

# Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 9, No. 8

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

August 2017

### President Report

by Terry McKee

First off, we have 2 items of interest that involves our chapter. Beginning in September, the Rolling Plains Chapter will begin meeting at Mid-western State University for our monthly meetings. Your board has been looking at new venues, mainly because our chapter is growing and room was becoming tight at River Bend. Lisa Taylor had also provided us with information from Region IX which the board greatly appreciates, but in the end we decided MSU might be a better fit. The board appreciates all that RBNC has done for us in the past, and will continue to do for us in the future. The chapter was currently paying \$150 a year to meet once a month plus River Bend was responsible for paying someone to open and man the building for the time we were meeting. There were no ill feelings, we just literally outgrew the space.

However, just because we will no longer meet at River Bend Nature Center does NOT mean we are eliminating them as a chapter partner. We still expect chapter members to continue volunteering at the nature center, and the chapter will still be involved in River Bend activities. The staff at River Bend are fabulous and the long standing partnership we have shared will continue.

Meeting at MSU will allow us to gather free of charge, the room has a audio/video system set up and will be climate controlled, plus will allow us the opportunity to generate more interest with the students and faculty at the university. It will also save wear and tear on those members that were moving chairs and tables back and forth.

Next- The Rolling Plains Chapter has been asked to sponsor the Home and Garden Show in February. Carol Sales at the Kemp Center For the Arts said the Master Gardeners has decided not to be a sponsor this year. Your officers have agreed to provide programs for the event and several speakers names have been brought up. We are looking forward to this opportunity, plus we will still have our booth, so we will need all the volunteers we can get. We are still in the planning stage, but February will be here before we know it.

I am excited about all the new events happening with the chapter which would not be possible without the help of your officers, Kay Murphy, Lynn Seman and Larry Snyder. We have some great plans for the chapter

### E LOCALS

**AUGUST 1:** Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM.

**Program:** The AT this month is member interactive. Each member is asked to bring a plant, preferable something native, and give a brief talk about that plant. Your research into your chosen plant may count at volunteer time.

**AUGUST 16-18:** Quail Symposium in Abilene <http://statewide-quailsymposium.com/location.html>

**OCTOBER 20-22:** Texas Master Naturalist 18th Annual Meeting at the Omni Corpus Christi. Registration opens August 1st. **Go to the state website (<https://txmn.org/2017-annual-meeting/>) for all the details.** Popular classes and field trips fill up quickly so don't wait. Accommodations are also handled through the online registration system.

### Congratulations!

Norman Mason and Ray Hyde have both achieved recertification for 2017. Congratulations are due for Marilyn Meador and Lisa Taylor on having achieved initial certification.

and we are looking forward to input from all our members. We may be one of the smaller chapters, but our members have the biggest hearts.

*See you August 1 at River Bend Nature Center for our plant show and tell.*

## Join The Horned Lizard Conservation Society



The Horned Lizard Conservation Society was established in 1990 by a group of concerned citizens who gathered at Austin Nature Center to discuss what can be done to save the beloved “horny toad”. Since then, this organization has continued to support education, outreach, and research opportunities to conserve one of Texas’s critters that has suffered a decline over the years. If you would like to become a member, you may go to this website (<http://www.hornedlizards.org/how-to-join.html>) and either join online or print out a membership form and mail it to: Horned Lizard Conservation Society, P.O. Box 122, Austin, TX. 78767

## Big Day for Wild Bird Rescue

Want to spend a day watching the birds while helping the birds?

Form a team for the Big Day for Wild Bird Rescue of Wichita Falls. On Oct. 29, teams will compete to see who can spot the largest number of bird species and raise the most money in a single 24-hour period.

“We hope to have more teams and raise more money than ever before,”



says Katherine Smith, President of the board for Wild Bird Rescue.

Each team is asked to secure pledges and sponsors to benefit the rescue

center. Prizes will be awarded for the team which sees the greatest number of species and for the team that raises the most money. The day-long event will be capped with a dinner for all participants.

