

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 13, No. 3

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

March 2021

President's Report

I woke up this morning in a winter wonderland. In the morning stillness as the sun was rising, the overnight fog had frozen on the trees and fences in large, flat crystals of ice that, from a distance, softened the world. As a breath of air stirred, those crystals floated out of the trees and landed on the previous day's snow creating a flat sheet of crystals that looked like shimmering silver/white galvanized metal. It was serene and magical and for a few moments, I forgot about the electricity issues plaguing the area and the washer drain that was frozen.

So, how can something so beautiful be so wicked?

Nature is harsh sometimes and this winter storm has created havoc here in our area. As Abby, (my Labrador) and I walked today, we were surrounded by pristine snow and the evidence of just how tough nature can be. So many birds were lying frozen in the snow or hit by cars as they were trying to get warm on the small patches of exposed black pavement. Coyotes, hawks and Great Blue Herons were all searching for meals.

Back at the house, as I scrolled through the many unhappy people on Facebook, I thought how lucky we naturalists are. We are better prepared to deal with extremes than a lot of these folks. To begin with, we know what to do when the power goes out.... we can read a book. (We have piles of them!) We watch birds and add to our life lists. We are most likely better prepared with gear also. Many of us are campers or hikers and we have the right clothes and proper footwear to deal with adverse weather. This little blip gives us an unusual opportunity to observe our world.

I absolutely don't mean to make light of the past few days. There were lots of folks not nearly as lucky at times like this it is nice to see how our communities can come together and help each other. On the Texas coast, Master Naturalists left their warm homes to help sea turtles suffering from "cold stun". By the time you read this, things will have warmed up



A beautiful hoarfrost on the pine tree.

LOCALS

MARCH 2: *Rolling Plains Chapter Meeting* - 7:00pm on Zoom - log in a little early so we can start the program at 7:00pm. A Zoom link will be sent out one hour before the meeting. Hope to see you all there!

The program: Debra Halter will be our speaker. The topic is iNaturalist. (which will come in handy for the upcoming City Nature Challenge 2021)

MARCH 1: City Nature Challenge Committee Meeting will be at 5:30pm on Zoom.

MARCH 4: Deadline for applications to training class.

MARCH 4: Our training class starts 7pm to 9pm on Zoom. Laura Gillis will be providing the introductory class with the background on being a Texas Master Naturalist.

MARCH 4: The rescheduled date for the Texas Waters Webinar on the Monofilament Recycling Program.

and they will be releasing those turtles back into the water. That's Texas weather for you.

I sincerely hope that you and yours have survived this bizarre Texas weather and that you were able to carve out a few moments to be amazed at our world of white. As I write this, things are beginning to warm up and thaw out and I hope you are safe and warm with no burst pipes! If you are having a hard time looking for the bright side of the past weather, just take a look at our February Last Saturday Hike with our focus on Animal Tracks. If you got out in the snow, you may have noticed tracks and signs of lots of animals. And, if playing in snow isn't your thing, now we have lots of mud to look for tracks and signs in!

I look forward to seeing everyone on the meeting Tuesday, March 2nd at 7:00 pm. Look for a link to the meeting in your email soon!

– Laura

8 Insect Stings That Might Need Medical Attention

<https://theoutdoorwear.com/8-insect-stings-that-might-need-medical>

Most of the insect bites are absolutely harmless, unless the symptoms that will be highlighted in this article sound familiar. Get the advice from your health care provider immediately if they are familiar in anyway. As soon as the kind of insect bite is determined, then the preeminent way to care for the sting it is next. For most, that may mean receiving medical care depending on the type and severity of the symptoms. Below you will find what the experts would like you to bear in mind as it relates to certain kinds of bites, as well as when they should not just be brushed off.

Mosquito



By themselves bites from a mosquito are not major problems; however, mosquitoes could transfer two potentially dangerous illnesses: Zika and West Nile virus. West Nile virus is more prevalent in the United States. Approximately eighty percent of persons who are infected with the West Nile Virus show no symptoms or signs of feeling sick. For those that do, the symptoms could include headaches, swollen lymph glands, fever, nausea, tiredness, vomiting and a rash on the chest, back or stomach. Symptoms typically last between a couple days to around a couple weeks. There have been reports of persons having serious infections such as encephalitis, which is an infection that attacks the brain. As it relates to Zika, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outlines that females should wait

for roughly eight weeks and males for six months after symptomatic infection or traveling prior to trying to conceive.

