

# Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 13, No. 5

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

May 2021

### President's Report

If April showers bring May flowers, we are in for a spectacular spring showing of wildflowers just in time for the City Nature Challenge!

The City Nature Challenge (CNC) 2021 is April 30 - May 3 and every observation on iNaturalist will help out our region. The City of Waco has challenged us to see which city will collect the most observations so we need everyone to get outside, take photos and upload them to iNaturalist! Time you spend making observations for the CNC 2021 can be reported as FR:BioBlitz in the VMS. You can also help ID the observations from May 4 - 9, 2021.



Don't forget to check your email or the Chapter website for listings of all the opportunities available to members. You will also want to be on the lookout for the TMN Tuesday programs. These online programs are the exception to the webinar rules and can be watched at any time and recorded as Advanced Training. (Time is recorded as the date that you watched it, not the date that it aired.)

Speaking of hours, last month, I mentioned a change to our hours keeping. After much research, we will align with other chapters across the state, and we will be able to count the business part of our monthly meetings as volunteer time. After each meeting, you will receive an email that will detail the Volunteer Time (VT) that we can count as well as the Advanced Training (AT) hours provided by the program.

We are also excited to be scheduling our Training Class Field Trips soon. We are working on a Fish ID class with a fishing survey; a bird ID field trip with a tour of Wild Bird Rescue; a wildflower walk; and a Paleontology trip to hunt fossils. We hope that members will be interested in attending as well as our trainees and we will let you know the dates as soon as we get them. (Masks will most likely be required as well as some social

### LOCALS

**MAY 4: 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:** Dana Cobb, TMN Trainee will present a program on Feral Hogs.

**MAY 1: BioBlitz at LASP**  
9:00am till noon Meet at the dining hall (admin. building) if you want to go as a group.

**MAY 1:** We will have a table at River Bend Nature Center - 1:30pm to 3:30pm to get other people started on the City Nature Challenge!!! Please stop by and help or sign up for a time at our table.

**MAY 2:** We are invited to Marluc Bella Vita Ranch in Jack County - 9:00am to noon to make observations for CNC 2021. The owner has invited our members to come out to his ranch to make observations for the City Nature Challenge. Please let Lynn Seman know if you plan to come! She will need to let him know how many are coming.

distancing.)

Finally, if anyone is interested in creating videos or writing essays, the State office is looking for entries in their Photo & Essays Diary Project. Videos are limited to one minute or less and you can count .5 hour (30 minutes) of volunteer time for your submission. Guidelines and more information can be found here: <https://txmn.tamu.edu/nature-reflections-2021/>

I look forward to seeing everyone on the meeting Tuesday, May 4th at 7:00 pm. Dana Cobb, TMN Trainee will present a program on Feral Hogs that promises to be interesting! Watch for a link to the meeting in your email soon!

– Laura

## Invasive Art Installation

*Invasive plants turned sculptures: new art installation at Marks Cove*



Justin Cifello twists invasive plants into the serpent structure. Photos by: Madison Czopek

As we fight to control invasive species population, it is sometimes easy to get lost in the monotony of the battle. Remove, treat, dispose, repeat. However, a group of volunteers, a Wareham Land Trust staff member, and a local artist launched an invasive removal and art build program at the Marks Cove Conservation Area in Wareham, MA, reminding us that there are also creative ways to fight back against invasive species.

The program started toward the end of April when the volunteers worked to pull and cut down the invasive species growing in the area.

The Conservation area's primary invasive species are Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) and Russian Olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), which are large shrubs that can

quickly choke out the surrounding vegetation. The vegetative debris was then brought together to be shaped, intertwined, and weaved together into sculptures. The group is forming two serpents along the walking path, so they appear to be emerging from and disappearing into the land itself. By creating the sculptures out of the invasive vegetation, and allowing it to desiccate at the site of removal, the volunteers reduce the chance of accidental seed spread from one location to another that can occur when debris is transported for disposal. The sculpture and cleared areas will be treated with herbicide to prevent regrowth. The sculptures are not finished yet, and they don't know how long the Wareham Land Trust plans to keep them up, but the esthetically pleasing sculptures can last for years.

