

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 9, No. 5

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

May 2017

President Report

by Terry McKee

Congratulations, Penny Miller! 4000 Volunteer Hours Milestone Reached!



Penny Miller is not one to rest on her laurels. In fact, Penny never rests. She is a dynamo! Whether she is doing a mussel watch, rehabbing a wild bird or dealing with issues nature or community related, she is up for any challenge. Penny is one of our original charter members from 2001. Without her leadership, I doubt the Rolling Plains Chapter program would be as strong as it is. She gives of her time to teach the ornithology section of our training class and is eager to lead monthly bird walks or to help people become better bird-watchers by sharing her knowledge of all things avian.

I could go on and on about all the committees on which she has served (just in the time I have known her), but the highest recommendation I can give is that she is an example of what everyone should strive to be—dedicated, eager to learn, eager to teach and a friend to nature.

Congratulations, Penny Miller, on reaching your 4000 volunteer hour service milestone.



Also Congratulations, Paula Savage on reaching your 1000 volunteer hour service milestone.

E LOCALS

MAY 2: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Chris Flis Museum Director and Head Paleontologist at Whiteside Museum of Natural History will speak about the museum, their projects, and how to volunteer.

MAY 5: River bend nature center-Bugfest *volunteers needed* 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

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

MAY 6: *Volunteers needed*, LASP Dragonfly Trail Boy Scout activity, sations along the trail 9 am to 11 am.

MAY 9: *Advanced Training* at WF Museum at MSU starting at 5 pm, Birds In Art by Dr Marsden.

MAY 9, 11, 16, 18: After school fishing at South Weeks Pond 4:30 to 6 pm. *Volunteers needed*

MAY 13: Monthly bird walk at LASP led by Penny Miller. starts at 8 am.

JUNE 3: Mark Howell Memorial Kid Fishing Rodeo at LASP, 9 am to noon. *Volunteers needed* to register kids and record their catch and pass out bait.

Up Coming Advanced Training Events

Birds In Art

May 4—June 24, 2017

Exhibition, Opening Reception,
and Educational Programs

Dr. Marcy Brown Marsden, Dean of the MSU College of Science and Mathematics, will present “Birds in Art – Uniting Science, History and Beauty,” *on Tuesday May 9th at 5pm in the Museum’s Cannedy Events Hall.*

Dr. Marsden’s May 9th talk will count as advanced training for chapter members. Her talk is an hour, but following that she will lead a tour and discuss several of the bird species in the exhibit.

The Wichita Falls Museum of Art at Midwestern State University (WFMA) will present Birds in Art, a touring exhibition organized by the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum of Wausau, Wisconsin. The exhibition, on view from May 4th through June 24th, will feature 60 artworks in a variety of media and stylistic approaches. The artworks present wide-ranging perspectives and insights into avian life and environmental issues. Outstanding contemporary artists represented in the exhibition are from the world over including the USA, Canada, South Africa, Sweden, Japan, Australia, Italy, and England. Prominent among the list of artists is Chris Bacon, Robert Bateman, Mark A. Collins, Peter Gray, Lars Jonsson, Patricia Pepin, and Paula Waterman. The exhibition will provide audiences of all ages the opportunity to examine art that depicts wild birds in their natural habitats, and expresses the beauty and variety of birds worldwide.



Texas Pollinator Powwow
May 5—7
Nacogdoches, Texas

Online registration for the Nacogdoches PowWow ends **April 30, 2017.** <http://www.texaspollinator-powwow.org/>



The Dynamic Ocean: Changes and Impacts Virtual Conference

Saturday, May 13—10 AM - 2 PM ET

The ocean is the defining physical feature of our planet. The interaction of oceanic and atmospheric processes controls our planet’s weather and climate, and dominates Earth’s energy, water, and carbon cycles. Join NSTA, NOAA, and NOAA partner scientists and educators for an exciting virtual conference on Saturday, May 13 to learn about the ocean, how we are changing it, and the impacts these changes are having on our world.

NSTA virtual conference explore the three dimensions

Presenters include: Nicholas Bond, Mark Eakin, Laura Francis, Molly Harrison, Gretchen Hofmann, Bruce Moravchik, Marlies Tumolo, Margie Turrin, Michael Whitney and Chris Zervas.

Busy that Saturday? No problem!

Register and receive access to the conference archives to watch later on-demand.

In addition, participants receive the Ocean’s Effect on Weather and Climate SciPack with their paid registration (value \$18) at no additional cost.

