

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 8, No. 1

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

January 2016

Presidents Report

It's hard to believe 2016 is already upon us. With a new year comes new possibilities. I urge each of you to donate your time and talents to help the Rolling Plains Chapter continue in its mission of education and discovery.

As your current president, I appreciate your support, but a leader is only as good as the people in the organization. We are lucky to have great officers who have agreed to serve this year- Kay Vince continues as our vice-president, Judy Snyder begins her first full year as our secretary- thanks to her for agreeing to this job after filling in for six months last year, and our rock, Larry Snyder, man of many hats. Thanks also to Tami Davis, our webmaster (if you need instant information and current events, please check out the chapter website. And to Paula Savage (without whom you would not be reading this) we all appreciate the hard work and interesting items she writes up in the chapter newsletter. We also want to thank Kim Mason for editing articles for the Times Record News, and the members that have had stories published in those articles. Thank you to all chapter members that are out conducting surveys and spreading the word about the good things our chapter does, and to everyone for their dedication to the cause.

Make your new year's resolution to help out by submitting an article or items of interest to Paula at (pasavage@sbcglobal.net), by sending articles to Kim Mason (norman_kimmason@yahoo.com) for the local newspaper.

If you know of a guest speaker for the monthly meeting, or you want to do a program, please contact Kay Vince kay_vince@sbcglobal.net.

Spring training class begins March 8, so invite friends and interested nature lovers to take the classes. We are still working on the agenda, but you can find the application on our website. The cost is \$100.

And as always, call me if I may be of service.

Terry
723-4174 wk #
766-4097 hm#



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JANUARY 5: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Cassandra Shimpugh, director of Wild Bird Rescue is going to be our January speaker

JANUARY 1: First Day Hike **Location:** Lake Arrowhead Group Pavilion **Time:** 8:30 AM and 2:00 PM.

This is a volunteer activity for the chapter. Start 2016 by earning hours toward certification. You are welcome to help out at either hike- the 5 mile hike starting at 8:30 a.m.

or the 2 p.m. hike at the Dragonfly Trail. If you help with the 5 mile hike from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m you may count as partner hours. The 1/2 mile Dragonfly trail guided hike from 2 to 3 p.m. is chapter hours. We usually have adult and children at this event and everyone is welcome. *Reserve the date on your new calendar for January 1!*

FEBRUARY 27-28: Home and Garden Show **Location:** MPAC **Time:** 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM. on Feb 27th and 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Feb 28th. Tickets are \$6.00 if purchased from our Chapter. See Larry Snyder.



Invasive Spotlight: Tropical Spiderwort

(*Commelina benghalensis*)

Tropical spiderwort, native to Asia and Africa, is an invasive perennial plant that grows quickly to form dense, pure stands, outcompeting other plants, especially those that are low-growing. Also known as Benghal dayflower, it has been reported recently as a problem in cotton fields in Alabama. In pastures, it can become the dominant species. In rice and other lowland crop it can withstand flooding and waterlogged conditions. It can also be found in cultivated lands, field borders, gardens, grasslands, roadsides, disturbed areas, and waste places. Because it can root from the nodes, light cultivation can break plants and spread them. One plant can produce as many as 1600 seeds.



Photographer: Herb Pilcher Source: USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org



Photographer: Byron Rhodes Source: University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Top: Tropical Spiderwort aerial flower. **Above:** The underground flowers of the tropical spiderwort which look like swollen nodes

young leaves are hairy. The stems are sprawling.

Unlike other spiderworts or dayflowers, tropical spiderwort produces both aerial and underground flowers. The aboveground flowers are very small with two relatively large lilac-to-purple/lavender (not blue) upper petals and a small whitish lower petal, and are present from the spring into the fall. Underground flowers, which grow on burrowing rhizomes, are white and very small.

Tropical spiderwort is found in 6 states, but has so far not found its way to Texas. Because of its potential for ecological and agricultural harm, it is one of the “Dirty Dozen” pest species identified by the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Council. It

therefore is one of the “Report It!” alert species on the Texasinvasives.org website and reporting app. It is also on the Federal Noxious Weed List.

If you believe you have found tropical spiderwort, please report this species at the Texasinvasives.org website!