Everything you need to know can be found at [www.wildbirdrescueinc.org](http://www.wildbirdrescueinc.org). Wild Bird Rescue cares for injured and orphaned birds year-round, as well as providing educational programs about birds.

“Big Day is always a fun event, with lots of friendly competition. We hope a number of the Master Naturalists will join us this year,” says Smith.

## Volunteer Opportunities

*Monarch Watch is asking for volunteers to report Monarch sightings from August 1 to September 25.* If you are interested in participating, visit the guidelines and more details on this website: <http://monarchwatch.org/blog/2017/03/31/new-monarch-watch-citizen-scientist-project/>

*Campfire of North Texas is asking for our help!* We are looking for volunteers to work with children in a special program about Monarch butterflies to be presented at the end of September and first week of October. This is about the right time that the Monarchs will hopefully heading our way on their trip to back north! If you are interested in helping with this program, please contact Lynn Seman, 940-867-3006 or [rlynnseman@gmail.com](mailto:rlynnseman@gmail.com).

## July 8th Butterfly Count at LASP

*photos by Terry McKee*



On July 8, Larry Snyder, Judy Snyder, Kim Mason, Norman Mason, Debra Halter, Joy Parsons, Lisa Taylor, Terry McKee, Marilyn Meadors, Megan Sternadel, Lynn Seman and Kay Murphy met at Lake Arrowhead State Park to participate in the North American Butterfly Count. Species reported were: rearkirts blue, queen, sleepy orange, pearl crescent, hackberry emperor, checkered white, common buckeye, dainty sulphur, little yellow and black swallowtail.

# Meet Banshee, A Wild Bird Rescue Avian Ambassador!

by Maryruth Prose

Banshee in Irish folklore is a spirit or fairy who warns of a death by wailing. At Wild Bird Rescue Banshee is a Barn Owl and an Avian Ambassador. He is very appropriately named, as our Banshee, like all Barn Owls, does not hoot but utters an eerie, drawn-out shriek. When he was about two days old, he and his family were thrown out



of a deer blind in October 2015 near Woodson, TX. A man and his granddaughter overheard the hunter telling the story, and asked him where the blind was located. They went out and gathered the four survivors and brought them to Wild Bird Rescue. When Banshee fell to the ground, his left eye was injured causing permanent impact to his depth perception. His siblings were released in April 1916.

There are two families of owls; Tytonidae and Strigidae. The large Strigidae family comprises about 189 living species worldwide in 25 genera. They are referred to as true or typical owls. Banshee (*Tyto alba*) belongs to the second family, Tytonidae, and is sometimes called the common barn owl to differentiate it from its kin. The name literally means “white owl” from ancient Greek. The Barn owl is the only tytonoid that lives in North America. Barn owls usually have white, heart shaped faces with a ridge of feathers above the ivory bill, and small blackish eyes. Lacking ear tufts, this species is unique in appearance when compared to all other North American owl species. The Barn Owl is the most widespread land bird species in the world, and is found in every continent except Antarctica. It also had a wider distribution than any

other owl species. They are nocturnal and often hunt in absolute

darkness, aided by their incredible hearing.

Barn owls usually have white, heart shaped faces with a ridge of feathers above the ivory bill, and small blackish eyes. Females are generally darker than males, and have more and larger black spots on the underside of wings and breast. Lacking ear tufts, this species is unique in appearance when compared to all other North American owl species. It is also distinguished by its exceptionally buoyant flight with its relatively long wings, short squared tail, and long feathered legs which are useful for reaching into long grass when hunting. Like most owls, they fly silently, gliding for long distances interrupted by a brief series of wing beats. Owls have tiny serrations on the edges of flight feathers and a hair like fringe on the feather edges. These break up the air flow over the wings reducing turbulence and the noise that accompanies it. **Check out this video:** <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/owl-power-owl-shows-silent-flight-superpower/11608/>

Barn owls mate for life. There is evidence that greater proportion of a female’s plumage that is covered by black spots, the more resistant her young will be to nest parasites.

