

# LOST PINES CHAPTER

Texas Master Naturalist

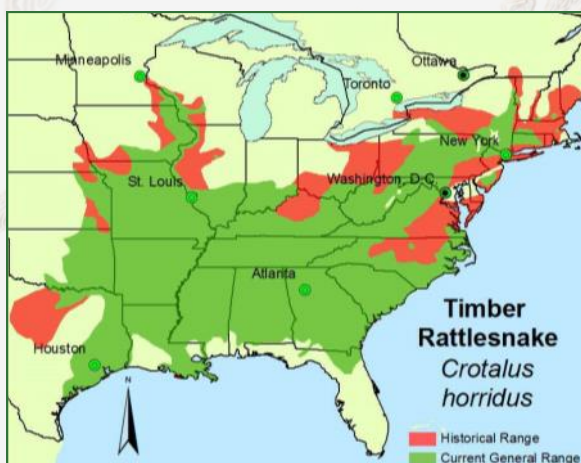


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## Magnificent, Masterful and Misunderstood by Larry Gfeller

I remember a signature moment during a chapter meeting in which a dragonfly was described devouring a hummingbird. There was this collective “ahhhh,” as the crowd expressed sadness at the obvious juxtaposition of expected roles. Such is life in the natural world. Positions in the familiar order of things can sometimes be turned around. You’re hiking the backwoods, a merciless sun stares down hard, dried weeds snap under your boots every step you take . . . then you hear that distinctive buzzing sound near your leg as you step over a dead log—SNAKE! There isn’t one among us who upon hearing such a sound doesn’t realize they’ve just been demoted to the lowly status of criminal trespasser on the rickety ladder of life.



Historic (red) and current (green) range of the timber rattlesnake

It’s difficult to feel sympathy for the snake; still, it’s us doing the trespassing, and us who are responsible for nearly exterminating timber rattlesnakes in Texas. The timber rattler is perhaps the most efficient predator on earth, yet their existence is threatened here despite their prowess. So it has been with the black bear, the mountain lion, the wolf. Ask a wildlife biologist in Texas what he is doing about it and you will hear, “We are monitoring the situation closely.” For this, hear: “We are watching them die,” for we cannot stop the spread of urbanization.

The species is extinct in Canada, Maine and Rhode Island, and nearly extinct (extirpated) in New Hampshire. It is on the “threatened” list in Texas and a few other states, but overall in the U.S. survival is not a concern to biologists. Where it has experienced problems, timber rattlesnakes have been losing their battle because of outright intentional destruction or the loss of places they need to live, hunt and hibernate.

Timber rattlers are the only protected species of venomous snake in Texas, but not often seen. The timber rattlesnake (also known as canebreak and banded rattlesnake) is one of our state’s most reclusive reptiles. East Texas is believed to be the southern boundary of this mostly northeastern pit viper (the only rattlesnake in that part of the U.S.), but boundaries are imaginary mental constructs; there have been two deaths in Bastrop County from timber rattlesnake bites in recent years, neither of which should have occurred. The truth is, few people actually die from snake bites these days, given our medical knowledge and near instant communication systems (these two fatalities had extenuating circumstances). So, what do we know about timber rattlers?

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## Misunderstood, cont.

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The eastern timber rattlesnake is one of some ten rattlesnake species/sub-species found in Texas, more than any other state except Arizona. The snake has “keeled” scales on the top of its body. Keeled means they have a ridge down the center, making them rough and ragged looking. These keels generally smooth out as they reach the belly. The function of the keels is not really known, but one thing they do provide is a less shiny surface, allowing the snake to hide more easily—possibly an evolutionary advantage. Regardless, as Bill Brooks reminds us, “If you’re close enough to be noticing keels, you’re too close.”

The timber rattler has no recognized subspecies, yet it presents a number of different looks. The back of the snake is marked with crossbands of dark brown or black on a yellowish brown or greyish background. These crossbands have irregular zig-zag patterns and may be V-shaped or M-shaped (making them nearly impossible to see in leaves). Often there is a rust-colored stripe down their back as well. Their bellies are uniform yellowish, or yellowish marked with black. Some individuals are very dark (almost black) . . . a condition known as melanism. Many timber rattlesnakes’ tails are completely black. If you are fortunate enough to hear its warning rattle, none of this matters—step back and get the hell away!



Timber rattlesnake’s keeled scales and characteristic black tail

Why are sightings relatively rare? In Texas, the timber rattler is mostly found in our pine forests. The deciduous oak motts and grasslands are the realm of its brother, the diamondback. Pregnant timber rattlers like to bask in the sun before giving birth in open rocky areas known as basking knolls. Timber rattlers have a relatively mild disposition, relying on their natural camouflage to blend into their surroundings, rather than reveal their presence. Unless surprised, it takes a great deal to provoke one into rattling or biting. Before striking, they usually perform a good deal of preliminary rattling and feinting. Moreover, in warm areas like ours, they hunt mostly at night, although they remain active during the day during spring and fall. In winter, timber rattlesnakes hibernate in dens and limestone crevices, often with copperheads, rat snakes and others.



