

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

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<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

June 2017

President Report

by Terry McKee

Can you believe we are already into June? It hasn't taken long for the year to be half over, not when we have a myriad of activities taking place and lots of volunteers to keep things hopping. June will continue to keep us busy. ***Our first major event is the Mark Howell Memorial Kid Fishing Rodeo June 3 at Lake Arrowhead State Park.*** Come out and enjoy the kids as they try to catch the biggest fish to take home prizes. It's a lot of fun and you are helping out Texas Parks and Wildlife. We have spots inside for those that want to record the kids' catches, and if you prefer to be outside, we can use worm wranglers and people to help oversee the fishing.

June 10 is an advanced training event at Hackberry Flat in Oklahoma. We will leave Atwoods at 8 am and meet up with Melynda Hickman for a biologist's tour of the wildlife management area from 9 to noon.

Penny Miller leads her ***monthly bird walk June 10 at 8 am at Lake Arrowhead State Park.***

June 15 is the Texoma Regional Math/Science Conference from 9 to 4 where the chapter will have a booth set up at Region IX.

June 24 is the North American Butterfly Count. We will meet at Lake Arrowhead State Park at 7 am by the headquarters building. Come out and learn your local moths and butterflies up close.

Also on June 24, making its comeback after a 2-year hiatus (mainly due to the state park being flooded) is ***the National Wildlife Federation's Great Backyard Camp Out.*** Activities begin at 7 p.m. at the group picnic pavilion with a scavenger hunt along the Dragonfly Trail, followed by s'mores, and ending with owl calling at dark.

All of these events combined with mussel watches and horned lizard tracking and nature trackers should help ensure plenty of hours for chapter members. If you don't re-certify in June, it's not our fault. The time to get outside is now!

The time for kudos is also now. Biggest kudo goes to Lynn Seman. She has taken on a lot of responsibilities since she became chapter secretary. Thanks to her, the Horned lizard surveys have started up after a several

E LOCALS

JUNE 6: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Chris Jackson will be speaking about urban wildlife found in and around the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex.

Meet Chris Jackson, DFW Urban Wildlife Founder



Chris Jackson is a software engineer by profession, and an author, naturalist, and photographer by passion. Exploring the natural world and learning about native wildlife is what Chris really enjoys.

In 2005 Chris launched DFW Urban Wildlife (dfwurbandwildlife.com), a website and blog dedicated to documenting the diversity of urban wildlife living in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. For over ten years Chris has been collecting photographs, anecdotes, and other information about the wide variety of wildlife that lives all around us

year absences, and I appreciate the hard work she is doing by arranging booth space during community events, plus she has been arranging interviews for the TMN 20th anniversary. She has been going non-stop. That's not to say your other officers have been slouching off. Kay has arranged some excellent speakers, and there are no words to express the dedication and tenacity of Larry Snyder. Thanks also to our dynamic duo of social media- newsletter editor, Paula Savage, without whom you would not be reading this, and to Tami Davis for maintaining our web page.

Thanks to all the officers past and present, for helping to make the Rolling Plains Chapter what it is today.

And kudos to ALL our members and trainees, space limits me from mentioning all your names, who keep the love of nature in your heart and strive to keep the good works of the Rolling Plains Chapter going forward. We may be a small chapter, but WE ARE MIGHTY!

Advanced Training Opportunity

The following webinar has been approved for Advance Training

Topic: How Pollinators are the Glue Connecting Agriculture, Conservation and Habitat

Date: Tuesday, June 6th, 2:00 - 3:00PM

Time Zone: GMT-04:00, Eastern Daylight Time (US and Canada)

Register: <https://goo.gl/forms/DvN92dhFf2J6Buin2>

Description: The increased focus and interest in pollinator health and habitat offers unique opportunities to build collaborations with groups and individuals with a broad range of interests. This webinar will provide a unique perspective about the opportunity to reach out and collaborate with interests that range from water quality and soil health to sustainability, managing right-of-way's to concerns about grassland songbirds, Agriculture Industry and commodity groups to environmental groups, and species constituency groups to the next Farm Bill. In many ways, the issue of 'pollinators' offers a unique opportunity to bring together a wide, diverse and significant collation that may not have found many other issues in common. The objective of this webinar is to stir your perspective about who may be your next significant partner in delivering pollinator health and habitat benefits.

Presenter: Pete Berthelsen, Pheasants Forever, Director of Habitat Partnerships

Your Help is Needed!



The Texas Master Naturalist Organization is gearing up to celebrate our 20th anniversary across the state of Texas. To help with the celebration, each chapter is collecting an oral history in interviews and photos to share with the state organization. Our chapter will be involved in recording interviews of some of

our members also. Some of our charter members, including Penny Miller and Laura Gillis, will be interviewed for the project, as well as other members willing to share. To find out more about the project visit this website: <https://txmn.org/20th-anniversary/>

If you have photos to share that show our chapter's history, you may also want to contribute these to the project. *Please contact Lynn Seman for more information or if you would like to help.*

right here in the 4th largest metropolitan area in the nation.

