

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 8, No. 2

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

February 2016

Schedule of Upcoming Events

by Terry McKee

I hope everyone has enjoyed their leisurely January, because things are about to get hopping.

February is the start of our busy season. We have lots of opportunity for volunteer hours this month.

February 12-15 is the **Great Backyard Bird Count**. Anyone can count on their own time. For info go to GBBC.BIRDCOUNT.ORG or **join the chapter event Sunday, February 14 behind Wild Bird Rescue on Lakeshore Drive.**

February 27 and 28 is the **Home and Garden show**. Lots of volunteer time working at our booth as we recruit people to take the training class. We will have a volunteer sign-up sheet at the **day from 9 to 6 and Sunday 11-5**. There will be some guest speakers at the H&G show that will count as advanced training as well. More on that at the meeting.

February 13 is an advanced training **class on Birds of Prey**. The class will be held at Hackberry Flat near Frederick, Oklahoma from 9 a.m. to noon. For those that want to carpool, we will leave from Atwoods at 8 in the morning.

Of course, our #1 request in February is getting the word out about the **2016 training class that begins March 8**.

And we head into a busy March with the **Plum Lake Kid Fishing Rodeo, March 5 from 10 a.m. to noon, followed by the Plum Lake cleanup starting at noon**. You can do both events or either.

This organization is only as good as its members, and based on what our chapter has accomplished in the past, I am expecting great things this year. We are a small chapter but we have a big heart and a willingness to get things done. Time to roll up our sleeves and get to work!

LOCALS

FEBRUARY 2: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Betty Bowles and Lauren Jansen speaking about their experiences at the Dalquest Research Site.

FEBRUARY 13: Monthly Birding Field Trip **Location:** Lake Arrowhead State Park **Time:** 8:00 AM. Walk last about 1 hour and covers approximately a half mile.

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 Synder.

MARCH 12: Penitentiary Hollow Wild Walk **Location:** Lake Mineral Wells State Park & Trailway **Time:** 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM Explore beautiful sandstone formations in remote areas only accessible on this guided hike. This is a strenuous walk involving some crawling through tight spaces in rock cracks, crevices and short caves. Expect to get dirty! Reservations are required. Call 940-328-1171 ext 222. 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.



meeting. **Hours are Satur-**

Threatened Palo Duro Mouse

(Peromyscus truei comanche)

The Palo Duro Mouse is listed as a State Threatened species in Texas.

The Palo Duro Mouse's closest relative is the Pinon Mouse, which is found in extreme western Texas and eastern New Mexico. It became isolated from the Pinon mouse about 10,000 years ago. Some Palo Duro Mice have been known to live up to two and a half years in the wild.

Adults are cinnamon brown on their upper body with white underparts and feet. They have a reddish brown lateral line (stripe along their side). Their large ears (about 3/4 inch) and a long tail (1/2 of their total length). Its total length is 8 inches, 4 inches of body and 4 inches of tail.

Palo Duro Mice are relatively secretive creatures, emerging from burrows underground or crevices in rocks primarily at night. They are known to eat mainly the seeds of juniper, mesquite and prickly pear cactus.

Very little is known about the Palo Duro Mouse's reproductive cycle. The few studies that have been conducted have found pregnant females throughout



Top: Palo Duro Mouse **Above:** Pinon Mouse

the spring, summer and early fall months. This suggests that Palo Duro Mice may be able to breed when weather conditions and food availability are favorable to the survival of young mice.

Most rodents including mice are generally thought of as pests because of their potential to spread disease, damage crops and property. However, because Palo Duro Mice inhabit the steep canyon walls, they rarely come in contact with people and therefore pose little threat to humans.

Probably of most interest about the Palo Duro Mouse is the habitat which it calls home. It's adapted to live on the steep, rocky, canyon walls typically having only a few juniper trees and very little grass. Living in this rugged terrain helps to protect them from many predators like the coyote, bobcat, hawks, and owls that commonly prey upon small rodents. Rattlesnakes remain its major predator.

