



# INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

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

ISSUE 22121

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

*Elaine "Muffi" Ruby*

**WHAT AN AMAZING TIME IN OUR LIVES**, it is the Summer of 2021. We all survived the Pandemic and staying home a whole lot more than we wanted. It was a very wet spring and it is now a HOT summer though not as bad as some we have had.

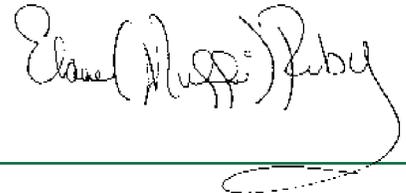
We started in-person meetings again in June 2021. We have our NEW 2021 Class starting at the end of August 2021. This is Very Exciting – Please promote the class, as of the end of June we had 10 people signed up. Wild Flower Walks at

Mockingbird, Safari excursion at Kachina, Blue Bonnet Festival all have been wonderful. New opportunity to Volunteer with Parktopia on July 23

We are what we make our organization

Please join us in celebrating being able to be together again. Do not forget our Annual State convention is at the DFW MARRIOT in October.

Hope to enjoy the rest of 2021 with ALL of you. Let's ALL get out and show our communities who we are as Master Naturalists !!



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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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## **CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS**

You will notice that photos of the recipients are absent from the article in this issue with the exception of Rachel Austin, pictured here. The reason for that? Their photos were submitted in a format that I can't use without a lot of effort on my part which is a waste of time. I prefer my efforts go to designing this newsletter as well as I can rather than manipulating bad or low resolution photos. I have mentioned a number of times the formats and the quality of photos we need to maintain our look. Here goes, one more time. On your phone, set the photo quality at the highest setting. Don't send photos that are embedded in other documents such as Word. It's too time consuming to extract them and there's no benefit in doing so. Jpgs. png, or tiffs are all welcome. *JW*



**Rachel Austin**

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**COVER: Stop, thief!** One of the younger participants in the wildflower walk at Kachina Prairie, held during the Bluebonnet Festival, managed to abscond with some of the flora. She was not prosecuted, however.

# INDIAN TRAIL MASTER NATURALISTS SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

*ITMN honors 4 students each year with \$1000 awards from Mox Moxley who are seeking degrees. Here's a brief history of each of our three winners for 2021.*

## **Midlothian Heritage - Rachel Austin -** *Charlie Grindstaff presented*

Rachel Austin has excelled both academically and musically. She was in the National Honor Society and took challenging courses throughout her high school career, all the while focusing on developing her natural musical talent and leadership skills in band. She was in the marching band and jazz band all four years and served as freshman representative, treasurer, brass captain, and ultimately, drum major. Rachel played two different instruments, the tuba and the bass trombone, and advanced to region and area competitions multiple times, earning her the pinnacle of achievement in a high school band: the John Philip Sousa Award. In addition to school and band, Rachel worked part-time to save money for college and volunteered with the Texas Master Naturalists, the Manna House, and our church. Rachel will continue to dedicate her life to others and the environment at Stephen F. Austin State University where she will study Forestry and Wildlife Management.

## **Corsicana High – Noheli Jimenez -** *Rena Sutphin presented*

Being a first generation student has really impacted the way I look at my education and future goals which is helped me stay determined throughout the past 12 years growing up. I have heard several stories about how my parents had to drop out of school in order to support their families and unfortunately this is the cycle for most Hispanic families. I'm thankful for my parents having a different mindset. Ever since I can remember I've always had my older sister set the bar for what I can pursue and achieve by going to college. She is now an engineer. Not only have I seen what the doors a college education can open for a first generation student, but it also drives me to be better and set an even higher standard for my youngest sister. My interest in pursuing a Bachelor's degree in animal science has been strongly imbedded since I was little and was surrounded by stray animals from our neighborhood. I never thought that working with

animals could be a typical job but as my passion grew stronger the more I realized that becoming a veterinarian was a goal I could achieve. My dream job of becoming a veterinarian will not be an easy task but this scholarship will help me greatly.