Pregnant females cluster together in birthing rookeries in groups of six or more.

Male snakes reach sexual maturity in about 3 years, females can take up to 4. Mating season is early springtime, only once every two or three years for females (possibly another factor in their slow decline). Babies are born live (between 5 and 20 little ones, 10-17” long), but they get no parental care. They first appear with a single rattle (called a “button”) and each subsequent molting of skin adds another one. It’s a popular belief that you can tell the age of a rattlesnake by the number of rattles it has; however, free-ranging snakes may molt three to six times a year. They live, on average, about ten years. As a generalization, timber rattlesnakes that live in the southern region of their range hibernate for a shorter time, grow more quickly, reproduce at an earlier age and have shorter reproductive intervals.

These reptiles are awesome hunters! They’re a “sit-and-wait” predator, lying beside a log or downed tree waiting for their prey to pass on a common path or rodent trail . . . they can wait several days for a meal . . . then ZAP! After striking with their powerful venom, they easily track down their victim with an excellent sense of smell. They are fond of rabbits, squirrels, rats, mice, occasionally birds, other snakes, lizards and frogs. Toxicity of their venom varies widely, mostly by geographic region, with type A venom being the most deadly (found in the north and parts of the southeast).

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# Oaks Are a Mess...

by Liz Pullman

My obsession with oaks, particularly the ones that were within the area of the 2011 Bastrop wildfires, began last July when Judy Turner and I visited a property northeast of Bastrop in a severely burned area. We were surveying a yard that had unfamiliar plants (yes, some were weeds) appearing. Walking around the yard and checking out what was coming up in the barren sandy, gravelly soil we noticed sprouts from a bluejack oak (*Quercus incana*). An alert I had received from the Wildflower Center asked for help in collecting acorns from bluejacks for propagating new trees—an arboretum project. We headed over to check out the tree, knowing that it was only sprouts from a tree that had burned all the way down (and below?) ground level. But, why not check for acorns? The more we stared at the tangle of regenerating sprouts, the more we began to note the weird leaves on some of the lateral branches. The leaf shapes near the trunk were radically different from the leaf shapes out at the tips of the branches. Both Judy and I spent a good amount of time staring at these strange looking leaves. After a few e-mail exchanges, Judy went back and photographed an entire limb. A photo was sent to our botanical guru Bill Carr, who is a botanist with Acme Botanical Services, but he declined to jump in and give a definitive answer. Since our taxonomy class was coming up, Judy returned (the owner is very supportive) and this time snipped off an entire branch that she brought to class. No answers were forthcoming at our show-and-tell class session but Flo Oxley, who is Director of Plant Conservation and Education at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, opined that it might be some sort of hybridization. In any case, we now had a specimen, which we put in a plant press, dried, then shipped off to the University of Texas' Plant Resource Center hoping someone at the Herbarium could come up with a quick and easy answer. Given the substantial time gap between sending a plant and feedback, we wait.



Judy Turner took this photo of a bluejack oak branch with normal egg-shaped leaves at the trunk and lobed leaves at the tip.



A blackjack oak that grew from post-wildfire stump sprouts. Note the change in leaf shape from tip to trunk.

Meanwhile, on another property scorched by the wildfire, I noticed a small blackjack oak in fellow LPMN Larry Gfeller's yard while surveying his camphorweed invasion. The origin of the "tree" was the result of judicious pruning that lopped off all sprouts except the finest vertical one; it was now a well-shaped little tree standing 10 ft. tall. I started looking at the branches and OOPS! some of them had leaves of two very definite shapes—the wide paddle-shaped leaves toward the trunk and the definitely lobed ones at the tips of the branches. We needed an oak leaf expert. Larry suggested Tom Byram, a geneticist at Texas A&M University. I sent a query by e-mail about the extremely weird oak sprout leaves in the wildfire area. I was hoping for an answer such as "Oh sure, this is a common

occurrence" but instead he had this gem to offer: "Oaks are a mess with juvenile and mature leaves, sun leaves and shade leaves." On a more positive note, Tom also pointed out that oaks regenerate very well after being "destroyed" in harsh logging practices. With the root collar intact and pruned to one good stem, they will exhibit exceptionally rapid growth due to an extensive root system that originally supported a mature tree but is now supporting only one stem. Oak forests can regenerate rapidly without planting acorns.

(Continued on page 10)



# What's Blooming?

by Liz Pullman

The earliest blooming spring flowers will be coming along shortly, or perhaps are already showing up. Lacking an eastern deciduous forest, Texas has no tsunami of spring ephemerals, which are the showy spring flowers that take advantage of the sunlight that beams down through the leafless branches of forest canopy, warming and lighting the ground to ensure the appearance of plants that must emerge, bloom and form seed before tree leaves appear and produce shade.



