

T E X A S

Master  
Naturalist™  
Elm Fork Chapter  
1999-2024



*Celebrating*  
— 25 YEARS —

# Naturalist News

April 2024 Volume 24, Issue 4



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/)

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*Celebrating*  
— 25 YEARS —

# Naturalist News



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## *On the Cover:*

Exploring South Hickory Creek,  
By Jamie Reneau



Tree shadows during the eclipse,  
from Tammie Walters

# Buzz From the Board

Happy April, friends!

Spring has sprung here in north central Texas, and, each day, we're happily discovering signs of new life in the landscape. This season affords us the joy of assessing our projects—appreciating the previous work that's been done while rolling up our proverbial sleeves and continuing to further refine and steward our natural resources as we educate and engage our community residents. What a joy to have weather that's not too cold or too hot, but just right!

Speaking of service, National Volunteer Week is April 21st - 27th, and our Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter members are the very best of the bunch! Every TMN-EFC project is carefully and thoughtfully chosen to fulfill and further our mission: 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 Chapter covers Cooke, Denton and Wise counties.) And, behind every project are the individuals who selflessly serve, lending their time and talent to support our Chapter and our community. Thanks to each and every one of you; what a pleasure and privilege to volunteer with you!

And, if you haven't yet heard the buzz, I'll be presenting a program on native bees at our April 18th Chapter meeting. 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 Administrative Courthouse (1 Courthouse Drive, Denton, TX). I hope to see you there!

TMN-EFC members and Cooke/Denton/Wise county residents—you bring life to this land! May your landscapes and your lives multiply and prosper—filled to overflowing with your very favorites—this month and every month.

*Kathryn*



# *What Happens Next*

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

Thursday, April 18th, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Denton County Administrative Courthouse

1 Courthouse Drive • Denton, TX 76208

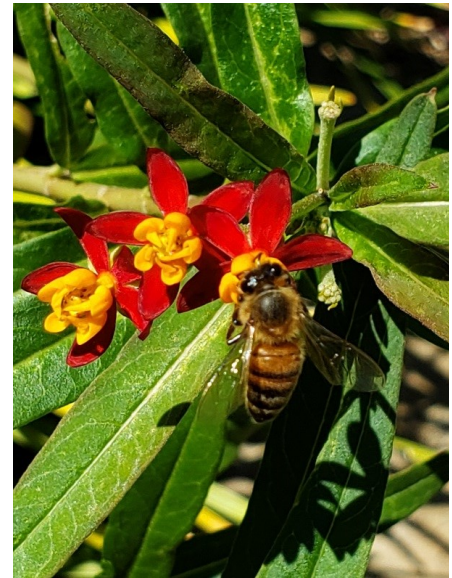


This Month's Presentation:

### ***What's the Buzz About Native Bees***

By Kathryn Wells

Learn about the most common native bees in North Texas, why they are so beneficial, and how to protect their habitat in your garden or landscape.



Current President of Texas Master Naturalist-Elm Fork Chapter, and Immediate Past President of Denton County Master Gardener Association, Kathryn



loves and appreciates the importance of Texas native plants, especially those indigenous to our north-central Texas ecoregion, and she especially loves creating bee-friendly habitats. Grants Coordinator of the Native Plant Society of Texas-Trinity Forks Chapter, Kathryn is a certified instructor for all five Native Landscape Certification Programs including "Native Landscapes for Birds". Her property is a Monarch Way Station and a Certified Wildlife Habitat®; the latest resident is a Greater Roadrunner she calls Tex.

# What Happens Next

## NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK 2024

Master  
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Elm Fork Chapter  
1999-2024

*Celebrating*  
— 25 YEARS —

 **246**  
VOLUNTEERS

 **31,827**  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS



TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



ELM FORK CHAPTER

**April 21st–April 27th**

National Volunteer Week is celebrated each year to recognize the contributions of volunteers. The Elm Fork Chapter has plenty to celebrate for National Volunteer Week 2024:

- 246 amazing volunteers, and counting,
- 31,827 hours of volunteer work,
- and 25 years as a chapter!

# What Happens Next



About Leave 7

This umbrella project summarizes results for all metro areas in Texas participating in the 2024 City Nature Challenge event, April 26-April 29, 2024. Click a city to go to its project page.

[Read More >](#) [Your Membership](#)

[Project Journal](#)



## ***iNaturalist*** **2024** **CITY NATURE CHALLENGE** **APRIL 24-29**

It's that time of year again! The 2024 iNaturalist City Nature Challenge April 26-April 29. We will be competing with many cities across the globe for number of observations and number of species.

