

**TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST
ELM FORK CHAPTER**

NATURALIST NEWS

**Volume 22 Issue 2
February 2022**



Blue dragonfly—Jonathan Reynolds

We're on the Web www.txmn.org/elmfork

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST ELM FORK CHAPTER

NATURALIST NEWS

Volume 22 Issue 2



At North Lakes juvenile female mallard —Jonathan Reynolds

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Special points of interest:

- Clear Creek burn
- “Bugs” in Green Acres
- Look for the Want Ad for Programs Director
- Open House is coming
- SWAt is meeting
- Check out the LBJ Grasslands article



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On Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/

From Mary Morrow

YOU'RE INVITED

FREE EVENT

Texas Master Naturalist

Elm Fork Chapter

Serving Denton, Wise and Cooke Counties

OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, April 21, 2022

9:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

**DCAC Courthouse
1 Courthouse Drive
3rd Floor, Room 2020
Denton**

**Come meet local Master Naturalists!
Find out how we serve your Community through**

**CONSERVATION
RESTORATION
PRESERVATION**

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™

Elm Fork Chapter





Texas Master Naturalist Elm Fork Chapter

TMN Mission: To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities

EFC Vision: In our community, Elm Fork Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program will be recognized as a primary source of information, education and service to support natural resources and natural areas today and in the future



Website:
txmn.org/elmfork

Email:
contact@efctmn.org

Facebook:
Elm Fork Chapter Texas
Master Naturalist

To check updates for this event please refer to our Website, Facebook or contact us through our Email.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Court of Texas Cooperating. We will seek to provide reasonable accommodation for all persons with disabilities for this program. We ask that you notify the Denton County AgriLife Extension Office of the auxiliary aid or service that will be required.

Inside Outside News

News Nuggets

From Jan Deathrage, President

Early Naturalist – Harriet Tubman

February, as you know, is Black History Month. Harriet Tubman was a prominent abolitionist and a “conductor” of the Underground Railroad in the mid 1800s. This year marks the 200th Anniversary of her birth.

The Nature Conservancy recently sponsored a webinar on her life and her strong connection to the natural world: “Harriet Tubman: An Unsung Naturalist”.

She was an herbalist and honed her outdoor skills as a child from journeys through the woods of Maryland with her father. She learned that cotton seed, bark and roots were helpful in relieving pain. Sassafras was a treatment for infection. Basil provided effective stress relief and boosted immunity. There was a knowledge sharing intersection between Africans and the Indigenous peoples on the healing and nutritional properties in nature.

Learning to use Bird Calls for communication in the woods she mimicked the Barred Owl to communicate safety to others that she was guiding to freedom.

She learned to use the stars for navigation. She expertly leveraged astronomy to navigate landscapes and waterways in travel routes for herself and many others.

She wrote in 1859:

“God’s time is always near. He set the North star in the heavens; He gave me the strength in my limbs; He meant I should be free.”

LISDOLA – What’s Old Is New Again

If you haven’t been to LISDOLA lately, you are in for a pleasant surprise. Last Fall the new Outdoor Learning Center was completed and what a difference it has made. The portable building was replaced with an impressive new Outdoor Learning Center. The structure has four classrooms, six total learning areas and three outdoor patios. Enhanced by a solar panel station and pond, the environment is very welcoming and supports hands-on learning. What an improvement!



Inside Outside News

cond. News Nuggets

February Chapter Meeting

Our February Chapter meeting will not include a speaker and no AT will be offered. But there is always something to learn. Each year we celebrate the accomplishments of our members and their contributions to our special place on the planet. In recent years, our criteria for selection has been simplified to recognize members and their projects in four critical areas of our program.

- Natural Resource Service
- Public Understanding
- Enhancing Education & Outreach
- Volunteer Network

We hope you'll join us in recognizing our 2021 Award Recipients in person at our new meeting location: Denton County Courthouse, 3rd Floor- Room 2020 at 9:30AM, Thursday February 17th.

Elevator Speech

Have you ever been tongue-tied when someone asks you "What is a Master Naturalist"? Here's a good example of an answer from the TMN Coastal Prairie Chapter.

"We are a group of trained volunteers who share our appreciation and knowledge of nature with the community through outreach, education, and conservation/restoration projects."

It's always nice to have a quick elevator speech at the ready. You never know who might be influenced. If you have one that you'd like to share, please pass it on to our Member-At-Large, Harriet Powell, on the website at <https://txmn.org/elmfork/chapter-suggestions>.

Zoom registration link to meeting February 17

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpfu2sqz4sHtALeXP2aQsPxSjCLMCXNIUn>

Inside Outside News

SUGGESTIONS

Have an idea, a complaint, a question? Then take advantage of the Chapter Suggestion Box.



Member suggestions are welcomed by the Board and may be made on the Chapter's website in the Members area under Suggestion Box or by contacting Harriet Powell directly by email at Suggestions@efctmn.org



Clipart (not Green Acres)

Green Acres activities—from *Becky Bertoni*:

Sat April 2, 2022 10-11 am Eastern Bluebirds

Come take a short hike around the 8 Bluebird Boxes at Green Acres with Texas Master Naturalist LeeAnn Weaver and learn all about the Eastern Bluebirds, their nesting practices, and how to start attracting these beautiful birds to your area.

