

T E X A S

Master  
Naturalist™  
Elm Fork Chapter



# *Naturalist News*

November 2023 Volume 23, Issue 11



White-tailed Deer, by Jonathan Reynolds

We're on the Web [www.txmn.org/elmfork](http://www.txmn.org/elmfork)

On Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/](https://www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/)





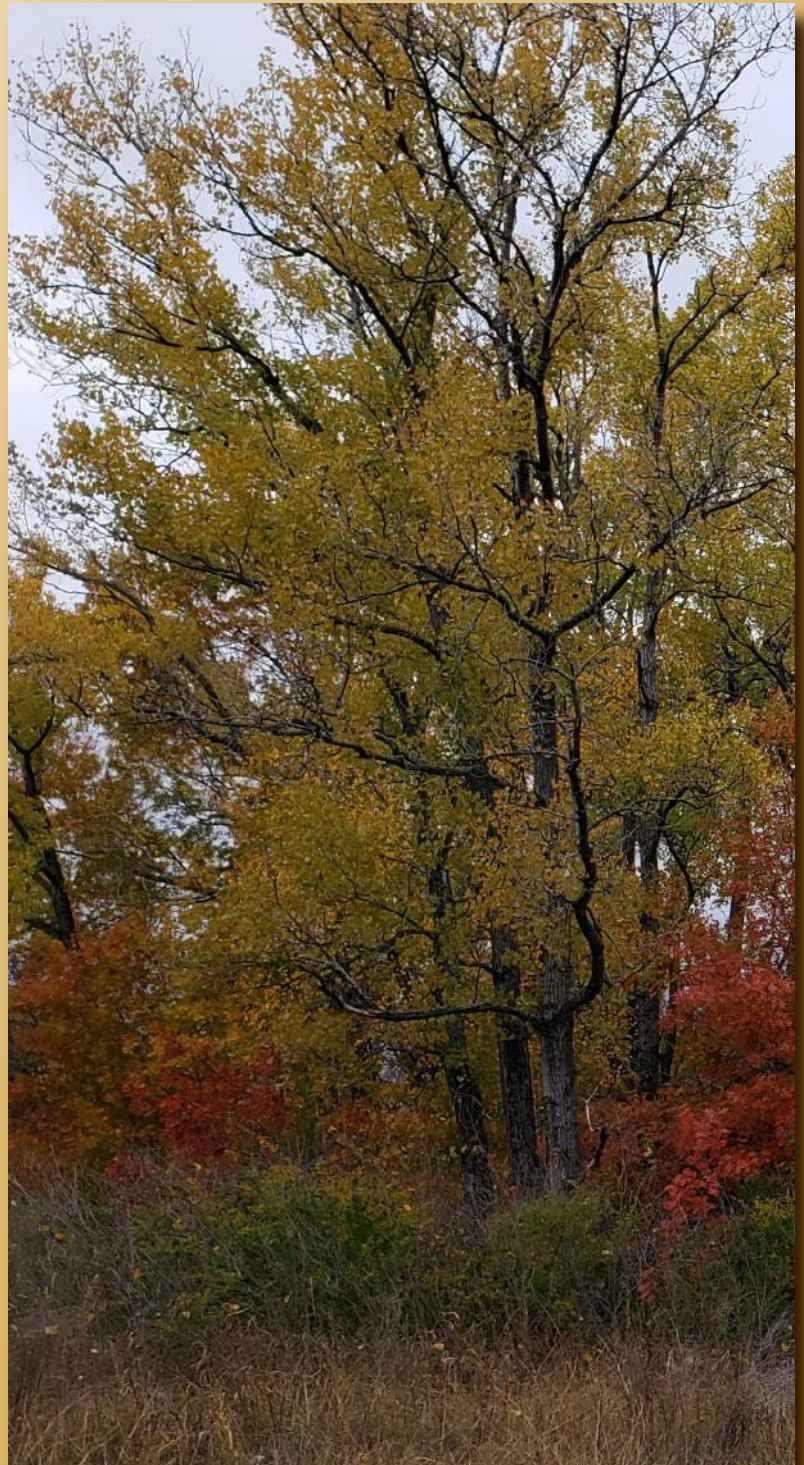
# Naturalist News

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Wild Turkey, by Denver Kramer



Fall Colors at CCNHC, from Tammie Walters



# *What Happens Next*

## ***Chapter Meeting and Presentation***

Thursday, November 16th, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Denton County Southwest Courthouse

6200 Canyon Falls Drive

Flower Mound, TX 76226



## *This Month's Meeting Presentation*

### **Nature of the Moon**

**By Amy Martin**

Known by many as the Moonlady, Amy Martin will share her deep knowledge of the Moon. You'll be a pro-level Moon watcher after this talk, with a deep understanding of how Moon phases are created. Become able to predict where the Moon will be at any time with some great timing tips on when the Moon rises and sets in each phase. Understand synchrony which creates tides and causes us to only see one side of the Moon. Discover how synchrony led to life on Earth and how the Moon stabilizes the planet to enable human life to evolve. Learn how Full Moons at perigee create Super Moons and how perihelion makes the winter Moon much brighter. Get insight into the Moon's metaphoric qualities. Learn how you can live in tune with the Moon with gardening based on the lunar phases. Find reasons for celebration in global lunar-based holidays and significant New and Full Moons. Sit back for an astronomical, anthropological, and yet poetic, image-filled talk about our Moon.



*Amy* has been an acolyte of the Moon since she was a child when it gave her hope in difficult times. As an adult, she's studied the Moon deeply and continues to do so. She's traveled across the continent just to experience its exceptional moments in special places. On many New and Full Moons, she can be found in her backyard or local parks, meditating, and communing with the Moon by herself or leading walks with others. She also enjoys a good howl. For all these reasons, she's known as the Moonlady.

A journalist and writer for over 40 years, Amy Martin, is the author of *Wild DFW: Explore the Amazing Nature of Dallas-Fort Worth*, *Itchy Business: How to Treat the Poison Ivy and Poison Oak Rash, Prevent Exposure and Eradicate the Plant*, and *Holy Smokes: Loose Herbs & Hot Embers for Intense Group Smudges & Smoke Prayers*. She is currently senior features writer for GreenSourceDFW, profiling parks, preserves, and the people who protect them. Find her writings at [Moonlady.com](http://Moonlady.com).



