

July 2022
Volume 22 Issue 7

Naturalist News



Texas Master Naturalist-Elm Fork Chapter



Dickcissel (*Spiza
Americana*) - courtesy
Jonathan Reynolds



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Special points of interest:

- Birds, birds, birds!
- Check out Web page article
- Suggestions Box always open

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Common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) in full bloom in Texas' 105 degree temperature—from Dorothy Thetford.

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

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/

July 21 Regular Meeting

From David Jones, Program
Coordinator

Speaker: **Karen McGraw, Ed.D.**



Dr. Karen McGraw is a retired corporate consultant, adult educator, and researcher. For over 30 years she managed client projects in the fields of human performance improvement, user-interface design, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and training. She also taught courses and led research projects in AI and knowledge engineering at the University of Texas, Arlington, and the University of Maryland. Karen holds a doctorate in curriculum/instruction and educational/cognitive psychology from Texas Tech University.

In 2015 she completed her certification as a Texas Master Naturalist and is now a member of the Elm Fork Chapter. Karen also is a certified Water Quality Citizen Scientist, a Dark Sky Advocate for the Texas chapter of IDA (darksky.org), and a member of the Native Plant Society. Although she volunteers for several environmental projects, she is most passionate about reducing light pollution for people and wildlife, water quality, and support for pollinators. In her free time Karen enjoys gardening, reading, playing frisbee with her Corgi, and spending time with friends and family.

Presentation Title: Protecting Dark Skies for Humans & Wildlife

Presentation Abstract: Almost every living thing on our planet uses the cycle of light and dark to trigger life processes. Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) and light pollution interrupts this cycle. This program helps us understand the effects of light pollution on living things, including ourselves, and how we can protect dark skies for humans and wildlife.

Participants will take home a new awareness about lighting practices, which allow us to have the light we need for nighttime activities while minimizing the negative effects of ALAN. You will learn things you can do to reduce light pollution (glare, light trespass, skyglow), increase safety, limit the negative consequences on wildlife, and create a more aesthetically pleasing nocturnal environment.



Field Notes in Focus



**BLUE-EYED MARY (COLLINSIA VERNA)
— FROM THE GALLERY OF JONATHAN
REYNOLDS**

Submit your flora and/or fauna photos to Newsletter: announcements@efctmn.org -
newsletter@efctmn.org— wanda.odum@gmail.com

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

Come, Take a Tour on the Wildlife Explorer!

Enjoy a ninety minute tram tour of Wildlife Drive aboard our open-air Wildlife Explorer. Learn about the fascinating history of the displaced town of Hagerman while watching for an abundance of wildlife.



- ◆ Lots of stops for bird-watching and photography.
- ◆ Guided tours are weather permitting and seating is limited.
- ◆ Standbys are accepted if space permits.
- ◆ Recommended for age 6 – adult.
- ◆ Bring your binoculars or borrow ours.
- ◆ Meet at the visitor center 15 minutes before departure
- ◆ Free, funded by donations and powered by volunteers.

Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, July 16 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Landowner Workshop presented by the North Texas Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists. Join us at the Agrilife Center for educational presentations on local wildlife, prairies, and more!

Topics include: 1-d-1 Wildlife Tax Valuation for Landowners, Managing Your Land for Birds, Importance of Prairies, Biology of Bobcats and Coyotes and Using Apps to Identify Wildlife. Lunch provided onsite.

Cost: 40.00

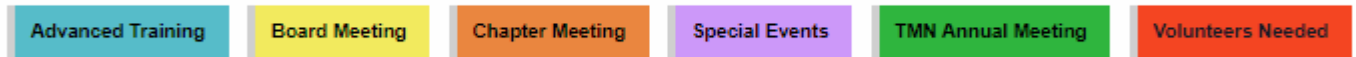
Coordinator: Sam Kieschnick, Urban Wildlife Biologist, DFW Texas Parks and Wildlife

Inside Outside News -Website Feature

From Gale Bacon Webmaster

Website Calendar Tip

The calendar has 6 *color coded categories* at the top:



Click any category to view only that event category on the calendar. For example, selecting the Advanced Training filter displays only AT events on the calendar.

< > Today July 2022 ▾

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
26	27 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm Prairie Time, A Blackland Prairie Portrait by Matt White – AT 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm ↕ Beginner Birding For Fun Series – AT	28	29	30 9:30 am - 11:30 am Identifying and Managing Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) – AT	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9

The calendar will continue to filter on Advanced Training when changing the view from month to day or list view, and when choosing a different month. The category color appears paler for past events.

