

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

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Map Out a New Year of Travel Adventures

by Lana Berkowitz

The Galveston Bay Area Chapter asked Texas chapters to suggest the best places to visit within their chapter areas. Lana Berkowitz compiled the following list and was gracious enough to share with us. Lots of places to explore in our state. Time to get outside and explore!

—Terry

Let's go. We don't want to miss any places as we continue the quest to visit all the state parks, preserves, refuges, historic sites and natural areas in Texas, so we sought advice from our favorite trip advisors: Master Naturalists.

Several chapter reps responded to our email requests asking them to recommend must-see sites in their chapters' areas that should be on our itineraries. There's bound to be some place on this list to spark your wanderlust.

Government Canyon State Natural Area

In San Antonio there are many choices, but I would like to recommend Government Canyon State Natural Area. This natural area has hiking trails of all different levels, walk-in camping, and lots of opportunities for birding. On the Joe Johnston Route, hike past 110-million-year-old dinosaur tracks (the only known tracks on public land in Bexar County) and a prehistoric midden on your way to the Zizelmann House built in the 1800s. Or for great views, hike the Far Reaches Trail to the Chula Vista and Sotol Overlooks. — *Martha Cray, Alamo Area chapter*



Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve

The 227-acre preserve is part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve system and is owned by Travis County and St. Edwards University. It offers grassland views and wooded trails within Austin city limits. It is definitely worth seeing in the spring when the waterfall is flowing. It is

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FEBRUARY 6: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is *in Bolin Science Hall room 209 at Midwestern State University*
Time: 7:00 PM. **Program:** Rad-diete Ghionwill be speaking about hydrology.

FEBRUARY 17: Learn to identify raptors at Hackberry Flat at 9:00 AM. Those who wish to carpool can meet at Atwoods. We will leave from Atwoods at 8 AM.

FEBRUARY 26-27: Arts Alive! Home & Garden Festival at the MPAC. The Chapter is **SOLD OUT** of discounted tickets.

JUNE 10: Invasive Plant Round-Up at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge from 8:00 AM till 1:30 PM. Meet at the Main Corrals 5.1 miles west of the Visitor Center. Come learn about the most damaging invasive plants in southwestern Oklahoma.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Carl Brown has reached the 500 hour milestone. For those who don't recall, Carl was a 2017 trainee. He's achieved double certification as well as his 250 and 500 hour milestone awards all within March to December. Way to go Carl!

habitat for the Golden-cheeked Warbler and a good example of a healthy Hill Country habitat. — *Heather Valey, Balcones Canyonlands chapter*

Hornsby Bend

There are so many places to hike around Central Texas, but I'll go with our world famous birding spot. Open dawn to dusk, you can view birds around the ponds or hike the three-plus miles of Colorado River shoreline, looking for birds, dragonflies, and butterflies. — *Mark Wilson, Capital Area chapter*

Mother Neff State Park

We were using the Miller Springs Nature Center in Belton for many of our youth projects, but the nature center closed in August. We have moved some of our activities to Mother Neff State Park in Moody but we are not the only TMN chapter to use that location. Hiking is the premiere attraction at the park. The Rock Tower represents the signature structure of the park. The Civilian Conservation Corps built the water tower in the 1930s and added a spiral staircase to the design to provide yet another high vantage point in the park. — *Rene C. Berkhoudt, Central Texas chapter*



Caddo Mounds State Historic Site

In addition to seeing the mounds themselves, visitors can enter a rebuilt and authentic Caddo house and marvel at the building techniques used by our ancestors. Don't miss the new museum with displays depicting life among the Caddo Indians in days gone

by. There is an excellent gift shop. Caddo is a great place to get in touch with history and archeology in a family-friendly atmosphere. — *Beverly Guthrie, East Texas chapter*

Stephen F. Austin State Park

The six miles of trails are suitable for hiking and biking and you must visit the scenic overlook. There are a number of camping areas, screened shelters and pavilions. Visitors should also take note of the stately Cottonwood trees; some are over six feet in circumference. They are located in the western part of the bottomland portion of the trail system. For those interested in the geographical effects a river can have on land, see the abrasion, sediment deposits, and carving the mighty Brazos has done over the years. Visitors can access the riverbanks for excellent cat fishing when the current is right. No fishing license required! — *Betsy Palkowsky, Gideon Lincecum chapter*