Texas umbrellawort (*Tauschia texana*)

We do have early spring flowers. One of the plants I want to highlight has been recorded in Caldwell County but not in Bastrop. Texas umbrellawort (*Tauschia texana*) is a low growing member of the carrot family (*Apiaceae*) whose yellow flowers can show up in February. The leaves are compound and deeply cut (ferny looking). Scrambled eggs has showy yellow flowers (*Corydalis curvisiliqua*). These can be found at McKinney Roughs along the edge of the overflow parking area as well other places in both counties, but McKinney Roughs happens to be a great drive-up location.

A spring plant that I have yet to come across in either county, and which is frequently mistaken for a weed, is the nodding green violet (*Hybanthus verticillatus*), possibly because it is not showy and in spite of being in the violet family is not violet but rather greenish, and instead of hugging the ground, flowers are up on a stalk. Popping up along trails and roadsides are two species of *Anemones* (*Anemone berlandieri* and *A. caroliniana*), which are usually pure white but also show up in pinks and purples—a strange color for a flower in the usually yellow buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*).

A purple blooming plant known as wild heliotrope (*Phacelia congesta*) produces a coiled flower stalk that unrolls as it blooms—typical of the borage or waterleaf family. Two early blooming species from the aster family (*Asteraceae*) that have been recognizable since fall by the winter basal rosette are Lindheimer's daisy and yellow star of Texas (*Lindheimeri texana* and *Engelmannia peristena*). We have early blooming plants in lawns, on grassy roadsides, stormwater impoundments and parking lot edges that are non-natives but have been present so long that we depend on them for spring color (or even a bit of winter color). Look for cranesbill (*Erodium cicutarium*), speedwell (*Veronica persica*) and field madder (*Sherardia arvensis*).



Nodding green violet (*Hybanthus verticillatus*)

Now for your Latin 101 lesson with Judy Turner . . . Hopefully, you can recognize the names of early botanists from your training class lesson—Berlandier, Engelmann, Lindheimer, Sherard and Tausch. Their names are used for the genus or the species. Some of the other Latin names are based on what the namer thought the genus or species resembled. For example, the genus *Erodium* is from the Greek language and refers to the long beak on the fruit. *Cicutarium* refers to the resemblance of the leaves of plants in the genus *Cicuta* (poison hemlock). Genus *Hybanthus* is Greek for humpbacked flower; *verticillatus* means whorled leaves. Genus *Corydalis* comes from the flower looking like a lark's spur, while *curvisiliqua* means curved pod. Genus *Anemone* may be Hebrew meaning wind. *Caroliniana* means of or from Carolina, north or south they don't say.

Want to know more? Find a copy of "The Home Garden Self-Pronouncing Dictionary of Plant Names" edited by Ralph Bailey, published in 1948 by the American Garden Guild. Or go to the [Botanary section on Dave's Garden website](#). Too bad I didn't find his webpage first . . . ✂



# Brooks on Books

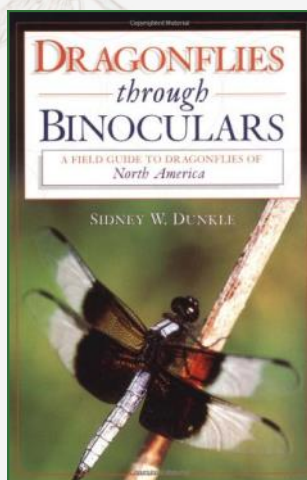
by Bill Brooks

Bird watching has been popular for centuries. (Florence Merriam Bailey published “Birds through an Opera Glass” in 1880.) Butterfly watching, however, has been popular for only decades, and it’s only since around 2000 that watching dragonflies and damselflies has become more popular. One benefit of watching butterflies and dragonflies is that prime time to watch them isn’t as early as it is to watch birds.

Occasionally I “discover” a great book long after many others have read it. Such was the case with “A Dazzle of Dragonflies” by Forrest Mitchell and James Lasswell published in 2005. This is a wonderful overview of the dragonfly family. I especially loved the section on colloquial names and the lovely detailed scanned pictures of dragonflies are outstanding.

Stokes field guides are usually well done and the “Stokes Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies” (2002) is a good one. It’s a start for people wanting to learn more about North American dragonflies. The book describes 100 of the over 300 species found in North America.

“Dragonflies through Binoculars” (2000) by Sidney Dunkle is another starter guide you may want to consider. At the time of its writing, it described all 307 species in North America. (That number has since increased.)



