

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™
Elm Fork Chapter



Naturalist News

April 2023 Volume 23, Issue 4



Ohio Spiderwort at Green Acres, from Jean Mason

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

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/

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Naturalist News



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Downy Woodpecker, from Tammie Walters



What Happens Next

Chapter Meeting and Presentation

Thursday, April 20th • 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Southwest Courthouse

6200 Canyon Falls Dr. • Flower Mound, TX 76226

AT Presentation:

Name of Speaker: Alejandra Gage

Bio: Alejandra Gage is a graduate student pursuing her master's degree in biology at the University of North Texas studying Painted Buntings. Her research is focused on exploring the mating system of the Painted Bunting and the possibility of multiple paternity in the broods. She will be using molecular genetic methods to determine paternity, which is something that has not been done before with this species. Before Painted Buntings, Alejandra did behavioral research on Bumble bees (Dr. Elinor Lichtenberg, UNT) and molecular research on Honey bees (Dr. Nancy Moran, UT Austin).

Presentation Title: Monogamy Mythology: Painted Bunting Breeding Ecology at an Urban Prairie

Presentation Summary: Scientists have long considered Painted Buntings monogamous or polygynous, but recent evidence from the work done at the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA) suggests that this might not be true. Based on the limited amount of parental care provided by the male of the species and recently collected female home range data, we suspect that female Painted Buntings are mating with more than one male. This presentation will focus on the life history of the Painted Bunting, our recent findings, and the work currently taking place at LLELA by the UNT Painted Bunting Project.



What's Happening Now

Dear Elm Fork Chapter,

Happy TMN Tuesday! April is a celebration of many things! The best of those celebrations is YOU--our Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers!! The entire month of April is **Global Volunteer Month**. The week of April 16th to 22nd is highlighted as **National Volunteer Week**. April also has a whole host of conservation and stewardship events with Earth Day, Arbor Day, City Nature Challenge and so many other nature festivals and events taking place to celebrate the return of spring across Texas. In our minds, April should be recognized as Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer Month! The work done by Master Naturalist volunteers this month - and in fact every day of the year - is worthy of celebration on a state, national and global level!

National Volunteer Week (April 16-22nd) is an opportunity for our Texas Master Naturalists to be celebrated and to celebrate each other. Watch our Texas Master Naturalist social media channels that week as we highlight the work of our incredible volunteers. Follow us at [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#)!

Rounding out our National Volunteer Week is **Earth Day** (Saturday, April 22nd). Though these two special events are not tied together, for us, they offer a stewardship-focused capstone to one amazing week.

All of these events serve as opportunities to recognize the impact of your volunteer service and the power of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. Your ability to tackle our communities' and society's greatest natural resource challenges is unrivaled. As a Texas Master Naturalist, you've heard us say before that when you put on the dragonfly badge, your name tags, your pins, or your Texas Master Naturalist shirt - you are part of something bigger. You are part of our state's largest conservation and stewardship movement. YOU ARE our Texas Master Naturalist family! And our family is awesome!

As part of the Texas Master Naturalist program, you have made considerable impacts over the past 25 years of the program. In 2022 alone, our Texas Master Naturalist Program volunteers conquered service projects, developed conservation partnerships, changed landscapes, and enlightened your communities. To see the whole of your impacts, check out our 2022 annual report attached and shared on our [website](#). Please share this resource with other people you know too!

Help us share your story and your favorite parts of being a Texas Master Naturalist. Join our [25th anniversary storytelling project](#) by submitting your videos, stories or photos. Your contribution to this project will help tell the story of the program with more than just impact numbers and volunteer service hours. It's the people, the heart of our program, that we want to hear from, learn about and recognize the spirit of in this 25th year and the next 25 years going forward.

The impacts you and the entire Master Naturalist family make on behalf of our two state agency sponsors, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, are noticed, felt, and appreciated more than can ever be expressed. Our agencies recognize the power of conservation stewardship and your volunteerism - and the fact that "it's needed now more than ever"! We hope you and your chapters utilize this month-long celebration as an opportunity to inspire others to join your ranks as you shout from the rooftops how amazing you are!

Happy Global Volunteer Month! Happy National Volunteer Week! Happy Earth Day!
We appreciate you! We celebrate you! We have so much to look forward to with you!
You make a difference! You make everything possible! Thank YOU!

Michelle Haggerty

Texas Master Naturalist State Program Coordinator

Mary Pearl Meuth

Texas Master Naturalist Assistant Program Coordinator

Awards and Recognition

March 2023

Initial Certifications

Christine Wayles

Class of 2022



Recertifications

Gale Bacon

Class of 2018

Sharon Barr

Class of 2008

Becky Bertoni

Class of 2015

Sharon Betty

Class of 2018

Regina Dale

Class of 2019

Troy Dale

Class of 2020

Mike Danner

Class of 2014

Dale Denton

Class of 2019

Karen DeVinney

Class of 2021

Janet Gershenfeld

Class of 2005

Maggie Gunnels

Class of 2020

Sandra LaQuey

Class of 2019

Carl Malmberg

Class of 2021

Jean Mason

Class of 2017

Dale Meyer

Class of 2011

Ginny Richards

Class of 2022

Diane Wetherbee

Class of 2000

Fran Witte

Class of 2017

Kim Wootton

Class of 2017

Allen York

Class of 2017



Continued
on next page



Awards and Recognition

March 2023

250 Hour Milestone

Missy McCormick

Class of 2019



1500 Hour Milestone

Dale Meyer

Class of 2011

Sandra LaQuey

Class of 2019



2000 Hour Milestone

LeeAnn Weaver

Class of 2004



3000 Hour Milestone

Diane Wetherbee

Class of 2000



4000 Hour Milestone

Tom Mills

Class of 2014



5000 Hour Milestone

Carl Patrick

Class of 2010



Field Notes in Focus



A **White-lined Sphinx** (*Hyles lineata*), a type of Hummingbird Moth, darting through **henbit deadnettle** (*Lamium amplexicaule*) seeking nectar. This creature's habitat was mowed by the local city shortly after the photograph was taken.

