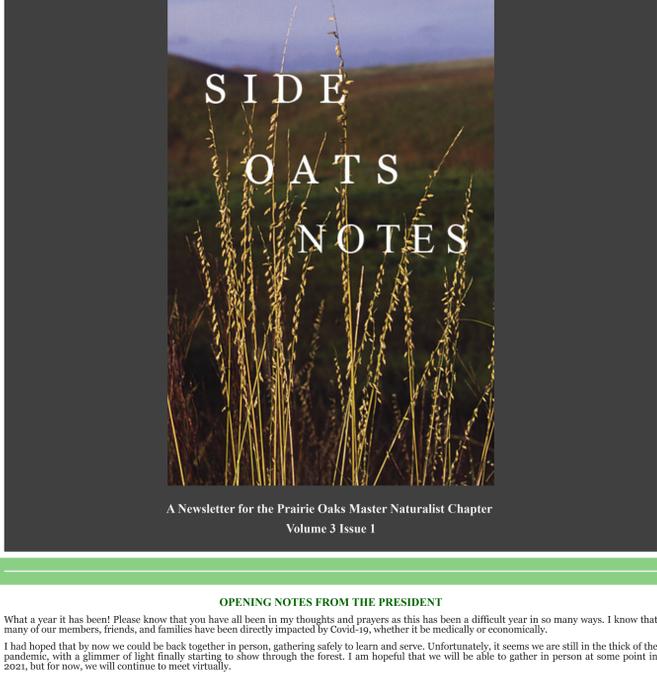


SIDE OATS NOTES

Winter 2020



A Newsletter for the Prairie Oaks Master Naturalist Chapter
Volume 3 Issue 1

OPENING NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

What a year it has been! Please know that you have all been in my thoughts and prayers as this has been a difficult year in so many ways. I know that many of our members, friends and families have been directly impacted by Covid-19, whether it be medically or economically.

I had hoped that by now we could be back together in person, gathering safely to learn and serve. Unfortunately, it seems we are still in the thick of the pandemic, with a glimmer of light finally starting to show through the forest. I am hopeful that we will be able to gather in person at some point in 2021, but for now, we will continue to meet virtually.

UPDATED COVID-19 GUIDELINES: Agrilife has developed a new system for determining advanced training and volunteer guidelines. Each week an update will be posted at <https://tamn.tamu.edu/sec/comm/covid-19-revisions/>, with each county rated as green, yellow, or red. Red is the highest rating, with the most restrictions.

Currently our chapter is rated as red which means that we cannot have any face-to-face events, regardless of the location or number of people. Only virtual and solo volunteering and training is currently allowed. (Note: solo volunteering in remote areas is NOT recommended.) If you have any questions about specific scenarios, please contact PrarieOaksMasterNaturalist@gmail.com. When our chapter status changes, a notification will be emailed.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW? Mark your calendar for the Virtual Volunteer Fair (<https://tamn.tamu.edu/virtual-volunteer-fair/february-2021/>) on February 3rd and 4th. There are MANY ways for you to stay engaged and keep serving our communities!

Thank you to everyone who has held on for the ride this year. Even with all the restrictions and safety concerns, our chapter still logged over 1,750 hours of service. We have some very dedicated folks and I hope that we can all re-engage in 2021, finding new and unique ways to serve our community.

It has been an honor to serve as your Chapter President and I am looking forward to seeing what our new leader, Katie Moses, has in store for us!

Gratefully,
Karen Aho
PrarieOaksMasterNaturalist@gmail.com



CALENDAR

January 1, 2021: Membership dues (\$24 for individuals, \$35 for couples) for the year are due. Expect a contact from Treasurer Edd Robinett about how to pay.

January 7, 2021: POTXMN Board Meeting, Virtual

January 13, 2021: Beginning of POTXMN Spring training class. Virtual except for field trips.

January 21, 2021: 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p "Wildlife, Agriculture and Aquaponics", Ashley Medeiros, POTXMN Chapter member. Virtual

February 3-4, 2021: Texas Master Naturalist sponsored Virtual Volunteer Fair.

February 18, 2021: 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p TBA Virtual

March 18, 2021: 6:00p POTXMN Chapter Meeting, 7:00p "Marvelous Mosquitos-Part 2", Dr. David Kattes, Tarleton State University. Virtual

POTXMN END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

Thanks to all who participated (virtually) in the POTXMN End of Year Celebration on December 10. After a short business meeting we had a wonderful video of nature sightings and events put together by Chris Inbody with contributions from many members. If you missed the video or if you would like to see it again, here is a link that should be live until Christmas. We also voted on the best musical composition by our breakout groups, best festive costume and the best virtual background. A good time was had by all.

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER AND ADVANCED TRAINING 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. Peggy reports that humilis is starting to come up in the garden. If anyone has time to volunteer now, being it early will be appreciated. Contact Peggy Tolboom at 254-445-3436 or equese@datrysolutionsinc.com to sign up.