# What Happens Next

*Greetings Elm Fork Chapter,*

*I have the privilege of announcing our 2024 candidates to serve as Officers on our Board of Directors. We are so grateful to them for volunteering their time and talent to help navigate our organization next year. You will be asked to participate in an election for these candidates at our November 16 Chapter Meeting.*

*Please learn more about each of them below.*

*We look forward to seeing you on the 16th.*

*Thank you,*

*Kathy Webb*

*President*

*Elm Fork Chapter Texas Master Naturalist*

T E X A S



## KATHRYN WELLS - President



### **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter**

*Class of 2017*

*Vice President 2021*

*Secretary 2019-2020*

*Class Co-Representative 2018*

*iNaturalist Aficionado*

### **Other Current Service:**

*Immediate Past President, Denton County Master Gardener Association*

*tion (2023-2024; President 2020-2022)*

*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Texas Master Gardener Association (2023-2024)*

*Grants Coordinator, Native Plant Society of Texas - Trinity Forks Chapter (2023-Ongoing)*

*Instructor, Native Landscape Certification Program - Native Plant Society of Texas (Ongoing)*

*Board Member, The Flower Mound Foundation (Ongoing)*

I am consistently overcome with gratitude for all who so generously give their time and talent to our Chapter; what a privilege and pleasure to serve alongside each of you!

Continued  
on next page



# *What Happens Next (Cont.) - 2024 Candidates*



## **LARRY DUNCAN - Vice President**

### **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter**

Class of 2018

Volunteer Service Projects Director 2023

Member of the initial LLELA Three-Toed Box Turtle Project 2018-2022

Administrative Work LLELA 2019-2023

Co-Manager Lewisville Extending the Green 2022

Project Manager Roots for Wings 2022

Projects Committee 2022-2023

### **Other Organizations:**

PGA Supervisor of Volunteers Colonial Golf Tournament 2010-2024

Village of Cross Timbers HOA President 2019-2020

Lake Worth Fire Department 1962-1974

When I was 17, I became a volunteer firefighter. I asked my trainer why he became a firefighter. He told me, "Service to others is the rent you pay on the space you occupy!" I have been involved in volunteer work and servant leadership since that day.



## **BECKY CORTINES - Secretary**

### **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter**

Class of 2021

Training Committee 2023

### **Other Organizations:**

Denton County Master Gardener Class of 2020

Garden Tour Home 2023 - showcasing native plants as a "Living" Landscape that Supports Wildlife

Garden Captain 2022, Mentor 2021-2022, and other committees and projects

Native Plant Society of Texas

Church positions: Leadership team in Women's Ministries

Staff member - Children's Ministries, Director of Food Bank

Administrative Assistant at a large company

My husband and I recently celebrated our 40th anniversary. We have two sons who along with their wives have given us seven wonderful grandchildren. We steward a few acres in Lake Dallas next to Lewisville Lake - and enjoy the native plants, wildlife and natural beauty of the land.

Continued  
on next page



## *What Happens Next (Cont.) - 2024 Candidates*



### **MIKE HATCH - Treasurer**

#### **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter**

Class of 2014

VMS Team since 2015

VMS Director since 2017

A/V Tech Team since 2015

A/V Manager since 2017

Projects Committee member 2020-2022

#### **Other Organizations:**

Treasurer for Denton County Parent & Leaders Association 2013-2014

Webmaster for Collin County Hobby Beekeepers Assoc (CCHBA) since 2015

Treasurer for CCHBA since 2016

Webmaster for Texas Beekeepers Association since 2016

I retired from UNT as an IT Manager in 2013 after 17 years at UNT and a total of 38 years in higher education including Texas Tech and Kansas State Universities. My wife, Diana, is an Elm Fork member from the Class of 2007. We have four adult sons and currently 14 grandchildren. We moved from Denton to rural Cooke County in 2014 and manage 20 acres of woodlands as a wildlife sanctuary.



### ***2024 Officers***

*Officers of our Chapter's Board of Directors are elected by Membership. Our candidates for 2024 will be presented and an election will be held at the November 16 Chapter Meeting. Per our Bylaws, (Article V, D.) Nominations from the Floor for all positions will be accepted prior to the vote. Winners will be determined by a simple majority of members in attendance.*

*Please plan to attend the chapter meeting November 16, at the Southwest Courthouse.*

# *What Happens Next*

## TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

# SEASON OF *Thanks!*

Dear Texas Master Naturalists,

Welcome to a Season of Thanks! The Texas Master Naturalist Program is wrapping up its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year and to celebrate, we're launching our "Season of Thanks". Over the next two months, we'll be highlighting TMN volunteer projects, service and accomplishments to close out 2023. We're inviting you to interact with our social media posts and share with us what you are most thankful for!

To get us started - we are thankful for you and the sense of service our Master Naturalists have! The TMN Program has become an active conservation force across Texas for 25 years thanks to its passionate corps of members. Some impressive numbers from the past 25 years:

- To date, the Texas Master Naturalists have improved or stewarded **3,010 miles of trails** in their ecoregion and community.
- Master Naturalists have served over **6,787,000 service hours** in natural resource conservation, education or stewardship since the program's inception.
- And over **6,628,000 Texans** have interacted with the conservation mission of the Texas Master Naturalist members, chapters and mission.

Share with us what you're thankful for by watching our social media channels for our Season of Thanks posts starting this month!

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistProgram>

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/texasmasternaturalist/>

Or share your thoughts, reflections and hopes for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Texas Master Naturalist Program through our Survey - linked below. These will be collected and shared in April next year as part of our National Volunteer Month celebration in 2024!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/tmn25thanniversary>

We are thankful!

Michelle and Mary Pearl



# What Happens Next



Outstanding Service

Volunteer of the Year

Project of the Year

Deadline for Nominations is December 31st, 2023 (but why wait?)