Fire Ants



The bite from these ferocious insects could produce red, sweltering stings in clusters. According to researchers, Fire Ants naturally bite so that they can connect themselves to their victims and then proceed to sting numerous times in a curved pattern. Concurrent stings from non poisonous insects like these fire ants could cause a toxic reaction, weakness, headache, fever, lightheadedness, muscle spasms, drowsiness, diarrhea, seizures and fainting. Symptoms such as these require urgent medical care. What is more, if persons develop symptoms of an allergic response, for example hives, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, nausea, dizziness or

March

by James Hoggard

Irises and mesquites would not bud
but purple milk vetch was spreading
near patches of burr clover wheels

Mowers and chainsaws screamed
Rushing to prune the trees we'd
missed we were trying to beat spring

henbit already ganging on lawns
but winter rye was holding on,
deep chills whistling through limbs

Something was wrong
No dandelions were seeding
and crocuses weren't rising

Winds bullied hedges day after day
A hard freeze hit and held
We had planted our gardens too
early

Easter was still three weeks away,
snow was forecast for tomorrow
but the weekend was due to be hot

Impacts of Winter Storm on Texas Wildlife

It is starting to become clear that the impacts of last week's Winter Storm in Texas may have been catastrophic for some wildlife populations. TPWD officials and Master Naturalists alike have provided recounts of big die-offs in ducks, migratory birds, bats, and exotics.



To better document the extent of the Winter Storm's impacts to wildlife,

TPWD started a project on iNaturalist to help with the documentation. Please report your observations directly to the following iNaturalist Project: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/winter-storm-uri-wildlife-deaths/>

Please share the information about this project with your peers, neighbors, other organizations and the public.

stomach cramps, head directly to the emergency room.

Brown Recluse Spider



As you could guess from the name, these spiders have a tendency of hiding away from people and other creatures and would not bite except they felt that they would be harmed, and quite frequently the bites are painless until a few hours later, then a red bulls eye looking wound appears and then it starts to swell up and turn black or blue. If the area around the wound is sloughing, blistering, warm, or hot head to the emergency room immediately. Inspect your urine after being bitten as well and if it appears dark, you develop chills, fever or seizures; this could be an indicator of a systemic illness.

Ticks



Bites from ticks are not dangerous; however, they could put you at peril for a multitude of serious diseases, such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme disease, according to doctors from Doctor on Demand. Identifying the bite early is one way of restricting the possible damage that the bite can inflict. The chances of contracting an infection due to the bite from a tick gets worse the longer a tick is attached to the skin. If a tick is suspected to be attached for more than twenty-four hours, seek medical attention also if there is a rash that is spreading or you experience muscle aches, a fever, nausea, , abdominal pain, headache or any other fly like symptoms. Head to the emergency room if you begin to experience heart palpitations, difficulty breath-

ing or severe headaches. Even though severe symptoms may not be experienced, it is still a good idea to speak to your doctor regarding the bite from a tick. The doctor can examine the tick bite and make a determination on the risk of infection and in many cases prescribe medication such as antibiotics which would reduce the chance of developing Lyme disease.

Bees



For many individuals, bee stings are simply a tad of pain. However, specific post sting symptoms indicate it is time to head to the emergency room. Subsequently to being stung by an insect such as a wasp, bee, hornet or yellow jacket, you should immediately contact 911 if difficulty breathing is experienced or if stomach cramps, diarrhea, dizziness, itchiness, swelling of the face, throat or tongue or progressive hives because these are all signs of a systemic allergic reaction.

Black Widow Spider

This is a venomous spider and the



bite has a clearly identifiable red hourglass marking and also the propensity to cause serious damage. For these bites it is recommended to definitely seek out medical attention. Seizures, muscle spasms, uncontrolled blood pressure spikes and facial spasms are symptoms that can be experienced after being bitten by a black widow spider and requires medical treatment from an emergency room doctor. The elderly and infants who are bitten should seek urgent medical care as the bites could be worse in them.

Scorpion



When a scorpion stings, the pain is typically localized, also the swelling and redness. Anything more severe than this requires urgent medical attention. The elderly and children should be assessed by a medical professional immediately for any and all stings from a scorpion, specifically if the suspect is a bark scorpion sting, which is located in the desert of the Southwest. Get to an emergency room or contact Poison Control for an assessment. Children are the ones with the highest risk of developing serious symptoms after receiving a sting. The symptoms can progress at a very rapid rate, so they would require being monitored very closely.

