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SIDE OATS NOTES

Winter 2018-2019



A Newsletter for the Prairie Oaks Master Naturalist Chapter Volume 1 Issue 1

OPENING NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

This being our first newsletter, we wanted to include some history of how the Prairie Oaks chapter got started. In 2012, I met one of the founding members of the Rio Brazos Master Naturalist Chapter. I was able to visit her property and witness how the management practices she employed helped create a haven for wildlife. Immediately I was hooked and wanted to know more. In 2013, I registered for the Rio Brazos Training Class, but because of scheduling conflicts I was unable to attend that year. At the time, I was taking classes at the Tarrant County College Northwest campus. The campus just so happened to be located near the Fort Worth Nature Center where the Cross Timbers Chapter held most of their training classes. By the end of 2014, I became a certified Texas Master Naturalist.



CALENDAR

December 13

POMN Christmas Party
7:00-8:00p
AgriLife Research and
Extension Classroom

December 16

Christmas Bird Count
7:00-8:00a-Stephenville City
Park (early group)
9:00-5:00p-Ranger College

a Master Naturalist. After starting the TSU Permaculture Site and the Bosque Nature Center, I felt that the infrastructure was in place for a new chapter to have some volunteer opportunities. In the summer of 2016 I wrote an article in the Empire Tribune asking for volunteers interested in starting a new TXMN chapter. To my great surprise (and relief) several people responded, including Drs. Stephens and Damron. Dr. Barbara Bellows of the TSU Center for Environmental Studies, and students Kenneth Nalley, Josiah Mulvihill, and Melissa Hopkins were also founding members.

In the summer of 2017, we hosted our first training class. That same year we were officially recognized as the Prairie Oaks Chapter at the TXMN State Meeting. In the Spring of 2018, we had our first hybrid training class composed of Tarleton students and members of the community. In two and a half years, we went from a motley crew of dreamers to a growing chapter that has successfully trained nearly 40 people and has 26 active members. I am very proud of what we have accomplished and I look forward to the future.

Seth Hamby, POMN President 2018

January 16

POMN Spring training class begins.
Tarleton Horticulture Ceneter

January 17

Business Meeting
6:00-7:00p
AgriLife Research and Extension Classroom
AT program: "Prairie Oaks 2018 Year in Review" (Seth Hamby)
7:00-8:00p

February 21

Chapter Meeting
Committee Planning
6:00-7:00p
AgriLife Research and Extension Classroom
AT program: "The Role of Environmental Consultants in Natural Resources Preservation and Restoration"
(Colton Claiborn, SWCA Environmental Consultants)
7:00-8:00p



What I Learned in School Today

Parents have a long tradition of asking their children what they did in school today. During January through May of this year, some local parents and grandparents (as well as students) may have been answering that same question with some surprising reports to their families. Photos went up on Facebook with grandparents in waders navigating a clear flowing river to observe and sample aquatic animals and water quality. Some days they might have reported learning about archaeological evidence of ancient campfires, the diversity of native plants and animals that manage to flourish in Texas cities, and how to identify unknown plants and animals using a social media application called iNaturalist. Other stories could have included observing and learning about common regional snakes or what happens to municipal waste water to transform it into the clean outflow that replenishes the Bosque River. Emails to children may have included information about the amazing seldom-seen mammals that live in our region, and the local geological formations that provide precious groundwater for agriculture and other human usage.

The Spring 2018 training class of the Prairie Oaks Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists concluded May 3, with 20 participants successfully completing an initial 40 hours of basic training and six of those participants completing an additional eight hours of advanced training and 40 hours of volunteer service to achieve the status of Certified Texas Master Naturalist. Upon reaching this status, the member receives a certificate, a permanent name tag, and the coveted dragonfly pin, tangible symbols of joining an elite corps of over 10,000 Texans who are united in a desire to serve in natural resource conservation and education. Of particular note, five of those who successfully completed 40 hours of basic training were undergraduate and graduate students at Tarleton, whose participation was part of a course in Conservation Outreach and Interpretation. One participant, who literally got his feet wet doing volunteer service at the Possum Kingdom Fish Hatchery, not only completed certification, but logged an additional 40 hours of volunteer service and eight hours of extra advanced training, thereby completing a “double certification” marked by receipt of this year’s special Texas Master Naturalist ocelot pin, an iconic endangered Texas animal. By November thirteen members of this class had completed certification with 5 of that number achieving “double certification” status.

In addition to the Tarleton students, participants in the course came from Palo Pinto, Comanche, and Eastland counties, as well as the Stephenville area. Some are retirees dedicated to lifelong learning, while others are younger with active careers. Two of the participants have BS degrees in Environmental Science but are somewhat new to Texas. Other participants came with experience in business, engineering, pharmacy science, landscaping, farming, homemaking and more. Some participants own small farms, others hundreds of acres; some grew up in rural areas while others have spent most of their lives primarily in towns and cities.

One thing is for sure, when you ask a Texas Master Naturalist training class participant “what did you learn in school today?”, you need to be prepared to listen

program about another fascinating topic in Texas natural resources.