More recently, Chris has added both an iNaturalist project and a Facebook group to DFW Urban Wildlife, opening up participation to every amateur and professional naturalist in the ten county area. Through these two venues, citizen scientists from all over the metroplex have collected well over 100,000 observations, representing more than 3200 species of Dallas/Fort Worth urban wildlife.

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Chris will be speaking about urban wildlife found in and around the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. His presentation will include a brief introduction to the DFW Urban Wildlife website, Facebook Group and iNaturalist Project. The discussion will touch on reasons why people enjoy observing wildlife and why urban wildlife makes such an appealing subject.

Chris will share some of the reasons why wildlife lives in urban areas and how it survives there. This will be followed by a slideshow sampling of common and uncommon species found in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

The presentation will briefly touch on pursuing wildlife photography as a hobby, and how to share your discoveries online. It will conclude with an overview of iNaturalist, including a discussion about how to add observations and how to explore the data. A question and answer session will follow if time allows.

CONGRATULATIONS!

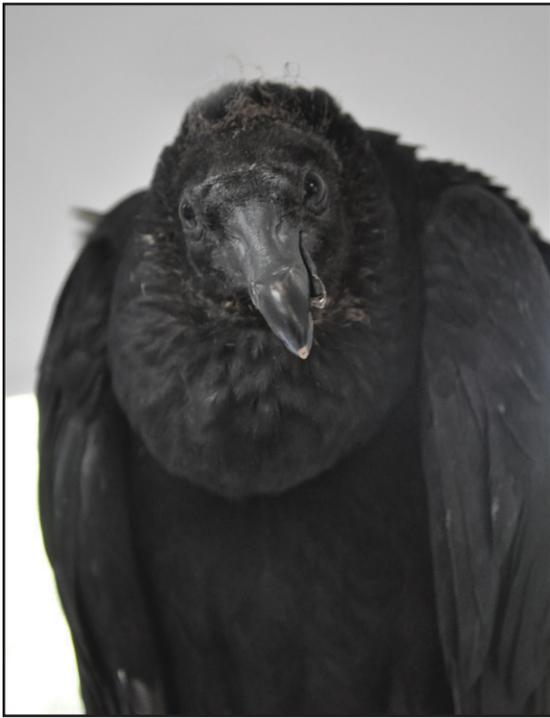
Congratulations goes to Lynn Seman who has reached the 1,000 volunteer hours milestone. Congratulations to Maryruth Prose upon having achieved 250 volunteer hours. Debra Halter has achieved recertification for 2017. Congratulations.

We'll present both Lynn, Maryruth and Debra their pins at the next meeting they attend.

Morticia, A Black Vulture

by Maryruth Prose

One of the favorites of both the staff and volunteers at Wild Bird Rescue is Morticia, a black vulture (*Coragyps altratus*). She is indeed a funny gal and is very friendly. Morticia came to Wild Bird Rescue from Bowie, Texas as a little nestling.



She couldn't stand or feed herself, and was covered with little yellow downy feathers. She was hand fed until she learned to feed herself. It was noticed that her bottom beak didn't align with the top, and it became more and more difficult for her to eat on her own. Even with physical therapy suggested by the veterinarian, it was obvious that her beak condition was permanent. Morticia was determined to be non-releasable and became a much-loved Avian Ambassador.

The black vulture lives year around in open areas which provide scattered forest and shrub lands in the

Eastern and Southern United States, but their range is now extending further north. The New World and Old World vultures evolved from different ancestors in different parts of the world, but both are similar in appearance and ecological

roles. While their range extends to South America, their distribution is not as extended as the turkey vulture which breeds into Canada. This large bird may have a wing span of almost 5 feet; but it is still shorter than that of a turkey vulture. With black plumage, the head and neck are featherless and gray/black. Like other New World vultures, the black vulture lacks a syrinx and therefore has very few vocalizations except for hisses and grunts. Turkey vultures are more numerous, but a flock of black vultures will take over a carcass and drive the turkey vulture away.

The black vulture is a scavenger and feeds mainly on carrion which may have been found by a turkey vulture with their keener sense of smell. In areas populated by humans, it may scavenge at garbage dumps. Like other vultures, it plays an important role in the ecosystem by disposing of carrion which otherwise might be a breeding ground for disease. They will also eat eggs and will kill newborn animals. It is the only species of New World vulture which preys on cattle, and will occasionally harass cows which are giving birth.

