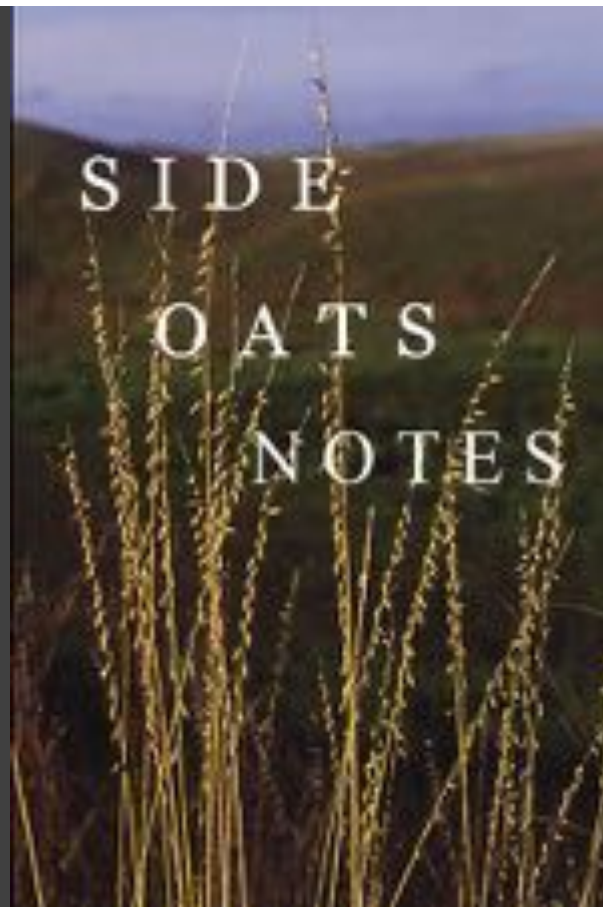


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**A newsletter by the Prairie Oaks Chapter
of the Texas Master Naturalist program**

Volume 4 Issue 1 - Winter 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

- Check out the stats from Nature Fest 2021
- Member spotlight featuring Matt Olszewski
- Learn about a wheel bug's rectal gland!
- Find out about the Recovering America's Wildlife Act
- Plus - native trees, nature centers, and more at the annual convention



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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

As another year comes to a close, I want to commend our chapter's perseverance as we overcame the hurdles that 2021 presented and transitioned to our new normal. Despite gathering restrictions and extreme weather, Prairie Oaks Master Naturalists have logged 1,906 volunteer hours this year, and there's still more to come! Thank you all for devoting your time to carrying out our organization's mission. Thank you to those who volunteered at the Nature Center. Your hard work has made this spot on the Bosque River Trail a delightful place for visitors and a beneficial area for pollinators. Thank you to everyone who helped make Nature Fest such a success. Linda Wood did an amazing job coordinating this year's event and we had over 100 people in attendance. Thank you to the officers, directors, and committee chairs who served in 2021. I am grateful for your leadership and support as we navigated another abnormal year.

What a joy it has been to be able to gather again for meetings, advanced training, and volunteer service! So that everyone can be included, we will continue to offer a virtual option for chapter meetings. Thank you for your patience as we try out new things and work through the technology issues that arise. I welcome any feedback on how we can improve on our hybrid meeting format.

I look forward to the new year and all the great things that we can accomplish as we work together to carry out our mission to "provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas in the counties of Palo Pinto, Erath, Hamilton, and Comanche."

Thanks for all you do,

Katie Moses

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CALENDAR

December 2021: Applications open for 2022 Spring Training

[Learn more on the Prairie Oaks Chapter website](#)

January 19, 2022: 2022 Spring Training Begins

January 20, 2022: Chapter Meeting

February 17, 2022: Chapter Recognition and Awards Ceremony

March 17, 2022: Chapter Meeting



KUDOS!

Initial Certification 🏆

Denisse Trujillo
Kaesey Browne
Monica Cortez
James Gray

Re-certified ✓

Wathina Bradshaw
Taylor Breeden
Bill Hopkins
Chris Inbody
Dayna Inbody
Katie Moses
Marsha Stephens
Peggy Tolboom
Lynn Wood
Linda Wood



Nature Fest 2021 Wrap Up

Photos by Lynn and Linda Wood

Nature Fest 2021 was held Saturday, October 9, at the [Bosque River Trail Nature Center](#). Visitors enjoyed educational activities, nature games, and guided nature walks, while celebrating the natural areas and resources that make the state of Texas great.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success. Special thanks to Linda Wood and to all of our sponsors and booth participants for taking part in this year's Nature Fest!

