



Rolling Plains Chapter NEWSLETTER

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<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

February 2022

The Rolling Plains Chapter partners with River Bend Nature Center and Wild Bird Rescue, Inc. in Wichita Falls; Lake Arrowhead State Park in Clay County; Copper Breaks State Park in Hardeman Count.; Whiteside Museum of Natural History in Seymour; and Comanche Springs Astronomy Campus in Crowell. Our Chapter covers Archer, Baylor, Clay, Foard, Hardeman, Jack, Montague, Wichita, Wilbarger, and Young Counties.

FEBRUARY 1: Rolling Plains Chapter Meeting - 7:00pm at MSU's Bolin Science Hall, room 209. If you would prefer to attend via Zoom, watch for the link to the meeting in your email. Either way, I hope you will join us.

The program: Blair Ramon - Bee Biologist, Conservation Photographer. "North Central Texas Wild Bees is a citizen science project that is a science-based strategy for protecting and promoting wild and managed bees through education, pollinator-friendly practices, and research. This is a focused effort in Texas counties: Archer, Baylor, Clay, Foard, Hardeman, Jack, Montague, Wichita, Wilbarger, and Young Counties."



One day in early January, I was walking to the entrance at Vernon College and saw several Canada Geese checking out the planter box. Every year the geese build a nest in the box under the Yaupon and hatch out a brood of chicks. It's one of my favorite things to see but sadly, not everyone agrees.

Another student was walking in with me and made a comment about how the geese really mess things up and how she wished they could find somewhere else to go.

It's funny though... I bet the geese (and every other living plant, animal and bird) says the same thing about us humans. We invade their territory and do a lot of damage to their habitat not to mention the amount of trash we leave laying around.

With that thought in mind, I am going to try to pick up some extra trash... not just mine, but things along the road. (Someone out in my area of the county is very fond of Keystone Light!) If you would like to join the cause, the Chapter has adopted a section of highway out by Lake Arrowhead State Park. If you pick up trash there, you can record some volunteer hours but feel free to pick up trash wherever you go... maybe the geese will reward you by not pooping on your sidewalk!

In other news, the Chapter Board members had a productive retreat earlier this month and we are excited to present you with a few new opportunities. (More than just trash pick-up!)

One opportunity is the creation of a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Lynn Seman and Alex Nelson will be heading up this important committee and if you would like to help, please let Lynn or Alex know.

We are also gearing up for the Home & Garden Show and in addition to needing volunteers for the booth, we will need volunteers to help with our Last Saturday Hikes. For the month of February, we are excited to be leading three hikes out and around the MPEC and the Home & Garden Show. We will have two hikes on Saturday and one on Sunday.

This year also marks the Twentieth Anniversary of the Rolling Plains Chapter! To celebrate, we are proposing a year-long Scavenger Hunt. We will explain it all and pass out your check-

list at the February Meeting. (Checklists will also be available on the website for download for those who can't be at the meeting.)

The February meeting will again be hybrid. We will meet in person at 7:00 PM in Bolin Science Hall, Room 209 at Midwestern State University and we also on Zoom at the same time. (Watch for a link in your email.) Our program will be Blair Ramon with a program on the North Texas Bee Project (rescheduled from January).

I hope everyone is staying safe, healthy and warm.... and I hope to see you soon!—*Laura*

2022 Texas Conservation Symposium

text and photos by Lynn Seman

Each January, the Texas Conservation Symposium takes place in Georgetown, Texas. This event is composed of research graduate students, especially those that are conducting research with Texas Horned Lizards. With horned lizards being in my top five favorite animals, the symposium always captures my interest. I also love attending, judging, and listening to student science research projects, and in a way, this event is an adult version of a “science fair” on topics that interest Texas Master Naturalists.

This year's event was a hybrid event which allowed me to watch from the comfort of my couch, and as always, I was not disappointed with the presentations!

