

T E X A S

Master  
Naturalist™  
Elm Fork Chapter  
1999-2024



*Celebrating*  
— 25 YEARS —

# Naturalist News

March 2024 Volume 24, Issue 3



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

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

T E X A S



*Celebrating*  
— 25 YEARS —

# Naturalist News



## Inside This Issue:

Buzz from the Board.....3

What Happened Last.....4

What Happens Next.....6

Here’s What’s New.....9

Awards and Recognition.....11

Field Notes in Focus.....13

Inside Outside News.....14

Quick Tips.....18

Projects in the Community.....20

Features.....24

Tweet of the Month.....31

25th Anniversary Special.....33

This Month’s Contributors.....37

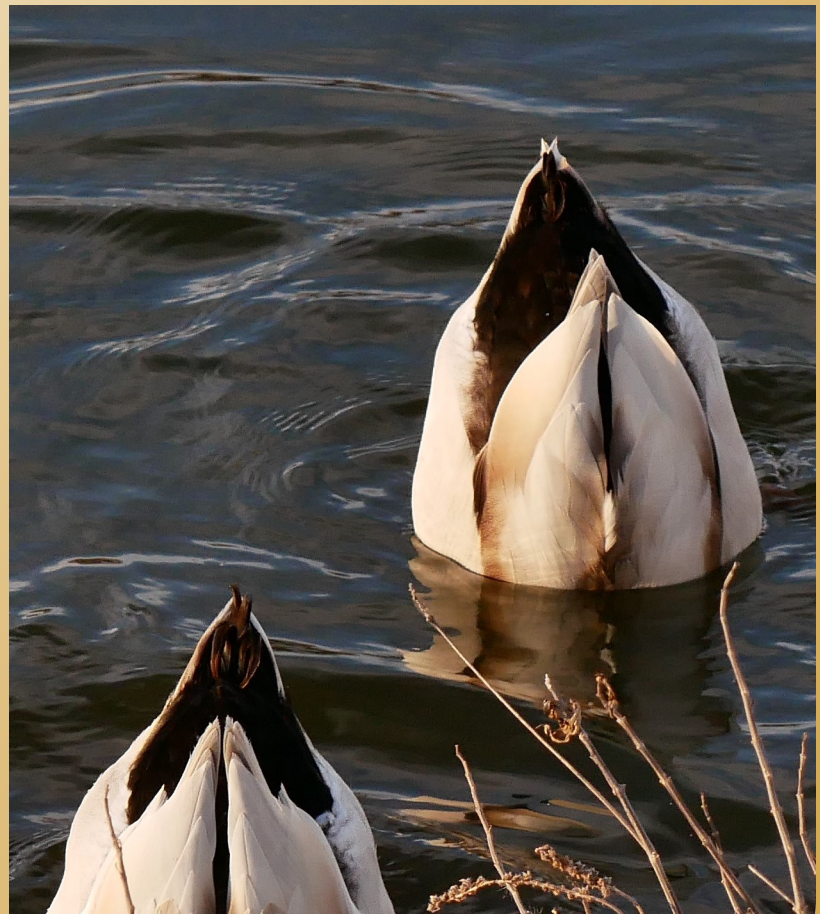
Almost Last Word.....38

Who We Are.....42



## On the Cover:

Bluebird eggs at Green Acres,  
by LeeAnn Weaver



Mallards, *Anas platyrhynchos*, by Jonathan Reynolds

# Buzz From the Board

Happy March, friends!

Each new season in Texas is interesting (and keeps us on our proverbial toes!). No matter the weather, there's a spring in our collective step as we march forth to serve our community, steward our environment, and celebrate our most favorite things.

One of our treasured service opportunities is to educate and engage the next generation of naturalists, and DISD School Days at Clear Creek is one project which allows us to do just that. Since its 2017 inception and 2018 inaugural program, we've reached tens of thousands of second and fourth graders (as well as hundreds of accompanying adults). Held at [Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center](#) in Denton, our Spring 2024 session begins on March 25<sup>th</sup> and continues through May 10<sup>th</sup>. Project Managers Elise Spain and Sharon Betty and the entire stellar team of Chapter member volunteers are prepared to welcome each busload of smiling faces, eager to learn more about the wonders of nature. With educational stations, exhibits, and presentations on a variety of topics from Native Wildflowers to Amazing Owls, every day with our young naturalists is a hoot!

And, in case you've been in the dark and don't yet know, a [total solar eclipse](#) will cross North America on April 8<sup>th</sup>. To help prepare and educate us about this rare visible occurrence, NASA's Dorian Janney will present "Eclipses 101" at our March 21<sup>st</sup> Chapter meeting. (Kudos to our Chapter's Advanced Training Director, David Jones, for securing Dorian and her timely program!) Dorian will teach us how and why NASA studies eclipses and how we can be involved in collecting eclipse data for NASA's "GLOBE Observer" citizen science program. Per usual, our monthly Chapter meetings are free and open to the public; the meeting opens with business and announcements at 9:30 am, immediately followed by our program. You're also welcome to join us for pre-meeting social time beginning at 9 am. This month, we'll gather at the Denton County Southwest Courthouse (6200 Canyon Falls Drive, Flower Mound, TX 76226). Parking is limited; car-pooling is recommended (and appreciated!).

Friends, may this spring season be full of your very favorites. Let's enjoy the great outdoors; ready, set, March!

*Kathryn*



# What Happened Last



## ***Volunteer of the Year***

### ***Carl Patrick, Class of 2005***

Carl is described as kind, calm, serious, knowledgeable, and a tireless volunteer ready to assist with or supervise the completion of the most difficult or mundane tasks needed to maintain some of our most precious natural resources, such as walking trails or prairie restorations. This master naturalist manages all tasks to maintain one of our native plant nurseries and the seedlings and plants inside, and the resulting, greatest outcome is perhaps the providing of thousands of native plants to Lewisville ISD 7th Graders for transplanting into a prairie restoration.

## ***Project of the Year:***

### ***Lewisville Extending the Green Project - Roots for Wings***

According to the March 14, 2023 issue of *Texas Monthly*, “One Texas Town is Rethinking the American Lawn.” And, a chapter project is helping. This project encourages residential property owners in Lewisville to replace non-native, water-hungry lawns with certified, mostly-native landscapes that sustain pollinators. Chapter volunteers have contributed to the creation of a pollinator-friendly demonstration garden, and assist with outreach, training, plant selection, garden design, and re-certifying gardens. Lewisville Extending the Green - Roots for Wings - a partnership with Denton County Master Gardeners Association, Native Plant Society of Texas and the City of Lewisville .

## ***Outstanding Service—Natural Resource Service***

1. Dinah Stults, Class of 2020
2. Jerry Hamby, Class of 2014
3. Leonard Chochrek, Class of 2019
4. Whit Dieterich, Class of 2022

## ***Outstanding Service—Public Understanding***

1. Diane Wetherbee, Class of 2000
2. Co-Winners Kristina Richter, Class of 2021, and Jerry Clark, Class of 2021

Continued ... 

# *What Happened Last (cont.)*



## ***Outstanding Service—Outreach and Education***

1. Elise Spain, Class of 2017
2. Scott Kiester, Class of 2003
3. Trish Reyes, Class of 2021

## ***Outstanding Service—Building Our Chapter***

1. Co-Winners - Susan Warren, Class of 2021, and Carl Patrick, Class of 2005
2. Mike Hatch, Class of 2014
3. Co-winners Karen McGraw, Class of 2015, and Susan Warren, Class of 2021
4. Betty Mullenweg, Class of 2001

## ***Most Hours—Intern***

1. Whit Dieterich, Class of 2022

## ***Most Hours—Veteran***

1. Carl Patrick, Class of 2005



# What Happens Next

## *Chapter Meeting and Presentation*

Thursday, March 21st, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Denton County Southwest Courthouse

6200 Canyon Falls Drive \* Flower Mound, TX 76226



### This Month's Presentation:

## *Eclipses 101*

By Dorian Janney



During this Zoom presentation, we will learn about solar eclipses. Find out why we had to wear solar eclipse glasses during the annular eclipse, but can remove them during totality during the upcoming, April 8, 2024, total eclipse. Learn how and why NASA studies eclipses, and find out how you can be involved in collecting eclipse data for NASA's "GLOBE Observer" citizen science program.

Dorian has a passion for sharing the wonders of NASA's science and exploration with others across all age levels! For over three decades, she taught public school in both special and general education settings across all grade levels. She was an Einstein Fellow Finalist and achieved National Board Certification in Science Education, served on numerous education working groups, and wrote science curriculum for the country. She now serves as NASA's "Global Precipitation Measurement" (GPM) mission's Education and Outreach Coordinator, and she develops resources to help share the science, technology, and real-world applications of GPM with others. She is a Mentor GLOBE trainer, a member of the GLOBE Education Working Group, and supports the GLOBE field campaigns. Her most recent project is leading an effort to engage Lifelong Learners with The GLOBE Campaign's Citizen Science efforts.



Dorian recommends anyone interested in the eclipse download the GLOBE Observer app (<https://observer.globe.gov/about/get-the-app>) to their smartphones.

# What Happens Next



## Total Solar Eclipse April 8, 2024

Here is information on two locations  
where you can view the total solar eclipse.

### 1. Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA)

Address:	201 E Jones St, Lewisville, TX 75057
Event Time:	Noon to 2:00PM
Totality Begins:	1:41PM
Totality Duration:	2 minutes & 29 seconds
LLELA Viewing Area:	Green area around Cicada Pavilion
Parking:	Cicada Pavilion Area
Bring:	Lawn chair, blanket, food, drink, etc.