## **Waxahachie High – Bailey Ballard -** *Wendy Sheppard presented*

My name is Bailey Ballard and I'm currently a senior at Waxahachie High School I am in many organizations at my high school I am in the National Honor Society, Future Farmers of America and was a member of Belles and Beaus last year. I'm also a member of the Waxahachie High School Theater Department. I am in musical theater, advanced theater, and UIL One Act Play. I have been in a total of 13 high school productions throughout my high school career. I've been a member of the International Thespian Society for the last two years. ITS honors student's achievements and theater. I also attended the ITS weekend event where I learned more about acting dancing and improvisation. I'm also a Waxahachie High School Drama Department Officer. I am the public relations representative. I try to be involved in the community as much as I can. I volunteer at at Streets to Sheets Animal Rescue. Sheets is a nonprofit animal rescue organization that helps find abandon animals. At home we host several fundraisers and all the money we collect goes to the needs of the animals. At Streets to Sheets there are many opportunities for people to foster or adopt and spend time and love the little for babies. We work hard to ensure happiness and a caring family to animals in need. I have over 30 hours of community service volunteering for Streets to Sheet. My educational goal is to learn more about how to become a veterinarian which is my career interest at this time. Since I only have one goal right now I can focus on my efforts on becoming a veterinarian. Of course, to gain the skills to become a veterinarian I need to have a college degree. The scholarship will help me achieve my goals leading to a more successful future. This scholarship will help me turn my dreams into reality.

# QUESTING FOR *Wild* ENCOUNTERS

By Tom Hollingsworth

You have an innate capacity to tune in to Nature...to be an integrated, natural being. For eons, people thrived by selecting healthy, wild plants and tracking wildlife for game. Humans could sense danger from smells, sounds, or mysterious silences. First Peoples could find water by reading the land.

Our origins are wild. Our instantiation and evolution into modernity depended on total awareness of Nature. The masters perfected Nature's crafts. They kept a mental encyclopedia of the wild encounters that killed and those that gave life.

Keepers of this natural book of life became sages, healers, scouts, crafters, and chieftainesses. Their knowledge was the medicine prescribed to thrive in Nature. Some identified with Nature's elements: earth, water, wind, and fire. Wisdom increased. Spirituality emerged. Today, these cultures have all but vanished.

Why are humans detached from Nature? Naturalist cultures may be vanishing, but modern keepers bear witness to many threads of Nature's wisdom. Before exploring the cause, let's demonstrate how accessible Nature truly is.

**Wild Encounter #1:** Blue jays have different sounds and behaviors when they mob. After three encounters, I learned when blue jays are following a snake, when they are harassing an owl, and when they are expressing ease. One jay in my area mimics a red shouldered hawk to ward off rivals. You can learn what is going on in your wild community by paying attention. Awareness is the key.

**Wild Encounter #2:** During the Medicinal Plant Walk in May, 2021, Rebecca Schumacher, identified over a dozen species of plants, including their notable, constituent properties. We learned that many plants' poisoning and healing qualities have varying attributes. Some constituents are consistently toxic, some consistently nutritious. Other constituents may nourish in one dose and poison in another. This ancient wisdom is the foundation of medicine. By learning from a well-trained and knowledgeable, Clinical Herbal Practitioner like Rebecca, you gain insight on how our ancestors learned from wild encounters of the plant kind.

**Wild Encounter #3:** Eastern Phoebe's may brood twice in a season, if the first clutch is unsuccessful. I

observed a mother lay four eggs, hatch them after the winter storm, and then kill all four chicks. She then laid four more eggs. A western rat snake shows up. Last year this same bird lost 3 chicks to a snake. I caught and released that snake in time to save one chick. Why, this year, did she kill her first brood only to lay another? Something in Nature triggered the behavior. My lesson: Snakes smell chicks' poop. Phoebes discard small chick poop away from the nest, but can't keep up with the large chicks' poop. I relocate this snake before it climbs to the nest and my wife and I decide to clean the patio daily. No more snakes. Two chicks fledge. No sign of the others. Nature can be mysterious. Observe and learn. This type of encounter is available to thousands of city folk in their backyard. Participate and be rewarded.