We have landed in the top 5 every year since the inception and plan to keep it that way. We have also finished No. 1 for the State of Texas, beating out Houston, San Antonio and all the other cities in TX.

Yes, we are that good!

Stay tuned for some mini blitzes we will have during the four days of observations at our project sites; we hope to have at least one a day during the challenge and hope to see eager iNaters on the trails taking photos.

We will have until May 4th to ID observations. If you have any questions please contact Mary Morrow through [projects@efctmn.org](mailto:projects@efctmn.org) or the Members Directory on our website.



About Join 34

Join Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Master Naturalists, the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, and many others in a fun challenge to see which city can document the most species during April 26 - April 29. It is easy to participate by joining an event or making observations on your own using the iNaturalist

[Read More >](#) [Project Journal](#)

*See page 11 for the City Nature Challenge invite at LLELA!*

# Here's What's New



## Introducing the Announcement Request Form

The Announcement Request Form is designed to streamline the announcement submission process and allow for more accuracy in announcements provided to the Communications Team and Chapter members.

The Announcement Request Form is on our website in the Members Area What's New section, and in the Members Area under Forms and Documents.

You can also click the link here: <https://txmn.org/elmfork/announcement-request/>



**ANNOUNCEMENT REQUEST FORM**

The Announcement Request Form is designed to streamline the Announcement submission process and allow for more accuracy in announcements provided to the Communications Team and Chapter members. Thank you for taking time to complete this form. Please provide as much information as possible in the Description and Comments boxes sections

**Name\***

First  Last

**Email**

**Title of Announcement/Event/Opportunity**

**Start Date**  
mm/dd/yyyy

**Time(s)**

**End Date**  
mm/dd/yyyy

**Location**

**Description** (be as comprehensive as possible and include website if applicable)

**Additional Comments**

# *Awards and Recognition*

## *March 2024*

### *Recertifications*

<i>Mindy Anderson</i>	<i>Class of 2015</i>
<i>Gale Bacon</i>	<i>Class of 2018</i>
<i>Sharon Barr</i>	<i>Class of 2008</i>
<i>Barbara Beane</i>	<i>Class of 2018</i>
<i>Abigail Beck</i>	<i>Class of 2023</i>
<i>Marilyn Blanton</i>	<i>Class of 1999</i>
<i>Brynne Bryan</i>	<i>Class of 2022</i>
<i>Troy Dale</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>
<i>Susan Hamby</i>	<i>Class of 2022</i>
<i>Lin Hampton</i>	<i>Class of 2022</i>
<i>Kaye Jackson</i>	<i>Class of 2015</i>
<i>Sandy LaQuey</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>
<i>Bryan Lewis</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>
<i>Jean Mason</i>	<i>Class of 2017</i>
<i>Vin Merrill</i>	<i>Class of 2011</i>
<i>Dale Meyer</i>	<i>Class of 2011</i>
<i>Chryl Prestemon</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>
<i>Jamie Reneau</i>	<i>Class of 2022</i>
<i>Elise Spain</i>	<i>Class of 2017</i>
<i>Tammie Walters</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>



Continued ... 



# Awards and Recognition

## March 2024

### 250 Hour Milestone

*Lin Hampton*

*Class of 2022*



### 500 Hour Milestone

*Susan Hamby*

*Class of 2022*



### 1500 Hour Milestone

*Denver Kramer*

*Class of 2018*



### 2000 Hour Milestone

*Sharon Barr*

*Class of 2008*

*Pam Bennett*

*Class of 2019*

*Jane Duke*

*Class of 2009*

*Donna Wolfe*

*Class of 1998*



# Congratulations!

# *Field Notes in Focus*



Toad at Cooper Creek, by Jonathan Reynolds

# Inside Outside News

*The Friends of LLELA invite you to nature's paradise  
for the annual*

## ***City Nature Challenge 2024 by iNaturalist***

**Friday April 26 @ 6:00 AM - Monday April 29 @ 8:00 PM**

### **What is the City Nature Challenge (CNC)?**

The CNC is an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in their own cities. Run by the Community Science teams at the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM), the CNC is an annual four-day global bioblitz at the end of April, where cities are in a collaboration-meets-friendly-competition to see what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal.

### **How can I participate?**

- Find Wildlife
- It can be any WILD plant, animal, or any other evidence of life found in your city.

### **Take a Picture or Record a Sound**

- Take a picture or record the sound of what you find. Be sure to note the location of the critter or plant. Your camera or phone may be able to gps tag your location for you.

