

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

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<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

April 2017

President Report

by Terry McKee



As you can tell from the photo of the March 25 training class field trip to Lake Arrowhead State Park, we have a great class of trainees this year. Everyone had fun learning about birds and hiking the Dragonfly Trail. Thanks to Keith (LASP Superintendent) and Laura (LASP park interpreter), everyone had binoculars, and trainees learned to identify several types of birds, while enjoying their hike around the park.

We'd like to formally welcome the 2017 trainees: Alice Blanco, Carl Brown, Cindy and Vince Huckabee, Rob Robertson, Charles Schotta, Megan Sternadel, Don Swift, Sandy Underwood and John Yates. We hope you all decide to continue with the Texas Master Naturalist program once you have completed your training. You are a fun group to be around.

We have several projects coming up including the April 8 bass casting program from 11 am to 8 p.m. at the Downtown Farmer's Market. We will be helping Lake Arrowhead State Park personnel showcase fishing to the kids. We will need several volunteers. I will be posting a sign-up sheet shortly.

Due to training class, there will be no April meeting. Our regular monthly meetings will resume May 2.

E LOCALS

APRIL 4: *There will be no regular chapter meeting April 4th due to our 2017 training class. Location: Bolin Science Hall room 213 at Midwestern State University Tuesday night at 7:00PM*

APRIL 15-MAY 15: The Great Texas Birding Classic – deadline April 1. <http://tpwd.texas.gov/events/great-texas-birding-classic>



We still have room for volunteers in the 1 to 3 and 3 to 6 time slots. Please let Terry know as soon as possible.

MAY 13: Spring Wingding – Dinosaur Valley State Park <http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/dinosaur-valley>

MAY 5-7: Pollinator PowWow—<http://www.texaspollinatorpowwow.org/>

Wild Bird Rescue Bird of the Month: Brisbane, Mississippi Kite

by Maryruth Prose

Wild Bird Rescue, Inc. is a partner agency with the Rolling Plains Texas Master Naturalist. In addition to caring for sick, injured and orphaned wild birds, WBR also maintains several “Avian Ambassadors” for educational programs for the community. The educational birds cannot be released into the wild since their injury would not allow it to take care of itself. I thought it would be fun to get up close and personal with each of these special creatures by featuring one each month.

“Brisbane” is a Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) who came to the rescue as a nestling in the summer of 2015. This small raptor had broken his wrist which did not heal well enough to go on a 3,000+ mile migration. Being unreleasable, he easily became an ambassador. Not yet mature, Brisbane still has a banded tail and a streaked body. At maturity, sometime this summer, his outer wings and tail will become a dark gray; his head and inner wings will be a lighter gray, almost white. There will be a pronounced black mask across the scarlet eyes, if all goes according to nature’s plan. The Kite’s clearly angled, pointed wings, nearly 3 feet tip to tip help identify it in the field. It’s long and dark tail is rectangular in outline

with just a hint of a notch at its tip. Seen from below, it looks like the Batman logo! It is almost impos-



sible to distinguish the males from the females. Mississippi Kites utter a piercing “phee phew” whistle.

Since the breeding area for Kites is across the central and southern United States, most of us are familiar with this small raptor. However, they have been regularly recorded in southern New England states. Migrating in late April/early May from South America, kites nest in colonies in a variety of living trees. Along my creek, they nest in the tall pecans. In the last several decades they are nesting more in urban environments including college campuses, cemeteries, parks and golf courses where there hear

a lot of cursing! Kites may appropriate nests, but usually they will reuse their own old nests. They lay one clutch of two eggs. The eggs will hatch in 30 to 32 days and both parents attend to the nestlings. They will leave the nest in 30 to 35 days.

Unlike most raptors, which perch when eating, Mississippi Kites generally feed on the wing. While golfers may curse at them, they are economically important as they eat cicada, grasshoppers and other crop-damaging insects, along with beetles, crickets and dragonflies. They will eat mice and other small vertebrates. Along with owls and other hawks, kites dispose of invertebrate exoskeletons and other indigestible parts of their prey by casting in neatly formed pellets.

