

# Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 6, No. 3

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

March 2014

### Monarch Butterflies Drop, Migration May Disappear

MEXICO CITY January 29, 2014 (AP)  
By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press



The number of Monarch butterflies wintering in Mexico plunged this year to its lowest level since studies began in 1993, leading experts to announce Wednesday that the insects' annual migration from the United States and Canada is in danger of disappearing.

A report released by the World Wildlife Fund, Mexico's Environment Department and the Natural Protected Areas Commission blames the displacement of the milkweed the species feeds on by genetically modified crops and urban sprawl in the United States, as well as the dramatic reduction of the butterflies' habitat in Mexico due to illegal logging of the trees they depend on for shelter.

After steep and steady declines in the previous three years, the black-and-orange butterflies now cover only 1.65 acres (0.67 hectares) in the pine and fir forests west of Mexico City, compared to 2.93 acres (1.19 hect-

### E LOCALS

**MARCH 4:** Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **Program:** Douglas Hall, Beekeeper

**MARCH 1:** Tree Seminar **Location:** RiverBend Nature Center **Time:** 8:30 a.m.-noon. **This is an advance training opportunity.**

**MARCH 6:** Graywater **Location:** RiverBend Nature **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **This is an advance training opportunity. See page 5.**

**MARCH 5 & 6:** Farm and Ranch Show **Location:** MPAC **Time:** 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**MARCH 8:** Raptor ID Seminar **Location:** Hackberry Flat, Frederick, OK **Time:** 8:00 a.m. Meet at Atwoods at 8 a.m. to carpool seminar. **This is an advance training opportunity.**

**MARCH 11:** Master Naturalist Training Classes begin. **Location:** Bolin Science Hall room 213 at MSU **Time:** 7:00 p.m. Chapter members will receive *1 hour of volunteer time* for attending this session which will introduce trainees to the program. Let's make the new class feel welcome.

ares) last year. They covered more than 44.5 acres (18 hectares) at their recorded peak in 1995.

Because the butterflies clump together by the thousands in trees, they are counted by the area they cover.

The decline in the Monarch population now marks a statistical long-term trend and can no longer be seen as a combination of yearly or seasonal events, experts say.

The announcement followed on the heels of the 20th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which saw the United States, Mexico and Canada signing environmental accords to protect migratory species such as the Monarch. At the time, the butterfly was adopted as the symbol of trilateral cooperation.

“Twenty years after the signing of NAFTA, the Monarch migration, the symbol of the three countries’ cooperation, is at serious risk of disappearing,” said Omar Vidal, Omar Vidal, the World Wildlife Fund director in Mexico.

Lincoln Brower, a leading entomologist at Sweet Briar College in Virginia, wrote that “the migration is definitely proving to be an endangered biological phenomenon.”

“The main culprit is now GMO herbicide-resistant corn and soybean crops and herbicides in the USA,” which “leads to the wholesale killing of the monarch’s principal food plant, common milkweed,” Brower wrote in an e-mail.

While Mexico has made headway in reducing logging in the officially protected winter reserve, that alone cannot save the migration, wrote Karen Oberhauser, a professor at the University of Minnesota. She noted that studies indicate that the U.S. Midwest is the main source of the butterflies coming to Mexico. “A large part of their reproductive habitat in that region has been lost due to changes in agricultural practices, mainly the explosive growth in the use of herbicide-tolerant crops.”



While some gardeners and activists in the United States have started a movement to plant small patches of milkweed, the effort is in its infancy. Extreme weather — extreme cold snaps, unusually heavy rains or droughts in all three countries — have also apparently played a role in the decline.

It’s unclear what would happen to the Monarchs if they no longer migrated. The butterflies can apparently survive year-round in warmer climates, but populations in the northern United States and Canada would have to face bitter winters. There is also another small migration route that takes



Plum Lake kid fishing is Saturday, March 1 at Plum Lake by the softball field. TPWD could use volunteers to help weigh and measure fish and help the kids. ***This will count as volunteer hours from 10 to noon.***

## Looking for Adult Volunteers

San Antonio, TX – The Texas Brigades program is looking for 32 adult leaders. The Texas Brigades’ mission is to educate and empower youths with the leadership skills and knowledge in wildlife, fisheries, and land stewardship to become conservation ambassadors for a sustained natural resource legacy. This will be the 22nd year of the Brigades.

