



INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

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

ISSUE 4 2021

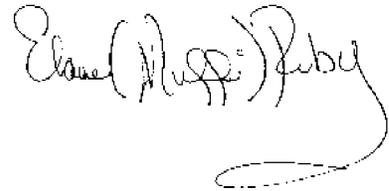
From the Desk of the **PRESIDENT**

Elaine "Muffi" Ruby

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your President for the past four years. We have had trials with the pandemic and major success's, with over 800 people wanting to tour Kachina Prairie during the 2021 Blue Bonnet Festival. We have enjoyed a beautiful fall so far and hope our winter isn't too

bad. Rena Sutphin will be a fabulous person to take the reins and run. Please support her in any way you are able.

Again, Thanks for letting me serve and I have learned so much. Muffi



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>

COVER: Tagging Monarch butterflies. The giant hand on this issue's cover belongs to me, Jim West. I was near the Trinity River in N.E. Ellis Co., tagging Monarchs as part of the Monarch Watch program that takes place each year in the fall. Join us next time.

PRESENTING THE ITMN CLASS OF 2021



The class of 2021, about to Soar

L to R back row: Tammy Cloud, Kerri Kerr, Robert Racine, Sherry Mossbarger, Lee Zollinger, Tanner Lambert, Joshua Fread, Austin Rollings, Rena Sutphin (*Training Coordinator*)

Middle row: Ginger Gonzales, Lori Crider

Front Row seated: Linda Weiss, Stephanie Romero, Annie Fuentes, Erin McKool, Linda Sanford, Stephanie Racine, Tannis Lambert, Lynn Sawyer



American Avocets, Soaring

Rhymes & Rhythms ON THE PRAIRIE



Cowboy poet David Smith and, guitar player Mike Harrison, kept the crowd entertained at our first **Rhymes & Rhythms On The Prairie** held at Kachina Prairie on the evening of November 5.



Word Rodeo

Given only 7 minutes and these 5 words: Leaf or Leaves; Arena (sand); Hawk; Wallow; and Smoke; guests and members at Rhymes and Rhythms on the Prairie created these awesome poems. Our judges, David Smith,

*The hawk wallowed in the sand
Because of the smoke made by man
Arena full of tears will fall
If we do not heed her call.*

*The hawk soars off into the sky
The bison departs his sandy wallow.
The leaves begin to burn
The smoke rises high
Renewal is nigh
The prairie flames once more*

*Once was a spectator in the arena of
sand
When I spotted a hawk rising up from a tree
My attention was divided, the show soon
forgotten
As I watch the bird rise from the leaves.
Its majesty was of divine proportions
As its freedom let it rise into the air
Its calculations were apparent in its
movement
Seeing it hunt the prairie for its fare.*

Waxahachie's Poet Lariat and Mike Harrison, guitar player, unanimously voted all 4 poems winners. All participants received a copy of "The Wildflowers of Ellis County."

*Smoke is rising high into
the leaves above the sand
A hawk is kittling high as
he soars above the wild hogs
wallowing in the arena.*



Ya'll, check out that house. Dry roof, dry feet, who's in?



By Maureen Nitkowski

An occasional vulture or hail is the usual thing found on my roof. Luckily for me the vultures prefer neighboring roofs, so I was surprised to see 5 large birds perched on the roofline and facing north in late spring.. The visitors were black-bellied whistling ducks (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*), and they were looking to the front yard in search of food. There is a story here.

My husband has been filling bird feeders in the front yard for many winters. A variety of songbirds come to feed on seeds or suet, and the spillage is consumed by ground feeders. That last category has come to include mallard ducks (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and rabbits. To satisfy the non-songbirds we invested in cracked corn which brought more mallards and the whistlers in ever growing numbers as spring became summer. The whistling ducks have been here in small numbers over the years, but this was the first year a pair raised ducklings on the neighboring pond and have been dining regularly in our yard. Indeed, it is comical to see cars stop with cell phone cameras at the ready in front of our house to photograph the ducks.

So far the record number of whistlers at a feeding is 56.

Black-bellied whistling ducks belong to the order *Anseriformes* which is waterfowl. They do have webbed feet for swimming but also possess strong claws which allow them to perch in trees or on my roof. As reflected in their scientific name they have long slender necks like swans (“cygna”) and some “autumn” coloring particularly in their rose-orange beaks and feet. Their original range was south Texas and Mexico, but that is changing. They are also described as non-migratory and nocturnal. In flight they call with a wheezy whistle which sounds more like a squeaky pet toy to me.