NSTA Member Price: \$63

NSTA Non-member Price: \$79



http://learningcenter.nsta.org/products/online_courses/

Hackberry Flat Tour Set for June 10, 2017



Melynda Hickman, Wildlife Diversity Biologist with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation will lead a tour on Saturday, June 10 from 9- noon at Hackberry Flat Wildlife management Area near Frederick, OK.

This will count as advanced training.

Frontier Day Fishing



photos by Terry McKee

Chapter members June McKee, Megan Sternadel, and Debra Halter pose with Laura Clepper, LASP park interpreter, during the bass casting event at the Farmer's Market, April 8. Not pictured Joy Parsons, Lynn Seman and Betty Bowles. Thanks to all that helped make the day great fun for the kids.



Debra Halter helps kids during the bass casting event downtown April 8

Texas Horned Lizard Survey

Chapter members participated in the April 9th Texas Horned Lizard Survey. They visited three different sites, Archer City Hwy, Lake Arrowhead State Park and Dean. Below is a Horned Lizard from Site #1.



Hackberry Flat Training Class

The training class had an active morning April 14 at Hackberry Flat WMA near Frederick, OK. Kelvin Schoonover, manager for Hackberry Flat led the group on a wetlands tour where many interesting species were seen and interesting facts about the WMA were discussed. Although we enjoyed the birds, another winged creature was not so welcome. As soon as we jumped on the tram, hoards of mosquitos hovered over us. But that is what makes a wetland so attractive to the birdlife- all the skeeters they can eat. It's not so nice, though, when you are on the receiving end. Thank goodness for bug spray!



photos by Terry McKee

Species seen at Hackberry Flat:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| spotted sandpiper | red-winged blackbird |
| upland sandpiper | gadwall |
| canada goose | peregrine falcon |
| grasshopper sparrow | snowy egret |
| American white pelican | cattle egret |
| blue-wing teal | great egret |
| shoveler | yellow-headed blackbird |
| mourning dove | dowitcher |
| horned lark | ruddy duck |
| scissortailed flycatcher | eared grebe |
| American coot | barn swallow |
| American Widgeon | avocet |
| Eastern meadowlark | stilt sandpiper |
| Loggerhead Shrike | American golden plover |
| Northern Harrier | pintail |
| lesser yellowlegs | solitary sandpiper |
| greater yellowlegs | great-tailed grackle |
| mallard | black-crowned night heron |
| white-faced ibis | American bittern |
| black-necked stilt | |

Max, the American Kestrel

by Maryruth Prose

The smallest raptor and the only Avian Ambassador in the falcon family at Wild Bird Rescue is Maxmillian, an American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*). Max, as he is affectionately known, came to the Rescue in 2016 after falling from his nest. He suffered a head injury that caused disorientation and vertigo. His ability to stand without falling was affected and he still cannot judge distance. He is fully feathered in adult plumage and is very vocal. Like other Avian Ambassadors, he cannot be released.

The American Kestrel is the smallest and most common falcon in North America. Falcons are distinguished by their thin, tapered wings which allow them to fly at high speed, and to rapidly change direction. Unlike hawks, eagles and other birds of prey who use their feet, falcons kill with their beaks. Once called sparrow hawks or grasshopper hawks, DNA analysis shows the American kestrel to be

more closely related genetically to the larger American falcons. They occur throughout all but the northern most reaches of North America. Seventeen subspecies of the American kestrel are recognized, two in North America, habituating pastures, fields and golf courses.

The handsome American Kestrels can be identified by their russet colored back and tails, and double black stripes on a white face, and white underwings. They are comparable in size to a blue jay or a mourning dove. They feed primarily on grasshoppers and other insects, reptiles, small mammals and small birds. This varied diet is one reason for its wide success as a species. American kestrels will perch on a utility line, waiting to drop onto the prey below. Sometimes they will hover before dropping down for the prey.

True falcons do not build their own nests, and American kestrels usual-



ly nest in tree cavities but they are able to adapt to a wide variety of nesting situations. They will commonly use nesting boxes as seen at Hackberry Flats. Nesting sites are selected in early spring, and previous sites will be used. The bonding between pairs is strong and often permanent. Elaborate dive displays are done by the male near the nest to attract the mate. Three to seven eggs will be laid and both sexes will incubate the eggs which hatch usually in thirty days. The hatchlings grow quickly and reach adult weight in 16 to 17 days, and leave the nest in about four weeks. The American kestrel in the wild has a life span of less than five years, but can live much longer in captivity.

National Volunteer Recognition Week Thank YOU Texas Master Naturalists!!!

Texas Master Naturalists:

As it relates to our program, April is a big and very important month for us! This week is National Volunteer Recognition Week. We recently celebrated Earth Day this month too!

