct any Nature Walks at Kachina this year, we still logged 700 adults, 250 kids and received \$86 in donations for the 1 ½ days of the Festival.



# Drive-by Birders



By Susan Frary

I have been chasing a Ferruginous Hawk I'd seen briefly last week near Rockett - a rather huge light morph, snowy white body - but wasn't entirely sure that's what I'd seen as Redtails are similar if you don't get a good look. Ferruginous Hawks are rather rare here, so I was trying to find it again this morning driving around. There was a hawk on top of the Brown Street Church power structure this morning. I stopped to try and get a good picture since I had my long lens



with me. I hadn't seen our resident Redtail pair for a couple of weeks, but one of them at least is back standing sentinel over the church high on the power structure. Not the Ferruginous Hawk sadly.... The "homeless bird" twigs attempt at a nest is

gone, likely a victim of winds recently. Now there is now a big piece of plastic in the same place flapping like a flag. Don't know if the female of the pair will find that pleasing yard art.... :-)

Pix of darkish birds with white parts against an overcast sky with lousy light are a bit challenging, but

as a teacher of mine once said, "shoot with whatcha got..." - this one was taken from a fair distance away with a 300mm lens + 1.4x teleconverter, handheld. 1/250 sec at f4, ISO 100 for the camera geeks.

I probably should have used a higher shutter speed to get the feathers sharp, but sometimes you want a bit of blur to show the feathers in motion — or at least that's my excuse. The wind was fluffing him up a bit, so you can see the field marks of a Redtail - the squared-off tail of course, pale underneath and red above, dark edges of the wings, yellow feet, mostly white belly. This guy is a bit small as compared with other local Redtails I've seen around here. The Ferruginous Hawk would have been whiter, with rusty feathered legs and a much paler head.



Can you tell I am practicing for my upcoming bird-fest vacation in Del Rio and and at the South Llano River Bird Festival? Whooooo, ten days with "real" birders..... Yellow-cheeked Warbler, Green Jay, Black-capped Vireo. Whooooo Rare Bird Alert! Well, not so rare where I'm going, but non-existent at home, so hoping for lots of lifers and good pix.

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

## Katie Christman

By Madeline Kelley

**MK:** Tell us a little bit more about your life outside of Texas Master Naturalist.

**KC:** Oh goodness, it's crazy busy, but in a good way, lol. Most people know that I work at Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center, but outside of that, I love being involved in my community. I serve on the Audubon Dallas board with some amazing people and have been involved in influencing environmental education with that. I also have an amazing church that I have the privilege of calling my "family." I help lead our short-term mission trips and assist in overseeing our small groups. If I'm not with my church family, then I'm typically working out with my Camp Gladiator peeps, outside camping somewhere or trying to find the best taco place in DFW. Most of my family lives in upstate NY, and my older brother lives in Anchorage, Alaska with his family (and my adorable one-year old nephew).

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

**KC:** I have to credit this to Eileen, Charlie and Ms. Debbie for convincing me to join ITMN. When you've grown up in the New England area and have done all you're schooling in the New England area, it's a bit overwhelming to have to be proficient in teaching Texas natural history. I felt the need to beef up my skills after moving here, but the Master Naturalists are so wonderful to work with it made it easy to step into. When I can fit projects into my schedule, I love anything that allows me to be interacting with people and conservation related projects. I really love getting my hands dirty!

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

**KC:** Ooh, there are quite a few, however I have had the privilege of travelling to other countries and areas in the U.S. and ultimately, I would say that I'm passionate about people and their relationships (or lack of

relationship) to nature. What I mean by that is that environmental issues are often social justice issues, they often go hand in hand, but sometimes aren't treated as such. Look at the water issue in Flint, Michigan. Certain people don't have access to clean water; not only is that a people issue, but it's an environmental issue. Here in Dallas, kids may not go outside simply because it's not safe; there are economic issues, cultural issues, lack of access to nature etc.

