

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™
Elm Fork Chapter



Naturalist News

January 2025 Volume 25, Issue 1



Fisherman's Trail in the snow at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center, by Carl Malmberg

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Naturalist News



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Hooded windmill grass (*Chloris cucullata*), looks like fireworks!
Photo by Susan Richmond at Green Acres, courtesy of Becky Bertoni.



Birdhouse in the snow, by Tammie Walters

Buzz from the Board

By Brenda Martin

Hello friends,

2025 is here and with it, you can always rely on change. Buzz from the Board will be brought to you by a different board member each month. This month it is my honor as Director of Volunteer Projects to get us rolling! So, let's do this!

My mantra for 2025 is "Be the Change." Instead of looking to others, I am going to act in a way that allows change to happen through me and around me. What do you think? Are you with me? My first step is to visit all the projects, see firsthand the great work being done by our chapter members, and "get my hands dirty!"

Do you know we have almost 50 different projects in our chapter? These are incredible projects that create change every day. You hear about the bigger or longer running ones, but I want to try to pique your interest in a smaller one that may not have caught your eye yet.

Bryo-Texana is a group led by Project Manager Jeanne Erickson (Class of 1998). This group has been locating, collecting, and identifying bryophytes across Texas since 2018. "Bryophyte" is the informal group name for mosses, liverworts and hornworts. Bryo-Texana works closely with Dale Kruse, Curator of the S. M. Tracy Herbarium at Texas A&M University in College Station, as well as the US Forest Service, BRIT of Fort Worth, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and many others.

A few unknown facts about Bryo-Texana: Elm Fork is the only master naturalist chapter in the state taking part in this important project. The group is small, with only four volunteers last year. One volunteer even allowed specimen collection on his own land! Despite their small size, the impact they have is felt far and wide. In 2024 alone, 294 new specimens were collected, dried, catalogued and delivered to organizations around the state.



Mossy sandstone boulders, from Jeanne Erickson

Due to their expertise, Bryo-Texana is often called on to help locate and collect rare species throughout the state that are not Bryophytes. In Spring 2022, Jeanne and her friend Mary Curry spent three weeks at Caddo National Grassland in Fannin County conducting surveys for the USFS looking for the endangered Frosted Elfin Butterfly. The USFS asked Bryo-Texana again for their help in Spring 2023. They spent a full week searching at Caddo before locating two rare



Buzz from the Board, cont.

plants. Jeanne shared the remarkable discovery with Jason Singhurst of TPWD who made a special site visit to note the locations of the rare plants. In 2024, the scope of the group's activities continued to expand as Bryo-Texana joined with TPWD for a rare plant survey at Lake Mineral Wells State Park. Throughout these searches for non-bryophyte species, Bryo-Texana is always on the hunt for moss, liverwort and other bryophyte specimens to collect.

Amazing stuff, right? You may be asking, "How do I get involved with such worthy service?" The answer is simple! Contact Jeanne Erikson to get started. With such vast areas to cover and many groups requesting their help, Bryo-Texana needs additional volunteers to both collect bryophytes and assist in verifying identifications located in other herbaria. Class of 2024, do you want to serve where your contribution has the greatest impact? Then I invite you to explore projects like Bryo-Texana!

Let's make 2025 a year of change! Is this your year to branch out, learn new skills, and work with new and different projects? This is just one of many lesser-known opportunities where you can make a BIG difference. For smaller groups, even one additional volunteer's impact is clearly visible. We are 266 members strong! We are a powerful, positive force that can make powerful, positive changes. So, let's get started and see how much change we can affect in our world.

See you in the forest my friend.



A growth of various bryophytes (here liverworts and leafy mosses), from Wikimedia Commons.

Announcements



Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society's 2025 Annual Conference

**February 19-21, 2025
Embassy Suites, Denton, TX**

The conference will have 12 workshops on a variety of topics, as well as poster sessions presented by students and technical sessions from wildlife professionals,

It is very possible that the chapter will be asked to provide support for the meeting. Attending sessions will need to be chapter approved for AT. Providing support would be advisory and outreach P070510:PO.

