

# Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 12, No. 6

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

June 2020

### President Report

I hope everyone is enjoying this mild spring weather, both my vegetable garden and my flower gardens have never been this lovely going into June. This weekend was the perfect time to have Laura Gillis' Nature Journaling Workshop. It was attended online by 67 participants!!! Then we all went outside to practice what we learned and came back to share our sketches. Congratulations, Laura, it was an awesome presentation. You are a treasure. We are looking forward to your next one!

Last month, Lisa Taylor resigned from her position on our Board. She had more duties at work and she felt that she did not have enough time to focus on the duties of Vice President. Debra Halter, our Webmaster, graciously agreed to fill in until the end of the year in Lisa's place. Thank you, Debra!!!

Governor Abbott has been busy opening up Texas businesses, so our TMN state office has issued these return to service guidelines:

#### *Wave 1 – Beginning May 18th*

- No gatherings until Wave 2 is in place.
- Local offices should consider setting a schedule with rotations if a large number of volunteers are frequently present.

#### *Wave 2 – Beginning June 1st*

- Group meetings of 10 or fewer people only if social distancing can be practiced.
- Additional volunteer may return to work with the office capacity not exceeding 50% but should practice social distancing. Wearing masks is encouraged when in public spaces.

#### *Wave 3 – Beginning July 1st*

- Group meetings of 25% capacity of space or fewer people only if social distancing can be practiced. All volunteers may be at work site but should practice social distancing. Wearing masks is encouraged when in public spaces.

In May, our chapter conducted the first Adopted Highway cleanup, Quail Study participants have been able to do call counts and Lynn has conducted some Horned Lizard Surveys. We are staying safe and figuring out create ways to conduct TMN activities. Looking forward to when we will feel safe enough to conduct a meeting face to face! See you online Tuesday evening at our June 2nd Zoom Chapter meeting! Debra has prepared a unique Quiz Bowl experience.

Kay

### E LOCALS

**JUNE 2:** Rolling Plains Chapter Meeting - 7:00pm on Zoom - log in a little early so we can start the program at 7:00pm. The link will be sent the day before the meeting. Please do not share the link to others not in group.

*The program* will consist of our annual quiz bowl competition to claim the valued Quiz Bowl Trophy for 2020. Debra Halter will be conducting the competition so get your TMN curriculum books out and start studying! (Sorry, but last year's winners are not eligible to win this year)



Winners of the 2019 Quiz Bowl are from left to right: Terry McKee, Debra Halter, June McKee and Penny Miller.

# Lets Not Mess This Up!

Lynn Seman

In a period of a couple of months, the world changed. The normal way of life for most people is different now. As a naturalist for most of my life, but “officially” since 2006 when I joined the Texas Master Naturalist organization, I spend much of my time outdoors. In the last few years, I have been making numerous observations of plants and animals in our local area, but recently I have observed changes in one particular species, homo sapiens.

Starting in April each spring and continuing through September, I help with conducting horned lizard surveys in various locations around the region. Usually, I am with a few members of our group or solo, depending on who is available. With my notepad in hand, I head out to locations known to have red harvester ant dens, the favorite food of the Texas Horned Lizard, and walk the transect to scout for these little lizards. Their numbers have dwindled over the years, so surveys are important to keep track of any that are left in the wild.

On my latest excursion, I visited a



local park that is normally secluded and quiet during “school hours” part of the day. Before I left my car, I already noticed several humans out and about, that I normally never see. First, I came across a mother and two boys riding bikes

down the gravel trail. Their faces had an anxious, but curious look as they, in a single file, trudged down the trail next to the water ditch. The youngest had an amusing helmet with “mohawk” hair sticking up down the center. Not one of them said a word as they passed by at a good six feet distance. I wondered if they were enjoying being outside on a bike ride instead of sitting inside in a classroom? Did they happen to see the Viceroy Butterfly that was flying beside them?

As I continued down the trail counting the ant dens with tally marks on my notepad, I heard a piercing scream coming from up ahead on the walking bridge. When I looked up, I saw a Grandpa and three little ones standing on the bridge looking down to the water below. I heard the grandpa say, “look there it is! The snake, he’s eating a fish!” The screams were

coming from the young ones. I don’t know if they were screams of excitement or fear, but they were definitely engaged in watching the scenario that was taking place below the bridge. I frowned when I heard one of the kids say “I would kill

that snake if I could!” I was hoping to hear the grandpa talk about the predator-prey relationship or describe how a snake has to eat too, but that didn’t happen this time. At least there was excitement about seeing something out of the ordinary happening right before their eyes!

As I continued my survey, I came across 2 joggers, at least 3 cyclists, a lady walking her dog, and the park employees who were mowing the grass along the trails. They didn’t stay very long and most seemed in a hurry. Did they stop and notice that that the prickly pears had just bloomed with the vivid yellow blossoms showing their colors? I hope that they looked over into the wetland area to notice the Great Blue Heron patiently waiting for lunch among the lotus pads. What a beautiful site!

In this time of a changing world, I notice more people having the time to spend outside. I hope that they



are realizing what gift they have before them. I hope they will take time to notice the new blossoms, watch the interactions between wildlife, and slow down to enjoy the healing touch of nature. I hope that we humans will continue to learn and care about the plants and animals that share our world every day. Let’s not mess up this opportunity.