Age: 14-Adult

Location: Green Acres Park, 4400 Hide-A-Way, Flower Mound

Instructor: LeeAnn Weaver, Texas Master Naturalist

Max: 20 will have a wait list

Sat April 30 10-11 am

Become a Citizen Scientist at Green Acres

Learn how to use the iNaturalist app, then help document the plants, birds, insects, and animals that call Green Acres home. Bring your cell phone to take pictures, and if you download the iNaturalist app (<https://www.inaturalist.org/>) and create an account ahead of time, we can start observing sooner!

Age: 14-Adult

Location: Green Acres Park, 4400 Hide-A-Way, Flower Mound

Instructor: Diane Wetherbee, Texas Master Naturalist

Max: 20 will have a wait list

Inside Outside News

cont.—Green Acres activities:

Sat May 7, 2022 10-11 am

Spring at Green Acres: Spring Blooms and Caterpillars

Learn about plants at the monarch station that you could use in your yard to attract butterflies, caterpillars, and other pollinators. Walk up to the prairie restoration and down to the riparian area to see spring wildflowers.

Age: 14-Adult

Location: Green Acres Park, 4400 Hide-A-Way, Flower Mound

Instructor: Becky Bertoni, Texas Master Naturalist

Max: 20 will have a wait list.

Sat Oct 1, 2022 10-11 am

Fall at Green Acres: Monarchs and Prairie Grasses

Explore the Monarch Station for pollinators--and maybe monarchs, and hike to the prairie restoration and riparian areas to learn about native grasses. Learn plants you could use to make a pocket prairie on your property.

Age: 14-Adult

Location: Green Acres Park, 4400 Hide-A-Way, Flower Mound

Instructor: Becky Bertoni, Texas Master Naturalist

Max: 20 will have a wait list

From Hagerman Featherless Flyer: Our beloved Visitor Center is opening on Thursday, February 17th!

Come and bring the kids to see the indoor exhibits, and enjoy shopping in our fully stocked Nature Nook! We hope you are as excited as we are, but we need to make you aware of some changes:

Masks are required in the building, as in airports and every federal facility.

Thursday through Monday (Feb 17-21) the Visitor Center will be open 9am to 4pm except Sunday: 1pm to 4pm.

After the initial four day opening weekend, the Visitor Center will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday 9am to 4pm.

Tram tours will begin Saturday, February 19th. Make your [Wildlife Explorer reservation online today!](#)

[Visit us online](#) for more information about the refuge and all it has to offer, and [Contact Us](#) if you would like to become a visitor center greeter.

See you at the refuge!

Inside Outside News

From Mary Morrow



IDENTIFYING & MANAGING EMERALD ASH BORER (EAB)

With Dr. Demian Gomez, TFS
Regional Forester Courtney Blevins, TFS
Urban Forester Rachel McGregor, TTF



Thursday, March 10, 2022
Hardwicke Interpretive Center
9601 Fossil Ridge Road
Fort Worth, TX 76135
9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (English)
12 p.m. - 2 p.m. (En Espanol)

REGISTER ONLINE

Using the QR Code
or visit
<https://bit.ly/34ACYup>



**SPACE IS LIMITED*

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MONTHLY PLANNING MEETING AND ADVANCED TRAINING

DATE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2022

TIME: 9:30 A.M.—11:30 A.M.

BUSINESS MEETING AT 9:30-10:30 A.M.

FOLLOWED BY ADVANCED TRAINING

LOCATION:

CARROLL COURTS BUILDING

401 W. HICKORY ST.

ROOM 115

DENTON

**YOU ARE
INVITED!**

The SWAT Team extends this personal invitation to you to join us at our upcoming meeting. Come learn more about us and how you might fit in! Our program is ongoing throughout the year and we are always in need of additional volunteers.

For more information, please contact Tammie Gurley, Sharon Betty or Marion Arndt at sciencewithattitude@gmail.com or visit our webpage: dcmga.com/all-about-dcmga/swat-science-with-attitude-educational-outreach/

▶ Training

Come hear about summer plans for nature, science and gardening programs at a variety of sites in Denton County and learn how you can help!

PRESENTERS:

- Daniel Arenas - Beulah Acres Agroforest/Global Gardeners Classes
- Sharon Betty - City of Denton Summer Camp
- Beth Sharum - Junior Master Gardener Camp
- Sharon Betty - Junior Master Naturalist Camp
- Marti Lathrop - Elm Fork Education Center Summer Camp
- Shelly Robinson - Lewisville ISD Outdoor Learning Area (LISDOLA)
- Rita Lokie - Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA)
- Sharon Betty - What is Project Wild? Quick Program Overview



Inside Outside News

REMINDER!!!

PROJECT NESTWATCH

By Sharon Clark

Starting Date: Anytime

Project # 171207

It is that time of the year again when our feathered friends start nesting!

WHAT IS NESTWATCH?

