

# Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 7, No. 11

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

November 2015

### Greater Arid-Land Katydid (*Neobarrettia spinosa*)

by Debra Halter

On October 14th, I let my dogs outside about 9 PM. I noticed something sitting on a stick that I had leaning against the deck railing. It was a very large insect. Checking online, I discovered that it was a Greater Arid-Land Katydid. These predatory insects have reduced wings, but are quite capable of flying. “Red-eyed Devil” is a name that has been proposed by someone with first-hand experience of this insect’s behavior. This large and robust katydid (length is 3-3.5”) is distinctly aggressive, especially when threat-



*Neobarrettia spinosa* female (photo by Debra Halter)

ened. It will display its short spotted hind wings, stick out its extremely spiny legs, and open its huge jaws. It will attempt to bite. One observer said that when he wiggled his finger in front of one, it attacked it, biting, and drawing blood. The female has a long and thick ovipositor.

### LOCALS

**NOVEMBER 3:** Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Penny Miller will be speaking about the soil ecosystem.

**NOVEMBER 28:** Penitentiary Hollow Wild Walk **Location:** Lake Mineral Wells State Park & Trailway **Time:** 2-4 PM. Explore beautiful sandstone formations in remote areas only accessible on this guided hike. Join Park Interpreter David Owens on a wild walk, crawl and scoot through some of the most remote areas Penitentiary Hollow. Reservations are required. Call 940-328-1171. Held at Lake Mineral Wells State Park, 100 Park Road 71, Mineral Wells, TX, 76067. The program is free with paid park entrance fee or a State Park Pass.

**DECEMBER 1:** Chapter Christmas Party. There will be a \$5.00 per person cover charge. Please bring a dessert and an item or cash donation for Wild Bird Rescue. There will be a “white elephant” gift exchange. The gift should hold a value of \$15.00 or less. Tickets for the party may be purchased at the November meeting or by e-mailing Larry Snyder who will send you PDF copies of tickets. Tickets must be purchased by November 15th so we have a head count.

The Greater Arid-land Katydid is exclusively carnivorous and can be cannibalistic. It captures its prey by suddenly pouncing and sitting on it. There is one report of it attacking a bird nestling (<http://www.bioone.org/doi/full/10.1674/0003-0031-167.1.210>).

They are not common every year, but when they occur they tend to stay low in trees and are reported to prefer hanging around Prickly-pear Cactus (*Opuntia* sp.).

## Chapter Activities for October 2015



*One of Lynn's students nets monarchs during the Monarch tagging at Lake Wichita October 2.*



*During the Take Me Outside event at LASP October 10 James and guests along the trail dissect scat.*



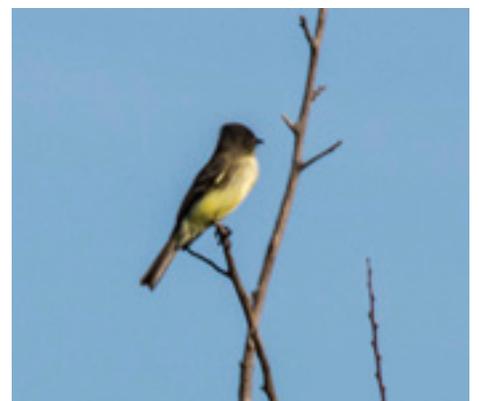
*Lynn leads a geocaching hike at LASP during the October 10 event.*

## Big Sit at Wild Bird Rescue

October 11 was a beautiful morning for the Big Sit. It did get a little windy late, but nowhere near the record cold we usually see on this event. The only bad thing was that there were so many Monarch butterflies soaring overhead that we couldn't concentrate on the birds. The following birders participated: Sue and Warren King, June and Terry McKee, Debra Halter, Charles Thueson, James Masuoka, Tami Davis, Penny Miller and Paula Savage.

### Here are the species seen on the count:

- Cattle Egret
- Great Egret
- Snowy Egret
- Great Blue Heron
- Am. White Pelican
- Common Grackle
- Great-tailed Grackle
- American Coot
- White-winged Dove
- Eurasian collared Dove
- Mourning Dove
- Canada Goose
- American Robin
- Blue Jay
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Killdeer
- Meadowlark specie
- Mallard
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Red-shafted Flicker
- Yellow-shafted Flicker
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
- Northern Mockingbird
- Northern Cardinal
- Starling
- Rock Pigeon
- Eastern Phoebe



- Cormorant
- Yellow-headed Blackbird
- Black-crown Night Heron

# Endangered Texas Poppy-mallow

*(Callirhoe scabriuscula)*

Texas Poppy-mallow (*Callirhoe scabriuscula*) is on both the Texas Endangered list and was listed on the US Endangered list in January of 1981.