Although the mallards and whistlers will feed in my yard together, I suspect they tend to stay apart at that time due to their differing modes of arrival: the mallards waddle from the pond across the road (another stopped traffic event) while the whistlers fly in and land gracefully. No one can say the sliding belly flop of a mallard coming to earth is graceful, and it does require a bit of a runway, so the waddle works fine. We cannot all be graceful “swans”.



Fall Musings

By Christine Cook

When I was teaching 6th graders (you were 11 or 12) science, my ice breaker each year was to ask the students to write about their favorite season of the year and give at least 4 reasons why. After much moaning and groaning about the accompanying instructions to use complete sentences and proper punctuation, they got busy (remember looking up at the ceiling in order to make a decision?). Then I collected the papers in order of seasons beginning with spring and ending with winter. The amounts for each were counted and graphed. Well, guess which season ranked highest--duh, summer, of course, because there was no school! Is that what you would have picked back then? They did not quite understand why I had picked Fall.

Growing up in Ohio, spring was often wet and coldish, summer sweaty and no AC (as my own kids said, "back in the dark ages, Mom."). Winter was definitely cold and no dryer to refresh mittens and socks. Fall was delightful; the nerd in me was always happy for school. My sister and I were in charge of raking leaves under the silver maple in the front yard; I was maybe 7-8, and Jane was 20 months older. We would finish with a huge pile, put our old blue crib

blanket on it, get our current books, and jump on to read--Autumn heaven.

On weekends our family would picnic at Ault Park (Cincinnati) and walk the trails to see what "cool stuff" we could discover, such as berries, seed pods, box turtles, toads, and jack-in-the-pulpits. I usually went home with goodies like that in my pockets--I still do! The best was a breezy day to be out when the beautiful leaves took flight and the air smelled of piles of them being burned at the front porch curbs. I remember making a booklet of leaf rubbings with my favorite crayon colors (Prussian blue and red-orange) and learning to identify the tree names. We would collect milkweed pods and try to make angels to decorate Christmas trees. In my teenager years, it was a time of outdoor exploring with Girl Scouts, playing field hockey, freezing at football games (we would often sit inside of big black leaf bags), and having hotdogs and s'mores. Nostalgia obviously has its place in my Fall memories. We had four very definite seasons, each with its own change of clothing, its own holidays to celebrate, its own reminders of seasonal changes and cycles in nature and our responses to them.



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I've been in Texas for 54 years now, but I find that my internal clock still expects and yearns for the seasonal timing of my childhood. Fall leaf color should begin at least in early September (not 90-100 F); it should be cold on Halloween; winter should for sure be here in December (not 60+ degrees at Christmas); and no flowers should be blooming in late February/early March! I should get to wear wool sweaters because it is cold!! But at the same time, the seasons here in Ellis County, Texas have their own time to which I look

forward with pleasure.

Life is about cycles, about balance, and I think that balance changes as I go through my own cycles. I'm in the Fall of my life, retired, children grown, and grandchildren and great grands around to enjoy with delight but not daily labor. I'm lucky to be able to see the fruits of my labors and have time to explore the beauty of our world before my winter comes. Enjoy your good memories as the Earth goes round and round the sun.

Oppositeleaf Spotflower Spotted

By Charlie Grindstaff and Chris Cook

On October 28th I called Chris Cook to help me with my presentation of the Asteraceae family to the Plant Family Study Group. I needed a few stems of ragweed which she agreed to collect at Kachina Prairie. In addition to the ragweed, Chris collected another flower neither of us had seen before. At some point the right-hand side of the drive into Kachina Prairie had been mowed and with the water level in that boggy side so low, there was a large colony of these interesting and mysterious flowers. We were able to identify it as Oppositeleaf Spotflower or Creeping Spotflower, *Acmella repens*. And coincidentally, a member of the Asteraceae family...perfect timing for my presentation. Yes, it is related to sunflowers, daisies and asters.

It is a native (southeastern and south-central United States) perennial, typically growing 4 to 6 inches in height with branches spreading to 40 inches. The flower head may reach 3/4 inch across with yellow ray flowers and orange disk flowers congested in a conelike structure blooming from July to November. Leaves are up to 3 inches long, opposite (Duh!) with margins coarsely toothed. This plant prefers moist to wet soils and usually forms extensive colonies.

Many thanks to Chris for adding to our list of plants found at Kachina Prairie. Photos by Diana Melcher & Charlie Grindstaff.