NestWatch is a nationwide monitoring program (**Cornell Lab of Ornithology project**) designed to **track status and trends** in the **reproductive biology of birds**, including when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, how many eggs hatch, and how many hatchlings survive. Nest boxes are considered nests.

Enrolling **has no cost** to participants.

Nestwatch is a field research and observation volunteer project.

Please note that construction of, placement of, and maintenance of nest boxes **does not count** as EFCMN volunteer time for this project.

There **is no specific start or stop date** for this project due to the fact that in some states some birds (like owls in January) can be nesting year-round.

The Cornell database is used **to study the current condition of breeding bird populations** and how they may be changing over time as a result of **climate change, habitat degradation and loss, expansion of urban areas, and the introduction of non-native plants and animals.**

HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE?

Participating in NestWatch is easy and just about anyone can do it.

Simply follow the directions on the website (www.nestwatch.org) to become a **certified Nest-Watcher**, then **find** a bird nest (in a bush/tree, in a nest box, in riparian area, etc.) using the helpful tips offered on the web site, **visit** the nest every 3-4 days and **record** what you see, and then **report** this information on the NestWatch website.

You can also download the **NestWatch Mobile App** for iOS and Android and record what you see at the nest in real time. Direct email for Nest-watch is : nestwatch@cornell.edu.

Your observations will be added to those of thousands of other Nest-Watchers in a **continually growing database used by researchers** to understand and study birds. Simply put, without your help it would be impossible to gather enough information to accurately monitor nesting birds across the country. And while you are contributing extremely valuable information to science, you will learn firsthand about birds and create a lifelong bond with the natural world.



Eastern Bluebird hatchlings

Photo courtesy of EFCMN Member Sharon Clark

Inside Outside News

Cont. REMINDER!!!

PROJECT NESTWATCH

IMPORTANT: If you are observing nests/nest boxes located on another MN approved project site (Clear Creek, Green Acres, LLELA, etc.), contact the project manager for that project's current observational practices/documentation.

PROJECT COORDINATOR: SHARON CLARK; seclarkdomph@att.net; questions/suggestions are welcomed.

News from Clear Creek courtesy Clay Thurmond project manager

Clear Creek Has Its First Burn

On Thursday, January 27, Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center had its first prescribed restoration burn on 6.4 acres of the Davis Prairie. The burn was conducted by the Denton Fire Department with assistance from the Justin Fire Department which provided a pumper truck. Denton Fire had two brush trucks and two UTV's. A fire engine stood on standby outside the burn area. Originally planned for 9 am, it didn't get started until about 12:45 pm as Battalion Chief David Boots, the burn boss, waited until conditions met the requirements for an approved burn.

Dan Brockett, Parks, prepared the areas in advance by mowing fire lanes that outlined the burn site and reduced fuel on the perimeter. After a briefing by Chief Boots and a walk of the site, Denton's two brush trucks each made a loop of the perimeter, laying down a spray of foam to further reduce flare ups that might occur from embers escaping the burn. A small test burn was done and all required conditions were met to give a "Go" for the burn.

Two teams, one going north and one going east begin the burn. Each team had one fireman with a drip torch setting the grass afire, two on foot behind raking and patting down the edges of the burn, and a UTV with a fire hose cruising behind for insurance. The pumper truck from Justin provided water for Denton's grass trucks and UTV's. The burn provided the firemen training towards certification for wildfire deployment across the state.

The slow moving burn took about three hours revealing patches of cactus, yucca, and privet hidden by the tall grass. Several piles of previously cut privet, mesquite, and honey locust provided extra fuel. Some areas didn't burn -- too green or too little ground fuel to sustain the fire, especially around a few large briar thickets.

Denton Parks has some native grass and wildflower mixes we can seed the area with. We will also monitor the area for how it bounces back and if the abundant KR Bluestem is reduced. as well as how a thick stand of Little Bluestem recovers. Denton Fire is looking forward to the next opportunity for a prescribed burn and a continuing partnership with Clear Creek and Denton Parks.

FB link for [Denton Fire's video of the burn](#) and FB link to [video by Parks/DTV](#)

Inside Outside News

cond. News from Clear Creek courtesy Clay Thurmond project manager



Inside Outside News

cond. News from Clear Creek courtesy Clay Thurmond project manager



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Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition

The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition is now displayed at the Elm Fork Education Center in the EESAT Building at UNT. The display features the award winning pictures of Texas native plants created by 4th grade students from 22 Denton ISD elementary schools. The artwork was displayed at the Denton Senior Center in



November and at the TWU Blagg-Huey Library during December and January. I hope you have an opportunity to see the current and upcoming exhibits. They will make you smile! Mark your calendars now to attend the Appreciation Reception. Everyone is welcome to attend even if you haven't been involved with the project. The reception is a great time to see the artwork, various other displays, the student artists and their art teachers and enjoy the refreshments. The reception will be held at the Denton ISD Professional Development Center,

1212 Bolivar Street in Denton from 4:30pm - 6:30pm on Wednesday, April 20. For more information contact Marilyn Blanton. marilynblanton42@gmail.com

Schedule of Displays

February	UNT Elm Fork Education Center
March	Emily Fowler Central Library North Branch Library South Branch Library
April	Discover Denton (April 1 - April 15) Appreciation Reception (April 20) Denton Redbud Festival (April 23)



Inside Outside News

Cond. Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition



HELP WANTED

(Continuing Education) Programs Director

Lifelong Learner

This person possesses an inherent sense of curiosity about nature and enjoys sharing information with fellow Master Naturalists.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

Keep finger on pulse of what's making news in our surrounding natural world.