More information and registration can be found at:
<https://tctws.org/annual-meeting-2/annual-meeting/>

What Happens Next

Chapter Meeting and Presentation

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

Denton County Administrative Courthouse • 3rd Floor Conference Room

1 Courthouse Dr. • Denton, TX 76208

This Month's Presentation:

Reintroducing Fire to North Central Texas - Using Prescribed Fire as a Tool for Natural Resource Management

By Patrick Thompson, Crew Leader - Preserve and Greenbelts, Parks and Recreation, City of Lewisville

We will discuss the history of prescribed fire in Texas and the characteristics that separate prescribed fire from wildfire. The presentation will include the effects of weather and fuel models on fire behavior, the benefits of fire, the precautions and preparation entailed when working with fire, techniques and equipment, and the outreach needed to get the public to trust beneficial fire as a tool for land management.



Pat Thompson has been the Crew Leader for the Preserve and Greenbelts division of the City of Lewisville's Parks and Recreation Department since 2023. Before that he worked for Texas Parks and Wildlife as a Park Ranger at Ray Roberts Lake State Park for four years where he received his introduction to prescribed fires and earned his qualifications as a Type II Wildland Firefighter. Before that Pat spent 10 years ranching in Texas, New Mexico, and Arkansas practicing Holistic Management and quickly falling in love with native plants.

Awards and Recognition

December 2024

Initial Certifications

<i>Dan Graves</i>	<i>Class of 2024</i>
<i>Debra Nobles</i>	<i>Class of 2024</i>
<i>Daniela Parker</i>	<i>Class of 2024</i>
<i>Susan Richmond</i>	<i>Class of 2024</i>



Recertifications

<i>John Bodnar</i>	<i>Class of 2007</i>
<i>Mike Danner</i>	<i>Class of 2014</i>
<i>Deborah Driver</i>	<i>Class of 2023</i>
<i>Stephanie Durbin</i>	<i>Class of 2021</i>
<i>Sheri Fenter</i>	<i>Class of 2015</i>
<i>Patricia Kelly</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>
<i>Tyler Leverenz</i>	<i>Class of 2022</i>
<i>Alice Mankoff</i>	<i>Class of 2016</i>
<i>Kere Post</i>	<i>Class of 2020</i>
<i>Kristina Richter</i>	<i>Class of 2021</i>
<i>Sharon Sahm</i>	<i>Class of 2016</i>
<i>Jonathan Smith</i>	<i>Class of 2013</i>
<i>Mary Strickland</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>
<i>Dawn Tallman</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>
<i>Norma Wilkerson</i>	<i>Class of 2011</i>



Awards and Recognition

November 2024

250 Hour Milestone

Amy Montgomery

Class of 2023



2000 Hour Milestone

Jeanne Erickson

Class of 1998



6000 Hour Milestone

Hilton Dickerson Class of 2009



~ Congratulations! ~

Field Notes in Focus



An Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) in a Suburban Backyard, by Bryan Lewis

Field Notes in Focus



*Nature Photos from
a Walk in the Rain at LLELA*

By Sue Yost, class of 2017



A Walk in the Rain, cont.



*"I go to nature to be soothed and healed,
and to have my senses put in tune once more."
John Burroughs*



Inside Outside News

Approved AT

Just dig it!

Practical Ideas for Adding Native Plants to your Yard

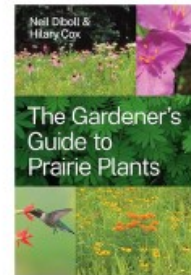
Saturday, January 18, 2025
9:00 AM to 2:30 PM

Lewisville Thrive: Dogwood Room
1950 S Valley Pkwy, Lewisville, TX 75067

Prairie Garden Design Principles, presented by Neil Diboll (via Zoom):

Neil will share his expertise in plant selection, garden layout, and integrating native prairie species into the home landscape.

Presenter Bio: Neil Diboll is the owner and consulting ecologist for Prairie Nursery, Inc., and, with Hilary Cox, the author of *The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants*. With over 40 years of expertise with native prairies ecology, Neil's work emphasizes "aesthetics, sustainability, and ecological compatibility with the land."



Pocket Prairies of the Blackland Prairie Chapter: Susan Abernethy and her fellow Blackland Prairie Texas Master Naturalists will share photos and discuss their process creating pocket prairies and pollinator spaces at home. They will answer questions about their experiences creating these native gardens in urban settings.

Presenter bio.: Susan has served as Outreach Director and on the Training committee. She volunteers in prairie restoration projects, is a Monarch Steward, and enjoys photographing pollinators, birds and plants for iNaturalist. She has a 20 x 10 foot pocket prairie and a pollinator garden at home.