### **Share**

- Share your observations through iNaturalist app or website. Download the app for free...If it's planted or taken care of by people it is not WILD. Mark it captive/cultivated!

### **Where can I participate?**

- Anywhere in the Dallas Fort Worth 7 county area. OR...
- LLELA - 201 E Jones St, Lewisville, TX 75057

Come spend time with us at LLELA (Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area) in Lewisville, Texas. We are a 2,600-acre wildlife area situated at the base of Lewisville Lake. A combination of grasslands, prairies, pocket prairies, marshes and wooded areas teeming with wildlife. The Elm Fork branch of the Trinity River bisects the property.

### **LLELA's trails include:**

- \* Bittern Marsh Trail
- \* Redbud Trail
- \* Blackjack Trail
- \* Cicada Trail
- \* Cottonwood Trail
- \* Green Dragon Trail



*Continued on next page...*



Copyright Denver Kramer

# Inside Outside News

*(City Nature Challenge, continued)*

## What does it cost?

Normally there is a \$5 daily entrance fee per car (or seasonal passes available). During this 4 day event admission is FREE when a vehicle occupant presents their iNaturalist app (free download from App Stores).

If you haven't used the iNaturalist app before, no worries... there will be someone available from 8-10am each day to teach you how to use... it's an easy process 1) open app, 2) take a picture, 3) identify what you took picture of or ask app to identify, then 4) share...

## Who can participate?

Anyone who can operate a camera or smartphone!!! It's a great experience for the whole family to get out and experience nature... come alone or bring the kids for a wonderful nature experience!

## What can I expect to see?

- LLELA is loaded with many species of flora (plants) and fauna (animals). What can be observed depends on the wildlife, time of day, location and environment.
- There is a wide array of native plants and trees.
- Insects including various species of damselflies, dragonflies, bees, spiders, butterflies and so many more...
- Reptiles and Amphibians including snakes, lizards, turtles, frogs and toads...
- Birds galore including eagles, osprey, kestrels, vultures, herons, egrets, cormorants, songbirds and migratory birds...
- Mammals including deer, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons, and armadillo...
- Marsupials featuring the opossum

*For more information contact Denver Kramer through [projects@efctmn.org](mailto:projects@efctmn.org), or the Members Directory on our website, or go to [City Nature Challenge 2024 by iNaturalist - Friends of LLELA](#)*



Photos by Denver Kramer

Copyright Denver Kramer

# *Inside Outside News*

## Volunteer Opportunities



### **Helpers/Ambassadors & Planners Needed for the 2024 Projects Showcase**

Sign up to be a helper/ambassador for the prep-day (July 17th), showcase-day (July 18th), or both, and separately let the showcase manager know if you'd like to help plan the event. Helpers/ambassadors set up tables per the plan and take them down, guide project managers to their reserved tables, and provide tours for our special guests (the public) through the projects. Planners create the layout of tables based on the reservations of project managers, either in person or via zoom.

For more information contact Bryan Lewis through [projects@efctmn.org](mailto:projects@efctmn.org), or the Members Directory on our website.

**Click here to sign up:**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4FAFAD29ABF8C61-48642226-project#/>



# Inside Outside News

## Volunteer Opportunities



### Rescue the Little Bluestem at Green Acres Saturday, April 20th, 9:15 AM–?

Green Acres Farm Memorial Park  
4400 Hide-A-Way Lane  
Flower Mound 76226

We are digging plants from a development site and replanting them at Green Acres! We will need lots of folks to plant and help out—the developer will have his workers digging and transporting grasses and we will be planting. Please let Becky Bertoni know if you can help or need more information. Contact her through [projects@efctmn.org](mailto:projects@efctmn.org), or through the Membership Directory in the Members Area of the Elm Fork Chapter website.

### DISD School Days at Clear Creek Spring 2024–

*Going Strong,  
but Still Needs Volunteers!*

School Days, a project of the Elm Fork Master Naturalists and with DCMGA, began on March 25 and will run through May 10. We are hosting 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](#)

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.



# Inside Outside News

## Approved AT



## THE CHANGING CLIMATE IN YOUR BACKYARD

MONDAY, APRIL 22 • 7:00PM - 8:30PM

Flower Mound Public Library

3030 Broadmoor Lane • Flower Mound, TX 75022

How is the changing climate affecting the way we garden in North Texas? CBS News Meteorologist Jeff Ray shows how the weather is changing in your backyard.