Plan, coordinate and schedule Speakers for our chapter meetings.

Maintain contact information for past and prospective speakers and information on past programs.

Solicit speakers and program topics from membership to be considered.

Collaborate with Communications for advanced publicity and VMS Committees for AT approval.

Arrange for Speaker gifts and honorariums as necessary and provide budget information to the Treasurer.

Past experienced not required. Present enthusiasm appreciated.

Contact: Rita Lokie: at@efctmn.org

Expand Your Knowledge—Explore the Many Surprises of Nature

From Jeanne Erickson



Visiting LBJ National Grasslands

Such a wonderful place to explore! Prairies, woods, creeks, hills, bluffs and more are there for you to discover and enjoy. But be aware that the 20,250 acres of LBJ Grasslands are not contiguous - there are multiple units with all sorts of access points from Wise County roads. Some of my favorite places include the limestone topped hill at Ball Knob Hill (Unit 32), the extensive trails on Tadra (Unit 31 – be sure to walk beyond some of the locked gates erected to exclude vehicular traffic) and the bluff and ravines on Unit 71. Many Units have miles and miles of horse trails that one can follow or you can just explore anywhere off trail on your own.

LBJG Facebook Page

There is a brand new Facebook page created by Michael Smith and Kayla West - they are planning to lead hikes there - that may be the best place to start your exploration of the area. Here is a link to their LBJG Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lbjgrasslandsproject/permalink/614542669799793/>

A bit of background information on the Grasslands

Lyndon B. Johnson National Grassland (LBJ), of the Caddo-Lyndon B. Johnson National Grasslands, is the most southerly of the national grasslands and has a rich history. The land we now call LBJ was the home of great herds of bison, antelope, deer, and elk and a favored hunting ground of the Native people. The Caddo Indians, the largest Indian culture in Northeast Texas, were the first cultivators of this land. They were forced out around the mid-1700s by the more aggressive Apache and Comanche people. The European settlers, primarily stockmen, moved into the area in the 1800s with the farmers following in the early 1900s. The land has seen great cattle drives, with an estimated ten million head of cattle driven northward, and the advent of barbed wire. Cattle, barbed wire, and farming brought major changes to the land.

The areas now designated as "grasslands" were settled in the 1800s under a variety of "Homestead Acts" that opened the land to people, generally farmers, and helped to settle the west. A prolonged period of drought in the late 1920s into the 1930s caused some homesteads on sub-marginal farmland (a location receiving 15 or less inches of annual moisture) to literally dry up and blow away. During this time, Congress established the Land Utilization Program (LUP) which bought homesteads from bankrupt private owners and returned it to public land status. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) helped to stabilize the eroding soil by re-seeding it and applying other conservation techniques. In the 1950s, the LUP holdings were assigned to the USDA Forest Service which was tasked with management of these sub-marginal lands."

The link to the full article for the above information is below – worth the read! <https://www.forestcamping.com/dow/southern/lbjinfo.htm>

Additional information from the Forest Service web site:

https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/texas/about-forest/districts/?cid=fswebdev3_008440

The Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) National Grasslands is located northwest of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. It not only provides grazing land for cattle and habitat for wildlife, but offers a variety of recreation. The most popular activities are hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and photography.



cond. LBJ Grasslands

White-tailed deer, small mammals, coyotes, bobcats, red fox, waterfowl, bobwhite quail, turkey, and songbirds thrive in the diverse habitats provided by the Grasslands. Largemouth bass, blue and channel catfish, and various sunfish species are common catches at the many lakes that dot the Grasslands' landscape.

The recreation areas on LBJ offer a variety of facilities for camping, picnicking, and other outdoor activities. All are open year-round. Recreation areas are located at Black Creek Lake, and Valley View Group Use Campground. TADRA



Point is a designated trail-head is a primary access

point for the 75 mile LBJ Multiuse Trail system. Other popular lakes include Clear Lake and Rhodes Lake.