To dive more deeply into the subject, you can pick up the 1963 classic “Biology of Dragonflies” by Philip S. Corbet. The information is a bit dated, but you can buy used copies fairly cheaply. If you find the next two books cheaply, buy them. I own an earlier signed edition of the textbook “Dragonflies of North America” (2014) by Needham, Westfall, and May. It’s very technical, but good. Just how many drawings of caudal appendages can you take? Phillip S. Corbet’s “Dragonflies: Behavior and Ecology of Odonata” (1999) was the standard textbook before the Needham book came out and it’s still very informative.

Dennis Paulson’s books: “Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West” (2009) and “Dragonflies and Damselflies of the East” (2012) are very popular and come close to describing almost all the dragonflies at a reasonable price. Both are Princeton Field Guides. The guide covering the west (and Texas) describes 348 species. The guide to the east describes 336 species.

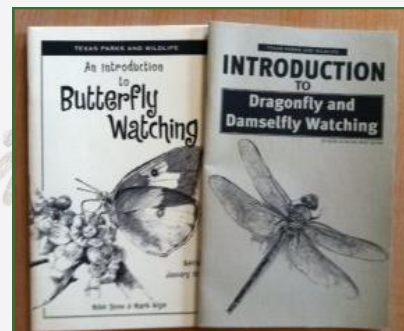
John C. Abbott, the director of the Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve in west Austin, wrote my favorite guide for our area. His “Dragonflies and Damselflies of Texas and the South Central United States” was published in 2005. He subsequently split that book into two Texas Natural History Guides. “Damselflies of Texas” was published in 2011 and the “Dragonflies of Texas” was just released in February.

I cannot leave out the 2003 book “Insects of the Texas Lost Pines” by Stephen Taber and my friend Scott Fleenor. They describe 23 species of dragonflies and damselflies commonly found in the Lost Pines.

For kids and beginners Texas Parks and Wildlife has published a pamphlet, “Introduction to Dragonfly and Damselfly Watching” by Mark Klym and Mike Quinn. This 24-page guide has several pages for you to record field notes.

For more information on dragonflies and damselflies see Odonata Central, the website of the [Dragonfly Society of the Americas](http://www.dragonfly.org).

Enjoy and keep on reading!





# Meet Caroline Boyd

## by Larry Gfeller

"I was totin' my pack along the dusty Winnemucca road, when along came a semi with a high and canvas-covered load" . . . flashbacks of the Man in Black—Johnny Cash—guitar canted high behind his back, belting out the words to "I've Been Everywhere, Man." This was my mental image when Caroline Boyd described all her occupations: janitor, postal clerk, bartender, police dispatcher, dental assistant, probation officer, freight and inventory worker for Home Depot, deputy sheriff, and child protective service worker—yes, she's been everything, man!

Oh, and those are some of the formal positions she's held. On her own time she's been one of those harried band mothers as well as a Bastrop Honey Bear mom—you know, the local high school girls drill team? Believe me, it's not easy being a Honey Bear mom.

First, there's the house mother aspect of being a chaperone—keeping a protective eye out for elevated hormones during football games and other performances. Then there's life on the endless road—logging mile after mile in one of those distinctive yellow dog buses, stuffed with loud and giggly teenage girls. There's the obligatory making of cotton candy, selling of concessions and supporting the squad in numerous other ways. Wusses need not apply.

She's had many other informal jobs, too. Caroline has cooked for her family, cooked for the school kids, cooked for her church—she's cooked for just about everyone at one time or another. Now her son is attending culinary school and will cook for her. Can't get much better than that! Caroline grew up in a family that loved parties and food. It was only natural then that Caroline was the Hospitality Chair for our chapter—now named Food & Fun—for two years. You see, she loves feeding people and sees it as a great way to meet people.

Meeting people is a recurring theme with Caroline . . . after giving her all to feeding the chapter, she left the kitchen behind to join our team of interpretative hike leaders. During many a sultry morning, unrelieved by breeze or cloud cover, she has provoked the public to not just look at the aftermath of the fires at Bastrop State Park, but to understand them . . . why they occurred, why they were inevitable and why fire and pine forests need each other. A former Girl Scout leader, she has made a special effort to put on hikes for local Girl Scouts—even to the point of learning new routes in new parks with customized themes to enhance group learning objectives. This year Caroline focuses her time on presenting the ecosystem at Buescher State Park. Her schedule is reduced to make room for pursuit of a Masters in Criminal Justice degree from the University of Cincinnati.

Caroline was born in San Antonio but has bounced back and forth between central and west Texas ever since. The lure of the Trans-Pecos is strong, with the highway spread out like a black whip cracking on into the empty distance. Caroline graduated from Sul Ross State University in Alpine, with two degrees: Range Animal Science (with a minor in biology) and Criminal Justice. But it almost didn't happen. She credits her botany professor, the famed environmental innovator Barton Warnock, with persuading her to stay in school and graduate, after sitting down with her several times. An unforgettable character in her life, Dr. Warnock made a huge impact on the world of environmental conservation as well. Outside Lajitas, Texas lies a 2.5 acre desert landscape garden—the Barton Warnock Environmental Educational Center—named in his honor (a must see for naturalists traveling the Big Bend area). A little encouragement can make all the difference with curious young minds. Caroline returned the favor to later quietly urge her own daughter through college, who is today a successful teacher—it's one of her proudest accomplishments.