The Palo Duro Mouse is found only in three counties in the world, Randall, Armstrong, and Briscoe Counties. The largest populations are known to exist in Palo Duro Canyon and Caprock Canyon State Parks.

Chapter Begins Restoration Work on the Dragonfly Trail at Lake Arrowhead State Park

The long drought has taken its toll on the Chapters sponsored Dragonfly Trail at Lake Arrowhead State Park. A group of members braved a very cold January Day to walk the trail and made an assessment of what needs to be done to put the trail back in shape.



Terry McKee, Judy Snyder, Debra Halter, and Jane McGough walk the Dragonfly Trail.

Texas Master Naturalist
17th Annual Meeting ★
OCTOBER
21 - 23, 2016
MONTGOMERY, TX
<http://www.txmn.org>

La Torretta
 LAKE RESORT & SPA

We are happy to announce the Texas Master Naturalist Program's 2016 Annual Meeting October 21, 22 and 23rd, 2016 at La Torretta Resort in Montgomery, Texas. Put the dates on your calendar now!



Male stone flies attract females by drumming their abdomen against a hard surface. For this reason, these insects are popularly known as “primitive drummers.”

Some sea snakes can breathe partially through their skin, allowing it to hold its breath for 2-3 hours for longer dives!



A house wren can feed 500 spiders and caterpillars to its nestlings during a single summer afternoon.

Invasive Spotlight: Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*)



Cogongrass requires full to partial sun, which allows the grass to take over pastures, meadows and even wooded areas quickly. This

perennial grass utilizes disturbed ecosystems such as rights of way as well. It spreads via white, scaly rhizomes that create dense circular mats. The stiff leaves grow up to 4 feet in height and an inch wide, have finely serrated margins and an off-centered white midrib, are covered in hairs on the upper surface at the base, and terminate in a sharp point. Silky white flowers

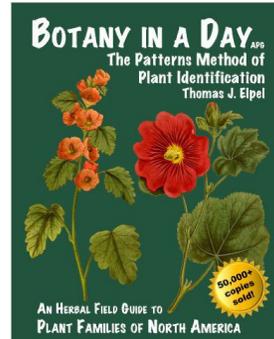
form on a panicle that can reach up to 11 inches long.

Cogongrass produces thousands of tiny tufted seeds that resemble dandelion seeds and are carried by wind. Both rhizomes and seeds can be carried to new sites via contaminated soil and equipment.

The dense mats of cogongrass prohibit the growth of other plant species and create a serious fire hazard as they alter the normal fire regime of a landscape. Fires burn hotter and occur more frequently where cogongrass is present, which can destroy native plant species, displacing native animal and insect species by eliminating food sources, shelter and nesting sites.

RESOURCE CORNER

Botany in a Day: The Patterns Method of Plant Identification by Thomas J. Elpel
 Paperback: 235 pages
 ISBN-10:1892784351
 Price:\$24.20



Looking for a faster, easier, and engaging way to identify plants? Related plants have similar characteristics, and they often have similar uses. Rather than learning new plants one-at-a-time, it is possible to learn them by the hundreds, based on plant family patterns.

Each family of related plants has unique patterns for identification. Learn to recognize these patterns, and discover them again and again in the plants you encounter. It is possible to instantly recognize a plant never before seen, and in many cases, to know its edible or medicinal properties on the spot-even before you have identified it down to the species!

Botany in a Day is changing the way people learn about plants. A one-day tutorial introduces eight of the world's most common plant families, applicable to more than 45,000 species of plants. Master these eight patterns and have the skills to recognize an astonishing number of plants on any continent. Add to your repertoire by keying out entirely unknown plants and learning additional family patterns.

Botany in a Day is principally written for North America, but used and adored by readers all over the world. It is used as a textbook in numerous universities, high schools, and herbal schools. This book is widely used in nature programs and promoted in national parks. *Botany in a Day* is your passport connection to nature and discovering the amazing world of plants!

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