Pre-registration is required for each person to receive their official CE and ISO certified sun-viewing glasses, so you can safely see the sun in all its glory. Supplies are limited and we cannot guarantee that people who are not registered will receive a pair of certified viewing glasses.

Do not miss this chance to experience this once in a lifetime event at your favorite nature preserve! This event is free with your paid \$5/vehicle entry into LLELA.

Activity Link: <https://www.llela.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/68940/3382>

Pre-registration link: <https://app.amilia.com/store/en/lewisville-tx/shop/activities/5077766?date=2024-04-08&view=month&scrollToCalendar=false>

Activities are available for those who choose to participate. Staff and volunteers are available for guided hikes, etc.

- Telescope with a solar filter for a brief peek.
- Science stations with temperature readings, photometer readings, eclipse model and animal behavior changes based on lack of light, etc.
- Passive solar viewer- make and take
- Art station- fun with shadows

Continued ... 

# What Happens Next

## Total Solar Eclipse April 8, 2024

*(Viewing Locations, Continued)*



### 2. The Flower Mound

Address:	2450 Flower Mound Road, Flower Mound, TX 75028
Event Time:	11:30AM to 2:30PM
Totality Begins:	1:41PM
Totality Duration:	2 minutes & 18 seconds
Viewing Area:	The Flower Mound
Parking:	Shopping center parking lot to the west of The Mound
Bring:	Lawn chair, blanket, food, drink, etc.

#### Activities

- This will be an informal gathering, and people are free to bring their telescopes or other viewing tools.
- We will have eclipse glasses available for purchase for a nominal fee.
- We will be collecting data for an hour or so on either side of totality through NASA's Global Observer citizen science tool.
- Master Naturalists who have an idea for a hands-on activity and who would like to host it during the event are encouraged to contact Diane Wetherbee through the Membership Directory on the Elm Fork Chapter website ASAP.
- We would love to have more learning activities for those who have gathered. We expect more adults than children, since area school districts are in session that day.
- We do not anticipate any AT, but there is an opportunity for service hours through keeping the crowd engaged, taking environmental measurements, and preparing and hosting an activity.



*Happy Viewing!*



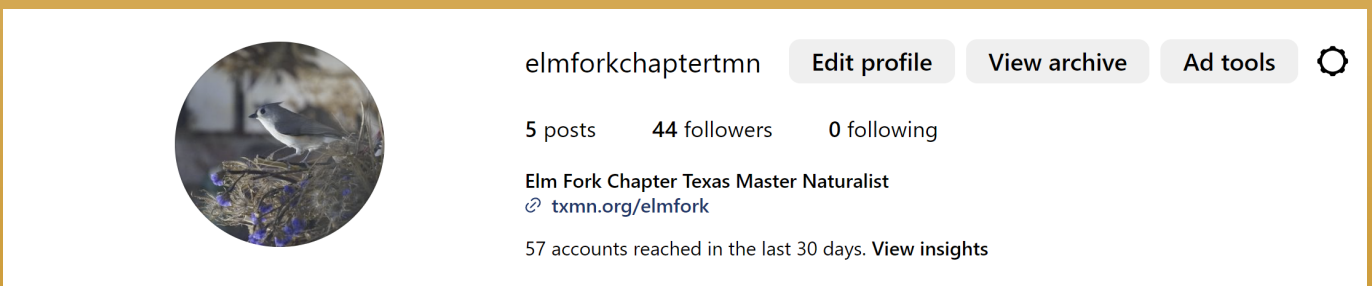
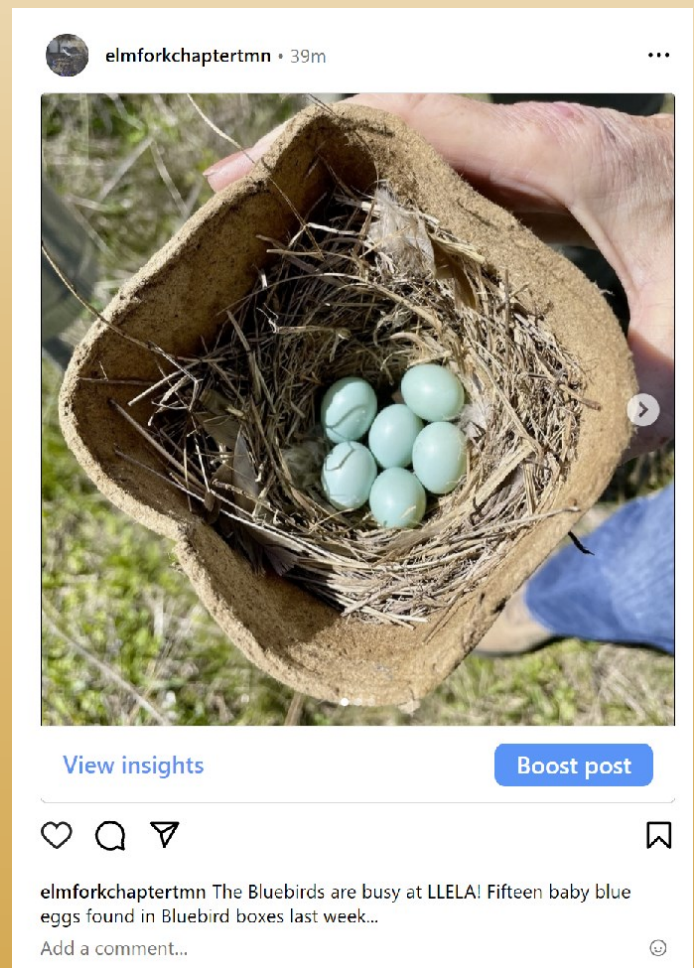
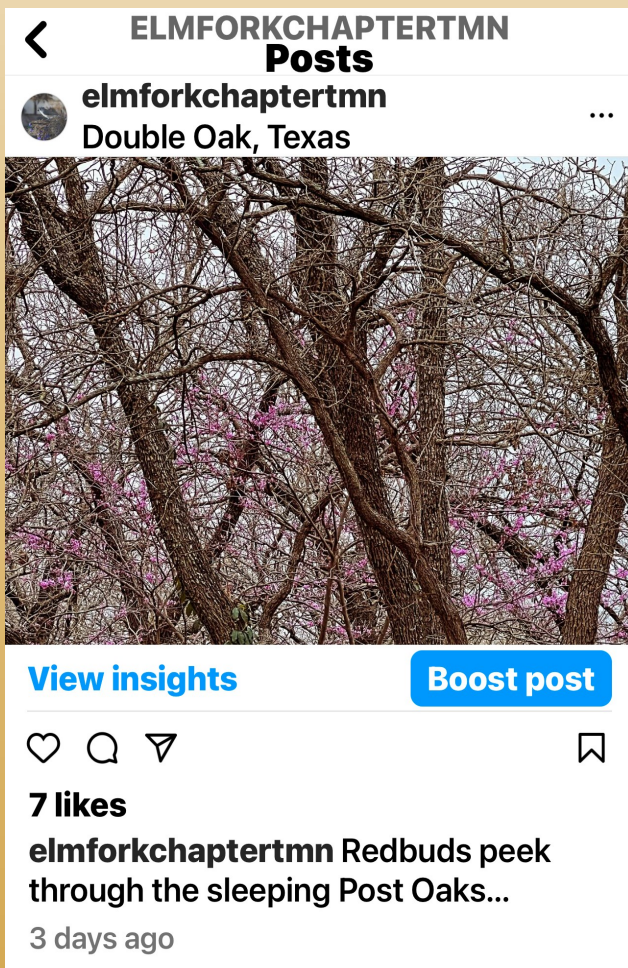
# Here's What's New



## WE ARE ON INSTAGRAM!



Please follow us and check out all the neat photos from our chapter. If you would like your project workday included please mail one to three photos to [socialmediateam@efctmn.org](mailto:socialmediateam@efctmn.org).



# Here's What's New

## At Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center...



### New Bird Blind

By Clay Thurmond

Dan Brockett, City of Denton Parks and Recreation, CCNHC Maintenance, has replaced the proof-of-concept PVC framed bird blind with a sturdy wooden structure with two viewing windows, built-in seating, and a tin roof. He hauled in rock from the mountain bike park to create a pool in the small stream that runs in front of the blind and installed a solar powered fountain that will help attract birds. A couple of feeders supplement the available food.

The temporary blind received a lot of visitors who left positive comments, observations, and drawings in a notebook that was left there for that purpose. This new blind will certainly thrill them and make for an even better experience.

Dan wanted this to be a surprise and it was totally unexpected. Now we need a sign to go on it: "*Dan's Blind*".

Thank you so much, Dan!