The event started with presentations on a federally threatened species of salamanders, *Eurycea tonkawae*, and the work being done in a special area around a spring where these critters live. We also have salamanders in our region, mainly the Barred Tiger Salamander *Ambystoma mavortium*, but they are rarely reported on iNaturalist. In fact, in our region, the only salamander sightings have been reported around Petrolia in 2015! That sounds like a new challenge for our BioBlitz – let's look for some salamanders!

Next came the Texas horned lizard projects. Some of these were partially funded by the Horned Lizard Conservation Society, in which I serve as a member of the board that approves grants for research projects, so I was especially interested to see these bright students' conservation work. One project involved studying the importance of “thermal refugia” for horned lizards which seemed to become the “buzz word” of the symposium. “Refugia” is defined as areas in which organisms can survive during periods of unfavorable conditions. With all the changes going on in our world, assuredly this word will become more and more important when talking about conservation. With horned lizards being ectotherms, I learned that their most preferred temperature range is around 35 degrees Celsius in laboratory tests. Cover is important to provide shade to keep them comfortable in this range, not only for just hanging out, but to provide them the best means to reproduce successfully. Some of the students have been researching microhabitats and using clever data loggers embedded in lizard models to collect data. Overall, these studies



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Upcoming Opportunities for AT and VT Hours

Here are upcoming opportunities for AT and VT hours. You can find any links to these on the calendar on the Chapter's website.

Feb 1 (5:30 - 6:30) Mushrooms, Molds and Mycorrhizae: The amazing role of Fungi.

Feb 1 (7:00 - 9:00) February Monthly Meeting. Program by Blair Ramon on the North Central Texas Bee Project.

Feb 3 (9:30 - 10:30) The Nature of Oaks by Doug Tallamy. This webinar has a \$10 fee to attend by Zoom, but you get a recording of the presentation to view later. However, to get AT time, you must watch it live.

Feb 5 (9:00-11:00) 2022 Weather Spotter Training. You may count this live training once a year as continuing education.

Feb 7 (4:30 - 5:30) Birding is fun with Kristine Rzvers. Class # 5 or 8. Understanding habitat.

Feb 8 (12:00 - 1:00) TMNTuesday. see page 3 for the link for more information.

Feb 12 (8:00 - 10:00) Bird outing at Lake Wichita. Meet at the dump site at Lake Arrowhead State Park.

Feb 13 (2:00 - 4:00) Water Testing at the Lake Wichita Boat ramp off of Kemp, then travel to Lucy Park.

lead to the conclusion that horned lizards need a mosaic of vegetation and microhabitats to help with survival.

The rest of the presentations were also very informational and thought provoking. One study discussed the Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis*, and how they began nesting places in new areas that historically were not in their range. I learned that there are several subspecies of this bird and that their populations are out of control in many areas, especially in urban spaces. One interesting tidbit of information I learned is that they poop every 20 minutes, which explains the extreme fecal messes around some local pond areas!



From alligator snapping turtle studies to freshwater mussels' surveys, the presentations covered a wide range of topics, but focused mainly on urban wildlife and habitats. One presentation about the community of Sun City, Texas, explained how planning ahead and looking for connections in the habitat through waterways and riparian areas around them, not isolating or "cutting off" areas, can provide sufficient habitat for urban wildlife coexisting with people.



Another presentation that caught my eye was about master naturalists monitoring bluebird nesting boxes in a public area. Lake Arrowhead State Park has several bluebird boxes that have been there now for years. This starting me thinking about how we can help with these!

The keynote speaker was a member of a non-profit organization called 500 Women Scientists. This group is working toward inclusion of under-represented groups in scientific research. Her message was inspiring and raised thought-provoking questions for the audience to consider. Bias in scientific research is definitely "not very scientific" and should be eliminated. The basics of scientific research is to collect data, analyze, and present findings in a way that we can ALL learn from for the future. When prejudices come into the picture, science does not flourish.

I highly recommend this symposium to those who want to stay current with scientific research in Texas. It never fails to get me to thinking about new topics of interest and new words to ponder! Wouldn't it be great if we could present some of our citizen science research next year? ✨

2022 Advanced Training

As you all know, to stay certified, you need to get 8 hours of Advanced Training for 2022. There are many ways you can accomplish this.