Westcave Outdoor Learning Center

Westcave is a nature preserve of 76 acres. The Uplands is a short self-guided hiking trail, but the

main attraction is the Canyon Tour. This is a guided hike that takes groups along the savanna trail then down 125 steps to the small slot canyon to a grotto with a small waterfall and the small cave. The grotto is a wonderful lush and amazing place. Westcave attracts visitors from



around the world. It is often a surprise for Austin locals who never knew it was there. — *Beverly Gordon, Hays County chapter*

Lake Waco Wetlands

The wetlands serve as a wildlife habitat for over 186 bird species plus nu-

Reminders, News and Events

- We've been asked to be sure to remind *all our members to enter their 2017 hours ASAP*. Of course you have until the 15th of Feb to submit anything for December 31st but why wait?
- One of our members, Peggy Browning, has an online newspaper in which she will add any information about the Texas Master Naturalist program. She has recently sent out a link to information about joining our new spring training class. Here is the link: <https://wichitafall-times.com/texas-master-naturalist-classes-starting-march-6/>
- If you are interested in helping with a special program for Campfire after-school programs, please contact Lynn Seman, rlynnseman@gmail.com. We will be offering a couple of programs this spring for the Campfire kids. **More information to come soon!**
- Burkburnett I.S.D. is hosting a S.T.E.M fair on the *evening of February 22*. Our chapter will have a booth which will offer an interactive activity to show how our chapter members use technology in what we do, such as iNaturalist, game cameras, etc. If you are willing to help or volunteer at our booth, *please contact Lynn Seman, rlynnseman@gmail.com*.
- Our chapter is sponsoring a state award at the Texas State Science and Engineering Fair in San Antonio on *March 24*. This is our second year to offer this award to a senior and a junior high participant at the fair. We have recruited members from other TMN chapters to help with the judging at this year's event which will be held at the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center in San Antonio. If you are interested in being a judge, *contact Lynn Seman, rlynnseman@gmail.com*.

merous reptiles, amphibians, and mammals of the Central Texas area. Additionally, the wetlands help filter about 11 million gallons of the North Bosque River water daily before it flows into Lake Waco, the sole source of drinking water for Waco. — *Nora Schell, Heart of Texas chapter*



Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery

Five hiking trails, a bird blind, native plant gardens, picnic tables, some of the

oldest exposed rock in the Llano Uplift and a designated Monarch Way Station; does that sound like a fish hatchery to you? Come see for yourself. Admission is free. Private tours can be arranged on weekends. — *Becky Breazeale, Highland Lakes chapter*

Kerrville-Shreiner Park

The park's butterfly garden, maintained by chapter volunteers, is a Monarch Larva Monitoring Project site that's especially beautiful when bluebonnets bloom in the spring. Lost Maples State Natural Area, great fall color when the leaves turn, is also lovely for hikes (both casual and steep) year-around. And Enchanted Rock State Natural Area: There's a bit of a climb to the top of this 325-foot high granite dome, but you're rewarded by beautiful views of the Hill Country when you get there. — *Lenore Langsdorf, Hill Country chapter*

McKinney Roughs Nature Park

This is one of four nature parks belonging to Lower Colorado River Authority. Its 1,100 acres contain elements of three ecoregions: Blackland Prairie, Post Oak Savanna and Piney Woods. Situated on the Colorado River, the park features excellent old-growth riparian habitat and 14 miles of connected trails. Kayak trips, animal demonstrations, star parties, and nature hikes, can be arranged. — *Larry Gfeller, Lost Pines chapter*



Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

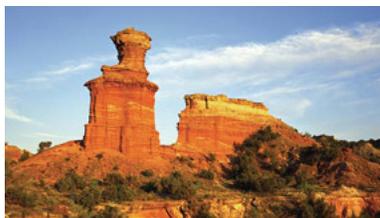
There is great birding, and the refuge is the southern host to migrant whooping cranes. I enjoy the Rail Trail. Visitors can visit all the trails off the main park road and a variety of nature habitats and experiences in a nice day trip. — *Larry Henneke, Mid-Coast chapter*

Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area

We have several great places to visit in the Dallas area. However, there are three that stand out in my mind as definitely worth a visit: John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, Cedar Ridge Preserve and Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area, a personal favorite. You can visit prairies, wetlands, bottomland hardwood forest, and walk along the river - all in one trip! I always see something interesting when I go to Lewisville Lake. Last time I saw a kestrel and dinner plate-sized fungi growing on the remains of an old cottonwood tree. — *Laura Preston, North Texas chapter*

Palo Duro Canyon

The Panhandle chapter has in its backyard Palo Duro Canyon State Park, the "Grand Canyon of Texas." This hidden jewel opens up from the flat plains of the Panhandle and drops 500 feet to reveal a geologic wonder full of beautiful colors. It is a paradise for



2018 First Day Hike

Lynn Seman

The new year's "First Day Hike" at Lake Arrowhead State Park was a chilly, but fun adventure! With a wind chill of -4 degrees F, three rangers and one attendee took off and completed the 5.5-mile hike on Onion Creek Trail. Even though the temperature was cold, the sun was shining which made it seem a little warmer. Parts of the lake were frozen solid from the frigid cold spell. The afternoon hike was a little warmer and 7 participants braved the cold for the Dragonfly trail walk.

Sea Turtles Rescued from Paralyzing Cold



Nearly 3,500 cold-stunned sea turtles have been rescued so far this winter – a state record. Very cold weather has a paralyzing effect on these turtles, causing them to wash up on shore or float helplessly, becoming easy prey.

Since all 5 species of sea turtles found in Texas are federally listed as endangered or threatened, and we don't want to lose any of them. That's why a team of Texas Game Wardens, partner organizations, Coastal Fisheries staff and volunteers spent days pulling cold-stunned turtles from the icy water, picking them up off the beach and transporting them to shelters. Once it warmed up, the team released the turtles back into the Gulf.

Sea turtles can get stranded any time of year. If you see one, please call 1-866-TURTLE-5 to report it. To see more images of turtle rescues, visit the Texas Game Warden Twitter and Facebook.

photographers seeking wildlife, wildflowers, and rock formations, including the Lighthouse. — *Bernice Blasingame, Panhandle chapter*



Lennox Woods Preserve

Lennox Woods in Red River County is the only old-growth forest in northeast Texas. The 1.5-mile trail loop takes hikers along an old wagon road before descending through a pine and hardwood forest to a

tributary of Pecan Bayou. — *J.W. Smith Jr., Red River chapter*

Hugh Ramsey Nature Park

The RGV chapter offers several state parks, national wildlife refuges, and regional parks to choose from when visiting the southern tip of Texas, but the local favorite is the Hugh Ramsey Nature Park. It is also known, along with the Harlingen Thicket property, as the Arroyo Colorado World Birding Center. Native vegetation has been planted over a former landfill specially to attract native birds. Paths lead to the Arroyo Colorado, passing numerous gardens and ponds, with photo blinds and benches along the way. There is no charge to enjoy this park, which also offers a paved parking lot, restrooms, and a covered pavilion with picnic tables. — *Tami Bulow, Rio Grande Valley chapter*

Lake Arrowhead State Park

This is our go-to spot. Lots of room to bird watch, nature watch, hike, bike, kayak, and fish. Check out the Onion Creek Trail for a five-mile hike or the quarter-mile kid-friendly hike along Dragonfly Trail. LASP is the only state park in Texas to feature a prairie dog town within the park. — *Terry McKee, Rolling Plains chapter*

Davis Mountains State Park

One of my favorite Texas destinations is Davis Mountains State Park's Indian Lodge. A visit in winter may provide photo ops of ice sculptures or snow in the Texas mountains. Plan a birding hike in the Limpia Canyon Primitive Area. If you have a four-wheel drive vehicle, visit Big Bend Ranch State Park, one of best-kept secrets in Texas. There you will find waterfalls, grand canyons, and the Solitario, a geologic wonder. — *Doug Gray, Tierra Grande chapter*



Happy trails, indeed! What are we waiting for?