# Awards and Recognition

## February 2024

### Initial Certifications

Brandy Gibson	Class of 2023
Wylie Harris	Class of 2023



### Recertifications

Toni Benjamin	Class of 2015
Pam Bennett	Class of 2019
Becky Bertoni	Class of 2015
Sharon Betty	Class of 2018
Dale Denton	Class of 2019
Hilton Dickerson	Class of 2009
Whit Dieterich	Class of 2022
Jane Duke	Class of 2009
Larry Duncan	Class of 2018
Jeanne Erickson	Class of 1998
Hugh Franks	Class of 2019
Jim Gerber	Class of 2019
Jerry Hamby	Class of 2014
Scott Kiester	Class of 2003
Carl Parsons	Class of 2023
Michele Rawleigh	Class of 2018
Ginny Richards	Class of 2022
Christine Wayles	Class of 2022
Fran Witte	Class of 2017
Sue Yost	Class of 2017



# Awards and Recognition

## February 2024

### 250 Hour Milestone

<i>Samra (Sam) Bufkins</i>	<i>Class of 2023</i>
<i>Kristina Richter</i>	<i>Class of 2021</i>
<i>Chris Teves</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>



### 1000 Hour Milestone

<i>Barbara Beane</i>	<i>Class of 2018</i>
<i>Sharon Clark</i>	<i>Class of 2014</i>
<i>Kaye Jackson</i>	<i>Class of 2015</i>
<i>Tammie Walters</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>



### 2000 Hour Milestone

<i>Sarah Goodrich</i>	<i>Class of 2016</i>
<i>Sandra LaQuey</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>



### 6000 Hour Milestone

<i>Carl Patrick</i>	<i>Class of 2010</i>
---------------------	----------------------



# Congratulations!

# *Field Notes in Focus*



Northern Flicker, by Jonathan Reynolds

# Inside Outside News

## Approved AT



**YOU ARE  
INVITED!**

### MONTHLY PLANNING MEETING ADVANCED TRAINING/CONTINUING ED

**DATE: THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2024**

**TIME: 9:30 A.M.—11:30 A.M.**

**LOCATION: AGRILIFE OFFICE**

**HULCHER COMPLEX**

**611 KIMBERLY DRIVE #114**

**DENTON 76208**

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

**FOLLOWED BY AT/CE**

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

For more information, please contact Tammie Gurley, Sharon Betty or Marion Arndt at [sciencewithattitude@gmail.com](mailto:sciencewithattitude@gmail.com)



## The BUZZ on bees



This month's training will focus on Texas Native Bees.  
Presenter: Kathryn Wells, Denton County Master Gardener  
Elm Fork Chapter Texas Master Naturalist

### *Did you know?*

- ⇒ Hundreds of species of bees are swarming around here in north Texas. The majority of these native bees are solitary and do not produce honey.
- ⇒ These buzz-worthy insects pollinate close to their nest, so planting native shrubs, trees, and ornamentals could invite them to stay. Because solitary bees carry pollen all over their bodies, these beneficial bugs are actually 100 times more effective at pollinating than honey bees.
- ⇒ Native bees are also better at pollinating some of the most beloved backyard crops — including tomatoes, blueberries and pumpkins — making them the heroes of home gardeners everywhere!
- ⇒ Since solitary bees don't have a hidden stash of honey to protect, these bees are generally non-aggressive, unless threatened.

# Inside Outside News

## Approved AT



### Soil Testing & Microscope Analysis Workshop at Beulah Acres

Wednesday, March 27th, 1:30–3:30 PM

By Jane Duke



In case you missed the workshop at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center last month, here's another chance! You will learn how to use a basic microscope, make sample dilutions and scan the slide to determine the abundance or lack of bacteria, fungal and other microbiology which may indicate a lack of oxygen in the soil. There will be 5 microscopes set up and we will work in teams of 3. Workshop is limited to 15. Please register on sign-up genius.

[Sign Up Here](#)



Enjoy learning about improving water quality, water quantity, conservation practices, water law, and aquatic habitats. Join us throughout the year for FREE.

- **Thursday, April 18 @ 6:30-7:30 PM CT** - Judy K. Adams, Division Manager, Jose Armando Garza, Water Treatment Manager, & Jacob Galvan with Brownsville Public Utilities Board; Southmost Regional Water Authority
  - \* *Desalination: Southmost Regional Water Authority Brackish Groundwater Treatment Facility*
  - \* [Register](#)
- **Thursday, May 16 @ 6:30-7:30 PM CT** - Michael J. Bodenchuk, Texas State Director, with USDA APHIS WS
  - \* Feral Pigs and Water Issues
  - \* [Register](#)

Visit the [Texas Waters](#) webpage for information on becoming a certified [Texas Waters Specialist](#) and view recorded webinars from 2017-2023.

\*Note: Texas Water Webinars AT: Texas Waters Certification Training

# Inside Outside News

## Approved AT

### Native Prairie Association Texas, Jeff Quayle Led Hikes

Please email reservations for all hikes  
to Jeff Quayle at: [squaylei2000@gmail.com](mailto:squaylei2000@gmail.com)

#### Marion Sansom Park

Tuesday, March 26th, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

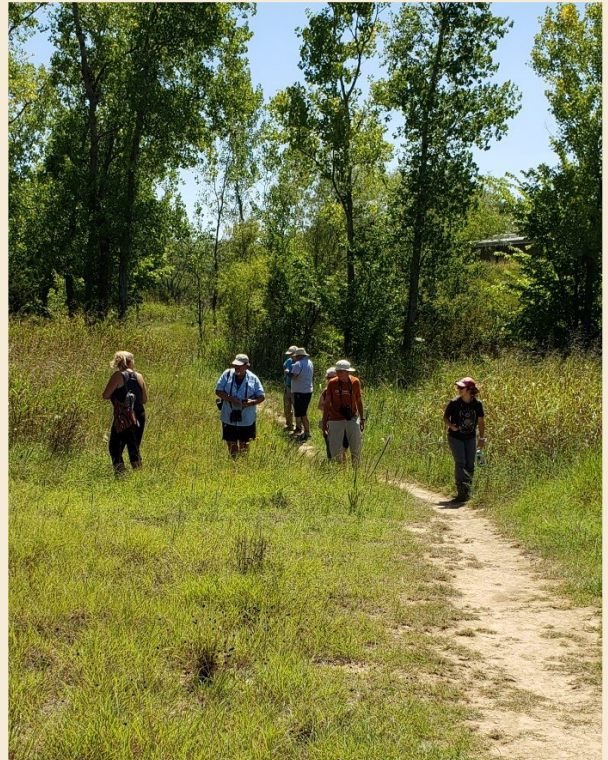
2501 Roberts Cut Off Road

Fort Worth, TX 76114

[www.fortworthtexas.gov/departments/parks/parks-and-trails/marion-sansom-park](http://www.fortworthtexas.gov/departments/parks/parks-and-trails/marion-sansom-park)

\*Optional lunch afterwards at Navajo Burgers  
(7028 Navajo Trail, Fort Worth, TX 76135)

Register here: [www.texasprairie.org/event/marion-sansom-park-hike/](http://www.texasprairie.org/event/marion-sansom-park-hike/)



#### Kachina Prairie Tour (organized by TPWD biologist Taylor Garrison)

Thursday, March 28th, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Intersection of W Baldrige St and Kachina Pr Rd on the NW side of Ennis, TX

Google Pin: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/VkGYZaUmZCLsW8kG7>

#### Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center

Tuesday, April 2nd, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

1206 FM 1382

Cedar Hill, TX 75104

[www.dogwood.audubon.org](http://www.dogwood.audubon.org)

See the Elm Fork Chapter [Calendar](#) for more exciting hikes led by  
Jeff Quayle, NPAT Fieldtrip Leader, or go to [Fort Worth Chapter - NPAT \(texasprairie.org\)](http://FortWorthChapter-NPAT.texasprairie.org)



# Inside Outside News

## Volunteer Opportunities

### Great American Cleanup in Denton

Saturday, March 23, 2024

8:00 a.m.

Welcome to Keep Denton Beautiful's 36<sup>th</sup> Annual [Great American Clean-up](#), Denton's largest and longest-running community clean up. Cleanups will begin at 9 a.m. at locations around Denton, followed by a volunteer appreciation party from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Denton Civic Center/ Quakertown Park (321 E. McKinney St.). The volunteer party will include a free lunch, music, and entertainment.



Walk-up registration is available at the Denton Civic Center on March 23 at 8 a.m.

More information about the event and registration can be found at [Denton's Great American Cleanup](#).

When entering your hours in VMS, use project [P210212:RM: Community Cleanup Events](#) and indicate KDB Great American Cleanup in the box that describes your service or training.



### DISD School Days at Clear Creek Spring 2024

School Days, a project of the Elm Fork Master Naturalists and with DCAMC, begins on March 25 and will run through May 10. We will host the Denton ISD second graders, their teachers and many parents and grandparents. Please join us at Clear Creek from 9:00-1:30 any day that you are able. All ability levels are welcome and on-the-job training is available—it takes about two minutes.

Please consider coming. We will need 10 volunteers daily and will see about 2500 students by May 10.

Click here to sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040C49A4A62BAB9-48198088-denton#/>

For more information contact: Elise Spain or Sharon Betty through [projects@efctmn.org](mailto:projects@efctmn.org), or through the Membership Directory in the Members Area of the Elm Fork Chapter website.

See the [Elm Fork Chapter Website](#) and [Calendar](#) for MORE volunteer and Advanced Training opportunities!

# Website Quick Tips

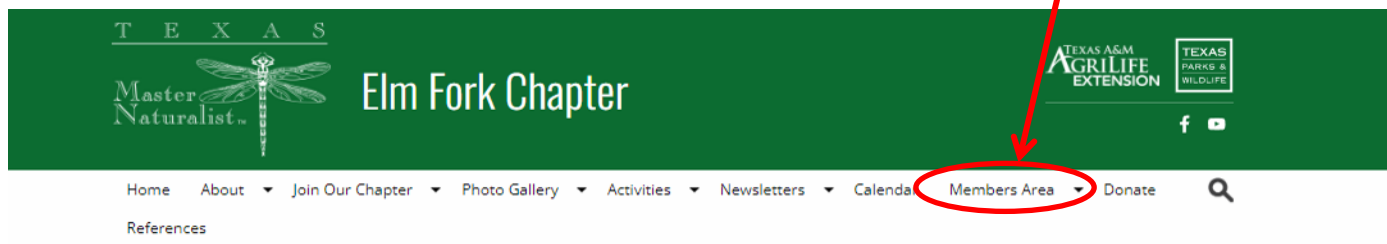


Here's Another Refresher... *From Andrea Dixon*

*Curious about who shares your interests and hobbies? Or who is knowledgeable in specific subject matter? Our member photo directory can help!*

## Access the Photo Directory

- ◆ From our website: <https://txmn.org/elmfork/members-area/>, visit the Members Area page (type in the website password, if prompted).



