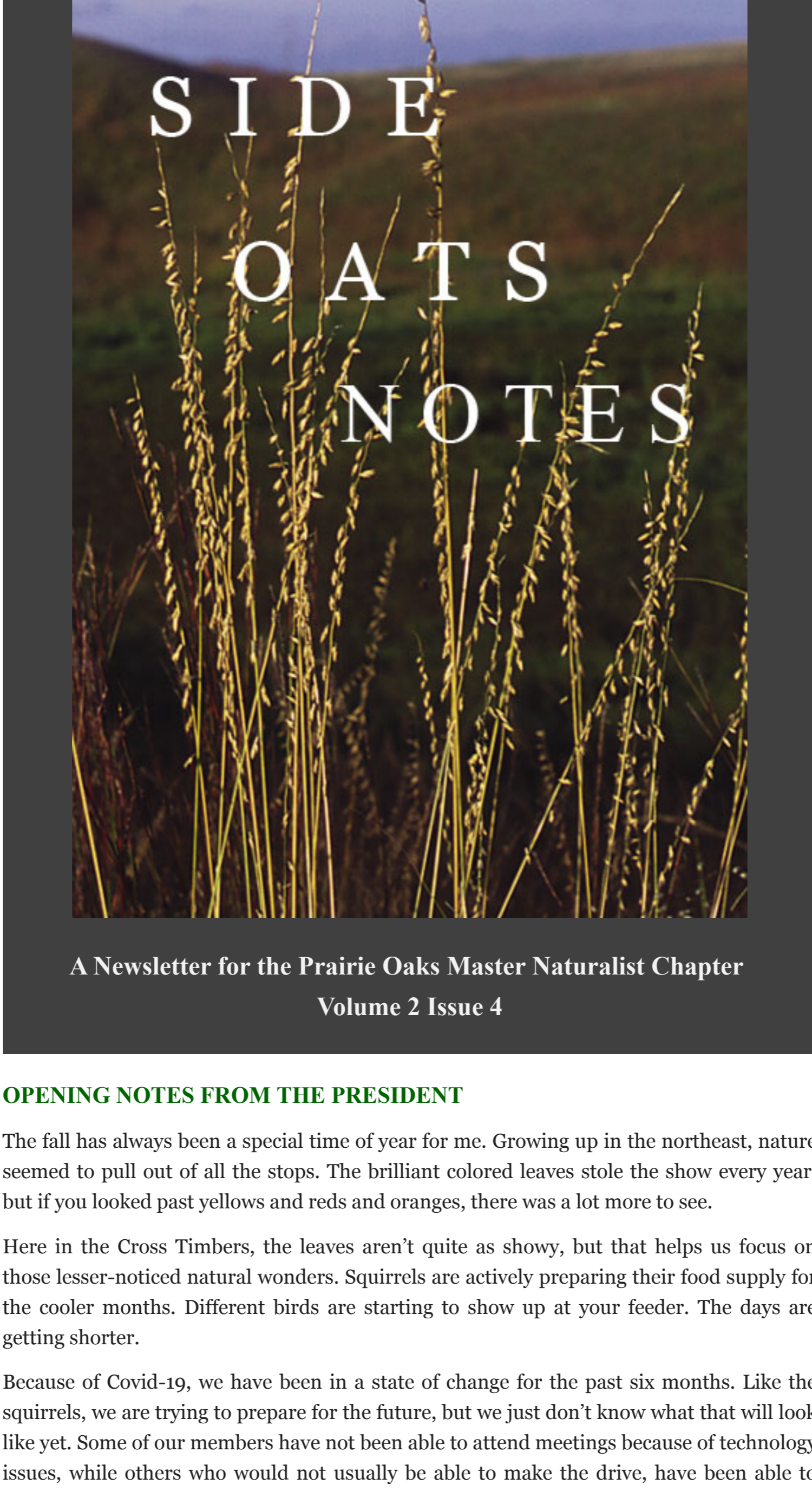


# SIDE OATS NOTES

Fall 2020



A Newsletter for the Prairie Oaks Master Naturalist Chapter  
Volume 2 Issue 4

### OPENING NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

The fall has always been a special time of year for me. Growing up in the northeast, nature seemed to pull out of all the stops. The brilliant colored leaves stole the show every year, but if you looked past yellows and reds and oranges, there was a lot more to see.