Click here to register: <https://fmlibrary.libnet.info/event/10126124>

*Please note: If severe weather is forecasted, this presentation will be rescheduled.*



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



**YOU ARE  
INVITED!**

### MONTHLY PLANNING MEETING ADVANCED TRAINING/CONTINUING ED

**DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 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.



# Website Quick Tips

From Andrea Dixon

Our website has a wealth of information in the 'References' section on useful websites and apps (recently updated), books, birds, butterflies, bees and more.



- ◆ From our website: <https://txmn.org/elmfork/>, click on the References tab.



- ◆ Then, just click on any icon or link to get more information. There are many downloadable PDF files here for your use.

**Reference Materials**

**Websites and Apps**

**Books**

**Birds**

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**Butterflies**

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

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**Bees and other insects**

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

- ◆ If you have a website, app or book not listed here, let the website team know! [website@efctmn.org](mailto:website@efctmn.org)

# Projects in the Community



You're Invited!

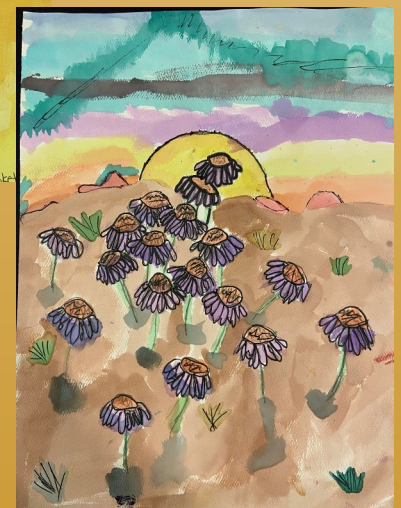
## Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition Appreciation Reception

Wednesday, April 24 - 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm

DISD Professional Development Center  
1212 Bolivar Street, Denton, Texas

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

Thank you,  
Marilyn Blanton



# Projects in the Community

## Composting Bioreactor at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center By Clay Thurmond

Building on the work of Dr. Elaine Ingham's [Soil Food Web Approach](#) as Jane Duke presented at the January chapter meeting and workshops at Clear Creek and Beulah Acres, volunteers built a Johnson-Su composting bioreactor at Clear Creek on April 1st.

The Johnson-Su bioreactor, invented by Dr. David Johnson of New Mexico State University and his wife Hui-Chu Su, is a vertical closed system of composting that focuses on increasing fungal growth rather than on nutrient and bacterial densities as in other composting methods. This style of composting is static, that is, it does not require turning and promotes air flow via columns within the stack, fostering aerobic decomposition as opposed to anaerobic methods.

It takes quite a bit of work to set up, but after that, is relatively maintenance free, especially if moisture levels can be maintained by automatic drip irrigation. It doesn't take much. The PVC pipes will be withdrawn, leaving a relatively stable void which helps circulate air to the compost material. Generally, the yield can be harvested between 6 and 12 months, though it can be sooner. The resulting product will be used to amend the soil for transplants, giving them a better start than with regular compost.

Plans are to build a second bioreactor to use up the generous donations of leaves we have received. Meanwhile, enjoy the photos of the project courtesy of Becky Cortines and Ginny Richards.



# Projects in the Community

## The "Lucky Number Seven" Bluebird Box at Green Acres

Photos (and box monitoring) by LeeAnn Weaver



Last Month's *Naturalist News*  
cover photo,  
March 11th, 7 eggs in box 7



March 18th,  
5 hatchlings, 2 eggs



March 25th,  
7 babies



April 1st,  
7 big babies!

# Features



Jerry Hamby Staking a Bald Cypress in Houston (Photo by Susan Hamby)

## Park by Park— Surveying the Trees of North Texas By Jerry Hamby

When an abandoned golf course near my house in Houston was developed into a nature park called Exploration Green in 2014, I volunteered to help oversee an onsite tree nursery. For seven years I organized work events and the planting of 1,500 native trees in the park. After moving to Denton and joining the Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists in 2021, I was eager to expand my knowledge of trees, and within a month, I had an opportunity to do so when Rick Travis, Blackland Prairie Master Naturalist, invited me to participate in a tree survey at Coppell Nature Park. Rick and his wife Lisa lead forest ecology and tree identification training for Elm Fork’s initial class training.



Survey Team on the Trail at Coppell Nature Park

The purpose of the Coppell survey was to provide an inventory of trees and selected plants in the 66-acre park. A little-known jewel in north Dallas County, Coppell Nature Park is a ten-minute drive from DFW International Airport. For our work Rick divided the park into six zones with the goal of covering them over a five-week period. Each weekly survey took approximately three hours to complete and involved the participation of ten volunteers (representing three area TMN chapters).



