

# Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 11, No. 2

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

February 2019

### Presidents Report

We have 2 advanced training activities scheduled this month, both on the same day February 9.

The first is at Hackberry Flat near Frederick, OK. *Chicken Hawks and Hoot Owls Program* and Tour runs from 9 am to noon.

The second is at Hagerman Wildlife Management Area from 10 to 11:30 am. Meelyn Pandit of Oklahoma University will be discussing Bluebirds. Since these are both AT courses you can not count mileage to either destination

Another opportunity for volunteering will be February 16, beginning at 9 am at Lake Arrowhead State Park. We will meet at the dump station. This is a chapter-sponsored event to celebrate the *Great Backyard Bird Count* that takes place from Feb. 15-19.

*Home and Garden Show* will be February 23 and 24. We will have a sign-up sheet for volunteer spots for both Saturday and Sunday. The H&G Show is our last opportunity to promote the 2019 training class which begins March 5 at MSU, so let's get the word out. Application forms will be available on our web page shortly. Application deadline is Feb. 28.

We also need a volunteer to help Dian and Ray as they go to TV 3. Ray will have a spot, Feb. 14 at 6 am and Dian will have a spot Feb. 19 at noon on TV3. — Terry

#### TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST, Rolling Plains Chapter Spring 2018 – TRAINING AGENDA

Welcome: Program Orientation statewide program mission local program goal Texas Master Naturalist program	Terry McKee Chapter President	March 5 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Weather and Climatology		March 7 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Ornithology, bird watching and conservation	Dr. Marcy Brown Marsden Dean, College of Science & Mathematics	March 12 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Ecological concepts with a discussion concerning biomes, trophic levels	Henry Krusekopf	March 14 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213

### E LOCALS

**FEBRUARY 5:** Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is *in Bolin Science Hall room 209 at Midwestern State University*  
**Time:** 7:00 PM. **The program:** Maryruth Prose will be presenting information two butterfly projects. One is the Texas Monitoring Butterfly Network (which just started this year), and the other Project Monarch Health out of the University of Georgia. This project tests monarchs for parasites.

**FEBRUARY 9:** Bird Walk with Penny at 8am at Lake Arrowhead State Park. Meet at the dump station.

**MARCH 2:** Cross Timbers Bird Walk, 10:00am to 12:00pm at Lake Mineral Wells State Park & Trailway. Join our Park Ranger on a birding walk in the park. We will locate and identify birds of the Cross Timbers area. We will have binoculars on hand to loan to those without.

Reservations are required. Call 940-328-1171 ext 222.

**APRIL 20:** A Day in the Life of Dr. Anthony Fiorillo, the Perot Museum's chief curator and vice president of research and collections. Time: 9am. Tickets go on sale February 2019. Perot Museum, Dallas, Texas. 1-214-428-5555

Water Resources	Tad Gose	March 26 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Overview of freshwater fisheries biology and conservation	Robert Mauk District Fisheries Biologist Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept	March 28 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
<b>Field Trip 1</b> Lake Arrowhead State Park Fisheries and invasives	Tom Lang TPWD Inland Fisheries	March 30 8:30 am- noon
Vertebrate biology overview including historical biogeography with mammals as a model with functional morphology and geographic variation	Dr Ray Willis Associate Professor Biology Dept. MSU	April 2 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
General Botany	Dr. William Cook Professor Biology Dept., MSU	April 4 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
<b>Field Trip 2</b> Nature Observation	Ranger Laura Clepper	April 6 9:00 am-noon Lake Arrowhead State Park
Mussels	Penny Miller Larry Snyder Naturalists	April 9 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Herpetology with general discussion of local amphibians and reptiles	Dr. Charles Watson Associate Professor Biology Dept. MSU	April 11 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
<b>Field Trip 3</b> Hackberry Flat, Frederick, OK to observe wetland ecology and migratory waterfowl	Chapter Master Naturalists ODWC biologist Melynda Hickman	April 13 8:00-noon car pool
Entomology overview including common local insects Dept of Biology	Blair Ramon Dept of Biology	April 16 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Mycology Study of Fungi	Dr. James Masuoka Associate Professor Biology Dept., MSU	April 23 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Plants	Dr James Estes	April 23 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
<b>Field Trip 4</b> Grassland and wildflower morphology and ecology	Paul Dowlearn Wichita Valley Nursery	April 27 9:00 am-noon Lake Arrowhead
Overview of local geology and soils, stratigraphy, lithologies fossils and minerals geologic features of North Texas	Dr. Jonathan D Price Associate Professor / Chair Geosciences Dept. MSU	April 30 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Interpretive, volunteer opportunities & communication	Terry McKee Rolling Plains, Chapter President	May 2 7:00-9:00 pm Bolin 213
Chapter Meeting	Rolling Plains	May 7