Gardening with native Texas plants: The why and how of gardening with native plants.

Presenter bio.: Anna Hurst is the owner of Eco Blossom Nursery in Ft. Worth.

Pocket Prairies: Missy Singleton will explore the wonder of pocket prairies, highlighting their positive biological impacts.

Presenter Bio: Missy is a Private Lands Fish & Wildlife Biologist with the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Partner and Vendor Tables: Seedsource and Trinity Forks Native Plant Society of Texas will host tables with information on native seeds and plants.



Cost: \$40
Includes breakfast pastries
& a boxed lunch
Register at: friendsofllela.org

FRIENDS of
LLELA

Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area



Inside Outside News

Approved AT

Monarch Butterflies

ADVANCED TRAINING

"TRAIN THE TRAINER" WITH CAROL CLARK

Do you want to learn how to lead presentations and discussions about Monarchs? Join this "Train the Trainer" event with Carol Clark - Monarch Watch Conservation Specialist and Texas Master Naturalist
Read more about Carol's work and expertise at carolsworld.net

Date: January 21st, 2025

Time: 10-11:15 a.m.

Location: Zoom and In-Person

(Denton AgriLife Extension Office Conference Room)

RSVP to save your in-person spot or to receive the Zoom meeting link

- Tom Kirwan: TAKirwan@aol.com
- Katey Pirot: Katey.art.np@gmail.com



Inside Outside News

Approved AT



Time To Restore Texas

Connecting People, Plants, & Pollinators

Advanced Training with David Gwin

“Time to Restore” State Coordinator for Texas
and Texas Master Naturalist

Tracking the seasonal life cycles, from bud to fruit to seed, of native plants provides insight into plants’ relationships with the surrounding environment. Learn more about how you can participate in tracking Texas native plant phenology during this training.

Date: January 30th, 2025

Time: 10:00-11:15 a.m.

Location: Virtual on Zoom

Advance Registration Required

Register Via Provided Zoom Link

Event Contact: Tom Kirwan

TAKirwan@aol.com

972-213-5664

Read more about “Time to Restore” and Native Plant Phenology at
usanpn.org/community/TimeToRestore

David Gwin is the Texas State Coordinator for “Time to Restore”, a National Phenology Network project connecting people, plants, and pollinators. Join this training to learn about Texas native plant phenology, the process of tracking plant life cycles and stages throughout the seasons. David will be sharing about the work of the National Phenology Network and teaching about how to get involved in tracking Texas native plant life cycles (phenology).

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunity



DFW Wildlife Coalition

DFW Wildlife Coalition is looking for volunteers to do 2- or 3-hour shifts answering the phones from your home. You would do the same shift every week. We have an online training program for you to do at your own pace. All you need is a phone and a computer. We answer calls from 7 am to 10pm, 365 days a year.

You will learn all about Texas native wildlife, referring callers to rehabbers and answering questions from the public on how we can co-exist with our native wildlife.

Contact Betty Zajac through the Members Area Membership Directory or Projects (P091009).

Be sure to check Plan Your Week and the [Elm Fork Chapter Website](#) and [Calendar](#) for MORE AT and volunteer opportunities!

The screenshot shows the website header for the Elm Fork Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist. It includes logos for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Texas Parks & Wildlife. The navigation menu contains: Home, About, Join Our Chapter, Photo Gallery, Activities, Newsletters, Calendar, Members Area, and Donate. Below the menu is a 'References' section with color-coded buttons for: Advanced Training, Board Meeting, Chapter Meeting, Special Events, TMN Annual Meeting, and Volunteers Needed. The main content is a calendar for January 2025, showing events for the 12th through 18th.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
12 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit	13 9:00 am - 12:00 pm LLELA Monday & Wednesday Workday	14 9:00 am - 12:00 pm LLELA Trailhead Tuesday 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm	15 9:00 am - 12:00 pm Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday	16 9:00 am - 12:00 pm Chapter Meeting 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake	17 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch Unit	18 9:00 am - 2:30 pm Just Dig It! Native Plant Landscaping Seminar – AT

Projects in the Community

The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition

From Marilyn Blanton

The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition is now at the TWU Blagg-Huey Library. The exhibit will be at the library through the end of January before traveling to the UNT Elm Fork Education Center for the month of February. The exhibit features all of the artwork that received a ribbon. The exhibit celebrated Texas Native Plants and the creativity of DISD fourth grade students. Almost 700 students participated in this project. This is a collaborative project between the Trinity Forks Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas, Elm Fork Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist and Texas Woman's University. The display at the library is located in the children's area on the first floor. The library offers a beautiful setting to showcase the exhibit.



