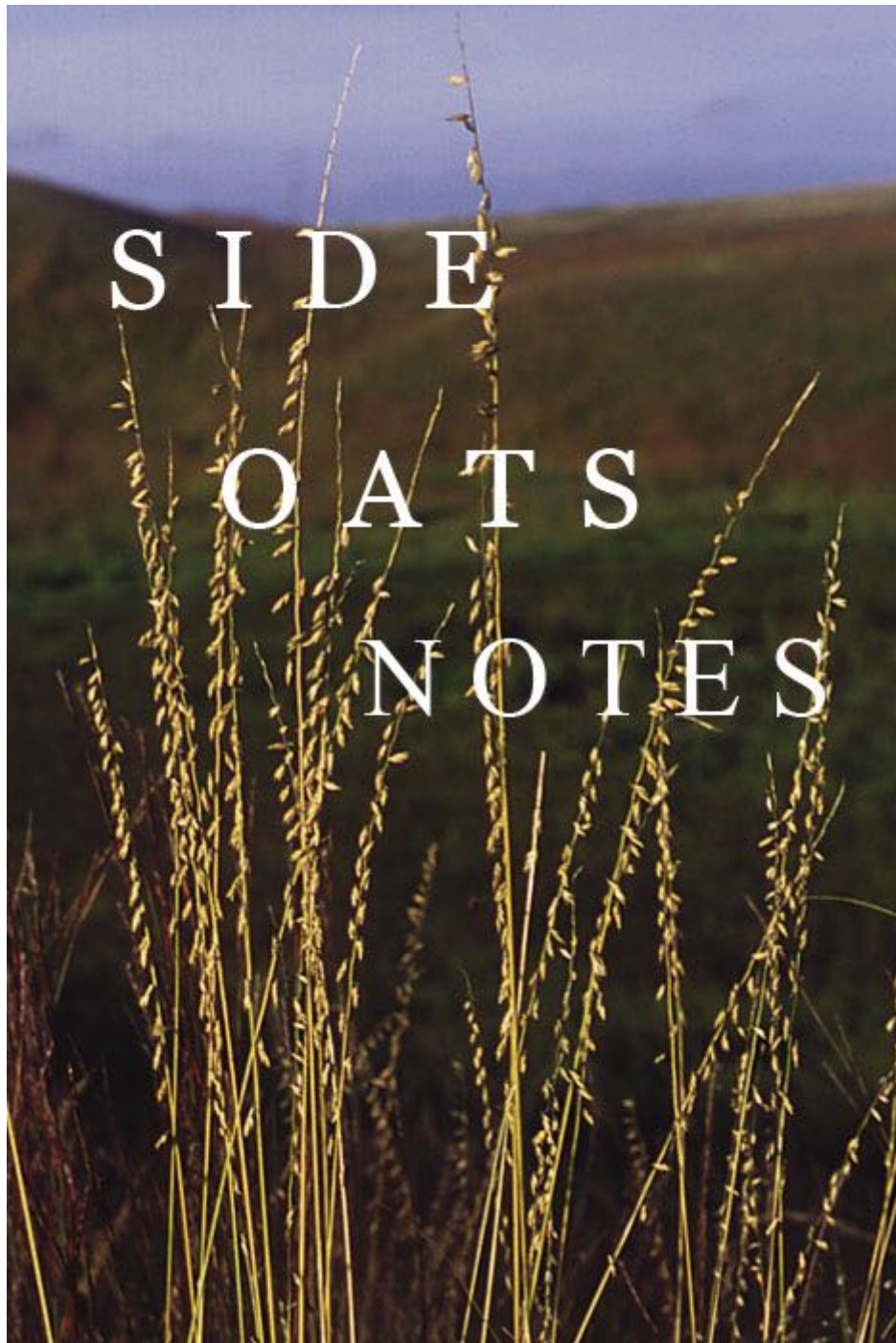


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SIDE OATS NOTES

Spring 2020



A Newsletter for the Prairie Oaks Master Naturalist Chapter

OPENING NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings to all of our Prairie Oaks Chapter members and all of you wonderful friends of the Texas Master Naturalist Program!

This is a strange time. On one hand, people are getting outside and enjoying the outdoors—some much more than usual. On the other hand, we are not allowed (for good reason) to gather together as a chapter to enjoy nature as a group.