Courtesy of Bryan Lewis, class of 2020

Inside Outside News



About

Leave 28

Join Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Master Naturalists, the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, and many others in a fun challenge to see which city can document the most species during April 28 - May 1. It is easy to participate by joining an event or

[Read More >](#)

[Your Membership](#)

[Project Journal](#)

iNaturalist.org

2023 City Nature Challenge

April 28 – May 1:

Observations

April 28 – May 7:

Enter Data

ID Observations

For more information,

Contact Mary Morrow , or projects@efctmn.org



About

Join 133

Join in the 2023 City Nature Challenge! Make observations of wild plants and animals 28 April - 1 May, and take part in one of the largest community science events in the world while helping us better understand - and therefore, take care of -

[Read More >](#)

[Project Journal](#)

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunities

Ray Roberts Lake Nature Centers

The Nature Centers at both Isle Du Bois and Johnson Branch Parks need your help so they can be part of the experience for lake attendees.

Isle Du Bois has very few slots filled and is in critical need for volunteers.

Johnson Branch has some slots filled but there are many opportunities waiting for you!

Please sign up at the links below:

[Isle Du Bois](#)

[Johnson Branch](#)

City of Lewisville's

Mariposas

Mariposas is the City of Lewisville's annual celebration of butterflies. This year's festivities will be held on Sat, April 29 from 8am-1pm at Thrive Recreation Center in conjunction with Keep Lewisville Beautiful's spring cleanup event.

Volunteers are needed to help with nature walks, milkweed planting, and kids' crafts. We'll meet at 7:30am and wrap up around 1pm but shorter time commitments are possible.

Contact Michele Rawleigh

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers Needed!

April 25th, 9:00 - 12:00 or completion

Lewisville's **Extending the Green** project is going to be planting approximately 600 native and adapted plants in its Garden Ridge median pollinator garden, at 2220 Garden Ridge Blvd. 5-7 volunteers are needed to assist UNT students and city staff in supervising 50 corporate volunteers in placing and planting an urban pollinator garden. Volunteers should bring water, sun-screen, and insect repellent and provide personal tools if they wish to assist in planting. VMS hours will be recorded as technical guidance (TG) or resource management (RM).

Sign up and information contacts

Chris Chastain at cityoflewisville.com

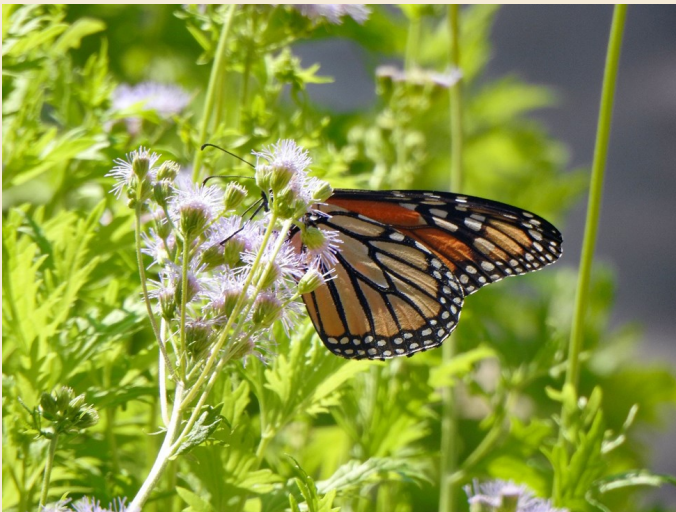
Scott Kiester (through the Members Area Directory), or projects@efctmn.org

Lantana Monarch Waystation Workday

1301 Haverford Lane, Lantana (may come up Argyle on GPS)

Third Wednesday of Every Month

9:00am-11:00am



Lantana's Monarch Waystation is designed to educate residents and other HOAs on how native landscapes and HOAs can co-exist. We'll tend to the plants in this HOA showcase native garden - weeding, deadheading as needed, adding plant material, adding mulch, and generally keeping things tidy. Bring weeding tools, gloves, clippers, water...and your cell phone or camera to add the many pollinators attracted to the garden to your iNaturalist observations.

For more information or to let us know you're coming, contact Diane Wetherbee through the Members Area Directory, or projects@efctmn.org

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunities



DFW WILDLIFE COALITION is looking for Volunteers!

The volunteers usually work for 2-hour shifts once a week from your home.

There are 6 hours of Online Training.

If interested or need more information contact

Cecily Pegues or Betty Zajac

projects@efctmn.org

<https://www.dfwwildlife.org/>

The DFW Wildlife Coalition is a group of volunteers who help with wildlife emergencies like injuries, out of the nest or orphaned babies, and animal conflicts with people. The volunteer receives phone calls, identifies the problems, and directs the caller to available resources or provides guidance. Volunteering is usually from your home using the internet and your phone. Volunteers have a two-hour shift each week. A supervisor is available to assist with special problems.

Many times, the caller just doesn't understand animal behavior and we help with that. Baby season is particularly busy with orphaned animals or babies discovered by a pet dog or cat. Fledgling birds are a major activity.

REMINDER

FeederWatch Season Ends April 30th

Which means April 29th is the last day to start a two-day count.



Inside Outside News



Become a Citizen Scientist at Green Acres

Sun April 30, 2023 2-3 pm

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! Our entries will count for the 2023 iNaturalist City Nature Challenge.

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

Instructor: Diane Wetherbee, Elm Fork Chapter Texas Master Naturalist

Spring at Green Acres: Spring Blooms and Caterpillars

Sat May 6, 2023 10-11 am

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.

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

Instructor: Becky Bertoni, Elm Fork Chapter Texas Master Naturalist



Approved AT

Inside Outside News

Advanced Training (AT) Offered by Other Texas Master Naturalist Chapters

Update from this Week's Board Meeting:

The Board agreed to allow Elm Fork members to use approved AT events held by other chapters without pre-approval, since some folks had a hard time getting approval ahead of the event. The event has to allow live questioning (i.e. no taped presentations, but Zoom is okay). We've decided to give this new policy a trial run and will revisit at the July Board meeting to see how many people this actually affects. A new AT opportunity will be added to VMS, named something like "AT-Other Chapter-Approved."

