

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 9, No. 7

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

July 2017

President Report

by Terry McKee

More than four in five Americans agree that protecting natural resources is a patriotic duty, suggesting wilderness conservation has bipartisan appeal.— condensed from Mother Nature Network

There aren't many issues that can unite Republicans and Democrats, but a national poll seems to have found at least one: conservation. Conducted for the Nature Conservancy by two opinion-research firms — one Democratic and one Republican — the poll found more than four in five Americans consider it a patriotic duty to protect natural resources, regardless of politics.

- The following percentages of various groups agree that conservation is patriotic:
- More than 70 percent of registered voters in every U.S. region
- Voters younger than 35 (84 percent) and those 65 or older (83 percent)
- Urbanites (79 percent), suburbanites (85 percent) and rural residents (83 percent)
- Hunters (80 percent), anglers (80 percent) and wildlife watchers (82 percent)
- Hikers (80 percent), mountain bikers (78 percent) and ATV users (77 percent)

“Overall, it is clear that conservation is an issue that more often unites, rather than divides, the American people,” says David Metz of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, the Democratic polling group. And according to Lori Weigel of Public Opinion Strategies, the GOP firm, “Whether it is a general sense of patriotism and pride in national parks, or support for several specific federal policies, the survey finds a great deal in common among Americans regarding their views on conservation.”

As Nature Conservancy CEO Mark Tercek notes in a press release, three-quarters of voters say government is good at preserving “history and natural beauty through national parks, forests and other public lands,” which may explain why three-quarters also say they'd rather visit a national park for their summer vacation than a major U.S. city.

Many Americans spend the Fourth of July holiday outdoors — in a local park, at the beach, on the water or in a national park. In effect, by our actions we are celebrating and enjoying both the creation of our republic

E LOCALS

JULY 11: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM.

Program: Either Jack Browne or Michael Mitchell will present all of the information about the Maker Faire. **Lynn Seman** will talk about her Horned Lizard Survey and tell us all about Horned Lizards and why we should study them. She is in charge of the Membership for the horned lizard organization. Regular membership is \$25 per year and you receive the newsletter. Senior membership is \$10. (65 and up). We can bring a check to the meeting or do it online: <http://www.hornedlizards.org/how-to-join.html>.

JULY 8: Lake Arrowhead State Park Butterfly count will begin at 7 am (meet up at headquarters), then we will join Penny's birdwalk at 8 am at the dump station and continue counting butterflies with the birders.

JULY 10: Project Wild Opportunity at Region 9 – has a fee of \$35 (I think) - Great program for educators and people who work with children.

JULY 22-30: Moth Week

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

and the long history of our country's commitment to conservation of our land and water. These poll numbers reveal that the overwhelming majority of Americans still believe in conserving our natural resources and that this is, in fact, patriotic.

- While 80 percent of voters say the economy is a serious problem, 74 percent don't want to cut federal funding for conservation. In fact, 83 percent are willing to pay more in taxes to protect land, water and wildlife habitat in their area.
- Voters are twice as likely to say wilderness conservation has a positive impact on job growth (41 percent) than they are to say it has a negative impact (17 percent), or little impact one way or the other (33 percent).
- That general view on employment holds true in every U.S. region, but voters who participate in outdoor recreation are "much more likely to perceive an economic benefit to protections of land, water and wildlife."
- Overall, Americans seem to reject the idea that environmental and economic priorities are innately at odds. Seventy-nine percent of poll respondents say the U.S. can protect nature and have a strong economy at the same time.



So do your patriotic duty this month and visit a park!

Great American Backyard Campout

photos by Terry McKee

Chapter members hosted the Great American Backyard Camp Out at Lake Arrowhead State Park, Saturday June 24. There was a small attendance, but everyone had a good time.

Thanks to Laura Clepper, Park Interpreter, for her help during the event.



Above Left: Debra Halter stokes the fire while kids toast marshmallow.



Above Right: Children show off their creations.

Right: Lynn Seman helps a family make colorful crafts with smashed plants.