## Advanced Training Opportunities

*The Role of Honey Bees in Natural Areas Webinar.* Time: **February 20, 2019**, Noon Eastern. New Pollinator Management Research.

*Blue Birds* Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge on **February 9th** from 10 to 11:30 AM. Meelyn Pandit will talk about the characteristics of the birds, his research, and also his camera-monitoring system. <https://www.facebook.com/events/2301352029909656/?ti=ia> Hagerman NWR is about a two hour drive from Wichita Falls. But, if you've never been there, it's a spectacular place bordering on Lake Texoma. There's a good chance of spotting bald eagles. The last two times I've been there I've seen them. Also many shorebirds and other birds. Pileated woodpeckers have been seen although not by me. Lots of other wildlife as well. Plus I've never seen it crowded.

**February 9** – Chicken Hawks & Hoot Owls Program & Tour – From 9AM to Noon at Hackberry Flat  
NOTE: RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED ... E-MAIL MELYNDA.HICKMAN@ODWC.OK.GOV OR CALL 405-990-4977

**Monarch Workshop, Train the Trainer 1** at Big Stone Lodge, Spring, TX Friday, **January 25**, 8:30am - 4:00pm. Link to workshop details: <http://bit.ly/2A9o6Bf>

## Reminder

If you haven't paid your dues, they must be paid before the end of February. We're required to send an updated membership list to "headquarters" at the beginning of the year. I convince them to hold off until we have our class organized. So, please, get this done ASAP. Dues are \$15 for an individual and \$25 for a couple.

You may always mail your dues to me at my home address:

1020 Pawhuska Ln.  
Burkburnett TX 76354-2815

# Conservation Research in Texas

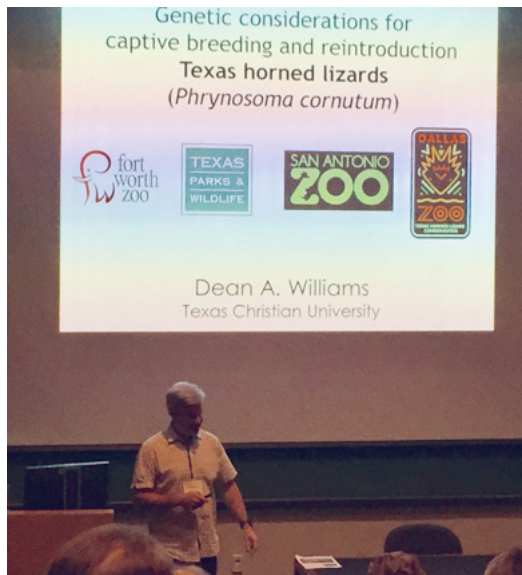
by Lynn Seman

On January 10 & 11, curiosity seekers gathered at the 5th Annual Texas Conservation Symposium in Georgetown, TX. As stated in the program, “Texas makes one of the world’s great transitional landscapes for many species” which encourages new discoveries to promote conservation efforts across the state. This symposium provides research scientists a place to share these new discoveries. Fortunately, I was able to attend the second day of the session and would like to share some highlights.