*Be sure to see **Plan Your Week** or the **Elm Fork Chapter Calendar** for more volunteer service projects and advanced training opportunities.*

Click here: <https://txmn.org/elmfork/members-only-calendar/> or click on the Calendar

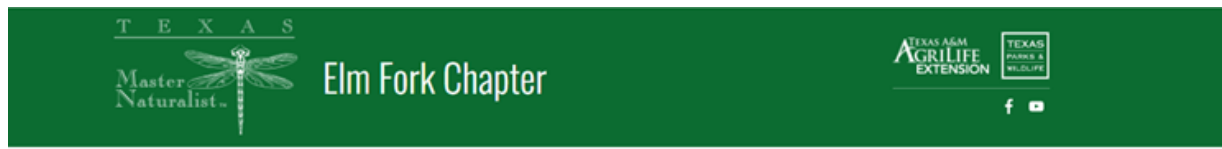
<div>  <div>Elm Fork Chapter</div> <div>   </div> </div>						
Advanced Training	Board Meeting	Chapter Meeting	Special Events	TMN Annual Meeting	Volunteers Needed	
16 8:00 am - 2:00 pm LLELA Visitor Center - Volunteers Needed 9:00 am - 10:30 am Thrive Nature Walk - AT 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Isle Du Bois Unit	17 9:00 am - 11:00 am Clear Creek Workday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm LLELA Monday & Wednesday Workday 9:00 am - 1:30 pm Spring DISD School Days 9:00 am - 1:30 pm Environmental Discovery and Adventure (EDA)	18 8:30 am - 11:30 am Green Acres Workday	19 8:00 am - 12:00 pm Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm LLELA Monday & Wednesday Workday 9:00 am - 1:30 pm Environmental Discovery and Adventure (EDA) 9:00 am - 11:00 am Lantana Monarch Waystation Workday	20 9:00 am - 12:00 pm Chapter Meeting 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm Texas Waters Webinar - Mountain Cedars: the Limestone Jumpers of Texas	21 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit	22 8:00 am - 2:00 pm LLELA Visitor Center - Volunteers Needed 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Wise County Native and Lawn Festival 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Isle Du Bois Unit
23 8:00 am - 2:00 pm LLELA Visitor Center - Volunteers Needed 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Isle Du Bois Unit	24 9:00 am - 11:00 am Clear Creek Workday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm LLELA Monday & Wednesday Workday 9:00 am - 1:30 pm Spring DISD School Days 9:00 am - 1:30 pm Environmental Discovery and Adventure (EDA) 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Beginner Birding Virtual Classes - AT	25 8:30 am - 11:30 am Green Acres Workday	26 8:00 am - 12:00 pm Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm LLELA Monday & Wednesday Workday 9:00 am - 1:30 pm Environmental Discovery and Adventure (EDA)	27 9:00 am - 11:00 am Clear Creek Workday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit	28 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Isle Du Bois Unit	29 7:30 am - 1:00 pm Mangos at Thrive 7:30 am Bird Walk at Clear Creek - AT 8:00 am - 2:00 pm LLELA Visitor Center - Volunteers Needed 9:00 am - 2:00 pm TPWD Basic Fly Fishing Class - AT 10:00 am - 2:00 pm Petaloo Festival + 1 More
30 8:00 am - 2:00 pm LLELA Visitor Center - Volunteers Needed 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit	1 9:00 am - 11:00 am Clear Creek Workday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm LLELA Monday & Wednesday Workday	2 8:30 am - 11:30 am Green Acres Workday	3 8:00 am - 12:00 pm Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday 9:00 am - 12:00 pm LLELA Monday & Wednesday Workday	4 9:00 am - 11:00 am Clear Creek Workday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit	5 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit	6 8:00 am - 2:00 pm LLELA Visitor Center - Volunteers Needed 9:00 am - 12:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branch Unit

Quick Tips From Our Webmaster

Gale Bacon



Our website has a wealth of information in the 'References' section on useful Websites and Apps (recently updated), Books, Birds, Butterflies, Bees and more. Just click on any icon or link to get more information. The Website and Apps and Books section contain downloadable PDF files.



Reference Materials



- [Enticing North Texas Butterflies to Your Yard](#) by Nancy Collins
- [Hackberry Extravaganza](#) by Claire Curry
- [Milkweed Seed Cleaning, Storage, and Propagation](#) by Cathy Downs



- [Bee Basics: An Introduction to Our Native Bees](#)
- [Insects](#)
- [Insect Pest Alert](#)
- [Pest Check](#) – Mosquitoes and Pine Sawflies
- [Texas Bumble Bees](#)

If you have a website, app or book not listed here, let me know! website@efctmn.org

Projects in the Community

Green Acres Boardwalk

By Jim Gerber

At the end of the year, Becky Bertoni and the Green Acres crew reflect on the past year and make plans for the future. Part of these plans is a "wish list" of things that we would like to do at Green Acres. Last year, the list included a boardwalk over the sometimes wet "riparian" area on the East side of the park, and I said that I would take a look at it. Never having built anything remotely close to a boardwalk before, I set out to discover what it would take and, more importantly, what it would cost. Having settled on a simple design, it came down to a choice between ordinary pressure-treated deck boards and the far superior (and considerably more expensive) composite decking from Trex. After submitting the design to Flower Mound Parks and Recreation, we all decided that the Trex choice was the way to go and started looking for funding for the project. Our first stop was our friends at **Keep Flower Mound Beautiful**, and they graciously agreed to provide the necessary backing. After placing the materials order from Lowes for delivery, Becky put out a call for volunteers to help build the boardwalk. She received lots of positive responses and, in about three hours on the afternoon of March 15th, we built a boardwalk!



Continued on next page...



Green Acres Boardwalk (cont.)



Details

Length: 32 feet

Width: 29 inches

Construction is Trex composite decking (made with recycled thin-film plastic) screwed into pressure treated 2x4 boards that sit on TuffBlock foundation bases (made of 100% recycled plastic). The thin-film plastic that Trex uses is collected through the "Bags to Benches" program that KFMB participated in from June 2020, through December 2022. Who knows, maybe some plastic bags from Flower Mound are in our boardwalk!



Many thanks to Becky Bertoni, Matt Brown and his son, Micah, Edsel Harrell, Craig Brazier, Suzanne Barnard, LeeAnn Weaver, and especially to Keep Flower Mound Beautiful.

Features

iNaturalist

Helping to Steward the Earth ... One Observation at a Time

By Kathryn Wells

Since its 2008 inception and as of this writing, 1,670,054 observations of 10,800 species have been uploaded to [iNaturalist](#) by 32,545 observers in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and confirmed by 17,239 identifiers from around the world. Almost two million observations is a tremendous statistic, and, yet, it represents only 1.3% of the 128,866,719 (and counting!) worldwide observations documented in the popular, international, nature app.