To change the category filter, either select another filter, or click Calendar again on the main menu to clear the filter and view all events.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Weekly Digest Bulletin

This summer, make plans to witness one of Texas' most unique wildlife experiences – sea turtle hatchlings making their first run to the sea.

The world's most endangered sea turtle is the Kemp's ridley, and they lay eggs on Texas beaches. Turtle watchers gather the eggs for their protection. As soon as they hatch, the tiny turtles are brought to the beach and released.

You can see hatchling releases from now through early August at [Padre Island National Seashore](#) – call the Hatchling Hotline at 361-949-7163; and at [Sea Turtle Inc](#) – they announce releases on social media, including [Facebook](#).

Find out how tequila played a role in the decline of sea turtles in our video [Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle – Saving a Species](#).

***The Buffalo Bayou is calling your name.***

From Jan Deatherage

TMN Annual Meeting will be held October 20 – 23 at the Omni Houston.

The Agenda is now available on the [TXMN.org](#) website and offers a wide range of learning opportunities.

Registration opens the first week of August and will close the end of September.

Show Your Stuff.

Over the years, Elm Fork Chapter has been the recipient of several awards for our work and for the many talents of our members.

Project Fair

Video

Art, Photo and Media

Each of these are described in detail on the State website. Deadline for entry is September 30th.

This Conference is an excellent opportunity to meet MNs from around the State, hear presentations from noted field experts and enjoy the camaraderie of people who share your passion for the natural world.

We might be able to help you get there.

Each year the Elm Fork Chapter offers a limited number of scholarship opportunities. If you are interested in applying for financial assistance to attend the meeting, you can apply by sending a request to scholarships@efctmn.org. The deadline for consideration is August 30. Winners will be announced in September.

Inside Outside News

Volunteers are really needed for The beautiful Nature Center at Johnson Branch Texas State Park for **Saturday and Sunday 10am to 4pm** (hours were recently changed). The center has been closed several times due to lack of volunteers. If you don't tolerate the heat and need an easily accessible site to volunteer this is the place for you! You will enjoy great air conditioning and a spacious atmosphere as you interact with our visitors. If you need training or want more information contact Pat Bragg at (nativebragg55@gmail.com)

Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday

Join Us for Volunteer Work days, every Wednesday.

9am – 12pm

Copy this Link to sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4CA5AE29A3F9C07-volunteer>

Organizer: Daniel Arenas, agroforest@beulahacres.org

Green Acres Tuesday Workdays

8:00 am - 11:00 am (Summer Hours)

Green Acres (located at 4400 Hide-A-Way Lane, Flower Mound, 75022)

Join us at our monarch station, prairie restoration, and riparian area

Contact Becky Bertoni becky.bertoni@gmail.com or 972 878 4058 to volunteer or for more details.

NOTE:

We will have no regular Green Acres Tuesday volunteer day for July 19 and July 26.

If you want to help with watering, please contact Jean Mason by email at

jean7mason@gmail.com

or call 214-500-7690

Thanks for your help!

Thrive Nature Park – Damsels and Dragons – AT

July 17 @ 9:30 am - 10:30 am

Our July 17 session will be an indoor class featuring Michael Fox, local naturalist, photographer, and odonate (dragonfly) expert. He will be giving a presentation titled, “Damsels and Dragons”.

Coordinator: City of Lewisville

Link to register: <https://www.playlewisville.com/programs/class-registration>



Master Volunteer Entomology training August 30 - October 27, 2022

This course is designed as an Advanced training for Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners.

<https://tamu.estore.flywire.com/products/master-volunteer-entomology-advanced-training>

Over the course of 8 weeks and 30+ instructional hours, you can gain a greater understanding of entomology, integrated pest management, be able to identify common insects, spiders and arthropods in Texas, learn about butterfly gardening and native pollinators and much more. iNaturalist training, invasive insects to watch for in Texas, medical entomology, using dichotomous keys for identification will also be covered.

There will be opportunities for you to learn how to collect insects and other arthropods during course. We will also cover curation: pinning, pointing, spreading wings, preservation, etc. This part of the course is **OPTIONAL**. If you choose to participate in collecting and curation it will be done on your own. I have allotted time for sessions to teach about collecting equipment and methods and curation if you choose to participate.