At this time, all face to face volunteer and advanced training opportunities for the Prairie Oaks Chapter are postponed until April 10th. This means that we will not be promoting any in-person opportunities on specific dates and times, in an effort to ensure social distancing of our members. However, this does not mean that you need to stop volunteering or learning!

You are welcome to volunteer individually in places where you can do so while social distancing and adhering to local laws and ordinances. The Bosque River Nature Center garden is a great example, but again, we do not encourage groups volunteering there at the same time.

We will be sharing online opportunities for you to receive Advanced training so you can keep growing your knowledge. (Ideas and resources are welcome!)

The board is already working on plans for an online chapter meeting in case we are unable to meet in person in April.

Sadly, our new training class is also highly impacted by the current situation. Marsha is hard at work getting the coarse materials online for our Tarleton students. After much thought and discussion, the decision was made to postpone the rest of the training class for our community members. We hope that this ensures a thorough hands-on experience for them when we can resume, likely in the fall.

It is my hope that we can find ways to keep in touch, grow our knowledge, enjoy nature, and serve our communities- all while taking precautions to keep ourselves and our communities safe.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns you may have.

Gratefully,
Karen Aho

PrairieOaksMasterNaturalist@gmail.com

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PRAIRIE OAKS

C H A P T E R



CALENDAR

NOTE: Tarleton will be on extended spring break March 16-20 with classes resuming online on March 23. All Prairie Oaks Chapter meetings and outreach events are cancelled from March 11 to March 23. All calendar and volunteer activities will be subject to change to observe then current and appropriate public health and safety guidelines.

March 19th: 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p "Marvelous Mosquitos", Dr. David Kattes, Tarleton State University, Texas A&M Agrilife Research and Extension Center, 1229 N. US Highway 281, Stephenville, TX. **CANCELLED**

April 16th: 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p "Monitoring Wildlife Communities within Riparian Areas", (Kathryn Burton, Dr. Heather Mathewson and Dr. Darrell Murray), presented by Kathryn Burton, Graduate Assistant, Department of Wildlife, Sustainability & Ecosystem Science, Tarleton State University. Texas A&M Research and Extension Center, 1229 N. US Highway 281, Stephenville, TX.

May 7th: POTXMN Board Meeting, 6:00p, Conference Room, Texas A&M Agrilife Research and Extension Center, 1229 N. US Highway 281, Stephenville, TX.

May 21st: 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p "Exploring Citizen Science, Dr. Kelly Albus, Advanced Environmental Research Institute, University of North Texas. Texas A&M Research and Extension Center, 1229 N. US Highway 281, Stephenville, TX.

June 18th: 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p "Oak Wilt", Rachel McGregor, Texas A&M Forest Service.

October 15-18, 2020: Texas Master Naturalist Annual State Meeting in Houston, TX.

Latest on Palo Pinto Mountain State Park



At a meeting of the Palo Pinto Mountain State Park Partners on January 22, 2020 members were given an overview of what the future might hold for the park.

In June 2020 contracts will be let for clearing for utilities and road construction. TXDOT will construct the roads. Access to the park will be limited during the infrastructure construction phase. Construction of buildings will start in 2021. Eventually the park will have 30 water/electric campsites, 9-10 equestrian sites at the corral, a pavilion, a conference room, an interpretive center, a boat ramp and 18-20 miles of trails. The lake will be stocked with channel catfish. An old cabin in the interior of the park will eventually be refurbished for hike-in overnight camping. The target is to open the park in 2023 to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the state park system.

In an exciting development, the park grew by 450 acres recently with the acquisition of an adjoining property.

Be sure to watch for activities at the park. They hope to have trail rides and star parties and possibly a 5k/10k/half marathon/marathon/ultra marathon in May.

One way you could help this local gem of a park would be to become a member of the Palo Pinto Mountain State Park Partners. The purpose of the PPMSP is to help supplement the funds and support provided by the State — to provide small items and services that would otherwise be unavailable, e.g. lawnmower, clippers, etc.

Individuals can join for \$10; families for \$20 or you can make a donation of any size. The address is:

State Park Partners
P.O. Box 201
Strawn, TX 76475

Direct any questions to PaloPintosppartners@gmail.com.