Name That Grass with Ricky Linnex

photos by Terry McKee

Several members met at the ranch of Ray and Sharon Hyde in Jack County for an advanced training session on grasses led by Ricky Linnex. Members enjoyed the morning of May 27, identifying plants with Ricky. We would like to thank Ricky for leading us and sharing his knowledge; and to Ray and Sharon for inviting us onto their property.



Summertime Is Bat-viewing Time in Texas

This summer, plan a visit to one of the sites in Texas where you can watch huge colonies of bats stream out of a cave or bridge. They awaken at dusk, then fly out in groups to feed on insects.

In fact, Texas happens to be the battiest state in the country. It is home

to 32 of the 47 species of bats found in the United States. Not only does it hold the distinction of having the most kinds of bats, it also boasts the largest known bat colony in the world, Bracken Cave Preserve (It has about 15 million bats – more than twice the number of people in Austin, Dallas, Ft Worth, Houston and San Antonio combined!), near San Antonio, and the largest urban bat colony, Congress Avenue Bridge, in Austin. Visitors from around the world flock to Texas to enjoy public bat-viewing at several locations throughout the state.

A Year in the Life of a Mexican Free-tailed Bat

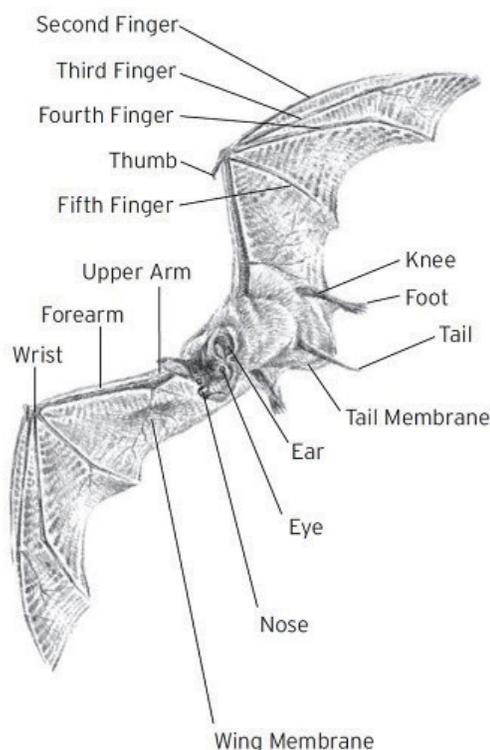


Mexican free-tailed bats (also known as Brazilian free-tailed bats) are the most common bat found throughout Texas. In most parts of the state, Mexican free-tailed bats are migratory and spend the winters in caves in Mexico. They begin their migration to Texas in February and by early spring female bats form large maternity colonies where they will raise their young. There are only a small number of suitable sites for these large maternity colonies because the bats require high humidity and temperature levels. In June, mother bats give birth to one pup each. Male bats do not help in raising the young and form smaller “bachelor” colonies away from females.

Bats are mammals, so the pups are born live and weigh about 25 percent of their mother’s weight. They feed from their mother’s rich milk located in mammary glands found under each of her wings.

The Mexican free-tailed bats’ milk is so rich that the pups grow fast and are ready to fly within four to five weeks of birth. It is estimated that baby Mexican free-tailed bats roost in densities of up to 500 pups per square foot. It is amazing to think that mother bats are able to find their own baby amongst thousands of pups by using their sense of smell and by knowing the sound of their pup’s call.

By early August, most pups are flying and foraging on their own. It is at this time of the summer when the most spectacular bat emergences often occur as the colony size might easily double. When the first cold fronts start pushing through in late October to mid-November, the Mexican free-tailed bats begin their migration to Mexico for the winter.



Bat-Watching Site Locations Across Texas

Camden Street Bridge San Antonio Riverwalk

Nestled under the I-35 Bridge where it crosses the San Antonio River near Camden Street, a colony of approximately 50,000 male Mexican free-tailed bats roost during the summer months.