Features

America's State Parks First Day Hikes—Starting the Year on the Right Foot

By Jerry Hamby

The first “first day hike” took place in 1992 at Blue Hills Reservation, a state park in Milton, Massachusetts, and was the brainchild of former supervisor Patrick Flynn. The intent was to encourage people to celebrate the new year by immersing themselves in nature and local history. By 2008 similar hikes were scheduled across the state, and in 2012 more than 400 events were held across the United States under the banner of America's State Parks First Day Hikes. According to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 177 first day events took place in Texas State Parks on January 1, 2024, and their popularity continues to grow.

First day hikes reinforce my love of the outdoors. They rejuvenate me in way that is laid back and allow me to share a favorite ritual with friends, family, and new acquaintances. If I am lucky, a first day hike will introduce me to a new place and an unforgettable experience.

My inaugural first day hike occurred in 2017 when a friend in Houston, Mary Carol Edwards, invited my wife Susan and me to join her and several of her friends at Sheldon Lake State Park and Environmental Learning Center, a 2,800-acre nature preserve in northeast Harris County. I first visited Sheldon Lake in 2014 during an all-day field session for my initial training with the Gulf Coast Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) program. Sheldon Lake is where I learned about coastal prairies and wetlands. In subsequent years I organized field trips for English and Honors students at Lee College and participated in prairie planting events.

Unlike most first day hikes, which are led by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department rangers, Mary Carol's event was an informal nature walk. We met for lunch on the viewing platform of the John Jacob Observation Tower, sixty feet above a restored tall-grass prairie to the east and Sheldon Lake to the west. Afterwards, we hiked the mile-long Prairie Trail (a series of boardwalks leading into the heart of the prairie) and stopped at a wildlife viewing platform suspended above a prairie pothole, or wetland depression, a key element of the Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes ecoregion. We ended our hike on the Swamp Rabbit Trail, a woodland path that skirts the edge of several naturalized ponds.

My final first day hike in Southeast Texas took place at Galveston Island State Park, another field trip destination for my TMN training. On that first visit in 2014, I learned about the ecological zones that define Gulf Coast barrier islands—beach, dunes, coastal prairie, and salt marsh wetlands. On that day I also found the shell of a Texas lightning whelk (*Sinistrofulgur pulleyi*), which, like me, is left handed. The lightning whelk is the State Shell of Texas and was the TMN recertification pin in 2022.



Wildlife viewing platform, Sheldon Lake SP



Clapper Rail Trail, Galveston Island SP



America's State Parks First Day Hikes (cont.)



Butterowe Bayou boardwalk, Galveston Island SP

Our first day hike on Galveston Island took place on a cold, blustery day in 2021. Following the protocols of the COVID-19 pandemic, the twelve people in our group practiced social distancing and wore face masks. Other than a brief stop to observe coastal sand dunes, we limited our exploration to the bayside trails, starting with the Oak Mott and Eskimo Curlew Loops, the latter of which is named for a native bird (*Numenius borealis*) last seen on the island in 1962. We also crossed Butterowe Bayou via a boardwalk and hiked along a salt marsh to an observation tower that looks onto West Bay.

After moving to North Texas in 2021, Susan and I continued to participate in first day hikes, exploring places as diverse as the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge, Arbor Hills Nature Preserve, and Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve. For our inaugural hike of 2025, we settled on Lake Mineral Wells State Park, eighty miles southwest of Denton. It was our first time to visit and the first time we participated in a ranger-led first day event. Joining us were three friends from the Backland Prairie Chapter of TMN, Rick and Lisa Travis and Ernie Stokely, and fellow Elm Fork Master Naturalist Ginny Richards.



CCC ruins, Fort Worth Nature Center

What made this hike more special was the fact we saw a part of the park normally closed to the public. The Penitentiary Hollow "wild walk" lived up to its description and was every bit as strenuous as advertised. Park Interpreter David Owens led twenty participants through box canyons, taking us over, under, and between sandstone boulders. While we covered less than two miles, the way through was unpredictable and slow, and we hiked over three hours.