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Build hours at your convenience and increase your knowledge of native Texas plants. The pollinator garden at the Bosque River Nature Center is divided into plots. You can have your own plot to be maintained according to your schedule. Mentoring is available. Contact Peggy Tolboom at 254-445-3436 or equest@dairysolutionsinc.com to sign up.

Watch your inbox for specific information about volunteering. **However, remember All calendar and volunteer activities will be subject to change to observe then current and appropriate public health and safety guidelines.**

April 18th: First Annual Wild Game Dinner, Tarleton State University.

VOLUNTEERING

On February 27, 2020, a hardy group of POTXMN members worked at the Bosque River Nature Center pollinator garden weeding and mulching the garden.



Birdwalk on the Brazos River

Learn about our native birds and get POTXMN credit hours. Leaders Bob and Ann Wood get volunteer hours and participants get AT hours. Selective Saturday mornings throughout the year. Watch for notices in your mailbox or above in Volunteer Opportunities



Front (L to R): Barbara Salter, Mica Baize, Ann Wood
Back (L to R) Michele Cathey, Colton Kennelly

A leisurely walk on a beautiful day (2/8/2020) and 30 species identified.

A Natural History Demo to Dye For

What do British Redcoats, Roman Catholic Cardinals and the Aztec monarch Montezuma have in common?

Their brilliant red (carmine) garments were colored with dye made from cochineal scale insects from central Mexico.

By the 14th century the Aztecs and Incas both had agricultural systems based upon cultivating the cochineal (*Dactylopius coccus*). In 16th century Europe the best red colorings were made from a pest of oak trees called kermes. Its use could be traced back to Neolithic cave paintings, the Dead Sea Scrolls and even Egyptian mummies. When Cortez invaded Mexico in 1518 he was amazed to find Montezuma and other Aztec nobles dressed in robes dyed a vivid, brilliant red, well beyond anything that could be produced by kermes. (In fact, cochineal proved to have 10 to 12 times the dyeing properties of kermes in both brilliance and fastness.) By 1600 cochineal was second only to silver as the most valuable import to Europe from Mexico.

Cochineal produces an intense color that sets firmly. It works better on wool and other protein-based animal fibers including silk than on plant-based materials such as cotton. It is one of the few water-soluble dyes to resist degradation (fading) over time.

Trade in cochineal remained brisk until it was virtually wiped out in the 1870's by the development of synthetic pigments and dyes made from coal tar. These cheaper substitutes were a product of the industrial age and not as labor intensive as the production of cochineal coloring, and their introduction disrupted a major aspect of international trade and caused a substantial crisis in the Spanish financial markets.

Cochineal is currently the only natural red food coloring authorized by the FDA. It is still used in food (including fruit juices, candies, gelatins, maraschino cherries, yogurt and pink lemonade),

simple demonstration.

Find a prickly pear cactus with a white fluff or fuzz on the pads.



Press a stick or grass-stem into the fluff, twist and remove a portion to the palm of your hand.



Then use the thumb or forefinger of your other hand to rub it around.



From the white fuzz (actually from the insects hidden therein) comes the stain that for 250 years changed the fashion world— a stain that in spite of its formidable look is water-soluble and will not permanently stain your hand.

Member Spotlight Peggy Tolboom



How fortunate we are at Prairie Oaks to have as an active member Peggy Tolboom. And active she is. She is the seed ball queen and she has built a demonstration water table. Both the Dublin Library Butterfly Garden and the Bosque River Nature Center benefit from her organizational skills and her green thumb. She has added a nature perspective to the Dublin Library's story time. Monthly she brings a nature topic which involves going outdoors, consistent with her view that connecting with nature at an early age is essential.

Peggy comes by this nature connection naturally (no pun intended). Born in Wisconsin she and her friends ran and bicycled in fields and woods, enjoying the berries and hickory nuts that such adventures could produce.

Peggy graduated from the University of Florida with a BS in Dairy Management and a MA in Agricultural Education. No wonder she is an outreach maven. She also met her husband, TJ in Florida. When they moved with their daughters to Dublin in 1993, Peggy was involved with both girls' 4H activities and, of course, busy with her own. She has always had vegetable gardens and has been a member of the Lone Star Iris Society. But when she read in the newspaper about Texas Master Naturalists — about being trained to educate others about wildlife, conservation, and Texas ecology, she was hooked. It came at a propitious time. Her oldest daughter had just gotten married and was moving to Germany and Peggy wanted to be busy. One of her current projects, inspired in part by her Master Naturalist training is to work on her back pasture by harvesting and re-distributing the native grasses she wants to encourage.

