

# Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 13, No. 6

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

June 2021

### President's Report

Happy June! It's hard to believe it is June already. I don't know where this year has gone!

Thanks to everyone who participated in the City Nature Challenge! And, even though Waco may have technically beat us, we still finished 8th in Texas with 2,787 observations and that is pretty impressive. Especially for our first time. Larry Snyder made an interesting observation... Waco had 150 observers to our 48 but we had more observations per observer so statistically, we may have beaten them! I like Larry's math.

June marks the end of our Spring Training classes and I want to thank everyone (trainees & members) for hanging in there with us. The past year has seen many changes in the way we do things and the move to the Zoom platform has had both benefits and challenges. As things begin to open up, we have been able to schedule a few field trips and some of our last training classes will be in person.

Our first field trip was to Crowell to the Three Rivers Comanche Springs campus to see the wildflowers. Christina Stephens of Three Rivers did a great job showing us lots of flowers even letting us collect some seeds and pick a few blooms. After lunch, we got to press the flowers and she sent everyone home with their own field presses full of plants. The rain held off until after the walk and it was such fun to see people in person and get out there with everyone.

Our next two field trips are also scheduled. On Saturday, June 5, Robert Mauk will take the trainees out for some fish surveys and fish identification at Lake Arrowhead State Park. Then, on Saturday, June 12, we will go to Fort Richardson in Jacksboro to study some archaeology and historical preservation. Members are welcome to come to both outings but trainees will take priority when going out for the fish surveys. Watch your email for more information coming soon!



*An unusual Indian Blanket (Gaillardia pulchella) at Comanche Springs. Christina speculates that the double bloom was caused by insect damage.*

### LOCALS

**JUNE 1: 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:** Heidi Kryger's presentation will be on nature tracking. Heidi is the top Wildlife Tracker within TPWD and has received Level 3 Track and Sign Interpreter certifications in two regions of the U.S. from CyberTracker International.

**June 3** - Dr. James Estes - Botany - 2021 Training Class - Will be held at Midwestern State University Room 209 in Bolin Science Hall 7:00pm to 9:00pm

**June 9-10** - Region 9 STEM 2021 Conference - We will have a booth set up both days - If you want to help with working at the booth, please let me know. 9:00am to 4:00pm each day

**June 10** - Training Class - Fish Information and Identification with Robert Mauk 7:00pm to 9:00pm - Bolin Science Hall Room 209

**June 12** - 8:00am - Bird Outing

Our June meeting will be on the Zoom platform but if everyone is ready, we can move to in-person meetings starting in July. We will do an informal survey to see how everyone feels about that at the June meeting.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting Tuesday, June 1st at 7:00 pm. Our program will be on Animal Tracking and presented by Heidi Kryger. Watch for a link to the meeting in your email soon!

– Laura

with Penny Miller at Lake Arrowhead State Park - meet at dump station.

**June 13** - Water Testing at Lake Wichita and Wichita River - 2:00pm -meet at boat ramp at Lake Wichita.

## Rolling Plains TMN Participate in the Great Texas Birding Classic!

*Summary by Sue King*

It was dark. 4:30 am. Alarm clocks sounding. The team gathering. McDonalds serving. Camera, binoculars, clipboard, hats. Lunch to the ice chest. Load into Larry's truck. Then...the Great Horned Owl hooted. The first bird. It was going to be a great Big Day!

These Rolling Plains TMNers were embarking on the Great Texas Birding Classic (GTBC) tournament of 2021. Warren and Sue King, Penny Miller, and Larry and Judy Snyder made up the crew of the "Wichita Wingmen." The



*"Beautiful avocets and other Lake Arrowhead Shorebirds"*

Plains TMNers participating this year; the Queenfishers included Lynn Seman, Laura Clepper, and Debra Halter, and the Birding 4 Life team consisting of Dana Cobb and Sandy McIntyre. I look forward to hearing about these teams adventures.

The Wingmen competed in the Prairies and Pineywoods Regional Big Day category of the GTBC tournament. This region covers more than 40 counties, with Wilbarger as a western border, east to Grayson, and south to Fayette.

On May 6, with sunny skies, low winds, and comfortable temperatures, the Wingmen traveled around Archer, Clay, Wichita, and Wilbarger counties in search of as many species of birds as they could find in 24 hours. Travelling over 150 miles and walking short distances they netted a satisfying count of 84 species. In 2016, 89 species handed the Wingmen first place. In 2017, 95 species placed third. In 2018 they again placed third with 91 species. In 2019 a mere 75 species placed them second, and in the ever-odd year of 2020, 73 species were good enough for first place. They await 2021's final results to realize what place their 84 species will earn. The team's total number of species

documented over the six years is 160. That's a lot of birds!