The ***application deadline is March 15, 2014*** and may be found at <http://www.texasbrigades.org/Applications/applications.html>.

Participants are selected through a competitive application process. They are looking for adult volunteers ages 21 and up. No experience is necessary, but applicants should have a strong interest in learning about wildlife, natural resources, livestock, and the environment and with working with high achieving youth.

The 4.5 days camps are held on private ranches across the state. Exact dates and locations are listed on the website. For more information, call 855-TXBRIGS or 210-556-1391 or e-mail [hholdsworth@texas-wildlife.org](mailto:hholdsworth@texas-wildlife.org).

the butterflies to California, but that has also registered declines.

The migration is an inherited trait. No butterfly lives to make the full round-trip, and it is unclear how they remember the route back to the same patch of forest each year, a journey of thousands of miles to a forest reserve that covers 193,000 acres (56,259-hectares) in central Mexico.

Inhabitants of the reserve had already noted a historic change, as early as the Nov. 1-2 Day of the Dead holiday, when the butterflies usually arrive.

“They were part of the landscape of the Day of the Dead, when you could see them flitting around the graveyards,” said Gloria Tavera, the director of the reserve. “This year was the first time in memory that they weren’t there.”

Losing the butterflies would be a blow for people such as Adolfo Rivera, 55, a farmer from the town of Los Saucos who works as a guide for tourists in the Piedra Herrada wintering ground. He said the butterflies had come later and in smaller numbers this year, a fact he attributed to a rainy winter. “This is a source of pride for us, and income,” Rivera said.

Butterfly guide Emilio Velazquez Moreno, 39, and other farmers in the village of Macheros, located inside the reserve, have been planting small plots of milkweed in a bid to provide food for the Monarchs if they decide to stay in Mexico year-round, which he said some do.

Sitting beside a mountainside patch of firs where the butterflies were clumping on the branches, Velazquez Moreno, a second-generation guide who has been visiting the butterflies since he was a boy, said “we have to protect this. This comes first, this is our heritage.”

# Chapter Activities for February 2014

*Photos by Terry McKee*



James Masuoka, Dian Hoehne and Penny Miller participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count on Lake Wichita at Wild Bird Rescue, February 16. The highlight of the count was several flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese flying overhead.



At the chapter booth, Cynthia Archibald hands out information to visitors during the Home and Garden Show, February 22.

## TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST, Rolling Plains Chapter Spring 2014 – TRAINING AGENDA

Welcome: Program Orientation Statewide program mission, local program goal and pre-test	Jim Hensley local chapter president Texas Master Naturalist	March 11 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Weather and Climatology	Bryan Rupp Meteorologist KFDX	March 13 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
Ornithology, bird watching and conservation	Penny Miller Texas Master Naturalist Wichita Falls	March 25 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Overview of freshwater fisheries biology and conservation	Robert Mauk District Fisheries Biologist Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept	March 27 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
<b>Field trip 1</b> Lake Gordon, fisheries and birding observation	Tom Lang TPWD Inland Fisheries	March 29 8:30 am- noon

Natural Resource Conservation Service perspective on grassland ecology and management	Jerry Payne NRCS office (retired)	April 1 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Introduction to Archeology	Patti Hamilton Texas Master Naturalist TX Archeology Society	April 3 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
<b>Field trip 2</b> Grassland and wildflower morphology and ecology	Paul Dowlearn Wichita Valley Nursery	April 5 9:00 am-noon River Bend
Vertebrate biology overview including historical biogeography with mammals as a model with functional morphology and geographic variation	Dr Ray Willis Professor of Biology MSU	April 8 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Overview of local geology and soils, stratigraphy, lithologies fossils and minerals geologic features of north Texas	Dr.Jonathan D Price Ph.D Assistant Professor of Geology Midwestern State University	April 10 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
Herpetology with general discussion of local amphibians and reptiles	Dr. Charles Watson Professor of Biology MSU	April 15 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
<b>Field trip 3</b> Hackberry Flat, Frederick, OK to observe wetland ecology and migratory waterfowl	Chapter Master Naturalists ODWC biologist Kelvin Schoonover and staff	April 19 8:00-noon car pool
Entomology overview including common local insects	Dr.Roy Vogtsberger associate professor Dept of Biology, MSU	April 22 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Arachnology Study of spiders	Dr. Roy Vogtsberger MSU	April 24 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
<b>Field Trip 4</b> Lake Arrowhead State Park Invasives, zebra mussel	Robert Mauk TPWD fisheries biologist	April 26 9:00 am-noon
Mycology Study of fungus	Dr. James Masuoka Assistant professor Biology Dept, MSU	April 29 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Ecological concepts with a discussion concerning biomes, trophic levels and energy movement through succession stages.	Rebecca Dodge associate professor geosciences program, MSU	May 1 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209
Chapter meeting	Rolling Plains Chapter	May 6 7:00 p.m. River Bend
Interpretive, volunteer opportunities & communication Evaluation/ test, wrap up	Jim Hensley Rolling Plains Chapter President	May 8 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 209