- ◆ Scroll down to the **Membership Directories** section and click on [Photo Directory](#)

**Membership Directories**


Information in the membership directories are **only** to be used for TMN-EFC business. Directory information should not be used for business or personal use.

- [Photo Directory and Photo Directory Search Criteria](#)
- [2023 Membership Roster](#) (April 2023)
- [Training Class Photos](#) (Aug 2023)
- [2023 Training Class Roster](#)

- ◆ In the select box, choose how to search. For example, by Last Name, First Name, Subject Matter Interests, etc.

**PROTECTED: PHOTO DIRECTORY**

T E X A S



Master Naturalist  
Elm Fork Chapter

(select)

- First Name
- Nickname
- Last Name
- City
- County
- Class
- Subject Matter Interests
- Personal Hobbies and Interests
- Administrative Interests
- Other Organizations

(select) ▾

SEARCH CLEAR

Continued ... 

# Website Quick Tips

- ◆ Next, type a search keyword in the light gray box and press the search button.

For example, this search would return a list of members interested in birds. Be sure to scroll down the page to see the search results.

The screenshot shows a search interface. At the top is the label 'Search:'. Below it is a dropdown menu currently set to 'Subject Matter Interests'. Underneath the dropdown is a text input field containing the word 'Birds'. At the bottom of the form are two dark buttons labeled 'SEARCH' and 'CLEAR'.

- ◆ To view a list of subject matter interests, personal hobbies, and other interests, click on [Photo Directory Search Criteria](#).

The screenshot shows a section titled 'Membership Directories'. Below the title is a disclaimer: 'Information in the membership directories are **only** to be used for TMN-EFC business. Directory information should not be used for business or personal use.' Below this is a bulleted list of links. The link 'Photo Directory Search Criteria' is circled in red, and a red arrow points from the circle to the text in the adjacent list item.

- [Photo Directory and Photo Directory Search Criteria](#)
- [2023 Membership Roster \(April 2023\)](#)
- [Training Class Photos \(Aug 2023\)](#)
- [2023 Training Class Roster](#)

- ◆ A downloadable/printable PDF version of the search criteria list will open.

**Photo Directory Search Criteria**

*Search for any word on this list, except words within parentheses*

<b>Subject Matter Interests</b>	<b>Personal Hobbies and Interests</b>
Trees (and shrubs)	Art (drawing; painting; illustration)
Forbs (flowering plants; wildflowers)	Crafts (sewing; pottery)
Grasses (and grasslike plants)	Fishing
Mosses (and lichen)	Gardening
Bees	Hiking
Butterflies (and moths)	Photography (nature)
Dragonflies (and Damselflies)	Rainwater (harvesting)
Macroinvertebrates	Recycling (composting)
(Other) Insects	Woodworking
<i>Water birds</i>	
Perching (tree-clinging) birds	<b>Administrative Interests</b>
Hawks (and owls)	Admin (and Membership Support)
Upland (ground) birds	(Communications) Writing
<i>Mammals</i>	(Communications) Graphic Design
<i>Frogs (and salamanders)</i>	(Communications) Photography
<i>Turtles</i>	(Community) Outreach
<i>Lizards</i>	Finance
<i>Snakes</i>	Fundraising
<i>Paleontology</i>	Teaching and Training
<i>Geology</i>	
<i>Forest ecology</i>	<b>Other Organizations</b>
<i>Prairie ecology</i>	Citizen Forester
<i>Wetland ecology</i>	Denton County Master Gardeners (DCMGA)
<i>Land conservation</i>	Friends of LLELA
<i>Water conservation</i>	Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT)

# Projects in the Community

## New Project: Bats, Bats and More Bats!

By Samra Bufkins and Mary Morrow

The newest project taken on by the Elm Fork Chapter is the Acoustic Bat Monitoring Project, recently approved by the board of directors. This project is part of the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat), a multi-agency, multi-national initiative to monitor bat populations across North America. This is the first year for the project in Texas, and is a citizen science project for Texas Master Naturalists, in partnership with Texas Nature Trackers of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.


Bats are good bioindicators for monitoring overall ecosystem health because of their longevity and their sensitivity to changes in their environment that may also affect other organisms.

There are eight species of bats (see sidebar) already documented in the three counties served by the Elm Fork Chapter, with three of those designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). This multi-year project will give researchers a better idea of the habits and range of the more than thirty species of bats in Texas as well as improved understanding of relationships to landscape features, resources and conditions that stress their populations.

The project will entail placing acoustic monitors on pre-selected sites to monitor bat activities over four nights from late April through June or July. The monitors will be moved weekly to another pre-selected site. The data will be uploaded for analysis using Kaleidoscope analytic software by Wildlife Acoustics. Training on this software can be found at <https://training.wildlifeacoustics.com/>.

In addition to data analysts, the project will need volunteers to deliver and install the electronic monitors and then relocate them to another site after 5 days throughout the study period.


In the initial year of the project the sites will be chosen by the TNT team based on the grids developed by the NABat coordinators. As



Eastern Red bat  
*Lasiurus borealis*



Mexican Free-Tailed bat  
*Tadarida brasiliensis*



Evening bat  
*Nycticeius humeralis*



Silver-Haired bat  
*Lasionycteris noctivagans*



Big Brown bat  
*Eptesicus fuscus*



## Bats, Bats and More Bats! (cont.)

the project grows, additional sites will be added, including some on private property.

If you are interested in the project contact Mary Morrow (Class of 2014) and Samra (Sam) Bufkins (Class of 2023), co-project managers.


You can watch the Texas Nature Trackers January 23rd presentation on the TMN Tuesday website, or view the slides at <https://txmn.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Acoustic-Monitoring-of-Texas-Bats-A-Citizen-Science-Project-for-TMNs-.pdf>

Another source of information can be found at <https://www.nabatmonitoring.org/>. Texas Master Naturalists interested in participating in the project are encouraged to read A Plan for the North American Bat Monitoring Program chapters 1-4 (background) and chapters 6, 8 and 9 (data processing).


There will be several training opportunities for data analysis, information provided if you are interested in this part of the project.

AT credit is available for all training associated with the project, except review of the PDF slides. AT: Project Specific, P240208, Bat Monitoring Project.


Three Species of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) status found in Denton, Wise and Cooke Counties



Hoary bat  
*Lasiurus cinereus*  
(SGCN Status S3 Vulnerable)



Tricolored bat  
*Perimyotis subflavis*  
(SGCN Status S2, Imperiled)



Seminole bat  
*Lasiurus seminolus*  
(SGCN Status S3 Vulnerable)



# Projects in the Community

## *New at Green Acres*

*From Becky Bertoni*

### Screech Owl Box

At the end of January Green Acres put up a screech owl box. The bird box was donated by Mary Strickland, and the 15 foot telescoping pole was donated by Flower Mound Wild Birds Unlimited. Jim Gerber installed the telescoping pole, and he will be maintaining this box. We are grateful for our donors--thank you Mary and Criss!

So far it is only attracting a bird building a nest--still hoping for an owl tenant this season.



### Native Bee Boxes

On February 25, Boy Scout Graham held the installation of 5 native bee boxes at Green Acres. Graham worked with Jim Gerber on good box design and orientation. The boxes are designed to be easy to maintain, and Jim will be doing that work. Many thanks to Graham and Jim for this project that enhances what we do at Green Acres!



# Projects in the Community

## The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition

The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition is displayed for the month of March in Denton's three public libraries. All of the award-winning pictures are displayed. The artwork brightens the libraries and makes everyone smile, including the volunteers. We had a lot of fun hanging all those pictures!

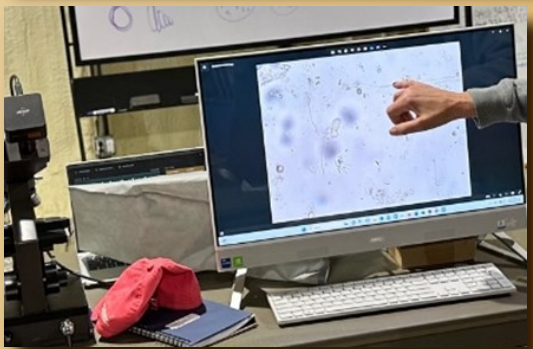
The Patterson-Appleton Arts Center is also hosting an exhibit now in their Festival Hall. Their exhibit will be in place until April 19.

The Appreciation Reception to honor the fourth grade students and their art teachers that participated in the Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition will be held on April 24 at the DISD Professional Development Center. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us! All of the 837 pictures of Texas native plants made by fourth grade students for the Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition will be displayed at the reception. The best of show entries will be framed. There will also be other displays and refreshments. We can always use more volunteers. We're busy now preparing for the reception. Hundreds attend the reception. For more information contact Marilyn Blanton.