Caroline with son Joseph and daughter Shelby. That's the son-in-law "photo bombing" on this portrait.

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# Caroline, cont.

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The epitome of “oxymoron” is the concept of a compassionate dentist, yet this was Caroline’s father. He liked almost everyone he met and rarely missed an opportunity to strike up a conversation—one of the reasons Caroline is quiet. Her mother was the dutiful wife of that era, filling the home with organization and order. She was devoted to her husband and family and ran a tight and efficient household. She was an excellent seamstress. Caroline has her mother’s 1945 sewing machine and admires that it still works better than her own modern one. There was no sitting around the Boyd house; her parents insisted on kids playing outside until dark each day.

What drives a woman like Caroline? Well, that’s not easy to explain. A strong sense of honesty, underpinned by solid ethics, with service to others—says it about as simply as possible. A Sunday school teacher for 20+ years, Caroline enjoys helping others become the best they are capable of—in their work, with their families and with others. From her experience in the criminal justice system, Caroline knows that tomorrow is ours to claim. She has witnessed both sides of human behavior and examines herself critically each day as she looks in the mirror. “Sometimes people need a hand and sometimes they need someone to speak for them,” she says.



Photograph of Buescher State Park taken by Caroline while out on a hike

For Caroline, enjoying life means being outdoors. She describes herself as “a fairly crazy woman who wants to see and do everything.” Aside from her parents’ active lifestyle, she suspects this was a gift from her socialite grandmother who owned a fishing cabin in Seguin, a place of fond memories and experimentation for her. She grew up spending weekends at the lake—swimming, boating, fishing, exploring; often sitting up listening to the night sounds until the last liquid smear of light in the west was gone. Experiences . . . not the glossy nail-biting kind but rather the last-a-lifetime kind. Her grandfather came from a long line of farmers and was an accomplished gardener. Legacies are left through people . . . Caroline is wicked fast at correctly identifying native plants.

Today, Caroline enjoys hiking almost anywhere—McKinney Roughs is one of her favorites because of the solitude and the Colorado River—but has close ties with the Big Bend area because of its unforgiving wildness. “It’s the sort of place you either love, or can’t stand,” she says. “I love it!” Water continues to play an important role in Caroline’s life. Paddling the waterways, kayaking, fishing and swimming, are all pastimes that continue to delight; leftovers from her childhood. Caroline revels in all things natural: plants, animals, water, clouds—the whole package. Special fulfillment comes from photography; she

likes to capture the landscapes, sunsets and textures around her, often snapping images while leading hikes. Lead by example.

A graduate of the 2010 LPMN class, Caroline, aflame with curiosity, enjoyed the training classes—“even if something was not my cup of tea (e.g., snakes). I have been all over the place with my activities and enjoy doing different things,” she says. Now she’s interested in learning new (old) things, particularly historical topics. Although she has over 250 hours of volunteer service, being a member of LPMN to Caroline is about a lot more than “collecting pins.” She’s into learning/helping, getting kids outdoors and involved in nature (and away from those damned video games!), telling others about the great outdoors, and helping people appreciate nature’s munificence. What you give you never will forget; what you get you never will remember. To newcomers she recommends finding something you enjoy and concentrating on that until you figure it out for yourself. It will happen.

[\(Continued on page 12\)](#)



# The Maniac Mulch Mutiny or *We Don't Need No Stinkin' Tractor!*

by Cat May

The Maniacs were recently assigned the task of raking mulch at Bastrop State Park. A menial task, but the Maniacs are well known for their willingness to tackle any task, small to large—this was definitely small in terms of expertise, but large in quantity of mulch to be moved. A tractor was supposed to arrive to help with relocating large amounts of mulch, while the Maniacs were to fine tune the spreading. The tractor, however, was a no-show, so after approximately an hour of boring mulch raking, which was an uphill battle without mechanical help, the Maniacs mutinied.

There were boulders to be moved at the Lost Pines Nature Trails on the Colorado River and no one had come forward with a tractor to do that job either, so, the gauntlet was dropped and the Maniacs decided to pick it up. Moving boulders was far more fun than raking mulch! Arriving at the Colorado River, the consensus was, “We can do this! We can move these boulders!”

One of the major problems at the Lost Pines Nature Trails is the abuse of the wetlands by “yahoos” ripping up the area with off road vehicles on the beach and in the mud after rain storms. Moving boulders, which were already in the area, to block access to the sensitive wetlands seemed to be an immediate fix. However, getting the equipment to do the job is not always easy.