Dr. Marsha Stephens

Prairie Oaks Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists

Students Endorse Innovative Class.

The Prairie Oaks Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists benefits greatly from its association with Tarleton State University. It is clear that the students and the community volunteers who take the TMN class also benefit from this unique collaboration. Student involvement is an important part of promoting land stewardship within the next generation to hit the work force. Emily Moore, a student member of the Spring 2018 class found the training classes and field trips dynamic and “jam-packed with useful information.” Roze Shipman, a graduate student participant found the classes informative and hands-on, the information relevant and up to date. She would also echo others in saying that she enjoyed the dynamic of the different age groups in the class and that she “got to know people who [she] wouldn’t normally have the opportunity to.” Katherine Hood, a non-Texas native, who moved here to get her MS at Tarleton said that the program allowed her to accelerate her learning about the native ecosystems of the state. She also noted the opportunity for involvement in the community gave her a sense of purpose. Certification as a Texas Master Naturalist might be a star on one’s resume, but it is clear that getting there through this program packs its own value.

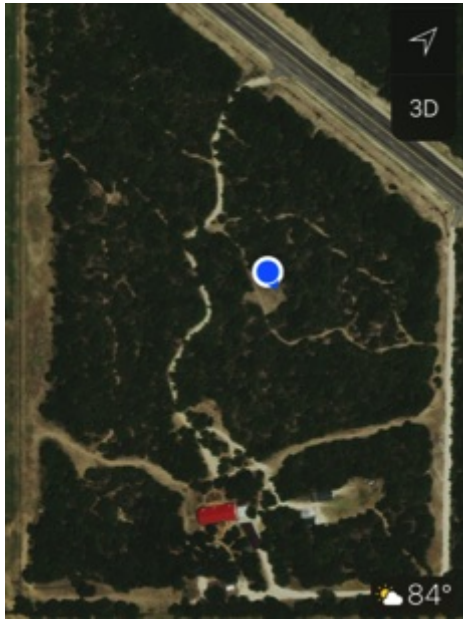
Katherine Hood

Prairie Oaks Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists

Outreach Works!

Donna and Steve Clark are part of the Prairie Oaks Texas Master Naturalist Chapter class of 2018. They moved to Comanche in 2007. The Clarks met in Big Spring and have been married since 1972. Both were raised in the country and their granddaughter, Lillian, is truly a country girl, although her father, Donna and Steve's son was much more a city kid. Lillian is certain that the Eastern Phoebe that perches on the fence near their garden is saying "Gege,Gege,Gege" in honor of her grandmother, Donna.

that what they learned would help them realize their dream described below.



Steve and Donna had a vision of butterfly garden in a clearing in the middle of their 23 wooded acres. While attending NPSOT Landscape classes in the Spring of 2017, they toured the butterfly gardens at both locations. They then knew that a butterfly garden was feasible. While searching for a local NPSOT chapter, the Clarks found Prairie Oaks Master Naturalists, attended a meeting in November, 2017, and liked what they saw. That night they signed on for the Spring 2018 training classes.



They started construction on the garden in early November, 2017. Donna had a vision in her head of how she wanted it to look: lots of rocks, a rock wall, and lots of butterfly plants. There being no rocks on the place, an internet search found a large pile for \$20 in Lometa. After filling up a trailer and the back of pickup, the rocks found a new home. Still just a vision!



That first Master Naturalist meeting was a program given by Forrest Mitchell about dragonflies. Steve decided that the garden needed a water feature for dragonflies, so they found a windmill and water trough. Crushed granite was brought in for the pathway that Donna wanted. Still just a vision!

After seeing a pack of wild hogs just down the trail from the garden, a fence became a necessary addition to the garden. After pricing fence panels in the local big box store, they decided to build the fence



the panels for the front side out of 2x4's and horse panels.
Still just a vision!



River rocks were brought in to line the pathway and mulch was added to help with moisture control. In late April, they began moving plants from the greenhouse to the garden. A lesson learned is those little plants need to be placed in the ground much earlier in order to get established before the hot summer.
Still a vision!



Bluebonnets, coreopsis, coneflower, phlox, blue mistflower, artemesia, some unnamed wildflowers, and several kinds of milkweed are just some of the plants found in the Clarks' garden. Several butterflies, including queens and monarchs, have been spotted in the garden.

Would they do it again? Absolutely! They have enhanced the ecology of their property and provided a way station for butterflies and other pollinators— a win/win for everyone.



At the end of October, a group of eleven Master Naturalists from the Prairie Oaks chapter went to Georgetown for the Annual Meeting of the Texas Master Naturalist (TXMN) program, which is celebrating its 20th Anniversary. They were part of an annual meeting record-setting 650 members from 48 chapters across the state of Texas.