Currently a joint initiative by the [California Academy of Sciences](#) (as of 2014) and the [National Geographic Society](#) (as of 2017), iNaturalist began 15 years ago as a Master's final project for three students at UC Berkeley's School of Information. Today, it's a full-blown community of over one million citizen scientists, naturalists, and enthusiasts who, through their observations, create quality data to help better understand and protect nature.

Documenting uncultivated biodiversity

And, while, yes, there's an app for that—which is handy for uploading quick observations in the field or on the go, the [website](#) is really rich with data and serves as a virtual gathering spot and social network for observers and identifiers to share information and discoveries with other like-minded individuals.

iNaturalist (dubbed “iNat” by most users) is designed to document uncultivated biodiversity, so if you're looking for a tool to identify store-bought garden cultivar plants, this is not that. But, if you're interested in helping to collect data via photos of uncultivated natural species (or escaped-from-cultivation invasive species), this is absolutely that.

Filters help narrow the data by geographic area in twelve categories: amphibians, arachnids, birds, fungi (including lichens), insects (including bees and butterflies), mammals, mollusks, plants, protozoans, ray-



Wildflowers: Among the wildflower species I document each spring on [The Flower Mound](#), *Penstemon cobaea* (top left) also known as Prairie Penstemon, Wild Foxglove, Large-Flowered Beardtongue (and several other common names!) is one of my all-time favorites. Located in Flower Mound, Texas, this historic, preserved 12,576-acre native tall grass prairie segment of the Great American Blackland Prairie flourishes with seasonal native plants throughout the year.

iNaturalist (cont.)

finned fishes, reptiles, and unknown (the big, black hole where unidentified observations linger until someone brings them out into the light with at least a high-level identification). Other filters allow users to narrow or widen data as needed or preferred.

Numerous projects also exist as repositories of observations, which users may join. Some projects automatically “sweep” observations into their data according to designated project parameters. Users may also create projects; I’ve created one just to document the uncultivated species I’ve observed on my property. And, although I’ve always been an avid iNatter, in January 2020, I decided to “streak” (upload consecutive days of observations); as of this writing, my current streak duration is 1,159 days. I haven’t missed a day of observing or documenting since January 11th, 2020; even on my daughter’s wedding day, I pulled my phone from my pocket (don’t you love a formal dress with pockets?!) and documented an uncultivated plant (Southern Annual Saltmarsh Aster, *Symphyotrichum divaricatum*) on the grounds of the wedding venue while waiting for the ceremony to begin.



Birds, 2021 City Nature Challenge: Some of my favorite avian observations during the 2021 City Nature Challenge include (clockwise from top left): Clay-Colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*), Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*), Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii*), and Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*).

Blitzing the biosphere

While iNaturalist users are individuals, many users team up for periodic bioblitzes with the goal of recording as many flora and fauna species as possible in particular areas for designated time periods. Bioblitzes can be smaller regional events or larger worldwide (friendly) competitions. Each spring, for example, the DFW area engages in a global competition known as the [City Nature Challenge](#). During the four-day event, ten metroplex counties (Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant, and Wise) canvas their respective boundaries in an effort to document as much biodiversity as possible. All observations made during this time (and uploaded to iNaturalist before the deadline, typically a few days after the event ends) are automatically swept into the DFW City Nature Challenge project; users need do nothing more than enjoy time documenting nature with their cameras (or smart phones).

During the area challenges, many of our Chapter projects schedule mini bioblitzes

within the main event; it's a fun way to connect with our Chapter members and research what's in our own purview while contributing to the overall event. Chapter bioblitzes have been held at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center, Green Acres, Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA), The

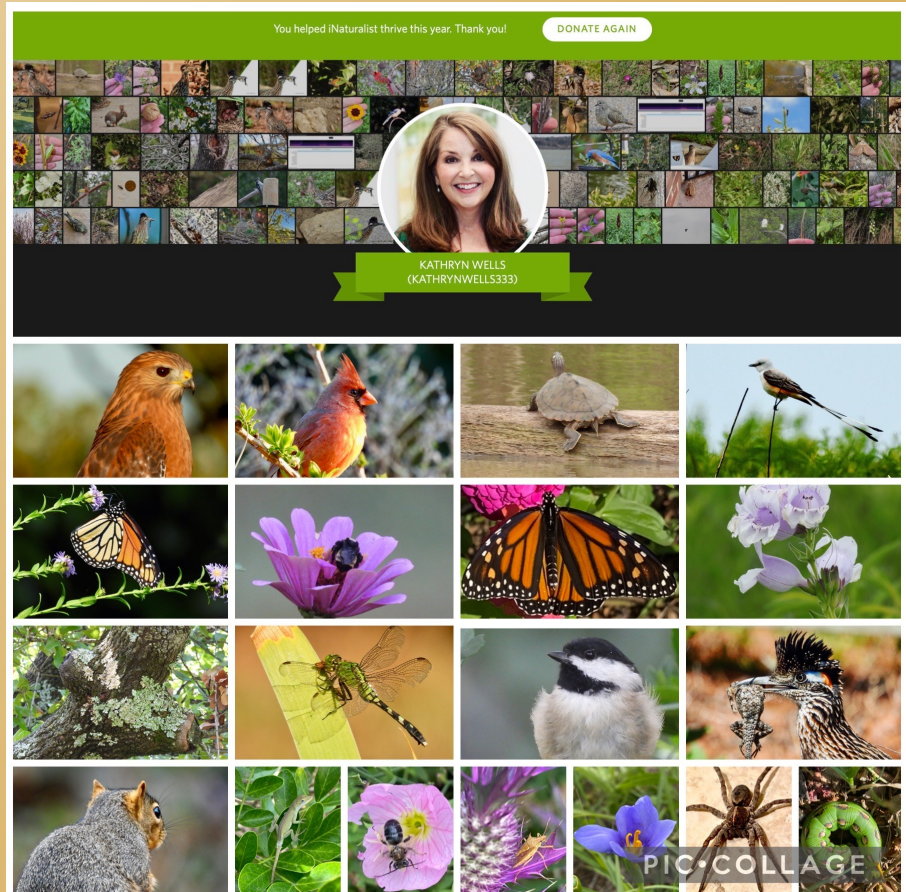
iNaturalist (cont.)