“Who goes there”? -
Courtesy Sue Yost

Inside Outside News



People for Prairies
 Saturday, Oct. 1, from 5:30-8:30 p.m.
 River Walk Hall in Flower Mound
[Registration opening soon.](#)

Native Prairies Association of Texas (NPAT) will be hosting an evening of great food, drink, music, AND conversation. **This will also be the start of something bigger.**

You are invited to take part in this ground-breaking event to discuss, enjoy and support prairie conservation in North Texas. Experts from the private, urban planning, property development, and natural resources sectors will engage in a broader conversation about how open spaces and prairies could coexist with regional urban development.

The evening will also raise vital funds for NPAT's North Texas outreach, stewardship, and education programs.

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Cancelling Lantana Workdays in July and August

NO LANTANA MONARCH WAYSTATION WORKDAYS IN JULY AND AUGUST!

We're going to cancel workdays in July and August at the Monarch Waystation in Lantana since it's hotter'n Hades out there, and nothing much is happening. The splash pad construction adjoining it is still causing some disruption, as well. Put this project on your calendar starting the second Wednesday in September and thereafter, though, as we clean up for fall blooms and butterfly migration and get the garden ready for its winter sleep.

More Info: Diane Wetherbee, diane.wetherbee@gmail.com or 972-897-3318

Tweet of the Month

TWEET of the Month

Sue Yost class of 2017

Ruby Throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*

This is prime season for this little dynamo of a bird. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the most common hummingbird east of the Rockies.

Only the males show the brilliant red gorget when a glimmer of sunlight hits the throat. Metallic green above with a black, shallowly forked tail. The females lack the red throat and have a rounded tail with white tipped corners. They are very hard to separate from the female Black-chinned Hummingbird that also is in our area. The Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are more common than the Black-chinned.

Ruby throats make an astonishing migration for such a tiny bird. In the spring, [March-April] they fly, non-stop all the way across the gulf from Mexico and surrounding tropical areas where they spent the winter. [A few do overwinter in south Texas]. They repeat the same route in the fall [September-October]. They fatten up by adding 50% more weight in preparation for the journey. It is important to keep feeders fresh and continuous nectar bearing plants available through October. North-central Texas is in the central migration flyaway for these hummingbirds. You should notice an increase in activity come August as they fuel up for migration.

As with most bird species, the male migrates first to claim territories. The male puts on quite a show to attract a female. Zooming up and down! Swinging back and forth like a pendulum on a clock! Once mating occurs the male is done. The female will make the nest, incubate, feed the nestlings, and help them fledge alone.

The nest is made up of spider silk, lichens, bud scales, lined with plant down. It is about the size of a golf ball. Nests are sometimes re-used after a little refurbishing. She will lay 2 eggs the size of jelly-beans. Incubation takes about 11-14 days. It takes approximately 14-28 days for the nestlings to fledge. As they continue to grow, they stretch the tiny nest. In addition to nectar [artificial and natural] they also get tiny insects and spiders. Sometimes, if insects are in short supply she will feed on tree sap—thank you woodpeckers! She pumps the food into their gaping beaks.

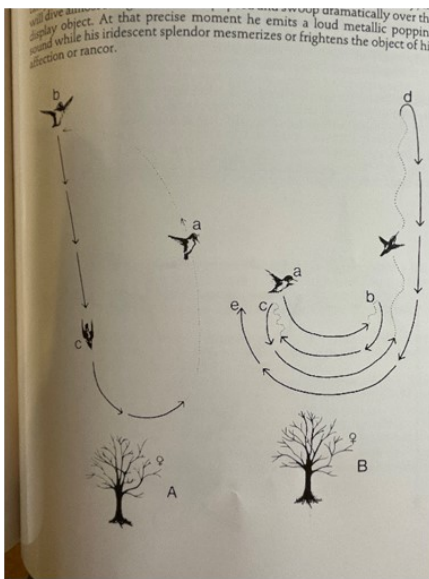
The nectar for hummingbird feeders can be bought commercially made or you can make your own. A simple solution that closely replicates the natural flower nectar is 1 cup table sugar to 4 cups hot water. No red dye please. In this heat, nectar should be changed out every other day. Can you believe they remember which flowers they have fed at and when to return once the flower replenishes its nectar? [it takes a flower about 20 minutes to reproduce more nectar].

Tweet of the Month

Many customers come into Wild Birds Unlimited concerned because they have not seen any hummers. Here are a few answers. Hummers are not like songbirds that perch on a feeder and eat and eat. In the blink of an eye a hummer can feed and disappear! But they will return, as they need to eat about every 15-20 minutes. When we had the snowmageddon the entire state was frozen. The hummers were just starting their migration and had landed in south Texas. Many perished as there was nothing for them to eat. Covid. Yes, covid affected the backyard populations of hummers. Every homeowner was stuck at home and by doing so realized “Hey, I have birds! I have hummers!” So, feeders were bought, and natural habitats were planted. This event has caused our resident birds to disperse into more areas.