Survey Map of Coppell Nature Park



Yellow Passionflower (Coppell Nature Park)

At first we hiked the trails that meander through the park, but during the last two weeks, we ventured deeper into the woods and down ravines to get a full count. In organizing the survey, Rick divided the identification of species into three categories—canopy, understory, and ground cover and vines. Rick led the way, identifying and counting trees while a designated counter walked behind and, clipboard in hand, tallied the results. To facilitate the process, Rick printed a list of species commonly found in North Texas. Only canopy trees were counted; understory and other species were noted as being present. Other volunteers helped Rick spot trees and low-growing plants that might be easily overlooked, such as the tiny yellow passionflower (*Passiflora lutea*) growing near Cottonwood Branch, the waterway that runs through the park. This delicate native plant is related to the more commonly known purple passionflower (*P. incarnata*) and is a host plant for the Gulf fritillary butterfly (*Dione vanillae*).



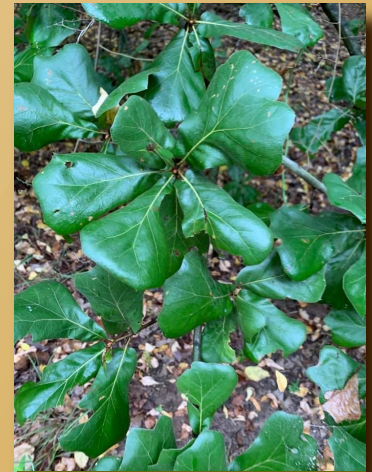
## Park by Park—Surveying the Trees of North Texas (cont.)

This tree survey, like others Rick subsequently completed, had several goals, the most important of which was to provide baseline data. In the case of Coppell Nature Park, the Education Director of the Biodiversity Center, Cynthia Contreras, wanted to know how much of the woodland forest was native and where to address deficits (through future plantings). It turns out that the largest and oldest trees—particularly post oak (*Quercus stellata*), pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), and eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*)—are species commonly found in the Eastern Cross Timbers habitat that makes up much of the park. More recent forest succession was evident in the southeast corner of the park, where there was a high concentration of cedar elms (*Ulmus crassifolia*), accounting for almost one-fifth of the total trees.



Interpretive Sign  
(Coppell Nature Park)

Rick’s formal report on the survey also highlighted sections of the park where invasive species of trees and shrubs were crowding out native vegetation. Of particular note was a large infestation of privet, primarily *Ligustrum quihoui*, in one section of the park. There were other invasive species that were spreading throughout the park, including callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), heavenly bamboo (*Nandina domestica*), and Chinese pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*). Knowing where these invasive plants are most prevalent made it easier for Contreras and Park Department officials to formulate an eradication plan.



Blackjack Oak  
(Pratt Nature Preserve)

In 2022 and 2023 Rick and Lisa completed several more tree surveys in which I participated, including three for Elm Fork Chapter projects—Beulah Acres, LISDOLA (Lewisville ISD Outdoor Learning Area), and Pratt Nature Preserve at Hickory Creek. In addition to providing data and recommendations to the stewards of those projects, the surveys gave additional Elm Fork Chapter members the opportunity to tag along for a crash course in tree identification. The survey of Beulah Acres was completed at the request of Project Manager Daniel Arenas Richieri, who had sought the inventory for educational purposes—he wanted to label sample trees for each species represented in the agroforest.

A highlight of the LISDOLA survey was finding a high concentration of Hercules club trees (*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*), which are instantly recognizable by the corky protrusions and prickly thorns on their bark. This unique tree looms large in Native American lore. Known also as the toothache tree because chewing on its leaves or inner bark numbs the mouth, *Z. clava-herculis* was used by Native Americans and early settlers for medicinal purposes. It is also a host plant for the giant swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*) and other beneficial insects.



Lisa and Rick Travis Surveying the Trees  
of Pratt Nature Preserve



Hercules Club  
(LISDOLA)



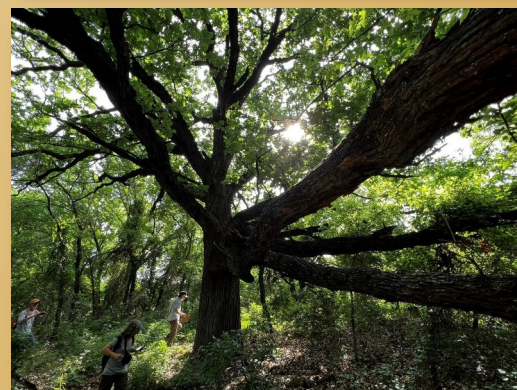
## Park by Park—Surveying the Trees of North Texas (cont.)