The meeting had its usual field trips exploring local ecosystems, workshops for learning or getting certification in various Citizen Science programs, opportunities to learn more about various natural resources, and presentations of work that Texas Master Naturalist chapters are doing with natural resources all over the state. In addition, we were made aware of efforts at the state and national level to conserve fish and wildlife, one-third of which is at risk of extinction. The Reintroducing the American Wildlife Act (RAWA) could bring millions of dollars into Texas to provide support for conserving the 1,310 species in Texas that are Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

The keynote speaker, Ben Masters, a Texan who makes innovative films addressing the state of natural resources in Texas and beyond, was a delight to listen to and showed portions of the work he has done on behalf of natural resources. You can view his film "Unbranded" at this website <http://mountainandprairie.com/ben-masters/> or visit one of his film tour locations this upcoming year <http://www.wildfilmtour.com/>.

app or come across a group of TXMNeers standing at the edge of a body of water taking samples for water quality testing. This group of nature lovers and lovers of science aren't just tied to the classroom; they are outdoors learning and growing and enjoying the company of like-minded folks.

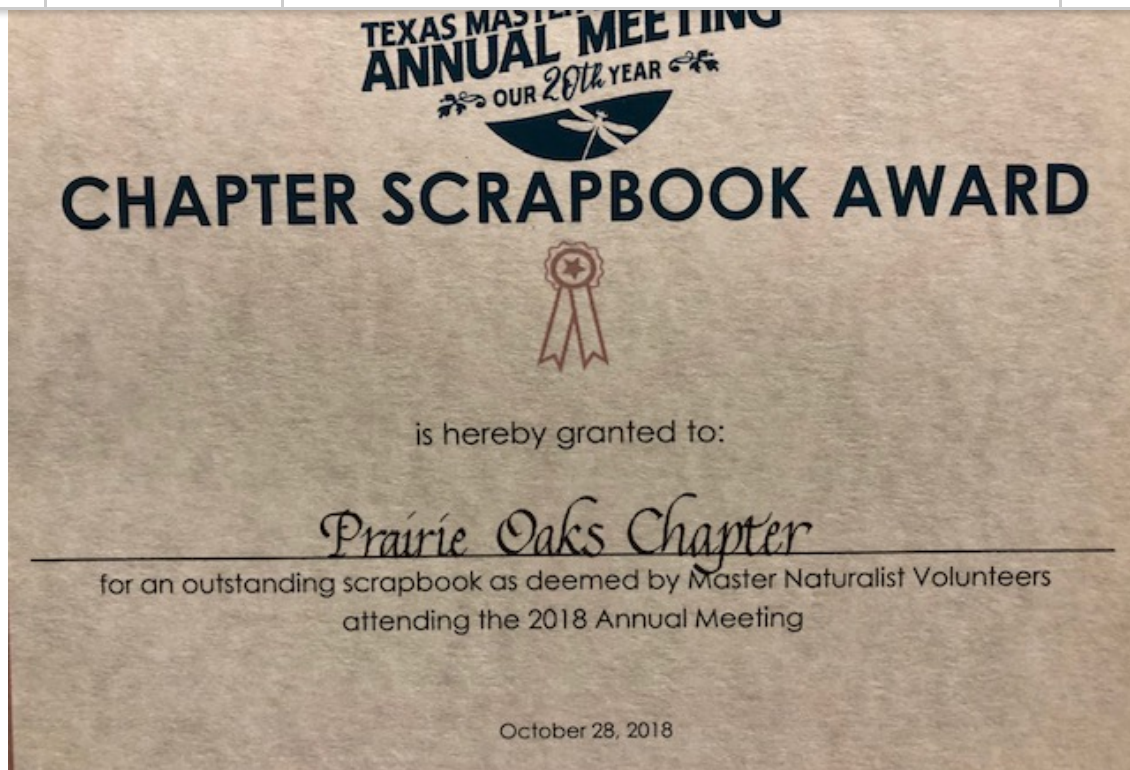
As energizing and joyful it is to see and interact with individual master naturalists, however, it is mind boggling to learn what the organization has accomplished over the last 20 years:

- **11,973 volunteers** have been trained all over the state of Texas;
- Master Naturalist volunteers have reached **5.6 million adults and youth**;
- **2, 120 plus miles of trails** have been created and maintained;
- And, the economic impact this group of volunteers has had on the state of Texas is \$98, 000,000—yes, that is **98 million dollars**.

Dr. Rebecca Damron

Prairie Oaks Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists





Congratulations to Gail Bradshaw for making and entering our chapter's first scrapbook in the state contest. It was a winner! We'll have more information from our Master Scrapper in the next edition of Side Oats Notes.



WINTER PIE FOR BIRDS

Cook 2 cups oatmeal in 4 cups boiling water for 2 minutes. Turn off heat and add 1 cup peanut butter and 1 lb. lard (Animal fat, not vegetable fat – can use bacon grease, waste animal grease or ground or chopped suet). Stir until mixed. Add 3 cups each yellow corn meal, oatmeal and wheat hearts or other wheat cereal. Other things can be added: birdseed, chicken scratch, chopped apples, nuts, raisins, breadcrumbs, cookie crumbs, etc. Pack in margarine tubs (or equivalent). and freeze. Makes about 11 half-pound margarine tubs.

Recipe of Virginia Wood (Editor's Mother) who made it every winter for her birds.

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Vice-President — Alisa Terrell Starbird
Secretary — Dr. Rebecca Damron
Treasurer — Doris Hasten

POMN Officers 2019

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