**Wild Encounter #4:** On a hike with a grandson in the Sandia Mountains, NM, he identified bear track. I've never seen bear sign. His awareness was inspiring. I've given my grandchildren lessons on tracking, but never expected this. It was a sacred moment. In Cedar Hill city limits, I've tracked fox, bobcat, opossum, rabbit, coyote, and a crow that left a wing print in the snow. Tracking is available to anyone that visits a park, dirt road, or hiking trail. Tracks can be found in most neighborhoods. Being outdoors is a choice. Many people can't conceive of wild encounters. They are engrained in a culture of unconsciousness. Yet, humans have the capacity to be consciously aware of our innate connection to Nature

**Wild Encounter #5:** In observing crows mob predators, I've learned crows tell you things. I've encountered bobcat and coyote by following certain crow calls.

These brushes with the wild are modest compared to our ancestors' experiences. Still, they tap into the same primal link with Nature that First Peoples mastered long ago. Our true selves have union with Nature. But we must quest for a relationship because our core identity lies deep. Modernity made it dormant.

Back to the question, "Why are people so detached from the wild?" Urban living inherently disconnects us from Nature. We are soft. We relish modern comforts. Social conditioning tells us we can't integrate technology and Nature into a symbiotic lifestyle. I challenge that notion. Cars could get 100 mpg. Streams and oceans could be free of trash. We could thrive without harming the Earth.

*Quest continued from previous page*  
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integrate technology and Nature into a symbiotic lifestyle. I challenge that notion. Cars could get 100 mpg. Streams and oceans could be free of trash. We could thrive without harming the Earth. Modern lifestyles depend on asphalt, retail, restaurants, stocks, and the internet. By being born in this time and place, we inherit what author Richard Louv described as the

“Nature-Deficit Disorder,” in his 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. No one is immune.

Over many generations, people reduced their wild encounters as they started to depend upon industrialized living conditions. Modern living has

also devastated oral traditions of the keepers of wild knowledge. Yet, the love for wild encounters runs deeply in the human matrix. There are many keepers continuing the quest!

When you support Nature learning, as when Charlie Grindstaff leads a prairie walk, or the Children’s Wildflower/Plant Safari, you are reinforcing our connection to Nature by leading people to a new experience of Creation. In so doing, you also honor a modern keeper as she passes on her knowledge.

You likely became a Master Naturalist because deep down, you are drawn to Earth. Nature initiates a spark in our spirit, if we pay attention. Recognizing that spark of interest during a wild encounter is a first step to deeper awareness of Nature’s intricate beauty and rugged realities. That awareness taps into a dimension of our inner, true self that has been suppressed. We don’t have to be primitive to reconnect. It is vital though that we share wild encounters with others to help create more balance between humans and the environment.

What is your most recent wild encounter? What awaits you? Continue the quest. It is our heritage and a privilege. And, thank you to all you keepers.

### **Resources**

Nature-Deficit Disorder:

<http://richardlouv.com/blog/what-is-nature-deficit-disorder>

### **Disparity in Outdoor Engagement:**

<https://cnr.ncsu.edu/news/2020/12/nature-gap-why-outdoor-spaces-lack-diversity-and-inclusion/>

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## *Dust if you must*

*Dust if you must, but wouldn’t it be better  
To paint a picture or, write a letter,  
Bake a cake or plant a seed,  
Ponder the difference between want and need.*

*Dust if you must, but there’s not much time,  
With rivers to swim and mountains to climb,  
Music to hear and books to read,  
Friends to cherish and life to lead.*

*By Anonymous, submitted by Chris Cook*

*Dust if you must, but the world’s out there,  
With the sun in your eyes, and the wind in  
your hair,  
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain.  
This day will not come around again.*

*Dust if you must, but bear in mind,  
Old age will come and, it’s not kind.  
And when you go-and go you must,  
You, yourself, will make more dust.*

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# Visit to Rogers Wildlife Rehab in Hutchins, TX

By Chris Cook

Many thanks to those of you who brought paper products for Rogers Wildlife Rehab to the last two 'in your faces' get together we had in June. My daughter Kari and I delivered them yesterday and they were much appreciated by Kathy Rogers. Our pile of offerings filled the back seat and trunk of our car. For those of you unaware of the need, they lost their sponsorship of paper goods and put out a request for help to which ITMN is responding. They still have no sponsorship, but Kathy said they have had an amazing response for paper towels but are still in need of tissues. Hopefully we will continue to collect at our meetings and will send a reminder to you each time.

