

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

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May 2018

Presidents Report

by Terry McKee



Spring has finally sprung and the chapter has already jumped into action.

There have been tons of volunteer activities with Camp Fire fishing events, MSU earth day celebration, horned lizard watch, quail surveys and much more.

I urge members (and trainees) to join an event to get their volunteer hours, either

by checking out our website (Tami keeps the site up to date- thanks Tami!) or through Lynn's weekly events e-mail which is a quick way to see what is happening, Thanks, Lynn.

Megan took the initiative and organized a cleanup at Lake Wichita by the boat ramp, March 30. Shown in the photos are Lisa Taylor gathering cigarette butts, and Marilyn Meador, Debra Halter, Megan Sternadel and Penny Miller posing with some of the results of their labor.



Members also participated in a bio-blitz at Copper Breaks State Park April 20-22 organized by Park Superintendent Edwin Quintero. Several participants spent a rainy Saturday and a blustery Sunday at the park just south of Quanah. I must



Above Left: Debra Halter stands at the Permian Sea Tide Ripples. **Above Right:** Terry McKee admires the scenery.



LOCALS

MAY 1: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is *in Bolin Science Hall room 209 at Midwestern State University Time: 7:00 PM.* The program will be presented by Dr. Michael Masser. The title of his program will be "Aquatic Invasive Species in Texas and Their Impacts".



Dr. Masser is an Extension Fisheries Specialist with 32 years of experience in three states and co-author of our MN book

chapter on Aquatic Ecology (a training course he has done often). He has retired from WFSC Department Head after six years and returned to Extension as a "working retiree" at 50% effort.

MAY 1: Aquatic Invasive Species 4:00 pm "pre-program" at Lake Wichita (Borrow Pit Pond) Park in Lake Wichita Park at the RC control field parking lot SEE ATTACHED MAP,



admit it has been many years since I was last there, but Edwin gave us the grand tour of Juniper Ridge Nature Trail as we did the bio-blitz. And I will definitely be back!



June McKee and Edwin Quintero leave no stone unturned in their quest for wildlife.

So get out, explore, do some good, and remember to submit your photos and articles on what you are doing and seeing for Paula to put in the newsletter. Paula does a great job on our chapter newsletter, but could always use your help!

And remember to check out our Facebook page maintained by Larry Snyder. I am glad to be surrounded by so many talented people!

Let Dead Wood Live! Save a Snag for Wildlife!

by Susan E. Quinlan

Reprinted from Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Dead trees, or snags, are valuable to a wide variety of wildlife. Unfortunately, many people assume snags are of no value and routinely cut them down. In some places, this practice has caused cavity-nesting bird and mammal populations to decline. Though nest boxes may provide alternate nesting sites for some cavity-nesting birds, they are not suitable replacements for dead trees. Here's why:

- Snags provide homes for woodpeckers. Woodpeckers use snags for drumming, nesting, roosting, and feeding. Woodpeckers hammer their bills against the resonating surface of dead tree trunks to make a loud drumming sound; this is their courtship and territorial "song." Snags provide ideal feeding sites for woodpeckers as many insects live and reproduce in decaying wood. Many snags are covered with small holes made by foraging woodpeckers. Though woodpeckers have powerful bills and neck muscles, they are only able to excavate nests in trees with soft decaying centers. Thus, dead or dying trees are preferred excavation sites. Unlike most other cavity-nesting birds, woodpeckers rarely use birdhouses.
- Snags with old woodpecker holes provide homes for swallows, chickadees, nuthatches, bluebirds, owls, and other cavity-nesting birds that are rarely able to excavate their own nest sites.
- Snags provide ideal hunting perches for Red-tailed and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Bald Eagles, Crested Caracara, Great-horned Owls, and other raptors.
- Snags provide "songposts" to a wide variety of birds. Many small birds use songposts sticking above other vegetation to sing (to attract mates and proclaim nesting territory boundaries) and to perch on when looking out for predators and/or other birds.
- Snags provide "hawking" perches for flycatchers and resting perches for swallows. Flycatchers perch on a branch, fly out to snatch insects, and then return to the same branch to watch for other insects.
- Large natural cavities, formed in snags by decay, often provide homes for a variety of mammals including ringtails, raccoons, porcupine, bats, opossums, Eastern gray squirrels, and other species.
- When left to decay and fall over naturally, large hollow snags may provide den sites for larger animals like mink, gray fox, and coyotes.