As a monocot, the leaves of the tropical spiderwort have parallel veins and are lily-like. Unlike grasses, the leaves and stems are thicker and more succulent. The stems are sprawling and will creep along the ground. Leaf blades are alternate, and ovate to lanceolate, 1-3 in (2.5-7.5 cm) long, 0.5-1.5 in (1.3-3.8 cm) wide. Unlike other dayflowers (or spiderworts) the

Yellow-collared Scape Moth Spotted at Hagarman National Wildlife Refuge

by Debra Halter

While visiting Hagarman National Wildlife Refuge on November 8, 2015, Terry and June McKee and I stopped by their visitor center. Noticing a large number of butterflies around their flower garden, we went to observe. Among the bees, flies, Queens, Gulf Fritillaries and even a late female Monarch, we spotted an unusual insect. It had black wings, was almost wasp-like in appearance, with orange just behind its black head. We had discovered a Yellow-collared Scape Moth.

The species is distinctive in that it is one of the few moths that fly during the daylight. Because it is so visible to predators, it had to



devise a way to protect itself. It is possible that its coloration is a warning that it may be poisonous. Or it could be mimicking dangerous wasps or other poisonous moths.

Seen in summer and fall, the

Yellow-collared Scape Moth is found from Texas to Canada, from the Rocky Mountains to the East Coast. The color of the collar may be orange or yellow (more yellow in the Midwest). The forewing is black with a thin yellow stripe extending along the outer basal half. The hind wing is usually hidden, but is translucent with black margins and veins. The larvae feed at ground level at night, feeding on grasses and sedges. They are brown with an orange head. They overwinter as half-grown larvae.

A scape is defined as stalk. The name “scape moth” might refer to the long, scapelike stalk at the base of each antenna.

Open Carry of Firearms: Texas Parks and Wildlife Volunteer Policy

During the last Texas Legislative Session, House Bill 910 was passed and allows those who have a license to carry a handgun to openly holster a handgun beginning on January 1, 2016. As a result of that new legislation TPWD has instituted an open carry of a handgun policy for staff. TPWD volunteers are expected to follow TPWD policies, procedures and guidelines as staff.

General Policy- Members of the public are authorized to carry firearms in accordance with state law in the areas of the Department that are generally accessible to the public. Department volunteers will not take actions to discourage members of the public from the lawful carrying of firearms in areas of the Department that are generally accessible to the public.

On-Duty Prohibition for Volunteer Open Carry- Volunteers shall not openly carry firearms either on Department premises or while on-duty for the Department unless the volunteers has specific volunteer duties that require firearms handling and the volunteer is handling firearms in the manner required for performing those volunteer duties. A non-commissioned volunteer holding a handgun license under Government Code Chapter 411 may possess a handgun on department property if carried in a manner in which the presence of the handgun is not openly discernible to the ordinary observation of a reasonable person.

Prohibition Relating to Department Clothing and Weapons- A volunteer whether on or off-duty, shall not wear any clothing, identification card, or other items identifying the volunteer as a Department volunteer while openly carrying a firearm. A volunteer with a job duty that requires the handling or transportation of firearms or other firearms equipment may possess that equipment while wearing an approved uniform or Department identification in a manner approved by a volunteer supervisor.

Visitors to Non-Public Secure Portions of Department Facilities- The Department may post signs designating non-public secure areas of Department facilities pursuant to Government code 411.207. Non-commissioned visitors to the designated non-public secure areas shall be directed to secure any personally owned weapons in their locked personal vehicle prior to entering a Department secure area.

FAQs- Open Carry of Firearms- TPWD Volunteer Policy

Q: Beginning on January 1st, can everyone open carry in the State of Texas?

A: No, only those holding the proper license.

Q: Can TPWD make a policy so people cannot open carry at our facilities?

A: No, the law specifically addresses that, and provides for a penalty to the agency.

Q: The new TPWD policy states... Volunteers shall not openly carry firearms either on Department premises or while on-duty for the Department unless the volunteer has specific job duties that require firearms handling and the volunteer is handling firearms in the manner required for performing those job duties....what are some examples of a specific job duty that requires firearms?

A: These would include volunteers acting as guides for hunts and providing hunter education to name a few.

Q: Are there certain types of guns that are legal to open carry and certain kinds that are not?

A: The law states a person with a license to carry may openly carry a

handgun. A handgun is defined as any firearm that is designed, made or adapted to be fired with one hand. There are no handguns that are prohibited by law.

Q: What is legal for open carry and what is not (ie- does the gun have to be holstered, does the person carrying the gun have to carry their license or present their license?)