Use the Link Below

<https://txmn.org/elmfork/2023-achievement-recognition/>



# What Happens Next

## 'Tis the Season for Giving...



Place your nominations in the basket by the  
Welcome/Sign-In Table or  
Text, Mary Morrow, by December 1, 2023  
(contact info on the website, Member's Area)



Sign up to help Santa's Elves  
Holiday Luncheon  
Wednesday and Thursday,  
December 13th and 14th  
DCAC Elections Bldg

Please bring a pot-luck dish or dessert  
and wrapped nature-theme ornament

**SIGN UP TODAY OR CONTACT:**  
Susan Warren or  
Mary Morrow.

Contact info on the website, Member's Area





# Awards and Recognition

## October 2023

### Initial Certifications

Missy Adair	Class of 2022
Nancy Blakney	Class of 2023
Brent Bloechle	Class of 2023
Samra Bufkins	Class of 2023
Andrea Dixon	Class of 2023
Scott Heffley	Class of 2023
Brenda Martin	Class of 2023
Amy Montgomery	Class of 2023
Carl Parsons	Class of 2023
Marissa Shaw	Class of 2023
Barb Van Order	Class of 2023



### Recertifications

Bob Bender	Class of 2019
Craig Blow	Class of 2019
Samra Bufkins	Class of 2023
Stephen Carroll	Class of 2021
Bill Coleman	Class of 2013
Jan Deatherage	Class of 2011
Andrea Dixon	Class of 2023
Jim Hardy	Class of 2019
Jan Hodson	Class of 2002
Brenda Martin	Class of 2023
Theresa Page	Class of 2005
Marissa Shaw	Class of 2023



# *Awards and Recognition*

## *October 2023*

### *250 Hour Milestone*

*Becky Cortines*

*Class of 2021*



### *500 Hour Milestone*

*Bryan Lewis*

*Class of 2020*



### *1500 Hour Milestone*

*Dale Denton*

*Class of 2019*



### *2000 Hour Milestone*

*Abigail Miller*

*Class of 2003*



### *4000 Hour Milestone*

*Jan Deatherage*

*Class of 2011*



### *7000 Hour Milestone*

*Mary Morrow*

*Class of 2014*





# Field Notes in Focus



**Plain Chachalaca**  
(*Ortalis vetula*)



**Mexican Bluewing**  
(*Mycalesia ethusa*)



**Green Jay**  
(*Cyanocorax yncas*)



**Buff-bellied Hummingbird**  
(*Amazilia yucatanensis*)

*Bryan Lewis, Zoombee Class of 2020, was hoping to photograph species he had never seen before during his trip to McAllen and Rio Grande Valley for the 2023 Annual Meeting - and he did!*



# Field Notes in Focus



Double-crested Cormorant (*Nannopterum auritum*), from Diane Wetherbee

*"My first sighting of the season of a double-crested cormorant. It was drying its wings on the bank of the pond behind our house. Unlike most other water birds, cormorants' feathers aren't water-resistant, allowing them to become waterlogged so the cormorant can dive deep for its food. So, you'll often see them afterward sitting on the bank, wings spread wide to dry."*

*Diane Wetherbee*



# Inside Outside News

## Volunteer Opportunities

The Class of 2023 is helping promote projects for LLELA 3rd Saturdays at the Cabin, and every Saturday/Sunday for the Visitor Center!

For visitor center training, please contact Rachel Weaver, Lynn West, or Andrea Dixon through the Members Area, 2023 Training Class Roster.

LLELA 3rd Saturday - training will provided on site at day of event.



LLELA

### Docent 3rd Saturday at the Cabin

AD Andrea Dixon

✉ Contact

3rd Saturdays 12:00-3:00. Please review the available slots below and click on the button to sign up. Thank you!

📍 Location LLELA Cabin

Click here to sign up: <https://tinyurl.com/LLELA3rdSat>



LLELA

### Visitor Center

AD Andrea Dixon

✉ Contact

Saturdays and Sundays (Shift 1: 10:00-1:00, Shift 2: 1:00-4:00)  
Please review the available slots below and click on the button to sign up. Thank you!

📍 Location LLELA Visitor Center

Click here to sign up: <https://tinyurl.com/LLELAVisitor>

# *Inside Outside News*

## Volunteer Opportunities



**Class of 2023**

### **LBJ Grasslands CleanUp**

**11/28/2023 (Tues.) 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

The Class of 2023 is helping with a project workday for LBJ Grasslands!

We welcome anyone who wants to come spend a day of fellowship and cleaning up one of our great project sites.

SignUpGenius link: <https://tinyurl.com/LBJGrasslandsCleanUp>

Please sign up so we can get an idea of how many volunteers to plan for. Anyone who signs up will be emailed more specific details of where to meet etc. as they become available.

We will be picking up trash and cleaning up the area. Bring gloves, water, lunch, and trash bags. You can come for all or any portion of the day.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

VMS - LBJ Grasslands PO70308RM

*The Volunteer Opportunities keep coming!*

So be sure to see Plan Your Week,  
or go to our [Elm Fork Chapter Website](#),  
and click on the Calendar for more  
Volunteer Service Projects!





# *Inside Outside News*

Approved AT



## **Oak Wilt Biology and Management**

(Free Webinar)

**November 15th at 12:00 PM**



Dr. Demian Gomez (Regional Forest Health Coordinator - Texas A&M Forest Service) will discuss oak wilt - what causes it and what you can do to manage it.

Oak wilt is a vascular tree disease that is known as one of the most destructive tree diseases in the U.S. It is caused by the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum* and can spread via root grafts to neighboring trees or through beetle vectors. Although its origin is unknown, it was first detected in the U.S. in the 1900's and is now responsible for the mortality of thousands of oak trees each year. In this webinar, Dr. Demian Gomez will tell us more about oak wilt, its signs, symptoms, and what you can do to manage it.

There is no registration for this webinar. Go to the link below 15-30 min before the webinar and the first 500 will be able to join.

<https://conservationwebinars.net/webinars/oak-wilt-biology-and-management/?sr=wp~upcoming>

Wild Ones presents a free webinar on

## ***The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants***

**November 16th at 6:00 PM**

Join us for an enlightening webinar featuring authors, Neil Diboll and Hilary Cox, as they present their latest book, "The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants." This comprehensive compendium is a treasure trove of knowledge for gardeners looking to incorporate native prairie plants into their landscapes. Neil and Hilary will delve into the making and application of this essential guide, sharing rich historical and ecological insights about prairie ecosystems, all while showcasing stunning images of prairie flora. Submit your questions! Because webinar host Doug Tallamy will be leading a Q&A at the end.