Visiting with Kathy was fascinating and my daughter took some notes on her phone, thank goodness, and we have permission to share a few things we learned. Rogers Wild Life Rescue specializes in birds and Kathy has been active in this for over 40

years. She is qualified to receive and care for lawfully protected wild birds. This past year the facility received and cared for 5,869 protected wild birds. However, she also receives many baby and injured songbirds, bringing the total way over 6,000! She said that her totals have been increasing most years by 10 percent, and that does not even include the returners who come back to stay for the winter.

Kari and I wandered from enclosure to enclosure visiting with the feathered residents. As we strolled, others with the freedom to wander often followed us - pelicans, peacocks, great blue herons, great egret, ducks, vultures, turkeys and geese. Should you go to visit, you will be met at the gate by a gaggle of geese who are in no hurry to get off

the road, so just open your window and visit with them. Enjoy seeing blue jays and bluebirds, mockingbirds and robins, ravens, crows, doves, pheasants and chickens, owls, hawks, caracaras, crowned night herons, eagles, and more. Oops, can't forget those crazy roadrunners, too!



*I found the Swainson's hawk in the photo above in late May, sluggish and inactive, near the road down from my home. I tried to catch it a couple of times to no avail. Eventually I found it on the ground, this time, too weak to fly. Grabbing my trusty butterfly net, I waded the muddy ditch and caught it. There was an angel on my shoulder as I didn't fall in the ditch going or coming. I loaded up and took it to RWLR, where they treated it for dehydration and released it.*

And, here's what a healthy juvenile Swainson's hawk looks like. Photos of an adult below the book review.



# NATURAL reads

Book review by Charlie Grindstaff

## The Forest

**Author: Roger Caras**

**Illustrator: Norman Arlott**

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979,  
170 pages

If you are familiar with the old spiritual “Dem Bones” then you are very familiar with the theme of this wonderful book...

Well, your toe bone connected to your foot bone

Your foot bone connected to your heel bone

Your heel bone connected to your ankle bone

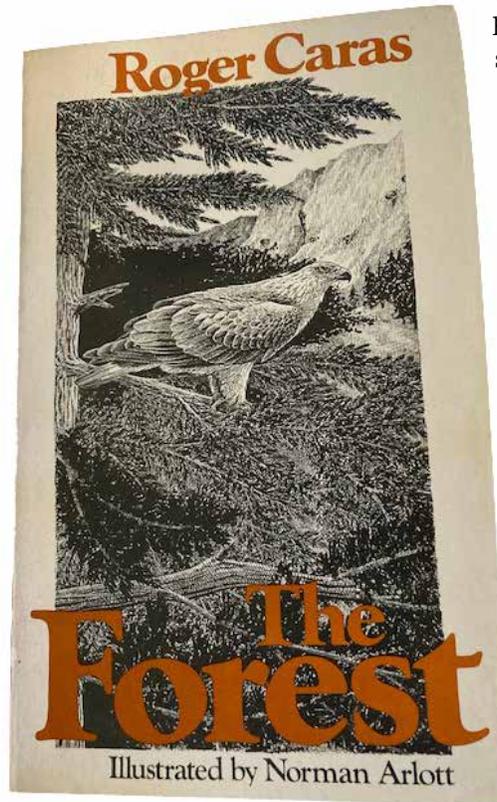
Your ankle bone connected to your leg bone.

This book takes place in a northwestern American forest where a golden eagle soaring at 6,000 feet, spots a rabbit, drops down, picks it up and drops it again. “It had died on contact, though, for the eagle’s talons had rolled shut and snapped the spine of her prey. Because rabbits usually lose and eagles win, there are millions of rabbits born each year, far more than the number of hunting birds. Still, it is the victim that controls the population of the predator. The number of eagles depends on the supply of their food base — rabbits and other prey – and not the other way around.”