At Pratt Nature Preserve, Rick observed a high number of (mostly) Texas ash trees (*Fraxinus texensis*), 148, constituting seventeen percent of the total tree population. All ash species are susceptible to the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), an invasive beetle that destroys almost every ash tree in its path. Post oaks accounted for forty-four percent of the trees at Pratt (a total of 393 trees). Project Manager Dinah Stults knew that the park was densely wooded but was surprised that the eight-acre site contained nearly 900 canopy trees. Sharing the survey results with the Hickory Creek Town Council helped Stults bolster the case for protecting the site from future development.

Rick and Lisa’s most ambitious survey of 2023 took place at Grand Park in Frisco. Between April and June, Rick led volunteers through twelve sections that he defined using Google Maps. This new public green space covers 275 acres, but there are plans to extend the park to more than 1,000 acres, an area larger than Central Park in New York City. Frisco’s Parks and Recreation reached out to Rick for input into the Grand Park master plan. Because the park is largely undeveloped and is bisected by Stewart Creek, most of the areas surveyed were densely wooded or sloped toward the waterway. We accessed those sections via the only trail in the park, the two-mile Big Bluestem Trail, which opened to the public in late 2022.



Crossing Stewart Creek (Grand Park)



150-Year-Old Bur Oak (Grand Park)



Bois D’arc Foundation Block (Grand Park)

The final count of 5,700 canopy trees represented twenty species, eighteen of which are native to North Texas. More than eighty percent of the trees counted were cedar elm, sugar hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*), and ash (genus *Fraxinus*), suggesting that most of the forest is relatively young. While there weren’t many oaks in the park, Rick estimated that one of the few bur oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*) we spotted was at least 150 years old, and he recorded several other major Cross Timbers species, including 185 American elms (*Ulmus americana*) and 174 Osage orange trees (*Maclura pomifera*). This latter

species, which is also called a bois d’arc, is known for its ability to resist rot and insect damage. Remnants of the early twentieth century Wollenreich homestead, buried deep in the woods near Stewart Creek, bear witness to this fact. Although the roof and most of the walls of the house have collapsed, the floor beams still rest on completely intact bois d’arc foundation blocks. Because the homestead site represents a danger to the public, these ruins will need to be stabilized or removed.



Navigating the Dense Understory of Grand Park



## Park by Park—Surveying the Trees of North Texas (cont.)



Whit Dieterich, Armed with a Machete, at Grand Park

In preparing his final report to Frisco Parks and Recreation, Rick ranked sections of Grand Park according to their ecological valuations. He labeled areas that contained a high density and diversity of native flora as being of highest value while areas dominated by non-native and invasive plants were deemed to be of low value. He recommended that park amenities, including a proposed Nature Learning Center, be developed in the areas of lowest ecological value and that the sections of highest value be preserved for their biodiversity and aesthetic value.

To demonstrate the importance of two sections, in particular, Rick organized a series of BioBlitzes and highlighted the results in his formal report. Over the course of several weeks, 102 participants uploaded approximately 7,000 observations on iNaturalist, including 300 species of flora and 600 species of fauna. One of the events was led by Sam Kieschnick, Urban Wildlife Biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. An area of particular interest is a large prairie meadow on the southeast side of the park. On the day I visited the meadow, hundreds of butterflies and bees covered the native wildflowers and grasses. While most of the volunteers who worked with Rick on the survey and

BioBlitzes were members of the Blackland Prairie Chapter, Elm Fork Master Naturalists Susan Hamby, Whit Dietrich, and I were regular participants.

My work with Rick will come full circle in late April when he leads a tree survey at Furneaux Creek Nature Trail (in Carrollton). It was my early association with Project Manager Richard Johnson that led to my working with Rick. When I met Richard in 2021, he was looking for help in creating an inventory of the trees along Furneaux Creek and asked if I was interested. I am looking forward to completing a job that is long overdue, and it will include an element that harkens back to my volunteer work in Houston. Like most natural sites I have visited, Furneaux Creek has its share of invasive plants, and one species that I spotted during my first visit is Chinese tallow (*Triadica sebifera*). In the forests of east Texas, there are more than 340 million mature Chinese tallows, and while this highly aggressive species is not as problematic in North Texas, its presence is a reminder of why tree surveys are so important, especially in protecting native species from plants that threaten to displace them.