**MK:** What is the most rewarding thing about volunteering?

**KC:** The people you volunteer with become like a second family. The folks in ITMN have a special place in my heart. And I love this quote, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." Volunteering adds a little bit of light in people's lives, so I will continue to that for as long as I can..

**MK:** What activities do you enjoy when you're not busy with chapter programs?

**KC:** I get lost in book stores often, love hanging out at coffee shops (though I don't really like coffee), bird watch while driving on the highway, get up at the crack of dawn to workout, make friends with strangers, am attempting to learn Spanish and I'm really enjoying all of the natural beauty that Texas has to offer!





## MR. WEST'S NEIGHBORHOOD

*By Jim West*

**LOVE IS IN THE AIR, LITERALLY.**

I was in one of my spots, waiting on something (I never know what until it shows up.) when some movement off to the side caught my eye. A yellow-billed Cuckoo perched just a few feet away, in plain sight, nearly too close for my lens to focus. Normally very secretive, a public appearance was unusual enough but it started rapidly bobbing up and down. I started shooting and the reason for all of the excitement became clear a few seconds later, with a nice juicy Dragonfly in its beak. Her mate was bringing her a gift, part of their mating ritual I later read. Ah romance.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR RESOURCES?

By Madeline Kelley

Those who attended the January 25 Indian Trail Master Naturalist Meeting got a thorough well explained presentation on what is happening to our future resources from the North Central Texas Council of Governments – Environment and Development. Tamara Cook and Hannah Allen from NCTCOG delivered a very thorough look at how future growth and development will affect our land and water resources as our population continues to grow in north Texas. There was a PowerPoint presentation that is available if anyone is interested in reviewing the statistics.

Hannah also provided the links for further information and study.

The main website (that should link out to all programs) is [www.nctcog.org/envir](http://www.nctcog.org/envir). Here are more websites to check out.

- [www.developmentexcellence.com](http://www.developmentexcellence.com)
- [www.defendyourdrainsnorthtexas.com](http://www.defendyourdrainsnorthtexas.com)
- [www.timetorecycle.com](http://www.timetorecycle.com)
- [www.reportdfwdumping.org](http://www.reportdfwdumping.org)
- [www.gosolaratexas.org](http://www.gosolaratexas.org)
- <http://txsmartscape.com>

Below is their contact information if you need more detail.

Tamara Cook, Senior Program Manager  
Hannah Allen, LEED® Green Associate  
Environment and Development Planner  
North Central Texas Council of Governments  
direct: (817) 695-9215 | main: (817) 695-9210



Here's one example of what's happening to our resources. About a mile of riparian habitat was dozed to get rid of beavers that caused the flooding of farm fields. A far cheaper and better solution would be to have just gotten rid of the beavers.

## DID YOU KNOW?

By Madeline Kelley

The annual Master Naturalist training class will run from August 20 through November 12, 2019 at the First Methodist Church in Waxahachie. The **APPLICATION DEADLINE is July 16, 2019**. Class size is limited.

Requirements to become a certified Master Naturalist volunteer:

- Attend all scheduled classes and field trips complete 40 volunteer hours of service and 8 advanced training

hours. These requirements must be completed by November 13, 2020.

- Fees: The Training Program tuition is \$150. This fee pays for the Texas Master Naturalist manual, handouts, speakers and field trips. The fee is \$100 for a second family member when one manual is shared. Payment plan available upon request. Cash or check only, please.

All applicants will be notified of their status no later than July 30, 2019. Fees will be collected after acceptance notification and before the first class. Contact Rena Supthin at [renasutphin@yahoo.com](mailto:renasutphin@yahoo.com) for an application.