**Register at:**

<https://wildones.org/webinar-diboll-cox-nov-2023/#DibollCox2023>

# Inside Outside News

New Advanced Training opportunities being offered almost daily,  
so be sure to check Plan Your Week  
and the Elm Fork Chapter Website and Calendar for MORE!

## Elm Fork Chapter

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[Volunteers Needed](#)

12	13	14	15	16	17	18
<p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Isle Du Bois Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>LLELA Visitor Center</p>	<p>7:30 am - 10:30 am</p> <p>LLELA Monday &amp; Wednesday Workday</p> <p>9:00 am - 1:30 pm</p> <p>Environmental Discovery and Adventure (EDA)</p> <p>12:00 pm - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Roots For Wings Demo Garden- think 'mulch' about it?</p>	<p>7:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday</p> <p>8:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Green Acres Workday</p> <p>9:00 am - 12:00 pm</p> <p>LLELA Trailhead Tuesday</p> <p>12:00 pm - 1:00 pm</p> <p>#TMN Tuesday – AT</p> <p>6:00 pm - 7:00 pm</p> <p>Raptors 101 – AT</p>	<p>7:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday</p> <p>7:30 am - 10:30 am</p> <p>LLELA Monday &amp; Wednesday Workday</p> <p>9:00 am - 1:30 pm</p> <p>Environmental Discovery and Adventure (EDA)</p> <p>9:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Lantana Monarch Waystation Workday</p> <p>12:00 pm - 1:00 pm</p> <p>Oak Wilt Biology and Management – AT</p>	<p>9:00 am - 12:00 pm</p> <p>Chapter Meeting</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit</p> <p>6:00 pm - 7:30 pm</p> <p>The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants – AT</p>	<p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Isle Du Bois Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 1:00 pm</p> <p>Denton County: North Texas Nature Hotspot – AT</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>LLELA Visitor Center</p> <p style="text-align: right;">+ 1 More</p>	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
<p>9:00 am - 10:30 am</p> <p>Thrive Nature Walk – AT</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Isle Du Bois Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>LLELA Visitor Center</p>	<p>7:30 am - 10:30 am</p> <p>LLELA Monday &amp; Wednesday Workday</p> <p>9:00 am - 1:30 pm</p> <p>Environmental Discovery and Adventure (EDA)</p>	<p>7:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday</p> <p>8:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Green Acres Workday</p> <p>9:00 am - 12:00 pm</p> <p>LLELA Trailhead Tuesday</p>	<p>7:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday</p> <p>7:30 am - 10:30 am</p> <p>LLELA Monday &amp; Wednesday Workday</p> <p>9:00 am - 1:30 pm</p> <p>Environmental Discovery and Adventure (EDA)</p>	<p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit</p>	<p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Isle Du Bois Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>LLELA Visitor Center</p>	<p>8:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Fumeaux Creek Volunteer Day on the Trail</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Isle Du Bois Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit</p> <p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>LLELA Visitor Center</p>
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
<p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake</p>	<p>7:30 am - 10:30 am</p> <p>LLELA Monday &amp;</p>	<p>7:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Beulah Acres</p>	<p>7:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Beulah Acres</p>	<p>9:00 am - 11:00 am</p> <p>Thursdays@Thrive</p>	<p>10:00 am - 4:00 pm</p> <p>Ray Roberts Lake</p>	<p>9:00 am - 12:00 pm</p> <p>First Saturday</p>

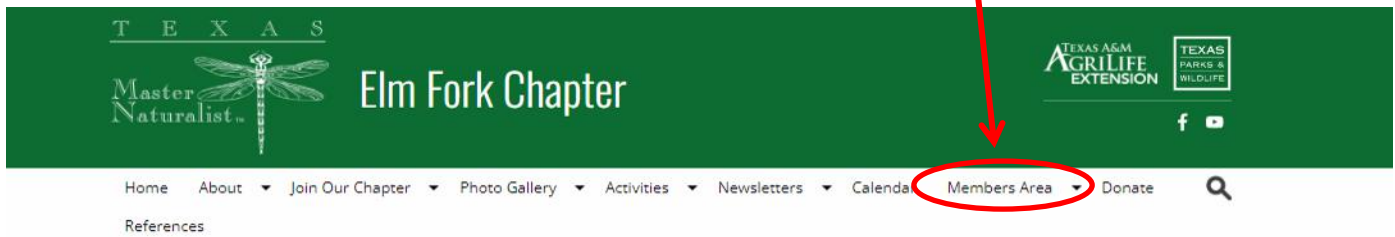


# Quick Tips From Our Webmaster

Gale Bacon



*Here's What's New  
In the Members Area!*



Now accepting 2024 chapter dues payments online. Payments can be made via credit card or paypal.

- From our website, go to **Members Area**, Forms and Documents, 2024 Dues.
- Or click on the link below!  
<https://txmn.org/elmfork/2024-dues/>

Note: 2023 class members have already paid their 2024 dues.



Now accepting 2023 Award nominees!

- From our website, go to **Members Area**, 2023 Award Nominations, or click on the link below!  
<https://txmn.org/elmfork/2023-achievement-recognition/>



# Projects in the Community

## The Big Rain at Green Acres

by Becky Bertoni

Before the rain there were still big cracks in the soil at Green Acres, but some previous fall rain had perked the plants up a bit.



Water Flowing,  
by Becky Bertoni

Then what would become several inches of rain started on Monday, October 23rd and ended about a week later.

October 27th was the one sunny and humid day in the middle of the rain, and what a change we saw that day around Green Acres from the deluge so far!

Water was pouring out of the over-flow pipe from the pond next door, with many little largemouth bass fish flopping in the stream. The fish were strewn along the water's course through the riparian area. We saw 10 or so great egrets and great blue herons at the park, near where there was standing water—and the fish I guess. I counted 5 red-eared slider turtles on the

northern side of the park, where there is higher elevation. They had escaped their normal home in the pond. There was a place in the east pasture with a line of holes in a row, where you could see how the top piece of soil fell down about 12 inches into a hole.