Peggy likes to read and she and TJ like to travel. TJ is from the Netherlands and their travel includes Germany, Switzerland, France and, of course, visits to family in the Netherlands.

Horses have always been a part of her life and currently she has two, Tucker, a retired gelding and his companion, Sunny, a mare. Peggy has added birdwatching as a hobby since becoming a Master Naturalist and uses Cornell Lab of Ornithology and their wonderful website as a deep resource for expanding her knowledge.

Peggy says her greatest takeaway from the Master Naturalist Program is the need to educate people to appreciate and take care of our precious planet (There is no Plan[et] B) and how being out in the natural world is beneficial for our well-being. She's doing her part.



Nature in Poetry

To succeed in the fight against climate change we must do two big things: Limit emitting carbon dioxide and remove the excess carbon dioxide we have already emitted. Restoring forests is one of the best ways to do the second part. This has become even more important with the loss in the last two years of 50 million acres of forest in Australia and the Amazon. Ambitious plans of reforestation are gaining traction. [Replant Amazon](#) Sensible alternatives are being identified. [Assisted Natural Regeneration](#) Nonetheless no one can doubt the wisdom and satisfaction of taking the time to plant a tree. Our poet for this issue not only writes about it, but he "put his money where his mouth is". [Felix Dennis](#)

Whosoever Plants a Tree

Whosoever plants a tree
Winks at immortality.

Woodland cherries, flowers ablaze,
Hold no hint of human praise;

Hazels in a hidden glade
Give no thought to stake or spade;

London planes in Georgian squares
Count no patrons in their prayers;

Seed and sapling seek no cause,
Bark and beetle shun applause;

Leaf and shoot know nought of debt,
Twig and root are dumb— and yet

Choirs of songbirds greet each day
With eulogies, as if to say:

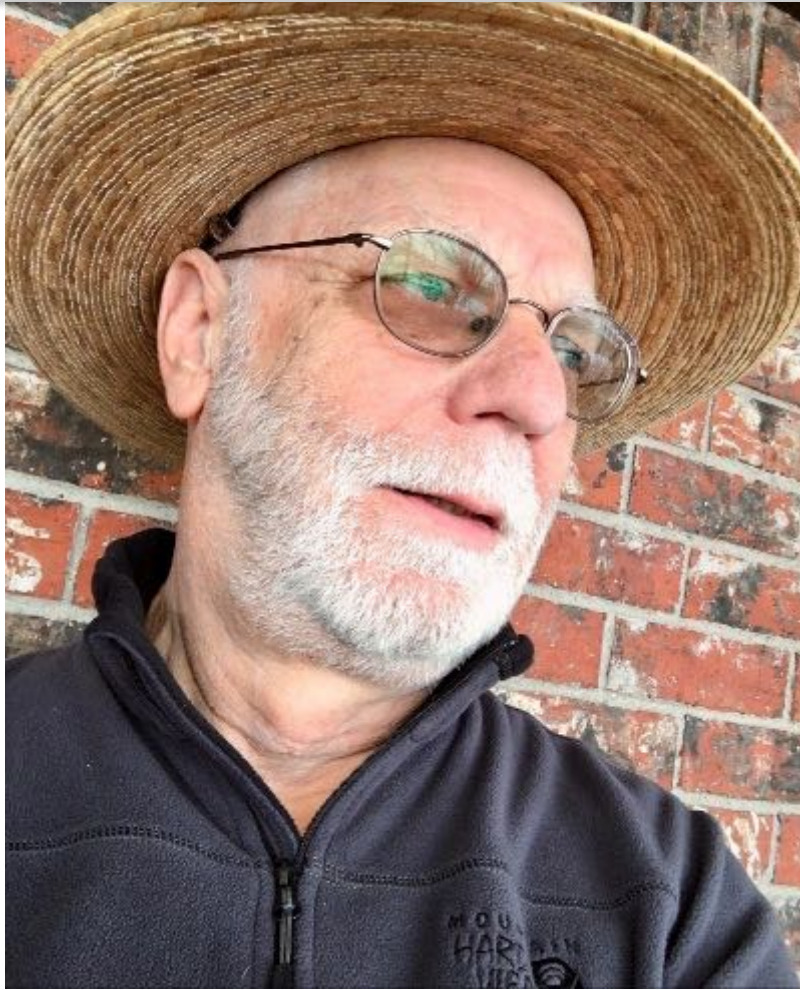
‘Whosoever plants a tree
Winks at immortality!’