Flower Mound, Thrive Nature Park, and more. Class of 2020 member Bryan Lewis has set up an iNat project to document biodiversity at Beulah Acres Agroforest, and, Green Acres currently has an iNaturalist Photography Exhibit at the Flower Mound Public Library (3030 Broadmoor Lane), which may be viewed from April 1st through May 25th.

This year, the City Nature Challenge is scheduled for April 28th through May 1st. Observations discovered during those four days must be uploaded before May 6th to count in the final tally. As a reference, the 2022 DFW City Nature Challenge netted 42,149 observations of 3,340 species by 1,378 observers, which were identified by 1,219 observers. Those efforts landed us in fourth place on the worldwide leaderboard! The La Paz area in Bolivia earned first place last year with 138,179 observations of 3,982 species. But, in terms of actually documenting diversity, DFW scored higher than La Paz with 8% of total observations representing unique species while La Paz's ratio of unique species to observations was "only" 2.9%. Globally, 1,593,327 observations of 51,945 species were documented by 67,984 observers. That's still "only" a 3.3% ratio of unique documentations, so DFW was way ahead of the average! And, at least as long as I've been participating, DFW has always reached the global Top 5, with strong representation from our Elm Fork Chapter iNatters.

What's the upside? Well, in addition to bragging rights, we get the satisfaction of contributing research-grade data to help analyze, protect, and preserve the land. The stats can even be used at the grassroots level (pun intended!)-perhaps as educational and informational support to help preserve swaths of open space in your city, town, or county. We also receive the joy of being in nature ... and sharing that joy with like-minded friends.

For more information on iNaturalist, please visit the [Frequently Asked Questions web page](#), which addresses many topics including how the identification process works (research-grade observations are important) and how you can protect your privacy while contributing meaningful data. If you're not an iNatter but want to be, [here's how to begin](#). And, if you're already an iNatter, please participate in the upcoming [2023 City Nature Challenge](#); every observation (and identifi-

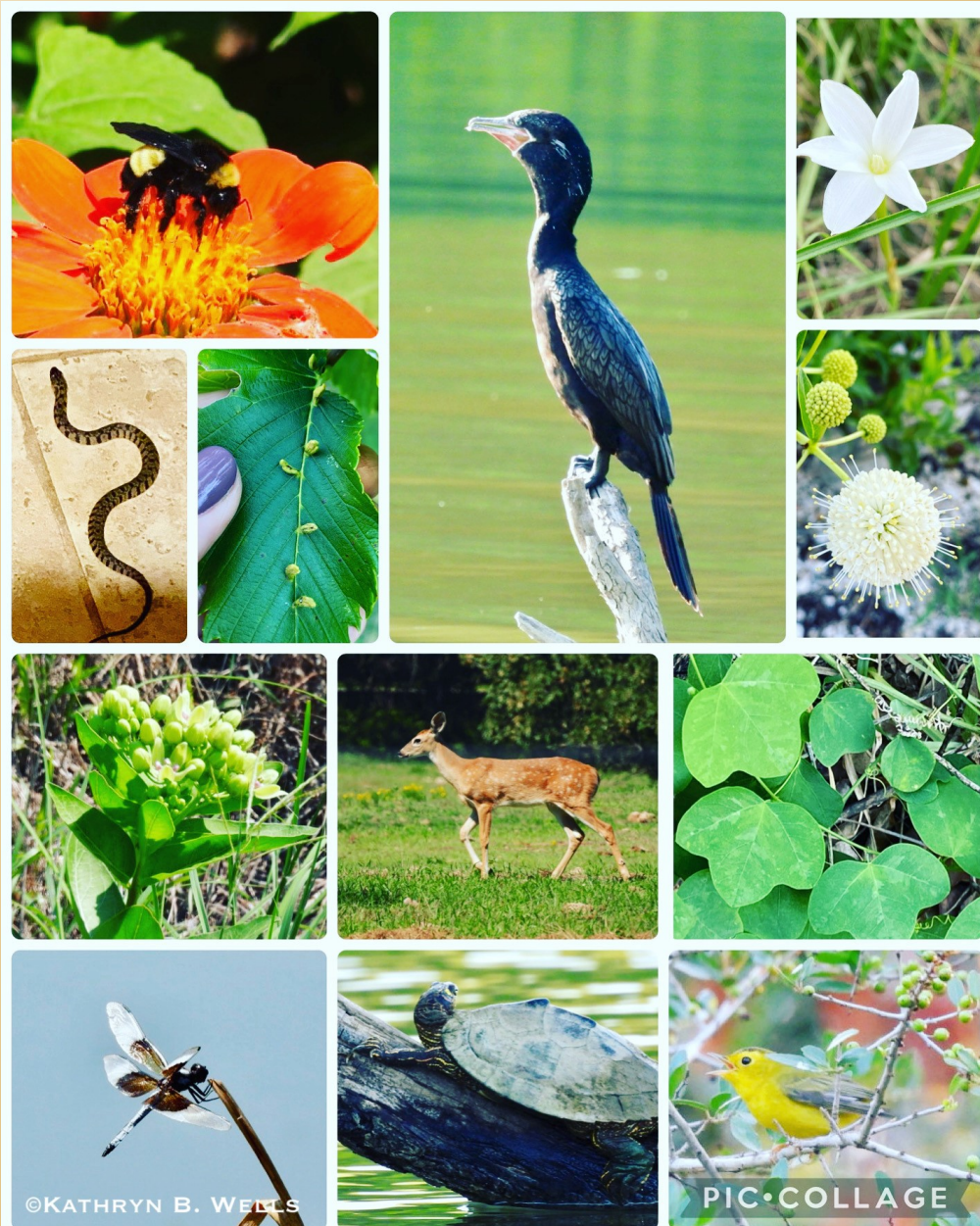


2021 Statistics: At the end of the year, iNaturalist provides a "Year in Review" for each user to easily see their annual observation statistics. In 2021, I contributed 5,835 observations of 907 species.

iNaturalist (cont.)

cation) matters! Mary Morrow is the iNaturalist Project Manager for our chapter; she'll happily help you on your iNat journey. And, be on the lookout for future Chapter-wide bioblitz volunteer service opportunities ... coming soon to a project location near you.

Flora and fauna friends, I look forward to following your finds ... and finding you in the field!