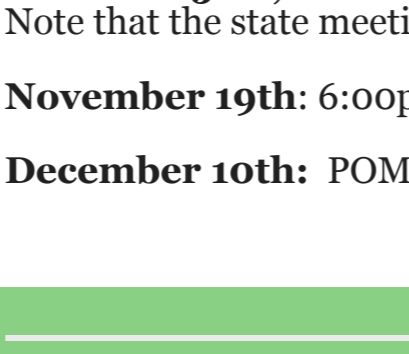
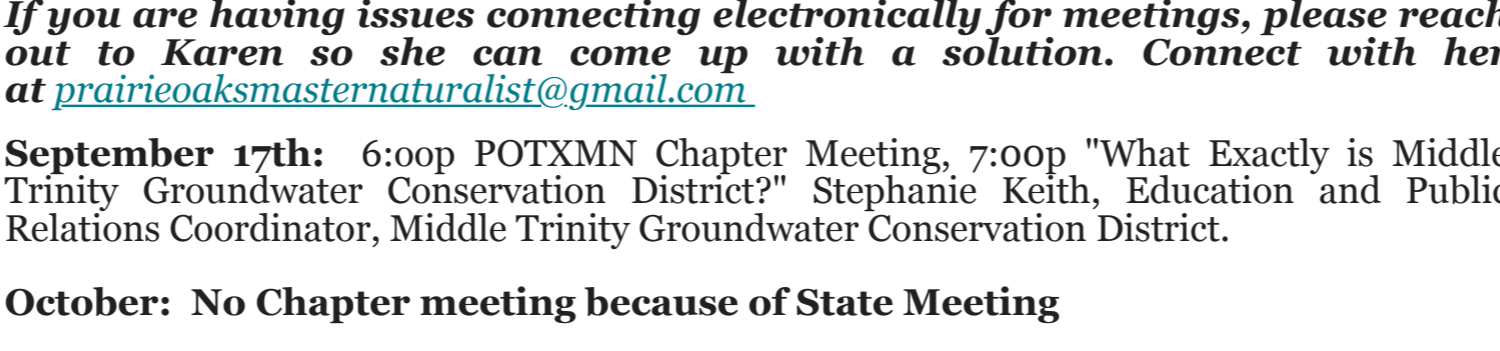
Here in the Cross Timbers, the leaves aren't quite as showy, but that helps us focus on those lesser-noticed natural wonders. Squirrels are actively preparing their food supply for the cooler months. Different birds are starting to show up at your feeder. The days are getting shorter.

Because of Covid-19, we have been in a state of change for the past six months. Like the squirrels, we are trying to prepare for the future, but we just don't know what that will look like yet. Some of our members have not been able to attend meetings because of technology issues, while others who would not usually be able to make the drive, have been able to participate more regularly. We are using technology for meetings and to train new master naturalists. (See below: **Members in Training are Moving Forward**) Luckily, individuals and small groups of members have still been able to keep volunteering, which is the highest purpose of our mission.

It's been a strange time, but also a time for us to look at some of those things we normally don't even notice. In the coming months we will be examining how our chapter can be more representative of the four counties we cover, and how we can be more inclusive of our current and future members. While my biggest wish would be for us to be able to safely meet together in person, I am also extremely thankful that we have been given this important time to slow down and plan for the future of our chapter.

Gratefully,  
Karen

PrairieOaksMasterNaturalist@gmail.com



### CALENDAR

**NOTE:** Chapter meeting for September, and until further notice, will be held on Zoom. Currently volunteer opportunities are limited to 10 or fewer people who should practice social distancing. Larger groups may volunteer, but family groups should still practice distancing. Wearing masks is strongly encouraged when members are in public places.

Please do your best to respect these rules as we are not just representing ourselves, but the wider organization. What we post on social media AND what folks see in person should be in line with these guidelines.

**If you are having issues connecting electronically for meetings, please reach out to Karen so she can come up with a solution. Connect with her at prairieoaksmasternaturalist@gmail.com**

**September 17th:** 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p "What Exactly is Middle Trinity Groundwater Conservation District?" Stephanie Keith, Education and Public Relations Coordinator, Middle Trinity Groundwater Conservation District.

**October:** No Chapter meeting because of State Meeting

**October 10th:** POTXMN Second Annual Nature Fest. See Katie's note below.

**October 15-18, 2020:** Texas Master Naturalist Annual State Meeting in Houston, TX. Note that the state meeting will be held virtually. Registration is open on the state web site.

