**Texas Master Naturalist – Rolling Plains Chapter**

**Minutes of the May 2, 2017 Meeting @ River Bend Nature Center**

**Special Guest –** Chris Flis – Paleontologist and Director of the Whiteside Museum of Natural History (along with Holly and Ashley)

Chris provided the group with an excellent program explaining the work and information on the museum in Seymour, TX. He also invited us to come to training to be a volunteer at the site. Contact him if you are interested.

Program lasted from 7:00pm to 7:45pm – AT time .75

At approximately 7:46pm, meeting was called to order by President Terry McKee with 33 members and trainees present. Terry called for approval of the secretary and treasurer reports. There were no objections. Reports were approved. The treasurer report was sent to all members.

**Committee Reports:**

Horned Lizard Surveys – Lynn reported on the horned lizard surveys. We have three sites that we are monitoring as of now. A survey was conducted in April (no sightings) and one will be held each month through September. THL’s have been reported on the site 1 and 3 by the homeowners.

Nature Tracker – Penny explained that the Mussel Watch will be done through iNaturalist program. Next watch will be held on June 10 after the bird walk at Lake Arrowhead. In July, there will be a Mussel Watch held at Lake Buffalo and Lake Gordon – more to come later about times, etc.

Spotted Skunk Survey – Larry reported that a spotted skunk had been found as roadkill in Burkburnett. He asked for members to keep an eye out and take a picture if found (even if dead). Clint Perkins would like to be notified for his study.

Feral Hogs – Larry said that he is helping David Graf with this, but only deer have been caught on the game camera as of now. He said that David is deciding what to do next and will keep us posted.

**Old Business:**

State Science Fair -April 1 – Lynn reported on the State Science Fair project that we helped to sponsor. Our chapter provided judges (Lynn and Leslie) to talk to students at the fair in San Antonio. They talked to 60 different projects and chose 2 top winners – (one for senior and one for junior divisions). Michelle Haggerty and Mary Pearl Meuth wrote a letter from the state office of “congratulations” that was sent to the top 10 projects from the interviews. The top two winners were presented a plaque and a copy of the curriculum book. Lynn suggested that next year, we try to get the state organization to provide a scholarship with the award.

April 8 – Frontier Day at Farmer’s Market - Terry reported that our chapter helped with the “backyard bass” fishing booth at this event. The kids all had fun fishing and the members that showed up to help had a great time.

April 20 – Earth Day Fair at MSU – Our chapter had a booth at the Earth Day Fair hosted by the new Environmental Student Organization. Some of our members talked to many students about our organization and how to help the earth. Channel 6 came to cover the event.

Great TX Birding Classic – Terry said this was the first year that our chapter entered as a “group” and because of this, Toyota sponsored our chapter (Debra, Terry, Larry, and Mike) and paid the entry fee for that group. This group counted over 60 species in 2 hours! They headed to the Hagerman Wildlife Refuge (even though it was cold and windy!) to do most of their observing. There event lasted 15 hours. Penny, Sue, and Warren also had a group in the event. They will report their findings later after the official counting is over. (competition is tight!)

Benjamin Ranch Quail Survey – Larry gave a detailed account of the work that took place on the occupancy survey of scaled quail at Benjamin, TX ranches. He had permission from another chapter of TMN for us to assist Becky Ruzicka with this project. She is reintroducing scaled quail in these areas. Larry and Judy spent the entire week while Kay and Lynn came for a couple of days to help, but rain slowed down the surveys. Larry explained how they used radio telemetry to track the quail and the process used. Very interesting project!

Kirby Middle School Dissection project – Lynn explained that the 7th grade teachers at Kirby enjoyed our help with the quail dissection and invited us to come help with frog dissections also. Jane, Carol, and Lynn were able to help for a couple of days.

**New Business:**

May 6 – Boy Scout Activity at Dragonfly Trail – Terry explained that our chapter will set up at the dragonfly trail on Saturday, May 6 to share information to a group of Boy Scouts – (Troop 1 from Wichita Falls). Several members will be setting up to share information about owls, prickly pear cactus, blue birds, flowers, etc. at the event. The boys will be hiking at the park also. Helpers should meet at 8:30am at the Dragonfly Trail by the group pavilion to set up. The event should last until 11 or noon.