Want hummers to visit? Fresh nectar in multiple feeders, blooming natural nectar and fresh water or better yet a mister for a leaf bath should able you to see a few flashes of these wonderful, tiny but feisty little birds.

“It is seen to stop thus some instants before a flower, and dart off like a glean to another; it visits them all, plunging its little tongue into their bosom, caressing them with its wings, without ever settling, but at the same time never quitting them” W.C.L. Martin, General History of Hummingbirds, circa 1840



Mason bee—courtesy
Sue Yost

Features

Let's Talk Birdie

Creating a Feather-Friendly Fly Zone

by Kathryn Wells

Cardinals, chickadees, and kinglets ... oh, my!

Home to approximately 500 regularly-occurring birds, Texas has its fair share of feathered friends; over 600 avian species have been identified in our state! Common permanent residents, which you've probably seen in your own backyard, include (but certainly are not limited to) Blue Jays, Carolina Chickadees, Eastern Bluebirds, Tufted Titmice, Woodpeckers (Downy and Red-Bellied), Wrens (Bewick's and Carolina), Northern Cardinals, and Northern Mockingbirds (our Texas state bird).

In addition to our regular residents, North Central Texas rolls out the proverbial welcome mat for seasonal visitors and transitory migrants, too. Smack in the middle of the Central Flyway—the seasonal migration route for birds traveling north and south in spring and autumn—the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex offers a summer (or winter!) home for many species and serves as a temporary respite for species just passing through. In fact, according to the American Ornithological Society, 98.5% of all long-distance North American migrant species have been recorded in Texas—333 of 338 species! Summer residents include Buntings (Indigo and Painted), Hummingbirds (Black-Chinned and Ruby-Throated), Summer Tanagers, and Scissor-Tailed Flycatchers. Winter dwellers include American Goldfinches, Cedar Waxwings, Dark-Eyed Juncos, Ruby-Crowned Kinglets, Sparrows (Chipping, White-Crowned, and White-Throated), and Warblers (Orange-Crowned and Yellow-Rumped).

Interesting information aside, why should we care about birds at all? Well, our feathered friends serve many important purposes in our ecosystem; they're pollinators (hummingbirds are one excellent example), seed dispersers (a single jay can cache 3000-5000 nuts, and they typically use only 30% of what they store), decomposers (woodpeckers help break down decaying trees), biological controllers (birds serve as organic pest management), and environmental health reflectors (their presence reflects a healthy, well-balanced ecosystem). They're also entertainers—providing many hours of enjoyment for backyard birders and back-porch coffee drinkers.

Sadly, about one-third of North American birds are in decline due to issues such as habitat fragmentation (construction and encroaching development), homogenization (monocultures like lawn grass and non-native invasive plants), and sterilization (loss of natural food sources—insects, native plants, and smaller creatures—due to herbicides, pesticides, rodenticides, and other “ides”).

Migration challenges also abound for our seasonal visitors; high-quality stopover habitat is critical for their success, but, unfortunately, the seasonal journey is fraught with obstacles:

- Changing weather patterns (which impact the availability of resources, especially food)

- Lack of food and water (due to habitat loss and fragmentation, drought, invasive species, and pesticide use)

- Light pollution (which inhibits nocturnal migration—most songbirds migrate at night via magnetic compass and stop during the day to rest and eat)

- Collisions (due to communication towers, wind turbines, high-rise buildings, and windows)

- Predators (especially domestic cats—the primary human-related cause of bird death in the United States, annually killing between 1.3 and 4 billion birds)

The Bare Necessities: Food, Water, and Shelter

Considering the perilous conditions birds must navigate, how can we help our familiar (and long-distance-flying) feathered friends not only survive but also thrive? Basic bird requirements are the same as we humans need: food, water, shelter, and a safe place to raise the next generation.

Features



Food

Native plants are the best food source, and natives that produce berries, fruit, seeds, nuts, nectar, and sap are the very best. Consider each plant's annual evolution and incorporate natives that yield the highest benefits. For example, Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*) first functions as a flowering nectar source in spring and summer; later in the year, the turban-shaped blooms morph into nice-sized fruits for birds and small mammals. (They're fit for human consumption, too—either raw or cooked—and taste somewhat like a mild apple.)