Susan entering the Squeeze, Lake Mineral Wells SP

A highlight of the hike was traversing a narrow slot canyon called "The Squeeze" that winds between two vertical walls that, at the narrowest point, are no more than twelve inches apart. To avoid a bottleneck, our hike leader had us enter and exit the slot one at a time, allowing people to back out if they were unsure if they could make it through. Predictably, some participants did change their minds, but, as was the case at other difficult points, there was an alternate route to rejoin the group.



Hike leader David Owens in Penitentiary Hollow, Lake Mineral Wells SP

Before crawling on hands and knees through one tunnel, we were warned to look out for "The Guillotine," a rock wedged between the walls that comes to a point two feet above the ground. One of the few injuries David recalled from previous hikes involved a man smacking his head against this rock. To his credit, David always warned us about potential dangers. When we first



America's State Parks First Day Hikes (cont.)



Susan crawling into a tunnel,
Lake Mineral Wells SP



Walking through a slot canyon,
Lake Mineral Wells SP

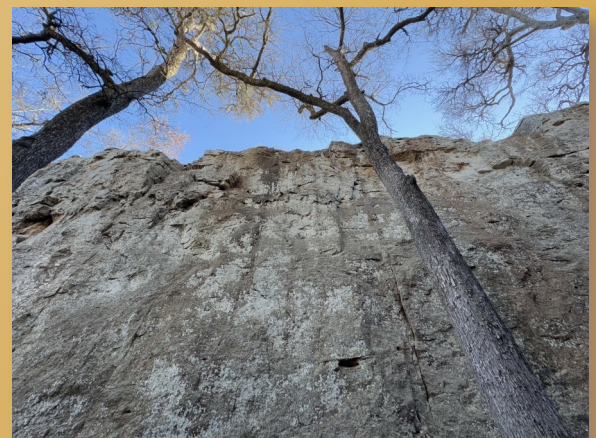


Rick and Susan in Penitentiary Hollow,
Lake Mineral Wells SP

ventured off trail, he shared two important rules—"don't bushwhack" (or smack other people with branches) and "don't be bushwhacked" (by getting too close to the person ahead of you). I plan to appropriate his rules the next time I lead a group through the "cast iron forest" found in much of North Central Texas, something I have done on more than one tree survey.

One advantage of waiting for other participants to catch up to the group was getting to ask questions of our leader. I was curious, for example, about how Penitentiary Hollow got its name. David said that every local historian he asked gave a different answer, all of them of questionable veracity. One story involved outlaws who purportedly buried gold in the box canyon, and another, set during the Civil War, told of Union soldiers pretending to be homesteaders relocating from Louisiana. When their true identities were given away by the U.S. government stamps on their supply crates, the soldiers were temporarily held in the canyon, where their captors trained rifles on them from above.

The most likely explanation for Penitentiary Hollow's name is the nature of the canyon itself, whose sheer walls rise as high as forty feet and give the impression of a prison yard. In more recent years, those cliffs have made Lake Mineral Wells State Park a popular destination for rock climbers. Such activity is limited to a small section of Penitentiary Hollow, primarily to reduce damage to the native habitat. The farther we ventured off trail, the more pristine the canyon walls looked; that is where we saw prickly pears, ferns, and purple-stem cliffbrake (*Pellaea atropurpurea*) anchored in the sandstone. The unusual geology of the site also explains the existence of several rare plants, including jack-in-the-puplit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), which can be found in the eastern half of the United States.



Sheer cliff that inspired the name of Penitentiary
Hollow, Lake Mineral Wells SP

What made the hike most engaging was the variety of features we encountered. One slot canyon with an overhang was called "The Funnel." After climbing over a series of boulders, we worked our way down through crevices that got narrower as they twisted and turned. The last tunnel we explored was "Patrick's House," and like the abode of Patrick Star (in the animated series *SpongeBob SquarePants*), the passage opens up beneath



A Hike in the LBJ National Grassland (cont.)



The author in a slot canyon,
Lake Mineral Wells SP
(photo by Susan Hamby)

a large rock. Getting there required us to crawl flat on our bellies, ensuring, as the hike description claimed, that we would get dirty.

A highlight of the hike was spotting a canyon wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*) on the edge of a cliff twenty feet overhead. This songbird is more common in the desert Southwest but is undoubtedly drawn to the rocky habitat of the state park. Soon after, we heard a second wren as the pair traded loud calls across the canyon for several minutes.