May 5 – Bugfest at River Bend Nature Center – Leslie Cusick-Fernandes mentioned that River Bend could always use volunteers to help with this event to be held from 5:30pm to 8:30pm. OSU will be bringing their bug collection to show.

May 5-7 – Pollinator PowWow in Nacogdoches, TX. – Larry talked about the schedule for this event that he and Judy plan to attend. “Bats” are a big theme for this year’s event. At first, he mentioned that the registration is closed, (however, after checking later – he found that you can register at the event). Here is a link to the event if interested: <http://www.texaspollinatorpowwow.org/nacogdoches-may-5-7-2017.html>

May 9 – WFMA – Terry mentioned an event to be help at Wichita Falls Museum of Art entitled Birds in Art and Science which will be presented by Dr. Marsden at 5:00pm. This will count as AT. Dr. Marsden will walk through the art exhibit and talk about the birds. It should last about 1 hour.

May 9, 11, 16, 18 – Terry said that the “After School Fishing Event” will take place at South Weeks Pond from 4:30pm to 6:00pm. Tami asked about the age limit. Terry said that she doesn’t think there is an age limit. Dian said that there is a fee that you pay of $3 when you register a child. They could use volunteers to help kids with fishing.

May 13 – Penny will host a bird walk at Lake Arrowhead State Park starting at 8:00am. Kim Mason also mentioned that Penny was honored for a “Give Light” award recently for her volunteer work in the community. Everyone applauded! Sue King also shared a story of how Penny spotted a burrowing owl while travelling past it at road speed while they were on their birding adventure! She is amazing!

May 13 (correction from agenda) – is the Spring Wind Ding at Dinosaur Valley State Park – Larry explained the schedule for this event and highly recommends this for anyone interested. More on this event at : <https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/dinosaur-valley/spring-wing-ding>

June 3 – Mark Howell Memorial Kid Fishing Rodeo at Lake Arrowhead State Park – Terry explained about this event. It should last from 9 to noon. We need volunteers to sign up the kids in 3 age groups. This is basically a “sit down” job. If you want to be outside, then you can volunteer with helping kids fish or pass out worms. This event is named in memory of our past chapter advisor, Mark Howell.

June 10 – “Tour With A Biologist” – Hackberry Flats – Terry explained this event that will count as AT.

June 15 – Texoma Regional Math/Science Conference booth – 9 to 4 at Region 9 Education Service Center in Wichita Falls. Our chapter will host a booth to explain what we do to area math/science teachers. You can sign up to help with the booth if interested. Lynn mentioned that we did get one new member from the event last year, (Sandy Underwood).

Penny also said that she will be conducting a Breeding Bird Survey on June 3. If you are interested in helping, notify Penny Miller. She will be leaving Sutherland’s parking lot at 5:00am (no later!) to drive a 25 mile route (stopping every half mile) to do bird counting. She will also do this again on June 17.

Larry mentioned to make sure that you are reporting your hours on the website.

Maryruth Prose mentioned that Wild Bird Rescue has obtained two Bald Eagles (came from Breckenridge) that are being cared for at the center. She also mentioned several great horned owls. Wild Bird is always in need of donations to provide food for these birds. You can also be a volunteer at Wild Bird Rescue.

Terry mentioned that the last training class will be on Thursday, May 04, 2017.

Terry presented recertification pins to Lynn Seman, Larry Snyder, and Judy Snyder.

Mary Webber’s pin was given to Jane McGough who will give it to Mary.

Paula Savage was honored and presented with her 1000 hour pin of service. Congratulations to Paula!

Penny Miller was honored with earning her 4000 hour achievement. Her pin and certificate are not in yet, so she will be presented with it hopefully at the next meeting. Congratulations to Penny for so many hours of volunteer service for our Chapter. Penny is also a chapter charter member.

Lynn mentioned that to celebrate our 20th year anniversary as an organization, the state office wants us to have interviews with some of the members, and hopefully Penny will participate in the video interview.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:29pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynn Seman

Secretary

May 2, 2017