Additionally and importantly, native plants host native insects, and all birds need insects! Even seed-eaters like Northern Cardinals and fruit-eaters like Northern Mockingbirds need insects to supplement their diets and, especially, to feed their young. Just as human newborns can't digest a meal of steak and potatoes, nestlings can't digest seeds, nuts, or fruit. And, while milk sustains human babies, invertebrates (especially caterpillars) provide necessary nutrition for avian species in those early days and weeks of life. An average size clutch of Carolina Chickadees, for example, needs between 6000 and 9000 insects to sustain helpless hatchlings as they grow into healthy fledglings—that's a lot of meals and snacks! And, because Mom and Dad forage in an approximate 50-yard radius, it's important to keep their natural pantry well-stocked with high-quality food.

Water

A supplemental water source for your feathered friends is simple: keep it clean, keep it filled, and keep it shallow. Textured, sloped sides allow birds of all sizes easy access without losing their footing. Stones in the center provide places to perch and devices like water wigglers or misters provide gentle water movement, attracting birds and discouraging mosquitoes. Algae growth may appear in summer's heat; it's easy to scrub away with a mild solution of nine parts water to one part chlorine bleach (or vinegar). Rinse well before refilling. Birds are vulnerable when they're drinking and especially when they're bathing, so place your bird bath/watering station in an open area where birds can clearly see what's around them; proximity to shelter (five to ten feet away) provides cover and inspires confidence should the birds need to quickly exit. In the winter, heaters or deicers will help keep the water drinkable. Homemade solutions such as a water-holding saucer offset over a lit candle in a terra cotta pot work well in a pinch!

Shelter

Shelter is the biggest void in most suburban landscapes. Since it's necessary for birds' cover, protection, and nesting, we can help by thoughtfully stewarding habitat to include a range of plants with revolving maturities. Think vertically, and densely fill your landscape from the ground up—vines, grasses and flowers, shrubs, under-canopy trees, and canopy trees. Different species nest in different ways; for example, bluebirds and chickadees are cavity nesters. Wrens, also cavity nesters, tend to nest anywhere; check your potted plants, hanging baskets, and garden boots! ;-) Cardinals tend to nest in shrubby layers of the landscape (3 to 10 feet from the ground while meadowlarks prefer to nest in native bunch grasses. To ensure a full, lush landscape, consider which plants and trees are evergreen and which are deciduous, which are annuals and which are perennials, and incorporate them accordingly. Immaculate maintenance strips habitat of important cover and nesting sites, so, as is safe for your particular site, consider leaving brush piles and tree snags.

Easy as A, B, C

By thoughtfully incorporating high-quality food supplies, water sources, and safe shelters, you'll be well on your way to creating a feather friendly fly zone in your own backyard.

Features

Native Plant Suggestions

Berry/Fruit-Producing (ordered alphabetically by common name)

- American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)
- Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*)
- Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *canadensis*)
- Mexican Plum (*Prunus mexicana*)
- Pigeonberry (*Rivina humilis*)
- Pokeberry (*Phytolacca americana*)
- Possumhaw Holly (*Ilex decidua*)
- Rough-Leaf Dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*)
- Turk's Cap (*Malvastrum arboreum*)
- Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)

Nectar-Producing (ordered alphabetically by common name)

- Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggii*)
- Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)
- Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*)
- Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*)
- Flame Acanthus (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus*)
- Penstemons (*Penstemon* sp.)
- Red Yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*)

Seed/Nut-Producing (ordered alphabetically by common name)

- Bee Balms (*Monarda* sp.)
- Bluestems (*Andropogon* sp.)
- Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
- Coneflowers (Various including *Dracopis*, *Echinacea*, *Ratibida*, and *Rudbeckia* sp.)
- Oaks (*Quercus* sp.)
- Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*, Texas state tree)
- Side Oats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*, Texas state grass)
- Sunflowers (*Helianthus* sp.)
- Wildflowers (Pick your favorites!)
- Woodland (Inland Sea) Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

Features

Insect-Sustaining (ordered by number of species supported)

Oaks (*Quercus* sp., hosts more than 400 caterpillar species)

Willows (hosts more than 400 caterpillar species; Texas native *Salix nigra* supports at least 90 species)

Cherry Laurels (*Prunus* sp., hosts more than 300 caterpillar species)

Cottonwoods (*Populus* sp., hosts more than 250 caterpillar species)

Every native plant!