Prairie Remnant at Grand 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



*This bird has a name that pretty much tells the whole story. Can you guess who is featured this month?*

*If you guessed the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher you are right! It is the state bird of Oklahoma, but people south of the Red River call it “the Texas bird-of-paradise.” This bird is a sign of spring in Texas. It migrates to Mexico and South America in the winter to assure a plentiful supply of food. Pre-migratory roosts and flocks flying south may contain as many as 1000 birds. They can be seen congregating along fence lines and in trees in preparation for the long journey ahead. But every year, in early April they arrive back in Texas and as far north as southern Nebraska and prepare to stake their claim for nesting.*



*Scissor-tails prefer ranches, farms, prairies, mesquite shrubs and open fields. Insects are guaranteed and it is the perfect habitat to raise their young. The nest is a grass-lined cup of twigs and weed stems in isolated trees or shrubs, but sometimes using artificial sites such as telephone poles near towns. The male performs a spectacular aerial display during courtship with his long tail forks streaming out behind him. The female will lay 4-6 white eggs mottled with brown, violet or gray. She incubates the eggs for about 14 days. Both parents then feed the hungry nestlings lots and lots of insects. When they are about 2 weeks old, they leave the nest.*

*As mentioned in its name, it eats flies and other insects. Like other flycatchers, it will sit on a perch, a fence line, a telephone wire, etc. watch and wait for an*



## Tweet of the Month (Cont.)

*insect and swoop down to the ground to catch it. It can also swoop and loop and dive for an aerial meal on the wing! Its favorites are grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, robber flies, dragonflies along with any other flying insects to be found. They can regularly be seen “hawking” insects along the dam and spillway at LLELA.*

*And what a beauty in the bird world! Adult birds have pale gray heads and upper parts, light underparts, beautiful salmon-pink flanks, undertail coverts, and dark gray wings. The extremely long, forked tails, which are black on top and white on the underside, are characteristic and unmistakable. At maturity, the male may be up to 15 inches in length, while the female's tail is up to 30% shorter. The wingspan is 5.9 inches, and the weight is up to 1.5 oz. Immature birds are duller in color and have shorter tails. Don't let its beauty fool you; it will fiercely defend its territory against intruders and will not hesitate to chase off a passing crow or hawk.*

*Keep your eyes peeled along the roadside or visit LLELA and watch the antics of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, a perfect name for a beautiful Texas bird of summer.*



*Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, photo by Jonathan Reynolds*

T E X A S



*Celebrating*  
— 25 YEARS —

# 25th Anniversary Special

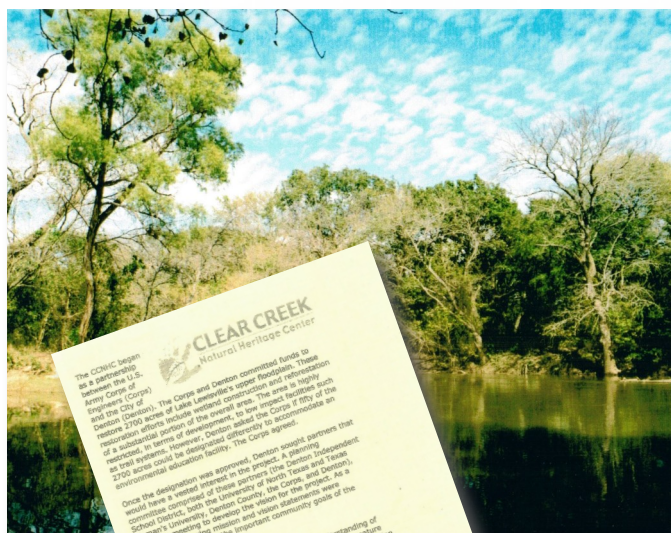
*2024 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists. All year we'll be looking at milestones in the chapter's history through articles, illustrations, and the recollections of our members. If you have a story or anecdote to share about your experiences in the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

## Elm Fork Chapter, The Early Years

By Samra Bufkins, Class of 2023

When the first classes of Texas Master Naturalists graduated, there was much less structure in the fledgling organization than now. There also were not as many nature centers or public places for people to experience hiking as there are today—and that means there were fewer volunteer opportunities. The idea of gardening with native plants was fairly new, and the sources of native and well-adapted plants for various areas were not as prevalent as they are 25 years later.

Perusing scrapbooks and newsletters from the first decade or so of the Elm Fork Chapter reveals some interesting trends. Figuring out ways to get members to record their service hours in a timely manner—in pre-VMS days—was a recurrent issue in board meetings and newsletters. Monthly chapter meetings were occasionally held in the evenings. Ideas were being batted around about developing a speaker's bureau. An activity calendar was newly available online, and the website was under development, with new items and sections added every couple of months or so. And an Advanced Training committee was formed to develop and approve AT opportunities.