Puss Caterpillar



Do not be fooled, as these look very cute and cuddly, however the fur that looks so soft are actually a series of poisonous spikes. For many of the encounters with the Puss Caterpillar the first aid kit from your medicine cabinet could handle it. Apply tape and remove it repeatedly until all the spike have been removed from your skin, then the affected area should be washed with soap and water, then an ice pack can be applied to manage the pain. If the pain continues contact your doctor, also if you develop bad skin blisters, a rash that spreads, or fever. It is also noteworthy that if your tetanus booster is not up to date, you should see your doctor. Visit the emergency room is serious symptoms such as fever, headaches, dizziness, chest pain, difficulty breathing, nausea, and swelling are experienced.

FACTOIDS FUN

The trees that existed 300 million years ago do not resemble the trees we have on Earth now. These trees could grow extremely tall, but they had very shallow root systems, so fell over very easily. At the time, no microbes existed that could decompose these trees, so as they fell, they stacked up upon each other, eventually creating what one could consider a blessing or a curse....coal.



Dragonflies make a heart with their tails while mating. The male clasps the female from the back of the head and the female curls down her abdomen to pick up sperm. This position aligns them into the shape of a heart.

A frog's gender can be determined by its ears. Frog ears can be spotted right behind their eyes. For males, the disk-like organ near its ears is larger than that of the females. Their ears are also called the tympanum.



Report Winter Monarchs



The monarch butterflies we see in fall are migrating to Mexico. But some are not reaching their destination; they're being lured to stay in Texas by fall-blooming milkweed. While milkweed is necessary for them to lay eggs in spring, by mid-fall it becomes an unhealthy distraction.

Studies are being done to find out how many monarchs are overwintering in the U.S. and how it affects their survival. If you see wild monarchs in Texas from Dec.-March, report your sighting.

If your milkweed is still blooming by Oct., cut it back. This puts it on pause while the monarchs pass through. Grow other fall-blooming, nectar-producing plants to support monarchs during their fall migration.



Chapter Contacts:

Laura Gillis, President, to 733-4467, gillis.laura5319@gmail.com; Debra Halter, Vice President 632-8557, chickadeekes@aol.com; Sandy Underwood, Secretary, 867-9905, sandyleau@gmail.com; Lynn Seman, Treasurer 867-3006, rlynnseman@gmail.com

Committees Chairperson:

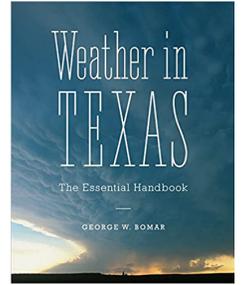
Paula Savage, Newsletter Editor and Designer 691-0231, pasavage15@gmail.com; Debra Halter, Website Manager 632-8557, chickadeekes@aol.com; Lisa Taylor, Communication Chair 781-9695, nothingb-blueskz@gmail.com

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

RESOURCE CORNER

Weather in Texas: The Essential Handbook
by George W. Bomar
Paperback:304 pages
ISBN-978-1477313299
Price: \$24.95 on Amazon

Only in Texas could a snowstorm pelt the Panhandle at the very moment abrasive dust is scouring the Permian Basin while searing heat is wilting the Winter Garden region in the south. The state's large size and central location within North America subject it to a great variety of weather occurrences. Texas state meteorologist George W. Bomar has been observing Texas weather for nearly half a century, and in *Weather in Texas*, he provides the essential guide to all of the state's weather phenomena.



Writing in lively layman's language, Bomar fully explains both how the weather works and how Texans can prepare for and stay safe during extreme weather events. He describes the forces that shape Texas weather from season to season, including the influence of tropical cyclones, frontal boundaries, El Niño, and the polar jet stream. Bomar puts specific weather events in historical context, using a ranking system to illustrate how recent droughts, snowstorms, hurricanes, flash floods, and tornadoes compare with those of previous generations. He also includes comprehensive tabulations of weather data for every area of Texas, quantifying what constitutes "normal" weather, as well as the extreme limits of variables such as low and high temperatures, rain days, snow accumulations, and earliest and latest freezes. With everything from the latest science on climate change and weather modification to dramatic stories about landmark weather events, *Weather in Texas* is a must-have reference for all Texans..