Fish in the Grass,  
by Becky Bertoni



Great Blue Heron and Great Egret,  
by Shiva Shenoy



Red-eared Slider, by Becky Bertoni





## *Big Rain at Green Acres (Cont.)*

After the rain was done, on Tuesday, October 31, the turtles were gone from the park and about all of the visible fish also. (We discovered a few were under some solarizing plastic.) There still were several great egrets and great blue herons, maybe because the flooded pond next door was still muddy. A small amount of water was flowing out of that pond still, and we found another sink hole in the west pasture.

By Thursday, November 2nd, a pink evening primrose was blooming in Irene's Garden, and there were many redstem stork's bills, a mini springtime green-up.



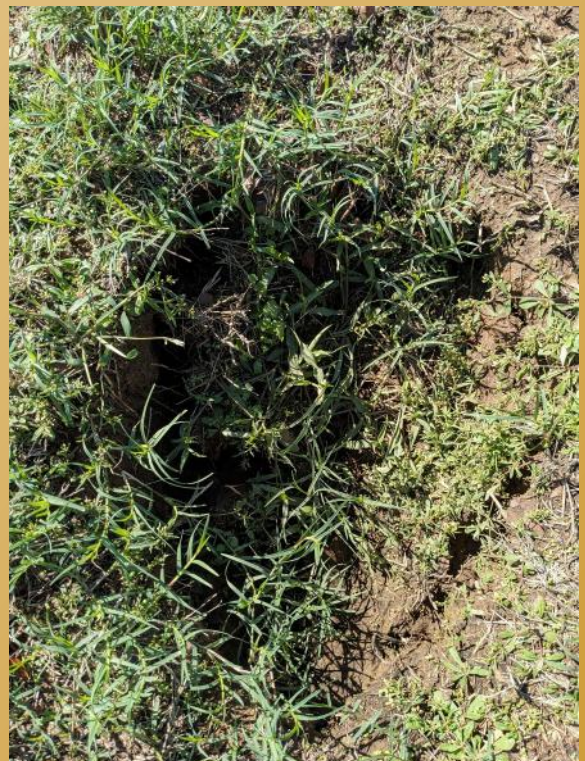
Great Egret, by Becky Bertoni



Pink Evening Primrose, by Becky Bertoni



Redstem Stork's Bill, by Becky Bertoni



Hole in Pasture, by Becky Bertoni



# Features

## Gone to Return Again

By Marilyn Blanton

The cicadas of summer are now all gone  
But their nymphal skins still hang on

Their loud summer buzz is stilled and quiet  
Now the cricket's cheerful song fills the night

Gone are summer's black eyed susans that spread color all around  
But the promise of blooms next year is held in their seed heads that abound

The leaves of the sumacs have turned bright yellow and red  
They'll be replaced in the spring with new leaves, fresh and green instead

Spring's lovely, sweet, shy little violets disappeared in the summer heat  
But their heart-shaped leaves are back, preparing for their spring show to repeat

The beautiful little hummingbirds have all migrated  
But they'll be back next year, to be admired and celebrated

Now there are no delicate eggs nestled in the leftover bird's nest  
But the surprise of finding a nest with eggs in the spring will be the best

As the days grow shorter with the approaching cold time of the year  
The trees will start silently forming their buds so they can reappear

Enjoy the season as autumn fades into winter  
Spring will return again next year in all its splendor





## Features

# WHAT SPARKS YOUR INTEREST?



BY ANDREA DIXON, CLASS OF 2023

DID YOU SEE THAT? DID YOU HEAR THAT?  
DID YOU NOTICE? ... MY WORLD HAS BEEN  
AMPLIFIED! WHY HAVE I NOT BEEN AWARE  
OF ALL THAT IS AROUND ME?

I have enjoyed a lifetime of being outside, climbing trees, catching fireflies, making paths through the woods as a child... planting flowers and gardens, riding through the countryside horseback as a young adult... Teaching my children about plants and wildlife, camping, continually enjoying the outdoors, but now... NOW as an almost empty nester, NOW why do I feel like I am seeing things for the first time?

I received an email - A "special" name tag was waiting for me at the Elm Fork Chapter Texas Master Naturalists Project Showcase event. My mentor also let me know that I would have a bag with all of my class materials waiting for me there. How could I not attend this event if strangers had gone out of their way to prepare items for me?

Passionate, friendly, knowledgeable individuals filled the room. All so welcoming and encouraging. Little did I know the education and hands on opportunities that would unfold over the next days, weeks and months would change my life in ways I would have never thought possible.

I no longer go outside to drink my coffee and just listen to the birds, I am entranced by all of the different calls. I no longer just have birds in my yard, I have Red Shouldered Hawks, King Fishers, Bewick's Wrens, Indigo Buntings, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, ... I can't put the app down, waiting for just one more bird!

I have discovered that my learning and curiosity can carry over to inspire the same in others. Volunteering for the Get Outside Texas State Fair booth with TPWD I enjoyed the opportunity to work with snakes from the Wetlands Center. I learned and shared the joy of seeing and holding a precious hognose snake named Oink. It was effortless to draw people in with his cute little face. To see fear melt into wonder and appreciation for this creature truly touched my heart, over and over again for the entire day.

The TMN Annual Meeting, what an opportunity! On top of the eclipse, endless classroom sessions and field sessions... the opportunity to go behind the border wall, walk along the Rio Grande River and observe Green Jays, javelina tracks, and so much more with my new found friends will not be forgotten.

I cannot begin to imagine what tomorrow will bring... I encourage you to really look around you and see what you have been missing that is right in front of you. What will SPARK an interest in you?