To view a video of the exhibition, click on [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1omGMDKYCcrTm6LttFVsz3-ZEeYhaWyJ?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1omGMDKYCcrTm6LttFVsz3-ZEeYhaWyJ?usp=drive_link)



# Features



## Learning to Manage the Soil as an Ecosystem

By Jane Duke

Eighteen soil enthusiasts braved the late spring storm on Thursday 2/29 to study the soil ecosystem at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center (CCNHC). With test tubes in hand, members pipetted water into a sample of soil, shook off the bio-organisms, and examined a drop of the solution on a slide under the microscope. The members were excited at identifying amoeba, bacteria, fungi, and other protozoa at 400X power in compost. One group found a bacteria-feeding nematode (good guy) squirming to get free from under the cover slip on the slide. Another group found an arthropod, which in the food cycle eats the nematodes and fungi, who eat the protozoa and bacteria, who eat the organic matter and provide the nutrients for the plant. We discussed the soil food web and how the ecosystem keeps the soil biology in check to support the particular plants - bacteria for annual weeds and grasses and more fungi for perennials, shrubs and trees.

After the rain stopped, we collected soil samples along with pH and temperature readings from the CCNHC prairie, the controlled burn and garden areas, and pocket prairie. We talked about plans to slow water down, stop erosion on the prairie and remove compaction. There was no difference in the average soil temperature (57F) and pH (5.6) of the 3 samples; however, there were differences in the fungi to bacteria ratio with the most found in the pocket prairie, followed by the grassland prairie, garden, and burned area.

Note that the microscopes we used are now stored in the center at Clear Creek and are available for members to check-out to do their own project or home analysis.

You may ask what is the purpose of this exercise for Master Naturalists? When approaching any area for restoration, you must first slow water down so your improvements are not washed away by a heavy storm. You also need to test and remove any soil compaction so roots can grow deep into a biology rich aerobic environment thus requiring less water. Then decide the needs of the plants you want to grow. Next, sample your soil and sample the compost amendments you plan to use to create the right ecosystem to achieve healthy plants adapted for the bio-organisms you have introduced.

We all had fun.



# Features



Wanda Odum

## Tell Me Something I Don't Already Know

By Wanda Odum

“Would that I could” enlighten you about the northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*). However, try as I may I am hard pressed to add any new information about the bird. So maybe I can just remind you of a few things.

Cardinals are beautiful and very visible birds. It is thrilling to get a glimpse of red in trees or bushes or hear its familiar song early in spring. They are easy to spot because of their plumage. We often see them pictured against a backdrop of snow around the Holidays or in illustrations on Valentine's Day. Sightings by early Europeans gave the bird its name because they were reminded of the red robes and caps worn by Roman Catholic cardinals. A group of northern cardinals can even be referred to as a college, conclave, or Vatican ([Audubon.org/news/10-fun-facts-about-northern-cardinal](http://Audubon.org/news/10-fun-facts-about-northern-cardinal)).

Cardinals may show up where there is dense low cover - backyards, parks, forests, swamps and deserts. They



## Tell Me Something I Don't Already Know (cont.)

thrive in towns and suburbs and are the state bird in seven states. Cardinals are territorial in the breeding season during which time males establish and defend their territory through song. However, they can be flexible in their social behavior. For example, in the breeding season each pair defends its own territory and chases away other cardinals; but after breeding season they may be more tolerant of others.

Nests are built low, maybe 4-8 feet off the ground. Since cardinals generally stay in the same area, some may start laying eggs as early as February. It takes three to nine days to build the nest where the female lays three-four grayish, grayish white or greenish white eggs with brown speckles. Incubation periods are 11-13 days and young are fed spiders and insects almost exclusively by both parents for the next 25-56 days. (TP&W)

Cardinals can sing more than 24 different songs. Most common among them is "What cheer! What cheer! What cheer!" The female cardinal sings duets with her mate during courtship and while she's on the nest.

According to Cornell Lab of Ornithology female cardinals are among the female North American songbirds that sing. They can often be heard singing to communicate to their mate to return and bring food for the family

The human larynx can produce only one sound at a time. However, a bird's syrinx (the vocal organ of birds located at the base of a bird's trachea) is a paired structure that allows birds to sing complex, fast-paced songs. The left side of the Northern Cardinal's syrinx produces the lower pitch portion of the sweeping notes, while the right side produces the higher pitch portion. (<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/built-to-sing-the-syrinx-of-the-northern-cardinal/>)

My undergrad degree is in speech pathology and audiology, and I remember a course in which we listened to, and analyzed bird song. Hearing the voice of a cardinal always brought a smile.

Another observation that I was reminded of is that cardinals are among the group of birds who practice "anting":

*A bird draws its wings forward in front of the head and swings its tail around to the far right or left. Both wing and tail feathers are then rubbed with ants held in the bird's beak* (Hannah Carrington Revis, Old Dominion University Biological Sciences Theses & Dissertation).

It is not known for certain why they do this as scientists disagree on it. Possibly the behavior transfers the ants' secretions to the bird's body and the ants' formic acid helps the bird to control feather-mites and other parasites; or it might be that the birds use this method to sooth irritated skin much like a person uses body lotion. ([www.birdnote.org](http://www.birdnote.org) & [georgiawildlife.com](http://georgiawildlife.com))

The northern cardinal's brilliant plumage and sweet songs made it a popular cage bird in the 1800s. It is now protected in the U.S. by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and other legislation <https://abcbirds.org/bird/northern-cardinal/>.

Did you learn anything new? Probably not but in the process of writing this article I was reminded of a few things. Maybe you were too. Remember to watch for the "red." It might just make your day!

Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all.

*Emily Dickenson*



# Features

## Heritage Wildscape Park- A Wildflower Haven

By Jerry Hamby



Atlantic Camas (or Wild Hyacinth)

Before European settlement, tallgrass, shortgrass, and mixed grass prairies covered one third of North America (more than 240 million acres), stretching from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, but today only one to four percent of native prairie remains. Beginning with the Western Expansion of the nineteenth century and continuing with agricultural, urban, and suburban development, humans have systematically altered the landscape, destroying complex ecosystems in the process. In addition to preserving the land itself, citizen scientists need to share their knowledge of these unique environments. The more people understand the value of prairies, the more likely those spaces will be protected for future generations. In North Central Texas, there are several prairie remnants—pristine areas undisturbed by development—but places such as the LBJ National Grassland and Clymer Meadow Preserve are not convenient access points for most people.

Fortunately, smaller remnants can be found in urban and suburban settings, including one within the city limits of Decatur, thirty miles west of Denton. Heritage Wildscape Park covers less than two acres and is located one mile south of the Wise County Courthouse. It is across the street from the Wise County Heritage Museum, which was destroyed by fire in March 2023 and which, presumably, lent its name to the park. I first learned about the site last April when self-taught botanist and Texas Master Naturalist Jeff Quayle posted photos of native wildflowers on social media following an exploratory trip. He described the location as a “limestone remnant.” Indeed, the most robust wildflowers growing there—Wright's skullcap (*Scutellaria wrightii*), Texas sage (*Salvia texana*), and Texas stork's bill (*Erodium texanum*), among others—are native plants that thrive on limestone foundations.



Wright's Skullcap

Inspired by Jeff's discoveries, I went to Heritage Wildscape Park five times between mid-April and late June, taking friends and fellow master naturalists with me. During our stops we focused on identifying native wildflowers. A late April visit coincided with the annual City Nature Challenge, sponsored by iNaturalist, and gave me the opportunity to identify more than forty species of native plants. Over the course of my five visits, I uploaded 126 observations and noted subtle changes in the blooming cycles of many native species.



## Heritage Wildscape Park-A Wildflower Haven (cont.)

The first time I visited the park, the brilliantly blue flowers of Atlantic camas (*Camassia scilloides*) were visible in several spots, but two weeks later, the blooms were mostly spent, replaced by dark green seed pods. Similarly, the fringed bluestars (*Amsonia ciliata*) were prominent only during my first visit. One of the reasons I returned was to see the Barbara's-buttons (*Marshallia caespitosa*) come into flower. Their spherical blooms are made up of tiny florets that appear green at first but eventually turn white to pink. The first time I observed this species in the field (two years ago), I was told that it was named after former First Lady Barbara Bush, who spotted it blooming on a plant walk. When she asked what the flowers were called, the leader of the walk supposedly dubbed them Barbara's-buttons on the spot. Much as one might want the story to be true, the reality is that the common name first appeared in print as early as 1933.

Carolina woollywhite (*Hymenopappus scabiosaeus*) is another prairie plant that covers a large area of Heritage Wildscape Park, and like Barbara's-buttons, its flowering heads are made up of dozens of disc florets. This plant looks similar to another species in its genus, the smaller and interestingly named old plainsman (*Hymenopappus artemisiifolius*).

One of the first prairie plants I observed in North Texas was flat-head rabbit tobacco (*Diaperia prolifera*), another species whose common name appealed to me. On my first visit to the park, I saw it growing in dry open areas. Because the small green to silvery flower heads maintain their structure after dying back, they are easily spotted year round. While the origin of its common name is unclear, this annual herb has long been used medicinally, particularly for respiratory ailments.



Barbara's-Buttons



Carolina Woollywhite Growing on Limestone



Flathead Rabbit Tobacco



Jerry Hamby and Ginny Richards at Heritage Wildscape Park (Photo by Susan Hamby)

When I tell people about the park, I am often asked about the best time to visit. The blooms are impressive throughout April, but I observed the most colorful variations near the end of the month. On April 28th, during the City Nature Challenge, Ginny Richards, who, like my wife Susan and me, is a member of the Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists, explored the park with us. One of the photos I took that day emphasizes an explosion



## Heritage Wildscape Park-A Wildflower Haven (cont.)



Engelmann Daisies and Stiff Greenthreads



Stiff Greenthreads in Various Blooming Stages



Dodder Covering Texas Stork's Bil

of yellow blooms. Kneeling low to the ground, I focused on a cluster of Engelmann or cutleaf daisies (*Engelmannia peristenia*) in the foreground. Beyond them were dozens of Texas yellow stars (*Lindheimeria texana*) and stiff greenthreads (*Thelesperma filifolium*); the yellow rays and reddish discs of the latter are easily identifiable even when out of focus.