Fall 2022 BioBlitz: During the week-long DFW area Fall 2022 BioBlitz, our Elm Fork Chapter dominated with 6,045 observations of 1,130 unique species by 306 observers. I documented 949 observations of 377 unique species and identified 627 observations for others. Fun fact: the most observed species during that event was the Common Buck-eye (*Junonia coenia*) butterfly. See the snake in this photo? Yep; that's a Diamond-Back Water Snake (*Nerodia rhombifer*) ... in my kitchen! Sometimes, the wildlife comes to you; happily, it appeared during the event, so I could count it in my stats ... ha! (After documenting it, I encouraged it out the patio door into the backyard where it could forage for supper in a place other than my pantry.)

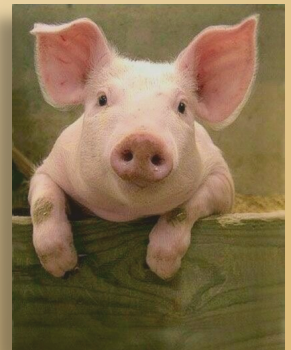
Features

A Human to Animal Connection

By Wanda Odum

Is there a human to animal connection? I think we would all be inclined to agree that is undeniable. Think about your own experience with the different animals to which you have felt a connection. It could be a dog, a cat, a horse, a snake (or other Reptilia), a bird, a gerbil, farm animals like a cow, chicken etc. Even a pig.

When I was about 9 or 10 years old my dad decided to move us temporally onto a farm, and I developed an attachment to a pig he bought. This pig was bought for the sole purpose of becoming food. Think bacon, chops, roasts, etc; and I was given the daily responsibility of feeding him. Since I was feeling pretty lonely without close neighbors and no one to play with, I spent a fair amount of my day talking to my dog, Dusty, and “my” pig. He even had a name - Sugar-foot! The night before he was to be slaughtered, I cried myself to sleep. Then I refused to eat any part of “my” pig.



Okay, how does this wandering through the weeds relate to anything? It just illustrates the connection of human to animal. Can that connection extend to birds? Think about the widespread interest in bird watching that has been going on for centuries. A birder might cross the globe looking for a specific bird and becomes ecstatic when that bird is spotted. So there must be a connection. Why else do people engage in this activity? Birds have been caged and doted upon. My grandmother had parakeets that she talked to for hours. No, she wasn't strange, but loved her birds.



*Cedar Waxwing,
photo by Denver Kramer*

This brings me to one of my favorite birds - Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). Through a little research, I found some fun folklore attached to this bird.

The name waxwing is associated with the long ago practice of using red wax to seal important letters. These documents usually came from those of power and influence with the courier being given instructions to show the documents only to the addressed recipient. This wax seal was a symbol of secrecy and trust. The spots of red on the wingtips of the Cedar Waxwing resemble this red wax seal. The masking on the head further enforces the idea of confidentiality and mystery.

Other feathers of the waxwing are smooth and silky with the dominant color being brown with a black chin, a black beak and legs. The black mask extends through the eyes. Symbolism can be attached to the bird's colors: Red symbolizes passion and energy; brown balances the heat with grounding; and black adds sophistication.

Waxwings do not usually fear humans if approached following good birding rules. They will continue with their tasks such as the care and feeding of offspring. Generally waxwings welcome with open

A Human to Animal Connection (cont.)

arms the return of a fallen one to the nest by humans. Please follow all federal and/or local guidelines (if any) should you encounter any nestling that has fallen.

Cedar Waxwings are found year-round mostly in the northern half of the United States. In non-breeding winter, populations are found in the Midwest and southern states down through Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America. In the spring the waxwings go to wherever there are berries. They can eat as many as 1,000 berries daily. Look for them in open woodlands, fruiting trees, and orchards. (Roger Tory Peterson - Peterson Field Guide Series.)

And there you have it! Mystery, secrecy, beauty and respect - all are part of a human to animal connection. So get "connected". Happy birding.



Cedar Waxwing drawing by Wanda Odum

Features

TONIGHT I HEARD THE WILD GOOSE CRY

By Bob James

When I was a little boy, early in the Spring of 1942, we were at war with Japan. Everyone was scared the Japanese were going to invade the west coast and their Navy sail into the Gulf of Mexico to bomb Texas cities. They even practiced "Black Outs" where there were no lights, porch lights, or street lights, and windows were covered. The city of Fort Worth was blacked out nightly in anticipation of Japanese bombers.

One night during the blackout my dad came in and picked me up, wrapped me in a blanket and took me outside into the front yard. There were no lights at all but a great full moon high in the east. My Dad told me to look up; I did, and I saw thousands of birds passing to the north flying over the face of the moon. I told my dad, "There must be millions of them". He answered, "Well, there are not millions, but several thousands and they are geese flying north for the summer". Then he told me how geese migrate north in the spring of the year and then migrate south for the winter where it is warmer. As I looked up at these beautiful birds, I could hear their faint cry in the night. I will never forget that experience.



Several years later, when I was a teenager, my dad took me goose hunting down on the Gulf Coast at Anahuac, Texas. We stayed in a huge house with a number of other hunters. I remember it was very cold; a front had passed through all the way to the Gulf Coast. Besides being cold it was clear as a bell with no clouds. The first morning we went out to a blind in a rice field where we saw thousands of geese, but they were all flying high and well out of shotgun range. The geese would not come to our decoys and after three days of slogging around in the mud and thigh deep cold water we never fired a shot. We saw Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*) and hundreds of ducks of all varieties. We left the hunting fields and came home empty handed. I decided after this trip not to eat rice for a long, long time.