The morning sessions included much about salamander studies involving DNA genome sequencing, habitat requirements, and courtship behaviors. Salamanders are considered an indicator species because of their close association with water. If water quality suffers, so do the salamanders. Like most amphibians, salamanders have special moist skin which can absorb gases, such as oxygen and liquids which make them sensitive to environmental changes. When they show distress, this can alert us to changes that may be a potential danger. In addition, frogs and toads tell us much about the environment. During one session, a researcher presented data on the endangered, Houston Toad. By placing “recording robots” on trees with special recorders, he was able to use technology and sound analyzing software to collect information on this species which has been listed as “endangered” since 1970.

In the afternoon line-up, another research investigation explored the presence of Bd, which is short for *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*, also known as amphibian chytrid fungus. This causes a disease called chytridiomycosis in amphibians. The disease can be catastrophic to many amphibian species in Texas. The fungus takes hold on the animal’s skin and using special enzymes, digests the cells as a nutrient source so that it can produce more of its kind. Research has focused on learning more about the spread of this disease. Unfortunately, a common amphibian, the American Bullfrog, can be a carrier for this fungus while remaining unaffected. The bullfrog can be considered an invasive species in many western counties, as well as this fungus it carries, which is thought to have originated from African clawed frogs trade.

Reptiles are also susceptible to environmental concerns and provide us with a natural pest control as



well as being important in the ecological food webs. One study provided information about the increased prevalence of *Ophidiomyces ophiodicola* (Oo), in the threatened Brazos water snake. Another study focused on the Chronic Sloughing Shell Disease and its affect on the population of a variety of mud turtles.

A favorite reptile, the Texas Horned Lizard, was the anticipated subject of the afternoon presentations. Attendees were able to hear from Andrew Glusenkamp, from the San Antonio Zoo, about the current reintroduction project of the Texas Horned Lizard. He explained implementation of this project, including the qualifications set for choosing reintroduction location sites. In a related subject, Dean Williams, from Texas Christian University, explained the genetic concerns and challenges for captive breeding programs, which provide the numbers of horned lizards for the reintroduction projects. The remainder of the day included student research

on horned lizards including habitat type studies, population estimates, ectoparasites, color-matching, and urban vs. rural predation studies. One researcher created 3D printed models of Texas Horned Lizards in order to test the predation differences between rural and urban environments. Out of the 5 student research projects which were awarded monetary prizes for their presentations, 3 of these involved horned lizard research. The Texas Horned Lizard, also known as Texas State Reptile, has been on the “threatened” species list since the late 1970’s, and is considered one of the most beloved reptiles of many across the state.

Overall, the symposium attendees were treated to excellent quality research presentations on conservation efforts in Texas. One theme, supported by several projects, was the importance of museum historical collections of species which could be used to conduct research on problems that species have faced over the years. In addition, the value of continued monitoring and data collection was supported by all of the research presented, including a first-time presentation by Capital Area Texas Master Naturalists on an ongoing amphibian study.

The well-attended symposium was quite enlightening and encouraging to the future of conservation issues in Texas.

# Great Backyard Bird Count

Chapter sponsored event will be Saturday, February 16, starting at 9 am at Lake Arrowhead State Park.

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 15-18, 2019, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish!

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must create a free online account to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

In 2018, Great Backyard Bird Count participants in more than 100 countries counted more than 6,400 species of birds on more than 180,000 checklists!

During the count, you can explore what others are seeing in your area or around the world. Share your bird photos by entering the photo contest, or enjoy images pouring in from across the globe. You can even add photos and sounds to your



Common Redpoll by Kathleen Payne, N. 2018 GBBC.

checklist. Read more.

Your help is needed every year to make the GBBC successful!

Then keep counting throughout the year with eBird, which uses the same system as the Great Backyard Bird Count to collect, store, and display data any time, all the time.