**BEST EXTERIORS**  
OF NORTH TEXAS



**GreywaterAuthority**  
[Wastewater Recycling Experts]

Best Exteriors of North Texas is excited to introduce greywater recycling for residential and commercial use. By partnering with Greywater Authority, we will offer custom greywater design and installation, consulting, workshops, and for the home handyman there is a do-it-yourself kit. We will even rent the tools needed to complete the job.

Best Exteriors of North Texas is owned and managed by Chris Cornman, a longtime resident of Wichita County. Chris, who has spent many years abroad helping under privileged children in third world countries, has personally witnessed the crisis of a worldwide water shortage. As Wichita Falls entered Stage 4 drought emergency, Chris went to work to bring awareness of water saving and recycling technologies to the masses. It is this mission that drives Chris and Best Exteriors of North Texas to help conserve and recycle as much water as possible, in Wichita County and surrounding areas.

It is true that our local water supply is in crisis, but we as a community can do something about it. If only ten people recycle water from their washing machines they can save an acre-foot of water annually. That's 325,851 gallons, roughly the size of a football field.

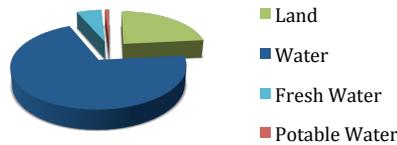
Workshop speaking points:

- What is Greywater?
- Why is it important?
- What are the rules, codes, and regulations?
- What are some common greywater systems?
- Can I use the same type of soaps?
- Design and Installation Concerns
- How much water can I expect to save?
- What plants can I water with greywater?
- How to install a simple greywater system at home?

75% of the Earth's surface is water, only 6% is fresh water, and only 1% is drinkable.

It's time to look at how we use our water, and ways to conserve and recycle it.

### Earth's Surface Composition



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## Eco Alert: Rolling Plains



The original prairie grasslands included tall and mid-grasses such as bluestems and grammas. Buffalo grass and other shortgrasses have increased under heavy, uncontrolled grazing. Much of the Rolling Plains

today can be described as a mesquite-shortgrass savannah. Stream floodplains are dominated by various hardwood species, and juniper is common on steep slopes along rivers. Steep slopes, cliffs, and canyons occurring just below the edge of the High Plains Caprock comprise the Escarpment Breaks area of the Rolling Plains. The Breaks are an ecotone or transition zone between the High Plains grasslands and the mesquite savannah of the Rolling Plains. Crop and livestock production are the major agricultural industries in this region. *(continued on page 6)*



## Upcoming Workshop May 16-17, 2014

Texas Amphibian and Mussel  
Watch Train the Trainer Workshops  
Fort Worth Nature Center  
9601 Fossil Ridge Road  
Fort Worth, TX 76135

Registration Required. Fee \$10 for materials per workshop.

Learn how to identify amphibian and freshwater mussel species and participate in scientific research as members of an important Texas Nature Tracker Partnership. Sponsored by the Fort Worth Nature Center and the Cross Timbers Texas Master Naturalist Chapter. Texas Amphibian Watch will be held on May 16, 6:00-10:00 p.m. and Texas Mussel Watch will be held on May 17, 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. *Texas Master Naturalist Approved Advanced Training*. CPE and TEEAC credit available for educators.