Like the common winecup, the Texas poppy-mallow has deep red to purple cup-shaped flowers. You can tell the Texas poppy-mallow from the winecup because the stems are stiffly erect and thick as a pencil. Also, the leaves of Texas poppy-mallow have broad, irregularly-shaped lobes. It grows to a height of 2 1/2 feet or taller.

The poppy-mallow usually blooms from May to June. Bees use the flowers for nectar, pollen, and shelter, and help the plants reproduce by spreading pollen between plants. The flowers open each morning 2-3 hours after sunrise and close right before sunset. Within 30-90



minutes after pollination, the flowers close forever. If not pollinated, flowers continue to open each morning for 6-8 days.

The Texas poppy-mallow grows only in wind-blown, river-deposited deep sands near the upper Colorado River.

This wildflower is found in Coke, Mitchell, and Runnels counties in the Rolling Plains of Texas.

It is endangered because of habitat loss due to farming, pasture plant-

ing, sand mining, and urban development. Because it has such beautiful flowers, the poppy-mallow is threatened by people picking the flowers or collecting plants for their garden. If you see this plant, don't pick the flowers or disturb the area where it is growing. Take a picture instead! *Photograph of the Texas Poppy-mallow TPWD ©*



## TPW Television Series

*Airing Soon on PBS Stations*

**Dallas Paddling  
Shotguns  
& Bighorn Sheep**  
November 1-7, 2015

**Dark Skies Ranch  
Restoration &  
Rockin' Art**  
November 8-14, 2015

**Catching Up on  
Quail, Balmorhea  
Cool & RVs**  
November 15-21, 2015

Traverse the Trinity River near Dallas by canoe or kayak. Get some tips for safe, and accurate, shotgun shooting. Thirty years ago the Desert Bighorn Sheep was mostly gone from Texas. See what was being done to bring back the Bighorn.



Discover the spectacularly dark skies of West Texas, and meet some folks who are working to keep them dark. Take a trip back in time through the discovery of ancient rock art. Enjoy the beauty of a wide open Panhandle ranch.

See what's happening with Texas' four distinct quail species. Get above and below the clear water of Balmorhea Springs. Travel Texas with some snowbirds in their RVs.



# FUN FACTOIDS



Snow doughnuts, or rollers, are a rare natural phenomenon. If snow falls in a clump, gravity can pull it down over itself as it rolls. Normally it would collapse, but sometimes a hole forms,

Wind and temperature also play key roles.



Welwitschia mirabilis, the so-called 'living fossil' plant of the Namibia desert in Africa grows only two leaves, over hundreds of years. They grow continuously and can extend more than 13 feet.



The Pompeii worm is a bristle-covered worm that can survive in hotter conditions than any other animal. It lives inside vent

chimneys, where it's over 176 degrees Fahrenheit.

## Now Taking Membership Dues for 2016 Get Your 2016 Home & Garden Tickets

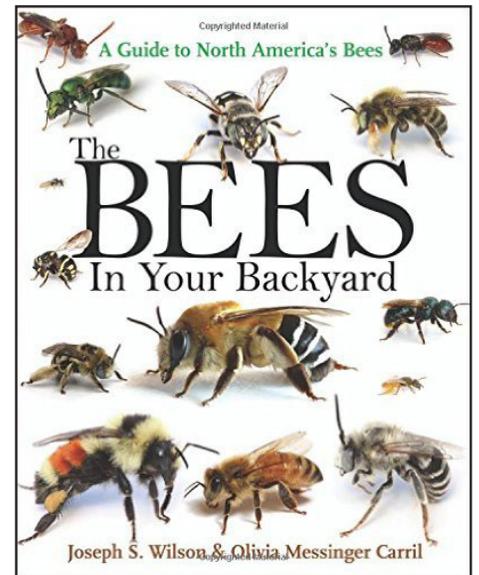
We'll be taking dues payments for 2016 at that meeting and we'll have tickets for the Home and Garden show available as well. Dues are \$15 for an individual and \$20 for a couple and Home and Garden Show tickets are \$5.00 each. We'll have a 100 tickets available. This is the only chapter fund raiser that we ask you to participate in. For each ticket sold your chapter gets \$4.00 in return.

# RESOURCE CORNER

*The Bees in your Backyard: A Guide to North America's Bees*

by Joseph S. Wilson  
Paperback: 288 pages  
ISBN-10: 0691160775  
Price: \$21.74

*The Bees in Your Backyard* provides an engaging introduction to the roughly 4,000 different bee species found in the United States and Canada, dispelling common myths about bees while offering essential tips for telling them apart in the field.



The book features more than 900 stunning color photos of the bees living all around us--in our gardens and parks, along nature trails, and in the wild spaces between. It describes their natural history, including where they live, how they gather food, their role as pollinators, and even how to attract them to your own backyard. Ideal for amateur naturalists and experts alike, it gives detailed accounts of every bee family and genus in North America, describing key identification features, distributions, diets, nesting habits, and more.

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