Postscript: At the Nov. 6 Rhymes and Rhythms on the Prairie event at Kachina we identified another new (to us) plant – Climbing hempvine *Mikania scandens* also to the right of the driveway near the spotflower.



NATURAL reads

Reviewed by Elaine Ruby

The Nature of Oaks By Douglas W. Tallamy

By reading this book we can learn all sorts of ecological things we didn't know. Oaks go unnoticed and thus are unappreciated by most homeowners. People cut down oaks because they get tired of raking leaves. How can we be interested in or understand the ecological significance of something we know nothing about? Our lives have been usurped by the digital age, any spare moments are consumed by our phones or TV's.

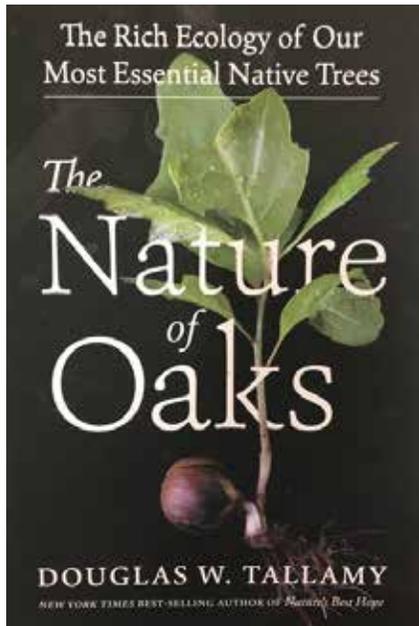
Did you know a single Blue Jay can gather and bury 4,500 acorns each fall? Acorns are critical components of the winter diet of woodpecker's, turkeys, and many ducks. Oaks are also for the most part wind-pollinated.

Wondering how Oaks allocate energy for their growth; some years it goes to growth, other years they direct energy toward reproduction.

Nothing is wasted in nature. Acorns provide housing for tiny ants and many others creatures. Acorns are a food staple for many, besides all the insects, inchworms, moths in larvae form, and caterpillars that eat the green leaves in the early fall

UNEXPLORED TERRITORY AT THE AGRILIFE EXTENSION OFFICE

Indian Trail Chapter has a library at the AgOffice (701 S. I-35E, Waxahachie) of over 200 books about all aspects of nature; but it appears we don't have lots of readers. The last entry on the sign-out sheet was in March, 2021 and the one prior to that was November, 2020. A list of the books available for check out is located in the Members section on our website (txmn.org/indiantrail/). I hope you will check out the list and a book or two!

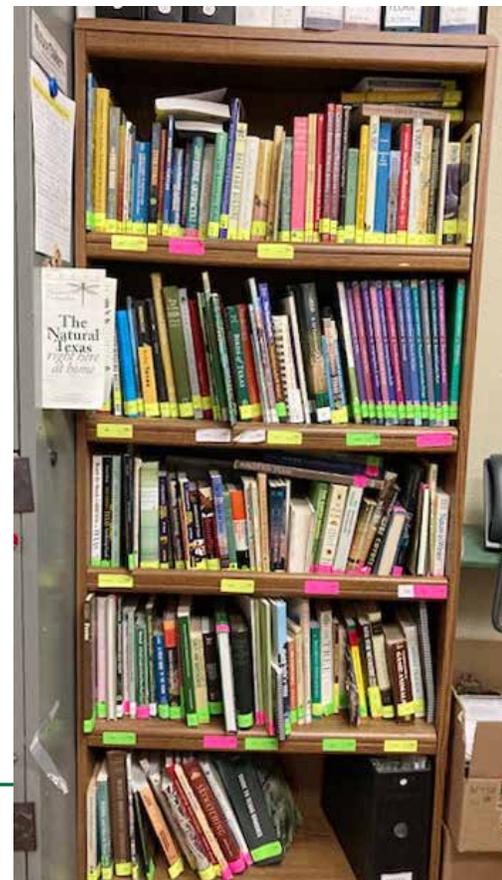


and then they stop eating and hide in the nooks and crannies of the tree's bark or stay where they are on a small branch and do absolutely nothing. They look like a stick themselves all winter long. Glycerin in their cells keeps their cells from bursting.

Oaks contribute to our ecosystems by being a help with Watershed management. By virtue of their copious leaf surface area and large root systems, oaks impede rainwater from the moment it condenses out of the clouds. Much of the water intercepted by the leafy oak canopies (up to 3000 gallons per tree annually) evaporates before it ever reaches the ground. This makes oaks one of the best tools in responsible water shed management.