Revisit POTXMN website to see virtual volunteering opportunities in Field Research Citizen Science Programs such as Cornell Labs "Feeder Watch".

If you would like to submit a natural history article for Side Oats Notes, your time researching and writing can qualify as volunteer time if it is accepted for publication. For more information, contact Ann or Bob Wood.

PLEASE NOTE: POTXMN will not participate in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count this year due to COVID-19 restrictions for our area and from Audubon.

Texas Master Naturalist Tuesdays: In 2021 TMNT will offer virtual Advanced Training monthly on second Tuesdays from 12:00-1:00 (except for October). See [link](#) for details.

KUDOS

Congratulations to POMN Tarleton Member Graduates:

Dylan Ham-M.S. Agricultural and Natural Resources
Brandon Consolus-B.S. Wildlife, Sustainability and Ecosystems Sciences
Vanessa Quintero-B.S. Environmental Sciences

Congratulations to Meghan Peoples-Co-winner of the Best Video Contest at the Native Plant Society of Texas Annual Award Presentation.

Congratulations to Bob Wood for reaching 250 volunteer hours.

Congratulations to Karen Aho, Genet Klempinger, Bob McCormick, Katie Moses, Barbara Salter, Bob Wood for re-certifying in the last quarter.

Special thanks to the officers and directors of the chapter for 2020. Despite the challenges presented in a global pandemic we were able to meet (virtually), graduate a new class, accumulate and log impressive volunteer hours, improve the Nature Center and keep the harmonious spirit of the Prairie Oaks Chapter alive. Thanks for your hard work and dedication.

And WELCOME to the new officers and directors. We're all here to help you.

NATURE FEST

Thank you to everyone who helped with the 2nd Annual Nature Fest! While we couldn't get together in person this year, we were still able to hold a virtual event and offer educational videos and activities through social media. Thank you so much to Karen Aho, Bill Hopkins, Linda Wood, Dayna Inbody, and Katie Moses for contributing to our Nature Fest videos. And thank you to all who helped brainstorm, plan and share the event!

Katie Moses



Progress at the Nature Center

In October, many chapter members contributed hours and materials to bring to fruition the next phase of the Nature Center's Pollinator Garden. An irrigation system was installed to the existing and new plantings. Mulberry, Elderberry, Bounty Berry, Smooth Sumac and a Pecan tree are among the new plantings. Big thanks to leaders, Peggy and Bill and all who helped this project grow. The Pollinator garden offers ongoing opportunities to volunteer.



LIGHTS OUT TEXAS

Texas is a major flyway for migrating birds. Twice a year a billion birds migrate through Texas. According to the National Audubon Society 98.5% of all U.S. migratory bird species have been recorded in Texas. More than 70% of birds nationwide are migratory and 80% of migrants travel at night. This latter statistic brings into play a deadly truth: When cities brighten the sky with artificial light, migrating birds suffer – from collisions with buildings (the third leading cause of the alarming decline in the number of birds, behind only habitat loss and feral cats) and from disorientation caused by obscuring the stars used for navigation and the associated energy loss.

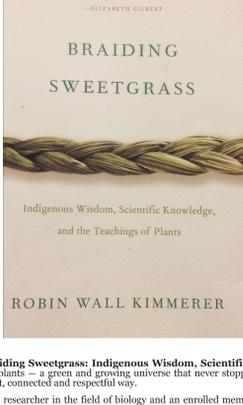
Houston and Dallas rank 2nd and 3rd respectively among cities creating the most danger for birds from light pollution. But Lights Out Texas is a proactive organization seeking to have buildings, businesses and residents to reduce or turn off their lights from 11:00 pm – 6:00 am during peak migration periods. Downtown Dallas cooperated this fall during the September 5 - October 29 fall migration at the suggestion of Laura Bush, among others.

Prairie Oaks' own Dayna Inbody has been active in promoting Lights Out Texas and expects to keep the chapter informed and involved with regard to next Spring's peak migration period of March 15- May 15. Let's all do our part!

Below is an article that Dayna helped place in the Hood County News.



BOOK REVIEW



The essays that comprise the chapters in **Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants** give us a new way of looking at the world of plants – a green and growing universe that never stopped speaking to us even when we forgot how to listen. It is not really a new way, but an ancient, connected and respectful way.

Robin Wall Kimmerer (PhD) is a pre-eminent researcher in the field of biology and an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Her first book, **Gathering Moss**, was awarded the John Burroughs Medal for outstanding nature writing. In **Braiding Sweetgrass**, Dr. Kimmerer introduces the reader to trees and forests and lichens and a whole host of wonderful plants with her educated scientific rigor, but also with the respectful, thankful and engaging personal wisdom of the ancient indigenous peoples whom she represents and honors. The result is a fascinating journey from her native New York to the forests of Oregon and the sweeping plains of Oklahoma Indian Territory on three interwoven strands – traditional ecological science, Native American culture and personal engagement. It will bring you to a new appreciation of the meaning of ecology.