Recommended Reading:

Bird by Bird Gardening (Sally Roth)

Bringing Nature Home (Doug Tallamy)

Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife (Damude & Bender)

Recommended Resources:

[Audubon Native Plants Database](#)

[Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)

[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)

[Native Plant Society of Texas, Trinity Forks Chapter](#)

[Texas Parks & Wildlife, Bird Migration FAQ](#)

Important Information:

[Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#): it's illegal to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird or bird parts (feathers), nests, or eggs without a valid Federal permit. Non-native species (House Sparrows and European Starlings) are excluded; limited protection applies in season for game birds (ducks, geese, doves, some shorebirds).

Photo gallery of birds by Kathryn Wells on the following pages



Features



Eastern bluebird pair

Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) sometimes lay up to three clutches each spring. The adult insectivores supplement their diet with fruits and berries throughout the winter. Here, Mom and Dad are diligently watching over their fledglings, who've just left the nest.



Eastern bludbird male

Male Eastern Bluebirds help feed the nestlings; here, Dad is returning to the nest with a tasty snack.



Eastern bludbird juvenile

Testing their independence under the watchful eyes of Mom and Dad (above) recently fledged Eastern Bluebirds enjoy a bird bath and a new perching perspective of their expanded world.

Eastern bludbird male



Northern cardinal male

Male Northern Cardinals attract females, in part, due to their intensity of their color—the redder the better! A rich red color results from high nutrition, specifically from carotenoids, and informs potential mates that this guy knows where to source good food.



Northern cardinal female

Female Northern Cardinals are beautiful in their own right; this lovely lady came for a drink in the late afternoon. A water wiggler gently moves the bird bath water, attracting her attention while helping to prevent mosquitoes and other pests from breeding.



Mourning dove juvenile

Mourning Doves tend to be ground feeders, although they prefer nest in dense shrubbery or evergreen canopy trees. This almost-grown juvenile sports a more “scaly” appearance, which is one way differentiate it from the fully mature adults.



Carolina chickadee

Carolina Chickadees are seldom seen sitting still; this one was photographed in a rare repose. Black-Capped Chickadees are a close relation, but their geographic range is more northwest. In areas where the two ranges overlap, hybridization can occur.

Features



Blue jay

Blue Jays are sometimes viewed as bossy nuisances, but they are highly intelligent familial birds with a sophisticated social system. Their love of acorns helps to propagate our important oak tree species, since jays typically only use about 30% of what they store.



Red-Bellied Woodpecker

Red-Bellied Woodpeckers do have red heads, but they are named for the red-dish wash on the bellies, especially apparent in breeding season (but not apparent in this photo!). Males, like this one, can be distinguished from females because their red caps extend across their crown; in females, the red coloration stops at the nape of her neck.



Brown Thrasher

Relatives of our Texas state bird (Northern Mockingbird), Brown Thrashers are in the Mimidae family. Our north central Texas area is just on the southwest edge of their year-round range, and they can be hard to spot, preferring to stay hidden as they scratch through leaf litter to feed on favorite insects. But, these omnivores will fiercely protect their nest, and they have a great musical repertoire—more than any other North American songbird ... if you're lucky enough to hear it.



Greater Roadrunners

Greater Roadrunners may be the ultimate Texas bird! Intelligent and inquisitive, these interesting birds are omnivores but especially appreciate reptile repasts. This was a good day for the roadrunner but a bad day for the Texas Spiny Lizard.



Red Winged Blackbird

Found year-round throughout the state of Texas, Red-Winged Blackbirds particularly appreciate nesting spots adjacent to freshwater marshes and fields. This first-year juvenile male will have his adult coloring—glossy back feathers with yellow-tipped red shoulder patches—next breeding season.

Seasonal and Migrating Birds



Summer Tanagers are—you guessed it!—summer residents here in Texas, flying north in the spring for breeding season. This first-spring juvenile male looks a little like he's been drinking (and dribbling) Kool-Aid; by next spring, he'll be a beautiful rosy-red color.

Features

Seasonal and Migrating Birds— cont'd



Painted Bunting female

Painted Buntings are a seasonal favorite here in Texas. While the males are unmistakable with their blue, red, and yellow-green coloring, adult females, like this one, are beautiful, too. In the Cardinalidae family (like our resident Northern Cardinals), their bills are made for eating seeds.



Clay-Colored Sparrows

Clay-Colored Sparrows primarily pass through our area in the autumn as they wing their way from their breeding range (north central United States and Canada) back to their winter home in Mexico. They appreciate a safe and stocked backyard bed and breakfast during their travels.