Oak root systems are densely packed together, allowing more carbon to be stored; and it should come as no surprise that oaks produce some of the densest wood of all North American hardwoods. This helps scrub carbon from the atmosphere and store it safely in the soil throughout the world. The goal is to remove CO2 from the atmosphere long enough to reduce the greenhouse effect in a meaningful way.

Although oaks can live 500 - 1000 years and become ancient cornerstones of our ecosystems throughout the United states. The old giants that once provided unique niches for layers upon layers of biodiversity are largely absent from our landscapes. Our urbanization has lost our oak population and the many plants and animals that depend on them. But, there is no shortage of places in which to restore oak populations. To learn about the birds, insects, parasites, and many other parts of our natural world that depend on the mighty Oak, please read this book. *The Nature of Oaks* by Douglas Tallamy.



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

Thomas Hollingsworth

By Debbie Pierce

DP: What do you do outside of ITMN?

TH: I enjoy hiking, biking, tent camping, and hunting. My wife, Lynne and I love to explore Texas' state parks. My goal is a balanced lifestyle...which was "hit or miss" during my career with the State of Texas. I strive to tune in with Nature, renew my spiritual life, and improve my physical conditioning through walks, meditation, prayer, and outdoor activities. My degrees are in Philosophy. I read and write on topics such as Natural Law and Native Americans. I own a taxidermy business. I love observing and tracking wildlife and honing my wilderness training. I spend lots of time in the dirt on my hands and knees looking for critter sign. Time with my six grandchildren feeds my soul.

DP: How did you become interested in Texas Master Naturalists?

TH: I met other Master Naturalists from Indian Trail when doing volunteer work at Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center. I was intrigued and encouraged to find other like-minded folk. Learning is a life-time endeavor for those who seek. Joining ITMN boosts my knowledge of native species and my ability to care for the environment. There are so many knowledgeable, service-oriented people in the Indian Trail Chapter, I wanted to become part of that. Without Nature, humans have no existence. Beyond that, Nature has intrinsic worth and beauty. Helping preserve and protect the Earth is both necessary and Godly. Texas Master Naturalists allows me to share in this mission with others, and have kept my interest in the natural world.

DP: What projects do you enjoy the most?

MN: There is so much to do and so few to do it that I just try to do what is presented to me as it unfolds. This approach suits the Taoist in me. Most of my volunteer service is at Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center doing trail maintenance, habitat restoration, and various construction projects,

like the greenhouse. I recently helped lead an outdoor educational kayak event. I'm signed up to help with a night hike under moon light. Since there is no group to care for Cedar Mountain Preserve, I periodically maintain that trail and coordinate help with Cedar Hill Parks and Recreation.

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

TH: Pollution is my #1 environmental issue. I recall the old Public Service Announcement with the Native American who tears up as someone tosses trash out of the car that lands at his feet. It conveyed a message of individual and societal accountability. This type of message isn't compatible with today's world which relies less on fact and valid argument and more on ridged denial of responsibility. Therefore, I find it rewarding if I can just get a tiny bit of airtime with a hiker or an acquaintance to discuss Mother Nature and our duty to care for her. Kind truth-telling is required to deepen people's awareness of our essential bond with Nature. I believe ITMN lends credence to this message.





MR. WEST'S NEIGHBORHOOD

By Jim West

Serendipity can be a wonderful thing. In this case, it was stumbling into a gathering of Gulf Fritillaries while following a pair of Tiger Swallow-tails. The Fritillaries stayed in one small area, 16 x 16 maybe, while the swallowtails roamed in and out. I'm thinking they didn't get the memo.