Late April is also when I spotted cobaea beardtongue (*Penstemon cobaea*), a popular springtime flower found throughout North Texas. On the day I saw it, the large light purple tubular flowers stood out among the surrounding asters.

In late May, I observed even more species, including diamond-flowers (*Stenaria nigricans*), black prairie clover (*Dalea frutescens*), and trailing rhatany (*Krameria lanceolata*), a plant that some people consider a nuisance. It produces delicate reddish blooms before putting on spiny fruits that also give the plant the common name of prairie sandbur. I learned quickly to be careful where I knelt while taking photos.



Cobaea (or Prairie) Beardtongue

One of the strangest plants I observed at the park was a native species of dodder (genus *Cuscuta*), a parasitic plant that attaches itself to a host plant's vascular system if it provides beneficial food. I spotted orange stems of dodder covering a patch of Texas stork's bill and Texas sage, both of which were still thriving.

The most stunning wildflowers in the park were the paintbrushes, a genus that includes approximately 200 spe-



## Heritage Wildscape Park-A Wildflower Haven (cont.)



Purple Paintbrush



Lemon Paintbrush



Purple Paintbrush (Pink Variety)

cies. Unlike dodder, which relies on other plants to survive, paintbrushes are hemiparasites, drawing nutrients from the roots of other plants but capable of photosynthesis and, therefore, surviving on their own. In the past five years, I have uploaded fifty paintbrush observations on iNaturalist, mostly of Texas paintbrush (*Castilleja indivisa*). It is the bright orange to red leaf-like bracts, not the flowers, that provide such vivid colors. At Heritage Wildscape Park, however, I discovered two varieties of purple paintbrush (*Castilleja purpurea* and *C. purpurea* var. *purpurea*), which, respectively, have purple and pink bracts. The most unusual example of *Castilleja* I observed, lemon paintbrush (*Castilleja citrina*) has yellow floral bracts. Once listed as a variety of *C. purpurea*, it is now considered a separate species. I found only one lemon paintbrush in the park.

The story of Heritage Wildscape Park remains a bit of a mystery. There is no signage on the property, and the only evidence of human activity is the faint outline of a walking path and foundation rocks for garden beds. However, near the south end of the site, several yards from the street, I found a group of hexagon pavers buried in the grass. They were etched with names, presumably of benefactors, and a central paver was inscribed, "Heritage Wildscape Park 2005."

In the aftermath of the Heritage Museum fire, the city purchased the land surrounding the historic 1893 building, and the Wise County Historical Society is negotiating to create a park and erect a memorial while leaving the wildscape intact. In the meantime, I plan to return this spring and hope to discover even more species of native plants. I also plan to share my experiences with more people.



Concrete Pavers at Heritage Wildscape Park

*All photos by Jerry Hamby, with the exception of noted photo by Susan Hamby*

# Tweet of the Month

By Sue Yost, class of 2017

## Have you ever noticed the logo for the city of Lewisville?

This logo was adopted in 2009. It pictures a bird. That bird is a Purple Martin. Why did they use that bird? More on that later! Let's learn about the bird first!



**Purple Martins** are a beautiful, slender aerial bird in the swallow family. The males are a dark solid glossy blue-black-purple while females and juveniles are gray underneath with paler coloring on their bellies. Some females will also have a pale "collar" around the neck. Their shallow forked tails and long, pointed wings help them catch insects mid-air. They eat huge amounts of insects like flies, bees, moths, butterflies, wasps, dragonflies, beetles, and other flying bugs. Contrary to publicity they do NOT eat many mosquitoes, as skeeters fly low to the ground whereas martins fly higher in the air. They eat *some*, but not enough to put a dent in the population!



The Purple Martins are cavity nesters. East of the Rocky Mountains they are dependent on human-supplied housing. West of the Rockies and in the deserts, they largely nest in abandoned woodpecker nest cavities in saguaro cacti. In the Pacific Northwest martins are using gourds and clusters of single-unit boxes for nesting, as well as natural cavities in trees. Purple Martins are also colony nesters and have site fidelity. Once they establish a colony, they return to that same nest box year after year like clockwork. Party on Martins!



Humans and Purple Martins have had a connection for centuries. The Native Americans used gourds in their everyday life. They hung hollowed out gourds near their lodges to attract the insect eating martins. Workers on the colonial plantations continued this practice. Man-made plastic gourds are now being produced and hung on gourd racks. Delighted by the martins' graceful flight, bubbly song and insect-eating habits, homeowners across the country now erect large multi-unit martin houses. And the Purple Martins LOVE to be near humans. It is very common for the Amish community in the Midwest/East to have multiple martin houses on their farms. Because they

are flying, swooping insectivores they need a minimum of 40' of clearance around the nesting box/gourds. The nesting sites should also be at least 15' high on a telescoping pole. They like to be around human activity too.

## Tweet of the Month (Cont.)

Why you ask on a telescoping pole? You must be a good Purple Martin landlord. It's good to keep track of the nesting cycle but more importantly you need to help keep out invasive species like the Old English House Sparrow and the European Starling. Those non-native species can attack the adults, break the eggs, and even go as far as killing the nestlings if they want the nest site. Being pro-active by nest monitoring can curb their negative activity. Having a telescoping pole makes this weekly duty easier for us.

The 2-year-old, (ASY for 'after-second-year') Purple Martins make a neat, tidy nest of grass, pine needles and fresh leaves. Sometimes they add a rim of mud towards the front to prevent the eggs from rolling out. 3-6 glossy white eggs are incubated by the female. They take about 16 days to hatch. The young martins fledge in 4-5 weeks.



Once nesting is over this is where it gets exciting for birdwatchers! And this is how Lewisville got the idea for their logo! Purple Martins will gather in HUGE, ENORMOUS colonial nighttime roosts for several weeks (mid-July) before taking off to their winter ranges in South America. These birds at one time, for years and years gathered at the Lewisville post office off Main Street. Then for some unknown reason they moved to the parking lot where the WinCo now is, still on Main Street. I remember going to Purple Martin tailgate parties watching in awe as upwards of 70,000 birds came into the trees



for the night. Then... Suddenly... One year they didn't return. No one knows why they abandoned the site. But for years Lewisville was put on the map for this phenomenon of nature hence the adoption of the Purple Martin on their logo. There are current roosting sites in Garland and Plano. These flocks are so large they can be picked up by doppler radar! Some small flocks do gather at Lake Park in Lewisville.

Purple Martins face many dangers in the wintering grounds in Brazil. High use of pesticides and habitat loss are in the forefront of declining population. If they survive the winter they head back to the U.S. arriving in our area around Valentine's Day. Landlords can set their watches to their return. Males arrive first and squabble with each other for the best cavity. The female has the last word on where the nest will be. Of course she does!

These beautiful swallows are now showing up in our area. Watch for them in the air. Watch for them over the water. Listen for that easy identifiable chittering call.

Purple Martins, nature's bug lovers!





T E X A S



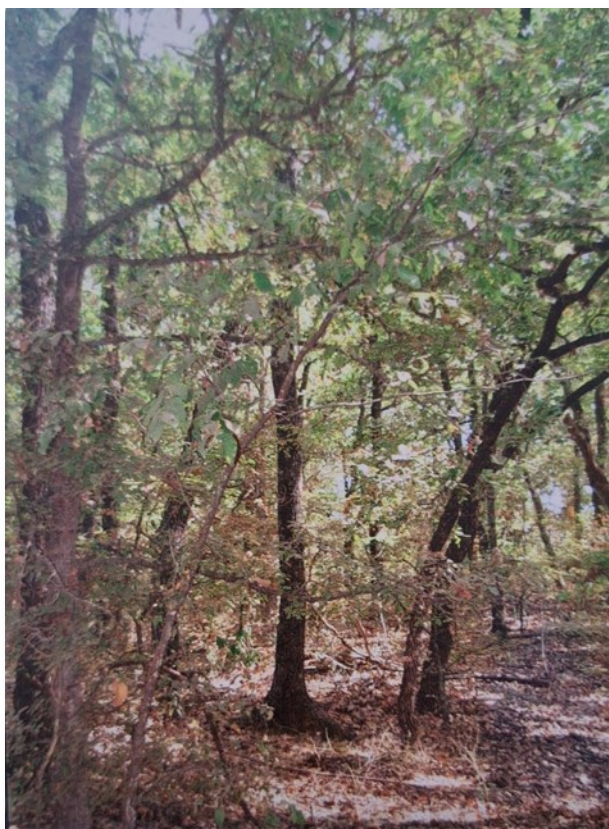
*Celebrating*  
— 25 YEARS —

## 25th Anniversary Special

*2024 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists. All year we'll be looking at milestones in the chapter's history through articles, illustrations, and the recollections of our members. If you have a story or anecdote to share about your experiences in the Elm Fork Chapter, please contact Samra Bufkins, Class of 2023.*

### Project #000902: Cross Timbers Park A Well-Kept Secret in Far South Denton

By Samra Bufkins, Class of 2023



Tucked between the Ryan Ranch, Oaks of Montecito and River Oaks subdivisions in southeast Denton is one of the last untouched sections of Cross Timbers in north Texas. This 70 acre gem might be the best kept secret among all of Denton's parks, and through the efforts of area residents, developers, and partners like the Texas Master Naturalists and Native Plant Society of Texas, corporate donors and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, it became one of the first major projects taken on by the Elm Fork Chapter.