Except for its direction, fall migration for Mississippi Kites is little different from their passage

in the spring. Although fall flocks include not only the adults, but also the yearlings and the current year’s juveniles. Presently, the Wild Bird Rescue is housing three young kites that were not mature enough to endure the fall migration. They will be released this Spring when others return to the area in April/

Mississippi Kite
Ictinia mississippiensis



May. With the information now available, indication is that Mississippi Kites follow the overland route in migration; through Mexico and Central America.



Invasive Spotlight

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (*Halyomorpha halys*)

Online registration for the Nacogdoches PowWow ends April 26, 2017

Hotel reservations must be made by April 4, 2017 to secure the special event rate

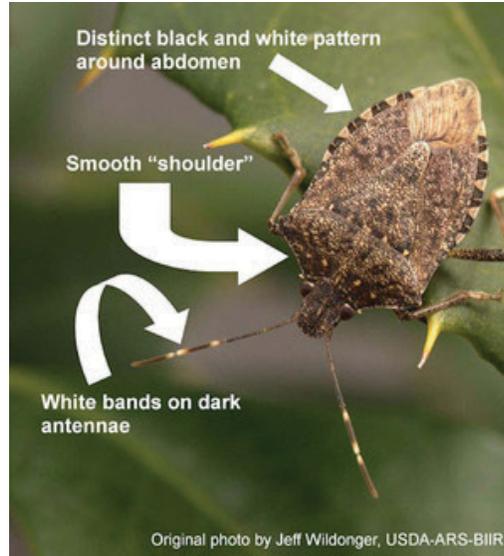
A pollinator conservation conference for Texas and beyond.

We are ever pleased to present to you some of the best and brightest of minds and committed professionals in pollination conservation today.

Mission: To provide education, resources and networking opportunities to natural resource management professionals and volunteers-- and the community at large-- and to empower them all in conserving our pollinators and their habitats across the landscape.

As a capacity builder in pollinator conservation, the TEXAS POLLINATOR POWWOW is unique in that it has active and enthusiastic participation from non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, and local, state and federal governments -- as speakers, exhibitors and attendees. Our pollinator conferences support the

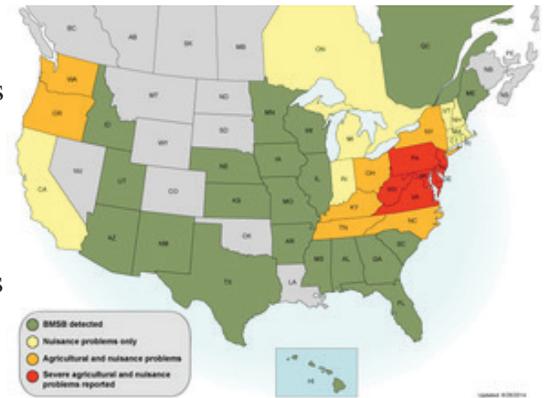
The brown marmorated stink bug, which came to the United States from Asia, is not only threatening to destroy vegetable crops and orchards where established, but is also causing homeowners to walk around holding their noses



Though the majority of its lifecycle is spent outdoors, the insects become a smelly indoor nuisance when they invade homes seeking shelter. As temperatures drop in Texas, pests will begin to search for shelter from the winter elements and often end up in homes and other structures.

Brown marmorated stink bug feeds on *Eucommia elmoides*, a small tree threatened in the wild in China, which is commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine. Here however, this pest also attacks a variety of fruit and ornamental trees, including peach, pear, apple, plum and mulberry.

The invasive pest was accidentally imported from Asia into North America in the late 1990s and was first identified in 2001. By 2004, the stink bug was widely identified on farms and forests throughout the mid-Atlantic states, with some growers of sweet corn, peppers, tomatoes, apples, and peach reporting total losses that year.



Since introduction, this pest has rapidly spread across the United States. It has been detected in Texas on multiple occasions.