After a late lunch our group explored the quieter west side of the lake. The multi-use Cross Timbers Black Trail is popular among horseback riders but is wide enough to accommodate hikers and cyclists. For a more varied hike, we returned on the rocky Primitive Camping Trail. The combined routes revealed additional plants, including Christmas cholla (*Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*), a desert cactus that has narrow branches. Apache and other Native American tribes crush the small red fruits and mix them with a beverage to produce a narcotic effect.

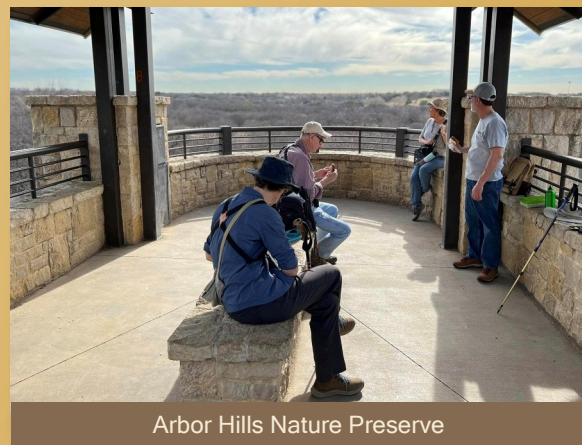


Looking up from a slot canyon,
Lake Mineral Wells SP

After a full day of hiking, we decided to call it a day, but on the drive back, we considered next year's first day hike. With any luck Palo Pinto Mountains State Park will finally be open (after two years of construction delays). Located halfway between Fort Worth and Abilene, the site will be the first new state park in more than forty years. Whatever the destination for next year's first day hike, I will see what's in store on Texas Parks and Wildlife's website: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/first-day-hikes>.



Lisa, Ernie, and Rick examining scat on the trail,
Lake Mineral Wells SP



Arbor Hills Nature Preserve

All photographs by Jerry Hamby,
except those noted

Tweet of the Month

By Sue Yost, class of 2017

Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*)

Winter migration... Winter migration in Texas means a wide variety of birds leave the north and stay in Texas for the winter. A major winter migrating bird around these parts is waterfowl. My favorite of all migrating ducks is the beautiful Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*).

The genus name is derived from Ancient Greek βουκέφαλος *bouképhalos*, “bullheaded”, from *boûs* “bull”, and *kephalé*, “head”, a reference to the oddly bulbous head shape of the species. The species name *albeola* is a diminutive of Latin *albus* meaning “white”.

The Bufflehead is a small sea duck. It breeds in Alaska and Canada and migrates in winter to southern North America. They are migratory and most of them winter in protected coastal waters or open inland waters, on the east and west coasts of North America and the southern United States. They are fairly common in our area and can be seen on retention ponds and small bodies of water. Bufflehead prefer water depths of 3.9-14.8 ft.

Have you ever seen one? Adult males are striking black and white. One of the easiest ducks to identify. When the sun hits the males head, one can see iridescent green and purple. They have a large white patch behind the eye. Females are grey toned with a smaller white patch behind the eye and a light underside.

The Bufflehead ranges from 13-16 inches long and weighs 9.5-19.4 oz with the drakes larger than the females. It is the smallest American duck. The bufflehead has a wingspan of 21.6 inches.

Due to their small size, they are highly active, undertaking dives almost continuously while sustained by their high metabolism. Now you see ‘em, now you don’t! They do not tend to collect in large flocks and groups are usually limited to small numbers. One duck serves as a sentry, watching for predators as the others in the group dive in search of food. Buffleheads are amongst the last waterfowl to leave their breeding grounds and one of the world's most punctual migrants, arriving on their wintering grounds within a narrow margin of time.

Because of their small size, they nest in cavities in trees, primarily aspens or poplars, close to water. The Bufflehead’s breeding range is limited by the distribution of Northern Flickers, which are their main source of nesting cavities. Their breeding habitat is wooded lakes and ponds in Alaska and Canada, almost entirely included in the boreal forest or taiga habitat. Buffleheads are monogamous, and the females may return to the same nest site, year after year. Nest competitors include Mountain Bluebird, Tree Swallow and European Starling. Nests in tree cavities or nest boxes are lined with downy feathers from the chest of female.