- One way is to participate in the **TMN Tuesdays**. These are webinars that are presented on

Looking for Volunteers

1. We need to update our Display board for the upcoming Home and Garden Show in February. If you are interested in taking charge of this or with helping to spruce it up, let us know! Project leader of course can recruit help!
2. Comanche Springs Astronomy Campus would like to have a couple of tables built and a screech owl box built to use on the campus. If you are great at building things and want to organize or help with this project, let us know! Of course, the project leader can recruit help. These could be built at your home and then relocated to Comanche Springs when they are ready to be installed. If interested, let Lynn know and she will send you some plans to look at. The tables will help with educational outdoor programs as well as with water testing at the Beaver Pond.
3. River Bend Nature Center needs field guides for student field trips coming up. If you are interested in becoming a field guide (paid position) or if you are wanting to volunteer, please contact River Bend Nature Center. RBNC Number is 940-767-0843

We will update you with more projects soon!
Lynn Seman
Rolling Plains Chapter
Volunteer Activity Director
2022

the second Tuesday of each month by the state TMN office. You can watch them live or you can watch the recording later at your convenience. Unfortunately, I found out that you cannot watch last years and report them for this year. (Note – *these are the only recordings that can be approved for AT*) They will also be doing a “Be the Change” Series that you can find out about. Here are the ones for 2022: <https://txmn.tamu.edu/tmntuesdays/> If you watch them live, you will need to register for it each month to get the Webex link.

- Another way to get AT is to attend the **chapter meeting programs**. Alex Nelson will be setting up programs this year and will let you know what they will be in advance. You can report this time if you attend the meeting live or if you attend on Zoom. You cannot watch the recording and count it for AT.
- The **Texas Waters Webinars** are another way to get AT. Because they deal with water in Texas, most of these are approved for our chapter. You can find the list and where to register for these at this website: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/water-education/texaswatersprogram/texaswatersspecialist> If you are not sure if it is approved, please feel free to ask.



- One AT opportunity that you might be interested in is through **Whiteside Museum of Natural History**. (If you have not experienced the dig site training). They are hosting a Classroom Earth Workshop on several dates coming up. We have received permission to sign up for this because part of what we do is educate the public. When it asks for what school, just put Rolling Plains Chapter Texas Master Naturalist. Please keep in mind these will be weather dependent. Here is the link: <https://www.wmnh.org/classroom-earth-sign-up>

We will be announcing more AT opportunities and post them on the chapter website here: <https://txmn.org/rollingplains/events/> Debra Halter will be updating this calendar with opportunities as they come in.

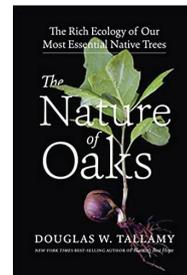
If you have an idea for Advanced Training or know of something, please let us know. We will get the board to approve the training and get it added to the calendar. There is a form to fill out for new training opportunities that you can find here: <https://txmn.org/rollingplains/files/2021/02/Request-for-AT.pdf>

Thank you! If you ever have a question or need help with anything, feel free to ask Lynn Seman, Rolling Plains Chapter TMN, Advanced Training Director 2022.✱

Good Read

The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees

by Douglas W. Tallamy
Hardback – 200 pages
ISBN-13: 978-1643260440
Price: \$23.49 on Amazon



Oaks sustain a complex and fascinating web of wild-life. The Nature of Oaks

reveals what is going on in oak trees month by month, highlighting the seasonal cycles of life, death, and renewal. From woodpeckers who collect and store hundreds of acorns for sustenance to the beauty of jewel caterpillars, Tallamy illuminates and celebrates the wonders that occur right in our own backyards. He also shares practical advice about how to plant and care for an oak, along with information about the best oak species for your area. The Nature of Oaks will inspire you to treasure these trees and to act to nurture and protect them. ✱

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