European Honeybee, courtesy Jessica Beckham participants' community outreach and education efforts, and provide opportunities for them to share information and research, to build relationships and craft project part-

nerships, and to position potential grantees with funders.

All these laudable organizations and individuals are effectively engaged in a multitude of best

practices in pollinator conservation and monitoring, seed and plant research, production and distribution, citizen science programming, natural resource and wildlife management of private and public lands, authoring and artistry, and scientific coordination of all points between in the arena of pollination ecology.

Everyone involved with the TEXAS POLLINATOR POWWOW (whether the Board, the speakers, the exhibitors or the participants) is eager to meet you on your own level of interest or expertise, whatever that may be. Please join with us. We'll "talk the talk, and walk the walk" together.

Pendant nests are impressive complicated structures that hang down from branches in mid-air. Made by birds like orioles and weavers, they are sacs of elegantly woven twigs and grasses. The nest is as big as a soccer ball, oval, stretched with a hallway and an entrance with a 10cm opening on the underside made with less dense plaited grass.



A fogbow is similar to a rainbow in the sense that it is created from the same process of sunlight refraction and reflection. However, rather than being formed by raindrops, a fogbow is formed by the water droplets found in fog, mist or cloud. Some fogbows contain faint visible shades of blue and red.

Lady bugs may have as many as 16 spots while others may have no spots. They can eat up to 50 aphids a day and the females will lay up to 1,000 eggs within a few months, generally from spring to early summer.



Crested Caracara Seen in Clay County

by Debra Halter

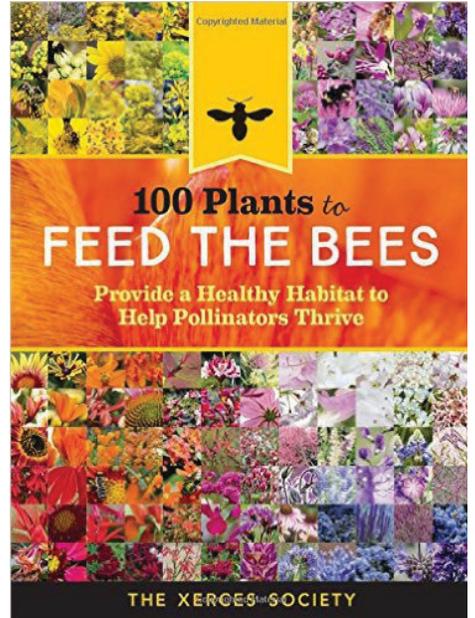
Terry McKee and I found a Crested Caracara north of Henrietta this morning. It is along FM 1197, between McNeely and Graf Roads. A local rancher said there are two and they've been there for a while. By the way, this is the first documented record of this species in Clay County. The only other was a sight record by Tad Gose at Lake Arrowhead State Park on 2 May 1995.



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RESOURCE CORNER

100 Plants to Feed the Bees: Provide a Healthy Habitat to Help Pollinators Thrive
by Xerces Society
Paperback: 240 pages
ISBN-13: 978-1612127019
Price: \$11.49 on Amazon



The international bee crisis is threatening our global food supply, but this user-friendly field guide shows what you can do to help protect our pollinators. The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation offers browsable profiles of 100 common flowers, herbs, shrubs, and trees that attract bees, butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds. The recommendations are simple: sow seeds for some plants — such as basil, rhododendron, and blueberries — and simply don't mow down abundant native species, including aster, goldenrod, and milkweed. 100 Plants to Feed the Bees will empower homeowners, landscapers, apartment dwellers — anyone with a scrap of yard or a window box — to protect our pollinators.

“A wonderful and much-needed book that will inspire and inform the creation of bee-friendly wildflower gardens. Perhaps we can turn our gardens, neighborhoods, towns, and cities into vast, colorful havens for bees, butterflies, and other vital insects!”

— Dave Goulson, biologist, founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, and author of *A Sting in the Tale*

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