With the team members all vaccinated, it was a real pleasure to be birding as an "intact" team after last year's necessity for "dispersed" birding. There is

so much more energy and delight when we can discover birds collectively. Some of this year's highlights were the Orioles which were out in force with Baltimore, Bullock's and Orchards all showing up. All the egrets (Cattle, Snowy, and Great) were out in view as well as many Swallows (Bank, Barn, Cliff, and Tree). However, disappointment was the word for the lack of the usual woodpeckers, wrens, and hawks. But the most baffling absentee was the Meadowlark. Not a single one was heard or sighted. However, rounding out the highlights were some really nice shore birds (avocets, sandpipers, terns, willets, dowitchers and phala-



*"Taking a close look at Lake Wichita"*

GTBC is a competitive event that aides in tracking the distribution of birds on their spring migration and uses the tournament entry fees for Texas Parks and Wildlife Conservation grants. Organized by Texas Parks and Wildlife, the GTBC website claims it is "the biggest, longest and wildest bird-watching tournament in the U.S.!" This is the sixth year members of the Rolling Plains Chapter have participated. In 2016 Shelley Platt, of the GTBC staff expressed, "I love seeing teams venturing further and further inland and a Wichita Falls team is a great new area!" This area of the state is beginning to be even better represented with two additional teams of Rolling



*"A well deserved break after discovering 61 species before lunch"*

ropes) at a very pleasant lunch spot in Lake Arrowhead State Park.

It was a very enjoyable and satisfying day, but we must look forward because the perpetual goal of 100 species in a day remains un-realized. NEXT TIME!

Some insects engage in mating swarms. One example involves a group with the charming name of dance flies. In some species of dance flies, males gather in a loose sphere above a shrub or other object flying up and down and around while they wait for females to enter the dance.



Such swarms can be noticeable from quite a distance. This kind of behavior is known for various orders of insects.



It's nearly impossible to kill a cockroach. Certain species of cockroaches can go without air for 45 minutes, can remain active for a month without food, can sustain themselves on the glue from a postage stamp, can survive being submerged in water for half an hour, and can withstand radiation up to 15 times the lethal dose for humans.

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Mice, rats and pigs all share a secret super-power: They can all use their intestines to breathe, and scientists discovered this by pumping oxygen up the animals' butts.



## June 8, 2021 TMN Tuesdays

On the Second Tuesday of each month at the noon hour (12PM Central Standard Time), the TMN State Office will offer an hour-long virtual **advanced training event** (sometimes including some fantastic new and returning guest speakers).

This month we get to celebrate the dragonfly, as we bring in TWP Urban Biologist Sam Kiseschnick.



Beautiful, intricate, active predators throughout their lives, the best natural mosquito control, and numerous in Texas – dragonflies! Sam will lead us in an exploration of these amazing insects. Learn all about their biology, their importance in the ecosystem, and how they do what they do. We'll also talk about how to document these predators and learn how to fill in some of the data gaps of their distribution. Hopefully, we'll guide you in some new and fun ways to appreciate these magnificent critters while also contributing to their conservation and management!

Registration Link: <https://tpwdevents3000.webex.com/tpwdevents3000/onstage/g.php?MTID=e423539c63e01b4a2851446e50ab3f546>

# RESOURCE CORNER

**iTrack Wildlife Pro 4+**  
by NatureTracking.com  
iPad and iPhone  
Price: \$14.99 on Mac App Store



iTrack Wildlife is the most comprehensive digital field guide to animal tracks ever made. Whether you're a naturalist, a hunter, a nature lover, an outdoor enthusiast, or a wildlife biologist, you will find iTrack Wildlife to be a terrific

companion on your outdoor adventures. While the simple and intuitive design make this app accessible to the novice, the wealth of accurate information and powerful search tools will appeal to experts and wildlife professionals.

### ***This definitive guide contains:***

- Track and sign info for 71 common mammals of North America (see full list below).
- Over 700 high quality track, sign, and animal photos with detailed captions.
- 120 detailed skull photos for 41 of the species.
- Precise front and hind track drawings for every animal.
- Detailed track, gait, and similar species descriptions.
- A beautiful, easy to use interface.
- The ability to zoom, pinch, and swipe between photos.
- New in version 1.1 the wikipedia page for each species is now stored in the app to allow viewing with no internet connection!

iTrack Wildlife goes far beyond what a traditional field guide can offer with powerful search tools that make track identification easier than ever before. Simply select basic characteristics of a track you want to identify and you will quickly narrow down your search to just a few similar tracks. Then, browse through the photos until you find your track.

The app also contains illustrated help guides that offer numerous tracking tips and trick, including: illustrated explanations of gait patterns, measuring tracks, and track anatomy.

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