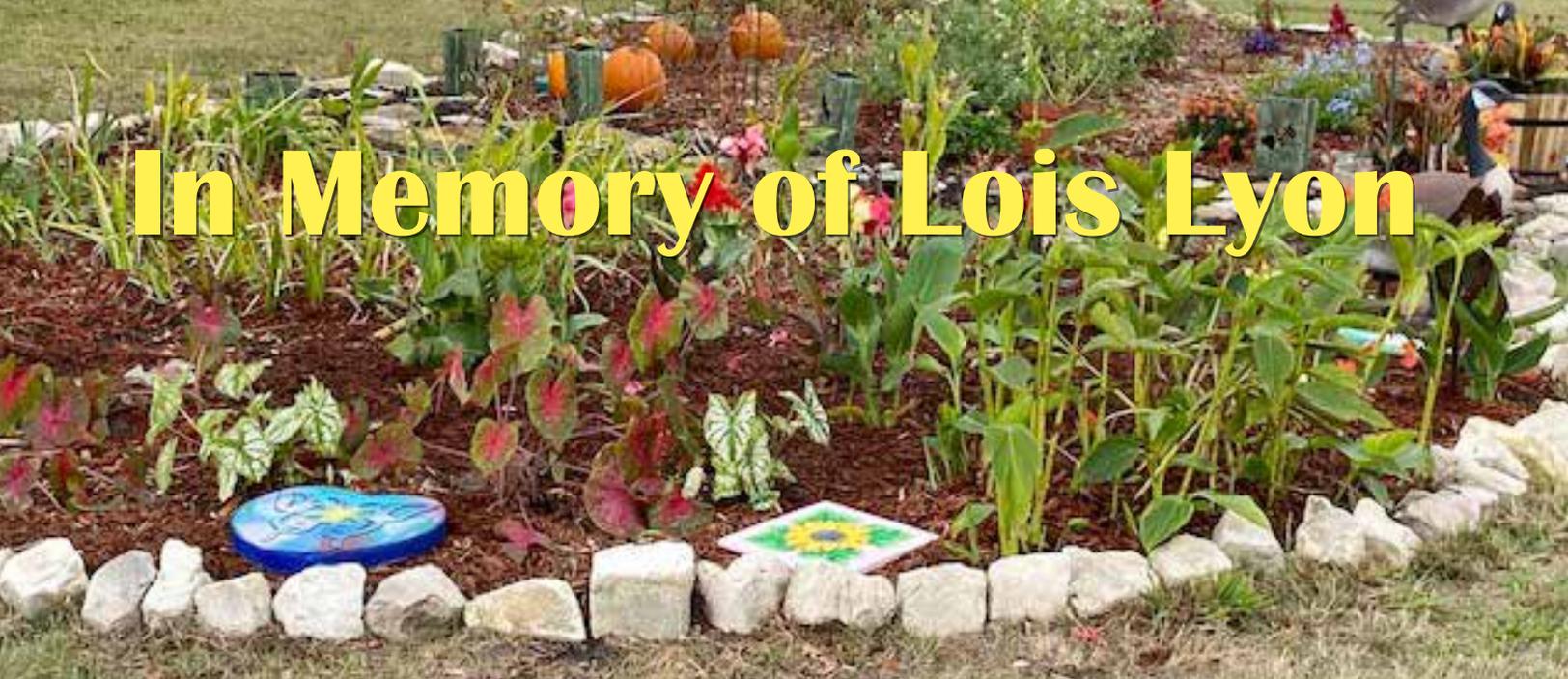
Sensing that something of importance was afoot, I pulled over to see what all of the fuss was about. It took me a couple of minutes to figure it out after spotting a fruit on the ground. A Passion Flower vine, which is their absolute favorite plant to lay their eggs on and that is what they were doing, for the most part, along with a few caterpillars of different sizes.

One thing you can't see in these photos is that what appear to be white spots on their outer wings are actually silver.

This one had just emerged from its chrysalis.



In Memory of Lois Lyon



By Larry Lyon

Her grandchildren called her Beebok. Grandson, Aaron, couldn't say "grandma" when he was little so he created the name Beebok. Lois didn't like being called traditional grandmother names but she fell in love with Beebok. It fit her perfectly since she was a lover of bees and other pollinators.

Lois Elaine Larson Lyon entered the gates of heaven far too soon for our hearts to understand on August 23, 2021 at the age of 76 due to Covid complications. From the time she was a child in Western New York, Lois passionately loved the outdoors. Her stories told of how her family grew all of their own vegetables and canned them for the winter months. She remembered riding on a horse-drawn sugar wagon into the woods to retrieve maple sap that had been dripping into buckets on the Maple trees. The friendly farmer would take this liquid gold to his little wooden sugar shack and pour the sap into large vats with wood burning ovens below them, to cook and reduce the sap into syrup. The best part for Lois and her five siblings was when the farmer dropped snow into the bubbling syrup to make maple "snow candy" for them.

Following in the footsteps of her mother, Lois Larson (passed away in August 2012), Lois exercised her love for toys when

she became an employee at Fisher Price Toys. She was a longtime employee in East Aurora, New York. In 1982, Lois and her husband L.B. moved to Texas where she continued work with Fisher Price in the World Trade Center in Dallas. In 1986 she left the company so she could devote time to raising her daughter, Tiffany. During the late 80's, 90's and early 2000's her family grew as she spent all of her "spare" time raising Tiffany, Christopher, and twins, Melina and Michele.