Contact the Fort Worth Nature Center at 817-392-7410 for information and registration.

Wildlife Diversity Program  
Science for Stewardship

**Saturday**  
**March 1, 2014**  
**8:30-12:30 pm**  
**River Bend**  
**Nature Center**  
2200 3rd Street  
Wichita Falls, TX



### Saving our Trees

Saturday, March 1, 2014

8:30-9:00	Registration. Give us your questions
9:00-10:00	<u>Evaluating Trees and Tips to Save Them</u> Gregory David, Certified Arborist, Muenster, Texas
10:00-10:30	<u>Dealing with Day to Day Issues- Insects, Disease, Pruning</u> Charlie Carr, Certified Arborist, Wichita Falls
10:30-11:00	<u>Stretching Soil Moisture to the Max</u> Paul Dowlearn, Professional Low Water Use Nurseryman, Wichita Falls
11:00-11:30	<u>Question/Answer Panel</u> With presenters
11:30-12:30	<u>RBNC Tree Tour</u> With presenters



For more information or to register  
Contact:  
Wichita County Extension 940.716.8610



Wichita County

Educational programs conducted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

# FACTOIDS FUN



High in New Zealand's mountains grow remarkable plants whose woolly hummocks resemble flocks of sheep. These rounded, ovine cushions are actually Raoulia plants, covered in woolly leaves; they are more commonly known as vegetable sheep because of their appearance. As the cushion grows, its center rots, forming spongy peat from which the plant's roots draw nutrients.

As the cushion grows, its center rots, forming spongy peat from which the plant's roots draw nutrients.

The tube-lipped nectar bat has the longest tongue relative to its total size. The tube-lipped nectar bat is 2.2 inches long, but its tongue measures 3.3 inches.



The kingfisher is the largest bird capable of hovering mid-flight.

(continued from page 5)

## ROLLING PLAINS DIRTY DOZEN

These plants have been identified as particularly worrisome in the Rolling Plains ecoregion. Go to the Invasive Plant Database and learn more. <http://www.texasinvasives.org>

- Chinese tallow tree - *Triadica sebifera*
- Japanese privet - *Ligustrum japonicum*
- Salt cedar - *Tamarix ramosissima*
- Johnson grass - *Sorghum halepense*
- Japanese honeysuckle - *Lonicera japonica*
- King Ranch bluestem - *Bothriochloa ischaemum* var. *songarica*
- Giant reed - *Arundo donax*
- Nutgrass - *Cyperus rotundus*
- Dallisgrass - *Paspalum dilatatum*
- Bermudagrass - *Cynodon dactylon*
- Prickly Russian thistle - *Salsola tragus*
- Siberian elm - *Ulmus pumila*

# RESOURCE CORNER

*Desert Solitaire, a Season in the Wilderness*

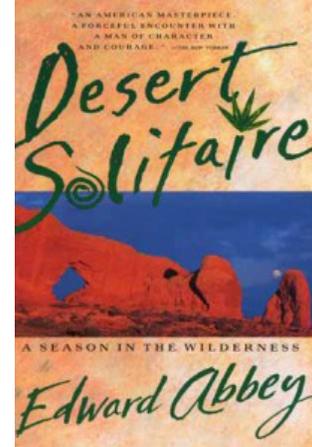
by Edward Abbey

Paperback: 269 pages

ISBN-10: 0671695886

ISBN-13: 978-0671695880

Price:\$14.95



When *Desert Solitaire* was first published in 1968, it became the focus of a nationwide cult. Rude and sensi-

tive. Thought-provoking and mystical. Angry and loving. Both Abbey and this book are all of these and more.

Here, the legendary author of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, *Abbey's Road* and many other critically acclaimed books vividly captures the essence of his life during three seasons as a park ranger in southeastern Utah.

This is a rare view of a quest to experience nature in its purest form -- the silence, the struggle, the overwhelming beauty. But this is also the gripping, anguished cry of a man of character who challenges the growing exploitation of the wilderness by oil and mining interests, as well as by the tourist industry.

Abbey's observations and challenges remain as relevant now as the day he wrote them. Today, *Desert Solitaire* asks if any of our incalculable natural treasures can be saved before the bulldozers strike again.

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