Lake Arrowhead State Park “Hike With a Ranger”

Lynn Seman

“Hike with a Ranger” took place on Jan. 20 and 21 at Lake Arrowhead State Park. The weather was very cooperative for these two hikes and there was a fairly good turnout for the warmer weather. Laura Clepper, LASP Interpreter, does a great job with these hikes. We appreciate all that she does to get people “out-



side” in this area!

Below: Debra Halter is showing a kid a praying mantis egg case.



Invaders of Texas Spotlight

Dana Wilson, of the Blackland Prairie Invaders satellite group, kindly penned the following story.



Credit: Carroll Mayhew, North Texas Master Naturalists

On November 11, 2017, 35 members of the North Texas Master Naturalists descended upon a pocket prairie adjoining the campus of Mountain View College, southwest of downtown Dallas, determined to beat back encroaching invasive species. The oak/ash/cedar elm treeline that defines this area has increasingly been overtaken by privet (*Ligustrum*), amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), and Chinese pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*). When volunteers began removing invasive plant material, they were thrilled to uncover saplings of valuable trees and understory shrubs like toothache tree (*Zanthoxylum clavaherculis*) and Carolina buckthorn (*Frangula caroliniana*); they even found big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) hidden behind a row of privet.

Master Naturalist and adjunct biology instructor Adam Cochran, who coordinated the project, shared what this area – and this project – can teach both Mountain View science students and area naturalists. “There are so many principles of biology that are visible in this prairie: succession, how invasive species negatively impact succession, and how human intervention is often needed – especially in urban areas – to protect the diversity within our ‘wild’ spaces,” he said. “This prairie is full of wildflowers, native grasses, eastern bluebirds... When students and naturalists study a beautiful wild space like this, they come to understand the complex interactions that made it possible, and they want to protect it.”

Hot water freezes faster than cold water. This is known as the Mpemba Effect, and no-one knows why it happens.



Despite their large girth and weight, Wild Turkeys roost overnight in trees. They have excellent vision, seeing three times more clearly than 20/20. Turkeys can also see in color and have a 270 degree field of vision.

There are at least 16 different kinds, or “phases”, of ice. All of them have different crystal structures.



Worldwide Importance of Honey Bees for Natural Habitats Reported

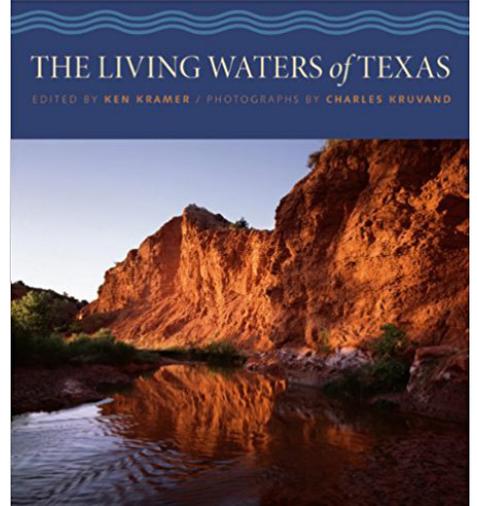
An unprecedented study integrating data from around the globe has shown that honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) are the world’s most important single species of pollinator in natural ecosystems and a key contributor to



natural ecosystem functions. The report weaves together information from 80 plant-pollinator interaction networks. However, the report also indicates that there is still much we don’t know about the impact of honey bees on native plants and pollinators. *Learn more at sciencedaily.com.*

RESOURCE CORNER

The Living Waters of Texas
by Ken W. Kramer (Editor),
Charles Kruvand (Photographer)
Hardback: 164 pages
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In ten impassioned essays, veteran Texas environmental advocates and conservation professionals step outside their roles as lawyers, lobbyists, administrators, consultants, and researchers to write about water. Their personal stories of what the springs, rivers, bottomlands, bayous, marshes, estuaries, bays, lakes, and reservoirs mean to them and to our state come alive in the landscape photography of Charles Kruvand.

Allied with the Texas Living Waters Project (a joint education and policy initiative of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Environmental Defense Fund, among others), editor Ken Kramer joins his fellow activists in a call to keep rivers flowing, to protect wildlife habitat, and to save tax dollars by using water efficiently and sustainably (<http://www.texas-watermatters.org/>).

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