Maps:

LBJ Multiuse Trail System: There are nearly 75 miles of multipurpose trails in the LBJ Multiuse Trail system. Hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders use these trails. You can view the LBJ Multiuse Trail Map: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5274355.pdf

The US Forest Service office is north of Decatur on Hwy 287 but has been closed since the advent of covid so you cannot stop to buy the map shown in the link below, but apparently can order it on-line: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/50/Lbj_Grasslands_Map.gif

If this has piqued your interest.....and if you are interested in learning about monitoring nest boxes or have any ideas that you would like to propose for new projects at LBJ NationalD Grasslands you can contact me at fossilhillwj@gmail.com



cond. LBJ Grasslands**Bluebird and nest boxes resources****Jeanne Erickson bluebirds and nest boxes resources**

Cornell Nest Watch Website - <https://nestwatch.org/> - Wonderful website with an incredible amount of information on all things about birds including their Nest Watch Manual - https://nestwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/NestWatch_manual_20191106.pdf

Texas Bluebird Society – <https://texasbluebirdsociety.org/index.php> – lots of great information including has a long list of publications that can be downloaded including:

“Bluebirds in Texas” - <https://texasbluebirdsociety.org/Resources.php> and

“Eastern Bluebird Nestling Growth Chart” - https://homepage2.texasbluebirdsociety.org/documents/20200427_EABL_Nesting_Growth_Chart-NABS_factsheet_final.pdf

North American Bluebird Society - <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/> -

Many publications including – “Get to Know Bluebirds” - http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/PDF/Get%20to%20Know%20Bluebirds_A%20Guide%20for%20Young%20Nature%20Lovers.pdf

Photo credits for this article: a, b, c by Susan Hamby; remainder by Jerry Hamby

Cond. Expand Your Knowledge—Explore the Many Surprises of Nature**My Field Report: 2022 10th Annual Laredo Birding Festival by Maggi Gunnels**

The 2022 Laredo Birding Festival (February 2-5) was an adventure this year, especially with the winter blast that came to south Texas late in the day on Day 1! When I arrived on Wednesday, a balmy 85 degrees was perfect for birding on the Rio Grande trails. By the next morning, temperatures were near freezing with a very blustery wind!

On Thursday, even with bitter cold and wind, many of us ventured out on daily birding adventures. The sun finally came out again on Friday afternoon and made for an enjoyable time out and about. There were extra walking tours from the Festival base at the La Posada Hotel (delicious food!) ... such as walks to view the parakeets roosting downtown. And we enjoyed interesting evening activities such as a lectures on biodiversity and championing birding in our future generations. And there were even art contests for young birders and all levels of photographers, with a special exhibit on “Birds of the Brush” at the Laredo Center for the Arts.

Most of all, I cannot say enough about the genuine hospitality of the Festival committee and local hosts and sponsors. My highlights were definitely the daily birding and photography trips. This is a unique way to experience the local ranches and parks. The ranch hosts share their beautiful homes and properties, and are land stewards and conservationists. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about the culture, the challenges at our Texas border and great tips on enjoying the outdoors in the Rio Grande region. I enjoyed the outings, as a bonus I learned new lessons about conservation of water and solar energy, as well as living in and sharing rugged lands with diverse fauna.

<https://laredobirdingfestival.org>

Expand Your Knowledge—Explore the Many Surprises of Nature

For bird sightings, check E-Bird for Laredo and the surrounding counties.
By Maggi - @magpiesquared



Rio Grande Country, Zapata County.



Black-throated warbler with cactus thorn near beak



Pyrrhuloxia, Webb County.



Audubon's Oriole, Webb County.



Cactus Wren,
Webb County.



Green Jay,
Webb County.

Expand Your Knowledge—Explore the Many Surprises of Nature

NEST BOXES FOR EASTERN BLUEBIRDS

and other cavity nesters

by Sharon Clark

Consider purchasing your Bluebird nest boxes (and other nest boxes) from volunteer societies instead of for-profit companies.

Texas Bluebird Society is a non-profit, all-volunteer grassroots organization helping bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds through increasing nesting sites while sustaining and increasing their food supply.

Website: <https://texasbluebirdsociety.org/>

Mission: To spread "Bluebirds (and other native cavity-nesting birds) Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time" - through education, though the installation of "NestWatch'd" nestboxes in appropriate habitat, and through sustaining and increasing their natural food supply (insects and berries of native plants) - while enjoying the process and the bluebirds.

Boxes: At the heart of TBS' efforts is the **construction, distribution, and sale** of a "well-suited for Texas" bluebird nestbox, known as the "Texas Nestbox." This non-profit organization has built over 17,000 nestboxes since 2002. **The boxes are suitable for other cavity nesters (wrens, chickadees, etc.).** The **design** of these boxes affords opportunity to **add heat shields** to the box – see photos and the TBS website for more information.

Purchase: There are several purchase options. New and renewing members can opt for reduced cost of and delivery of the nest boxes. A local member volunteer in Keller is a box distributor. Income obtained is used to resupply nestbox building materials. Please visit website for more purchase information.



Photo courtesy of EFCMN
Sharon Clark

Standard TBS Bluebird box.



Box with heat shielding.



Photos courtesy of Texas Bluebird Society

Expand Your Knowledge—Explore the Many Surprises of Nature

Dorothy Thetford shares another beautiful sunset!



Heard the “BUZZ” about Green Acres? by Jean Mason

Although it’s often cold and wintry now, we’ll soon be seeing our Monarch Station and prairie come alive with an incredible diversity of insects and spiders. If you stand still in any given spot, and look closely, you are sure to be rewarded with several interesting sightings.