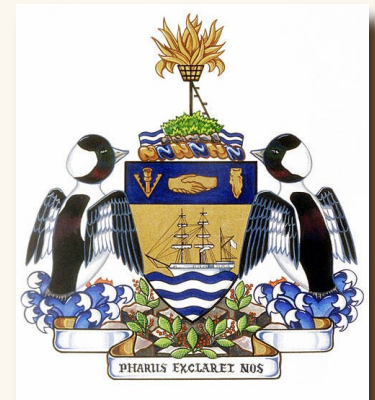


Tweet of the Month (cont.)

The female lays 6-11 eggs with 9 being the average. Incubation averages 30 days. A day after the last duckling hatches, the brood leaps from the nest cavity, much like Wood Ducks do. Nest predators are fox, weasels, raccoons and snakes. Avian aerial predators of adults include the Peregrine Falcon, Snowy Owl, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, and Cooper's Hawk.

Bufflehead dive for aquatic invertebrates, crustaceans, and mollusks. They typically swallow their food while still underwater. Dives last on average about 12 seconds and rarely more than 25 seconds, typically staying on the surface another 12 seconds or so before diving again. Bufflehead forage in open, shallow water over sparse submerged vegetation or over mudflats that would be exposed at low tide. They are rarely seen on land. On freshwater they mostly eat damselfly and dragonfly larvae, midge larvae, water boatmen, mayfly larvae, caddisfly larvae, large zooplankton such as amphipods, and snails and clams in winter. They eat some plant matter in fall and winter, mainly seeds of pondweeds and bulrushes. In saltwater, Bufflehead eat shrimp, crabs, amphipods, isopods, snails, mussels, herring eggs, sculpins, and ratfishes. Downy ducklings sometimes dabble at the surface rather than diving.

Because of their striking plumage, highly active nature, and proximity to humans on waterfront properties, Buffleheads are one of the most popular birds amongst bird watchers. The Bufflehead, also known as the spirit duck, was added to the coat of arms of the town of Sidney, British Columbia, in 1995. Buffleheads are hunted and are considered gamebirds. Duck hunting is carefully managed to maintain populations; nevertheless between 200,000 and 250,000 are shot per year in the U.S. and Canada combined. Buffleheads are also losing nest sites as loggers clearcut boreal forests, and as agricultural fields replace aspen parklands in western North America. In contrast to many other sea ducks that have declined in recent decades, bufflehead numbers have remained relatively constant. Although Buffleheads do use manmade nest boxes, they still need the forest habitat to thrive.



This winter, grab your optics and look for this gorgeous visitor at your local pond. Now you see 'em, now you don't!



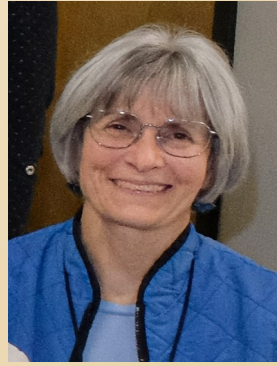
Bufflehead at LLELA, by Denver Kramer

Photos, unless stated otherwise, and Greek text courtesy of Wikipedia and Cornell.

This Month's Contributors



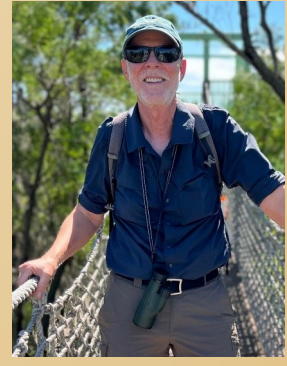
Gale Bacon



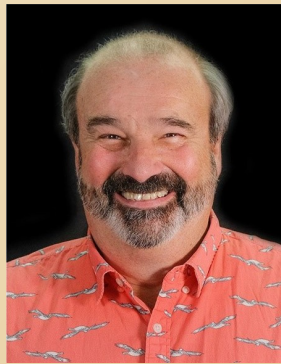
Becky Bertoni



Marilyn Blanton



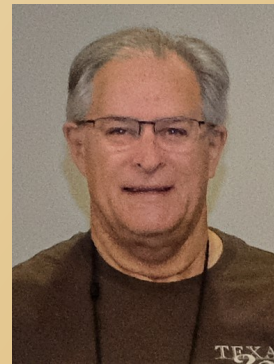
Jerry Hamby



Dave Jones



Scott Kiester



Denver Kramer



Bryan Lewis



Brenda Martin



Katey Pirot



Fran Witte



Sue Yost



Betty Zajac

And a big thanks to Karen DeVinney and Mary Morrow for proofing!