For more photos, [check out this post](#) by Karen Aho or [this post](#) by Katie Moses on the chapter's Facebook page.

74 Visitors

42 Volunteers

16 Booths & Activities



2 Welcome Booths



Nature Bingo Activity



4 Guided Nature Walks



Monarch Migration Game with

Dinosaur Valley State Park



Bluebirds 101 with the Texas

Bluebird Society



Bird Migrations and Lights

Out Texas!



Happy Earth, Sad Earth with



Animal Tracks and Park Info

with Lake Brownwood State Park



Animal Specimens with the TSU Wildlife Society



Skins and Skulls with a Texas Parks and Wildlife Biologist



Fishing 101 with the US Army Corp of Engineers: Proctor Lake



POMN Activities: Ecoblocks, Rainfall Simulator, Animal Tracks,

the **TSU Tri Beta Biological Honor Society**

"Seek" Flora/Fauna ID App, and 2022 Training Class Info





Reflections on the Annual Convention

Contributions from Peggy Tolboom, Linda Wood, and Layne Cassidy

Photos by Layne Cassidy

The Texas Master Naturalist Annual Convention was held October 21 - 24, 2021, in Irving and the surrounding DFW area. The Prairie Oaks Chapter had 4 members attending in person. Some of the attendees shared their experiences and learnings from the conference.

Contribution by Peggy Tolboom

My first stop was the Fort Worth Nature Center for **Prairies at the Crossroads**. My best memory is being up close and personal with the bison that live there. They are descended from young bison that Mr. Goodnight saved at the urging of his wife. Buffalo hunters were indiscriminately killing all the bison to starve off the Native Americans. The hides were used for industrial belts, but enough were saved to keep the bison from being extinct.

Another lasting impression for me was a map of all the rivers flowing into and through the metroplex. The Trinity River has many tributaries. Along these rivers are parks and

nature centers. **Amy Martin**, Friday night's keynote speaker, spoke about the rivers and parks along them in her book ***The Wonders of North Texas Nature***. Amy picked out her favorite nature parks and described them in her book.

After the **Trees of North Texas** session, I've been trying to learn the different types of oaks. Did you know there are 2 main divisions of oaks? White oaks and red oaks. Acorns of red oaks take two years to mature. White oak acorns mature in one year. The acorns taste different, too.

I got worried by the presentation on invasive species. The lionfish has spread along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts and is destroying coral reefs. An insect, the Emerald Ash Borer, will kill ash trees all over the US. Nandina, a landscape plant, is invasive, and I have one.

This year, transportation was not provided to field sessions. On Saturday morning, I was signed up for **Making and Sustaining of a Nature Park**. I don't like driving by myself, so after breakfast, I went to about 3 tables asking, "What are you doing today?" The people would excitedly tell me about their upcoming sessions. One lady said she wished she were going on a field trip but was signed up elsewhere, so I didn't find anyone to go with. As I was headed to my car, the lady who said she wished she was going, caught me in the hall. She said she really couldn't sit through an indoor session. Her name was Lauren from the Abilene Big Sky Chapter. Lauren drove us, and we hiked the **Coppell Nature Center** together and became friends.

The **Coppell Nature Center** started with a high school committee who went to their city council asking for a nature center. Providentially, some land was under consideration: an area big enough for a sports field and with a creek for a nature center. Many volunteers built trails, including scouts, citizens, and employees from large companies during work days. Eventually, the city built an educational center. There are at least 2 city employees who organize educational programs. We were proudly told about their programs and how COVID was handled. We then went on a hiking tour through the woods and to the creek. I was impressed by their accomplishments, but I'm not sure they answered "the sustaining" part of the program. Later I wished I had asked: "How do you get volunteers to come out once a month to mulch the trails?"



Bison at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge

Contribution by Linda Wood

Favorite class session: **Identification of Trees of North Texas presented by Lisa Travis**

Lisa created a brochure using a dichotomous key to guide a person to identify various trees common in North Texas. I relearned the difference between simple and compound leaves as the mark that distinguishes the beginning of a compound leaf (the bud scar). She demonstrated how to use her brochure step by step with slides of different trees. As we went along through the slides, she provided useful pointers in tree identification, like the odds of a specific tree being in the area and mnemonic devices (in an alternate leaf arrangement, the leaves “walk up” and in an opposite leaf arrangement, the leaves “hop up”). **The best part is that Lisa has given us permission to use her guide as a model to create one specific to our area. I hope to have time to do this. If you are interested in helping, let me know.**

Three useful things that I learned:

1. If you are interested in volunteering in water related activities, there are two (maybe more) organizations that utilize volunteers, **Texas Stream Team** and **TPWD Texas Water Specialists**. Both require training. The Texas Stream Team sponsors water testing and monitoring, while Texas Water Specialists work with TPWD and has more educational outreach in schools and the public. I will probably pursue obtaining the Texas Water Specialist through TPWD.
2. When you are leading a public outreach event and someone asks you question and you do not know the answer, you should make a reply that makes it a discussion for learning. For example, ask the person what they think the answer to their question is and how can we/they come up with a satisfactory resolution. Your hope is to spark an interest in that subject for the person so that they want to learn more. This is from **David Powell, Heard Museum**; I attended a couple of his sessions.
3. From the **Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT)**, I learned how to mount flora samples and methods to help preserve them.