After feeding on the rabbit, she has an encounter with a bald eagle (she grabs a few of his feathers in a flyby) before settling at the top of a 200-foot-tall hemlock tree, where she observes the activity in the

forest. The author does a wonderful job of explaining the musculature and feather schematics that make the incredible flight of the eagle possible and the features of the rabbit that almost allowed it to escape. So much for chapter one...the plants are connected to the rabbit which is connected to the golden eagle which is connected to the hemlock tree.

Each chapter follows another food web in the forest and the lives and deaths necessary to keep it all going. I really enjoyed the details provided about the fungus, lichen, sunlight, rain, plants and animals involved and the reinforcement of all the connections. There is nothing ho-hum about these connections; the author puts you at the scene to experience each interaction. I have to admit my favorite may have been the encounter between a king snake and a western rattlesnake...the 40 inch long king snake has the smarts and patience to wear down the 42 inch long rattlesnake to the point it could begin swallowing it headfirst toward the digestive juices in its stomach. Unfortunately, when it had “eaten” a foot of rattlesnake, the king snake realized a black bear was approaching, but was unable to either slither away with 30 inches of rattlesnake hanging out of its mouth or to regurgitate



it. After tossing the joined snakes in the air a couple of times, ripping them open with its claws until they released a slush of musk in death, then eating a little of each snake; the bear rolled over them several times to get their smell on its coat before lumbering away. Of course, a raven, beetles, grubs and other animals disposed of the snakes, nothing goes to waste in nature.

Good book, well written, and very well connected!

Swainson's Hawk © Jim West



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

## Maureen Nitkowski

By Lois Lyon

**LLL:** What do you do outside of ITMN?

**MN:** I like to spend time reading, cooking, and baking.



This includes growing crops in my garden that I can use for home canning, which I have done for years. I also enjoy camping with my husband, Stan, in our Cassita pull-behind camper. This is a compact camper that is made locally in Rice, Texas, and we like to travel and camp in the state parks.

I have been an Ellis County Master Gardener for 19 years, and served in the past as their President for 3 years. I served in

many other capacities as well, including Programs Chairperson for 5 terms. I worked as an educator at the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center in Combine, Texas for many years, teaching mainly 4th - 6th graders the many aspects of this amazing center.

**LLL:** How did you become interested in Texas Master Naturalists?

**MN:** I became a Master Naturalist with Indian Trail in 2010, but I have been a naturalist all of my life. My very early days in Pennsylvania were spent walking the woods and streams with my dad and grandfather who taught me about plants which were useful or to be avoided or to enjoy just for their beauty. It was not surprising that I later studied biology, and have kept my interest in the natural world.

**LLL:** What projects do you enjoy the most?

**MN:** I especially enjoy the Wildflower Walks and other educational walks hosted by ITMN at the Mockingbird Park and Kachina Prairie projects.

**LLL:** What nature/environmental issues interest you the most or do you find the most rewarding?

**MN:** I am most concerned and involved in water conservation, native plants and using the land wisely. These are themes I try to share with the public through written articles and talks.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Bee flies, of the family, Bombyliidae, comprised of over 4,500 species are very difficult to ID. I believe this is a Black-tailed Bee Fly.



## GETTING STARTED WITH DISCORD

Are you excited about our new Discord server? So are we! Discord is an app that enables text, voice, and even video chat amongst members of a community. These different community areas are called servers. We now have a server for our Indian Trail chapter. You can access Discord through a web browser, an installed application on your computer, or the phone app.

When following the invite link to our server ([discord.gg/wypxDBENcw](https://discord.gg/wypxDBENcw)), you will need to sign in if you already have an account, or create a new account. You can call your account name anything you want. Once your account is set up, you can update your picture by going to your User Settings. On the computer, this is the cog wheel near the bottom left next to your username. In the app, tap the three lines at the top left, then your user info at the right of the bottom bar, then My Account. Click/tap the + by the default picture, and you can upload a photo/avatar of your own.