# Features

## any acorn can

A poem by Alan Gann

### any acorn can

fall  
 easiest thing in the world  
 letting go can be hard but once you do  
 gravity does all the work  
 so any acorn can  
 take root  
 gather water and sunlight  
 and grow ring by ring until it  
 casts shade where  
 two young people kiss the kiss  
 that puts all other kisses  
 to shame  
 any acorn can  
 be eaten by deer or squirrel  
 digested  
 doing its part  
 another blessed and anonymous  
 thread in the universal web  
 and any acorn can  
 be kicked to the curb  
 by a student on their way  
 first day at a new school  
 all sharpened pencils and empty notebooks  
 no red-marked pages no unexcused absences  
 and perhaps a teacher who believes  
 who inspires who knows  
 any acorn can  
 get snatched up in the claws  
 of an unfettered jay and carried  
 beyond river fence and ravine  
 dropped into a fertile field  
 one day to yield delicious fruit  
 from an impossible impossible tree



### About the Author:

Alan Gann, a teaching artist-poet who facilitates writing workshops for at-risk youth. His newest collection of poems, *Better Ways to See* from Assure Press, celebrates his parents with nature and ekphrastic poems. Other publications include 2 volumes of poetry: *That's Entertainment* (Lamar University Press), and *Adventures of the Clumsy Juggler* (Inkbrush Press), plus *DaVerse Works*, a performance poetry curriculum.

(Alan Gann is Sue Yost's LLELA birding friend. He has given permission to publish in *Naturalist News*.)



# Tweet of the Month

By Sue Yost, class of 2017



It's November... it's Turkey Time!!  
No, not *THAT* turkey!

***THIS*** turkey...

The Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)



You drive past an electric transmission tower or a gnarly dead tree and see a flock of large, black birds huddled together. They are vultures. The sun is rising in the east. The vultures slowly rouse themselves, but they remain on their tall perches. They have lowered their nighttime body temperature about 6 degrees Celsius and are not quite ready to seize the day with a first flight. As the sun continues to rise above the horizon it warms the air. The Turkey Vultures outstretch the long 6' wings to dry them in the warmth of the sun. This stance is believed to serve multiple functions: drying the wings, warming the body chilled by the autumn night in addition to baking off bacteria. It is practiced more often following damp or rainy nights. The sun is well up in the sky, the vultures take flight into the air. Once airborne, high above the ground they form big circles within the boundaries of the rising column of warm, descending air. Round and round, floating tirelessly on air. These are referred to as "kettles." They sail along with the wings tilted in a V [dihedral] rocking back and forth, spreading the primary [edge] feathers like fingers scarcely flapping. With a keen eye searching the ground for a fresh roadkill from the night before.

The Turkey Vulture has a featherless red naked head and a long tail, compared to the Black Vulture that has a black naked head and short tail. The wings of a TV are slender and appear to have steel gray edge. The BV has broader wings and steel gray "fingertips."

The Turkey Vulture has few natural predators. Fledging and immature vultures may fall prey to Great Horned Owls, Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks, while eggs and nestlings may be preyed on by mammals such as raccoons and opossums. Foxes can occasionally ambush an adult but species that can climb are more likely to breach and predate nests than adults. Its life expectancy in the wild ranges upward of 16 years, with a captive life span of over 45 years being possible.

Turkey Vultures breed throughout Texas and are year around residents. The females lay 2 white eggs in a sheltered niche like a cliff, a cave, a rock crevice, a burrow, inside a hollow tree, or in a thicket. Sometimes they will nest in an abandoned building or barn loft. There is little or no construction of a nest; eggs are laid on a bare surface. Both parents share the incubation duties for 38-41 days until hatching begins. The chicks are a downy white with bare black faces. They are fed by regurgitation. At about 11 weeks they leave the nest. They stay together as a family until fall.



## Turkey Vulture (Cont.)

The Turkey Vulture forages by smell, an ability that is uncommon in the avian world, often flying low to the ground to pick up the scent of ethyl mercaptan, a gas produced by the beginnings of decay in dead animals. They also observe Black Vultures feeding and fly down to join them.

Vultures are roadkill specialists. Turkey Vultures feed exclusively on carrion. They rarely, if ever, kill prey themselves; when they do it tends to comprise small weak offspring or very sick individuals of various animals, such as bird eggs and nestlings, as well as reptiles. They can also be found near bodies of water, feeding on washed-up fish. They also will feed on fish or insects that have become stranded in shallow water. This was witnessed at LLELA as Beaver Pond slowly dried up during the summer drought. Like other vultures, it plays an important role in the ecosystem by disposing of carrion, which would otherwise be a breeding ground for disease.



Vultures are important factors in nature's sanitation department. The genus name *Cathartes* is from the Greek *kathartes* "a purifier". They gather peacefully for dinner with grunts and hissing as dinner table talk.

Vultures are very easily imprinted by humans. Permitted rehabilitation facilities must strictly limit human contact when taking care of them so they can be released back into their natural habitat.

As the sun starts to set, the earth cools and there are no more warm thermals to ride, Turkey Vultures, along with Black Vultures return to their roosting towers for the night. Another day is done. Until tomorrow.....the clean-up crew rests.

### Two fun facts I love to share. The kids love them!

#### What does a vulture do when it feels threatened?

Regurgitates its stomach contents! This primary form of defense is regurgitating semi-digested meat, a foul-smelling substance, which deters most creatures' intent on raiding a vulture nest. It will also sting if the predator is close enough to get the vomit in its face or eyes.