From keynote speaker:

Amy Martin, the Moon Lady, enlightened me about the nature opportunities around the DFW metroplex. Many of them I do not believe existed when I was growing up in Garland. My hope is that these opportunities are well publicized and utilized. Not everyone is as lucky as I was as a child. I could leave the city and visit the Grandparents at the ranch outside of Dublin, TX.

Contribution by Layne Cassidy

As a 2021 training class graduate, I was excited to attend the conference, specifically to meet in person and attend as many field sessions as I could. I brought my mom and aunt as guests.

I enjoyed visiting the **Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge** where we toured a prairie that was burned the day before and learned about the tools to conduct a prescribed burn. We saw their bison herd, and we explored the pastures to learn about how they manage invasive species and take care of their native grasses.

The next day, we visited the **Bob Jones Nature Center and Preserve** in Southlake. While exploring the trails, we learned the history of Bob Jones and his family, why they were important to the area, and how they have left a lasting legacy. It was fun to hike with a few naturalists from other chapters who were incredibly knowledgeable about plant life. I've included a picture of an Anglepod milkvine we found.

We finished the weekend by visiting the **Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT)** for a behind the scenes tour. The staff told us about the history and importance of their botanical collections and showed us the rooms where they process and store specimens. I appreciated their contagious excitement about what they do and why they do it! This month's edition of their journal includes an article about [the flora of Erath County](#).

On Friday, the key note speaker during lunch was **J. Drew Lanham**, an ornithologist and author from South Carolina. He spoke of the importance of teaching others about nature, especially someone who may not have access to it, by meeting each person where they are at. Whether a flower growing in a side walk crack or a pigeon on a city building, nature is all around us. I enjoyed his speech so I read his book, ***The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature***, which I highly recommend.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the conference, as did my mom and aunt. I can't wait for next year!



Anglepod milkvine in the Bob Jones Nature Center and Preserve



Gulf fritillary in the pollinator garden at Bob Jones Nature Center and Preserve



The earliest scientific description from 1836 of the Texas Bluebonnet at the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT)



Member Spotlight: Matt Olszewski

Article by Matt Olszewski

Matt is a newer member of POMN, having just joined after completing the 2021 training class. Nature conservation has been a lifelong interest of his, probably starting from his reading Ranger Rick magazine, the National Wildlife Federation's youth periodical. As a child he would recycle trash bags full of crushed aluminum soda and beer cans, getting 32 cents per pound in return. On into high school he became interested in Earth Day activities as well as other conservation issues of the day such as the controversial new government regulation—at least controversial along the Texas Gulf Coast near Corpus Christi where he was born and raised—requiring the use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) throughout the commercial shrimping industry.

Matt joined POMN because he and Layna, his wife, recently moved to Bluff Dale in eastern Erath County with the goal to raise meat goats for market and grow fruits and vegetables on their 25 acre farm. He sees the Texas Master Naturalist program as extremely helpful and informative with regards to engaging nature, including through the normal course of farming, with a knowledgeable perspective to be able to support and bolster an ecosystem in a healthy and sustainable manner.

His respect for nature is essentially an acknowledgment that nature and the environment are things that can be permanently impaired if they are not sufficiently respected. He feels that it is a challenge worth pursuing to try to do things in nature that will leave the world a better place. The training and experiences from POMN have provided valuable tools to support effort towards this goal.

He earns a living as a federal real estate lease contract procurement project manager. This involves finding and setting up offices for federal agencies to move into so that they have a location from which to perform their agency activities. As this type of work is desk bound and mostly administrative, he has found himself surprised by new interests in things like birding or thinking about soil—both of which were spurred on by POMN training class field experiences. For example with the recent increase in teleworking due to the coronavirus pandemic, he has been able to enjoy keeping a pair of binoculars at his office desk to be able to use whenever a red tailed hawk flies

by outside the window.