**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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President: Elaine "Muffi" Ruby ..... [elaineruby@wgfhc.com](mailto:elaineruby@wgfhc.com)  
Vice President/Programs: Lynn Wisakowsky ..... [lynnwisakowsky@gmail.com](mailto:lynnwisakowsky@gmail.com)  
Treasurer: Denise King ..... [kdeniseking2223@gmail.com](mailto:kdeniseking2223@gmail.com)  
Secretary: Sue Frary ..... [aggiemom@mac.com](mailto:aggiemom@mac.com)  
Past President: Don Happ ..... [donnahapp.happ@gmail.com](mailto:donnahapp.happ@gmail.com)

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## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Advanced Training Chair: Jack Dunaway ..... [jackdsr@hotmail.com](mailto:jackdsr@hotmail.com)  
Historian: Sharon Lane ..... [sharon@smrtexas.com](mailto:sharon@smrtexas.com)  
Host/Hostess Chair: Celia Yowell ..... [celiayowell@gmail.com](mailto:celiayowell@gmail.com)  
Membership Chair: Debbie Pierce ..... [debbiekpierce@att.net](mailto:debbiekpierce@att.net)  
Office Manager: Lois Lyon ..... [loislyon@gmail.com](mailto:loislyon@gmail.com)  
Newsletter Co-editor: Madeline Kelley ..... [m.a.kelley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:m.a.kelley@sbcglobal.net)  
Newsletter Co-editor: Debbie Pierce ..... [debbiekpierce@att.net](mailto:debbiekpierce@att.net)  
Newsletter Design/Production: Jim West ..... [jrwest901@gmail.com](mailto:jrwest901@gmail.com)  
Outreach Chair: Charlie Grindstaff ..... [pcgrindstaff@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pcgrindstaff@sbcglobal.net)  
Scholarship Chair: George Lawton ..... [micromanwaxa@yahoo.com](mailto:micromanwaxa@yahoo.com)  
Publicity Co-Chair: Pam Mundo ..... [pmundo@mundoandassociates.com](mailto:pmundo@mundoandassociates.com)  
Publicity Co-Chair: Joe Mundo ..... [joe@mundoandassociates.com](mailto:joe@mundoandassociates.com)  
State Representative: Pam Mundo ..... [pmundo@mundoandassociates.com](mailto:pmundo@mundoandassociates.com)  
Training Chair: Rena Sutphin ..... [renasutphin@yahoo.com](mailto:renasutphin@yahoo.com)

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## SUPPORT

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Webmaster: Sharon Lane ..... [sharon@smrtexas.com](mailto:sharon@smrtexas.com)  
Social Media: Josh Stanfield ..... [jstanfield00@gmail.com](mailto:jstanfield00@gmail.com)

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## PROJECT CHAIRS

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Bullard Heights Neighborhood Park: Don Happ ..... [donnahapp.happ@gmail.com](mailto:donnahapp.happ@gmail.com)  
Cerf Park Butterfly Garden: Chris Cook ..... [chriscook17@sbcglobal.net](mailto:chriscook17@sbcglobal.net)  
CoCoRaHS: Carolyn Gritzmaker ..... [cgritzmaker@gmail.com](mailto:cgritzmaker@gmail.com)  
Kachina Prairie: Jim Patak ..... [jpatak@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jpatak@sbcglobal.net)  
Matthews Park: Wendy Shappard ..... [wendyshappard@gmail.com](mailto:wendyshappard@gmail.com)  
Mockingbird Nature Park Butterfly Garden:  
Mockingbird Nature Park: Elaine "Muffi" Ruby ..... [elaineruby@wgfhc.com](mailto:elaineruby@wgfhc.com)  
Project Wild: Rebecca Schumacher ..... [rebeccaschumacher@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rebeccaschumacher@sbcglobal.net)  
Stream Team:

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## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY LIAISONS

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Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT): Debbie Pierce ..... [debbiekpierce@att.net](mailto:debbiekpierce@att.net)  
Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center: Michaela Kral ..... [michaelarkral@gmail.com](mailto:michaelarkral@gmail.com)  
John Bunker Sands Wetland Center: Don Happ ..... [donnahapp.happ@gmail.com](mailto:donnahapp.happ@gmail.com)  
Perot Museum:  
Trinity River Audubon Center: Kayleigh Medeiros ..... [kmmedeir89@gmail.com](mailto:kmmedeir89@gmail.com)

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