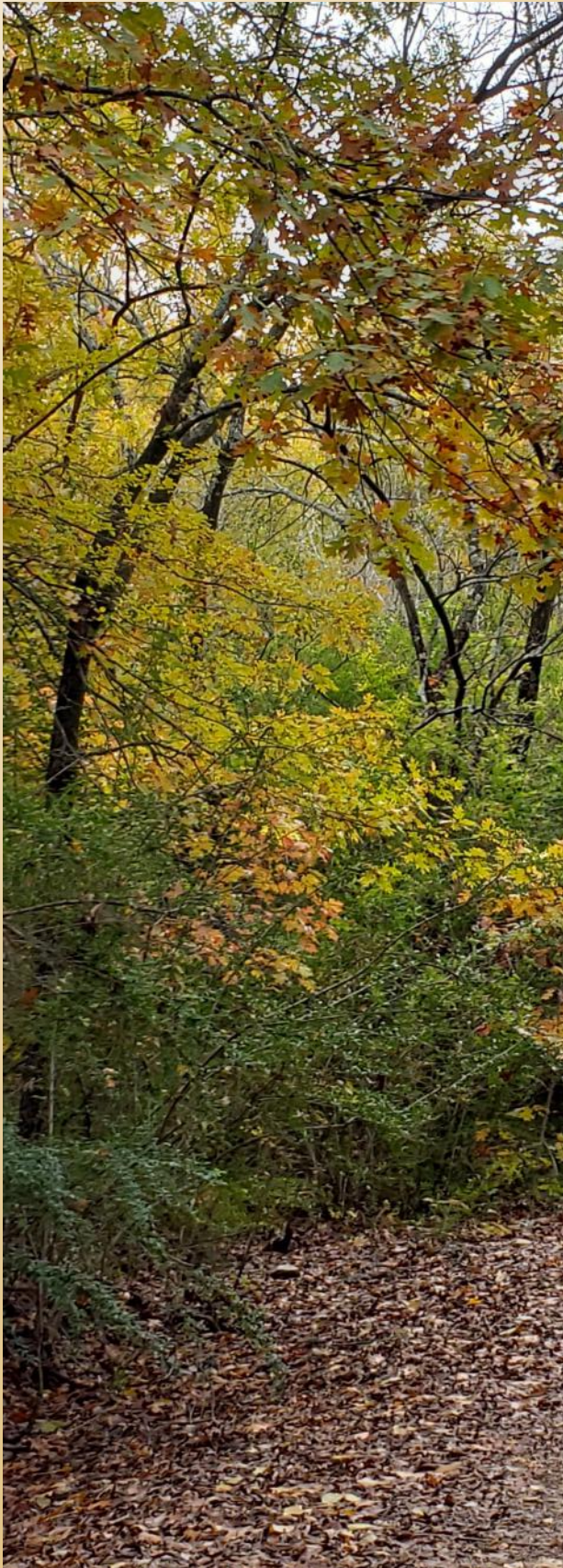
#### How does a vulture cool off?



It pees on its leg, a process known as uridrosis. It cools the blood vessels in the unfeathered tarsi and feet, and causes white uric acid to streak the legs.



# *From Fieldnotes*



## THAT CREAKING FEELING

By Missy Adair

Some of you are young, lithe, athletic. You may feel this excerpt from Field Notes is not for you. Take heed. Age and life have a way of creeping up and adding challenges to our activities. It starts with that twinge in the knee. That funny cracking noise when you stand. The ache in your back. Life experience has a way of wreaking revenge!

But you, Naturalist, will take little note. You will continue your trail walking, kid teaching, clearing, planting, etc. For some of us things get harder with age and bodily wear and tear.

My knees don't work because they are bone on bone. My back doesn't work well due to surgery, at the time of this telling my rotator cuff was torn- some of you know the agony of that! But I was on vacation in the mountains of Arkansas! The trees surged high, the mountains were small but vertical, the music of streams and rivers was everywhere.

Below, down a very steep embankment was a stream of boulders and mystery. Trees dotted the slope. I had to get to that stream and investigate! You all know that feeling- of something that calls to you and whets your appetite for adventure. But I was without the braking power of knees, the balance of a good back and with one working arm. Obviously this could be done!

I merely had to swing from tree to tree with my good arm and I could make it down. Have you ever conceived of a grand adventure in the presence of a more practical companion? One who points out that you probably will end up having to be air lifted off a mountain?

Do not be defeated Naturalists! If age, crippling disease, injury, or other obstacles stand in your path never forget you have ingenuity, personal strength, and the need for nature in your corner!

Continued ...



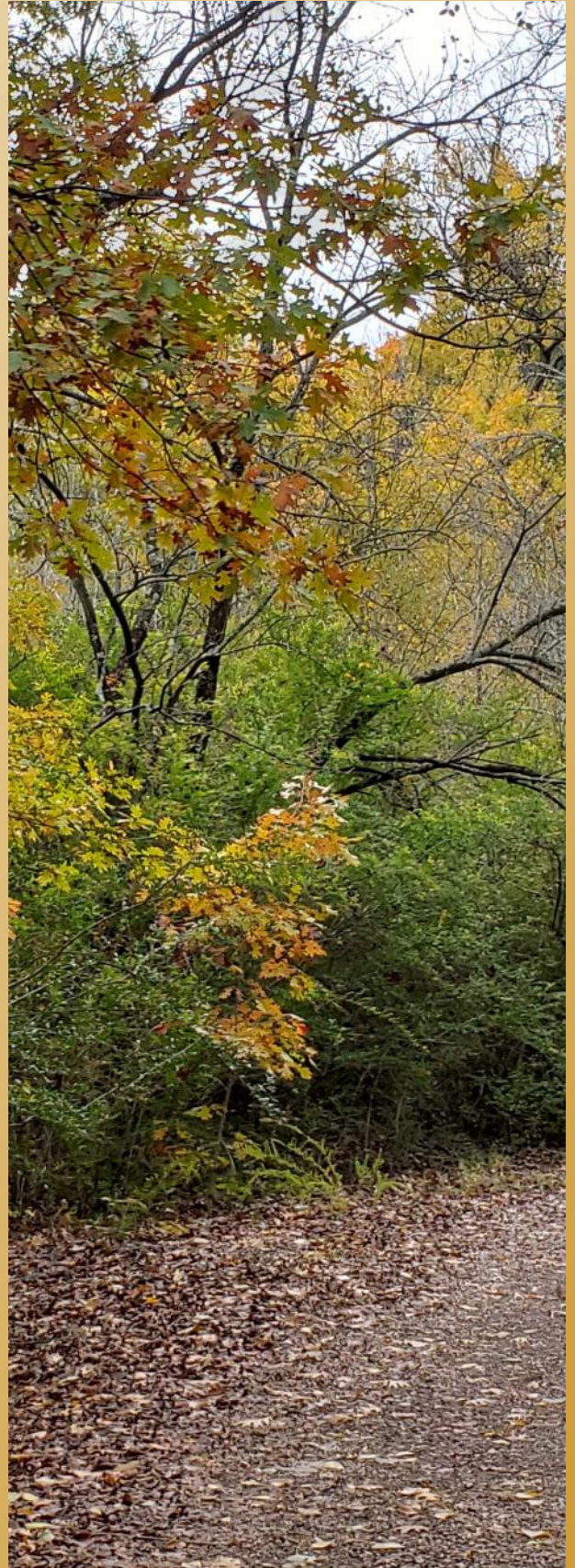


# *From Fieldnotes*

My sedate companion was convinced to help me down to the stream. It was a perilous journey with some language unfit for such beautiful surroundings, but we made it to the stream!