To help provide homes for this wide variety of animals, leave dead trees standing whenever possible, particularly snags larger than 6 inches in diameter and/or any containing woodpecker holes or other cavities.

Invaders of Texas Spotlight

Salt Cedar (aka Tamarisk)
(*Tamarix ramosissima*)



Salt cedar plants are spreading shrubs or small trees, 5-20 feet tall, with numerous slender branches and small, alternate, scale-like leaves. The pale pink-to-white flowers are small and arranged in spike-like racemes. The distinct petals and sepals occur in fours or fives. It is sometimes confused with Roosevelt weed (*Baccharis neglecta*), but its leaves and flowers are very different.

Salt cedars have long taproots that allow them to monopolize limited sources of moisture by intercepting deep water tables. They disrupt the structure and stability of native riparian plant communities, degrading native wildlife habitat by outcompeting and replacing native plant species, and increasing the frequency, intensity and effect of fires and floods.

Salt cedar spreads vegetatively. In addition, each flower can produce thousands of tiny seeds that are wind dispersed. Seeds can also be dispersed by water.



The leaf feeding chrysomelid beetle, *Diorhabda elongate*, is being used as a biological control agent. This beetle has caused spectacular mortality of salt cedar in some release areas in the southwest USA. Learn more in this review article (restricted access). Also see the first article in the More News section below.

Rabbits can jump as high as two feet into the air and cover up to 15 feet in a single bound. When they are content they sometimes jump and spin around in the air, a behavior known as ‘bink’.



The fried egg jellyfish occupies cool water in many parts of the world and grow to 23.6 inches in diameter. The distinctive egg-yolk-like circle in the center of its bell is its gonadal mass. The sting from its tentacles is very weak.

The corn snake, a species of rat snake is a native of the US and Mexico. After temperatures cool for the winter the snakes will court and mate and, a month later, females lay leathery eggs in warm, concealed spots then leave the young snake to fend for its self.



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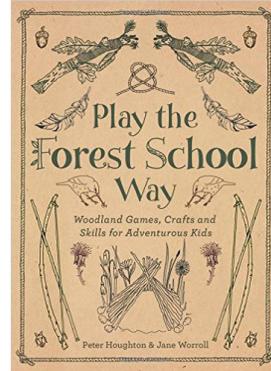


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RESOURCE CORNER

Play The Forest School Way
 by Jane Worroll and Peter Houghton
 Paperback: 160 pages
 ISBN- 978-1780289298
 Price: \$12.70 on Amazon



Help your child connect with nature, be adventurous and most of all have fun, with these woodland games, crafts and other activities from Forest School.

The rise of the Forest School movement in recent years is part of a groundswell of concern about the wellbeing of our children, with many media scare stories about child obesity, nature deficit disorder’ (as described in Last Child in the Woods) and lack of exposure to risk. This woodland adventure book brings the activities and learning through nature ethos of Forest School to the parents of nursery and primary school-age children. It’s packed full of ideas, from making nature jewelry and whittling a bow and arrow to building a shelter and foraging for food; it also celebrates the Forest School philosophy of encouraging self-esteem, confidence and social skills through engagement with nature. As well as sharing Forest School’s brilliant ideas for activities, this book encourages parents to follow aspects of the Forest School approach in the way they handle play sessions; in, for example, getting adults to engage actively while being careful to let the kids lead; in framing sessions with small rituals.

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