Almost the Last Word

Funny Finds From Sue Yost!


















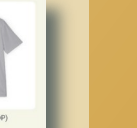
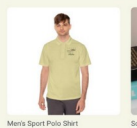
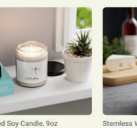






Remember to visit the Elm Fork Chapter's online pop-up store for TMN-EFC merchandise!

TMN-Elm Fork Chapter All products Home & Living Women Men Accessories


<https://tmn-elm-fork-chapter.printify.me/>

All products 25 items Sort by: Newest arrivals

 Unisex Jersey Long Sleeve Tee \$29.36	 Unisex Garment-Dyed Tank Top \$20.13	 Bento Lunch Box \$26.91	 Slim Water Bottle \$20.92
 Can Cooler Sleeve \$8.14	 Women's Baseball Jersey (ADP) \$28.64	 Unisex 3/4 Sleeve Baseball Tee \$20.99	 Unisex Garment-dyed Long Sleeve... \$23.63
 Unisex Jersey Short Sleeve V-Neck... \$11.08	 Unisex Jersey Short Sleeve Tee	 Canvas Shopping Tote	 Women's Performance V-Neck T-shirt

 Garden Kamp; House Banner \$10.24	 Copper Vacuum Insulated Bottle... \$27.62	 Desk Mouse Pad \$6.64	 Men's Sports Jersey (ADP) \$27.78
 Men's Sport Polo Shirt \$31.69	 Scented Soy Candle, 9oz \$13.02	 Stemless Wine Glass, 11.75oz \$10.83	 Unisex Distressed Cap \$16.49
 Low Profile Baseball Cap \$16.69	 Spiral Notebook - Ruled Line \$8.94	 Journal - Ruled Line \$15.64	 Luggage Tag \$12.31

<https://tmn-elm-fork-chapter.printify.me/products/1>



Almost the Last Word

Click below to Stream this month's issue of Naturalist News, our newsletter in audio format, featuring the voice of Teri Schnaubelt.



WE ARE ON INSTAGRAM!

Please follow us and check out all the neat photos from our chapter.

Show your project workday on Instagram! Send one to three photos to socialmedia@efctmn.org.

2025 ELM FORK CHAPTER TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST CHAPTER DUES

Dues are on a sliding scale:

- \$25.00 if paid by January 31st (+\$1.01 convenience fee when paying online)
- \$30.00 if paid February 1st through February 28th (+\$1.11 convenience fee when paying online)
- \$40.00 if paid March 1st through March 31st (+\$1.31 convenience fee when paying online)
- After March 31st, a member who has not paid their dues will be moved to Inactive status in VMS

2024 Class Members DO NOT need to pay dues in 2025.



REMINDER: Please update your personal information in VMS

Thank you all for your amazing articles and photos for the

Naturalist News!

I couldn't do it without you!

Please send submissions to: newsletter@efctmn.org

February 2025 submissions are due by:

Monday, February 10th

Note: The submission deadline has changed from the Wednesday the week before the chapter meeting, to the **Monday** the week before the chapter meeting.



Tammie Walters,
Editor

Who We Are



Texas Master Naturalist–Elm Fork Chapter

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

OFFICERS

President - Bryan Lewis

Vice President - Eric Houston

Treasurer - Mike Hatch

Secretary - Delia Croessmann

BOARD POSITIONS

Immediate Past President – Kathryn Wells

Member-at-Large – Jane Duke

BOARD DIRECTORS

Membership - Sharon Betty

VMS - Jim Gerber

Initial Training - Brenda McCoy, Cathy Griesbaum

Communications - Fran Witte

Volunteer Service Projects - Brenda Martin

Advanced Training Programs - David Jones

Outreach/Adult Education - Open

New Class Representative - Stevie Wyatt

CHAPTER ADVISORS

AgriLife – Zach Davis

Texas Parks and Wildlife – Mindy Shumate

Our Mission

“To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.”

Our Vision

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

Regular Monthly Chapter Meetings

Meetings are on the third Thursday of each month at 9:30 a.m. preceded by a social time at 9:00 a.m.

Chapter meetings are open to the public.

Board Meetings

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

Monthly board meetings are open to members.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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Denton, TX 76208

940-349-2883