Maniacs Frank May, Nick Nichols, Audrey Ambrose, Beverly Kithcart, Cat May, Jim Estes, Dave Hill, Carroll Moore, and Larry Gfeller



Any ideas on how to get a chain around this thing?

Enter the Maniacs—a group who is rapidly becoming a legend in their own time for being tenacious—some folks call it stubborn—ingenious, and totally effective when they set their minds to a task! Don’t tell the Maniacs they can’t do something ‘cuz they’ll go out and do it!

Arriving with chains, ropes, a pry bar, a bunch of pickup trucks, and a determined attitude, they started moving boulders. The challenge was new with each rock—its size, position relative to where it was needed, how deep it was buried in the ground, and how many trees the pickup had to dodge or wedge between to pull it from point A to point B. All part of the fun.

An hour and a half later, all of the easily accessible boulders and most of the not so accessible ones had been repositioned to deter vehicular access to the picnic and beach areas. There are a few boulders still available for use, although located in difficult places, and one or two areas still vulnerable, but that will be for another day of renewed energy!

That afternoon, Dave Hill wrote in an email, “No need of your tractor, Maniacs have done it again. Is there nothing that can stop these people?!? What’s next, we all have capes and fly?”

The Bridge Maniacs are proof that being retired doesn’t mean sitting in front of a television wondering how to spend the day. ✨



# Go FISH! 2015

by Bill Brooks

Do you like earning volunteer hours outside? Do you like helping our Lost Pines State Parks? Do you enjoy helping our community and kids find an appreciation of our wildlife resources?

If you answered yes to any of those questions you might want to come out and help kids of all ages learn how to fish. This is the 11th year of a TPWD program held at Bastrop and Buescher state parks. All programs are from 8 am until 12:30 pm on Saturdays. Set up and training is from 8 to 9. You do not need to know how to fish—we will train you. After participants check in at the park at 9am, they make their way through 5 learning stations: casting, habitat, safety, rules, and regulations. Kids get little prizes at every station. When they are done they get a diploma and a fish pin. They then get to fish. TPWD supplies rods, reels, and bait. At noon we have a raffle for the kids. At the end of the event participants go through a check-out station and we're wrapped up by 12:30.



This is a completely free program for the public, with the only cost being the park entrance fee. Volunteers, however, get in the park free.

If you are unsure if you would like to do this, please ask around. Many LPMNs help with this program. In fact, I couldn't do it without my LPMN friends. There really isn't a more fun way to make 4.5 hours of volunteer credit.

Here are the program dates and locations for 2015:

- March 14 - Bastrop State Park
- March 21 - Buescher State Park
- June 13 - Bastrop
- June 20 - Buescher
- July 11 - Bastrop
- July 18 - Buescher

To volunteer or for more information please contact Bill Brooks 512-581-0377 or via email at [b.brooks@utexas.edu](mailto:b.brooks@utexas.edu).

## Lost Pines Master Naturalist Monthly Business Meetings

The monthly business meeting, which occurs on the third Monday of each month, is an opportunity to hear first hand about volunteer and advanced training opportunities. The chapter's project leaders update members on their work and recruit volunteers if needed. In addition, chapter administration issues are discussed: brief committee reports, financial decisions, and news from our state organizers. Stay tuned to Meetup.com to learn more about upcoming meetings. *One hour volunteer time is awarded for attendance at qualifying business meetings.*



# Oaks, cont.

(Continued from page 3)

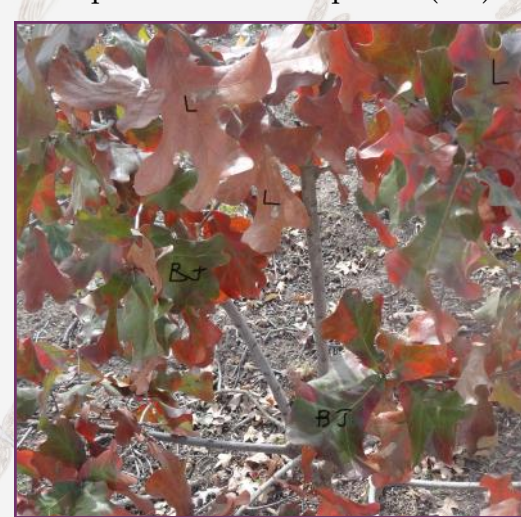
Obviously more research was needed. I requested help from the plant interest group in our TMN chapter and several responses appeared in my e-mail. Judy Turner and I spent one Sunday afternoon looking around her severely burned 6 acres and spotted many clumps of root sprouts, all of which seemed to have come from blackjack oaks, many with strange leaf shapes. Two oak leaf shapes on one limb is not rare.