The idea for the park began in 1999 when several developers donated wooded land along the Fletcher Branch of Hickory Creek to the city parks and recreation department. Residents of the surrounding neighborhoods raised about \$14,000 from area businesses and foundations with the desire to preserve about twelve acres of this relatively untouched land. Their intent was to preserve the forest as an intact ecosystem for use as an educational outreach project for area school children and residents.

The project really took off in 2001 when the Denton Parks & Recreation Department received a \$500,000 matching grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. City of Denton bond funds and park land dedication and development funds matched the state's grant money to acquire more land and complete Phase I of the project.

With input from neighborhood residents, a vision for the park's seventy acres was developed. The southern portion of the park abuts McNair Elementary School, and DISD became involved because of the potential for an outdoor classroom.

Continued ...





# 25th Anniversary Special



## Project #000902: Cross Timbers Park (cont.)



Marilyn Blanton, Janet Simpson (assistant director, Denton Parks & Recreation), and Brenda Phillips were all smiles at the dedication of Cross Timbers Park in November, 2002.



**Cross Timbers Park  
Denton, Texas**  
Trail Layout, Restoration, and Management Plan  
for Natural Areas

Prepared by  
Steve Windhager, Ph.D. and  
Daniel Dietz  
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center  
4801 La Crosse Ave.  
Austin, Texas 78739

June 27, 2002



Lady Bird Johnson  
**Wildflowercenter**

Trail layout and restoration plan for Cross Timbers Park prepared by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

With the help of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, a thorough inventory of plants in the park was completed and trails were mapped out.

Marilyn Blanton (class of 2000) took over as project manager in 2001 when the original project manager, Brenda Phillips (class of 1999) moved out of state.

“We had lots of workdays preparing the trails,” Blanton said. “The city used heavy equipment where it was necessary, and then volunteers from many different groups like scouts, Native Plant Society, university students, churches, and of course the Master Naturalists completed the details.”

“Unfortunately, there is hardly any real cross timber left today, having been plowed under and paved over to accommodate subdivisions, shopping malls, highways and the like,” wrote landscape architect Owen Yost in an article for *NPSOT News* in the spring of 2006. “Cross Timbers Park is very special.”

According to Yost’s article, the origin of the name “Cross Timbers” is murky, but the most popular story has its roots in the natural geography and vegetation of this area. The Cross Timbers region stretches from far southeastern Kansas through Oklahoma down through central Texas. He wrote that most forests here run in north-south bands, while the rivers tend to flow mainly west-to-east. The early pioneers tried to avoid dangerous river crossings by crossing bands of forest as they traveled between rivers on their westward migration. Thus the name “Cross Timbers.”

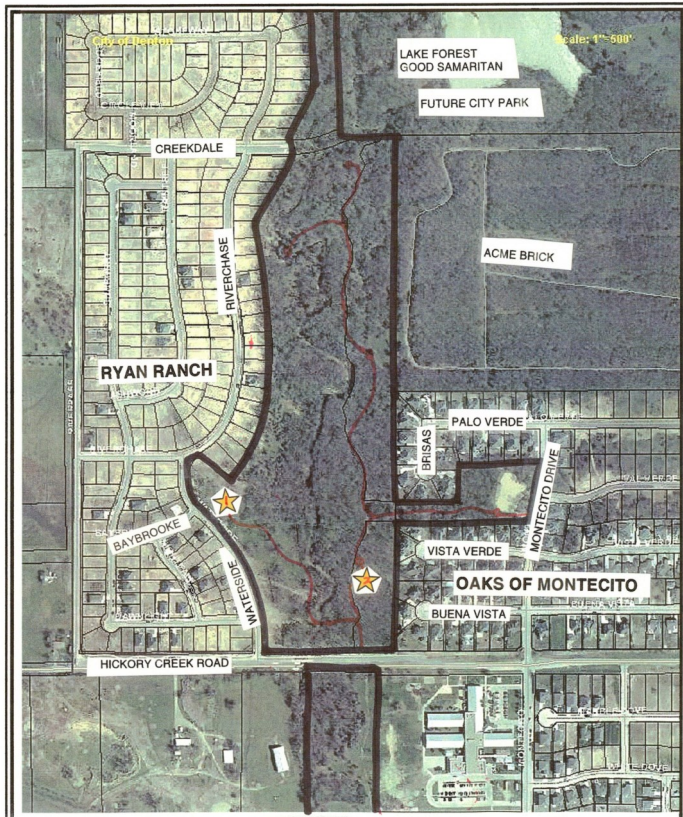
The pioneers found getting through the Cross Timbers difficult. While the forests were made up primarily of post oaks and blackjack oaks, there were also millions of smilax vines, those annoying thorny vines most of us know as catclaw vine or greenbrier. They were so thick that the 19th Century statesman and author Washington Irving described the Cross Timbers as “forests of cast iron.”

Continued ...



# 25th Anniversary Special

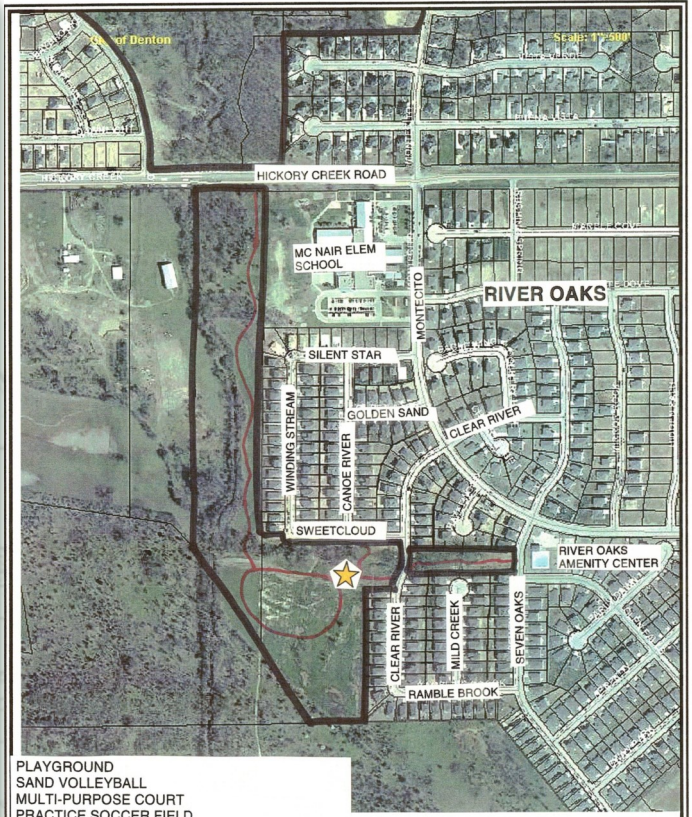
## Project #000902: Cross Timbers Park (cont.)



- 1 ☆ PLAYGROUND
- 2 ☆ OUTDOOR NATURE CLASSROOM

TRAIL LENGTHS  
1,200 feet from Hickory Creek to Ryan Ranch

**DISCLAIMER**  
This data has been compiled for the City of Denton. Various official and unofficial sources were used to gather this information. Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this data, however, no guarantee is given or implied as to the accuracy of said data.



PLAYGROUND  
SAND VOLLEYBALL  
MULTI-PURPOSE COURT  
PRACTICE SOCCER FIELD

TRAIL LENGTHS  
600 feet from Seven Oaks to Clear River  
1,807 feet around the loop by the playground  
1,699 feet from the loop to Hickory Creek Road

**DISCLAIMER**  
This data has been compiled for the City of Denton. Various official and unofficial sources were used to gather this information. Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this data, however, no guarantee is given or implied as to the accuracy of said data.

Satellite view of the section of Cross Timbers Park north of Hickory Creek Road in November 2002. Notice how few houses in the Ryan Ranch subdivision are built yet. McNair Elementary School is near the bottom right.

Satellite view of Cross Timbers Park south of Hickory Creek Road, November 2002.

Cross Timbers Park is now connected to Lake Forest Park (home of Wiggly Field, Denton’s original dog park) via the trail system in both parks. Privet has overtaken much of the understory, but the bulk of the forested area remains largely as it was when the first settlers traveled through this part of north Texas. The Elm Fork Chapter’s role in preserving this little patch of natural history will benefit the Denton area for generations to come.

**Recommended reading:**

*Cast Iron Forest: A Natural and Cultural History of the North American Cross Timbers* by Richard V. Francaviglia. University of Texas Press, April 2000.

*A Tour on the Prairies* by Washington Irving. First published in 1835, reprinted by University of Oklahoma Press, October 1985.

Continued ...