I gloried in the fall colors underfoot, the rushing of the stream over huge boulders, the blue sky so far up between the trees. I found no fauna and the trip back up was as painful as you are probably imagining, but I had had my nature experience. I had communed with rocks and water and touched fall colors.

There is always a way to experience nature. Maybe you'd rather sit on a porch, or in a bird blind. Maybe your adventure is less life threatening but just as magical, in a butterfly garden or pruning roses or strolling down a nature path. My point is that no amount of creaking and aching can keep the Naturalist from the power and peace of Nature!





## *This Month's Contributors*



Missy Adair



Gale Bacon



Becky Bertoni



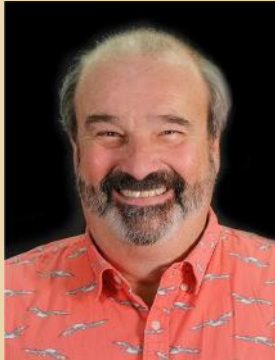
Marilyn Blanton



Regina Dale



Andrea Dixon



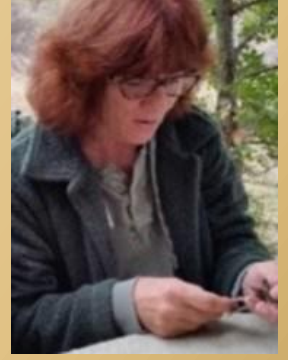
Dave Jones



Claire Kamego



Brian Lewis



Mary Morrow



Jonathan Reynolds



Susan Warren



Kathy Webb



Diane Wetherbee



Sue Yost



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](mailto:newsletter@efctmn.org)

Deadline for the December 2023 submissions is  
Wednesday, December 6th.

# *Almost the Last Word*

## *Thank You!*

The EFC Chapter would like to thank Regina Dale and her Team 25 members (Jean McMeans, Marty Newman, Kere Post, and Susan Warren) for their initial efforts gathering information and coordinating activities to celebrate our Chapter's 25 years.

A new committee will continue with this effort, so be looking for information in upcoming newsletters and Plan Your Week editions about ways you can get involved and celebrate our Chapter's history.

**The Carroll Building and AgriLife Office is closed for an indefinite period due to problems with the AC/Heater unit.**

Please contact Jade Flowers at 940-349-2883 to gain access to the building. Jade lives a distance from the office. She will be glad to drive in, if no one happens to be in the office that day, but, if possible, a day or two notice would be very helpful.

## **FINAL LAST CALL**

For nature stuff, needed for the Spring class visits at Clear Creek.

The second graders will make Nature Art using yucca and redbud seed pods, sunflower seeds, bark, sticks, mesquite bean pods and more to create works of art. We need LOTS of the above or any other natural "nature stuff" found outdoors. Also we need kids 4 foot wading pools even if it has holes and leaks.

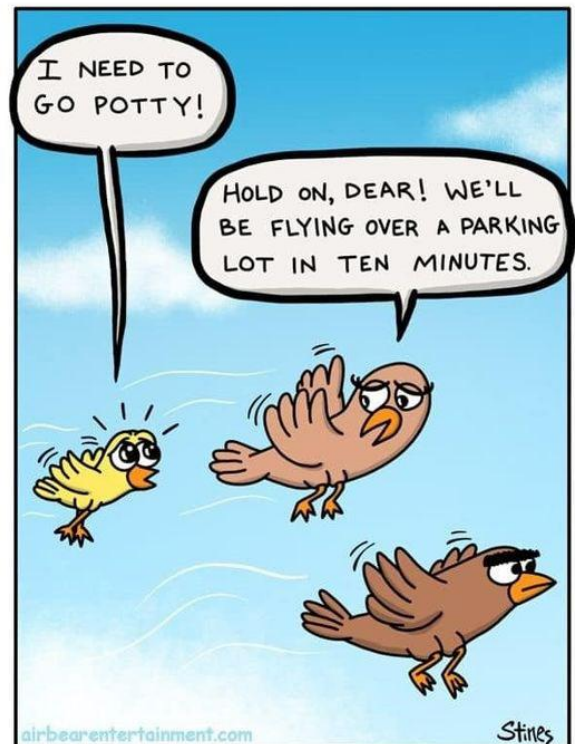
Please bring your "stuff" to me at the November 16th Master Naturalist Monthly Meeting at the Southwest Courthouse

Thank you, Claire Kamego



# Almost the Last Word

## Funny Finds from Sue Yost!



## Help Wanted

### Field Reporter Needed!

Are you looking for an exciting opportunity to get out in the field and learn about and report on all the fascinating projects that the Texas Master Naturalist Elm Fork Chapter has to offer??? Then this position is for you!

**Job Requirements:** Participation in at least one different TMNEFC project each month; take photographs of the volunteers and work being done; write a brief article describing the project; send photos and article to [newsletter@efctmn.org](mailto:newsletter@efctmn.org).

**Salary:** All time spent volunteering, reporting, and documenting counts as service hours in VMS.

It's that easy!



Wishing you all a very  
Happy Thanksgiving  
Filled with  
Family, Good Friends,  
And Food!

# Who We Are



## Texas Master Naturalist–Elm Fork Chapter

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

### OFFICERS

President - Kathy Webb

Acting Vice President - Bryan Lewis

Treasurer - Ray Kreutzfeld

Secretary - Missy McCormick

### BOARD POSITIONS

Immediate Past President – Jan Deatherage

Member-at-Large – Janet Gershenfeld

### BOARD DIRECTORS

Membership - Sharon Betty

VMS - Mike Hatch

Initial Training - Elise Spain

Communications - Karen DeVinney

Volunteer Service Projects - Larry Duncan

Advanced Training Programs - David Jones

Outreach/Adult Education - Fran Witte

New Class Representative - Christine Wayles

### CHAPTER ADVISORS

AgriLife – Zach Davis

Texas Parks and Wildlife – Mindy Shumate



### 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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