Initially an online search that specifically targeted this “two-shapes-of-leaves-on-the-same-branch” came up with zilch, but I came across many articles on oak regeneration in hardwood forests that reiterated Tom’s information—as long as the root collar remained intact at ground level, there is rapid regeneration. Most references referred to forests that were clearcut and the fires mentioned were prescribed burns, not wildfires. Admittedly, my online search through scientific journals was hampered by the requirement of access by subscribers only.

Next were books . . . This search resulted in only two botanical manuals mentioning strange leaf shapes. In Gray’s Manual of Botany, I stumbled across a comment under post oak (*Quercus stellata*) leaf description “leaves on sprouts (are) often unlobed and suggest the outline of Blackjack Oak (*Quercus*



Jim Estes took this photo of two blackjack oak leaves. The one on the left is from a branch tip, and the other is paddle-shaped, which is the “normal” shape for a blackjack oak leaf.



Blackjack oak in fall colors. Kathy McAlleese labeled the leaves: BJ = normal leaves and L = lobed leaves.

*marilandica*) leaves.” Adding to the confusion? The consensus in literature leads me to discount hybridization since post oaks are in the white oak family while blackjacks are in the red oak family and oaks are not known to hybridize across these two major red/white lines. In a second reference book, Henry A. Gleason made a comment in his introduction to oaks: “In general, the characters which separate the species of *Quercus* are subject to much variation, especially those pertaining to the leaf. Sun leaves and shade leaves of the same tree may differ and leaves of rapidly growing sprouts are notoriously aberrant. Satisfactory identification requires fully grown acorns and normal mature foliage leaves.” Could we be looking at parent post oaks with blackjack-looking leaves or vice versa? If Asa Gray commented about these leaves in the mid-1800s in the original “A Manual of the Botany of the Northern United States,” has this been general knowledge all these years?

Revisiting the wildfire area this year to see how the leaves are “shaping up” may be a good investment of time. There may be other clues to species identification, such as bark patterns and possible acorns. One definite conclusion, whether clearcuts or severe wildfires, rapid regeneration from the root collar occurs. Leaf shapes? Why two shapes on one limb? Wild theories but no conclusions: Reversion to ancestral tree species (Yggdrasil)? Evolutionary leap? Injury at the molecular level? More likely it is simple sunstroke! Oaks are a mess . . .

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THANKS to LPMNers Jim Estes, Larry Gfeller, Kathy McAlleese, Judy Turner and overlooked people who talked with me on the subject of oaks.



# A Message from Julia Akin, LPMN President

The future of our chapter is dependent on regularly bringing in new, motivated members. That said, our future is all but assured with the start of our 2015 training class. What a wonderful group of people. Training kicked off on February 2nd with twenty-six students whose professional backgrounds include education, healthcare, ranching, veterinary medicine, accounting and the ministry. AND, speaking of our future, it includes two students who are 19 and 20 years old! The collective energy and motivation among this group is palpable every time I'm with them.

Monday evening, February 16th, was our first joint chapter meeting and training class. Sixty-five chapter members and students were on hand to hear Val Bugh, a local naturalist specializing in arthropods of the Austin area, talk about butterflies and moths. What an engaging, entertaining speaker. I am very eager to ask Val to present the entomology curriculum topic to the 2016 training class.



Lost Pines Master Naturalist trainees, Class of 2015

Also on hand at the chapter meeting was Mick Haven, Park Interpreter and Volunteer Coordinator for Bastrop and Buescher state parks, who presented our chapter with a Stars in Our Parks award for the second year in a row. Jim Estes and Larry Gfeller were presented the award for their work in organizing the Bridge Maniacs (Jim) and park interpretive hikes (Larry). Unfortunately, Gary Buckwalter is still recovering from his automobile accident and was not on hand to accept the

award for his work with the Maniacs. Our chapter was the only Texas Master Naturalist chapter in the state to be recognized with this award!!! State park employees nominate individuals and teams to be recognized for their contributions. A panel of judges reviews the nominations and votes on them based on how well the group or individual meets the criteria for each category. Congratulations to everyone who contributed to the chapter's work at the local state parks!

2015 is shaping up to be a very productive year. If you're bored, you're not paying attention! ✨




Larry Gfeller (left) and Jim Estes (right) accept the Stars in Our Parks award from Texas State Parks' Mick Haven



# Caroline, cont.

(Continued from page 7)

Under the surface of this façade of reserve lies not only a passion for life, but also a keen sense of humor . . . when I asked Caroline what she thought the greatest misconception people held about her was, she responded, “I don’t know, what do you hear about me?” I had not only found a naturalist, I’d found a comedienne. Looking to the future, there are two goals: meaningful and fulfilling employment followed by a retirement of travel. Both of these, Caroline believes, require a pot of gold. So the chase is on. She describes herself currently as being a “bum,” much of her time dedicated to reading and writing in pursuit of her third degree. It’s the quiet ones you gotta watch. It’s not our abilities that show us who we are, but our choices. Some bum, huh? 