Felix Dennis



Felix Dennis (1947 – 2014) poet, publisher, planter of trees. With a net worth just shy of a billion dollars, Dennis came a long way from the poverty of his childhood in a south London suburb. He first gained notoriety as one of the editors of the 60s satirical magazine, *Oz*, and as such was prosecuted for obscenity in an infamous trial in 1971 (he was subsequently acquitted by the High Court of Appeal). His business interests and flamboyant party lifestyle left little room for poetry, though he'd always read and enjoyed it. However a serious illness in 1999 found him looking inward and poetry suddenly flooded into his life. Since his first poem scribbled on a post-it note in hospital he wrote over a thousand and published six best-selling collections. As in so many aspects of his life, his involvement in the poetry world was unconventional: volumes of contemporary poetry are supposed to be slim – his often ran to over two hundred pages. Collections of modern poetry do not sell over ten thousand copies – his did and are being reprinted. First time poets don't go on national reading tours – Dennis did and even appeared with members of the Royal Shakespeare Company on the stage of the Swan Theatre in Stratford.

Member Spotlight Bill Hopkins



1. Where were you born? Raised?

In my earliest years I lived in a little town just east of Corsicana, where my grandparents had a farm. Later my parents moved south of Fort Worth and I commuted into Fort Worth for high school.

2. Where do you live now?

After college I lived in Houston and then Dallas. When we started thinking about retirement, I told Tricia that I wanted a place where I could not see or hear any trace of human civilization. She is more of a social person than me so that was a bit of a problem. Luckily we compromised on a place on Lake Palo Pinto that works for both of us.

3. Would you care to share with us about your family?

Married, three children, six grand-children, scattered in Houston, Dallas, Kansas City.

4. What is/has been your career? Education?

I majored in English, got a job writing documentation for software. I was surprised that I was able to do that since I didn't really think of myself as a technical sort. But then I'm very introverted so relating to computers was easier than dealing with people. Anyway I got a masters degree in Information Technology, and worked in software development.

of the Native Plant Society.

6. To what do you attribute your love of Nature?
Not entirely sure. I have always felt more completely in touch with animals, plants and trees than I do with humans. For as long as I can remember going for a walk in the woods or a park has been my way to feel grounded or find peace.

7. What was it that interested you in the Master Naturalist program?
As soon as I heard about it I knew it was something I wanted to do. Some of my friends were Master Gardeners but that program was not quite right for me. The MN was an opportunity to learn how all the parts of nature fit together. Plus, make a worthwhile contribution.

8. What was it that interested you in the Prairie Oaks chapter?
Well, mainly it was the closest one. Ricky Linex mentioned to me that a chapter was forming Stephenville and introduced me to Seth Hamby. At first I had time conflicts that kept me from participating but things change and I was able to enroll in the second training class.

9. What has been your greatest takeaway from the POTXMN experience?
I have been very impressed with the quality of the program. And it's great to find people who share interests and values.

10. Describe what would be your perfect, bucket-list natural science encounter or experience.
Someday I would like to visit the forest in Mexico where the Monarchs go in Winter.



We are asking all of our members to consider this proposition:

Describe what would be your perfect bucket-list natural science encounter or experience.

Please share yours with us by emailing it to bob@abwoodpk.com. Each issue we will include some of these, reserving some for future issues. You can be as brief or as thorough as you want. We will edit, if necessary. Thanks in advance for yours and thanks to these contributors. Here's this batch:

- Nothing here because you didn't submit yours.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

He that plants trees loves others besides himself.

—Thomas Fuller, English churchman and historian (1608-1661)

POMN Officers 2019

President —Karen Aho
Vice-President — Emily Moore
Secretary — Donna Clark
Treasurer — Bill Hopkins

POMN Officers 2020

President —Karen Aho
Vice-President — Katie Moses
Secretary — Ashley Medeiros
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