## Why Count Birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distri-

bution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

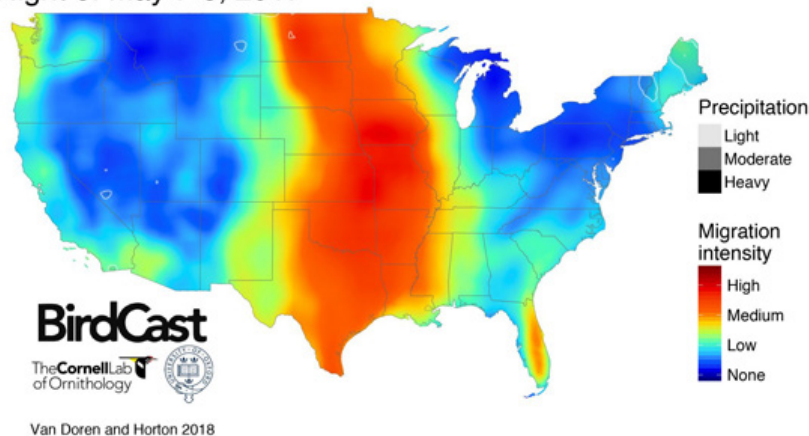
Scientists use information from the Great Backyard Bird Count, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like these:

- How will the weather and climate change influence bird populations?
- Some birds, such as winter finches, appear in large numbers during some years but not others. Where are these species from year to year, and what can we learn from these patterns?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Bird Studies Canada and many international partners.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is powered by eBird. The count is made possible in part by founding sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.

Night of May 7-8, 2017



# FUN FACTOIDS



Researchers at Berlin Free University recently found octopus fossils. Soft tissue usually decays before fossilizing, so fossils of creatures with no hard parts are rare.

Eagle eyes magnify like a high-powered telescope. They have superior color vision and are able to see UV light. This enables them to see urine tracks.



Macroglossus minimus, the long-tongued nectar bat, is one of the smallest species of mega bat. It inhabits forests of Southeast Asia and Oceania and doesn't really like company, preferring to hang out alone in small groups. The species is an important pollinator for many trees, including banana and mangrove.

## AT Opportunity Comming!



**Great news!** Chris Flis from White-side of Museum of Natural History in Seymour, Texas is offering to schedule an advanced training opportunity for our chapter at the Craddock dig site and the museum.

This AT opportunity would involve a trip to the dig site first, followed by a session at the museum. Before scheduling a date and time, we would like to get a list of those interested so that we can plan this event. We can only have a group of 10 at a time (especially at the dig site) so it might be possible to have more than one day scheduled if there is enough interest.

I will have a sign-up sheet at the meeting on Tuesday night for those interested. If you can't make it to the meeting, let me know if you are interested by e-mail (and if you would prefer Sunday or Monday).

Thanks,  
Lynn Seman

# RESOURCE CORNER

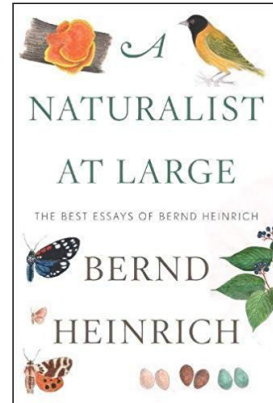
*A Naturalist at Large: The Best Essays of Bernd Heinrich*

Hardback: 304 pages

ISBN- 978-0544986831

Price: \$17.10 on Amazon

*Some of the world's greatest writings on ravens and other birds, insects, trees, elephants, and more, collected for the first time in book form showing why Bernd Heinrich is so beloved for his "passionate observations [that] superbly mix memoir and science" (New York Times)*



From one of the finest scientist/writers of our time comes an engaging record of a life spent in close observation of the natural world, one

that has yielded "marvelous, mind-altering" (Los Angeles Times) insight and discoveries. In essays that span several decades, Heinrich finds himself at home in Maine, where he plays host to visitors from Europe (the cluster flies) and more welcome guests from Asia (ladybugs); and as far away as Botswana, where he unravels the far-reaching ecological consequences of elephants' bruising treatment of mopane trees. The many fascinating discoveries in *Naturalist at Large* include the maple sap harvesting habits of red squirrels, and the "instant" flower-opening in the yellow iris as a way of ensuring potent pollination. Heinrich turns to his great love, the ravens, some of them close companions for years, as he designs a unique experiment to tease out the fascinating parameters of raven intelligence. Finally, he asks "Where does a biologist find hope?" while delivering an answer that informs and inspires.

### 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 704-3461

**Advisor:** Robert Mauk, TPWD Advisor 766-2383, Robert.Mauk@tpwd.Texas.gov