What's in a name? Your account name may be highly imaginative, or there may be several people who have the same first name as you. How are we supposed to know who you are? In Discord, you can set your Nickname for each server you're in. On the ITMN server, please set your Nickname so we know who you are. Using the computer, you should see a list of people who belong to our server on the right side, including

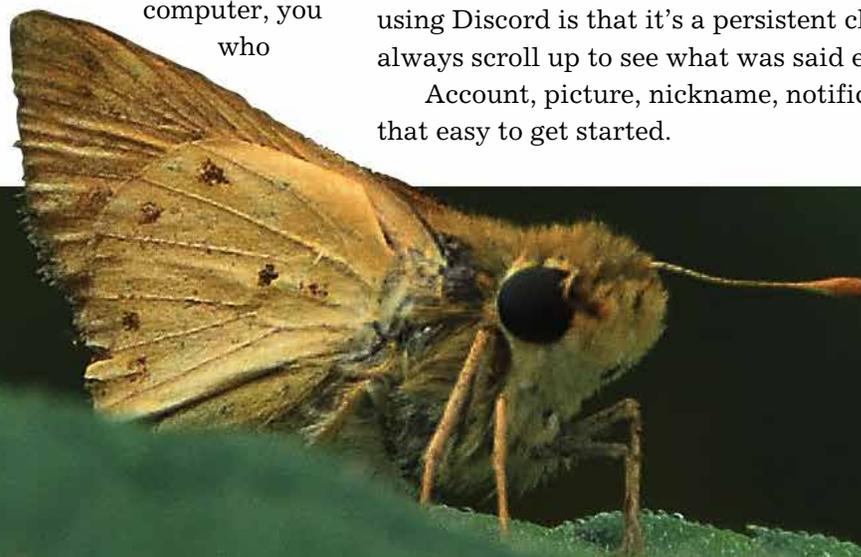


yourself. To change your Nickname, right click your name there, and choose Change Nickname. Type it in and press enter. Yes, it's that easy. In the phone app, tap the three lines at the top left to see the server channels (or swipe to the right), then tap the three dots to the right of the ITMN label at the top. There you can tap Change Nickname and let us all know who you are.

So, you've signed up, set up your profile picture and nickname, and you're ready to chat. But now you say you're worried about missing out on any chats that happen? By default, the server is set to not send you notifications (like when your phone beeps with a text) unless you are specifically tagged in a message (using the @ symbol). But not worry. You can change your personal notifications settings! If you want to get all messages anytime anyone says anything, right click ITMN banner at the top and choose Notification Settings, then select All Messages and Done. For the phone app, tap those three dots up by the ITMN label again, then tap the Notifications settings. It looks like a bell. But what if you want to get notifications of some things, like the #members-lounge or #kachina-prairie channels, but you don't want your phone dinging over everything? You can turn on the notifications for each channel as you see fit. Of course, you can always update your settings later. And since part of the advantage of using Discord is that it's a persistent chat, you can always scroll up to see what was said earlier.

Account, picture, nickname, notifications. It's that easy to get started.

Fiery Skipper



*For those summer gardeners*



*whose squash will be ripening.*

allrecipes

## Yellow Squash Casserole

★★★★★

Tender squash, gooey cheese and crunchy crackers make this a memorable side dish or a hearty main course. This is a great dish that can be made with low-fat ingredients and is still just as good!

**Prep:** 20 mins

**Cook:** 30 mins

**Total:** 50 mins

**Servings:** 10

**Yield:** 1 - 9x13 inch pan



### Ingredients

- 4 cups sliced yellow squash
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 35 buttery round crackers, crushed
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ¾ cup milk
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ground black pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons butter

### Directions

#### Step 1

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).

#### Step 2

Place squash and onion in a large skillet over medium heat. Pour in a small amount of water. Cover, and cook until squash is tender, about 5 minutes. Drain well, and place in a large bowl.

#### Step 3

In a medium bowl, mix together cracker crumbs and cheese. Stir half of the cracker mixture into the cooked squash and onions. In a small bowl, mix together eggs and milk, then add to squash mixture. Stir in ¼ cup melted butter, and season with salt and pepper. Spread into a 9x13 inch baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining cracker mixture, and dot with 2 tablespoons butter.

#### Step 4

Bake in preheated oven for 25 minutes, or until lightly browned.

**more** 

**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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