She was just as passionate and devoted in the loving whirlwind of life in a large family. She was actively involved in a Pre-School PTA and then with public school PTA programs. She was a substitute teacher at Ovilla Christian School for many years and served a term as PTF President. Her love for being active in her children's lives certainly left a mark on their hearts with many memories to cherish.

As the children got older Lois began to revisit her desire to be outside as she developed gardens at their home. During the children's teen years, Lois and family moved three times and in every home she left a beautiful display of flora for the new homeowners to enjoy. In 2013 the family's last move was to a little over 11-acres in Red Oak, Texas. The property had plenty of trees but not a flower in sight.



Lois's love changed that. She soon became a member of Ellis County Master Gardeners and the Indian Trail Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists through the AgriLife Office and had been actively involved since 2016. She volunteered many, many hours with both groups.

At home with hubby, L.B., she planted gardens to attract pollinators and create habitats for bees to help them populate and thrive. Through her efforts the property is now designated as a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation and the Texas Conservation Alliance. Lois's passions and interests were especially for the native and adaptive plants of Texas as well as the preservation and creation of wetlands. She was also actively involved in plant propagation, rain water harvesting and recycling.

Lois spent many of her hours at home in the garden and enjoying the wildlife. Among her favorites are the bees, butterflies, dragonflies and hummingbirds. Her other interests included quilting and taking pictures of beautiful sunsets, cloud formations, and spending as much time with her children and grandchildren as possible. She was always in awe of God's handiwork.

Her greatest love, above all else, was for God, her husband, her children and her grandchildren. Worshipping with other believers in church was a high priority for her and her whole family knew it! Her Bible is loaded with her handwritten notes in the margins from her daily reading and studying. She was fascinated with the many names of her Creator and she spent many heartfelt moments uttering His Holy Name in worship and prayer with and over her family. Her voice was a beautiful instrument through which God blessed everyone who could hear as she sang in choirs. She was active in many women's Bible study groups and an involved member in church.

Lois and L.B. had 4 children...Tiffany Lyon Greenberg (Tim), Christopher Lyon (Kristina), Melina Lyon Inmon (Scott) and Michele Lyon Lasley (Cory). She was blessed with a beautiful quiver full of grandchildren. Tiffany's children include Aliyah, Angelei, Aaron, Asher and Alex. Christopher's children include Elijah, Zayden and Chloe. Melina's children

include Haven and Heidi. Michele's children include Elias, Addison and Aydin. Lois had two children from a previous marriage. Her son, Loren (who passed away in February 2021) (Rochelle) and daughter, Sherrie Hines O'Brien (Chris) of Holland, New York. Sherrie's son, Nikkolas Pangel, was Lois's first grandson. Our Beebok loved her grandchildren with all of her heart and they dearly loved her. From grocery trips to sleepovers, she spent as much time with them as she absolutely could.

Lois is survived by her siblings, Bill Larson (Sandy), Roberta Koehler (Don), Kathy Arky, Donna Aughenbaugh and Dale Larson. She loved to talk to

people in yard sales and flea markets and it wouldn't take long before she was sharing photos of the kids and grandkids and telling stories of

their exploits. Lois also had a very generous heart. She would constantly give food, clothes, and other items to people in need. Her most recent endeavor was helping a family who had been displaced due to a fire.

Lois and L.B.'s love even stretched across the borders as they have been supporting two children in Guatemala through Compassion International for many years now.

It is impossible to sum up in a few paragraphs her spirit, passions, adventures, dreams come to life, and mostly how much she was loved by all of us. We know she is in the best place but that doesn't lessen the pain and emptiness we all feel. We can feel her in the beauty of a garden, the song of a bird, the flight of a dragonfly, bee, butterfly or hummingbird, in a colorful sunset, in the laughter of children and in the silence and stillness when nothing is said.

Save us a place at the great banquet table, Beebok. We know you will have all the seating arrangements planned when we get there. We love you beyond measure and we always will. You have left an undeniable mark on the lives and hearts of your children and grandchildren (and many others) that will remain with us forever.

A celebration of her life and legacy took place October 23, 2021, at her gardens, 710 Pierce Road, Red Oak, Texas 75154 at 11:30 AM.

*There were no strangers
in Beebok's world.*

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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