Clarity Tunnel Caprock Canyons State Park & Trailway

Clarity Tunnel is an abandoned railroad tunnel, which is located on the Trailway of Caprock Canyons State Park. It was built in the late 1920s and was included in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

Congress Avenue Bridge Downtown Austin

The Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge, located in the heart of downtown Austin, hosts the largest urban bat colony in the world, estimated at 1.5 million bats.

Old Tunnel State Park

Old Tunnel State Park is home to up to 3 million Mexican free-tailed bats and 1,000 to 3,000 cave myotis bats from May to October.

Waugh Drive Bridge Downtown Houston

Nestled among lush green vegetation of Buffalo Bayou Park, Waugh Drive Bridge rests over Buffalo Bayou, less than two miles west of Downtown Houston.

Frio Bat Cave Privately Owned

View up to 10 million Mexican free-tailed bats, one of the largest colonies in Texas, as they make their ascent into the evening



Numbers of American snowshoe hares rise and fall in an 8-11 year cycle. This cycle affects the number of lynxes, which depend on them for food.

The temperature of the Sun's surface is 10,832° F. Each inch burns with the brightness of 650,000 candles. Some areas on the Sun's surface are cooler than others. These areas look darker. They are called sun spots.

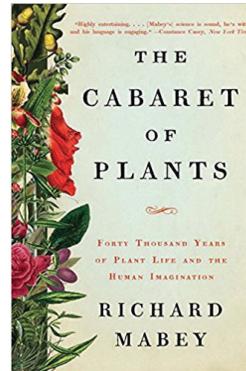


Leaf-Cutter ants, can carry leaves 50 times their body weight. They are one of the strongest creatures on Earth in terms of power to weight ratio.

RESOURCE CORNER

The Cabaret of Plants: Forty Thousand Years of Plant Life and the Human Imagination

by Richard Mabey
Paperback: 384 pages
ISBN-13: 978-0393353860
Price: \$11.77 on Amazon



The Cabaret of Plants is a masterful, globe-trotting exploration of the relationship between humans and the kingdom of plants by the renowned naturalist Richard Mabey.

The Cabaret of Plants explores dozens of plant species that for millennia have challenged our imaginations, awoken our wonder, and upturned our ideas about history, science, beauty, and belief. Going back to the beginnings of human history, Mabey shows how flowers, trees, and plants have been central to human experience not just as sources of food and medicine but as objects of worship, actors in creation myths, and symbols of war and peace, life and death.

Mabey takes readers from the Himalayas to Madagascar to the Amazon to our own backyards. He ranges through the work of writers, artists, and scientists such as da Vinci, Keats, Darwin, and van Gogh and across nearly 40,000 years of human history: Ice Age images of plant life in ancient cave art and the earliest representations of the Garden of Eden; Newton's apple and gravity, Priestley's sprig of mint and photosynthesis, and Wordsworth's daffodils; the history of cultivated plants such as maize, ginseng, and cotton; and the ways the sturdy oak became the symbol of British nationhood and the giant sequoia came to epitomize the spirit of America.

Complemented by dozens of full-color illustrations, *The Cabaret of Plants* is the magnum opus of a great naturalist and an extraordinary exploration of the deeply intertwined history of humans and the natural world.

Texas Rivers

Presenting the "Texas Rivers" Plate

This spring there's a new way to help keep Texas rivers healthy and flowing. By purchasing a new Texas Rivers conservation license plate, you'll be supporting a vast array of projects that help conserve Texas rivers, protect the diverse fish and wildlife species they support, and increase access to our Texas waterbodies.

About the Texas Rivers License Plate:

- Only \$30/year*—with \$22 going to benefit Texas Rivers
- Give your vehicle a personal touch—the perfect way to show your love for Texas Rivers
- Available for your car, truck, motorcycle, boat trailer, travel trailer or RV



- No need to wait for vehicle registration renewal. Cost will be prorated.

Chapter Contacts:

Terry McKee, President 766-4097, dgm59@aol.com; Kay Murphy, Vice President 704-0406, kay_vince@sb-cglobal.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