Lastly, Matt says that his primary interest in participating in POMN, oddly, isn't so much an interest in the nature related activities, but more of an interest in supporting the club in its administrative duties. Administrative duties may be less fun than nature activities, but administrative activities are required so that the club can focus on the nature activities that it wants to focus on.

More Awesome Insects at the Bosque River Trail Nature Center

Contribution by Marsha Stephens

"Eeeeew, What is That?"

Wheel Bug (*Arilus cristatus*), July 2021



Sometimes there are the weirdest things right there at your feet (see photo). This is a wheel bug, also known as an assassin bug, a common predator in the true bug group. But come on, what the dickens is that ummm red thing, protruding from the end of the bug's abdomen? Ah, handy Bugguide website to the rescue; that is a rectal gland, which occurs only in female wheel bugs. The gland is displayed when the bug is disturbed, and was once thought to be the source of a distinct sweet/pungent scent given off by the bug. However, research has shown that the scent arises from other glands on the bug's thorax. The function of the rectal gland remains unknown, although it is now thought to be associated with reproduction. It is pretty eye-catching.



“Check Out Those Jaws!”

Ground beetle (*Pasimachus* sp.), November 2021

Digging in the pollinator beds always yields surprises, like this predatory ground beetle, who was rudely disturbed from its pursuit of prey underneath the mulch. This group of beetles are recognizable by their large size (~2 inches long); shiny smooth elytra (covering abdomen), pronotum, and head; and distinctive large and complex mandibles that are used to capture and hold prey. They feed on other insects, and some species even capture and eat snails





New Officers Elected

During November's chapter meeting, 2022 chapter officers were elected.

President: Katie Moses

Vice President: Dayna Inbody

Secretary: Monica Cortez

Treasurer: James Gray

Their roles will take effect on January 1, 2022.

This year's nomination committee was comprised of five members: Karen Aho, Barbara Salter, Lynn (Gary) Wood, Matt Olszewski, and Doris Hasten.

Thank You

We would like to thank exiting officers Meaghan Peoples, Ashley Medeiros, and Edd Robinett for their service during 2021. We appreciate the dedication to serving members of the chapter and the community. Thank you for your leadership and contributions to making 2021 a great year of service!



Recovering America's Wildlife Act could bring \$50 Million Per Year to Texas

Guest Article by Michael Mitchell

Retired Game Warden and an El Camino Real chapter founder, now living in Austin. Michael will be teaching one of the chapter's training classes.

Photo by TPWD

Nature lovers have enjoyed the benefits of significant federal funding landmarks over the decades. Among those funding achievements are the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (1937), Dingell Johnson Act (1950), and the Endangered Species Act (1973). There is a new initiative of similar landmark proportions. This is a 21st Century wildlife conservation funding proposal.

A nationwide alliance of government, business, and conservation leaders united to combat one of America's greatest natural threats—the decline of our fish and wildlife and their natural habitats. Scientists estimate one-third of wildlife species are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered without additional funding.

Where past funding mechanisms have often focused upon hunted animals, this effort would focus upon preventing more than 12,000 species of fish and wildlife from becoming endangered. Over 1,300 of those species are here in Texas. These are called Species of Greatest Conservation Need. To see a list of them, see https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/nongame/tcap/sgcn.phtml

Recently, the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act, [H.R. 2773](#) and [S. 2372](#), was introduced into Congress. The bill would dedicate \$1.4 billion in existing revenues to species and habitat restoration, nature education, and recruiting people into outdoor recreation activities. If passed, Texas could receive about \$50 million annually to implement its Texas Conservation Action Plan, without any increase in citizens' taxes.

For our state, this could mean true transformative change to people and wildlife. It is truly a once-in-a-generation look at how to protect species.

It currently costs hundreds of millions of dollars yearly to address our nation's threatened and endangered species. With this funding, it is hoped that more proactive measures could be put into place to protect these resources.

The purpose of this bill is to increase and stabilize funding for states to address these concerns. For more information about the federal bill under consideration, see www.TxWildlifeAlliance.org. What an exciting time to be alive and see what could improve for a nation's wildlife!



A Thought for Today

"Heart and mind cannot be exclusive of one another in the fight to save anything.

To help others understand nature is to make it breathe like some giant: a revolving, evolving, celestial being with ecosystems acting as organs and the living things within those places -- humans included -- as cells vital to its survival."

J. Drew Lanham

From the book, *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*

2021 Officers of the Prairie Oaks Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program

President —Katie Moses

Vice-President — Meghan Peoples

Secretary — Ashley Medeiros

Treasurer — Edd Robinett

Statewide Sponsors of the Texas Master Naturalist program

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please email Layne Cassidy, at emilylaynecassidy@gmail.com.



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