During this busy spring season we wanted to take a minute to say THANK YOU for all that you do as a Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer for our natural resources-- not just on Earth Day or National Volunteer Week but EVERY DAY no matter what the day!!!

- Through the latest reporting year of 2016 and to date, Texas Master Naturalists have reported:
- More than 10,800 volunteers have been trained through TMN training classes.
- There are 46 TMN chapters statewide with two in development.
- 428,168 service hours were reported by TMN volunteers throughout the 2016 calendar year. This service is valued at more than \$9.48 Million. To date, over 3.690 Million hours (valued at \$84.88 Million) have been reported to the TMN program.
- Last year TMN volunteer reached over 426,000 youth adults and private land owners through their outreach, educational and technical guidance events. Through 2016, TMN volunteers have reached more than 5.6 Million people to date.

- 4,887 new acres were impacted in 2016 through TMN volunteer stewardship projects and management plans and over 226,200 acres have been impacted to date.
- 105 new trail miles were developed and/or maintained through new TMN service projects in 2016. To date, over 2,120.68 trail miles have been impacted.
- Over 400 partnerships at the local chapter level have been established statewide to date.

The volunteer work and assistance that you provide our agencies on a daily basis is such a vital part of our existence. Quite simply, we could not accomplish much of what we do without your help! Your everyday activity is making a difference for Texas' natural resources and natural areas. From the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU! Thank You! Thank you!!!

The work that you do and the accomplishments you have never goes unnoticed! Undoubtedly, you have already noticed the other thank you messages from our agencies and agency directors already this week.

Thank you once again and keep making us proud!

Michelle Haggerty and Mary Pearl Meuth
TMN State Program Coordinators

FUN FACTS



There are about 28,000 known species of orchid. They come in every size, shape and color, with dazzling markings from tabby spots and tiny freckles to checks and neat stripes. This is because they are not self-pollinating so they have become skilled mimics in order to attract their pollinator, which may be an insect or even a hummingbird.

Mute swans mate for life, although if one of them dies, the other will find a new partner.



From jellyfish to worms, crustaceans to fireflies, there are many creatures that glow in the dark. But there's no electrical activity behind their illuminations—it's a chemical reaction, which releases light energy.

The Lowly Wax Worm May Hold the Key to Biodegrading Plastic



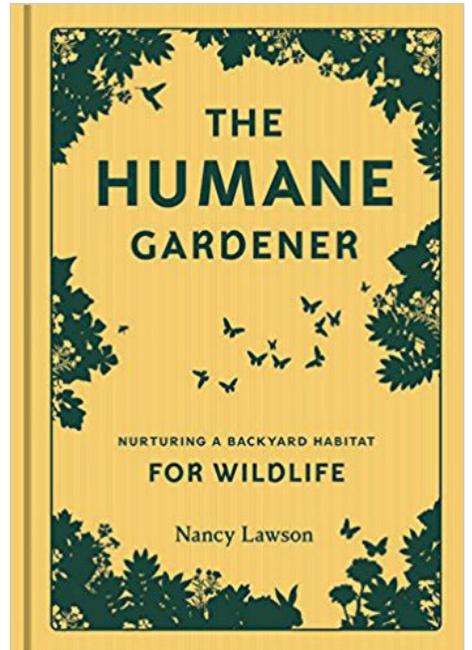
People around the world use more than a trillion plastic bags every year. They're made of a notoriously resilient kind of plastic called polyethylene that can take decades to break down.

But the humble wax worm may hold the key to biodegrading them. An accidental discovery by scientist and beekeeper Federica Bertocchini may lead to identifying the enzyme responsible which could have big ramifications for breaking down plastic waste. To read more about this new discovery go to www.npr.org

RESOURCE CORNER

The Humane Gardener: Nurturing a Backyard Habitat for Wildlife

by Nancy Lawson
Hardback: 224 pages
ISBN-978-1616895549
Price: \$16.00 on Amazon



In this eloquent plea for compassion and respect for all species, journalist and gardener Nancy Lawson describes why and how to welcome wildlife to our backyards. Through engaging anecdotes and inspired advice, profiles of home gardeners throughout the country, and interviews with scientists and horticulturalists, Lawson applies the broader lessons of ecology to our own outdoor spaces.

Detailed chapters address planting for wildlife by choosing native species; providing habitats that shelter baby animals, as well as birds, bees, and butterflies; creating safe zones in the garden; cohabiting with creatures often regarded as pests; letting nature be your garden designer; and encouraging natural processes and evolution in the garden. The Humane Gardener fills a unique niche in describing simple principles for both attracting wildlife and peacefully resolving conflicts with all the creatures that share our world.

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