During the breeding season pairs are formed following a courtship ritual performed on the ground. The black vulture generally does not use any nesting materials and lays its eggs on the ground in a wooded area or a cavity. The mated pair will use the same successful nesting site for many years. Both parents incubate the two eggs which hatch after 28 to 41 days, and both feed the nestlings regurgitating the food at the nest site. Like Morticia, the hatchlings are covered with white down and can fly within 75 to 80 days.

The black vulture appears in the hieroglyphics of the Mayan codices, and is often shown in the glyphs as attacking humans. It is normally connected with death or as a bird of prey.

Great Texas Birding Classic

by Terry McKee

This year Mike Cavett, Debra Halter, Terry McKee and Larry Snyder formed a team under the Rolling Plains Texas Master Naturalist, for the Great Texas Birding Classic. We were lucky enough to be sponsored by Toyota who paid our registration fees.

The Rolling Plains team headed out on a cold blustery Saturday, April 22. Our first stop was at Hagerman Refuge near Sherman. We were excited about the promise of great birds as our first species was a singing Olive-sided Flycatcher followed by several flocks of singing Dickcissels. For 2 hours we sat huddled in Larry's truck as shorebird



Mike, Debra, Terry and Larry spent 15 hours on the road counting birds in Grayson, Clay, Wichita and Archer counties.

after shorebird waited for their turn to be counted. It was mesmerizing. Did I mention it was very blustery? Normally that is a bad thing, but with waterfowl it kept them down along the shoreline, making it easier to identify them.

We were extremely disappointed that we had no warblers. As a trade-off, we did have a nice flock of Yellow-headed Blackbirds and the adult Bald Eagle was a lifer for Mike. We hope to participate again, maybe next year the weather will be better.

88 species were sighted.



The silver jewel scarab beetle gets its name from its gold wing cases, which reflect light making it appear like a precious gem. They inhabit a wide range, living in the pine, oak and juniper forests the US all the way down through Honduras and even as far

south as Ecuador. They are nocturnal bugs, feeding on the leaves of trees and laying their larvae in rotting logs.

Horn sharks lay corkscrew-shaped eggs. 24 is the maximum number of egg that a Horn shark lays in a season. It takes the mother shark several hours to deposit one egg. The yolk sac inside the egg provides enough nutrients for each baby shark to survive for a month without food after hatching.



The Feather Starfish, with its branching limbs and a brilliant spectrum of color, are elegant and eyeless creatures that are easily mistaken for plants.

Close Encounters of the Wild Kind: The Striped Skunk



In spring and early summer you may see young striped skunks (“kits”) out and about, even in cities. They’ll often leave their den to ex-

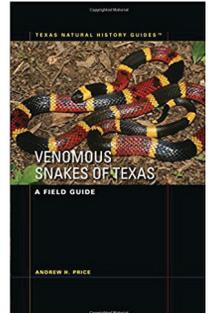
plore while their mom is gone looking for food. Since most wild animals have a healthy respect for skunks, kits aren’t likely to run from a potential threat (like your dog). But they may spray if scared. So keep those pets and children away!

If you encounter kits, keep at a safe distance to observe them. Then share your sighting with the Mammals of Texas Project on iNaturalist – your observations can help in the conservation of wild skunks in Texas.

RESOURCE CORNER

Venomous Snakes of Texas: A Field Guide

by Andrew H. Price
Paperback: 130 pages
ISBN-978-0292719675
Price: \$15.95 on Amazon



Texas has about one hundred twenty native species and subspecies of snakes, fifteen of which are venomous. Since 1950, Texans have turned to the Poisonous Snakes of Texas pamphlet series published by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for help in identifying these snakes and for expert advice on preventing and treating snakebite. *Venomous Snakes of Texas*, a thoroughly revised and updated edition of *Poisonous Snakes*, carries on this tradition as a one-stop, all-you-need-to-know guide to Texas’s rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths, and coral snakes. *In this authoritative field guide, you’ll find:*

- Full-color photographs and a county-by-county distribution map for each species.
- Each species’ common and scientific name, description, look-alikes, and a summary sketch of its habitat, behavior, reproduction, venom characteristics, predator-prey relationships, and fossil record.
- Up-to-date advice on recognizing venomous snakes and preventing and treating snakebite, both at home and in the field.
- A glossary of terms and an extensive bibliography.

A special feature of this guide is an expanded treatment of the ecological and evolutionary context in which venomous snakes live, which supports Price’s goal “to lessen the hatred and fear and to increase the understanding, the respect, and even the appreciation with which venomous snakes should be regarded.”

Chapter Contacts:

Terry McKee, President 766-4097, dgm59@aol.com; Kay Murphy, Vice President 704-0406, kay_vince@sbcglobal.net; Lynn Seman, Secretary, 867-3006, rlynnseman@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