In the spring of 2005, the Elm Fork Chapter teamed up with Keep Southlake Beautiful to provide interpretive trail guides at the Bob Jones Nature Center, which was undergoing major renovations. In the spring of 2006, the interpretive center at Lake Ray Roberts State Park Isle du Bois unit was under construction, and a monthly chapter meeting was held there to help familiarize chapter members with the opportunities there.

Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center was new, and the chapter adopted it as a “special project.” The interpretive center was being planned to be in place by February 2007. Elm Fork Chapter members were hard at work clearing trails, providing trail markers, and working with the Denton Independent School District on integrating their curriculum into the burgeoning Clear Creek learning environment.

*Continued ...*



# 25th Anniversary Special

## Elm Fork Chapter, The Early Years (cont.)

During this time, the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA) was also being developed as an outdoor learning area as well as a preserve for wildlife and habitat. The Lewisville Wildlife Management Area, as it was originally called, was created in the 1990s. A consortium that included Texas Woman's University, Texas A&M University, The City of Lewisville, Lewisville ISD, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and UNT's Institute of Applied Sciences managed the property. The area was closed to the public after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks because of security concerns. The area re-opened to the public on weekends beginning in May 2006.

By March of 2007, an advanced training policy was announced: "Every member must obtain 8 advanced training hours each calendar year to qualify for re-certification."

Guidelines for approving AT opportunities were also announced. The guidelines required AT opportunities promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills, provide master naturalists knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts, direct members toward specific programs in need of service, provide practical information for application as volunteers, provide members opportunities to focus their interests on specific topics, take advantage of local partnerships, build on the core curriculum provided by the local chapter, and provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Texas. At that time, the board had to approve AT opportunities.

One can spend hours and hours studying the historical documents in the chapter. While websites are great for providing a wealth of information, there is something very satisfying about flipping through the many photographs, articles, and training information stored on good, old paper. Look for stories elaborating on these early projects in upcoming issues of Naturalist News.



Master naturalists Betty Zajac, Paula Blakshear and Jan Thompson "measuring" a giant cottonwood tree at Clear Creek.



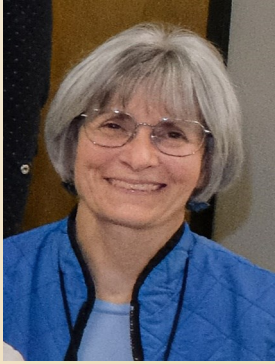
Susan Pittman observing ATV damage to trail at Clear Creek. In the early days of Clear Creek, Naturalists struggled with damage to trails by motorized vehicles as well as illicit campsites.



Illicit Campsite at Clear Creek photo caption: Campsite at Clear Creek off Hartlee Field Road.



# *This Month's Contributors*



Becky Bertoni



Marilyn Blanton



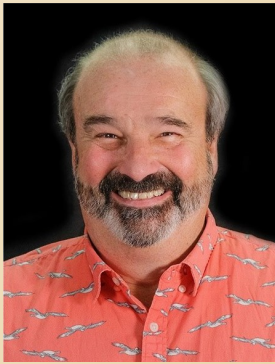
Samra Bufkins



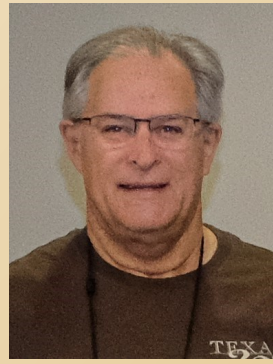
Andrea Dixon



Jerry Hamby



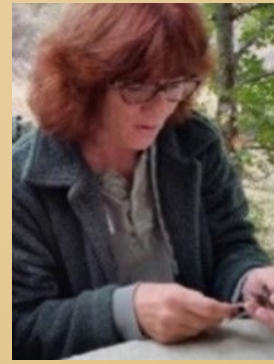
Dave Jones



Denver Kramer



Bryan Lewis



Mary Morrow



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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)

*May 2024 submissions are due by Wednesday, May 8th.*

# Almost the Last Word

Click below for Stream:  
The Naturalist News podcast and the  
latest newsletter in audio format.



## 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 on Instagram  
please mail one to three photos to  
[socialmedia@efctmn.org](mailto:socialmedia@efctmn.org).

### Funny Finds From Sue Yost!



# 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.*

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