## Newsletter Deadline

Submission deadline for the next issue is April 17, 2015. We welcome relevant contributions, photos, announcements, or other material relating to the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program, particularly those pertaining to our local area. Submissions may be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling, and space requirements. Please send information to the editor at [Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com](mailto:Roxanne.M.Hernandez@gmail.com).

## Stay connected!

The Lost Pines Master Naturalists use Meetup.com to stay current on volunteer and advanced training activities. So, take a few minutes to sign up and set your notifications to receive alerts (under Account, then Email and Notifications).

Visit <http://www.meetup.com/>, sign up, and you’ll be on your way to knowing all that the Lost Pines Chapter has to offer.

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# Snippets

## WIDE-RANGING DRAGONFLY

Contributed by Bill Brooks

The Wandering Glider (*Pantala flavescens*) is the most wide-ranging dragonfly, with a range that circumnavigates the globe. It was the first dragonfly species to populate Bikini Atoll after the nuclear tests.



## THAT'S A LONG PROBOSCIS!

Contributed by Bill Brooks

After Charles Darwin received a package of orchid specimens in 1862 he predicted, now famously, in his paper "The Various Contrivances by Which Orchids are Fertilized by Insects" that there were moths with proboscides between 10 and 11 inches long. He was proven correct some forty years later when a subspecies of the African hawk moth (*Xanthopan morgani praedicta*) was found in Madagascar ([Wings magazine, Fall 2014](#)).

## POLLINATING MAMMALS

Contributed by Bill Brooks

Two non-flying mammals are known to pollinate plants—sugar-gliders of Australia and lemurs on Madagascar. The lemurs, weighing in at over 5 pounds, are thought to be the heaviest pollinators in the world ([Wings magazine, Fall 2014](#)).



## THE COLOR OF BLOOD

Contributed by Bill Brooks

Have you ever noticed that the blood of insects smashed against your windshield is green? That is because copper helps insects move oxygen around their body. Mammals' blood is red because it's iron that moves the oxygen.

## INVASIVE ANTS, INVASIVE PLANTS

Contributed by Bill Brooks

A study done in Ontario shows invasive fire ants help spread invasive non-native plant species. The study compared seed preference and distribution between native woodland ants and three species of native wildflower seeds with invasive European fire ants and one invasive wildflower species. Findings showed the fire ant selected the non-native seeds. [Read more at Science World Report.](#)



## IN HONOR OF GROUNDHOG DAY...

Contributed by Bill Brooks

What is the difference between a groundhog and a woodchuck? Nothing. They are also called whistle-pigs.



# Misunderstood, cont.

(Continued from page 2)

As much as many folks fear rattlesnakes, not everything out there does. The snake is lunch to a number of others who hunt the wild spaces. Coyotes, bobcats, skunks, foxes, hawks and owls all have been known to feast on timber rattlers. Still, these snakes are an important part of the food web, limiting rodent populations while also serving as an important food source for their own predators.

There are almost as many dangerous myths about treating snakebite as there are about snakes themselves. Let's say you're on a daytime hike and your buddy gets bitten. What do you do?

Regain your calm (remember, most folks do NOT die from snakebite); try to identify the snake and immediately tend to your buddy. If the snake hangs around, drag your friend a safe distance away and remove restrictive clothing/jewelry. Keep your buddy calm and as still as possible. Don't move the bitten area; if it's a limb, keep it level with or below the heart, treat the wound with a loose fitting bandage and call for medical assistance. Elevate the victim's feet and turn them on their side if they vomit. Breathing stopped? Administer CPR. Keep talking . . . let him know you called for help . . . keep him informed of what's going on during the rescue as you learn it.

It's almost more important to know what not to do. Forget the movies. DO NOT make any incisions or attempt to suck out the venom! Do not use ice, coffee, alcohol or other drugs to sooth—these things will have the opposite effect you seek. Don't use a tourniquet, it only increases necropsy around the bite—it's better to let the venom dilute in all the victim's blood. Pay attention to your buddy. If he's too cold, cover him up. If he's too hot, give him some air and water. Keep talking.

We almost never see our existence as interconnected, especially when it comes to species we consider threats instead of co-participants. As the number of timber rattlers continues to decline, some may say, "Good riddance," but the fact is, this is a response born from ignorance . . . as the rich diversity of wildlife on our planet is poisoned, starved or pushed out of our lives, we upset the very balance needed for our own long-term survival. We've discussed how you save your buddy. How do you save this serpent? Stop killing these reptiles just because they're snakes! When found in the wild, leave them alone. Only humans are capable of genocide. Educate others; promote public nature preserves, wild spaces and protected wilderness areas. They need habitat and there's damned little left in Texas. As naturalists, our charge is to inform others . . . in our society, all actions seem to be about winners and losers. That needs to change . . . or someday soon we'll all be losers.



A rattlesnake tail is made of the same material as our fingernails—keratin.

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The Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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