Here are photos from this past year. The information about each is from iNaturalist or from iNaturalist links. Please check out Green Acres iNat pages for more information:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/green-acres-farm-memorial-park>

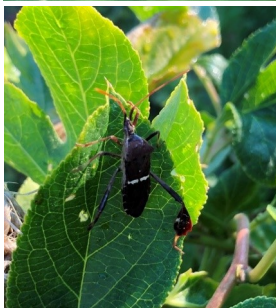
Expand Your Knowledge—Explore the Many Surprises of Nature



Brown recluse, *Loxosceles reclusa*, is a recluse spider with necrotic venom, i.e., venom that may result in dead or devitalized tissue. Their bite sometimes requires medical attention. These spiders usually have markings on the dorsal side of their cephalothorax, with a black line coming from it that looks like a violin with the neck of the violin pointing to the rear of the spider, resulting in the nick-names fiddleback spider, brown fiddler, or violin spider.



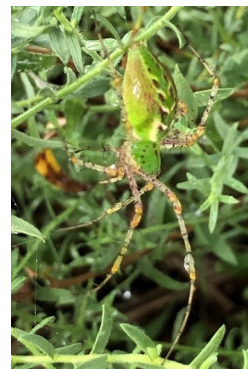
Cactus coreid, *Chelinidea vittiger*, is a species of leaf-footed bug in the family Coreidae. Other common names include the squash bug and cactus bug. First eggs are laid in March, longitudinally on the underside of prickly pear spines. The egg laying period in each generation extends over 2-3 months, the rate of nymphal development varies considerably; adults are long-lived (9-12 months).



Eastern leaf-footed bug, *Leptoglossus phyllopus*, is a common garden insect which may damage a wide variety of crops. *L. phyllopus* suck juices from plants by puncturing them with their sucking mouth parts, making them resistant to ingested pesticides. A toxin is injected into the plant when piercing its skin, causing discoloration and hard spots on fruits.



Fiery skipper, *Hylephila phyleus*, is a butterfly of the family Hesperiidae. Reaching approximately 1 inch in length, male Fiery Skippers are orange or yellow while the females are dark brown. Small brown spots may be observed on both the hindwing and forewing of both sexes although to a varying degree. Females may be darker brown overall with pale checkered markings on the hindwing.



Green lynx spider, *Peucetia viridans*, is a bright-green lynx spider usually found on green plants. It is the largest North American species in the family Oxyopidae. The body of the female may be as much as 0.87 inches long. The male is smaller, being more slender and averaging 0.47 inches in length. There often is a red patch between the eyes, with a few red spots on the body. The green lynx spider very seldom bites humans, and when it does, its venomous bite, though painful, is not deadly but may cause surrounding swelling up to 7"-10" in diameter.

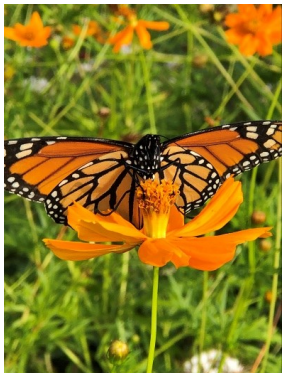
Expand Your Knowledge—Explore the Many Surprises of Nature



Gulf fritillary or passion butterfly, *Dione vanillae*, is a bright orange butterfly in the subfamily Heliconiinae of the family Nymphalidae. Gulf fritillaries have a chemical defense mechanism in which they release odorous chemicals in response to predator sightings. As a result, common predators learn to avoid this species.



Large milkweed bug, *Oncopeltus fasciatus*, is a medium-sized hemipteran (true bug) of the family Lygaeidae. It inhabits disturbed areas, roadsides, and open pastures. Due to its widespread geographic distribution, this insect exhibits varying life history trade-offs depending on the population location, including differences in wing length and other traits based on location.



Monarch butterfly, *Danaus plexippus*, is a milkweed butterfly. Other common names, depending on region, include common tiger, wanderer, and black-veined brown. It may be the most familiar North American butterfly and is considered an iconic pollinator species. Its wings feature an easily recognizable black, orange, and white pattern, and it has a wingspan of 3½–4 inches.



Obscure bird grasshopper, *Schistocerca obscura*, is a species of grasshopper in the family Acrididae. The body is green with gray or reddish-brown forewings; side of knee bright green, yellow, or whitish, conspicuously contrasting against black on dorsolateral edge of knee. Adult males can be 1.4-1.7 inches length; females can reach a whopping 2-2.5 inches.

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Snowberry clearwing, *Hemaris diffinis*, is a moth of the order Lepidoptera, family Sphingidae. This moth is sometimes called "hummingbird moth" or "flying lobster". It is about 1.25–2 inches in length. The adult moth's abdomen has yellow and black segments much like those of the bumblebee, for whom it might be mistaken due to its color and flight pattern similarities.



Spotted cucumber beetle or southern corn rootworm, *Diabrotica undecimpunctata*, is a species of cucumber beetle that is native to North America. The species can be a major agricultural pest insect, causing damage to crops in the larval and adult stages of their life cycle. The beetles can also spread diseases such as bacterial wilt and mosaic virus.