A: The handgun must be in a belt or shoulder holster. The law does not specify what that holster has to look like. There is specific provision in the law that requires the person to carry the license on them. Common sense indicates most people would have it with them just as they do their driver's license or hunting/fishing license. There is no requirement under the law absent a peace officer's reasonable suspicion or probable cause to present their license

Q: What actions should I take if I am concerned or think someone is acting inappropriately when they are in the building carrying a gun?

A: Contact a law enforcement officer.

Q: TPWD has some facilities that are used for educational purposes can those facilities get an official design-

nation and ban guns?

A: Certain places are listed in the penal code as places where a firearm cannot be carried at all – even by someone with a license to carry. Facilities like Sea Center Texas are not an educational institution as that term is used in statutes.

Q: Can I ask someone to see the license to carry?

A: A peace officer may however it is advised to only do so in situations where the officer has probable cause or reasonable suspicion to believe the person is committing some offense. Volunteers should not ask to see the license as it would be a violation of the new firearms policy. (Volunteers will not take actions to discourage members of the public from the lawful carrying of firearms in areas of the Department that are generally accessible to the public.)

Q: Can I open carry a gun during while volunteering?

A: No, TPWD policy regarding the carrying of firearms applies to persons who are volunteers on behalf of the department.



Ball lightning is an unexplained atmospheric electrical phenomenon. The term refers to reports of luminous, spherical objects which vary in diameter from pea-sized to several meters. It is usually associated with thunderstorms, but lasts considerably longer than the split-second flash of a lightning bolt.

The different species of parachute flower have long flower tubes lined with inward pointing hairs that temporarily hold insects trapped, to ensure they end up covered in pollen before exiting.



Deep in the Indian Ocean, near extremely hot hydrothermal vents, where scalding hot water erupts in tall, black columns, lives an extraordinary species of snail called chrysomallon squamiferum, commonly known as scaly-foot gastropod. The harsh environment has caused the snail to develop a unique exoskeleton. Its outer shell is covered with a layer of iron, and its soft fleshy foot that protrudes from the under the shell is protected by hard mineralized scales made of iron sulphides. Scaly-foot gastropod is the only animal on Earth known to utilize iron in this way.

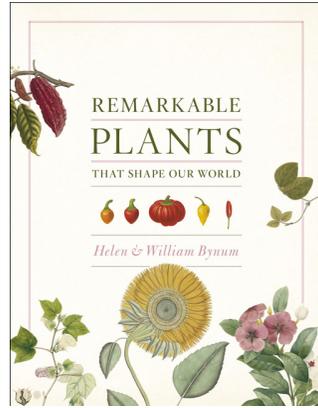
Now Taking Membership Dues for 2016 Get Your 2016 Home & Garden Tickets

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 \$6.00 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

Remarkable Plants That Shape Our World
by Helen & William Bynum
Hardcover: 240 pages
ISBN-10: 022620474X
Price: \$27.09



Remarkable Plants celebrates the wonder and utility of the green kingdom, taking a detailed

look at how plants have shaped our world. It focuses on eighty key species and richly explores their history, highlighting their importance and bringing to light surprising stories. Organized thematically into eight sections, the book starts with “Transformers” (including rice, beans, olives) and moves through sections such as “Heal and Harm” (poppy, aloe, strychnos) and “Revered and Adored” (lotus, frankincense, rose). Each species is introduced with its common and scientific names and followed by an exploration of its cultural, historical, botanical, and symbolic associations. Hundreds of botanical illustrations show full plants as well as highlight distinctive leaves, blooms, and fruits.

Rooted in one of the world’s most important and renowned temples of greenery, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Remarkable Plants is a symbiotic balance of science and art that will open readers’ eyes to the deep influence of the natural world on our modern one.

Chapter Contacts:

Terry McKee, 766-4097, dgm59@aol.com; Kay Murphy, Vice President 704-0406, kay_vince@sbcglobal.net; Judy Snyder, Secretary 569-4534, judithksnyder@gmail.com; Larry Snyder, Treasurer 569-4534, lastime64@gmail.com

Committees Chairperson:

Paula Savage, Newsletter Editor and Designer 691-0231, pasavage@sbcglobal.net; Tami Davis, Website Manager 224-013, tamieducator@gmail.com; Dian Hoehne, Communication Chair 692-7234

Advisor: Robert Mauk, TPWD Advisor 766-2383, Robert.Mauk@tpwd.Texas.gov