When I was in high school, I had a good friend, Walter, who loved to duck hunt. He and his father owned a motorboat they kept at Possum Kingdom Lake northwest of Fort Worth. Before Duck Season opened Walter and I had gone to the lake and dug several pit blinds on the edge of the water. When the season opened we hunted there with some success, bagging Mallards, Pintails and Canvasback ducks. One morning rather late in the season we were there hunting and had not seen a duck. After the sun was well up we decided to pick up our decoys and head back to Fort Worth. Suddenly, we heard other hunters up the Lake calling with their Goose calls. We saw two large birds we first thought were Mergansers off to the west. They turned and started to fly in our direction. As the two birds came toward us we saw they were not Mergansers but Canada Geese. When they flew over I shot the lead bird and Walter shot the traveling bird. As we pumped our shotguns for a second shot we saw the two geese falling toward the water. We retrieved the boat, picked up the birds, the decoys and drove home. After arriving in Fort Worth we showed the two geese to my Dad who was very surprised. Walter told us that he and his family were going out of town for the holidays and we could have his bird. My Dad took the two geese to a processing company on the north side of Fort Worth to have them picked, cleaned and prepared for cooking. Later he took them out to the old Blue Star Restaurant on Camp Bowie Boulevard. My Dad knew the owner and told him he could have one of the birds if he would cook the other

TONIGHT I HEARD THE WILD GOOSE CRY (cont.)

one for us. He agreed and we picked up our goose right before Christmas. It was prepared with fried rice, noodles and Chinese vegetables. It was one of the best Christmas dinners I have ever had.

Geese can become common residents on local lakes and ponds. They adapt to living within the human habitat and have established colonies in urban areas where they have food and few natural predators. They can become a pest species because of their excrement, noise and aggressive territorial behavior toward humans. There are geese on the lakes at South Lakes Park. The sidewalks adjacent to the lake have to be washed every few days to remove the goose excrement.

My father-in-law had a goose on a pond on his property north of San Angelo, Texas at Grape Creek. That goose was a malignant creature and would attack you in an instant. He kept everyone away from the pond with the exception of my father-in-law. I had to promise I would not make a Christmas dinner out of him. The goose stayed on the pond for several years.

Geese are monogamous by nature and if one in the pair dies the other rarely takes another mate. Canada Geese (*Branta c.*) are very large birds with a black chinstrap, a wingspan of up to 76 inches and can weigh from 12 to 16 pounds. A normal goose will generally weigh 8 to 10 pounds. The female lays from two to nine eggs in a clutch and both parents protect the nest while the eggs incubate. The nest is usually located near water and is a shallow depression lined with soft plant material and goose down. The incubation period is from 24 to 32 days and the geese adjust their laying time to the temperature. The offspring do not leave the parents until after the spring migration and they return to their birthplace.

In the 19th century, hunters would hunt geese for market and for their feathers and down. The hunters used a small canoe-like boat called a "punt". They attached a huge canon-like shotgun to the bow of the punt and would drift into a raft of ducks and geese. When they got into range they would fire the "punt gun" and kill hundreds of ducks and geese with one shot. When the numbers of the geese and ducks started to decline the Federal Government finally outlawed the practice with the Federal Migratory Bird Act of 1918. By the mid-1930s the number of geese and ducks were still in decline and there was concern they might become extinct like the Passenger Pigeon. This was the result of loss of habitat, DDT and hunting pressure. On January 29, 1937, hunters formed a non-profit organization called Ducks Unlimited and began buying land in northern Canada as a sanctuary for the migratory birds. DDT was outlawed and hunting limits were strictly enforced. Both geese and ducks have made a substantial comeback.

Last fall I saw a huge flight of geese flying over, heading south for the winter. They were arrayed in large Vs from horizon to horizon. My good friend Jim Hendricks asked me if I knew why one leg of the V was longer than the other leg. I told him I didn't know but it might be because it was a method of orienting themselves north to south or perhaps it had to do with the magnetic field of the earth. Jim looked at me and said, "No Bob, there are more geese in the long leg of the V". Then he laughed and laughed!



Canada Goose, from Bob James

"Tonight I heard the wild goose cry,
Winging north in the lonely sky
I tried to sleep, but it ain't no use,
'Cause I am the brother to the old wild goose"

An old folk song by Tennessee Ernie Ford

Tweet of the Month

By Sue Yost, class of 2017

Blue Jay **(*Cyanocitta cristata*)**



Photo by Denver Kramer

The 19th century ornithologist Charles Bendire said “Cunning, inquisitive, an admirable mimic, full of mischief; in some localities extremely shy, in others, exactly the reverse, it is difficult to paint him in his true colors.” That is a Blue Jay. You have in your yard a large bird that is blue above and white below with a prominent crest and a bold black necklace. White patches and black and white barring are added to the blue wings and tail. As it approaches the feeder all the other birds scatter! That is a Blue Jay.

Blue Jays are only found east of the Rocky Mountains and north into Canada. It is one of only 2 jays that have a crest [the other is a Steller’s Jay]. They belong to the Corvid family which includes crows, ravens, and magpies. As a group they are thought to be among the most intelligent of birds.

Brash and flashy, Blue Jays roam the woods, parks, and backyards in search of food. Most are permanent residents although some do migrate south in the fall. They are omnivores. One study found their summer diet to contain 30% insects and other vertebrates, as well as some small invertebrates; the other 70% was made up of seeds, acorns, and fruit. They readily will come to a feeder of peanuts and sunflower seeds. They will grab a seed and fly off to a branch, put the seed between their feet and use their long thick beak to hammer it apart. Blue Jays will also take and eat the eggs and nestlings of other open-nesting birds.

Jays are also famous hoarders. Studies prove that they can recall where they cached their seeds and nuts. I have witnessed them “hiding” a peanut in the yard by picking up



Photo by Denver Kramer

Tweet of the Month (cont.)

leaves and covering it up. I always wonder if they know that a squirrel can smell that nut “hidden” under those leaves!

Jays are open nesters using lots of twigs and dry leaves to create a bowl-shaped nest high in a tree. They lay 3-5 green or blue brown spotted eggs. The female will incubate for 16-18 days, and they fledge in 17-21 days. Even though jays will eat eggs and nestlings of other species they are fiercely defensive of their own. An intruder in their territory will face a flashing beak and an “unrelenting steel-cold scream” jay jay, jay!

A lot of backyard birders don't like the Blue Jays. They say they scare all the other birds away. I tell them “I bet you know a human with the same traits as a Blue Jay!” That person walks into a room, loud and brash and wants all the attention from the crowd. That is a Blue Jay! But Blue Jays are an important guardian of the back yard when it comes to warning calls about predators. If you hear jays in your yard just pitching a fit, agitating calls, chances are they have discovered a threat...a hawk, an owl, a cat, or maybe a snake that will harm the songbirds in the yard. That call alerts all the other birds and they come and join forces to mob it and hopefully send that predator on its way. But on the flip side jays can also mimic the sound of the Red-shouldered Hawk which would put birds and squirrels on alert.