# 25th Anniversary Special

## Project #000902: Cross Timbers Park (cont.)

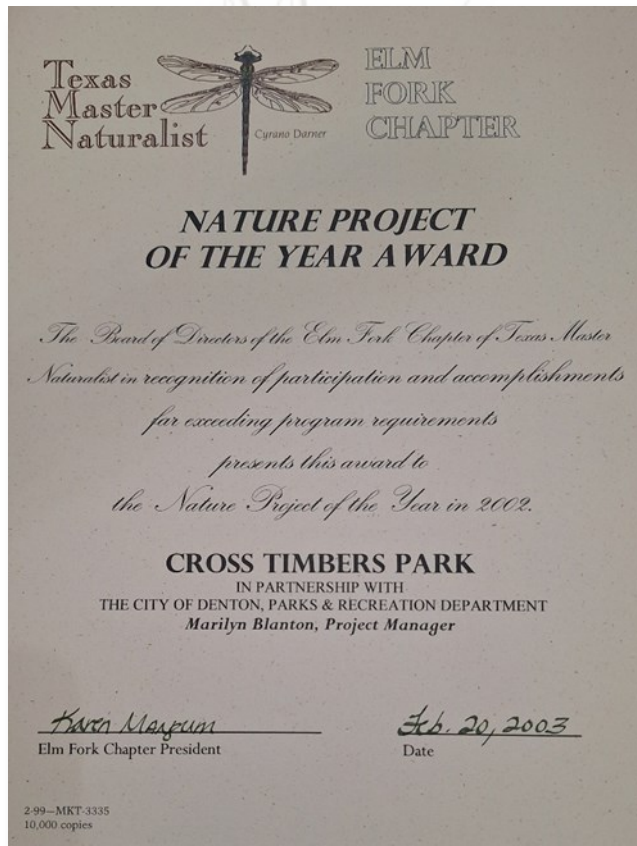
**Cross Timbers Park** straddles Hickory Creek Road and is connected to Lake Forest Park via the trails. There are two addresses: 7601 Waterside Place and 8402 Clear River Lane in Denton. The neighborhood pond is located at 7112 Montecito Drive. There is no parking within the park, but visitors can park at McNair Elementary School, 1212 Hickory Creek Road, at the adjacent Lake Forest Park/Wiggly Field dog park at 1750 East Ryan Road or access it through the surrounding neighborhoods.

**The park features:**

- 1.17 miles of trail (concrete and soft surface)
- Two playgrounds with shade
- Basketball court
- Benches
- Bike racks
- Drinking fountains
- Picnic area with grills
- Pond



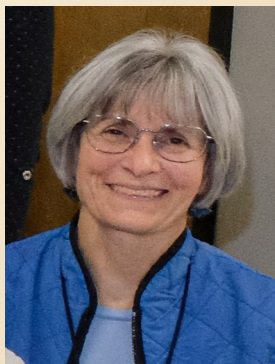
Cross Timbers Park in Denton Parks and Recreation Play Magazine, 2002.



Cross Timbers Park was recognized as "Nature Project of the Year" in 2003.



# *This Month's Contributors*



Becky Bertoni



Marilyn Blanton



Samra Bufkins



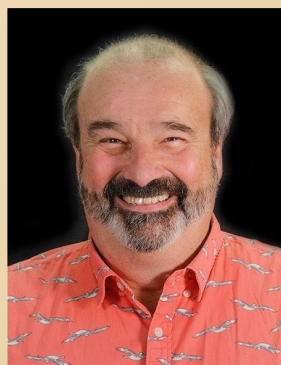
Andrea Dixon



Jane Duke



Jerry Hamby



Dave Jones



Bryan Lewis



Mary Morrow



Wanda Odum



Jonathan Reynolds



Clay Thurmond



LeeAnn Weaver



Kathryn Wells



Sue Yost



*Thank you all!*

Your articles and photos for the *Naturalist News* are so appreciated! I couldn't do it without you!

Please send submissions to: [newsletter@efctmn.org](mailto:newsletter@efctmn.org)

*April 2024 submissions are due by Wednesday, April 10th.*

# Almost the Last Word



## Fun Facts: Amazing Feet

*Sue Yost, class of 2017*

*Did you know there are some birds that have little or no ability to walk?*

*Hummingbirds use their feet only to perch or scratch themselves. Moving even a few feet is done by flying.*

*Swifts' legs are almost non-existent and their tiny, clawed feet are suited for little more than clinging to vertical surfaces like the inside of chimney for the Chimney Swifts.*



*The legs of some water birds, such as the grebes and loons are set so far back for diving and swimming that walking or even taking flight from land isn't possible. [Same goes for bats!]*



*Frigatebirds do almost everything aloft, including sleep and have tiny feet that are nearly useless for walking. The only time they come to earth is to breed.*

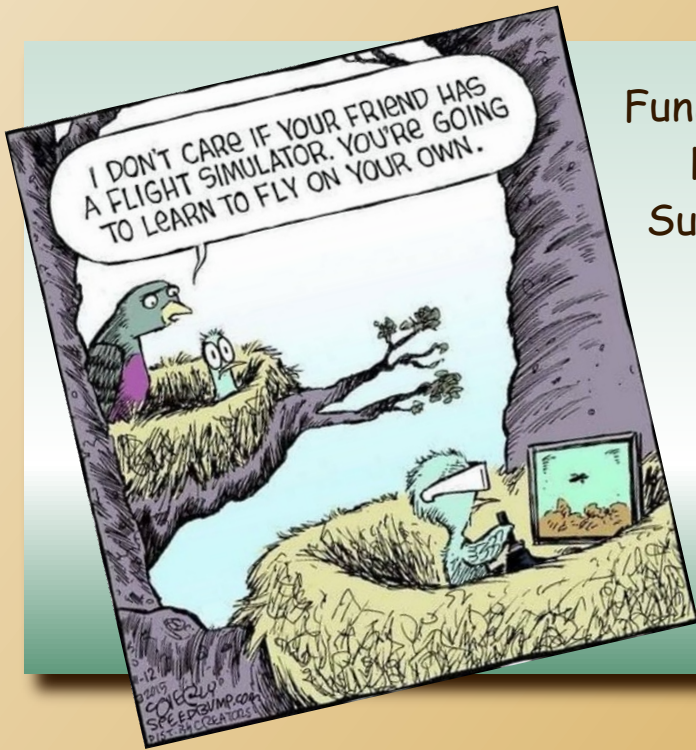
# Almost the Last Word

## Stream: The Naturalist News

Our newsletter is now available in audio format so you can listen while you do your TMN thing!

Click the AUDIO button below to listen to the February 2024 edition.

[AUDIO](#)



Funny Finds  
From  
Sue Yost!



### Editor's Oops!

In last month's issue on page 7, Awards and Recognition for January 2024, Initial Certifications, Nancy McWhorter class was incorrectly entered as 2022.

It should have read: *Nancy McWhorter*      *Class of 2023*

My apologies to Nancy!

# *Almost the Last Word*

For those with young ones in the flock, the daughter of Wylie Harris (class of 2023) is leading these great monthly get-togethers for kids!



## **JOIN OUR FLOCK OF BIRDERS!**

**Are you interested in birds? Come join our flock! Meetings will be on the second Saturday of every month. We will have trivia, games, sightings, and more! *Ages 10-15. No prior experience required.***



### **Meeting dates:**

**February 10, 12:00-2:00**  
**March 9, 12:00- 2:00**  
**April 13, 12:00-2:00**  
**May 11, 12:00-2:00**  
**August 10, 12:00-2:00**  
**September 14, 12:00-2:00**  
**October 12, 12:00-2:00**  
**November 9, 12:00-2:00**  
**December 14, 12:00-2:00**  
**At the Denton Public Library, North Branch**

### **Field trips:**

**Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center**  
**April 27, 9:00-11:00**  
**October 26, 9:00-11:00**

**For more information contact Wylie Harris through the Elm Fork Chapter Membership Directory**





# Almost the Last Word

## In Memoriam

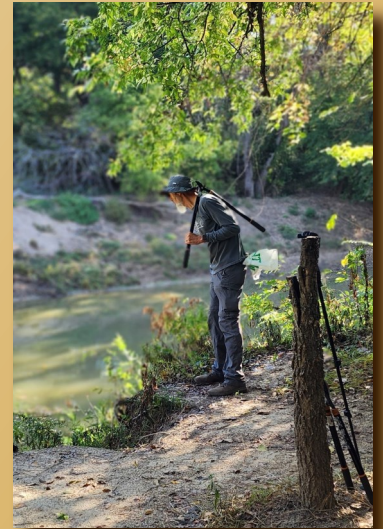


### The “Jeff LaQuey Memorial Trail” Approved

On February 20, Denton City Council approved the naming of a trail at Denton’s Hartlee Field Mountain Bike Park after Jeff LaQuey.

It almost didn't happen as the Parks Board, following their guidelines which required the person to be a resident of Denton, denied the request. However, City Council voted 7-0 to approve the request with Mayor Hudspeth stating that volunteers aren't required to be residents, and this is a regional resource anyway. Councilman Joe Holland helped tip the vote by recalling his association with Jeff in the cycling community and extolling the efforts Jeff put in his volunteer work across the county. Councilman Beck also spoke in favor of honoring Jeff's contributions.

Plans for a sign and unveiling ceremony are pending.



From Clay Thurmond



Steve Romaine, Class of 2018, passed away. He had been in the care of a Memory Care home for the last couple of years. He led bird walks at the Furneaux Creek Nature Trail, Farmers Branch Historical Park, and Elm Fork Nature Preserve, McInnish Park. He will be remembered for his sweet gentle nature and his love for birds and just being a Master Naturalist.

A service at Dallas Ft Worth National Cemetery will be held on Thursday, March 21st at 9:30 am followed by visitation at his home in Carrollton, 3600 Fieldstone, Carrollton, from 11:30-1:30 pm. The visitation is come and go, and lunch will be provided.



# Who We Are



## Texas Master Naturalist–Elm Fork Chapter

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

### OFFICERS

President - Kathryn Wells

Vice President - Larry Duncan

Treasurer - Mike Hatch

Secretary - Jane Duke

### BOARD POSITIONS

Immediate Past President – Jan Deatherage

Member-at-Large – Eric Houston

### BOARD DIRECTORS

Membership - Sharon Betty

VMS - Jim Gerber

Initial Training - Elise Spain

Communications - Fran Witte

Volunteer Service Projects - Larry Duncan, Interim

Advanced Training Programs - David Jones

Outreach/Adult Education - Trish Reyes

New Class Representative - Andrea Dixon

### 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

Hulcher Services Building B, Suite 114

611 Kimberly Drive

Denton, TX 76208

940-349-2883