In addition, it appears that males do select more heavily spotted females for mates. These cavity-nesters use a wide range of sites, both natural (holes in trees, cliffs, caves, etc.) and human made structures. Indeed, many of the barn owls brought in to Wild Bird Rescue like Banshee are from deer stands. No nesting material is

used, but as the female incubates the eggs she draws out the dry fur from the regurgitated pellets. By the time the chicks are hatched in about thirty days, they are surrounded by a carpet of fur. They may have 2-18 eggs in each clutch and use the same nest throughout the year. The white downy chicks develop rapidly and by the ninth week they are fully fledged, but still dependent on their parents for training. A sight all of us at Wild Bird Rescue enjoy is watching young barn owl fledglings swaying side to side in a defensive attitude.

Wild Bird Rescue is witness to how environmental changes affect species. When I first began volunteering in Spring 2015 there were no barn owls brought in until the Fall; I had never seen one. Rains came and along with it an increase in the rodent population. This stimulated the local barn owls to begin nesting, and unlike other owl species, they will breed more than once a year. Last year we received over 156 barn owls; this year we will probably match that record. Weight for weight, barn owls consume more rodents than possibly any other creature. This makes them one of the most economically valuable wildlife animals for agriculture.

# FACTS FUN

The main bulk of the cacti's body comes in the form of a water-retentive tissue, often in the optimal shape for storage, a sphere or cylinder. At the center of the body tissue lies the stem, the main organ for food manufacturing and storage.



Red River Giant Soft shell Turtle is the largest in the world. It's leathery shell can be up to 40 inches long and the turtle can weigh nearly 300 pounds. It's also the rarest. There are only three left in captivity.



The Glasswing Butterfly has an unusual diet. This delicate see-through creature sips the nectar of sweet flowers and dines on bird droppings. The wings do not have colored scales in their centers so light passes through the wing unhindered.

## Partial Solar Eclipse August 21st

On Monday August 21, a solar eclipse will cut across the entire United States. And wherever you are, you will be able to see it. Even though the "totality" — the area where the sun is completely blocked out by the moon — is only 70 miles wide, the whole country (even Alaska and Hawaii) will experience a partial eclipse.



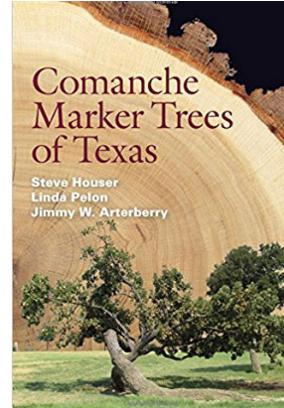
In Wichita Falls we will see a partial solar eclipse. The eclipse will peak at 1:04:46 pm CDT, when the moon obscures 77.2% of the sun.

It's never safe to view the sun with the naked eye. The sun's surface is so bright that if you stare at any portion of it, no matter how small, it produces enough light to permanently damage your retina. Solar filters, special eclipse glasses or welder's goggles must be used to view the partial eclipse. *Experts suggests that one widely available filter for safe solar viewing is number 14 welder's glass.*

# RESOURCE CORNER

## Comanche Marker Trees of Texas

by Steve Houser, Linda Pelon, Jimmy W. Arterberry  
Paperback: 224 pages  
ISBN-13: 978-1623494483  
Price: \$30.06 on Amazon



In this unprecedented effort to gather and share knowledge of the Native American practice of creating, designating,

and making use of marker trees, an arborist, an anthropologist, and a Comanche tribal officer have merged their wisdom, research, and years of personal experience to create Comanche Marker Trees of Texas.

A genuine marker tree is a rare find—only six of these natural and cultural treasures have been officially documented in Texas and recognized by the Comanche Nation. The latter third of the book highlights the characteristics of these six marker trees and gives an up-to-date history of each, displaying beautiful photographs of these long-standing, misshapen, controversial symbols that have withstood the tests of time and human activity.

Thoroughly researched and richly illustrated with maps, drawings, and photographs of trees, this book offers a close look at the unique cultural significance of these living witnesses to our history and provides detailed guidelines on how to recognize, research, and report potential marker tree candidates.

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