Western honey bee or European honey bee, *Apis mellifera*, is the most common of the species worldwide. Like all honey bee species, the western honey bee is eusocial, creating colonies with a single fertile female (or "queen"), many normally non-reproductive females or "workers", and a small proportion of fertile males or "drones". Individual colonies can house tens of thousands of bees. Colony activities are organized by complex communication between individuals, through both pheromones and the dance language.

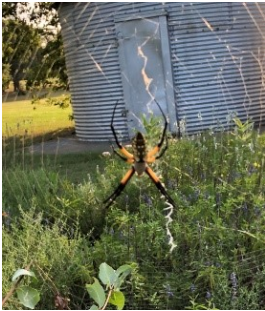


Wheel bug, *Arilus cristatus*, is a species of large assassin bug in the family Reduviidae and the only species of wheel bug found in the United States. It is one of the largest terrestrial true bugs in North America, reaching up to 1.5 inches in length in its adult stage.

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Widow Skimmer, *Libellula luctuosa*, is one of the group of dragonflies known as king skimmers. The nymphs live in the water, molting and growing until they are ready to emerge from the water and then molting a final time to reveal their wings.



Yellow Garden Spider, *Argiope aurantia*, is commonly known as the yellow garden spider, black and yellow garden spider, golden garden spider, writing spider, zigzag spider, zipper spider, black and yellow argiope, corn spider, Steeler spider, or McKinley spider. These spiders may bite if disturbed or harassed, but the venom is harmless to non-allergic humans, roughly equivalent to a bumblebee sting in intensity.



Jonathan Reynolds—at Isle du Bois

Expand Your Knowledge—Explore the Many Surprises of Nature

Sue Yost who has delighted and enlightened with the monthly series “Meet a Master” now has a new series entitled “Tweet of the Month” - don't miss it! Here is the first in the series:

Tweet of the Month

By Sue Yost; class of 2017

Cedar Waxwings; *Bombycilla cedrorum*. The name comes from the unusual red tips in the secondary wing feathers that have the texture of sealing wax.

Cedar Waxwings congregate in large, social flocks that move across Texas in the winter months. They feed voraciously on small berries and fruits. Waxwings obtain some food by hawking insects like a flycatcher or glean juicy caterpillars from tree branches.

The Cedar Waxwing is a dapper bird with a slender crest much like a Cardinals'. It is a bit smaller than a Cardinal measuring 7-8". It is brown above and has a lighter buffy color below. The black mask goes from above the beak and runs through the eyes. It has a yellow band on the end of the tail and a red tip on each wing. The call is a soft, high-pitched, trilled whistle.

Did you know because they see in ultraviolet light they can tell by the color of the berries when they are ripe? How cool is that? A flock might sweep into your yard to dine on holly berries, possum haw berries, juniper berries even mistletoe and poison ivy berries! There they sit as a group and calmly devour every single berry. Then off they fly to the closest water source for a group drink! Being sure to leave their calling card.... purple poop everywhere just to let you know they had been there!

Having arrived in Texas with the first blue norther, they will stay well into spring to feed on ripening mulberries. They pace their migration back north to the timing of the ripening berries on their migration route.

Have you ever seen a drunk Waxwing? Some Waxwings gorge themselves on overripe berries/fruits that have started to ferment. The inebriated birds cling to the limbs, trying desperately to maintain their balance and their dignity.

Cedar Waxwings breed in the northern United States and into Canada. The nest placed high in a tree fork in open woods is made loosely of woven grasses, forbs, and twigs lined with rootlets, plant down, lichens and fine grasses. They typically lay 4-5 pale gray/blueish eggs. Incubation by the female lasts about 12-13 days. 14-16 the nestlings fledge. Before the clutch is complete, she will start again. Two broods are typical with the same mate for the nesting season.

If you have an overloaded tree or bush of berries, just wait...they will come.