**November 19th:** 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p Program TBA

**December 10th:** POMN Holiday Celebration. Details coming.

### UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Accumulate 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@dairyolutionsinc.com to sign up.

#### Nature Fest- Saturday October 10th

For the safety of our members and guests, we will be holding this year's event virtually. Instead of setting up a booth on the day of the event, volunteers will be creating a video of their topic and we'll compile those into one or more Nature Fest videos to be available on social media on October 10th. If you would like to volunteer to help with this year's event, please contact Katie Moses at katiemoses@hotmail.com or 254-948-6544. If you aren't able to participate in the event itself, we'd love for you to watch the video and share with friends on Facebook. There will be something for everyone and it will still be a great way to educate and encourage others to enjoy the natural world around them.

#### Help Chris Inbody prepare a presentation for the December chapter meeting Advanced Training.

Keeping with the previous theme we'd like to have members send in their photos of "Moments in nature." What is it? "This is what hatched or grew in my world," or any other great catches. Chris will put them together in a presentation for the December chapter meeting AT. Share your photos or videos with audio or written narrative. He will need to know what it is if you have that information, where it was taken, and a bit about it. Get creative! Quotes from your favorite naturalist that are reminiscent of the image. Poetry, anecdotes, stories, facts and figures. Anything you think might be interesting to the chapter.

You can get Volunteer time for doing it. **CB: Administrative Work Programs activities related to providing programs at chapter meetings that meet the criteria for Advanced training at a Chapter Meeting.** It will be presented as AT for the meeting with a chance for members to ask questions and have a learning opportunity.

Please send your photos, information, questions or comments to Chris at [cmibody@wildlifers.com](mailto:cmibody@wildlifers.com).

The deadline for this is October 31, 2020.

### Members in Training are Moving Forward

Spring is heralded by migrant bird arrivals, new leaves on skeletal winter branches, and the glory of Texas wild flowers. This spring, the phenomenon of invasive species that we learn about as Texas Master Naturalists, became manifested in the wolfish arrival of COVID-19. While the Tarleton students in our spring 2020 training class continued to complete their course (Conservation Outreach and Interpretation) via email, our 14 avid community participants were forced to suspend their Texas Master Naturalist studies and wait for better times. In the presence of this strange new normal, we have managed to re-create the remainder of the training class using Cisco Webex for "classroom" sessions, and a few in-person field classes. Half of the spring class chose to move forward with this format for 7 weeks this fall, while the other half chose to delay until spring 2021 to complete their sessions. Exactly how spring 2021 training will be conducted has not been determined.

This fall marked another transition of roles: Dr. Lynn Wood has accepted appointment as the New Class Training Director, with Dr. Linda Wood and Dr. Marsha Stephens serving as assistants during classroom sessions and Marsha also shepherding the fall field classes.

So with high hopes and determination, the Fall 2020 Extended Training Class kicked off on September 9, and is scheduled to be completed on October 29. Field classes are scheduled (with nature's cooperation) for Saturdays: October 3 (Prairie Ecology), October 10 (Birding and Bird Ecology, Woodland Ecology) and October 24 (Local Geology, Local Soils).

Get ready to welcome a batch of new Pledges to the chapter in October!

**Dr. Lynn Wood, New Class Training Director**

### Member Spotlight on Lance Trinqué



The French word "trinqué" translates as "a toast." So here's a toast to Lance and here's his story in his own words:

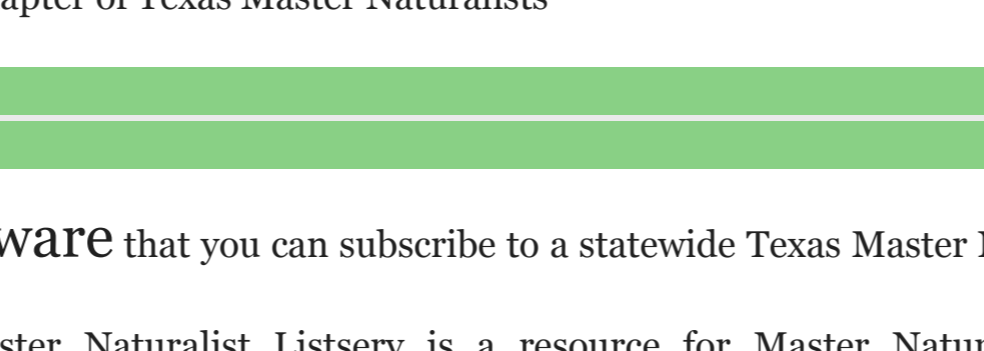
I'm Lance Trinqué I was born in Farmers Branch Texas. I attended Tarleton State and graduated in 1983. I have been a firefighter for the last 36 years and plan on retiring in October 2021. I am married to Michelle and we have 4 children and 6 grand children. I feel it is my obligation to teach them all I can about the natural world around them, especially when there is so much to distract them from what is real. I love that all of our grand kids could tell you at least 10 different kinds of birds before they are 5 years old, and as many wild flowers. I think kids will fill their minds with the love of nature instead of techy stuff when given the opportunity.