If you are a baseball fan, you may follow the Toronto Blue Jays. There are many college and high school athletic teams named after the jay.

And that, my fellow Master Naturalists is a Blue Jay!



Photo by Denver Kramer

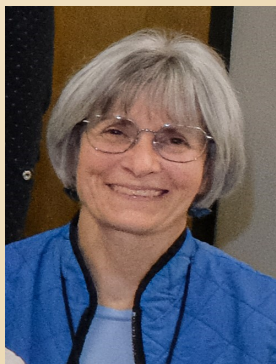


Photo by Tammie Walters

This Month's Contributors



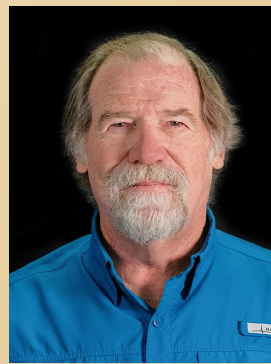
Gale Bacon



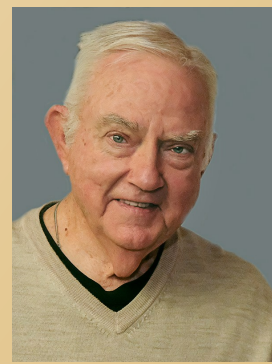
Becky Bertoni



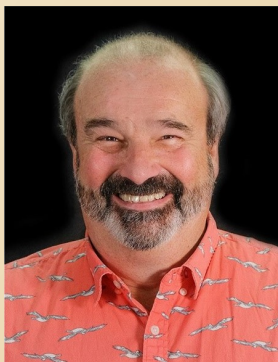
Marilyn Blanton



Jim Gerber



Bob James



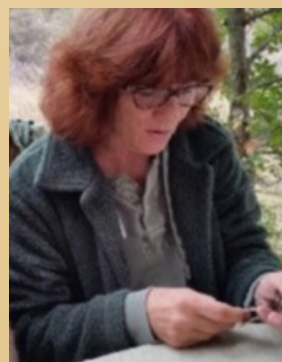
Dave Jones



Denver Kramer



Brian Lewis



Mary Morrow



Jean Mason



Wanda Odum



Diane Wetherbee



Kathryn Wells



Sue Yost



Betty Zajac



Tammie Walters, Editor

Thank you all!

Articles and photos for the *Naturalist News*
are always wanted and welcomed!

Please send submissions to: newsletter@efctmn.org

Deadline for the May 2023 submissions is
Friday, May 12th.

Almost the Last Word



Green Acres iNaturalist Photography Exhibit

Now through May 25, 2023

Flower Mound Library 3030 Broadmoor Ln. Flower Mound, TX 75022

(Visit <https://www.flower-mound.com/135/Library> for days and hours)

You can vote for your favorite nature photo, view the original land patent to Benjamin Waters in 1855, and read the typed transcription and notes. You can also read memories of the Green Acres Farm during 1969-2005, when the Davises lived there and champion Tennessee Walking Horses trained on the land.



You're Invited!

Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition

Appreciation Reception

Wednesday, April 26 – 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm

DISD Professional Development Center

1212 Bolivar Street, Denton, Texas

Please join us to honor the fourth grade students and their art teachers. All of the artwork that was submitted will be displayed. Other displays will be set up to recognize the display hosts and project sponsors. Stop by at your convenience to join the fun.

Thank you,
Marilyn Blanton

Almost the Last Word

Naturalist News Needs Your Photos!



Please share your photographs of native plants and flowers, birds, insects, mammals, reptiles... anything that you would like to share & have published in the *Naturalist News* to newsletter@efctmn.org.

We all want to see what you have seen!

Thank you!

Tammie Walters, Editor

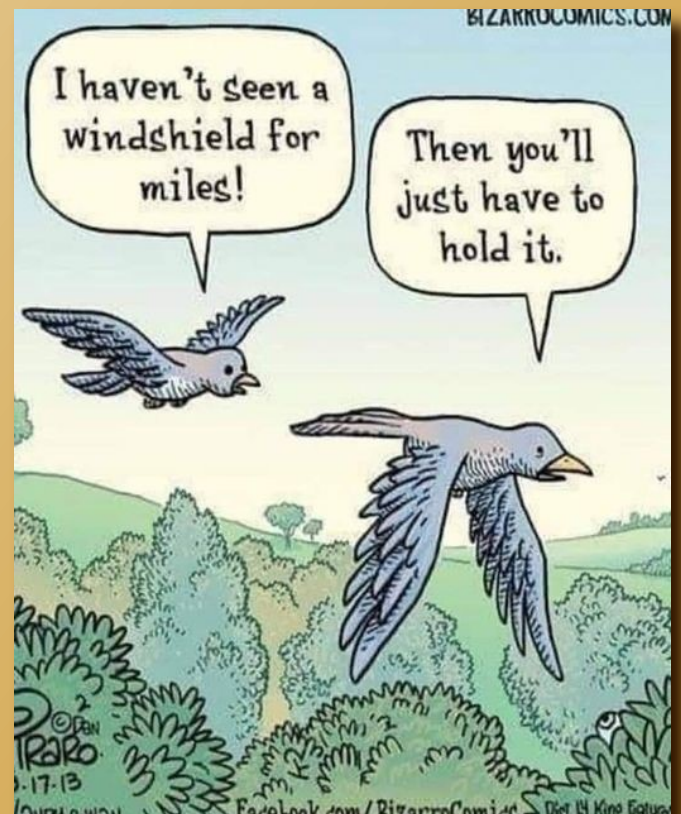


We know that YOU know a thing or two about native plants!

Please share your knowledge with our chapter by writing a brief article about a native plant that might be showing its glory at this time, and submitting it to newsletter@efctmn.org.

Articles can be as short as 200 words or as long as 600 words, or more. And please include a photo or two of the plant.

Thank you!



Who We Are



Texas Master Naturalist—Elm Fork Chapter

<https://txmn.org/elmfork/>

OFFICERS

President - Jerry Betty

Vice President - Kathy Webb

Treasurer - Ray Kreutzfeld

Secretary - Missy McCormick

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CHAPTER ADVISORS

AgriLife — Janet Laminack, Extension Agent

Texas Parks and Wildlife — TBD



Our 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 for the State of Texas."

Our Vision

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

Board Meetings

The Board meets each second Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m.

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.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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