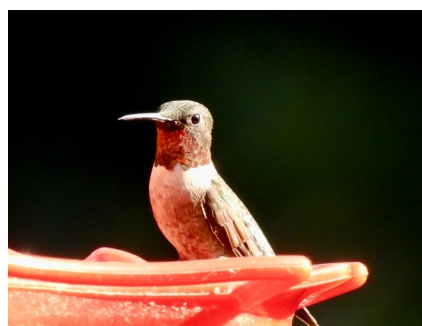
Dark-Eyed Junco

Dark-Eyed Juncos flock to Texas for the winter; where you see one, there are usually many more! They're a little camouflaged by the winter foliage, but, if it snows, these ground-foraging friends are easy to spot.



Yellow-Throated Warbler

Yellow-Throated Warblers are a rare find in our area, as north central Texas is west of their general range. This one may have been a wayward migratory straggler, and he was gone as quickly as he arrived. Fortunately, I had my camera handy and snapped exactly one shot before he flew away. Thankfully, that one photo was mostly in focus!



Ruby-Throated Hummingbird male



Hummingbird female

Who doesn't love a hummingbird? While our north central Texas summer residents (Black-Chinned and Ruby-Throated, like the male adult pictured here) favor plants with tubular blooms, they also appreciate nectar in the form of sugar water (one part white table sugar to four parts boiling water; mix and let cool before serving). If you make your own sugar water, don't use organic, raw, or brown sugar—only plain white granulated table sugar, as high levels of iron in the unprocessed sugars can be fatal to hummers. And, don't use honey, as it can produce detrimental fungal growth in the birds' esophagus. No red coloring is necessary; the plain mixture of white table sugar and water is most like the chemical composition of natural nectar. Change your solution every two to three days—before it becomes cloudy—as sugar water rapidly ferments in hot temperatures, producing toxic alcohol. Extra solution can be stored in the refrigerator. Better yet, just plant more natives with tubular-shaped blooms—Coral Honeysuckle, Flame Acanthus, and Red Yucca are just three of many choices. And, although it's said that with their ultraviolet vision spectrum, hummers prefer red and orange, I've seen them enthusiastically feeding on white (Autumn Sage), pink (Desert Willow), and purple (Penstemon sp.) blooms, too. See the pollen on this female's beak? She's been a busy, beneficial girl!

Features

A Winter Story by Becky Bertoni

Last winter, when our temperatures were far from the triple digits we are enduring now, Michele Rawleigh shared an anglepod milkvine pod full of seeds with me, (see photo of this "mother" seedpod) to see if we could get the seeds to germinate for plants for our master naturalist projects. I had just learned recently about this tree climbing milkvine from Michele on my first tour of Thrive Nature Park, across the road from the Thrive Recreation Center.

Anglepod, or angularfruit milkvine, is most recently classified as *Gonolobus suberosus*. (See Mary Curry's *North Central Texas Wildflowers*, p. 33.) Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center classifies it as *Matelea gonocarpos*, the older name, and notes that it has a green, purple, or brown star shaped flower. See Marilyn Blanton's photo of the green flower on the anglepod milkvine. This flower then develops a long seed pod with five surfaces joined with distinct ridges. See the photo by Abigail Miller, from a plant on her property in September two years ago. Mary Curry adds the detail that the plant has a "burnt rubber odor". Some details from Carol Clark, master naturalist in the Blackland Prairie Chapter Texas Master Naturalists and monarch/milkweed expert, through Michele: the true leaves are oppositely paired and heartshaped (see Toni's photo of the leaves), and this milkvine does well in the woods, actually attracting the milkweed tussock moth, more than monarch butterflies.

By February 6, I had distributed the seeds to the Great Greenhouse Crew: Marilyn Blanton, Toni Benjamin, and Irene Hansen. They all managed to get seeds to germinate!

Toni explained her successful approach: put the seeds in moist soil in containers, on a tray with water, and keep out of sunlight. The tray can even be in the dark. Then when the seeds sprout, continue to keep them moist, still on the tray with water, to encourage root growth. When I planted one of Toni's anglepods, it had roots down to the bottom of the gallon container she had moved it up to.

Thrive and Green Acres, and some private yards, now have the anglepod plants growing, and Clear Creek will plant it in the fall.

Marilyn has discovered that she had anglepod milkvine growing on her property already. Brenda Tucker, who received a seedling from Irene, reports that it is doing well on her property. I have mixed results—some that I planted at Green Acres have been eaten down. This last one from Toni that is growing so well in the pot (see photo) I'll plant with a chicken wire cage around it for protection. Michele notes that the anglepod is in several locations at Thrive Nature park, coincidentally with *Passiflora lutea*, yellow passionvine.