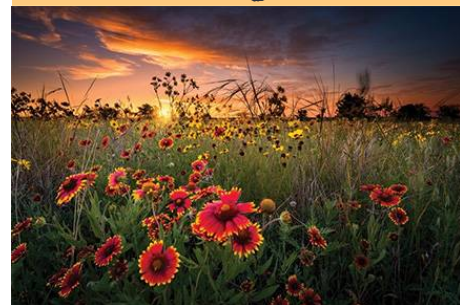
**MAY 6:** Training Class –  
7:00pm to 9:00pm Pollinators  
with Penny Miller

**MAY 8:** Bird Outing – LASP  
with Penny 8:00am - meet at  
dump station at the park

**MAY 10:** Horned Lizard Survey  
– LASP 9:00am

**MAY 10:** Water Testing at Lake  
Wichita and Wichita River meet  
at boat ramp Lake Wichita at  
2:00pm.

May



*by James Hoggard*

It hasn't in years but if spring  
lasts even a month this time  
it will happen in May when wine-  
cups bloom,  
when purple thistles rise  
near the tiny vervain,

when at this place where three  
winds meet  
Indian blanket and Mexican hat  
sway beneath overcast skies  
with sawtooth daisies and butter-  
cups,  
brown-eyed Susans and dock

If spring lasts even a month  
it will happen in May when winds  
become breezes, if it happens at  
all,  
it will happen in May when the  
world  
flares open its petals

its wild little mouths open with  
hymns

*Image by Dean Fikar, TDF Photography*





Santa Elena Canyon in Big Bend National Park is the deepest Rio Grande Canyon. Santa Elena Canyon is 8 miles long and 1,500 feet (450 m) deep. In some places it is only 30 feet wide. The Rio Grande established its present course on basin-filling sediments that covered the rocks and faults we see exposed today.

Collared doves are monogamous and can breed continuously in warm regions. When a pair has eggs in the nest, the female will incubate the eggs during the day before swapping over at dusk for the male to incubate through the night. Males and females work together to feed their new babies something called “crop milk” for the first few days of their life. Rich in protein and fat, it resembles cottage cheese, is secreted by the adults’ crop lining, and is regurgitated to the little ones.



Wild pigs can run up to 30 mph. They can jump over fences less than 3 feet high and have “climbed” out of pig traps with walls 5 to 6 feet high.

## Black Velvet Leatherleaf Slug

The black velvet leatherleaf slug is typically jet black with an inconspicuous tan

stripe down the underside, and two ocular tentacles that are also black. The mantle covers the entire length of the body and has a velvety/wrinkled appearance. The ventral portion of the mantle that runs along either side of the tan strip has black flecks along the margins. Both the breathing pore and anus are located posteriorly. The slugs can measure up to 3.5 inches in length when fully extended. These slugs are typically nocturnal, but will often emerge following a rainstorm. They live underneath fallen trees, planks, or similar places that will keep them out



of the sun.

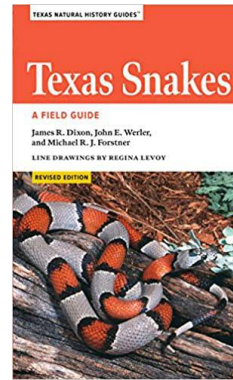
Their diet consists of both live and decaying plant matter.

The slugs have a large appetite, which can be detrimental to many types of grasses, plants, and agricultural crops. Outside the U.S., the black velvet leatherleaf slug has been reported as an important vector of the nematode parasite *Angiostrongylus costaricensis*, which causes abdominal angiostrongyliasis in humans. It is recommended that latex gloves be worn, or at least samples handled using a plastic bag. After handling live slugs, hands should be washed thoroughly in hot soapy water and rinsed in alcohol or hand disinfectant.

## RESOURCE CORNER

### *Texas Snakes: A Field Guide* (*Texas Natural History Guides*)

by James R. Dixon  
Paperback: 464 pages  
ISBN-978-1477320419  
Price: \$21.37 on Amazon



With species ranging from the legendary, fear-inspiring western diamond-backed rattlesnake to the tiny threadsnake, Texas has a greater di-

versity of snakes than any other state in the country. This fully illustrated field guide to Texas snakes, written by two of the state’s most respected herpetologists and updated by their student and later colleague, gives you the most current and complete information to identify and understand all 111 species and subspecies. *Texas Snakes: A Field Guide* has all the resources you need to identify snakes in the wild and in your own backyard: • 113 full-color, close-up photos that show every snake, as well as, 39 detailed line drawings • 113 range maps • Up-to-date species accounts that describe each snake’s appearance, look-alikes, size, and habitats • A checklist of all Texas snakes with a key to the species • Reliable information on venomous snakes and prevention of or initial treatment for snakebite • Concise discussion of conservation, classification, and identification approaches Drawn from the lead authors’ monumental, definitive *Texas Snakes: Identification, Distribution, and Natural History*, this field guide is your must-have source for identifying any snakes you see in Texas.

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