# TPWD Volunteer Recognition Letter from Carter Smith

April 15, 2020



Life's better outside.®

Dear TPWD Volunteers:

First and foremost, I hope this letter finds you safe, well, and healthy. The COVID-19 scare has undoubtedly created unsettling times for us all. My hope and prayer during this time is for all of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) family, yourselves included, to remain safe.

An event like this causes all of us to reflect on the things we are most thankful for. One of those things is our cadre of extremely dedicated and talented volunteers who support TPWD's mission with their wealth of knowledge, skills, experience, and passion. It takes a special person to take time away from their own lives and loved ones to teach others about conservation, stewardship and outdoor recreation. As a volunteer, you do that willingly, and in doing so, often serve as the face of TPWD and are in fact, the first contact for many outdoor enthusiasts to our state parks, state natural areas, and outreach events. Thank you!

If you are a State Park Host, you provide impactful experiences and stewardship in our parks and excellent customer service to our visitors. As an Instructor for Hunter, Boater or Angler Education, you educate Texans about how to participate in the great outdoors safely, ethically, and responsibly. If you are a Texas Master Naturalist, you assist our biologists and communities with conservation efforts and help educate others about our native plants and animals. Perhaps you are one of the lucky few spending the day with our freshwater biologists, collecting organisms to determine the health of our springs and rivers. Wherever, whenever, and however you give your time and talents, I am deeply inspired by your dedication to our Department and its mission.

Please know that through your spirit of volunteerism, you are helping to instill a spirit of conservation in Texans young and old by enhancing stewardship of our great state's natural and cultural resources. You facilitate critical hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the state. Volunteers like you are often the ones who teach a child to catch their first fish, shoot their first arrow, pitch their first tent, or take their first hike. These outdoor "firsts" create memories for a lifetime.

All of us at TPWD are deeply grateful for your service. I hope you will take great pride that in 2019, you and your fellow volunteers contributed 1.1 million hours to conservation and recreation. This is equal to 550 full-time employees and has an estimated value of more than \$29 million! I would like to personally express my appreciation to each of you who do so much for our home ground and for all of us who live and visit here.

So again, on behalf of your TPWD, thank you for caring about our wild things and wild places. They need you now more than ever.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carter Smith".

Carter Smith  
Executive Director

CS:dh

cc: Ms. Patty David  
Ms. Kris Shipman

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To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

*"Each species is a masterpiece, a creation assembled with extreme care and genius." -Edward O. Wilson*

The hairy frogfish is covered in spines. These spines, which resemble strands of hair, allow the marine animal to camouflage itself against coral and seaweed. Found mostly in warm waters around the world, the hairy frogfish can also change its color to blend in with its surroundings. Frogfish jump by sucking in water through the mouth and expelling it in jets through the small gill openings behind their “legs”.



Out of the 5,000 species of dragonflies that exist, only 450 reside in the United States. They can fly at speeds of 30 miles per hour – making them some of the fastest flying insects in the entire world. Dragonflies also have the ability to fly backwards. This ancient insect has been around for over 300 million years! Many people take up the hobby of “oding,” which is actually dragonfly watching, similar to bird watching.

The *Lupinus Texensis* and *Lupinus Sub-carnosis* (species of bluebonnets) only grow in Texas. The bluebonnet is actually toxic if ingested. Leaves and seeds from the entire *Lupinus* plant family are poisonous, although actual toxicity is determined by a number of different biological and environmental factors. Even animals steer clear of bluebonnets when they get the munchies.



## Endangered Aplomado Falcon Chicks Banded at Mustang Island State Park



On May 16, 2020, researchers banded two females and one male 26-day-old northern aplomado falcon chicks at Mustang Island State Park. This banding is part of ongoing restoration efforts by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the nonprofit The Peregrine Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

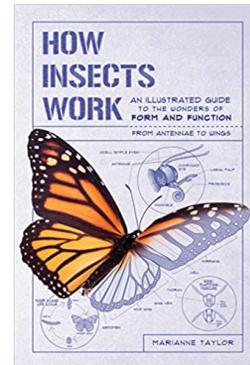
The Mustang Island project is part of broader restoration work in Texas, in which 997 birds were released into the wild at 27 Texas sites, including many private ranches, from 1993 to 2013. Since then, over 500 northern aplomado falcons have been banded in Coastal Texas.

For more information go to: Texas Parks and Wildlife website and look under the media tab.

## RESOURCE CORNER

*How Insects Work: An Illustrated Guide to the Wonders of Form and Function from Antennae to Wings*

by Marianne Taylor  
 Flexibound: 224 pages  
 ISBN-13: 978-1615196494  
 Price: \$16.95 on Amazon



*The extraordinary inner-workings of the world's amazing, adaptable insects. A tiny textbook to learn on your own.*

*How Insects Work* goes beyond the typical field guide to show us not only what insects look like but why. Arguably the most successful land animals—still going strong after five mass extinctions—insects have evolved a spectacular array of real-life superpowers to help them thrive in virtually every environment: Bumblebees’ wingbeats leave a faint electrical signal at each flower they visit to show that the nectar’s already been taken (see page 57), and houseflies defy gravity with tiny leg hairs that stick to the smoothest wall or ceiling (see page 69). In this in-depth, photo-filled handbook, discover the ways insects are even more astounding than you know—inside and out:

- Evolution
- Exoskeleton and Body Segments
- Senses
- Circulation
- Digestion
- Respiration
- Reproduction
- Metamorphosis
- Movement

And much, much more!

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