Personally my hobbies include metal, wood and stone work. I love old Texas architecture and Texas archeology. I also enjoy working to restore my place, researching its history and trying to get it back closer to its roots. I took the Texas Master Naturalist class because it gave me the opportunity to learn more about Texas and its natural resources. The POMN has also provided the same learning environment along with the local community involvement. I enjoy being with people who are as dedicated to Texas and the natural world as I am. My bucket list seems to change yearly but high on it now is, I would love to work as an intern at The Land Institute in Salina Kansas the summer after I retire. I attribute my love of nature to my mother, she is an avid bird watcher and wild flower expert. My uncle had a farm in Bonham Texas and I spent every weekend there, working, fishing and exploring the country side. Good memories.



### Big Stinkers and Little Stinkers

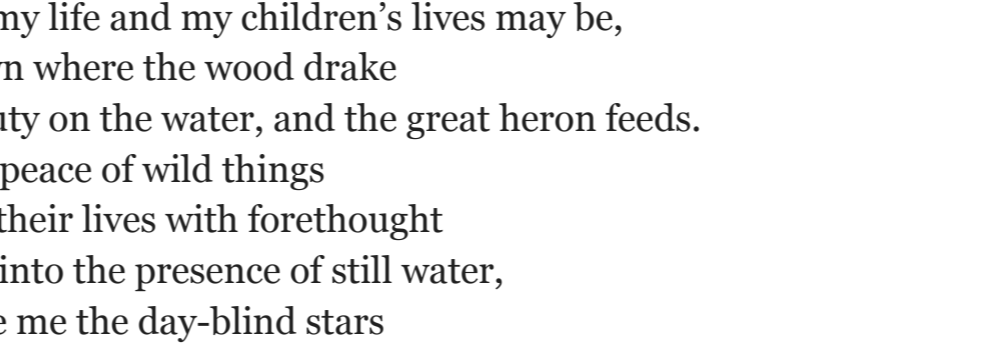
Both rural residents and city dwellers alike in Texas are generally able to recognize the black and white fur pattern of one of our most widespread mammals, the striped skunk. This type of skunk has adapted quite well to civilization, and skunk populations flourish across Texas, emerging from their dens to waddle along through the night, seemingly unconcerned about any nearby humans. Of course, skunks are most well-known for the signature odor of their anal scent gland products, which cause most people to be less than eager about having them near their homes. However, as you have probably guessed, skunks play an important role in ecosystems, not least as voracious insect eaters. Depending on the season they also consume lesser amounts of small animals such as mice, reptiles, and snails, and even some plant material and carrion. And yes, it is true, skunks may take an opportunity to partake of fresh chicken when they can gain access to chicken coops at night. Adult striped skunks generally travel less than 2 miles from their residential dens during their routine activities. The most common natural den locations of all skunks are crevices in rock ledges, cavities along creek banks, and abandoned burrows of armadillos and other animals. With the arrival of human buildings, skunks have found crawl spaces and under foundations to also be ideal for lodging, much to the dismay of human residents.



In this part of Texas, there are actually three species of skunks. While the striped skunk is most common in all habitats, the hog-nosed skunk and the eastern spotted skunk also occur here, but are much less common. As the name implies, the hog-nosed skunk has an extended snout that is largely bare of fur and used for rooting to unearth insects, worms and other soil dwellers. The hog-nosed skunk, on average, the largest North American skunk, weighing six to ten pounds at maturity, and this species sports a striking solid white forehead, back and tail. While striped skunks can often be seen in extended family foraging groups of several adults and offspring, hog-nosed skunks are famously unsocial and seldom seen even in pairs.