This winter story of collaboration has had good results—and now we wait for these plants to grow and make their own unique seedpods in several locations across Denton County.

Thanks to Marilyn for digging into the name for this milkweed, and thanks to Abigail, Marilyn, and Michele for photos. Thanks to Michele for details from Carol Clark. Thanks to Toni for details on germination.

Features



Michele R angle pod seed



Marilyn's anglepod flowers



Anglepod Milk vine Abigale



Anglepod Milk vine leaves Toni



Toni's plant for Green Acres

Features



**Tina working at Clear Creek
with Master Naturalist—
photo by Jan Thompson**

Tina's Bench Replacement on Fisherman's Trail at Clear Creek

In 2006, our chapter installed a bench on Fisherman's Trail in memory of **Tina Litherland**, an Elm Fork Texas Master Naturalist, **Class of 2003**. Tina was our colleague in work and mischief on many projects, but was especially involved in our early days at Clear Creek. Cutely petite but, oh so strong and determined. She could handle any piece of equipment on our first major construction project – building a walkway bridge for the stream bed on Fisherman's Trail. When we were clearing trails, she would remark at things she could see from a distance or bugs and flowers along the trails, she loved nature. Her early history growing up as part of family that were subsistence farmers may have influenced her love and respect of nature.

I will never forget a project I needed help on to remove a plant that had become invasive, the American Lotus at Crosstimbers Park pond. Tina jumped in to help, literally. In 2003 I had a project to plant aquatic plants in the pond at Crosstimbers Park. One of the plants we planted was an American Lotus which liked the setting way too much. By the next year it had completely covered the entire pond so that even the water wasn't visible. The neighbors and the Denton Parks Department were none too pleased with how it turned out. Since I was the responsible person, I volunteered to do my best to remove the Lotus from the pond. I asked for volunteers to assist and as you might expect, not many were willing to take on the chore. But...Tina who was a new member at the time stepped up to help. As I recall, it was she, Dave Ford and myself who showed up to do the removal, which was an almost impossible task. Dave and I had on chest high waders, but Tina showed up in her bathing suit! Dave and I reluctantly waded in, fully protected, but Tina didn't hesitate and waded right in her bathing suit and began ripping out Lotus plants. Tina wasn't afraid of hard work or snakes. Everyone who worked with her has a Tina story to tell.

Features

Tina's bench was built after her passing in 2006 so she would always be remembered. It saddened us to see the damage humans, time and weather had done to the bench. Over the 16 years, boards had to be replaced and even the plaque was stolen once. We have just replaced the bench with a new one of composite wood (plastic bags and bamboo). Thanks to all who keep her memory alive by maintaining her bench and enjoying sitting in nature and seeing nature as if Tina were still looking on.

Thanks to Clay Thurmond, Jeff Laquey, Carl Malmberg and Van Elliott for great help in replacing the bench! And Jan Thompson for historical input!

Dave Rowley

Class of 2000



Contributors this Month



w odum, editor
class 2005



Kathryn Wells class 2017



Sue Yost 2017



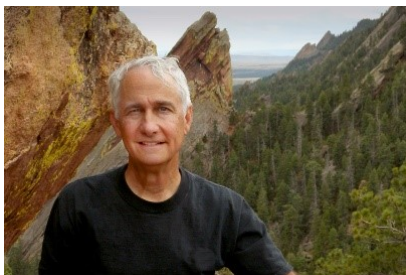
Mary Morrow class 2014



Dorothy Thetford class 2001



Becky Bertoni class 2015



Jonathan Reynolds class 2014



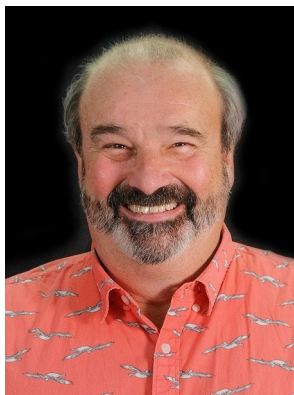
Gale Bacon class 2018



Dave Rowley, class 2000



Harriett Powell class 2015



David Jones class 2019

Jan Deatherage class 2011



Almost the Last Word



Have a last word? Send to Newsletter at:
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OR wanda.odum@gmail.com

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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 pro-gram will be recognized as a primary source of information, education and service to support natural resources and natural areas to-day and in the future.”



Regular Monthly Chapter Meetings

Meetings are 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 July 21, 2022 . Speaker is

Board Meetings

The Board meets each second Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m. The Board last met July 14, 2022. Next monthly Board meeting August 11, 2022

Monthly Board meetings are open to members.

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