Some of the essays focus mainly on Native American culture, some on the teachings of particular plants, but all fairly glow with a love and appreciation for the gift to our planet and our people given freely by plants, those magical comrades who convert sunlight to sugar and therefore make life possible for those who don't.

Whether your interest is plants, or teaching (she chronicles some interesting field trips), Native American culture or just good nature writing this is a book for your library and for your enjoyment. Everyone who has a favorite chapter (essay), but my favorite chapters teaching elementary students to start the day not with the rote recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, but with their ancient Thanksgiving Address. This invocation of gratitude is more than a pledge, a prayer or a poem. It systematically addresses and thanks each element of the ecosystem: Fish, Food Plants, Medicine Herbs, Trees, Animals, Birds, Four Winds, Thunder Beings, Sun, Moon, Stars, Teachers and the Creator or Great Spirit. There is a culture of conscious thankfulness and it values reciprocity. That is why they ask the sweetgrass and other plant benefactors permission before harvesting a sustainable amount and why they always leave a tangible gift, signifying their gratitude.

And that is a feeling you will likely have when you read **Braiding Sweetgrass** – gratitude.

* In the book Kimmerer honors the indigenous way of recognizing the personhood of all beings as equally important and therefore capitalizes the names of all persons, human or not.

Bob Wood
Member Prairie Oaks Chapter
Texas Master Naturalist

Member Spotlight Kelli and Larry Cotten



Kelli and Larry Cotten live on ranch land a few miles west of Morgan Mill, a place they call God's country. Kelli was born in the frigid north, Chicago, spending her first 17 years there. Larry was born and raised in Fort Worth where he resided before moving to Morgan Mill seven years ago. They have four children, nine grandchildren with one on the way. They also have two great grandchildren. There are 6 girls and 6 boys if you count the one on the way.

Kelli has a BA in Health Education and a Masters in Liberal Arts from TCU. She focused her career mostly in management and also in non-profit fund raising. Her last 6 years in Fort Worth were spent as an art curator, Larry has a BA in Economics from University of Texas, Austin and a JD from the Houston Law Center (University of Houston). He has practiced law for the past 40 years, the last 28 with Cotten Schmidt, LLP, concentrating in civil litigation and representing a stable of clients that reads like a Who's Who of Texas, American and global business.

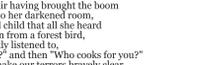
Kelli is an avid reader, devouring untold numbers of books in a year's time. She is a member of several local women's clubs, and works at the Morgan Mill food pantry. One of her hobbies is the care and feeding of her pet hens, Vivian Westwood, Betsy Johnson, Coco Channel and Tory Burch all named after female fashion designers.

Larry continues the practice of law but loves the major professional and college sports. He has been the commissioner of fantasy sports leagues in professional football, baseball and basketball the last 20 years.

In their words, "Nature is the major reason we moved from the city to the country. It is a different world that we can learn about and from. Larry's mother and her sister were born in Paluxy, Texas and knew the names of all the flora and fauna. We are trying to catch up. Kelli grew up going to her family's cottage on one of the largest lakes in Wisconsin where she learned to love the outdoors."

The Cottens got interested in the Master Naturalist program when Kelli heard Dr. Marsha Stephens speak at a women's organization meeting. They felt the program was a way for them to accelerate their learning as well as to get to know new friends.

Again the Cottens, "We have come to realize that we have only scratched the surface and look forward to future learning and sharing experiences. For our bucket-list experience, we would like to explore all of what the Texas state parks have to offer as a part of our photographing nature all along the way."



Nature in Poetry

We have seen that owls are favorite nature subjects for poets. This poem features a well-known mnemonic for recognizing the barred owl.

A Barred Owl
The warping night air having brought the boom
Of an owl's voice into her darkened room,
We tell the wakened child that all she heard
Was an odd question from a forest bird,
Asking of us, if rightly listened to,
"Who cooks for you?" and then "Who cooks for you?"
Words, which can make our terrors bravely clear,
Can also thus domesticate a fear,
And send a small child back to sleep at night
Not listening for the sound of stealthy flight
Or dreaming of some small thing in a dew
Borne up to some dark branch and eaten raw.

Richard Wilbur (1921-2017)



Richard Wilbur was the second Poet Laureate of the United States (from 1965 to 1987) called the Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 1987. He also received two Pulitzer Prizes for poetry.

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

Never do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Learning for others is a noble mastery. We are all here to help each other. No matter how difficult it is. Life is good when you are happy, but much better when others are happy because of you.
Pope Francis (1936-)

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Vice-President – Meghan Peoples
Secretary – Ashley Medeiros
Treasurer – Edd Robinett

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