Spotted skunks have a unique color pattern of 9 white spots and stripes scattered over the head and body. The eastern spotted skunk is tiny by comparison to striped and hog-nosed skunks, weighing less than two pounds as adults. Perhaps the most memorable thing about spotted skunks is behavioral: when disturbed and preparing to spray their scent, they rapidly stomp their front feet on the ground, then stand on their front feet while raising their back legs off the ground, and arching backward before releasing the scent.



There are many myths and questions about skunk scent. The distinctive odor of skunk spray is attributed to a variety of chemical compounds collectively called thiols, but the exact chemical composition of scent varies between species. In general, if you are within 15 feet of a skunk, you are within the possible range of the scent spray. What is the function of the scent spray? It is the major form of defense for skunks. Can skunks smell the scent of other skunks? Yes, in fact a male skunk will sometimes spray another male skunk to repel competitors for a female, and females use scent spray to repel unwanted males. In this area of Texas, the beginning of mating season for striped skunks is around Valentine's Day, a period when humans become much more aware of skunk populations. Skunk roadkill mortality increases markedly as a result of agricultural nighttime activity of adult skunks, portrayed in exaggerated style by the carnivore antics of a famous cartoon skunk.

Like most mammals in the order Carnivora, all skunk species can contract and transmit rabies. Based on specimens submitted to the Texas Department of Health for rabies testing, among wild animals, rabies is most common in skunks in many years. Skunks can also contract and transmit distemper. Combined with the potential for memorable odor exposure, it is reasonable to conclude that skunks are important ecosystem components that are best appreciated from a safe social distance, preferably at least 15 feet!

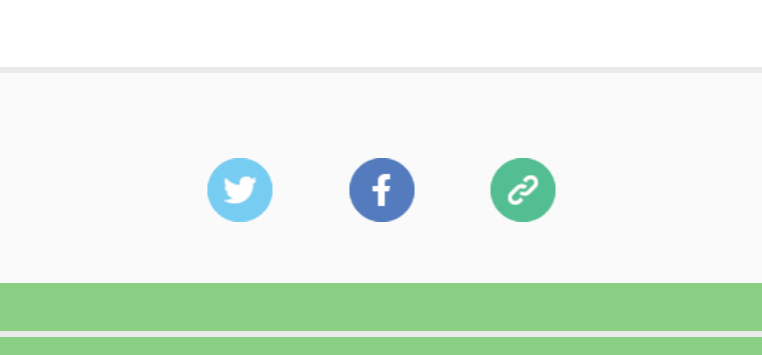
Dr. Marsha Stephens  
Prairie Oaks Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists

### Are you aware that you can subscribe to a statewide Texas Master Naturalist email service?

The Texas Master Naturalist Listserv is a resource for Master Naturalist members, chapters, sponsors, advisors and Master Naturalist affiliates to share information and resources specific to the Texas Master Naturalist Program. The listserv is provided as a service to Texas Master Naturalist Program Members and supporters. This is a great way to stay connected with Texas Master Naturalist statewide program. You may want to subscribe. To subscribe [click here](#)

### KUDOS

**For reaching 1000 Volunteer hours:** Barbara Salter  
**For re-certification:** Chris Inbody, Marsha Stephens and Ann Wood



### Nature in Poetry

Nature can renew and center us. In days of shelter-in-place, a trip to the river or the lake or the field or the park can calm and reassure us. Wendell Berry captures this in a poem written well before anyone ever heard of Covid-19.

#### The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things,  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water,  
and I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry



Wendell Berry is an American novelist, poet, essayist, environmental activist, cultural critic, and farmer. He is an elected member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, a recipient of The National Humanities Medal, and the Jefferson Lecturer for 2012. He lives in Port Royal, Kentucky near his birthplace, where he has maintained a farm for over 40 years. A champion of the unplugged, earth-conscious life, he is an author you should know.

"I hear that I have a website, but I didn't do those things. My instrument is a pencil."

### A THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

When we take our air, waters and land for granted, when we show a simple lack of respect for Nature and our environment, we unmake God's good creation.

John Lewis -- Civil Rights Leader and "Conscience of the U.S. Congress" (1940-2020)

POMN Officers 2020  
President – Karen Albo  
Vice-President – Katie Moses  
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