Contributors This Month



**Jan Deatherage
class 2011**

**wanda odum class
2005—editor**



**Harriett Powell
class 2015**



**Jonathan Reynolds
class 2014**



**Judy Elliott class
2009**



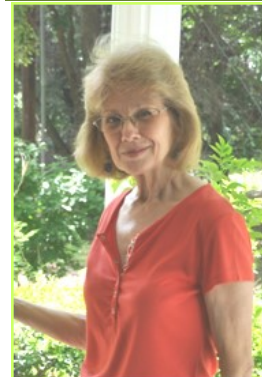
**Jean Mason class
2017**



**Mary Morrow
class 2014**



**Sharon Clark
class 2014**



**Marilyn Blanton
class 1999**



**Clay Thurmond
class 2016**



**Jeanne Erickson
class 1998**



**Maggi Gunnels
Class 2020**



**Becky Bertoni
class 2015**



**Susan Yost class
2017**

FIELD NOTES IN FOCUS

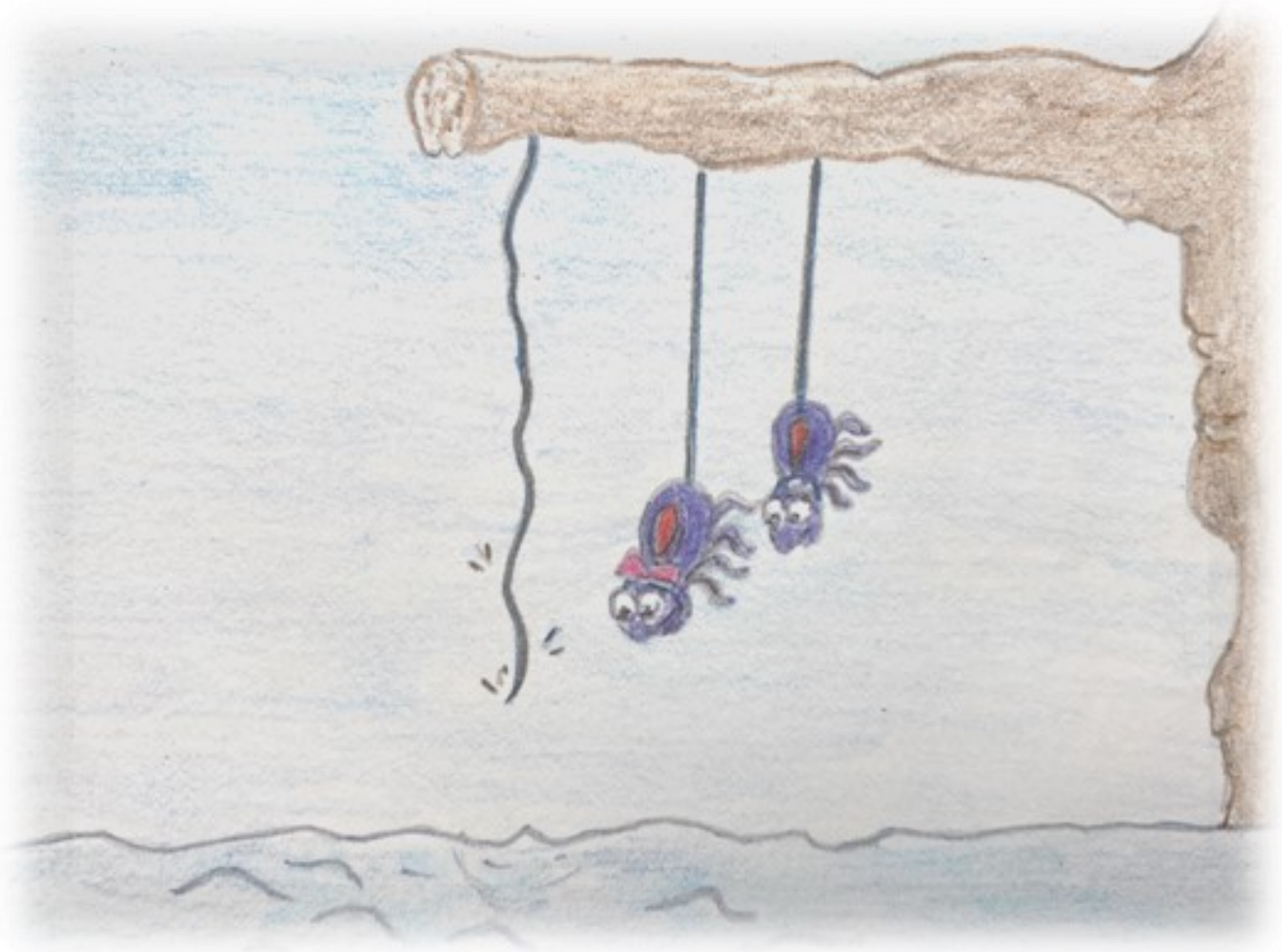


**From the gallery of Jonathan Reynolds—
Basil Wasp**

If you would like to be featured on either front page or in Field Notes in Focus—
send photos to wanda.odum@gmail.com



Famous Last Words



She said the fish can't jump that high

Who we are



Texas A&M AgriLIFE Extension
Joseph A. Carroll Building
401 W. Hickory Street
Denton, TX 76201
940-349-2883

Our mission . . . "to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within our community"

Our vision . . . "in our community, Elm Fork Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program will be recognized as a primary source of information, education and service to support natural resources and natural areas today and in the future."

We're on the web

<https://txmn.org/elmfork>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT—Jerry Betty

VICE-PRESIDENT—Kathy Webb

SECRETARY—Barbara Bean

TREASURER—Ray Kreutzfeld

MEMBER-at-LARGE— Harriet Powell

CLASS 2021 REPRESENTATIVE— Karen DeVinney
2021

ADVISORS:

Janet Laminack, Extension Agent

TPWD—Daniel Rios

Regular Monthly Chapter Meetings

Meetings on the third Thursday of each month at 9:30 a.m. preceded by a social time at 9:00 a.m. Chapter meetings are open to the public.
Next meeting February 17, 2022

Board Meetings

The Board meets each second Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m.
The Board last met February 10 2022. Next monthly Board meeting March 10

Monthly Board meetings are open to members.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



Ever watchful hawk—from
Jonathan Reynolds